

Silla

Somm

An Opera in 3 Acts
by

GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL

Première Recording

GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL
(1685 -1759)

SILLA

Opera in Three Acts

Libretto by GIACOMO ROSSI
(London 1713)

THE LONDON HANDEL ORCHESTRA
Leader: Adrian Butterfield
Conducted by DENYS DARLOW

SILLA (LUCIUS CORNELIUS SULLA) Consul and Dictator of Rome	JAMES BOWMAN <i>Countertenor</i>
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LEPIDO (LEPIDUS) People's Tribune, Silla's friend	JOANNE LUNN <i>Soprano</i>
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CLAUDIO (CLAUDIUS) A Roman knight, in love with Celia and hostile to Silla	SIMON BAKER <i>Countertenor</i>
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METELLA Wife of Silla	RACHEL NICHOLLS <i>Soprano</i>
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FLAVIA Wife of Lepido	NATASHA MARSH <i>Soprano</i>
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CELIA A Roman maiden, daughter of Catulus, Silla's lieutenant, secretly in love with Claudio	ELIZABETH CRAGG <i>Soprano</i>
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IL DIO (THE GOD)	CHRISTOPHER DIXON <i>Bass</i>
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THE LONDON HANDEL ORCHESTRA

First violin

Adrian Butterfield (leader)

Peter Lissauer

Diane Moore

Nicolette Moonan

Ellen O'Dell

Second violin

Oliver Webber

Ruth Slater

Jean Paterson

Viola

Theresa Caudle

Peter Collyer

Cello

Katherine Sharman

Christopher Suckling

Double bass

Cecilia Bruggemeyer

Oboe

James Eastaway

Zilla Gillman

Bassoon

Noel Rainbird

Trumpet

Jonathan Impett

Harpsichord

Laurence Cummings

The London Handel Society

Founded by Denys Darlow in 1978 the London Handel Festival has contributed to a Handel revival in the UK, specialising in the performance of lesser-known works of the period. In 1981 the London Handel Orchestra and Choir made their début at the Festival. They now have an excellent reputation as exponents of 'authentic' performance and in 1999 the principals of the orchestra formed the London Handel Players to extend the repertoire performed at the Festival and elsewhere.

The London Handel Society was established to promote the music of Handel and his contemporaries and in particular their lesser-known works; to encourage young singers and musicians of outstanding promise early in their careers; to bring the works of Handel to a wider community through working with young people and the elderly; to encourage study and scholarship and to work with other artists in the visual and dramatic arts.

Musical Directors Denys Darlow & Laurence Cummings
Associate Director Adrian Butterfield

Silla was recorded in the Concert Hall of the Royal College of Music, London on 11th April 2000 in collaboration with the London Handel Society

Executive and Recording Producer: Siva Oke
Recording Engineer: Annabel Connellan, RCM Studios

Note: © 2000 Anthony Hicks
Text Editor: © 2000 Anthony Hicks
English translation of text: © 2000 Anthony Hicks
Design & Layout: Keith Oke

Front Cover: The Falls of Tivoli, circa 1661-4, Gaspard Dughet (1615-1675), by courtesy of The Wallace Collection, London.

The London Handel Society and SOMM Recordings wish to thank the following for their support:

Mr. & Mrs. Derek Baker
Robert & Simone Benaim
Deborah Broughton
John Chown
Stephen Cooke
Michael & Meriel Downey
Basil Duttson
David Houston
Michael Johnson
Alan King

Patricia Morton
Michael Normington
Jane Pattle
Peter Rice
Royal College of Music
Anne Siddell
Maurice Thunder
David Vermont
David Wilkinson
Mark Windisch

Silla is exceptional among Handel's operas in many ways, not least in the remarkable absence of information about its composition and performance. Until fairly recently the work was known only from fragments of Handel's autograph and manuscript full scores, one of which contained an overture not found elsewhere. It was clear that it had been written in London around 1713-14, between *Teseo* and *Amadigi* – the latter taking up some of the music composed for *Silla* – but no record of a performance could be traced. The full scores appear to be complete, but do not contain any music to accompany several spectacular stage effects demanded by the stage directions. An important advance was made in 1969, when J. Merrill Knapp announced the discovery of a unique copy of a printed wordbook in the Huntington Library in California, with the title *L. C. Silla*. (The form *Lucio Cornelio Silla*, adopted in some recent literature, has no authority.) The wordbook bears a lengthy dedication dated 2 June 1713 and signed by Giacomo Rossi, who also wrote the librettos of Handel's *Rinaldo* and *Il pastor fido*. The date can be taken as that of the first performance, since the dedication in the wordbook to *Il pastor fido* is similarly dated. The *Silla* dedication is addressed to the Duke D'Aumont, who had been appointed by Louis XIV at the end of 1712 to be the new French Ambassador to the English court of Queen Anne, resuming diplomatic relations after the War of the Spanish Succession.

Valuable as it is, the wordbook raises as many questions as it answers. Rossi's dedication is fulsome in its praise of the Duke's generosity and his zealously in fostering concord between Britain and France, but contains no clue as to why the repressive rule of the Roman consul Lucius Cornelius Sulla was chosen as a subject. And it does not quite resolve the question of the first performance. Normally the existence of a printed wordbook would in itself be taken as evidence of a performance, but strictly speaking it proves only that a performance was planned. Unlike the wordbooks of all other Italian operas staged in London, the *Silla* wordbook lacks an English translation, and does not state the place of performance. The most likely place would, of course, be the main opera house at the time, the Queen's (later King's) Theatre in the Haymarket. Duncan Chisholm has pointed out that some of the scenes and stage effects in the opera are similar to those in earlier productions there: the machinery needed for *Silla*'s sea journey and shipwreck in Act 3, for example, could be adapted from that used for two scenes in *Rinaldo*. The main opera season of 1712/13 ended on 16 May 1713, but there was an isolated performance of the pasticcio *Ernelinda* on 30 May, and it is therefore conceivable that a single performance of *Silla* was given privately for D'Aumont at the Queen's Theatre on 2 June. However, the notion of a private performance of an opera in

London is otherwise unknown, and it is hard to see why the production of a new opera before the French Ambassador should not have been regarded as a major public event, especially as D'Aumont had gone out of his way to arrange several highly publicised events after his arrival in London.

The nature of the libretto itself is another puzzle. Until the final scenes Silla is consistently presented as a repulsive leader, taking absolute command over Rome at the start of the action, alienating his supporters, indulging in a massacre of his enemies, and finally resigning his position for no obvious reason. Meanwhile, heedless of his faithful wife Metella, he makes several indecent advances to two Roman noblewomen, one (Flavia) the wife of a friend, the other (Celia) the daughter of one of his officers, though on every occasion he is rebuffed and has to make an undignified retreat. The presence of a mute servant called Scabro ('rough') hints at some satirical purpose, though the character merely helps Metella to rescue two men (Lepido, Flavia's husband, and Claudio, a declared enemy) whom Silla has sentenced to death. Why was this story thought to be appropriate to put before the Ambassador? Chisholm has suggested that *Silla* was intended as an attack on the Duke of Marlborough. His command had been instrumental in winning the war against France, but his over-ambitious attempt in October 1709 to gain the appointment of Captain-General for life annoyed Queen Anne and led to him being removed from office in November 1711. D'Aumont might have been amused by the vague correspondences between the reputations and careers of Sulla and Marlborough. But the libretto might also be read as an unflattering portrait of an absolute ruler – like Louis XIV – and therefore sufficiently ambiguous to provide a reason for the opera to have been cancelled at the last minute. Until clear documentary evidence is found, a performance of *Silla* in Handel's lifetime must be regarded as plausible but by no means certain.

Read literally, the libretto is a fictional elaboration of key moments in the career of the historical Sulla as related in Plutarch's account of his life, starting with his triumphal return to Rome after defeating the supporters of his rival Marius (82 BC) and ending with his voluntary resignation from consular office (79 BC). The scene in which a god appears to Silla in a dream and encourages him to slaughter his enemies is found earlier in Plutarch – it is also illustrated on coins of the period – though there the deity is said to have been a moon-goddess or Athena. (In the 1713 wordbook it is the goddess Hecate.) The wordbook adds a little to the text of the opera as found in the musical sources. It contains two extra scenes marked with *virgole* (inverted commas), the usual sign indicating that they would not be performed.

Neither contributes to the plot: the first, at the end of Act 1, is set in an amphitheatre and shows Silla making further pursuit of Flavia and Celia, after which all watch a gladiatorial combat; the second, just before the final scene of Act 3, anticipates the deposing of Silla. In Act 3 the wordbook also supplies the texts of two duets, not marked with *virgole*. No music survives for any of these items, but in the present performance the text of the second duet (*Non s'estingue mai la fiamma*, for Metella and Silla) is sung to the music of the duet *Prendi l'alma* from Handel's *Rodrigo* of 1707.

It would not be surprising if the disjointed construction and occasionally ludicrous story lines of the libretto handicapped Handel's inspiration, but the music of *Silla* is invariably – sometimes incongruously – delightful, and does not lack emotional depth at points where the characters are under the greatest stress. Silla's first aria (*Alza il volo*) has an easy-going grace which belies his nature (as it does when later reworked for another tyrant in *Radamisto*), though something of his sadistic side emerges in the middle section of *È tempo, oh luci belle* and in his last aria (*La vendetta*). His cavatina as he goes to sleep (*Dolce nume*), scored for recorders and strings, is a lovely example of a Handelian slumber song. These are his only arias: the leading male role in the music is that of Claudio, who has a brilliant trumpet aria at the end of Act 1, a bitter arioso as he contemplates imminent death near the end of Act 2, and two lively arias with recorders. Metella's *Hai due vaghe pupilette* – oddly addressed to Celia – has an attractive lilt, and her hesitant *Io non ti chiedo più* (one of the pieces prominently re-used in *Amadigi*) is particularly affecting. Flavia's final aria (*Stelle rubelle*) has grim power in its main section, and a sense of resignation in its middle section; the repeat of the middle section on its own later in the scene is a nice touch. The highlight of Celia's part is *Sei già morto* (also notably echoed in *Amadigi*), perhaps the most moving moment in the opera.

This, the first recording of *Silla*, is taken from a concert performance of the opera given in the Concert Hall of the Royal College of Music, London, as part of the London Handel Festival for the year 2000. (It was the first public performance of the opera in Britain, though a staged production was given in Paris in October 1993, and there have also been concert performances at Cologne in 1991 and Halle in 1993.) In addition to the duet mentioned above, two orchestral pieces are inserted at points where music is implied but not provided in the extant manuscript scores. A March in D with trumpet (HWV 345) is played after the Overture to give an impression of Silla entering Rome 'to the sound of military instruments', and a Sinfonia from *Teseo* is added to the final scene for the descent of the god Mars.

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ARGUMENT (translated from the wordbook of 1713)

Lucius Cornelius Sulla, after bringing many foreign nations under the rule of his country, stirred up a most bitter civil war against his rival Marius. Eventually, with Marius defeated and dead, Sulla entered Rome with armed forces. Here many marvels were at first seen, and Sulla then became absolute master, declaring himself on his own authority to be perpetual Dictator. He exercised great cruelty, robbing anyone he pleased of life and property, nor was there any place, sacred or profane, which could serve as sanctuary for his opponents, all of them being put to death. He was led to this (so he said) by a goddess who appeared to him while he was sleeping and who put thunderbolts in his hand, encouraging him to slaughter. He divorced several wives without cause and forced other married men to do the same. Metella herself, though loved by him, eventually met a similar fate. At last, leading a dissolute and wanton life, he voluntarily resigned the dictatorship and all the other offices he held in the Republic and lived privately. This action will serve to conclude the present drama, so that it may have a happy ending and thus ignore Sulla's wretched death, namely that of being devoured by lice.

Plutarch

To the above history certain fictions have been added, as will be apparent in the drama.

SYNOPSIS

The action is set in Rome in the period 82-79 BC.

ACT I

Silla enters Rome in triumph after his foreign conquests and victory over his enemy Mario. Military instruments play as he passes in procession through a triumphal arch (*March*). Metella and Lepido welcome him. As a reward for his victories he demands the submission of Rome to his absolute rule, confident in his future fame (*Alza il volo la mia fama*). Metella and Lepido are horrified by the threat to the freedom of the Roman Republic. Metella says she would die if Rome's liberties were destroyed by her husband (*Fuggon l'aure in me la vita*). Flavia, Lepido's wife, tells her husband of fearful dreams in which she has seen Rome reduced to ashes. Lepido assures her that ill omens do not always bring ruin (*Se ben tuona il cielo irato*). Flavia and Celia see a thunderbolt shatter part of the triumphal arch, confirming Flavia's fears.

She begs Jupiter to grant a ray of hope (*Un sol raggio di speranza*). Claudio appears, holding a portrait which he is admiring. Celia assumes it is of a woman and snatches it from him. She is scornful when she finds it is a picture of the dead Mario, whom Claudio supported against Silla, since she is the daughter of one of Silla's officers. Claudio says he loves her, but Celia cannot reveal her love for him because he is Silla's enemy. Claudio promises to be faithful to her (*Senti, bell'idol mio*). Left alone, Celia admits she loves Claudio, but honour requires her silence (*Se la speranza nudrisce il mio cor*).

In a garden Claudio confronts Silla, accusing him of suppressing Rome's freedom. Celia intervenes, distracting Silla by asking him about her father. Silla gives her a letter from her father, which she reads. Claudio threatens to depose Silla, and Silla storms out with Celia following. Claudio resolves to oppose Silla's arrogance (*Con tromba guerriera*).

ACT 2

Silla and Flavia meet near a temple in which several men and women are taking refuge. Flavia rejects Silla's advances, determined to be faithful to Lepido (*Qual scoglio in mezzo all'onde*). Frustrated, Silla lies down to sleep (*Dolce nume de' mortali*). A god appears to him in a dream, urging him to subdue Rome with bloody slaughter (*Guerra, stragi, e furor*). Silla awakes, repeating the god's words, and summons assassins to massacre the people in the temple. Lepido denounces this terrible act, but Silla is impervious to advice and orders Lepido to divorce Flavia so that he can marry her. Lepido says that will never happen, but Silla looks forward to being with her and threatens to destroy anyone who gets in his way (*È tempo, o luci belle*). Lepido tells Flavia that he will have revenge on Silla, and the couple affirm their mutual love (*Duet: Sol per te, bell'idol mio*).

DISC 2

Claudio meets Celia, distressed at having been the object of Silla's lecherous advances. Claudio impetuously offers to be her protector, prompting her to confess that she loves him. Claudio is delighted (*Mi brilla nel seno*). After he has gone, Silla returns and tries to lead Celia away, but Metella appears and warns him off. Metella praises Celia's beauty (*Hai due vaghe pupillette*).

