

OPERAS FOR MAY 2019

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Notes on the operas

Scipione (HWV 20) - or Publio Cornelio Scipione - is an opera seria in three acts, with music composed by George Frideric Handel for the Royal Academy of Music (1719) in 1726. The librettist was Paolo Antonio Rolli. Handel composed Scipione whilst in the middle of writing Alessandro. It was based upon the life of Roman General Scipio Africanus. Its slow march is the regimental march of the Grenadier Guards and is played at London Metropolitan police passing out ceremonies.

Scipione had its premiere on 12 March 1726 at The King's Theatre, Haymarket. Handel revived the opera in 1730, but it did not receive another UK production until October 1967, by the Handel Opera Society. In Germany, Scipione was revived at the Göttingen International Handel Festival in 1937 and at the annual Handel Festival in Halle in 1965. With the revival of interest in Baroque music and historically informed musical performance since the 1960s, Scipione, like all Handel operas, receives performances at festivals and opera houses today

Roles

Scipione, commander of the Roman army	alto castrato
Lucejo, Spanish prince, in disguise in the Roman army	alto castrato
Lelio, Roman general	tenor
Berenice, prisoner	soprano
Armira, prisoner	soprano
Ernando, King of the Balearic Islands and father to Berenice	bass

Prologue

The setting is New Carthage (Cartagena), 210 BCE, after the Roman army, led by Scipione has captured the city from the Carthaginians and their Spanish allies.

Act 1

Scipione leads a procession of captives into the city through the triumphal arch. He anticipates future conquests and salutes his officers, with a particular laurel for Lelio. Lelio, in return, offers the prisoner Berenice to Scipione. Scipione is immediately attracted to Berenice, but vows to respect her honour. Berenice is in love with the Spanish prince Lucejo, who is among the Roman army incognito. He vows to rescue her. Lelio himself is attracted to another prisoner, Armira, but she will not return the affection whilst a prisoner. This begins to draw Lelio in sympathy with the female prisoners, although he does advise Berenice to accept Scipione's affection.

The female prisoners are confined in a palace with a garden, but Scipione has forbidden strangers to enter. Still disguised, Lucejo breaches the garden, but hides when he hears Scipione approaching. Scipione tries to win over Berenice and proclaims his love for her. Lucejo cannot tolerate this, and betrays his presence by his exclamation. Berenice tries to protect Lucejo by calling him a madman and begging for mercy. Alone at the end of the act, Lucejo is unsure of Berenice's motives and begins to become jealous.

Act 2

Ernando, father to Berenice, has arrived to offer a ransom for his daughter and also friendship to Scipione. Scipione tries again to woo Berenice, but she again rejects his advances. After Scipione has left, Lucejo reappears, but she dismisses him. This confirms Lucejo's initial jealous suspicions, but Berenice feels emotionally torn. Even with his jealous feelings, Lucejo does not completely break with Berenice, but he does pretend to express affection for Armira, in the expectation that Berenice will overhear this. Both Berenice and Armira are distressed at the situation, and Scipione arrives, angry to see Lucejo in the garden. Lucejo now confesses his identity and his plans, and challenges Scipione to a duel. Scipione orders the arrest of Lucejo. Berenice then admits that she could love a Roman, if she had not promised herself to another.

Act 3

Scipione offers Ernando freedom for Berenice, on condition that he may marry her. Ernando replies that he would willingly give up his life and kingdom, but that he cannot break his earlier promise to Lucejo of Berenice in marriage. This nobility impresses Scipione, who then plans to send Lucejo to Rome as a prisoner. He further ponders the situation, and resolves to sacrifice his own personal desires for the greater happiness of the others. He tells Berenice of his change of mind and heart. He accepts the ransom offer from Ernando and frees Berenice, saying that she may marry Lucejo. Furthermore, he gives the ransom to the couple as a wedding present. All present praise Scipione's generosity, and Lucejo vows loyalty to Rome for himself and his subjects.

Vanessa

Vanessa is an American opera in three (originally four) acts by Samuel Barber, opus 32, with an original English libretto by Gian Carlo Menotti. It was composed in 1956–1957 and was first performed at the Metropolitan Opera in New York City on January 15, 1958 under the baton of Dimitri Mitropoulos in a production designed by Cecil Beaton and directed by Menotti. Barber revised the opera in 1964, reducing the four acts to the three-act version most commonly performed today.

