ÆSOPERA
A PENTAPTYCH CHAMBER OPERA
INSPIRED BY THE FABLES OF ÆSOP

MUSIC BY
JONATHAN PRICE

LIBRETTI BY
JEFF GOODE, JAN MICHAEL ALEJANDRO & THE COMPOSER
ÆSOPERA

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LIBRETTO BY THE COMPOSER
INSTRUMENTATION

Piano

DURATION

approximately 70 minutes

SINGERS

LIGHT LYRIC or COLORATURA SOPRANO, 20-50
Roles:
- Corycia, a wood nymph
- Dame Fortune, a goddess in the employ of Poseidon
- Oracle 1, one-third of the Oracle of Delphi
- Athena, goddess of wisdom

FULL LYRIC SOPRANO, 20-50
Roles:
- Kledora, a wood nymph
- Cassandra, queen of the island of Kos
- Daughter 1, the wife of a Gardener
- Oracle 2, one-third of the Oracle of Delphi
- Log/Eel/Crane, a would-be leader of frogs

MEZZO SOPRANO, 20-50
Roles:
- Melaina, a wood nymph
- Hera, advisor to Queen Cassandra
- Daughter 2, the wife of a Bricklayer
- Oracle 3, one-third of the Oracle of Delphi
- Chromia, a mother turned into a frog

TENOR, 20-50
Roles:
- Lasus, a lion
- Jason, court singer in love with Adon
- Gardener
- Son, son of an inventor, and a would-be soldier
- Dolon, husband to Chomia, also turned into a frog

BARITONE, 20-50
Roles:
- Adon, a royal guard
- Bricklayer
- General, a general at war with Troy
- Antiphos, man turned into a frog

BARITONE or BASS-BARITONE, 40-70
Roles:
- Kephisos, a wood nymph, father of three daughters
- Zeno, an alchemist and soothsayer
- Fisherman, father of two daughters
- Inventor, first to discover human flight
- Melantho, man turned into a frog
THE LION & THE WOOD NYMPH

MUSIC BY JONATHAN PRICE
LIBRETTO BY THE COMPOSER
INSPIRED BY AESOP'S FABLE "THE LION IN LOVE"
THE LION & THE WOOD NYMPH

MUSIC BY JONATHAN PRICE
LIBRETTO BY THE COMPOSER
INSPIRED BY AESOP’S FABLE "THE LION IN LOVE"

CHARACTERS
CORYCIA, a Naiad (wood nymph) .................. Lyric Soprano
KLEODORA, her sister .................................. Lyric Soprano
MELAINA, her other sister ............................. Mezzo Soprano
LASUS, a lion .............................................. Tenor
KEPHISOS, their father ................................. Baritone

The action takes place in a forest near the sacred springs of the Corycian Cave of Mount Parnassus in Phocis.

INSTRUMENTATION
Piano

PRONUNCIATION
CORYCIA .............................................. koh-ree-KEE-ah
KLEODORA .......................... klay-oh-THOH-rah ("th" as in "the")
MELAINA ............................. mee-LAY-nah
KEPHISOS ...................... KEE-thee-sohs ("th" as in "threat")
LASUS .............................. LAH-soos
HELIOS ........................................... HEE-lee-ahs
APOLLO ........................................... uh-PAH-loh
VENUS ........................................... VEE-nuhs
ZEUS ........................................... zoos

DURATION
approximately 12:30
THE LION & THE WOOD NYMPH

A forest near the sacred springs of the Corycian Cave of Mount Parnassus in Phocis.

(Enter Naiads: Corycia, Kleodora, Melaina. Their father, Kephisos, follows behind them.)

CORYCIA
Father....

KLEODORA & MELAINA
Father....

CORYCIA
Can today we sing
the morning song of Spring?

KLEODORA
O yes....

MELAINA
O can we sing today?
For the satyrs have gone to the
forests of Othrys and
no one will hear us...

KLEODORA
...and no one will harm us...

NAIADS
O can today we sing
the morning song of Spring?

KEPHISOS
Today.

NAIADS
Today?

KEPHISOS
Today the threat so newly gone
you wish to tempt the fates with song.
I know we see no dancing faun,
and yet the week is hardly long.

*(The Naiads stand disappointed.)*

And yet it has been many days
since I have heard my daughters sing.
So sing and mind the forest's ways
yet mind those ways most menacing.

*(The Naiads bow their gratitude and prepare to sing to the morning sun.)*

**KLEODORA** and **MELAINA**

Helios brings the morning sun,
and Apollo the light, and the morning star watches from above
god of love Venus from night.

**CORYCIA**

Hear our song to you Apollo,
praising this most wond'rous sight,
as we praise O mighty Helios' flight,
 flying from night to light.

**KLEODORA** and **MELAINA**

Helios brings the morning sun,
and Apollo the light, and the morning star watches from above
god of love Venus from night into light.

**MELAINA**

All in sight, O Apollo, seek to follow out of night, O Apollo, into day.
MELAINA and KLEODORA
All in sight, O Apollo,
seek to follow
out of night, O Apollo,
into day.

NAIADS
All in sight, O Apollo,
seek to follow
out of night, O Apollo,
into day.

MELAINA and KLEODORA CORYCIA
All in sight, O Apollo,
seek to follow
out of night, O Apollo,
into day.
Ah....... 

(Lasus enters.)

CORYCIA and MELAINA
A lion!

