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CHANDOS

OPERA IN
ENGLISH



Monteverdi

THE CORONATION OF POPPEA

Dame Janet Baker

Robert Ferguson • Anne Collins
Katherine Pring • Clifford Grant
John Brecknock

Sadler's Wells Opera Chorus and Orchestra
Raymond Leppard

ARCHIVE EDITION

A BBC recording

MONTEVERDI



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Claudio Monteverdi (1567 – 1643)

The Coronation of Poppea

Dramma musicale in a Prologue and two acts

Libretto by Giovanni Francesco Busenello,

English translation by Geoffrey Dunn

Prologue

Fortune

Virtue

Love

Barbara Walker *soprano*

Shirley Chapman *soprano*

Elizabeth Gale *soprano*

Opera

Ottone, most noble lord

Poppea, most noble lady, mistress of Nero,
raised by him to the seat of empire

Nero, Roman emperor

Ottavia, reigning empress, repudiated by Nero

Drusilla, lady of the court, in love with Ottone

Seneca, philosopher, preceptor to Nero

Arnalta, aged nurse and confidante of Poppea

Lucano, poet, intimate of Nero, nephew of Seneca

Valletto, page of the empress

Damigella, lady-in-waiting to the empress

Liberto, Captain of the praetorian guard

First soldier

Second soldier

Lictor, officer of imperial justice

Pallas Athene, goddess of wisdom

Tom McDonnell *baritone*

Janet Baker *mezzo-soprano*

Robert Ferguson *tenor*

Katherine Pring *mezzo-soprano*

Barbara Walker *soprano*

Clifford Grant *bass*

Anne Collins *mezzo-soprano*

Emile Belcourt *tenor*

John Brecknock *tenor*

Iris Saunders *soprano*

Norman Welsby *baritone*

Robin Donald *tenor*

John Delaney *tenor*

Anthony Davey *bass*

Shirley Chapman *soprano*

Chorus of Sadler's Wells Opera

Orchestra of Sadler's Wells Opera

Raymond Leppard

	COMPACT DISC ONE	Time	Page
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1	Sinfonia	2:55	p. 30
	Prologue		
2	'Virtue, go hide yourself away' <i>Fortune, Virtue, Love</i>	7:16	p. 30
	Scene 1		
3	'Again I'm drawn here' <i>Ottone, Soldier 2, Soldier 1</i>	8:32	p. 31
4	'My lord, do not go yet!' <i>Poppea, Nero</i>	9:54	p. 32
	Scene 2		
5	'At last my hopes have ended' <i>Poppea, Arnalta</i>	6:38	p. 34
	Scene 3		
6	'Oh, dishonoured Ottavia!' <i>Ottavia, Drusilla</i>	7:26	p. 35
7	'There stands that most ill-fated lady' <i>Seneca, Ottavia, Valletto</i>	5:43	p. 36
8	'The purple robes of emperors' <i>Seneca, Pallas Athene, Nero</i>	8:07	p. 37
	Scene 4		
9	'Did I please you, my lord?' <i>Poppea, Nero</i>	9:01	p. 39

	Time	Page
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10 'Though Fate allows all others to drink the wine' <i>Ottone, Poppea, Drusilla</i>	8:44	p. 40
Scene 6		
11 'I can feel I don't know what' <i>Valletto, Damigella</i>	4:42	p. 42
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COMPACT DISC TWO		
Scene 7		
1 'Solitude, beloved and treasured' <i>Seneca, Liberto, Chorus</i>	13:55	p. 43
Act II		
Scene 1		
2 Sinfonia – 'Since old Seneca's dead now' <i>Nero, Lucano</i>	5:53	p. 45
Scene 2		
3 'You, who received your rank and your honour' <i>Ottavia, Ottone, Drusilla</i>	8:57	p. 45
Scene 3		
4 'Since old Seneca's dead now' <i>Poppea, Arnalta, Love</i>	9:11	p. 47
5 'Here I am, here have I come' <i>Ottone, Love, Poppea, Arnalta</i>	3:40	p. 48

Scene 4		
6	'Oh happy, happy is Drusilla! <i>Drusilla, Arnalta, Lictor, Nero, Ottone</i>	7:37 p. 49
7	'My lord, now you have good reason' <i>Poppea, Nero</i>	5:18 p. 52
8	'Think of her, think of my Poppea' <i>Arnalta</i>	3:39 p. 52
Scene 5		
9	'Ah, ah, my country' <i>Ottavia</i>	4:27 p. 53
Scene 6		
10	Sinfonia – 'To you, to you Poppea, our Empress' <i>Chorus</i>	4:16 p. 53
11	'My beloved' <i>Poppea, Nero</i>	5:20 p. 54
TT 72:26		



JANET BAKER

In November 1971, Dame Janet Baker – a great champion of opera sung in English – performed the title role in Monteverdi's *The Coronation of Poppea* with Sadler's Wells Opera at the London Coliseum, conducted by Raymond Leppard. Happily, the production was broadcast live on BBC Radio 3 and we are delighted that by this latest addition to our Archive Edition, we have been able to provide new listeners the experience of hearing Dame Janet's artistry, at the height of her career.

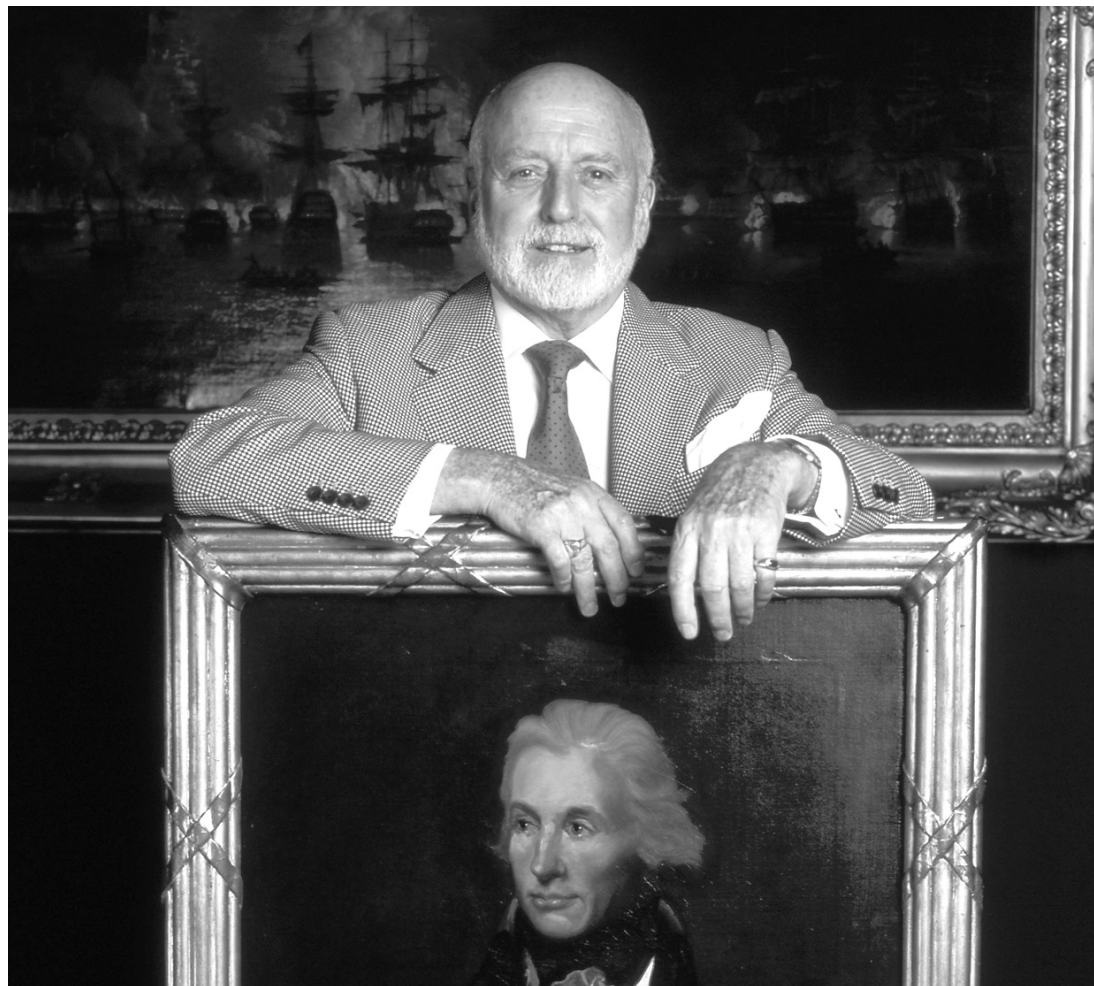
Sir Peter Moores, CBE, DL

June 2010

A black rectangular box containing the handwritten signature "Peter Moores" in white ink.

Sir Peter Moores with a portrait of Admiral Lord Nelson
by Lemuel Francis Abbott, acquired for Compton Verney

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Re-imagining Poppea

Seventeenth-century opera, most especially the surviving works of Claudio Monteverdi, was one of the great musical rediscoveries of the twentieth century. This rebirth echoed the renaissance of the sung drama of the ancient Greeks and its translation into opera in late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth-century Italy. In each case, it was a laborious process to re-imagine the historical artefact from limited and fragmented access to original sources.

The early steps were taken in adaptations by composers such as Vincent d'Indy, Gian Francesco Malipiero, Ernst Krenek, Ottorino Respighi, Luigi Dallapiccola and Carl Orff. Unsurprisingly, they reinterpreted Monteverdi through their own sound worlds. My own first encounter with *The Coronation of Poppea* came through the recorded version prepared by the composer and conductor Walter Goehr. A refugee from Nazi Germany, Goehr had been a pupil of Schoenberg, and he was an advocate of contemporary music.

But the breakthrough event which ensured the wider popularity of Monteverdi's operas in the United Kingdom was the production at the 1962 Glyndebourne Festival of *L'incoronazione di*

Poppea in a reconstruction by Raymond Leppard. So successful were these performances that the opera was revived at the two subsequent festivals, and it led to Glyndebourne commissioning Leppard to realise Francesco Cavalli's *L'Ormindo* in 1967 and *La Calisto* in 1970, as well as a new version of Monteverdi's *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* in 1972. Within a decade, Leppard had opened the window to a whole new dimension of opera.

