

**THE WORLD PREMIERE OF *GIULIO CESARE* WAS A BLOCKBUSTER**, running for 13 performances. That was in London in 1724, when a new work mounted half a dozen times was considered a hit. George Frideric Handel had produced something extraordinary and unusual for its time: an opera with a plot based on history (albeit fictionalized), not mythology. *Giulio Cesare* tells the love story of Caesar and Cleopatra, two of the ancient world’s most famous characters, and its original production featured some of the greatest stars of the day, singing unprecedentedly luscious music. It was terrific entertainment.

The Metropolitan Opera’s new production follows in that tradition. “*Giulio Cesare* is a kaleidoscope of an opera—a semi-comic, semi-tragic adventure story,” says director David McVicar. “You get romance, you get drama, you get moments of political wheeling-and-dealing, complex family relationships—as well as real emotion and tragedy.” McVicar’s staging, which originally premiered to popular and critical acclaim at England’s Glyndebourne Festival in 2005, incorporates elements of Baroque theater, British imperialism, and Bollywood-inspired dance moves. David Daniels, today’s leading counter-tenor, and soprano Natalie Dessay, one of opera’s greatest singing actresses, play the lead roles, with Baroque specialist Harry Bicket conducting.

Young people will find much to enjoy in *Giulio Cesare*—but they may also find it somewhat unusual. Baroque opera is ruled by conventions that run counter to 21st-century expectations, and its sounds are a far cry from the familiar operatic hits of the Romantic era. The instrumentation is different. There are heroes who sing with high voices. And the opera’s formal structure, a sequence of set pieces tailored to showcasing the abilities of star vocalists, demands a different kind of listening from what even seasoned opera fans are used to. The activities in this guide will introduce your students to the sounds and sense of Baroque opera. For those who are less familiar with the history of Julius Caesar in Egypt than 18th-century Londoners were, it includes a primer to the quick-moving plot. The guide is designed to invite students to explore the colorful world of this Met production of *Giulio Cesare*.

### THE WORK *GIULIO CESARE*

An opera in three acts, sung in Italian

Music by George Frideric Handel  
(1685–1759)

Libretto by Nicola Francesco Haym

First performed on February 20, 1724  
at the King’s Theatre, Haymarket,  
London, England

### PRODUCTION

Harry Bicket, Conductor

David McVicar, Production

Richard Jones, Set Designer

Brigitte Reiffenstuel, Costume  
Designer

Paule Constable, Lighting Designer

Andrew George, Choreographer



DESSAY



DANIELS



BARDON



COOTE

Production a gift of the Arthur F. and Alice E. Adams Charitable Foundation, in memory of William B. Warren, former Co-Trustee and Governor of the Foundation

Production owned by Glyndebourne Festival Opera

The guide includes four types of activities. Reproducible student resources for the activities are available at the back of this guide.

### CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

a full-length activity, designed to introduce students to the structure of Baroque opera

### MUSICAL HIGHLIGHTS

opportunities to focus on excerpts from *Giulio Cesare* to enhance familiarity with the work

### PERFORMANCE ACTIVITIES

to be used during *The Met: Live in HD* transmission, calling attention to specific aspects of this production

### POST-SHOW DISCUSSION

a wrap-up activity, integrating the *Live in HD* experience into students' views of the performing arts and humanities

The activities in this guide address several aspects of *Giulio Cesare*

- the use of the three-part da capo aria in Baroque opera
- instrumentation in Baroque opera
- voice and gender in the casting of Baroque opera
- the production as a unified work of art, involving creative decisions by the artists of the Metropolitan Opera

The guide is intended to cultivate students' interest in *Giulio Cesare* whether or not they have any prior acquaintance with opera. It includes activities for students with a wide range of musical backgrounds, seeking to encourage them to think about opera—and the performing arts in general—as a medium of entertainment and as creative expression.



NOTE: *Giulio Cesare* unfolds as a series of scenes built around one or two da capo arias or duets (see Classroom Activity *Getting Inside Their Heads*). It may enhance students' enjoyment of this richly plotted work to approach *Giulio Cesare* in terms of its scenes, using the musical numbers as points of orientation. The synopsis below follows this structure. Italian character names are used for consistency with the libretto (Cesare for Caesar, Tolomeo for Ptolemy, Sesto for Sextus).

Pompeo, the rival defeated by Cesare in the battle of Pharsalus (48 BCE), has fled to Egypt, with Cesare hot on his trail.

## ACT I

*Scene 1:* The royal court welcomes Cesare to Alexandria, the capitol city of Egypt.

ARIA: "Presti omai l'egizia terra" (Cesare)

*Scene 2:* Pompeo's wife and son, Cornelia and Sesto, ask Cesare to make peace with Pompeo, and he agrees.

*Scene 3:* Achilla, commander of Egypt's army, arrives with a gift for Cesare from the Egyptian king, Tolomeo: Pompeo's severed head on a platter. Cornelia faints. Cesare, disgusted, calls for Pompeo's head to be cremated, with its ashes placed in a fine urn. He chastises Achilla and announces that he will pay a visit to King Tolomeo.

ARIA: "Empio, dirò, tu sei" (Cesare)

*Scene 4:* Cornelia revives. Cesare's general, Curio, offers his hand in marriage, vowing to avenge Pompeo. Sesto insists that revenge will be his.

ARIA: "Priva son d'ogni conforto" (Cornelia)

ARIA: "Svegliatevi nel core" (Sesto)

*Scene 5:* In her chamber, Tolomeo's sister, Cleopatra, tells her servant Nireno that she intends to rule Egypt in her brother's place. Nireno reports the incident of Pompeo's head. Cleopatra decides to offer Cesare a more appropriate welcome, a step toward supplanting Tolomeo. She taunts her brother: even though he's about to lose power, he may yet find love.

ARIA: "Non disperar, chi sa?" (Cleopatra)

*Scene 6:* Achilla reports back to Tolomeo on the angry reaction to Pompeo's head, announcing Cesare's intention to pay Tolomeo a call. Achilla vows to kill Cesare—if Tolomeo will reward him with Cornelia's hand in marriage.

ARIA: "L'empio, sleale, indegno" (Tolomeo)

*Scene 7:* Cesare pays tribute to the urn with Pompeo's ashes. Curio announces a visitor: a servant of Cleopatra named Lidia—who is actually Cleopatra in disguise. Cesare falls in love with "Lidia" and agrees to help her steal the Egyptian throne. Curio, too, decides to marry her should Cornelia refuse him. When Cesare and Curio leave, Nireno tells "Lidia" that she's succeeded in winning Cesare's heart. She revels in having outmaneuvered her brother, Tolomeo.

ARIA: "Non è sì vago e bello" (Cesare)

## STARRING

### ROMANS

**David Daniels**

GIULIO CESARE (countertenor)

**John Moore**

CURIO (bass)

**Patricia Bardon**

CORNELIA (mezzo-soprano)

**Alice Coote**

SESTO (mezzo-soprano)

### EGYPTIANS

**Natalie Dessay**

CLEOPATRA (soprano)

**Christophe Dumaux**

TOLOMEO (countertenor)

**Guido Loconsolo**

ACHILLA (bass)

**Rachid Ben Abdeslam**

NIRENO (countertenor)

## VOICE TYPE

Since the early 19th century, singing voices have usually been classified in six basic types, three male and three female, according to their range:

### SOPRANO

the highest-pitched type of human voice, normally possessed only by women and boys

### MEZZO-SOPRANO

the female voice whose range lies between the soprano and the contralto (Italian “mezzo” = middle, medium)

### CONTRALTO

the lowest female voice, also called an alto

### COUNTERTENOR

a male singing voice whose vocal range is equivalent to that of a contralto, mezzo-soprano, or (less frequently) a soprano, usually through use of falsetto

### TENOR

the highest naturally occurring voice type in adult males

### BARITONE

the male voice lying below the tenor and above the bass

### BASS

the lowest male voice

*Scene 8:* Cornelia comes to pay tribute to Pompeo’s urn. She swears vengeance, but Sesto insists revenge is his duty alone. As they consider how to approach Cesare, “Lidia” appears and offers to help.

ARIA: “Cara speme, questo core” (Sesto)

ARIA: “Tu la mia stella sei” (Cleopatra)

*Scene 9:* Cesare comes to see Tolomeo, who intends to have him killed.

ARIA: “Va tacito e nascosto” (Cesare)

*Scene 10:* Cornelia and Sesto come to see Tolomeo. He immediately falls in love with Cornelia. But when she charges him with her husband’s murder, he has them both arrested. He lets Achilla believe that he can have Cornelia, then denies it under his breath.

*Scene 11:* Achilla proposes to Cornelia, who rejects him. He sends Sesto to prison, but holds Cornelia back.

ARIA: “Tu sei il cor di questo core” (Achilla)

DUET: “Son nato a lagrimar” (Cornelia)/“Son nato a sospirar” (Sesto)

## ACT II

*Scene 1:* In a pleasure garden, Cleopatra sends Nireno to bring Cesare.

ARIA: “Chi perde un momento” (Nireno)

*Scene 2:* Nireno advises Cesare to await “Lidia.” Cleopatra arrives, dressed as Virtue, then disappears. Nireno assures Cesare that “Lidia” will receive him in her chambers and bring him to Cleopatra.

