

Libretto by John Gay

Music by G. F. Handel

ACIS & GALATEA

LIBRETTO

ACT I

1. SINFONIA

The Orchestra starts the performance.

2. OH THE PLEASURE OF THE PLAINS!

*The Chorus celebrates the beauty of nature
and life in the countryside.*

Oh, the pleasure of the plains!
Happy nymphs and happy swains,
Harmless, merry, free and gay,
Dance and sport the hours away.

For us the zephyr blows,
For us distills the dew,
For us unfolds the rose,
And flow'rs display their hue.
For us the winters rain,
For us the summers shine,
Spring swells for us the grain,
And autumn bleeds the wine.
Oh, the pleasure... *da capo*.

3. YE VERDANT PLAINS AND WOODY MOUNTAINS

*Despite its beauty, Galatea claims that nature
can't cool her love for Acis.*

Ye verdant plains and woody mountains,
Purling streams and bubbling fountains,
Ye painted glories of the field,
Vain are the pleasures which ye yield;
Too thin the shadow of the grove,
Too faint the gales, to cool my love.

4. HUSH, YE PRETTY WARBLING CHOIR!

*Galatea scolds the birds; their singing makes
her lonely for Acis.*

*Listen for: woodwind instruments,
which sound like singing birds!*

Hush, ye pretty warbling choir!
Your thrilling strains
Awake my pains,
And kindle fierce desire.

Cease your song, and take your flight,
Bring back my Acis to my sight!
Hush... *da capo*.

Did You Know...?

'Libretto' means 'little book' in Italian. It includes the words that are sung in an opera, which is very useful if you want to follow along!

While most of the libretto for 'Acis & Galatea' was written by John Gay, some parts were written by Alexander Pope and John Hughes.

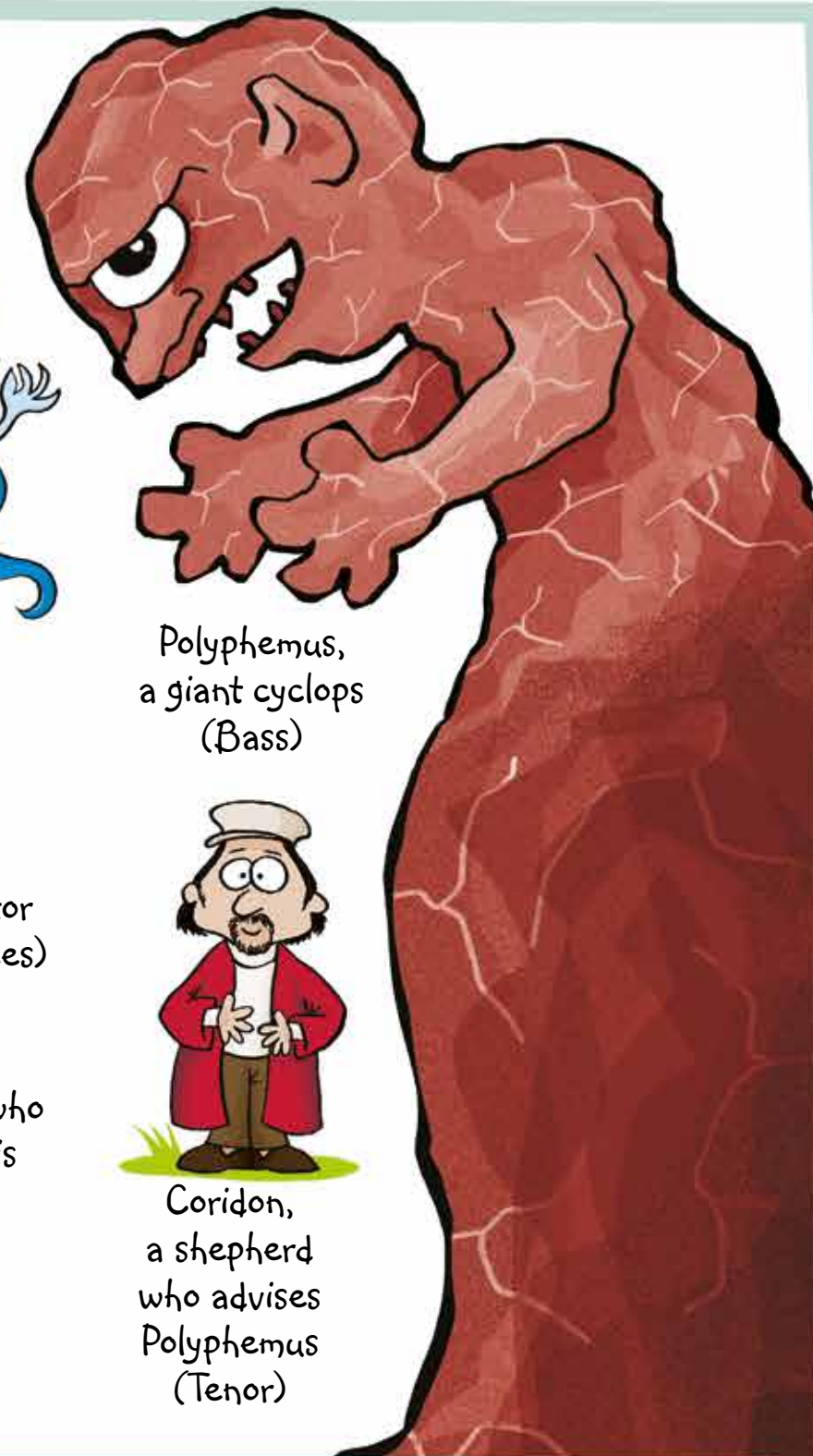
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CHARACTERS

