

Operas for April 2024

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| April 3 | Gluck | | Orfeo ed Eurydice |
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Stories of the operas

Orfeo ed Euridice: (English: Orpheus and Eurydice) is an opera composed by Christoph Willibald Gluck, based on the myth of Orpheus and set to a libretto by Ranieri de' Calzabigi. It belongs to the genre of the *azione teatrale*, meaning an opera on a mythological subject with choruses and dancing. The piece was first performed at the Burgtheater in Vienna on 5 October 1762, in the presence of Empress Maria Theresa. Orfeo ed Euridice is the first of Gluck's "reform" operas, in which he attempted to replace the abstruse plots and overly complex music of opera seria with a "noble simplicity" in both the music and the drama.

The opera is the most popular of Gluck's works, and was one of the most influential on subsequent German operas. Variations on its plot—the underground rescue mission in which the hero must control, or conceal, his emotions—can be found in Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, Beethoven's *Fidelio*, and Wagner's *Das Rheingold*.

Though originally set to an Italian libretto, Orfeo ed Euridice owes much to the genre of French opera, particularly in its use of accompanied recitative and a general absence of vocal virtuosity. Indeed, twelve years after the 1762 premiere, Gluck re-adapted the opera to suit the tastes of a Parisian audience at the Académie Royale de Musique with a libretto by Pierre-Louis Moline. This reworking was given the title *Orphée et Eurydice*, and several alterations were made in vocal casting and orchestration to suit French tastes.

Background

Francesco Algarotti's *Essay on the Opera* (1755) was a major influence in the development of Gluck's reformist ideology. Algarotti proposed a heavily simplified model of opera seria, with the drama pre-eminent, instead of the music or ballet or staging. The drama itself should "delight the eyes and ears, to rouse up and to affect the hearts of an audience, without the risk of sinning against reason or common sense". Algarotti's ideas influenced both Gluck and his librettist, Calzabigi. Calzabigi was himself a prominent advocate of reform, and he stated, "If Mr Gluck was the creator of dramatic music, he did not create it from nothing. I provided him with the material or the chaos, if you like. We therefore share the honour of that creation."

Other influences included the composer Niccolò Jommelli and his maître de ballet at Stuttgart, Jean-Georges Noverre. Noverre's *Lettres sur la danse* (1760) called for dramatic effect over acrobatic ostentation; Noverre was himself influenced by the operas of Rameau and the acting style of David Garrick. The considerable quantity of ballet in Orfeo ed Euridice is thought to be due to his influence. Jommelli himself was noted for his blending of all aspects of the production: ballet, staging, and audience.

Cast

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| Orfeo | Counter-tenor | Derek Lee Ragin |
| Euridice | Soprano | Sylvia McNair |
| Amore | Soprano | Cyndia Sieden |

With the Monteverdi Choir & the English Baroque Soloists conducted by John Eliot Gardiner

Act 1

A chorus of nymphs and shepherds join Orfeo around the tomb of his wife Euridice in a solemn chorus of mourning; Orfeo is only able to utter Euridice's name (Chorus and Orfeo: "Ah, se intorno") Orfeo sends the others away and sings of his grief in the aria "Chiamo il mio ben" the three verses of which are preceded by expressive recitatives. This technique was extremely radical at the time and indeed proved overly so for those who came after Gluck: Mozart chose to retain the unity of the aria. Amore (Cupid) appears, telling Orfeo that he may go to the Underworld and return with his wife on the condition that he not look at her until they are back on earth As encouragement, Amore informs Orfeo that his present suffering shall be short-lived with the aria "Gli sguardi trattieni". Orfeo resolves to take on the quest.

Act 2

In a rocky landscape, the Furies refuse to admit Orfeo to the Underworld, and sing of Cerberus, its canine guardian ("Chi mai dell'Erebo"). When Orfeo, accompanied by his lyre (represented in the opera by a harp), begs for pity in the aria "Deh placatevi con me", he is at first interrupted by cries of "No!" from the Furies, but they are eventually softened by the sweetness of his singing in the arias "Mille pene" and "Men tiranne" and let him in ("Ah, quale incognito affetto").

