



Delibes SYLVIA and COPPÉLIA

Members of the Boston Symphony Orchestra

Pierre Monteux, Conductor

If, three hundred years ago, when ballet was experiencing its stately beginnings at the court of Louis XIV, some eager courtier had asked the Sun King to sit and listen to a passage of ballet music without seeing the performers in action, he would doubtless have received the royal shrug. Music for dance in that age was background. Specialized interest in ballet music came later than dedication to the dance.

Provided we define ballet as group dancing of a dramatic or decorative order, clear in design and skillful in performance, we can trace its origin to the Middle Ages, in connection with morality and miracle plays, and later to the Renaissance carnivals of Italy. Its existence as an independent art is more recent.

In 1661, Louis XIV granted leave to a circle of learned instructors to form a Dancing Academy and gave them a room in the Louvre—then the royal residence—for their meetings. Eight years later he authorized the founding of a national opera, which was to include professional ballet.

Ballet technique grew with great speed and the new ideas spread throughout Europe. Independent dance dramas were produced in Milan. But they disappeared from La Scala; no equivalent form replaced them; opera absorbed the performing elements that were left.

If ballet may be said to have faded quickly in Italy, it hardly got off to a start in Central Europe. Isolated instances of greatness did occur in Germany and Austria, but always with artists who either had won their spurs elsewhere or were heading in another direction.

Although creative ballet moved momentarily to Italy during the days of Vigani (1769-1821), Paris was to remain its fortress for many years. On the night of June 28, 1841, Giselle burst like a bombshell on the French

capital, creating a new era not only in the technical and expressive powers of dance, but also in the scope of ballet music.

In the time Delibes (1838-1891) was at work on *Coppélia* and *Sylvia*, the writing of ballet music had reached a new level of consciousness. This was no longer, in any sense, a secondary art but ranked in importance with everything on stage, sometimes surpassing it.

The French ballets of this period (the 1870's), leaning on the elaborate and bizarre, turned out delightfully at the hands of a composer like Delibes and the choreographers with whom he worked.

Delibes, celebrated for his opera *Lohengrin*, has a more solid claim to the listener's affection with the scores of *Sylvia* and *Coppélia*. *Sylvia*, with choreography by Louis Mérante, was first produced at the Paris Opera in June, 1876. Its story, drawn from mythology, concerns the shepherd Amintias and the nymph Sylvia, whom the god of love, Eros, in the guise of a sweetest, contrives to join in spite of the objections of the chase goddess Diana and the dark hunter Orion.

Coppélia, one of the most popular of full-length ballets, had its first performance at the Paris Opera in May, 1870. Its choreography was devised by Arthur Saint-Léon. Almost at once, the leading role of Swanilda, whom courted by every ballerina, since it offered a performer full-dance to display her wit, elegance and brilliance of movement. The dominant figure is Coppélia, a mechanical doll. The youth Frantz falls in love with her, much to the chagrin of his lively fiancée Swanilda. But all ends happily when he discovers that Coppélia is no maiden, but only a myth, and in the final act the betrothal of Frantz and Swanilda is celebrated.

Side 1

Delibes SYLVIA

- Band 1—Prelude: Les Chasseuses
- Band 2—Intermezzo and Valse lente
- Band 3—Pas des Deux
- Band 4—Chant Baragone
- Band 5—Pianissimo Polka
- Band 6—Cortège de Barchus

Alfred Krpis, Violin solo

Side 2

Delibes COPPÉLIA

- Band 1—Prelude and Maestria
- Band 2—Scene et Valse de Swanilda
- Band 3—Gardes
- Band 4—Scene et Valse de la poupée
- Band 5—Ballade
- Band 6—Theme sur star variata: Variations 1-4

Alfred Krpis, Flute solo

Manuel Valerio, Clarinet solo

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RED SEAL



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*pierre monteux ...
members of the
boston symphony
orchestra*

