

Bedřich Smetana (1824–1884)

The Kiss

Opera in 2 acts (1876)

Libretto by Eliška Krásnohorská

Synopsis

Act I

Vendulka's aunt Martinka runs to the Palouckýs' cottage to announce the arrival of Lukáš, a young widower who will soon arrive to negotiate for Vendulka's hand in marriage. Lukáš once loved Vendulka, but was forced by his parents to marry another girl. Now that his wife has died he is coming, accompanied by his brother-in-law Tomeš and people from the village, to ask for Vendulka's hand. Father Paloucký agrees to the marriage, but unwillingly, as both young lovers are very hard-headed. His doubts are soon justified when Vendulka refuses to give Lukáš a kiss before they are wedded, explaining that she wants to honor Lukáš's late wife, who left behind a small infant as well. Lukáš is furious. Martinka vainly tries to persuade Vendulka. Lukáš brings musicians and girls from the village to mock Vendulka for the refused kiss. Vendulka, devastated, flees to Martinka, who secretly helps smugglers in the wood.

Act II

Matouš and his smugglers pass through a dark forest near the border. An anguished Lukáš approaches, tormented by his guilty conscience. A worried Tomeš soon catches up with him and counsels him to ask Vendulka to forgive him. Lukáš joyfully goes to find her. Matouš, who has heard their whole conversation from his hiding place, turns his goods over to Martinka and her helper Vendulka, then hurries after Lukáš with the news that his beloved is with her old aunt. Martinka and Vendulka meet a guard on their way back, but Martinka easily fools him. She tries to convince her niece to forgive Lukáš, but Vendulka refuses.

Change of Scene

Barče, the Paloucký's maid, joyfully spreads the big news: Lukáš is coming to ask forgiveness. Matouš, accompanied by neighbor men and women from the village, brings in Father Paloucký, Tomeš and Lukáš, who begs forgiveness first of Vendulka's father, then of Vendulka herself when she comes from the forest. She wants to kiss him, but Lukáš refuses. He doesn't want the kiss until Vendulka forgives him in front of the whole gathering. In the end, however, both young lovers are reconciled to each other.