



THE ROYAL

Carl Rosa

Opera Company.

STORIES
OF
THE OPERAS.

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THE



ROYAL

Carl Rosa Opera Company.

The History of the Royal Carl Rosa Opera Company is the History of Grand Opera in English for the past half-century.

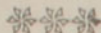
Faust.

STORY OF THE OPERA.

Faust, a student in Germany, after a life of meditation and research becomes disgusted with human knowledge, and with his own inability to unravel the mysteries of nature. He summons to his aid an evil spirit, who appears under the form of Mephistopheles. By the supernatural power of Mephistopheles, Faust is at once restored to youth, with most of its illusions and passions, and at the same time, is endowed with both personal beauty and splendid attire. Mephistopheles, through a vision, reveals to him the lovely village maiden, Margaret, with whom Faust falls immediately in love. He wishes to become acquainted with her, and his desire is soon afterwards gratified. Margaret, noted both for her loveliness and her virtue, has been left by her brother, a soldier, Valentine, under the care of Dame Martha, a good woman, though not a very vigilant guardian. The maiden at first rejects the stranger's advances, but Faust, aided by the demoniacal influence of Mephistopheles (who is anxious to destroy another human soul) urges his suit with such ardour that Margaret's resistance is at length overcome. Margaret's brother, Valentine, when he returns with his comrades from the wars, soon learns what has occurred: he challenges the betrayer of his sister, but, through the intervention of Mephistopheles, he is slain in the encounter. Margaret, who is horror-stricken at the calamity of which she is the cause, gives way to despair. Her reason becomes affected, and in a fit of frenzy she kills her child. She is thrown into prison for this crime. Faust, with the aid of Mephistopheles, obtains access to the cell where she is imprisoned. They both eagerly urge her to fly, but Margaret, in whom holier feelings have gained the ascendant, spurns their proffered assistance, and places her reliance in repentance and prayer. Overcome by sorrow and remorse, and with an earnest prayer for forgiveness on her lips, the unhappy girl expires. Mephistopheles then triumphs at the catastrophe he has been able to bring about, but a chorus of celestial voices is heard,

proclaiming pardon for the repentant sinner, and the evil spirit, foiled and overcome, crouches suppliantly as the accents of divine love and forgiveness are heard, while the spirit of Margaret, borne by angels, is wafted upwards to its heavenly home.

The Scene is laid in Germany. Period, the Sixteenth Century.



Maritana.

STORY OF THE OPERA.

Maritana, a handsome Gipsy, whilst singing to a crowd of people in a square in Madrid, attracts the admiration of the King. Don Jose, an unscrupulous courtier, observing this, determines to satisfy the King's whim, and then betray him to the Queen, with whom he is bold enough to be madly in love. An impetuous spendthrift, Don Cæsar de Bazan, arrives upon the scene, and in order to protect a poor boy named Lazarillo from arrest, challenges the Captain of the Guard, an action which, by a recent edict of the King, entails death by hanging. He is arrested and imprisoned, but by Don Jose's influence his sentence is changed to the more soldierlike death of being shot, on condition that he marries a veiled lady; this he consents to do. After the ceremony, he is led away to the fortress to be shot. Don Jose conveys the veiled wife, who is none other than Maritana, to the palace of the Marquis Montefiori, where the King is introduced to her as the Count de Bazan, whom she has married. Unfortunately for Don Jose's scheme, the real Count was not shot dead, as the bullets had been withdrawn from the guns by Lazarillo whilst the soldiers were drinking at the wedding feast, and he now appears dressed as a monk, and searches the saloons for his wife. Don Jose persuades the Marchioness to play the part of the veiled lady but the Count discovers the imposture, and Don Jose is compelled to have him re-arrested to prevent his meeting Maritana, who is conveyed by his orders to the Villa d'Aranjuez. Here the King pursues her with his unwelcome attentions, but she remains true to Don Cæsar; the latter, having escaped from prison, forces his way into the room just as Maritana leaves the King. In the altercation which ensues, the King, whom Don Cæsar recognises, says he is the Count de Bazan and so Don Cæsar assumes the character of the King, and learns for the first time that a pardon had been sent on the night of his condemnation; this pardon was intercepted by Don Jose. The King, receiving a message from the Queen, departs, leaving orders to Lazarillo for the re-arrest of the unfortunate Don Cæsar, who, risking all peril, sees Maritana, and proves that he is the man to whom she was so mysteriously wedded. He then climbs over the wall of the villa into the Royal garden adjoining, intending to beg the Queen's help, but arrives just in time to kill Don Jose, who is pressing his suit upon the indignant Queen. He returns to the villa to find the King there again, who, on hearing of his loyal bravery restores him to his bride, and makes him Governor of Valentia.

The Scene is laid in Madrid. Period, the Seventeenth Century.

The Tales of Hoffmann.

(OFFENBACH).

STORY OF THE OPERA.

The scene is laid in Nuremberg, in Luther's wine cellar, a tavern next door to the opera house. Hoffmann arrives with his friends, a merry company of students. He tells his companions the story of his three loves, and they one and all discard Luther's warning that the curtain is about to rise on the second act of "Don Giovanni," and remain to hear Hoffmann's Tales.

Hoffmann's first tale is of Olympia, the reputed daughter of Spalanzani, the physiologist, whose pupil he becomes in order to be near the object of his love. Olympia is really a wonderful automaton, the creation of Spalanzani and his colleague Coppelius, who has contributed her eyes, and claims a half share. Spalanzani buys him out by giving him a worthless cheque. Coppelius has artfully contrived to sell the young lover a pair of glasses which endow the inanimate objects with life. Olympia is presented to the assembled guests, who marvel at her accomplishments. Finding himself alone with her, Hoffmann is by no means disconcerted at her mechanical replies to his impassioned declarations and fancies that he is loved in return. Presently a dance takes place, during which Hoffmann claims Olympia for his partner. The doll gets out of control, and Hoffmann is whirled round till he falls in a swoon, whilst she dances out of the room. In falling, Hoffmann has broken his glasses, and when he recovers he hears that Coppelius, infuriated at having been duped, is wreaking vengeance by destroying Olympia. Amid the jeers of the guests, Hoffmann realizes his mistake.

