

IPHIGENIE EN AULIDE

Music by Christoph Willibald Gluck

Libretto by [le bailli] François du Roullet

First Performance: Opéra, Paris, April 19, 1774

Agamemnon, King of Greece, has incurred the wrath of the goddess Artemis (Diana), who takes revenge by becalming the Greek ships in Aulis bound for the Trojan War. To propitiate her, Agamemnon reluctantly agrees to sacrifice his daughter, Iphigenia, but secretly sends a message warning her not to come to Aulis. The girl and her mother Clytemnestra arrive unexpectedly to join Iphigenia's betrothed, Achilles. Agamemnon, though reassuring the High Priest Calchas that he will allow the sacrifice, tries another ruse, informing Iphigenia that Achilles has been unfaithful to her and urging her to depart. The hero himself clears up this misunderstanding, and all is in readiness for the wedding ceremony. The vacillating Agamemnon can no longer appease the Greeks, who demand the sacrifice. In spite of Clytemnestra's anguished protests and Achilles' resort to armed intervention, the High Priest's knife is lifted over the victim, when the goddess herself relents. Iphigenia is saved - not for marriage with Achilles, as the triumphant celebrational ending of the opera might indicate, but as a potential priestess for Diana, as she appears in the original myth and in Gluck's own sequel, "Iphigenia in Tauris."