

Matinée Performances: Sunday, June 8 & Sunday, June 15, 2025 at 3:30pm
Evening Performances: Wednesday, June 11 & Friday, June 13, 2025 at 7pm
Emerson Cutler Majestic Theatre, 219 Tremont Street, Boston, Massachusetts

DIE EDELMÜHTIGE **OCTAVIA** THE ROMAN REBELLION



HAMBURG, 1705

Music by Reinhard Keiser (1674–1739)

Libretto by Barthold Feind (1678–1721)

Paul O'Dette & Stephen Stubbs, Musical Directors

Gilbert Blin, Stage Director



Robert Mealy, Orchestra Director

Marie-Nathalie Lacoursière, Dance Director



Hubert Hazebroucq, Choreographer

Anna Kjellsdotter, Costume Designer

Alexander McCargar, Set Designer

Kelly Martin, Lighting Designer

Ellen Hargis, Assistant Stage Director

Kathleen Fay, Executive Producer

The directors of Boston Early Music Festival's
June 2025 production of Reinhard Keiser's *Octavia*
wish to dedicate our production to

Thomas Ihlenfeldt

June 26, 1958 – June 20, 2022

Thomas Ihlenfeldt, one of the leading Keiser experts and our close friend and colleague, had already begun his work as our musicological advisor and editor for BEMF's 2025 centerpiece opera, *Octavia*, when he was tragically killed in a car accident on June 20, 2022. Thomas had dedicated himself to the lute and theorbo, and particularly to the legacy of the Hamburg Opera, since his time as a student of Stephen Stubbs at the Akademie für Alte Musik in Bremen in the 1990s. After graduation, he became a regular performer with the Freiburger Barockorchester, The Harp Consort, and Weser-Renaissance, and in 1990 established his own ensemble, Capella Orlandi Bremen, dedicated to the music of Reinhard Keiser.

Vocal Cast

Emőke Baráth
 Douglas Ray Williams
 Amanda Forsythe
 Sherezade Panthaki
 Aaron Sheehan
 Hannah De Priest
 Christian Immler
 Michael Skarke
 Richard Pittsinger
 Marc Molomot
 Jason McStoots

Boston Early Music Festival Dance Company

Marie-Nathalie Lacoursière, *Dance Director and Dancer*
 Hubert Hazebroucq, *Choreographer and Dancer*
 Julian Donahue
 Junichi Fukuda
 Caitlin Klinger
 Alexis Silver



Boston Early Music Festival Orchestra

Violin I

Robert Mealy, *concertmaster*
 Cynthia Roberts
 Beth Wenstrom
 Sarah Darling
 Miloš Valent

Violin II

Julie Andrijeski, *principal*
 Johanna Novom
 Jesse Irons
 Emily Dahl Irons

Viola

Daniel Elyar, *principal*
 Laura Jeppesen
 Dagmar Valentová

Violoncello

Phoebe Carrai, *principal*
 Matt Zucker
 Keiran Campbell
 Jennifer Morsches

Double bass

Nathaniel Chase

Oboe & Recorder

Debra Nagy, *principal*
oboe & recorder
 Kathryn Montoya, *principal*
recorder & oboe

Bassoon

Dominic Teresi, *principal*
 Allen Hamrick
 Marilyn Boenau
 Sally Merriman

Natural horn

Todd Williams
 Nathanael Udell

Percussion

Michelle Humphreys

Theorbo

Paul O'Dette

Baroque Guitar

Stephen Stubbs

Continuo Violoncello

David Morris

Harpsichord

Jörg Jacobi

Baroque harp

Maxine Eilander

Boston Early Music Festival Young Artists Training Program

Gilbert Blin, *Founder & Director*

Jason McStoots, *Associate Director, 2025*

Jeffrey Grossman, *Musical Director, 2025*



Singers of the Young Artists Training Program

Anna Bjerken

Reed Demangone

Samuel Higgins

Seth Hobi

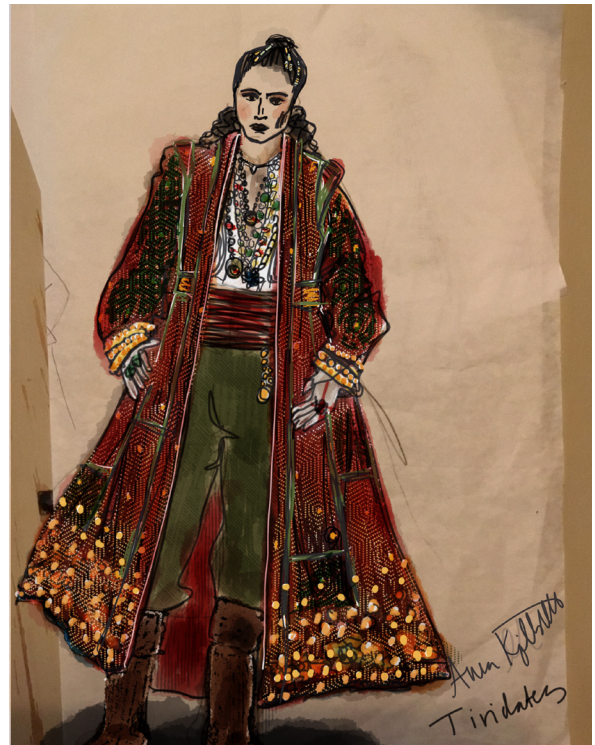
Raphaël Laden-Guindon

Andréa Walker



Dancer of the Young Artists Training Program

Irenie Melin-Gompper



Costume Designs for Keiser's *Octavia*, Anna Kjellsdotter, *Costume Designer*

OCTAVIA

Octavia Cast



(Characters are listed in the order given by the original libretto.)

Douglas Williams, *Nero, Roman Emperor*

Emőke Baráth, *Octavia, his wife*

Michael Skarke, *Tiridates, King of Armenia*

Amanda Forsythe, *Ormœna, the King's wife*

Hannah De Priest, *Livia, a Latin Princess, relative of the Emperor*

Aaron Sheehan, *Piso, a Campanian Prince and Roman Patrician*

Sherezade Panthaki, *Clelia, a Florentine Princess*

Richard Pittsinger, *Fabius, Imperial General*

Christian Immler, *Seneca, a Stoic Philosopher and Imperial Adviser*

Jason McStoots, *Lepidus, a Chamberlain*

Marc Molomot, *Davus, Court Quartermaster*

Anna Bjerken*, *Lady-in-Waiting to Octavia*

Andréa Walker*, *Maid of honor to Clelia*

Reed Demangone*, *Ormœna's nurse*

Sam Higgins*, *Sporus, the Emperor's freedman*

Seth Hobi*, *A Praetorian Centurion*

Raphaël Laden-Guindon*, *A Praetorian Prefect*

Roman Actors: Caitlin Klinger, Irenie Melin-Gompper*, Marie-Nathalie Lacoursière, Alexis Silver, Julian Donahue, Junichi Fukuda, Hubert Hazebroucq

Roman Gentlemen and Noble Ladies: Caitlin Klinger, Alexis Silver, Marie-Nathalie Lacoursière, Irenie Melin-Gompper*, Julian Donahue, Hubert Hazebroucq, Junichi Fukuda

Fishermen: Marie-Nathalie Lacoursière, Alexis Silver, Julian Donahue, Junichi Fukuda

Gravediggers: Julian Donahue, Junichi Fukuda, Hubert Hazebroucq

Ghosts: Caitlin Klinger, Alexis Silver, Marie-Nathalie Lacoursière

Flora: Marie-Nathalie Lacoursière

Cupids: Caitlin Klinger, Alexis Silver

Zephyrs: Julian Donahue, Junichi Fukuda

*Denotes member of the 2025 Young Artists Training Program

Boston Early Music Festival *Octavia* Production Credits

Kathleen Fay *Executive Producer*
Maria van Kalken *Assistant to the Executive Producer*

Mercedes Roman-Manson *Production Manager*
Carmen Alfaro Henry *Production Stage Manager*

Carla Chrisfield *General Manager*
Perry Emerson *Operations Manager*
Elizabeth Hardy *Production & Company Assistant*

Morgen Heissenbuettel *Intern Assistant to the Musical Directors
& Orchestra Director*

Grant Sorenson *Intern Assistant to the Stage Director*
Isabel Oliart *Orchestra & Operations Intern*
Erin Genett *Company Assistant*
Nicholas Holloway *Company Assistant*

Emma Ross *Assistant Stage Manager*
Abigail Lindhart *Assistant Stage Manager*
Emma Belfer *Production Assistant*

Gordon Manson *Technical Director*
Michael Geoghegan *Assistant Technical Director/Flyman*
Ren Squire *Deck Supervisor*

Kaitlin Smith *Master Electrician*
Tyler Lindsley *Assistant Master Electrician*
Zachary Connell *Programmer*

Maya Ramirez *Props Supervisor*
Ian Thorsell *Props Artisan*

Seth Bodie *Wig Designer & Supervisor*

Jackie Oliva *Costume & Wardrobe Supervisor*
Chloe Moore *Assistant Costume Shop Supervisor*
Melina Abreu *Hair & Makeup Designer*
Taylor Clemente *Hair & Makeup Artisan*

Ellen Hargis *Supertitle Creator*
Dan McGaha *Supertitle Supervisor*

Octavia, the rebel opera of a noble-minded poet

“A poor reputation is a clock subject to frequent repairs.”

Simon Bignicourt (1709–1775) in *Pensées et réflexions philosophiques*, 1755.

Die Römische Unruhe, oder Die Edelmühtige Octavia (*The Roman Rebellion, or The Noble-Minded Octavia*), with music by Reinhard Keiser (1674–1739) and a libretto by Barthold Feind (1678–1721), premiered in Hamburg at the Oper am Gänsemarkt on August 5, 1705.

Hamburg operas of the late seventeenth century embrace artistic liberties that might otherwise be seen as unconventional even for the eyes and ears of opera lovers, past and present. While such liberties in dramatic composition could risk appearing excessive if not carefully executed, Feind masterfully integrates them, reinforcing the status of his opera Octavia as a landmark of German Baroque opera.

Taking liberties with the historical fate of the Roman Empress Octavia, Nero’s consort, the opera enriches its narrative with additional historical events, interpolated with great artistic liberty. In his first original libretto for Keiser, Barthold Feind sets a new standard for the German stage, positioning Octavia as a bold and innovative work from one of opera’s most significant German theorists.

A staged performance of Octavia invites audiences to reconsider both their understanding of the historical figures of the first century and the ways in which late-seventeenth-century opera reimagined them. As a quintessential example of an “opera of memory,” Feind and Keiser’s Octavia encapsulates both a distinctive vision of the Roman Empire and the distinctive artistic style of the Baroque age.

The suicide of the protagonist

on a Dutch frontispiece for the Latin tragedies of Seneca. *L. Annaei Senecae Tragediae cum notis Farnabii* Amsterdam, Jansson-Waesberg, 1678. Private Collection.



Octavia (late 39 or early 40 AD – June 9, 62 AD) was the daughter of Emperor Claudius and his third wife, Valeria Messalina. After her mother’s death and her father’s remarriage to Agrippina the Younger, she became the stepsister of the future Emperor Nero, Agrippina’s son. She also became his wife in a politically motivated marriage arranged by Agrippina, who sought to secure Nero’s political future. Empress Claudia Octavia was popular with the Roman people, but her marriage was disastrous. When Nero’s mistress, Poppaea, became pregnant, he divorced and banished Octavia, claiming she was infertile. The decision provoked a public outcry, leading Nero to accuse Octavia of adultery and order her to commit suicide. These are the facts on which historians generally agree.

Octavia’s tragic fate made its way to the stage rather quickly. Her doomed relationship with Nero is the subject of the play *Octavia*, the only surviving example of a Roman drama based on Roman history. Although sometimes attributed to Nero’s tutor, the philosopher Seneca (who died in 65 AD), it was written by an unknown author after Nero’s death in 68 AD. The play dramatizes the downfall of Claudia Octavia and represents her as Nero’s virtuous and popular wife. Nero, increasingly tyrannical and obsessed with his mistress Poppaea Sabina, decides to divorce Octavia and marry Poppaea. The action unfolds with the Ghost of Agrippina (Nero’s murdered mother) rising at the beginning, prophesying Nero’s eventual downfall. Octavia is mourning her fate, feeling powerless

against Nero's cruelty and Poppaea's ambitions. Seneca tries to counsel Nero towards moderation and justice, but Nero ignores him. Poppaea is portrayed as ambitious and ruthless, eager to see Octavia cast down. The Roman populace (the "Chorus") sympathizes strongly with Octavia, lamenting her fate and criticizing Nero's tyranny. The play ends with a bleak vision of Octavia's exile and the people's grief, emphasizing the decline of moral and civic Roman values under Nero's rule.

Aside from the play *Octavia*, there were few ancient sources that a late seventeenth-century writer interested in the fate of Empress Octavia, Nero's consort, would have consulted first. These surviving historical accounts of Nero's life, written by non-contemporary witnesses, were often biased, leaving significant gaps that invited speculation and fabrication. Unlike other emperors, Nero's real life remained somewhat obscure, largely due to the intrinsic biases of the surviving evidence. The bulk of what is known about Nero comes from Tacitus, Suetonius, and Cassius Dio, historians who had little sympathy for Nero and who wrote long after the emperor's death. Tacitus and Suetonius wrote their accounts more than 50 years after, while Cassius Dio wrote his history over 150 years later. Although these posthumous sources contradict each other on certain events in Nero's life, they are consistent in their condemnation of him. Tacitus's own experience of the tyranny, corruption, and decadence during the reign of Domitian (81 AD–96 AD) may explain the bitterness and irony in his political analysis, particularly regarding the factors that led to such conditions. Through their portrayals of Nero, all three writers highlight the dangers of unchecked power, the pursuit of authority unrestrained by moral principle, and the confusion and instability caused by the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few. Feind doubtlessly found great material in their accounts, if not on their damaging take on Nero's reign.

In opera's early years, most *dramma per musica* drew inspiration from the myths and history of classical antiquity. Beginning in the mid-seventeenth century, operas and other dramatic works increasingly focused on the life of Nero. The ancient Roman play *Octavia* likely influenced some of these works, alongside the writings of ancient historians, which were then becoming more widely available through translation and new printed editions. After Claudio Monteverdi's opera *L'incoronazione di Poppea* (Venice, 1643), the characters of Nero and Octavia appeared in several Italian operatic works. Alongside these operatic adaptations, the excesses of Nero's reign have also been explored in spoken theater. In addition to *Britannicus* (1669), Jean Racine's quintessential French tragedy about Octavia's doomed younger brother, an English work, *The Tragedy of Nero, Emperour of Rome* (1674) by Nathaniel Lee must have attracted the attention of Barthold Feind, whose interest for English theater is well documented. The list of characters of this action-packed play includes Octavia, Nero, Seneca, Piso (who conspired against Nero), Poppaea, Agrippina,

Britannicus, and Emperor Caligula's ghost. In 1708, Feind noted in his *Gedanken von der Opera* (Thoughts about Opera): "I am not of the same opinion as the French writers who imitate the ancient Greeks and Romans and let the most important deeds to be narrated in their Tragedies so that the actor's best action consists only of a melancholy report, mainly when it has to do with the fall of a person. In this the English are here also completely different from them." An admirer of the historical dramas of German playwright Daniel Casper von Lohenstein (1635–1683), Feind would have known his 1665 tragedy, *Agrippina*; it centers on the downfall of Nero's mother. Influenced by Shakespeare, the play features the characters of Octavia, Nero, and Seneca, as well as the ghost of Britannicus.

Octavia is also the subject of the massive German novel *Die Römische Octavia* (1677–1707) by Anton Ulrich, Duke of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel. Originally published in three volumes in 1677, this Baroque novel was highly successful at the time. Decades later, it was completed with three additional volumes between 1703 and 1707, around the time *Octavia* was created in Hamburg. Keiser's relationship with the Duke was a decisive one. In 1694, when he was twenty, he had been appointed court composer by the Duke of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel and presented his first opera, *Procris und Cephalus*, in the recently built opera house. Common themes can be found in Feind's libretto and Anton Ulrich's novel. Both works juxtapose historical accounts of the imperial court—drawn from the sources available at the time—with fictional elements, which primarily unfold in the private spheres of Rome. These two narrative levels are intricately connected: on one hand, Octavia endures persecution by Nero, while on the other, Roman nobles engage in the political intrigues surrounding Nero's overthrow. This interplay of history and invention is first reflected in the opera's original title, *Die Römische Unruhe* (The Roman Rebellion), emphasizing how Nero's tumultuous life lent itself to dramatic reenactment.

Like the novel, which uses history as a foundation for creative storytelling, dramatic works about Octavia and Nero take considerable liberties with historical events. Some even feature happy endings, where all the characters survive and are ultimately reconciled. The same applies to Reinhard Keiser and Barthold Feind's opera *Octavia* (1705). The presence of key protagonists—Nero, Seneca, and Octavia—and the underlying conflict between the governance envisioned by the Senate and the People of Rome versus Nero's personal ambitions, which drive the emperor to defy legal and moral constraints for the sake of love, establish clear connections to the first-century drama *Octavia*.

Feind's later theoretical writings on opera emphasize that a poet should not be confined by reality, arguing that the truth of the stage operates on a different level. This principle is evident in his treatment of history in *Octavia*, his first libretto for Keiser. While the fate of the Empress remains the central

subject, it is approached with significant creative liberty. Beyond Octavia's story, Feind expands on other events of Nero's reign, freely incorporating historical events that took place years apart. He intertwines the Pisonian conspiracy to overthrow Nero with the visit to Rome of Tiridates, King of Armenia, who pledges allegiance to the Empire. This blending of historical moments serves to heighten the dramatic impact of the opera, illustrating Feind's belief in the stage's capacity to transcend strict historical accuracy for the sake of compelling storytelling.

In the libretto of *Octavia*, these political events are structured around the Pisonian conspiracy, which occurred in 65 AD. While Feind's treatment of the conspiracy does not yet achieve the grand, epic scale that later nineteenth-century operas would bring to such historical plots, it nonetheless adds depth to Octavia's character. Rather than portraying her merely as a passive victim of Nero's cruelty, Feind introduces an emotional connection between Octavia and Piso, who loves her, offering a reinterpretation of her historical fate. In this version, the virtuous Octavia is saved from her forced suicide by Piso, giving the story a dramatic twist that diverges from historical accounts.

The Pisonian conspiracy, led by Senator Piso, took place in 65 AD, three years after Octavia's death—while the visit of Tiridates, King of Armenia, as a client ruler of Rome, suggests an even later setting, in 66 AD. In Feind's *Octavia*, these events collide within a fictional timeline. However, official and administrative records indicate that conspiracies were indeed unfolding around the time of Tiridates's visit to Rome, making the opera's dramatic liberties not entirely detached from reality. The Roman official calendar records that at the beginning of 66 AD, sacrifices were made to celebrate the thwarting of a conspiracy against the emperor. Other sacrifices marked a military victory, likely connected to the campaigns in Armenia. The Romans had successfully finalized an agreement establishing Armenia as a Roman protectorate while allowing Tiridates to retain his throne. This arrangement was formalized with a grand coronation ceremony in Rome in May of 66 AD, accompanied by numerous public prayers of thanksgiving decreed by the Senate. Furthermore, to accommodate this solemn occasion, the religious festival of Dea Dia was postponed by one month and celebrated in mid-June. This intense succession of state celebrations took a toll on Nero's health—by late summer, sacrifices were offered for his well-being, as he was reportedly suffering from a cold. Later in the year, Nero faced yet another conspiracy, prompting further sacrifices “for having foiled a new conspiracy against the emperor.”

The operatic potential of this turbulent period—marked by political unrest, religious ritual, and personal suffering—was keenly appreciated by Feind. His libretto for *Octavia* captures this historical moment with a striking balance of historical observation, psychological depth, and acute political insight. While Feind, under the pressure of Hamburg's preference for



Nero, and the lists of his evils

Engraving by Jean Picquet (fl. 1611–1650) from Suetone.

De la vie des douze Césars. Nouvellement traduit en français by Jean Baudouin
 (1584–1650), published by Jean Richer, Paris, 1611. Private Collection.

happy endings, altered the fate of Octavia and the historical outcome of the Pisonian conspiracy, he successfully crafted a series of powerful moments that gradually build dramatic tension. The final scene when the emperor comes back to his senses can even be interpreted as Nero's redemption. Feind's construction of the libretto demonstrates a keen understanding of what made opera appealing to Hamburg audiences. By alternating between public and private events, he allows the audience to follow the characters' psychological journeys while also incorporating large-scale scenes with choruses and dances to ensure an engaging spectacle for the city's diverse paying audience. Additionally, elements from various years of Nero's reign were skillfully woven into the plot, creating enough twists and turns to captivate both the rich patrons in the boxes and the lower classes in the *parterre*.

Keiser, then co-artistic director of the Oper am Gänsemarkt, had been demanding crowd-pleasing operas from his librettists. *Claudius*, which premiered in Hamburg in 1703, was Keiser's most recent attempt to stage the grandeur of Imperial Rome. The libretto, written by Heinrich Hinsch (1650–1712), blends a wide array of elements—both historical, featuring Octavia's parents Emperor Claudius and Empress Messalina, and mythological, including the gods

Silenus, Minos, and others. Roman soldiers share the stage with Bacchantes and Satyrs, while the city of Rome itself opens directly onto mythological settings such as Pluto's cavern. This extravagant fusion, however, was not to Feind's taste. In *Octavia*, he sought to elevate the style of opera by grounding it in human events and historical locations. While he does not entirely abandon mythology or the supernatural, he gives them a unique dramatic function: the gods in *Octavia* appear only as fictional characters portrayed by actors under Nero's stage direction. In doing so, Feind integrates the emperor's histrionic tendencies as a cultural reality, seen from the perspective of the main characters.



The Monuments of Octavia the Younger
De Curia Octavia et Porticu (The Portico and Curia of Octavia)
 Engraving by Giacomo Lauro (ca. 1561–ca. 1645)
 for *Splendore dell'antica Roma in Antiquae Urbis Splendor*
 published by Andrea Fei: Rome, 1625.
 Private Collection.

This effect is further emphasized by the absence of Greco-Roman gods in Feind's *Octavia*, a stark contrast to their frequent appearances in other operas of the period. The spectacle of elaborate stage machinery, with flying deities and mythological effects, is not fully present—or at least not in the same direct way. The audience is not expected to perceive these divine figures with the same reality as the historical characters. This choice may also have been influenced by the preferences of Hamburg's audiences. As early as 1697, Christian Heinrich Postel, in the multilingual preface to his libretto *Der geliebte Adonis* for Keiser in Hamburg, offered a lengthy apology for the inclusion of “pagan fables.” Feind himself noted in 1708 that Hamburg audiences had become “totally disgusted by the pagan fable of deities.” Instead of presenting pagan gods as divine beings, Feind integrates them into the staged entertainments orchestrated by Nero in honor of the sovereigns of Armenia. By assigning them a representative function—as characters in a play within the play—Feind skillfully constructs a cultural environment that reflects both the spiritual beliefs of Nero's time and the emperor's own theatrical obsessions. The year following *Octavia*, in the preface to his libretto

for another opera with Keiser, *La costanza sforzata* (1706), Feind explicitly articulates his perspective on the purpose of German Baroque drama: “Characteristics vary with each nation according to the custom of the times, for our plays, especially the musical ones, are vastly different from the ancient tragedies and comedies of Euripides, Sophocles, Seneca, Plautus, Terence, and by now also the later German ones of Lohenstein, Gryphius, and Hallmann. The French, in turn, differ from the Italians and Germans in many works because of the composition of the music as well as the poetry.” Feind's comparison with the dramatists of classical antiquity is of particular significance—both culturally and aesthetically—and his engagement with Roman authors is evident in several of the dramaturgical decisions he made in *Octavia*.

