

SYNOPSIS

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Negroponte, a Venetian colony in Greece (1470)

ACT 1

Scene 1 *The palace of the Governor*

After the conquest of Byzantium, Sultan Maometto II and his troops are laying siege to Negroponte. Maometto has demanded the surrender of the city by the following day. Governor Erisso and his generals are holding a council of war. General Condulmiero prudently suggests they yield to the Ottomans, but the young warrior Calbo urges fierce resistance. Swearing allegiance to Calbo, the troops draw their swords promising to fight to the death.

Scene 2 *Another part of the palace*

Alone, Erisso's daughter, Anna, sings of her concern for her father (*"Ah! che invan su questo ciglio"* / *Ah! In vain I call for sweet oblivion*). Erisso arrives with Calbo and explains their dangerous situation. When he suggests that she marry Calbo for additional protection, she explains that while her father was away, she was in Corinth, where she fell in love with another man, Uberto, Lord of Mytilene. On learning that the real Uberto had been traveling with her father, she realizes she was tricked by an imposter. (Terzettone [Big Trio]: *"Ohimè, qual fulmine"* / *Alas, what a thunderbolt*). At the sound of a cannon, Erisso and Calbo rush off to fight.

Outside the church Anna learns that a traitor has opened the gates to the Sultan's forces. She leads the women in prayer (*"Giusto cielo"* / *Merciful heaven, in such peril, no counsel, no hope is forthcoming*). Erisso returns to say that Maometto will attack at dawn. When Anna complains at his leaving her in such danger, he gives her his dagger for protection. Anna understands she is to stab herself before allowing the enemy to capture her.

Scene 3 *The city, the following morning*

The victorious Ottoman troops warn their swords will bring iron and fire to all cities who resist them (*"Dal ferro, dal foco"*). Maometto arrives and praises his soldiers saying that with them he will conquer the world (*"Sorgete, sorgete, in sì bel giorno"* / *Arise, in this fine morning*). Soldiers bring in Erisso and Calbo in chains. On learning Erisso's name, Maometto realizes he is the father of the woman he loves. He promises to release the two men if they surrender the city. Erisso rejects the offer and, as the two are about to be led away to be tortured, Anna rushes in to plead for her father's life. In a scene of great confusion, Anna recognizes that her lover "Uberto" is really Maometto; the Sultan is astonished to find Anna again and to learn she is the daughter of his enemy, and Erisso cannot believe that his daughter loves the Sultan. Each character expresses anguish or surprise. Anna threatens to kill herself unless Maometto releases Erisso and Calbo (whom Anna identifies as her brother); he agrees and asks her to marry him. He rushes off to continue the fight, while she remains torn between her love for her enemy, her father, and her country.

ACT 2

Scene 1 *Maometto's tent*

Anna has been captured by the Ottomans and taken to Maometto's tent where Muslim women try to persuade her to return the Sultan's love ("*E' follia sul fior degli anni*" / *It is crazy in the prime of life*). She refuses, and when Maometto enters and promises to make her his wife and queen and to save her father and Calbo, she says her love for her country is so strong she could never love him. But in their duet, it becomes clear that she does still love him ("*Anna, tu piangi? Il pianto, pur non è d'odio un segno*" / *Anna, are you crying? Your tears are not a sign of hatred*).

Maometto realizes that the Ottoman troops are being massacred by troops rallied by the Venetians. Exhorting his men to follow him, Maometto prepares to lead the final assault on the citadel. Before he departs, Anna begs for a token to protect her in his absence. He gives her his imperial seal, warning her that unless she accepts his love, she will feel his wrath. He grabs the standard ("*All'invito generosa*" / *At this gallant request*) and rushes off to battle.

Scene 2 *The church vault with Anna's mother's tomb*

Erisso and Calbo have hidden in the vault. When Erisso bemoans Anna's betrayal of her family and country, Calbo replies that she will remain loyal and brave. He reminds Erisso that Anna was duped by the disguised Sultan and adds that he saw her resisting when the Ottomans carried her away ("*Non temer: d'un basso affetto, non fu mai quel cor capace*" / *Do not fear: that heart was never capable of base emotions*).

Anna enters, and when her father rejects her, she shows her loyalty by giving him the Sultan's imperial seal for protection. To convince him that she will never marry Maometto, she also asks her father to marry her to Calbo by her mother's tomb. The three sing of their torment and pain at their current crisis; Anna resigns herself to certain death (Trio: "*In questi estremi istanti*" / *In these last moments*). The two men, now disguised as Ottomans, leave to continue fighting.

Anna hears the women praying in the church overhead ("*Nume, cui 'l sole è trono*" / *O God whose throne is the sun*). The women warn Anna that the Venetians, inspired by the sudden appearance of Erisso and Calbo, were victorious, and Maometto has escaped. Angry Ottomans are looking for her in revenge. She recognizes her dire situation ("*Alfin compita è la metà dell'opra*" / *At last one half of the task is accomplished*). When the soldiers rush in, she faces them so bravely, asking to die, that they hold back ("*Si ferite: il chieggo, il merto*" / *Yes, strike: I ask it, I deserve it*). Maometto enters demanding his seal. Anna tells him that she has given it to her father and reveals that Calbo is not her brother, but her husband. She stabs herself and falls dying on her mother's tomb.