

# THE FLYING DUTCHMAN

Richard Wagner

Der Fliegende Holländer

A Norwegian Fishing Village in the Eighteenth Century.

## Act I

Setting: a Norwegian seashore with steep cliffs. A violent storm rages.

A sudden violent storm has driven Daland's ship seven miles off course. His port had evidently been in sight because Daland thought he had seen his home and Senta waiting to greet him. The storm abates as all settle down for a rest. Sleep even overcomes Daland's Steersman who is alone on deck. The Flying Dutchman's ship suddenly approaches the shore and drops anchor next to Daland's ship. The Dutchman goes ashore and laments his fate (Die Frist ist um). He has been condemned to sail the oceans of the earth until doomsday. His only chance for rest is to find a woman who will be faithful to him until death. Every seven years he is allowed to land and search out just such a woman. He calls for the end of time to come and take him to his final rest. Daland comes up on the deck of his ship and notices the Dutchman's ship anchored next to his. The Steersman awakens and calls to the other ship. They do not answer and the call is repeated. This time the Dutchman appears on shore. Daland joins him on the beach and greets him. The Dutchman tells Daland his ship is full of treasures; if Daland will grant him shelter for the evening, he will be richly rewarded (Durch Sturm und bösen wind verschlagen). Two of the Dutchman's crew enter carrying a chest of jewels and the Dutchman says that this is just a small part of the collection he has on-board. He goes on to ask if Daland has a daughter, and Daland replies that he does. The Dutchman says that if Daland will give him his daughter in marriage, Daland can have all the treasure on the Dutchman's ship. Daland promises Senta's hand to the Dutchman. The Dutchman admits apprehension over the promise, but also excitement over the prospect of ending his torment (Wenn aus der Qualen Schreckgewalten). Daland expresses joy over his new found treasures and gladly gives Senta to the stranger. Daland departs for his home port. The Dutchman declares that his ship will rest for a while, but soon over-take Daland's in their trip home.

## Act II

Setting: A large room in Daland's house.

Mary and the girls are seated around the stove spinning and singing (Summ' und brumm', du gutes Rädchen). Senta is chastised for not spinning and instead gazing at the picture of a man with a pale face and dark beard wearing a black cloak. Senta turns to Mary and asks why she told her the story behind the man in the picture. The girls chide Senta for being in love with the man in the picture when she could have the hot-blooded Erik. Senta calls for Mary to sing the ballad of the Flying Dutchman. She refuses, so Senta sings it instead (Johohohe!).

Have you met the ship at sea with blood-red sails and black mast?

On the high deck, the pale man, the master of the ship, keeps endless watch.

Hoo! How the wind howls - Yo ho hey!

Hoo! How it whistles in the rigging, Yo ho hey!

Hoo! Like an arrow he flies, without aim, without rest, without peace!

But redemption may one day come to the pale man,

if he but find a woman on earth true unto death.

Oh, when will you find her, wan mariner?

Pray to Heaven that soon a woman will stay true to him!

In bitter gale and raging storm, he once tried to round a cape;  
he cursed in, mad fury, and swore: "Never will I give up!"  
Hoo! And Satan heard it! Yo ho hey!  
Hoo! Took him at his word! Yo ho hey!  
Hoo! And, damned, he now roams the sea without rest or peace!  
But the poor man may still find salvation on earth  
for an angel of God showed him how one day he might be redeemed.  
Ah, wan mariner, could you but find it!  
Pray to Heaven that soon a woman will stay true to him!  
At anchor every seven years, a wife to woo he goes ashore:  
he wooed every seven years, but never a true wife he found.  
Hoo! "Hoist sails!" Yo ho hey!  
Hoo! "Weigh anchor!" Yo ho hey!  
Hoo! "False love, false faith! Back to sea, without rest or peace!"

