MERLE OBERON
in
The Broken Melody
THE STORY

In Paris, the first-night of a new opera by a young composer Leon Grace, who himself plays the lead, is attended by the ex-Commandant of Devils Island, the French convict colony. The theme of the opera reminds the Commandant of the life-story of a convict who served under him on the Island, and who was shot while trying to escape. While awaiting the second act, the Commandant tells the following story to a friend.

Paul Verlaine, a struggling composer, starving in Paris whilst working on an opera, was friendly with beautiful Germaine Brissard, who found Paul a job as singer in her father's cafe. Here Paul met Madame Simone St. Cloud, the opera star, and her impresario Pierre Falaise. Paul and Simone were strongly attracted to each other, and eventually married. Germaine, who loved Paul secretly, was almost broken-hearted.

A son was born to Paul and his wife, and Paul's opera, financed by Simone, was produced, but was a failure. The marriage also was unsuccessful, and Simone turned increasingly to her old flame, Pierre Falaise.

One night, when Paul returned to find Simone in Pierre's arms, there was a furious struggle between the two men. To Paul's horror, Pierre fell, striking his head heavily, and died immediately.

Realising that his arrest was imminent, Paul entrusted his baby son to the care of Germaine. A few weeks later he was tried for murder and sentenced to Devils Island.

At this point in the Commandant's narrative, the second act of the opera commences. It portrays the escape of a galley-slave from Devils Island, and shows him shot down by the Guard while attempting to swim
ARE THE SCENES OF THIS TENSE DRAMA

away. During the interval, the Commandant resumes his story, explaining that this incident also runs parallel with Paul Verlaine's life. He adds that Paul was a model prisoner, and eventually the French Government was petitioned for a pardon on his behalf. When this was refused, Paul, desperate with disappointment, tried to escape. The Commandant was obliged to order the guards to fire, and when last seen Paul Verlaine was sinking, apparently mortally wounded, into the sea.

* * *

The opera's last act shows the galley-slave who had been shot down by the guard rescued by a fishing boat and returning to his native city for a reunion with his little son and the woman in whose charge the boy had been left. With the police close on his trail, however, their happiness is brief, and as the curtain falls he and the girl commit suicide together.

Now certain that Leon Grace, composer and actor in the opera, is really Paul Verlaine, the Commandant goes round to his dressing-room, where he finds Paul with Germaine. Paul recognises the Commandant, and there is a moment of great suspense, as Paul expects to be re-arrested. But the Commandant sets Paul's fears finally at rest by shaking hands, congratulating him on the opera, and wishing him a long and prosperous career.

THE CAST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Germaine Brissard</th>
<th>Colonel Dubonnet</th>
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<tr>
<td>Paul Verlaine</td>
<td>Charles Carson</td>
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<td>Simone St. Cloud</td>
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<td>MARGOT GRAHAME</td>
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