

NAXOS

RAFF

Dame Kobold

Lika

Rieken

Surushkina

Most

Krimmel

Choir of the Theatre
of the City of
Ústí nad Labem

West Bohemian
Symphony Orchestra
(Mariánské Lázně)

Dario Salvi



Joachim
RAFF
(1822–1882)

Dame Kobold
(‘The Phantom Lady’)

Komische Oper in three acts, Op. 154 (1869)

Libretto by Paul Reber (1835–1908), based on the comedy *La dama duende*
by Pedro Calderón de la Barca (1600–1681)

Edited by Volker Tosta

First performance: 9 April 1870 at the Hoftheater, Weimar

Don Juan **Matthias Lika, Baritone**
Donna Angela, Juan’s sister **Lara Rieken, Soprano**
Beatrice, Angela’s maid **Julia Surushkina, Soprano**
Don Manuel, friend of Juan **Gustav Wenzel Most, Tenor**
Rodrigo, Manuel’s servant **Lukas Krimmel, Bass**

Choir of the Theatre of the City of Ústí nad Labem
(Jan Snítíl, Choir Master)

West Bohemian Symphony Orchestra (Mariánské Lázně)

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The German libretto and an English translation can be accessed at www.naxos.com/libretti/660619.htm

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|-----------|--|------|--|-------|
| 1 | Ouvertüre | 7:28 | | |
| | Act I | | | |
| | Scene 1 | | | |
| 2 | Schaut, ist es hier? (<i>Rodrigo, Don Manuel</i>) | 1:36 | | |
| | Scene 2 | | | |
| 3 | Scene and Aria: Verwandelt ist Madrid (<i>Don Manuel</i>) | 4:13 | | |
| | Scene 3 | | | |
| 4 | Ariette and Scene: Herr, mein Herr! (<i>Rodrigo, Don Manuel</i>) | 1:36 | | |
| | Scene 4 | | | |
| 5 | Seid Ihr ein Ritter (<i>Donna Angela, Don Manuel, Rodrigo</i>) | 1:20 | | |
| | Scene 5 | | | |
| 6 | Trio: Wie pocht das Herz (<i>Don Juan, Rodrigo, Don Manuel</i>) | 7:05 | | |
| 7 | Intermezzo | 2:00 | | |
| | Scene 6 | | | |
| 8 | Scene and Cavatina: Im Garten ist sie nicht zu finden (<i>Don Juan</i>) | 3:44 | | |
| | Scene 7 | | | |
| 9 | Duet: Spring auf, Feder spring auf! (<i>Beatrice, Donna Angela</i>) | 4:14 | | |
| 10 | Ariette: Ei, Ihr solltet Euch mich grämen (<i>Beatrice</i>) | 2:21 | | |
| | Scene 8 | | | |
| 11 | Scene and Aria: Soll ich mein Glück, mein Leben (<i>Donna Angela</i>) | 5:15 | | |
| | Scene 9 | | | |
| 12 | Duet: Nun Beatrice? (<i>Donna Angela, Beatrice</i>) | 4:02 | | |
| | Scene 10 | | | |
| 13 | Scene and Duet: Vortrefflich! (<i>Donna Angela, Don Juan</i>) | 3:50 | | |
| | Scene 11 | | | |
| 14 | Finale: Beatrice! (<i>Donna Angela, Beatrice, Chorus</i>) | 4:35 | | |
| | Act II | | | |
| | Scene 1 | | | |
| 15 | Scene and Duet: Im ganzen Haus macht' ich die Runde (<i>Rodrigo, Don Manuel</i>) | | | 11:42 |
| | Scene 2 | | | |
| 16 | Trio: Ah! Jene Türe hört' ich eben (<i>Donna Angela, Don Manuel, Rodrigo</i>) | | | 4:26 |
| | Scene 3 | | | |
| 17 | Höllisch' Blendwerk! (<i>Don Manuel, Donna Angela</i>) | | | 5:04 |
| | Scene 4 | | | |
| 18 | Herr, mir beben Herz und Hände! (<i>Rodrigo, Don Manuel</i>) | | | 1:08 |
| | Scene 5 | | | |
| 19 | Finale: Oh Herr, erwacht! (<i>Rodrigo, Don Manuel, Chorus, Beatrice</i>) | | | 2:57 |
| | Act III | | | |
| | Scene 1 | | | |
| 20 | Edler Ritter, wir sind am Ziel (<i>Beatrice</i>) | | | 0:46 |
| | Scene 2 | | | |
| 21 | Romance: Sei mir begrüßt, dämonisches Haus (<i>Don Manuel</i>) | | | 3:43 |
| | Scene 3 | | | |
| 22 | Wer bist Du? Sprich! (<i>Donna Angela, Don Manuel</i>) | | | 0:36 |
| | Scene 4 | | | |
| 23 | Verzeiht, Eu'r Hoheit, wenn ich störe (<i>Beatrice, Don Manuel, Donna Angela</i>) | | | 1:09 |
| | Scene 5 | | | |
| 24 | A tempo – Tanz Divertissement im ungarischen Stil | | | 6:32 |
| 25 | Don Juan ist es (<i>Beatrice, Donna Angela, Don Manuel, Don Juan</i>) | | | 0:47 |

| | | | |
|-----------------|---|------|------|
| Scene 6 | | | |
| 26 | Trio: Teure Schwester, schöne Witwe (<i>Don Juan, Donna Angela, Don Manuel</i>) | 2:00 | |
| Scene 7 | | | |
| 27 | Scene and Couplets: In jener Sänfte, gnäd'ger Herr (<i>Beatrice, Donna Angela, Don Juan, Chorus, Don Manuel</i>) | 3:05 | |
| Scene 8 | | | |
| 28 | Der Besuch, er dauert lange (<i>Don Manuel, Rodrigo</i>) | 2:48 | |
| Scene 9 | | | |
| 29 | Glücklich ist Don Juan fort (<i>Beatrice, Rodrigo</i>) | 0:41 | |
| Scene 10 | | | |
| 30 | Edler Ritter, ach verzeiht (<i>Donna Angela, Rodrigo, Beatrice</i>) | 0:34 | |
| Scene 11 | | | |
| 31 | Aufgemacht, augenblicklich! (<i>Don Juan, Donna Angela, Beatrice, Rodrigo</i>) | | 1:03 |
| Scene 12 | | | |
| 32 | Licht her! (<i>Don Manuel, Don Juan, Donna Angela, Beatrice, Rodrigo, Chorus</i>) | | 1:30 |
| 33 | Angela! – Aria: Oh Glück meines Lebens (<i>Don Manuel, Donna Angela</i>) | | 3:55 |
| Scene 13 | | | |
| 34 | Finale: Herr, mein Herr! (<i>Rodrigo, Don Manuel, Beatrice, Don Juan, Chorus</i>) | | 2:33 |

Joachim Raff (1822–1882)

Dame Kobold

Back to the Future?

