

OPERAS FOR SEPTEMBER 2020

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Notes on the Operas

Tristan & Isolde

Tristan und Isolde (Tristan and Isolde), WWV 90, is an opera in three acts by Richard Wagner to a German libretto by the composer, based largely on the 12th-century romance Tristan by Gottfried von Strassburg. It was composed between 1857 and 1859 and premiered at the Königliches Hof- und Nationaltheater in Munich on 10 June 1865 with Hans von Bülow conducting. Wagner referred to the work not as an opera, but called it "eine Handlung" (literally a drama, a plot or an action).

Wagner's composition of Tristan und Isolde was inspired by the philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer (particularly *The World as Will and Representation*), as well as by Wagner's affair with Mathilde Wesendonck. Widely acknowledged as one of the peaks of the operatic repertoire, Tristan was notable for Wagner's unprecedented use of chromaticism, tonal ambiguity, orchestral colour and harmonic suspension.

The opera was enormously influential among Western classical composers and provided direct inspiration to composers such as Gustav Mahler, Richard Strauss, Alban Berg, Arnold Schoenberg, and Benjamin Britten. Other composers like Claude Debussy, Maurice Ravel, and Igor Stravinsky formulated their styles in contrast to Wagner's musical legacy. Many see Tristan as a milestone on the move away from common practice harmony and tonality and consider that it lays the groundwork for the direction of classical music in the 20th century. Both Wagner's libretto style and music were also profoundly influential on the symbolist poets of the late 19th century and early 20th century.

Roles

Tristan, a Breton nobleman, adopted heir of Marke	tenor
Isolde, an Irish princess betrothed to Marke	soprano
Brangäne, Isolde's maid	mezzo-soprano
Kurwenal, Tristan's servant	baritone
Marke, King of Cornwall	bass
Melot, a courtier, Tristan's friend	tenor (or baritone)
A shepherd	tenor
A steersman	baritone
A young sailor	tenor

Synopsis

Act 1

Isolde, promised to King Marke in marriage, and her handmaid, Brangäne, are quartered aboard Tristan's ship being transported to the king's lands in Cornwall. The opera opens with

the voice of a young sailor singing of a "wild Irish maid", ("Westwärts schweift der Blick") which Isolde construes to be a mocking reference to herself. In a furious outburst, she wishes the seas to rise up and sink the ship, killing herself and all on board ("Erwache mir wieder, kühne Gewalt"). Her scorn and rage are directed particularly at Tristan, the knight responsible for taking her to Marke, and Isolde sends Brangäne to command Tristan to appear before her ("Befehlen liess' dem Eigenholde"). Tristan, however, refuses Brangäne's request, claiming that his place is at the helm. His henchman, Kurwenal, answers more brusquely, saying that Isolde is in no position to command Tristan and reminds Brangäne that Isolde's previous fiancé, Morold, was killed by Tristan ("Herr Morold zog zu Meere her").

Brangäne returns to Isolde to relate these events, and Isolde, in what is termed the "narrative and curse", sadly tells her of how, following the death of Morold, she happened upon a stranger who called himself Tantris. Tantris was found mortally wounded in a barge ("von einem Kahn, der klein und arm") and Isolde used her healing powers to restore him to health. She discovered during Tantris' recovery, however, that he was actually Tristan, the murderer of her fiancé. Isolde attempted to kill the man with his own sword as he lay helpless before her. However, Tristan looked not at the sword that would kill him or the hand that wielded the sword, but into her eyes ("Er sah' mir in die Augen"). His action pierced her heart and she was unable to slay him. Tristan was allowed to leave with the promise never to come back, but he later returned with the intention of marrying Isolde to his uncle, King Marke. Isolde, furious at Tristan's betrayal, insists that he drink atonement to her, and from her medicine chest produces a vial to make the drink. Brangäne is shocked to see that it is a lethal poison.

Kurwenal appears in the women's quarters ("Auf auf! Ihr Frauen!") and announces that the voyage is coming to an end. Isolde warns Kurwenal that she will not appear before the King if Tristan does not come before her as she had previously ordered and drink atonement to her. When Tristan arrives, Isolde reproaches him about his conduct and tells him that he owes her his life and how his actions have undermined her honour, since she blessed Morold's weapons before battle and therefore she swore revenge. Tristan first offers his sword but Isolde refuses; they must drink atonement. Brangäne brings in the potion that will seal their pardon; Tristan knows that it may kill him, since he knows Isolde's magic powers ("Wohl kenn' ich Irlands Königin"). The journey almost at its end, Tristan drinks and Isolde takes half the potion for herself. The potion seems to work, but instead of death, it brings relentless love ("Tristan!" "Isolde!"). Kurwenal, who announces the imminent arrival on board of King Marke, interrupts their rapture. Isolde asks Brangäne which potion she prepared and Brangäne replies, as the sailors hail the arrival of King Marke, that it was not poison, but rather a love potion.