Sadler's Wells Opera jumped on the bandwagon in 1965, when it engaged Leppard to prepare and conduct his version of Monteverdi's first opera *La favola d'Orfeo*, controversially breaking its own English-language rule to perform it in Italian at Leppard's insistence. Leppard argued that the structure of the vocal line with its feminine endings and the madrigalian nature of this early Monteverdi were indissolubly linked to Alessandro Striggio's original text. By contrast, Giovanni Busenello's text for *Poppea* is more narrative and uses a freer and more characterised recitative, which Leppard was happy to perform in the English translation of Geoffrey Dunn when invited to direct a new production of this later opera at the London Coliseum in 1971.

For the Coliseum, Leppard made a number of changes. He reinstated the prologue for the three goddesses, instead of opening with Ottone beneath Poppea's window as at Glyndebourne; he expanded the drinking duet for Nero and Lucano at the start of his Act II to include a dumb-play recapitulating the action by adapting a *sinfonia* from a Monteverdi *ballo*; and he enlarged the body of strings to fill the bigger theatre with their lush sound. The Sadler's Wells orchestra for this assignment comprised 7 first violins; 7 second violins; 4 first violas; 4 second violas; 4 'cellos; and 4 double basses. The continuo section constituted 2 harpsichords; 1 harp; 2 organs (a reed organ and a flue organ); 1 lute doubling chitarrone; 1 guitar; 2 'cellos; and 2 basses.

What Leppard did not change were his transpositions of the pitch of the voices and gender of the singers. So, Nero is a tenor instead of a soprano as in Monteverdi; Ottone a baritone rather than an alto; Arnalta a female alto as opposed to a tenor *in travesti*; Ottavia's part a tenor rather than a soprano. He was aware of the historical incongruities, but believed that during these early days of establishing Monteverdi in the operatic canon 'we are not yet preaching to the converted'. He thought it simply not viable dramatically to cast a woman

as Nero: 'One day it might be, but there's a long way to go'. He was less convinced about persevering with a baritone Ottone. At the time of the first Glyndebourne production, he judged that strong male altos were not around, that those who existed were simply 'too Anglican'. He conceded that, by the 1970s, the choice was greater and that 'next time a male alto would be a good idea'. His choice for Arnalta was based on both practical and aesthetic judgments. The role lies unusually low, and tenors in drag were associated with exclusively comic roles. While that might be appropriate for Arnalta's final scene, he believed it would diminish the beauty of her lullaby. Listening to the clear and steady line of Anne Collins's contralto, it is easy to be persuaded.

The principal female roles of Poppea and Ottavia each avoid extremes of high or low notes and may be satisfactorily cast with either soprano or mezzo-soprano. The important thing is to ensure a contrast of vocal colour and of personality. Janet Baker's patrician style and high-minded temperament would appear to make her a natural Ottavia, and indeed she has recorded magnificent versions of her two great laments on a recital disc. So, casting her as the flighty Poppea represented a challenge to the audience's prejudices. I attended three of the

performances in December 1971 and remember feeling a slight discomfort that this noble artist was demeaning herself in sordid sexual antics, but that may have been a reflection on Colin Graham's perhaps over-decorous production. Yet, listening to this recording almost forty years later, I find myself entranced by the subtle sensuality of her interpretation. Singing this soprano role, the voice acquires a forward brightness which adds a sheen to its natural warmth. Baker conveys both urgency and languor, often in close juxtaposition, and her sovereign command of words and of rhythmic nuance succeeds in portraying 'a creature of infinite variety'. Katherine Pring's firm but less multi-faceted mezzo provides a strong contrast as Ottavia, but you can hear why Baker chose the title role.

Janet Baker was a guest but Katherine Pring was a member of the strong Sadler's Wells Company of that time, as were all but two junior members of the rest of the cast (Elizabeth Gale as Love and Anthony Davey as a Lictor). They may not all be early music stylists, but they make a characterful bunch, notable for the clarity of their diction and responsiveness to the drama. You would not encounter singers like Robert Ferguson as Nero and Tom McDonnell as Ottone today, quite apart from the transpositions of pitch. Both have big, veristic voices with

natural vibrato. Ferguson went on to become a founding member and versatile house tenor at Opera North. McDonnell was to be Andrei in English National Opera's landmark production of Prokofiev's *War and Peace*. On the other hand, neither would you be likely to enjoy the luxury casting of John Brecknock as Ottavia's page. The application of his fine Mozart and Rossini tenor and pristine diction to this little role is an example of a lost art.

Yet, even as Sadler's Wells Opera was embracing Monteverdi's masterpiece within its repertory at its large new home theatre in central London, the ground of performance practice was starting to shift. Earlier in that same year 1971, the London Opera Centre, the advanced training college for young opera singers, had staged a production of *The Coronation of Poppea* at Sadler's Wells Theatre in Rosebery Avenue, in many ways a more suitable theatre for this piece than the Coliseum. The Leppard version was used, albeit with a smaller string strength: 4, 3, 2, 2, 2, 1, plus continuo and 2 trumpets. Anthony Rooley played lute doubling chitarrone, and the musical preparation together with one of the harpsichords was in the charge of David Syrus, today Head of Music at the Royal Opera Covent Garden. The conductor was the young Roger Norrington.

Norrington returned to the opera three years later, but this time as Musical Director of Kent Opera and with his own realisation of the score based on the collation of the manuscripts by the American scholar Alan Curtis. Norrington reverted to Monteverdi's three-act structure, and restricted the string orchestra to the *ritornelli*, leaving the main body of the text to be accompanied by continuo alone. His aim was that 'the voices stand out completely in their own right, without any hindrance from the orchestra and in a manner very near to elevated Shakespearean speech. Secondly, the orchestra, though they play but rarely, make an effective impact when they do play.' His small string ensemble (eleven in all) played almost entirely on Baroque instruments, with gut strings and short viol bows. The predominant sound of the continuo was the two harpsichords, lutes and chitarrones, supported by two 'cellos. The single chamber organ was used much more sparingly than by Leppard, and only in association with the linked characters of Seneca and Virtue. Equally important was the return to the original vocal pitches, though his Nero was played by a female soprano and his Ottone by a very high tenor.

Kent Opera followed its *Coronation of Poppea* with the other surviving Monteverdi operas. Nikolaus Harnoncourt likewise embarked on an

influential Monteverdi cycle in Zürich, which later reached other European cities. When English National Opera, as Sadler's Wells Opera had become, returned to Monteverdi, it was in sparser realisations: John Eliot Gardiner's *Orfeo* in 1981; Paul Daniel's *Ulissee* in 1989; and eventually in 2000 back to *Poppea* in Clifford Bartlett's edition conducted by Harry Christophers. The title role on this occasion was wonderfully played by Alice Coote, a mezzo capable of soprano roles and a singer very much in the Janet Baker mould. I was responsible for commissioning this last production, and we chose to place the tiny orchestra (only twelve musicians in all, including continuo) on stage behind the singers. The effect was that they had to accompany the singers, who in turn had to take the lead in matters of pacing and inflection. This emphasis on a free recitative with considerable licence given to the singers was precisely that stated by Raymond Leppard in an interview broadcast in the interval of the 1971 performance re-mastered for these discs.

That performance and Leppard's version belong to their time. Yet, without his pioneering work during the 1960s and early 70s, the acceptance of Monteverdi's prime position in the operatic canon and the more authentic editions of today might not have been achieved. It is also a testament to the strength of the

resident English ensemble of that era at the London Coliseum and to the transcendent power of a great singer.

Some of the greatest voices are forever themselves, recognisably belonging to their owner alone. I think of Jussi Björling and Birgit Nilsson, Leontyne Price and Franco Corelli, Joan Sutherland and Luciano Pavarotti. Other great singers have a different ability so to colour their voices that they assume different personalities. Listen to how Maria Callas lightens her voice in order to play Gilda, or to become the innocent Amina in *La sonnambula*. Compare the different means by which Elisabeth Söderström characterises her three Janáček heroines: Jenůfa, Katya Kabanova and Emilia Marty. Hear how Janet Baker, supreme as the tragic Dido of both Purcell and Berlioz, re-imagines her voice in order to become Monteverdi's amoral Poppea.

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SYNOPSIS

The action takes place in Rome in AD62

COMPACT DISC ONE

Act I

^[1] Sinfonia

^[2] Prologue

Olympus

The Goddesses Fortune and Virtue argue over which has the greater influence over human affairs. The God of Love claims greater importance than either. The story of Nero and Poppea exemplifies this argument.

Scene 1

A street outside Poppea's house

^[3] Ottone, a noble lord, recognising two soldiers on duty as Nero's men, realises that Poppea has betrayed his love for her in favour of Nero. ^[2] Later, Nero affirms his passion for Poppea and assures her that he will soon reject his Empress, Ottavia.

Scene 2

Inside Poppea's house

^[5] Poppea glories in the prospect of marrying Nero. Her nurse, Arnalta, warns her to be on her guard against the empress Ottavia.

Scene 3

Ottavia's apartments in the imperial palace

^[6] – ^[7] Ottavia laments her bitter fate and curses the gods for their injustice. Drusilla, her lady-in-waiting, recommends her to choose

another lover, more worthy of her,^[8] but Seneca urges her to accept calmly the blows of Fortune. Ottavia's page derides the philosopher's counsel. Pallas Athene, the goddess of Wisdom, appears to Seneca and warns him of his impending death. Later, Nero tells Seneca that he wishes to divorce Ottavia and marry Poppea, and is furious when Seneca delivers a dignified rebuke.

Scene 4

Inside Poppea's house

^[9] Poppea and Nero sing ecstatically of their mutual love. Nero promises her that she will soon be Empress. Poppea then turns him against Seneca, and Liberto, captain of the guard, is despatched with an order for Seneca's death.

Scene 5

Outside Poppea's house

^[10] Ottone upbraids Poppea for having given him up, but she replies that now Nero is her master. Ottone promises to love Drusilla, who is in love with him, but he knows in his heart that he will always love Poppea.

Scene 6

The palace garden

^[11] Ottavia's page and handmaid, Valletto and Damigella, enjoy a light-hearted love scene.

COMPACT DISC TWO

Scene 7

Seneca's house

^[1] Liberto brings Nero's message to Seneca, who stoically bids a last farewell to his mourning friends and pupils.

Act II

Scene 1

Nero's apartments in the palace

^[2] Sinfonia. Nero, his attendants and the poet Lucano celebrate Seneca's death and revel in a drunken party.

