



DDD

8.550924

Can-Can

and other
Dances from the Opera

Orpheus in the Underworld • The Bartered Bride
Faust • Tales of Hoffmann • Eugene Onegin



Can-Can and Dances from the Opera

- 1 **Can-Can from *Orpheus in the Underworld***
Jacques Offenbach (1819 - 1880)
- 2 - 5 **Ballet Music from *Faust***
Charles Gounod (1818 - 1893)
- 6 - 7 **Dances from *The Bartered Bride***
Bedřich Smetana (1824 - 1884)
- 8 **Barcarole from *The Tales of Hoffmann***
Jacques Offenbach (1819 - 1880)
- 9 **Bacchanale from *Samson et Dalila***
Camille Saint-Saëns (1835 - 1921)
- 10 **Gopak from *The Fair at Sorochintsy***
Modest Mussorgsky (1839 - 1881)
- 11 **Dance of the *Hours* from *La Gioconda***
Amilcare Ponchielli (1834 - 1886)
- 12 - 13 **Dances from *Eugene Onegin***
Pyotr Tchaikovsky (1840 - 1893)
- 14 **Dance of the *Persian Slaves* from *Khovantshchina***
Modest Mussorgsky (1839 - 1881)
- 15 **Interlude and Dance from *La Vida Breve***
Manuel de Falla (1876 - 1946)
- 16 **Polovtsian Dances from *Prince Igor***
Alexander Borodin (1833 - 1887)

1 Offenbach's light-hearted re-interpretation of the Orpheus legend caused some scandal at the first performance of his *Orphée aux Enfers* at the Bouffe-Parisiens in 1858, when it seemed that he might be mocking the opera of Gluck on the same subject. The work was mounted with décor by Gustave Doré and expanded in 1874 with additional ballets. In Offenbach's version of the myth, with a libretto by Hector Crémieux and Jacques François Halévy, Orpheus is only too glad to be rid of his nagging Eurydice, who goes off with Pluto, god of the Underworld. The intervention of Jupiter allows that master of disguise to descend to the Underworld in the guise of a fly to seek out Eurydice. The famous can-can, the answer to Gluck's *Dance of the Blessed Spirits*, is performed by the infernal corps de ballet after Jupiter has turned Eurydice into a Bacchante, a metamorphosis that leaves her happily parted from her Orpheus.

2 - 5 The most famous of all operatic versions of Goethe's *Faust* is the opera by Charles Gounod, first staged at the Paris Théâtre-Lyrique in 1859. The plot centres on the love of Faust and Marguerite (Gretchen) and the dances from the opera, a necessary contemporary element of French opera, include, in addition to the kermesse of the second act, the well known fifth act Walpurgisnacht on the Brocken in the Hartz Mountains, where the dances include *Les nubiennes*, *Cléopatra et la coupe d'or*, *Les troyennes* and *Danse de Phrynée*, part of a revision of 1869 for the Grand Opéra.

6 - 7 Smetana was a leading figure in the creation of Czech opera and his best known work in this form must be *The Bartered Bride* (*Prodaná Nevešta*), first staged at the Prague National Theatre in 1866. The bride of the title, Mařenka, is to marry the son of Tobias Micha, apparently the simpleton Vašek, but eventually is able to marry the man she loves, Micha's long lost son Jenik. The *Polka* ends the first act, while the *Furiant* is heard at the inn scene of the second.

8 Offenbach's *Les contes d'Hoffmann*, first performed in 1881, the year after the composer's death, at the Paris Opéra-Comique, is based on stories by E.T.A.Hoffmann, including the famous Coppelia tale of love for a puppet. The third act is set in Venice, where the love of Nicklausse and the courtesan Giulietta is celebrated in a *Barcarole*, the gondolier's song.

9 As versatile as he was prolific, Camille Saint-Saëns scored the most lasting operatic success with his biblical *Samson et Dalila*, a work that had its first performance in 1877 at the Hoftheater in Weimar. The climax of the opera is the *Bacchanale* of the third act, where the Philistines feast and rejoice, mocking the blinded hero, who is about to bring the house down.

