

Queen Indigo

[Opera comique, in three acts; text by Jaime and Wilder. First produced in Vienna, February 10, 1871.]

PERSONAGES.

Montadada I., widow of King Indigo. Fantasca, the late King's favorite. Janio, the late King's jester. Romadour, chief of the eunuchs. Babazouck, fruit and vegetable vender. Mysouf, general-in-chief.

[Inmates of the harem, eunuchs, cooks, courtiers, soldiers, sailors, etc.]

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

At the opening of the opera King Indigo has just died, and his widow, Montadada I., decides to sell the harem. Fantasca, a beautiful slave, who was the favorite of the King, is included among those to be sold, and Romadour, chief of the eunuchs, resolves to secure her. Fantasca is in love with Janio, the King's jester, of her own country. Queen Montadada is also in love with him and has chosen him for her second husband, but he prefers Fantasca. The two contrive a cunning plot for the escape of the entire harem. Janio informs the Queen that one of her tribes has revolted, and as her troops are all sick he proposes that the women be armed and that he be placed in command. She accepts the proposal, and promises that the victor "shall choose the woman he loves, did she even wear a crown," not doubting Janio will select her, but, much to her chagrin, he announces Fantasca as his choice.

The second act discloses the Amazon army with Janio and Fantasca at its head. The Queen also accompanies them, still bent upon securing Janio's love. At the first alarm the troops fly in all directions, and the Queen, suspicious that something is wrong, scours the woods for Janio, who makes his escape by changing clothes with Babazouck, a

fruit-vender. The Queen meanwhile arrays herself in male attire, so that she may compete in physical attractions with Fantasca. She furthermore gets into a semi-drunken condition, but recognizes the cheat when Babazouck is brought before her. Immediately thereafter she falls into a drunken stupor. Romadour also comes in intoxicated, and mistaking her for Fantasca, sings to her, "O, my Queen, I love you," in a deep bass voice. The act closes with the two sleeping side by side, and the women of the harem carrying off the royal treasures.

In the last act Janio, Fantasca, and the other slaves are preparing for flight, when the Queen and Romadour enter. The former announces she no longer loves Janio, but the man who had declared, "Oh, my Queen, I love you." At her request Romadour repeats the remark, but this time in a high falsetto voice which she does not recognize. Subsequently he changes his mind, after hearing of Fantasca's prowess in battle, and exclaims, "O, my Queen, I love you," in the bass voice. The Queen promptly claims him for her husband and he acquiesces. She then orders Janio and Fantasca to be sold, but Romadour intercedes in their behalf, and she banishes them.

Like all the Strauss operas, "Queen Indigo" is full of charming waltz music, comprising, in addition to many novelties, several of his old-time favorites. The most effective vocal numbers are the trio, "What Dark Forebodings" ("Quel sombre et noir présage"); Fantasca's couplets, "A Model Soldier" ("Cavalier modèle"), and her song, "Woman is a Cunning Bird" ("La femme est un oiseau subtil"); the waltz song, "Oh! Maddening Flame" ("O flamme cuivrante"); the characteristic Tyrolienne, "Youpla! why, Fond Lover" ("Youplà, pourquoi, bel amoureux"); and the "Blue Danube" chorus of the sailors, in the last act.