

## **Mignon**

[Opéra comique, in three acts; text by Barbier and Carré. First produced at the Opéra Comique, Paris, November 17, 1866.]

### PERSONAGES.

Mignon. Wilhelm Meister, a student. Laertes, an actor. Frederic, an admirer of Filina. Lotario, Mignon's father in disguise of a harper. Filina, an actress.

[Actors, gypsies, etc.]

The scene is laid in Germany and Italy; time, the last century.

The story of "Mignon," Thomas's universally popular opera, is based upon Goethe's "Wilhelm Meister." Mignon, the heroine, who is of noble birth, was stolen in her childhood by gypsies. Her mother died shortly afterwards, and her father, disguised as Lotario, the harper, has long and vainly sought for her. At the opening of the opera, a strolling band of actors, among them Filina and Laertes, arrive at a German inn on their way to the castle of a neighboring prince, where they are to perform. At the same time a gypsy band appears and arranges to give the guests an entertainment. Mignon, who is with the band, is ordered to dance, but being tired, she refuses. The leader of the band rushes at her, but Lotario, the old harper, intercedes in her behalf, whereupon he is singled out for assault, but is saved by the wandering student, Wilhelm Meister. To spare her any further persecution, he engages her as his page, and they follow on in the suite of Filina, to whom he is devoted. Touched by his kindness to her, Mignon falls in love with him; but he, ignorant of her passion, becomes more and more a victim to the actress's fascinations. When they arrive at the castle, all enter except Mignon, who is left outside. Maddened by jealousy, she is about to drown herself, but is restrained by the notes of Lotario's harp. She rushes to him for counsel, and invokes vengeance upon all in the

castle. After the entertainment the guests come out, and Filina sends Mignon in for some flowers she has left. Suddenly flames appear in the window. Lotario has fired the castle. Wilhelm rushes in and brings out the insensible Mignon in his arms. In the dénouement Wilhelm discovers her attachment to him, and frees himself from Filina's fascinations. A casket containing a girdle Mignon had worn in childhood, a prayer which she repeats, and the picture of her mother convince Lotario that she is his daughter, and Wilhelm and Mignon are united.

The leading numbers of the first act are the quintette immediately following the rescue of Mignon by Wilhelm; the romanza, "Non conosci il bel suol" ("Know'st thou the Land"), a song full of tender beauty and rare expression; the duet which immediately follows it, "Leggiadre rondinelli" ("Oh, Swallows Blithe"), known as the Swallow Duet, and of almost equal beauty with the romanza: and the graceful aria, "Grazia al gentil signore" ("You'll come with us"), in which Filina invites Wilhelm to join them. The best numbers in the second act are the trio, "Ohimè quell' acre riso" ("Alas! her Bitter Laugh"); Filina's gay, coquettish aria, "Gai complimenti" ("Brilliant Compliments"); Mignon's exquisite and characteristic song, "Conosco un zingarello" ("A Gypsy Lad I well do know"), which the composer himself calls the "Styrienne"; a bewitching rondo-gavotte, "Ci sono" ("I'm here at last"), sung by the love-lorn Frederic; Wilhelm's pathetic farewell to Mignon, "Addio, Mignon! fa core" ("Farewell, Mignon, take Heart"); the beautiful duet for Mignon and Lotario, "Sofferto hai tu" ("Hast thou e'er suffered"); and the polacca in the fourth scene, which is a perfect *feu de joie* of sparkling music, closing with an extremely brilliant cadenza. The last act is more dramatic than musical, though it contains a few delightful numbers. Among them are the chorus barcarole in the first scene, "Orsù, scioglian le vele" ("Quick, the Sails unfurl"); a song by Wilhelm, "Ah, non credea" ("Ah, little Thought"), and the love duet, "Ah, son felice" ("Ah, I am happy"), in which is heard again the cadenza of Filina's polacca.