

Orchestra Seattle and the Seattle Chamber Singers
present

Hercules

A Musical Drama



by George Frideric Handel

featuring

Linda Strandberg Emily Lunde
Hanne Ladefoged Howard Fankhauser

with Andrew Danilchik
and Brian Box *as* Hercules

Orchestra Seattle
Seattle Chamber Singers
George Shangrow, conductor

Sunday, February 8, 1998 ♦ 3:00 PM
University Christian Church

❖ Soloists

Hercules
Brian Box

Iöle
Linda Strandberg

Lichas
Hanne Ladefoged

Dejanira
Emily Lunde

Hyllus
Howard Fankhauser

Priest
Andrew Danilchik

First Oechalian
Andrew Danilchik

First Trachinian
Andrew Danilchik

❖ Orchestra Seattle

Violin
Dajana Akrapovic-
Hobson
Maria Hunt
Deborah Kirkland
Principal second
Fritz Klein
Concertmaster
Pam Kummert
Eileen Lusk
Gregor Nitsche
Leif-Ivar Pedersen
Janet Showalter

Viola
Beatrice Dolf
Saundrah Humphrey
Principal
Jim Lurie
Robert Shangrow

Cello
Julie Reed
Principal
Valerie Ross

Bass
Allan Goldman

Oboe
Shannon Hill
Principal
Taina Karr

Bassoon
Jeff Eldridge

Trumpet
David Cole
Gordon Ullmann
Principal

Percussion
Daniel Oie

Harpsichord
Robert Kechley

❖ Seattle Chamber Singers

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Jennifer Adams
Barbara Anderson
Sue Cobb
Crissa Cugini
Kyla DeRemer
Susan Dier
Dana Durasoff
Cinda Freece
Kiki Hood
Lorelette Knowles
Jill Kraakmo
Nancy Lewis
Alexandra Miletta

Caroline Pachaud
Paula Rimmer
Kelly Sanderbeck
Liesel Van Cleeff

Alto
Laila Adams
Sharon Agnew
Cheryl Blackburn
Nicole Blackmer
Jane Blackwell
Wendy Borton
Shireen Deboo
Penny Deputy

Laura Dooley
Christine Hackenberger
Adrienne McCoy
Verlayn McManus
Suzy Means
Laurie Medill
Nedra Slauson

Tenor
Alex Chun
Ralph Cobb
Jon Lange
Timothy Lunde
Thomas Nesbitt

Jerry Sams
Dave Spurling
David Zapolsky

Bass
Andrew Danilchik
Douglas Durasoff
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❖ Guest Artists

Brian Box

Brian Box is a native of Washington and received his Master of Music degree in vocal performance from Western Washington University. Mr. Box has appeared frequently with OS/SCS as a soloist in cantatas and oratorios. Among his credits are performances of Brahms' Four Last Songs with the Western Washington University Orchestra and the leading role in Dominic Argento's opera *Postcard from Morocco* at the University of British Columbia. He is a regular performer with Northwest Opera in Schools, Etc. (NOISE), and Seattle Opera's education program and made his Seattle Opera solo debut as the Corporal in *The Daughter of the Regiment*; this past summer he appeared in their production of *Der Rosenkavalier*. Mr. Box's recent appearances with Orchestra Seattle and the Seattle Chamber Singers include Haydn's *The Seasons* and Handel's *Israel in Egypt* and *Messiah*.

Howard Fankhauser

Howard Fankhauser is a frequent soloist with community and professional choirs and orchestras throughout the Northwest, including the Northwest Chamber Orchestra, the Seattle Youth Symphony, Cascadian Chorale, and Choir of the Sound. Recent performances have included Mozart cantatas with the Northwest Chamber Orchestra, Handel's *Messiah* at St. Mark's Cathedral, Orpheus in Gluck's *Orpheus et Eurydice*, guest artist in St. James Cathedral's New Year's Eve all-Bach concert, and tenor soloist in Mozart's *Requiem*. In July of 1995, Mr. Fankhauser was featured in the Living Composers Recital at the (National Association of Teachers of Singing national convention. He made his debut with Orchestra Seattle and the Seattle Chamber singers in an April, 1996 performance of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*.

