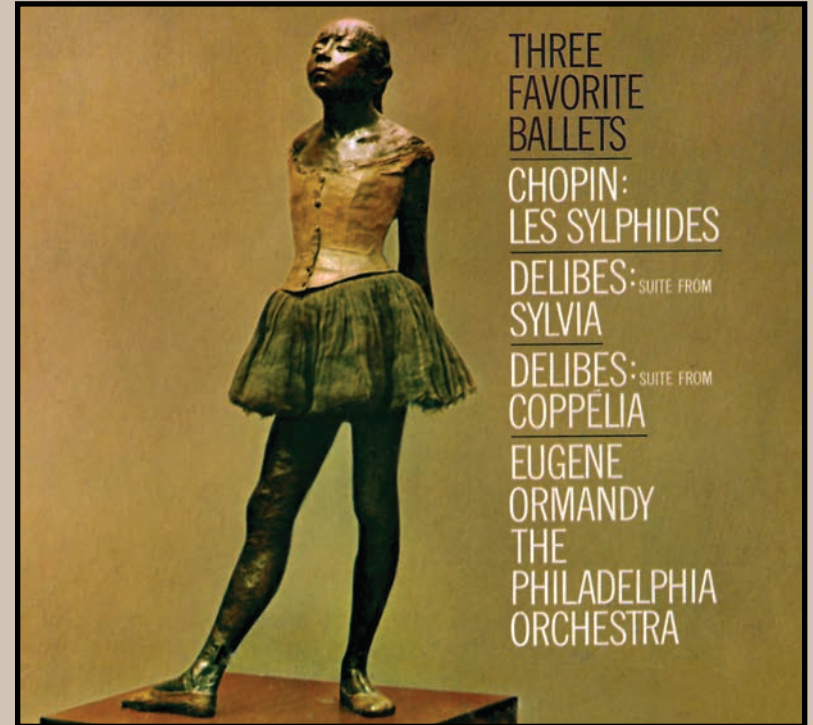


success, and paved the way for the future developments of the classical ballet of the nineteenth century. Coppélia had been in rehearsal since 1868, and had seen many setbacks. It took Delibes some time to compose the music, and in the meantime, the choreographer was obliged to look for a new prima donna, due to the illness of his lead dancer. Swanilda at the premiere was performed by a prodigy by the name of Giuseppina Bozzacchi. Franz was performed "en travestie" by another female star, Eugenie Fiocre, and Coppélia was played by a real, mechanical doll. Because the male lead was played by a woman dancer, there wasn't a classical pas de deux written for the lovers. Instead, the ballet closes with a divertissement called "Fete del la Cloche," which features the ringing of the village bell. It is filled with dances and festivities meant to close the Opera on a high note.

The music for Coppélia ranks with that of the ballets by Tchaikovsky. It is colorful, sensitive, full of nuance and spirit. Its lyricism inspires motion, and it advanced the technique of the leitmotif in theatrical music. Each of the characters is identified by its own leitmotif, and leitmotifs also set the mood and atmosphere of each number. Color and timbre are Delibes' forte. He uses both to exquisite effect, communicating emotional content with his diverse palette. He was well acquainted with Slavic music and eastern European dance forms. For the first time, the czardas, a Hungarian dance, is included among the dance numbers. There are also mazurkas and Slavic themes throughout the ballet. The ethnic and national color adds character to the work, and follows Romantic ballet traditions. Romanticism was on the wane when Delibes composed the score for Coppélia, and his evocative and impressionistic score prefigures future developments of the nineteenth century.

The librettist for Coppélia was Charles Nutter. He took his story from E.T.A. Hoffmann's Der Sandmann, but he was also influenced by the comedy La Fille mal Gardee, which has characters derived from the commedia dell'arte. The story of Coppélia, though taken from Hoffmann's gothic tale, is a light-hearted love story, which features a mechanical doll as the heroine's arch rival and a comical villain. Although Dr. Coppélius is still a somewhat sinister figure, he is also the springboard for comic events. Coppélia was the first ballet to feature a mechanical doll coming to life as part of the plot, and it formed a precedent for future ballet plots of the century.



