

DECCA







Richard Bonynge has firmly entered the pantheon of conductor legends. In the operatic world especially, many of his recordings are classics of recorded music, his contribution vast by any standards. He has not only introduced completely forgotten or neglected repertoire, his championing of young talent, most famously Luciano Pavarotti in the 1960s, has given exciting opportunities to many singers. If his most significant achievements have been in opera, his "extra-curricular" activities are hardly less note-worthy.

Natural talent aside, Bonynge was fortunate in other ways too, not least in being contracted to Decca Records. One story illustrates his relationship with this label. In 1966, Decca recorded Donizetti's *Anna Bolena* with Elena Souliotis. As this strayed onto Bonynge/Sutherland territory, Bonynge – rather upset about it – contacted Maurice Rosengarten, Director of Decca Recordings (Europe) to express his disappointment. Mr Rosengarten replied, "Mr Bonynge, if you wish to record *Anna Bolena* for Decca, you may do so next week". In fact he did record it many years later. But that generosity of spirit resulted in an astonishingly rich legacy of recordings, to which this release is a splendid tribute.



Adolphe Adam's ballet, *Le Diable à quatre* (1845) was the first complete forgotten ballet score resurrected by Bonynge. It was the ninth ballet the composer wrote, four years after *Giselle*. It displays beautifully Adam's felicitous sense of colour and melody, and in cahoots with Decca's engineering skills, Bonynge brings this out vividly. It was recorded in 1964 when he was relatively inexperienced, yet the London Symphony Orchestra responds superbly. During those days especially, the LSO was famous for, shall we say, its sometimes uncooperative behaviour with

any conductor it deemed not up to their own high standards. I asked Bonynge how he got on with them: "They were terribly kind and helpful and always gave of their best. I knew what I wanted from the players and somehow was able to communicate that to them."

Bonynge recorded Adam's *Giselle* (1841) – the oldest ballet in the permanent repertoire – twice: first with the Orchestre National de l'Opéra de Monte-Carlo in 1967, the second with the National Philharmonic in 1986. For these recordings, Bonynge not only went back to the original orchestrations, but also included many passages, which had seemingly been lost over the years, some of which were strikingly beautiful. The icing on the cake of the 1969 release was the booklet. The then booklet editor, Nicholas Anderson, recalls that "it almost cost me my job; I used the most luxurious art paper I could find and filled it with lavish illustrations and comprehensive essays. It cost Decca a fortune!" The later National Philharmonic version perhaps has more polish than the earlier recording, and is also a superb digital recording – Decca capturing the bass drum like no other company – but the earlier version has a wonderfully theatrical feel to it.

It is curious that Adam's ballet score for *Le Corsaire* (1856) had not been recorded complete before Bonynge's 1990 recording with the ever-versatile English Chamber Orchestra. In the theatre many of the most celebrated passages were often performed individually, but the score as a whole maintains the composer's reputation for charm and melody – the first CD especially so, with its dashes of "local" colour: a "bolero", an "écossaise", and the like, not to mention a rollicking "bacchanal".

From the 1950s until 1967 the legendary record producer John Culshaw was a towering figure at Decca. In his book, *Putting the Record Straight* (1981), he wrote of "Richard Bonynge, who was himself a trained musician and a pianist of no mean talent. The human voice was his speciality, and his knowledge of the voice and the vocal literature of the nineteenth century was comprehensive to say the very least. Certainly his appetite for increasing that knowledge was insatiable. No work was too obscure to avoid his investigation and his enthusiasm for some of the by-ways of music was as infectious as [Sir Thomas] Beecham's." No praise could be higher, and the next composer on the list admirably proves the point.

Daniel Auber is a colourful figure in music history. A successful opera composer who hated listening to his own music, he loved women – many a pretty opera singer received their audition in a private room – and had a knack of writing catchy tunes; he was famous for his quips and bon mots. "Music was once my mistress," he would say, before adding, "since then she has become my wife." For his ballet *Marco Spada* (1852), he chose not to adapt his opera on the same



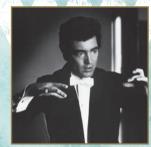
8





subject for the ballet score, but used music from many of his other works. The result is a delightful collection of tunes, deliciously orchestrated with much charm. Recorded in 1972, the vintage Decca sound was produced by the legendary engineer, Kenneth Wilkinson. Bonynge always had a warm relationship with his engineers and producers, and the ending of many happy recording sessions invariably ended up with a celebratory drink in the local pub!

Friedrich Burgmüller is mainly remembered today for two numbers he composed for *Giselle*, but Bonynge gave us a chance to hear one of his own original scores, *La Péri* (1843). It was created for the reigning prima ballerina of the day, Carlotta Grisi, following the success of *Giselle* at the Opéra in Paris. Its warmth and easy-going style is typical of the charm, which seemed to come so naturally from composers of this period. The original LP, incidentally, eschewed the usual notes on the back of the sleeve and instead adorned each side with a beautiful illustration. Notes



in the form of a detailed essay by Bonynge himself were contained on a separate leaflet. He concluded this essay by saying, "Bizet and Tchaikovsky were acquainted with the score of *La Péri* which was, in its day, such a famous piece; it would seem to me a shame for it to disappear altogether."