Act 2

King Marke leads a hunting party out into the night, leaving Isolde and Brangäne alone in the castle, who both stand beside a burning brazier. Isolde, listening to the hunting horns, believes several times that the hunting party is far enough away to warrant the extinguishing of the brazier – the prearranged signal for Tristan to join her ("Nicht Hörnerschall tönt so hold"). Brangäne warns Isolde that Melot, one of King Marke's knights, has seen the amorous looks exchanged between Tristan and Isolde and suspects their passion ("Ein Einz'ger war's, ich achtet' es wohl"). Isolde, however, believes Melot to be Tristan's most loyal friend, and, in

a frenzy of desire, extinguishes the flames. Brangäne retires to the ramparts to keep watch as Tristan arrives.

The lovers, at last alone and freed from the constraints of courtly life, declare their passion for each other. Tristan decries the realm of daylight which is false, unreal, and keeps them apart. It is only in night, he claims, that they can truly be together and only in the long night of death can they be eternally united ("O sink' hernieder, Nacht der Liebe"). During their long tryst, Brangäne calls a warning several times that the night is ending ("Einsam wachend in der Nacht"), but her cries fall upon deaf ears. The day breaks in on the lovers as Melot leads King Marke and his men to find Tristan and Isolde in each other's arms. Marke is heartbroken, not only because of his nephew's betrayal but also because Melot chose to betray his friend Tristan to Marke and because of Isolde's betrayal as well ("Mir – dies? Dies, Tristan – mir?").

When questioned, Tristan says he cannot answer to the King the reason of his betrayal since he would not understand. He turns to Isolde, who agrees to follow him again into the realm of night. Tristan announces that Melot has fallen in love with Isolde too. Melot and Tristan fight, but, at the crucial moment, Tristan throws his sword aside and allows Melot to severely wound him.

Act 3

Kurwenal has brought Tristan home to his castle at Kareol in Brittany. A shepherd pipes a mournful tune and asks if Tristan is awake. Kurwenal replies that only Isolde's arrival can save Tristan, and the shepherd offers to keep watch and claims that he will pipe a joyful tune to mark the arrival of any ship. Tristan awakes ("Die alte Weise – was weckt sie mich?") and laments his fate – to be, once again, in the false realm of daylight, once more driven by unceasing unquenchable yearning ("Wo ich erwacht' weilt ich nicht"). Tristan's sorrow ends when Kurwenal tells him that Isolde is on her way. Tristan, overjoyed, asks if her ship is in sight, but only a sorrowful tune from the shepherd's pipe is heard.

Tristan relapses and recalls that the shepherd's mournful tune is the same as was played when he was told of the deaths of his father and mother ("Muss ich dich so versteh'n, du alte, ernst Weise"). He rails once again against his desires and against the fateful love potion ("verflucht sei, furchtbarer Trank!") until, exhausted, he collapses in delirium. After his collapse, the shepherd is heard piping the arrival of Isolde's ship, and, as Kurwenal rushes to meet her, Tristan tears the bandages from his wounds in his excitement ("Hahei! Mein Blut, lustig nun fliesse!"). As Isolde arrives at his side, Tristan dies with her name on his lips.

Isolde collapses beside her deceased lover just as the appearance of another ship is announced. Kurwenal spies Melot, Marke and Brangäne arriving ("Tod und Hölle! Alles zur Hand!"). He believes they have come to kill Tristan and, in an attempt to avenge him, furiously attacks Melot. Marke tries to stop the fight to no avail. Both Melot and Kurwenal are killed in the fight. Marke and Brangäne finally reach Tristan and Isolde. Marke, grieving over the body of his "truest friend" ("Tot denn alles!"), explains that Brangäne revealed the secret of the love potion and that he had come not to part the lovers, but to unite them ("Warum Isolde, warum mir das?"). Isolde appears to wake at this and in a final aria describing her vision of Tristan risen again (the "Liebestod", "love death"), dies ("Mild und leise wie er lächelt").

