



left to right: Emeric Pressburger, Sir Thomas, Michael Powell



## The Beecham Collection

*Including Unissued Recordings*



Jacques Offenbach

### THE TALES OF HOFFMANN

Robert Rounseville  
Dorothy Bond  
Margherita Grandi  
Monica Sinclair, *et al*

Sadler's Wells Chorus  
Royal Philharmonic Orchestra  
Sir Thomas Beecham,  
Bart., C.H.

#### **Bonus included**

Extracts from  
The Tales of Hoffmann  
played at the piano  
by Sir Thomas Beecham



**THE BEECHAM COLLECTION**  
**Sir Thomas Beecham, Bart., C.H.**  
**THE TALES OF HOFFMANN**  
**OFFENBACH: GUIRAUD: ARUNDELL**  
**(Sung in English)**

The Sadler's Wells Chorus  
The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra  
Sir Thomas Beecham, Bart., C.H.

DISC I

PROLOGUE:

[1] Prelude (Orchestra)		0:38
[2] Glou, Glou, Glou (The Spirits of Wine) (Chorus)		2:14
[3] Drink, Drink, Drink (Chorus)		1:20
[4] Good day my friends (Hoffmann, Nicklausse, Nathaniel, Hermann, Luther, Students)	(Scena)	2:13
[5] The Legend of Kleinsack (Hoffmann, Chorus, et al)	(Song & Scena)	5:44
[6] Finale - This beer tastes of the stable (Hoffmann et al)	(Finale)	4:43

ACT I:

[7] Intermezzo (Orchestra)		1:13
[8] There sleep in peace (Spalanzani, Hoffmann, Cochenille)	(Scena)	1:57
[9] So be it (Hoffmann)	(Récit. & Romance)	2:39
[10] Of course I might have known (Nicklausse, Hoffmann)	(Scena & Song)	2:40
[11] It is I, Coppelius (Coppelius, Nicklausse, Hoffmann)	(Scena & Song)	3:23
[12] Oh you! Dear Professor: (Spalanzani, Coppelius, Hoffmann, Cochenille)	(Scena)	2:21
[13] None but our host, I do declare (Chorus of Guests)		2:03
[14] You will not have to wait my friends. (Spalanzani, Nicklausse, Hoffman, Chorus of Guests)	(Scena)	1:46

[15] And now ladies, and gentlemen (Spalanzani, Nicklausse, Cochenille, Hoffmann, Olympia, Chorus)	(Scena)	1:39
[16] The Doll's Song (Olympia, Chorus)		5:28
[17] Her reputation well deserved (Hoffmann, Nicklausse, Spalanzani, Olympia, Cochenille, Chorus)		2:23
[18] So now they've gone away at last (Hoffmann, Olympia)	(Romance)	2:43
[19] Oh, my dear, do but stay (Hoffmann, Nicklausse, Coppelius)	(Scena)	2:02
[20] Let the dancing proceed. (Spalanzani, Cochenille, Hoffmann, Olympia, Nicklausse, Coppelius, Chorus of Guests)	(Finale)	5:47

ACT II:

[21] Entr'acte and Barcarolle (A voice, Giulietta, Chorus)		3:53
[22] For me a love like that (Hoffmann, Chorus)	(Récit & Drinking Song)	1:59
[23] I see a celebration. (Schlemil, Giulietta, Pitichinaccio, Hoffmann, Nicklausse, Chorus)	(Scena)	2:12

**Total: 63:13**

DISC 2

ACT II (contd.)

[1] So gleam with desire (Dapertutto)	(Dapertutto's Song)	3:22
[2] Fair Angel... (Dapertutto, Giulietta, Hoffmann)	(Scena & Duet)	7:38
[3] Just as I thought - together. (Giulietta, Schlemil, Hoffmann, Pitichinaccio, Dapertutto, Nicklausse)	(Scena)	1:47
[4] Alas, my soul again outpouring (Hoffmann, Dapertutto, Giulietta, Nicklausse, Schlemil, Pitichinaccio, Chorus)	(Septet)	3:02
[5] Do you hear, my friends (Giulietta, Chorus)	(Barcarolle, Finale)	3:22

ACT III

[6] Entr'acte - All in vain (Antonia)	(Entr'acte - Romance)	4:16
[7] Oh my darling child (Crespel, Antonia, Frantz)	(Scena)	3:22
[8] Day and Night I am always slaving (Frantz)	(Song)	1:43
[9] Frantz, so you're here (Hoffmann, Frantz)	(Scena)	0:46
[10] Sweet is the song lovers learn (Hoffmann, Antonia)	(Duet)	1:44
[11] And yet beloved (Hoffmann, Antonia)		4:11

