



Peggy

GLANVILLE-HICKS

Sappho

Opera in Three Acts

Libretto from the play

by Lawrence Durrell

Deborah Polaski, soprano

Martin Homrich, tenor

Scott MacAllister, tenor

Roman Trekel, baritone

Wolfgang Koch, bass-baritone

John Tomlinson, bass

Coro Gulbenkian

Orquestra Gulbenkian

Jennifer Condon, conductor

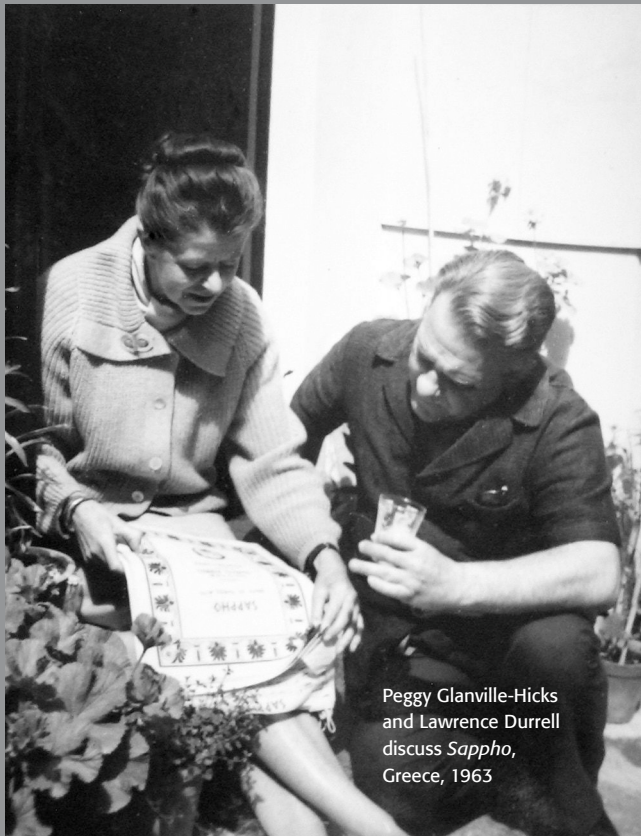
FIRST RECORDING

SAPPHO

OPERA IN THREE ACTS

LIBRETTO
FROM THE PLAY BY
LAWRENCE DURRELL
MUSIC BY
P. GLANVILLE-HICKS





Peggy Glanville-Hicks
and Lawrence Durrell
discuss *Sappho*,
Greece, 1963



SAPPHO

OPERA IN THREE ACTS
BY PEGGY GLANVILLE-HIKKS
WWW.SAPPHO.COM.AU

Comprehensive information on *Sappho* and foreign-language translations of this booklet
can be found at www.sappho.com.au.

Cast

Sappho	Deborah Polaski, soprano
Phaon	Martin Homrich, tenor
Pittakos	Scott MacAllister, tenor
Diomedes	Roman Trekel, baritone
Minos	Wolfgang Koch, bass-baritone
Kreon	John Tomlinson, bass
Chloe/Priestess	Jacquelyn Wagner, soprano
Joy	Bettina Jensen, soprano
Doris	Maria Markina, mezzo soprano
Alexandrian	Laurence Meikle, baritone

Orquestra Gulbenkian
Coro Gulbenkian
Jennifer Condon, conductor

Musical Preparation	Moshe Landsberg
English-Language Coach	Eilene Hannan
Music Librarian	Paul Castles
Chorus-Master	Jorge Matta

Act 1

1	Overture	3:43
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Scene 1

2	‘Hurry, Joy, hurry!’... ‘Is your lady up?’	Chloe, Joy, Doris, Diomedes, Minos	4:14
3	‘Now, at last you are here’	Minos, Sappho	6:13
4	Aria – Sappho: ‘My sleep is fragile like an eggshell is’	Sappho, Minos	4:17
5	‘Minos!’	Kreon, Minos, Sappho	5:14
6	‘So, Phaon’s back’	Minos, Sappho, Phaon	3:19
7	Aria – Phaon: ‘It must have seemed like that to them’	Phaon, Minos, Sappho	4:33
8	‘Phaon, how is it Kreon did not ask you to stay’	Sappho, Phaon, Minos	2:24

Scene 2 – ‘The Symposium’

9	Introduction... ‘Phaon has become much thinner’..		
	Song with Chorus: The Nymph in the Fountain	Minos, Sappho, Chorus	6:22
10	‘Boy! Bring us the laurel!’... ‘What are the fortunes of the world we live in?’	Diomedes, Sappho, Minos, Kreon, Phaon, Alexandrian, Chorus	4:59
11	‘Wait, hear <i>me</i> first!’... The Epigram Contest	Minos, Diomedes, Sappho, Chorus	2:55
12	‘Sappho! Sappho!’... ‘If death be noble’	Sappho, Chorus	3:56
13	‘Ah, it is you’	Phaon, Sappho	6:27
14	Duet: ‘Nay, but always and forever’	Sappho, Phaon	2:45

Act 2

Scene 3

- | | | | |
|-----|--|----------------------|------|
| [1] | Introduction... 'What are you making?'... 'Here's Minos coming!' | Sappho, Phaon, Minos | 4:47 |
| [2] | Chorus: 'Hail to Pittakos!' | Phaon, Minos, Chorus | 1:34 |

Scene 4

- | | | | |
|-----|--|--------------------------------|------|
| [3] | 'Sea begotten heroes' | Chorus | 3:54 |
| [4] | 'Admit it now' ... 'Now, where is this brother of mine' | Sappho, Pittakos, Kreon, Phaon | 5:31 |
| [5] | 'Ah, here you are at last' | Pittakos, Sappho | 6:37 |
| [6] | Aria – Pittakos: 'You think I do not feel' ... 'Sappho! Sappho!' | Pittakos, Sappho, Minos | 4:29 |

Act 3

Scene 5

- | | | | |
|-----|--|------------------|------|
| [7] | 'Diomedes, oh Diomedes, what have you done?' | Sappho, Diomedes | 5:31 |
| [8] | 'Sleep now' | Sappho, Diomedes | 3:26 |

Scene 6

- | | | | |
|------|--|---------------------------|------|
| [9] | 'Priestess of the Oracle' ... Invocation | Sappho, Priestess, Chorus | 3:49 |
| [10] | Kreon's confession: 'Oh Mask!' | Kreon, Sappho, Chorus | 5:52 |

Scene 7

- | | | | |
|------|---|-------------------------|------|
| [11] | Introduction | | 1:27 |
| [12] | 'The voting must be over' | Minos, Sappho | 6:30 |
| [13] | Aria – Minos: 'I am very tired' | Minos, Sappho | 1:51 |
| [14] | The Verdict: 'Sappho! Sappho! It is exile' | Pittakos, Sappho, Minos | 4:24 |
| [15] | Monologue: 'Now everything is silence and remoteness' | Sappho | 7:08 |

6 it is an acting role, par excellence, and a great acting capacity is far more important than a beautiful or famous voice here. The text is fabulous, and the most difficult to set that I've ever encountered, simply because the words are so lovely, packed and significant, and I feel all along that they must be heard, the music being scaled down to ensure this. There are none of the easy success gimmicks of most good operas, and which *Nausicaa* had, big blocks of active chorus, fast action, corpses, duels, plotting quartets, ballet interludes etc.

This piece is a thread depending on the bit by bit development and building up of a character, an ageing, tragic, rich, successful, famous lady who, mystic at heart has never found fulfillment despite having had everything. She is in turn tempestuous, querulous, compassionate, tender, fierce, impatient, swinging fast from one mood to another, poised like a needle in a compass. The music without a strong personality will be fragmented and spasmodic; [...] I've never done anything like it before 7

Peggy Glanville-Hicks on *Sappho*, quoted in James Murdoch, *Peggy Glanville-Hicks: A Life Transposed*, Pendragon Press, Hillsdale, NY, 2002, p. 217.

PEGGY GLANVILLE-HICKS AND *SAPPHO*

by Deborah Hayes

Peggy Glanville-Hicks was born in Melbourne, Australia, on 29 December 1912. She studied first at the Melba (Albert Street) Conservatorium in Melbourne with the opera-composer and conductor Fritz Hart (1874–1949). In 1932 she moved to London where she took composition lessons with Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958) at the Royal College of Music; in 1937 she studied with Nadia Boulanger (1887–1979) in Paris.

In 1941 she settled in New York City with her first husband, the English composer Stanley Bate (1911–59); the marriage ended in 1949. She became a US citizen and made her career as a leading composer, respected critic, and successful producer of concerts and recordings of new music. After about twenty years in New York City, quite exhausted by her struggles, she moved to Greece where she could live well for less and thus have more time to compose music. She maintained her American contacts and secured more American commissions and grants; she wrote two operas set in ancient Greece – *Nausicaa* (1960) and *Sappho* (1963) – and several ballets.

As a composer, Glanville-Hicks adopted a variety of ancient and non-western ideas, including a ‘melody-rhythm’ structure (suggested to her by the raga-tala system of India), unusual percussion instruments, and traditional melodic idioms from Spain, Morocco, North America, Greece, and elsewhere. Her harmony, ‘demoted’ from its Romantic prominence, is mostly consonant and modal, features she attributed to Vaughan Williams’ influence; non-diatonic relationships create an exotic sound. The real avant-garde composers, she wrote,¹ were those who, like her, were discovering new sound materials and exploring new musical paths.

¹ ‘Musical Explorers: Six Americans Who are Changing the Musical Vocabulary’, *Vogue*, No. 116, 15 November 1950, pp. 112–13, 134, 137 and 139.

In 1966, on a visit to New York for a premiere of one of her ballets, she underwent surgery for a brain tumour. She recovered, but composed little more after that. In 1975, she returned to Australia, settling in Sydney where her friend and biographer James Murdoch (1930–2010), founder of the Australia (now Australian) Music Centre in Sydney, appointed her the AMC Asian music liaison. For fifteen years she enjoyed the status of celebrated expatriate now returned. In 1977 she was a recipient of the Queen Elizabeth II Silver Jubilee Medal, and in 1987 the University of Sydney awarded her an honorary Doctorate in Music. Glanville-Hicks died in Sydney on 25 June 1990, leaving her estate as a Trust to provide a residence for composers.

Sappho, commissioned by the San Francisco Opera Company with funding from the Ford Foundation, was among Glanville-Hicks' favourite creations. She constructed the libretto from *Sappho, A Play in Verse* (1950) by Lawrence Durrell, set on the island of Lesbos in the sixth century BCE. Durrell's play is an intimate and personal exploration of the poetic imagination – the conflict between the creative mind, such as Sappho's, which seeks a still, quiet focus, and the world of action that can intrude. With Durrell's approval, Glanville-Hicks cut scenes, summarised others in a few lines, much reduced the dialogue throughout, and changed the ending. The composer and playwright collaborated via letters, and in September 1963, Durrell and his third wife, Claude, visited Glanville-Hicks in Athens.

In Durrell's play, which draws upon history and tradition, Sappho is married to a rich, older man, Kreon. She is not writing much poetry any more; she spends evenings drinking and reciting at poetry symposiums. Her son and daughter are being raised by the servants. She is bored. The two other men in her life are twin brothers, Pittakos and Phaon. Pittakos, her former lover, is a man of action, a soldier who wants to rule the entire Greek world with Lesbos as centre; he has now to conquer Corinth. In Phaon, a poor fisherman and sea-diver, she recognises a soul-mate, a fellow 'refugee' in 'this barbarian world'. She learns that Pittakos has killed one of his own young soldiers, the son of one of her good friends, for cowardice; she feels guilt and remorse, for she is the person who, at religious ceremonies, takes a drug that allows her to speak, unconsciously, as 'the oracle of the island'. On one occasion, without the drug, she advised Pittakos to pursue his campaign to conquer all of Greece.

As the story continues, Phaon, hired by Kreon, retrieves some stone tablets from the bottom of the sea that suggest that Kreon is really Sappho's father. Sappho and Kreon are found guilty of incest; on Pittakos' orders, they are exiled to Corinth – without the children. (Later it

turns out that Kreon is not Sappho's father after all.) Glanville-Hicks ends her opera with a final scene in which Sappho, sentenced to exile, bids her world farewell.

