



Hercules

di
Georg Friedrich Handel

(1745)

HWV 60



Un Dramma Musicale

Libretto di Thomas Broughton

Personaggi



Hercules, soprannominato Alcide (basso)

Dejanira, sua moglie (mezzo-soprano)

Hyllus, suo figlio (tenore)

Iole, Principessa di Oechalia (soprano)

Lichas, un Araldo, servo di Dejanira (alto)

Sacerdote di Giove (basso)

Primo Oechaliano (soprano)

Primo Trachinian (tenore)

Coro di Trachinians

Coro

A tto P rimo

1. Overture

Scene 1

Palazzo a Trachis, Tessalia. Dejanira, Lichas e Trachinians.

2. Accompagnato

Lichas

See, with what sad dejection in her looks,
Indulging grief, the mournful princess sits.
She weeps from morning's dawn to shades of night,
From gloom of night to redd'ning blush of morn,
Uncertain of Alcides' destiny,
Disconsolate his absence she laments.

3. Aria

Lichas

No longer, fate, relentless frown,
Preserve, great Jove, the hero's life.
With glory's wreath his actions crown,
And oh, restore him to his mourning wife!
No longer, fate. . . **da capo**

4. Accompagnato

Dejanira

O Hercules! Why art thou absent from me?
Return, return, my hero, to my arms!
O gods, how racking are the pains of absence
To one who loves, who fondly loves, like me!

5. Aria

Dejanira

The world, when day's career is run,
In darkness mourns the absent sun;
So I, deprived of that dear light
That warm'd my breast and cheer'd my sight,
Deplore in thickest gloom of grief
The absence of the valiant chief.

6. Recitativo

Lichas

Princess, be comforted, and hope the best!
A few revolving hours may bring him back,
Once more to bless your longing arms.

Dejanira

Ah no, impossible! He never will return.

Lichas

Forbid it, Heav'n, and all ye guardian pow'rs
That watch o'er virtue, innocence and love!

Scene 2**Hyllus, rivolto a Loro.****Dejanira**

My son, dear image of thy absent sire!
What comfort bringst thou to thy mother's ear?

Hyllus

Eager to know my father's destiny,
I bade the priests with solemn sacrifice
Explore the will of Heav'n. The altar smok'd,
The slaughter'd victim bled, when lo, around
The hallow'd walls a sudden glory blaz'd!
The priest acknowledg'd the auspicious omen,
And own'd the present god, when, in a moment,
The temple shook, the glory disappear'd,
And more than midnight darkness veil'd the place.

Lichas

'Twas dreadful all!

Hyllus

At length the sacred flamen,
Full of the deity, prophetic spoke:

7. Aria**Hyllus**

” I feel, I feel the god, he swells my breast.
Before my eyes the future stands confest:
I see the valiant chief in death laid low,
And flames aspire from Oeta's lofty brow.”

8. Recitativo**Hyllus**

He said; the sacred fury left his breast
And on the ground the fainting prophet fell.

Dejanira

Then I am lost. O dreadful oracle,
My griefs hang heavy on my tortur'd soul,
And soon will sink me to the realms of night!
There once again I shall behold my Hercules,

Or whirl the lance, or bend the stubborn bow,
Or to the listening ghosts his toils recount.

9. Aria

Dejanira

There in myrtle shades reclin'd,
By streams that through Elysium wind,
In sweetest union we shall prove
Eternity of bliss and love.

10. Recitativo

Hyllus

Despair not, but let rising hope suspend
Excess of grief, 'till I have learn'd the certainty
Of my dear father's fate. Tomorrow's sun
Shall see your Hyllus bend his pious steps
To seek the hero through the travell'd globe.
If yet he lives, I will restore him to you,
Or perish in the search.

11. Aria

Hyllus

Where congeal'd the northern streams
Bound in icy fetters stand,
Where the sun's intenser beams
Scorch the burning Lybian sand,
By honour, love and duty led,
There with daring steps I'll tread.

12. Coro di Trachinians

O filial piety, O gen'rous love!
Go, youth inspir'd, thy virtue prove!
Immortal fame attends thee,
And pitying Heav'n befriends thee!
O filial piety. . . **da capo**

Scene 3

Lichas, rivolto a loro

13. Recitativo

Lichas

Banish your fears! The noble Hercules
Lives, and from sacked Oechalia, which his arms
Have levell'd with the ground, returns a conqueror!