Scene 2

Ottavia's apartments

^[3] Ottavia orders Ottone to disguise himself as a woman, get into Poppea's house, and murder her. Ottone persuades Drusilla to lend him her cloak.

Scene 3

Poppea's house

^[4] Poppea excitedly implores the god of Love to let her marry Nero soon. Her nurse Arnalta begs her to be calm and gently sings her to sleep. ^[5] Love appears, re-affirms that he rules the world, and is in time to prevent Ottone's murderous

attempt on Poppea. Poppea, waking up in time to see Drusilla's cloak, supposes that it was Drusilla who tried to kill her.

Scene 4

A street

[6] Drusilla, rejoicing that her rival Poppea is about to die, is suddenly confronted by Arnalta and Lictor, and later by the enraged Nero, who accuses her of the attempted murder. She tries to shield Ottone, but he now enters and reveals his guilt. Nero exiles Ottone. Drusilla asks to be allowed to go into exile with him. Nero publicly announces Ottavia's banishment, [7] and tells Poppea that she is to be his new Empress. [8] Arnalta exults in Poppea's glory and in her own new dignity.

Scene 5

A harbour

[9] Ottavia, on her way into exile, bids farewell to Rome.

Scene 6

The coronation of Poppea

[10]–[11] Nero and Poppea declare their love to each other.

Barbara Walker (Fortune/Drusilla) was born in Halifax, Yorkshire, and studied with Fredrick

Cox at the Royal Manchester College of Music. Following roles at the College she sang at Glyndebourne, Scottish Opera and Opera for All. She made her debut with Sadler's Wells as Mimi (*La Bohème*), and further roles included Frasquita and Micaëla (*Carmen*), Kristine (*The Makropulos Case*), Cherubino, Natasha (*War and Peace*), and Varvara (*Katya Kabanova*).

Shirley Chapman (Virtue/Pallas Athene) was born in Manchester and spent much of her life in Canada. She studied singing from the age of sixteen and studied in London with Roy Henderson. She joined Sadler's Wells Opera in 1961, and her many roles with the company included Rosalind (*The Mines of Sulphur*), Orlofsky (*Die Fledermaus*), Smeraldina (*The Love for Three Oranges*), Josephine (Malcolm Williamson's *The Violins of Saint Jacques*), Dorabella, Cherubino, Suzuki, Mercedes, Calliope (*Orpheus in the Underworld*), Flora (*La traviata*) and the title role in *Iolanthe*.

Elizabeth Gale (Love) studied at the Guildhall School of Music and made her debut in 1970 as Cupid (*King Arthur*) with the English Opera Group, and went on to perform Flora (*The Turn*

of *the Screw*) at the Aldeburgh Festival. She sang the role of Papagena (*The Magic Flute*) at Glyndebourne in 1973 and returned there each year until 1986. Roles there included Susanna, Zerlina (*Don Giovanni*), Drusilla (*Dioclesian*), Titania and Marzelline. She made her Covent Garden debut as Jano (*Jenůfa*) and subsequently performed the roles of Zerlina, Adele (*Die Fledermaus*) and Miss Wordsworth (*Albert Herring*). Elizabeth Gale sang with English National Opera and made her American debut in 1986 in Poulenc's *Le Voix humaine*. Her recordings include Amore (*Orfeo ed Euridice*) under Raymond Leppard, Zerlina under Bernard Haitink, *Messiah* under Nikolaus Harnoncourt and a DVD recording of Mrs Julian (*Owen Wingrave*) under Kent Nagano.

Tom McDonnell (Ottone) was born in Australia and, after studying in Melbourne, sang the role of Belcore (*The Elixir of Love*) in Brisbane. He joined Sadler's Wells in 1967 and sang the title role in *The Marriage of Figaro* and Marcel Sciocca (Malcolm Williamson's *The Violins of Saint Jacques*), Germont (*La traviata*), Schaunard (*La Bohème*), Escamillo (*Carmen*), Papageno (*The Magic Flute*), and Andrey (*War and Peace*) which he sang at the first London performance of the

work in 1972 and at the opening of the Sydney Opera House in 1973. Other roles include the title role in *Eugene Onegin* for Glyndebourne Touring Opera and Wolfram (*Tannhäuser*) for Australian Opera. He created the role of Lieutenant September (Gordon Crosse's *The Story of Vasco*), and sang the Captain in the first London performance of Henze's *The Bassarids*. At Covent Garden he made his debut in Henze's *We Come to the River*, and created the role of Yuri in Tippett's *The Ice Break*. Other roles include Atahualpa (Iain Hamilton's *The Royal Hunt of the Sun*) and a role in Nicola LeFanu's *Dawnpath* for English National Opera; Faber (*The Knot Garden*), Commendatore (*Don Giovanni*), Don Alfonso and Seneca for Opera Factory. Recordings include *La fanciulla del West* and *The Gondoliers*.

Dame **Janet Baker** (Poppea) 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 studied 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 Lied, opera and on the concert platform. Notable appearances include

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*) including the company's visit to La Scala, 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 *Julius Caesar*, Donizetti's *Mary Stuart* and Massenet's *Werther* (available as part of Chandos' Opera in English series) Handel's *Ariodante*, Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice*, Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* and numerous recital discs.

Born in Athens, the tenor **Robert Ferguson** (Nero) studied at the Royal Manchester College of Music (later the Royal Northern College of Music) under Frederick Cox. He sang Pinkerton (*Madam Butterfly*) and Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*) with Yorkshire Opera, and made his debut at Sadler's Wells Opera (later English National Opera) as Pinkerton, going on to sing such roles as Froh (*The Rhinegold*), Turiddu (*Cavalleria rusticana*), Camille (*The Merry Widow*) and Tikhon (*Katya Kabanova*).

Katherine Pring (Ottavia) studied at London's Royal College of Music and at the Geneva Conservatory. She made her operatic debut as Flora (*La traviata*) at the Grand Théâtre in Geneva, and joined Sadler's Wells Opera. She made her Covent Garden debut as Thea (Tippett's *The Knot Garden*) in 1972, and first sang at Bayreuth in the same year. Her wide repertoire encompassed such roles as Dorabella (*Così fan tutte*), Azucena (*Il trovatore*), Princess Eboli (*Don Carlos*), Suzuki (*Madam Butterfly*), Prince Orlofsky (*Die Fledermaus*), Carmen, Jocasta (*Oedipus Rex*), and Agave in the British stage premiere of Henze's *The Bassarids*. With The Royal Opera she sang Preziosilla (*La forza del destino*) and Kate Julian (Britten's *Owen*

Wingrave). She sang Baba the Turk (*The Rake's Progress*) at Glyndebourne, Delilah (*Samson and Delilah*) at English National Opera North (later Opera North), Brangäne (*Tristan und Isolde*) in Düsseldorf, Princess Marina (*Boris Godunov*) in Frankfurt and Preziosilla at the Paris Opéra. She made her American debut as Carmen at San Diego Opera, returning to sing Princess Eboli.

The Australian bass **Clifford Grant** (Seneca) trained in Sydney, Melbourne and London, and made his operatic debut with the New South Wales Opera Company as Raimondo (*Lucia di Lammermoor*). He joined Sadler's Wells Opera where he appeared as the Commendatore (*Don Giovanni*), Sarastro (*The Magic Flute*), Silva (*Ernani*), Padre Guardiano (*The Force of Destiny*), Philip II (*Don Carlos*), King Henry (*Lohengrin*), Pogner (*The Mastersingers of Nuremberg*), Fafner, Hunding and Hagen (*The Ring of the Nibelung*) and in leading roles in *The Barber of Seville*, *Rigoletto*, *Madam Butterfly*, *Manon*, *Oedipus Rex* and *Peter Grimes*. Other engagements have included Doctor Bartolo (*Le nozze di Figaro*) at The Royal Opera, Covent Garden; roles in *Nabucco* and *Die Zauberflöte* at Welsh National Opera; Nettuno (*Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*) at Glyndebourne; Hunding at L'Opéra de

Marseille; Alidoro (*La Cenerentola*), Oroveso (*Norma*), Matteo (Auber's *Fra Diavolo*), Sparafucile (*Rigoletto*), the King (*Aida*), Lodovico (*Otello*), and Hagen, as well as roles in *I puritani*, *Il trovatore* and *Tannhäuser* at San Francisco Opera; and Nilakantha (*Lakmé*) and Pimen (*Boris Godunov*) in Sydney. After appearing in Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots* with Opera Australia in 1990 he retired from opera but returned to the stage in 1993 to sing Alvis Badoero in *La Gioconda* with Opera North.

Anne Collins (Arnalta) joined Sadler's Wells Opera (later English National Opera), where her repertoire included *The Coronation of Poppea*, *Count Ory*, *A Masked Ball*, *Madam Butterfly*, *Arabella*, *Katisha* (*The Mikado*) and several roles, including most famously Erda, in Wagner's Ring cycle. She sang frequently with The Royal Opera, Covent Garden, Welsh National Opera, Opera North and Scottish Opera, and appeared at the Glyndebourne, Aldeburgh, Wexford and Camden Festivals and at the BBC Promenade Concerts. She performed in the opera houses of Lyon, Strasbourg, Geneva and Hamburg, the Paris Opéra and Théâtre du Châtelet, the Théâtre royal de la Monnaie in Brussels and the Teatro alla Scala in Milan. American appearances

included The Metropolitan Opera in New York. Her many recordings include, for Chandos, the Grammy-award-winning *Peter Grimes*, *Albert Herring*, Lennox Berkeley's *A Dinner Engagement*, and Vaughan Williams' *The Poisoned Kiss*, all under Richard Hickox.

