

THE BRIDE OF DIONYSUS

MUSIC DRAMA IN THREE ACTS

The poem by
Robert Calverley Trevelyan

Set to Music by
Donald Francis Tovey

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

MINOS King of Crete.....*Bass*

ARIADNE, his elder daughter.....*Soprano*

PHAEDRA, his younger daughter.....*Contralto*

THESEUS.....*Tenor*

DIONYSUS.....*Bass*

CHROMIS, a *Satyr*.....*Tenor*

CHORUS OF ATHENIAN CAPTIVES.....*Soprano, Mezzo soprano, and Alto*
(6 youths and 7 maidens)

CHORUS OF NEREIDS.....*Soprano and Alto*

CHORUS OF CRETANS

CHORUS OF SATYRS –*Tenor and Bass*

FULL CHORUS OF MAENADS, BACCHANALS, AND SATYRS

THE BRIDE OF DIONYSUS

ACT I.

Bright noonday. The Stern of a Ship of State.

MINOS *enthroned, with ARIADNE and PHAEDRA Standing on his either Side.* CRETAN HERALDS, WARRIORS *and* ATTENDANTS. *The Song of the CAPTIVES upon the unseen Athenian Ship is heard faintly, as though from some distance.*

SCENE I

CHORUS of ATHENIANS.

Dark ship of doom, slow, yet more slow
Southward o'er bright surges go !
Nay, black sail, stay, ah stay !
Droop droop; fall limp and slack.
Blow, thou wind, another way:
Waft me swift to Athens back.

Ah, vain, vain
Heart to hopes o' fain !
Hope only thy death's pain.

MINOS

Once more returned the wished-for day makes glad
my soul.
From hated Athens once more yonder death-black
sail
Draws nigh, bearing her tributary freight, death-
doomed,
Righteous reprisal for my 'son Androgeos' blood.
Go then, ye heralds, haste and from their ship bring
hither
Before my throne these children of those that slew
my child.
With furled sails now I bid their ship no nearer ride.

If any strive, seize them, spare not, but lead them
bound
Perforce. My captives are they now, so let them
learn.

Exeunt heralds and Several armed men.

CHORUS of ATHENIANS. *nearer.*

Athens, at the thought of the
Tears are standing in mine eyes.
Yon dark alien hills no more they see:
Like a vision thou dost rise.
Thy tall cliffs with temples white
Mid the clouds I see them bright:
Thy loved plains with olives fair
Quiver in the green waves there.

Northward, ah northward let us fix our eyes!
No, no!
Naught may it stead our woe
Idly to dream so.
Deathward, deathward still our swift ship flies.

ARIADNE and PHAEDRA during this Chorus have gone to side of the ship, and stand looking out over the sea.

ARIADNE.

Hark, Phaedra ! Is thy heart not touched with ruth
To hear so sweetly yon doomed captives sing,
Though of their own death be their
song?

(Turning to MINOS.)

Father,
What need is there that these should
die?

MINOS.

No need,

If with sweet melodies they might enchant

My heart to forget Justice, as now it seems

They have charmed thine.

ARIADNE.

They draw so near us, we can see their faces.

How scared they look, how pale!

They seem but children, younger than we are.

MINOS.

Androgeos, thy brother, when the Athenians

Murdered him, was no older than are these.

ARIADNE.

What evil have these done thee? Oh yet show mercy.

MINOS.

Such mercy as their fathers showed my child.

ARIADNE..

Alas, how can we deem such vengeance just, For
one life many lives?

MINOS, *angrily*.

Not by some private hand in obscure strife

He perished, but amidst the assembled citizens.

Ne'er yet contending at their festival

Had hero so divine to Athens come

Maddened with savage envy they beheld

Their proudest champions by a stranger vanquished.

Whelmed 'neath their wolf-like fury, there in the
dust.

Stabbed, gashed and marred his fair young limbs
sank down,

While with that noble blood forth gushed his life.

City and people justly had I destroyed:

Yet for this tribute hath my mercy spared them.

ARIADNE *turns sadly away towards the sea.*

ARIADNE, *after a pause.*

Look, Phaedra!

Slowly the black sail from the mast drops down.

Our heralds leap to the deck; the captives shrink

In Panic back to the stern

PHAEDRA

But among them is one more tall, more noble of
mien.

Fearless and proud he stands.

ATHENIANS *off the stage.*

Theseus, help us! Theseus !

ARIADNE.

Hark, what a cry was that!

They seize, they bind them:

They would drag them along by force.

THESEUS, *off the stage.*

Forbear, slaves! Forbear!