Dejanira

O joyful news, welcome as rising day
To the benighted world, or falling showers
To the parched earth! Ye lying omens, hence!
Hence, every anxious thought!

14. Aria**Dejanira**

Begone, my fears, fly hence, away,
Like clouds before the morning ray!
My hero found,
With laurels crown'd,
Heav'n relenting,
Fate consenting,
Springing joys my griefs control,
And rising transports swell my soul.
Begone, my fears. . . **da capo**

15. Recitativo**Lichas**

A train of captives, red with honest wounds,
And low'ring on their chains, attend the conqueror.
But more to grace the pomp of victory,
The lovely Iole, Oechalia's princess,
With captive beauty swells the joyful triumph.

Hyllus

My soul is mov'd for the unhappy princess,
And fain, methinks, I would unbind her chains;
But say, her father, haughty Eurystus?

Lichas

He fell in single combat by the sword of Hercules.

Dejanira

No more, but haste, and wait thy lord's arrival!

Esce Dejanira.**Lichas**

How soon is deepest grief exchanged for bliss!

16. Aria**Lichas**

The smiling hours of joyful train
On silken pinions waft again
The moments of delight.
Returning pleasures banish woe,
As ebbing streams recruited flow,
And day succeeds to night.
The smiling hours. . . **da capo**

17. Coro di Trachinians

Let none despair; relief may come though late,
And Heav'n can snatch us from the verge of fate.
Escono.

Scene 4

Una piazza di fronte al Palazzo. Iole e vergini Oechaliane, condotte prigioniere.

18. Recitativo

Iole

Ye faithful followers of the wretched Iole,
Your bonds sit heavier on me than my own.
Unhappy maids! My fate has dragg'd you down
Like some vast pile, that crushes with its fall
The neighb'ring domes, and spreads wide ruin round it.

Primo Oechaliano

You are our mistress still!

Iole

Alas, Erastia,
Captivity, like the destroyer death,
Throws all distinctions down, and slaves are equal.
But if the gods relent, and give us back
To our lost liberty — ah me! — how soon
The flatt'rer hope is ready with his cordial!
Vain expectation! No, adieu for ever,
Ye smiling joys and innocent delights
Of youth and liberty! Oh, sad remembrance!

19. Aria

Iole

Daughter of gods, bright liberty!
With thee a thousand graces reign,
A thousand pleasures crowd thy train
And hail the liveliest deity.
But thou, alas, hast wing'd thy flight,
The graces that surround thy throne
And all the pleasures with thee gone,
Remov'd for ever from my sight.
Daughter of gods. . . **da capo**

20. Recitativo

Iole

But hark, the victor comes!

Scene 5

Hercules and attendenti, rivolto a loro.

21. Marcia

22. Recitativo

Hercules

Thanks to the pow'rs above, but chief to thee,
Father of gods, from whose immortal loins
I drew my birth! Now my long toils are o'er,
And Juno's rage appeas'd. With pleasure now,
At rest, my various labours I review.
Oechalia's fall is added to my titles
And points the rising summit of my glory.

(Rivolgendosi a Iole)

Fair princess, weep no more! Forget these bonds,
In Trachin you are free, as in Oechalia.

Iole

Forgive me, generous victor, if a sigh
For my dear father, for my friends, my country,
Will have its way. I cannot yet forget
That such things were, and that I once enjoy'd them.

23. Aria

Iole

My father! Ah, methinks I see
The sword inflict the deadly wound:
He bleeds, he falls in agony,
Dying he bites the crimson ground.
Peaceful rest, dear parent shade,
Light the earth be on thee laid!
In thy daughter's pious mind
All thy virtues live enshrin'd.

Escono Iole e Oechaliani

Scene 6

24. Recitativo

Hercules

Now farewell, arms! From hence, the tide of time
Shall bear me gently down to mellow age.
From war to love I fly, my cares to lose
In gentle Dejanira's fond embrace.

25. Aria

Hercules

The god of battle quits the bloody field,
And useless hang the glitt'ring spear and shield,
While, all resign'd to conqu'ring beauty's charms,
He gives a loose to love in Cytherea's arms.

