

"GAINSBOROUGH'S DUCHESS"
or
"THE PAINTER AND THE LADY"

By

ALBERT COATES

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Libretto and Lyrics by C. Reginald Grundy

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The opera plays in the late 18th century

The action takes place within 24 hours

C H A R A C T E R S

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH ----- The Artist.
 GEORGE, PRINCE OF WALES ----- Afterwards George IV.
 JOHANN FISCHER ----- Oboe player to the Prince of Wales
 SIR THOMAS TOLLEY ----- Leading supporter of Charles
 James Fox.

BEADLE
 JAMES ----- Footman at Gainsborough's House
 LORD ELDERMERE ----- Equerry to the Prince of Wales.
 LORD ASPEN ----- Friend of the Prince of Wales.
 LORD BEECHMASTER ----- " " " " " "
 MASTER OF CEREMONIES

GEORGIANA, DUCHESS OF
 DEVONSHIRE
 MRS. GAINSBOROUGH ----- Wife of the Artist.
 MOLLY ----- Gainsborough's eldest daughter, in
 love with Fischer.
 PEGGY ----- Gainsborough's younger daughter.
 MISS FOYLE ----- A Harpist.
 LADY BETTY FOSTER ----- Intimate friend of the Duchess.
 FRED A ----- Maid to the Duchess.

Lords and Ladies of the Court.
 Guests at Ranelagh.
 Musicians and Canvassers.

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A C T I

SCENE I

Front Sittingroom in Gainsborough's House.

SCENE 2

GAINSBOROUGH'S Studio

A C T II

SCENE I

The Grounds at Ranelagh

SCENE 2

The Royal Pavilion

A C T III

SCENE I

The Duchess of Devonshire's Boudoir

SCENE 2

Gainsborough's Studio

Act I - Morning
Act II - Evening of the same day
Act III - The following morning

"DUETT and ENTRANCE of the DUCHESS."

Fischer: Oh, how lovely to hold you close to my heart
To see your sweet soul shine thro8 your eyes,
And to feel your dear lips,
So soft, so tender, my angel, my darling--
Tell me you love me - I love you, I love you.
Tell me that no one can ever part us.

Molly: No one, Johann.

Fischer: Beloved, I feel I could fight the whole world.

Molly: Darling, not the whole world,
Just father and mother.

Fischer: Impossible, your mother wants you to marry a lord or a duke,
Your father, someone who has no opinion at all.
He ordered me out of the house
Because I argued with him
That Handel was greater than Bach.

Molly: Oh, but what did you tell him?

Fischer: That his knowledge of music was nil.

Molly: Lud, no wonder. But you can mend this,
Tell him that he was right.

Fischer: Oh no, he was wrong.
Handel is greater than Bach.

Molly: Well, compromise, and say: Handel is equal with Bach.

Fischer: What. Betray my artistic convictions.
Oh no, I could never do that.

Molly: Ah, you don't love me. - Don't love me.

Fischer: Molly.

Molly: Bach is far more important to you than me.

Fischer: Not Bach but the truth.

Molly: Bother the truth, why should I suffer for it?

Fischer: That is exactly my point.
As you can not persuade your parents to give their consent
Let us elope.

Molly: Elope, how can I?
No, no, it's not right.

Fischer: Then you don't love me.

Molly: I do, I do.

Fischer: I don't believe you.

Molly: Johann.

Fischer: My Molly. (Peggy enters)

Peggy: Hide quickly. Her Grace, the Duchess.

Molly: We are lost.

Fischer: Where can I hide?

Peggy: Under the sofa.

Fischer: I can't, it's too low.

James: We're caught, please protect me.
Tell the mistress I've been all this time in the kitchen.

Peggy: Oh, do help.

Molly: It's no use.
Don't move dearest man. Don't move.

Fischer: (sneezes) A --- tchu.

Peggy: Oh, don't sneeze.

Fischer: (Can't help it -- A --- tchu.
(I'm wet -- A --- tchu.

Molly: (I'm fainting.

Peggy: (Balcony scene with Romeo comfortably sneezing under the sofa.
Fischer: (Tch, tch, tch, A - tchi, Atchu.

Molly: Your Grace -- (Entrance of the Duchess)

Duchess: Oh, good people, I'm tired, exhausted, pumped out.

