

## OPERAS FOR FEBRUARY 2021

|            |          |                       |
|------------|----------|-----------------------|
| 3 February | Verdi    | Luisa Miller          |
| 10         | Pacini - | Alessandro nell'indie |
| 17         | Verdi -  | Otello                |
| 24         | Verdi    | La Forza del Destino  |

### **Luisa Miller                  Verdi**

Luisa Miller is an opera in three acts by Giuseppe Verdi to an Italian libretto by Salvatore Cammarano, based on the play *Kabale und Liebe* (*Intrigue and Love*) by the German dramatist Friedrich von Schiller.

Verdi's initial idea for a new opera - for which he had a contract going back over several years - was rejected by the Teatro San Carlo in Naples. He attempted to negotiate his way out of this obligation and, when that failed, Cammarano came up with the idea of adapting the Schiller play with which Verdi was familiar. The first performance was in Naples on 8 December 1849.

This was Verdi's 15th opera and it is regarded as beginning the composer's "middle period". It is fair to comment that after this opera, every Verdi opera was a masterpiece.

#### **Roles**

|  |               |
|--|---------------|
| Miller, a retired soldier                    | baritone      |
| Luisa, his daughter                          | soprano       |
| Count Walter                                 | bass          |
| Rodolfo, his son                             | tenor         |
| Federica, Duchess of Ostheim, Walter's niece | contralto     |
| Wurm, Walter's steward                       | bass          |
| Laura, a village girl                        | mezzo-soprano |
| A peasant                                    | tenor         |

#### **Synopsis**

Time: Early 17th Century      Place: The Tyrol

#### **Act 1: Scene 1: A village**

On Luisa's birthday, the villagers have gathered outside her house to serenade her. She loves Carlo, a young man she has met in the village (*Lo vidi e 'l primo palpito* / "I saw him and my heart felt its first thrill of love") and looks for him in the crowd. Luisa's father, Miller, is worried by this mysterious love since Carlo is a stranger. Carlo appears and the couple sing of their love (*Duet: t'amo d'amor ch'esprimere* / "I love you with a love that words can only express badly"). As the villagers leave to enter the nearby church, Miller is approached by a courtier, Wurm, who is in love with Luisa and wishes to marry her. But Miller tells him that he will never make a decision against his daughter's will (*Sacra la scelta è d'un consorte* / "The choice of a husband is sacred"). Irritated by his reply, Wurm reveals to Miller that in reality Carlo is Rodolfo, Count Walter's son. Alone, Miller expresses his anger (*Ah fu giusto il mio sospetto* / "Ah! My suspicion was correct").

#### **Scene 2: Count Walter's castle**

Wurm informs the Count of Rodolfo's love for Luisa and Wurm is ordered to summon the son. The Count expresses his frustration with his son (*Il mio sangue la vita darei* / "Oh,

everything smiles on me"). When he enters, tells Rodolfo that it is intended that he marry Walter's niece Federica, the Duchess of Ostheim.

When Rodolfo is left alone with Federica, he confesses that he loves another woman, hoping that the duchess will understand. But Federica is too much in love with him to understand (Duet: Deh! la parola amara perdona al labbro mio / "Pray forgive my lips for the bitter words").

### **Scene 3: Miller's house**

Miller tells his daughter who Rodolfo really is. Rodolfo arrives and admits his deception but swears that his love is sincere. Kneeling in front of Miller he declares that Luisa is his bride. Count Walter enters and confronts his son. Drawing his sword, Miller defends his daughter and Walter orders that both father and daughter be arrested. Rodolfo stands up against his father and threatens him: if he does not free the girl, Rodolfo will reveal how Walter became count. Frightened, Walter orders Luisa to be freed.

### **Act 2: Scene 1: A room in Miller's home**

Villagers come to Luisa and tell her that her father has been seen being dragged away in chains. Then Wurm arrives and confirms that Miller is to be executed. But he offers her a bargain: her father's freedom in exchange for a letter in which Luisa declares her love for Wurm and states that she has tricked Rodolfo. Initially resisting (Tu puniscimi, O Signore / "Punish me, o Lord"), she gives way and writes the letter at the same time being warned that she must keep up the pretense of voluntarily writing the letter and being in love with Wurm. Cursing him (A brani, a brani, o perfido / "O perfidious wretch"), Luisa wants only to die.

### **Scene 2: A room in Count Walter's castle**

At the castle Walter and Wurm recall how the Count rose to power by killing his own cousin and Wurm reminds the Count how Rodolfo also knows of this. The two men realize that, unless they act together, they may be doomed (Duet: L'alto retaggio non ho bramato / "The noble inheritance of my cousin"). Duchess Federica and Luisa enter. The girl confirms the contents of her letter.

