Wagner – Parsifal (Kubelik) [2003]

CD 1 *01. Act 1. Vorspiel 02. Act 1. He! Ho! Waldhuter ihr 03. Act 1. Seht dort, die wilde Reiterin! 04. Act 1. Recht so! – Habt Dank! 05. Act 1. He, du da! Was liegst du dort wie ein wildes Tier? 06. Act 1. Das ist ein andres 07. Act 1. Titurel, der fromme Held, der kannt' ihn wohl 08. Act 1. Vor allem nun: der Speer kehr' uns zuruck! 09. Act 1. Weh! Weh! 10. Act 1. Du konntest morden, hier, im heil'gen Walde 11. Act 1. Wo bist du her? 12. Act 1. Den Vaterlosen gebar die Mutter 13. Act 1. So recht! So nach des Grales Gnade* CD 2 *01. Act 1. Vom Bade kehrt der Konig heim 02. Act 1. Nun achte wohl, und lass mich seh'n 03. Act 1. Mein Sohn Amfortas, bist du am Amt 04. Act 1. Nein! Lasst ihn unenthullt 05. Act 1. Nehmet hin meinen Leib 06. Act 1. Was stehst du noch da?*

CD 3

01. Act 2. Vorspiel 02. Act 2. Die Zeit ist da 03. Act 2. Erwachst du? Ha! 04. Act 2. Jetzt schon erklimmt er die Burg 05. Act 2. Hier war das Tosen! 06. Act 2. Ihr schonen Kinder 07. Act 2. Komm, komm! Holder Knabe! 08. Act 2. Parsifal! – Weile! 09. Act 2. Ich sah das Kind an seiner Mutter Brust 10. Act 2. Amfortas! – Die Wurde! 11. Act 2. Grausamer! Fuhlst du im Herzen 12. Act 2. Auf Ewigkeit warst du verdammt 13. Act 2. Vergeh, unseliges Weib! 14. Act 2. Halt da! Dich bann'ich mit der rechten Wehr!

CD 4

01. Act 3. Vorspiel 02. Act 3. Von dorther kam das Stohnen 03. Act 3. Du tolles Weib! Hast du kein Wort fur mich? 04. Act 3. In dustrem Waffenschmucke? 05. Act 3. Heil mir dass ich dich wiederfinde! 06. Act 3. O Gnade! Hochstes Heil! 07. Act 3. Nicht so! – Die heil'ge Quelle selbst 08. Act 3. Du wuschest mir die Fusse 09. Act 3. Wie dunkt mich doch die Aue heut so schon 10. Act 3. Mittag – Die Stund'ist da 11. Act 3. Geleiten wir im bergenden Schrein 12. Act 3. Ja, Wehe! Wehe! Weh' uber mich 13. Act 3. Nur eine Waffe taugt

Performer: Bernd Weikl (Baritone) - Amfortas Kurt Moll (Bass), - Gurnemanz Matti Salminen (Bass) - Titurel James King (Tenor) - Parsifal Franz Mazura (Baritone) - Klingsor Yvonne Minton (Mezzo Soprano) - Kundry Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra Rafael Kubelik – conductor

This splendid set, recorded commercially in 1980 but held up due to contractual problems, here makes (to the best of my knowledge) its first appearance on CD. Entirely tic-, quirk-, and

eccentricity-free, this performance's translucence is one of its great virtues, and there are very few drawbacks. Tempos are ideal, buildups natural, peaks never overstated. Paying the most scrupulous attention to dynamics I've ever heard, Rafael Kubelik keeps the mood mysterious and pious. Parsifal himself, as sung by James King in Act 1 and the start of Act 2, is boyish and tentative. At first it's easy to think he's merely undersinging and saving himself--or that he's simply under-powered; but in fact, it's a brilliantly thought-through and executed performance. The Kundry/Parsifal encounter in Act 2 is so suggestive, so whispered, so intimate, that when Parsifal finally explodes with awareness ("Amfortas! Die Wunde!") it is truly his awakening. From there until the act's end he grows in stature (and voice), and with spear in hand, he's truly magnificent and fearsome in his new-found strength. His potent calmness in Act 3 is palpable and by the close he is truly worthy of the Grail. It's a nuanced, brilliant performance.

Kurt Moll, with his big cavernous sound, keeps it in check for all but the most extroverted, extravagant moments (recognizing Parsifal in Act 3, etc.), and if he never quite sounds as weary in Act 3 as Hans Hotter does, he certainly sings the role more beautifully than anyone else in memory. He also exudes true authority and a type of cosmic calm when he must--his voice is in perfect condition and his pianissimos are beautiful. In all, no complaints about his excellent performance.

Yvonne Minton's Kundry is a mixed bag: she's brilliantly insightful and expressive, and at low volume (most of the role, the way Kubelik plays it) she's remarkable. But in the rare forays into forte and above the staff, the tone is hard and unhappy. She's no Christa Ludwig (perfect for Solti) or Waltraud Meier (her only decent recorded performance, for Barenboim) or Mödl (loony but irresistible for Knappertsbusch in '51) or Jessye Norman (gorgeous, with Levine), but she certainly is not a problem and uses her undersized voice with blazing passion. Matti Salminen's vibrato-free sound as Titurel is oddly commanding, and Bernd Weikl is a suitably agonized Amfortas. Franz Mazura's Klinsor is a nasty, snarling piece of work, wonderfully corrupt. The rest are very good, with Lucia Popp's First Flower Maiden particularly seductive. The chorus is just about perfect, as is the orchestra; they sing and play with luster and at times a type of dreaminess I've never encountered before.

There's a stillness, a sense of timelessness to this reading that is unmatched by any other I've heard (even Karajan's), and it's not only appropriate, it's hypnotic. Solti's may be more awe-inspiring and Knappertsbusch's more fanatically Wagnerian, but this is something otherworldly. The recording is early digital, and a boost to the treble brings it more forward--just to the right place. This is a performance that chills and warms just where it should. Highly recommended. ---Robert Levine, ClassicsToday.com

Parsifal (WWV 111) is an opera in three acts by Richard Wagner. It is loosely based on Wolfram von Eschenbach's Parzival, the 13th century epic poem of the Arthurian knight Parzival (Percival) and his quest for the Holy Grail, and on Chrétien de Troyes' Perceval, the Story of the Grail.

Wagner first conceived the work in April 1857 but it was not finished until twenty-five years later. It was to be Wagner's last completed opera and in composing it he took advantage of the particular acoustics of his Bayreuth Festspielhaus. Parsifal was first produced at the second Bayreuth Festival in 1882. The Bayreuth Festival maintained a monopoly on Parsifal productions until 1903, when the opera was performed at the Metropolitan Opera in New York.

Wagner preferred to describe Parsifal not as an opera, but as "ein Bühnenweihfestspiel" - "A Festival Play for the Consecration of the Stage". At Bayreuth a tradition has arisen that there is no applause after the first act of the opera.

Wagner's spelling of Parsifal instead of the Parzival he had used up to 1877 is informed by an erroneous etymology of the name Percival deriving it from a supposedly Arabic origin, Fal Parsi meaning "pure fool". ---wiki

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