

OBERON'S HORN

Translated and adapted by Frank J. Morlock C 2003

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Etext by Dagny

Based on
The Flowering Horn

A one act fairy play by
Ephraim Mikhael
1888

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CHARACTERS:

TITANIA

ORIANA

SILVERE

OBERON

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OBERON'S HORN

The stage represents clearing in a forest of the fairies. Among the Luminescent grass and flowers flows a fountain. To the right rose bushes. Titania is seated near the fountain. She is dividing on her spinning wheel fine threads made from the rays of the moon.

TITANIA: O resplendent threads, o thread the color of stars,
Will you be the mantle of a prince or indeed the veil
Of a queen? No, no, thread the color of spring,
I intend that you be the floating curtains of lightning
Used on the passionate bed of a woman in love
Like a pavilion of gold on a lucky barge.
(A silence, the spinning wheel stops, Titania lets her spindle drop
and dreams)

Yes, as for me, the calm sister of lilies and branches,
I love to love, and it's my customary pleasure
To go to sleep a virgin and with dreams of a spouse.
O nuptial dreams,
(excitedly, reproaching herself)
Well, am I jealous?
Titania will be jealous of lovers?
Ah! madwoman! Don't I have in my sleeping palace
The pride of ineffably pure sensuality?
Down there, in the blue bushes, I pluck instead of mulberrys,
Sapphires, and at night, in turning my spindle,
I hear mandrakes singing. My birds
Exhale in their flight a perfume of corollas
And I am a fairy and I know the words
Which make unknown stars rise up in heaven.
I can do anything.
(sadly)

No! because my long hair, my naked arms,
My throat which throbs under my bestarred dress
None see them; and if sometimes in an alley
A traveler struck by the heavens and the forests
Passes by singing in the distance: quick, I disappear!
Because Oberon, king of enchanted forests
Wishes it so! I can sleep under the oaks
By the road. The passerby won't be dazzled,
To awaken me: I am invisible for him,
And everywhere, I mix myself into the vapors of paths,
With the mists of the moon, with the shivering brilliance
Which expires over fields, gardens and woods.
(she admires herself in the fountain)
Alas! For whom am I beautiful? Why heaven,
You see me where eyes waken, and you, living forest,
You see me. The kiss that my dream boasts of,

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The kiss is not worth the caress of evening,
Perfumed totally with fairy flowers. My power
Is much sweeter than love. I am the happy queen
Who's never been troubled by any desire.

ORIANA: (entering abruptly) Godmother!
Avenge me!

TITANIA: Oriana! Oh! How enraged your eyes are!

ORIANA: Listen to me! Formerly, amongst the rose bushes
You found me like a bee exiled
From beautiful gold hives.

TITANIA: (laughing) And I stole you.

ORIANA: You took me in your arms, godmother, and I grew
As the forest gilds a magic noon.

TITANIA: Yes, but sometimes you flee the divine light.
You go away, deploying, o my sweet warrior,
Your hair like a noble standard in the wind
And I know that down there you often triumph
And that in proud evenings you choose for an escort
Sad kings that you tame.

ORIANA: Yes, I am strong!
My feet repose on great shields
Like frail and familiar white birds
Battling on the high roofs of citadels.
Yes, everywhere unknown and faithful lovers
Are waiting for me. Well, there, in the woods, this morning
I don't know what puerile and loud singer
Was insulting me, do you understand, me the victorious!
But you will avenge me.

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TITANIA: My beautiful fury,
Tell me what the insult was?

ORIANA: I was wandering,
Listening vaguely under the cool foliage
To the friendly murmurs of a sacred spring.
Suddenly (surely, I must have been wrong), my golden belt
And my dress I had thrown in the bushes
And smiling with shivering shyness
I hid myself in the splendor of the fountain.

TITANIA: (excitedly)
And the child who was dreaming on the distant path
Ran, saw the shining light of your hair,
Intoxicated himself on your flesh and in his nervous arms
Seized, like a shield, conqueror of a faun,
Your dear body bursting with royal youth?

ORIANA: (a bit confused) Eh! no, it wasn't like that.

TITANIA: You were telling me
Of an insult?

ORIANA: Alas! while I veiled
My face with my half closed hands, the savage child,
Without hiding amongst the willows of the river bank,
Without espying the fountain in which I was still laughing,
Passed his eyes to heaven, disdainfully singing.

