

SAPHO: An Opera

Music by Charles Gounod, Text by Emile Augier

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Translated and adapted by Frank J. Morlock C 2003

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CHARACTERS:

SAPHO

GLYCERA

OENONE

PHAON

PYTHIAS

ALCAEUS

PITTACUS

CYNEGIRUS

CRATES

AGATHON

A SHEPHERD

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The first act takes place at Olympia; the others at Lesbos: the second in the house and gardens of Phaon, the third at Sapho's, and the fourth on a rocky cliff.

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SAPHO: An Opera

ACT I

At Olympia. A square before the temple of Jupiter. At the back, on one side of the stage the temple whose facade and steps are presented as facing the audience. AT RISE, the crowd is proceeding in procession toward the temple.

PROCESSIONAL CHORUS: O Jupiter, if you are pleased by games,
By sacred games that celebrate Olympia,
Don't permit the triumph of impiety;
Don't allow the courageous to be shamed!

(Enter the procession of an Athletic Victor.)

VICTOR'S CHORUS: Mix the honey with barley!
Glory to the winner of three matches!
His rivals, shaken by the throat
Almost to death, won't forget
That the rough hammer of the forge
Is less terrible than his arm.
Mix the honey with barley!
Glory to the winner of three matches.

(The Victor's procession goes into the temple.)

PROCESSIONAL CHORUS: Happy the one the crowd contemplates
And whose name is born up to the heavens.
Nothing is finer than a victor in a temple
Bending his glory at the feet of gods.

(The Processional Chorus enters the temple.)

PYTHIAS: You are not following the multitude, Phaon.

PHAON: I am better here.

PYTHIAS: You are going to seem a fainthearted lover.

PHAON: Lover, and why's that?

PYTHIAS: Because, usually
Hearts gripped with solitude
Are not hearts without care.

PHAON: Surely, I have some; but I imagine,
Good Pythias, that you are not lacking them
From the tyrant conspiring to ruin us.

PYTHIAS: Pittacus and Lesbos are far away!
Let's forget for a minute
Lesbos, Pittacus and his fall!
From Glycera you feel you've detached your heart,
And for Sapho—But what, already blushing?
So I guessed it?

PHAON: I admit it!—
My heart is floating between two loves
And Venus maliciously delights
In seeing it distracted with its own twistings.
Can I forget, O my Glycera,
Our happy days,
So much grace and light
From your beautiful eyes,
Your beautiful dazzling shoulder

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Under the necklace,
O Glycera, and your languishing voice—
Can I forget?

PYTHIAS: If your memory is unfaithful,
A thousand nearby,
A thousand other lovers of the beauty
Will remember.
And Sapho?

PHAON: Sapho!
Terrestrial body, divine soul,
Look conqueror!
Clay lamp that illuminates
The heart's fire!
Sapho, I am unaware by what charms
You retain me;
But I've seen your eyes full of tears
And recall them.
Yes, you remain in memory
For her love,
Melera, your name was glorious
For a day!

VOICES OF MEN OF THE PEOPLE: (at the back)
There's Sapho! Sapho! Sapho's coming.
Look.

PYTHIAS: (to Phaon) When Glycera passes by
No one says anything at all.

PHAON: Her naked feet are so beautiful on rugs from Sardis!

PYTHIAS: And her cheek is so red when she paints it!

PEOPLE: She's coming in, friends, stand up! stand up!
(Sapho enters, followed by young girls.)

CHORUS: Greetings, O rival of Alcaon!
Greetings, O muse of Lesbos!

As you were born you were caressed
By the God they adore at Delos!

SAPHO: Phaon! this meeting is a lucky omen.

PHAON: All are moved by your passage. (aside)
At her glance I feel all my senses troubled. (aloud to Sapho)
Can my voice mix with so many voices?

SAPHO: With lyre and poetry I dispute the prize,
Not without fear, not without terror,
But I will enter the field more calmly
If I know your prayers are with me.

PHAON: Ah! Sapho, my prayers and my soul!

GLYCERA: (entering)
What sweet conversation keeps your soul so occupied,
Phaon, to forget yourself so far from me?

PHAON: What do you want?

GLYCERA: I see they didn't deceive me
And my place in your heart is near to being usurped.

PYTHIAS: (aside) Good! The business is starting!
Let's listen, let's remain still!

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SAPHO: (to Phaon) Who is that bold woman?

GLYCERA: That woman! She's only a nameless woman
That the Greeks have not applauded,
That one takes and dismisses
Without even telling her the reason;
But however small she may be, she is proud, Phaon!
And she won't endure her lover giving her a rival
Were she Aphrodite in person.

