

LA VIE PARISIENNE

Music by Jacques Offenbach

Libretto by Henri Meilhac & Ludovic Halévy

First Performance: Palais Royal, Paris October 21, 1866

The story relies heavily on impersonation and concealed identities, with overtones of sociological revolution under the picture of glittering Paris life. Two young men, Bobinet and Raoul de Gardefeu, are rivals for the favors of the demimondaine Metella, but she spurns them for another man. Gardefeu bribes his former valet, Joseph, and takes his place as a tourist courier, conveying the wealthy Swedish Baron and Baroness Gondremarck to his own house, pretending it is the Grand Hotel. To maintain the masquerade, Gardefeu invites to a great supper his shoemaker, Frick, and a glove maker, Gabrielle, who brings along a crowd of their fellows, rather rude but enormously zestful. Metella is also present at the Baron's request. Bobinet takes over the following night with a party in the house of his absent aunt, when all the servants masquerade as nobility, to the enchantment of the Baron. The party ends in a riotous champagne supper and dance. The next night, a rich Brazilian, Pompa de Matadores, is host at Alfred's restaurant. Baron Gondremarck arrives for a rendezvous with Metella, but she tells him she is returning to Gardefeu and offers as a substitute a heavily veiled lady - the Baroness, of course. The Baron has discovered Gardefeu's deception and challenges him to a duel, but is pacified by recalling the fun the young men had arranged for him. Everybody is reconciled, everybody is happy.