### **Scene 3: Rodolfo's rooms**

Rodolfo reads Luisa's letter and, ordering a servant to summon Wurm, he laments the happy times which he spent with Luisa (Quando le sere al placido / "When at eventide, in the tranquil glimmer of a starry sky"). The young man has challenged Wurm to a duel. To avoid the confrontation the courtier fires his pistol in the air, bringing the Count and his servants running in. Count Walter advises Rodolfo to revenge the offense he has suffered by marrying Duchess Federica. In despair, Rodolfo abandons himself to fate (L'ara o l'avello apprestami / "Prepare the altar or the grave for me").

### **Act 3: A room in Miller's home**

In the distance echoes of the celebration of Rodolfo and Federica's wedding can be heard. Old Miller, freed from prison, comes back home. He enters his house and embraces his daughter, then reads the letter she has prepared for Rodolfo. Luisa is determined to take her own life (La tomba è un letto sparso di fiori / "The grave is a bed strewn with flowers"), but Miller manages to persuade her to stay with him. (Duet: La figlia, vedi, pentita / "Your child, see, repentant"). Alone now, Luisa continues praying. Rodolfo slips in and unseen pours poison into the water jug on the table. He then asks Luisa if she really wrote the letter in which she declared her love for Wurm. "Yes," the girl replies. Rodolfo drinks a glass of water and passes a glass to Luisa, inviting her to drink. Then he tells her that they are both

condemned to die. Before she dies, Luisa has time to tell Rodolfo the truth about the letter (Duet: Ah piangi; il tuo dolore / "Weep your sorrow is more justified"). Miller returns and comforts his dying daughter; together the three say their prayers and farewells (Trio, Luisa: Padre, ricevi l'estremo addio / "Father, receive my last farewell"; Rodolfo: Ah! tu perdona il fallo mio / "Oh, forgive my sin"; Miller: O figlia, o vita del cor paterno / "Oh, child, life of your father's heart"). As she dies, peasants enter with Count Walter and Wurm and before he too dies, Rodolfo runs his sword through Wurm's breast declaring to his father La pena tua mira / "Look on your punishment".

### **Alessandro nelle Indie (Pacini)**

Alessandro nelle Indie (Alexander in India) is an opera seria in two acts by Giovanni Pacini to a libretto by Andrea Leone Tottola and Giovanni Schmidt, based on Alessandro nell'Indie by Pietro Metastasio. It was premiered at the Teatro di San Carlo in Naples on 29 September 1824, and had a total of 38 performances in its first season.

This opera is one of some 70 operatic works using Metastasio's text about Alexander the Great, most of which were written in the 18th century, starting with the work by Leonardo Vinci (1730).

#### **Roles**

|   |         |
|---|---------|
| Cleofide (Cleophis)                           | soprano |
| Poro  | soprano |
| Alessandro Magno (Alexander the Great)        | tenor   |
| Gandarte                                      | tenor   |
| Timagene                                      | bass    |
| Greek and Indian warriors, courtiers, priests |         |

#### **ACT 1 in two scenes -**

##### **Scene 1:**

In Cleofide's palace, on the banks of the River Hydaspes, her followers pray to Vishnu to deliver them from the invading Greeks. Cleofide herself tries to bolster their failing morale, but is deeply anxious regarding Poro's fate. Fleeing soldiers bring news that the Indian forces have been utterly defeated. When asked about Poro, they simply say that he vanished in the thick of the fray. Cleofide orders them to return to the battlefield to search for him. Gandarte, Poro's general, comes to reassure her that Poro has survived, and within moments the Indian king himself appears. Highly suspicious and jealous by nature, he bitterly bids Cleofide rejoice, for Alessandro's victory means that she will soon have all his Asian trophies laid at her feet. Cleofide hastens to justify her conduct: if she has pretended to be flattered by Alessandro's attentions, it has only been to protect Poro and to deflect Alessandro from invading his territories. Poro, at least briefly persuaded of her sincerity, swears that he will never suspect her again. Alessandro, with typical generosity, releases a group of his most illustrious prisoners, but when Cleofide responds by sending them back with the announcement that she herself will wait upon him to pay homage, Poro is once again consumed by his jealous suspicions. He determines to follow her to the Greek camp.

**Scene 2:** In his camp on the opposite bank of the Hydaspes, Alessandro welcomes a cessation of combat and confides in his friend Timagene that he has fallen in love with Cleofide. Cleofide herself appears, bringing costly gifts. Alessandro, however, brusquely rejects them.