PHAON: (to Glycera)

You are listening to much pride from your attractions.

GLYCERA: (to Phaon) Yes, I am listening to it and why not?
Do you think I will be confounded
By struggling with a muse?
If it's a question of love, I think that
The beauty of Asian girls
Is the first poetry,
And that was your opinion one day.

TOGETHER

PHAON: When she urges me to choose,
It's necessary that by a mocking game,
Fate, weighing my tenderness,
Makes my heart hesitate!

PYTHIAS They fight over his tenderness,
Is he lucky, this conqueror!

And as for me, I shiver through the night
Without being able to dispose of my heart.

SAPHO: So he had a mistress
And I must fight for his heart!
Who cares? I will have his tenderness
With the victor's palm.

GLYCERA: He dares to name his mistress;
But with the victorious memory
Of his passions and our intoxication
I will retain his heart!

(Chorus of priests enter, while people exit the temple, and take places at various points around the stage.)

CHORUS OF PRIESTS:

The entrails of sacrifices
Assure us that the gods
Are delighted.
Poets, be sublime!
Because your harmonious hymns
Are heard in the heavens.
O powerful Jupiter, O sovereign of gods,
Moderator of the world, assembler of clouds,
Drive away their dark troupe from the plain of the skies,
And exile storms to other climes.

THE PEOPLE: Grant our prayers, O Jupiter
Master of earth and air.

PRIESTS: These divine poets are going to bring their honey to you;
If you are pleased by the games of these noble bees,
Command, king of the air, the four winds of heaven

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To allow their songs to reach your ears!

THE PEOPLE: Grant our prayers, O Jupiter!

Master of earth and air.

THE HIGH PRIEST: The gods have seen our sacrifices with a clement eye.

TWO HERALDS: O poets, sing, for the gods are propitious!

THE HERALD: (on one of the steps of the temple)

Alcaeus! Alcaeus! Alcaeus!

ALCAEUS: (coming forward to center stage, singing)

O Liberty, austere goddess,

They broke your proud altar;

But of your steps, old earth

Keeps an immortal memory.

There comes an hour when each fiber

Revolts in generous hearts

And shouts to man that he is free

And his only master is the gods.

Let the arm rise

For ills suffered;

In default of a sword

Let's brandish our chains.

Humanity that degenerates,

Isn't it still the child of gods?

Its eye lowered towards the dust,

Doesn't it dare look at the heavens?

So regasp your heritage,

Noble race, with your pride.

If you were born into slavery

Bequeath liberty to your sons.

Let the arm rise

For wrongs endured;

In default of a sword

Let's brandish our chains.

THE PEOPLE: Death to tyranny!

Misfortune to whoever dozes

In this shame!

Rather die!

ALCAEUS: Do you hear them, Phaon, these shouts of happy omen?

PHAON: Greece has understood you! It encourages us.

HERALD: (on the steps of the altar) Sapho! Sapho! Sapho!

THE PEOPLE (Distracted) Silence! Listen!

SAPHO: (coming forward, and singing) ODE

Hero, in her solitary tower,

Breathing freshness from the seas,

Awaits the nocturnal swimmer

That guides love toward land.

Trembling by the vault of the heavens

Phoebe spreads over the marine plain

A silvery caress

Of silent rays.

All sleep on the perfumed earth,

But in the heart of the beloved,

SAPHO: An Opera

The night of love
Is broad daylight.
The sea that separates them is so vast and deep.
Time passes—he doesn't come.
But suddenly on the waves, his blond head shines
Yet quite distant—quite distant, alas!
But love sustains his courage
He advances, he's coming closer, he's reached the beach
And towards the tower his feet hurry.
Hero, pale and joyous, is finally in his arms!
Come in the arms of your lover
Audacious, conquering waves,
Come share the ardent passion
That lifts us to the rank of gods.
One day this beautiful flame,
Piercing the darkness of time,
Will give to our tender and faithful love
Immortality.

THE PEOPLE: Evoe! Glory!

Evoe! Glory!

ALCAEUS: I intend to proclaim your victory!

THE PEOPLE: Evoe!

PYTHIAS: O Glycera! O supreme beauty

I will have you!

THE PEOPLE: Evoe!

PHAON: (to Sapho) Every one admires you, and as for me, I love you.

SAPHO: Thanks, Venus, O protectrice!

You take pity on my torture

You inspire me with the conquering tone!

It's you who are smiling on my troubles!

And your power brings me

All my joy with his heart.

PHAON: Joy, intoxicating and supreme,

Yes, it's you, you alone that I love

It's you, daughter of heavens,

Whose victorious name

The wild crowd

Carries up to heaven.