Galatea,
a sea nymph
(Soprano)



Acis,
a shepherd
(Tenor)



Polyphemus,
a giant cyclops
(Bass)

Chorus,
the narrator
(Many voices)



Damon,
a shepherd who
advises Acis
(Tenor)



Coridon,
a shepherd
who advises
Polyphemus
(Tenor)

GUIDE TO THE VOICES



SOPRANO

- Comes from Italian for 'above' (sopra)
- Sings the really high notes
- Typical roles: angel, princess, spirit



TENOR

- Comes from Italian for 'to hold' (tenere)
- The tenor helps to hold the melody
- Typical roles: prince, romantic hero



BASS

- Comes from Old French for 'low' (bas)
- Sings the really low notes
- Typical roles: king, the baddie!

5. WHERE SHALL I SEEK THE CHARMING FAIR?

Acis searches for Galatea, his true love.

Where shall I seek the charming fair?
Direct the way, kind genius
of the mountains!
O tell me, if you saw my dear!
Seeks she the grove,
or bathes in crystal fountains?
Where... *da capo*.

6. STAY, SHEPHERD STAY!

Damon, a shepherd, reminds Acis to watch after his flock of sheep.

Stay, shepherd, stay!
See, how thy flocks in
yonder valley stray!
What means this melancholy air?
No more thy tuneful pipe we hear.



7. SHEPHERD, WHAT ART THOU PURSUING?

Damon tries to convince Acis that love is not worth the agony.

Shepherd, what art thou pursuing?
Heedless running to thy ruin;
Share our joy, our pleasure share,
Leave thy passion till tomorrow,
Let the day be free from sorrow,
Free from love, and free from care!
Shepherd... *da capo*.

8. LO, HERE MY LOVE, TURN, GALATEA, HITHER TURN THY EYE!

Acis tries to get Galatea's attention.

Lo, here my love, turn,
Galatea, hither turn thy eye!
See, at thy feet the longing Acis lies.

9. LOVE IN HER EYES SITS PLAYING

Acis gazes into Galatea's eyes and concludes that she loves him, too!

Love in her eyes sits playing,
And sheds delicious death;
Love on her lips is straying,
And warbling in her breath!
Love on her breast sits panting
And swells with soft desire;
No grace, no charm is wanting,
To set the heart on fire.
Love in her eyes... *da capo*.

10. OH, DIDST THOU KNOW THE PAINS OF ABSENT LOVE

Galatea tells Acis how much she missed him, and asks him not to leave again.

Oh, didst thou know
the pains of absent love,
Acis would ne'er from Galatea rove.

Did You Know...?

'Da capo' means 'from the head' in Italian. This phrase tells the musicians to 'take it from the top.'

11. AS WHEN THE DOVE

Galatea compares herself to a cooing, happy dove when Acis is with her – and a sad, pitiful dove when he's not.

As when the dove
Laments her love,
All on the naked spray;
When he returns,
No more she mourns,
But loves the live-long day.
Billing, cooing,
Panting, wooing,
Melting murmurs fill the grove,
Melting murmurs, lasting love.
As when... *da capo*.

12. HAPPY WE!

Acis & Galatea rejoice in their love.

Listen for: The Orchestra echoes the singers, and the Chorus joins in. The whole world seems to be happy!

Happy we!
What joys I feel!
What charms I see!
Of all youths nymphs thou
dearest boy brightest fair!
Thou all my bliss, thou all my joy!
Happy... *da capo*.

END OF FIRST ACT





ACT II

13. WRETCHED LOVERS! FATE HAS PAST

The Chorus predicts that the happiness won't last and introduces Polyphemus.

Listen for: The song starts slowly and simply. But when Polyphemus shows up, the song speeds up, with different voices singing; this creates a sense of panic as if they're fleeing from the monster. Then the song grows quiet, as if the Chorus is whispering and hiding.

