Circé Synopsis

Act One
The magician Circé tells her confidant Astérie that, after welcoming Ulisse (Odysseus) to her secluded island, she has fallen in love with him. When Ulisse's Greek companions want him to leave with them, Circé transforms them into beasts to prevent them from sailing away. To appease Ulisse's horror, Circé asks the happy lovers living on her island to comfort him. Elphénor, a Greek who escaped the spell by revealing the planned departure to Circé, declares his love to Astérie; appalled by his shameful betrayal, the nymph rejects him. Elphénor suspects he has a rival.

Act Two
In the temple of Cupid, Astérie confesses she is in love with Polite, one of the Greeks that Circé has turned into beasts. Ulisse pleads with the enchantress, assuring her of his true love, and she agrees to restore his companions to their human shapes. Left alone, Ulisse reflects on the fact that he must lie about his feelings for Circé: in fact, he fears her and loves Éolie, the daughter of a wind god. Circé, unaware that she has a rival, changes Ulisse's companions back to human to please him, and all pray at the altar of Love. Cupid appears and announces that, before the end of the day, Circé will see how much he favors her… After the ceremony, Astérie and Polite unite in their secret love.

Act Three
Having arrived on the island, Éolie is searching for Ulisse, fearing he is dead. Minerve appears and reassures her that Ulisse is alive and asleep nearby. The goddess will warn him in his dreams about the dangers of staying on the island: when she no longer loves them, Circé transforms her lovers into rocks and trees!

Intermission

Act Three (continued)
Ulisse awakens from his nightmare and is consoled by Éolie. Elphénor overhears them but is unable to identify the woman to whom Ulisse declares his love. He resolves to tell Circé what he has learned to gain the queen's permission to marry Astérie. Circé agrees to the union, but Astérie refuses vehemently. In total despair, Elphénor kills himself.

Act Four
Circé confronts Ulisse and accuses him of having killed Elphénor and being unfaithful to her. Ulisse denies both. Unconvinced, Circé summons the underworld for help and asks the spirit of Elphénor to appear. The ghost confirms that Ulisse is untrue to Circé. The rage-filled magician calls the Eumenides, the deities of vengeance, to torture the deceiver. Meanwhile, Éolie is searching the island for Ulisse, and Circé, hearing her, directs hell's demons to impersonate nymphs and capture her. But Mercure appears and forces the demons to flee; he gives Éolie a Moly flower, a magical charm against all spells.

Act Five
Despite Astérie's warnings, Polite wants to rescue Ulisse, but Éolie, thanks to the Moly, has already freed Ulisse from the Underworld. Astérie and Polite plan to escape the island. The wind god Aquilon promises a calm voyage and the deities of the seas offer their help so all can sail safely away. Circé, seeing Ulisse with Éolie boarding a ship, calls for the demons to burn his fleet. Protected by the magical flower, the Greeks escape unscathed. A sorrowing Circé destroys the harbor, making her island forever inaccessible to the outside world. h —Gilbert Blin Synopsis of Circé