SAPHO: In this nation that greets me

It's you alone that I see;

In the shouts of the agitated crowd

I hear only your voice, Phaon.

THE PEOPLE: Let a whole nation salute you.

And that, by us, your conquering name

Be lifted and praised to high heaven.

Honor! honor! honor!

CURTAIN

ACT II

Phaon's home at Lesbos. A large room closed at the back by curtains. To the left, placed obliquely, a long table covered with amphora, and cups of fruit. To the right, a round table with three legs beside an armchair. Chairs on both sides of the table at the left.

ALCAEUS: Let's deliberate; the place and the time are propitious
For the party that Phaon is giving here to Sapho
Dissipates suspicions under these joyous auspices
And leaves tyranny's prudence in default.
Tomorrow, at dawn, he leaves with very few of his followers
For the hunt; it's we that he must find in ambush.

PYTHIAS: (very moved) What! Tomorrow?

PHAON: Yes! he's going to offer himself to our blows himself.

ALCAEUS: Each of us has his assigned task
For the great day.

Before leaving, let's swear to accomplish it.

ALL: We swear to accomplish everything,
Shame on him whose hand trembles!
Liberty, to conquer you
We shall conquer or die together!

PHAON: Come see the queen of the fest.

Let's forget everything, friends, until tomorrow.

PYTHIAS: (on the forestage as Phaon and the others are going to meet Sapho)
Before the peril that's being prepared,
Where to find forgetfulness? In wine!

(He sits at the table to the left and pours himself a drink.)

(Sapho enters with her women.)

PHAON: Greetings, beautiful victor!
Your presence on my sill
Fills me with joy and pride.
I will mark this happy day in red.

CHORUS: We'll mark this happy day in red.

SAPHO: It's me, Lord, that your greeting
Fills with joy and pride.

CHORUS: Greetings, beautiful victor!
(Pittacus enters with a servant who brings an ivory box.)

ALL: Pittacus!

PHAON: He!

PITTACUS: (to Phaon) Does that surprise you?
I know that you are celebrating Sapho's victory,
And like a good tyrant, I rush
To offer my tribute to her glory. (to Sapho)
Muse, open this ivory box.

CHORUS: A gold crown!

SAPHO: It's too much, Lord, you make me confused.

PITTACUS: Say that it's too little! By Castor and Pollux
You deserve much more!
What wouldn't I have to offer you, O Muse,
A diadem instead of a simple laurel of gold!

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SAPHO: O chaste sisters, wise troupe,
Worthy of being commended to the gods,
He who respects the pious
Honors you in your servant.

PITTACUS: The gods are listening to you—if they listen to anyone. (to Phaon)
In favor of its purpose, excuse my visit,
Lord, now I am leaving you,
Not wishing to be importunate.

ALCAEUS: (to Sapho) Suffer Phaon to invite him in your name.

SAPHO: Surely.

PITTACUS: (to Phaon) You are quiet?

PHAON: (bowing) She is queen here.

PITTACUS: (offering his hand to Sapho) Well, let's crown her!

SAPHO: Noble Lords, thanks!

(Pittacus escorts her to the back of the stage surrounded by women; meanwhile they place the crown on her head, the conspirators reassemble to the left and sing on the sly.)

PYTHIAS: Now he's putting his head
In the jaws of the wolf.

ALCAEUS: Let's embloody the feast.

ANOTHER: Let him fall under our blows!

PHAON: So long as he's under my roof, he's sacred to us all!

(Pittacus escorts Sapho to the chair near the round table to the right and remains standing behind her.)

ALCAEUS: (to Phaon) To spare him, what a sin!

PHAON: (filling cups on the table to the left, sends one by a slave to Pittacus and raises the other.)
I drink to you, my guest. (turning towards the conspirators)
I drink the wine of hospitality!

CHORUS: To hospitality!

PITTACUS: And as for me, Sapho, I drink to immortality.

CHORUS: To immortality!

Glory to Bacchus, god of the wine—cup!
Glory to Bacchus, god of good wine!
For us, he stole the divine juice
From the celestial troupe!

(During this chorus Pittacus speaks in a low voice to Sapho; Phaon observes them suspiciously.)

ALCAEUS: He wanted that when a man weeps,
Saddened by the burdens of life,
For each to procure
An hour of divinity!

CHORUS: Glory to Bacchus, etc.

PHAON: My eye is bothered, a sweet mystery
Transports me among the gods;
When what you see is no longer earthly,
Doubtless, what you see is heavenly!

CHORUS: Glory to Bacchus, etc.

PITTACUS: But, as for you, Pythias, with reddened face
You are drinking a lot and saying nothing!

