

LA WALLY

Composer: Alfredo Catalani (1854 - 1893)

Libretto: Luigi Illica after the Novel by W. de Hillern

Premiere: Teatro alla Scala, Milan, January 20, 1892

Act I

Hochstoff in Tyrol, c. 1800.

Stromminger, a wealthy farmer, is celebrating his 70th birthday with a shooting contest that is won by Vincenzo Gellner. The zither player Walter sings a song about Wally, Stromminger's daughter, who prefers the seclusion of the mountains. The young men from the neighboring village of Sölden return from the hunt. Among them is Giuseppe Hagenbach, who has slain a bear and proudly boasts about his feat. Stromminger, an archenemy of Hagenbach's late father, ridicules the bear killer, which leads to a violent quarrel. Wally suddenly appears and puts an end to the skirmish. She and Hagenbach feel passionately attracted to one another, but neither of them dares avow this. Their blossoming love does not escape the attention of the jealous Gellner, who tells Stromminger what he has seen. The farmer decides to give his daughter to Gellner in marriage, but Wally rejects Gellner and defies her father. After Stromminger repudiates his daughter, she leaves the village to settle in the mountains. Walter accompanies her.

Act II

Sölden, one year later.

The villagers have gathered together for the Corpus Christi procession. Gellner, Hagenbach and Walter are also there. Wally, who has become the wealthiest woman in the region since her father's death, also unexpectedly shows up. She coquettishly claims that she has yet to kiss a man, and that she will marry the one who succeeds in stealing a kiss from her. As the villagers enter the church for mass, Gellner approaches Wally, professes his eternal love for her, and reports that Hagenbach now loves Afra, the pretty innkeeper from Sölden. Wally is devastated by this news and promptly offends Afra. Hagenbach, who rushes to help the girl, bets ten thalers with the peasants that he can steal a kiss from Wally. To the sound of ländlers and waltzes, Wally and Hagenbach declare their love for each other and kiss passionately. The Sölden townspeople make fun of the couple and applaud Hagenbach, who has won his bet. Wally feels deceived and is deeply hurt. "I want him dead", she says to Gellner, who is still completely in her hands.

Act III

Hochstoff, the same evening.

Walter has accompanied Wally home. While Gellner is returning to Hochstoff, one of the revelers tells him that Hagenbach is also on his way there to ask Wally for forgiveness. Gellner hides near the bridge. As a storm rages outside, Wally regrets her murderous wish and decides to forgive Hagenbach. But as Hagenbach approaches the bridge, Gellner leaps out at him and pushes him into the ravine. Gellner then proudly reports the successful outcome of his mission to Wally. But then cries are heard from the ravine: Hagenbach is still alive! Wally drums up the villagers to save him. But only she

alone has the courage to descend into the dark and foreboding ravine. She ties a rope around the unconscious Hagenbach and pulls him up from the ravine. She, then entrusts him to Afra and gives the girl her entire fortune as well. Wally, who is celebrated as a heroine by the townspeople, now retreats to the mountains to live in complete solitude.

Act IV

On the peak of the Murzoll in December.

Walter has climbed the mountain to bring Wally back to the village for Christmas. She, however, sends Walter away and longs for death in the snow and solitude. Hagenbach, who has long searched for Wally, then suddenly appears. The couple confess their love again and decide to start a new life. They begin their descent. But a storm arises and Hagenbach loses his way in the fog. An avalanche comes thundering down the mountain, burying Hagenbach within it. Wally then jumps into the churning masses of snow to Hagenbach - and to her death.