

Conductors: Peeter Lilje  
 Arvo Volmer  
 Director: Arne Mikk  
 Designer: Eldor Renter  
 Choir masters: Jüri Rent  
 Anne Dorbek  
 Concert masters: Ivo Sillamaa  
 Helin Kapten  
 Riina Pikani  
 Aarne Talvik  
 Choreography: Heino Aassalu  
 Sets painted by Uno Kärbis  
 Concert master of the orchestra: Mati Uffert  
 Stage manager: Peeter Karell

Cast

Barbara von Tisenhusen . . .	RIINA KADAJA TIIU REINAU PILLE LILL
Her brothers:	
Jürgen, lord of the Rannu . . .	VÄINO PUURA
manor . . . . .	ARVO LAID AHTI MÄNNIK
Reinhold . . . . .	ROSTISLAV GURJEV ANTS KOLLO TEO MAISTE
Bartholomeus . . . . .	HANS MIILBERG THOMAS MÜRK
Johann von Tödwen, lord of the Rõngu manor . . . . .	MATI PALM UNO KREEN MART LAUR
Anna, his wife, Barbara's aunt .	URVE TAUTS MARE JÕGEVA
Matthias Jeremias Friesner, the parson of Rannu . . . . .	TEO MAISTE VOLDEMAR KUSLAP TARMO SILD
Franz Bonnius, scribe at the Rõngu manor . . . . .	IVO KUUSK VELLO JÜRNA MATI KÕRTS
Reinhold von Tisenhusen from Konguta . . . . .	MATI PALM ERVIN KÄRVET

Fool . . . . .	TIIT TRALLA ALAR HAAK
Old canon	ERVIN KÄRVET ILLART ORAV
Nobleman One . . . . .	TAIMO TOOMAST JAAN-VILLEM SIBUL
Nobleman Two . . . . .	MATI VAIKMAA NEEME HENK
Noblewoman One . . . . .	KATRIN KULLAMAA MARE VÄLI
Noblewoman Two . . . . .	MAAJA RUMESSEN SIRJE TOOMLA
Tipsy nobleman . . . . .	LEMBIT POOBUS AIN TOIM
Herald . . . . .	AIN ORAV PER EELJÕE
Old woman . . . . .	LIIDIA PANOVA EDA ZAHHAROVA
Tanner . . . . .	MART LAUR THOMAS MÜRK
Manservant . . . . .	ALARI PÕLDOJA PER EELJÕE
Triin . . . . .	ÜLLE TUNDLA VAIKE KIIK VILJA KRUSEMENT
Boy . . . . .	GEORG GURJEV MARTIN POOBUS
Girl One . . . . .	EHA PÄRG ANU ARENDI
Girl Two . . . . .	LYDIA ROOS LIINA SAARI
Nobleman with sandglass . . .	TAIMO TOOMAST JAAN-VILLEM SIBUL
Scribe . . . . .	ALARI PÕLDOJA REIN TAIDLA
A Tisenhusen . . . . .	KARLI KANNELMÄE NEEME HENK
Peasant One . . . . .	JAAN-VILLEM SIBUL MATI VAIKMAA
Peasant Two . . . . .	MART LAUR KALJU KALLAS

The Estonia opera choir.  
 The story takes place at Rõngu, Rannu, near Sigulda and on  
 Lake Võrtsjärv in 1551.



## SYNOPSIS

### Act I

**Scene 1.** Hall of the Great Guild in Tallinn in 1551. Among the guests invited to the wedding of Egbert von Yxkyll and Alleth von Risbitter Barbara, the young sister of the lords of the Rannu manor von Tisenhusens attracts attention with her beauty and expensive ornaments. The orphaned Barbara is looked after maternally by Anna, the wife of the lord of the Rõngu manor Johann von Tödwen.

The traditional dance with torches takes the guests out into the street, where curious onlookers have gathered. Barbara's expensive finery arouses the anger and scorn of the common people. Someone remarks, "A thousand poor could be clothed for the price of this gown." The words hurt Barbara bitterly, she tears off the necklace and leaves the wedding party.

Barbara's brothers are perplexed, but their behaviour allows one to assume that they are used to Barbara's self-willed actions.

**Scene 2.** A secluded corner in the garden of the Rõngu manor. Triin, a girl from the village, brings her brother here: Barbara is teaching the boy to read.

Barbara's sudden change of heart puzzles the von Tödwen: the girl dresses simply, often moves among the village people, learns songs of the country folk.

Barbara's brothers arrive, bringing guests. They are followed by Franz Bonnius, the new scribe of the Rõngu manor. As is the custom among the Livonian nobility, kisses are exchanged in greeting. Only Bonnius as a commoner is excepted.

