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CHANDOS
OPERA *IN*
ENGLISH



SIR CHARLES MACKERRAS

HANDEL
JULIUS CAESAR

PETER MOORES FOUNDATION



George Frideric Handel

AKG

George Frideric Handel (1685–1759)

Julius Caesar

Libretto by Nicola Haym

English translation by Brian Trowell

Edition prepared by Noel Davies and Sir Charles Mackerras

Julius Caesar.....	Dame Janet Baker <i>mezzo-soprano</i>
Curio.....	Christopher Booth-Jones <i>baritone</i>
Cornelia	Sarah Walker <i>mezzo-soprano</i>
Sextus	Della Jones <i>mezzo-soprano</i>
Cleopatra.....	Valerie Masterson <i>soprano</i>
Ptolemy	James Bowman <i>countertenor</i>
Achillas	John Tomlinson <i>bass</i>
Nirenus	David James <i>countertenor</i>

English National Opera Orchestra and Chorus

Victor Morris chorus master & assistant to the conductor

Noel Davies harpsichord continuo

Sir Charles Mackerras

COMPACT DISC ONE

1 **Overture** 3:02 [p. 76]

Act I

Scene 1

2 'Caesar! Caesar! Egypt acclaims thee'
Chorus 1:38 [p. 76]

3 'Kneel in tribute, fair land of Egypt'
Caesar 2:05 [p. 76]

4 'Curio, Caesar has come...'
Caesar, Cornelia, Sextus, Achilles 2:33 [p. 76]

5 'Tyrant, avoid my sight'
Caesar 3:57 [p. 77]

6 'Mother!' 'Cornelia!'
Sextus, Curio, Cornelia 0:43 [p. 77]

7 'Grief and woe all hope deny me'
Cornelia 6:10 [p. 77]

8 'The time for tears is over'
Sextus 0:27 [p. 78]

9 'Come rouse yourselves to vengeance'
Sextus 4:07 [p. 78]

Scene 2

10 'You shall be Queen, Cleopatra'
Cleopatra, Nirenus, Ptolemy 2:00 [p. 78]

11 'Yet why despair?'
Cleopatra 4:37 [p. 79]

12 'Pharaoh, my King!'
Achillas, Ptolemy 1:10 [p. 79]

13 'Upstart, barbarian and traitor!'
Ptolemy 3:41 [p. 79]

Scene 3

14 'Spirit of mighty Pompey'
Caesar, Curio, Cleopatra, Nirenus 5:19 [p. 80]

15 'Here within thee, O friendly marble'
Cornelia 3:03 [p. 81]

16 'Alas! Reviled and neglected, must I remain
here for ever?' 2:03 [p. 81]

17 'O star of my desire'
Cleopatra 5:32 [p. 81]

Scene 4

18 'Caesar! A generous destiny...'
Ptolemy, Caesar, Achilles 1:08 [p. 82]

19 'How silently, how slyly'
Caesar 6:29 [p. 82]

20 'Sire, with Sextus her son, the lady Cornelia'
Achillas, Cornelia, Sextus, Ptolemy 1:58 [p. 82]

21 'Ne'er reject a tender lover'
Achillas 5:13 [p. 83]

22 'Mother!' 'My dearest!'
Sextus, Cornelia 0:37 [p. 83]

23 'Condemn'd to grieve and cry, my love'
Cornelia, Sextus 7:44 [p. 83]

TT 75:26

COMPACT DISC TWO

Act II

Scene 1

- | | | |
|-----|--|--------------|
| [1] | ‘Have you done as I ordered, faithful Nirenus?’
<i>Cleopatra, Nirenus, Caesar</i> | 2:48 [p. 84] |
| [2] | ‘Lamenting, complaining of Caesar’s disdain’
<i>Cleopatra, Caesar</i> | 4:37 [p. 84] |
| [3] | ‘Fly then, fly, O my heart’
<i>Caesar, Nirenus</i> | 0:42 [p. 85] |
| [4] | ‘Fleet o’er flowery meadow gliding’
<i>Caesar</i> | 7:47 [p. 85] |

Scene 2

- | | | |
|------|--|--------------|
| [5] | ‘Still despairing, still lamenting’
<i>Cornelia</i> | 2:19 [p. 85] |
| [6] | ‘Lady, forget your grieving’
<i>Achillas, Cornelia, Ptolemy</i> | 2:05 [p. 85] |
| [7] | ‘Deep within my bosom burning’
<i>Ptolemy</i> | 3:19 [p. 86] |
| [8] | ‘So why delay?’
<i>Cornelia, Sextus</i> | 1:17 [p. 86] |
| [9] | ‘Sigh no more, forget lamenting!’
<i>Cornelia</i> | 3:14 [p. 87] |
| [10] | ‘He is no son who seeks not full revenge...’
<i>Sextus</i> | 0:23 [p. 87] |
| [11] | ‘Wounded, the serpent ne’er reposes’
<i>Sextus</i> | 5:05 [p. 87] |

Scene 3

- | | | |
|------|---|--------------|
| [12] | ‘Soon he will come to find me’
<i>Cleopatra</i> | 0:44 [p. 87] |
| [13] | ‘Venus, fair lady, one favour send me’
<i>Cleopatra</i> | 4:53 [p. 87] |
| [14] | ‘Ah gods! What do I see?’
<i>Caesar, Cleopatra, Curio</i> | 2:49 [p. 88] |
| [15] | ‘In anger and fury I’ll turn on the foe’
<i>Caesar, Chorus</i> | 1:41 [p. 89] |
| [16] | ‘They will kill him’
<i>Cleopatra</i> | 1:10 [p. 89] |
| [17] | ‘Hear my prayer, O gods, relenting’
<i>Cleopatra</i> | 9:40 [p. 89] |

TT 54:40

COMPACT DISC THREE

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|-----|-----------------|--------------|
| [1] | Symphony | 0:41 [p. 89] |
|-----|-----------------|--------------|

Act III

Scene 1

- | | | |
|-----|---|--------------|
| [2] | ‘So! You are beaten!’
<i>Ptolemy, Cleopatra</i> | 0:56 [p. 89] |
| [3] | ‘I shall tame your pride unbending’
<i>Ptolemy</i> | 4:14 [p. 90] |
| [4] | ‘And so in one brief hour all my glory is gone’
<i>Cleopatra</i> | 1:06 [p. 90] |

5	'Flow, my tears' <i>Cleopatra</i>	6:50 [p. 90]
6	'From the perils of the ocean' <i>Caesar</i>	2:06 [p. 90]
7	'Zephyrs! Zephyrs, come to mine aid!' <i>Caesar</i>	6:35 [p. 90]
8	'Nirenus, the battle is fought and lost' <i>Sextus, Achilles, Caesar, Curio</i>	2:32 [p. 91]
9	'See in spate the high cataract storming' <i>Caesar</i>	4:33 [p. 92]
Scene 2		
10	'Ladies, my faithful servants' <i>Cleopatra, Caesar</i>	3:25 [p. 92]
11	'Stormy winds my ship had shaken' <i>Cleopatra</i>	6:24 [p. 92]

Scene 3		
Symphony		
12		2:59 [p. 93]
13	'Here, Curio and your legions' <i>Nirenus, Caesar, Sextus, Cornelia, Cleopatra</i>	2:27 [p. 93]
14	'Dearest!' 'Fairest!' <i>Cleopatra, Caesar</i>	5:45 [p. 93]
15	'Long, long may Egypt continue' <i>Caesar</i>	0:29 [p. 94]
16	'Proclaim we all great Caesar's glory' <i>Chorus</i>	0:52 [p. 94]
17	'A vow I give you' <i>Caesar, Cleopatra</i>	0:57 [p. 94]
18	'Proclaim we all great Caesar's glory' <i>Chorus</i>	0:49 [p. 94]

Handel: Julius Caesar

Handel and the Aria Opera

Opera seria – serious opera – was the most important and prestigious creation of the musical Baroque. Without its techniques, conventions and aesthetic, Handel's oratorios and Bach's mastery of the aria and of melodic ornamentation could not have developed as they did. Yet it is only recently that our opera houses have begun to take *opera seria* seriously, on its own terms. Perhaps audiences will learn to find in its very 'artificialities' and 'unrealities' a source of strength: more than any other art form, opera needs its conventions – an agreed framework, an expected pattern from which significant departures may be made. Yet today, when anything goes, theatre music can be poured like reinforced concrete into any shape or mould. Many a modern composer who has ventured into opera will ruefully tell you, if he is honest, that he feels hamstrung from the start by the lack of any agreed common language linking stage and audience. In such a context, the rigidities of Baroque convention become a welcome strength.

It is something of a paradox that the very finest Italian *opere serie* of the Baroque should

have been written by a Saxon living in London, setting libretti almost never designed specially for him, in a language which was neither his own nor that of his audience (though they probably understood Italian better than a modern British audience, and had bi-lingual libretti to follow). But Handel's isolation gave him certain advantages. He could adapt libretti much more easily to his will, truncating the often long-winded fine sentiments of the recitatives in order to make room for more and longer arias – and, in spite of current misconceptions, it is in the succession of arias, not in the recitatives, that the essential continuity of the action lies. Handel seems to have exercised much more control over his company and his performers than might have been the case in the typical Italian opera company at an Italian or South German court: the Royal Academy of Music, though it enjoyed court patronage, was set up, in typical British fashion, as a joint-stock company. Handel must also have drawn valuable artistic support from the more discerning of his noble patrons in Augustan London, men such as the Earl of Burlington.

It is easy to forget when we read the often self-interested attacks on Italian opera by writers such as Addison and Steele, or accounts of the frivolity of the London audience, that Handel's dramatic perceptions were subtler and stronger than theirs, that he had not been nurtured on a diet of Otway and Rowe, and that much of the sensitive writing on the aesthetics of painting and architecture that he might have read in such authors as Shaftesbury was very relevant to the highly pictorial 'aria opera'. The choice of the 'significant moment', the exact narrative point or single emotional crisis with which painting or aria must deal, which gesture, tone, texture and design must combine to illuminate, is at the very heart of Handel's operatic method, which is at once highly analytical and extraordinarily concentrated and passionate.

The general themes of *opera seria* can often seem irrelevant to us today. Whether the story is classical myth, medieval history or epic fantasy, the subject-matter is essentially concerned with the behaviour of the great and powerful, of the kings, princes and dukes who had fostered the new art and used it to celebrate court occasions. Behind a typical Handel libretto we can trace the moral and social concerns of the earlier French dramatists Corneille and Racine (the former shows the individual will triumphing over its

temptations, the latter the will failing and the individual destroyed). How should great princes behave? How use their absolute power when public duty and private love come into conflict? How choose a wife? How conduct themselves so that their *gloire* – their good name, reputation, honour – should continue to justify the admiration and obedience of their subjects and their families? These were very important matters in an age of unfettered absolutism, when marriage and inheritance could lead to dynastic conflicts such as the War of the Spanish Succession. The French Revolution and the arrival of bourgeois constitutional monarchy naturally robbed *opera seria*, at this level, of most of its overt contemporary relevance.

All the same, Corneille and Racine reached beyond their immediate subject-matter to universal truths expressed in timeless verse and powerful dramatic portraiture, so that their plays, greater than their local themes, still survive. The same is true of Handel's musical dramas. The individual arias, of course, were never forgotten, and many have been sung as concert pieces since the time when Walsh or Cluer first published them. That being so, and in view of the fact that the operas consist of solo arias and very little else, it is perhaps odd that we have had to wait

so long to arrive at the proper understanding of the principles by which Handel used them to portray characters and arranged them into significantly grouped sequences to make a scene, an act, a whole opera.

The method is like Hogarth's. His famous sets of oil-paintings, soon made into best-selling prints, such as *The Rake's Progress*, need no narration or 'recitative'. He selects for depiction various significant moments in the Rake's or the Harlot's story and arranges around his central character such a wealth of telling detail, all relevant to the main point at issue – Rakewell buying love in a brothel, Rakewell buying social admiration – that we ourselves, as we examine the detail, diffuse the imagery in our minds beyond the spatial and temporal confines of the picture; the wainscoting between the separate paintings, as we walk from one to another, becomes charged with the implications of the story. A similar parallel might be made with Richardson's methods of analytical narration in the novel, by means of a sequence of individual letters.

If we examine Handel's depiction of Cleopatra by means of the aria, perhaps with Shakespeare's Cleopatra at the back of our minds, we shall arrive at a better notion of the largely unrecorded aesthetic and dramaturgy that governed Handel's methods. He drew her

in an analytical sequence of eight solo arias, two accompanied recitatives and a duet, each item carefully placed with an eye to contrast and continuity amid the larger sequence of forty-odd items, almost all solo arias.

Her first aria, 'Yet why despair?', is a common-time *allegro* in E, accompanied by all the violins in unison supported by violas and basses. The violas play only in the orchestral tutti, and in the middle section the violins too drop out. The main musical themes of the aria – which, unusually, are not derived from the vocal line – show that she is teasing her detested brother Ptolemy, mocking and jeering at him as an effeminate lad unfit to rule. This is achieved with repeated notes, emphatic crotchets with mordents or staccato quavers, giving way to short pointed phrases and laughing runs. Even the expected vocal *fioritura* on words such as 'heart' and 'console' takes on a tone of ironic gulling. The musical drama of the aria is not in the least static in spite of the repeated words; it continually ebbs and flows with different shades of feeling; and this is true of all Handel's arias.

Cleopatra's next aria (here omitted) is also, like many others to come, in a sharp and brilliant key, A major; it is a $3/8$ *allegro* for the same combination of strings, but Handel adds deeper tone to the vocal line by edging it with

an oboe. Disguised as a court lady, Cleopatra has succeeded in winning Caesar's heart, and the aria shows her frankly delighting in her beauty's power over the conqueror of the world. It is a dance of pleasure and naive self-display, its alert rhythms and brilliant chains of semiquavers veering unexpectedly from *forte* to *piano* and back, with a more intimate middle section accompanied by violins and bass alone. Her third aria is simpler and softer, a $6/8$ *allegro ma non troppo* in B flat. She has enlisted Sextus and Cornelia to help her fight Ptolemy, and what had started as mere pique, almost a game, has now grown into a settled hope that she can rid Egypt of her tyrannical brother and win both the throne and Caesar's lasting love. The high violins, now in unison and now in lulling thirds, tell of the distant star of hope and the gentle thrill of pleasure and love finding mature gratification.

The first aria in Act II, elaborately accompanied by all the Muses, is an alluring song of love, at once worshipping and captivating Caesar. It is a $3/4$ *largo*, in F. Cleopatra has a halo of nine solo instruments on stage (including theorbo and harp); in the pit, the muted four-part strings echo Caesar's adoring sighs of admiration, falling silent for the middle section. In the next aria she awaits him in her apartments and prays to Venus to

lend her all Cupid's charms. This is a $3/8$ *allegro* in A for unison violins and bass, dropping to solo violin when the voice enters and to continuo alone during the middle section. The music suggests both a charming prayer to the mother of love, and a portrait of the shining attractions Cleopatra hopes to acquire: for Caesar does not know who she is and she wants him to ask her to marry him in spite of the fact that she is apparently a mere commoner. Just before the next aria, Caesar has rushed off to defend himself from a treacherous surprise attack by Ptolemy's men. Left in uncertainty and suspense, and now realizing how deeply she loves Caesar, Cleopatra utters an anguished prayer for his safety: if he dies, so will she. Falling phrases in the bass and dragging suspensions in the bassoons suggest that she is humbling herself before the gods; throbbing quavers in the inner strings support shorter, broken gestures in the first violins, now despairing, now pleading, while Cleopatra herself has a quite independent thematic line in her appeals for divine aid. The piece is a common-time *largo* in F sharp minor, contrapuntally conceived and highly Bachian in tone.

In Act III, Caesar is believed dead, Cleopatra's forces have been defeated, and she expects to be put to death. We return to

E major and a slow 3/8 for the keen grief of 'Flow, my tears', a justly famous aria which turns to a different affect, texture and tempo for its middle section. The first part has a flute (hitherto associated with Cornelia, the mourning widow) silvering the line of the first violins, which is supported by second violins and basses only; Cleopatra's sorrowing cantilena is constantly echoed by a chiming figure of grief and regret, two rising notes and the second repeated, which develops from her opening interval of a third (there is no introductory ritornello) into a fourth, a fifth and finally an octave. The middle section, a common-time *allegro* where she furiously vows to return and haunt Ptolemy as a ghost, replaces the flute with a solo cello, suggesting, with the runs in the vocal line, implacable pursuit of the villain from beyond the grave; this tinges the return of the opening section (made the more intense by additional ornament, as all *da capo* reprises should be) with an additional ironic poignancy. Cleopatra's final solo, with Caesar triumphant and Ptolemy as good as destroyed, is an example of the 'simile aria' on the hackneyed image of the storm-tossed ship arrived safely in harbour. It is a common-time *allegro* in Cleopatra's opening key of E. But Handel's simile arias are invariably character-portraits as

well, and this one is a picture of the future queen's serene and shining delight, growing to intense exultation at dangers past and joys in prospect. The violins are sometimes in unison with the voice, and sometimes, *divisi*, they deepen her calm joy with taut repeated quavers. The last we hear of Cleopatra is a golden duet with Caesar, where the lovers plight their troth; this is in G, a slowish *allegro* in 12/8 for divided violins, oboes and bass, dropping to continuo alone for the middle section; the lovers also sing a *minore* trio, with oboes and bassoon, in the final bourrée ensemble.

We see and hear Handel's heroine, like Shakespeare's, in a matchless variety of moods; each is thoroughly explored in a brilliantly concentrated and epigrammatic portrait, framed by orchestral ritornellos of ever-varied texture (in which the art lies in the string-writing rather than in a more spectacular deployment of obbligato instruments). The portraits contrast with each other and, of course, even more with the similar suites of arias for other characters in which they are embedded, with an art fully comparable to Racine's famous *enchaînement de scènes*, the linking of a sequence of scenes. The aria opera developed perfectly naturally as the quintessence of the chief expressive and structural elements in Baroque music, using an

analytical method of presentation which is common in other art forms of the time as well. Form and matter are one, and it need not disturb us that there are no concerted finales and almost no ensembles of any kind. Even the psychology of the much-scorned 'exit aria' is in fact perfectly valid: the opera is experienced as a series of wave-like crescendos of dramatic excitement, each of which ends in a crisis for one of the characters, who sings an aria, after which there is for the moment no more to be said until a new sequence of events has placed that character in a new posture requiring a new aria. (In French opera of the time, arias often begin an act, so that the ensuing action dangles after them; in practice, this usually seems less psychologically satisfying.) It has been all too easy, for the past two centuries, for historians and critics to go on repeating Gluck's censures on mid-eighteenth-century *opera seria* as if they were intended to refer to the operas of Alessandro Scarlatti and Handel, which probably Gluck, and certainly those who quote him, had never heard. It may well be that the 'caprice and vanity of singers' had increased during the lean years of the 1740s and 50s; but the virtuosity which Handel's operas demand is never empty. He was writing for the greatest singers in the world; but their superb vocal technique would have been useless without the

dramatic and musical insight, passion and sense of style which alone make the 'impossible' conventions of *opera seria* not merely possible but vital and viable for us today.

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A Note on the Edition

Julius Caesar is not only one of Handel's best-known operas, it is also one of his longest. When English National Opera produced the opera in 1979, a number of cuts were made in order to bring it to a manageable length under non-festival conditions. When asked to take the production into the recording studio, we pondered as to whether to record the work in full, there being no necessity to adhere to the time limits imposed by theatrical conditions. This, however, would have involved such a lot of re-arrangement of the version, that it would no longer have been the same ENO production which had been seen and enjoyed by so many opera lovers. Immense care had been taken in deciding which of the arias should be cut, in order to produce a coherent and flowing version of the mighty work, so we decided to leave well alone, restoring only two passages which had been cut at a late stage in our rehearsals: the 'B' section and 'da capo' of the final duet and Ptolemy's aria in Act II.

Most of the arias and duets in *Julius Caesar* are written in the 'da capo' A–B–A form, and this form is an inherent part of the Handelian operatic style. It therefore seemed better to me to cut whole arias rather than spoil Handel's three-part scheme. Caesar, Cleopatra and Cornelia, therefore, have lost one aria each, Sextus has lost three, and the others have each lost two. One whole scene, at the end of the second act, has been omitted and the recitatives, which carry the story forward, have been shortened.

All those who have been involved in the selection of the music for this production hope that Handel's dramatic contrasts, his key sequences (despite certain transpositions to suit some of the cast) and the general flow of this great masterpiece have not been too much impaired by the cuts which we have found it necessary to make for the practical reasons mentioned above. The ornamentation of the reprises and cadenzas are the work of several people, including the singers themselves, as was done in Handel's time. These embellishments are written specifically to suit the talents of the singers of the ENO production and the characters they represent. They are *not* an attempted reconstruction of the manner in which a Senesino or a Cuzzoni might have ornamented the same arias.

Handel himself adapted his music to suit different singers and indeed recomposed parts of *Julius Caesar* when the role of Sextus was changed from a (female) soprano into a tenor. One wonders what he would have done had he been confronted with the brilliant upper register of Dame Janet Baker, after having originally composed the role of Caesar for Senesino, a deep-voiced castrato with a range of little more than an octave. Would he have *recomposed* those marvellously characterized and richly diverse arias, or would he have *adapted* them to suit the different type of singer? He is unfortunately not around to give us counsel, or to adapt *Julius Caesar* for us, so we had to take the plunge and make rather large changes in the tessitura and keys of Caesar's arias, particularly in the 'da capos'.

Similarly, the orchestral parts of the score have been edited so that members of the ENO Orchestra, playing on their normal modern instruments, can produce the rhythms and expression of an eighteenth-century orchestra. A Baroque cello is being used with the harpsichord to accompany the recitatives and a viola da gamba and theorbo for Cleopatra's seductive stage band in Act II. Otherwise the orchestra consists entirely of modern instruments, including flutes instead of

recorders (which only blend well with other baroque instruments).

The opening and closing choruses, plus a short revolutionary chorus, off-stage, were originally sung by all the available soloists (even though at the end two of the characters are dead!). In fact, their *names* (Durastanti, Robinson, Berenstadt, etc.) appear in the original score instead of the *voices*. However, it was thought more appropriate to replace this tiny ensemble with a real chorus, albeit a small one.

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Synopsis

The Scene is Egypt, in and around Alexandria.

Act I

Caesar is hailed by the Egyptian populace. He agrees to peace at the request of Pompey's wife, Cornelia, and young son, Sextus. Achilles, Ptolemy's general, then approaches and declares his master's friendship for Caesar. To prove it, one of his followers comes forward with the severed head of Pompey. The Romans are appalled and Caesar furiously denounces Ptolemy's cruelty, telling Achilles to warn his master of his imminent arrival. In her grief, Cornelia tries to kill herself but Sextus and

Curio prevent her. Then Sextus assures her that he will avenge his father's death.

Cleopatra learns of Pompey's murder and resolves to enlist Caesar's support to confirm her sole authority in Egypt. Ptolemy overhears her and mocks her claim; Cleopatra suggests that he might be more successful with girls than at ruling a kingdom. Achilles reports Caesar's reaction to Ptolemy's gift and swears, on condition that Cornelia should be his, to destroy Caesar. Ptolemy vows to be revenged on Caesar for his insult.

Caesar contemplates Pompey's funeral urn. Cleopatra, disguised as her attendant Lydia, arrives. She begs Caesar's assistance in righting the wrongs done to Cleopatra by her brother; and Caesar, overwhelmed by her beauty, readily agrees. Just as she is about to leave, Cornelia enters, grieving for her husband. When Cleopatra realizes that Cornelia and Sextus have determined to kill Ptolemy, she, maintaining her disguise, offers to help. She looks forward to success and proposes that her trusted adviser, Nirenus, should introduce them to the palace.

Although Ptolemy receives Caesar in great splendour, neither trusts the other, and Ptolemy plots to kill Caesar that very night. Caesar sees through the deception. Then Cornelia and Sextus are presented and Sextus

challenges Ptolemy to single combat. In response, Ptolemy has them both arrested, sending Cornelia to work in the harem gardens as a slave, and imprisoning Sextus in the palace. Achilles advises Cornelia that he could ease her suffering if she would love him but she scornfully rejects him. Mother and son are parted from each other.