Bonynge joined the delightful arrangement of Chopin piano pieces, which comprise the ballet *Les Sylphides* with a typically inventive coupling of the ballet music from Ambroise Thomas – of whom someone once most unfairly said, "There is good music, there is bad



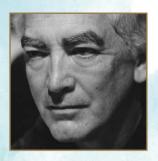
music, and there is the music of Ambroise Thomas"! The opera *Hamlet* was first performed in 1868 and the rather elaborate divertissement ballet, entitled *La Fête du printemps*, has charm and vivacity, not to mention one of the first uses of a saxophone in a classical score.

Along with the ballets of Tchaikovsky and Adam's *Giselle*, Léo Delibes represents the greatest ballet music of the 19th century. Bonynge made two recordings of *Coppélia*: the first in 1969 with the

Suisse Romande Orchestra, the second in 1986 with the National Philharmonic. The latter was a session orchestra made up from the finest players from the London orchestras and they served both Decca and Bonynge very well for many years. This version is superbly played and recorded (the woodwind is a delight), though the earlier version had the distinct timbre of a "French" orchestra – reedy wind colouring in particular – a sound which has almost vanished today. It was recorded in the famous Victoria Hall, Geneva, where they made many Decca recordings with Ernest Ansermet.

Sylvia was written five years after Coppélia and whilst it may not possess the "perfection" of the earlier work, it nevertheless offers many striking passages. In 1875, the score was considered "Wagnerian", but to our ears it is a delightful confection of melody, colour and spectacular "set" pieces, notably the bacchanal. The "pizzicato" number is every bit as fetching as the famous Pizzicato Polka of Johann Strauss II, while the dramatic writing in numbers such as "Le Temple de Diane" and the vibrant horns in the "Les Chasseresses" were all beautifully captured by the Decca engineers.

The Penguin Stereo Guide was very enthusiastic over two LPs of Handel overtures, recorded in 1967 and 1969 – a composer of whom Bonynge is particularly fond: "The Arrival of the Queen of Sheba is as popular as ever, but almost all of this splendid collection has been neglected and all credit to Richard Bonynge for resurrecting it with such vigour." Of the second volume the Penguin Guide said, "Bonynge uses his scholarship to produce results the very opposite of dry as dust. He may use double-dotting, notes inégales and added appoggiaturas beyond what other



scholars would allow, but the baroque elaboration is justified in the exuberance of the end result."

Charles Lecocq had the misfortune to be born with a hip condition, which necessitated the use of crutches all his life. Although this caused him much distress, it did not prevent him from writing a string of highly attractive works, most famously the opera *La Fille de Madame Angot* (1872). So rich in tunes is this work, Gordon Jacob extracted from it (with some other music too) enough to make the effervescent ballet *Mam'zelle Angot*. Bonynge conducted the first complete recording for Decca in 1983, with the National Philharmonic on sparkling form. The rarely heard ballet music from Berlioz's *Les Troyens* and Weber's popular *Invitation to the Dance* were also included on this release.

Jules Massenet was one of the most successful opera composers in music history. Only after his death did his popularity fall into decline. Bonynge, with Joan Sutherland, were at the forefront of the Massenet revival last century, famously performing and recording *Esclarmonde* and *Le Roi de Lahore*. Bonynge became intrigued by Massenet in the 1950s. In those days, in antique or antiquarian book shops in Paris, one could easily find

14



opera scores, often signed by the composer, and Bonynge collected as many Massenet' scores as he could find. They went for a song then. (Bonynge, it must be said, is an insatiable collector. In London in the 1950s/60s he spent many hours scouring the shops in Portobello Road, finding the most amazing paintings, Staffordshire pottery, and curios which one could buy for very little money then). Even more recherché than Massenet's operas were the Suites and ballet music of this most appealing composer. In the mid-1970s, Bonynge chose to record two of the rare orchestral Suites, the *Scènes alsaciennes* and *Scènes dramatiques*, both giving ample opportunity for Decca sound engineers to show their prowess; the Penguin Record Guide described the sound as "superlative" and the LP finishes with the sparkling *Marche des princesses* from *Cendrillon*.

Bonynge made the first recordings of two original Massenet ballets, *Cigale* (recorded in 1978) and *Le Carillon* (1983), the latter including the first recording made by Nigel Kennedy in the celebrated "Méditation" from *Thaïs*. The ballets are charming, and the sentimentality of Cigale and the exotic Flemish background of *Le Carillon* offer many delights.

Not an original Massenet ballet, but one ingeniously put together from many works by the composer Leighton Lucas, was *Manon*, performed regularly in the theatre with tremendous success. It contains some of Massenet's finest melodies (above all the famous *Élégie*) and this 1985 recording can be regarded as a feast of entertaining music in its own right. The orchestra of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, gives this stylish performance great authenticity.

Decca has made a house speciality of coupling *Le Cid* (Massenet) and *Les Patineurs* (Meyerbeer) ballet music over the years (with Robert Irving, Jean Martinon and Stanley Black), but Bonynge's 1975 recording is perhaps the most spectacular; sumptuously recorded and brilliantly played, this music had never before sounded so opulent.