It is normal for an artist to develop and change direction by exploring and evaluating a large number of diverse influences. This can lead to them enthusiastically embracing a model just as easily as it can to sceptical distancing or to highly individual changes. Joachim Raff altered his stylistic and aesthetic stance several times. This can be clearly demonstrated by comparing his stage works in order of composition. Raff wrote a total of six operas. He began *König Alfred* ('King Alfred') in Stuttgart in 1848, and after being subjected to a thorough revision, this 'grand heroic opera' in four acts was staged in Weimar in 1851 thanks to the good offices of Raff's mentor Franz Liszt. The year before, Liszt had premiered Richard Wagner's *Lohengrin* in Weimar. Raff, as Liszt's then-secretary, knew this 'romantic opera' inside-out, as well as being familiar with Wagner's publications regarding a new form of 'music drama'. His compositional response was his second opera, *Samson*; his theoretical response was *Die Wagnerfrage* ('The Wagner Question', 1854), a book critique.

Raff was unlucky with *Samson*, which he completed in 1857. Even Liszt's advocacy couldn't alter the fact that this 'musical tragedy' in three parts and five acts wasn't ultimately performed. (It only received its premiere in 2022, in Weimar.) After that, it was a long time before Raff wrote anything else for the stage. It wasn't until 1869 that he could bring himself to make what was, for him, an entirely fresh start in this arena, composing his first comic opera, *Dame Kobold* ('The Phantom Lady'), in Wiesbaden. His remaining three operas – *Die Parole* ('The Watchword', 1871/72), *Benedetto Marcello* (1875–78) and *Die Eifersüchtigen* ('The Jealous Ones', 1880–82) – date from the final decade of his life and are in the same genre, which didn't have much standing in German-speaking countries at the time. For as long as Wagner dominated the German operatic scene, standalone comedies were in short supply. Only a few, like Peter Cornelius's *Der Barbier von Bagdad* ('The Barber of Baghdad', 1858), managed to find a place in the repertoire in those circumstances.

Raff's *Dame Kobold* had its first performance in Weimar on 9 April 1870. Soon afterwards, in a knee-jerk reaction, a reviewer found fault with a 'certain eclecticism' and lack of a 'progressive' concept. The composer had not 'on principle followed the path Wagner was pursuing', he wrote. Despite 'the use of some modern innovations', the work was alleged to be backward-looking and its originality compromised by 'drawing on the old artistic forms'. Nevertheless, Raff's 'confident mastery of orchestral resources' and 'uncommon command of form' are commended. Everything was 'exceptionally well executed and very pleasing to the ear', 'effective and nimble'. 'Gounod might almost envy his German colleague' some of the vocal writing. Despite some of his observations being correct, the reviewer's clumsy attempt to place the opera adhered to a one-dimensional view of how music history evolves that derives from the futuristic ideology of the New German School and continues to have repercussions to this day.

The success of Wagner's propositions for music drama had devastating consequences for a long time afterwards. *Die Meistersinger* – which was solemn, long-winded and replete with nationalistic bombast near the end – wasn't a suitable pattern for truly comic opera. But afterwards, perpetuating the German comic opera tradition exemplified by Lortzing and Flotow was considered passé; Wagner's opera was threatening to generate a backwash of inferior imitators and acolytes; and between the two positions lurked the danger of an unsatisfactory compromise. Raff's 'solution' to this problem looked two ways. By seemingly abandoning 'progress' and looking back to the cheerful levity and facility of Rossini and elements of the associated operatic tradition, he managed to circumvent Wagner and anticipate trends that wouldn't become mainstream until 30 years after he had died.

When composing his first opera, *Alfred*, Raff had taken his bearings from grand opera, which was still being cultivated in the 1840s by composers he admired, such as Peter Josef von Lindpaintner, Carl Gottlieb Reissiger and Franz Lachner (heirs to Giacomo Meyerbeer's French *grand opéra* and the German Romantic opera practised by the likes of Heinrich Marschner). But it became clear to him in Weimar that owing to the practical constraints imposed by performance conditions in Germany, Meyerbeer's Parisian *Gesamtkunstwerk* could not be bettered there. After all, even Wagner had long since moved on from *Rienzi*. And while Raff's *Samson* looked like a German version of the *tragédie lyrique* from the outside, the way the score was organised unmistakably aimed to achieve a through-composed music drama, and was designed to get closer to that particular ideal than Wagner had managed to in *Lohengrin*. In his book, Raff had not only analysed compositional shortcomings in *Lohengrin*, he had been equally ruthless in criticising the discrepancies with what Wagner was then arguing was needful.

The long pause to reflect on opera that the composer of *Samson* imposed on himself after finishing it probably wasn't just a result of all attempts to have it performed having failed. Whereas Wagner's *Tristan* and *Meistersinger* triggered a hype that was specific to him, Raff first needed to digest his personal experience and conclusions where Wagner's 'music drama' was concerned. He probably gradually came to see that he could not go any further in that direction and nor did he

want to. It was a while before his search for an 'answer' to Wagner led him to develop the notion of a fresh type of comic opera – an idea that actually put him well ahead of his time. When, in 1869, after this lengthy process of demarcation, Raff wrote *Dame Kobold*, he had already achieved success in the prestigious symphonic genre, to which Wagner hadn't contributed anything of note. This gave him enough self-confidence to venture back onto prime Wagnerian territory. The subject of his three-act opera had been recommended to him by the singer Ludwig Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1836–1865), who had died young. He had been Raff's preferred candidate to create the title role of *Samson* and had achieved fame as Wagner's first Tristan shortly before he died.