PHAON: Come on! To reawaken your slumbering frivolity,
The song to Bacchus!

PYTHIAS: Indeed! I'd really like to.

(Pythias opens his lips with difficulty; Pittacus notices it by smiling to Sapho.)

PYTHIAS: Let Mars renounce our homage!

SAPHO: An Opera

We'll skip this god,
Bacchus is the god of courage,
For he alone gives it to cowards!
Friends, a drunk is worth four men
A soldier fasting is paralyzed.
Thanks, Bacchus,
No more worries!
Through you I've succeeded in emboldening myself!
Let's drink, friends, let's drink! If it's a question of fighting,
Seeing double is the best way of striking twice as hard.
Venus is no longer a goddess,
To Bacchus we are carrying her powers!
He's the true god of tenderness
For he alone gives it to the frigid!
Friends, a drunk is worth four men!
A lover fasting is paralyzed.
Thanks, Bacchus!
Through you I've succeeded in emboldening myself!
Let's drink, friends, let's drink! If it's a question of fighting,
Seeing double is the best way of striking twice as hard.
(He sits back down near the table in the midst of the laughter and applause of those present.)
PHAON: And now, Lords, let's go into the gardens
Where chatting about all things
Under flowering myrtles and oleanders
We will gaily await the hour of buffoons.
Sapho! Lords! Deign to follow me!
PITTACUS: Save Pythias! For he is drunk!
(All leave by the back.)
PYTHIAS: Yes, tyrant, I am drunk, but not sufficiently yet
To tell you the degree to which your life is threatened.
GLYCERA: (entering enveloped in a thick veil, without seeing Pythias)
Cymbals and cithars
Make my shame ring in the air,
In delightful fanfares
From my eyes I bring lightning to Phaon!
—Pythias?
PYTHIAS: You, Glycera?
GLYCERA: And why not? Where are they?
PYTHIAS: By Bacchus,
You have the air of a panther!
GLYCERA: Where are they?
PYTHIAS: (pointing to the gardens at back) With Pittacus.
GLYCERA: Pittacus here?
PYTHIAS: Without an escort.
Reckless!
GLYCERA: (astonished) Reckless?
PYTHIAS: No question. Unfortunately,
Hospitality protects him.
GLYCERA: Against what?
PYTHIAS: (trying to get out of it) Against—the heat!
GLYCERA: Who invited him?

SAPHO: An Opera

PYTHIAS: Nobody—

He brought a crown.

GLYCERA: (bitterly) For the muse?

PYTHIAS: Yes, in that box.

(Pointing to it on the round table where the slave of Pittacus has placed it.)

GLYCERA: Thus her triumph is complete!

Oh! I hate her! Who will avenge me on her?

Who will avenge me on Phaon?

PYTHIAS: Forget your faithless lover

And avenge yourself in a fine way

By letting me gather from your—cheek—

GLYCERA: (pushing him away) You are drunk.

PYTHIAS: I admit it.

A little, but not yet sufficiently

To tell him to what degree his life is threatened.

GLYCERA: Assuredly, something is being plotted.

(She heads toward the table at the left.)

PYTHIAS: (following her)

Oh! How beautiful she is, this woman!

GLYCERA: (taking a cup and pouring a drink for Pythias from an amphora)

Let's drink to the success of the conspiracy!

PYTHIAS: (speechless) Of what conspiracy?

GLYCERA: The one Pythias is the ringleader of.

PYTHIAS: (falling into a seat near the table)

Me? To conspire is not my lot.

GLYCERA: So much the worse!

Such audacity in you would have pleased me!

PYTHIAS: I would please her with such audacity.

(Pythias drinks, Glycera fills the cup.)

GLYCERA: And you would have made yourself handsome on the spot!

PYTHIAS: I would seem handsome on the spot!

(Pythias drinks, Glycera pours again.)

GLYCERA: For valor is men is elegant!

PYTHIAS: Yes, valor is our elegance.

(Pythias drinks, Glycera pours again.)

GLYCERA: And I don't know all that I would have done!

PYTHIAS: (rising) I understand all that she would have done!

TOGETHER:

GLYCERA (aside) Soon, a bit of hope,

I think, is going to

Make him indiscreet.

I've got my vengeance

If I have their secret!

PYTHIAS (aside) O sweet hope,

For my imprudence!

What! I will please her

By confiding

All our secrets!

PYTHIAS: (mysteriously) Well, it's necessary to tell you

Since you are provoking me

Tomorrow, Pittacus will expire!

