

**The Richness of Rossini: Musical Examples    Class No. 6., Oct. 25, 2018**  
**Examples are from YouTube unless otherwise noted**

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| 1. | Rossini: <i>Maometto II</i><br>Video Excerpts<br><br>Musica Classica DVD | Lorenzo Regazzo as Maometto<br>Federico Lepre as Selimo<br>Maxim Mironov as Erisso<br>Carmen Giannattasio as Anna<br>Anna Rita Gemmabella as Calbo<br>Nicola Marchesini as Condulmiero  | Claudio Scimone, conductor<br>Pier-Luigi Pizzi, director<br>Teatro La Fenice, Venice |
| 2. | Rossini: <i>Semiramide</i><br>Video Excerpts<br><br>Arthaus Musik DVD    | June Anderson as Semiramide<br>Marilyn Horne as Arsace<br>Stanford Olsen as Idreno<br>Samuel Ramey as Assur<br>YHoung-OK Shin as Azema<br>John Cheek as Oroe<br>Jeffrey Wells as the Ghost of Nino<br>Michael Forest as Mitrane | James Levine, conductor<br>John Copley, director<br>Metropolitan Opera               |

## Maometto II: Synopsis

Time: 1470; Place: Negroponte, in the Aegean Sea

**Act 1:** *The palace of the Governor, Erisso.* Byzantium (modern-day Constantinople) has just fallen to the Turks, and the troops of Maometto II (Sultan Mehmed II) are laying siege at the Venetian city of Negroponte. Maometto has demanded the surrender of the city the following day. Amongst the Venetians, a council of war is being held and different opinions as to proposed actions are expressed. Young Calbo pushes Paolo Erisso to go on fighting and defend the city, while General Condulmiero wishes to yield. The consensus is to continue fighting and the troops swear allegiance to Calbo.

*Another part of the palace:* Alone, Erisso's daughter, Anna, contemplates her father's plight. Erisso enters along with Calbo, and he explains their situation, suggesting that she marry Calbo as additional protection. However, her discomfort is clear: she explains that she has fallen in love with a man named Uberto while her father was away in Venice. When told that this same Uberto traveled with Erisso, she realizes that she has been duped by an unknown noble. Erisso gives her a dagger with which to defend herself if necessary. A cannon shot is heard, and Erisso and Calbo rush off to battle. Anna leaves to go to the church to pray.

*A square outside the church:* The women gather and, upon Anna's arrival, she learns from them that a traitor has allowed the Turks to gain entry into the city. Briefly, Anna prays, and all take refuge in the church.

*The city, the following morning.* Maometto and his men enter the city, which he seems to know well. His henchman Selim is curious as to why, but his general reveals nothing. Then soldiers rush in and announce that Erisso and Calbo have been captured. Both men are led in, in chains. Maometto acknowledges their gallantry, but demands that they and their men surrender and open the gates to the citadel, where they have taken refuge, assuring them that then all will be released. By his silence, Erisso rejects the offer and, as the two are about to be led away to be tortured, Anna and the women appear from the church.

Each character recognizes the situation with which they are confronted: Anna realizes that Maometto is the man who was her lover "Uberto"; Maometto is dumbfounded to re-discover Anna; and her father Erisso, similarly dumbfounded, cannot believe that she could have fallen for the Sultan. Each of the other characters also expresses their anguish or surprise. Anna threatens to kill herself unless Maometto releases Erisso and Calbo; he agrees. He then promises Anna a life of luxury if she will remain faithful to him.

**Act 2: *Maometto's tent.*** Anna, who has been taken to Maometto, is surrounded by Muslim girls who appeal to her to soften her feelings towards him. Indignantly, she rejects them and states her determination to escape. At that moment, Maometto enters. He says that he understands her conflicting emotions on discovering that "Uberto" is now Maometto, but he still loves her and wishes her to reign with him as queen of Italy while he will allow her father and Calbo (who has been described as her brother) to live. Rejecting him, she declares "I loved Uberto; I loathe a liar" and continues to explain that her love for her country is so strong that she could never love him as much. In their duet her conflicting emotions are revealed, with Maometto declaring that she will eventually be his and Anna stating "I love, but sooner would I be buried than yield to love".

Noise from outside is revealed to be Maometto's soldiers ready to continue their attack on the citadel. As he prepares to leave, Maometto promises that while he still has a hope of possessing Anna, he will protect her father. She insists on something to guarantee her safety in his absence and, as a symbol of his promise and his protection, he gives her his imperial seal of authority. Urged on by his captains, Maometto vows to fight or die as they leave for battle in the citadel. Anna vows to find a means of preserving her honor, and also leaves.

*The church vaults with Anna's mother's tomb.* Erisso and Calbo are hiding in the vault. Erisso speaks of his frustration, wishing that he could be fighting again in the citadel. He kneels before his wife's tomb wishing that he too was dead and not having to endure his daughter's disgrace and to see her with Maometto. Calbo tries to assure him that Anna was duped, that she is innocent, and that she was forcefully abducted by Maometto's men.