Wretched lovers! Fate has past
This sad decree: no joy shall last.
Wretched lovers, quit your dream!
Behold the monster Polypheme!
See what ample strides he takes!
The mountain nods, the forest shakes;
The waves run frighten'd to the shores:
Hark, how the thund'ring giant roars!

14. I RAGE – I MELT – I BURN!

Meet the cyclops Polyphemus. He's so big, he uses a tree as a walking stick. And he loves Galatea, too.

I rage — I melt — I burn!
The feeble god has stabb'd
me to the heart.
Thou trusty pine,
Prop of my godlike steps,
I lay thee by!
Bring me a hundred reeds
of decent growth
To make a pipe for my capacious mouth;
In soft enchanting accents let me breathe
Sweet Galatea's beauty, and my love.

15. O RUDDIER THAN THE CHERRY

Polyphemus tries to woo Galatea.

O ruddier than the cherry,
O sweeter than the berry,
O nymph more bright
Than moonshine night,
Like kidlings blithe and merry.

Ripe as the melting cluster,
No lily has such lustre;
Yet hard to tame
As raging flame,
And fierce as storms that bluster!
O ruddier... *da capo*.

16. WHITHER, FAIREST, ART THOU RUNNING

Polyphemus asks Galatea why she runs away from him.

Whither, fairest, art thou running,
Still my warm embraces shunning?

Galatea responds.

The lion calls not to his prey,
Nor bids the wolf the lambkin stay.

Polyphemus invites Galatea to his home.

Thee, Polyphemus, great as Jove,
Calls to empire and to love,
To his palace in the rock,
To his dairy, to his flock,
To the grape of purple hue,
To the plum of glossy blue,
Wildings, which expecting stand,
Proud to be gather'd by thy hand.

But Galatea rejects Polyphemus and tells him she hates him and his food.

Of infant limbs to make my food,
And swill full draughts of human blood!
Go, monster, bid some other guest!
I loathe the host, I loathe the feast.

17. CEASE TO BEAUTY TO BE SUING

Polyphemus sings of his love for Galatea.

Listen for: a 'hemiola' – a musical illusion that makes it sound like the rhythm quickens – just like Polyphemus' heartbeat!

Cease to beauty to be suing,
Ever whining love disdaining.
Let the brave their aims pursuing,
Still be conqu'ring not complaining.
Cease... *da capo*.



18. WOULD YOU GAIN THE TENDER CREATURE

Coridon advises Polyphemus that love will only cause him pain (much like Damon advised Acis!).

Would you gain the tender creature,
Softly, gently, kindly treat her:
Suff'ring is the lover's part.
Beauty by constraint possessing
You enjoy but half the blessing,
Lifeless charms without the heart.
Would you... *da capo*.

19. HIS HIDEOUS LOVE PROVOKES MY RAGE

Angered by Polyphemus trying to steal Galatea, Acis decides to take him on!

His hideous love provokes my rage.
Weak as I am, I must engage!
Inspir'd with thy victorious charms,
The god of love will lend his arms.

20. LOVE SOUNDS TH' ALARM

Acis is ready to die for his love!

Love sounds th'alarm,
And fear is a-flying!
When beauty's the prize,
What mortal fears dying?
In defence of my treasure,
I'd bleed at each vein;
Without her no pleasure,
For life is a pain.
Love sounds... *da capo*.

21. CONSIDER, FOND SHEPHERD

Damon reminds Acis that life is too short to throw away on doomed love.

Consider, fond shepherd,
How fleeting's the pleasure,
That flatters our hopes
In pursuit of the fair!
The joys that attend it,
By moments we measure,
But life is too little
To measure our care.
Consider... *da capo*.



22. CEASE, OH CEASE, THOU GENTLE YOUTH

Galatea tells Acis that she loves him.

Cease, oh cease, thou gentle youth,
Trust my constancy and truth,
Trust my truth and pow'r above,
The pow'r's propitious still to love!

23. THE FLOCKS SHALL LEAVE THE MOUNTAINS

Acis and Galatea sing to each other, and confirm their commitment.

The flocks shall leave the mountains,
The woods the turtle dove,
The nymphs forsake the fountains,
Ere I forsake my love!

Polyphemus cannot control his jealousy.

Torture! fury! rage! despair!
I cannot, cannot bear!

Galatea and Acis sing to each other.

Not show'rs to larks so pleasing,
Nor sunshine to the bee,
Not sleep to toil so easing,
As these dear smiles to me.

Polyphemus can't control his rage anymore.

He throws a boulder on Acis!

Fly swift, thou massy ruin, fly!
Die, presumptuous Acis, die!

24. HELP, GALATEA! HELP, YE PARENT GODS!

As he gets squashed, Acis asks Galatea and her parents, who are gods, for help.

Help, Galatea! Help, ye parent gods!
And take me dying to your deep abodes.