[12]	Are you ill? (Hoffmann, Antonia, Crespel, Frantz, Dr. Miracle)	(Scena)	2:35
[13]	Well, say on then, and be brief (Dr. Miracle, Hoffmann, Crespel, Antonia)	(Trio)	4:21
[14]	No more to sing alas (Hoffmann, Antonia)	(Scena)	3:45
[15]	You'll never sing again (Dr. Miracle, Antonia, The Voice of Antonia's Mother, Crespel, Nicklausse, Hoffmann)	(Trio & Finale)	10:37

#### INTERMEZZO

[16]	(Barcarolle) (Orchestra)		3:40
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#### EPILOGUE

[17]	Entr'acte (Orchestra)		1:21
[18]	Pour out the wine and drink (Chorus)	(Finale)	1:01

Sir Thomas Beecham (piano)

[19]	Extracts. Prelude - Legend of Kleinsack - ACT I - Finale - Epilogue - Finale		15:39
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**Total:78:14**

Hoffmann.....	<b>Robert Rounseville (ténor)</b>
Olympia.....	<b>Dorothy Bond (soprano)</b>
Giulietta.....	<b>Margherita Grandi (soprano)</b>
Antonia.....	<b>Ann Ayars (soprano)</b>
Coppelius } Dapertutto } Dr. Miracle }	<b>Bruce Dargavel (bass-baritone)</b>
Nicklausse.....	<b>Monica Sinclair (mezzo-soprano)</b>
Spalanzani } Frantz }	<b>Grahame Clifford (baritone)</b>
Schlemil } Crespel } Hermann }	<b>Owen Brannigan (bass)</b>
Cochenille } Pitichinaccio }	<b>Murray Dickie (tenor)</b>
Luther.....	<b>Fisher Morgan (bass)</b>
Nathaniel.....	<b>René Soames (tenor)</b>

Premier CD release.

Recorded at Shepperton Film Studios, 1947.

\* [19] Excerpt from an informal recording session with Sir Thomas Beecham going through the vocal score of *The Tales of Hoffman* and accompanying himself at the piano, in the presence of Emeric Pressburger and Michael Powell.

\* Previously unissued.

The collaboration between the Sir Thomas Beecham Trust and SOMM Recordings will ensure that the Scholarship Fund will benefit from the sale of these discs.

The libretto for *The Tales of Hoffmann* was constructed by Jules Barbier and Michel Carré. It was based on their own play, which they had created by adopting a series of stories by E.T.A. Hoffmann (b. 1776 in Königsberg, d. 1822 in Berlin). These seemingly separate stories are separately dramatised in each of the three acts of the opera but they form a unity in Barbier and Carré's creation. They have become best known in the context of Offenbach's music and this seems entirely just since Hoffmann was not only a novelist but also a composer. Christened Ernst Theodor Wilhelm, the writer was so passionate about music that in 1815 he changed his third name to Amadeus in honour of Mozart. The unifying thread between the stories used for the libretto of *The Tales of Hoffmann* has an autobiographical slant since each of the tales results in unrequited love.

**The Prologue** is set in the wine-cellar of Luther's Tavern in Nuremberg. [2] [3] [4] Students are carousing when Hoffmann (described for the purposes of the opera as a poet) enters with his young companion Nicklausse. Hoffmann is in love with Stella, an opera singer currently starring in performances of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* at the nearby opera house. [5] He is enjoined to sing a comic song about the dwarf Kleinsack. [6] Eventually the song is completed, although not without the singer straying into his thoughts about Stella, and encouraged by the students, Hoffmann is persuaded to relate to the assembled company the stories of his three loves.

[8] **Act I** takes place in the house of the scientist Spalanzani, to whom Hoffmann goes as a pupil. Spalanzani has a "daughter" called Olympia although in fact she is a life-size, almost human doll created by Spalanzani in association with his colleague Coppelius. [9] [10] Hoffmann is deceived into thinking she is a living person and sings of his love for Olympia. Even after the appearance



of his friend Nicklausse, who tells him that Spalanzani is solely interested in science, Hoffmann still does not understand the truth. [11] Realising that Hoffmann brings in good money as a pupil, Coppeliuss persuades Hoffmann to buy a pair of "magic" spectacles from him on the theory that it makes Olympia seem even more beautiful. In fact they have the effect of making the poet unable to distinguish between the lifelike doll and a real woman. [12] Coppeliuss then decides to demand money from Spalanzani for the benefit they both derive from this trick but Spalanzani begrudges him the money and pays by a draft drawn on a banker who has just become bankrupt. [13] [14] [15] Guests now arrive for Olympia's coming-out party. [16] The doll sings a song for the guests in which she accompanies herself on the harp. The game is almost given away when she appears to run down and Spalanzani has to wind her up but, deluded by his glasses, Hoffmann does not notice. [17] The guests finally depart and persuaded by Spalanzani to stay behind [18] Hoffmann touches the automaton who at first responds and then wanders away. [19] At this point, Nicklausse returns but again fails to convince his friend of Spalanzani's deceit. The furious Coppeliuss also arrives having discovered that he has been given a worthless draft. [20] Hoffmann now begins to dance with the doll but Spalanzani stops them, Hoffmann falls, breaking his glasses and recovers to find that, in the next room, Coppeliuss is destroying Olympia. Spalanzani and Coppeliuss shout at one another leaving the bewildered Hoffmann shamed and confused.