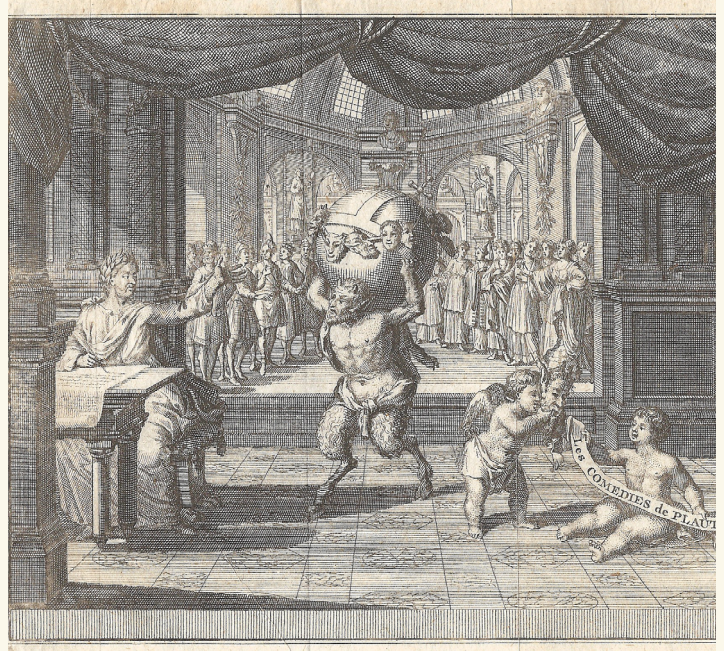
After the Greek theater giants, Feind begins his list of ancient writers with Seneca. In addition to his knowledge about the play *Octavia*, which Feind—like all his contemporaries—attributed to Seneca, he also integrates the stoic philosopher as a character in his libretto. As Nero's tutor, Seneca is portrayed as a voice of reason amid the young emperor's growing instability. His main role, however, centers on staging a psychodrama in which Octavia appears to Nero as her own ghost, and therefore he is also presented as a dramatist. The scene begins with a series of hallucinations: Nero envisions the spirits of his mother Agrippina, his great-grandmother Antonia, and various Romans who plotted against him and were executed on his orders. These visions serve as ominous portents and reflect Nero's inner turmoil. Encouraged by Seneca—who seeks to exploit Nero's guilty conscience—Octavia performs her own ghostly apparition to accuse him of his crimes. Feind was undoubtedly influenced by Shakespeare for this scene, the dramatic power of which inspired the illustrator for a later edition of his libretto. The ghost of Octavia drives Nero into a spiral of self-doubt and repentance. For the first time in the opera, he seems to recognize that his cruelty will leave him unloved and alone—yet also realizes it is too late to change. He contemplates suicide, only to be brought back to reality by the arrival of his loyal guards.

Beyond his exploration of tragic elements through Seneca, Feind also draws inspiration from the comedies of Plautus and Terence. Publius Terentius Afer (ca. 195/185 BC – ca. 159 BC), better known as Terence, was a prominent playwright during the Roman Republic. He authored six comedies, all adaptations of Greek originals. After his death, and especially during the imperial period—including the reign of Nero—Terence became second only to Virgil as the most widely read and studied Latin poet. He remained a staple of the school curriculum, even as other Republican authors were supplanted by Augustan poets and, after the first printed edition in 1470, became a standard name in the Classical Studies. Alongside Terence, the comedies of Plautus were also based on Greek originals adapted to suit Roman tastes. His plays often preserved much of the Greek structure



The tomb believed to be the one of Nero outside Rome
“Sépulcre P. Vibii Mariani sepulchrum. Hors de Rome.”
(The tomb of P. Vibius Marianus. Outside Rome.)

Engraving by Pieter Schenck (1661–1715) after Johann von Sandrart (1606–1688)
 from *Nouveau theatre d'Italie ou description exacte de ses villes, palais, églises.*
 published by Pierre Mortier, Amsterdam, 1704.
 Private Collection.



Plautus welcomes Pan and his theater masks
Anonymous Frontispiece for *Les Comédies de Plaute.*
 published by Pierre Cander, Leide 1719.
 Private Collection.

and themes while infusing them with Roman flavor, making them more accessible and appealing to local audiences. As the earliest surviving complete works of Latin literature, Plautus’s comedies were rediscovered during the sixteenth-century Renaissance humanism. The German editions produced by Veit Werler in the 1510s played a significant role in the early reception of Plautus in German-speaking regions. Feind may also have consulted one of the many French editions circulating throughout Europe at the time, widely available in both academic settings and private libraries.

An anonymous frontispiece vividly echoes the libretto of *Octavia* and sheds light on how Plautus was perceived in the early eighteenth century. At the center of the image stands the god Pan, bearing a globe on his back like Atlas, surrounded by theatrical masks. The image of Pan bearing the globe like Atlas may symbolize the universality of theater and its divine or mythological roots in early modern iconography. To the right, Plautus is depicted seated at his desk, crowned with poetic laurels and writing on a scroll. In the lower left corner, a winged Cupid holds a mask and faces the figure of a genius presenting a scroll titled *Les Comédies de Plaute*. In the background, behind a proscenium arch, a stage is visible, populated by characters from all of Plautus’s plays.

These figures are arranged in a formation reminiscent of a Baroque chorus, with men and women standing apart—an arrangement that highlights both the enduring relevance of Plautus’s work and its influence on the theater of the time. This sense of theatricality is heightened by a draped curtain above the composition, evoking the idea of theater within the theater—a concept Feind employs in *Octavia*. Inspired by the known poetic and theatrical ambitions of the emperor Nero, Feind stages a scene in which Nero offers the Queen of Armenia a performance in his own private theater, merging imperial vanity with performative spectacle. Feind’s use of meta-theatrical elements is evocative of contemporary trends and mirrors what was known of Nero’s own performance on stage, recorded in ancient sources like Suetonius.

Among the comedies of Plautus, *Mostellaria* may have held relevance for Feind, as its title translates from Latin as *The Ghost*. In this play, when the master returns home unexpectedly, his slave invents an elaborate story to prevent him from entering the house, claiming it is haunted by the ghost of a man who was cruelly murdered there. The play, which draws on the popular belief that a violent death leads to a restless spirit, may have inspired Feind in crafting the two ghost scenes in *Octavia*. Death is a constant presence throughout

Octavia: from the evocation of lives lost in the recent war with Armenia, to Nero's command that Octavia take her own life, and the execution of the failed conspirators led by Piso. Feind intensifies this atmosphere by introducing two supernatural apparitions: the "real ghosts" that appear in the graveyard scene, and Octavia herself, who appears to Nero in the form of her own ghost. The reaction of Nero to the apparition is made plausible by the presence of "real ghosts" before. Here Feind, playing with the concept of verisimilitude, tries to articulate in practice what he later claims as a principle: "The truth is presented in theatrical performances through fictions, for otherwise, it wouldn't be verse that is spoken and sung. The stage only imitates nature to a certain degree, and anyone who wants to see something entirely natural can turn to the great stage of the world, which offers new presentations every day—not the small one of operas and comedies. A play is, so to speak, merely a shadow play, where one sees something, but touches neither flesh nor bone."

The attention Feind gives to Roman theater in the libretto of *Octavia* suggests that, while he may have held personal ideas about the development of German drama and, more specifically, Hamburg opera, he was also aware of the central role the performing arts played in Roman culture. In his libretto, likely inspired in part by Nero's well-documented passion for the stage, Feind refers no fewer than four times to the artificial world of the Roman theater. These allusions are evocative of how Romans engaged with the stage, particularly the use of masks by actors, a convention that the Baroque stage absorbed and reinterpreted through forms such as *commedia dell'arte*, dance, and pantomime.

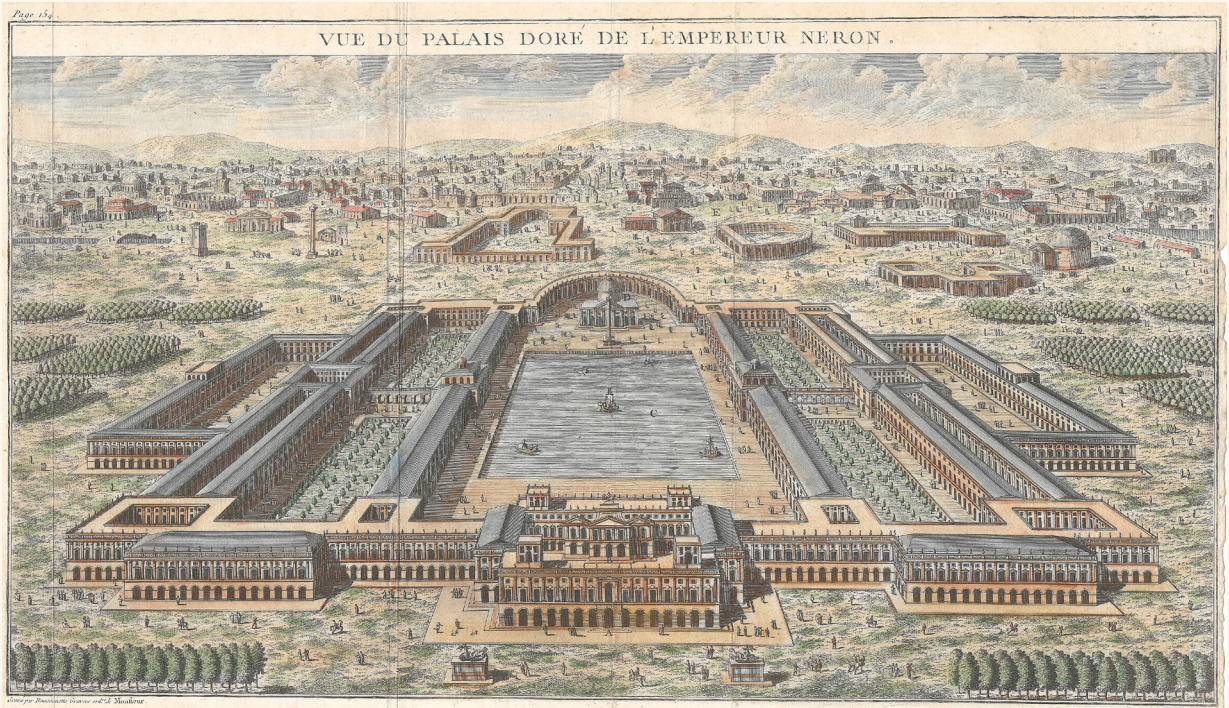
At the Oper am Gänsemarkt, Friedrich Christian Feustking (1678–1739), who served as poet-in-residence during the 1704–1705 season, also drew on classical themes for the librettos he produced during his tenure. One of the most prominent examples is *Almira, Königin von Castilien*, set to music by the young George Frideric Handel. Premiered on January 8, 1705, *Almira* received praise for its music, but Feustking's text—based on a libretto by Giulio Pancieri, originally set to music in 1691 for a Venetian performance—elicited mixed reactions. Critics expressed confusion or disappointment at the adaptation, and a polemical exchange ensued between Barthold Feind and Feustking. Feind criticized the libretto as being in the "bad taste of the Hamburg parterre" implying that the "cloak and dagger" libretto catered to the lower classes, who stood in what was then the cheapest section of the theater. The season had opened with Johann Mattheson's *Die unglückselige Cleopatra, Königin von Egypten oder Die betrogene Staats-Liebe*, Feustking's first libretto, which premiered on October 20, 1704. This opera, centered on the fall of Cleopatra and the death of Mark Antony, reflected contemporary interest in Roman history and the moral struggles of imperial figures. Its focus on the political dynamics between Rome and its allies set the tone for the season and laid the groundwork for further exploration of Roman imperial narratives.

More directly relevant to Feind's *Octavia* was the opera that followed *Almira* on February 25, 1705: Handel's *Die durch Blut und Mord erlangete Liebe, oder: Nero* (Love Acquired Through Blood and Murder, or: Nero). Although it was performed only three times and ultimately deemed a failure, the opera had a significant influence on *Octavia*. While the score is now lost, Feustking's libretto shared the same historical setting—the reign of Nero—and featured many of the same characters, including Nero, Octavia, Seneca, and Tiridates. Feind's use of these figures in his *Octavia*, and his continuation of themes related to power, cruelty, and psychological torment, suggests that, despite Feind's aversion for Feustking, Handel's *Nero* served as a key source of inspiration in the shaping of *Octavia*.

The list of spaces and sets required for the staging of *Nero* in Hamburg reveals some intriguing similarities with those found in *Octavia*, including the rare "Fischerey" (fishing pond), which is associated with Nero's "Palast" (palace), the iconic *Domus Aurea* (Golden House). This suggests an economical reuse of existing scenic resources from the theater's "magazine" (scenery storage or repertory). Beyond the specific recurrence of the "Fischerey" and the general presence of Nero's imperial "Palast" in both works, the list of spaces in *Octavia*—where the action unfolds—is compiled by Feind as a collection of Roman architectural landmarks from antiquity. Notably, Feind does not adhere strictly to historical chronology: he includes monuments that Octavia would not have known in her lifetime. Feind's blending of Roman monuments across time periods reflects a common Baroque practice of assembling a mythical or composite vision of the past, rather than striving for strict historical accuracy.

The spatial arrangements in Baroque operas such as *Octavia* are not merely backdrops for dramatic action; they are active participants in the construction of meaning. The variety of locations presented on stage—ranging from imperial palaces to more mundane civic spaces—reflects the stratified nature of Roman society and visually reinforces class distinctions embedded within the narrative. These alternating settings, juxtaposing loci of political power with scenes of everyday Roman life, provide a theatrical microcosm of the Roman world. This interplay between scenography and narrative helps convey a complex understanding of identity, status, and imperial ideology.

In *Octavia*, the libretto orchestrates encounters between characters of diverse geographic origins, social strata, and political roles. Through these interactions, the opera constructs what might be termed a "spectrum" of Roman society. This spectrum not only encompasses social and political differentiation but also functions ideologically, articulating each character's position in relation to *Romanitas*—the set of cultural ideals, legal institutions, and moral values that defined Roman identity in contrast to external "others."



Nero's Golden House

Vue du Palais Doré de l'Empereur Neron. (View of the Golden House of Emperor Nero.)

French Optical view by Pierre Nicolas Ransonette (1745–1810), Paris.

Private Collection.

Romanitas operated through exclusion as much as inclusion. Central to its logic was the binary opposition to the *barbari*—a term inherited from Greek (*barbaros*) that the Romans applied to those outside the Greco-Roman civic and cultural sphere. These “barbarians” were constructed as uncivilized, irrational, and politically immature. In the operatic context, such distinctions are not only implied in dialogue and plot but also embedded within casting choices, costume, gesture, and stage design. For example, the inclusion of Armenians as foreign figures in *Octavia*—before their assimilation into the Roman Empire—invokes this civilizational hierarchy, reinforcing Rome’s image as a rational and ordered empire pitted against the chaotic periphery. In *Octavia* the opposition between Roman virtue and Armenian “barbarism” is literalized on stage, with contrasting scenic motifs, musical styles, and costumes assigned to each group. Similarly, Handel’s *Nero* employs spatial and musical juxtapositions to depict Rome as a morally compromised but still hegemonic center, surrounded by characters who alternately conform to or challenge its ideals. In these operas, Roman identity is not simply asserted—it is dramatized, negotiated, and sometimes undermined, depending on the moral arc of the plot.

Moreover, the reuse and adaptation of scenic elements across multiple operas—such as the appearance of the “Fischerey” or imperial “Palast” in both *Nero* and *Octavia*—suggest a scenographic vocabulary that was both symbolic and economical. These shared features serve not only to represent imperial spaces but to carry ideological weight, evoking luxury,

decadence, or authority, depending on their context. This recycling of set pieces reflects the theater’s practical constraints, but also a kind of iconographic shorthand recognizable to contemporary audiences steeped in popular antiquarian culture.

One of the key mediators of that culture was Giacomo Lauro’s *Antiquae Urbis Splendor* (1615), a volume of imagined reconstructions of ancient Rome widely disseminated and reprinted throughout the seventeenth century. Though present scholars dismiss Lauro’s engravings as largely fantastical, they were then considered serious visual resources and were frequently consulted by painters, architects, and set designers. Through works like Lauro’s, even illiterate spectators were exposed to a mythologized version of Rome: grandiose, idealized, and deeply theatrical. In this way, the opera house became a site where scholarly antiquarianism, popular imagination, and political allegory converged.

Ultimately, operas like *Octavia* and *Nero* do more than dramatize historical events: they reconfigure antiquity to speak to contemporary concerns—about authority, legitimacy, empire, and cultural identity. The stage becomes a forum where the idea of Rome is not just remembered but actively reconstructed, with *Romanitas* as both a narrative device and a visual language. In Hamburg, as in other opera houses of the time, the poet librettist worked closely with the set designer to establish a visual language for a convincing theatrical opera performance. The designer of *Octavia* had to present an attractive visual

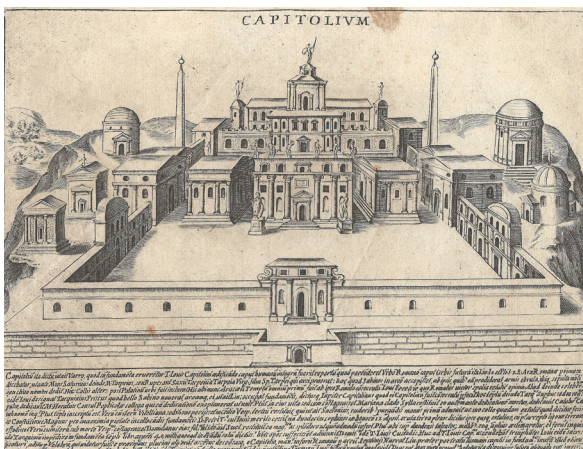
realization of Feinds's poetic vision that would contribute to the success of the enterprise. This was probably the task of Johann Oswald Harms (1643–1708), the set designer who had been commissioned to create the sets for the Oper am Gänsemarkt since 1695.

While Giacomo Lauro may have served as a source of inspiration for the Hamburg production, the most up-to-date visual and textual document likely available to Feind and Harms was *The Description of Ancient and New Rome* by François Desseine. This work was reissued in 1704 by François Halma in Amsterdam, accompanied by lavish etchings by Jan Goeree (1670–1731). Goeree's illustrations for the *Beschryving van Oud en Nieuw Rome* possess a distinctive poetic quality: on a single page, he juxtaposes the ruins of ancient Roman structures with their imagined reconstructions. These architectural renderings are often framed within trompe-l'œil devices—scrolls pinned to walls—around which figures in classical attire appear to comment or gesture toward the monuments, as if engaged in scholarly or theatrical debate.

The visual effects are strikingly immersive. The illusionistic technique produces a vertiginous sensation for the viewer, especially upon close inspection, where multiple layers of visual narrative coexist within a single composition. These engravings not only functioned as antiquarian documents but also provided a scenographic model, blurring the boundaries between scholarly reconstruction and theatrical imagination. In a comparable fashion, Feind's libretto can be seen as a dramatic reconstruction of Nero's Rome, pieced together from historical fragments, literary sources, and visual representations. His approach mirrors that of Goeree: working from the “ruins” of antiquity, he reanimates a coherent, if idealized, Roman world on stage.



A Reconstruction of the Castellum Aquae Martiae (above) and a View of the Ruins (below)
Dutch etching by Jan Goeree (1670–1731) for *Beschryving van Oud en Nieuw Rome* (Description of Ancient and New Rome) by François Desseine, published by François Halma, Amsterdam, 1704.
Private Collection.



The ancient Capitoline
Capitolium (The Capitoline Hill)
Engraving by Giacomo Lauro (ca. 1561–ca. 1645)
for *Splendore dell'antica Roma in Antiquae Urbis Splendor*
Giacomo Mascardi, Rome, 1615.
Private Collection.

Baroque operatic productions, particularly those with Roman subject matter like *Octavia*, participated in a wider cultural project of reconstructing antiquity—not simply as historical recall but as imaginative reconstitution. Librettists, set designers, and engravers alike engaged with the physical and textual remains of the ancient world to craft new visions that spoke to the aesthetics and ideologies of their own time. Goeree's etchings are not straightforward topographical views, but rather visual essays in historical imagination. In each composition, he places reconstructions of ancient Roman monuments alongside their present-day ruins, frequently within a single visual field. Architectural settings are presented as pinned scrolls or unfolded maps, arranged on the backdrop of walls or columns, around which figures in antique dress engage in what seems to be critical commentary or performance. The effect is both didactic and theatrical: Goeree stages the past as a site of ongoing interpretation, mediated through image, viewer, and allegorical participants.

This technique evokes the illusionism of *trompe-l'œil* but applied not only to space but to time. As the eye moves from crumbling arch to restored temple, from silent ruin to active dialogue, the spectator is drawn into a vertiginous oscillation between history and its reconstruction. The engravings thus operate as a kind of visual dramaturgy, inviting the viewer to contemplate not merely what ancient Rome was, but how it might be remembered, interpreted, and reanimated. Feind's dramaturgy in *Octavia* enacts a similar gesture. Working with fragmentary historical sources, a theatrical tradition of Roman imperial narratives, and a popular appetite for classical spectacle, Feind reassembles Nero's Rome as a dynamic site of political conflict and cultural symbolism. Like Goeree, he does not aim for strict historical accuracy. Instead, he selects and synthesizes elements—architectural, linguistic, social—to construct a version of Rome that is understandable to his audience as both antique and allegorical. The staging of *Octavia*, which incorporates spatial markers such as the “Fischerey” and “Nero's Palast”, mirrors Goeree's interest in the visual tension between ruin and restoration: symbols of imperial grandeur are embedded in a narrative of decline, echoing contemporary concerns with authority and decadence.

Furthermore, both Goeree and Feind position their respective audiences—viewers of prints and spectators of opera—not as passive recipients but as interpreters. The inclusion of costumed figures pointing toward architectural reconstructions in Goeree's engravings finds its parallel in the way Feind uses characters from different social and geographic backgrounds to comment on, participate in, or resist the imperial order. In both media, antiquity is rendered not as a distant past but as a



Allegory of Victory
Victoria (Victory in front of a Roman triumph)
 German etching by Melchior Küsel (1626–1683) after Johann Wilhelm Baur
 (1607–1641) From *Ausburg*, ca. 1670.
 Private Collection.

living structure that invites active engagement. Thus, Goeree's illustrations and Feind's libretto belong to a shared Baroque impulse: the reconstruction of antiquity as a layered, mediated experience. Each deploys illusion, juxtaposition, and citation to evoke Rome—not as it was, but as it might be imagined, remembered, and staged anew.

In Octavia—Barthold Feind's first libretto for Reinhard Keiser—Feind offers not a faithful historical account but rather his own imaginative version of Roman history. Drawing on ancient sources but treating them with creative liberty, Feind constructs a text tailored to the culturally diverse and intellectually curious audiences of early eighteenth-century Hamburg. In doing so, he repositions antiquity as a realm of interpretive play, accessible to both connoisseurs of classical learning and spectators in search of vivid theatrical spectacle. The double title of the work boldly announces the duality of the action and the protagonist.