André Messager represents the last flowering of French operetta, but he also wrote several ballets, of which *Les Deux Pigeons* is the most famous. Andrew Lamb, in *Gramophone Magazine*, wrote: "*Les Deux Pigeons* is a score of such tunefulness and refinement that it is surprising that it has taken Bonynge so long to get round to it." It was recorded with the Orchestra of the Welsh National Opera in 1991.

The composers of the Russian Imperial Ballet were not overlooked by Bonynge. The ballet *La Source* (1866) shared the music equally between Delibes and the Austrian composer Ludwig Minkus, who was associated with Russian theatres for many years. This was Delibes' first ballet score to hint at the greatness to come with his more famous ballets. The music of the more experienced Minkus is hardly second best, though perhaps slightly more melancholic in feeling. The Italian composer Riccardo Drigo's most significant role was as director of the Russian Imperial Ballet, for which he wrote his delightful *La Flûte magique*. Both these works received their first complete recordings under Bonynge, with *Gramophone Magazine* again questioning why Bonynge took so long to get around to recording them!

La Bayadère (1877) is the most enduring of all ballets by Minkus. The engineer for this 1992 recording was Stan Goodall. Stan made many recordings with Bonynge over the years and talking of those sessions, he recalls, "Bonynge was always a pleasure to work with and the sessions invariably accomplished with good humour and efficiency. Bonynge's style was one of quiet authority, always seemingly able to elicit the very best from the orchestra and, in opera recording, the singers. Bonynge understood singers like few other conductors, and this accounts for his notable success in this genre. One felt he was even more relaxed in making his recordings of ballet music, perhaps as he didn't have to deal with the sometimes more demanding world of opera."



Perhaps the finest of all of Bonynge's ballet "finds" was the score by Jacques Offenbach – The Mozart of the Champs-Élysées – of his only ballet, *Le Papillon* (1860). The score is rich in melody, colourfully orchestrated and beguiling. The LP also came with an especially evocative cover. But the ballet itself has a macabre story attached to it. It was created for the ballerina Emma Livry, who one day, alas, danced too close to the gas lights on the stage and was engulfed in flames. She lingered in agony for several days, the press reporting every gruesome detail (some things never change). One number from the ballet, the "Valse des rayons", had a separate saucy life as the notorious "Apache Dance", often performed at the Folies Bergère.

So beautifully orchestrated and put together, it is hard to believe that *La Boutique fantasque* was not an original ballet score. Yet Respighi's deft arrangement of Rossini's smaller works (which Rossini dubbed his "sins of an old age") works so perfectly, the ballet has a permanent place in the repertoire. Britten – in rare light music mode – made similarly colourful arrangements of these "sins", with the *Soirées musicales* and *Matinées musicales*. Bonynge and the National Philharmonic clearly enjoyed every second of this 1981 recording session.

Although Johann Strauss II composed only one complete ballet – *Aschenbrödel* (Cinderella), which had to be completed posthumously (by Josef Beyer) –, the result is pleasing for Straussians and balletomanes alike, in an early digital recording from 1980. Both *Le Beau Danube* (arr. Désormière) and *Bal de Vienne* (recorded 1974) are arrangements of lesser known, but adroitly chosen works by Strauss, each ending in exhilarating fashion. Bal de Vienne was arranged by Douglas Gamley, who added deft orchestrations to various Bonynge recordings over the years. Gamley dedicated this work



to Bonynge, and it was first performed in a gala performance of *Die Fledermaus* in San Francisco in 1973.

British music critic Peter Gammond wrote, "there are four great composers: Bach, Mozart, Beethoven and your own particular favourite". Tchaikovsky could very well be that fourth composer. As the great Sibelian Robert Layton said, "there is more melody in a few bars of Tchaikovsky than most composers manage in a lifetime". Bonynge embraced the

three ballets with the relish of a connoisseur: the 1974 *Nutcracker* really sparkles in the "transformation scene", while the 1975 *Swan Lake* is both spectacular as a recording and performance. The finale is irresistible, while the *Penguin Stereo Guide* commented that, "the 'fairy castle' fanfares have the atmosphere of a medieval tournament". In the 1977 *Sleeping Beauty*, the *Penguin Guide* also noted a "frisson of tension" in the magical "Panorama", and Bonynge fully captures the romantic sweep of the score with red-blooded romanticism.

One of the critics of the *Penguin Stereo Guide* was Edward Greenfield OBE who published his memoir, *Portrait Gallery: A Life in Classical Music*, in 2014. He wrote, "It was in the recording studio above all that he [Bonynge] came to shine, not just in the operas in which his wife starred but also in ballet music, often in scores that had largely been forgotten. He himself is a musical scholar, and has made a vast collection of scores over the years, specialising in nineteenth-century opera but also extending to ballet scores, above all those of French composers. As in Donizetti and Bellini, his gift

for lifting rhythms seductively was a great asset on conducting any ballet score, and his knowledge of the recording process made him a very welcome conductor with recording managers and engineers."

