

# Mitridate

*Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)*

**Livret de Vittorio Amedeo Cigna-Santi**

Opera seria en trois actes

Première représentation le 26 décembre 1770 au Teatro Regio Ducale, Milan

Édition Alkor – Bärenreiter, Kassel

## Livret

### Personnages

Mitridate

Aspasia

Sifare

Farnace

Ismene

Marzio

Arbate

## Overture

### ACT ONE

#### Scene 1

*The town square of Nymphaea, with a view into the distance from the city gate. Sifare with a retinue of officers and soldiers, and Arbate with the City Fathers, one of whom is carrying the keys to the city on a platter.*

#### Recitative

ARBATE:  
Come, my lord.  
More than any words of mine the homage of the troops,  
the assembling of the people,  
and the sincere joy evident on the face of everyone  
demonstrate to you on this day  
how much Nymphaea rejoices at your return.

SIFARE:  
I welcome these tokens of your loyalty.  
However, I expected other, greater ones,  
for Farnace ought not to have found refuge here.

ARBATE:  
Can jealousy over the throne, then,  
already make Sifare  
an enemy of his brother?

SIFARE:  
The beautiful Greek woman  
who earned the affections of the great Mitridate  
was also the flame of my heart,  
and is the primary, though innocent,  
cause of our brotherly rivalries.

ARBATE:  
Ah, how much her sorrowful heart preceded you  
with its yearnings and prayers!

SIFARE:  
If what you say is true, I still have much to hope for,  
and I can hope for everything  
if Arbate dares to support the better side  
between the servant and the enemy of Rome.

ARBATE:  
If I dare! How can you doubt it, my Lord?  
That same dedication which bound me to your father  
I here entirely devote to your cause,  
and you will witness Farnace, as a result of my valour  
and my loyalty,  
having to go elsewhere to seek a wife and a home.  
*(he leaves with his entourage)*

#### Scene 2

*Sifare with his followers and Aspasia*

#### Recitative

SIFARE:  
If Arbate supports my cause,

what can I not achieve?

ASPASIA:

My Lord, I come to beg for your help.  
Afflicted, uncertain, a widow before being a bride,  
I appeal to Mitridate's better son.  
Ah, let it not be true that the blood  
which unites you to your brother  
prevails on this day  
over the tears of an unhappy woman.  
Barbarous, audacious, offensive to his father,  
he demands love from my heart,  
which is free and which hates him.

SIFARE:

Queen, ah calm your fears,  
I implore you.  
For as long as I breathe your will is free,  
and Farnace will have to go elsewhere to use force.  
But if you call the man who adores you evil,  
you should know that I am less innocent than him.

ASPASIA:

What do I hear, O heavens?

SIFARE:

Do not be angry: Sifare's love  
is different from that of his brother.  
No, if I defend you from him you won't become my conquest.  
But when I have restored you to yourself,  
will you detest your defender as much as your enemy?  
And I, as a reward for my loyalty, to please you,  
must I resolve never to see you?

ASPASIA:

Prince, if you are chivalrous,  
do not take too much advantage of the state in which I am.

SIFARE:

I am not taking advantage of it while I am defending you without hoping for  
reward, when I promise,  
beautiful Aspasia, to obey you and then to hide myself  
for ever out of your sight.

ASPASIA:

Perhaps you are promising  
something which you are not capable of carrying out.

SIFARE:

So in spite of my protestations do you still fear  
that I may become your tyrant?

ASPASIA:

Against Farnace I ask for help, my lord.  
First save me from his wicked hands;  
this is my wish.  
Then there will be no need for you to use cruel force on me, because I grant  
to you the pleasure of seeing me,  
and perhaps you will also get to know better that heart  
which you can now unjustly accuse of severity.

No. 1 Aria

ASPASIA:  
From the fate that threatens it,  
Free, o God, this oppressed heart.  
First give me back to myself;  
Then you can be angry with me.  
How do you expect me in face of danger  
To answer your words?  
Ah, you can learn to know me,  
As you well know my heart.  
(*She departs.*)

Accompanied Recitative

SIFARE:  
What a tumult her words aroused in my soul!  
I feel you grow even stronger,  
my almost lost hopes.  
Through you my courage receives a new spur today;  
let there be an end now to useless delay, and the reward which my dear love  
seems to promise, ah, let me deserve it even if it cannot be mine.

