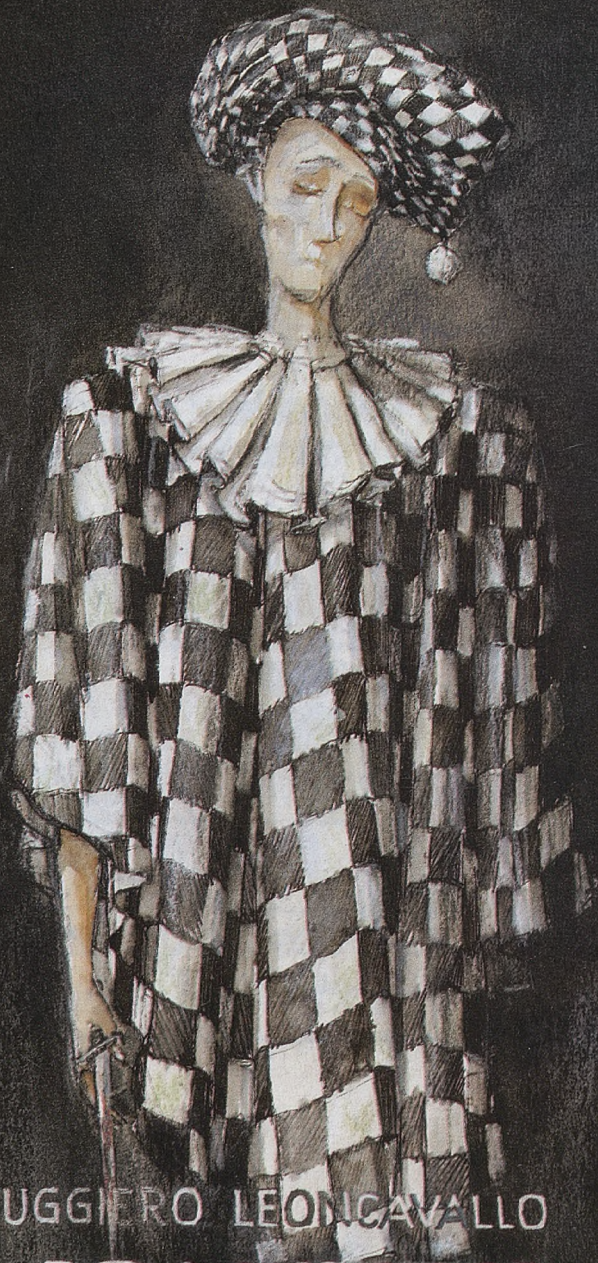




RUGGIERO LEONCAVALLO

I PAGLIACCI



Cracow 28 May — 7 June 1991

TEATRO DELL' OPERA DI CRACOVIA

WIELICZKA 4.06.1991

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In March 1982, the Cracow Opera celebrated its bicentenary. On March 9th 1782, a first public opera performance took place in our city; it was organized by Mateusz Witkowski. The show was André Grétry's *Zemire et Azor*, very much in vogue at the time.

Since those days Cracow has always been important as far as the Polish music and theatre are concerned. In the period of 1787—1789, the first operas sung in Polish were staged here. In Cracow, the Polish audience could hear and see Donizetti's works (*Lucrezia Borgia*, *Anna Bolena*, *Linda di Chamonix*, to name but a few) for the first time. The likes of Ada Sari, Adam Didur and Jan Kiepura — the greatest Polish singers of the period between the Wars, performed here... Cracow has produced such world-famous artists of today as Teresa Żylis-Gara and Wiesław Ochman. Also, the celebrated premières: Massenet's *Don Quichotte* (direction and scenography by Tadeusz Kantor) and Gounod's *Faust* (direction and scenography by Józef Szajna), both conducted by Kazimierz Kord, took place in Cracow ...

In 1981, Ewa Michnik became the manager and chief conductor of the Cracow Opera which has been receiving a growing international acclaim since then. The theatre performed in Italy many times; it is noteworthy that in La Roncole (Verdi's native town), Ewa Michnik was awarded the Golden Baton (1986) for conducting the best *Rigoletto* of all ever shown at the Verdi Festivals there and the reason was the following: "the Italian audience find the rendition of Verdi's masterpieces by the Cracow Opera conducted by Ewa Michnik closest to their idea of a perfect interpretation of their beloved composer." Numerous tours in Germany, Switzerland, USSR, Luxembourg, Austria, France and Holland have made the Cracow Opera become more and more successful outside Poland. The vast repertoire ranges from baroque works to the modern ones.

Leoncavallo's *I Pagliacci* which is presented to You tonight was already shown in Austria, Belgium, Germany and Switzerland.



Ruggiero Leoncavallo studied music in Naples. After graduating from the conservatoire, he lived a quiet life of a conductor and a teacher of music. His first opera: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was a failure and it was only the staging of *I Pagliacci* at Teatro del Verme in Milan which became a turning point of Leoncavallo's career as a composer; he achieved worldwide success at that time. His subsequent operas: *La Bohème*, *Zazá*, *Chatterton*, *Der Roland von Berlin* and others were never so successful as the triumphant *I Pagliacci*, the one and only work which gained the composer his very strong position in the history of opera music.

An Opera in Two Acts; libretto by the composer.
World Première: Milan, May 22nd, 1892.
Polish Première: Warsaw, 1894.

Instead of an overture, the action of the opera is preceded by the sung Prologue ("Si può?"), a kind of an ideological programme of Leoncavallo as well as other verist composers. The author speaks to the audience through the mouth of one of the actors (Tonio), that he does not intend to tell some imaginary stories but real-life events, as rough and cruel as they are. The audience are also told that a clown who makes people laugh at his jokes is a human being who experiences the deepest emotions too; he is one who knows love, happiness, jealousy and pain.

