



Wesfarmers Arts

SYNOPSIS & CASTLIST

West Australian Opera presents

RUSALKA

18 – 27 July 2024

His Majesty's Theatre

An Opera Conference production.

Composer Antonín Dvořák

Librettist Jaroslav Kvapil

Conductor Christopher van Tuinen

Director Sarah Giles

Assistant Director Laura Hansford

Movement Director & Intimacy Coordinator Lyndall Grant

Set Designer Charles Davis

Costume Designer Renée Mulder

Lighting Designer Paul Jackson

Video Designer & Content Creator David Bergman

Repetiteur Tommaso Pollio

Czech Language Coach Alzbeta Rekosh

Rusalka Elena Perroni

The Prince Paul O'Neill

The Water King Warwick Fyfe

The Duchess Naomi Johns*

Ježibaba Ashlyn Tymms

First Wood Sprite Bella Marslen*

Second Wood Sprite Chelsea Burns

Third Wood Sprite Brigitte Heuser

The Gamekeeper Stuart Laing

The Kitchenhand Brianna Louwen

The Hunter / Chorus Brett Peart

West Australia Opera Chorus

West Australian Symphony Orchestra

This production is supported by the Artistic Director Circle.

*Supported by The Roberts Emerging Artists Program.

ACT I

Rusalka, an unhappy water spirit, wants to leave her native waters. She has fallen in love with a Prince and she dreams of a life with him in the sunshine. She begs her father, the Water King, to free her from her watery home and to help make her human so she can live on land with him. Her confession devastates her father. He thinks humans are evil and full of sin, but he sees that Rusalka has made up her mind. He advises her to visit the enchantress of the forest, the wise Ježibaba. Rusalka confides in the moon and calls on the moon to help her.

Rusalka visits the wise enchantress of the forest, Ježibaba, who explains that once human, Rusalka will never be able to return to her native waters, and that should she fail to find love with the Prince she will be damned for eternity, trapped between the worlds. Ježibaba explains that it will not be easy to find this love, because no human will be able to hear a word Rusalka says. Rusalka is determined that she can find love despite having no voice. Ježibaba adds that should Rusalka fail to find and keep this love, her Prince will also be damned for eternity. Rusalka agrees and Ježibaba turns her into a human.

The sound of horns heralds the breaking of dawn and the entrance of the Prince. He is in pursuit of a white doe but feels a mysterious attraction when he comes to the lake. Rusalka comes into sight.

The Prince is enchanted and doesn't know if she is human or a fairy tale. Rusalka is elated to meet her Prince and they leave for his palace. By the lake, the water spirits mourn the loss of Rusalka.

ACT II

It is a week later. The palace is preparing a feast to celebrate the engagement of the Prince and Rusalka. Gossip builds among the servants and the guests, who are deeply suspicious of this foreigner Rusalka; they believe the Prince is still in love with an old flame, the Duchess, and that the relationship between the Prince and Rusalka is already falling apart.

The party is in full swing, but the Prince is distracted with Rusalka. The Duchess comes to reprimand the Prince for ignoring his guests. The Prince apologises and returns to the party with the Duchess – sending Rusalka to go get dressed for the party.

The formal ball is a disaster, and Rusalka runs outside, humiliated and devastated. She finds her father, The Water King, waiting for her. She explains that she cannot make it work with the Prince – her father insists she must try to fix it. Rusalka and the Water King hide as the Duchess and the Prince come outside.

The Duchess has doubts about the Prince changing his affections so quickly. The Prince tries to convince her that he wants to be only with her. Rusalka emerges from her hiding and confronts him. The Water King reveals himself to the humans and reprimands the Prince for betraying Rusalka. The Duchess is horrified to see the terrifying Water King and runs away. The Water King drags Rusalka back beneath the surface. The Prince, never having seen the Water King until now, faints from shock.

ACT III

Rusalka is condemned to wander forever as a will-o'-the-wisp. As she longs for death, Ježibaba appears to note that only killing the Prince can redeem Rusalka from her curse. Rusalka refuses. Her sisters call to her from beneath the water, and Rusalka is left to accept her fate.

The wood sprites gather by the lake to sing and dance until The Water King appears, who begs them to stop and reminds them of Rusalka's woes. The Prince, now crazed with remorse, staggers out of the forest thinking only of Rusalka. He calls on her to return. As Rusalka speaks to him for the first time from above the lake, he begs her forgiveness and for her to take his life. Rusalka warns him that if they touch, he will die. Accepting his destiny, the Prince asks for peace and dies as they embrace.

Rusalka's final act of killing the Prince releases her from her eternal curse and she is freed to begin her new life.

Read the full program: bit.ly/RusalkaProgram

GOVERNMENT PARTNERS



West Australian Opera is supported by the State Government through the Department of Local Government Sport and Cultural Industries and Lotterywest, and the Australian Government through Creative Australia, its arts funding and advisory body.



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