SAPHO: An Opera

GLYCERA: (sitting by the table where the ivory box is)
You are having fun?
PYTHIAS: (on the other side of the table) No—on the way to the hunt
We will all be in ambush
And bad luck to him if he comes by!
GLYCERA: You are having fun!
PYTHIAS: By the Styx! Must you be told
All the names of the conspirators?
Phaon, Crates, Cynegirus—
GLYCERA: You are having fun.
PYTHIAS: Alcaeus, Alcidamas, Aegisthus!
GLYCERA: I don't believe a thing!
PYTHIAS: (pulling a notebook from his breast) Here's the list
From the very hand of Phaon
And you can see my name there. (gives her the notebooks and stretches his hand to take it back)
Do you still doubt?
GLYCERA: No!
(Placing her right hand in Pythias' extended hand, and keeping the notebook in her left.)
GLYCERA: Go, wait for me, my master!
Go, shut the window
Light your tripod
I will go, dressed in rose
To join you at night's end
On tip-toe!
PYTHIAS: (kissing the hand she holds) Yes, I love your caprice
With candor!
The mystery is abetted
With joy!
GLYCERA: Go, wait for me, my master, etc.
TOGETHER: Goodbye! Something mysterious!
Wait until night
I'll wait until night
Has extinguished on earth
Daylight and noise.
(Pythias leaves staggering.)
GLYCERA: (alone) I prefer to see him dead than happy with my rival!
Ah! Those who are suffering are evil! (her eyes rest on the small table)
That box suggests an infernal idea to me
A double edged vengeance (writing on Pythias tablets)
“Guard yourself, Lord, they're plotting.
Here's the names of the conspirators.
Their plans are already prepared
In the regions where the hunt must lead you tomorrow.
Screen yourself from their fury
And guess your saviour.”
(She places the notebooks in the box.)
GLYCERA: O the sensual delight of satisfied hate!
Subtleties of vengeance in return
You bring to my ravished heart
More intoxication than love!
I savour you, bitter delight

SAPHO: An Opera

With a rapidly beating heart!
I am going to inflict on my rival a torture
That will surpass her happiness!
Go, accursed, strut,
Crowned and serene.
You think this triumph of one day is eternal?
A sudden bolt of lightning
Will soon burst in the blue azure of your heaven!
(She leaves by the right taking the box under her arm.)
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CHANGE OF SCENE
(The stage represents the gardens of Phaon.)

SAPHO: (descending at the rear with her cortege)
In this abode, my life is a limpid stream.
Which spreads on the moss and reflects light.
Let's love, my sisters, let's love, for life is rapid
And time is wasted that passes without love.
PITTACUS: Friend, Phaon, this feast is magnificent!
I love to see you seized by dance and music.
PHAON: It's better than troubling ourselves
With public policies?
You are here to think of it?
PITTACUS: You speak goldenly!
PHAON: Pooh on politics!
Let's sit down: the choruses are going to begin.
(All are seated. The ballet enters.)
CURTAIN

ACT III

Sapho's home. A locked room. A statue of Apollo towards the left.

(One of the women hangs the crown of the second act at the feet of Apollo.)

SAPHO: What are you doing?

WOMAN: I'm hanging this crown here

While waiting for the slave Agathon

To bring back the ivory box forgotten at Phaon's.

SAPHO: He's really slow, my dear Oenone.

WOMAN: Here he is.

(Enter Agathon.)

SAPHO: What a distracted air!

AGATHON: Ah! Madame! What an adventure!

Phaon's palace is surrounded by soldiers,

Himself, in flight, they assure us

A conspiracy discovered and all the conspirators

Captured, except Phaon!

THE WOMEN: Great Gods! What an adventure!

SAPHO: (kneeling before the statue)

Immortal gods in whom I have faith,

Let my prayer reach you.

If his love was too much a blessing for me

Take his love away from me, but let him live!

THE WOMEN: Save Phaon, immortal gods,
And we will flower your altars!

(Phaon enters.)

SAPHO: Phaon! (to her women) Leave us alone. And you at the gate, Agathon;
Let no one enter or leave.

(They all leave.)

PHAON: Learn that—

SAPHO: I know everything.

PHAON: (astonished) Everything? And from whom?

SAPHO: Never mind!

What are you doing here? You will ruin yourself!

Leave, wretch, leave quickly!

They told me you were in flight.

PHAON: All the passages are guarded,
You cannot leave the city.

SAPHO: Then stay hidden in my house.

PHAON: I am not coming to ask you asylum.
Surrounded by treason,
Resistance is useless.

I came to say my goodbyes to you

Before giving myself up.

Keep a pious memory

Of this wretch who loves you!

SAPHO: If you love me, save yourself
For me, cruel one, for me!

