

Arcangelo/Jonathan Cohen

Handel's Theodora

Start time: 7pm

Approximate end time: 10pm, including a 20-minute interval

Please note all timings are approximate and subject to change.

Programme

George Frideric Handel *Theodora*

***Theodora* was once considered second-rate, but, with its dramatic story of religious persecution, which inspired from Handel some of his most moving music, it bears comparison with the *Passions* of JS Bach.**

Handel once reportedly observed that what the English liked was something that 'hit them on the drum of the ear'. The 'victory' oratorios prompted by Butcher Cumberland's crushing of the 1745 Jacobite rebellion – *Judas Maccabaeus*, *The Occasional Oratorio* and *Joshua* – had meshed perfectly with the bellicose national mood. But the oratorios that followed, *Solomon*, *Susanna* and *Theodora*, all far richer works, proved much less popular. The last of these, Handel's sole religious drama set in Christian times, was the biggest flop of all, surviving for a mere three performances at Covent Garden in the 1750 Lenten season and revived just once in 1755.

According to the (admittedly biased) memoirs of the librettist, the Revd Thomas Morell, Handel valued *Theodora* 'more than any Performance of the kind', placing the chorus 'He saw the lovely youth' far beyond the Hallelujah Chorus in *Messiah*. And he wryly observed of the oratorio's failure at the box-office: 'The Jews will not come to it ... because it is a Christian story; and the Ladies will not come because it [is] a virtuous one.'

There may be a grain of truth in Handel's reported witticism, at least as regards Jewish audiences, hitherto a vital component of his oratorio attendees. But the crucial reason behind public indifference to *Theodora* was surely its reflective inwardness, rising in Parts 2 and 3 to spiritual sublimity. Of all the oratorios, none was less calculated to hit its listeners 'on the drum of the ear'.

Thomas Morell's immediate source for his libretto was Robert Boyle's mawkish novella *The Martyrdom of Theodora and of Didymus*, set in Roman-occupied Antioch. Though no poet, Morell at least made a coherent narrative from Boyle's sententious ramblings.

As a Church of England vicar he was keen to emphasise the power of the Holy Spirit to change lives: the Roman soldier Didymus, in love with the Christian Theodora, has secretly converted to her religion; and at the end of the story, in a passage not set by Handel, the open-minded Roman officer Septimius likewise becomes a Christian.

Judged merely by the libretto, Theodora's piety and suffering have something almost masochistic about them. But through the beauty and unsentimental tenderness of Handel's music she becomes a poignant, vulnerably human figure. In the composer's vision her martyrdom is both glorious and suffused with a sense of agonised loss. Theodora's solos – most poignantly her prison air 'With darkness deep' – and two duets with Didymus give the oratorio its essential tragic tinta. Her one aria in the major key, the serene 'Angels, ever bright and fair', became a Victorian parlour favourite.

While Theodora dominates the oratorio, each of the other characters is drawn with an individuality that, again, goes far beyond Morell's libretto. At the one extreme is the unbending Roman governor Valens, not a bloodthirsty monster but a man who does things by the book and is always in a hurry. His solos are marked by rapid tempos and terse, impatient phrases. Septimius, the 'good' Roman who becomes ever more sympathetic to the Christian cause, sings the most ornate and suavely lyrical music in the oratorio. The airs for Theodora's lover Didymus, written for the castrato Gaetano Guadagni, have a gentle rapture that complements the more searching music for the heroine.

barbican

Didymus's ethereal nature is epitomised by the exquisitely chaste 'Sweet Rose and Lily', sung over the sleeping Theodora, and the rarefied air that flowers into a duet just before the final martyrdom. This glowing spirituality also suffuses the magnificent airs Handel wrote for Theodora's fellow-Christian and confidante Irene, a milk-and-water figure in the libretto who is transfigured by the warmth and strength of her music.

