

Aribert Reimann: King Lear

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Nationaltheater München, new production

Duration about 3 hours

Monday 30 May 2021, 16:00-19:00 IS, 18:00-21:00 DE, free of charge

Interval 17:30-18:00-IS, 19:30-20:00 DE

Video on demand for 30 days from July 1, free of charge

Creative Team

Conductor	Jukka-Pekka Saraste
Production	Christoph Marthaler
Production Assistant	Joachim Rathke
Set Design	Anna Viebrock
Costume Design	Dorothee Curio
Lighting	Michael Bauer
Choruses	Stellario Fagone
Dramaturgy	Benedikt Stampfli, Malte Ubenauf

Cast

König Lear	Christian Gerhaher
König von Frankreich	Edwin Crossley-Mercer
Herzog von Albany	Ivan Ludlow
Herzog von Cornwall	Jamez McCorkle
Graf von Kent	Brenden Gunnell
Graf von Gloster	Georg Nigl
Edgar	Andrew Watts
Edmund	Matthias Klink
Goneril, Tochter König Lears	Angela Denoke
Regan, Tochter König Lears	Ausrine Stundyte
Cordelia, Tochter König Lears	Hanna-Elisabeth Müller
Narr	Graham Valentine
Bedienter	Dean Power
Ritter	Marc Bodnar

About the opera

King Lear intends to distribute his kingdom among his three daughters. Those that love him the most will receive the most. As Cordelia only describes her love in plain, simple words, she disappoints her father and leaves empty-handed. The kingdom is divided between the other two, and discord and scheming set in immediately. Lear is broken by it, becomes a powerless beggar and loses his sanity.

Aribert Reimann composed his opera *Lear* based on William Shakespeare's tragedy, *King Lear*, with a libretto by Claus H. Henneberg. It celebrated its world premiere at the Nationaltheater in the 1978 as a work commissioned by the Bayerische Staatsoper. Reimann's composition illustrates a dramaturgy that moves the game of power obsession along at breakneck speed. Lear's vocal line, characterised by exorbitant virtuosity, illustrates the broken King with his manner of speaking only appearing confused on the surface. The instrumental cluster structures of this monumental work create a breath-taking atmosphere, and are the reason why, as an opera classic of the 20th century, this metamorphosis is an indispensable mirror image of our age.

Synopsis

Lear is tired of ruling and wishes to divide the governance of his empire between his three daughters. The largest part shall be destined for the daughter who loves him the most. While Goneril and Regan attempt to outdo one another with verbose expressions of love, Cordelia expresses her love in humble words only after Lear's repeated requests. Her actions arouse anger within Lear, and he casts her out, denying her a dowry for her marriage to the King of France. The Earl of Kent, a follower and supporter of Lear, sides with Cordelia and is banished from the kingdom. To strengthen their positions, Regan and Goneril form an alliance in the full knowledge that each of them seeks sole power.

A further inheritance dispute erupts between the Duke of Gloster and his sons Edgar and Edmund. The latter, as an illegitimate son, feels neglected for no reason and convinces his father with a forged letter that Edgar is planning his murder. The Duke places a bounty on Edgar's head and appoints Edmund as his sole heir.

The Earl of Kent returns to Lear in disguise. Believing him to be a spy, Goneril and Regan arrest him. By now, the maidens are tired of caring for their stubborn father and exhaust him with provocations. Upon realising that his daughters have conspired against him, he curses and threatens them. Regan eventually chases him away.

Lear finds himself alone in a storm and despondent about his bleak situation until the Earl of Kent and the fool take him into their care. The three of them encounter Edgar, disguised as poor Tom to protect himself from his pursuers. Gloster, who is secretly loyal to Lear, appears and brings the King to safety.

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A French invasion is imminent. Regan's husband, the Duke of Cornwall, has taken the Duke of Gloster captive. Upon confessing that he supports Lear, Cornwall and Regan blind him. One of Cornwall's servants then changes allegiance and kills his old master. Regan reveals Edmund's betrayal to Gloster and leaves the blinded Duke to his fate.

Goneril is disappointed in her husband, the Duke of Albany, who is plagued by scruples about her behaviour. She concocts a plan to poison Regan and hands Edmund command of her troops while promising to wed him and rule together. Meanwhile, Cordelia learns of Lear's condition and orders him to be found.

The now-blind Duke of Gloster meets his son Edgar without recognising him. He asks his son to lead him to a cliff from which he wishes to throw himself to his death, but Edgar deceives his father and leads him to an open field. Gloster jumps, but only falls to the ground, and he allows Edgar to convince him that his survival was due to a miracle. They meet the disoriented, wandering Lear. The King of France encounters Lear and has him taken to the French camp, where Cordelia and her father are reconciled.

Edmund has captured Lear and Cordelia, and has ordered Cordelia's execution. With his goal of sole rule in mind, Edmund plays Goneril and Regan off against each other. The Duke of Albany tries vainly to put him in his place and save Lear and Cordelia. In the meantime, Regan begins to notice the effects of the poison Goneril administered to her, and she dies. Edgar, still in disguise, challenges Edmund to a duel and kills him. In desperation, Goneril stabs herself to death. Lear mourns his executed Cordelia and finally dies.