

## **Falka**

[Comic opera, in three acts; text by Letterier and Vanloo.]

### PERSONAGES.

Kolbach, military governor of Montgratz. Tancred, his nephew. Arthur, student, son of a rich Hungarian farmer. Lay Brother Pelican, doorkeeper of the convent. Konrad, captain of the governor's pages. Tekeli, sergeant of the patrol. Boboky, gypsy scout. Boleslas, chief of the gypsies. The Seneschal, Kolbach's steward. Falka, niece of Kolbach, at the convent school. Edwige, sister of Boleslas. Alexina de Kelkirsch, a young heiress. Minna, her maid. Janotha, landlady of the inn.

[Military pages, soldiers of the watch, maids of honor, peasants, Bohemians, etc.]

The scene is laid in Hungary; time, the middle of the eighteenth century.

The first act of "Falka" opens with the announcement that Kolbach, the military governor of Hungary, has been promised a patent of nobility by the Emperor upon the condition that he can establish the succession with a male heir, either direct or collateral. He is childless himself, but he has a niece, Falka, who is in a convent, and a nephew, Tancred, who is usher in a village school. The brother of Kolbach is dead. His hopes for the heir rest upon Tancred, whom he has never seen. He summons him to take a place in his house as the heir presumptive. On his way, Tancred is captured by a band of gypsies, led by Boleslas, but is released by Edwige, Boleslas' sister, on condition that he marries her. All this has happened in the night, and Edwige has not even seen Tancred's face. The latter, when he learns who Edwige is, flies, and is pursued to the city where Kolbach lives by Boleslas and Edwige. From a pocket-book he has dropped they

discover he is the nephew of the governor, and plot to identify him at the meeting, but Tancred, overhearing them, decides to baffle them by not appearing, and writes to his uncle that he is detained by illness. In the mean time Falka, the niece, has eloped with a young man named Arthur. Closely pursued by Brother Pelican, the convent doorkeeper, the fugitives arrive at the inn where Kolbach and Tancred were to have met. To foil Brother Pelican, Falka arrays herself in a suit of Arthur's, and then boldly decides to personate her brother. Kolbach is easily deceived, but new complications ensue. Brother Pelican, finding Falka's convent dress, suspects she has disguised herself as a boy and arrests Arthur for her. Boleslas and Edwige, witnessing the meeting of Falka and Kolbach, are certain Falka is the missing Tancred. For Falka's sake Arthur is silent, and the cortège sets out for the castle where the heir presumptive is to be engaged, by the Emperor's order, to the rich young Alexina de Kelkirsch.

In the second act Brother Pelican takes Arthur to the convent in Falka's dress, and Falka remains in a soldier's uniform to win the consent of her uncle to their union. Her plans are now disturbed by the arrival of Tancred, disguised as a footman, to watch his own interests and thwart the schemes of the young soldier, who he little dreams is his own sister. He is afraid to reveal himself because he knows Boleslas is on his track. He contrives that Falka shall be accused of broken vows before Kolbach, and she is challenged by Boleslas, but escapes by revealing her sex to Edwige. Arthur, who has been brought back from the convent, confesses the interchange of dresses with Falka, whereupon Kolbach orders them both out of his presence. Tancred displays unusual satisfaction, and thus discloses his identity to Edwige. Thus the act closes with Kolbach's discovery that Tancred is betrothed to a gypsy and that the pseudo Tancred is his niece Falka.

In the last act Kolbach reluctantly prepares for the marriage of Tancred to Alexina, as the Emperor desires. Falka is shut up in a tower, whence she is to be sent back to the convent. At this point Boleslas appears with Edwige. An interview between the two brides

leads to the substitution of Edwige for Alexina, and Tancred marries the gypsy. Falka escapes from the tower, but is caught and brought before her uncle, who at last pardons her various follies, all the more willingly because he has received a despatch from the Emperor that he may adopt her as his heiress, the succession having been settled in the female line.

The principal numbers in the first act are the stirring air and refrain, "I'm the Captain," sung by Edwige, Tancred, and Boleslas, precluded by a short march movement; a taking little nocturne, "There was no Ray of Light," sung by Edwige; a rondo duet, "For your Indulgence"; and the long and elaborate finale, which closes with an octette and full chorus.

The second act opens with a charming chorus, "Tap, tap," sung by the maids of honor, followed by couplets, "Perhaps you will excuse." Falka has a pretty air, "Yon Life it seems," followed by the exit chorus, "Ah! is she not a Beauty?" This in turn is followed by a characteristic Bohemian chorus, "Tra-la-la," with a gypsy air, "Cradled upon the Heather," coming in as a kind of vocal intermezzo. After a long ensemble, "It was Tancred," a trio, "Oh Joy! oh Rapture!" is sung, in the course of which there is an ingenious passage burlesquing Italian opera, followed by a quintette, "His Aspect's not so overpowering," and leading up to an elaborately concerted finale.

The last act, though short, contains many brilliant numbers; among them the bridal chorus, "Rampart and Bastian Gray," followed by a lively Hungarian rondo and dance, "Catchee, catchee"; a romanza "At Eventide," which literally passes "from grave to gay, from lively to severe," as it begins with an andante agitato, changing to an andante religioso, and ending with a waltz tempo, and repeating with the same abrupt changes; a charming duo Berceuse, "Slumber, O Sentinel"; and the bell chorus, "There the Bells go," preceding a short finale.