Durrell's play has two additional scenes set fifteen years later when Sappho returns to Lesbos. The Corinthians, now her allies, have overthrown Pittakos. She has had her revenge. Finally, though, some Corinthian soldiers, looking for Pittakos, kill Pittakos and Phaon both. Sappho, totally drained of emotion, asks her daughter to weep for both of them. As Sappho has succeeded in the world of action, that world has destroyed her.

In the opera, there is no return, only Sappho's impending exile. In her final recitative and aria, facing the end of her life as a poet, Sappho finds her spiritual centre. For the recitative 'Now everything is silence and remoteness', Glanville-Hicks sets a passage from Durrell's last scene; she wrote to him in March 1963 that this 'superb' poem conveys the 'detachment that comes from the betrayal of all one's attachments.'² For Sappho's final aria, 'How soon will all my lovely days be over', Glanville-Hicks sets a poem from another source, *Sappho: One Hundred Lyrics* (1904), by the Canadian poet Bliss Carman. It is not about exile but about death, at least artistic death, and silence. A solo cor anglais introduces the minor-mode melody and helps create the feeling of resolution and loneliness that permeates the scene. Following Sappho's final words, a relentless series of repeated slow, sombre chords brings the opera to an unforgettable close.

Deborah Hayes, musicologist and professor emerita at the University of Colorado at Boulder, is the author of Peggy Glanville-Hicks: A Bio-Bibliography (Greenwood Press, Westport (Conn.), 1990).

² Unpublished letter to Lawrence Durrell dated 20 March 1963.

SAPPHO OF LESBOS: POETRY AND PERFORMANCE

by Margaret Reynolds

Sappho is a real historical figure. We know that Sappho lived, that she composed poetry, and that she came from Lesbos – a large island in the Aegean Sea off the coast of what is now Turkey. If Western literature begins with the epics of Homer – who was working about two hundred years before she was born – then the lyric tradition begins with Sappho, who lived at the end of the seventh century/beginning of the sixth century BCE.

But that's it, as far as history goes. We know very little about Sappho's work, hardly anything about her family, a few scraps of information about her society, nothing to speak of about her character and nothing at all about her appearance.

In the ancient world Sappho's reputation was immense and her fame spread far beyond her native island. One story tells how Solon of Athens (c. 640/635–561/560 BCE), hearing a song of hers, asked to be taught the poem, 'So that I may learn it and then die.' Sappho was hailed as 'the Tenth Muse' by Plato (c. 427–348 BCE). Her portrait appears on a vase dating from the end of the sixth century BCE now in the Czartoryski Collection in the National Museum in Warsaw. From about the first century AD her head figured on coins issued in the Lesbian towns of Mytilene and Eresos.

Sappho lived at a time when a literary culture was beginning to take over from the oral. Her own works were probably improvised and memorised by her disciples. But Sappho's poems were written down quite early on, and in the last years BCE the great library at Alexandria reputedly held nine books (or rather, papyrus rolls) of her writings. One whole book contained her *epithalamia* or wedding songs, and that alone was said to run to 2,320 lines. Today, just over 200 verses survive, most of them only two or three lines long.

What happened? The legends tell of barbarian hordes sacking the library, or of early Christian zealots consigning her to the flames. The truth is that papyrus crumbles, gets eaten by mice, is used for other purposes, and Sappho's works were not always copied and re-copied because she fell out of fashion when her Aeolic Greek seemed provincial in comparison with Attic, the language of Athens.

How then do we come to have any of Sappho's poems at all? Firstly because during those early centuries many other ancient writers quoted Sappho and their books remained in favour. That is why we have the one complete poem – Fragment 1, or the 'Ode to Aphrodite' – which was quoted in a book *On Literary Composition* by Dionysius of Halicarnassus from about 30 BCE. And her most famous, almost complete, poem – Fragment 31, 'That man seems to me' – was quoted in *On the Sublime* by Longinus, dating from the first century AD.

And secondly because there are some papyrus fragments. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, farmers at a little town in Egypt – then called Oxyrhynchus, now el-Bahasa – began to turn up fragments of papyrus as they ploughed. Scholars arrived to excavate what turned out to be rubbish heaps dating from about the fifth century AD, with some of the refuse dating from even earlier. Two young men from Oxford, Arthur Hunt and Bernard Grenfell, gathered so many thousands of fragments as they sifted painstakingly through the sands that some pieces are still un-catalogued and un-deciphered today. Most of these scraps are bills, laundry lists, IOUs. But among the fragments was a record of some sayings of Jesus and a new poem by Sappho. Even as recently as 2005, a papyrus in a German collection was identified as the missing part of one of Sappho's poems about old age.

Most of Sappho's poems are about love and desire. Whether they are personal poems is a matter of debate. Sappho seems to have been a devotee in a cult dedicated to Aphrodite, the goddess of love. Many modern scholars now believe that Sappho's poems were composed for formal, public occasions to mark the ritualised stages in women's lives – the onset of puberty, betrothal, marriage – and this is why she so often writes about such celebrations. And Sappho seems to be performing specifically for the women of Lesbos. She gathered round her a group of young girls – *parthenoi*, virgins – as opposed to *gynaiki*, adult women. Hence, in part, her long-lived reputation as a lesbian Lesbian.

Sappho's famous Fragment 1 invokes the aid of the goddess Aphrodite. The speaker imagines the goddess responding to her call and coming to help Sappho in her pursuit of a girl who has left her, but with whom Sappho is still in love: 'Many coloured Aphrodite, eternal daughter of Zeus, guile-weaver, don't, I beg you, oppress my heart with grief.'

Fragment 31 is even more famous and influential. It catalogues and evokes all the symptoms of desire, and it has been copied and re-worked by Catullus, John Donne, Alexander Pope, Percy Shelley, Tennyson and Emily Dickinson. It has also had an extraordinary extended ghost

life in pop songs: ‘That man seems to me more than the gods, whoever it is that sits by you and listens to your voice.’

Above all, Sappho was a performer. She knew about poetry and how it weaves into and structures living experience. How the stories it tells shape our lives. I see her performing these poems at public celebrations. Telling the story of how Aphrodite will guard and help your love. Telling the story of how desire works, for good or ill.

This Sappho is recognisably modern, and she lies close behind the Sappho created by Peggy Glanville-Hicks and Lawrence Durrell. Their Sappho, like the Classical Sappho, had a clear sense of her own identity. One of the most astonishing things about the few fragments of Sappho’s poetry still extant is that she frequently names herself, in Fragment 1 and in other poems. She names her women friends, too: Atthis, Anactoria, Dica, and her own daughter, Cleis: ‘Must I remind you, Cleis, that there is no place for grief in the house of the Muses.’

Sappho has had many afterlives, many incarnations. But the one that most colours the tragic and moving vision in Glanville-Hicks’ opera is Sappho the performer, Sappho the poet who knows that art transcends life and death and faces them both with dignity.

Margaret Reynolds is Professor of English at Queen Mary, University of London. She is the author of The Sappho History (Palgrave Macmillan, New York and London, 2003) and The Sappho Companion (Vintage Books, London, 2000) and the presenter of BBC Radio 4’s Adventures in Poetry.

LAWRENCE DURRELL: A BIOGRAPHICAL OUTLINE

by Charles Sligh

The novelist, poet, playwright and travel-writer Lawrence Durrell was born in Jullundur (or Jalandhar), India, on 27 February 1912. Shortly after his eleventh birthday he was sent 'home' to England to complete his education. Durrell recalled this departure for the rest of his life: he keenly felt the contrast between the vibrant, colourful experience of his Anglo-Indian childhood and the pallid tameness that he discovered upon arrival in 'Pudding Island,' and he drew upon memories of that much-regretted Indian landscape in his first novel, *Pied Piper of Lovers* (1935).

Durrell spent his early adulthood playing jazz piano and writing poetry in the bars and nightclubs of Fitzrovia and Bloomsbury. He produced his first literary works during this time, including *Quaint Fragment* (1931), *Ten Poems* (1932), *Bromo Bombastes* (1933), and *Transition: Poems* (1934). In 1932 Durrell met Nancy Meyers (1912–83), a young painter studying at the Slade School of Fine Art, and three years later they were married, in the first of his four marriages. Shortly afterwards, they moved to the island of Corfu, where the rest of his family was now living.¹ Ionian culture and the Corfiot landscape left an indelible stamp upon Durrell's artistic sensibilities, and he memorialised Corfu's nurturing, transformative influence with lyric nostalgia in the first of his island books, *Prospero's Cell* (1945):

You enter Greece as one might enter a dark crystal; the form of things becomes irregular, refracted. Mirages suddenly swallow islands, and wherever you look the trembling curtain of the atmosphere deceives. Other countries may offer you discoveries in manners or lore or landscape; Greece offers you something harder—the discovery of yourself.²

Two novels written on Corfu, *Panic Spring* (1937) and *The Black Book* (1938), testify to his growing ambitions and increased confidence during this period. T. S. Eliot (1888–1965), who served as Durrell's editor at Faber & Faber, called *The Black Book* 'the first piece of work by a new English writer to give me any hope for the future of prose fiction.'³ The Axis Powers'

¹ Durrell's naturalist brother Gerald documented his childhood on Corfu in the trilogy *My Family and Other Animals* (Rupert Hart-Davis, London, 1956), *Birds, Beasts and Relatives* (Collins, London, 1969) and *The Garden of the Gods* (Collins, London, 1978).

² *Prospero's Cell: A Guide to the Language and Manners of the Island of Corcyra*, Faber & Faber, London, 1945, p. 11.

invasion forced the Durrells to take flight from Greece, and Lawrence ended up exiled in Egypt for the duration of the war. In 1943, while stationed as a press attaché in Alexandria, Durrell met Yvette Cohen (1918–2004), an Alexandrian-born Jew of striking beauty and precocity. Eve Cohen would become his second wife in February 1947.

Durrell's post-war assignments carried him to a variety of locales around the Mediterranean, providing him with a considerable fund of material for his poetry, travel-writing, literary criticism and fiction. He drew on his time stationed on Rhodes (1945–47) for *Reflections on a Marine Venus* (1953), and *Bitter Lemons* (1957) which, completing his trilogy of island books, recollects his time on strife-torn Cyprus (1953–56). Amid the explosive Cypriot situation, Durrell managed to initiate an acclaimed series of novels: *Justine* (1957), *Balthazar* (1958), *Mountolive* (1958), and *Clea* (1960), later collected as *The Alexandria Quartet* (1962). While writing *Justine*, Durrell met Claude-Marie Forde, née Vincendon (1925–67), an Alexandrian writer, whom he married in 1961.

It was during this same period of success and celebrity that Peggy Glanville-Hicks first approached Durrell about writing a libretto based upon *Sappho: A Play in Verse* (1950). She vividly recalled the immediate rapport she discovered with her 'new real friend', Larry Durrell:

He's a mad Irishman who's never set foot in Ireland [...] He's a short, stocky little man who (every time he goes swimming) prays softly into the waves, 'Oh god please make me thin again' – who was born in India, gives fabulous impersonations of the Babu, (the Anglo-Indian) or the Greek having an argument (his Greek is fabulous) he perhaps could have been a great actor [...] He's better than his books. I felt I'd found a new real friend, and that happens less and less, I find.⁴

The two friends discovered their strongest affinity in a shared appreciation of Greek language, culture and landscape – all of which are readily witnessed by Durrell's words and Glanville-Hicks' music for *Sappho: Opera in Three Acts*.

Following the runaway success of *The Alexandria Quartet*, Durrell published *The Revolt of Aphrodite* (1968–70) and *The Avignon Quintet* (1974–85) -- works that critics found more

³ T. S. Eliot, letter to Lawrence Durrell, dated 18 February 1938, Special Collections, Morris Library, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale.

⁴ Peggy Glanville-Hicks, letter to John Butler, dated 15 December 1963, quoted in Murdoch, *op. cit.*, p. 220.

difficult to place because of their darker themes and experimental form. Lawrence Durrell died at his home in Sommières, between Marseilles and Montpellier, on 7 November 1990.

Charles Sligh specialises in Victorian Literature and the history of the novel at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. His research interests include the works of the Pre-Raphaelite poets, late-Victorian print culture, the digital humanities and the notebooks and manuscripts of Lawrence Durrell. He was co-editor of Major Poems and Selected Prose of Swinburne (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2004) and co-chair of 'Durrell 2012: The Lawrence Durrell Centenary'.