ARIA: “V’adore, pupille” (Cleopatra)

ARIA: “Se in fiorito ameno prato” (Cesare)

*Scene 3:* Cornelia sings of her plight. Achilla offers to ease her pain in marriage, and she tries to flee.

*Scene 4:* Tolomeo arrives. Achilla explains that he’s come to woo Cornelia, but she’s spurned him. Tolomeo gloats, but again tells Achilla that Cornelia will be his if he kills Cesare.

ARIA: “Sì, spietata, il tuo rigore” (Tolomeo)

*Scene 5:* Cornelia decides to kill herself rather than marry Achilla. Fortunately, Sesto (who has escaped from prison) and Nireno appear. Sesto reaffirms his vengeful intent.

*Scene 6:* Nireno shocks Cornelia with the news that Tolomeo has ordered her to join his concubines. But this, he says, will provide Sesto an opportunity to hide nearby and kill Tolomeo. Sesto again swears vengeance.

ARIA: "Cessa omai di sospirare!" (Cornelia)

ARIA: "L'angue offeso mai riposa" (Sesto)

*Scene 7:* In the pleasure garden, "Lidia" feigns sleep and overhears Cesare talking to himself about marrying her. She opens her eyes to say yes, startling Cesare. He can't marry a servant girl, he says. In that case, says "Lidia," she'll go back to sleep.

ARIA: "Venere bella" (Cleopatra)

*Scene 8:* Curio rushes in to tell Cesare that Achilla's assassins are in the palace and his life is in danger. When Cesare says he will therefore leave Egypt, "Lidia" sits up to stop him, amazing Cesare by admitting that she's really Cleopatra. Cesare prepares for war as his enemies close in. Cleopatra, seeing that she too is now in peril, swears to fight Tolomeo as Cesare's ally.

ARIA: "Al lampo dell'armi" (Cesare)

ARIA: "Se pietà di me non senti" (Cleopatra)

*Scene 9:* Standing among his concubines, Tolomeo chooses Cornelia. She rejects his advances. Sesto prepares to attack.

*Scene 10:* Achilla grabs Sesto's sword. He has come to tell Tolomeo that Cesare and Curio have escaped into the sea. Cesare is presumed dead. Achilla asks for his reward: Cornelia. The king refuses, infuriating Achilla.

### ACT III

*Scene 1:* Achilla declares he will henceforth serve Cleopatra.

ARIA: "Dal fulgor di questa spada" (Achilla)

*Scene 2:* After an initial victory against Cesare's army, Tolomeo takes Cleopatra captive.

ARIA: "Domerò la tua fierezza" (Tolomeo).

*Scene 3:* Cleopatra, in chains, laments her fate.

ARIA: "Piangerò la sorte mia" (Cleopatra)

*Scene 4:* Cesare lands safely ashore. He comes upon Sesto and Nireno, then Achilla, who lies mortally wounded. Achilla, not recognizing the others, asks them to pass one last message to Cornelia: He arranged Pompeio's murder in order to marry her. He then tells them an army stands ready nearby to attack Tolomeo. Sesto has Achilla's corpse tossed into the sea.

ARIA: "Aure, deh, per pietà" (Cesare)

*Scene 5:* Cesare lays out his plan to rescue Cleopatra.

ARIA: "Quel torrente che cade dal monte" (Cesare)

*Scene 6:* With Cesare living and Achilla dead, Sesto envisions his revenge.

ARIA: "La giustizia ha già" (Sesto)

*Scene 7:* Cesare rescues Cleopatra.

ARIA: "Da tempeste il legno infanto" (Cleopatra)

*Scene 8:* Tolomeo again advances on Cornelia. She pulls out a dagger to defend herself.

*Scene 9:* Sesto arrives and insists upon being the one to kill Tolomeo. They fight, and Sesto kills Tolomeo.

ARIA: "Non ha più che temere" (Cornelia)

*Scene 10:* Cornelia and Sesto bring Tolomeo's crown and sceptre to Cesare. He offers Cleopatra the throne of Egypt. She accepts, but only under the authority of Cesare and Rome. Celebration ensues.

DUET: "Caro! Più amabile beltà" (Cleopatra)/"Bella! Più amabile beltà" (Cesare)

DUET: "Un bel contento il sen già se prepara" (Cleopatra and Cesare)

CHARACTER		PRONUNCIATION	VOICE TYPE	THE LOWDOWN
Giulio Cesare	Dictator of Rome and leader of the Roman army	JOO-lee-oh CHAY-zah-ray	countertenor (when sung by a man) or mezzo-soprano (when sung by a woman)	Written for a high voice, sung by a castrato in Handel's time
Cleopatra	Queen of Egypt	CLAY-o-PAH-tra	soprano	She goes through a wide range of emotions, from flirtatious to hopeless
Tolomeo	King of Egypt, Cleopatra's brother and rival	toh-loh-MAY-oh	countertenor	Another castrato role in Handel's day
Cornelia	Widow of Pompeo, a Roman general	core-NAY-lee-ah	mezzo-soprano	Every man in Egypt falls in love with her, but she rejects them all.
Sesto	Son of Pompeo and Cornelia	SAY-stow	mezzo-soprano	Also written for a castrato, but today often a trouser role (sung by a woman)
Nireno	Servant and confidant to Cleopatra and Tolomeo	nee-RAY-no	countertenor	Nireno, always on Cleopatra's side, is another castrato role.
Curio	A Roman officer	KOO-ree-oh	baritone	Cesare's right-hand man
Achilla	Leader of Egypt's army	ah-KEE-lah	baritone	Obsessively in love with Cornelia

## Getting Inside Their Heads: A Close Look at the Structure and Function of the Baroque Da Capo Aria

### IN PREPARATION

For this activity, students will need the reproducible resources available at the back of this guide. You will need a whiteboard, chalkboard, overhead projector, or large sheets of poster paper to present the Italian texts of several arias, as well as the audio selections from *Giulio Cesare* available online or on the accompanying CD.

This activity is a game, so you may want to prepare awards for the winners. You can make laurel wreaths, appropriate for *Giulio Cesare*, from headbands, gluing on leaves cut from green construction paper or craft foam.

### CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Social Studies (change and continuity in cultural forms)

Critical Thinking (listening skills and analysis)

Music

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To understand the structure of the da capo form, the main musical building block of Baroque opera
- To practice careful listening and distinguishing among similar, but not identical, phrases of music
- To heighten interest and appreciation of a generally unfamiliar musical form

Three elements are key to the experience of this *Live in HD* production of *Giulio Cesare*: David McVicar's inventive staging; the opera's plot; and the basic building block of Baroque music theater: the da capo aria. Students will instantly appreciate the first. They'll benefit tremendously from familiarity with the second, both by learning a bit of classical history and as a means of maintaining orientation during a rather long opera. But nothing can contribute more profoundly to the appreciation of Handel's art than an understanding of the musical da capo form.

*Giulio Cesare* incorporates 27 arias and three duets. Each unfolds according to the same formal structure and on a specific timescale that will seem unusual to most young people (and that is unknown in the more frequently heard operas of the Classical and Romantic periods): da capo numbers can seem slow, and the operas that are made up of them can seem long. But once students understand what's going on in the music and text, as well as the characters' heads, this form will prove to be subtle, magnetic, and psychologically acute. To help explain this concept, this Classroom Activity takes the form of a game, in which teams of students will:

- listen to full arias, then listen to brief selections and figure out where and why they fit within each aria's da capo structure
- distinguish between melody and ornamentation
- identify melodies in terms of their function and meaning
- associate musical selections with roles in *Giulio Cesare*, considering narrative structure and character development
- become familiar with the historically inspired plot of *Giulio Cesare*

## STEPS

### STEP 1: TAKING IT FROM THE TOP

Generally speaking, the da capo form is a three-part musical structure in which the third part is very similar to the first. (A common shorthand used to describe this is ABA.) But the Baroque da capo aria can be defined in greater detail:

**FIRST SECTION (A):** The character expresses an emotion in a sentence or two of text set to the aria's main melody. Several variations, whole or in part, of the same words and music are repeated.



**SECOND SECTION (B):** The mood of the piece changes with the introduction of a second melody, set to a different text and in a different key.

**THIRD SECTION (A' or DA CAPO):** The first section is repeated, with the singer adding ornamentations, such as trills, runs, and grace notes, to the melody (which is why it is referred to as ABA'). This musical embellishment (which is not written down in the score and left to the imagination of the individual performer) adds nuance to the character's original thought. The Italian words "da capo" (literally, "from the head") refer to the piece being repeated "from the top."

After introducing this basic ABA' structure to your students, distribute the reproducible *Voices from Backstage*. It features quotations from the director and conductor of *Giulio Cesare* discussing the psychological acuity of the da capo form.

When students have reviewed the two quotations, pose the following question: What is conductor Harry Bicket referring to when he says that in real life, "it's ... not unreasonable... to spend ten minutes saying, 'I love this person!' and then spend another five minutes saying, 'But then he betrayed me—but I still love him!' as someone singing a da capo aria does"?

Answers might include:

- Da capo arias tend to be longer than later arias. They can last as long as nine or ten minutes.
- Within each section of a da capo aria, the same few words are repeated over and over again, as the music expresses different shades of meaning and feeling.
- Da capo arias aren't succinct, irrevocable positions—snap judgments or feelings "at first sight." Instead, as David McVicar explains in the other quotation, they invite listeners to follow a character's train of thought.

Understanding the rich expressive qualities of a da capo aria can take some getting used to. This is the objective of the next step.