For a detailed description of the background to this opera, changes and performance history see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vanessa_\(opera\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vanessa_(opera))

Role	Voice type
Vanessa	soprano
Erika, her niece	mezzo-soprano
The Old Baroness, Vanessa's mother	contralto
Anatol, the son of Vanessa's original lover, also named Anatol	tenor
The Old Doctor	baritone
Nicholas, the major-domo	bass

The Footman

bass

Synopsis

Time: About 1905. Place: Vanessa's country house in a northern country.

Act 1: In her secluded country house, Vanessa awaits the arrival of Anatol, a man who had been Vanessa's lover twenty years before. After he left, she covered up all the mirrors of the house until his expected return, unwilling to face looking at her aging self. She lives alone with her niece, Erika, and her mother, who has refused to speak to her for twenty years. Thinking that the man who arrives and who is called Anatol is her former lover, Vanessa refuses to reveal her face to him until he says he still loves her. He says that he does, but she does not recognize him. It is the young Anatol who has come, his father now dead. Upset, Vanessa leaves the room, and Erika and Anatol now enjoy the meal and wine meant for Vanessa and his father.

Act 2: Erika tells the Baroness that the young Anatol seduced her on his first night in the house and the Baroness scolds her. Erika has fallen in love with Anatol, but resists his marriage proposal because she doubts his sincerity. Not knowing that Erika loves the young man and in her delusionary state of mind, Vanessa tells her niece that she still loves him, despite Erika's warning that he is not her former lover. The Baroness tells Erika to fight for Anatol. She is unsure if he is worthy of her efforts. Again, he proposes, and, again, she declines.

Act 3: The doctor is drunk at a New Year's Eve ball. The Baroness and Erika refuse to come to the party to hear his announcement of Anatol and Vanessa's engagement. The doctor goes to fetch them, while Vanessa tells Anatol her fears. Finally Erika, who, unbeknownst to everyone else, is pregnant, comes downstairs, but faints, clutching her stomach, while the doctor is making the announcement. She recovers and flees into the freezing weather in order to cause herself to miscarry. (In the original she says, "His child! It must not be born!" which makes clear her motivation for going out into the cold, but this line is dropped in the revision.)

Act 4: Vanessa is happy when Erika is found alive, and she asks Anatol why Erika is acting so strangely and whether he thinks that she loves him. He explains that she does not. Continuing in her delusionary state, Vanessa begs Anatol to take her away. Meanwhile, Erika confesses to the Baroness that she had been pregnant, but is no longer. The Baroness, horrified, refuses to speak to her niece.

As Vanessa and Anatol finalize their preparations to move to Paris, Vanessa asks Erika why she ran away. The niece replies that she was just being foolish, and Vanessa tells her that she may never come back to the house where she has been living. After the couple leaves, Erika covers the mirrors and closes up the house, just as Vanessa had done before her. She says that it is now her turn to wait.

Das Spitzentuch der Königin (The Queen's Lace Handkerchief)

Johann Strauss II

Synopsis

The young King of Portugal shows little interest in ruling his country. Count Villalobos, the king's power-hungry guardian and prime minister, uses his listlessness to advance his own

cause. By having the royal tutor Don Sancho raise the king as a ladies' man and gourmand, he succeeds in excluding him from direct involvement in any sort of state business. In this way he has also succeeded in estranging the king from his young wife. Even the wedding night of the two was a disaster. The queen wanted to surprise her husband with an exquisite pastry, but the king, so very fond of physical pleasures, indulged so greatly in the banquet fare and the wine that he then disappointed her by falling asleep. Since then the young king has avoided his wife.

Act I

Don Sancho is keeping guard on the house of the prime minister, whose wife has an appointment for a secret rendezvous with the king. The dishes served by Sancho provide for the physical comfort of the two during their tryst. The writer Miguel de Cervantes has fled from his political opponents in Spain and is residing at the Portuguese court; he has set himself the task of removing the premier from power and in this way to make the king aware of his responsibility. Cervantes sees to it that Sancho has to withdraw. In order to pursue his plan, Cervantes wants to make a fool of the premier in public and thus to make it impossible for him to serve as head of state. For this reason he distributes caricatures of the premier together with his friends and fellow conspirators and sings a satirical song to him as a serenade. The infuriated minister calls the guard and has Cervantes and his friends arrested. The king makes use of this tumult to flee unseen from the premier's house with help from Cervantes, who lends him his jacket.

