
SEMELE

An opera.

Text by

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Music by

Georg Friedrich Händel

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Motivazioni per scrivere note di ringraziamento non mancano. Contributi e suggerimenti sono giunti da ogni dove, vien da dire «dagli Appennini alle Ande». Tutto questo aiuto mi ha dato e mi sta dando entusiasmo per continuare a migliorare e ampliare gli orizzonti di quest'impresa. Ringrazio quindi: chi mi ha dato consigli su grafica e impostazione del sito, chi ha svolto le operazioni di aggiornamento sul portale, tutti coloro che mettono a disposizione testi e materiali che riguardano la lirica, chi ha donato tempo, chi mi ha prestato hardware, chi mette a disposizione software di qualità a prezzi più che contenuti.

Infine ringrazio la mia famiglia, per il tempo rubatole e dedicato a questa attività.

I titoli vengono scelti in base a una serie di criteri: disponibilità del materiale, data della prima rappresentazione, autori di testi e musiche, importanza del testo nella storia della lirica, difficoltà di reperimento.

A questo punto viene ampliata la varietà del materiale, e la sua affidabilità, tramite acquisti, ricerche in biblioteca, su internet, donazione di materiali da parte di appassionati. Il materiale raccolto viene analizzato e messo a confronto: viene eseguita una trascrizione in formato elettronico.

Quindi viene eseguita una revisione del testo tramite rilettura, e con un sistema automatico di rilevazione sia delle anomalie strutturali, sia della validità dei lemmi.

Vengono integrati se disponibili i numeri musicali, e individuati i brani più significativi secondo la critica.

Viene quindi eseguita una conversione in formato stampabile, che state leggendo.

Grazie ancora.

Dario Zanotti

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DRAMATIS PERSONAE

JUPITER TENOR

CADMUS king of Thebes BASS

ATHAMAS a prince of Bœotia, in love with
and design'd to marry CONTRALTO

SEMELE daughter to Cadmus, beloved by and
in love with Jupiter SOPRANO

SOMNUS BASS

APOLLO TENOR

CUPID OTHER

JUNO CONTRALTO

IRIS SOPRANO

INO sister to Semele, in love with Athamas CONTRALTO

CHIEF PRIEST of Juno BASS

Zephyrs, Loves, Shepherds, Satyrs, Shepherdesses, Priests, Augurs.

Bœotia.

Argument

After Jupiter's amour with Europa, the daughter of Agenor, king of Phaenicia, he again incenses Juno by a new affair in the same family; viz. with Semele, niece to Europa, and daughter to Cadmus king of Thebes. Semele is on the point of marriage with Athamas; which marriage is about to be solemniz'd in the temple of Juno, goddess of marriages, when Jupiter by ill omens interrupts the ceremony; and afterwards transports Semele to a private abode prepar'd for her. Juno, after many contrivances, at length assumes the shape and voice of Ino, sister to Semele; by the help of which disguise and artful insinuations, she prevails with her to make a request to Jupiter, which being granted must end in her utter ruin.

This fable is related in Ovid *Metam.* L. 3 but there Juno is said to impose on Semele in the shape of an old woman, her nurse. 'Tis hoped, the liberty taken in substituting Ino instead of the old woman will be excus'd: it was done, because Ino is interwoven in the design by her love of Athamas; to whom she was married, according to Ovid; and because her character bears a proportion with the dignity of the other persons represented. This reason, it is presumed, may be allowed in a thing intirely fictitious; and more especially being represented under the title of an opera, where greater absurdities are every day excused.

It was not thought requisite to haue any regard either in rhyme or equality of measure, in the lines of that part of the dialogue which was design'd for the recitative stile in musick. For as that stile in musick is not confin'd to the strict observation of time and measure, which is requir'd in the composition of airs and sonata's, so neither is it necessary that the same exactness in numbers, rhymes, or measure, should be observed in the formation of odes and sonnets. For what they call recitative in musick, is only a more tuneable speaking, it is a kind of prose in musick; its beauty consists in coming near nature, and in improving the natural accents of words by more pathetick or emphatical tones.