No. 2 Aria

SIFARE:  
My heart endures calmly  
A tyrannical beauty,  
But it cannot tolerate the arrogance of an insolent man, no.  
She who is able to deny my love  
Causes me to suffer but does not offend me,  
yet he who becomes my rival inflames me with fury  
(*He departs with his entourage.*)

Aspasia enters, pursued by Farnace.)

Recitative:

FARNACE:

How long, O Queen, will you resist my desires? Oh, flee, yes, flee and come with me. The throne of Pontus awaits you impatiently, and everyone longs to see you as Queen and my bride. Give me your hand at the altar, and while under happier auspices the diadem is destined for your temples, let the son fulfil the promises of the father.

ASPASIA:

To avenge a father murdered by the Romans, I have neither sceptres nor soldiers, and all that remains of my fortune is my stout heart. Ah, may this at least keep the faith due to my father. Nor shall his daughter be seen to offer a disrespectful, sacrilegious hand to the friend of Rome, base Farnace.

FARNACE:

What weak excuses are these which you invent, and who told you that I was a friend of Rome? I want you now as my wife (he seizes her by the hand), and you oppose my will in vain.

ASPASIA:

Sifare, where are you? (gazing around agitatedly)

(Sifare enters.)

Recitative

SIFARE:

Stop, brother, and in Aspasia learn to respect Sifare.

FARNACE:

(to Aspasia, with resentment) I understand your heart better now, ungrateful one. Perhaps this man is the reason for your refusal. He is a more fortunate lover than Farnace, and displeases you less.

SIFARE:

(to Farnace) I am her defender here, and whoever attempts to tyrannise her heart deserves all my anger.

FARNACE:

Let Sifare go to Colchis to speak so pompously to his vassals.

SIFARE:

I can speak thus in Colchis or in this palace.

FARNACE:

Here at my hands you could well shed your soul with your blood.

SIFARE:  
(grasps his sword as does Farnace)  
To such insolence I reply thus.

ASPASIA:  
(restraining the brothers) Oh, no, stop!

(Arbate enters.)

Recitative

ARBATE:  
Ho, there, control your wrath, Princes. The sea is filled with armed ships,  
and Mitridate is arriving unexpectedly  
at the port of Nymphaea to bring firmer news of himself.

SIFARE:  
My father!

FARNACE:  
Mitridate!

ARBATE:  
A fast boat came to forewarn me. Oh set aside all rivalry between you, cease  
your quarrelling, and come with me to honour your father.

No. 3, Aria

ARBATE:  
Curb the hatred in your hearts,  
Let peace return between you,  
Or fear a father  
Who cannot forgive.  
If today brotherly love  
Ceases in you and dies,  
Who will protect you  
From his just severity?  
(He departs.)

Recitative

FARNACE:  
Prince, what have we done?

SIFARE:  
In my heart  
I feel no regrets.

ASPASIA:  
(Oh, fatal return!)  
Sifare, farewell.

No. 4 Aria

ASPASIA:  
In my breast my heart beats painfully;  
My grief calls me to weep;

I cannot resist, I cannot remain.  
But if my eyes are wet with tears,  
Believe me, it is only  
Your peril which is the  
Cruel reason for my suffering.

(She leaves.)

Recitative

FARNACE:

Such a farewell, brother, explains enough. But time demands other things from us – our father is coming home, as proud as he is unhappy. Think of it: at your disposal you have your troops ready, and I do not lack help. In order to ensure our pardon, let us prevent him from entering the city, and let him create just laws or he is lost.

SIFARE:

I know myself, I know my father well enough: but when Mitridate returns, I can only obey.

FARNACE:

At least let us cautiously conceal our common secret from him so that brother may not betray brother.

SIFARE:

Even at my peril I shall jealously remain a faithful brother and a faithful son.

No. 5, Aria

SIFARE:

I must go: in this great danger  
I shall be a brother and a son;  
Equal to your peril  
Shall be my fate.  
Follow your inclination;  
You shall never see me  
Lacking in loyalty.  
(He departs.)

Recitative

FARNACE:

In a moment my plans have been upset.

MARZIO:

Farnace must not yield to craven fear

FARNACE:

And what hope is left to me  
If hostile fortune  
Vents all her scorn upon my head?

MARZIO:  
Greater than any other destiny  
Is the great destiny of Rome, and before  
A new dawn rises in the sky,  
You shall have certain truth.