While fleeing, he assigns Sancho the task of freeing the writer from arrest. His tutor, in a complete state of stress, sets out to carry out this order. Donna Irene, the betrothed of Cervantes and a confidante of the queen, attempts to win her mistress as an ally for his plans: the address that the king is to deliver at the premier's request at the assembly of the estates to be held on that same day is to be exchanged for another speech, one penned by Cervantes. In its text the king dissolves the previous government and declares that he himself will immediately take over all the state business. Irene asks the queen to persuade the king to read the address written by Cervantes at the assembly. But since she has not been alone with her husband since her wedding night, which she sadly recalls, the queen does not at all see that she is in the position to influence the king in any way.

Meanwhile the king has had Cervantes released from arrest in gratitude for the help that he gave him and named him reader to the queen. Irene jealously observes how the writer flirts with the queen, who has eyes only for him, and then has to put up a clever defence to resist the king's advances. Left back alone, the king too thinks of his wedding night and above all of the truffle pastry with which the queen had surprised him.

During his daily report the premier demands that Cervantes be punished as a dissident, but the king does not grant his request. When the king refuses the breakfast offered to him, the premier begins to suspect that the young ruler himself may be the man who dined alone with his wife on the previous evening. It is only with difficulty that the king succeeds in diverting the suspicion from himself.

The morning dance lesson brings with it the confrontation of the rival parties, each of whom attempts to exert influence on the young king. While Don Sancho has at Count Villalobos' request prepared an address for the assembly of the estates to be held later in the day in order to expand the premier's powers as regent, Irene and Cervantes try to persuade the king to

dismiss the premier and immediately to begin conducting state business on his own. For her part, the queen, most deeply impressed by Cervantes, writes a declaration of love to him on her lace handkerchief: "A queen loves you, but you are no king!"

When the principal lady at court, the Marquise de la Villareal, witnesses the delivery of this token of love, Irene is able to avoid imminent disaster at the last moment by initially taking it into her possession and then handing it on to Cervantes. The premier, no longer in charge of the situation, inveighs against the writer and his work and has Cervantes arrested.

Act 2

The king begins to view his wife from a new perspective, while she is torn back and forth between her feelings for her husband and her infatuation with Cervantes. Irene is able to convince the king to help her together with the queen to release Cervantes from arrest and reveals to him her plan to have the writer declared a fool who cannot be held responsible for his words and deeds.

The prime minister has called a council meeting and urges that the writer be condemned, but during the cabinet session of his ministers the king orders the examination of the accused by a medical commission. This commission is headed by none other than the disguised Irene, who declares Cervantes a fool and thus again is able to secure his release from arrest. To the horror of the premier and Sancho, the writer is even able to reconcile the king and queen.

In order to continue with his plan to expose the king's false advisors in public, Cervantes, disguised as the English ambassador, presents the diplomatic incompetence of the premier and Don Sancho. When he goes, he is recognized by Sancho and loses the queen's lace handkerchief. The premier thus has the means for once again estranging the king from his wife at the next assembly of the estates and is overjoyed. When the monarch publicly declares that he himself will assume rule over the country. Count Villalobos presents him the lace handkerchief as proof that his wife has deceived him with Cervantes. Deeply wounded, the young king sends his wife to a nunnery and banishes Cervantes from his land. The premier is overjoyed: his dismissal has been prevented.

Act 3

In the mountains. After his separation from his wife, the king has lapsed into his old listlessness. By again hurrying him from pleasure to pleasure, the premier hopes that he will again be able to control the young monarch. Cervantes has remained incognito in Portugal. Disguised as an innkeeper, he has got the idea into the premier's head that a popular festival might destroy the king. A bullfight is to form the height of this festival.

In order to bring the premier before the people in an impossible situation, Cervantes claims on short notice that no wild bull can be found in the whole region and persuades the premier to get into a bull's hide together with Don Sancho in order in this way to save the bullfight.