Hanne Ladefoged

Born in Denmark, mezzo soprano Hanne Ladefoged is now a resident of Seattle, where she is an active soloist, lecturer and teacher. After receiving her Masters in Musicology and Vocal Pedagogy from the University of Copenhagen, she was awarded several grants to pursue vocal performance studies in America. In 1993, Ms. Ladefoged was invited to join the Seattle Opera Young Artist Outreach Program, in which she sang and lectured extensively. Her professional opera debut (as Prince Orlovsky in *Die Fledermaus*) was with the Whatcom Symphony. She has also performed leading roles with Seattle Experimental Opera (SEXO) and with OperaWorks in Los Angeles. Orchestral and oratorio works include *Messiah* with Seattle Choral Company, Bach's *Magnificat* with Northwest Chamber Orchestra, Beethoven's 9th, Elgar's *Sea Pictures*, Bach's

b minor mass and *Messiah* with Orchestra Seattle, and works by Bach, Vivaldi, Telemann, and Respighi. As a recitalist, specializing in the Scandinavian song, Ms. Ladefoged is enjoying a thriving career, which has taken her all over the Pacific Northwest, as well as to the East Coast and the Midwest. Most recently she was featured in the Mostly Nordic Series at the Nordic Heritage Museum. She is also a frequent soloist with the Pacific Northwest Ballet. This season Ms. Ladefoged can be heard with the Estoria Company at the Seattle Fringe Festival, and with the Benevolent Order for Music of the Baroque, portraying Architecture in Charpentier's *Les Arts Florissants*.

Emily Lunde

One of our region's premier mezzo-sopranos, Emily Lunde is a performer whose repertoire runs the gamut from early and Classical music to contemporary works. A Seattle native, she has sung extensively with many of the area's finest choral ensembles and orchestras, including the Seattle Symphony and Chorale, Orchestra Seattle and Seattle Chamber Singers, Seattle Choral Company, Choir of the Sound, the Everett Symphony and the Walla Walla Symphony. Ms. Lunde also performs regularly with the Pacific Northwest Ballet in their productions of *Nutcracker* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In 1997, she gave a Brahms recital in Seattle and performed for the Seattle Opera as part of their Young Artists Outreach Program, previewing selections from *Il Trovatore*. This season Ms. Lunde has sung *Messiah* with the Walla Walla Symphony and the Colorado Springs Symphony, as well as Handel's *Saul* with OS/SCS. Upcoming performances include Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* in April for the University of Puget Sound, the Duruflé *Requiem* in June with the Pacific Northwest Chamber Chorus, and Handel's *Theodora* with OS/SCS.

Linda Strandberg

Linda Strandberg holds degrees from the University of Arizona and the University of Southern California. She has also attended the Banff Festival of the Arts Singing Academy and participated in the Vancouver Early Music Program, the Aston Magna Performance Practice Institute in New York, and the Musica en Compostela Festival in Spain. While living in Los Angeles, she sang in the West Coast premier of Philip Glass' *A Madrigal Opera* at the Mark Taper Forum and was soloist in the performance of Mozart's *Requiem* in honor of the visit of Archbishop Desmond Tutu. She has performed leading roles in Menotti's operas *The Old Maid and the Thief*, *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, and *The Medium*, and has appeared as soloist with the Pacific Northwest Chamber Chorus, the Seattle Choral Company, and Choral Arts Northwest. She currently teaches voice at Seattle Central Community College and is soloist at Plymouth Congregational Church.