## STEP 2: THE HEAD GAME

The Head Game is a fun way to learn how to listen to da capo music. Teams of students win one point every time they correctly match a brief musical selection to the correct section of the piece—one (A), two (B), or da capo (A').

Materials are provided for four rounds (four audio tracks each), so the maximum possible score is 16. Each of four complete arias from *Giulio Cesare* (two by Cesare and two by Cleopatra) is available online or on the accompanying CD, followed by four brief selections on consecutively numbered tracks. A scorecard for each aria can be found in the reproducible section.

## COMMON CORE ELA

College and Career Readiness Standards for Reading: Grades 6–12

### Craft and Structure

5. Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.

## COMMON CORE ELA

College and Career Readiness Standards for Speaking and Listening: Grades 6–12

### Comprehension and Collaboration

2. Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

## NATIONAL CENTER FOR HISTORY IN THE SCHOOLS

Historical Thinking Standards for Grades 5–12

### Standard 2: Historical Comprehension

E. Read historical narratives imaginatively.

### Standard 3: Historical Analysis and Interpretations

B. Consider multiple perspectives.

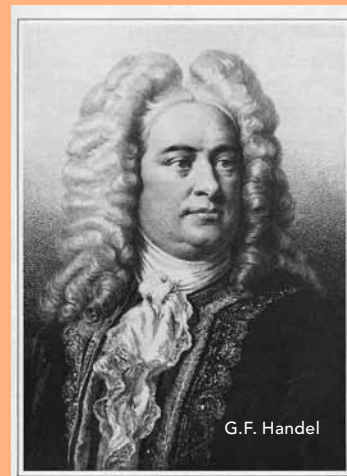
## High-Pitched Heroes

The title role of *Giulio Cesare*, as well as the parts of Tolomeo, Sesto, and Nireno, were written for castrati—men whose voices were kept from changing through a surgical procedure performed before they reached puberty. It has been estimated that in the early decades of the 18th century, when demand for castrati was highest, some 4,000 boys with promising voices were undergoing the operation each year. Only a small number of them would go on to have major careers.

The first castrati sang in church choirs, where Papal law had forbidden female voices. By the late 17th century, they had conquered the operatic stage, where they retained their extraordinary popularity for close to a century. Some singers like Senesino (Francesco Bernardi, 1686–1758) or Farinelli (Carlo Broschi, 1705–82) rose to superstar status comparable to today’s pop musicians. The voice of a castrato combined the range of a woman with the lung power of a man, allowing for highly virtuosic singing. We don’t know exactly what they sounded like, but contemporary writers describe them as possessing unusual brilliance and agility.

By the late 18th century, castrati, associated with the entertainment of the aristocracy, had come under attack for both political and medical reasons, but the practice persisted well into the 19th century. The last known castrato, Alessandro Moreschi, died in 1922. He made a few recordings that give a glimpse of the castrato voice. (They can be found on YouTube at <http://tinyurl.com/amoreschi>.)

Today, castrato parts in Baroque music are usually performed by countertenors—male singers with a highly developed falsetto register, or “head voice,” who are able to sing in the alto and mezzo-soprano range through special training. The other alternative, of course, is to have a woman appear in a “trouser role.” This production of *Giulio Cesare* does both: Cesare, Tolomeo, and Nireno are sung by countertenors, Sesto by a mezzo-soprano.



Distribute copies of *The Story* (pages 3–6), to provide students with a narrative framework for their listening. Divide the class into groups of four or five. Then, in each round:

- Provide each group with one copy of the appropriate scorecard.
- Point out the information on the scorecard: the name of the character who sings the aria, its act and scene location, and its duration. Students should check their copies of *The Story* to determine the narrative context of the aria.
- Play the aria straight through (the first track of each round). Students can read along with the text (in Italian!) and take notes. As they’re listening to the aria, they should think about which section is which.
- Given some arias’ relatively long duration, this may strain students’ attention.
  - Prepare them by encouraging them to listen carefully for each different section of the aria.
  - Point out that this is the only opportunity they’ll have to hear the whole piece before having to guess where much shorter selections come from.

- e. Play each brief selection, then allow the teams about two minutes to discuss the selection and decide which section of the aria it comes from. Then play the next selection. (Note that the selections are not necessarily given in chronological order.) If it suits your need, feel free to replay any of the brief selections.
- f. Each team should circle their answers on the scorecard. They can change answers at any time within a round.
- g. After deciding on all four brief selections, each team should decide on the character's mood and/or the feelings expressed in the aria. (Note that they will not have an English translation at hand.) There is no right answer here: the objective is for students to be able to justify their impression with specific listening notes. They may also find it helpful to refer to *The Story* for the narrative context of each aria.
- h. Each team is allowed one "lifeline" per round: they can ask you for the answer to one brief selection, in exchange for 1/2 point off their final score.
- i. Make sure each team's name is on its scorecard and collect the scorecards.
- j. Review the four brief selections, using the descriptive material below (answers included). This will help improve students' feel for the da capo form. It will also enable them to apply their growing understandings to the next round of the Head Game.
- k. Begin the next round.

NOTE: At the end of each round, or at the end of the game, you may want students to listen to the entire aria again. For that purpose, a supplementary reproducible does provide English translations for all four pieces.

Texts on the student reproducibles are not divided into A and B sections, but for your orientation, A and B are separated in the texts below. Please note that the arias have been made in order of difficulty and to emphasize particular features of the da capo form. You don't need to complete all four arias, but it is recommended that you don't play them in a different order.

#### FUN FACT

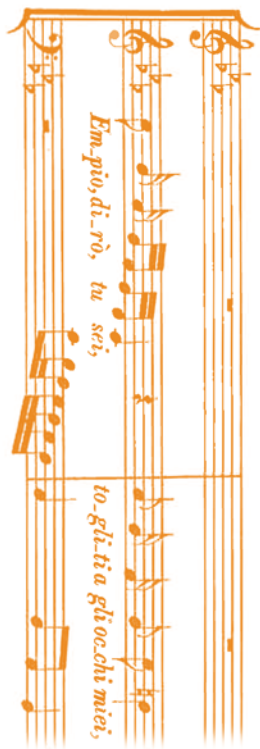
Johann Sebastian Bach, the other great Baroque composer, premiered his *St. John Passion* in Leipzig, Germany, just a few weeks after *Giulio Cesare* was first seen in London.

## Round 1

Tracks 1–5: “Empio, dirò, tu sei”

Sung by Giulio Cesare in Act I, Scene 3

Duration: 3:36



**A: Empio, dirò, tu sei.  
Togliti a gli occhi miei.  
Sei tutto crudeltà.**

**Merciless—that’s what I’ll say you are.  
Get out of my sight.  
You are entirely cruel.**

**B: Non è da re quel cuor,  
che donasi al rigor,  
che in sen non ha pietà.**

**It is not fitting for a king  
to have an unbending heart  
that holds no place for pity.**

Students new to Baroque opera may be surprised to hear an unusual voice: that of a countertenor, a man singing in a very high register (see sidebar *High-Pitched Heroes*). This is Giulio Cesare himself (in Act I, Scene 3), recently arrived in Egypt pursuing his Roman adversary, Pompeo. Achilla, the commander of Egypt’s army, has just presented Cesare with a gift from King Tolomeo: Pompeo’s bloody head on a platter. Cesare responds with this brisk, forceful preview of the way he will denounce Tolomeo (Track 1).

Selection 1: First section (A)

**Track 2.** This selection presents the initial statement and first repetition of the A section. Cesare’s singing is powerful and straightforward. Musical emphasis is placed on the last word of the sentence (“crudeltà,” or “cruelty”), a key theme of the text. Some students may have trouble locating this selection before listening to the others, with their distinctive variations.

Selection 2: Middle section (B)

**Track 3.** This is the main statement, with some internal repetition, of the B section. Students should be able to hear the brighter melody, having shifted from the darker minor key to its relative major key in the B section, quite different from the A theme.

Selection 3: Da capo section (A')

**Track 4.** This is the final statement (da capo section) of the A theme, characterized by far greater amount of ornamentation than the version heard before. One easy-to-hear example is the way Cesare’s vocal line moves up and down the scale on each of several syllables in his last repetition of “tutto crudeltà.”

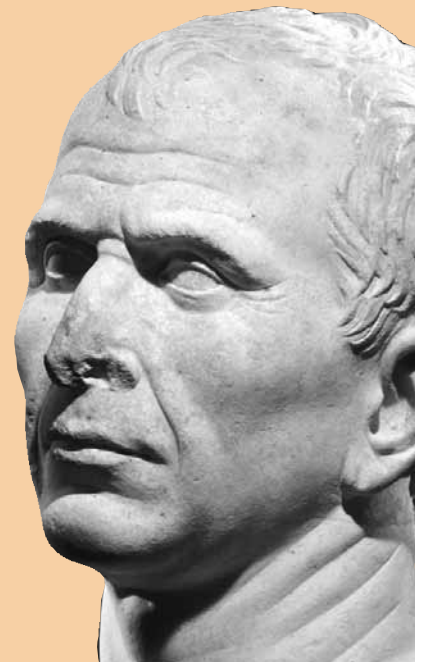
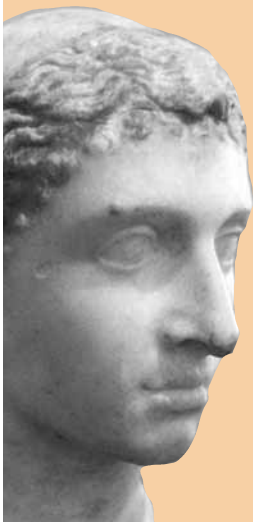
NOTE: Ornamentation in da capo sections vary from performer to performer and the audio clips included with this guide will differ slightly from what is heard during the *Live in HD* presentation. The point of this activity is that *all* performers ornament in the da capo section. It is about paying attention to the difference between the da capo and the introduction of themes.