Cervantes, disguised as a robber, succeeds in intercepting the queen and Irene before they have reached the nunnery. Sancho, who is accompanying the two women, also falls into the hands of the supposed bandit and immediately decides to join him. Meanwhile Cervantes informs the queen and Irene of his plan, in which he has thought up a special role for the queen: she is to pretend to be the innkeeper's daughter in the presence of the king, who is in the region on a hunt that has been organized by the premier. The plan is set in motion: the premiere orders a little snack from Cervantes for the melancholy king, with the idea that this food will get him to think of something else. The queen, as the innkeeper's daughter, serves

the king the same pastry that she had prepared for him on her wedding night. The girl's face and the baked goods painfully remind the king of his banished wife. She coquettishly flirts with him. When he is about to kiss her, she is able to rob from him the lace handkerchief in order to give it to Cervantes.

Irene, disguised as a lady bullfighter, opens the popular festival. It quickly becomes apparent that none other than Don Sancho and the premier are under the bull's hide. Both are finally discredited in public.

While Cervantes explains to the king that the message on his wife's lace handkerchief actually was intended for him as her husband, since with her words she only meant that he finally ought to acknowledge his responsibility as king and husband, he is able to persuade the king to forgive his wife.

The queen and king are reunited, and the premier is expelled from the country together with Don Sancho.

Médée

Médée is a tragédie mise en musique in five acts and a prologue by Marc-Antoine Charpentier to a French libretto by Thomas Corneille. It was premiered at the Théâtre du Palais-Royal in Paris on December 4, 1693. Médée is the only opera Charpentier wrote for the Académie Royale de Musique.

Roles

Médée, Princess of Colchis	soprano
Nérine, Medea's confidante	soprano
Jason, Prince of Thessaly	haute-contre
Arcas, Jason's confidante	tenor
Créon, King of Corinth	bass
Oronte, Prince of Argos	baritone
Créuse, Daughter of Créon	soprano
Cléone, Créuse's confidante	soprano

A chorus of Corinthians, Argians, Love's captives, demons, and phantoms

Synopsis

Act 1

Jason and Médée (Medea), pursued by the people of Thessaly because of Médée's crimes, have sought refuge in Corinth. Médée is worried that Jason is growing distant from her. Jason claims he needs to win the good graces of the princess Créuse so her doting father, King Créon, will protect them. He suggests that Médée should give Créuse a beautiful robe as a present. After Médée leaves, Jason confides that he is really in love with Créuse but fears Médée's reaction. Créuse is due to be married to Oronte, prince of Argos, who now arrives in Corinth with his army. However, King Créon tells Jason that he would prefer him as a son-in-law. Jason leads the combined Corinthian and Argive army to victory against the Thessalians.

Act 2

Créon tells Médée he will not hand her over to her enemies but she must leave Corinth. Jason and his children by her will stay. Médée protests that she only committed those crimes out of

love for Jason, but Créon replies that the Corinthian people want her to leave. Médée hands over her children to Créuse. Créuse confesses her love to Jason.

Act 3

Oronte promises Médée refuge in Argos if she can arrange a marriage between him and Créuse. She tells him that the only reason she is being banished is so Jason can be free to marry Créuse. They must combine forces to prevent this happening. Jason pleads with Médée that he is only acting in the best interests of their children. Left alone, Médée resorts to witchcraft and summons demons from the underworld who bring her a poisoned robe for Créuse.

Act 4

Jason admires the beauty of Créuse's new robe. Oronte finally realises that what Médée had said is true: Créuse will marry Jason, not him. Médée vows that Créuse will never be Jason's bride. Créon arrives and is angered that Médée has not yet left Corinth. He orders his guards to seize her but she conjures up spirits of beautiful women who seduce the guards away. Then she uses her magic powers to drive the king insane.

Act 5

Médée rejoices at her success and plans to take her vengeance to an extreme by murdering her own children by Jason. Créuse begs her to spare Corinth, even pledging to renounce her wedding to Jason if she does so. News arrives of Créon's madness and death. Médée touches Créuse's poisoned robe with her wand and it bursts into flame. Créuse dies in Jason's arms. Jason swears revenge on Médée, who now appears in a flying chariot pulled by dragons to announce she has stabbed their children. She leaves as the palace of Corinth bursts into flames.

