

## GISELLE: SYNOPSIS

### ACT 1

Young, innocent and passionate about dancing, the peasant girl Giselle is in love. She is courted by Albrecht, Duke of Selesia, who disguises himself as a peasant lad and visits her in the village. Hilarion, a gamekeeper, is secretly in love with Giselle.

He witnesses their meeting and becomes jealous and suspicious. Giselle's mother, Berthe, is superstitious and over-protective of her daughter, concerned for her delicate and fragile health. She warns Giselle that too much dancing could be dangerous and that young girls who die before marriage are destined to become Wilis – vengeful, ghost-like creatures.

The unexpected arrival of a hunting party led by the Prince of Courland and his daughter Bathilde – who is the real fiancée of Albrecht – brings more dancing to the autumn harvest celebration. Amidst the joyous festivities, Hilarion reveals Albrecht's true identity.

The shock of Albrecht's betrayal causes Giselle to lose her reason. She dances as if in a trance. Devastated, she collapses and dies of a broken heart.

### ACT 2

In the gloomy village cemetery, Myrtha, the Queen of the Wilis, holds her mystical and supernatural powers over the magical sisterhood.

Each night between dusk and dawn, the Wilis seek male prey who they force to dance until exhausted, or their hearts give out, or they are so weak they can be thrown to their deaths in the nearby lake. Hilarion mourns by Giselle's grave, but flees in terror when he is visited by the ghostly forms. Albrecht, sad and remorseful, brings field flowers to Giselle's grave. He senses her spirit around him.

Hilarion falls victim to the Queen of the Wilis. He succumbs to her powers and to those of her spirit helpers, and drowns in the lake.

Giselle defies Myrtha and dances with Albrecht all through the night until he is at the very point of exhaustion. The sound of the church bell heralds the dawn.

The Wilis vanish and the spirit of Giselle disappears with the soft morning light. Albrecht is saved and is left with only her memory to cherish.