For a detailed background essay see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tristan_und_Isolde

Fatinitza was the first full-length, three-act operetta by Franz von Suppé. The libretto by F. Zell (a pseudonym for Camillo Walzel) and Richard Genée was based on the libretto to *La circassienne* by Eugène Scribe (which had been set to music by Daniel Auber in 1861), but with the lead role of Wladimir, a young Russian lieutenant who has to disguise himself as a woman, changed to a trousers role; in other words, a woman played the part of the man who pretended to be a woman.

It premièred on 5 January 1876, at the Carltheater Vienna and proved a huge success, running for more than a hundred performances, with the march "Vorwärts mit frischem Muth", proving a particular hit. The opera as a whole is no longer in the popular repertory, but the overture is performed as a stand-alone piece.

Roles

Vladimir Samailoff [Russian lieutenant/aka Fatinitza]	mezzo-soprano
Timosey Kantschukoff [Russian general]	baritone
Lydia Uschakoff [Russian Princess]	soprano
Julian Von Goltz [war correspondent]	tenor
Izzet Pascha	bass baritone

Act 1

The opera opens in a Russian camp on the lower Danube near the castle of Isaktscha in Odessa during the Crimean war between Russia and Turkey 1854/1855.

Vladimir, a Circassian cavalry lieutenant, is wakened from his dream of Lydia Uschakoff, a girl whom he has met but whose surname he does not know, and is ordered to act as the officer of the day. He is young, good-looking and very popular with the regiment and the men are soon chaffing him about his conquests. The story comes out that while recently masquerading as a girl and calling himself Fatinitza he has met Count Timofey Kantchukoff, the Russian general, who has fallen violently in love with him. As the soldiers make merry, there is brought into the camp, as a spy, one Julian von Goltz, war correspondent for a large German newspaper and a friend of Vladimir, in whom is combined newspaper enterprise, much fun and good nature and a gift for extricating his friends from dilemmas.

The monotony of camp life is beginning to pall and Vladimir recounts his success in feminine attire which suggests amateur theatricals. These are speedily arranged, with the fair Fatinitza as leading lady. While the company has retired to dress for rehearsal, General Kantchukoff arrives unexpectedly and the first object of his displeasure is the journalist, who escapes punishment by means of his passport and his ready tongue. Other actors stroll in fantastically dressed but the appearance of Fatinitza, the old bachelor's first and only love, diverts his wrath from them. In order to be left alone with her, the General orders the men off to drill but Vladimir, who has been drinking allash, is coy about receiving the kiss of betrothal. The love-making is interrupted by the arrival of the General's niece, the Princess Lydia, whose incipient affair with Vladimir has caused him to be transferred to the outposts by her wary relative. Vladimir, who learns his sweetheart's rank for the first time is fearful lest the lady may penetrate his disguise but the resourceful von Goltz smooths over the remarkable resemblance by explaining that Fatinitza is the sister of Vladimir, the young man Lydia has seen and loved. Lydia naturally is much interested in the girl and when the General commends his sweetheart to her, she offers to share her sleigh with her. Scarcely has the General left to inspect his troops when the camp is surprised by a band of Bashi-Bazouks,

who capture the Princess, Vladimir and von Goltz, the last being left to arrange a ransom. The doting General will not allow the troops to be fired upon lest they hit Fatinitza.

Act 2.

The second act shifts to the harem of Izzet Pasha.

The four wives of Izzet Pasha are discovered deftly applying cosmetics. When the lord and master arrives, they quarrel for his kiss, but he insists that "order must be maintained even in a harem." His information that he is about to increase their number to five, by the addition of a beautiful Christian maiden captured by Hassan Bey, is received with disapproval. As he is cleverly reconciling his boasted reform sentiments with this course, Vladimir, still in woman's attire, is brought in with Lydia. The captives soon are cheered by the arrival of von Goltz and the Russian sergeant Steipann to arrange for their release. The Pasha announces himself as ready to give up the lovely Fatinitza, but is determined to keep Lydia. Steipann is despatched to carry the Pasha's terms to the General and is also intrusted with a secret message from Julian telling him how he can surprise the Turks with his army. Vladimir reveals the secret of his true sex to the quartet of wives and they are happy to aid in his escape and especially in that of their rival, Lydia. Meantime, the Pasha and von Goltz are "getting on" famously and the host provides elaborate entertainment, which includes a Turkish shadow pantomime called Karagois, an expression for 'black face'. While this is in progress, the Russian army comes successfully to the rescue.

