

BEATRICE DI TENDA

Bellini

ACT 1: In the banqueting hall of the castle of Binasco, the courtiers encounter Filippo Maria Visconti, Duke of Milan, who flees the ceremony taking place at the castle and also the presence of his wife, Beatrice di Tenda, widow of Facino Cane. Filippo declares his love for Agnese del Maino, and the courtiers encourage him in his affections.

In her apartments, Agnese sings with melancholy of her love for Orombello who at that point makes his appearance. Following a misunderstanding Agnese is furious to discover that he loves Beatrice and not herself: She swears revenge.

In the castle gardens, Beatrice expresses her distress at Filippo's ingratitude to her ladies-in-waiting and deploras his harshness with regard to her people.

In a major duet, Filippo, who has ordered Rizzardo to spy on Beatrice, accuses his wife of adultery. She defends herself with dignity.

Near to the statue of Facino Cane soldiers talk of Filippo's disquiet, and move away. Beatrice, alone, invokes the spirit of her first husband, Facino Cano, and takes full measure of her solitude; Orombello appears and offers his fealty, and, to her astonishment Beatrice discovers the love he bears her.

Filippo, Agnese and the courtiers surprise Orombello kneeling at Beatrice's feet. The deepest feelings are expressed by all. Filippo has Beatrice and Orombello imprisoned on the assumption of their guilt.

ACT 2: In one of the castle halls transformed into a tribunal, ladies-in-waiting and courtiers comment on the confessions wrested from Orombello under torture. Anichino tries to appease Filippo, but the latter persists in his intention to have Beatrice and Orombello tried.

The magistrates take their place: Beatrice enters and proudly reminds Filippo and the assembly of her sovereignty; Filippo makes accusation against her. Exhausted by torture, Orombello is brought before the tribunal; he disclaims his confessions and asserts Beatrice's innocence. In the face of Beatrice's purity, Filippo feels his wrath diminish. But the tribunal decides to send the supposed traitors back to the torture-chamber; Filippo recovers his fury. Agnese repents and experiences remorse.

Filippo declares his love to Agnese and offers her the crown; Agnese admits her own guilt. In a monologue, Filippo confesses the doubts that torture him. The death sentence is brought to him for signature; in high emotion, the Duke is hesitating to seal the writ when news is brought that the castle is about to be besieged by Facino Cane's former troops. In fury, Filippo signs the death-warrant.

Beatrice leaves the prison: She let it be known that she had found the strength to resist torture. Everybody surrounds her in deep emotion. Agnese enters and confesses to Beatrice that through intrigue and jealousy she alone had compromised her with Orombello, whose prayer can now be heard from the prison-tower. With heart at peace, Beatrice goes to her death. She pardons the whole assembly and pleads for prayers not for her, but for those she leaves behind.