

PART III CLEOPATRA – BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS.

Giulio Cesare, Georg Friedrich Händel (1685-1759)

Pure seduction - V'adoro, pupille
Premonition - Se pietà di me non senti
Destiny - Piangerò la sorte mia

Reality or imagination - remote history or contemporary interpretation? All the world speaks of Giulio Cesare, even Händel's opera sports his name, but the real star of the opera is Cleopatra! She who seductively exploits her charms is also a cunning politician, winning over the hearts and ears of the audience in the musical world. We tell her story with some beautiful imagery and arias from Händel's opera, with her "photographically" floating in the background whilst singing in front of you.

Cleopatra's biography renders any who's who of the time she lived in appear pale by comparison. Continuously reinventing herself depending on the political situation, she found herself co-ruling with her father, being married to her brother or trying her charms on the Roman ruler of the day. Her representation in historical story telling varies from ruthless ruler to a calculating seductress with intent, displaying an extraordinary female power in times where women could only be *co-rulers*.

Händel's opera, composed in 1723 and premiered a year later at the King's Theatre in London, displays different facets of her personality. In the opera we have arrived at the point in her life where she is about to make the acquaintance of Giulio Cesare. To mask her true intentions, , and for political reasons (let's not forget that she is still married to her brother Tolomeo), she presents herself as her own servant Lidia and creates a seductive aura in **V'adoro pupille**. Being faced with the imminent threat of Giulio Cesare's assassination later in the opera, she appeals to the gods to protect her beloved in **Se pietà di me non senti**. Momentarily luck turns against her, with Tolomeo imprisoning her and forcing her to pay tribute to him as the ruler at which point Cleopatra laments her fate in **Piangeró la sorte mia**. In the opera, all's well that ends well with her final aria **Da tempeste il legno infranto**, which we also have in our repertoire.