



# THE TALES OF HOFFMANN

JACQUES OFFENBACH

**Fantastic opera in five acts**

**Libretto by Jules Barbier after the play by Jules Barbier and Michel Carré**

**Sung in French with German surtitles**

What do we long for when we love? Can our longings possibly be recognised and fulfilled by another person? Are we in search of ourselves or do we want to merge with the other person? The author, composer and draftsman E. T. A. Hoffmann scrutinised our longings, fantasies and dreams, and peered into the abyss as few others have done. Two French writers turned the author himself into the main character of his stories and cut the ground from under his, and our, feet.

Who does Hoffmann want to love? The doll, the singer, the prostitute? Or in fact just himself? The German-born composer Jacques Offenbach, who enjoyed great success in Paris as an operetta composer and cello virtuoso, reworked this fascinating play as something midway between grand opéra, light-hearted operetta and Romantic blood-curdler. The dark fate of the main character was shared by the work itself: Offenbach died before he was able to complete *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, and after his death two theatres burned down in Paris and Vienna with many scores being destroyed. Music from *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* continues to surface around the world today, which generally only serves to make the opera even more of a puzzle than it was before.

For decades this enigmatic work has exercised a great fascination on director Stefan Herheim. Which is one reason why he hasn't dared stage it yet. Now, for the Bregenz Festival, Herheim is getting together with the conductor Johannes Debus and his team to search for a way of telling these unfinished tales right to the end and presenting the bizarre mechanics of human existence on stage.

## **PREMIERE**

23 July 2015 – 7.30 p.m.

## **FURTHER PERFORMANCES**

26 July – 11 a.m.

30 July, 3 & 6 August – 7.30 p.m.

Festspielhaus

Music Director **Johannes Debus**

Stage Director **Stefan Herheim**

Stage Designer **Christof Hetzer**

Costume Designer **Esther Bialas**

Choir Director **Lukáš Vasilek**

Dramaturg **Olaf A. Schmitt**

**Vienna Symphony Orchestra**

**Prague Philharmonic Choir**

Bregenz Festival 22 July – 23. August 2015