Some of Bonynge's most prized finds are contained in the various recordings of ballet excerpts and overtures he recorded over the years. His first ballet recording, *The Art of the Prima Ballerina*, was perhaps designed as a companion to Joan Sutherland's famous *The Art of the Prima Donna* set. The original booklet in the box set admirably summed up the ambitions of this release: "Our cover photo depicts the celebrated ballerina Alicia Markova and the talented young conductor Richard Bonygne in the act of selecting pieces for inclusion in this album, celebrating the glories of the Prima Ballerina in the classical ballets of the 19th century, the charming idea for which owes its conception, inception and subsequent fulfilment to them. Much devoted care and thought was expended by both on the selection of pieces; Mme. Markova's enthusiasm brought her to the recording session and play throughs. Her collaborator, Mr. Bonynge thus had the advantage of

her generous and unstinted assistance and the benefit of her vast experience from beginning to end of the undertaking." The repertoire mixed the familiar with the unfamiliar, the Penguin Guide noting that, "some of the curiosities in the second part are especially gay and vivacious".

The LP *Pas de Deux* that followed, comprises famous pas de deux which have survived, often after the ballet has disappeared from the permanent repertoire. The music is tuneful in the most alluring ballet tradition.



 \sim 23



It included Auber's delightful *Pas classique*, a number which lingers in the mind long after the music has stopped. The last few minutes of *Esmeralda* (Drigo) are another highlight and the Minkus "Pas de deux" from *Paquita* is similarly enjoyable. Each item contains at least one striking tune, but much of the success of this music is due to the crisply pointed playing of the orchestra, beautifully captured by the Decca engineering.

Homage to Pavlova celebrated the artistry of the ballerina Anna Pavlova (1881–1931) in music with which she became associated. Much of it is rarely heard today but all is undeniably charming. Perhaps the most well-known number is the pseudo-exotic Ballet égyptien by Luigini, and it remains the only complete recording of this work to date. The lavish booklet is the work of Decca's Nicholas Anderson again. These recordings were all with the LSO and show the fine relationship Bonynge had with this orchestra.

In 1988, a 2-CD set of ballet music was recorded: it included some items recorded before, like the Minkus "Grand pas" (perhaps even livelier in this new version) but also some new items, most importantly *The Good-Humoured Ladies* (Scarlatti, arr. Tommasini) and *Les Rendez-vous* (Auber, arr. Lambert). The Auber is especially delightful and one again thinks the composer's gift for melody was inexhaustible.

Overtures have sadly fallen out of fashion in the concert hall, robbing the public of much wonderful music. Bonynge made several very enterprising collections including, in 1965, Favourite Overtures of the 19th Century – released in America as Overtures to Forgotten Operas. Highlights from the LP were the marvellously Mendelssohnian Maritana by the Irish composer, William Vincent Wallace, Aimé Maillart's Les Dragons de Villars, and a fizzing performance of Offenbach's La Fille du tambour-major overtures.



The late 1960s and early 1970s were vintage years for Bonynge. He recorded a range of classic opera sets (*The Tales of Hoffmann, Lucia di Lammermoor, Les Huguenots, Rigoletto,* to name but a few) and two sparkling recordings of French overtures and the like. *French Opera Overtures* (1969) contains two overtures by Auber: *Marco Spada* (which features some sweetly melancholic passages before bursting into champagne-like brilliance halfway through) and the similarly piquant *Lestocq,* with a haunting theme for oboe and an exuberant second half. Planquette's spicy *Les Cloches de Corneville* is another gem – the opera was so popular it ran for 461 performances and, on the final night, free rolls and beer were given to every member of the audience! Adam's *Giralda* has many charming felicities of detail, including castanets and some delicious string writing. The same composer's *La Poupée de Nuremberg* is similarly tuneful and unusually offers a section for a string quartet at one point. The LP ends with the famous *Le Calife de Bagdad* overture of Boieldieu. All of these were responsively performed by the New Philbarmonia Orchestra

In 1971, Ballet Music and Entr'actes was recorded and similarly inspired in repertoire. The LP featured the Mozartian overture La Dame blanche – as light as a soufflé – and several items by Massenet: the glittering "Sévillana" (from Don César de Bazan), the ballet from Le Roi de Lahore (another early use of the saxophone), and the deservedly famous and haunting "Invocation" (or "Élégie"), inter alia. The "Dance of the Gypsy" from Saint-Saëns' opera Henry VIII, with its sinuous opening to an atmospheric dance macabre, contrasts with the wonderful pastiche entr'acte to Delibes' Le Roi l'a dit. The LP ended with a rare Auber overture, La Neige, in which Bonynge invests infectious vigour. Two extra items were recorded during this session which failed to make it on to the LP (due to space): they have now been released on CD: a prelude from Delibes' Kassya and an entr'acte to Massenet's Les Érinnyes. The latter is especially appealing. It has a

perfumed, nostalgic atmosphere and, when played late at night with a glass of wine, it gives us a small glimpse of heaven on earth.

In between the two above recordings in 1970 came a disc of 18-century overtures, which included a rarity by Boieldieu along with the striking overture *Le Magnifique* by Grétry. Two other curios were taped by Decca during this fertile period. In 1968, a disc of J.C. Bach and Salieri with the English Chamber Orchestra – the latter's Concerto in C for flute & oboe is particularly delightful – and in 1971, Cello Concertos by Auber, Popper and Massenet. All are attractive works, though perhaps the Auber Cello Concerto No.1 in A minor, is the most interesting. It is an early work of substance and invention – which, however had to be orchestrated by Douglas Gamley.