The young scribe's unaffected and forthright manner draws Barbara. The young people engage in conversation and soon both realize that they need each other.

**Scene 3.** In front of the Rõngu castle. Parson Friesner, Tödwen and Anna express their liking for the new scribe. However, they detect in him a dangerous fighting spirit.

Barbara, happy and in love, arrives to meet Bonnius. Barbara vows that nobody and nothing will ever separate them.

Friesner, who happens to witness the meeting, is gripped with worry and anxiety.

### Act II

**Scene 4.** Balcony of the Rannu manor. Jürgen von Tisenhusen has invited guests to watch the fight of a bear with dogs. The cruel sight is too much for Barbara and she leaves the balcony. Her leaving is noticed by her brothers. "I hate your bloody games and love Bonnius", the girl hurls defiant words at her brothers. She announces that Bonnius will become her husband.

Jürgen asks Barbara threateningly if she has heard of the Pärnu treaty. The brothers depart.

**Scene 5.** The Rannu church. Friesner explains to Barbara the provisions of the Pärnu treaty: if a highborn maiden takes a commoner to husband, she and all who aid her must be condemned and die.

Barbara deprecates the law: only base persons could have made it. She asks Friesner to bless her and not condemn her.

**Scene 6.** Knights' hall at the Rannu manor. The brothers von Tisenhusen have their scribe write a letter to the bailiff about capturing Barbara and Bonnius, who have fled. In vain do Anna and Friesner beg them to show mercy to Barbara. The brothers set out in pursuit of the fugitives.

### Act III

**Scene 7.** Near Sigulda. Barbara and Bonnius have driven the third horse to death. Bonnius sets off in search of another. They hope to reach the Lithuanian border by next night.

The pursuers arrive. Barbara decides to save her beloved. She announces that Bonnius will not fight a dozen men and hastens their departure to be gone before Bonnius returns.

**Scene 8.** All the von Tisenhusens have gathered in the knights' hall of the Rannu manor to pass sentence on Barbara. Friesner as Barbara's baptist and confessor has also been invited to attend.

Barbara announces full of determination that Bonnius is her husband. When her brothers had threatened to deprive her of dowry she had given it up without a pang. Now too she knows that nobody can defend her and fearlessly faces her fate.

The brothers request the court to deliver Barbara into their hands for punishment.

Only Tödwen and Friesner protest the verdict.



**Scene 9.** The dark ice field of Lake Võrtsjärv. Here the sentence is to be carried out.

Barbara refuses to repent: she does not consider she has sinned; her love for Bonnius was joy.

The peasants refuse to push Barbara down the hole in the ice, it is the brothers who do it.

Friesner moans out, "My Lord, if thou art love, why hast thou forsaken us?"

### THE HISTORY OF THE OPERA

The idea for the opera was born in 1966 when Eduard Tubin attended a performance of his ballet *The Goblin* in Tallinn. Arne Mikk, then literary director of the theatre, made a proposal to the composer that he should write a new opera and suggested Aino Kallas's short story as the subject.

In May 1967 Tubin wrote to Arne Mikk saying that there probably existed no other subject that would suit him equally well for an opera. The talk with Mikk had made it perfectly clear that the opera should start with the ball scene and from there, in a direct line to the hole in the ice. The inevitability of it all seemed to require a certain form of music — chaconne, which Tubin considered himself master of. So he was all set to start work.

Jaan Kross was entrusted with writing the libretto. The first version was a bit too short and in September 1967 the composer again came to Tallinn to iron out the problems with the librettist and the then director Udo Väljaots. Jaan Kross rewrote Scene 1 in a couple of days and Tubin could start work. In October the entire text reached Sweden and work speeded up.

In an interview to the *Teataja* newspaper in 1968 Eduard Tubin characterized the opera as having been built on just one theme, a passacaglia of nine notes that occurs in numerous variations, basically because he had wanted to find out what it was possible to do with one theme, but also because, in his opinion, the story by Kallas was like an uninterrupted move from the wedding to the hole in the ice which required

a corresponding musical structure. The only problem was how to vary the theme to characterize each situation.

Tubin first regarded Kallas's story as a beautifully written piece of fiction. Later on he found out that it was based on a real-life happening.

Indeed, in the *Chronica der Prouintz Lyfflandt*, written by Balthasar Russow (1536—1600), parson of the Holy Ghost congregation in Tallinn, a short paragraph about the 1571 peasant unrest makes mention of the fact that Jürgen von Tisenhusen had had to pay for the evil he had done, among other things the drowning of his sister. The fact is also mentioned by another Baltic chronicler, Christian Kelch (1657—1710), in his *Liefländische Historia* (1695).

