

RUSALKA: THE LITTLEST MERMAID

Based on the opera *Rusalka* by Antonín Dvořák
and
The Little Mermaid by Hans Christian Andersen

Music by Antonín Dvořák
Libretto by Joshua Borths

Originally written for Florida State University Opera Outreach in 2013
Revised for Arizona Opera 2016
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ACT ONE SCENE 1

Design Idea: The set is an old fairytale storybook. The pages of the book open from the center and are hinged on the offstage sides so that when the pages are opened, they create a proscenium where the action takes place.

The book is closed as the audience enters. "Rusalka: The Littlest Mermaid" on the front cover.

The music begins.

Rusalka enters from the auditorium and looks at the closed book, reading the cover.

RUSALKA

To audience "Rusalka: The Littlest Mermaid." That's me! Addressing audience What do you think? Should I open it?

As the audience responds, Rusalka opens the book to reveal the underwater world.

Welcome under the waves!

Rusalka exits.

Immediately following, Rusalka's Sister enters through the water with puppets of her other mermaid sisters. Rusalka and her Sisters "swim." Since they are creatures of the sea, they are always moving with the currents and waves.

RUSALKA'S SISTER

Rusalka! Rusalka? Where are you?

Rusalka sneaks around to the front of the stage and disappears into the water as her Sister is distracted, looking in the opposite direction.

To audience Oh, not again! Rusalka is always missing right when you need her most. Today is her 16th birthday and guests should be arriving any minute. But I can't find her at all!

Throughout the following number, Rusalka constantly swims around, narrowly escaping her sister. It's like a game of hide-and-seek.

RUSALKA'S SISTER

Calling out AH! AH! AH!

AH! AH! AH!

WHERE'S OUR SISTER RUSALKA?

To audience Have you seen her?

*SHARPLY THROUGH THE DEPTHS WE GLIDE,
LOOKING FOR HER FAR AND WIDE.*

To each other WE'VE LOOKED EVERYWHERE SHE HIDES.

OH! OH! OH! WHERE DID OUR DEAR SISTER GO?

FOR TODAY SHE TURNED SIXTEEN,
AND YET NOWHERE SHE'S BEEN SEEN.
WE SWIM 'ROUND WITH OUR EYES KEEN.

OH! OH! OH!
WILL THE MOONLIGHT HELP US KNOW?

Rusalka reenters as she tries to swim to the surface. However, she has to keep hiding as her sisters look for her. Comedy ensues.

RUSALKA'S SISTER

IN THE SKY WE SEE THE MOON RISE.
LET ITS LIGHT NOW GUIDE OUR EYES.
MOONLIGHT PIERCE THE DEPTHS OF THE SEA,
AND BRING MY SISTER BACK TO ME!

HO! HO! HO!

To each other WHY'D SHE PICK THIS SPECIAL DAY?
FATHER MUSTN'T KNOW SHE'S STRAYED!

OH! OH! OH!
WHERE'S OUR SISTER to the audience DO YOU KNOW?

To audience WHAT IF SHE HAS FOUND A LOVE
AND HE'S FROM THE WORLD ABOVE?
A DISASTER! I'LL SWIM FASTER!
HUMANS MUSTN'T SEE HER SWIM!
SHE CAN'T LOVE A HUMAN "HIM!"

OH! OH! OH!
WHERE DID OUR DEAR SISTER GO?
OH! OH! OH!

The Sisters exit and Rusalka reenters. She tentatively looks around. The music continues under the following dialogue.

RUSALKA

Turning to the audience Are they gone? Thank goodness. I must get to the surface. The Prince will sail by at any moment.

Having heard Rusalka's voice, Rusalka's Sister angrily reenter just as Rusalka is about to swim up to the surface.

RUSALKA'S SISTER

Rusalka! We've been looking for you everywhere. Everyone's waiting to celebrate your birthday at the coral reef. They want to hear you sing, open the presents, and blow out the bubbles!

RUSALKA

I'm sorry, but I can't go with you. I'm meeting someone above.

RUSALKA'S SISTER

On the surface? You can't! Father forbids it!

RUSALKA

Defiantly You wouldn't understand.

RUSALKA'S SISTER

But, there's a storm brewing and the currents are shifting.

Rusalka is unmoved.

Condescending Oh Rusalka, look around! What could you possibly find up there that you don't have down here?

WE ARE HAPPY AS CAN BE
LIVING UNDER THE SEA.

WHY CAN'T YOU BE HAPPY HERE
WHERE THE WATER'S ALWAYS CLEAR?

RUSALKA AND SISTER

LIFE IS PERFECT IN THE SEA,
SWIMMING IN THE BIG WAVES.

ALL THINGS IN PERFECT HARMONY!
NO WHERE ELSE I'D WANT TO BE.

HO! HO! HO! HO!

They dance with Rusalka.

RUSALKA'S SISTER

HERE THERE ARE NO ENEMIES.
ONLY ANEMONES!

THERE'S NO SHARK YOU CAN'T OUTSMART,
AND EVERY URCHIN PLAYS HIS PART.

LIFE IS PERFECT IN THE SEA,
EXCEPT THE WITCH'S CAVE.

BUT, AS LONG AS YOU DON'T GO THERE,
YOU WILL HAVE NO NEED FOR AIR!

HO! HO! HO! HO!

The Sisters dance. But when they turn to dance with Rusalka, they realize that she is gone.

RUSALKA'S SISTER

Rusalka? Rusalka?! She swam away again on porpoise! Oh, she makes me so crabby!

Rusalka's Sister exits and the scene transforms to the surface of the water.

SCENE 2

The moon is shining. A ship comes into view. NOTE: This effect has been simply accomplished through clever fabric work and stick puppetry.

RUSALKA

To audience OH, SILVER MOON I MUST NOW CONFIDE:
I AM IN LOVE WITH A HUMAN.
HE'S ON THAT SHIP—HE'S THERE INSIDE!
SEND HIM MY LOVE IF YOU CAN.

YOU WHO LOOK DOWN ON LAND AND SEA,
TELL ME IF EVER HE COULD LOVE ME.

AND, TELL ME WHAT IT'S LIKE IN HIS WORLD ABOVE.
HOW I LONG, OH, HOW I YEARN TO BE FREE.

Clouds appear and cover the moon.

BE FREE OF THE SEA, FREE TO RUN.
FREE TO SPEND ALL OF MY DAYS IN THE SUN!

A storm begins. The ship starts to sink.

RUSALKA

Oh no... The storm... The Prince is sinking, and I must save him!

Rusalka dives into the water to save the Prince. The Prince is rolled by Rusalka onto the beach.

OH, MY PRINCE, WILL YOU DREAM OF
ME? I WHO SAVED YOU FROM THE SEA.

I WOULD GIVE ANYTHING. GIVE ALL TO BE WITH YOU.

The Prince begins to wake up. Rusalka is nervous.

HE MUST NOT SEE ME.

Getting an idea Only the Sea Witch can make me human!

TO THE SEA WITCH! TO THE SEA WITCH!

Rusalka starts to swim away as the Prince starts to recover. Rusalka wants to help him, but she stays hidden.

PRINCE

WHAT A STORM!
WHO WAS MY SAVIOR?

He remembers the voice of the girl that saved him from the storm, as if the voice were a fragment of a distant memory.

THAT VOICE? THAT VOICE. THAT VOICE!

The Prince runs offstage with newfound strength. He is going to find the girl who saved him!

RUSALKA

Determined TO THE SEA WITCH! TO THE SEA WITCH!

Rusalka dives down and exits.

Contact Opera Classroom for a full perusal script/score!

PERUSALKA