The scene of the second tale is laid in Venice at the sumptuous palace of Giulietta, a courtesan. Hoffman loves her in spite of the warnings of his friend, Nicklaus. She is the slave of a magician, Daperutto, who has persuaded her to steal the shadow of Peter Schlemil, and now requires her to obtain the reflection of Hoffmann in a mirror he gives her for that purpose. This is his way of securing souls. She easily succeeds in the course of their love-making. Schlemil arrives on the scene and a quarrel ensues in which he loses his life. A moment later a gondola passes in which Hoffmann sees the faithless Giulietta with Daperutto.

The third tale is of Antonia, the beautiful daughter of Councillor Crespel. She has inherited a wonderful voice from her mother, but she is so frail that she must not sing. She loves Hoffmann, but her father disapproves of the match, and forbids his servant Franz to admit him. Franz, being deaf, misunderstands him, and a moment later the lovers are together. When Crespel returns Hoffmann hides behind a curtain, and learns, by overhearing Doctor Miracle, that Antonia is consumptive. Hoffmann entreats her to sing no more, but the Doctor invokes the soul of her dead mother and persuades her it is her duty to use the gift bequeathed to her. Antonia sings, and the effort kills her.

Those are the three tales that Hoffmann relates to his companions. The opera is over: Hoffmann and the students call for more punch, and the curtain falls on a scene of wild carousal.

The Bohemian Girl.

STORY OF THE OPERA.

Count Arnheim, loyal to the Austrian Empire, entertains certain guests at his castle, where they raise the National standard above the Emperor's statue, the Count meanwhile extolling a soldier's life. The guests depart for the chase without him, his daughter, Arline, a child six years old, accompanying them with her nurse. Thaddeus, an exiled Polish rebel, enters seeking refuge, which he finds in the company of a tribe of passing gipsies, who disguise him by order of their leader, Devils-hoof, just in time to escape his pursuers. The huntsmen, with Florestein—a foolish nephew of Count Arnheim, return in terror with the tidings that Arline is attacked by a stag. Thaddeus rushes to her assistance and restores her unhurt to the Count, whose gratitude induces him to invite the apparent gipsy to join the feast of rejoicing. At this feast Arnheim proposes the Emperor's health, which is declined boldly by Thaddeus, whose life is in danger for this act, but he is protected by the Count; Devilshoof, however, who has shared the republican enthusiasm of Thaddeus, is arrested and confined in the castle. He escapes, and is seen by the distracted company bearing away in his arms Arline, whose abduction suggests his revenge. In *Act II.* twelve years have been passed in sorrow by the Count; the gipsies are stationed at Presburg ready for a fair, led still by Devilshoof, who catches and robs Florestein, an incautious intruder. The Gipsy Queen, however, commands the restoration of his property. Devilshoof obeys, but reserves a diamond medallion for himself. Arline, reared among the gipsies and tended gently by Thaddeus, wakes from a sleep, and relates a strange dream which Thaddeus knows is retrospective. She asks the history of her birth, which he hesitates to relate, fearing lest her love should leave him. The Gipsy Queen, who also loves Thaddeus, now irritates Arline into jealousy—whereupon Thaddeus implores her to marry him. Their betrothal is witnessed by the tribe, who now set out for the fair. Here Arline attracts hosts of admirers, amongst them Florestein, who suddenly recognises his medallion on Arline's neck, where it has been cunningly placed by the Gipsy Queen. In spite of Thaddeus and the tribe, she is seized and conveyed to the Count's castle. Here an accident reveals to her father that the prisoner is his child. Thaddeus implores Arline (*Act 3*) in a secret interview not to desert him, but the Count spurns the supposed vagabond; when Thaddeus declares himself, and Arnheim is induced to give his daughter to the noble exile. At the feast in their honour, the Gipsy Queen, with Devilshoof, attempts Arline's life, but the gipsy diverts the shot, which strikes her who aimed it. The festival proceeds to commemorate the happy fortunes of the Bohemian Girl.

The Scene is laid in and about Presburgh. Period, the Eighteenth century.

Madame Butterfly.

STORY OF THE OPERA.

ACT 1.—The Scene is laid in the garden of the house taken by Pinkerton in Nagasaki.

An American Naval Lieutenant, B. F. Pinkerton, in a spirit of sensation-seeking, and practically as a pastime, contracts, through a Japanese agent, a marriage with a young and beautiful Japanese girl,—“Butterfly.” Previous to the marriage the American Consul, having learned from the Bride-to-be that far from being a pastime to her she has taken the matter very seriously, and has already renounced in secret her faith—thus throwing herself entirely into the hands of Pinkerton,—tries in vain to dissuade the latter from the marriage. The marriage is carried out in Japanese fashion, it is barely completed when the Bonze (a Japanese Priest and uncle to Butterfly) appears on the scene. Having discovered Butterfly’s renunciation of her faith, he curses her and places her outside all intercourse with her relations. Pinkerton turns them all out and comforts the lone smitten Butterfly with some ease for the harsh treatment of her relations. The curtain descends as they are about to enter the Bridal Chamber.

ACT 2.—Scene—Interior of Butterfly’s living room.

Some three years have passed—Pinkerton has long left and forgotten Butterfly—but the latter firmly believes that Pinkerton will return as he promised. The American Consul calls on Butterfly upon an evidently distasteful errand, no less than to break the news that Pinkerton is indeed returning to Nagasaki, but with an American wife. While the Consul is vainly endeavouring to break the news, a wealthy Japanese suitor for the hand of Butterfly calls to offer his hand (according to Japanese law three years absence annuls a marriage), but Butterfly will have none of him. The Consul makes one more attempt to tell the truth but is appalled and rendered dumb by her producing a baby boy, blue eyed, fair haired, and Pinkerton’s double. The Consul has hardly gone before Butterfly hears the signal gun of Pinkerton’s ship. Here occurs one of the most moving passages in any play yet written and the curtain descends on poor little Butterfly waiting and watching on her knees for her lord’s return.

