

The Rape of Lucretia by Benjamin Britten.

Act 1: In an armed camp outside Rome Tarquinius Sextus, son of the king Tarquinius is drinking with two generals. The night before, a group of soldiers rode into Rome to see if their wives were being faithful. All of them were caught betraying their husbands except for Collatinus' wife Lucretia. Junius encourages Tarquinius to test Lucretia's chastity himself and he rides off to her house. She is busy spinning wool with her servants and missing her husband. Tarquinius arrives and asks to stay the night.

In this act you can see that Britten has taken Ovid's idea and adapted it pretty faithfully for this opera which has a Christian view of what happened. (1) Tarquinius was drinking with some soldiers in the camp but two generals are not specially mentioned. In Ovid's story the soldiers were boasting about their wives and did ride into the city (2) *tollamur equis urbemque petamus* "Let's get on our horses and make for the city." (3) In Ovid's story it is Sextus' own idea to go back to see Lucretia as he is "burning with an unjust love" (4). Junius does not appear in Ovid's story. Just like in Ovid, Tarquinius rapes Lucretia and she commits suicide in the opera. (5)