Feind's manipulation of the chronology of Nero's reign is central to this project. By altering the pacing and sequencing of historical events, he enables Keiser to explore time not as a rigid historical continuum but as a flexible dramatic tool. This innovation allows the opera to present antiquity in a dual mode: on the one hand, as a kind of archaeological reconstruction—an earnest attempt to reveal, interpret, and stage the past with scholarly

ambition; on the other, as an entertaining theatrical fiction that breathes life into a dead empire through music, gesture, and scenography.

This double vision—part antiquarian, part dramatist—defines the aesthetic of Feind and Keiser's collaborations. Over the course of their next operas, they would continue to blend Roman motifs with action-packed dramaturgy, populated by emperors, generals, and historical figures. Their version of the past, while filtered through Baroque imagination, is not just a setting for exotic grandeur, but a mirror for contemporary concerns: power, virtue, ambition, and downfall.

Rome held a strong visual and ideological presence in Hamburg at the time. The northern city was not simply fascinated by the ancient world as a distant spectacle, but engaged with it as a framework for learning, identity, and cultural aspiration. Two years after *Octavia*, in 1707, Feind articulated his broader views on opera in *Gedanken von der Opera* (*Thoughts on Opera*).



Costume Designs for Keiser's *Octavia*, Anna Kjellsdotter, Costume Designer

There, he argued for opera as a self-sufficient artistic form, distinct from spoken drama. His assertion that opera could stand as an autonomous and intellectually valuable genre anticipates the later claims of Johann Mattheson, who in 1728 declared: "The opera is in itself a little art world, constructed from various building materials on an imposing stage and made with much learning."

Mattheson's claim underscores the pedagogical and encyclopedic ambitions of early eighteenth-century opera. It is telling that he included the libretto of *Octavia* among his recommended books for a cultivated Hamburg lady's library—a sign that Feind's text was valued not just as entertainment, but as literature. The libretto could, in Mattheson's view, stand independently from both music and stage—an artifact of learning, worthy of contemplation and rereading. *Octavia* uses classical names and events not for antiquarian accuracy, but as a dramaturgical field of satire, pathos, and human conflict.

Ultimately, *Octavia* exemplifies how Baroque opera could transform antiquity into a flexible, multifaceted construct—at once an educational tableau, a moral mirror, and a thrilling spectacle. Through Feind's libretto and Keiser's music, Rome is not preserved as a museum piece but reanimated as a living world on a singing stage. ■

—Gilbert Blin

OCTAVIA

(Re)Constructing a Baroque World in Boston



Any reconstruction contains the seeds of artistic freedom and imagination. While the Cambridge and Oxford Dictionaries define reconstruction as “building something again that has been destroyed” and “an attempt to repeat an event,” they also hint at the creative potential in reconstruction when defining it as an “impression” of a past event. The eighteenth-century artist, architect, writer, and antiquarian, Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720–1778), attempted in many of his prints to reconstruct ancient Rome for his audiences and collectors (see Figures 1 and 2). While Piranesi maintained a scholarly rigor throughout his study of archaeology, in his passion for the subject, he was also unafraid to dream up possible pasts. He has thus been described by modern scholars as combining science with pure invention. Despite this invention, his works still give us one of the clearest and most complete “impressions” of ancient Rome. Minuscule architectural details as well as entire monuments from his

prints can still be recognized in ancient ruins today. It was his very invention which still makes his reconstructions so alluring, engaging, and convincing. Although Piranesi’s fame has eclipsed that of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century stage designers, he is in many aspects indebted to their work and the world of the Baroque stage.

Piranesi’s combination of outright fantasy with disciplined scientific study is the same approach as that of Baroque stage and costume designers as well as librettists and composers. For operas that took place in ancient Rome, conjuring a convincing world was, similar to Piranesi, part science, part invention. The idea of the creative potential embodied in a reconstruction served as a fundamental idea in the conception of BEMF’s 2025 production of *Octavia* on multiple levels. First, we had to decipher how theater artists in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Hamburg—where



Figure 1. Giovanni Battista Piranesi,
Monument on the Via Cassia, the so-called Tomb of Nero,
1756, University of Tokyo



Figure 2. Giovanni Battista Piranesi,
View of the Stone Pavement of the Appian Way,
1756, Metropolitan Museum of Art



Figure 3. (left) Johann Oswald Harms, *View of the Roman Forum Looking Towards the Capitoline Hill*, ca. 1665–1670, Herzog Anton Ulrich Museum, Braunschweig, (right) The Roman Forum today

Octavia premiered in 1705—would have interpreted ancient Rome. What sources were available for them to study? Had they traveled to the Italian peninsula? What did they make of the concepts of “historical accuracy” or “reconstruction”? Second, as artists and practitioners of theater today, we had to decide where and to what degree to bring in our own artistic voices into a historically informed staging. How do we capture an “impression” of something based on the fragmentary parts which have come down to us?

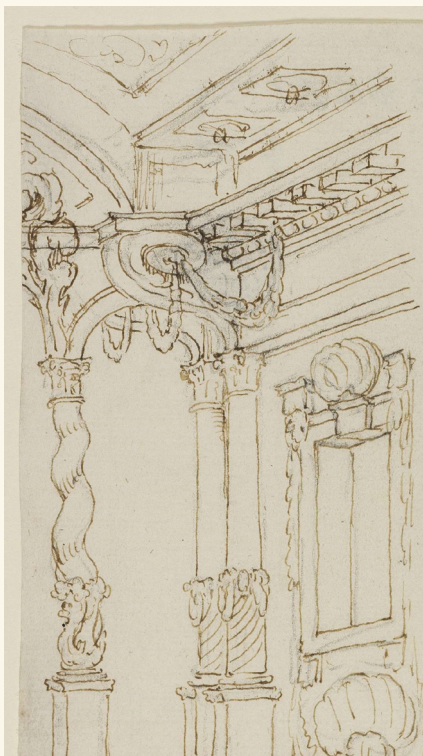
During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Rome was a popular location to recreate on stage, appearing in countless operas. At the same time, emperors, kings, and princes across Europe styled themselves as “Romani” in festive processions and costumed celebrations aligning themselves with the legacy of the Roman emperors. Rulers even had genealogies fabricated which showed them as direct descendants of figures like Julius Caesar. There was a strong interest in visually reviving the glory of Rome, something which theater and opera were perfectly suited to do. The artists creating costumes and stage designs for these ephemeral events served as forerunners to Piranesi. Piranesi even apprenticed under the stage designers Giuseppe and Domenico Valeriani in Venice and closely studied the works of (and possibly studied with) the Galli Bibiena family. While such theater artists formulated their ideas from the expanding wealth of knowledge on ancient Rome, dispersed through illustrated books and growing collections of antique sculpture, as artists working for the theater, they also had to invent and imagine.

Johann Oswald Harms and *Octavia*

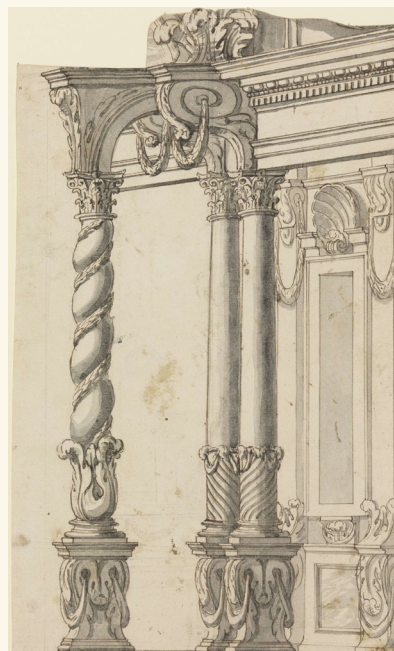
For *Octavia*, we can say with near certainty that the stage designs were created by Johann Oswald Harms (1643–1708). Harms became “Dekorationsmaler”—a term literally meaning “decoration painter” (“decoration” referring to the painted sets)—for the Hamburg Oper am Gänsemarkt in 1695. He remained in that position until 1701 but continued to work for the Hamburg Opera on

individual projects after that. As a scenic designer around 1700 at a public opera house, his sets were not just created for a single opera and thrown away, but added to the stock and reused. By 1705, the year of the premiere of *Octavia*, the Hamburg opera would have had a huge inventory of set pieces designed by Harms. In Boston for BEMF, a similar practice has been set in place by Gilbert Blin starting in 2008. Each centerpiece opera contains mostly new set pieces but includes several that have appeared in past shows. This practice was mainly possible in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries due to the standardized technical machinery built into Baroque theaters. Obviously, the city of Boston has no Baroque theaters with original built-in stage machinery, so behind the set pieces at the Cutler Majestic, a technical system imitating that of a Baroque stage has been devised, overseen by Technical Director Gordon Manson and Production Manager Mercedes Roman-Manson. This allows for the reuse of some scenic pieces and a standard system for integrating new ones.

In designing the stage for *Octavia*, part of my research involved understanding Johann Oswald Harms’s design aesthetic as well as how he would have interpreted ancient Rome. He did make his own grand tour to the Italian peninsula in the 1660s. Horst Richter, the first scholar to create a monograph on Harms, *Johann Oswald Harms. Ein deutscher Theaterdekorator des Barock* (1965), places Harms in Rome from approximately 1665 to 1668. Several of Harms’s surviving sketches depict Roman monuments with enough detail and geographic information that we can still figure out exactly where Harms sat and drew (see Figure 3). By 1669 he was in Venice, where he would have learned about stage practices, developments in scenic technology, and have been able to see many operatic performances first hand. It is highly likely, but based only on circumstantial evidence, that Harms travelled through Vienna on his way back to Hamburg. In Vienna he could have met the imperial theater engineer Lodovico Ottavio Burnacini who had brought a Venetian influence to the Viennese court, and whose stage designs were widely disseminated through engravings.



Figures 4 and 5. Johann Oswald Harms, *Two sketches labelled "nerone"*, ca. 1705, Herzog Anton Ulrich Museum, Braunschweig



Figures 6 and 7. Johann Oswald Harms, *Backdrop and Shutter Designs*, ca. 1696, Herzog Anton Ulrich Museum, Braunschweig



Figure 8. Alexander McCargar after Johann Oswald Harms, Imperial Hall Backdrop for BEMF's *Octavia*, 2025

We are extremely lucky that a large collection of Harms's drawings and sketches today survive at the Herzog Anton Ulrich Museum in Braunschweig, Germany. Consulting these drawings proved instrumental in conceiving the stage for Boston and understanding *Octavia*. While the Oper am Gänsemarkt in Hamburg was heavily inspired by Venetian Opera both in the design of the opera house itself and the works performed there, it still had a uniquely northern style and approach.

Within Harms's surviving drawings in Braunschweig, none can be definitively linked with the 1705 production of *Octavia*. However, two rough sketches are labelled with "nerone"—likely referring to George Frideric Handel's opera *Die durch Blut und Mord erlangte Liebe, oder: Nero (Love Obtained through Blood and Murder, or: Nero)*, performed just months before *Octavia* (see Figures 4 and 5). The two operas likely shared some scenic elements and sets. The first set unveiled to the Boston audience in 2025, as the curtain rises, is the Imperial Hall in the palace of Nero, described in the libretto as being decorated with columns. The design is taken directly from two of Harms's sketches. I was able to identify within the drawings in Braunschweig a drawing of a backdrop and a matching drawing of a shutter which were previously catalogued apart from one another with no link made between them (see Figures 6 and 7). Using Harm's designs as a base I redrew the two drawings and digitally painted them since Harms's originals were only pen and ink (see Figures 8 and 9). The single shutter sketch was then mirrored and repeated on either side of the stage and missing parts of the backdrop sketch completed based on Harms's architectural details. In June 2025 in Boston, audiences are

thus able to see the separate scenic elements reunited and the entire scene reconstructed at full-scale for the first time since approximately 1705.

A second scene for our production of *Octavia* also draws directly from Harms's work: the Fishery in the Imperial Menagerie directly before the intermission (see Figure 10). The backdrop for this scene with pond, Neptune statue, and classically inspired pavilions with grotto-like details is derived from an anonymous gouache painting created after a design by Harms. The small gouache painting, today in the collection of the Staatsbibliothek Berlin, commemorates the celebrations held in Hamburg for the crowning of the King of Prussia in 1701. Music for the event was composed by Reinhard Keiser. While Harms's stage designs were created especially for the event, it is possible that they entered the stock and could have been reused for productions such as *Octavia*, just a few years later.

For other scenes of *Octavia*, we have had to be even more inventive and imaginative. While the opera itself was chosen primarily for its musical excellence, the libretto contains over fourteen different locations, an exciting but quite difficult challenge for a design and directorial team. In realizing the piece, we have chosen to merge similar locations in a way that does not over-simplify the opera but ideally strengthens the dramaturgy and the clarity of the story. For example, several less-defined locations, such as various streets and alleyways around the Capitoline Hill in Rome, as well as the outdoor Flaminian Market, have been merged and represented with a single street scene. For several scenes taking place in different parts of the countryside outside

Rome, I have decided to use a painting by Nicolas Poussin (1594–1665) as the base for a backdrop. Although Poussin was a classical French painter, he was, like Harms, highly influenced by Italy. He arrived in Rome roughly forty years before Harms and painted many Italian *campagna* landscapes. His compositional arrangements and placement of figures, have a distinct theatricality and artificiality which complements the Baroque stage. It is even said that as studies for his paintings, Poussin arranged little wax figures within boxes, just like a stage design model. In his painting used as a base for the backdrop, a temple, placed directly in the center and indicating a proximity to Rome, is uncomfortably and rather strangely blocked by a rough hill, serving as a form of visual dramaturgy that foreshadows the more ominous operatic events to come (see Figure 11).

The unifying of several locations from the opera into single scenic typologies is not simply the result of technical or other limitations we face today while bringing *Octavia* to a modern stage. It was not uncommon that a libretto would describe settings with more detail, while the stage showed more consistent, conventional spaces. Just as certain stock theatrical characters such as those found in *commedia dell'arte* would be recognizable to audiences and conjure certain associations and emotions, so too would specific scenic typologies such as a forest, a royal hall, or a street scene. The deeper spatial specificity could be read by those with the printed libretto, and for those only watching, the repetition of certain sets would make the story clearer and easier to follow. Additionally, despite the technical marvel that the Baroque stage was, it was not unlimited in the visual

scenes it could present. Moveable flats could most easily be changed at intervals and the technical apparatuses, despite their versatility, could not display unlimited scenes. There are reports of travelers to Venice commenting on awkward breaks and loud, clunky scenic changes made in full view of the audience. Despite the Hamburg theater being modelled on Venetian precedents (it was constructed by a Venetian architect, performed much Venetian repertoire, and was the first public opera house outside of Venice), we have decided not to attempt to reenact this part of the experience.

In creating a historically informed staging for BEMF's *Octavia* we have managed to come closer to many of the original designs than ever before. While only a few of Harms's drawings have a reference to "nerone" and may have been used for either (or both!) Handel's *Nero* and Keiser's *Octavia* in their respective 1705 premieres, his work provides a perspective on the general aesthetic and visual interpretation of ancient Rome that would have been glimpsed on the Hamburg stage. While we have worked rigorously to study and present historical accuracy, like Keiser and Harms (as well as Piranesi), we have not held back our imagination and the potential for new waves of creativity. Through the close study of period documents during archival visits to collections across Europe, and to site visits of the ancient locations of Nero's Rome, we have traversed the many layers of the ancient city—invented, lost, and actual—and present our "reconstruction" of *Octavia*. ■

—Alexander McCargar



Figure 9. Alexander McCargar, Stage Design Model of the Imperial Hall for BEMF's *Octavia*, 2025



Figure 10. Alexander McCargar after Johann Oswald Harms, *Fishery in the Imperial Menagerie for BEMF's Octavia*, 2025



Figure 11. Nicolas Poussin (original) with digital editing by Alexander McCargar, *Countryside outside Rome; Backdrop for BEMF's Octavia*, 1642/2025, Prado Museum (original)

Synopsis of *Octavia*

PART I

A Hall in the Imperial Palace

The imperial army has conquered Armenia, and in Rome, the court praises Emperor Nero, who orders the construction of a monument in his honor. Seneca, the Imperial Advisor, warns Nero against succumbing to hubris. Empress Octavia joins Nero, and they express their mutual affection. They are interrupted by Lepidus, a chamberlain, who announces that the Armenian King Tiridates has arrived to declare his allegiance to Rome. Octavia is uneasy, fearing that Nero's decision to restore Tiridates's throne will provoke unrest among the Roman people, while Davus, a court quartermaster, mocks the thirst for power.

A Street in Rome by the Capitoline

When Tiridates and Ormœna, his Queen, appear before Nero, Ormœna humbly thanks him for the return of her husband's crown. Nero is captivated by her charms as he instantly restores Tiridates's throne. Piso, a Roman patrician, and Imperial General Fabius hide their consternation at the return of Armenia, recalling the loss of so many Roman lives during its conquest. Octavia, noticing Nero's growing infatuation with Ormœna, confronts him, but her words fall on deaf ears. Determined to celebrate the occasion, Nero commands a grand feast to honor the visiting King and Queen that very night. While Ormœna revels in Nero's attentions, Octavia struggles with jealousy and heartbreak. Despite her anguish, she resolves to remain patient, lamenting the loss of Nero's affection but clinging to hope for its return.

Flaminio Market in Rome

Princess Livia, a young kinswoman of Nero, mourns the absence of a lover. Fabius, who is besotted with Livia, persistently seeks her favor, only to be rejected. Lepidus joins Fabius and both vent about the Armenian affair. Their rant is interrupted by Piso, who aspires to be Emperor. Alone, he confesses his love for Empress Octavia. Princess Clelia gives him troubling news from the palace: Nero has severely punished a senator for daring to criticize the emperor's decision to restore Tiridates's crown. Piso, observing the growing madness of the tyrant, warns that the political tides may soon shift. After his departure, Clelia reflects on her attraction to King Tiridates.

A Hall in the Imperial Palace

Nero, ignoring the discontent of the Roman patricians, hosts a grand feast in honor of King Tiridates and Queen Ormœna. During the revelry, the court joins in singing and dancing, yet underlying tensions simmer. Members of the court whisper about their new infatuations, jealousies, and frustrations over the lavish honors Nero has bestowed upon the foreign king and queen. Davus muses about the folly of rulers.

A Street in Rome by the Capitoline

Princess Clelia is wooed by Lepidus, but she is not won over. Meanwhile, Nero wrestles with his growing obsession for Ormœna. Despite the Queen's protests in support of Empress Octavia, Nero declares that he no longer loves his wife and decrees that Octavia must die. Ormœna, torn between pity and ambition, is eventually swayed by Nero's passionate declarations of love. Lepidus arrives, and Nero entrusts him with the task of commanding Octavia to kill herself. A distressed Lepidus reveals Nero's order to Tiridates, unaware that Clelia has overheard their conversation.

A Country Road near Tivoli

Octavia mourns the loss of Nero's affection and resolves to accept her fate with dignity. Piso joins her and reveals Nero's deadly scheme. Although moved by Piso's concern, the noble-minded Octavia is resigned to her destiny. When Piso confesses his love for her, Octavia rebukes him for harboring such inappropriate feelings.

A Fishing Pond in the Imperial Gardens

The court gathers for a fishing party, trying to decipher omens in the fish they catch, but their revelry is interrupted by a sudden storm. The party scatters in search of shelter, and Octavia and Ormœna find themselves alone together. Octavia confronts Ormœna about Nero, alluding to her rival's role in the emperor's betrayal though accepting her own doom.

PART II

Flaminio Market in Rome

Consumed by jealousy, Tiridates struggles with his resentment about Nero and Ormœna. Fabius warns him to be discreet. Their conversation is interrupted by Livia. Both men express their admiration for her, but Livia rebuffs their advances and urges Tiridates to remain faithful to his wife. Soon after, Piso delivers a fiery speech to his fellow conspirators, condemning Nero's tyranny and the deteriorating state of Rome under his rule.

A Country Estate, where Octavia is Held Prisoner

Octavia, held captive and resigned to her fate, prepares herself for death by poison or dagger. As she steels herself, Nero, accompanied by Lepidus, comes to witness her final moments. Piso also hides nearby, watching the scene unfold. Octavia bids farewell to life and raises the dagger. Overcome with conflicting emotions, Nero cannot bear to watch her die and leaves. Piso then intervenes, seizing the dagger and discarding the poison. Octavia protests, insisting that defying the emperor's orders is treason, but Piso swears vengeance, vowing to kill Nero and end his tyranny.

A Graveyard

Davus, grumbling about the absurdity of love, is gathering bones from the graveyard to make a potion against it. He is frightened by ghosts, who then chase off some gravediggers.

Flaminio Market in Rome

Seneca reflects on the destructive passions of human life and cautions Nero that his illicit affair with Ormœna threatens Rome's stability and the whole of the Roman Empire. Nero is defiant and unwavering; he dismisses Seneca's warnings and clings to his obsession.

Nero's Theater

A theatrical performance is held by Nero in Ormœna's honor: Flora, the goddess of spring, brings Cupids and gentle breezes. The festivities are interrupted by rebels who storm the theater, calling for Nero's death and declaring Piso the successor to the throne. Thanks to Fabius's loyalty to the Empire, Nero, unnerved and his mind in disarray, narrowly escapes the plotters.

Flaminio Market in Rome

Piso leads his rebels against the Imperial forces, now commanded by Fabius. Piso is defeated and captured. Following the battle, Fabius once again presses Livia for her affection, and she declares that she will seek Nero's approval to reward him for victory over the rebels.

A Desolate Field

Seneca tells Octavia that Nero has fled Rome. He advises Octavia to disguise herself as a ghost and appear before Nero, hoping to terrify him into abandoning his destructive

path and restoring order to his mind and therefore to Rome itself. Nero wanders, raving and hallucinating, accompanied by Sporus, his favorite. Exhausted, he collapses into sleep. Octavia appears, pretending to be her own ghost, and demands that he answer for his crimes. Confused and terrified by this vision, Nero is shaken to his core. Overcome with guilt, he repents his infidelity and yearns for reconciliation with Octavia. Fabius arrives, reporting that the rebellion has been quelled and Piso imprisoned. Grateful for his faithful service, Nero rewards Fabius by granting him Livia's hand in marriage.

A Street in Rome by the Capitoline

Tiridates and Ormœna, now reconciled, are walking together when Clelia approaches with troubling news: Piso is to be executed. The couple, moved by his fate, vow to attempt to secure his release. Meanwhile, Lepidus once again pleads for Clelia's love. Realizing that Tiridates will never be hers, Clelia finally accepts Lepidus. The court gathers for the public execution. Seneca and Fabius offer thanks to the gods for Nero's safety. Nero, still haunted by guilt for having ordered his wife to die, summons Piso to face punishment for plotting against him and failing to prevent Octavia's suicide. Upon learning from Seneca that Piso has in fact saved Octavia, Nero relents. In a gesture of imperial mercy, he pardons Piso and asks for the gods' blessings on the newly united couples. Octavia arrives, and Nero publicly apologizes to her; she nobly forgives him. With peace restored, love should prevail. ■

—Gilbert Blin and Ellen Hargis

LIBRETTO

Octavia

*Die Römische Unruhe, oder Die Edelmühtige Octavia.
The Roman Rebellion, or The Noble-Minded Octavia.*

Music by Reinhard Keiser (1674–1739)

Libretto by Barthold Feind (1678–1721)

English Translation by Stephen Stubbs

First Performance: Hamburg, Oper am Gänsemarkt, August 5, 1705

Die Römische Unruhe.
Oder:
Die Edelmühtige
OCTAVIA.