Act II

Cleopatra has arranged a surprise entertainment for Caesar. She appears to him, in a garden of the palace, as Virtue enthroned upon Parnassus, attended by the nine muses and sings the famous aria, 'Lamenting, complaining of Caesar's disdain'. Caesar is entranced and follows Nireus to her rooms.

Cornelia sadly reflects on her wretchedness but nothing will persuade her to accept the advances of Achilles. She angers Ptolemy also by refusing to listen to his protestations of love. In despair, she prepares to throw herself to the tigers which guard the seraglio. Suddenly Sextus enters, having escaped from imprisonment, and she is cheered by his determination to set her free. Sextus swears revenge on Ptolemy.

Cleopatra eagerly awaits Caesar. She pretends to be asleep when he enters, so that she overhears him speak of his love for her. As

he talks of marriage, she awakens: he is taken aback and his apparent reluctance dismays her. At that moment, Curio interrupts them with the news that Ptolemy's men are searching the palace to kill Caesar. Cleopatra amazes them by declaring her real identity but not even she can stop her brother's henchmen. Caesar asserts his courage and runs to meet his enemies. Cleopatra listens to the fighting and prays for his safety.

Act III

Caesar has been overpowered in the struggle and is falsely believed to have drowned in the sea. Cleopatra has declared war on Ptolemy but has been defeated and captured. Ptolemy denounces her unnatural behaviour and puts her in chains. In despair Cleopatra contemplates her sudden misfortune in the celebrated lament 'Flow, my tears'.

Caesar recalls his defeat and thinks of Cleopatra. Curio and Sextus approach but before they see him they find Achilles, who is fatally wounded. He confesses, as he dies, to the murder of Pompey, and to the attempted assassination of Caesar. He also relates that he turned traitor when Ptolemy refused to let him take Cornelia, his promised reward. He then gives them a ring which will grant them the command of his forces and which will enable

them to enter the palace in order to kill Ptolemy. Caesar comes forward and grasps the ring: the three Romans are joyfully reunited and determine to rescue Cornelia and Cleopatra.

Cleopatra urges her attendants to escape before her brother has them killed. She hears the clash of arms and prepares for her death, but it is Caesar who enters, sword in hand, to embrace and rescue her.

Before the assembled legions and populace of Alexandria, Caesar is hailed as Emperor of Rome. Sextus relates how he killed Ptolemy, and Cornelia presents Caesar with the regalia of Egypt. Turning to Cleopatra, Caesar crowns her Queen of Egypt and together, amid general rejoicing, they proclaim their eternal love.

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Dame Janet Baker has appeared with the world's most distinguished conductors and orchestras and has recorded for all the major record companies. She was born in Yorkshire and began studying with Helene Isepp and later Meriel St Clair. In 1956 she won second prize in the Kathleen Ferrier Award and since then she has achieved worldwide recognition as an artist of equal distinction in Lieder, opera and on the concert platform. Notable appearances included Purcell's *Dido* at

Aldeburgh with the English Opera Group in 1962, the title role in Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia*, (1964 and 1970), and the role of Kate in *Owen Wingrave* (1971).

For The Royal Opera she sang Vitellia (*La clemenza di Tito*), and Gluck's *Alceste*, for Glyndebourne Penelope (Monteverdi's *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*), and Diana/Jupiter (Cavalli's *La Calisto*), for Scottish Opera Dido (Berlioz's *Les troyens*), and for English National Opera she sang a repertory ranging from Monteverdi to Massenet's *Werther*, including Handel's *Julius Caesar* and Marguerite in Berlioz's *The Damnation of Faust*. Her latest appearances with the company were in its production of *Mary Stuart*. Numerous honours have been awarded her, including the Hamburg Shakespeare Prize (1971), and honorary degrees from the Universities of London, Birmingham and Oxford. Janet Baker was made a CBE in 1970 and a DBE in 1976. She was made a Companion of Honour in 1994. Her many recordings include Handel's *Ariodante*, Donizetti's *Mary Stuart*, Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice*, Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* and numerous recital discs.

Christopher Booth-Jones was born in Somerset and studied at the Royal Academy of Music. He started his operatic career touring

with Welsh National Opera for All, and went on to perform with Welsh National Opera, Glyndebourne Festival and Touring Operas, Kent Opera and the English Music Theatre. Roles at English National Opera have included Papageno, Dr Falke, Schaunard, Silvio, Pantaloon (*The Love for Three Oranges*), Elviro (*Xerxes*), Count Almaviva (*The Marriage of Figaro*), and Giorgio Germont. He has also appeared with Opera North and the Royal Opera, and broadcasts regularly for BBC Radios 2, 3 and 4, and for Radio France and Belgian Radio. Recordings include *Carmen*, *Billy Budd*, Sondheim's *Pacific Overtures* and *Tosca* (for Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation).

Sarah Walker began her musical life studying violin at the Royal College of Music and subsequently singing with Vera Rosza, with whom she has built up a wide repertoire ranging from Bach and Monteverdi to twentieth-century works by composers such as Berio, Boulez, Cage, Henze, Ligeti, Copland and Ives. She is much in demand on the concert platform worldwide, where she has worked with Ozawa, Davis, Mackerras, Solti, Norrington, Boulez, Rozhdestvensky, Masur, Harnoncourt and Rattle.

Sarah Walker is closely associated with The

Royal Opera where she has performed roles such as Baba the Turk (*The Rake's Progress*), Charlotte (*Werther*), Mrs Sedley (*Peter Grimes*), and in Sallinen's *The King Goes Forth to France*, Maxwell Davies's *Taverner* and Handel's *Samson*. With English National Opera her many roles include Mary Stuart, Charlotte, the Countess (*The Queen of Spades*), the title role in Britten's *Gloriana*, and Katisha (*The Mikado*). She has also performed in Geneva, San Francisco, Chicago, at the Metropolitan Opera, New York and at Glyndebourne and is well known as a recitalist. Recordings include *Peter Grimes*, *Roméo et Juliette*, Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *La traviata* and Martha (Gounod's *Faust*, for Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation).

Della Jones, one of Britain's leading mezzo-sopranos, was born in Neath and studied at the Royal College of Music where she won many prizes, including the Kathleen Ferrier Memorial Scholarship. Her wide repertoire ranges from early through to contemporary music. She has appeared with all the major British opera companies, and foreign engagements have included performances in the United States, Russia, Japan, Canada and throughout Europe. Roles include the title roles in *Ariodante*, *La Cenerentola* and *Carmen*,

Rosina, Herodias (*Salome*), Baba the Turk (*The Rake's Progress*), Marcellina (*Le nozze di Figaro*), the Hostess (*Boris Godunov*) and Aunt Hermance in Gavin Bryars's *Doctor Ox's Experiment*.

Della Jones is a regular broadcaster on radio and television, both in this country and abroad, and her many recordings include *Alcina*, *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, *Dido and Aeneas*, *La clemenza di Tito*, Korngold's *Die Kathrin*, and *The Barber of Seville* (for Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation).

Valerie Masterson was born in Birkenhead and studied in London and Milan. She sang at Salzburg for a season and then joined the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company as principal soprano. She has sung with all the major opera companies in the UK as well as extensively abroad including appearances at Aix-en-Provence, Nancy, Montpellier, the Paris Opéra, Toulouse, Bordeaux, Geneva, Rouen, Prague, Dublin, Munich, Marseilles, the Piccola Scala Milan, Barcelona, Chicago, Philadelphia, Santiago, San Francisco, New York and Houston.

Her wide-ranging repertoire includes the title roles in *La traviata*, *Manon*, *Louise*, *Mireille*, *Die lustige Witwe* and *Semele*, Madame Lidoine (*Dialogues des carmélites*), Micaëla,

Susanna and Countess Almaviva, Sophie and the Marschallin, Mimì, Marguerite (*Faust*), Antonia (*Les contes d'Hoffmann*) and *The King Goes Forth to France* with The Royal Opera. Valerie Masterson appears regularly on radio and television and her recordings include *Elisabetta*, *Regina d'Inghilterra*, *Das Rheingold*, *Götterdämmerung*, several Gilbert and Sullivan operettas, and *La traviata*.

James Bowman has been one of the world's leading countertenors for nearly thirty years. His career spans opera, oratorio, contemporary music and solo recitals. He began singing as a chorister at Ely Cathedral and later went to New College, Oxford, where he was a member of the chapel choir. He made his London debut in 1967 when he was invited by Britten to sing at the opening concert of the new Queen Elizabeth Hall. He was soon in demand on both the opera stage and the concert platform, appearing at Sadler's Wells (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*), Glyndebourne (*La Calisto*), English National Opera (*Semele*), and The Royal Opera (*Taverner*). Abroad he has sung in Paris, at La Fenice in Venice, La Scala, Milan, Aix-en-Provence, the Sydney Opera House and in the USA.

James Bowman has made over 150 recordings including Britten's *Death in Venice*,

A Midsummer Night's Dream and *Rejoice in the Lamb, Orfeo ed Euridice*, and Monteverdi's *Orfeo*.

John Tomlinson was born in Lancashire and gained a degree in Civil Engineering at Manchester before winning a scholarship to the Royal Manchester College of Music. He has sung regularly with English National Opera since 1974 and with The Royal Opera since 1976, and has also appeared with Opera North, Scottish Opera, Glyndebourne Festival and Touring Operas and Kent Opera. Early roles included Figaro, Masetto, Hunding, Hagen, Pimen and King Henry (*Lohengrin*).

He has sung at the Bayreuth Festival every year since 1988, where he has been heard as Wotan (*Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre*), the Wanderer (*Siegfried*), Titurel and Gurnemanz (*Parsifal*) and King Mark (*Tristan und Isolde*). Other roles include Hans Sachs (*Die Meistersinger*), Landgraf (*Tannhäuser*), Hagen (*Götterdämmerung*) and Baron Ochs (*Der Rosenkavalier*). Recordings include the *Ring* cycle, Verdi's *La forza del destino* and *La traviata*, and highlights from Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov* and Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier* (for Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation).

David James was a choral scholar at Magdalen College, Oxford and subsequently joined the choir of Westminster Abbey. He won first prize in the 's-Hertogenbosch competition in the Netherlands in 1978 and has since enjoyed an international career as a soloist and ensemble singer, performing with groups such as The Sixteen, and taking major operatic roles for English National Opera, Handel Opera, Geneva Opera and the Aldeburgh Festival.

A founder member of the Hilliard Ensemble, David James gives some 100 concerts a year with this group, performing medieval, Renaissance and contemporary repertoire. His solo engagements have taken him worldwide, and he specializes in Baroque and contemporary music. Recordings include Bach's *St John* and *St Matthew Passions*, Handel's *Messiah* and Pärt's *Passio*.

Sir Charles Mackerras was born in 1925 of Australian parents in the USA and studied in Sydney and Prague. He made his debut as an opera conductor at Sadler's Wells, where he was instrumental in producing the sensational first British performance of Janáček's *Káťa Kabanová*, which led to Janáček becoming standard repertoire in the UK. He was First Conductor of the Hamburg Opera (1966–9)

and Musical Director of both Sadler's Wells (later English National) Opera (1970–77), and of Welsh National Opera (1987–92), where his notable Janáček productions, amongst many others, won great acclaim. The production and recording of *Osud* were sponsored by the Peter Moores Foundation, who also sponsored the recording of *The Cunning Little Vixen*. He is Conductor Laureate of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Conductor Emeritus of Welsh National Opera, Principal Guest Conductor of the San Francisco Opera, and from the 1998/99 season he is Music Director of the Orchestra of St Luke's New York.

Sir Charles Mackerras has undertaken much

research into performance practice of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which has profoundly affected today's interpretations. His vast discography includes an award-winning cycle of Janáček operas with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, Britten's *Gloriana* (which won a *Gramophone* Award), Beethoven, Brahms and Mahler Symphonies, and with English National Opera Donizetti's *Mary Stuart* and Verdi's *La traviata*.

Sir Charles Mackerras received a CBE in 1974 and was knighted for his services to music in 1979. He has also received The Medal of Merit from the Czech Republic and has been made a Companion of the Order of Australia.



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24



James Bowman
as Ptolemy

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25



Della Jones
as Sextus

Clive Barda/Performing Arts Library

PETER MOORES, CBE, DL

Peter Moores was born in Lancashire in 1932, son of Sir John Moores, founder of the giant Littlewoods mail order, chain store and football pools group. He was educated at Eton and Christ Church, Oxford, where he read Modern Languages. He was already fluent in German and Italian. It was opera which was his great love, however. He had worked at Glyndebourne before going up to university, and at the end of his second year he left Oxford to become a production student at the Vienna State Opera. He was required to attend morning rehearsals and evening performances, but the afternoons were free, so he enrolled as well for a four-year course at the Viennese Academy of Music and Dramatic Art.

By the end of his third year Moores had produced the Viennese premiere of Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia*, had worked as Assistant Producer at the San Carlo Opera House, Naples, the Geneva Festival and the Rome Opera, and seemed set for a successful operatic career. At this point he received a letter from his father asking him to come home as he was needed in the firm. Family loyalty was paramount and he returned to Liverpool immediately.

By 1977 he was Chairman of Littlewoods. Three years later he stepped down from the post, although still remaining on the Board, and was director of a merchant bank. From 1981 to 1983 he was a Governor of the BBC, and a Trustee of the Tate Gallery from 1978 until 1985. In May 1992 he became a Deputy Lieutenant of Lancashire. And in the New Year's Honours List for 1991 he was made a CBE for his charitable services to the Arts.

He had started his early twenties giving financial support



Christina Burton/PMF

Peter Moores, CBE, DL

to various young artists, several of whom – such as Geraint Evans, Joan Sutherland and Colin Davis – have since become world-famous. Moores has always been astute in his recognition of potential quality. In 1964 he set aside a large slice of his inheritance to found the Peter Moores Foundation, a charity designed to support those causes dear to his heart: to make music and the arts more accessible to more people; to give encouragement to the young; to fight discrimination and to improve race relations. 99% of the Foundation's money has come from Peter Moores's own pocket – so far about £33 million in today's money.

PETER MOORES FOUNDATION

In the field of music, the Peter Moores Foundation awards scholarships to promising young opera singers through the Royal Northern College of Music. Financial help may be given also to enable a singer to study abroad, or to work on a new role with an acknowledged expert in the repertoire.

In the last twenty years the Foundation has supported the recording of forty operas. Many are sung in English, in translation, because Moores believes that in the popular repertoire, 'what people want is to be able to follow the plot of an opera and understand what is going on'. Others are of interesting but unperformed Italian operas from the early nineteenth century (the age of *bel canto*), which are otherwise only accessible to scholars. Accessibility is the key word.

The same criterion holds where live opera is concerned. So the Foundation may sponsor Welsh National Opera, performing for a week at the Liverpool Empire and charging only £2.50 per ticket – the provision being that each ticket holder must be a first-time opera visitor – or it may fund the production at Glyndebourne of *Ermione*, a *bel canto* opera never before performed in England.

The aim is always the same: availability. 'Share and enjoy' is his philosophy.

Händel: Julius Caesar

Händel und die Arien-Oper

Opera seria – die ernste Oper – war die bedeutendste und renommierteste Schöpfung des musikalischen Barock. Ohne ihre Techniken, Konventionen und Ästhetik hätten sich Händels Oratorien und Bachs Meisterschaft auf dem Gebiet der Arie und der melodischen Verzierung nicht so entwickeln können, wie sie es getan haben. Und dennoch haben unsere Opernhäuser erst neuerdings angefangen, die *Opera seria* um ihrer selbst willen ernstzunehmen. Vielleicht wird das Publikum lernen, in ihrer „Künstlichkeit“ und „Unwirklichkeit“ eine Quelle der Kraft zu entdecken: Mehr als jede andere Kunstform bedarf die Oper ihrer Konventionen – eines Rahmenwerks, über das man sich einig ist, ein Grundmuster des Erwarteten, von dem signifikant abgewichen werden darf. Dabei läßt sich heute, in einer Zeit, in der alles erlaubt ist, Bühnenmusik wie Beton in jede gewünschte Form oder Schablone gießen. Manch ein moderner Komponist, der sich in den Bereich der Oper vorgewagt hat, wird einem, wenn er ehrlich ist, reumütig anvertrauen, daß er sich zugleich vom Fehlen einer vereinbarten,

gemeinsamen Sprache, die die Kluft zwischen Bühne und Publikum überbrückt, wie gelähmt gefühlt hat. In so einem Umfeld werden die starren Regeln barocker Konvention zur willkommenen Stütze.

Es ist gewiß paradox, daß ausgerechnet die gelungensten italienischen *Opere serie* des Barock von einem in London ansässigen Sachsen stammen – der Libretti vertonte, die so gut wie nie für ihn geschrieben waren, in einer Sprache, die weder die seine noch die seiner Zuhörer war (auch wenn sie Italienisch wahrscheinlich besser verstanden als das britische Gegenwartspublikum und zweisprachige Texthefte hatten, um dem Geschehen zu folgen). Aber Händels Isolation verschaffte ihm auch bestimmte Vorteile. Er konnte Libretti viel leichter nach seinem Gutdünken ändern und die oft langatmige Äußerung schöner Gefühle in den Rezitativem beschneiden, um Platz für mehr und längere Arien zu schaffen. Entgegen der derzeit herrschenden irrigen Auffassung beruht nämlich die unverzichtbare Kontinuität der Handlung auf der Abfolge der Arien, nicht der Rezitativen. Händel hat offenbar viel mehr

Einfluß auf sein Ensemble und seine Darsteller ausgeübt, als es in der typischen italienischen Operntruppe an einem italienischen oder süddeutschen Fürstenhof üblich war: Die Royal Academy of Music stand zwar unter der Schirmherrschaft des Hofes, war jedoch auf typisch britische Art als Aktiengesellschaft gegründet worden. Händel muß von den Kennern unter seinen adligen Gönnern im augusteischen London, z.B. von Männern wie dem Earl of Burlington, wertvolle künstlerische Anregungen bezogen haben. Wenn wir die oft von Eigeninteresse geprägten Angriffe von Autoren wie Addison und Steele auf die italienische Oper oder Berichte über die Frivolität des Londoner Publikums lesen, vergessen wir allzu leicht, daß Händels dramatisches Empfinden feiner und geschärfter war als das ihre, daß er nicht mit den Werken englischer Tragödiendichter wie Thomas Otway oder Nicholas Rowe großgeworden war und daß viele Aussagen von Belang über die Ästhetik von Malerei und Architektur, die er bei Autoren wie Shaftesbury gelesen haben mochte, für die äußerst bildhafte „Arien-Oper“ von hoher Relevanz waren. Die Wahl des „signifikanten Moments“, dem exakten Punkt im narrativen Ablauf oder der emotionalen Krise, auf die sich die Malerei ebenso wie die Arie konzentrieren muß, zu dessen Erhellung Gestik, Nuancierung,

Struktur und Form zusammenkommen müssen – dies steht im Zentrum von Händels Operschaffen, das zugleich höchst analytisch und von außergewöhnlicher Dichte und Leidenschaft ist.

Die wiederkehrenden Themen der *Opera seria* können uns heute oft irrelevant erscheinen. Ob es sich um einen klassischen Mythos handelt, um mittelalterliche Geschichte oder ein episches Märchen: Grundsätzlich geht es darum, was die Großen und Mächtigen tun, die Könige, Fürsten und Herzöge, welche die neue Kunst gefördert und dazu genutzt hatten, höfische Anlässe festlich zu begehen. Hinter einem typischen Händel-Libretto sind die moralischen und gesellschaftlichen Interessen der älteren französischen Dramatiker Corneille und Racine auszumachen (Corneille zeigt den Einzelnen als Sieger über die Versuchungen, denen er ausgesetzt ist, Racine das Versagen der Willenskraft und den Verfall des Individuums). Wie sollen sich wahrhaft große Fürsten verhalten? Wie sollen sie ihre absolute Macht einsetzen, wenn öffentliche Pflicht und private Liebe in Konflikt geraten? Wie sollen sie eine Gemahlin wählen? Wie sollen sie sich verhalten, damit ihre *gloire* – ihr guter Name, ihr Ansehen, ihre Ehre – auch in Zukunft die Bewunderung und den Gehorsam ihrer

Untertanen und ihrer eigenen Familien rechtfertigt? Das waren in einem Zeitalter des unumschränkten Absolutismus, in dem Heirat und Erbschaft zu dynastischen Konflikten wie dem spanischen Erbfolgekrieg führend konnte, durchaus wichtige Fragestellungen. Die französische Revolution und das Aufkommen der bürgerlich konstitutionellen Monarchie raubten natürlich der *Opera seria* in dieser Hinsicht weitgehend ihre offenkundige, aktuelle Relevanz.

Dennoch griffen Corneille und Racine über ihre unmittelbare Thematik hinaus auf universelle Wahrheiten zu, die sich in zeitlosen Versen und eindrucksvollen dramatischen Porträts niederschlugen, so daß ihre Schauspiele, die über ihre zeitlich und örtlich begrenzten Stoffe hinaus von Bedeutung sind, bis heute überlebt haben. Das gleiche gilt für Händels Musikdramen. Die einzelnen Arien sind natürlich gar nicht erst in Vergessenheit geraten, und viele wurden als Konzertstücke gesungen, seit Walsh oder Cluer sie ursprünglich herausgebracht haben. Deshalb und in Anbetracht der Tatsache, daß die Opern aus Solo-Arien und sonst kaum etwas bestehen, mutet es ein wenig seltsam an, daß wir so lange darauf warten mußten, zum rechten Verständnis der Prinzipien zu gelangen, nach denen Händel vorgegangen ist,

als er sie einsetzte, um Figuren zu porträtieren, und sie zu sinnvoll gruppierten Sequenzen ordnete, um eine Szene, einen Akt, eine ganze Oper herzustellen.

Die Methode ähnelt der von Hogarth. Dessen bekannte Serien von Ölgemälden, die wie *The Rake's Progress* schon bald in großer Zahl als Drucke verkauft wurden, brauchten keine Erklärung, kein "Rezitativ". Hogarth wählt zur Darstellung diverse signifikante Momente in der Geschichte des Lebemanns oder der Prostituierten und umgibt diese Zentralfigur mit einer Fülle von Einzelheiten, die allesamt für den Kernpunkt der Debatte relevant sind – Rakewell, wie er in einem Bordell Liebe erkauft, Rakewell, wie er gesellschaftliche Anerkennung erkauft. Diese Einzelheiten sind so aufschlußreich, daß wir selbst, wenn wir sie ins Auge fassen, das Dargestellte in unseren Köpfen über die räumlichen und zeitlichen Grenzen des Bildes hinaus verallgemeinern. Die Wandtäfelung zwischen den einzelnen Gemälden wird, während wir von einem zum nächsten weitergehen, mit den Implikationen der Geschichte aufgeladen. Eine ähnliche Parallele ließe sich im Bereich des Romans zu Samuel Richardsons Methode der analytischen Erzählung mittels einer Aneinanderreihung einzelner Briefe ziehen.

Wenn wir Händels Darstellung der Cleopatra mit den Mitteln der Arie betrachten und dabei vielleicht auch an Shakespeares Cleopatra denken, gewinnen wir eine bessere Vorstellung von der dokumentarisch bislang kaum belegten Ästhetik und Dramaturgie, die Händels Vorgehen bestimmte: Er hat mit einer analytischen Reihe von acht Soloarien, zwei begleiteten Rezitativen und einem Duett ihr Porträt geschaffen, und jede Nummer ist sorgfältig mit Rücksicht auf Kontrast und Kontinuität in die größere Reihe der insgesamt rund vierzig Nummern eingeordnet, die fast ausschließlich Soloarien sind.