Silla finds Flavia at home in the garden of Lepido's palace. It has a statue of Silla in token of Lepido's former support of him. Silla tries to persuade Flavia to marry him, but

she remains implacable. As he tries to embrace her, the statue sinks into the ground and a cypress tree (symbol of death) rises in its place. Flavia interprets this as a warning, but Silla takes it to mean that he will find a place in the Elysian Fields. When Lepido intervenes, Silla accuses him of harbouring conspirators. He orders his soldiers to arrest Lepido and Flavia and put them in separate prisons. The couple part tenderly (Duet: *Ti lascio, idolo mio*).

Claudio and Celia are still delighting in their love when Silla and his soldiers appear. Silla gives orders for the execution of Claudio and for Celia to be confined to her apartments. He tells Metella's servant Scabro to arrange for Claudio to be fed to wild beasts, and for Lepido to be shot through with arrows. He rejoices in the thought of revenge (*La vendetta è un cibo al cor*). Metella learns of Silla's orders from Scabro and resolves to countermand them.

Claudio is seen in the window of a tower overlooking the enclosure where the wild beasts are kept. He is about to be thrown to them and reflects on his fate (*Se il mio mal da voi dipende*). Scabro brings Silla a bloodstained garment, with the implication that it belongs to the executed Lepido. Silla is pleased and tells Scabro to show him Claudio being devoured by the beasts. Metella stops them, bringing news that the former followers of Mario are now rising against Silla. Silla decides to deal with the rebellion and leaves. Metella tells Scabro to release Lepido and Claudio, and to bring them to her. She implores the gods for help (*Secondate, o giusti dei*). Scabro returns with the two men and all leave quickly.

ACT 3

Lepido is safe in Metella's apartments. He thanks her for saving him, and wants to kill Silla to restore Rome's liberties. Metella says she cannot allow that: she must remain loyal to her husband. Scabro brings Metella a letter from Silla: it says that he is leaving Rome. Metella tells Scabro to take Lepido to Flavia's prison cell and, as soon as Silla has gone, to help him to free her. She regrets that Silla is leaving without saying farewell to her (*Io non ti chiedo più*). Lepido looks forward to being reunited with Flavia (*Già respira in petto il core*).

Silla, alone, reflects on the burdens of ruling an empire. Just as he was hoping to enjoy the favours of Flavia and Celia, he has to go on a secret journey to Sicily. He decides to make one more attempt on Celia's virtue, but she again rejects him. He leaves, callously telling her that Claudio is dead. Celia is distraught (*Sei già morto, idolo mio*). As she continues to lament her loss, she hears her words being echoed in sympathy. In fact it is Claudio supplying the

echoes. He comes out of hiding, and Celia, after first thinking he is a ghost, is overjoyed. Claudio assures her of his love (*Luci belle, serene stelle*).

In her prison Flavia resolutely awaits death (*Stelle rubelle*). Silla appears with the bloodstained garment, warning her that she can expect to join Lepido in the underworld if she will not submit to him. When she remains defiant, he throws down the garment and leaves. Flavia returns to thoughts of death (*Ma infelice saria il vivere*). Scabro brings in Lepido. He convinces Flavia he is not an apparition and the couple are happily reunited.

Silla has reached the shore near Rome, on a moonlit night, and is preparing to sail away. Metella joins him. He is distressed to leave her and begs forgiveness for his past behaviour. The couple hope that their love will be renewed (Duet: *Non s'estingue mai la fiamma*). As Metella watches, Silla's boat is wrecked by a sudden storm. Silla swims to a rock and Metella rows out in a small boat to rescue him. She brings him back to safety.

In the Capitol Lepido and Claudio lead the revolt against Silla's tyranny. The god Mars appears in a cloud as Metella arrives with a repentant Silla. He asks pardon for his crimes, resigns his position and his honours, and declares he will live quietly with Metella. As his last act he gives Claudio permission to marry Celia. All praise those who put their trust in heaven (Chorus: *Chi si trova tra procelle*).

A plusieurs égards *Silla* est une exception parmi les opéras de Handel, à cause, entre autres, du manque d'informations sur sa composition et ses représentations. Jusqu'à ces derniers temps, cette œuvre a été connue seulement par des fragments d'autographe de Handel et de grandes partitions en manuscrit, dont une ouverture autrement inconnue. C'était évident que l'opéra fut composé à Londres vers 1713-14, entre *Teseo* et *Amadigi* – ce dernier utilisant une partie de la musique composée pour *Silla* – mais on n'a trouvé aucune mention d'une représentation. Les grandes partitions sont apparemment complètes, à l'exception d'aucune musique pour accompagner plusieurs effets scéniques spectaculaires exigés par les indications scéniques. Il y a eu des progrès importants en 1969 avec la découverte par J. Merrill Knapp dans la bibliothèque Huntington en Californie d'un exemplaire unique d'un libretto imprimé intitulé *L.C. Silla* (la forme écrite *Lucio Cornelio Silla* n'est pas authentique). Le libretto a une

dédicace longue datée du 2 juin 1713 et signée par Giacomo Rossi, qui a écrit aussi les libretti du *Rinaldo* et du *Pastor fido* de Handel. La dédicace de *Silla* s'adresse au Duc d'Aumont qui, vers la fin de 1712, fut nommé par Louis XIV comme nouvel ambassadeur français à la cour anglaise de la reine Anne, en renouant les relations diplomatiques après la Guerre de Succession d'Espagne.

Bien que de grande valeur, le libretto pose autant de problèmes qu'il n'en résoud. La dédicace de Rossi est pleine d'effusions dans sa louange de la générosité du Duc, et de son zèle à nourrir une entente cordiale entre l'Angleterre et la France, mais elle ne donne aucune explication sur le choix du sujet représentant le règne répressif de Lucius Cornelius Sulla, et elle ne résoud non plus la question de la première représentation. L'existence d'un texte imprimé suppose normalement qu'une représentation a eu lieu, mais, strictement parlé, elle prouve seulement qu'elle a été projetée. Contrairement aux libretti de tous les autres opéras italiens mis en scène à Londres, le texte de *Silla* manque d'une traduction anglaise, et ne précise pas l'endroit du théâtre de représentation. Le lieu le plus probable serait naturellement le théâtre d'opéra principal de l'époque, le Théâtre de la Reine (plus tard du Roi) au Haymarket. Duncan Chisholm a fait remarquer que certaines scènes et certains effets scéniques de *Silla* ressemblent à ceux dans des mises en scène précédentes au même théâtre; par exemple, les mécanismes nécessaires pour le voyage et le naufrage de *Silla* dans l'Acte III ont pu être adaptés de deux scènes de *Rinaldo*. La saison principale d'opéra de 1712/13 a terminé le 16 mai 1713, mais le 30 mai il y a eu une représentation de pastiche *Ernelinda*; il se peut donc qu'une seule représentation de *Silla* a pu être donnée en privé pour le duc d'Aumont au Théâtre de la Reine le 2 juin. Toutefois, l'idée d'une représentation privée d'un opéra à Londres est ailleurs inconnue, et il est difficile à comprendre pourquoi l'on n'a pas pu regarder comme un évènement public d'importance la mise en scène d'un nouvel opéra devant l'Ambassadeur français, étant donné que celui-ci, depuis son arrivée à Londres, a organisé plusieurs spectacles avec beaucoup de publicité.

Une autre énigme, c'est la nature du libretto lui-même. Jusqu'aux scènes finales, *Silla* est dépeint comme un chef détestable, qui au début de l'action s'empare du pouvoir absolu de Rome, qui aliène tous ses partisans, se livre au massacre de ses ennemis et finit par abandonner sa position sans raison évidente. Pendant ce temps, sans se soucier de sa femme fidèle Metella, il fait plusieurs avances indécentes à deux femmes nobles romaines, l'une (Flavia) la femme d'un ami, l'autre (Célia) la fille d'un de ses officiers, bien que toutes ses avances soient

repoussées d'une façon humiliante. La présence d'un serviteur muet nommé Scabro ('rude') suggère quelque chose de satirique, quoiqu'il ne fasse rien que d'aider Metella à sauver deux hommes (Lépido le mari de Flavia et Claudio, un ennemi déclaré) condamnés à mort par Silla. Comment a-t-on pensé que cette histoire était appropriée pour être représentée devant l'Ambassadeur? Chisholm a suggéré que *Silla* a été écrit dans l'intention d'une attaque contre le duc de Marlborough. Quoique le commandement de Marlborough eût contribué à la défaite de la France, son ambition en 1709 de gagner le poste de Capitaine-Général a contrarié la reine Anne, ce qui a causé son déplacement d'office en novembre 1711. Il est possible que les similarités imprécises entre les réputations et les carrières de Sulla et de Marlborough ont pu amuser d'Aumont. Mais on peut aussi interpréter le libretto comme portrait peu flatteur d'un souverain absolu (par exemple, Louis XIV), et par conséquent assez équivoque pour précipiter l'annulment à la dernière minute de l'opéra. Sans la découverte d'évidence documentaire contraire, on doit regarder une représentation de *Silla* du vivant de Handel comme plausible mais pas du tout certaine.

Dans son sens littéral, le libretto est une élaboration fictive des moments décisifs dans la carrière de Sulla, comme racontée par Plutarque, commençant avec son retour triomphal à Rome après la défaite des partisans de son rival Marius, et finissant avec sa démission volontaire de sa fonction consulaire (79 av. J-C). La scène où un dieu paraît en rêve à Silla et l'encourage à massacrer ses ennemis se trouve plus tôt dans Plutarque – et est illustrée sur des pièces de monnaie de l'époque – où la divinité est représentée comme une déesse lunaire ou comme Athéna (dans le texte de 1713 c'est la déesse Hécate). Le texte fait quelques additions au libretto de l'opéra comme trouvé dans les sources musicales. Il ajoute deux scènes marquées de *virgole* (guillemets), le signe usuel indiquant qu'elles ne sont pas à exécuter. Ni l'une ni l'autre ne contribue à l'action; la première, à la fin de l'Acte I, se passe dans un amphithéâtre, où Silla poursuit encore Flavia et Célia, puis se joint à elles pour assister à un combat de gladiateurs; la deuxième, juste avant la dernière scène de l'Acte III, préfigure la déposition de Silla. Le libretto fournit aussi le texte de deux duos, non marqués de *virgole*. La musique de ces pièces n'existe plus, mais dans cette représentation nous avons mis le texte du deuxième duo, pour Metella et Silla (*Non s'estingue mai la fiamma*) à la musique du duo *Prendi l'alma* dans l'opéra *Rodrigo* de Handel de 1707.

Ce ne serait pas surprenant si la structure décousue et les événements parfois ridicules du libretto avaient gêné l'inspiration de Handel, mais en effet la musique de *Silla* est toujours –

et quelquefois incongrument – charmante, et non sans profondeur émouvante aux moments les plus tragiques. La première aria de Silla (*Alza il volo*), d'une beauté décontractée, est incompatible avec son caractère (de même quand Handel a réarrangé la mélodie plus tard dans *Radamisto*), bien qu'un soupçon de sa nature sadique se montre dans la section du milieu d' *È tempo, oh luci belle* et dans sa dernière aria (*La vendetta*). Sa cavatina en s'endormant (*Dolce nime*), avec flûtes à bec et cordes, est un exemple ravissant d'une berceuse handélienne. Ce sont les seules deux arias de Silla; le rôle mâle principal au point de vue musical, c'est celui de Claudio, qui a une aria brillante avec trompette à la fin de l'Acte I, un *arioso* amer vers la fin de l'Acte II comme il contemple la mort imminente, et deux arias entraînantes avec flûtes à bec. L'aria de Metella *Hai due vaghe pupilletta* – bizarrement adressée à Célia – a une mélodie charmante, et sa complainte hésitante *Io non ti chiedo più* (une des pièces réutilisées dans *Amadigi*) est particulièrement touchante. L'aria finale de Flavia (*Stelle rubelle*) a une puissance macabre dans sa section principale et un sens de résignation dans sa section du milieu; la répétition de celle-ci plus tard dans la scène est un trait charmant. Le haut point du rôle de Célia, c'est *Sei già morto* (réutilisé de même dans *Amadigi*), peut-être le moment le plus émouvant de l'opéra.

Cet enregistrement est pris d'une représentation de l'opéra dans la salle de concerts du Collège Royal de Musique à Londres, faisant partie du Festival Handel de Londres de l'année 2000. (Ce fut la première représentation publique de l'opéra en Grande-Bretagne, bien qu'une mise en scène fût donnée à Paris en octobre 1993, et qu'il y ait aussi eu des auditions de concert à Cologne en 1991 et à Halle en 1993). En plus du duo mentionné ci-dessus, on a introduit deux pièces orchestrales à certains endroits où la musique est implicite mais non fournie dans les partitions manuscrites existantes. Une Marche en ré avec trompette (HWV 345) est jouée après l'ouverture pour l'entrée de Silla à Rome 'au son d'instruments militaires', et une Sinfonia extraite de *Teseo* a été introduite dans la scène finale pour accompagner la descente du dieu Mars.

L'ARGUMENT (traduit du libretto de 1713).

Lucius Cornelius Sulla, ayant subjugué beaucoup de pays étrangers à la domination de Rome, a provoqué une guerre civile des plus amères contre son rival Marius. En fin de compte, Marius est vaincu et mort. Sulla est entré à Rome avec des forces armées. Ici beaucoup de

merveilles se sont produites d'abord, et puis Silla est devenu chef absolu, se déclarant, sur sa propre autorité, Dictateur à perpétuité. Il a exercé des actes de grande cruauté, en privant la vie et les biens à qui il voulait. Il n'y avait nul endroit, ni sacré ni profane, qui pouvait servir d'asile pour ses adversaires, qui ont tous été mis à mort. Il a été dirigé (comme il l'a dit) par une déesse qui lui a apparu en rêve en l'exhortant au massacre. Il a divorcé plusieurs femmes sans raison, et a forcé d'autres maris à faire de même. Sa propre femme Metella, quoiqu'aimée de lui, a éventuellement souffert le même destin. Enfin, en menant une vie dissolue et abandonnée, il a renoncé volontairement à la dictature et à tous les autres offices qu'il avait tenus dans la République, et a mené une vie privée. Cette action servira à conclure le drame actuel, afin qu'il se termine heureusement, sans raconter la vraie mort horrible de Sulla, celle où il est dévoré par des poux.

Plutarch

Certains évènements fictifs ont été ajoutés à l'histoire ci-dessus, ce qui paraîtra dans le drame.

RÉSUMÉ

L'action se passe à Rome, 82-79 av. J-C.