In einem Sing=Spiel,
Auf dem grossen
Hamburgischen Schau=Platz
aufgeführt.
Gedruckt im Jahr 1705.

Personen.

Nero, Römischer Käyser.
Octavia, dessen Gemahlin.
Tiridates, König aus Armenien.
Ormæna, des Königs Gemahlin.
Livia, eine Latinische Princeßin, mit dem Käyser verwandt.
Piso, ein Campanischer Fürst und Römischer Patritius.
Clelia, eine Florentinische Princeßin.
Fabius, Käyserl. General.
Seneca, ein Stoischer Philosophus und Käyserl. Raht.
Lepidus, ein Cammer=Herr.
Davus, Hof=Fourir.
Sporus, des Käysers Freygelaßner. Im Spiel stumm.
Flora mit einigen Zefirn und Amouretten.
Einige Römische Fürsten, Cavalliers, Dames, Edel=Knaben,
Fischer, Soldaten, Gratien, aufrührische
Bürger &c.

The Roman Rebellion.
Or:
The Noble-Minded
OCTAVIA.

A music theater piece
given at the Great Theater
of Hamburg.

Printed in 1705.

Characters.

Nero, Roman Emperor.
Octavia, his wife.
Tiridates, King of Armenia.
Ormæna, the King's wife.
Livia, a Latin Princess, relative of the Emperor.
Piso, a Campanian Prince and Roman Patrician.
Clelia, a Florentine Princess.
Fabius, Imperial General.
Seneca, a Stoic Philosopher and Imperial Adviser.
Lepidus, a Chamberlain.
Davus, Court Quartermaster.
Sporus, the Emperor's freedman. Mute.
Flora with Zephyrs and Cupids.
Some Roman Princes, Gentlemen, Noble Ladies,
Noble Youths, Fishermen, Soldiers, Graces, Rebellious
Citizens, etc.

Entréen und Reyhen=Täntze.

Des Käysers und der gantzen Hof=Statt.

Der Todten=Gräber.

Der Fischer.

Der Winde.

Der Dames und Cavalliers.

Der Geister.

Der Amouretten.

Der Schau=Platz ist die Gegend in und um Rom.

Octavia

Erster Handlung.

Erster Auftritt.

Der Schau=Platz zeigt einen mit Seulen=Stellungen geschmückten Verhör=Saal, mit einem Thron=Himmel, unter welchem der Käyser von vielen Römischen Fürsten und Edelleuten fussfällig verehret wird. Auf einem besondern Tische liegen Kron und Scepter. Nero, Fabius, Piso, Lepidus, Seneca seitwärts.

Chorus

Herrsche glücklich, grosser Käyser!

(Auff des Käysers Wink richtet sich das Volck wieder auff.)

Nero

*Wo Titans frühes Morgen=Licht
Für Jovis Allmacht muß erröthen,
Wenn es beschämt der Lüffte Dämmerung bricht;
Wo Cynthia aus Ehrfurcht scheint erblast,
Und wo Olympus Wolcken=Last
Des Atlas Stützen hat vornöhten,
Sey mir ein Denckmahl aufgerichtet!*

Aria. Nero.

*Atlas stützt den blauen Bogen
Von dem hohen Firmament.
Gleiche Last ist dem gewogen,
Der der Herrschafft Bürde kennt.
Atlas &c.*

Chorus

Herrsche glücklich, grosser Käyser!

Nero

*Läst Seneca sein Vivat nicht erthönen,
Da uns das Volck gebückt
Den Zoll getreuer Wünsche schickt,
Und unser Haupt die Sieges= und Friedens=Palmen krönen?*

Entrées and Line-Dances.

The Emperor and his entire Court.

The Gravediggers.

The Fishermen.

The Winds.

The Noble Ladies and Gentlemen.

The Ghosts.

The Cupids.

The Scene is the area in and around Rome.

Octavia

Act One.

Scene One.

The scene shows a reception room decorated with columns, and a raised throne, in which the Emperor is obediently honored by many Roman Princes and the nobility. On a special table the crown and scepter are displayed.

Nero, Fabius, Piso, Lepidus, Seneca from the side.

Chorus

Reign happily, great Caesar, reign happily!

(At a signal from the Emperor, the crowd stands up again.)

Nero

*Where Titan's early morning light
blushes before Jove's omnipotence,
when it is shamed into the breaking dawn;
where Cynthia (the moon) pales in awe,
and where Olympus's heavy cloud cover
needs Atlas's support,
there let a monument be raised to me!*

Aria. Nero.

*Atlas supports the blue arch
Of the heavenly firmament.
An equal burden is given to he
Who knows the weight of ruling.
Atlas...*

Chorus

Reign happily, great Caesar, reign happily!

Nero

*Does Seneca not raise his voice in "Vivat"
now that the kneeling public
sends its tithe of good wishes,
and our head is crowned with wreathes of victory and
peace?*

Seneca

*Was nützet dir ein leerer Schall,
Den deine Schmeichler hören lassen?
Sey nicht so sicher vor dem Fall,
Denck, daß im Labyrinth
Verworffner Eitelkeit
Hochmuhts=Gedancken Flügel sind,
Die Wahn wie Wachs in das Gefieder fassen.*

Aria. Seneca.

*Ruhig seyn, sich selbst gelassen,
Ist der Seelen wahres Gut.
(Geht ab. Nero steigt vom Thron.)*

Nero

*Geh immer hin mit deiner Ruh,
Und sieh nur für dir selber zu.*

Anderer Auftritt.

Octavia. Vorige.

Octavia und Nero à 2

Octavia
Kan dich mein Arm umschliessen,

Nero

Ich meine Schöne küssen,

à 2

So steht mein Geist in Ruh.

Lepidus

*Dünckt Eurer Majestät nicht Zeit zu seyn,
Dem König aus Armenien
Den Vorlass anzudeuten?*

Nero

*Mach' ihm kund,
Daß wir zur Stund
Ihn in der Burg zu sehn
Uns gleich bereiten,
Und führ ihn selbst herein.
(Lepidus tritt ab.)*

Dritter Auftritt.

Vorige. Davus hernach.

Octavia

Kriegt er die Krone denn zurücke?

Nero

Der Fried ist so gemacht.

Octavia

Was sagt das Volck? Mich daucht es sey verdrossen:

Seneca

*What use do you have for the empty noise
that your sycophants make ring in your ears?
Be not so sure of your situation;
remember that in the Labyrinth
of profligate vanity,
pride-addled thoughts are wings,
in which madness, like wax, can get stuck in the feathers.*

Aria. Seneca.

*Be at peace, return to your true self,
That is the soul's real treasure.
(He leaves. Nero descends from his throne.)*

Nero

*Go away with your "peace,"
and look out for yourself!*

Scene Two.

Octavia joins them.

Duet. Octavia and Nero.

Octavia
If my arms can embrace you...

Nero

If I can kiss my beauty...

Both

...Then my soul is at peace.

Lepidus

*Does it not seem to your majesty that it is time
to admit the Armenian King
into your presence?*

Nero

*Let him know,
that we at this hour
are preparing ourselves
to meet him in the castle—
and bring him in yourself.
(Lepidus leaves.)*

Scene Three.

Davus joins them.

Octavia

Will he be given his crown back?

Nero

Peace was agreed on this basis.

Octavia

What do the people say? They seem angry to me.

Nero

*Was Volck? Wir haben es beschlossen,
Wer murt, dem bricht man das Genicke.*

Piso und Fabius à 2

*(Wie stoltz ist er bey seinem Glücke!)
(Davus kommt.)*

Davus

*Ein Herr mit vielen Edelknaben
Hat an den Käyser eine Sach,
Und ist bereits im Vorgemach,
Ihm vorbringen,
Daß er so gern möchte eine Krone haben.
(Ich muß auch eins von Kronen sagen.)*

Aria. Davus.

*Will man gerne Kronen tragen,
Thut man wohl,
Es dem Käyser anzusagen.
Das geht ein,
Dieweil allein
Nur ein Käyser krönen soll.*

Fabius

Der König tritt schon ein.

Piso

Soll man die Paucken lassen schallen?

Nero

*Thut nach gefallen.
(Er steigt mit Octavia auf den Thron.)*

Aria. Nero.

*La Roma trionfante,
Viva in ogni Età.
Con penna d'Adamante
Mio nome scriverà.
La Roma &c.*

Vierdter Auftritt.

*Unter dem Schall der Paucken und Trompeten naht sich der
König Tiridates und Ormcæna mit vielen Dames, Cavalliers
und Edelknaben zu dem Throne und knien.*

Ormæna und Tiridates à 2

*Durchlauchtster, ist dein Zorn vergangen,
So laß doch deinen Gnaden=Schein
Mit neuen Strahlen prangen.*

Nero

Auf, auf, geliebte Freunde.

Nero

*What people? We have decided it so.
If someone grumbles, he will have his neck broken.*

Piso and Fabius

*(How proud he is in his luck!)
(Davus arrives.)*

Davus

*A Gentleman with a large entourage
seeks an audience with the Emperor,
and is already in the antechamber
to present his plea
to have his crown restored.
(I also have to say something about crowns!)*

Aria. Davus.

*If one would like to wear a crown,
One would do well
To tell the Emperor.
That is true,
Because only
An Emperor can bestow a crown.*

Fabius

The King is already entering.

Piso

Should we let the timpani sound?

Nero

*If you like.
(He ascends the throne with Octavia.)*

Aria. Nero.

*Triumphant Rome
Shall live forever!
And with an adamantine pen,
My name shall be written!
Triumphant Rome...*

Scene Four.

*Amidst the sound of trumpets and timpani King Tiridates
and Ormcæna, with many noble ladies, gentlemen, and
children, enter to the throne and kneel.*

Ormæna and Tiridates

*Your most serene highness, if your anger has abated,
let your mercy shine forth
with a new light.*

Nero

Please stand, beloved friends.

Ormæna

*Soll deine Magd sich glücklich nennen,
So laß Armenien bekennen,
Daß ihm die schon verlobnte Krone
Der Käyser wiederschlenkt zu einem Gnaden=Lohne,
Wir bleiben dir treu biß ins Grab.*

Nero

*So holder Schönheit spricht man nichts ab.
Denn weil euch Rom als Feinde
Hinfort nicht mehr zu fürchten hat,
Setzt Nero dir, mein trautster Thiridat,
Die Krone wieder auf das Haupt.
Ormæna, deiner Hand
Will ich das Scepter reichen,
Zum Zeichen
Der Herrschaft über das erhaltne Land,
(Der Herrschaft über dieses Hertz,
So deine Schönheit mir geraubt.)
(Fabius und Lepidus überreichen Kron und Scepter auf
einem Sammtnen Küssen.)*

Ormæna und Tiridates à 2

Für diese Gnad bleibt Hertz und Seele dein.

Fabius und Piso à 2

(O Schimpf, O Spott!)

Piso

*(Was mit so vielem Blut und Leben
Erworben ist, so wieder hinzugeben.)*

Nero

(Unschätzbar=schönes Engelbild!)

Ormæna

*Ist mir erlaubt,
Der grossen Käyserin
In Unterthänigkeit die Hand zu küssen?*

Nero

*Dein Wille ist mein Wunsch, Octavia,
Bereite dich,
Reich Hand und Mund ihr hin.
(Ach Tiridat ist glücklicher als ich!)*

Octavia

Ich wünsche Glück zu dieser neuen Ehre.

Nero

(Ormæna, du entzündest mich!)

Lepidus, Fabius und Piso à 3

Der Himmel gebe doch, daß sie beständig wäre!

Ormæna

*Your maidservant will count herself lucky,
if Armenia [Tiridates] acknowledges
that his lost crown
was restored by the Emperor's generosity:
we will remain true to you unto the grave.*

Nero

*One can deny nothing to such a noble beauty.
Because Rome no longer sees you
as enemies to be feared, from now on
Nero himself, my trusty Tiridates,
places your crown once again upon your head.
Ormæna, I place the scepter
in your hand
as a sign
of your dominion over that land
(and your power over this heart,
which your beauty has stolen from me).
(Fabius and Lepidus present the crown and scepter on a
velvet pillow.)*

Ormæna and Tiridates

For this merciful act, our hearts and souls are yours.

Fabius and Piso

(O scandal! O mockery!)

Piso

*(That which was won with so much blood and loss of
life—just to give it back like that!)*

Nero

(Unfathomably beautiful Angel!)

Ormæna

*May I be allowed
to kiss, in servitude,
the hand of the Empress?*

Nero

*Your desire is my command. Octavia,
prepare yourself...
extend your hand and mouth to her!
(Ah, Tiridates is luckier than I!)*

Octavia

I wish you luck with this new honor.

Nero

(Ormæna! Ormæna, you set me aflame!)

Lepidus, Fabius, and Piso

Heaven grant that this blessing remain constant!

Piso
(Pfuy, daß ich diß bekennen müssen.)

Nero
(Ormœna, du entzündest mich!)

Octavia
Mein Käyser. (Er sitzt in Gedancken.)

Nero
(Ormœna, du entzündest mich!)

Octavia
Wie ist doch mein Gemahl so still?

Nero
(Ach Tiridat ist glücklicher als ich!)

Octavia
Wie so still?

Nero
Ich sinne auf ein Freuden=Spiel.

Octavia
(Das mich vielleicht mit Reu und Leyd erfüllt.
Kömmst etwa ihm Ormœn schon schöner für als ich?)
Mein Käyser, höre doch ein Wort
An diesen Ort.
(Sie ziehet ihn seitwärts.)

Aria. Octavia.
Geliebte Augen, sagt, wo zielt ihr hin?
Schaut nicht in einen frembden Spiegel,
Ich bin ja euer Gegenstand.

Nero
Octavia, zur Ehre und Vergnügen
Des Königs und der Königin
Werd' heut ein Fest vollzogen,
Eh' sich Diana zeigt an ihrem Bogen.

Octavia
(Ich spühre schon, daß ich verrathen bin.)

Nero
Drumb nöhtige die neue Gäste!

Octavia
(O weh! Der neuen Neben=Buhlerin,
Soll ich noch selbst die Spur und Wege zeigen,
Mein Ehbett zu besteigen!)

Nero
Nun fort!

Piso
(Fie, that I must make such a statement!)

Nero
(Ormœna! Ormœna, you set me aflame!)

Octavia
My Caesar! (He is lost in his thoughts.)

Nero
(Ormœna! Ormœna, you set me aflame!)

Octavia
Why is my husband so quiet?

Nero
(Ah, Tiridates is luckier than I!)

Octavia
Why so quiet?

Nero
I would like to play a Pleasure Game.

Octavia
(A game that will perhaps fill me with sorrow and regret.
Does he find Ormœna more beautiful than me?)
My Caesar, listen to my words
now:
(She pulls him aside.)

Aria. Octavia.
Beloved eyes, tell me, where are you looking?
Do not look in a foreign mirror,
I am your constant object.

Nero
Octavia, for the honor and pleasure
of the King and Queen,
a great feast will be created
before Diana appears in the heavens.

Octavia
(I already see that I am betrayed.)

Nero
Then show our guests the way!

Octavia
(O torture! So I must myself show
the new mistress the way
to mount my wedding bed!)

Nero
Get on with it!

Octavia

*Sie werden so gefällig seyn,
Dem neuen Freuden=Feste
Noch vor dem Abend beyzuwohnen.*

Ormœna und Tiridates à 2

Wir stellen uns, wie sie verordnen, ein.

Octavia

Vielleicht kan ich dir da, wie du verdienst, lohnen.

Fünffter Auftritt.

Ormœna.

Ormœna

*Nun scheint mein Glück recht Knospen zu gewinnen,
Sobald ich nur den Käyser angesehen,
Gab er mir seine Glut durch Blicke zu verstehn,
Ermuntert euch, seyd froh ihr Sinnen.*

Aria. Ormœna.

*Non mi negate,
Pupille grate,
Di vostro sguardo
L'acceso ardor.
Se voi scoccate
La luce e il dardo,
Piace al mio cor.
Non mi &c.*

Sechster Auftritt.

Octavia.

Octavia

*Verlassene Octavia,
Dein Ehbett wird verschmäh't,
Des Käysers Auge war als eine Wende,
Die sich nach alle Winde dreh't,
Wenn er die Königin ansah.
Betrübteste Octavia.*

Aria. Octavia.

*Geloso sospetto
T tormenta l'affetto costante
D'un alma penante.*

Siebender Auftritt.

*Der Schau=Platz verändert sich in den Flaminischen
Marckt, und zeigt im Prospect desselben Thor mit den
Stadt=Mauren.*

Livia

*Ach armes Hertz,
In was für Noht bistu gebracht!
Durch einen Blick geliebter Augen,
Die ich zum ersten mahl betracht,*

Octavia (to Tiridates and Ormœna)

*Please be so kind
as to attend our revels
now before evening falls.*

Ormœna and Tiridates

We will do whatever you command.

Octavia

(Perhaps I can then reward you as you deserve!)

Scene Five.

Ormœna alone.

Ormœna

*Now it seems that my luck is growing new buds!
As soon as I saw Caesar,
he let me understand his passion through his glances.
Be encouraged and be happy my soul!*

Aria. Ormœna.

*Do not deny me,
Lovely eyes,
The burning passion
Of your glance:
If you shoot
Shining arrows
It pleases my heart.
Do not...*

Scene Six.

Octavia alone.

Octavia

*Abandoned Octavia!
Your marriage bed will be defiled.
Caesar's eyes were like a weather-vane
that turns at every wind
when he saw the Queen.
Saddest, most miserable Octavia!*

Aria. Octavia.

*Jealous suspicion
Tortures the faithful love
Of a suffering soul.*

Scene Seven.

*The scene changes to the Flaminian market, and shows in
perspective the same city gate with the city walls.*

Livia

*Ah, poor heart!
What an extreme distress you find yourself in!
Through one glance from beloved eyes,
which I saw for the first time,*

*Verspührt' ich eine süsse Macht,
Die was empfindliches in meine Seele bließ,
Jedoch sobald mein Schöner mich verließ,
Gedacht' ich Ruhe zu gewinnen,
Wol Ruh! nichts als verwirrte Simmen.*

Aria. Livia.
*Kehre wieder,
Mein Verlangen,
Meine Seele seufzt nach dir!*

Achter Auftritt.
Fabius. Livia.

Livia
(Unzeitige, verhaste Gegenwart!)

Fabius
Bistu noch nicht ein Trost in meinen Nöhten?

Livia
*Darffstu dich nicht erröhten
Auf solche freche Art
Mir fürs Gesicht zu treten,
Da ich so oft den Zutritt dir versagt?*

Fabius
*Versagt, doch wieder alle Schuld,
Was hab ich denn verbrochen?*

Livia
Du kanst nur gehn, diß sey genug!

Fabius
*Ach habe nur so viel Gedult,
Noch einmahl mich zu hören,
Warumb wiltu dich von mir kehren?
(Livia kehret sich umb.)*

Livia
Dein Wort=Spiel ist nur Wind und Trug.

Fabius
*Diß hat der Selbst=Betrug gesprochen,
Schau dieses Hertz, nimms hin, es ist dein eigen,
Mein Augen=Quell soll tausend Zähren,
Die Brust dir tieffe Wunden zeigen.*

Livia
*(Das Beyleid rührt mich zwar, doch lieb ich ihn noch nicht.)
Wer erstlich starcke Glut muß fühlen,
Kan sich hernach im Schatten wieder kühlen,
Gehab dich wohl, mein Fabius. (Ab.)*

I felt such a sweet power
which woke something sensitive in my soul.
But then, once my fair one left my presence,
I expected to regain my sense of peace.
What peace? Nothing but confused emotions!

Aria. Livia.
Come back to me,
My desired one!
My soul sighs for you!

Scene Eight.
Fabius. Livia.

Livia
(Badly timed and hated presence!)

Fabius
Will you give me no comfort in my misery?

Livia
Don't you blush
to come before me
in such an insolent fashion,
when I have so often rejected your advances?

Fabius
Denied again, and yet guiltless;
what have I ever done wrong?

Livia
You can just go now, let that be enough!

Fabius
Ah, have at least enough patience
to hear me out;
why do you turn away from me?
(Livia turns back.)

Livia
Your little word-games are just hot air and deceit.

Fabius
Thus speaks self-deception in person:
just look into my heart, take it, it is yours!
My eyes have cried a thousand tears,
my heart can show you deep wounds.

Livia
*(Pity for him moves me, but still I do not love him.)
He who at first feels loves flames,
can then cool himself in the shade.
Be well, my Fabius. (she exits)*

Neunter Auftritt.
Fabius allein.

Fabius
Gehab dich wohl, mein Fabius.

Aria. Fabius.
*Du kanst hoffen,
Sagt das Glücke,
Und macht Thür und Angel offen.
Doch mein Hertz
Spricht: Die Hoffnung ist nur Schertz,
Nichts als leere Schmeichel=Tücke.
Du kanst hoffen, &c.*

Zehnter Auftritt.
Fabius, Lepidus.

Lepidus
*Auf solche Arth den Frieden einzugehn,
So schlechter Dings mit Reich und Kron zu spielen?*

Fabius
*Wenn Nero ihn vom Tiridat erbeten,
Könt' er nicht spöttlicher auf unser Seite seyn.*

Lepidus
Und warumb giengstu ihn mit ein?

Fabius
*Ich must' ihm ja zu Dienste stehn,
Und konte nicht allein auf frembde Seite treten.*

Lepidus
Indessen murrst das Volck.

Fabius
*Das Volck steht nicht in Ruh,
Biß Strang und Schwert ihm Friede
macht.*

Lepidus
Der Adel selbst ist schwüurig.

Fabius
*Laß es gehn.
Sie sehen schon behutsam zu,
Wenn man den Degen pflegt zu schleiffen,
Rom hat ja Dolche, Beil und Strang.*

Lepidus
*Dis ist zu hitzig auserdacht,
Ein Anschlag muß erst langsam reiffen,
Kein Degen schützt allein die Kronen dieser Erden.*

Scene Nine.
Fabius alone.

Fabius
"Be well, my Fabius!"

Aria. Fabius.
Fortune says
"You can hope"
And seems to open the door.
Yet my heart
Says: "hope is only a joke,
Nothing more than flattering tricks!"
Fortune says...

Scene Ten.
Fabius, Lepidus.

Lepidus
To enter into a peace agreement on such terms,
and to play around with the empire and the crown like that!

Fabius
If Nero needs to ask Tiridates sometime to have them back,
he has already made a mockery of our side.

Lepidus
Then why did you agree to help him?

Fabius
I still need to serve him,
and couldn't go to the other side all by myself.

Lepidus
The people are grumbling now.

Fabius
The people will never be at peace,
until the noose and sword and might force them to be
peaceful.

Lepidus
The nobility is also troublesome.

Fabius
Let it go,
they are already watching attentively
while we are sharpening our rapiers.
Rome also has daggers, axes and ropes.

Lepidus
Your imagination is getting too heated;
an attack must be allowed to slowly ripen;
no single sword protects the crowns of this world.

Fabius

Noch Weißheit, noch Verstand
Reicht bey dem Aufruhr eine Hand.

Lepidus

Die Feder und das Schwerdt erhalten beyd' ein Land.

Fabius

Wie wirds denn endlich werden,
Die Zögerung ist hier zu lang?

Lepidus

Ein jeder sucht Gelegenheit
Sich bey bequemer Zeit zu rächen,
Und auf den Käyser loßzubrechen.

Fabius

Und weistu mehr?