The second scene opens in Elysium. The brief ballet of 1762 became the four-movement "Dance of the Blessed Spirits" (with a prominent part for solo flute) in 1774. Orfeo arrives and marvels at the purity of the air in an arioso ("Che puro ciel"). But he finds no solace in the beauty of the surroundings, for Euridice is not yet with him. He implores the spirits to bring her to him, which they do (Chorus: "Torna, o bella").

Act 3

On the way out of Hades, Euridice is delighted to be returning to earth, but Orfeo, remembering the condition related by Amore in act 1, lets go of her hand and refusing to look at her, does not explain anything to her. She does not understand his action and reproaches him, but he must suffer in silence (Duet: "Vieni, appaga il tuo consorte"). Euridice takes this to be a sign that he no longer loves her, and refuses to continue, concluding that death would be preferable. She sings of her grief at Orfeo's supposed infidelity in the aria "Che fiero momento". Unable to take any more, Orfeo turns and looks at Euridice; again, she dies. Orfeo sings of his grief in the famous aria "Che farò senza Euridice?" ("What shall I do without Euridice?"). Orfeo decides he will kill himself to join Euridice in Hades, but Amore returns to stop him. In reward for Orfeo's continued love, Amore returns Euridice to life, and she and Orfeo are reunited. After a four-movement ballet, all sing in praise of Amore ("Trionfi Amore").

L'Enfant et les Sortilèges [The child & the spells]

During World War I, the Opéra de Paris director Jacques Rouché asked Colette, whom he met at one of Marguerite de Saint-Marceaux's salons, to provide the text for a fairy ballet. Colette originally wrote the story under the title *Divertissements pour ma fille*. After Colette chose Ravel to set the text to music, a copy was sent to him in 1916 while he was still serving in the war; however, the mailed script was lost. In 1917, Ravel finally received a copy and agreed to compose the score, humorously replying to Colette, "I would like to compose this, but I have no daughter." It was eventually agreed that the composition would be more of an operetta, but retain the ballet dance elements. Colette accordingly revised the text and developed a libretto.

Ravel stopped composition of the work in the spring of 1920, suffering from physical exhaustion and poor health. In the next few years he was compelled to complete the work by Raoul Gunsbourg, director of the Monte Carlo Opera, who had insisted Ravel write a sequel to *L'Heure espagnole*. By this time Ravel had become newly inspired by the stage presentations of American musicals and revues by composers such as George Gershwin. Ravel's work on the composition began to incorporate the musical style of these productions.

Roles

The score specifies that fire / the princess / nightingale must be sung by the same singer, and the little old man and frog by the same singer. It is also specified that the following groups or pairs of roles can be sung by the same singer: mother / china cup / dragonfly; the bergère / owl; the female cat / the squirrel; the male cat / grandfather clock; the armchair / tree.

Part one

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| L'enfant, the child | mezzo-soprano | Francoise Ogeas |
| Maman, the mother represented by a huge skirt | contralto | Jeanine Collard |
| Le fauteuil | bass Heinz | Rehfuss |
| La bergère Louis XV | soprano | Colette Herzog |
| L'horloge comtoise, a clock broken by the child | baritone | Camille Maurane |
| La théière, Wedgwood teapot | tenor | Michel Senechal |
| La tasse chinoise, a broken china cup | mezzo-contralto | Jeanine Collard |
| Le feu, the fire in the fireplace | coloratura soprano | Sylvaine Gilma |
| La princesse, the princess torn out of a storybook | coloratura soprano | Sylvaine Gilma |
| Une pastourelle shepherdess | soprano | Colette Herzog |
| Un pâtre shepherd | contralto | Jane Berbie |
| Le petit vieillard, the little old man (representing the torn arithmetic book) | tenor | Michel Senechal |
| Le chat tomcat | baritone | Camille Maurane |
| La chatte female cat | mezzo-soprano | Jane Berbie |

Part two

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| La chouette owl | soprano | Colette Herzog |
| L'arbre, | tree bass | Heinz Rehfuss |
| La libellule, a dragonfly | mezzo-soprano | Jeanine Collard |
| Le rossignol, a nightingale | coloratura soprano | Sylvaine Gilma |
| La chauve-souris, widower bat | soprano | Colette Herzog |
| L'écureuil, a squirrel | mezzo-soprano | Jane Berbie |

