

A Kalmus Classic Edition

Friederich von
FLOTOW

MARTHA
(The Fair At Richmond)

An Opera in Four Acts
for Soli, Chorus and Orchestra
with German and English text

VOCAL SCORE

K 06170



MARTHA

Characters of the Drama

LADY HARRIET DURHAM, Maid-of-honor to Queen Anne	Soprano
NANCY, her friend	Mezzo-Soprano
SIR TRISTRAM MICKLEFORD, Lady Harriet's cousin .	Bass
LIONEL	Tenor
PLUNKETT, a wealthy farmer	Bass
THE SHERIFF OF RICHMOND	Bass
THREE SERVANTS OF LADY HARRIET	Tenor and Two Basses
THREE MAIDSERVANTS	Soprano and Mezzo-Soprano

Chorus of Ladies, Servants, Farmers, Hunters and Huntresses, Pages, &c.

THE SCENE IS LAID, AT FIRST, IN THE CASTLE OF LADY HARRIET, THEN IN RICHMOND AND ENVIRONS, DURING THE REIGN OF QUEEN ANNE

MARTHA

OR

THE FAIR AT RICHMOND

A SEMI-SERIOUS OPERA IN FOUR ACTS

Words by W. FRIEDRICH (F. W. RIESE)

Music by

FRIEDRICH FREIHERR VON FLOTOW

First Performed at the Court Opera, Vienna, on November 25th, 1847,
with the Following Cast:

LADY HARRIET,	Soprano,	ANNA ZERR
NANCY,	Contralto,	THERESE SCHWARZ
LIONEL,	Tenor,	JOSEPH ERL
PLUNKETT,	Bass,	CARL FORMES

Martha.

The history of Flotow's "Martha," the "ever popular," as it has come to be called in England, is full of incident, but does not appear ever to have been correctly set down in all its details. The hand-books disagree hopelessly as to titles, dates and performers. Who sang the rôle of *Lionel* at the first performance of the opera in Vienna? The lexicons say Herr Ander; the widow of the composer, who wrote his biography ten years after his death, says Erl. The latter was a popular singer at the Court Opera in 1847, at the zenith of his career and the height of his powers; the former was still a novice on the stage and ten years Erl's junior. I have, therefore, accepted the statement of the widow

of the composer, although she did not become his wife until twenty-one years after the original production of the opera and may not have written from original information. Who sang the part of *Nancy* when the opera was given for the first time in its Italian garb in Paris? The "Dictionnaire des Opéras," by Clément and Laroussé, says it was Madame Nantier-Didiée; Flotow's biographer says it was Marietta Alboni. One book gives the title of the French ballet which provided Flotow with his story as "Lady Henriette, ou la Foire de Richmond"; another as "Lady Harriette, ou la Servante de Greenwich." So among the German titles of the opera we find "Martha, oder der Markt zu Richmond," and also "Martha, oder der Mägdemarkt zu Richmond"; yet "Martha" is a German opera, and its correct title ought not to have caused bewilderment.

I shall not attempt to reconcile the discrepancies which have found their way into the opera's history, but shall in the following account set down the facts as they seem established in my mind. In 1843 Flotow, the son of a member of the minor nobility of Mecklenburg, was a young composer in Paris, where he had made his serious musical studies under Reicha. He had already set a number of small operas which had been performed in amateur circles, and was looking with longing eyes toward the Opéra-Comique, where his models had won their successes. One day he received a visit from the Marquis de Saint-Georges, first of French librettists after Scribe and collaborator of Donizetti, Adolphe Adam, Auber, Halévy and other famous composers, who asked him if he would undertake to compose the music for one act of a ballet to be produced at the Grand Opéra. Two other composers, Friedrich B. Burgmüller and Edouard Deldevez, had undertaken the other two acts, and the commission was conditioned upon an agreement to finish the work within four weeks. Flotow accepted the task with gladness, the ballet was written, and after its successful production the young musician learned the reason why the work of musical composition had been divided between three men and its hurried completion insisted upon. The director of the Grand Opéra, under his contract with the French Government, was bound to bring forward a new ballet in three acts each year. As the time approached for the 1844 production the director grew anxious to be quit of his obligation, being apprehensive of failure. His principal dancer was pretty, but, as he then thought, not specially talented, and he foresaw financial failure. He called upon the Government Minister and asked for a dispensation exempting him from the obligation to give the new ballet. Information of his purpose reached the ears of the dancer (later a celebrity in her line known as Adèle Dumilâtre). Grievously hurt in her *amour propre*, she, too, went to the Minister, who informed her that the director's conduct was due to his fear that, under the circumstances, an expenditure of 100,000 francs, which the new ballet would cost, would be unjustifiable. The lady departed, but next day a gentleman called at the ministry and offered to pay 100,000 francs to the director provided a ballet was immediately prepared in which Mlle. Dumilâtre should