#### Selection 4: Middle section (B)

**Track 5.** This is the last part of the B section. Some students may have noticed before, listening to the entire aria, the dramatic slowdown, followed by a pause, as the middle section ends. This is typical of the B sections of da capo arias—an aural landmark for the attentive listener.

## CAESAR & CLEOPATRA: THE FACTS

- Julius Caesar conquered Egypt in 47 BCE, defeating King Ptolemy XII on March 27 (according to the Roman calendar).
- Caesar named a son and daughter of the defeated ruler as the new king and queen: Ptolemy XIII and Cleopatra. According to his own writings, Cleopatra “had always continued under his protection and guardianship.”
- Historians are not certain when Caesar left Alexandria. Based on records of his arrival at a battle in what today is northeastern Turkey, Caesar probably spent less than a month in Egypt.
- The first source to mention a romantic relationship between Caesar and Cleopatra dates from almost 200 years after their meeting. There is no contemporary evidence that their association was anything but political.
- According to Greek historian Plutarch, Cornelia was with her husband, Pompey, when he arrived in Egypt and witnessed his murder.
- Plutarch also relates that Achilles, an Egyptian, did kill Pompey, hoping that Ptolemy would thereby win favor with Caesar.
- Again according to Plutarch, Caesar was presented with Pompey’s head and rejected the “gift.” The incident is not mentioned by Caesar in his writings.
- According to Caesar, Achilles was killed by Cleopatra’s younger sister, Arsinoe, before he, Caesar, arrived in Egypt. (Upon appointing Cleopatra queen, Caesar banished Arsinoe from the country.)



## Round 2

Tracks 6–10: “Non è sì vago e bello”

Sung by Giulio Cesare in Act I, Scene 7

Duration: 3:16

**A: Non è sì vago e bello  
il fior nel prato,  
quant'è vago e gentile  
il tuo bel volto.**

**The flower in the meadow  
is not as fair and beautiful  
as your beautiful face is  
fair and charming.**

**B: D'un fiore il pregio a quello  
solo vien dato,  
ma tutto un vago aprile  
è in te raccolto.**

**But while the meadow  
is only as pretty as its flower,  
all the delight of April  
is gathered up in you.**

Cesare sings this aria in Act I, Scene 7, moments after having met Cleopatra (disguised as “Lidia”) for the first time. Thoroughly romantic, flowing and lyrical, it sounds completely different from “Empio, dirò, tu sei.” The music of the A section drives forward in the forceful way of a great soldier, but the B section is suffused with the longing, even uncertainty, of a new love (**Track 6**).

### Selection 1: Middle section (B)

**Track 7.** Students adept at sounding out the Italian text, or those who noticed the shift to a more pensive tone, in a minor key, while listening to the whole aria, will recognize this as the opening statement of the B section.

### Selection 2: First section (A)

**Track 8.** Straightforward and unornamented, this is the first statement of the A theme. It may be useful to replay Selection 1 in contrast, so students can hear how much brighter this opening sally is.

### Selection 3: First section (A)

**Track 9.** Hearing this right after Selection 2, students will recognize the same line of music slightly embellished, but it is still a part of the A section. But any students who mistake this for an elaborate da capo variation will hear the difference in Selection 4.

### Selection 4: Da capo section (A')

**Track 10.** While maintaining the text, basic melody, and rhythm of the initial A section, the vocal line here wanders above and below the original melody with embellishments and a sense of improvisation. This is a prime example of a da capo variation—a style meant to showcase the singer’s abilities.



## Round 3

Tracks 11–15: “Non disperar, chi sa?”

Sung by Cleopatra in Act I, Scene 5

Duration: 4:07

**A: Non disperar, chi sa?**

Se al regno non l'avrai,  
avrai sorte in amor.

**B: Mirando una beltà**

in essa troverai  
a consolar un cor.

**Don't lose hope—who knows?**

If you're not lucky in politics,  
you'll be lucky in love.

**By checking out a beautiful girl,**

you'll find in her what  
you need to console your heart.

This is Cleopatra's first aria, from Act I, Scene 5 (**Track 11**). She taunts her brother, King Tolomeo, telling him not to despair when he loses his throne to her—he might, after all, still be lucky in love. Cleopatra's A melody is as provocative as her sentiment, especially when she repeats the “Chi sa, chi sa?”—“who knows, who knows?” In the middle section, Cleopatra turns mock-serious. By the end of the B part, when the tempo slows down, one might even be fooled into thinking she was genuinely compassionate.

**Selection 1: Da capo section (A)**

**Track 12.** With its cascading scales and elaborate ornamentation, this could only be part of the showy third section, the da capo section, of Cleopatra's solo.

**Selection 2: Da capo section (A)**

**Track 13.** Continuing where Selection 1 stopped, this selection begins with Cleopatra's mock-innocent “Chi sa?” She is being intentionally obnoxious toward her brother, as she takes off on a flight of even more outrageous fancy. As she tries to get a rise out of Tolomeo, clearly Cleopatra is pleased with herself.

**Selection 3: Middle section (B)**

**Track 14.** A touch more staid, emphatic rather than giddy, and supported by a harpsichord and cello, the middle section, in a shift to a minor key, teases Tolomeo a whole different way: by pretending to care and to support him.

**Selection 4: First section (A)**

**Track 15.** With a straightforward delivery of the first theme, coming to rest on that ironic, entirely direct, double “Chi sa, chi sa?”—“who knows, who knows?”, this selection makes up part of the opening statement.

### FUN FACT

In 18th-century London it was common to write new music to existing librettos. Haym's text for *Giulio Cesare* is based on what was then a 50-year-old libretto from Venice.

### *Round 4*

Tracks 16–20: “Piangerò la sorte mia”

Sung by Cleopatra in Act III, Scene 3

Duration: 6:21

**A: Piangerò la sorte mia,  
sì crudele e tanto ria,  
finché vita in petto avrò.**

**I will weep over my fate,  
so cruel and so wicked,  
as long as there is life within me.**

**B: Ma poi morta d’ogn’intorno  
il tiranno e notte e giorno  
fatta spettro agiterò.**

**But when I’m dead and  
made a ghost, I will haunt everyone  
around the tyrant, night and day.**

In Act III, Scene 3, a different Cleopatra emerges. Cesare is gone, believed dead, and Cleopatra, locked up by her brother, no longer plays the confident little vixen. The relationship between the A and B sections in this aria are different from those students have heard earlier. The middle part, instead of being the more subdued or thoughtful one, brings a switch from sorrow to determination, as Cleopatra vows to punish Tolomeo in the afterlife (**Track 16**).



### *The Post-Colonial Perspective*

David McVicar’s production of *Giulio Cesare* has been described as a “post-colonial” approach to the opera’s story, and, indeed, elements of 19th-century colonialism figure in the production. The expression “post-colonial” refers to the period following the decline in the early 20th century of the great global empires ruled by such European nations as Britain, Spain, Portugal, and the Netherlands. Post-colonial thinking involves self-criticism within the former imperial powers as well as new cultural and political nationalism arising in the former colonies. The Met’s *Giulio Cesare* depicts Caesar and his conquering Romans within the imagery of British rule over parts of Africa and the Middle East, contrasting England’s dominion over Egypt with Julius Caesar’s. Some commentators have even drawn parallels to Western nations’ current involvement in the very different cultures of Afghanistan and Iraq.



### Selection 1: First section (A)

**Track 17.** Though the heartrending melody might trick some students into guessing this is a middle section, the pure unadorned flow of Cleopatra’s grief indicates that it in fact comes from her introductory statement.

### Selection 2: Da capo section (A)

**Track 18.** An embellished, slower version of the A melody, your students will notice some new high notes in this section. Cleopatra doesn’t cartwheel all over the musical map as she did in “Non disperar, chi sa?”, but her modest ornamentation provides a lovely example of a da capo spin in the context of sadness.

### Selection 3: Middle section (B)

**Track 19.** Students will recognize this energetic passage instantly as coming from the middle of the aria. It signals that Cleopatra is not only sad but angry, and dreams of having her vengeance one day, in this life or the next.

### Selection 4: Middle section (B)

**Track 20.** Continuing on from Selection 3, this section demonstrates the psychological insight that can be achieved within the da capo form. Cleopatra is angry, yes, but she is also imprisoned. Over the course of this section she musically “loses steam,” at last falling silent not because the form demands so, but as a reaction of being faced with indomitable facts.

## STEP 3

Now that students have listened closely to four different da capo arias, they’re in a better position to evaluate the arguments made by David McVicar and Harry Bicket on the reproducible *Voices from Backstage*. Do they agree that the da capo form captures the way people think? What, in particular, in these four arias supports their points of view?

