

La Rosa

Synopsis

This tragic story of betrayal, murder, true love and redemption is interwoven in the complex tapestry and turbulent times of pre and post bellum America and the independence wars in Europe. Spanning two continents and fifty years their story is interwoven with insurrection and opera.

Characters – Georgia and Mississippi – the Beginning

Victoria Hunt – widowed matriarch of a well-to-do southern family with plantations and slaves. She is a typical wealthy southern woman of her day.

Beauregard (Beau) Hunt – First son and heir to the Hunt fortune he is handsome, well liked and runs the plantation well.

Clayton Hunt – Second son of Victoria he is dissolute, a gambler and womanizer, violent and disliked by most behind his back. He inherits nothing. His shoddy plantation next door barely makes it.

Giovannina Hunt – beautiful bride of Beau she is an accomplished opera singer. They have been married a year.

Annette Hunt – Sister of Beau and Clayton she is also an opera singer and was trained in Milan.

Clara – An opera-singing friend of Annette's visits from Milan. She's infatuated with Giuseppe Verdi (who does not reciprocate).

Antonio – a very wealthy neighbouring plantation owner. He is interested in Clara but while she doesn't reject him her interests are elsewhere.

Carlo – a wealthy Austrian relative of Antonio.

Samuel Hunt – a house slave on the Hunt Plantation. Trustworthy and loyal, he falls in love with Jessie.

Jessie – a young house slave in Antonio's household, she looks comes to look after Giovannina.

Velda The Voodoo Queen – summoned to the Hunt household for a séance entertainment at the party, her predictions are dark, foreboding and accurate.

The Story in Hours One and Two

It is 1840, 20 years before the Civil War.

The Magnolias Plantation is just outside of Savannah Georgia

We join the joyous 1st wedding anniversary ball of Beauregard and Giovannina Hunt. Despite the lavish gaiety and spectacle, the social upheavals that are occurring in Europe and the rising anti-slave feelings in America create an undercurrent of fear and uncertainty. This is true of both slave owners and slaves as the slave's prospects

once “Freed” are far from promising. There are cracks in the veneer of this privileged society who knows its time has come to an end.

Giovannina sings a beautiful song and Beau presents her with an emerald necklace. The first séance is held at the ball for Matriarch Victoria and her cronies and the foretelling is grim.

After the Ball, a drunken Clayton attempts to rape his sister Annette but she escapes. Following the anniversary ball, his brother Clayton, in a staged riding accident, he murders Beau Hunt. Clayton has figured out how to inherit. However, Samuel has noticed the trip-wire marks on Beau’s horse and quickly puts two and two together. He says nothing – he’s just a slave; others notice as well.

Velda The Voodoo Queen has predictions that are dire. On the heels of the séance, Antonio arrives with the news of Beau’s death.

The funeral is held 2 days later after which all the houseguests depart, Clara rushing back to Venice for a part in Nambucco by Verdi.

Following their departure, Clayton and his Mother fight. Victoria realizes that Clayton had killed Beau. Clayton reacts by pushing her out of the window.

Her funeral is a lower key affair. Following his mother’s funeral Clayton leaves Annette and Giovannina alone while he goes whoring and gambling in Savannah.

The Slave’s sense change is coming. They are well aware of the Underground Railroad to the North as well as the creation of the nation of Liberia by freed slaves. Deep in the swamps runaway slaves have created militaristic groups “The Maroons” who run farms and who will fight to the death to protect their freedom. In Europe, the Italian republican movement to escape Austria’s rule is being set back by the pope who is siding with Austria.

Hour Three

Another Ball – this time at Antonio’s lavish plantation “The Roses”. It is even more extravagant than the last, however the discrepancy between slave and owner are even more apparent.

In the stable, Jessie and Samuel meet to share a stolen moment; they are in love.

At the party, the men discuss European independence politics and their possible impacts to their own country and lives. Carlo is happy to be out of Europe.

Meanwhile the girls are upstairs deciding what to wear and gushing over Clara’s exquisite Parisian dress. Clara acknowledges that Antonio is infatuated with her but she won’t leave Italy and give up her career so she “gives” Antonio to Giovannina so now all they have to settle is a husband for Annette.

The slaves revolt at Clayton’s decrepit plantation, killing their overseer and going on a murderous rampage. Oliver, a lead hand, pretends to go along with them but takes the overseer’s horse and hightails it to Savannah to raise the alarm. Most of the slaves have retreated to The Maroons murdering and pillaging as they go. They will receive no mercy so show none. Some decide to head to The Magnolias to free those slaves.