Cleopatras erste Arie "Yet why despair?" ist ein *Allegro* in E-Dur und im Vierertakt, unisono begleitet von sämtlichen Violinen mit Unterstützung der Bratschen und tiefen Streicher. Die Bratschen spielen nur während der Orchestertutti, und im Mittelteil verstummen auch die Violinen. Die musikalischen Hauptthemen der Arie – die ungewöhnlicherweise nicht aus der Gesangslinie abgeleitet sind – veranschaulichen, daß sie sich über ihren verhaßten Bruder Ptolemy lustig macht und ihn als weibischen Knaben verhöhnt, der zum Herrschenuntauglich ist. Dies wird mit Hilfe von wiederholten Noten, nachdrücklichen Vierteln mit Mordenten

oder *staccato* gespielten Achteln erreicht, die kurzen, gehässigen Phrasen und lachenden Läufen Platz machen. Selbst die erwartungsgemäßen Fiorituren von Begriffen wie "heart" (Herz) oder "console" (trösten) nehmen einen spöttischen Tonfall an. Die musikalische Dramatik der Arie stagniert trotz der wiederholten Textteile überhaupt nicht, sondern ist von einem stetigen Auf und Ab unterschiedlicher Gefühlsnuancen gekennzeichnet; und das trifft auf alle Arien von Händel zu.

Cleopatras nächste Arie (die hier ausgelassen wurde) ist wie viele weitere in einer Tonart mit Erhöhungszeichen und leuchtendem Klang gesetzt, nämlich in A-Dur; es handelt sich um ein *Allegro* im 3/8-Takt für die gleiche Streicherbesetzung, nur daß Händel der Gesangslinie eine tiefere Note gibt, indem er sie mit einer Oboe säumt. Als Hofdame verkleidet ist es Cleopatra gelungen, Caesars Herz zu gewinnen, und ihre Arie zeigt, wie sie sich unverhohlen an der Macht ergötzt, die ihre Schönheit auf den Bezwingen der Welt ausübt. Sie ist Freudentanz und naive Selbstdarstellung zugleich; ihre wachen Rhythmen und brillanten Sechzehntelketten schlagen von *forte* in *piano* um und wieder zurück, und ein intimerer Mittelteil wird nur von Violinen und Baß begleitet. Die dritte Arie

ist schlichter und leiser, ein *Allegro ma non troppo* in B-Dur und im 6/8-Takt. Cleopatra hat Sextus und Cornelia angeworben, ihr im Kampf gegen Ptolemy beizustehen, und was als bloße Verstimmung, fast als Spiel begonnen hatte, hat sich zur festen Hoffnung ausgewachsen, daß sie Ägypten von ihrem tyrannischen Bruder befreien und sowohl den Thron als auch Caesars immerwährende Liebe erringen kann. Die hohen Violinen erzählen mal unisono, mal in einlullenden Terzen vom fernen Stern der Hoffnung und vom sanften Schauer der Wonne und Liebe, die reife Erfüllung findet.

Die erste Arie im II. Akt, kunstvoll begleitet von den versammelten Musen, ist ein verlockendes Liebeslied, das Caesar gleichzeitig anbetet und betört. Diesmal geht es um ein *Largo* in F-Dur im 3/4-Takt. Cleopatra ist auf der Bühne von neun Soloinstrumenten umgeben (einschließlich Theorbe und Harfe); im Orchestergraben werfen die gedämpften vierstimmigen Streicher Caesars bewundernde Seufzer als Echo zurück, um dann im Mittelteil zu schweigen. Während sie die nächste Arie singt, erwartet sie ihn in ihren Gemächern und wendet sich betend an Venus, ihr alle Reize der Liebe zu schenken. Diese Nummer ist als *Allegro* in A-Dur im 3/8-Takt für Unisono-Violinen und Baß angelegt, die sich auf eine

Solovioline reduzieren, sobald die Gesangsstimme einsetzt, und im Mittelteil auf das Continuo allein. Die Musik deutet ein charmantes Gebet an die Mutter der Liebe an und illustriert, welche außerordentlichen Reize Cleopatra zu erlangen trachtet: Caesar weiß nicht, wer sie ist, und sie will erreichen, daß er um ihre Hand anhält, obwohl sie scheinbar nur eine gewöhnliche Frau ist. Unmittelbar vor der nächsten Arie ist Caesar davongeeilt, um sich eines hinterhältigen Überraschungsangriffs durch Ptolemys Soldaten zu erwehren. Cleopatra bleibt in Ungewißheit und Aufregung zurück, erkennt nunmehr, wie tief ihre Liebe zu Caesar ist, und betet beklommen um seine Sicherheit: Wenn er stirbt, will sie es ihm gleichtun. Abwärts gerichtete Phrasen im Baß und schleppende Vorhalte der Fagotte deuten an, daß sie sich in Demut vor den Göttern beugt; pulsierende Achtel der mittleren Streicher unterstützen kurze, gebrochene Gesten der ersten Violinen, die mal verzweifeln, mal flehentlich klingen, während Cleopatra in ihren Bitten um den Beistand der Götter selbst eine weitgehend unabhängige thematische Linie verfolgt. Dieses Stück ist ein *Largo* in fis-Moll im Vierertakt, kontrapunktisch umgesetzt und im Tonfall sehr an Bach erinnernd.

Im III. Akt wird Caesar für tot gehalten;

Cleopatras Heer ist besiegt, und sie rechnet damit, hingerichtet zu werden. Wir kehren zu E-Dur und einem langsamen 3/8-Takt zurück, um die tiefe Gram von "Flow, my tears" darzustellen, einer zu Recht berühmten Arie, die sich im Mittelteil einer anderen Emotion, Gefüge und Tempo zuwendet. Der erste Teil läßt eine Flöte (die bis dahin mit Cornelia, der trauernden Witwe, assoziiert wurde) die Linie der ersten Violinen versilbern, die nur von den zweiten Violinen und Baßinstrumenten gestützt wird. Cleopatras kummervolle Kantilene findet ständigen Widerhall in einer klangvollen Figur voller Gram und Bedauern, zwei ansteigenden Tönen, von denen der zweite wiederholt wird. Diese Figur geht aus Cleopatras anfänglichen Intervallsprüngen (es gibt kein einleitendes Ritornell) von der Terz zur Quarte, Quinte und schließlich Oktave hervor. Der Mittelteil, ein *Allegro* im Vierertakt, in dem sie wütend schwört, als Gespenst zurückzukehren und Ptolemy heimzusuchen, ersetzt die Flöte durch ein Solocello, das zusammen mit den Läufen der Gesangslinie die unerbittliche Verfolgung des Schurken über das Grab hinaus andeutet. Das verleiht der Wiederkehr des ersten Abschnitts (eindringlicher gemacht durch zusätzliche Verzierungen, wie es sich für alle Dakapo-Reprisen gehört) noch mehr ironische Schärfe.

Cleopatras abschließendes Solo, nachdem Caesar besiegt und Ptolemy eine vernichtende Niederlage erlebt hat, ist ein Musterbeispiel einer "Simile-Arie" über das abgedroschene Bild des von Stürmen gepeitschten Schiffs, das sicher im Hafen anlangt. Es handelt sich um ein *Allegro* im Vierertakt in Cleopatras Grundtonart E-Dur. Aber Handels Simile-Arien sind immer zugleich Charakterporträts, und im vorliegenden Fall wird die stille, helle Freude der künftigen Königin dargestellt, die beim Gedanken an vergangene Gefahren und bevorstehende Wonnen in heftigen Jubel umschlägt. Die Violinen spielen mal unisono mit der Gesangsstimme, mal vertiefen sie *divisi* mit knappen wiederholten Achteln deren ruhige Heiterkeit. Das letzte, was wir von Cleopatra zu hören bekommen, ist ein goldenes Duett mit Caesar, in dem die Liebenden einander das Eheversprechen geben; dieses Duett steht in G-Dur und ist ein bedächtiges *Allegro* im 12/8-Takt für geteilte Violinen, Oboen und Baß, dessen Besetzung sich im Mittelteil auf Continuo allein reduziert. Außerdem singen die Liebenden in der abschließenden Ensemble-Bourrée ein *Minore*-Trio.

Wir sehen und hören Handels Heldin (wie die von Shakespeare) in einer unvergleichlichen Vielzahl von Stimmungen, deren jede in

einem herrlich prägnanten und treffenden Porträt gründlich ausgelotet wird. Als Rahmen dienen Orchesterritorielle von immer wieder anderer Struktur (die Kunst besteht dabei weniger im spektakulären Einsatz von Obligatoinstrumenten als in der Führung der Streicher). Die Porträts kontrastieren miteinander und natürlich noch mehr mit den entsprechend zusammengestellten Arien anderer Figuren, zwischen die sie eingebettet sind – und zwar mit einer Kunstfertigkeit, die vollauf mit Racines *enchaînement de scènes*, der Verkettung einer Szenenfolge, vergleichbar ist. Die Arien-Oper hat sich als Quintessenz der wesentlichen Ausdrucks- und Strukturelemente der Barockmusik vollkommen natürlich entwickelt und sich einer analytischen Darstellungsmethode bedient, wie sie auch in anderen Kunstformen der damaligen Zeit vorkommt. Form und Inhalt sind eins, und es braucht uns nicht zu kümmern, daß es keine konzertanten Finalsätze und fast keine Ensemblenummern gibt. Selbst die Psychologie der vielgeschmähten “Abgangsarie” hat in Wahrheit durchaus ihren Sinn: Die Oper wird als Serie wogenartiger *Crescendos* der dramatischen Erregung empfunden, die jeweils für eine der Figuren in einer Krise enden. Die betreffende Figur singt eine Arie, und dann gibt es erst einmal nichts mehr zu sagen, bis

eine neue Folge von Ereignissen sie in eine neue Lage gebracht hat, die eine neue Arie notwendig macht. (In der französischen Oper der damaligen Zeit leiten Arien oft einen Akt ein, so daß die anschließende Handlung hinterherhinkt; das ist jedoch in der Praxis psychologisch meist weniger zufriedenstellend.) Historiker und Kritiker haben es sich in den vergangenen zwei Jahrhunderten allzu leicht gemacht, indem sie Glucks Kritik an der Mitte des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts gängigen *Opera seria* so nachbeteten, als sei sie auf die Opern von Alessandro Scarlatti und Händel gemünzt gewesen. Die aber hatte Gluck vermutlich nie zu hören bekommen und die, die ihn zitieren, ganz bestimmt nicht. Es mag durchaus sein, daß die Launen und die Eitelkeit der Sänger während der mageren 1740er und 1750er Jahre zunahmen; aber die Virtuosität, die Händels Opern verlangen, ist niemals hohl. Er hat für die großartigsten Sänger der Welt komponiert, doch wäre ihre vorzügliche Gesangstechnik bedeutungslos gewesen ohne das dramatische und musikalische Verständnis und Stilgefühl, die allein uns Heutigen die “unmöglichen” Konventionen der *Opera seria* nicht nur möglich, sondern lebendig und realisierbar erscheinen lassen.

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Eine Anmerkung zur Vorlage

Julius Caesar (*Giulio Cesare in Egitto*) ist nicht nur eine von Händels bekanntesten Opern, sondern auch eine seiner längsten. Als die English National Opera (ENO) sie 1979 in englischer Sprache herausbrachte, wurden eine Reihe von Kürzungen vorgenommen, um sie auf eine auch anderen als Festspielbedingungen angemessene Dauer zu bringen. Als man uns aufforderte, mit dieser Inszenierung ins Aufnahmestudio zu gehen, überlegten wir, ob wir das Werk vollständig aufzeichnen sollten, da nicht die Notwendigkeit bestand, sich an die zeitlichen Beschränkungen zu halten, die eine Darbietung auf der Bühne auferlegt. Das jedoch wäre mit derart umfangreichen Änderungen unserer Fassung verbunden gewesen, daß wir es nicht mehr mit der ENO-Produktion zu tun gehabt hätten, die so viele Opernliebhaber gesehen und schätzen gelernt haben. Wir hatten bei der Entscheidung, welche Arien gestrichen werden sollten, um eine zusammenhängende, flüssige Version des umfänglichen Werks zu erstellen, ungeheure Vorsicht walten lassen. Darum beschlossen wir, sie zu lassen, wie sie war, und nur zwei Passagen wiederaufzunehmen, die in einem späten Probenstadium gestrichen worden waren: den “B-Teil” und das “Dakapo”

des Schlußduetts sowie Ptolemys Arie im II. Akt.

Die meisten Arien und Duette in *Julius Caesar* sind in Dakapoform (A–B–A) angelegt, und diese Form ist ein inhärenter Bestandteil des Händelschen Stils der Opernkomposition. Es erschien mir darum besser, ganze Arien zu streichen, als Händels dreiteiliges Schema zu verderben. Caesar, Cleopatra und Cornelia haben auf diese Weise je eine Arie verloren. Sextus hat drei eingebüßt, die anderen je zwei. Eine ganze Szene am Ende des II. Akts haben wir ausgelassen, und die Rezitative, die die Handlung vorantreiben, wurden gekürzt.

All jene, die mit der Auswahl der Musik für diese Inszenierung zu tun hatten, erhoffen sich, daß Händels dramatische Kontraste, seine Abfolge der Tonarten (trotz diverser Transpositionen einzelnen Ensemblemitgliedern zuliebe) und der allgemeine Fluß dieses großen Meisterwerks nicht allzu sehr beeinträchtigt werden durch die Kürzungen, die anzubringen wir aus den oben genannten Gründen für nötig befunden haben. Die Verzierung der Reprisen und Kadenzen ist das Werk mehrerer Beteiligter – darunter auch der Sänger selbst, wie es zu Händels Zeit üblich war. Die Verzierungen sind so abgefaßt, daß sie zu den Talenten der Sänger der ENO-Produktion und den Figuren passen, die sie

verkörpern. Sie sind kein Versuch einer Rekonstruktion der Art und Weise, wie ein Senesino oder eine Cuzzoni die betreffenden Arien verziert hätten.

Händel selbst paßte seine Musik verschiedenen Sängern an und komponierte sogar Teile von *Giulio Cesare in Egitto* neu, als die Rolle des Sextus von einer Sopranistin auf einen Tenor überging. Man fragt sich, was er getan hätte, wenn er mit dem brillanten hohen Register von Dame Janet Baker konfrontiert gewesen wäre, nachdem er die Rolle des Caesar ursprünglich für Senesino komponiert hatte, einen Kastraten mit tiefer Stimmlage und einem Stimmumfang von wenig mehr als einer Oktave. Hätte er diese herrlich charakterisierten und abwechslungsreichen Arien *neu komponiert* oder hätte er sie auf den anderen Sängertypus *abgestimmt*? Er ist leider nicht zugegen, um uns zu beraten oder *Julius Caesar* auf unsere Zwecke abzustimmen, daher mußten wir den Sprung wagen und recht umfassende Änderungen der Lage und der Tonarten von Caesars Arien vornehmen, insbesondere an den "Dakapos".

Die Orchesterstimmen der Partitur wurden entsprechend bearbeitet, damit die Angehörigen des ENO-Orchesters auf ihren normalen modernen Instrumenten die Rhythmen und den klanglichen Ausdruck eines Orchesters aus dem 18. Jahrhundert

nachvollziehen können. Ein Barockcello wird zusammen mit dem Cembalo eingesetzt, um die Rezitative zu begleiten, und je eine Viola da gamba und Theorbe für Cleopatras verführerische Bühnenmusik im II. Akt. Ansonsten besteht das Orchester ausschließlich aus modernen Instrumenten, zum Beispiel Querflöten anstelle von Blockflöten (die sich nur mit anderen Barockinstrumenten harmonisch verbinden).

Der Eröffnungs- und Schlußchor sowie ein kurzer aufrührerischer Chor hinter den Kulissen wurden ursprünglich von allen verfügbaren Solisten gesungen (und das, obwohl am Ende zwei der Figuren offiziell tot sind!). Das geht soweit, daß in der Originalpartitur ihre *Namen* (Durastanti, Robinson, Berenstadt usw.) statt der *Stimmen* aufgeführt sind. Wir dagegen fanden es angemessener, dieses spärliche Ensemble durch einen richtigen, wenn auch kleinen Chor zu ersetzen.

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Inhaltsangabe

Der Schauplatz ist Ägypten, in und um Alexandria.

I. Akt

Caesar wird vom ägyptischen Volk begrüßt.

Er erklärt sich auf Bitten von Pompeys Gemahlin Cornelia und deren Sohn Sextus bereit, Frieden zu schließen. Achilles, Ptolemys Feldherr, nähert sich und verkündet, daß sein Herr Caesar freundlich gesonnen sei. Zum Beweis bringt einer seiner Gefolgsleute das abgeschlagene Haupt Pompeys herein. Die Römer sind entsetzt, und Caesar brandmarkt wütend Ptolemys Grausamkeit. Achilles befiehlt er, seinen Herrn von seiner bevorstehenden Ankunft zu unterrichten. In ihrem Kummer versucht Cornelia, sich das Leben zu nehmen, aber Sextus und Curio halten sie davon ab. Sextus versichert ihr, daß er den Tod seines Vater rächen werde.

Cleopatra erfährt von der Ermordung Pompeys und beschließt, Caesar um Unterstützung zu bitten und ihr Recht auf die Alleinherrschaft in Ägypten durchzusetzen. Ptolemy belauscht sie und verhöhnt ihren Anspruch; Cleopatra unterstellt ihm, daß er bei den Mädchen mehr Aussicht auf Erfolg habe als damit, ein Königreich zu regieren. Achilles berichtet von Caesars Reaktion auf Ptolemys Geschenk und gelobt unter der Bedingung, daß Cornelia ihm gehören soll, Caesar zu vernichten. Ptolemy schwört, sich wegen der ihm angetanen Beleidigung an Caesar zu rächen.

Caesar betrachtet nachdenklich Pompeys

Urne. Cleopatra erscheint, als ihre Dienerin Lydia verkleidet. Sie bittet Caesar um Beistand, um das Unrecht wiedergutzumachen, das Cleopatra von ihrem Bruder angetan wurde. Caesar ist überwältigt von ihrer Schönheit und stimmt bereitwillig zu. Als sie sich soeben zurückziehen will, kommt Cornelia hinzu, die um ihren Gemahl trauert. Als Cleopatra erfährt, daß Cornelia und Sextus Ptolemy töten wollen, bietet sie immer noch verkleidet ihre Hilfe an. Sie rechnet mit Erfolg und schlägt vor, daß ihr getreuer Berater Nireus ihnen Zugang zum Palast verschaffen solle.

Ptolemy bereitet Caesar zwar einen prunkvollen Empfang, aber die zwei trauen einander nicht über den Weg und Ptolemy schmiedet Pläne, Caesar noch am selben Abend zu ermorden. Caesar durchschaut die Täuschung. Cornelia und Sextus werden hereingeleitet, und Sextus fordert Ptolemy zum Zweikampf heraus. Daraufhin läßt Ptolemy ihn und seine Mutter verhaften. Er schickt Cornelia in den Haremsgarten, um dort als Sklavin zu arbeiten, und sperrt Sextus im Palast ein. Achilles teilt Cornelia mit, daß er ihre Not lindern könne, wenn sie bereit wäre, ihn zu lieben, doch sie weist ihn verächtlich zurück. Mutter und Sohn werden auseinandergerissen.

II. Akt

Cleopatra hat, um Caesar zu überraschen, ein Spektakel inszeniert. Sie erscheint ihm im Garten des Palastes als Tugendgöttin, die von den neun Musen umgeben auf dem Parnas thront, und singt ihre bekannte Arie "Lamenting, complaining of Caesar's disdaining". Caesar ist von ihr bezaubert und folgt Nireus in ihre Gemächer.

Cornelia denkt traurig über ihre elende Lage nach, läßt sich aber durch nichts überreden, Achilles' Annäherungsversuche hinzunehmen. Sie bringt auch Ptolemy gegen sich auf mit ihrer Weigerung, seiner Liebeserklärung Gehör zu schenken. In ihrer Verzweiflung plant sie, sich selbst den Tigern vorzuwerfen, die das Serail bewachen. Da erscheint auf einmal Sextus, der aus der Gefangenschaft entkommen ist, und seine Entschlossenheit, sie zu befreien, gibt ihr neuen Mut. Sextus schwört, sich an Ptolemy zu rächen.

Cleopatra wartet sehnsüchtig auf Caesar. Als er eintritt, gibt sie vor, zu schlafen, und hört mit an, wie er von seiner Liebe zu ihr spricht. Als von Heirat die Rede ist, wacht sie auf. Er ist betroffen, und seine scheinbare Ablehnung bestürzt sie. Da unterbricht Curio sie mit der Nachricht, daß Ptolemy's Männer den Palast durchsuchen, um Caesar zu töten. Cleopatra erstaunt die Anwesenden damit, daß sie sich zu

erkennen gibt, aber nicht einmal sie kann die Häscher ihres Bruders aufhalten. Caesar beteuert seine Tapferkeit und eilt seinen Feinden entgegen. Cleopatra lauscht dem Kampf und betet um seine Sicherheit.

III. Akt

Caesar ist im Gefecht überwältigt worden, und man nimmt fälschlich an, daß er im Meer ertrunken sei. Cleopatra hat Ptolemy den Kampf angesagt, ist jedoch besiegt und gefangengenommen worden. Ptolemy schmäht ihr unnatürliches Benehmen und legt sie in Ketten. Verzweifelt sinnt Cleopatra mit dem bekannten Klagelied "Flow, my tears" über ihr unvermutetes Mißgeschick nach.

Caesar erinnert sich seiner Niederlage und denkt an Cleopatra. Curio und Sextus nähern sich, aber noch ehe sie seiner ansichtig werden, finden sie Achilles, der tödlich verletzt ist. Er gesteht sterbend den Mord an Pompey und das versuchte Attentat auf Caesar. Außerdem vertraut er ihnen an, er sei zum Verräter geworden, als Ptolemy sich geweigert habe, ihm Cornelia zu überlassen, seinen versprochenen Lohn. Dann gibt er ihnen einen Ring, der ihnen Befehlsgewalt über seine Soldaten verleiht und es ihnen ermöglichen wird, in den Palast einzudringen und Ptolemy zu töten. Caesar tritt vor und nimmt den Ring

entgegen. Die drei Römer freuen sich, wieder vereint zu sein, und beschließen, Cornelia und Cleopatra zu retten.

Cleopatra drängt ihre Dienerschaft zur Flucht, ehe ihr Bruder sie niedermetzeln läßt. Sie hört Waffengeklirr und macht sich bereit, zu sterben, doch es ist Caesar, der mit dem Schwert in der Hand hereinkommt, um sie zu umarmen und zu befreien.

Die versammelten Legionen und das Volk von Alexandria jubeln Caesar als Kaiser von Rom zu. Sextus berichtet, wie er Ptolemy getötet hat, und Cornelia überreicht Caesar die Insignien des ägyptischen Throns. Caesar wendet sich Cleopatra zu und krönt sie zur Königin von Ägypten, woraufhin sie einander inmitten des allgemeinen Frohlockens ihre ewige Liebe versichern.

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Übersetzung: Anne Steeb/Bernd Müller

Dame Janet Baker ist zusammen mit den namhaftesten Dirigenten und Orchestern der Welt aufgetreten und hat mit allen bedeutenden Operntruppen Aufzeichnungen auf Tonträger vorgenommen. Sie wurde in der englischen Grafschaft Yorkshire geboren und erst von Helene Isepp, dann von Meriel St. Clair ausgebildet. 1956 gewann sie den zweiten Preis

beim Kathleen-Ferrier-Gesangswettbewerb, und seither hat sie es als Künstlerin, die sich mit der Interpretation von Liedern ebenso hervortut wie in der Oper und auf dem Konzertpodium, zu weltweiter Anerkennung gebracht. Zu ihren denkwürdigen Auftritten zählen Purcells Dido 1962 in Aldeburgh mit der English Opera Group, die Titelrolle in Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia* (1964 und 1970) und Kate in *Owen Wingrave* (1971).

Für die Royal Opera hat sie die Vitellia (*La clemenza di Tito*) gesungen, und Glucks *Alceste*, für Glyndebourne Diana/Jupiter (Cavalli's *La Calisto*), und Penelope (Monteverdis *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*), für die Scottish Opera Dido (Berlioz' *Les troyens*) und für die English National Opera ein Repertoire, das von Monteverdi bis Massenets *Werther* reicht und Donizettis *Mary Stuart* sowie Marguerite in Berlioz' *The Damnation of Faust* einschließt. Ihr letztes Gastspiel bei der Truppe erfolgte in einer Inszenierung von *Mary Stuart*. Janet Baker hat zahlreiche Auszeichnungen erhalten, darunter den Hamburger Shakespeare-Preis (1971) und die Ehrendoktorwürde der Universitäten von London, Birmingham und Oxford. Sie wurde 1970 zum Commander und 1976 zum Dame of the British Empire erhoben. Zu ihren Aufzeichnungen auf Tonträger gehören

Händels *Ariodante*, Donizettis *Mary Stuart*, Glucks *Orfeo ed Euridice*, Mahlers *Das Lied von der Erde* und zahlreiche Recitalprogramme.

