Cesare Pugni:
Music from Five Ballets
Ondine
Esmeralda
Pas de Quatre
Catarina, ou La Fille du bandit
Théolinda, ou Le Lutin de la vallée
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Edited and Introduced by Robert Ignatius Letellier
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This book first published 2012
Cambridge Scholars Publishing
12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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Cesare Pugni (St Petersburg, c. 1860)
TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ondine</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pas de Séduction</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catarina, ou La Fille du bandit</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 1 Introduction</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 2</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 3</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 4</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 5</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 6 Galop</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contredanses françaises</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 1 Lucrezia Borgia</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 2 Semiramide</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 3 Il Barbiere di Siviglia</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 4 Roberto il Diavolo</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 5 Les Huguenots</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 6 Norma</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Théolinda, ou Le Lutin de la vallée ................................................................. 73

1. Prologue ............................................................................................................. 74
2. Scène de folie .................................................................................................... 91

Hungaria .................................................................................................................. 94
3. [Untitled] ........................................................................................................... 97
4. La Métamorphose ............................................................................................. 98
5. Szardasz ............................................................................................................. 102
6. [Untitled] .......................................................................................................... 105
7. Final du 1er acte ............................................................................................... 107
8. Antracte Scène et Valse du gnome .................................................................... 109
9. Scène et Pas des miroires ............................................................................... 114
10. Pas des lucioles ............................................................................................... 118
11. Pas des Quatre Éléments .............................................................................. 128
12. [Untitled] ........................................................................................................ 144
13. Pas fantastique et final .................................................................................... 145
14. Antracte du 3ème acte et Scène ...................................................................... 153
15. Grand pas mixte .............................................................................................. 161
16. Danse de la noce, La Lituana et La Friss ....................................................... 174
17. Krakoviak ........................................................................................................ 180
18. Marche à l'église ............................................................................................. 184
19. Scène ............................................................................................................... 185
20. Panorama ........................................................................................................ 186
21. Friska final du ballet ...................................................................................... 188
Cesare Pugni was born in Genoa on 31 May 1802, and studied in Milan from 1815 to 1822 with Antonio Rollo and Bonifazio Asioli. He made his debut as a composer at La Scala in 1826 with the opera *Elerz e Zulmida*. He became a cymbalist in the theatre orchestra, and on the death of Vincenzo Lavigna was appointed musical director. He later moved to Paris where he became director of the Paganini Institute. There he met the great choreographers of the time and started an artistic collaboration that was to prove one of the most productive in the history of ballet. He began working closely with Jules Perrot, first in Paris, then in London. He later followed him to St Petersburg and became official composer of the Imperial theatres in St Petersburg. His most famous collaboration, with Marius Petipa, now followed, lasting until his death on 26 January 1870.

Pugni is known above all for his enormous output of musical works, including more than 300 ballets, a dozen operas, over 40 masses, other polyphonic works and a few symphonies, among which was a *Sinfonia a canone* highly praised by Meyerbeer. This extremely prolific composer was very popular with the public, his ballets being so easy to listen to and to understand. He also found no difficulty in adapting his music to suit all sorts of choreographic needs, and many different performers. His versatility and facility in composition helped him succeed in his international career, even when they set limits on his artistic achievement. His time in Paris with Perrot was marked by an extraordinarily intense activity, which became even more evident when he reached Her Majesty’s Theatre in London. Here Pugni presented some of the most renowned ballets of the 19th century, such as *Esmeralda* and the *Pas de Quatre* (in 1844 and 1845 respectively), which still find their place in some modern repertories. He also worked with Saint-Léon, Paolo Taglioni, Marius Petipa, and some of the greatest dancers of the century. Some of his ballets already well-known in Europe were transferred to St Petersburg, although he also composed new ballets for that city.

**Sources**

*Ondine* St Petersburg: Basile Denotkine, n.d. [c. 1851]

*Esmeralda* London: Published at Her Majesty's Theatre, n.d. [c. 1844]

*Pas de Quatre* London: Published at Her Majesty's Theatre, n.d. [c. 1845]

*Catarina, ou La Fille du bandit* St Petersburg: A. Büttner, n.d. [c.1850]

*Théolinda, ou Le Lutin de la vallée* St Petersburg: F. Stellowsky, n.d. [1862]

Note: The deterioration of age has in some cases resulted in discoloration and faintness of print in the scanning process.

