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Peter Joslin

Bedřich Smetana

Verlag Hermann Lissner, Berlin-Wilm.

79a

Bedřich Smetana (1824–1884)

The Bartered Bride

Comic opera in three acts

Libretto by Karel Sabina, English version by Kit Hesketh-Harvey

Krušina, a farmer Neal Davies *baritone*
 Ludmila, his wife Yvonne Howard *mezzo-soprano*
 Mařenka, their daughter Susan Gritton *soprano*
 Toby Mícha, a smallholder Geoffrey Moses *bass*
 Háta, his wife Diana Montague *mezzo-soprano*
 Vašek, their son Timothy Robinson *tenor*
 Jeník, Toby Mícha's son from his first marriage Paul Charles Clarke *tenor*
 Kecal, a village marriage-broker Peter Rose *bass*
 Ringmaster Robin Leggate *tenor*
 Esmeralda, circus artist Yvette Bonner *soprano*
 Indian, circus artist Kit Hesketh-Harvey
 Two boys Louis Hill, Ravi Shar

Philharmonia Orchestra

The Royal Opera Chorus

Sir Charles Mackerras

Gareth Hancock assistant conductor



Catherine Ashmore

Susan Gritton as Mařenka and Paul Charles Clarke as Jeník in rehearsal for The Royal Opera's production of *The Bartered Bride*



Mike Hoban

Glyndebourne Festival Opera's production of *The Bartered Bride*

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7 Duet: 'Such a mother is a blessing' <i>Jeník, Mařenka</i>	2:25	[p. 108]
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9 'Every detail has been sorted' <i>Kecal, Krušina, Ludmila</i>	5:05	[p. 109]
10 'Hold it! Are we not forgetting' <i>Krušina, Kecal, Ludmila</i>	0:59	[p. 110]
11 Trio: 'Well, as I told you, he's kind and he's gentle' <i>Kecal, Ludmila, Krušina</i>	3:58	[p. 110]

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3 'Time and time again I encounter men'	3:33	[p. 119]
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6 'Ah, my friend! Once you learn' <i>Kecal</i>	3:50	[p. 122]
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Scene 6 – Finale

7 'Come now everyone, gather round' <i>Kecal, Chorus, Jenik, Krušina</i>	4:16	[p. 123]
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Act III

Scene 1

8 'I'm near now to despairing' <i>Vášek</i>	4:01	[p. 124]
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Scene 2

9 'Roll up! Roll up ladies and gentlemen! <i>Ringmaster</i>	2:45	[p. 125]
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10 Ballet	6:02	[p. 125]
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11 'Oh, it looks so lovely! <i>Vášek, Esmeralda, Indian, Ringmaster</i>	4:53	[p. 125]
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12 Duettino: 'Mother doesn't matter, Mother wouldn't care!' <i>Esmeralda, Ringmaster</i>	1:44	[p. 127]
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Scene 3

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14 Quartet: 'What? Dare he? Would he? You do what?' <i>Háta, Micha, Kecal, Vašek</i>	2:44	[p. 128]
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Scene 4

15 'No! I don't believe you!' <i>Mařenka, Krušina, Kecal, Ludmila, Háta, Micha</i>	4:58	[p. 129]
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Scene 5

16 'Oh, Vašek! Don't run away!' <i>Kecal, Vašek, Ludmila, Háta, Krušina, Micha</i>	1:14	[p. 129]
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17 Sextet: 'Think it over, Mařenka, think it through' <i>Ludmila, Háta, Krušina, Kecal, Micha, Mařenka</i>	3:18	[p. 130]
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18 'Oh, but the pain! The burning pain!'	1:49	[p. 130]
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19 'We dreamed upon a moonlit night' <i>Mařenka</i>	4:33	[p. 131]
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20 'Mařenka mine, Mařenka mine!' <i>Jenik, Mařenka</i>	4:31	[p. 131]
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21 'So then, young man' <i>Kecal, Mařenka, Jeník</i>	1:19	[p. 132]
22 Trio: 'Be calm, oh my love' <i>Jeník, Mařenka, Kecal</i>	3:37	[p. 133]
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25 'Everybody get out of the way!' <i>Two boys, Vašek, Háta, Krušina, Ludmila, Micha, Mařenka, Jeník, Chorus</i>	3:08	[p. 135]

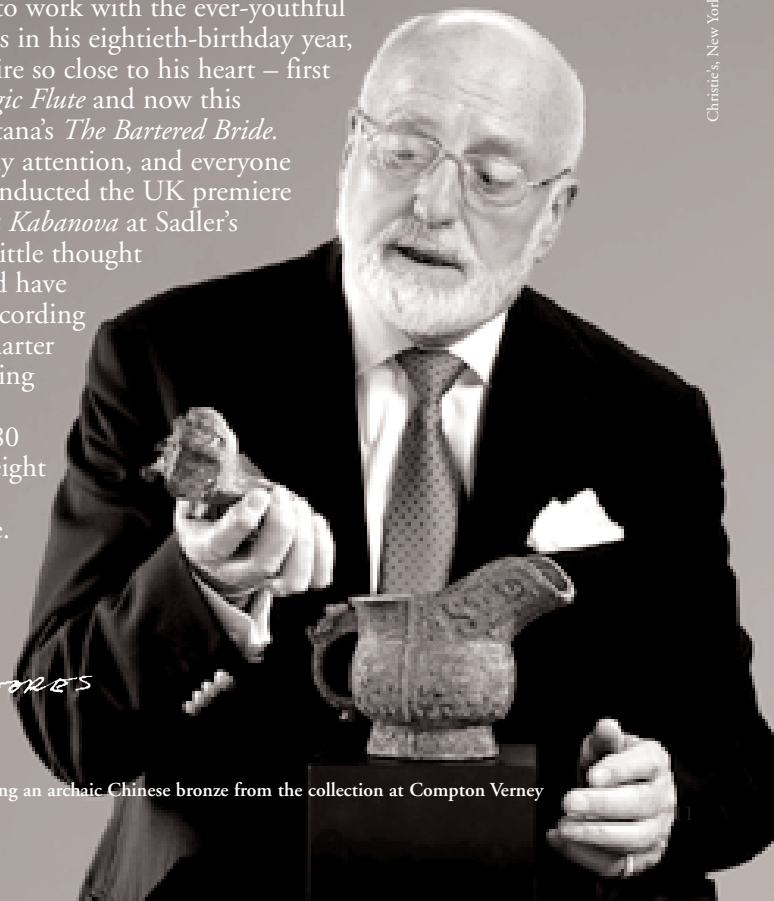
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It has been great to work with the ever-youthful Charles Mackerras in his eightieth-birthday year, recording repertoire so close to his heart – first Mozart's *The Magic Flute* and now this recording of Smetana's *The Bartered Bride*. He first caught my attention, and everyone else's, when he conducted the UK premiere of Janáček's *Katya Kabanova* at Sadler's Wells in 1951. I little thought then, that I would have the privilege of recording with him for a quarter of a century, starting with Verdi's *La traviata* in 1980 and followed by eight more wonderful recordings to date. Many happy returns, Sir Charles!

Peter Moores

October 2005

Sir Peter Moores examining an archaic Chinese bronze from the collection at Compton Verney





Catherine Ashmore

Timothy Robinson as Vašek in
The Royal Opera's production
of *The Bartered Bride*



Catherine Ashmore

Geoffrey Moses as Mícha and Diana Montague as Háta in The Royal Opera's production of
The Bartered Bride



Catherine Ashmore

Timothy Robinson as Vašek and Yvette Bonner as Esmeralda in The Royal Opera's production of *The Bartered Bride*



Mike Hoban

Glyndebourne Festival Opera's production of *The Bartered Bride*

Smetana: The Bartered Bride

It is only a toy and composing it was mere child's play. I wrote it not out of ambition, but simply tossed it off... to spite those who accused me of being Wagnerian.

Encountering *The Bartered Bride* for the first time, it is tempting to imagine its easy-going, good-natured notes flowing straight from the composer's pen to the ears of a grateful audience. Nothing could be further from the truth. Despite what he wrote, Smetana's second opera was quite a struggle for the composer and was received at its premiere with frigid indifference. It took seven years, four rewrites and a significant political change in Central Europe, before it achieved the popular acclaim which ensured its survival in the repertory. No one would be more surprised than the composer to discover that his gentle comedy has come to epitomise Czech opera, while his other theatrical works have slipped into semi-obscurity. To understand why, we must dig deep into the history, not only of Czech music but of the Czech nation itself.

Bedřich Smetana was born in a small town on the borders of Bohemia and Moravia in

1824. It was a dull time to come into the world with the artistic and intellectual fires of Napoleonic Europe dampened in the complacency and convention of the repressive Austrian Monarchy. The Czech provinces were governed from Vienna, but the glamour and sophistication of the Habsburg capital were light years away from the backwater in which the brewer's son grew up. It was only when he reached the age of fifteen that Smetana persuaded his father to send him to study in the ravishing Czech capital city of Prague. Here he was greeted with a richer social life, but for all its sensual beauty, Prague was still a provincial city. Like the majority of his contemporaries, Smetana spoke and wrote in German, and Czech literature, music and the visual arts were still firmly subject to German hegemony.

However, under the surface, something was bubbling up in Czech society, as it was in all the provinces of the Empire. It would find its political expression in the revolutions of 1848, when for a brief period, almost all the kingdoms and empires of Europe tottered. The revolutions failed, but they left indelible traces in art, music and literature. In particular,

emergent nationalism spread throughout Central Europe and nowhere did it leave a more vivid mark than on music. Although the influence of folk culture had always been present in Austria and its dependencies, not least in Haydn, Beethoven and Schubert, it was now acquiring political resonance. The spirit of Hungarian nationalism had begun to permeate the scores of Franz Liszt and even Frederick Chopin, in his self-imposed Parisian exile, breathed the air of Poland. In Prague, Smetana was as susceptible to the spirit of the times as any ambitious provincial boy, something that was reinforced by his fiercely nationalistic friends. His early marches, polkas and waltzes were modelled on the patriotic band music of the city and the salon pieces of Chopin and Liszt, but imbued everywhere with the melodic and rhythmic colours of the Bohemian vernacular.

It was another twenty years before Smetana's nationalist sentiments found expression on the stage – years of travel and experiment in which he modelled his style on Liszt's daring symphonic poems. When he returned, it was with an operatic project which fused his preoccupation with the 'music of the future' and his increasing absorption in national history. *The Brandenburgers in Bohemia*, a

huge success at its premiere in 1866 and now largely forgotten outside the Czech lands, established Smetana at once as the musical voice of his nation. With its mighty patriotic choruses and its sturdy modal harmonies, Smetana's first opera laid the foundations of a style which dominated Czech music for the next half century.

It also attracted accusations that he was drinking from the poisoned chalice of Wagnerianism. Like most of Europe, the Austrian provinces were in thrall to Italian and French grand opera and Wagner was regarded with profound suspicion. So, at the premiere of *The Bartered Bride* in 1867, the audience might have been expecting a grand heroic epic or an intense Wagnerian music drama. What they were not prepared for was a gentle, bucolic comedy, full of folk melodies and tender duets. Things might have fared better if it had not taken place on a steamy May night in the middle of a holiday weekend, when the city was half deserted. If the temperature in the theatre was sultry, the audience was decidedly lukewarm, and to cap it all, seventeen days later the Prussians invaded Bohemia. So, while the patriotic elements in the house were disappointed to be denied a nationalistic pageant in the idiom of *The*

Brandenburgers in Bohemia, the anxious majority were only too happy to abandon a light-hearted romp scarcely in tune with the sombre zeitgeist. Czechs liked their opera serious and uplifting, as the writer Nedeljy remarked:

The National Theatre was not a place of entertainment, but a hallowed place, a shrine, a school, where the nation had to speak with the highest form of its own language about its feelings and its dearest aims.

As for Smetana, he was equally pleased to abandon Prague and take refuge in the provinces.

However, the transformation of Austria's destiny heralded an ironic change in Smetana's own fortunes. In the wholesale reorganisation of Czech bureaucracy which followed Austria's defeat by Prussia in 1867, Smetana found himself elected music director of the Provisional Theatre, a more than useful springboard for his burgeoning operatic career. There was also a mutation of musical taste. These were not the times for martial epics such as *The Brandenburgers in Bohemia*. A cosy folk comedy like *The Bartered Bride* was just the ticket. All that was needed was a little musical reorganisation, and so, over the next three years, Smetana chopped and trimmed

and extended, adding dances and cutting duets, to furnish the opera which we know today. After a fiasco, a war and a great deal of hard work, the fourth and final version of the opera received its triumphant premiere in 1870.

What did Smetana do to that first draft which reversed its fortunes? We do not have to listen far before the first differences reveal themselves. After the celebrated overture, whose fugal bustling pays more than a passing homage to both *The Magic Flute* and *The Marriage of Figaro*, a robust chorus leads into an anxious accompanied recitative for the two principal characters – Mařenka and her sweetheart Jeník. Indeed, the dialogue actually begins while the chorus is still in progress, with its two principal themes threaded behind the lovers' first words. In the original, the dramatic action was entirely carried by speech – as it is in *The Magic Flute* or Smetana's contemporary German model, Cornelius' *The Barber of Baghdad*. By giving the recitative an orchestral accompaniment, Smetana shifts the piece firmly away from the territory of operetta or *opéra comique*. While the text tells us that this is a formulaic comedy, the score hints at darker emotions underneath.

However, the most significant changes appear in the opera's middle act. The original version was cast in two acts and made a rather lightweight evening's entertainment. In re-structuring the piece, Smetana split it into three, with an opening scene in Act II which is a virtual miniature folk festival. Not content with ending Act I with a lively choral polka, Smetana begins the second act with another even more vigorous one, cast as a suitably patriotic hymn of praise to the restorative properties of beer. The insistent dance rhythms persist throughout the following scene, with Kecal and Jeník providing high and low descants, leading into a yet more energetic *furiant*. The dotted rhythms even continue throughout the stammering aria for Vašek which follows, placing him firmly in the ranks of the rustic booby. Even the first version of the opera was permeated with folk melodies and rhythms, but by building an entire scene from traditional dances, Smetana fashioned a form of vernacular musical theatre which spawned imitations for the next half century.

If Smetana succeeded in forging a template for the folk-operas which spread throughout Central Europe in the late nineteenth century, it was more by accident than design. Although

both the drinking song in Act II and the March of the Circus Troupe in Act III were modelled on Czech and Moravian folk material from published collections, Smetana was never a serious scholar of folksong in the manner of Kodály or Bartók. None of his other stage works make such generous use of traditional melodies and he never again borrowed an entire folk dance, as he did with the *furiant*. He was quite serious in his frivolity when he described *The Bartered Bride* as a toy. He clearly enjoyed composing the playful scene in which Mařenka fools Vašek into believing that she is someone else and that the real Mařenka is a libidinous vixen. Like its counterpart, in which Jeník dupes Kecal into signing the contract which will release his bartered bride, the dancing pulse of the polka transforms the necessary cruelty of comedy into something harmless and engaging.

Smetana saves his real creative engagement for the plentiful duets, by turns tender, ardent and, in the third act, where Mařenka believes herself betrayed, genuinely poignant. He is content to leave the arrival of the circus troupe as a virtual play with music, possibly because the character tenor, the soubrette and comic baritone in the original production all came

from the acting company of the Provisional Theatre and not from the roster of principal singers. It is no surprise that the real musical delight of the scene is the Dance of the Comedians which follows the entry of the acrobats, one of many episodes in the opera which has been painlessly extracted time and again over the last century as a concert encore. Once this episode is over, Smetana returns to the warm lyricism which characterises the duets, and pours out a stream of sinuous melody in the plangent ensemble which is the dramatic heart of the act.

Nevertheless, by slipping skilfully from the lyrical to the burlesque to the bucolic, he shaped something more original and enduring than any of his more serious theatrical works. Apart from the witty set pieces for the stuttering mummy's boy Vašek and the cleverly interwoven Slavonic dances which open Act II, his transformation of the overture's development section into the complex comic finale to the same act is as inventive as anything by Rossini. Which is not to deny that Smetana took himself seriously, as his symphonic poems, the national epic *Má vlast* and the grave dramas of *Dalibor* and *Libuše* bear witness. Even in today's Czech Republic, the complete performance of *Má vlast*, which opens the

Prague Spring Festival each year, is virtually an act of national veneration. In today's Prague, it is still heresy to suggest that Dvořák was the more profound creator of romantic opera and Janáček the more penetrating and heart-rending musical dramatist.

Where Smetana excels is in reflective lyrical writing. The extended ensemble at the centre of Act III does nothing to forward the drama, but searches into the souls of the principal characters and more than compensates for the opera's lack of dramatic development. We do not go to Smetana for psychology or spiritual depth, but there is no need for special pleading when the drama is dressed in such inebriating rhythms and such melodic grace. It is these qualities which allow *Vltava*, *From Bohemia's Woods and Fields* and the First String Quartet to keep their honoured place in the concert hall, and which ensure that *The Bartered Bride* is the one Smetana opera which will always find a place in any theatre and in any language.

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Synopsis

It is the May Day festival in a village in Bohemia: a time of courtship and of round dances.

COMPACT DISC ONE

Act I

[1] – [2] One village girl, Mařenka (pronounced *Mazhenka*), cannot join in the joyful mood of the villagers. [3] She tells her young man, Jeník (*Yaynik*), of her concerns. [4] – [5] Her father Krušina (*Krushina*) is in debt to Mícha (*Meeka*), a rich man of the village, and she is being forced to marry Mícha's son, a simpleton.

Jeník reassures her of his love. [6] – [8] When she presses him about his mysterious past, he explains; on the death of his beloved mother, Jeník's father remarried, and his new stepmother made his life intolerable. Jeník went out into the world and lived amongst strangers. But, he swears, he has rediscovered the happiness of true love with Mařenka.

[9] – [11] The local marriage-broker, Kecal (*Ketsal*), attempts to gloss over the shortcomings of the Mícha's half-witted son Vašek (*Vashek*), as he describes him to Mařenka's hard-pressed parents, Krušina and Ludmila (*Ludmila*). The marriage is all but sewn up, and his commission is, it seems, in the bag. Krušina sees the proposed marriage as an end to his financial difficulties. Ludmila is more sympathetic to her daughter's feelings.

[12] – [13] Her fears are justified when Mařenka refuses to cooperate. She tells them all that her heart belongs to Jeník. Kecal reassures her parents that he will find Jeník, and deal with him.

[14] The villagers, still in celebratory mood, dance the polka.

Act II

[15] The Second Act opens with a drinking song in praise of beer. Kecal sings the virtues of money: Jeník, in contrast, the greater virtues of true love. [16] There is a wild dance, after which [17] Vašek, the stammering groom-to-be, shyly creeps on. He lives in terror of his mother, and what she will say if he does not fall in with the plan to marry him off.

[18] – [19] Mařenka realises that this is the man whom she is being required to wed. Without revealing her identity, she fools Vašek into believing that the girl 'Mařenka' is in fact a faithless and ill-willed creature who, having married him, will kill him! Flirtatiously, she persuades the gullible Vašek to swear not to marry 'Mařenka'.

COMPACT DISC TWO

[1] – [4] Kecal, having sought out Jeník, now

attempts to bribe him into signing an agreement that he will not, after all, marry Mařenka. ¹⁵ Jeník accedes to this, having extracted a counter-covenant: that Mařenka shall marry no one but 'Mícha's son', that her father's debt to Mícha will be cancelled, and that Kecal will pay him, Jeník, ten thousand crowns.* Kecal, believing that he has rescued the original plan, withdraws in triumph.

¹⁶ Alone, Jeník marvels that Kecal should believe him capable of such apparent treachery, when he loves Mařenka as he does.

¹⁷ Kecal returns with the chorus to witness the signing of the bargain between himself and Jeník. The chorus reviles Jeník for being so easily bought off.

Act III

¹⁸ Vašek is in despair. He cannot find the lovely girl who earlier gave him such good advice against marrying Mařenka.

¹⁹ – ²⁰ However, his delight at the arrival of a travelling circus distracts him.

²¹ – ²² The strolling players are in a quandary. The actor who normally plays the dancing bear is too drunk to perform. The Ringmaster and the succulent trapeze artist, Esmeralda, persuade a star-struck Vašek to wear the bear-suit for the evening.

¹⁸ – ¹⁹ Vašek's parents, Mícha and Háta (*Hutta*), are amazed that Vašek should prove so wary of marrying Mařenka. ²⁰ But when Vašek realises that she is none other than the lovely girl who was warning him off, they press ahead with Kecal's plan as quickly as possible.

²¹ Mařenka has been made miserable by Jeník's apparent faithlessness. The parents and Kecal persuade her to reconsider marriage to Vašek.

²² – ²³ Left alone, Mařenka is in despair, ²⁴ which when Jeník appears, turns to fury. She refuses to listen to his seemingly hollow promises that everything will turn out for the best.

²⁵ – ²⁶ Kecal calls the company together to finalise arrangements. ²⁷ But when at last the Míchas meet Jeník, they are astounded to recognise Toby Mícha's long-lost first-born son. Jeník now insists that his side of the contract be honoured. As 'Mícha's son', he will marry Mařenka. What is more he will receive ten thousand crowns, the half-share of his father's fortune from which Háta, his stepmother, had attempted to swindle him. Mařenka's parents' debt is written off, and Kecal retires in disgrace.

When she realises how cunning Jeník's strategy has been, Mařenka is delighted to

forgive him. ²⁸ After Vašek happily appears dressed as the dancing bear, the Míchas realise the folly of their plans to marry him off. Blessings and forgiveness abound, as the company celebrates the union of Jeník and the 'Bartered Bride'.

*In the present translation, this price was increased in order to match that of Jeník's cheated inheritance. In order for Jeník's counter-contract to work, moreover, he must keep his real identity secret even from Mařenka, so as to obtain his parents' signature to the trick agreement. This justifies what otherwise would appear to be his unnecessary cruelty by keeping her in the dark.

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Winner of the 1994 Kathleen Ferrier Memorial Prize, **Susan Gritton** (Mařenka) read botany at Oxford and London Universities before taking up a career in singing.

Her operatic engagements have included Susanna (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Zerlina (*Don Giovanni*), Miss Wordsworth (*Albert Herring*) and the title role of *Theodora* at the Glyndebourne Festival; Tiny (*Paul Bunyan*), Mařenka (*The Bartered Bride*), First



Flowermaiden (*Parsifal*) and Ismene (*Mitridate*) for the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden; Romilda (*Xerxes*), Cleopatra (*Giulio Cesare*) and the title role of *Rodelinda* at the Bayerische Staatsoper, Munich; Pamina, Fiordiligi, Sophie (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Nannetta (*Falstaff*) and the title role of *The Cunning Little Vixen* at English National Opera; Governess (*The Turn of the Screw*) and Blanche (*Les Dialogues des Carmelites*) at Snape Maltings Concert Hall; Marzelline (*Fidelio*) for Rome Opera, Tytania (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*) for Teatro la Fenice, Venice; and Fiordiligi (*Così fan tutte*) at the Mostly Mozart Festival, New York.

Her extensive discography includes Nannetta (*Falstaff*) and the Priestess in *Aida* for the Opera in English series, Handel's *Theodora* and *Messiah*, Mozart's Requiem, Haydn Masses for Chandos, Gluck's *Paride ed Elena*, Hero (*Beatrice et Benedict*), Tiny and Miss Wordsworth.

With Sir Charles Mackerras she has sung the Mozart Requiem with the Scottish

Chamber Orchestra and Ravel's *Shéhérazade* with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic; with Sir Simon Rattle, she has sung *L'Enfant et les sortilèges* with the Berlin Philharmonic and the Brahms Requiem with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. She lives in Surrey with her husband and two children.



Born in Liverpool, **Paul Charles Clarke** (Jeník) studied with Neil Mackie at the Royal College of Music, where he was a Peter Pears scholar. He was awarded first prize in the 1989 Kathleen Ferrier Competition.

Engagements include Jeník (*The Bartered Bride*), Kudryas (*Katya Kabanova*), Jaquino (*Fidelio*), Alfred (*Die Fledermaus*) and Cassio (*Otello*) at the Metropolitan Opera; Tybalt (*Roméo et Juliette*), Jeník, Cassio, Froh (*Das Rheingold*) and Alfredo (*La traviata*) for the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden; Duke (*Rigoletto*), Alfredo, Tamino (*Die Zauberflöte*), Edgardo (*Lucia di Lammermoor*), Pollione (*Norma*) and Anatol (*Vanessa*) for Seattle Opera; Alfredo and Nemorino (*Elisir*) for

Scottish Opera; Macduff (*Macbeth*) for Opéra de Monte Carlo; the title role in *Faust* for Minnesota Opera and Cincinnati Opera; the title role in *Don Carlo* with Minnesota Opera; Pinkerton (*Madama Butterfly*) and the title role in *Werther* for the Deutsche Oper Berlin; Alfredo with the Houston Grand Opera; Nicias (*Thaïs*) with L'Opéra de Montréal and English National Opera; Don José (*Carmen*) for Seattle Opera; and Jaquino at the Teatro Carlo Felice di Genova conducted by Lorin Maazel. He is closely associated with Welsh National Opera where his roles include Duke, Fenton (*Falstaff*), Alfredo, Faust, Pinkerton and Gabriele Adorno (*Simon Boccanegra*).

His concert work includes Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, Dvořák's *Stabat Mater* at the BBC Proms, Verdi's *Requiem* at the Teatro Real in Madrid and Gran Teatre del Liceu in Barcelona, and Leicester in a concert performance of Donizetti's *Maria Stuarda* conducted by Sir Charles Mackerras.

His recordings include the title role in *Faust* as part of Chandos' Opera in English series.

Peter Rose (Kecal) was born in Canterbury. He read music at the University of East Anglia and studied with Ellis Keeler at the Guildhall

Clive Barada



School of Music and Drama. In 1985 he won the Kathleen Ferrier Memorial Scholarship and in 1986 the Glyndebourne John Christie Award, and made his operatic debut in 1986 as the Commendatore with Glyndebourne Festival Opera in Hong Kong. He was principal bass with Welsh National Opera between 1986 and 1989. He made his Royal Opera House debut as Rochefort (*Anna Bolena*) with Dame Joan Sutherland.

His repertoire includes: Ramfis, Fasolt, Cadmus/Somnus (*Semele*), Daland, King Marke, Commendatore and Timur (*Turandot*) at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden; Gessler (*Guillaume Tell*), Commendatore, and Basilio (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*) in San Francisco; Kecal (*The Bartered Bride*) for Chicago Lyric Opera; Ramfis, Daland and Ochs (*Der Rosenkavalier*) at the Metropolitan Opera; King Marke, Gremin, Claggart, Sarastro and Ochs at the Vienna Staatsoper; as well as roles at the Paris Opéra, Deutsche

Staatsoper Berlin, Hamburg State Opera, Seattle Opera, and in Amsterdam and Sydney.

Concert engagements include Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, Mozart's Requiem, Mahler's Eighth Symphony, Verdi's Requiem, *La Damnation de Faust*, Ravel's *L'Enfant et les sortilèges* and *L'Heure espagnole*, and Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*.

Recordings include *The Barber of Seville*, *Tosca*, *Aida* and *Lucia di Lammermoor*, all as part of Chandos' Opera in English series, *Le nozze di Figaro* with Barenboim and the Berlin Philharmonic, *The Seven Deadly Sins* and *Salome* with the Vienna Philharmonic and von Dohnányi, *Un ballo in maschera* with Carlo Rizzi and *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* under Sir Charles Mackerras.

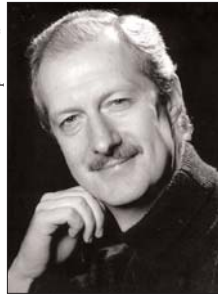


Timothy Robinson (Vašek) was a choral scholar at New College, Oxford; after completing his degree in Music he continued his studies at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. He has appeared in concert

throughout the United Kingdom, with ensembles including the BBC Symphony, City of Birmingham Symphony, Royal Philharmonic and Scottish Chamber Orchestras, the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and at the Aldeburgh Festival under Steuart Bedford and the BBC Promenade Concerts under William Christie, Sir Andrew Davis and Sir Simon Rattle. Abroad his concerts have taken him to the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam, the Konzerthaus, Vienna, and the Orchestre de Lyon, and he made his debut with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra under Sir Simon Rattle.

His operatic engagements include *Falstaff*, *Boris Godunov* and Handel's *L'Allegro* for English National Opera; Jupiter at the Aix-en-Provence Festival; Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*) and the title role in *La clemenza di Tito* for Welsh National Opera; and Kudras (*Katja Kabanova*), Jacquino (*Fidelio*) Janek (*The Makropulos Case*) and Grimoaldo (*Rodelinda*) for the Glyndebourne Festival. He made his debut at the Paris Opéra in *Turandot*, returning for *Alcina*. He was a member of the Royal Opera, Covent Garden, where he sang under Sir Charles Mackerras, Sir Colin Davis, and Bernard Haitink.

Robert Carpenter Turner



His recordings include Vaughan Williams' *Serenade to Music* under Sir Roger Norrington, Beethoven Cantatas, *Alcina*, Mozart's Requiem, and Szymanowski's *Harnasie*.

Born in Abercynon, South Wales, **Geoffrey Moses** (Micha) read history at Cambridge. He completed his vocal studies at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama with Otakar Kraus and Peter Harrison.

Geoffrey Moses has sung with all the major British opera companies. With the Royal Opera, Covent Garden, his roles include Lindorf (*Les Contes d'Hoffmann*), Cleomer (*Esclarmonde*), Foltz and Schwartz (*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*), Pistol (*Falstaff*), the Commendatore (*Don Giovanni*). Roles with Welsh National Opera include Basilio (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*), Moser (*I Masnadieri*), Sparafucile (*Rigoletto*), Colline (*La Bohème*), Sarastro (*Die Zauberflöte*), Nourabad (*Les Pêcheurs de perles*), King Mark (*Tristan und Isolde*), Fotis (*The Greek Passion*), Giorgio

(*I puritani*), Rodolfo (*La sonnambula*), Bartolo (*Le nozze di Figaro*), and Pistol also in Tokyo, Milan, New York and Paris), and Raimondo (*Lucia di Lammermoor*). He has also performed with Glyndebourne Festival Opera, Glyndebourne Touring Opera, Opera North, Scottish Opera and English National Opera.

Engagements abroad include Basilio and Colline in Hamburg, Crespel and Pietro in Brussels, Rodolfo (*La sonnambula*) in Nancy, Walton (*I puritani*) for the Deutsche Oper, Berlin, Peter in the world premiere of Harrison Birtwistle's *The Last Supper* for the Deutsche Staatsoper, Berlin, and Collatinus (*The Rape of Lucretia*) in Seville.