As early as January 1865, Schnorr von Carolsfeld sent Raff a libretto he'd written, which has survived as part of Raff's estate. It is based on Pedro Calderón de la Barca's 1629 cloak-and-dagger comedy *La dama duende* – in English *The Phantom Lady*. (E.T.A. Hoffmann had already based his 1807 Singspiel *Liebe und Eifersucht* on a Calderón play.) But Raff doesn't seem to have liked Schnorr von Carolsfeld's draft. He altered the scenario, had Paul Reber, an engineer, architect and occasional poet from Basel, write the libretto for him, then adapted it to fit his concerns as a composer. Although Schnorr von Carolsfeld's and Reber's librettos are based on the same source, they differ greatly in their execution.

From Wiesbaden, Raff sent the autograph score and piano reduction of *Dame Kobold*, plus ten printed copies of the libretto, to the management of the Weimar Hoftheater on 19 January 1870, on time and as promised. He'd already asked Liszt to put in a word for him there in November 1869, and apparently Liszt had told him 'of his own accord' that he'd 'not hesitate to recommend a performance of it there'. The premiere was scheduled for the beginning of April, to mark the birthday of the Grand Duchess.

Because of the author's significance in the music world, Raff's *Dame Kobold* was 'eagerly awaited' in Weimar according to the Leipzig *Musikalisches Wochenblatt*. The premiere by the court orchestra, conducted by Liszt's successor Eduard Lassen, was a qualified success. The Leipzig weekly thought the second performance met with 'more widespread acceptance' and singled out the libretto and 'unfailingly interesting, in parts utterly gorgeous musical setting' for special commendation. On the other hand, it failed to make any 'lasting impression' on another reviewer, though he blamed 'the extremely appealing music less than the fact that the libretto hadn't more comic impact'. We learn from Helene Raff's biography of her father, published in 1925, that Liszt's long-time partner Princess Carolyne zu Sayn-Wittgenstein wrote to a friend from Rome on 20 April 1870 that she was extremely surprised by what she was hearing from Weimar about *Dame Kobold*: 'Raff light on his feet and slightly risqué – who'd have thought it?!' Ultimately, the work failed to establish itself in the stage repertoire, however. It proved to be the last of Raff's operas to be staged during his lifetime.

In his four comic operas, Raff wasn't even trying to reconcile more established elements of the genre with innovations from Wagner's music drama as he'd seen Cornelius, another member of Liszt's Weimar circle during the 1850s, do in his *Barbier von Bagdad* (1858). The idea behind Raff's final operas could even be interpreted as advancing a radical alternative to Wagner's stage works (especially *Die Meistersinger*). Helene Raff, who made her name as a writer after her father's death, was right when she credited the score of *Dame Kobold* with a 'lighter, Franco-Italian style'. References to Rossini (his aesthetics, the Rossini overture) and to German comic opera (Lortzing/Nicolai/Flotow) serve as starting points for a new light-hearted quality in the sense of the 'beauty' and 'Southern brightness to the sky' that Friedrich Nietzsche missed in Wagner's operas, as he did 'grace' and 'dance'. More than 30 years before Ermanno Wolf-Ferrari's attempts to resuscitate *opera buffa*, Raff turned his back on opera demanding large forces, as though he felt uncomfortable, as Nietzsche also came to, about 'a certain clumsiness' to it, 'something arbitrary, barbaric and solemn', 'something Teutonic, in the best and worst sense of the term'.

Raff's *Dame Kobold* is already moving towards chamber-opera proportions. The instrumentation is pared-down, with bewitching solos; the harmony is subservient to elegant, flowing melodies (Raff criticised Wagner's tunes for 'each note just [being] the top of the hefty chord underneath'); musical forms are succinct and focussed, the ensembles constructed with skill. There's not a bar too many: everything proceeds at pace; the effective, deftly written music responds to the scene flexibly moment by moment and is tailored to the text and the action of the piece. The closed music numbers, in the lighter 'Italianate' vein, appear traditional, while flexibly inserted *parlando* dialogue already points forward to Richard Strauss's *Ariadne* and his later conversation piece *Capriccio*. Dotted rhythms and surprising harmonic twists bring Berlioz to mind. The reduced forces anticipate the 'return to simplicity' and 'focussed setting' that Siegfried Wagner would, decades later, praise as his teacher Engelbert Humperdinck's 'enduring achievement' on the path to an 'innocent, intelligent German comedy'.

Raff's eclectic aesthetics are, in the final analysis, already moving towards the 'polystylism' of the 1920s, when composers combined multiple, distinct styles within a single piece of music. The Romantic delicacy of the writing in his Calderón opera resists German 'profundity', as it were on behalf of Rossini and Donizetti. The disarmingly simple plot eschews both philosophical 'messages' and biting satire à la Offenbach in favour of musically fruitful situations and moods. As Raff wrote to Weimar to commend the opera to the management there, this provocatively unsentimental opera – a rewarding one for singers –

makes do with five characters and a 'chorus used with restraint'. A little ballet required a minimum of expenditure, he went on; stage sets from old productions would be usable; the score was less about making 'noise' and more about 'real music'. Helene Raff's biography tells us that after the premiere and 'so much artistic effort', Raff needed a rest and 'travelled to the Bergstraße in Auerbach with his family'.

Raff didn't allow himself to be diverted from the operatic path on which he'd embarked by the lack of subsequent productions of his *Dame Kobold*. In the remaining twelve years of his life, he wrote three further comic operas, without commissions or definite prospects of having them performed. In these too, he remained steadfastly committed to his plan of marrying words and music ('la musica' and 'le parole', to allude to the title of the one-act opera by Giambattista Casti and Antonio Salieri, the subject matter of which Strauss would pick up much later in *Capriccio*). Indeed Raff's individual achievement remains that of expertly reconciling music and language and their respective rules.

Werner M. Grimm

English translation: Susan Baxter

Synopsis

Madrid, 1600s

Act I

A street in Madrid.