Christopher Booth-Jones wurde in Somerset geboren und studierte an der Royal Academy of Music. Seine Opernkarriere begann er mit einer Tournee der Welsh National Opera for All; hieran schlossen sich Engagements an der Welsh National Opera, der Glyndebourne Festival und der Glyndebourne Touring Opera, der Kent Opera sowie dem English Music Theatre an. Zu seinen Rollen an der English National Opera zählen Papageno, Dr. Falke, Schaunard, Silvio, Pantaloon (*The Love for Three Oranges*), Elviro (*Xerxes*), Graf Almaviva (*The Marriage of Figaro*) und Giorgio Germont. Außerdem ist er an der Opera North und der Royal Opera aufgetreten und ist regelmäßig auf BBC Radio 2, 3 und 4 sowie in Radio France und dem Belgischen Rundfunk zu hören. Zu seinen CD-Aufnahmen zählen *Carmen*, *Billy Budd*, Sondheims *Pacific Overtures* und *Tosca* (für Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation).

Sarah Walker begann ihre musikalische Ausbildung mit einem Violinstudium am Royal College of Music; später studierte sie Gesang bei Vera Rosza, mit der sie ein

breitgefächertes Repertoire erarbeitete, das sich von Bach und Monteverdi bis zu Werken des 20. Jahrhunderts von Komponisten wie Berio, Boulez, Cage, Henze, Ligeti, Copland und Ives erstreckt. Sie ist gefragter Gast auf Konzertpodien weltweit und hat mit Ozawa, Davis, Mackerras, Solti, Norrington, Boulez, Roschdestwenski, Mazur, Harnoncourt und Rattle zusammengearbeitet.

Sarah Walker ist eng mit der Royal Opera verbunden, an der sie unter anderem Baba the Turk (*The Rake's Progress*), Charlotte (Werther), Mrs. Sedley (*Peter Grimes*) und Rollen in Sallinens *The King Goes Forth to France*, Maxwell Davies's *Taverner* und Händels *Samson* gesungen hat. Zu ihren zahlreichen Rollen an der English National Opera zählen Mary Stuart, Charlotte, die Gräfin (*The Queen of Spades*), die Titelrolle in Britzens *Gloriana* sowie Katisha (*The Mikado*). Sarah Walker ist außerdem in Genf, San Francisco und Chicago, an der Metropolitan Opera in New York und in Glyndebourne aufgetreten und hat sich auch als Konzertsängerin einen Namen gemacht. Ihre Aufnahmen umfassen *Peter Grimes*, *Roméo et Juliette*, Mendelssohns *Sommernachtstraum*, *La traviata* und Martha (Gounods *Faust*, für Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation).

Della Jones, eine der führenden britischen Mezzosopranistinnen, wurde in Neath geboren und studierte am Royal College of Music, wo sie mit zahlreichen Preisen ausgezeichnet wurde, darunter auch das Kathleen Ferrier Memorial Scholarship. Ihr breitgefächertes Repertoire reicht von der frühen bis zur zeitgenössischen Musik. Sie ist an allen großen britischen Opernhäusern aufgetreten; auswärtige Engagements haben sie in die USA, nach Rußland, Japan, Kanada und durch ganz Europa geführt. Zu ihrem Opernrepertoire zählen die Titelrollen in *Ariodante*, *La Cenerentola* und *Carmen*, Rosina, Herodias (*Salome*), Baba the Turk (*The Rake's Progress*), Marcellina (*Die Hochzeit des Figaro*), die Wirtin (*Boris Godunov*) sowie Aunt Hermance in Gavin Bryars' *Doctor Ox's Experiment*.

Della Jones ist zudem regelmäßig im In- und Ausland in Radio und Fernsehen zu hören. Ihre zahlreichen Aufnahmen umfassen *Alcina*, *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, *Dido und Aeneas*, *La clemenza di Tito*, Korngolds *Die Kathrin* sowie *The Barber of Seville* (für Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation).

Valerie Masterson wurde in Birkenhead geboren und studierte in London und Mailand. Nach einer Spielzeit in Salzburg wurde sie Erste Sopranistin des D'Oyly

Carte Opernensembles. Sie ist an allen großen Opernhäusern Großbritanniens aufgetreten; ihre zahlreichen Auslandsverpflichtungen umfassen Engagements in Aix-en-Provence, Nancy, Montpellier, an der Pariser Oper, in Toulouse, Bordeaux, Genf, Rouen, Prag, Dublin, München, Marseilles, an der Mailänder Piccola Scala, in Barcelona, Chicago, Philadelphia, Santiago, San Francisco, New York und Houston.

Ihr breitgefächertes Repertoire umfaßt die Titelrollen in *La traviata*, *Manon*, *Louise*, *Mireille*, *Die lustige Witwe* und *Semele*, Madame Lidoine (*Dialogues des carmélites*), Micaëla, Susanna und Gräfin Almaviva, Sophie und die Marschallin, Mimì, Marguerite (*Faust*), Antonia (*Hoffmanns Erzählungen*) und *The King Goes Forth to France* mit der Royal Opera. Valerie Masterson ist regelmäßig im Radio und im Fernsehen zu hören. Ihre Einspielungen umfassen *Elisabetta*, *Regina d'Inghilterra*, *Das Rheingold*, *Götterdämmerung*, verschiedene Operetten von Gilbert und Sullivan sowie *La traviata*.

James Bowman ist seit nahezu dreißig Jahren einer der weltweit führenden Countertenöre. Seine Tätigkeit umfaßt Oper, Oratorium, zeitgenössische Musik und Solo-Recitals.

Bowman sang zunächst als Chorknabe an der Kathedrale von Ely und studierte später am New College in Oxford, wo er ebenfalls Chorsänger war. Sein Londoner Debüt feierte er 1967 auf Einladung von Benjamin Britten anlässlich der Einweihung der neuen Queen Elizabeth Konzerthalle. Er war schon bald gleichermaßen auf Opernbühne und Konzertpodium gefragt und trat in Sadler's Wells (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*) und Glyndebourne (*La Calisto*) sowie an der English National Opera (*Semele*) und der Royal Opera (*Taverner*) auf. Im Ausland sang er in Paris, an La Fenice in Venedig, an der Mailänder Scala, in Aix-en-Provence, am Sydney Opera House und in den USA.

James Bowman hat über 150 Einspielungen gemacht, darunter Brittens *Death in Venice*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* und *Rejoice in the Lamb*, *Orfeo ed Euridice* und Monteverdis *Orfeo*.

John Tomlinson wurde in Lancashire geboren und absolvierte in Manchester seine Ausbildung als Ingenieur, bevor er am Royal Manchester of Music ein Stipendium erhielt. Seit 1974 hatte er regelmäßig Engagements an der English National Opera und seit 1976 an der Royal Opera, außerdem ist er an der Opera North, der Scottish Opera, der Glyndebourne

Festival und Touring Opera sowie der Kent Opera aufgetreten. Zu seinen frühen Rollen zählen Figaro, Masetto, Hunding, Hagen, Pimen und König Heinrich (*Lohengrin*).

Seit 1988 hat John Tomlinson jährlich auf dem Bayreuther Festival gesungen, wo er als Wotan (*Das Rheingold* und *Die Walküre*), der Wanderer (*Siegfried*), Titorel und Gurnemanz (*Parzival*) und König Markus (*Tristan und Isolde*) zu hören war. Zu seinen weiteren Rollen zählen Hans Sachs (*Die Meistersinger*), der Landgraf (*Tannhäuser*), Hagen (*Götterdämmerung*) und Baron Ochs (*Der Rosenkavalier*). Seine Aufnahmen umfassen den Ring-Zyklus, Verdis *La forza del destino* und *La traviata*, sowie Highlights aus Mussorgskis *Boris Godunow* und Strauss' *Rosenkavalier* (für Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation).

David James war Chorsänger am Magdalen College in Oxford und sang später im Chor der Westminster Abbey. 1978 wurde ihm der erste Preis des niederländischen 's-Hertogenbosch-Wettbewerbs verliehen. Seither verfolgt er eine internationale Karriere als Solist und Ensemblesänger; unter anderem hat er mit dem Ensemble The Sixteen zusammengearbeitet sowie zahlreiche große Opernrollen an der English National Opera, der Handel Opera, der Genfer

Oper und auf dem Aldeburgh Festival übernommen.

Als Gründungsmitglied des Hilliard Ensembles nimmt David James mit dieser Gruppe jährlich etwa 100 Konzertengagements wahr, wobei ihr Repertoire die Musik des Mittelalters und der Renaissance, aber auch zeitgenössische Werke umfaßt. In seinen weltweiten Soloauftritten spezialisiert sich David James auf Musik des Barock und der Gegenwart. Seine Einspielungen umfassen Bachs *Johannes-* und *Matthäus-Passion*, Händels *Messias* und Pärts *Passio*.

Sir Charles Mackerras wurde 1925 als Kind australischer Eltern in den USA geboren und studierte in Sydney und Prag. Sein Debüt als Operndirigent feierte er in Sadler's Wells, wo er wesentlichen Anteil an der Produktion der sensationellen britischen Erstaufführung von Janáčeks *Kát'a Kabanová* hatte, die dazu führte, daß Janáčeks Werke ihren Weg ins britische Standardrepertoire fanden. Er war Chefdirigent an der Hamburger Oper (1966–69) und Musikdirektor an der Oper von Sadler's Wells, der nachmaligen English National Opera (1970–77) sowie der Welsh National Opera (1987–92), wo unter anderem seine bemerkenswerten Janáček-

Inszenierungen große Beachtung fanden. Die Inszenierung und Einspielung von *Osud* wurden von der Peter Moores Foundation gefördert, die auch die Einspielung von *The Cunning Little Vixen* unterstützte. Sir Charles Mackerras ist Ehrenmitglied des Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Emeritus-Dirigent der Welsh National Opera, erster Gastdirigent der San Francisco Opera und seit der Spielzeit 1998/99 Musikdirektor des Orchestra of St. Luke's in New York.

Sir Charles Mackerras hat sich intensiv mit der Aufführungspraxis des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts befaßt, was seine musikalischen Interpretationen wesentlich beeinflusste. Seine beeindruckende Diskographie umfaßt den preisgekrönten Zyklus der Opern Janáčeks mit den Wiener Philharmonikern, Brittens *Gloriana* (ausgezeichnet mit dem *Gramophone Award*), die Sinfonien von Beethoven, Brahms und Mahler sowie Donizettis *Mary Stuart* und Verdis *La traviata* mit der English National Opera.

Sir Charles Mackerras wurde 1974 mit dem CBE ausgezeichnet und 1979 für seine Verdienste um die Musik geadelt. Außerdem erhielt er die Verdienstmedaille der Tschechischen Republik und wurde zum Mitglied des "Order of Australia" ernannt.

Haendel: Julius Caesar

Haendel et l'opéra à arias

L'*opera seria* – “opéra sérieux” – fut la création musicale la plus importante et la plus prestigieuse de l'ère baroque. Les techniques, les conventions et l'esthétique de ce genre sont à la base même de l'épanouissement de Haendel dans l'oratorio et de l'extraordinaire maestria de Bach dans les arias et l'ornementation mélodique. Et pourtant ce n'est que récemment que les théâtres lyriques ont commencé à prendre l'*opera seria* au sérieux, pour ce qu'il est. Le public va peu à peu se rendre compte que c'est justement l'artificialité et l'irréalité du genre qui font sa force: plus que tout autre moyen d'expression artistique, l'opéra a besoin de ses conventions – une structure établie, un modèle convenu dont on pourra largement s'éloigner. Mais de nos jours, tout est permis et la musique lyrique est coulée comme du béton dans n'importe quelle forme, n'importe quel moule. Bien des compositeurs modernes, s'étant essayés à l'opéra, vous avoueront l'air piteux et en toute honnêteté qu'ils se sentent paralysés par l'absence d'un idiome établi, commun à la scène et au public. Dans un tel contexte, les

conventions rigides de la musique baroque deviennent un atout certain.

Il est plutôt paradoxal que les plus beaux *opere serie* de l'ère baroque aient jailli de la plume d'un Saxon vivant à Londres, mettant en musique des livrets qui la plupart du temps ne lui étaient même pas destinés, dans une langue qui n'était ni la sienne ni celle de son public (un public qui malgré tout comprenait sans doute mieux l'italien qu'un public britannique moderne et qui pouvait suivre l'action dans des livrets bilingues). Mais Haendel tourna cet isolement à son avantage. Il put adapter les livrets à sa guise, coupant les récitatifs aux nobles sentiments souvent interminables au profit d'arias plus nombreuses et plus longues – contrairement aux idées fausses que l'on a, c'est la succession des arias, et non celle des récitatifs, qui assure la continuité essentielle de l'action. De plus, Haendel semble avoir exercé un plus grand contrôle sur sa troupe et ses interprètes que s'il s'était agi d'une troupe d'opéra italien typique attachée à une cour d'Italie ou d'Allemagne du sud: la Royal Academy of Music, bien que placée sous le patronage de la cour, était une

société par actions, suivant la coutume britannique. Haendel bénéficia également du soutien si précieux sur le plan artistique des plus éclairés de ses mécènes néoclassiques, ces aristocrates londoniens comme le comte de Burlington. On oublie trop facilement à la lecture des diatribes intéressées contre l'opéra italien d'auteurs comme Addison et Steele, ou des récits de la frivolité du public londonien, que l'intuition dramatique de Haendel était bien plus subtile, bien plus aiguë que la leur, qu'il ne s'était pas nourri de l'œuvre d'Otway ou de Rowe, et que les essais plein de sensibilité sur l'esthétique en peinture et en architecture qu'il avait lus chez des auteurs comme Shaftesbury s'accordaient très bien avec “l'opéra à arias”, un genre extrêmement pictural. Le choix du “moment-clé”, ce point précis dans l'histoire, cette crise émotionnelle unique qui deviendra le sujet du tableau ou de l'aria et que geste, ton, texture et décor mettront ensemble en valeur, ce choix est au cœur même de la méthode de Haendel en matière d'opéra, une méthode à la fois hautement analytique et extrêmement concentrée et passionnée.

Les grands thèmes de l'*opera seria* nous paraissent souvent incongrus de nos jours. Qu'il s'agisse d'un mythe classique, d'une histoire médiévale ou d'une fantaisie épique, le sujet

traite essentiellement du comportement des grands et des puissants, des rois, des princes et des ducs qui, ayant encouragé ce nouvel art, s'en servirent pour célébrer les événements importants de la cour. Derrière un livret typique de Haendel, on retrouve les questions morales et sociales qui avaient préoccupé Corneille et Racine (le premier peignant le triomphe de la volonté humaine face aux tentations, le second l'échec de cette volonté et la destruction de l'individu). Comment les grands princes doivent-ils se comporter? Comment user du pouvoir absolu quand le devoir public et les raisons du cœur sont en conflit? Comment choisir une épouse? Comment doivent-ils se conduire pour que leur gloire – ou encore leur renom, leur réputation, leur honneur – justifie à jamais l'admiration et l'obéissance de leurs sujets et de leurs familles? Ces questions étaient primordiales à une époque d'absolutisme total, où mariage et succession pouvaient entraîner des conflits entre dynasties comme la Guerre de succession d'Espagne. La Révolution française et l'avènement de la monarchie constitutionnelle bourgeoise dépouilla l'*opera seria* de ce qui le rendait si pertinent à son époque.

Corneille et Racine réussirent néanmoins à s'élever au-delà de leurs sujets ponctuels pour exprimer dans leur poésie éternelle et leurs

dramas puissants des vérités universelles, assurant à leurs pièces, plus grandes que les thèmes qu'elles abordent, l'immortalité. Il en est de même des drames musicaux de Haendel. Bien sûr, les arias individuelles n'ont jamais été oubliées et beaucoup figurent régulièrement au programme de concerts depuis leur publication par Walsh ou Cluer. Etant donné la popularité des arias et le fait que les opéras consistent avant tout d'arias pour soliste, n'est-il pas étrange que nous ayons mis aussi longtemps à comprendre réellement les principes selon lesquels Haendel s'en servit pour peindre ses personnages, les regroupant de façon significative pour faire une scène, un acte, un opéra entier.

Sa méthode nous rappelle celle du peintre Hogarth. Ses célèbres huiles, reproduites dans des séries de planches très populaires, comme *La carrière du roué*, n'ont pas besoin de narration, de "récitatif". Il choisit de décrire certains moments-clés de l'histoire du roué ou de la prostituée et arrange autour de son personnage central tant de détails révélateurs, ayant tous un rapport avec le sujet central – Rakewell achetant l'amour dans une maison de tolérance, Rakewell achetant l'admiration sociale – que c'est nous-mêmes, en examinant la peinture par le menu, qui diffusons les images dans notre esprit au-delà des limites

spatiales et temporelles du tableau; comme nous avançons d'un tableau à l'autre, le lambris qui les sépare semble vibrer des retombées de l'histoire. On pourrait établir un parallèle semblable avec les procédés de narration analytique utilisés par Richardson dans ses romans de forme épistolaire.

Examinons le portrait que Haendel nous dresse de Cléopâtre dans ses arias, tout en gardant à l'esprit la Cléopâtre de Shakespeare, et nous comprendrons mieux l'esthétique et la dramaturgie qui régissaient les méthodes de Haendel et dont nous savons si peu. Il la dépeint dans une série analytique de huit arias solos, deux récitatifs avec accompagnement et un duo, la position de chaque pièce étant soigneusement choisie pour créer un contraste maximum ou assurer la meilleure continuité dans cette œuvre alignant une quarantaine de morceaux, presque tous des arias pour soliste.

Sa première aria, "Yet why despair?" est un *allegro* en mi à 4/4, accompagné par tous les violons à l'unisson soutenus par les altos et les basses. Les altos ne participent qu'aux tutti orchestraux, et les violons eux aussi se taisent dans la section centrale. Les principaux thèmes musicaux de l'aria – qui, fait rare, ne découlent pas de la ligne vocale – nous la montrent en train de tourmenter Ptolémée, ce frère qu'elle déteste, le traitant d'un ton moqueur et

sarcastique de gamin efféminé indigne de gouverner. L'effet est obtenu par des notes répétées, noires vigoureuses ornées de mordants ou croches staccato, qui cèdent le pas à de courtes phrases lourdes de sens et des roulades riantes. Même les fioritures vocales traditionnelles sur des mots tels "heart" (cœur) et "console" se teintent d'ironie et le tournent en ridicule. Malgré les notes répétées, le drame musical est loin d'être statique durant cette aria; il traverse toute une palette d'émotions; et cela est vrai de toutes les arias de Haendel.

La seconde aria de Cléopâtre (omise sur ce disque), est écrite elle aussi, comme tant d'autres par la suite, dans un ton aigu particulièrement éclatant, en l'occurrence la majeur; c'est un *allegro* à 3/8 pour la même combinaison de cordes, mais Haendel ajoute un degré de profondeur à la ligne vocale en la soulignant d'un hautbois. Déguisée en dame de cour, Cléopâtre a réussi à conquérir le cœur de César, et dans cette aria elle se réjouit ouvertement que le conquérant du monde ait succombé à sa beauté. C'est une danse de joie dans laquelle elle s'affiche en toute naïveté et dont les rythmes entraînants et les chaînes éclatantes de doubles-croches passent de façon inattendue de *forte* à *piano* pour revenir à *forte*; la section centrale plus intime est accompagnée uniquement par les violons et la basse. Sa

troisième aria est plus simple, plus douce, c'est un *allegro ma non troppo* à 6/8 en si bémol. Cléopâtre s'est assurée le concours de Sextus et de Cornelia pour lutter contre Ptolémée, et ce qui n'était au départ qu'un simple accès de dépit, un jeu presque, est devenu cet espoir tenace de pouvoir libérer l'Égypte du joug tyrannique de son frère, de devenir reine et de gagner l'amour durable de César. Les violons dans l'aigu, tantôt à l'unisson, tantôt en tierces apaisantes, parlent de cette étoile lointaine de l'espoir et du doux frisson du plaisir et de l'amour enfin assouvi.

La première aria de l'Acte II, sur un accompagnement recherché des Muses réunies, est un chant d'amour très séduisant, qui réussit d'un seul geste à honorer et à charmer César. C'est un *largo* à 3/4, en fa. Neuf instruments, dont un théorbe et une harpe, entourent Cléopâtre sur scène; dans la fosse d'orchestre, les cordes en sourdine, divisées en quatre, se font l'écho des soupirs d'amour et d'admiration de César; elles se taisent dans la section centrale. Dans l'aria suivante, alors qu'elle attend César dans ses appartements, Cléopâtre prie Vénus de lui prêter tous les charmes de Cupidon. C'est un *allegro* à 3/8 en la pour violons à l'unisson et basse, un accompagnement qui se réduit à un violon solo à l'entrée de la voix et à la basse continue dans

la section centrale. La musique est à la fois une prière charmante à la mère de l'amour, et un portrait des attraits resplendissants que Cléopâtre espère acquérir: car César ignore sa véritable identité et elle veut qu'il la demande en mariage bien qu'elle ne soit à ses yeux qu'une simple roturière. Juste avant l'aria suivante, César est parti précipitamment se défendre d'une attaque surprise par les hommes du perfide Ptolémée. Laissée dans l'incertitude mais consciente soudain de la profondeur de son amour pour César, Cléopâtre, toute à son angoisse, prie pour qu'il revienne sain et sauf: s'il meurt, elle mourra aussi. Des phrases descendantes à la basse et des suspensions interminables aux bassons symbolisent son humilité devant les dieux; les croches trépidantes des cordes médianes soutiennent des gestes brisés plus courts aux premiers violons, tantôt pleins de désespoir, tantôt implorants, tandis que Cléopâtre elle-même développe un thème musical bien distinct pour invoquer l'aide divine. Cette pièce est un *largo* à 4/4 en fa dièse mineur au schéma contrapuntique dont les sonorités évoquent Bach.

Dans l'Acte III, César est soi-disant mort, l'armée de Cléopâtre a été vaincue et cette dernière se pense condamnée à mort. Nous retournons à la tonalité de mi majeur et à un

3/8 lent pour la douleur intense de "Flow, my tears", une aria célèbre à juste titre qui change d'émotion, de texture et de tempo dans sa section centrale. Dans la première partie, une flûte (jusqu'ici associée à Cornelia, la veuve éplorée) vient souligner de son timbre argentin la phrase des premiers violons que soutiennent seuls les seconds violons et les basses; à la cantilène affligée de Cléopâtre répond inlassablement un motif carillonnant exprimant chagrin et regret, deux notes ascendantes puis la seconde répétée, un motif qui se développe depuis son intervalle initial de tierce (il n'y a pas de ritournelle d'introduction) en une quarte, une quinte et finalement une octave. La section centrale, un *allegro* à 4/4 dans lequel, épanchant sa fureur, elle fait le serment de revenir en fantôme hanter Ptolémée, remplace la flûte par un violoncelle solo, les roulades de la ligne vocale évoquant la poursuite implacable du scélérat au-delà de la tombe; lorsque la section initiale reparait (son intensité décuplée par de nouveaux ornements, comme il était de mise dans les reprises *da capo*), elle est teintée d'une ironie particulièrement poignante. Comme César triomphe et que Ptolémée est pour ainsi dire anéanti, le dernier solo de Cléopâtre file la métaphore galvaudée du navire battu par la tempête qui arrive sain et sauf au port. C'est

un *allegro* à 4/4 qui retourne à la tonalité initiale de Cléopâtre, à savoir celle de mi. Mais les arias-métaphores de Haendel se doublent toujours d'une peinture de caractère, et celle-ci nous offre le tableau de la joie sereine et resplendissante de la future reine qui enfle en véritable jubilation à l'idée des dangers passés et des joies à venir. Les violons jouent parfois à l'unisson avec la voix, parfois, divisés, ils intensifient sa joie tranquille de leurs croches tendues répétées. La voix de Cléopâtre retentit pour la dernière fois dans un merveilleux duo avec César, dans lequel les amants s'engagent l'un à l'autre; c'est un *allegro* assez lent à 12/8 en sol pour violons divisés, hautbois et basse, l'accompagnement se réduisant à la basse continue dans la section centrale; les amants chantent aussi un trio *minore* avec hautbois et basson dans la bourrée finale qui réunit la troupe entière.

