

THE STORY

PROLOGUE

Two companies are preparing for their evening performances at the home of the wealthiest man in Vienna, Austria. The evening is scheduled to begin with the opera company's premiere of a new work on the Greek myth of Ariadne. Afterward, a troupe of comedians is set to offer *Fickle Zerbinetta and Her Four Lovers*. Fireworks will conclude the festivities at dusk.

When it becomes clear that the pre-performance dinner is lasting too long, it is announced that both shows must be performed simultaneously in order to conclude the entertainment before the fireworks begin.

The idealistic **Composer** of *Ariadne* is scandalized at being asked to shorten his opera. At first he refuses to allow any changes to his masterpiece. But when **Zerbinetta** turns her charms on him, he capitulates.

THE OPERA

The simultaneous performances of *Ariadne* and *Fickle Zerbinetta and her Four Lovers* begin with the character of **Ariadne**, who has been abandoned on the island of Naxos by her husband Theseus. She longs for death, seeing it as her only refuge from the grief she feels.

The comedians try in vain to lift Ariadne's spirits, but she is inconsolable. Zerbinetta addresses her woman-to-woman, insisting that the best way to mend a broken heart is to welcome a new lover.

A stranger is announced, and Ariadne believes that Death has come to her at last. In truth, it is the young god **Bacchus**, son of Jupiter. He is enthralled by Ariadne, she is awakened from her trance, and they are transformed.

As they succumb to passion, Zerbinetta and the Composer play out their own love story, and the comedienne reminds us that she was right all along.