ACT ONE. It is a Feast of the Assumption and everybody in the village is joyful. A troupe of actors arrive and their manager, Canio, announces a performance to be shown in the evening. Canio wears a smile on his face but his heart is in despair as the beauty of Nedda, his wife, attracts too many a man. Canio speaks about his great love making him so jealous of Nedda (arioso "Un tal gioco") and at the same time he warns her: if ever she is unfaithful, she will die.

Canio and his fellow troupers are invited to a nearby inn. Nedda is alone (ballatella "Qual fiamma"). Tonio appears and he tries to win her affection. However, Nedda mocks his wooing and when Tonio reaches out to embrace

her, she beats his face with a riding-whip. Tonio leaves furiously swearing to take his revenge. A good opportunity arises almost at once as a young villager approaches. The conversation between Silvio and Nedda is a clear evidence of their secret love which began a long time ago (duet "Nedda! Silvio! a quest'ora"). Silvio is now begging his beloved to leave Canio. Nedda resists but she eventually agrees that the two should escape together. Deep in love, the couple do not notice Tonio who overhears them hidden in the bushes and rushes out to the inn to meet Canio as soon as possible. Silvio runs away at the very last moment; the anger of the betrayed husband turns against Nedda. When she refuses to reveal her lover's name, Canio threatens her with a knife and it is only due to the interference of the other members of the troupe that no blood is shed. Canio experiences a tragedy; he knows that the performance is just about to begin and he is supposed to be a comedian, to laugh and entertain the crowd though his heart is bleeding (aria "Vesti la giubba" — "You Clown, Laugh!").



ACT TWO. The troupers begin their show. The stage represents the flat of Nedda-Colombina who awaits her lover, Arlecchino, played by Beppo. Instead of him, Taddeo-Tonio arrives and expresses his love for Colombina in an amusing way. A love serenade ("O Colombina") can be

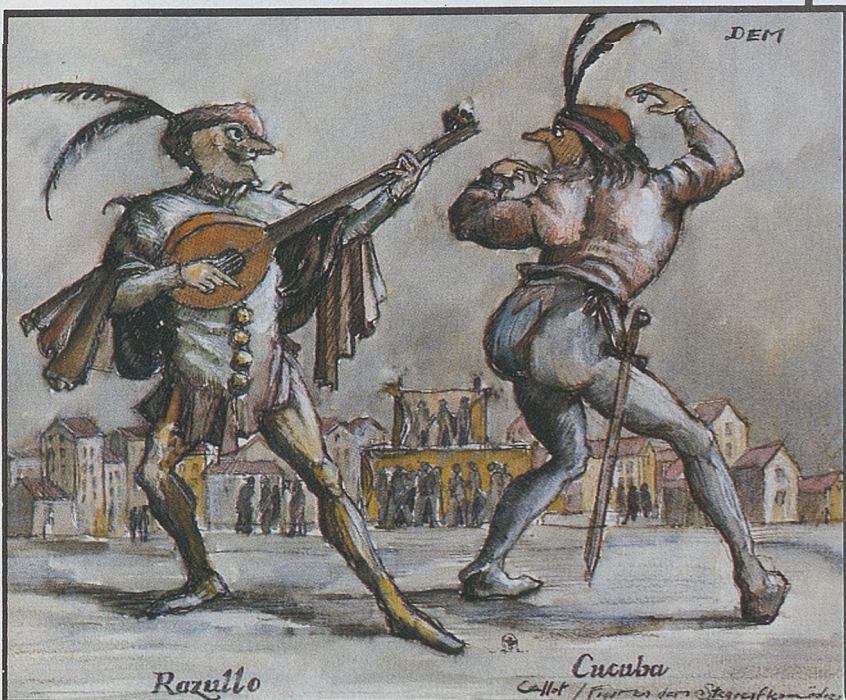
heard from behind the window and very soon Arlecchino comes in through the very window; as the audience merrily applaud, he turns the unfortunate suitor out. When Colombina's husband, il Pagliaccio (played by Canio) appears, Arlecchino escapes, and, in this way, the events of the last afternoon happen again; the words uttered on the troupe stage sound so similar to those earlier said by the actors in private.

Canio, his heart in despair, is unable to bear the suffering of the betrayed. However, as he urges Colombina to reveal the name of her secret lover, he gradually loses himself between comedy and reality. Nedda senses that and she tries a light, comedy tone, but it is all in vain. "Clown! Clown!", she gently speaks to her husband hoping this could remind him of the part he is supposed to play. Unfortunately, Nedda's words provoke an explosion of Canio's smothered passion (aria "No, pagliaccio non son"). Colombina runs away from the stage looking for help among the audience, but Canio catches up with her and stabs her with a dagger. Silvio rushes out to help and he is also killed by Canio who recognizes him as his wife's lover. Canio remains motionless for a while, then he drops the dagger and desperately speaks to the terrified audience: "La commedia é finita!" — "The show is over!"

CAST

CANIO	— ROBERT BRUINS
NEDDA	— KRYSTYNA TYBUROWSKA
TONIO	— BOGUSŁAW SZYNALSKI
SILVIO	— ANDRZEJ BIEGUN
BEPPA	— TADEUSZ SŁOWIAK

Soloists, Orchestra and Chorus of the Cracow Opera



Conductor	— EWA MICHNIK
Director	— KAY METZGER
Set Decorator	— HANS PETER HARLACHER
Costume Designer	— ELŻBIETA KRYWSZA-FEDOROWICZ
Chorus Master	— EWA BATOR

text: Józef Opalski

Józef Kański (from *Przewodnik operowy / A Guide to Opera*)

translation: Paweł Łopatka

illustrations: Janusz Wrzeński,

layout: Lech Polcyn



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