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Operas by Eduard Tubin



4.12.69

E. Tubin

Eduard Tubin attending the première of *Barbara von Tisenhusen* on 4
December 1969



The Parson of Reigi

An opera in 2 acts

Based on the novel by Aino Kallas
Libretto: Aino Kallas and Jaan Kross

Première: 5 June 1988

Musical director and conductor: Paul Mägi
 Director: Arne Mikk
 Designer: Ingrid Agur
 Choir master: Jüri Rent
 Concert masters: Jaanus Juul, Riina Pikani, Ivo Sillamaa
 Assistant director: Tiit Tralla
 Sets painted by Uno Kärbis
 Concert master of the orchestra: Mati Uffert
 Stage manager: Peeter Karell

Cast

Paulus Lempelius the parson of Reigi	TEO MAISTE VOLDEMAR KUSLAP HANS MIILBERG
Catharina Wycken, his wife	MARIKA EENSALU TIIU REINAU RIINA KADAJA
Jonas Kempe the curate of Reigi	IVO KUUSK VELLO JÜRNA MATI KÕRTS
Viiu, Catharina's maid	NADEŽDA KUREM EVE TAŠA
Kristi, a maidservant	URVE TAUTS ÜLLE TUNDLA
Ann, an old dependant	LIIDIA PANOVA LEILI TAMMEL
Henn, a farm hand	TIIT TRALLA ROSTISLAV GURJEV
Minstrel	TÕNU KILGAS ARVO LAID
Judge	HEINO MANDRI
Old usher	ALARI PÕLDOJA REIN TAIDLA
Young usher	MARGUS PALMIPUU RAGNAR TILK

Journeyman baker One	TIIT ARUVEE AIN TOIM
Journeyman baker Two :	LEMBIT POOBUS LEMBIT TOLGA
Burgher girl	KAI PARMAS LIIDIA ROOS
Young burgher	AIN ORAV
Fine lady	ANU ARENDI MAIE SOMMER
Town guard	MART LAUR
Old woman	KAJA SILDNA EDA SOOMUS
Matron One	MAAJA RUMESSEN SIRJE TOOMLA
Matron Two	MARVI TAGGU

Fishermen of Reigi, judges, gaolers, executioner, townspeople — the Estonia opera choir.

The story takes place at Reigi in Hiiumaa Island (Act I) and in Tallinn (Act II) in 1644—49.

SYNOPSIS

Act I

Scene 1. Early morning of St. George's Day on the coast of Reigi. Lempelius is praying to God for His blessing for the fishermen putting to sea as well as for his wife Catharina.

Viiu the maid makes it known that the new curate has arrived.

Scene 2. Jonas Kempe is received at the Reigi parsonage. After supper Lempelius liberally treats the new curate to beer and wine, and gets intoxicated himself. Kempe, however, is more and more captivated by the beauty of the reticent Catharina.

Scene 3. A summer evening about St. John's Day. Catharina endeavours to overcome the stirring passion, but then Kempe arrives, they read together the Song of Solomon — the greatest celebration of earthly love in the Holy Writ — and, one thing leading to another, they drift into each other's arms.

Lempelius, who arrives unexpectedly, is becoming aware of his wife's fondness of Jonas Kempe.

Scene 4. A winter evening at the Reigi parsonage. Catharina and Kempe's relationship is no longer a secret to the servants either. To vex Catharina, they begin to tell the story of the Count of Suuremõisa and his wife, the King's former mistress, adding all kinds of tales about the punishment of adulterers.

Catharina is on the point of fainting but at that moment Lempelius and Kempe return from a long trip. For several weeks they have exchanged hardly a word. Now Lempelius insists Kempe should confess why he came to Reigi and why he lusts after another man's wife.

The altercation gets stormier and stormier, and an unexpected blow dealt by the enraged Lempelius results in Kempe falling senseless on the floor. Catharina hastens to his aid and unintentionally reveals her passion to her husband. She and Kempe decide to flee the very same night.