Oliver alerts Clayton who he discovers drunk in a Savannah saloon. Clayton rides home gathering plantation owners en route. They must put down the revolt before it spreads.

Back at The Roses, Giovannina confides to Antonio that Clayton is seeking to marry her but only so he can sell her emeralds to pay his debts. She wonders if Antonio might be interested in her; he is overwhelmed – this is what he was dreaming of. Clayton’s plantation has been destroyed. Clayton and the mob of white men stage pitched battles with the rebelling slaves. Those they capture are decapitated or hung from the trees alongside the road, many are killed.

The next day dawns bright and happy. Clara is headed back to Milan for an opera role. She gives a more than friendly kiss to Antonio who is now thoroughly confused by these women. During a lavish luncheon Antonio asks Giovannina to marry him and she accepts. Clayton arrives with news of the rebellions, the guests scatter quickly back to their estates. Later on Antonio tells Clayton that he is going to marry Giovannina in a months time.

Clayton consults with his lawyer in Savannah; he is trying everything to disinherit his sister Annette and Giovannina. The lawyer tells him that it is hopeless that it has all been tied up securely.

At the grand ball celebrating their engagement Antonio gives Giovannina an Emerald Tiara. Antonio buys Samuel and all of Clayton's house slaves. Clayton is broke and needs the money desperately. Privately Samuel gives Jesse a special brooch that he has carved just for her. They pledge their underlying love for each other.

The grand ball ends and everybody leaves. Giovannina agrees to join Antonio in a few days. Whilst sitting alone the next day she is surprised and raped by a drunken Clayton. In self-defence she kills him with a poker. Samuel and Jesse, who had been standing outside, witness everything and rush in to help. They all panic. Giovannina decides to flee to Milan with Jesse; Giovannina has relatives there who are minor royalty. They hope to get out of town fast before the alarm is raised. Samuel parts from a tearful Jesse. Jesse confides she is pregnant. Samuel returns the tiara to Antonio but with no word of explanation. Although Antonio had promised to free Samuel, this dramatic turn of events causes him to go back on his word to emancipate Samuel. He keeps him as his slave.

Hour Four

Giovannina and Jesse breathe a sigh of relief when the ship for Milan leaves New York harbour. On the route to Milan Jesse develops morning sickness and Shortly after the departure of Jesse and Giovannina, Clara arrives back from her unsuccessful attempt to seduce Verdi and begins to fall for Antonio. He, in turn, falls for her.

Her brothers who are Savoy Princes meet Giovannina in Milan. They do not know she is pregnant as a result of the rape by Clayton. At the welcoming dinner, drawn by her wealth and beauty, a ne'er-do-well minor Prince attempts to ingratiate himself with her. He contrives to push all other potential suitors away.

[1842] Jesse is invited to visit a gypsy encampment by fascinating old woman. She tells Selena about Samuel and her pregnancy. In October of that same year, Jesse gives birth to Samuel’s child, Natalya.

[June 1842] When Giovannina's pregnancy becomes apparent she enters into a marriage of convenience with Fredo, the ne'er-do-well. Her brothers arrange this marriage. Unbeknownst to her brothers, Fredo's friends have persuaded him to marry and then kill off the new wife and son to inherit. Fredo buys poison. Giovannina's brothers learn of his plot. Fredo gives Giovannina the poison pretending it's a tonic, but she does not take all of it. While it does not kill her, it is enough to weaken her that she dies [January 1843] shortly after giving birth to Giovanni, her son [December 1842]. Her friend Clara arrives to see her only to find her on her deathbed. Matteo kills Fredo. Matteo then enters an abbey as a monk.

Hour Five

Jesse is left as nanny to Giovanni. Jesse visits the Gypsy camp often, as they are the only friends she has. They look after her and the two babies as if they were family. Clara, having just watched her best friend die, rejected as a lover by Verdi and terrified about the political turmoil in Italy and Europe, heads back to the USA. After a brief courtship, she marries Antonio. Nine months to the day after their wedding their daughter Rosa is born [1844]. Giovanni grows to be a talented artist and Composer and Opera Singer despite his blindness.

In a tragic wartime accident, Clara is killed during the final days of the American Civil War. Her daughter Rosa is barely an adult.

Rosa does not share her father's values when it comes to slaves and she is becoming an ardent abolitionist. Rosa reads about slavery and argues so vehemently with her parents that Antonio burns her books.

