BERENICE

The following pages are taken from the printed programme of the first performance of the multi-media opera **Berenice** in Southampton 1993, and include the full libretto with stage directions.

The first public showing of a new DVD based on this performance but visually redesigned will be given by New Music Brighton as part of a concert in the **Friends' Meeting House**, Ship Street, Brighton at **6pm** on **Oct 27 2012.**

BERENICE

Music	Ric Graebner
Images	Larry Wakefield
Choreography	Anna Carlisle
Soprano	Valerie Nunns
Berenice	Amanda Banks
Titus	Dean Xavier
Antiochus	Richard Knight
Mourners	Bill McCann, Geraint McCann, Richard Harding

Costumes	Lucy Goffin
Lighting	Alasdair Graebner
Production Co-ordinator	Bill McCann
Sound/Light	Richard Gibson, Ian Baker, Alex Charge

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Synopsis

Berenice, a Jewish queen, and Titus, son of the Roman emperor, are lovers. But Antiochus, their closest friend, is secretly in love with Berenice.

Scene 1 (Introduction and Aria of Antiochus). The opening tableau suggests various erotic undercurrents which disturb the apparently idyllic friendship of Antiochus, Berenice and Titus. Fanfares - always suggesting some sort of threat to personal fulfillment (often associated with Rome, public duty) - here signal a rupture between Antiochus and the lovers. The tableau disintegrates leaving him alone, gazing into an empty space. His initial reverie eventually gives way to a torrent of despair and frustration over the impossible burden of friendship complicated by unrequitable passion.

Scene 2 (Dance for Berenice and Titus) starts in a contrastingly relaxed and flirtatious mood. However, the closing of the scene gradually intimates that all may not be so secure for the happy couple.

Scene 3 (Aria of Titus). Doubt becomes certainty. The emperor has suddenly died: Titus must succeed to the throne, and is politically forced to renounce Berenice. Unable to confront her he sends a letter via Antiochus...

Scene 4 (Dance for Antiochus and Berenice)... who now sees a chance to make a declaration of love. This self-deluding quest is interspersed with images of Titus' emotional self-destruction. Under pressure from Berenice's mounting anxiety over the letter, Antiochus virtually reveals its content and uses the excuse of consolation to reveal his own passion. Berenice is affronted at this move ....

Scene 5 (Aria of Berenice)... which also gives her the momentary excuse not to believe what Antiochus says about the letter, now that his motivation is plain. Antiochus leaves, embarrassed and offended at the imputation. Reflecting alone, Berenice soon realises the truth and is overcome by anger and bitterness at her lover's betrayal. She then reads his letter and realises . the sacrifice is equally tragic for him and resigns herself to eternal separation.

Libretto (**Ric Graebner,** adapted from **Jean Racine - *Bérénice***)

Prelude

The opening images and music suggest some calm idyllic scene. Titus and Berenice appear in an amorous tableau, observed by Antiochus. The atmosphere is rudely interrupted by fanfares, suggesting Rome and duties incompatible with the scene we have just witnessed. The lovers disappear. Antiochus is left staring in their direction.

Scene 1

ANTIOCHUS

Arioso Je demeurai longtemps errant dans Cesarée
I long remained straying in Caesarea

Andant Lieux charmants ou mon coeur vous avait adorée.
City of charms where my heart adored you
Je cherchais en pleurant les traces de vos pas.
I *sought, weeping, the traces of your steps*

Echo – electronic voices repeat the four phrases of the last line in various possible orders and fragmented.

Recit. transition D'un voile d'amitié j'ai couvert mon amour.
A veil of friendship hid my love.
Un voile d'amitié vous trompa 1'un et 1'autre.
A veil of friendship fooled you both,

Allegro – Aria da capo

Constante victime d'une flamme inutile
The faithful victim of a useless flame
Je pars plus amoureux que je ne fus jamais.
I leave more ardent than before

Middle section Il l'épouse. Ai-je donc attendu ce moment
He marries her. Have I awaited this moment
Pour me venir encor déclarer son amant?
To declare my love for her?
Ah, tourment qu'elle ignore!
Ah – she knows nothing of my torment!