enact the principal part. The agreement was made; Saint-Georges wrote the book, the composers were commissioned, and within the time agreed upon "Lady Harriette, ou la Servante de Greenwich" was on the boards. The plot of the ballet not only pleased the people, but delighted Flotow, and when, in consequence of the success of "Stradella," he received a commission in 1846 to compose an opera for the *Hofoper* at Vienna, he turned to Saint-Georges's ballet, and from it planned the opera "Martha." The libretto was written by a friend named F. W. Riese, who had taken part in the performance of a little opera entitled "Le duc de Guise" which Flotow composed for a charity entertainment given at the palace of the Princess Czartoryska, one of Chopin's *disciples affectionnés*. Riese, who wrote over the pen-name of "W. Friedrich," had previously written the book of "Stradella," and secured its representation in his native city of Hamburg, whence it journeyed to Vienna, where its success was so great as to create the wish for an opera specially composed for the Austrian capital.

There is a story current that Saint-Georges borrowed the fundamental idea of his ballet-plot from the personal experience of two of his lady friends who had amused themselves by masquerading as servants at a country fair. The tale is of doubtful authenticity. The genesis of "Lady Harriette, ou la Servante de Greenwich," was like that of many another stage piece. It was modelled after a vaudeville entitled "La Comtesse d'Egmont," which in turn derived its *motif* from the "Ballet des Chambrières à louer," a popular piece in the early part of the seventeenth century. Less than a month after the production of "Martha" in Vienna, W. M. Balfe brought forward an opera based on the same story in London, the book of which had been prepared by Fitzball, whose play on the subject of the Flying Dutchman is supposed to have figured in the genesis of Wagner's opera. According to a statement made by Max Maretzek in his "Sharps and Flats," Balfe told him in 1847 that he had heard "Martha" at Vienna in the preceding summer. He liked the music, but thought the libretto the better part of the work, and so got Fitzball to remodel the story under the title "The Maid of Honour," for which he composed the music, producing the opera in London on December 20th, 1847. He comforted himself with the reflection that if Flotow's opera ever reached London, he, Balfe, would have the advantage of the first impression in his favor. It took "Martha" nearly eleven years to reach London, but it does not appear that "The Maid of Honour" was in any wise responsible for the tardy production. Paris was only four months earlier, and the opera did not make a conclusive hit in the French capital until it was cast in a French version by Saint-Georges and illuminated by Nilsson's genius in 1865. Since "Martha" was not given in Vienna, where it had its first representation, until November 25th, 1847, less than four weeks before the appearance of Balfe's opera in London, it seems certain that unless Maretzek blundered in the telling of the story, Balfe must have heard Flotow's music in private, a circumstance which would throw

an unamiable light upon his choice of the subject for himself. Flotow composed the music after he had left Paris (soon after the production of Saint-Georges's ballet in 1844) on his estates in Wutzig and Teutendorf, Pomerania, and in Vienna, putting the finishing touches to it while the rehearsals were in progress in the summer of 1847.