As in several of his earlier oratorios, Handel graphically characterises opposing cultures in the choruses. Typically, the Romans come across not as bloodthirsty sadists but as unabashed sensualists, singing in catchy dance rhythms and simple textures. The Christian choruses, gravely or radiantly contrapuntal, share the spirituality of Theodora's music; and each of the three parts ends with a sublime choral climax. The beautiful contrapuntal duet between Didymus and Theodora near the end of Part 2 fuses human tragedy with a transfigured ecstasy. But Handel crowns even this duet with the chorus he valued above all others, 'He saw the lovely youth'. Beginning as a dirge, this ends with a fugal movement of chastened joy depicting Christ's raising of the widow's dead son in St Luke's Gospel.

The two final numbers form a true apotheosis: the duet that grows out of Didymus's air, music of unearthly purity tinged with the ache of what might have been; and the chorus, 'O Love divine'. Morell's words here might have suggested an exultant ending. But Handel's valedictory music, part-prayer, part-lullaby (reworked from an air in *Hercules*), leaves us in no doubt that he viewed the fate of Theodora and Didymus as essentially tragic. We know little about Handel's personal faith. But it is hard to deny that this chorus conveys an intense religious experience, and that for once Handel and Bach – in so many ways musical antipodes – meet here on common ground.

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Performers

Jonathan Cohen conductor

Louise Alder Theodora

Tim Mead Didymus

Anna Stéphany Irene

Stuart Jackson Septimius

Adam Plachetka Valens

Arcangelo

violin I

Michael Gurevich

Agata Daraskaite

Iona Davies

Sophia Prodanova

Emma Williams

Yaoré Talibart +

cello

Jonathan Byers # *

Andrew Skidmore

Madeleine Bouissou +

double bass

Tim Amherst *

horn

Ursula Paludan Monberg #

David Bentley

trumpet

Neil Brough #

Paul Sharp

violin II

James Toll #

Beatrice Philips

Florence Cooke

Cristina Prats-Costa +

Nick Skachkov

flute

Georgia Browne #

Miriam Kaczor

oboe

Katharina Spreckelsen #

Sarah Humphrys

timpani

Adrian Bending

lute

Sergio Bucheli *

harpsichord/organ

Thomas Foster *

viola

John Crockatt #

Elitsa Bogdanova

Thomas Kettle

bassoon

Andrea Bressan

harpsichord/direction

Jonathan Cohen

* Continuo

Principal

+ Arcangelo New Ensemblist

Choir

soprano

Penelope Appleyard
Bobbie Blommesteijn
Tara Bungard
Jessica Cale
Angharad Gruffydd Jones
Hannah King
Helen Lacey
Elsbeth Piggott

alto

Mercè Bruguera Abelló
Hannah Cooke
Rebecca Leggett
Judy Louie Brown
David Clegg
Christopher Field
Anita Monserrat

tenor

Matthew Beale
Jeremy Budd
Guy Elliott (Messenger)
Sebastian Hill
Nicholas Todd
Tom Robson

bass

Charles Baigent
Richard Bannan
Hugo Herman-Wilson
Steven Kennedy
Tom Lowen
Andrew Tipple

PART 1

Overture

Scene 1

Valens

Recitative

– 'Tis Dioclesian's natal Day. –
Proclaim, throughout the Bounds of Antioch,
A Feast, & solemn Sacrifice to Jove. –
Whoso disdains to join the sacred Rites,
Shall feel our Wrath, in Chastisement, or
Death.
And This, Septimius, take you in Charge.

Air

Go, my faithful Soldier, go.
Let the fragrant Incense rise,
To Jove, great Ruler of the Skies:

Chorus of Heathens

And draw a Blessing down,
On his imperial Crown,
Who rules the World below.

Didymus

Recitative

Vouchsafe, dread Sir, a gracious Ear
To my Request. – Let not your Sentence doom
To Racks & Flames, all, all, whose Scrup'lous
Minds
Will not permit them, or, to bend the Knee
To Gods they know not, or, in wanton Mood,
To celebrate the Day with Roman Rites.

Valens

Recitative

Art Thou a Roman, & yet dar'st defend
A Sect, rebellious to the Gods & Rome?

Didymus

Recitative

Many there are in Antioch, who disdain
An Idol-Offering, yet are Friends to Caesar.