## FOLLOW-UP

For follow-up, students may want to try creating a work in da capo form of their own. Have them choose any medium that can present distinct units, sequenced in time or space. They might shoot a video, write a poem, paint a visual triptych, or even compose a song. The only requirement is that the first and second parts express related, but distinct, moods, and that the third part restate—and renew—the first. There might be more elaborate ideas or richer language. They might go from black and white to color—or from 2D to 3D. No matter what medium they choose, they should see whether they can create the kind of psychological journey that David McVicar and Harry Bicket describe, on the reproducible, as the hallmark of the da capo form.

**FUN FACT** Moments after he first appears on stage, Handel’s Giulio Cesare sings, in Italian translation, Caesar’s famous words, “Veni, vidi, vici”—“I came, I saw, I conquered.” In fact, Caesar didn’t make this statement until a few weeks after he left Egypt, while fighting in what today is Turkey.

## Sending the Wrong Message: A Close Look at the Recitative “La reggia Tolomeo t’offre in albergo”

### MUSICAL HIGHLIGHTS ARE BRIEF OPPORTUNITIES TO

- help students make sense of opera
- whet their interest in upcoming *Live in HD* transmissions

Each focuses on audio selections from *Giulio Cesare* available online at [metopera.org/education](http://metopera.org/education) or the accompanying CD. Associated texts and translations are available in the back of this guide.

These “mini-lessons” will in practice take up no more than a few minutes of class time. They’re designed to help you bring opera into your classroom while minimizing interruption of your ongoing curriculum. Feel free to use as many as you like.

**FUN FACT** For the 1725 revival of *Giulio Cesare*, Handel rewrote the part of Sesto for a tenor and recast the character of Nirena as a woman—Nirena.

If the da capo form (see Classroom Activity) provides the bone and muscle of Baroque opera, its sinews are the sections known as secco recitatives. These are scenes of interaction among two or more characters that drive the story forward (as opposed to the contemplative nature of the arias). The orchestral accompaniment is sparse, usually consisting of a harpsichord, a cello, bass, and/or bassoon, and a theorbo (a form of lute). The vocal lines are much simpler than in the arias and closer to the pattern of speech. (The Italian “recitativo secco” comes from “recitare,” or recite, and “secco,” or dry.)

Explaining his approach to staging Handel, David McVicar, director of this production, has said, “If you tackle the secco recitatives in Handel operas with conviction and a willingness to explore the emotional depths of each moment, you find that these operas are far from static. You find that they communicate as naturally as human beings do in life.”

A scene that offers a great opportunity to examine this kind of natural communication, with the full array of Baroque voice types interacting with each other, occurs right at the beginning of *Giulio Cesare*. In Act I, Scene 3, Cesare has just arrived in Egypt, hunting down Pompeo. The Egyptian king, Tolomeo, sends the commander of his army, Achilla, with a gift for the honored guest. In **Track 21**, Achilla arrives at the lodgings of Cesare. A simple harpsichord announces his entrance. In a grand, formal, and generous tone, Achilla (sung by a baritone) conveys his monarch’s wish that Cesare move to the royal palace. He enhances the invitation with what he understands to be a gesture of esteem—delivering the “proud head of Pompeo” to Cesare.

The reaction is not the expected one (**Track 22**). Pompeo’s now-widow Cornelia (mezzo-soprano) screams. Cesare (countertenor) says to himself, “Giulio, che miri?”—“Julius, what are you looking at?” Sesto (mezzo-soprano in a trouser role) looks at the bloody head of his late father and wails, “Che veggio?”—“What do I see?”

When Cesare declares that the only decent response is to cremate the head, storing Pompeo’s ashes in a fine urn, Achilla realizes this visit has not gone as planned. “Oh dei!” he exclaims—“Oh gods!” Notice the way Handel sets Achilla’s exclamation, on two notes. Like all the other music in this recitative, they faithfully capture the tones of real, human speech.

This raises a point that students may never have considered: all speech is a kind of singing. You can demonstrate this real-life secco recitative with a fun experiment: Have a student say a sentence or two, then invite another student to repeat the same sounds without pronouncing the words. (Old Charlie Brown cartoons use this effect brilliantly whenever grownups speak off-screen.)

Now invite two students to have a conversation using only musical tones, not words. Can they understand each other? Does the rest of the class understand?

## Three Faces of Vengeance: A Close Look at Sesto's Arias "Svegliatevi nel core" and "Cara speme, questo core"

A simple read through the synopsis of *Giulio Cesare* (see *The Story*) reveals a somewhat limited role for Sesto, the son of Pompeo and Cornelia: again and again, he swears to avenge his father's murder (I/4 and I/8; II/6; III/6). But careful listening reveals that Handel found the desire for vengeance to be a very complex emotion. Evidence can be found in the contrast between Sesto's two Act I arias, "Svegliatevi nel core" ("Awaken in your heart") and "Cara speme, questo core" ("Dear hope, this heart").

In the first section of "Svegliatevi nel core," Handel conveys Sesto's feelings with music of clean, raw passion (**Track 23**). The word "furie"—"furies"—is accented for extra bite, and Sesto repeats "svegliatevi" ("awaken"), as he will throughout the section (for example, **Track 24**). He is determined to muster those furies.

In its middle section, the aria takes a starkly different direction (**Track 25**). After a pause, Sesto's words are still of revenge, but now he's thinking of the father he just lost. With spare accompaniment, the melody is melancholy and slow, as heavy as his heart. Pompeo's ghost, Sesto continues, is speaking to him (**Track 26**), and as he sings its counsel, his voice strengthens (**Track 27**). The word "figlio" ("son") gets particular emphasis, as if Sesto were simultaneously pronouncing and listening to the paternal advice. The desire for vengeance, Handel suggests, is more than blood thirst. It is lined with grief and a powerful connection to the person being avenged.

In "Cara speme, questo core," Handel proposes a third face of vengeance. Here Cleopatra has just offered Sesto the services of her valet, Nireno, in his mission against Pompeo's killer, her brother Tolomeo. In Sesto's reply, Handel conveys both loneliness and, by indirection, the fear that must follow such a vow. From its delicate orchestral introduction into Sesto's melody, the aria overflows with gratitude, even relief that he will not be alone (**Track 28**). This gratitude continues into the aria's B section, where Handel provides an unexpectedly sympathetic, prayer-like setting for the word "vendicar"—"to revenge" (**Track 29**). This is the third aspect of vengeance: the conviction that it may be a lonely and frightening undertaking, but that it is also a just and sacred mission.

With these observations in mind, students might want to listen particularly closely, during the HD transmission, to Sesto's arias "L'angue offeso mai riposa" in Act II and "La giustizia ha già" in Act III. What other faces of vengeance does Handel present for his character here?

"Svegliatevi nel core" can be heard without interruption on **Track 30**.

"Cara speme, questo core" can be heard without interruption on **Track 31**.

### FUN FACT

*Giulio Cesare* was a hit in 1724, and Handel revived it three times over the subsequent eight years. But like most Baroque operas, it then disappeared from the repertoire and wasn't seen or heard again until 1922, when it became part of the Handel revival that continues to this day.



## Changes Big and Small: A Close Look at Orchestration in *Giulio Cesare*

Handel scored most of *Giulio Cesare* for a typical Baroque ensemble of strings and woodwinds. But in moments of special interest he rearranges the musical forces—and even brings a surprising new instrument on board.

Two of these moments involve Cleopatra's flirtation with Cesare in Act II, Scene 2. She has prepared a pageant in a peaceful garden for his entertainment. As Cesare looks on, the Goddess Virtue appears (or rather Cleopatra, in the guise of "Lidia," in the guise of Virtue). Cesare emits what seems to be his standard expression of surprise, "Giulio, che miri?"—"Julius, what are you looking at?" (**Track 32**, but see also Track 22 in the Musical Highlight *Sending the Wrong Message*).

Baroque audiences would have been surprised by more than Cleopatra's disguise. They would have noticed that for her seductive aria "V'adoro, pupille" ("I adore you, eyes" **Track 33**) Handel augmented his orchestra, bringing a complement of strings, oboes, and bassoons right onto the stage as part of the pageant.

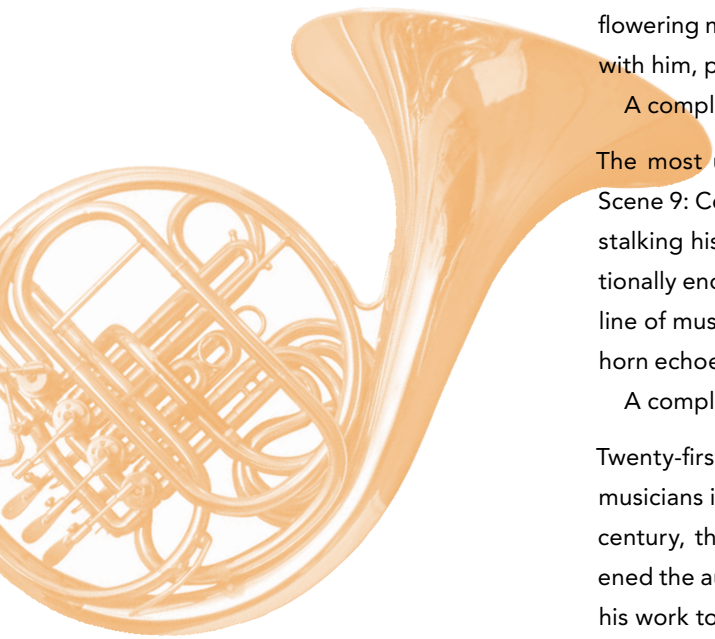
The pageant ended, Virtue and her nine muses disappear. The great Cesare finds himself lovestruck over "Lidia." When Nireno assures him that the feeling is mutual, Cesare launches into the aria "Se in fiorito ameno prato"—"If, in a delightful, flowering meadow." But he doesn't sing alone. Handel scores a solo violin to partner with him, playing the part of the songbird referenced in the text (**Track 34**).