Born in Saskatchewan, Canada, **Emile Belcourt** (Lucano) first trained as a light baritone at the Academy of Music in Vienna, becoming a member of the opera companies in Ulm and Bonn where he sang such roles as Don Giovanni, Guglielmo (*Così fan tutte*), Sharpless (*Madama Butterfly*), Escamillo (*Carmen*) and Dr Falke (*Die Fledermaus*). Deciding to train instead as a tenor, he moved to Paris to study with Pierre Bernac and Germaine Lubin. He sang Pelléas at Scottish Opera, and Gonzalve (*L'Heure espagnole*) under Georg Solti at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. Moving to England, he began a long association with Sadler's Wells Opera which included Loge (*The Rhinegold*), roles in *Orpheus in the Underworld*, *Bluebeard* and *Patience*. He has sung Herod (*Salome*) took part in the British premiere of the three-act version of Berg's *Lulu* at Covent Garden, Eisenstein (*Die Fledermaus*) and Count Danilo (*The Merry Widow*), as well as the leading role in *Man of La Mancha* in London's West End. He

has appeared also with Welsh National Opera, at the Théâtre du Châtelet, the Canadian Opera Company, San Francisco Opera, and Seattle Opera. Contemporary opera has included Malcolm Williamson's *The Violins of Saint Jacques* and *Lucky Peter's Journey*, Sir Richard Rodney Bennett's *A Penny for a Song*, Iain Hamilton's *The Royal Hunt of the Sun* and David Blake's *Toussaint L'Ouverture*.

Born near Nottingham, **John Brecknock** (Valletto) studied at the Birmingham School of Music and with Denis Dowling. He joined Sadler's Wells (later English National) Opera where his many roles have included Don Ottavio, Belmonte, Ferrando, Count Ory, Almaviva (*The Barber of Seville*), Alfredo, des Grieux (*Manon*), Tamino, the Duke (Johann Strauss II's *A Night in Venice*) and Werther, in addition to appearances in *The Italian Girl in Algiers*, *The Merry Widow* and *The Thieving Magpie*. His roles for The Royal Opera, Covent Garden have included Fenton (*Falstaff*), Rinuccio (*Gianni Schicchi*), Iopas (*Les Troyens*) and Gennaro (*Lucrezia Borgia*). He has also sung with Welsh National Opera. Abroad his engagements have included *Don Giovanni* at The Metropolitan Opera, and in Ottawa and Buenos Aires; *Die Zauberflöte* at

The Metropolitan Opera, in New Orleans and Ottawa; *Il barbiere di Siviglia* in San Francisco, Miami and Vienna; *La Cenerentola* at the Paris Opéra), Buenos Aires and Cape Town; *Werther* in Rouen, Buenos Aires and San Diego; *La traviata* in Cape Town and Ottawa; *Les Pêcheurs de perles* in Rouen and Paris; as well as *Le Comte Ory* in Ottawa, *Rigoletto* in Houston and *Falstaff* in Miami. His recordings include Offenbach's *Robinson Crusoe* for Opera Rara and *La traviata* and *Werther* for Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation.

Iris Saunders (Damigella) was a member of Sadler's Wells Opera and her recordings include *Death in Venice* and *Manon Lescaut*.

The baritone **Norman Welsby** (Liberto) was born in Warrington, Lancashire and received his musical training at the Royal Manchester College of Music (later the Royal Northern College of Music). After two seasons with the Glyndebourne Festival Opera, where among others he sang the title role in *Falstaff*, he joined Sadler's Wells Opera, making his debut as Masetto (*Don Giovanni*). A variety of roles with the company stretched from Liberto in *The Coronation of Poppea* to Pentheus in the British premiere of Henze's *The Bassarids*, and included

also the title role in *The Marriage of Figaro*, the Speaker (*The Magic Flute*), Alfio (*Cavalleria rusticana*), Silvio (*Pagliacci*), Escamillo (*Carmen*) and Schlemil (*The Tales of Hoffmann*). He also sang many roles with The Royal Opera, Covent Garden.

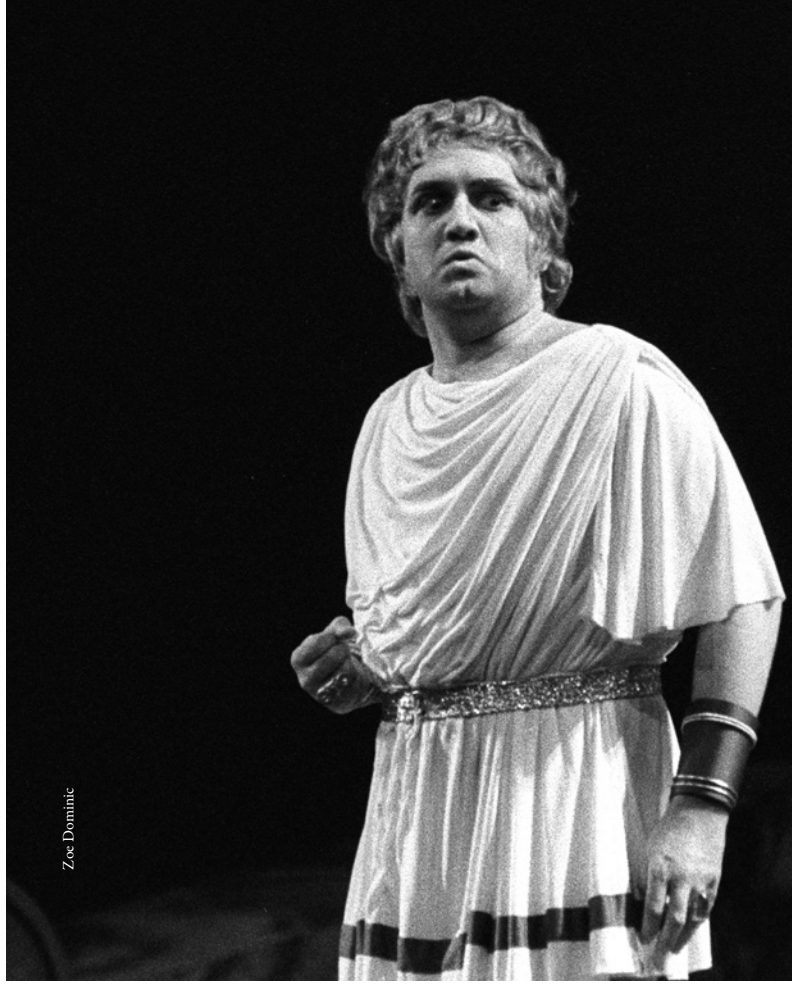
Raymond Leppard was born in London and grew up in Bath. He studied harpsichord and viola at Trinity College, Cambridge and made his London debut in 1952 as a conductor with his own Leppard Ensemble, in music of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. For a short period he was music director for the Royal Court Theatre and a répétiteur at Glyndebourne. From 1958 to 1968 he was a lecturer in music at Cambridge University. In 1959 he made his Covent Garden debut conducting Handel's *Samson*. He made an edition of Monteverdi's *The Coronation on Poppea* which was performed at Glyndebourne in 1962, and it was this and a series of realizations of baroque operas that did much to introduce the genre to a wider audience.

With *Billy Budd* Raymond Leppard made his Metropolitan Opera debut in 1978, having settled in the USA and become an American citizen. He conducted opera for New York City Opera and in Houston, Miami and

San Francisco. In 1973 he became principal conductor of the BBC Northern Symphony Orchestra in Manchester, a position he retained until 1980. Music Director of the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra since the late 1980s, Leppard relinquished this post in May 2001 to become the orchestra's first Conductor Laureate.

Raymond Leppard has made more than 150 recordings, earning him such international

prizes as the Deutsche Schallplattenpreis and a Grammy Award, and he has composed a number of film scores. His many recordings include a video recording of the 1984 Glyndebourne production of *Poppea*, and the 1973 Glyndebourne production of *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* with Janet Baker. He was named a Commendatore of the Italian Republic in 1974 and made a CBE in 1983.



Zoe Dominic

ROBERT FERGUSON

PETER MOORES FOUNDATION

British philanthropist Sir Peter Moores established the Peter Moores Foundation in 1964. Through the Foundation he has disbursed millions of pounds to a wide variety of arts, environmental, social and educational causes 'to get things done and open doors for people'.

The story behind *Opera in English*, the award-winning label launched in 1995 by Chandos and the Peter Moores Foundation, goes back more than forty years to the moment when Peter Moores was bowled over by the impact of hearing Reginald Goodall conduct *The Valkyrie*, sung in English at the London Coliseum. He determined to get the whole 'English' *Ring* recorded for a wider audience and for future generations. A linguist himself, Sir Peter recognised, nevertheless, that nothing 'speaks to the heart' so directly as hearing the drama of opera expressed in your own language. Encouraging the first-time listener to 'give opera a go' has been a key element in building the *Opera in English* catalogue, hence the emphasis on recording mainstream repertoire with a roster of great artists who relish communicating the English text. Today the *Opera in English* catalogue forms the largest collection in the world of operas sung in English translation.

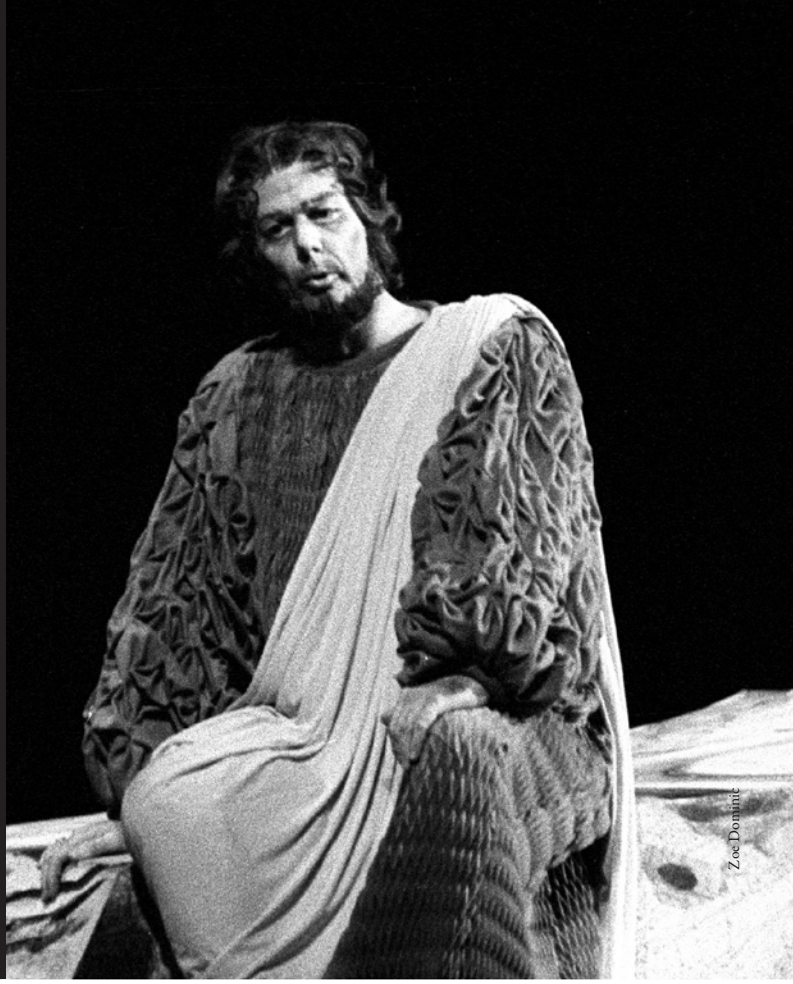
Sir Peter's philanthropic work began with his passion for opera: in his twenties he helped a number of young artists in the crucial, early stages of their careers, including the then relatively unknown Joan Sutherland and Colin Davis. After he established the Peter Moores Foundation, many more young singers were supported through scholarships and bursaries, several achieving international recognition, including Barry Banks, Alice Coote, Simon Keenlyside, Mary Plazas, Amanda Roocroft and Toby Spence.