In the original form of the opera and also in the English version the time of the action is supposed to be in the reign of Queen Anne, that is, the early part of the eighteenth century. For an inexplicable reason the period was moved back to the fifteenth century in the Italian version, and forward to the nineteenth in the French. The scene is laid in the old market town of Richmond in Yorkshire and its vicinity. *Lady Harriet* (or *Henrietta*, according to some versions), who is maid of honor to Queen Anne, wearied of the ceaseless round of conventional pleasures at court, conceives and carries out a project which promises to furnish diversion of a novel sort. Disguised as menials, she, her maid and her doting but somewhat aged cousin, *Sir Tristram Mickleford*, are to go to Richmond, whither a band of servants that pass her window are wending their way, and mingle with the crowd at the annual fair. There the frolicsome dames find the servingmaids hiring themselves to the farmers who have come to the fair to engage help. Among the farmers are *Plunkett* and his foster-brother *Lionel*, the latter a waif who had been left as a child at the door of *Plunkett's* father with nothing to identify him except a ring, which in case of need was to be shown to the queen. In furtherance of their prank, *Lady Harriet* (now known as *Martha*) and *Nancy* engage themselves as servants to *Lionel* and *Plunkett*, who are fascinated by their beauty and archness; and carry the joke so far as to accept the legal earnest-money. *Sir Tristram*, who has been pestered by the fair folk, purchases release from their torments with a purse and returns to bid the ladies go back to their homes. They are willing, but *Lionel* and *Plunkett* insist upon their rights under the law, and they are obliged to drive off with the young farmers. Arrived at the farmhouse, an attempt is made to set the young women to work, but in vain, and the men find themselves obliged to instruct them even in the simple art of spinning. *Lionel* loses his heart to *Martha*, who at his solicitation sings "The Last Rose of Summer." The clock rings midnight and the men go to bed, while the women are rescued from their awkward predicament by *Sir Tristram*. In the next scene the foster-brothers discover their quondam servants in the hunting train of Queen Anne. They assert their supposed right, but are repulsed, and when *Lionel* laments the harshness of my lady, who had masqueraded only to make mock of his peace of mind, *Lady Harriet* asks pity for him from the courtiers who come to her aid, on the ground that he is insane. In his despair he sends the ring given to him by his unknown father to the queen, and by its means is identified as the Earl of Derby, son of the old Earl, who had been banished from the kingdom, though guiltless of the offence with which he was charged. Despite her apparent harshness, *Lady Harriet* loves *Lionel*, even before the discovery of his high rank; now she

seeks to throw herself into his arms ; but he, whose mind has been turned awry by his sufferings, repulses her. In this dilemma a remedy is sought in the device of bringing back to his mind the scene of the first meeting. The fair scene of the first act is reënacted, and amid its merriment reason returns to the lover, and with it happiness. Roguish *Nancy* becomes the prize of *Plunkett*.

"Martha" had its first performance in Vienna on November 25th, 1847. Its growth in popularity was rapid and lasting in Germany, thanks to its gracious and graceful melodiousness ; but singularly slow in Italy, France and England, which countries it did not reach until eleven years after its first production. New York listened to its measures in 1852, six years before the privilege of hearing it was vouchsafed to Paris and London. How this came about I have been unable to learn, and the fact itself was unknown to Flotow's biographer. In September, 1852, an English company, under the management of Madame Anna Thillon and Mrs. Maeder, began an engagement at Niblo's Garden, alternating with a French opera company. The new opera was brought forward on November 1st, 1852, under the title "Martha ; or, the Richmond Market." Madame Anna Bishop, the wife of Sir Henry Rowley Bishop, who had eloped with Bochsá, the harp virtuoso, in 1839, sang the part of *Lady Harriet*; and Bochsá conducted the performance. The other parts were distributed as follows : *Nancy*, Miss Rosa Jacques ; *Lionel*, Signor Guidi ; *Plunkett*, Mr. Leach ; *Mickleford*, Signor Strini ; *the Sheriff*, Mr. Rudolph. The opera was given seven times. In 1855 it was performed in German at Niblo's by the company headed by Fräulein Lehman, and the next year it was heard at the Academy of Music with Madame Lagrange as *Lady Harriet*. This was still two years before the opera reached Paris and London. In the former city it was given in Italian at the Salle Ventadour, on February 11th, 1858, with the parts in the hands of Mesdames Saint-Urbain and Nantier-Didiée (or Alboni) and Messieurs Mario and Graziani. The engagement of Madame Nantier-Didiée and the Signori Mario and Graziani for the season of 1858, at the Royal Opera, at Covent Garden, resulted in the production of the opera in London on July 1st of that year, with Madame Bosio as *Lady Harriet*. On October 11th, 1858, it was given in English at Drury Lane with Miss Louisa Pyne as *Lady Harriet*, Miss Susan Pyne as *Nancy*, and Mr. Harrison as *Lionel*. In 1865 Saint-Georges made a French translation of the libretto for a revival of the opera at the Théâtre Lyrique, where with Madame Nilsson in the titular rôle it had a run of three hundred performances. Madame Adelina Patti, Fanny Natali, Signor Brignoli and Carl Formes (the original *Plunkett*) appeared in the opera when it was given in Philadelphia, on October 10th, 1860, in honor of the then Prince of Wales, now King Edward VII.; and Madame Patti chose it for the performance at the Academy of Music, New York, on November 26th, 1884, with which she celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of her entrance on an operatic career.

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