Touch them not! Bind them not!

ARIADNE, *turning indignantly away.*

Ah cruel! cruel!

THESEUS, *off the stage.*

Poseidon, be with me now!

Poseidon, father!

A shrill scream from an Athenian.

CRETANS *on the stage.*

Behold, behold him!

PHAEDRA

Like a lion he has leapt on them!

CRETANS

He has struck down the foremost:

At his feet he lies slain.

Athens shall pay this outrage

PHAEDRA.

Like slaves they shrink back before him,

Unarmed he defies them.

CRETANS.

But in his hand now gleams a sword snatched from
the slain.

MINOS, *rising.*

Shame on these cowards ! Dares no man go near
And smite this madman, or wrest his weapon from
him?

PHAEDRA.

No madman is this, father.

See how he stands, fearlessly,

Calm and at ease, parleying with his foes.

MINOS

Thus to defy me! Thus before my face

To slay my heralds !

PHAEDRA.

Hither he guides the boat.

Our spearmen hold aloof,

Silent, fearing his sword.

CRETANS.

Who is this that weaponless

Mocketh at spear and sword?

Can this be he

By whom Minotaur shall be quelled at length?

MINOS, with CRETANS.

Who is this that lawlessly

Scorneth the sanction of treaties?

Though the he fears not, yet Is a servant mine

By whom ere long to fear he shall be taught.

ACT II. PART I.

SCENE VI

THESEUS *sleeps. A dim light appears in the back
wall, which opens,
and through the opening ARIADNE enters*

ARIADNE.

Theseus!

THESEUS.

Phaedra!

ARIADNE.

Hist! ,It is I, Ariadne.

THESEUS.

What more with me would Minos now?

ARIADNE.

Hardly at my own peril have I returned.
Theseus, weaponless into the Labyrinth
Must thou be cast: yet thither
Will I too enter; a sword-

THESEUS, *starting*.
A sword!

ARIADNE.
-will I bring you.

THESEUS.
Fast locked will be the gates, the guard strict set.

ARIADNE.
There is a hidden gate through caverned rocks
Known to no man save Daedalus. He now
Shall guide me-

THESEUS.
Daedalus! Wouldst thou trust
That ancient cunning traitor?

ARIADNE.
Yes, 'tis he
Who by his cunning to this prison once more
Hath won me entrance, for their sakes, his
countrymen,
When long years since, building their bane he
wronged,
But now would save.
He to that door will guide me.

THESEUS.

And from that door shall Daedalus
Help thee to find us?
Else
Lost in the Labyrinth's myriad branching maze
Thou too shalt perish.

ARIADNE.
No.
See what I bring.
Each tangled crypt, each cavern's winding snare
Did Daedalus on these brazen tablets grave.
Thus from the secret gate this passage leads
To the great stairways's foot,
Where I must find you.
There in the dark await me.
Stray not thence
One step, else we are lost.

THESEUS.
Ariadne!
How, how worthily may I recompense thy deed?

ARIADNE.
Ah, once I imagined,
what else but this for me were possible
Born of like mortal nature with your own?
To Daedalus must I haste for council now.
At midnight Minos comes to take you hence.
Let them not stray one step from the stairway's foot.
Farewell.
Here to your peril am I lingering.

SCENE VII

THESEUS *alone. He Gazes a while at the place of*
ADIADNE'S *exit.*

THESEUS.

Her shadow did I deem thee?

Oh blind!

blind!

ACT II. PART II.

SCENE X

THESEUS *turns away down an opposite passage which instantly conceals him. The moonlight fails. Suddenly the scene vanishes in complete darkness.*

THESEUS.

Ho, thou son of Pasiphae!

From Minos, Thy foster father to greet thee am I here!

A dull light appears and resolves itself into the smoke of hastily lighted torches. The CRETAN WARRIORS are gazing through the open door in consternation at the slain MINOTAUR who has been hurled against the steps of the stairway. The light falls upon his hands, gigantic and dark, but unmistakably human, stretched upwards above the horns of his bull's head; the rest is shapelessness and shadow.

SCENE XI

PHAEDRA.

Fail me not now, oh treacherous Aphrodite!

ACT III. PART I.

SCENE I

The seashore of the island of Naxos, by moonlight.
PHAEDRA. *She is standing, occupied with the instruments of her magic; a fire in a small brazier, and a magic wheel. The fire burns high of low according to PHAEDRA'S words. As the curtain rises it is dying down, with feeble flickers.*

PHAEDRA.

In vain! In vain!

Low dies my fire, and low

Hangs the moon, sinking slow.

