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TALES OF HOFFMANN

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DECCA RECORDS

Tuesday, 5th November, 1957

The 39th performance at the Royal Opera House

THE TALES OF HOFFMANN

OPERA IN THREE ACTS

Words by Jules Barbier and Michel Carré
founded on a play by the same authors

Music by Jacques Offenbach

Scene and costumes by Waldheovitch

CONDUTOR - EDWARD DOWNES
PRODUCER - GÜNTHER RENNERT

THE COVENT GARDEN OPERA CHORUS
Chorus Master - Douglas Robinson

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JACQUES OFFENBACH, 1819-1880

This opera was first performed at the Opéra-Comique, Paris, on 10th February, 1881 with Avelot Isaac, Cid, Olympia, Giuditta, Amore, Tullio (Hoffmann), Taskin (Landorf, Coppettis, Vappertus, Dr. Minelli). It was first performed in England at the Adelphi Theatre (in German) on 15th April, 1887, and at His Majesty's Theatre (in English) on 15th May, 1910. The first Covent Garden performance was on 5th October, 1910, with Mazuric Tute, Mignon Nevada, Zelie de Lussan, Walter Hyde and Harry Dacre ( conductor Brooks). It was revived at this theatre, again under Brooks, in 1936 and 1937. The first performance of the present production was on 26th October, 1954.
CHARACTERS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

PROLOGUE
The Muse ...................................................... Eileen Barry
Luther, an Innkeeper ........................................... Rhuddor Davies
Councillor Lindorf ............................................. Otakar Kraus
Andreas, servant of Stelio ................................... David Tree
Nicklaus, Hoffmann's companion ......................... Josephine Veasey
Hoffmann, a poet ............................................... James Johnston
Nathaniel ......................................................... Deshon Troy
Wilhelm ......................................................... Joseph Rouleau
Hermann ......................................................... Robert Allman

ACT I "OLYMPIA"
Spalanzani, an inventor .................................... Ronald Lewis
Hoffmann, a poet ................................................ James Johnston
Cochrane, Spalanzani's servant ............................. David Tree
Nicklaus, Hoffmann's companion ......................... Josephine Veasey
Coppellio, a scientist, rival of Spalanzani ............... Otakar Kraus
Olympia, a mechanical doll ................................. Edna Graham

ACT II "ANTONIA"
Antonia, a singer ............................................... Joan Sutherland
Crepsel, her father ............................................ Michael Langdon
Franz, her servant ............................................. David Tree
Hoffmann, a poet ............................................... James Johnston
Nicklaus, his companion ..................................... Josephine Veasey
Dr. Miracle, a doctor ........................................ Otakar Kraus
The Voice of Antonia's mother ............................. Laura Elms

ACT III "GIULIETTA"
Hoffmann, a poet ............................................... James Johnston
Pattiissiaccio, an admirer of Giulietta ..................... David Tree
Giulietta, a courtesan ........................................ June Grant
Nicklaus, Hoffmann's companion ......................... Josephine Veasey
Schiller, Giulietta's lover ................................... Michael Langdon
Duperbourg, a scoundrel ..................................... Otakar Kraus

EPILOGUE
Hoffmann, a poet ............................................... James Johnston
Nicklaus, his companion ..................................... Josephine Veasey
Nathaniel ......................................................... Deshon Troy
Wilhelm ......................................................... Joseph Rouleau
Hermann ......................................................... Robert Allman
Luther, an Innkeeper .......................................... Rhuddor Davies
The Muse ......................................................... Eileen Barry
Stelio, an opera singer ........................................ Romayne Austin

THE COVENT GARDEN OPERA BALLET
under the direction of Harold Turner
Ballet Mistress - Romayne Austin
Miss Marion Stoddleome appears by permission of Sadler's Wells Trust Ltd.
HISTORICAL NOTE

In March 1851 a play called "Les Contes Fantastiques d'Hoffmann" by Jules Barbier and Michel Carré was produced at the Odéon Theatre, Paris. Offenbach, who was Musical Director of the theatre, probably conducted the incidental music and it was then that his interest in the subject was aroused.