Benvenuto Cellini

Opéra-Comique In two Acts and four tableaux

Music: Hector Berlioz Libretto: Léon de Wailly & Auguste Barbier

CHARACTERS

Benvenuto Cellini:	Florentine Goldsmith
Giacomo Balducci:	Papal Treasurer
Fieramosca:	Sculptor in the Pope's service
Pope Clément VII:	
Francesco:	An artisan from Cellini's workshop
Bernardino:	An artisan from Cellini's workshop
Pompeo:	A Swordsman
Publican:	
Teresa:	Balducci's daughter
Ascanio:	Cellini's apprentice
Columbine:	speaking role

The action takes place in Rome in 1532

SYNOPSIS OF THE OPERA [David Cairns]

The action is set in sixteenth-century Rome, during the pontificate of Clement VII and covers Shrove Monday, Shrove Tuesday and Ash Wednesday.

ACT I

First Tableau: Shrove Monday, Balducci's house at nightfall.

Balducci, the Papal Treasurer, grumblingly prepares to answer a late summons to the Papal presence. What makes it doubly annoying is that the summons concerns that Florentine rogue and impostor Cellini, from whom the Pope has misguidedly commissioned a bronze statue of Perseus, instead of getting his official sculptor Fieramosca to do it - a real artist, and the man whom Balducci has chosen to be the husband of his young daughter Teresa. To make things worse the silly girl has had her head turned by Cellini. Balducci is on the point of leaving the house when some carnival maskers strike up a song in the street below his window. Cellini is among them. Balducci goes angrily to the window, to be met by a hail of flour pellets which bespatter his official robes and give him, he furiously protests, the look of a leopard. But it is too late to change, and he goes off fuming to his interview.

Meanwhile a bouquet of flowers has landed at Teresa's feet. Attached is a note from Cellini, telling her that he is on his way to see her. Teresa is in a whirl of delightfully conflicting feelings: she does not want to go against her father's wishes, but at 17, with life waiting to be enjoyed, what else can she do? Yet when Cellini appears, Teresa, nervous of being discovered with him, at first tries to persuade him to give her up. He reminds her of the fate that awaits her if she does-marry to the abject Fieramosca. A moment earlier, Fieramosca himself has tiptoed into the room carrying an enormous bouquet. He hides behind an armchair, while Cellini explains to Teresa his plan: the next night, in the Piazza Colonna, while her father is busy watching Cassandro's theatrical troupe, Teresa will be met by two friars, a Penitent in white and a Capuchin in brown -- Cellini and his apprentice Ascanio; then off to Florence, to live and love in joy and contentment. Fieramosca strains to overhear but can catch only an occasional word. Teresa is fearful of what the church will think if she disobeys her father, but Cellini's passion and the thought of Fieramosca give her fresh heart, and they go over the plan again - this time fully overheard by the indignant Fieramosca, who has moved behind a nearer chair, and who decides that he too will keep the rendezvous.

Balducci is heard returning. Fieramosca, still unseen, slips into the adjoining room, which is Teresa's bedroom, while Cellini desperately flings himself behind the door of the main room just as Balducci enters. The treasurer, surprised that Teresa has not yet gone to bed, forgets to shut the door. To distract his attention, Teresa invents a story about a noise and a man in her room, and while Balducci goes to investigate, she takes a hasty leave of Cellini. To Teresa's delighted amazement there is a man in her room; Balducci emerges dragging him after him. It is Fieramosca. The scandalised Balducci will have none of his stammered excuses and explanations, and summons his servants and neighbours, who come pouring into the house, announcing that they are going to take Fieramosca and duck him in the fountain. But he escapes with a beating.

Second Tableau: Shrove Tuesday evening, the Piazza Colonna. On one side is the courtyard of a tavern, with tables and benches, on the other Cassandro's open-air theatre.

Alone in the tavern courtyard, Cellini meditates on his art and the new force that inspires him - his love for Teresa. He is joined by his assistants, Francesco and Bernardino and a crowd of their fellow craftsmen. They sit down at the tables and, while they drink, sing to the glory of their calling, the metal-worker's magic craft. When they call for more wine to help their song, the innkeeper reads out a long list of bottles already drunk but not paid for and demands

payment. Ascanio, Cellini's apprentice, opportunely appears with a bag of money - the Pope's advance payment for the statue of Perseus; however, before handing it over, Ascanio extorts a promise from Cellini that the casting of the statue, which is overdue, will take place the following day. The money proves to be much less than expected - a fresh grievance against the Papal Treasurer. Cellini resolves to be publicly revenged on Balducci by getting one of Cassandro's actors to impersonate him in the satirical opera which is about to be performed and which Balducci himself will be watching. They all go off to make the necessary arrangements with Cassandro: they are watched by Fieramosca, who has again overheard the plan.