Mockingly yonder the waves whisper and moan,

The night passes, and I

Heartsick wait still, still her alone.

O Hecate, Hecate!

Wilt thou not hear me?

What have I left undone that I should do?

What rite neglected?

Lo, once more on the flames these magic herbs I throw,

These leaves laurel strewn.

As the fire that slept now wakening leaps up high.

So now in his heart set burning may the love waken.

As the leaves by the quick flames taken shrivel and are seen no more,

May this new love in his heart so shrivel and die.

Ah me! More low

Droops the moon, sinking slow.

Now, now my chant renewing

Once more this brazen wheel,

To false, false love's undoing,

Slowly, set slowly turning

As the wheel turns softly, softly

So from her arms entwining, where now he lies,

So softly may he turn and softly rise,

Stealthily, lest she be wakened,
Forth from the false bride's bower
With trance rapt mind
Gliding silently casting no glance behind
Forth from the dim woodways,
Out into the moon white haze
Hastening with steps unflinching,
Swifter, my wheel, now swifter!
On through the dew drenched grasses,
through briars that clutch and tear,
Over stones rough and bare,
Drawn by one tence thought only
Overmastering, never altering,
Drawn swifter and yet more swift,
Nearer, more near
Down the rocks o'er the sand and drift,
Till here,
Here at last he shall stand.
Where the slow waves suddenly, ceaselessly whisper
and moan,
While night passes, and I
Heartsick wait still, still here alone.

Lost! Betrayed!
Hecate! Hecate!
Is it thus thou wilt scorn,
O Hecate, me thy votaress?

The wreath!
This hallowed wreath I wear,
By him given me against our bridal day!
Yea mine his soul, even as itself is mine.
To thee, O my fire, to thee now will I give it.
Burn! Burn!
Leap again fierce and gay!
For thee this mystic rose
Leaf from leaf thus I tear,

Leaf after leaf cast to thee thus thy prey
Deathless petals, nurselings of Aphrodite,
Though fair and fresh as of old in her sacred garden,
Yet now by a magic than your own more mighty
In Hecate's fire red rose
Writhe, shrivel and die, deathless, delicate petals.

Yea Mine, mine, mine
His soul who gave thee even as thou, his wreath art
mine.
Let him haste, haste hither
From the flames to save you, yea his own soul to
save,
Lest that too wither,
Beneath my spells wither and waste and pine
O Theseus haste thee hither, for thou art mine.
Theseus, Theseus, at length art thou come?
Long have I waited; long hast thou delayed.

SCENE V

*The ship of the ATHENIANS becomes visible out to
sea in the dim twilight.*

ATHENIANS.
O ye strong winged foam wanderers, glad birds of
the sea,
A comrade of your roaming gladly now shall I be,
Over blue calms homeward gliding, without dread,
without care.

ACT III PART II

SCENE VI

Another part of the shore of Naxos. The sea is in the

background to the left. On the right the ground rises to a cliff overhanging the sea. On the summit is a pine tree. The day is breaking slowly. CHROMIS is seated upon the cliff, playing on his pan-pipes. Other SATYRS (chorus of tenors and basses) are sitting below

CHROMIS

Syrinx is lost, lost
And sad is the heart of Pan,
calm, sad and still,
That once like a wild wave at the wind's will
Leapt with love and was tost,
When e'er among her sister wood nymphs walking
He saw her, or might hear her sweet voice talking
And in some lone place longed alone to meet her,
Then with songs grave and wise enchant her mind,
So gently gently Woo her to be kind
But meeting ah fool, fool! his wise words fail him
Nor aught that day might his swift hooves avail him,
But in drear reeds he lost her.

CHORUS of SATYRS and FAUNS
fool, fool! his wise words failed him
So in drear reeds he lost her.

CHROMIS

Long ago that woe befell:
long years ago Syrinx fled, Pan pursued
Yet not dead is Syrinx no:
In Pan's pipes she liveth still;
There doth sleep, till oft,
In some sad mood
Tender as dusk or dawn
On upland lawn or sea shore solitude,
With a kiss on her lips denied him now no more
He wakes her and yet sweeter than of old

Her voice is heard, now soft,
Now clear and bold in answer to his skill.
Thus of his lost love oft
Hath Pan yet had his will.

CHORUS of SATYRS and FAUNS

Now sweeter than of old her voice is heard
Thus of his lost love oft
Hath Pan yet had his will.

SCENE VII

ARIADNE appears breaking through the bushes in the foreground.