❖ Program Notes

by Lorelette Knowles

George Frideric Handel was, according to R. A. Streatfeild, “a man who, while every other musician in the land remained at an angle of forty-five degrees in the presence of his princely patrons, resolutely stood upright, went his own way, and snapped his fingers in their ducal faces. What was to be done with him?” The ladies of the London aristocracy, who had supported the Italian operas which Handel’s oratorios had by 1744 superseded, answered this question by devoting their best efforts to ruining the insufferable, upstart musician, carefully choosing the evenings of his oratorios for their balls, card-parties, and mumming-shows. Their efforts were rewarded: Handel’s 1744-45 subscription concert series dragged drearily through the winter, some concerts being postponed, others being canceled. *Hercules*, unquestionably the greatest of his secular oratorios, failed in January of 1745, and both Handel’s health and his fortunes suffered substantially. Handel’s old friend, Lady Shaftesbury, wrote to her cousin two months later:

“My constancy to poor Handel got the better of my indolence, and I went last Friday to *Alexander’s Feast*. but it was such a melancholy pleasure as drew tears of sorrow to see the great though unhappy Handel, dejected, wan and dark, sitting by, not playing on the harpsichord, and to think how his light had been spent by being overplied in music’s cause. I was sorry, too, to find the audience so insipid and tasteless (I may add unkind) not to give the poor man the comfort of applause; but affectation and conceit cannot discern or attend to merit.”

The success in early 1744 of his oratorio, *Semele*, had led Handel to turn again to Greek mythology for inspiration. On July 19, 1744, he began, under the title of *Hercules*, to set to music the Reverend Thomas Broughton’s adaptation of Sophocles’ *The Women of Trachis*. The first act of this composition, announced in the *General Advertiser* of January 1, 1745, as a “musical drama,” was completed on July 30. The second act was finished on August 11, and on August 17, one month after he had begun his work (and almost exactly three years after he had begun the composition of *Messiah*), Handel completed one of the greatest “operas” in the English language.

Hercules, A Musical Drama, for orchestra, chorus, and soloists (soprano, two mezzo-sopranos, tenor, and two basses), was first performed at the King’s Theatre in the Haymarket, London, on January 5, 1745, shortly before Handel’s 60th birthday. For four years, he had been writing oratorios, having discovered that this musical form was generally not only more popular with the public than opera, but was also less difficult and expensive to produce, since it required neither scenery nor costumes nor expensive, ill-tempered Italian soloists. *Hercules* was presented “in the manner of an oratorio,” *i.e.*, in the theater, but without stage action. With its great dramatic

power, its masterful character delineations, and its use of the chorus as a clarifying and summarizing lyric entity in the style of the classical *choros*, the work lay much closer to opera than to oratorio. It represented the pure form-musical Greek tragedy—of which the oratorios based on stories from the Old Testament, such as *Saul*, were adaptations. The relatively unsophisticated London audiences of the 1740s, however, expected an oratorio to provide them with an edifying message, and *Hercules’* hearers felt that the work did not do so. Both those who still preferred Italian opera, and those disgusted by the presentation of such a blatantly secular work as *Hercules* in the midst of musical settings of holy scripture, were put off by the work. “The Goths,” the group of “fine ladies, *petit maitres* and ignoramus’s” (so designated by Mary Delaney, one of Handel’s most loyal friends) who had, as noted earlier, begun to stir up opposition to Handel’s oratorios during the 1743-44 season, continued to poison public opinion against his works as the 1744-45 season progressed. In addition to all of this, one of the principal soloists fell ill on *Hercules’* opening night. Indeed, putting on “an English Opera call’d *Hercules*...on Saturdays, during the run of Plays, Concerts, Assemblys, Drums, Routs, Hurricanes, & all the madness of Town Diversions.” as Charles Jennens noted, proved disastrous. *Hercules* failed so catastrophically that, not long after its second performance on January 12, Handel wrote to the *Daily Advertiser*:

“As I perceived that joining good Sense and significant Words to Musick was the best Method of recommending this to an English Audience; I have directed my Studies that way, and endeavor’d to shew, that the English Language, which is so expressive of the sublimest Sentiments is the best adapted of any to the full and solemn Kind of Musick.... I am assur’d that a Nation, whose Characteristick is Good Nature, would be affected with the Ruin of any Man, which was owing to his Endeavours to entertain them. I am likewise persuaded, that I shall have the Forgiveness of those noble Persons, who have honour’d me with their Patronage, and their Subscription this Winter, if I beg their Permission to stop short, before my Losses are too great to support...and I intreat them to withdraw three Fourths of their Subscription, one Fourth Part only of my Proposal having been perform’d.”