26. Coro di Trachinians

Crown with festal pomp the day,
Be mirth extravagantly gay.
Bid the grateful altars smoke,
Bid the maids the youths provoke
To join the dance, while music's voice
Tells aloud our rapt'rous joys!

A tto Secondo

Scene 1

Un appartamento. Iole e Oechaliani.

27. Sinfonia

28. Recitativo

Iole

Why was I born a princess, rais'd on high,
To fall with greater ruin? Had the gods
Made me the humble tenant of some cottage,
I had been happy.

29. Aria

Iole

How blest the maid ordained to dwell
With sweet content in humble cell,
From cities far remov'd,
By murm'ring rills on verdant plains
To tend the flocks with village swains,
By every swain belov'd.

Scene 2

Dejanira, rivolta a lei

30. Recitativo

Dejanira (a parte)

It must be so! Fame speaks aloud my wrongs,
And every voice proclaims Alcides' falsehood;
Love, jealousy and rage at once distract me!

Iole

What anxious cares untimely thus disturb
The happy consort of the son of Jove?

Dejanira

Insulting maid! I had indeed been happy,
But for the fatal lustre of thy beauty!

31. Aria**Dejanira**

When beauty sorrow's livery wears,
Our passions take the fair one's part.
Love dips his arrows in her tears,
And sends them pointed to the heart.
When beauty. . . **da capo**

32. Recitativo**Iole**

Whence this unjust suspicion?

Dejanira

Fame of thy beauty, so report informs me,
First brought Alcides to Oechalia's court.
He saw, he lov'd, he ask'd you of your father.
His suit rejected, in revenge he levell'd
The haughty town, and bore away the spoil:
But the rich prize, for which he fought and conquer'd,
Was Iole.

Iole

Ah, no! It was ambition,
Not slighted love, that laid Oechalia low
And made the wretched Iole a captive.
Report, that in the garb of truth disguises
The blackest falsehood, has abus'd your ear
With a forg'd tale; but oh, let me conjure you
For your dear peace of mind, beware of jealousy!

33. Aria**Iole**

Ah, think what ills the jealous prove!
Adieu to peace, adieu to love,
Exchang'd for endless pain.
With venom fraught the bosom swells,
And never-ceasing discord dwells
Where harmony should reign.
Ah, think what ills. . . **da capo**

34. Recitativo**Dejanira (andandosene)**

It is too sure that Hercules is false.

Scene 3

Entra Lichas.

Lichas

My godlike master?

Dejanira

Is a traitor, Lichas.

Traitor to honour, love and Dejanira.

Lichas

Alcides false? Impossible.

35. Aria

Lichas

As stars, that rise and disappear,

Still in the same bright circle move,

So shines unchang'd thy hero's love,

Nor absence can his faith impair.

The breast where gen'rous valour dwells,

In constancy no less excels.

As stars. . . **da capo**

36. Recitativo

Dejanira

In vain you strive his falsehood to disguise.

Esce Dejanira.

Lichas

This is thy work, accursed jealousy.

37. Coro

Jealousy! Infernal pest,

Tyrant of the human breast!

How from slightest causes bred

Dost thou lift thy hated head!

Trifles. light as floating air.

Strongest proofs to thee appear!

Esce Lichas.

Scene 4

Iole; Hyllus, rivolto a lei.

38. Recitativo

Hyllus (a parte entrando)

She knows my passion, and has heard me breathe

My am'rous vows; but, deaf to the soft plea,

Rejects my offer'd love. See where she stands,

Like fair Diana, circled by her nymphs.

Iole

Too well, young prince,

I guess the cause that this way leads your steps.
Why will you urge a suit I must not hear?
Love finds no dwelling in that hapless breast
Where sorrow and her gloomy train reside.

Hyllus

The stealing hand of all-subduing time
May drive these black intruders from their seat,
And leave the heav'nly mansion of thy bosom
Serene and vacant to a softer guest.

Iole

Think'st thou Iole can ever love
The son of Hercules, whose arms depriv'd her
Of country, father, liberty? Impossible!

Hyllus

I own the truths that blast my springing hopes;
Yet, oh permit me, chariming maid, to gaze
On those dear beauties that enchant my soul
And view, at least, that heav'n I must despair to gain.

