

L'AFRICAIN

Giacomo Meyerbeer

Libretto by Eugène Scribe

First Performance: Opéra, Paris, 28 April 1865

Vasco de Gama, who was presumed lost at sea, returns to Portugal, bringing two natives from the new land he has discovered. These two natives are the Indian queen Selika and Nelusco, her attendant. Inez, Don Diego's daughter is in love with da Gama, but her father wishes her to marry Don Pedro, president of the council. Don Pedro orders Vasco jailed on charges that his voyage was an insult to the council.

Vasco is alone in his prison cell.

Vasco's O paradis!

Selika, whose rank is still unknown to the Portuguese, has come to love Vasco. She finds her way to his prison cell and confesses her love. She also warns him of Nelusco's jealousy. Inez has agreed to marry Don Pedro and Vasco is freed.

Don Pedro has set out to explore the new land that Vasco had discovered. Don Pedro has brought along Inez and Selika and Nelusco to serve as guides. Nelusco plans to blow up the ship. After Vasco is freed from jail, he outfits a ship and overtakes Don Pedro's ship at sea. His attempts to warn Don Pedro of Nelusco's plot is rebuffed and Vasco is seized. The ship is driven aground by a storm and Nelusco, with his savage followers, attack the ship, slaying all but a few of the crew.

Selika is welcomed back as their queen. She prevents Vasco's execution by claiming to be his wife. The marriage is barely celebrated when Inez is brought in. Vasco's love for Inez is rekindled. Selika orders Nelusco to provide Vasco and Inez with a ship with which to return to Portugal. As the ship sails away, Selika breathes the blossoms from a poison-laden mancanilla tree and dies. Nelusco discovers the lifeless body and shares her death.