La rainette, the tree frog tenor

Michel Senechal

Orchestre National de la RTF Conductor Lorin Maazel

Synopsis

Place: An old-fashioned Normandy country home

Part 1

This is the story of a rude child who is reprimanded by the objects in his room, which he has been destroying. After being scolded by his mother in the beginning of the opera, the child throws a tantrum, destroying the room around him and harming the animals nearby. He is then surprised to find that the unhappy objects in his room come to life. The furniture and decorations begin to talk; even his homework takes shape as it becomes an old man and a chorus of numbers. They all sing out the pain and misery that the child inflicts on them and their wishes to punish him for his misdeeds.

Part 2

The bedroom becomes a garden filled with singing animals and plants which have been tortured by the child. The child attempts to make friends with the animals and plants, but they shun him because of the injuries he did to them earlier, before they could talk. They leave him aside, and in his loneliness, he eventually cries out "Maman". At this, the animals turn on him and attack him in an act of vengeance, but they wind up jostling among each other as the child is tossed aside. At the culmination, a squirrel is hurt, which causes the other animals to stop fighting. The child bandages the squirrel's wound and collapses exhausted. Seeing this act of kindness, the animals have a change of heart toward the child, and decide to try to help him home. They mimic the cry of "Maman", carry the child back to his house, and sing in praise of the child. The opera ends with the child singing "Maman", as he greets his mother, in the very last bar of the score.

L'heure Espagnole Opera by Maurice Ravel

Librettist Franc-Nohain; Based on Franc-Nohain's play

Premiere 19 May 1911 Opéra-Comique, Paris

L'heure espagnole [The Spanish Hour] is a French one-act opera from 1911, described as a comédie musicale, with music by Maurice Ravel to a French libretto by Franc-Nohain, based on Franc-Nohain's 1904 play ('comédie-bouffe') of the same name. The opera, set in Spain in the 18th century, is about a clockmaker whose unfaithful wife attempts to make love to several different men while he is away, leading to them hiding in, and eventually getting stuck in, her husband's clocks. The title can be translated literally as "The Spanish Hour", but the word "heure" also means "time" – "Spanish Time", with the connotation "How They Keep Time in Spain".

The original play had first been performed at the Théâtre de l'Odéon on 28 October 1904. Ravel began working on the music as early as 1907, and the opera was first performed at the Opéra-Comique on 19 May 1911.

Performance history

Ravel was closely involved in every aspect of the production as it was prepared for its premiere by the Opéra-Comique at the Salle Favart in Paris. The opera was first performed by the Opéra-Comique on 19 May 1911, in a double-bill with *Thérèse* by Jules Massenet; after the initial nine performances it was not revived. The Paris Opéra presented it on 5 December

1921 with Fanny Helder as Concepción, and it enjoyed more success. The opera returned to the Opéra-Comique in 1945 where it continued in the repertoire. Outside France, *L'heure espagnole* was first seen at Covent Garden in 1919, Chicago and New York in 1920, Brussels in 1921, followed by Basel and Rotterdam (1923), Prague (1924), Hamburg, Stockholm (1925), reaching Buenos Aires in 1932 and Cairo in 1934. The opera was performed for the first time in Canada at the 1961 Montreal Festivals.

Musical background

In relation to Ravel's vocal writing in the opera, Roland-Manuel wrote "The language of the music is linked up as naturally as possible with the music of the language". In an interview published two days before the premiere, Ravel explained his approach to his new opera. "I have written an opéra-bouffe. Apart from [Gonzalve] who sings sérénades and cavatines with deliberately exaggerated melodies, the other rôles will give, I think, the impression of being spoken." Ravel also cited Mussorgsky's *The Marriage* for the effect he was aiming to achieve in the word setting, and underlined the Spanish elements of the score in his use of *jotas*, *habaneras* and *malagueñas*. Kobbé commented that from "the delightful clock noises of the opening to the Habanera quintet of the end, *L'Heure Espagnole* is full of charming music", while Grove notes that the opera is one of a group of Spanish influenced works that span Ravel's career and that in it he employed "a virtuoso use of the modern orchestra".