Act 3.

The third act takes places in the General's summer palace at Odessa.

Lydia and the four wives of her former captor are discovered. Lydia declares spiritedly that she will not marry a certain "ancient ruin," that is, a crippled old friend that her uncle has picked out for her. Julian von Goltz brings in the favoured Vladimir and so adroitly smooths matters over, that the testy old General himself directs the wedding procession into the church. The old fellow, who has been ever in quest of his lost Fatinitza, is overjoyed to hear that his agents have at last found her but his joy is changed to disgust when a veiled negress bearing that name is brought in. The conspirators terminate his only love-affair by having conveyed to him a letter which leads him to believe that the real Fatinitza has died of grief over her separation from him. The General blesses the union of his niece and the brother of his faithful love and all ends as comfortably as possible.

La Cour de Celimene

La cour de Célimène (The Court of Célimène), also known as Les douze (The dozen) is an opéra comique in two acts by French composer Ambroise Thomas. The original French libretto was by Joseph-Bernard Rosier (1804–1880). The principal character, the Countess, is not named, but her nickname in the opera, Célimène, refers to a character in Molière's drama *Le Misanthrope* who has a large number of suitors.

The premiere took place at the second Salle Favart on 11 April 1855. It received nineteen performances, but was forgotten until a recording by Opera Rara was released in 2008.

The opera returned to the stage for the first time in nearly a century and a half on 21 October 2011, when it opened the 60th season of Wexford Festival Opera.

Roles

La Comtesse.....	Laura Claycomb
La Baronne, her sister.....	Joan Rodgers
Le Commandeur de Beaupré.....	Alastair Miles
Le Chevalier de Mérac.....	Sébastien Droy
Bretonne.....	Nicole Tibbels
Geoffrey Mitchell Choir	
Les Adolescents	
Helen Miles, Emma Brain-Gabbott, Alison Place, Jacqueline Connell, Nina Bennet	
Les Jeunes Gens	
James Geer, Philip Dennis, Julian Alexander-Smith, Phillip Brown	
Les Vieillards	
Philip Tebb, Neil Bellingham, Simon Preece, Francis Brett	
Philharmonia Orchestra	
James Clark, leader	
Andrew Litton, conductor	

THE STORY

Act 1

The Overture takes us back in time, evoking the setting; a chateau in Paris in 1750.

The curtain opens on a classical garden with coppices to the right and left, a few trees and statues of mythological figures. The opening ‘morceau d’ensemble’ is hilarious and takes place in almost complete darkness throughout. As the 12 suitors of the Countess (nicknamed Célimène on account of her resemblance, no doubt, to Molière’s character of the same name) gradually appear to wait for her, they bump into each other in the dark. They are divided into three groups of four lovers - Youths, Adolescents and Old Men. Nicely rhymed, they seem to be unaware of how many they are and each thinks himself to be the favoured one.

The tension builds up for the arrival of the Countess, who eventually appears with a flurry of cadenza vocalise, in the company of maids-in-waiting and her confidante, Bretonne. Her sister the Baroness, a woman whose morality is diametrically opposed to hers, enters from the other side. The ensemble continues, ending with the words ‘Quel espoir!’ (What hope!) from the suitors, and ‘Au revoir!’ from the Countess.

In the spoken dialogue with her sister-widow the Baroness, the Countess reveals a little about her insatiable desire to conquer men’s hearts: in part it is revenge against the male species in general, as her late husband caused her so much heartache with his infidelities.

The contrasting morals of the two sisters are further explored in the duo which begins with words from the Countess: ‘Oui, c’est le plus grand des bonheurs quo de regner sur mille coeurs’ (The greatest of pleasures is to reign over a thousand hearts!).

The Baroness clearly disapproves of her sister’s delight in being an incurable ‘allumeuse’. But what she thinks is ‘honneur’ her sister thinks of as ‘erreur’. The Countess then goes on to boast other ability to attract lovers of all characters and of all ages. The duo turns into a trio as the Commander enters, singing to the Countess. He is engaged to her; but is it wise to marry someone who takes such an open delight in breaking hearts? ‘Oh yes,’ he says, ‘I’m flattered!’ He sings in praise of her open coquettishness, never tarnished: all her desires, all her pleasures will bring him pleasure too. The ladies listen to him, evidently charmed, and the

Countess warns him that, whatever happens, no-one, not even he, will steal her heart. This, says the commander, is a 'marriage of convenience': he likes living on the estate owned by the two sisters. His next air is all about this beloved property: he tells them that separation from the estate would be bad for his health.

