

The libretto in brief

Traduzione di Chris Owen

Act One

The scene is Corinth, a gallery in Créon's palace.

Créon's daughter, Dircé, is preparing to marry Jason, but she is troubled at the thought of Médée, the hero's previous wife whom he is about to abandon. Médée, the powerful sorceress from Colchis, had helped Jason and the Argonauts to steal the Golden Fleece, betraying her family and bearing him two children. Dircé is consoled by her maidservants, who are helping her to prepare for the wedding, and she prays to Hymen that the new union might be auspicious. Créon, Jason and the Argonauts enter. The king reassures Jason about the fate of his children, while the Argonauts triumphantly bear the Golden Fleece taken in Colchis. On seeing this, however, Dircé falls prey, once again, to feelings of foreboding over the presence of Médée, even though Jason, her father and everyone present seek to hearten her. A mysterious stranger roams the palace: it is Médée, determined to defend her rights as a wife and those of her children before her faithless husband. The angry Créon confronts the sorceress and orders her to leave. Left alone with Jason, Médée vainly attempts to convince him through flattery and threats to return to her, but she eventually curses him and promises vengeance. They both lament the unhappy influence the Golden Fleece has had over their lives.

Act Two

A wing in Créon's palace overlooking the temple of Juno.

Médée plans her revenge, although her maidservant, Nérís, pleads with her to leave Corinth and save herself from the king's wrath, as well as that of the people. Créon arrives with his entourage and again urges the sorceress to leave the city. Médée asks him to give her one more day to bid her children farewell. After hesitating, Créon agrees to her request. Médée is overcome and Nérís, whose destiny is bound to that of her mistress, expresses her undying loyalty. Médée recovers from her state of dejection and returns to her plans for revenge over Jason, their children and Dircé. The sorceress asks Jason to allow her to see the children one last time; she pretends to be distraught at the thought of being separated from them and, with the hero, recalls the happy days of their love. Alone with Nérís, Médée orders her to send a wedding gift to Dircé, through the children: a cloak and a diadem given to her by Apollo, both of which, however, have been poisoned. As Jason's marriage to Dircé is being celebrated in the temple, Médée pronounces her terrible threats of vengeance.

Act Three

A barren place between the temple and Créon's palace.

Médée calls upon the gods to give her the strength to wreak vengeance on her children. When Nérís brings her the children, the sorceress is initially overcome with love and compassion, dropping the dagger and ordering the servant to take the children away from her into the temple. However, the thought of leaving them to Jason soon rekindles her desire to kill them and thus have her revenge. The Corinthians can be heard mourning the death of Dircé as Médée, surrounded by the Erynes, picks up the dagger and enters the temple to kill her children. When Jason enters, he is met by Nérís, but it is too late: Médée emerges from the temple holding a blood-stained dagger. She justifies her act of revenge and predicts that Jason will roam the earth in despair and without peace until the day he dies, when they will meet once more in Hades. The sorceress vanishes into the air and the temple bursts into flame, to the terror and horror of all.