L'héroïne de Haendel, comme celle de Shakespeare, traverse une gamme incomparable d'états d'âme; chacun de ces états d'âme est exploré en détail dans un portrait merveilleusement concentré et mordant, encadré de ritournelles orchestrales aux textures très variées (l'art résidant dans l'écriture pour cordes plutôt que dans un étalage plus spectaculaire des instruments obligés). Ces portraits s'opposent d'une part les

uns aux autres et d'autre part, avec encore plus de force, aux suites d'arias similaires qui tracent le portrait d'autres personnages, dans un style très proche de Racine et de son célèbre "enchaînement de scènes". L'opéra à arias s'imposa tout naturellement comme la quintessence des principaux éléments structuraux et expressifs de la musique baroque, recourant à une méthode analytique de présentation qui régissait également les autres moyens d'expression artistiques du temps. Forme et matière ne font qu'une, l'absence de finals concertés et la rareté des ensembles ne devrait pas nous troubler. Même l'*aria di sortita* (l'air de sortie), une notion tant décriée, est en fait parfaitement valide: l'opéra est vécu comme un déferlement de *crescendos* successifs dans un drame enfiévré, chaque *crescendo* résultant en une crise pour l'un des personnages qui chante alors une aria, épuisant tout ce qu'il y a à dire jusqu'à ce qu'une nouvelle suite d'événements mette ce personnage dans une nouvelle situation appelant une nouvelle aria. (Dans l'opéra français à l'époque, les arias bien souvent ouvrent l'acte, si bien que l'action par la suite semble manquer d'élan; en pratique, c'est une méthode moins satisfaisante sur le plan psychologique). Depuis deux siècles, historiens et critiques n'ont pas hésité à répéter les

attaques de Gluck sur l'*opera seria* du milieu du XVIIIe siècle comme si elles concernaient les opéras d'Alessandro Scarlatti ou de Haendel, des opéras que probablement Gluck, et sans aucun doute tous ceux qui le citent, n'ont jamais entendus. Il est bien possible que les chanteurs soient devenus plus "capricieux et vaniteux" durant les vingt années de vaches maigres entre 1740 et 1750; mais la virtuosité qu'exigent les opéras de Haendel n'est jamais creuse. Il écrivit pour les plus grands chanteurs du monde, mais leur superbe technique vocale aurait été vaine sans la perspicacité musicale et dramatique et le sens du style dont il fit preuve et qui rendent les conventions "impossibles" de l'*opera seria* non seulement possibles mais viables et vitales pour le public d'aujourd'hui.

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A propos de l'édition

Jules César est non seulement l'un des opéras les plus célèbres de Haendel mais aussi l'un des plus longs. Lorsque l'English National Opera décida de monter cette œuvre en 1979, plusieurs coupures furent réalisées pour donner plus de souplesse à une production qui n'était pas destinée à un festival. Lorsqu'on nous demanda de faire un enregistrement en studio de cette production, nous nous sommes

demandés si nous devions enregistrer l'œuvre intégrale, puisque nous n'avions plus les contraintes horaires de la scène. Mais une telle décision aurait entraîné tant de nouveaux arrangements de cette version qu'elle n'aurait plus eu grand chose à voir avec la production initiale de l'English National Opera qui avait plu à tant d'amateurs d'opéra. Le choix des coupures n'avait pas été fait à la légère, dans le souci de conserver une version cohérente et fluide de cette œuvre majestueuse, et la décision fut donc prise de ne rien changer à la production, à l'exception de la restitution de deux passages qui avaient été coupés assez tard dans les répétitions: la section "B" et le "da capo" du duo final et l'aria de Ptolémée dans l'Acte II.

La plupart des arias et des duos de *Julius Caesar* suivent la forme "da capo" A-B-A, une forme inhérente au style lyrique de Haendel. Il nous a donc semblé préférable de couper des arias entières plutôt que de défigurer ce plan tripartite. Ainsi César, Cléopâtre et Cornelia perdent chacun une aria, Sextus en perd trois et les autres personnages deux chacun. Une scène entière, à la fin du deuxième acte, a été omise et les récitatifs, qui font avancer l'intrigue, ont été raccourcis.

Tous ceux qui ont eu un rôle à jouer dans le choix de la musique pour cette production

espèrent que les contrastes dramatiques de Haendel, ses enchaînements de tonalités (en dépit de certaines transpositions pour arranger certains chanteurs) et le déroulement d'ensemble de ce grand chef d'œuvre n'aient pas trop souffert des coupures qui nous parurent nécessaires pour les raisons pratiques déjà abordées. L'ornementation des reprises et des cadences fut un travail d'équipe, incluant les chanteurs eux-mêmes, la norme à l'époque de Haendel. Ces ornements sont spécifiquement adaptés aux talents des chanteurs ayant pris part à cette production et aux personnages qu'ils incarnent. Nous n'avons pas cherché à reproduire le genre d'ornementation qu'un Senesino ou un Cuzzoni auraient pu choisir pour ces arias.

Haendel lui-même adapta sa musique aux chanteurs dont il disposait et il recomposa même certains passages de *Jules César* lorsque le rôle de Sextus, jusque là interprété par une soprano, fut confié à un ténor. On se demande ce qu'il aurait fait s'il avait été confronté aux aigus si éclatants de Dame Janet Baker après avoir composé initialement le rôle de César pour Senesino, un castrat à la voix profonde dont le registre ne dépassait guère une octave. Aurait-il carrément *recomposé* ces arias au caractère si merveilleusement marqué et si riches dans leur diversité, ou se serait-il

contenté de les *adapter* à cette chanteuse? Comme il ne peut malheureusement pas nous donner son avis ou adapter *Julius Caesar* pour nous, nous nous sommes lancés en changeant de façon assez radicale la tessiture et les tonalités des arias de César, en particulier dans les "da capo".

De même, les parties orchestrales de la partition ont été révisées pour permettre aux membres de l'orchestre de l'English National Opera, équipés d'instruments modernes normaux, de produire les rythmes et l'expression d'un orchestre du XVIIIe siècle. Un violoncelle baroque vient s'ajouter au clavecin pour accompagner les récitatifs tandis qu'une viole de gambe et un théorbe complètent sur scène l'orchestre charmant de Cléopâtre à l'Acte II. Autrement, l'orchestre comprend uniquement des instruments modernes, et les flûtes traversières y remplacent les flûtes à bec (qui ne se marient bien qu'avec des instruments anciens).

Les chœurs au début et à la fin de l'œuvre, ainsi qu'un court chœur révolutionnaire chanté dans les coulisses, étaient confiés à l'origine à tous les solistes disponibles (même les deux dont le personnage est mort à la fin!). Ce sont d'ailleurs leurs *noms* qui apparaissent dans la partition originale (Durastanti, Robinson, Berenstadt, etc.) plutôt que les *voix*. Il nous a

cependant paru plus approprié de remplacer cet ensemble minuscule par un véritable chœur, même s'il ne s'agit que d'un petit chœur.

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L'action

L'action se déroule en Egypte, à Alexandrie même et dans les environs.

Acte I

César est acclamé par la foule égyptienne. Il accepte de faire la paix à la demande de la femme de Pompée, Cornelia, et du jeune fils de cette dernière, Sextus. Achille, général de Ptolémée, s'avance et déclare que son maître désire l'amitié de César. Comme preuve, l'un de ses hommes lui tend la tête tranchée de Pompée. Les Romains sont horrifiés et César, hors de lui, dénonce la cruauté de Ptolémée et dit à Achille de prévenir son maître de son arrivée imminente. Eperdue de chagrin, Cornelia tente de se tuer mais Sextus et Curio l'en empêchent. Puis Sextus lui promet de venger la mort de son père.

Cléopâtre apprend que Pompée a été assassiné et décide de demander l'aide de César pour affirmer sa suprématie sur l'Egypte. Mais Ptolémée surprend ses plans et commence à se moquer de son ambition; Cléopâtre rétorque

qu'il est plus dans son élément avec les filles qu'à la tête d'un royaume. Achille raconte à Ptolémée comment César a réagi à son cadeau et jure d'anéantir César, à condition que Cornelia soit sienne. Ptolémée fait le serment de se venger de César qui a osé l'insulter.

César, songeur, contemple l'urne funéraire de Pompée. Cléopâtre, se faisant passer pour Lydia, sa servante, entre. Elle supplie César de l'aider à réparer les torts que Ptolémée a causé à Cléopâtre; César, bouleversé par une telle beauté, accepte de bon cœur. Alors que Cléopâtre est sur le point de sortir, Cornelia entre, pleurant son mari. Se rendant compte que Cornelia et Sextus ont décidé de tuer Ptolémée, Cléopâtre, sans révéler son identité, leur offre son aide. Impatiente de voir leur plan réussir, elle propose que son fidèle conseiller Nireus les introduise dans le palais.

Ptolémée accueille César en grande pompe mais il est évident que la confiance ne règne pas entre les deux hommes et Ptolémée complotte de tuer César cette nuit-même. Mais César n'est pas dupe. Cornelia et Sextus sont alors introduits et Sextus provoque Ptolémée en duel. Pour toute réponse, Ptolémée ordonne qu'ils soient arrêtés: il envoie Cornelia travailler comme esclave dans les jardins du harem tandis que Sextus est emprisonné au palais. Achille explique à Cornelia qu'il pourrait

alléger son fardeau si elle voulait bien l'aimer mais elle le repousse avec dédain. Mère et fils sont emmenés chacun de leur côté.

Acte II

Pour faire une surprise à César, Cléopâtre a organisé un divertissement. Elle paraît devant lui dans un jardin du palais, incarnant la Vertu trônant au Parnasse, entourée des neuf muses, et entonne la célèbre aria "Lamenting, complaining of Caesar's disaining". César, envoûté, suit Nireus qui l'entraîne vers les appartements de sa maîtresse.

Cornelia, découragée, médite sur son extrême tristesse mais rien ne pourra la persuader d'accepter les avances d'Achille. Elle contrarie aussi Ptolémée en refusant d'écouter ses déclarations d'amour. Désespérée, elle décide de se jeter au milieu des tigres qui gardent le sérail. Soudain Sextus entre, s'étant échappé de sa prison, et elle reprend courage quand il lui annonce qu'il va la libérer. Sextus jure de se venger de Ptolémée.

Cléopâtre attend César avec impatience. Elle fait semblant de dormir lorsqu'il entre et surprend ainsi la déclaration d'amour qu'il lui adresse. Alors qu'il parle de mariage, elle s'éveille: décontenancé, il ne semble guère disposé à son égard, ce qui la consterne. C'est alors que Curio fait irruption et leur révèle que

les hommes de Ptolémée sont dans le palais, à la recherche de César qu'ils veulent tuer. Cléopâtre les stupéfie en révélant sa véritable identité mais cela ne suffit pas à arrêter les acolytes de son frère. César, intrépide, court à la rencontre de ses ennemis. Cléopâtre écoute la lutte qui suit et prie pour qu'il revienne sain et sauf.

Acte III

César, vaincu, a soi-disant péri en mer. Cléopâtre a déclaré la guerre à Ptolémée mais elle aussi est vaincue et faite prisonnière. Ptolémée dénonce son comportement pervers et la fait enchaîner. Désespérée, Cléopâtre songe à son malheur si soudain dans la célèbre complainte "Flow, my tears".

César se souvient de sa défaite et pense à Cléopâtre. Curio et Sextus s'approchent mais avant de voir César, ils rencontrent Achille, blessé à mort. Ce dernier avoue avant de mourir que c'est bien lui qui a tué Pompée et tenté d'assassiner César. Il raconte qu'il est passé à l'ennemi quand Ptolémée a refusé de lui donner Cornelia, la récompense qu'il lui avait promise. Il leur donne alors une bague qui leur assurera le soutien de ses armées et qui leur permettra d'entrer dans le palais pour tuer Ptolémée. César s'avance et s'empare de la bague: les trois Romains, heureux de se

retrouver, décident de sauver Cornelia et Cléopâtre.

Cléopâtre supplie ses servantes de s'échapper avant que son frère ne les tue. Elle entend des bruits d'armes et se prépare à mourir, mais c'est César qui entre, l'épée à la main, pour l'enlacer et la délivrer.

Devant les légions et le peuple d'Alexandrie réunis, César est acclamé comme empereur de Rome. Sextus raconte comment il a tué Ptolémée, et Cornelia remet à César les insignes royaux de l'Égypte. Se tournant vers Cléopâtre, César la couronne reine d'Égypte et ensemble, dans l'allégresse générale, ils déclarent leur flamme éternelle.

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Traduction: Nicole Valencia

Dame Janet Baker s'est produite avec les orchestres et les maestros les plus illustres dans le monde et elle a enregistré avec toutes les plus grandes troupes lyriques. Née dans le Yorkshire, elle étudie le chant avec Helene Isepp puis Meriel St Clair. En 1956 elle remporte le deuxième Prix du Kathleen Ferrier Award et dès lors s'impose sur la scène internationale, où elle devient tout autant réputée pour ses récitals de Lieder, ses rôles lyriques que ses solos de concert. Elle se fait

remarquer entre autres dans *Dido and Aeneas* de Purcell à Aldeburgh avec l'English National Opera en 1962, dans le rôle-titre du *Rape of Lucretia* de Britten (en 1964 et 1970) et dans le rôle de Kate dans *Owen Wingrave* (1971)

Pour le Royal Opera elle est Vitellia (*La clémence de Titus*), et l'*Alceste* de Gluck, pour Glyndebourne elle interprète Diana/Jupiter (*La Calisto* de Cavalli), et Pénélope (*Le Retour d'Ulysse* de Monteverdi), pour le Scottish Opera elle est Didon (*Les troyens* de Berlioz) et pour l'English National Opera elle chante un répertoire allant de Monteverdi au *Werther* de Massenet, en passant par *Mary Stuart* de Donizetti et *The Damnation of Faust* de Berlioz (Marguerite). C'est avec une production de *Maria Stuarda* qu'elle fait ses adieux à l'English National Opera. Elle a reçu de nombreuses distinctions, comme le Prix Shakespeare de Hambourg en 1971 et le titre de docteur *honoris causa* de l'université de Londres, de l'université de Birmingham et de celle d'Oxford. Dame Janet Baker est devenue Commander of the British Empire (CBE) en 1970 et Dame of the British Empire (DBE) en 1976. Elle a fait de très nombreux enregistrements, gravant entre autres *Ariodante*, et *Mary Stuart* de Donizetti, *Orphée et Eurydice* de Gluck, *Das Lied von der Erde* de Mahler et un grand nombre de récitals.

Christopher Booth-Jones est né dans le Somerset et a étudié à la Royal Academy of Music à Londres. Il a fait ses débuts lyriques lors d'une tournée du Welsh National Opera for All avant de se produire avec le Welsh National Opera, avec l'Opéra du Festival de Glyndebourne et le Glyndebourne Touring Opera, Kent Opera et l'English Music Theatre. Il a chanté plusieurs rôles au sein de l'English National Opera dont Papageno, Dr. Falke, Schaunard, Silvio, Pantaloon (*The Love for Three Oranges*), Elviro (*Xerxès*), le comte Almaviva (*The Marriage of Figaro*) et Giorgio Germont. Il s'est également produit avec Opera North et le Royal Opera et on l'entend régulièrement à la BBC (Radio 2, Radio 3 et Radio 4), à Radio France et à la Radio belge. Il a enregistré entre autres *Carmen*, *Billy Budd*, *Pacific Overtures* de Sondheim et *Tosca* (pour Chandos en collaboration avec la Peter Moores Foundation).

Après avoir étudié le violon au Royal College of Music à Londres, **Sarah Walker** s'est orientée vers le chant et, guidée par son professeur Vera Rosza, elle s'est créé un vaste répertoire allant de Bach et Monteverdi jusqu'aux compositeurs du XXe siècle tels Berio, Boulez, Cage, Henze, Ligeti, Copland et Ives. Ses concerts l'ont fait voyager dans le monde entier et elle a travaillé

avec Ozawa, Davis, Mackerras, Solti, Norrington, Boulez, Rozhdestvensky, Masur, Harnoncourt et Rattle.

Le nom de Sarah Walker est associé de près à celui du Royal Opera puisqu'elle y a interprété de nombreux rôles dont ceux de Baba the Turk (*The Rake's Progress*), Charlotte (*Werther*), Mrs Sedley (*Peter Grimes*), chantant aussi dans *The King Goes Forth to France* de Sallinen, *Taverner* de Maxwell Davies et *Samson* de Haendel. Avec l'English National Opera, elle a été entre autres Marie Stuart, Charlotte, la Comtesse (*The Queen of Spades*), Elizabeth I dans *Gloriana* (Britten) et Katisha (*The Mikado*). Elle s'est également produite à Genève, San Francisco, Chicago, au Metropolitan Opera de New York et à Glyndebourne, et ses récitals sont fameux. Son importante discographie comprend *Peter Grimes*, *Roméo et Juliette*, *Le songe d'une nuit d'été* de Mendelssohn, *La traviata* et elle a tenu le rôle de Martha dans l'enregistrement du *Faust* de Gounod réalisé par Chandos en collaboration avec la Peter Moores Foundation.

Della Jones, l'une des plus grandes mezzo-sopranos de Grande-Bretagne, est née à Neath et a fait ses études au Royal College of Music à Londres, remportant de nombreux prix, dont la Kathleen Ferrier Memorial Scholarship. Son vaste répertoire va de la musique ancienne à la

musique contemporaine. Elle a chanté avec les plus grandes troupes lyriques britanniques et s'est produite sur de nombreuses scènes internationales aux Etats-Unis, en Russie, au Japon, au Canada et dans l'Europe entière. Elle a chanté les rôles-titres d'*Ariodante*, *La Cenerentola* et *Carmen* ainsi que les rôles de Rosine, Hérodiade (*Salomé*), Baba the Turk (*The Rake's Progress*), Marcelline (*Les noces de Figaro*), l'Hôtesse (*Boris Godounov*) et Tante Hermance dans *Doctor Ox's Experiment* de Gavin Bryars.

Della Jones passe fréquemment à la radio et à la télévision dans son pays comme à l'étranger; elle a réalisé de nombreux enregistrements, gravant entre autres *Alcina*, *Le couronnement de Poppée*, *Didon et Enée*, *La clémence de Titus*, *Die Kathrin* de Korngold, *The Barber of Seville* (pour Chandos en collaboration avec la Peter Moores Foundation).

Valerie Masterson est née à Birkenhead et a étudié à Londres et Milan. Elle a chanté une saison à Salzbourg avant d'entrer dans la D'Oyly Carte Opera Company comme principale soprano. Elle a chanté avec toutes les plus grandes troupes lyriques du Royaume-Uni et sa riche carrière internationale l'a conduite entre autres à Aix-en-Provence, Nancy, Montpellier, Paris (à l'Opéra), Toulouse, Bordeaux, Genève, Rouen, Prague, Dublin,

Munich, Marseille, Milan (la Piccola Scala), Barcelone, Chicago, Philadelphie, Santiago, San Francisco, New York et Houston.

Son vaste répertoire comprend les rôles-titres de *La traviata*, *Manon*, *Louise*, *Mireille*, *La veuve joyeuse* et *Sémélé*; elle a également été Madame Lidoine (*Dialogues des carmélites*), Micaëla, Susanne et la Comtesse Almaviva, Sophie et la Maréchale, Mimì, Marguerite (*Faust*), Antonia (*Les contes d'Hoffmann*) et elle a chanté dans *The King Goes Forth to France* avec le Royal Opera. Valerie Masterson travaille régulièrement pour la radio et la télévision et elle a enregistré entre autres *Elisabetta, regina d'Inghilterra*, *L'or du Rhin*, *Le crépuscule des Dieux*, plusieurs opérettes de Gilbert et Sullivan et *La traviata*.

Depuis près de trente ans, **James Bowman** figure parmi l'élite mondiale des contre-ténors. Il partage sa carrière entre l'opéra, l'oratorio, la musique contemporaine et les récitals en soliste. Enfant de chœur à la cathédrale d'Ely, il fait ses études à New College à Oxford et chante dans le chœur de la chapelle. Il fait ses débuts londoniens en 1967 lorsque Britten l'invite à chanter durant le concert d'inauguration du nouveau Queen Elizabeth Hall. Sa carrière est alors bien lancée, aussi bien sur la scène lyrique que dans la salle de

concert. James Bowman a chanté à Sadler's Wells (*Le songe d'une nuit d'été*), Glyndebourne (*La Calisto*), l'English National Opera (*Sémélé*) et au Royal Opera (*Taverner*). Sa carrière internationale l'a conduit à Paris, au théâtre de La Fenice à Venise, à La Scala de Milan, à Aix-en-Provence, à l'Opéra de Sydney et aux Etats-Unis.

James Bowman a gravé plus de cent-cinquante disques, enregistrant entre autres *Mort à Venise*, *Le songe d'une nuit d'été* et *Rejoice in the Lamb* de Britten, *Orphée et Eurydice* de Gluck et *l'Orfeo* de Monteverdi.

John Tomlinson est né dans le Lancashire; après avoir achevé son diplôme d'ingénieur des travaux publics à Manchester, il a obtenu une bourse d'études au Royal Manchester College of Music. Il chante régulièrement avec l'English National Opera depuis 1974 et avec le Royal Opera depuis 1976; il s'est également produit avec Opera North, Scottish Opera, l'Opéra du Festival de Glyndebourne et le Glyndebourne Touring Opera ainsi qu'avec Kent Opera. Parmi ses premiers rôles notons ceux de Figaro, Masetto, Hunding, Hagen, Pimène et du roi Henri (*Lohengrin*).

Depuis 1988 il chante chaque année au Festival de Bayreuth où il a été Wotan (*L'or du Rhin* et *La Walkyrie*), le Voyageur (*Siegfried*),

Titirel et Gurnemanz (*Parsifal*) et le roi Marke (*Tristan et Isolde*). Parmi ses autres rôles, notons ceux de Hans Sachs (*Les maîtres chanteurs*), du Landgrave (*Tannhäuser*), de Hagen (*Le crépuscule des Dieux*) et du Baron Ochs (*Le chevalier à la rose*). Il a enregistré entre autres le cycle de l'*Anneau*, *La force du destin* et *La traviata* de Verdi ainsi que les grands airs de *Boris Godounov* de Moussorgsky et du *Chevalier à la rose* de Strauss (pour Chandos en collaboration avec la Peter Moores Foundation).

David James a étudié le chant à Magdalen College à Oxford avant de devenir membre du chœur de l'Abbaye de Westminster. Il a remporté le Premier Prix du Concours 's-Hertogenbosch aux Pays-Bas en 1978 et se produit depuis sur la scène internationale à la fois comme soliste et comme membre d'ensembles comme The Sixteen, tout en tenant des grands rôles lyriques pour l'English National Opera, l'Haendel Opera, l'Opéra de Genève et le Festival d'Aldeburgh.

Membre fondateur de l'Hilliard Ensemble, David James donne une centaine de concerts par an avec ce groupe, dans un répertoire allant de la musique du Moyen-âge et de la Renaissance jusqu'aux œuvres contemporaines. Il a chanté dans le monde entier en soliste, se spécialisant dans la musique baroque et la

musique contemporaine. Il a enregistré entre autres *La passion selon saint Jean* et *La passion selon saint Matthieu* de Bach, *Le Messie* de Haendel et *Passio* de Pärt.