KLEODORA
Ah!

KEPHISOS
Stay back!
Why are you here?

LASUS
'Tis no cause for fear.
Your morning song drew me
through field and through forest.
Your beautiful voices
ensnared me with awe.

Yet all the song's beauty
could not have prepared me
(To Corycia:)
for your perfect form to which
Zeus gave no flaw.

I am Lasus.
(He bows.)

CORYCIA
I am Corycia.

KEPHISOS
And I am Kephisos.

Her father.

LASUS
Dear sir, if I may,
I should ask your leave
To woo and court
Your charge on this eve.

(Kephisos is silent in thought.)

KEPHISOS
Lasus,
much too alarming...
are your teeth
and your claws.

Corycia would be too frightened
to take as suitor...
one who owned
such as those in his paws.

(Long moment as Lasus simply stares at Kephisos. There is the slightest suspicion of an unspoken threat.)

If you will allow me
to remove your claws and teeth,
my daughter would be sated
and my blessing I'd bequeath.

LASUS
Is there anything else poor
Lasus can offer?

KEPHISOS
Nothing.

LASUS
Then 'tis
A small price to pay for
Olympian passage.

**KEPHISOS**
Then now we must go to Corycian Cave
which lies at the mouth of this stream on above.
And there we'll make good on the promise you gave
in a hollow so named after one you claim love.

*(Kephisos and Lasus exit.)*

**CORYCIA** *(teasingly:)*
Strange, I know,
but flattering too.
Who would suppose
he'd pick me over you?

**MELAINA**
'Tis true. He must have the
sight of Orion.

**KLEODORA**
Perhaps of us three you look
most like a lion.

*(Smiles or laughter.)*

**CORYCIA**
In earnest, though,
who would agree to such farce?

**MELAINA**
A lion who's sense in his
head is but sparse.

**KLEODORA** *(revelation)*
A romantic:
a beast who runs through
valley and vale
in search of a paragon
noble and frail.

**MELAINA** *(following)*
And, finding none, knows his
best chance for success
lies in not knowing anyone
should they prove less.

**CORYCIA**
And tested against an ideal,
all else pales.
Will Lasus miss his poor claws
when Corycia fails?

(Lasus and Kephisos enter. Lasus' paws are bloodied and perhaps
his face. Kephisos now walks with a tall staff.)

Oh father, the price he has paid is too steep!
I fear, though, there's naught to be done but weep.

(Lasus approaches Corycia to take her hand. Kephisos raises his
staff above his head.)

**KEPHISOS**
Be gone!

**NAIADS** *(in shock)*
Ahh!!

**KEPHISOS**
Be gone say I!
And never return lest you wish that your hide
become garments for satyrs.
Leave now or die!

(Lasus looks longingly at Corycia, resolves himself to the situation
and begins to exit. Before leaving, he turns and addresses
Corycia.)

**LASUS**
Corycia, you will be
in all I hear and all I see
and every day I draw a breath
I will breathe Corycia. Corycia.

Remember me
and I will you.
You are the promise and hope that Love gives us
that a few will live ever to see.
I will remember you, Corycia.
Please remember me.

Corycia, you will be
in all I hear and all I see
and every day I draw a breath
I will breathe Corycia. Corycia.

(Lasus exits.)

CORYCIA
Oh, Father....

KLEODORA and MELAINA
Father....

KEPHISOS
In time 'twill not seem all so grim.
'Tis the only way for us,
And the only way for him.

(Kephisos stands guard as the Naiads watch the departure of Lasus.)

MELAINA
All in sight, O Apollo,
seek to follow
out of night, O Apollo,
into day.

MELAINA and KLEODORA
All in sight, O Apollo,
seek to follow
out of night, O Apollo,
into day.

NAIADS
All in sight, O Apollo,
seek to follow
out of night, O Apollo,
into day.

FINE DELL' OPERA BREVE
THE QUEEN & THE DRAGON

MUSIC BY JONATHAN PRICE
LIBRETTO BY JAN MICHAEL ALEJANDRO & THE COMPOSER
INSPIRED BY AESOP'S FABLE "THE DOG & HIS SHADOW"
THE QUEEN & THE DRAGON

MUSIC BY JONATHAN PRICE
LIBRETTO BY JAN MICHAEL ALEJANDRO & THE COMPOSER
INSPIRED BY AESOP'S FABLE "THE DOG & HIS SHADOW"

CHARACTERS

QUEEN CASSANDRA, queen of Kos ................Lyric Soprano
HERA, her advisor .................................................. Mezzo Soprano
JASON, court singer and Hera's son ....................... Tenor
ADON or ADONIS, a royal guard ......................... Baritone
ZENO, the royal alchemist & soothsayer ................ Baritone

The action takes place in Ancient Greece on the royal grounds of the island of Kos.

INSTRUMENTATION

Piano

PRONUNCIATION

CASSANDRA ........................................ca-SAHN-thra ("th" as in "there")
HERA ..........................................................EE-ra
JASON ..........................................................ee-AH-sone
ADON/ADONIS.... ah-THONE/ah-THONE-ees ("th" as in "there")
ZENO .........................................................ZEE-none
KOS .......................................................... koze
ouroc .........................................................oo-RAH

DURATION

approximately 18 minutes
THE QUEEN & THE DRAGON

Ancient Greece on the royal grounds of the island of Kos.

(Zeno is alone, seeing visions of possible futures.)