10 Dance has an important and necessary part to play in Russian opera. Mussorgsky's *Sorochintsy Fair*, based on Gogol and left unfinished at his death in 1881, included the famous *Gopak*, intended for the end of the first act, but transferred by Tcherepnin in his completed version of the third, where the heroine Parassia recovers her spirits, as she thinks of her lover Gritzko.

11 *The Dance of the Hours* has enjoyed an independent orchestral existence, separated from its dramatic context in Amilcare Ponchielli's opera *La Gioconda*. The ballet, in four parts, Dawn, Day, Evening and Night, is given for the entertainment of the guests of Alvisè Badoero, head of the state inquisition, and precedes the dramatic arrest of La Cieca (The Blind Woman), mother of La Gioconda.

12 - 13 Tchaikovsky based his opera *Eugene Onegin* on the work of Pushkin. It deals with the love of Tatiana and Onegin, with dance at its very heart. In the second act there is a dance at Madame Larina's and it is during the *Waltz* that Onegin antagonizes Lensky, whom he later kills in a duel, the cause of his own exile. Years later there is a grand ball at the aristocratic residence of Prince Gremin, epitomized in the *Polonaise* and it is here that Onegin meets Tatiana again, now the wife of Prince Gremin, and parts from her for ever.

14 Mussorgsky's opera *Khovantshchina* has a libretto by Stasov, mentor of the five nationalist composers under the influence of Balakirev. The opera deals with the clash between the reformist supporters of Peter the Great and the traditionalists, the Streltsy musketeers and Old Believers, with Prince Khovansky. *The Dance of Persian Slaves* entertains the Prince in the fourth act.

15 There is a very different kind of nationalism in Manuel de Falla's opera *La vida breve*. The story of the opera is one of love and betrayal, as the faithless Paco deserts his gypsy mistress Salud.

16 Borodin, like Mussorgsky, died before he had time to complete his principal opera, *Prince Igor*. There is a strong element of exoticism, particularly in the famous *Polovtsian Dances* with which Khan Khonchak entertains his prisoners Prince Igor and the latter's son Vladimir.



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STEREO

Can-Can and other Dances from the Opera

DDD

 Playing
Time:
77'11"

CSR Symphony Orchestra • Slovak Philharmonic*

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra** • Slovak State Philharmonic Orchestra (Košice)***

 Keith Clark • Stephen Gunzenhauser • Kenneth Jean • Ondrej Lenárd
Barry Wordsworth / Adrian Leaper / Johannes Wildner

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|----------|--|--------|-----------|---|---------|
| 1 | OFFENBACH: Can-Can from
<i>Orpheus in the Underworld</i> *** | (5:18) | 10 | MUSSORGSKY:
Gopak from <i>Fair at Sorochintsy</i> * | (1:44) |
| | GOUNOD: Ballet Music from <i>Faust</i> | | 11 | PONCHIELLI:
Dance of the Hours from <i>La Gioconda</i> | (7:48) |
| 2 | Allegretto | (2:24) | | TCHAIKOVSKY: Dances from <i>Eugene Onegin</i> | |
| 3 | Allegretto | (1:27) | 12 | Polonaise | (4:17) |
| 4 | Moderato con moto | (2:03) | 13 | Waltz | (6:21) |
| 5 | Allegretto | (1:43) | 14 | MUSSORGSKY:
Dance of the Persian Slaves from <i>Khovanshchina</i> * | (6:11) |
| | SMETANA: Dances from <i>The Bartered Bride</i> * | | 15 | FALLA: Interlude and Dance
from <i>La Vida Breve</i> | (7:11) |
| 6 | Polka | (4:48) | 16 | BORODIN: Polovtsian Dances
from <i>Prince Igor</i> ** | (11:08) |
| 7 | Furiant | (2:13) | | | |
| 8 | OFFENBACH:
Barcarole from <i>Tales of Hoffmann</i> | (3:17) | | | |
| 9 | SAINT-SAËNS:
Bacchanale from <i>Samson and Delilah</i> | (8:00) | | | |

 Cover Painting: Dancers at the Old Opera House
by Edgar Degas (1877)

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