If she comes as a subject, he asks no other homage than loyalty; if she comes as a friend, he exacts no price for his friendship. Rebuked but undaunted, Cleofide at his request stays to converse with him, and they proceed to manoeuvre around each other, each trying to gain an advantage. Alessandro is fast succumbing to her charms when Timagene announces that a commander named Asbite wishes to speak to him in Poro's name. This proves, not surprisingly, to be Poro himself in false guise. Cleofide sees all the progress she has been making rapidly undermined, for 'Asbite' declares that Poro utterly rejects any overtures of peace and challenges Alessandro to return to the field. As if this is not provocation enough, 'Asbite' also advises that Cleofide should not be trusted, for, he claims, she is already guilty of betraying Poro. The act ends with Cleofide suppressing her indignation, and Alessandro and all the fuming Greeks panting to do battle once more. Cleofide declares that she no longer opposes Alessandro's crossing the Hydaspes: he will be welcome upon her territory as her guest.

**ACT 2 in three scenes -**

**Scene 1:** On Cleofide's side of the Hydaspes, where she has erected buildings and tents to accommodate Alessandro and his army. She greets Alessandro and the advance guard of his forces as they cross a bridge over the river, but their exchange of courtesies is interrupted by a clash of arms. Poro's forces, led by Gandarte, have attacked the column, and are trying to cut off the Greeks' retreat. The Greeks, however, retain the upper hand, and Gandarte, hard pressed, throws himself into the river. Poro, meanwhile, though still uncertain of Cleofide's fidelity, once more allows himself to be won over by her protestations. Their reconciliation is, however, interrupted by the approach of the Greeks. Poro suggests that, rather than be taken prisoner, they should die together. He seizes a dagger and is about to slay her, when Alessandro arrives in time to stay his hand. To save her lover, Cleofide passes him off, not as Poro, but as Poro's faithful agent, come to carry out his master's instructions that she should die. Alessandro, appalled at such barbarity, has Cleofide escorted away to safety, and Poro's agent (i.e. Poro) taken into custody.

**Scene 2:** In Cleofide's palace. Gandarte has been rescued from drowning, and Cleofide urges him to flee: if he, too, should be taken prisoner, there will be no one left to lead the Indian resistance. He has no time to do so – no opportunity to do anything but conceal himself – before Alessandro appears. Alessandro informs Cleofide that the Greek army is clamouring for her blood, and proposes, as the only possible way of saving her, that he should marry her. The marriage should, moreover, take place immediately. This is too much for Gandarte, who bursts from cover, declaring that he is Poro, and that, since he is the one who has stirred up the Indians' resistance to Alessandro, he, rather than Cleofide, is the one who should die. Filled with admiration for this gallant gesture, and believing that he is talking with Poro, Alessandro reciprocates by relinquishing his claims upon Cleofide and delivering her back to this man whom he believes to be her lover. Left with Gandarte, Cleofide is just beginning to thank him for his generous intervention when a procession of maidens appears. They are in mourning, and announce Poro's death: despite the shackles that weighed him down, he threw himself into the Hydaspes and was swept away by the current. Cleofide, disconsolate, looks forward to death as a release from her sufferings and as a way of rejoining Poro. Gandarte, left alone, is amazed to see Poro approaching, rescued from the river and still very much alive, though despairing to think that he has lost his kingdom yet again. Gandarte seeks to console him by pointing out that he still has the loyalty of Cleofide and himself. Alessandro

is surprised to receive word from Cleofide that, now that Poro is dead, she is prepared to give him her hand.

**Scene 3 :** A temple of Bacchus. Gandarte and Poro have heard that Cleofide is to marry Alessandro, and Poro determines to slay her before she can do so. He and Gandarte conceal themselves. Alessandro and Cleofide arrive with all their followers, ostensibly to go through with the marriage ceremony, but Cleofide scores a veritable coup de théâtre when she declares that this is a time for death, not for love. Indian custom demands that a faithful widow be burnt alive upon her husband's funeral pyre, and she has come hither to immolate herself to the memory of Poro. Poro, who had been on the very point of stabbing her, is overcome by such an irrefutable demonstration of her fidelity, and, stepping forward, proposes that they should die together. Gandarte's protests that this is some impostor – that he himself is Poro – are swept aside: Poro is now recognised as Poro by one and all. Alessandro is so impressed by this excess of generous feeling in a people he had considered barbarian that, determined not to be outdone, he gives Poro back both wife and kingdom, and bestows upon Gandarte the kingship of certain lands he has conquered beyond the Ganges. The opera ends as all celebrate and hymn his clemency and magnanimity.