There are two further literary treatments of the event that may have served Aino Kallas as source material: a ballad by Christian Eduard Pabst (1815—1882) dating from 1856, and the novel *Die von Kelles* by Theodor Hermann Pantenius (1843—1915) that was published in Leipzig in 1885, partly translated into Estonian and serialized in the *Olevik* newspaper the same year and appeared in full in 1902.

The fate of Barbara von Tisenhusen has inspired later authors as well. Marie Under (1883—1980) wrote a ballad in 1929, and only recently, in 1987, Maimu Berg (b. 1949) published the novel *They Write*. In contrast to earlier writers who depicted Barbara as a positive heroine whose sweetness of character and pleasing manners captivated all and sundry, and who gained strength from great love, Maimu Berg shows Barbara as capricious and satanic rather than pious, impudent rather than sweet. However, when love strikes, here too everything changes and Barbara would rather die than repudiate Bonnius.



EDUARD TUBIN was born into the family of a fisherman near Kallaste by Lake Peipsi on 18 June 1905. When the boy was three years old the family moved to Naelavere near Alatskivi in East Estonia, where his elder brother was given a post as schoolteacher. Eduard Tubin received elementary education at the Naelavere and Kokora schools. As a boy he studied the flute and about the age of ten began to play together with his father (who played the trumpet and the trombone) in the local sinfonietta orchestra. In 1920 Tubin entered the Tartu Teacher Training College where he played in the orchestra and conducted the choir. In 1924 he became a student of the Tartu Higher School of Music where he studied the organ under J. Kärt for a year and then composition under Heino Eller. After graduation from the Teacher Training College in 1926 Tubin became a teacher at the Nõo school, continuing his studies at the music school till finishing it in 1930. Thereafter he moved to Tartu, where he worked first as a rehearsal, later (until 1944) as conductor of the Vanemuine Theatre's orchestra. He also conducted several choirs in Tartu, and in 1935—36 a choir in Tallinn as well. He made two educational trips abroad: to Vienna in 1932, and to Budapest in 1938. In 1944 Tubin emigrated to Sweden, where he worked for a long time as restorer of old operas at the Drottningholm Theatre (1945—72) and conductor of the Estonian Male Choir in Stockholm (1945—59 and 1975—82). Eduard Tubin died in Stockholm on 17 November 1982.

Despite long spells of orchestra and choir conducting, Tubin's interests centred on composition. He was very prolific already during his Tartu period and won great, even if not yet unanimous, recognition. The acme of his career as composer in his native land occurred during the war when he finished several major compositions which were performed in Tartu as well as in Tallinn. His ballet *The Goblin* was staged at the Vanemuine Theatre in Tartu in 1943 and next year also at the Estonia Theatre in Tallinn.

Since Tubin had emigrated to Sweden in the confusion of war, his works were prohibited in Estonia for a long time. Only in 1956 was the composer's Symphony No. 5 performed in Tallinn. The drama and sense of tragedy characteristic of the symphony were a staggering experience to the new generation of musicians after the long, oppressive years of Stalinist cultural policy. In 1961 Tubin visited Estonia for the first time after the war in connection with the restaging of his ballet *The Goblin* at the Vanemuine. In the years that followed he visited his native land several times to attend

performances of his works. Commissioned by the Estonia Theatre, Tubin wrote two operas: *Barbara von Tisenhusen* (1968) and *The Parson of Reigi* (1971). The former was produced at the Estonia Theatre in 1969 and ran with great success (57 performances), and its production at the Vanemuine in 1971 ran 18 performances. The latter was produced at the Vanemuine in 1979 and at the Estonia in 1988.

Music for the stage is the part of Tubin's work that has been most often performed in Estonia. The greater part of his ten symphonies has also been performed here, but not many times. It was Neeme Järvi who in 1980 began to popularize Tubin's works abroad. The performance of Tubin's Symphony No. 10 in the series of concerts dedicated to the 100th anniversary of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, attended by the composer, was a real triumph. After Tubin's death in 1982 the BIS record company started production of a series of his symphonic works, making it known on a worldwide scale. At the same time the Wilhelm H. Hansen publishers of music acquired all rights to publishing the composer's works.

Eduard Tubin's creative bequest is immense and varied: ten symphonies, short symphonic compositions and suites, instrumental concertos, vocal symphonic works, pieces for piano and violin, chamber music, solo and choral songs, two ballets and two operas. Symphonic works form the backbone of his music. The principle of symphonic thinking allows one to treat Tubin, similarly to Sibelius or Shostakovich, as a symphonist, and it should be a starting point also in appreciating and evaluating his other works. The deeply national character of Tubin's work stems not so much from folk-music intonations as from the composer's nationally-oriented turn of mind and specific psychological make-up from which sprang the musical character and structure of each composition.

