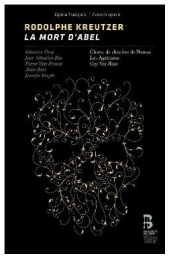
Rodolphe Kreutzer - La mort d'Abel (2012)



CD1 *01. Ouverture [0:05:55.30] 02. L'aurore a dissipé [0:02:02.82] 03. Charmant séjour [0:04:10.13] 04. Quoi, mon père [0:02:56.56] 05. Unissons-nous pour le rendre sensible [0:03:18.74] 06. Approchez mes enfants [0:01:16.12] 07. Insensible aux tourments [0:02:36.97] 08. J'attendais le retour [0:02:56.04] 09. Je vais le ramener [0:05:41.90] 10. Quoi ! toujours ton image est offerte [0:02:29.84] 11. Oh mon fils, ce démon [0:03:29.20] 12. Oh moment plein de charme [0:06:32.28] 13. Va préparer tes dons [0:06:53.90] 14. Mon dieu, de l'amour [0:02:27.49] 15. et bien de ma furreur [0:02:38.14]* CD2 *01. Acte deuxième, Prélude, scène et air (Caïn) [0:09:57.74] 02. Acte deuxième, Récit, air et scène (Caïn, Anamalech) - 'Tu dors, Caïn, tu dors' [0:06:24.86] 03. Acte deuxième, Scène et duo (Abel, Caïn) - 'Tremble, indigne frère' [0:02:32.64] 04. Acte deuxième, Duo (Abel, Caïn) - 'Cède a l'amitié d'un frère' [0:03:19.16] 05. Acte deuxième, Duoet scène (Abel, Caïn) - 'Viens dans mes bras' [0:01:52.66] 06. Acte deuxième, Scène (Méala, Tirsa, Ève, Adam, Les Enfants) - 'Nous approchons de lui' [0:02:45.26] 07. Acte deuxième, Scène (Méala, Tirsa, Ève, Adam, Les Enfants) - 'Ève, tu perds ton fils' [0:03:04.29] 08. Acte deuxième, Scène (Méala, Tirsa, Ève, Caïn, Adam, Les Enfants) - 'Mais quel monstre a frappé' [0:01:55.38] 09. Acte deuxième, Récit (Adam) - 'Ô toi, qui vois couler nos pleurs' [0:02:30.04] 10. Acte deuxième, (Chœur d'Anges) - 'Viens, viens dans les sein de l'innocence' [0:01:24.08]*
Sébastien Droy: Abel Katia Velletaz: Méala Jean-Sébastien Bou: Caïn Yumiko Tanimura: Tirsa Jennifer Borghi : Eve Pierre-Yves Pruvot : Adam Alain Buet : Anamalech Orchestre Les Agrémens Choeur de chambre de Namur Guy van Waas - director

First of all the story. It comes directly from the Bible and we have to keep in mind this is the psychological rewriting of an episode that is both important and at the same time rather short in the aforesaid Bible. In the Bible Cain is the farmer who presents God with fruits and vegetables, whereas Abel is the shepherd and he presents God with the newborn lambs of his flock. God rejects the offerings from Cain and accepts those from Abel. This is essential since it makes God a blood lover. He needs blood in his sacrifices to be satisfied. The long sections about the temple, the bowls and knives of the temple, etc., are the evidence that Jehovah loves blood

sacrifices and he only brings human sacrifices to an end with Abraham's ordered and then shunted sacrifice's) of his son(s). Jesus is not the first one to bleed for God as a human sacrifice still and quite many will follow the example willfully or not. But it is clear God rejects Cain at this moment. And that this rejection is the cause of the murder.

The opera does not go beyond the killing of Abel. The offerings are not clearly differentiated and what's more the rejection does not come from God but is clearly the result of the intervention of Anamulech, an envoy from Satan who tells us he has always been behind Cain's hatred for his brother Abel. And it is clearly implied it is that devil which topples Cain's altar and offerings. In fact God is absolutely silent and absent from the whole opera. This is already an important disruption of the Biblical story.