ZENO
Echoes...
Ripples of what's yet to be...

Masters reap...
what freedom sows.

(Zeno points and draws in the air as if writing equations on a blackboard, eyes following the unseen numbers. Cassandra approaches Zeno.)

CASSANDRA
Zeno, are you conjuring some new potion on my special day?

ZENO
I apologize your majesty.

CASSANDRA (smiles)
Would the royal alchemist rather be in his workshop?

(Zeno nods.)

First enjoy awhile,
then you may go.

(Hera, Adon and Jason enter.)

HERA
Good people of the kingdom of Koz,
today we celebrate the birthday of our Queen Cassandra.

(Zeno, Jason and Adon applaud.)

At twenty-five years she has now come of age
and as full queen she
now has full privileges.
The privilege to make new laws...

(They applaud.)

...to accept suitors...

(They applaud.)

...and a few other privileges...
much too mundane to mention now.
please honor our queen
in celebration!

(They cheer.)

CASSANDRA
Quite a day, my dear Hera.

HERA
All for you, Queen Cassandra.
And then later, a song from my son.

(She indicates Jason.)

CASSANDRA
He's a very fine singer.

HERA
Many thanks Queen Cassandra.

CASSANDRA
Yes, his voice is but second to none.

(Hera bows to Queen Cassandra, then goes to Jason. Queen
Cassandra goes to Adon.)

CASSANDRA
Adon, my dear friend,
please walk with me.

ADON
The honor is mine, Queen Cassandra.
ADON, ZENO, HERA, and JASON
All hail the kingdom of Kos and her royalness:
Queen Cassandra the Great!
All hail the kingdom with unending loyalness.
long live the Queen and her State!
O, that her judgement be
fair and be strong:
award to the good and
a sword to the wrong.
All hail the kingdom of Kos and her royalness:
Queen Cassandra the Great!
long live the Queen and her state!
O ραχήλα!¹

(Hera and Jason continue to talk quietly, although Jason's
attention is split between Hera and Adon. Zeno exits.)

CASSANDRA
Adon, my noble warrior...

ADON
Something weighs upon your thoughts.

(Cassandra looks surprised.)

Tell me.

(They walk to a small bench and sit.)

CASSANDRA
You know because of the law,
I was forbidden to have suitors?

ADON
So there is someone special...

CASSANDRA
Yes, there is.

ADON
Who?

¹ oo-RAH!
CASSANDRA
Look at me, Adon.
Look and know that what I say is true.
My love, my sweet Adon,
My love is all for you, Adon, for you.

ADON
Me, your majesty?
Me?

CASSANDRA
All these years, Adon,
all these words have waited to be freed.
For you, alone, Adon,
for you are all my heart will ever need.

ADON
But we are still friends?

CASSANDRA
All the better.

ADON
My friend, I love another.
For some time, now.

CASSANDRA
If I am truly your friend,
why did I not know of this?

ADON
I could not...

CASSANDRA
You could not tell me?
Then you can tell me now!

ADON
Please Cassandra…

CASSANDRA
Your Majesty!
ADON
Your Majesty, I would rather not.

CASSANDRA
I command you!
Adonis!
Who is this woman?

ADON
Cassandra...

CASSANDRA
Your Majesty!

(Cassandra storms off stage. Hera follows her, hoping to catch her. Jason crosses and sits next to Adon.)

JASON
Did you ask the queen?

ADON
No.
In fact...I may have broken her heart.

(Hera enters, having not been able to catch Cassandra. She sees Jason and walks toward him. She stops and listens, unseen.)

She told me she loved me.
I told her, of course,

(Jason looks panicked.)

which hurt her...
upset her...

JASON
You told her?

ADON
...That I love another.
(touches Jason's cheek)
Not the name of the one I love.

JASON
Thank you.
**ADON**  
It was difficult.

(Adon is saddened. Jason hugs Adon, then lovingly kisses or touches his cheek. Hera looks worried.)

I must go.

(Adon stands and exits without seeing Hera. Jason remains sitting. Hera approaches Jason. Jason is taken by surprise.)

**JASON**  
Mother.

**HERA**  
Jason.
Are you familiar with the law that forbids men to love men, except as brother, son, father or friend?

**JASON**  
I need to practice.  
I sing for the queen this afternoon.

(Jason hurriedly exits. Hera exits as Zeno enters, distracted by visions only he sees.)

**ZENO**  
(worried)  
Is it future?  
Is it past?

Mistakes allowed...wisdom grows.  
Everyone cares yet nobody knows.

Masters reap...what...freedom sows.  
Everyone cares yet nobody knows.

A secret’s a secret as secret can be until there is one to betray it.  
And one word can hold back an ocean of blood, but then who am I to say?

(Cassandra enters. Zeno is unaware that she has entered.)

**CASSANDRA**  
Zeno.
ZENO (oblivious)
Yes, that's right...the choice I chose.
Everyone cares yet nobody knows.

CASSANDRA
Zeno!

(Zeno turns around and sees Cassandra. He rushes to her.)

ZENO (bows to her)
Your Majesty.

CASSANDRA
Make me a potion
to give to a man...
a man who loves another.
Make me a potion
to make him love me...
and never love the other.

ZENO
A love elixir...
It's now...it's now...

CASSANDRA
Zeno.

ZENO
The potion is possible
yes, I can say,
but only with blood from the
red dragon.

Locked in the dungeon
and hidden away,
it's lethal to any who...