The dialogue with Bretonne that follows announces the arrival of the Countess's latest young suitor; a real toy-boy in this case, a Gascon cadet known as the Chevalier. She hesitates for a moment, but in the end the temptation to have a little fun is too strong. Gallant dialogue with the Baroness leads to a quartet where the young cadet meets the Countess again, with the Commander and the Baroness hiding unseen. The Countess is elegantly dressed for town, the besotted young cadet is very nervous and not at all confident in the ways of courtship. He is nonetheless convinced that the Countess has led him to believe that she wishes to marry him. A few home truths about some goings-on in Aix, where they first met, come out in the following dialogue and, almost *en passant*, the Chevalier learns that, far from intending to marry him, she is to marry the Commander. The Countess denies having led him on: her loving smiles were merely a 'headache' she claims, and, as for embracing, 'she must have been asleep.'

In the energetic finale, the suitors reappear. They are horrified to have learnt of the Countess's imminent wedding. They all seem to have been under the illusion that she loved each one of them! The Commander and the Chevalier argue with greater and greater vehemence as the music becomes more and more heated. A duel is called for and the 12 suitors divide into two groups to form seconds for the duellists.

Act 2. The scene is set in the Countess's boudoir. A table on the left is covered with bouquets of flowers and opened love-letters. In the short recitative that serves as an introduction to Act II, the Countess seems tired of all her games and wants a few moments to herself.

In the following display aria she pretends to address a lover kneeling in front of her. Never mind if he goes away, she remarks, another will soon take his place. She reflects before pretending to address a second lover: both of them are treated to a fine display of vocal fireworks.

Her maid Bretonne appears, and the Countess gives her a heap of bouquets to perfume her room and some love-letters 'to inflame her heart', much to her delight. The Baroness rushes in to announce that the wounded are returning from the duel- In the 'morceau d'ensemble' that follows, the walking wounded utter cries of pain and at first accuse the Countess of being 'proud, ungrateful, ungrateful and wilful'. She melts their anger away by parading around them seductively: to each she offers a word of consolation. Each one of them is delighted, believing himself at last to be the object other love. The Countess asks what has happened to the Commander and the suitors tell her that he is seriously wounded. He enters, his clothes torn and dishevelled and his face bandaged in several places. Everyone laughs mockingly but then pretends to be moved by his misfortune.

The tottering Commander has a solution. It is a rather long-winded one, but it confirms our previous perception that it is property and the desire to live in his *domaine enchantée* that governs the Commander's motives. His only way forward, shamed by the loss of the duel for the Countess, is to marry the Baroness. He lavishes flattery on the latter. His clumsy advances are welcomed by the company with choruses of praise for his gallantry!

The following dialogue is crucial, for the Countess has had a change of heart. Somewhat alarmed at having been forced by the Commander's loss of the duel into a corner where she may have to marry the Chevalier, she demands that her sister inform the Chevalier that if he wants her hand in marriage he must apologise for earlier violent scenes and prepare for her reformed attitude (a remark made with an ironic sigh): the Countess will from henceforth be a sweet, good woman whose only desire is for constant love from a faithful husband. Enter the Chevalier who admits no hatred for the Commander whom he considered honourable and a gentleman. He is now intent only on exacting revenge from the hard-hearted Countess. When the Baroness, as the Countess has instructed her, suggests that he might find a gentle, loving woman instead, the Chevalier misunderstands her and, falling in love at once with the Baroness, assumes that she will marry him straightaway. He goes to collect his bags.

In the finale the Baroness is reduced to laughter as the Chevalier returns to see the Commander on his feet in front of her. Now she has two offers of marriage. The suitors enter and the Chevalier is sporting for another duel; the Commander has once again become a rival. The Countess enters, holding a bouquet, and offers her hand to the Chevalier. But he spurns it and instead takes the hand of the Baroness, announcing that he will marry her after he has killed the Commander. The confused Countess then confesses her mistake, claiming that she had meant to offer her hand to the Commander: things have turned full circle and the first solution is adopted. The 12 suitors are annoyed: they confess that their aim was that she should never marry so that they could live eternally in hope. The Countess throws down her bouquet and each of the suitors takes a flower for their buttonholes.

It seems she will take the Commander, for beside him, without her heart stolen; she can be free and happy.