Valens

Recitative

It cannot be: They are not Caesar's Friends,
Who own not Caesar's Gods. I'll hear no
more.

Air

Racks, Gibbets, Sword, & Fire,
Shall speak my vengeful Ire,
Against the stubborn Knee.
Nor gushing Tears,
Nor ardent Pray'rs,
Shall shake our firm Decree.

Chorus of Heathens

For ever thus stands fix'd the Doom
Of Rebels to the Gods & Rome:
While sweeter than the Trumpet's Sound,
Their Groans & Cries are heard around.

Scene 2

Didymus

Recitative

Most cruel Edict! Sure, thy gen'rous Soul,
Septimius, abhors the dreadful Task
Of Persecution. – Ought we not to leave
The Free-born Mind of Man, still ever free;
Since Vain is the Attempt to force Belief
With the severest Instruments of Death.

Air

The raptur'd Soul defies the Sword,
Secure of Virtue's Claim:
And trusting Heav'n's unerring Word,
Enjoys the circling Flame.

Septimius

Recitative

I know thy Virtues, & ask not thy Faith:
Enjoy it as you will, my Didymus. –
Tho' not a Christian, (for I worship still
The Gods my Fathers worship'd) yet, I own,
Something within declares for Acts of Mercy.
But Antioch's President must be obey'd;
Such is the Roman Discipline: While we
Can only pity, whom we dare not spare.

Air

Descend, kind Pity, heav'nly Guest,
Descend & fill each human Breast
With sympathising Woe.
That Liberty, & Peace of Mind,
May sweetly harmonise Mankind,
And bless the World below.

Scene 3

Theodora, with the Christians

Theodora Recitative

Tho' hard, my Friends, yet Wholesome are the Truths
Taught in Affliction's School; whence the pure Soul
Rises refin'd, & soars above the World.

Air

Fond, flatt'ring World, adieu!
Thy gaily smiling Pow'r,
Empty Treasures,
Fleeting Pleasures,
Ne'er shall tempt, or charm me more.
Faith inviting,
Hope delighting,
Nobler Joys we now pursue.

Irene

Recitative

O bright Example of all Goodness!
How easy seems Affliction's heavy Load,
While thus instructed, & companion'd thus,
As 'twere, with Heav'n conversing, we look down
On the vain Pomp of proud Prosperity!

Air

Bane of Virtue, Nurse of Passions,
Soother of vile Inclinations,
Such is, Prosperity, thy Name.

Chorus of Christians

Come, mighty Father, mighty Lord,
With Love our Souls inspire:
While Grace, & Truth, flow from thy Word,
And feed the holy Fire.

Scene 4

Messenger

Recitative

– Fly, fly, my Brethren, heathen Rage
Pursues us swift, –
Arm'd with the Terrors of insulting Death.

Irene

Recitative

Ah! Whither should we fly? or fly from whom?
The Lord is still the same, to day, for ever;
And his Protection here, & ev'rywhere. –
Still shall thy Servants wait on thee, O Lord,
And in thy saving Mercy put their Trust.

Air

As with rosy Steps the Morn
Advancing, drives the Shades of Night;
So from virtuous Toils well-borne,
Raise Thou our Hopes of endless Light.
– Triumphant Saviour! Lord of Day!
Thou art the Life, the Light, the Way.

Chorus of Christians

All Pow'r in Heav'n above, on Earth beneath,
Belongs to Thee alone,
Thou everlasting One,
Mighty to save, in Perils, Storm, & Death.

Scene 5

Enter Septimius

Septimius

Recitative

Mistaken wretches! why thus blind to Fate,
Do ye in private Oratories dare
Rebel against the President's Decree?

Theodora

Recitative

Deluded Mortal! Call it not Rebellion,
That thus we persevere in Spirit, & Truth,
To worship God: It is his dread Command,
His, whom we cannot, dare not, disobey,
Tho' Death be our Reward. –

Septimius

Recitative

– Death is not yet thy Doom;
But worse than Death so such a virtuous Mind,
Which Didymus wants Eloquence to praise. –
Lady, these Guards are order'd to convey you,
To the vile Place, a Prostitute, to whom
Valens thinks proper to devote your charms.