A complete recording of "Se in fiorito ameno prato" can be heard on **Track 35**.

The most unusual sound for Handel's audience would have been heard in Act I, Scene 9: Cesare, in the palace of the treacherous Tolomeo, likens himself to a hunter stalking his prey in the aria "Va tacito e nascosto." The piece seems to begin traditionally enough, but then the sound of a solo horn emerges, playing an independent line of music, as if the hunter had joined the strings and woodwinds (**Track 36**). The horn echoes Cesare each time he mentions the word "cacciator"—hunter (**Track 37**).

A complete recording of "Va tacito e nascosto" can be heard on **Track 38**.

Twenty-first-century students may not see anything special in putting instrumental musicians in the middle of the stage action or adding an extra horn. But in the 18th century, these effects were equivalent of converting a movie to 3D. They heightened the audience's experience. In our day, they demonstrate that Handel intended his work to be much more than a string of beautiful arias. He wanted to truly entertain his audience. In this context, students may enjoy imagining what artists might invent once 3D and high-definition presentations have become commonplace. How would they spice up the entertainment of the future?



## Supporting Students During *The Met: Live in HD* Transmission

Thanks to print and audio recording, much about opera can be enjoyed long before a performance. But performance itself brings vital layers of sound and color, pageantry and technology, drama, skill, and craft. Performance activities are designed to help students tease apart different aspects of the experience, consider creative choices that have been made, and sharpen their own critical faculties.

Each Performance Activity incorporates a reproducible activity sheet. Students bring the activity sheet to the transmission to fill out during intermission and/or after the final curtain. The activities direct attention to characteristics of the production that might otherwise go unnoticed. Ratings matrices invite students to express their critique: use these ratings to spark discussions that call upon careful, critical thinking.

The basic activity sheet is called *My Highs & Lows*. Meant to be collected, opera by opera, over the course of the season, this sheet points students toward a consistent set of objects of observation. Its purposes are not only to help students articulate and express their opinions, but to support comparison and contrast, enriching understanding of the art form as a whole.

For *Giulio Cesare*, the other activity sheet, *When the Singing Stops*, invites students to consider not only Handel's music, but the individual performances and the creative choices made by the director and choreographer of this Metropolitan Opera production.

The Performance Activity reproducibles can be found in the back of this guide. Either activity can provide the basis for class discussion after the transmission. On the next page, you'll find an activity created specifically for follow-up *after* the *Live in HD* transmission.

**FUN FACT** The aria “Va tacito e nascosto” is the only time a French horn is heard in any Handel opera. Handel had introduced the horn into Baroque orchestral music with his 1717 *Water Music*.

### Then and Now: A Close Look at David McVicar's Production of *Giulio Cesare*

#### IN PREPARATION

This activity requires no preparation other than attendance at the *Live in HD* transmission of *Giulio Cesare*. Optional resources on the topics discussed during the activity can be found with a simple online search.

#### CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

- Social Studies (World History and Cultures)
- Language Arts (Adaptation and Translation)
- Cultural Studies (Post-modern and post-colonial theory)
- Critical Thinking

#### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To distinguish characteristics of the production determined by score and libretto from creative options available to a production team
- To think critically about the relationship between score/text and production choices
- To understand the concepts of “post-modernism” and “post-colonialism” as expressed in this production
- To consider the accessibility of classical works to contemporary audiences
- To practice critical thinking in the context of aesthetic choices

Students will enjoy starting the class with an open discussion of the Met performance. What did they like? What didn't they? Did anything surprise them? What would they like to see or hear again? What would they have done differently? This discussion will offer students an opportunity to review the notes on their *My Highs & Lows* sheet, as well as their thoughts about this Met production—in short, to see themselves as *Giulio Cesare* experts.

This open conversation will also set the stage for a more focused assessment of this particular interpretation of Handel's work. As students have seen, the setting for this production is neither ancient Egypt, *per se*, nor Handel's own 18th-century milieu. Its combination of aesthetic styles has been described as “post-modern” or “post-colonial” (discussed in the sidebar *The Post-Colonial Perspective*). But even viewers unfamiliar with those concepts can't miss the rich array of visuals that they describe. It will be useful for the class as a whole to catalog interesting features they noticed. Here is a partial list:

#### COSTUMES:

- British military uniforms inspired by 19th and early 20th-century styles, including everything from ruffled white shirts to pith helmets
- The bowtie, tweed jacket, and high Wellington boots of a 19th-century British schoolboy
- Exotic “oriental” silks and brocades
- Turkish fezzes (cylindrical hats)
- Cesare's Roman military breastplate
- Kilts

#### MOVEMENTS:

- Dance steps, gestures, and stylized facial expressions inspired by the “Bollywood” movie musicals produced in India
- Dancing in the style of late 20th-century music videos
- Physical contact between performers, conveying sexual and sometimes violent overtones in the relations between, for instance, Cleopatra and Tolomeo, Cleopatra and Cesare, or Cornelia and Sesto

#### SETS AND PROPS:

- 19th-century British frigates
- 20th-century airships (Zeppelins)
- Weaponry ranging from scimitars to revolvers
- Modern binoculars
- Fashion sunglasses
- Umbrellas and hat racks
- Rattan armchairs
- The hand-cranked movie camera recording events at Cesare's court

What do your students make of the combination between these visuals and the ancient Egyptian setting of *Giulio Cesare*? Focus questions might include:

- What sorts of sets, costumes, and actions do students feel are appropriate in today’s presentations of yesterday’s works—and what aren’t? Why?
- Do all these elements enhance the audience’s experience of the underlying music and text? Are any of them distracting? Why?
- If *Giulio Cesare* were presented in a more historically consistent setting, would audiences today know enough about history and music to appreciate it? Is it disrespectful to assume otherwise?
- What kinds of creative decisions respect and preserve the integrity of a classic work—and what kinds don’t? How is it possible to draw a line?

In addressing such questions, your students join an international community of audiences and critics grappling with the relationship between the “then” of an opera’s creation and the “now” of its production. Depending on their strengths and interests, they may enjoy following the discussion up by:

- taking pro/con positions and formally debating the merits of this production of *Giulio Cesare*,
- writing a review of *Giulio Cesare*—a persuasive essay that states and supports a critical stance, or
- writing “notes” for the creators of this production, including suggestions for improvement and, of course, arguments supporting those suggestions.

### COMMON CORE ELA

College and Career Readiness Standards for Speaking and Listening: Grades 6–12

#### Comprehension and Collaboration

2. Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

### COMMON CORE ELA

College and Career Readiness Standards for Reading: Grades 6–12

#### Craft and Structure

6. Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

### NATIONAL CENTER FOR HISTORY IN THE SCHOOLS

Historical Thinking Standards for Grades 5–12

#### Standard 2: Historical Comprehension

F. Appreciate historical perspectives.

#### Standard 3: Historical Analysis and Interpretations

A. Compare and contrast differing sets of ideas.



A scene from *Giulio Cesare*  
ROBERT KUSEL/LYRIC OPERA OF CHICAGO





**Giulio Cesare**  
**Educator Guide**  
**Track List**

Met Radio Recording  
April 21, 2007

GIULIO CESARE

David Daniels

CLEOPATRA

Ruth Ann Swenson

CORNELIA

Patricia Bardon

SESTO

Alice Coote

TOLOMEO

Lawrence Zazzo

CONDUCTOR

Harry Bicket

Metropolitan Opera  
Orchestra and Chorus

**CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: Getting Inside Their Heads**

- 1 ACT I: Cesare; calls King Tolomeo cruel for sending Pompeo's bloody head as a gift ("Empio, dirò, tu sei")
- 2 Cesare; A section
- 3 Cesare; B section
- 4 Cesare; da capo section
- 5 Cesare; B section
- 6 ACT I: Cesare; compares Cleopatra to the most beautiful sights in nature ("Non è sì vago e bello")
- 7 Cesare; B section
- 8 Cesare; A section
- 9 Cesare; A section
- 10 Cesare; da capo section
- 11 ACT I: Cleopatra; taunts her brother, King Tolomeo, by telling him not to despair if he loses his throne to her ("Non disperar, chi sa?")
- 12 Cleopatra; da capo section
- 13 Cleopatra; continuation of the da capo section
- 14 Cleopatra; B section
- 15 Cleopatra; A section
- 16 ACT III: Cleopatra; weeps for her fate after she has been taken captive by Tolomeo and believes Cesare to be dead ("Piangerò la sorte mia")
- 17 Cleopatra; A section
- 18 Cleopatra; da capo section
- 19 Cleopatra; B section
- 20 Cleopatra; continuation of the B section

**MUSICAL HIGHLIGHT: Sending the Wrong Message**

- 21 ACT I: Achilla; offers Cesare a gift from Tolomeo
- 22 Cesare, Sesto, Cornelia, Achilla; all are shocked by Tolomeo's gruesome gesture

