

Giulio Cesare in Egitto

The Barns at Wolf Trap

June 27, June 29, July 1, 2014

WOLF TRAP
OPERA

THE STORY

Act 1

Giulio Cesare (Julius Caesar) has just defeated Pompey at the Battle of Pharsalia, and he is welcomed as victor in Egypt. Pompey has survived the battle, and Cesare is prepared to make peace. However, the Egyptian King **Tolomeo** (Ptolemy XII) has ordered Pompey to be killed, and his General **Achilla** presents Cesare with Pompey's severed head. Cesare is outraged. Pompey's wife **Cornelia** laments the death of her husband, and his son **Sesto** swears to avenge his father's murder.

Cleopatra decides to exploit the circumstances of Pompey's death in order to win Cesare's support against Tolomeo, her brother.

Tolomeo plans to strengthen his reign by killing Cesare, and Achilla offers to carry out the murder if the king will give him Cornelia as reward.

As Cesare reflects on the futility of life and fame, Cleopatra enters. She is disguised as a servant named Lidia, and she asks for support against Tolomeo, who she says wronged her.

Cornelia comes to pay her last respects to her husband's ashes. She seizes a sword to kill Tolomeo, but her son, Sesto, tells her that vengeance is his duty alone. Cleopatra overhears them and offers her help.

Cesare reproaches Tolomeo for Pompey's murder. Cornelia and Sesto arrive; Sesto is arrested after he challenges Tolomeo to a duel, and Cornelia is condemned to serve in Tolomeo's harem. Achilla promises to help Cornelia if she agrees to become his wife, but she refuses.

Act 2

Cleopatra (still disguised as Lidia) woos Cesare with a love song, and her beauty overwhelms him. Achilla leaves on his mission to kill Cesare, reminding Tolomeo that he is promised Cornelia as reward. When he is gone, Tolomeo tries to force himself on Cornelia. After he leaves, she attempts suicide but is stopped by her son. They are led to Tolomeo's chambers, where Sesto hopes to find the king defenseless.

Cesare woos "Lidia." After he receives a warning that his life is in danger, Cleopatra reveals her true identity. He departs for battle, and Cleopatra prays for his safety.

Tolomeo prepares to bed Cornelia. Achilla notifies him that Cesare was drowned during the battle, but when he asks for his promised reward (Cornelia), he is denied.

Sesto despairs of ever getting revenge, but Cornelia encourages him to persist.

Act 3

Achilla turns against Tolomeo and joins Cleopatra's camp. During the ensuing battle, Tolomeo is victorious over Cleopatra and has his sister taken prisoner.

Caesar has managed to escape drowning, and he overhears the dying Achilla's confession to having plotted against him. Achilla hands over a seal that gives command over his troops, and Cesare rushes off to liberate Cleopatra and Cornelia.

Tolomeo attempts to force himself on Cornelia once more, but this time Sesto prevents him and has the ultimate revenge.