

SYNOPSIS

Act I

City of Jerusalem besieged.

At the time of the First Crusade, the Christian general Goffredo, certain of an imminent victory, urges the brave Rinaldo to conquer Jerusalem, promising him the hand of his daughter Almirena, whom the knight is in love with. The girl supports the heroic feat with words of encouragement for her beloved. Meanwhile, the Saracen King Argante arrives at the Christian camp, offering a three-day truce, readily accepted. Left alone, Argante meets with the sorceress Armida, his lover, who promises him to remove Rinaldo from the battlefield, thus ensuring victory for the Saracen army.

A place of delights with springs, boulevards where birds fly and sing.

Rinaldo and Almirena are sharing a romantic moment when Armida appears intending to kidnap the girl. Rinaldo tries to oppose, but Armida rejects him with her magic arts and vanishes together with Almirena. Briefed about what has happened, Goffredo suggests Rinaldo to visit a Christian magician he has heard about and who is able to counter Armida's tricks. Rinaldo thus regains hope and sets off with Goffredo.

Act II

Great calm sea.

Rinaldo and Goffredo are on the seashore looking for the magician. From a ship a beautiful woman invites Rinaldo to follow her with the promise of seeing Almirena again. Then the melodious song of the sirens rises: entranced, the knight boards on the magic ship, determined to find his beloved. Goffredo's efforts to retain him are worthless.

A delightful garden in the enchanted palace of Armida.

Almirena repels Argante's insistent love offers and weeps for her cruel fate. In the meantime, Rinaldo is forced in Armida's presence, who immediately falls in love with him: the sorceress takes the form of Almirena to seduce the knight, but Rinaldo is not at all deceived and rejects her. Then comes Argante: believing to see Almirena, he declares his love for her again and promises to free her. At that point Armida resumes her appearance and swears revenge against the traitorous lover.

Act III

Horrid mountain with cliffs and waterfalls.

Goffredo reaches the mountain where Armida's palace is located: ready to break in with his sword, he is stopped by the Christian magician who offers him an enchanted stick which he can break Armida's spells with.

Garden of Armida.

Armida is determined to kill Almirena, but Rinaldo begs her to spare his beloved's life. Meanwhile, Goffredo arrives: thanks to the enchanted stick, he manages to dissolve the enchanted garden. Armida escapes, while Almirena can finally embrace her father and her beloved.

A great deserted countryside, in the depths of which the city of Jerusalem can be seen.

In the Saracen camp, Armida and Argante reconcile and the latter prepares for battle. Likewise, on the Christian front everything is ready for the decisive assault: Goffredo and Rinaldo attend the parade of their ranks. The battle begins and Rinaldo leads the Christians to victory and the liberation of Jerusalem. Taken prisoners, Armida and Argante are led to the presence of Goffredo: choosing to convert to Christianity, they save their lives.

In general rejoicing, everyone sings a hymn to virtue.