Recordings include *The Greek Passion* with Sir Charles Mackerras, and Helmsman (*Tristan und Isolde*) with Sir Reginald Goodall.

Yvonne Howard (Ludmila) studied at the Royal Northern College of Music. Early roles included the title role in *La Cenerentola* with English Touring Opera, Marcellina in *Le Nozze di Figaro* with both Glyndebourne Festival and Touring Opera, and Fricka and Waltraute in the highly acclaimed City of Birmingham Touring Opera *Ring Saga*.

For English National Opera she has performed Amastris (*Xerxes*) and Meg Page.



She has also appeared in *Xerxes* in Sao Paolo, Brazil, *Die Walküre* in Paris and Nantes, and *Falstaff* and *Madama Butterfly* in Tel Aviv. Other appearances include *Dream of Gerontius* in New York and Cape Cod, Amneris (*Aida*) at the

Royal Albert Hall, Berta at English National Opera, Assunta (*The Saint of Bleecker Street*) at the Spoleto Festival, Leonore (*Fidelio*) at Opera Holland Park, and Marilyn Klinghoffer in a new TV film of *The Death of Klinghoffer*.

Concert and recital work has taken Yvonne Howard to Japan, France, Spain, Scandinavia, Switzerland, USA and, of course, throughout Great Britain. Recordings include *Sweet Swan of Avon*, *Messiah*, and, for Chandos, Walton's *Troilus & Cressida* and Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov*.

Neal Davies (Krušina) was born in Newport, Gwent and studied at King's College, London, and the Royal Academy of Music, of which he was made a Fellow in 2003. He continued his studies at the International Opera Studio,

Susie Alburg



Zurich, under the patronage of Dame Gwyneth Jones.

His operatic appearances have included Rameau's *Platée* (in London and at the Edinburgh Festival); Handel's *Giulio Cesare* under Ivor Bolton and *Figaro* (*Le nozze di*

Figaro) for the Royal Opera, Covent Garden; Handel's *L'Allegro* for English National Opera; Handel's *Radamisto* for the Opéra de Marseille; Handel's *Theodora* with Les Arts Florissants and William Christie (Paris and Salzburg); Handel's *Orlando* with the Gabrieli Consort; Leporello for Scottish Opera; and Guglielmo (*Così fan tutte*), Leporello and Dulcamara (*L'elisir d'amore*) for Welsh National Opera. He made his debut with Chicago Lyric Opera as Major General Stanley (*The Pirates of Penzance*).

Concert appearances have included engagements with the Cleveland and Philharmonia Orchestras under von Dohnányi, the Gabrieli Consort and Paul McCreesh (including Handel's *Saul* for the BBC Proms),

the Oslo Philharmonic under Jansons, the BBC Symphony under Boulez, the Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra and de Waart, the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and the Chamber Orchestra of Europe.

His recordings include Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Messiah*, *Theodora*, *Saul*, Vivaldi Cantatas, and for Chandos Vaughan Williams' *The Poisoned Kiss*, and *Jentfa*, as part of the Opera in English series.

Mike Hoban



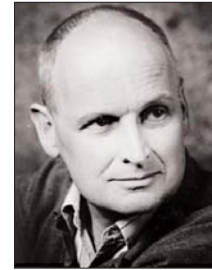
Diana Montague (Háta) was born in Winchester and studied at the Royal Northern College of Music. Since her debut as Zerlina with Glyndebourne Touring Opera she has appeared at the Royal Opera House, Covent

Garden, the Metropolitan Opera in New York, the Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels, the Opéra national de Paris-Bastille, Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires and the Bayreuth and Salzburg Festivals.

Her repertory includes the major roles for mezzo-soprano in operas by Mozart, Gluck,

Strauss, Rossini, Bellini and Berlioz, and engagements have included *Benvenuto Cellini* with Rome Opera; *Iphigénie en Tauride* in Buenos Aires, Madrid and with Welsh National Opera; *Albert Herring*, Cherubino (*Le nozze di Figaro*) and Andromaca in Rossini's *Ermione* at Glyndebourne; *Le Comte Ory* in Lausanne, Rome and Glyndebourne; Proserpina in Monteverdi's *Orfeo* in Amsterdam; *Ariadne auf Naxos* in Lisbon; Marguerite (*La Damnation de Faust*) in Vienna and Geneva; Minerva (*Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*) in Amsterdam and Sydney; *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* at the Royal Opera House Covent Garden, Junon in Rameau's *Platée* with The Royal Opera at the Edinburgh Festival and in London, and Octavian (*Der Rosenkavalier*) at English National Opera, in Bilbao and at the Teatro Real in Madrid.

Diana Montague's many recordings include Monteverdi's *Orfeo*, *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*, *Norma*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Iphigénie en Tauride*; for Opera Rara *Rosmonda d'Inghilterra*, *Zoraida di Granata* and *Il crociato in Egitto*, and, as part of Chandos' Opera in English series, Cherubino (*The Marriage of Figaro*), Idamante (*Idomeneo*), *Cavalleria rusticana*, Octavian in *Der Rosenkavalier* (highlights), *Faust*, and two recital discs of Great Operatic Arias.



Robin Leggate (Ringmaster) is one of Britain's most versatile tenors. Since joining The Royal Opera as principal tenor, he has appeared there in many productions. Highlights include *Otello* under Carlos

Kleiber, the British premiere of the three-act version of *Lulu* under Sir Colin Davis, and the premiere of Verdi's *Stiffelio* under Sir Edward Downes. More recently, he has sung Mime (*Das Rheingold*), Peter Quint, Cassio and Caius (*Falstaff*) for the re-opening of the Royal Opera House.

Robin Leggate has also had particular success in the Mozart repertoire, having sung all the leading lyric tenor roles, at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, the Châtelet Theatre in Paris, in Amsterdam and with Scottish Opera, Opera North and Welsh National Opera.

Recordings include *Salome*, *La traviata*, *Don Carlos*, and, for Chandos Berkeley's *A Dinner Engagement* and Menotti's *Martin's Lie*. Concert appearances include Britten's *War Requiem*, Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, Beethoven's

Missa Solemnis, concert performances of Berg's *Lulu* with the BBC Symphony Orchestra and Sigmund (*Die Walküre*) with RTE Dublin.

Hugo Glendinning



Yvette Bonner (Esmeralda) studied at the Royal Academy of Music, graduating in 1998 with the Dip. RAM, the Academy's highest award for performance, and the Blyth-Buesst Operatic Prize. She made her

debut with The Royal Opera, Covent Garden as Hermione in Strauss' *Die Aegyptische Helena* under the baton of Christian Thielemann, followed by Esmeralda (*The Bartered Bride*) under Bernard Haitink, a role that she repeated in 2001 under Sir Charles Mackerras.

Other roles include the Vixen (*The Cunning Little Vixen*) for the Aix-en-Provence Festival, Tina (Jonathan Dove's *Flight*) for *Vlaamse Opera*, the role of Alice in the world premiere of *Alice in Wonderland* with the Netherlands Opera, Flora (*The Turn of the Screw*) for Welsh National Opera, Jennie Hildebrand in Kurt Weill's *Street Scene* for English National Opera, as well as for Houston Grand Opera and on

film, and Zerlina (*Don Giovanni*) in concert under Sir Colin Davis.

Yvette Bonner made her Wigmore Hall debut singing Britten's *Les Illuminations* with The Academy of St Martin-in-the-Fields. She has also performed *Carmina Burana* in Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Bach's *Magnificat* and Vivaldi's *Gloria* with the English Chamber Orchestra, Haydn's *Nelson Mass* at St. John's, Smith Square, and Dvořák's *Stabat Mater* for Scottish Opera Orchestra.

Her recordings include Strauss' *Semele* (*Die Liebe der Danae*) under Elgar Howarth, and *Albert Herring* under Richard Hickox for Chandos.

Hugo Glendinning



Kit Hesketh-Harvey (Indian, opera translator) was born in Zomba, Nyasaland. Senior Chorister at Canterbury, under Dr. Allan Wicks, and a Choral Scholar at Clare Cambridge, under Dr. John Rutter, he worked for six years as a

staff producer for the BBC-TV Music and Arts Department, before leaving to become a freelance writer, broadcaster and cabaret singer.

He studied under Stephen Sondheim, and with his society cabaret *Kit and the Widow* has been nominated for three Olivier Awards. He is a regular panelist on *Just A Minute* for BBC Radio Four, and has a long-running cabaret series on BBC Radio Three, *Cocktails*. Opera translations include *Il Turco in Italia* and *La Belle Hélène* for English National Opera, *Die Fledermaus* and *Die Zauberflöte* for Scottish Opera, *Le Roi Malgré lui* for Grange Park Opera and *La Fille du Régiment* for English Touring Opera. Libretti for composer James McConnel include *Writing Orlando* at the Barbican Festival, and *Yusupov* at the Bridewell Theatre.

Screenplays include *Maurice* for Merchant-Ivory, and *Hans-Christian Andersen* for Hallmark Pictures. Television writing credits include *The Vicar of Dibley* (with Richard Curtis), and *Birkin* (for Rowan Atkinson). Plays include *Five o'Clock Angel*, the story of Tennessee Williams' friendship with Maria St. Just, and *The Fat Lady Sings*, an operatic revue. Kit Hesketh-Harvey divides his time between Norfolk and Cornwall, and is married to the actress Kate Rabett. They have two children.

One of the world's great orchestras, the **Philharmonia Orchestra** is now in its sixth season with renowned German maestro

Christoph von Dohnányi as Principal Conductor. That post was first held by Otto Klemperer, and the Orchestra has since had important collaborations with Lorin Maazel (as Associate Principal Conductor), Riccardo Muti (as Principal Conductor and Music Director), Giuseppe Sinopoli (as Music Director) and, currently, Kurt Sanderling (as Conductor Emeritus), Vladimir Ashkenazy (as Conductor Laureate) and Sir Charles Mackerras (as Principal Guest Conductor), besides such eminent figures as Wilhelm Furtwängler, Richard Strauss, Arturo Toscanini, Guido Cantelli, Herbert von Karajan and Carlo Maria Giulini. It continues to engage world-class conductors and soloists, and attracts Europe's most talented young players to join its orchestral ranks.

Resident Orchestra at the Royal Festival Hall, it maintains a central position in British musical life also through regional residencies which provide an ideal opportunity to expand a dynamic educational and community-based programme. Winner of numerous awards, it has garnered unanimous critical acclaim for its innovative programming policy, at the heart of which is a commitment to performing and commissioning new music by today's leading composers.

An increasing number of the Orchestra's concerts are being broadcast by BBC Radio 3, including its annual performance at the BBC Proms. As the world's most recorded symphony orchestra, with over 1000 releases to its credit, among these a number of television and feature film soundtracks, the Philharmonia Orchestra enjoys a worldwide reputation. The discography includes, for Opera Rara, several recital discs as well as thirteen complete operas, and for Chandos, in the Opera in English series sponsored by the Peter Moores Foundation, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *The Thieving Magpie*, *Wozzeck*, *Don Giovanni*, *The Elixir of Love*, *Lucia of Lammermoor*, *Faust*, *Carmen*, *Aida*, *La Bohème*, *Madam Butterfly*, *Turandot*, the award-winning *Tosca* and solo recital albums of operatic arias with Bruce Ford, Diana Montague, Dennis O'Neill, Alastair Miles, Yvonne Kenny and John Tomlinson. The Philharmonia Orchestra continues to consolidate its international renown through regular tours and through recent prestigious residencies at the Châtelet Théâtre Musical in Paris, the Megaron in Athens and the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts in New York.

The Chorus of The Royal Opera, Covent Garden, was created in 1946 for the re-opening of the Royal Opera House after World War II. Known then as the Covent Garden Opera Chorus, it first appeared during December the same year in a production of Purcell's *The Faery Queene* staged with Sadler's Wells Ballet (now The Royal Ballet). Its first full-scale opera production with the Company was *Carmen* in January 1947. Since then the Chorus has been the backbone of The Royal Opera, both in the UK and on tour, performing with many of the world's greatest conductors and directors.

The Chorus is heard regularly in radio broadcasts of Royal Opera productions and has featured in a large number of commercial video recordings made at the Royal Opera House including Verdi's *Otello*, *Stiffelio* and *La traviata*, Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette*, Mozart's *Così fan tutte* and Lehár's *The Merry Widow*. Since re-opening DVDs issued have included *Die Zauberflöte*, *Il trovatore*, *Rigoletto*.

Recordings include *Tannhäuser*, *Cavalleria Rusticana*, *The Cunning Little Vixen* for Chandos' Opera in English series, *Peter Grimes*, Harrison Birtwistle's award-winning *Gawain*, *The Puccini Experience*, *Don Carlos*

and the award-winning recording of *Tosca* conducted by Antonio Pappano. The Royal Opera Chorus regularly joins The Royal Ballet in productions including *Requiem* (Fauré), *Gloria* (Poulenc), *Daphnis et Chloë* (Ravel) and *Les Noces* (Stravinsky).

Other than the Royal Opera House, the Chorus has appeared in New York, Paris, Tokyo, Baden-Baden, Palermo and Savolinn and in the Aldeburgh Festival, Edinburgh Festival and at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam as well as several BBC Promenade Concerts at the Royal Albert Hall. The Chorus is led by Renato Balsadonna, who joined the Royal Opera in August 2004 from La Monnaie in Brussels.



Sir Charles Mackerras studied at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music and came to England in 1947. He gained a British Council Scholarship to study further at the Academy of Music in Prague. His great interest and love for

Janáček commenced in 1947 on hearing *Katya*

Kabanova conducted by the great Václav Talich.

As an assistant conductor at Sadler's Wells in 1951 he gave the first performance of *Katya Kabanova* in the English-speaking world. Later he introduced *The Makropoulos Case* and *From the House of the Dead* at Sadler's Wells and continued conducting highly successful productions of Janáček's operas as well as more standard repertoire when he became Musical Director of English National Opera (1970–77) and for Welsh National Opera when he became their Musical Director (1987–1992). He has been a pioneer in the dissemination of the music of Janáček throughout the capitals of Europe and in the USA and Australia. *Jenůfka* has been a particular favourite.

He has had a long association with the Czech Philharmonic and recorded most of Janáček's orchestral works with them as well as *Katya Kabanova* and Dvořák's *Rusalka*. Included in his vast discography is an award-winning cycle of the Janáček operas with the Vienna Philharmonic in the early 1980s. For Chandos he has recorded Janáček's *Glagolitic Mass* in the original version, Kodály's *Psalmus Hungaricus* and Dvořák's Cello Concerto. As part of the Opera in English series he has recorded *Osud*, *La traviata*, *Werther*, *Julius*

Caesar, Mary Stuart, Eugene Onegin, Jenůfa
and *the Magic Flute*.

Sir Charles has also undertaken much research into the music of the eighteenth century, particularly Handel and Mozart. He has recorded a series of Mozart and Gilbert and Sullivan operas as well as a complete series of Mozart, Beethoven and Brahms Symphonies, several oratorios by Handel and symphonies by Mahler and Elgar. He is at present Principal Guest Conductor of the

Philharmonia Orchestra, Conductor Laureate of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and Conductor Emeritus of Welsh National Opera and the San Francisco Opera.

Sir Charles received a CBE in 1974, was knighted in 1979, honoured with the Medal of Merit from the Czech Republic in 1996 and made a Companion of the Order of Australia in 1997. In 2003 he became a Companion of Honour in the Queen's Birthday Honours.



Catherine Ashmore

The Royal Opera's production of *The Bartered Bride*

PETER MOORES FOUNDATION

British philanthropist Sir Peter Moores established the Peter Moores Foundation in 1964 to realise his charitable aims and, to fulfill one of these, the Compton Verney House Trust in 1993 to create a new art gallery in the country. Through his charities he has disbursed more than £104 million to a wide variety of arts, environmental and social causes 'to get things done and open doors for people'.

Sir Peter's philanthropic work began with his passion for opera: in his twenties he helped a number of young artists in the crucial, early stages of their careers, several of whom – Dame Joan Sutherland, Sir Colin Davis and the late Sir Geraint Evans amongst them – became world-famous.

Today, the Peter Moores Foundation supports talented young singers with annual scholarships awarded through the Royal Northern College of Music, has made it possible for Chandos Records to issue the world's largest catalogue of operas recorded in English translation, and enabled Opera Rara to record rare *bel canto* repertoire which would otherwise remain inaccessible to the general public.

In live performance, the Foundation has encouraged the creation of new work and schemes to attract new audiences, financed the publication of scores, especially for world premieres of modern operas, and enabled rarely heard works to be staged by British opera companies and festivals.

Projects supported by the Foundation to help the young have ranged from a scheme to encourage young Afro-Caribbeans 'stay at school' for further education, to the endowment

of a Faculty Directorship and Chair of Management Studies at Oxford University (providing the lead donation which paved the way for the development of the Said Business School).

In 1993 the Foundation bought Compton Verney, a Grade 1 Georgian mansion in Warwickshire, designed by Robert Adam, with grounds by Capability Brown. Compton Verney House Trust was set up by Sir Peter to transform the derelict mansion into a world-class art gallery that would provide an especially welcoming environment for the 'first-time' gallery visitor. The gallery, which houses six permanent collections, a Learning Centre for all ages, and facilities for major visiting exhibitions, was opened in March 2004 by HRH the Prince of Wales. The Compton Verney website can be found at: www.comptonverney.org.uk

Sir Peter Moores was born in Lancashire and educated at Eton College and Christ Church, Oxford. He was a student at the Vienna Academy of Music, where he produced the Austrian premiere of Benjamin Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia*, and worked as an assistant producer with Viennese artists in Naples, Geneva and Rome, before returning to England in 1957 to join his father's business, Littlewoods. He was Vice-Chairman of Littlewoods in 1976, Chairman from 1977 to 1980 and remained a director until 1993.

He received the Gold Medal of the Italian Republic in 1974, an Honorary MA from Christ Church, Oxford, in 1975, and was made an Honorary Member of the Royal Northern College of Music in 1985. In 1992 he was appointed a Deputy Lieutenant of Lancashire by HM the Queen. He was appointed CBE in 1991 and received a Knighthood in 2003 for his charitable services to the arts.

Smetana: Die verkaufte Braut

Es ist nur eine Lappalie und das Komponieren war ein reines Kinderspiel. Ich habe das Stück ohne jegliche Ambitionen geschrieben, habe es eigentlich nur so hingeworfen ..., um all die zu ärgern, die mir vorgeworfen haben, ich sei Wagnerianer.

Erlebt man *Die verkaufte Braut* zum ersten Mal, so fällt es leicht, sich vorzustellen, wie die leichtfüßigen, wohlgelaunten Noten aus der Feder des Komponisten direkt in die Ohren eines dankbaren Publikums fließen. Nichts könnte jedoch weniger der Wahrheit entsprechen. Trotz der oben zitierten Worte war der Entstehungsprozeß von Smetanas zweiter Oper für den Komponisten ausgesprochen mühselig und das Werk wurde bei der Uraufführung mit kalter Gleichgültigkeit aufgenommen. Sieben Jahre mußten vergehen und vier Überarbeitungen sowie ein fundamentaler Wandel des politischen Klimas in Zentraleuropa waren vonnöten, bevor die Komposition die Popularität erreichte, die ihren Bestand im Repertoire sicherte. Niemand wäre überraschter als der Komponist selbst, wenn er feststellen würde, daß seine leichte Komödie

zum Inbegriff der tschechischen Oper geworden ist, während seine übrigen Bühnenwerke schon halb vergessen sind. Um die Gründe hierfür zu verstehen, müssen wir uns in die Geschichte nicht nur der tschechischen Musik sondern auch der tschechischen Nation selbst vertiefen.

Bedřich Smetana wurde 1824 in einer kleinen Stadt an der Grenze zwischen Böhmen und Mähren geboren. Es war langweilig, in einer Zeit aufzuwachsen, in der die künstlerischen und intellektuellen Feuer des napoleonischen Europa in der Selbstgefälligkeit und Konventionalität der repressiven österreichischen Monarchie erstickten. Die tschechischen Provinzen wurden von Wien aus regiert, der Glanz und die Kultiviertheit der habsburgischen Hauptstadt waren jedoch Lichtjahre entfernt von der hinterwäldlerischen Umgebung, in der der Sohn eines Brauers aufwuchs. Erst der Fünfzehnjährige konnte seinen Vater überreden, ihn zum Studium in die aufregende tschechische Hauptstadt Prag zu schicken. Hier begegnete er einem reicheren gesellschaftlichen Leben, doch trotz all seiner

sinnlichen Schönheit war Prag immer noch eine Provinzstadt. Wie die Mehrheit seiner Zeitgenossen sprach und schrieb Smetana deutsch und die tschechische Literatur, Musik und bildende Kunst standen noch absolut unter deutscher Vorherrschaft.

Unter der Oberfläche jedoch brodelte es in der tschechischen Gesellschaft, ebenso wie in sämtlichen anderen Provinzen des Reiches. Ihren politischen Ausdruck sollte diese Unruhe in den Revolutionen des Jahres 1848 finden, als für einen kurzen Augenblick nahezu alle Königtümer und Kaiserreiche Europas wankten. Die Revolutionen scheiterten, aber sie hinterließen unauslöschbare Spuren in Kunst, Musik und Literatur. Vor allem der aufkommende Nationalismus verbreitete sich in ganz Zentraleuropa, und nirgenwo hinterließ er eine deutlichere Spur als in der Musik. Der Einfluß volkstümlicher Kultur war in Österreich und seinen Schutzgebieten zwar schon immer präsent, nicht zuletzt auch in der Musik Haydns, Beethovens und Schuberts, nun gewann sie jedoch auch politische Resonanz. Der Geist des ungarischen Nationalismus hatte begonnen, die Werke eines Franz Liszt zu durchdringen, und sogar Frédéric Chopin atmete in seinem freiwilligen Pariser Exil die Luft Polens. In Prag war Smetana ebenso

empfänglich für den Zeitgeist wie jeder Junge aus der Provinz, und diese Haltung wurde durch seine entschieden nationalistisch gesinnten Freunde noch verstärkt. Seine frühen Märsche, Polkas und Walzer orientierten sich an der patriotischen Kapellmusik der Stadt und den Salonstücken von Chopin und Liszt, waren aber zugleich durchdrungen von den Melodien und rhythmischen Nuancen der böhmischen Landessprache.

Es sollten weitere zwanzig Jahre vergehen, bevor Smetanas nationalistische Empfindungen auf der Bühne Ausdruck fanden – Jahre des Reisens und des Experimentierens, in denen er seinen Stil nach Liszts gewagten sinfonischen Dichtungen formte. Als er in die Heimat zurückkehrte, hatte er ein Opernprojekt im Gepäck, das seine Beschäftigung mit der “Musik der Zukunft” und seine zunehmende Vertiefung in die tschechische Nationalgeschichte miteinander verknüpfte. Mit der Oper *Die Brandenburger in Böhmen*, ein riesiger Erfolg bei der Premiere in 1866 und heute außerhalb der Grenzen Tschechiens weitgehend vergessen, etablierte Smetana sich über Nacht als die musikalische Stimme seiner Nation. Mit seinen mächtigen patriotischen Chören und seinen derben modalen Harmonien schuf

Smetana mit seiner ersten Oper die Grundlagen eines Stils, der die tschechische Musik für das folgende halbe Jahrhundert prägen sollte.

Das Werk zog allerdings auch den Vorwurf auf sich, daß der Komponist von dem vergifteten Kelch des Wagnerismus trinke. Wie fast ganz Europa waren auch die österreichischen Provinzen den großen Opern im italienischen und französischen Stil verfallen, während man Wagner mit tiefem Mißtrauen betrachtete. Bei der Premiere von *Die verkaufte Braut* im Jahr 1867 mag das Publikum daher ein großes heroisches Epos oder ein eindringliches Musikdrama im Stile Wagners erwartet haben. Kaum vorbereitet war man jedoch auf eine heitere bukolische Komödie voller Volksmelodien und zärtlicher Duette. Vielleicht hätten die Dinge einen besseren Verlauf genommen, wenn die Premiere nicht an einem schwülen Maiabend mitten an einem Feiertagswochenende stattgefunden hätte, als die Stadt halb verlassen war. Das Klima im Theater war sicherlich drückend heiß, aber das Publikum reagierte allenfalls lauwarm, und zu allem Überfluß marschierten sieben Tage später die Preußen in Böhmen ein. Während also die patriotischen Elemente im Hause darüber enttäuscht waren,

daß man ihnen ein nationalistisches Schaustück im Stile der *Brandenburger in Böhmen* vorenthielt, war die besorgte Mehrheit des Publikums nur allzu bereit, auf eine oberflächliche Tollerei zu verzichten, die sich kaum mit der vorherrschenden bedrückten Stimmung vereinen ließ. Die Tschechen mochten ihre Oper ernsthaft und erhebend, wie der Schriftsteller Nedeljy bemerkte: "Das Nationaltheater war nicht ein Ort der Unterhaltung sondern ein geheiligter Ort, ein Schrein, eine Schule, wo die Nation in der gewählten Form ihrer eigenen Sprache ihre Empfindungen und ihre höchsten Ziele auszudrücken hatte." Was Smetana betraf, so war es ihm ganz recht, Prag zu verlassen und in der Provinz Zuflucht zu suchen.

Die politischen Umwälzungen im Schicksal Österreichs bedingten ironischerweise jedoch auch einen Wandel in Smetanas persönlicher Zukunft. In der auf Preußens Sieg über Österreich (1867) folgenden grundsätzlichen Neuorganisation der tschechischen Bürokratie sah Smetana sich zum Musikdirektor des Interimstheaters ernannt – ein mehr als hilfreiches Sprungbrett für seine beginnende Laufbahn als Opernkomponist. Zugleich ging auch ein Wandel des musikalischen Geschmacks vonstatten. Dies waren nicht

mehr die Zeiten solch kriegerischer Epen wie *Die Brandenburger in Böhmen*. Eine gemütliche Komödie fürs Volk wie *Die verkaufte Braut* war hingegen genau das richtige. Das Stück mußte musikalisch nur ein wenig umgestaltet werden, und so kürzte und stutzte und erweiterte Smetana über die nächsten drei Jahre, fügte neue Tänze ein und strich Duette, um die Oper so zu gestalten wie wir sie heute kennen. Nach einem Fiasko, einem Krieg und einer Menge harter Arbeit erlebte die vierte und endgültige Fassung der Oper im Jahre 1870 ihre triumphale Premiere.

Was änderte Smetana an dem ersten Entwurf seiner Oper, so daß sie doch noch zum Erfolg wurde? Wir müssen nicht viel von der Musik hören, bevor die ersten Unterschiede sich zeigen. Nach der gefeierten Ouvertüre, deren fugale Geschäftigkeit sowohl der *Zauberflöte* als auch der *Hochzeit des Figaro* mehr als nur einen flüchtigen Tribut zollen, leitet ein robuster Chor zu einem bangen begleiteten Rezitativ der beiden Hauptfiguren Mařenka und ihres geliebten Jeník über. Deren Dialog setzt schon ein, während der Chor noch singt, so daß dessen beide Hauptthemen sich im Hintergrund der ersten Worte der Liebenden miteinander verknüpfen. In der ursprünglichen Fassung wurde die dramatische Handlung

ausschließlich von der Rede getragen – wie etwa in der *Zauberflöte* oder Smetanas zeitgenössischem deutschen Vorbild, Cornelius' *Der Barbier von Bagdad*. Indem er das Rezitativ mit einer Orchesterbegleitung versieht, entfernt Smetana das Werk eindeutig aus dem Umfeld der Operette oder der komischen Oper. Während der Text uns vermittelt, daß es sich hier um eine formelhafte Komödie handelt, verweist die Musik auf eine von dunkleren Emotionen bestimmte tiefere Ebene.

Die gravierendsten Änderungen finden sich jedoch im mittleren Akt der Oper. Die ursprüngliche Fassung bestand aus zwei Akten und diente als recht leichtgewichtige Abendunterhaltung. Bei seiner Umstrukturierung des Werkes teilte Smetana es in drei Akte auf, wobei er den zweiten Akt mit einer Eröffnungsszene versah, bei der es sich eigentlich um ein miniaturhaftes Volksfest handelt. Es genügte ihm nicht, den ersten Akt vom Chor mit einer lebhaften Polka beschließen zu lassen, vielmehr eröffnete er den zweiten mit einer noch lebhafteren Polka, die passend als patriotische Lobeshymne an die stärkende Kraft des Bieres daherkommt. Die beständigen Tanzrhythmen sind während der gesamten anschließenden Szene zu hören, wobei Kecal und Jeník hohe und tiefe

Diskante zu Gehör bringen, die in einen noch energievolleren *Furiant* übergehen. Die punktierten Rhythmen setzen sich sogar während der sich anschließenden gestammelten Arie des Vasek fort, der sich damit eindeutig auf dem Rang eines bäuerlichen Tölpels plaziert sieht. Auch die erste Fassung der Oper war bereits von volksliedhaften Melodien und Rhythmen durchdrungen, doch indem er eine ganze Szene aus traditionellen Tänzen zusammensetzte, schuf Smetana eine Form des einheimischen Musiktheaters, die ein halbes Jahrhundert lang ihre Nachahmer finden sollte.

Wenn es Smetana gelang, für die sich im späten neunzehnten Jahrhundert in ganz Zentraleuropa ausbreitenden Volksopern eine Schablone zu schaffen, so geschah dies eher zufällig als durch Absicht. Obwohl sowohl das Trinklied im zweiten Akt als auch der Marsch der Zirkustruppe im dritten auf tschechischem und böhmischem folkloristischem Material aus veröffentlichten Sammlungen basieren, war Smetana kein ernsthafter Volkslied-Forscher wie etwa Kodály oder Bartók. Keines seiner anderen Bühnenwerke macht so ausgiebig Gebrauch von traditionellen Melodien, und er sollte auch nie wieder einen ganzen Volkstanz verwenden wie im Fall des *Furiant*. Als er *Die verkaufte Braut* als Lappalie beschrieb, meinte

er dies durchaus ernst. Es machte ihm ganz offensichtlich Spaß, die spielerische Szene zu komponieren, in der Mařenka Vašek gegenüber vorgibt, daß sie jemand ganz anderes und die wahre Mařenka eine lose Dirne sei. Wie ihr Gegenstück, in dem Jeník Kecál anstiftet, den Vertrag zu unterschreiben, der seine gekaufte Braut auslösen wird, verwandelt auch hier der Tanzrhythmus der Polka die notwendige Grausamkeit der Komödie in etwas Harmloses und Anrührendes.