Peggy Glanville-Hicks
and Lawrence Durrell
discuss *Sappho*,
Greece, 1963

FROM MANUSCRIPTS TO MUSIC

by Jennifer Condon

Until now, only the final monologue from *Sappho* has been heard.

The original piano score submitted to the San Francisco Opera was summarily rejected by General Director Kurt Adler, who claimed that the work contained an ‘abundant use of modal tonality’ and that the ‘dramatic timing [...] was not acceptable.’¹ Glanville-Hicks proposed substantial revisions, later claiming that the reworking of the score ruined her eyesight. Yet the final orchestral score, dated 24 October 1965, is almost identical to the original piano score, completed on 21 November 1963 (according to the composer’s diary). The revisions were never undertaken: her failing eyesight was the result of an undiagnosed brain tumour and the opera remained unperformed.

Now, after nearly fifty years, the manuscripts have become music. Both completed, but at times barely legible, manuscripts have been deciphered – but not modified – for this recording. A revised ‘performance edition’ of the score has yet to be completed on the premise that – as Glanville-Hicks observed of her earlier Greek opera, *Nausicaa* – ‘it would be foolish not to admit that the actuality of the physical dimension for the first time always requires minor adjustments.’²

There is no doubt that the hugely successful premiere of *Nausicaa* at the Athens Festival in 1961 influenced the orchestration of *Sappho*. The voices at times must carry over a wall of sound, from epic blocks of unison writing to a mammoth brass fanfare. When this factor is combined with the distinct lack of dynamic detail in the manuscript, it is fortunate that this world-premiere cast comprises voices of Wagnerian proportions. But *Sappho* does not require such a cast and can be performed on a smaller scale – which will be reflected in substantial dynamic revisions and minor orchestral alterations included in the performance edition. Such orchestral alterations will not interfere with the colours and textures of *Sappho*: the orchestration, particularly its relationship to the text, is all important. Although most piano reductions of opera are lacking in colour, I believe the inadequacy of the piano score is largely the reason for so many years of neglect. With this recording, I hope to change the fate of the work.

¹ Unpublished letter to Glanville-Hicks dated 21 December 1963.

² In a letter to the conductor Carlos Surinach dated 15 June 1961, quoted in Murdoch, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

ΣΑΠΦΟ

SAPPHO

Opera in Three Acts by Peggy Glanville-Hicks

Libretto taken from the Play in Verse by Lawrence Durrell (1950)

with additions from *Sappho – One Hundred Lyrics* by Bliss Carman (1907)

Sappho, poet of Lesbos	Mezzo Soprano
Phaon, a sponge diver	Lyric Tenor
Pittakos, a General, Phaon's twin brother	Dramatic Tenor
Diomedes, a poet and witty drunkard	Baritone
Minos, Sappho's tutor	Bass Baritone
Kreon, Sappho's elderly husband	Bass
Chloe } Maids in Sappho's house	Soprano
Joy }	Soprano
Doris	Mezzo Soprano
Priestess of the Oracle	Soprano
Alexandrian, a guest at the Symposium	Tenor/Baritone
Chorus	Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass

1 Overture

2 Act 1, Scene 1

The spacious room of a rich Greek family in Lesbos, circa 650BC. It opens back upon a courtyard, showing blue sky and the tops of cypresses. The room is in great disorder; backstage a fat man is asleep on a couch. Maids of the house are tidying up. It is early morning.

Chloe

Hurry, Joy, hurry!

Joy

I Am hurrying.

This floor is filthy, just look at it!

Chloe and Doris

Yes, look at it!

All

We should really wash it!

Chloe

No! No! There is no time.

She will be up at any moment.

Joy and Doris

Yes, she will be up at any moment!

All

Hurry! Hurry!

Doris

What do we do with him over there, Chloe?

Joy

What can we do, Chloe?

Doris and Chloe

We must get rid of him!

Joy and Doris

Let's pour water on his head to wake him up.

Chloe

No! No, let me wake him.

All

Diomedes! Get up, get up!

Diomedes

What is it?

Chloe and Joy

It's time to get up! Get up!

Diomedes

Get up? What nonsense! It's still dark.

Chloe

Please get up, we are cleaning the room

Diomedes

Then clean around me. Why wake me?

Where's my crown?

Chloe

It's on your head.

Diomedes

That makes twice this week I've won the laurel
from Sappho!
Money! Money! I can get drunk again today!

Chloe

Come, Diomedes, away with you.

All

It's time to go home!

Diomedes

In a moment!

All

Now, now, now, immediately, at once! Now!

Diomedes

You don't know what you ask!
I have been left too long in this position!

Joy and Doris

You take his legs, Chloe.

Chloe

I'll take his legs.

All

Yes, yes, yes!

Diomedes

No! I am an old man!
Besides, they might come off!

Chloe

Come, my dears, it's the only way!

Joy and Doris

You take his legs. It's the only way!

All

Hopa! Hopa!

Diomedes

A rape! A rape! A palpable rape!

*(He is carried from the room yelling. Presently,
Minos enters, and seats himself at the table.
Chloe goes to serve him.)*

Minos

Is your lady up?

Chloe

Yes, she is awake, Sir.

Minos

Then you may go.

Chloe

Thank you, Sir.
(Exits backstage, after the other girls.)

3 (*Enter Sappho from the door right. She is expensively dressed, and wears a gold wig. She takes no notice of Minos, but advances to the sunlit courtyard where she stretches, and yawns. Minos watches her.*)

Minos

Now, at last you are here,
as always toward the ending of your element
the summer,
Lovely, lonely, famous and discontented
Sappho!

Sappho

Discontented?

Minos

Now as the year declines austerely on itself,
leading from summer into winter,
Sappho, Sappho! You climb out of your bed
to patronise the morning with your beauty,
a creditor to work, to joy an ignoramus!

Sappho

Dear Minos, I am late again, I know it!
Where is Kreon?

Minos

He rose early, and is already
at the Counting House!

Sappho

I wonder does he ever think
of anything but work?
Tell me, Minos: Have we not lands enough?

Have we not cattle enough?
Have we not money enough and houses?

Minos

You are his wife, you know,
and if he works so hard
it is because of you.

Sappho

Ah! I am to Kreon something
of the order of a head of cattle,
part of his property.
Oh, he is a dear friend,
almost like a father.
I am his folly merely –
yet, what other kind of man –

Minos

– would set you free to dream!

Sappho

Yes, set me free –

Minos

Who else would give you
so generously to a world
that claimed you
through your work?

Minos and Sappho

Only Kreon!

Minos

So dependable!

Sappho

So sure of what
he does not understand,
as you are Minos!
As all men are,
until the next earthquake comes
to shatter your certainties!

Minos

That earthquake again!
Now you are teasing me.
How I wish you'd seen it for yourself.
You do not understand
how deeply we still inhabit
that fond corner of the life
we didn't live.
That city that lies beneath the bay,
covered with water
is our childhood.
How can we replace it,
save in each other's memory?

Sappho

I will never tease you again about the
earthquake!

Minos

It is not important!
But where would you be, dear Singer,
if I had not found you there in the ruins?
Homeless, nameless.

Sappho

Not nameless, Minos.
I knew my name, it seems.

Minos

True, you knew your name,
and strange it was
to hear you keep repeating it:
Sappho! Sappho!
I am called Sappho,
my mother is a lady.

Sappho

Who can she have been, I wonder?

Minos

We shall never know.

Sappho

Oh, Minos! I am so tired of everything!

4 Sappho

My sleep is fragile like an eggshell is,
the daylight hurts me when it comes again.
The truth is I am growing old, perhaps,
and cannot bear it as I thought I would.
When I was young, I wanted to be loved.
I am, I truly am.
Then to be famous, famous and left idle.
I am! I am, I am!
Then to be rich. I am, I am.
Then to be happy. I am. Or am I?
It is rather the failure in my wanting
that troubles, than any certain lack in what I
have.

*(A slave crosses stage back, holding two children
by the hand, a boy and a girl.)*

There go my lovely children.
How fortunate we are in them at least.
And yet – they frighten me, they frighten me...
They do not love me as other children love.
I wonder why?
Am I a bad mother for those two, Minos?

Minos
Of course not!

Sappho
Others devour their young with lavish kisses.
Mine are left entirely free to grow.
And yet perhaps because I never punish them
they love me less.
Pain creates the deepest bonds
when we are children.

5 (Enter Kreon backstage, in a hurry.)

Kreon
Minos! Those tablets that I asked you for,
you did not bring them to me!

Minos
Oh, yes. Yes, I did!
I sent them to you
at the Counting House.
What can have become of them?

Kreon (*he sees Sappho*)
Good morning, dear.
(*she turns away from him as he kisses her*)
I cannot send Phaon down unless he sees
them!

Minos
Down where? Down where?
What do you mean?

Kreon
Well, how can a diver find
an object in the sea
unless he knows its shape and weight?

Minos
What Phaon is this?
Did you say Phaon?
What Phaon?

Kreon
Why, Phaon, of course.
Pittakos' twin brother.

Minos
What?
The General's missing brother?

Sappho
But he's dead! He is dead!
The Tyrian fishermen last summer
said he was dead!

Kreon
I know! I know, it was all rumour, he's alive.
I have engaged him as diver.

Minos
As diver, Kreon? As diver?

Sappho

Is this the Phaon they call mad?

Kreon

Yes, they call him mad.

Anyone is mad

to forfeit luxurious living

to become a sponge diver!

A sponge diver! Ha, ha, ha!

I'm sending him to dive

into Old Eresos;

For years now,

I have been trying to reach

the Counting House beneath the Bay.

Remember the Old Room,

the great carved chest

we kept the ladings in?

Minos

Of course! Of course I do!

Kreon

Down there written on wax,

I kept the titles

of all the land that I owned

before the earthquake.

Now, supposing a diver

could bring me up those titles!

What law can then prevent me

reclaiming the greater part of Lesbos!

Minos

Reclaiming the greater part of Lesbos!

Sappho

Ah, Kreon! Have we not land enough?

Are we not rich enough?

Have we not land enough? And houses?

Kreon

Whoever came to harm by having money?

Sappho

Ah Kreon, do not let Phaon dive into the Old
Town.

No good will come of it!

Minos

She speaks the truth, Kreon.

No good will come of it!

Sappho (*aside*)

I wonder how this Phaon looks today?

Never were twins less like than he and

Pittakos.

Kreon

They are still unlike.

I will send him up and you will

see for yourself. You will see.

(*Exit Kreon*)

6 **Minos**

So, Phaon's back, well, well!

Sappho

Why did they think him dead?

Minos

How should I know?
He was always disappearing and returning.
Always alone, never with friends.

Sappho

Always, never!

Minos

Always silent, never at ease...

Sappho

Always, always – never, never!
That would make an epitaph for a poet!

Minos

A sponge diver! A penniless fisherman!
What will the General say?

Sappho

Pittakos is different.
Legs without a head,
sleep without dreaming,
life without meaning!

Minos

He is a great man, and you are cruel.
He loved you truly, Sappho,
and still does.
He wept when they were leaving.

Sappho

Pittakos weeps quite easily.

Minos

And so did you for him!

Sappho

Did I? Did I? Perhaps I did.
That would be like me.
You look reproving!
How many have there been?
Some three I thought I loved.
Can one outgrow love altogether, Minos?
If so our literature is nothing,
for that is all it ever thinks of!

(Phaon has entered quietly in the background)

Sappho

What do you want here?
Who are you? Who are you?

Phaon

I was sent by Kreon, Sappho.
He said you wished to see me.

Minos

Why, Phaon, my boy, do you remember me?

Phaon

Yes, Minos, I remember you.

Sappho

Is this Phaon?
Phaon, Phaon they told us you were dead.
They told us you were dead!

Minos

Phaon, they told us you were dead!

7 Phaon

It must have seemed like that to them.

It did to me.

I lived for seven years alone upon an Island
so small it had no name.

Sappho

Why did you go there?

Minos

Why did you go there?

Sappho

Why did you stay there?

Minos

Why did you stay there?

Sappho

Why did you stay away so long alone?

Phaon

When I was working as a diver near Egypt,
while bending to my oars one day,
I saw my arms had some infection.
You can perhaps guess what it was.

Minos

Leprosy!

Sappho

Leprosy!

Phaon

Gradual at first, then quickly,
it seemed best to go away.

I went alone.

Sailed my small boat until I found an island,
uninhabited except for birds,
and there I stayed.

Sappho and Minos

For seven years! For seven years! –
The loneliness! The loneliness!