Richard Langham-Smith

Death in Venice is an opera in two acts by Benjamin Britten, his last. The opera is based on the novella *Death in Venice* by Thomas Mann. Myfanwy Piper wrote the English libretto. It was first performed at Snape Maltings, near Aldeburgh, England, on 16 June 1973.

The often acerbic and severe score is marked by some haunting soundscapes of "ambiguous Venice". The boy Tadzio is portrayed by a silent dancer, to gamelan-like percussion accompaniment. The music of the opera is precise, direct and movingly understated

Roles

Gustav von Aschenbach, a novelist		tenor
Traveller/ Elderly fop/ Old gondolier/ Hotel manager/Hotel barber/ Leader of the players/ Voice of Dionysus		baritone
The Polish mother	(dancer)	
Tadzio, her son	(dancer)	
Her two daughters	(dancers)	
Jaschiu, Tadzio's friend	(dancer)	
Voice of Apollo		countertenor
Hotel porter		tenor
Boatman		baritone
Hotel waiter		baritone
Russian mother		soprano

Russian father	bass
German mother	mezzo-soprano
Strawberry seller	soprano
A guide	baritone
Lace seller	soprano
Newspaper seller	soprano
Glassmaker	tenor
Strolling player	tenor
Strolling player	mezzo-soprano
English clerk	baritone
Nurse-governess	soprano
Chorus – travellers, workers and dancers	

Synopsis

Place: Venice and Munich

Time: 1911

Act 1: Scene 1: Munich

Aschenbach, a famous German novelist, is weary and opens the opera bemoaning the fading of his artistic inspiration. As he walks through the suburbs of Munich, he stops before the entrance to a cemetery. He catches sight of a traveller ("from beyond the Alps by his looks") and, musing on the strange and exotic nature of foreign lands, is impulsively moved to travel south in the hope of refreshing his artistic imagination.

Scene 2: On the Boat to Venice

He takes a boat to Venice, sharing his passage with a group of libidinous youths and their leader, the Elderly Fop. Aschenbach's discovery that the fop is not young, but old and made-up ("How can they bear that counterfeit; that young-old horror. A wretched lot, a wretched boat") repulses him, and he arrives in Venice dispirited.

Overture: Venice

Scene 3: The Journey to the Lido

Aschenbach contemplates his arrival by gondola into the city ("What lies in wait for me here, Ambiguous Venice, Where water is married to stone, And passion confuses the senses?"). He intends to go to the Schiavone, but is taken towards the Lido by the Old Gondolier, who mutters that "Nobody shall bid me; I go where I choose; I go my own way". A brief argument as to their destination ensues, but the novelist soon capitulates and is taken to the Lido.

Scene 4: The First Evening at the Hotel

Aschenbach is greeted by the Hotel Manager, who shows him his room with ingratiating volubility. As the other guests assemble for dinner, Aschenbach watches them pass. His eye is taken by a young Polish boy, Tadzio, in whom he sees unnatural beauty ("Surely the soul of Greece; Lies in that bright perfection; ...Mortal child with more than mortal grace"). Aschenbach is aware of the fatuousness of his thoughts, but allows himself to indulge in his speculations.

Scene 5: On the Beach

Reading on the beach, Aschenbach observes Tadzio playing on the sands. He obtains a wry satisfaction from the discovery that Tadzio has flaws: as a Pole, the boy hates the Russian guests ("He is human after all. There is a dark side even to perfection. I like that.").

Scene 6: The Foiled Departure

Walking the streets of Venice, Aschenbach is accosted at every turn by beggars, street sellers and others demanding his custom. Seeing rubbish on the streets and smelling the foul water of the canals, he feels nauseated and claustrophobic, and decides that he must leave Venice. Back at the hotel, the Manager expresses his regret over Aschenbach's departure. When Tadzio returns Aschenbach's glances, Aschenbach himself also feels regret. On arriving at the station, Aschenbach finds that his luggage has been sent on the wrong train ("I am furious because I am forced to return, but secretly I rejoice. Vacillating, irresolute, absurd"), and he realises upon seeing Tadzio again that the boy was the cause of his regret at leaving.

Scene 7: The Games of Apollo

Aschenbach sits in his chair on the Lido beach, watching Tadzio and his friends play. Aschenbach's thoughts (voiced by the chorus) are of the gods Phaedra, Apollo and Hyacinthus, their actions mirroring those of Tadzio. The boys compete in a variety of sports: running, long jump, discus, javelin and wrestling. Tadzio wins conclusively, and Aschenbach is inspired artistically by the boy's beauty, as "...thought becomes feeling, feeling thought". Aschenbach determines to congratulate Tadzio on his victory, but when the opportunity arises, he cannot bring himself to speak. Almost choking on the words, Aschenbach realises the truth: "I – love you."