PHAON: I am lost: what remains to me

SAPHO: An Opera

To save on this funereal day
Is the dignity of defeat.
In an hour I will have died,
But let me fall under the ax
Intrepidly, and not as a coward!

SAPHO: Ingrate, have you no pride?
Mine is humiliating itself before you;
I am kneeling and I supplicate you,
Don't put my love in mourning!
Resist the pride that urges you
To rush to your fate,
And don't prevent my tenderness
From battling death over you!

PHAON: Gods sustain me in this test,
My virtue is ready to collapse!

SAPHO: I insist on this proof of your love!
If, despite all, I cannot save you
At least allow me, allow me as your widow,
To preserve this memory.

PHAON: My widow! You?

SAPHO: (her eyes lowered)
I was destined for you
Remain hidden—let a secret marriage—

PHAON: O heaven! (throwing himself at her knees and holding her in his arms)
Let's intoxicate ourselves with our love!
In one kiss, let's swallow life
And let death, in its turn find
The cup drained
By our thirst on a sole and last day.

SAPHO: Remain hidden—
Our marriage
Will deflect destiny
And to strike you in my arms
No! death won't dare.

TOGETHER

SAPHO, PHAON: Let's intoxicate ourselves with our love!
In one kiss let's swallow life!
And let death, in its turn find
The cup drained
By our thirst on a sole and last day!

AGATHON: (entering) The street is full of soldiers
And Pittacus is on my heels.

PHAON: Already! You see, he's come to get me.

SAPHO: Ah! Let me protect you to the end.

(She pushes him toward the curtain at the right; he takes her in his arms and kisses her face and vanishes behind the curtain. Sapho turns smiling towards Pittacus who enters from the rear, in armor, helmet in hand, followed by several soldiers who remain at the door outside.)

SAPHO: What! Lord, you at my place? What a favor!

PITTACUS: Did I guess my saviour?

SAPHO: Your savior?

(Enter Glycera from the left. She hides behind the statue.)

SAPHO: An Opera

PITTACUS: O ingenuous surprise—
But it's necessary to remain unknown
To find a more discreet messenger,
Madame, than this particular box.

GLYCERA: (aside) My ruse succeeded!

SAPHO: (to Pittacus) Doubtless, you are jesting
Because I don't understand.

PITTACUS: Is someone listening to us?

SAPHO: (excitedly) No one!

PITTACUS: Why pretend then? What is this game?

SAPHO: (turning her eyes towards Phaon's hiding place.) Nobody!

GLYCERA: (aside) Fine! Phaon is there.

PITTACUS: Let's break the mirror.

To whoever denounced the conspiracy, I made a vow
To grant a grace.

GLYCERA: (aside) I've got her! Nemesis is leading her under my blows.

SAPHO: Well, Lord?

PITTACUS: Well, what do you request of me?

SAPHO: Me! It's me they accuse—
Oh, what infamy!

PITTACUS: Simply of being my friend.

I am coming to repay your kindness. (Glycera appears on stage)
You see plainly someone was listening. (Glycera falls at his feet)
Who is this?

SAPHO: (aside) What audacity!

GLYCERA: (to Pittacus) It's the mistress of Phaon,
Coming to ask mercy for him!

PITTACUS: What service have you done me, what is your name,
For daring to ask of me impunity for crime?

GLYCERA: Noble Lord, be magnanimous!

PITTACUS: (raising her up) Mercy for Phaon? Never!

SAPHO: And if I asked it of you?

PITTACUS: That's different: as for you, I owe you my life
And I took a vow which binds me.

GLYCERA: (aside, turning toward the curtain that hides Phaon)
And what's more, Phaon, who you are not expecting!

PITTACUS: Let your will be done.
Is this enough to pay my debt to you?

SAPHO: Yes, Lord, my prayer has penetrated the heavens.

GLYCERA: Mine, too. Let's render thanks to the gods.

TOGETHER

GLYCERA: To your confessions I have bound you.
It's Phaon who received them,
You can't be exalted by 'em
I ask nothing more.

SAPHO: To my confessions I am bound.
It's Phaon who received them,
You can be exalted by 'em
I ask nothing more.

PITTACUS: Her conduct is badly motivated
From the admissions I've received

SAPHO: An Opera

But still my life is saved.

I ask nothing more.

PITTACUS: (to Sapho) Then let him live! But his presence
On Lesbos creates a peril for me
That exceeds my gratitude.
Do you accept exile for him?

PHAON: (rushing on stage) Take my head!
(Pittacus places his hand on his sword.)

PHAON: Leave your hasty sword in its furrow.
I am without arms before you
As you were yesterday in my home.
I've lost, take the wager!
Let the executioner get ready!

PITTACUS: (to Sapho)
You were hiding the author of the denounced conspiracy?