Don Manuel and Rodrigo are searching for Don Juan's house in Madrid [2]. Manuel recalls how he saved Juan's life when they were in the army. Although he remained a soldier, Juan returned to the court in Madrid [3]. The city, which Manuel hasn't visited for 15 years, is celebrating the baptism of the Spanish heir [4]. Suddenly, a veiled lady appears who begs Manuel to hide her from a pursuer. Attracted to her, he obliges and the two of them hide [5] as Rodrigo attempts to divert the man, who brushes him aside. At this Manuel confronts the stranger; they draw swords and fight. Manuel is slightly wounded, but then he recognises his assailant as Juan, and they embrace. The quarrel is forgotten and they enter Juan's nearby house [6].

Scene change: Donna Angela's room in the house of her brother, Don Juan.

In Donna Angela's empty room Juan muses that he must protect his widowed sister's honour. In the street he saw her talking to some foreigners, but she ran off as he approached. He reveals that, to help him supervise her, he has installed a secret door into her room and, hearing Angela and Beatrice approach, he leaves by that door [8]. Beatrice sees him 'disappear' through the wall. She tells Angela of her discovery, and her mistress recognises that it is part of Juan's well-meaning surveillance of her [9]–[10]. Left alone, she recalls her previous marriage to a man whom she did not love, but of whom her brother approved. She is lonely, and intrigued by the man who has just helped her evade Juan [11]. Beatrice returns with the news that Manuel and Rodrigo are now Juan's guests. Angela is anxious to see the wounded Manuel, so her maid suggests that she writes him a note and, as the secret door connects with his room, that they use it to leave it for him there. Angela writes a note and Beatrice uses the door [12]. Juan returns and greets his sister. He reminds her that, now she is a widow, only he can safeguard her honour unless she agrees to marry someone of his choice. If she cannot do that, then she must enter a convent [13]. Once he leaves, Beatrice returns through the secret door to hear Angela bemoaning her fate. To lighten her spirits she opens the windows to better hear the crowd in the street outside, celebrating the baptism of the prince [14].

Act II

Don Juan's room, now the guest room for Don Manuel.

His wound treated, Manuel enters his room with Rodrigo but, although it had been locked, they find his possessions strewn around, and Rodrigo suspects supernatural forces are to blame when he finds that coals have replaced gold coins in his bag. They are unaware of the secret door. Manuel finds a letter lying on his bed and, despite Rodrigo's ever more desperate warnings that it is the work of a phantom, he reads it. It is from 'Your Lady', offering to care for her wounded rescuer. Rodrigo vehemently confirms that the room was never left unlocked or unguarded and repeats that it is the work of a phantom, but Manuel cannot believe that the beautiful lady in the street was a demon, and writes her a letter in reply before they go out to the room's vestibule 15. Angela enters through the secret door, and hides in an alcove, enjoying the adventure. Intent on ambushing the phantom, Manuel returns and sits in darkness, whilst Rodrigo guards the door outside 16. Emerging from hiding to find to Manuel's letter, Angela lights a candle to read it and he sees her. He is struck by her beauty, and she confesses her love for him but, despite his entreaties, she does not deny that she's a phantom or reveal her identity, and writes him another note, predicting that they will meet later that night. She vanishes through the secret door 17. Manuel tells the fearful Rodrigo of this development, before settling down to sleep 18, but is awoken by his terrified servant with the news that he has seen four black devils outside, carrying a chariot of fire on their shoulders. Four hooded men enter, bearing a litter from which Beatrice emerges, inviting Manuel to go with her to meet his lady. As Rodrigo falls to his knees in terror, the blindfolded Manuel eagerly joins Beatrice in the litter and is carried away 19.

Act III

Double decoration: Donna Angela's room and the guest room with the secret corridor in between.

Beatrice leads Manuel into Angela's room and leaves him there 20. He removes his blindfold and, when he calls for the 'Phantom Lady', Angela appears behind him 21–22. Beatrice re-enters, calling her 'Highness', and announces that gypsies have arrived to sing and dance for her. Manuel, thinking her royalty, falls to his knees 23. After the gypsies' performance 24 Beatrice sees Juan coming, and Angela hurriedly hides Manuel in the cabinet which houses the secret door between their rooms 25. Juan tells her that he intends to choose her husband 26. He demands to know whose litter is outside and angrily sends away the gypsies, who have carried on playing 27. Rodrigo enters his master's unlit room, and senses a presence; Manuel has unwittingly opened the secret door connecting it with Angela's room. Fearfully, the servant challenges the invisible presence and, after some confusion, they recognise each other in the dark. Manuel realises that he is in his own room, but does not understand how 28. With Juan gone, Beatrice tries to get Manuel back from his hiding place in the cabinet, only to pull Rodrigo through into Angela's room by mistake 29. Thinking he is back in the presence of a phantom, he begs for mercy while Beatrice apologises for her mistake 30. A moment later Juan returns and Angela realises that the subterfuge has run its course. Beatrice and Rodrigo leave by the secret door, which is left open. Juan accuses the abject Angela of treachery 31. Through the secret door, in his own room, Manuel hears Juan's attack on Angela and protests. Juan enters Manuel's unlit room through the open door, and in the darkness they start fighting. Servants arrive with lights and Juan and Manuel recognise each other. Mollified, Juan suddenly announces that he had decided on Angela's new husband: it will be his old friend Manuel 32. She rejoices and Manuel is delighted 33. Beatrice good naturedly taunts Rodrigo about his missing coins, but they agree to get on as their employers are to be married. The opera ends amidst general celebration 34.

Mark Thomas

[from Edition Nordstern's critical catalogue: *The Music of Joachim Raff*, Stuttgart 2021]

Joachim Raff (1822–1882)

Dame Kobold

Zurück in die Zukunft?