This ballet was fashioned from orchestrated versions of a number of the Chopin's most popular piano works. Mikhail Fokine was the driving force behind the project, which evolved from a single number, *Moonlight Vision*, in 1907, growing to a larger work called *Danse sur la musique de Chopin* the following year, and finally expanding in 1909 to *Chopiniana*, the completed ballet's initial title. Three months after its St. Petersburg premiere it was retitled *Les Sylphides* and introduced to Parisian audiences by Diaghilev's *Ballets Russes*. It was one of the first plotless ballets ever presented in Europe and was a great success. Fokine used a number of celebrated orchestrators in fashioning *Les Sylphides*, including Taneyev, Lyadov, Glazunov, Tcherepnin and Stravinsky. Later versions of the work featured arrangements by Roy Douglas, and the team of Leroy Anderson and Peter Bodge.

Les Sylphides is a short ballet, consisting of just eight dance movements, set in a moonlit park where the sylphides (winged spirits) dance with a poet. The first section is entitled "Prelude," an arrangement of Chopin's lovely Op. 28, No. 7 Prelude. The music sounds more ethereal and even slower in its orchestral guise than in Chopin's piano version. The ensuing Nocturne is from Chopin's Op. 32, No. 2, and it maintains the delicate, airy mood from the preceding prelude. The Op. 70, No. 1 Waltz is used for the next section. Chopin's music here turns a bit saccharine, clearly resisting transformation from its more natural keyboard version. Two mazurkas follow, bringing festive cheer in the first (Op. 33, No. 2) and a playful intimate mood in the second (Op. 67, No. 3). The Prelude returns to introduce the next section, which is comprised mainly of Chopin's Op. 69, No. 1, Waltz, one of his more intimate waltz creations. While it adapts well to the orchestral setting, its mood is lightened and its expressive soul somewhat attenuated.

The Prelude makes another reappearance at the beginning of the penultimate section, which uses the elegant Op. 64, No. 2, Waltz. Here, the orchestral rendition imparts color and is nearly as effectively as the keyboard version. The last movement, "Grand Waltz" (the only number titled slightly differently than its chief musical source), is drawn on Chopin's Op. 18 *Grande valse brillante*. This is a lively and colorful closing number, the orchestra catching much of the merriment and charm of the Chopin original.

No standard suite from Sylvia, with its richly scored and charming melodies, has quite fallen into place and today's recordings generally draw from complete traversals of the ballet. Most presentations, however, include the Prelude, the fanfare "Les Chasseresses," the "Valse lente," the pizzicato section of the *Divertissement*, and the "Cortège de Bacchus." Two other movements usually find their way into the suite: the "Danse des Ethiopiens" and the Act III March. The Prelude begins as a bombastic processional, but it pulls up almost in mid-phrase and becomes a nocturnal forest fantasy, with quiet, distant horn calls providing the basis of lyrical material for winds and strings. Next comes a playful, rustic episode featuring flutes and other woodwinds, with a tender sub-interlude inserted in the middle of the section. The Prelude, really just a potpourri of good tunes, concludes with a restatement of the opening processional. "Les Chasseresses," billed as a fanfare, opens with heroic horn calls over a throbbing string figure; despite the ballet's forest setting, this music could serve equally well in a nautical adventure. A second section offers a skipping little tune, with short string phrases answered by the winds. A more vigorous passage brings back the fanfare material. The "Valse lente" makes a charming 3/4 dance out of less-than-promising materials: a little noodling figure that rises and hesitates, repeating again and again over a pizzicato accompaniment. The central section is louder and more sweeping, but the entire piece relies more heavily on the strings than any other section of the orchestra. The "Danse (or Pas) des Ethiopiens" ostensibly concerns the denizens of Africa, but the pow-wow beat and chirpy descending tune more strongly evoke Native Americans, at least as they were interpreted by outsiders. The ballet's greatest hit is the segment of the Act III *Divertissement* known simply as "Pizzicati." It's a quiet, tip-toeing little dance for pizzicato strings, with a brief interlude for woodwinds in the middle. The festive March that opens Act III has an irresistible toy-soldier character. This leads directly into the "Cortège de Bacchus," which begins with a flowing episode reminiscent of Meyerbeer, then a lighthearted, delicate return of the bombastic melody from the Prelude. More Meyerbeer material -- this could also work in the "Triumphal March" from Verdi's *Aida* -- leads into a section that dallies with fragments of the March and ends with a grand restatement of the Prelude's opening theme.

The premiere of the ballet *Coppélia*, on May 25, 1870, at the Paris Opera, was an overwhelming

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