

## FLORENCIA EN EL AMAZONAS OPERA SYNOPSIS

Daniel Catán, composer; Marcela Fuentes-Berain, librettist

### ACT I

*The Amazon rainforest, the early 1900s.* Passengers aboard the steamboat *El Dorado* are traveling to hear the legendary but intensely private opera singer Florencia Grimaldi sing at the reopening of the theater in Manaus. Riolobo, a mystical character who can assume many forms, introduces the embarking passengers: Paula and Alvaro, a middle-aged couple attempting to rekindle their marriage; Rosalba, a journalist researching a biography on Grimaldi; and Florencia herself, travelling alone and incognito, harboring a burning desire to find her long-lost lover Cristóbal, a butterfly hunter, whose love unlocked her staggering powers of musical expression.

Once en route, Rosalba accidentally drops her research notes overboard. The captain's nephew, Arcadio, manages to rescue them, and the pair becomes aware of a strong mutual attraction. The evening concludes as Paula and Alvaro's attempt at a romantic dinner dissolves into a bitter quarrel. Initially unaware of her identity, the captain tells Florencia of the fate of Cristóbal, who disappeared without trace in the jungle, thus dashing her dearest ambition. As a heated card game brings out the contrasting sexual and hostile tensions between Rosalba and Arcadio and Paula and Alvaro, a violent storm brews outside. Trying to save the ship from being crushed, Alvaro is swept overboard. The captain is knocked unconscious, and despite Arcadio's efforts at the helm, the ship runs aground.

### ACT II

Paula mourns the loss of Alvaro, realizing that it was pride—not lack of love—that stood between them. Riolobo appears again mysteriously to return Alvaro to the ship, claiming that Paula's laments saved him from death. Rosalba, distraught that her notebook has been ruined in the storm, talks to the incognito Florencia about her research. During the ensuing discussion, Florencia declares passionately that Grimaldi's gift was a result of her love for Cristóbal. Rosalba realizes that she is talking to her heroine and, hearing her story, decides her own love for Arcadio shouldn't be suppressed. To Rosalba's joy and relief, Arcadio reciprocates her feelings. Paula and Alvaro have also rediscovered their joy and love for each other.

After a long voyage, *El Dorado* reaches Manaus at last; however, the passengers learn that cholera has struck the town. The passengers do not disembark. Florencia laments her loss of Cristóbal, but as she dreams of finding him, her spirit drifts towards his in a mystical transformation.

*Synopsis courtesy of the Metropolitan Opera.*