

Emmerich Kálmán - Die Csárdásfürstin (The Gypsy Princess) Dresden [2014]



1. *The Csárdás Princess* Anna Netrebko (Sylva Varescu) Juan Diego Flórez (Edwin Ronald von und zu Lippert-Weylersheim) Christina Landshamer (Countess Stasi) Pavol Breslik (Graf Boni Káncsiánu) Sebastian Wartig (Feri von Kerekes) Bernd Zettisch (Fürst Leopold Maria von und zu Lippert-Weylersheim) Sächsischer Staatsopernchor Dresden Staatskapelle Dresden Christian Thielemann - conductor Silvesterkonzert der Staatskapelle Dresden Semperoper Dresden (Dresden, Germany) 28 Dec. 2014

Die Csárdásfürstin, an operetta in three acts by Leo Stein and Béla Jenbach with music by Imre Kálmán, premiered on November 17, 1915 on the stage of the Johann Strauss Theater in Vienna. Almost immediately, numbers from the operetta, such as "Tanzen möchte ich," "Tausend kleine Englein singen," and "Machen wir's den Schwalben nach" could be heard in all the cafés in Vienna and spread swiftly throughout Europe.

In German-speaking areas of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (and much of the Hungarian area) the csárdás was exclusively associated with Gypsy music, because Gypsy musicians played them on the streets of Vienna and other cities. Thus, the title, Die Csárdásfürstin, is generally translated as The Gypsy Princess.

Hungarian by birth, Kálmán did not infuse his music with elements from Hungarian folk music to create a national flavor, as did Bartók and Kodály, but instead employed a stylized "Hungarian" sound associated with Liszt and his followers. When a new work by Kálmán was announced, the public anticipated "music with paprika." Largely because of such expectations Kálmán, Stein, and Jenbach entitled their new work, Die Csárdásfürstin despite its overabundance of Viennese waltzes.

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On the surface, the operetta portrays the world of Budapest's Orpheum Theater and its decadent, wealthy patrons. For many, however, the operetta represented the last days of humanity, as Die Csárdásfürstin was staged while war raged in the Ardennes. Stein and Jenbach were as aware as anyone of the upheaval, writing such lines as, "Weisst du, wie lange noch der Globus sich dreht, ob es morgen nicht schon zu spät?" (Do you know how much longer the Globe will turn, whether tomorrow is already too late?) This question is answered later in the operetta with, "Man lebt ja nur einmal: tanzen möchte ich, singen möchte ich ... " (One lives only once: I want to dance, I want to sing ...). The passing of the Old World is depicted in numerous ways, not the least of which was the coupling of an Austrian aristocrat, Edwin Ronald, with a "common" singer, Sylva Varescu. More telling, however, is the failure of Edwin's father's attempt to marry his son to a "proper," aristocratic woman, Countess Stasi. Furthermore, the libretto of Die Csárdásfürstin presents an unflattering picture of the Austrian military, an aspect of the operetta that outraged some critics and members of the public. ---John Palmer, Rovi

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