

Dream a Little Dream: A Close Look at Don Magnifico's Aria, "Miei rampolli femminini"

MUSICAL HIGHLIGHT

The story of *La Cenerentola* has been mostly set up by the time we meet Don Magnifico. Cenerentola's stepfather has slept through Alidoro's first visit and the announcement by the Prince's courtiers of his search for a bride. But once he appears, Rossini and Ferretti waste no time in fleshing out his comic character with the aria, "Miei rampolli femminini"—my feminine beauties. The entire aria is on **Track 46**; **Tracks 47** through **52** break it into sections for discussion purposes.

Though Don Magnifico praises his daughters with his greeting, the praise instantly turns to criticism, because they've awakened him from a wonderful dream. He makes this bold announcement, strewn with complaints, sung with a general grandiosity, in **Track 47**. Clearly, this is one overbearing, pompous fool of a dad! He retells the dream proper in **Track 48** with a boyish, enthusiastic lilt. He's proud of his dream, and he takes its conclusion quite seriously. But in **Track 49**, he chastises his daughters again for their interruption. Nonetheless, he will interpret the dream. His interpretation, in **Track 50**, essentially states the wish he'll repeat over and over throughout the opera: that his daughters will rise in society and take him along.

The central joke of the aria comes in **Track 51** where without irony or self-awareness, Don Magnifico declares that the ass in the dream represents himself. With **Track 52**, the aria concludes in strains of festive celebration— Don Magnifico's fantasy of the future that awaits him, sung in his characteristic self-promoting, language muddling style.

The Announcers: A Close Look at the Role of the Chorus in *La Cenerentola*

MUSICAL HIGHLIGHT

Throughout *La Cenerentola*, a group of courtiers serve as a sort of Greek chorus. They announce upcoming events and comment on events that just occurred. In this Metropolitan Opera production, they appear out of nowhere and seem to be all-knowing.

In their first appearance, the courtiers interrupt Clorinda and Tisbe's ongoing attacks on Cenerentola to announce the Prince's search for a bride. As students can hear in **Track 53**, they bring a hustling competitive energy into the house—particularly as they speak in dialogue with Cenerentola's stepsisters. In **Track 54**, they accompany Dandini to Don Magnifico's home and prompt "the Prince" to hurry and choose a bride. Providing texture and occasional commentary, the courtiers add weight to a version of the Cinderella story with an unusually large number of male roles (and voices)—literally underscoring the presence of Cinderella and her stepsisters in a male-dominated world.

Winking and Laughing: A Close Look at Dandini, the Performing Valet

MUSICAL HIGHLIGHT

Through most of *La Cenerentola*, Dandini, the Prince's valet, plays the role of prince. With their audience in on the joke, Rossini and Ferretti give Dandini several opportunities to comment on his own performance—and even on the opera itself!

Not long after Dandini arrives at Don Magnifico's home, he finds an opportunity to ask his boss how he's doing. Reading along with **Track 55**, students will see how Dandini comments on his own acting. In Act II, though he's back to being a valet, Dandini's tongue is just as sharp, even when commenting on his boss's fury: **Track 56**. Again, reading along, students may be surprised to find that Dandini seems to know he's a character in a theater piece!