**Cesare Pugni Ondine**

Ballet in 6 scenes
Scenario and choreography: Jules Perrot and Fanny Cerrito
Music: Cesare Pugni
Scenery: W. Grieve
First Performance: London, Her Majesty’s Theatre, 22 June 1845
Principal dancers: Fanny Cerrito (Ondine), Jules Perrot (Matteo), Mme Copère (Hydrola), Mlle Guy-Stephan (Giannina)

This is a variant on the famous water nymph story by Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué, *Undine* (1811).

**Scene 1**

On the coast of Sicily, fisherfolk are preparing for the Festival of the Madonna. Matteo, a fisherman, is present with his betrothed Giannina. He remains behind to pull his nets, and draws in a shell containing the naiad Ondine, who has fallen in love with him. She tries to tempt Matteo, leading him up to a high rock from which she falls to the water, inviting Matteo to follow. Some peasants enter just in time to save him.
Scene 2
In Matteo’s cottage he recounts his adventure to Giannina. A gust of wind blows open the window, and Ondine enters, visible only to Matteo. She frustrates Giannina’s spinning, and eventually leaps onto the window looking over the sea, inviting Matteo to follow. She resolves to show Matteo something of her world in a dream.

Scene 3
In a submarine cavern, Ondine rises amidst a group of nymphs and they dance a pas de six. Hydrola, the Queen of the Waters, warns Ondine against consorting with mortals, but the naiad, plucking a rose, is prepared to assume mortality if it means winning the sleeping Matteo.

Scene 4
At the shrine of the Madonna, the townspeople dance a tarantella. All kneel and pray at the Vespers bell. Ondine rises from a fountain and attracts the attention of Matteo, who pursues her through the kneeling throng. Giannina brings him to his senses and he goes to fetch his boat. Ondine lures Giannina into the water, and assumes her shape. As a consequence of her assumed mortality, Ondine sees her shadow for the first time in the moonlight, and pursues it with fascination, eventually dancing with it joyously. Matteo rows Ondine away, while Giannina is borne by naiads to the palace of Queen Hydrola.

Scene 5
Ondine is asleep in Giannina’s bed, and despite warning from Hydrola, refuses to relinquish her mortality, although weak and exhausted. Matteo and his mother enter, and he and Ondine dance the Pas de la rose flétrie, a tarantella in which Ondine continually tries to overcome her weariness, to Matteo’s concern.

Scene 6
During the wedding procession, Ondine is hardly able to support herself. Hydrola and the naiads make a last effort to save Ondine. The Queen has restored Giannina to life and now leads her forward. Matteo is overjoyed to recover his true love while Ondine resumes her immortal state and is borne in triumph to her home beneath the sea.

The ballet became famous for the conception of the generic scene type of the Pas de l’Ombre. It was praised for its magnificent décor, but not felt to be the equal of Giselle (The Times, 23 January 1843). Pugni’s music was described as “singularly appropriate, quite descriptive, and adds a charm to the perfection of the ballet. ...the musical accompaniment which describes the rise and fall of the waves is eminently characteristic and beautiful: the very ripple of the flow, and the rushing sound of the ebb over the pebbly strand, are heard and fully satisfy the ear”.

Fanny Cerrito proved herself as a choreographer as well as a dancer, and established a legend in the famous Shadow Dance: “The mountains in the background, which shone with the light of day, become red with the tints of sunset, and at last the moon rises, and a full blue light is thrown upon the stage. This is strong enough to show the shadow of Cerrito, who having assumed substantial form for the first time, views the outline of herself with wonder. The Pas de l’Ombre in which she wildly dances to the shadow, and tries to catch it, is one of those things which none but Cerrito could do. The conception is charming, and we only regret the pas is not somewhat longer” (Beauties of the Opera and Ballet).