*[Venice version, 1822: At this point, Maometto enters and confronts the two men. Maometto proclaims that he still wishes to marry Anna, but Erisso states that he would rather kill his daughter. In a duet which becomes a trio, the three men lay their out their claims and feelings, Calbo asserting his love for Anna, Erisso revealing that Anna has become Calbo's wife, and when Maometto swears vengeance upon the two men, Calbo taunts him to return to the battlefield. The trio concludes with all three claiming that Anna shall be his reward—as a father, as a lover, as a husband. Maometto then leaves. All of the confrontation between Anna, her father, and Calbo—see below-- is omitted].*

While Erisso hopes that Calbo is right, Anna enters. Initially, he spurns his daughter for consorting with the enemy but she swears that she will never marry Maometto. As proof, Anna gives him Maometto's seal, which will enable both men to come out of hiding. However, she declares that she must die, but not before her father marries her to Calbo at her mother's tomb. Erisso clasps both their hands in his as they all stand beside the tomb: The two men depart for the combat against Maometto. Alone, Anna contemplates her situation. From the church above the vaults, a women's chorus is heard praying.

*[Venice version, 1822: The women join Anna and a commotion is heard as the battle rages. Suddenly, the Venetian soldiers rush in proclaiming their victory and they are followed by Erisso and Calbo. Erisso embraces his daughter and tells her that she must give herself in marriage to Calbo. She agrees. With the women and soldiers singing of their joy, Anna joins Calbo at the altar as the opera ends.]*

The women call out to Anna and a few of them enter the vault to tell her that Maometto has been defeated by Erisso and has fled, but that her life is now in danger, since he will be seeking revenge. Maometto's men rush in, but they appear to be powerless to act, in spite of her demand that she be struck down rather than be taken captive. At that moment, Maometto and his captains enter and confront Anna. Maometto asks for his seal to be returned, but she tells him that she gave it to her father and that she has married Calbo. She then stabs herself and dies on her mother's tomb.

## Semiramide: Synopsis

**ACT I:** *Ancient Babylon.* The high priest Oroe opens the Temple of Baal, as Idreno, an Indian prince, pays homage. Assur, a prince descended from Baal, brings offerings in hopes that Queen Semiramide will choose him as successor to her late husband. The queen enters, but with a flash of lightning, the sacred altar flame goes out. Believing this to be a bad omen, Oroe warns that the ceremony should not proceed.

Arsace, commander of the Assyrian army, arrives in answer to a summons from Semiramide. He warmly recalls his beloved Azema, whom he once rescued from barbarians. He entrusts a casket containing relics and documents from his late father to Oroe. Assur appears, and when Arsace tells him that he will ask Semiramide for Azema's hand in reward for his bravery, the older man warns that Azema has been betrothed since birth to Ninia, the crown prince who has long been missing. Arsace is defiant in his love, and Assur admits his own desire for Azema.

In the Hanging Gardens, Semiramide awaits the arrival of Arsace, whom she hopes to wed. She receives a message from an oracle stating that she will regain peace of mind with a new marriage. When Arsace enters, she tells him that she is aware of Assur's ambitions for the throne and will not permit Assur to wed Azema. Arsace believes the queen knows of his love for Azema, but Semiramide mistakenly thinks that Arsace's ardor is meant for herself and vows to give him whatever he desires.

In the throne room, Semiramide announces that Arsace will become both king and her husband. The news comes as a surprise to everyone, especially when the queen promises Azema's hand to Idreno, and Indian monarch. Thunder and lightning signal the gods' displeasure, and the ghost of the fallen King Nino (Semiramide's late husband) appears. He announces that Arsace will reign but only after a victim is sacrificed in atonement. Fearlessly, Arsace vows to avenge the king's death, but the apparition vanishes, warning Semiramide not to follow until her time has come. The crowd wonders what guilty person could have angered the gods.

**ACT II:** In a hall within the palace, Assur reminds Semiramide that he arranged the death of her husband King Nino, so that she could ascend the throne on her own, and that she promised her hand to him in return. The queen repudiates his claim and says that if her son Ninia were alive, he would help her. Assur is determined to be avenged for this betrayal.

In the sanctuary, the high priest Oroe tells Arsace that he is actually the long-lost crown prince Ninia and shows him a scroll written by the dying Nino identifying Assur and Semiramide as his assassins. Arsace accepts the duty of killing Assur but cannot bring himself to take his own mother's life.

Azema mourns the loss of her beloved Arsace, but when Idreno appears, she realizes that Arsace hasn't married the queen yet. Idreno still hopes Azema will accept his love. Semiramide and Arsace enter, but he says that he cannot go through with the marriage, showing her the fatal scroll. Guilt stricken, she bids her newly rediscovered son to kill her and avenge his father, but Arsace hopes that the gods will spare his mother. Now knowing that Nino was his father, he resolves to visit the death king's tomb.

Outside Nino's tomb, Assur learns from loyal conspirators that Oroe has frightened the people with omens, and their chance to seize the throne is lost. Assur plans to hide in the tomb and ambush Arsace but becomes frightened when he has a vision of an iron hand brandishing a sword. His cohorts fear he has gone mad, and are relieved when the apparition fades and he regains his composure.

In the vault beneath the tomb, a group of priests awaits the traitor who will try to violate its precincts. Guided by Oroe, Arsace enters the vault and conceals himself to await his rival. Assur appears, and Semiramide descends in hopes of saving Arsace. Wandering in the dark, all three feel overcome by fear. When Oroe tells Arsace to strike, he accidentally falls Semiramide, who has stepped between him and Assur. Oroe orders Assur to be arrested and stops Arsace, who despairs at having unintentionally killed his mother, from committing suicide. The people rejoice in the gods' victory and implore Arsace to assume the throne.