FARNACE:  
To your good faith I commend myself, my friend;  
you can see my danger.  
In my defence, oh, let the proud Roman eagles soon move bringing victory  
and terror. And if  
my cruel fate  
be stronger than Rome,  
Ah, I will surely die, but I will die avenged.

No. 6 Aria

FARNACE:  
Let my implacable father come then,  
Let him threaten and fume,  
My heart will not yield  
To his scorn and fury.  
Let him respect and fear Rome in me,  
Less fierce and less severe,  
Or else his anger will make me  
More cruel and more proud.  
(He leaves.)

(A seaport with two fleets anchored on opposite sides of the harbour.  
Mitridate and Ismene land from the largest ship. Arbate receives them on  
the beach.)

No. 8 Cavatina

MITRIDATE:  
Faithful shores, if I do not return to you  
Crowned with laurel,  
At least my face is not flushed  
With shame and disgrace.  
Even defeated and oppressed  
I still remain the same,  
And I bring to you as ever  
A great heart in my breast.

Recitative

MITRIDATE:  
You see me again, Arbate, but you do not see that happy Mitridate to whom  
it was long given to hold the fate  
of Rome in balance.  
A single night, fortunate for Pompei, fatal to me, has swept away the labours  
of forty years.

ISMENE:  
What use, my lord, remembering a misfortune which can do nothing to  
obscure your glory? Let us have respite from gloomy thoughts, at least for a  
brief while on this friendly shore. Where are your sons, Mitridate?



ARBATE:

From the nearby palace, see, they hasten to their father's feet in respect and love.

(Sifare, Farnace come from the city.)

Recitative

SIFARE:

As one son and then the other imprint a kiss on your feared right hand, they express all the feelings of their hearts, father.

MITRIDATE:

Princes, in this hour of need, what made you desert Colchis and Pontus, which I entrusted to your valour and good faith?

FARNACE:

The baleful news of your death brought us here, the one unaware of the other, my lord. We are fortunate that by disobeying your orders, we have the joy to see safe the one who till now has been so wept over and mourned!

ISMENE:

Why, among his joys, does Farnace hide what he feels on seeing again the daughter of the Parthian monarch?

FARNACE:

(Oh, bitter reproof!)

MITRIDATE:

My sons, you meet me here less as judge than as father. You must be the first to repair your rash error, Farnace. Ismene, whom you loved, I know, comes as your bride: see in her new support for Mitridate's harassed throne; for this splendid union, which I myself sought, prepare your heart, and learn to be worthy of such good fortune.

FARNACE:

My lord...

MITRIDATE:

To the palace, where I shall shortly follow you, Princess, both Sifare and Farnace will escort you. Only Arbate must stay.

ISMENE:

I go before you, sir. But I harbour in my breast a secret fear which foretells me how unhappy my heart will be.

No. 9 Aria

ISMENE:  
Before the man  
Who makes me burn with love,  
I should feel only  
Joy in my heart.  
But I feel a torment  
Which I cannot understand.  
Those lips that are silent,  
Those troubled eyes  
Now spell danger  
To my peace of mind,  
Now say that I shall only  
Be bound to suffer.  
(She departs with Sifare and Farnace.)

Recitative

MITRIDATE:  
Listen, Arbate. Even in my anger I should surely distinguish between Sifare and Farnace. But what have they been doing here? Have they both perhaps sought the Queen's love? Which of them does it seem that Aspasia favours? How should I behave towards her? Oh, speak, what have you seen and how much do you know? Tell Mitridate now.

ARBATE:  
My lord, as soon as Farnace entered the city, he hurried impatiently to speak of love to the Queen, offering her as a dowry the throne of Pontus and his hand in marriage.

MITRIDATE:  
Villain! Without allowing her time at least to shed the tears due to my ashes! And Sifare?

ARBATE:  
So far I have seen no sign of love in him, and he seems a worthy son of Mitridate, turning his thoughts only to war and revenge.

MITRIDATE:  
Go to him, Arbate, and assure him of my fatherly love. Meanwhile watch Farnace discreetly.

ARBATE:

I hurry obediently to fulfil the royal command. (Whatever can be on his mind?) (He departs.)

Accompanied Recitative

MITRIDATE:

Breathe at last, breathe, O heart of Mitridate. The most cruel of your fears has vanished. That son so dear to you you still find loyal, and in him you will not see yourself forced to punish a too beloved rival. Let Farnace wrong me: he appears to my jealous rage only as a hated son, my enemy, and long an admirer of the Romans. Ah, if ever Aspasia loves him, if he robs me of an affection, my due, let the traitor not hope for my pardon: for him I will forget that I am his father.

