



A lexander Balus

23 Marzo 1748

Musica di

George F riederic H andel

Libretto Oratorio di Thomas Morell

A cura di

http://it.groups.yahoo.com/group/Handel_forever

<http://www.haendel.it>

PERSONAGGI DEL DRAMMA

Alexander Balus, Re di Siria (alto)
Tolomeo, Re d'Egitto (basso)
Jonathan, Capo degli ebrei (tenore)
Cleopatra, Figlia di Tolomeo (soprano)
Aspasia, Sua Confidente (soprano)
Un adulatore cortigiano (tenore)
Messaggero (tenore)
Altro Messaggero (basso)

Coro di Israeliti
Coro di Asiatici
Coro di Bricconi



ATTO PRIMO



1. Overture

Scena 1

Ritorno di Alessandro dalla vittoria su Demetrio

2. Coro di Asiatici

Flush'd with conquest, fir'd by Mithra,
Fountain of eternal rays,
Sing we to Balus, sing we to Mithra
Songs of triumph, songs of praise.

3. Recitativo

Alexander

Thus far, ye glorious partners of the war,
The pow'r on high hath prosper'd our designs.
Demetrius is fall'n, and Syria bows
To me, her lord, with universal joy.
I will repay them with those royal virtues,
Justice and clemency.

Jonathan

Most noble king!
The sons of Israel, no less of peace
Desirous, than alert and brave in war
Whene'er their country calls, congratulate
This your success; and gifts, yet more than gifts,
Their hands and hearts they offer in firm league,
As late accepted by imperial Rome.

Alexander

Thy boon is granted: be it wrote on brass,
That Jonathan is Alexander's friend;
The hearts of brothers govern in our loves,
And sway our great resolves.

Jonathan

Confirm it, Heav'n.

4. Aria

Jonathan

Great Author of this harmony,
Who rul'st in Heav'n above,
Oh, bind this league of amity
With chains of lasting love.
Flourish of trumpets.

5. Recitativo**Tolomeo**

And thus let happy Egypt's king
Speak his affection with the trumpet's sound,
That the surrounding nations all may know,
Balus commands the pow'rs of Tolomeo,
Or to secure, or to adorn his throne.

6. Aria**Tolomeo**

Thrice happy the monarch, whom nations contend,
With counsels to guide, and with arms to defend:
Secure stands the throne, that on concord relies,
As by concord preserv'd are the earth and the skies.
Thrice happy, etc.

7. Recitativo**Cleopatra**

Congratulation to our father's friend,
Amidst this general joy, directs our part.
But how shall Cleopatra entertain
The royal ear, unless Apollo's self
Deigns to attune to his own harp my song?

8. Aria**Cleopatra**

Hark, hark! He strikes the golden lyre,
And tells it to his joyful choir,
His Alexander reigns.
Ye docil echoes, catch the sound,
And spread the blessing all around
In sweet harmonious strains.

9. Recitativo**Alexander**

Be it my chief ambition there to rise,
Where for these obligations true desert
May speak me grateful.

10. Aria**Alexander**

Fair virtue shall charm me,
And honour shall warm me
This love to repay:

While steams flow from fountains,
And flocks on the mountains
Or valleys shall stray.

11. Coro di Asiatici

Ye happy nations round,
Loudly triumph, your voices raise!
In choral symphony resound
Great Alexander's praise.

Scena 2

12. Recitativo

Alexander

My Jonathan,
Didst thou mark well her graces? Didst thou feel
The music of her eye? To me it seem'd
More soft and sweet than her melodious voice.
Beauty's a pleasing tyranny, my friend,
Which laughs at the reluctance of the will,
And humbles to her lure the hearts of kings.

13. Aria

Alexander

Oh, what resistless charms are giv'n
To symmetry of feature!
It seems the model of Heav'n,
And triumph of all nature.
Oh, what. . . da capo.

