



The Guide to Musical Theatre

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS

Music by Jacques Offenbach: book and lyrics by Don White:
score compiled and edited by Patric Schmid

SYNOPSIS

This is the sort of operetta Offenbach might have written and uses much of the music he had intended for a work for America, together with other gems that lie hidden in unperformed Offenbach scores. The racy, witty and brilliantly zany story concerns the amorous adventures of the polygamous Columbus, who, against his will, is sent across the sea pursued by three wives and a fiancée to find the riches of the Indies. He unwittingly comes across an even greater treasure in the shape of a Cola nut, thus discovering not only a new world but one of America's greatest treasures, Coca Cola! Although not an adaptation, this work has been performed successfully by amateurs and is suitable for companies who perform opera or prefer original versions.



THE STORY

ACT ONE A Square in Cordova in 1492.

The young ladies of Cordova, bored with snapping their castanets, shouting 'Ole', are delighted when Beatriz tells them she is engaged. The object of her affections, Christopher Columbus, explains to the young men of the town that he has discovered the art of seduction - marriage. We soon discover it is an art he has been practising all over Europe, for his past catches up with him in the shape of Rosa, Fleurette and Gretel, wives he has wooed, won and walked out on in Italy, France and Switzerland. Columbus tries to hide from this trio of termagants in the middle of a demonstration organised by the Round Earth Society, led by Luis de Torres. To no avail. Columbus' wives accuse him of quadrigamy, and Cordova's sensitive Chief of Police arrests him - along with everybody else in sight.

ACT TWO The Royal Palace

Queen Isabella has a hangover. Her attempts to recall the events of the night before are interrupted by a disturbance outside the palace. The prisoners are brought before her. Guilty or not guilty? Columbus is asked. He replies that dazzled by Isabella's beauty he has quite forgotten the defence he had prepared. Case dismissed, says Isabella. And so is everybody else - except, of course, Columbus, who is left alone with Her Majesty to fight for his honour. Just in the nick of time, King Ferdinand arrives. Isabella hastily explains that Columbus was showing her a new way... to the East. Ferdinand thinks this is a splendid idea for replenishing the coffers left empty by Isabella's shopping expeditions, and offers Columbus the Nina, the Pinta and the Santa Maria cheap. Isabella loans her jewels to pay for them (at 49½%) and, as his crew - all of his fellow disturbers of the peace.

ACT THREE Aboard the Santa Maria

Columbus is seasick. The rest of the crew are finding the sea voyage most pleasant - until their first Atlantic storm, and the discovery that they have gone off the map. Once again Columbus is blamed for their misfortune and despite Beatriz' plea for clemency, he is put into a longboat and cast adrift. As they plan to turn back to Spain, the lookout cries 'land ho!'

ACT FOUR A deep forest, somewhere in downtown Manhattan.

The ladies feel quite sure that they have not reached the Indies and an attack by Red Indians confirms their doubts. They are saved however by Columbus who, wasting no time, had immediately married Princess Minnehaha on his arrival the day before and is now honorary chief of the tribe. What is more he has discovered gold - not quite the kind they'd been thinking of, but enough to make millionaires of them all. Pausing long enough only to name the New World, and for Luis to announce his engagement to Beatriz, they set sail back to Spain.

Scenes and Settings

ACT ONE A Square in Cordova in 1492.

ACT TWO The Royal Palace

ACT THREE Aboard the Santa Maria

ACT FOUR A deep forest, somewhere in downtown Manhattan.

MUSICAL NUMBERS

Act I

1. Overture (Les Bavards - overture)
2. Couplets of the Castanets (Maitre Peronilla - couplet des Petits Valets)
3. Columbus' Serenade (Les Braconniers - Serenade)
4. Waltz of Surrender (Boule de Neige - Valse du Divorce)
5. Trio of the Three Wives (Les Braconniers - quintet no.11)
6. (a) Fleurette's chanson (Docteur Ox - Marche Bohemienne)
7. (b) Rosa's rondo (Belle Lurette - rondeau)
8. (c) Gretel's Tyrolienne (Le 66 - Tyrolienne)
9. The world is round (Vert-Vert - couplets dialogues)
10. Married Man duet (Maitre Peronilla - introduction)
11. Finale (Boule de Neige - Finale Act 1)

Act 2

12. Chorus (La Creole - chorus no. 4)
13. Fanfare (Voyage dans la Lune - fanfare)
14. Isabella's Hangover Song (Belle Lurette - couplets du souper)
15. Polka of arrest (Madame l'Archiduc - polka de l'arrestation)
16. Columbus' plea (Le Pont des Soupirs - Le Reve)
17. Love duet (Les 3 baisers du Diable - grand duo dramatique)
18. Couplets de Ferdinand (Les Bergers - couplets no.15B)
19. Jewel Song (La Boulangere a des Ecus - quartet no. 6)
20. Finale
21. a) Introduction (La Princesse de Trebizonde - finale Act 2)
22. b) Conclusion (Docteur Ox - finale Act 2)

Act 3

23. Barcarolle (La Creole - barcarolle)
24. Seasick song (La Princess de Trebizonde - couplets du Mal de Dents)
25. Lovely Night (Vert-Vert - Belle Nuit)
26. Storm (Vent du Soir - L'Orage)
27. Off the map (La Boite au Lait - quartet no.4)
28. Overboard ensemble (Mesdames de la Halle - ensemble no.8)
29. Couplets of Beatriz (Dragonette - couplets no.6)
30. Finale (Maitre Peronilla - finale Act 2)

Act 4

31. Entracte (Maitre Peronilla - entracte Act 2)
32. Indies Trio (Fleurette - trio)
33. Luis' Romance (Vert-Vert - Romance no.3B)
34. Scene - Indians! (Docteur Ox - scene no.7)
35. Coca-Cola Song (La Boite au Lait - couplets des Modeles)
36. Thanks to Christopher Columbus (La Boite au Lait - Rondo du Lait)
37. Finale (Fantasio - finale)

CAST OF CHARACTERS Principals: 5 female, 6 male

- Christopher Columbus
- Beatriz, his fiancée
- Rosa Columbus
- Fleurette Columbus
- Gretel Columbus
- Luis de Torres, president of the Round Earth Society
- The Chief of Police
- Queen Isabella
- King Ferdinand
- A tourist
- A waiter
- Princess Minnehaha Columbus
- Esperanza
- Carmelita
- Manuela
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- Valencia Townspeople, policeman, courtiers, Red Indians, etc

INSTRUMENTATION:

2 flutes, oboe, 2 clarinets, bassoon, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, 2 trombones, 3 percussion, accordion, strings

Vocal Score on hire only