Sir Charles Mackerras naquit en 1925 aux Etats-Unis de parents australiens et fit ses études à Sydney et Prague. Il fit ses débuts de chef lyrique au Sadler's Wells, où il contribua à la première britannique de *Kát'a Kabanová* de Janáček, une création sensationnelle qui assura à Janáček de figurer au répertoire des troupes britanniques. Il fut Chef d'orchestre principal de l'Opéra de Hambourg (1966–1969) et directeur musical du Sadler's Wells Opera (qui deviendrait l'English National Opera) entre 1970 et 1977 et du Welsh National Opera entre 1987 et 1992, où ses productions remarquables de Janáček furent accueillies avec enthousiasme. La production et l'enregistrement d'*Osud* ont été financés par la Peter Moores Foundation, qui finança aussi l'enregistrement de *La petite renarde rusée*. Il est

chef d'orchestre honoraire du Scottish Chamber Orchestra et du Welsh National Opera, l'un des chefs réguliers de l'Opéra de San Francisco et, depuis la saison 1998–1999, directeur du St Luke's Orchestra à New York.

Sir Charles Mackerras a fait des recherches poussées sur l'interprétation aux XVIIIe et XIXe siècles qui ont profondément influencé la façon dont il aborde le répertoire aujourd'hui. Sa vaste discographie comprend un cycle primé des opéras de Janáček avec la Philharmonie de Vienne, *Gloriana* de Britten (primé par la revue *Gramophone*), des Symphonies de Beethoven, Brahms et Mahler, et avec l'English National Opera *Mary Stuart* de Donizetti et *La traviata* de Verdi.

Sir Charles Mackerras est Commander of the British Empire (CBE) depuis 1974 et a été anobli en 1979 pour services rendus à la musique. Il s'est vu également décerner la Médaille du mérite de la République tchèque et le titre de Companion of the Order of Australia.

Handel: Julius Caesar

Handel e l'opera ad arie

L'opera seria fu la creazione più importante e più prestigiosa del Barocco musicale. Senza le sue tecniche, convenzioni ed estetica gli oratori di Handel e la padronanza di Bach dell'aria e dell'ornamentazione melodica non avrebbero potuto avere lo sviluppo che ebbero. Eppure è solo recentemente che i nostri teatri lirici hanno cominciato a prendere seriamente l'opera seria nei suoi propri termini. Il pubblico, forse, imparerà a trovare una sorgente di forza nelle sue stesse "artificiosità" e "irrealità": più di qualsiasi altra forma d'arte l'opera ha bisogno delle sue convenzioni – una struttura predeterminata, un modello prevedibile dal quale possano esser fatte deviazioni significative. Eppure oggi, quando tutto è permesso, il melodramma può essere travasato come cemento armato in qualsiasi forma o stampo. Molti compositori moderni che si sono avventurati in campo operistico vi diranno con rammarico e tutta onestà di sentirsi incapacitati dall'inizio dalla mancanza di una qualsiasi lingua comune che congiunga scena e pubblico. In tale contesto la rigidità della convenzione barocca diviene una forza ben gradita.

È un po' paradossale che le più belle opere serie italiane dell'era barocca siano state scritte da un compositore sassone che viveva a Londra e che metteva in musica libretti quasi mai destinati specialmente per lui, in una lingua che non era la sua né era quella del suo pubblico (sebbene il pubblico di allora abbia probabilmente capito l'italiano meglio di un moderno pubblico inglese ed abbia avuto a disposizione un libretto bilingue). Ma l'isolamento di Handel gli diede certi vantaggi. Gli era assai più facile adattare libretti alla sua volontà, troncando i fini, e spesso verbosi, sentimenti dei recitativi per far posto ad arie più numerose e più estese – e, malgrado le erronee idee correnti, l'essenziale continuità dell'azione sta nella successione di arie e non nei recitativi. Handel sembra aver esercitato un assai maggior controllo sulla sua compagnia ed i suoi interpreti di quanto non sarebbe stato il caso in una tipica compagnia italiana ad una Corte dell'Italia o della Germania Meridionale: la Royal Academy of Music, sebbene godesse del patronato della Corte, era costituita – in tipica maniera britannica – in società anonima. Handel deve aver tratto inoltre prezioso

appoggio artistico dai più sagaci fra i suoi nobili patroni della Londra augustea, come il Conte di Burlington. È facile dimenticare, quando leggiamo gli spesso partigiani attacchi all'opera italiana da parte di scrittori come Addison e Steele, oppure resoconti della frivoltà del pubblico londinese, che le concezioni drammatiche di Handel erano più forti e più sottili delle loro, che egli non era stato nutrito con una dieta di Otway e Rowe, e che gran parte dei rilevanti saggi sull'estetica della pittura e della architettura che egli può aver letto in autori come Shaftesbury era assai pertinente all'alta descrittività dell'opera ad arie. La scelta del "momento significativo", l'esatto punto narrativo o singola crisi emotiva con cui deve trattare un quadro o un'aria; quale gesto, tono, tessitura o disegno occorrono ad illuminarli è il fulcro del metodo operistico handeliano che è, allo stesso tempo, altamente analitico e straordinariamente concentrato e appassionato.

I temi generali dell'opera seria ci possono oggi sembrare spesso irrilevanti. Sia che la trama si basi su un mito classico, storia medievale o fantasia epica l'argomento concerne essenzialmente il comportamento dei grandi e dei potenti, dei re, principi e duchi che avevano favorito la nuova arte e se n'erano serviti per celebrare le grandi occasioni a corte. Dietro ad

un tipico libretto di Handel possiamo scorgere le considerazioni morali e sociali degli antichi drammaturghi francesi, Corneille e Racine (l'uno mostra il volere dell'individuo che trionfa sulle tentazioni, l'altro il fallimento del volere e la distruzione dell'individuo). Come dovrebbero comportarsi i grandi della terra? Come dovrebbero usare il loro potere assoluto quando il dovere pubblico e l'amore privato vengono a conflitto? Come scegliersi una consorte? Come procedere affinché la loro *gloire* – il loro buon nome, reputazione, onore – continui a giustificare l'ammirazione e l'obbedienza dei loro sudditi e delle loro famiglie? Queste questioni erano di grande importanza in un'epoca di assolutismo illimitato, in cui matrimoni e le eredità potevano portare a conflitti dinastici come la guerra di successione spagnola. La rivoluzione francese e l'arrivo di una monarchia costituzionale e borghese naturalmente spogliarono l'opera seria, a questo livello, della massima parte della sua palese rilevanza contemporanea.

Pertanto Corneille e Racine si spinsero oltre i loro immediati argomenti verso verità universali, espresse in versi immortali ed in una potente rappresentazione drammatica, cosicché i loro drammi, superiori ai loro temi locali, ancora sopravvivono. Lo stesso dicasi dei melodrammi handeliani. Le singole arie,

naturalmente, non furono mai obliate, e molte sono state cantate come pezzi da concerto dal tempo in cui Walsh o Cluer le pubblicarono. Ciò detto, e in vista del fatto che le opere consistono di arie solistiche e pochissimo d'altro, ci sembrerà forse strano che sia stato necessario aspettare tanto a lungo per arrivare ad una giusta comprensione dei principi usati da Handel per descrivere i personaggi e per sistamarli in sequenze significativamente raggruppate, per costruire una scena, un atto, un'opera intera.

Il metodo è simile a quello di Hogarth. La sua famosa serie di quadri, presto tradotti in stampe ad alta tiratura, quali *La carriera di un libertino*, non hanno bisogno di narrazione né di "recitativo". Hogarth seleziona per la descrizione vari momenti significativi nella storia del Libertino o della Prostituta, sistemando intorno al suo personaggio centrale tale una dovizia di eloquenti dettagli – Rakewell che compra l'amore in un bordello, Rakewell che compra ammirazione sociale – di modo che noi, esaminando il dettaglio, diffondiamo l'immagine nella nostra mente al di là dei confini spaziali e temporali del quadro; l'intavolatura fra i singoli quadri, mentre procediamo dall'uno all'altro, si carica delle implicazioni della storia. Un simile parallelo può essere fatto con i metodi di

Richardson di narrazione analitica nel romanzo tramite una sequenza di lettere individuali.

Se esaminiamo la descrizione handeliana di Cleopatra tramite l'aria, forse con la Cleopatra shakespeariana nel fondo della nostra mente, arriveremo ad una migliore nozione dell'estetica e drammaturgia – largamente prive di documentazione – che guidarono i metodi di Handel. Egli la ritrae in una sequenza analitica di otto arie, due recitativi accompagnati ed un duetto, ogni pezzo ben sistemato con attenzione al contrasto e alla continuità, in mezzo ad una più vasta sequenza di una quarantina di pezzi, quasi tutti arie solistiche.

La sua prima aria, "Yet why despair?", è un *allegro* in tempo comune in mi, accompagnato da tutti i violini in unisono, sostenuti da viole e bassi. Le viole suonano solo nel tutti orchestrale, e nella sezione centrale anche i violini vengono eliminati. I principali temi musicali dell'aria, che insolitamente non sono derivati dalla linea vocale, la mostrano intenta a stuzzicare il suo odiato fratello, Tolomeo, schernendolo e dileggiandolo quale un giovane effeminato indegno di governare. L'effetto è raggiunto con note ripetute, enfatiche semiminime con mordenti e crome staccate che lasciano il passo a brevi frasi mordaci e fioriture ridenti. Persino la prevista fioritura su

parole come “heart” (cuore) e “console” (consolare) assume un tono di ironica canzonatura. Il dramma musicale dell’aria non è affatto statico malgrado le parole ripetute; fluisce e rifluisce con differenti sfumature di sentimento; e altrettanto si può dire di tutte le arie di Handel.

La successiva aria di Cleopatra (qui omissa) è anch’essa, come molte altre che seguiranno, in una tonalità pungente e brillante, la maggiore; è un *allegro* in 3/8 per la stessa combinazione di archi, ma Handel aggiunge un tono più profondo alla linea vocale orlandola con un oboe. Travestita da dama di corte Cleopatra è riuscita ad accaparrarsi il cuore di Cesare, e l’aria descrive il suo schietto compiacimento nel potere della sua bellezza sul conquistatore del mondo. È una danza di piacere e di ingenua auto-ostentazione, i suoi agili ritmi e brillanti catene di semicrome virando inaspettatamente avanti e indietro dal forte al piano, con una sezione più intima nel mezzo, accompagnata solo dai violini e basso. La sua terza aria è più morbida, un *allegro ma non troppo* in 6/8 in si bemolle. Ha tirato dalla sua parte Sesto e Cornelia perché l’aiutino nella sua contesa con Tolomeo, e ciò che era cominciato come un mero puntiglio, quasi un gioco, è ora cresciuto in una radicata speranza di liberare l’Egitto dal suo tirannico fratello e

conquistare sia il trono sia l’amore duraturo di Cesare. I violini nel registro alto, ora in unisono ora in terze cullanti, ci parlano della lontana stella della speranza, della tenera eccitazione del piacere e dell’amore che trovano matura gratificazione.

La prima aria dell’Atto II, elaboratamente accompagnata da tutte le Muse, è una seducente canzone d’amore, intesa a venerare e affascinare Cesare allo stesso tempo. È un *largo* in 3/4, in fa. Cleopatra ha un’aureola di nove strumenti solisti in scena (che includono tiorba e arpa); nella buca d’orchestra gli archi a quattro parti con sordina fanno eco agli adoranti sospiri d’ammirazione di Cesare, cadendo nel silenzio per la sezione centrale. Nell’aria successiva Cleopatra lo aspetta nei suoi appartamenti e prega Venere di prestarle tutti gli incantesimi di Cupido. Quest’aria è un *allegro* in 3/8 in la per violini e basso all’unisono, che si riducono a un violino solo quando entra la voce, poi al solo continuo durante la sezione centrale. La musica suggerisce un’incantevole invocazione alla madre dell’amore e allo stesso tempo un ritratto delle splendidi attrattive che Cleopatra spera di acquistare: giacché Cesare ignora la sua identità e lei vuole che lui la chieda in moglie nonostante gli appaia come una persona qualunque. Poco prima della prossima aria

Cesare è corso a difendersi da un perfido attacco che gli è stato lanciato di sorpresa dagli uomini di Tolomeo. Rimasta nell’incertezza e nell’ansia, e accorgendosi ora di amare profondamente Cesare, Cleopatra lancia un’angosciata preghiera per la sua salvezza: se lui muore, morirà anche lei. Frasi cadenti nel basso e trascinate sospensioni nei fagotti suggeriscono che Cleopatra si umilia dinanzi agli dei: crome palpitanti negli archi centrali sostengono brevi gesti spezzati nei primi violini, volta a volta disperanti ed imploranti, mentre la stessa Cleopatra ha una linea tematica del tutto indipendente nei suoi appelli all’aiuto divino. Il pezzo è un *largo* in tempo comune in fa diesis minore, concepito in maniera contrappuntistica e di tono molto bachiano.

Nell’Atto III Cesare è ritenuto morto, l’esercito di Cleopatra è stato sconfitto ed essa si aspetta di essere condannata a morte. Si ritorna alla tonalità di mi maggiore ed ad un *lento* 3/8 per il cocente dolore di “Flow, my tears”, aria famosa, che nella sezione centrale volge ad una emozione, tessitura e tempo diversi. La prima parte ha un flauto (che finora si è identificato con Cornelia, la vedova afflitta) che inargenta la linea dei primi violini, sostenuta solo dai secondi e dai bassi; al lamento di Cleopatra fa costantemente eco un rintocco di angoscia e di rimpianto: due note

in ascesa con la seconda ripetuta, che si sviluppano dal suo introduttivo intervallo di una terza (senza ritornello introduttivo) ad una quarta, una quinta ed infine un’ottava. La sezione centrale, un *allegro* in tempo comune, in cui essa furiosamente giura che il suo spirito tornerà dalla tomba per perseguitare Tolomeo, rimpiazza il flauto con un violoncello solo che evoca nei rapidi passaggi della linea vocale l’implacabile caccia al furfante al di là della morte; ciò tinge il ritorno della sezione introduttiva (resa più intensa da un’aggiunta ornamentazione, come ci si aspetta da tutte le riprese da capo) con un’ulteriore intensità ironica. L’aria finale di Cleopatra, con Cesare trionfante e Tolomeo praticamente distrutto, è un esempio dell’aria simile sulla sfruttata immagine della nave sbattuta dalle onde che arriva felicemente in porto. È un *allegro* in tempo comune nella introduttiva tonalità di Cleopatra in mi. Ma le “arie simili” di Handel sono invariabilmente anche ritratti del personaggio, e questa è un quadro della serena e luminosa delizia della futura regina, che diviene un giubilo intenso al pensiero dei pericoli scongiurati e delle gioie che il futuro prevede. I violini sono talvolta in unisono con la voce, e talvolta divisi, scavando nella sua calma gioia con tese crome ripetute. L’ultima volta che sentiamo Cleopatra è in un aureo

duetto con Cesare, nel quale gli amanti si scambiano il loro amore; questo duetto è in sol, un *allegro moderato* in 12/8 per violini divisi, oboi e basso, che si riducono al continuo solo per la sezione centrale; gli amanti cantano inoltre un trio in minore, con oboi e fagotto, nella bourrée finale.

Vediamo e sentiamo l'eroina di Handel, come quella di Shakespeare, in un'incomparabile varietà di umori, ognuno esplorato a fondo in un ritratto brillantemente concentrato ed epigrammatico, incorniciato da ritornelli orchestrali cangianti (in cui l'arte sta nella scrittura degli archi piuttosto che in un più spettacolare sfoggio di strumenti obbligati). I ritratti sono in contrasto fra loro e, naturalmente, ancora di più con la simile serie di arie per altri personaggi nella quale vengono incastrati, con un'arte del tutto paragonabile alla famosa *enchaînement de scènes* di Racine (l'allacciamento di una sequenza di scene). L'opera ad arie si sviluppa in modo perfettamente naturale come la quintessenza dei principali elementi espressivi e strutturali della musica barocca, usando un metodo analitico di presentazione che è altrettanto comune in altre forme d'arte del tempo. Forma e sostanza si unificano né deve crucciarsi il fatto che non ci sono finali concertati, né praticamente quasi nessuno ensemble. Persino

la psicologia della molto derisa "aria di congedo" è in effetti perfettamente valida: l'opera si scopre come una serie di crescendo, come onde di eccitazione drammatica, ognuno di essi termina in una crisi per uno dei personaggi che canta un'aria, dopo di che, per il momento, non c'è più nulla da dire fin quando una nuova sequenza di eventi non ha posto quel personaggio in una nuova situazione che richiede una nuova aria. (Nell'opera francese di quel tempo l'atto spesso comincia con l'aria, cosicché la successiva azione è appesa ad essa: in pratica ciò sembra psicologicamente meno soddisfacente). È stato tutto troppo facile, per gli ultimi due secoli, per storici e critici continuare a ripetere le censure di Gluck nei confronti dell'opera seria della metà del Settecento così come se fossero intese a riferirsi alle opere di Alessandro Scarlatti e di Handel, che probabilmente Gluck e certamente coloro che lo citano non avevano mai sentito. Può ben darsi che il "capriccio e la vanità dei cantanti" si fossero accresciute durante le annate magre della quarta e quinta decade del Settecento; ma il virtuosismo che le opere di Handel esigono non è mai vuoto. Egli scriveva per i più grandi cantanti del mondo, ma la loro superba tecnica vocale sarebbe stata inutile senza la veggenza drammatica e musicale e il senso dello stile che solo è capace

a rendere le "impossibili" convenzioni dell'opera seria non semplicemente possibili ma vitali e viabili per noi nel nostro tempo.

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Nota sull'edizione

Il *Giulio Cesare* non è soltanto una delle opere più note di Handel, è anche una delle più lunghe. Quando la English National Opera la mise in scena nel 1979 furono apportati vari tagli per ridurla a proporzioni maneggevoli per circostanze che non fossero quelle di un festival. Quando ci fu proposto di portare l'allestimento in uno studio di registrazione ci chiedemmo se non fosse il caso di registrare l'opera per intero, non essendo imposte le limitazioni di tempo che esistono in un teatro. Ciò avrebbe comportato, comunque, tante modifiche alla versione che non sarebbe più stata la stessa produzione dell'English National Opera che era stata vista e goduta da tanti amanti dell'opera. Fu esercitata immensa cura nel decidere quali delle arie dovessero essere tagliate per poter produrre una versione coerente e scorrevole del possente lavoro; alla fine decidemmo di lasciare le cose come stavano, restituendo solo due passaggi che erano stati tagliati nel corso delle prove: la sezione "B" e il da capo nel duetto finale e l'aria di Tolomeo dell'Atto II.

Le arie e duetti del *Julius Caesar* sono scritte in massima parte nella forma A–B–A da capo e questa forma è parte inerente dello stile operistico handeliano. Mi è parso quindi preferibile tagliare arie intere piuttosto che guastare il metodo tripartito di Handel. Di conseguenza Cesare, Cleopatra e Cornelia hanno ciascuno perso un'aria, Sesto ne ha perse tre e gli altri personaggi ne hanno perso due ciascuno. Un'intera scena, alla fine del secondo atto, è stata omessa e i recitativi, che portano avanti la storia, sono stati scorciati.

Tutti quelli che sono stati impegnati nella selezione della musica per questa produzione sperano che i drammatici contrasti di Handel, le sue sequenze di tonalità (nonostante certe trasposizioni per adattarle ad alcuni degli interpreti) e il flusso generale di questo grande capolavoro non siano stati troppo pregiudicati dai tagli che abbiano ritenuto necessario apportare per le ragioni pratiche summenzionate. L'ornamentazione dei ritornelli e le cadenze sono state affidate a più persone, inclusi gli stessi cantanti, come venne fatto al tempo di Handel. Questi abbellimenti sono stati scritti specificamente per adattarsi alle capacità degli interpreti dell'allestimento dell'English National Opera e per i personaggi che rappresentano. Non sono un tentativo di ricostruire la maniera in

cui un Senesino o un Cuzzoni avrebbero ornamentato le stesse arie.

Lo stesso Handel adattò la sua musica per accordarla a cantanti diversi e in effetti ricompose parti del *Giulio Cesare* quando il ruolo di Sesto venne cambiato da soprano (femminile) a tenore. Ci si chiede cosa avrebbe fatto se si fosse trovato di fronte al brillante registro acuto di Janet Baker, dopo avere originariamente composto il ruolo di Cesare per Senesino, un castrato a voce bassa con un registro di poco superiore all'ottava. Avrebbe ricomposto queste arie, splendidamente caratterizzate e così abbondantemente diverse, oppure le avrebbe *adattate* per accordarsi ad un diverso tipo di cantante? Purtroppo non abbiamo qui Handel a consigliarci o ad adattare il *Julius Caesar* per noi; di conseguenza, abbiamo dovuto farci coraggio e fare cambiamenti abbastanza notevoli nella tessitura e nelle tonalità delle arie di Cesare, particolarmente nei da capo.

Con lo stesso criterio le parti strumentali dell'orchestra sono state edite affinché i membri della English National Opera Orchestra potessero produrre il ritmo e l'espressione di un'orchestra del Settecento pur suonando su strumenti moderni. Un violoncello barocco è stato adoperato con il cembalo per accompagnare i recitativi, ed una

viola da gamba e una tiorba per il seducente accompagnamento in scena all'aria di Cleopatra nell'Atto II. Altrimenti l'orchestra consiste interamente di strumenti moderni, inclusi i flauti al posto dei flauti dolci (che si amalgamano bene solo con altri strumenti barocchi).

Le parte corali all'inizio e alla fine, più un breve coro rivoluzionario fuori scena, originariamente erano cantate da tutti i solisti (anche se alla fine due dei personaggi sono morti!). Infatti i loro *nomi* (Durastanti, Robinson, Berenstadt, ecc.) appaiono nella partitura originale invece delle *voci*. In ogni modo è stato ritenuto più appropriato rimpiazzare questo esiguo insieme vocale con un vero coro, seppure in proporzioni ridotte.

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La trama

La scena è in Egitto, in ed intorno ad Alessandria.

Atto I

Cesare è acclamato dalla folla egiziana. Promette la pace dietro richiesta della moglie di Pompeo, e del giovane figlio, Sesto. Il generale di Tolomeo, Achilla, si avvicina e dichiara l'amicizia di Tolomeo a Cesare. Per dimostrarla uno dei suoi seguaci si fa avanti con la testa di

Pompeo. I romani sono inorriditi e Cesare furiosamente denuncia la crudeltà di Tolomeo, ordinando ad Achilla di annunciare al suo capo il suo immediato arrivo. Nel suo dolore Cornelia cerca di uccidersi, ma Sesto e Curio glielo impediscono. Sesto, poi, l'assicura che venderà la morte di suo padre.

Cleopatra ha avuto notizia dell'uccisione di Pompeo e decide di farsi aiutare da Cesare a confermare la sua autorità assoluta su Egitto. Tolomeo la sorprende e deride la sua pretesa. Cleopatra suggerisce che Tolomeo potrebbe aver maggior successo con le donne che alla guida del suo popolo. Achilla riferisce a Tolomeo la reazione di Cesare al suo dono e giura che distruggerà Cesare purché Cornelia sia sua. Tolomeo promette di vendicarsi su Cesare per il suo insulto.

Cesare contempla l'urna che contiene le ceneri di Pompeo. Cleopatra gli si presenta nei panni della sua dama di compagnia, Lidia. Si appella a Cesare perché raddrizzi i torti fatti a Cleopatra da suo fratello e Cesare, sopraffatto dalla sua bellezza, acconsente di buon grado. Mentre Cleopatra sta per partire entra Cornelia che piange il consorte. Quando Cleopatra si accorge che Cornelia e Sesto hanno deciso di uccidere Tolomeo offre loro il suo aiuto, pur mantenendo il suo travestimento. Pregusta il successo e propone che il suo fido

consigliere, Nireno, li introduca nel palazzo.

Nonostante Tolomeo riceva Cesare in grande splendore, l'uno diffida dell'altro e Tolomeo progetta di uccidere Cesare quella stessa notte. Cesare intuisce l'inganno. Cornelia e Sesto vengono poi introdotti e Sesto sfida a duello Tolomeo. In risposta Tolomeo fa arrestare tutti e due, mandando Cornelia a lavorare nei giardini dell'harem come schiava ed imprigionando Sesto nel palazzo. Achilla dice a Cornelia che potrebbe renderle più facile la vita se lei lo amasse, ma Cornelia lo respinge con sdegno. Madre e figlio vengono separati l'uno dall'altra.