The subscribers refused to withdraw their support, however, and the musical season limped ahead. Though he revived the work twice, Handel conducted a total of only five performances of *Hercules*, and it has seldom been performed since his death.

Handel’s musical genius responded enthusiastically to the well-crafted drama of human passion that is *Hercules*. The plot combines several of Handel’s favorite interests: the violence of a wife’s jealousy, the relationships of children and parents, the collapse of the individual beneath the burden of personal folly and obsession, and the tension between private pain and public performance.

The libretto, by the learned Reverend Thomas Broughton of Salisbury, is based on Sophocles' play, *The Women of Trachis*, and on Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and Handel set the text in a way that displays most impressively his musical mastery, both as a composer and as a dramatist. In this work, Handel stands close to Mozart in his musical depiction of individual psychology. The musical drama is characterized by a wealth of wondrously appropriate melodies that convey the internal states of the characters, from the deranged, jealous passions of Dejanira to the heartrending grief of Iöle over the death of her father. *Hercules* also contains short instrumental passages of descriptive music that show how advanced an orchestrator and scene-painter Handel could be. The sinfonia preceding Act III which depicts the hero's agonies "is as close to speech, to painting, and to drama as music can come and remain music," in the words of Herbert Weinstock.

The musical drama opens in the palace of Hercules in Trachis. Dejanira, his wife, mourns his long absence, and, despite the comfort offered by Lichas, the herald, she predicts that her husband will never return. Her son, Hyllus, having consulted the oracle, enters with grim tidings: the temple trembled and was deluged with darkness, and the priest, inspired by the god, foresaw the death of Hercules and flames shooting from the crown of Mount Oeta. Despairing Dejanira looks forward to meeting her husband again in the realms of night, but her son decides to depart in search of his father, and to bring him home or die in the attempt. The chorus praises Hyllus' filial piety and generous love, but just as he is about to leave, Lichas announces that Hercules is returning from the conquest of Oechalia with a group of captives, among which is the beautiful princess, Iöle, whose father, Eurytus, Hercules has slain. The chorus urges that "none despair, relief may come, though late."

The scene now shifts to the square before the palace. Iöle and her retinue of virgins are led in, after which a march introduces the conquering hero, Hercules. He declares that Juno's rage has at last been appeased, and his long labors have ended. Hercules tells Iöle to be as free in Trachis as she was in her homeland, but she can think of nothing but her father's dreadful death, which she mourns in one of the greatest laments in the dramatic literature. Hercules bids a formal farewell to arms, and anticipates the enjoyment of Dejanira's love, and the act concludes with a chorus encouraging both maids and youths to join the celebratory dance.

As Act II opens, Iöle bewails her noble birth, wishing that she was instead the occupant of some humble cell. Dejanira enters, her soul tormented by suspicion and jealousy of Iöle. She has concluded that it was only the desire for Iöle that caused her husband to attack Oechalia. Iöle denies this and warns Dejanira to beware of jealousy. Dejanira tells Lichas that Hercules is untrue, and the chorus describes the power of jealousy, that "infernal pest," to turn "trifles light as floating air" into "sacred proofs." Hyllus, meanwhile, has fallen in love with the

lovely Iöle (Scene 2), but she rejects him, being overcome by grief for her slain father. Hyllus reminds her that "gods have left their heaven above to taste the sweeter heaven of love," and the chorus affirms that love is the greatest of powers.