ACT 3.—The curtain rises—Butterfly has kept vigil the entire night ; she is persuaded to retire for a little rest with the promise that she shall be called immediately Pinkerton calls. Pinkerton and the Consul shortly arrive, greatly to the joy of Suzuki, the servant, a joy quickly turned to horror on discovering that Pinkerton is accompanied by his American wife. Pinkerton, stricken with deep remorse, leaves the scene to his American wife and the Consul, and he has no sooner gone than in flutters poor little Butterfly expecting to find the faithless Pinkerton. It is here the most poignant scene of the play takes place. A promise is extracted from Butterfly by Mrs. Pinkerton to give up the child for his own welfare and Butterfly only stipulates that they shall leave her and send Pinkerton for the child in half-an-hour. When Pinkerton, accompanied by the Consul, arrives, he finds Butterfly has committed suicide, leaving the child for him to take away.

La Boheme.

STORY OF THE OPERA.

The origin and inspiration of "La Boheme" is Murger's famous novel, "Vie de Boheme," the most fascinating of all Latin Quarter stories and the fount of many romances and tragedies. Realising the impossibility of weaving a connected story from the book, Puccini's librettist took four scenes, each completed in itself, and presented them without any pretence of a connecting thread of interest. The manner is atmospheric and impressionistic, but it catches in a remarkable degree the spirit of the tale. The principal characters of the opera are four reckless adventurous youths and two fair, but frail, girls. The four Bohemians—Rodolphe the poet, Marcel the painter, Collins the philosopher, and Schaunard the musician—live together in a Parisian attic in chronic poverty, yet in perfect harmony and good fellowship.

The curtain discloses the poet and the painter in their garret, cold and hungry. Rodolphe feeds the fire with the manuscript of his drama until the arrival of the philosopher and the musician—the latter with an unexpected windfall of provisions and a wonderful tale as to their acquirement. The feast is delayed by the advent of the landlord demanding his rent, but the Bohemians, instead of paying him, ply him with liquor and fool him by crediting him with vices which he is pleased to be accused of. Finally they thrust him out of doors, and depart for further jollification at the Cafe Momus, all except Rodolphe, who remains behind to finish an article. His labours are interrupted by the appearance of Mimi, a pretty neighbour, who comes to ask for a light for her candle. A lost key and a sudden indisposition lead up to a beautiful duet, in which the poet and the seamstress declare their love for each other and go off to join their friends. In the second scene at the Cafe Momus the Christmas saturnalia is in full blast. The joyous quartette are dining with Mimi, who is the proud possessor of a new hat bought by the poet, when Musetta, a former flame of Marcel's, appears with a wealthy banker. Musetta ne sooner sees Marcel than she tries in every way to attract his attention. Finally she gets rid of her aged admirer by sending him to buy her a new pair of shoes and rushes into the arms of her former lover. This scene, which is very short, is a carnival of bustle and gaiety, and is a brilliant example of Puccini's happy knack of handling concerted music. The third act, at a Customs Gate on the outskirts of Paris, consists of a series of quarrels and reconciliations between the lovers. Mimi and Rodolphe cannot live with each other and also cannot live without each other; Marcel is jealous because of Musetta's flirtations. Mimi is suffering from consumption and the weather is intensely cold, the chill, drear atmosphere being reflected in the music with remarkable subtlety. The last act is back again in the garret. The poet and the painter are making merry over their scanty meal, pretending that it is a banquet. In the midst of their pretended jollity Musetta enters to announce that Mimi is very ill. Mimi is in fact dying, and does die, after an intensely sad and moving scene, stretched on Rodolphe's hard little bed. The pathos of the situation is intensified by the silence in which it takes place.

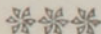
Puccini's music echoes the spirit of Murger's romance with wonderful sincerity, painting the mingled joy and grief of the Bohemian life in hues the most delicate and tender.

Carmen.

STORY OF THE OPERA.

Carmen is a gipsy girl, employed in a cigarette factory at Seville, and is an accomplice of a band of smugglers. Having wounded another factory girl, she is about to be imprisoned, but so fascinates Jose—the sergeant of the dragoons, who is ordered to conduct her to the gaol—that he connives at her escape, and is himself imprisoned for his breach of duty. On regaining his liberty, he seeks Carmen at a low inn outside the walls of Seville. Here he quarrels with a rival, his captain (Zuniga), upon whom he draws his sword, and as death would be the penalty of this offence, he is tempted by Carmen to join the band of smugglers. The bull-fighter, Escamillo, who has fallen in love with Carmen, comes to the smugglers' retreat in search of her, and a combat ensues between him and Jose. Carmen saves Escamillo from the dagger thrust of Jose, who is furious with jealousy, having previously discovered that Carmen's love for him has grown cold. Micaela, a peasant girl, who had once before brought him a loving message from his mother, arrives with the tidings that his mother is at the point of death, and Jose departs, threatening Carmen with his vengeance if she should prove unfaithful to him. Carmen accompanies Escamillo to a grand bull-fight, and while waiting for him outside the bull ring, she is met by Jose, who vainly implores a renewal of her former love for him: and, maddened by jealousy, stabs her to the heart.

The Scene is laid in and about Seville. Period, the Nineteenth Century.



Cavalleria Rusticana.

STORY OF THE OPERA.

Turiddu, a young peasant, son of Lucia, on his return from military service finds that his sweetheart Lola has married Alfio, a prosperous village carrier. In pique, he woos and wins Santuzza. Thereupon Lola's love revives, and she takes Turiddu once more to her heart. When the action commences, the curtain is down, and Turiddu sings from behind, by way of a prelude to the story, a song to Lola, avowing the love which guides him once more to her side, and hinting at some dark shadow which lies upon her path and his. The curtain rises to the song of peasants coming from their early toil to keep the Easter festival. Santuzza, burning with jealous fears, enters and questions Lucia as to Turiddu's movements, and tells her that, though her mother heart believes that her son has gone for wine to the neighbouring Francofonte, he has, in fact, never left the village. Upon Santuzza's misery, and the mother's newly-aroused suspicions, Alfio breaks in, returning with his team, and singing a song of his hard but jovial life, and of his happy faith in his pretty Lola. His joy is but momentary, for the mention by Lucia of Turiddu's