ACTE I

Silla entre à Rome en triomphe, suite à ses conquêtes étrangères et sa victoire sur son ennemi Mario. Lors de son passage en cortège sous un arc triomphal on entend des instruments militaires (*Marche*). Metella et Lépidio l'accueillent. Sûr de sa renommée à venir, il demande en récompense pour ses victoires la soumission de Rome à sa domination absolue (*Alza il volo la mia fama*). Metella et Lépidio sont horrifiés par le danger qu'il pose à la liberté de la République Romaine. Metella déclare qu'elle mourrait si son mari détruisait les libertés de Rome (*Fuggon l'aure in me la vita*). Flavia, la femme de Lépidio, raconte à son mari ses rêves affreux dans lesquels elle a vu Rome réduite en cendres. Lépidio la rassure que les mauvais augures n'amènent pas toujours la ruine (*Se ben tuona il cielo irato*). Flavia et Célia voient un coup de foudre qui détruit une partie de l'arc triomphal, ce qui confirme les peurs de Flavia. Elle prie à Jupiter de leur accorder une lueur d'espoir (*un sol raggio di speranza*). Claudio entre, avec un portrait qu'il admire. Célia, supposant que c'est le portrait d'une femme, le lui arrache. Elle est méprisante en trouvant que c'est un portrait de Mario qui est mort, et que Claudio a soutenu contre Silla, puisqu'elle est la fille d'un des officiers de Silla. Claudio déclare son amour pour Célia, mais elle ne peut pas la lui retourner parce qu'il est l'ennemi de Silla.

Claudio lui promet sa fidélité (*Senti, bel idol mio*). Laisée seule, Célia admet qu'elle aime Claudio, mais l'honneur exige son silence (*Se la speranza nudrisce il mio cor*).

Dans un jardin Claudio fait face à Silla et l'accuse de supprimer la liberté de Rome. Célia s'interpose, et distrait Silla en lui demandant des nouvelles de son père. Silla lui donne une lettre de son père, qu'elle lit. Claudio menace de déposer Silla, qui sort en colère suivi de Célia. Claudio se résoud à s'opposer à l'arrogance de Silla (*Con tromba guerriera*).

ACTE II

Silla et Flavia se rencontrent près d'un temple où plusieurs personnes se réfugient. Flavia repousse les avances de Silla, résolue d'être fidèle à Lérido. (*Qual scoglio in mezzo all'onde*). Frustré, Silla se couche pour dormir (*Dolce nume de' mortali*). Un dieu lui apparaît en rêve et l'exhorte à maîtriser Rome par un carnage sanglant. (*Guerra, stragi e furor*). Silla s'éveille, répète les paroles du dieu et appelle des assassins pour massacrer les gens dans le temple. Lérido dénonce cet acte terrible, mais Silla est sourd aux conseils et ordonne à Lérido de divorcer Flavia afin qu'il puisse l'épouser. Lérido répond que cela n'arrivera jamais, mais Silla est impatient de la posséder et menace de détruire quiconque lui en empêche (*È tempo, o luci belle*). Lérido dit à Flavia qu'il se vengera sur Silla, et les mariés affirment leur amour mutuelle (Duo: *Sol per te, bel idol mio*).

DISC 2

Claudio rencontre Célia, affligée d'avoir été le but des avances sexuelles de Silla. Claudio s'offre impétueusement comme protecteur à Célia, en la persuadant d'avouer qu'elle l'aime. Claudio est enchanté (*Mi brilla nel seno*). Silla, en rentrant, essaie d'emmener Célia; mais Metella revient et l'en déconseille. Metella loue la beauté de Célia (*Hai due vaghe pupillette*).

Silla trouve Flavia chez elle dans le jardin du palais de Lérido, qui est orné d'une statue de Silla en témoignage de son ancien soutien de Silla. Il essaie de la persuader à l'épouser, mais elle reste implacable. Comme il essaie de l'embrasser, la statue descend dans le sol et un cyprès (symbole de la mort) s'élève à sa place. Flavia interprète cela comme de mauvais augure, mais Silla l'interprète comme une prophétie et qu'il finira dans les champs élysées. Lorsque Lérido s'interpose, Silla l'accuse de receler des conspirateurs. Il ordonne à ses soldats d'arrêter Lérido et Flavia et de les mettre dans des prisons séparés. Les mariés se séparent

tendrement (Duo: *Ti lascio, idolo mio*).

Claudio et Célia se délectent encore dans leur amour lorsque Silla apparaît avec ses soldats. Silla ordonne l'exécution de Claudio et que Célia soit consignée à son domicile. Il ordonne à Scabro, le serviteur de Metella, de s'arranger pour que Claudio soit donné à manger aux bêtes sauvages et que Lépidio soit transpercé de flèches. Il se jouit à l'idée de vengeance (*La vendetta è un cibo al cor*). Metella apprend de Scabro les ordres de Silla et en décide autrement.

Claudio paraît à la fenêtre d'une tour donnant sur l'enclos où sont enfermées les bêtes sauvages. Juste avant d'être jeté, il réfléchit sur son sort (*Se il mio mal da voi dipende*). Scabro apporte à Silla un vêtement taché de sang, laissant entendre qu'il appartient à Lépidio exécuté. Silla en est content, et ordonne à Scabro de lui montrer Claudio dans les mâchoires des bêtes. Metella les en empêche en annonçant l'insurrection contre Silla des anciens partisans de Mario. Silla sort en promettant de supprimer la rébellion. Metella dit à Scabro de libérer Lépidio et Claudio et de les lui amener. Elle supplie les dieux de l'aider (*Secondate, o giusti dei*). Scabro rentre avec les deux hommes, et ils s'échappent tous.

ACTE III

Lépidio est à l'abri dans les appartements de Metella. Il la remercie de l'avoir sauvé, et veut tuer Silla pour rétablir les libertés de Rome. Metella lui répond qu'elle ne peut pas permettre cela, qu'elle doit rester loyale envers son mari. Scabro remet à Metella une lettre de Silla qui l'avertit qu'il va quitter Rome. Metella dit à Scabro d'amener Lépidio à la prison de Flavia et aussitôt que Silla sera parti, de l'aider à la libérer. Elle regrette que Silla part sans lui dire adieu (*Io non ti chiedo più*). Lépidio est impatient d'être réuni avec Flavia (*Già respira in petto il core*).

Silla, seul, réfléchit sur les fardeaux de gouverner un empire. Juste au moment qu'il espérait jouir des bonnes grâces de Flavia et de Célia, il doit partir en voyage secret en Sicile. Il décide d'essayer une dernière fois à séduire Célia, mais elle le repousse encore. Il part en lui disant cyniquement que Claudio est mort; Célia est éperdue (*Sei già morto, idolo mio*). Pendant qu'elle continue de se lamenter sur sa perte, elle entend ses paroles répétées en sympathie. En effet c'est Claudio qui fait les échos. Il sort de sa cachette et Célia, l'ayant pris d'abord pour un revenant, est enchantée. Claudio l'assure de son amour (*Luci belle, serene stelle*).

Dans la prison, Flavia attend résolument la mort. Silla paraît avec le vêtement ensanglanté, en l'avertissant que, si elle ne se soumet pas à lui, elle peut s'attendre à se réunir avec

Lépido aux enfers. Lorsqu'elle reste rebelle, il jette le vêtement par terre et sort. Flavia pense de nouveau à la mort (*Ma infelice saria il vivere*). Scabro amène Lépido, qui convainc Flavia qu'il n'est pas un revenant, et les mariés sont joyeusement réunis.

Silla est arrivé à la côte près de Rome par une nuit de lune, et se prépare à partir en bateau. Metella le rejoint. Il est peiné de la quitter, et implore son pardon pour sa conduite passée. Ils espèrent tous les deux que leur amour se rallumera. Comme Metella le regarde, le bateau de Silla est soudain naufragé par un orage. Silla nage à un rocher, et Metella va à la rame dans un petit canot pour le sauver. Elle le ramène en sûreté.

Dans le Capitole, Lépido et Claudio dirigent la revolte contre la tyrannie de Silla. Comme Metella rentre avec un Silla repentant, le dieu Mars paraît dans un nuage. Silla demande pardon pour ses crimes, renonce à sa poste et à ses honneurs, et déclare qu'il vivra tranquille avec Metella. Comme sa dernière action d'office il permet à Claudio d'épouser Célia. Tout le monde fait l'éloge de ceux qui ont confiance au ciel (Chœur: *Chi si trova tra procelle*).

Traduction: Denys Becher & Nadia Jackson

Schon wegen des bemerkenswerten Mangels an Information was die Komposition und die Aufführungen betrifft dürfte Händels Oper *Silla* als eine außergewöhnliche Oper gelten. Bis vor kurzem war dieses Werk nur durch Fragmente aus Händels Originalmanuskript und Dirigierpartitur bekannt, von welchen eines eine Ouvertüre enthielt, die anderswo nicht gefunden wurde. Es war klar, dass es in London um 1713-14 zwischen *Teseo* und *Amadigi* geschrieben wurde-einiges von der für *Silla* komponierten Musik wurde auch für *Amadigi* benutzt – eine Aufzeichnung einer Aufführung konnte jedoch nicht ausfindig gemacht werden. Die Dirigierpartituren scheinen vollständig zu sein jedoch enthalten sie keine Musikbegleitung für einige sensationelle Bühneneffekte, die in der Regieanweisung beansprucht werden. Ein wichtiger Fortschritt wurde im Jahre 1969 gemacht, als J. Merrill Knapp von der Entdeckung einer einmaligen Kopie eines gedruckten Textbuchs mit dem Titel *J.C. Silla* in der Huntington Bibliothek in Kalifornien berichtete. (Die Form *Lucio Cornelio Silla*, die in neuerer Literatur übernommen wurde ist nicht berechtigt). Das Textbuch enthält eine vom 2. Juni 1713 datierte ausführliche Widmung und ist von Giacomo Rossi, der auch die Libretti für Händels *Rinaldo* und *Il pastor fido* schrieb unterzeichnet. Man kann dieses Datum als das Datum der

Uraufführung gelten lassen, da die Widmung im Textbuch für *Il pastor fido* mit einem ähnlichen Datum versehen ist. *Silla* ist dem Herzog D'Aumont gewidmet, der am Ende des Jahres 1712 von Louis XIV zum französischen Botschafter am Hofe von Königin Anne ernannt wurde und somit diplomatische Beziehungen nach dem spanischen Nachfolgekrieg wiederaufnahm.

Obwohl das Textbuch nützlich ist, so wirft es ebenso viele Fragen auf wie Antworten. Rossis Widmung zeigt ein übertriebenes Lob für die Großzügigkeit des Herzogs und dessen Eifer eine Eintracht zwischen Großbritannien und Frankreich herzustellen, aber es gibt keinen Hinweis darauf warum die repressive Herrschaft des römischen Konsuls Lucius Cornelius Sulla als Thema ausgewählt wurde. Außerdem gibt es auch keine Antwort auf die Frage bezüglich der Uraufführung. Normalerweise könnte die Existenz eines gedruckten Textbuchs als Beweis einer Aufführung angenommen werden; genau genommen aber beweist es nur, dass eine Aufführung geplant war. Im Gegensatz zu den Textbüchern aller anderen italienischen Opern, die in London aufgeführt wurden, gibt es für das *Silla* Textbuch keine englische Übersetzung. Der Platz der Aufführung wird außerdem auch nicht angegeben. Höchstwahrscheinlich war es natürlich das damalige Haupttheater, das Queen's (später King's) Theatre im Haymarket. Duncan Chisholm deutete darauf hin, dass einige der Szenen und Bühneneffekte denen früherer Produktionen ähnlich sind. Die Maschinen, die zum Beispiel für Sillas Meeresreise und Schiffbruch im dritten Akt benötigt werden, konnten von zwei Szenen aus *Rinaldo* übernommen werden. Die Hauptopernsaison der Jahre 1712/13 endete am 16. Mai 1713, es gab jedoch eine einzelne Aufführung des *pasticcio* *Ernelinda* am 30. Mai und es ist deshalb denkbar, dass *Silla* am 2. Juni im Queen's Theatre für D'Aumont privat aufgeführt wurde. Die Idee einer privaten Opernaufführung in London jedoch ist andererseits unbekannt und es ist schwierig zu verstehen, warum die Aufführung einer neuen Oper vor dem französischen Botschafter nicht als ein bedeutendes öffentliches Ereignis betrachtet wurde, vor allem da sich D'Aumont besonders angestrengt hatte verschiedene äußerst publik gemachte Ereignisse nach seiner Ankunft in London zu arrangieren.

Das Libretto selbst ist ein anderes Rätsel. Bis hin zu den letzten Szenen wird *Silla* durchweg als ein abstoßender Führer charakterisiert, der am Anfang der Handlung das absolute Kommando über Rom übernimmt, seine Anhänger entfremdet, sich dem Massaker seiner Feinde frönt und schließlich aus nicht sehr eindeutigen Gründen von seiner Stelle zurücktritt. Rücksichtslos seiner Frau Metella gegenüber, macht er in der Zwischenzeit mehrere anstößige Annäherungsversuche auf zwei adelige Römerinnen, Flavia, die Frau eines Freundes und

Celia, die Tochter eines seiner Offiziere, bekommt jedoch bei jeder Gelegenheit eine Abfuhr und ist gezwungen sich würdelos zurückzuziehen. Die Gegenwart eines stummen Dieners mit dem Namen Scabro ('roh') weist auf einen gewissen satirischen Zweck hin, obwohl dieser Charakter Metella lediglich hilft zwei Männer (Lepido, Flavius Ehemann und Claudio, einen erklärten Feind), den Silla zum Tode verurteilt hat, zu retten. Warum hielt man diese Geschichte für geeignet, um sie vor dem Botschafter aufzuführen? Chisholm schlägt vor, *Silla* sei als Angriff auf den Herzog von Marlborough beabsichtigt gewesen. Sein Kommando hatte dazu verholfen den Krieg gegen Frankreich zu gewinnen, sein zu ehrgeiziger Versuch zum Hauptmann auf Lebenszeit ernannt zu werden ärgerte Königin Anne und führte im November des Jahres 1711 zu seiner Entlassung aus dem Dienst. Die vage Paralle, die zwischen dem Ansehen und der Karriere Sillas und dem Ansehen und der Karriere Marlboroughs geschaffen wurde dürfte D'Aumont amüsiert haben. Das Libretto könnte auch als ein wenig schmeichelhaftes Porträt eines absoluten Herrschers wie Louis XIV – interpretiert werden, und wäre somit Grund genug gewesen, die Operaufführung in der letzten Minute abzusagen. Ohne urkundlichen Beweis muss eine Aufführung der Oper *Silla* zu Händels Lebzeiten als glaubwürdig jedoch auf keinen Fall sicher betrachtet werden.