Scena 3

14. Aria

Cleopatra

Subtle love, with fancy viewing,
Rapt'rous joys on joys ensuing,
Plays around my captive heart.
Cautious reason fain would ease me,
But all efforts to release me
Only deeper fix the dart.
Subtle love, etc.

15. Recitativo

Cleopatra

Aspasia, I know not what to call
This interview. Grant, O ye pow'rs, it prove
A happy one! But I am sick with doubt.
Mark'd you the king, Aspasia? Look'd he not
A king indeed, while on his radiant brow,
Deck'd with the rosy rays of youth, love seem'd
To sit enthron'd and full of majesty?

16. Aria**Cleopatra**

How happy should we mortals prove,
How joyous spend the live-long day,
If silent merit gain'd the love
That crafty courtship steals away.

17. Recitativo**Aspasia**

Check not the pleasing accents of thy tongue,
Nor be asham'd, fair princess, to declare
A passion for the brave. 'Tis a reward,
Besides the honours of the well-fought field,
They justly claim: "none else deserves the fair".

18. Aria**Aspasia**

So shall the sweet attractive smile,
Winning graces,
Soft embraces,
Ever crown the soldier's toil:
When he a while forgets the noise
Of loud alarms
And clashing arms,
To triumph in connubial joys.
So shall. . . da capo

19. Recitativo**Cleopatra**

How blissful state...

Aspasia

That blissful state of yours!

Cleopatra

When neither tyrant custom rules the choice...

Aspasia

Nor fickle flights of fancy guide the will...

Cleopatra

But equal love on equal merit form'd,
With pure affection feeds the constant flame.

20. Duetto**Cleopatra e Aspasia**

O, what pleasures, past expressing,
Flow from pure and constant love!
All is joy, and all is blessing,
Which the circling hours improve.

Scena 4

21. Recitativo

Jonathan

Why hangs this heavy gloom upon the brow
Of Syria's monarch, while his big heart heaves
With sudden passion? Hath the royal maid,
Worthy indeed of Alexander's love,
Enslav'd the mighty conqueror? Know thyself,
'Tis thine to ask, and Tolomeo's to grant.

Alexander

Aye, be it so! With speed, my friend, dispatch
The message, rich with gifts, worthy a king.
But oh, what gifts! Had I a word to give,
It were not equal price for such a gem.

22. Aria

Alexander

Heroes may boast their mighty deeds,
And talk of conquests in high strains:
Yet oft more pow'rful beauty leads
The conqueror captive in chains.
Fly swift, on borrow'd wings of love,
Ye tardy-footed minutes, fly!
And bring the sentence, to remove
This frantic torture, live or die.
Heroes. . . da capo

Scena 5

23. Recitativo

Jonathan

Ye sons of Judah, with high festival
Proclaim this happy day. The sword is ceas'd
From Israel. The captives are restor'd,
And liberty, that life of life itself,
And soul of property, directs her sons,
To praise the donor with extatic joy.

24. Aria

Jonathan

Great God, from whom all blessings spring,
Life, liberty, and fame;
To thee let grateful Judah sing,
And magnify thy name.

25. Coro di Israeliti

These are thy gifts, almighty king,
Life, liberty, and fame;
To thee let grateful Judah sing,
And magnify thy name.



ATTO SECONDO



Scena 1

26. Aria

Alexander

Kind hope, thou universal friend,
Sweet balm in all distress,
Still, still a lover's pray'r attend
With fancied raptures of success.
So shall my love-sick soul have ease,
And make her voyage in smoother seas.
Kind hope. . . da capo

27. Recitativo

Jonathan

Long, long and happy live the king! Thus speaks
The messenger from Egypt: Tolomeo
Greets thee his son, and Cleopatra, deck'd
In all the lustre of blooming bride,
At Ptolemais waits the smiling hour.

Alexander

Thither let us haste, my Jonathan,
And all the thorny cares of state apart,
Seize the sweet hour, and revel in delight.

