

# The libretto in brief

Traduzione di Christopher Owen

## Act One

*A large hall in the castle*

Old and blind, baron Archibaldo anxiously waits in his castle for his son, Manfredo, to return from war.

He recalls episodes of his youth, when he had marched south to conquer Italy and had become captivated by the country's beauty. By dawn, his son has still not arrived and his loyal servant, Flaminio, accompanies him to his chambers. In the meantime, Fiora, Manfredo's wife, who has been forced into marriage for political reasons, secretly meets Avito, her one-time fiancé. They exchange mutual declarations of love, until a sudden noise causes Avito to flee. It is Archibaldo who, on finding Fiora outside her chambers, accuses her of betrayal; she defends herself claiming she has left them to wait for her husband. Flaminio announces the arrival of Manfredo, who tenderly greets his wife; she, on the other hand, receives him coldly. Fiora's behaviour confirms Archibaldo's suspicions.

## Act Two

*A terrace on the high castle walls*

Manfredo has to leave for war again and he begs Fiora to wave a veil from the top of the highest tower until he disappears from her sight. Manfredo leaves and Avito immediately returns. Fiora, who has been touched by her husband's signs of affection, expresses her wish to end their relationship. Avito is forced to leave due to the arrival of a maidservant bearing Fiora a casket containing the white veil that Manfredo has sent her. Fiora climbs to the highest tower to wave the veil for her husband. Avito returns and Fiora, divided between her sense of duty and a passion for her lover, eventually yields to Avito's persistent advances. The two lovers lock in a long kiss and do not realise that Archibaldo has entered, accompanied by Flaminio. Avito takes out a dagger and lunges at the old man, but he is stopped by Flaminio. Meanwhile, unable to see his wife on the ramparts, Manfredo has turned back. Archibaldo sends Flaminio to receive him and, once alone with Fiora, demands she confess the name of her lover. As she refuses to tell him, he is overcome with anger and strangles her. When his son comes, the baron tells him of his wife's faithlessness and assumes responsibility for murdering her.

## Act Three

*The crypt of the castle's church*

Fiora's body lies in the crypt of the castle. Avito wishes to see her one last time and kisses her on the lips. As he is leaving, he meets Manfredo who reveals that, in order to discover the lover's identity, Archibaldo has had Fiora's lips smeared with poison. Avito then confesses that he is the lover, declares his love for Fiora and invites Manfredo to take his revenge. But Manfredo forgives both his wife and the now dying Avito, and he too kisses Fiora's lips. When Archibaldo arrives, he finds his son in the throes of death and his triumph turns to despair.