

## ANNA BOLENA – SYNOPSIS

### ACT I

*Scene one – A ball in Windsor Castle* As they await the king's arrival, courtiers gossip over Henry's cool treatment of Queen Anne and the possibility of a rival. Her favorite lady-in-waiting, Jane Seymour, privately expresses her guilty conscience over receiving Henry's unprovoked affections. At the same time, she tries to console the queen. Anne asks her court musician, Smeton, to sing a song, but it only disturbs her more. She advises Jane never to allow the throne to seduce her, while Jane can barely look her in the eye.



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Anne and the courtiers retire. Jane encounters Henry and insists they discontinue their secret indiscretions – like Anne before her marriage to the king, she fears for her own reputation. Henry counters that the path to the altar is now entirely clear, as the day of Anne's reckoning has come.

*Scene two – The park of Windsor Castle* Anne's brother Rochefort is surprised to find Percy back in England at Henry's request. Percy had once been betrothed to Anne and was exiled after she wed Henry to assuage his grief. Henry arrives with the royal hunt, and Anne soon afterwards with her ladies. Unaware the king has set a trap, Percy thanks him for allowing his return, and Henry reveals that it was intended to please Anne. When Percy kisses her hand, the court is taken aback, but Henry remains strangely unaffected.

*Scene three – Anne's private apartments* Secretly enamored with the queen, Smeton tries to replace a small portrait of Anne which he stole. Hearing Anne and Rochefort approach, he is forced into hiding. Anne is concerned over Percy's return, and departing, Rochefort promises to do what he can to ease the awkward situation. Percy enters and Anne realizes the irony of it all – she left him for the throne and now all she has is a crown of thorns. Percy renews his earlier suit, claiming that if Henry hates his wife, he still holds her dear. Alarmed, Anne tells him to leave, but Percy refuses, ready to throw himself on his sword. Smeton tries to stop him and they scuffle.

Rochefort returns in a panic, and then the king bursts with the rest of the court to witness the compromising scene. Henry suspects something is afoot, and as Smeton vehemently denies any impropriety, Anne's portrait falls from his pocket. Henry uses this blunder as proof of her infidelity and orders all three to be imprisoned.



GIOVANNA SEYMOUR



ENRICO VIII

### ACT II

*Scene one – A small vestibule leading to the rooms where Anne is imprisoned* Anne is comforted by her ladies-in-waiting, but soon Hervey announces that all her women have been called before the Council of Peers. Jane tries to soothe the queen's anguish. A plot has been hatched, and the only way Anne can avoid death is to confess her guilt. Jane begrudgingly reveals that she has inadvertently won Henry's heart, and Anne flies into a jealous rage. When Jane begs for mercy, Anne's anger subsides as she comes to realize Henry alone is to blame.

COSTUME SKETCHES BY JESSICA JAHN

*Scene two – A vestibule outside the council chamber* The courtiers anxiously wait as the Peers confer inside. Hervey comes into the anteroom announcing that Anne and Percy have been called before the council – Smeton has been pressed into divulging her lurid affairs. In front of the king, both Anne and Percy deny his hateful accusations.

Left alone with Jane, Henry expresses his love, but her guilt cannot be reconciled. Hervey announces the Peers' verdict – the royal marriage is to be dissolved, and Anne, with her suspected lover Percy, is condemned. Jane begs her king to be clement.

*Scene three – The Tower of London* Percy learns Rochefort also faces execution, merely for his familial association. Hervey arrives with a reprieve from Henry for the two men, but as Anne is sentenced to die, they bravely agree to follow her to the chopping block. Rochefort and Percy are led away under guard.

Anne's ladies enter, lamenting their queen's fate. She soon enters, uneasily remembering happier days. Anne is brought to her senses with the arrival of Percy, Rochefort and Smeton under guard. Smeton admits his complicity in the trial – by lying he thought he was actually saving her life. Anne's mind begins to wander again, but a cannon shot brings her back to lucidity – Jane has been proclaimed queen. Anne forgives the new royal couple and steels herself for the ascent to the scaffold.