TITANIA: Surely, granddaughter, he gravely offended you.
He's going to die, that's agreed.

ORIANA: I wasn't thinking
Of killing him! You see this foreign child,
I hate him. But you can hate without butchery.
And I wasn't dreaming of the unique pleasure

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Of seeing him devoured by wolves and hounds.

TITANIA: Do you want him to love you?

ORIANA: No! It's too late for that. Truly,
I don't know what I want. Imagine a torture.
(she thinks)
To enchain him on the terrifying shore of a gulf?
No! Change him into a stone, into a tree? He's got to suffer
And the rock feels nothing, and trees have too many flowers.
Let's keep looking! The earth is impoverished by sorrows!
Wait! Near the spring where I was offended
Let him be troubled by some strange fiancée
So that I will hear mounting to the deaf and distant heavens
His tears and screams of vain amours.

TITANIA: By who will we make him punished?
(abruptly, to herself)
Oh! what an idea.
(To Oriana)
The punishment is certain, because you will be helped
By someone very great.

ORIANA: Heavens! Have I guessed?
It's you who are going to—

TITANIA: Why that astonished look?
I am obeying you, I want to punish him myself.

ORIANA: Consider. So he will scream to you "I love you."
And leaning towards your lips he'll whisper
Conquering words. You won't weaken?

TITANIA: Titania can never soften.

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ORIANA: Are you sure?

TITANIA: Yes, my sovereign heart doesn't fear wounding
By vain amours.

ORIANA: (resigned) So be it! If you want to, avenge me!

(Titania comes forward toward the trees and makes magic passes with her spindle.)

TITANIA: Oberon, Oberon, I'm calling you, O my king!

OBERON: (appearing)

What do you want now? Are you going to ask me again
For a dress soaked in the whirlpool of the dawn?
Do you want to drink the light of the moon. Must
Some one weave you a veil from April mist?
To decorate your face and ears
Must I bring to summer nights vermilion stars?

TITANIA: No, neither jewels from heaven nor dress! My wish
Is to be no longer alone in the mute woods.
King, I intend that a young, mincing man wait
To speak to me sensuously and smile at me.
Release this cruel oath that forbids me
To appear. I want for a child down there
To see in the eternal night of the world
My resplendent throat like a blonde ray.
I intend to deliver my hair to the terrestrial wind.

OBERON: You want to be a woman, Titania! These prayers
Are unworthy of you! What! you're a fairy.
You spend the night, luminous and dressed
With rays; you gather all the flowers from heaven.
You plunder, like a child thief with honey
The wave filled with savory light!
And then, alas, you want to be, some impassioned lover

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Some girl furtively prowling the night
In the shadow of the highways, in the arms of her lover.
And beware, o my innocent Titania,
Of hugging a rustic with a donkey's head!

TITANIA: (very grave) No potion, o my king, has disturbed my reason.
Me, lose my dignity! No, I am from much too noble a house,
Being born, one spring, of an enchanted pearl.
But, sire, you haven't listened to me enough,
For I want to appear, one day only, one moment
To a pitiful child who's calling me with distraction
And weeping to see me. (supplicating) A single day! What do you care!
Since he will see me like a dead star
Swallowed by the sadness of the sea.
And his heart will keep like a bitter perfume
The mortal memory of my illusory lips.

OBERON: Go! but keep this silver horn, pale and ivory.
If the child, captivated by your youthful splendor,
Disturbs your heart with a wicked passion,
If your face blushes with a carnal light,
Call me. If not, you will be exiled
Eternally. Forever, with vain sobs,
You will wail, woman, far from the divine palace.
But when you wish to flee the shame of the earth,
No matter where you may be, in a solitary valley,
In tumultuous fields, in dozing woods,
Blow with the ivory horn towards friendly stars.
I will come to get you like a rich spoil
Towards the country of dreams and fairy joy.

(Oberon disappears.)

TITANIA: Oriana! I am delightfully frightened.
Woman! I have annoying hail beneath my feet,
Cool grass, I who flew naked,
Now I feel as if I were naked,
And as if the evening wind were closer
To my face. O new smell of forests.
Formerly, in my divine courses, I aspirated
I don't know what magic perfumes. The water of fountains
Is changing between my lips into a celestial liquor.
How good the water of fountains is! All my heart

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Shivers when the rude wind grazes my shoulders!
Oh! I want to run down there amongst the willows
But it's time. You see how I will avenge you.
Let's find this insolent.