Theodora

Recitative

O worse than Death indeed! Lead me, ye
Guards,
Lead me, or to the Rack, or to the Flames,
I'll thank your gracious Mercy.

Air

Angels, ever bright, & fair,
Take, O take me to your Care:
Speed to your own Courts my Flight,
Clad in Robes of Virgin White.

Exit Theodora with Septimius

Scene 6

Enter Didymus

Didymus

Recitative

Unhappy happy Crew! – Why stand ye thus
Wild with Amazement? – Say, where is my
Love,
My Life, my Theodora?

Irene

Recitative

– Alas! she's gone.
Too late thou cam'st to save,
the fairest, noblest, best of Women. –
A Roman Soldier led her, trembling, hence
To the vile Place, where Venus keeps her
Court.

Didymus**Air**

Kind Heav'n, if Virtue be thy Care
 With Courage fire me,
 Or Art inspire me,
 To free the captive Fair.
 On the Wings of the Wind will I fly,
 With this Princess to live, or this Christian to
 die.

Exit Didymus

Irene**Recitative**

O Love! how great thy Pow'r! but greater still,
 When Virtue prompts the steady Mind to
 prove
 The native Strength in Deeds of highest
 Honour.

Chorus of Christians

Go, gen'rous, pious Youth,
 May all the Pow'rs above
 Reward thy virtuous Love,
 Thy Constancy & Truth;
 With Theodora's Charms,
 Free from these dire Alarms:
 Or Crown you with the Blest,
 In Glory, Peace, & Rest.

PART 2**Scene 1****Valens****Recitative**

Ye Men of Antioch, with solemn Pomp,
 Renew the grateful sacrifice to Jove;
 And while your Songs ascend the vaulted
 Skies,
 Pour on the smoking Altars Floods of Wine
 In Honour of the smiling Deities,
 Fair Flora, & the Cyprian Queen. –

Chorus of Heathens

Queen of Summer, Queen of Love,
 And Thou, cloud-compelling Jove;
 Grant a long, & happy Reign,
 To great Caesar, King of Men.

Valens**Air**

Wide spread his Name,
 And make his Glory,
 Of endless Fame
 The lasting Story.

Recitative

Return, Septimius, to the stubborn Maid,
 And learn her final Resolution.
 If, ere the Sun with prone Career has reach'd
 The Western Isles, she deigns an Offering
 To the great Gods, she shall be free. – If not,
 The meanest of my Guards with Lustful Joy
 Shall triumph o'er her boasted Chastity.

Chorus of Heathens

Venus laughing from the Skies,
 Will applaud her Votaries: –
 When seizing the Treasure,
 We revel in Pleasure,
 & Revenge sweet Love supplies.

Scene 2

Theodora, in her Place of Confinement

Sinfonia**Theodora****Recitative**

O thou bright Sun! how sweet thy Rays,
 To Health, & Liberty! but here alas!
 They swell the agonising Thought of Shame,
 And pierce my Soul with Sorrows yet
 unknown.

Air

With Darkness deep as is my Woe,
 Hide me, ye Shades of Night.
 Your thickest Veil around me throw,
 Conceal'd from human Sight;
 Or come, thou, Death, thy Victim save,
 Kindly embosom'd in the Grave.

Symphony of Soft Musick**Recitative**

But why art Thou disquieted, my Soul? –
 Hark! Heav'n invites thee in sweet rapt'rous
 Strains
 To join the ever-singing, ever-loving Choir,
 Of Saints, & Angels in the Courts above.

Air

O that I on Wings cou'd rise,
 Swiftly sailing through the Skies,
 As skims the silver Dove;
 That I might rest,
 For ever blest,
 With Harmony & Love.