SAPHO: Lord, I wanted to save the one and the other—

GLYCERA: (to Pittacus who turns towards her undecided)
So as to have a clean conscience?

PITTACUS: (making a gesture of assent and turning towards Phaon)
As you were listening, you heard—

PHAON: Yes, that the lady betrayed me.

PITTACUS: But she also bought you back.

PHAON: (to Sapho) And by what right? Do you think that after betrayal
I still have a desire to live?
Death, exile or prison.
I chose death which frees.

PITTACUS: Phaon, you don't have a choice.

PHAON: (to Sapho) Wretch! What thought
Pushed you into such a crime?

Were you hoping to

Change this crown into a diadem?

(Phaon tears the crown suspended from the pedestal and it rolls at her feet.)

SAPHO: (aside) He thinks!

GLYCERA: (aside) Fine! Everything suits blaming her.

PITTACUS: (aside) Indeed, who knows? Woman, what a puzzle!

SAPHO: (aside)

Great gods at what a price you are selling me my salvation!

PHAON: (striding back) Well, no! it's not possible

No! You didn't betray us!

Wake me from a horrible dream!

Swear to me it wasn't you!

SAPHO: (with spirit) Ah, I swear—

(Glycera stops her by touching her shoulder; she turns and finds herself face to face with Pittacus.)

PITTACUS: Go on, finish.

SAPHO: I swear it was me.

TOGETHER:

SAPHO: O cruel sacrifice!

Must I submit

To pay his ransom

With this horrible torture!

This horrible suspicion!

SAPHO: An Opera

PITTACUS: From interest or caprice
You rendered me a service
But treachery
My beautiful protectress
Doesn't open my home.

GLYCERA: O blessing! O delight!
Thanks to my artifice
To pay his ransom
She has to submit
To this horrible suspicion!

PHAON: O you, gods of justice!
Ought I to see
The like treachery!
Such a cruel torture
Distracts my reason.

PITTACUS: You will leave tomorrow for the Bosphorous.

PHAON: Your clemency dishonors me.
I want to share the misfortune of my friends.

PITTACUS: But your reprieve entails theirs.
I'm embarking you all on the same ship
Saving them with you, you have nothing to say.

(Phaon lowers his head.)

GLYCERA: As for me, I have something to say!

PITTACUS: (smiling) Really?

GLYCERA: I was part of the conspiracy: I surrender.

PHAON: (low to Glycera) That's not true!

GLYCERA: (low) I want to follow you!

SAPHO: Ah! This is too much.

PITTACUS: (to Glycera) Yes, too much devotion.

GLYCERA: (pointing to Sapho) The lady has less, I confess
For this exile to which I am devoting myself. (to Phaon)
It's to her that you owe it.

PHAON: Alas!

SAPHO: (aside) When all my heart is rushing towards my lips,
I must condemn myself by my silence!

GLYCERA: (to Phaon) I want to attach myself to your heels,
Accept me as your servant. (to Pittacus)
I was in the plot, and I am proud of it.
Lord, don't separate us!

PHAON: (to Sapho) You hear her, Lady? (to Glycera) Come with me, come noble lady!

TOGETHER

PITTACUS: The girl with blue eyes
Truly interests me.
If she's his mistress
The monster is lucky!

PHAON: (to Glycera) We are leaving these parts!
In parting I am leaving
To this traitress
Forgetfulness for goodbyes!

GLYCERA: (to Phaon) Come, let's leave these parts.
Let your pride leave

SAPHO: An Opera

To this traitress

Oblivion for goodbyes!

SAPHO: Is it enough, great gods!

I am losing his tenderness,

Another mistress

Is leading him away before my eyes!

PITTACUS: (to his soldiers who remain at the back)

Soldiers, take the two of them away.

(Phaon and Glycera leave between four soldiers. Pittacus follows them. Sapho falls crushed at the foot of the statue.)

CURTAIN

ACT IV

Rocks on the sea shore. The Sun is going down.

SAPHO: (alone) This is the funereal vessel awaiting its prey.

I must see you one last time. (the orchestra recall the Romance of Phaon at the beginning of the first act)

Why these memories of my lost happiness

When my soul is in mourning and weeping?

What do you expect of me at this time,

Echoes of a song heard so many times? (she takes the lyre and accompanies herself)

Terrestrial body, divine soul,

Conquering look,

The silver lamp that ignites

The heart's fire.

Sapho I am unaware through what charms

You keep me

But I've seen your eyes filled with tears

And I remember!

(Glycera enters from the right followed by slaves bearing boxes.)

SAPHO: Her again!

GLYCERA: Is this your place or mine?