ORIANA: Ah! I would have preferred
Less zeal!
(Titania gestures in surprise)
Don't you go believing that I love him,
This prowler of forests, pale and harmonious.
He's a dreamer, a fool who chats with the wind
And walks through shivering flowers, drinking
The idle sensuality of the easterly breeze.
At least you won't be a rival.
Surely, he will touch you with his human desires.
If his lip offers insult to your snowy hands,
You will sound your horn and you will ruin everything
In the fogs of this native sky.

TITANIA: (impatiently) Eh! Yes, no question.
Let's go towards this child.

(A hunting flute in the distance, than a raised voice.)

ORIANA: He's here. I hear
His songs.

TITANIA: Yes, down there, indecisive and floating
With murmurs of flute awakening closed flowers.
Let's spy on him. Come let's hide ourselves among these roses.

SILVERE: (in the distance)
Girls dancing in the vines
On the dark and charming lake
Listening to the swans' bye byes
Expiring melodiously.
Dancing choirs of wine-picking girls
Joining around the wine press
Listening to dreaming voices

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Of swans dying in the night.
(he appears at the edge of the woods)
Yes, the swans! The white songbirds! I envy them
And I'd like to die the way they do, soul ravished,
Singing nobly on beloved streams.
O music! Woods with perfumed orchards,
A potent song escapes, intoxicating me.
Down there, folks told me, one day you may live
Without hearing the triumphant noise of trees.
But, be certain, they were mocking me. It's false.
Because, as for me, I know for sure, to live you must
Mix your voice with the gay or plaintive sound
Of the good forest, with breezes, with streams.
O my god! I would like to be all the birds.
(listens to a nightingale singing)
Nightingale. He's going away! The beasts are naughty!
(turning towards the trees, hands joined as if praying to the
nightingale)
I'd so much like to know the song you're singing!

(Silvere leans back against the tree as in ecstasy. Titania half
emerges from the bushes and gestures to Oriana to remain hidden.)

TITANIA: Languishing night! Distant odor of hay,
Ecstasy! Ah! I am mad! It's time. Let's punish
The insulter!
(turning towards Silvere)
Heavens! He's asleep. A sorceress
Has touched him, perhaps, or a gypsy
Poured over his eyes a vase of sleepiness.
What's he doing there, standing up?
(to Silvere)
Why, you are like
Birds dozing in branches. No question
You aren't listening to me!

SILVERE: (without turning) I'm not sleeping, I am listening.
Begone. The peaceful night was so sweet.

TITANIA: Rude! No, I intend to seat myself near you,
Quite near, to disturb you.

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(Titania bursts into laughter. Silvere turns, astonished.)

SILVERE: My God, am I in a delirium?
What marvelous bird was singing?

TITANIA: That's my laugh!

SILVERE: Oh! mercy, laugh again!

TITANIA: You want
To be alone in the happy shadow of thickets;
Make the woods laugh. I'm leaving.

SILVERE: (supplicating) I beg you,
The two of us will watch in the ornate forest.
Stay! You must know mysterious tunes.
Just now I was naughty. How bright
Your eyes are!
(picking a flower, as Titania sits on a sort of bench covered with
moss, she plays with the horn she holds in her hand)
Take this flower, it's a primrose.
This other one too.

TITANIA: (taking the flowers) What's your name?

SILVERE: Silvere!

TITANIA: And what do you do?

SILVERE: I sing with shepherds.
Here, these flowers, too! Put these light lilies
There, in the horn, just like in a white vase.

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I know the whole woods. I know where the periwinkle
Hides and I know which tree is going to flower.
Would you like some hawthorn? Oh! I would like to offer you
The whole Springtime! Still. I'm afraid of you. You are
Very beautiful!

TITANIA: (coquettish) You think so!

SILVERE: Yes, I've seen in fests,
Among kings dressed in silver and satin,
A joyous queen with a babyish smile
But your hand is more royal than hers.

TITANIA: Truly?

SILVERE: And your voice, blond musician
Has the air of commanding these obedient woods.
Come closer, amongst the lilies. Oh! I feel I'm
Fainting delightfully.

(Silvere keeps gathering flowers; he brings them to Titania. Titania
keeps playing with the horn in which he places flowers as in a vase.
When Silvere turns toward her, she nonchalantly places the horn on the
mossy bench.)