28. Aria

Alexander

O Mithra, with thy brightest beams
Shine out serene and gay.
And pour forth all thy golden streams,
To glad our bridal day.
O Mithra. . . da capo

29. Recitativo

Un cortigiano Adulatore

Stay, my dread sov'reign, and let just revenge
Secure thy throne. A base ungrateful man,
Covering fell purpose with the specious mask
Of friendship, plots against thy throne, thy life.
Loyal affection dictates this, yet more,
It bids me stay, that Jonathan is he.

Alexander

'Tis false! Avvaunt, before I frown thee dead.
Bring me, my lords, the richest purple robe,
And ducal crown: much more deserves my friend,
My brother Jonathan, and more I will
Exalt thee, best of men; for sacred is
This day to honour, gratitude, and love.

Jonathan

There is no greatness in mortality,
That can tie up the gall of sland'rous tongues,
Or 'scape th'intended wounds of calumny.
'Tis a rough brake, the virtuous must go through,
Ever in danger, and yet ever safe,
In the protection of Almighty Pow'r.

30. Aria**Jonathan**

Hateful man! Thy sland'rous tongue
Throws in vain the poison'd dart.
Know, that 'twill recoil ere long,
Doom'd to stab the traitor's heart.
Hateful man. . . da capo

31. Coro di Israeliti

O calumny, on virtue waiting,
Shadow-like, yet virtue hating;
Fly these upper regions, fly,
Native of the shades below,
Thither, thither go!
Go with all thy base designing,
All thy forging, feigning, coining,
And in darkness ever lie.

Scena 2**32. Recitativo****Cleopatra**

Ah! Whence these dire forebodings of the mind?
Why droops my soul, when on the verge of bliss?
Is he not brave, successful, good, a king,
And all that can deserve return of love?
Yet apprehension of I know not what
Hangs heavy on my soul, and checks the rising joy.

33. Aria**Cleopatra**

Tost from thought to thought I rove,
Joys surround me,
Fears confound me.
Ev'ry passion's thine, O love.
Love, thou pleasing irksome guest!

Wishes rising,
Doubts surprising,
Give thy changeful tide no rest.
Tost. . . da capo

34. Recitativo

Aspasia

Give to the winds, fair princess, these vain doubts
And anxious fears; nor think that they arise
From skill prophetic in the book of fate,
But from pure nature, that with decent strife,
'Twixt hope and fear, views th'approaching Scena.

35. Aria

Aspasia

Love, glory, ambition, whate'er can inspire
A flame that is lasting or purest desire,
Unite in the choice of a monarch so great,
To make ev'ry joy, ev'ry blessing complete.
Then give to the winds these disconsolate tears,
When the promising morn of all comfort appears.
Love. . . da capo

Scena 3

36. Recitativo

Tolomeo

Thus far my wishes thrive. With eager joy
Fond Alexander rushes on the toils.
Friend, brother, son or whate'er he be, he falls;
He falls to my ambition. 'Twas for this
I gave him Cleopatra; and for this
With other arts will strengthen our alliance,
Till I can work his ruin. Yes, I've fawn'd,
But only to devour; and soon will hurl
This happy monarch from his fancied throne,
To seat therein whom I can better rule,
The young Demetrius.

37. Aria

Tolomeo

Virtue, thou ideal name,
All thy honours I disclaim;
Vain delight of coward minds!
Bold ambition knows no law,
Active souls, like mine, to awe,
Raging fierce as boist'rous winds.
Virtue. . . da capo

Scena 4

38. Accompagnato

Jonathan

Ye happy people, with loud accents speak
Your grateful joy in Hymenean verse;
Balus and Cleopatra claim the song.

39. Solo e Coro**Jonathan e Israeliti**

Triumph Hymen in the pair;
Thus united,
Thus delighted,
Brave as one, the other fair.

40. Recitativo**Alexander**

Glad time, at length, hath reach'd the happy point,
Where long-liv'd hope in sweet possession dies.
Mithra, I thank thee, Cleopatra is mine.
Thou sacred pow'r, bear witness to my love,
Warm as thy fires, and pure as mid-day light.