Atto II

Cleopatra ha preparato un trattenimento a sorpresa per Cesare. Gli si presenta in un giardino del palazzo come la Virtù in trono nel Parnasso, circondata dalle nove Muse, e canta la famosa aria, "Lamenting, complaining of Caesar's disdain". Cesare è incantato e seguendo Nireno entra nelle sue stanze.

Cornelia riflette con tristezza sulla sua disgrazia ma nulla potrebbe persuaderla ad accettare le proposte di Achilla. Manda in furia anche Tolomeo rifiutandosi di ascoltare le sue proteste d'amore. In disperazione è pronta a gettarsi alle tigri che stanno a guardia del serraglio. Improvvisamente entra Sesto che è

sfuggito alla prigionia e Cornelia è rinfrancata dalla sua determinazione di liberarla. Sesto giura di vendicarsi di Tolomeo.

Cleopatra attende Cesare ardentemente. Pretende di dormire mentre egli entra e così, nascostamente, lo sente dichiarare il suo amore per lei. Mentre egli parla di matrimonio, Cleopatra si sveglia: Cesare viene colto di sorpresa e la sua apparente riluttanza la sconvolge. In quel momento Curio li interrompe con la notizia che gli uomini di Tolomeo stanno perlustrando il palazzo con l'intento di uccidere Cesare. Cleopatra li sorprende rivelando la sua vera identità, ma neppure lei è in grado d'intercettare gli accoliti di suo fratello. Cesare asserisce il suo coraggio e corre a fronteggiare i suoi nemici. Cleopatra rimane in ascolto della mischia e prega per la salvezza di Cesare.

Atto III

Cesare è stato sopraffatto nella lotta ed erroneamente si ritiene che sia affogato in mare. Cleopatra ha dichiarato guerra a Tolomeo ma è stata sconfitta e catturata. Tolomeo denuncia la sua innaturale condotta e la pone in catene. In disperazione Cleopatra contempla la sua improvvisa disgrazia nel famoso lamento, "Flow, my tears".

Cesare ricorda la sua sconfitta e pensa a

Cleopatra. Curio e Sesto si avvicinano ma prima di vedere Cesare trovano Achilla che è mortalmente ferito. In punto di morte egli confessa di avere ucciso Pompeo e di avere tentato di assassinare Cesare. Racconta anche di aver voltato giubba quando Tolomeo gli ha rifiutato di portarsi via Cornelia promessagli in premio. Achilla poi consegna a loro un anello che darà loro il comando delle sue forze ed il permesso di entrare nel palazzo per uccidere Tolomeo. Cesare si avvanza ed afferra l'anello: i tre romani sono felicemente riuniti e decidono di andare a salvare Cornelia e Cleopatra.

Cleopatra esorta i suoi servitori a fuggire prima che suo fratello li faccia uccidere. Sente il fragore delle armi e si prepara alla morte, ma è Cesare che entra con la spada in mano per abbracciarla e portarla in salvo.

Dinanzi alle legioni e al popolo di Alessandria radunati Cesare viene salutato quale Imperatore di Roma. Sesto gli descrive come ha ucciso Tolomeo e Cornelia offre a Cesare le regie insegne d'Egitto. Volgendosi a Cleopatra Cesare l'incorona Regina d'Egitto ed insieme, in mezzo al giubilo generale, essi proclamano il loro eterno amore.

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Traduzione: Marcella Barzetti

Janet Baker ha cantato con i più insigni direttori ed orchestre del mondo e inciso dischi per tutte le principali compagnie. Nata nello Yorkshire ha iniziato i suoi studi con Helene Isepp e continuato poi con Meriel St. Clair. Nel 1956 vinse il secondo premio nel concorso Kathleen Ferrier e da allora ha acquistato fama internazionale di artista di pari rango in campo lirico, oratoriale e liederistico. Fra le sue interpretazioni degne di nota si includono il ruolo di Didone di Purcell a Aldeburgh con l'English Opera Group nel 1962, quello di protagonista ne *The Rape of Lucretia* di Britten (1964 e 1970) e di Kate in *Owen Wingrave*.

Per la Royal Opera House ha cantato Vitellia (*La clemenza di Tito*), e Alceste di Gluck; per Glyndebourne Diana/Jupiter (*La Calisto* di Cavalli), e Penelope (*Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* di Monteverdi); per la Scottish Opera Didone (*Les troyens* di Berlioz), e per la English National Opera il suo repertorio si è esteso da Monteverdi al *Werther* di Massenet includendo il *Mary Stuart* di Donizetti e Marguerite ne *The Damnation of Faust* di Berlioz. La sua interpretazione più recente per questa compagnia è stata in un'allestimento di *Mary Stuart*. Ha ricevuto numerose onorificenze, fra le quali il Premio Shakespeare di Amburgo nel 1971 e lauree honoris causa dalle università di Londra, Birmingham e Oxford. Nel 1970 ha

ricevuto il titolo di Commendatore (CBE) e quello di Dame Janet Baker (DBE) nel 1976. La sua cospicua discografia comprende l'*Ariodante* e il *Mary Stuart* di Donizetti, *Orfeo ed Euridice* di Gluck, *Lied von der Erde* di Mahler e numerosi dischi di recitals.

Christopher Booth-Jones è nato nel Somerset ed ha studiato alla Royal Academy of Music. Ha iniziato la sua carriera operistica cantando nelle tournées della Welsh National Opera for All ed in seguito per la Welsh National Opera, Glyndebourne Festival e Glyndebourne Touring Opera, Kent Opera e l'English Music Theatre. I suoi ruoli per la English National Opera hanno incluso Papageno, Dr. Falke, Schaunard, Silvio, Pantalone (*L'amore delle tre melarance*), Elviro (*Xerxes*), il Conte Almaviva (*Le nozze di Figaro*) e Giorgio Germont. Ha inoltre cantato per Opera North e per la Royal Opera, trasmette regolarmente sui canali 2, 3 e 4 radio della BBC e per le stazioni radio francesi e belghe. I suoi dischi includono *Carmen*, *Billy Budd*, *Pacific Overtures* di Sondheim e *Tosca* (per Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation).

Sarah Walker ha cominciato la sua educazione musicale studiando il violino al Royal College of Music e poi canto con Vera Rosza, con la

quale si è costruito un vasto repertorio che va da Bach e Monteverdi alle musiche del Novecento di compositori quali Berio, Boulez, Cage, Henze, Ligeti, Copland e Ives. La sua partecipazione in concerti è universalmente richiesta ed ha lavorato con Ozawa, Davis, Mackerras, Solti, Norrington, Boulez, Rozhdestvensky, Masur, Harnoncourt e Rattle.

Sarah Walker è strettamente legata alla Royal Opera House per la quale ha cantato i ruoli di Baba the Turk (*The Rake's Progress*), Charlotte (*Werther*), Mrs. Sedley (*Peter Grimes*) e in *The King Goes Forth to France* di Sallinen, *Taverner* di Maxwell Davies e *Sansone* di Handel. Le molte parti che ha interpretato per la English National Opera comprendono Maria Stuarda, Charlotte, la Contessa (*The Queen of Spades*), la parte di protagonista in *Gloriana* di Britten e Katisha (*The Mikado*). Ha inoltre cantato a Ginevra, San Francisco, Chicago, al Metropolitan di New York e a Glyndebourne, ed è assai nota nel campo della musica vocale da concerto. La sua discografia include *Peter Grimes*, *Roméo et Juliette*, *Sogno di una notte di mezza estate* di Mendelssohn, *La traviata* e *Martha* (*Faust* di Gounod per la Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation).

Della Jones, uno dei principali mezzosoprani britannici, è nata a Neath ed ha studiato al

Royal College of Music dove ha vinto numerosi premi, fra i quali la borsa di studio della Fondazione Kathleen Ferrier. Il suo vasto repertorio va dalla musica antica a quella contemporanea. Ha cantato con tutte le maggiori compagnie liriche britanniche, e all'estero negli Stati Uniti, Russia, Giappone, Canada e in tutta l'Europa. I suoi ruoli includono quelli di protagonista in *Ariodante*, *La Cenerentola* e *Carmen*, Rosina, Herodias (*Salome*), Baba the Turk (*The Rake's Progress*), Marcellina (*Le nozze di Figaro*), l'Ostessa (*Boris Godunov*) e Aunt Hermance in *Doctor Ox's Experiment*.

Della Jones svolge un'intensa attività in televisione e radio, in Gran Bretagna e all'estero; i suoi numerosi dischi comprendono *Alcina*, *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, *Didone ed Enea*, *La clemenza di Tito*, *Die Kathrin* di Korngold, *The Barber of Seville* (per la Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation).

Valerie Masterson è nata a Birkenhead ed ha studiato a Londra e a Milano. Ha cantato a Salisburgo per una stagione e poi è entrata a far parte della compagnia D'Oyly Carte Opera come soprano principale. Ha cantato con tutte le maggiori compagnie liriche britanniche e all'estero la sua carriera si è estesa su un vasto raggio che include Aix-en-Provence, Nancy,

Montpellier, l'Opera a Parigi, Toulouse, Bordeaux, Ginevra, Rouen, Praga, Dublino, Monaco di Baviera, Marsiglia, la Piccola Scala a Milano, Barcellona, Chicago, Philadelphia, Santiago, San Francisco, New York e Houston.

Il suo eclettico repertorio comprende le parti principali in *La traviata*, *Manon*, *Louise*, *Mireille*, *Die lustige Witwe* e *Semele*, Madame Lidoine (*Dialogues des carmélites*), Micaëla, Susanna e la Contessa Almaviva, Sophie e la Marescialla, Mimì, Marguerite (*Faust*), Antonia (*I racconti di Hoffmann*) e *The King Goes Forth to France* con la Royal Opera. Valerie Masterson appare regolarmente in televisione e nei programmi radiofonici; la sua discografia include *Elisabetta*, *regina d'Inghilterra*, *Das Rheingold*, *Götterdämmerung*, svariate operette di Gilbert e Sullivan e *La traviata*.

James Bowman è stato per quasi trentanni uno dei più insigni falsettisti del mondo. La sua carriera abbraccia l'opera, l'oratorio, la musica contemporanea e il repertorio vocale da camera. Ha cominciato a cantare nel coro della cattedrale di Ely, passando poi a Oxford dove ha fatto parte del coro della cappella. Ha debuttato a Londra nel 1967, invitato da Britten a cantare nel concerto d'inaugurazione della nuova Queen Elizabeth Hall. Subito

attivamente ricercato per ingaggi in campo lirico e concertistico è apparso al Sadler's Wells (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*), Glyndebourne (*La Calisto*), English National Opera (*Semele*) e alla Royal Opera (*Taverner*). All'estero ha cantato a Parigi, la Fenice, la Scala, Aix-en-Provence, l'Opera di Sydney e negli Stati Uniti.

James Bowman ha inciso più di 150 dischi, fra i quali *Death in Venice*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* e *Rejoice in the Lamb* di Britten, *Orfeo ed Euridice*, e l'*Orfeo* di Monteverdi.

John Tomlinson è nato nel Lancashire e si è laureato in ingegneria civile a Manchester prima di vincere una borsa di studio per il Royal Manchester College of Music. Ha cantato regolarmente con la English National Opera sin dal 1974 e con la Royal Opera dal 1976; ha cantato inoltre per Opera North, Scottish Opera, Glyndebourne Festival e Touring Operas e per Kent Opera. Fra i suoi primi ruoli figurano Figaro, Masetto, Hunding, Hagen, Pimen e Re Enrico (*Lohengrin*).

Ha cantato al Festival di Bayreuth sin dal 1988 nei ruoli di Wotan (*Das Rheingold* e *Die Walküre*), il Viandante (*Siegfried*), Titorel e Gurnemanz (*Parsifal*) e Re Marco (*Tristano e Isotta*). Altri ruoli includono Hans Sachs

(*Die Meistersinger*), Landgraf (*Tannhäuser*), Hagen (*Götterdämmerung*) e Baron Ochs (*Der Rosenkavalier*). La sua discografia include il ciclo del *Ring*, *La forza del destino* e *La traviata* di Verdi, brani dal *Boris Godunov* di Mussorgsky e *Der Rosenkavalier* di Strauss (per la Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation).

David James ha fatto parte del coro di Magdalen College di Oxford (dove è stato iscritto come Choral Scholar) ed in seguito di quello dell'Abbazia di Westminster. Ha vinto il primo premio del concorso di 's-Hertogenbosch in Olanda nel 1978 e da allora ha avuto un'attiva carriera internazionale come solista in recitals e complessi da camera, cantando con gruppi come The Sixteen, ed interpretando ruoli operistici di rilievo per la English National Opera, Handel Opera, l'opera di Ginevra e il Festival di Aldeburgh.

Membro fondatore del complesso Hilliard Ensemble, David James dà un centinaio di concerti all'anno con questo gruppo, eseguendo musiche medievali, del Rinascimento e contemporanee. Ha cantato ovunque in qualità di solista specializzandosi nelle musiche barocche e contemporanee. I suoi dischi comprendono *La passione secondo Giovanni* e *La passione secondo Matteo* di Bach, il *Messia* di Handel e *Passio* di Pärt.

Sir Charles Mackerras è nato nel 1925 negli Stati Uniti da genitori australiani ed ha studiato a Sydney e a Praga. In opera ha debuttato come direttore al Sadler's Wells Theatre dove diresse la sensazionale prima esecuzione britannica della *Káťa Kabanová* di Janáček, rappresentazione che inserì Janáček nel corrente repertorio britannico. È stato direttore stabile dell'opera di Amburgo dal 1966 al 1969 e direttore artistico del Sadler's Wells (poi English National Opera) dal 1970 al 1977 e della Welsh National Opera dal 1987 al 1992 per la quale diresse, fra l'altro, di nuovo Janáček con grande successo. L'allestimento e la registrazione di *Osud* vennero sponsorizzati dalla Peter Moores Foundation così come il disco de *La volpe astuta*. Sir Charles Mackerras è direttore ad honoris della Scottish Chamber Orchestra, direttore emeritus della Welsh National Opera, direttore principali della San Francisco Opera e dalla stagione 1998/99 direttore artistico dell'Orchestra of St. Luke's di New York.

Sir Charles Mackerras ha intrapreso estese ricerche nella pratica esecutiva della musica del Settecento e Ottocento esercitando profonda influenza nell'interpretazione dei nostri giorni. La sua vasta discografia include un assai premiato ciclo di opere di Janáček con l'Orchestra Filarmonica di Vienna, *Gloriana* di

Britten (che ha vinto un premio *Gramophone*) e con la English National Opera il *Mary Stuart* di Donizetti e *La traviata*.

Sir Charles Mackerras ha ricevuto l'onorificenza di Commendatore (CBE) nel

1974 e il titolo di Sir per la sua attività di musicista nel 1979. Gli è stata inoltre conferita la medaglia al merito della Repubblica Ceca ed è stato nominato Companion of the Order in Australia.



Valerie Masterson as Cleopatra and
Dame Janet Baker as Julius Caesar

Clive Barda/Performing Arts Library



Caesar and the Muses

Clive Barda/Performing Arts Library

COMPACT DISC ONE

1 Overture

Act I

Scene 1

Open country in Egypt, with an ancient bridge over a branch of the Nile

(Julius Caesar and Curio march over the bridge with their forces.)

Chorus

- 2** Caesar! Caesar! Egypt acclaims thee.
Glorious be thy name on this great day!
Vale and mountain sing thy praises:
Fear and grief have passed away.

Aria

Caesar

- 3** Kneel in tribute, fair land of Egypt:
Deck with palm-leaves your master's way.

Recitative

- 4** Curio, Caesar has come, has seen, has conquered,
and if Pompey, defeated, expects that Ptolemy,
the King of Egypt, will help restore his fortune,
he is deceived.

(Enter Cornelia and Sextus.)

Cornelia

My lord, Rome now owns her master. Even the
gods divide with you their empire. They have
decreed that of all the world's dominions Jove
shall rule the skies, Caesar the earth.

Caesar

What would you ask of Caesar, fair wife of
vanquished Pompey, noble Cornelia?

Cornelia

Let warfare now cease!

Sextus

Hang up your trophies in the temple, sheathe
your sword, disband all your legions!

Caesar

He conquers twice, who shows mercy to the
conquered. Send Pompey hither. Let him
embrace me; our hatred, our war shall be
forgotten; and in defeat Pompey shall conquer
his conqueror.

(Enter Achilles, leading a band of Egyptians carrying covered basins of gold.)

Achillas

Great Caesar! My master Ptolemy offers you his
kingdom for your repose and your enjoyment,
and so that the world may know you are its
master, in token of his friendship and his
allegiance King Ptolemy lays at your feet as a
foundation for your throne the haughty head of
Pompey your enemy.

(One of the Egyptians uncovers a charger, on which stands the severed head of Pompey.)

Caesar

What gift is this?

Sextus

Oh heavens, what horror!

Cornelia

Alas, what anguish! O my husband!

(She swoons.)

Sextus

Pompey, my father! Ah wretched mother!
Oh heavens!

Caesar

We shall give him a burial befitting his greatness,
both as a warrior and as a Roman.

(Caesar weeps.)

Achillas

My master...

Caesar

And you, tempt not my wrath! Leave us.

Achillas

Caesar, restrain your anger!

Caesar

Go! I shall reach your master's palace tonight at
sunset! Let him beware my coming.

(Exeunt Achilles and Egyptians.)

Aria

Caesar

- 5** Tyrant, avoid my sight,
Monster compact of spite,
Who rules by fear and force!

None can deserve a throne
Who worships hate alone,
Whose heart knows no remorse!

da capo

(Exit Caesar. Cornelia revives.)

Recitative

Sextus

- 6** Mother!

Curio

Cornelia!

Cornelia

Oh heavens! Must I still live? Let me silence the
heart in my breast with one merciful stroke.

(Curio prevents her from snatching Sextus's sword in order to kill herself.)

Curio

Never! This sword was not forged to be stained
with innocent blood!

(Exit Curio.)

Sextus

Mother!

Cornelia

Sextus, my dearest!

Sextus

What shall we do, surrounded by our enemies,
you without a husband, I without a father?

Aria

Cornelia

- 7** Grief and woe all hope deny me;
Death would free me from my sorrow,
Yet alas, I may not die.

Though I mourn, though sorrow try me,
Though I weary of complaining,
Welcome Death will ne'er draw nigh.

da capo

(Exit.)

Recitative
Sextus

- [8] The time for tears is over; henceforth my only thought shall be to avenge my father: to summon all my fury and exact a fitting vengeance, to visit on the tyrant a hero's murder.

Aria

- [9] Come rouse yourselves to vengeance,
Furies, with hatred fire me,
That while he yet draws breath
No fear affright me!

Father, your spirit stays me;
You comfort and inspire me
And tell me: 'Avenge my death,
Sextus! Requite me!'

da capo

(Exit.)

Scene 2

A room in the palace

(Cleopatra, attended by Egyptian maidens)

Recitative
Cleopatra

- [10] You shall be Queen, Cleopatra, and crowding

round your throne your subjects will acclaim you. Arab and Syrian, all shall adore the crown upon your brow. Come, my friends, whoe'er among you has the will and the courage to help me gain a throne, let them swear on my right hand eternal allegiance.

(Enter Nirenus.)

Nirenus

My Queen, I bring unhappy tidings.

Cleopatra

What tidings? Speak out!

Nirenus

King Ptolemy has beheaded the vanquished Pompey and sent the severed head to conquering Caesar.

Cleopatra

So! Pray leave me, my friends.

(Exeunt maidens.)

Nirenus, stay. I have resolved to visit this mighty Caesar in his quarters, and you, Nirenus, shall attend me as my escort. Caesar will make me welcome, and Ptolemy will lose his kingdom. He is my younger brother. I am the lawful Queen of Egypt.

(Enter Ptolemy.)

Ptolemy

You, lawful Queen of Egypt, proud Cleopatra, my sister?

Cleopatra

I demand what is mine. The crown of Pharaoh descends to me by right, and I claim my inheritance. No boyish youth is fit to run this kingdom! Stay in your harem, and I will rule over Egypt.

Aria

Cleopatra

- [11] Yet why despair? Who knows?
Though kingdom pass you by,
You'll gain a maiden's heart.

Pursue some blushing rose,
And let her roguish eye
Console a lover's smart.

da capo

(Exit with Nirenus. Enter Achilles.)

Recitative

Achillas

- [12] Pharaoh, my King!

Ptolemy

Achillas! I trust Caesar welcomed the gift that we sent him?

Achillas

He refused it.

Ptolemy

Refused it?

Achillas

He said that you were hasty and ill advised.

Ptolemy

A Roman dares thus insult me?

Achillas

I have a plan, Sire, to teach him better manners. I here make promise that I will lay his lifeless body at your feet, provided that you grant me, as my reward, the hand of Pompey's widow.

Ptolemy

So be it, your timely counsel shall guide my actions. Go now, make all ready, then return here.

(Exit Achilles.)

Presumptuous Caesar shall die – his haughty head shall lie beneath my feet. Rome then, which long he has oppressed, shall regain her freedom. Caesar living may destroy me: Caesar dead shall secure my throne for ever!

Aria

- [13] Upstart, barbarian and traitor!
What folly could be greater
Than to alarm a king
And rouse my anger?

He dies that would oppose me,
Dies ere he overthrows me,
While yet his hungry heart
Foresees no danger.

da capo

Scene 3

Caesar's camp. An urn containing the ashes of Pompey the Great, standing above a high heap of trophies
(Enter Caesar.)

Recitative

Caesar

- [14] Spirit of mighty Pompey, who over these poor ashes all unseen still dost hover, your trophies are but a shadow of your past triumphs, as you yourself are. To this empty conclusion man's glory shrivels. Yesterday his stride spanned a world of warring empires; today, consumed to ashes, an urn confines him. Even so for all men, alas, our beginning is clay, our ending mere dust. Ah, life is wretched! How frail is man's existence! Born from a breath, a breath of air destroys him.
(Curio enters.)

Curio

A nobly born young maiden here at hand asks audience with Caesar.

Caesar

Let her approach.

(Enter Cleopatra in disguise and Nireus with escort.)

Cleopatra

Along with my companion, I serve Cleopatra. My name is Lydia: I was born here in Egypt of high and noble lineage, but Ptolemy the usurper has cruelly robbed me of my fortune.

Caesar (aside)

How can so much beauty combine in one fair face?

(to Cleopatra)

Is King Ptolemy such a tyrant?

Cleopatra (kneeling)

I kneel here before you and before Rome too; grieving, afflicted and in tears, I ask you for justice.

Caesar (aside)

Ah Gods! Who could resist her?

(He raises up Cleopatra.)

Most unfortunate lady, in but a moment I go to Pharaoh's palace. This very night your wrongs shall be righted.

Cleopatra

My lord, your grace and kindness bind me to your service!

Caesar

Your beauty binds me to yours.

(Exit.)

Nireus

Cleopatra, you have conquered, and the power of your beauty has made Caesar himself your willing servant. Whatever you desire, Caesar will grant it. But see, a woman in great anguish, with weary footsteps and woe in every feature, walks here towards us.

Cleopatra

I can see from her bearing this is a noble woman.

Let us watch from a distance to learn why she is grieving.

(They retire. Enter Cornelia.)

Aria

Cornelia

- [15] Here within thee, O friendly marble,
Lies enshrined my joy, my treasure.

Recitative

Cornelia

- [16] Alas! Reviled and neglected, must I remain here for ever? Ah no, among these weapons a dagger I shall find to suit my purpose. Now let me seek out Ptolemy, there, in his palace...

(Cornelia has no sooner taken a dagger from the pile of trophies, than Sextus enters.)

Sextus

Stay! What would you do?

Cornelia

Leave me to my purpose! I will seek my revenge on the black-hearted tyrant who murdered your father.

Sextus

That is a duty which falls to me alone!

(Sextus takes the dagger from Cornelia.)

Cornelia

No, my son, I'm not afraid: I will come with you.

Sextus

Wait, consider, he is well guarded: who will assist us?

(Cleopatra enters impetuously.)