Seine eigentliche kreative Kraft reservierte Smetana für die zahlreichen Duette, die wechselweise zärtlich, glühend und – im dritten Akt, wo Mařenka glaubt, sie sei betrogen worden – zutiefst anrührend sind. Er gab sich damit zufrieden, die Ankunft der Zirkustruppe als echtes Schauspiel mit Musik zu belassen, vielleicht weil die Figur des Tenors, die Soubrette und der komische Bariton in der ursprünglichen Aufführung alle aus der Schauspieltruppe des Interimstheaters stammten und nicht aus den Reihen der festen Sänger. Es überrascht nicht, daß der eigentliche musikalische Genuß der Szene der Tanz der Komödianten ist, der sich an den Auftritt der Akrobaten anschließt – eine der zahlreichen Episoden in der Oper, die im

vergangenen Jahrhundert unzählige Male als Konzertzugabe gespielt wurden. Sobald diese Episode vorüber ist, kehrt Smetana zu dem für die Duette typischen warmen lyrischen Ausdruck zurück und betört in dem anrührenden Ensemble, das das dramatische Herzstück des Akts bildet, mit einer Reihe schmeichelnder Melodien.

Mit diesem geschickten Wechsel vom lyrischen Idiom zu dem der Burleske und der Bukolik schuf Smetana etwas Originelleres und Dauerhafteres als mit all seinen ernsthafteren Bühnenwerken. Neben den geistreichen Genrestücken für das stotternde Muttersöhnchen Vašek und den kunstvoll verwobenen slawischen Tänzen, die den zweiten Akt eröffnen, ist seine Verwandlung der Durchführung der Ouvertüre in das komplexe komische Finale desselben Akts genauso einfallsreich wie ein Stück von Rossini. Dies soll jedoch nicht bedeuten, daß Smetana seine Musik nicht ernst nahm – wie seine sinfonischen Dichtungen, das nationale Epos *Má Vlast* und die düsteren Dramen von *Dalibor* und *Libuše* bezeugen. Selbst in der heutigen tschechischen Republik ist die vollständige Aufführung von *Má Vlast*, mit der in jedem Jahr das Prager Frühlingfestival eröffnet wird, eine Art Akt der nationalen

Ehrebietung. Im heutigen Prag grenzt es noch immer an Ketzerei zu behaupten, daß Dvořák der profundere Schöpfer romantischer Opern war und Janáček der tiefgründigere und anrührendere Musikdramatiker.

Smetana brilliert vor allem im reflektiven lyrischen Idiom. Das ausgedehnte Ensemble in der Mitte des dritten Akts dient in keiner Weise dazu, die Handlung voranzutreiben, sondern erkundet vielmehr das Seelenleben der Hauptfiguren und kompensiert damit mehr als hinreichend den Mangel an dramatischer Entwicklung. Wir suchen bei Smetana weder tiefgründige Psychologie noch spirituelle Tiefe, dies ist jedoch kein Mangel, wenn das Drama in solch betörenden Rhythmen und mit solch melodischer Grazie daherkommt. Es sind diese Eigenschaften, die der *Moldau*, der sinfonischen Dichtung *Aus Böhmens Hain und Flur* und dem Ersten Streichquartett weiterhin erlauben, ihre angestammte Rolle im Konzertleben zu spielen, und die garantieren, daß *Die verkaufte Braut* diejenige von Smetanas Opern ist, die in jedem Theater und in jeder Sprache immer ihren Platz behaupten wird.

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Übersetzung: Stephanie Wollny

Die verkaufte Braut

Synopse

Es ist der Maifeiertag in einem böhmischen Dorf – eine Zeit des Freiens und der Reigentänze.

COMPACT DISC ONE

Erster Akt

[1] – [2] Eines der Mädchen im Dorf, Mařenka (ausgesprochen *Maschenka*), kann sich der fröhlichen Stimmung der Dorfbewohner nicht anschließen. [3] Sie erzählt ihrem Verehrer Jeník von ihren Sorgen. [4] – [5] Ihr Vater Krušina (*Kruschina*) hat Schulden bei Mícha (*Mika*), einem reichen Mann im Dorfe, und sie soll Míchas Sohn heiraten, der ein Trottel ist.

Jeník beteuert seine Liebe zu ihr. [6] – [8] Als sie ihn nach seiner geheimnisvollen Vergangenheit befragt, erzählt er: Nach dem Tod seiner geliebten Mutter habe sein Vater erneut geheiratet, und seine neue Stiefmutter habe ihm das Leben zur Hölle gemacht. Er sei daher in die Welt hinaus gezogen und habe unter Fremden gelebt. Jeník schwört jedoch, daß er bei Mařenka das Glück der wahren Liebe wiederentdeckt habe.

[9] – [11] Der Heiratsvermittler des Dorfes, Kecal (*Ketsal*), versucht, die Unzulänglichkeiten von Míchas schwachsinnigem Sohn Vašek (*Vaschek*) zu überspielen, als er diesen Mařenkas in Not geratenen Eltern Krušina und Ludmila gegenüber beschreibt. Die Heirat ist so gut wie beschlossen, und seine Provision scheint ihm sicher. Krušina sieht die geplante Hochzeit als das Ende seiner finanziellen Schwierigkeiten. Ludmila hat mehr Sympathie mit den Gefühlen ihrer Tochter.

[12] – [13] Ihre Befürchtungen stellen sich als gerechtfertigt heraus, als Mařenka sich weigert, mitzuspielen. Sie teilt den Anwesenden mit, daß ihr Herz Jeník gehöre. Kecal versichert ihren Eltern, daß er Jeník aufsuchen und die Sache mit ihm klären werde.

[14] Die Dorfbewohner – immer noch in festlicher Stimmung – tanzen eine Polka.

Zweiter Akt

[15] Der Zweite Akt beginnt mit einem Loblied auf das Biertrinken. Kecal besingt die Tugenden des Geldes, Jeník hingegen die noch größeren Tugenden der Liebe. [16] – [17] Nach einem wilden Tanz kommt Vašek, der stammelnde künftige Ehemann, scheu herangeschlichen. Er hat große Angst vor

seiner Mutter und vor ihrer Reaktion, wenn er sich nicht an die für ihn geschmiedeten Heiratspläne hält.

[18] – [19] Mařenka begreift, daß dies der Mann ist, den sie heiraten soll. Ohne ihre Identität preiszugeben, macht sie Vašek glauben, daß das Mädchen “Mařenka” in Wirklichkeit eine treulose und übelwollende Kreatur sei, die ihn, nachdem sie ihn erst einmal geheiratet habe, töten werde! Kokett überredet sie den leichtgläubigen Vašek, ihr zu schwören, daß er “Mařenka” nicht heiraten werde.

COMPACT DISC TWO

[1] – [4] Kecal hat Jeník inzwischen gefunden und versucht ihn nun zu überreden, eine Vereinbarung zu unterzeichnen, daß er Mařenka nicht heiraten werde. [5] Jeník stimmt zu, nachdem er als Gegenvertrag ausgehandelt hat, daß Mařenka niemand anderen als “Míchas Sohn” heiraten werde, daß die Schulden ihres Vaters bei Mícha erlassen werden und daß Kecal ihm, Jeník, zehntausend Kronen zahlen werde.¹ Kecal, der glaubt, er habe den ursprünglichen Plan gerettet, geht triumphierend ab. [6] Der allein zurückbleibende Jeník wundert sich darüber,

daß Kecal ihn tatsächlich eines solchen Verrats für fähig halten kann, wo er Mařenka doch so liebt.

[7] Kecal kehrt mit dem Chor zurück, der beim Unterschreiben des Abkommens zwischen ihm und Jeník als Zeuge dienen soll. Der Chor schmäh't Jeník dafür, so leicht käuflich zu sein.

Dritter Akt

[8] Vašek ist verzweifelt. Er kann das hübsche Mädchen nicht finden, das ihm so gute Ratschläge gegen eine Ehe mit Mařenka gegeben hat. [9] – [10] Seine Freude über die Ankunft eines Wanderzirkus lenkt ihn jedoch ab.

[11] – [12] Die fahrenden Artisten stecken in einem Dilemma. Der Schauspieler, der gewöhnlich den Tanzbären mimt, ist zu betrunken, um an der Aufführung mitzuwirken. Der Zirkusdirektor und die kesse Trapezkünstlerin Esmeralda überreden den verzückten Vašek, an diesem Abend das Bärenkostüm zu tragen.

[13] – [15] Vašeks Eltern, Mícha und Háta, sind erstaunt darüber, daß Vašek sich so sehr davor scheut, Mařenka zu heiraten. [16] Als Vašek jedoch begreift, daß diese in Wirklichkeit das hübsche Mädchen ist, das ihn

gewarnt hat, treiben sie Kecals Plan so schnell wie möglich voran.

¹⁷ Mařenka ist über Jeníks scheinbaren Treuebruch tief betrübt. Ihre Eltern und Kecal überreden sie, die Heirat mit Vašek noch einmal zu überdenken.

¹⁸ – ¹⁹ Allein zurückgelassen, gibt Mařenka sich ihrer Verzweiflung hin, ²⁰ die zu Wut wird, als Jeník erscheint. Sie weigert sich, auf seine scheinbar leeren Versprechungen zu hören, daß sich alles noch zum besten wenden werde.

²¹ – ²² Kecal ruft alle zusammen, um die Vorbereitungen abzuschließen. ²³ Doch als die Míchas Jeník schließlich persönlich begegnen, sind sie erstaunt, in ihm Míchas lange verschollenen erstgeborenen Sohn zu erkennen. Jeník besteht nun darauf, daß seine Seite des Vertrags erfüllt werde. Als Míchas Sohn wird er Mařenka heiraten. Außerdem wird er zehntausend Kronen erhalten, die Hälfte vom Vermögen seines Vaters, um das ihn seine Stiefmutter Háta zu prellen versucht hatte. Die Schulden von Mařenkas Eltern werden erlassen, und Kecal geht in Ungnade ab.

Als sie begreift, wie geschickt Jeníks Strategie war, ist Mařenkas nur allzu bereit, ihm zu vergeben. ²⁴ Nachdem Vašek glücklich im Kostüm des Tanzbären erschienen

ist, begreifen die Míchas die Torheit ihres Plans, ihn zu verheiraten. Allseits gibt es Glückwünsche und Vergebung, als die Gesellschaft den Ehebund zwischen Jeník und der “verkauften Braut” feiert.

¹Dieser Preis wurde in der vorliegenden Übersetzung erhöht, um ihn dem von Jeníks geprellter Erbschaft anzupassen. Damit Jeníks Gegenvertrag funktioniert, muß dieser zudem seine wahre Identität sogar vor Mařenka geheimhalten, wenn er die Unterschrift seines Vaters unter seinen listigen Vertrag erhalten will. Dies rechtfertigt ein Verhalten, daß man sonst der uneingeweihten Mařenka gegenüber als unnötige Grausamkeit ansehen könnte.

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Übersetzung: Stephanie Wollny

Susan Gritton (Mařenka) wurde 1994 mit dem Kathleen Ferrier Memorial Prize ausgezeichnet; sie hatte zunächst an den Universitäten von Oxford und London Botanik studiert, bevor sie eine Laufbahn als Sängerin einschlug.

Zu ihren Opernengagements zählen die Susanna (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Zerlina (*Don Giovanni*), Miss Wordsworth (*Albert Herring*)

und die Titelrolle in Händels *Theodora* auf dem Glyndebourne Festival; Tiny (*Paul Bunyan*), Mařenka (*Die verkaufte Braut*), Erstes Blumenmädchen (*Parsifal*) und Ismene (*Mitridate*) am Royal Opera House in Covent Garden; Romilda (*Xerxes*), Cleopatra (*Giulio Cesare*) und die Titelrolle in *Rodelinda* an der Bayerischen Staatsoper in München; Pamina, Fiordiligi, Sophie (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Nannetta (*Falstaff*) und die Titelrolle in *The Cunning Little Vixen* an der English National Opera; die Gouvernante (*The Turn of the Screw*) und Blanche (*Les dialogues des Carmelites*) in Snape Maltings Concert Hall; Marzelline (*Fidelio*) an der Oper von Rom, Tytania (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*) am Teatro la Fenice in Venedig sowie Fiordiligi (*Così fan tutte*) auf dem Mostly Mozart Festival in New York.

Zu ihrer umfangreichen Diskographie zählen Nannetta (*Falstaff*) und die Priesterin in *Aida* im Rahmen der Chandos-Reihe “Opera in English”, Händels *Theodora* und *Messias*, Mozarts Requiem, Haydns Messen (für Chandos), Glucks *Paride ed Elena*, Hero (*Beatrice et Benedict*) sowie Tiny und Miss Wordsworth.

Unter Sir Charles Mackerras hat sie mit dem Scottish Chamber Orchestra Mozarts

Requiem und mit dem Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra Ravels *Shéhérazade* gesungen, und unter Sir Simon Rattle *L'Enfant et les sortilèges* mit den Berliner Philharmonikern sowie Brahms' Requiem mit dem Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. Susan Gritton lebt mit ihrem Mann und ihren beiden Kindern in Surrey.

Paul Charles Clarke (Jeník) wurde in Liverpool geboren und studierte bei Neil Mackie am Royal College of Music, wo er Peter-Pears-Stipendiat war. 1989 wurde er im Kathleen-Ferrier-Wettbewerb mit dem ersten Preis ausgezeichnet.

Seine Opernengagements umfassen Jeník (*Die verkaufte Braut*), Kudryas (*Katya Kabanova*), Jaquino (*Fidelio*), Alfred (*Die Fledermaus*) sowie Cassio (*Otello*) an der Metropolitan Opera; Tybalt (*Roméo et Juliette*), Jeník, Cassio, Froh (*Das Rheingold*) und Alfredo (*La traviata*) am Royal Opera House, Covent Garden; Herzog (*Rigoletto*), Alfredo, Tamino (*Die Zauberflöte*), Edgardo (*Lucia di Lammermoor*), Pollione (*Norma*) und Anatol (*Vanessa*) an der Seattle Opera; Alfredo und Nemorino (*Elisir*) an der Scottish Opera; Macduff (*Macbeth*) an der Opéra de Monte Carlo; die Titelrolle in *Faust* an der Minnesota

und der Cicinnati Opera; die Titelrolle in *Don Carlo* an der Minnesota Opera; Pinkerton (*Madama Butterfly*) und die Titelrolle in *Werther* an der Deutschen Oper Berlin; Alfredo an der Houston Grand Opera; Nicias (*Thaïs*) an der Opéra de Montréal und der English National Opera; Don José (*Carmen*) an der Seattle Opera sowie Jaquino am Teatro Carlo Felice di Genova unter der Leitung von Lorin Maazel. Er unterhält enge Verbindungen mit der Welsh National Opera, an der seine bisherigen Rollen Herzog, Fenton (*Falstaff*), Alfredo, Faust, Pinkerton und Gabriele Adorno (*Simon Boccanegra*) umfassen.

Seine Konzerttätigkeit umfaßt Beethovens Neunte Sinfonie, Mendelssohns *Elias*, Dvořáks *Stabat Mater* bei den BBC Proms, Verdis *Requiem* am Teatro Real in Madrid und am Gran Teatre del Liceu in Barcelona, sowie Leicester in einer konzertanten Aufführung von Donizettis *Maria Stuarda* unter der Leitung von Sir Charles Mackerras.

Zu seinen CD-Einspielungen zählt unter anderem die Titelrolle in *Faust* für die Chandos-Serie "Opera in English".

Peter Rose (Kecal) wurde in Canterbury geboren. Er studierte Musik an der University of East Anglia und bei Ellis Keeler an der

Guildhall School of Music and Drama. 1985 gewann er ein Kathleen Ferrier Memorial Scholarship und 1986 wurde er in Glyndebourne mit dem John Christie Award ausgezeichnet; sein Operndebüt feierte er 1986 in Hong Kong als Commendatore mit der Glyndebourne Festival Opera. Von 1986 bis 1989 war er Erster Bassist an der Welsh National Opera. Sein Debüt am Royal Opera House feierte er als Rochefort (*Anna Bolena*) mit Dame Joan Sutherland.

Zu seinem Repertoire zählen: Ramfis, Fasolt, Cadmus/Somnus (*Semele*), Daland, König Marke, Commendatore und Timur (*Turandot*) am Royal Opera House in Covent Garden; Gessler (*Guillaume Tell*), Commendatore und Basilio (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*) in San Francisco; Kecal (*Die verkaufte Braut*) an der Chicago Lyric Opera; Ramfis, Daland und Ochs (*Der Rosenkavalier*) an der Metropolitan Opera; König Marke, Gremin, Claggart, Sarastro und Ochs an der Wiener Staatsoper sowie weitere Rollen an der Pariser Opéra, der Deutschen Staatsoper Berlin, der Hamburger Staatsoper, der Oper von Seattle sowie in Amsterdam und Sydney.

Seine Konzertverpflichtungen umfassen Beethovens Neunte Sinfonie, Mozarts Requiem, Mahlers Achte Sinfonie, Verdi

Requiem, *La Damnation de Faust*, Ravels *L'Enfant et les sortilèges* und *L'Heure espagnole* sowie Beethovens *Missa solemnis*.

An wichtigen Einspielungen sind zu nennen: *Der Barbier von Sevilla*, *Tosca*, *Aida* und *Lucia di Lammermoor* (sämtlich im Rahmen der Chandos-Reihe "Opera in English"), *Le nozze di Figaro* mit Barenboim und den Berliner Philharmonikern, *Die sieben Todsünden* und *Salome* mit den Wiener Philharmonikern unter von Dohnányi, *Un ballo in maschera* unter Rizzi sowie *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* unter Sir Charles Mackerras.

Timothy Robinson (Vašek) war Chorstipendiat am New College in Oxford; nach Abschluß seines Musikstudiums setzte er seine Ausbildung an der Guildhall School of Music and Drama fort. Er hatte Konzertverpflichtungen in ganz Großbritannien, darunter mit der BBC Symphony, der City of Birmingham Symphony, dem Royal Philharmonic und dem Scottish Chamber Orchestra sowie dem Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, ferner auf dem Aldeburgh Festival unter Stuart Bedford und bei den BBC Promenade Concerts unter William Christie, Sir Andrew Davis und Sir Simon Rattle. Im Ausland hatte

er Auftritte im Amsterdamer Concertgebouw und im Wiener Konzerthaus, ferner mit dem Orchestre de Lyon; sein Debüt mit den Wiener Philharmonikern feierte er unter dem Dirigat von Sir Simon Rattle.

Zu seinen Opernengagements zählen *Falstaff*, *Boris Godunow* und Händels *L'Allegro* an der English National Opera; Jupiter auf dem Festival von Aix-en-Provence; Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*) und die Titelrolle in *La clemenza di Tito* an der Welsh National Opera sowie Kudrjash (*Katja Kabanova*), Jacquino (*Fidelio*), Janek (*The Makropulos Case*) und Grimoaldo (*Rodelinda*) auf dem Glyndebourne Festival. Sein Debüt an der Pariser Opéra feierte er mit *Turandot*; später kehrte er mit *Alcina* dorthin zurück. Als Mitglied des Ensembles der Royal Opera in Covent Garden sang er unter Sir Charles Mackerras, Sir Colin Davis und Bernard Haitink.

Seine CD-Einspielungen umfassen Vaughan Williams' *Serenade to Music* unter Sir Roger Norrington, Beethovens Kantaten, *Alcina*, Mozarts Requiem und Szymanowskis *Harnasie*.

Der aus Abercynon in Südwest-Wales gebürtige **Geoffrey Moses** (Mícha) studierte in Cambridge Geschichte. Seine Gesangsausbildung absolvierte er an der

Londoner Guildhall School of Music and Drama bei Otakar Kraus und Peter Harrison.

Geoffrey Moses hat mit allen großen britischen Opernensembles gesungen. Zu seinen Rollen an der Royal Opera in Covent Garden zählen Lindorf (*Les Contes d'Hoffmann*), Cleomer (*Esclarmonde*), Foltz und Schwartz (*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*), Pistol (*Falstaff*) und der Commendatore (*Don Giovanni*). An der Welsh National Opera hat er den Basilio (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*) gesungen, ferner den Moser (*I Masnadieri*), Sparafucile (*Rigoletto*), Colline (*La Bohème*), Sarastro (*Die Zauberflöte*), Nourabad (*Les Pêcheurs de perles*), König Marke (*Tristan und Isolde*), Fotis (*The Greek Passion*), Giorgio (*I puritani*), Rodolfo (*La sonnambula*), Bartolo (*Le nozze di Figaro*) sowie Pistol auch in Tokio, Mailand, New York und Paris) und Raimondo (*Lucia di Lammermoor*). Weitere Engagements hatte er mit der Glyndebourne Festival Opera, der Glyndebourne Touring Opera, der Opera North, der Scottish Opera und der English National Opera.

Engagements im Ausland umfassen Basilio und Colline in Hamburg, Crespel und Pietro in Brüssel, Rodolfo (*La sonnambula*) in Nancy, Walton (*I puritani*) an der Deutschen Oper Berlin, Peter in der Weltpremiere von

Harrison Birtwistles *The Last Supper* an der Deutschen Staatsoper Berlin und Collatinus (*The Rape of Lucretia*) in Sevilla.

Zu seinen CD-Einspielungen gehören *The Greek Passion* unter Sir Charles Mackerras und der Steuermann (*Tristan und Isolde*) unter Sir Reginald Goodall.

Yvonne Howard (Ludmila) studierte am Royal Northern College of Music. Zu ihren frühen Engagements gehören die Titelrolle in *La Cenerentola* mit der English Touring Opera, die Marcellina in *Le nozze di Figaro* auf dem Glyndebourne Festival wie auch mit der Glyndebourne Touring Opera sowie Fricka und Waltraute in der gefeierten Inszenierung des Ring-Zyklus der City of Birmingham Touring Opera.

An der English National Opera hat sie Amastris (*Xerxes*) und Meg Page gesungen. In *Xerxes* ist sie auch in Sao Paulo in Brasilien aufgetreten, außerdem in *Die Walküre* in Paris und Nantes sowie in *Falstaff* und *Madama Butterfly* in Tel Aviv. Weitere Auftritte umfassen *Dream of Gerontius* in New York und auf Cape Cod, Amneris (*Aida*) an der Royal Albert Hall, Berta an der English National Opera, Assunta (*The Saint of Bleeker Street*) auf dem Spoleto Festival, Leonore (*Fidelio*) an

der Opera Holland Park sowie Marilyn Klinghoffer in einer kürzlich entstandenen TV-Verfilmung von *The Death of Klinghoffer*.

Konzerte und Recitals haben Yvonne Howard neben Verpflichtungen in ganz Großbritannien nach Japan, Frankreich, Spanien und Skandinavien, in die Schweiz und die USA geführt. Zu ihren Einspielungen zählen *Sweet Swan of Avon*, der *Messias* und, für Chandos, Waltons *Troilus & Cressida* sowie Mussorgskys *Boris Godunow*.

Neal Davies (Krušina) wurde in Newport, Gwent, geboren und studierte am King's College in London sowie an der Royal Academy of Music, wo er 2003 zum Fellow ernannt wurde. Er vertiefte seine Studien am Internationalen Opernstudio in Zürich bei Dame Gwyneth Jones.

Seine bisherigen Opernengagements umfassen Rameaus *Platée* (in London und auf dem Edinburgh Festival); Händels *Giulio Cesare* unter Ivor Bolton und Figaro (*Le nozze di Figaro*) an der Royal Opera in Covent Garden; Händels *L'Allegro* an der English National Opera; Händels *Radamisto* an der Opéra de Marseille; Händels *Theodora* mit Les Arts Florissants unter William Christie (Paris und Salzburg); Händels *Orlando* mit dem

Gabrieli Consort; Leporello an der Scottish Opera sowie Guglielmo (*Costi fan tutte*), Leporello und Dulcamara (*L'elisir d'amore*) an der Welsh National Opera. Sein Debüt an der Chicago Lyric Opera feierte er als Major General Stanley (*The Pirates of Penzance*).

Zu seinen Konzertauftritten zählen Engagements mit dem Cleveland und dem Philharmonia Orchestra unter von Dohnányi, dem Gabrieli Consort unter Paul McCreech (darunter Händels *Saul* für die BBC Proms), der Osloer Philharmonie unter Jansons, dem BBC Symphony Orchestra unter Boulez, dem Niederländischen Philharmonie-Orchester unter de Waart, dem Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment und dem Chamber Orchestra of Europe.

An wichtigen Einspielungen sind zu nennen: Brittens *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Händels *Messias*, *Theodora* und *Saul*, Kantaten von Vivaldi sowie für die Reihe "Opera in English" bei Chandos Vaughan Williams' *The Poisoned Kiss* und *Jentäfa*.

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Diana Montague (Háta) wurde in Winchester geboren und studierte am Royal Northern College of Music. Seit ihrem Debüt als Zerlina mit der Glyndebourne Touring Opera hatte sie Auftritte am Royal Opera House in Covent Garden, an der Metropolitan Opera in New York, am Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brüssel, an der Opéra national de Paris-Bastille, am Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires sowie bei den Festspielen in Bayreuth und Salzburg.

Ihr Repertoire umfaßt die großen Mezzosopran-Rollen in den Opern von Mozart, Gluck, Strauss, Rossini, Bellini und Berlioz, und zu ihren Engagements gehörten *Benvenuto Cellini* an der Oper in Rom; *Iphigénie en Tauride* in Buenos Aires und Madrid sowie an der Welsh National Opera; *Albert Herring*, Cherubino (*Le nozze di Figaro*) und Andromaca in Rossinis *Ermione* in Glyndebourne; *Le Comte Ory* in Lausanne, Rom und Glyndebourne; Proserpina in Monteverdis *Orfeo* in Amsterdam; *Ariadne auf Naxos* in Lissabon; Marguerite (*La Damnation de Faust*) in Wien und Genf; Minerva (*Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*) in Amsterdam und Sydney; *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* am Royal Opera House in Covent Garden; Junon in Rameaus *Platée* mit der Royal Opera auf dem Edinburgh Festival und in London;

sowie Octavian (*Der Rosenkavalier*) an der English National Opera, in Bilbao und am Teatro Real in Madrid.

Zu Diana Montagues zahlreichen Einspielungen zählen Monteverdis *Orfeo*, *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*, *Norma*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Iphigénie en Tauride*, für Opera Rara *Rosmonda d'Inghilterra*, *Zoraida di Granata* und *Il crociato in Egitto* sowie als Teil der bei Chandos erscheinenden Reihe "Opera in English" Cherubino (*Die Hochzeit des Figaro*), Idamante (*Idomeneo*), *Cavalleria rusticana*, Octavian in *Der Rosenkavalier* (Highlights), *Faust* und zwei Recital-CDs mit Großen Opernarien.

Robin Leggate (Zirkusdirektor) ist einer der vielseitigsten Tenöre Großbritanniens. Seit er an der Royal Opera als Erster Tenor engagiert ist, hat er dort bei zahlreichen Produktionen mitgewirkt. Höhepunkte seiner Arbeit sind *Otello* unter Carlos Kleiber, die britische Premiere der dreiaktigen Fassung von *Lulu* unter Sir Colin Davis sowie die Premiere von Verdis *Stiffelio* unter Sir Edward Downes. In jüngerer Zeit hat er Mime (*Das Rheingold*) und Peter Quint sowie anlässlich der Wiedereröffnung des Royal Opera House Cassio und Caius (*Falstaff*) gesungen.

Besonders große Erfolge feierte Robin Leggate mit dem Mozart-Repertoire, in dem er alle größeren lyrischen Tenorpartien gesungen hat – am Royal Opera House in Covent Garden, am Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris, in Amsterdam sowie an der Scottish Opera, der Opera North und der Welsh National Opera.

Seine Einspielungen umfassen *Salome*, *La traviata* und *Don Carlos* sowie für Chandos Berkeleys *A Dinner Engagement* und Menottis *Martin's Lie*. Konzertauftritte hatte er mit Brittens *War Requiem*, Mendelssohns *Elias* und Beethovens *Missa Solemnis*; hinzu kommen konzertante Aufführungen von Bergs *Lulu* mit dem BBC Symphony Orchestra und der *Walküre* (in der Rolle des Siegmund) mit RTE Dublin.

Yvette Bonner (Esmeralda) studierte an der Royal Academy of Music und schloß ihre Ausbildung 1998 mit dem Dip. RAM, der höchsten von der Academy für Konzertdarbietungen verliehenen Auszeichnung, sowie dem Blyth-Buesst Operatic Prize ab. Ihr Debüt an der Royal Opera in Covent Garden feierte sie als Hermione in Strauss' *Die Ägyptische Helena* unter der Leitung von Christian Thielemann, gefolgt von Esmeralda (*Die verkaufte Braut*) unter Bernard Haitink

sowie ein weiteres Mal 2001 unter Sir Charles Mackerras.

Weitere Rollen umfassen die Füchsin (*The Cunning Little Vixen*) auf dem Festival in Aix-en-Provence, Tina (Jonathan Doves *Flight*) für Vlaamse Opera, die Rolle der Alice in der Weltpremiere von *Alice in Wonderland* an der Niederländischen Oper, Flora (*The Turn of the Screw*) an der Welsh National Opera, Jennie Hildebrand in Kurt Weills *Street Scene* an der English National Opera sowie auch an der Houston Grand Opera und im Rahmen einer Filmproduktion, ferner Zerlina (*Don Giovanni*) in einer konzertanten Aufführung unter der Leitung von Sir Colin Davis.

Ihr Debüt an der Wigmore Hall feierte Yvette Bonner in einer Aufführung von Brittens *Les Illuminations* mit The Academy of St Martin-in-the-Fields. Sie wirkte außerdem mit bei Aufführungen der *Carmina Burana* in der Symphony Hall in Birmingham, von Bachs *Magnificat* und Vivaldis *Gloria* mit dem English Chamber Orchestra, Haydns *Nelson-Messe* in St. John's, Smith Square, und Dvořáks *Stabat Mater* mit dem Scottish Opera Orchestra.

Zu ihren CD-Einspielungen zählen Strauss' Semele (*Die Liebe der Danae*) unter der Leitung von Elgar Howarth, und *Albert Herring* unter Richard Hickox für Chandos.

