

**JACQUERIE (THE
PEASANTS' REVOLT):
OPERA IN THREE ACTS**

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Jacquerie (The Peasants' Revolt): Opera in Three Acts by A. Donaudy

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A. DONAUDY

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A.P. 25-
JACQUERIE

(THE PEASANTS' REVOLT)

OPERA IN THREE ACTS

BY

A. DONAUDY

MUSIC BY

GINO MARINUZZI

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AT THE

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ARGUMENT

ACT FIRST.

On the outskirts of the little city of Nointel stands a rustic house, the marital home of ISAURA. Before the festooned doorway the friends of ISAURA and her husband MAZUREC are celebrating the marriage with song and with feasting, and offering of gifts.

After ISAURA's father has performed the simple marriage ritual, the guests withdraw, leaving the happy couple alone in the garden.

ISAURA, glancing up at the door before crossing the threshold, stops with a shriek, terrified. She calls her father, telling him that the pickaxe and distaff, symbols of the commonalty of life, have been removed from the doorway, and in their place has been hung a gleaming sword, unsheathed. The sword has been placed there by the notary. It is the sign that the Viscount has the right to take the Virgins on their marriage night.

The father, WILLIAM, goes to the notary, taking with him all his property; but he has not enough to buy ISAURA's release. MAZUREC has one hope,—he knows that the Viscount CORRADO has gone to Beauvais to see the beautiful GLORIANDA to whom he is to be betrothed. Surely, he thinks, she will have mercy.

Horns are heard in the distance announcing the passage of the court retinue, while from the city and country, the road is filled with crowds of men and women. The people are cheering CORRADO. MAZUREC runs and lays himself prostrate before CORRADO, imploring him that ISAURA be freed from the right of first-night. His sadness is felt by the crowds who take up MAZUREC's plea with threatening gestures. CORRADO, angered, refuses to remove the sword till the morrow. WILLIAM, leaping up as if mad, tears the sword from the door, and lunges at CORRADO; but the guards seize and disarm him.

ACT SECOND.

In the great-room of the castle, CORRADO and GLORIANDA are celebrating their betrothal with feasting. It is also a day of pardon; a day when the people have a right to ask favors of their lord, provided the tithes have been heavy enough. The gallery is jammed with noisy peasants. WILLIAM, who was condemned to die, is released. The notary hands over ISAURA to MAZUREC,

The suffering ISAURA becomes delirious in MAZUREC's arms. In her agony she cries that she is choking, suffocating; and begs MAZUREC to protect her from the serpent's fangs. He now knows all the sufferings she has endured. Frenziedly, she embraces him and then in a last shudder falls dead. MAZUREC, raising his arm to the sky, makes a solemn oath of revenge,—“No longer, 'the Lamb!' MAZUREC, 'the Wolf!' Thus now I name myself!”



ACT THIRD.

MAZUREC, deformed and almost unrecognizable, has been living alone in the woods, since ISAURA'S death. WILLIAM finds him sleeping in a hollow tree. He tells MAZUREC that all the people have sworn revenge and that a new conscience has been kindled in a thousand hearts; that a scanty handful of yesterday is today an army, aflame with the desire for revenge. Even the servants of the castle are with them at last.

The trumpet is sounded—the signal of the Giacomi. The castle lights are suddenly extinguished. From every ridge and every rock, and behind every stump appears an armed man ready for the ascent to the castle. Then the onrush of the Giacomi, a fierce clambering up the hill! Cries of savage joy ring out,—“Giacomi; courage! to the slaughter, to revenge, fight, burn, slaughter!”

Then a cry of victory! Cries of terror and death rend the air, mingled with the fierce laughter of the victorious Giacomi.

WILLIAM is dragging GLORIANDA down the hill. She cries out in horror when he hands her to MAZUREC, who passionately embraces and kisses her. GLORIANDA tearfully begs for pity. He sees a vision of his ISAURA in the same plight, and dares not touch this girl again. Instead, he shows her a path of escape through the woods.

The castle goes up in flames and the exultant Giacomi cry out in their fierce joy; the hymn of the enslaved, breaking their centuries-old chains, rings out,—“Let there be annihilation of the oppressors! E. W.

JACQUERIE

PRIMO ATTO.

