

LINDA DI CHAMOUNIX:

Donizetti

Act 1 - The Departure from Chamounix

Act 2 - Paris

Act 3 - The Return to Chamounix

Characters:

LINDA (soprano)

PIEROTTO, a young orphan from Savoy (contralto)

CARLO, Vicomte of Sirval (tenor)

ANTONIO, a peasant and Linda's father (baritone)

MADDALENA, Linda's mother (soprano)

The MARQUIS of Boisfleury (buffo)

The PREFECT (bass)

The feudal ADMINISTRATOR (tenor)

People of Savoy, boys, girls

The period is around 1670.

Act 1 - The Departure from Chamounix

Early morning in the mountain village of Chamounix. Preparations are underway to send many of the young people to Paris, where they must go because there is no work at home during the winter. Antonio worries about his family's future: the lease of their farm is expiring and he has been unable to renew it ("Ambo nati in questa valle"). He receives good news from the administrator, however: the Marquis will plead Antonio's case with his sister, the land owner. The marquis comes to Antonio's home. He says he wants to assure him of his protection, but he is really interested in the young and beautiful Linda. When he asks to make her acquaintance he is told that she has already gone to church. (In fact, she worked late the night before, and is still asleep.) However he promises his help with the lease renewal and offers to accommodate Linda at the castle and to take charge of her education.

Linda is in a hurry because she is late for her daily rendezvous with Carlo, a young artist from Paris who is working in the village ("O luce di quest'anima"). On the way she meets the young orphan Pierotto, who is leaving for Paris ("Cari luoghi") with the other young people to earn money so that he may continue to make music in the summer. He is asked to sing his newest song, a ballad about a girl who goes away to work and has an unhappy love affair: when she returns home, her mother is dead ("Per sua madre andò una figlia").

Linda is troubled by the song. She meets Carlo who has been waiting for her ("Da quel dì che t'incontrai"). Carlo expresses his wish to remain in the village with Linda: it is impossible for now, and he cannot divulge the reason (he is the son of the Marquise). Both hope that everything will work out ("A consolarmi affrettisi").

The prefect takes Antonio aside and informs him of the Marquis' real intentions ("Quella pietà sì provvida"). He proposes to let Linda go to Paris, in order to put her beyond the Marquis' reach: his brother lives there and could put her up. Both express their trust in providence ("Esaltiam la tua potenza, O divina provvidenza!").

Linda comes with a letter from the Marquis, and announces that she will be a guest at the castle. The prefect informs her that she must leave the village instead.

The populace is assembled to greet those who are leaving. The prefect invokes heaven's protection of them, and everyone prays ("O tu che regoli gli umani eventi").

Act 2 - Paris

Carlo has followed Linda to Paris: he had revealed his identity to her and offered to provide for her until the day of their marriage. Linda accepted and is now living in a luxurious home. She is worried because she has had no news from home for three months. Hearing music of Savoy played on a ghironde outside, she recognizes Pierotto and invites him in.

Linda informs Pierotto of her engagement to Carlo. He tells her that after having been ill he searched for her at the prefect's brother's house, but that he was no longer living there (which is why she had received no news from her family). He asks her if the Marquis knows of her engagement: Linda says that all is still secret and she does not know when they will be married. Pierotto congratulates her ("Al bel destin che attèndevi") and leaves.

The Marquis appears: he has seen Linda in Paris and has found her home. He assumes she is the lover of some rich man, so he offers her a finer house and more money. Linda is insulted and orders him to leave.

Carlo now comes in: he is desperate because his mother the Marquise has discovered his engagement with Linda. She will not allow him to marry a peasant's daughter and has arranged a suitable wedding; she threatens to have Linda imprisoned if he refuses. He even thinks of suicide ("Se tanto in ira agli uomini"). When Linda comes in, he does not have the heart to tell her the truth ("Ah dimmi... dimmi, io t'amo").

Linda is worrying about Carlo's behaviour when her father Antonio appears at the door. He desperately needs help, having been unable to renew his leasehold, and is looking for the Viscount (Carlo). He does not recognize Linda, and she feels that in her ambiguous situation it is better not to reveal her identity. She gives him some money, but when Antonio tearfully tells her about the daughter he has lost ("Ah! che il ciel vi benedica") she is moved and reveals her identity to him. Antonio is shocked, and refuses to recognize the mistress of an aristocrat in his honest daughter. Linda asks him for forgiveness, but Antonio answers that he has nothing to forgive- he does not even know her.

Pierotto hurries in because he has heard of Carlo's wedding. That is too much for Antonio: he begins to curse Linda, but Pierotto restrains him and he departs in a rage. Linda goes mad, and Pierotto takes her away from the house.

Act 3 - The Return to Chamounix

A spring day in Chamounix. The young Savoyards are returning home with the money they earned in Paris, and the populace celebrates the event. Only Pierotto and Linda are missing. The prefect is thinking about Antonio's misfortune (his daughter is the only young person who did not return to the village) when the Viscount approaches him. He has found the courage to refuse the arranged marriage and his mother has finally consented to his marriage with Linda. He has come to fulfil his promises: to marry Linda and to restore the honor of her family. The prefect informs him that Linda is dead for her family and for the village ("Ah! chi sa quale e dove"). Carlo swears to be faithful to her forever ("Ma se il cielo mi punisce").

The Marquis arrives. He announces a great celebration for the wedding of his nephew with a beautiful lady of the country, but he does not reveal the bride's identity ("Ella è un giglio di puro candore")

Pierotto and Linda appear from the hillside: Linda, still mad, is nearly unconscious: only Pierotto's music keeps her going. The prefect is the first to encounter them, and immediately goes to tell Linda's parents. On his way he meets Carlo, who has brought the mortgage for the farm and is about to leave for Paris to search for Linda. The Marquis arrives with all the townsfolk. Antonio and Maddalena are desperate because Linda does not recognize them.

Pierotto suggests to Carlo that Linda might recognize him when he plays his music, as that is the only thing she reacts to. Carlo speaks to her ("È la voce che primiera"), but Linda says that the real Carlo would have spoken other words to her. [She is a Wagnerian, and wants to hear Leitmotives, not some frivolous aria!] He understands, and sings the refrain from their first act duet. Linda joins in and recognizes him, then the others: she is healed! Everyone celebrates ("Di tue pene sparve il sogno").