

THE SAINT OF BLEEKER STREET

Composer: Gian Carlo Menotti

Libretto by the composer

Act I

In a tenement on Bleecker Street, a group of people are gathered outside the bedroom door of Annina, who is supposed to have the Stigmata. They argue about whether she can heal the sick or not; Maria Corona gets into a fight with one of the other women there. Don Marco, a priest, has Annina carried out among them; in great pain, she has a vision of the Crucifixion. The neighbors crowd around her, Maria Corona first among them, but Michel, Annina's brother, arrives and throws them all out, including Don Marco. Michel does not believe in Annina's visions; he is determined to save her from his neighbors' fanaticism. Don Marco warns Michel that he is competing with God for his sister's love.

Later, Annina and her friend Carmela are preparing a little girl for her part in a procession; Carmela confesses to Annina that she has fallen in love with Salvatore and won't be taking the veil with her. Carmela is afraid because she has broken her promise, but Annina is happy for her. Annina describes a vision of Heaven for her neighbors. Maria Corona comes to warn Annina: angry because Michel won't let her take part in the procession, they are planning to come and drag her away by force. Maria Corona describes to Annina the changes that have taken place in her son since the day he touched her during her vision; formerly dumb, he has begun to speak. Michele arrives; he tries to convince Annina that her visions are only hallucinations, but she is certain they are visions from God. Michele wants to prevent her from taking the veil; he is afraid of losing her. As the procession passes, Michele is overpowered and tied to a fence by a group of men, while Annina, frightened and helpless, is carried off. Michele is rescued by his lover, Desidera.

Act II

At Carmela and Salvatore's wedding, a young man offers an Italian toast to the bride and groom. When the guests have gone into the next room, Annina enters; she tells Salvatore to be good to her friend. Desidera arrives, looking for Michele; she has been thrown out of her mother's house. She is angry at the neighborhood; because everyone knows she is sleeping with Michele, she is not invited to weddings and christenings, but Michele still is. Desidera wants Michele to take her in to the wedding, but Michele is worried about how it would affect Annina. Desidera is angry and jealous that Michele lets his love for his sister come between them. Michele agrees to take her in; Don Marco tries to prevent them, and their argument brings out the guests. Salvatore accuses Michele of causing trouble; Michele sings a bitter aria of defiance. Desidera accuses Michele of being in love with his sister rather than her. When she refuses to take her words back, Michele stabs her and runs away; Desidera begs Annina to help her; as they pray together, Desidera dies.

Act III

Annina and Maria Corona are meeting Michele in a subway station. Maria Corona shows Annina Michele's picture in the paper. Don Marco arrives with Michele. Annina asks Michele to give himself up. He refuses; he says he will fight to the end, even against God. He tells Annina that she is all he has left. Annina in turn tells him that her voices have told her she is going to die very soon; she has decided to take the veil immediately. Michele tries to convince her to stay with him, but she is unmoved. Michele curses her and runs off.

Back in her apartment, Annina, very ill, is waiting with Carmela for word on whether Annina will be allowed to take the veil. Annina is upset because she doesn't have a white dress to wear;

Carmela gives her her wedding dress to wear. Her permission is granted, and Don Marco begins the ceremony. The guests wonder if Michele will try to stop the ceremony. As she is being ordained as Sister Angela, Michele bursts in and tries to convince her to stay with him. Annina does not hear him; as the ceremony finishes, she falls down dead.