No. 10 Aria

MITRIDATE:

That rebel and that ungrateful son,  
I want him to fall lifeless at my feet,  
And in his treacherous blood  
Shall I avenge more than one offence.  
(He departs.)

ACT TWO

(The Royal Apartments. Ismene and Farnace enter.)

Recitative

ISMENE:

Is this the love, Farnace, is this the fidelity you swore to me? When I cross provinces and kingdoms and brave the oceans just to be with you, you seem to hardly know me, ungrateful man. And must I, a scorned lover, find you worshipping another?

FARNACE:

What can I say, Princess? Is it true that once I adored you. Far from you my passion gradually faded, finally died and gave way to a new love.

ISMENE:

I too have lived far from you.... No, for my kind it is not enough to despise those who despise us. The outrage which I suffer demands redress or revenge, and I myself will ask it of Mitridate.

FARNACE:

You will have little trouble in provoking him against a son he already loathes: even so do not hope that his severity will revive a dead love.

No. 11 Aria

FARNACE:  
Go, reveal my wrongdoing,  
And hasten my punishment,  
But maybe revenge  
Will cost you dear.  
When you see me punished  
For such a slight offence,  
You will accuse yourself  
Of excessive cruelty.  
(He departs.)

(Mitridate approaches.)

Recitative

ISMENE:  
Wretch, listen...oh, Mitridate!

MITRIDATE:  
I can read sufficiently in your face, Princess, what you want to say, what you desire. You shall have revenge on Farnace. He offends you and his father alike. I need only proof of his crimes, and then his fate is decided, nor shall being my son save him from his death.

ISMENE:  
You speak of death? Oh, Sir.

MITRIDATE:  
Go, and begin to forget him. Maybe you will have a more worthy husband in Sifare.

ISMENE:  
But he will not be the one I loved so much.  
(She leaves.)

Recitative

ASPASIA:  
Here I am at your command.

MITRIDATE:

Beloved Aspasia, the greatest misfortunes will be sweet to me, if only my return be not misfortune to you.  
I have explained myself, and the illustrious pledge of my faith which you wear is ample reminder of what you owe to me. Today in the temple, convince me of yours also.

ASPASIA:

My lord, you can do anything; he who gave me life, made me the slave of your will.

MITRIDATE:

Barbarous hussy! I understand you more than you think, and I see, alas, that I was told the truth. A son is tempting you and you listen to him, ungrateful one. But those false tears will not help him. Guards, bring Sifare to me.

(Two guards depart on receiving the order.)

ASPASIA:

What are you doing? Oh, sir, Sifare...

MITRIDATE:

I know. He is loyal to me, and maybe I should be less ashamed if such a son were the object of misbegotten love.  
But that Farnace should try to actually steal my bride, and that you should adore an insolent rogue, without virtue, shameless...(to Sifare who arrives)  
Come, my son, your father is betrayed.

Recitative

ASPASIA:

(I breathe again, O Gods!)

SIFARE:

My lord, what has happened?

MITRIDATE:

Your brother is Aspasia's lover, she, his. You whose loyalty is not shaken by the base example of a brother, or a mother, free Mitridate from the intrigues of a profligate and remind this ungrateful woman of her duty. Tell her she should fear to stir up my anger, that scorned love can become fury in a moment, and that it would be too late to repent.  
(He departs.)

Recitative

SIFARE:

What can I say? What do I hear? Heavens! Can it be true that the only reason for such anger is that Farnace is dear to you?

ASPASIA:

Farnace dear to me? I can forgive Mitridate, who does not know my secret feelings, for such a suspicion, but not Sifare, no.

SIFARE:

Then who can the fortunate rival be?

ASPASIA

You still do not know? You still doubt? Tell me, whom did I beg just now to be my shield against unjust force? And who till now, tell me, was worthy to speak to me of love without raising my anger?

SIFARE:

What do I hear? Am I then the happy culprit?

ASPASIA:

Unfortunately, Prince, you charmed me, and I still feel in spite of myself that this heart of mine adores you. Bound by a tyrannical law, I hid it from you, but now... (Arbate enters) Oh Gods! What brings Arbate?

Recitative

ARBATE:

Your father, Sifare, applauds your loyalty, and sparing the bow destined for Farnace he calls both sons and Aspasia to the camp. Ismene, too, is summoned to the great assembly, not an unimportant spectator, as I believe it. This was my command. I have delivered it. The rest depends on you.  
(He departs.)