CASSANDRA
Zeno.
Send a hundred men...I really don't care how.
Anything you need is yours, just do it...quickly...now.

ZENO
As you wish, your Majesty.
(Cassandra exits, followed by Zeno. Jason enters to practice singing.)

**JASON**
I have been told, by a man who would know,  
there once was a dog with a bone in his mouth  
who, crossing a river, looked down whence he stood  
to see yet another, as fates would allow.

(Cassandra enters, unseen by Jason.)

This other dog also possessed a large bone,  
so our dog decided to bare his sharp teeth.  
Hoping for both bones, he barked at the other,  
losing both his and the shadow beneath.

(Jason sees Cassandra.)

**JASON**  
My queen.

**CASSANDRA**  
Jason.  
What was that song?

**JASON**  
An old story my  
mother would tell me.

**CASSANDRA**  
Sing for me one of  
your love songs  
I cherish so.

(Jason takes a breath.)

**JASON**  
When I see your face,  
I wish that I could say  
All that wells within me  
but my words within me stay.  
My love remains for you unbroken...  
a love remains a love, unspoken.

(Cassandra joins Jason in song.)
JASON and CASSANDRA
When I see your eyes,
I'm certain you can see
ev'rything I'm feeling,
ev'ry gesture that can never be.
My faith remains with you unbroken...
a love remains a love, unspoken.

(Hera enters, unseen.)

JASON and CASSANDRA
If this love can never be
and you and I remain undone.

(Adon enters as if to speak to Cassandra, but stops and listens.
Cassandra does not see him. Jason does and sings directly to him.
Hera remains unseen.)

JASON and CASSANDRA
Who can stop my heart from seeing
you and I as one.

JASON
When I see your lips,
I wish that they could say
all the words I long for
but your words, like clouds, float high and far away.
My heart remains with them above...
My love remains, my love.

(Hera approaches Cassandra.)

CASSANDRA
Whom did you write that for?

JASON
I wrote it for someone...very dear to me....

HERA
My queen, there is
business of state...

CASSANDRA
Please, my dear Hera...
business can wait.
HERA
Your pardon...
Are you familiar with the law that forbids
men to love men,
except as brother, son, father or friend?
...upon pain of death?

CASSANDRA
Is there such law?

HERA
There is.
Would you, my Queen,
now that you have the power....

JASON (stopping her)
Mother.
Dear Queen Cassandra,
might you consider abolishing this law?

   (Cassandra assumes the reason Jason himself is asking her and is
    moved by his courage.)

CASSANDRA
The kingdom of Kos
shall never oppose a
a freedom that no one
should lose.

Today, it shall be
queen cassandra's decree,
that men may love
any they choose.

JASON
Wonderful day! I cannot wait
to tell Adon this news of late!

CASSANDRA
Adon?

JASON
Oh, Adon...
Yes, he will like
knowing that
you are abolishing
(Cassandra realizes why Adon would not court her and abhors the way she has acted. Turning to Jason:)

CASSANDRA
I am the dog on the bridge...
wanting more than I have...
asking more than he
could ever give to me.

What have I done?
I have sent soldiers into harm's way...
I need to find Zeno 'fore the dragon awake.
I fear I have made a most dreadful mistake.

(Cassandra begins to exit, but Zeno enters and bows to her.)

ZENO
Your Highness,
Blood from both sides
has now been shed.
Your potion can be made.

CASSANDRA
Blood?

ZENO
Mistakes allowed...wisdom grows...

(Hera steps forward.)

HERA
What is the death count?

ZENO
I was told there were...

(Adon stumbles in, mortally wounded, reaching out.)

ADON
My love...

(Cassandra begins to go to him, but stops. Jason goes to him.)

Help me...
JASON
Oh... Adon...

(Jason holds him in his arms. Zeno crosses to examine Adon. Cassandra crosses to Adon and holds his hand.)

ADON (to Jason)
You and I remain undone...

CASSANDRA
My dear friend.
I am truly sorry.

ADON
Your Majesty...

(Yeno shakes his head, indicating that there is nothing that he can do. Zeno steps back. Simultaneously, Adon slowly lifts Cassandra's hand to his cheek, then to his lips and gently kisses it. Crying, Cassandra is horrified with herself.)

JASON
What can I do, Adon?

ADON
Sing to me, Jason
That my last moments
will be of song...
and of you...

(Jason touches Adon's cheek.)

JASON
Sleep, mighty warrior...

(Jason falters. Hera steps forward and helps him sing the song.)

HERA
Sleep, mighty warrior, that you may rest.
Sleep and be still through the night.
Wars we are through,
and battles we won.
Sleep, there is no one to fight.
HERA and JASON
Sleep, mighty warrior, that you may dream.
Sleep that your dreams may take flight.
Swords we are through,
and blood we are done.
Sleep, have no worries tonight.

HERA, JASON and CASSANDRA
Dream as a child of a more pleasant time.
Dream without bother or care.
Dream of a world where we once meet again.
Dream for you soon will be there.

HERA, JASON, CASSANDRA and ZENO
Sleep, mighty warrior, rest you at peace.
Sleep for there's no use for might.
Day we are through.
Twilight's begun.
Sleep and find rest on this night.

(Adon dies.)

