

Smetana – Prodana Nevesta (The Bartered Bride) [1995]

Written by bluesever
Friday, 16 May 2014 16:11 -

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CD 1 1. *The Bartered Bride. A Comic Opera in Three Acts* 02:09:01 1. Overture 00:06:09 2. Act 1, Scene 1 "Let us rejoice, let's be merry" 00:07:44 3. Act 1, Scene 2 Recitativo "It will then happen like I have been told!" 00:01:09 4. Act 1, Scene 2 Aria "Should I ever happen to learn something like that about you" 00:03:25 5. Act 1, Scene 2 Recitativo "It's only true that your past life seems to be veiled in a sort of mystery" 00:00:39 6. Act 1, Scene 2 Duetto "While a mother's love means blessing, painful is a stepmother's hate ..." 00:02:13 7. Act 1, Scene 2 Duetto "Faithful love cannot be marred by any former pledge or promise" 00:03:39 8. Act 1, Scene 3 "As I'm saying, my dear fellow ..." 00:05:00 9. Act 1, Scene 3 Recitativo "Of course, I know Tobias Micha since my childhood" 00:00:44 10. Act 1, Scene 3 Terzetto "He's well brought up and decent ..." 00:03:42 11. Act 1, Scene 4 Quartetto "Here she's coming!" 00:04:38 12. Act 1, Scene 4 Recitativo "Jenik will not give in ..." 00:01:23 13. Act 1, Scene 5 Finale - Polka and Chorus "Come on, girl, let's be merry ..." 00:04:07 14. Act 2, Scene 1 "Beer's no doubt a gift from heaven ..." 00:04:54 15. Act 2, Scene 1 - Furiant 00:02:06 16. Act 2, Scene 2 "My-my-my mother dear sa-sa-said to me..." 00:02:12 17. Act 2, Scene 3 Recitativo "You are surely Marenka Krusinova's bridegroom?" 00:01:18 18. Act 2, Scene 3 Duetto "I know a maiden fair whose love for you is boundless ..." 00:05:50 CD 2 1. *The Bartered Bride. A Comic Opera in Three Acts* 02:09:01 1. Act 2, Scene 4 Recitativo "As I say, she's lovely, sweet and also rich ..." 00:00:37 2. Act 2, Scene 4 Duetto "Now then, my dear man ..." 00:08:01 3. Act 2, Scene 4 Recitativo "And if you renounce Marenka I shall also pay you something" 00:03:14 4. Act 2, Scene 5 "When you find out for whom you have bought a bride. you will sadly return home" 00:03:41 5. Act 2, Scene 6 Finale "Come inside, people ..." 00:03:51 6. Act 3, Scene 1 "I...I can't get it off my,my mind" 00:03:50 7. Act 3, Scene 2 March of the comedians. Recitativo "We announce to the public ..." 00:01:41 8. Act 3, Scene 2 - Skocna. Dance of the Comedians 00:04:44 9. Act 3, Scene 2 Recitativo "Oh, oh, oh, oh, that will be lovely ..." 00:03:52 10. Act 3, Scene 3 Duetto "We shall make a graceful little bear of you ..." 00:01:31 11. Act 3, Scene 4 Recitativo "Oh, dear me, dear me !" 00:03:16 12. Act 3, Scene 4 "No, no, I don't believe ..." 00:04:02 13. Act 3, Scene 4 "Hey Vasel, hey Vasicek ..." 00:01:11 14. Act 3, Scene 5 Sextetto "Make up your mind, Marenka, take your time ..." 00:03:02 15. Act 3, Scene 6 "Oh, what a grief!" 00:05:44 16. Act 3, Scene 7 "Marenka mine - Are you really so stubborn, dear ..." 00:04:04 17. Act 3, Scene 8 Recitativo "Well, so you are still here, my young man?" 00:01:02 18. Act 3, Scene 8 Terzetto "Calm down, calm down, dear, calm down" 00:03:30 19. Act 3, Scene 9 Finale "What have you decided, Marenka?" 00:04:07 20. Act 3, Scene 10 "Save yourselves! The bear has got loose!" 00:00:44 21. Act 3, Scene 10 "Remember, neighbour!" 00:01:54

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Drahomira Tikalova (Marzenka) Ivo Zidek (Jeník) Eduard Haken (Kecal) Oldřich Kovář (Vašek) Stepanka Stepanova (Hata) Jaroslav Horáček (Micha) Václav Bednár (Krusina) Jaroslava Dobra (Ludmila) Prague National Theatre Chorus & Orchestra Zdeněk Chalabala - conductor

The first thing to notice about this delightful 1959 performance is that it is in Czech. I make this point because, in the West, we frequently hear this opera only in German (of which there is still a fine 1962 recording on EMI Classics). Yet, Smetana's lines are intimately tuned to the Czech language, which is clear as a bell here.

This may be the best comic opera between Rossini and Gilbert and Sullivan and why it is not more often performed I know not. An LP of this recording was my introduction to Smetana's comic world, and I have only recently seen a number of productions, two of which moved the time to the early-Communist-grey period, and Smetana survived them all. I find, nonetheless, that I return to this performance because it still reaches out to me, not in the exaggerated way we sometimes get in buffo opera, where singers overact to make sure we get the point, but with some subtlety and nuance, and I think that has to do with the singers' use of the language, whose every inflection they own. Above all, this is a performance with a great deal of joy.

In a sense, the star here is Chalabala, perhaps the most experienced pit conductor of his day in then-Czechoslovakia. He keeps things moving without giving the impression that he thinks this is a new-style Baroque opera. The balance between singers and orchestra is reasonable and the sound is clean.

Not all the singers are flawless, of course, but none is false to his or her character. Eduard Haken was the grand bass of the Prague stage, often associated with the operas of Dvořák and Janáček, and if he is occasionally pressed by some of Kecal's high notes, he knows everything about this wheeler-dealer. Ivo Žídek, eventually also widely known for his work in Janáček, is a most ardent and clever suitor to the put-upon but spirited Marenka of Drahomira Tikalova, and Oldřich Kovář's Vašek stutters appealingly without sounding like a fool. Though a studio recording, this is very much a performance honed in the theater.

A detail I have not been able to resolve is the question of the orchestra. On the issue reviewed here, the orchestra is given as the Czech Philharmonic. On the Supraphon re-release

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(Supraphon 40), the orchestra is called the Prague National Theatre Orchestra, which I believe to have been the orchestra actually used, as the Czech Philharmonic separated from the opera in 1901. Whichever it was, it plays excellently for Chalabala.---FANFARE, Alan Swanson

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