[21] **Act II** takes place in Venice in the gallery of a palace overlooking the Grand Canal. Here lives a beautiful courtesan, Giulietta, in thrall to the wicked magician Dapertutto. The magician has a plan whereby he persuades Giulietta to attract men, have them look in a mirror, which absorbs their reflections and the magician is then able to collect their souls. [22] When Hoffmann arrives at the palace, the usual plot is begun, the poet is attracted to go to Giulietta [23] but she tells him of her two other boyfriends: Schlemil and Pitichinaccio. **Disc 2** [1] Dapertutto enters with his previous victim Schlemil and shows Hoffmann the mirror. [2] At once the poet realises that his reflection has gone but he yet again ignores his friend Nicklausse's advice and does not take the opportunity to flee from Giulietta. [3] [4] The courtesan's next ruse is to ask Hoffmann to retrieve the key to her room, which Schlemil has stolen. [5] Schlemil refuses to give it up and the two men fight leaving the soulless Schlemil dead. Meanwhile Giulietta has departed on a gondola with Pitichinaccio who is destined to be both her next lover and victim. Nicklausse finally drags Hoffmann away.

[6] **Act III** finds Hoffmann deeply enamoured of Antonia, daughter of the widower Crespel. [7] [8] Antonia's mother had died of consumption and her father forbade her to sing for fear the same fate should befall her; he also fears Hoffmann's and Antonia's mutual love. Crespel, who is about to go out, issues orders to his servant Frantz to admit no-one in his absence. [9] The deaf servant fails to understand his master's instructions to keep the lovers apart and lets them meet. [10] [11] Inevitably they embrace and sing a long duet. [12] Enter Crespel and Dr. Miracle. Hoffmann hides. The doctor has supernatural powers and Crespel has always suspected that he was connected with his wife's death. [13] Hoffmann leaves and Dr. Miracle is driven out by Crespel but when Antonia is alone the doctor returns, subtly telling her that her refusal to sing is an offence against heaven. [14] [15] In an effort to persuade her he conjures up the image of her dead mother. In attempting to sing, Antonia falls dying just as her father enters. Crespel accuses Hoffmann of causing her death.

The **Epilogue** finds Hoffmann admitting to the students that his real passion is for Stella. Olympia, Giulietta and Antonia are really embodiments of Stella while Coppeliuss, Dapertutto and Miracle represent the same malign personality, frustrating Hoffmann's search for love. Hoffmann, resigned to his fate, again takes up his glass and soon sprawls in apparent drunken insensitivity on the table. [18] The curtain descends as the assembled company sing a reprise of the Prologue's drinking chorus. Unknown to them however, he has seen a vision of the muse of poetry and has consented to devote his life to her. This was to be Hoffmann's ultimate love.

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It was a hallmark of Sir Thomas Beecham's masterly performances in both the opera house and the concert hall that he could create a consistency of musical and emotionally aesthetic experiences matched by few, if any, other conductors of his day or since. Whether under ideal conditions at the head of his own hand-picked orchestra in conducive surroundings or with unfamiliar forces in stranger venues, the results always carried that Beecham stamp. In the field of opera we experienced dramatically uplifting Wagner, powerfully forceful Richard Strauss, enchanting Mozart and exquisite Delius, alongside which he could conjure delightful and charmingly entertaining Smetana or Offenbach.

Sir Thomas Beecham also much enjoyed conducting the best of lighter music, especially that by French composers of the nineteenth century. Such music from the pens of Bizet, Chabrier, Delibes, Faure, Gounod, Grétry, Massenet and Saint-Saëns all brought heartwarming beautiful performances from him, which also brought smiles to the faces and an inner glow of wellbeing to the audiences, not to mention a particular sense of delight to the players. The German-born French composer Jacques Offenbach (born in Cologne on 20th June 1819 and died in Paris on 5th October 1880) is another which had a place in that Beecham list.