Is it you who is leading Phaon away?

They allowed me to take a head start

With some of my men

To embark this world of finery

Without which our allures are so uncertain!

The tyrant understood that I still intend

Even in exile to do my lord and master proud.

(Sapho moves away disdainfully without answering. Glycera throws herself in front of her barring her way.)

GLYCERA: Ah! This is too much insolence!

I understand your silence,

Your scorn is inward.

But I have the right to your hate

And with a word, noble queen,

I will make you gnash your teeth!

(Sapho shrugs her shoulders and takes some steps, but Glycera follows her.)

GLYCERA: It's I who, from the need of a gnawing vengeance,

Betrayed the conspiracy and managed

To have you accused of this treachery.

SAPHO: Wretch!

GLYCERA: Do you think that I am well avenged?

In your turn do you feel the shiver of hate?

SAPHO: But you are very imprudent

To take me for your confidant!

GLYCERA: You'll repeat my confession

To Phaon? I consent to it; try!

I will deny everything; he won't believe you!

Truth without witnesses isn't true.

Anyway, you convinced him too well with your oath.

Am I an enemy to be despised,

SAPHO: An Opera

What do you say to that, tenth muse?

SAPHO: O twice and thrice be wretched!

GLYCERA: Insult is allowed to the vanquished.

SAPHO: You've defeated me, yes, glory in it!

But know, after such battles

That Sapho wouldn't exchange

Her defeat for your victory!

GLYCERA: Hey! Who cares by what means

Your rival tears your soul out.

To your eyes I am less infamous

Than you are execrable to mine.

TOGETHER

SAPHO: Never, at the price of the greatest treasures

Would I want it, no! on my soul

To be as cowardly infamous

To your eyes as you are to mine.

GLYCERA: Who cares by what means

etc.

(After the ensemble Phaon enters with the conspirators escorted by the soldiers of Pittacus. Glycera and Sapho remain on the other side of the stage hidden behind some rocks.)

CHORUS OF CONSPIRATORS: Goodbye, fatherland,

Cherished land,

You that your sons were unable to save.

Far from the shore so dear to their infancy.

Your avengers are going to preserve themselves

For the day of your deliverance. (turning towards the soldiers)

Mercenaries from Thrace,

Less soldiers than armed robbers,

Tremble! We will be back,

Driving out those who drive us out,

To the roar of our trumpets.

Mercenaries from Thrace,

We will meet you again

Goodbye, fatherland —etc.

(They head towards the rear between two files of soldiers and disappear amongst the rocks. Phaon marches behind them. Glycera retains him pointing to Sapho.)

GLYCERA: There's Sapho coming to say a last goodbye

To her victim.

PHAON: Of Pittacus

Let her demand a diadem.

As for me, I no longer know her.

I detest her and scorn her,

With all the respect and love

With which my soul was seized

And that she betrayed on that day;

I have pity for what this false

And ambitious heart meditates.

Perfidious one, be thrice cursed

And I doom you to the gods of hell!

(He rejoins the other conspirators; some soldiers who were waiting for them bring up the procession.)

SAPHO: (alone) Be blessed by one dying!

SAPHO: An Opera

If my prayer reaches the gods
Let their bounty watch over you from the height of the heavens
And protect your wandering life.

PHAON: (and the conspirators in the distance) Goodbye, country,
Cherished land!

SAPHO: (screams and falls in a faint)

A HERDSMAN: (descending the rocks at the back and crossing the stage singing)
Browse on thyme, browse, my goats,
Wild thyme, with thyme.
Blonde Aglaea with her lips
Touched mine this morning;
And I'm waiting for Venus to rise
To rejoin her on the shore.

Shine now, star of love,
And extinguish daylight in the heavens. (he disappears)

SAPHO: (alone, coming to) Where am I? Ah, yes, I remember.

Everything that tied me to life is shattered,
Nothing remains for me but eternal night
To rest my heart from consuming torture. (she takes her lyre)
O my immortal harp
That in these bad times
Amidst all my ills always
Faithfully consoled them!
Vainly your sweet murmurs
Want to help my suffering.
No, you cannot cure
My latest wound,
My wound is to the heart,
Death alone can end my sorrow!
Goodbye, torch of the world!
Descend to the breast of the waves!
As for me, I am descending beneath the ocean
Into eternal rest.

Day which must dawn
Will shine on you, Phaon,
But without thinking of me
You'll see the dawn again.

Open bitter gulf,

I am going to sleep forever in the sea. (she climbs the rock at the back; reaching the top she repeats her last verse)

Open, bitter gulf,

I am going to sleep forever in the sea.

(She hurls herself off the rock.)

CURTAIN