

Pyotr Tchaikovsky – Eugene Onegin (Levine) [1978]

Written by bluesever

Monday, 26 October 2009 22:55 - Last Updated Monday, 02 June 2014 10:54

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Eugene Onegin - Sherrill Milnes Lenski - Nicolai Gedda Tatyana - Teresa Zylis-Gara Olga - Isola Jones Larina - Jean Kraft Filipjevna - Batyah Godfrey Ben-David Gremin - Paul Plishka Triquet - James Atherton Zaretsky - Andrij Dobriansky Captain - Richard Best Metropolitan Opera & Chorus James Levine - conductor

The Story of Eugene Onegin

Eugene Onegin, ACT 1

In the garden of her country estate, Madame Larina and her servant Filippyevna sit and discuss their days of once being youthful after hearing Larina's two daughters, Tatiana and Olga sing about love from inside the house. After a hard day's work, peasants enter the garden bringing harvested hay from the fields and celebrating the bountiful yields. Olga joins in the merriment and teases Tatiana for reading her novels instead. When the festivities start to wane and the peasants take their leave, Lenski and Eugene Onegin arrive. Madame Larina and Filippyevna return to the house leaving the girls alone with the boys. After a while of light conversation, Lenski confesses his love to Olga and they disappear. Onegin and Tatiana meander through the garden talking about life. As night falls, the couples go inside to eat dinner.

After dinner, Tatiana retires to her bedroom. Filippyevna enters and Tatiana asks her about

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love. Filippyevna recounts her stories, but the restless Tatiana sits impatiently. Finally, she confesses to Filippyevna that she is in love with Eugene Onegin. Filippyevna leaves and Tatiana writes a love letter to Onegin. She is so nervous, she barely sleeps through the night. The following morning, she gives the letter to Filippyevna so she can deliver it to Onegin.

Onegin arrives later that day to give Tatiana his answer. Though he was moved and flattered by her letter, he admits that he is not suited for marriage - he would grow bored in a matter of weeks and would seek something new. Though she possesses all the qualities he finds attractive in a woman, he turns her down as gentlemanly as possible. Still, Tatiana runs away brokenhearted.

Eugene Onegin, ACT 2

After several months have passed, Madame Larina hosts a party in her country manor to celebrate Tatiana's name day. Many guests are in attendance, including Lenski and Onegin. Onegin has begrudgingly tagged along at Lenski's request. Onegin quickly becomes bored with the country lifestyle and decides to dance with Olga in order to make Lenski jealous. Olga is flattered and enjoys Onegin's attention, nearly forgetting of her engagement to Lenski. Lenski is quick to catch on to Onegin's trickery, and soon the men squabble and interrupt the party. Madame Larina tries unsuccessfully to remove them from the house. Lenski, no matter how hard he tries to remain calm, challenges Onegin to a duel.

The following morning, Lenski and his second man await for Onegin's arrival. Lenski, regretful of the previous evening's events, imagines Olga's life without him and how she would sadly visit his grave. Finally, Onegin shows up with his second man. Both friends, now with their backs to each other, sing how they would rather laugh together than be here in this situation. Sadly, neither one of them can set aside their pride, and Onegin delivers the fatal shot to Lenski's chest.

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Eugene Onegin, ACT 3

Several years later, Onegin finds himself in St. Petersburg at another meaningless party - this time at his cousin's extravagant ball - after having traveled extensively across Europe. Despite his travels, Onegin could not alleviate the guilt of his best friend's death, nor could he find happiness. Suddenly, across the room, Onegin sees an exquisitely gowned Tatiana descending a staircase. No longer a country girl, Tatiana is poised and proper. Onegin pulls aside his cousin, Prince Gremin, to ask about her. Gremin proudly replies that she is his wife of two years and his saving grace. Gremin introduces Tatiana to him, unknowing of their past history, and the two have a polite conversation. Tatiana tactfully excuses herself, and Onegin's heart burns with desire.

Onegin finds Tatiana alone and confesses his love for her. Confused, Tatiana wonders if he is in love with her or if it her social standing. He swears that his love for his is genuine, but she does not give in. She is brought to tears and recounts how happy their lives could have been, as well as how she still has feelings for him. Sadly, she tells him it could never be. Even though she does not feel great passion for her husband, she will remain faithful now matter what. As much as it pains her to do so, she exits the room leaving Onegin to wallow in his despair. ---
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