Act 2

Sitting with a book but distracted by his own thoughts, Aschenbach decides to accept his feeling for the boy as it is, ("ridiculous, but sacred too and no, not dishonourable, even in these circumstances.")

Scene 8: The Hotel Barber's Shop (i)

Aschenbach visits the Hotel Barber, who lets slip a mention of a sickness in Venice. Aschenbach questions urgently, but the barber denies that the sickness is of any importance.

Scene 9: The Pursuit

As Aschenbach crosses the waters to Venice, he detects the smell of disinfectant. On his arrival, he finds citizens reading public notices warning them to take precautions against infection. The citizens too deny that there is any cause for worry, but Aschenbach finds a graver warning in a German newspaper: "We doubt the good faith of the Venetian city fathers in their refusal to admit to the cases of cholera in the city. German citizens should return as soon as possible". The Polish family appears and Aschenbach determines that they must not find out about the cholera outbreak for fear that they will leave. Aschenbach follows the family to a café, where the mother notices him and moves herself in between Aschenbach and her son. The family moves onward to St Mark's, with Aschenbach still following at a distance. In due course, the family leaves and takes a gondola back to the hotel, with Aschenbach in pursuit and in a state of some excitement ("Tadzio, Eros, charmer, see I am past all fear, blind to danger, drunken, powerless, sunk in the bliss of madness").

Scene 10: The Strolling Players

On the hotel terrace after dinner, the guests assemble to watch the players. Aschenbach questions the Leader of the Players about the rumours of plague, but the actor dismisses his suggestions. Aschenbach notices that Tadzio, like himself, is not laughing at the skit, and wonders "Does your innocence keep you aloof, or do you look to me for guidance? Do you look to me?"

Scene 11: The Travel Bureau

A young English clerk is dealing with a crowd of hotel guests, all urgently trying to leave Venice. As the clerk closes the bureau, Aschenbach asks him about the plague and is told that the city is in the grip of Asiatic cholera. He advises Aschenbach to leave immediately before a blockade is imposed.

Scene 12: The Lady of the Pearls

Aschenbach decides to warn Tadzio's mother of the danger posed to them by the plague, but cannot bring himself to do it. He initially chastises himself for having failed to "make everything decent and above board", but then decides that he was right not to speak out, and idly wonders "What if all were dead, and only we two left alive?"

Scene 13: The Dream

Aschenbach dreams of the gods Apollo and Dionysus, who argue their respective viewpoints of reason and beauty verses chaos and ecstasy. Apollo is overwhelmed and leaves Dionysus to a wild dance. Aschenbach wakes and realises how little of his former intellectual rigour and detachment remains. He is resigned to the change: "Let the gods do what they will with me".

(The music for Apollo in this scene derives from the First Delphic Hymn, an early Greek melody Britten heard Arda Mandikian sing at the 1954 Aldeburgh Festival).

Scene 14: The Empty Beach

Aschenbach watches as Tadzio and his friends play a desultory game on the beach; they soon leave.

Scene 15: The Hotel Barber's Shop (ii)

Aschenbach declares "Do what you will with me!", and the barber works at beautifying him with make-up and hair dye, extolling the virtues of youthful appearance the while.

Scene 16: The Last Visit to Venice

Aschenbach boards a gondola for Venice and sings of its beauty. He realises and mocks his own resemblance to the Elderly Fop. Upon seeing the Polish family ahead of him, Aschenbach follows distractedly. Tadzio detaches himself from the family and waits for Aschenbach, who turns away when the boy looks directly at him. Aschenbach is pleased to notice that Tadzio does not betray his follower's presence to his mother. Alone again, Aschenbach buys strawberries from a street seller, but finds them musty and over-ripe. He sits down, tired and ill, and bitterly mocks himself ("Self-discipline your strength... All folly, all pretence"). He recites a paraphrase of Plato's dialogue between the old philosopher Socrates and the boy Phaedrus, speaking the parts of both man and boy. The subject of the dialogue is the paradoxical, dangerous relationship between the artist and his subject.