Except for a performance of Offenbach's *Violoncello Concerto* of 1847 that Sir Thomas conducted in the Royal Festival Hall on 22nd November 1959, with Jean Max Clement as soloist, Sir Thomas's attention to Offenbach's music seems solely to have been directed towards *The Tales of Hoffmann*, a work written late in the composer's life, and whose orchestration and additional recitatives were completed after his death by Ernest Guiraud (1837-1892) before the work was first performed at the Opéra-Comique in 1881. Beecham conducted the work nearly forty times in the opera house, first on 12th May 1910 with the Beecham Opera Company at His Majesty's Theatre in London, giving it for the first time in English to a translation by Edward Agate. He conducted it for the last time in Cleveland, Ohio, on 1st May 1944. Although occasional arias from the opera appeared in his concert programmes, the piece which found most favour and might have been classed as one of his "lollipops" was the *Barcarolle*, finding a place in programmes from 1911 to 1947. However, it was selected arias, including the *Doll's Song* and the *Legend of Kleinsack* that were among his very first acoustic recordings for the gramophone in July 1910, at the time of the London production.

Alec Robertson, reviewing the Decca recording of the sound track of the film in the July 1951 issue of *The Gramophone*, recalled that 1910 season and wrote:

*Sir Thomas Beecham has, I am sure, a particular love for Offenbach's enchanting opera and I recall with delight the fine performance of it he directed in the 1910 season at His Majesty's Theatre...*

He went on to compare the 1910 cast with that of the film and then returned to Beecham's contribution:

*On the stage then, so to speak, this is an average performance; but in the orchestral pit it is an obviously superb one. Beecham's magical power of vitalising phrases is perfectly demonstrated here. There are a number of short "motives" in the opera, as when Giulietta enters, or when Hoffmann's evil genius is about, and these motives spring to life in an amazing way. How lovely, too, are the phrases for woodwind in Antonia's exquisite song, how ravishing the playing of the Barcarolle before the Epilogue. It was these things that brought back so vividly to me the glories of the 1910 performance.*

Beecham's championing of opera from as early as 1902 with his Imperial Grand Opera Company is well known and the range of operas that he presented makes remarkable reading today. However, success was mixed, as he relates after the 1910 season in his incomplete autobiography, *A Mingled Chime*, published in 1944:

*I ended the year 1910 in a very different mood from that from which I had begun it. I had plunged head foremost into the operatic arena under the cheerful conviction that I had only to present any work of fair renown in a tolerably adequate way for the public, to crowd my theatre in gratitude and appreciation. The principal reason for the failure of other men's ventures, so I had been told, was that they had been too sporadic or limited in scope. But this could hardly be urged against me, for during a period of twelve months I had given an almost uninterrupted sequence of about two hundred performances, had produced over a score of operas not heard before in London, revived many others that were hardly better known and had made use of nearly all the British singers qualified to appear on the stage, as well as a large contingent of front rankers from France, Germany and Italy. A preliminary review of this trial trip only*

*increased the suspicion that for the support of opera run on such a scale there was not nearly enough living interest in the existing state of London's musical culture. Out of something like fifty works there had been unqualified approval of only four: the short and sensational bloodcurdlers, Salome and Elektra, and the tuneful lightweights Le Contes d'Hoffmann and Die Fledermaus. Something was wrong somewhere and I was not at all sure where the fault lay, with the public or myself.*

It seems strange to us today that such contrasting works as the dramatically stark Richard Strauss operas and the entertainingly tuneful Offenbach and Johann Strauss should have been the successes when Beecham's offerings had included also Gounod's *Faust*, Bizet's *Carmen*, Verdi's *Il Trovatore* and Mozart's *Il Seraglio*, *Così fan Tutte* and *The Marriage of Figaro*, as well as Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* and *Tannhäuser*. Thank goodness Beecham did not give up and continued to conduct in the opera house right up to 1958.

When Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger decided to make a film of *The Tales of Hoffmann*, in a new translation by Dennis Arundell, apparently they did not know the work. Sir Thomas Beecham sat at the piano and played through the whole score to introduce it to them, providing the vocal parts himself along the way. A recording of this informal session survives and extracts are included here from nearly two hours of tape. For someone who was not a professionally trained pianist, Sir Thomas had an extraordinary knack of being able to convey the essence of a work and was an excellent sight-reader. In the same way, with his tuneless singing, he could convey to his orchestral players exactly what musical result he required. Here, as the work progresses, he sings more like a love-sick billy goat stung by the occasional passing wasp but the essence of the work is always clear. There are occasional remarks from Lady Betty Humby Beecham, sitting at his side and the last passage is read by Michael Powell before Sir Thomas takes over singing and shouting enthusiastically to the end.

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| SOMM-BEECHAM 12-2 | DELIUS 'A Village Romeo & Juliet'<br>Songs of Sunset (1934 Leeds Festival)<br>BBC Chorus, RPO<br>Fabian Smith, Frederick Sharp, René Soames,<br>Gordon Clinton, Roy Henderson, Olga Haley, et al.                           |