

I MASNADIENI

Giuseppe Verdi

Setting:

Germany at the beginning of the eighteenth century. The Opera spans three years.

Act I

Scene One

Setting: A tavern on the borders of Saxony.

Carlo is reading a book and waiting for word from his father. He expresses discontent with the current state of affairs in Germany (Quando io leggo in Plutarco). He longs for the forgiveness of his father for taking up with such a vile group of men as the Masnadier. He longs also for the embrace of Amalia and his homeland. He is truly repentant for his actions at the university. Several young men enter with a letter for Carlo. It is from his brother and Carlo turns pale as he reads it. He drops the letter and rushes from the room. Rolla picks it up and reads from it aloud. His brother warns him not to return unless he wants to be imprisoned as directed by his father. Carlo returns in an intense state of agitation. The men tell him they will form a band of bandits with Carlo as their leader. Carlo swears that he will be their leader until his death. The bandits join him in a vengeful chorus calling for death and destruction (Nell'argilla maldetta).

Scene Two

Setting: A room in the castle of Count Moor.

Francesco alone and in deep thought, says that he has finally done away with his brother. Carlo had written a letter to the Count seeking forgiveness which Francesco intercepted. He substituted another letter painting a dark picture of Carlo. He comments that his father is almost dead and that he should finish him off (La sua lampada vitale). He has been debating various methods of hastening the end.

Arminio enters and Francesco questions his loyalty. Satisfied with his answer, Francesco tells him to disguise himself and go to the old Count. He is then to tell Massimiliano that Carlo has been killed in the battle of Prague. Arminio questions whether the old man will believe him. Francesco assures him he will because of the proof he will provide him with. Arminio leaves and alone, Francesco declares that soon he will be the Count (Tremate, omiseri, voi mi vedrete). He swears unspeakable havoc on those he will soon rule.

Scene Three

Setting: A bedroom in the castle.

Massimiliano is asleep in a chair. Amalia approaches and observes him. She comments on his appearance and the fact that he has banished Carlo. She has lost her joy, but does not hold it against Massimiliano. She suddenly remembers Carlo (Lo sguardo avea degli angeli). Dreaming, Massimiliano calls for Carlo and speaks of the sadness that plagues his son. Amalia tries to wake him, but he thinks it is Francesco trying to take Carlo away from him. Amalia finally rouses him and he tells her he has taken away her happiness and asks her not to curse him. She declares she could never do that. Massimiliano proclaims he is dying and that the ungrateful hand of his son Francesco will lay him in his grave with no one to mourn him. Amalia wishes herself dead to spend eternity with Carlo.

Francesco and Arminio, who is disguised, enter. Arminio tells them that he and Carlo were comrades in the Army. They fought bravely against the enemy until Carlo was struck down. He ordered Arminio to take his blood-stained sword to Massimiliano and to tell him his disgraced

son is dead. The last word he uttered was, "Amalia." Francesco shows Carlo's sword to Amalia. Written in blood on the blade is, "Death releases you, Amalia, from our oath. Francesco, take Amalia as your wife." Amalia proclaims that Carlo never loved her while Massimiliano turns on Francesco ordering him to return to life his dead son (*Sul cap mio colpevole*). Francesco comments that he hopes this is the final blow to the old man. Arminio expresses extreme remorse over the lies he has just told. Massimiliano collapses and Amalia declares he is dead as Francesco proclaims himself the new Count.

Act II

Scene One

Setting: A precinct adjoining the Chapel of the Castle. On one side are several sepulchres, of which the latest one bears the name of Massimiliano.

Massimiliano has been buried and Francesco is celebrating his succession. Amalia has slipped away to the tomb to mourn the old man. A chorus from the castle interrupts Amalia's solitude. She observes that now Francesco cannot rob the old man of the peace he was denied in life (*Tu del mio Carlo al seno*). She goes on to declare her unhappiness and envy over his suffering that has come to an end. Arminio enters and tells her that Carlo is alive. Her joy is evident as she declares that the world is once again filled with love (*Carlo vive?*).

Francesco enters wondering why Amalia left the banquet and she answers that she came here to pray. Francesco dismisses her feelings and tells her he loves her. She turns on him and tells him she will not dishonor herself this way. He suggests that if she refuses, she will be his servant forever and her reputation will be ruined. Amalia pretends to want to embrace him to ask for forgiveness. Instead, she takes his knife and holds him at bay as she flees into the woods.

Scene Two

Setting: The Bohemian woods near Prague.

Two groups of Bandits are gathered at a campsite. The bandits exchange the news of Rolla's imprisonment. Carlo swore that he would liberate Rolla and destroy Prague by fire. A distant fire is seen as Rolla and another group of bandits enter. Rolla was being led to the gallows when the bandits rode through the groups of people throwing firebrands on the buildings. Carlo freed Rolla from the noose that was around his neck. Carlo enters and tells his group they leave at dawn. The group wanders into the woods to prepare for their departure. Alone, Carlo contemplates the sunset and his current position as leader of the bandits. His thoughts turn to Amalia (*Di ladroni attorniato*). The bandits rush back in alarmed that they have been surrounded. All exit to fight their way to freedom.

Act III

Scene One

Setting: A lonely area on the edge of the forrest near the castle.