### **Otello: Verdi**

Otello is an opera in four acts by Giuseppe Verdi to an Italian libretto by Arrigo Boito, based on Shakespeare's play Othello. It was Verdi's penultimate opera, and was first performed at the Teatro alla Scala, Milan, on 5 February 1887. For a detailed discussion of the opera see here: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Otello>

### **Roles**

|  |               |
|--|---------------|
| Otello, a Moorish general  | tenor         |
| Desdemona, his wife  | soprano       |
| Iago, Otello's ensign  | baritone      |
| Emilia, wife of Iago and maid of Desdemona                               | mezzo-soprano |
| Cassio, Otello's captain   | tenor         |
| Roderigo, a gentleman of Venice  | tenor         |
| Lodovico, ambassador of the Venetian Republic                            | bass          |
| Montano, former Governor of Cyprus                                       | bass          |
| A herald   | bass          |
| Chorus: Venetian soldiers and sailors; and Cypriot townfolk and children |               |

### **Synopsis**

Time: The late 15th century.

Place: A coastal city on the island of Cyprus.

**Act 1:** A town in Cyprus, outside the castle. An inn with a pergola, in the background the quayside and sea. It is evening. Lightning, thunder, gale force winds.

On a stormy evening, the people of Cyprus anxiously await the arrival of the new governor, Otello, from a naval battle with the Turks (Chorus, Montano, Cassio, Iago, Roderigo: *Una vela!* / "A sail!"). For a moment it seems as if Otello's ship will founder, to the delight of Otello's treacherous ensign, Iago, but Otello arrives safely and announces that the Turkish fleet has been destroyed, and the Cypriots cheer (Otello, chorus: *Esultate! L'orgoglio musulmano sepolto è in mar* / "Rejoice! The Mussulman's pride is buried in the sea").

Iago offers to help the young Venetian gentleman Roderigo in his seduction of Otello's wife Desdemona – Iago envies Otello his success and longs to destroy the Moor (Iago, Roderigo: Roderigo, *ebben che pensi?* / "Well, Roderigo, what are you thinking?"). Among his grievances, Iago is outraged that Otello has appointed Cassio to be the captain of the navy, a position that Iago hoped to have. The people of Cyprus celebrate the safe return of Otello and his men by lighting a bonfire and drinking (Chorus: *Fuoco di gioia!* / "Fire of joy").

Iago proposes a toast to Otello and his wife, while Cassio praises Desdemona (Iago, Cassio, Chorus, Roderigo: Roderigo, *beviam!* / "Roderigo, let's drink!"). Iago offers Cassio more wine, but Cassio says he has had enough. Iago pressures him and offers a toast to Otello and Desdemona. Cassio gives in. Iago sings a drinking song and continues to pour Cassio wine (Iago, Cassio, Roderigo, chorus: *Inaffia l'ugola!* / "Wet your throat").

Montano enters and calls for Cassio to begin his watch; he is surprised to find Cassio drunk and barely able to stand upright. Iago lies to Montano, telling him that this is how Cassio spends every evening. Roderigo laughs at Cassio's drunkenness and Cassio attacks him. Montano tells Cassio to calm down, but Cassio draws his sword and threatens to crack open Montano's head. (Montano, Cassio, Iago, Roderigo, chorus: *Capitano, v'attende la fazione ai baluardi* / "Captain, the guard awaits you on the ramparts".) Cassio and Montano begin to duel, and Iago sends Roderigo to call the alarm. Montano is wounded and the fight is stopped only by the appearance of Otello.

Otello orders Montano and Cassio to lower their swords. He then asks "honest Iago" to explain how the duel began, but Iago says he doesn't know. Otello then turns to Cassio, who is embarrassed and cannot excuse his actions. When Otello discovers that Montano is wounded, he becomes enraged. Desdemona enters, and, upon seeing that his bride's rest has been disturbed, Otello declares that Cassio is no longer Captain. (Otello, Iago, Cassio, Montano: *Abbasso le spade* / "Down with your swords".) He tells Iago to patrol the town to restore quiet, calls for help for Montano and orders everyone to return to their houses.

The Cypriots leave Otello alone with Desdemona. Together Otello and Desdemona recall why they fell in love. Otello, in an ecstasy of joy, invites death, fearing that he will never know such happiness again. Desdemona prays that their love will remain unchanged. They kiss, overcome with love for each other. (Otello, Desdemona: *Già nella notte densa s'estingue ogni clamor* / "Now in the dark night all noise is silenced".)

**Act 2:** A hall on the ground floor of the castle, divided by a glass partition from the garden at the back, with a balcony.

Iago suggests to Cassio that he should ask Desdemona to talk to Otello about his demotion; Desdemona can influence her husband to reinstate him (Iago, Cassio: *Non ti crucciar* / "Do not fret"). Desdemona and Emilia can be seen walking the garden. Cassio approaches Desdemona. Watching from the room, Iago voices his nihilistic beliefs and hatred of humankind (*Credo in un Dio crudel* / "I believe in a cruel God").