Phaon

Solitude I knew, but never loneliness.
It created strange new appetites in me.
Silence was one.
I lived in silence
for whole months together,
letting the sea speak for me.
And after five years,
the great change came...

Sappho

What was that?

Phaon

I have no name for it as yet.
If you could but imagine a repose that is
positive, beautiful, determined as an act,
without the lumber of the mind
to weigh it down.
Diminished as a man in all I was,
I grew extending faculties
as a meteor in the night grows hair.
I sank so deep,

past waking it would seem,
into a deep profoundness, like a pool
where time becomes quite innocent of force.
I had the feeling I created
a sort of refuge
like a healing place
in the midst of some great wound –
for that is what the world is.

8 Sappho

Phaon, how is it
Kreon did not ask you
to stay with us here at the house?

Phaon

He did.
He asked me when I came,
but I refused.

Sappho

Why?

Phaon

I am a fisherman now
and not a courtier.
I sleep at the tavern by the port.

Sappho

Phaon! Phaon! Listen to me!
Tonight we have the last Symposium
before the fast begins.
Diomedes and the others will be there,
and we'd be happy, happy if you came.

Phaon

Ah, no, I can't.
I have no clothes to wear.
I would be out of place.

Sappho

We could find you clothes.
We'll find you clothes, we'll find you clothes.

Minos

We do not wish to press you, Phaon,
but we'd be happy if you came.

Sappho

We would be glad to see you there amongst us.

Minos

We would be happy if you came.

Minos and Sappho

So happy if you came.

Phaon

Then thank you both,
I thank you both.
Perhaps, perhaps I'll come.
(He exits)

Sappho

He's a strange character!

Minos

Another morning gone in profitless gossip!

Sappho

Ah, Minos, it would have been wasted
anyway!

(They exit together)

9] Act 1, Scene 2 – The Symposium

*The room is the same as in Scene 1, but lit for
night time.*

Minos

Phaon has become much thinner
and far more feverish than when I knew him.
All that talk! What a bore he is!

Sappho

I like him.
I believe in what he says.
Minos, do you remember
those verses of his
you once taught me?

Minos

The Nymph in the Fountain?
Ah, yes!
As a boy he was a creditable poet.

Sappho

I wonder if I can recall it?

Minos

Surely you remember it.
Sing it, Sappho, sing it!

Sappho

How does it go?

*(Sappho walks to corner of room taking off her
wig as she does so. There is a huge lyre. She
undrapes it, strikes a few chords and begins.)*

(Stage darkens as she sings)

Sappho

Shut up from pleasure in a Holy Fountain,
a Nymph lies, hearing the woollen water,
softly, softly on the cones of the ear uncurling.

Chorus

A water Nymph, idle as innocence professed
woven in the hum of the hairy hive.

Sappho

She longs, she longs, but no one calls her.
In lapidary totals go the water-woken syllables.
She is to love a stranger, demoralised by
pleasure.

Chorus

A water Nymph, idle as innocence professed,
woven in the hum of the hairy hive.

Sappho

Who will come? One to hush the water,
two to crush the stone, three to cherish her,
four to fold, and five to usher her
blushing into the world.

Chorus

A water nymph, washed in the commotion
of a stony fountain floor, Oh, speak to her!
Speak to her within the rock.

Sappho

For who can measure peace of mind,
or halve the world of pleasure
for all the water living in the clock.

(At the second verse, servants bring lamps, and as the light again brightens, half a dozen people are seen lying about on couches. The walls have been hung with wreaths and tables are brought, covered with food and wine. At the end of the song, Phaon rises to kiss Sappho's hand. Applause.)

10 Diomedes

Boy! Bring us the laurel!
(Diomedes is quite drunk)
This time Sappho wins it fairly.

Sappho

Wait! Wait!

Minos

She did not win it.
It was not her song.

Kreon

She did not win it.

Chorus

She did not win it.

Sappho

Wait! Wait!
The song was not mine, but Phaon's.

Diomedes

Bring us the laurel, give it to Phaon!
Bravo!

Chorus

Give it to Phaon, give it to Phaon! Bravo!

Diomedes

Can Phaon read and write?

Chorus

Ha ha ha ha ha ha!

Diomedes

Then take the wreath my boy,
and put it on!

Phaon

Thank you!
I shall put it up again in challenge.
All against an epigram!

Chorus

Put it on! Put it on!

Diomedes

An epigram? Do not be rash, my boy.
Verse or prose?

Phaon

Verse or prose, verse or prose,
whichever pleases you.

Chorus

Verse or prose, verse or prose,

whichever pleases us!

Diomedes

It is the same, the same to me.
I can shape it!

Minos

Diomedes, sit down! Sit down!

Diomedes

Why should I?
(Hic.) (*Drunken hiccup.*)

Minos

Sappho thinks you're drunk.

Diomedes

(Hic.) She knows I am. She loves me for it.
(Hic. Hic.) Great ornament of Lesbos'
Legislature (Hic.) in wine express your lovely
nature. (Hic.)

Chorus

Drunk! Drunk! Diomedes is really quite
drunk!
Sit down, Diomedes, sit down!

Diomedes

How shall I seem
the lovely thing I am
except for red wine,
and the homely clam?

Chorus

Enough! Enough, Diomedes, be silent!

Diomedes

One question may I be allowed?

Chorus

No!

Diomedes

One single question, one single question!
What are the fortunes of the world we live in?
A glut of gold, a common of tyrants,
a snail of virtues, a carp of critics,
a gape of satyrs, a lobe of lechers,
a chirp of whores, and a whole heaving heap
of ineffably herbaceous Alexandrian
hermaphrodites!

Alexandrian

I protest, I protest. I am an Alexandrian!

Chorus

Ha ha ha ha! He is an Alexandrian!

Diomedes

Ha ha ha ha!
Very well, we will fight it to the death.
Have a grape! (Hic, hic.)

Sappho

Order! Order!
We contend for an epigram!
Let us get on!
I shall ask Phaoon now
for the subject.

Chorus

The subject. Yes, the subject!
 What will the subject be?

Phaon

The subject will be 'Freedom'.

Chorus

Freedom? Bravo! Bravo!
 An excellent subject!

Minos

An excellent subject!

Chorus

A topical subject!

Diomedes

Boy, another drink, fill it up!
 We must be neckfast if we would see
 who can reach absolute platitude first.
 Phaon, may I declare mine?

Phaon

Already, Diomedes?

11 Minos

Wait! Hear ME first!

Chorus

Yes, let us hear Minos first, sit down
 Diomedes.
 Sit down!

Minos

Who guessed what Freedom was or 'er could be
 until our Pittakos discovered she?

Diomedes

Not 'SHE', Minos! 'HER' – Ha ha ha!

Minos

Don't interrupt, it rhymes!

Diomedes

Ah yes, I see, it rhymes. Ha ha ha ha!

Minos

And who, until our Island banner rose
 in attic air knew Freedom would disclose
 so rich a rapture, so sublime a law –

Diomedes

– as made our General the whole world's bore!
 (Hic.)

Minos

Diomedes! Don't interrupt.
 You put me off.
 Now, where was I?

Diomedes

These islands which are merely lumps of rock
 turn out pedestrian poets by the flock.
 I really feel, good Minos 'twould be neater
 if we must face abstractions in this meter
 To ask ourselves if Freedom's main intention
 is not a purely political invention.

Chorus

A purely, purely political invention! Order!
Sit down! Sit down, Diomedes!

Minos

I am going.

Chorus

Stay! Stay! Finish it!
Minos, stay! Don't go!

Minos

I am going! My mind is made up!
I am going to bed! Goodnight!

Sappho

Shame on you, Diomedes!

Chorus

Shame on you, Diomedes!

Diomedes

He will recover, he will recover.
Let us have a song instead.

[12] Chorus

Sappho, Sappho! Let Sappho sing it!
Sappho, Sappho, sing to us!

Sappho

What shall it be?

Chorus

A song of love.

Sappho

If death be noble,
why do the gods not ever die?
If life be all,
why do the gods still live on?
If love be nothing,
why do the gods still love, still love?
If love be all,
what shall man do but love too?
*(By the end of the song, the stage is completely
blacked out save for a circle of light on the couch
where Phaon sleeps. Sappho enters this circle of
light and seats herself, watching him. He wakes.)*

Phaon

[13] Ah, it is you. I fell asleep.
Are we alone?

Sappho

Yes, they are all gone.
I was watching you sleep
and envying you.
The shell of the world peels off,
so softly for those, the lucky ones who sleep.

Phaon

You should take the Egyptian drug.

Sappho

I do – it dulls me,
distorts the darkness,
but that is somehow
the repose of the will.
(She takes Phaon's hand in hers.)
I am happy tonight!

(Phaon withdraws his hand.)

Phaon

My hand is rough with the ropes I work in.
Let me see yours. Open it!

Sappho

Can you tell fortunes?

Phaon

Yes. Do you believe in them?

Sappho

No, no!

Phaon

Good!

Then I shall tell you all I find.

It is the hand of someone curious, ill-at-ease –
who always finds what she is not looking for,
and always seeks for what is not to be found.
Yet it is a woman's hand.

Sappho

Could you love such a woman?

Phaon

How could one love her unless she loved
herself?

Sappho

Ah! Too true, too true!

Hating myself, I do love the injustice
of trying to lose myself in it!
(suddenly petulant)

You do not like me!

There's an end to it!

Let us talk about the death of friendship in
the world!

Phaon

Wait! Wait! Wait! Suppose we loved?

What a tragedy!

We would be two bankrupt states
combining empty treasuries against a famine!
You would not wish to possess me
if you knew the burden of possession.

Sappho

Ah, stupid!

The object is self-possession always!
The mind can lose, the body can give back
despite its humours
and its despairs.

Ah, Phaon, the mind is shod with iron corners,
yet the body is weak and soft
and ours to damage
with its pleasures.

Phaon

The world and I have been
through a great sickness,
I have made eternity
my only province now
and as for you,
why you are surely
disqualified for love
by all you know of it,
you taste the poison
woven in the marriage wreath,

and choose the laurel,
you choose the laurel.

Sappho

I know, I know the contemplative role, the
contemplative role.

Phaon

You choose the laurel.
You choose the laurel alone.

Sappho

I know, I know.
But I am lonely Phaon,
and what I do not know
is where to hide it,
where to hide it
save in the idle tenderness
of those I love.
You wrong me if you think
I dare not suffer,
will not advance,
or cannot struggle!
You wrong me
to think I am not brave
or cannot struggle,
will not advance.
I will! I will!
I dare! I dare!

Phaon

Sappho! Sappho! Sappho!
Ah, Sappho!
My lovely, lovely Sappho!

Sappho

You wrong me
if you consider me unworthy
of one mad friendship,
unworthy of one fugitive mad friendship...
among the idols
in this barbarian world
we give the lie to,
and from which,
because we're weak,
we both are refugees.
I in my poems, you in your solitude.

Phaon

Sappho! Sappho, my love.

*(They look at one another, and then embrace.
Stage dims slowly as they sit together, reciting in
soft voices.)*

14 Phaon and Sappho (Duet)

Nay, but always and forever
like the bending yellow grain,
or quick water in a channel
is the heart of man.
Comes the unseen breath in power
like a great wind from the sea
and we bow before his coming
though we know not why,
though we know not why.

End of Act 1

1 Act 2, Scene 3

Courtyard before Sappho's house, Sappho sits on a low wall, overlooking the sea. Phaon sits on the terrace steps, carving with a small knife.

Sappho

What are you making?

What are you making there?

Phaon

A sailing ship.

It's for your daughter.

One fine day, she says,
she'll visit me and we'll get married.

Sappho

She is in love with you
and I am jealous!

Phaon

It serves you right!

A proper punishment to meet in your old age!

(Phaon holds up the little model boat)

There, it is finished.

A ship is a lovely creature, is it not?

The three most beautiful forms are ships,
women and musical instruments.

Their properties must somewhere intersect,
but this is only seen by mad poets
for whom there are no single images,
but a continual marriage of attributes.

Sappho

Three properties of beauty?

And what of the three sadnesses?

– Lovers, partings, grey hairs?

Phaon

Alas! Yes!

Tomorrow I may be gone.

Today I found the tablets

that Kreon asked me for.

If they're the ones he wanted,
he'll pay me and I'll go.

Sappho

Phaon, Phaon!

When shall we meet again?