Recitative

ASPASIA:

Oh day of sorrow!

SIFARE:

Oh fatal moment, which makes me the happiest and yet the most wretched man alive!

ASPASIA:

Ah, let us not try to weaken ourselves uselessly. I understand all that my duty demands of me, but I still await proof of your good faith.

SIFARE:

What can you want?

ASPASIA:

Vanish from my sight, and never see me again.

SIFARE:

Cruel command!

ASPASIA:

But necessary. I know my weakness too well; perhaps my strength is no greater than yours. If I were to see you an unworthy sigh would escape me, and my heart would take secret flight to its one and only love, from which heaven wishes to part it...

#### Accompanied Recitative

SIFARE:

No more, Queen, Oh, God, no more. If you wish Sifare to be obedient, at least do not show him such tenderness. I was the wicked cause of others' misfortunes, of your sorrow, by revealing my feelings, bringing to my dear father's throne the insane frenzy of an illicit love. Ah, you supreme Gods, why did you not destroy the words on my lips with a sudden thunderbolt? I would die innocent...

ASPASIA:

Sifare, where is your rash violence taking you? What more do you want of me? Return, Oh God, to reason, unless you wish me dead.

SIFARE:

Ah, no, forgive me, I was wrong. I leave you cradled in your innocence. I shall vanish from your sight because you wish it so, because loyalty, my duty, the peace of your heart demand it... Aspasia, farewell.

#### No. 13 Aria

SIFARE:

If you wish me wander  
Far from you, my beloved,  
Do not remember the sufferings  
You experience, my dear.  
I depart, my beautiful one, farewell,  
For if I stay longer with you,  
I shall forget my duty,

I shall forget myself.  
(He leaves.)

Accompanied Recitative

ASPASIA:

Thanks be to the Gods, he has gone. But what will become of you, unhappy heart of mine? Oh, since you were able to utter the cruel sentence, follow the policy which virtue decreed. Forget a man, fatal to you, think of your honour, and thus ensure your victory. But I only deceive myself! I can try, and I will try, since duty, alas, demands it. But hoping to attain it is useless.

No. 14 Aria

ASPASIA:

In the grave torment  
Which oppresses my breast  
I already feel peace  
Fading from my heart.  
I cannot bear  
This fierce struggle;  
For duty and love  
Rend my soul.

(Mitridate's camp. Mitridate, Ismene and Arbate are present.)

Recitative

MITRIDATE:

Here, where Asia's revenge is being prepared, O Princess, may it please you to sit with me.

ISMENE:

I obey readily your commands. And Farnace?

MITRIDATE:

Thanks to your pleas, his fate still hangs in the balance. May it please heaven that I do not find a traitor in him as well as a rival!

ISMENE:

What are you saying?

MITRIDATE:

Soon I discover. Arbate, let my sons come to me.



ARBATE:

They are already here, Sir.

(Farnace and Sifare enter).

Recitative

MITRIDATE:

Be seated, Princes, and hear me. I am going to take up my fearful sword, O sons, and from these desolate shores, girded with arms and glory, I shall hasten to avenge the honour of my throne, not on Pompei but on the Capitol.

SIFARE:

The Capitol?

FARNACE:

Alas, what hostile Deity can direct you to such a crazy enterprise, my lord? How much of your kingdoms remains intact! May this rather be your concern to preserve. If you depart, who will stay loyal? Who can protect me from the shifty Parthian and how...?

SIFARE:

It is right that there, whence offence comes upon us, the weight of vengeance should fall. But may it please you to put a younger man in charge, and while Farnace's cowardice forces you to remain in Asia, yield the honour of triumphing on the Tiber to my prowess.

FARNACE:

Vain hope. To Rome we are feeble enemies. Father, if it pleases you, accept, I urge you, the offer of peace.

MITRIDATE:

(Ismene, what more can you want to hear? The villain already has almost revealed himself.) And who is the glad bearer of this peace?

Recitative

FARNACE:

My lord, I am.

MITRIDATE:

Heavens! A Roman in the camp? Arbate, disarm Farnace, and in the dungeon of the great tower let him await the punishment for his crimes.

Recitative

MITRIDATE:

Noble Ismene, Oh, how I blush for you!

ISMENE:

Leave the shame to him who, by inventing such an evil plan, showed himself unworthy of such a great father.  
(She departs.)