In live music performance, the Foundation has encouraged the creation of new work and schemes to attract new audiences, financed the publication of scores, especially for world premieres of modern operas, and enabled rarely heard works to be staged by British opera companies and festivals. It has also enabled Opera Rara to record rare *bel canto* repertoire which would otherwise have remained inaccessible to the general public. For further information about Sir Peter and his Foundation's work, including initiatives in business studies at Oxford University, and the establishment of Compton Verney Art Gallery in Warwickshire, visit www.pmf.org.uk

Sir Peter Moores was born in Lancashire and educated at Eton College and Christ Church, Oxford. He was a student at the Vienna Academy of Music, where he produced the Austrian premiere of Benjamin Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia*, and at the same time was an assistant producer with the Vienna State Opera, working with Viennese artists in Naples, Geneva and Rome, before returning to England in 1957 to join his father's business, Littlewoods. He was Vice-Chairman of Littlewoods in 1976, Chairman from 1977 to 1980 and remained a director until 1993.

He received the Gold Medal of the Italian Republic in 1974, an Honorary MA from Christ Church, Oxford, in 1975, and was made an Honorary Member of the Royal Northern College of Music in 1985. In 1992 he was appointed a Deputy Lieutenant of Lancashire by HM the Queen. He was appointed CBE in 1991 and received a Knighthood in 2003 for his charitable services to the arts. In July 2008 he received the Stauffer Medal, the highest award of Germany's Baden-Württemberg Province, and in October 2008 was made an Hon. DLitt. of the University of the West Indies.

CLIFFORD GRANT



Zoe Dominic



KATHERINE PRING

ROBERT FERGUSON,
BARBARA WALKER
& ANNE COLLINS



COMPACT DISC ONE

Act I

1 Sinfonia

Prologue

Fortune

- 2** Virtue, go hide yourself away,
now you're living from hand to mouth.
You're a goddess none believes in,
you're a goddess with no temple:
with no priest nor disciples, without any altars.
Disregarded and discarded,
so neglected, so dejected,
that I ask was your name ever respected?
Once an Empress, now a pauper,
you have to purchase what you need for food and
clothing,
by trading titles, and rights
and honours for payment.
All who burn to obey you,
if I show them no favour,
find their fire is illusion,
neither warming nor shining,
so they are left to suffer for ever in darkness.
For the virtuous man may talk no more
that he will win great riches, or glory or high
honours,
if he does not enjoy the smile of Fortune.

Virtue

Oh, be silent, misbegotten,
guilty conscience of the people,
chosen goddess of every gambler!
For I'm the very ladder
by which the spirit of man shall climb the summit.
For I am the North star, the only power
that brings fulfilment to man's endeavour
to find his way up to Olympus.
One could say, never once intending to flatter,
that I am pure in heart and more steadfast
than the rest of the Gods who reign among us,
a thing that can't be said of you, O Fortune.

Love

What are you scheming, you goddesses?
To slice the whole wide world and share between
you,
its sole command and its dominion, and without
consulting Love,
the god of Love, greater than both of you?
I teach the practice of Virtue,
I turn the wheel of Fortune;
tender my age for a god, and yet for ages past
I've reigned over all the others,
because Eternity and I are twin brothers.
You must kneel to me, you must bow to me,
and as sovereign and lord of all,
you must pledge your vow to me.

Fortune and Virtue

No man alive, no god upon Olympus,
dares to challenge our ageless god of lovers.

Love

This day we shall join in combat;
when I've conquered you both, in spite of your
prating,
you will admit I set the world rotating.

Scene 1

*Outside Poppea's house in Rome; early morning.
Two soldiers sleep before the door.*

Ottone

³ Again I'm drawn here, I'm drawn here once
again,
like steel to a magnet, like fire to Heaven,
or like a brook to the ocean.
Though there's no light to console me,
yet in there my light of life is shining.

House of virtue, dearest house of joy and
contentment;
sweet shelter for my love, how I adore you.
my soul and body shall bow down before you.
Dreams and visions to her go flying.
Take her my greeting, take my devotion,
take my tears and my sighing;
take them, my sighs, to her I love so deeply.

But, who lies here in the darkness?

They are not phantoms, I'm not deceived by
shadows.

They're soldiers, the bodyguard of Nero.
Ah, wretched.

I scatter my lamenting to the unfeeling breezes,
I cause the very stones to melt for pity,
I kneel before these portals
and I worship the walls wherein she slumbers,
and there beside Poppea, on the bosom of Poppea
Nero lies sleeping.

Ah, treacherous Poppea!

Are these the protestations and the pledges
that set my poor heart flaming?

This is your ardour, Oh heaven, god in heaven?

Am I that Ottone who followed you,
who lived for you, who longed for you –
that Ottone who worshipped you?

But, nothing now can still the echoes of my sorrow.

Soldier 2

Who are you, who are you?

Ottone

There remain but the ashes of my rich harvest.

Soldier 2

Who goes there? Look alive there?

Soldier 1

What now? It's not even light.

Soldier 2

You're on guard there! Wake up! You're asleep at your post, man!

Soldier 1

There on the grey horizon the dawn is breaking...

Soldier 2

Up, I tell you, wake up, man!

Soldier 1

I wasn't asleep.
I haven't slept a moment.

Soldier 2

Get up now, get back on duty, and take up your position!

Soldier 1

O curse this God of Love,
curse Poppea and Nero,
and Rome and the stinking army!
If they would only give me time for sleeping!
A day, an hour would do me!

Soldier 2

Our Empress, Ottavia, spends all her days in weeping,
while Poppea and Nero deride and scorn her.
Rebellion in Armenia,
and Nero just ignores it.

There's Pannonia re-arming,
yet Nero's laughing.

Soldier 1

What you say is no laughing matter.
Trust us both to be crafty:
one eye must not know where the other is looking.
Nonetheless when on guard they work together.

Soldiers 1 and 2

Let your eyes only see what they're meant to,
and nothing else.

Soldier 1

But dawn's already breaking, and day is come.

Soldiers 1 & 2

The Emperor! Look out, for Nero's here!

(Enter Nero and Poppea)

Poppea

⁴ My lord, do not go yet!
Stay here, and let my arms close around and hold you,
as your enchantments sweetly and gently close around me.

Nero

Poppea, let me begone now.

Poppea

Do not go, my lord, do not leave me!
The dawn has hardly broken,
and you, my dearest, the source of my loving,
you are my light in living,
and you are day made flesh in all my being.
Will you not grieve to part from me?
Can you bear it?
Ah, say not that we part,
for the sound of farewell is so very bitter.
Ah, I faint, I die to hear it!

Nero

Your noble blood, indeed your reputation
demand that no one in Rome must know
that we are united, until Ottavia...

Poppea

Until what? Until when?

Nero

Until Ottavia is at last rejected...

Poppea

Rejected? Rejected?

Nero

Until Ottavia is at last rejected
and is Empress no more.

Poppea

Go then, go gladly beloved, go then!

Nero

I breathe a sigh, a sigh that springs
from the depth of my heart.
Oh, let me love you, O dearest,
and so farewell.
And soon we'll see each other, yes,
idol I cherish.

Poppea

My lord, you see me ever;
yet, you never can see me.
And why? If I am truly in your heart,
and I lie concealed there,
how can I be seen there by eyes unbidden?

Nero

Lovely eyes I treasure,
rest on me for ever!
O stay like this, Poppea,
heart, beauty, my glory, yes, all my glory!

Poppea

Ah, say not that we part,
for the sound of farewell is so very bitter,
ah, I faint, ah I die, I die to hear it!

Nero

Do not fear, you shall ever be beside me,
the light of my eyes, the goddess who shall guide
me!

Poppea
You'll return?

Nero
Although I leave you, I shall be beside you still.

Poppea
You'll return?

Nero
Enchanted by your eyes, my heart shall be yours
for ever.

Poppea
You'll return?

Nero
Life could never be life
living without you.
So much I love you, I cannot live without you.

Poppea
You'll return?

Nero
You have my word.

Poppea
And soon?

Nero
Tomorrow.

Poppea
Tomorrow? Do you promise?

Nero
I swear it.

Poppea
Farewell now.

Nero
Farewell now.

Poppea
My Nero, my Nero, farewell now.

Nero
Poppea, Poppea, farewell beloved.

Scene 2
Inside Poppea's house

Poppea
⁵ At last my hopes have ended.
I trust in highest Heaven above.
At last my hopes have ended.
I trust in highest Heaven above
and all shall bow before Poppea's throne.
But, if it should be a daydream?
Not a daydream; nothing shall prevent it.
Fighting for me is the God of Love,
and Goddess Fortune.

Arnalta

Ah lady, lady, heaven grant
that these kisses and embraces
won't end up someday in your unlucky downfall.

Poppea

No, no, not a daydream, no never; nothing shall
prevent it.

Arnalta

The Empress Ottavia knows all
about your love affair with Nero;
that's why I'm frightened and suspicious.
Any morning, any moment may be your last one;
it will be once too often!

Poppea

Fighting for me is the God of Love,
and Goddess Fortune.

Arnalta

Though Nero loves you, it's just his way of talking;
if he forsakes you, don't go weeping and moaning.
For something less, if you are wise, say nothing.

Poppea

It's not a daydream, no, never; nothing shall
prevent it.

Arnalta

Do remember, Poppea,
in the grass where a sweet brooklet is gliding,

that's where a snake is hiding;
a sudden change of fortune is our undoing;
a clear sky always foretells that a storm is brewing.