Dass ein Komponist sich in Auseinandersetzung mit mannigfachen Einflüssen neu orientiert, gehört zum normalen Gang künstlerischer Entwicklung. Dabei kann es zu begeisterter Übernahme von Modellen ebenso kommen wie zu skeptischer Abgrenzung oder zu ganz persönlicher Modifikation. Auch Joachim Raff hat seine stilistischen und ästhetischen Positionen mehrfach gewechselt. Wenn man seine Werke für das Musiktheater ihrer Entstehungszeit nach miteinander vergleicht, lässt sich das gut nachvollziehbar zeigen. Insgesamt sechs Opern hat Raff geschrieben. In Stuttgart begann er 1848 seinen „König Alfred“. Durch Vermittlung seines Mentors Franz Liszt kam die vieraktige „Große heroische Oper“ nach gründlicher Umarbeitung Anfang 1851 in Weimar auf die Bühne. Im Vorjahr hatte Liszt am selben Ort Richard Wagners „Lohengrin“ aus der Taufe gehoben. Raff, der diese „Romantische Oper“ als Liszts damaliger Sekretär bestens kannte und auch mit Wagners Schriften zu einem neuen „Musikdrama“ vertraut war, reagierte darauf als Tonsetzer mit seiner zweiten Oper „Samson“, als Theoretiker mit seinem kritischen Buch „Die Wagnerfrage“ (1854).

Mit dem 1857 vollendeten „Samson“ hatte Raff freilich Pech. Auch Liszts Fürsprache konnte nichts daran ändern, dass das „Musikalische Trauerspiel“ in drei Abteilungen und fünf Aufzügen damals letztlich unaufgeführt blieb (Uraufführung erst im Jahr 2022 in Weimar). Danach schrieb Raff lange nichts mehr für die Musikbühne. Erst 1869 hatte er sich zu einem für ihn ganz neuen Ansatz auf diesem Gebiet durchgerungen und komponierte in Wiesbaden seine erste komische Oper „Dame Kobold“. Auch die restlichen drei Musik-theaterwerke seiner letzten Lebensdekade - „Die Parole“ (1871/1872), „Benedetto Marcello“ (1875 bis 1878) und „Die Eifersüchtigen“ (1880 bis 1882) - sind diesem Genre verpflichtet, das im deutschsprachigen Raum damals keinen guten Leumund hatte. Solange Wagner die deutsche Opernlandschaft dominierte, waren eigenständige heitere Stücke Mangelware. Nur wenige wie Peter Cornelius' „Der Barbier von Bagdad“ (1858) konnten sich unter diesen Umständen im Repertoire etablieren.

Raffs „Dame Kobold“ kam erstmals am 9. April 1870 in Weimar auf die Bühne. Schon kurz danach wurde in einer Kritik reflexhaft ein „gewisser Eklektizismus“ und das Fehlen einer „fortschrittlichen“ Konzeption bemängelt. Der Komponist habe „principiell nicht den von Wagner eingeschlagenen Weg“ genommen. Trotz „Benutzung mancher neueren Errungenschaften“ sei das Werk rückwärtsgewandt. Durch „Anlehnen an die älteren Kunstformen“ sei die „Originalität der Erfindung“ beeinträchtigt. Gleichwohl wird Raffs „sichere Beherrschung der orchestralen Mittel“ und „ungemeine Formbeherrschung“ gelobt. Alles sei „außerordentlich geschickt gemacht und sehr dankbar gehalten“, „wirkungsvoll und leichtfüßig“. Um manche Gesangs-partien könne „Gounod seinen deutschen Kollegen fast beneiden“. Trotz teilweise richtiger Beobachtungen blieb der hilflose, seinerzeit gängige Einordnungsversuch des Rezensenten einer „eindimensionalen“, in der „Zukunfts“-Ideologie der „Neudeutschen“ wurzelnden und bis heute nachwirkenden Sicht vom Fortgang der Musikgeschichte verhaftet.

Für die deutsche komische Oper hat der Erfolg von Wagners musikdramatischen Theoremen lange Zeit verheerende Folgen gehabt. Die schwergewichtig-überlangen, gegen Ende nationalpathetisch gespreizten „Meistersinger“ waren als Modell für wirklich komisches Musiktheater nicht geeignet. Ein Fortschreiben der deutschen Spieloper à la Lortzing oder Flotow galt danach als rückständig, im Fahrwasser von Wagners Musikdrama drohte Epigonentum, zwischen beiden Positionen lauerte der schlechte Kompromiss. Raffs „Antwort“ auf diese Problematik war janusköpfig. Mit seiner scheinbaren Abkehr vom „Fortschritt“, seinen Rückgriffen auf Rossinis Leichtigkeit und Elemente jener Spieloper gelang ihm an Wagner vorbei die Vorwegnahme von Tendenzen, die sich erst drei Jahrzehnte nach seinem Tod durchsetzen sollten.

Hatte sich Raff mit seinem Erstling „Alfred“ noch am Modell der „Großen Oper“ orientiert, die in der Vierzigerjahren von ihm bewunderte Tonsetzer wie Peter von Lindpaintner, Carl Gottlieb Reissiger oder Franz Lachner in der Nachfolge von Giacomo Meyerbeers französischer „Grand Opéra“ und der deutschen „Romantischen Oper“ eines Heinrich Marschner pflegten, so wurde ihm in Weimar klar, dass Meyerbeers Pariser Gesamtkunstwerk im deutschsprachigen Raum aufführungspraktisch nicht zu toppen war. Auch Wagner hatte ja seinen „Rienzi“ längst hinter sich gelassen. Äußerlich gab sich Raffs „Samson“ zwar als deutsche Version einer „Tragédie lyrique“, doch die Ausgestaltung der Partitur zielte unmissverständlich auf die Verwirklichung eines durchkomponierten Musikdramas und sollte diesem Ideal noch näherkommen, als dies Wagner in seinem „Lohengrin“ gelungen war. An ihm hatte Raff in seinem Buch nicht nur kompositorische Mängel analysiert, sondern ebenso schonungslos auch fehlende Übereinstimmung mit aktuellen Postulaten des Meisters moniert.