Recitative

FARNACE:

Ah, since I am betrayed, let all be revealed now. On account of that face which unfortunately was the cause of my greatest crime, know, father, that I was not the only one to cause you outrage. Sifare is also your rival, and a more dangerous one; for where I found rebuffs, scorn and harshness, he, more welcome than me, was given love.

No. 16 Aria

FARNACE:

(to Mitridate)

I am guilty; I confess my fault;

And worthy of your anger

I do not ask for your pity.

But guiltier than me

Is this rival of yours,

(pointing to Sifare)

Who won the love

Of that bewitching beauty.

In my tragic grief

You, too, must mourn;

Sifare shall not laugh

At my misfortune.

(He departs, escorted by Arbate.)

Recitative

SIFARE:

And do you really believe, my lord...

MITRIDATE:

I shall soon know what I must believe. Stand apart from Aspasia, who is approaching. Hide and be silent. If you disobey you will both die. Do you hear me?

SIFARE:

I do. (Ah do not betray me, O fate!) (He hides.)

MITRIDATE:

(Here is the ungrateful woman). At last, Queen, I am myself again, and I see with shame that my wish to make you my wife, considering my state and yours, is too inappropriate. Let me be fairer to you, and when I depart to seek war and death, offer more sensibly Aspasia one of my sons in marriage.

SIFARE:  
(What do I hear?)

ASPASIA  
(Oh, heavens!)

MITRIDATE:  
Not Farnace: I yield only to Sifare.

SIFARE:  
(Oh, treachery!)

ASPASIA:  
Oh, do not torture me any more, Sir. I know that I was meant for Mitridate, and I know that we are both awaited now at the altar. Come.

MITRIDATE:  
I see, Aspasia: to spite me you wish to keep for Farnace all the affection of your ungrateful heart. And already your hate and contempt has passed from the father to the unhappy son.

ASPASIA:  
I despise him, my lord? You do not know me, and since after all I do not believe that you wish to deceive me

SIFARE:  
(Oh, rash girl!)

ASPASIA:  
... Learn that my heart never burned for Farnace, and that even before winning the honour of your royal glance, that faithful son of yours, the one I so much... Because he is like his father, and your favourite...

MITRIDATE:  
You loved him?  
And he loved you?

ASPASIA:  
Ah, our love was mutual, my lord... But, what is it? Your face has changed colour!

MITRIDATE:  
Sifare.

ASPASIA:

(Oh, God! Is Sifare here?)

SIFARE:  
(coming forward) All is lost.

ASPASIA:  
(to Mitridate)  
O cruel one  
So I was betrayed?

MITRIDATE  
I alone, I alone am so far the betrayed. You, unworthy pair, I shall shortly await in the palace. There, before leaving, I shall exact my revenge, and become infamous for the slaughter of my sons and my bride.

No. 17 Aria

MITRIDATE:  
I now strip my heart of pity,  
Ungrateful creatures:  
For you, traitors, I give  
Free rein to my fury.  
An outraged father and lover,  
I want vengeance and I want  
The weight of my righteous severity  
To crush you both.  
(He departs.)

SCENE 15

Recitative

ASPASIA:  
Sifare, for pity's sake draw your sword, and by your own hand punish me, the guilty source of your ills.

SIFARE:  
What are you saying, my soul?

ASPASIA:  
Here is my breast, strike now. Oh, God! let us forestall Mitridate's fury.

SIFARE:  
With my blood, if only Aspasia is willing, all shall be atoned... Oh, my queen, be advised: be prepared to please him, or at least to pretend: and remember that he is my father. By swearing eternal devotion to him, ascend the throne, and let Sifare with his cruel fate cost you nothing but tears.

Accompanied Recitative

ASPASIA:

I, bride to that monster, whose ruthless love divides us for ever?

SIFARE:

Yet a short time ago you did not speak thus.

ASPASIA:

I was not then aware of all his barbarity. Now how could I follow such a husband to the altar? How could I clasp the hand, still reeking, alas, with the blood of my murdered lover. No, Sifare, forgive me, I cannot do it; it is useless to ask me.

SIFARE:

So you want...

ASPASIA:

Yes, to precede you to Hades. To cross that stream I lack neither courage nor daring. But I could not bear to see the death agonies of my beloved.

SIFARE:

No, fair heart,  
we shall die together.

No.18 Duet

SIFARE:

If I cannot live,  
If you, too, must die,  
My idol, let me at least  
Die with you.