FIRST ACT

*A Natura discedimus: populo nos damus, nullius rei bono auctori, et in hac re, sicut in omnibus, inconstantissimo.
Seneca. Ep. 99.*

[Ouverture - Gavotte]

Scene 1

The scene is the temple of Juno, near the altar is a golden image of the goddess. Priests are in their solemnities, as after a sacrifice newly offer'd: flames arise from the altar, and the statue of Juno is seen to bow.

Cadmus, Athamas, Semele, Ino and Chorus of priests.

[N. 1 - Accompagnato]

1ST PRIEST Behold! auspicious flashes rise;
Juno accepts our sacrifice;
the grateful odour swift ascends,
and see, the golden image bends.

[N. 2 - Chorus of Priests]

1ST PRIEST AND 2ND PRIEST

Lucky omens bless our rites,
and sure success shall crown your loves;
peaceful days and fruitfull nights
attend the pair that she approves.

[N. 3 - Recitative, arioso and duet]

CADMUS Daughter, obey,
hear, and obey.
With kind consenting
ease a parent's care;
invent no new delay.

ATHAMAS O hear a faithful lover's pray'r;
on this auspicious day
invent no new delay.

CADMUS AND ATHAMAS

Hear, and obey;
invent no new delay
on this auspicious day.

[N. 4 - Accompagnato]

SEMELE

(apart)

Ah me!
What refuge now is left me?
How various, how tormenting,
are my miseries!
O Jove assist me,
can Semele forgo thy love,
and to a mortal's passion yield?
Thy vengeance will o'ertake such perfidy.
If I deny, my father's wrath I fear.

[N. 5 - Air]

O Jove, in pity teach me which to chuse,
incline me to comply, or help me to refuse.
Teach me which to chuse,
or help me to refuse!

[N. 6 - Air]

The morning lark to mine accords his note,
and tunes to my distress his warbling throat.
Each setting and each rising sun I mourn,
wailing alike his absence and return.

(da capo)

[N. 7 - Recitative]

ATHAMAS See, she blushing turns her eyes:
see, with sighs her bosom panting:
if from love those sighs arise,
nothing to my bliss is wanting.

[N. 8 - Air]

Hymen haste, thy torch prepare,
love already his has lighted,
one soft sigh has cur'd despair,
and more than my past pains requited.

(da capo)

[N. 9 - Recitative]

INO Alas! she yields,
and has undone me:
I can no longer hide my passion;
it must have vent. ~
Or inward burning
ill consume me.
O Athamas ~
I cannot utter it. ~

ATHAMAS On me fair Ino calls
with mournful accent,
her colour fading,
and her eyes o'erflowing!

INO O Semele!

SEMELE On me she calls,
yet seems to shun me!
What would my sister?
Speak. ~

INO Thou hast undone me.

[N. 10 - Quartet]

CADMUS Why dost thou thus untimely grieve,
and all our solemn rites prophane?
Can he, or she, thy woes relieve?
Or I? Of whom dost thou complain?

INO Of all; but all, I fear, in vain.

ATHAMAS Can I thy woes relieve?

SEMELE Can I assuage thy pain?

CADMUS, ATHAMAS, Of whom dost thou complain?

SEMELE

INO Of all; but all, I fear, in vain.

It lightens, and thunder is heard at a distance; then, a noise of rain; the fire is suddenly extingush'd on the altar: the Chief Priest comes forward.

[N. 11 - Chorus of Priests]

CHORUS OF PRIESTS

Avert these omens, all ye pow'rs!
Some god averse our holy rites controlls,
o'erwhelming with sudden night, the day expires!
Ill-boding thunder on the right hand rolls,
and Jove himself descends in show'rs,
to quench our late propitious fires.

Flames are again kindled on the altar, and the statue nods.

[N. 12 - Accompagnato]

2ND PRIEST Again auspicious flashes rise,
Juno accepts our sacrifice.

Flames are again kindled on the altar, and the statue nods.