Antonio arranges a marriage for Rosa to the wealthy and stupid James. James has factories in the North where he treats his workers worse than slaves. It is 1865 the end of the American Civil War. Rosa is feeding the masses of "freed" slaves slowly making their way to "freedom" in the North.

In Milan, Giovanni moves between high society and gypsy life effortlessly but is unsettled. He and Vicenza fight. She won't sleep with him until they are married which he is not too keen on. He creates a bust of his mother and casts it in bronze. Vicenza's allowance is cut off unless she gets married; her brothers are fed up with her spending. Giovanni snubs her in front of her friends and she vows vengeance. Down at the docks, a mysterious figure arrives Yasmina, a beautiful veiled escapee from Persia. She is taken in and protected by the gypsies. Natalya gets her a job at Mario's Café. Giovanni's has his Artist Loft above the café. Yasmina remains veiled, exotic, unknown.

Hour Six

(1854) In the past we see when as a boy, Giovanni loses his sight playing soccer. He still has his music and has many friends. He enjoys visiting the gypsy encampment and it is his second home. Giovanni and Mario are best of friends. Vicenza, as a girl, wants to be part of their circle but Natalia rebuffs her. However Vicenza is admired from afar by David Bloom.

[Syria: 1854]

Yasmina is 12 years old. She has learned to read and write in secret by doing her older brother's homework. Sold into marriage, she is raped on her wedding night and runs away home the next day. Her male relatives drag her back. She is beaten and put to work. She earns money secretly teaching the other women and girls to read and eventually she saves enough to run away to Italy.

A talented amateur opera singer, having been taught by her mother Clara, Rosa decides to go to Milan to follow an operatic career in a country where they "do not have slaves". She will seek extra training and study opera. Samuel goes to protect her but is secretly looking for Jesse and his child.

Rosa has impressed the passengers on the voyage from the USA with her singing and enjoys being in society. David Bloom is on the same ship and is impressed by Rosa's opera talents they become friends. Rosa and Samuel will find her uncle in Milan. She is to be feted by the rich and famous. Samuel has hopes of finding his lost love, Jesse.

Hour Seven

In the Piazza outside life goes on.

The carriage that is bringing Rosa to Uncle Lavigna's Palace is across the Plaza. Rosa talks with Samuel and her guardian angel asking to find Love in this new city and a brilliant career. As Rosa and Samuel pass through one side of the plaza. Giovanni is on the other side also asking the angels of the city for love. They are unaware of each other.

At Uncle Lavigna's Palace Rosa and Samuel talk to Uncle Lavigna to thank him for his hospitality. He tells her about her mother's girl friends what he knows from letters about her life?

Rosa tours David's silk factory at his invitation and meets Vincenza shopping extravagantly. Vincenza buys Jewels from David charges them to Giovanni's account. She brags about her fiancé, Giovanni

Rosa enrolls at Opera school. Vincenza and her friends laugh at her accent and snub her. They learn she is a princess through her mother's family and are jealous. Giovanni arrives at the school. He is a teacher at the Opera Academy.

Vincenza's brothers trick her into the Convent to scare her and put pressure on her to marry. She is to stay a week with the poor food and work. She escapes bribing a nun with jewelry

Samuel and Rosa tour the church Rosa sings in the Cathedral. She asks the angels for help with her dreams. Giovanni is there in another chapel too asking for help and

guidance. Rosa meets Giovanni and tells him to stop feeling sorry for himself. She has survived war and the murder of her mother and still has dreams.

Giovanni and Vincenza have another terrible final fight when she pushes him too far. She storms away and he goes downstairs to play the Piano

At The Bellaggio Trattoria, Rosa walks in the door with Samuel her old chaperon. Giovanni falls in love with Rosa; Samuel finds out that Natalia is his daughter. Natalia & Samuel Sing: "Fate was in Charge"
He tells her to blame no one he thinks Jesse is dead. Then he finds out she is alive. Giovanni and Rosa talk flirt and fall in love.

Jessie Arrives with the gypsies.
Samuel and Jessie are reunited during the Gypsy Birthday party
They all eat a wonderful feast. Giovanni and Rosa get to know one another.
In the Piazza the gypsies put on a circus show for the passers by.

8th Hour La Rosa

Giovanni Takes Rosa in a carriage ride to his Country Estate. She meets his uncles. The farm and estate are idyllic. There are workers treated well, in the vast gardens and farm. There is great Joy as they fall in love.