ASPASIA:

With these words, Oh, God!  
You worsen my suffering.  
My love, you want too much,  
You ask too much of me.

SIFARE:

Then...

ASPASIA:

Alas, be silent.

SIFARE:

Oh, Gods!

BOTH:

Cruel, ungrateful stars,  
If only this excess  
Of grief would kill me now!

ACT THREE

Recitative

MITRIDATE:

Those who offend me shall perish, and let my anger not care to distinguish between one son and the other. So be it and Sifare shall die first... (Aspasia enters, followed by Ismene) Alas, what an encounter!

ASPASIA:

(throwing away her bands scornfully) To the ground with you, vain encumbrances of the head! As you do not even serve as a funeral accessory to my death, I trample upon you.

MITRIDATE:

What is this passion?

ISMENE:

One worthy, Sir, of her who was born free. She desperately tried to use your gifts to hang herself; but the Gods mercifully broke the noose. Oh, if her life is dear to you, if you still have a spark of love in your heart, restrain an anger that is perhaps excessive. I am suffering the same outrage as you, yet I do not claim to avenge my betrayed love with excessive violence.

No. 19 Aria

ISMENE:

You know how much I, too, suffer  
For the one who set my heart afire,  
And yet my grief  
Does not change into fury.  
I could punish him, it is true,  
I tolerate the insults,  
And do not yet despair  
Of conquering that heart.  
(She departs.)

SCENE 2

Recitative

ASPASIA:

Cruel king, ruthless king, let me at least once see truth on your lips. Do not deceive me and speak: what has happened to Sifare? Victim of your jealous anger, maybe he is already dead?

MITRIDATE:

No, he still lives, and if you so desire, you can save his life.

ASPASIA:

How?

MITRIDATE:

By not abusing my patience, by being kind to my desires, and by restoring in your heart the love which belongs to me.

ASPASIA:

You hope in vain for me to change, my Lord. I care not for entreaties, and I fear no threats. I understand fully what my fate will be; but I do not dread the man who dared to hasten it.

MITRIDATE:

Think about it; my compassion offers you one more chance to repent.

ASPASIA:

Sir, let your innocent son benefit from your pity, which is useless to me. Now vent your fury on me as much as you wish; but by destroying her who is guilty, pardon Sifare.

MITRIDATE:

Sifare? Ah, you wretch! You expect me to believe that the man dear to you and who still occupies your thoughts is loyal to me? No, your very pity condemns him. With you he shall be a victim of my vengeance.

(Arbate enters)

Recitative

ARBATE:

My liege, hasten either to save yourself or to fight. Landing upon the beach, the Romans in one moment have put your troops to flight and are launching a savage attack on these walls.

MITRIDATE:

O Gods, have you still more thunderbolts for me? Hurry men to the defences, Arbate. (to Aspasia) You shall not enjoy my misfortune, faithless woman: Farewell.

No. 20 Aria

MITRIDATE:

I go to meet my fate,  
Cruel Heaven, pitiless destiny;  
But meanwhile an ungrateful soul  
Shall precede my spirit. (He departs.)

Recitative

ASPASIA:



Untimely tears, why, in spite of myself, do you fall from my eyes and flood my breast? Now is not a time for weakness. An unhappy woman must await the end of her sufferings with more courage: that last farewell tells me all.

(A guard brings Aspasia a goblet of poison.)

Accompanied Recitative

ASPASIA:

Ah, my foreboding was right! Here is Mitridate's last gift. O my right hand, will you fear to approach the fatal cup, you who boldly put the ropes around my neck? Ah, no, let me take it. And I must thank the donor. Through him I regain my liberty; through him I can decide my fate, and in the grave at the end of my life, find that peace which was stolen from me.

No. 21 Cavatina

ASPASIA:

Pallid shades, who see  
My misery from Elysium,  
Pray restore to me  
All the happiness which I lost.

Accompanied Recitative

Let me drink... Alas, what icy cold is holding back my hand?... What cruel idea confuses my mind? At this moment, perhaps Sifare is drinking his death! Oh, what fear afflicts me! What a tragic vision! Can it be true? No, innocence always has the Gods on its side. They will all defend so great a hero, and if there is one in Heaven who may arm against him, this black poison, which I now pour inside me in honour of Nemesis, will quell such anger.

(Sifare enters.)

Recitative

SIFARE:

What are you doing, queen?

ASPASIA:

Ah, you are safe then?

