

## **Crispino**

[Opera buffa, in three acts; text by Piave. First produced in Venice, in 1850.]

### PERSONAGES.

Annetta, the cobbler's wife. La Comare, the fairy. Crispino, the cobbler. Il Contino, the Count. Dr. Fabrizio. Dr. Mirolante. Don Asdrubal. Lisetta.

[Clerks, waiters, servants, etc.]

The scene is laid in Venice; time, the last century.

The first act of this charming little fairy opera opens with a unison chorus of apothecary's apprentices, "Thump, thump" ("Batti, batti"). Crispino, a poor cobbler, over head and ears in debt, whose wife Annetta tries to help him out by ballad singing, is seated at his bench at work in front of his house. In the intervals of the chorus the Count, who figures in a side plot, sings a beautiful romanza, "Thou Beauteous as an Angel art" ("Bella siccome un angelo"). Then Crispino bewails his hard fortune in a quaint melody, "Once a Cobbler" ("Una volta un ciabattino"), after which Annetta introduces herself with a canzonetta, "My Pretty Tales and Songs" ("Istorie belle e leggere"), leading up to a minor duet between them. In the sixth scene a buffo aria, "I am a Bit of a Philosopher" ("Io sono un po' filosofo") is sung by Dr. Fabrizio. At last Crispino gets into such desperate straits that he resolves to make way with himself. He is about to jump into a well when a fairy appears and dissuades him, at the same time giving him a purse of gold and offering to set him up in business as a doctor, telling him he must look about him whenever he has a patient, and if she is not present he will be successful. The act closes with a duet for Crispino and Annetta, "Since you have found a Fairy" ("Troffo so, basta per ova").

The second act discloses Crispino in the midst of a flourishing business, and the delighted Annetta sings a joyous little melody, "I no longer am Annetta" ("Io non sono piu l'Annetta"). A workman who has met with an accident is brought to Crispino for treatment, and as the fairy is not present he is successful. The musical treatment of the healing scene is worked up with great skill. It begins with a baritone solo, leading up to a duet with soprano and chorus accompaniment. A sextette then takes up the theme, and in the close all on the stage give it with impressive effect. A broadly humorous but very melodious trio of the doctors follows, "Sirs, what means this Quarrel?" ("Ma Signori, perchè tantes questione?"). In the next scene Annetta sings the pretty Fritola song, "Pietro, Darling, this Cake so Tempting" ("Piero mio, go qua una fritola"), in which she boasts the merits of a cake she has made for the Carnival. Meanwhile Crispino grows so puffed up with his wealth that when Annetta invites some old friends to the house he drives them out, and is about to strike Annetta when the fairy suddenly appears.

In the last act the fairy has taken Crispino to a cavern, where she shows him crystal vases in which more or less brilliant lights are burning. She tells him that each represents a human life. The one burning so brightly is Annetta's, the one so dimly is his own. When he asks her to take some oil out of Annetta's lamp and put it into his, she upbraids him, reveals herself as death, and tells him to make his last request, for he is about to die. In a doleful ballad, "Little I ask, Dearest Fairy" ("Poco cerco, O mia Comare"), he asks for only a half-hour more, so that he may see Annetta and the children. A sudden change of scene shows him in his own house, awaking from sleep in his chair. As he realizes that it has been only a nightmare, occasioned by a sudden fit of illness, he expresses his delight and Annetta expresses her joy in a brilliant waltz movement, "There's no Joy that e'er hath given me" ("Non ha gioja in tal Momento"), which closes the opera.