Iole

Is this, is this the son of Hercules,
For labours fam'd and hardy deeds of arms?
O prince, exert the virtues of thy race,
And call forth all thy father in thy soul.

39. Aria

Iole

Banish love from thy breast,
'Tis a womanish guest,
Fit only mean thoughts to inspire.
Bright glory invites thee,
Fair honour excites thee,
To tread in the steps of thy sire.
Banish love. . . **da capo**

40. Recitativo

Hyllus

Forgive a passion, which resistless sways
Ev'n breasts immortal.

41. Aria

Hyllus

From celestial seats descending,
Joys divine a while suspending,
Gods have left their Heav'n above
To taste the sweeter heav'n of love.
Cease my passion then to blame,
Cease to scorn a godlike flame.
From celestial seats. . . **da capo**

42. Coro

Wanton god of am'rous fires,
Wishes, sighs and soft desires,
All nature's sons thy laws maintain.
O'er liquid air, firm land and swelling main
Extend thy uncontroll'd and boundless reign.

Scene 5

Altro appartamento. Hercules e Dejanira.

43. Recitativo

Dejanira

Yes, I congratulate your titles, swell'd
With proud Oechalia's fall; but oh, I grieve
To see the victor to the vanquish'd yield.
How lost, alas, how fall'n from what you were,
Your fame eclips'd, and all your laurels blasted!
Hercules
Unjust reproach! No, Dejanira, no,
While glorious deeds demand a just applause!

44. Aria

Hercules

Alcides' name in latest story
Shall with brightest lustre shine,
And future heroes rise to glory
By actions emulating mine.
Alcides' name. . . **da capo**

45. Recitativo

Dejanira

O glorious pattern of heroic deeds!
The mighty warrior, whom not Juno's hate,
Nor a long series of incessant labours
Could e'er subdue, a captive maid has conquer'd.
O shame to manhood! O disgrace of arms!

46. Aria

Dejanira

Resign thy club and lion's spoils,
And fly from war to female toils!
For the glitt'ring sword and shield
The spindle and the distaff wield!
Thund'ring Mars no more shall arm thee,
Glory's call no more shall warm thee,

Venus and her whining boy
Shall all thy wanton hours employ.
Resign thy club. . . **da capo**

47. Recitativo

Hercules

You are deceiv'd! Some villain has bely'd
My ever-faithful love and constancy.

Dejanira

Would it were so, and that the babbler fame
Had not through all the Grecian cities spread
The shameful tale!

Hercules

The priests of Jupiter
Prepare with solemn rites to thank the god
For the success of my victorious arms.
The ready sacrifice expects my presence.
I go. Meantime let these suspicions sleep
Nor causeless jealousy alarm your breast!
Esce.

Scene 6

Dejanira

Dissembling, false, perfidious Hercules!
Did he not swear, when first he woo'd my Iove,
The sun should cease to dawn, the silver moon
Be blotted from her orb, ere he prov'd false?

48. Aria

Dejanira

Cease, ruler of the day, to rise,
Nor, Cynthia, gild the evening skies!
To your bright beams he made appeal,
With endless night his falsehood seal!

49. Recitativo

Dejanira

Some kinder pow'r inspire me to regain
His alienated love, and bring the wand'rer back!
Ah, lucky thought! I have a garment
Dipped in Nessus' blood, when from the wound he drew
The barbed shaft, sent by Alcides' hand.
It boasts a wondrous virtue, to revive
Th'expiring flame of love. So Nessus told me,
When dying to my hand he trusted it.
I will prevail with Hercules to wear it

And prove its magic force. — And see, the herald,
Fit instrument to execute my purpose.

Scene 7

Lichas, a lei.

Dejanira

Lichas, thy hands shall to the temple bear
A rich embroider'd robe, and beg thy lord
Will instant o'er his manly shoulders throw
His consort's gift, the pledge of love's renewal.

Lichas

O pleasing task, O happy Hercules!

50. Aria

Lichas

Constant lovers, never roving,
Never jealous torments proving,
Calm, imperfect pleasures taste.
But the bliss to rapture growing,
Bliss from reconciliation flowing,
This is love's sublime repast.

51. Recitativo

Dejanira

But see, the princess Iole. Retire!

Esce Lichas.

Dejanira

Be still, my jealous fears, and let my tongue
Disguise the torture of my bleeding heart.

