

---

## Synopsis

### ACT ONE

*Scene one.* Diana and her faithful servant arrive riding a hippogriff in a wasteland. They see a building, and at the same time they hear the sound of chains. Inside the tower, the prince curses his fate, screaming his desire for freedom, and comparing himself to birds, wild beasts and fish, which can move freely while he is condemned to eternal imprisonment. Diana listens to his voice and draws closer, feeling both pity and trepidation. The girl tells him that she too is prey to misfortune, but that seeing the conditions in which he finds himself she realizes that there is always someone who suffers more. Clotaldo arrives and has Diana and her servant arrested by the guards, who take them away, blindfolded.

*Scene two.* We are in the palace. Estrella and Don Arias, the king's niece and nephew, are eager to succeed the King to the throne; they exchange formal compliments. The sovereign appears, and tells them what happened long ago: Clorilena, his wife, had given birth to a son who had been born under the most ominous omens: the sun had darkened, the earth had trembled, stones rained down from the sky and the water of the rivers was blood red. After consulting the stars – the king continues – he had decided to lock up his son in a tower, where only Clotaldo could enter from time to time to talk to him. But in the end, he was overcome with doubt, thinking that this act of cruelty contradicted Christian charity. So – he concludes – on that very day the Prince would be liberated and would take his place in the realm. If he turned out to be inhuman and cruel, as indicated by the stars, he would return to his prison. Clotaldo arrives with Diana, and the king forgives the latter for disobeying his order not to speak to the prisoner.

### ACT TWO

The setting is transformed into a lavishly decorated room. Clotaldo tells the king how, following his orders, he put the prince to sleep with a liqueur and brought him from the tower where he was imprisoned to the palace. The king explains that he wanted his son to be put to sleep so that if he had to return to captivity, he might think that everything he had experienced was nothing more than a dream. The prince wakes up and is amazed at where he is. Clotaldo obsequiously reveals to him that he is the king's son, and that he has been imprisoned since birth to ward off ominous omens. Upon learning this news, the prince is enraged and insults Clotaldo and attacks a squire. The king appears, reproaching his son



*Elena Cicorella, figurino del re per La vita è sogno di Gian Francesco Malipiero al Teatro Malibran, ottobre 2024. Direttore Francesco Lanzillotta, regia di Valentino Villa.*

for his violence. The prince reproaches him in turn for having given birth to him and then forcing him to live as a dead man. The king then warns him that everything he is experiencing could be just a dream. Diana arrives, and the prince's attitude changes; he approaches her meekly. The woman reminds him that she met him when he was in the tower. The prince expresses his love for Diana, but she is terrified and shields herself, getting ready to leave. He restrains her until Clotoldo returns. The prince draws his dagger to kill him, Diana flees, the king appears, and the prince announces that he will soon fall at his feet.

#### ACT THREE

In his dreams, the prince is savouring the taste of revenge against Clotaldo and the king. When he wakes up, he realizes that he has returned to his prison, and moreover, is once again in chains. Disconsolate, he reflects in verse on the futility of existence. Diana turns to him affectionately, telling him to pity his sorrows. The prince replies bitterly: "You can ask nothing of a prisoner

who dreams." Diana sings a hymn to love, then walks away. Meanwhile Clotaldo arrives, and the prince tells him about his dream, during which he had found himself the son of a king and with the power of life or death over everyone. Voices can be heard with increasing insistency: a crowd is descending from the mountain. One of them states that people do not believe in omens and stars, and insistently demands the prince. The latter refuses to give in to illusions a second time. But the crowd cheers him and finally he is released. Not yet convinced that what he is experiencing is reality and not an invention of his mind exclaims: "I agree to live this new dream." The king approaches and kneels in front of him, telling him that this is how the prophecy came true. The prince forgives his father, saying that it is not the heavenly signs that are fallacious, but that those who interpret them might make mistakes. He then kneels before the king. The cheering crowd makes way so they can pass.