Interval**Scene 3****Didymus****Recitative**

Long have I known thy friendly social Soul,
 Septimius, when Side by Side we fought,
 Dependent on each other's Arm; with
 Freedom then,
 I will disclose my Mind. – I am a Christian.
 And she, who by Heav'n's influential Grace,
 With pure religious Sentiments inspir'd
 My Soul, with virtuous Love inflam'd my Heart:
 Ev'n she, who, shame to all Humanity!
 Is now condemn'd to public Lust. –

Septimius**Recitative**

– No more;
The Shame reflects too much upon thy Friend,
The mean, tho' duteous, Instrument of Pow'r;
Knowing her Virtues only, not thy Love.

Air

Tho' the honours, that Venus & Flora receive
From the Romans, this Christian refuses to give:
Yet nor Venus, nor Flora delight in the Woe
That disfigures their fairest Resemblance
below.

Didymus**Recitative**

O save her then, or give me Pow'r to save
By free Admission to th'imprison'd Maid.

Septimius**Recitative**

My Guards, not less ashamed of their vile
Office,
Will second your Intent, & pleasure me.

Didymus**Recitative**

I will reward them with a bounteous Heart,
And you, my Friend, with all that Heav'n can
give
To the Sincerity of Pray'r.

Scene 4

Irene with the Christians

Irene**Recitative**

The Clouds begin to veil the Hemisphere,
And heavily bring on the Night; the Last
Perhaps to us, Oh! that it were the Last
To Theodora, ere she fall a Prey
To unexampled Lust & Cruelty.

Air

Defend her, Heav'n. – Let Angels spread
Their viewless Tents around her Bed;
Keep her from vile Assaults secure,
Still ever calm, & ever pure.

Scene 5

Theodora's Place of Confinement

Didymus (*at a distance, the Vizor of his
Helmet clos'd*)

Recitative

Or lull'd with Grief, or, rapt her Soul to
Heav'n,
In Innocence of Thought, entranc'd she lies:
Her Beauty shining still, like Cynthia,
Rising in clouded Majesty.

(approaching her)

Air

Sweet Rose, & Lily, flow'ry Form,
Take me, your faithful Guard;
To shield you from bleak Wind, & Storm:
A Smile be my Reward.

Theodora (*starting*)**Recitative**

O save me, Heav'n, in this my perilous Hour!

Didymus**Recitative**

Start not, much injur'd Princess, – I come not
As one, this Place might give you Cause to dread,
But your Deliverer,
And that dear Ornament to Theodora,
Her Angel-Purity. – If you vouchsafe
But to change Habit with your Didymus.

(discovering himself)

Theodora**Recitative**

– Excellent Youth!
I know thy Courage, Virtue, & thy Love;
This becomes not Theodora,
But the blind Enemies of Truth. – Oh, no;
It must not be. – Yet Didymus can give
A Boon, will make me happy, nor himself
Endanger. –

Didymus**Recitative**

– How? or What? my Soul with Transport
Listens to the Request. –

Theodora**Air**

The Pilgrim's Home, the sick Man's Health,
The Captive's Ransom, poor Man's Wealth,
From thee I wou'd receive.
These, & a thousand Treasures more,
That gentle Death has now in store,
Thy Hand & Sword can give.

Didymus**Recitative**

– Forbid it, Heav'n!
Shall I destroy the Life I came to save?
Shall I in Theodora's Blood embue
My guilty Hands; & give her Death, who taught
Me first to live?
– Or say, what Right have I
To take, what just Reflection bids confess
Not at your own Disposal? – Think it too
No less a Crime, if thus inflexible
Your Safety you refuse. – Time forbids more:
Strait then resolve to gain your Liberty,
Preserve your Honour, & secure your Life.

Theodora**Recitative**

Ah! What is Liberty or Life to me,
That Didymus must purchase with his own?

Didymus
Recitative

Fear not for me. The Pow'r that led me hither
Will guard me hence; if not, his Will be done.

Theodora
Recitative

Yes, kind Deliverer, I will trust that Pow'r
To hear my Pray'rs for Thee:
Farewell, thou gen'rous Youth.

Didymus
Recitative

Farewell, thou Mirror of the Virgin State.

