

January 13, 2022 – Gioachino Rossini's *L'Assedio di Corinto*

Join me this week on the Thursday Night Opera House for the role that put Beverly Sills on the international map, Pamira in Gioachino Rossini's *L'Assedio di Corinto* (*The Siege of Corinth*). Originally known by its French title as *Le siège de Corinthe*, the opera was first performed on October 9, 1826 at the Paris Opéra. The Italian version, which we'll hear tonight, premiered in Parma on January 26, 1828. The opera commemorates the siege and ultimate destruction of the town of Missolonghi in 1826 by Turkish troops during the Greek War of Independence but now takes place during the Turks' 1470 conquest of the Venetian colony of Negroponte. The French version was a partial rewrite of Rossini's *Maometto II* (1820). Six years after her triumphant 1969 La Scala debut as Pamira, Sills was finally heard at the Metropolitan Opera on April 7, 1975 in same role.

Governor Cleomeme (tenor **Harry Theyard**) calls on the citizens of Corinth to decide whether to surrender to the Turkish emperor, Mahomet (bass **Justino Diaz**). Neocle (mezzo-soprano **Shirley Verrett** in a "trouser" role) and Jero (bass **Gwynne Howell**) persuade the citizens to fight on. The governor has promised his daughter Pamira (soprano **Beverly Sills**) to Neocle, but Pamira loves a man she met in Athens named Almanzor (who's in reality Mahomet). The Turks conquer the city but not the fortress. Mahomet tells his friend Omar (bass **Robert Lloyd**) about the young woman he fell in love with while traveling under the pseudonym. Cleomeme and Pamira are taken prisoner. Mahomet and Pamira recognize one another, and he asks her to marry him. Cleomeme curses his daughter.

Mahomet tries to console Pamira. Neocle has been captured attempting to fight his way to freedom. To save her fiancé, Pamira says he is her brother. The Greeks rise in revolt and Pamira decides to die with them rather than marry an enemy of her people. Neocle and Pamira join the Greek resistance in the Corinthian catacombs. Mahomet comes alone to plead for Pamira's love, but learns that Neocle is her intended husband. Pamira makes peace with her father. Admitting that the fight is hopeless, Jero leads the Greeks out to battle. The defeated Greeks set fire to Corinth rather than leave it to the Turks.

Thomas Schippers conducts the London Symphony Orchestra and the Ambrosian Opera Chorus in this 1975 recording.

In a 1969 La Scala performance conducted by **Carlo Franci**, **Beverly Sills** sings the final scene from *L'Assedio di Corinto*: <https://youtu.be/NmZDewBRt4Q>.