Ondine, with Carlotta Grisi in the leading role, was produced by Perrot in St Petersburg in 1851 under the title The Naiad and the Fisherman. On 23 July, the nameday of Grand Duchess Olga Nikolaevna, a gala performance was given in the open air. Perrot used a specially built platform raised just above the water of the lake at the Ozersky Pavilion, and the naiads glided to the platform in boats shaped like shells. The natural backdrop of trees, coupled with fine weather and a beautiful moon that shone on the scene, made it a singularly memorable event in ballet history.
Pugni *Ondine* (Scenes 1 & 2)

Pugni *Ondine* (Scene 3 Pas de l'ombre)
Cesare Pugni Esmeralda

Ballet in 3 acts and 5 scenes
Scenario and choreography: Jules Perrot
Music: Cesare Pugni
Sets: William Grieve
Costumes: Mme Copère
Machinery: D. Sloman
First performance: London, Her Majesty’s Theatre, 9 March 1844
Principal dancers: Carlotta Grisi (Esmeralda), Jules Perrot (Pierre Gringoire), Arthur Saint-Léon (Febo), Louis-François Gosselin (Claude Frollo), Antoine-Louis Coulon (Quasimodo), Adelaide Frassi (Fleur-de-Lys), Mme Copère (Aloisa)

The ballet is based on the story of Victor Hugo’s Notre-Dame de Paris (1831), somewhat altered and without the final catastrophe. It depicts the hopeless love of the deaf and hunchbacked Quasimodo for the gypsy girl Esmeralda. She has inadvertently become the wife of the student poet Gringoire during the follies of the Cour de Miracles, and is also being pursued by the evil archdeacon Claude Frollo. Her principal rescuer from Frollo’s attempted abduction is the handsome Captain Phoebus, with whom Esmeralda falls in love. Frollo’s jealous intrigues cause her to be accused of murder, and she is awaiting execution when Quasimodo exposes Frollo as the real villain. The early versions of the ballet have this happy ending.

The poet Gringoire is captured by pickpockets and taken to their lair, ‘the Court of Miracles’. There he is condemned to be hanged for the crime of having no money in his pockets. He will be reprieved only if some woman among those present will consent to marry him. The young Esmeralda, moved to pity, consents to the bargain, but the archdeacon of Notre Dame de Paris, Claude Frollo, enamoured of her, plans to possess her that very night. Frollo’s gang and his hunchbacked servant Quasimodo take Esmeralda and Gringoire captive, but are foiled by the arrival of the officer Captain Phoebus. Love between Phoebus and Esmeralda blossoms immediately, although he is engaged to marry Fleur-de-Lys. Esmeralda and Gringoire are invited to dance at the festivities. Forgetting all prudence, Esmeralda and Phoebus turn towards each other, and dance together to the despair of the bride and the indignation of the guests. Leaving the crowd, they declare their mutual love. Frollo, who has been watching unseen, throws himself at Phoebus, and stabs him. Esmeralda is accused of Phoebus’ murder, and condemned to death. Just as the gallows are being erected, Phoebus appears. Frollo’s blow was not mortal after all. Reunited with him, Esmeralda shows the crowd who the real villain is.

The ballet was reasonably successful, and Carlotta Grisi was pronounced the perfect personification of Esmeralda, combining the innocent gaiety of Fanny Cerrito, the sparkling coquetry of Fanny Elssler, and the ineffable poetry of Marie Taglioni. A year after the London premiere, Grisi introduced two of the variations from Esmeralda into Mazilier’s Le Diable à quatre. Another great Esmeralda, especially praised for her superlative dramatic interpretation, was Fanny Elssler, prima ballerina of the first performance in St Petersburg on 21 December 1848. Her partners were Didier (Quasimodo), Perrot (Gringoire), and Golts (Frollo). Elssler chose the part again for her farewell performance at the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow in March 1851. Cyril Beaumont recounted an anecdote passed on by Prince Egalytchev, who was an eyewitness on that occasion. So many bouquets, over 300, were thrown on the stage at the end of the first act that Elssler used them in place of a sofa in the second. In this act she used to write her lover’s name, Febo, on a wall in chalk, instead of composing it with cut-out letters according to established tradition. But that evening the ballerina wrote Moscow in Cyrillic letters (‘Mockba’) which set off an ovation that seemed endless.

