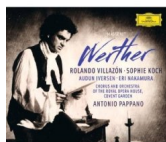


Massenet – Werther (Pappano) [2011]

Written by bluesever

Friday, 23 October 2009 16:29 - Last Updated Saturday, 15 February 2014 13:53

Massenet – Werther (2011)



Disc: 1 1. Werther, lyric drama in 4 acts: Prélude 2. Werther, lyric drama in 4 acts: Act 1. Assez! Assez! M'écouterait-on cette fois? 3. Werther, lyric drama in 4 acts: Act 1. Bravo pour les enfants! 4. Werther, lyric drama in 4 acts: Act 1. Alors, c'est bien ici la maison du Bailli?... Ô Nature, pleine de grâce 5. Werther, lyric drama in 4 acts: Act 1. Jésus vient de naître! 6. Werther, lyric drama in 4 acts: Act 1. Arrivez donc, Brühlmann!... Ô spectacle idéal d'amour et d'innocence 7. Werther, lyric drama in 4 acts: Act 1. Sophie! - Albert! Toi de retour! 8. Werther, lyric drama in 4 acts: Act 1. Elle m'aime! Elle pense à moi! Quelle prière de reconnaissance et d'amour 9. Werther, lyric drama in 4 acts: Act 1. Interlude orchestral. Clair de lune 10. Werther, lyric drama in 4 acts: Act 1. Il faut nous séparer 11. Werther, lyric drama in 4 acts: Act 1. Mais vous ne savez rien de moi 12. Werther, lyric drama in 4 acts: Act 1. Rêve! Extase! Bonheur! 13. Werther, lyric drama in 4 acts: Act 1. Charlotte! Charlotte! Albert est de retour! 14. Werther, lyric drama in 4 acts: Act 2. Vivat Bacchus! Semper vivat! 15. Werther, lyric drama in 4 acts: Act 2. Trois mois! Voici trois mois que nous sommes unis! 16. Werther, lyric drama in 4 acts: Act 2. Un autre est son époux! 17. Werther, lyric drama in 4 acts: Act 2. J'aurais sur ma poitrine pressé la plus divine 18. Werther, lyric drama in 4 acts: Act 2. Si, Kätchen reviendra, je vous dis! 19. Werther, lyric drama in 4 acts: Act 2. Au bonheur dont mon âme est pleine... Vous l'avez dit: mon âme est loyale et sincère 20. Werther, lyric drama in 4 acts: Act 2. Frère, voyez le beau bouquet!... Du gai soleil, plein de fiamme 21. Werther, lyric drama in 4 acts: Act 2. Ai-je dit vrai?... Ah! qu'il est loin ce jour plein d'intime douceur 22. Werther, lyric drama in 4 acts: Act 2. N'est-il donc pas d'autre femme ici-bas 23. Werther, lyric drama in 4 acts: Act 2. Oui, ce qu'elle m'ordonne... Lorsque l'enfant revient d'un voyage 24. Werther, lyric drama in 4 acts: Act 2. Mais venez donc! Le cortège s'approche

Disc: 2 1. Werther, lyric drama in 4 acts: Act 3. Prélude 2. Werther, lyric drama in 4 acts: Act 3. Werther! Werther! Qui m'aurait dit la place... Je vous écris 3. Werther, lyric drama in 4 acts: Act 3. Des cris joyeux d'enfants 4. Werther, lyric drama in 4 acts: Act 3. Bonjour, grande soeur! Je viens aux nouvelles 5. Werther, lyric drama in 4 acts: Act 3. Va! Laisse couler mes larmes 6. Werther, lyric drama in 4 acts: Act 3. Tiens, Charlotte, crois-moi, ne reste pas ici 7. Werther, lyric drama in 4 acts: Act 3. Ah! mon courage m'abandonne! 8. Werther, lyric drama in 4 acts: Act 3. Oui, c'est moi! Je reviens 9. Werther, lyric drama in 4 acts: Act 3. Toute mon âme est là! Pourquoi me réveiller, ô souffle du printemps? 10. Werther, lyric drama in 4 acts: Act 3. N'achevez pas! Hélas! 11. Werther, lyric drama in 4 acts: Act 3. Ah! Moi! Moi! dans ses bras! 12. Werther, lyric drama in 4 acts: Act 3. Werther est de retour 13. Werther, lyric drama in 4 acts: Act 4. Interlude orchestral. La nuit de Noël 14. Werther, lyric drama in 4 acts: Act 4. Werther! Rien! 15. Werther, lyric drama in 4 acts: Act 4. À cette heure suprême je suis heureux! 16. Werther, lyric drama in 4 acts: Act 4.

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Noël! Noël! Noël! 17. Werther, lyric drama in 4 acts: Act 4. Ah! ses yeux se ferment

Werther – Rolando Villazón The Bailli – Alain Vernhes Charlotte – Sophie Koch Sophie – Eri Nakamura Albert – Audun Iversen Johann – Darren Jeffrey Schmidt – Stuart Patterson Brühlmann – ZhengZhong Zhou Käthchen – Anna Devin Orchestra of the Royal Opera House Antonio Pappano - conductor Recorded May 2011 at The Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, London

Despite the fact that the world needs no more recordings of this opera—at least a half-dozen of those available fall into the “superb” category—this one proves that there’s always room for one with a great central character and a conductor who really can underpin the acres of angst. Rolando Villazon has been in vocal trouble now for a few years: surgeries, periods of silence, and a comeback or two have been punctuated by appearances on Britain’s TV show “Popstar to Operastar”; this latter decision, along with his zippy personality, has not led the opera world to expect much.

But this Werther, recorded live last May at Covent Garden, is stunning: still singing with emotional abandon and seemingly little care for his own vocal health, Villazon never sounds under pressure, the voice is not being pushed, the top notes ring true and grand, the rest of the voice is both beautiful and filled with his usual dark resonance. And as always, he sings the words as if they are happening in real time: the “Il faut nous separer” duet that closes the first act has just the right sense of wonderment and honesty; his second-act solos build brilliantly toward desperation; and his third act—including “Pourquoi me reveiller”—is an inevitable buildup to the character’s suicide.

Yes, there are moments when Alfredo Kraus or Nicolai Gedda are more supremely French in their tortured state, where Roberto Alagna adds a vocal beauty that is unmatched, or where Georges Thill or Jonas Kaufmann are a touch more virile—and vocally unstoppable; but overall, there is not an insincere or thrown-away note or word in Villazon’s portrayal of this self-destructive, idealistic semi-adolescent. If this is no longer a voice that can do anything, it is one that has learned a lesson and is doing what it does correctly.

Sophie Koch as Charlotte, since we are comparing, has not the luster of Victoria de los Angeles nor the innate sadness of Frederica von Stade, but there’s an alertness to her responses and a bloom to her voice (with suitable darkness at the bottom) that are without criticism. And each phrase is sensitively, intelligently sung: her reticence at the start giving way to near-panic in Act 3. The problem is that I cannot recall individual moments from Koch the way I can with other

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Charlottes: Crespin, Troyanos, the two mentioned above; Callas in the third-act aria.

Eri Nakamura's Sophie is the usual perky gal, perhaps less irritatingly coy than most. Audun Iversen turns the normally enigmatic Albert into more of a bully than usual—a welcome interpretation. The rest of the cast and Covent Garden Orchestra, led with a combination of Italianate passion and French orchestral filigree by the remarkable Antonio Pappano, make this a must-have recording of this opera, even if you already have a favorite. --- Robert Levine, ClassicsToday.com

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