Mrs. Gains.: Your Grace.

Duchess: I've been canvassing amongst the Covent Garden porters,
Kissing the babes of tradesmen, begging, beseeching
And blustering. All for Mr. Fox.

Peggy: A little port?

Duchess: Oh, thank you --
And now, come and sit here by me.

Molly: Hm.

Duchess: Don't be afraid.

Molly: Your Grace, my -- my shoe hurts me so.

Duchess: Your shoe. I know how painful that can be,
But come, Peggy will help you to hop over here on one foot.
I'll soon find out what there is wrong with your shoe.

Molly: Oh, Your Grace, I'm only too certain you will.

Duchess: Now I see the cause of your trouble,
It's not the shoe, it's a boot.

Molly: (Yes, yes -- it's my father's
(He leaves them all over the place.

Fischer: (Ech - atchu. - Ech - atchu.

Molly: I'm fainting.

Peggy: Oh faint and have done with it.--
Oh please, Your Grace, forgive our deception.
We were trying to hide him from mother.

Duchess: A boot and a cold - but I'm anxious to know to whom they belong.

Fischer: To Johann Fischer, Your Grace.

Duchess: But, but this is delightful, Ha ha ha ha ha -
The great and elegant Mister Fischer, Ha ha ha --
The Prince's pet oboe player
Under the - under the - ha ha ha

"The Laughing Trio"

Molly: (Ha ha ha ha
Peggy: (Ha ha ha ha
Fischer: (Ha -- ha --
Duchess: (Ha ha ha ha

Molly: All this is my fault.
I feel so ashamed.

Duchess: My dear, you must not - We've all been through it.
It's so lovely, the spring of our life.
Be happy my dear, be proud to be loved, and to love.
I'm entirely on your side.

Molly: (Oh thank you, Your Grace.
Peggy: (Oh thank you, Your Grace.
Fischer: (Oh thank you, Your Grace.

Molly: (I fear all this is my fault all this is my fault
Fischer: (I feel all this is my fault all this is my fault
Peggy: (The spring of our life - What a thrill it must be to be loved

Molly: (I feel so ashamed but with Your Grace's help
Fischer: (And I feel, Your Grace, all our plans and hopes are in your hands
Peggy: (To be loved for one's self, what a thrill it must be to be loved.

Molly: (We know all will be well in the end
Peggy: (And to love, what a thrill t'would be
Fischer: (But with Your Grace's help we know all will be well in the end.

Duchess: I'm entirely -
Entirely on your side.

Molly: (Oh thank you, Your Grace
Peggy: (Oh thank you, Your Grace
Fischer: (Oh thank you, Your Grace.

Duchess: Now tell me what is your real trouble?

Molly: My parents are against our marriage

Duchess: That is sad but not hopeless.

Fischer: I fear, Your Grace, it is, and therefore I propose to elope.

Duchess: Tut, tut, Mister Fischer, certainly not.
At least not until we have tried other ways first.

Fischer: And if they fail?

Duchess: Then perhaps.

Molly: (Oh, thank you, Your Grace.
Peggy: (Oh, thank you, Your Grace.
Fischer: (Oh, thank you, Your Grace.

Duchess: And now let us plan how to get the consent of your father.
You must all come to Ranelagh tonight, as my guests.

Molly: (Oh, Your Grace.
Peggy: (Oh, Your Grace.
Fischer: (Oh, Your Grace.

Duchess: There we will find a way to get his consent.

"The Quartet Finale"

Duchess: At midnight the Queen of the May will be chosen
And she perhaps will find a way to help you both.

Molly: (How kind of Your Grace to help me and my beloved Johann.
Duchess: (I shall gladly do this for you both, shall gladly do this.

Fischer: (He truly shall not prevent me from marrying my Molly.
Molly: (You're very kind, how can we thank you - gen'rous.
Peggy: (When I get a lover,

Peggy: (I won't let father interfere at all,
Molly: (How kind of Your Grace to invite us both
Fischer: (If Gainsboro' were not her father, I'd challenge him.
Duchess: (The visitors at Ranelagh will be wearing fancy dress tonight.

Peggy: (Oh yes, Your Grace, what fun in fancy dress,
Molly: (Oh yes, Your Grace, what fun in fancy dress,
Fischer: (He shall not prevent me from marrying Molly,
Duchess: (So you must wear some fancy dress tonight.