During the Universal Exhibition of 1878, some extracts from an "Opéra Romantique" by one Hector Saloman, based on the Barbier and Carré play, were performed. Offenbach once again became very interested in the subject and began negotiations for the presentation of his version of the work at the Théâtre Lyrique. For various reasons these negotiations fell through, as did others in Paris. Offenbach then came to an arrangement with the Director of the Vienna Opera for his "Tales of Hoffman" to be performed there.

Before finally signing the contract, he gave a private performance of the work at his own house and the audience included all the important musicians and critics of Paris, as well as the theatre managers. They were so impressed with what they heard that they did not wish Vienna to stage the première and accordingly Carvalho, the Director of the Opera-Comique, secured the work for his theatre.

During rehearsals Offenbach became ill. He had completed the vocal score but not the orchestration. His illness became severe and he died in October 1858 while the work was still in the rehearsal stage. Ernest Guiraud, who had written the reindications for "Carmen," was called in to complete the orchestration of the work.

The first performance took place in February 1849 and it was in five acts: Act I in Luther's Tavern (now called the Prologue), Act II Olympia the Doll, Act III Antonia the Singer, Act IV Giulietta the Courtesan, Act V (now the Epilogue) again in Luther's Tavern. Carvalho suddenly became nervous about the excessive length of the opera and cut one act out completely, the Venice scene, and made several other changes. A vocal score and libretto of this version were published with the names of Barbier and Carré as librettists, but soon after Barbier's name disappeared altogether from the title page of the libretto.

In the 1893 revival in Paris the Giulietta scene was restored, but in the wrong place, i.e., before instead of after the Antonia scene. The version of "The Tales of Hoffmann" which has generally been placed in this country and elsewhere received its first performance in Berlin in 1905; arranged by Maxmillian Morris it is in three acts, with a prologue and epilogue. Again there were many changes in this version, the most important of which were the use of recitatives instead of spoken dialogue, the singing of the Barcarolle by Giulietta and Nicklaus as a love duet, the introduction of a sõlet into the Venice scene, and the abbreviation of the whole story of the Epilogue.

The present Covent Garden production uses a shortened form of the spoken dialogue and a version of the music which is as close as possible to that which Offenbach intended. The Management are grateful to the Carl Rosa Opera Company and to Mr. Arthur Hammond who have generously placed their version, especially of the dialogue, at the disposal of the Royal Opera House.

H.D.R.

THE TALES OF HOFFMANN

PROLOGUE

LUTHER'S TAVERN IN SÜDBERG

The Muse invokes the aid of the Spirits of Wine and Beer to prevent Hoffmann forsaking Poetry for Love.

The councillor Lindorf by bribing Andres, the servant of the Primadonna Stella who is singing Donna Anna in the Opera House next door, learns that she is to meet Hoffmann, her former lover, after the evening's performance. Andres gives Lindorf Stella's letter to Hoffmann which also contains the key to Stella's dressing room. Lindorf, who during the course of the opera assumes in various guises the role of Hoffmann's evil genius, exults over his prospective victim.
A band of students led by Nathaniel and Hermann enter the tavern. They are soon joined by Nicklaus (sung by a Mezzo-soprano) and his friend Hoffmann. Hoffmann is persuaded to sing the legend of Kleinzeck to the assembled company, but half way through he falls into a reverie and begins to sing about Stella. Hoffmann is further depressed by the presence of Lindorf, whom he says brings him bad luck. He then offers to tell the story of the three great loves of his life. Despite Latrobe’s warning that the curtain is going up on the second act of “Don Giovanni,” all the students prefer to stay and hear Hoffmann’s story. “The first one you must know was called Olympia...” says Hoffmann, and the “Tales” begin.

ACT I. OLYMPIA THE DOLL

SPALANZAN’S HOUSE

The inventor Spalanzani is awaiting the arrival of his guests, who have been invited to see his wonderful doll Olympia. He is worried, however, lest Coppélia his former partner and co-inventor of the doll should come and claim her share of the proceeds.

Hoffmann, Spalanzani’s pupil, has fallen in love with Olympia, whom he believes to be Spalanzani’s daughter. Nicklaus warns him not to be duped, but Hoffmann refuses to listen to his friend’s advice.