This celebratory box set is rather like a musical equivalent to a holiday island you remembered going to as a child. Some of it is familiar, but what happens if you turn left down this street? You might find Glière's Harp Concerto, or if you turn right, suddenly you find you're in Leoni's *The Prayer and the Sword*. If you go straight ahead you could enter the world of Offenbachian butterflies, or Russian swans, or French ghosts. The possibilities are endless, the surprises many, and all of them lavishly served to us, thanks to Richard Bonynge.

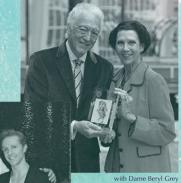
© 2020 Paul Westcott

28





with Vladmir Malakhov



with Carla Fracci

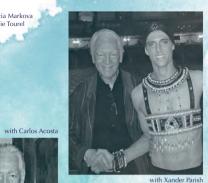
with Steven McRae

with José Manuel Carreño





with Alicia Markova and Jennie Tourel

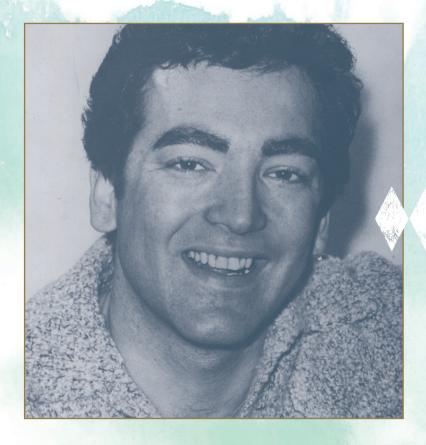




with Vladimir Vassiliev



with Alicia Alonso and Viengsay Valdés



SYNOPSES

"Extraordinary how potent cheap music is." In Noel Coward's play *Private Lives*, the character of Amanda is talking about Coward's song *Someday I'll Find You*, but she could just as well have been talking about ballet music. For much of the 19th century, ballet music was rather looked down upon with a sneering attitude. Writing ballet music for opera – a contractual necessity for composers in Paris – was undertaken with a sense of obligation. It wasn't until Tchaikovsky wrote *Swan Lake* that composing for the ballet earned a new respectability, but the truth is that the century was already filled with much fine ballet music, bursting with tunes, rich in "potency".

ADOLPHE ADAM

Most 19th-century ballet music was rooted in France, where Rameau and Lully had already sown the seeds during the Baroque era. The "Godfather" of French ballet, though, was **Adolphe Adam**, composer of *Giselle* (1841), the quintessential Romantic ballet. Adam studied under François-Adrien Boieldieu (the "French Mozart") and was a prolific opera composer, but also wrote many ballets. His score to *Giselle* – allegedly composed in just three weeks – marked a dramatic shift, especially its strong emotional quality, which matched the action of Théophile Gautier's libretto. The title role was created for Italian ballerina Carlotta Grisi, one of the leading ballerinas of the century. Grisi also created the role of Mazourka in Adam's *Le Diable à quatre* (1845). The last of Adam's 14 ballets was *Le Corsaire* (1856), a swashbuckling tale loosely based on Lord Byron's poem *The Corsair*.



Act 1: Giselle, a peasant girl, has a weak heart, but loves to dance. She entrances the philandering Count Albrecht, who has disguised himself to court her. They declare their love for each other, but Albrecht's plans are thwarted when a hunting party, including his fiancée Bathilde, arrives. Hilarion, a gamekeeper in love with Giselle, discovers Albrecht's real identity and exposes his deceit. Giselle loses her mind and dies.

Act 2: Giselle has been buried in the forest. Hilarion mourns at her grave but is disturbed by the arrival of Myrtha, Queen of the Wilis, ghostly spirits of maidens betrayed by their lovers. The Wilis force him to dance until he dies, exhausted. Albrecht, full of remorse, also comes to mourn. Myrtha summons Giselle from her grave to entice Albrecht to dance. Although Albrecht betrayed her, Giselle still loves him and protects him from death before vanishing back into her grave.

Countess Berta Polinsky is hot-tempered and so rude she has earned the nickname "Devil Four". She drives visitors out of her house and knocks over a magician disguised as a blind fiddler. He is helped by sweet-tempered Mazourka, the basket-maker's wife. In return, the magician causes the two women to swap places, a metamorphosis that lasts for 24 hours. Mazourka does not enjoy her newfound wealth and is happy to return to her old life, but the unruly Countess Berta learns her lesson and mends her ways.

The plot is based on the English farce The Devil to Pay, or The Wives Metamorphosed and tells the story of two Polish women who are completely opposite in character.



CERSAIRE CERSAIRE

Act 1: At a Turkish bazaar, Conrad, a pirate, falls in love with Medora, a slave girl. However, the Pasha buys her from the slave trader, Lankendem. Conrad instructs his second-in-command Birbanto to rescue Medora and kidnap Lankendem.