3RD PRIEST Again the sickly flame decaying dies:
Juno assents, but angry Jove denies.

The fire is again extinguish'd.

[N. 13 - Recitative]

ATHAMAS (apart)
Thy aid, pronubial Juno, Athamas implores.

SEMELE (apart)
Thee Jove, and thee alone, Semele adores.

A loud clap of thunder; the altar sinks.

[N. 14 - Chorus of Priests]

CHORUS OF PRIESTS

Cease, cease your vows, 'tis impious to proceed;
be gone, and fly this holy place with speed:
this dreadful conflict is of dire presage;
be gone, and fly from Jove's impending rage.

All but the priests come forward. The scene closes on the priests, and shews to view the front and outside of the temple. Cadmus leads off Semele, attendants follow. Athamas and Ino remain.

Scene 2

Athamas and Ino.

[N. 15 - Recitative]

ATHAMAS O Athamas, what torture hast thou born!
And o, what hast thou yet to bear!
From love, from hope, from near possession torn,
and plung'd at once in deep despair.

[N. 16 - Air]

INO

Turn, hopeless lover, turn thy eyes,
and see a maid bemoan,
in flowing tears and aking sighs,
thy woes, too like her own.

[N. 17 - Recitative]

ATHAMAS She weeps!
The gentle maid, in tender pity,
weeps to behold my misery!
So Semele wou'd melt
to see another mourn.

[N. 18 - Air]

Your tuneful voice my tale would tell,
in pity of my sad despair;
and with sweet melody compel
attention from the flying fair.

(da capo)

[N. 19 - Recitative]

INO Too well I see
thou wilt not understand me.
Whence cou'd proceed such tenderness?
Whence such compassion?
Insensible! Ingrate!
Ah no, I cannot blame thee:
for by effects unknown before
who cou'd the hidden cause explore?
Or think that love cou'd act so strange a part,
to plead for pity in a rival's heart.

ATHAMAS Ah me, what have I heard!
She does her passion own.

INO What, had I not despair'd,
you never shou'd have known.

[N. 20 - Duet]

You've undone me;
look not on me;
guilt upbraiding,
shame invading;
look not on me;
you've undone me.

ATHAMAS With my life I wou'd atone
pains you've borne,
to me unknown.
Cease, cease to shun me.

INO You've undone me,
look not on me.

ATHAMAS Cease, cease to shun me:
love, love alone
has both undone.

INO, ATHAMAS Love, love alone
has both undone.

Scene 3

To them enter Cadmus attended.

[N. 21 - Recitative]

CADMUS Ah, wretched prince, doom'd to disastrous love!
Ah me, of parents most forlorn!
Prepare, o Athamas, to prove
the sharpest pangs that e'er were born:
prepare with me our common loss to mourn.

ATHAMAS Can fate, or Semele invent
another, yet another punishment?

[N. 22 - Accompagnato]

CADMUS Wing'd with our fears, and pious haste,
from Juno's fane we fled;
scarce we the brazen gates had pass'd,
when Semele around her head
with azure flames was grac'd,
whose lambent glories in her tresses play'd.
While this we saw with dread surprize,
swifter than lightning downwards tending
an eagle stoopt, of mighty size,
on purple wings descending;
like gold his beak, like stars shone forth his eyes,
his silver plummy breast with snow contending:
sudden he snatch'd the trembling maid,
and soaring from our sight convey'd;
diffusing ever as he lessening flew
celestial odour, and ambrosial dew.

[N. 23 - Recitative]

ATHAMAS O prodigy, to me of dire portent!

INO To me, I hope, of fortunate event.

Scene 4

Enter to them the Chief Priest, with Augurs and other Priests.

[N. 24 - Recitative]

CADMUS See, see Jove's priests and holy augurs come:
speak, speak, of Semele and me declare the doom.

[N. 25 - Chorus of Priests and Augurs]

CHORUS OF PRIESTS AND AUGURS

Hail Cadmus, hail!
Jove salutes the Theban king.
Cease your mourning,
joys returning,
songs of mirth and triumph sing.
Hail Cadmus, hail!