Die lange Denkpause in Sachen Musiktheater, die sich der Komponist des „Samson“ in der Folgezeit verordnete, war wohl nicht nur dem Scheitern aller Versuche einer Aufführung geschuldet. Während Wagner mit seinem „Tristan“ und den „Meistersingern“ einen ganz persönlich auf ihn zugeschnittenen Hype auslöste, musste Raff im Blick auf dessen „Musikdrama“ seine eigenen Erfahrungen und Erkenntnisse erst einmal verdauen. Vermutlich ging ihm allmählich auf, dass er selbst in dieser Richtung nicht weitergehen konnte und wollte. Es sollte dauern, bis im Zuge seiner Suche nach einer „Antwort“ auf Wagner die Idee einer neuen komischen Oper in ihm heranreifte, mit der er seiner Zeit in Wirklichkeit weit voraus war. Als Raff 1869 nach diesem längeren Abgrenzungsprozesses seine „Dame Kobold“ komponierte, war er bereits erfolgreich in der prestigeträchtigen Gattung der Sinfonie unterwegs, die Wagner nicht nennenswert bedient hatte. Das gab ihm genug Selbstbewusstsein, sich auch wieder auf dessen ureigenes Gebiet zu wagen. Den Stoff zu seinem Dreiakter hatte ihm der früh verstorbene Sänger Ludwig Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1836-1865) empfohlen. Er war Ruffs Wunschkandidat für die Titelpartie des „Samson“ gewesen und kurz vor seinem Tod als Wagners erster Tristan berühmt geworden.

Bereits im Januar 1865 schickte Schnorr von Carolsfeld ein eigenes Libretto an Raff, das sich in dessen Nachlass erhalten hat. Es basiert auf Pedro Calderóns Mantel- und Degenkomödie „La Dama duende“ von 1629 (E.T.A. Hoffmann hatte bereits 1807 in seinem Singspiel „Liebe und Eifersucht“ ein Sujet dieses spanischen Dramatikers vertont). Raff hat aber offenbar Carolsfelds Entwurf nicht gepasst. Er modifizierte dessen Szenario, ließ sich das Textbuch von dem Basler Bauingenieur, Architekt und Gelegenheitsdichter Paul Reber schreiben und passte es dann seinen kompositorischen Belangen an. Obwohl Carolsfelds und Rebers Libretti also auf derselben Vorlage beruhen, weichen sie in der Ausführung stark voneinander ab. Wie versprochen schickte Raff die handschriftliche Partitur und den Klavierauszug seiner „Dame Kobold“ samt zehn gedruckten Textbüchern pünktlich am 19. Januar 1870 von Wiesbaden an die Direktion des Weimarer Hoftheaters. Schon im November 1869 hatte er sich dort auf die Fürsprache Liszts berufen, der ihm „aus freien Stücken“ gesagt habe, wenn das Werk fertig sei, werde er „keinen Anstand nehmen, eine Aufführung desselben bei Ihnen ... zu befürworten“. Die Uraufführung wurde für das Geburtstagsfest der Großherzogin Anfang April angesetzt.

Wegen der „Bedeutung, welche der Autor in der Musikwelt einnimmt“, wurde Ruffs „Dame Kobold“ vor Ort „mit Spannung erwartet“, wie das Leipziger „Musikalische Wochenblatt“ damals meldete. Bei der Premiere mit der Hofkapelle unter Leitung von Liszts Nachfolger Eduard Lassen hielt sich der Erfolg in Grenzen. Die zweite Aufführung fand nach Meinung des genannten Blatts „allgemeinere Anerkennung“. Ausdrücklich wurde dort das Libretto und das „durchgehends interessante, zum Teil ganz prächtige musikalische Kleid“ gelobt. Ein anderer Rezensent registrierte hingegen „keinen durchschlagenden Eindruck“, machte dafür aber „weniger die recht ansprechende Musik als das die vis comica nicht in hoher Potenz besitzende Libretto“ verantwortlich. Helene Ruffs 1925 erschienener Biographie über ihren Vater ist zu entnehmen, dass Liszts langjährige Partnerin Fürstin Carolyne zu Sayn-Wittgenstein am 20. April 1870 aus Rom an eine Freundin schrieb, es erstaune sie sehr, was jene aus Weimar über „Dame Kobold“ berichte: „Raff leichtfüßig, und ein bisschen prickelnd – wer hätte das gedacht!“ Letztlich konnte das Werk jedoch nicht auf den Bühnen Fuß fassen. Es sollte Ruffs letzte zu seinen Lebzeiten aufgeführte Oper bleiben.

In seinen vier komischen Opern hat Raff gar nicht erst versucht, ältere Elemente der Gattung mit Errungenschaften von Wagners Musikdrama zu versöhnen, wie das Cornelius, der neben Raff in den fünfziger Jahren ebenfalls zum Weimarer Kreis von Liszt gehörte, in seinem „Barbier von Bagdad“ (1858) vorgemacht hatte. Man könnte das Konzept seiner letzten Musiktheaterwerke sogar als radikalen Gegenentwurf zu Wagners Bühnenwerken (und speziell zu dessen „Meistersingern“) deuten. Helene Raff, die sich nach dem Tod ihres Vaters als Schriftstellerin einen Namen machte, hatte recht, als sie der Partitur seiner „Dame Kobold“ einen „leichteren italienisch-französischen Stil“ bescheinigte. Rückgriffe auf Rossini (Ästhetik, Ouvertüre) und auf die deutsche Spieloper (Lortzing/Nicolai/Flotow) dienen als Ausgangspunkte für eine neue Unbeschwertheit im Sinne jener „Schönheit“ und „südlicher Helligkeit des Himmels“, die Friedrich Nietzsche ebenso wie „Grazie“ und „Tanz“ an Wagners Opern vermisste. Mehr als dreißig Jahre vor Ermanno Wolf-Ferraris Versuchen einer Wiederbelebung der Opera buffa kehrte Raff dem groß besetzten Musikdrama den Rücken, als habe auch er wie später Nietzsche Unbehagen über „eine gewisse Plumpeheit“ daran verspürt, über „etwas Willkürlich-Barbarisches und Feierliches“ an diesem Format, etwas „Deutsches im besten und schlimmsten Sinne des Wortes.“