SILVERE: Stay close by like that.
I am dreaming that divine night is bending
Over me like a beautiful and serene sister.

ORIANA: (leaving the bushes)
Get out of here, he loves you enough.

TITANIA: (to Oriana) Soon.
(to herself)
O sweet

OBERON'S HORN

Words of love!

SILVERE: See, in your breath
I'm inhaling flowers taken from the plain.
Give me your lips.

TITANIA: (not protecting herself very well) No! No!

ORIANA: (coming out of her bushes) Isn't it time
Yet?

TITANIA: (as if in ecstasy) Time?

ORIANA: Come on, quick, the horn?

SILVERE: Your blonde hair illuminates and perfumes
The sweet shadow and the evening veils with foggy light.

ORIANA: Let's hurry up!

TITANIA: (to Oriana) A minute more! Could you be afraid?
(laughing to herself)
I'm laughing
But my heart is trembling like a startled bird.

SILVERE: (rising, going toward her and hurling himself on her)
I love you!

ORIANA: Will you blow that horn!

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TITANIA: So be it! My job's finished.
(with an affected irony, she frees herself)
Goodnight, child! Yes, from irony I allowed
Your young lips to wander on my scattered hair
And I was laughing with you. But that's enough, I'm leaving.
(going toward the bench and picking up the horn)

SILVERE: You're leaving! O my God, you are leaving me. I'm trembling.
What have I done? Stay! Why it seems to me
Since you are fleeing me that the summer moon
Is withdrawing to heaven and taking back its light.
It seems to me that the forests are desolated
That you are going to carry them off like stolen flowers
In your dress, and with them all the stars of heaven in your hands.
O I am suffering from love

(Silvere weeps, head in hands. Titania puts the horn back on the bench.)

TITANIA: (dreaming) A delicious thought
Spreading over me again!

SILVERE: You've taken my calm evenings from me,
You've taken the forests and the palm gardens,
You've taken the fraternal friendship of the birds from me.
I will sing no more: eternal sobs
Will choke my beloved songs in me.
When I am walking under the sad branches
I will no longer know the caress of the woods
And my exiled heart will no longer hear its voice.
(Titania pretends to be looking ironically at him)
O I will die from your scornful glance!

TITANIA: Well, no! I lied! You know, o breeze,
O luminous and blond footpath that I walked through,
And you, clear, friendly fountain yes, you will know him,
You towards whom I incline my aerial glory,
I can no longer leave now. I am his.

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SILVERE: What are you saying?

TITANIA: Take me, Silvere, I consent.

SILVERE: Come! I am going to carry you off in my trembling arms
Across the splendor of the guilty forest.
So that the marriage of our two dreams shall be accomplished
The nuptial stars are closing their clement eyes.
In all the woods for the success of lovers
A fairy springtime weighs on the foliage.
Everything is silent. Not even the cry of an awakened little bird,
Not a shiver of wind on the calm lawn.
Come! Down there, I think I see heaven on the horizon
Opening for us a divine door.
Come! We are going to go into a fine ravine
And during our first embrace, we will feel
The indulgent roses leaning over our heads.

TITANIA: Yes, love's intoxication disturbs my ardent soul
Let's flee!

ORIANA: (leaving the bushes)
Are you going to blow that horn! She's fleeing. Reckless!
You are avenging me too well, Titania! Thanks.
I didn't dream of punishing him like this.
Titania, Titania! Alas in the bushes—
(she looks in the thicket)
She weakened! The flowers are shaking around her,
Her undone hair seems like a stream of gold.
Oh! I intend to save her. I'm going to take the horn
Myself!
(she grabs the horn and puts it to her lips, the horn makes no sound)
Prodigy! The horn remains mute!
Why, no—it's just these flowers. Get out, I tell you.
Nasty flowers!
(she tears the flowers out violently)
Finally, my resounding calls
Are going to evoke the saviour king.
(she is about to blow when she takes a last look in the bushes)
Too late!

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(Titania and Silvere appear in the midst of the trees.)

TITANIA: I prefer you to the king of magic glades.
I am a woman and, fleeing nostalgic dreams
In your arms, I will forget the joyous byways,
The divine shade and superhuman silences.
When kisses join our impassioned lips
Terrestrial love is the sweetest of fairies.

CURTAIN