

THE MERRY WIDOW

Artistic Director

David McAllister AM

Executive Director

Libby Christie

Music Director & Chief Conductor

Nicolette Fraillon AM

Guest Conductor

Paul Murphy

Concertmaster

Jun Yi Ma

with Opera Australia Orchestra

Joan Sutherland Theatre,
Sydney Opera House

Recorded

Wednesday afternoon
9 May 2018

**The 414th performance of THE MERRY
WIDOW**

Hanna Glawari
Amber Scott

Count Danilo Danilowitsch
Adam Bull

Valencienne
Leanne Stojmenov

Camille de Rosillon
Andrew Killian

Baron Mirko Zeta
*Steven Heathcote**

Njegus
*David McAllister**

Kromow
Brett Simon

Pritschitsch
Jarryd Madden

Maitre d'
Luke Marchant

Pontevedrian Dancer
Marcus Morelli

Guests at the Embassy, Pontevedrians,
Can-Can Ladies etc
Artists of The Australian Ballet

*guest artist

SUPPORTING OUR FUTURE

Refurbishing this lavish production of *The Merry Widow*, created in 1975, was made possible by the vision and generous support of the Margaret Ellen Pidgeon Fund. It's an example of philanthropy helping us to deliver world-class ballet to Australian stages for the delight of our loyal audiences.

With theatres still closed today, your support has never been more important. The generosity you have shown us is the reason we can continue to do what we love, and it will keep us dancing into a brighter future.

There is still a long road ahead for us but, with you by our side, we look forward to the curtain going up on live performances once again. We hope to see you in the theatre again very soon.

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THE MERRY WIDOW

THE MERRY WIDOW

Scenario Robert Helpmann

Choreography Ronald Hynd

Guest répétiteurs

Mark Kay

Marilyn Rowe

Music Franz Lehár

Based on the operetta by

Victor Léon and Leo Stein

Arranged and orchestrated by

John Lanchbery

Costume and set design

Desmond Heeley

Lighting design Francis Croese

*Presented by arrangement with Glocken Verlag Ltd
These seasons of The Merry Widow are generously
supported by The Margaret Ellen Pidgeon Fund*

Synopsis

The action takes place in Paris in the year 1905.

ACT I

Scene 1: An ante-room in the Pontevedrian Embassy

Minor officials and the French Attaché (Camille de Rosillion) are finishing work prior to the ball to be given in the Embassy that evening. The Ambassador's secretary (Njegus) enters with a fresh heap of bills and all lament their country's bankruptcy. The Ambassador (Baron Zeta) and his young French wife (Valencienne) enter with a telegram announcing that a recently widowed Pontevedrian (Hanna Glawari) is to attend the ball. She is worth 20 million francs and seeks a new husband. However, should she marry a foreigner, Pontevedro will lose the benefit of her wealth and the country will be left penniless. The First Secretary (Count Danilo) is considered a prospective suitor.

Camille and Valencienne are left alone. He is passionately in love with her, and she with him, but she clings to

her marriage vows. Njegus interrupts the lovers and they leave as Danilo enters – more than a little intoxicated. Njegus informs him of the marriage plan. He is amused at the suggestion and lapses into an alcoholic slumber. The Baron returns and orders Njegus to ensure that Danilo is sober before the ball begins.

Scene 2: The ballroom in the Pontevedrian Embassy

Hanna Glawari arrives and Danilo is presented to her. They are dumbfounded, having met when she was a peasant girl in Pontevedro ten years ago. Danilo had put an end to the affair at the insistence of his aristocratic parents. He is amazed at the transformation of Hanna and, in his confusion, mops his forehead with a handkerchief which Hanna recognises as a keepsake she gave him when they parted. He tells Hanna that he has always loved her, but she, thinking that he is only interested in her money rejects him.

The Baron bids Hanna choose a partner for the dance. Hanna regrets her coldness and chooses Danilo, but he, still smarting, refuses, and waltzes with another guest.

Valencienne urges Camille to prevent a 'situation'. Hanna accepts his arm and they dance together. In the course of changing partners, Hanna finds herself alone with Danilo. She continues to resist his attentions but cannot really disguise her love for him.

ACT II

Scene: The garden of Hanna's villa

Hanna is holding a Pontevedrian soiree at her villa and the guests celebrate with their national dances. As they all go into supper, Zeta, Danilo, and Njegus agree to meet at eight o'clock in the pavilion for a small diplomatic discussion on Danilo's progress with Hanna. All is going well and they are growing closer to each other, despite a slight mutual distrust.

Valencienne and Camille sneak into the deserted garden and as she finally succumbs to his persuasive passion, they withdraw into the darkness of the pavilion – observed, however, by Njegus. As the Baron and Danilo approach, Njegus panics and locks the pavilion door. Looking through the keyhole, the Baron sees all. In the ensuing scuffle to wrest the key from Njegus, Hanna appears and realises the situation. She releases Valencienne through a side door and takes her place inside.

The Baron unlocks the door and orders the guilty couple to emerge. To his amazement, Camille comes out with Hanna, who dumbfounds everyone by announcing their engagement. The astounded guests offer frigid congratulations and depart. Danilo is the last to leave and, in a frenzy, throws at her feet the handkerchief with which she had, a moment ago, retied their union. She picks it up knowing that he truly loves her.

ACT III

Scene: Chez Maxime

The Pontevedrians have come to drown their sorrows and spend their last francs at Chez Maxime. Gaiety prevails until Camille unwisely appears – hoping, of course, to meet Valencienne. The Pontevedrians, led by Valencienne, jeer at him. Her mockery, however, is more emotional than patriotic.

Hanna suddenly appears and accepts Camille's unwillingly offered arm. This is too much for Danilo who advances to challenge him to a duel, but Hanna and Valencienne intervene. The Baron perceives, from his wife's protection of Camille, that his fears are not without foundation and resignedly accepts the inevitable.

All have left and Hanna stands forlornly alone. Danilo quietly returns and folds her into a loving embrace that turns into an ecstatic waltz.