

Dance of the Comedians from *Prodaná nevěsta* (The Bartered Bride) (1866)
Bedřich Smetana (1824 – 1884)

Sometimes, operas are written for the oddest of reasons. Smetana composed this comic-opera masterpiece purely to refute an accusation – that he could compose only Wagnerian-style operas.

The opera, a simple peasant comedy full of delightful melodies, concerns Mařenka, who loves Jeník, but to settle a debt her parents want her to marry Vašek, a country bumpkin and son of Tobias Mícha, a wealthy landlord. Kecal, the marriage-broker, tries to buy Jeník off; Jeník agrees for the sum of 300 florins plus the agreement that Mařenka must marry no one except Mícha's eldest son. Everyone is appalled at the callousness of Jeník, who literally sold his bride. Eventually, Mícha finally realizes that Jeník is his long-lost son by his first marriage. Jeník, who knew all along but kept it secret, is therefore the eldest and qualifies for Mařenka's hand in marriage! Kecal, hoodwinked and enraged, storms out; Jeník keeps the money and marries Mařenka, and everyone rejoices. The energetic Dance of the Comedians is performed by a visiting circus troupe in Act III.

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