name reminds him that he has seen him only that morning lurking by his cottage. But Santuzza will not betray her faithless lover, and bids Lucia be silent. Then from the church comes the sound of the Mass, and the villagers, assembling in the square, sing their Easter Anthem, and all pass in together. Left alone with Lucia, Santuzza tells the miserable story, how Turiddu had won her love, and then had gone back to his old love Lola. At this moment Turiddu enters, looking, no doubt, for Lola, and certainly little pleased to find Santuzza. She reproaches and implores him in turn. But he will not relent. Lola's love is all he wants. Santuzza is nothing to him. As if to emphasize the bitterness of the blow, Lola is heard singing outside, and presently enters, only to banter Turiddu and mock at Santuzza. Turiddu, infuriated at Lola's mockery, which he attributes to Santuzza's presence, bids her leave him, turns a deaf ear to her prayers and reproaches, and when she clings to him, flings her to the ground, and leaving her senseless on the steps of the church, enters in pursuit of Lola. As Santuzza recovers herself, she finds Alfio near her, and maddened by Turiddu's cruelty, she tells the husband of his wife's dishonour and of Turiddu's betrayal of herself. Alfio, in some degree prepared, vows vengeance on the guilty pair. After a short pause, during which the stage remains empty, the villagers come from church, Lola and Turiddu amongst them, and as they all crowd around him, he sings with reckless gaiety a drinking song, and pledges Lola in a cup, to which she as recklessly responds. This is the moment chosen for the return of the injured husband. He enters with set face, and though he greets his friends, it is evident to all that some terrible deed is preparing. So, when Turiddu bids him drink with him, Alfio indignantly refuses the invitation. A cup from the hand of Turiddu would be a poisoned one. Lola knows that all is discovered, and is terrified at what is coming. The women whisper together and lead her away. Then follows the challenge by Alfio to Turiddu, given, according to local custom, by biting the left ear; and Alfio goes out to the appointed meeting-place. After a heart-broken farewell to his mother, and one touch of remorse in which he bids her guard Santuzza, Turiddu follows his adversary. The fight is soon over. Santuzza, who has just heard what has happened, rushes to Lucia to ask for her lover. The only answer is the cry of the frightened women "Turiddu is killed! Turiddu is killed!" Thus "Village Honour" is satisfied, and the curtain falls upon the fainting forms of Lucia and Santuzza.

The Scene is laid in Sicily. Period, the Nineteenth Century



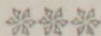
Pagliacci.

STORY OF THE OPERA.

During the prelude, Tonio comes forward and announces to the audience that the Author is desirous of restoring the ancient Prologue of Greek tragedy in order to explain that the subject of his play is taken

from real life, and that as a composer he has devoted his attention to expressing the sentiments, good or bad, but always human, of the characters whom he introduces, rather than to describe their social conditions. He then makes a sign for the curtain to rise. The first Act commences with the arrival of a troupe of Strolling Players. Canio (the *Clown*), Chief of the little Troupe, invites the crowd to attend the performance, and then goes off with Beppi (the *Harlequin*) and several peasants to drink at the tavern. Meanwhile, Tonio, the Hunchback, who is also a member of the Troupe, takes advantage of the absence of Canio to declare his love to Nedda, his (Canio's) wife, but on his becoming too pressing, she strikes him with a whip. Tonio, furious, goes off vowing to be revenged. He returns, however, a few minutes afterwards to the little theatre and finds Nedda with her lover, Silvio, a rich farmer, who is trying to induce her to leave her husband, and run away with him. Tonio, without being seen, goes off to find her husband, Canio, and bring him back to surprise the pair. Silvio, however, succeeds in scaling a wall and getting away without being recognised, but not before Canio has heard his wife's parting words as she tells Silvio to meet her at night. Canio, urious, orders her to tell him the name of her lover, but she refuses, and Beppi arrives just in time to seize the knife from the hands of Canio, who is about to attack her. He persuades her to go into the theatre to get ready for her part, and induces Canio to be calm and prepare for the performance. The First Act closes with a cry of despair from Canio, who is obliged to act a comedy with death in his very soul. In the second Act the peasants arrive to attend the performance. By a mere chance this proves to be a burlesque of all that has taken place in the First Act. Tonio, who plays the part of the idiot servant, makes a declaration of love to *Columbine* (Nedda), which she receives with scorn. *Harlequin*, in love with *Columbine* then appears, but after a short interview, is nearly surprised by Canio (the *Pagliacci*), who arrives just as *Columbine* is helping *Harlequin* to run away, and hears her repeat the very words to him which she had used to Silvio when she bade him meet her after the play that night. At this Canio loses his head, forgets his part, and furiously demands the name of her lover. *Columbine* laughs in order to put the public off the scent, and they, failing to grasp the truth, are much amused. Suddenly, however, Canio, beside himself with rage and jealousy, seizes a knife from the table and stabs Nedda to the heart, whereupon Silvio, who is among the audience, rushes forward with a dagger in his hand to her rescue, but is assailed and killed by Canio, who, turning to the crowd, announces "the Comedy is ended."

The Scene is laid in Calabria. Period, the Nineteenth Century.



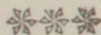
Rigoletto.

STORY OF THE OPERA.

The plot of the opera is founded on the intrigues of the Duke of Mantua in which he is aided by Rigoletto, his jester. Rigoletto, by his unscrupulous conduct, has made many enemies, amongst them the Count

Monterone, who on coming to the Duke to demand the restoration of his daughter, is met by the Jester with laughter and derision. The Count curses Rigoletto, who is stricken with terror. Rigoletto has a daughter who is kept in strict seclusion : but the Duke has seen her, unknown to her father, and fallen in love with her. Count Ceprano, knowing that she is in some way connected with the Jester, and glad of an opportunity of doing him an injury, lays a plan for carrying off the young girl, and so arranges it, that Rigoletto is made to believe that it is Ceprano's wife he is helping the Duke's followers to steal away. When he finds that it is his own daughter, and that she is in the power of the Duke, he becomes almost mad, and forms the determination of murdering him, taking into his confidence Sparafucile, a bravo. This man has a sister, Maddalena, who entices the Duke to a lonely inn, but becoming fascinated with him, she begs of her brother to spare his life ; this he consents to do, if any one should arrive at the inn before a certain time whom he can kill and pass off as the murdered Duke. Rigoletto, who has now recovered his daughter, brings her to the door of the inn that she may be herself a witness of the Duke's inconstancy, thinking to cure her of her hopeless love. He then desires her to disguise herself in male attire and escape to Verona ; but shortly afterwards, returning alone to the inn, she overhears the plot to murder her lover, and being determined to make an effort to save him, knocks for admittance, and is stabbed on entering. Rigoletto comes at the appointed time for the body, which Sparafucile brings out in a sack. The Jester is about to throw his burden into the water, when, to his surprise, he hears the Duke singing. Enraged at being foiled in his vengeance, he hastily tears open the sack and is horrified at beholding his beloved daughter.