ARIADNE

What sounds wake me?
So clear and wild, yet sweet!
Where art thou, Theseus?
Where art thou, Theseus?
Was it in dream I heard thee sing?
Nowhere I see thee by this dawn's dim light
Yet well I know that here along thou wilt not leave
me long
O Love, Love, that with tender thought filleth the
heart thou hast made thine own,
As the dawn with soft light
Filleth the earth and sky, and bringeth comfort to the
lone heart of Night;
O Love, Love, the evil of thee be spoken
By those that ne'er have known thee, yet I that know
thee now,
Of thee will I think no evil,
In thee will I rest my trust, nor deem that thou
Canst e'er have broken
Hearts that in thee have trusted

Thought I hear not thy voice,
Thought I look not within thine eyes,
Yet would that I now might know,
O my love, what thoughts are thine

Are they blissful and calm as mine?
Do the waves that up on the sand
Break tranquil and slow
Doth the wind that with a soft and whispering noise
Stirreth among the leaves above,
Through the grass below,
Speak to thee with a voice that now thy soul grown
wise
Hearing may understand?
Yet alas but a brief while when thou art hence,
May glad thoughts my loneliness beguile.
Dim fears I know not whence
In my heart arise;
For the light of the dawn's smile
On sea and land to a frown hath faded,
and changed are the voices of waves breaking
and leaves that whisper
In a moment grown estranged.

O my love, fain, how fain
Would I hear thy voice again,
Would I look within thine eyes!
Theseus!

Ah!
The God of this lone isle!
He is gone – Theseus,
Why so long has thou left me here alone
Where such things haunt?

SCENE IX

DIONYSUS *appears out of the mist.*

DIONYSUS
Io! Io!
Maenads of Naxos!

SATYRS and FAUNS, *led by CHROMIS, enter in great agitation.*

CHORUS of SATYRS and FAUNS
Hear ye the voice of our Bromios?

CHROMIS
Where is she , the forsaken one?
Evilly my heart bodeth.

CHORUS of SATYRS and FAUNS
To the waves she hath leapt, she is slain.

Dionysus! Dionysus!
Evoi! Saboi!
Bromios! Bromios!

The mists have now dispersed, revealing DIONYSUS transfigured to his authentic form as a God, and ARIADNE who stands beside him in the attire of a Bacchanal. The MAENADS, BACCHANALS, SATYRS and FAUNS remain below, gazing up at them in hushed and awe-stricken adoration.

DIONYSUS
O thou pure soul,
Thou chosen shrine of
Justice and of Love
Through mortal suffering winnowed and found true.
Out of the weary wheel of change and woe
Hast thou flown forth.

My thyrsus in thy hand
Thus do I set,
Thy brows with vine and
Ivy thus I crown.
Mortal hence forth no more,
The Bride art thou of Dionysus that God whom
unknown
So long thy thirsting spirit had desired.
Child of earth and starry heaven,
My wine for thee I pour pressed forth from life's
true vine.

CHORUS of MAENADS,
BACCHANALS, SATYRS and FAUNS
Blessed art thou, O Bride divine
He whom the whole world loves is thine!
Our Thyoneus, the hope and the delight
Of deities and mortals, yea, our Evius,
the Lord of the Vine of Life.
Whose roots, Deep as Tartarus entwined,
From the strong heart of Earth draw their might:
And abroad o'er all the world to the starry heavens
above
Are its leaves and tendrils curled. and from its fruits
He presseth forth his wine into the bowl
of rapture and remembrance, that the soul of all
mankind
From sorrow and from death setteth loose.
Dithurambos son of Zeus!
Yet Sorrow's child is he
Born of sad Semele,
Whom love untimely slew
O sorrow pitying heart!
O Love divine
There springing ever new!
Yea, blessed Ariadne for thee too and for thy

loveborn woe,
Sorrow divine within that heart to Love
Divine did grow
Child of Earth and starry Heaven,
for thee his wine Dionysus presseth forth from
Life's true Vine.

ARIADNE
Mine!
Mine Iacchus, have I found thee
Thou my true my heavenly Lethe?
in thy glad life-giving vintage
Have I quenched my soul's long thirst?
O thou serpent world sustaining
All enfolding, now I know thee:
Now, oh now thy quickening poison
within my newborn heart is burning
Round my soul now art thou winding
Now O know thee dream foreknown
Mine Iacchus O my God!
Whither Bacchus wouldst thou guide me
Earth and ocean far above
Within thy brightness folded lifted sheltered by thy
love?
Amid revelling stars fire breathing,
Their rapt dance ever wreathing
The music of the choirs within my soul;
With thee, O Dionysus thee the world's life, the
world's glory
With the fullness of thy Godhead made whole!
END