Otello enters the room; Iago, pretending not to notice him, says that he is deeply troubled. Cassio sees Otello from afar and goes discreetly away. Otello asks what's wrong, but Iago gives only vague answers. Finally, he hints that Cassio and Desdemona are having an affair. Otello begins to get suspicious, but declares that he needs proof before believing that Desdemona has been unfaithful. (Iago, Otello: *Ciò m'accora... Che parli?* / "That worries me..." "What did you say?") Iago warns Otello against jealousy, but also advises him to be vigilant.

A crowd of children, sailors, and Cypriots sing to Desdemona, praising her beauty and purity (Chorus, Iago, children, Desdemona, Otello: Dove guardi splendono raggi / "Wherever you look, brightness shines..."). They present her with gifts and wish her happiness before leaving.

Desdemona carries Cassio's request for reinstatement to Otello. Otello sourly tells her to ask him another time; as she persists, he grows impatient and says he has a headache. Desdemona offers to wrap his head in a handkerchief Otello once gave her, linen embroidered with strawberries. Otello throws it to the ground and says he doesn't need it (Desdemona, Otello: D'un uom che geme sotto il tuo disdegno la preghiera ti porto / "I bring a petition from one who suffers under your displeasure"). Emilia picks up the handkerchief. Desdemona asks for Otello's forgiveness. Aside, Iago demands that Emilia give him the handkerchief. When she refuses, Iago forcibly takes it from her.

Otello dismisses the others, and declares that he now believes that Desdemona may be deceiving him (Otello: Ora e per sempre addio sante memorie / "Now and forever farewell, holy memories"). Iago returns, and the jealous Otello demands proof of Desdemona's infidelity. Iago says that once, when he and Cassio were sleeping in the same room, he heard Cassio talking to Desdemona in a dream. In the dream, says Iago, Cassio told Desdemona that they must be careful to conceal their love. (Iago: Era la notte, Cassio dormia / "It was night, Cassio was sleeping".) Iago says that dreams don't prove anything, but remarks that he saw Cassio carrying Desdemona's strawberry-embroidered handkerchief just the day before. Otello swears vengeance on Desdemona and Cassio, and Iago joins him in his vow (Otello, Iago: Sì, pel ciel marmoreo giuro / "Yes, by the marble heavens I swear").

**Act 3:** The great hall of the castle. To the right, a large colonnade leading to a smaller hall, in the back of which is a balcony. Othello and Iago talking in the hall as a herald enters.

A herald brings news of the approach of ambassadors from Venice. Iago explains to Otello that he will lure Cassio here and talk with him while Otello watches, hidden. He leaves to go get Cassio. (Iago: Qui trarrò Cassio / "Here I will bring Cassio".)

Desdemona enters and reminds Otello of Cassio's request. Otello says that his headache has returned, and asks Desdemona to wrap her handkerchief around his head. When Desdemona produces a different handkerchief, Otello demands the one with strawberries. When she says she does not have it, Otello says that it was a talisman, and troubles will befall her if she loses it. Desdemona says that he is trying to ignore Cassio's plea, and as she asks him about Cassio, he demands the handkerchief ever more insistently. (Desdemona, Otello: Dio ti giocondi, o sposo / "God keep you merry, husband".) Desdemona protests that she is faithful; Otello sends her away (Desdemona, Otello: Esterrefatta fisso lo sguardo tuo tremendo / "Terrified, I face your dreadful look").

Otello laments his fate (Dio! mi potevi scagliar tutti i mali / "God, you could have thrown every evil at me" ). When Iago calls out "Cassio is here!" Otello hides as Iago and Cassio enter. Cassio says he had hoped to see Desdemona here, for he wanted to know whether she had been successful with Otello (Iago, Cassio, Otello: Vieni; l'aula è deserta / "Come, the hall is deserted"). Iago asks him to tell of his adventures with that woman. Cassio asks which woman, and, softly, so that Otello cannot hear, Iago says "Bianca" (the name of Cassio's actual lover). As Cassio laughs about his romantic adventures, Otello assumes he is speaking of Desdemona. In a conversation only partially heard, Cassio seems to be telling Iago that another woman, a secret admirer, left him a handkerchief as a token. At Iago's urging, Cassio

produces it, whereupon Iago seizes it—for it is Desdemona's—and holds it out where he knows Otello can see it. He then returns it to Cassio and teases him, while in his hiding place Otello fumes (Iago, Cassio, Otello: *Questa è una ragna dove il tuo cuor casca* / "This is a spiderweb in which your heart is caught").