Coppélia now appears and succeeds in selling Hoffmann a pair of magic spectacles which increases Hoffmann’s delight as he gazes on Olympia. Spalanzani agrees to pay Coppélia 500 ducats for Olympia’s eyes, and makes out a draft for immediate payment on Elias, the money lender, knowing him to be already bankrupt.

The servant Cochenille announces the arrival of the guests. Olympia is introduced and Spalanzani accompanies her on the harp while she sings before the assembly. The guests depart for supper and Hoffmann makes ardent love to Olympia with little response on her part. When he touches her on the shoulder she evades him and vanishes into her own room.

Coppélia returns—the draft on Elias is worthless—and hides herself. The guests return to dance. Hoffmann dances with Olympia who, fully wound-up, dances faster and faster until in the end Hoffmann falls exhausted. Cochenille removes Olympia. Suddenly a crash is heard in the adjoining room. Coppélia has destroyed the doll. As the two inventors hurl insults at one another, Hoffman’s voice is heard saying: “It was a doll, it was a doll.” And amidst general laughter the curtain falls.

INTERVAL.
Warning bells will be sounded five and two minutes before the rise of the curtain.

ACT II. ANTONIA THE SINGER

A ROOM IN THE HOUSE OF COUNCILLOR CRESPEL, MUNICH

Antonia, the拧ing daughter of Councillor Crespel, sits singing at the piano. Her father begs her not to sing since he has already seen in her the signs of the consumption that had killed her mother. He has brought Antonia to Munich to escape Hoffmann’s attentions, and tells his dear servant Franz to admit no one to the house. Franz spies on his hard lot.

Hoffmann and Nicklaus gain admission to the house. The poet and Antonia sing an impromptu duet. Crespel returns, Hoffmann hides and Antonia returns to her own room. Doctor Miracle is announced. “No doctor he,” says Crespel, “he is the murderer who attended my wife with his horrible flasks.” He tries to keep him out but is unable to do so. Doctor Miracle pretends to treat the absent Antonia, and in response to his command to sing her voice is heard from the adjoining room. Crespel begs Doctor Miracle to leave Antonia alone, but the evil man says that he can save her only if he can cure her. Crespel and the doctor leave the room.

Hoffmann and Antonia now return and Hoffmann tries to persuade her to give up singing. She agrees and they arrange to meet the following day. No sooner has Hoffmann left than Doctor Miracle is back. He tempts Antonia to sing by evoking the spirit and voice of her mother. Antonia, her mother’s voice and Doctor Miracle join in an exciting trio, and Antonia’s
voice, accompanied by the doctor on a viola, rises higher and higher until she falls dying. Hoffman and Crespi rush in. "Go fetch a doctor" shouts Hoffman. "I am here" says Doctor Miracle.

INTERVAL
Warning bells will be sounded five and two minutes before the rise of the curtain.

ACT III. GIULIETTA THE COURTESAN

GIULIETTA'S PALACE OVERLOOKING THE GRAND CANAL, VENICE

GIULIETTA is entertaining her friends, including Hoffman. Nicklaus warns Hoffman not to fall in love with the courtesan. "I defy the devil himself to make me seriously in love with such a woman", reflexes Hoffman. His remarks are overheard by Dapertutto, who invokes the power of a magnificent diamond with which he will be able to persuade GIULIETTA to capture the soul of Hoffman as she has done in the case of Schlemil. He asks Giulietta to obtain Hoffman's reflection in his mirror.

Hoffman returns and Giulietta fulfills Dapertutto's order to capture the poet's reflection. Schlemil enters and is furious at Giulietta's seeming infidelity. He challenges Hoffman to a duel, and Dapertutto offers Hoffman his sword. Schlemil is killed.

In the meantime Giulietta meets Pittichinaccio, with whom she leaves by gondola. Hoffman returns to see them floating away together.

EPILOGUE
We are back in Leporello's wine cellar. Hoffman finishes his story just as "Don Giovanni" opens upstairs in the Opera House. Conductor Lindorf leaves to meet Stella. The students drink a toast to Stella who embodies the virtues of Hoffmann's three loves, and then depart to supper leaving Hoffman alone. The Muse reappears and poisons the metal "Love makes a man great; tears make him greater still."

Hoffman, under the influence of the Muse's words, repulses Stella's advances, when she enters with Lindorf from the opera.

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