Vincenza's brothers visit the uncles and demand that Giovanni marry her. They claim know of the poisoning of Giovannina's husband and also think they poisoned her in an honour killing because of the shame she brought to them.
The uncles deny it but Giovanni has overheard

Vincenza Shops- David tries to interest Vincenza in him as a suitor. She almost rebuffs him. Can it be that she likes his attention? Is she capable of love?

Rosa is at school unable to avoid the Vincenza crowd.
To a panel of opera directors, they sing to compete for the best range of voice. Rosa is the best Singer. Vincenza wins because of favoritism. Listening outside Giovanni is furious. Rosa calms him with a kiss. The Kiss is seen as a scandal.

Mario talks to Yasmine about his dreams for the future, He would like to include her. She won't open up about her past.

9th Hour La Rosa

Rosa visits the Pagani palace, the Contessa tells her about the society of Milan. She tries to warn Rosa about Vincenza.

The Pagani Palace, A Charity Ball
There is an Elaborate Ballet going on as we see Rosa and Uncle Lavigna enter the palace for the ball. The Contessa Berio predicts trouble in Society for Rosa. The Ball is

filled with minor Royalty from the area. They are heavily wealthy, well jeweled and well dressed.

Rosa meets Natalia and Giovanni. She and Uncle Lavigna walk about and socialize. She is wearing the emerald tiara that Giovannina had returned to Antonio.

Giovanni fights with Vincenza about her reclaiming him as her fiancé.
The 2 faced Society Chorus (V's friends) are in a rage, taking her side.
The hostess asks him to sing to the party

Giovanni Sings: "I Hardly Know You"

Ballet Choreography in the rafters like cirque du Soleil is simultaneous

Giovanni Speaks to the crowd and sings to Rosa.
Giovanni fights further with Vincenza
Vincenza & Chorus Sing: "Outsider" (part) to Rosa.

Giovanni asks Uncle Lavigna for permission to Court Rosa.

Vincenza fights with Rosa
Vincenza & Chorus Sing: "Outsider"

In an Alley and then in La Scala Theatre
Giovanni and Rosa fall in love.
Giovanni Sings: "Bitter Honey"

Mario is with Yasmine cleaning up the restaurant has fallen for her.
She tells him the story of her life. He is horrified and she thinks he rejects her.
He just doesn't know what to say or do to comfort her.

At the Gypsy Camp there is Spirited Gypsy Dancing.
The Choreography is accompanied on many Flamenco guitars.

10th Hour La Rosa

Jessie marries Rosa and Giovanni in a gypsy ceremony.
David a friend of Jessie for years is visiting and for the first time really sees Natalia.
Jessie and Samuel talk about lost love.

At a Piazza del Duomo concert the next day Giovanni publicly declares his love for Rosa. There is ballet choreography in the Plaza to the song.
Giovanni & Rosa Sing: "Falling Star"
The crowd asks for more. He sings to Rosa

The Contessa Vincenza Robbiberio visits Uncle Lavigna's Palace. He's out at the concert. She finds the Tint-type photos of Rosa's father Antonio. He is the man in Giovanni's painting of his mother. She decides they are half brother and sister.

At the Bellaggio Trattoria, Mario is in love with the mysterious Yasmine he tries to reach her by saying he will learn the Quoran and become a Muslim. She is horrified and runs from the room. Natalya tells him to give her time. He buys her a beautiful gold ladies watch. He gives her Time. She laughs at his joke. It is a lovely bell like laugh behind her veils.

Padre Mattei visits with Mario. Vincenza enters with the News. His Uncle the Padre goes upstairs to tell Giovanni he terrible revelation

In Giovanni's Studio upstairs Giovanni is singing part of the song he had sung to Rosa in the Plaza, "**Falling Star**". Padre Mattei speaks to him and tells him the news about his past. Antonio is not his father but all of them are mistaken because of the painting Giovanni had taken with her when she fled from the Rape.

Below in the Bellaggio Trattoria, Rosa enters and talks to Mario and Jasmine. They tell her nothing of the bad News. She goes upstairs. Giovanni tells Rosa he'll marry Vincenza, lying he says because she's pregnant with his child. He has invented a lie to protect Rosa. She leaves broken hearted

11th Hour La Rosa

Vincenza returns to the Studio. Giovanni strikes a bargain about a false pregnancy with her in exchange for marriage.

Natalya, at the gypsy camp, helps Samuel and Jessie

She sings a Flamenco Song about her tragic family to David.