Peggy: (Your Grace, we will do our best - like this.
Molly: (Your Grace, we will do our best - like this.
Fischer: (If Your Grace helps us, t'will be well.
Duchess: (And walk sedately, walk like this, and curtsy,

Peggy: (T'will be like going to court, as good as going to court.
Molly: (T'will be like going to court, as good as going to court.
Fischer: (My heart is flaming with love for Molly,
Duchess: (Curtsey to the Prince, when I present you,

Duchess: Like this

Peggy: (Like this
Molly: (Like this
Fischer: (Molly, as my wife.
Duchess: (Like this.

Molly: (I'll wear my blue and silver. T'will be as good as going to
court

Peggy: (I'll wear my green and gold, hurrah. I may meet a lord there,
or a Duke.

Fischer: (He truly shall not prevent me from marrying Molly,
 Duchess: (And perhaps I even may tell the Prince of your engagement,
 Molly: (If Your Grace helps us then all will be well ---
 Peggy: (Perhaps I shall impress the Prince ---
 Fischer: (Not prevent me, if Your Grace helps us all will be well ---
 Duchess: (And he may influence your father to give his consent at
 Ranelagh tonight.

"LANDSCAPE AND THE QUARREL"

Duchess: If you were not so cantankerous with your sitters
 You would not have to waste so much valuable time on mere
 landscapes.

Gainsborough: Landscape, Your Grace,
 Do you truly realize what landscape is?

Gains.: Landscape, sky and earth unite to form it's beauty,
 Winter's icy snow, spring's breezy showers
 And summer's sunshine bright are preludes
 Meet for autumn's glow
 When leaves and fruit, all of gorgeous colours,
 Vie with richest gem's of nature's alchemy,

Think of the trees piercing the ambient air.
 Man's noblest works his great cathedral
 Piles with nature's woodland fanes can not compare
 Where towering trees arch over green walled aisles
 Their leafy boughs encroaching on the sky,
 To form giants roofs that glow with emerald light
 Where choirs of feathered songsters sing
 On high thrilling to heaven, Psalms of pure delight.

That, Your Grace, is what Landscape means to me.

Duchess: Our ideas on art as well as politics are evidently at variance.
 Despite your preference for trees over humanity
 I should like to proceed with my sitting
 But -- I will look at portrait first.

Gains.: As Your Grace pleases.

Duchess: I vow that I do not like it as well as I did.
 There is a kind of a likeness
 But you have made me too serious
 People will think that it's a portrait of my grandmother.

Gains.: You liked it well enough yesterday.

Duchess: I know what is wrong with it - it's the hat.
It's too heavy for me.
I always look better bareheaded,
You must take it out.

Gains.: I assure Your Grace - the hat suits you perfectly,
You said so yourself.

Duchess: Anyhow, I don't now - remove it.

Gains.: Your Grace may have changed her mind by the next sitting.

Duchess: Well, if I do. You can paint it in again.

Gains.: The hat is the keynote of the picture.

Duchess: Ah, that is what is wrong about it.
My face should be the keynote
And you have sacrificed it to the hat.
Out with the hat.

Gains.: (I put in the hat because nothing else
(Would suit Your Grace's style of beauty so charmingly.)

Duchess: (Out with the hat - out with the hat.)

Duchess: Man - the hat shall come out - I insist, insist.

Gains.: I'm demmed if it shall. (Sweeps his hand across the portrait,
eliminating the face)

Duchess: Oh, you've ruined it.
How dare you spoil my picture - insolent man -
How dare you spoil my picture.

Gains.: (Not so, Your Grace.
(I have a pretty serving maid with a face, suitable for the
design.)

Duchess: (Serving maid.)

Gains.: When completed I'll sell the work as a fancy picture.

Duchess: You - you pettyfogging limner, I'll tell my friends of your
Abominable rudeness, and see that none of them sit for you.

Gains.: I see that I must fall back upon landscape painting.
Even your Grace's displeasure can not prevent me
From using the woods and pastures. The birds of the air,
The sheep, the dogs, cows and horses - all as my sitters.