Wörtlich genommen ist das Libretto eine erdichtete Ausführung bedeutender Momente in der historischen Laufbahn Sillas, sowie sie in Plutarchs Lebensbericht Sillas aufgezählt sind. Es beginnt mit seiner triumphalen Rückkehr nach Rom, nachdem er die Anhänger seines Rivalen Marius (82 v.Chr.) besiegt hatte, und es endet mit seinem freiwilligen Rücktritt aus dem Konsulndienst (79 v.Chr.). Die Szene in der Gott Sulla in einem Traum erscheint und ihn auffordert seine Feinde zu schlachten erscheint in einem früheren Bericht Plutarchs – diese Szene ist auch auf einer Münze aus dieser Zeit abgebildet – obwohl hier die Göttlichkeit als eine Mondgöttin oder Athene beschrieben ist. (In dem Textbuch des Jahres 1713 ist es die Göttin Hecate). Dem Operntext aus musikalischen Quellen wird von dem Textbuch etwas angefügt. Er enthält zwei zusätzliche Szenen, die mit *virgole* (Anführungszeichen) beschriftet sind, ein Zeichen üblicherweise benutzt, um anzudeuten, dass diese Szenen nicht aufgeführt werden würden. Keine der Szenen jedoch trägt zur Handlung bei: die erste Szene am Ende des ersten Akts spielt in einem Amphitheater und zeigt wie sich Silla weiterhin um Flavia und Celia bemüht, anschließend sehen alle einem Gladiatorenkampf zu; die zweite Szene genau vor Ende des dritten Akts sieht wie vorausgesehen die Absetzung Sillas. Im dritten Akt liefert das Textbuch auch die Texte für zwei Duette, die mit keinem *virgole* beschriftet sind. Es besteht keine Musik für diese Szenen, aber in dieser Aufführung wird die Musik zu

dem Text des zweiten Duets (*Non s'estingue mai la fiamma* für Metella und Silla) von der Musik aus dem Duett *Prendi l'alma* von Händels *Rodrigo* aus dem Jahre 1707 übernommen. Es wäre keine Überraschung, wenn der zusammenhanglose Aufbau und die gelegentlich lächerliche Handlung des Librettos für Händels Inspiration ein Nachteil gewesen wären. Die Musik aus *Silla* jedoch ist unweigerlich – manchmal unpassend – reizend und ist an den Stellen an denen die Charakter sich unter dem größten Druck befinden sehr gefühlvoll. Sillas erste Arie (*Alza il volo*) hat eine gelassene Anmut, welche über seinen Charakter hinwegtäuschen lässt (ähnlich wie die Rolle des Tyrannen in dem später als *Radamisto* wiederbearbeiteten Stück), seine sadistische Seite kommt jedoch in dem mittleren Teil *È tempo, oh luci belle* und in seiner letzten Arie (*La vendetta*) zum Vorschein. Seine Kavatine beim Schlafengehen (*Dolce nune*) instrumentiert für Blockflöten und Streichinstrumente ist ein reizendes Beispiel eines Händelschen Wiegenlieds. Musikalisch gesehen hat Claudio die führende männliche Rolle, mit einer großartigen Trompetenarie am Ende des ersten Akts, einem erschütternden arioso als er am Ende des zweiten Akts dem nahe bevorstehenden Tod entgegenseht, und zwei lebhaften, von seiner Blockflöte begleiteten Arien. Metellas *Hai due vaghe pupillette* – welches merkwürdigerweise an Celia gerichtet ist – hat einen ansprechenden Rhythmus und ihr zögerndes *Io non ti chiedo più* (eines der Stücke, das deutlich für *Amadigi* wiederbenutzt wird) ist besonders rührend. Flavias letzte Arie (*Stelle rubelle*) zeigt im Hauptteil eine erbarmungslose Macht. Der mittlere Teil verschafft ein Gefühl der Resignation; die Wiederholung des mittleren Teils ganz allein später in der Szene ist ein guter Einfall. Der Höhepunkt für die Rolle Celias ist *Sei già morto* (ebenfalls in *Amadigi* wiedergegeben) und ist möglicherweise der ergreifendste Moment dieser Oper.

Eine Konzertaufführung der Oper wurde als Beitrag zu den Londoner Händel Festspielen für das Jahr 2000 in der Concert Hall des Royal College of Music gegeben und diese Aufnahme wurde dieser Aufführung entnommen. (Es war die erste öffentliche Aufführung der Oper in Großbritannien, eine Bühnenaufführung dieser Oper wurde im Oktober 1993 in Paris gegeben, auch gab es 1991 bereits Konzertaufführungen in Köln und 1993 in Halle). Zusätzlich zu den oben erwähnten Duetten wurden zwei Orchesterstücke an Stellen eingefügt, wo Musik impliziert ist, jedoch in den vorhandenen Partituren des Manuskripts nicht geliefert wurde. Mit dem Marsch in D mit Trompete (HWV 345) nach der Ouvertüre wird der Einzug Sillas nach Rom zu den Tönen von Militärintstrumenten zum Ausdruck gebracht. Eine Symphonie aus *Teseo* wird der Schluss-Szene für den Abstieg des Gottes Mars beigefügt.

THESE (übersetzt aus dem Textbuch des Jahres 1713).

Nachdem Lucius Cornelius Sulla viele fremde Länder unter seine Herrschaft gebracht hatte zettelte er einen äußerst bitteren Bürgerkrieg gegen seinen Rivalen Marius an. Als Marius schließlich besiegt und getötet ist kehrt Sulla mit bewaffneten Soldaten in Rom ein. Am Anfang war vieles bewundernswert, dann wurde Sulla der absolute Meister, er ernannte sich selbst zum fortwährenden Diktator. Er übte schreckliche Grausamkeiten aus, beraubte jeden nach Belieben um Leben und Besitz, auch gab es keine Zufluchtstelle weder geistlich noch weltlich für seine Gegner und somit kamen alle ums Leben. Eine Göttin hätte ihn dazu gebracht so zu handeln (so sagte er); sie erschien ihm im Schlaf, drückte eine Blitzerschleuder in seine Hand und forderte ihn auf zu töten. Ohne Grund ließ er sich von mehreren Frauen scheiden und zwang andere verheiratete Männer das gleiche zu tun. Selbst Metella, obwohl er sie liebte, traf schließlich das gleiche Schicksal. Nach einem zügellosen und verschwenderischen Leben gab er schließlich freiwillig seine Diktatur und alle anderen Ämter, die er in der Republik hatte, auf, um ein zurückgezogenes Leben zu führen. Diese Handlung gibt dem Drama die Aussicht auf ein glückliches Ende und somit die Wahl Sullas erbärmlichen Tod (er wurde von Läusen verzehrt) unbeachtet zu lassen.

Plutarch

Einige frei erfundene Stellen wurden der oben aufgeführten Geschichte zugefügt, was in dem Drama deutlich zu erkennen sein wird.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG DER HANDLUNG

Die Oper *Silla* spielt in den Jahren 82-79 v.Chr. in Rom.

1.AKT

Silla kehrt nach seinen Eroberungen im Ausland und seinem Sieg über seinen Feind Marius triumphierend in Rom ein. Militärintstrumente spielen während er in einem Siegeszug durch das Siegestor marschiert (*Marsch*). Metella und Lepido heißen ihn willkommen. Als Entlohn für seine Siege und überzeugt von seinem zukünftigen Ruhm verlangt er, dass sich Rom seiner absoluten Herrschaft unterwerfe. (*Alza il volo la mia fama*). Metella und Lepido sind über die Bedrohung der Freiheit für die römische Republik entsetzt. Metella sagt sie würde

sterben sollte die Freiheit Roms von ihrem Gatten zerstört werden (*Fuggon l'aure in me la vita*). Flavia, Lepidos Frau erzählt ihrem Mann von ihren schrecklichen Träumen in denen sie Rom völlig niedergebrannt sah. Lepido versichert ihr, dass so ein Omen nicht immer den Untergang bedeute (*Se ben tuona il cel irato*). Flavia und Celia sehen wie ein Blitz einen Teil des Siegestors zerstört und somit Flavias Ängste bestätigt. Sie bittet Jupiter ihr einen Hoffnungsschimmer zu gewähren (*Un sol raggio di speranza*). Claudio erscheint mit einem Bild, das er offensichtlich verehrt. Celia glaubt es sei das Bild einer Frau und entreißt es seiner Hand. Als Tochter einer der Offiziere Sillas ist sie verächtlich als sie bemerkt, dass es das Bild des toten Mario ist, den Claudio im Kampf gegen Silla unterstützte. Claudio sagt, dass er sie liebe Celia jedoch kann ihre Liebe für ihn nicht zeigen, da er ein Feind Sillas ist. Claudio verspricht ihr Treue (*Senti, bell'idol mio*). Als sie alleine ist gibt sie zu, dass sie Claudio liebt, ihrer Ehre aber schuldet sie ihr Schweigen. (*Se la speranza nudrisce il mi cor*).

In einem Garten wird Silla von Claudio konfrontiert, der ihn beschuldigt die Freiheit Roms zu unterdrücken. Celia schreitet ein und lenkt Silla mit Fragen über ihren Vater ab. Silla gibt ihr einen Brief von ihrem Vater, den sie liest. Claudio droht Silla abzusetzen. Silla stürmt aus dem Garten gefolgt von Celia. Claudio beschließt sich dem Hochmut Sillas zu widersetzen (*Con tromba guerriera*).

2. AKT

Silla und Flavia treffen sich in der Nähe eines Tempels in dem mehrere Männer und Frauen Zuflucht nehmen. Flavia weist Sillas Annäherungsversuche ab, entschlossen Lepido treu zu bleiben (*Qual scoglio in mezzo all'onde*). Irritiert legt sich Silla schlafen (*Dolce nume de' mortali*). Ein Gott erscheint ihm in seinem Traum und bittet ihn eindringlich Rom mit einer blutigen Schlacht niederzuwerfen. (*Guerra, stragi, e furor*). Beim Aufwachen wiederholt Silla die Worte, die der Gott zu ihm sprach und lässt Attentäter zu ihm kommen um die Leute im Tempel niederzumetzeln. Lepido verurteilt diese schreckliche Handlung, Silla jedoch bleibt von jedem Ratschlag unberührt und befiehlt Lepido sich von Flavia scheiden zu lassen damit er sie heiraten könne. Lepido sagt dies würde nie geschehen. Silla aber freut sich darauf mit Flavia zu sein und droht jeden zu zerstören, der ihm im Weg stehe (*È tempo, o luci belle*). Lepido sagt Flavia, dass er sich an Silla rächen werde und die beiden beteuern ihre Liebe zueinander (Duett: *Sol per te, bell'idol mio*).

DISC 2

Claudio trifft Celia, die über die lüsternen Annäherungsversuche Sillas betrübt ist. Ungestüm bietet sich Claudio an ihr Beschützer zu sein und ermutigt sie somit ihre Liebe für ihn zu gestehen. Claudio ist hochofrenetisch (*Mi brilla nel seno*). Nach seiner Abreise kommt Silla zurück und versucht Celia wegzuführen, aber Metella erscheint und warnt ihn. Metella preist Celias Schönheit. (*Hai due vaghe pupillette*).

Silla findet Flavia zu Hause in ihrem Garten im Palast Lepidos. Im Garten befindet sich eine Statue Sillas, ein Zeichen Lepidos früherer Unterstützung für ihn. Silla versucht Flavia zu überreden ihn zu heiraten, sie jedoch bleibt unerbittlich. Als er versucht sie zu umarmen versinkt die Statue in den Boden und an ihrer Stelle wächst eine Zypresse (Symbol des Todes). Flavia sieht dies als eine Warnung, für Silla jedoch ist es ein Zeichen, einen Platz im Elysium finden zu werden. Als Lepido einschreitet beschuldigt ihn Silla Verschwörungen gegen ihn zu hegen. Er befiehlt seinen Soldaten Lepido und Flavia zu verhaften und sie ihn getrennte Gefängnisse zu werfen. Zärtlich scheidet das Paar voneinander (Duett: *Ti lascio, idolo mio*).

Claudio und Celia erfreuen sich immer noch ihrer Liebe zueinander als Silla und seine Soldaten erscheinen. Silla befiehlt die Hinrichtung Claudios und Celias Hausarrest. Er gibt Metellas Diener Scabro die Anweisung dafür zu sorgen, dass Claudio vor die wilden Tiere geschmissen werde und dass Lepido mit Pfeilen erschossen werde. Er erfreut sich seiner Rachedgedanken (*La vendetta è un cibo al cor*). Metella hört von Sillas Befehlen und beschließt sie rückgängig zu machen.

Man sieht Claudio im Turmfenster, welches das Gehege mit den wilden Tieren überblickt. Man ist gerade im Begriff ihn den wilden Tieren vorzuwerfen und er denkt über sein Schicksal nach (*Se il mio mal da voi dipende*). Scabro bringt Silla ein blutbeflecktes Gewand und behauptet es gehöre dem hingerichteten Lepidos. Silla freut sich und befiehlt Scabro ihm den von den Tieren zeretzten Körper Claudios zu zeigen. Metella hält ihn davon ab indem sie ihm die Nachricht von einem Aufstieg der früheren Anhänger Marios gegen Silla überbringt. Silla verspricht mit der Sache sofort zu handeln und zieht ab. Metella befiehlt Scabro, Lepido und Claudio zu entlassen und zu ihr zu bringen. Sie fleht die Götter um Hilfe an (*Secondate, o giusti dei*). Scabro kehrt mit beiden Männern zurück und alle ziehen schnell ab.

3.AKT

Lepido ist in Metellas Gemächern sicher. Er dankt ihr für seine Rettung und möchte, um die Freiheit Roms wiederherzustellen Silla ermorden. Metella sagt sie könne dies nicht erlauben da sie zur Treue zu ihrem Mann verpflichtet sei. Scabro bringt Metella einen Brief von Silla in dem es heißt, dass er Rom verlassen werde. Metella befiehlt Scabro Lepido zu Flavias Gefängnis zu begleiten und sie, sobald Silla weg sei, zu befreien. Sie ist traurig, dass Silla ohne von ihr Abschied genommen zu haben fortgeht (*Io non ti chiedo più*). Lepido freut sich darauf mit Flavia wieder vereint zu sein (*Già respira in petto il core*).