The opera then builds some psychological situation in which Cain accuses his parents of having preferred Abel to him and because of that he hates his brother. It is the typical rivalry of the older son who feels menaced by the arrival of the younger son. Note the opera provides the two brothers with wives and children, which implies, and it is clearly said, Adam and Eve have had daughters and these daughters became the wives of their own brothers. Incest is not heavily mentioned but it is mentioned a few times.

Act I Scene 4, Abel says: "My sisters, run to him. No, he cannot hate." He is speaking to the two wives, his and Cain's.

Act II Scene 6, Adam says to the women: "Eve, you have lost your son (to the others) Your brother is no more."

This incestuous situation that comes from the very axiom of the Bible that humanity came from the only two humans to have been created by God, Adam and Eve, both being directly connected via the famous rib. God is a basic in-breeder. The opera does not make it an extremely important element but the two instances I have given here are strategically positioned and thus cannot be seen as metaphorical or just accidental. They are motivated by their contextual environment. We can say that is a French element in the story after the strongly anti-Christian French Revolution.

Finally the opera insists a lot on the way the parents did not treat the two sons the same way.

Even if they mention the curse from the angel when they were ousted from the Garden of Eden, and Adam's fault (note Eve's fault is not mentioned), the main argument heavily used by Cain is that Abel is the favorite son and he, the elder, is not, is rejected. The toppling of his altar and the rejection of his offerings are the direct endorsement - for Cain - of this rejection from his parents by God himself. In other words he is cursed. If you add to that the fact that Anamulech pretends he is manipulating Cain, God is described as a pretty impotent and absent character. That too is a mark of the period: 1810 and Napoleon I with the strong heritage from the French Revolution.

We of course have to think of Victor Hugo's version of the tale in which things are just as ambiguous since Cain has himself buried underground but he is haunted by the eye of his guilt, Abel's eye watching him, ,if it is Abel's: "The eye was in the grave and looked at Cain." And the title is "Consciousness" (La Conscience). In the same way the poem makes god very absent from the situation. The great difference is that in the opera we are considering what happened up to the murder, whereas Victor Hugo only considers Cain running away with wife and children, dressed in hides and thus seen as savage wild uncivilized human beings who are bound to discover or invent consciousness, hence humanity. But the emphasis is set by Kreutzer on the fact that the devil is always manipulating us and the devil is in us in the shape of jealousy, whereas Victor Hugo insists on the fact good is always in man, even in the worst criminal, in the form of consciousness which is clearly seen as the sense of guilt, remorse even, though the crime is unredeemable, hence guilt is forever, and this is a fully human step.

Compare with Act II Scene 3, Cain singing about himself in the third person: "Cain cannot betray himself, his heart is but bitterness, it is made for hatred." There is no human transformation in this declaration just before he kills his brother.

In this opera Kreutzer is very close to Victor Hugo, both erasing God and the divine from the world but different because he seems to think only evil exists, as if there would not be any human life without evil. Godless and pessimistic indeed is this vision. And yet evil is only present in some individuals, like Cain, whose "race" is declared to be "cursed" in the opera. That goes against Victor Hugo's belief that Man is fundamentally good and creative, that Cain was a murderer because he was primitive, not yet fully human and he was to develop into a higher level of humanity through his own primitive crime.

And Anumalech is the only supernatural force that is taken into account: "Since a tyrant drove us out of Heaven, We must reign on earth." And that is the will of God who with this decision became absent on earth.

The music is quite pleasant and at times dramatic, though Kreutzer probably does not have the power of some other composers of the time. The production here is very good. The male voices are clearly differentiated and Cain and Abel are definitely clearly kept apart. Unluckily we do not have this same quality with the voices of the three women, Eve and the two wives or sisters. The opera has a couple of very good duets but the choruses are not used as they should have been: the chorus of children for instance, or those of demons and angels. Their use is hardly some kind of supplementary very short musical element supporting the soloists. They could and should have had some dramatic existence of their own. The composer chose not to give them any real density. The production here has been obliged to follow the score. ---Dr Jacques COULARDEAU, amazon.com

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