

June 2019 operettas

8 June 2019: 3 p.m.

Offenbach, J. Orpheus in the Underworld, operetta in two acts. Libretto by Ludovic Halévy; rev. Hector-Jonathan Crémieux. First performed Paris, 1858.

Eurydice is in love with the shepherd, Aristaeus, who is really the god Pluto, and Orpheus is in love with Chloë, a shepherdess. Eurydice and Orpheus break off their marriage but keep it secret, fearing Public Opinion. Orpheus and Pluto plot to kill Eurydice so that Pluto may have her. Pluto tricks her into walking into the trap and, as she dies, he changes to his true form. They descend into the Underworld. Orpheus is threatened by Public Opinion with ruin to his violin teaching career unless he goes to rescue his wife. Orpheus reluctantly agrees.

In Olympus, Pluto describes the pleasures of the Underworld to the bored gods. When Orpheus arrives, Jupiter announces that he is going to the Underworld to sort it out and consents to the other gods coming along. In the Underworld, Eurydice is locked up. Jupiter finds Eurydice's prison and slips through the keyhole by turning into a beautiful, golden fly. He reveals himself, promising to help her, but he wants her for himself. While the gods are partying, the disguised Eurydice sneaks in. They all dance with abandon to the *Galop infernal* (or the can-can). Ominous violin music heralds the approach of Orpheus and Public Opinion. Orpheus must not look back, or he will lose Eurydice forever. Public Opinion keeps a close eye on him, to keep him from cheating, but Jupiter throws a lightning bolt, making him jump and look back. All ends happily with a reprise of the *Galop*.

22 June 2019: 3 p.m.

Offenbach, J. The Grand Duchess of Gerolstein. Operetta in three acts and four tableaux. Libretto by Henri Meilhac and Ludovic Halévy. First performed Paris, 1867.

It is 1720. The charming 20-year-old Grand Duchess of Gerolstein, who has been brought up to have her own way, is a veritable tyrant. She is unhappy, as she has been betrothed to the foppish Prince Paul, so Baron Puck generates a war to amuse her. She decides to review her troops and, in doing so, falls desperately in love with the manly, handsome soldier Fritz. The Duchess immediately makes him a corporal, then a sergeant, lieutenant and captain. Finally, to spite General Boum who commands the army, she makes Fritz commander-in-chief and sends him to conquer the enemy.

Fritz, with the help of 300,000 bottles, wins the battle easily by making the whole opposing army drunk. The delighted Duchess finds herself more enamoured of him than ever but he shows that he prefers his sweetheart, Wanda and displeases the Duchess by asking permission to marry Wanda. Infuriated, the Duchess conspires to assassinate Fritz upon his return from the wedding ceremony. Then she changes her mind as she is now involved in a new affair with Baron Grog but he has a wife and four children. The Duchess becomes philosophic and decides to marry her original betrothed, Prince Paul. She says: "What can you do? If you can't have the one you love, you must try to love the one whom you can have". Fritz is stripped of his military ranks but he can now leave the army, return to Wanda, and become a village schoolmaster.