



THE CUNNING LITTLE VIXEN

Studiescenen 24. og 25. januar 2023

Komponist: Leoš Janáček

Musikalsk ledelse: Kai Johannes Polzhofer

Instruktion: Peter Kunz



DET KONGELIGE DANSKE
MUSIKKONSERVATORIUM

Introduction

Dear audience

I am very happy to present the result of this year's opera project to you. It is a piece that, even though it may seem simple at first glance, is full of symbolic meanings and references to the time in which Janáček lived and the people he lived among. In particular, his relationship with the woman who would become the love of his life. In 1917, in the spa town Luhačovice, he writes this letter:

“My dear Lady,

Please accept these few roses as a token of my inestimable respect for you. You are so dear in character that a person in your company feels better in his soul. You exude heartfelt honesty; you look at the world with such goodness that one wishes only good and pleasant things for you. I have met you, happy as you are. All the more painfully do I feel my sense of abandonment and my bitter fate.

Heartedly devoted to you,

Leos Janáček

So begins the 63-year-old Janáček his relationship with the 25-year-old, black-haired, married Kamila Stösslová. She considered refusing the roses but ended up not to. While never giving herself into a love affair with him, she became his muse and inspiration for the rest of his life. It was an impossible love that fired up his artistic work and made him one of our greatest composers.

Five years later he began composing *The Cunning Little Vixen*. It was during the years of 1922 and 1923, hundred years ago from our performance today. He found inspiration in a book by Rudolf Tesnohlídek with illustrations by Stanislav Lolek. The book was a transcript of a running newspaper story by the same author and illustrator about a Vixen's life between animals and humans.

Janáček wrote many letters to Kamila about the piece. At one time, she sent him a drawing of a black sun, and when writing the opera, he wrote to her: “I am working on a girls' romance ‘*The Cunning Little Vixen*’. I remember how you shook out your black hair on the balcony in the morning in Luhačovice. Maybe I can get a loan of your black eyes and their deep sheen. You see, I would poeticize the thing. So please draw me that black sun again”. Quite obviously are Kamila and the spontaneity and caprices he saw in her very present in the opera, especially in the characters of the Vixen and Terynka.

In the years between the two world wars the Czech State was at the center of many conflicts, which is reflected in the opera by the Vixen's revolt against dictators. Love, friendship, violence, death, sexuality and the eternal cycle of life flows through the co-existence of animals, humans and nature who seem tied together by the mystic vibrations of music.

I hope that you will enjoy the wonders in Janáček's music and the inspiring work being performed by the singers on stage.

Peter Kunz, Director

1. Act

The Gamekeeper walks through the woods, where he sees the Young Vixen, and catches her. He brings her home to his house. Next time we meet her, she has lived with the gamekeeper a while. His wife strongly dislikes the Young Vixen but the kids find her funny and try to play with her. She gets impatient with the boys and attacks, which results in her getting punished and tied up. With the Vixen tied up the other animals come out to mock her. But the Vixen stands up for herself and first she tries to start a revolution among the hens. The act ends with her gaining her freedom and fleeing back to the forest.

2. Act

The Vixen is now slightly older and on the lookout for a place to live in the woods. She finds the Badger's house and overthrows him, turning all the forest creatures against him.

At the same time in the village, there is a riot against the Parson. He hides in the inn where he meets the Schoolmaster and the Gamekeeper. The Gamekeeper teases the Schoolmaster by trying to figure out who the Schoolmaster is in love with, and finally finds out it's Terynka. The Schoolmaster tries to get back at him by asking him about the Vixen. When the drunken Schoolmaster walks home, he believes that he sees Terynka, but she runs away from him. Meanwhile, the Parson drinks to forget the girl who betrayed him in his youth. The Vixen listens to the Parson's sorrows, but suddenly the Gamekeeper enters and tries to shoot her. They all run away in fear

The Vixen then meets the Fox for the first time. They fall in love, and when the Vixen discovers that she is pregnant, they hurry to get married. The Woodpecker weds them and the whole forest joins in celebration.

3. Act

The poacher, Harašta, is scouting the woods for prey when he runs into the Gamekeeper who warns him not to poach. Harašta reveals that he is getting married to Terynka. A dead hare reveals that the Vixen is nearby and the Gamekeeper sets a trap to catch her again. The Vixen, the Fox and their cubs see the trap, but are too clever to be lured by it.

Harašta comes back to the clearing where he finds the Vixen. He grabs his gun, hoping to make her into a new muff for his fiancée. The Vixen tricks him and points out how unfair it is that she is to be killed just because of her fur. Regardless, Harašta takes aim and shoots her.

The Gamekeeper enters the inn and sees the Schoolmaster heart-broken. He tries to cheer him up, but the Schoolmaster has lost all hope because his love, Terynka, is getting married to Harašta. The Innkeeper's wife, Mrs. Pásková reveals that Terynka has gotten a new muff, and the Gamekeeper realises that he has been fooled by Harašta who has killed the Vixen.

Low in spirit, the Gamekeeper leaves the inn and walks into the forest. There, he sees a mushroom, and it sparks memories about when he was young and in love. Slowly, he sees the forest coming to life around him, even though everything seemed to be lost - life finds a way to come back and bring new hope to the world.

Production team

Director: Peter Kunz

Conductor and musical instructor: Kai Johannes Polzhofer

Production and Directing Assistant: Victoria Elmas

Project manager: Helene Gjerris

Scenography and costumes: Karin Sjöholm

Lighting: Mads Amping

Production manager: Tine Damsgaard-Sørensen

Repetition: Mattias Branner, Laurits Dragsted, Cecilia Apostolo, Berit Johansen Tange,

Manuel Esperilla, Vagn Sørensen

Technical assistance: Jacob Due

Planning producer: Anne Heide

Head of Costume: Therese Schoder-Larsen

Head of Hair and Make-up: Melike Uludağ

Head of Scenography: Martin Münster

Head of Prop: Jakob Nilsson

Head of PR and Program: Anna Golovanova Hjortkjær

Orchestra

Violin: Nicole Bronder, Tilda Suntian Shen, Giuly Johannsen

Viola: Johannes Bærentzen Pihl

Cello: Ludvig Jacobsen

Double bass: Karla Egebjærg Wulff

Flute: Liam Campbell Kongsbak Larsen

Oboe: Lavinia Opris

Clarinet: Tekla Nilsson

Bassoon: Dagny Mehus

Horn: Simon Nordstrand Berg, Timothy Jenson

Trumpet: Camilla Holum Jeppesen

Trombone: Aksel Engebakken Berg

Accordion: Marcin Waszczyk

Harmonium and celesta: Isak Soewarta Birkemose

Percussion: Patryk Szczechowski

Harp: Liru Yang