The girls ask who is the angel that will save the poor captain. Senta answers it is herself as the girls express horror. Erik has heard Senta's last words and asks if she wishes to destroy him Erik reports sighting Daland's ship approaching their cliff. The girls and Mary leave to prepare for his return when Erik halts Senta. Erik tells her that before Daland goes back out to sea, he will give Senta a groom. He adds that his heart will be true until death. He has not much to offer her, but asks for her hand anyway. Senta deflects his plea and tells him she should go and greet Daland. Erik asks who will comfort his heart-break if she leaves with the stranger. She tells him not to doubt her affection for him and asks what has made him so sad and suspicious. He tells her that her father thinks only of wealth. He asks her to forget her mad infatuation at which she tells him it is not her fault her face shows pity. She tells him his anguish is nothing compared with the Dutchman's fate. Erik remembers a dream in which her father brought home a stranger. Senta embraced him and then disappeared with him on the sea. He realizes that his dream is about to become reality and rushes from the room.

Senta is startled by the sudden appearance at the door of her father and the Dutchman. She recognizes the Dutchman and looks at him spellbound. Daland chides her for not embracing him, and she does so. Daland then introduces the Dutchman to her and asks if she will be kind to the stranger. Neither are paying him any attention so he leaves them alone. The Dutchman comments quietly, as if in a trance, that he has seen her before in his dreams (*Wie aus der Ferne*). He talks of the warmth he feels wondering if it is love or the yearning for redemption. Senta feels compassion for him and hopes his salvation will come true through her. The Dutchman asks if she agrees with her father's decision and if he can depend on her (*Wirst du des Vaters*). She responds that regardless of his past she will obey her father. He comments on her quick answer and asks if she has pity for his suffering. To herself, Senta wonders if she can console him. The Dutchman overhears her and his ecstasy soars as he begins to believe his redemption is at hand. He warns her of the sacrifices she will have to make at which she tells him she knows about the sacred duty of a woman. This soothes the Dutchman. Daland returns to see how things are progressing and asks Senta if she consents to marriage with the Dutchman. Senta agrees as the three join in a joyful trio filled with hope and love.

### **Act III**

Setting: A cove with a rocky beach overlooking the Norwegian and Dutch Ships. It is evening. The Norwegian Sailors are celebrating Daland's return (*Steuermann, laß die wacht!*). The crowd has grown curious about the Dutch ships eery appearance and unearthly silence. They begin to call for the Dutch crew to join them in the celebration. Girls from the village offer wine and food to

the Dutchman's crew. Several attempts are made to hail them. All their calls go unanswered and the crowd thinks them dead. The Norwegian sailors claim the wine and food as their own and they return to drinking and revelry. A blue flame suddenly flares up on the Dutch ship. The sea around the ship becomes violent and the wind whistles through its rigging. The crew is suddenly illuminated in the flickering flame. In an evil chorus they declare that Satan has blessed their ship (Johohoe!). They call upon their captain to return as he will never find a woman to redeem his soul. The chorus grows in volume until the Norwegian crew retreats below deck making the sign of the cross as they leave. The ghostly crew mocks them and silence once more returns to their ship and the surrounding area.

Senta rushes from the house pursued by Erik. He says that he cannot comprehend what he has seen or heard. He has been told of her promise to marry the Dutchman. He goes on to ask how she could marry someone she barely knows. She admits that a noble duty has decreed her destiny. He reminds her of the countless risks he took to get her flowers and of her protection he was sworn to provide. He reminds her of her declaration of love for him.

The Dutchman has been quietly observing the two and rushes forward declaring, "Lost! My redemption is lost forever!" He bids farewell to Senta and begins to leave. Senta holds him back as the Dutchman whistles and shouts for his crew to get underway. Senta tells him she will fulfill her promise to marry him. Erik, unbelieving her words, tries to drag her away. The Dutchman tells her that since she has not married him yet, her vow means nothing. Senta tells him she knows who he is and insists that through her he will find salvation. The villagers arrive, summoned by Erik's cries for help. The Dutchman turns on Senta and tells her that she has no idea who or what she is getting involved with. "I am the terror of all devout men: The Flying Dutchman I am called!" He rushes aboard his ship and instantly it puts out to sea. Senta tries to follow but is held back by Daland and Erik. She struggles and tears herself away from them and runs to a cliff overhanging the sea. She calls after the Dutchman, "Here I am, true to you even until death!" She leaps into the sea and the Dutchman's ship sinks with all of her crew still on the ship. The sun begins to ascend and in its glow, the Dutchman and Senta can be seen, embracing, ascending from the ocean to the heavens.