

April 4, 2019 – Antonín Dvořák's *Rusalka*

On tonight's edition of the WCPE Opera House we'll hear Czech composer Antonín Dvořák's most successful opera, *Rusalka*. Jaroslav Kvapil's libretto was based on the Slavic fairy tale of the water nymph Undine and on Hans Christian Andersen's *The Little Mermaid*. *Rusalka* was premiered in Prague on March 31, 1901, and the current Metropolitan Opera production dates back to 1993. On March 30, 2014, North Carolina Opera presented a semi-staged concert production in Raleigh.

The Water-Goblin Vodnick's (bass **Franz Hawlata**) daughter Rusalka (soprano **Renée Fleming**) wishes to become human so as to win the love of the Prince (tenor **Ben Heppner**). The witch Ježibaba (mezzo-soprano **Dolora Zajick**) agrees to arrange this provided that Rusalka remains a deaf mute and the Prince remains faithful; if not, both will be damned. After a while, the Prince tires of the mute Rusalka and turns to the Foreign Princess (soprano **Eva Urbanová**). Repenting, he frees Rusalka from Ježibaba's curse before dying himself.

Sir **Charles Mackerras** conducts the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra and the Kühn Mixed Choir in this 1998 recording.

Frederica Von Stade sings Rusalka's great Act I aria "Měsíčku na nebi hlubokém" ("Song to the Moon"): <https://youtu.be/UwVYFpY3VL4>.

This Saturday afternoon, April 6th, at 1:00 p.m., be sure to listen to the Metropolitan Opera's broadcast of Giacomo Puccini's *Tosca*. Rising star **Jennifer Rowley** sings the title role of the volatile diva at the heart of this operatic thriller. **Joseph Calleja** brings his stylish tenor to the role of Cavaradossi, and **Wolfgang Koch** sings the role of the nefarious police chief Scarpia. **Carlo Rizzi** conducts.

Be sure to join me next Thursday, April 11th, for Ferenc Erkel's *Hunyadi László*, the 1844 opera that made the composer a national hero and established Hungarian opera as a genre. This 1985 Hungarian State Opera recording, conducted by **János Kovács**, features **Dénes Gulyas** in the title role and **Magda Kalmár** as Mária Gara.

The Opera House is heard every Thursday evening at 7 o'clock in the Eastern time zone on 89.7 FM in central North Carolina. We're streamed online at <http://www.theclassicalstation.org>, or you can listen on our Android or iPhone apps.

Bob Chapman

W. Robert Chapman, Host of the Opera House