[N. 26 - Air and Chorus]

SEMELE

Endless pleasure, endless love
Semele enjoys above;
on her bosom Jove reclining,
useless now his thunder lies,
to her arms his bolts resigning,
and his lightning to her eyes.

CHORUS OF PRIESTS AND AUGURS

Endless pleasure, endless love
Semele enjoys above.

(Exeunt Omnes.)

SECOND ACT

[N. 27 - Symphony]

Scene 1

The scene is a pleasant country, the prospect is terminated by a beautiful mountain adorn'd with woods and water-falls. Juno and Iris descend in different machines. Juno in a chariot drawn by peacocks; Iris on a rainbow; they alight and meet.

[N. 28 - Recitative]

JUNO Iris, impatient of thy stay,
from Samos have I wing'd my way,
to meet thy slow return;
thou know'st what cares infest
my anxious breast,
and how with rage and jealousy i burn:
then why this long delay?

IRIS With all his speed not yet the sun
thro' half his race has run,
since I to execute thy dread command
have thrice encompass'd seas and land.

JUNO Say, where is Semele's abode?
'Till that I know,
tho' thou hadst on lightning rode,
still thou tedious art and slow.

IRIS Look where Citheron proudly stands,
Bœotia parting from Cecropian lands.
High on the summit of that hill,
beyond the reach of mortal eyes,
by Jove's command, and Vulcan's skill,
behold a new-erected palace rise.

[N. 29 - Air]

There from mortal cares retiring,
she resides in sweet retreat;
on her pleasure, Jove requiring,
all the Loves and Graces wait.

(da capo)

[N. 30 - Recitative]

JUNO No more ~ I'll hear no more!

IRIS Thither Flora the fair
with her train must repair,
her amorous Zephyr attending,
all her sweets she must bring
to continue the spring,
which never must there know an ending.
Bright Aurora, 'tis said,
from her old lover's bed
no more the grey orient adorning,
for the future must rise
from the fair Semele's eyes,
and wait 'till she wakes for the morning.

[N. 31 - Accompagnato]

JUNO Awake, Saturnia, from thy lethargy!
Seize, destroy the cursed Semele!
Scale proud Cithaeron's top,
snatch her, tear her in thy fury,
and down to the flood of Acheron
let her fall, let her fall, fall, fall,
rolling down the depths of night,
never more to behold the light.
If I th'imperial scepter sway, I swear by hell!
(Tremble, thou universe, this oath to hear!)
Not one of curst Agenor's race to spare.

[N. 32 - Recitative]

IRIS Hear, mighty queen, while I recount
what obstacles you must surmount.

[N. 33 - Accompagnato]

With adamant the gates are barr'd,
whose entrance two fierce dragons guard.
At each approach they lash their forked stings
and clap their brazen wings;
and as their scaly horrors rise,
they all at once disclose
a thousand fiery eyes
which never know repose.

[N. 34 - Air]

JUNO

Hence, Iris, hence away,
far from the realms of day!
O'er Scythian hills to the Maeotian lake
a speedy flight we'll take!
There Somnus I'll compel
his downy bed to leave, and silent cell;
with noise and light I will his peace molest,
nor shall he sink again to pleasing rest,
rill to my vow'd revenge he grants supplies,
and seals with sleep the wakeful dragons' eyes.

(da capo)

(Exeunt.)

Scene 2

The scene changes to an apartment in the palace of Semele; she is sleeping; Loves and Zephyrs waiting.

[N. 35 - Air]

CUPID

Come Zephyrs, come, while Cupid sings,
fan her with your silky wings;
new desire I'll inspire
and revive the dying flames;
dance around her,
while i wound her,
and with pleasure
fill her dreams.

(da capo)

A dance of Zephyrs, after which Semele awakes, and rises.

[N. 36 - Air]

SEMELE

O sleep, why dost thou leave me?
Why they visionary joys remove?
O sleep again deceive me,
to my arms restore my wand'ring love.

