

1-4. Sonata Op. 2, No. 15 “La Torriana”

II Sedecia - Part One

5. Chorus. Chorus of Jews: *Let us flee*

Let us flee
prompt and swift
yes, let us flee,
before the wrathful enemy
arrives,
armed and determined
to put an end
to our lives.

6. Recit. Narrator: *Thus, as Jerusalem lay besieged*

Thus, as Jerusalem
lay oppressed and besieged
by the barbarous troops
of the Chaldean army,
conquered by famine,
the dejected Jews
moaned in terror,
while they escaped
through the attacked walls.
And already with her silvery rays
the crescent of Artemis was reflected
in the sapphire, wavy bosom of Thetis.
Already King Zedekiah, bemoaning the fate
of his crumbling kingdom,
had left the royal gardens;
pale and trembling,
musing in grief
over his predicament,
he thus shared his vain laments
with shadows, woods and winds:

7. Recit. Zedekiah: *Farewell, my kingdom, farewell*

Farewell, my kingdom, farewell.
How far from you
my cruel fate forces me to go
in deathly anguish,
carrying my grief
to a foreign land, to a different country.

8. Aria. Zedekiah: *I lose and abandon you*

I lose you, brittle pomp,
and abandon you,
and I stamp on you, useless crown,
transient gift of fortune.
Opulence, haughty glories,
alas, you forsake me;
yet cruelly you leave me
all too vivid memories.
Those who enjoy you the most and revel in you
live in a dream, love a shadow and clutch water.

9. Recit. Zedekiah: *But adverse, inexorable Fate*

But adverse, inexorable Fate,
grown fierce,
makes us plunge, my sons,
from the heights of prominence
into the depths
of misery and trouble.

10. Aria. Zedekiah: *Arm yourselves*

Arm your hearts
with strength and courage,
for against the wise man
every shaft, every weapon
of furious fate
is blunt, and a breast,
though defenceless and bare,
if strengthened by faith
can fend off the blows of destiny.

11. Recit.: *With these words*

With these words, locking
his cruel suffering in his heart
and suppressing his sighs,
the woeful king
reassured the faltering spirits
of his sons,
his only companions in his predicament;
and as a wondrous ray of virtuousness
blossomed again within them,
heartened,
they softened with these words
their wretched father's cruel suffering:

12. Recit. First son: *The bright example*

The bright example
of unwavering strength
that shines in you, father,
reassures my frightened heart,
and kingdom and calamities
when I look at you, are forgotten;
this bitter predicament
teaches me a lesson.

13. Aria. First son: *More capricious than the breeze*

More capricious than the breeze,
more uneven than the waves,
lighter than the leaves
of this dark
and grim wood
that is man's life
are beauty,
greatness,
treasures and power.
Only virtue is eternal, which is not affected
by fortune and the hungry bite of time.

14. Recit. Second son: *Your great examples*

Your great examples,
dear father and brother, is where I fix my gaze,
and your noble courage
makes me burn with generous valour;
your steadfastness is a fine lesson,
and as I admire it I learn
that to disdain misfortune
provides ample shelter from a cruel destiny.

15. Aria. Second son: *A beautiful face*

A beautiful face, paler
than a lily and rivalling,
when it blushes,
the bright red of a rose,
is vanity;
under time's blows
it wrinkles and loses its beauty.

16. Recit.: *Heartened and fortified*

Heartened and fortified,
as they hurried off
quickening their pace,
they were heard saying:

17. Trio. First son, Second son, Zedekiah: *The hard rocks of our troubles*

The hard rocks of our troubles
in this voracious sea,
the cruel winds
of obstinate misfortune,
will not defeat
will not crush
our steadfastness,
for a generous heart, a strong soul
disdains kingdoms, riches, life and death.

18. Recit. Zedekiah: *But since even a fast escape*

But since even a fast escape
is but idle and slow
when danger looms,
urge your feet on,
my sons,
and under cover of darkness,
as grim and gloomy
as our misfortunes,
let us seek, in our predicament,
less harsh a fate under less cruel skies.

19. Recit. Narrator: *Thus, sad and dejected*

Thus, sad and dejected,
his silvery locks bathed in tears,
the troubled old man
fled with his sons by a solitary path
running to their imminent, dreadful end;
forsaken and alone,
they had no counsel nor guidance.

Fool is he who trusts in anyone else but God.
Meanwhile the Chaldean army
burst into applause and cheered,
and as they worshipped
their king Nebuchadnezzar
at the sound of war trumpets
their acclamations echoed through the air.

