

Lakmé

[Romantic opera, in three acts; text by Goudinet and Gille. First produced at the Opéra Comique, Paris, April 14, 1883; in New York, March 1, 1886.]

PERSONAGES.

Lakmé, daughter of Nilakantha. Nilakantha, a Brahmin priest. Gerald, an English officer, lover of Lakmé. Frederick, an English officer. Mallika, slave of Lakmé. Hadji, slave of Lakmé. Ellen, } Rose, } daughters of the Viceroy. Mrs. Benson, their governess.

[Hindoos, Chinamen, fruit-venders, sailors, etc.]

The scene is laid in India; time, last century.

The opera of "Lakmé" opens in the sacred grounds of Nilakantha, a Brahmin priest who has an aversion to all foreigners, where Gerald and Frederick, two young English officers, with ladies are strolling about. They gradually retire with the exception of Gerald, who is curious to see the owner of some jewels left upon a shrine. Lakmé, the daughter of Nilakantha, returns for them, espies Gerald, and there is a case of love at first sight. The priest however interrupts their demonstrations, and Gerald escapes his vengeance in a convenient thunder-storm. In the second act Lakmé and Nilakantha appear in the market-place in the guise of penitents. He forces his daughter to sing, hoping that her voice will induce her lover to disclose himself. The scheme succeeds, and Nilakantha, stealing upon Gerald, stabs him in the back and makes good his escape. The third act opens in a jungle where Lakmé is nursing Gerald with the hope of retaining his love. She eventually saves his life, but while she is absent to obtain some water which, according to the Indian legend, will make love eternal, Frederick finds him and urges him to return to his regiment. Duty is

more powerful than passion, and he consents. When Lakmé finds that he is going, she takes poison and dies in Gerald's arms.

The first act opens with a chorus of Hindoos, oriental in its coloring, followed by a duet between Lakmé and her father, the scene closing with a sacred chant. A beautiful duet for Lakmé and her slave follows, "Neath yon Dome where Jasmines with the Roses are blooming." As Lakmé appears at the shrine, she sings a restless love song, "Why love I thus to stray?" followed by Gerald's ardent response, "The God of Truth so Glowing."

The first number of importance in the second act is the pathetic aria of Nilakantha, addressed to his daughter, "Lakmé, thy Soft Looks are over-clouded." Then follows Lakmé's bell song, "Where strays the Hindoo Maiden," a brilliant and gracefully embellished aria with tinkling accompaniment which will always be popular. The remaining principal numbers are an impassioned song by Gerald, "Ah! then 'tis Slumbering Love," followed by the mysterious response from Lakmé, "In the Forest near at Hand."

The music of the third act is tinged with sadness throughout, as the action hastens to the tragic dénouement. Its principal numbers are the low murmuring song by Lakmé, "Neath the Dome of Moon and Star," as she watches her sleeping lover; Gerald's song, "Tho' Speechless I, my Heart remembers," followed by a pretty three-part chorus in the distance; and Lakmé's last dying songs, "To me the Fairest Dream thou'st given," and "Farewell, the Dream is over."