Duchess: Ah. --- Mister Gainsboro', you've forgotten - the pigs.
I have heard that your pig pictures are master pieces.
You can follow up your triumphs with them.
Whenever I see my piggies in the future
It will remind me of our interview. ---
For tho' as an artist, he is but a potboiler.
There's none can surpass him - ha ha ha ha ha ha
As canvas spoiler.

Gains.: (alone) (As the Duchess sweeps out, she inadvertently drops her
handkerchief, which Gains. picks up and hides).

My Duchess.

V. Ker, "NIGHTINGALE's Song"

Molly: Johann, oh, Johann.

Fischer: Beloved.

Molly: My darling.

Fischer: My dearest.

Molly: (It's just like a dream - this ball, the garden, the moon.

Fischer: (And we together

Molly: (For ever and ever, on earth and in heaven.

Duchess: I envy those children. ---

alluring
Duchess: Oh nightingale, what lovesong art ^{thou} you singing?
What fervent passion fires thy throbbing strain?
Does it breathe hope to which thy heart is clinging?
Tells it of joys that ne'er may come again.
Is't poignant, poignant pleading to the one you love?
Or does it mourn for loneliness profound?

Song so sweet and sad might well a mistress move,
Or be the dirge for hopes dashed to the ground.
Dear rapturous songster
With thy music voicing our highest bliss
And our most sore distress
Only heaven will hear it.---
All rejoicing - for there alone is unalloyed happiness.

"INTRIGUE"

Foyle: Lord Beechmaster.

Beechmaster: At your service, Maam.

Foyle: I have some news for you.

Beechm.: That is intriguing.

Foyle: It concerns Her Grace of Devonshire and Mister Gainsboro'.

Beechm.: Begad, that rogue.

Foyle: She's -

Beechm.: Well?

Foyle: She's in love with him.

Beechm.: You are bubbling me.

Foyle: It's true, they had their first quarrel this morning.

Lord Aspen: (enters) Who had?

Foyle: Her Grace of Devonshire and Gainsboro'.

Aspen: Slap my vittals.
How flashing.

Foyle: They quarreled,
He, in a fit of temper blackened her face in the portrait.

Beechm.: Huh.

Aspen: (How delirious.

Beechm.: (Huh.

Aspen: I must tell the Prince

Beechm.: (The scoundrel, scoundrel, outrageous.

Foyle: (Black patch on her nose. Ha, ha, ha.

Aspen: (Black patch on her cheek.

Beechm.: (I'll - I'll teach him a lesson. I'll - I'll -

Aspen: (Ha, ha, ha, Black patch on her nose - ha, ha, ha, her cheek.

Foyle: (Black patch on her cheek - ha, ha, ha-you must tell the Prince.

Beechm.: : Revenge to you would be sweet.
Foyle: Sweet as honey.
Beechm.: I'll help you.
Foyle: Ah.
Foyle: (We'll teach them a lesson.
(We'll teach them a lesson.

"MOST GLORIOUS GODDESS"

Gainsborough: Most glorious Goddess of the night
Thy beauty shown to mortal eyes,
Inspires a love that dare not rise
To one who on olympian heights
Amongst the Gods sits crowned.
But as you've doffed celestial state
To tread the earth as woman sweet
What wonder if when you I meet,
My heart your pleasure to await
I lay upon the ground.

Duchess: Mooncrowned Diana came to earth
To where Endymion sleeping lay.
Her glory made it bright as day.
Cupid passed - and swayed by mirth,
He sped two arrows right away.

Duchess: (Cupid's shafts both pierced a heart,
Gains.: (Grant me some hope and I will strive
Duchess: (Diana loved her Swain,

(He dared return her love again.
Gains.: (Thy beauties to immortalize,
(So paint your smile and sparkling eyes
(On canvas, that you'll seem alive
(And your charms will live forever.

Duchess: (For those transfixed by Cupid's darts,
(True lovers must remain.

Chorus: Ever - ever remain
Ever true lovers, true lovers.

Gains.: Oh beauteous Goddess your sweet grace
Emboldens me to raise my eyes
And hope to see a smiling face
When you do bid me rise.

"MAY SONG and GOD BLESS OUR NOBLE PRINCE"

Chorus: Advance!

Peggy: The dawn will bring the first of May.

Chorus: The first of May.

Peggy: So we shall stay till the rise of the sun.