Lepidus

Was denn?

Fabius

Der Piso ...

Lepidus

Fabius.

Fabius

Der wird ...

Lepidus

Was wird er denn?

Fabius

Du wirst noch mehr schon hören,
Die Zeit wird alles lehren.

Fabius und Lepidus á 2

Fahr wohl,
Ich geh zu meiner {Livien / Clelien}.

Eilffter Auftritt.

Piso.

Aria. Piso.

Ich segel auf den Liebes=Wellen,
Dieweil es so mein Schicksal heischt,
Die Hoffnung, an das Land zu stellen,
Hat mich schon manchesmahl geteuscht.
Getrost! Beginnt mein Schiff zu wackeln,
Will ich mit Freuden untergehn,
Es leuchten mir zwey schöne Fackeln,
Die nahe bey dem Milch=Weg stehn.

Fabius

Neither wisdom nor reason
suffice to give rebellion a helping hand.

Lepidus

The pen and the sword together preserve a country.

Fabius

When will it finally happen?
The hesitation is taking too long!

Lepidus

Everyone looks for the right moment
to seek revenge,
and to attack the Emperor.

Fabius

And you know what else?

Lepidus

What?

Fabius

Piso...

Lepidus

Fabius...

Fabius

He will...

Lepidus

What will he do?

Fabius

You will soon hear more;
time will reveal all.

Fabius and Lepidus

Farewell,
I go to my {Livia / Clelia}.

Scene Eleven.

Piso alone.

Aria. Piso.

I sail into the waves of love,
Although I may meet my fate there;
To leave my hopes on land
Has often led to disappointment.
Be comforted! If my ship begins to shudder,
I will go down with joy!
My way is lighted by two lovely torches
That rival the light of the Milky Way.

Piso

*Octavia ist schön, so sagt die Liebe,
 Noch mehr als schön, daß zeugen meine Triebe.
 Entzündtes Hertz,
 Beklemmter Sinn,
 Was legt ihr ihr vor Nahmen bey?
 Ach Schmerz!
 Sagt, was ihr ihr vor Nahmen gebet.
 O weh! Die Furcht macht daß ihr bebet,
 Und zitternd fragt: Ist sie nicht Käyserin?
 Die Schönheit macht, daß ich dich liebe,
 Dein hoher Stand, daß ich mich nur betrübe,
 Schön= und getreue Käyserin!*

Aria. Piso.

*Porto il seno trafitto d'un dardo,
 Che un bel guardo dal ciglio vibrò;
 La saëtta e fatale,
 Altro strale nel petto non vò,
 Porto il seno trafitto d'un dardo,
 Che un bel guardo dal ciglio vibrò.
 (Clelia kömmt.)*

Zwölffter Auftritt.

Clelia. Piso.

Clelia

Was seuffzestu?

Piso

Etwas verborgenes stöhrnt meine Ruh.

Clelia

*Hastu gesehn das Hauß des Lucius zerstöhren,
 Des Lucius, den man den Tapfern hieß,
 Das Nero niederreißen ließ?*

Piso

*Muß ich denn stets von seinem Wüten hören?
 Was war die Schuld?*

Clelia

*Weil er den Raht berieff, dem Käyser vorzutragen,
 Dem Tiridat den Frieden abzuschlagen.
 Jedoch es ist nicht Zeit hie lange zu verweilen,
 Weil man zur Burg muß eilen,
 Das Freuden=Fest mit anzusehn.*

Piso

*Nur kurtze Zeit Gedult,
 Es möchte wohl bald anders gehn.
 (Trit ab.)*

Dreyzehender Auftritt.

Clelia.

Piso

*Octavia is beautiful, so says my love;
 more than just beautiful, so says my desire.
 Enflamed heart,
 oppressed senses,
 why should her Name matter so much?
 Oh pain!
 Say, what does her Name mean?
 O torture! Fear makes me quake
 and tremble to ask: "Is she not the Empress?"
 Beauty makes me love you,
 yet your high station fills me with sorrow,
 fair and faithful Empress!*

Aria. Piso.

*My heart is pierced by an arrow
 Which a lovely glance shot from her eyes.
 This arrow is deadly,
 I want none other in my breast.
 My heart is pierced by an arrow
 Which a lovely glance shot from her eyes.
 (Clelia arrives.)*

Scene Twelve.

Clelia. Piso.

Clelia

Why do you sigh?

Piso

Something secret and hidden is destroying my peace.

Clelia

*Did you see that Lucius's house is destroyed;
 Lucius, the one who was called "the brave":
 Nero ordered its destruction.*

Piso

*Must I always hear about his rages?
 What was his crime?*

Clelia

*He summoned a special council to advise Nero
 not to make peace with Tiridates.
 However, now is not the time to dally here,
 we must hurry to the palace
 to see the joyous festivities!*

Piso

*Have a bit of patience;
 it will soon go a different way entirely.
 (He leaves.)*

Scene Thirteen.

Clelia.

Clelia

*Auf die Gedancken bracht' ich ihn,
Umb meiner Gegenwart sich zu entziehen,
Und etwas Ruhe zu gewinnen,
Meinem Schicksal nachzusinnen.
Umb mich seufftzt Lepidus,
Ich aber muß
Des Tiridates Blicken
Getreue Seufftzer wieder schicken.
Furcht, Anmuht, Freude, Schmertz, Vergnüen,
Läst Cyprisor aus seinem Köcher fliegen.*

Aria. Clelia.

*Holde Strahlen, wehrtes Licht,
Das aus schönen Augen bricht,
Du entzündest mehr und mehr!*

Vierzehender Auftritt.

Das Theatrum verändert sich in einen zum Spielen gewidmeten Platz im grossen Vorhoff der Käyserl. Burg, mit einem Amphitheatro, in welchem des Cupido himmlischer Pallast zu sehen. In der Luft schweben viele Gratien und Liebes=Götter in verschiedenen Maschinen. Nero mit Ormcæna, Tiridates und Octavia, Piso und Livia, Fabius und Lepidus mit Clelia, Davus mit der ganzen Hoffstatt.

Nero

*Zu ihrer Ehr ist dieser Platz erbaut,
Und im Pallast, der dorten wird geschaut,
Soll heut das Abendmahl gehalten werden,
Dieweil die Lieb ein Himmel ist auf Erden.
Denckt daß die Gratien uns selbst bedienen!
Auf, auf, ihr Liebsten und Getreuen,
Bereitet euch gleich mit gesammter Schaar,
Diß edle Paar
Mit einem Tantz zu erfreuen,
Last Lieb und Lust in euren Hertzen grünen.*

(Sie schliessen hierauf ins gesamt einen Kräyß, in welchem noch unterschiedliche Dames und Cavaliers treten. Unter Absingung folgender Aria, gehet die ganze Suite herumb, Nero bleibt immer in der Mitte.)

Aria. Tutti.

*Amor Amor reizt zum Springen,
Zu dem Spielen, zu dem Singen,
Drum verbannet alles Leid
In Ewigkeit.
Die frohe Zeit
Machet beym spielenden Streit
Hüpfen und Lachen und Schertzen
Dem Hertzen
Bereit.
Amor Amor &c.*

Clelia

I got him to think about something
so that I could get away from him,
in order to have some peace and quiet
to reflect on my own fate.
Lepidus sighs for me...
I, however, have to
send true sighs in the direction
of Tiridates's glances.
Fear, Grace, Joy, Pain, Pleasure,
fly forth from Cupid's quiver.

Aria. Clelia.

Noble rays, worthy light,
Shining forth from fair eyes,
You enflame me more and more!

Scene Fourteen.

The scene changes to a sporting ground in the large forecourt of the royal palace, with an amphitheater in which Cupid's heavenly palace can be seen. In the air many graces and cupids are seen floating in various machines.

Nero with Ormcæna, Tiridates and Octavia, Piso and Livia, Fabius and Lepidus with Clelia, Davus with all the courtiers.

Nero

This place has been built in your honor;
And in the Palace, which you can see through here,
dinner will be served—
while Love makes a heaven here on earth.
Imagine, the Graces themselves will serve us!
Up, up all beloved, faithful friends,
prepare yourselves with the entire court
to delight this noble pair
with a dance.
Let Love and Desire be evergreen in your hearts!

(Now they all form a great circle in which various ladies and gentleman appear. While singing the following aria the entire company goes around, Nero always stays in the middle.)

Aria. Tutti.

Cupid moves us to dance,
To play and to sing,
Therefore banish all sorrow
Forever.
The happy time,
With playful competition,
With hopping and laughing and joking
Prepares
Our hearts.
Cupid moves us to dance...

Beym Anfang dieser Aria fordert Nero die Ormœna aus den Reyhen und tantzt mit ihr, da inzwischen die andern sich zu beyden Seiten stellen. Auf gleiche Arth continuiren die andern, und nach geendigtem Spiel tanzen alle ins gesammt, worüber Seneca zugehen kömmt.

Menuet.

*Hebet und sencket den fertigen Fuß,
Setzt den Leib bequem
Und angenehm.
Bereitet die lächelnden Lippen zum Kuß,
Dieweil sich heut alles erlustigen muß.*

Octavia

*Verhaste Frölichkeit,
Die mir nur einen Fallstrick streut! (Geht ab.)*

Nero

Ich sah Octavia nach Piso sehn? (Geht ab.)

Tiridates

Müßt' eben mein Gemahl so stets beym Nero stehn? (Geht ab.)

Ormœna

*Octavia sah mich erzürnet an,
Doch acht' ich ihren Zorn nicht groß. (Geht ab.)*

Piso

*Octavia ward von dem Tiridat geführt,
O Eifersucht die dieses Hertze rührt! (Geht ab.)*

Livia

*Und Fabius war stets bey Clelia,
Diß macht den Anschlag bloß. (Geht ab.)*

Fabius

*Der Piso führte Livia,
Dadurch er mir zu viel gethan. (Geht ab.)*

Clelia

*Der Tiridat gieng bey Octavien,
Was für Verdruß ist mir geschehn! (Geht ab.)*

Lepidus

Bey dieser Lust war keiner recht erfreut. (Geht ab.)

Davus

Die Thorheit war allhie bey Scheffeln ausgestreut. (Geht ab.)

Seneca

O Eitelkeit! (Geht ab.)

Ende der ersten Handlung

At the beginning of the following aria, Nero invites Ormœna out of the circle and dances with her. Meanwhile, the others place themselves on one side or the other. In the same manner, the others continue the dance, and at the end of this play they all dance together, at which time Seneca enters.

Menuet.

*Raise and lower your nimble feet,
Seat your body, comfortably
And pleasurably.
Prepare your smiling lips for kisses,
For today, everything must be for pleasure.*

Octavia

*Hated celebrations—
that are only a trap for me! (leaves)*

Nero

I saw Octavia looking at Piso. (leaves)

Tiridates

Must my wife always be with Nero? (leaves)

Ormœna

*Octavia looked at me angrily,
but I don't care much about her anger. (leaves)*

Piso

*Octavia is accompanied by Tiridates.
O jealousy that shakes my heart! (leaves)*

Livia

*And Fabius was always with Clelia;
this makes his intentions clear. (leaves)*

Fabius

*Piso was with Livia;
in this he does me harm. (leaves)*

Clelia

*Tiridates went out with Octavia;
that really annoys me! (leaves)*

Lepidus

At these festivities no one was really happy. (leaves)

Davus

Stupidity was spread around here by the shovel-full. (leaves)

Seneca

O vanity! (leaves)

End of Act One

*Anderer Handlung.
Erster Auftritt.*

Ein Spatzier=Gang mit Alléen und Garten=Häusern
zwischen dem Capitolio und Colosseo.
Clelia nachmahls Lepidus.

Aria. Clelia.

*Wenn mein Geist in seinem Leide,
Einen kurtzen Stillstand fühlt,
Kebret gleich das bange Schertzen
Süsser Schmertzen,
Zweifach zu verliebten Hertzen,
Wann ein schönes Auge spielt.
(Lepidus kömmt.)*

Lepidus

Hab' ich noch keine Gunst zu hoffen?

Clelia

*Wie es scheint,
So hat ein Unfall dich betroffen?*

Lepidus

*Weil dieses Hertz um was geliebtes weint,
Ach schleicht den allemahl bey Amors Freuden
Nur Schmerz und Leiden
In unsern Seelen ein!
Besinne dich, holdseeligs Götter=Bild,
Und stärke mich in meiner Pein.*

Clelia

*Was wunderstu dich doch, daß ich dich nicht kan lieben,
Ich weiß nicht, was du heischen wilt.
Weistu was Liebe ist?
Ihr Trieb ist zwar in unser Hertz geschrieben,
Doch ihren Ursprung hat kein menschlicher Verstand,
Kein Geist, wie klug er ist, erkand.*

Lepidus

Wiltu mein Flehen nicht erhören?

Clelia

Ich kan dir keine Gunst gewehren.

Lepidus

*Kans möglich seyn, daß du so grausam bist?
Der Purpur, so auf deinen Wangen thront,
Die Anmuht, so in deinem Wesen wohnt,
Ist etwas Englisches, allein in meiner Pein,
Kanstu darum wohl menschlich seyn.*

Clelia

*Bloß vom Geschicke,
Und nicht von mir, rührt dein Gelücke,
Wenn dieses will, so steht mein Hertz dir offen,*

*Act Two.
Scene One.*

*A walkway with alleys and garden-houses between the
Capitoline Hill and the Colosseum.
Clelia, and later Lepidus.*

Aria. Clelia.

*When my soul, in the midst of its suffering,
Pauses to reflect,
It immediately feels the anxiety
Caused by the sweet pains
Which plague the amorous heart
When a fair eye plays with it.
(Lepidus arrives.)*

Lepidus

Have I no hope of your good will?

Clelia

*So it seems,
but what mishap has befallen you?*

Lepidus

*This heart of mine is crying about something beloved,
ah, why are Cupid's pleasures always accompanied
by pain and suffering
creeping into our hearts?
Please reconsider, kindly goddess,
and help me bear my pain.*

Clelia

*Why are you still amazed that I can't love you?
I don't know what you are asking of me!
Do you know what love is?
The instinct for it is written in our hearts,
but the origin of it is not known to any human mind, and
no one, no matter how clever, knows the answer.*

Lepidus

Will you not at least hear my pleas?

Clelia

I can grant you no favors.

Lepidus

*Is it possible that you are so cruel?
The purple on your cheek,
the grace in your nature
is something angelic; but toward my suffering
can you not be more humane?*

Clelia

*It is from fate,
not me, that your bad luck stems;
if fate wills it, then my heart will be open to you.*

Lepidus*Wohlan, so will ich hoffen.***Anderer Auftritt.***Nero, Ormcæna.***Aria. Nero.**

*Bey dem Zunder neuer Pein,
 Fragt das Pochen unser Seelen,
 Ob wir fehlen,
 Wenn wir eine Schönheit wehlen.
 Die Gedancken stehen still,
 Wenn der Mund bekennen will.
 Aber ach, verborgne Strahlen,
 Die uns alles schöne mahlen,
 Wincken nein,
 Bey dem Zunder neuer Pein.*

*(Ormæna kömt.)***Nero**

*Ach könntest du in dieses Hertz sehn,
 Wie du darinnen angeschrieben.*

Ormæna

*Weicht nicht bey dir die Lieb' aus ihren Schrancken?
 Ich bin an Tiridat vermählt,
 Da du Octavia zu deiner Gunst erwehlt.*

Nero*Octavia, die niemahls mich vergnügt.***Ormæna***Und doch ist sie der Krone wehrt geschätzt.***Nero***Kan dich ein Käyser nicht zur Gunst bewegen?***Ormæna**

*Weil er in andern Armen liegt.
 Wenn ich dich würde lieben
 Wie würde sie verletzt?*

Nero

*Verletzt? Wie, kan Nero nicht befehlen?
 Hat ihr das Glück die Kron bestimmt,
 So ist schon Raht, daß man sie wieder nimmt.*

Ormæna*Wodurch?***Nero***Wodurch? Durch ihr entseelen.***Ormæna***(O Weh, der Schluß ist gar zu widerlich.)***Lepidus***Well then, I will hope.***Scene Two.***Nero, Ormcæna.***Aria. Nero.**

*At the flaring up of a new pain,
 The throbbing in our soul asks:
 Are we wrong
 When we choose a new beauty?
 Thoughts go silent
 When the mouth wants to confess.
 But ah, hidden rays
 Which paint everything beautiful,
 Signal "No",
 At the flaring up of a new pain.*

*(Ormæna arrives.)***Nero**

*Ah, if only you could see into my heart,
 how your name is written there!*

Ormæna

*Is your love not going beyond its proper boundaries?
 I am married to Tiridates;
 You had the luck to win Octavia's hand.*

Nero*Octavia who never gave me pleasure.***Ormæna***And yet she is worthy of the crown.***Nero***Can an Emperor not move you to be kind?***Ormæna**

*While he lies in the arms of another?
 If I would love you,
 how wounded would Octavia be?*

Nero

*Wounded? What? Can Nero not command?
 If luck brought her a crown,
 then it would be advisable now to take it back.*

Ormæna*How?***Nero***How? I'll do away with her!***Ormæna***(O horror! This conclusion is far too shocking!)*

Nero

Besinne dich, Ormen, besinne dich.

Ormœna

So liebste sie nicht mehr?

Nero

Nein, nein.

Ormœna

Und wilt dich von ihr scheiden lassen?

Nero

Nicht diß allein, sie soll erblassen.

Ormœna

*(Ormœna, gehstu dieses ein,
Ihr Sinnen, geht zu Raht,
Was sagt mein liebster Tiridat?)*

Aria. Ormœna.

*Es streiten mit reizender Blüthe
In meinem Gemüthe,
Liebe, Treue, Glück und Ehr.*

Ormœna

*(Doch wo ist Treu, wo wahre Lieb' auf Erden?
Wo Treu und Liebe kämpfft
Bey einer die zur Käyserin soll werden
Da wird sie durch das Glück und Ehrsucht leicht gedämpfft.)*

Nero

Besinne dich.

Ormœna

Kan ich dir sicher trauen?

Nero

Du kanst auf meine Worte bauen.

Ormœna

*So nim dieß Hertz, das dir zur Wohnung auffgericht,
Genieß es wie du wilt.*

Nero

*Ach so wird meine Pein gestillt,
Mein Engel, zu Bestärkung deiner Treu
Vergnüge mich mit einem Kuß!*

Ormœna

*Weil man dem Käyser folgen muß
So stimm ich bey.*

Aria. Ormœna.

*Caro amante, Nerone adorato!
Prendi li baci, che io ti do.*

Nero

Think carefully, Ormen, think carefully.

Ormœna

So you don't love her any more?

Nero

No, no.

Ormœna

And you will divorce her?

Nero

Not just that, she must die.

Ormœna

*(Ormœna, will you go along with this?
I must take counsel with myself!
And what will my beloved Tiridates say?)*

Aria. Ormœna.

*Delightful blossoms compete with one another
In my heart:
Love, Faith, Fortune, and Honor.*

Ormœna

*(Yet where is faithfulness, and true love on earth?
Where faith and love do battle
within one who should become Empress,
they are slightly muted by luck and ambition.)*

Nero

Think carefully!

Ormœna

Can I really trust you?

Nero

You can depend on my words.

Ormœna

*Then take this heart, which is made to be your refuge:
enjoy it as you will.*

Nero

*Ah, now my pain is stilled.
My angel, as a pledge of your faith,
please me with a kiss.*

Ormœna

*Because one must follow Caesar,
I obey.*

Aria. Ormœna.

*Dearly beloved, adored Nero,
Take this kiss, which I give you.*

Dritter Auftritt.

Vorige, Lepidus.

Nero

*Zu rechter Zeit kömt Lepidus,
Nun soltu sehn, daß mir zu trauen sey.
(Zu Lepidus)
Du bist ja wohl getreu?*

Lepidus

*Ich dencke nicht,
Daß ich mich jemahls so verhalten,
Daß Eure Majestät deßwegen zweifeln muß.*

Nero

*Wenn nur dein Hertz auch also spricht.
Hör' an, du solt ein Amt verwalten,
Nim einen Dolch und ein Gefäß mit Gifft
Und bring es in Octavien Gemach,*

Lepidus

(O weh!)

Nero

*Mit dem ausdrücklichen Befehle,
Daß sie von beyden eins zu ihrem Tod' erwehle,
Doch warte biß die Fischerey vollbracht.*

Lepidus

*Ach harte Bohtschafft, die mich trifft!
Mein Kaysar, ach*

Nero

*Schweig, nim in acht
Was wir dir ferner sagen,
Du solt sie auch des Ehebruchs verklagen,
Und sprechen, daß sie so der Kaysar=Kronen
Verlustig sich gemacht,
Wir wollen deinen Dienst nach Würden lohnen.*

Vierter Auftritt.

Tiridates, Lepidus, nachmahls Clelia.

Aria. Tiridates.

*Das blinde Kind der Liebe
Will daß man Kummers=voll
Die Leidenschaft beseufzen soll.
Doch flöst die Regung ihrer Triebe
Bey solcher bangen Pein
Uns manches Labsal ein.*

Tiridates

*Und nun entfermt Ormcæna sich von mir
Und sucht ... (er erblickt den Lepidus)
(Er stöhret mich.)
Was kräncket dich?*

Scene Three.*Lepidus joins them.***Nero**

*Lepidus arrives at the right time.
Now you will see that I am to be trusted.
(to Lepidus)
Are you faithful to me?*

Lepidus

*I don't believe
that I have ever acted in a way
to cause your Majesty to doubt it.*

Nero

*I hope your heart really means it.
Listen, I have a task for you:
take a dagger and a jar of poison
and bring them to Octavia's chambers...*

Lepidus

(O my god!)

Nero

*...with the express order
that she must choose one of them for her death,
but wait until the fishing games are concluded.*

Lepidus

*Ah, what a harsh and cruel task.
My Caesar...*

Nero

*Silence! Now hear
the rest of your orders:
You must accuse her of adultery,
and that she has made herself unworthy of
Caesar's royal crown.
We will reward your service worthily.*

Scene Four.*Tiridates, Lepidus, later Clelia.***Aria. Tiridates.**

*That blind child, Cupid,
Wants us to sigh for passion,
And be full of cares.
Yet along with the incitement of passions,
And all their anxious cares,
Some relief flows as well.*

Tiridates

*Ah! now Ormcæna goes away from me
and seeks... (he sees Lepidus)
(He interrupts me!)
What is the matter?*

Lepidus

Es wird ja täglich Blut vergossen.

(Clelia kömt und bleibt in der Ferne stehen.)

Clelia

(Da find ich ihn,)

Tiridates

Was ist beschlossen?

Lepidus

Octavia sol sterben.

Tiridates

Wie? Octavia?

Clelia

(Was hör ich!)

Tiridates

Irrstu, Lepidus?

Lepidus

Du wirst schon sehn, daß man mir glauben muß. (Geht ab.)

Tiridates

Ich will die Wahrheit bald erfahren. (Geht ab.)

Fünffter Auftritt.

Clelia.

Clelia

Da ich ihn kaum erblick

Entzieht ihn mir das neidische Geschick!

Du eilst zwar fort, jedoch dein Angedencken

Muß ich in dieser Brust bewahren.

Aria. Clelia.

Bionde chiome, care rete!

Se risplende vostro seren

Al mio sen,

Dilettosi mi siete.

Bionde chiome, care rete!

Sechster Auftritt.

Eine Land=Strasse mit einer Aue, wodurch ein Bach rinnt, in welchem die Sonnen=Strahlen spielen. In der Ferne zeigt sich Tibur (Tivoli) auf einem angenehmen Hügel.