(Un luogo di campagne, poco d'scosto dalla piccola città di Nointel che si scorge in fondo, a sinistra—e dall'antico castello visconteo che s'erge in maestà alla cima d'un prossimo colle rigoglioso. Sul davanti a destra, un pò di sghembo, in modo che la porta d'entrata rimanga nascosta a chi venga dalla strada, una piccola casa agreste—la casa maritale di ISAURA—è tutta adorna di fiori e di festoni. Ma dalla grande porta spalancata sono stati rimossi il badile e la conocchia—simboli della nuova comunianza di vita—e vi pende, invece, sospesa a un fil di ferro, una lucida spada sguainata, segno del divieto che fa il signore di varcarne la soglia, sotto pena di morte. Davanti alla casetta è un piccolo orto fiorito, limitato da una siepe verso la strada e con una panchina di pietra nel mezzo. Le acque dell'Oisa scorrono al di là della casetta, invisibili, non appalesate che da un ponte di legno che congiunge, in fondo, le due sponde. È un caldo meriggio di primavera.

Giunge da poco lontano un gaio strimpellar di violino al quale si sposa, di quando in quando, una cantilena appropriata che or si smorza e or s'accende languidamente amorosa. Amici ed amiche dei dintorni, convenuti presso la casa maritale per festeggiare gli sposi, sono aggruppati sul ponte e guardano verso la strada).

ALCUNI

Ecco la coppia di sposi novella
Ch'esce di chiesa e s'avvia qui in campagna...

ALTRI

Che sia lor la vita bella!

ALCUNI

La precede e l'accompagna
Cantilenando e spargendo a mannelle
Rose bianche e bionde spicche
un lungo stuol di parenti a d'ar.liche.

x

GLI UOMINI.

Le offerte vostre, comari, son quelle?

LE DONNE.

Noi diam quel cercine.

—Noi quella spola.

Noi solo un bacio e una buona parola.

ALTRE DONNE.

Noi salimmo alla montagna

per un fascio d'erba stella

Ond'essi adornino il tetto e le mura,
Si che stia lungi la mala ventura.

GLI UOMINI.

—E noi cogliemmo una rama fiorita
perchè li accenda d'amore ancor più...

(La cantilena nuziale, fattasi sempre più vicina, si smorza ora sulle labbra delle giovanette bianco vestite che s'avanzano in lungo stuolo, recando larghe ceste da cui spargono a piene mani petali di rose e chicchi di grano sul cammino che dovranno percorrere gli sposi, siccome in doviziosa messe votiva. Raggiante di gioia, GUGLIELMO CALLET, il padre della sposa, segue le giovanette, primo fra i parenti).

ALCUNI.

Eccolo il padre...

ALTRI

(Circondandolo e festeggiandolo).

Felice sii tù!

ALCUNI.

Gli sposi...

(Quanti hanno dei doni da presentare si fanno loro incontro, e ognuno vorrebbe essere il primo, ognuno ha un augurio da fare; sicchè ISAURA, cogli occhi smarriti e il sorriso alle labbra, tra confusa e commossa non sa rispondere altrimenti che prodigando baci e strette di mano).

THE PEASANTS' REVOLT

FIRST ACT.

(A country place, on the outskirts of the little city of Nointel, visible in the distance, to the left, and from the viscountal castle which stands majestically on the summit of a nearby imposing hill. To the right, foreground, a little obliquely, in such a way that the entrance door remains hidden from anyone coming from the street, a little rustic house, the marital home of ISAUURA, entirely adorned with flowers and festoons. But from the great gate, wide open, there have been removed the pickaxe and distaff, symbols of the new commonality of life, and there hangs, instead, suspended by an iron wire, a shining unsheathed sword, sign of the master's order against crossing the threshold, under pain of death. Before the house is a little flowering kitchen-garden, separated from the street by a hedge and with a small stone bench in the middle. The waters of the Oise flow by the house, unseen, except from a wooden bridge which, backstage, joins the two banks. It is a warm spring noon-day.)

There is heard from nearby a gay strumming of a violin, to which is joined, from time to time, an appropriate song, now calm, now rising in languid amourousness. Friends (of both sexes) of the inhabitants of the house, arrived at the house for the purpose of feasting the couple, are grouped on the bridge and are looking toward the street.)

SEVERAL.

Behold the newly-joined couple
Leaving the church and coming here
to their fields!

OTHERS.

All happiness to them!

SEVERAL.

See how, preceding and accompanying
them,

Singing, and scattering handfuls
Of white roses and flaxen ears,
Goes the long band, of friends and
relatives.

