

La Cenerentola

Gioacchino Rossini

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“Before the carnival is over, all Rome will love my *Cinderella...*” Thus spoke Rossini in 1817, in the aftermath of the disastrous opening night, firmly convinced that his pumpkin would be transformed into a sumptuous carriage. The future was to prove him right. However, in moving from Perrault’s tale to the opera, the humble servant who dreams of going to the ball has lost all her magical attributes: here there is no fairy godmother to transform mice into horses, rats into coachmen and lizards into footmen with a wave of her wand. And it is not a fur slipper but a bracelet that the beauty leaves behind for her prince, quite deliberately, challenging him to find her again. The Enlightenment had lit its fires throughout Europe and *La Cenerentola* focused on the burning issues of the day, confronting social divisions to reveal the crinoline beneath the rags. Guillaume Gallienne, member of the Comédie-Française, stages his first opera.

Presented by Alain Duault

Dramma giocoso in two acts (1817)

Music by Gioacchino Rossini

Libretto by Jacopo Ferretti

After Charles Perrault, *Cendrillon*

Conductor: Ottavio Dantone

Director: Guillaume Gallienne

Artistic collaboration: Marie Lambert

Sets designs: Éric Ruf

Costumes designs: Olivier Bériot

Lighting design: Bertrand Couderc

Choreography: Glysein Lefever

Chorus master: José Luis Basso

Don Ramiro, Juan José De León

Dandini, Alessio Arduini

Don Magnifico, Maurizio Muraro

Clorinda, Chiara Skerath

Tisbe, Isabelle Druet

Angelina, Teresa Iervolino

Alidoro, Roberto Tagliavini

Paris Opera Orchestra and Chorus

Duration: 3hrs approx. plus interval

Performed in Italian, with English subtitles

Film Director: Louise Narboni

ACT I

Angelina, alias Cenerentola (Cinderella), lives like a slave in the dilapidated palace of her stepfather Don Magnifico. Clorinda and Tisbe, her half-sisters are both obsessed by their own appearance and constantly make fun of her. One day, a stranger calls. It is Alidoro, who has come in search of charity. While Clorinda and Tisbe berate him, Angelina offers him something to drink. Soon thereafter, a chorus of men arrive to deliver an invitation from Prince Ramiro who is organising a ball to help him choose a wife. The news only serves to exacerbate Clorinda and Tisbe's self-obsessed excitement. Don Magnifico storms out of his room furious at being awakened by the noise. He tells his two daughters about the dream he has just had and how all the symbolism it contains must be an augur of imminent glory.

Prince Ramiro arrives alone at Don Magnifico's palace disguised as an equerry. He secretly observes the young ladies. Alidoro, his former tutor, has promised that he will find an ideal wife here. Angelina goes about her chores as usual and is startled when she notices him. The two young people are moved by their fortuitous encounter, but they are interrupted by the cries of Clorinda and Tisbe. Dandini, Ramiro's equerry, who has assumed the guise of the Prince, makes a highly conspicuous entrance. The two sisters leave for the ball. Ramiro holds back Dandini to watch what transpires between Don Magnifico and Angelina, the young servant he likes so much. The latter is eager to go to the ball but Don Magnifico cruelly refuses to allow her to attend. Alidoro intervenes and declares that a third daughter lives in the palace and also has the right to attend the ball. Don Magnifico claims that his third daughter is dead. Angelina, now alone, is crushed by his words. Alidoro returns to reassure her and promises her that her future will be brighter. At Ramiro's palace, Dandini appoints Don Magnifico as head sommelier and reignites the hopes of Clorinda and Tisbe. The court chorus pretends to obey Don Magnifico who in his drunkenness begins issuing ridiculous orders to them.

Clorinda and Tisbe stubbornly pursue the Prince in the hope of winning his heart. The latter announces that one of the sisters could become his wife and the other will marry his equerry. Appalled, the two sisters shower Ramiro with insults. The chorus heralds the arrival of a mysterious, veiled woman. Even wise Alidoro seems not to know her identity. The mysterious woman announces she will love the he who can demonstrate respect, love and kindness. Ramiro is immediately won over, as is Dandini who asks to see the face of the mysterious woman. He removes her veil and everyone is astounded by her beauty. Don Magnifico is dumbfounded at the sight of the mysterious woman who has a curious resemblance to Angelina. Before the assembly takes their leave to enjoy the banquet, we sense a fire smouldering beneath the rumbling earth and feel that a rude awakening may await them.

ACT II

Don Magnifico awakens from his drunken stupor convinced that he will soon be in a position to wield power. Overcome with delusions of grandeur, he already imagines himself corruptly reigning and dispensing his favours to his flattering courtiers. Ramiro hides to observe the mysterious girl from the ball as she is assiduously wooed by Dandini, himself disguised as the Prince. She reveals to him that she has fallen in love with his equerry. Ramiro comes out from his hiding place. Before she runs away, the mysterious girl gives him one of her two bracelets as a token of her love and challenges him to find her. On the advice of Alidoro, Ramiro ends the roleplay and promises to find the mysterious beauty. Dandini, who has since re-assumed the identity of equerry must now face Don Magnifico who bombards him with questions to find out if he is going to marry Clorinda or Tisbe. Cultivating his own illusion, Don Magnifico already sees himself on the throne alongside Dandini. When the latter finally reveals his true identity, a humiliated Don Magnifico is furious. Back at home in her role as a lowly servant, Angelina dreams of the equerry who may soon find her. Don Magnifico, Clorinda and Tisbe return in a foul mood and start picking on Angelina who bears a striking resemblance to the mysterious girl who torpedoed all their plans.

A storm breaks out. Using the pretext of an overturned carriage, Ramiro enters Don Magnifico's palace in search of shelter, accompanied by Dandini. Now recognised as the real Prince, he listens aloofly to the obsequious banter of Don Magnifico, Clorinda and Tisbe. Then, thanks to the bracelet that she wears on her wrist, he finally recognises Angelina and realises that the bullied servant he met earlier that morning and the mysterious woman at the court are one and the same. The family unleash their fury on Angelina. Exasperated, Ramiro stands up in her defence and announces that she shall be his wife. Alidoro reveals the moral of the story to the two sisters. One reacts with unyielding disdain and the other with detached resignation. The chorus celebrates the marriage of Ramiro and Angelina. Forgetting all the insults and bullying, Angelina decides that forgiveness will be her vengeance. She ponders her fate and realises that her misfortune has been but a flash in the pan, nothing more than dream and diversion.

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