

FULL
DRESS

CANTARA CHRISTOPHER

Welcome

I know why you're here.

You want to look at him one more time in full dress, and remember. You want to remember the crowds, the heat, the excitement; you wonder if it'll ever happen again.

The music? The music, I'm afraid, is secondary here. It's the clothes I'm after.

Then the man.

Marlene

There was a film many, many years ago called *The Song of Songs*, which was co-written (based on an 1898 German play) and directed by an old Armenian I once knew named Rouben Mamoulian.

In this movie, Marlene Dietrich plays the Baroness Maria, wife of a wealthy patron of the arts turned amateur composer, and Brian Aherne plays Jean, a struggling, handsome but unworldly (note the spectacles) young conductor. The two meet when Jean approaches Maria's husband to help him finance a new orchestra, and you can imagine the rest. Baron will finance orchestra only if young conductor performs his new symphony; young conductor consents, only to find while rehearsing it that it's *merde* and it nearly unhinges him, so pure is he of musical heart.

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So it's up to Maria to light the fire within Jean in order for him to finally "get" the composer's music in an honest and inspired way—and in this way turn her young lover into an acclaimed conductor, and her husband into a composer worthy of notice.

There are two scenes in *The Song of Songs* which, to me, are the most erotically explosive scenes in the history of cinema:

One - the scene around twenty minutes in, where Jean dresses—slowly, piece by tantalizing piece—in the full dress suit that the Baron has paid for *while the Baron watches, clearly aroused*;

Two - the scene at the perfect halfway mark where, after a concert, a nearly nude Maria literally throws herself at Jean—*who is wearing the full dress suit*—and grovels before his feet, imploring him to make love to her.

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The movie is filled with Mamoulian touches like that. It's what I liked best about *The Old Man*, his respect for emotional truth in even the most flamboyant of displays. It's the reason why sexually fluid people like me are fans of his movies, and why I'm proud to say I knew and worked with him...

PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY
SYMPHONY NO 6 "PATETICHESKAYA"
ALLEGRO MOLTO VIVACE
ROYAL ACADEMY OF MUSIC ORCHESTRA
CONDUCTED BY JOHN WILSON

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Cantara is a retired actress and Hollywood intimate who has appeared in porn movies under her screen name Simona Wing. She is now a novelist, memoirist, and amateur musicologist.

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