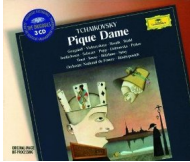


Tchaikovsky - Pique Dame 1977 (Rostropovich)

Written by bluesever

Tuesday, 10 January 2012 19:46 - Last Updated Saturday, 04 February 2012 13:47

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CD1 1. Overture 2. "Gori, Gori Yasno" 3. "Chem Konchilas Vchera Igra?" 4. "Ya Imeni Yeyo Ne Znayu" 5. "Nakonets-To Bog" - "A Ty Uveren" - "Schastlivy Den" - "Skazhi, Na Kom Ty Zhenis" 6. "Mne Strashno!" - "Grafinya!" 7. "Kakaya Vedma" 8. "Odnazhdy V Versalye" 9. "Se Non È Vero" - "Kak Bystro Groza Nastupila" - "Po- Luchish Smertelny Udar Ty" 10. "Uzh Vecher" 11. "Obvorozhitelno!" 12. "Da, Vspomnilna... Podrugji Milie" 13. "Nu-Ka, Svetik Mashenka" 14. "Mesdemoiselles" 15. "Pora Uzh Raskhoditsya" 16. "Ne Nado Zatvorit" 17. Otkuda Eti Slyozy CD2 01. "Ostanovites" 02. "Prosti, Prelestnoe Sozdanye" 03. "Liza, Otvori!" 04. "O Poshchadi Menya!" 05. "Radostno, Veselo V Den Sei" 06. "Khozyain Prosit Dorogikh" 07. "Vy Tak Pechalny" 08. "Ya Vas Lyublyu" 09. "Posle Predstavleniya" - "Ne Ty Li Etot Trety" 10. "Pod Tenyu Gustoyu" 11. Dance Of The Shepherds And Shepherdesses 12. "Moi Milenki Druzhok" 13. "Kak Ty Mila" 14. "Kto Pylko I Strastno Lyubya!" - "Tsaritsa! Yega Veli- Chestvo!" 15. "Vsyo Tak, Kakmne Ona Skazala" 16. "Shagi! Syuda Idut" - "Blagodetelnitsa Nasha" 17. "Akh, Postyl Mne Etot Svet!" 18. "Je Crains De Lui Parler La Nuit" 19. "Ne Pugaites!" 20. "Yesli Kogda Nibud" 21. "Chto Zdes Za Shum?"

CD3

01. Entr'acte 02. Ya ne veryu etc 03. Ya prishla k tebe 04. Uzh polnoch blizitsya 05. Akh, istomilas ya gorem 06. A yesli mne v otvet 07. O da, minovali stradanya 08. Budem pit i veselitsa 09. Yesli b miliye devitsy 10. Tak v nenastiye dni 11. Za delo gospoda 12. Chto nasha zhizn ? 13. Idyot yeshcho 14. Knazh knazh prosti menya 15. Godpod prosti yemu
Herman – Peter Gougaloff Count Tomsky – Dan Iordachescu Prince Yeletzky – Bernd Weikl
Countess – Regina Resnik Liza – Galina Vishnevskaya Pauline – Hanna Schwarz
Chekalinsky – Fausto Tenzi Surin – Dimiter Petkov Chaplitsky – Heinz Kruse Narumov –
Rudolf Alexander Sutey Master of Ceremonies – Heinz Kruse Governess – Ewa Dobrowska
Masha – Christine Mitlehner Orchestre National de France Mstislav Rostropovich – conductor

For a long time, although knowing the stature of "Píkovaja Dáma" in the oeuvre of Chaykóvskiy and in opera generally, it's with pain that I've forced myself at long last to get to know this work. My first experience 15 years ago, not knowing the story, led to me walking out after the 2nd act through no fault of the Canadian Opera Company's performance - all due to my utter abhorrence

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at the character Hjérman (Hermann) being sucked into his obsession with gambling (which destroys him after the secret cards given to him by the demoness appearing as the Countess' ghost turn out to be incomplete, leading him to kill himself) and in the process destroying both Ljizavjéta and her grandmother the Countess with him in his selfish addiction!!! While my horror about the theme of this story (both the Púshkin original short story and this opera) hasn't abated, this recording (as well as knowing the whole of the story, understanding thus Hjérman's poverty and also his dislike of the Countess) has helped me overcome matters sufficiently to start to enjoy the music.

Although the score for my taste has somewhat excessive "classical" mood-writing (some of it, e.g. the 1st mvt. of Act II, hardly sounds like the composer at times!!!), the greatness of the work overall predominates. If "Jevgéñiy Oñégin" is the product of a youthful composer, "Píkovaja Dáma" shows how far the mature notesmith has come along - just listen to the prelude to Act I to hear the difference in orchestration as well as thematic mastery (the melodic sweep of the love theme that leads into mvt. 2 when the curtain rises is so outstandingly Chaykóvskian!!!). It also mirrors the darker subject's mood as opposed to "Jevgéñiy Oñégin" - also corresponding to the more public damage done by Hjérman as opposed to the more internalised suffering occasioned by Oñégin.

Top honours go to Rostropóvich, an ever-masterful conductor in the Russian repertoire - although dealing with a French orchestra (like B'ichkov in his recording of "Jevgéñiy Oñégin"), he truly gets them to give a very Russian sound (quite unlike B'ichkov, and very much like Gjérgijev!). Also, the diction of the foreign singers (notably Hanna Schwartz as Poljína and Regina Resnik as the unlucky Grafíña/Countess - both are truly splendid!!! - as well as Gougaloff as Hjérman {he is not vocally as good as the others, alas}) indicates that they felt extra-motivated for this effort (Rostropóvich has been a strong motivator!), sounding virtually as Russian as anybody. No less fulsome praise should go to Vishnévskaja, who truly gives us an incandescent Ljízta - that the Soviets preferred to hurt and ultimately as good as expel her and Rostropóvich shows both the evil and the stupidity of all political correctness! DGG's recording also doesn't let the voices for once dominate the orchestra, and with their de-hissing technology the sound is as immaculate as one could wish for.

Without wishing to slight in the least Gjérgiev's work with the Kiróv-Mariínskiy recording (which I'm now getting to know - at least 4 if not 5 stars so far {a better Hjérman there undoubtedly!}), this recording is most certainly a most worthy contender, surely no less great! Get it!!!

{It's also a question of conceptions - Rostropóvich can be blunter than the at-times subtler Gjérgijev, but it DOESN'T mean that either one ought to be pooh-poohed at the other's

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expense! In fact, Rostropóvich's handling of the Act I prelude is more electrifying than Gjúrgijev (among other things). [There really isn't such a difference at all in terms of playing and sonority between the Orchestre National de France and the Kiróv-Mariínskiy Theatre orchestra - they actually have quite a similar brass-sound as well as wonderfully-lush strings!] Also, Hanna Schwartz, Regina Resnik and Bernd Weikl are no less wonderful than Óljga Bórodina, Irína Arkhipóva and Vladímír Chjernóv in their respective rôles. Coached right, foreign singers need NOT be automatically thought of as inferior in Russian rôles compared to native Russian singers by a long shot!} --- Alexander Z. Damyanovich (Flesherton, Ontario, Canada)

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