

## Handel-Bononcini - Muzio Scevola (1991)

Written by bluesever

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Disc: 1 1. Muzio Scevola, opera: Act 2. Overture 2. Muzio Scevola, opera: Act 2. Air. Dolce pensier 3. Muzio Scevola, opera: Act 2. Air. E pure 4. Muzio Scevola, opera: Act 2. Air. Sì, t'ama 5. Muzio Scevola, opera: Air. Pupille amate 6. Muzio Scevola, opera: Air. Come, quando 7. Muzio Scevola, opera, Act III, HWV 13: Act 3. Overture 8. Muzio Scevola, opera, Act III, HWV 13: Act 3. Recitative 9. Muzio Scevola, opera, Act III, HWV 13: Act 3. Aria. Lungo pensar 10. Muzio Scevola, opera, Act III, HWV 13: Act 3. Recitative 11. Muzio Scevola, opera, Act III, HWV 13: Act 3. Accompanied Recitative 12. Muzio Scevola, opera, Act III, HWV 13: Act 3. Recitative 13. Muzio Scevola, opera, Act III, HWV 13: Act 3. Aria. Pupille 14. Muzio Scevola, opera, Act III, HWV 13: Act 3. Accompanied Recitative 15. Muzio Scevola, opera, Act III, HWV 13: Act 3. Aria 16. Muzio Scevola, opera, Act III, HWV 13: Act 3. Recitative 17. Muzio Scevola, opera, Act III, HWV 13: Act 3. Aria. Volate più Disc: 2 1. Muzio Scevola, opera, Act III, HWV 13: Act 3. Recitative 2. Muzio Scevola, opera, Act III, HWV 13: Act 3. Aria. Il confine 3. Muzio Scevola, opera, Act III, HWV 13: Act 3. Recitative 4. Muzio Scevola, opera, Act III, HWV 13: Act 3. Aria. Non ti fidar 5. Muzio Scevola, opera, Act III, HWV 13: Act 3. Recitative 6. Muzio Scevola, opera, Act III, HWV 13: Act 3. Aria. Come se 7. Muzio Scevola, opera, Act III, HWV 13: Act 3. Recitative 8. Muzio Scevola, opera, Act III, HWV 13: Act 3. Aria. Con lui volate 9. Muzio Scevola, opera, Act III, HWV 13: Act 3. Recitative 10. Muzio Scevola, opera, Act III, HWV 13: Act 3. Aria. Spera 11. Muzio Scevola, opera, Act III, HWV 13: Act 3. Recitative 12. Muzio Scevola, opera, Act III, HWV 13: Act 3. Aria. Ah, dolce 13. Muzio Scevola, opera, Act III, HWV 13: Act 3. Fanfare / Recitative 14. Muzio Scevola, opera, Act III, HWV 13: Act 3. Duet. Vivo 15. Muzio Scevola, opera, Act III, HWV 13: Act 3. Recitative 16. Muzio Scevola, opera, Act III, HWV 13: Act 3. Duet. Come 17. Muzio Scevola, opera, Act III, HWV 13: Act 3. Recitative / Accompanied Recitative 18. Muzio Scevola, opera, Act III, HWV 13: Act 3. Recitative 19. Muzio Scevola, opera, Act III, HWV 13: Act 3. Coro finale. Sì, sarà

D'Anna FORTUNATO - Muzio Julianne BAIRD - Clelia Erie MILLS - Orazio Frederick URREY - Tarquinio Jennifer LANE - Irene Andrea MATTHEWS - Fidalma John OSTENDORF - Porsenna Brewer Baroque Chamber Ensemble Rudolph PALMER – conductor

Synopsis

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### Act I

Porsenna, King of Tuscany is allied with Tarquinio, recently ousted from the Roman throne. Blind to this villain's flaws, Porsenna has promised him the hand of his own daughter Irene. She is secretly pledged to a young Roman officer Orazio. Irene encourages Orazio to resist Tarquinio's efforts to regain his throne. The conflict climaxes in a 'valorous action' whereby Orazio stands off the enemy at the Sublican bridge, sets it afire and jumps into the Tiber River.

### Act II

Muzio is another young Roman warrior, betrothed to the fiery-but-comely maiden Clelia. Determined to match Orazio's bravery, he sets off to the enemy camp to assassinate Porsenna. Failing, Muzio defies the king by thrusting his own hand into the sacred flame. This 'valorous action' prompts the kindly – but simple – monarch to forgive Muzio. Later in battle, Porsenna captures Clelia. He takes her hostage, but in doing so loses his heart.

### Act III

Porsenna declares himself to Clelia, offering his own throne and an armistice with Rome. Though tempted, she declines due to a prior, secret betrothal. The naive King asks Muzio's aid in winning Clelia. Tormented, Muzio agrees. Meanwhile, Irene and Orazio secretly meet to declare their own love

Clelia defies both Porsenna and Muzio with the final 'valorous action' taking yet another plunge into the Tiber. Porsenna is outraged at her escape but assuaged by Muzio's reassurances. All meet again in Rome. Porsenna, realizing Clelia's true love for Muzio, sacrifices his own and also gives Irene to Orazio. All manages to end happily. --- John Ostendorf

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In November 1719 the Italian composer Giovanni Bononcini, then resident in Rome, had received an invitation from the Royal Academy of Music to provide an opera for the King's Theatre in London. The Academy's second season opened on 19th November 1720 with his *Astarto* which was to be performed an astonishing 24 times. Almost immediately a rivalry between Handel and Bononcini developed – not between the two composers themselves, but rather their fans. The Duke of Marlborough and most of the aristocracy supported Bononcini, while Handel had the backing of the Prince of Wales and his associates. The satirist John Byrom summed up the rivalry in a catchy verse:

*“Some say, compar'd to Buonocinny    That Mynheer Handel's but a Ninny.    Others  
aver, that he to Handel    Is scarcely fit to hold a Candle:    Strange that this difference there  
should be    Twixt Tweedle-dum and Tweedle-dee!*

Handel's biographer John Mainwaring reports that, in order to alleviate this apparent antagonism between their two star composers, the Academy decided to have them compose an act each of a new opera. Such joint compositions were not unusual in the 18th century, and even into the 19th century, but this is the only record of such an arrangement being seen as a direct competition between the individual composers.”

The first act was set by Filippo Amadei, the principal cellist of the Royal Academy orchestra who had previously been employed in Rome by one of Handel's Italian patrons, Cardinal Ottoboni. There are few surviving compositions by Amadei and it seems that after about 1724 he abandoned composition in favour of his skills as a performer. Bononcini set the second act, and Handel set the third. The general opinion was that Handel's music was far superior to that of his collaborators.

The first performance of *Muzio Scevola* on 15th April 1721 was interrupted by the announcement of the birth of a son to the Princess of Wales. The boy was to become the Duke of Cumberland, whose military success in 1746 against the Jacobites at the Battle of Culloden was to be celebrated by Handel's oratorio *Judas Maccabaeus*. --- [handelhendrix.org](http://handelhendrix.org)

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