Kit Hesketh-Harvey (Indian, Opernübersetzer) wurde in Zomba in Nyasaland (heute Malawi) geboren. Er war Senior Chorister in Canterbury unter Dr. Allan Wicks sowie Chorstipendiat am Clare College, Cambridge, unter Dr. John Rutter; später wirkte er für sechs Jahre als Produzent für das BBC-TV Music and Arts Department, bevor er sich als freischaffender Autor, Rundfunksprecher und Kabarettspieler selbständig machte. Er nahm bei Stephen Sondheim Unterricht und wurde für sein gesellschaftskritisches Kabarett *Kit and the Widow* für drei Olivier Awards nominiert. Er wirkt regelmäßig bei der Sendung *Just A Minute* für BBC Radio Four mit und hat bei BBC Radio Three eine seit langem erfolgreiche Kabarettserie mit dem Titel *Cocktails*. Zu seinen Opernübersetzungen zählen *Il Turco in Italia* und *La Belle Hélène* für English National Opera, *Die Fledermaus* und *Die Zauberflöte* für Scottish Opera, *Le Roi malgré lui* für Grange Park Opera und *La Fille du régiment* für English Touring Opera. Für den Komponisten James McConnel hat er die Libretti zu *Writing Orlando* (Barbican Festival) und *Yusupov* (Bridewell Theatre) geschrieben.

Seine Drehbücher umfassen *Maurice* für Merchant-Ivory und *Hans-Christian Andersen* für Hallmark Pictures. Fürs Fernsehen hat er

unter anderem *The Vicar of Dibley* (mit Richard Curtis) und *Birkin* (für Rowan Atkinson) geschrieben. Zu seinen Arbeiten für die Bühne zählen *Five o’Clock Angel*, die Geschichte von Tennessee Williams’ Freundschaft mit Maria St. Just, sowie die Opernrevue *The Fat Lady Sings*. Kit Hesketh-Harvey lebt in Norfolk und Cornwall und ist mit der Schauspielerin Kate Rabett verheiratet. Sie haben zwei Kinder.

Das **Philharmonia Orchestra**, eines der großen Orchester der Welt, steht nun bereits im sechsten Jahr unter der Leitung seines berühmten deutschen Chefdirigenten Christoph von Dohnányi. Er setzt eine Tradition fort, die mit Otto Klemperer begann und über Lorin Maazel (Erster Gastdirigent), Riccardo Muti (Chefdirigent und Musikalischer Leiter), Giuseppe Sinopoli (Musikalischer Leiter) bis zu Kurt Sanderling (Emeritierter Dirigent), Vladimir Ashkenazy (Ehrendirigent) und Sir Charles Mackerras (Hauptgastdirigent) führt, aber auch die Zusammenarbeit mit Wilhelm Furtwängler, Richard Strauss, Arturo Toscanini, Guido Cantelli, Herbert von Karajan und Carlo Maria Giulini einbezog. Das Orchester verpflichtet weiterhin Gastdirigenten und

Solisten von Weltrang, während einige der größten europäischen Nachwuchstalente in seine Reihen aufgenommen werden.

Das Philharmonia Orchestra ist in der Royal Festival Hall ansässig und nimmt eine zentrale Position im Musikleben Großbritanniens ein, nicht nur durch seine Londoner Konzerte, sondern auch durch feste Kontakte mit Aufführungsstätten in anderen Teilen des Landes, die eine ideale Gelegenheit für die Erweiterung seines dynamischen und bevölkerungsnahen musikpädagogischen Programms bieten. Das Orchester ist mit zahlreichen Preisen ausgezeichnet worden und hat beispiellose kritische Unterstützung für seine innovative Programmpolitik gewonnen, die in ihrem Kern der Bestellung und Darbietung neuer Musik von führenden Komponisten unserer Zeit verpflichtet ist.

Die Konzerte des Orchesters werden immer häufiger von BBC Radio 3 übertragen, nicht zuletzt im Rahmen der jährlichen BBC Proms. Mit über 1000 Schallplattenaufnahmen verfügt das Philharmonia Orchestra über die größte Orchesterdiskographie der Welt, die auch Fernseh- und Filmmusik beinhaltet, und genießt weltweit höchstes Ansehen. Das Orchester hat für Opera Rara mehrere Recitals

sowie dreizehn komplette Opern eingespielt und in der Reihe “Opera in English” für Chandos mit Unterstützung durch die Peter Moores Foundation *Die Hochzeit des Figaros*, *The Thieving Magpie*, *Wozzeck*, *Don Giovanni*, *The Elixir of Love*, *Lucia of Lammermoor*, *Faust*, *Carmen*, *Aida*, *La Bohème*, *Madam Butterfly*, *Turandot*, die preisgekrönte *Tosca* und Opernarien in Solorecitals mit Bruce Ford, Diana Montague, Dennis O’Neill, Alastair Miles, Yvonne Kenny und John Tomlinson aufgenommen. Das Philharmonia Orchestra untermauert seinen internationalen Rang durch regelmäßige Tourneen und Gastauftritte an berühmten Häusern wie dem Châtelet Théâtre Musical in Paris, dem Megaron in Athen und dem Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts in New York.

Der **Chor der Royal Opera, Covent Garden** wurde 1946 anlässlich der Wiedereröffnung des Royal Opera House nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg gegründet. Der Chor, der damals noch den Namen “Covent Garden Opera Chorus” trug, trat zum ersten Mal im Dezember desselben Jahres in einer Inszenierung von Purcells *The Fairy Queene* mit dem Sadler’s Wells Ballet (heute The Royal

Ballet) auf. Seine erste große Operninszenierung an diesem Haus war *Carmen* im Januar 1947. Seither bildet der Chor das Rückgrat der Royal Opera sowohl in Großbritannien als auch auf Tourneen und ist unter vielen der weltbesten Dirigenten und Regisseure aufgetreten.

Der Chor ist regelmäßig in Radiosendungen von Inszenierungen der Royal Opera zu hören und hat zudem an einer großen Zahl kommerzieller Video-Produktionen des Royal Opera House mitgewirkt, darunter Verdis *Otello*, *Stiffelio* und *La traviata*, Gounods *Roméo et Juliette*, Mozarts *Così fan tutte* und Lehárs *Die lustige Witwe*. Seit der Wiedereröffnung des Hauses sind DVDs von *Die Zauberflöte*, *Il trovatore* und *Rigoletto* erschienen.

Zu den CD-Einspielungen des Chors zählen *Tannhäuser*, *Cavalleria Rusticana* und *The Cunning Little Vixen* in der Chandos-Reihe "Opera in English", *Peter Grimes*, Harrison Birtwistles preisgekrönter *Gawain*, *The Puccini Experience*, *Don Carlos* und die ebenfalls preisgekrönte Einspielung von *Tosca* unter der Leitung von Antonio Pappano. Der Royal Opera Chorus findet sich regelmäßig mit dem Royal Ballet zu gemeinsamen Inszenierungen zusammen, darunter *Requiem* (Fauré), *Gloria* (Poulenc),

Dafnis et Chloë (Ravel) und *Les Noces* (Stravinsky).

Außerhalb des Royal Opera House ist der Chor in New York, Paris, Tokio, Baden-Baden, Palermo und Savolinna sowie auf dem Aldeburgh und dem Edinburgh Festival aufgetreten, ferner im Amsterdamer Concertgebouw und in mehreren BBC Promenade Concerts in der Royal Albert Hall. Der Chor wird gegenwärtig von Renato Balsadonna geleitet, der im August 2004 von La Monnaie in Brüssel an die Royal Opera wechselte.

Sir Charles Mackerras studierte am Konservatorium in Sydney und kam 1947 nach England. Von der Kulturorganisation British Council erhielt er ein Stipendium zur Erweiterung seines Studiums an der Musikakademie Prag. In jenem Jahr begann seine Leidenschaft für die Musik Janáčeks, als er *Katja Kabanowa* unter der Leitung des großen Václav Talich hörte.

Als Assistant Conductor am Londoner Opernhaus Sadler's Wells dirigierte er 1951 die erste Aufführung von *Katja Kabanowa* in der englischsprachigen Welt und brachte später auch *Die Sache Makropulos* und *Aus einem Totenhaus* nach Sadler's Wells.

Hoherfolgreiche Inszenierungen von Janáčeks Opern sowie vertrautere Werke aus dem Standardrepertoire leitete er auch während seiner Zeit als Musikdirektor der English National Opera (1970–77) und der Welsh National Opera (1987–1992). In ganz Europa, den USA und Australien gilt er als Wegbereiter der Musik Janáčeks. *Jenůfa* ist ihm besonders ans Herz gewachsen.

Name verbindet sich seit langem mit der Tschechischen Philharmonie, mit der er die meisten Orchesterwerke Janáčeks, *Katja Kabanowa* und Dvořáks *Rusalka* aufgenommen hat. Seine umfangreiche Diskographie enthält einen preisgekrönten Zyklus von Janáček-Opern mit den Wiener Philharmonikern aus den frühen achtziger Jahren. Für Chandos hat er Janáčeks *Glagolitische Messe* in der Originalfassung, Kodálys *Psalmus Hungaricus* und Dvořáks Cellokonzert eingespielt. Für die Chandos-Serie "Opera in English" hat er *Osud*, *La traviata*, *Werther*, *Julius Caesar*, *Mary*

Stuart, *Eugene Onegin*, *Jenůfa* und *Die Zauberflöte* aufgenommen.

Sir Charles hat auch die Musik des 18. Jahrhunderts erforscht, insbesondere Händel und Mozart. Er hat eine Reihe von Mozart-Opern und Gilbert-und-Sullivan-Operetten sowie Gesamtaufnahmen der Sinfonien von Mozart, Beethoven und Brahms, mehrere Oratorien von Händel sowie Sinfonien von Mahler und Elgar vorgelegt. Derzeit ist er Hauptgastdirigent des Philharmonia Orchestra, Conductor Laureate des Scottish Chamber Orchestra sowie Conductor Emeritus der Welsh National Opera und der San Francisco Opera.

Sir Charles wurde 1974 mit dem britischen Verdienstorden CBE ausgezeichnet, 1979 zum Ritter geschlagen, 1996 mit der Ehrenmedaille der Tschechischen Republik gewürdigt und 1997 zum Companion of the Order of Australia ernannt. 2003 erhob ihn Königin Elizabeth II. zum Companion of Honour.

Smetana: La Fiancée vendue

Ce n'est qu'un jouet et la composition fut un simple jeu d'enfant. Je ne l'ai pas écrit par ambition, mais je l'ai simplement jeté sur le papier... pour ennuyer ceux qui m'accusaient d'être wagnérien.

En découvrant *La Fiancée vendue* pour la première fois, il est facile d'imaginer ses notes souples et agréables coulant directement de la plume du compositeur aux oreilles d'un auditoire reconnaissant. Rien ne saurait être plus éloigné de la réalité. Malgré ce qu'a écrit Smetana, son deuxième opéra fut très dur pour le compositeur et fut accueilli lors de sa création avec une indifférence glaciale. Il fallut sept ans, quatre remaniements et un changement politique important en Europe centrale, avant qu'il ne remporte le succès populaire qui lui permit de rester au répertoire. Personne n'aurait pu être plus surpris que le compositeur de découvrir que cette gentille comédie allait incarner l'opéra tchèque, alors que ses autres ouvrages pour le théâtre allaient tomber dans une semi-obscure. Pour en comprendre la raison, il faut fouiller profondément dans l'histoire, non seulement de la musique tchèque, mais de la nation tchèque elle-même.

Bedřich Smetana naquit dans une petite ville située aux frontières de la Bohême et de la Moravie, en 1824. Il n'était pas très gratifiant d'y grandir alors que la suffisance et les conventions de la monarchie autrichienne répressive avaient étouffé les feux artistiques et intellectuels de l'Europe napoléonienne. Les provinces tchèques étaient gouvernées depuis Vienne, mais l'éclat et la sophistication de la capitale des Habsbourg se situaient à des années lumières du village tranquille où grandit le fils du brasseur. Ce n'est que lorsqu'il atteignit l'âge de quinze ans que Smetana convainquit son père de l'envoyer dans la ravissante capitale tchèque de Prague. Une vie sociale plus riche s'y offrit à lui, mais malgré toute sa beauté sensuelle Prague était encore une ville provinciale. Comme la majorité de ses contemporains, Smetana parlait et écrivait en allemand, et la littérature, la musique et les arts visuels tchèques étaient encore fortement soumis à l'hégémonie allemande.

Cependant, quelque chose bouillonnait sous la surface dans la société tchèque, comme dans toutes les provinces de l'empire, phénomène

qui allait trouver son expression politique dans les révolutions de 1848, lorsque, pendant une courte période, la plupart des royaumes et empires européens chancelèrent. Les révolutions échouèrent, mais elles laissèrent des traces indélébiles dans l'art, la musique et la littérature. En particulier, un nationalisme émergent s'étendit d'un bout à l'autre de l'Europe centrale et c'est dans la musique qu'il laissa la marque la plus profonde. Bien que l'influence de la culture populaire ait toujours été présente en Autriche et dans les territoires dépendants, à commencer par Haydn, Beethoven et Schubert, elle était alors en train d'acquiescer une résonance politique. L'esprit du nationalisme hongrois avait commencé à imprégner les partitions de Franz Liszt, et même Frédéric Chopin dans l'exil parisien qu'il s'était imposé respirait l'air de la Pologne. À Prague, Smetana se montra aussi sensible à l'esprit de l'époque que tout jeune provincial ambitieux, attitude renforcée par ses amis farouchement nationalistes. Ses premières marches, polkas et valse furent modelées sur la musique de fanfare patriotique de la ville et sur les pièces de salon de Chopin et de Liszt, tout en étant imprégnées des couleurs mélodiques et rythmiques du langage vernaculaire de la Bohême.

Il fallut encore attendre une vingtaine d'années pour que les sentiments nationalistes de Smetana trouvent une expression scénique – des années de voyage et d'expérience au cours desquelles il modela son style sur les audacieux poèmes symphoniques de Liszt. À son retour, il avait un projet lyrique qui faisait fusionner son obsession pour la "musique du futur" et sa concentration de plus en plus forte sur l'histoire nationale. *Les Brandebourgeois de Bohême*, un immense succès lors de sa création en 1866 et largement oublié aujourd'hui hors des territoires tchèques, firent immédiatement connaître Smetana comme la voix musicale de sa nation. Avec ses chœurs patriotiques imposants et ses robustes harmonies modales, le premier opéra de Smetana jeta les bases d'un style qui domina la musique tchèque pendant le demi-siècle suivant.

Il lui valut aussi d'être accusé de boire au calice empoisonné de l'esthétique wagnérienne. Comme la majeure partie de l'Europe, les provinces autrichiennes étaient sous l'emprise du grand opéra italien et français et Wagner était considéré avec une profonde suspicion. À la première représentation de *La Fiancée vendue* en 1867, l'auditoire s'attendait donc peut-être à une grande épopée héroïque ou à un intense drame

musical wagnérien. Mais il n'était pas préparé à une douce comédie bucolique, pleine de mélodies traditionnelles et de tendres duos. Les choses se seraient peut-être mieux passées si cette création n'avait pas eu lieu par une torride soirée de mai au beau milieu d'un week-end chômé, où la ville était à moitié déserte. La température était peut-être étouffante dans le théâtre mais l'auditoire fut franchement tiède et, pour couronner le tout, les Prussiens envahirent la Bohême dix-sept jours plus tard. Ainsi, alors que les patriotes présents dans la salle furent déçus de se voir privés d'une reconstitution historique dans le langage des *Brandebourgeois de Bohême*, la majorité inquiète ne fut que trop heureuse de renoncer à une exubérance enjouée trop éloignée de l'esprit du temps. Les Tchèques aimaient que leur opéra soit sérieux et tonique, comme le remarqua l'écrivain Nedeljy:

Le Théâtre national n'était pas un lieu de divertissement, mais un lieu vénéré, un sanctuaire, une école, où la nation devait s'exprimer dans la forme la plus élevée de son propre langage sur ses sentiments et ses objectifs les plus chers.

Quant à Smetana, il était tout aussi content d'abandonner Prague et de trouver refuge en province.

Toutefois, la transformation du destin de l'Autriche annonça un changement ironique dans le propre destin de Smetana. Dans la réorganisation massive de la bureaucratie tchèque qui suivit la victoire de la Prusse sur l'Autriche en 1867, Smetana se trouva élu directeur musical du Théâtre provisoire, un tremplin plus qu'utile à sa carrière lyrique florissante. Il y eut également une mutation du goût musical. Ce n'était plus l'heure des épopées martiales dans le style des *Brandebourgeois de Bohême*. Une comédie populaire rassurante comme *La Fiancée vendue* était exactement ce qu'il fallait. L'ouvrage avait simplement besoin d'une petite réorganisation musicale et, au cours des trois années suivantes, Smetana coupa, ajusta, élargit donc, ajoutant des danses et coupant des duos, pour arriver à l'opéra que l'on connaît aujourd'hui. Après un fiasco, une guerre et beaucoup de dur labeur, la quatrième et dernière version de cet opéra connut une première représentation triomphale en 1870.

Quelles furent les modifications apportées par Smetana à cette première ébauche qui inversèrent son destin? On n'a pas besoin d'écouter longtemps avant que les premières différences se révèlent. Après la célèbre

ouverture, dont l'effervescence fuguée rend plus qu'un hommage lointain à *La Flûte enchantée* ou aux *Noces de Figaro*, un robuste chœur mène à un récitatif angoissé avec accompagnement confié aux deux principaux personnages – Mařenka et son ami de cœur Jeník. En fait, le dialogue commence réellement avant la fin du chœur, ses deux principaux thèmes se faufilant derrière les premières paroles des amoureux. Dans l'original, l'action dramatique était entièrement portée par le discours – comme c'est le cas dans *La Flûte enchantée* ou dans le modèle allemand contemporain de Smetana, *Le Barbier de Bagdad* de Cornelius. En donnant au récitatif un accompagnement orchestral, Smetana éloigne résolument cette pièce du territoire de l'opérette ou de l'opéra-comique. Alors que le texte nous dit qu'il s'agit d'une comédie à formules, la partition fait allusion à des émotions sous-jacentes plus sombres.

Toutefois, les changements les plus importants apparaissent dans l'acte central de l'opéra. La version originale était conçue en deux actes et constituait un divertissement de soirée assez léger. En restructurant l'ouvrage, Smetana l'éclata en trois actes, avec une scène initiale à l'Acte II qui est une sorte de festival

populaire miniature. Non content de terminer l'Acte I par une polka chorale animée, Smetana commença le deuxième acte par une autre polka encore plus vigoureuse, conçue comme un hymne dûment patriotique de louange aux vertus fortifiantes de la bière. Les rythmes de danse insistants se maintiennent d'un bout à l'autre de la scène suivante, Kecal et Jeník tenant les parties aiguë et grave d'un déchant, qui mène à un *furiant* encore plus énergique. Les rythmes pointés continuent même tout au long de l'air bégayant de Vašek qui suit, air où il se trouve résolument catalogué comme un nigaud campagnard. La première version de l'opéra était déjà imprégnée de mélodies et de rythmes traditionnels, mais en construisant une scène entière sur des danses traditionnelles, Smetana fabriqua une forme de théâtre musical national qui suscita des imitations pendant le demi-siècle suivant.

Si Smetana réussit à forger un modèle pour les opéras d'inspiration populaire qui se sont développés dans toute l'Europe centrale à la fin du XIXe siècle, ce fut davantage par accident qu'à dessein. Bien que la chanson à boire de l'Acte II comme la marche de la troupe de cirque de l'Acte III furent modelées sur du matériel populaire tchèque et morave

provenant de recueils publiés, Smetana ne fut jamais un véritable spécialiste des chansons traditionnelles à la manière de Kodály ou de Bartók. Aucune de ses autres œuvres scéniques ne fait un usage aussi généreux des mélodies traditionnelles et il n'eut plus jamais recours à une danse traditionnelle complète comme il le fit avec le *furiant*. Il était tout à fait sérieux dans sa frivolité lorsqu'il décrivit *La Fiancée vendue* comme un jouet. Il prit manifestement beaucoup de plaisir à composer la scène enjouée où Mařenka fait croire à Vašek qu'elle est quelqu'un d'autre et que la vraie Mařenka est une mégère libidineuse. Comme dans la scène homologue, où Vitek amène Kecal à signer en le dupant le contrat qui libérera sa fiancée vendue, la pulsation dansante de la polka transforme la cruauté nécessaire de la comédie en quelque chose d'innocent et de charmant.

Smetana réserve son véritable engagement créateur pour les nombreux duos, tour à tour tendres, ardents et, au troisième acte, où Mařenka se croit trahie, vraiment poignants. Il se contente de faire de l'arrivée de la troupe de cirque une pièce virtuelle avec musique, peut-être parce que le ténor de caractère, la soubrette et le baryton comique de la production originale venaient tous de la troupe

d'acteurs du Théâtre provisoire et non de la liste de principaux chanteurs. Il n'est pas surprenant que le véritable plaisir musical de la scène soit la Danse des comédiens qui suit l'entrée des acrobates, l'un des nombreux épisodes de l'opéra dont on a fait parfois et sans trop de mal un bis de concert au cours du siècle dernier. Une fois terminé cet épisode, Smetana retourne au lyrisme chaleureux qui caractérise les duos et déverse un flot de mélodie sinueuse dans l'ensemble mélancolique qui constitue le cœur dramatique de l'acte.

Néanmoins, en passant habilement du lyrique au burlesque et au bucolique, il a créé quelque chose de plus original et de plus durable que n'importe laquelle de ses œuvres lyriques plus sérieuses. En dehors des fameux morceaux spirituels de Vašek, le bègue à sa maman, et des danses slaves astucieusement mêlées qui ouvrent l'Acte II, la transformation du développement de l'ouverture en finale comique et complexe du même acte est aussi inventive que la moindre page de Rossini. Ceci ne démentit pas que Smetana se prenait au sérieux, comme en témoignent ses poèmes symphoniques, l'épopée nationale *Má Vlast (Ma Patrie)* et les drames graves de *Dalibor* et *Libuše*. Même dans la République tchèque

d'aujourd'hui, l'exécution complète de *Má Vlast*, qui ouvre chaque année le Festival du Printemps de Prague, est une sorte d'acte de vénération nationale. De nos jours, à Prague, c'est toujours un sacrilège de considérer Dvořák comme le créateur d'opéra romantique le plus profond et Janáček comme l'auteur dramatique musical le plus pénétrant et le plus déchirant.

Smetana excelle dans l'écriture lyrique profonde. Le grand ensemble au milieu de l'Acte III ne cherche pas à expédier le drame, mais fouille dans l'âme des principaux personnages et compense largement le manque de développement dramatique de l'opéra. On ne recherche pas chez Smetana la psychologie ou la profondeur spirituelle, mais il n'est pas besoin de plaidoirie spéciale lorsque le drame est paré de rythmes aussi enivrants et d'une telle grâce mélodique. Ce sont ces qualités qui permettent à *Vltava (La Moldau)*, *Par les Prés et les bois de Bohême* et au Quatuor à cordes no 1 de conserver une place d'honneur dans les salles de concert et qui font de *La Fiancée vendue* l'opéra de Smetana qui trouvera toujours une place dans n'importe quel théâtre et dans n'importe quelle langue.

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Synopsis

La fête du 1er Mai dans un village de Bohême: une période où l'on se fait la cour et où l'on danse des rondes.

COMPACT DISC ONE

Acte I

[1] – [2] Une jeune fille du village, Mařenka (prononcé *Mazhenka*), ne parvient pas à partager la bonne humeur des villageois.

[3] Elle confie ses soucis à son ami de cœur, Jeník (*Yaynik*). [4] – [5] Son père Krušina (*Krushina*) doit de l'argent à Mícha (*Mika*), un homme riche du village, et elle se trouve forcée d'épouser le fils de Mícha, un simple d'esprit.

[6] – [8] Jeník la rassure sur l'amour qu'il lui porte. Lorsqu'elle le presse de questions sur son mystérieux passé, il s'explique; à la mort de sa mère bien-aimée, le père de Jeník s'est remarié et sa nouvelle belle-mère lui a rendu la vie insupportable. Jeník est parti de par le monde et a vécu au milieu d'étrangers. Mais il jure avoir redécouvert le bonheur du véritable amour avec Mařenka.

[9] – [14] Le marieur local, Kecal (*Ketsal*), tente de dissimuler les défauts de Vašek (*Vashek*), le fils naïf de Mícha, lorsqu'il en dresse le portrait aux parents de Mařenka,

Krušina et Ludmila, dont on connaît les difficultés. Le mariage est presque conclu et sa commission semble dans le sac. Avec le mariage proposé, Krušina voit la fin de ses difficultés financières. Ludmila se montre plus compréhensive envers les sentiments de sa fille.

[12] – [13] Ses craintes sont justifiées lorsque Mařenka refuse de coopérer. Elle leur dit à tous que son cœur appartient à Jeník. Kecal rassure ses parents; il ira trouver Jeník et traitera avec lui.

[14] Les villageois, encore à leurs célébrations, dansent la polka.

Acte II

[15] L'acte II commence par une chanson à boire à la louange de la bière. Kecal chante les vertus de l'argent, alors que Jeník s'attache à celles, plus grandes, de l'amour véritable.

[16] Suit une danse déchaînée après laquelle

[17] Vašek, le futur jeune marié bégayant, entre timidement. Il vit dans la terreur de sa mère et de ce qu'elle va dire s'il ne se conforme pas au projet de mariage qu'elle a élaboré pour lui.

[18] – [19] Mařenka comprend que c'est l'homme qu'on lui demande d'épouser. Sans révéler son identité, elle fait croire à Vašek que

la jeune fille "Mařenka" est en fait une créature infidèle et malveillante qui le tuera après l'avoir épousé! En usant de son charme, elle persuade le crédule Vašek de jurer qu'il n'épousera pas "Mařenka".

COMPACT DISC TWO

[1] – [4] Après avoir déniché Jeník, Kecal tente maintenant de le soudoyer pour qu'il signe un accord spécifiant qu'en fin de compte il n'épousera pas Mařenka. [5] Jeník accède à cette demande, après y avoir mis une condition: Mařenka n'épousera nul autre que "le fils de Mícha", la dette de son père envers Mícha sera annulée et Kecal lui remettra à lui, Jeník, dix milles couronnes.* Croyant qu'il a sauvé le projet initial, Kecal se retire triomphant. [6] Resté seul, Jeník s'étonne de ce que Kecal le croit capable d'une trahison aussi évidente, lui qui aime tant Mařenka.

[7] Kecal revient avec le chœur pour assister à la signature du marché qu'il a passé avec Jeník. Le chœur vilipende Jeník de s'être laissé acheter si facilement.

Acte III

[8] Vašek est au désespoir. Il ne parvient pas à retrouver la jolie fille qui lui a donné plus tôt

le si bon conseil de ne pas épouser Mařenka. [9] – [10] Cependant, il se laisse distraire en assistant avec plaisir à l'arrivée d'un cirque itinérant.

[11] – [12] Les comédiens ambulants sont confrontés à un dilemme. L'acteur qui interprète normalement le rôle de l'ours dansant est trop ivre pour tenir son rôle. Le Maître de manège et la merveilleuse trapéziste Esmeralda réussissent à convaincre Vašek, impressionné par la vedette, de porter le costume de l'ours pour la soirée.

[13] – [15] Les parents de Vašek, Mícha et Háta (*Hutta*), sont surpris que leur fils se montre si méfiant à l'idée d'épouser Mařenka. [16] Mais lorsque Vašek comprend qu'elle n'est autre que la jolie fille qui lui a déconseillé ce mariage, ils font avancer le plan de Kecal aussi vite que possible.

[17] Mařenka est très malheureuse de l'infidélité apparente de Jeník. Ses parents et Kecal réussissent à la convaincre de reconsidérer son mariage avec Vašek.

[18] – [19] Restée seule, Mařenka est au [20] désespoir, désespoir qui se transforme en fureur lorsque Jeník apparaît. Elle refuse d'écouter ses promesses apparemment vaines selon lesquelles tout s'arrangera au mieux.

[21] – [23] Kecal appelle tout le monde à se réunir pour finaliser l'accord. [24] Mais lorsque Mícha et Háta rencontrent enfin Jeník, ils reconnaissent avec stupéfaction le fils aîné de Míchá disparu depuis longtemps. Jeník insiste alors pour que cet aspect du contrat soit honoré. En sa qualité de "fils de Mícha", il épousera Mařenka. Qui plus est, il recevra dix mille couronnes, la moitié de la fortune de son père, dont Háta, sa belle-mère, a tenté de l'escroquer. La dette des parents de Mařenka est annulée et Kecal se retire en disgrâce.

Lorsqu'elle comprend à quel point la stratégie de Jeník a été habile, Mařenka est heureuse de lui pardonner. [25] Vašek apparaît joyeusement déguisé en ours dansant et les Mícha comprennent à quel point il serait fou de vouloir le marier. Sous les bénédictions et les pardons, l'assemblée célèbre l'union de Jeník et de la "Fiancée vendue".

*Dans la présente traduction, ce prix a été augmenté afin de correspondre à celui de l'héritage dont Jeník a été dépouillé. En outre, pour que la contre-proposition de Jeník fonctionne, il doit garder secrète sa véritable identité, même vis-à-vis de Mařenka, afin d'obtenir que son père signe l'accord truqué.

Ceci justifie ce qui pourrait autrement passer pour de la cruauté inutile en la laissant dans l'ignorance.

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Traduction: Marie-Stella Pâris

Lauréate du Kathleen Ferrier Memorial Prize en 1994, Susan Gritton (Mařenka) a étudié la botanique aux Universités d'Oxford et de Londres avant de se lancer dans une carrière de chanteuse.

Elle s'est produite notamment dans les rôles de Suzanne (*Les Noces de Figaro*), Zerline (*Don Giovanni*), Miss Wordsworth (*Albert Herring*) et le rôle titre de *Theodora* au Festival de Glyndebourne, Tiny (*Paul Bunyan*), Mařenka (*La Fiancée vendue*), la première Fille Fleur (*Parsifal*) et Ismene (*Mitridate*) au Royal Opera House de Covent Garden, Romilda (*Xerxès*), Cléopâtre (*Jules César*) et le rôle titre de *Rodelinda* à la Bayerische Staatsoper de Munich, Pamina, Fiordiligi, Sophie (*Le Chevalier à la rose*), Nannetta (*Falstaff*) et le rôle titre de *La Petite Renarde rusée* à l'English National Opera, la Gouvernante (*Le Tour d'érou*) et Blanche (*Dialogues des Carmélites*) à Snape Maltings Concert Hall, Marcelline (*Fidelio*) à l'Opéra de Rome,

Tytania (*Le Songe d'une nuit d'été*) à la Fenice de Venise, Fiordiligi (*Così fan tutte*) au Mostly Mozart Festival de New York.

Sa vaste discographie comprend Nannetta (*Falstaff*) et la Prêtresse d'*Aida* pour la série Opéra en anglais, *Theodora* et *Le Messie* de Haendel, le *Requiem* de Mozart, des messes de Haydn chez Chandos, *Paride ed Elena* de Gluck, Hero (*Béatrice et Bénédicte*), Tiny et Miss Wordsworth.