Scene 3

Two Loves lead in Jupiter. While he meets and embraces Semele, Cupid sings.

[N. 37 - Recitative]

CUPID Sleep forsaking,
seize him waking;
love has sought him,
back has brought him;
mighty Jove tho' he be,
and tho' love cannot see,
yet by feeling about
he has found him out,
and has caught him.

[N. 38 - Recitative]

SEMELE Let me not another moment
bear the pangs of absence.
Since you have form'd my soul for loving,
no more afflict me
with doubts and fears, and cruel jealousy.

[N. 39 - Air]

JUPITER

Lay your doubts and fears aside,
and for joys alone provide;
tho' this human form I wear,
think not i man's falshood bear.
(da capo)

[N. 40 - Recitative]

You are mortal, and require
time to rest and to respire.
Nor was I absent,
tho' a while withdrawn,
to take petitions
from the needy world.
While love was with thee I was present;
love and I are one.

[N. 41 - Air]

SEMELE

With fond desiring,
with bliss expiring,
panting,
fainting,
if this be love, not you alone,
but love and I are one.
Causeless doubting,
or despairing,
rashly trusting,
idly fearing,
if this be love, not you alone,
but love and I are one

(da capo)

[N. 42 - Air]

CHORUS OF LOVES AND ZEPHYRS

How engaging, how endearing,
is a lover's pain and care!
And what joy the nymph's appearing
after absence or despair!

(da capo)

[N. 43 - Recitative]

SEMELE Ah me!

JUPITER Why sighs my Semele?
What gentle sorrow
swells thy soft bosom?
Why tremble those fair eyes
with interrupted light?
Where hov'ring for a vent,
amidst their humid fires,
some new-form'd wish appears.
Speak, and obtain.

SEMELE At my own happiness
i sigh and tremble;
mortals whom gods affect
have narrow limits set to life,
and cannot long be bless'd.
Or if they could ~
a god may prove inconstant.

JUPITER (apart)
Too well I read her meaning,
but must not understand her:
aiming at immortality
with dangerous ambition.

[N. 44 - Air]

I must with speed amuse her
lest she too much explain.
It gives the lover double pain
who hears his nymph complain,
and hearing, must refuse her.

(da capo)

[N. 45 - Chorus of Loves and Zephyrs]

CHORUS OF LOVES
AND ZEPHYRS

Now love that everlasting boy invites
to revel while you may in soft delights.

[N. 46 - Recitative]

JUPITER By my command
now at this instant
two winged Zephyrs
from her downy bed
thy much lov'd Ino bear,
and both together
waft her hither,
through the balmy air.

SEMELE Shall I my sister see!
The dear companion
of my tender years.

JUPITER See, she appears,
but sees not me;
for I am visible
alone to thee.
While I retire, rise and meet her,
and with welcomes greet her.
Now all this scene shall to Arcadia turn,
the seat of happy nymphs and swains;
there without the rage of jealousy they burn,
and taste the sweets of love without its pains.

[N. 47 - Air]

Where'er you walk, cool gales shall fan the glade;
trees, where you sit, shall crowd into a shade.
Where'er you tread, the blushing flow'rs shall rise,
and all things flourish where'er you turn your eyes.

(da capo)

Scene 4

Jupiter retires. Semele and Ino meet and embrace. The scene is totally changed, and shews an open country. Chorus of Nymphs and Swains. Semele and Ino having entertain'd each other in dumb shew, sit and observe the rural sports, which end the second act.

[N. 48 - Recitative]

SEMELE Dear sister, how was your passage hither?

INO O'er many states and peopled towns we pass'd,
o'er hills and valleys, and o'er deserts waste;
o'er barren moors, and o'er unwholesome fens,
and woods where beasts inhabit dreadful dens.
Through all which pathless way our speed was such,
we stopp'd not once the face of earth to touch.
Meantime they told me, while through air we fled,
that Jove did thus ordain.

