

WOZZECK

opera in three acts

libretto and music by Alban Berg

The drama was inspired by *Woyzeck* di Georg Büchner

premiere:

Berlin, Staatsoper Unter den Linden, 14 December 1925

Act one

Scene one – The Captain's Room. Early in the morning. Wozzeck, an orderly, is shaving the Captain, who is reflecting on his anguish at the brevity of life and misjudges Wozzeck for choosing to live with Maria and the son he had with her out of wedlock. The orderly says he doesn't have time to worry about morals, since he has to worry about earning enough to survive. *Scene two – Open countryside. Late afternoon.* Wozzeck and his friend Andres are collecting firewood for the Captain, when Wozzeck begins to hallucinate: he sees dark presences and feels a sense of emptiness and despair. *Scene three – Mary's room. Evening.* Maria looks out the window and observes the charming Drum Major with her neighbour Margret and then withdraws and looks after her son. Wozzeck is still deeply shaken by his hallucinations and when he presents himself to Marie with disconnected phrases, she re- mains at home exasperated. *Scene four – Doctor's Study. A sunny afternoon.* Wozzeck visits the Doctor who is conducting medical experiments on him in exchange for money and, instead of helping his patient, is excited he is able to study this case of ongoing neurosis. *Scene five – Alley in front of Maria's house. Twilight.* The Drum Major presents himself to Maria, who after some hesitation yields to his flattery.

Act two

Scene one – Mary's Room. The morning sun lights the room. Mary has received a pair of earrings as a gift from the Drum Major. Wozzeck returns and becomes suspicious when he sees the new jewellery; she tells him she found them by chance and he hands her the money without saying anything else. At the same time Maria is upset by her miserable existence and regrets her betrayal. *Scene two – A street in the city. Daytime.* The Captain is walking along with the Doctor when they see Wozzeck; the Captain jokes about Maria's unfaithfulness, while the Doctor describes the symptoms of the orderly's madness. *Scene three – The street in front of Maria's front door. A dark day.* Wozzeck is increasingly losing his mind, and, in the grips of hallucinations and



jealousy, he argues with Maria. *Scene four – A tavern Garden. Late evening.* Wozzeck experiences the instinct to kill for the first time when, at the tavern, he sees Maria dancing with the Drum Major. Amidst general indifference, a madman incites Wozzeck by saying he smells blood. *Scene five – Bodyguard in the barracks. At night.* Wozzeck talks to Andres about his own turmoil, interrupting himself when the Drum Major arrives, boasting about his conquest. Wozzeck attacks the Drum Major, but in the confrontation he comes off the worst.

Act three

Scene one – Mary's Room. It's nighttime. Mary is alone with her son; leafing through the Bible, she reads a passage from the Gospel asking heaven for mercy. *Scene two – Path in the woods, by a pond. It's dark.* Maria is walking with Wozzeck but feels a growing sense of unease. The woman wants to retrace her steps, but Wozzeck becomes increasingly threatening until he attacks her with a knife and kills her. *Scene three – A seedy tavern. At night.* Wozzeck has returned to the city and is distracted by the tavern, but those present become suspicious when they notice his blood-stained clothes. *Scene four – Path in the woods, by a pond. A moonlit night.* Wozzeck returns to the pond in search of the knife; once he finds the weapon he throws it into the pond but convinced that he has left it too close to the shore, he dives to retrieve it. In the pond the man is once again gripped by hallucinations; the water seems to turn to blood and Wozzeck drowns. The Doctor and the Captain pass by, hear Wozzeck's last groans but decide to ignore them and walk away. *Scene five – The street in front of Maria's front door. Bright morning, sunshine.* Mary's son is playing with friends; boys passing by shout to him that his mother is dead and they head towards the woods. Vaguely confused, the child follows them.