20. Chorus. Chorus of Chaldean soldiers: *Live, live in glory*

Live, live in glory,
subdue time and conquer oblivion,
king, god of our hosts,
for victory is your slave.
Jove the Thunderer may rule in heaven,
but Earth is subject to you,
fortune lies at your feet,
you are the conqueror of the world.

21. Recit. Narrator: *Thus the flattering army*

Thus the flattering army
blandished the ear
of the haughty tyrant
when, all of a sudden
Fame carried the trustworthy news
that, to escape death,
the besieged king
and his sons had fled
and moved their faltering steps
along an uncertain path.
Hearing this Nebuchadnezzar,
at the height of happiness,
burst forth and said:

22. Aria. Nebuchadnezzar: *My thundering arm*

My thundering arm
shall reach him
no matter where he wanders;
he will end up flat on the ground
as my footstool,
my victim, my trophy.
On with you, on his tracks,
find and arrest him,
hurry, fly,
my faithful ones;
let disdain and honour
lend you wings.

23. Recit. Nebuchadnezzar: *Where can he ever flee*

Where can he ever flee,
the wicked man, and not find
every path blocked
and every passage cut off?
How can he hope not be captured
and brought to kneel before me?

24. Recit. Narrator: *No sooner had he spoken*

No sooner had he spoken
than a group of archers
hurried off
in pursuit of the fleeing king.

25. Madrigal. Chorus of Jews: *How mad you are*

How mad you are,
foolish absconder!
You think you can run away,
but Heaven's wrath cannot be escaped.

End of Part One

26-29. Sonata Op. 2, No. 4 "*La strasolda*"

Second Part

30. Recit. Narrator: *After a long march*

After a long march,
exhausted and breathless, the king
stopped in the pleasant,
verdant plain of Jericho
with his sons at his side.
On the banks of a stream
they rested their tired limbs,
and at the sweet murmuring
of the rushing waters,
watching the cold stream flow by,
thus did they speak:

31. Aria. First son: *This flowing water*

This flowing water,
which pushes more water
on its fast journey
towards the sea,
is a clear mirror
of our fatal destiny.
With quick steps
the years go by,
youth flies,
and foolish mortals
end up
into the sea of death.

32. Aria. Second son: *This pleasant breeze*

This pleasant breeze
that blows around us
is a paradigm
of our cruel destiny.
Erratic,
it never stops moving;
similarly, kingdoms and ages
never stop changing.

33. Duet. First son, Second son: *Time disperses all things*

Time destroys all things:

men, who are but breath, vanish into air, and riches,
which come from the earth, turn into dust.

34. Recit. Zedekiah: *Brave sons*

Brave sons,
true seeds and noble offspring
of my lofty lineage,
fortune shall not rejoice
in our downfall
if Heaven musters such virtue in you.
But a distant sound
seems to injure my ear, and horror
courses through my veins,
filling my heart with dread.

35. Recit. Narrator: *The impending dawn*

The impending dawn,
having loosened her golden locks on the banks of the Ganges,
already gilded the blue fields of the sky
when the sparkling of weapons
of enemy soldiers
hot on their trail
flashed across their confused faces,
and, in terror,
they envisioned
their imminent, atrocious fate.

36. Chorus. Chorus of Chaldean soldiers: *You are vanquished and captured*

You are vanquished and captured,
yield and submit,
reckless valour will not avail you.
Let us bind his feet
with an iron chain,
the suitable punishment
deserved for such a serious offence.

37. Recit. Narrator: *In cruel fetters*

Bound in cruel fetters,
the sons and their hapless father,
dejected captives,
were brought by the ruthless soldiers
into the presence of the furious Nebuchadnezzar.
He fixed fearsome, stern eyes
on them
and said:

38. Recit. Nebuchadnezzar: *At last my arm has reached you*

At last my arm has reached you,
reckless Zedekiah.
At last I see you,
as it befits you,
bound as a slave in harsh fetters.
Behold, haughty one, the result of your foolishness.
You would contend with me, a god,
and refuse being my subject,
bold, arrogant man;

you would deny
the due tribute
to my formidable and fearful power
and oppose my greatness;
I, who can overturn fortune
on my command,
I, who can will
Fate and human destiny to change;
did I not deserve, you boor,
to see you prostrate at my feet
humbling your haughty brow,
to see you yield your royal crown
for you fatal glory,
begging for peace?
Like a mad Niobe,
proud of your offspring,
you stood up to me, your god on Earth,
and fought me.
Like Niobe you shall pay the price.
Your daring children
shall be slain
before your woeful eyes,
and then, to make you powerless
I shall have you blinded,
and thus, vanquished and sightless,
you shall be carried in fetters to my triumph.

