

BEDŘICH SMETANA
(1824–1884)

Libuše

A festival opera in three acts from 1872

Act 1

LIBUŠE'S JUDGEMENT

Scene 1:

The hall at Vyšehrad – Radmila, one of Libuše's ladies, expresses her gratitude to the queen for gathering the court to settle a dispute between her brothers, Chrudoš and Šťáhlav. Libuše hopes for their reconciliation and calls upon the deities to bless her country. Before leaving, the lady Krasava confides in Radmila about what caused the dispute.

Scene 2:

An open space at Vyšehrad – The people are upset by the feud between the two brothers. Chrudoš's violent behaviour indicates that he has no intention of complying with the court's decision. Even when the queen and the court are present, he continues to assert his right to inherit everything. However, according to the court decision announced by Radovan, the brothers are to divide their inheritance equally as per the old law. Chrudoš revolts, refuses to accept the decision, and even offends the queen. Libuše descends from the throne and asks the elders to choose their king – ruler, who she will marry. Radovan, leading the others, urges Libuše to make her own decision. Libuše declares Přemysl of Stadice the king.

Act 2

LIBUŠE'S MARRIAGE

Scene 1:

A landscape with a mound – Krasava's father, Lutobor, is deeply upset upon learning that his daughter is the reason behind the dispute between the two brothers. Krasava confesses to him that she pretended to be in love with Šťáhlav. She did so to provoke the proud Chrudoš, who secretly loves her, into confessing his feelings. Krasava, Radmila, and Šťáhlav ask for forgiveness. Lutobor informs them that he has invited Chrudoš to his father's mound. Krasava's task is to persuade him to reconcile and, thus, comply with the queen's decision. Otherwise, Lutobor would disown her. Chrudoš curses all women, yet he cannot help but be touched by memories of Krasava. He finds her pleas and explanations at the mound moving, leading him to reconcile with both her and his brother.

Scene 2:

Countryside – During the harvest celebration, Přemysl is thinking of his beloved Libuše. An envoy, led by Radovan, arrives and asks Přemysl to become a king and marry Libuše. Přemysl bids farewell to his people and homeland. Upon hearing of Libuše's disgrace, he prepares for battle and departs for Vyšehrad.

Act 3

LIBUŠE'S PROPHECY

Scene 1:

The hall at Vyšehrad – Libuše is pleased that the dispute has been resolved. Chrudoš and Šťáhlav shake hands, and everyone awaits Přemysl's arrival. Libuše asks for a blessing for herself and the nation.

Scene 2:

An open space at Vyšehrad – During a ceremonial procession, Libuše escorts Přemysl to the throne. The new king asks Chrudoš to make amends for his disgraceful behaviour. Although Chrudoš eventually kneels before Libuše, Přemysl believes that the willingness to reconcile settles everything. The people praise the king as he begins his reign. Libuše gives thanks for the joyful day and, in a prophetic rapture, predicts that the Bohemian nation will endure.