Poppea

Fighting for me is the God of Love,
and Goddess Fortune.

Arnalta

You're demented if you believe
that they can make you safe and happy,
for Love is blind, and Fortune never can be trusted.

Scene 3

Ottavia's apartments in the palace

Ottavia

[6] Oh, dishonoured Ottavia!
An Empress so dishonoured!
Oh, dishonoured Ottavia! Wife and consort of Nero,
deserted, unhappy woman.
Ottavia, are you mad? Distracted and weeping.
Oh, what a miserable sex is woman!
Though by the will of heaven women are born to
freedom,
the ties of wedlock made us slaves in bondage.
Though man is born of woman,
what a miserable sex they make us!
We are shaping the limbs of impious tyrants,
we are suckling a murderer, a hangman who will
smite us and slay us;

and we are helpless in the hands of Fortune
 that takes our bodies to create destruction.
 O Nero, barbarous Nero!
 Since Nero, O gods in heaven,
 profanes the name of husband,
 for ever is he cursed for all the wrongs I suffer.
 Where art love, where are you?
 Where else but with Poppea –
 You are lying with with Poppea,
 oh love her, enjoy her!
 And waiting, I measure my time in tears of anguish;
 they flow in such profusion that they form into a
 mirror
 wherein you'll see reflected beside your pleasure
 how I must suffer.
 O gods, if you be there,
 Jove, give ear to me now.
 If Nero goes unpunished by thunder or lightning,
 I deny you your godhead, and I curse your injustice.
 Ah! My words are unholy; and I repent them.
 I stifle my resentment,
 and in my silent anguish I bury my torment.

Drusilla

Ottavia, listen to what I tell you in friendship,
 hear me, my lady.
 If your Nero's lost his senses
 in his passion for Poppea,
 choose a man worthy to love you,
 whose embrace will bring contentment.
 Think, think, and consider my word, I implore you,
 all your pain will turn to pleasure.

Ottavia

If there were neither gods in heaven, nor honour,
 then I would take the law into my own hands,
 and I would punish myself for the sins I have
 committed.
 And in truth, far, so far from what you counsel,
 I'll freely divide my heart
 between virtue and weeping.

Enter Seneca and Valletto

Seneca

(aside)

[7] There stands that most ill-fated lady,
 the mistress of an Empire,
 yet she lives as in bondage.
 O crown and glory of Rome, imperial lady,
 glorious beyond the titles of the great Roman house
 that bore you in splendour, a vain display of weeping,
 that ill becomes an Empress, should be beneath you.
 Your gratitude should be paid to Fortune,
 who with each blow she strikes you
 exalts your reputation.
 If no one strike the anvil, no spark will fly.
 These strokes of fate will test you;
 all these will be remembered, all you have suffered
 for endurance and duty,
 glory far great by far, than beauty.

Ottavia

Would you offer these words as remedy for my sorrow,
 and deathless fame for torment?

Seneca, pardon me, if I say these, I feign
high sounding phrases,
grandiose and affected: no cure,
but worse than useless for one who suffers.

Valletto

My lady, pray forgive me.
May I register a protest.
May I be allowed to pick a quarrel
with this eminent scholar,
so highly marvel?
These words, though mere inventions of his fancy,
he speaks as holy, mysteries.
But they're not worth their salt.

Ottavia

The Emperor vainly persists in his intention to
reject me
so he may wed Poppea. Let him enjoy her,
if he intends to set the world a bad example.
Plead for me, pray then, play to the Senate and to
the People of Rome.
All I can do now is bear my offerings to the temple.

Valletto

If you won't give assistance to our noble Empress,
upon my word, I promise,
I'll set light to your papers,
I shall burn all your books and your beard!

Seneca

8 The purple robes of emperors with all their grandeur

are closely woven of jagged thorns and brambles.
In the name of imperial power, you are martyred,
unhappy princes who wear them;
and the crown of your glory
serves you only to be a crown of torment.
In the splendour of kings can be seen
the pomp and glory, the pride, the grandeur;
but there, always invisible, are their sorrows.

(Pallas Athene appears to Seneca.)

Pallas Athene

Seneca, your stars in heaven are dark with warning;
they are menacing you, to your sorrow.
And very soon your life will be ended.
You shall receive a sign by daybreak tomorrow.

(Pallas Athene disappears.)

Seneca

Come, oh come, I await you death;
for strong and steadfast, I defy
every terror and all misfortune.
After the storm of all our days of darkness,
death is the dawn of the day without end,
endless day everlasting.

(Enter Nero)

Nero

I am resolved and determined, O Seneca, my
master,

that Ottavia surrender her status as my consort,
and I shall wed Poppea.

Seneca
My lord, beneath what seems the greatest pleasure,
there will often lie hidden bleak repentance.
One's own feelings are profligate advisers
that hate law and justice and will defy all reason.

Nero
No time for lectures; I will, yes I will have it my
way!

Seneca
Do not enflame the Senate and the People.

Nero
For the Senate and the People I care not.

Seneca
Care, at least, for yourself, sir, and for your honour.

Nero
Whoever blames, me, I'll have them tear his
tongue out!

Seneca
Make all your people dumb, they'll still accuse you.

Nero
Ottavia is both barren and frigid.

Seneca
Those who wish to do wrong search for a pretext.

Nero
My power is law in peacetime,

Seneca
Your power lights the flames of discord

Nero
just as my sword is in wartime,

Seneca
and leads to bloodshed.

Nero
and they neither have any need of reason.

Seneca
It is reason, only reason rules the earth and gods
in heaven?

Nero
You, you, you brave my displeasure!
So in spite of you,
and in spite of the Senate and of the People,
and Ottavia and of heaven and of Hades,
though the laws are against me,
I am above them, and I say
tomorrow Poppea shall be my wife.

Seneca

Oh, that a silly woman's power
should lead you into such a blunder.
It is not worthy of an Emperor.
You are a demigod, this is merely plebeian!

Nero

I'll show you what's plebeian, you insolent
professor,
impertinent old pedant! (*Exit*)

Seneca

Now I fear for the worst.
Always dark is the season,
when love of power contests the claims of reason.

Scene 4

Inside Poppea's house

Poppea

9 Did I please you, my lord?
Was I as sweet to you as you were to me?
While night embraced us, did all my kisses excite
you?

Nero

The more you bite me, the more I love you.

Poppea

And what of my breasts, these fruits so inviting,
taste once more?

Nero

Ah, but these breasts of yours deserve a name more
tender.

Poppea

My lord, these words you speak to me are so
sweet,
I repeat them again and again in my inmost heart;
at the sound of that echo,
my loving heart must melt with pleasure.
I breathe your words like a fragrance,
and I treasure your kisses, I treasure them;
and in your dearest words is such meaning,
yes, so tender, yes, and so delightful,
that not content with ravishing my ears,
they must enter in and engrave my heart with kisses.

Nero

That sublime crown of the Empire
with which I govern the fate
of many men and of many kingdoms,
my desire is to share it with you.
And I shall soon rejoice with you
when you are on my arm as Nero's Empress.
But what is this I am saying, Poppea?
Far too petty is Rome for your great worth,
far too small is my empire to sing your praises,
and for such beauty as yours,
far too low is the flame
to be known as the consort of the Emperor.

Poppea

To the hopes that fly highest, my heart I raise,
since the honour is your command,
and my innocent hopes rejoice for gladness.
Yet there is one who tries his best to hinder
your imperial promise and your intention:
Seneca, your friend and master,
that discriminating stoic,
that astute man of learning;
for he is always holding forth to others
that your sceptre depends on his approval.

Nero

What?

Poppea

That your sceptre depends on his approval.

Nero

That decrepit old madman has dared to say so?

Poppea

Yes, has dared to say so.

Nero

You there!

(Enter Liberto and servants)

Go, you go, Liberto to Seneca, this morning.

The man must die:

I want him dead by nightfall.

Only on me my sovereign will depends,
not on his learning nor all his sophist nonsense.

(Exeunt Liberto and servants)

Nero

Poppea, Poppea, your hope shall flower.
And today you shall see
what Love and I can offer.

Scene 5

Outside Poppea's house

Ottone

¹⁰ Though Fate allows all others to drink the wine,
I may but look on the glass.
To Nero, doors are opened at a glance,
but are closed to the wretched Ottone.
Nero at table may overfeed his cravings,
while I lie at his door, dying of hunger.

Poppea

Find fault with me no longer!
I am so weary of your endless reproaches!
Do not torment me further!
When Nero calls Poppea, she must surrender;
stifle your fires of rage, silence your anger.
I leave you far beneath me now to mount the
throne of Empire.

Ottone

Is it so, does ambition take prior place above your
other vices?

Poppea

It does, and it is madness for you to ask of me that
I forgo it.

Ottone

Is this my just reward for having loved you?

Poppea

Oh no, no more! Nero's my master. *(Exit)*

Ottone

Otton, Otton, come to your senses!
That most imperfect sex has no love, no sense of
duty,
nothing to merit praise except its beauty.
My heart, my heart, come, oh come to your senses!
This woman longs for power, and once she has it,
Then my life will be forfeit.
Otton, come, oh come to your senses!
Is this the end of all that you promised,
of your love, oh most perfidious Poppea?

(Enter Drusilla)

Drusilla

You're always with Poppea,
either in fact or else in imagination!

Ottone

Drive that name from my heart into my tongue,
and from my tongue may it be scattered on the
winds,

the name of that Poppea who enticed and betrayed
my deep affection!

Drusilla

In Cupid's court of love the judges all agree:
you do not pity me, but others laugh to see
that you are crossed in love.

Ottone

I freely give my heart, most beautiful Drusilla,
to you for what it's worth;
no others shall attract me, but only yours I'll be,
my own Drusilla.
Forgive me, oh Gods, forgive me, my uncivil
neglect, my past behaviour.
Though you have not rebuked me for my conduct,
yet I confess the wrong I've done you.
Here are my heart and soul prepared to redeem
them.

Drusilla

They are buried with memories of past loves.
Is this the truth?
That now my faithful heart and yours are one?

Ottone

The truth, Drusilla, yes.

Drusilla

But I'm afraid that you are only lying.

Ottone

No, Drusilla, no.

Drusilla

Ottone, how can I tell?

Ottone

I'd never lie to you, my faith upon it.

Drusilla

You love me?

Ottone

I love you.