39. Aria. Nebuchadnezzar: *Get on with it*

Get on with it,
slain his wicked children,
rightful victims
of my rigour,
and let the wretch
feel his soul and heart
fail
at the harsh blow.

40. Recit. Zedekiah: *Stop, hold the blow*

Stop, hold the blow,
cruel murderer! Listen, Nebuchadnezzar.
I was the one who offended you,
who scorned your greatness,
who challenged your fearsome power;
thrust your ruthless sword
through my breast,
sate yourself with my blood;
but, oh God, spare
my beloved children,
and if you want me alive for your triumph
do not kill my sons,
because that would be a mistake:
if you want me alive, you must leave me my heart.

41. Recit. First son: *Sate yourself*

Cruel man, sate yourself
with my innocent blood,

but let the grim end
of my once bright,
serene life,
let my death
put an end to your wrath.
Kill me
and spare my father's life,
and death will be sweet for me.

42. Arioso. First son: *And death will be sweet*
And death will be sweet for me.

43. Recit. Second son: *No, no, vent your cruelty*
No, no, vent your cruelty,
inhuman tiger,
against me, who has never offended you;
muster all your rigour
and with barbarous torture
tear out not only my eyes, but the heart from my breast.

44. Arioso. Second son: *I shall be at the height of happiness*
I shall be at the height of happiness
if my death
will spare my father and brother cruel suffering.

45. Recit. Second son: *I shall welcome my destiny*
I shall welcome my destiny,
and, dying, I shall adore death.

46. Recit. Narrator: *But, enraged, the unruly tyrant*
But the wilful tyrant, enraged,
a nasty smile
flashing across
his ruthless face,
shook his haughty head
and sternly said:

47. Recit. Nebuchadnezzar: *Let me put an end*
Let me put an end
to your quarrels and rivalries;
you shall both be granted your wish
and shall both die.
Quickly, carry out my orders,
my faithful ones.
Kill these offenders.

48. Recit. Narrator: *Thus the beloved sons*
Thus the beloved sons
were they slain under their father's eyes,
and as they died they breathed out:

49. Duet. First son, Second son: *Father, I expire*
Father, I expire.
Father, I die.
Take comfort, take heart.
My destiny wants thus.

My cruel fate
wants me to die
in the blossom of my life,
at the dawn of my existence.

50. Recit. Narrator: *At the dreadful sight*

At the dreadful sight
the wretched old man
felt his heart break
and was kept alive
only by his terrible, bitter pain;
and to torture him even more
the wrathful Nebuchadnezzar
burst forth saying:

51. Recit. Nebuchadnezzar: *Tell me now, haughty king*

Tell me now, haughty king,
is Nebuchadnezzar powerful?
Enough; too long have you contemplated
your pain, your sons and my greatness.
Tear his eyes out,
and condemn him
to perpetual darkness.

52. Arioso. Nebuchadnezzar: *Let those who see my glory*

Let those who see my glory
and do not worship it
suffer perpetual horror.

53. Recit. Narrator: *And so they tore the poor man's eyes out*

And so they tore the poor man's eyes out,
and, suffering cruelly, he moaned:

54. Aria. Zedekiah: *Nebuchadnezzar, you have won*

Nebuchadnezzar, you have won;
behold, I am miserable,
without kingdom, without eyes and without children,
in harsh fetters, and surrounded.

55. Aria. Zedekiah: *I, a mortal, insane Sisyphus*

I, an insane mortal Sisyphus,
in vain tried to roll
my slippery rock
of royal appetites, up against God.

56. Recit. Zedekiah: *I contravened your laws*

I contravened your laws, I scorned
your sovereign power;
O well-deserved suffering!

57. Arioso. Zedekiah: *O sons, o sight, o heaven, o motherland, o kingdom*

O sons, o sight, o heaven, o motherland, o kingdom!

58. Recit. Zedekiah: *God catches you out and makes no mistakes*

God catches you out and makes no mistakes,
He humbles His enemy with his enemy.

59. Madrigal. Chorus of Jews: *Mortals, learn*

Mortals, learn

the laws of God;

first He corrects,

then He turns a deaf ear.

If a sinner scorns His guidance,

God can take away his life, kingdom and children,

his life, kingdom and children.