THE MEN.

And these, good wives, are your offerings?

THE WOMEN.

We are giving them that cushion.

—We that shuttle;

And we nothing but a kiss and a loving word.

OTHER WOMEN.

We climbed the mountain
For a sheaf of grass
To adorn the roof and walls,
That ill-luck may be ever far away.

THE MEN.

And we have gathered a flowering
branch,
That the flame of love may even more
be kindled.

(The nuptial song, having come ever nearer, now grows still on the lips of the small white-garbed boys who come up in great number, carrying large baskets, from which they scatter handfuls of rose petals and sweetmeats of corn on the road which the couple will have to cross, as if in a rich votive harvest-offering. Beaming with joy, WILLIAM CAILLET, the father of the bride, follows the youths, the first among the relatives.)

SEVERAL.

Behold the father...

OTHERS

(Hovering around and congratulating him).

May ye be happy!

SEVERAL.

The couple...

(Those who have presents to give advance, and each wants to be the first, each has a prophecy to make: ISAUURA, eyes downcast and a smile upon her lips, cannot respond, because of her confusion and emotion, save for passionate kisses and handclaps).

TUTTI.

Ognor vi sia bella la vita!

(*Carichi di doni, tra il fervore augurale, gli sposi s'avanzano così sino al limitare dell'orto, dove GUGLIELMO sta ad attenderli e dove s'inginocchiano in atto solenne dinanzi a lui, nel silenzio quasi religioso fattosi intorno.*)

GUGLIELMO

(*Posando le mani sulle due teste congiunte.*)

Prima ch'entriate sotto il tetto novo,
Da soli, tra il badile e la conocchia,
La mia benedizione vi rinnovo,
Figli miei ch'or mi state alle ginocchia.
E ognor così si rinnovelli in voi
L'amore che v'ha tratto ad una sorte

ISAURA E MAZUREC.

Padre, t'ubbidiranno i figli tuoi.

I PRESENTI

(Segnandosi commossi).

Ora e sempre e nell'ora della morte.

(*In silenzio, quasi solennemente, GUGLIELMO li invita a rialzarsi, bacia MAZUREC sui capelli, stringe tra le braccia ISAURA che gli si abbandona con un moto convulso, li rimette uno a fianco dell'altra e, introdottili nell'orto, s'allontana cogli amici, discretamente, commosso e felice.*)

ISAURA

(*Ha appena sollevato lo sguardo sulla porta grande, prima di varcarne la soglia, che ristà con un grido, atterrita.*)

Mazurec!

(*E più cogli occhi che col gesto smarrito gli indica la conocchia spezzata per terra e la spada che pende in sua vece sul vano della porta.*)

MAZUREC

(*Ristando anch'egli con un moto d'orrore e cercando di allontanarla istintivamente, quasi verecondo ch'ella comprenda.*)

Torna indietro, va... E richiama,
richiama il padre!

x

(*S'abbandona sulla panchina, colle mani sul volto.*)

Ahimè, la cosa orrenda!

ISAURA

(*Correndo sulla strada incontro al padre che già al suo grido stava per accorrere.*)

Padre, il badile fu rimosso, e in pezzi
Ridotta la conocchia in sacrilegio!
E una spada, una spada rilucente
Posta in sua vece sulla porta...

GUGLIELMO

(*Slanciandosi nell'orto, seguito dagli amici.*)

Giù

Quella vergogna!

I PRESENTI

(*Ritenendolo nell'atto in cui sta per strappare la spada dall'uscio.*)

Ah, no! Che fai?

—Ti perdi!

Se la rimuovi la morte è su te!

—Ve l'avrà posta il balivo, e tu sai

Che è il segno del diritto che il

Visconte

Ha su tutte le vergini fanciulle.

GUGLIELMO.

Ah, voi tacete!

(*Correndo accanto ad ISAURA e stringendola a sé come per difenderla contro tutti.*)

E tu, figliuola, nulla

Hai udito che t'offenda, non è vero?

(*L'accarezza e la bacia con effusione.*)

Isaura mia! Tenera e pura cosa!

(*Fattala sedere sulla panchina, torna accanto agli amici ai quali la indica con tutto una gelosia paterna negli occhi.*)

Sin da bambina, morta la sua mamma,

Meco la crebbi, in purità di vita;

E più che bella, e più che buona, degna

La volli per il di delle sue nozze.