[N. 49 - Air]

But hark, the heav'nly sphere turns round,
and silence now is drown'd
in ecstasy of sound.
How on a sudden the still air is charm'd
as if all harmony were just alarm'd!
and ev'ry soul with transport fill'd,
aternately is thaw'd and chill'd.

[N. 50 - Duet]

SEMELE, INO

Prepare then, ye immortal choir,
each sacred minstrel tune his lyre,
and all in chorus join!

[N. 51 - Chorus of Nymphs and Swains]

CHORUS OF NYMPHS AND SWAINS

Bless the glad earth with heav'nly lays,
and to that pitch th'eternal accents raise,
that all appear divine!

THIRD ACT

[N. 52 - Symphony]

Scene 1

The scene is the cave of sleep. The god of sleep lying on his bed. A soft symphony is heard. Then the musick changes to a different movement.

[N. 53 - Accompagnato]

JUNO Somnus, awake,
raise thy reclining head.

IRIS Thyself forsake,
and lift up thy heavy lids of lead.

[N. 54 - Air]

SOMNUS
(waking)

Leave me, loathsome light;
receive me, silent night.
Lethe, why does thy lingering current cease?
O murmur, murmur me again to peace,
sinks down again.

[N. 55 - Recitative]

IRIS Dull god, can'st thou attend the waters fall,
and not hear saturnia call!

JUNO Peace, Iris, peace, I know how to charm him:
Pasishea's name alone can warm him.

JUNO, IRIS Only love on sleep has pow'r;
o'er gods and men
tho' Somnus reign,
love alternate has his hour.

JUNO Somnus, arise,
disclose thy tender eyes;
for Pasishea's sight
endure the light:
Somnus, arise.

[N. 56 - Air]

SOMNUS

(rising)

More sweet is that name
than a soft purling stream;
with pleasure repose I'll forsake,
if you'll grant me but her to sooth me awake.

[N. 57 - Recitative]

JUNO My will obey,
she shall be thine.
Thou, with thy softer pow'rs,
first Jove shalt captivate.
To Morpheus then give order,
thy various minister,
that with a dream in shape of Semele,
but far more beautiful
and more alluring,
he may invade the sleeping deity;
and more to agitate his kindling fire
still let the phantom seem to fly before him,
that he may wake impetuous, furious in desire,
unable to refuse whatever boon
her coyness shall require.

SOMNUS I tremble to comply.

JUNO To me thy leaden rod resign,
to charm the sentinels
on mount Cithaeron.
Then cast a sleep on mortal Ino,
that I may seem her form to wear,
when I to Semele appear.

[N. 58 - Duet]

SOMNUS Obey my will, thy rod resign,
and Pasithea shall be thine.
All I must grant, for all is due
to Pasithea, love and you.

(Exeunt.)

Scene 2

Semele's Apartment.

Semele alone.

[N. 59 - Air]

My racking thoughts by no kind slumbers freed,
but painful nights to joyful days succeed.

Scene 3

Enter Juno as Ino, with a mirrour in her hand.

[N. 60 - Recitative]

JUNO (apart)
Thus shaped like Ino.
With ease I shall deceive her,
and in this mirrour she shall see
herself as much transform'd as me.
(to Semele)
Do I some goddess see!
Or is it Semele?

SEMELE Dear sister, speak,
whence this astonishment?

JUNO Your charms improving
to divine perfection,
shew you were late admitted
amongst celestial beauties.
Has Jove consented?
And are you made immortal?

SEMELE Ah no, I still am mortal;
nor am I sensible
of any change or new perfection.

[N. 61 - Air]

JUNO

(giving her the glass)

Behold in this mirrour
whence comes my surprize;
such lustre and terror
unite in your eyes,
that mine cannot fix on a radiance so bright;
'tis unsafe for the sense, and too slipp'ry for sight.

[N. 62 - Recitative]

SEMELE (looking in the glass)
O ecstasy of happiness!
Celestial graces
I discover in each feature!

