

Dvorak - Kate and the Devil (Chubalala) [2008]

Written by bluesever

Thursday, 30 December 2010 10:59 - Last Updated Sunday, 03 November 2013 17:38

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CD1

1. Overture
2. Act 1. *Why so early, shepherd*
3. Act 1. *O me, little shepherd poor* [play](#)
4. Act 1. *Dance*
5. Act 1. *Isn't it enraging?* [play](#)
6. Act 1. *Good evening*
7. Act 1. *May I offer you a drink, please?*
8. Act 1. *Hurray! Jirka is here again!*
9. Act 1. *I've been kicked out!*
10. Act 1. *It is somewhat out-of-the-way*

CD2

1. Act 2. Overture
2. Act 2. *Glory to the might of gold* [play](#)
3. Act 2. *Shall I forever listen to your larm?*
4. Act 2. *Ah, poor me!*
5. Act 2. *What seek you? What do you want here?*
6. Act 2. *Everywhere I heard but laments*
7. Act 2. *He might, perhaps, carry her home!*
8. Act 2. *Kate, get ready now!*
9. Act 2. *Devilish Dance*
10. Act 2. *How do you like it here in hell?*
11. Act 3. Overture
12. Act 3. *Now sad the castle*
13. Act 3. *What can I do my gracious princess?*
14. Act 3. *He is here, the shepherd, Your Grace!*
15. Act 3. *Here I am, what is it, Jirka?*
16. Act 3. *Take a seat here, my dear princess* [play](#)
17. Act 3. *Steady, princess, you go with me!*
18. Act 3. *I am grateful!*
19. Act 3. *For your gracious kindness to us*

ČERT A KÁČA | KATE AND THE DEVIL

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Opera in 3 acts, Op. 112 (B 201, 1898-1899).

Libretto by Adolf Wenig based on Czech folk-tale and the Balad of the Poor Devil by Ladislav Quís

Jirka the Shepherd (tenor) ... Lubomír Havlák

Kate (mezzo-soprano) ... Ludmila Komancová

Her Mother (mezzo-soprano) ... Věra Krilová

Devil Marbuel (bass) ... Přemysl Kočí

Lucifer (bass) ... Rudolf Asmus

Devil the Gate-Keeper (bass) ... Karel Berman

Princess (soprano) ... Marie Steinerová

Chambermaid (soprano) ... Jaroslava Vymazalová

Marshall (bass) ... Jaroslav Horáček

Musician (tenor) ... Rudolf Vonásek

Village people, youths and girls, musicians, devils, courtiers

Prague National Theatre Chorus

Chorus master: Jan Ouředník

Prague National Theatre Orchestra

Conductor: Zdeněk Chabälala

The Devil and Kate, after Russalka, is the most popular of Dvorák's operas amongst his countrymen and achieved success in a performance given, in the autumn of 1932, by the Oxford University Opera Club. If the English opera-going public was less conservative that success might well be repeated in a professional performance at Sadler's Wells. The libretto, an excellent one by Josef Kapvıl, a young Prague schoolmaster and "riter, is refreshingly out of the ordinary. The heroine, Kate, is a plain and garrulous spinster, mad on dancing and aching to get married, who becomes such a trial to Marbuel, one of Lucifer's employees, that he will do anything to get rid of her. He arrives, in Act 1, at the inn where the farmhands are gathered on a country fair day, to make some inquiries about the tyrannical steward employed by the princess up at the castle both of them, because of their oppression of the workpeople, being destined to Hell. In the synopsis of the plot which precedes the Czech-English libretto the princess is said to spend most of her life" in social functions, hunting, and dolce-far-niente ", an obvious case for elimination. Kate and the shepherd George (Jirka), both of whom make a temporary descent into the infernal regions in Act 2, manage to outwit Marbuel when, in Act 3, he comes to collect the princess. One glimpse of Kate, whom he thought himself rid of, is enough. George also scares him away from the now repentant steward, receiving a large reward in return, and the princess willingly pays the price of her salvation by freeing the serfs, making George her "prime minister ", and endowing Kate with a fortune.

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There is no love interest in this unusual opera—though we are left to believe Kate's money-bags will secure her a husband—and there are also no detachable arias ; the ballet music in Acts 1 and 2 are the only detachable pieces. Such "arias" as there are, George's little "pastoral", Marbuel's description of the delights of Hell, in Act 1, a few passages for Marbuel in Act 2, the princess's soliloquy in Act 3, are, except the last, quite short. Dvořák, in fact, adopts the Wagnerian technique, with some modifications, of continuous music, using a group of three leading motive's, representing the peasants, Marbuel and Hell, and the princess and steward, respectively, very ingeniously. The music is delightfully melodious and often most imaginatively orchestrated. Two passages may be mentioned, the eerie effect made by the harps in Marbuel's description of Hell and the lovely and poignant section of the ballet, in Act 2, when a human soul—"a dancer in white, floating robes"—is dragged in and condemned to eternal fire. Act 1 moves slowly—Dvořák had not much sense of the stage—Act 2, with its picturesque detail and fairly convincing devils, goes better, and Act 3 is the most successful of all. Kate is, vocally, an ungrateful part and Ludmila Komancová, its exponent, has too warm a voice to suggest the stolid and irrepressible creature—it needs an Edith Coates type of singer for perfect characterisation—but the artist has some good moments. Lubomír Haviak's George is well in character and so is Přemysl Koci's Marbuel, though he seems unable to sustain a note of any length without wobbling. No doubt all the bad singing teachers go to Hell ! I liked Marie Steinerová's Princess—to her fall some lovely phrases—and the smaller parts are all well done. The recording is no more than adequate and does not do full justice to the admirable playing of the Prague National Theatre Orchestra—or to Dvořák's picturesque orchestration—except in some of the quieter moments, such as the first part of the scene of the condemned soul and in the poetical prelude to the last Act, which paints a touching picture of the lonely and deserted princess. -- *Gramophone*, November 1958

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