Et je viens donc vous dire un éternel adieu.
And so I say farewell for ever.

Quasi-Reprise Constante victime etc.
The faithful victim etc.

Coda Suivez les doux transports, où vous conduit 1'amour
Pursue the sweet delights where love invites you Oui...
Ma gloire, mon repos, tout m'excite à partir.
Yes – glory, peace, all commands me depart
De la crainte à 1'espoir, de 1'espoir à la rage
From fear to hope, from hope to rage
Tous mes moments ne sont qu'un tourment éternel. *Every moment is eternal pain.*

Scene 2

Dance – TITUS and BERENICE

Erotic scene. Flirtatious and energetic at start. After the climax a more wistful mood and foreboding which anticipates the tragic dilemma in the next scene.

Scene 3

Introduction – Funeral March – procession for the late emperor, the father of Titus, leading to coronation of Titus.

TITUS

Recitative Le senat a placé mon père entre les dieux.
The Senate has placed my father among the gods.
Dois-je croire qu'assise au trône des Césars
Must I believe that seated on the imperial throne
Une si belle reine offensât ses regards?
A queen so lovely could offend its gaze?

Arioso un poco agitato Que dit-on des soupirs que je pousse pour elle?
How will my sighs be received?
Quel succès attend-on d'un amour si fidèle?
What success can so faithful a love expect?

Aria andantino J'aimais, je soupirais dans une paix profonde,
I loved, I sighed in a deep peace

Un autre était chargé de l'empire du monde.
To rule the world was another's care.
Maître de mon destin, libre de mes soupirs.
Master of my fate, free in my desires.

Reprise of Funeral March

Mais à peine le ciel eut rappelé mon père
But no sooner had the heavens claimed my father
De mon aimable erreur je fus désabusé.
Than I was disabused of my fond mistake.
Je sentis le fardeau qui m'était imposé.
I felt the burden that was laid on me.
Je connus qu'il fallait renoncer à moi-même.
I knew I must renounce myself.

Arioso

Hélas! à quel amour on veut que je renonce.
Alas! what love they wish me to renounce!

Agitato Verse I

Mais par où commencer? Vingt fois depuis huit jours
But where do I start? Twenty times in eight days
J'ai voulu devant elle en ouvrir le discours.
I have tried to bring up the subject with her
Et dés le premier mot ma langue embarrassée
And from the first word my embarrassed tongue
Dans ma bouche vingt fois a demeuré glacée.
Has twenty times stuck frozen in my mouth.

Aria andantino contd.

Maître de 1'univers, je règle sa fortune
Master of the universe, I rule its fate
Cependant de mon coeur je ne puis disposer.
But of my heart I cannot dispose as I wish.
Je viens percer un coeur qui m'adore, qui m'aime.
I shall pierce a heart which adores and loves me.

Agitato Verse II

Et même en ce moment inquiète, empressée,
And even now, disturbed, afflicted,
Elle veut qu'à ses yeux j'explique ma pensée.
She wants me to come and explain my thoughts.

Agonised hesitation. Then Titus slowly shows he has reluctantly decided what to do, comes from behind the screen and sits at a writing desk.

Letter Music. He begins to compose a letter, hesitates, tears up drafts, starts again. Reading a fragment as he writes..

...Pour sortir des tourments dont mon âme est la proie
To escape the torments that tear my heart

Il est vous le savez une plus noble voie.
There is as you know a nobler way.

Confused, exclaiming to himself

Que sais-je?
Titus continues writing. He reads the next fragment aloud
... J'espérais de mourir à vos yeux.
How I would sooner have died before your eyes
Avant que d'en venir à ces cruels adieux....
Than reach this moment of cruel separation...

He continues to write. On finishing the letter Titus summons Antiochus and addresses him as follows:

Vivace Verse I

Prince il faut avec vous qu'elle parte demain.
Prince, she must leave with you tomorrow.
D'un amant interdit soulagez le tourment.
Comfort the torment of a forbidden lover.
Portez-lui mes adieux et recevez les siens.
Send and receive her farewell for me.