Roles

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| Torquemada, a clockmaker | tenor | Jean Giraudeau |
| Concepción, Torquemada's wife | mezzo-soprano | Jane Berbie |
| Gonzalve, a student poet | tenor | Michel Senechal |
| Ramiro, a muleteer | baritone | Gabriel Bacquier |
| Don Iñigo Gomez, a banker | bass | Jose Van Dam |
| Orchestre National de la RTF. | Conductor | Lorin Maazel |

Synopsis

Time: 18th century Place: The workshop of the clockmaker Torquemada in Toledo, Spain. The opera takes place in 21 scenes, with an introduction.

Torquemada is at work in his shop when the muleteer Ramiro stops by to have his watch fixed, so that he can fulfill his duties at collecting the town's post. It is Thursday, the day that Torquemada goes out to tend the municipal clocks, so Ramiro must wait. Torquemada's wife, Concepción, enters to complain that her husband hasn't yet moved a clock into her bedroom. After Torquemada has left, she takes advantage of his absence to plan assignations with gentleman friends. However, the presence of Ramiro is initially a hindrance. So she asks him to move a grandfather clock to her bedroom, which he agrees to do.

Meanwhile, she waits for Gonzalve, a poet. He arrives, and is inspired to poetry, but not to lovemaking, where Concepción would prefer the latter. When Ramiro is about to return, she sends him back saying that she chose the wrong clock. She then has the idea of having Gonzalve hide in one clock so that Ramiro can carry him upstairs. After Gonzalve is concealed, Don Iñigo, a banker and another of Concepción's gentleman friends, arrives. When Ramiro returns, she persuades him to carry up the clock with Gonzalve concealed in it, and she accompanies him.

On his own, Don Iñigo conceals himself in another clock. Ramiro enters, asked to watch the shop, and musing on how little he understands of women. Concepción then summons him

back upstairs, saying that the clock's hands are running backwards. She and Don Iñigo try to communicate, but Ramiro arrives back with the other clock. Don Iñigo has hidden himself again, and Ramiro now carries up the clock with Don Iñigo upstairs.

With Gonzalve now downstairs, Concepción tries to turn him away from poetry towards her, but Gonzalve is too absorbed to follow her lead. Ramiro returns, and Gonzalve must conceal himself again. He offers to take the second clock up again. Impressed by how easily Ramiro carries the clocks (and their load) upstairs, Concepción begins to be physically attracted to him.

With Gonzalve and Don Iñigo now each stuck in clocks, Torquemada returns from his municipal duties. Both Gonzalve and Don Inigo eventually escape their respective clock enclosures, the latter with more difficulty. To save face, they each have to purchase a clock. Concepción is now left without a clock, but she muses that she can wait for the muleteer to appear regularly with his watch repaired. The opera ends with a quintet finale, as the singers step out of character to intone the moral of the tale, paraphrasing Boccaccio:

**"Entre tous les amants, seul amant efficace,
Il arrive un moment, dans les déduits d'amour,
Où le muletier a son tour!"**

**"Among all lovers, only the efficient succeed,
The moment arrives, in the pursuit of love
When the muleteer has his turn!"**

The Opricnik: [The Guardsman] P I Tchaikovsky

Premiered in 1874 at the Mariinsky theatre in Saint Petersburg, this opera was Tchaikovsky's first public triumph. It was then taken up by Kiev, Odessa and Moscow but Tchaikovsky increasingly came to dislike it and tried to ward off revivals by saying that he intended to revise it although he had no intention of doing so. Some of the music appeared earlier in his first unsuccessful opera, the *Voyevoda*.

Act 1: Prince Zemchuznyj's garden, at nightfall.

Zemchuznyj, the boyard, receives the visit of Molchan Mit'kov, who has come to ask for the hand of his beautiful daughter Natal'ja. The prince accepts, in spite of the suitor's age, but warns him: the girl won't have any dowry.