Act 2: Conrad takes Medora to the grotto which is the pirates' hideout. Medora entreats him to free all the slave girls. He agrees, but Birbanto rebels. Failing to strike up a mutiny, Birbanto poisons a rose, which Medora unwittingly presents to Conrad, who falls into a drugged sleep. In the ensuing confusion, Lankendem steals Medora and escapes.

Act 3: The Pasha is delighted to have Medora returned to him, but Conrad and his pirates, disguised as pilgrims, carry out a rescue mission during which Birbanto is exposed as a traitor and Conrad shoots him. They flee to his ship.

Act 4: A storm snaps the ship's mast in half, but Conrad and Medora survive, thanking God for their salvation.

DANIEL AUBER





East River, New York, 1962



his daughter, the Marchesa Sampietri, and Pepinelli, a captain of the dragoons (in love with the Marchesa), are forced to take shelter in a house, unaware that it is the hideout of Marco Spada, a bandit chief. Spada and his daughter, Angela, are invited to a grand ball, at which Count Federici, promised in marriage to the Marchesa, professes his love for Angela instead. But Angela prefers to share her father's perilous adventures, so Federici decides to marry the Marchesa without delay. Spada has the Marchesa abducted to the bandits' retreat, where she is married to Pepinelli. Spada leads an assault on the dragoons, but is fatally wounded. With his dying breath, he declares that Angela is not really his daughter, but of noble birth, thus leaving the way clear for her to marry Federici.

4



LÉO DELIBES

A pupil of Adam, **Léo Delibes** was an important figure in 19th-century ballet, elevating the importance of the score to almost symphonic levels. Indeed, Tchaikovsky was a great admirer and confessed, "I listened to Delibes' ballet *Sylvia* [1876]... what charm, what elegance, what wealth of melody, rhythm, and harmony. I was ashamed, for if I had known of this music then, I would not have written *Swan Lake*." Following Adam's lead in *Giselle*, Delibes introduced leitmotifs in his most famous ballet, *Coppélia* (1870), with different themes for the characters of this surreal E.T.A. Hoffmann plot.





Act 1: In Ancient Greece, creatures of the forest dance before Fros. A shepherd, Aminta, disrupts the scene. Sylvia, a huntress nymph, rejects Aminta's advances and mocks Fros. She draws her bow. Aminta intervenes to protect the god, but is wounded by Sylvia's arrow instead. Orion, an evil hunter, kidnaps Sylvia. Aminta, revived, sets out to rescue her.

Act 2: Sylvia is being held captive in Orion's secret grotto. Her escape bid fails and she implores the help of Eros who arrives and shows her a vision of Aminta waiting for her on a rock.

Act 3: At the temple of Diana, Aminta and Sylvia are united, but Orion angrily appears. Diana smites Orion but refuses to give the lovers her blessing until Eros shows a vision of her own young love, the shepherd Endymion, and Diana has a change of heart.

LA PÉRI

In Persian legend, a "péri" was a fairy of mischievous nature. Sultan Achmet is worldweary and desires pure love. A péri appears to him in one of his opium dreams (a not uncommon device in 19th-century ballets!) and he falls in love with her. She gives him a talisman by which he may summon her in times of need. To test the Sultan's devotion, the péri takes on the form of a slave, Leila. Achmet refuses to surrender her to her owner and is imprisoned, but the walls of his prison evaporate and he and the péri enter paradise.

FRIEDRICH BURGMÜLLER

Friedrich Burgmüller was born in Regensburg but moved to Paris in his twenties; his music is suitably French in style. His ballet *La Péri* (1843) was choreographed by Jean Coralli to a libretto by Théophile Gautier and premiered with Carlotta Grisi (creator of Giselle) in the title roles.



IULES MASSENET

Jules Massenet was best known for his many operas such as Manon and Cendrillon, and although he composed balletic interludes for his operas, he only wrote two stand-alone ballets, Le Carillon and the charming Cigale, which is based on Aesop's fable The Ant and the Grasshopper, with the grasshopper here turned into a cicada. Massenet's "hit ballet" was created long after his death when the choreographer Kenneth MacMillan made a dance version of Manon (1974) using music from Massenet's other operas and orchestral suites arranged by Leighton Lucas.

Act 1: The young Manon arrives at an inn near Paris, on her way to a convent. She meets des Grieux, a young student, and they fall in love. But the wealthy Monsieur GM also has his eye on her, and Manon's brother Lescaut tries to strike a bargain. Manon and des Grieux elope. Manon, however, is persuaded by promises of wealth and succumbs to her brother's deal.

Act 2: At a party, des Grieux is caught cheating Monsieur GM at cards. The old man has Manon arrested as a prostitute.

Act 3: Manon has been deported to New Orleans, but des Grieux has followed her there. He kills her gaoler and they escape to the swamps of Louisiana, but Manon dies in des Grieux's arms.