The Scene is laid in and about Mantua. Period, the Sixteenth Century.



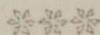
Giovanni.

STORY OF THE OPERA.

The Opera opens before the Palace of the Commandant of the Order of the Knights of Malta, in Seville. Leporello, the servant of the libertine Don Giovanni, is waiting for his master, who has entered the palace to carry off Donna Anna, the Commandant's daughter. Giovanni comes forth pursued by Anna, who is resolved to punish him for his insolence ; and the Commandant, learning the cause of the disturbance, rushes forward, and, in the attempt to avenge the insult, is killed by Giovanni. Escaping from the scene, Giovanni meets Donna Elvira, and on making advances to her, as he has done to hundreds before, discovers that it is his wife, whom he has deserted. He then encounters Zerlina, a peasant girl, who is betrothed to Masetto, and invites them both to his palace, leaving Masetto in charge of Leporello, and is about to press his suit with Zerlina when Elvira appears and exposes his perfidy. Afterwards meeting Anna and her lover, Don Ottavio, Elvira enters and again denounces him, when Giovanni endeavours to persuade them that she is mad ; but Anna

suddenly recognises the murderer of her father, and calls upon *Ottavio* to punish him. *Giovanni* gives a feast at his palace, and when the revels are at their height, a scream from *Zerlina* is heard, and *Giovanni*, suddenly entering, to screen himself, accuses *Leporello* of offering insult to the peasant girl. A thunderstorm breaks over the palace, and the maskers, including *Anna*, *Elvira*, and *Ottavio*, throw off their disguises and vow vengeance upon *Giovanni*. In order to prosecute a fresh intrigue with *Elvira's* waiting-maid, *Giovanni* makes *Leporello* change clothes with him and assume the character of the repentant husband with *Elvira*. Whilst personating his servant, *Leporello*, *Giovanni* meets *Masetto*, and gaining possession of his fire-arms, under pretence of examining them, beats him unmercifully. Meanwhile *Leporello* encounters *Zerlina*, *Anna*, and *Ottavio*, and being mistaken for his master, only escapes punishment by acknowledging the deceit he has practised. Still in his valet's dress, *Giovanni* passes himself off on *Leporello's* wife as her husband; when she discovers her error, she raises an alarm, and *Giovanni* takes refuge in a Cemetery. Being followed by his servant, he jokes with him upon his late adventure, when he hears himself addressed by the equestrian statue of the Commandant, who tells him that vengeance is about to overtake him. Nothing daunted, *Giovanni* invites the statue to supper, and to the dismay of *Leporello*, the stone man nods acceptance of the invitation. During supper in the palace that night, *Giovanni* is visited by *Elvira*, who in vain urges her husband to repentance. On quitting him she utters a scream of terror; and *Leporello*, hastening to enquire the cause, meets the statue of the Commandant, who enters, and is welcomed by *Giovanni*. Refusing to partake of any food, the spectre invites *Giovanni* to sup with him; he accepts the offer, and gives his hand to the statue. In spite of solemn warnings from the ghost of the murdered victim, *Giovanni* refuses to repent, and sinks into a flaming abyss which open suddenly beneath him, whither he is summoned by fiends.

The Scene is laid in and about Seville. Period, the Seventeenth Century.



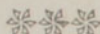
Marriage of Figaro.

STORY OF THE OPERA.

This Opera cannot be said to contain any defined plot. It is rather a succession of awkward and amusing situations, calling forth brilliant repartee and much humour as the incidents follow one another. The character on whom the chief amusement centres is *Count Almaviva*; with extraordinary notions of morality himself, he is very jealous of the conduct of his Countess, whom he suspects of being too fond of the company of an overgrown page, one *Cherubino*. Meanwhile, he is himself carrying on flirtations with *Susanna*, the Countess's waiting-woman, and the drolleries of the Opera hang mainly on the incidents thus afforded. There are also an old couple, *Bartolo* and *Marcellina*, the

first has endeavoured to force his attentions on Susanna, the latter on the Count's valet, Figaro, but neither with any amount of success. In Figaro's case, it would be surprising if it were so, considering this amorous pair are in reality Figaro's father and mother. The Count sends, as he supposes, the page Cherubino off to the wars, but much merriment is caused by his presumed meetings with Susanna, on one occasion the page himself, and on another the Countess being disguised as his innamorata. However, "All's well that ends well." The page is reinstated in the Count's good graces, Figaro weds Susanna, and the Count and Countess forgive each other their little flirtations.

The Scene is laid near Seville. Period, the Seventeenth Century.



Tannhauser.

STORY OF THE OPERA.

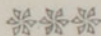
The ancient Germanic goddess Holda shared, with the introduction of Christianity, the fate of Odin and the rest of the Teutonic pagan divinities. She, the friendly, mild, and gracious goddess, was banished to subterranean caves, to the interiors of the mountains. Subsequently, and while the belief in her mild nature and invigorating rule still lived unconsciously in the mind of the people, her name became intermingled with that of Venus, to whom attached all the ideas of a fatal, magical nature, alluring to evil lustful desires. One of her principal homes was in Thuringia, in the interior of the Horselberg, near Eisenbach: there she held her court of luxury and voluptuousness. The German legend tells us how a knight and singer, named Tannhauser, was allured into the Horselberg, and lived there an entire year, at the voluptuous court of Dame Venus.—R.W.

The opera opens with the scene of Tannhauser at the court of Venus. The minstrel knight, wearied of his revels, and listening to the nobler impulses of nature, wishes to return once more to earth. With the admission of his penitence, that his hope rests in heaven, the scene suddenly changes, and he finds himself in the valley in front of Castle Wartburg. There, while sunk in prayer and gratitude, he is recognised by the Landgrave and Minnesingers of the famous court, and finally induced, when the memories of Elizabeth, the Landgrave's niece, are recalled to his mind, to rejoin them.