Bugles sound, announcing the arrival of the Venetian ambassador, Lodovico. Iago warns Cassio that he should leave unless he wants to see Otello. Cassio exits, and Otello asks Iago how he should kill his wife. Iago advises Otello to kill Desdemona by suffocating her in her bed, while he will take care of Cassio. Otello promotes Iago to Captain.

Lodovico, Desdemona, Emilia, Roderigo, and other dignitaries enter. When Lodovico notes Cassio's absence, Iago tells him that Cassio is out of favor. Desdemona interrupts, telling Lodovico that she hopes he will soon be restored. Otello calls her a demon and almost strikes her violently but is held back by Lodovico. Otello then calls for Cassio. (Lodovico, Otello, Desdemona, Emilia, Iago, chorus: *Il Doge ed il Senato salutano l'eroe trionfatore* / "The Doge and the Senate greet the triumphant hero".) Cassio enters and Otello reads (mixing in insults to Desdemona) a letter from the Doge, announcing that he (Otello) has been called back to Venice and Cassio is to succeed him as governor of Cyprus. Enraged, Otello throws Desdemona to the ground. (Otello, Roderigo, Iago, Cassio, Lodovico: *Messeri! il Doge mi richiama a Venezia* / "Gentlemen! The Doge recalls me to Venice".)

Desdemona, on the ground, laments (*A terra! ... sì ... nel livido fango* / "Fallen! yes, in the foul mud..."). The various characters express their feelings: Emilia and Lodovico express their sympathy for Desdemona, Cassio marvels at his sudden change of fortune, and Roderigo laments that Desdemona will soon depart. In separate asides, Iago urges Otello to take his revenge as soon as possible, while he will take care of Cassio. He advises Roderigo that the only way to prevent Desdemona from leaving is for Cassio, the new Duke, to die, and suggests that Roderigo murder Cassio that night. (Emilia, Cassio, Desdemona, Roderigo, Lodovico, Iago, Otello, chorus: *Quell'innocente un fremito d'odio non ha nè un gesto* / "That innocent one is without feeling or gesture of hatred"). In a fury, Otello orders everyone to leave. Desdemona goes to comfort him, but Lodovico pulls her away as Otello curses her. As the others leave, Otello raves about the handkerchief, then collapses. Iago presses Otello's forehead with his heel, then walks away. Outside the crowd of Cypriots calls out victory and glory for Otello. (Otello, Desdemona, Emilia, Cassio, Roderigo, Lodovico, Iago, chorus: *Fuggite!* / "Begone".)

**Act 4:** Desdemona's bedchamber: A bed, a prie-dieu, a table, a mirror, some chairs. A light burns in front of an image of the Madonna which hangs above the prie-dieu. To the right is a door. On the table a light. It is night.

Desdemona is preparing for bed with the assistance of Emilia. She asks Emilia to put out the bridal gown she used on her wedding day, and says that if she dies, she wants to be buried in it. Emilia tells her not to talk about such things. Desdemona recalls how her mother's servant Barbara was abandoned by her lover, and how she used to sing the Willow Song (Desdemona: *Piangea cantando nell'erma landa* / "Singing, she wept on the lonely hearth"). After Emilia leaves, Desdemona prays (*Ave Maria*) and then falls asleep.

Silently, Otello enters, with a sword. He kisses his wife three times; she awakens. Otello asks her if she has prayed tonight; she must die, and he does not wish to condemn her soul. She asks God for mercy, both for her and for Otello. Otello accuses her of sin, saying that he must kill her because she loves Cassio. Desdemona denies it and asks that he summon Cassio to

testify to her innocence. Otello says that Cassio is already dead. Desdemona, horrified, pleads for mercy, but Otello tells her it's too late and strangles her (Otello, Desdemona: *Diceste questa sera le vostre preci* / "Have you said your prayers tonight?").

Emilia knocks at the door, (Emilia: *Aprite! Aprite!* / "Open up!") announcing that Cassio has killed Roderigo. Desdemona softly calls out that she has been unjustly accused, but refuses to blame Otello. She dies. Emilia calls Otello a murderer; he retorts that Iago gave him proof of Desdemona's infidelity. Otello begins to threaten Emilia, who calls for help. Iago, Cassio, and Lodovico enter. Emilia demands that Iago deny Otello's accusation; he refuses. Otello says that the handkerchief Desdemona gave to Cassio is proof enough. Emilia, horrified, explains that Iago stole the handkerchief from her—Cassio confirms that the handkerchief appeared mysteriously in his lodgings. Montano enters and says that Roderigo, with his dying breath, has revealed Iago's plot. Iago, brandishing his sword, runs away.

