

R. Strauss:

Die Frau Ohne Schatten Synopsis

Act I

The Emperor of the South-East Islands is married to the daughter of a fairy that he captured while out hunting; once he injured a gazelle which transformed into the beautiful young woman. Having become the Emperor's wife, she did not, however, become human. She casts no shadow and so cannot become a mother. There is a connection between having a shadow and motherhood, as the former is an Omen and Destiny. The Nurse is pleased at this as she despises all that is human. Keikobad, ruler of the Spirit Realm and the Empress' father, sends his envoy who holds talks with the Nurse. A falcon flies to the Empress, having been on a hunt with the Emperor when he shot at a white gazelle. The falcon informs her that "Time will soon run out, woman will not cast a shadow – and thus the Emperor will be turned to stone." The Empress understands the allusion: she has gone beyond the confines of the demonic world, but the Emperor's egotistical love has not surrounded her with humanity. She is between two worlds: one that does not wish to let her go, and one that will not accept her. And this curse will exert its power not over her, but rather over him. The Empress wishes to acquire a shadow whatever the cost. She is assisted in this by the Nurse, who proposes buying a person's shadow. The Empress and the Nurse set off and come to the family of Barak the Dyer.

Barak is no longer young, but he is hale and hearty, as an ox. He works for the sake of his three brothers and his Wife, who is young and attractive but dissatisfied with her life with Barak. Children would be a divine blessing for him, though this marriage, too, has produced no children. The Empress and the Nurse ask the servant to direct them to the Dyer's Wife.

The Nurse offers the Dyer's Wife fine clothes and a lover in exchange for her surrendering her shadow and her fertility. With magic spells and gestures, the old procuress ensnares the young woman and the Dyer's wife concludes the bargain. The Empress barely understands this tainted covenant, thanks to which she will acquire her heart's desire. But the deal is done, the guests vanish suddenly and the Dyer's Wife is once more left alone. The voices of her unborn children can be heard coming from the pay where five fish are being fried, lamenting mournfully from the darkness. The unsuspecting Dyer returns home. Barak and his Wife each go to their separate beds.

Act II

The trials begin. The Nurse tempts the young woman with a spectre of a languishing and ardent young boy. As soon as the Dyer leaves, the youth appears in his house. Barak doesn't know what is going on, but is kind but foolish heart becomes heavier and heavier. He feels that something is amiss, as if someone is calling on him to help. The Empress is involved in this evil scheme. At night, in fear-filled dreams she sees her husband walking through an empty forest, alone, eaten up by egotistical suspicions. His heart has already turned to stone. She awakes from her prophetic dream, but her days are more dangerous than her nights. There is no room for a creature from the Spirit Realm in the world of men. Gradually the Empress overcomes her fears and begins to sense her guilt before Barak. The third night falls: The Nurse, in order to complete the pact, calls on devilish forces for help. Heavy mists descend all around. A cry of horror emerges from the mouths of Barak's brothers, while the lips of Barak's

wife produce insane, wild words. She accuses herself of something she has not yet done – of marital infidelity – and says that she has sold her shadow and spurned her unborn children. The brothers light a fire and become convinced of what has been said: the young woman stands before them as a witch, casting no shadow. The Nurse rejoices – the pact has come into force. One has surrendered her shadow; the other must take it for herself. At this terrible and decisive moment, Barak seems to grow taller; his lips, which to this point have uttered no wicked word, pronounce the death penalty on his Wife. A glittering sword appears in his hands. At the sight of the sword, the Nurse understands that higher forces have entered the game, ones with which she cannot compete. Instead of grabbing the shadow, the Empress drags the Nurse away to avoid being spattered in human blood. The Wife falls at Barak's feet, in supplication and mad frenzy holds the sword above her own self. The fates are woven together and voices drown each other out – everything around is suddenly under some magic power. The Earth rotates and swallows man and wife; Barak's house crashes to the ground. A huge swell of water rises from the depths, The Nurse, shielding the Empress with her cloak, seats her in a boat that has magically appeared.

Act III

The first trial has been completed, and those who have completed it set out for the Spirit Realm. The boat with the Empress and the Nurse arrives at the gates of the Temple. She knows: she is being called to judgement. In the depths, utterly unaware of one another, Barak and his Wife are struggling in their confinement. The voice of one of the spirits calls them upwards. They rise and think of one another with tenderness: he forgiving her, and she begging forgiveness, humbly and, for the first time, lovingly. They rise above, trying to find each other. Here they meet the Nurse, standing before the closed gates of the Temple. The messenger of the spirits guards the entrance from her. She is infuriated. The Empress is standing in the depths of the Temple and awaits the court. But who is it that will judge her? Is it the King of Spirits, her stern father? A curtain screens his face. The Empress' courageous supplication goes unanswered. There is only the gentle gurgling of the water of the Golden Source, the Source of Life. "Drink," says a voice, "Drink, and the Wife's shadow will be yours." The Empress hears the voices of the separated man and wife and steps back without having let her lips touch the Golden Source. The waters recede. The Emperor sits upon a stone throne, unmoving, turned to stone. It is only in his eyes, it would appear, that life still lingers. The Source of Life again begins to ring out at the statue's feet. Sweet voices from above can be heard: "Say 'I want it' and the woman's shadow will be yours, it will rise, come to life and go with you." The Empress freezes to the spot, battling with her own self. The barely heard words "I don't want it!" at last come from her lips. She is victorious, as the mother before the throne of Solomon was victorious, prepared to lose her child that he might live. She is victorious for her own self and for the sake of one who would, without her self-sacrifice, would otherwise remain petrified forever. And for the sake of two others who, having suffered so much, must rise upwards. A distinct shadow falls on the floor of the Temple. The voices of the unborn children can be heard rejoicing.