The second act opens with the scene of the Singer's Hall in the Wartburg. Elizabeth addresses the Hall, confessing her love for the errant singer, who has so suddenly returned. The Landgrave then announces that he has arranged a Tournament of Song, to celebrate the "singer's glad return." The theme of the contest is to be love, its nature and praise; the prize is to be conferred by Elizabeth, even by her own hand, should it be demanded. Wolfram von Eschenbach, Walter von der Vogelweide, Biterolf, Heinrich der Schriever, Reiamur van

Zweter, and Tannhauser take part in this remarkable contest. Tannhauser, led away by the memories of his past life, disputes with the others about the nature of love, and startles and outrages the assembly by the revelation that he has dwelt with Venus, with whom alone love's highest joys are to be found. The singers are about to kill Tannhauser, when Elizabeth interposes, pleading for his life. A band of pilgrims is passing through the valley on their way to Rome, and Tannhauser is permitted to join them. He leaves in despair.

In the third act Wolfram awaits with Elizabeth the return of the pilgrims. She expects to find Tannhauser among the returning bands, pardoned and free; but she looks in vain, and ascends the hill towards the castle. Tannhauser returns in a pitiable plight, for Rome has refused his pleading, and the Pope has told him that "sooner could the staff which he held in his hand put forth green leaves than that he could be forgiven his grevous sins." Tannhauser in despair seeks to find the home of Venus again; Wolfram's attempts to prevent him are almost in vain, the magical scenes of enchantment gather dimly around him, but the name of Elizabeth pronounced by Wolfram suddenly recalls in him the nobler strivings of his heart. But too late; a chant of pilgrims is heard following the funeral procession of Elizabeth; while on the heights approaches a second band of pilgrims from Rome, announcing that a miracle has been wrought: for the papal staff had put forth green leaves, and the Pope had immediately sent after the repentant knight to announce to him the pardon of Almighty. Gazing upon the beauteous form of Elizabeth resting on the bier, he sinks down beside her, in death redeemed.



Tristan and Isolda.

STORY OF THE OPERA.

ACT I.—*Tristan*, a valiant Cornish knight, is bringing *Isolda*, a princess of Ireland, over as a bride for his uncle, *King Mark*. He is himself in love with her, but owing to a blood-feud between them forces himself to conceal his passion. *Isolda*, in anger at his seeming unkindness, attempts to poison herself and him, but her attendant, *Brangana*, changes the draught for a love potion, which inflames their passion beyond power of restraint.

ACT II.—*Isolda* has been wedded to *King Mark*, but holds stolen interviews with *Tristan*, during one of which they are surprised, for *Tristan* has been betrayed by a jealous friend *Melot*. Touched by *King Mark's* bitter reproaches, *Tristan* provokes *Melot* to fight, and suffers himself to be mortally wounded.

ACT III.—*Tristan's* faithful servant, *Kurvenal*, has carried his wounded master to his native home in Brittany, where he is carefully tended. *Isolda* has also been sent for as being skilled above all others in the healing art. The excitement of her approach only hastens *Tristan's* death, and he breathes his last sight in her arms. *Mark* has followed *Isolda*: he has had matters explained and is prepared to unite the lovers, but it is too late. *Isolda* utters her lament over the body of her lover and her heart breaks; in death alone are they united.

Il Trovatore.

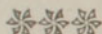
STORY OF THE OPERA.

Ferrando, one of the chief followers of Count de Luna, relates how the younger brother of the Count was bewitched by an old gipsy, who was caught and burnt, and how the gipsy's daughter, Azucena, out of revenge, stole the child and threw it into the flames.

Azucena, however, in the excitement of the moment, has thrown her own child by mistake into the fire, and the Count's brother is brought up as her son. He becomes a Troubador and at a Tourney falls in love with one of the reigning princess's ladies, Leonora, who returns his passion. The Count is also in love with Leonora and challenges Manrico. The Count's plan to carry off Leonora, who is about to retire to a convent, is frustrated by Manrico, accompanied by a large armed force.

Azucena falls into the power of the Count, who discovers that she is the supposed murderer of his brother and mother of his rival. He condemns her to death. Manrico, trying to rescue Azucena, is taken prisoner. Leonora, bewailing her lover outside his prison, hears him singing the "MISERERE," and to save his life consents to marry the Count, but poisons herself.

Manrico is led to execution, and the Count's rage is turned to horror when the old gipsy with the cry of "Thou art avenged, my mother," informs him that it is his own brother who has just been executed.



The Merry Wives of Windsor

STORY OF THE OPERA.

In MOSENTHALL'S effective plot of the Opera all the main incidents of Shakespeare's Comedy are retained, but simplified and abbreviated:—

Sir John Falstaff, in the hope of finding dupes to fill his needy pockets, sends love letters, in identical terms, to the wives of two wealthy Windsor citizens, Mrs. Ford and Mrs. Page. They resolve to punish him for his impertinence and Mr. Ford for his jealousy at the same time. Purposely advised by an anonymous letter that Falstaff has a rendezvous with his wife, Ford brings all his neighbours to witness their discomfiture, but the merry wives hide Falstaff in a laundry basket, which the servants empty into the river. Baffled but not satisfied, Ford has a personal interview with Falstaff under an assumed name. At a second appointment, the merry wives disguise Falstaff as an old woman, who gets well beaten by Ford and his companions before escaping. An explanation follows, the result being that husbands and wives combine to cover the fat Knight with ridicule. He is invited to meet Mrs. Ford at midnight in the guise of Herne the hunter, who is said to haunt Windsor Park. The citizens and their families, masked as fays and goblins, surprise Falstaff, pinch and tease him till he confesses his stupidity. Ann, Page's daughter, takes advantage of the frolic to get rid of her troublesome suitors, Dr. Caius and Master Slender, and is united to Fenton, the lover of her choice.

The Three Masks

ISIDORE DE LARA'S DRAMA IS A TALE OF A CORSICAN VENDETTA.

STORY OF THE OPERA.