**Giulio Cesare**  
**Educator Guide**  
**Track List**

**MUSICAL HIGHLIGHT: Three Faces of Vengeance**

- 23 ACT I: Sesto; transforms his grief into rage in a mission of revenge against Tolomeo ("Svegliatevi nel core")
- 24 Sesto; even more empowered by his mission of revenge
- 25 Sesto; focus shifts when thoughts of his dead father come to mind
- 26 Sesto; imagines what his father would say to him
- 27 Sesto; he says, "You are expected to be tough, my son!"
- 28 Sesto; thankful for Cleopatra's offer of alliance in his mission against Tolomeo ("Cara speme, questo core")
- 29 Sesto; has hope that he can succeed in avenging his father's death
- 30 Tracks 23–27 continuously ("Svegliatevi nel core")
- 31 Tracks 28–29 continuously ("Cara speme, questo core")

**MUSICAL HIGHLIGHT: Changes Big and Small**

- 32 ACT II: Cesare; amazed by what he sees in front of him
- 33 Cleopatra; seduces Cesare ("V'adoro, pupille")
- 34 Cesare; delights that his feelings for Cleopatra (Lidia) are mutual ("Se in fiorito ameno prato")
- 35 Cesare; complete aria ("Se in fiorito ameno prato")
- 36 ACT I: Orchestra; Instrumental ("Va tacito e nascosto")
- 37 Cesare; while in Tolomeo's palace, Cesare likens himself to a hunter ("Va tacito e nascosto")
- 38 Cesare; complete aria ("Va tacito e nascosto")

**Giulio Cesare**  
**Educator Guide**  
**Track List—**  
**Chronological**

**ACT I**

- 21 Achilla; offers Cesare a gift from Tolomeo
- 22 Cesare, Sesto, Cornelia, Achilla; all are shocked by Tolomeo's gruesome gesture
  - 1 Cesare; calls King Tolomeo cruel for sending Pompeo's bloody head as a gift ("Empio, dirò, tu sei")
  - 2 Cesare; A section
  - 3 Cesare; B section
  - 5 Cesare; B section
  - 4 Cesare; da capo section
- 23 Sesto; transforms his grief into rage in a mission of revenge against Tolomeo ("Svegliatevi nel core")
- 24 Sesto; even more empowered by his mission of revenge
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  - 9 Cesare; A section
  - 7 Cesare; B section
  - 10 Cesare; da capo section
- 28 Sesto; thankful for Cleopatra's offer of alliance in his mission against Tolomeo ("Cara speme, questo core")
- 29 Sesto; has hope that he can succeed in avenging his father's death
- 31 Tracks 28–29 continuously ("Cara speme, questo core")
- 36 Orchestra; Instrumental ("Va tacito e nascosto")
- 37 Cesare; while in Tolomeo's palace, Cesare likens himself to a hunter ("Va tacito e nascosto")
- 38 Cesare; complete aria ("Va tacito e nascosto")

**ACT II**

- 32 Cesare; amazed by what he sees in front of him
- 33 Cleopatra; seduces Cesare ("V'adoro, pupille")
- 34 Cesare; delights that his feelings for Cleopatra (Lidia) are mutual ("Se in fiorito ameno prato")
- 35 Cesare; complete aria ("Se in fiorito ameno prato")

**ACT III**

- 16 Cleopatra; weeps for her fate after she has been taken captive by Tolomeo and believes Cesare to be dead ("Piangerò la sorte mia")
- 17 Cleopatra; A section
- 19 Cleopatra; B section
- 20 Cleopatra; continuation of the B section
- 18 Cleopatra; da capo section

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

## Getting Inside Their Heads: Voices from Backstage

I actually think that these da capo arias are a very natural way of thinking and speaking—we are so used to *La Bohème*, where emotions are so telescoped, and within a few minutes of meeting, Rodolfo and Mimì are singing a love duet. No one says, ‘Oh, that’s ridiculous! They only met ten minutes ago!’ But it’s also not unreasonable for you to spend ten minutes saying, ‘I love this person!’ and then spend another five minutes saying, ‘But then he betrayed me—but I still love him!’ as someone singing a da capo aria does. The da capo happens to be more like real emotional time.

—Harry Bicket, conductor of *Giulio Cesare*

I find it incredibly focusing, because in the da capo form what you have is an exposition of an emotion or a thought, and then the alternative thought, and then a meditation, an exploration of greater depth upon what the character wants to say at the beginning. I actually find that human beings think like this.

—David McVicar, director of *Giulio Cesare*

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

# Getting Inside Their Heads: Scoring the Head Game: Round 1

TEAM NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

**“Empio, dirò, tu sei”  
Sung by Giulio Cesare  
Act I, Scene 3  
Duration: 3:36**

**Empio, dirò, tu sei.  
Togliti a gli occhi miei.  
Sei tutto crudeltà.**

**Non è da re quel cuor,  
che donasi al rigor,  
che in sen non ha pietà.**

**TEAM NOTES**

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**SELECTION 1**

- First section (A)     Middle section (B)     Da capo section (A')

What did you hear that supports this choice?

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**SELECTION 2**

- First section (A)     Middle section (B)     Da capo section (A')

What did you hear that supports this choice?

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**SELECTION 3**

- First section (A)     Middle section (B)     Da capo section (A')

What did you hear that supports this choice?

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**SELECTION 4**

- First section (A)     Middle section (B)     Da capo section (A')

What did you hear that supports this choice?

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Describe Cesare's feelings in this aria:

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CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Getting Inside Their Heads: Scoring the Head Game: Round 2

TEAM NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

**“Non è sì vago e bello”  
Sung by Giulio Cesare  
Act I, Scene 7  
Duration: 3:16**

Non è sì vago e bello  
il fior nel prato,  
quant’è vago e gentile  
il tuo bel volto.

D’un fiore il pregio a quello  
solo vien dato,  
ma tutto un vago aprile  
è in te raccolto.

TEAM NOTES

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**SELECTION 1**

- First section (A)     Middle section (B)     Da capo section (A')

What did you hear that supports this choice?

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**SELECTION 2**

- First section (A)     Middle section (B)     Da capo section (A')

What did you hear that supports this choice?

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**SELECTION 3**

- First section (A)     Middle section (B)     Da capo section (A')

What did you hear that supports this choice?

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**SELECTION 4**

- First section (A)     Middle section (B)     Da capo section (A')

What did you hear that supports this choice?

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Describe Cesare’s feelings in this aria:

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CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Getting Inside Their Heads: Scoring the Head Game: Round 3

TEAM NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

**“Non disperar, chi sa?”**  
**Sung by Cleopatra**  
**Act I, Scene 5**  
**Duration: 4:07**

**Non disperar, chi sa?**  
**Se al regno non l’avrai,**  
**avrai sorte in amor.**

**Mirando una beltà**  
**in essa troverai**  
**a consolar un cor.**

**TEAM NOTES**

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**SELECTION 1**

First section (A)     Middle section (B)     Da capo section (A')

What did you hear that supports this choice?

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**SELECTION 2**

First section (A)     Middle section (B)     Da capo section (A')

What did you hear that supports this choice?

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**SELECTION 3**

First section (A)     Middle section (B)     Da capo section (A')

What did you hear that supports this choice?

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**SELECTION 4**

First section (A)     Middle section (B)     Da capo section (A')

What did you hear that supports this choice?

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Describe Cleopatra’s feelings in this aria:

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CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Getting Inside Their Heads: Scoring the Head Game: Round 4

TEAM NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

**“Piangerò la sorte mia”  
Sung by Cleopatra  
Act III, Scene 3  
Duration: 6:21**

*Piangerò la sorte mia,  
sì crudele e tanto ria,  
finchè vita in petto avrò.*

*Ma poi morta d’ogn’intorno  
il tiranno e notte e giorno  
fatta spettro agiterò.*

**TEAM NOTES**

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**SELECTION 1**

- First section (A)     Middle section (B)     Da capo section (A')

What did you hear that supports this choice?

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**SELECTION 2**

- First section (A)     Middle section (B)     Da capo section (A')

What did you hear that supports this choice?

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**SELECTION 3**

- First section (A)     Middle section (B)     Da capo section (A')

What did you hear that supports this choice?

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**SELECTION 4**

- First section (A)     Middle section (B)     Da capo section (A')

What did you hear that supports this choice?

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Describe Cleopatra’s feelings in this aria:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

## Getting Inside Their Heads: Scoring the Head Game: The Head Game Arias

TEAM NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

**“Empio, dirò, tu sei”**  
Sung by Giulio Cesare  
Act I, Scene 3  
TRACKS 1–5

CESARE: Empio, dirò, tu sei.  
Togliti agli occhi miei.  
Sei tutto crudeltà.

Merciless—that’s what I’ll say you are.  
Get out of my sight.  
You are entirely cruel.

Non è da re quel cor,  
che donasi al rigor,  
che in sen non ha pietà.

It is not fitting for a king  
to have an unbending heart  
that holds no place for pity.

**“Non è sì vago e bello”**  
Sung by Giulio Cesare  
Act I, Scene 7  
TRACKS 6–10

CESARE: Non è sì vago e bello  
il fior nel prato,  
quant’è vago e gentile  
il tuo bel volto.

The flower in the meadow  
is not as fair and beautiful  
as your beautiful face is  
fair and charming.

D’un fiore il pregio a quello  
solo vien dato,  
ma tutto un vago aprile  
è in te raccolto.

But while the meadow  
is only as pretty as its flower,  
all the delight of April  
is gathered up in you.