Drusilla

Love me, love me?

Ottone

I love you, I love you.

Drusilla

But how can I believe it?

Ottone

Love is a firebrand, and suddenly it's kindled.

Drusilla

Happy shall I go rejoicing! Ottone you should be joyful!

I'm on my way to see my sovereign lady. (*Exit*)

Ottone

All the storms and tempests in my heart are over.

Now I am peaceful;

now indeed I belong to Drusilla!

And yet by the deceit of love,

I have on my lips Drusilla,

but still Poppea is in my heart.

Scene 6

The palace garden

Valletto

^[11] I can feel I don't know what,
something pains and yet excites me;
I can feel I don't know what,
lovely maid, whose charms delight me?
I would say if I knew, I'm not sure that I do,
for I don't know what excites me.

When you're here my heart is racing,
when you're gone I'm dull and stupid;
when I dream, we are embracing
in the secret groves of Cupid.

I would say if I knew, I'm not sure that I do,
for I don't know what excites me.

Damigella

Clever fellow, these pretences
could not even deceive a child.
And no baby could be beguiled,

you could never deceive a child.
So if you're a lover indeed
put no faith in your defences.
Love may play such games for his own amusement,
but Love and you are both of you heartless thieves.

Valletto

Is it thus that love commences?
Does it enchant the heart and senses?
Does it charm the senses?
Only let me enjoy your rare perfection,
and I'll give you cherries,
gold pears and red cherries, and sweet confections.
But if something turned sour this honeyed pleasure,
then would you make it sweet, tell me, my life, oh
tell me,
would you do this?

Damigella

I'd make it sweet, yes, yes;
I'd make it sweet again.

Both

Oh darling, you love me,
Oh darling, I love you.

COMPACT DISC TWO

Scene 7

Seneca's garden

Seneca

¹ Solitude, beloved and treasured
as the mind's quiet cloister,
as the peace of a hermit
and joy of the understanding,
you may gaze on the image of Heaven's vast
creation
under the form of man's ignoble shadow.
You come here, my soul, gladly,
and far from court and palace
with their fools and their flatterers
eager to tax my patience and my forbearance.
Here in the shade of the cloister find peace and
refreshment,
For this peace is holy.

(Enter Liberto)

Liberto

Seneca, Seneca, it grieves me deeply to have found
you,
though indeed I came to seek you.
Please do not look at me with eyes that shame me,
because I bring as evil tidings as the raven.

Seneca

My dear friend, for many years I've been armed;
my soul fears nothing from the arrows of Fortune,
and the face of the times I was born to live in
is by no means a stranger to my perception;
if you bring me my death,
do not ask for my pardon:

smiling I shall accept
that good gift you bring me.

Liberto
The Emperor...

Seneca
No more, no more!

Liberto
has sent me to you...

Seneca
I understand you, and will obey his pleasure.

Liberto
My lord, you have foreseen it.
May your last hours be peaceful.
For as the rising days go by,
and each bears the imprint of the sun every morning,
so other people's writings
will come to borrow lustre from your own great
writings.
May your last hours be peaceful.

Seneca
Go my friend, now go and go quickly,
and if Nero cannot contain impatience
you will tell him I am dead and buried.

(Exit Liberto. Enter chorus of Seneca's friends and pupils)

Seneca

My friends and my pupils the hour is at hand
when I must put into practice
all those virtues and rules that I have so much
honoured.

What is death but brief anguish,
but a faltering sigh from the tired bosom,
where for many long years the spirit has lingered
like a passing pilgrim;
and it shall fly to Olympus,
the one eternal home of true contentment.

Chorus

Do not die, do not die, Seneca, no!
I would never take my life, no, no, no!

Life is far too sweet and pleasant,
and the sky too clear and smiling.
Every evil can be suffered
when we live life in the present.

If I dream while I am sleeping,
in the morning I shall waken,
but a tomb of polished marble
never gives what it has taken.

I would never take my life, no, no, no!
Do not die, do not die, Seneca, no!

Seneca

Now you must leave me,
go and prepare my bath;

for if therein my life must like a river be ebbing,
I desire that my innocent blood
should emblazon the path I follow
to the death I long for.

Act II

[2] Sinfonia

Scene 1

Nero's apartments in the palace

Nero

Since old Seneca's dead now,
we'll sing, Lucano!

Lucano

We'll sing!

Nero

We'll sing, Lucano, many passionate love songs
in praise of those sweet features
which love upon my heart has imprinted.

Lucano

We'll sing together, my lord!

Nero and Lucano

We'll sing loud of that sweet face
that will always be smiling.
She dreams of glory, and makes her lover happy.

Sing on! We sing of that beauty, that heavenly
beauty,
for whom the pleasures of love were first created.
In winter cold a new miracle is in her power;
she can bring back to life the passion flower.
Sing on! Sing loud of that sweet mouth to whom
far India has given her pearls,
and far Arabia all her perfumes.
Red lips, lips of coral, if they are pouting or smiling,
they have an unseen weapon,
and granting, with joy they kill it.
Ah, fate! Luscious lips when you lead me on to
which lead me on to lascivious pastime,
tender, soft rubies, my very heart is drunk!
Ah, what nectar in her kisses!

Scene 2

Ottavia's apartments in the palace

Ottavia

[3] You, who received your rank and your honour
from my father,
if you still recollect favours that he showered upon
you,
now you must help me.
I bid you take your sword,
and write the terms of my oath in the blood, in the
lifeblood of Poppea.
Go now and kill her!

Ottone
And kill her? Who must I kill?

Ottavia
Poppea.

Ottone
Poppea? Must I kill Poppea?
O heaven, O Gods! Oh heaven, in this my hour of
anguish,
take my life in atonement, my life and spirit.

Ottavia
Come, what are you waiting for?

Ottone
Must I send her to her death?

Ottavia
Why do you stay, what are you waiting for? Tell me!
You're rousing my imperial anger!

Ottone
And if Nero should find out?

Ottavia
Dress yourself as a woman,
then you must find a way to approach her.
With resourceful deceit you will wisely
choose your time, and then carry out my orders.
If you will not obey me,
I shall denounce you to Nero,

saying you tried to lay your hands upon me;
I shall do this. I don't know what the imperial sentence,
but all these things befit further torture
till death shall take you.

Ottone
I shall obey you, imperial highness,

(Exit Ottavia.)

O Gods, O heaven! In this my hour of anguish,
take my life in atonement, my life and spirit.

Ottavia's apartments in the palace

Drusilla
My heart in my bosom is blissfully happy,
after winter, sweet spring shall smile so gladly.
For today I hope that Ottone
will come to me and pledge his lover's promise.
My heart in my bosom is blissfully happy, joyfully
happy.
My heart is light as air, joyfully dancing.

(Enter Ottone.)

Ottone
I do not know which way I am going.
My heart is beating loudly;
my feet are of lead: I cannot move them;
and the air while I suffer, most sorrowfully weeps
for sheer compassion.

Drusilla

My dear lord, where are you going?

Ottone

Drusilla, Drusilla.

Drusilla

Where, my lord, where are you going?

Ottone

You and you only, to find you only.

Drusilla

Here I am, here to serve you.

Ottone

Drusilla, I have to trust you
with a secret so terrible!
Can you promise your silence and assistance?

Drusilla

Reveal to me your secret,
and I will give my soul as a pledge
for my assistance and for my silence.
My heart in my bosom is blissfully happy...

Ottone

Listen, listen!

Drusilla

My heart in my bosom is blissfully happy...

Ottone

Listen, listen!

My hand is committed to a horrifying duty.
This sword of mine is plighted to a murder.
So none may know the culprit
of a crime so appalling,
you must lend me a cloak of yours.

Drusilla

Any thing that you want I'll give to you very gladly,
but you must go with care, be very wary.
And you will find Drusilla so noble and true as a lover
that none in ancient days could be her equal.
We'll go now.
My heart in my bosom is blissfully happy..., joyfully
happy!
We'll go now, and I'll dress you
with my own hand,
and completely disguise you.

Ottone

We'll go, we'll go together,
and I'll tell you, I'll tell my secret.

Scene 3

Poppea's house

Poppea

⁴ Since old Seneca's dead now,
Ah Love, I beg of you,

guide all my hopes to harbour;
let me marry my dear lord.

Arnalta

Whenever will you stop chattering of love and marriage?

Poppea

There's nothing Arnalta, no, nothing else I think of,
there's nothing else I ever think of.
But have no doubt whatever that we'll still be together,
for there will never be another like you, my nurse
and handmaid.

Love, I beg of you,
guide all my hopes to harbour;
let me marry... *(She sleeps.)*

Arnalta

Be still and rest, Poppea,
and dream in peace, my sweetest lady.
You shall be closely guarded.
Oblivion charm your cares away,
forget the world of scheming
in the sweet state of dreaming.
Be merciful, eyes of beauty;
you open and all hearts are slain;
you close and yet you kill again.
Poppea, be lost in calm content;
let me watch you, guard you in my safe keeping
while waking or sleeping. *(Exit)*

(Love appears.)

Love

Sleeping? Unwisely sleeping;
little she knows that close at hand
the stroke of death awaits her.
Mankind will live in shadow and in darkness,
and while their eyes are blindfold,
they think themselves to be safe from disaster.
You mortal creatures, how frail and foolish!
While you are falling into sweet oblivion,
Upon your slumber a God is watching.

Slumber, Poppea, you earthly goddess.
I'll shelter you from evil and all its forces.
I'm Love who moves the sun
and stars in their courses.

Now while you're sleeping your fate approaches,
but you shall take no harm with Love your master.
Love may be but young, yet he is almighty.

(Enter Ottone)

Ottone

⁵ Here I am, here have I come, transformed from
Ottone to Drusilla.
No, no, not Ottone to Drusilla, no, no,
but man to viper, with deadly rage and venom,
whose like the world never saw nor ever shall see!
But I tremble to see her!
Are you sleeping, soul of my body?
You close your eyes to open them no more!
Eyes most beloved, your sleep shall be so sound,

that you shall never witness so terrible an outrage
that, though I love you,
you'll die at my hands.
Poppea, Poppea, I kill you;
farewell, my love, for ever, farewell!

(Ottone's hand is restrained by Love.)

Love
Wretched madman, shameless villain,
you are armed against my godhead!
Are you daring to defy me?
I should strike you down with lightning,
but you don't deserve to die
by any hand that is immortal.
Go safe away, far from my piercing arrows;
I shall not rob the hangman of his victim!