Phaon

How should I know, dear?

Sappho

Tell me a lie –

say a year from now, in April weather.

Phaon

I cannot say it. Perhaps before we die.

Here's Minos coming!

Sappho

He looks alarmed!

(Minos enters.)

Minos

Sappho! Sappho!

Diomedes' son is dead!

Phaon
Dead?

Sappho
Ah no! Ah no,
my poor Diomedes.
Where is he?

Minos
He's in his house.
He will see no one!
He will see no one!

Sappho
My poor Diomedes! My poor Diomedes!
I must go to him, I must go to him.

(The sound of cheering crowds is heard offstage)

2 **Chorus**
Hail to Pittakos! Pittakos! Pittakos!

Phaon
What was that?

Minos
It came from the harbour!
They're hailing Pittakos,
The General! The General!

Phaon
The General! The General!
His galley must be sighted,
sighted in the harbour.
Ah, there! Look there!

Look there!
The beacon fires are lit!

Minos
The General at last!
A victory!
A victory at Athens!

Phaon
This means a victory,
a victory at Athens!

Minos
Let's away!

Minos and Phaon
Let's join the crowd to receive him!

(Exit Phaon and Minos hurriedly. A confused cheering outside in which may be distinguished the words 'Pittakos for Tyrant')

(Quick Curtain)

3 **Act 2, Scene 4**
Sappho's house, as in Scene 1. The room is decorated for the General, who stands framed in the doorway, his back to the audience. Torch lights flare, as the chorus sings verses of welcome.

Chorus
Sea and flint-begotten warriors,
Sea begotten heroes,
Companions of the Grecian sunlight,
Honour return of the helmeted victor

from the parched fields of Attica coming.

All hail! All hail!

Who shall announce him?

Who shall say his name?

Pittakos! Hail Pittakos!

His pinnacle was carved like a seabird,
sitting the waves of the blue Aegean,
touched Lesbos,

lightly as a cup touches a lip.

The journey ended,

the good news spoken.

Who shall announce him?

Who shall say his name?

Who shall announce him

and name him Pittakos!

Pittakos! Hail Pittakos!

Sling and quiver,

boarskin shield,

sling, quiver and bow,

celebrate the returning heroes

celebrate the returning conqueror!

Celebrate the returning conqueror

from the smokeless hearth of the vanquished.

Who shall announce him?

Who shall say his name?

Who shall announce him

and name him Pittakos!

Pittakos! Hail Pittakos!

(Pittakos enters, with Kreon on one arm, Sappho on the other. She holds his shield. Soldiers come to divest him.)

4 Sappho

Admit it now – you are quite puffed up!

Pittakos

I admit it.

I was born for power

– or so it seems

if I don't boast,

eh, Kreon?

Kreon

Power to the powerful!

Tell us of the battle, Pittakos.

Sappho

Do not bother him,

he is too tired,

his head still spinning

from the sea.

Pittakos

Ah, yes! Ah, yes!

I am as tired as a dog

and the reception at the harbour

overwhelmed me.

Who wrote the verses?

Sappho

Diomedes!

Pittakos

Diomedes, poor fellow!

You know that his son is dead?

Sappho and Kreon

We heard this morning,
We heard this morning only.

Pittakos

He died like a hero, a hero.
He died like a hero.
Now, where is this brother of mine
we all thought dead?
Has he not the grace to come and greet me?
Where is he? Where is he?

(Phaon comes forward)

Phaon

Hail brother!
I am here to greet you.
How are you, Pittakos?

Pittakos

Why, bless you boy.
I am so glad,
so glad, to see you.
They told me you were dead!
And now they tell me
you're a fisherman.

Phaon

By choice, Pittakos,
I came to it by my own choice.
But you have grown much fatter
in these last few years,
and more assured.

Pittakos

Ah, power does that!
Today, who'd ever think
we were related?
Look at us together!
Would you say twins?
The starving brother and
the corpulent Tyrant!
Ha! Ha!
Did you hear of it, Phaon?
They want me for Tyrant!
They want me for Tyrant!

Phaon

Who do?
Pittakos
My fellow citizens!

Phaon

You have accepted?

Pittakos

No, no,
I must consult the Oracle.
But I was thinking of a task for you,
I want you to administer Attica,
while I push on.

Phaon

Nothing would persuade me, Pittakos.

I will not work for you.

Pittakos

I do not understand you.

We could rebuild the world together.

Phaon

Or pull it down,
Or pull it down!

Pittakos

How can we pull it
any lower than it is?

Phaon

I am rebuilding it.
I am rebuilding it
in my own way.

(Phaon moves towards exit)

Pittakos

You're not going?

Phaon

Tonight, I shall sleep in my boat
to catch the dawn wind
when it comes.

Pittakos, one favour of you,
say goodbye, goodbye to them all for me.
When it comes to a parting,
I am a coward.

Pittakos

Yes, I will,
but so, we must part?

Phaon

Yes, so, so must we part.

*(Phaon exits, leaving Pittakos alone on stage.
Sappho enters, after a brief pause)*

5 **Pittakos**

Ah! Here you are at last!
What had become of you?

Sappho

Where is Phaon?

Pittakos

Phaon has gone,
back to his lonely island.
He asked me to say...

Sappho

To say goodbye for him?
A coward was he,
when called upon
to face the partings
that he called imaginary?
We shall miss him.

Pittakos

Yes, we shall miss him.

Sappho

Are you fasting for the Oracle, tonight?

Pittakos

Yes, of course!
With such responsibilities afoot,
I tremble.
The Sybil must decide,
decide for me again.

Sappho

So! You still believe in her?
I think the Oracle is simply
an old woman,
one of the Priestesses,
muttering through the Mask
as fancy takes her.

Pittakos

Sappho! That's blasphemy!
There are important matters
that the Mask must settle.
The question of being Tyrant,
for example.

Sappho

I say, give it up!
Give it up, give it all up!
Retire to private life.

Pittakos

Give it up?
Preposterous!
What would I do in private life?
I am a tough adventurer!
My soul learns through the
forfeits and the failures.
I cannot colonise ideas.
My theatre is this world.

Sappho

Then the sum of all your efforts
must be wasted.

Pittakos

Something has changed between us since we
parted.
We must be patient, be patient.

Sappho

Patient? To what end?

Pittakos

Why, to the love we bear each other!

Sappho

Ah, yes, the love,
the love I had forgotten.
So much time has passed,
so much time has passed,
things have changed.
I am going now,
I am going.

(Sappho turns to leave)

Pittakos

No, no! You must not leave me.
There is something to confess to you.

Sappho

Confess?
You were unfaithful to me
with an Athenian slave!

Pittakos

Be serious.

Sappho

Well? What is it?

Pittakos

You know the son of Diomedes?

Sappho

He's dead.

Pittakos

I know.

I had it given out he died a hero.

It wasn't true. It wasn't true.

He turned a coward
on the battlefield.

I had to kill him. I had to kill him.

Sappho

Pittakos!

A boy like that,

bound to us all by long ties of affection!

And you can run him through like a spider?

I cannot bear it! I cannot bear it!

Pittakos

What could I do?

Sappho

What could you do?

What could he do? Ha! Ha!

Pittakos

What has come over you?

All this for one small death among so many?

*(Sappho rushes at Pittakos, beats on his chest
with her fists)*

Sappho

What are you thinking in there,
the place where you were meant
to have a heart?

Where do you keep it? Ha! Ha!

Where do you keep it?

Tell me that! Tell me that! Tell me that!

Ha ha ha ha!

Pittakos

Sappho! Sappho! Sappho!

(Sappho's hysterical laughter turns into sobbing)

6 Pittakos

You think I do not feel?

I do, I do – believe me,

but I also know

what quality measures itself against me
in the guilt of action.

Never was man more conscious of his guilt,
but nobody is free,

neither the stars, nor the sky.

We are all fragments of
one circumstance.

(Sappho rises from her seat, head on one arm)

We cannot alter it to fit the picture as we wish.

I am hopeless in despair,

but will not go beyond

the truth as you do,

or accept Phaon's likeness
of a man stripped
of its carnal envelope.
Our fault lies
in the conditions that are given us,
as the magnet is given
its definition by the pole.
For we are all victims,
We're all victims!
Listen to me, listen to me!

Sappho

Pittakos, perhaps the best thing
that we can do for Lesbos,
is to murder you
before this pattern spreads
about us like a stain!
Perpetual increase of ruin,
nobly excused,
Perpetual fraud of the humble
doing your work!

Pittakos

Then make an end of me! Take this dagger.

Sappho

You dare not die, you dare not die!
If I should strike you
you would stay my hand,
Would you not? Would you not?

Pittakos

Try it, then! Try it! Ah, try it!

(Sappho snatches the dagger from Pittakos)

Sappho

Then Tyrant, die!
Then die!

(Sappho strikes at him: he snatches her wrist and turns the blow. As Sappho's hysterical laughter subsides into sobbing. Pittakos sinks slowly onto a bench, looking at the dagger in his hands.)

(Minos' voice is heard as he enters at a run.)

Minos

Sappho! Sappho!
Diomedes has taken poison! Has taken poison!

Sappho

Ah no! Ah no! I must go to him.
I must go to him.

(Sappho snatches a lantern and exits)

Minos

It's a terrible thing! He was ten years younger
than me.

Pittakos

Shut up! Shut up!

(Pittakos sinks slowly onto the bench, looking at the dagger, still in his hand.)

(Slow Curtain)

7 Act 2, Scene 5
Diomedes' Farmhouse

Sappho

Diomedes, oh Diomedes, what have you done?

Diomedes

Sappho, is that you?

Sappho

Why did you do it, why?

Was it because your son died in the war?

Diomedes

No, I die of shame, merely –

Sappho

Of shame?

Diomedes

How shall I tell you?

Where shall I begin?

How to define the graduations
of one's self disgust!

Bald, short of breath and
something of a drunkard,
the last coin that I won
was spent on poison,
not on wine!

It might have been cheaper
to cut an artery in the arm
but I am a coward,
as my young son
showed himself in battle!

Sappho

You knew about that?

Diomedes

One of his comrades witnessed the incident.

But that is not why I die, Sappho.

I was in love with Chloe,

a fat man in love with his son's young wife!

Sappho

But Chloe is a slave,

you could have bought her!

Diomedes

My own self-loathing

kept repeating that!

I wanted Chloe

as her own free gift,

or not at all.

Finally, when I learned

my son was dead,

what do you think I felt?

Joy!

Indescribable joy,

to know that she was free!

That was a joy no ordinary man

could bear to live with.

Therefore, this little cup...

8 **Sappho**

Sleep now.

Diomedes

No! Talk to me.

Tell me how it feels to be the Oracle!

Sappho

What! What are you saying?

Diomedes

I always guessed the Voice in the Golden Mask
was yours.

I was not wrong, was I?

Sappho

No! No, but it would be death to me
if anyone should hear me
speaking of it!

Oh Diomedes, did you also
guess what I have suffered
by the Oracle?

Diomedes

You wielded greater power than all of us!
Are your judgements all your own?

Sappho

No.

Diomedes

They drug you, do they not?

Sappho

Ah! I have sworn not to reveal it,
yet, hear the truth:

I take a drug before I sit in judgement,
my voice in judging them is not my own.

Diomedes

Then why this anguish of responsibility?

Sappho

Ah, because I cheated once,
out of contempt!

I could not make myself believe
the Mask an arbiter of men!

I did not take the drug,
but trusted to myself.

Bored with Pittakos as a lover,
it was I who sent him off
away from Lesbos,
on this mad adventure.

It was myself,
my own clear conscious mind;
My act that killed your son!
My act that brought upon us
all this confluence of misadventure.
Forgive me. Forgive me, Diomedes.
(Sappho feels that his hand is limp)
Diomedes! Diomedes!

(In fright and despair, she realises that he is dead)

(Curtain)

9 Act 3, Scene 6 – Cave of the Oracle

*(Three old Priestesses are performing the ceremony
of dedication for the Mask. Sappho kneels in a
corner, clad in a long black robe.)*

Chorus of Priestesses

Priestess of the Oracle!

We snuff the seven symbols here,
the seven burners in the dark,
the seven pupils in the cave.

Priestess of the Golden Mask!
Priestess of the Golden Oracle!
Present, past, and future tense,
by this mantric we condense,
all the categories of the sense,
action and experience!