Als Silla alleine ist macht er sich über die Belastung, die so eine Herrschaft mit sich bringt Gedanken. Gerade jetzt, da er hofft die Liebesgünste Flavias und Celias zu genießen muss er sich auf eine geheime Reise nach Sizilien begeben. Er beschließt Celias Tugendhaftigkeit noch einmal zu versuchen, aber sie weist ihn wiederum zurück. Er zieht fort und herzlos erzählt er Celia von Claudios Tod. Celia ist verzweifelt (*Sei già morto, idolo mio*). Ihren Verlust weiter beklagend hört sie ihre Worte von einer mitfühligen Stimme widerschallen. Das Echo ist in der Tat Claudio. Er kommt aus seinem Versteck und Celia nachdem sie zuerst glaubte er sei ein Geist ist überglücklich. Claudio versichert Celia seiner Liebe (*Luci belle, serene stelle*). Entschlossen erwartet Flavia in ihrem Gefängnis den Tod (*Stelle ribelle*). Silla, der mit einem blutigen Gewand erscheint warnt sie damit rechnen zu können Lepidos in die Unterwelt zu folgen, soll sie sich ihm nicht unterwürfig zeigen. Als sie aber aufsässig bleibt wirft er das Gewand nieder und geht weg. Todesgedanken kommen wieder in Flavia auf (*Ma infelice saria il vivere*). Scabro erscheint mit Lepido. Er überzeugt Flavia, dass dies keine Erscheinung sei und das Paar ist wieder glücklich vereint. In einer mond hellen Nacht erreicht Silla das Ufer in der Nähe von Rom und bereitet sich auf seinen Aufbruch vor. Metella schließt sich ihm an. Er ist bekümmert sie zu verlassen und bittet wegen seines Verhaltens in der vergangenen Zeit um ihre Vergebung. Beide hoffen, dass ihre Liebe zueinander erneuert werden wird (Duett: *Non s'estingue mai la fiamma*). Metella sieht zu wie Sillas Schiff durch einen plötzlich aufbrausenden Sturm Schiffbruch erleidet. Silla schwimmt zu einem Felsen und Metella rudert in einem kleinen Boot aus, um ihn zu retten. Sie bringt ihn sicher ans Ufer zurück.

Im Kapitol führen Lepido und Claudio den Aufstand gegen Sillas Tyrannei an. Der Gott Mars erscheint in einer Wolke als Metella mit einem reuevollen Silla ankommt. Silla bittet um Begnadigung für seine Verbrechen und tritt von seiner Stelle und allen Ehrenämtern zurück. Danach verkündet er, er werde ein ruhiges Leben mit Metella führen. Als letzte Tat gibt er Claudio die Erlaubnis Celia zu heiraten. Alle preisen diejenigen, die ihr Vertrauen in die Götter setzen. (Chor: *Chi si trova tra procelle*).

Übersetzung: Ilse Herlihy



'Sulla's Vision' as depicted on reverse of Roman silver denarius of 44 BC (enlarged). Sulla (on left, reclining) is roused by the goddesses of Victory (centre, holding palm frond) and the Moon (on right, with bow).

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Note

The Italian text presented here is derived from the musical manuscripts and differs slightly from the version given in the printed wordbook (*L. C. Silla*, London, 1713). The version given here follows the manuscripts, but where there are extra stage directions in the wordbook which amplify and do not contradict the manuscript versions, the extra words are added in square brackets.

Le texte italien qui suit dérive des manuscrits musicaux, et diffère un peu des versions données dans le libretto imprimé (*L. C. Silla*, Londres, 1713). La version donnée se conforme aux manuscrits, mais dans certains cas il y a des indications dans le libretto qui amplifient sans contredire les versions manuscrites, et les mots supplémentaires sont ajoutés en crochets.

Der italienische Text hier stammt aus den musikalischen Handschriften und unterscheidet sich etwas von der Fassung, die in dem gedruckten Textbuch gegeben wird (*L.C. Silla*, London, 1713). Die Fassung, die hier gegeben wird richtet sich nach den Handschriften, wo aber zusätzliche Regieanweisungen in dem Textbuch erscheinen, um die handschriftliche Fassung ausführlicher zu erläutern und ihr nicht im Widerspruch stehen, an diesen Stellen sind die zusätzlichen Wörter in Klammern beigefügt.

DISC 1

OVERTURE

- 1 *Largo - Allegro - Adagio*
- 2 *Andante - Adagio*
- 3 *Minuet*
- 4 *March*

ATTO I

SCENA I. *Gran piazza di Roma, nel mezzo di cui s'innalza un arco trionfale. Silla sedendo sopra un caro tirato da sei schiavi negri, e preceduto da' littori co' fasci ed insegne consolari s'avanza, e passa sotto il sudetto arco al suono di stromenti militari, e nel discendere dal carro viene incontrato da Metella, e da Lepido*

5 RECITATIVO

Silla, Metella e Lepido

METELLA

Silla, s'oggi risplende
per te più chiaro di Quirino il Cielo,
qual sarà del mio cor l'alto fulgore?
S'arde per te di Gloria, e in un d'amore.

LEPIDO

Quanto deve la patria al tuo valore!

OVERTURE

ACT 1

SCENE 1. *A great square in Rome, in the midst of which rises a triumphal arch, Sulla, seated on a chariot drawn by six black slaves and preceded by lictors with fasces and consular insignia, comes forward and passes under the arch while military instruments play. As he steps down from the chariot he is met by Metella and Lepidus*

RECITATIVE

Silla, Metella and Lepidus

METELLA

Today, Sulla, as heaven shines more brightly
for you on the Quirinal hill,
will it be like the proud radiance in my heart?
One burns with your glory, the other with
your love.

LEPIDUS

How much your country owes to your valour!

SILLA

De' regni servi, che incatenati al Tebro
quivi traggio, e di Mario,
che col suo capo altero
forma base al mio piede,
Roma sola ne fia degna mercede;
quindi' l' Lazio s' appresti
obbedir le mie leggi, e in Campidoglio
pieghi Roma a miei cenni il proprio orgoglio.

ARIA

SILLA

- 6 Alza il volo la mia fama
sin nell'etra a festeggiar.
Vinto Mario, e serva Roma,
doppio alloro alla mia chioma
or mi vedo a scintillar.

Alza il volo, &c

*Silla parte col suo seguito, restando
Metella e Lepido sospesi.*

SCENA II. *Metella e Lepido.*

7 RECITATIVO

METELLA
S' eclissa la mia gioia!

LEPIDO
Il cor ne freme.

SULLA

For the subject realms which I bring here
in chains to the Tiber, and for Marius,
whose proud head
becomes my foot-stool,
let Rome alone be the worthy reward;
then let Latium be prepared
to obey my laws, and in the Capitol
let Rome submit to my command the pride
that is hers.

ARIA

SULLA

My fame soars aloft
to be celebrated in heaven.
With Marius defeated, and Rome submissive,
I see double laurels
glistening now in my hair.

*Sulla leaves with his attendants; Metella
and Lepidus remain, in a state of doubt.*

SCENE 2. *Metella and Lepidus.*

RECITATIVE

METELLA
My joy vanishes!

LEPIDUS
My heart shudders.

METELLA
Patria infelice!

LEPIDO
Ah! sventurato evento!

METELLA
Oh consorte superbo!

LEPIDO
Amico infido!
Ma tu, Metella, in generoso core,
corri a temprar quell'ambizioso affetto.

METELLA
Tanto devo alla patria, in ciò m'affretto.

ARIA

- 8 Fuggon l'aure in me di vita,
se la patria, oh Dio, è tradita,
e lo sposo è'l traditor.
Sposo ingrato,
dispietato,
cessa omai tanto rigor,
Fuggon, &c.

[Parte]

- 9 SCENA III. *Lepido e Flavia, ch' esce spaventata.*

FLAVIA
Cieli, numi! che vidi?

LEPIDO
Oh dei, che fia?

METELLA
My unhappy country!

LEPIDUS
Event of ill fortune!

METELLA
Arrogant husband!

LEPIDUS
Faithless friend!
but may you, Metella, with your generous heart
make speed to moderate his ambitious desires.

METELLA
I owe that much to my country: I'll hasten
to do so.

ARIA

The breath of life would fly from me
if my country, oh God, were betrayed
and my husband were the traitor.
Oh my husband, ungrateful
and heartless,
end now such severity.

[She leaves]

SCENE 3. *Lepidus and Flavia, who enters in fear.*

FLAVIA
Heavens, gods, what have I seen?

LEPIDUS
Oh gods, what has happened?

FLAVIA
Fantasmi portentosi
turbano i miei riposi.

LEPIDO
E che vedesti?

FLAVIA
La patria incenerita
per man d'orrido mostro.

LEPIDO
Cara, t'acquieta, che non sempre al fine,
benchè minaccia il Ciel, porta rovine.

ARIA

10 LEPIDO
Se ben tuona il ciel irato
sempre i fulgori non scaglia
ma dimostra il suo splendor.
Di costanza un core armato
a un sol lampo non s'abbaglia,
né ricetta apre al timor.

Se ben tuona, &c.

(Parte)

SCENA IV. *Flavia e Celia. Mentre Celia esce, cade un fulmine che atterra una gran parte dell'arco trionfale.*

11 RECITATIVO

CELIA
Sin con lingua di foco
conferma il ciel ora i spaventi miei?

FLAVIA
Ill-omened visions
are troubling my sleep.

LEPIDUS
And what have you seen?

FLAVIA
My country reduced to ashes
by the hand of a horrid monster.

LEPIDUS
Dearest, be calm, for though Heaven threatens,
it does not always bring ruin.

ARIA

LEPIDUS
Though angry Heaven may thunder,
it does not always send down lightning,
but instead may reveal its splendour.
A heart armed with constancy
is neither blinded by a single flash
nor offers a refuge to fear.

(He leaves)

SCENE 4. *Flavia and Celia. As Celia enters, a thunderbolt falls, shattering a large portion of the triumphal arch.*

RECITATIVE

CELIA
Now is not Heaven confirming my fears
so far with a tongue of fire?

FLAVIA

Ah, non fu sogno il mio; v'intendo, oh Deil

ARIA

FLAVIA

12 Un sol raggio di speranza
non negare, oh Giove, al seno.
Che fra l'ombre del timore
la costanza
va perdendo il bel sereno.

Un sol raggio, &c

SCENA V. *Celia e Claudio. Claudio esce tenendo nelle mani il ritratto del morto Mario, quale sta contemplando attentamente.*

13 RECITATIVO

CELIA

Sino su li occhi miei
vagheggia altra beltade?
No, nol soffrire, oh core!
Ma'l mio onor? che risolvo? Eh, vinca amore.

(Gli strappa con furia il ritratto della mani e [vedendo esser quella di Mario] la getta a terra con disprezzo)

Ad un spento tiranno
ancor serbi l'affetto?

CLAUDIO

Idolo mio! per te sola
è'l mio amor, quello è rispetto.

FLAVIA

Ah, it was not a dream I had; I understand you,
oh you gods!

ARIA

FLAVIA

Oh Jove, do not deny my heart
a single ray of hope.
For amid the shadows of fear
my constancy
is losing its bright serenity.

SCENE 5. *Celia and Claudius. Claudius enters holding in his hands a portrait of the dead Marius, which he gazes at attentively.*

RECITATIVE

CELIA

Before my very eyes
is he admiring some other beauty?
No, my heart, I'll not endure it!
But what of my honour? what shall I decide?
Ah, let love prevail.

(In fury she seizes the portrait from Claudius' hands and [seeing that it is of Marius] throws it scornfully to the ground)

Do you still retain affection
for a dead tyrant?

CLAUDIUS

My beloved! you alone
have my love, but he has my respect.

CELIA
D'amor parli, e non sai...

CLAUDIO
So che sei l'alma mia .

CELIA
... che sostegno di Silla.

CLAUDIO
Quella, ch'un dì saprai, gran tirannia.

CELIA
Vanne, ardito, da me!

CLAUDIO
Bella, concedi che la mia fedeltà...

CELIA
Da me, che chiedi?

CLAUDIO
Il tuo amor...

CELIA
Di 'l mio sdegno.

CLAUDIO
La tua pietà...

CELIA
Di Silla
un nemico n'è indegno.

CLAUDIO
Amabile rigore!

CELIA
You speak of love, and you do not know...

CLAUDIUS
I know that you are my very soul.

CELIA
... that I am a supporter of Sulla.

CLAUDIUS
His great tyranny you will one day recognise
as such.

CELIA
Away from me, rash man!

CLAUDIUS
Fairest, admit that my faithfulness...

CELIA
What do you want from me?

CLAUDIUS
Your love.

CELIA
Say rather my hate.

CLAUDIUS
Your compassion...

CELIA
An enemy of Sulla's
is not worthy of it.

CLAUDIUS
Adorable severity!

CELIA
(Amor! onor! deh, mi squarciate il core!)

ARIA

CLAUDIO

14 Sentì, bell'idol mio!
sarà per te'l desio
fedele ogn'ora.
È solo la costanza
nudrir vuol la speranza
del fermo e fido amor di chi t'adora.
Sentì, &c.

(Parte)

SCENA VI. *Celia sola*

15 RECITATIVO

CELIA
Sì, t'amo, oh caro, e pur io son costretta
celar in sen gli affetti
per quei crudi d'onor vani rispetti.

ARIA

CELIA

16 Se la speranza nudrisce il mio cor,
anco tacendo felice è'l mio amor.
E' pure desio contento maggior,
ma non lo vuole rispetto d'onor.
Se la speranza, &c.
(Parte)

CELIA
(Love! Honour! ah, you tear my heart!)

ARIA

CLAUDIUS

Hear me, my fair beloved,
my desire for you
shall always be faithful.
And constancy alone will feed the hope
of the steady and faithful love
of him who adores you.

(He leaves)

SCENE 6. *Celia alone*

RECITATIVE

CELIA
Yes, I love you, my dearest, yet I am compelled
to hide my feelings within my breast
by those cruel and empty requirements of honour.

ARIA

CELIA

While hope nourishes my heart
My love, keeping silent, remains happy.
And yet I desire a greater happiness
but regard for honour will not allow it.

(She leaves)

SCENA VII *Giardino delizioso.*
Silla e Claudio; Celia osservandoli
in disparte

17 RECITATIVO

CLAUDIO
Silla, dov'è la gloria
del Tebro omai? Ché se tu usurpi, insano,
un ingiusto poter, non sei Romano.

SILLA
Anzi del Lazio è figlio
chi tenta un ardua impresa.

CLAUDIO
Chi ha sol di virtù l'anima accesa,
ma tu...

SILLA
Taci, superbo!

CLAUDIO
... la commun libertà calpesti intento.

SILLA
Premio del mio valor.

CELIA
(Quanto pavento!)
(*Si presenta in fretta a Silla*)
Signor, del genitore
qual nove arrecchi?

SCENE 7 *A delightful garden.*
Sulla and Claudius; Celia observing them
from a distance

RECITATIVE

CLAUDIUS
Sulla, where now is the glory of Rome?
For if, madman, you assume power
without right, you are no Roman.

SULLA
Rather is he a son of Latium
who attempts an arduous enterprise.

CLAUDIUS
The soul of such a man is fired
only by virtue, but you...

SULLA
Silence, arrogant man!

CLAUDIUS
... are intent on trampling down our common
freedoms.

SULLA
The reward for my valour.

CELIA
(How great is my fear!)
(*She hastily confronts Sulla*)
My lord, what news of my father
can you bring me?

