



## *Cinderella | Cendrillon*

By Jules Massenet

Libretto by Henri Cain

English translation by H. Crafton Chapman

### Synopsis

*By Benjamin Robinson*

#### Act 1, Chez Madame de la Haltière

Early in the morning, the household of much-put-upon servants is groaning about another day's hard labor as they prepare tea and breakfast for Madame de la Haltière and her two daughters, Noémie and Dorothée. Pandolfe, husband of Madame de la Haltière, is looking for a quiet spot to do some reading; however, with his wife and stepdaughters noisily ringing, relaxation is out of the question. Pandolfe laments his choice to remarry, but did so feeling that his daughter, Lucette, whom they tauntingly call "Cinderella", needed a mother.

Madame de la Haltière comes downstairs with Noémie and Dorothée and announces that the two young women will be presented to the King that night at a lavish ball, with the hopes that one of them will be picked by the Prince to be his bride. In a flurry of excitement, the dressmakers and coiffeurs arrive to get Noémie and Dorothée ready for the ball and Madame de la Haltière has her portrait painted. The two stepdaughters grow jealous of each other and begin to fight, ultimately ruining the painting.

Hours later, Cinderella is finally able to finish her chores. She longs to attend the ball, too, but she was not allowed to go – nor does she have a dress. A strange light manifests and a kind woman appears. She is Cinderella's Fairy Godmother, attended by a team of fairies. The Fairy Godmother has heard Cinderella's wishes and transforms her so that she can go to the ball. She tells Cinderella that she must return home by midnight.

#### Act 2, At the Court

The Prince is attended by a legion of advisors who tell him that his father is expecting him to identify a bride at the ball; he is doubtful and grows tired of the royal routine.

Guests begin arriving and are introduced to the Prince. Madame de la Haltière and her daughters make a most distinct impression. All of a sudden, Cinderella arrives, but no one recognizes her. The Prince is instantly taken with her and declares his love. The clock strikes midnight and she flees, but loses a slipper.

## *Intermission*

### Act 3, In the Home of the Fairies

Cinderella reflects on the ball but realizes that she will never be able to have her dream realized. She overhears Madame de la Haltière telling Noémie and Dorothée that the unknown woman's manners must have put the Prince in an icy mood and forced the woman to flee. Cinderella misses her true mother and resolves to die beneath the fairies' tree.

The Prince appears and while he cannot see Cinderella, he recognizes her voice. They fall asleep under the watch of the fairies.

### Act 4, Chez Madame de la Haltière

The fairies have spirited Cinderella back home, where Pandolfe watches over her. A royal herald announces the Prince is looking for the woman who lost her slipper at the ball. An army of eligible women arrive, but when the Prince sees Cinderella, he knows he has found his true love. Madame de la Haltière ingratiates herself to Cinderella and Pandolfe declares happily ever after.