



The Chorus Newsletter

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**The Plot
Of
Tales of
Hoffman**

New Tenor



According to John and Aubree Bowling, his parents, Jonathan Allan Ray Bowling was born on Dec 27, 2006 at INOVA Hospital on Seminary Road in Alexandria. He was 8 lbs and 2 oz and 20 and 1/2 inches long at birth. He is now going on his fifth week and is nearly 10 lbs and 23 inches long. A growing boy! As the chorus was informed at our first meeting, the baby promised to be a tenor, helping his father (leader of the NOVA Community Chorus tenor section) to control rowdy singers whose ranks seem now to be visibly split into the two sections. We welcome Jonathan to our chorus, and will keep a seat warm for him.

The Other Fauré Music

The Fauré Requiem is to be performed at St. Mark's Church in Springfield on 24 February 2007. It will be performed as one half of the concert. A smaller part of the chorus will sing two other works by Faure in the other half of the program.

Messe Basse

Fauré's Requiem remains a standard element in choral repertoire, with its setting of funeral rites, rather than the full Requiem Mass of tradition. The earlier Messe basse (Low Mass) was originally a collaborative composition of 1881 with Messenger, but in final revision in 1906 consisting of four Mass movements by Fauré himself.

Cantique de Jean Racine

"The *Cantique* is a setting of words by the 17th century dramatist and poet Jean Racine. It was Fauré's first significant composition, written in 1865 whilst he was in his final year at the École Niedermeyer, the 'École de musique religieuse et classique'. He submitted the piece for the composition prize, and won, though it was only published eleven years later, with a full orchestral version following in 1906. Fauré went on to write a good deal of religious music – most notably the *Requiem*, written in 1888 – but of the shorter sacred pieces it is the *Cantique* that has particularly captured the affections of choirs and audiences."

By: John Bawden
Musical Director (1994 - 2006)
Fareham Philharmonic Choir

Plot of the *Tales of Hoffman*

Prologue

A tavern in Nuremberg: The Muse appears and tells the audience that she wants Hoffmann for herself so he can be devoted fully to her: *poetry*. She appears as Hoffmann's closest friend, Niklausse. The prima donna Stella sends a letter to Hoffmann, asking him to meet her after she performs. The letter is intercepted by Councillor Lindorf, who is the first incarnation of evil; Hoffmann's Nemesis. Lindorf intends to replace Hoffmann at the rendezvous with Stella. In the tavern students are waiting for Hoffmann. He arrives and tells them the legend of Kleinzach the dwarf, Lindorf coaxes him to tell about his life's three great loves.

Act One

Hoffmann's first love is Olympia, an automaton created by the scientist Spalanzani. Coppélius, sells Hoffmann magic glasses that make Olympia appear to him as a real woman. Olympia sings one of the opera's most famous arias *Les Oiseaux Dans La Charmille* where she periodically keeps winding down just before hitting the final high note. Hoffmann is tricked into believing his affections are returned, to the bemusement of Niklausse, who subtly tries to warn his friend. While dancing with Olympia, Hoffmann falls and breaks the glasses. At the same time, Coppélius appears and tears Olympia apart. In the middle of the crowd laughing at him, Hoffmann realizes that he was in love with an automaton.

Act Two

Hoffmann finds the house where Crespel and his daughter Antonia are hiding. Hoffmann and Antonia loved each other, but were separated when Crespel hid his daughter from Hoffmann. Antonia inherited her mother's voice, but her father forbids her to sing because of her mysterious illness. He forbids her to see Hoffmann who encourages Antonia in her musical career. Hoffmann sneaks into the house. When Crespel returns, Dr. Miracle (this act's evil incarnation) visits, who forces Crespel to let him heal Antonia. Still in the house, Hoffmann learns that Antonia may die if she sings too much. Once

she is alone, Dr. Miracle enters Antonia's room and tries to persuade her to sing, stating that Hoffmann only wants to satisfy himself with her. Dr. Miracle raises a vision of Antonia's dead mother and induces Antonia to sing to death. Crespel arrives in time to witness his daughter's last breath. Hoffmann enters and Crespel wants to kill him, thinking that he is responsible for his daughter's death. Niklausse saves his friend from the old man's vengeance.

Act Three - Venice.

Hoffmann falls in love with Giulietta and thinks his affections are returned. But Giulietta is seducing Hoffmann under the orders of Captain Dappertutto, who promised to give her a diamond if she filches Hoffmann's reflection from a mirror. Schlemil wants to save Hoffmann from his foolish passion for the courtesan by killing him. He challenges the poet to a duel, but is killed. Meanwhile, Hoffmann meets Giulietta and cannot resist her: he gives her his reflection, only to be abandoned. Hoffmann tells the evil man that his friend Niklausse will come and save him. Dappertutto prepares a poison to kill Niklausse, but Giulietta drinks it by mistake and drops dead in the arms of the poet.

Epilogue

The tavern in Nuremberg. Hoffmann, drunk, swears he will never ever love again, and explains that Olympia, Antonia, and Giulietta are three facets of a same person, Stella. Niklausse reveals himself as the Muse and reclaims Hoffmann: "Be reborn a poet! I love you, Hoffmann! Be mine!" The magic of poetry reaches Hoffmann's limb: "Beloved Muse, I am yours". Stella enters the tavern and finds Hoffmann drunk. The poet tells her to leave and Lindorf, comes forth. Niklausse tells Stella that Hoffmann does not love her but that the Councillor Lindorf is waiting for her. Students enter the room for more drinking: Stella and Lindorf leave together.

(The plot that I describe above is a greatly edited version of the plot that is available in Wikipedia...ed.)

The Chorus Newsletter welcomes news, articles and photographic contributions. Are you planning a recital? Tell us when and where and we will get the word out. Call the editor, Bob Trexler at 703 978-9171 or e-mail at Rctrex@aol.com.

The Chorus Newsletter contains information about and for members of the NOVA Community Chorus. It is privately published monthly except during June and July. The College has no responsibility for its content. Members are encouraged to contribute articles and news about musical offerings and musical topics to Robert Trexler, editor and publisher, at Rctrex@aol.com.