FINE DELL' OPERA BREVE
THE FISHER & THE WISHES

MUSIC BY JONATHAN PRICE
LIBRETTO BY JEFF GOODE
INSPIRED BY AESOP’S FABLE “THE FATHER & HIS TWO DAUGHTERS”
THE FISHER & THE WISHES

MUSIC BY JONATHAN PRICE
LIBRETTO BY JEFF GOODE
INSPIRED BY AESOP'S FABLE "THE FATHER & HIS TWO DAUGHTERS"

CHARACTERS

DAME FORTUNE .......................................................... Lyric Soprano
1st DAUGHTER .............................................................. Lyric Soprano
2nd DAUGHTER ............................................................. Mezzo Soprano
GARDENER, husband of 1st Daughter .............................. Tenor
BRICKLAYER, husband of 2nd Daughter ......................... Baritone
FISHERMAN, father of the Daughters ............................... Baritone

The action takes place in Ancient Greece.

INSTRUMENTATION

Piano

DURATION

approximately 14:30 minutes
THE FISHER & THE WISHES

The shores of the Gulf of Korinthos.

(Enter Dame Fortune.)

FORTUNE
O, Fortune smiles on whom she may
And 'tis Poseidon's will this day
That I, Dame Fortune, may bestow
Three wishes on a certain soul

Who puts to sea each day at dawn
In rain or shine or troubled skies
And not returns to shore till dusk
To feed his humble fam'ly:

His daughters twain, his joy, his pride
Each fair of heart, and this beside:
Each maid, of late, become a bride.
For they, he labors on the tide.

To him Poseidon has decreed
His fondest wishes with all speed

(Enter Fisherman.)

FISHERMAN
O mighty God of Oceans hear my daily plea
That from the boundless bounty of the bounding sea.
Might I, a humble fisherman
Engather with your benison

Each day, the sea gods I implore
Ere I set foot away from the shore

To work all day in rain and shine
With hook and net and fishing line

I spend my labors on the tide
For my poor fam’ly to provide
My daughters, twain, my joy, my pride
And each of them of late a bride.
The elder to a gardener’s wed
Who toils in soil quite famishèd
For months of drought have plagued the land.
And yet he labors, worthy man.
He well deserves my daughter’s hand.

The younger, to a bricklayer cleaves
A man of enterprise and wealth
His houses sprouted ’cross the land
Reward his labors, worthy man
He well deserves my daughter’s hand.

And I, each day, set out from shore
In hopes I may provide them more.

(Dame Fortune appears to the Fisherman.)

FORTUNE
Then know thou, O Fisher of the seas, that mighty Lord Poseidon in his deeps has heard your prayers and cries and nether weeps. And bade me grant you this good fortune, in recompense for your many years of devotion: Three wishes might I fulfill in whatsoever manner you will.

FISHERMAN
O blessed day! O bright sunny morn! Has Poseidon so decreed? To help my self and family in our need? I thank thee, Dame Fortune. For your timely gift. I shall share this providence with my daughters and their husbands. How happy this day will surely make them all. This blessed day. This bright and sunny day.

(Enter 1st Daughter and her husband, the Gardener.)

GARDENER
O curse this day! This sweltering, sunny day. My harvest withers ’neath its blistering beams. When will this famine end, and, with it, our suffering?

1ST DAUGHTER
O Father, tell me, what am I to do? His harvest wilts and shrivels on the vine. If this persists, my husband will have no choice but to give up his farm and find work elsewhere.

FISHERMAN
O daughter, do not fear, for I have no doubt, if it should come to that, your sister would be happy to help you out. Her husband, the bricklayer has had a very good year. His houses spring up like weeds. And there’s plenty of work to be had.
**1ST DAUGHTER**
But she is the younger. I, the elder. How would that look? My husband going to work for hers? I would not be able to show my face for shame. O curse this day! Father, you may work each day in rain or shine, but a gardening man is at the mercy of the weather and the weather’s gods.

**FISHERMAN**
Very well, daughter, fret not. I shall make your husband as successful as your sister’s is, for Fortune has granted me this blessing: Three wishes to spend as I please. And it pleases me to wish you down a torrent of rain.

**FORTUNE**
As you wish, so shall it be. 
Let rains torrential soak the land
Heavenly tears, the soil shall nourish
Away this drought, by Fortune’s hand
That ev'ry farmer’s seed shall flourish.

*(Suddenly, it begins to storm!)*

**GARDENER & 1ST DAUGHTER**
O joyous day! The farm is saved. The crops all bloom! O heavenly rain! The gard'ner’s boon!

*(Enter Bricklayer and 2nd Daughter.)*

**BRICKLAYER & 2ND DAUGHTER**
The bricklayer’s bane! O curse this day!

**GARDENER & 1ST DAUGHTER**
This blessed day!

**BRICKLAYER & 2ND DAUGHTER**
This wretched rain!

**GARDENER & 1ST DAUGHTER**
The gard'ner’s boon!

**BRICKLAYER & 2ND DAUGHTER**
The Bricklayer’s bane!

**2ND DAUGHTER**
O father, tell me, what are we to do? This cursed day! My husband is ruined.
FISHERMAN
I will help you, dearest daughter, if I can. But what is the matter? What care and trouble furrows your brow?

2ND DAUGHTER
This rain, this rain. The bricklayer’s bane. Now all my husband’s hard work is in vain. For a brick cannot dry in the sun, when it pours. Now my husband’s whole business has washed out to shore. Father, you, a fisherman, may work in any weather, but for the men who ply my husband’s trade, the blistering sunlight is better.

