

# Princess Ida

or, Castle Adamant

A Respectful Operatic Perversion of Tennyson's "Princess," in a Prologue and Two Acts

Synopsis by Fredric Woodbridge Wilson

Produced at the Savoy Theatre, London, under the management of R. D'Oyly Carte, on Saturday, January 5, 1884, through August 16, 1884, and from September 15 through October 9, 1884, for a total of 246 performances. Sullivan conducted the first performance.

KING HILDEBRAND	<i>Baritone</i>	Rutland Barrington
HILARION, son of King Hildebrand	<i>Tenor</i>	H. Bracy
Hilarion's Friends		
CYRIL	<i>Tenor</i>	Durward Lely
FLORIAN	<i>Baritone</i>	Charles Ryley
KING GAMA	<i>Light Baritone</i>	George Grossmith
King Gama's Sons		
ARAC	<i>Bass-Baritone</i>	Richard Temple
GURON	<i>Baritone</i>	Warwick Grey
SCYNTHIUS	<i>Bass-Baritone</i>	William Lugg
PRINCESS IDA, King Gama's Daughter	<i>Soprano</i>	Leonora Braham
LADY BLANCHE, Professor of Abstract Science	<i>Contralto</i>	Rosina Brandram
LADY PSYCHE, Professor of Humanities	<i>Mezzo-Soprano</i>	Kate Chard
MELISSA, Lady Blanche's Daughter	<i>Mezzo-Soprano</i>	Jessie Bond
Girl Graduates		
SACHARISSA	<i>Chorus</i>	Sybil Grey
CHLOE	<i>Chorus</i>	Miss Heathcote
ADA	<i>Chorus</i>	Miss Twyman

SOLDIERS, COURTIERS, GIRL GRADUATES, "DAUGHTERS OF THE PLOUGH," etc.

Produced at the Fifth Avenue Theatre, New York, under the management of John Stetson, on February 11, 1884, for 48 performances through March 22, 1884. The opera was not revived in London during D'Oyly Carte's original management. First London revival at the Prince's Theatre, under the management of Rupert D'Oyly Carte, December 30, 1919, during a repertory season.

PROLOGUE —THE PAVILION IN KING HILDEBRAND'S PALACE

Florian, leads the soldiers and courtiers, awaits the arrival of King Gama and his daughter Ida (Chorus, *Search throughout the panorama*). She had been betrothed to Hildebrand's son Hilarion twenty years ago, at the age of one. It is the appointed day for their wedding, and the consequence of Ida's failure to appear is war between Hildebrand and Gama.

Gama is spied in the distance; but it cannot be seen whether Ida accompanies him. Hildebrand directs his court to prepare for both possibilities: "For as King Gama brings the Princess here, Or brings her not, so shall King Gama have Much more than everything — much less than nothing!" (Song and Chorus, *Now hearken to my strict command*).

Hilarion enters (Recitative, *To-day we meet — my baby bride and I*), and he sings of his uncertainties and anticipations (Ballad, *Ida was a twelvemonth old*). He has heard, however, "That Princess Ida has forsworn the world, And, with a band of women, shut herself Within a lonely country house, and there Devotes herself to stern philosophies!" King Gama's three rough sons, Arac, Guron, and Scynthus arrive (Song, *We are warriors three*), followed by the misanthropic Gama (Song, *If you give me your attention, I will tell you what I am!*). Gama admits that Ida "rules a woman's University," behind the walls of Castle Adamant, immune to love's influences: "He who desires to gain their favour must Be qualified to strike their teeming brains, And not their hearts." In short, the University teaches feminism.

Gama suggests a way for Hilarion to approach Ida (Duet, *Perhaps if you address the lady*), but Hildebrand warns that if Hilarion's attempts are unsuccessful he will storm Castle Adamant, and Gama will be hung; in the meantime Gama will be held hostage. Hilarion resolves to go to Castle Adamant (Recitative, *Come, Cyril, Florian, our course is plain*), and the three friends plot their strategy (Finale, *Expressive glances Shall be our lances*). The prologue ends as Gama and his three sons are marched off (Trio, *For a month to dwell In a dungeon cell*).