**“Non disperar, chi sa?”**  
Sung by Cleopatra  
Act I, Scene 5  
TRACKS 11–15

CLEOPATRA: Non disperar, chi sa?  
Se al regno non l’avrai,  
avrà sorte in amor.

Don’t lose hope—who knows?  
If you’re not lucky in politics,  
you’ll be lucky in love.

Mirando una beltà  
in essa troverai  
a consolar un cor.

By checking out a beautiful girl,  
you’ll find in her what  
you need to console your heart.

**“Piangerò la sorte mia”**  
Sung by Cleopatra  
Act III, Scene 3  
TRACK 16–20

CLEOPATRA: Piangerò la sorte mia,  
sì crudele e tanto ria,  
finché vita in petto avrò.

I will weep over my fate,  
so cruel and so wicked,  
as long as there is life within me.

Ma poi morta d’ogn’intorno  
il tiranno e notte e giorno  
fatta spettro agiterò.

But when I’m dead and  
made a ghost, I will haunt everyone  
around the tyrant, night and day.

RESOURCE PAGE FOR MUSICAL HIGHLIGHT

## Sending the Wrong Message

### TRACK 21

**ACHILLA:** La reggia Tolomeo t'offre in albergo,  
eccelso eroe, per tuo riposo...  
Acciò l'Italia ad adorarti impari,  
in pegno d'amistade e di sua fede  
questa del gran Pompeo superba testa  
di base al regal trono offre al tuo piede.

Tolomeo offers you his palace as the shelter,  
exalted hero, for your rest...  
So that Italy might learn to adore you,  
as a pledge of his friendship and trust,  
he offers, at the base of your royal throne,  
at your feet, this proud head of Pompey.

### TRACK 22

**CESARE:** Giulio, che miri?

Julius, what are you looking at?

**SESTO:** O dio, che veggio?

Oh god, what do I see?

**CORNELIA:** Ahi lassa! Consorte! Mio tesoro!

Alas! Husband! My treasure!

**SESTO:** Padre, Pompeo! Mia genitrice! O dio!

Father! Pompey! Mother! Oh god!

**CESARE:** Per dar urna sublime al suo cenere illustre,  
serbato sia il nobil teschio.

May his noble head be preserved by placing  
his distinguished ashes in a magnificent urn .

**ACHILLA:** O dei!

Oh gods!

RESOURCE PAGE FOR MUSICAL HIGHLIGHT

## Three Faces of Vengeance

### TRACKS 23 AND 24

SESTO: Svegliatevi nel core,  
furie d'un alma offesa,  
a far d'un traditor  
aspra vendetta!  
Svegliatevi!

Awaken in your heart,  
the rage of an offended soul,  
to bring harsh vengeance  
upon a traitor!  
Awaken!

### TRACKS 25

SESTO: L'ombra del genitore accorre a mia difesa,

My father's ghost rushes to my defense,

### TRACK 26

SESTO: e dice,

and says,

### TRACK 27

SESTO: a te il rigor, figlio, si aspetta.

"You are expected to be tough, my son!"

### TRACK 28

SESTO: Cara speme, questo core  
tu cominci a lusingar.

Dear hope, you begin  
to entice this heart of mine.

### TRACK 29

SESTO: Par che il ciel presti favore  
i miei torti a vendicar.

It seems that heaven looks kindly  
on revenge for my injuries.

### TRACK 30

Tracks 23-27 continuously

### TRACK 31

Tracks 28-29 continuously

RESOURCE PAGE FOR MUSICAL HIGHLIGHT

## Changes Big and Small

### TRACK 32

**CESARE:** Giulio, che miri?  
E quando con abisso di luce  
scesero i Numi in terra?

Julius, what are you looking at?  
And when did the gods come  
down to Earth in a flood of light?

### TRACKS 33

**CLEOPATRA:** V'adoro, pupille,  
saette d'amore;  
le vostre faville  
son grate nel sen.

I adore you, eyes,  
love's arrows;  
your sparks  
burn in my breast.

Pietose vi brama  
il mesto mio core,  
ch'ogn'ora vi chiama  
l'amato suo ben.

Pitifully my sad heart  
yearns for you;  
at all hours it calls  
you its great love.

### TRACK 34

**CESARE:** Se in fiorito  
ameno prato  
l'augellin tra fiori e fronde  
si nasconde,  
fa più grato  
il suo cantar.

If in a delightul,  
flowering meadow,  
a little bird hides  
among flowers and leaves,  
its singing is  
even lovelier.

### TRACK 35

**CESARE:** Se in fiorito  
ameno prato  
l'augellin tra fiori e fronde  
si nasconde,  
fa più grato  
il suo cantar.

If, in a delightul,  
flowering meadow,  
a little bird hides  
among flowers and leaves,  
its singing is  
even lovelier.

Se così Lidia vezzosa  
spiega ancor notti canore,  
più graziosa  
fa ogni core innamorar.

If, in the same way,  
the charming Lydia fills the  
nights with song, she makes  
every loving heart even sweeter.

### TRACK 36

Instrumental

RESOURCE PAGE FOR MUSICAL HIGHLIGHT

## Changes Big and Small (CONTINUED)

### TRACK 37

**CESARE:** Va tacito e nascosto,  
quand'avidò è di preda,  
l'astuto cacciator.

The cunning hunter sets out  
quiet and concealed when  
he is eager for his prey.

### TRACK 38

**CESARE:** Va tacito e nascosto,  
quand'avidò è di preda,  
l'astuto cacciator.  
E chi è mal far disposto,  
non brama che si veda  
l'inganno del suo cor.

The cunning hunter sets out  
quiet and concealed when  
he is eager for his prey.  
And he who prepares to do evil  
does not want the deception  
in his heart to be seen.

## Performance Activity: When the Singing Stops

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Class \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

One of the challenges in presenting Baroque opera is finding a way to spotlight its subtleties for a 21st-century audience. This production’s visually extravagant sets, costumes, and dancing go a long way in that direction. So do the dramas that unfold during Handel’s instrumental passages.

Watch closely whenever the singing stops. How does each of the three characters listed below interact with other characters? What does that say about the character? Do actions speak louder than words?

### *Tolomeo*

Scene	Other characters involved	What does he do?	What does this tell you about him?

### *Achilla*

Scene	Other characters involved	What does he do?	What does this tell you about him?

### *Sesto*

Scene	Other characters involved	What does he do?	What does this tell you about him?

# Giulio Cesare: My Highs & Lows

APRIL 27, 2013

CONDUCTED BY HARRY BICKET

REVIEWED BY \_\_\_\_\_

<b>THE STARS</b>	<b>STAR POWER</b>	<b>MY COMMENTS</b>
DAVID DANIELS AS GIULIO CESARE	* * * * *	
NATALIE DESSAY AS CLEOPATRA	* * * * *	
PATRICIA BARDON AS CORNELIA	* * * * *	
ALICE COOTE AS SESTO	* * * * *	
CHRISTOPHE DUMAUX AS TOLOMEO	* * * * *	

<b>THE SHOW, SCENE BY SCENE</b>	<b>ACTION</b>	<b>MUSIC</b>	<b>SET DESIGN/STAGING</b>
ACT 1, SCENE 1: CESARE ARRIVES MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
SCENE 2: CORNELIA AND SESTO PETITION CESARE MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
SCENE 3: ACHILLA BRINGS A GIFT MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
SCENE 4: SESTO VOWS VENGEANCE MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
SCENE 5: CLEOPATRA TAUNTS TOLOMEO MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
SCENE 6: ACHILLA REPORTS BACK TO TOLOMEO MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
SCENE 7: CESARE AND "LIDIA" MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
SCENE 8: "LIDIA" OFFERS TO HELP MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
SCENE 9: CESARE IN TOLOMEO'S PALACE MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5



# Giulio Cesare: My Highs & Lows

(CONTINUED)

<b>THE SHOW, SCENE BY SCENE</b>	<b>ACTION</b>	<b>MUSIC</b>	<b>SET DESIGN/STAGING</b>
SCENE 10: TOLOMEO CAPTURES CORNELIA AND SESTO MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
SCENE 11: ACHILLA PROPOSES TO CORNELIA MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
ACT II, SCENES 1–2: CLEOPATRA AND CESARE IN THE GARDEN MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
SCENES 3–4: CORNELIA VS. ACHILLA AND TOLOMEO, PART 1 MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
SCENE 5: SESTO TO THE RESCUE MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
SCENE 6: CORNELIA THE CONCUBINE MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
SCENE 7: CESARE FALLS FOR “LIDIA” MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
SCENE 8: THREATS TO CESARE AND CLEOPATRA MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
SCENES 9–10: CORNELIA VS. ACHILLA AND TOLOMEO, PART 2 MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5

# Giulio Cesare: My Highs & Lows

(CONTINUED)

<b>THE SHOW, SCENE BY SCENE</b>	<b>ACTION</b>	<b>MUSIC</b>	<b>SET DESIGN/STAGING</b>
ACT III, SCENE 1: ACHILLA SUPPORTS CLEOPATRA MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
SCENE 2: TOLOMEO'S VICTORY MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
SCENE 3: CLEOPATRA'S LAMENT MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
SCENES 4-6: CESARE TO THE RESCUE MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
SCENE 7: CESARE SAVES CLEOPATRA MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
SCENES 8-9: CORNELIA VS. TOLOMEO: THE LAST BATTLE MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
SCENE 10: VICTORY! MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5