SILLA

Oh Celia, al sen t'accoglio;
leggerai li suoi cenni su questo foglio.
(Le dà una lettera [che Celia legge])

CLAUDIO

E credi forse, oh Silla,
che questo acciar...

SILLA

Cotanto...?
(Celia li interrompe)

CELIA

Scrive egli omai delle guerriere squadre.

SILLA

Ch'io sosterrò ver te veci di padre.

(Celia seguita a leggere)

CLAUDIO *(verso Celia)*

Reprimer ben saprò ...

SILLA

Meglio consiglia!

CELIA

(li interrompe di nuovo)

Ti sarò, sì signor, e ancella, e figlia.

(Parte Silla [sdegnato] e Celia [lo seguita])

SULLA

Oh Celia, I welcome you in my heart;
you can read his directions in this letter.
(He gives Celia a letter [which she reads])

CLAUDIUS

And perhaps you believe, oh Sulla,
that this sword...

SULLA

So much...?
(Celia interrupts him)

CELIA

He writes now about his warrior troops.

SULLA

Which I shall maintain on your behalf in
place of your father.
(Celia continues to read)

CLAUDIUS *(to Celia)*

I am sure I can hold them back...

SULLA

Take better counsel!

CELIA

(interrupting him again)

My lord, I shall be your handmaiden and your
daughter.

(Sulla leaves [in a rage] with Celia [following him])

ARIA

CLAUDIO

- 18 Con tromba guerriera,
m'invita la fama
l'orgoglio a pugar.
D'un alma severa
gloriosa vittoria
saprò riportar.

ARIA

CLAUDIUS

With war-like trumpet
fame summons me
to fight pride.
I can gain
a glorious victory
over an unfeeling spirit.

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ATTO II

SCENA 1. *Campagna con tempio di Berecintia nel fondo, ove si rifuggiano molti uomini e donne, raccomandandosi alla Dea*

19 RECITATIVO

Silla e Flavia

SILLA
Flavia!

FLAVIA
Signor, la tua grandezza ammira
stupido il mond'omai...

SILLA
(Quanto è vaga! mi serpe ardor vicino.)

FLAVIA
... Quindi anch'io la tua gloria umile
inchino

SILLA
Anzi la tua bellezza...

FLAVIA
Se virtù non l'adorna, è vile il dono.

SILLA
... merta gloria maggior

FLAVIA
Nel mio sposo ha mercè.

ACT II

SCENE 1. *Countryside with the temple of Cybele in the distance, where many men and women are taking refuge and praying to the goddess*

RECITATIVE

Sulla and Flavia

SULLA
Flavia!

FLAVIA
My lord, all the world now stands amazed
at your greatness...

SULLA
(How lovely she is! A fire creeps over me.)

FLAVIA
... and therefore I too bow humbly before
glory.

SULLA
Rather your beauty...

FLAVIA
Vile is the gift not adorned by virtue.

SULLA
... deserves greater glory.

FLAVIA
It has its reward in my husband.

SILLA
Più nel mio core.

FLAVIA
(Accenti non graditi!)

SILLA
Ascolta, oh cara,
trionfi di quest'alma
con quel vago sembiante.

FLAVIA
Sdegnata moglie Latina arti d'amanti.

ARIA

[20] FLAVIA
Qual scoglio in mezzo all'onde
sarà sempre il mio cor,
ai turbini d'amor
sempre costante.
Qual aspe sordo ogn'or,
qual face crudo ancor
verso ogni amante.
Qual scoglio, &c.

(Parte)

SCENA II

[21] RECITATIVO

Silla solo

SILLA
T'arresta, altera! Ma pietoso Amore
vuol temprare col sonno il mio dolore.

SULLA
But more in my heart.

FLAVIA
(Unpleasant words!)

SULLA
Listen, my dearest,
you vanquish my soul
with those lovely features.

FLAVIA
A Roman wife scorns the wiles of lovers.

ARIA

FLAVIA
Like a rock in mid-ocean
my heart shall always be,
ever constant
amid the whirlwinds of love.
Always deaf as an asp,
and searing as a torch
against every lover.

(She leaves)

SCENE 2

RECITATIVE

Sulla alone.

SULLA
Wait, proud woman! But Love in pity
will moderate my grief with sleep.

ARIA

SILLA

22 Dolce nume de' mortali,
nel mio sen dispiega l'ali.

(Dorme)

SCENA III. *Silla, che dorme.*

Il Dio sopra un carro, tirato da due dragoni, e circondato dalle Furie con faci accese alla mano, che vanno girando attorno di Silla; oscurandosi allora il cielo

ARIA

IL DIO

23 Guerra, stragi e furor!
Vo' che Roma sommessata
il tuo poter adori,
e inaffii col tuo sangue a te gl'allori.
Guerra, stragi e furor!

SCENA IV. *Il Dio sparisce con tutte le Furie rischiarandosi il cielo, e Silla si risveglia, infuriato replicando "Guerra".*

SILLA

Guerra, stragi e furor!
(*Silla chiama li sicarii, che vengono colla spada alla mano*)

Miei fidi, ivi accorrete,
abbattete, uccidete!
(*Li sicarii entrano nel templo e fanno strage di quella gente ivi rifuggiata; esce Lepido*)

ARIA

SULLA

May the gentle god of mortals
unfurl his wings in my heart.

(He sleeps)

SCENE 3. *Sulla asleep.*

The God appears on a chariot drawn by two dragons and surrounded by the Furies with flaming torches in their hands, wheeling round Sulla; the sky is darkened

ARIA

THE GOD

War, slaughter and fury!
I would have Rome, now submissive,
revere your power,
and water your laurels with her blood.
War, slaughter and fury!

SCENE 4. *The God and all the Furies vanish, the skies clear, and Sulla awakens, furiously repeating the word "War".*

SULLA

War, slaughter and fury!
(*Sulla summons assassins, who appear with swords in their hands*)

My faithful followers, assemble there,
strike down and kill!
(*The assassins enter the temple and massacre the people taking refuge there; Lepidus comes out*)

SCENA V

24 RECITATIVO

Lepido e Silla

LEPIDO

Silla! ove ti guida
cieco furor?

SILLA

Ciò la mia gloria affida.

LEPIDO

Sino nei sacri asili
profanar...

SILLA

E che forse
pretendono quì in terra
divider seco il mio poter i numi?

LEPIDO

Empio, che parli?

SILLA

Irriverente, taci! O che...

LEPIDO

Tanto presumi?

SILLA

Porterai del tuo ardir la pena, insano!

LEPIDUS

Le minacce non teme un cor Romano.

SCENE 5

RECITATIVE

Lepidus and Sulla

LEPIDUS

Sulla! where is this blind fury
leading you?

SULLA

Let my glory take care of that.

LEPIDUS

Even profaning
the holy sanctuaries...

SULLA

And do the gods
perhaps claim division with them
of my power here on earth?

LEPIDUS

Impious man, what are you saying?

SULLA

Be silent, impudent man! Or else...

LEPIDUS

Do you presume so much?

SULLA

I shall punish you for your boldness, madman!

LEPIDO

A Roman heart fears no threats.

SILLA

Non sai che sono...

LEPIDO

Usurpator del soglio!

SILLA

E posso ciò che voglio.

Ti comando di Flavia
sciogliere il laccio, affinché io possa a pieno
col nodo marital stringerla al seno.

LEPIDO

Ciò non fia mai.

SILLA

Tu proverai la forza,
che'l poter coll'amor sempre rinforza.

ARIA

SILLA

[25] È tempo, oh luci belle,
di consolarmi un dì.
Che se'l foco del mio amore
trova ostacolo, il terrore
struggerà chi lo impedi.

(Parte)

SCENA VI

[26] RECITATIVO

Flavia, e Lepido sospeso.

SULLA

Do you not know that I am...

LEPIDUS

The usurper of the throne!

SULLA

And I can do whatever I want.
I command you to break your ties with
Flavia, so that I can bind her fully to my
heart in the knot of marriage.

LEPIDUS

That shall never be.

SULLA

You will be testing your strength,
for power is always reinforced by love.

ARIA

SILLA

It is time, oh lovely eyes,
to console me for a while.
For if the fire of my love
is obstructed, terror
shall destroy whoever hinders it.

(He leaves)

SCENE 6

RECITATIVE

Flavia, and Lepidus in a state of suspense.

FLAVIA
Mio diletto, che pensi?

LEPIDO
Alla vendetta!

FLAVIA
E chi t'accende?

LEPIDO
Un barbaro tiranno,
Silla crudele, che pretende, oh Dio!
svellerti dal mio sen, idolo mio!

FLAVIA
Pria morirò.

LEPIDO
Sensi di nobil alma!

FLAVIA
Sol per te vive il core.

FLAVIA e LEPIDO
Eterno fia nelle tue braccia amore.

27 **DUETTO**
Sol per te, bell'idol mio,
il mio cor ha gioia e pace.
Chi tentar vorrà il mio petto
proverà di cruda Aletto
l'ardente face.

Sol per te, &c.

(Partono)

FLAVIA
My love, what are you thinking?

LEPIDUS
Of revenge!

FLAVIA
And who has angered you?

LEPIDUS
An inhuman tyrant,
cruel Sulla, who, oh God! would
pluck you, my beloved, out of my heart!

FLAVIA
I would sooner die.

LEPIDUS
The thoughts of a noble spirit!

FLAVIA
My heart lives only for you.

FLAVIA and LEPIDUS
In your arms may love be eternal.

DUET
Only in you, my fair beloved,
does my heart find joy and peace.
Anyone who would invade my breast
will face the burning torch
of fierce Alecto.

(They leave)

DISC 2

ATTO II (cont.)

SCENA VII

1 RECITATIVO

Celia piangendo, e Claudio.

CLAUDIO

Bella, lascia i sospiri!

CELIA

Claudio, lasciami piangere.

CLAUDIO

Ah, che per te me sento il cor a frangere!
Ma qual n'è la cagione?

CELIA

La lascivia di Silla.

CLAUDIO

Oh dei, che ascolto?
Barbaro! e ancor non sai che sola è questa
l'anima mia? Vendetta!
(*Corre infuriato, ma Celia lo ferma*)

CELIA

Oh dei! t'arresta!

CLAUDIO

Celia, benchè non senti
pietà di me, di vendicarti io bramo.

CELIA

Taci, caro mi sei, pur troppo io t'amo.

DISC 2

ACT II (contd.)

SCENE 7

RECITATIVE

Celia weeping, with Claudius.

CLAUDIUS

Fairest, no more sighing!

CELIA

Claudius, let me weep.

CLAUDIUS

Ah, I feel my heart breaking for you!
But what is the cause?

CELIA

The lasciviousness of Sulla.

CLAUDIUS

Oh gods, what do I hear?
Vile man, do you still not know that this
woman alone is my soul? Revenge!
(*He runs off in a rage, but Celia stops him*)

CELIA

Oh gods, wait!

CLAUDIUS

Celia, though you may feel
no pity for me, I want to avenge you.

CELIA

Be silent, you are dear to me, too much I love
you.

ARIA

CLAUDIO

- 2 Mi brilla nel seno
un certo seren
ch'invece di noia
contento mi dà.
E pur l'alma a pieno
non gode quel ben,
ch'unito alla gioia
timore sen v`a.

Mi brilla, &c.

(Parte. Celia nel partire si rincontra in Silla che la trattiene)

SCENE VIII

3 RECITATIVO

Silla, Metella, e Celia che vuol partire

SILLA

Mio bel nume, t'arresta!
Non mi lasciar del caro volto privo.
(Metella gliela strappa dalle mani)

METELLA

Non oltraggiar l'altrui onestà, lascivo!

SILLA

Ancor tu, ardità, tenti
di turbar le mie gioie?

METELLA

Il ciel, lo sdegno mio nulla paventi?

ARIA

CLAUDIUS

There shines in my heart
a certain calm
which brings me happiness
in place of annoyance.
And yet my soul does not
fully enjoy that blessing,
for fear and joy
depart together.

(He leaves. As Celia is about to leave she is met by Silla who detains her)

SCENE 8

RECITATIVE

Sulla, Metella, and Celia trying to leave

SULLA

Wait, my fair goddess!
Do not leave me bereft of your dear face.
(Metella snatches Celia from Sulla's hands)

METELLA

Lustful man, do not violate the decency of
others!

SULLA

Would you, rash woman, try
to interfere with my pleasures?

METELLA

Do you fear nothing, neither heaven nor my
wrath?

(Silla vuol abbracciar Celia [ma Mettella lo impedisce])

SILLA

Scostati, over...

METELLA

Ti trarrò prima il core.

SILLA

Superba, lo saprai.

(Parte infuriato)

METELLA

Forza d'amore!

ARIA

METELLA

(verso Celia)

4

Hai due vaghe pupillette,
che son scorta al Dio d'amor.
Ride il brio nel tuo sembiante,
ed a se tragge ogni cor.

Hai due vaghe, &c.

(Partono)

SCENA IX. Giardino con palazzo di Lepido nel fondo, in mezzo di cui s'innalza la statua di Silla

5

RECITATIVO

[Flavia e Silla con soldati, che fa ritirare]

(Sulla tries to embrace Celia [but Metella prevents him])

SULLA

Stand aside, or...

METELLA

I shall rip your heart out first.

SULLA

Proud woman, you shall know your fate.

(He leaves in a rage)

METELLA

The power of love!

ARIA

METELLA

(to Celia)

You have two lovely eyes
which are a guide to the God of love.
Liveliness smiles in your features,
and draws all hearts to them.

(They leave)

SCENE 9. Garden with Lepidus' palace in the distance; a statue of Sulla rises in the centre of the garden

RECITATIVE

[Flavia and Sulla with soldiers, who draw back]

FLAVIA
Che miro, oh Dei? Qui Silla?

SILLA
Son io, Flavia; che temi?
Egro d'amor, ricerco
al disperato mal rimedi estremi.
(Vuol abbracciarla, ed ella s'inginocchia)

FLAVIA
Supplice alle tue piante,
signor...

SILLA
Bella, risorgi;
t'offro la man di sposo, e in un d'amante.

FLAVIA
È vana ogni speranza
di vincer il mio cor.

SILLA
Avrò costanza, idolo mio.

FLAVIA
Parti!

SILLA
Non posso.

FLAVIA
Oh dio!

FLAVIA
Oh Gods, what do I see? Sulla here?

SULLA
It is I, Flavia; what do you fear?
Sick with love, I seek
drastic remedies for a grievous illness.
(He tries to embrace her, but she falls to her knees)

FLAVIA
A suppliant at your feet,
my lord...

SULLA
Rise, my fair one;
I offer you the hand of both a husband and a
lover.

FLAVIA
All your hopes of winning my heart
are empty.

SULLA
I shall be constant, my beloved.

FLAVIA
Leave me!

SULLA
I cannot.

FLAVIA
Oh god!

