



# the Merry Widow

## **ACT I: Paris, 1905**

### **Scene 1: An ante-room in the Pontevedrian Embassy**

Undersecretaries and the French Attaché (Camille de Rosillion) are finishing work prior to the ball to be given at the Embassy that evening. The Ambassador's secretary (Njegus) enters with another pile of bills, and all lament their country's precarious financial situation.

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 is reportedly seeking 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 shakily to her marriage vows.

Njegus interrupts the lovers and they leave as Danilo enters, more than a little intoxicated. Njegus informs Danilo of the marriage plans. He is amused at the suggestion and lapses into an alcoholic slumber.

The Baron returns and orders Njegus to ensure Danilo is sober for the ball.

### **Scene 2: The ballroom in the Pontevedrian Embassy.**

Hanna Glawari arrives and Danilo is presented to her. They are shocked to recognize one another, having been lovers in Pontevedro some ten years earlier when Hanna was a peasant girl. Danilo had put an end to their affair at the insistence of his aristocratic parents.

He is amazed at the transformation in Hanna and, in his confusion, cools his forehead with a handkerchief which Hanna recognizes as the keepsake she gave him many years ago.

Danilo attempts to explain himself and his love for Hanna, but she rejects his advances, suggesting that perhaps now he is more interested in her money. Alone, Danilo recalls their earlier days together.

The Baron re-enters with Hanna and bids her to choose a partner. Hanna regretting her earlier coolness chooses Danilo, but he, still smarting, refuses.

Valencienne urges Camille to dance with Hanna to avoid an awkward situation. Hanna graciously accepts and they dance together, but in the course of changing partners, Hanna finds herself in the arms of Danilo. She continues to resist his advances but cannot disguise the love she still feels for him.

## **ACT II: The Garden of Hanna's Villa**

Hanna is holding a Pontevedrian soiree at her Parisian villa where the guests celebrate with their national dances. As they all go in to supper, the Baron, Danilo and Njegus arrange to meet at ten o'clock in the pavilion for a small diplomatic discussion on Danilo's progress with Hanna. All is apparently going well.

The Baron's wife, Valencienne and her lover Camille sneak into the deserted garden and she finally succumbs to his persuasive passion; they withdraw into the darkness of the pavilion, unaware that they are being observed by Njegus. As the Ambassador and Danilo approach, Njegus panics and locks the pavilion door. Looking through the keyhole, the Ambassador sees all.

In the ensuing scuffle to wrestle the key from Njegus, Hanna appears and, realizing the situation, releases Valencienne through a side door and takes her place.

The Baron unlocks the door and orders the guilty couple to explain themselves. To his amazement, Camille emerges, followed by Hanna, who shocks everyone by announcing her engagement to Camille. The astounded guests offer frigid congratulations and depart. Danilo is the last to leave and in a frenzy, throws at Hanna's feet the handkerchief which she had, a moment ago, re-tied their union. She picks it up knowing that he truly loves her.

## **\*\*\* 20 MINUTE INTERMISSION \*\*\***

### **ACT III: Chez Maxim**

The Pontevedrians have come to drown their sorrows and spend their last francs at Chex Maxim. Gaiety prevails until Camille unwisely appears, hoping to meet Valencienne. The Pontevedrians, led by Valencienne, jeer at him. Her mockery 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. Hanna and Valencienne attempt to intervene. The Baron realizes, 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 his penitent and forgiving arms.

## **\*\*\* 20 MINUTE INTERMISSION \*\*\***