Titus gives Antiochus the letter

Fuyons tous deux, fuyons un spectacle funeste.
Let us both flee this mournful scene.
Mon règne ne sera qu'un long banissement.
My reign will be one long exile.
Adieu. Ne quittez pas ma princesse, ma reine.
Good-bye. Do not abandon my princess - my queen.

Antiochus takes the letter away.

Scene 4

Dance - ANTIOCHUS and BERENICE
Recit. TITUS

Antiochus sees a chance in Titus' renunciation to declare his own love for Berenice. But he presents the letter with mixed feelings. Berenice senses his unease. Under pressure from her mounting anxiety Antiochus affirms her suspicions about its contents, using consolation as a means to seduction. At first Berenice interprets his behaviour as friendly concern but gradually realises the truth and is repelled.

During this scene a deranged Titus still vacillates emotionally between his decision and its alternative. He imagines voices giving him simultaneous contradictory advice - which we hear as a parody of a Medieval tri-textual motet. Eventually the voices transform into inarticulate sounds of derision and threat like a rabble.

TITUS
Recit.
Ah lâche! Fais 1'amour, et renonce a l'empire.
You coward! Make love and renounce the Empire.
Au bout de 1'univers va, cours te confiner.
Go and imprison yourself at the edge of the world.
invisible voices

Duplum Vous-même rougiriez de ma lâche conduite
You yourself would blush at my cowardly conduct
Vil spectacle aux humains des faiblesses d'amour.
Vile public spectacle of love's weaknesses.

Tenor Ah lâche! Fais 1'amour,

Titus expresses horror as he hears the voices. He turns to face them then recoils.

Duplum Un indigne empereur sans empire, sans cour
An unworthy emperor without empire or court.

Triplum Non, je dois moins encor abandonner l'empire
No, I must even less abandon the empire
Pour vous suivre et d'aller au bout de l'univers.
To follow you to the edge of the world.

Duplum Au bout de 1'univers va, cours te confiner.
Go *and imprison yourself at the edge of the world.*

Tenor et renonce à l'empire.

At the end of the scene, following Berenice's rebuff of Antiochus, there is a long silence in which they react to their new situation.

Scene 5

BERENICE addressing Antiochus

Vivace Verse II Seigneur, je n'ai pas cru que, dans une journée
My lord! I would not have believed that on a day
Qui doit avec César unir ma destinée
Which unites Caesar's destiny and mine
Il fût quelque mortel qui pût impunément
There existed any mortal who, with impunity,
Se venir à mes yeux déclarer mon amant.
Could declare his love for me to my face.
Mais de mon amitié mon silence est un gage:
However, my friendship guarantees my silence.
J'oublie, en sa faveur, un discours qui m'outrage.
or its sake I will forget this outrageous conversation.

Antiochus makes a gesture of despair and embarrassment. Berenice to herself:

Arioso Après tant de serments, Titus m'abandonner!
Would Titus abandon me, after so many vows?
Titus qui me jurait... Non, je ne le puis croire.
Titus who swore to me that... No, 1 cannot believe it.

Turning with renewed vehemence to Antiochus

Vivace Verse III Ce piège n'est tendu que pour nous désunir.
It is expressly to separate us that this trap is laid.
Contre son innocence on veut me prévenir.
I am to be put in doubt of his innocence.
Vous le souhaitez trop pour me persuader.
You wish it too much to persuade me.

Antiochus leaves, angry and offended. Berenice, looking after Antiochus

Arioso Je 1'aurais retenu. Cette prompte retraite
I should have made him stay. His hasty departure
Me laisse, je 1'avoue, une douleur secrète.
Leaves me in secret sorrow, I have to admit it.

Moment of sorrowful reflection. Then with renewed resolution

Titus m'aime. Titus ne veut point que je meure.
Titus loves me. He does not wish me to die.

Another pause for reflection

II craint peut-être, il craint épouser une reine.
Perhaps he fears to marry a [foreign] queen.
Hélas! S'il était vrai. Mais non, il a cent fois
Alas! If that were true...But no, hundreds of times
Rassuré mon amour contre leurs dures lois;
He has asserted my love in defiance of harsh Roman law.
L'amour d'Antiochus 1'a peut-être offensé
Perhaps the love of Antiochus has offended him.
Ne cherchons point ailleurs le sujet de ma peine.
Let us look no further for the cause of my unease.

