

Stanisław Moniuszko – Straszny Dwór (Haunted Manor) [Jan Krenz]

Written by bluesever

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1. Act I 2. Act II 3. Act III 4. Act IV Miecznik - Andrzej Hiolski Hanna - Bożena
Betley-Sieradzka Jadwiga - Wiera Baniewicz Damazy - Zdzisław Nikodem Stefan - Wiesław
Ochman Zbigniew - Leonard Mróz Czesnikowa - Aleksandra Imalska Maciej- Florian Skulski
Skoluba - Andrzej Saciuk Marta – Anna Witkowska Coro e Orchestra della
Radio-Televisione Polacca di Cracovia Jan Krenz – conductor Cracovia, 1978

The Haunted Manor (Polish: *Straszny dwór*) is an opera in four acts composed by Polish composer Stanisław Moniuszko in 1861–1864. The libretto was written by Jan Chęciński. Despite being a romance and a comedy, it has strong Polish patriotic undertones, which made it both popular with the Polish public and unpopular – to the point of being banned – by the Russian authorities which controlled most of Poland during that era.

It is considered Moniuszko's best opera, and also the greatest among all 19th century Polish opera scores. However, it is mostly unknown outside Poland.

In the middle of the 19th century, Poland was partitioned by Russia, Germany and Austria and Polish culture struggled against Russification and Germanization policies. Many contemporary Polish writers, artists and musicians readily reflected that struggle, and this opera did so both in the story and in the music.

The story represents both an idyllic view of life in a Polish country manor house, and at the same time an idealistic preoccupation with the patriotic duties of the soldier, the military virtues of courage, bravery, and readiness to take up arms against any enemy of the nation, and the importance of family honor. It presents in its opening scenes the obvious conflict between those

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patriotic aspirations on the one hand, and every man's desire for a quiet home life, love and marriage, on the other. The fact of the opera's nationalistic content is proven by the adverse reaction of the Russian censor to its appearance, and reflected in its lasting place in the hearts of many Polish people.

Straszny dwór was first performed in the Teatr Wielki, Warsaw, on 28 September 1865, and received only two more performances before being banned by the censor of the tsar of Russian Empire which controlled Poland at the time. The Polish patriotic undertones of this piece were deemed dangerous, particularly as the January Uprising had ended only two and a half years earlier. Moniuszko lived until 1872 but the opera, considered his best and most original, was never performed again in his lifetime.

An English language version of The Haunted Manor was created in 1970 by translator Dr. George Conrad working with opera singer and singing teacher Mollie Petrie. The world premiere of this English version was given by the University of Bristol Operatic Society in 1970, which caused some excitement in the Polish expatriate community in England because of the opera's theme of Polish nationalism, at a time when Poland (then part of the Warsaw Pact) was again under Russian domination, as it had been when the opera first appeared. Thus, unusually, many Polish people travelled to Bristol to attend — and warmly applaud — what was in fact a fine amateur production by university students. That English version has been performed a number of times in England since 1970, including in an acclaimed production by Opera South (formerly Opera Omnibus) in February 2001.

In April 2009, a new English translation, written by Pocket Opera founder Donald Pippin and funded by the National Endowment of the Arts, was presented by Pocket Opera in San Francisco. ---wikipedia

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