

DER PROTAGONIST

One-Act Opera, Op. 15

libretto by Georg Kaiser
music by **Kurt Weill**

premiere:
Staatsoper, Dresden – March 27, 1926

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England, Elizabethan age. The Protagonist, together with his theatre company and his beloved Sister, have rented a large room in a country inn to prepare a play to be performed in the presence of the Duke. The Protagonist wants the performance to be perfect, so he assigns the parts to the Actors and rehearsals begin. While everyone is busy, the Sister secretly meets with her lover, who would finally like to marry her. Her brother is still in the dark and she is worried he will be jealous; nevertheless, together they decide to announce their relationship once the play has ended.

A Servant arrives, telling them that the Duke wishes to attend an amusing show in the form of a pantomime, and is offering them his own musicians. The Protagonist then reassigns the roles for a comedy in which a husband is entertained by a young woman, while his wife is entertained by a monk. The Sister waits for the rehearsals to end before telling her brother about her lover; the latter does not believe her and asks to meet him. The Servant returns: a bishop will also be attending the show, so now the Duke wants the subject to be serious. The Protagonist changes the show yet again, and this time prepares a tragedy in which he plays a husband blinded by jealousy who kills his wife. During the rehearsals, the Sister announces the arrival of her lover; in a raptus of madness that is a combination of role play and real jealousy, the Protagonist throws himself at her with a knife and stabs her in the neck. While those present call for help, the Protagonist asks the Servant to postpone his arrest until the Duke has seen his play.