Fieramosca disconsolately tells his friend Pompeo, a professional swordsman, of Cellini's latest villainy: Balducci's attention will be distracted by the opera and when the Sant'Angelo cannon announces the end of the Carnival and all lights are extinguished. Teresa will be abducted under cover of darkness by a friar in white and another in brown - Cellini and Ascanio in disguise. Pompeo retorts that they too will dress as friars and thus foil Cellini by carrying out the abduction themselves. Fieramosca's despondency turns to delight; he brags of his skill in fencing and pictures Cellini already spitted on his sword. He and Pompeo hurry off to find friars' habits. The Piazza Colonna begins to fill with carnival revellers. Members of Cassandro's troupe unroll a large Playbill advertising "The pantomime-opera of King Midas with the donkey's ears." Fanfares (mingling with snatches of melody, dance rhythms and the noise of the crowd) proclaim that the entertainment is shortly to begin. Balducci enters with Teresa - he self-important and complacent, she still worried at the thought of abandoning her father; she gives voice to her anxieties while Balducci goes over to study the playbill. A moment later Cellini and Ascanio enter the piazza, dressed as friars. The carnival crowd keeps on growing, and excitement mounts. A group of dancers perform a saltarello, while the theatre people urge the crowd to come and see the show. The dancers move off across the piazza and the pantomime-opera begins, to the accompaniment of constant chatter from the crowd. Among the audience are Balducci and Teresa. Cellini and Ascanio, and Fieramosca and Pompeo (the last two also disguised as friars. When the curtains part it is observed at once that King Midas has been made up to resemble the Papal Treasurer. Columbine introduces two singers. Harlequin and Pasquarello, who are to compete for the prize. Harlequin steps forward first and sings (in dumb show) an exquisite arietta, accompanying himself on the lyre (cor anglais and harps). During the song Midas yawns and falls asleep. When Pasquarello sings (tuba), accompanying himself on the bass drum, his vulgar cavatina rouses Midas, who listens enchanted and beats time (against the rhythm). He awards the palm to Pasquarello, while the crowd yell their derision. Balducci is furious and (as Cellini has planned) intervenes, climbing up onto the stage and laying about him with his stick.

Teresa, left to herself, is bewildered to see two pairs of friars advancing on her. At this moment a procession of revellers surges across the piazza, carrying carnival candles (mocoli). The crowd grows more dense. A fight breaks out between the "friars," in which the exasperated Cellini stabs and kill Pompeo. A horrified silence falls on the vast crowd. The murderer is arrested and about to be led off when the three cannon shots from Sant' Angelo boom out, announcing that the Carnival is over and Lent has begun. All candles and torches are extinguished, and in the ensuing darkness Cellini escapes, Ascanio leads Teresa away to safety, and Fieramosca, still in his white friar's habit, is arrested by mistake.

ACT II

Third Tableau: Dawn on Ash Wednesday, Cellini's studio, with the clay model of Perseus. Ascanio and Teresa enter from the street. There is no sign of Cellini. Teresa is fearful for his safety. Ascanio tries to reassure her: there is no need to worry, his master will join them soon. The sound of distant chanting is heard: a moment later a procession of friars passes in the street outside. Teresa kneels and she and Ascanio add their voices in a prayer for Cellini's safe return. As the procession passes into the distance, Cellini enters, still in his white friar's habit. He describes how he escaped from his guards and, after nearly being recaptured, finally and by miraculous good luck made his way back to his very door in the company of a group of white friars on their way to their morning devotions. But he is now a wanted man and he resolves to flee to Florence with Teresa at once, leaving the statue uncast.

