

LA TESTA DI BRONZO

Carlo Soliva

1st Act

The court of Adolfo, Prince of Pressburg (now Bratislava). Tollo directs the servants to prepare the rooms for the wedding of Adolfo with Floresca, a Polish countess.

The prince enters, accompanied by his secretary Ermanno. Ermanno, knowing that Floresca is already secretly married to the young Francesco, reminds the prince of the late Elisa, his former sweetheart. But Adolfo wishes to forget the past.

After the prince's departure Ermanno speaks with Riccardo, an officer of the guard, about how to prevent the marriage.

The entry aria of Floresca express her doubts: Ermanno has advised her to continue to conceal her marriage with Francesco, but time and opportunities to mend the situation are running out. The chorus appears and greets the bride.

Ermanno tells Floresca that Francesco, an officer, having heard of the impending marriage, has left the army without permission and is now pursued as a deserter. He is now hidden in the palace. (Ermanno goes to a bronze head, unlocks a hidden door, and Francesco appears.) Francesco plans to flee with Floresca: first to the hut in the woods where he lived as a child, then out of the country. He returns to the hiding place under the bronze head. Tollo appears, and Ermanno is forced to leave without taking the key from the secret door. Tollo cleans the heads. He sees a key in the very one which always frightens him: he turns the key and Francesco appears. Tollo believes the statue has come alive: he promises to obey and gives Francesco his coat.

The chorus wishes happiness to Adolfo and Floresca.

Riccardo announces Francesco's desertion. Ermanno tries to calm the prince when knocks from the floor are heard. Adolfo, who knows of the hiding place, asks Ermanno to open it. He must obey: Tollo appears and tells them that the statue had locked him in there. Adolfo accuses Ermanno of helping the deserter. When Floresca tries to intercede the prince suspects an affair between her and Francesco. He promises to punish the traitors and the act ends in disarray.

2nd Act

The countryside near the Danube. A reward has been posted for Francesco's capture. Tollo and the servants are armed and searching for him.

Tollo arrives at the hut of his aunt Anna. He tells her in a comical way about his adventure with the bronze statue. A storm begins, so Tollo, Anna and a number of armed men take refuge in the hut.

Francesco arrives. He recognizes his childhood home. He approaches the door, but hearing voices he hides himself.

Tollo says that Anna has persuaded him to help the fugitive. Francesco hears him and appears, but Tollo is frightened and calls for help.

Floresca and her servants are also searching for Francesco. They are all disguised as soldiers.

They promise the reward to Tollo, and they take the prisoner into their custody. Ermanno appears. The scheme seems about to succeed when Riccardo and the guards burst in. Floresca (still disguised) is captured.

Adolfo is directing the search. Riccardo is reporting to him when Tollo comes and announces that Francesco has been taken. The prince orders the prisoners brought to him immediately.

Adolfo is amazed when he recognizes Floresca. When she tells him that Francesco is her secret husband the prince promises to sentence him to death.

Riccardo brings Francesco, who immediately embraces Floresca. The prince separates them and announces an immediate trial of the traitor.

Anna hears from Tollo what is happening and says that she must speak to the prince, because Francesco is the orphan she has raised.

The prince and the court-martial are in Anna's home. Riccardo, who is worried because Ermanno does not appear, does not allow her to interfere.

Francesco has been sentenced to death. Floresca, Anna and Tollo ask Adolfo for pardon: he is immovable.

Ermanno appears and tells Adolfo that Francesco is his son by Elisa. The prince is upset when a burst of shots announces that the sentence has already been carried out. Everyone is in despair. Anna and Tollo are caring for Floresca, who has fainted. She awakens and laments the loss of Francesco when the chorus announces that he is still alive. Riccardo, afraid that Ermanno would arrive too late, had removed the bullets from the guns of the firing squad. The prince has ordered a great celebration.

Open-air party. Everyone celebrates the happy ending: Adolfo is delighted at having found his son and has consented to his marriage with Floresca.