

Peter Tchaikovsky *The Queen of Spades* op. 68 (1890)

after the novella of the same name by A. C. Pushkin

Libretto by Modest Tchaikovsky

New version for soli and orchestra op. 75 by Eberhard Kloke

Starting situation

The following sources were available for the new version of *The Queen of Spades*: scores published by Kalmus, D. Rather, Lucie Galland and the Hermann group of publishers.

The reason and aim of this kind of new version consists not only in creating a feasible version for smaller ensembles and stages, but far more in establishing the basis for concentrating on the dramatic core of the work.

Aim of the new version

The central action was reduced to a chamber play, since the protagonists' main action takes place independently of the so-called episodic scenes (offering elements of French Grand Opéra with chorus, ballet and colourful genre set pieces). The chamber opera thus galvanises the dramatic action with a more stringent dynamic force and shifts it closer to Pushkin's novella. Nevertheless, the set confusion of time, styles and sequence of action is retained, since Tchaikovsky placed the work in the late eighteenth century and not, like Pushkin, in the early nineteenth.

The musical adaptation

The compositional structure in general, the notation of the vocal parts, and the main instrumental characteristic of the work are retained according to Tchaikovsky's original intention. The reduction of the woodwind is based on the instrumentation settings required in the original score and is a reason for the likewise reduced string setting. The sound figures, sound colours and register changes are oriented on the main score and are – when at all possible – transferred to the smaller score. This achieved a more transparent sound with the highest potential for a differentiated listening experience of the scoring. An effectively balanced treatment of orchestral and singing voices was required in order to attain an optimal understanding of the text.

Solo voices – sung texts

The vocal parts/notations are faithful to the original. It is to be particularly emphasised that the adapted version enables a more precise, i.e., more radical realisation of linguistic and sung nuances. The sung texts are written in Russian and German. The German translation (A. Bernhard, Rolf Lauckner) was revised by the author of this new version. In transposing the Russian original diction into German, the text was meticulously adapted to the Russian syllabic sequence in order to retain the character of the idiosyncratic rhythmic and declamatory linguistic melody of the Russian diction; this ensured that the phonetic melody was approximated as closely as possible.

The supposed loss of “grand opera” is countered by winning compositional and acoustic substance in terms of a finely tuned balance between soli and the tauter orchestral apparatus. Priority was given to the advantages gained in casting the piece by providing for alternatives in the cast that are more variable and based on acting priority.

Dramatis Personae

Herman, Tenor
Count Tomsky, Baritone
Prince Yeletzky, Baritone
Chekalinsky, Tenor
Chaplitzki (also Master of Ceremonies), Tenor
Surin, Bass
Namurov, Bass

Lisa, Soprano
Countess, Mezzo Soprano
Pauline, Mezzo Soprano
Governess, Mezzo Soprano
Masha, Soprano

Chorus

The new version dispenses with a chorus. The exception is the fifth scene (Act 3), with Herman and the chorus backstage. Here the chorus can come from off-stage, a recorded chorus (broadcast-transmission) can be played, or a kind of electronically generated soundtrack can “galvanise” the vision scene.

Orchestra/Instruments

The orchestral setting and instrumentation is oriented on Tchaikovsky's score. The instrumental sound character and a differentiated diversity of sound colours are retained, the register changes from woodwind to brass are adapted to the original and if necessary occasionally modified. The overall sound however seems more densely compacted and accentuated, because the scoring dispensed with doubling and "balancing" instrumentations.

1 Flöte (auch Piccoloflöte und Altflöte in G),
Oboe (auch Englischhorn)
Klarinette 1 in B (auch Klar. in A)
Klarinette 2 in B (auch Klar. in A und Bassklarinette in B)
Fagott 1
Fagott 2 (auch Kontrafagott)
Horn 1 in F
Horn 2 in F
Trompete in B
Tenorbassposaune = 10 Bläser
Klavier, Pauke/Perc (Xylorimba, Vibraphon, Glocken,
Becken, große Trommel, kleine Trommel, Tamtam) = 3 Spieler
Streicher: 4/4/3/3/2 = 16 (alternativ Streicher: 8/6/5/4/3 = 26)
Gesamt: 29 (39) Spieler

Acts, Scenes and Scenery

Act 1, Scene1 *Public Park in St. Petersburg*

Introduction und No. 1: Scene and Arioso, Hermann
Herman, Graf Tomsky, Prince Yeletzky, Chekalinsky, Surin

No. 2: Scene

Tomsky, Hermann, Surin, Chekalinsky, Yeletzki

No. 3: Quintet and Scene

Lisa, Countess, Hermann, Yeletzky, Tomsky, Chekalinsky, Surin

No. 4. Scene and Ballade, Tomsky

Surin, Chekalinsky, Tomsky, Hermann

No. 5: Final Scene with storm

Surin, Chekalinsky, Tomsky, Hermann

Act 1 Scene 2 *Lisa's Room*

No. 6: Duet and Ballad

Lisa, Pauline

No. 7: Scene and Arioso, Governess

No. 8: Final Scene

Governess, Pauline, Lisa, Masha, Hermann, Countess

Act, Scene 3 Party/Banquet in the House of Prince Yeletzky

No. 9: Prelude

No. 10: Scene and Aria, Prince
Master of Ceremonies, Chekalinsky, Surin, Count Tomsky, Prince Yeletzky, Lisa,
Hermann

No. 11: Scene
Hermann, Surin, Chekalinsky

No. 12: Final Scene
Hermann, Surin, Lisa

Act 2, Scene 4 The Countess's Room

No. 13: Scene
Hermann, Lisa, Masha, Countess

No. 14: Final Scene
Hermann, Countess, Lisa

Act 3, Scene 5 Barracks, Hermann's Room, late evening

No. 15: Scene
Hermann, Ghost of the Countess

Act 3, Scene 6 Banks of the Neva

No. 16 Scene and Arioso, Lisa
Lisa, Hermann

Act 3, Scene 7 In the Casino

No. 17 Finale
Chekalinsky, Chaplitzky, Count Tomsky, Prince Yeletzky, Surin, Namurov, Hermann

Duration: approx. average of 2 hours

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