(Exit Ottone. Poppea wakes.)

Poppea
Drusilla! Drusilla,
and in her right hand she held a naked dagger,
while I was asleep here in the garden!

(Enter Arnalta)

Arnalta
Come at once, you servants, every man and woman!
Run and find Drusilla! Get her! Such a monster,
she must die!
Hurry, hurry, hurry!

Love
I defended Poppea.
I promise to make her Empress.

Scene 4
A street

Drusilla
[6] Oh happy, happy is Drusilla!
Now the fatal hour comes now,
Both for me and Poppea,
for her fate is to die, at last my rival shall die,
and for ever Ottone, for ever will be mine.
Oh happy, happy Drusilla!

(Enter Arnalta and Lictor)

Arnalta
There is the wicked murderess;
and she's changed her clothes
so that we would never know her.

Drusilla
Do you arrest me? Why? What have...?

Lictor
Hold your tongue, or I'll kill you!

Drusilla
Am I guilty of a crime so dreadful that you'll
kill me?

Lictor

Are you pretending that you can't be guilty?
When Poppea was sleeping, you had plotted to
kill her.

Drusilla

(aside)

Ah, friend and lover, ah, cruel fortune! Ah, the
cloak he was wearing!

Arnalta

My lord, here's the monster who was trying to kill
my dear lady, Poppea.

(Enter Nero)

Nero

Man, I believe what she tells me.
With whom have you been plotting this act of
treason?

Drusilla

Truly I am not guilty;
my conscience knows I am not; the gods be witness.

Nero

Scourge her and lash her,
and tear her and burn her
till she reveals the name of her leader
and all his supporters.
Torture her, torture her
till she tells us who's drawn her to treason.

Drusilla

(aside)

O, you who hold the name of friendship sacred,
see and witness in me the final tribute of a true friend.

Arnalta

What's this nonsense, you viper?

Lictor

What's this raving, assassin?

Nero

What is the woman saying?

Drusilla

My lord, I am the sinner
who would have murdered the guiltless Poppea.

Nero

Take the woman, and have her sent
at once to the scaffold.
Soldiers, why are you waiting?
I'll have this woman suffer all the horrors of torture,
all the terrors of death and all its anguish.

(Enter Ottone)

Ottone

No, no!
You have spoken the sentence that you should
speak for me,
for I deserve it!

Drusilla

No, I'm the sinner
who would have murdered the guiltless Poppea.

Ottone

Jove, Astraea and Nemesis,
let me die by your lightning
unless in divine justice
death on the scaffold is mine to suffer...

Drusilla

...is mine to suffer.

Ottone

Kill me, my lord, and kill me with your own hand.

Nero

You shall live;
but go into remotest exile,
divested of your titles and your fortunes,
and in some lonely cavern,
as a beggar and an outcast,
do penance for your offences.
(to Drusilla)
And you, who tried so bravely, O noble Roman
lady,
to stand and shield that man
when your defence was so palpably a falsehood,
live in the fame of my imperial mercy,
live in the glory of your love and daring!

Drusilla

Let me share in his exile!
(to Ottone)
Oh, pray, my lord, allow me to live and die beside
you.
Nothing else do I ask for.
I will give back to Fortune
every gift that she brought me,
if my lord will acknowledge that there are women
whose hearts and minds are faithful.

Nero

Have done, enough of that! You both can go to
Hades!

(Exeunt Ottone and Drusilla)

I have resolved and decided by my power as
Emperor
to abandon Ottavia;
from Rome shall she be banished for ever.
Nero has spoken!
Go, take Ottavia to the nearest harbour.
Lay your hand on any vessel;
prepare it at once for sailing.
In this consign her,
to the mercy of tempests.
With justice have I tempered my resentment.
Away, and do my bidding!

(Exit Lictor. Enter Poppea)

Poppea

- [7] My lord, now you have good reason
for so just a rejection.

Nero

By great Jupiter's power, and that of Nero,
you shall, today I swear it, be Empress of all the Romans;
my imperial word, you dare not doubt it!

Poppea

By the word of my Emperor?

Nero

My imperial word!

Poppea

Your imperial word?

Nero

My imperial word, you dare not doubt it.

Poppea

Idol that my heart worships,
now comes the hour when all my hopes are blest.

Both

No more unhappiness, no more delaying,
I've no heart in my breast, for you stole it,
stole all that I possess and all I treasure.
No man can ever measure
the wealth of my heart's treasure.
I shall bind my arms round you,

strong and tender, and deeply loving.

Ah, no one can break the hours of sweet surrender!

If I am lost in you, in you myself I find.

So I return, but to lose myself yet once more for ever!

Arnalta

- [8] Think of her, think of my Poppea my own Poppea:
she is now the Empress of the Romans!

I who began as her nursemaid
will now walk upstairs with the upper classes,
not down with vulgar crowds;
for I'll never stoop so low again...

Once people shouted 'You there!'

Now they'll sing quite a new tune,

they'll gush and simper sweetly:

'I kiss your hand, your Highness,

I'm so charmed to know you!'

When we meet in the street, they will tell me:

'What a fine looking woman,

very well preserved,

you've lost none of your beauty',

and I know I'm like that old Sybil in the legend

who prophesied disaster;

but everyone will flatter me like that

because they're hoping that I can grant them

favours from Poppea.

So I will pretend that I don't suspect

their flattering phrases;

I'll take their cup of lies and drink my praises!

I was born a servant,

and I shall die a lady.

But I won't want to die;

if I were born again, I would rather be born a lady
and die a servant.
For those who leave a fortune,
go weeping to meet their death;
those who have nothing to loose but sorrow
greet the end of their troubles:
death is a blessing.

Scene 5
A harbour

Ottavia

⁹ Ah, ah, my country,
ah, ah my homeland,
ah, my people, my companions,
ah farewell.
I am guiltless, and yet I have to leave you.
I go to suffer exile with tears and sighing,
sailing in desperation, while hopes are dying.
Breezes, that hour by hour
receive my sighs and sighing,
will send them back again,
that for my heart's sake
they may see and may kiss
the walls of Rome,
and there I shall stand forsaken,
sadly grieving for loved ones
from whom I parted,
vainly teaching cold marble to show me pity.
See and hear me, and remember me now, deluded
Romans;

I go to exile far from the land that bore me.
Ah, my grief, do not betray me!
Forbid my tears to flow when I am leaving my
country.
So be it, not a tear shall escape me,
when I whisper at parting,
farewell, Rome,
no weeping, not a tear that shall escape me,
when I cry out at parting,
farewell, Rome, for ever.

Scene 6

The Coronation

¹⁰ **Sinfonia**

Chorus

To you, to you Poppea, our Empress,
with full consent of all the Senate and the Roman
people,
we set the diadem on your imperial brow.
All of Asia, all of Africa shall bow down before you,
and all of Europe and that great ocean
that circles this most glorious Empire.
Heaven be praised that the gods in their wisdom
granted to you the golden crown of Empire.
Romans, salute the crown of Empire.

Sinfonia

Poppea

11 My beloved,

Nero

I adore you,

Poppea and Nero

Let me hold you and enfold you,
for no longer our sweet pleasure is clouded.
O my treasure, beloved treasure!

I am yours,
all my hope,
all I wish,
and desire.

I am yours,
my content,
my delight,
and my joy.
You are mine,
yes, my love,
yes, my life and soul,
yes, my love, my heart, beloved, yes.

Poppea

My beloved,

Nero

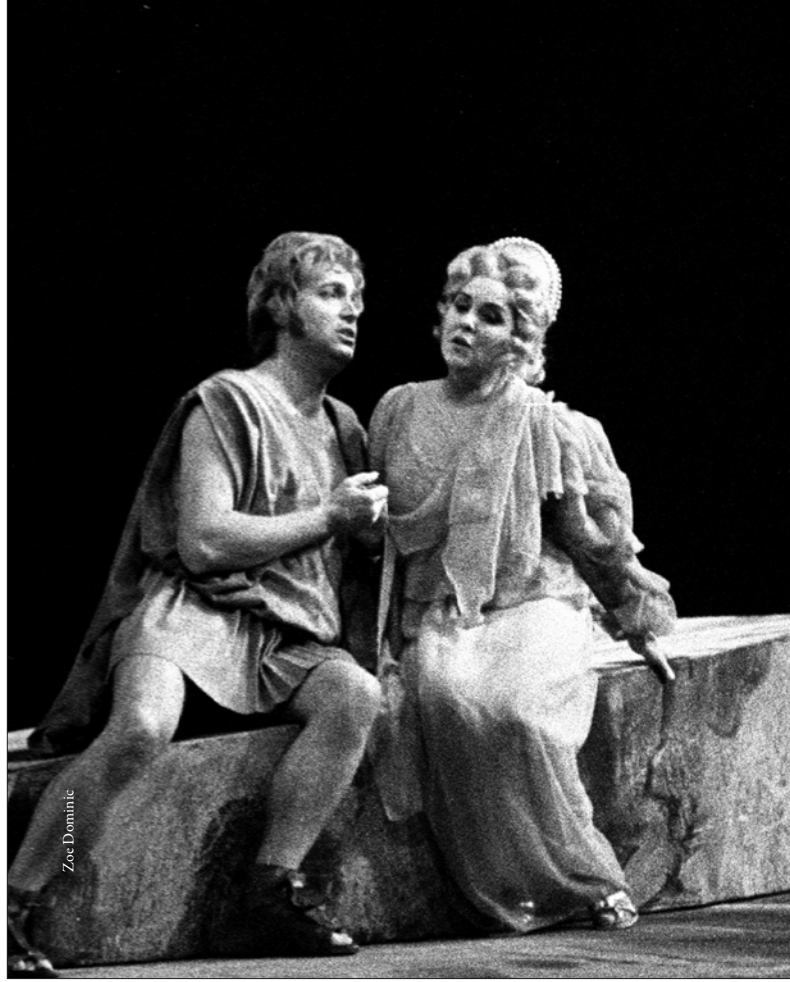
I adore you,

Poppea and Nero

Let me hold you and enfold you,
for no longer is our sweet pleasure clouded.
O my treasure, beloved treasure!

English translation by Geoffrey Dunn

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Zoe Dominie

JOHN BRECKNOCK & IRIS SAUNDERS

ROBERT FERGUSON
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Zoe Dominc



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