## ACT I — THE GARDENS OF CASTLE ADAMANT, AT NIGHT

The girl graduates are seated at the feet of Lady Psyche as she offers advice on their studies (Chorus, *Towards the empyrean heights*), concluding with a lesson on the male sex: "Man is nature's sole mistake!" Lady Blanche enters and administers disciplines to wayward pupils, and Princess Ida is greeted on her entrance (Chorus, *Mighty maiden with a mission*). She replies with an invocation to Minerva (Aria, *At this my call*), and delivers a lecture on the weaknesses of Man. As Ida leads the graduates off, the discontented Lady Blanche sings of her ambition and her envy of Ida (Song, *Come mighty Must!*) As Lady Blanche leaves, Hilarion and his two friends scale the Castle wall (Trio, *Gently, gently*). They engage in sophomoric ridicule of the school (Recitative, *A Woman's college! maddest folly going!*) and its doctrines (*They intend to send a wire To the moon*). Finding some academic robes, they put them on amidst further clowning (Trio, *I am a maiden, cold and stately*). The Princess

enters, reading, and they impersonate novice female pupils as they share *doubles-entendres* in their conversation with Ida. They sing a quartet (*The world is but a broken toy*), after which Lady Psyche enters. Florian recognizes her as his estranged sister, their childhood playmate, and they confide their secret to her. She tries to explain to them the reason for their renunciation of mankind (Song, "*The Ape and the Lady*"). Melissa, daughter of Lady Blanche, discovers them, and reacts with innocent curiosity: "How marvellously strange! and are you then Indeed young men?" The ladies' convictions are somewhat shaken (Quintet, *The woman of the wisest wit*). As they leave, Lady Blanche intercepts Melissa, and reveals that she knows they are imposters: "It's very odd. One is a tenor, two are baritones!" But Melissa appeals to her mother's self-interest: if Hilarion should be successful, Lady Blanche would be left in charge (Duet, *Now wouldn't you like to rule the roast*).

As Lady Blanche leaves, Florian enters, trying to get Melissa's cooperation in their scheme. She warns him that they have been discovered, and that they must escape. The other two men and all the women enter, spreading their luncheon out upon the rocks (Chorus, *Merrily ring the luncheon bell!*). Ida, on learning that the disguised Hilarion comes from Hildebrand's court, asks after the prince — Hilarion himself — whose name she has forgotten. Hilarion replies, with teasing word-play, describing to Ida "her" intimate knowledge of the prince. Cyril, grown tipsy, repeats a kissing-song Hilarion used to sing (Song, *Would you know the kind of maid*), the amorous sentiments of which arouse the Princess's anger, and she orders Cyril away. Hilarion strikes Cyril, who accidentally calls Hilarion by name. Their identities are discovered, and the horrified Ida, in her alarm, loses her balance and falls into the stream. Hilarion jumps in and saves her (Chorus, *Oh! joy, our chief is saved*). Ida has no mercy, however, and she orders the three men chained. Hilarion sings (Song, *Whom thou has chained must wear his chain*) as they are marched off. Melissa enters, announcing (*Madam, without the castle walls*) that an army approaches; and, indeed, the Castle is invaded by Hildebrand's forces (Ensemble, *Rend the air with wailing*). King Hildebrand reminds Ida of her betrothal to Hilarion (Solo, *Some years ago, No doubt you know*). Gama's sons plead with their sister for their own safety (Trio, *We may remark, though nothing can Dismay us*), but Ida is adamant (Solo, *Though I am but a girl*). The act ends in a tableau.

## ACT II — THE COURTYARD OF CASTLE ADAMANT

The ladies of the University, in battle dress, prepare to defend the Castle (Chorus, *Death to the invader!*). Melissa speaks for some of the girls when she confesses to some difficulty in summoning the necessary courage: "We are more inclined to say, 'Please you, do not hurt us.'" Princess Ida enters to find that the preparations have not been fully carried out. Her cherished plans are doomed to failure (Song, *I built upon a rock*). Ida's father and brothers request an audience. Explaining that "Hildebrand Is loth to war with women," Gama

proposes that Arac, Guron, and Scynthius should wage combat with Hilarion, Cyril, and Florian. Gama complains that Hildebrand has found the worst kind of torture — he treats him so well that he can find nothing about which to complain (Song, *Whene'er I spoke Sarcastic joke*). Ida agrees to his proposal, and Gama is hysterical with relief.

The gates open and Hildebrand's forces enter (Chorus, *When anger spreads his wing*). Hilarion and his friends are brought forward by the "Daughters of the Plough," and Gama's sons by Hildebrand's soldiers. The prisoners exchange insults, as do Hildebrand and Gama. Gama's sons prepare for combat by shedding their heavy armor (Song, *This helmet, I suppose*). The desperate fight (Chorus, *This is our duty plain*) ends in victory for Hilarion, whereupon Ida concedes defeat, resigns her position, and nominates Lady Blanche to assume her post. Princess Ida expresses regret at the failure of her scheme, but Hilarion points out that if she had enlisted all women in her cause, "How Is this Posterity to be provided?" Ida has no answer. Lady Psyche and Melissa have resolved to leave the University with Cyril and Florian — and so Ida willingly abandons Castle Adamant for her betrothed Hilarion (Finale, *With joy abiding*).

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