

DON QUICHOTTE

Music by Jules Massenet

Libretto by Henri Cain

First Performance: Opéra de Monte Carlo, February 19, 1910

Act I: Public square on a fair day. The crowd fills the square and they drink to the health of the beautiful Dulcinée. Four of her admirers praise her beauty and the lady is drawn to her balcony. Dulcinée tells the crowd that no matter how rich, a woman needs a man to make her happy. Don Quichotte arrives on his steed, Rossinante, and Sancho Panza follows on his mule. Don Quichotte, after being mocked by the crowd, sings rhymes with accompaniment of his mandolin. His is interrupted by Juan, who challenges the knight to challenge him to a duel. In the middle of the duel, Don Quichotte breaks off to complete his rhymes. Dulcinée overhears the rhymes and admits her appreciation of romantic poets. Dulcinée is amused by the knight's heroic love, but asks Don Quichotte to recover a priceless necklace that was stolen. The knight, which his quest defined, leaves with Sancho, while Dulcinée revives her mischievous song.

Act II: Spanish countryside. Sancho enters the Spanish countryside, which is dotted with windmills that are concealed by the mist. Don Quichotte is composing rhymes to his beloved. Sancho can take no more of this and angrily turns on all womenkind. This mist burns off and the windmills become visible. Don Quichotte charges the nearest windmill and becomes impaled on one of the wings.

Act III. On the road to the Sierra Morena, Don Quichotte and Sancho are attacked by a bank of rogues. They mistreat the old man. No one dares to kill the old man. Don Quichotte prays rightously and this disquiets the bandits. They ask his identity and Don Quichotte tells them that his is a knight errant to right all wrongs. His is filled with strength and breaks his bonds. The bandits are so taken aback by this stranger, they return the necklace. They kneel to Don Quichotte as the fire illuminates his face.

Act IV: house of Dulcinée. At a festive party, Dulcinée sings and dances for the crowd. Don Quichotte and Sancho return with the necklace. Dulcinée greets her champion who produces the stolen necklace. He professes his love. She tells him that she treasures her freedom, but invites him to stay with her and her friends. She returns to her friends leaving the rejected lover.

Act V. In the forest, Don Quichotte rests against an old oak tree. Sancho builds a fire to warm his master. Don Quichotte reminisces over his past glory. While dying, Don Quichotte gives Sancho, at long last, the magic island of dreams. He recognizes Dulcinée in the stars. He grasps the oak and dies. Sancho sobs over his master.