While Ascanio goes off to find a horse for Teresa, the two lovers fervently declare their faith in the future and their determination to defy all opposition and seize the chance of happiness together. But before they can escape there is a commotion at the door and Balducci and Fieramosca rush in. The Treasurer denounces Cellini as a murderer and angrily demands his daughter back. Their quarrel is interrupted by the arrival of the Pope in person; he has come to see whether his Perseus is ready. After announcing his willingness to grant indulgence to one and all, he is obliged to listen to Balducci's tale of murder and abduction. He is even more put out to discover that the statue, though paid for, has not yet been cast, and declares that, as his patience is exhausted, he will give the job of casting to another sculptor. Appalled and deeply insulted, Cellini threatens to destroy the whole work and, when the Pope orders his guards to arrest the madman, raises a hammer to the model. The Pope relents and, privately impressed by his demonic audacity, hears his request: pardon and Teresa's hand, and enough time to cast the statue. A bargain is struck; the Pope will forgive him and let him marry Teresa provided the statue is cast the same day; he will himself come to the foundry in the evening to see that it is done. If it is not, Cellini will be hanged.

There is a stunned silence from all except Cellini, who remarks ironically: "So this is how you grant indulgence!" In the ensuing ensemble all express their different feelings about the new turn of events: the Pope satisfied at having taught Cellini a lesson and doubtful if even he will get away with it, Cellini exalted and fiercely confident, Teresa full of anxiety, Ascanio proud of his master's superb resource. Balducci and Fieramosca vindictively prophesying his final ruin.

Fourth Tableau: the same evening, Cellini's foundry in the Colosseum; at the back, behind a curtain, the furnace and mould which are being got ready by Cellini's workmen.

Ascanio, who is incapable of feeling anxious or depressed, soliloquises amusedly on the events of the morning and looks forward to the coming encounter, when their "bronze offspring will have its baptism of fire." Cellini enters and, during a lull in the preparations, gives way momentarily to weariness and futility: the eyes of all Rome are on him; but would that he could be as obscure and as free as a shepherd tending his flocks in the remote mountains. From behind the curtain come the voices of the foundrymen singing a nostalgic sea-shanty. Cellini remarks uneasily that the song is a bad omen; in the past it has always been followed by some misfortune. He and Ascanio shout encouragement to the men and urge them to still greater efforts: they are sailors on seas of metal; to rule the waves is nothing - they are masters over fire!

Cellini is now faced with a fresh disturbance. He is about to join the men when Fieramosca appears, accompanied by two bravos, and challenges his rival to a duel. Cellini is prepared to fight on the spot; but Fieramosca refuses since, as he points out, to kill Cellini in his own workshop would make him a murderer. Teresa, entering with the news that she has got away from her father, is in time to see the exasperated Cellini, with drawn sword, stride off to fight Fieramosca. A new catastrophe now threatens to destroy Cellini's plans: the foundrymen, rebellious from arrears of pay, fatigue, and lack of direction, burst in, having decided to down tools. Why is their master not there? Teresa tries in vain to calm their rage. But their mood changes abruptly when Fieramosca, who has given Cellini the slip, reappears, his pockets full of gold coins with which to bribe them to leave Cellini's service. Teresa, half fainting, assumes that Cellini is dead; and the men, now once more loyal, turn furiously on Fieramosca. Cellini, re-entering, is just in time to prevent them throwing him into the furnace. Instead, Fieramosca is ordered to put on overalls and help prepare the casting. The men, now in calmer mood, return to the foundry.

It is evening. The Pope enters with Balducci and impatiently orders the casting to begin. The curtain is pulled back. Suddenly Fieramosca runs in and gleefully informs them that things are going wrong: they have run out of metal. The appalling news is confirmed by Francesco and Bernardino ("Master, the metal's congealing"), while Balducci gloats at the prospect of Cellini's downfall. But Cellini, face to face with the supreme crisis, appeals to God and then, in a moment of reckless inspirations, orders his men to fetch all his works of art, of whatever metal, and use them to replenish the supply.

Every visible object is flung into the crucible. All seems saved, when there is a violent explosion; but cries from the foundry proclaim that Cellini has triumphed: the cap of the crucible has blown off, but the metal, in perfect liquefaction, is seen to flow down and fill the waiting mould. Even Balducci and Fieramosca are carried away by admiration. The Pope acknowledges divine approval of Cellini's labours, pardons him and grants him the hand of Teresa in marriage. All unite in praise of the art of the master metalworkers