Act II

Scene 5. Court-room in Tallinn. Catharina and Kempe, who had been in hiding in the Finnish archipelago for a long time, have been captured and now the trial is about to begin.

Denying any kind of witchery, Catharina and Kempe confess themselves guilty only of having fled impelled by a love stronger than the smoke of the stake or the sword of the executioner.

Lempelius is prepared to forgive Catharina, but on no account Kempe.

The defendants are found guilty of adultery and flight, and they are sentenced to death by the hand of the executioner.

Scene 6. Town Hall Square in Tallinn. Early-morning bustle — journeyman bakers are offering freshly baked buns, a minstrel sings a new song about Catharina and Kempe's 'love story'.

The condemned are taken three times round the square. The crowd jeers at them. Lempelius, in anguish and on the brink of breaking down, begs Catharina to come back to him.

The square empties. Lempelius remains alone. Only the church bells ring out with a crushing loudness.

The number of strictly historical records Aino Kallas could use was rather small. She said that the writing of the novel was caused by a page-long biographical note on the parson of Reigi Lempelius in a book about Estonian clergymen by Paucker given her by the then parish clerk Qwarnström. Kallas then sent letters of inquiry to Uppsala and Tallinn to obtain additional information, and finally received from her husband's brother-in-law Niggol, an archivist in Tartu, a two-page letter concerning the last phase of the legal proceedings against Jonas Kempe and Catharina Wieck (the minutes of the closing session and the verdict). The letter by another archivist provided data based on books by Carlblom and Russwurm.

Records maintain that Paulus (Paaveli) Andreas Lempelius (Lempelensis) finished a school in Turku, Finland, in 1622. In 1624 he was already styled Doctor and in 1627 he was ordained parson of Reigi. Before that he had for some time taught school at Toompea. A letter Lempelius wrote to the Bishop of Tallinn in 1624 has been preserved. He announces his intention of going to Finland to fetch the books he had inherited from his father. The same letter mentions for the first time Jonas Kempe, a central character of *The Parson of Reigi*: "By my invitation curate Jonas Kempe from Smaaland, who used to teach my children, settled here. He is a learned man with appropriate training." On 16 June 1644 the Bishop of Tallinn Joachim Ihering, who also acted as president of the consistory, made it known that Jonas Kempe, "a diligent student of theology who has worked assiduously as a teacher under the parson of Reigi, has now been ordained to minister to his flock."

Deterioration of Lempelius and Kempe's relations becomes apparent from an undated and unaddressed letter in which Kempe accused Lempelius of not having paid him. The letter probably dates from 1645. Two years later Bishop Ihering summoned both Lempelius and Kempe to the consistory to check the validity of rumours about adultery by the wife of the parson of Reigi Catharina Wieck (or Wyck; the name Wycken was given her heroine by Aino Kallas) with curate Kempe. In February 1647 the parson of Reigi Lempelius was forced to institute legal proceedings. Eight witnesses, including Lempelius, were heard. Jonas Kempe and Catharina, however, were not among them, since, as the minutes read, "on the night of Wednesday last, Jonas Kempe with all his

belongings and with the wife of Herr Paulus foolishly left the land and fled." A couple of years later the royal court in Tallinn tried the case of Jonas Kempe and Catharina Wieck who had been captured meanwhile. On 3 February 1649 the assessors brought in a verdict of guilty. The defendants were sentenced to death by beheading. The sentence was to be carried out on 6 February.

Paucker's book mentioned above is also the source for the date of Lempelius's death, 29 September 1665.

Not all historical records were available to Aino Kallas. All the more remarkable is her intuition for picking out the details of the dramatic story, developing the particulars of the intrigue as well as capturing the historical colour.



Barbara von Tisenhusen

An opera in 3 acts

Based on the short story by Aino Kallas
Libretto: Jaan Kross

*Presented by the Estonia Theatre
to commemorate the 85th anniversary of
Eduard Tubin's birth*

Première: 22 June 1990