Raffs „Dame Kobold“ tendiert bereits zur Dimension der Kammeroper. Die Instrumentation ist schlank mit berücksichtigenden Soli, die Harmonik Dienerin elegant fließender Melodien (an denen Wagners bemängelte Raff, dass hier „jede Note nur die Spitze des unter ihr stehenden zentnerschweren Akkordes“ sei), die musikalischen Formen sind knapp und konzentriert, die Ensembles kunstvoll aufgebaut. Da ist kein Takt zuviel, alles geht Schlag auf Schlag, die effektvolle, mit leichter Hand geschriebene Musik reagiert in jedem Moment flexibel auf die Szene, ist Texten und Aktionen des Stücks geradezu auf den Leib geschneidert. Ihre geschlossenen, in jener leichteren „welschen“ Tradition stehenden Gesangsnummern sind scheinbar traditionell, während flexibel eingefügte Parlando-Dialoge zukunftssträchtig bereits auf Richard Strauss' „Ariadne“ und sein spätes Konversationsstück „Capriccio“ vorausweisen. Pointierte Rhythmen und überraschende harmonische Wendungen lassen an Berlioz denken. Die Reduktion der Mittel nimmt jene „Rückkehr zur Einfachheit“ und „Begrenzung des Raums“ vorweg, die Siegfried Wagner Jahrzehnte danach als „ewige Errungenschaft“ seines Lehrers Engelbert Humperdinck auf dem Weg zu einer „harmlosen, klugen deutschen Komödie“ preisen sollte.

Raffs eklektizistische Ästhetik ist letztlich bereits unterwegs zu moderner Polystilistik der 1920er-Jahre. Der romantisch-delikate Tonsatz seiner Calderón-Oper opponiert quasi im Namen Rossinis und Donizettis gegen deutsche „Tiefe“. Die entwaffnend einfache Handlung verzichtet zugunsten musikalisch ergiebiger Situationen und Stimmungen auf philosophische Botschaften ebenso wie auf beißende Satire à la Offenbach. Das provozierend unpathetische, für Sänger dankbare Stück kommt mit fünf Personen und „spärlich angewandtem Chor“ aus, wie Raff nach Weimar schrieb, um es der Direktion schmackhaft zu machen. Ein kleines Ballett verlange nur minimalen Aufwand, Dekorationen älterer Produktionen seien verwendbar, die Partitur mache „weniger Lärm, als wirklich Musik“. Nach der Uraufführung und „so viel künstlerischer Anstrengung“ sei der Komponist ruhebedürftig „mit den Seinigen nach Auerbach in die Bergstraße gereist“, heißt es in Helene Raffs Biographie.

Von seinem neu eingeschlagenen Weg auf dem Gebiet des Musiktheaters ließ sich Raff trotz ausbleibender Folgeproduktionen seiner „Dame“ nicht mehr abbringen. Ohne Aufträge oder Aussicht auf konkrete Realisierungsmöglichkeiten schrieb er in den ihm verbleibenden zwölf Jahren seines Lebens noch drei weitere komische Opern. Auch in ihnen hielt er unbeirrbar fest an seinem bis dahin im deutschen Musiktheater einzigartigen Konzept einer engen Verschränkung von „la musica“ und „le parole“ (um auf den Titel jenes Einakters von Giambattista Casti und Antonio Salieri zu anzuspielen, dessen Thematik Strauss lange danach in „Capriccio“ aufgreifen sollte). Es bleibt in der Tat Raffs eigenständige Leistung, dass er hier Musik und Sprache mit ihren jeweiligen Eigengesetzlichkeiten virtuos auf einen Nenner gebracht hat.

Werner M. Grimm

Matthias Lika



German baritone Matthias Lika (b. 1994) was awarded First Prize in the concert category at the 2024 Bundeswettbewerb Gesang. He received his first vocal training from his father, bass Peter Lika, before studying with Dominik Wortig at the Leopold Mozart Centre in Augsburg and completing his Master's Degree with distinction at the Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst Stuttgart in 2025 under Thilo Dahlmann. Lika performs internationally with renowned ensembles including the Nederlands Kamerkoor, Regensburger Domspatzen, and Kammer-akademie Potsdam, and has appeared at the Alte Oper Frankfurt and Musik Theater an der Wien, as well as at major festivals across Europe.

www.matthiaslika.de

Lara Rieken



Soprano Lara Rieken performs on opera and concert stages worldwide, with appearances at the Musikverein Wien, Alte Oper Frankfurt, Vatroslav Lisinski Concert Hall in Zagreb and Rheingau Musik Festival. She has been a member of the ensemble at Theater Trier since the 2025/26 season, appearing in roles such as Flora in Britten's *The Turn of the Screw*. A laureate of the Bundeswettbewerb Gesang Berlin and the Vienna International Music Competition, she completed her Bachelor's Degree with distinction at the State University of Music and Performing Arts Stuttgart under the guidance of Prof. Thilo Dahmann.

www.lara-rieken.de

Julia Surushkina



Born in Ukraine, and of Polish heritage, soprano Julia Surushkina began her musical training in Poland, earning her Bachelor's Degree at the Krzysztof Penderecki Academy of Music in Kraków under Zdzisław Madej. She continued her studies at the Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst Stuttgart with Marion Eckstein. Surushkina has appeared on numerous stages in Poland and abroad, with roles including Juliette in *Pierwsza zmarszczka*, Adele in *Die Fledermaus*, Amor and Euridice in *Orfeo ed Euridice*, Gretel in *Hänsel und Gretel*, Clorinda in *La Cenerentola* and First Lady and Papagena in *Die Zauberflöte*, showcasing her versatility across both lyric and coloratura soprano repertoire.