Cleopatra

Let Isis ever bind my grateful heart
To duteous vows, and more than loyal love.

41. Duetto**Alexander**

Hail wedded love, mysterious law!
Hearts delighting,
Souls uniting,
A thousand sweets from thee we draw.

Cleopatra

A thousand sweets from thee we draw,
Peace and pleasure,
Without measure,
From wedded love's mysterious law.

42. Coro di Asiatici

Hymen, fair Urania's son,
Show'r thy choicest blessings down
On the lovely royal pair;
Let pure honour and delight
Crown the day, and bless the night,
As he is brave, and she is fair.



ATTO TERZO

Scena 1 Un Giardino

43. Sinfonia

44. Recitativo

Cleopatra

Tis true, instinctive nature seldom points
At some approaching ill in vain. But sure,
In vain were all my former doubts and fears:
For I am happy, happy beyond thought,
In this bright Scena of ever-constant joy.

45. Aria

Cleopatra

Here, amid the shady woods,
Flagrant flow'rs and crystal floods,
Taste, my soul, this charming seat,
Love and glory's calm retreat.
Hence, vain doubt, and idle fear:
Joy and only joy dwells here.

46. Solo e Coro

Bricconi

Mistaken queen! The Gods and Tolomeo
Have otherwise ordain'd! You must with us.

Cleopatra

Help, help, O Isis, Alexander, help!

Scena 2

47. Recitativo

Alexander

Ah, was it not my Cleopatra's voice?
The voice of Cleopatra in distress?
It cannot be. — What beast can leap these walls?
Or more than bold and fierce, that dares invade
Our royal privacy? — Yet she was here,
And I did promise to partake with her
The sweet and solid pleasures of retirement.

48. Aria**Alexander**

Pow'rful guardians of all nature,
O preserve my beauteous love!
Keep from insult the dear creature,
Virtue sure has charms to move.
Pow'rful guardians. . . da capo

49. Recitativo**Jonathan**

Treach'ry, O king, unheard of treachery
Stalks through the kingdom with gigantic steps,
And glories in success. The Syrian towns
Have Tolomeo receiv'd with open gates,
As your kind friend and father. Ent'ring thus
He with Egyptian soldiers garrison'd
Each place, and now at Antioch hath assum'd
The double crown of Egypt and Asia.

Alexander

Talk'st thou of crowns and kingdoms lost, my friend,
We will recover them: but know'st thou aught
Of Cleopatra? — Faithful Aspasia,
Where is my queen, my Cleopatra?

Aspasia

Brib'd by pernicious gold, 'tis said, your guards
Admitted ruffians, sent by Tolomeo,
To seize the queen for young Demetrius.

Alexander

Horror, Confusion! Call my forces round.
To arms, my Jonathan, and let us rush
Upon the guileful foe, that he may feel
The fury of affronted majesty.

50. Aria**Alexander**

Fury, with red sparkling eyes,
Rise, in all thy terrors rise;
All around destruction deal!
That revenge may give some ease,
Or cold death a kind release
To the horrid pains I feel.
Fury. . . da capo

51. Recitativo**Aspasia**

Gods! Can there be a more afflicting sight,
Than such majestic greatness in distress?

How is he fall'n from empire, love, and joy,
The wretched scorn of mercenary slaves!

52. Aria

Aspasia

Strange reverse of human fate,
Mighty joy, and mighty woe!
None are happy, none are great
In this changeful state below.

53. Recitativo

Jonathan

May he return with laurel'd victory
On his glad brow. But oh, I fear the gods,
The creature gods he trusteth cannot help!
They are no gods, but mere delusion all.

54. Aria

Jonathan

To God, who made the radiant sun,
And fix'd him in his central throne,
The paler moon, and ev'ry star,
That darts his beamy light from far;
To Him, almighty, greatest, best,
Jehovah, Lord of Hosts confest,
All victory belongs.
To Him alone 'tis Judah's care,
To offer up their humble pray'r,
And tune their grateful songs.