Scene 17: The Departure

The Hotel Manager and a porter are organising the departure of the last guests, the Polish family among them. Aschenbach inquires as to their time of departure, then leaves to sit on the deserted beach where Tadzio and another boy, Jaschui, are playing. The game becomes rougher and Jaschui dominates, pushing Tadzio's face into the sand. In an attempt to assist, Aschenbach tries to get up but is too weak. Jaschui and the other children run away, leaving Tadzio on the beach alone with Aschenbach. Tadzio beckons the author, but he slumps in his chair. Tadzio continues walking far out to sea.

Les Brigands

Les brigands (The Bandits) is an opéra bouffe, or operetta, by Jacques Offenbach to a French libretto by Henri Meilhac and Ludovic Halévy.

Les brigands was first performed at the Théâtre des Variétés, Paris on 10 December 1869. This version was in three acts. A four-act version was subsequently prepared for a production at the Théâtre de la Gaîté, opening on 25 December 1878. The piece achieved great success as the Second Empire came to an end. Only the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War in the following months dampened audience enthusiasm. The piece also played in New York City at The Grand Opera House in 1870-71.

Meilhac and Halévy's libretto is cheerfully amoral in its presentation of theft as a basic principle of society rather than as an aberration. The forces of law and order are represented by the bumbling carabinieri, who always arrive too late to capture the thieves, and whose exaggerated attire delighted the Parisian audience during the premiere. Les brigands has a more substantial plot than many Offenbach operettas and integrates the songs more completely into the story. In addition to policemen, financiers receive satiric treatment.

The music of the piece influenced Bizet in writing Carmen, and the librettists for this work supplied Bizet's libretto

Roles

Adolphe de Valladolid	tenor
Antonio, treasurer to the Duke	tenor
Barbavano	bass
Baron de Campo-Tasso	tenor
Carmagnola	tenor
Comte de Gloria-Cassis	tenor
Domino	tenor
Duc de Mantoue	baritone
Falsacappa, the chief	tenor
Fiorella, his daughter	soprano
Fragoletto, a farmer	mezzo-soprano
La Duchesse	soprano
Pipa, wife of Pipo	soprano
Pipetta, daughter of Pipo	soprano
Pipo, a landlord	tenor
Pietr, the brigand lieut.	tenor
La Princesse de Grenade, a captive	soprano
Zerlina	soprano
Bianca	soprano
Fiametta	soprano
Ciccinella	soprano
Marquise	soprano
Chief of the carabinieri	soprano
Preceptor	bass

Synopsis

Fragoletto, a young farmer, is captured by Italian brigands lurking in the Alps. He falls in love with Fiorella, the daughter of the bandit chief Falsacappa. Falsacappa intends to move up from small robberies to grand-scale ones. To prove himself, Fragoletto becomes involved in Falsacappa's complicated plan to steal a large sum of money while intercepting the marriage between the Princess of Granada (whom they capture) and the womanizing Prince of Mantua (the Duke). Falsacappa substitutes Fiorella's portrait for that of the Princess and provides his own wedding delegation to Mantua. Eventually, matters are sorted out, the brigands are revealed and pardoned, and Fragoletto marries his beloved Fiorella. The lesson: the true bandits are to be found not in the forest but in the leading circles of society.

English version

The piece was translated in three acts as *The Brigands* by English dramatist W. S. Gilbert and published by Boosey in 1871 but was not performed until 9 May 1889 at the Casino Theatre, New York City, starring Edwin Stevens as Falsacappa (the brigand chieftain), Lillian Russell as Fiorella, Fred Solomon as Pietro (the brigand lieutenant), Henry Hallam as the Duke, and Fanny Rice as Fragoletto, with an American tour thereafter. Its British premiere was on 2 September 1889 at the Theatre Royal, Plymouth, again starring Russell, soon transferring to the Avenue Theatre in London, beginning 16 September 1889, running for about 16 nights until 12 October. It then toured, starring Hallam Mostyn as Falsacappa, H. Lingard as Pietro, Frank Wensley as Fragoletto, Agnes Dellaporte as Fiorella, Marie Luella as the Princess of Granada, and Geraldine St. Maur as Fiametta.

Gilbert was displeased with his own work and attempted to prevent its performance in London - fortunately without success. He also objected to new songs inserted in the piece but written by another lyricist. Gilbert's arch lyrics pleased operetta audiences, who were delighted to accept a rough-and-tumble pirate band speaking impeccable drawing room English while describing dastardly deeds to gavottes and musical romps in three-quarter time. Many of the characters and situations in the piece are echoed later in Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Pirates of Penzance* and *The Gondoliers*.