Gustav Wenzel Most



Gustav Wenzel Most studied at the Royal Danish Academy of Music, the Danish National Academy of Music, the Opernschule of the Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst Stuttgart and the Privatuniversität für Musik und Kunst der Stadt Wien. He has performed at the Wiener Staatsoper, Musikverein Wien, Roskilde Cathedral, Odeon Odense and the Hofburg in Vienna, and has recently appeared as a soloist with the Copenhagen Phil, Danish Philharmonic Orchestra and the Odense Symphony Orchestra. Most specialises in German opera and Lied repertoire, and has worked with tenor Ian Bostridge on the interpretation of Schubert's *Die schöne Müllerin*. He has also received artistic guidance and vocal instruction from singers such as Thilo Dahlmann and Ramón Vargas.

www.nordicartistsmanagement.com/artists/singers/gustav-wenzel-most-tenor

Lukas Krimmel



Lukas Krimmel completed his Bachelor's Degree in 2025 with Marion Eckstein in Stuttgart, and is currently continuing his studies with Teru Yoshihara. Concert activities include Mozart's *Requiem*, Haydn's *Nelson Mass* and Bach's *St John Passion*, and he is particularly dedicated to Lieder, regularly appearing with pianist Jana Purešić. He also participated in a touring production of *Rose, die Müllerin*, created by Julian Prégardien and Johannes Held and produced by SWR. Krimmel is a scholarship holder of the Deutschlandstipendium, the Society of Friends of the HMDK Stuttgart, the Richard Wagner-Verband and the Trude Eipperle Rieger Foundation.

Choir of the Theatre of the City of Ústí nad Labem



The choir and opera ensemble of the Ústí nad Labem City Theatre consists of 32 permanent members, seven of whom act as soloists. The members of the choir are also sought-after guests of other important Czech ensembles. In addition to classic opera titles such as *Nabucco*, *Aida*, *Carmen* and *Rusalka*, it also appears in popular operettas and musicals, including *The Čardáš Princess*, *My Fair Lady* and *A Night at Karlštejn*. As well as regular performances in its home theatre, the ensemble appears across the Czech Republic, and has toured across Europe, predominantly in Germany and Austria. On the concert stage, the ensemble has performed works such as the Mozart and Verdi Requiems, and Dvořák's *Stabat Mater*. Artistic leadership is provided by opera director Martin Peschík, who also acts as the conductor of the Ústí nad Labem City Theatre orchestra. Leading guest singers from the Czech and international opera scenes also regularly appear on the Ústí nad Labem stage.

West Bohemian Symphony Orchestra



The West Bohemian Symphony Orchestra in Mariánské Lázně is the oldest orchestra in the Czech Republic. Its origins date back to 1821, when a rich musical tradition began to develop in the spa town. Since then, the orchestra has become an integral part of the cultural life of the region and the whole country. During its long history, the orchestra has collaborated with a number of important conductors, composers and soloists from the Czech and international music scenes. The orchestra's repertoire includes works from classical symphonic literature, Czech music of the 19th and 20th centuries and works by contemporary composers. In addition to regular concerts in Mariánské Lázně, the orchestra performs at domestic and international festivals and participates in representing Czech musical culture abroad. For more than two centuries, the West Bohemian Symphony Orchestra has been continuing the legacy of its predecessors and fulfilling the mission it has had since its inception – to bring music to the public in its purest and most beautiful form.

Dario Salvi



Photo: Murray Kerr

Dario Salvi is a busy and respected conductor with a versatile and eclectic repertoire, which has been recognised through numerous awards and nominations, including the 2023 ‘Riccardo Drigo’ Music for Ballet prize and a 2022 International Classical Music Awards nomination for the world premiere recording of Johann Strauss II’s *Waldmeister* (Naxos 8.660489-90). His passion for the rediscovery and performance of long-forgotten masterpieces and the curation of world premieres has put Salvi in the spotlight around the world. He has conducted many international orchestras and opera companies including the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra, Janáček Philharmonic Ostrava, Czech Chamber Philharmonic Orchestra Pardubice, Sofia Philharmonic Orchestra and Chorus, Karlovy Vary Symphony Orchestra, PKF – Prague Philharmonia, Neue Preußische Philharmonie Berlin, Kosovo Philharmonic, Malmö Opera and State Opera Rouse among many others, in a repertoire ranging from ballet to opera, operetta to musical comedies, and stage to symphonic works. World premiere performances include Vassallo’s *Edith Cavell*, Adam’s *Griseldis* and *Orfa*, Romberg’s *The Desert Song* and Strauss II’s *Blindekuh*, *Waldmeister* and *Indigo und die vierzig Räuber*, among many others. Salvi’s discography is available on Naxos.

www.dariosalvi.com



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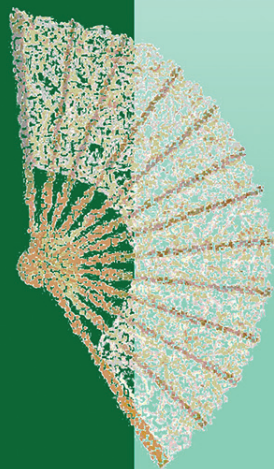
JOACHIM RAFF

Dame Kobold

komische Oper
in drei Akten

op. 154

Partitur



Joachim Raff moved in circles that included Franz Liszt and Robert Schumann, and he ultimately became one of the best-known German composers of his day. Of Raff's six stage works *Dame Kobold* ('The Phantom Lady') was the first of a series of comic operas that anticipated later trends, moving away from Wagnerian pathos and looking back to the levity of Rossini. Admired for its utterly gorgeous musical setting, the opera is notable for a disarmingly simple yet fast-paced plot, bewitching solos and elegantly flowing melodies, and a deftly responsive marriage of language and music.

Joachim
RAFF
(1822–1882)



Dame Kobold (‘The Phantom Lady’)

Komische Oper in three acts (1869) • Libretto by Paul Reber (1835–1908) • Edited by Volker Tosta

Don Juan Matthias Lika, Baritone
Donna Angela, Juan's sister Lara Rieken, Soprano
Beatrice, Angela's maid Julia Surushkina, Soprano
Don Manuel, friend of Juan Gustav Wenzel Most, Tenor
Rodrigo, Manuel's servant Lukas Krimmel, Bass

Choir of the Theatre of the City of Ústí nad Labem

(Jan Snítíl, Choir Master)

West Bohemian Symphony Orchestra (Mariánské Lázně)

Dario Salvi

WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING

1 Ouverture **7:28** **2–14** Act I **45:55** **15–19** Act II **25:17** **20–34** Act III **31:48**

A detailed track list can be found inside the booklet.

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The German libretto and an English translation can be accessed at www.naxos.com/libretti/660619.htm

Recorded: 15–17 October 2024 at the Společenský dům Casino, Mariánské Lázně, Czech Republic

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