DON GIOVANNI

SYNOPSIS

ACT I

Late at night, Leporello, the servant of Don Giovanni, is keeping watch while his master attempts to rape the daughter of the Commendatore, Donna Anna. She escapes and gives chase, trying to discover the identity of the intruder. The Commendatore rushes to her defense as Don Giovanni slays the old man and flees. Anna returns with Don Ottavio, her fiancé, and the two swear revenge. In the early morning, Donna Elvira, a young woman from Burgos, searches for Don Giovanni; she is one of his jilted lovers. Servant and master spy on her and when they all meet, Don Giovanni talks his way out of trouble and escapes, leaving Leporello to explain his master’s philandering ways. He shows her Don Giovanni’s “little black book.” Around midday, Don Giovanni and Leporello happen upon the rustic nuptial celebration of Masetto and Zerlina. The latter excites Giovanni’s fancy, and he invites everyone to his villa—the better to snare the young girl. The seduction is interrupted by Elvira, who denounces him and sweeps Zerlina away. Anna and Ottavio arrive, not yet recognizing Don Giovanni as the murderer. When Elvira interrupts again, Giovanni attempts to pass off her hystericlas madness, but the suspicion is planted. After he leaves to “help” Elvira in her distress, Anna realizes the truth, recounts the events preceding her father’s death, and concludes with a call for vengeance. Ottavio is then left alone to contemplate his love for Anna. Meanwhile, not in the least deterred, Don Giovanni orders Leporello to prepare a lavish party for all the neighbors. He is reminded to add more names to his famous list—Zerlina’s among them. The guests begin to arrive as daylight wanes. Zerlina vainly tries to soothe a worried, jealous Masetto. Don Giovanni renews his wooing of Zerlina, but her sharp-eyed fiancé intervenes. As Giovanni leads the young couple into the villa, Anna, Ottavio, and Elvira enter wearing masks. They are quickly invited by the master to join the festivities. With the party in full swing, Don Giovanni leads Zerlina into an adjoining room. Her cries, however, bring everyone to her assistance. Don Giovanni tries to make Leporello seem like the offending villain, but no one is taken in. The three guests unmask, and the tone of the party suddenly turns accusatory. Surrounded and condemned, Don Giovanni’s adventures seem at an end, but by a sudden intervention he once again escapes his accusers.

ACT II

Later that evening Don Giovanni, after soothing a disgruntled Leporello with some coins, hatches his latest plot, this one aimed at Elvira’s maid; it requires master and servant to exchange clothes. Elvira is lured away by the man she thinks is her beloved and the real Giovanni is left to serenade the maid. Just then an armed Masetto and his followers arrive in search of the fugitive. The supposed Leporello sends them off in all directions, personally disarms Masetto, and beats him. Zerlina finds Masetto crestfallen and aching, and she tries to comfort him by offering her own personal remedy. Leporello, still disguised as Don Giovanni, is trying to escape the deceived of Elvira when Anna and Ottavio and, a few moments later, Masetto and Zerlina converge upon him. Believing they have found Don Giovanni, they threaten him with a speedy death. Leporello reveals his identity and everyone is dumbfounded; Anna retires. With profuse apologies, Leporello manages to escape. Ottavio asks that Anna be informed of his determination to punish Don Giovanni. Elvira finds that in spite of her outrage, she still feels pity for Don Giovanni.
Later that night Don Giovanni and Leporello have sought refuge in a cemetery. The raucous conversation is interrupted by a ghostly voice from the statue over the Commendatore’s grave. In response to a doomful warning, Don Giovanni invites the statue, through Leporello’s terrified mediation, to come to Don Giovanni’s villa for a pre-dawn supper. To the servant's horror, the invitation is accepted. The two return to the villa to prepare. Ottavio seeks to console Anna, suggesting marriage. Temporarily rejected, he charges Anna with cruelty. Anna protests her love and begs for patience. Don Giovanni eats supper while a wind band serenades him with popular operatic tunes of the day (including a snippet from Figaro). Elvira rushes in resolved to forgive Don Giovanni and tries to persuade him to change his ways. He cruelly taunts her, and she leaves in despair. Moments later, her terrified scream is heard and Leporello rushes out to see what is wrong. He too screams in terror and returns shaken, announcing the arrival of the statue of the Commendatore. In deadly jest, the Commendatore asks if Don Giovanni will dine with him according to the rules of hospitality. Arrogant to the end, Giovanni accepts. Pressing further, the Commendatore demands repeatedly that Don Giovanni repent his sins, but he is refused again and again. Finally, Don Giovanni meets his death.

**EPILOGUE**

The other characters return searching for Giovanni, and Leporello tells them what has happened. They all point out the moral of the opera:

*This is the evil-doer’s end.*

*And sinners will die just as they have lived.*