Aria. Octavia.

Die Edelmuht pranget mit Lorber und Kron.

Octavia

Beym Unglück tobt ein slavisches Gemühte

Ich halte meinem Schicksaal still,

Lepidus

Blood is being shed every day.

(Clelia arrives and stays in the distance.)

Clelia

(There he is!)

Tiridates

What is decided?

Lepidus

Octavia must die.

Tiridates

What? Octavia?

Clelia

(What do I hear?)

Tiridates

Are you sure you're not wrong, Lepidus?

Lepidus

You will see that I must be believed. (he leaves)

Tiridates

I will soon find out the truth. (he leaves)

Scene Five.

Clelia.

Clelia

Now that I've just found him,

jealous fate takes him away from me!

You rush to leave, and yet the souvenir

of your presence remains in my heart.

Aria. Clelia.

Golden hair, worthy nets!

Let your beauty shine

Into my heart.

You are my beloved delight!

Golden hair, worthy nets!

Scene Six.

A country road with a meadow, through which a brook runs, on which the sunlight plays. In the distance Tivoli can be seen on a pleasant hillside.

Aria. Octavia.

Nobility is resplendent with laurel and crown.

Octavia

In misfortune, slavish [lesser] minds rage.

I however, quietly accept my fate;

*Ich suche keine Rach', und seh ob nicht in Güte,
Mein Käyser widerkehren will.*

Aria. Octavia.

Torna, o sposo, torna a me!

Octavia

*Umsonst, ich muß mich nur mit leerer Hofnung nehmen!
Beliebter Bach, die Quelle meiner Zähren
Wird deinen spielenden Cristall
Auff seinem blancken Kiesel mehren.*

Aria. Octavia.

*Wallet nicht zu laut,
Silber=helle Bach=Cristallen!*

Siebender Auftritt.

Piso, Octavia.

Piso

*Der Käyser hat Ormcen zur Fischerey geladen,
Ach Schönste Käyserin!*

Octavia

Meinstu, daß ich deßwegen traurig bin?

Piso

*Ich kenne deinen grossen Geist,
Der sich in allen Thun erweist,
Allein dein Ungelück macht auch die Felsen rege,
Was Wunder, daß es mich bewege?*

Octavia

Was für ein Unglück, rede.

Piso

*Ach dein Gemahl, der Blut=Tyrant,
Doch ach ...*

Octavia

Was ist es dann?

Piso

*Die Zunge wird fast blöde,
Er sucht dich zu verstossen,
Und ruhet nicht, biß er durch Gifft und Stahl
Dein reines Blut vergossen.*

Octavia

*Er ist mein Herr, mein Käyser, mein Gemahl,
Mein Leben ist ihm bloß allein verpflichtet,
Vergnügt ihm meine Liebe nicht,
So sterb' ich gerne,
Vergnügt soll sich mein Auge brechen,
Wenn er mir will mein Todes=Urtheil sprechen.*

I seek no revenge, and hope that with my goodwill,
my Caesar will return to me.

Aria. Octavia.

Return, my husband, return to me!

Octavia

In vain, I must nourish myself with empty hopes!
Beloved brook, source of my tears,
will your playful crystals
fall upon his unfeeling stone?

Aria. Octavia.

Do not babble too loudly,
You silvery river crystals.

Scene Seven.

Piso, Octavia.

Piso

Caesar has invited Ormcena to join him at the fishing place.
Alas! Most beautiful Empress!

Octavia

Do you think that I'm sad because of that?

Piso

I know of your great spirit,
which is proven in everything you do.
Still, your misfortunes would move a stone.
Do you wonder that I am also moved?

Octavia

What misfortune? Speak!

Piso

Ah, your husband, the bloody tyrant...
alas...

Octavia

What then?

Piso

My tongue can hardly move...
he seeks to abandon you,
and won't rest until, by poison or the sword,
he spills your guiltless blood.

Octavia

He is my master, my Caesar, my husband,
my life is in his hands alone.
If my love no longer pleases him,
then I am happy to die;
I will look on with equanimity
if he pronounces the death sentence upon me.

Piso

Nein, die gerechte Sterne,
Die werden mir schon Wege zeigen,
Dem Ubel vorzubeugen.
Ist mir noch mehr erlaubt?

Octavia

Erzehle!

Piso

So höre dann, geliebte Seele!

Aria. Piso.

Ein Blick von deinem Angesicht
Macht meine keusche Seele schmachten,
Will ich dein Wesen recht betrachten,
Rückt mir das Hertz ins Augen=Licht,
Da wünsch' ich nur auf dieser Erden,
Dem wachen Argus gleich zu werden.

Octavia

Hat eine Fantasey
Dir dein Gehirn verrückt,
Und trägstu keine Scheu,
Nach so verbotne Frucht zu fragen?

Piso

Kan ich davor, daß mich dein Aug' entzückt?

Octavia

Soll sich ein Knecht des Käysers nicht entblöden,
Mit solchen wilden Reden
Die Majestät auff's schärfste zu verletzen?
Kein Weib, das Treu und Zucht
Zur Wohnung ihrer Seel gesucht,
Wird solchen Spott vertragen,
Noch hören solche Frechheit an.

Piso

Vergib, so fern ich dir zu weh gethan!

Octavia

Darff denn ein Untersaß
Selbst seine Käyserin so hönisch schätzen?
Schweig, und bereue das. (Geht ab.)

Piso

Soll meine Zunge schweigen,
So mag mein thränend Aug von meinen Leiden zeugen.

Achter Auftritt.

Ein lustiges mit verguldeten Statuen und andern Ornaten
geziertes Revier an der Kayerlichen Menagerie, woselbst ein
grosser Teich mit vielen Schiffen zu sehen, in welchen der

Piso

No, the just stars
will show me the way
to prevent such an evil.
Am I allowed to do more?

Octavia

Tell me.

Piso

Then hear this, beloved soul!

Aria. Piso.

A glance from your eyes
Causes my chaste soul to languish.
If I want to truly ponder your essence,
My heart must emerge into my eyes.
Then my only wish on this earth
Is to be like all-seeing Argus.

Octavia

Has a fantasy
made you lose your mind?
And have you no shame
to ask for such forbidden fruits?

Piso

What can I do if your eyes have enchanted me?

Octavia

Should one of Caesar's knights have the effrontery,
with such wild talk,
to threaten to hurt his Majesty so deeply?
No wife, with faithfulness and modesty
in her soul,
could allow such a mockery,
nor even hear such impudence.

Piso

Please forgive me if I have caused you pain.

Octavia

Can an underling then
treat his Empress with such scorn?
Silence, and regret your words! (*she leaves*)

Piso

If my tongue must be silent,
so let my tear-stained eyes be witness to my suffering.

Scene Eight.

*A pleasant riviera in the royal menagerie with golden
statues and other ornaments, where a large lake can be seen
with many boats in which the Emperor and his whole court*

Käyser mit der gantzen Hofstatt fischet.
 Nero. Octavia. Tiridates. Ormœna. Livia. Piso. Fabius.
 Lepidus. Davus, nebst einen Chor von Fischern mit ihren
 zur Fischerey gehörigen Geräthe.

Chorus

*Auf zum angeln, auf zum fischen, auf zum Netz!
 Bringt Hälter, Kescher, Züßer,
 Bringet Kannen, Wasser=Küßer,
 Daß man Fische drinnen setz.
 Auf zum angeln, auf zum fischen, auf zum Netz!
 (Hierauff halten die Fischer einen Tantz, da unterdessen die
 andere fischen.)*

Ormœna zu Nero
Hat Eure Liebden was gefangen?

Nero
Es war ein Hecht, der wiederum entgangen.

Davus
*(Das trifft noch ziemlich ein,
 Die Hechte pflegen insgemein
 In einem frischen Teich den Strich zu fressen,
 Das deine Eigenschafft auch nicht vergessen.)
 (Ormœna fängt einen Aal.)*

Nero zu Ormœna
Was fängt Ormœna?

Ormœna
Einen Aal.

Davus
(Ja, ja, bey dir gibts auch zu fischen.)

Seneca
*Denck, daß das Glücke schlipfrig sey,
 Das eh' wirs uns versehn, pflegt wieder zu entwischen,
 Und seine Schwester ist hernach die Reu!*

Ormœna
(Ich weiß, daß du ein Schulfuchs bist.)

Nero zu Octavia
Was fängt dann mein Gemahl!

Octavia (fängt eine Murene)
*(Ja wol Gemahl! Du teuschest mich,)
 Es war ein' eintzige Murene,
 Die in dem Glaß durch einen Pfriemen=Stich
 In ihrem Blute muß ersterben.*

Davus
(Sie mercket wohl, wie's hier geschoren ist.)

*are fishing.
 Nero, Octavia, Tiridates, Ormœna, Livia, Piso, Clelia,
 Fabius, Lepidus, Davus, as well as a chorus of fisherman
 with all their fishing gear.*

Chorus

Let's go sporting, let's go fishing, bring your nets!
 Bring baskets, bring fish-nets, bring pitchers,
 And water buckets,
 In which to put our fish.
 Let's go sporting, let's go fishing, bring your nets!
*(After this some of the fishermen dance while the others
 fish.)*

Ormœna (to Nero)
 Did your Highness catch something?

Nero
 It was a pike, but he got away.

Davus
*(That seems very accurate,
 in fresh-water lakes
 pikes usually eat the fishline,
 and you [Nero] do just the same!)
 (Ormœna catches an eel.)*

Nero (to Ormœna)
 What did Ormœna catch?

Ormœna
 An eel.

Davus
(Yes, yes, with you there is something very fishy.)

Seneca
 Remember, luck is something slippery,
 that before we even notice, slips away again,
 and leaves behind his sister: regret!

Ormœna
(I know that you are a clever scholar.)

Nero (to Octavia)
 What has my wife caught?

Octavia (she catches a moray eel)
*(Yes, my husband, you betray me!)
 It was a single moray eel
 which was caught in a glass and with an awl stitch
 had to die in its own blood.*

Davus
(She now sees how the sheep are shorn here.)

Nero und Ormœna à 2
(Es deutet ihr Verderben.)
(Livia bekommt in ihrem Netze einen Scarus.)

Fabius zu Livia
Was fängt dann meine Schöne?

Livia
Ein Scar, der Römer beste Speise.

Fabius
Wie artig schertzt das Glücks=Gestirn!
Man nennet diesen Fisch des Jupiters Gehirn,
Und unser Rom nennt dich die Weise.

Davus (bekommt einige Frösche)
Was thu ich denn für einen Fang?
Au weh, Blut schlecht! Welch lieblicher Gesang!
Fünff junge Frösch. Ein rarer Schatz,
Die Tierchen sind sonst gut für einen Plauder=Matz.
Ihr Brüder, frisch, noch einen andern Gang.
(Die Fischer ziehen die Netze mit vielen Fischen in die Höhe.)

Aria. Davus.
Nehmet aus den alten Teichen
Karpfen, Aale, Barß und Hecht,
Denn diß schuppigte Geschlecht,
Pfleget muntre durchzustrudeln,
Und zu streichen
In den frembden Wasser=Pfudeln.

Nero zu Tiridates
Und was hat Tiridat?

Tiridates
Zwo Schnecken.
(Tiridates zieht zwo Schnecken hervor, und versammeln sich almählig viele Wolcken am Himmel.)

Davus
(Du hast es recht getroffen,
Denn sie gehören auch für dir,
Seht, wie die Raben=Thier
Bemühet sind, die Hörner auszustecken.)

Nero
Es ist allmählig Zeit
Sich nach dem Schauspiel zu begeben.
Octavia, verführe dich ins Hortulan,
Da deutet Lepidus dir unsern Willen an.

Octavia
(Ich weiß, daß meinem Leben
Schon das Verderbens=Netz gelegt.)

Nero and Ormœna
(It signifies her doom.)
(Livia catches a scarus in her net.)

Fabius (to Livia)
What has my love caught then?

Livia
A scarus, most beloved dish of the Romans.

Fabius
How appropriately our lucky stars joke with us: one calls this fish "Jupiter's Brain" and Rome calls you "the wise."

Davus (catches a frog)
What have I caught then?
Dammit! This is bad! What a pretty chorus!
Five young frogs. A rare treasure,
these creatures are usually good for a bit of gossip.
(To the fishermen) Brothers, look spritely, let's have another round!
(The fishermen hold their nets up high, with many fish in them.)

Aria. Davus.
Take from this good old lake:
Carp, eels, perch, and pike,
For these scaly species
Are usually found swirling
Around
In foreign puddles.

Nero (to Tiridates)
And what did Tiridates get?

Tiridates
Two snails.
(Tiridates shows his two snails while storm clouds gather in the sky.)

Davus
(You also got it right,
for they are appropriate to you.
Look how the little creatures
stretch out their horns!)

Nero
It's almost time
for us to go to the theater.
Octavia, go to the Greenhouse,
there Lepidus will reveal our will to you.

Octavia
(I know that a death-trap
has already been set for my life.)

Es entstehet ein erschreckliches Donnern und Blitzen, mit einem starcken Platz=Regen, worauff sie sich ins gesammt ans Land begeben. Ormœna bleibt hinter Octavia, welche sich unter einen Baum verfügen, da inzwischen die Luftt sich wieder ausheitert.

*Ihr Götter, was ist diß womit der Himmel dräut,
Er wird vielleicht zur Rach bewegt.*

Neunter Auftritt.

Octavia, Ormœna.

Ormœna
Käyserin!

Octavia
*Die du woll gerne wärest,
Und auch vielleicht schon bist in deinem Sinn*

Ormœna
Käyserin!

Octavia
Ein Heuchel=Nam damit du mich verehrest.

Ormœna
Ich weiß nicht, was du sagen willt.

Octavia
*Wie schön ist dein Gesicht,
Du angenehmes Götter=Bild,
Wie funckelt doch dein klahres Augen=Licht!
Sind alle in Armenien so schön?*

Ormœna
*Du bist nicht minder schön,
Und mich entzündet selbst dein freyes Wesen,
In deinen Augen hat Cupido sich
Die Wohnung ausgelesen,
(Octavia kehrt sich um.)
O Weh! Es rühren mich
Selbst ihre schwartze Flammen.*

Aria. Octavia.
*Die Eifersuch bläset im Hertzen zu kämpfen,
Die Liebe zu dämpfen,
Sie stehet zum Streit
Mit fliegendem Heere von Argwohn bereit,
Und dräuet der Seelen mit blutiger Schlacht,
So fern sie die Treue nicht waffenloß macht.
(Da Capo)*

A frightening bout of thunder and lightning arrives, with a downpour of rain, at which everyone flees to land. Ormœna remains behind Octavia and they take refuge under a tree. Meanwhile, the air clears again.

Ye Gods, what is this with which heaven threatens us? Perhaps it is moved to revenge.

Scene Nine.
Octavia, Ormœna.

Ormœna
Empress!

Octavia
Which is what you would like to become, or perhaps already are in your own mind.

Ormœna
Empress!

Octavia
A hypocritical name with which you honor me.

Ormœna
I don't know what you are trying to say.

Octavia
How beautiful is your face,
a truly god-like visage.
How brightly your eyes shine.
Are all Armenian women as beautiful as you?

Ormœna
You are no less beautiful,
and even I am enflamed by your free spirit;
in your eyes Cupid
makes his home...
(Octavia turns her back.)
O my! I myself am moved
by her black flames!

Aria. Octavia.
Jealousy blows into the heart—
Creates war, and dampens love.
It is ready for the conflict,
With a flying company of suspicion at its side,
And threatens the soul with a bloody battle,
Unless it has already disarmed faithfulness.
Jealousy blows into the heart...

• INTERMISSION •

Zehnter Auftritt.

Das Theatrum verändert sich in die Julianische Gasse.

Aria. Tiridates.

Tenta di spargere

La Gelosia

Nell'alma mia

Freddo velen.

Il cuore crede

D'esser deluso,

E sta confuso

Dentro al mio sen.

Eilffter Auftritt.

Tiridates, Fabius.

Fabius

Befand der König sich auf jüngsten Ball vergnügt?

Tiridates

Vergnügt? So ja,

Als wie Octavia,

An Nero Hoff' ist alles prächtig.

Fabius

Es scheint, als wenn ein Schmerz dein Hertz besiegt.

Tiridates

Wenn mein Gemahl in frembden Armen liegt.

Fabius

Die Eifersucht ist oft zu mächtig

Wenn sie Verdacht austreut.

Wer hat es denn entdeckt?

Tiridates

Des Käysers unverwandte Blicke

Die haben den Verdacht erweckt.

Fabius

Ormœna ist ja züchtig.

Tiridates

Entschuldigung, die ziemlich nichtig!

Fabius

Sey nur bedacht den Argwohn auszugähnen.

Tiridates

Zu schlechtem Glücke

Hab ich das grosse Rom betreten.

Zwölffter Auftritt.

Vorige. Livia.

Scene Ten.

The theater changes into a Julian alley. Tiridates alone.

Aria. Tiridates.

Jealousy

Tries to strew

Cold poison

In my soul.

The heart believes

It is betrayed,

And is confused

Within my breast.

Scene Eleven.

Tiridates, Fabius.

Fabius

Did your highness enjoy the ball?

Tiridates

Enjoy? About as much

as Octavia did.

Everything is wonderful at Nero's court!

Fabius

It seems that some pain is pressing on your heart.

Tiridates

Because my wife is lying in another man's arms!

Fabius

Jealousy is often too strong,

when suspicion spreads around.

Who discovered this?

Tiridates

The Emperor's unwavering glances

first aroused my suspicions.

Fabius

But Ormœna is very chaste.

Tiridates

Excuse me, not any more!

Fabius

Be careful not to let your suspicions be known.

Tiridates

It is my great misfortune

that I ever came to Rome.

Scene Twelve.

Livia joins them.

Tiridates und Fabius à 2
(Ach welcher Trost!
Ich spühre, daß mein Geist nach etwas frembdes sehne.)

Livia
(Ach Livia verstelle dich!)
Scheint Fabius erbost,
Der Tiridat entstellt?

Tiridates und Fabius à 2
Weil deine Schönheit mich entzündet hält.

Livia
(Es spührt mein Geist, daß er mir wohl gefällt.)

Aria. Livia.
(Wie lieblich spielt ihr,
Daß sich die Seele nach euch sehne,
Schöne Augen, Schöne, Schöne!
Ihr stellet mir,
Wenn eure blaue Kräyse schertzen,
Ein Firmament mit Venus=Sternen führ,
Wovon ein Strahl das Hertze trennt von Hertzen.)

Tiridates
Ach Livia,
Sey doch nicht grausam gegen mir!

Livia
Was ist denn dir?

Fabius
Hast du nicht dein Gemahl?

Livia
Wo bleibt die Treu, so du Ormen versprochen?

Tiridates
Ach Leiden, ohne Zahl!

Fabius
Wird so das Band der Eh gebrochen?

Tiridates
Das längst von ihr gebrochen ist.

Livia
Bedenckstu denn nicht, wer du bist?

Tiridates
Ein König und von Königlichem Stamme.

Livia
So denck, daß dieser dich verdamme.

Tiridates and Fabius
(Ah, what consolation!
I feel my spirit longing for something new.)

Livia
(Ah Livia, hide your feelings now!)
Is Fabius angry?
Is Tiridates tense?

Tiridates and Fabius
Because your beauty holds me inflamed!

Livia
(My spirit feels that he is the one I really like.)

Aria. Livia.
(How lovely is your playfulness,
Fair eyes, that my soul longs for you.
Lovely eyes.
You create for me,
When your blue orbs flash,
The firmament of Venus's heavenly stars.
A single ray from there separates my heart from my heart.)

Tiridates
Ah Livia,
do not be cruel to me!

Livia
What is it with you then?

Fabius
Do you not have your wife?

Livia
Where then is the faith you swore to Ormcæna?

Tiridates
Ah, tortures without number!

Fabius
Is the marriage bond then broken thus?

Tiridates
It has long been broken by her.

Livia
But don't you consider who you are?

Tiridates
A king and from a kingly lineage.

Livia
Then think, that this will damn you!

Tiridates

Ach Grausame, bistu nicht zu erbitten?

Livia

Vergnüge dich mit einer Schöne.

Tiridates

*Ach deine Schönheit bindet mich,
Dieweil mein Geist selbst ihre Bande trägt.*

Fabius

(Ich habe fast zu viel erlitten.)

Livia

*Geh zur Ormœne,
Daselbst vergnüge dich,
Weil andre Glut sich in mir regt!*

Fabius

(Ich habe sie vielleicht bewegt.)

Tiridates

*Schaustu nicht meinen Schmertzen zu,
Was sagestu?*

Aria. Livia.

*Costante ogn'hor così
Io ti dirò di nò.*

Dreyzehender Auftritt.

Piso mit verschiedenen Römern.

Piso

*Betrübtes Rom,
Die Freyheit muß in letzten Ziügen schmachten,
Ein Ohrenbläser wird geehrt,
Durchlauchtigs Blut will man als knechtisch achten,
Kein weiser Raht wird mehr gehört,
Und diß ging Piso ein?
Nein, Nein.
Ihr, deren Eltern sind durchs Käysers Dolch gefallen,
Könt' ihr so ohn Verschulden
Das Joch des Blut=Tyrannen dulden?
Auf, krönt mit mir durch neue Sieges=Zeichen
Der Väter Leichen,
Und last das Blut in euren Adern wallen!*

Aria. Piso.

*Ein edles Gemühte gleicht blitzenden Flammen,
Es suchet die Sterne,
Von welchen die Strahlen der Tugenden stammen,
Und trennt sich ferne,
Von denen die Kämpfe mit Lastern verdammen.
Ein edles Gemühte gleicht blitzenden Flammen.*

Tiridates

Ah cruel one, can you not be more kind?

Livia

Be satisfied with one beauty.

Tiridates

But your beauty binds me,
and my soul is already bonded to yours.

Fabius

(I have almost suffered enough.)

Livia

Go to Ormœna,
and enjoy yourself with her,
because another ember glows in me.

Fabius

(Maybe I have finally moved her!)

Tiridates

Do you not see my pain?
What do you say?

Aria. Livia.

I have been constant in this
Always telling you no.

Scene Thirteen.

Piso with various Romans.

Piso

*Miserable Rome!
Freedom is languishing in its last moments;
a scandal-monger is honored,
noble blood is treated as common,
wise council is no longer heard,
and Piso should go along with all this?
No, no!
All you whose families are fallen to the Emperor's dagger,
can you without guilt
tolerate the yoke of the bloody tyrant?
Stand up with me and crown a new sign of victory:
the bodies of our fathers—
and let that blood now swell your veins!*

Aria. Piso.

A noble spirit is like a flashing flame.
It seeks out the stars
From which the rays of virtue come,
And separates itself widely
From those who condemn their battles with blasphemy.
A noble spirit is like a flashing flame.

Vierzehnder Auftritt.

Ein Gemach eines Landhauses ohnweit der Stadt, in welchem Octavia gefänglich gehalten wird. Bey Eröffnung desselben zeigt sich eine Gegend mit verschiedenen Rogis, Monumenten und Grabstädten. In der Ferne einige Rudera abgebrandter Gebäude.

Octavia in Trauer=Kleidern an einen Tisch sitzend, worauf eine Schüssel mit einem Doch und Gifft=Becher steht, von der Wache umgeben.

Accompagnato. Octavia.