Sous la direction de Sir Charles Mackerras, elle a chanté le *Requiem* de Mozart avec le Scottish Chamber Orchestra et *Shéhérazade* de Ravel avec le Royal Liverpool Philharmonic; sous la baguette de Sir Simon Rattle, elle a interprété *L'Enfant et les sortilèges* avec l'Orchestre philharmonique de Berlin et le *Requiem* de Brahms avec l'Orchestre de l'Âge des lumières. Elle vit dans le Surrey avec son mari et ses deux enfants.

Né à Liverpool, Paul Charles Clarke (Jeník) a fait ses études avec Neil Mackie au Royal College of Music de Londres, où il a bénéficié d'une bourse Peter Pears. Il a reçu le premier prix au Concours Kathleen Ferrier de 1989.

Parmi les rôles qu'il a chanté, on peut citer Jeník (*La Fiancée vendue*), Kudryas (*Kátya Kabanová*), Jaquino (*Fidelio*), Alfred

(*La Chauve-Souris*) et Cassio (*Otello*) au Metropolitan Opera; Tybalt (*Roméo et Juliette*), Jeník, Cassio, Froh (*L'Or du Rhin*) et Alfredo (*La traviata*) au Royal Opera House de Covent Garden; le Duc (*Rigoletto*), Alfredo, Tamino (*La Flûte enchantée*), Edgardo (*Lucia di Lammermoor*), Pollione (*Norma*) et Anatol (*Vanessa*) à l'Opéra de Seattle; Alfredo et Nemorino (*L'Elixir d'amour*) au Scottish Opera; Macduff (*Macbeth*) à l'Opéra de Monte-Carlo; le rôle titre de *Faust* à l'Opéra du Minnesota et à l'Opéra de Cincinnati; le rôle titre de *Don Carlos* à l'Opéra du Minnesota; Pinkerton (*Madama Butterfly*) et le rôle titre de *Werther* à la Deutsche Oper de Berlin; Alfredo au Grand Opera de Houston; Nicias (*Thaïs*) à l'Opéra de Montréal et à l'English National Opera; Don José (*Carmen*) à l'Opéra de Seattle; et Jaquino au Teatro Carlo Felice di Genova sous la direction de Lorin Maazel. Il est étroitement lié au Welsh National Opera, où a incarné notamment le Duc, Fenton (*Falstaff*), Alfredo, Faust, Pinkerton et Gabriele Adorno (*Simon Boccanegra*).

En concert, il a chanté la Neuvième Symphonie de Beethoven, *Elijah* de Mendelssohn, le *Stabat Mater* de Dvořák aux Proms de la BBC, le *Requiem* de Verdi au Teatro Real de Madrid et au Gran Teatre del

Liceu de Barcelone, ainsi que Leicester lors d'une exécution en concert de *Maria Stuarda* de Donizetti sous la direction de Sir Charles Mackerras.

Il a enregistré notamment le rôle titre de *Faust* dans le cadre de la série Opéra en anglais de Chandos.

Peter Rose (Kecal) est né à Canterbury. Il a étudié la musique à l'Université d'Est-Anglie et a travaillé avec Ellis Keeler à la Guildhall School of Music and Drama. En 1985 il a obtenu la Kathleen Ferrier Memorial Scholarship et, en 1986, le John Christie Award de Glyndebourne; il a fait ses débuts lyriques en 1986 dans le rôle du Commandeur avec la troupe itinérante du Festival de Glyndebourne, à Hong Kong. Il a été première basse au Welsh National Opera entre 1986 et 1989. Il a fait ses débuts au Royal Opera House de Covent Garden dans le rôle de Rochefort (*Anna Bolena*) avec Dame Joan Sutherland.

Il a chanté notamment Ramfis, Fasolt, Cadmus/Somnus (*Semele*), Daland, le Roi Marke, le Commandeur et Timur (*Turandot*) au Royal Opera House de Covent Garden, Gessler (*Guillaume Tell*), le Commandeur, Basilio (*Le Barbier de Séville*) à San Francisco, Kecal (*La Fiancée vendue*) au Lyric Opera

de Chicago, Ramfis, Daland et Ochs (*Le Chevalier à la rose*) au Metropolitan Opera, le Roi Marke, Gremine, Claggart, Sarastro et Ochs à la Staatsoper de Vienne. Il a chanté différents rôles à l'Opéra national de Paris, à la Deutsche Staatsoper Berlin, à l'Opéra d'État de Hambourg, à l'Opéra de Seattle, à Amsterdam et à Sydney.

Au concert, il s'est produit dans la Neuvième Symphonie de Beethoven, le *Requiem* de Mozart, la Huitième Symphonie de Mahler, le *Requiem* de Verdi, *La Damnation de Faust*, *L'Enfant et les sortilèges* et *L'Heure espagnole* de Ravel, la *Missa Solemnis* de Beethoven.

Ses enregistrements comprennent *Le Barbier de Séville*, *Tosca*, *Aïda* et *Lucia di Lammermoor*, tous dans le cadre de la série Opera in English de Chandos, *Les Noces de Figaro* avec Barenboim et l'Orchestre philharmonique de Berlin, *Les Sept Péchés capitaux* et *Salomé* avec l'Orchestre philharmonique de Vienne et Christoph von Dohnányi, *Un bal masqué* avec Carlo Rizzi, et *L'Enlèvement au sérail* sous la direction de Sir Charles Mackerras.

Timothy Robinson (Vašek) a travaillé le chant choral au New College d'Oxford; après avoir obtenu son diplôme de musique, il a poursuivi

ses études à la Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Il s'est produit en concert dans l'ensemble du Royaume-Uni, notamment avec l'Orchestre symphonique de la BBC, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, le Royal Philharmonic Orchestra et le Scottish Chamber Orchestra, l'Orchestre de l'Âge des lumières, au Festival d'Aldeburgh sous la direction de Steuart Bedford et aux Concerts Promenade de la BBC sous la baguette de William Christie, Sir Andrew Davis et Sir Simon Rattle. À l'étranger, ses concerts l'ont conduit au Concertgebouw d'Amsterdam, à la Konzerthaus de Vienne, il a chanté avec l'Orchestre national de Lyon et a fait ses débuts avec l'Orchestre philharmonique de Vienne sous la direction de Sir Simon Rattle.

Il a chanté notamment dans *Falstaff*, *Boris Godounov* et *L'Allegro* de Haendel à l'English National Opera, Jupiter au Festival d'Aix-en-Provence; Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*) et le rôle titre de *La Clémence de Titus* au Welsh National Opera, Kudrjash (*Katia Kabanová*), Jacquino (*Fidelio*), Janek (*L'Affaire Makropoulos*) et Grimoaldo (*Rodelinda*) au Festival de Glyndebourne. Il a fait ses débuts à l'Opéra national de Paris dans *Turandot* et y est retourné pour *Alcina*. Il a été membre de la troupe du Royal Opera de Covent Garden, où

il a chanté sous la direction de Sir Charles Mackerras, Sir Colin Davis et Bernard Haitink.

Ses enregistrements comprennent la *Serenade to Music* de Vaughan Williams sous la direction de Sir Roger Norrington, des cantates et des mélodies traditionnelles de Beethoven, *Alcina*, le *Requiem* de Mozart et *Harnasie* de Szymanowski.

Né à Abercynon (Galles du Sud), **Geoffrey Moses** (Mícha) a fait des études d'histoire à Cambridge. Il a achevé sa formation vocale à la Guildhall School of Music and Drama de Londres avec Otakar Kraus et Peter Harrison. Geoffrey Moses a chanté avec les principales compagnies d'opéra britanniques. Au Royal Opera de Covent Garden, il s'est produit dans Lindorf (*Les Contes d'Hoffmann*), Cleomer (*Esclarmonde*), Foltz et Schwartz (*Les Maîtres Chanteurs de Nuremberg*), Pistol (*Falstaff*), le Commandeur (*Don Giovanni*). Au Welsh National Opera, il a incarné Basilio (*Le Barbier de Séville*), Moser (*I Masnadieri*), Sparafucile (*Rigoletto*), Colline (*La Bohème*), Sarastro (*La Flûte enchantée*), Nourabad (*Les Pêcheurs de perles*), le Roi Mark (*Tristan et Isolde*), Fotis (*La Passion grecque*), Giorgio (*Les Puritains*), Rodolfo (*La Somnambule*),

Bartolo (*Les Noces de Figaro*), Pistol qu'il a chanté également à Tokyo, Milan, New York et Paris) et Raimondo (*Lucia di Lammermoor*).

Il s'est aussi produit au Festival de Glyndebourne, avec la troupe itinérante du Festival de Glyndebourne, à l'Opera North, au Scottish Opera et à l'English National Opera. À l'étranger, il a chanté Basilio et Colline à Hambourg, Crespel et Pietro à Bruxelles, Rodolfo (*La Somnambule*) à Nancy, Walton (*Les Puritains*) à la Deutsche Oper de Berlin, Peter lors de la création mondiale de *The Last Supper* de Harrison Birtwistle à la Deutsche Staatsoper de Berlin et Collatinus (*Le Viol de Lucrece*) à Séville.

Parmi ses enregistrements figurent *La Passion grecque* sous la direction de Sir Charles Mackerras et le rôle du Pilote (*Tristan et Isolde*) sous la baguette de Sir Reginald Goodall.

Yvonne Howard (Ludmila) a fait ses études au Royal Northern College of Music. Parmi ses premiers rôles figurent le rôle titre de *La Cenerentola* avec l'English Touring Opera, Marcelline (*Les Noces de Figaro*) au Festival de Glyndebourne et avec Glyndebourne Touring Opera, Fricka et Waltraute dans le *Ring Saga* qui a connu un grand succès avec l'Opéra itinérant de la Ville de Birmingham.

À l'English National Opera, elle a interprété les rôles d'Amastris (*Xerxès*) et de Meg Page. Elle s'est également produite dans *Xerxès* à São Paulo, au Brésil, *La Walkyrie* à Paris et Nantes, *Falstaff* et *Madama Butterfly* à Tel Aviv. Ses autres prestations comprennent *Le Songe de Gérontius* à New York et Cap Cod, Amneris (*Aïda*) au Royal Albert Hall, Berta à l'English National Opera, Assunta (*La Sainte de Bleecker Street*) au Festival de Spoleto, Léonore (*Fidelio*) à l'Opera Holland Park, et Marilyn Klinghoffer dans une nouvelle version télévisée de *La Mort de Klinghoffer*.

Yvonne Howard a donné des concerts et des récitals au Japon, en France, en Espagne, en Scandinavie, en Suisse, aux États-Unis et, bien sûr, dans toute la Grande-Bretagne. Ses enregistrements comprennent *Sweet Swan of Avon*, *Le Messie*, et, pour Chandos, *Troilus & Cressida* de Walton ainsi que *Boris Godounov* de Moussorgski.

Neal Davies (Krušina) est né à Newport, dans le Gwent; il a fait ses études au King's College de Londres et à la Royal Academy of Music, où il a commencé à enseigner en 2003. Il a poursuivi ses études à l'International Opera Studio de Zurich sous le patronage de Dame Gwyneth Jones.

Parmi ses prestations lyriques, on peut citer *Platée* de Rameau (à Londres et au Festival d'Édimbourg), *Jules César* de Haendel sous la direction d'Ivor Bolton et Figaro (*Les Noces de Figaro*) au Royal Opera de Covent Garden, *L'Allegro* de Haendel à l'English National Opera, *Radamisto* de Haendel à l'Opéra de Marseille, *Theodora* de Haendel avec Les Arts Florissants et William Christie (Paris et Salzbourg), *Orlando* de Haendel avec le Gabrieli Consort, Leporello au Scottish Opera, Guglielmo (*Così fan tutte*), Leporello et Dulcamara (*L'Élixir d'amour*) au Welsh National Opera. Il a fait ses débuts au Lyric Opera de Chicago dans le rôle du Major General Stanley (*The Pirates of Penzance*).

En concert, il a chanté avec l'Orchestre de Cleveland et le Philharmonia Orchestra sous la direction de Christoph von Dohnányi, avec le Gabrieli Consort et Paul McCreesh (notamment *Saul* de Haendel aux Proms de la BBC), avec l'Orchestre philharmonique d'Oslo sous la direction de Mariss Jansons, l'Orchestre symphonique de la BBC sous la direction de Pierre Boulez, l'Orchestre philharmonique néerlandais dirigé par Edo De Waart, l'Orchestre de l'Âge des lumières et le Chamber Orchestra of Europe.

Ses enregistrements comprennent *Le Songe d'une nuit d'été* de Britten, *Le Messie*, *Theodora*, *Saul*, des cantates de Vivaldi et, pour Chandos, *The Poisoned Kiss* de Vaughan Williams et *Jentfa*, dans la série Opera in English.

Diana Montague (Háta) est née à Winchester et a fait ses études au Royal Northern College of Music. Depuis ses débuts dans le rôle de Zerline avec Glyndebourne Touring Opera, elle se produit au Royal Opera House de Covent Garden, au Metropolitan Opera de New York, au Théâtre de la Monnaie de Bruxelles, à l'Opéra national de Paris-Bastille, au Teatro Colón de Buenos Aires ainsi qu'aux festivals de Bayreuth et de Salzbourg.

Son répertoire comprend les principaux rôles pour mezzo-soprano des opéras de Mozart, Gluck, Strauss, Rossini, Bellini et Berlioz. Elle a chanté notamment *Benvenuto Cellini* à l'Opéra de Rome; *Iphigénie en Tauride* à Buenos Aires, Madrid et au Welsh National Opera; *Albert Herring*, Chérubin (*Les Noces de Figaro*) et Andromaca dans *Ermione* de Rossini à Glyndebourne; *Le Comte Ory* à Lausanne, Rome et Glyndebourne; Proserpina dans l'*Orfeo* de Monteverdi à Amsterdam; *Ariane à Naxos* à Lisbonne;

Marguerite (*La Damnation de Faust*) à Vienne et Genève; Minerve (*Le Retour d'Ulysse dans sa patrie*) à Amsterdam et Sydney; *Les Maîtres Chanteurs de Nuremberg* au Royal Opera House de Covent Garden; Junon dans *Platée* de Rameau avec le Royal Opera au Festival d'Édimbourg et à Londres; et Octavian dans *Le Chevalier à la rose* à l'English National Opera, à Bilbao et au Teatro Real de Madrid.

Parmi les nombreux enregistrements de Diana Montague figurent l'*Orfeo* de Monteverdi, *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*, *Norma*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Iphigénie en Tauride*; pour Opera Rara, *Rosmonda d'Inghilterra*, *Zoraida di Granata* et *Il crociato in Egitto*, et, dans le cadre de la série Opéra in English de Chandos, Chérubin (*Les Noces de Figaro*), Idamante (*Idoménée*), *Cavalleria rusticana*, Octavian dans *Le Chevalier à la rose* (extraits), *Faust*, et deux disques de récitals consacrés à des grands airs d'opéras.

Robin Leggate (Maître de manège) est l'un des ténors britanniques aux talents les plus divers. Depuis qu'il est entré au Royal Opera comme principal ténor, il y chante dans de nombreuses productions. Parmi les temps forts de sa carrière, on peut citer *Otello* sous la direction de Carlos Kleiber, la première

représentation britannique de la version en trois actes de *Lulu* sous la baguette de Sir Colin Davis et la création de *Stiffelio* de Verdi sous la direction de Sir Edward Downes. Plus récemment, il a interprété les rôles de Mime (*L'Or du Rhin*), Peter Quint, Cassio et Caius (*Falstaff*) pour la réouverture du Royal Opera House de Covent Garden.

Particulièrement apprécié dans le répertoire mozartien, Robin Leggate a chanté tous les principaux rôles de ténor lyrique au Royal Opera House de Covent Garden, au Théâtre du Châtelet à Paris, à Amsterdam, au Scottish Opera, à l'Opera North et au Welsh National Opera.

Parmi ses enregistrements, on peut citer *Salomé*, *La traviata*, *Don Carlos*, et, pour Chandos, *A Dinner Engagement* de Berkeley ainsi que *Martin's Lie* de Menotti. Au concert, il a chanté le *War Requiem* de Britten, *Elijah* de Mendelssohn, la *Missa Solemnis* de Beethoven, des exécutions en concert de *Lulu* de Berg avec l'Orchestre symphonique de la BBC et Siegmund (*La Walkyrie*) à la Radio Télévision irlandaise (RTE) de Dublin.

Yvette Bonner (Esmeralda) a fait ses études à la Royal Academy of Music, où elle a obtenu en 1998 le Dip. RAM, plus haute distinction

décerné par cette institution dans le domaine de l'exécution, et le Prix d'opéra Blyth-Buesst. Elle a fait ses débuts au Royal Opera de Covent Garden dans le rôle d'Hermione dans *Hélène d'Égypte* de Strauss sous la direction de Christian Thielemann, puis y a chanté Esmeralda (*La Fiancée vendue*) sous la baguette de Bernard Haitink, rôle qu'elle a repris en 2001 sous la direction de Sir Charles Mackerras.

Parmi ses autres rôles, elle a chanté la Renarde (*La Petite Renarde rusée*) au Festival d'Aix-en-Provence, Tina (*Flight* de Jonathan Dove) à l'Opéra des Flandres, Alice lors de la création mondiale d'*Alice au pays des merveilles* avec l'Opéra néerlandais, Flora (*Le Tour d'écrou*) au Welsh National Opera, Jennie Hildebrand dans *Street Scene* de Kurt Weill à l'English National Opera, ainsi qu'au Grand Opera de Houston et au cinéma, Zerline (*Don Giovanni*) en concert sous la direction de Sir Colin Davis.

Yvette Bonner a fait ses débuts au Wigmore Hall en chantant *Les Illuminations* de Britten avec l'Academy of St Martin-in-the-Fields. Elle a aussi interprété *Carmina Burana* au Symphony Hall de Birmingham, le *Magnificat* de Bach et le *Gloria* de Vivaldi avec l'English Chamber Orchestra, la *Messe "Nelson"* de

Haydn à St. John's, Smith Square, et le *Stabat Mater* de Dvořák avec l'Orchestre du Scottish Opera.

Parmi ses enregistrements figurent *Semele (L'Amour de Danaë)* de Strauss sous la direction d'Elgar Howarth, et *Albert Herring* sous la baguette de Richard Hickox pour Chandos.

Kit Hesketh-Harvey (Indien, traducteur de l'opéra) est né à Zomba, dans le Nyassaland. Choriste confirmé à Canterbury sous la direction du Dr. Allan Wicks et chef de pupitre dans le chœur de Clare College, à Cambridge, que dirigeait le Dr. John Rutter, il a travaillé pendant six ans comme producteur au Département de la musique et des arts de BBC-TV, avant de devenir écrivain, animateur de radio et chanteur de cabaret indépendant. Il a fait des études avec Stephen Sondheim, et *Kit and the Widow* produit par sa société de cabaret a été nommé à trois reprises aux Olivier Awards. Régulièrement invité dans l'émission *Just A Minute* sur BBC Radio Four, il produit une série-fleuve consacrée au cabaret sur BBC Radio Three, *Cocktails*. Parmi ses traductions d'opéras, on peut citer *Il Turco in Italia* et *La Belle Hélène* pour l'English National Opera, *La Chauve-Souris* et *La Flûte*

enchantée pour le Scottish Opera, *Le Roi Malgré lui* pour le Grange Park Opera et *La Fille du Régiment* pour l'English Touring Opera. Il a écrit plusieurs livrets pour le compositeur James McConnel, notamment *Writing Orlando* représenté au Barbican Festival et *Yusupov* au Bridewell Theatre.

Ses scénarios comprennent *Maurice* pour Merchant-Ivory et *Hans-Christian Andersen* pour Hallmark Pictures. Pour la télévision, il a écrit *The Vicar of Dibley* (avec Richard Curtis) et *Birkin* (pour Rowan Atkinson). Parmi ses pièces de théâtre, figurent *Five o'Clock Angel*, l'histoire de l'amitié de Tennessee Williams avec Maria St. Just, et *The Fat Lady Sings*, une revue lyrique. Kit Hesketh-Harvey partage son temps entre le Norfolk et la Cornouailles; il est marié à l'actrice Kate Rabett et ils ont deux enfants.

Reconnu comme l'un des plus grands orchestres du monde, le **Philharmonia Orchestra** a depuis plus de cinq ans le grand maestro allemand Christoph von Dohnányi pour chef principal. Le premier à avoir tenu ce poste fut Otto Klemperer et l'Orchestre depuis lors a collaboré avec succès avec Lorin Maazel (au poste de chef principal assistant), Ricardo Muti (chef principal et directeur musical),

Giuseppe Sinopoli (directeur musical), une tradition qui se poursuit aujourd'hui avec Kurt Sanderling (chef émérite), Vladimir Ashkenazy (chef lauréat) et Sir Charles Mackerras (chef principal invité). L'ensemble a également été associé à des personnalités aussi éminentes que Wilhelm Furtwängler, Richard Strauss, Arturo Toscanini, Guido Cantelli, Herbert von Karajan et Carlo Maria Giulini. L'Orchestre continue à collaborer avec des chefs et des solistes de stature mondiale et recrute les jeunes instrumentistes les plus talentueux d'Europe.

Orchestre résident au Royal Festival Hall, il joue également un rôle central dans la vie musicale britannique en choisissant des résidences régionales qui sont l'occasion idéale de développer un programme éducatif dynamique centré sur la communauté. Lauréat de nombreux prix, l'ensemble a été salué unanimement par les critiques pour ses programmes innovateurs dont l'un des objectifs principaux est l'interprétation et la commande d'œuvres nouvelles des plus grands compositeurs d'aujourd'hui.

Un nombre croissant de concerts de l'Orchestre sont retransmis par BBC Radio 3, entre autres sa participation annuelle aux Promenade Concerts de la BBC. L'orchestre

symphonique le plus enregistré au monde, avec plus de mille disques à son actif, parmi lesquels plusieurs bandes originales pour le cinéma et la télévision, le Philharmonia Orchestra est réputé dans le monde entier. Sa discographie comprend, pour Opera Rara, plusieurs disques de récitals ainsi que treize intégrales d'opéras et, pour Opera in English chez Chandos, série financée par la Peter Moores Foundation, *Les Noces de Figaro*, *The Thieving Magpie*, *Wozzeck*, *Don Giovanni*, *The Elixir of Love*, *Lucia of Lammermoor*, *Faust*, *Carmen*, *Aida*, *La Bohème*, *Madam Butterfly*, *Turandot*, une version primée de *Tosca* ainsi que plusieurs récitals solistes d'airs lyriques avec Bruce Ford, Diana Montague, Dennis O'Neill, Alastair Miles, Yvonne Kenny et John Tomlinson. Le Philharmonia Orchestra consolide constamment sa réputation internationale grâce à des tournées régulières et récemment de prestigieuses résidences au Châtelet Théâtre Musical à Paris, au Megaron à Athènes et au Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts à New York.

Le Chœur du Royal Opera de Covent Garden a été créé en 1946 pour la réouverture du Royal Opera House après la Seconde Guerre mondiale. Alors connu sous le nom de Chœur

de l'Opéra de Covent Garden, il s'est produit pour la première fois au cours du mois de décembre de la même année dans une production de *The Faery Queene* de Purcell montée avec le Ballet du Sadler's Wells (aujourd'hui le Royal Ballet). Sa première participation à une production d'opéra intégrale avec la compagnie remonte à janvier 1947 (*Carmen*). Depuis lors, le Chœur est l'ossature du Royal Opera, au Royaume-Uni comme en tournée, se produisant sous la direction de la plupart des plus grands chefs et metteurs en scène du monde.

Il se fait entendre régulièrement lors des transmissions radiophoniques des productions du Royal Opera. Il s'est également produit dans un grand nombre d'enregistrements vidéo commerciaux réalisés au Royal Opera House, notamment *Otello*, *Stiffelio* et *La traviata* de Verdi, *Roméo et Juliette* de Gounod, *Così fan tutte* de Mozart et *La Veuve joyeuse* de Lehár. Parmi les DVDs publiés depuis la réouverture figurent *La Flûte enchantée*, *Le Trouvère* et *Rigoletto*.

Il a participé notamment à des enregistrements de *Tannhäuser*, *Cavalleria Rusticana*, *La Petite Renarde rusée* dans le cadre de la série Opera en anglais de Chandos, *Peter Grimes*, *Gawain* de Harrison Birtwistle qui a

été primé, *The Puccini Experience*, *Don Carlos* et l'enregistrement de *Tosca* sous la direction d'Antonio Pappano également primé. Le Chœur du Royal Opera travaille régulièrement avec le Royal Ballet dans des productions qui comprennent le *Requiem* de Fauré, le *Gloria* de Poulenc, *Daphnis et Chloé* de Ravel et *Les Noces* de Stravinski.

En dehors du Royal Opera House, le Chœur s'est produit à New York, Paris, Tokyo, Baden-Baden, Palerme et Savolinna, au Festival d'Aldeburgh, au Festival d'Édimbourg et au Concertgebouw d'Amsterdam ainsi que dans plusieurs Concerts Promenade de la BBC au Royal Albert Hall. Le Chœur est dirigé par Renato Balsadonna, qui est entré au Royal Opera en août 2004 après avoir travaillé à la Monnaie de Bruxelles

Sir Charles Mackerras étudia au Conservatoire de Musique de Sydney et vint en Angleterre en 1947. Il obtint une bourse du British Council pour continuer ses études à l'Académie de Musique de Prague. Son vif intérêt et sa passion pour la musique de Janáček commença en 1947 après avoir entendu l'opéra *Kat'a Kabanová* dirigé par le grand Václav Talich.

C'est en qualité de chef assistant au Sadler's Wells qu'il donna la première de *Kat'a*

Kabanová dans un pays de langue anglaise en 1951. Plus tard, il présenta *L'Affaire Makropoulos* et *La Maison des morts* au Sadler's Wells. Il continua à diriger des productions très acclamées d'opéras de Janáček ainsi que des ouvrages du répertoire habituel quand il devint directeur musical de l'English National Opera (1970–1977), et au Welsh National Opera dont il fut directeur musical de 1987 à 1992. Il a été un défenseur de la musique de Janáček dans les capitales européennes, aux USA et en Australie. *Jenůfa* est l'une de ses œuvres préférées.

Il a entretenu une longue collaboration avec la Philharmonie tchèque et a enregistré à la tête de cette formation la plupart des œuvres pour orchestre de Janáček, ainsi que *Kat'a Kabanová* et *Rusalka* de Dvořák. Sa vaste discographie inclut le cycle primé des opéras de Janáček réalisé avec le Wiener Philharmoniker au début des années 1980. Pour Chandos, il a enregistré la version originale de la *Messe Glagolitique* de Janáček, le *Psalmus Hungaricus* de Kodály et le Concerto pour violoncelle de Dvořák. Dans la série

Opera in English, il a enregistré *Osud*, *La traviata*, *Werther*, *Julius Caesar*, *Mary Stuart*, *Eugène Oneguine*, *Jenůfa* et *La Flûte enchantée*.

Charles Mackerras a également fait d'importantes recherches dans le domaine de la musique du dix-huitième siècle, en particulier Haendel et Mozart. Il a enregistré une série consacrée aux opéras de Mozart et à ceux de Gilbert et Sullivan, ainsi que les cycles complets des symphonies de Mozart, Beethoven et Brahms, plusieurs oratorios de Haendel et des symphonies de Mahler et Elgar. Il est actuellement chef principal invité du Philharmonia Orchestra, chef lauréat du Scottish Chamber Orchestra et chef émérite du Welsh National Opera et du San Francisco Opera.

Charles Mackerras fut nommé commandeur de l'empire britannique (CBE) en 1974 et anobli en 1979. Il a reçu la Médaille du Mérite de la République tchèque en 1996 et fait Companion of the Order of Australia en 1997. En 2003, la reine Elizabeth II l'a nommé Companion of Honour.



Diana Montague as Háta, Susan Gritton as Mařenka, and Yvette Bonner as Ludmila in The Royal Opera's production of *The Bartered Bride*

Smetana: La sposa venduta

È solo un giocattolo e il comporla è stato un semplice gioco da bambini. Non l'ho scritta per ambizione, ma l'ho semplicemente buttata giù come veniva... per ripicca contro coloro che mi avevano accusato di essere un wagneriano.

Ascoltando per la prima volta *La sposa venduta*, è facile immaginare le sue note gentili uscire dalla penna del compositore e fluire direttamente nelle orecchie di un pubblico grato. Nulla potrebbe essere, però, più lontano dalla verità. Nonostante ciò che scrisse lo stesso compositore, in realtà la seconda opera di Smetana rappresentò per lui una vera lotta e alla sua prima fu accolta con frivola indifferenza. Ci vollero sette anni, quattro revisioni e un cambiamento politico significativo nell'Europa centrale, per permetterle di raggiungere il consenso popolare che le assicurò la sopravvivenza in repertorio. Nessuno sarebbe stato più sorpreso del compositore nello scoprire che la sua delicata commedia ha finito poi con il simboleggiare l'opera cecoslovacca, mentre le sue altre composizioni teatrali sono scivolte nella semioscurità. Per capire il perché dobbiamo scavare nel profondo della storia,

non solo della musica cecoslovacca ma anche della stessa nazione.

Bedřich Smetana nacque in una piccola città ai confini di Boemia e Moravia nel 1824. Crescere con i fuochi artistici e intellettuali dell'Europa napoleonica smorzati nel compiacimento e nella convenzione della monarchia austriaca repressiva, fu per lui piuttosto noioso. Le province ceche erano governate da Vienna, ma il "glamour" e la sofisticatezza della capitale Asburgo erano lontani anni luce dalla zona depressa in cui il figlio di fabbricante di birra diventò un adulto. Solo quando compì quindici anni Smetana riuscì a convincere il padre a mandarlo a studiare nell'affascinante capitale cecoslovacca, Praga. Qui fu accolto da una vita sociale molto più ricca e varia, ma nonostante la sua bellezza sensuale, Praga era pur sempre una città provinciale. Come la maggior parte dei suoi contemporanei, Smetana parlava e scriveva in tedesco, e la letteratura, la musica e le arti visive cecoslovacche erano ancora fermamente soggette all'egemonia tedesca.