Seven for doubt and
Six for action,
Five for knowledge and
Four for faction
Three a moment burning be
painful and mysterious individuality
Thus the opposites in man – we make one.
Ignorance and appetite
here lose their identity.
Priestess of the Oracle! Judge them now!

First Priestess
Have you spoken the responses?

Sappho
I have spoken the responses.

First Priestess
Then rise, accepting your division and the
god's truth.

Sappho
I rise, accepting my division and the god's
truth.

First Priestess
Ascend now the Sybil's tripod.

Sappho
Who awaits the Oracle?

First Priestess
Kreon. Kreon, Merchant of Lesbos.

Sappho
Admit him, admit him.

First Priestess
Admit Kreon.

10 Kreon
O Mask, behold in me
a man who is tormented
by questions none can answer,
except perhaps an Oracle!

Sappho
Speak, for the Mask hears you!
Tell your story.

Kreon
Many years ago
I sailed away from Lesbos
leaving here behind me
a young wife married
two months before I set sail.
The years passed
and returning home at last,
I stood upon the deck in tears,
taking the stillness on my cheek.
It was spring weather,
a sea of glass.
We turned the headland and

entered the harbour,
Then as I stood,
the sea began to boil,
the hills appeared to lean
into the sea!
Aieeeeeee! Aieeeeeee!

I saw the town sink
like a stone.
I saw the town sink
like a stone.
And then, at last,
when everything was still,
in the ruins of a house,
a child was crying.
I picked her up and I saved her –
she is now Sappho,
Sappho the singer,
and my wife!

Mask! Listen to the story!
I had my divers raise some tablets
from the sea,
among them there was a fragment
of a letter from my dead wife
in which she tells me of a child,
of a child!
Aieeeeeeeee!
She tells me of a child called Sappho!
Sappho! Sappho!

Mask! Hear me, hear me!
We fear, oh gods we fear
this may be Sappho my daughter
and now my wife!

Sappho
Where is this tablet?

Kreon
Destroyed!!
Destroyed – for in my horror
I destroyed them all!

Sappho
Kreon!
You live not by what is absolute
in truth or fiction
but by dispensation here;
Since you have lost the tablet
you are condemned
to hunt your peace of mind forever
in that buried city
where the truth lies hid,
and according to the law,
your riches may be taken
for the Common Treasury,
your house and family put to suffrage,
chosen by ballot for exile
or the sword.

Kreon
Ah spare us, oh spare us,
save us from this most dreadful fate.
Have mercy Mask!
Have mercy on us!

Chorus of Priestesses
Ah woe! Ah woe!

11 Act 3, Scene 7 – Introduction to Act 3

12 Finale – Epilogue

The room in Sappho's house, as in Scene 3. The courtyard is seen open at the back. Sappho's two children are playing there among the columns.

Minos

The voting must be over,
it must be over!
They have had time to dispute it all,
circumscribe everything with words.
Where is the General?
The voting must be over!

Sappho

Patience! Patience!

Minos

You look pale.
Do not be afraid, my dear.
It will be surely, surely be exile, not the sword.

Sappho

I am not afraid,
I am mortally tired,
I have gone beyond consolation.
Oh, how gladly I would rise
to meet the lash of this misfortune,
could I feel it.
I feel nothing, I feel nothing!
Something is wrong with me.
Some sort of boundary is crossed.
Oh, nothing makes sense within the world.

Nothing makes sense within the world,
nor yet without it!
I am not afraid,
I am mortally tired,
I have gone beyond consolation.
I have become a rock!

Minos

It is the injustice of our luck that stuns,
and then the black failure of the law
to repeal the truth in favour of statutes
nobody believes in!
Did not Zeus marry his daughter?
Shall accident be punished for intention?

Sappho

Enough! Enough!

Minos

What a fool Kreon was to confess this!
What fools we all are to believe it,
on the evidence of an old tablet!

Sappho

You saw it, did you not?
Could someone have written it
and put it there?

Minos

What! A forgery?
Impossible! Impossible!

Sappho

You could not have done it, I suppose?

Minos

Sappho! Sappho!

Sappho

Or Pittakos, in revenge?

Minos

Revenge for what? For loving you?

For loving you?

Sappho

This blow seems far below the level of an injured
god,

for a god would know that there were worse things

I feared, like going blind!

And yet it's much above

the fitful stabbings of bad luck,

for luck would guess,

for luck would know

I did not care.

It smells far closer to the politics

of the hive that Lesbos is becoming.

Minos

My dear, this has upset you
more than you believe.

Try to compose your mind
to meet with it.

Sappho

You think I'm going mad?

I have already been there,
and returned!

To the outward eye unchanged

save for a tendency to boredom
and weeping alone
in the best bedroom!

13 **Minos**

I am very tired.

Will you think hardly of me
in your exile

for not accompanying you?

It is not lack of love or loyalty,
but somehow,

now this happens,

it sets me free

and releases me for death.

I feel the ebb and flow

of great events

beyond my power to follow.

I am a fragment now.

I am a fragment, a fragment
belonging more to death now

than to you.

Sappho

Bless you, you shall do as you please and if we
return...

If we return, if we return!

(Pittakos enters hurriedly.)

14 **Pittakos**

Sappho! Sappho!

It is exile, not execution!

But you must leave tonight!

Tonight, tonight!

Sappho & Minos

Tonight?

Pittakos

You have more enemies
than you have known of.
Several of them with teeth like sharks
gossiped of death for you and Kreon.

Sappho

Where is Kreon? What of him?

Pittakos

He is very ill.
They are carrying him down to the ship,
and Aristarchus here is come to take you safely
down.

Sappho

Then there is nothing more to say.
Am I permitted
to take Chloe as nurse
for the children?

Pittakos

Ah! The children, I forgot!
The children are to stay.

Sappho

To stay? To stay? What do you mean?

Pittakos

They stay as hostages,
against your good behaviour.

Sappho

My good behaviour? My good behaviour?

Pittakos

Sappho, listen!
In Corinth you can work for us!
Work for us underground!
Sway policy in our direction,
and you shall have your children!

Sappho

The Senate could not think of this!
This is your idea!

Pittakos

I admit it. It was,
it was my idea.

Sappho

Pittakos! How can you do this?
How can you do such a thing?

Pittakos

Sappho, I've done the best
I could for you,
the best I could.

Sappho

So! There is something left to feel.
This long, unwholesome argument
with the world that seemed to bring
no quickness either to death or exile –
It may mean something after all,
for now I feel it, I feel it.

I feel it now!

Pittakos

Ah, Sappho!

Sappho

Do you remember how you loved me?

Do you remember the salt black tears
that once unmanned you?

It became you not,
but this dark injustice
becomes you even less
than that did.

Pittakos

What a bitter, bitter ending to everything.

I do not know what to say.

I don't know what to say, Sappho.

Sappho

Leave me, ah leave me! Ah, go!

(Breaks into sobbing)

Pittakos

Farewell, dear lady. Fare thee well.

Minos

Farewell, dear Sappho. Farewell, dear lady. Fare
thee well.

(Minos and Pittakos exit.)

*(Sappho looks about the room, as if for the last
time)*

15 Sappho

Now everything

is silence and remoteness

except for the bubbling of the water clocks,
drinking our time into their soft throats of sand.

With all the misadventures we see fit to add
as life's amendments here.

Time to think of the remedies

we proposed ourselves,

Time to recall them one by one.

How much waste in plot and counterplot,

for the gain of the imagination,

as if this ruined house

were not a blackboard

on which we saw the future written.

Taking up positions

in each other's self esteem,

what could we ask for

more than injury

and damage to each other? .

So, at last,

after so very long,

I climb up here

onto this icy peak of my indifference!

Lacking now the soft compunction,

at hurting friend or enemy!

I shall be happier, far happier

at being less myself,

and men perhaps are best loved

by punishment.

They do not live by meekness,

but by blood,

unwatered by the fear of failure.

How soon will all my lovely days be over,

and I be no more found beneath the sun,
– neither beside the many-murmuring seas
nor where the plain winds
whisper through the reeds,
nor in the tall beech woods
where roam the bright-lipped Oreads,
nor along the pasture sides
where berry-pickers stray,
and harmless shepherds
pipe their sheep to fold.

For I am eager,
and the flame of life burns quickly
in this fragile lamp of clay.
Passion and love and longing and hot tears
consume this mortal Sappho,
this mortal Sappho

and, ah, too soon, ah, too soon,
a sable wind from the dark,
a sable wind from the dark
will blow upon me,
blow upon me, blow upon me,
and I be no more
found in this fair world,
for all the search
of the revolving moon
and patient shine
of everlasting stars.

*(Sappho turns, and slowly walks through the
archway to the darkening terraces beyond.)*

(Slow Curtain)

THE END

It was in the role of Brünnhilde in Harry Kupfer's 1988 staging of Wagner's *Ring* in Bayreuth that **Deborah Polaski** emerged as one of the world's major dramatic sopranos. She went on to sing the role there more times than any soprano since before the Second World War and portrayed Wotan's daughter in major international houses around the world in the years to come. Deborah Polaski has sung in Amsterdam, Barcelona, Berlin, Chicago, Cologne, Dresden, Florence, Leipzig, London, Madrid, Milan, Munich, New York, Paris, Prague, with the Salzburg Festivals, in Sydney, Tokyo, Vienna and Zurich, among others. Although Brünnhilde was her calling card, other big Wagnerian roles complete her repertoire: Senta, Venus, Ortrud, Sieglinde and Kundry. Deborah Polaski is also renowned as one of the outstanding Isolde's of her time. She first sang the role in Freiburg in the 1980s, made it her own and has sung it since in Dresden, Salzburg (with Abbado), Florence (Mehta), Tokyo (Abbado), Berlin (Barenboim), Barcelona (de Billy), Hamburg (Young) and Vienna (Welser-Möst), among others. She has recorded excerpts and, as with many of her Wagner roles, her performance is captured on DVD.



Her repertoire, of course, is not confined to Wagner. She is also an extraordinary Elektra, has more than 190 performances to her credit with the world's top conductors and directors and has recorded it twice, with Barenboim and Bychkov. Her repertoire also includes Marie in *Wozzeck*, the Kostelnička in *Jenůfa*, Cassandre and Didon in *Les Troyens*, the Färberin in *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, the title role in *Ariadne auf Naxos*, Ariane in *Barbe-Bleue*, Die Frau in *Erwartung*, Kabanicha in *Káta Kabanová*, and in 2012 she made her role debut as Gräfin Geschwitz in *Lulu* in Berlin.

Her concert work includes performances with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra (Maazel), the Berlin Philharmonic (Abbado), and collaborations with Boulez, Bychkov, de Billy, Levine, Luisi, Märkl, Mehta, Prêtre and Young, among many others. Her relationship with Barenboim has included concerts with the Staatskapelle Berlin in the Berlin Philharmonie, and appearances in Carnegie Hall and in Paris. With Barenboim she has also appeared as a recitalist, although she regularly works with pianist Charles Spencer. Together they have appeared in some of the world's finest recital halls.

In 2003 the Austrian government bestowed on her the title of *Kammersängerin* in recognition of her contribution to Vienna's cultural life and in 2010 she received an Honorary Doctorate in

Performing Arts from her alma mater, the University of Cincinnati. Aside from exciting plans on the opera stage, Deborah Polaski is also much in demand as a singing teacher around the world, both as a private teacher and in Master Classes.

Tenor **Martin Homrich** began his career in the ensemble of the Staatsoper Hamburg, moving after four years to the Semperoper in Dresden. His repertoire during this period included the major Mozart roles (Tamino, Tito, Don Ottavio, Belmonte and Ferrando) as well as Flamand (*Capriccio*), Macduff (*Macbeth*), Tom Rakewell (*The Rake's Progress*), Hans (*The Bartered Bride*) and Max (*Der Freischütz*). Since 2009 Homrich has been a freelance artist, regularly returning to Hamburg and Dresden in roles such as Tamino (*Die Zauberflöte*) and Erik (*Der fliegende Holländer*) and celebrating considerable success as Edmund in Hamburg's 2012 new production of Reimann's *Lear*. Other repertoire includes Elemer and Matteo (*Arabella*), Werther, Lohengrin, Idomeneo, Nero (*L'Incoronazione di Poppea*), Narraboth (*Salome*), the Italian Singer (*Der Rosenkavalier*) and Walter von der Vogelweide (*Tannhäuser*). He has sung in various major European houses including the Vienna State Opera, Berlin State Opera, Deutsche Oper Berlin, La Scala and the Bastille Opera under renowned conductors including Zubin Mehta, Daniel Barenboim, Marek Janowski, Stefan Soltesz, Armin Jordan and Peter Schreier.



