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Strauss par excellence!

by Moore Parker

Strauss, R: Salome
Vienna State Opera
7 December 2015



This evening marked the 220th showing of the State Opera's perennial Boleslaw Barlog/Jürgen Rose *Salome* - set around the period of Strauss' composition, with its fin-de-siècle Klimtesque swirls and opulent costumes.

The cast inspired optimism on paper, and subsequently more than fulfilled any expectations. Proof that an old warhorse well into its fifth decade can be reignited when all the right forces gather.

Returning to the title role, Lise Lindstrom appeared with a blond flowing mane. Her striking looks and lithe figure combined with a voice that has possibly gained in richness and dramatic thrust, while

maintaining a certain nimbleness - indeed, whetting one's appetite for the coming new *Turandot* here next spring. *Salome's* dance was tantalizingly erotic and her final morbid encounter with Jochanaan's severed head orgiastically frenetic. Enunciation issues and an occasional glint of an accent were relatively modest shortcomings in an otherwise impressive performance.

Tomasz Konieczny absolutely reveled in the challenges of Jochanaan's feisty lines. The Polish baritone's rather "earthy" timbre, dark and gleaming, rode the orchestra excitingly in this vocal marathon - well-complimented by his commandingly resolute stature. Considering the feast, it may seem rapacious to plead for clearer diction - but further pointing of the text could only profit this already imposing figure.

Herwig Pecoraro and Carole Wilson were a wonderfully complemented pair as Herodes and Herodias. Pecoraro was truly in his element, winning the sympathy of the audience with his badgered, lily-livered Tetrarch, and - as ever, every word was pregnant with charge which carried clearly to the back of the house.

The sympathy came as no surprise, with Carole Wilson to contend with as a spouse. Currently a State Opera ensemble member, this was Miss Wilson's first Herodias here - and an occasion to be remembered. Her first utterance (goblet in hand) after tentatively descending the stairwell, was a self-effacing belch to establish the character. Throughout, this characterisation was filled with rare detail, intensity, and focus - riding on a bright and searing mezzo ideal for the task to hand.

Carlos Osuna's Narraboth came with a welcome bel canto background, and the remaining cast well-supported the aforementioned leads.

Dennis Russell Davies drove a fiery and exciting reading, evidently savouring the assets of his soloists as well as those of the magnificent State Opera Orchestra.

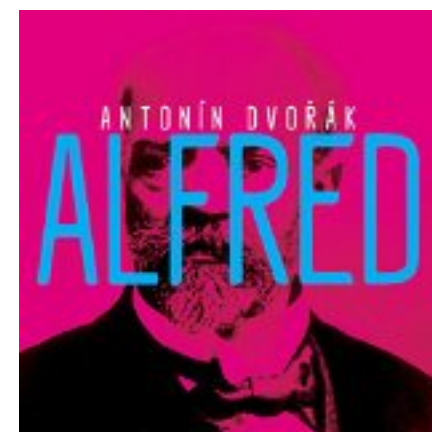
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