After he realizes what has happened, Otello grieves over Desdemona's death. Initially he draws his scimitar (Otello: *Niun mi tema* / "That none fear me") but then relinquishes it. He then stealthily draws a dagger from his robe (Otello: *Ho un'arma ancor!* / I still have another weapon!) and stabs himself. Others try to stop him, but it is too late. Before he dies, he drags himself next to his wife and kisses her (Otello: *Un bacio...un bacio ancora...ah!...un altro bacio...* / A kiss.. another kiss...ah...and yet another kiss). He lies dead next to Desdemona.

**La forza del destino The Power of Fate**, (often translated *The Force of Destiny*) is an Italian opera by Giuseppe Verdi. The libretto was written by Francesco Maria Piave based on a Spanish drama, *Don Álvaro o la fuerza del sino* (1835), by Ángel de Saavedra, 3rd Duke of Rivas, with a scene adapted from Friedrich Schiller's *Wallensteins Lager*). It was first performed in the Bolshoi Kamenny Theatre of Saint Petersburg, Russia, on 10 November 1862

### Roles

|  |               |
|--|---------------|
| The Marquis of Calatrava                                       | bass          |
| Leonora, his daughter  | soprano       |
| Don Carlo di Vargas, his son                                   | baritone      |
| Don Alvaro, Leonora's suitor                                   | tenor         |
| Curra, Leonora's maid  | mezzo-soprano |
| Preziosilla, a young gypsy                                     | mezzo-soprano |
| Mayor  | bass          |
| Maestro Trabuco, a muleteer and peddler                        | tenor         |
| Il Padre Guardiano (The Father Superior), a Franciscan         | bass          |
| Fra Melitone, a Franciscan                                     | baritone      |
| A surgeon  | bass          |
| Peasants, servants, pilgrims, soldiers, vivandières and friars |               |

### Synopsis

Place: Spain and Italy

Time: around 1750

Overture: The music begins with the opera's "Fate" motif, an ominous three Es unison in the brass.

**Act 1**

The mansion of Leonora's family, in Seville

Don Alvaro, a young nobleman from South America (presumably Peru), has settled in Seville, Spain, where he is looked down on by many because of his Inca background. There, he and Donna Leonora, the daughter of the haughty Marquis of Calatrava,[11] have fallen in love. But her father the Marquis violently opposes a match he feels is dishonorable and beneath her, believing her to have been seduced. Notwithstanding her tender regard for her father, who until now has always been kind to her, Leonora is ready to give up family and country in order to elope with Alvaro. Aided by her confidante, Curra. (*Me pellegrina ed orfana – "Exiled and orphaned far from my childhood home"*), she prepares to leave.

When Alvaro arrives to fetch her, however, Leonora, hesitates, begging for one last day with her father. Alvaro, stunned, releases her from their engagement, saying that she cannot love him as much as he loves her. Leonora then relents and they agree to escape as planned. At that moment the Marquis suddenly enters and discovers the couple together. Assuming the worst, he draws his weapons and threatens the young man with death. To remove any suspicion as to Leonora's purity, Alvaro surrenders himself. As he flings down his pistol, it goes off, mortally wounding the Marquis, who dies, uttering a curse on his daughter. The horrified lovers rush out of the room.

**Act 2**

**Scene 1:** An inn in the village of Hornachuelos

About a year has passed since the death of the Marquis of Calatrava. In their flight, Leonora and Alvaro were separated and have lost track of each other, unable to reunite or learn of each other's whereabouts.

The act opens in the crowded dining room of an inn, where the guests include the alcalde (town Mayor) and several muleteers among others gathered in the dining room as dinner is about to be served. Leonora's brother Don Carlo de Vargas then enters, bent on avenging the family honor and the death of his father. Carlo has disguised himself as a student from Salamanca by the name of Pereda. (*Son Pereda son ricco d'onore – "I am Pereda, of honorable descent"*). During the supper, Preziosilla, a pretty gypsy fortune teller joins them and sings a song urging them to enlist in the army (*Al suon del tamburo – "When side drums rattle"*) for Italy's freedom. Leonora arrives in male attire accompanied by Trabuco, a muleteer, on their way to a Franciscan monastery where Leonora plans to seek refuge. Recognizing her brother, whom she knows wants to kill her, she hides. Carlo/"Pereda" grills Trabuco about the identity of his traveling companion, but the company lets him know they don't like his prying questions. They turn the tables by asking Carlo who he is. He claims to be a University student helping a friend track down the friend's sister and her seducer, who, he claims has returned to his native America. The gypsy girl laughs and says she doesn't believe this story. Overhearing this, Leonora realizes that Alvaro is still alive. She concludes he has betrayed and abandoned her, and she slips away without being discovered.