In Scene 3, Dejanira bitterly chides the mighty Hercules for allowing himself to be conquered by the beauty of a captive maid. Hercules denies this firmly, and exits to oversee his victory celebrations, bidding his wife to "let these suspicions sleep." As she searches for a way to secure Hercules' devotion to her, Dejanira remembers the garment given to her by the centaur, Nessus, when mortally wounded by Hercules, with the assurance that its magic power would "revive the expiring flame of love" in its wearer (the garment, in reality, contains a deadly poison). She directs Lichas to take the garment to Hercules as a "pledge of love's renewal." Iöle approaches, and Dejanira (disingenuously?) begs her pardon for voicing jealous suspicions, whereupon the princess, overwhelmed, weeps. Dejanira, promising to obtain Iöle's freedom, sings a reassuring duet with Iöle, and then prays to Jupiter (father of Hercules) to bless her "last expedient of despairing love." The act concludes with the chorus' anticipation of a blessed restoration of "the nuptial band" of "the hero and the fair."

As the third act opens, Lichas brings the Trachinians dreadful news: Hercules, after returning "from foes and dangers threatening death," has fallen "inglorious, by a woman's hand." He describes the events at the temple: the arrival of Dejanira's gift, Hercules' joy, the effect of the venom in the garment, and the hero's tortures as he strove frantically to rip the garment from him. The chorus observes that "tyrants now no more shall dread," for "the world's avenger is no more."

The second scene opens with Hercules writhing in agony in the Temple of Jupiter, cursing his country and his wife, and praying for a speedy demise; he begs Hyllus to build him a funeral pyre on the summit of Mount Oeta. Scene 3 finds Dejanira in the palace, wretched and horrified at her role in the revenge of Nessus and in sending her "injured lord untimely to the shades." She sees the Furies rising to torment her guilty soul eternally. Observing the sufferings of her captors, Iöle, in Scene 4, forgets her own sorrows and pities "the countless woes of this unhappy house." In the fifth scene, the priest of Jupiter proclaims that an eagle's stooping upon the funeral pyre indicates that Hercules has been received in Olympus. He bids Hyllus marry Iöle and unite the houses of Oechalia and Trachis. The drama closes with a hymn to Hercules, conqueror and liberator, now ascended to the heavens.

Perhaps Handel's listeners could not understand "the note of distress, mixed with a vital expressive impulse" that is "too much even for our generation," and "thus the greatest of Baroque music dramas still awaits the recognition it deserves." (P.H. Lang). May this presentation of *Hercules*, a Seattle premiere, assist in bringing to this work that long-awaited and highly-deserved recognition!

Part the First

Overture

Recitative – *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.

Air – *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.

Accompagnato – *Dejanira*

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

Air – *Dejanira*

The world, when day's career is run,
In darkness mourns the absent sun;
So I, depriv'd 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.

Recitative

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!

Dejanira

My son! dear image of thy absent sire.
What comfort bring'st 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
owned the present god, when, in a moment, the
temple shook, the glory disappeared, and more
than midnight darkness veiled the place.

Lichas

'Twas dreadful all.

Hyllus

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

Arioso – *Hyllus*

I feel the god, he fills my breast!
Before my eyes the future stands confessed;
I see the valiant chief in death laid low,
And flames aspire from Oeta's lofty brow.

Recitative

Hyllus

He said, the sacred fury left his breast, and on the
ground the fainting prophet fell.

Dejanira

Then I am lost! Oh, dreadful oracle! My griefs hang
heavy on my tortured soul, and soon will sink me in 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.

Air – *Dejanira*

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

Recitative – *Hyllus*

Despair not; but let rising hope suspend excess
of grief till I have learnt 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 traveled globe; if yet he lives, I will
restore him to you, or perish in the search.

Air – *Hyllus*

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

Chorus

Oh, filial piety! courageous love!
Go, youth inspired, thy virtue prove;
Immortal fame attends thee,
And pitying heav'n befriends thee.

Recitative

Lichas

Banish your fears! Alcmena's godlike son lives,
And from sack'd Oechalia, which his arms have
levelled with the ground, returns a conqueror.

Dejanira

Oh, joyful news! Welcome as rising day to the
benighted world, Or falling showers to the
parch'd earth! Ye lying omens, hence! hence
every anxious thought.