[N. 63 - Air]

Myself I shall adore,
if I persist in gazing;
no object sure before
was ever half so pleasing.
(da capo)

[N. 64 - Recitative]

JUNO (taking the glass from her)
Be wise as you are beautiful,
nor lose this opportunity.
When Jove appears,
all ardent with desire,
refuse his proffer'd flame
'till you obtain a boon without a name.

SEMELE Can that avail me?

JUNO Unknowing your intent,
and eager for possessing,
he unawares will grant
the nameless blessing.
But bind him by the Stygian lake,
lest lover-like his word he break.

SEMELE But how shall I attain
to immortality?

[N. 65 - Accompagnato]

JUNO Conjure him by his oath
not to approach your bed
in likeness of a mortal,
but like himself, the mighty thunderer
in pomp of majesty,
and heav'nly attire;
as when he proud Saturnia charms,
and with ineffable delights
fills her encircling arms,
and pays the nuptial rites.

Continued on next page.

JUNO By this conjunction
with entire divinity
you shall partake of heav'nly essence,
and thenceforth leave this mortal state
to reign above,
ador'd by Jove,
in spite of jealous Juno's hate.

[N. 66 - Air]

SEMELE

Thus let my thanks be paid,
thus let my arms embrace thee;
and when i'm a goddess made,
with charms like mine I'll grace thee.

[N. 67 - Recitative]

JUNO Rich odours fill the fragrant air,
and Jove's approach declare.
I must retire. ~

SEMELE Adieu - Your counsel I'll pursue.

JUNO (apart)
And sure destruction will ensue.
Vain wretched Fool ~
to her.
Adieu.

Scene 4

Jupiter enters, offers to embrace Semele; she looks kindly on him, but retires a little from him.

[N. 68 - Air]

JUPITER

Come to my arms, my lovely fair,
soothe my uneasie care:
in my dream late I woo'd thee,
and in vain I pursu'd thee,
for you fled from my pray'r,
and bid me despair.

Come to my arms, my lovely fair.

[N. 69 - Recitative]

SEMELE Tho' 'tis easie to please ye,
and hard to deny;
tho' possessing's a blessing
for which I could die,
I dare not, I cannot comply.

JUPITER When I languish with anguish,
and tenderly sigh,
can you leave me, deceive me,
and scornfully fly?
Ah fear not, you must not deny.

SEMELE AND JUPITER I dare not, I must not comply.
Ah fear not; you must not deny.

JUPITER O Semele,
why art thou thus insensible?
Were I a mortal,
thy barbarous disdaining
would surely end me,
and death at my complaining
in pity would befriend me.

[N. 70 - Air]

SEMELE

I ever am granting,
you always complain;
I always am wanting,
yet never obtain.

[N. 71 - Recitative]

JUPITER Speak, speak, your desire,
I'm all over fire.
Say what you require,
I'll grant it ~ now let us retire.

SEMELE Swear by the Stygian Lake.

[N. 72 - Accompagnato]

JUPITER By that tremendous flood I swear,
ye Stygian waters hear,
and thou Olympus shake,
in witness to the oath I take.

Thunder is heard at a distance, and underneath.

[N. 73 - Recitativo]

SEMELE You'll grant what I require?

JUPITER I'll grant what you require.

[N. 74 - Accompagnato]

SEMELE Then cast off this human shape which you wear,
and Jove since you are, like Jove too appear.

[N. 75 - Air]

JUPITER

Ah! take heed what you press,
for beyond all redress,
should I grant what you wish, I shall harm ye.

[N. 76 - Air]

SEMELE

I'll be pleas'd with no less,
than my wish in excess:
let the oath you have taken alarm ye:
haste, haste, and prepare,
for I'll know what you are;
so with all your omnipotence arm ye.
No, no, I'll take no less,
than all in full excess!
Your oath it may alarm you.
Yet haste and prepare,
for I'll know what you are,
with all your powers arm you.

(da capo)

Scene 5

She withdraws, Jupiter remains pensive and dejected.