リヒャルト・シュトラウス

影のない女

作品解説

広瀬 大介 = 音楽学・音楽評論
Daisuke Hirose



リヒャルト・シュトラウス



フーゴー・フォン・ホフマンスタール

シュトラウスとホフマンスタールの「新たな試み」

1911年1月26日、《ばらの騎士》、ドレスデンにて初演。戯曲《エレクトラ》に曲をつけたことで、オーストリアの文学者フーゴー・フォン・ホフマンスタールと、ドイツの作曲家リヒャルト・シュトラウス(1864–1949)の協力関係が始まった。1905年、すでに歌劇《サロメ》を発表し、オペラ作曲家としてスキャンダラスなまでの成功を勝ち取っていたシュトラウス。彼にとって、もともと脂ののっていた時期が、この《サロメ》の前後10年くらいであっただろう。ホフマンスタールが初めてオペラ用に書き下ろした《ばらの騎士》は、ドイツ・オペラにとって久々の(おそらくワーグナー《マイスタージンガー》以来の)、堂々たる正統派の喜劇であった。この作品はあつという間に各地へと広まり、2人の名声を不動のものへと押し上げることになる。

だが2人は、旧来の成功に安住せず、常に新しい試みでオペラの世界に新風を吹き込もうという高邁な理想を掲げ、次の作品へと取りかかる。オペラと演劇を高い次元で融合しようと試みた《ナクソス島のアリアドネ》に続いたのは、当代きっての知識人ホフマンスタールが、ゲーテやシラー、あるいはモーツァルト《魔笛》やグリム童話、果ては《千夜一夜物語》や中国、インドの伝説までを渉猟し、汎世界的、普遍的な物語の世界を作り上げようと試みた野心作《影のない女》である。影がその持ち主の多産性、あるいは生命そのものを象徴する「記号」として用いられる例は、様々な物語に見られる(オペラファンの方ならば、オッフェンバック《ホフマン物語》ジュリエッタの幕で、同様のやりとりがあることを思い出されるかもしれない)。ホフマンスタールが後半生に作った作品は、どれも古典的な素材を現代的に翻案したものであり、この作品もそうした系統に属している。

この作品の受容の大きな妨げとなった要素の一つに、「象徴にあふれた難解な筋書き」が挙げられ、

必要以上にこの作品が「難解」である、と喧伝されたくらいがある。だが、ホフマンスタールが作り上げたこの世界の約束事、すなわち「影が、子供を産む能力、母親となることのできる能力の象徴として扱われる」という一点さえおさえれば、その世界観は決して難解なものではない。ホフマンスタールもその点を気にしたのか、自らオペラ向けのあらすじを書くだけでは足りず、後に小説の形でこの物語をさらに敷衍してさえる。

《影のない女》創作過程

ホフマンスタールがこの構想を初めてスケッチとして書き留めたのは、《ばらの騎士》初演のわずか1ヶ月後、1911年2月のこと。3月の書簡でこの構想を明かされたシュトラウスは、浮き立った調子で、「高貴で、幻想的で、あらゆる美しいものの中でも、もともと美しいもの」(同年4月、妻パウリーネへの書簡)として、そのオペラの構想を絶賛している。実際にリブレットが執筆されるのは、先行する仕事を終わらせた15年以降となるが、第1幕が作曲家のもとに送られるやいなや、シュトラウスはすぐに筆を進めていくほどの順調な制作ぶりであった。従来、この作品の作曲、特に第3幕にあたっては、シュトラウスが難渋を極めたといわれ、その証拠として、16年7月28日にシュトラウスがホフマンスタールに書き送った手紙が引用される。

「皇帝や皇后、乳母といった人物は、元帥夫人、オクタヴィアン、オックスのように、赤い血潮で満たすことができません。(中略)私は誠実に働き、素材を何度もふりいにかけますが、感情は半分しかそこにはないのです。頭だけで仕事の大半をやり遂げねばならぬとなると、アカデミックな冷たい風がそこへ吹き込み(妻はいみじくも「頭でっかちな音楽作り」と呼んでいます)、この風ではいかなるふいごでも、本当の炎を起こすことはできません。」