SIFARE:

Ismene broke my chains in time. Let the lethal potion spill on the floor.

ASPASIA:

Can you not see, rash man, that maybe you make my suffering longer, and once again wrong your father?

SIFARE:

Aspasia must live, and let the Gods take care of the rest. While the battle rages, these soldiers are for your protection.

ASPASIA:

You leave me thus?

SIFARE:

A more sacred duty far from you, my dear, now summons Sifare. At Mitridate's side I shall wield my sword.

Though he was unfair, he is still my father! And if I do not save him now, I have lost everything, and shall despise life.

ASPASIA:

Oh, the best son is worthy of his father!  
(She leaves with her escort.)

Recitative

SIFARE:

What is this life worth, where I cannot hope to enjoy a moment of happiness, where I must in eternal conflict waver between love and duty? If you rob me of it, I shall be grateful to you, O Gods. The honour of dying innocent is too great a reward for the loss of my days, and the man who can die a hero has lived enough.

No. 22 Aria

SIFARE:

If the severity of ungrateful fortune  
Makes my faith uncertain,  
Ah, let death at least reveal  
The fair purity of my soul.  
I am now weary of a life  
Which exposes me to the world,  
Having to tolerate  
The shameful charge of traitor.  
(He leaves.)

(The interior of a tower adjoining the walls of Nymphaea. Farnace in chains, seated on a stone.)

Recitative

FARNACE:

Cruel fate, hostile stars, are these the fruits which I reap from such fine hopes? I, the first-born, heir to many kingdoms, sit on a stone, and instead of ascending the throne, am chained by the foot? Oh, Heavens, what do I hear...? The clash of arms...with repeated blows, what external force struck

the walls and now demolishes them? Is it a dream or am I awake and delirious? Must I now fear or hope?

Oh, the Roman genius is always fortunate and invincible in every enterprise! ...But my father?

Accompanied Recitative

FARNACE:

I must go... Oh, Heaven, but where shall I direct my bold steps? Ah, I hear you, O sacred, powerful voices of nature, O proud remorse of my heart. No, I am not so callous, and at this price, for this throne, Aspasia, Romans, I detest you.

No. 24 Aria

FARNACE:

Now from my eyes the veil is lifted,  
Base affections, I abandon you:  
I have repented and heed  
Only the cries of my heart.  
(He departs.)

(A hall adjoining a great courtyard in the Palace of Nymphaea. In the distance the Roman fleet can be seen burning. Mitridate is carried in, wounded. At his side are Sifare and Arbate.)

MITRIDATE:

Son, friend, enough. My fate demands other than tears from your love. If untimely death curtails my plans, if Mitridate is no longer allowed to breathe, as he craved, in the heart of charred Rome, at least a foreign sword has no credit for the blow. He falls dying, but by his own hand, a victor, not the vanquished.

SIFARE:

Why, hostile fate, was I not able to prevent such a desperate act?

MITRIDATE:

You have still come in good time, my son. My last gaze has admired your loyalty and your courage.

(Aspasia enters)

MITRIDATE:

Ah, come, o sweet, tender object of my love, and unhappy recipient of my fury. Heaven did not in vain deliver you from it, and you alone can pay my obligations. My sceptre and crown would be but poor reward to a son without your right hand. May he receive it from a grateful father, and may eternal oblivion meantime wipe from your hearts the cruel memory of my fury.

ASPASIA

Live, my lord, and for both of us at least preserve, if you wish us to be happy, the greatest of all gifts in your remaining days.

MITRIDATE:

I have lived, Aspasia. Now may my son provide for your security.

SIFARE:

Oh, father, let me first go to punish the wicked Farnace...

(Ismene enters with Farnace, who throws himself at the Mitridate's feet.)

Recitative

ISMENE:

Sire, let him not be called guilty who brings illustrious proof to the feet of the King of his repentance and loyalty. Those fires that you see are the work of Farnace. He wreaked havoc on the Roman armies, and as for the liberty he had from the Romans, he was not ashamed to show them ingratitude in order to return to his beloved father as a son of fair name.

MITRIDATE:

O Gods, what new joy is this for me! Rise, Farnace, and come to your father's arms. Now I restore my tenderness to you. It is enough; I die supremely happy.

No.25 Chorus

Let us not yield to the Capitol.  
We must resist that pride  
Which still cannot curb itself.  
Always war and never peace  
A haughty Genius shall have from us  
When it presumes to rob the whole  
World of freedom.