FISHERMAN
Fret not my daughter, I shall make your husband prosperous again. For I shall wish for the bright sun to beat back the clouds, scorching the earth and drying his wares.

FORTUNE
As you wish, so shall it be.
Let storm clouds part and rain be banned
The searing sun again shall swelter.
The muddy clay shall turn to bricks
That builders turn, in turn, to shelter.

BRICKLAYER
O glorious day! O sun at high noon. The bricklayer’s blessing.

GARDENER
The gardener’s doom!

FISHERMAN
O me, I forgot! O, what have I done? In helping the other, I have ruined the one. I cannot wish well upon one of my daughters, without wishing woe to befall on the other.

FORTUNE
There’s no pleasing all, for whatever you choose, always some shall advantage, while others will lose.

FISHERMAN
Then all of my fatherly hopes are forever in vain. For the one daughter’s joy is the other one’s pain.

FORTUNE
There’s no pleasing all, some will lose, and some gain. And when faced with a choice, some were better to abstain.

FISHERMAN
What good is good fortune, when blessings are mixed? There will always be troubles that cannot be fixed.
FORTUNE & FISHERMAN
Which daughter o'er her sister, must a good father choose?
The wife of the mason? Or the wife of the gard'ner? The younger or the older? The sun or the rain?

FISHERMAN
If I aid the daughter who married the gard'ner
The bricklayer suffers; his clay will not harden
If I help the bricklayer out of his trouble
The gardener’s problems will only redouble

FORTUNE
There’s no pleasing all, some will lose and some gain
For how can one love both the sun and the rain?

FISHERMAN
There is nothing to do. Tell me what to do then?

It makes one wish
they had both married…

FORTUNE & FISHERMAN
Fishermen!!

FORTUNE
So shall it be.
Let the wife of the gard’ner no longer despair
And the wife of the bricklayer shed all her care.
For it is your good fortune
And your good father’s wish
That they both shall henceforward be
Men of the Fish!

(The Gardener and the Bricklayer are magically transformed into fishermen.)

FISHERMEN
We put to sea with each sunrise.

DAUGHTERS
In wind or rain or sunny skies.

FISHERMEN
And not return to shore till night.
DAUGHTERS
To net whatever catch they might.

FISHERMAN
My daughters twain, my joy, my pride
For you my family, I’ll provide
And now, two more, are by my side.

FISHERMEN
We set to work with the morning tide!

FORTUNE
So fortune smiles on whom she may
And I – Dame Fortune – have, this day.
Bestowed a blessing on this dad.
To be content with what he had.

FORTUNE
So fortune smiles on whom she may
And I – Dame Fortune – have, this day.
Bestowed a blessing on this dad.
To be content with what he had.

1ST DAUGHTER/ 2ND DAUGHTER
Poseidon, hear our daily prayer.
That in our nets each day we snare.
Enough to feed our families.
Poseidon willing, and the sea!

BRICKLAYER/ GARDENER/ FISHERMAN
We put to sea with each sunrise.
And not return to shore till night.
We put to sea with each sunrise.
And not return to shore till night.

FINE DELL’ OPERA BREVE
THE INVENTOR & THE RIDDLE

MUSIC BY JONATHAN PRICE
LIBRETTO BY JAN MICHAEL ALEJANDRO & THE COMPOSER
INSPIRED BY AESOP’S FABLE “THE EAGLE & THE TORTOISE”
THE INVENTOR & THE RIDDLE

MUSIC BY JONATHAN PRICE
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INSPIRED BY AESOP'S FABLE "THE EAGLE & THE TORTOISE"

CHARACTERS

[ ........................................ Lyric Soprano
ORACLE OF DELPHI { ........................................ Lyric Soprano
] ........................................ Mezzo Soprano
SON ........................................................................ Tenor
GENERAL .................................................. Baritone
INVENTOR .................................................. Baritone

The action takes place in the workshop of the Inventor, on the edge of a cliff.

INSTRUMENTATION

Piano

PRONUNCIATION

DELPHI.................................................. thel FEE ("th" as in "the")

DURATION

approximately 9:00
THE INVENTOR & THE RIDDLE

The Inventor's workshop. The Inventor holds a model of a flying device, very similar to Da Vinci's corkscrew helicopter, tied to a model carving of a tortoise.

INVENTOR
I would dream.
When I was a child,
I would dream.
I would dream...
of floating among the clouds,
of soaring above the hills,
of swimming among the birds,
...of flying,
...of flying.

(He drops the model, which sinks like a stone. His Son enters, seeing the model drop.)

SON
Is that what you will show the general?

INVENTOR
The machine will work.

(holds model of tortoise)
Sophocles will fly.

SON
"Sophocles" is eating mother's flowers.

INVENTOR
Best you tie him to the machine then.
The general will be here soon.

SON
This machine looks like the last one.
And that one fell from the sky.
I had thought that the Oracle Delphi
had taught you how men could fly.

INVENTOR
I went to the Oracle.
and waited two weeks
to be granted an audience.
I asked her how to build a flying machine.
But she tested me first,  
on my worthiness.

(The Oracle of Delphi, played by three women, appears or is lit.)

**ORACLE**  
You must give me an answer  
in exchange for an answer.  
What can never be tracked,  
yet be seen in a still lake  
and cannot be replaced.