Air – *Dejanira*

Begone, my fears, fly hence away,
Like clouds before the morning ray!
My hero found, with laurel crowned,
Heav'n relenting, fate consenting,
Springing joys my griefs control,
And rising transports fill my soul.

Recitative

Lichas

A train of captives, red with honest wounds,
and lowering on their chains, attend the
conqueror: but more to grace the pomp of
victory; the lovely Iöle, Oechalia's princess,
with captive beauty swells the joyful triumph.

Hyllus

My soul is moved for th' unhappy princess,
and feign, methinks, I would unbind her chains;
but say, her father, haughty Eurytus?

Lichas

He fell in single combat by the
sword of Hercules.

Dejanira

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

Lichas

How soon is deepest grief exchanged for bliss.

Air – *Lichas*

The smiling hours a 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.

Chorus

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

Recitative

Iöle

Ye faithful followers of the wretched Iöle,
your bonds sit heavier on me than my own.
Unhappy maids! My fate has dragged you
down like some vast pile that crushes with
its fall the neighboring domes and spreads
wide ruin round it.

First Oechalian.

You are our mistress still.

Iöle

Alas! Erastea, captivity, like the destroyer
Death, throws all distinction down, and slaves
are equal. But, if the gods relent, and give us
back to our lost liberty. Ah me! how soon the
flatterer Hope is ready with his cordial. Vain
expectations! no! Adieu forever, ye smiling joys,
and innocent delights of youth and liberty,
of sad remembrance.

Air – *Iöle*

Daughter of gods, bright Liberty. With thee a
thousand graces reign,
A thousand pleasures crowd thy train
And hail thee loveliest diety.
But, thou, alas! that winged thy flight,
The graces that surround thy throne,
And all the pleasures with thee gone,
Removed forever from my sight.

Recitative – *Iöle*

But hark! the victor comes.

March

Recitative

Hercules

Thanks to the powers above, but chief to thee,
father of gods, from whose immortal race I draw
my birth, now my long toils are over and Juno's
rage appeas'd. With pleasure now, at rest, my
various labors I review. Oechalia's fall is added
to my titles, and points the rising summit of my
glory. Fair princess, weep no more! forget these
bonds: In Trachin you are free as in Oechalia.

Iöle

Forgive me, generous victor, if a sigh for my
dead father, for my friends, my country, will
have its way; I cannot yet forget that such
things were, and that I once enjoyed them.

Air – *Iöle*

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 enshrined.

Recitative – *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.

Air – *Hercules*

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

Chorus

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 rapturous joys.

Part the Second

Sinfonia

Recitative – *Iöle*.

Why was I born a princess, raised on high to fall
with greater ruin? Had the gods made me the
humble tenant some cottage I had been happy.

Air – Iöle

How blest the maid ordained to dwell
 With sweet content in humble cell,
 From cities far removed.
 By murmur'ing rills, on verdant plains,
 To tend the flocks with village swains,
 By every swain beloved.
 Though low, yet happy in that low estate,
 And safe from ills which on a princess wait.

Recitative*Dejanira*

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

Iöle

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!

Air – Dejanira

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

Recitative*Iöle*

Whence this unjust suspicion?

Dejanira

Fame of thy beauty (so report informs me), first
 brought Alcides to Oechalia's court. He saw,
 he loved, he asked you of your father; his suit
 rejected, in revenge he levelled the haughty town,
 and bore away the spoil; but the rich prize for
 which he fought and conquer'd was Iöle.

Iöle

Ah no! it was ambition, not slighted love that laid
 Oechalia low, and made the wretched Iöle a captive.
 Report, that in the garb of truth disguises the
 blackest falsehood, has abused your ear with
 a forged tale; but oh! let me conjure you, for your
 dear peace of mind, beware of jealousy.

Air – Iöle

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

Recitative*Dejanira*

It is too sure, that Hercules is false.

Lichas

My godlike master?