Agitato Verse III Si Titus est jaloux, Titus est amoureux**.**
If Titus is jealous Titus is in love.

The screen images give little credence to anything in the last line. Titus looms progressively in what looks like a threatening manner.

II fuit, il se dérobe à ma juste fureur!
He flees. He hides from my righteous anger.

Recit. Hé bien! régnez cruel: contentez votre gloire.
Well then, cruel Titus! Reign and satisfy your glory.

Arioso andantino

Non, je n'écoute rien. Me voilà résolue:
No I will listen to nothing. I am resolved.
Je veux partir. Pourquoi vous montrer à ma vue?
It is my wish to leave. Why seek me out?
Pourquoi venir encore aigrir mon désespoir?
Why come to sharpen my despair?
Je n'écoute plus rien, et pour jamais adieu.
I will hear nothing more. Goodbye for ever!
Pour jamais! Ah! Seigneur, songez-vous en vous-même
For everl Ah! my lord, can you imagine
Combien ce mot cruel est affreux quand on aime?
How dreadful that cruel word is for one who loves?
Dans un mois, dans un an, comment souffrirons-nous,
In a month, in a year, how will we bear
Seigneur, que tant de mers me séparent de vous?
Our separation by so *many seas?*

Recit

N'attendez pas ici que j'éclate en injures,
Don't expect me now to break out in curses.
Que j'atteste le ciel, ennemi des parjures.
To call heaven, the enemy of perjurers, to witness.

Ariette Verse I

Non, si le ciel encore est touché de mes pleurs,
No, *if heaven is still touched by my tears*
Je le prie, en mourant, d'oublier mes douleurs.
I pray, as I die, that it should forget my sorrows.
Mon sang, qu'en ce palais je veux même verser
My blood which I shall shed in this palace
Est d'autant d'ennemis que je vais vous laisser.
7s *the only enemy I shall leave you.*

Letter Music continuation

Having decided on her own course of action, Berenice finally feels free to open the letter from Titus with some detachment, almost in a spirit of historical curiosity. First she reads silently and as she continues is increasingly moved. Eventually she reads aloud; the sense of the libretto (and the music) picks up the text where Titus left off in Sc.3, though the stage effect is of the singer reading intermittent fragments.

"... Si vos pleurs plus longtemps viennent frapper ma vue,
"*... If your tears strike my sight any longer*
S'il faut qu'à tous moments je tremble pour vos jours
If I must always tremble for your life

Moi, je ne réponds pas que ma main à vos yeux
I do not promise that my hand, in front of your eyes,
N'ensanglante à la fin nos funestes adieux."
Might not finally drown our mournful parting in blood."
...Vous m'aimez, vous le soutenez
You love me, you affirm it
Et cependant je pars, et vous me l'ordonnez?
And yet I leave, and you order it.
Ah! cruel! par pitié montrez-moi moins d'amour.
Ah cruel man! for pity's sake show me less love.
Et laissez-moi du moins partir persuadée
And let me at least depart convinced
Que je laisse un ingrat qui me perd sans regret.
That I leave behind a wretch who loses me without regret.

Ariette Verse II

Partout du déesespoir je rencontre 1'image.
Everywhere I see the image of despair.
Je ne vois que des pleurs, et je n'entends parler
I see nothing but tears, and I only hear talk
Que de trouble, d'horreurs, de sang prêt à couler.
Of anxiety, of horrors, of blood ready to flow.
J'aimais, Seigneur, j'aimais, je voulais être aimée.
I loved, my lord, and wished to be loved.
J'ai cru que votre amour allait finir son cours.
I believed your love would run its course.
Je connais mon erreur, et vous m'aimez toujours.
I *recognize my mistake, and you love me still.*

Envoi

Je vivrai, je suivrai vos ordres absolus.
I shall live. I shall obey your supreme orders.
Adieu, Seigneur. Regnez; je ne vous verrai plus.
Farewell, my lord! Be emperor; never shall I see you again.