

FATE [OSUD], GROUNDBREAKING WORK IN MANY ASPECTS

During his summer stay in the Luhačovice spa Leoš Janáček met charming Kamila Urválková who on numerous meetings told him her youth love story which attracted his attention. As a young girl she fell in love with Ludvík Vítězslav Čelanský, a composer and conductor, who after their break-up composed the opera *Kamilla* based on his own libretto. In this opera he portrayed the main character as an immature and reckless person. Kamila Urválková was deeply offended. The opera was successfully performed by the Prague National Theater in 1897.

The story became an inspiration for composer's next opera. After his return to Brno Leoš Janáček started pondering upon the composition structure and looking for a suitable work fellow who would write a libretto. Finally he asked his late daughter Olga's friend, Fedora Bartošová, a young teacher. Fedora rhymed Janáček's prosaic text. At first everything proceeded well and the first libretto version had been finished before Christmas, 1903. The whole structure was then however changed greatly and the libretto Janáček used for his composition was not prepared until July 1904. At this time he also ended his cooperation with Fedora Bartošová. We know very little about the composition work itself. Janáček was composing the present first act using the older libretto version from 10th March to 22nd April 1904 and then probably resumed working in the second half of 1904. The autographed composition was presumably finished in mid-1905. A score copy by Josef Štross includes the only date, 14th June 1905, at the end of the present third act (originally the first act). Since then the copy has been modified many times. After the score copy had been finished, Janáček drew up, perhaps in the second half of 1905, a practice part (a simple short score) which corresponds to the then act structure and text revision. The part was copied successively in 1906 by Hynek Svozil. Janáček was still working on the opera. In June 1906 he finished

the score revision and stated the final opera name as *Fatum*, thus *Fate*.

On 16th June 1906 the Družstvo committee of the Czech National Theater in Brno claimed its interest in performing the opera and the premiere was planned for March of the next year. However, the opera was not performed and the composer followed Artuš Rektorys' advice and assigned the performance to the newly opened Prague City Theater in Královské Vinohrady. The theater authorities accepted it but studying was being constantly postponed.

In 1907 Janáček revised the score again and waited for the Prague performance. When the situation did not change, he was determined to put the theater to court.

Finally he gave up and on 2nd March 1914 the Prague theater authorities returned the score with the presumption that Janáček did not request the opera performance any longer. Janáček revised the score once more and tried

to have at least the introduction to the third act performed at the Czech Philharmonic concert but did not succeed either. Janáček knew well the libretto was problematic and before 1918 he had asked several writers to rework it. After reading the libretto František S. Procházka, Jaroslav Kvapil and Max Brod declined any cooperation. The composer did not urge the opera performance any more. Thus *Fate* was not radio broadcasted until 1938 and scenic premiered until 1958.

SYNOPSIS OF THE OPERA

Act 1

At the centre of the attention of the spa guests in Luhačovice is the poetic Dr Suda with his friends Konečný, Lhotský and a young woman, Míla. A new guest arrives, the composer Živný. Everyone is surprised to discover that Živný and Míla know each other.

They all leave and only the composer Živný and Míla remain. Their relationship in the past had been thwarted by Míla's mother, who considered life with a composer as a beggar's existence. Živný wrote an opera about his unhappy life. Now, many years later, he discovered that he had falsely accused Míla of unfaithfulness in the opera; her son, Doubek, is in fact his child. Now Živný and Míla decide to start a new life together.

Act 2

Živný, Míla and young Doubek live together with Míla's unhinged mother. Živný sings excerpts from his opera. He now has to get rid of the part where he had earlier wrongfully denigrated Míla. Young Doubek asks his mother if she knows what love is. Míla knows only too well - love and her whole life is Fate - Fatum.

Life together with the mother is miserable. She is becoming increasingly deranged; she is being forced to live under the same roof with a man who she believes is only out for her money. The mother sees Živný as an evil raven. She wants to fly away from him, but when she falls from the balcony, she takes Míla with her. Živný is bereft at the loss of his wife. Lightning flashes as a portent of his unhappy fate.

Act 3

The students at a conservatory are singing a part from a new opera which was written by their teacher, Živný. The work is supposed to have its premiere that evening in the theatre, but the final act is still missing. The pupils ask him to tell them something about his strange opera. Živný passionately relates to them the origin of the work and the surprised students realize that the plot of the opera is in fact the true story of his life. Živný approaches the part where Míla dies...suddenly a storm approaches in which Živný sees his dead wife. The stunned composer falls to the ground. The end of the opera remains unwritten in the hand of God, just as with Živný's fate.