55. Coro di Israeliti

Sun, moon and stars, and all ye host of Heav'n,
To great Jehovah be all glory giv'n.
On his creating, his all-saving pow'r,
Judah shall call, and him alone adore.

Scena 3

56. Recitativo

Tolomeo (a Cleopatra)

Yes, he was false, my daughter, false to you,
And hath conspir'd against thy father's life.
Self-preservation, and paternal care
For you, my child, oblig'd me to dethrone
This kingly counterfeit. Then think no more
Of the lost Alexander, but receive
A worthier hero, whom thy father wills.

Cleopatra

Impossible! He never could be false
To me, or you; so brave, so just, so good!
But oh, indulge me once more with the sight,

The last farewell, of him, to whom I'm bound
By nature's strongest tie, connubial love.

57. Accompagnato

Tolomeo

Ungrateful child, by ev'ry sacred pow'r,
Thou never, never shalt behold him more.
In vain you sigh, in vain you mourn;
For soon thy rebel heart shall learn,
With smiles to weldome our return.

58. Aria

Tolomeo

O sword, and thou, all-daring hand,
Thy aid alone I crave.
Nor other gods or pow'rs demand,
To conquer or to save.
O sword. . . da capo

Scena 4

59. Recitativo

Cleopatra

Shall Cleopatra ever smile again?
Oh, no! Whate'er a father may command,
He cannot change the course of heart-sore grief.

Messaggero

Ungrateful tidings to the royal ear,
I bring, O queen; but such the will of fate.
The valiant Jew hath vanquish'd thrice his foes,
Whom, flying to Azotus, he pursued,
And on their city swift destruction pour'd,
Not sparing Dagon's temple, or the god;
And now returns in triumph. — But the king,
Alas, the king, o'erpower'd by Tolomeo,
Your father, and deserted by his host,
Sought refuge in Arabia, but in vain:
For treach'rous Zabdiel, heeding not the pray'r
That he pour'd forth in bitterness of soul,
Not for himself, but you, his queen, his life,
Hath with remorseless sword smote off his head.

60. Aria

Cleopatra

O take me from this hateful light:
Torture end me,
Death befriend me,
Wrapt in shades of endless night.

61. Recitativo

Altro messaggero

Forgive, O queen, the messenger of ill!

Cleopatra

Say on, say on.

All strange and terrible events are welcome

To one, whose only comfort is despair.

Messaggero

From the dread Scena of bloody war I come,

Where Tolomeo, your father, raging fierce

And fearless, ever in the formemost rank,

From many a gaping wound hath breath'd his soul.

Cleopatra

This is thy havock, O ambition, bane

Of human happiness! Oh! Had I ne'er

Been born a queen, to feel the dire effects

That wait the fortune of the wretched great.

But vain is all complaint.

62. Accompagnato**Cleopatra**

Calm thou my soul,

Kind Isis, with a noble scorn of life,

Ideal joys, and momentary pains,

That flatter or disturb this waking dream.

63. Aria**Cleopatra**

Convey me to some peaceful shore,

Where no tumultuous billows roar,

Where life, though joyless, still is calm,

And sweet content is sorrow's balm.

There free from pomp and care, to wait,

Forgetting and forgot, the will of fate.

Scena 5**64. Recitativo****Jonathan**

Mysterious are thy ways, O Providence!

But always true and just. By Thee kings reign,

By Thee they fall. — Where is now Egypt's boast?

Where thine, O Syria, laid low in dust,

While chosen Judah triumphs in success,

And feels the presence of Jehovah's arm.

Mindful of this, let Israel ever fear,

With filial reverence, his tremendous name,

And with obsequious hearts exalt his praise.

65. Solo e Coro

Jonathan e Israeliti

Ye servants of th'eternal King,
His pow'r and glory sing,
And speak of all his righteous ways
With wonder and with praise.
Amen. Hallelujah. Amen.

Fine dell'oratorio