**SON**  
What was the answer?

**INVENTOR**  
You, my son.

**SON**  
Me?

**INVENTOR (to the Oracle:)**  
Children.  
Children cannot be tracked,  
for children will walk  
in the footsteps we leave behind.  
They are reflections of ourselves,  
and they can never be replaced.

**ORACLE**  
You have answered me wisely.  
In exchange, I have placed  
in your mind's eye the answer.  
You will know it when  
this riddle is solved:  
What is lost as it is gained?

(The Oracles disappears.)

**SON**  
What is the answer?

**INVENTOR**  
I don't know.
SON
What?!
So you don't know
how to build a flying machine.
You should have stayed in the legion.
At least then there'd be money for our fam'ly.
And honor.

(The Inventor looks at his son with surprise. The Son repeats himself firmly:)

And honor.
I have decided
to join the legion myself.
When the general arrives
I will leave with him.
Glory, adventure, and honor await.

INVENTOR
I left the legion for good reason, my son.
I once felt as you did and dreamed
of glory, adventure and honor.
But when I became a soldier...
it was not what I had dreamed...

SON
You should have stayed a soldier.
As I will be.

(The Son exits.)

INVENTOR
A dream....
The answer's a dream.

(the Oracle appears)
When my dream to become a soldier was gained....
the dream was lost, replaced by what is real.

ORACLE
You have answered me wisely.
And in exchange, is the answer.

(The Inventor takes a piece of paper and begins to fold it.)

Think of the eagle in flight through the skies.
Think of the curve of his wings.
Think of the shape and his form as he flies.
Think of the curve of his wings.

(The Inventor continues folding the paper.)

Ah.....

(The Inventor has finished folding what looks like a paper eagle. He throws the model in the air and it glides across the room. After it lands, the General and the Son enter.)

GENERAL
There is a tortoise outside...

(The Inventor picks up the paper eagle.)

...the size of a large dog...

(The Inventor studies his paper eagle.)

...eating flowers.

(The Inventor continues to study his paper eagle.)

Did you hear me?

(The Inventor snaps out of his daze. He is euphoric.)

INVENTOR
That is Sophocles.
He's the same weight as my son.
We test on the tortoise,
but my son shall be the first man to fly!

GENERAL
Very good.
Your son has asked to join my legion,
and I have accepted.

INVENTOR
I see.

GENERAL
And I will go one further.
If this machine works...
If it's more than just a toy,
your son shall have the glorious honor to be the first soldier to fly it into war against Troy.

INVENTOR
I see.

GENERAL
Will it work?

(The Inventor crumples the paper eagle and picks up the corkscrew model.)

INVENTOR
I am very optimistic. And if not... well, Sophocles has a very hard shell.

GENERAL
Yes, well.... Then let us begin.

(The General exits.)

SON
Glory and honor are mine.

(The Son exits. The Inventor uncrumples the paper eagle. The Oracle appears.)

ORACLE
What is lost as it is gained?

INVENTOR
I would dream....

(The Inventor crumples the paper eagle and exits.)

FINE DELL' OPERA BREVE
THE FROGS
& THE CRANE

MUSIC BY JONATHAN PRICE
LIBRETTO BY THE COMPOSER
INSPIRED BY AESOP'S FABLE "THE FROGS ASKING FOR A KING"
The action takes place on the banks of the river Eridanos.

**INSTRUMENTATION**

Piano

**PRONUNCIATION**

ATHENA .................................................. ah-THEE-nah
CHROMIA ................................................. crow-MEE-ah
DOLOM ................................................... DOE-lone
ÁNTIPHOS .................................................. AHN-tee-fose
MELANTHÓ ..............................(between may & meh) meh-lahn-THOH

**DURATION**

approximately 12 minutes
THE FROGS & THE CRANE

Melanthó and Ántiphos enter and sit on the banks of the river Eridanos.

MELANTHÓ
Does it seem strange to you?

ÁNTIPHOS
You mean that we've been turned into frogs?

MELANTHÓ
Yep.

ÁNTIPHOS
Yep.

MELANTHÓ
...yep.

(Dolon enters.)

DOLOM
Chromia?!

CHROMIA (offstage)
Dolon?!

DOLOM
Chromia!

(Chromia enters.)

CHROMIA
Dolon! Where are the children?

DOLOM
No need to worry.
No need to fear.
They're there in the water,

(He points off apron edge. Chromia looks, but does not see them.)

No, right there, my dear.
CHROMIA (still can't see them)
The water?

DOLON (pointing)
The shoals.

CHROMIA
You mean...?

DOLON (nodding)
That's right....

CHROMIA and DOLON (looking in the water)
Tadpoles.

DOLON (waves nervously)
Hi kids....

MELANTHÓ
Robbed.

DOLON
Robbed?

MELANTHÓ
We've been robbed!
A whole city,
turned into frogs.

ÁNTIPHOS
Robbed.

DOLON (nodding)
Robbed.

CHROMIA
Robbed....

(Chorus of "robbed" among the four. The goddess Athena floats down among them.)

ATHENA
Quiet....
Quiet....!
(The four stop, but then Dolon....)

DOLON
Robbed!

(Chromia hits Dolon.)

MELANTHÓ
O Athena,
Goddess of Wisdom,
what have you done to us?
Our whole city...
turned into frogs.

ATHENA
Melanthó....
good...good
for nothing
Melanthó....
Your city complained of sundry and such.
A goddess's ears can take only so much.

MELANTHÓ
We had a right to complain!