Esmeralda was in the vein of historical romantic dance that had given rise to La Sylphide and Giselle. It was almost half a century before this vein was exhausted, lasting into the Second Empire until the death of Saint-Léon, one of the leading figures of the last phase of the Romantic ballet. In spite of the great interpretive opportunities it offered, Esmeralda made little enduring impression in England, France and Italy. On the other hand, when it reached Russia, it immediately established itself in the repertory. The ballet became immensely popular and was repeatedly revived and adapted. Fanny Elssler enjoyed one of her biggest triumphs in the title role. Among other distinguished ballerinas who danced the role were Marie Petipa, Carolina Rosati, Nadejda Bogdanova, Claudia Cucchi, Eugenia Sokolova, Virginia Zucchi, and Matilda Kschessinskaya. For the production of 1888 by Marius Petipa, Riccardo Drigo was asked to compose several new numbers, including the Esmeralda Pas de Deux and the Diana and Acteon Pas de Deux. These became very popular in their own right.
Other notable versions of the ballet include:

1) Arthur Saint-Léon (after Jules Perrot), Berlin, Court Theatre, 19 January 1847;
2) Hippolyte Monplaisir (after Perrot), New York, Park Theater, 18 September 1847;
3) Domenico Ronzani (after Perrot), Milan, La Scala, 31 January 1854; with scenery by Filippo Peroni and Luigi Vimercati; principal dancers: Caroline Pochini, Effisio Catte, Domenico Rossi;
4) Ferdinando Pratesi (after Perrot), Milan Canobbiana Theatre, spring 1865;
5) Marius Petipa (after Perrot), St Petersburg, Bolshoi Theatre, 17 December 1886; then at the Maryinsky Theatre, 21 November 1899;
6) Agrippina Vaganova (after Perrot), Leningrad, Kirov Theatre, 3 April 1935, with scenery by V. Khodasevich;
Cesare Pugni \textit{Pas de Quatre}

Ballet divertissement

Choreography: Jules Perrot

Music: Cesare Pugni

First performance: London, Her Majesty’s Theatre, 12 July 1845

This is a composition of pure dance, without a plot, for four ballerinas in long white tutus. It opens with a static tableau of the four dancers, who then draw apart with mutual curtseys of homage. Each in turn executes a solo variation in front of the others, and then stands still again. Finally they all join in a pas de quatre that ends in a grouping made famous for posterity in the contemporary lithograph by A. Chalon. Here the ballerina who is first among equals is crowned by her three partners: Taglioni central, Grisi to the left, Grahn right back, Cerrito right front.

Created by Marie Taglioni (1804–1884), Carlotta Grisi (1819–1899), Fanny Cerrito (1817–1909) and Lucile Grahn (1819–1907), this plotless ballet epitomizes the Romantic cult of the ballerina. The variations were especially designed to suit the particular character and skill of each dancer. Grahn began with her variation, then came Grisi, a waltz by Cerrito and finally a solo by Taglioni. The final ensemble is a bolero in crescendo. Marie Taglioni was already a legend when the \textit{Pas de quatre} opened in London. She was crowned with a garland of white roses during the ovation that followed this celebration of the Romantic ideal of the prima ballerina.

The impresario Benjamin Lumley, director of Her Majesty’s Theatre, managed to persuade four of the most famous ballerinas of the time to appear together on stage. This project of presenting a combined performance by four leading dancers excluded a fifth, Fanny Elssler (1810–1884), who was the implacable rival of Taglioni. Lumley’s inspiration was helped to fruition by the dancer and choreographer Jules Perrot (1810–1892). Great delicacy and tact was needed to maintain cooperation between these famous and temperamental stars. Marie Taglioni was the creator of \textit{La Sylphide} (1832), and had come to represent the archetype of the Romantic ballerina. Carlotta Grisi was famous for her expressiveness and versatility, and had just created \textit{Giselle} (1841). Lucile Grahn, who had realized the title role of the Danish \textit{Sylphide} (1836), personified the pure style of Bouronville. Fanny Cerrito, who had just created the leading roles in \textit{Ondine} (1843) and \textit{La Vivandière} (1844), had become the favourite of the London public for her great charm as well as her strength and technical accomplishment. Each was allotted a part exactly tailored to her style and technique. Jule Perrot’s choreography captured the pure essence of Romantic dance. He made imaginative use of the French academic technique, now codified into the universally accepted terms, and blended this with the Italian heritage derived from the theories and work of Carlo Blasis.