Tuttavia, sotto la superficie, qualcosa stava fermentando nella società cecoslovacca, così

come in tutte le province dell'Impero. Troverà la sua espressione politica nelle rivoluzioni del 1848, quando, per un breve periodo, quasi tutti i reami e gli imperi di Europa vacillarono. Le rivoluzioni fallirono, ma lasciarono tracce indelebili nelle arti, nella musica e in letteratura. In particolare, il nazionalismo emergente si diffuse in tutta l'Europa Centrale e in nessun altro luogo lasciò un marchio più vivido che nella musica. Sebbene l'influenza della cultura popolare era sempre stata presente in Austria e nelle sue colonie, non meno che in Haydn, Beethoven e Schubert, ora stava acquistando anche una certa risonanza politica. Lo spirito del nazionalismo ungherese aveva iniziato a permeare le composizioni di Franz Liszt e persino Frederick Chopin, nel suo esilio parigino volontario, respirava l'aria della Polonia. A Praga, Smetana era suscettibile allo spirito dei tempi, così come qualsiasi altro ragazzo ambizioso di provincia, sentimento che fu rafforzato dai suoi amici fieramente nazionalistici. Le sue prime marce, polke e valzer erano modellate sulla musica da banda patriottica della città e sui pezzi da camera di Chopin e Liszt, ma impregnate ovunque dei colori ritmici e melodici del dialetto della Boemia.

Ci vollero altri venti anni prima che i sentimenti nazionalistici di Smetana riuscirono a trovare la loro espressione sul palcoscenico – anni di viaggi ed esperimenti in cui modellò il suo stile sui coraggiosi poemi sinfonici di Liszt. Al suo ritorno, lo fece con un progetto operistico che fondeva la sua preoccupazione per la "musica del futuro" al suo crescente interesse nella storia nazionale. *I Brandeburghesi di Boemia*, grande successo alla sua prima nel 1866 e ora per lo più dimenticato al di fuori delle regioni ceche, impose immediatamente Smetana come voce musicale della sua nazione. Con i suoi vigorosi cori patriottici e le sue robuste armonie modali, la prima opera di Smetana pose le fondamenta di uno stile che dominò la musica cecoslovacca nei cinquant'anni seguenti.

Attrasse però anche delle accuse secondo cui Smetana stava bevendo allo stesso calice avvelenato del Wagnerianismo. Come molti in Europa, le province austriache erano schiave della grande opera italiana e francese e Wagner era visto con profondo sospetto. Quindi, alla prima de *La sposa venduta*, nel 1867, il pubblico si aspettava probabilmente una grandiosa epopea eroica oppure un intenso dramma musicale wagneriano. Ciò a cui nessuno era preparato era una commedia

delicata e bucolica, ricca di melodie popolari e teneri duetti. Le cose avrebbero potuto andare meglio se lo spettacolo non avesse avuto luogo in una calda notte di maggio, nel bel mezzo di un fine settimana vacanziero, con la città mezza deserta. Se la temperatura in teatro era soffocante, il pubblico era decisamente tiepido e, per completare il tutto, diciassette giorni più tardi i prussiani invasero la Boemia. Di conseguenza, mentre gli elementi patriottici in teatro rimasero delusi dal fatto di essersi visti negare uno spettacolo nazionalistico sullo stile de *I Brandeburghesi di Boemia*, la maggioranza ansiosa fu felice di abbandonare una commedia leggera, scarsamente in tono con il clima sobrio dell'epoca. I cechi volevano la loro opera seria ed edificante, come notò lo scrittore Nedeljy:

Il Teatro Nazionale non era un luogo di intrattenimento, ma un luogo consacrato, un santuario, una scuola in cui la nazione poteva esprimersi con la forma più elevata del suo stesso linguaggio riguardo ai suoi sentimenti e ai suoi obiettivi più cari.

Quanto a Smetana, fu ugualmente lieto di lasciare Praga e di rifugiarsi in provincia.

Tuttavia, la trasformazione del destino austriaco portò a un cambiamento ironico nella sorte di Smetana. Nella completa

riorganizzazione della burocrazia cecoslovacca che fece seguito alla sconfitta dell'Austria da parte della Prussia nel 1867, Smetana si ritrovò eletto direttore musicale del Teatro Provvisorio, una piattaforma più che utile per la sua carriera operistica in divenire. Ci fu anche un cambiamento di gusti musicali. Quelli non erano tempi per epopee marziali come *I Brandeburghesi di Boemia*. Una commedia popolare molto consolante come *La sposa venduta* era proprio ciò che ci voleva. C'era bisogno solo di un minimo di revisione musicale e quindi, nel corso dei tre anni seguenti, Smetana tagliò, modificò ed estese, aggiungendo danze e tagliando duetti, per rifinire l'opera che conosciamo oggi. Dopo un insuccesso, una guerra e una grossa mole di lavoro, la quarta e ultima versione dell'opera ebbe la sua trionfante prima nel 1870.

Che cambiamenti apportò, dunque, Smetana, a quella prima versione, per riuscire a stravolgere completamente le sue sorti? Non dobbiamo andare molto avanti nell'ascolto per notare le prime differenze. Dopo la famosa ouverture, il cui trambusto rende più di un fugace omaggio sia al *Flauto magico* che al *Matrimonio di Figaro*, un coro robusto porta a un recitativo accompagnato in modo ansioso dei due personaggi principali, Mařenka e il

suo innamorato Jeník. Infatti, il dialogo inizia proprio mentre il coro è ancora in via di svolgimento, con i suoi due temi principali inseriti dietro le prime parole degli amanti. Nell'originale, l'azione drammatica era interamente portata avanti dal discorso – come nel *Flauto magico* o nel modello tedesco contemporaneo di Smetana, *Il barbiere di Baghdad* di Cornelius. Dando al recitativo un accompagnamento orchestrale, Smetana allontana fermamente l'opera dal territorio dell'operetta o *opéra comique*. Mentre il libretto ci dice che questa è una commedia formulaica, la musica accenna ad emozioni più oscure e sotterranee.

Tuttavia, i cambiamenti più significativi appaiono nell'atto centrale dell'opera. La versione originale era stata suddivisa in due atti, rendendola un'occasione di intrattenimento serale piuttosto leggero. Ristrutturando l'opera, il compositore la divise in tre atti, con una scena di apertura nell'Atto II che costituisce un festival popolare virtuale in miniatura. Non contento di aver concluso l'Atto I con una vivace polka corale, Smetana inizia il secondo atto con una ancora più vigorosa, trasformata in maniera appropriata un inno di lode patriottico sulle proprietà tonificanti della birra. I ritmi danzanti

persistono anche attraverso la scena seguente, con Kecal e Jeník che offrono discanti alti e bassi, portando a un *furiant* ancora più energetico. I ritmi puntati continuano persino attraverso l'aria balbettata di Vašek che ne fa seguito, ponendolo fermamente tra le fila del rustico tonto. Anche la prima versione dell'opera era permeata di melodie e ritmi popolari, ma costruendo un'intera scena traendola da danze tradizionali, Smetana mise a punto una forma di teatro musicale dialettale che diede origine a tante imitazioni per oltre metà del secolo seguente.

Se Smetana è riuscito a creare un modello per le opere popolari che, sul finire del diciannovesimo secolo, si diffusero attraverso l'Europa centrale, fu più per caso che di proposito. Sebbene sia la canzone della bevuta nell'Atto II che la Marcia della Troupe del Circo nell'Atto III fossero modellate su materiale popolare ceco e moravo tratto da collezioni pubblicate, Smetana non fu mai uno studioso serio di musica popolare nella stessa maniera di un Kodály o di un Bartók. Nessuna delle altre sue opere per il palcoscenico fece un uso così generoso di melodie tradizionali e mai più prese in prestito un'intera danza popolare, come fece con il *furiant*. Era abbastanza serio nella sua frivolezza quando descrisse *La sposa*

venduta come un giocattolo. Si diverti chiaramente a comporre la scena giocosa in cui Mařenka riesce a convincere Vašek nel credere che lei è un'altra persona e che la vera Mařenka è una bisbetica libidinosa. Come nella sua controparte, in cui Jeník inganna Kecal convincendolo a firmare il contratto che libererà la sua sposa venduta, il ritmo danzante della polka trasforma la necessaria crudeltà della commedia in un qualcosa di inoffensivo e di affascinante.

Smetana risparmia il suo vero impegno creativo per i copiosi duetti, a turno teneri, ardenti e, nel terzo atto, in cui Mařenka si crede tradita, sinceramente intensi. È contento di lasciare l'arrivo della troupe del circo come un gioco virtuale con musica, forse perché nella produzione originale il personaggio tenore, la soubrette e il comico baritono venivano tutti dalla compagnia di attori del Teatro Provvisorio e non dall'elenco dei cantanti principali. Non sorprende che il vero piacere musicale della scena è la Danza dei Commedianti, che segue l'entrata degli acrobati, uno dei tanti episodi nell'opera che, nel secolo scorso, è stato spesso usato come "bis" da concerto. Ad episodio concluso, Smetana ritorna al liricismo appassionato che caratterizza i duetti e riversa un torrente di

melodia sinuosa nel lamentoso ensemble che costituisce il cuore drammatico dell'atto.

Ciò nonostante, passando sapientemente dal lirico al burlesco e al bucolico, diede forma a qualcosa di più originale e durevole di qualsiasi altra sua opera teatrale più seria. A parte i brani arguti per il mammoni balbettante che è Vašek, e le danze slave abilmente intrecciate che aprono l'Atto II, la trasformazione della sezione di sviluppo dell'ouverture, nel complesso finale comico dello stesso atto, è inventivo al pari di qualsiasi opera firmata da Rossini. Il che non significa negare che Smetana prendesse se stesso sul serio, come testimoniano i suoi poemi sinfonici, l'epica nazionalistica *Má Vlast* e i seri drammi di *Dalibor* e *Libuše*. Anche nell'attuale Repubblica Ceca, la completa performance di *Má Vlast*, che apre ogni anno il Festival della Primavera di Praga, è praticamente un atto di venerazione nazionale. Nella Praga di oggi è ancora un'eresia suggerire che Dvořák fu il creatore dell'opera romantica più profonda e che Janáček fu il drammaturgo musicale più straziante e acuto.

Smetana eccelle nella scrittura lirica riflessiva. L'esteso ensemble al centro dell'Atto III non fa nulla per far andare avanti il dramma, ma scava negli animi dei protagonisti

e più che compensa la mancanza nell'opera di uno sviluppo drammatico. Non ci rivolgiamo a Smetana per una profondità psicologica o spirituale, ma non c'è alcun bisogno di una supplica speciale quando il dramma è arricchito di ritmi così inebrianti e di una tale grazia melodica. Sono queste qualità che permettono alle musiche di *Vltava*, *From Bohemia's Woods and Fields* e al Primo quartetto d'archi di mantenere il loro posto d'onore nella sala concerti, e che fanno di *La sposa venduta* l'opera di Smetana destinata a trovare sempre un posto in ogni teatro e in ogni lingua.

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Sinossi

È la festa del patrono in un paesino della Boemia: tempo di danze e corteggiamenti.

COMPACT DISC ONE

Atto primo

[1] – [2] Una ragazza del paese, Mařenka, è triste e non riesce a unirsi all'umore festaiolo dei suoi compaesani. [3] Confida i suoi timori al suo amato, il giovane Jeník: [4] – [5] il padre della ragazza, Krušina, è in debito con Mícha, un ricco possidente del villaggio, e per questo

la fanciulla sarà costretta a sposare il figlio di Mícha, un sempliciotto.

Jeník riassicura l'amata dei suoi sentimenti [6] – [8] e quando lei insiste a farsi svelare il suo passato misterioso, il ragazzo spiega: alla morte della sua adorata madre, il padre di Jeník si risposò. La nuova matrigna gli rese la vita intollerabile e Jeník partì alla scoperta del mondo, andando a vivere con gente sconosciuta. Ma il ragazzo giura che proprio grazie a Mařenka è riuscito a riscoprire la felicità dell'amore vero.

[9] – [11] Nel descrivere Vašek, il figlio stupido di Mícha, a Krušina e Ludmila, i genitori di Mařenka in difficoltà, il sensale Kecal cerca di mascherare i difetti del ragazzo. Il matrimonio sembra ormai accordato e Kecal è certo di ricevere presto il suo compenso. Krušina vede la proposta di matrimonio come la soluzione ai suoi problemi economici. Ludmila si preoccupa, invece, dei sentimenti della figlia.

[12] – [13] I suoi timori sono giustificati quando Mařenka si rifiuta di cooperare. La ragazza rivela che il suo cuore appartiene a Jeník. Kecal riassicura i genitori della ragazza che cercherà Jeník e si accorderà con lui.

[14] Gli abitanti del villaggio continuano i festeggiamenti ballando la polka.

Atto secondo

¹⁵ Il Secondo Atto inizia con un elogio musicale alla birra. Kecal canta le lodi del denaro; Jeník, al contrario, canta le grandi virtù del vero amore. ¹⁶ Dopo una danza selvaggia, ¹⁷ il balzubiente Vašek, promesso sposo, si avvicina con timidezza. È terrorizzato dalla madre e dalla sua reazione se il piano per farlo sposare non avrà successo.

¹⁸ – ¹⁹ Mařenka si rende conto che questo è l'uomo che le si chiede di sposare. Senza rivelare la sua identità, inganna Vašek facendogli credere che “Mařenka” è in realtà una creatura perfida e maligna che, dopo averlo sposato, lo ucciderà! Vezzeggiandolo, convince l'ingenuo Vašek a giurare che non sposerà mai “Mařenka”.

COMPACT DISC TWO

¹ – ⁴ Kecal, trovato Jeník, cerca di indurlo a firmare un contratto in cui si stipula che il ragazzo non sposerà Mařenka. ⁵ Jeník acconsente, ma propone un altro contratto: Mařenka sposerà solo “il figlio di Mícha”, i debiti del padre della ragazza nei confronti di Mícha saranno cancellati, e Kecal pagherà Jeník diecimila corone.* Kecal crede di essere riuscito a salvare il suo piano originale e si

ritira assaporando il trionfo. ⁶ Rimasto solo, Jeník si meraviglia del modo in cui Kecal lo ha creduto capace di un tale tradimento, quando invece lui ama così tanto Mařenka.

⁷ Kecal ritorna con il coro per testimoniare la firma dell'accordo tra lui e Jeník. Il coro insulta Jeník per essersi fatto convincere così facilmente.

Atto terzo

⁸ Vašek è disperato. Non riesce a trovare la dolce ragazza che poco prima lo aveva convinto a non sposare Mařenka. ⁹ – ¹⁰ Viene distratto, tuttavia, dall'allegro arrivo di un circo itinerante.

¹¹ – ¹² I saltimbanchi hanno un problema: l'attore che di solito impersona un orso danzante è troppo ubriaco per esibirsi. Il Direttore del circo e la balla trapezista, Esmeralda, convincono Vašek a indossare il costume da orso per una sera.

¹³ – ¹⁵ Mícha e Háta, i genitori di Vašek, sono meravigliati del fatto che Vašek sembra così poco propenso a sposare Mařenka. ¹⁶ Ma quando Vašek si rende conto che costei non è altri che l'incantevole ragazza che poco prima aveva cercato di metterlo in guardia, i suoi genitori fanno pressione su Kecal affinché il piano venga messo in atto il più presto possibile.

¹⁷ Mařenka è rattristata dall'apparente tradimento di Jeník. I genitori e Kecal la convincono a riprendere in considerazione il matrimonio con Vašek.

¹⁸ – ¹⁹ Lasciata sola, Mařenka è disperata ²⁰ e quando arriva Jeník, la disperazione diventa furia. Lui le promette che tutto andrà per il meglio ma lei si rifiuta di ascoltarlo.

²¹ – ²³ Kecal riunisce la compagnia per mettere a punto i preparativi. ²⁴ Ma quanto finalmente incontrano Jeník, Mícha e Háta sono sbalorditi nel riconoscere in lui il figlio primogenito di Mícha, che credevano ormai perduto. Jeník insiste che il contratto venga rispettato: in qualità di “figlio di Mícha”, sarà lui a sposare Mařenka. In più riceverà diecimila corone, ovvero la metà del patrimonio del padre che Háta, la sua matrigna, aveva cercato di rubargli. Il debito dei genitori di Mařenka viene cancellato e Kecal cade in disgrazia.

Rendendosi conto dell'astuzia del piano di Jeník, Mařenka è felice di perdonarlo. ²⁵ E quando Vašek appare tutto felice, travestito da orso danzante, Mícha e Háta comprendono la follia del loro piano nel volerli trovare una sposa. Tra perdoni e benedizioni, la compagnia festeggia l'unione di Jeník e la “Sposa venduta”.

*Nell'attuale traduzione, la somma è stata aumentata al fine di eguagliare l'eredità che Jeník credeva perduta. Il contratto ideato da Jeník avrà successo solo se il ragazzo manterrà segreta la sua vera identità anche nei confronti di Mařenka, in modo da costringere il padre a firmare l'accordo. Questo giustifica ciò che altrimenti sembrerebbe un atto di crudeltà gratuita nei confronti dell'amata.

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Traduzione: Emily Stefania

Vincitrice, nel 1994, del Kathleen Ferrier Memorial Prize, prima di intraprendere la carriera di cantante **Susan Gritton** (Mařenka) ha studiato botanica alle università di Oxford e Londra.

Le sue esibizioni operistiche includono Susanna (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Zerlina (*Don Giovanni*), Miss Wordsworth (*Albert Herring*) e il ruolo di protagonista in *Theodora* al Festival di Glyndebourne; Tiny (*Paul Bunyan*), Mařenka (*The Bartered Bride*), First Flowermaiden (*Parsifal*) e Ismene (*Mitridate*) per la Royal Opera House, Covent Garden; Romilda (*Xerxes*), Cleopatra (*Giulio Cesare*) e il ruolo di protagonista in *Rodelinda* alla

Bayerische Staatsoper di Monaco; Pamina, Fiordiligi, Sophie (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Nannetta (*Falstaff*) e il ruolo di protagonista in *The Cunning Little Vixen* all'English National Opera; Governess (*The Turn of the Screw*) e Blanche (*Les Dialogues des Carmelites*) allo Snape Maltings Concert Hall; Marzelline (*Fidelio*) per l'Opera di Roma, Tytania (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*) per il Teatro la Fenice di Venezia; e Fiordiligi (*Così fan tutte*) al Mostly Mozart Festival di New York.

La sua vasta discografia include Nannetta (*Falstaff*) e la Priestess nell'*Aida* per la serie Opera in English, *Theodora* e *Messiah* di Handel, *Requiem* di Mozart, *Messe* di Haydn per Chandos, *Paride ed Elena* di Gluck, Hero (*Beatrice et Benedict*), Tiny e Miss Wordsworth.

Sotto la direzione di Sir Charles Mackerras si è esibita nel *Requiem* di Mozart con la Scottish Chamber Orchestra e *Shéhérazade* di Ravel con la Royal Liverpool Philharmonic; sotto la direzione di Sir Simon Rattle ha cantato *L'Enfant et les sortilèges* con la Filarmonica di Berlino e il *Requiem* di Brahms con l'Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. Vive nella regione del Surrey, in Gran Bretagna, assieme al marito e ai due figli.

Paul Charles Clarke (Jeník) è nato a Liverpool e ha studiato con Neil Mackie al Royal College of Music, dove è stato allievo di Peter Pears. Nel 1989 si è classificato primo al Concorso Kathleen Ferrier.

Tra i ruoli interpretati figurano Jeník (*The Bartered Bride*), Kudryas (*Katya Kabanova*), Jaquino (*Fidelio*), Alfredo (*Die Fledermaus*) e Cassio (*Otello*) alla Metropolitan Opera; Tybalt (*Roméo et Juliette*), Jeník, Cassio, Froh (*Das Rheingold*) e Alfredo (*La traviata*) alla Royal Opera House, Covent Garden; Duke (*Rigoletto*), Alfredo, Tamino (*Die Zauberflöte*), Edgardo (*Lucia di Lammermoor*), Pollione (*Norma*) e Anatol (*Vanessa*) all'Opera di Seattle; Alfredo e Nemorino (*Elisir*) per la Scottish Opera; Macduff (*Macbeth*) per l'Opéra de Monte Carlo; il ruolo di protagonista nel *Faust* per l'Opera di Minnesota e l'Opera di Cincinnati; il ruolo di protagonista nel *Don Carlo* per l'Opera di Minnesota; Pinkerton (*Madama Butterfly*) e il ruolo di protagonista nel *Werther* per la Deutsche Oper Berlin; Alfredo con la Grand Opera di Houston; Nicias (*Thaïs*) con L'Opéra de Montréal e la English National Opera; Don José (*Carmen*) per l'Opera di Seattle; e Jaquino al Teatro Carlo Felice di Genova, diretto da Lorin Maazel. Clarke ha

collaborato in particolar modo con la Welsh National Opera, con cui ha interpretato ruoli come Duke, Fenton (*Falstaff*), Alfredo, Faust, Pinkerton e Gabriele Adorno (*Simon Boccanegra*).

I suoi impegni concertistici includono la Nona Sinfonia di Beethoven, *Elijah* di Mendelssohn, *Stabat Mater* di Dvořák ai BBC Proms, *Requiem* di Verdi al Teatro Real di Madrid e al Gran Teatre del Liceu di Barcellona, e Leicester nell'esibizione concertistica del *Maria Stuarda* di Donizetti, diretto da sir Charles Mackerras.

Tra le sue numerose incisioni figura il ruolo di protagonista nel *Faust*, parte della serie Opera in English di Chandos.

Peter Rose (Kecal) è nato a Canterbury, in Gran Bretagna. Ha studiato musica presso l'University of East Anglia e con Ellis Keeler alla Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Nel 1985 ha vinto la Kathleen Ferrier Memorial Scholarship e nel 1986 gli è stato assegnato il Glyndebourne John Christie Award. Il suo debutto nell'opera è avvenuto nel 1986 nel ruolo di Commendatore con la Glyndebourne Festival Opera a Hong Kong. È stato basso principale con la Welsh National Opera tra il 1986 e il 1989. Ha debuttato alla

Royal Opera House nel ruolo di Rochefort (*Anna Bolena*) con Dame Joan Sutherland.

Il suo repertorio include: Ramfis, Fasolt, Cadmus/Somnus (*Semele*), Daland, King Marke, Commendatore e Timur (*Turandot*) alla Royal Opera House, Covent Garden; Gessler (*Guillaume Tell*), Commendatore, e Basilio (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*) a San Francisco; Kecal (*The Bartered Bride*) per la Lyric Opera di Chicago; Ramfis, Daland e Ochs (*Der Rosenkavalier*) alla Metropolitan Opera; King Marke, Gremin, Claggart, Sarastro e Ochs alla Staatsoper di Vienna; oltre a vari ruoli all'Opéra di Parigi, Deutsche Staatsoper Berlin, Opera di Amburgo, Opera di Seattle, e ad Amsterdam e Sydney.

Le sue esibizioni concertistiche includono la Nona Sinfonia di Beethoven, il *Requiem* di Mozart, l'Ottava Sinfonia di Mahler, il *Requiem* di Verdi, *La Damnation de Faust*, *L'Enfant et les sortilèges* e *L'Heure espagnole* di Ravel, e *Missa Solemnis* di Beethoven.

Tra le sue incisioni troviamo *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, *Tosca*, *Aida* e *Lucia di Lammermoor*, tutte parte della serie Opera in English di Chandos, *Le nozze di Figaro* con Barenboim e la Filarmonica di Berlino, *The Seven Deadly Sins* e *Salome* con la Filarmonica di Vienna e von Dohnányi, *Un ballo in maschera* con Rizzi

e *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* sotto la direzione di Sir Charles Mackerras.

Timothy Robinson (Vašek) è stato studente di coro al New College di Oxford; dopo la laurea in Musica ha continuato i suoi studi alla Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Si è esibito in concerti in tutto il Regno Unito, incluso la BBC Symphony, City of Birmingham Symphony, Royal Philharmonic e Scottish Chamber Orchestras, l'Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, il Festival di Aldeburgh sotto Stuart Bedford e i BBC Promenade Concerts sotto William Christie, Sir Andrew Davis e Sir Simon Rattle. All'estero i suoi concerti lo hanno portato al Concertgebouw di Amsterdam, alla Konzerthaus di Vienna, all'Orchestre de Lyon e al suo debutto con l'Orchestra Filarmonica di Vienna sotto Sir Simon Rattle

I suoi impegni operistici includono *Falstaff*, *Boris Godunov* e *L'Allegro* di Handel per la English National Opera; Jupiter al Festival di Aix-en-Provence; Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*) e il ruolo di protagonista ne *La clemenza di Tito* per la Welsh National Opera; Kudrjash (*Katja Kabanova*), Jacquino (*Fidelio*) Janek (*The Makropulos Case*) e Grimoaldo (*Rodelinda*) per il Festival di

Glyndebourne. Ha debuttato all'Opéra di Parigi in *Turandot*, tornando poi in *Alcina*. È stato membro della Royal Opera, Covent Garden, dove ha cantato sotto la direzione di Mackerras, Sir Colin Davis e Bernard Haitink.

Tra le sue incisioni figurano *Serenade to Music* di Vaughan Williams sotto Sir Roger Norrington, *Cantate* e *Canzoni popolari* di Beethoven, *Alcina*, *Requiem* di Mozart, e *Harnasie* di Szymanowski.

Nato a Abercynon, nel Galles meridionale, **Geoffrey Moses** (Mícha) ha studiato storia a Cambridge. Ha completato i suoi studi di canto alla Guildhall School of Music and Drama di Londra con Otakar Kraus e Peter Harrison.

Geoffrey Moses ha cantato con tutte le principali compagnie operistiche britanniche. Con la Royal Opera, Covent Garden, i suoi ruoli comprendono Lindorf (*Les Contes d'Hoffmann*), Cleomer (*Esclarmonde*), Foltz e Schwartz (*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*), Pistol (*Falstaff*), il Commendatore (*Don Giovanni*). Tra i ruoli cantanti con la Welsh National Opera figurano Basilio (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*), Moser (*I Masnadieri*), Sparafucile (*Rigoletto*), Colline (*La Bohème*), Sarastro (*Die Zauberflöte*), Nourabad (*Les Pêcheurs de*

perles), King Mark (*Tristan und Isolde*), Fotis (*The Greek Passion*), Giorgio (*I puritani*), Rodolfo (*La sonnambula*), Bartolo (*Le nozze di Figaro*), e Pistol anche a Tokyo, Milano, New York e Parigi), e Raimondo (*Lucia di Lammermoor*).

Si è esibito con la Glyndebourne Festival Opera, la Glyndebourne Touring Opera, l'Opera North, la Scottish Opera e l'English National Opera.

Impegni all'estero includono Basilio e Colline a Amburgo, Crespel e Pietro a Bruxelles, Rodolfo (*La sonnambula*) a Nancy, Walton (*I puritani*) per la Deutsche Oper, Berlino, Peter nella prima mondiale di *The Last Supper* di Harrison Birtwistle per la Deutsche Staatsoper, Berlino, e Collatinus (*The Rape of Lucretia*) a Seville.

Le sue incisioni includono *The Greek Passion* con Sir Charles Mackerras, ed Helmsman (*Tristan und Isolde*) con Sir Reginald Goodall.

Yvonne Howard (Ludmila) ha studiato al Royal Northern College of Music. I suoi primi ruoli includono la parte di protagonista in *La Cenerentola* con l'English Touring Opera, Marcellina in *Le Nozze di Figaro* con il Glyndebourne Festival e la Touring Opera, e

Fricka e Waltraute nella *Ring Saga* con la City of Birmingham Touring Opera, molto apprezzata dai critici.

Con la English National Opera si è esibita in Amastris (*Xerxes*) e Meg Page. È apparsa anche in *Xerxes* a Sao Paolo, in Brasile, *Die Walküre* a Parigi e Nantes, e *Falstaff* e *Madama Butterfly* a Tel Aviv. Altre apparizioni includono *The Dream of Gerontius* a New York e Cape Cod, Amneris (*Aida*) alla Royal Albert Hall, Berta all'English National Opera, Assunta (*The Saint of Bleeker Street*) al Festival di Spoleto, Leonore (*Fidelio*) all'Opera Holland Park, e Marilyn Klinghoffer in una nuova versione televisiva di *The Death of Klinghoffer*.

Le sue esibizioni concertistiche hanno portato Yvonne Howard in Giappone, Francia, Spagna, Scandinavia, Svizzera, USA e, naturalmente, in tutta la Gran Bretagna. Le sue incisioni includono *Sweet Swan of Avon*, *Messiah*, e *Troilus & Cressida* di Walton e *Boris Godunov* di Moussorgsky per Chandos.

Neal Davies (Krušina) è nato a Newport, nella regione gallese del Gwent, e ha studiato a Londra presso il King's College e alla Royal Academy of Music, di cui è diventato Fellow nel 2003. Ha continuato i suoi studi presso

l'International Opera Studio di Zurigo, sotto il patronato di Dame Gwyneth Jones.

Le sue esibizioni operistiche includono *Platée* di Rameau (a Londra e al Festival di Edinburgo); *Giulio Cesare* di Handel, sotto la direzione di Ivor Bolton, e Figaro (*Le nozze di Figaro*) per la Royal Opera, Covent Garden; *L'Allegro* di Handel per la English National Opera; *Radamisto* di Handel per l'Opéra de Marseille; *Theodora* di Handel con Les Arts Florissants e William Christie (Parigi e Salisburgo); *Orlando* di Handel con i Gabrieli Consort; Leporello per la Scottish Opera; e Guglielmo (*Così fan tutte*), Leporello e Dulcamara (*L'elisir d'amore*) per la Welsh National Opera. Ha debuttato con la Lyric Opera di Chicago nel ruolo di Major General Stanley (*The Pirates of Penzance*).

Le sue esibizioni concertistiche includono spettacoli con la Cleveland Orchestra e la Philharmonia Orchestra sotto la direzione di Dohnányi e con Gabrieli Consort e Paul McCreesh (incluso *Saul* di Handel per i Proms della BBC), la Filarmonica di Oslo sotto la direzione di Jansons, la BBC Symphony sotto Boulez, l'Orchestra Filarmonica Olandese e de Waart, l'Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment e la Chamber Orchestra of Europe.

Le sue incisioni includono *A Midsummer Night's Dream* di Britten, *Messiah*, *Theodora*, *Saul*, Le Cantate di Vivaldi, *The Poisoned Kiss* di Vaughan Williams per Chandos, e *Jentifa*, parte della serie Opera in English.

Diana Montague (Háta) è nata a Winchester, in Gran Bretagna, e ha studiato al Royal Northern College of Music. Dal suo debutto nella parte di Zerlina con la Glyndebourne Touring Opera è apparsa alla Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, la Metropolitan Opera di New York, il Théâtre de la Monnaie a Bruxelles, l'Opéra National de Paris-Bastille, il Teatro Colón di Buenos Aires e i festival di Bayreuth e Salisburgo.

