

Georg Friedrich Händel
ACIS AND GALATEA
(c. 1718)

A Serenata; or Pastoral Entertainment

Words by John Gay, Alexander Pope and John Hughes

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Galatea (soprano)

Acis (tenor)

Damon (tenor)

Polyphemus (bass)

Chorus of Shepherds and Shepherdesses

1. Sinfonia

2. Chorus

Oh, the pleasure of the plains!
Happy nymphs and happy swains,
Harmless, merry, free and gay,
Dance and sport the hours away.
For us the zephyr blows,
For us distills the dew,
For us unfolds the rose,
And flow'rs display their hue.
For us the winters rain,
For us the summers shine,
Spring swells for us the grain,
And autumn bleeds the wine.
Oh, the pleasure. . . *da capo*.

3. *Accompagnato*

Galatea

Ye verdant plains and woody mountains,
Purling streams and bubbling fountains,
Ye painted glories of the field,
Vain are the pleasures which ye yield;
Too thin the shadow of the grove,
Too faint the gales, to cool my love.

4. *Air*

Galatea

Hush, ye pretty warbling quire!
Your thrilling strains
Awake my pains,
And kindle fierce desire.
Cease your song, and take your flight,
Bring back my Acis to my sight!
Hush. . . *da capo*

5. *Air*

Acis

Where shall I seek the charming fair?
Direct the way, kind genius of the mountains!
O tell me, if you saw my dear!
Seeks she the grove, or bathes in crystal fountains?
Where. . . *da capo*

6. *Recitative*

Damon

Stay, shepherd, stay!
See, how thy flocks in yonder valley stray!
What means this melancholy air?
No more thy tuneful pipe we hear.

7. *Air*

Damon

Shepherd, what art thou pursuing?
Heedless running to thy ruin;
Share our joy, our pleasure share,
Leave thy passion till tomorrow,

Let the day be free from sorrow,
Free from love, and free from care!
Shepherd. . . *da capo*

8. Recitative

Acis

Lo, here my love, turn, Galatea, hither turn thy eyes!
See, at thy feet the longing Acis lies.

9. Air

Acis

Love in her eyes sits playing,
And sheds delicious death;
Love on her lips is straying,
And warbling in her breath!
Love on her breast sits panting
And swells with soft desire;
No grace, no charm is wanting,
To set the heart on fire.
Love in her eyes. . . *da capo*

10. Recitative

Galatea

Oh, didst thou know the pains of absent love,
Acis would ne'er from Galatea rove.

11. Air

Galatea

As when the dove
Laments her love,
All on the naked spray;
When he returns,
No more she mourns,
But loves the live-long day.
Billing, cooing,
Panting, wooing,
Melting murmurs fill the grove,
Melting murmurs, lasting love.
As when. . . *da capo*

12. Duet

Galatea, Acis

Happy we!

What joys I feel!

What charms I see

Of all youths/nymphs thou dearest boy/brightest fair!

Thou all my bliss, thou all my joy!

Happy. . . *da capo*

13. Chorus

Wretched lovers! Fate has past

This sad decree: no joy shall last.

Wretched lovers, quit your dream!

Behold the monster Polypheme!

See what ample strides he takes!

The mountain nods, the forest shakes;

The waves run frighten'd to the shores:

Hark, how the thund'ring giant roars!

14. Accompagnato

Polyphemus

I rage — I melt — I burn!

The feeble god has stabb'd me to the heart.

Thou trusty pine,

Prop of my godlike steps, I lay thee by!

Bring me a hundred reeds of decent growth

To make a pipe for my capacious mouth;

In soft enchanting accents let me breathe

Sweet Galatea's beauty, and my love.

15. Air

Polyphemus

O ruddier than the cherry,

O sweeter than the berry,

O nymph more bright

Than moonshine night,

Like kidlings blithe and merry.

Ripe as the melting cluster,

No lily has such lustre;

Yet hard to tame

As raging flame,

And fierce as storms that bluster!

O ruddier. . . *da capo*

16. Recitative

Polyphemus

Whither, fairest, art thou running,
Still my warm embraces shunning?

