

ARABELLA by Richard Strauss

Opera in three acts Sung in German with English supertitles

Synopsis

In 1860s Vienna, Count Waldner is in financial trouble brought on by gambling, and hopes to improve his fortunes by marrying his daughter Arabella to a rich husband. He writes to his friends and one of them, Mandryka, offers to help in exchange for Arabella's hand. Her sister Zdenka, who was brought up as a boy because the family could not afford two debutantes, is in love with Matteo, a young officer who happens to be in love with Arabella. Zdenka, hoping to resolve the family complications, has been sending letters to Matteo, pretending to be Arabella.

Arabella realizes that the fascinating stranger she had recently seen is Mandryka, whom she now meets at a ball. It is a case of love at first sight. Arabella, chosen as Carnival Queen, leaves him and also bids farewell to her other suitors. Zdenka gives Matteo a note, allegedly from Arabella, containing a key to her room. This is overheard by Mandryka, whose jealousy and resentment is aroused, causing him to direct his attentions to the cabaret singer Fiakermilli.

The key was to Zdenka's room, however, from which Matteo eventually emerges, believing he had been making love to Arabella. He is amazed to see her entering the hotel lobby. The Waldners and Mandryka also arrive, followed by Zdenka, who confesses her love for Matteo. Tying the loose ends together, Matteo agrees to transfer his attentions to the younger sister, while Arabella offers Mandryka a glass of water, following an old Croatian custom that symbolizes the bride's purity. They embrace as the curtain falls.