SILLA

Il duce sì temuto
dell'imperio latin così disprezzi?

FLAVIA

Così 'l mio onor apprezzi?

*(Mentre Silla vuol abbracciarla di nuovo,
calano quattro spettri, che girano attorno
la statua di Silla, la quale si profonda,
sorgendo invece di quella un cipresso,
albero funesto)*

FLAVIA

Mira, tiran, ch' il ciel
ti minaccia rovine.

SILLA

Or la mia imago
va negli Elisi a coronarsi il crine.
(Tenta ancor d'abbracciarla)

FLAVIA

Cieli! chi mi soccorre?
(Esce Lepido colla spada alla mano)

SCENA X. *Lepido, e li sudetti*

LEPIDO

Tanto ardisci?

SILLA

Il tuo tetto
è de' ribelli miei fatto ricetto.
(Silla chiama i suoi soldati)

SULLA

Do you so despise the dread ruler
of the Roman Empire?

FLAVIA

Do you so value my honour?

*(As Sulla again tries to embrace her, four
spectres descend and circle round the statue
of Sulla; the statue sinks down and in its
place rises a cypress tree, symbol of death)*

FLAVIA

See, tyrant, how heaven itself
threatens you with ruin.

SULLA

Now my image descends
to be crowned in Elysium.
(Again he tries to embrace her)

FLAVIA

Heavens! who will help me?
*(Lepidus comes forward with a sword in his
hand)*

SCENE 10. *Lepidus and the aforementioned*

LEPIDUS

Are you so bold?

SULLA

Your house
has become a refuge for my enemies.
(Sulla summons his soldiers)

Olà! ch'ambo costor sian custoditi
in due carceri orrendi.
(Silla parte. Mentre li soldati vogliono
prender la spada a Lepido, egli si mette in
difesa, ma lo impedisce Flavia)

FLAVIA
Cedi, o caro, e dal ciel soccorso attendi.

DUETTO

FLAVIA e LEPIDO
[6] Ti lascio, idolo mio,
ma teco resta il cor.
(Partono custoditi da soldati)

SCENA XI

[7] RECITATIVO

*Celia, Claudius; Silla con Scabro e soldati
osservandoli in disparte*

CLAUDIO
Anima mia!

CELIA
Mio caro!

CLAUDIO
Al fine la mia fede
ha per premio il tuo amor.

CELIA
Giusta mercede!

Ho there! let both of them be locked up
in separate dungeons.
(Sulla leaves. As the soldiers attempt to take
Lepidus' sword, he begins to defend himself,
but Flavia intervenes)

FLAVIA
Yield, my dearest, and await help from
heaven.

DUET

FLAVIA and LEPIDUS
I leave you, my beloved,
but my heart stays with you.
(They leave, guarded by the soldiers)

SCENE 11

RECITATIVE

*Celia and Claudius; in the distance observing
them are Sulla and Scabro with soldiers*

CLAUDIUS
My very soul!

CELIA
My dearest!

CLAUDIUS
At last my fidelity
has your love as its prize.

CELIA
A merited reward!

CLAUDIO

Oh! dolci accenti!

CELIA

Oh! punto sospirato!

Ma se Silla inumano...

CLAUDIO

Difenderti saprò con questa mano.

(Silla s'avvanza ed i soldati circondano Claudio, prendendoli la spada)

SILLA

Troncherò il vostro nodo!

CLAUDIO

Ah! crudo mostro!

CELIA

Signor, pietate, aita!

Claudio sol...

SILLA

Morirà.

CELIA

Dagli la vita!

CLAUDIO

Ha de' fulmini il cielo!

CELIA

Lanci pur contro te Giove il suo telo!

CLAUDIUS

Oh sweet words!

CELIA

Oh longed-for moment!

But if that inhuman Sulla...

CLAUDIUS

With this hand I can protect you.

(Sulla comes forward and the soldiers surround Claudius taking away his sword)

SULLA

I shall sever the bond between you!

CLAUDIUS

Ah! cruel monster!

CELIA

My lord, have pity, help us!

Claudius only...

SULLA

He shall die.

CELIA

Let him live!

CLAUDIUS

Heaven has thunderbolts!

CELIA

May Jove himself hurl his weapon against you!

SILLA

Costui vada tra marmi; e Celia intanto
meanwhile
purghi il suo error col pianto
ne' alberghi custodita.

CELIA e CLAUDIO

Addio, cara mia vita.

SCENA XII

(Partono)

8 RECITATIVO

Silla e Scabro

SILLA

Scabro! Lepido sia da' stral trafitto,
Claudio cibo alle fere;
tanto eseguisce. Ora trionfa Amore,
se gli offre due olocausti'l mio furore.

ARIA

SILLA

9 La vendetta è un cibo al cor.
se la chiede offeso Amor.
E chi vuole ben goder
offra vittime al piacer.

La vendetta, &c.
(Parte, restando Scabro)

SCENA XIII

RECITATIVO

SULLA

Let him go among the tombstones;

let Celia purge her offence with tears,
confined to her apartments.

CELIA and CLAUDIUS

Farewell, my dearest life.

SCENE 12

(They leave)

RECITATIVE

Sulla and Scabro

SULLA

Scabro! Let Lepidus be pierced by arrows,
and Claudius be fed to the beasts;
see that it is done. Now the god of love
shall triumph as my anger makes two
sacrifices to him.

ARIA

SILLA

Revenge is food to the heart
if offended Love seeks it.
And let him who would rejoice greatly
offer sacrifices to pleasure.

(He leaves; Scabro remains)

SCENE 13

10 RECITATIVE

Metella e Scabro

METELLA

Oh! perfido consorte,
grida al trono d'Astrea sangue innocente.
Che farò, Scabro, oh Dio? al fin da morte
per sottrarli farammi il ciel possente.

*(Metella prende per la mano Scabro, e parte
in fretta)*

SCENA XIV. Cortile che corrisponde al
serraglio delle fere [ove si vedono a camminare
li leoni]. Claudio alla finestra d'una torre in atto
d'esser gettato nel serraglio

ARIA

CLAUDIO

11 Se'l mio mal da voi dipende,
perchè, oh dei, non lo impedite?

SCENA XV. Silla e Scabro, che getta a' piedi
di Silla una veste forata ed insanguinata, creduta
di Lepido

12 RECITATIVO

SILLA

Sì, questi son trofei, però imperfetti
del mio amor, di mia gloria,
Vanne, mio fido, e me presente; Claudio
tra le fere, mi dia piena vittoria.

*(Mentre Scabro vuol partire, si rincontra Metella
affrettata, che lo trattiene)*

Metella and Scabro

METELLA

Ah! treacherous husband, innocent blood
cries out before the throne of justice.
What shall I do, Scabro? Oh God! let mighty
Heaven at last allow me to save them from
death.

*(Metella takes Scabro by the hand and they
leave in haste)*

SCENE 14. A courtyard alongside the
enclosure for wild beasts [where lions can be
seen prowling]. Claudius at the window of a
tower, about to be thrown into the enclosure

ARIA

CLAUDIUS

As my misfortune comes from you,
why, oh gods, will you not end it?

SCENE 15. Sulla and Scabro, who throws at
the feet of Sulla a torn and blood-stained
garment, presumed to belong to Lepidus

RECITATIVO

SULLA

Yes, these are the trophies of my love,
and of my glory, though incomplete.
Go, my trusty servant, and show me;
Claudius amid the beasts shall complete my
victory.

*(As Scabro turns to go, he is met by Metella,
entering in haste; she holds him back)*

SCENA XVI. *Metella, Silla e Scabro*

METELLA

Deh! corri al tuo signore!
*(Scabro corre verso Silla, e questo va
affrettato verso Metella)*

SILLA

Qual furore ti trae?

METELLA

La tua salvezza!

SILLA

Come?

METELLA

Di Mario insorge empia fazione
contro di te.

SILLA

(dimostrandogli Claudio)
La morte dell'indegno
Scabro eseguisce! Io corro
a recider col fer l'idra proterva.

(Parte infuriato)

SCENA XVII. *Metella, Scabro, poi Lepido e
Claudio*

METELLA

T'affretta, oh Scabro, ed ambedue
gli innocenti a me conduci. Il cielo
vedo arrider pietoso al mio gran zelo.

SCENE 16. *Metella, Sulla and Scabro*

METELLA

Ah, run to your master!
*(Scabro runs to Sulla, and the latter goes
hastily to Metella)*

SULLA

What madness impels you?

METELLA

Your safety!

SULLA

What do you mean?

METELLA

A merciless crowd of Marius' followers
is rising against you.

SULLA

(pointing to Claudius)
Scabro, see to the death
of that worthless man! I hasten
to slay the arrogant hydra with my sword.
(He leaves in a rage)

SCENE 17. *Metella and Scabro; later, Lepidus
and Claudius*

METELLA

Make haste, Scabro, and bring both
innocent men to me. I see Heaven
smiling mercifully on my great zeal.

ARIA

METELLA

13

Secondate, oh giusti dei
l'innocenza a sollevare.
Che qual fiamma i voti miei
ponno in voi centro trovar.

*(Scabro conduce in fretta Lepido e Claudio,
che presi per la mano da Metella, ella
conduce via seco frettolosamente)*

ARIA

METELLA

Grant relief to innocence,
oh righteous gods.
Let my prayers soar like a flame
to reach your hearts.

*(Scabro quickly brings in Lepidus and
Claudius; Metella takes them by the hand and
leads them away with her in great haste)*

ATTO III

SCENA I. *Corridore che corrisponde agli appartamenti di Metella*

14 RECITATIVO

Metella e Lepido

LEPIDO

Quanto devo, oh Metella,
al tuo cor generoso.

METELLA

Dovea impedir la tirannia d'un sposo.

LEPIDO

Or che per te respiro
e vita e libertà, lascia ch'io sciolga
colla morte di Silla
da' lacci Roma.

METELLA

Taci! alfin son moglie.

LEPIDO

E di Flavia mio ben, cara consorte,
qual è il destin?

METELLA

Avrà felice sorte.

SCENA II. *Scabro, Metella e Lepido. Scabro dà una lettera a Metella, che la legge.*

ACT 3

SCENE 1. *A corridor leading to Metella's apartments*

RECITATIVE

Metella and Lepidus

LEPIDUS

I owe so much, Metella, to your generous heart.

METELLA

I had to curb my husband's tyranny.

LEPIDUS

Now that, through you, I regain my life and liberty, let me release Rome from her bonds with the death of Sulla.

METELLA

Silence! I am still his wife.

LEPIDUS

And what is the fate of Flavia, my beloved, dear wife?

METELLA

She shall have good fortune.

SCENE 2. *Scabro, Metella and Lepidus. Scabro gives Metella a letter, which she reads.*

METELLA

Dunque partir deve il mio sposo ingrato?

LEPIDO

Oh sorte inaspettata!

METELLA

Ah! crudo fato!

Scabro, allora che Silla
volge il piè dalle mura,
nel carcere di Flavia
Lepido scorta; ed indi
della sua libertà prendine cura.

LEPIDO

Si strugge per la gioia il petto mio!

METELLA

Mi desse almen quel crudo un dolce addio.

ARIA

METELLA

15 Io non ti chiedo più, o sposo amato,
prima del tuo partir ch'un dolce addio.
Che se ver me d'ognor tu fosti ingrato
li falli tuoi pietosa adesso oblio.

Io non ti chiedo, &c.

(Parte)

METELLA

So does my ungrateful husband have to
leave?

LEPIDUS

An unexpected event!

METELLA

Ah! cruel fate!

Scabro, as soon as Sulla
turns his steps away from the walls,
guide Lepidus to Flavia's prison;
and then take good care
to secure her freedom.

LEPIDUS

My heart is bursting with joy!

METELLA

That cruel man might at least have bid me a
kind farewell.

ARIA

METELLA

Dear husband, I seek from you no more
than a kind farewell before you leave.
For though you have always been
ungrateful to me, in pity I now forget
your faults.

(She leaves)

SCENA III

16 RECITATIVO

Lepido e Scabro

LEPIDO

Al tua fedeltade, o caro amico,
fia eterno il mio dover. Quante comparte
grazie al Ciel, se mi serba
Flavia, ch'è del mio cor la miglior parte?

ARIA

LEPIDO

- 17 Già respira in petto il core
se l'amore
tutto in gioia lo cangiò.
E con iride sereno
doppo tenebre moleste,
or placate le tempeste
al piacer mi destinò.

Già respira, &c.

(Partono)

SCENA IV

18 RECITATIVO

Silla

SILLA

L'imper quanto è più vasto e più pesante.
e dà noie al pensier, gioie in sembante?

SCENE 3

RECITATIVE

Lepidus and Scabro

LEPIDUS

To your loyalty, dear friend, I shall always
be obliged. How many favours does heaven
share out, if Flavia, who is the greater part
of my heart, keeps true to me?

ARIA

LEPIDO

Now my heart lives again in my breast
as love
changes everything to joy.
And now that the storms
are calmed, with a bright rainbow
following troublesome darkness,
I am destined for happiness.

(They leave)

SCENE 4

RECITATIVO

Sulla

SULLA

What is greater and more burdensome than
imperial rule,
giving weariness to the mind, through
seeming joyful?

Or che dovrei bearmi,
e di Celia, e di Flavia in dolci amplessi,
devo in Trinacria tacito portarmi.

Ma l'amor...

(Pensa un poco)

no, la gloria...

(Pensa, ma poi risoluto)

Sì, olà! Qui Celia venga,

e parte del mio ardor prima si spenga.

19 SCENA V

Celia e Silla

SILLA

Placasti, oh bella diva, il tuo rigore?

CELIA

Silla, solo per Claudio io sento amore.

SILLA

Ma, il mio affetto...?

CELIA

Non curo.

SILLA

La mia grandezza?

CELIA

È vana.

SILLA

Il mio poter?

Now just when I ought to be happy
in the sweet embraces of Celia and Flavia,
I have to go in secret to Sicily.

But love...

(He is thoughtful for a moment)

no, glory...

(He is thoughtful again, then resolute)

Yes, ho there! Let Celia come here,

and share the flame of my passion before it is
extinguished.

SCENE 5

Celia and Silla

SULLA

Fair goddess, have you softened your
severity?

CELIA

Sulla, I love only Claudius.

SULLA

But, my affection...?

CELIA

I pay no heed to it.

SULLA

My greatness?

CELIA

It is worthless.

SULLA

My power?

CELIA
Non temo.
SILLA
Pensa...

CELIA
... che sei tiranno.

SILLA
Dono a meriti del padre
di vendetta il conforto.

CELIA
Claudio, cor mio!

SILLA
Claudio, superba, è morto.
(Parte [in collera] correndogli dietro Celia)

CELIA
È morto? ah! dispietato
crudel; ma più di te, barbaro Fato!