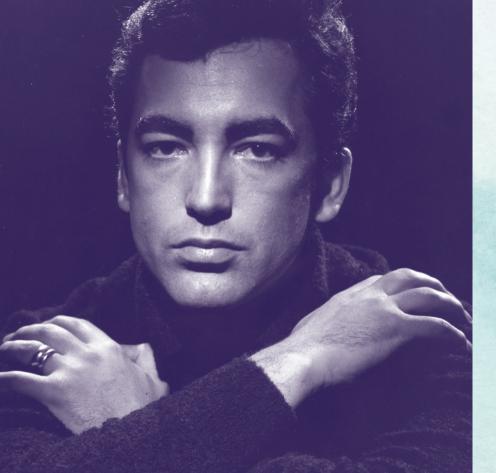


ANDRÉ MESSAGER

André Messager studied with Saint-Saëns and Fauré and became a major figure of musical life in Paris and, later, London. Full of typically Gallic grace, only few of his ballets are performed today, although Sir Frederick Ashton's 1961 re-choreographed version of *Les Deux Pigeons* (1886) has recently re-entered the repertory of The Royal Ballet with great success.

Based on the fable of the same name by Jean de La Fontaine. Pépio is unhappy with his life and his fiancée, Gourouli, their relationship symbolised in their pas de deux as two quarrelling pigeons. When a band of travelling gypsies arrive, Pépio is seduced by their lifestyle and flitts with Djali, arousing Gourouli's jealousy. He joins the gypsy camp, but Gourouli infiltrates it and makes all the men fall in love with her, bribing them to make Pépio's life miserable. Chastened, he returns home, seeking Gourouli's forgiveness.

56 57



Austrian composer **Ludwig Minkus** spent most of his life working for the Imperial Theatres in Moscow and St Petersburg where he was responsible for many collaborations with Marius Petipa, one of ballet's most important choreographers. Like fellow Russian-based composers Riccardo Drigo and Cesare Pugni, Minkus' music is often regarded as "serviceable" rather than inspired, but *La Bayadère* (1877), his most famous ballet, contains an episode of miraculous delicacy. In *The Kingdom of the Shades* (another opium-fuelled dream!), the corps de ballet enters one by one to a score of great delicacy. Minkus also jointly composed *La Source* (1866) with Delibes.

LUDWIG MINKUS

SOURCE SOURCE

Act 1: In a rocky desert, the beautiful princess Nouredda rests on her journey to marry the Khan of Ghendjib, and admires an inaccessible flower. The hunter Djémil picks it for her and, when offered a reward, asks her to lift her veil. In fury, she refuses and orders him to be tied up. The nymph Naïla rescues him and, although she loves Djémil, promises to help him win Nouredda's hand.

Act 2: Djémil enters the palace gardens in disguise and asks Nouredda to choose a wedding gift. She selects a jewelled flower, which Djémil throws to the ground from which a spring gushes forth and Naïla emerges. The nymph dances and the Khan proposes to her instead.

Act 3: Nouredda still rejects Djémil, so he implores Naïla for help. The nymph succeeds but only by sacrificing herself. As the lovers depart, the spring dries up.

Act 1: Nikiya, a temple dancer (bayadère), is in love with the warrior Solor. But the High Brahmin also desires her and when she rejects him, swears vengeance. He tells the Rajah about Solor's secret love.

Act 2: The Rajah's daughter, Gamzatti, is engaged to marry Solor and tries to bribe Nikiya to give him up. At the engagement festivities, Nikiya is bitten by a snake – planted in her basket of flowers on Gamzatti's orders – and dies.

Act 3: The Kingdom of the Shades: the despondent Solor smokes opium and dances with a vision of Nikiya's "shade" (or spirit).

Act 4: As the wedding takes place, Nikiya haunts Solor as he dances with Gamzatti. The High Brahmin performs the ceremony, but the gods take their revenge by destroying the temple, and the spirits of Nikiya and Solor are reunited.

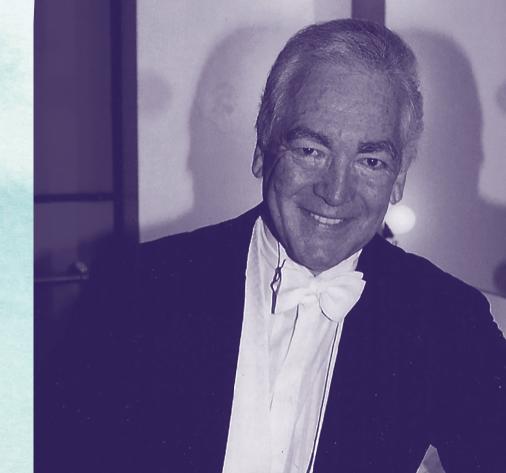


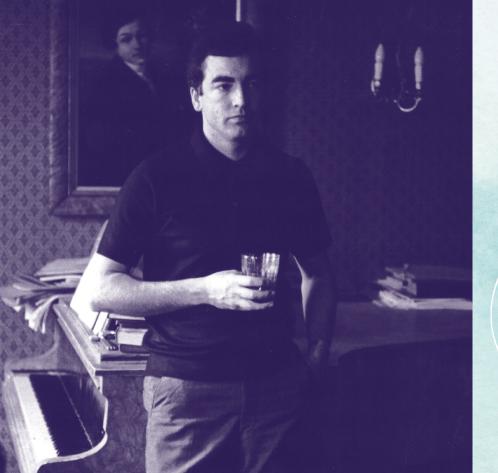
JACQUES OFFENBACH

Jacques Offenbach was the undisputed king of operetta, his works full of froth and sparkle, but he only composed a single ballet.

