

Conductor Richard Bonyngé began his studies at the New South Wales Conservatorium in Sydney as a piano student of Lindley Evans, a former accompanist of renowned Australian soprano Nellie Melba. At 14, Bonyngé performed the Grieg Piano Concerto in A minor, an impressive beginning to an even more magical career. He later continued his studies at the Royal College of Music in London with pianist Herbert Fryer. This institution frowned upon his desire to add conducting to his course load as, effectively, a second major area of study. Consequently, Bonyngé forfeited his scholarship and continued his education privately. Also, having developed a serious interest in vocal technique, Bonyngé began serving as accompanist to soprano Joan Sutherland. This relationship led to the couple's marriage in 1954, perhaps the most remarkable such professional union to date. It was at this point that the young musician transferred his attention to research of the bel canto operatic repertoire.

His debut on the podium in 1962 was sudden: the conductor of the Saint Cecilia Orchestra in Rome canceled due to illness and his replacement was struck by an automobile, leaving only Bonyngé to take the podium. He began, still without formal training, to conduct Sutherland's performances, beginning with Gounod's *Faust* in Vancouver and Bellini's *La Sonnambula* in San Francisco, both in 1963. After his Covent Garden debut in 1964 with a performance of Bellini's *I Puritani*, Bonyngé and his wife returned to Australia the next year. There he assumed the position of music director of the Sutherland-Williamson International Grand Opera Company.

In 1966, Bonyngé had his Metropolitan Opera debut with Sutherland performing the title role in Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*. As his reputation and career blossomed, the conductor enjoyed continued success when he was named artistic director of the Vancouver Opera, a position he held from 1974-1978. Concurrently, Bonyngé acted as music director of the Australian Opera from 1975-1986. In 1977, he was awarded the Commander of the British Empire. In 1983 he was given the same honor in his native Australia, and in 1989 the French government gave him the rank of *Commandeur de l'Ordre National de Mérite*.

Bonyngé championed a revival of the vocal ornamentation that had been customary during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This period was dear to Bonyngé, who has carefully studied the operas of Bellini as well as French opera of the period, and has composed cadenzas used by many singers (including Sutherland). One of the world's premiere opera conductors, Bonyngé has directed the masterpieces of the genre at the leading opera houses worldwide. His list of recorded operas is no less impressive and includes many works (including a number of nineteenth century ballet scores) previously not familiar to opera connoisseurs, such as those by Delibes, Graun, and Massenet. Most of these recordings feature Sutherland.

Ballet Music by Drigo, Minkus, Auber & Helsted

Richard Bonyngé London Symphony Orchestra



Riccardo Eugenio Drigo (30 June 1846 – 1 October 1930) was an Italian composer of ballet music and Italian opera, a theatrical conductor, and a pianist.

Drigo is most noted for his long career as kapellmeister and Director of Music of the Imperial Ballet of St. Petersburg, Russia, for which he composed music for the original works and revivals of the choreographers Marius Petipa and Lev Ivanov. Drigo also served as Chef d'orchestre for Italian opera performances of the orchestra of the Imperial Mariinsky Theatre. During his career in St. Petersburg, Drigo conducted the premieres and regular performances of nearly every ballet and Italian opera performed on the Tsarist stage.

Drigo is equally noted for his original full-length compositions for the ballet as well as his large catalog of supplemental music written ad hoc for insertion into already-existing works. Drigo is also noted for his adaptations of already-existing scores, such as his 1895 edition of Tchaikovsky's score for Swan Lake. Many pieces set to the music of Drigo are still performed today, and are considered cornerstones of the classical ballet repertory.

Ludwig Minkus , also known as Léon Fyodorovich Minkus (23 March 1826 – 7 December 1917), was a Jewish-Austrian composer of ballet music, a violin virtuoso and teacher.