Chorus: The rise of the sun.

Peggy: Whiling the silver night away.

Chorus: Night away.

Peggy: With mirth and dancing, music and song.

Chorus: Dance, dance, dance,
Dance all you lads and lassies
Dance, set to partners - retire.
Ha, ha, ha, ha ----
Advance!

Beechmaster: Sing out the merry roundelay.

Chorus: Roundelay.

Beechm.: Away has gone the winter cold.

Chorus: The winter cold.

Beechm.: It's sombre garb of drab and gray.

Chorus: Drab and gray.

Beechm.: Is gone - the winter cold.

Chorus: Dance, dance, dance,
Dance all you lads and lassies,
Dance, set to partners - retire!
Ah! Well done! Ha, ha!
Advance!

Chorus: Hurrah - Hurrah - Hurrah -
God bless our noble Prince
God grant him health and strength,
The man the farflung empire hails,
As one to whom shall come at last,
The heaviest crown in all the world.
God preserve the Prince.
Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah, hurrah ---

"SHOULD I GO?"

Duchess: (alone in her boudoir)

Should I go?
Dare I go?
When 'twas only last night
I struck that grievous blow
To his pride.
His skill I then decried
To the Prince and to them all.
Oh, what shall me befall
If I go?
Ah me - what can I do
To try call back those wanton words.
He thinks I scorn his work.
If he but knew
I thrill with pride
At ev'ry fervent stroke he sets on canvas.
Harmony divine flows from his brush.

Landscape
Sky and earth unite to form it's beauty.
Think of the trees --
Man's noblest works,
His great cathedral piles
With natures woodland fanes
Cannot compare.
Giant roofs that glow with em'rald light. Ah.

How can I ease his smart
For well I know
My angry words pierced to his heart?

I must go, I shall go
Whatever may befall
For now I feel
I know that me he ne'er belied.
So I'll curb my pride
No matter what poignant disgrace.
The Prince and all I will face -- by his side.

"PEACE BROODS."

Duchess: What a change from the madding crowd at the rotunda.

To this haven of silence.
The place is heavenly
Even the distant music is stilled.

Peace broods o'er this heav'nly summer night
Here with nature I commune.
I freely breathe beneath the tender light
Of the mysterious ever restful moon.

What joy to leave the madding crowd
For the country bright and fair
And idly bask upon a sun warmed down
One faithful heart with me
My solitude to share,
With me, my solitude to share.

Peace broods o'er this heav'nly summer night
Here with nature I commune.
I freely breathe beneath the tender light
Of the mysterious ever restful moon.

"GONE IS WINTER GLOOMING"

(The ceremony of Molly and Fischer's betrothal)

Peggy: Gone is winter glooming
 Ev~~e~~rything is blooming,
 Fields are fresh and green,
 Are fresh and green.
 Warm the breezes quiver
 Over mead and river,
 All the birds are singing
 Love songs while they're winging
 Each to find it's mate.
 For they now are pairing
 None are left despairing
 'cause they wooed too late.

Chorus: Now the sun is shining
 Let's have no repining
 All is bright and fair,
 Is bright and fair.
 Tall the crops are growing
 Gay the flowers are blowing,
 Scenting sweet the air.
 'Tis the time for mating,
 What's the use of waiting.
 Go to church and wed.
 In this halcyon weather
 Youth and love together
 Share their nuptial bed.

"DUKE SCENE"

Duke: Good morning, good morning, my dear
You seem to have a headache, tut, tut.

Duchess: Just a slight one.

Duke: A slight one, tut, tut,
Enjoyed yourself at the masked ball last night?
Tut, tut.

Duchess: Very much. I was sorry you could not come with me.

Duke: Hm. Affairs of state, my dear. Tut, tut.

Duchess: I know. Was Betty there?

Duke: Absurd. Tut, tut. Hmm.

Duchess: I was chosen as the Queen of the May.

Duke: I know, I know.

Duchess: News travels quickly.

Duke: And gossip.

Duchess: What gossip?

Duke: About your portrait.

Duchess: Absurd.

Duke: It's not. Tut, tut.
I've been too indulgent.

Duchess: And so have I.

Duke: Hm - but I will not allow a vagabond painter to insult my wife.

Duchess: Oh, please my head.