PAPILON

Le Papillon (1860) concerns an evil fairy, Hamza, who has been turned into an ugly woman and will only recover her beauty when someone kisses her. To help attract suitable young men, Hamza kidnaps the Maharajah's daughter Farfalla. Prince Djalma falls in love with Farfalla, so Hamza turns her into a butterfly. When Djalma attempts to kiss Farfalla, Hamza intercepts, is transformed back into a beautiful woman and puts a spell on him. During Hamza's wedding to Djalma, Farfalla's wings are burned and the spell is broken. Hamza is turned into a statue as Farfalla and Djalma are reunited.





JOHANN STRAUSS II

For a composer known in his lifetime as the "Waltz King", it's surprising that **Johann Strauss II** only composed one ballet. *Aschenbrödel* (Cinderella) was incomplete at the time of his death, but is full of infectious Viennese charm.

ASCHENBRODE

Aschenbrödel (1900) is no traditional setting of *Cinderella*, but transposes the action to a late 19th-century department store where the owner, Gustav, and his younger brother, Franz, vie for the love of Grete (Cinderella), who works in the women's fashion section where her stepmother, Mme. Leontine, is the supervisor.





Act 1: Prince Siegfried is celebrating his coming of age, but his mother, the Queen, instructs him to choose a bride. Siegfried, however, wishes to marry for love rather than duty. He spies a flock of swans, grabs his crossbow and sets off hunting.

Act 2: By a moonlit lakeside, Siegfried is about to shoot at the swans when one of them transforms into a beautiful maiden, Odette. She explains how they are held captive under the spell of the evil sorcerer, Rothbart, a spell that can only be broken by an oath of undying love. The two fall in love, but dawn breaks and Rothbart's spell turns her back into a swan.

Act 3: Six princesses are presented at a ball, but Siegfried rejects them. Rothbart arrives (in disguise) with his daughter, Odile, who has been transformed to look like Odette. Siegfried declares his love for her, whereupon Rothbart triumphantly reveals a vision of the "real" Odette he has just betrayed.

Act 4: Siegfried rushes to the lake to beg for Odette's forgiveness, but his betrayal cannot be undone. They choose to die together by leaping into the lake, which causes Rothbart's spell to break and the swans to be freed.



THE SLEEPING BEAUTY

Prologue: At the christening of Princess Aurora, fairies bestow their gifts. But one fairy, the evil Carabosse, has been accidentally omitted from the guest list. She gatecrashes the party and places a curse that, on her 16th birthday, Aurora will prick her finger on a spindle and die. The Lilac Fairy intervenes and, although not powerful enough to undo the curse, she tweaks it so that, rather than die, Aurora will fall asleep for a hundred years until she can be awoken by a prince's kiss.

Act 1: It is Aurora's 16th birthday and four suitors are presented. A cloaked stranger gives her a gift... a spindle, for it is none other than Carabosse. Aurora duly pricks her finger and collapses, but the Lilac Fairy works her magic, casting her spell of slumber over the entire kingdom.

Act 2: A hundred years later, Prince Désiré is hunting in the forest. The Lilac Fairy shows him a vision of the sleeping Aurora and he defeats Carabosse, enters the castle and awakens the princess with a kiss.

Act 3: A grand wedding divertissement featuring fairytale characters.



THE NUTCRACKER

Act 1: It is Christmas Eve and the Stahlbaums are giving a party. Clara's godfather, the mysterious toymaker Drosselmeyer, gives her a nutcracker. During the night, Clara goes down to the parlour to see her beloved nutcracker, but midnight strikes, the Christmas tree grows and giant mice scuttle about the room. The nutcracker and an army of toy soldiers give battle, but it is Clara who saves the day, striking the Mouse King dead with her slipper. The nutcracker is transformed into a handsome prince who leads her through a pine forest.

Act 2: In the Land of Sweets, the Sugar Plum Fairy rewards Clara's bravery with a delicious divertissement.















KODAK SAFETY FILM 5063



KODAK SAFETY FILM 5063 KODAK SAFETY FILM 306

→18A



FETY FILM 5063

















→19A









The digital copy of this booklet may be accessed at booklets.deccaclassics.com

This compilation © & © 2020 Universal Music Operations Limited
A Decca Classics Release
Project Management: Edward Weston
Compiled by Cytus Meher-Homji
Digital mastering: Paschal Byrne (Audio Archiving Company Ltd)
Special thanks to Cytus Meher-Homji, Richard Bonynge, Ruth Jaeger, Paul Westcott, Andrew Dalton,
Gary Pietronave & Kate Calloway (EMI Hayes Archive) and Jonathan Summers (British Library)
-Introductory Notes © 2020 Universal Music Operations Limited
Wallet Covers: Original LP artwork
Art Direction: Paul Chessell

Illustrations: Giulio Iurissevich
Booklet Photos: Decca & courtesy of Richard Bonynge unless otherwise stated.
We have made every effort to identify and credit the owners of copyright in
all images which appear in this release. We apologise for any omissions.
Booklet Editing: WLP Ltd