Enter Natal'ja, accompanied by a procession of handmaids and by Zachar'evna, the nurse. The young princess is listless and bored of the monotonous life she leads in the country, the high rooms of the noble residence assigned to the women; displeased with the song intoned by her friends, she suggests another, melancholy song, telling the story of a girl died of grief because she was forced to marry an old man. Then, at the nurses' reproaches, she asks her to tell them a love story. Playfully, the girls run off, scattering among the bushes,

Andrej Morozov, his friend Basmanov and a group of Oprichniks (Ivan the Terrible's praetorian guards) arrive. Andrej has come to see his beloved Natal'ja, who is secretly engaged to him, and Basmanov and the guards want to help him fulfil his dream. Left alone with Basmanov, the young man reveals to his friend that he thinks of joining the Oprichniks to obtain by the Czar, justice for the wrongs he suffered in the past. Zemchuznyj, in fact, killed his father and pillaged his family's properties, reducing them to poverty. Basmanov exhorts him not to waste any time and go to his mother in order to get her blessing for the enlistment. Before Andrej leaves, he gives him some money to help him out. Natal'ja, hidden behind the bushes, has overheard their dialogue; distressed, she invokes her beloved, while her nurse and handmaids try to entertain her with some dances.

Act 2: First tableau. A farmer's hut.

Princess Morozova, Andrej's mother, sadly recollects the wrongs she suffered from the wicked Zemchuznyj. But she is willing to accept her sad lot, bearing her suffering in silence and forgetting the proud life she led as the wife of the wealthy Prince Morozov, so long as God will protect her son, Enter Andrej, who exhorts her to forget the past and gives her a purse full of money, a sign that things have taken a turn for the best; it is a gift from Basmanov, the Czar's favourite. Morozova is horrified at the sight of the money and warns her son against getting close to Basmanov, for - she says - the terrible sovereign's steward is made of the same stuff as the Czar. Andrej reassures her and reveals that the money had been entrusted to the steward by his father when they were comrades-in-arms. The princess desperately tries to dissuade him again, but all she can do is beg him not to stain his father's honour and give him her blessing.

Second tableau. The Czar's quarters in the town of Aleksandrovskij.

Around a sumptuously laid table the Oprichniks are singing the Czar's praises when prince Vjaz'minskij comes to interrupt their revelry, lest they disturb the sovereign's rest. Basmanov announces that the Czar has accepted Andrej Morozov's request to enter the Praetorian corps. Vjaz'minskij is furious; he can't accept the son of his fierce enemy to become one of them. Basmanov tries to quench his anger by reminding him that a father's faults should not be on a son's head and that they cannot disobey a royal order; then he leaves to fetch Morozov, while Vjaz'minskij secretly hopes for revenge. In front of the Praetorians, Andrej must take the oath: he must swear to be loyal to the Czar, attend no other duty than the service of his sovereign and forget his blood-ties and his love. The young man proclaims that he is ready, but when Vjaz'minskij reminds him of the terrible punishment that would befall him in case of treachery; he hesitates at the thought of leaving his beloved and denying his mother and father. He has no choice, however: either he joins the Praetorians or he won't have any chance to redeem the wrongs his family suffered. To back out now, moreover, would mean death: urged by Basmanov, Andrej swears.

Act 3: A square in Moscow.

The people of Moscow give vent to their despair for having lost the Czar's loving guidance: the sovereign, in fact, has moved away from the city. Morozova, suffering from loneliness and fearing for her son's destiny, decides to go and pray in the nearby church; as she walks towards it, a group of boys insult her -while people chase them away, Natal'ja arrives at a run and throws herself into her arms. The girl has fled from her father's home, where she was kept like a captive awaiting the forced wedding, and is looking for her help and protection. The woman warns her: it is useless and dangerous to struggle against her powerful, wealthy and determined father. But Natal'ja is prepared to die: life without Andrej would be meaningless. Enter Zemchuznyj, accompanied by his retinue. The girl throws herself at her father's feet, begging for mercy, but at the mention of Andrej's name he reacts harshly and even Morozova's attempts to make him change his mind are all in vain. While Natal'ja is being seized by Zemchuznyj's servants, Basmanov and Andrej arrive with some Praetorians. Morozova immediately realises that her son has joined the Oprichniks. Aware that he is in danger, Basmanov wants to drag Andrej away, but he refuses to go and tries to explain to his mother that he has become a Praetorian for a noble purpose, to gain money and avenge his father. All in vain: Morozova curses her son and falls to the ground, crushed by grief.