Il suo repertorio include i ruoli principali da mezzo-soprano in opere di Mozart, Gluck, Strauss, Rossini, Bellini e Berlioz, e altre performance comprendono *Benvenuto Cellini* con l'Opera di Roma; *Iphigénie en Tauride* a Buenos Aires, Madrid e con la Welsh National Opera; *Albert Herring*, Cherubino (*Le nozze di Figaro*) e Andromaca nell'*Ermione* di Rossini a Glyndebourne; *Le Comte Ory* a Lausanne, Roma e Glyndebourne; Proserpina nell'*Orfeo* di Monteverdi ad Amsterdam; *Ariadne auf Naxos* a Lisbona; Marguerite (*La Damnation de Faust*) a Vienna e Ginevra; Minerva

(*Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*) ad Amsterdam e Sydney; *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* alla Royal Opera House, Covent Garden; Junon nel *Platée* di Rameau con la Royal Opera al Festival di Edinburgo e a Londra; e Octavian nel *Der Rosenkavalier* alla English National Opera, a Bilbao e al Teatro Real di Madrid.

Le numerose incisioni di Diana Montague includono l'*Orfeo* di Monteverdi, *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*, *Norma*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Iphigénie en Tauride*; per Opera Rara: *Rosmonda d'Inghilterra*, *Zoraida di Granata* e *Il crociato in Egitto*. Parte della serie Opera in English di Chandos sono: Cherubino (*The Marriage of Figaro*), Idamante (*Idomeneo*), *Cavalleria rusticana*, Octavian nel *Der Rosenkavalier* (estratti), *Faust*, e due dischi recital di Grandi arie operistiche.

Robin Leggate (Direttore del circo) è uno dei tenori più versatili della Gran Bretagna. Da quando è entrato a far parte della Royal Opera come tenore principale, vi si è esibito in molte produzioni. Estratti includono *Otello* sotto Carlos Kleiber, la prima britannica della vesione in tre atti di *Lulu* sotto Sir Colin Davis, e la prima di *Siffelio* di Verdi sotto la direzione di Sir Edward Downes. Più di recente ha cantato i ruoli di Mime (*Das Rheingold*), Peter Quint,

Cassio e Caius (*Falstaff*) per la riapertura della Royal Opera House.

Robin Leggate ha anche avuto un particolare successo nel repertorio di Mozart, avendo cantato tutti i maggiori ruoli da tenore alla Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, allo Châtelet Theatre di Parigi, ad Amsterdam e con la Scottish Opera, l'Opera North e la Welsh National Opera.

Le sue incisioni includono *Salome*, *La traviata*, *Don Carlos*, e *A Dinner Engagement* di Berkeley e *Martin's Lie* di Menotti per Chandos. Esibizioni concertistiche comprendono *War Requiem* di Britten, *Elijah* di Mendelssohn, *Missa Solemnis* di Beethoven, versioni concertistiche di *Lulu* di Berg con la BBC Symphony Orchestra e Siegmund (*Die Walküre*) con la RTE Dublin.

Yvette Bonner (Esmeralda) ha studiato presso la Royal Academy of Music, laureandosi nel 1998 con il Dip RAM, il più prestigioso premio per la migliore esibizione assegnato dall'Academy, e il Blyth-Buesst Operatic Prize. Ha debuttato con la Royal Opera, Covent Garden, nel ruolo di Hermione nel *Die Aegyptische Helena* di Strauss sotto la direzione di Christian Thielemann, seguito da Esmeralda (*The Bartered Bride*) con Bernard

Haitink, un ruolo da lei ripetuto nel 2001 sotto sir Charles Mackerras.

Altri ruoli includono la Vixen (*The Cunning Little Vixen*) per il Festival di Aix-en-Provence, Tina (*Flight* di Jonathan Dove) per *Vlaamse Opera*, il ruolo di Alice nella prima mondiale di *Alice in Wonderland* con l'Opera Olandese, Flora (*The Turn of the Screw*) per la Welsh National Opera, Jennie Hildebrand in *Street Scene* di Kurt Weill per la English National Opera, oltre che per la Grand Opera di Houston e nella versione cinematografica, e Zerlina (*Don Giovanni*) in concerto sotto la direzione di sir Colin Davis.

Yvette Bonner ha debuttato alla Wigmore Hall di Londra cantando *Les Illuminations* di Britten con l'Academy of St Martin-in-the-Fields. Si è esibita in *Carmina Burana* alla Symphony Hall di Birmingham, nel *Magnificat* di Bach e nel *Gloria* di Vivaldi con la English Chamber Orchestra, *Nelson Mass* di Haydn al St. John's, Smith Square, a Londra, e *Stabat Mater* di Dvořák per la Scottish Opera Orchestra.

Le sue incisioni includono Semele di Strauss (*Die Liebe der Danae*) sotto Elgar Howarth, e *Albert Herring* sotto Richard Hickox.

Kit Hesketh-Harvey (Indiano, traduttore dell'opera) è nato a Zomba, nel Nyasaland.

Corista Senior a Canterbury, sotto la direzione del Dott. Allan Wicks, e allievo del coro di Clare Cambridge, diretto dal Dott. John Rutter, è stato per sei anni produttore nel dipartimento Musica e Arti della BBC-TV. Si è poi dedicato alle attività di autore, presentatore radiotelevisivo freelance e artista di cabaret. È stato studente di Stephen Sondheim e ha ricevuto tre nomination agli Olivier Awards grazie al suo spettacolo di cabaret *Kit and the Widow*. Appare con regolarità come ospite di *Just a Minute*, un programma radiofonico di BBC Radio Four, e conduce *Cocktails*, una nota serie dedicata al cabaret trasmessa da BBC Radio Three. Tra le opere da lui tradotte figurano *Il Turco in Italia* e *La Belle Hélène* per la English National Opera, *Die Fledermaus* e *Die Zauberflöte* per la Scottish Opera, *Le Roi Malgré lui* per la Grange Park Opera e *La Fille du Régiment* per la English Touring Opera. Libretti firmati per il compositore James McConnel includono *Writing Orlando*, allestito al Barbican Festival, e *Yusupov* per il Bridewell Theatre.

Tra le sceneggiature firmate da Hesketh-Harvey figurano *Maurice* per la Merchant Ivory, e *Hans-Christian Andersen* per la Hallmark Pictures. Per la televisione britannica ha firmato *The Vicar of Dibley* (con Richard Curtis), e *Birkin* (per Rowan Atkinson). Le sue

opere teatrali includono *Five o'Clock Angel*, storia dell'amicizia di Tennessee Williams e Maria St. Just, e *The Fat Lady Sings*, un varietà in stile operistico. Kit Hesketh-Harvey vive nel Norfolk e in Cornovaglia con la moglie, l'attrice Kate Rabett, e i loro due figli.

La **Philharmonia Orchestra**, una delle più grandi orchestre del mondo, è diretta per la sesta stagione consecutiva dal famoso maestro tedesco Christoph von Dohnányi, in qualità di Direttore Principale. In precedenza questa carica era appartenuta a Otto Klemperer e da allora l'Orchestra ha collaborato con nomi di prestigio come Lorin Maazel (Direttore Principale Associato), Riccardo Muti (Direttore Principale e Direttore Musicale), Giuseppe Sinopoli (Direttore Musicale) e, attualmente, Kurt Sanderling (Direttore Emerito), Vladimir Ashkenazy (Direttore Laureato) e Sir Charles Mackerras (Direttore Principale Ospite), oltre che con artisti importanti come Wilhelm Furtwängler, Richard Strauss, Arturo Toscanini, Guido Cantelli, Herbert von Karajan e Carlo Maria Giulini. L'Orchestra continua a collaborare con direttori e solisti di fama mondiale, oltre ad attrarre nelle sue fila i giovani musicisti europei di maggiore talento.

Orchestra Residente presso la Royal Festival Hall di Londra, occupa una posizione centrale nella vita musicale britannica anche attraverso residenze regionali che offrono un'opportunità ideale per espandere il suo dinamico programma educativo, basato sulle comunità. Vincitrice di numerosi premi, è stata lodata all'unanimità dai critici per la sua politica di programmazione particolarmente innovativa e fortemente incentrata sull'impegno ad eseguire e commissionare musiche nuove firmate dai maggiori compositori contemporanei.

I concerti dell'Orchestra sono trasmessi sempre più frequentemente da BBC Radio 3, incluso l'apparizione annuale in occasione dei BBC Proms. La Philharmonia Orchestra gode di una reputazione a livello mondiale ed è l'orchestra sinfonica che ha inciso di più in tutto il mondo, con un catalogo di oltre 1000 incisioni, tra cui una serie di colonne sonore per film e televisione. La sua discografia include, per Opera Rara, numerosi dischi di recital, oltre a tredici opere complete, e nella serie Opera in English per Chandos, sponsorizzata dalla Peter Moores Foundation, *Le nozze di Figaro*, *The Thieving Magpie*, *Wozzeck*, *Don Giovanni*, *The Elixir of Love*, *Lucia of Lammermoor*, *Faust*, *Carmen*, *Aida*, *La Bohème*, *Madam Butterfly*, *Turandot*, *la Tosca*,

vincitrice di un premio, e vari album di recital, con assoli di arie d'opera eseguite da Bruce Ford, Diana Montague, Dennis O'Neill, Alastair Miles, Yvonne Kenny e John Tomlinson. La Philharmonia Orchestra continua a consolidare la sua fama internazionale con frequenti tournèe e attraverso le recenti, prestigiose residenze presso il Châtelet Théâtre Musical di Parigi, il Megaron di Atene e il Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts di New York.

The Chorus of The Royal Opera, Covent Garden, fu fondato nel 1946 in occasione della riapertura della Royal Opera House dopo la Seconda Guerra Mondiale. Noto all'epoca come il Covent Garden Opera Chorus, apparve per la prima volta nel mese di dicembre dello stesso anno, nella produzione di *The Faery Queene* di Purcell, allestita con il Sadler's Wells Ballet (ora The Royal Ballet). La sua prima produzione operistica completa con la Compagnia fu la *Carmen* nel gennaio del 1947. Da allora il Chorus è diventato la colonna portante della Royal Opera, sia in Gran Bretagna che in tournèe, esibendosi con i più grandi direttori d'orchestra.

Il Chorus si esibisce regolarmente nelle versioni radiofoniche delle produzioni della

Royal Opera ed è apparso in numerose registrazioni video commerciali realizzate presso la Royal Opera House, tra cui *Otello*, *Stiffelio* e *La traviata* di Verdi, *Roméo et Juliette* di Gounod, *Così fan tutte* di Mozart e *The Merry Widow* di Lehár. Dalla riapertura, i dvd pubblicati includono *Die Zauberflöte*, *Il trovatore*, *Rigoletto*.

Le incisioni comprendono *Tannhäuser*, *Cavalleria Rusticana*, *The Cunning Little Vixen* per la serie Opera in English di Chandos, *Peter Grimes*, i pluripremiati *Gawain*, *The Puccini Experience*, *Don Carlos* di Harrison Birtwistle e l'apprezzatissima incisione di *Tosca* condotta da Antonio Pappano. Il Royal Opera Chorus collabora regolarmente con il Royal Ballet, in produzioni come *Requiem* (Fauré), *Gloria* (Poulenc), *Daphnis et Chloë* (Ravel) e *Les Noces* (Stravinsky).

Oltre alla Royal Opera House, il Chorus si è esibito a New York, Parigi, Tokyo, Baden-Baden, Palermo e Savolinna, oltre al Festival di Aldeburgh, al Festival di Edinburgo, al Concertgebouw di Amsterdam e nel corso di numerosi BBC Promenade Concerts alla Royal Albert Hall. Il Chorus è guidato da Renato Balsadonna, entrato a far parte della Royal Opera nell'agosto 2004 da La Monnaie a Bruxelles.

Sir Charles Mackerras ha studiato presso il Conservatorio di Sydney e si è trasferito in Inghilterra nel 1947. Ha ottenuto una borsa di studio del British Council per proseguire gli studi presso l'Accademia Musicale di Praga. Nel 1947 nasceva il suo appassionato interesse per Janáček, dopo aver ascoltato la *Katá Kabánova* diretta dal grande Václav Talich.

In qualità di vicedirettore d'orchestra a Sadler's Wells nel 1951 Mackerras proponeva la prima esecuzione di *Katá Kabánova* nel mondo anglofono. Il seguito avrebbe presentato *L'affare Makropoulos* e *Da una casa di morti* a Sadler's Wells; avrebbe poi continuato a dirigere le opere di Janáček in allestimenti di grande successo, oltre a un repertorio più tradizionale alla sua nomina a Direttore musicale della English National Opera (1970-77) e in seguito della Welsh National Opera (1987-1992). È stato un pioniere della diffusione della musica di Janáček nelle capitali europee, negli USA e in Australia. Una delle sue opere predilette è *Jenůfa*.

Sir Charles Mackerras ha al suo attivo una lunga collaborazione con la Filarmonica ceca, con cui ha registrato la maggior parte delle opere orchestrali di Janáček oltre a *Katá Kabánova* e *Rusalka* di Dvořák. La sua vasta discografia comprende un premiato ciclo di

opere di Janáček con i Wiener Philharmoniker all'inizio degli anni Ottanta. Le registrazioni per Chandos comprendono la versione originale della *Messa glagolitica* di Janáček, *Psalmus Hungaricus* di Kodály e il Concerto per violoncello di Dvořák. Per la serie Opera in English ha registrato *Osud*, *La traviata*, *Werther*, *Julius Caesar*, *Mary Stuart*, *Eugene Onegin*, *Jenůfa* e *Il flauto magico*.

Sir Charles Mackerras ha svolto inoltre ricerche approfondite sulla musica del XVIII secolo, soprattutto quella di Handel and Mozart. Ha registrato opere di Mozart e Gilbert e Sullivan oltre a una serie completa delle sinfonie di Mozart, Beethoven e Brahms, numerosi oratori di Handel e sinfonie di Mahler ed Elgar. Attualmente è Principal Guest Conductor della Philharmonia Orchestra, Conductor Laureate della Scottish Chamber Orchestra e Conductor Emeritus della Welsh National Opera e della San Francisco Opera.

Sir Charles Mackerras ha ricevuto diverse onorificenze, tra cui il CBE nel 1974, seguito dalla nomina a baronetto nel 1979, la Medaglia di Merito della Repubblica Ceca nel 1996 e il titolo di Companion of the Order of Australia nel 1997. Nel 2003 all'elenco delle onorificenze reali britanniche si è aggiunto il Companion of Honour.









On session: Sir Charles Mackerras and Susan Gritton



The Bartered Bride

COMPACT DISC ONE

1 Overture

Act I

Scene 1

The village green. On one side the inn. On the other a fair is being held.

Chorus

- 2** Time at last for celebration,
time to hail the first of May.
Boys and girls come out to play.
Time at last for liberation.
Tilled the soil and ploughed the clay,
sown the seed and mown the hay.
Leave your fields and leave your houses,
can't you hear the music calling?
Leave your quarrels with your spouses.
Leave your children caterwauling.
Leave the bar where he carouses.
Leave the kitchen where she's bawling.
Ay me!
Youth is all too short.
Soon we're trapped and caught,
and the marriage bed is fraught.
Crying, sighing, bellyaching.
Vying, lying, mischief-making.
Prying, spying, window-breaking.
Time at last for recreation.
Time at last for relaxation.

Time to dance the night away.
Time to share the holiday.
Leave our troubles far behind us.
Who cares what may come our way?
Wise men constantly remind us
life is hard, so seize the day!
Time to hail the first of May!

Jeník

- 3** Why do you look so downcast
my darling Mařenka?

Mařenka

Oh Jeník, I'm scared!
Mother says the time is drawing near
I must wed the wealthy man
whom I've been promised to.
Oh God, what will happen?

Jeník

Come, now!
Let me dry your tears,
let me banish all your fears.
Stick to what we planned
and we will triumph.
Just you wait and see,
stand your ground and trust in me.

Chorus

Come on, let's not dwell
on matters so depressing.
Given time, a love like yours
is bound to win your parents' blessing.
Time at last for celebration,

time to hail the first of May. *etc.*
Take your partners,
listen to the bagpipes playing,
boys and girls now come a-Maying
Quick now!
Come hear the music sound,
forward, back, round and round.
Come let all care be drowned
Forward, back, round and round...

Scene 2

Recitative

Mařenka

- 4** Jeník, what will happen if Mother's right? I'm so
upset.

Jeník

Tell me, what did she say exactly? What
provoked it?

Mařenka

You know Toby Mícha? The Míchas have a son
who people say is slightly simple in the head –
my future husband!

Jeník

Your what? Who agreed to that?

Mařenka

My parents are so poor. Father owes Mícha so
much money. No one else would marry such an
idiot except by blackmail. But my father says we
have no option.

Jeník

Well! That's appalling!

Mařenka

Oh, it's worse than jut appalling. It's
contemptible! I detest the entire clan, I think
they're loathsome. They may be rich, but this is
what I swear, by God! I'll never wed a Mícha!
No, Jeník, you're the only one for me. You'd
never ever break your vow?

Jeník

Never, never!

Aria

Mařenka

- 5** Promise me that you would
never ever be untrue to me?
I can't imagine such a fate.
If I were to lose you
heaven knows what that would do to me.
My passion would turn to hate.
What I feel for you is
more than you could ever contemplate.
Ah! My love would turn to hate!
Won't you tell me, Jeník?
I'm curious – for so long now
you've mourned and pined.
And your past is so mysterious:
what is preying on your mind?
Some young girl you've left behind?
Could there be? Who is she? Answer me!
Won't you say my Jeník?

Tell me who you've left behind?
 Ah! Never think of leaving me!
 There's never been a love so great.
 If you only knew how
 much your silence now was grieving me
 You'd tell me your story straight.
 Why does someone flee their village
 leaving everything behind?
 Jeník, don't be so unkind!
 What is preying on your mind?
 Father swears there's something you're masking,
 some great secret that haunts your life.
 Share it with me, that's all I'm asking,
 Jeník, I'm to be your wife!
 Tell me now, my darling!
 What is it that haunts your life?

Recitative

- 6 Is it so unfair to want to know about the man to whom I've given my hand? I've put my trust in you: can you not put your trust in me?

Jeník

Of course I can! But it's something I don't dwell on. I was born into a wealthy family, but my dearest mother died so young and unluckily my father fell in love a second time. My stepmother soon made my life yet more unhappy, and so I ran away from home. I had to fend for myself and live with strangers.

Duet

- 7 Such a mother is a blessing.

My God, how suddenly
 happiness can turn!
 Since the day she died
 always I've been wandering,
 always alone,
 seeking that love for which I yearn.

Mařenka and Jeník

How we mourn them, all our dear ones.
 For who can ever fill their empty place?
 Yet given time will come the day
 that love will reappear to us.
 Love all the same, but bearing another's face.
 Love again has been rekindled,
 a love secure in your embrace.
 Our future holds no fear to us,
 I'm secure in your embrace

Jeník

Who cares what may happen?
 We can face the world unshaken,
 strengthened by the vow which we have
 taken.

Mařenka and Jeník

- 8 Faithful love I vow to you.
 Whatsoever Fate may do.
 Love in poverty
 or love in wealth,
 love in sickness
 or love in health.
 Love in my heart,
 love till death us both do part.

Mařenka

Look, they're back!
 And the lawyer is with them!
 What's to be done?

Jeník

I had best keep out of sight.
 Farewell, farewell, my dearest love.
 Dream of me when we part.
 Farewell.

Mařenka

Farewell.

Scene 3

Kecal

- 9 Every detail has been sorted,
 there's no doubt about it,
 your debts will all be cancelled,
 you've no earthly cause to doubt it.
 You leave it all to me.
 No point in getting nettled,
 it's been very nearly settled.
 You just leave it all to me.
 All it takes is someone
 with the legal expertise.
 Someone, I mean,
 whose brain is keen,
 who'll guide it through with ease,
 whose mind is sharp as mustard,
 who can save you getting flustered
 till the matter's done and dusted,
 and for very modest fees!

There's only one thing still outstanding –
 that's to tell your daughter,
 explaining your financial status
 leaves us very little quarter.
 The loopholes have been tightened,
 and the fine print has been heightened.
 Just you leave it all to me.
 Safe as can be!
 Dotted each 'I' and crossed each 'T'.
 Safe as can be,
 and all for such a very modest fee.
 Leave all to me!

Krušina

So, Mother, are you happy?
 I'm fairly satisfied.

Ludmila

I think we need a little longer to decide
 Should we not consult Mařenka?
 She's marrying the man,
 and it's only right to ask
 is she happy with this latest plan?

Kecal

Is she happy?
 She'll be married!
 What more can a woman expect?
 Between your resolution,
 and my great brain, she can't object!

Ludmila

Well I hope she likes her new husband.
 I have heard he's rather trying...

Kecal

Are you saying that
my judgement's less than flawless?
Then what are you implying?
You've heard rumours that he's simple?
Well, that's simply not the case,
and such rumours all are base!
And besides, that's incidental,
he is sweet and kind and gentle.
On top of which... He is rich!
This boy will inherit
more than twenty thousand crowns.
Every detail has been sorted,
there's no doubt about it.
Your debts will all be cancelled,
you've no earthly cause to doubt it.
You leave it all to me.
No need to call the debt in
once they marry off that cretin,
just you leave it all to me!

Ludmila

I'm not so sure, we need longer to decide
What if the bride should not agree?
It all seems very rum to me!

Krušina

I'm satisfied, it's alright by me!

Kecal

Just you leave it all to me!
Just you leave everything,
and yes, I do mean everything, to me!

Recitative

Krušina

¹⁰ Hold it! Are we not forgetting Mícha has two
sons? One son by his first wife, then, when he
remarried came this second one. Can we be sure
that the younger one will inherit?

Kecal

Not a problem! No one's seen the first son now
for years. He has forfeited his birthright. His
share has been made over to your son-in-law.

Ludmila

And that is Vašek? The one who's marrying
Mařenka?

Kecal

Yes, precisely; he's the one who'll get it all. Vašek!
His mother made sure the whole fortune was
his. No one knows where the elder one is.

Krušina

So I suppose we should now meet Vašek?
See what our son-in-law's truly like?

Trio

Kecal

¹¹ Well, as I told you,
he's kind and he's gentle.
Please disregard reports
that he is three parts mental.
As for his twitching,
well, once you're used to it, it's not so bad.

Unaspiring, bashful and retiring.

Take him as you find him
and you soon won't mind him
being rather oddly-clad.

Very compliant,
and softer than butter,
with lots to say
if you can understand his stutter.
And given time one soon forgets
the boy is barking mad.

He's a very handsome creature,
regular in face and feature.
So much so you're nearly blinded
to the fact he's feeble-minded.
And his strength is most impressive,
sturdy and yet not aggressive.
Just one look at his physique and
one forgets his brain is weakened.

If the *corpore* is *sano*
I maintain it recompenses
for however sick the *mens* is.
Taken all in all, there are no
problems we cannot thrash out
after we sort the cash out.
So then, what d'ya say?
Could you ask for more
from a future son-in-law?
Very docile, completely obedient.
When it comes to husbands, that's
the quality that's really most expedient.
Yes, he's a half-wit: and yet
taken as a whole, a lovely lad.

Ludmila and Krušina

What you say is most intriguing,
Vašek sounds a lovely lad.
Though the boy is clearly barking mad.
Vašek sounds a lovely lad.

Scene 4

Kecal

¹² Look! She's coming!

Ludmila and Krušina

Ah, Mařenka!

Ludmila, Krušina and Kecal

Better say what we've decided.

Mařenka

Dearest Father, dearest Mother,
did you want to see me?

Kecal

We all think it's high time you were married.
So we've picked the man for you.
I can't wait to tell you who!
Not just very handsome, but extremely rich!

Mařenka

Don't tell me he's got brains too?

Krušina

Well, we thought that
two out of three might do.

Ludmila

But don't feel any pressure,
it's all up to you.

Mařenka, Ludmila, Krušina and Kecal

We should meet no doubt
and gently sound him out,
just to see if he's
what I'm/you're looking for.
And if that is not the case
we'll show the man the door.

Kecal

Alright then? That's splendid!
Everything's agreed then?
I'm glad it's all turned out fine.
All you have to do is sign
on the dotted line.

Mařenka

Now hold your horses,
wait a minute, take your time!
It's not as if the
whole agreement's in the bag.
This may come as some surprise,
I don't think you realise,
I think you should recognise
there's a tiny snag!

Kecal

There's a snag, there's a snag,
so there's always a snag!
I'll deal with the snags,
you will soon see!
Nothing floors a brain like mine.
As I said, you leave it all to me.

Mařenka

I have a true love,
and one whom I love dearly.

Ludmila and Krušina

She has a true love,
one she loves, clearly.

Kecal

Well, it all sounds very pleasant,
but true love is evanescent.
I can give the man a present
and I'll make him find another.

Mařenka

I have sworn
and I'll not break my word!

Kecal

What a silly fuss you're making,
vows like that are meant for breaking.
Sign the paper, don't be so absurd!

Mařenka

I am betrothed to him, so there!

Kecal

Oh my goodness, what a caper!
There is nothing down on paper!

Mařenka

But I flatly refuse
and you can't make me swear!

Kecal

I'm not one for giving in.

I shall find a way to win,
with sagacity!
Perspicacity!
I'm smart! I'm sly!
Other men might be outwitted
but not I, no, no, not I!
We must find some way through
if it's the last thing that we do!

Mařenka, Ludmila, Krušina and Kecal

We must find some way through
if it's the last thing that we do!

Recitative

Mařenka

¹³ Fine then, say what you will. My lover won't
agree, I'll stake my life on that.

Krušina

Too late, no matter what he does. Mícha has
already signed. All is signed and sealed, you and
Mícha's son are pledged to marry.

Ludmila

You've not said a word to me about signatures.

Kecal

There you are! Written in black and white and
signed by independent witnesses.

Mařenka

So what if it is? I don't care a jot! I've not signed,
and what's more, I will not!

(*She exits.*)

Kecal

Oh, what a stubborn, wilful girl!

Krušina

Perhaps we ought to look for Mícha, and fetch
the groom? If Vašek is as splendid as you say he
is, once she has met the boy, Mařenka might
even like him.

Kecal

That is brilliant! Though I think you should
know that Vašek's very bashful. Someone like
Mařenka might frighten him.

Krušina

And that won't greatly help his chances.

Kecal

So, here's the plan then... You look for Mícha.
Don't tell him what's occurred, but ask if he will
meet and bring his son with him. Maybe not in
here, though; this will be too noisy. I'll find
Mařenka's other suitor. I can soon fix him!

Scene 5 – Finale

*The Inn. The elders sit at tables. The young ones
prepare to dance.*

¹⁴ **Introduction: Polka**

Chorus

Take your partners for the polka,
Take your partners in a row now.
Take your partners for the polka,
arm in arm and off we go now.

Are we ready? One two three!
 Dance the polka now with me!
 Dance the polka all night through,
 turning as the seasons do.
 Horn and cornet loudly mingle,
 dulcimer and banjo jingle,
 set our pulses all a-tingle.
 Dance the polka!
 Round and round each couple twirling,
 cheek aglow and apron swirling.
 Set our leaping feet a-whirling,
 Dance the polka!
 Till the world is spinning round,
 till your feet don't touch the ground.
 Dance the polka two by two,
 dance the polka all night through!

Act II

Scene 1

Interior of the Inn. On one side Jeník and village youths seated at tables drinking beer. On the other side Kecal.

Chorus

- 15** So charge the glasses, lads, and bring 'em over here,
 drink a toast to Beer!
 For this is the cup where your sorrows will drown,
 so if you're in trouble just swallow it down!
 For beer gives you courage and bearing.
 It fills you with valour and daring.
 Drink it down! Drink it down!

So charge the glasses, lads and one more cup of cheer,
 one more toast to Beer!
 It wipes away heartache and smooths every frown,
 so when you feel miserable drink it all it down!
 For beer makes your confidence stronger.
 You fight that much harder and longer.
 Drink it down! Drink it down!

Jeník

Now listen! Here's my toast!
 Come all, lend an ear.
 To Love! That's a nectar finer far than beer.
 My toast is Love!
 Which fills the heart of youth
 with a world full of joy and cheer.

Chorus

Poor Jeník is in it right up to his neck!
 You'd better fetch Kecal to keep him in check!

Kecal

Well, if you want my advice
 I'm happy to oblige.
 Good advice is always welcome.
 if you really want to marry
 Love's alright, but in its place.
 If you really want to marry
 don't be tempted by a pretty face.
 If you really want to marry
 you'll find money makes a solid base.
 So seek a girl who's got a dowry
 which can make a very solid base!

Chorus

So charge the glasses, lads, and bring 'em over here,
 drink a toast to beer!

Kecal (*breaking in*)

No, to Money!

Chorus

For this is the cup where your sorrows will drown,
 so if you're in trouble, just drink it all down!

Jeník

To Love! It's Love that wins the crown!

16 **Furiant**

Scene 2

Vašek (*stammering wildly*)

- 17** Ma... Ma... My Mamma said...
 whe... when... will I be wed?
 I... If... I hesitate
 I... It... will be too late
 Mamma... said she'll decide
 who'll be my bride.
 She wants me off her hands you see.
 I'm far too shy...
 and though I try...
 the girls don't fall in love with me.
 And then no doubt
 Mamma will shout
 and then everyone will laugh
 and say I'm mad,

and they'll all of them laugh and say that I'm mad!
 All the girls say I'm mad.
 I try, but I'm shy, but I try, and I try,
 I'm not mad, but I'm sad

(*Mařenka appears in the background.*)

Scene 3

Recitative

Mařenka

- 18** Don't say you're the boy who's been told to marry Mařenka!

Vašek

Yes! But how did you know that?

Mařenka

I'd have thought that it was obvious! I mean,
 look at you! All dressed up in your wedding clothes.
 They pity you, you know.

Vašek

They do? But why?

Mařenka

'Cos Mařenka will never be faithful, 'cos she has a lover.

Vašek

What do you mean, a lover? Hasn't she got me?

Mařenka

You? You don't know her! Have you met?

Vášek

Not as yet. But she still knows that I'm to be her bridegroom.

Mařenka

Don't be too sure! No doubt she's looking forward to it, cheating you till you can bear no more, wounding you until it kills you!

Vášek

Dreadful! But Mother has insisted, she said I must get married.

Mařenka

Did she? Well, there's lots of time; who can tell? Such a handsome boy as you are! You will find a girl!

Vášek

I will?

Duet

Mařenka

19 I know there's a girl for you,
who'll love you all her life.
I know she'll be ever true.
She'll make a perfect wife.

Vášek

Oh dear!
Someone loving me?
I'm a lucky boy!
Who is she?
I can't wait to hear!