Duet
Theodora

To thee, Thou glorious Son of Worth,

Didymus

To thee, whose Virtues suit thy Birth,

Theodora

Be Life & Safety giv'n;

Didymus

Be every Blessing giv'n:

Both

I hope again to meet on Earth,
But sure shall meet in Heav'n.

Scene 6

Irene with the Christians

Irene
Recitative

'Tis night, but Night's kind Blessing is deny'd
To Grief like ours. – How can we think of
Sleep,
While Theodora wakes to Misery;
And threat'ning Death hangs hovering o'er
our Heads!
Be Pray'r our Refuge; Pray'r to Him, who
rais'd,
And still can raise, the Dead to Life & Joy.

Chorus of Christians

He saw the lovely Youth, Death's early Prey,
Alas! too early snatch'd away!
He heard his Mother's Funeral Cries:
Rise, Youth, he said: The Youth begins to rise:
Lowly the Matron bow'd, & bore away the
Prize.

PART 3

Scene 1

Irene with the Christians

Irene
Air

Lord to thee, each Night, & Day,
Strong in Hope, we sing & pray:
Tho' convulsive rocks the Ground,

And thy Thunders roll around;
Still to thee, each Night & Day,
Strong in Hope, we sing & pray.

Scene 2

Enter Theodora, in the Habit of Didymus

Irene
Recitative

But see, the good, the virtuous Didymus!
Wakeful, as Philomel, with throbbing Heart,
He comes to join with us in pray'r
For Theodora. –

Theodora (*discovering herself*)
Recitative

No; Heav'n has heard your Pray'rs for
Theodora:
Behold her safe. – Oh! that as free, & safe,
Were Didymus, my kind Deliverer!
But let this Habit speak the rest.

Chorus of Christians and Theodora

Blest be the Hand, & blest the Pow'r,
That in that dark, & dangerous Hour,
Sav'd thee from cruel Strife.
Lord, favour still the kind Intent,
And bless thy gracious Instrument,
With Liberty, & Life.

Scene 3

Messenger
Recitative

Undaunted in the Court stands Didymus,
Virtuously proud of rescued Innocence;
But vain to save the generous Hero's Life,
Are all Intreaties, ev'n from Romans vain. –
And high-enrag'd the President protests,
Shou'd he regain the Fugitive, no more
To try her with the Fear of Infamy,
But with the Terrors of a cruel Death. –

Irene
Recitative

Ah! Theodora, whence this sudden Change
From Grief's pale Looks, to Looks of red'ning
Joy?

Theodora
Accompanied Recitative

– O my Irene, Heav'n is kind;
And Valens too is kind, to give me Pow'r
To execute in turn my Gratitude,
While safe my Honour.

Recitative

– Stay me not, dear Friend,
Only assist me, with a proper Dress,
That I may ransom the too generous Youth.

Duet
Irene

Whither, Princess, do you fly,
Sure to suffer, sure to die?

Theodora

No, no, Irene, no;
To Life, & Joy I go.

Irene

Vain Attempt. – O stay, O stay.

Theodora

Duty calls – I must obey.

(Exit Theodora)

Irene**Recitative**

She's gone, disdainng Liberty & Life,
And every Honour this frail Life can give.
Devotion bids aspire to nobler Things,
To boundless Love, & Joys ineffable.
And such her Expectation from kind Heav'n.

Air

New Scenes of Joy come crowding on,
While Sorrow fleets away;
Like Mists before the rising Sun,
That gives a glorious Day.

Scene 4

Valens *(to Didymus)*

Recitative

– Is it a Christian Virtue then,
To rescue from the Hands of Justice, One
Condemn'd by my Authority?

Didymus**Recitative**

Such my Religion, it condemns all Crimes,
None more than Disobedience to just Pow'r.
& had your Sentence doom'd her but to Death,
I then might have deplor'd your Cruelty,
And not attempted to defeat it. – Yet,
I own no Crime, unless it be a Crime
To've hinder'd you from perpetrating that,
Which wou'd have made you odious to
Mankind;
At least the fairest Half. –

Valens**Recitative**

– Ay, ay, fond Man!
It was the Charms of Beauty, not of Virtue,
That prompted you to save her. – Take him
Hence,
And lead him to Repentance, or – to Death.