Basmanov convinces Andrej that the only way he can regain his mother's blessing is to ask the Czar to release him from the oath. So they gallop away towards the royal palace, hoping for the Czar's mercy.

Act 4: The Czar's quarters in the town of Aleksandrovskij.

Natal'ja and Andrej's wedding banquet is under way. Morozov is happy because his request to be released from the oath has been granted and he was able to marry his Natal'ja, rescuing her from Zemchuznyj's clutches. But it grieves him to know that he must leave the Praetorians, his friends, for he would have wanted to serve his sovereign loyally; then he reaffirms his devotion to the Czar and proclaims that he is ready to defend him always and everywhere. Basmanov reminds him that till the end of the banquet, until midnight, he is still an Oprichnik, owing total obedience to the Czar. Andrej drinks light-heartedly to the Czar's health, but Natal'ja is troubled, she has an unpleasant presentiment and is impatiently awaiting the end of the party. Suddenly a very upset Basmanov arrives and warns Andrej that he is in great danger because of his senseless behaviour. The young man, however, does not seem conscious of the risks he is running. Enter Prince Vjaz'minskij, who announces that the Czar wants to see Andrej's beautiful bride. At first Morozov is proud of such a request, but when he learns that Natal'ja must go alone, he refuses to let her leave without him. The Oprichniks remind him that he must obey or he will infringe the oath that binds him till midnight, while Basmanov tries to convince him that this is nothing but an innocent prank. Vjaz'minskij secretly rejoices, feeling that his revenge is near. Natal'ja and Andrej stand firm in their decision: they prefer to face death than obey. While the girl falls unconscious and is dragged away by the Praetorians, Andrej is arrested and taken to the scaffold, where he is executed under the eyes of Morozova, forced by the wicked Vjaz'minskij to witness her son's death. The opera ends with the woman falling heart-broken to the ground, while the Oprichniks sing the Czar's praises.

La fanciulla del West (The Girl of the West) is an opera in three acts by Giacomo Puccini to an Italian libretto by Guelfo Civinini and Carlo Zangarini. It is based on the play *The Girl of the Golden West* by the American author David Belasco. *Fanciulla* followed *Madama Butterfly*, which was also based on a Belasco play. The opera has fewer of the show-stopping highlights that characterize Puccini's other works, but is admired for its impressive orchestration and for a score that is more melodically integrated than is typical of his previous work. *Fanciulla* displays influences from composers Claude Debussy and Richard Strauss, without being in any way imitative. Similarities between the libretto and the work of Richard Wagner have also been found, though some attribute this more to the original plot of the play, and have asserted that the opera remains quintessentially Italian.

The opera had a successful and highly publicised premiere at the Metropolitan Opera, New York City, in 1910. Nevertheless, while Puccini deemed it one of his greatest works, *La fanciulla del West* has become a less popular opera within the composer's repertoire, drawing a mixed public reception overall.

Cast

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| Minnie | soprano | Carol Neblett |
| Dick Johnson/Ramerrez | tenor | Placido Domingo |
| Jack Rance | baritone | Sherrill Milnes |
| Nick | tenor | Francis Egerton |
| Ashby Robert | bass | Robert Lloyd |
| Billy Jackrabbit | bass | Paul Hudson |
| Billy's Squaw | mezzo-soprano | Anne Wilkens |
| Jack Wallace | baritone | Gwynne Howell |
| Jose Casto | bass | Eric Garrett |
| Pony Express rider | tenor | Handel Owen |

With various other solo singers in the roles of miners and the Chorus & Orchestra of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden conducted by Zubin Mehta.

Synopsis

Time: 1849 to 1850. Place: A mining camp at the foot of the Cloudy Mountains, California.