Dejanira

Is a traitor, Lichas –
 Traitor to honor, love, and Dejanira.

Lichas

Alcides false? Impossible!

Air – Lichas

As stars that rise and disappear
 Still in the same bright circle move,
 So shines unchanged thy hero's love,
 nor absence can his faith impair.
 The breast where generous valour dwells,
 in constancy no less excels.

Recitative*Dejanira*

In vain you strive his falsehood to disguise.

Lichas

This is thy work, accursed jealousy!

Chorus

Jealousy! infernal pest,
 Tyrant of the human breast!
 How, from slightest causes bred,
 Dost thou lift thy hated head.
 Trifles light as floating air
 Sacred proofs to thee appear.

Recitative*Hyllus*

She knows my passion, and has heard me
 breathe my amorous vows; but, deaf to the soft
 plea, rejects my offered love. See where she
 stands, like fair Diana, circled by her nymphs.

Iöle

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 soothing 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.

Iöle

And thinkest thou Iöle can ever love the son of
 Hercules, whose arms deprived her of country,
 father, liberty? Impossible!

Hyllus

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

Iöle

Is this, is this the son of Hercules, for labors
 famed and hardy deeds of arms? Oh, prince,
 exert the virtues of thy race, and call forth all
 thy father in thy soul.

Air – Iöle

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

Recitative – Hyllus

Forgive a passion, which resistless sways even
 breasts immortal.

Air – Hyllus

From celestial seats descending,
 Joys divine awhile 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.

Chorus

Wanton god of amorous fires,
 Wishes, sighs, and soft desires,
 All nature's sons thy laws maintain;
 Over liquid air and swelling main
 Extends thy uncontrolled and boundless reign.

Recitative*Dejanira*

Yes, I congratulate your titles, swollen with
 proud Oechalia's fall; but oh! I grieve to see
 the victor to the vanquished yield. How lost,
 alas! how fallen from what you were! Your
 fame eclipsed, and all your laurels blasted!

Hercules

Unjust reproach! no, Dejanira, no! While
 glorious deeds demand a just applause.

Air – Hercules

Alcides's name is latest story
 Shall with brightest lustre shine;
 And future heroes rise to glory
 By actions emulating mine.

Recitative – Dejanira

Oh, glorious pattern of heroic deeds! The
 mighty warrior, whom not Juno's hate nor a
 long series of incessant labors could ever
 subdue, a captive maid has conquer'd.
 Oh, shame to manhood! oh, disgrace of arms!

Air – Dejanira

Resign thy club and lion's spoils,
 And fly from war to female toils;
 For the glittering sword and shield,
 The spindle and the distaff wield.
 Thundering 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.

Recitative*Hercules*

You are deceived! Some villain has belied my
 ever faithful love and constancy.

Dejanira

Would it were so, and that the babler Fame
 had not through all the Grecian cities spread
 the shameful tale.

Hercules

The priests of Jupiter prepare, with solemn rights,
 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. *Exit.*

Dejanira

Disassembling, false, perfidious Hercules; did
 he not swear, when first he woo'd my love, the
 sun should cease to dawn, the silver moon be
 blotted from her orb, ere he proved false?

Air – Dejanira

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

Recitative*Dejanira*

Some kinder power inspire me to regain his
 alienated love and bring the wanderer back. Ha!
 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 the 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.

Enter Hercules

And see, the herald! fit instrument to execute my
 purpose. Lichas, thy hands shall to the temple
 bear a rich embroider'd robe, and beg thy lord
 will instant over his manly shoulders throw his
 consort's gift, the pledge of love's renewal.

Lichas

Oh, pleasing task! oh, happy Hercules!

Air – Lichas

Constant lovers, never roving,
 never jealous torments proving,
 They no perfect pleasures taste;
 But the bliss to rapture growing,
 Bliss from love's renewal flowing,
 This is loves sublime repast.