Vardo Rumessen



AINO KALLAS (née Krohn; 1878—1956) was the daughter of a Finnish professor who after her marriage in 1900 to the Estonian folklorist and journalist Oskar Kallas and a short spell in St. Petersburg settled in Tartu, Estonia, till her husband's work in the diplomatic service took her to Helsinki (1918—22) and London (1922—34). She lived in Tallinn in 1934—44, emigrated to Sweden in 1944 and returned to Finland in 1953.

Aino Kallas has her place in the history of both Estonian and Finnish literature. She wrote in Finnish but drew her subjects almost exclusively from an Estonian background. She made her literary debut with a collection of poems (1897) and another of short stories (1899). The latter features for the first time the theme that is so prominent in Kallas's later work: love and death. During her Tartu period she published several collections of short stories, an autobiographical novel, a collection of verse and other works. She also translated into Finnish Estonian folk tales and works by several Estonian authors.

The London period was Aino Kallas's breakthrough as a writer. Three of her works published in English were received with rave reviews. What is more important, though, is that London released a new bout of creativity. One after another *Barbara von Tisenhusen* (1923), *The Parson of Reigi* (1926), *The Bride of the Wolf* (1928) and *The Revenge of the Holy River* (1930) appeared. It is interesting to note that the historical background of all Kallas's works of the 1920s can be determined with sometimes amazing accuracy.

In the 1930s Aino Kallas produced a number of plays based on her earlier prose works. In 1939 the author fell severely ill. The deaths of two of her children in 1941 dealt her new blows. Personal tragedy is reflected in collections of poems published in 1942—45.

Aino Kallas continued to work steadily right up to the end of her long career, publishing stories, memoirs and a sensitive and revealing diary. She died in Helsinki on 9 November 1956.

As appears from Aino Kallas's statements in the press, she was inspired to write *The Parson of Reigi* during her stay at the Reigi parsonage in Hiiumaa Island in 1923. The first edition of the novel appeared in Finnish in 1926, a year later it was translated into English, and the Estonian translation by Friedebert Tuglas reached the reading public in 1928.

In 1938 the Estonian composer Evald Aav got the idea to write an opera based on *The Parson of Reigi*. The composer's

correspondence with Aino Kallas proves that the author took an active part in writing the libretto. It was Evald Aav's sudden death that thwarted the plan. Later the unfinished libretto reached through Aav's relatives the composer Gustav Ernesaks who, in his turn, after the première of *Barbara von Tisenhusen*, handed it over to Eduard Tubin. Tubin was taken with the idea and suggested that the libretto might be completed and polished by the Estonian writer Jaan Kross. The composer was delighted with the final result. He finished the score by April 1971. However, luck, the time and people did not then favour the production of *The Parson of Reigi*: the opera was not approved for Estonia's repertory. Only in 1979 did Kaarel Ird manage to stage it at the Vanemuine Theatre. On 15 November 1979 the theatre presented the production in Tallinn. The performance was attended by Eduard Tubin. It was his last visit to his native land.

JAAN KROSS was born in Tallinn in 1920. He studied law at Tartu University and graduated in 1944. A professional writer since 1954. Publications include a number of collections of verse. His intellectual, lyrically bent poetry, possessed of a supple style and fresh imagery, influenced the renewal of Estonian poetry in the 1960s. Kross is also the author of a number of historical prose works (*Four Monologues on the Subject of Saint George*, 1970, *The Elevation of Michelson*, 1971, *The Third Mountains*, 1975, *Between Three Plagues*, four volumes, 1970—80, *A Novel about Rakvere*, 1982, *The Emperor's Madman*, 1978, *Professor Martens's Departure*, 1984, *The Wikman Boys*, 1989) and collections of critical writings and essays *Leisure Readings*. He has translated into Estonian works by Béranger, Brecht, Gorky, Griboyedov, Heine, Shakespeare, Rostand and others. Kross wrote the librettos for the operas *Barbara von Tisenhusen* by Eduard Tubin and *Cyrano de Bergerac* by Eino Tamberg, and translated *Gianni Schicchi* by Puccini, all of which have been staged at the Estonia Theatre. In 1986 the Estonia presented Alo Põldmäe's *Town Council Opera* at the Tallinn Town Hall, the libretto of which again came from Kross's pen (based on the idea by Arne Mikk).