ÁNTIPHOS, CHROMIA and DOLON
Yes we did!
Yes we did!

MELANTHÓ
Our government squandered our money
On interests both foreign and base.

ÁNTIPHOS, CHROMIA and DOLON
Yes they did!
Yes they did!

MELANTHÓ
We elect our officials to represent
us, not the country of Thrace.

ÁNTIPHOS, CHROMIA and DOLON
Yes we do!
Yes we do!
ATHENA
...did.
You gave corporations the right
to legally place politicians
in any so pocket they chose.

When your democracy
expands the definition of people
to include corporations,
who should complain
when I expand the definition of people
to include frogs?

MELANTHÓ
But...who will govern us?

ÁNTIPHOS, CHROMIA and DOLON
Yes who?
Yes who?

MELANTHÓ
We need someone to solve our woes.

ÁNTIPHOS, CHROMIA and DOLON
Yes we do.
Yes we do.

ATHENA
A bought politician
is no better than a queen.
So you shall have a Queen.

(enthusiastically)
I know you will like her.
She's a former politician.
And she's very liberal:
as blue as the blood in her veins.
Here she is now,
ready to be queen to the Frog,
Amphibious folk,
I give you Queen Log.

(Log enters, waving glamorously to everyone. She is excited
to be here and assumes everyone is excited she's there.)

LOG
Hello....
Hello, frogs.
I'm so thrilled to be
here in the sun.
I feel like Proserpina...
all rolled into one!

MELANTHÓ
She's a log....

ATHENA
She's a Queen Log.

LOG
The first thing I'd like to do,
before this beautiful sun turns into rain,
is launch my fund-raising efforts
for my re-election campaign.

ATHENA
My dear, you misunderstand.
You're Queen.
There is no election.

(pleasantly blank look from Log)
The job is yours.

(Log gets it.)

LOG
Beautiful....
Then let me say this,
to all the little frogs out there:

Those who believe
in the inspiration of the spirit,
and the indomitable will of the soul
will find their passage clear
on every road to every dream
in every heart of every log....

ATHENA
Frog.

LOG
...frog...everywhere!

(Everyone applauds.)
CHROMIA and DOLON
Queen Log, can you tell us
(this new life befogs),
do our tadpoles need food?
(We're new being frogs.)

(Log begins slowly backing toward an exit.)

LOG
I must say to you first,
as my first royal bon mot\(^1\),
that I stand to decree,
but my feet hurt a lot....

So...I shall sit...
over there.

(Log exits.)

MELANTHÓ
Robbed!

(Chorus of "robbed" among the four.)

ATHENA
Quiet....
Quiet...!
It amuses me
that you wish a choice,
when you gave them up long ago.
However, I shall humor you,
for it humors me,
and give to you a brand new Queen.

(enthusiastically)
I know you will like her.
She's a former politician.
And she's very conservative:
as red as the blood in her veins.
Here she is now,
ready to be queen on repeal,
Ambiguous folk,
I give you Queen Eel.

\(^1\) incorrectly pronounced BONN MOTT
(Eel enters, waving glamourously to everyone. She is played by the same singer who played Log.)

EEL
Hello....
Hello, frogs.
I'm so thrilled to
be here in your grace.
I feel just like Poseidon...
all over the place!

ANTIPHOS
She's an eel....

ATHENA
She's a Queen Eel.

EEL
The first thing I'd like to do,
before I hear anyone start to complain,
is launch my fund-raising efforts
for my re-election campaign.

ATHENA
You're Queen.
There is no election.

(pleasantly blank look from Eel)
The job is yours.

(Eel gets it.)

EEL
Beautiful....
Then let me say this,
to all the little frogs out there:

Those who believe
in the inspiration of the spirit,
and the indomitable will of the soul
will find their passage clear
on every road to every dream
in every heart of every eel....

ATHENA
Frog.
EEL
...eel...everywhere!

(Dolon begins to applaud enthusiastically. Chromia hits him and he stops.)

MELANTHÓ and ANTIPHOS
Queen Eel, we beseech you:
don't say anymore.
Your words all ring empty.
We've heard it before.

EEL
This is I know, little frogs,
but what you're failing to see,
when you heard it before,
what you heard was in "D."
Now you can hear:
I'm in "C."

MELANTHÓ
Robbed!

(Melanthó, Ántiphos, Chromia and Dolon shake their fists in the air. Chorus of "robbed" among the four. Eel is disturbed and quickly exits.)

ATHENA
Quiet....
Quiet....!
You know what you ought to do?
Fix your problems by consensus.
Isn't that democracy?
My patience is starting to wane.
Where do we stand?
You don't like the log.
You don't like the eel.
Let's see how you feel
if I give you Queen Crane.

(CRANE enters, waving glamorous to everyone. She is played by the same singer who played LOG and EEL.)

CRANE
Hello....
Hello, frogs.
I'm so thrilled to
be here among food...friends....
I feel like eating you all alive!

MELANTHÓ
She's a crane....

ATHENA
She's a Queen Crane.

ÁNTIPHOS
Cranes eat frogs.

ATHENA
...yep.

MELANTHÓ
Robbed!

(Chorus of "robbed" among the four. As they continue, Athena and Crane sing as well:)

ATHENA
La, la, la....

CRANE
Yuuuuummmmmmmmm!!!!!!!!!

FINE DELL' OPERA BREVE

FINE DELL' OPERA