[N. 77 - Accompagnato]

JUPITER Ah! whither is she gone! unhappy fair!
Why did she wish? ~ Why did I rashly swear?
'Tis past, 'tis past recall.
She must a victim fall.
Anon, when I appear
the mighty thunderer,
arm'd with inevitable fire,
she must needs instantly expire.
'Tis past, 'tis past recall.
She must a victim fall.
My softest lightning yet I'll try,
and mildest melting bolt apply:
in vain ~ for she was fram'd to prove
none but the lambent flames of love.
'Tis past, 'tis past recall.
She must a victim fall.

Scene 6

Juno appears in her chariot ascending.

[N. 78 - Air]

JUNO

Above measure
is the pleasure
which my revenge supplies.
Love's a bubble
gain'd with trouble:
and in possessing dies.
With what joy shall I mount to my heav'n again,
at once from my rival and jealousy freed!
The sweets of revenge make it worth while to reign,
and heav'n will hereafter be heav'n indeed.

(da capo)
(She ascends.)

Scene 7

The scene opening discovers Semele lying under a canopy, leaning pensively. While a mournful symphony is playing she looks up and sees Jupiter descending in a black cloud; the motion of the cloud is slow. Flashes of lightning issue from either side, and thunder is heard grumbling in the air.

[N. 79 - Accompagnato]

SEMELE Ah me! too late I now repent
my pride and impious vanity.
He comes! far off his lightnings scorch me.
~ I feel my life consuming:
I burn, I burn ~ I faint ~ for pity I implore ~
o help, o help ~ I can no more.

(She dies.)

As the cloud which contains Jupiter is arrived just over the canopy of Semele, a sudden and great flash of lightning breaks forth, and a clap of loud thunder is heard; when at one instant Semele with the palace and the whole present scene disappear, and Jupiter re-ascends swiftly.

Scene 8

*The scene totally changed represents a pleasant country, mount
Citheron closing the prospect.
Enter Cadmus, Athamas and Ino.*

[N. 80 - Recitativo]

INO Of my ill boding dream
behold the dire event.

[N. 81 - Air]

CHORUS OF PRIESTS

O terror and astonishment!
Nature to each allots his proper sphere,
but that forsaken we like meteors err:
toss'd through the void, by some rude shock we're broke,
and all our boasted fire is lost in smoke.

[N. 82 - Recitativo]

INO How I was hence remov'd,
or hither how return'd, I know not:
so long a trance whith-held me.
But Hermes in a vision told me
(as I have now related)
the fate of Semele;
and added, as from me he fled,
that Jove ordain'd I Athamas should wed.

CADMUS Be Jove in every thing obey'd.

ATHAMAS Unworthy of your charms, myself I yield;
be Jove's commands and yours fulfill'd.

[N. 83 - Air]

Despair no more shall wound me,
since you so kind do prove.
All joy and bliss surround me,
my soul is tun'd to love.

(da capo)

[N. 84 - Recitativo]

CADMUS See from above the bellying clouds descend,
and big with some new wonder this way tend.

Scene 9

*A bright Cloud descends and rests on mount Citheron, which opening,
discovers Apollo seated in it as the god of prophecy.*

[N. 85 - Symphony]

[N. 86 - Accompagnato]

APOLLO Apollo comes to relieve your care,
and future happiness declare.
From tyrannous love all your sorrows proceed,
from tyrannous love you shall quickly be freed.
From Semele's ashes a phœnix shall rise,
the joy of this earth, and delight of the skies:
a god he shall prove
more mighty than love,
and a sovereign juice shall invent,
which antidote pure
the sick lover shall cure,
and sighing and sorrow for ever prevent.
Then mortals be merry, and scorn the blind boy;
your hearts from his arrows strong wine shall defend:
each day and each night you shall revel in joy,
for when Bacchus is born, love's reign's at an end.

[N. 87 - Chorus of Priests]

CHORUS OF PRIESTS

Happy, happy shall we be,
free from care, from sorrow free.
Guiltless pleasures we'll enjoy,
virtuous love will never cloy;
all that's good and just we'll prove,
and Bacchus crown the joys of love.

(Exeunt omnes.)

Dance of Satyrs.

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