Scene 5

Enter Theodora

Theodora**Recitative**

Be That my Doom. – You may inflict it here
With legal Justice, there 'tis Cruelty.
If Blood your angry Laws require; behold,
The Principal is come to pay the Debt.
And welcome sure to Romans the Exchange,
A warlike Hero for an helpless Maid.

Valens**Air**

Cease, ye Slaves, your fruitless Pray'r;
The Pow'rs below
No Pity know,
For the Brave, or for the Fair:
Cease, ye Slaves, your fruitless Pray'r.

Didymus *(to Septimius)*

Recitative

– 'Tis kind, my Friends, but kinder still,
If for this Daughter of Antiochus, your Pray'rs
Prevail, that Didymus alone shall die. –

(to Theodora)

Had I as many Lives as Virtues Thou,
Freely for thee I would resign them all.

Theodora**Recitative**

Oppose not, Didymus, my just Desire,
For know, that 'twas Dishonour I declin'd,
Not Death; most welcome now, if Didymus
Were safe, whose only Crime was my Escape.

Chorus of Heathens

How strange their Ends,
And yet how glorious;
Where each contends
To fall victorious!
Where Virtue its own Innocence denies,
& for the Vanquish'd the glad Victor dies!

Didymus *(to Valens)*

Recitative

On me your Frowns, your utmost Rage exert,
On me, your Prisoner in Chains. –

Theodora**Recitative**

Those Chains
Are due to me, & Death to me alone.

Valens**Recitative**

– Are ye then Judges for yourselves?
Not so our Laws are to be trifled with.
If Both plead guilty, 'tis but Equity,
That Both should suffer. –

Air

Ye Ministers of Justice, lead them hence,
I cannot, will not, bear such Insolence.
And as our Gods they honour, or despise,
Fall they their Supplicants, – or Sacrifice.

Exit Valens

Scene 6**Didymus****Recitative**

– And must such Beauty suffer!

Theodora
Recitative

– Such useful Valour be destroy'd!

Septimius
Recitative

– Destroy'd,
Alas! by an unhappy Constancy!

Didymus
Recitative

Yet deem us not unhappy, gentle Friend,
Nor rash; for Life we neither hate nor scorn;
But think it a cheap Purchase for the Prize,
Reserv'd in Heav'n for Purity & Faith.

Air

Streams of Pleasure ever flowing,
Fruits ambrosial ever growing,
Golden Thrones,
Starry Crowns,
Are the Triumphs of the Blest.
When from Life's dull Labours free,
Clad with Immortality,
They enjoy a lasting Rest.

Theodora and Didymus
Duet

Thither let our Hearts aspire.
Objects pure of pure Desire,
Still encreasing,
Ever pleasing,
Wake the Song, & tune the Lyre,
Of the blissful holy Choir.

Scene 7

Irene with the Christians

Irene
Recitative

Ere This their Doom is past, & they are gone
To prove, that Love is stronger far than Death.

Chorus of Christians

O Love divine, thou Source of Fame,
Of Glory, & all Joy;
Let equal Fire our Souls inflame,
& equal Zeal employ:
That we the glorious Spring may know,
Whose Streams appear'd so bright below.

Libretto by Thomas Morell (1703–84)

The Barbican sparks creative possibilities and transformation for artists, audiences and communities – to inspire, connect, and provoke debate.

As a not-for-profit charity, we need to raise two thirds of our income through fundraising, ticket sales, and commercial activities. With the help of our generous supporters, we are able to share the work of some of the most inspiring and visionary artists and creatives, enabling the widest possible audience to experience the joy of the arts.

We're passionate about expanding access to ensure anyone can participate in art and creativity in London and beyond. From our work with local schools to provide unforgettable learning experiences, to development opportunities for emerging creatives, to discounted tickets to our events, your support helps us make a real difference every day.

There are many ways you can support the Barbican, including by making a donation, joining our programme as a sponsor, or becoming a Member. To find out more and join our community, please visit barbican.org.uk/supportus or contact development@barbican.org.uk

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