What will Mařenka think?

What will she say?

Mařenka

Nothing! She doesn't care a bit for you, that's very clear.

Vášek

But my Mother, though?
She will yell at me!

Mařenka

Once she sees your bride I'm sure
she'll like her, wait and see.

Vášek

You mean she is pretty?

Mařenka

Prettier than Mařenka!

Vášek

And is she young then?

Mařenka

Younger than Mařenka!
I know there's a girl for you,
who'll love you all her life.
I know she will always be true,
a perfect wife

Vášek

Oh... you know! You know a girl who's pretty?
A girl who'll love me all her life?
She'll be ever true?
A perfect wife!

And she'll marry me?

Do you think so?

Mařenka

Oh, you couldn't jilt her now!
Never! You'll make her cry!
How could you tell such a lie?
Maybe she might even try to drown?
She might take poison?
Can you hear her weep and sigh?
Reject her, and she will die!

Vášek

No! I can't bear it!

Mařenka

You don't care for her at all!

Vášek

But that's not true!
I do! But I'm so shy.

Mařenka

Oh now, of course you say that!
And yet, tomorrow
you'll jilt the poor girl I bet.
She'd be dead, but you would soon forget!

Vášek

No! Not at all!
If she's like you
I'd love her too.

Mařenka

So you promise you'll agree?

Vášek

I do!

Mařenka

You could wed a girl like me?

Vášek

Like you!

Mařenka

You'll take this other girl
and you'll let Mařenka free?
And she will cradle you
with more tender love
than Mamma does, I guarantee!

Now put your hand in mine

And now, swear it!

Swear you'll never try to seek Mařenka's hand!

From now on and through eternity

you'll never marry her.

Come on, swear it!

Vášek

Mamma said! Mamma said swearing's wicked!

Mařenka

Mařenka's more wicked still.

She can only bring you ill.

Take my hand and quickly now,

time that we make a vow-

'Solemnly I declare...'

Vášek

I declare...

Mařenka
‘I renounce Mařenka’s hand...’

Vášek
Renounce Mařenka’s hand...

Mařenka
‘I will never look at her...’

Vášek
Won’t look at her...

Mařenka
‘I will never speak to her...’

Vášek
...ver speak to her...

Mařenka
‘I swear on it...’

Vášek
I swear on it...

Mařenka
‘By all eternity I swear!’

Vášek
Eternity I swear!

Mařenka
I know there’s a girl for you,
who’ll love you all her life.
I know she will always be
a perfect wife.

Vášek
I know there’s a girl like you,

who’ll love me all her life.
I know she will always be
a perfect wife.

(They leave.)

COMPACT DISC TWO

Scene 4

Recitative

Kecal
[1] I have plenty of others: rich girls, pretty girls.
This one, she’s called Bella...

Jeník
Bella! How d’you know that Bella will like me?

Kecal
That is my concern. All I ask is that you let
Mařenka go.

Jeník
No! It’s madness. Leaving her would break my
heart

Kecal
Heartbreak is for fools, believe me! What’s
important is money!

Jeník
Yes? So this Bella, I suppose, comes with a
dowry?

Kecal
Yes, sir!

Duet

Kecal
[2] Just a word or two, my friend,
here’s some good advice for free.

Jeník
This discussion’s at an end,
I am busy as you see.

Kecal
Do you not know who I am?

Jeník
I don’t care who you might be,
I’m quite sure you don’t know me.

Kecal
Oh, but I do, and I’ve heard
that you’re an honest decent lad,
and I’ve heard that you are
thinking of marriage...
Marriage with no money?
Are you mad?
Have you the means to do it?

Jeník
Oh, the fact that I am poor
concerns me not a scrap.
Pretty girls require no more
than a some good-looking chap.

Kecal
Trust me. I have seen the world:
I’ve dreadful tales to tell.
You need cash... Lots of cash...

You need cash to set up home with your wife,
and cash throughout your life.
Without it bid your love farewell, sir!
But you’re not from these parts.
Tell me more and I am sure
I could assist you.

Jeník
Far away is my home,
far away, near Moravia’s border.

Kecal
Why not find a wife back there?
They are rich and they are fair;
ours are all good for nothing, I swear

Jeník
I dare say that that may be.
In most cases I’d agree,
but there’s one who is a jewel
far beyond compare.
That’s what Mařenka’s to me!

Kecal
[3] Time and time again
I encounter men
lost in the mire of love.
Time and time they say
adamantly, they
never will tire of love.
She’s the girl he prayed for!
She’s the girl he’s made for!
So the ring is paid for and he’s hooked.
She’s the one he prizes,

then he realises
as he rubs his eyes, his goose is cooked.
More mouths need feeding,
love soon lies bleeding.
Life's oh! such a bore.
Nose to the grindstone,
that jewel's a rhinestone,
love flies out the door!
Working night and day,
too many bills to pay,
hoardes of little children
crowding the marriage bed.
Tired and fractious wife
giving grief and strife;
hear that wedding bell
like a funeral knell.
Kiss romance farewell
for now it's oh! so dead
Are you still in doubt?
Well hear me out.
Rules are there to flout,
why then submit to hell?
Choose a girl with money,
and your life is sunny:
Is that milk and honey I can smell?
No girl's quite as fair as
one whose born an heiress:
strange how love can flare as coffers swell.
Take my word, heed my counsel,
it could be your saviour.
Quick, on your way,
leave today!

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Go back to Moravia
and with some cash-in-hand as well!

Jeník
I don't quite read your meaning.
What are you trying to say?

Kecal
That if you'll agree to ditch Mařenka,
I can pay!

4 Think what it's worth, lad,
your plot of earth, lad,
nothing in rent.

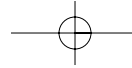
Jeník
I'm not the sort, sir,
clearly you thought, sir.
It's time that you went!

Kecal
Think of fields, and think of orchards,
think a farmyard built of stone!

Jeník
If I want a field and orchard
I can earn them on my own.

Kecal
Think of the hoeing,
ploughing and sowing,
think what you owe.

Jeník
No, I would never,
I couldn't ever grovel that low!



Kecal
Think of that enticing cottage,
think of roses round the door.

Jeník
If you're thinking of enticement
I'll require a whole lot more.

Kecal
Then you could keep
your own flock of sheep
and maybe a cow,
a goose and a sow.
And someone to feed them
when you need them
while you put your feet up
by the grate.
You must admit that what I'm saying
carries lots and lots of weight!

Jeník
Think I could keep my own flock of sheep
and maybe a cow,
a goose and a sow.
(Oh, think of a nice fat sow!)
And men to feed them
when I need them,
while I put my feet up by the grate.
I must admit that what you're saying
carries lots and lots of weight.

Kecal
Look at the baby lambs a-leaping!
Look at the baby chicks a cheeping!

121

Yours is the vision for the keeping
and what is more it's all for free!

Jeník
Oh, see the baby lambs a-leaping.
What is more it's all for free!
The baby chicks are cheeping
and what is more it's all for free!

Recitative

Kecal
5 You'll go home to Moravia? Break your
engagement to Mařenka? Splendid! We are in
agreement! Sign this paper here! Take these
thousand crowns...

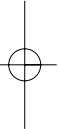
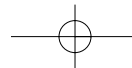
Jeník
Only a thousand? Oh, I think you underestimate
her worth, sir. If that's your price, I will not sell!

Kecal
Very well; two thousand then.

Jeník
Not nearly enough, sir...

Kecal
Then three thousand! That's my last offer. If you
don't accept, I'm warning you, I will round up
the town, and a band of us will drive you out.
Think what you'll lose! All this and Mařenka
too! I recommend you take the money and go
while you can, sir!

Jeník
So...So... Tell me who's putting up the money?



Kecal

I am.

Jeník

You mean you want her for yourself? I would not sell Mařenka for less than ten thousand crowns!

Kecal

Ten thousand? I don't want her for myself. I've got one wife and that's quite enough! But Mícha told me to negotiate the contract regardless of what it cost. (And then again, I'm on commission...) So ten thousand crowns! Agreed! And now, will you sign?

Jeník

Alright, I shall sign! Ten thousand crowns! Added to which, I've two more things to ask you, two more small conditions... The first: Mařenka must marry one man alone, that's the true son of Toby Mícha; failing which, this piece of paper's null and void!

Kecal

Have you not yet gathered that's precisely what I want? She shall marry Toby Mícha's son and no one else.

Kecal

That's it! Mícha's son and no one else! Quickly, write it down! That's the first condition I am asking – that is of crucial importance.

Kecal

You just leave it all to me, I'll add it to the agreement.

Jeník

My next condition...

Kecal

Yes?

Jeník

All parties must agree that on my signature conveying her to Toby Mícha's son no more money is owed. All of her father's debts to Mícha are cancelled. Nor will he need to pay a dowry. All guarantees must be in place.

Kecal

They shall agree when I return to base.

Scene 5

Jeník

6 Ah, my friend! Once you learn you've been hoodwinked how you'll stamp and shout! You'll soon find out. Not for the whole world could I once betray my own Mařenka. Not for the whole world could I cast away my own Mařenka. Angel fairer than the sky to whose service I would fly. No man on earth can make me break my vow.

I'll love Mařenka

till the day I die.

Not for the world could I betray Mařenka.

I'll love her, love her, love her till I die.

How much I love her, love my Mařenka.

Only a man in love could ever know.

Ah! How I love Mařenka so, only lovers know.

Scene 6 – Finale

Kecal

7 Come now everyone, gather round and lend an ear. I require a legal witness, anyone prepared to volunteer?

Chorus

We'll all do it, just lead us to it!

Kecal

This binding contract requires your signature.

Put your crosses at the base right here.

Chorus

What lovely writing!

This *is* exciting!

Can you read it out so all is clear?

Kecal (*reading from the document*)

'To whom it may concern, I say I renounce Mařenka from this day.'

Chorus

It concerns us quite a lot, does Mařenka know about this plot?

Jeník

But I'll not yield her up to anyone except one man and that man is Toby Mícha's son!

Chorus

That's the son of Toby Mícha.

Jeník

And his love must be sincere, his affection very clear. By free will he'll have to decide, free to take her as his bride.

Kecal

These conditions we agree in Subsection three.

Chorus

Well, the whole affair looks very odd to me...

Krušina (*to Jeník*)

You've made such a noble sacrifice and our debt is very great, sir.

Don't you feel some recompense is perhaps appropriate?

Kecal

One more detail I've not mentioned
which I think could colour the debate...
He's already asked a sum in compensation.
He will get ten thousand crowns remuneration.
Just chew on that and then tell me
the kind of man that you see!

Chorus

How outrageous! How appalling!
Just how greedy can you be?

Krušina (*to Jeník*)

I now take back every word!
And I think this is the vilest
sort of tale I've ever heard!

Kecal

Punctum, satis
hocus, pocus,
et tu Brute,
ergo Hic haec hoc.
Jeník signs his name as the first party...
Then the rest, en bloc!

Jeník

Here's my signature... The deed is done!

Krušina

I am very glad to sign.
Glad you'll be no son of mine!

Chorus

Bartering his bride!

What a heel! What a fake!
What a cad! What a snake!
How the wretch has lied!

Krušina, Kecal and Chorus

Shame on you, yes, shame on you, sir!
Shame on you, you vile seducer!
He is bartering his bride
Have a heart!
He has bartered his bride!
How the wretch has lied
to his bartered bride!

Act III

Scene 1

The village green. Vašek, alone and miserable

Vašek

8 I'm near now to despairing,
Mařenka is uncaring.
What if she should desert me?
She might try to hurt me!
I am far too young to die!
Why must I marry her? Why?
I'd really rather not do,
but Mamma says I've got to.
I wish I could defy her!
But no one can deny her.
She's very overbearing
I am despairing!

Scene 2

Enter strolling players, villagers and Vašek

Ringmaster

9 Roll up! Roll up ladies and gentlemen!
Roll up, because seats are at a premium.
The climax of your Harvest Fair!
Hurry along and witness our spectacular new
attractions, a tantalising foretaste of which we
now present!
Thrill! to see the luscious Esmeralda Salamanca,
acrobatic artiste *extraordinaire* whose
endowments are something to behold!
Wonder! At our wife-threatening, whoops,
pardonnez-moi – life-threatening
Red Indian brave from distant Ota...tota...
teet... haiti.
(Some seventy thousand miles from where I am
standing).
Gasp! At our *coup de resistance*!
A genuine grizzly bear!
Which has – thanks to the accommodating Miss
Salamanca – been tamed
and which will now appear and dance before
you!
Stand amazed! As he performs not just polkas
but also French extravaganzas with La
Esmeralda!
(Who will dance the can-can in costumes
which, while revealing — remain tastefully
artistic!)

Roll up ladies and gentlemen, to this premier
event!

Seats on sale right now in the circus-tent!
A fly-popping...an *eye*-popping divertissement to
both dazzle and enthral!
Roll up! Roll up!
One and all!

10 **Ballet and Dance of the Comedians**

Recitative

Vašek

11 Oh, it looks so lovely! And what about that
Esmeralda too? What a pair of legs she's got!

Esmeralda

Can I hope to see you at our show?

Vašek

Try and hold me back! I cannot wait to see you
on that tightrope!

Indian

Mister Ringmaster! You won't believe what's
happened now! Down at the pub! Frankie's been
drinking non-stop since it opened and he can't
stand up without falling over! There's no way
he'll be able to put on that bear-skin!

Ringmaster

Damn it! Drunk again! I'm gonna wring his
neck! That's the best part of the act. No bear
means no show and that's a fact! No, no, no!
We'll have to find some way around. Couldn't
we press-gang some young idiot, some local
yokel, to go on instead?

Indian

Nah, we'd be rumbled, mate. We need someone who's full-grown, but someone who none of 'em talk to. They find out that bear's a fake, it'll mean the end of our little troupe. Look, the crowds are gathering like vultures! We've got no time to waste. What are we gonna do?

Ringmaster

Esmeralda, Esmeralda!

Vášek

I bet she can solve the problem – she's incredible! She's smart! I wish I could marry Esmeralda! She would make me the envy of the town!

Esmeralda

If that's how you feel I might well make it happen!

Vášek

You're the most amazing girl I've met!

Indian (*to the Ringmaster*)

Guv'nor, are you thinking what I'm thinking? Reckon it'd fit him like a glove.

Ringmaster

Quick, go and tell the band to vamp till we're ready. I'll try and twist his arm to help us. (*Exit Indian and other players.*) (*to Vášek*)

Hey, you there! Looks like you're keen on Esmeralda? Maybe I can help you there. Hang around, and who knows what might

happen. A handsome lad like you, I'm sure we could use you.

Vášek

Me, join the circus show? I wouldn't know where to start.

Esmeralda

I'll teach you all the tricks you need to know.

Vášek

Well then, yes indeed!

Ringmaster

Trust me, you will love the actor's life here with us. We have debts – ah, *cash* – in showers, food and drink in idle hours, as well as all the rest! The actor's held in high regard throughout society. Custom never stales our infinite variety *Ars Longa, Vita Brevis*, as the ancient Romans had it. And *Ars Super Elbow*, as I myself at times have added. All the world's a stage, but of all the players we are easily the best!

Esmeralda

How can you resist? Join the parade! And I'll reward you for the choice you've made.

Ringmaster

Nothing need be final, maybe you should try it. Just this evening – keep it quiet.

Esmeralda

Have a go for tonight and see? Will you do it? Just for me? And then – who knows what will follow!

Vášek

What will I have to do?

Esmeralda

The can-can...

Vášek

Just the can-can...? What is that?

Esmeralda

Oh, you will love it! You just wait and see!

Vášek

But... Mother!

Esmeralda

Mother, leave to me!

Duettino

(*Esmeralda takes Vášek by the hand, and they dance.*)

Esmeralda

^[12] Mother doesn't matter, Mother wouldn't care! You belong to me now, you're my dancing bear!

Ringmaster

(...n't matter.)
(care!)
(me now!)
(bear!)

Esmeralda and Ringmaster

When they see you, they'll say 'My, how fierce and strong!' And I'll/she'll have your fur to cuddle all night long. With your golden collar and your jacket white as snow we'll/you'll be dancing and people will shout out, Bravo! Mother doesn't matter! Mother wouldn't care. You belong to me now, you're my dancing bear!

Scene 3

Recitative

Vášek

^[13] Oh, I don't understand it! Girls seem either to want to marry me or kill me!

Háta

Vášek, dearest, why are you so sad? Stand up straight and smile, dear. You're going soon to be married and that as we know is paradise.

Vášek

I'm scared though!

Háta

What's to be scared of, you idiot? Whom can there possibly be to be scared of? You're to be married! And what is better than a wife, dear?

Kecal

Oh? Nothing! Be a good boy and sign the contract. That should nail down the coffin.

Vašek

What does it say?

Mícha

'I will take Mařenka as my intended wife.'

Vašek

I refuse!

Quartet

Háta, Mícha and Kecal

¹⁴ What? Dare he? Would he? You do what?

Can he? Could he? Surely not!

I think that someone has been at him...

Vašek! What has occurred?

This protest is absurd.

You're talking total rot!

Vašek

But if Mařenka marries me she might take my life!

Don't want her for a wife!

Háta, Mícha and Kecal

But Vašek, that is not true!

Who? Who could have spun this?

Who could have done this?

Vašek

A friend of mine, whose name... That's all!

Háta, Mícha and Kecal

Come on now, you've begun it!

Vašek

I saw this beautiful lady, who said...

Háta, Mícha and Kecal

And what did she tell you, pray?

Vašek

I've met this other girl instead who said she'd love me anyway.

Háta

And what's her name?

Vašek

Can't say.

Háta, Mícha and Kecal

I think I smell deceit here,

we've got to be discreet here.

What he said sounded most enigmatic.

Our plans could be in doubt,

though his grasp of events is erratic,

we'd best not wait about.

Kecal

I'll go and find that youth and winkle out the truth.

Háta and Mícha

Yes, go and find that youth!

And winkle out the truth!

Before the night is out!

Scene 4

(Mařenka enters hurriedly with her father and mother.)

Mařenka

¹⁵ No! I don't believe you!

It's all a huge mistake.

It's all a fearful dream.

My Jeník's far too decent to submit to such a cruel scheme.

Krušina

It is the truth, my dear.

Kecal

Why's she making a fuss?

Krušina

He's signed his name, my dear.

Kecal

Look, see, it's written here.

There's no more to discuss.

Ten thousand crowns his price was.

He's now sold you back to us.

Mařenka

Oh, what a shameful thing to do!

How can men be so cruel?

He swore to me we'd never part,

no, not for the world,

he swore I had his heart!

Krušina

Come, Mařenka, do not cry, however dear to you, the sort of man he's proved at last is clear to you.

Kecal

Far better cut your losses and sign here, please. Where's Vašek?

Ludmila

He's hiding by the duck-pond, he's skulking on his own.

Mařenka

I'll never sign that paper.

I'd rather live alone.

I cannot ever break my vow,

I'll never marry now.

Ludmila, Háta, Krušina, Mícha and Kecal

My dear, the die is cast.

There's no use weeping what's past is past.

Kecal

¹⁶ Oh, Vašek! Don't run away!

Oh, Vašek! Come back I say!

Quickly boy! Come here and stay!

Scene 5

Vašek

Why are you calling?

Oh look! The lady's here!

Ludmila, Háta, Krušina, Mícha and Kecal
But she's your fiancée, dear!

Vašek
She's the lady that I talked about!

Ludmila, Háta, Krušina, Mícha and Kecal
Then there's nothing you need fear.

Vašek
She's the lady, don't you see?
She's the one who said that she
has met this girl in love with me!

Ludmila, Háta, Krušina, Mícha and Kecal
But that is Mařenka, do you not understand?
That girl is the girl
who has promised you her hand!

Vašek
I think it's her and
I think she is grand.

Kecal
Thank God that's sorted out then!
If there's no further doubt, then,
no reason to postpone...

Mařenka
I must think it over.
Leave me here alone.

Sextet

Ludmila, Háta, Krušina and Kecal
¹⁷ Think it over, Mařenka, think it through.
Make your mind up, Mařenka, what to do.

You have all your happiness in store.
All's at stake in the choice you make,
the future's up to you.

Ludmila, Háta, Krušina, Mícha and Kecal
Weigh your options Mařenka, side by side.
Don't be blinded, Mařenka, by your pride.
Here's a husband whom you can adore.
Don't dismiss a chance like this.
Let your conscience be your guide.
Though you've a broken heart,
your heart will mend.
Now choose those things
on which you can depend.
Wealth, power and status
which will endure
until the end.

Think it over, Mařenka, think it through.
Make your mind up what you want to do.
What do do?

Mařenka
Oh, how can I decide what I should do?
I don't know what I should do.
What to do?

Scene 6

Mařenka
¹⁸ Oh, but the pain! The burning pain!
To think he could betray me!
Yes, that's his name on the paper
and yet I can't believe it.
How could he sign our love away?

130

Maybe they somehow tricked him?
My head says, 'leave him',
but my heart, my poor heart,
my heart cries, 'stay'!

¹⁹ We dreamed upon a moonlit night.
Our love was rising like a star,
how I remember our delight
to see it shining from afar!
You wished for luck and happiness,
for stars that shine till morning.
Can stars which augured so much bliss
now change without a warning?
No! till the stars fall from the sky
I cannot believe our dream could die.
Like stars are in their constancy
I dreamed you would be true to me.
Let heaven weep tears from above!
Let stars rain down to mourn our love!
We dreamed that night... Our star was bright.
Without your love our dream has died.
I've nothing now but starless night.

Scene 7

Jeník (*entering*)

²⁰ Mařenka mine, Mařenka mine!
Don't speak! Just let me hold you!
So, say! How did they all react?
And what horrors have they told you?

Mařenka

Stand back! You whom I trusted so!
How can you look me in the eye?

Did you once spare a thought for my feelings
in your squalid double-dealings?
So, tell me the truth. Tell me now!
Did you sign? Tell me! Yes? Or no?

Jeník
Mařenka, let me tell you why...

Mařenka
Spare me your cheap prevarication!
Confess! Did you sign that paper?

Jeník
Alright, then! Yes! Yes! Yes!

Mařenka
Please go away, and don't come back.
I don't think I can face you.

Jeník
Mařenka, I'll explain it all,
but first, let me embrace you!

Mařenka
No explanations, not a word.
Just go! I shall marry Vašek!

Jeník
Ha ha ha ha!
I can't keep quiet! You're a riot!
You'd marry Vašek?
I can't wait to see you try it!

Mařenka
How dare you laugh at me like that?

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Jeník

You have to laugh, admit it!
But angel, won't you let me speak...

Mařenka

No! Don't you dare come near me!

Jeník

You'd marry into the Mícha clan?
Well, that is a sensation!
That's truly a sensation!
If you can wait until my plan
achieves its consummation,
why then you'll find that I can give you
a simple explanation!

Mařenka

You're such a low and faithless man,
I'll leave you to damnation!
And should we never meet again
there'd be no lamentation.
I don't regard that prospect
with an ounce of consternation!

Jeník

You'd marry into the Mícha clan?
Well, pardon my elation!

Mařenka

Our love affair has run its span
and here's the termination!
Will you retire? I don't require
your simple explanation.
Will you retire? I shan't inquire,
I don't desire a simple explanation!

Scene 8

Recitative

Kecal

[21] So then, young man I suppose you want your
pay-off? Well, have a little patience: wait till
the marriage-contract's dealt with and we'll carve
up the dividends.

Mařenka

Oh, such low-down cunning!

Kecal

Now, Missy, once and for all,
will you marry Mícha's son?

Jeník

Yes, upon my word! She'll marry him, him alone
and only him. I guarantee, sir. Wait and see,
sir!

Kecal

Give me your hand! That's good enough for me,
sir.

Mařenka

You give your lousy word? No! No! I still refuse!
I'd not be his wife, even though it cost me my
life!

Jeník

What's it worth then, if I can cajole her into
marrying old Mícha's son?

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Mařenka

Great God! Have you not sunk low enough
already? I call upon the heavens! The world
has never seen such villainy!

Trio

Jeník

[22] Be calm, oh my love, let me comfort your distress.
Have faith in the truth of all that I say.
Mícha's son will bring you
far greater joy than you can guess.
Believe me, now and evermore,
he'll love you, come what may.
Remember how I told you once
that happiness can quickly turn?
The sun will break through clouds of grey.
Believe me, you shall not come to harm.
Be calm now and wipe your sad tears away.
Come, wipe your sad tears away.

Mařenka

Oh Heaven, dear Heaven!
Would you rather drive a knife through my heart?

Kecal

I have to say, I must agree
with Jeník's little homily.
And now I think that we
ought to start so, so, so
it's time to call the parents in...

Jeník and Mařenka

It's time to call the parents in...

Kecal, Mařenka and Jeník

...and formalise the contract.
We'll put an end to all of this
unpleasant little entr'acte.
Yes! Call them in.
Call the parents in!

Jeník (to Mařenka)

Now, don't you begin to understand?

Mařenka (turning away from him)

No! Not another word!

Scene 9 – Finale

Enter Ludmila, Háta. Krušina, Mícha and Chorus

Chorus

[23] Tell us Mařenka, it's all up to you,
now it's all up to you.
Tell us, Mařenka, what will you do?
What'll you do?

Mařenka

I'll take revenge! Don't you recall now
how I tried to warn you?
Oh Jeník, my love's turned to hatred
and I scorn you!
(to Kecal)
Ask what you will, and I'll obey!

Chorus

Oh, bravo! Mařenka,
a noble thing you've done.
And now you're free
to marry Mícha's son!

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Jeník

Indeed, a noble thing she's done!
And now indeed she's free
to marry Mícha's son!

Háta and Mícha

²⁴ It's Jeník! What's he doing here?

Jeník

Yes Father: I'm the son you spurned
and drove away to distant lands.
For years I've hidden from your sight,
but now I claim what's mine by right.

Kecal

This is the first I've heard of it.
I don't believe a word of it!
You're Jeník? Mícha's eldest son?
So what's this claim you bring to bear?

Jeník

Oh, I claim nothing more
than what is right and fair.
Ten thousand crowns, the birthright out of which
I once was cheated by that woman there!

Háta

No, *you* left *us*! Your share will pass
to my son Vašek, you will find.

Jeník

But look at the contract now,
the contract which you all have signed!
Enough of that, leave that aside.
What matters more by far,
that Jeník claimed his rightful bride!

Háta

Oh no! She's pledged to Vašek too!

Jeník

You think so? Well, let's take a look,
the deed is here, let's read it through.
The wording says, Mařenka must wed
the son of Toby Mícha, you see?
There you are! That is me!

Mařenka

Now at last I understand you,
I'm yours my love!
We're free! We're free!

Kecal

Well who'd have thought he'd be so smart
concerning legal matters?
My cunning plan is blown apart,
my iron case now shatters.
My reputation's gone, I fear,
I think I ought to disappear.
My whole career is now in tatters!

Mícha

It seems to me, my friend,
you've lost your usual flair.

Háta

And if you're thinking
you'll be sending us your fee,
well, don't you dare!

Mařenka and Jeník

You poor old fellow!
It seems to me that you have lost your usual flair.

Chorus

Ha ha ha ha! I think you ought to disappear.

Ludmila and Krušina

It seems to me you've lost your usual flair.

Mařenka and Jeník

It seems that you've been double-crossed.
You'll have to take more care!

Háta, Ludmila, Mícha and Krušina

Your reputation's lost we fear,
we think you'll have to disappear.

Scene 10

Cries and confusion off-stage. Boys rush across the stage.

First boy

²⁵ Everybody get out of the way! There's a bear on
the loose!

Second boy

The bear's escaped! And it's heading in this
direction!

Recitative

Vašek

I'm having such fun! I've come to tell you
Mother, I've joined the circus!

Háta

Good heavens! Vašek, you little fool! Come back
here this instant! Do you want to heap shame on us?
Just take off that bearskin.

(She drags Vašek away with her.)

Krušina (to Mícha)

Well, my good friend Mícha, Vašek's found his
niche at last! He'll never make a husband, it isn't
in his nature!

Krušina

But do remember, Jeník's your son too.
He is your first-born.

Ludmila

I for my part, am content
that you two are reunited.
Give thanks that son and father
stand together hand in hand at last.
And let us forget all the past.

Mícha

Come here, my children, make your oath,
a father's blessing on you both.

Mařenka, Ludmila, Jeník, Mícha, Krušina and Chorus

Time at last for celebration,
make the wedding preparation.
Time to let the troth be plighted,
one and all in joy united.
Now let faithful love preside
over groom and over bride.
Blessings on the bartered bride!

English version by Kit Hesketh-Harvey

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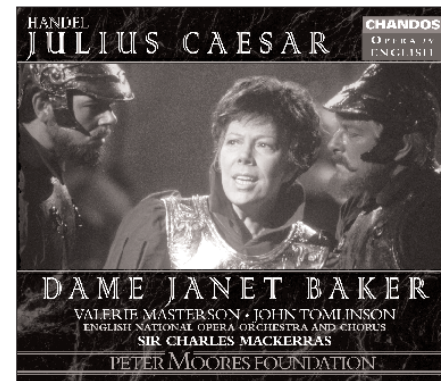
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Catherine Ashmore

Susan Gritton as Mařenka in The Royal Opera's production of *The Bartered Bride*



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The two boys (Act III) are members of the New London Children's Choir
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Artistic consultant to the Peter Moores Foundation: Patric Schmid
Vocal and language consultant: Ludmilla Andrew
Staging director: Charles Kilpatrick
Translation research: Henrietta Bredin
Repetiteur: Mark Packwood

Session photographs by Bill Cooper

Recording producer Brian Couzens
Sound engineer Ralph Couzens
Assistant engineer Michael Common
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SMETANA: THE BARTERED BRIDE

CHANDOS DIGITAL 2-disc set **CHAN 3128(2)**

Bedřich Smetana (1824–1884)

The Bartered Bride

Comic opera in three acts

Libretto by Karel Sabina, English version by Kit Hesketh-Harvey

Krušina, a farmer Neal Davies *baritone*
 Ludmila, his wife Yvonne Howard *mezzo-soprano*
 Mařenka, their daughter Susan Gritton *soprano*
 Toby Mícha, a smallholder Geoffrey Moses *bass*
 Háta, his wife Diana Montague *mezzo-soprano*
 Vašek, their son Timothy Robinson *tenor*
 Jeník, Toby Mícha's son from his first marriage Paul Charles *tenor*
 Kecal, a village marriage-broker Peter Rose *bass*
 Ringmaster Robin Leggate *tenor*
 Esmeralda, circus artist Yvette Bonner *soprano*
 Indian, circus artist Kit Hesketh-Harvey

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