*Hinweg, hinweg, du Dornen=schwangre Krone,
Weg Scepter, weg, du Bild der Eitelkeit,
Mich blendet nicht mehr euer Strahl,
Ihr habt mich zwar geehret,
Doch auch beschweret,
Fahrt wohl, da mich ein Schicksal trifft!
Armseeligste Octavia!
Ergreiff nur Dolch und Gifft,
Das dein vermeint=beleidigter Gemahl
Für so viel Lieb und Treu dir läst zu Lohne.
Weg Scepter, weg! weg Dornen=schwangre Krone!*

Aria. Octavia.

*Verletzte Augen=Lichter,
Ich schein' euch ungetreu,
Der Himmel ist mein Richter,
Daß ich beständig sey.*

Fünffzehender Auftritt.

Lepidus führt den Käyser heimlich herzu. Piso erscheint auf der andern Seite, einander ungesehen.

Accompagnato. Octavia.

*So fahre wohl, geliebter Ehgemahl,
Hab ich dir weh gethan,
Daß ich dich nicht nach Wunsch ergetzet,
Ach so vergib, ich bin nicht Schuld daran,
Vergib, so fern ich dich verletzt,
Weil ich dich nicht vergnügen können,
So will ich auch getrost erblassen,
Drumb küß' ich diesen blancken Stahl,
Und wenn der Todt uns nun wird trennen,
Will ich dich in Gedancken fassen.
Vergib, und fahre wohl, verletzter Ehgemahl,
Und bin ich gleich dahin, soll mein betrübter Schatten
Dir alle treue Pflicht abstaten.*

Aria. Octavia.

*Treu=geliebter, gute Nacht,
Fahre wohl zu tausendmahlen,
Weil der Todt uns trennen heist!
Wenn mein Geist
Mit dem Blute von mir fließet,
Und die blasse Lippen schliesset,*

Scene Fourteen.

A chamber in a country estate not far from the city, in which Octavia is being held captive. By the opening of this chamber, a scene is shown with various monuments and gravestones, in the distance some foundations of burnt-out houses.

Octavia in mourning clothes sitting at a table, on which a dagger and a jar of poison are placed—surrounded by guards.

Accompagnato. Octavia.

*Away, away! You crown of thorns!
Away scepter, you symbol of vanity!
Your gleam no longer blinds me.
You were an honor,
but also a weight;
farewell, farewell, my destiny now awaits.
Poor, poor Octavia!
Grasp now the dagger and the poison,
which your supposedly insulted husband
has given you as your reward for so much love and faithfulness.
Away scepter, away crown of thorns!*

Aria. Octavia.

*Wounded eyes,
You believed I was unfaithful?
As heaven is my witness,
I was always true to you!*

Scene Fifteen.

Lepidus secretly brings in the Emperor. Piso appears on the other side, neither seeing the other.

Accompagnato. Octavia.

*So farewell, beloved husband!
If I have caused you pain
in that I no longer pleased you as you wished,
ah, please forgive me, it was not my fault.
Forgive! if I wounded you,
because I could no longer give you pleasure,
I am happy to go to my death.
Therefore I kiss this blade,
and if death now separates us,
let me hold on to you in my thoughts.
Forgive, and farewell, my wounded husband,
and once I am gone, my sad shadow
will still bear you true and faithful duty.*

Aria. Octavia.

*Most faithfully beloved, good night!
Farewell a thousand times
While death now separates us.
When my spirit
With my blood flows away
And the pale lips close forever,*

Wincken die gebrochne Strahlen,
Fahre wohl zu tausendmahlen,
Treueliebter, gute Nacht!

(Nero gehet mit Lepidus ab.)

Octavia

Auf dann, behetzte Faust, vollziehe den Befehl,
Entweich, und stirb', getreue Seel!
(Wie sie sich entleiben will, greift Piso ihr in die Arme,
nimmt ihr den Dolch und wirft ihn von sich.)

Piso

Halt, halt Octavia.

Octavia

Ach wer ist da?
Ist Piso hie zugegen?

Piso

Dein Unglück muß zur Wehmuht mich bewegen.

Octavia

Wird so des Käysers Schluß erfüllt?

Piso

Kein so vollkommnes Götter=Bild
Muß sterben, (Er verschüttet den Gifft.)
Ein Wüthrich muß durch Dolch und Gifft verderben.

Octavia

Heist diß die Majestät geehrt?
Abscheuliches Verbrechen!

Piso

Gnug, daß es Piso hat begehrt,
Wir wollen schon davon noch weiter sprechen.

Sechszehnder Auftritt.

Davus mit einigen Todten=Gräbern.

Davus

Der Hencker hat die Lieb' erdacht,
Was weiß man doch vor Wege?
Oftt schickt man mich bey dunckler Mitternacht
Nach diese Gräber her,
Da gibt man mir ein Licht von Jungfern=Wachs gemacht,
Auch manchemal andre Zauber=Kohlen,
Wenn ich soll Todten=Knochen holen,
Und davon macht man einen Tranck,
Der zu der Gegen=Lieb' Artzney gewehr.
So muß ich dann woll Knochen lesen,
Ihr Brüder zeigt mir doch die Stege!
(Sie führen ihn herum, er stolpert über einen
Gedenck=Stein.)

Yet the broken rays of my eyes still say:
Farewell a thousand times,
Most faithfully beloved, good night!

(Nero leaves with Lepidus.)

Octavia

Get on with it now, courageous hand! Complete your order.
Die and disappear, faithful soul!
(As she attempts to stab herself, Piso grabs her by the arm,
takes the dagger from her and flings it away.)

Piso

Stop, stop Octavia!

Octavia

Ah, who is there,
is it Piso?

Piso

Your misfortune moves me to melancholy.

Octavia

But will the Emperor's order then be fulfilled?

Piso

No such god-like perfection
should die; (he pours the poison out)
a blood-thirsty tyrant is the one who should die by dagger
and poison!

Octavia

Is this the way you honor your Emperor?
Heinous crime!

Piso

It is enough that Piso desired it.
We will surely speak of it later.

Scene Sixteen.

Davus with some gravediggers.

Davus

The hangman invented love!
What did one know about it before?
They often send me out at black midnight
to these graves here;
they give me a lamp made of virgin wax
and sometimes other magic coals,
when I'm supposed to collect dead men's bones;
and they make a drink from them
that is supposed to be a medicine against love.
So then I'm supposed to read the bones.
Brothers, show me the pathway!
(They lead him around and he stumbles over
a gravestone.)

Potzvelten, halt, was find' ich hier,
Pfuy, welcher Stanck,
Wenn eine Leiche will verwesen,
Wer liegt dann hier verscharrt?
(Er liest die Grabschrift eines Affen.)

Hier liegt ein armer Aff verscharrt,
Der eben so wie du genarrt.
Wenn alle Affen nun nach ihrer Thorheit ruhn,
So geh du auch zur Ruh, was hastu hie zu thun?

(Es werden ihm einige Todten=Knochen an den Kopff
geworffen und erscheinen etliche Geister.)

Wie, kan man hier nicht sicher seyn?
Halt ein, O Weh, Herr Geist, Herr Geist,
Halt ein, halt ein,
Ich weiß nicht was das spucken heist.

(Einige Todten=Gräber halten einen Tantz, unter welche
sich etliche Geister mengen, die die Todten=Gräber zuletzt
verjagen, und die andre Handlung beschliessen.)

Dritter Handlung.

Erster Auftritt.

Des Seneca Studier=Stube mit einem Cabinet.

Seneca

Beliebte Stille,
Vergnügter Stand,
Bey dem die Tugend unser Sold,
Und reiner Unschuld wahres Gold
Die edle Seele schmücket!
Der, dem die stille Ruh in das Gemühte rücket,
Wird von Zufriedenheit entzucket,
Von keiner Lust der Welt bethöret,
Weil ihn nichts irrdisches ergetzen kan;
Von keinem Ungelück gestöhret;
Er schaut kein Ungelück für Unglück an.
Wenn bey der Ruh der Weißheit Licht
In seiner Seelen Wohnung bricht,
Bewaffnet er sich stets, die Sinnen zu bekriegen,
Und über Wollust, Furcht, Schmerz, Hochmuht, Geitz und Haß,
Als im Triumph zu siegen.
So ist er stets sich gleich, und lernt ohn Unterlaß,
Der Himmel auff der Welt sey ruhiges Vergnügen.

Aria. Seneca.

Ein kleiner Knabe liebt das Spielen,
Ein Jüngling liebet Brunst und Wein.
Die Männer pflegen Lust zu führen,
Daß sie geehrt und kühne seyn.
Die Alten lieben gerne Geld,
O schnöde Liebe dieser Welt!

Holy St. Valentine! stop, what do I see here?
Yuck, what a stink
these bodies make when they decay!
I wonder who lies buried here?
(He reads the headstone of an Ape.)

“Here lies buried a poor Ape,
who was a fool just like you.
When all the apes now rest in peace in their stupidity,
so you must also go to your peace—what are you doing here?”

(Now many bones are thrown at his head and a number
of ghosts appear.)

What? is one not safe here?
Stop! O pain! Mr. Ghost, Mr. Ghost,
stop! Stop!
I don't know what you are doing with all this spooking around!

(Some of the gravediggers now conduct a dance, and
some of the ghosts join them before they finally chase
the gravediggers off, and thus ends the second Act.)

Act Three.

Scene One.

Seneca's study with a cabinet.

Seneca

Beloved quiet,
happy condition,
in which virtue is its own reward,
and innocence is the true gold
which ornaments the soul.
He, who cultivates inner peace
shall be blessed with true satisfaction,
not tempted by any of the world's attractions,
because it is not earthly delights which can please him:
He cannot be bothered by any misfortune;
for he doesn't see misfortune as misfortune.
When, in this condition of peace,
the light of wisdom shines upon him,
he girds himself to fight against his senses,
and thus he triumphs over
Lust, Fear, Pain, Pride, Greed, and Hate.
So is he ever the same, and learns without ceasing
that heaven on earth is peaceful contentment.

Aria. Seneca.

A little boy loves to play,
A young man loves lust and wine.
Men desire to be
Honored and regarded as bold.
Old men tend to love their money,
O the despicable love of this world!

Anderer Auftritt.

Nero. Seneca.

Nero

*Was sinnet Seneca? Fort mit dem Bücher=Kram,
Du sitztest dich doch endlich lahm.
Geh in das Schau=Spiel-Haus
Da suchet unser Lepidus,
Dem wir mit Sporus heut die Aufsicht aufgetragen,
Dir einen Sitz=Platz aus,
Wir gehn Ormoenen abzuholen.*

Seneca

*Ach kanstu diß so sicher wagen?
Hispanien ist hin, Britannien verlohren,
Rom hat, wie Gallien, zum Aufstand sich verschworen,
Du läst Armenien, um deiner Liebe willen,
So schändlich wieder aus den Händen.*

Nero

Thu, was wir dir befohlen.

Seneca

*Mein Käyser, ach,
Wo will es endlich hin, denck einmahl nach,
Wer wird das Ungelück von deinem Hause wenden!*

Nero

Geh, unsern Willen zu erfüllen! (Geht ab.)

Seneca

Ach er verwirfft, was ihm zur Warnung dienen kan!

Dritter Auftritt.

Der gantze Schau=Platz bildet ab des Nero Comœdien-Hauß mit einer Par-terre, Gallerien, Logen und einem Orchester vor die Instrumentisten. Das Römische Volk nebst der gantzen Hof=statt, ausser Octavia, Fabius und Piso, haben sich bereits placirt.

Lepidus

Der Käyser kömmt, fangt nach gegebenen Zeichen an!

Sobald der Käyser angekommen, hebt man die Symphonie an, nach deren Endigung das Theatrum eröffnet wird.

Prologo

Die Schau=Bühne stellt vor den Tempel der Göttin Flora, die mit Grotesquen und Festonen gezieret, und durchaus illuminiret.

Scena I.

Flora mit einigen Winden und Amouretten, welche allerhand Blumen streuen.

Scene Two.

Nero, Seneca.

Nero

*What is Seneca musing about? Get rid of all this bookish nonsense! You're going to sit so long, you'll become lame.
Go to the theater, and
look for our Lepidus there,
to whom we gave the responsibility today, together with Sporus, to hold a seat for you:
Today we will fetch Ormoena.*

Seneca

*Ah, can you be so sure to dare this?
Spain is collapsed, Britain is lost,
Rome, like Gaul, is conspiring to revolt,
and you will let Armenia so shamefully escape our hands
because of your love affair?*

Nero

Do what I order you to do!

Seneca

*My Emperor, alas,
where will it all end? Think carefully:
who will prevent misfortune from falling on your head?*

Nero

Go, and fulfill our wishes! (he leaves)

Seneca

(Alas! He throws away the very warning that could help him!)

Scene Three.

The entire stage depicts Nero's Theater with a parterre, galleries, loges, and an orchestra place for the instrumentalists. The Roman people along with the entire court except for Octavia, Fabius, and Piso have already taken their places.

Lepidus

Caesar comes, start at my signal.

As soon as the Emperor arrives the instruments begin a symphony at the end of which the Theater curtain is opened.

Prologue

The theater stage presents the Temple of the goddess Flora, with grotesques and festooned pillars, and brilliantly illuminated.

Scene I.

Flora with several Winds and Cupids who strew flowers everywhere.

Aria. Flora.
Streu Blumen
Aus Idumen,
Du kleine Liebes=Schaar.
Bekrön' in einem Tantz
Mit einem Rosen=Krantze
Des Käysers güldnes Haar.
Streu Blumen, &c.

Hierauf tanzen die Zefirn und Amouretten eine Entrée unter welcher sie Kränze flechten, womit sie den Käyser und Ormoëna bewerffen.

Flora
Verdoppelt euren Tantz!

Unter Wiederholung dieses Tantes höret man ein Geschrey inwendig:

Chorus
Piso lebe! Nero sterbe!

Lepidus
Aufruhr, Aufruhr!

Das Geschrey wird immer stärker, worüber sich alles in höchster Unordnung retiriret, und die Schau=Bühne wieder geschlossen wird.

Chorus
Piso lebe! Nero sterbe!

Nero
Verfluchter Trotz!

Ormoëna
Verfluchte Wuht!

Lepidus
Verdammte Bruht!

Vierter Auftritt.
 Das Theatrum verändert sich in eine Gasse, so zum Esquilino führet.

Piso mit einer Menge Soldaten, welche immer ruffen:

Chorus
Nero sterbe, Piso lebe!

Piso
Die Burg ist schon erstiegen,
Der Wühtrich gehet flüchtig,
Auf, auf, und last uns ferner siegen,
Biß man mich auf den Thron erhebt!

Aria. Flora.
 Strew flowers
 From Edom
 You little flock of Cupids!
 As you dance,
 Crown Caesar's golden locks
 With a garland of roses.
 Strew flowers...

After this the zephyrs and cupids dance an Entrée during which they braid the flowers into garlands with which they adorn the Emperor and Ormoëna.

Flora
 Redouble your dance!

During the repeat of this dance a great outcry is heard.

Chorus
 Long live Piso! Nero must die!

Lepidus
 Rebellion! Rebellion!

The outcry becomes ever louder, during which everything becomes extremely disorderly, and the theater curtain is closed.

Chorus
 Long live Piso! Nero must die!

Nero
 Cursed insolence!

Ormoëna
 Cursed rage!

Lepidus
 Damned hooligans!

Scene Four.
The theater changes into an alleyway leading to the Esquilino.

Piso with a crowd of soldiers, who continually cry:

Chorus
 Nero must die! Long live Piso!

Piso
 The palace is already taken,
 the bloody tyrant flees.
 Up, up and let us continue the victory
 until I am placed upon the throne.

Chorus

Nero sterbe, Piso lebe!

Fabius gleichfalls mit einem Troup

Verräther, bistu hier?

Heist diß den Käyser treu gedient,

Soll man also die Majestät verletzen,

Und die gemeine Ruh gar aus den Augen setzen?

Piso

Verwegner, redstu so mit mir?

Weistu nicht, daß allhie der Sieges=Lorbeer grünt?

Fabius

Und bistu tüchtig ...

Piso

Schweig, und gib dich gefangen!

Fabius

Getreue, auf, last uns den Sieg erlangen!

(Nach einem kleinen Scharmützel wird Piso gefangen, und sein Volck verjagt.)

Piso

Ach Unglück! Fabius, ein Wort!

Fabius

Bringt den Rebellen fort!

Piso

Ein Wort! Ein Wort!

Fabius

Auführer, geh' fort leget ihn an Ketten!

Piso

Der Himmel mag das arme Rom erretten!

Fünffter Auftritt.

Fabius. Livia.

Fabius

Offt lasset sich auf Mavors Auen

Auch eine schöne Venus schauen.

Aria. Livia.

So manchesmahl

Forscht meiner Augen trüber Strahl,

Wo mein geliebter Engel lebt!

Kan ich ihn nicht finden,

Muß ich im Herten nach ihm gründen,

Da er doch auf der Zunge schwebt.

So manchesmahl, &c.

Chorus

Nero must die! Long live Piso!

Fabius *(also with a troop of soldiers)*

Traitors! Are you here?

Is this the way you give faithful service to the Emperor?

Should we now do violence to majesty

and lose the general peace for good?

Piso

Foolhardy wretch, you dare to speak to me like that?

Did you not know that right here the victory laurel is in full bloom?

Fabius

And are you able...

Piso

Silence, give yourself up as captive.

Fabius

All you faithful, come on, let us be victorious!

(After a short battle Piso is taken captive, and his men dispersed.)

Piso

Ah misfortune! Fabius, let me have a word!

Fabius

Take the rebel away!

Piso

A word! A word!

Fabius

Rebel, begone! Put him in irons!

Piso

May heaven save poor Rome!

Scene Five.

Fabius, Livia.

Fabius

Often in the meadows of Mars,

a lovely Venus appears.

Aria. Livia.

Sometimes

My sad eyes seek to find

Where my beloved angel lives.

If I can't find him,

I must look for him in my heart—

For he is always on the tip of my tongue.

Sometimes...

Fabius

Hör' ich denn nun, daß dein Gemüht
Von treuer Gegen=Liebe glüht?

Livia

Ach laß mich von dir ziehn!

Fabius

Du wirst umbsonst entfliehn,
Und flöhestu biß an des Himmels Dach,
So folgt' ich dir gewißlich nach.

Livia

So wolte Fabius mich wol begleiten?

Fabius

Stets soll mein Fuß nach deinen schreiten,
Ergib dich mir, mein werthes Leben,

Livia

Ich will den Käyser fragen.

Fabius

Weil Piso itzt von mir geschlagen,
Wird er schon Ja zu meiner Liebe sagen.

Sechster Auftritt.

Seneca. Octavia.

Seneca

Ich kenne sein Gemüht, es geht gantz sicher an,
Er hat mir ohne dem von dir erzehlt,
Daß du ihn jüngst in einen Traum gequält,
Und daß ihn dein Gespenst geführt in dunckle Schatten.

Octavia

Wenn ich ihn nur dadurch bewegen kan.
Was soll ich ihm dann für Bericht erstatten?

Seneca

Halt' ihm nur seine Wuht nachdrücklich für,
Schröck ihn mit Hölle, Todt und Grab,
Und bild' ihm deine Treu wehmühtig ab.

Octavia

Mein Freund, ich dancke dir,
Und folge deinen Raht.

Seneca

Die Götter segnen deine That!

Siebender Auftritt.

Ein ödes Feld mit einer elenden Stroh=Hütte, wobey eine
Wasser=Grube. In der Ferne ein Dorff.
Nero flüchtig und masquiert, von Sporus begleitet.

Fabius

Do I now hear that your heart
now glows with love in return for mine?

Livia

Ah, let me get away from you!

Fabius

You try to fly from me in vain,
for even if you would flee to the highest heaven,
I would surely follow you there!

Livia

So, Fabius wants to accompany me?

Fabius

My foot will always follow yours.
Give yourself to me, my dearest life!

Livia

I will ask the Emperor.

Fabius

Now that I have conquered Piso,
he will surely say "Yes" to my love.

Scene Six.

Seneca, Octavia.

Seneca

I know his mind, it certainly concerns him.
Besides that, he told me that recently,
in a dream, you menaced him
and your ghost led him into a dark place.

Octavia

If only I could move him like that!
What should I tell him then?

Seneca

Show him emphatically the results of his fury,
scare him with visions of hell, death, and the grave,
and also show him your faithfulness in moving sorrow.

Octavia

My friend, I thank you,
I'll follow your advice.

Seneca

May the gods bless your actions!

Scene Seven.

A drab field with a miserable straw hut and a water
hole. In the distance a village. Nero masked and fugitive,
accompanied by Sporus.

Accompagnato. Nero.

*Ach Nero ist nicht Nero mehr!
Armseelger Fürst, Nein, nein, armseelger Knecht!
Wo bleibet deine Würd' und Ehr?
Verschwunden.
Verschwunden, leyder, ach, durch ungerechte Wunden!
O weh! was rüget sich in mir?
Ach zeigt sich Agrippina hier?
Antonia! zurück Antonia!
Ach Burrus! Ach Crispin!
Ach Aulus! Tuscus, ach! Ach Mutter Agrippin!
(Er steht in Gedancken.)*

*Wie? sind die Hencker nicht schon da,
Verlassner Nero, dich zu fangen?
Ach ja! Ach ja! Was hab ich doch begangen!
Was hab ich doch vollbracht!
Vollbracht, und nie bedacht!
Wer kömmt? Was ist es, das ich hör?
Ach Nero ist nicht Nero mehr!
(Er steht wieder in Gedancken.)*

*Betrübte Seele, schmachtestu?
Ihr trockne Leffzen dürret ihr,
Die Stimme wird mir rauch, die Zunge spaltet sich,
Ach einen Trunck! Mich dürst,
Ist kein Gefäß mit Weine hier?
Mich dürst, und niemand träncket mich?
Schöpf Wasser, unglückseelger Fürst!
(Er schöpft mit der Hand Wasser aus einer Pfütze.)*

*Schaut, schaut, wie der bey einer Pfütze liegt,
Den oftmahls nicht der beste Wein vergnügt.
(Seneca kömmt und bleibt in der Ferne stehen.)*

*Reicht niemand nun ein Handtuch dar,
Zu trocknen eines Käysers Hände,
Da meiner Knaben zartes Haar
Mir sonst hiezu gedient? Ist diß der Wollust Ende?*

Aria. Nero.

*Erstaune, sichrer Kräyß der Welt!
Ihr Reich=Beherrscher, sehet, sehet,
Wie hier ein grosser Käyser fällt,
Wie Nero blutig untergehet!*

Nero

*Es regt sich was,
Ihr Ohren horcht, was ists? Ein Blat von einem Baum,
Ein Eschen=Laub rührt sich von ohngefehr,
Ich bin nur noch als wie in einem Traum.*

Accompagnato. Nero.

Mein Auge starrt, der Mund wird blaß,

Accompagnato. Nero.

*Alas! Nero is no longer Nero!
Miserable Prince! No, no, miserable servant!
Where are your worthiness and honor now?
Gone.
Gone, regrettably, alas, through unjust wounds inflicted.
O misery! How do I reprimand myself?
Alas, now Agrippina appears to me!
And Antonia! Go back, Antonia!
Ah Burrus! Ah Crispin!
Ah Aulus and Tuscus! Alas, mother Agrippina!
(He stands still in thought.)*

*What? Are the executioners already come for me,
poor abandoned Nero?
Yes, yes, what have I done!
What have I caused to happen!
Caused without a thought!
Who is coming? What is it that I hear?
Alas! Nero is no longer Nero!
(He stands still again in thought.)*

*Sad soul, do you languish now?
You lips, are you dried out?
My voice becomes raw, my tongue splits,
alas, give me a drink, I'm thirsty!
Is there no bottle with wine here?
I'm thirsty, and no one gives me anything to drink?
Scoop water, miserable Prince!
(He scoops water with his hands out of a puddle.)*

*Look, look how he now lies by a puddle,
who so often was not pleased even by the best of wines.
(Seneca enters but remains standing in the distance.)*

*Is there no one to give a towel
to dry an Emperor's hands—
a service which used to be given me in the tender hair
of my servant boys? Is this the end of all pleasure?*

Aria. Nero.