Amalia, lost, praises God for her escape from Francesco. Her thoughts are interrupted by voices proclaiming that pillaging and wreaking havoc are mere amusements for them. Carlo enters and immediately recognizes Amalia. Amalia at first does not recognize him. She finally does and they embrace and join in a duet proclaiming their love (*T'abbraccio, o Carlo*). Amalia frees herself from Carlo and tells him they must leave because she just heard the voices of bandits. She begins to question where he has been when he tells her not to concern herself. Carlo asks what she was doing alone in the woods. She tells him of his father's death and his brothers new position as Count. Francesco threatened her life and honor and she fled into the woods. Carlo tells her to

trust herself to him and joins her in proclaiming that their love will last this lifetime and into heaven (Lassù risplendere).

Scene Two

Setting: In the clearing of a forest with the ancient ruins of a keep rising from the center. It is evening.

The Bandits are gathered around a fire and are singing of their way of life. "Live full today for tomorrow may be our last." (Le rube, gli stupr) Carlo enters and the bandits rise and greet him. He tells them to sleep and he will keep the watch. One by one they lie down and fall asleep. Alone, Carlo says he has deceived Amalia. He promised himself to her forever, but he is separated from her forever because of his promise to the bandits. He contemplates suicide, but decides against it. Arminio enters and approaches a grille in the keep to deliver supper to a prisoner. The prisoner has been denied food and contact with other humans. Arminio tells him to eat and that it is unwise for him to stay here long. Leaving he curses Francesco. Carlo appears and blocks Arminio's path. Arminio at first thinks Carlo is Francesco and begs for forgiveness for not following his orders. Carlo is questioning Arminio when the voice from the grille calls out to Carlo. Arminio tries to keep Carlo from going to it, but Carlo threatens him and goes anyway. He opens it and brings out a mere skeleton of a man.

Carlo recognizes Massimiliano's voice and asks what has happened to him. Massimiliano declares that Francesco has buried him there and tells Carlo the sad tale (Un ignoto, tre lune or saranno). Massimiliano had been thought dead when he only had fainted. Francesco discovered him alive and brought him here to the dungeon. "Throw that old man down there; he has lived to long." Massimiliano says he begged and pleaded, but it was in vain as Francesco himself locked the doors. At this he passes out.

Carlo rouses himself from his shock and awakens the bandits by firing his pistol into the air. The bandits gather around him and he tells them this is his father who was left to die in this manner by his brother. Carlo calls for vengeance and tells them they shall bring this about (Vendetta, vendetta!). The bandits kneel and ask what he desires. Carlo tells them to bring the father-killer to him alive from wherever he is - which they swear to do. The bandits rush out as Carlo falls to his knees before his father.

Act IV

Scene One

Setting: A suite of several rooms at the Moor's castle.

Francesco suddenly awakens from a nightmare in which the dead has risen and called him a murderer! He summons Arminio and asks for a priest. Arminio sends another servant for the priest and tries to comfort Francesco. Francesco begins to recount his dream which was about the Day of Judgement (Pareami che sorto). His father, wasted with hunger appeared to condemn him. Arminio leaves as Moser, a priest, arrives.

Moser asks if he has been summoned for a legitimate call or to have his religion mocked. He notes Francesco's trembling and says God is summoning him and is demanding restitution for the crimes Francesco committed. Francesco answers with a question: "What can he do to me? Which sin excites God's wrath the most." Moser answers parricide and fratricide. Francesco tells him he is lying as Moser tells him human thought alone cannot conceive these crimes. Arminio suddenly enters with news of an attack on the castle. Francesco orders everyone to the chapel to pray for him. He turns on Moser and demands absolution. Moser tells him God can, but not man.

Francesco kneels and begins to pray. Suddenly he rises and proclaims, "No! Hell will not make jest of me!" Moser tells him to tremble for God is denying him forgiveness.

Scene Two

Setting: The same forest as in scene two Act Three. Daylight is breaking.

Massimiliano is seated on a stone with Carlo at his side. Massimiliano still thinks Carlo to be the ghost of his son. Massimiliano cries for Francesco to Carlo's amazement. Massimiliano tells him that he will be avenged by God's hand not his. He asks forgiveness from Carlo who grants it to him. Carlo kneels and asks for his father's blessing, which he receives. Several bandits enter and tell Carlo that Francesco has escaped. Carlo express joy. More bandits enter with a dishevelled Amalia. They proclaim her a splendid prize as she calls for Carlo to help her. Massimiliano greets her and she says, "You are alive?" Carlo asks who has brought her here as she embraces him and asks for his protection. Her identification of him in his current surroundings brings sudden changes in Carlo. He tells the bandits to get Amalia away from him. "Kill the old man! Kill her too, kill me, kill all of you! O that all the living could be destroyed in one stroke!" He proclaims to Amalia and his father that their deliverers are robbers and murderers and further, he is their leader! (Quel figlio da te maledetto) He resigns himself to spending the rest of his life in prison as Amalia throws herself at his feet. "Angel or demon! I will not leave you!" Carlo observes her love and they embrace and proclaim that their love will last for centuries. Massimiliano wonders if he is responsible for Carlo's fall. The bandits rush forward and remind Carlo of his sworn oath to be with them forever. Amalia tells him that if he cannot break his oath to the bandits, then he should kill her. Life with him and the bandits would be full of shame and unbearable for her. He tells the bandits that since they insist, he will sacrifice an angel to them. He draws his dagger and stabs Amalia. The bandits surround the dying Amalia as Carlo leaves to give himself up to the authorities.