There were four performances of the \textit{Pas de quatre} in all—with two later presentations in 1847, when the part created by Grahn was given to Carolina Rosati (1825–1905). A version was staged by Perrot at La Scala, Milan, in 1846, as an interpolation in \textit{Le Diable à quatre}, featuring Marie Taglioni, Sofia Fuoco, C. Galetti (i.e. Carolina Rosati), and Carolina Vente. It was then taken to London in 1847 (with Taglioni, Grisi, Cerrito and Rosati). Later reconstructions were pioneered by Keith Lester for the Markova–Dolin Ballet in 1936, initiating a series of revivals with many famous contemporary ballerinas.

Revivals:


The latter version was revived by many companies.
3) New York, 1948 (with Alicia Markova as Taglioni, Mia Slavenska as Grisi, Nathalie Krassovska as Grahn, Alexandra Danilova as Cerrito).
4) Monte Carlo, 1951 (with Alicia Markova, Tatiana Riabouchinska, Paula Hinton, Noel Rossana).
5) A French TV production of the Dolin version with Markova, Hightower, Moreau, and Bourgeois, was televised in 1953.
6) Nervi, 1957 (Alicia Markova, Yvette Chauviré, Carla Fracci, Margrete Schanne).
8) There was a Cuban film production in 1971.

Lester’s version was used at the annual summer courses of the Royal Academy of Dancing.
Le Pas de Quatre, 1845. Lithograph by A. E. Chalon.
From left to right: Carlotta Grisi, Marie Taglioni, Lucile Grahn, Fanny Cerrito
Cesare Pugni Catarina, ou La Fille du bandit

Ballet in 3 acts and 5 scenes
Scenario and choreography: Jules Perrot
Music: Cesare Pugni
Sets: Charles Marshall
First performance: London, Her Majesty’s Theatre, 3 March 1846
Principal dancers: Lucile Grahn (Catarina), Jules Perrot (Diavolino), Louis Gosselin (Salvator Rosa)

The painter Salvator Rosa falls in love with Catarina, a chief of bandits, who is also loved by her lieutenant Diavolino.

Act 1
The painter Salvator Rosa is captured by bandits in the Abruzzi, and falls in love with Catarina, their chief, who in turn is loved by her lieutenant, Diavolino. Though entreated by the artist and an officer who offer her safe conduct, Catarina refuses to lay down her arms. On the contrary, she performs a warlike dance with the bandits, the *Pas stratégique*, miming a battle. When the regular troops arrive, Salvator Rosa falls wounded while defending his beloved Catarina. She is saved by Diavolino, who persuades her to escape with him. The other bandits are taken prisoner. The two fugitives seek asylum in a Roman tavern, where they disguise themselves as servants. The Duke of Collalbano, Salvator Rosa, and his affianced bride, Florida, arrive. The bandits are recognized by the painter. The guards’ attention is distracted by a lively salterello, and the fugitives are once more helped to escape from the soldiers.

Act 2
Having taken refuge in the studio which Salvator is allowed to occupy in the ducal palace, Catarina discovers a portrait of herself. When the Duke, the artist and Florida all visit the studio, she has no alternative but to pass herself off as a model. Salvator lets her stay concealed there, but the jealous Florida has recognized her rival, and reveals the hiding place to her pursuers, and Catarina is captured again.

Act 3
The judges condemn Catarina to death, but she is saved by the painter, who, disguised as a father confessor, helps her to escape through a window. Diavolino, awaiting her, is contemplating the murder of his rival. He and the girl put on masks and mix with the carnival crowds, but are once more discovered and imprisoned. While Catarina is pardoned by the Duke, and reunited with Salvator Rosa, Diavolino escapes yet again, and vanishes, masked, among the merrymakers.