Cleopatra

Cleopatra!

Nireus

Remember your disguise.

Cleopatra

Cleopatra and Lydia, we both wish him dead. The King has wronged me! He's a usurper and a tyrant. I was given the name of Lydia and serve Queen Cleopatra. If by virtue of your courage she gains the throne, rewards await you, and I shall play my part.

Cornelia

Who will take us before the King?

Cleopatra

Nireus, Cleopatra's friend and faithful servant. His counsel will guide you to sure success.

(Exeunt Cornelia, Sextus and Nireus.)

Let my brother beware! Can he hope to escape me when I unleash against him the anger of a Caesar and the fury of Pompey's widow and valiant son? Let him look to his safety, if he'd rule here alone as King of Egypt!

Aria

- [17] O star of my desire,
Fond hope, shine on to guide me!
So bright, so fierce your fire,
My heart with joy doth glow.

My constant faith enduring
To sure success will lead me.
The power of Love's alluring
The days to come will show.

da capo

Scene 4

A hall in the palace of the Ptolemies

(Caesar, attended by Romans; Ptolemy and Achilles, attended by Egyptians)

Recitative Ptolemy

- [18] Caesar! A generous destiny has placed a thousand sceptres in your all-conquering hand.

Caesar

Your splendour, illustrious Ptolemy, leaves me amazed. In truth I cannot tell which luminary sheds the brighter radiance: the sun on high or royal Ptolemy here below. Be warned though; one evil deed beclouds all the world in shadow.

Achillas *(aside to Ptolemy)*

The upstart dares insult you to your face!

Ptolemy

Pray allow these my guards to act as your escort to your apartments, where my servants await you. *(aside)*

Villain, this very night I shall have him at my mercy.

Caesar *(aside)*

None but a fool would trust him for a moment.

Aria

Caesar

- [19] How silently, how slyly,
When once the scent is taken,
The huntsman tracks the spoor!
A traitor shrewd and wily,
Ne'er lets his prey awaken
Unless the snare be sure.

da capo

(Exit. Cornelia and Sextus enter.)

Recitative

Achillas

- [20] Sire, with Sextus her son, the lady Cornelia.

Cornelia

You have murdered the mighty Pompey, who long years since, with his own hand, placed the crown of Egypt on your royal father's brow. Not only was he a Roman, he was your guest.

Sextus

Villain! I challenge you to meet me in single combat!

Ptolemy

Enough! Take this foolish boy, confine him in the palace. And her, take her off to the gardens, there as a slave to labour with the menials, –

(aside to Achilles)

– but not for long. If she has won your heart, why then you shall have her.

Achillas

How happy you make me!

(Exit Ptolemy.)

Cornelia, your lovely eyes have captured my heart. When in good time you look on me with favour, why then we shall be married, and with your son you shall regain your freedom.

Cornelia

Silence! I, a Roman, wife to vile Egyptian?

Sextus

She, marry you? Ah no! Sooner shall death...

Achillas

Guards, here. The King has ordered that he shall be kept in confinement. Take him into the palace.

Cornelia

Ah, do not part us. Let me go with him, my son, my dearest Sextus.

Achillas

You must remain here. Think well, you have no hope of mercy except through me, but in turn you must show mercy to one who loves you.

Aria

- [21] Ne'er reject a tender lover,
Flaming eyes forget your fire.
No! No!

But be kind, you'll soon discover,
Love returned begets desire.

da capo

(As the guards try to lead Sextus away, Cornelia takes him by the arm, and prevents them from doing so.)

Recitative

Sextus

- [22] Mother!

Cornelia

My dearest!

Sextus

Farewell!

Cornelia

Villains, barbarous villains! Where do you mean to take him? Wretches! Ah stay! I beg you grant me a moment, that we may take a last embrace. Ah, Sextus!

Duet

Cornelia

- [23] Condemned to grieve and cry,
My love, my consolation
Forever I shall mourn.

Sextus

Condemned to weep and sigh,
My love, my consolation
Forever I shall mourn.

Cornelia and Sextus

How fate our love betrays,
Serene and golden days,
No more will you return!

da capo

COMPACT DISC TWO

ACT II

Scene 1

A delightful grove of cedars with a 'prospect' of Mount Parnassus which will later open to reveal the Kingdom of Virtue

(Enter Cleopatra and Nirenus.)

Cleopatra

- [1] Have you done as I ordered, faithful Nirenus?

Nirenus

Your commands are fulfilled.

Cleopatra

And has Caesar arrived?

Nirenus

He is within, but soon he will be coming to look for Lydia.

Cleopatra

But tell me, is all ready for the scene that we have planned?

Nirenus

Behind the curtain your magic palace blazes with light. But what is your intention?

Cleopatra

You must wait here for Caesar to arrive. When he has seen our entertainment you'll show him the way to my apartments and you will say that before the day is ended Lydia will come to tell great Caesar what wrongs the unjust Ptolemy has done her.

(Exit Cleopatra. Enter Caesar)

Caesar

Where is she, Nirenus? You said she would be waiting.

Nirenus

The Lady Lydia will shortly attend you, my lord.

(The sound of a delightful symphony of many instruments is heard.)

Caesar

Listen!

Nirenus

What is this?

Caesar

Heavens! What ravishing music descends from the spheres to steal away my soul!

(Here Parnassus opens to reveal Virtue enthroned, attended by the nine Muses.)

Caesar

Eyes, what have you seen? Since when, in such glorious radiance, have the Gods walked this earth?

Aria

Cleopatra

- [2] Lamenting, complaining
Of Caesar's disdain,
No comfort obtaining,
I languish and die.

Yet cannot give over,
My grief to discover,
For never was lover
So wretched as I.

Recitative

Caesar

Great Jove in his heaven has no melody to equal such peerless singing.

Aria

Cleopatra

Lamenting, complaining
Of Caesar's disdain,
No comfort obtaining,
I languish and die.

Recitative

Caesar

- [3] Fly then, fly, O my heart, towards that sweet enchantment. How the gods in heaven must envy me my fortune!

(As Caesar runs towards Cleopatra, Parnassus closes.)

Nirenus

My Lord, did you hear her? What think you of the Lady Lydia?

Caesar

She has, indeed, the voice of a Goddess! Lead me to her apartments, for I must see her; the thought of her makes sweet my lonely existence.

Aria

- [4] Fleet o'er flowery meadow gliding
Flies the lark in silence winging:
Then, in hiding,
How he charms us with his art!

Ah, to hear fair Lydia singing!
Ear and eye, alike enraptured,
Melt with longing!
Swiftly captured
Is every heart.

da capo

Scene 2

The garden of the Seraglio, surrounded by an enclosure where wild beasts are kept

Aria

Cornelia

- [5] Still despairing, still lamenting,
All my joy is fled for ever.

(Achillas enters.)

Recitative

Achillas

- [6] Lady, forget your grieving. Though your fate now seems harsh, you soon could change it.

Cornelia

My fate is despair, anguish my destiny.

Achillas

If you could find it in your heart to accept what I offer, I could save you and your son from all your misery.

Cornelia

No more; never use such words to me again.

(As Cornelia escapes, she meets Ptolemy, who takes her hand.)

Ptolemy

Lady, pray why so angry?

Cornelia

I beg you, leave me alone.

Achillas

Master, I entered here to try to soften the hard heart of her I love.

Ptolemy

It would seem you have failed.

Achillas

She rejects me still; my heart is broken.

Ptolemy

Cornelia, you are too proud.
(*He takes Achilles to one side.*)
Meanwhile, Caesar lives?

Achillas

My Lord, this very night his body will lie at your feet; insult avenged, you will rule in Egypt for ever.

Ptolemy

Go then, see it done; remember, the fair Cornelia is your reward.

(*Exit Achilles.*)

Fair one, how can you hate him whom your charms have enslaved?

Cornelia

He is a villain, unworthy of woman's love.

Ptolemy

Can such a lovely face offer no hope of comfort?
With all your beauty...

Cornelia

Leave me! Has your lust deprived you of reason?
Am I not Cornelia? Am I not a Roman?

Ptolemy

Dare you refuse a King? Vain, foolish woman.
I shall use force, since prayers cannot move you.
If I cannot make you love me, I'll teach you to fear me.

Aria

Ptolemy

[7] Deep within my bosom burning,
Furious flames of hatred play.

Each rejection, every spurning,
I'll repay
With bitter smart.

da capo

(*Exit.*)

Recitative

Cornelia

[8] So why delay? Now that he has left, one course alone remains to save my honour; beyond these high walls, guarding the seraglio, wild creatures lie in wait. I will throw myself down; I am not afraid to die. What should I live for? Farewell great Rome, farewell dear Sextus! O Death! Come swiftly!

(*Enter Sextus.*)

Sextus

Mother stay! What would you do?

Cornelia

What voice called me back?

Sextus

Mother!

Cornelia

Mother? My son? Sextus! Sextus, my dearest!
But how did you escape?

Sextus

I could not leave you in this palace of lust. With Nireus to guide me I soon found an entrance.

Cornelia

If the guards find you here, they will put you to death.

Sextus

When sacred vengeance calls me, why should I fear to die? One of us must perish, either Sextus or Ptolemy.

Aria

Cornelia

[9] Sigh no more, forget lamenting!
Now the gods, at last relenting,
Turn in anger on the tyrant,
Visit him with fire avenging.
Mariners, when storms assail them,
Ne'er abandon hope of haven:
Kindly Neptune will not fail them,
Joy's reward for fear exchanging.

da capo

Recitative

Sextus

[10] He is no son who seeks not full revenge for the murder of his father. So, on to retribution! Justice strengthen my arm; though I myself may die, first dies the tyrant!

Aria

Sextus

[11] Wounded, the serpent ne'er reposes,
Ere his venom spread its anguish
Through the body of his foe.

My right arm shall never languish
Till my sword has proved its valour:
On my dagger blood will flow.

da capo

Scene 3

A delightful chamber

Recitative

Cleopatra

[12] Soon he will come to find me, the idol of my heart, Caesar, beloved! He knows that Lydia awaits him and that Lydia adores him; I must discover if he loves me in return. He shall find me here asleep, and sleeping by my side, with his eyes closed like mine, he will find Cupid!

Aria

[13] Venus, fair lady,
One favour send me:

I pray you lend me
All charming graces
That crown Cupid's art!

Can you deny me?
Ah, never fly me,
Till I've enchanted
His kingly heart!

da capo

(As Caesar enters, Cleopatra pretends to be asleep.)

Recitative

Caesar

- ¹⁴ Ah, gods! What do I see? My love lies here sleeping? Charming Lydia, I adore you. Ah, if you gained an inkling, if one spark were to touch you, from the raging fire burning within me, you would know that one day the changes of fortune might place you at my side, my wife, perhaps my empress.

Cleopatra

Your wife? I shall love you till I die.

Caesar

My dear!

Cleopatra

Have I displeased you?

Caesar

You are very young, a servant here in the palace.
You know not what you say.

Cleopatra

I see that my words have angered you. You like

me less when I'm awake. Since I'd rather you loved me, I'll go to sleep again.

(Enter Curio, sword in hand.)

Curio

Caesar, you are betrayed.

Caesar *(drawing his sword)*

Betrayed?

Curio

I had gone to your rooms, my lord, when I heard voices. There was a shouted command: 'Find Caesar and kill him.' When I discovered you had come here, I came straightway to warn you.

Caesar

It is true then that Egypt is governed by murderers? Lady, remain here; we must part till these traitors are defeated.

Cleopatra

Stay my lord! Do not go, or I shall die!

Caesar

Leave me, Lydia!

Cleopatra

Not Lydia! I shall fly to the battle at your side. In the fiercest of the fight you will find Cleopatra!

Caesar

Cleopatra?

Cleopatra

Caesar, look with those dear eyes that I adore, and be not so amazed, beloved; I am Cleopatra, not Lydia as you thought me.

Caesar

You, Cleopatra? I can hardly believe it.
(aside)

Poor, foolish heart, what have you done? Lydia is Cleopatra? And you have spurned her? Ye gods!

Cleopatra

Caesar, fly while you may! The murderers are coming hard at our heels. Fly before they find you!

Caesar

So! Not even Cleopatra, not even the Queen, can save me from these villains.

Cleopatra

I cannot shield you. These are desperate men, suborned by Ptolemy.

Caesar

Then let them try me! I'm ready; Caesar has never yet refused a battle.

Aria

- ¹⁵ In anger and fury
I'll turn on the foe
The strength of my arm.

(Exit Caesar and Curio.)

Chorus *(offstage)*

Kill him, Caesar, kill him! Kill him! Kill him!

Recitative

Cleopatra

- ¹⁶ They will kill him. Oh heavens! Ah me, I too shall die! Cowardly woman, what have you said? Have courage! If Caesar comes to harm,

Cleopatra shall avenge him. To the ends of the earth I shall pursue them. But now. O gods above who rule the heavens, be at hand to defend him! My dear! My only love, my hope, my comfort!

Aria

- ¹⁷ Hear my prayer, O gods, relenting,
Spare my love, or I shall die.
Grant relief to all my torments
Or my soul to death shall fly.

COMPACT DISC THREE

Act III

Scene 1

An anchorage near Alexandria

- ¹ **Symphony**

(To the sound of war-like symphony there follows the battle between the forces of Cleopatra and Ptolemy, in which the latter are victorious and Achilles mortally wounded; after the Symphony, enter Ptolemy, with Cleopatra as his prisoner.)

Recitative

Ptolemy

- ² So! You are beaten! At the first sight of my all-conquering sword the Romans scatter.

Cleopatra

It was not Ptolemy who defeated me. I am betrayed by blind Fortune, who unjustly protects you, without honour, without reason, and without justice.

Ptolemy

Enough! I am your master, and from henceforth
you defy me at your peril!
(*to the guards*)
Place the traitress in fetters.

Cleopatra

Cruel brother! The Gods will punish your
tyrannies.

Ptolemy

Away! I here disown you! No more are you my
sister. Take her off to the prison, where she shall
atone for each crime and each insult, and there,
beneath my throne, she'll beg for mercy.

Aria

- [3] I shall tame your pride unbending,
Rack and scourge you with pain unending:
You'll learn to fear me when I frown.

Like an eagle you would fly
To snatch the sun from heaven's eye:
But I'll clip your wings and bring you down.

da capo

(*Exit Ptolemy. Cleopatra, alone with her guards*)

Recitative

Cleopatra

- [4] And so in one brief hour all my glory is gone?
Ah, cruel Fortune! Caesar, my only love, he too
has perished. Cornelia and Sextus are also
captive, and cannot hope to assist me. Ah,
heaven! No comfort, no hope is left me; my life
is ended.

Aria

- [5] Flow, my tears, cease not your grieving;
Though my sorrow be past relieving,
While I breathe still let me mourn.

I shall haunt him, sleeping, waking,
As a spectre my vengeance taking,
Till with terror his heart is torn.

da capo

(*Exit Cleopatra. Enter Caesar, from the other side –
with Curio, who goes off to spy out the land.*)

Recitative

Caesar

- [6] From the perils of the ocean I am cast ashore in
safety. The Gods still protect me. The time has
not yet come for the hand of fate to end my
wretched life. Where can I turn? What friend
have I to help me? What is left of my army, my
invincible legions, which so often in the past
have brought me victory? Vanquished, and alone
in this desert, must the master of an empire
defenceless wander?

Aria

- [7] Zephyrs!
Zephyrs, come to mine aid!
Relieve my desolation!
Inspire with consolation
My heart forlorn!

Tell me,
Tell me of her, my love!
Say that no fear will harm my dearest!

Recitative

But look! All around I see scattered weapons
and bodies that stain the sand with blood!
We fought in vain, then, and all is lost.

da capo

(*Enter Sextus and Nirenus.*)

Recitative

Sextus

- [8] Nirenus, the battle is fought and lost. Ptolemy
has conquered; we come too late.
Achillas (*mortally wounded*)
Cruel fortune, I am dying!

Sextus

A cry: who calls us?

Achillas

Is there no justice in heaven?

Caesar

Who are these? Two warriors, another lying
wounded. Who can they be? Let me hear further.

(*He retires to one side.*)

Curio

Achillas, have courage!

Achillas

I know not who you are, although you treat me
as a friend and call me by my name. But ah! if by
chance kind fate should guide your footsteps so
that one day you meet with the Lady Cornelia,
great Pompey's widow, tell her, that same

Achillas, who brought about her noble husband's
death and who, led on by hopes of marrying her,
conspired to murder Caesar, spurned at the last
by him he sought to serve, he turned his sword
on King Ptolemy, fought against the tyrant, but
fought in vain, and perished. Take this ring from
my finger. In a cave beyond this hill a hundred
faithful warriors still await my orders. Show them
this and they'll obey you. At your command
they'll lead you to the palace, where they know a
secret entrance, and once inside you may rescue
Cornelia, then kill the King!
(*He gives the ring to Sextus.*)
Though I die first, he'll follow.

(*He dies.*)

Caesar (*taking the ring*)

Give that ring to me.

Sextus

Ah gods!

Caesar

Who is this?

Sextus

My lord!

Caesar

You? Sextus?

Sextus

You are alive, Caesar, and unharmed. We all
thought you dead!

Caesar

Not so! I swam to the shore and thus escaped.
But now he's dead his villainy can help us.

(*to Curio*)

Seek out his men: they'll lead us to the palace.

(*to Sextus*)

You and Nireus follow. If now at last we cannot
rescue your mother and Cleopatra, we are not
Romans.

Aria

- [9] See in spite the high cataract storming:
All in terror must fly from its path.
So in terror flies the foe before me,
When I brandish this sword in my wrath.

da capo

Scene 2

Cleopatra's apartments

(*Cleopatra with guards, surrounded by her
handmaidens, who are weeping*)

Recitative

Cleopatra

- [10] Ladies, my faithful servants, pray weep no
longer; the time for tears is over. You must not
stay here. My cruel, treacherous brother, who has
usurped my kingdom, will take me from you;
from me he takes my life.
(*The clash of weapons is heard within.*)
The sound of swords... they are coming. Ah yes,
he takes me from you! And so, proud Cleopatra,
now die! Die bravely...

Caesar

At last I find you! You are safe, my dearest love!

Cleopatra

Caesar! It cannot be!

Caesar

Dearest! At last I hold you! I feared I came too
late. Your brother meant to murder you.

Cleopatra

Tell me, how were you rescued?

Caesar

There will soon be time to tell you the story of
my adventures. Meanwhile you are free. Go with
my men to the harbour, where Curio is rallying
our scattered troops, and wait for me there. Mars
calls me to battle. In your name I must conquer
the whole of Egypt; not only Egypt, a world is
waiting to be won, waiting for the man who
dares accept its challenge.

(*Exit, with his soldiers.*)

Aria

Cleopatra

- [11] Stormy winds my ship had shaken:
Safe to harbour now I'm sailing,
To the crown of all desire.

So my heart by grief o'ertaken,
Safe enfolded now in love unfailing,
May at last to joy aspire.

da capo

Scene 3

The harbour of Alexandria

- [12] **Symphony**

(*Caesar, Cleopatra, attended by Egyptians with
trumpets and drums; after the Symphony, enter
Curio and Nireus; and later Sextus and Cornelia,
with a page carrying Ptolemy's sceptre and crown.*)

Recitative

Nireus (*addressing Caesar*)

- [13] Here, Curio and your legions, there, all Egypt
assembled: the multitude acclaim you, Caesar,
with one accord, Emperor of Rome, great lord of
all the universe!

Caesar

Your faithful service shall not go unrewarded,
worthy Nireus. Curio, your skill and your
valour place all Rome in your debt.
(*Cornelia and Sextus kneel.*)

Cornelia and Sextus?

Sextus

My lord, kneeling before you, you see the son of
Cornelia and Pompey. I, at last, with my sword,
have avenged my father's death on the head of his
murderer, and killed in single combat Ptolemy of
Egypt.

Caesar

A mighty deed in one so young.

Cornelia

My son has indeed slaughtered the tyrant who
threatened my honour, perhaps even my life.

Caesar

It is fitting that a son avenge his father's death.
Rise, Lord Sextus, and as a friend let me embrace
you.

Sextus

I swear my lord to serve you in true allegiance.

Cornelia

We have brought to great Caesar the sceptre and
the crown of the infamous Ptolemy.
(*She gives the crown and sceptre to Caesar.*)

Caesar

My lovely Cleopatra, the diadem of the Pharaohs
is yours by right. Soon I will place it on your
brow; henceforth as Queen of Egypt you shall
rule this great kingdom in honour and justice.

Cleopatra (*kneeling*)

Caesar, to you alone I owe this great kingdom.
And so as Queen of Egypt I kneel in homage to
the Emperor of the Romans.

Caesar (*raising her*)

It is I who should kneel, my love, my dearest!

Duet

Cleopatra

- [14] Dearest!

Caesar

Fairest!

Cleopatra and Caesar

My love, forever mine,
Shine on, forever shine,
In grace and beauty.

May peace and joy depart,
If e'er my loving heart
Forget her duty.

da capo

Recitative
Caesar

- [15] Long, long may Egypt continue to enjoy her new-found liberty. Throughout the world, from one end unto the other, may the glorious name of Rome spread peace and justice.

Ensemble
Chorus

- [16] Proclaim we all great Caesar's glory:
Let all unite in love and joy!
O'erthrown is Pharaoh's cruel fury,
And peace eternal we enjoy.

Duet

Caesar and Cleopatra

- [17] A vow I give you,
My heart shall never leave you,

If you
Are true
As ever I shall prove.
No fear
Come near
To harm you
Or alarm you,
Delight
Shall still requite
Our tender love.

da capo

Ensemble
Chorus

- [18] Proclaim we all great Caesar's glory:
Let all unite in love and joy!
O'erthrown is Pharaoh's cruel fury,
And peace eternal we enjoy.

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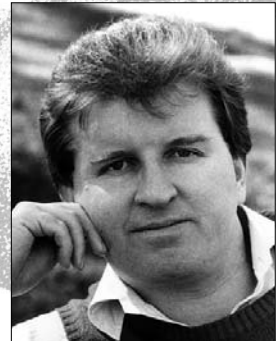


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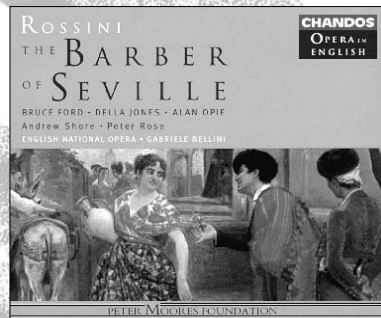
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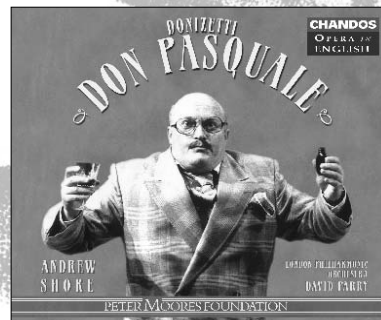
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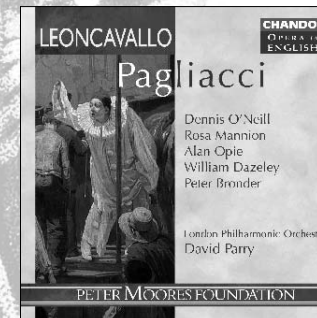


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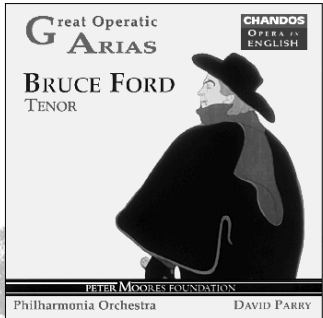


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Julius Caesar

Libretto by Nicola Haym

English translation by Brian Trowell

Edition prepared by Noel Davies and Sir Charles Mackerras



Julius Caesar Dame Janet Baker *mezzo-soprano*
Curio Christopher Booth-Jones *baritone*
Cornelia Sarah Walker *mezzo-soprano*
Sextus Della Jones *mezzo-soprano*
Cleopatra Valerie Masterson *soprano*
Ptolemy James Bowman *countertenor*
Achillas John Tomlinson *bass*
Nirenus David James *countertenor*

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