After studies in America and an early engagement at Western Opera, San Francisco, tenor **Scott MacAllister** moved to Europe. Four seasons at the Royal Opera de Wallonie in Liège were followed by engagements in Germany – at the Stadttheater Würzburg and at the National Theatre Mannheim where he remained a member of the ensemble for several years. Roles here included Hoffmann (*Les Contes d'Hoffmann*), Riccardo (*Un ballo in maschera*), Max (*Der Freischütz*), Alwa (*Lulu*), Parsifal, Cavaradossi (*Tosca*) and Don Jose (*Carmen*). Since then he has performed with major companies worldwide, in Australia, China, Japan and the USA. His roles in



major European opera-houses such as the Staatsoper in Hamburg, Semperoper in Dresden, Teatro La Fenice in Venice, Opéra Bastille and at the Netherlands, Leipzig, Nuremberg, Stuttgart, Zurich, Hannover, Stuttgart, Frankfurt and Cologne opera-houses have included the title roles in *Lohengrin*, *Tannhäuser* and *Siegfried*, Radames (*Aida*), Florestan (*Fidelio*), the Kaiser (*Die Frau ohne Schatten*), Albrecht von Brandenburg (*Mathis der Maler*) and Herod (*Salome*). His concert repertoire includes Verdi's *Requiem*, Puccini's *Missa da Gloria*, Britten's *War Requiem* and Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde*.

Baritone Roman Trekel began his operatic career at the Staatsoper Berlin, where he continues as a company member to this day. His performances, of course, are not confined to Berlin: he has performed to critical acclaim in some of the finest opera-houses in the world, among them La Scala, the Royal Opera House Covent Garden, the State Operas in Munich, Dresden and Hamburg, the New National Theatre in Tokyo, and in opera houses in Amsterdam, Brussels, Geneva, Florence, Madrid, Vienna and Zurich.

He has performed at the Bayreuth Festival over eleven years, celebrating particular triumph as Wolfram von Eschenbach in *Tannhäuser*. Trekel has mastered the dramatic, lyric and character roles of the baritone repertoire, including Kurwenal (*Tristan und Isolde*), Beckmesser (*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*), Amfortas (*Parsifal*), and the title role in *Wozzeck*, together with the Conte (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Posa (*Don Carlos*), Valentin (*Faust*), Don Alfonso (*Così fan tutte*) and many others. He is a much sought-after concert singer performing with some of the world's major orchestras such as the Berlin Philharmonic, the Chicago Symphony, Cleveland, the Houston Symphony and the Israel and Munich Philharmonic Orchestras under such conductors as Claudio Abbado, Daniel Barenboim, Pierre Boulez, Fabio Luisi, Zubin Mehta, Christian Thielemann and Kent Nagano.



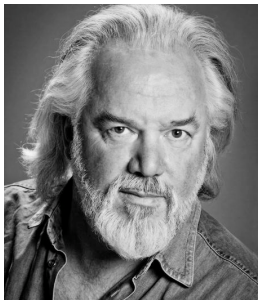
Wolfgang Koch is currently one of the most important dramatic bass-baritones in the opera world. His studies at the Munich Music High School and with Josef Metternich, Gianni Raimondi and Leondino Ferri were followed by engagements in the ensembles of Stadttheater Bern, Staatsoper Stuttgart and the Wiener Volksoper where Koch celebrated success in new productions of Schreker's *Irrelohe*, Kienzl's *Der Evangelimann*, Orff's *Die Kluge* and d'Albert's *Tiefland*.

Koch now works freelance in the world's most important opera houses. In Frankfurt in 2006 he made his highly praised debut as Hans Sachs in Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*. At this house he has also sung the title role in Reimann's *Lear*, Mandryka (*Arabella*) and Borromeo (*Palestrina*). Koch has achieved success at the Wiener Staatsoper with Hans Sachs, Telramund (*Lohengrin*), Jochanaan (*Salome*) and Barak (*Die Frau ohne Schatten*). His triumphs at the Staatsoper Hamburg include Alberich in new productions of Wagner's *Das Rheingold*, *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung*, Jochanaan, and new productions of Dean's *Bliss* and *Don Giovanni*.



Koch is also deeply involved with the Staatsoper Munich where he has sung leading roles in *Doktor Faust*, *Palestrina*, *Lohengrin*, *Fidelio* and the *Ring*. In 2011 Koch made his debuts at the Salzburg Festival and at the Royal Opera House Covent Garden. In Wagner's centenary, 2013, he has been cast in major role debuts as Wotan for the Bayreuth Festival's *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. He makes his debut with the Metropolitan Opera in New York in 2014. Concert appearances have led him to La Scala, the Accademia Santa Cecilia in Rome, to Hamburg, Brussels, Paris and the Konzerthaus and Musikverein in Vienna. Koch has participated in many CD and DVD recordings including *Das Rheingold*, *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung* (Hamburg), *Lear* (Frankfurt), and *Palestrina* and *Lohengrin* (Munich).

Born in Lancashire, **Sir John Tomlinson** studied at the Royal Manchester College of Music and with Otakar Kraus. He sings regularly with The Royal Opera and English National Opera and with all the major British opera companies. He appeared at the Bayreuth Festival for eighteen consecutive seasons from 1988 as Wotan, König Marke, Titirel, Gurnemanz, Hagen and the Dutchman. He has sung in Berlin, Geneva, Lisbon, Stuttgart, Vancouver, San Francisco, New York, Pittsburgh, Paris, Amsterdam, Munich, Vienna, Bologna, Florence, Tokyo and at the Glyndebourne, Orange, Aix-en-Provence, Munich and Salzburg festivals. His repertoire includes Hans Sachs (*Meistersinger*), Heinrich (*Lohengrin*), Baron Ochs (*Der*



Rosenkavalier), Leporello (*Don Giovanni*), Claggart (*Billy Budd*), King Fisher (*The Midsummer Marriage*), Méphistophélès (*Faust*), the four villains (*Les Contes d'Hoffmann*), King Philip (*Don Carlos*) and the title roles in *Attila*, *Mosè in Egitto*, *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Boris Godunov*, *Moses und Aron*, *Bluebeard's Castle* and *Oberto* (which he also directed). In 1993 he won a Grammy for Bartók's *Cantata Profana* and in February 2007 was honoured with the 'Special Award' at the Laurence Olivier Award Ceremony. He was awarded a CBE in 1997 and knighted in the Queen's Birthday Honours of 2005. John Tomlinson has a large concert repertoire and has sung with all the leading British orchestras and in Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Holland, Spain and the USA. His recordings, both on CD and DVD/video are prolific. Future performances include the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, Munich, Vienna, Salzburg, Hamburg, Antwerp, Copenhagen and Berlin.

The American soprano **Jacquelyn Wagner** has performed extensively in America and Europe including Fiordiligi (*Così fan tutte*) at the Minnesota Opera, the Grand Théâtre de Genève, Vlaamse Oper, Staatstheater Stuttgart, Opera de Marseille and Opéra National du Rhin; Donna Anna (*Don Giovanni*) with Opéra de Lyon, Florida Grand Opera and Opera Fuoco; Contessa (*Le nozze di Figaro*) at Theater Basel and Oper Frankfurt; Agathe (*Der Freischütz*) with Opéra Toulon; Violetta (*La Traviata*) at the Festival Internacional de Música de Almansa and Zuccherina in the pastiche *Lape musicale* with the Orquestra de l'Acadèmia del Gran Teatre del Liceu. Performances at the Deutsche Oper Berlin



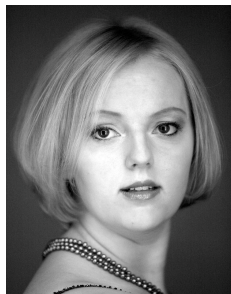
have included Micaela (*Carmen*), Pamina (*Die Zauberflöte*), Musetta (*La Bohème*), Gretel (*Hänsel und Gretel*), Contessa (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Stephano (*Roméo et Juliette*) and Suor Genovieffa (*Suor Angelica*). In concert, she has appeared with various American orchestras and with the Kammerorchester Berlin. She has been a recipient of the Jenny Lind Society and Fulbright Scholarships and been a finalist in competitions including the Queen Sonja International Music Competition, the Francisco Vinas International Singing Competition, the Renata Tebaldi International Voice Competition and Plácido Domingo's Operalia Competition.

The German soprano **Bettina Jensen** made her debut while still a student as Gorgo in Richard Strauss' *Des Esels Schatten* at the Staatsoper Berlin. She performed Pamina in the celebrated

production of *Zirkus um Zauberflöten* at the Circus Roncalli in Berlin. From 1999 to 2001 she was an ensemble member of the Lucerne Theatre before joining the ensemble of the Komische Oper Berlin in 2002. Her roles there included Micaela (*Carmen*), Donna Anna (*Don Giovanni*), Contessa (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Rosalinde (*Die Fledermaus*), Agathe, (*Der Freischütz*), Hanna Glawari (*Die lustige Witwe*), Marie (*Die verkaufte Braut*) and Kurfürstin (*Der Vogelhändler*), among others. Other engagements have taken her to Basel, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Essen, Hanover, Kiel, the Staatsoper Leipzig, Linz, Lucerne, Wiesbaden, Bremen, Kassel and to the Ponte de Lima Festival in Portugal. In 2011 she returned to Bremen as Rosalinde and to Berlin for Lehár's *Das Land des Lächelns*. Her debut in the same year at the Gran Teatre del Liceu in Barcelona as Agathe in *Der Freischütz* was an acclaimed success and she repeated the role in Calixto Bieito's new production at the Komische Oper, Berlin. Bettina has won various international competitions and awards and is active on concert stages around the world.



Mezzo soprano **Maria Markina**, originally from Moscow, studied at the Russian Academy of Theatre Arts with Aleksandr Titel and Emma Sarkisyan, graduating with honours. In 2002 she joined Moscow's Novaya Opera Theatre and was then engaged as a resident artist with the Houston Grand Opera Studio. Roles performed in Houston include Lola (*Cavalleria Rusticana*), Maddalena (*Rigoletto*), Second Lady (*Die Zauberflöte*), Hänsel (*Hänsel und Gretel*), Lapak/Woodpecker (*The Cunning Little Vixen*) and Pauline (*Pique Dame*). Markina also sang the title role in *La Cenerentola* with Connecticut Opera and appeared as Bradamante in *Alcina* for Wolf Trap Opera. Markina made her debut with the Hamburgische Staatsoper in 2009 and has been a member of the Hamburg ensemble since 2010. Her roles in Hamburg include Cherubino (*Le Nozze di Figaro*), Lola (*Cavalleria Rusticana*), Zaida (*Il Turco in Italia*), Emilia and Zaire (*Les Indes Galants*), Olga (*Eugene Onegin*), Siebel (*Faust*), Wellgunde (*Das Rheingold* and *Götterdämmerung*), Zerlina (*Don Giovanni*), Silla (*Palestrina*), Angelina (*La Cenerentola*), Meg Page (*Falstaff*) and Pauline (*Pique*



Dame). In concert she has performed with orchestras in Russia and Germany with conductors including Lawrence Foster, John Nelson, Valery Polianski, Ola Rudner and Vladimir Spivakov.

Australian baritone **Laurence Meikle** performed principal roles for Melbourne Opera, Victorian Opera and Opera Australia during his studies at the Victorian College of the Arts. He graduated from the Royal Academy of Music in 2010 with the Opera Rara Bel Canto Prize. As a recitalist he has performed with Dame Kiri Te Kanawa, Yvonne Kenny, Angelika Kirschlager and Dame Emma Kirkby. He gave a solo recital for Sir Charles Mackerras' 80th birthday. He has performed over 25 oratorios and given recitals for BBC and ABC Classic FM.



Recordings include Somm's award-winning release of Elgar's *The Fringes of the Fleet*. His repertoire includes Marcello and Schaunard (*La Bohème*), Masetto and Giovanni (*Don Giovanni*), Conte Almaviva (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Guglielmo (*Così fan tutte*), Escamillo (*Carmen*), Belcore (*L'Elisir d'amore*), Demetrius (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*), Malatesta (*Don Pasquale*), Conte Ceprano (*Rigoletto*), King Melchior (*Amahl and the Night Visitors*), Sciarrone and Angelotti (*Tosca*), Il Commissario (*Madama Butterfly*), Marco and Pinnelino (*Gianni Schicchi*), the Gamekeeper (*Rusalka*), and the three baritone roles in Massenet's *La Vierge*.