*Be astounded great circle of the world
And all you kings of the earth, see, see
How a great Emperor is fallen,
How Nero, bloodied, is destroyed.*

Nero

*Something is moving there:
you ears, listen, what is it? A leaf from a tree,
an ash tree moves somewhere,
I feel as if I'm in a dream.*

Accompagnato. Nero.

My eye stares, my mouth turns pale,

*Das Hertze pocht, die Adern beben mir,
Was zeigen sich vor Hencker hier?
Wer bin ich? Nero ach, du bist nicht Nero mehr.*

Er entschlüfft auf einem Stein unter einer stillen Music,
worauf Octavia in Gestalt eines Geistes erscheint.

Achter Auftritt.

Nero schlaffend. Seneca und Octavia.

Seneca

*So blutet das Gewissen,
Also muß man die Sünde büßen.*

Aria. Seneca.

*Wer mit Vorsatz hat gefehlet,
Wird gequähet
Durch der Reue Seelen=Pein.
Deiner Boßheit Angedencken
Wird dich kräncken,
Und dein eigner Hencker seyn.*

Seneca

*Er schläfft, du kanst nur zu ihm gehn,
Ich bleibe in der Ferne steht.*

Octavia

*Die Rache bricht die Riegel meiner Grufft,
Und ruffet mich aus meiner duncklen Höle.
Schau, Blut=Fürst, diesen Schatten an,
Ein irrendes Gespenst, das nicht mehr ruhen kan,
Schau einen Dufft und Nebel meiner Seele,
Der über dich ein lahmes Zetter ruft!
Du Hencker, du Tyran,
Was hatt' ich Arme dir gethan,
Daß du mein treues Blut vergossen,
Für alle Lieb und Gunst, die du von mir genossen?*

Aria. Octavia.

*Angenehmste Augen=Sonne,
Öffnet euch, und schauet an,
Wie mit Lust
Diese Brust
Euer Trost will wieder werden,
Angenehmste Augen=Sonnen,
Öffnet euch, und schaut mich an!*

(Nero erwacht.)

Octavia

*(Er wachet schon.)
Ersättige den Mord=Durst deiner Wuht
In diesem schon entseelten Blut,
Schau meiner Wunden Purpur=Farben,
Schau, wie ihr Scharlach triumphir,*

*my heart throbs, and my veins tremble!
Why are all these hangmen here?
Who am I? Nero, alas, Nero is no longer Nero!*

*He falls asleep on a stone while a quiet music plays;
Octavia in the form of a ghost appears.*

Scene Eight.

Nero sleeping, Seneca and Octavia.

Seneca

*Thus the conscience bleeds—
thus must one pay for one's sins.*

Aria. Seneca.

*He who has bad intentions,
Shall be tormented
With the regretful anguish of his soul.
The souvenirs of your wickedness
Will wound you
And become your own executioners.*

Seneca

*He sleeps, you can go to him,
I will remain here in the distance.*

Octavia

*Rage has broken open the bars of my crypt,
and calls me forth from my dark cave.
Look, bloody tyrant, at this my shadow,
a wandering ghost that can find no rest!
Look at the haze and fog which my soul has become,
and which makes a crippled outcry about you!
You Hangman! you Tyrant!
what did I—poor me—ever do to you,
that you should spill my innocent blood,
after all the love and favor which you enjoyed from me?*

Aria. Octavia.

*Most delightful sunny eyes,
Open and see
How much I desire
That this breast
Once again becomes your comfort.
Most delightful sunny eyes,
Open up and look at me!*

(Nero awakens)

Octavia

*(He awakens.)
Quench the murder-thirst of your rage
on this lifeless blood!
Look at the purple color of my wounds,
and see how your scarlet triumphs!*

Er bildet dir
 Ein Brand=Mahl der Gewissens=Narben.
 Sprich, Sprich,
 Rechtfertige dich,
 Wird deine Zunge nun zum Steine,
 Erzittert nun dein pochendes Gewissen
 Für dieses schlotternde Gebeine?
 Was schweigst du still,
 Du lallest, sprechen kanst du nicht,
 Ein Schröcken bindet deine Rede,
 Und Todes=Angst macht deine Sprache blöde.
 Dein Auge, das mich gern betrachten will,
 Schließt für Entsetzen alles Licht,
 Wird deinem Herzen nun erst bange,
 Erhebe nur dein schamroth Angesicht,
 Du Scheusahl auf, was schlummerst du so lange?
 Du Mord=Kind, du Verräther,
 Du Ungeheur, du Ubelthäter!
 (Octavia und Seneca verbergen sich.)

Neunter Auftritt.
 Nero allein.

Accompagnato. Nero.
 Halt, halt erzürnter Geist, laß schauen deine Wunden,
 Bistu schon wiederum verschwunden?
 Verzögere doch, ich eile nach!
 (Er steht wiederum tieffsinnig.)

Ach! Ach bist du nicht mehr da,
 Getreues Ehgemahl, Octavia!

Aria. Nero.
 Blasser Schatten, kehre wieder,
 Bleiche Lippen, öffne dich.
 Schaut, erstarrte Augenlieder,
 Aus dem seel'gen Todten=Reich!
 Komm, ach komm, erblaste Schöne,
 Daß ich mich mit dir versöhne!

Nero
 Mit Zittern und mit Zagen
 Muß ich beklagen,
 Entseelter Geist, wie sehr ich dich verletzt,
 Da ich unkeusches Feuer vor reine Glut gesetzt.
 Und weil mich alle Welt anitzt verlassen,
 So muß ich andern Anschlag fassen,
 (Er zieht zwei Dolche hervor.)
 Die Richter kommen schon, mein blutiges Verbrechen
 Durch Staupenschlag und Schwert zu rächen,
 Allein ich komm euch vor, und ende meine Noth
 Durch einen schnellen Todt.

Aria. Nero.
 Mit Trauren,
 Mit Schauern,

It marks
 the scars of your conscience.
 Speak! Speak!
 Justify yourself!
 Has your tongue turned to stone?
 Is your throbbing conscience now trembling
 on your shivering legs?
 What, still silent?
 You are just slurring, you can't speak properly.
 The shock prevents you from speaking,
 and the fear of death has rendered you deaf and dumb.
 Your eyes, that want to see me,
 close themselves in horror.
 Is your heart now afraid for the first time?
 Open your eyes, all red with shame—
 you monster, why do you go on sleeping?
 Murderer! Betrayer!
 Monster! Criminal!
 (Octavia and Seneca hide themselves.)

Scene Nine.
 Nero alone.

Accompagnato. Nero.
 Stop, stop angry ghost! Let me see your wounds!
 Are you already gone again?
 Wait a bit, I'm running after you.
 (He stands again deep in thought)

Alas! Are you no longer there,
 faithful wife, Octavia?

Aria. Nero.
 Pale shadow, come back!
 Pale lips, open again!
 Look again you frozen eyes,
 From the realm of the dead!
 Come, ah come back, pallid beauty,
 So that I can make it up to you!

Nero
 With trembling and apprehension
 I must lament,
 departed shade, how much I hurt you,
 because I put an unchaste lust before the pure flame of our
 love. And now that the whole world has abandoned me,
 I must now find a new way forward.
 (He brandishes two daggers.)
 The judges are already arriving to punish my bloody crimes
 with whips and swords.
 And yet, I will get there sooner, and end all my suffering
 with a quick death.

Aria. Nero.
 With mourning
 And shuddering,

Mit Quälen
Der Seelen,
Mit reuendem Sinn,
Mit Zittern,
Mit Wittern,
Mit Zagen
Und Klagen
Sinckt Nero dahin!

Nero
Doch wie! soll Nero furchtsam sterben?
Nein, gar nicht, Mord=Dolch weg! Verlass' ich gleich
(Er wirft die Dolche von sich.)
Ruhm, Kron und Reich,
Soll Nero doch so schimpflich nicht verderben.

Zehnter Auftritt.
Nero, Fabius mit einigen Soldaten.
(Auf Fabii Ankunfft verbirgt er sich in die Hütte.)

Fabius
Es ist ja seine Sprach, was ists, das ich erblick,
Den Käyser in der Bauren=Hütte?

Nero
Nun fängt man mich, ach, wo ist nun mein Degen?

Fabius
Ihr Himmel, ja, recht in der Mitte.

Nero
Soll Fabius mich noch an Ketten legen?

Fabius
Ach, wandelbahres Glück,
Nero. Käyser. Nero ... hörstu nicht?

Nero
Verzeiht, was ich begangen,
Wer ist der mir das Todes=Urtheil spricht?

Fabius
Was Urtheil, es ist ja die Unruh schon gedämpft,
Der Piso selbst gefangen.

Nero
Nicht Piso, Nero ach, ist leider, nun gefangen!

Fabius
Ich habe selbst mit ihm gekämpft,
Und unterm Capitol im Kercker hangesetzt,
Da wird er müssen
Die Unthat mit dem Strange büssen.

Nero
Kan ich dir glauben, Fabius?

With torture
Of the soul,
With a regret-filled heart,
With trembling
And apprehension,
With anxiety
And lamentation
Nero goes to his end.

Nero
But what? Shall Nero die in fear?
No, never! Murderous dagger, away!
(Throws the dagger away.)
[Even if I must give up] my reputation, my crown, and
my Empire, Nero will not die such a disgraceful death.

Scene Ten.
Nero, Fabius with some soldiers.
(At Fabius's arrival he hides himself in the hut.)

Fabius
It is his voice that I hear...but what's this I see,
the Emperor in a farmer's hut?

Nero
Now I am captured! Ah, where is my dagger now?

Fabius
Heavens, yes, right there in the middle!

Nero
Will Fabius now put me in chains?

Fabius
Ah, changeable fortune!
Nero! Caesar! Nero...do you not hear?

Nero
Forgive what I have done!
Who is the one who will condemn me to death?

Fabius
What condemnation? The rebellion has been put down,
and Piso himself is imprisoned.

Nero
Not Piso, Nero, alas! is now captured!

Fabius
I myself fought with him
and put him in jail beneath the capitol.
He now must pay
for his misdeeds at the end of a rope.

Nero
Can I believe you, Fabius?

Fabius

*Ich schwere dir bey aller Götter Macht,
Daß alles wahr, was ich dir vorgebracht!*

Nero

Mein wehrter Freund, nimm diesen Kuß!

Fabius

Allein, mein Käyser, höre mich.

Nero

Sprich frey, womit vergnüg' ich dich?

Fabius

Daß du mir Livia zur Ehe giebest,

Nero

*Und wenn sie meine Schwester wäre,
Geb' ich sie dir, ich weiß, daß du sie liebest,*

Fabius

So sieget bey mir Lieb' und Ehre.

Fabius und Nero à 2

*Die trübe Wolcke fliehet,
Wenn güldner Glantz umziehet
Olympus Sternen=Zelt.
Die Freude wird gebohren,
Wenn sich das Leid verlohren,
Das lauter Schatten hält.
(Da Capo)*

Eilffter Auftritt.

Der Schau=Platz verwandelt sich in das Argiletum mit dem Capitolio in der Ferne. An einer Seite siehet man ein Chavot, mit einem Beil und Richt=Block.
Tiridates, Ormœna, Clelia, Lepidus.

Tiridates und Ormœna à 2

Die Liebe wird den Fehler decken.

Tiridates

So ist Ormœna wieder mein?

Ormœna

Ormœna bleibt auf ewig dein!

Aria. Ormœna.

*Solo con te, ben mio,
Son' io.
Contento in amore,
Mio Tiridato sia
Alma del alma mia,
E cuore del mio cuore.
(Da Capo)*

Tiridates

Wo ist der Käyser, Lepidus?

Fabius

*I swear to you by the power of all the gods,
that what I have told you is all true.*

Nero

My worthy friend, receive this kiss!

Fabius

But first, Caesar, hear me.

Nero

Speak freely, how can I please you?

Fabius

You could give me Livia as my bride.

Nero

*Even if she were my sister,
I would give her to you; I know that you love her.*

Fabius

So now, in me, both love and honor win!

Duet. Fabius and Nero.

*The sad clouds disperse,
When golden sunshine covers
Mount Olympus's starry heaven.
Joy is born
When sorrow goes away
Which contained so many shadows.
The sad clouds...*

Scene Eleven.

*The theater changes into a spa with the Capitoline Hill in the distance. On one side one can see a scaffold, with an executioner's axe and an execution block.
Tiridates, Ormœna, Clelia, Lepidus.*

Tiridates and Ormœna

Love will hide the mistake.

Tiridates

Is Ormœna mine again?

Ormœna

Ormœna is forever yours!

Aria. Ormœna.

*Only with you, my treasure
Do I find
Contentment in love.
My beloved Tiridat is
The soul of my soul,
And the heart of my heart.
Only with you...*

Tiridates

Where is Caesar, Lepidus?

Lepidus

*Der tapfre Fabius
Hat ihm schon den Bericht gebracht,
Daß dem Tumult das Ende sey gemacht.*

Clelia

*Man saget, daß im Orden
Des hohen Rahts beschlossen worden,
Daß Piso wegen der gebrochenen Treu
Zum Tode zu verdammen sey.*

Lepidus

*Man wird das Urtheil noch verschieben,
Biß es der Käyser unterschrieben.*

Tiridates

Ich zweifle, weil der Richt=Block schon gesetzt.

Ormœna zu Tiridates

*Wir wollen uns bemüß,
Der Hafft ihn wieder zu entziehn.*

Zwölffter Auftritt.

Clelia, Lepidus.

Aria. Lepidus

*Ist es war, mein Leben,
Daß du nicht mehr so erbost,
Und zu meinem Trost
Etwas nachgegeben?
Was sagestu?*

Clelia

Nein, nein.

Lepidus

*Allein
Ist es war, mein Leben!*

Clelia

(Nun Tiridates fort, ist alle Hoffnung hin.)

Lepidus

*Ach sprich ein süßes Ja,
Und ändre doch den Felsen=harten Sinn.*

Clelia

(Ich spühre, daß ich ihm nicht ungewogen bin.)

Lepidus

Was saget Clelia?

Clelia

Daß ich ...

Lepidus

*Brave Fabius
already brought him the news
that the rebellion has been ended.*

Clelia

*I've heard that in the Senate
they have already decided
that Piso must be put to death
for breaking his oath of loyalty.*

Lepidus

*They will need to delay the execution
until Caesar has signed it.*

Tiridates

*I doubt they will, since the executioner's block has already
been put in place.*

Ormœna (to Tiridates)

*We should make an effort
to get him out of detention.*

Scene Twelve.

Clelia, Lepidus.

Aria. Lepidus

*Is it true, my love,
That you are no longer mad at me?
And to my great consolation
You have relented?
What do you say?*

Clelia

No, no, no, no!

Lepidus

*But is it true,
my love, is it true?*

Clelia

(Now that Tiridates is lost to me, all my hope is gone.)

Lepidus

*Ah, say a sweet "yes",
and change your hard heart!*

Clelia

(I feel that I'm not unfavorably inclined towards him.)

Lepidus

What does Clelia say?

Clelia

That I...

Lepidus
Ach rede!

Clelia
Was?

Lepidus
Was? Ja.

Clelia
Ich bin ...

Lepidus
Was bistu denn?

Clelia
*Ach Lepidus, ich bin besieget,
Dieß Hertz ist dein.*

Lepidus
Nimm meines wieder hin.

Lepidus und Clelia à 2
Nunmehr bin ich vergnüget.

Aria. Clelia.
*Schönste Seele, dich zu lieben,
Bleibet dieses Hertze rein.
Es ist dein,
Schau hinein,
Wie die Liebe selbst geschrieben,
Schönste Seele dich zu lieben!*

Dreyzehnter Auftritt.
Seneca, Fabius.

Seneca
Schon auf dem Capitol?

Fabius
Ja, ja, den Göttern Danck zu sagen.

Seneca
*Gehts meinem Käyser wol?
Ihr Götter seyd gepriesen,
Daß ihr ihm Heil und Glück erwiesen!*

Fabius
*Hier sieht man Block und Beil
Das den Rebellen wird zu theil.*

Vierzehnter Auftritt.
*Vorige. Nero kömmt vom Capitolio in voriger Pracht,
begleitet von Tiridates, Ormœna, Livia, Clelia, Lepidus,
Davus, Sporus, nebst verschiedenen anderen Cavalliers,*

Lepidus
Ah, please speak!

Clelia
What?

Lepidus
What? Yes!

Clelia
I am...

Lepidus
What are you then?

Clelia
*Ah Lepidus, I am conquered,
this heart is yours.*

Lepidus
Take mine for yourself.

Lepidus and Clelia
Now I am happy!

Aria. Clelia.
*Most beautiful soul, in loving you,
My heart remains pure.
It is yours,
Look into it,
As love himself wrote it,
Most beautiful soul, I love you.*

Scene Thirteen.
Seneca, Fabius.

Seneca
We are at the Capitol already?

Fabius
Yes, yes, to give thanks to the gods.

Seneca
*Is my Caesar doing well?
You gods be praised,
that you have preserved him in health and happiness!*

Fabius
*Here I see the axe and the block
which will be the fate of the rebels.*

Scene Fourteen.
*Adding to the former: Nero comes from the Capitoline
Hill in full splendor, accompanied by Tiridates, Ormœna,
Livia, Clelia, Lepidus, Davus, Sporus, with various other*

Dames und vielen Soldaten. Die Wache bringt Piso und andere Gefangene an Ketten geschlossen.

Aria. Nero.

*Chi non sà della fortuna
Ritrovar la sorte instabile,
La ricerchi nel mio sen.
Quante frodi in sè raduna,
Come passa, e quanto è labile,
Come fugge in un balen!*

Nero

*Auführer, fort, bereite dich,
Daß deine Boßheit mit dem Tode büsse!
Gleich legt das Haupt ihm vor die Füße,
Die andern streicht mit Ruhten.*

Davus

*Hier hat man Ruhten, Strang und Beil
Vor alle Friedens=Stöhrer feil.*

Piso

*Nicht dein Befehl mein Unglück ruffet mich,
Dem und nicht dir soll dieser Nacken bluten.*

Nero

*Du bist darum allein des Todes wehrt,
Weil du, wie wir gehört,
Den Tod Octaviens nicht hast gehemmt,
Der Tod, der Tod ... Ach ...
Der diß Hertz beklemmt! (Er steht gantz betrübt.)*

Seneca

*Mein Käyser, ach vergib, was Piso hat verbrochen, (kniend)
Durch seine Sorgfalt ist Octavia erhalten,
Und sie war selbst der Geist, der dich erschreckt.*

Nero

*So ist Octavia bey Leben noch geblieben?
Piso!*

Piso

*Ich hielte ihre Faust zurück,
Da gleich der Dolch ihr Hertze sollte spalten,
Diß Kleinod unser Zeit zu retten.*

Nero

*O Glück!
Ihr Knechte, löset ihm die Ketten,
Geh, werther, hol sie her! (Piso geht ab.)*

Livia

*Vergönnet Eure Majestät,
Daß ich in Lieb und Treu mit Fabius zu leben,
Ihm mag die Hände geben?*

ladies and gentlemen and many soldiers. The guard brings Piso and the other prisoners, all in chains.

Aria. Nero.

*Whoever knows not how to find
an unstable fate from Fortune,
should seek it in my breast:
so many deceptions are gathered there!
How it slips away, and how fleeting it is,
it is gone in a flash of lightning!*

Nero

*Rebel, come forward, prepare yourself
to pay for your malice with your death!
Soon your head will lay at the foot of him
whom others tried to strike at with a rod.*

Davus

*Here we have for every disturber of the peace
an axe, a noose, or a rod!*

Piso

*Not because of your command, but by virtue of my own
misfortune am I called forth. It is for that, and not for
you that my neck will bleed.*

Nero

*You are worthy of death for the simple reason
that you, as we have heard,
did nothing to prevent the death of Octavia,
the death...the death...alas,
that oppresses this heart. (He stands overcome with grief.)*

Seneca

*My Caesar, ah, forgive Piso his misdeeds: (he kneels)
Through his care Octavia has survived,
and it was she herself who haunted you as a ghost.*

Nero

*So is Octavia still alive,
Piso?*

Piso

*I restrained her hand,
and with it the dagger that should have pierced her heart,
and thus saved this jewel of our time.*

Nero

*O good fortune!
You servants, unchain him.
Go, my worthy, and bring her here. (Piso leaves.)*

Livia

*Will you grant, your majesty,
that I in love and faith can live with Fabius,
and give him my hand in marriage?*

Nero

Noch etwas mehr,
Gebt mit den Händen euch die Hertenzen.
(Er legt ihnen die Hände in einander.)

Lepidus

Und weil bey mir und Clelien
Die reine Loh gewünschter Liebes=Kertzen
In voller Klarheit ist zu sehn,
So wollen gleichfalls wir umbs Käysers
Beyfall bitten.

Davus

(Die wollen conjugatim geht.)

Nero

Die Götter wollen euch mit Segen überschütten!

Davus

(Das ist woll der Effect
Der in gedachtem Loco steckt.)
(Piso führt die Octavia herzu, Nero eilt ihr entgegen und
umbarmet sie.)

Nero

Geliebter Schatz, getreues Ehgemahl,
Vergib, daß du von uns beleidigt bist,
Dem Himmel sey gedanckt, daß du annoch bey Leben.

Octavia

Ein Weib, das edelmühtig ist,
Hegt keine Rache im Gemühte,
Es preist vielmehr der Götter Gühte,
Die endlich nach so langer Trauer=Nacht,
In Rom die Ruh, bey uns die Gunst
hat wiederbracht.

Schluß=Aria

Chorus

In Spielen und Lachen
Kehrt Amor das Leid.

Octavia

Mit Schertzen
Und Hertenzen
Muß Hymen den Zunder der Freuden anfachen
Nach Traurigkeit.

Alle

In Spielen und Lachen
Kehrt Amor das Leid.

ENDE ■

Nero

Also something more:
Along with your hands, give each other your hearts.
(*He places their hands together.*)

Lepidus

And since, between me and Clelia,
the pure flame of our longed-for love candles
is clear to see,
we also hope for the permission and good wishes of the
Emperor.

Davus

(They want to go in *conjugatim*!)

Nero

May the gods pour out their blessings upon you.

Davus

(This is the effect
that is contained in the said “loco”.)
(*Piso brings Octavia in, Nero rushes to her and takes her in
his arms.*)

Nero

Beloved treasure, faithful wife,
please forgive my offenses to you!
Heaven be thanked that you are still alive.

Octavia

A wife who has a noble heart,
bears no grudge in her soul.
Instead it celebrates the bounty of the gods
which, finally after a long night of sorrow,
has brought peace back to Rome, and our favor back to
each other.

Finale

Chorus

Love turns all suffering
Into games and laughter.

Octavia

With jokes
And hearts,
Hymen lights the flame of joy,
After every sorrow.

Tutti

Love turns all suffering
Into games and laughter.

End of the Opera ■