ARIA

CELIA
[20] Sei già morto, idolo mio,
per far vivo il mio dolor.
Pur dovrò seguirti anch'io
se con te parti il mio cor.
Sei già morto, &c.

(Resta penosa)

SCENA VI

[21] RECITATIVO

CELIA
I do not fear it.
SULLA
Consider...

CELIA
... that you are a tyrant.

SULLA
To the honour of your father
I offer the consolation of vengeance.

CELIA
Claudius, my love!

SULLA
Claudius, proud woman, is dead.
(He leaves [in a rage], Celia running after him)

CELIA
Is he dead? Ah, merciless,
cruel man; yet Fate is more cruel than you!

ARIA

CELIA
My beloved, now that you are dead
my grief becomes alive.
Yet I too must follow you
because my heart has gone with you.

(She remains, grief-stricken)

SCENE VI

RECITATIVE

Celia, e Claudio in disparte

CELIA

Rimembranze funeste
dell'estinto mio Claudio!

CLAUDIO

Claudio!

CELIA

(Si volge spaventata [non osservando Claudio])

Tu ancora, Eco crudele,
con quel nome adorato
ora le pene mie fai redivive?

CLAUDIO

Vive!

CELIA

Vive, sì, in questo cor sempre costante.

CLAUDIO

Costante!

CELIA

Ah, perchè non potei, idolo mio,
renderti dal tiranno allor sicuro?

CLAUDIO

Sicuro!

CELIA

E vivrò in sì infelice secolo?

CLAUDIO

Eccolo!

*(Claudio si presenta a Celia, ed ella si ritira
spaventata)*

Celia, and Claudius at a distance

CELIA

Mournful are the memories
of my lost Claudius!

CLAUDIUS

Claudius!

CELIA

(She turns in fright [not seeing Claudius])

Do you too, cruel Echo,
with that dear name,
now cause my pains to revive?

CLAUDIUS

He's alive!

CELIA

Yes, alive in my heart that's ever constant.

CLAUDIUS

Constant!

CELIA

Ah, my beloved, why from the tyrant
could I not keep you safe?

CLAUDIUS

Safe!

CELIA

And can I live on in so sad a time here?

CLAUDIUS

I'm here!

*(Claudius appears before Celia and she
starts back in fear)*

CELIA
Ombra adorata, oh Dei!

CLAUDIO
Ah, mia bella, son io, scaccia il timore
Metella mi salvò.
(*Celia gli si accosta pian piano*)

CELIA
Celia, fa core;
deggio creder ai lumi?

CLAUDIO
Anima mia,
stringimi al sen.

CELIA
Il cor più non desia.

ARIA

CLAUDIO
[22] Luci belle,
serene stelle,
del mio cor tiranne amate,
voi sol date
vita e spirito all'alma mia.
Da voi solo pende il mio fato,
ne agli Elisi ancor beato
senza voi giammai saria.

Luci belle, &c.
(*Partono*)

SCENA VII. Prigione ove sta Flavia

ARIA

CELIA
Beloved shade, oh gods!

CLAUDIUS
Ah, my fair one, it is I, dispel your fears.
Metella saved me.
(*Celia approaches him very cautiously*)

CELIA
Celia, take heart;
Can I believe my eyes?

CLAUDIUS
My very soul,
hold me to your breast.

CELIA
My heart desires no more.

ARIA

CLAUDIO
Beautiful eyes,
shining stars,
dear tyrants of my heart,
you alone give
life and spirit to my soul.
On you alone my fate depends,
never could I be happy without you,
even in Elysium.

(*They leave*)

SCENE 7. The prison where Flavia is held

ARIA

FLAVIA

23

Stelle rubelle,
a torto morirò.
Ma infelice saria il vivere
se l'amato mio consorte
colla morte
agli Elisi
il sentiero mi additò.

Stelle rubelle, &c.

SCENA VIII. Flavia e Silla con un soldato che porta un bacile coperto, sopra di cui vi è la veste lacera [ed insanguinata] creduta di Lepido.

24

RECITATIVO

SILLA

Al fin, del mio rigore,
bella, pentito, ora risveglio amore.

FLAVIA

Vanne, lascivo!

SILLA

Un sguardo
non mi negar.

FLAVIA

Sol di vendetta io ardo.
Barbaro, del mio sposo
rendi ragione.

SILLA

Egli ha dolce riposo.

FLAVIA

Hostile stars,

wrongly shall I die.

But it would be wretched to live on
when my beloved husband
with his death
has shown me the way
to the Elysian fields.

SCENE 8. Flavia and Sulla with a soldier carrying a covered basin, on top of which is the torn [and blood-stained] garment presumed to belong to Lepidus.

RECITATIVE

SILLA

Repenting of my harshness at last,
my fair one, I now awaken my love.

FLAVIA

Away, lascivious man!

SULLA

Do not deny me
one glance.

FLAVIA

My passion is only for revenge.
Cruel man, tell me
about my husband.

SULLA

He is sleeping soundly.

FLAVIA
Forse là negli Elisi?

SILLA
Dove irai, se non plachi un tanto orgoglio.

FLAVIA
Avrò sempre per te petto di scoglio.
Sù via, tiran, recidi
questa misera vita, e fa che l'alma
si congionga al mio bene.

SILLA
Il tuo fato, orsù, là si contiene.
*(Silla le getta a' piedi la veste di
Lepido, e parte sdegnato)*

FLAVIA
Ma infelice saria il vivere
se l'amato mio consorte
colla morte
agli Elisi
il sentiero mi additò.

*SCENA IX. Scabro, che conduce Lepido in
prigione, e Flavia, credendolo un fantasma,
corre con tutto ciò ad abbracciarlo.*

25 RECITATIVO

FLAVIA
Spirto adorato, oh Dio!
Vieni per consolare il duolo mio?

FLAVIA
Perhaps in the Elysian fields?

SULLA
That is where you shall go, if you do not
humble such pride.

FLAVIA
For you I shall always have a heart of stone.
go on, tyrant, cut short
this life of misery, and let my soul
join that of my beloved.

SULLA
Well then, your fate awaits there.
*(Sulla throws at her feet the garment of
Lepidus and leaves in a rage)*

FLAVIA
But it would be wretched to live on
when my beloved husband
with his death
has shown me the way
to the Elysian fields.

*SCENE 9. Scabro leads Lepidus into the
prison. Flavia, believing him to be a ghost
nevertheless runs to meet him.*

RECITATIVE

FLAVIA
Beloved shade, oh God!
Do you come to console my grief?

LEPIDO

I fantasmi funesti
lascia, mia cara, il tuo consorte è questi.

FLAVIA

Ah, lusinghe d'amor!

LEPIDO

Fugga i sospetti;
Lepido son.

FLAVIA

Ah, fantasia d'affetti!

LEPIDO

Metella mi salvò

FLAVIA

Sogno, o vaneggio?
Ed è ver?

LEPIDO

Sì, mio cor.

FLAVIA

Altro non chieggio.

(Partono)

SCENA X. Notte, con luna in cielo. Spiaggia di mare [con un scoglio nel mezzo], con piccolo vascello e barchetta al lido.

LEPIDUS

Do not think of deathly apparitions,
my dearest, I am indeed your husband.

FLAVIA

Ah, false hopes of love!

LEPIDUS

Banish your doubts;
I am Lepidus.

FLAVIA

Ah, love's illusion!

LEPIDUS

Metella saved me.

FLAVIA

Do I dream or rave?
Is it true?

LEPIDUS

Yes, my heart.

FLAVIA

I ask for nothing else.

(They leave)

SCENE 10. A moonlit night. The sea coast [with a rock in the middle and] with a small ship and a boat on the shore.

Silla, Metella.

SILLA

Metella, oh Dio! Qual sento
affanno nel lasciarti.

METELLA

Ed io tormento.
Ah, che del nostro amore
si ravviva la fiamma.

SILLA

E strugge il core.
Dura necessità.

METELLA

Partenza atroce!

SILLA

Mi divide da te!

METELLA

Destin feroce!

SILLA

Sposa amata, perdona il mio rigore.

METELLA e SILLA

Sempre è più forte dopo i sdegni amore.

DUETTO

27

Non s'estingue mai la fiamma
che in un core accese amor.
Sotto ceneri di sdegno
ha Cupido un bel disegno
di esaltar più forte ardor.

Non s'estingue, &c.

Sulla and Metella.

SULLA

Metella, oh God! What anguish
I feel as I leave you.

METELLA

And I am in torment.
Ah, let the flame of our love
burn once again.

SULLA

And my heart is breaking.
It is a harsh necessity.

METELLA

Cruel parting!

SULLA

Dividing you from me!

METELLA

Unrelenting Fate!

SULLA

Beloved wife, forgive my severity.

METELLA and SULLA

Love is always stronger after anger.

DUET

Let the flame that kindles love
in a heart never be extinguished.
Under the burnt ashes of anger
Cupid has a delightful plan
of exciting passion more strongly.

(Silla s'imbarca, vedendosi il vascello ad entrare in alto mare)

SCENA XI. [Metella sola]

28 RECITATIVO

METELLA

Propizio arrida il cielo
all'amato mio sposo. Oh dei, che miro?

(Metella si volge a guardar il mare, e vede il vascello agitato da un gran borasca. Essendosi oscurata la luna, in cui vece comparisce una gran cometa, con tuoni, lampi e fulmini; e finalmente il vascello fa naufraggio, vedendosi Silla a salvarsi nuotando sopra lo scoglio. [Metella agitata corre per la scena.])

METELLA

Assistete, soccorrete, sommi Dei,
esaudite i voti mei.
(Entra risoluta nella barchetta, e vogando arriva allo scoglio, ove prende Silla, conducendolo via seco)

SCENA XII. Piazza di Roma, ove nel fondo alla sommità d'una grande scalinata si vede il Campidoglio.

Lepido, Flavia, Claudio, Celia, senatori e⁴ popolo, poi Silla e Metella

29 RECITATIVO

LEPIDO

Pera la feritade!

(Sulla embarks, and the ship is seen making for the open sea)

SCENA XI. [Metella alone]

RECITATIVE

METELLA

May Heaven smile propitiously on
my beloved husband. Oh gods, what do I
see?

(Metella turns to look out to sea and sees the ship shaken by a violent storm. The moon is obscured and in its place appears a large comet, with thunder, lightning and thunderbolts. Eventually the ship is wrecked and Sulla is seen to save himself by swimming to the rock. [Metella runs excitedly across the stage.])

METELLA

Grant help and rescue, mighty gods,
answer my prayers.
(She resolutely gets into the boat and rows it to the rock, where she seizes Sulla and takes him away with her)

SCENE 12. A square in Rome. In the distance the Capitol can be seen, at the top of a great flight of steps.

Lepidus, Flavia, Claudius, Celia, senators and people; later Sulla and Metella

RECITATIVE

LEPIDUS

Let savagery perish!

CLAUDIO

Cessi la crudeltade!

TUTTI

Libertà, libertade!

(Vi scende un nube che copre il Campidoglio, ed aprendosi poi [a poco] comparisce Marte nella sua gloria. Tutti si mettono inginocchiati per adorare quel nume, ed in questo punto entra Metella con Silla che, mettendosi inginocchione poi rilevato, rassegna la spada e rinonzia a tutte le dignità [nella Republica], dimandando perdono [a Marte ed alla patria di tutti gli errori da lui commessi.]

30 Sinfonia

31 RECITATIVO

SILLA

De' miei falli pentito,
al tuo nume, alla patria,
chiedo perdon; e più presente il Cielo
il popolo, il senato,
depongo il fer, le dignità, gli onori,
per trar colla consorte i dì migliori.

(Tutti si levano, e Silla discende, abbracciando Metella)

LEPIDO

Giorno felice!

FLAVIA

Ah! venturosa sorte!

CLAUDIUS

Let cruelty be at an end!

ALL

Freedom, liberty!

(A cloud descends, covering the Capitol, and [partly] opens to reveal Mars in his glory. All fall to their knees to worship the god, and at that moment Metella enters with Silla who, after falling to his knees and rising again, surrenders his sword and renounces all titles [of the Republic], and begs forgiveness [from Mars and from his country for all the crimes committed by him.]

Sinfonia

RECITATIVO

SULLA

Repenting of my sins,
I ask pardon from your godhead,
and from my country; and furthermore
before Heaven, the people and the senate,
I lay down my sword, my titles and
my honours, to seek out better days
with my wife.

(All rise, and Silla comes down, embracing Metella)

LEPIDUS

Oh happy day!

FLAVIA

Fortunate event!

CELIA (*verso Silla*)
Signor, si mi permetti,
Claudio fia...

SILLA
Sì, di te degno consorte.

CLAUDIO
Cara, ti stringo al seno.

TUTTI
Doppo tante tempeste è 'l ciel sereno.

32 **CORO**

Chi si trova tra procelle
sol dal Ciel speri conforto.
Che non san negar le stelle
a un cor fermo e calma e porto.

CELIA (*to Silla*)
My lord, if you will allow me,
may Claudius be...

SULLA
Yes, he is worthy to be your husband.

CLAUDIUS
Dearest, I hold you to my breast.

ALL
After such tempests the sky is clear.

CHORUS

Let those caught in storms
hope for relief from Heaven alone.
For the stars cannot deny
calmness and a haven to a stout heart.

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OF CONCERT PERFORMANCECOMPACT
disc
DIGITAL AUDIO

SOMMCD 227-8

2 CD SET DDD

GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL (1685 - 1759)

SILLA

Opera in Three Acts
Libretto by Giacomo Rossi
(Live Recording – Sung in Italian)The London Handel Orchestra, Denys Darlow
(Leader, Adrian Butterfield)

James Bowman • Simon Baker	Countenors
Joanne Lunn • Rachel Nicholls	Sopranos
Natasha Marsh • Elizabeth Cragg	Sopranos
Christopher Dixon	Bass

COMPACT DISC 1 (SOMMCD 227)	59:13
1 - 18 ACT 1: <i>Overture, Scenes 1 to 7</i>	
19 - 27 ACT 2: <i>Scenes 1 to 6</i>	

COMPACT DISC 2 (SOMMCD 228)	56:10
1 - 13 ACT 2: <i>Scenes 7 to 17</i>	
14 - 32 ACT 3: <i>Scenes 1 to 12</i>	

The above individual timings will normally each include two pauses, one before the beginning and one after the end of each movement or work. Texts and translations included in the booklet.

Recorded live in the Concert Hall of The Royal College of Music, London, 11th April 2000
in collaboration with the London Handel Society.

Executive & Recording Producer: Siva Oke.

Recording Engineer: Annabel Connellan, RCM Studios. Design & Layout: Keith Oke.

Front Cover: *The Falls of Tivoli*, circa 1661-3, Gaspard Dughet (1615-1675), by courtesy of
The Wallace Collection, London.

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