

THE TROJAN WOMEN

CAST

Hecuba: formerly the Queen of Troy, soprano

Xena (Polyxena): Youngest surviving daughter of Hecuba, mezzo-soprano

Toby (Talthybius): Greek soldier, baritone

Helen: daughter-in-law of Hecuba, widow of Paris, wife of Menelaus, soprano

Cassandra: Oldest living daughter of Hecuba, mezzo-soprano

Andromache: Daughter-in-law of Hecuba, widow of Hector, soprano

Astyanax: six year old Grandson of Hecuba, non-singing, non-speaking role

Greek soldiers, supernumeraries

It is the first morning since the Greeks burned the city of Troy to the ground and ended the Trojan War. The queen and the princesses of Troy are gathered together in the burning rubble, awaiting the decisions of the conquering Greeks. The women are now war prizes to be given away as slaves to the generals of the Greek army. The women wait word that will tell them whose slave they have become. Each woman is lost in her own particular fears.

Queen Hecuba is old and fears spending her last years in a foreign land as a slave. Her youngest child Xena is rebellious and anxious to continue the fight against her oppressors. Cassandra seems to be mad, and though she speaks the truth she is never believed. Cassandra is thought to be a mad fool, and the role is played for all its dark comedy. Cassandra is acted as a comic role, but the character reveals the reality of the tragedy of war. Andromache, the wife of the hero Hector, is noble and composed, but fears for the welfare of her son Astyanax. Helen, the consort of Paris, has perhaps the most to fear since her husband Menelaus might rather execute her for her adultery rather than take her back.

The women gain the trust of a young Greek soldier, Toby, and through him they devise a plan whereby the child Astyanax can be saved. Xena is led off to an arranged marriage and Helen goes off to face her husband.

Though suffering greatly, the women of the House of Priam seem to have survived intact and the youngest son of that house has been safely preserved. But in the final moments of the opera Hecuba comes to learn how horribly she and her entire family have been betrayed by the soldier they thought they could manipulate.

The House of Priam is destroyed utterly, and the surviving women of Troy are led off to Greek ships and lives of slavery.