Jessie sells the last of her jewelry from Giovannina to David.

They hope to take Samuel to Venice to die. It's Giovannina's earrings.

In the Bellaggio Trattoria Giovanni tells Mario about the bargain with Vincenza. We see Vincenza in the plaza laughing at the nuns going into the cathedral.

Yasmine in the plaza sees Rosa and is worried for her friend. She helps her avoid Vincenza and gets her through the streets to Uncle Lavigna's palace.

The Uncle begs Yasmine to accompany Rosa to Venice.

Natalya asks Mario "where is Yasmine?".

He doesn't know and tells her why. They fought but he thought they made up.

Rosa, Uncle Lavigna and Yasmine are all three on a train leaving Milan. It rains the tears run down the faces of the girls. They will go to Venice.

In Venice Rosa blinds she, then finds she is pregnant. She decides to live.
She gives a concert in Venice.
Months go by; at the Bellaggio Trattoria all is quiet and gloom hangs everywhere.
Antonio walks into the Café looking for Samuel. Natalya tells Giovanni it is Antonio
That is the man in the Painting with his mother. Giovanni confronts Antonio.
They fight and blame each other. Antonio denies being his father.

There is much talk about the treachery of family and the past.
They decide that this must be the secret held for years by Samuel and Jessie.
They know what happened all those years ago in Savannah Georgia.

Mario is to drive Antonio the long way in his carriage to go to the Gypsy camp.
Natalia and Giovanni go over ground through the woods in a short cut to get to the
encampment first.

Hour Thirteen

In Venice there is a wedding in a small plaza in the Jewish ghetto. The wedding is
between David and Vincenza.

Yasmine and Blind Rosa had gone to the Jewish quarter to buy some lace for the baby's
layette. There is dancing and songs.

For Good Luck Rosa and Yasmine are invited to the Wedding
Rosa is so changed from the girl David met on the ship not long ago.

Rosa is shocked when she realizes it is David's and Vincenza's Wedding.

He does not give Vincenza the earrings. He had for her.

Yasmine asks David why Vincenza did not marry Giovanni.
They all confront her. Vincenza points out to David that he was her first.
He is disgusted with her for destroying Rosa he calls off the wedding.
She is ruined.

Samuel is failing. He is close to death. Jessie sings **"Why Won't You Mend"**

Giovanni arrives with Natalia. They talk to Jessie and Samuel about the past.

Antonio arrives with Mario. Samuel tells the long ago secret that Giovannina was raped
by Clayton and killed him. Jessie tells Antonio she loved him.
Giovanni is the child of rape but he and Rosa are not siblings

Samuel dies. He returns with advice.
They race to Venice to find Rosa

In Rosa's apartment in Venice; Rosa teaches a young girl student at her piano.

The sing a song together but the words mean different things to the women because of their different life experiences.

The Piazza San Marco is below the apartment. It's not crowded yet this morning. Yasmine is taking care of the baby below the Apartment in the Plaza. Her Veils swirl in the winds that come from Africa and blow across the Sea to Venice.

Natalia finds Yasmine and plays with the child.

Mario asks if she is happy with her life thinking the baby is hers. She explains it is Giovanni and Rosa's child not hers.

She sends Mario away begs him to leave them in peace He tells her of his remorse and gives her several fanciful clocks and watches in his pockets asking for more time. She laughs and claps her hands at the gifts and his remembered humour.

Back in Milan, at the convent, Vincenza rings the bell at the gate and begs to be let in. Her remorse as changed her.

At Rosa's Apt in Venice, Rosa Sings: "Mirror of Love"

Natalia Arrives with Giovanni and Antonio

The deceit is explained. He thought they were brother and sister.

Giovanni finds out that she is blind and what she has done for him.

Yasmine brings the baby home and Rosa tells her father of her disgrace.

Antonio begs her forgiveness

Giovanni begs her forgiveness. He asks her to marry him

On another in the Piazza San Marco, the crowd sees the famous lovers and their friends, Rosa wears Giovannina's necklace given to her by Giovanni (his mother's) and her tiara.

Natalia wears Her mothers emerald earrings and is with David.

Yasmine has taken off her Veils to marry Mario. She is beautiful.

The piazza is full of dance and celebration

Rosa and Giovanni have a concert in the Piazza San Marco

They talk to the crowd and everyone sings,

Giovanni & Rosa and everyone sing: "I'll Only Live for Love"

Chorus fills the Piazza San Marco.

Formal Dancing and circus performers add to the celebration.

The End: