

Janacek - Sarka (2008)

Written by bluesever

Thursday, 26 September 2019 15:41 -

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1. Act I 27:13 2. Act II 20:44 3. Act III 17:04 Sarka - Olga Romanko (soprano) Ctirad - Stuart Skelton (tenor) Lumir - Peter Wedd (tenor) Premysl - Ivan Kusjner (baritone) Groot Omroepkoor & Radio Filharmonisch Orkest DMITRI SLOBODENIOUK (conductor) Vredenburg Leidsche Rijn, Utrecht 28.XI.2008 Direct FM-broadcast Radio 4 (NL)

Šárka, Janáček's first opera, was completed in piano score in 1888 and partially orchestrated before the composer set it aside, unable to obtain permission to use the libretto. In 1918 the now-famous Janáček was finally given the green light, and with his student Osvald Chlubna embarked on a revision and completion of the work, which was premiered in 1925. It would not be until the year 2000 that Janáček's publisher, Universal Edition, in a joint venture with Editio Moravia, would publish Šárka in conjunction with this recording project. Although the score clearly shows its late-Romantic-period roots (notably recalling the music of Bedrich Smetana), traces of the mature Janáček already can be heard in the music's nervous energy, asymmetrical phrases, and syncopated rhythms—not to mention the highly individual approach to harmony.

Julius Zeyer's libretto softens the brutality of the original Czech legend: Ctirad arrives on a white horse to lead Premysl and his dispirited soldiers in an attack on the rebellious women warriors of Vlasta. Their leader, Šárka, has vowed revenge on all men, and has herself tied to an oak tree as a lure. Upon discovering her, Ctirad falls in love and frees her, and is subsequently killed by Šárka's warrior maidens. Realizing too late that she did indeed love Ctirad, Šárka returns his body to his men. After expressing great love and remorse, she throws herself upon Ctirad's funeral pyre. ---Victor Carr jr., classicstoday.com

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