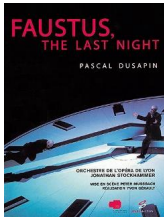


Pascal Dusapin

1. Faustus, the last night (Mp4)



311 MB

Georg Nikl – Faustus (Baritone) Urban Malmberg – Mephistopheles (Baritone) Robert Worle – Sly (Tenor) Jaco Huijpen – Togod (Bass) Caroline Stein – L'Ange / The Angel (Soprano)
Lyon National Opera Orchestra Jonathan Stockhammer – conductor

L'Opera National de Lyon has pulled out all the stops for its production of Pascal Dusapin's opera *Faustus* on its last night. The set is particularly striking; all the action takes place on a gigantic clock face set at a steeply raked angle. Its hands, which are large enough to carry the characters, move ambidextrously, and can be raised and lowered, and the rectangles representing the numbers can be removed and used as props, leaving in their place chasms through which characters can enter and depart. The quality of the singing and acting, under the direction of Peter Mussbach, is extraordinarily committed. Georg Nigl as Faustus, Urban Malmberg as Mephistopheles, Robert Wörle as Sly (a character lifted from the *Taming of the Shrew*), Jaco Huijpen as Togod (you're right to think of Beckett), and Caroline Stein as the Angel, create persuasive, energetic characterizations, and sing with radiant tone, even though the music rarely gives them the opportunity for extended lyrical expression. Dusapin intended the opera to confound traditional expectations of the Faust story, particularly Goethe's, and he fully succeeds. There is no discernible narrative logic, except that in the end, Faust does indeed end up dead. It would be tempting to describe it as an opera of ideas since it consists almost entirely of discussion, rather than comprehensible actions, except that by writing the libretto in English for a French opera house, Dusapin seems to want to obfuscate any semantic content. It

Dusapin (1)

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might be more accurately described as an opera of feelings, since most of the characters interact at a feverish emotional level, but without a coherent narrative structure, it's hard to tell what the emotions mean. It's also sometimes hard to distinguish between the characters, since Faust, Mephistopheles, and Togod are identically costumed. A number of events occur -- the characters clamber up and then slide down the steep clock face and ride around on its hands; Faust and Mephistopheles argue a lot; the angel remains aloof, quoting Blake and the New Testament; two characters appear in bunny rabbit suits; and toward the end, a Kitchen Aid electric mixer is turned on. Faust's demand throughout the opera is for light, and the fact that the actions and dialogue cast no light on the proceedings is certainly a metaphorical embodiment of his dilemma that allows the audience to share his frustration. Dusapin's music contributes to a Beckettian sense of troubled stasis; its tortuously slow unfolding, its consistently sparse but dark orchestration, and the lack of a musical-dramatic arc corresponding to the activities on-stage place it at a far remove from the expectations of traditional opera audiences. Because of its extraordinarily fine production values, this DVD of Faustus on its last night, should be of interest to fans of experimental theater, even though its intent seems more to be provocative than engaging. ---Stephen Eddins, Rovi

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