Many of Perrot’s ballets were based on realistic plots. *Catarina* emphasized that Romanticism was a revolutionary movement, especially once the fall of Napoleon had divested the mythological ballet of its former popularity. It also demonstrated how much the triumphs of the Opéra owed their origins to the rhythmic pantomime of theatres like the Porte-Saint-Martin, where Perrot himself had worked as “mime, dancer and monkey”. The ballet grew in popularity because of the fascination and humanity of the unconventional characters who were imbued with the essence of the original story from the artist’s life, and the incomparable elegance of its mass movements. Founded on the contrast between feminine grace and military precision, this work was one of the greatest triumphs of both Lucile Grahn and Fanny Elssler, the second of whom danced the title part in Milan at La Scala in January 1847, and in St Petersburg at the Imperial Ballet in November 1849. It was repeated with equal success by Sofia Fuoco at La Scala in 1853 and danced again in St Petersburg in 1886 by Claudia Cucchi, who personally trained the corps de ballet in military drill and exercises with firearms.
Pugni *Catarina* (Grahn)
Cesare Pugni Théolinda, ou Le Lutin de la vallée

Fantastic ballet in 3 acts with a prologue in 2 scenes
Choreography: A. Saint-Léon.
Music: Cesare Pugni

This work was a revival by Arthur Saint-Léon of Le Lutin de la vallée, with a score by Eugène Gautier. This opéra-ballet had first been produced in Paris in 1853.

Le Lutin de la vallée, an opera-ballet in 2 acts and 3 scenes, by librettists Michael Carré and Albioze, with choreography by Arthur Saint-Léon, and music by Eugène Gautier, was first performed in Paris at the Théâtre Lyrique on 22 July 1853. The libretto served little other purpose than to provide Saint-Léon with opportunities to deploy his multiple talents as dancer, actor and violinist. He was ably seconded by the dancer Mme Marie Guy-Stéphan, who danced the Madrilegna and El Zapateado, and by the singers Adolphine Petit-Brière and Charles Beval. The score contained some pretty choruses. Saint-Léon and Adolphe Adam were said to have interpolated some of their own compositions. The most popular item of the evening was a violin solo composed and played by Saint-Léon, entitled Une matinée à la Campagne in which he reproduced all the noises of the farmyard. The success of the work was good if ephemeral (33 performances), with 4,000 francs taken at each staging.

Jean-François-Eugène Gautier (1822–1878) was a pupil of Habeneck (violin) and Halévy (composition) at the Paris Conservatoire. In 1848 he became third conductor at the Théâtre-Italien, and professor of harmony at the Conservatoire, and in 1872 professor of history there. He composed 14 opéras-comiques, an oratorio (La Mort de Jésus), a cantata (Le 15 août), and religious music (an Ave Maria).

In 1855 Saint-Léon presented the work as a full-scale ballet at the San Carlos Theatre in Lisbon, where it enjoyed some popularity, and at Oporto. As in Le Violon du diable, he danced and played the violin in the same work. In this form it was revived in 1858 in Königsberg (where the music was attributed to Saint-Léon, Pugni and Partay), Vienna and Stuttgart, and in 1859 in Munich, also in Brussels and Hanover.

The work was completely revised as Théolinda, ou, Le Lutin de la vallée for Moscow in 1862. Pugni either re-wrote or arranged the score for the new format. Some of the music appears to have been written by Ludwig Minkus; several dances from this work were later used by Saint-Léon in Minkus ballets: the Hungaria and Pas des Lucioles in Plamya Lyubvi (Fiamma d’amore) (1863) and Néméa (1864), with the Wallachian Wedding and Friska also appearing in Plamya Lyubvi.

Saint-Léon greatly admired the new young star Marfa Muravieva, and chose her to create the title role in the new ballet. The work was revived on 2 January 1865 with Praskovia Lebedeva, again with Lebedeva on 21 January 1866, and once more on 20 January 1870 with Ekaterina Vazem, one of the last contractual engagements the choreographer attended to before leaving Russia. He would die a few months later.

Pugni’s adaptation of this music became popular enough in Russia for it to be published by Stellowsky as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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Exécuté par un grand orchestre à Villa Borghese.
INTRODUCTION DE SCÈNE DE LA SEDUCTION.
du ballet „LA NAJADE.”

Musique de
CESARE PUGNI.

Allegro mosso.

Propriété de l'Éditeur.
S'éternbourg, chez B. Denotkine.
SCÈNE DE LA SEDUCTION.

exécutées par Milî Carlotta Grisi et Milî Andrejanova.

PIANO.

Moderato assai.