GISELLE

Act 1

Earl Albert is in love with a peasant girl Giselle, but he keeps his title in secret. Another admirer of Giselle, the forester Hans, tries to explain to her that Albert is not the one he seems to be, but Giselle will not listen to him.

Hans creeps into the hunter’s hut and steals Albert’s sword, decorated with the Earl’s Coat of Arms. A horn sounds to announce the arrival of hunters, who are followed by Batilda and her father. They settle in a village to rest. Batilda is charmed by Giselle’s beauty and ingenuousness, and gives her a precious necklace as a present. The hunters leave and the peasants begin to celebrate the Harvest Day. At the height of the celebration Hans enters. He accuses Albert of deceit and presents his sword as evidence. Giselle does not want to believe that the accusation is true. Hans then sounds the horn and the Earl’s bride appears before the confused Earl. Giselle falls into a deep despair and dies.

INTERMISSION

Act 2

It is midnight. Hans has come to Giselle’s grave. The Willises appear, frightening Hans. They leave their graves and incite a great cemetery dance of death. Mirta calls for Giselle’s shadow, which rises from its grave to join the Willises’ dance. Earl Albert also arrives at the cemetery. His despair and sorrow touch Giselle’s heart and she forgives him. The Willises then surround Hans, who is supernaturally compelled to join in the dance of death. While still restrained under the Willises’ power, Hans is thrown into the lake. Albert’s fate appears to be the same when Mirta orders him to partake in the dance of death. Giselle pleads for a reprieve but Mirta resists adamantly. As the sun begins to rise the Willises lose their power. Albert is saved. Giselle then bids a final farewell to her beloved Albert, and returns again to her eternal resting place.