Galatea

The lion calls not to his prey,
Nor bids the wolf the lambkin stay.

Polyphemus

Thee, Polyphemus, great as Jove,
Calls to empire and to love,
To his palace in the rock,
To his dairy, to his flock,
To the grape of purple hue,
To the plum of glossy blue,
Wildings, which expecting stand,
Proud to be gather'd by thy hand.

Galatea

Of infant limbs to make my food,
And swill full draughts of human blood!
Go, monster, bid some other guest!
I loathe the host, I loathe the feast.

17. Air

Polyphemus

Cease to beauty to be suing,
Ever whining love disdaining.
Let the brave their aims pursuing,
Still be conqu'ring not complaining.
Cease. . . *da capo*

18. Air

Damon

Would you gain the tender creature,
Softly, gently, kindly treat her:
Suff'ring is the lover's part.
Beauty by constraint possessing
You enjoy but half the blessing,
Lifeless charms without the heart.
Would you. . . *da capo*

19. Recitative

Acis

His hideous love provokes my rage.
Weak as I am, I must engage!
Inspir'd with thy victorious charms,
The god of love will lend his arms.

20. Air

Acis

Love sounds th'alarm,
And fear is a-flying!
When beauty's the prize,
What mortal fears dying?
In defence of my treasure,
I'd bleed at each vein;
Without her no pleasure,
For life is a pain.
Love sounds. . . *da capo*

21. Air

Damon

Consider, fond shepherd,
How fleeting's the pleasure,
That flatters our hopes
In pursuit of the fair!
The joys that attend it,
By moments we measure,
But life is too little
To measure our care.
Consider. . . *da capo*

22. Recitative

Galatea

Cease, oh cease, thou gentle youth,
Trust my constancy and truth,
Trust my truth and pow'rs above,
The pow'rs propitious still to love!

23. Trio

Galatea & Acis

The flocks shall leave the mountains,
The woods the turtle dove,
The nymphs forsake the fountains,
Ere I forsake my love!

Polyphemus

Torture! fury! rage! despair!
I cannot, cannot bear!

Galatea & Acis

Not show'rs to larks so pleasing,
Nor sunshine to the bee,
Not sleep to toil so easing,
As these dear smiles to me.

Polyphemus

Fly swift, thou massy ruin, fly!
Die, presumptuous Acis, die!

24. Accompagnato

Acis

Help, Galatea! Help, ye parent gods!
And take me dying to your deep abodes.

25. Chorus

Mourn, all ye muses! Weep, all ye swains!
Tune, tune your reeds to doleful strains!
Groans, cries and howlings fill the neighb'ring shore:
Ah, the gentle Acis is no more!

26. Solo & Chorus

Galatea

Must I my Acis still bemoan,
Inglorious crush'd beneath that stone?

Chorus

Cease, Galatea, cease to grieve!
Bewail not whom thou canst relieve.

Galatea

Must the lovely charming youth
Die for his constancy and truth?

Chorus

Cease, Galatea, cease to grieve!
Bewail not whom thou canst relieve;
Call forth thy pow'r, employ thy art,
The goddess soon can heal thy smart.

Galatea

Say what comfort can you find?
For dark despair o'erclouds my mind.

Chorus

To kindred gods the youth return,
Through verdant plains to roll his urn.

27. Recitative

Galatea

'Tis done! Thus I exert my pow'r divine;
Be thou immortal, though thou art not mine!

28. Air

Galatea

Heart, the seat of soft delight,
Be thou now a fountain bright!
Purple be no more thy blood,
Glide thou like a crystal flood.
Rock, thy hollow womb disclose!
The bubbling fountain, lo! it flows;
Through the plains he joys to rove,
Murm'ring still his gentle love.

29. Chorus

Galatea, dry thy tears,
Acis now a god appears!
See how he rears him from his bed,
See the wreath that binds his head.
Hail! thou gentle murm'ring stream,
Shepherds' pleasure, muses' theme!
Through the plains still joy to rove,
Murm'ring still thy gentle love.