ACT 1.—Shows the outbreak of the feud between Prati della Corba and the Vescotelli. The former, a proud old man, refuses to allow his son Paolo to marry Vescotelli's daughter Viola, whose honour is compromised. Active hostilities are only held up by the procession of the Host. Vescotelli gives Prati three days in which to reply. Some children playing at soldiers inspires the old man with the sudden idea of saving his son by sending him to France.

ACT 2.—Viola is conversing clandestinely with her lover, while Mancecca keeps watch. Torn between love and duty, Paolo promises to meet Viola that evening. It is the last day of Carnival and the Masquerade will enable them to meet undisturbed. Paolo obtains his Father's reluctant consent to go out for a few hours.

ACT 3.—The Fete. Three Masks in extravagant costumes are prominently noticed. Carnival is at its height. A mock dirge is sung, followed by a wild dance. The effigy is burnt, and the crowd depart. Viola, who has been separated from her lover, appears on the scene. After awhile she summons up courage to knock at Corba's door, timidly at first, then with the energy of despair.

ACT 4.—Prati and the nurse waiting up for Paolo's return. The old man is irritated at every sound, and retires upstairs. Viola enters hurriedly having recognised her three brothers in the crowd. She has come to warn Paolo. She has hardly left when Red Harlequin, Big William, and the Monk tumble in riotously, holding up a Pierrot who appears to be quite drunk. They push him into a seat, and he goes to sleep. The Maskers terrify the old nurse with their merriment. Prati's anger at their presence is soon mollified by their quips and capers, and wine is served. The old man gets quite merry, but is soon irritated and turns them out. In the confusion, they leave the drunken Pierrot behind. Prati and the nurse discover that he is dead, takes off his mask. It is Paolo. While Prati is cursing the Vescotelli, Viola rushes in and throws herself on the corpse. The old man is about to strike her, but the nurse holds him back with the words "Will you kill your own child? The child of Paolo?" "Yes, I will," he replies, but his anger suddenly ceases at the sight of his dead son's face. The nurse places Viola's hand in Prati's, and softly says "We'll call him Paolo."

Mignon.

STORY OF THE OPERA.

Prior to the point at which the Opera opens, Sperata, the little daughter of Lothario, disappears, and it is assumed that she has been drowned. The shock kills her mother and Lothario becomes mentally deranged, and taking his harp he wanders out into the world looking for his lost child.

ACT I.—Wilhelm Meister, a young and wealthy Viennese, is travelling in search of adventure. Arriving at a wayside inn, he finds a tribe of Gipsies performing. Lothario is with them. The Chief of the Gipsies, Giarus, announces that the next item of the performance will be a wonderful dance on eggs performed by MIGNON, and going to the caravan, he drags out a ragged, half starved child, whom he tells to dance. She refuses. Giarus is about to chastise her, Lothario vainly trying to protect her, when Wilhelm intervenes, knocks Giarus down and rescues Mignon. He purchases her freedom from Giarus. Staying at the Inn are a stranded travelling company of actors; Laertes, the leading man of the Company, introduces himself to Wilhelm and presents him to Signora Filina, the prima donna. The latter, a heartless vain little coquette, tries hard to captivate Wilhelm, who falls a victim to her charms. Laertes comes with the good news that he has arranged a "bespeak performance" for the Company that will put them on their feet again. Mignon exhibits an intense jealousy of his attentions to Filina. She elects to join old Lothario in his wanderings. Wilhelm questioning her as to her past, she can tell him nothing beyond the fact that when a little child she was stolen by rough fierce men.

ACT II.—Mignon's growing love for Wilhelm opens her eyes to Filina's designs on Wilhelm and she gives way to furious anger. Filina again taunts her. She concludes that a dress of Filina's would make her more attractive to Wilhelm and proceeds to put one on. She is discovered by Wilhelm and Filina, the latter again taunts her, and tearing the dress to tatters, Mignon rushes out, puts on her Gipsy rags and rushes from the house, almost mad with hate and rage. Outside she meets Lothario, who welcomes her and asks her to join him. She tells him how she hates Filina, who has taken Wilhelm from her and wishes that the castle might catch fire and burn all in it. The old man in his madness, acts on her hint and sets fire to the castle.

ACT III.—Wilhelm, finding the Castle of Cipriani for sale decides to purchase it, and realising Mignon's love for him, intends to marry her. He takes her and Lothario to the Castle. An old retainer tells him the story of the late owner. Lothario under the influence of his surroundings, begins vaguely to recover his sense and memory. Finally the name of the Castle being told him, he disappears in a great agitation and presently returns, clothed as befits his station and rank and announces to Wilhelm that all the domain is his. He brings with him a casket, which he shows to Mignon. It contains some childish belongings of his little daughter Sperata. She takes the child's Prayer Book and begins to spell out a prayer. Half way through, she drops the book and continues the prayer from memory. Lothario recognises her as his long lost daughter and blessing her and Wilhelm, join their hands.

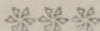
The Miracle

Or, The Story of Antoine.

(BY REGINALD SOMERVILLE.)

STORY OF THE OPERA.

The scene is laid in a picturesque Breton village. Antoine is a fisherman who has been blind for four years through an accident at sea. He is reduced to poverty, has lost faith, and has become a confirmed free-thinker. Therese, his young wife, has fallen under the spell of Paul, a "poet-singer," who owns a Cabaret on Mon Martre. In her misery she promises to run away with him to Paris. It is the Eve of the village "Pardon," or Saint's-Day, when pilgrimage is made to the neighbouring Holy Well, whose waters possess miraculous healing powers. Jeanne-Marie, Antoine's mother, pleads with him to bathe his eyes and test their virtue. He scoffs at the idea. A vehement outburst against the Church is overheard by the Curé. He threatens Antoine with excommunication. Jeanne-Marie redoubles her entreaties, only to be angrily driven away by her son. In an access of remorse for his undutiful and cruel behaviour he calls on heaven in his Mother's name and bathes his eyes in the water. A Miracle! His sight is returned to him. The Curé is the first to hear the great news. He places a penance on Antoine. He shall openly proclaim his penitence in the Chapel after Morning Mass on the morrow, and until that moment his fresh-given sight shall remain a solemn secret. Antoine makes a vow of silence. Therese is on the point of eloping with Paul. Antoine sees his wife for the first time after years in her lover's arms. He controls himself remembering his vow and acting the blind man passes them by. The shock has brought Therese to her senses. Never will she leave Antoine. So Paul goes back to Paris alone. Therese confesses all to Jeanne-Marie. Antoine also claims his mother's sympathy. Therese has left a letter saying she is going. Antoine has found it. He tells his Mother that Therese has left him, and nearly breaks his vow, but saves himself in time. At last Jeanne-Marie has the happiness of seeing Therese and Antoine reconciled. The Curé absolves Antoine from his vow. Antoine proclaims the great blessing which has been vouchsafed to him. The curtain falls on a scene of tense religious fervour and emotion.