25. MOURN, ALL YE MUSES! WEEP, ALL YE SWAINS!

The Chorus tells us that Acis has died.

Mourn, all ye muses! Weep, all ye swains!
Tune, tune your reeds to doleful strains!
Groans, cries and howlings
fill the neighb'ring shore:
Ah, the gentle Acis is no more!

26. MUST I MY ACIS STILL BEMOAN

Listen for: Galatea's music is in a minor key with a slow tempo – to show her sadness; the Chorus sings in a major key with an upbeat tempo, trying to encourage her.

Galatea wonders if there's something she can do.

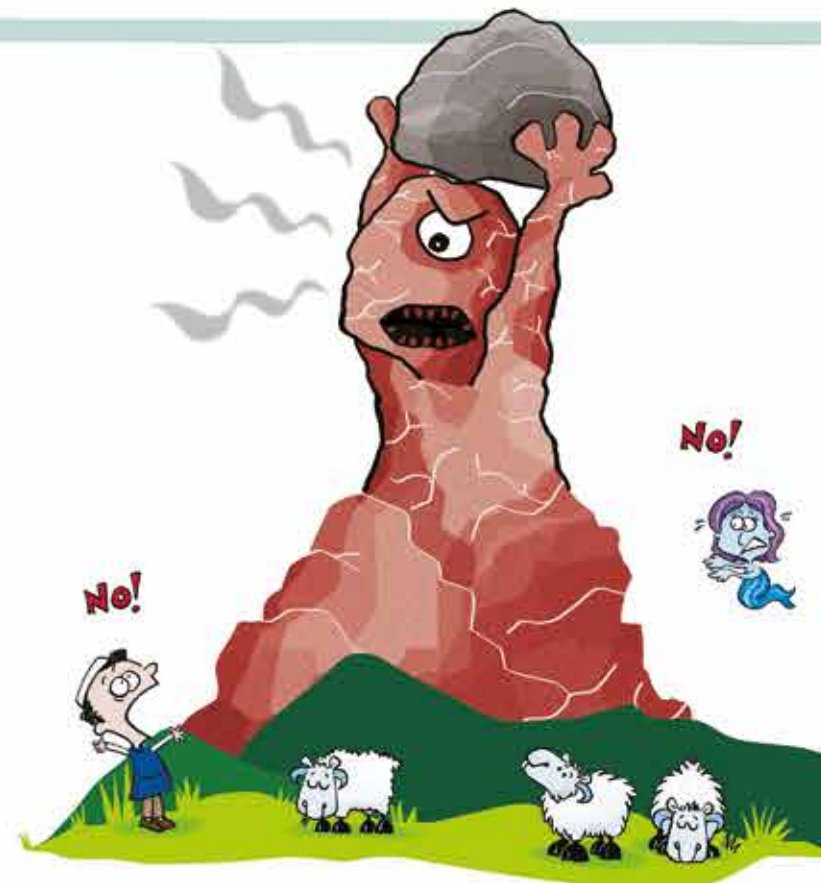
Must I my Acis still bemoan,
Inglorious crush'd beneath that stone?

The Chorus suggests she should accept his death.

Cease, Galatea, cease to grieve!
Bewail not whom thou canst relieve.

But Galatea won't give up that easily.

Must the lovely charming youth
Die for his constancy and truth?



The Chorus suggests that Galatea could use her power to do something.

Cease, Galatea, cease to grieve!
Bewail not whom thou canst relieve;
Call forth thy pow'r, employ thy art,
The goddess soon can heal thy smart.

Galatea asks the Chorus for an idea.

Say what comfort can you find?
For dark despair o'erclouds my mind.

The Chorus suggests making Acis part of the beautiful countryside.

To kindred gods the youth return,
Through verdant plains to roll his urn.

27. 'TIS DONE! THUS I EXERT MY POW'R DIVINE

Galatea turns Acis into a river. So he will live forever, but not as her beloved shepherd.

'Tis done! Thus I exert my pow'r divine;
Be thou immortal, though thou
art not mine!



28. HEART, THE SEAT OF SOFT DELIGHT

Galatea sings about her love, Acis, who is now a natural fountain.

Heart, the seat of soft delight,
Be thou now a fountain bright!
Purple be no more thy blood,
Glide thou like a crystal flood.
Rock, thy hollow womb disclose!
The bubbling fountain, lo! it flows;
Through the plains he joys to rove,
Murm'ring still his gentle love.

29. GALATEA, DRY THY TEARS

The Chorus finishes the story.

Listen for: the final two lines echo Galatea's. This shows that the story has finished and nature is in harmony.

Galatea, dry thy tears,
Acis now a god appears!
See how he rears him from his bed,
See the wreath that binds his head.
Hail! thou gentle murm'ring stream,
Shepherds' pleasure, muses' theme!
Through the plains still joy to rove,
Murm'ring still thy gentle love.

THE END