Duke: Tut, tut, tut.
I'll go and see the portrait with the Prince,
And if it's true - if it's true
I'll run him out of London.

Duchess: Oh, do what you want.

Duke: I will. (suddenly remembering his manners) Hm, tut, tut.
(Makes low bow and ceremoniously exits.)-----

"DRINKING SONG"

Aspen: I'll give you a toast that will suit you all.

Chorus: Sweethearts?

Aspen: Aye, aye.

Chorus: Tra la la la Tra la la la -

Aspen: Let each one toast his sweetheart,
His sweetheart that shall be.

Chorus: (For let each toast his sweetheart-----
(For let each toast his sweetheart,
(His sweetheart whether she be a lowly maid,
(A lowly maid or of a lofty degree,
(A lofty, a lofty degree, a lofty degree.

Basses: Sweethearts, sweethearts, sweethearts---

Tenors: (Here's to each sweetheart true.

Basses: (Sweethearts, sweethearts, sweethearts---

Aspen: It may be she has black eyes,
Or may be they are blue,
Each sees in them his love returned
With adoration true.

Basses: (Pompous of Porte,
(Laughing or flighty,
(Inclined to rashness.
(Fat as a bullock.

Tenors: (Or of humble mien,
(Or sober or staid,
(Or over afraid,
(Or graceful or lean.

Basses: (There is a woman one of us thinks his Queen.
(Sweethearts, sweethearts, sweethearts---

Chorus: La, la, la, la, la, la, la-----
To his Queen.

Gains.: (after having been insulted by the Duchess)
Now you may toast your ladies,
High ladies of degree,
Not one of them is woman,
Is woman for me.

Chorus: Oh ho, ho ho, ho ho---

Gains.: Be she Countess, Duchess or Queen
 For the girl I admire, is the serving maid,
 The serving maid of England.

Chorus: Ho.

Gains.: Who comes at your call,
 Your call, to give you her aid.

Chorus: The serving maid, ho, ho, ho
 Shall we stop him?
 No, play up to him.

Gains.: With smiling face, respectful mien
 No matter what the work is,
 The serving girl keeps tidy and clean,
 The serving maid of old England.

Basses: Ladies of rank at fete and at ball,

Tenors: Expect you to stand at their beck and call

Basses: Till you are nearly worn out with waiting.

Tenors: But the serving maid will wait on you

Basses: Bringing you ale of your favorite brew.

Tenors: Glass after glass without any ado,

Basses: Till you find that your thirst's abating.

Chorus: The serving maid, the serving maid of England.
 Drink to the serving maid of merry England.
 Smiling faces, r'spectful mien
 Waits upon us tidy and clean.
 La, la, la, la, la, la, la---
 To the serving maid.
 Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha-----

"LADY DISDAIN and END OF OPERA"

Gainsborough: (While repairing the portrait)
You've conquered many a heart,
Lady Disdain.
Left many an aching smart,
Lady Disdain.
For your smile strikes like a ray of tropic sun
A single fervent glance,
The mischief's done.
What divine, divine rapture
That sweet smile to capture,
A moment's glance of heaven,
Then it's gone.

My poor brush that you despise,
Lady Disdain,
Preserves your looks for all men's eyes,
Lady Disdain.
Immortal on this canvas you'll remain
Fairest of Queens
Who did men's hearts enchain.

Ev'ry beauty of your face,
Your proud and stately grace
Will live through me, through me alone.
Lady Disdain.

Duchess: (enters in her portrait dress, stands hesitatingly, just
inside the room, holding the door which opens into the
studio as if to support herself)
I am here.

Gains.: Your Grace does me an honour.

Duchess: I am here - to sit.

Gains.: After what Your Grace said last night?

Duchess: I never meant it.

Gains.: Then why say it?

Duchess: In self defense.
They forced me to it.

Gains.: Forced the Duchess of Devonshire?

Duchess: They said you were boasting
That I had gone down on my knees to you.

Gains.: And you believed it?

Duchess: For one brief moment.
Could I come here now
If I still believed it?

Gains.: The arch devils - monstrous -
To say that of me.

Duchess: What does it matter now.

Gains.: (Kisses her hand)

Duchess: Nothing matters now.

Gains.: My divinity and guardian angel!
(The Duchess touches his head)