Scene 8

Entra Iole.

Dejanira

Forgive me, princess, if my jealous frenzy
Too roughly greeted you! I see and blame
The error that misled me to insult
That innocence and beauty.

Iole

Thank the gods
That have inspir'd your mind with calmer thoughts.
And from your breast remov'd the vulture, jealousy.
Live, and be happy in Alcides' love.
While wretched Iole... (weeping)

Dejanira

Princess, no more! But lift those beautiful eyes
To the fair prospect of returning happiness.

At my request Alcides shall restore you
To liberty, and your paternal throne.

52. Duetto

Dejanira

Joys of freedom, joys of pow'r,
Wait upon the coming hour
And court thee to be blest.

Iole

What heav'nly-pleasing sounds I hear,
How sweet they steal upon my ear
And charm my soul to rest!

Esce Iole.

53. Recitativo

Dejanira

Father of Hercules, great Jove, oh help
This last expedient of despairing love!

54. Coro

Love and Hymen, hand in hand,
Come, restore the nuptial band!
And sincere delights prepare
To crown the hero and the fair.
Love and Hymen. . . **da capo**

A tto Terzo

55. Sinfonia

Scene 1

Lichas e Trachinians.

56. Recitativo

Lichas

Ye sons of Trachin, mourn your valiant chief,
Return'd from foes and dangers threat'ning death
To fall, inglorious, by a woman's hand.

Primo Trachinian

Oh, doleful findings!

Lichas

As the hero stood

Prepar'd for sacrifice, and festal pomp
Adorn'd the temple, these unlucky hands
Presented him, in Dejanira's name,
A costly robe, the pledge of love's renewal.
With smiles that testified his rising joy,
Alcides o'er his manly shoulders threw
The treach'rous gift. But when the altar's flame
Began to shed its warmth upon his limbs,
The clinging robe, by cursed art envenom'd,
Through all his joints dispers'd a subtle poison.
Frantic with agonizing pain, he flings
His tortur'd body on the sacred floor,
Then strives to rip the deadly garment off,
But with it tears the bleeding, mangled flesh;
His dreadful cries the vaulted roof returns!

57. Aria

Lichas

O scene of unexempl'd woe,
O sun of glory sunk so low!
What language can our sorrow tell?
Gallant, unhappy chief, farewell!

58. Coro di Trachinians

Tyrants now no more shall dread
On necks of vanquish'd slaves to tread.
Horrid forms of monstrous birth
Again shall vex the groaning earth.
Fear of punishment is o'er,
The world's avenger is no more!

Scene 2

Il Tempio di Giove. Hercules, Sacerdoti ed Attendenti.

59. Accompagnato

Hercules

O Jove, what land is this, what clime accurst,
By raging Phoebus scorch'd? I burn, I burn,
Tormenting fire consumes me. Oh, I die,
Some ease, ye pitying powers! — I rage, I rage,
With more than Stygian pains.
Along my feverish veins,
Like liquid fire the subtle poison hastes.
Boreas, bring thy northern blast,
And through my bosom roar!
Or, Neptune, kindly pour

Ocean's collected flood
Into my breast and cool my boiling blood!

60. Recitativo

Hyllus

Great Jove, relieve his pains!

Hercules

Was it for this unnumber'd toils I bore?
O Juno and Eurystheus, I absolve ye!
Your keenest malice yield to Dejanira's,
Mistaken, cruel, treach'rous Dejanira!
Oh, this curst robe! It clings to my torn sides
And drinks my vital blood.

Hyllus

Alas, my father!

Hercules

My son, observe thy dying sire's request!
While yet I live, bear me to Cæta's top;
There, on the summit of that cloud-capped hill,
The tow'ring oak and lofty cypress fell,
And raise a funeral pile: upon it lay me.
Then fire the kindling heap, that I may mount
On wings of flame, to mingle with the gods!

Hyllus

O glorious thought! Worthy the son of Jove!

Hercules

My pains redouble — Oh, be quick, my son.
And bear me to the scene of glorious death!

Hyllus

How is the hero fall'n!

61. Aria

Hyllus

Let not fame the tidings spread
To proud Oechalia's conquer'd wall!
The baffled foe will lift his head,
And triumph in his victor's fall.
Let not fame. . . **da capo**

Escono.