He has engagements in the 2012–13 season with Opera Monte Carlo, Teatro dell'Opera di Milano, Bergamo Opera, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Soho Theatre, Woodhouse Opera and Opera Holland Park.

Born in Australia in 1983, **Jennifer Condon** studied piano in Sydney and operatic conducting in Melbourne, Vienna and Germany. While still a student, she was assistant conductor of *La Bohème* for Melbourne City Opera, conducted *The Tales of Hoffmann* for the Sydney University Arts Festival and founded The Tivoli Orchestra for a gala concert in Sydney. She was also the inaugural chief conductor of the Sydney Eclectic Composers' Society. Condon is an experienced vocal coach, working freelance in Australia and Europe.



After discovering *Sappho* in 2001, she devoted the next decade to securing the rights to produce a performance edition, the premiere recording and stage production of the work. She is currently completing the performance edition as part of a PhD at the University of New England, Australia.

Since 2008 she has been employed as a *souffleuse* at the Staatsoper Hamburg where her repertoire comprises over forty works in five languages. In 2011 she established Owl's Nest Opera, an Australian-based production company dedicated to promoting the work of Australian artists and composers, in particular Peggy Glanville-Hicks, on the world stage. The sole driving force behind this world-premiere recording, Jennifer Condon will continue in both her roles as impresario and conductor to bring *Sappho* to the stage in the coming years.

In 1962 the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation decided to establish a permanent orchestral body. It initially consisted of only twelve players (strings and continuo) and was called the Gulbenkian Chamber Orchestra. The group was successively enlarged up to the point where today the **Orquestra Gulbenkian** (the name it has adopted since 1971) counts upon a permanent body of 66 instrumentalists which can be expanded as required by the programme at hand. This structure allows Orquestra Gulbenkian to interpret a wide repertoire which spans all of the Classical period, a significant part of nineteenth-century orchestral literature and much of the music of the twentieth. Each season the Orchestra gives a regular series of concerts at the Grande Auditório Gulbenkian in Lisbon. There it has had the opportunity of working together with some of the world's finest conductors and soloists. It has also performed on numerous locations all over Portugal, which has allowed it to contribute to the decentralisation of culture.

The Orchestra has been gradually expanding its international activities, performing in Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas. In September 2011, for example, it appeared at the Enescu Festival in Romania and went on to visit Armenia for the first time, giving two concerts in Yerevan under the direction of Lawrence Foster. New tours are in preparation for 2013, to Austria, Germany and China.

Recordings of the Orquestra Gulbenkian have appeared on a number of labels, among them Adès, Deutsche Grammophon, Erato, Hyperion, Lyrix, Nimbus, Naïve, Pentatone, Philips and Teldec, and have been awarded a number of prestigious international prizes. Among recent projects are the first recording of Salieri's Requiem, a disc with works by Ligeti, Kodály and Bartók, and a new collaboration with the pianist Sa Chen released in 2012, all of them under the direction of Lawrence Foster and released on Pentatone. The Gulbenkian Orchestra

recorded a CD for young people – with Prokofiev’s *Peter and the Wolf*, Saint-Saëns’ *Carnival of the Animals* and Britten’s *Young Person’s Guide to the Orchestra* – conducted by Joana Carneiro, released in 2011 on Trem Azul. Currently in preparation are three CDs featuring soloists from the Gulbenkian Orchestra, conducted by Lawrence Foster, Joana Carneiro and Pedro Neves, as part of the commemorations of the 50th anniversary of the Orchestra in the 2012–13 season.

Lawrence Foster, the current Principal Conductor, has been responsible for the artistic direction of the ensemble since 2002–3. In 1987 Claudio Scimone, who occupied this position between 1979 and 1986, was nominated Honorary Conductor. Joana Carneiro holds the position of Guest Conductor since 2006. Paul McCreesh has just been appointed Principal Conductor of the Gulbenkian Orchestra, beginning in 2013–14.

Founded in 1964 by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, the **Coro Gulbenkian** performs works from the Classical, Romantic and contemporary choral-symphonic repertoire with its full complement of 100 singers, to Portuguese polyphony from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries in smaller vocal ensembles.

Performing regularly with the Orquestra Gulbenkian, the choir is also frequently invited to perform with some of the world’s major orchestras, including the London, Berlin, Czech and Strasbourg Philharmonics, the San Francisco and Vienna Symphony and the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, under such distinguished conductors as Claudio Abbado and Sir Colin Davis. The choir has a particularly close relationship with the Orchestra of the XVIII Century, recording Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony for Philips under the direction of Frans Brüggen and touring to France, Germany, Hong Kong, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands and the UK with them. The choir’s international reputation has also been enhanced by tours to the Americas, Canada, and the Far and Middle East.

The Coro Gulbenkian has participated in music festivals around the world, including the Eurotop Amsterdam, the Veneto, the City of London, the Granada International and Hong Kong Arts Festivals. In 2010 the choir toured with the Freiburg Barockorchester under René Jacobs to Brussels, Lisbon and Paris, presenting semi-staged performances of *Così fan tutte*. In 2011 the Coro and Orquestra Gulbenkian, under the direction of Esa-Pekka Salonen, performed a multi-media production of Janáček’s *From the House of the Dead*, which was also presented in concert at the Royal Festival Hall, London. In 2012 the chorus toured with the Orchestre National de Lyon under Leonard Slatkin in performances (including a live broadcast by Medici TV) of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony.

The Coro Gulbenkian has recorded extensively, the labels including Philips, Archiv-Deutsche Grammophon, Cascavelle, Erato, FNAC-Music, Musifrance and Portugaler, and has a number of international awards to its credit, among them the Berlioz Prize of the French Académie Nationale du Disque Lyrique, the Grand Prix International du Disque and an Orphée d'Or. Particular emphasis in recordings is given to Portuguese music such as the *Madrigais camonianos* ('Camões Madrigals') of Luis de Freitas Branco, the seventeenth-century 'Vilancicos negros' ('Creole villancicos') and the *a cappella* works of Pero de Gambôa and Lourenço Ribeiro from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Michel Corboz has been Principal Conductor of the choir since 1969; the Associate Conductor is Jorge Matta.

Recorded in the Grande Auditório, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon, 10–20 July 2012

Recording engineers: Pierre Lavoix and Thibaut Maillard, Lourisom.

Production Management: Berliner Opern- & Konzertagentur Bredtmeyer

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Booklet texts by Jennifer Condon, Deborah Hayes, Margaret Reynolds, Charles Sligh

Cover image: Peggy Glanville-Hicks at the Herod Atticus Theatre, Athens, 1961

Design and layout: Paul Brooks, Design and Print, Oxford

Acknowledgements and Thanks

The entire cast and crew, without whose generosity and commitment this recording would not have been possible

Shane Simpson and the late James Murdoch of the Estate of Peggy Glanville-Hicks

The Peggy Glanville-Hicks Composers' House Trust

Major Sponsors

Ian Dickson

The Hon. Jane Mathews

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Renaissance Tours

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Thanks also to:

José Andrade, Aris Argiris, Richard Bonyngé, Judi Connelli, Rowena Cowley, John Davis, Christine Douglas, Lawrence Foster, Christian Franz, António Gonçalves, Ambre Hammond, Deborah Hayes, Daniela Hebbelmann, Robyn Holmes, Olivia Jeremias, Suzanne Johnston, Joanna Kamenarska, Anja Krietsch, Ira and Maxim Landsberg, Richard Letts, Jane Lewis, Robert Mitchell, Gisela and Jürgen Paproth, Astrid Patzelt, Sandra Poccheschi, Peggy Reynolds, Claudia Ribeiro, Suzanne Robinson, Anne Schwanewilms, Jennie Shaw, Siegfried, Stuart Skelton, Aaron Sorkin, Charles Sligh, Lothar Strauss, Paolo Totaro, Vladimir Vais, Elizabeth Willis, Simone Young, and my family, especially my parents Susan and Michael. –JC

Producer: Jennifer Condon

Executive Producer: Martin Anderson

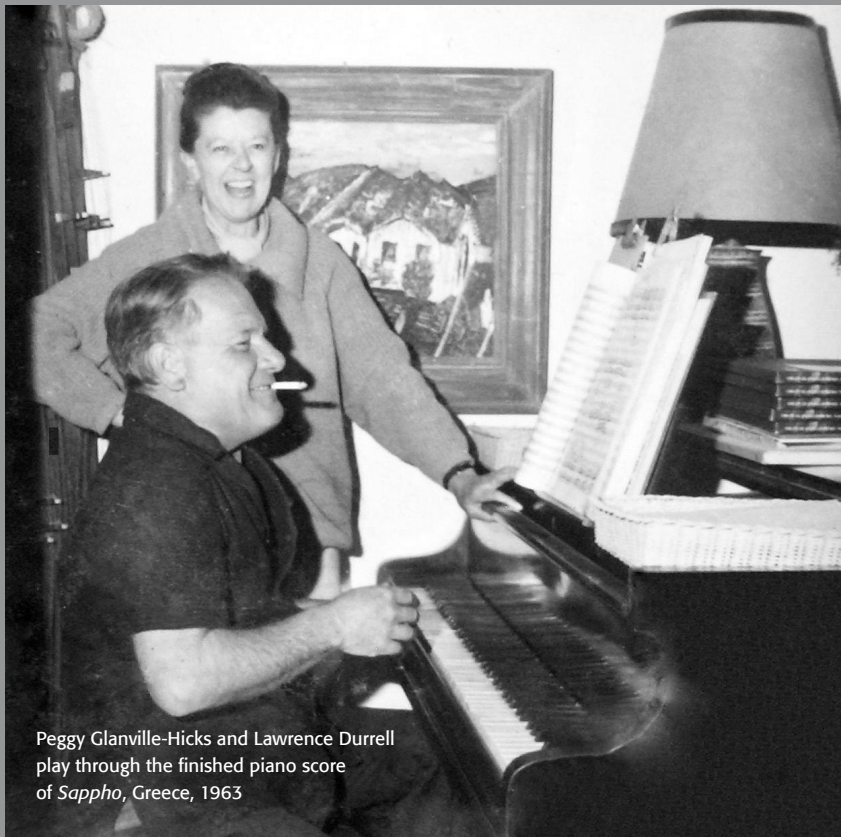
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Libretto: Laurence Durrell Estate

Sound recording © Peggy Glanville-Hicks Composers' Trust



Peggy Glanville-Hicks and Lawrence Durrell
play through the finished piano score
of *Sappho*, Greece, 1963

TOCCATA
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Sappho, the last grand opera of Australian composer Peggy Glanville-Hicks (1912–90), was written in her stone cottage on Mykonos in 1963. Never heard before this recording, *Sappho* reflects Glanville-Hicks' fascination with the orient and folk music, capturing the colours of ancient Greece, with a heroic brass fanfare and epic writing for chorus, haunting woodwind solos and shimmering percussion evoking the stillness of crystal island waters. Deborah Polaski, who creates the role of the disenchanting Sappho, describes it as 'the kind of music that singers want to sing'. The libretto, based on Lawrence Durrell's verse-play, incorporates fragments of Sappho's own verse.

PEGGY GLANVILLE-HICKS *Sappho*

CD 1

Act 1

1	Overture	3:42
2-8	Scene 1	30:14
9-14	Scene 2	26:20

TT 61:21

CD 2

Act 2

1-2	Scene 3	6:19
3-6	Scene 4	20:31
7-8	Scene 5	8:57

Act 3

9-10	Scene 6	9:41
11-15	Scene 7	21:18

TT 66:48

Deborah Polaski, soprano: Sappho

Martin Homrich, tenor: Phaon

Scott MacAllister, tenor: Pittakos

Roman Trekel, baritone: Diomedes

Wolfgang Koch, bass-baritone: Minos

John Tomlinson, bass: Kreon

Jacquelyn Wagner, soprano: Chloe/Priestess

Bettina Jensen, soprano: Joy

Maria Markina, mezzo soprano: Doris

Laurence Meikle, baritone: Alexandrian

Coro Gulbenkian

Orchestra Gulbenkian

Jennifer Condon, conductor

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