Recitative*Dejanira*

But see the princess Iöle, retire! be still, my
 jealous fears, and let my tongue disguise the
 torture of my bleeding heart. 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.

lôle
Thank the gods, that have inspired your mind with calmer thoughts, and from your breast removed the vulture jealousy! Live! and be happy in Alcides' love, while wretched *lôle* (*Weeping*.)

Dejanira
Princess, no more! lift but those beauteous eyes to the fair prospect of returning happiness. At my request Alcides' shall restore you to liberty, and your paternal throne.

Duet
Dejanira
Joys of freedom, joys of power,
Wait upon the coming hour,
And court thee to be blest.

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

Recitative – Dejanira
Father of her Hercules, great Jove,
Oh help this last expedient of despairing love.

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

Part the Third

Sinfonia

Recitative
Lichas
Ye sons of Trachin, mourn your valiant chief, returned from foes and dangers threatening death, to fall, inglorious, by a woman's hand.

First Trachinian
Oh, doleful tidings.

Lichas
As the hero stood, prepared for sacrifice, and festal pomp adorned 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 tortured 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.

Air – Lichas
Oh, scene of unexampled woe!
Oh, sun of glory, sunk so low!
What language can our sorrow tell?
Gallant, unhappy chief--farewell.

Recitative – First Trachinian
Oh, fatal jealousy!
Oh, cruel recompense of virtue, in severest labors tried.

Chorus
Tyrants now no more shall dread
On necks of vanquished slaves to tread.
Horrid forms of monstrous birth
Again shall vex the groaning earth.
Fear of punishment is over,
The world's avenger is no more.

Air – Hercules
Oh, 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 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 the sea's collected flood
Into my breast, and cool my boiling blood!

Recitative
Hyllus
Great Jove, relieve his pains!
Hercules
Was it for this unnumbered toils I bore?
Oh, Juno and Eurystheus, I absolve ye.
Your keenest malice yield to Dejanira – mistaken, cruel, treacherous 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 Oeta's top; there, on the summit of that cloud-capp'd hill, the towering 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
Oh, 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 fallen!

Air – Hyllus
Let not fame the tidings spread
To proud Oechalia's conquer'd wall;
the baffled foe will lift his head,
And triumph in the victor's fall.

Recitative and Air
Dejanira
Where shall I fly? Where hide this guilty head?
Oh, fatal error of misguided love! Oh, cruel Nessus, how art thou revenged? Wretched I am! by me Alcides dies! These impious hands have sent my injured 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, see! the snaky whips they bear!
What yellings rend my tortured 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.

Recitative
Dejanira
Low the fair fatal cause of all this ruin! Fly from my sight, detested sorc'ress fly, and lest my uncontrolled 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.
lôle
Though torn from every joy, a father's love, my native land, and dear prized liberty, by Hercules' arms, still must I pity the countless woes of this unhappy house.

Air – lôle
My breast with tender pity swells
At sight of human woe;
And sympathetic anguish feels
Wherever heav'n stikes the blow.

Recitative
Priest of Jupiter
Princess, rejoice! whose heav'n-directed hand
Has raised Alcides to the court of Jove.
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.
Priest
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, stopping from the clouds, swift to the burning pile his flight directs; their lights a moment, then with speedy wing regains the sky. Astonished we consult the sacred grove, where sounds oracular from vocal oaks disclose the will of Jove. Here the great sire his offspring's fate declared: "His mortal part by eating fires consumed, his part immortal to Olympus borne, there with assembled deities to dwell!"

Air – Lichas
He who for Atlas propped 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.

Recitative
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.
Priest

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 *lôle*, consenting, ratifies the gift of heav'n.
lôle
What Jove ordains, can *lôle* resist?

Duet
lôle
O prince, whose virtues all admire,
Since Jove has every bar removed,
I feel my vanquished heart conspire
To crown a flame by heav'n approved.

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.

lôle
I grieve no more, since now I see
All happiness restored in thee.
Hyllus
I ask no more, since now I find
All earthly good in thee combined.

Recitative – Priest
Ye sons of freedom, now in every clime, with joyful accents sing the deathless chief, by virtue to the starry mansions raised.

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