**Scene 2:** A monastery nearby

Outside the monastery of the Madonna of Angels, Leonora, seeking sanctuary and solitary atonement, has come to take refuge in the monastery intending to live the rest of her life as a hermit (*Son giunta! Grazie, o Dio! Estremo asil quest'è per me! ... Madre, pietosa Vergine, – "I've arrived! Thank heaven! My last resort and hope"... "Mother, merciful Virgin".*) After a somewhat surly reception by Fra Melitone, she tells the abbot, Padre Guardiano, her true

name and her wish to spend the remainder of her life in the monastery's hermitage. The abbot recounts the trials she will have to undergo. Padre Guardiano agrees to direct her to a secret cave in the mountains, where he alone will bring her food and where she will find a bell which she is to ring only in times of great danger or if she is on the point of death. Leonora, Padre Guardiano, Fra Melitone, and the other monks join in prayer as she is formally accepted as tenant of the hermitage.

### **Act 3**

**Scene 1:** A forest near Velletri, in Italy

Meanwhile, Alvaro, believing Leonora to be dead, has joined the Spanish army under the name of Don Federico Herreros and has distinguished himself for bravery (*La vita è inferno all'infelice ... O tu che in seno agli angeli – "Life is a hell to an unhappy man." ... "Oh, you who dwell with the angels"*). He is interrupted by cries for help and rescues a man from two assassins. It is Don Carlo, who has newly joined the same regiment, also under an assumed name: Don Felix Bornos. The two become friends and march off side by side to fight in the Battle of Velletri, a historical event which occurred in 1744.

**Scene 2:** The officers' quarters

Alvaro is brought into the officers' quarters, gravely wounded in the chest. Thinking he is about to die, he entrusts the key to a casket to his friend "Don Felix" (Carlo). The box contains packet of letters, which Alvaro says contain a secret. He makes his friend swear to burn them without reading them: (*Solenne in quest'ora, giurarmi dovete far pago un mio voto – "You must swear to me in this solemn hour, to carry out my wish."*). Felix/Carlo assures Alvaro that he won't die and that he will be decorated with the Order of Calatrava for his bravery. At the name Calatrava Alvaro shudders and exclaims, "No!". Carlo is taken aback. He is afraid that "Don Federico" (Alvaro) may in truth be the mysterious seducer who killed his father. He resolves to look at the letters to settle his doubts. (*Morir! Tremenda cosa! ... Urna fatale del mio destino – "To die! An immense thing... Begone, fatal vessel of my destiny!"*). As his wounded friend is taken away on the surgeon's stretcher, he opens the casket, finds his sister's portrait, and realizes Alvaro's true identity. At that moment a surgeon brings word that Don Alvaro may recover. Don Carlo exults at the prospect of avenging his father's death.

**Scene 3:** A camp near the battleground

Having recovered, Alvaro is confronted by Carlo. They begin to duel, but are pulled away from each other by the soldiers. As they restrain Carlo, the anguished Don Alvaro vows to enter a monastery.

The soldiers gather. Trabucco, the peddler, tries to sell them his wares; Fra Melitone chastises them for their godless ways; and Preziosilla leads them in a chorus in praise of the military life (*Rataplan, rataplan, della gloria – "Rum-tum-tum on the drum is the music that makes a soldier's martial spirit rise"*).

### **Act 4**

**Scene 1:** The monastery

Impoverished peasants from the region approach Fra Melitone at the monastery at Hornachuelos for food and Padre Guardiano gently scolds Melitone for his less than charitable behaviour towards them. Don Carlo then approaches, having learned of the presence of Don Alvaro there. Under the name of Father Raphael, Alvaro has indeed entered the monastery, near which is Leonora's cave. Alvaro offers peace, but when Carlo taunts him

as a half-breed Alvaro takes up the challenge and the two rush from the monastery. (Le minacce, i fieri accenti – "May the winds carry off with them").

**Scene 2:** A desolate spot near Leonora's hermitage

Leonora, longing for the peaceful release of death, restates her love for Alvaro and begs God for peace. (Pace, pace mio Dio! – "Peace, O mighty Father, give me peace!"). The duel between the two men spills over onto the neighboring crags in the vicinity of Leonora's isolation. Upon hearing the clashing of swords she takes refuge in her cave. Carlos is mortally wounded by Alvaro, who invades the hermit's sanctuary to request the last offices for the dying man. Leonora and Alvaro recognize each other. Alvaro tells her of what has happened, and she rushes to embrace her dying brother. As she bends over him, he stabs her in the heart. The Father Superior, who has come in answer to Leonora's alarm bell, orders Alvaro to stop cursing fate and to humble himself before God. The dying Leonora joins him in this plea, and Alvaro declaims that he is now redeemed.