Minkus is noted for the music he composed while serving as the official Composer of Ballet Music to the St. Petersburg Imperial Theatres in Russia. During his long career, he wrote for the original works and numerous revivals staged by the renowned Ballet Masters Arthur Saint-Léon and Marius Petipa. Among the composer's most celebrated compositions was his score for *La source* (1866; composed jointly with Léo Delibes), *Don Quixote* (1869); and *La Bayadère* (1877). Minkus also wrote supplemental material for insertion into already existing ballets. Among these pieces is the *Grand Pas classique* added to the second act of the ballet *Paquita* by Marius Petipa when he mounted a revival of the ballet for Vazem's benefit performance in 1881. For this revival Minkus also wrote the *Mazurka des enfants* (Children's Mazurka) and an expanded edition of the ballet's *Pas de trois*, which would go on to become known as the *Minkus pas de trois*.

Today, Minkus's music is some of the most performed in all of ballet, and is a most integral part of the traditional classical ballet repertory.

A dominant figure in nineteenth century French opera, Auber was born to a royal huntsman in the Normandy region. Auber demonstrated facility at the keyboard as a child, and by 1799 he had produced a string quartet that demonstrated his awareness of emerging Romantic styles.

Auber's first one-act stage work, *Julie*, reached the stage in an amateur performance in 1805; in 1811, Italian composer Luigi Cherubini saw a revised version and agreed to take Auber under his wing. A string of failures led Auber to abandon composition around 1813, but in 1819, Auber's father died bankrupt, and Auber turned back to composition as means of self-preservation. The following year, Auber enjoyed his first hit, *Le bergère châtelaine*.

For the next four decades, several of Auber's operas held the stage in Paris and elsewhere. Even early phonograph records testify to his tremendous popularity; witness Ellen Beach Yaw's recording of "C'est l'histoire amoureuse" (*Manon Lescaut*), made for the Gramophone & Typewriter company in London in 1898. By 1910, however, Auber's work was dropping from even the French repertory, with only *Fra Diavolo* keeping a tenuous hold. Changing times and tastes led to the neglect of Auber's music, with the exception of some of his overtures, in particular that for *Les Diamants de la couronne* (*The Crown Jewels*). Rossini accurately evaluated Auber's compositions as "little music, but by a great musician" Auber was the recipient of praise from kings, emperors, and eminent men of learning, and five biographies of him appeared during his own lifetime.

The Flower Festival in Genzano is a one-act ballet by Danish choreographer and ballet master August Bournonville (1805-1879). Bournonville created the work for Denmark's Royal Ballet in 1858 specifically on December 19, 1858, at the Royal Theater of Denmark, on the basis of general enthusiasm among the Danes for Italy. The libretto is adapted from a tale found in *Impressions de voyage* by Alexandre Dumas and tells the story of a pair of young lovers, Rosa and Paolo, who alludes to the festival that is still celebrated in Genzano, Italy, during the month of June. The music is by Edvard Helsted and Holger Simon Paulli. Bournonville was a dancer, choreographer, ballet teacher and director; son of the dancer and French ballet master Antoine Bournonville, who had been a disciple of the great Noverre. Auguste was born in Copenhagen in 1805, studied with his father and completed his training in France – with the last virtuoso of the French classical style, Vestris – before becoming a star of the Paris opera. But Bournonville's personal contribution to the development of romantic ballet in the course of his long reign as head of the Royal Danish Ballet far outweighed French influence. Bournonville created a repertoire of more than 50 ballets, a school and its own style. The characteristic of his repertoires is that he was able to maintain real characters, that the dancers are as they are (they did not exaggerate the gestures), and looking for exotic places for his works.

Ballet Music by Drigo, Minkus, Auber & Helsted

Richard Bonyngre London Symphony Orchestra

- 1 Minkus: Paquita - Pas De Deux 12:23
 - 2 Drigo: Esmeralda - Pas De Deux 10:11
 - 3 Auber: Pas Classique 8:17
 - 4 Helsted: Flower Festival At Genzano - Pas De Deux 9:08
 - 5 Drigo: Le Corsaire - Pas De Deux 8:08
- Total Time: 48:07

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