Scene 3

Il mPalazzo. Dejanira da sola.

62. Accompagnato

Dejanira

Where shall I fly? Where hide this guilty head?
O fatal error of misguided love!

O cruel Nessus, how art thou reveng'd!
Wretched I am! By me Alcides dies!
These impious hands have sent my injur'd lord
Untimely to the shades! Let me be mad!
Chain me, ye Furies, to your iron beds,
And lash my guilty ghost with whips of scorpions!
See, see, they come! Alecto with her snakes,
Megaera fell, and black Tisiphone!
See the dreadful sisters rise,
Their baneful presence taints the skies!
See the snaky whips they bear!
What yellings rend my tortur'd ear!
Hide me from their hated sight,
Friendly shades of blackest night!
Alas, no rest the guilty find
From the pursuing furies of the mind!

Scene 4

Dejanira; Iole, a lei rivolta.

63. Recitativo

Dejanira

Lo, the fair fatal cause of all this ruin!
Fly from my sight, detested sorceress, fly,
Lest my ungovern'd fury rush upon thee,
And scatter thee to all the winds of Heav'n!
Alas, I rave! The lovely maid is innocent,
And I alone the guilty cause of all!

Iole

Though torn from every joy, a father's love,
My native land and dear-priz'd liberty.
By Hercules' arms, still must I pity
The countless woes of this unhappy house.

64. Aria

Iole

My breast with tender pity swells
At sight of human woe;
And sympathetic anguish feels
Where'er Heav'n strikes the blow.
My breast. . . **da capo**

Scene 5

Il Sacerdote di Giove a loro rivolto, Hyllus, Lichas e Trachinians.

65. Recitativo

Sacerdote di Giove

Princess, rejoice, whose Heav'n-directed hand
Has rais'd Alcides to the court of Jove's!

Dejanira

Speak, priest, what means this dark, mysterious greeting?
That he is dead, and by this fatal hand,
Too sure, alas, my bleeding heart divines.

Sacerdote

Borne, by his own command, to Oeta's top,
Stretched on a funeral pile, the hero lay.
The crackling flames surround his manly limbs,
When lo, an eagle, stooping from the clouds,
Swift to the burning pile his flight directs!
There lights a moment, then, with speedy wing,
Regains the sky. Astonish'd, we consult
The sacred grove, where sounds oracular
From vocal oaks disclose the will of Jove.
Here the great sire his offspring's fate declar'd:
"His mortal part by eating fires consum'd,
His part immortal to Olympus borne,
There with assembl'd deities to dwell!"

66. Aria**Lichas**

He, who for Atlas propp'd the sky,
Now sees the sphere beneath him lie,
In bright abodes
Of kindred gods,
A new-admitted guest,
With purple lips
Brisk nectar sips,
And shares th'ambrosial feast.

67. Recitativo**Dejanira**

Words are too faint to speak the warring passions
That combat in my breast: grief, wonder, joy
By turns deject and elevate my soul.

Sacerdote (a Iole)

Nor less thy destiny, illustrious maid,
Is Jove's peculiar care, who thus decrees:
"Hymen with purest joys of love shall crown
Oechalia's princess and the son of Hercules."

Hyllus

How blest is Hyllus, if the lovely Iole,
Consenting, ratifies the gift of Heav'n!

Iole

What Jove ordains, can Iole resist?

68. Duetto

Iole

O prince, whose virtues all admire,
Since Jove has every bar remov'd,
I feel my vanquish'd heart conspire
To crown a flame by Heav'n approv'd.

Hyllus

O princess, whose exalted charms
Above ambition fire my breast,
How great my joy to fill those arms,
At once with love and empire blest!

Iole

I grieve no more, since now I see
All happiness restor'd in thee.

Hyllus

I ask no more, since now I find
All earthly good in thee combin'd.

69. Recitativo

Sacerdote

Ye sons of freedom, now, in every clime,
With joyful accents sing the deathless chief,
By virtue to the starry mansions rais'd.

70. Coro di Trachinians

To him your grateful notes of praise belong,
The theme of liberty's immortal song!
Aw'd by his name, oppression shuns the light,
And slavery hides her head in depths of night,
While happy climes to his example owe
The blessings that from peace and freedom flow.
To him. . . **da capo**

Fine