Met’s New Production of Dvořák’s Haunting Fairy Tale

Rusalka

Starring Kristine Opolais in the Title Role

Comes to Great Performances at the Met

Sunday, June 18 at 12 p.m. on PBS

Kristine Opolais stars in her first Met performances of her breakthrough role, the title character in Antonin Dvořák’s Rusalka, in a critically acclaimed new staging, directed by Mary Zimmerman and conducted by Mark Elder, on Great Performances at the Met Sunday, June 18 at 12 p.m. on PBS (check local listings). (In New York, THIRTEEN will air the opera at 12:30 p.m.)
This haunting love story also stars Jamie Barton as the witch Ježibaba, with Katarina Dalayman as the Foreign Princess, Brandon Jovanovich as the Prince, and Eric Owens as Rusalka’s father, the Water Sprite.

The opera premiered at the National Theater in Prague in 1901. The only one of Dvořák’s operas to gain an international following (so far), Rusalka is in many ways a definitive example of late Romanticism—containing folklore, evocations of the natural and the supernatural worlds, and even a poignant interpretation of the idea of a love-death. The story has a strong national flavor as well as universal appeal, infused by the Romantic supernaturalism of Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué’s novella Undine (previously set as an opera by E.T.A. Hoffmann, Tchaikovsky, and others) and Hans Christian Andersen’s *The Little Mermaid*.

Czech composer Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904) was celebrated internationally during his lifetime for his chamber, choral, and symphonic music, while his nine operas found little renown beyond his native Bohemia. He was especially popular in London and in New York, where he served for a while as director of the short-lived National Conservatory of Music. Jaroslav Kvapil (1868–1950) was a Czech author and poet who had written the libretto for *Rusalka* before Dvořák became interested in it.

The opera takes place in an unspecified fairy-tale setting. Contrasting unspoiled and “honest” nature (the woods and lake of the framing acts) with corrupt human culture (the Prince’s palace in Act II) was a favorite theme of Romantic artists.

*The New York Times* proclaimed it “a dark, sexy hit” and noted the “matchless cast led by the lovely soprano Kristine Opolais, who gives a vocally lustrous and achingly vulnerable performance,” adding that “Mark Elder conducted a glowing account.” *The Wall Street Journal* acclaimed the “handsome new production” and found it “a luminous performance.” *The Huffington Post* noted Brandon Jovanovich’s “strong voice” and “commanding presence” and declared, “Eric Owens delivers another powerful performance”.

Tenor Matthew Polenzani hosts the broadcast.


*Rusalka* was originally seen live in movie theaters on February 25 as part of the groundbreaking *The Met: Live in HD* series, which transmits live performances to more than 2,000 movie theaters and performing arts centers in over 70 countries around the world. The *Live in HD* series has reached a record-breaking 22 million viewers since its inception in 2006. *Great Performances at the Met* is a presentation of THIRTEEN Productions LLC for WNET, one of America’s most prolific and respected public media providers.

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the National Endowment for the Arts. This Great Performances presentation is funded by the Irene Diamond Fund, the Anna-Maria and Stephen Kellen Arts Fund, The Philip and Janice Levin Foundation, The Agnes Varis Trust, and public television viewers.

For the Met, Gary Halvorson directs the telecast. David Frost is Music Producer. Mia Bongiovanni and Elena Park are Supervising Producers, and Louisa Briccetti and Victoria Warinvonchik are Producers. Peter Gelb is Executive Producer. For Great Performances, Bill O’Donnell is Series Producer; David Horn is Executive Producer.

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About WNET

WNET is America’s flagship PBS station and parent company of THIRTEEN and WLIW21. WNET also operates NJTV, the statewide public media network in New Jersey. Through its broadcast channels, three cable services (KidsThirteen, Create and World) and online streaming sites, WNET brings quality arts, education and public affairs programming to more than five million viewers each week. WNET produces and presents such acclaimed PBS series as Nature, Great Performances, American Masters, PBS NewsHour Weekend, Charlie Rose and a range of documentaries, children’s programs, and local news and cultural offerings. WNET’s groundbreaking series for children and young adults include Get the Math, Oh Noah! and Cyberchase as well as Mission US, the award-winning interactive history game. WNET highlights the tri-state’s unique culture and diverse communities through NYC-ARTS, Reel 13, NJTV News with Mary Alice Williams and MetroFocus, the daily multi-platform news magazine focusing on the New York region. In addition, WNET produces online-only programming including the award-winning series about gender identity, First Person, and an intergenerational look at tech and pop culture, The Chatterbox with Kevin and Grandma Lil. In 2015, THIRTEEN launched Passport, an online streaming service which allows members to see new and archival THIRTEEN and PBS programming anytime, anywhere: www.thirteen.org/passport.

About the Met

THE METROPOLITAN OPERA is America’s leading performing arts organization and a vibrant home for the world’s most creative and talented artists, including singers, conductors, composers, orchestra musicians, stage directors, designers, visual artists, choreographers, and dancers. The company presents more than 200 performances each season of a wide variety of operas, ranging from early masterpieces to contemporary works. In recent years, the Met has launched many initiatives designed to make opera more accessible, most prominently the Live in HD series of cinema transmissions, which dramatically expands the Met audience by allowing select performances to be seen in more than 2,000 theaters in more than 70 countries around the world.

Synopsis:


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