

Czar and Carpenter

[Opéra comique, in three acts; text and music by Lörtzing. First produced in Berlin in 1854.]

PERSONAGES.

Peter I., Czar of Russia under the name of Peter Michaelhoff. Peter Ivanoff, a young Russian shipwright. Herr van Bett, burgomaster of Saardam. Gen. Lefort, Russian ambassador. Lord Syndham, British ambassador. Marquis of Chateauneuf, French ambassador. Marie, niece of the burgomaster. Widow Brown, mistress of the shipyard.

[Shipwrights, workmen, sailors, villagers, etc.]

The scene is laid in Saardam; time, the year 1698.

The opening of the first act of the "Czar and Carpenter" discloses Peter the Great and Peter Ivanoff, a deserter from the Russian army, at work in the shipyard of Mrs. Brown in Saardam. The British and French ambassadors, having been notified that the Czar is there in disguise, are searching for him with the object of negotiating a treaty with him, or, failing that, to abduct him. The British ambassador employs the pompous burgomaster of Saardam to find him a Russian named Peter, without however disclosing his real character to him. The burgomaster happens upon Peter Ivanoff and brings him to the ambassador, who, supposing him to be the Czar, seeks to arrange a treaty with him, and finally gives him a passport so that he may visit England. Meanwhile the people of Saardam, being informed that the Czar is with them, prepare a reception for him.

The French ambassador, who has also been searching for the Czar, finds the real one by telling him the story of a Russian defeat which causes him to betray himself. The Czar, who is now anxious to go home and crush out the rebellion, seeks for some means to get away

without the knowledge of the Dutch and the English. Finding out by chance that Ivanoff has an English passport, he secures it, and gives Ivanoff another paper which he is not to open until an hour has passed. During this time Ivanoff is enjoying the public reception, which suddenly is interrupted by cannon reports. The gateway of the port is opened, showing the Czar with the Russian and French ambassadors sailing away. Ivanoff opens his paper, and finds that his companion was the Czar, who has given him a good situation as well as his consent to his marriage with Marie, the burgomaster's niece.

The leading numbers of the first act are the carpenter's spirited song, "Grip your Axes"; Marie's jealousy song, "Ah! Jealousy is a Bad Companion"; the humorous aria of Van Bett, "Oh! sancta Justitia, I shall go raving"; the long duet for Van Bett and Ivanoff, "Shall I make a Full Confession?" and the effective quartettes in the finale. The second act contains the best music of the opera. It opens with a mixed chorus of a bacchanalian sort, "Long live Joy and Pleasure," which after a long dialogue is followed by the tenor romanza, "Fare thee well, my Flandrish Maiden," a quaint melody, running at the end of each stanza into a duet, closing with full chorus accompaniment. A sextette, "The Work that we're beginning," immediately follows, which, though brief, is the most effective number in the opera. The next number of any consequence in this act, is a rollicking bridal song, "Charming Maiden, why do Blushes," sung by Marie. The last act has a comic aria and chorus, "To greet our Hero with a Stately Reception," and an effective song for the Czar, "In Childhood, with Crown and with Sceptre I played."