Stella Maris.

(By the Belgian Composer, ALFRED DE KEYSER.)

STORY OF THE OPERA.

SCENE: A Brittany Fishing Village.

ACT I.—The curtain rises upon the marriage festivities of Marga and Sylvain. Whilst the marriage ceremony is in progress, Yanik returns

from an absence of three years to claim his old sweetheart Marga, who had thought him dead. Yanik retorts to this excuse that solemn vows are not so easily broken, and taking from his pocket a bag of gold, says, "For three years I have toiled in the stormy seas for you, and this is how I keep my promise," and flings the bag of gold at her feet. Sylvain is about to spring upon Yanik in jealous rage, when the chimes of the bells summons the party to the wedding, and Sylvain and Marga, followed by the wedding guests, enter the little village church, leaving Yanik alone and in despair.

ACT II.—Marga is in her new home, and while Sylvain is away on his fishing duties Yanik enters and protests and pleads his cause with Marga. Marga refuses to listen to him. Yanik in despair, swears to kill Sylvain unless Marga yields to him. Marga, in terror for her husband's life, agrees to violate her marriage vows to save Sylvain's life, upon condition also that Yanik will at once leave and go to sea for good.

ACT III.—Yanik accidentally meets Marga upon the pathway leading to the harbour, and Sylvain who has overheard Marga's explanation of her sacrifice to her Mother, in which she says, "Do you think if Sylvain knew the reason of my sacrifice, that he would forgive me?" confronts them both. After a powerful scene, Yanik returns to the sea, and Sylvain and Marga are left alone together.



Tosca

STORY OF THE OPERA.

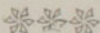


The curtain rises on the Attavanti Chapel of the Church of Sant 'Andrea Alla Valle—almost immediately Angelotti enters in prison garb, he is obviously in a hunted and distressed state. He goes straight to the statue of the Blessed Virgin, where by some prearrangement, a key has been hidden for him which enables him to open the portals of the Chapel. The Sacristan here enters and prepares the paint-brushes for the artist Cavaradossi (who is painting a picture of the Mary Magdalen). The latter artist shortly enters and at once proceeds with his painting. The sacristan examines the picture and exclaims that he recognises it as the portrait of a fair worshipper, who day by day has knelt in prayer before the Statue of the Virgin. The sacristan leaves, and no sooner has he gone than Angelotti re-enters. He immediately recognises Cavaradossi, but the latter at first does not return it, so altered is the escaped prisoner by his sufferings. The conversation is interrupted by the voice of Tosca, and Angelotti is hurriedly hidden because, as Cavaradossi explains, he dare not trust to the discretion of Tosca, who is extremely jealous as well. Tosca is in a suspicious mood, and half hints that Cavaradossi has been in conversation in the Chapel with another lady, then she becomes infuriated upon seeing in the picture of Magdalen the portrait of Attavanti. (Who is the sister of Angelotti, and who, whilst praying before the Virgin, left the key for her brother.) Tosca

is at last pacified and leaves. At once Cavaradossi calls Angelotti, and leads him off to safety. Scarpia, Chief of Police, enters upon the track of Angelotti, and by means of a fan of the Attavanti works upon the jealousy of Tosca for his own ends.

Act Two shows Scarpia's apartments in the Farnese Palace. By a subterfuge, Tosca is induced to visit the apartments. A police agent shortly enters and announces that, though he has been unable to find Angelotti, he has arrested Cavaradossi. The latter is at once produced, and refuses to speak. He is taken to a room just off, and tortured within the hearing of Tosca, who in her horror reveals the hiding place of Angelotti in order to spare her lover further torment. The result is that Cavaradossi is at once condemned to death. When he is removed, Tosca is left alone with Scarpia, who invites her to supper. He offers that if Tosca will give herself up to him he will arrange that the execution shall be a mock one. In desperation, and to gain time, Tosca pretends to agree. Scarpia thereupon calls in his agent and instructs him that the execution is to be a mock one, and that Cavaradossi shall not be really killed, but the audience are not left in much doubt as to the genuineness of Scarpia's promise by his method in giving the order. Tosca, however, believes him. When they are left alone again, to save her honour she stabs Scarpia and escapes.

The Third Act. A platform of the Castle Sant Angelo. The place of execution. Tosca, by virtue of the pass she had obtained from Scarpia, is admitted to Cavaradossi, and reveals the story of Scarpia to him, and the promise of a mock execution; they both prepare, and the firing party enter. Tosca instructs Cavaradossi to await a signal from her before moving after the firing. The shooting takes place, and to Tosca's signal to rise there is no answer. Cavaradossi has been executed in earnest. Tosca in her despair flings herself from the walls of the Castle, just as the police agents rush on to arrest her for the (just discovered) killing of Scarpia.



Daughter of the Regiment.

STORY OF THE OPERA.

Marie, (the Daughter of the Regiment), was found as a child on the Battlefield by Sergeant Sulpice. She is beloved by Tonio, a young Tyrolese peasant, who enters the Grand Army in order to obtain the consent of the regiment to his marriage to her. The Countess of Berkenfeldt claims Marie as her niece, who takes a sorrowful farewell of the whole regiment and her lover. In spite of all the instructions of the Countess, to remember her high birth, Marie cannot forget her early associations, and during a singing lesson with her aunt, breaks off into her beloved "Rataplan" with Sulpice who is staying at the Castle. Tonio, now in command of the regiment, renews his offer of marriage, but the Countess determined to marry Marie to one of her own rank, tries to enforce obedience. Sulpice, however, discovers that she is not the aunt but the mother of Marie, and compels her to confess this. Her better feelings are awakened, and she consents to Marie's marriage with Tonio.