Act 1: Inside the Polka Saloon

A group of Gold Rush miners enter the "Polka" saloon after a day working at the mine ("Hello! Hello! Alla 'Polka'"). After a song by traveling minstrel Jake Wallace ("Che faranno i vecchi miei"), one of the miners, Jim Larkens, is homesick and the miners collect enough money for his fare home ("Jim, perchè piangi?").

A group of miners playing cards discover that Sid is cheating and want to attack him. Sheriff Jack Rance quiets the fight and pins two cards to Sid's jacket, as a sign of a cheat.

A Wells Fargo agent, Ashby, enters and announces that he is chasing the bandit Ramerrez and his gang of Mexicans. Rance toasts Minnie, the woman who owns the saloon, as his future wife, which makes Sonora [a miner] jealous. The two men begin to fight. Rance draws his revolver but at that moment, a shot rings out and Minnie stands next to the bar with a rifle in her hands ("Hello, Minnie!"). She gives the miners a reading lesson from the Bible ("Dove eravamo?").

The Pony Express rider arrives ("La posta!") and delivers a telegram from Nina Micheltoarena, offering to reveal Ramerrez's hideout. The sheriff tells Minnie that he loves her, but Minnie puts him off as she is waiting for the right man ("Ti voglio bene, Minnie").

A stranger enters the saloon and asks for a whisky and water. He introduces himself as Dick Johnson from Sacramento, whom Minnie had met earlier. Johnson invites Minnie to dance with him and she accepts. Angrily, Rance watches them.

Ashby returns with the captured Ramerrez gang member, Castro. Upon seeing his leader, Johnson, in the saloon, Castro agrees to lead Rance, Ashby and the miners in a search for Ramerrez, and the group then follows him on a false trail and in what turns out to be a wild goose chase. But before Castro leaves, he whispers to Johnson that somebody will whistle and Johnson must reply to confirm that the place is clear. A whistle is heard, but Johnson fails to reply.

Minnie shows Johnson the keg of gold that she and the miners take turns to guard at night and Johnson reassures her that the gold will be safe there. Before he leaves the saloon, he

promises to visit her at her cabin. They confess their love for each other. Minnie begins to cry, and Johnson comforts her before he leaves.

Act 2: Minnie's dwelling, later that evening.

Wowkle, a Native American woman who is Minnie's servant, her lover Billy Jackrabbit and their baby are present as Minnie enters, wanting to get ready for Johnson's visit. Johnson enters Minnie's cabin and she tells him all about her life. It begins to snow. They kiss and Minnie asks him to stay till morning. He denies knowing Nina Micheltoarena. As Johnson hides, a posse enters looking for Ramerrez and reveal to Minnie that Johnson is the bandit Ramerrez himself. Angry, she orders Johnson to leave. After he leaves, Minnie hears a gunshot and she knows Johnson has been shot. Johnson staggers in and collapses, Minnie helps him by hiding him up in the loft. Rance enters Minnie's cabin looking for the bandit and is about to give up searching for Johnson when drops of blood fall on his hand. Rance forces Johnson to climb down. Minnie desperately makes Rance an offer: if she beats him at poker, he must let Johnson go free; if Rance wins, she will marry him. Hiding some cards in her stockings, Minnie cheats and wins. Rance honours the deal and Minnie throws herself on the unconscious Johnson on the floor.

Act 3: In the Great Californian Forest at dawn, sometime later.

Johnson is again on the run from Ashby and the miners. Nick and Rance are discussing Johnson and wonder what Minnie sees in him when Ashby arrives in triumph: Johnson has been captured. Rance and the miners all want Johnson to be hanged. Johnson accepts the sentence and only asks the miners not to tell Minnie about his capture and his fate ("Ch'ella mi creda"). Minnie arrives, armed with a pistol, just before the execution and throws herself in front of Johnson to protect him. While Rance tries to proceed, she convinces the miners that they owe her too much to kill the man she loves, and asks them to forgive him ("Ah! Ah! E Minnie!"). One by one, the miners yield to her plea ("E anche tu lo vorrai, Joe"). Rance is not happy but finally he too gives in. Sonora unties Johnson and sets him free. The miners bid Minnie farewell ("Le tue parole sono di Dio"). Minnie and Johnson leave California to start a new life together.