

MIKLÓS GYÁRFÁS: DYNASTY

A historical comedy in 31 scenes

First produced by the Miskolc NEMZETI SZINHÁZ

(National Theatre) on January 24th 1971

Directed by László Jurka - Sets designed by Antal Suki

- Costumes designed by Klára Letanovszky

4 male and 3 female roles

The action takes place in our own day

"Can a turner become managing director establish a dynasty? If, let us say, his wife is as ambitious as Mrs Mihály Kovács in Miklós Gyárfás's Dynasty who made diplomats out of her two sons and first a managing director and later a minister out of her husband? Gyárfás apparently asks those questions. What in fact interests him is the attitude and behaviour in their present fully fledged environment of working class people who were turned into professional men and women by the Liberation. Miklós Gyárfás picks one of the possible ways of behaving, perhaps it is not even the most typical one." (András Barta)

Mihály Kovács is the managing director of a great Budapest bus factory, but his wife, Julia, wears the pants in his house. She directs every one of her husband's actions. When the curtain goes up she is preparing him for negotiations with Eumailos Nicolaidis, a Greek businessman. She tells him the story of Admetos, King of Pherai, and Alkestis, his selfsacrificing wife. When she tells him that she wants to make a minister out of him, Kovács admits that his rising career has given him obsessional phantasies; sometimes he sees himself as a king, imagining his house to be a palace and those around him to be his court.

Kovács asks the Greek businessman home. While they are expectantly preparing for his arrival, Márton Kalász drops in, whom they have picked as a husband for their eighteen year old daughter Éva, and who has just been appointed an Assistant Professor at the University. It becomes clear that the boy was made into a scholar by Julia, so her daughter could be the wife of a professor. Éva however rejects Kalász, she would sooner marry Patai, her father's driver. Julia immediately begins to plan the career of the latter.

The Greek guest arrives. While they are talking Kovács is once again overpowered by his obsessional vision. He imagines that he is King Admetos. He would like to rid himself of the burdens of his scepter. The guest imagines

that it is all a joke, but Julia is frightened by her husband's illness. Eumailos tells that his wife was a Hungarian countess, and that he had eloped with her just forty years ago. They left the child of their guilty love in a foundling's home. Julia "discovers" that she was that child; she has a saving idea: if she is the daughter of a Countess and a millionaire her husband cannot be a minister, in the same way as the husband of the descendant of slaves could not be a king in ancient Pherai. She cures Kovács in this way by sacrificing her own dreams. Meanwhile it turns out that their guest had abandoned a boy child, but Julia will not allow her plan to fall into the water because of such a "bagatelle". Kovács is truly on the mend, he feels he does not have to go on rising in his career when a telephone message arrives: the minister has died suddenly. Kovács triumphantly announces that his wife's origins place her with the class enemy, they still entrust him with the portfolio. Following the decisive conversation on the telephone, he returns to the others with majestic steps, and adjusts the invisible crown on his head.

Miklós Gyárfás is a József Attila Laureate dramatist who teaches drama at the College of Theatre and Film Art. His plays show the sure hand of the craftsman, but they are inclined to be overstylized in the direction of tragedy or comedy. His comedies are full of grotesque situations and a facile wit. His plays are very popular on Hungarian stages. His most successful comedy, A head start, was performed in a number of towns in the Soviet Union, in Hamburg, Yugoslavia and Rumania.