

Written by bluesever

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Othmar Schoeck - Das Schloss Dürande (2019)



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This reworking of *Das Schloss Dürande* aims to restore to the international operatic stage a significant opera of late-tonal Modernism that in the long term will have to find its own way into the repertoire alongside the works of Richard Strauss, Leoš Janáček, Franz Schreker and Alexander Zemlinsky.

Its late-Romantic style, which is common to the "lyrical" Schoeck of the songs and the "dramatic" Schoeck of the opera *Penthesilea*, here explores the very boundaries of what the idiom would allow.

At the same time, both these aspects of his oeuvre are so closely interwoven that the result in *Dürande* – which we are now able to rediscover for ourselves – is wholly autonomous and appropriate to its subject, almost postmodern in conception, and still capable of sweeping us off

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our feet today. ---Thomas Gartmann, claves.ch

It goes without saying that this opera – given the stigmatising circumstances of its genesis and its performance history as described above – cannot be performed again in its original form. I made an initial, somewhat half-hearted attempt at radically excising Burte's makeshift rhymes and dramaturgically trite text from the score, leaving just the music behind.

And it was only then that I recognised the impact of the music, its power and immediate sincerity. I also grasped that Schoeck had obviously composed his music over long stretches before even getting the text from his librettist. Without the text, without any words, the music itself tells the story of Eichendorff's novella in a compelling, unambiguous manner. I also recognised those passages where the composer had been compelled to extend his phrases and patch together bars in order to accommodate Burte's laborious verses more or less creditably.

These joins have remained so visible that we can open them up again without damage to the musical substance, and then with a certain amount of skill we can simply let the new verses flow into the music – without Burte's excrescences. When I listen to the performance documented on this CD, I experience just what I had so very much hoped for: the almost addictive rapture of the great Othmar Schoeck, with his visionary voice. This work is undoubtedly one of the most extraordinary to have ever come from his pen.

In fact, it's really his unspoken magnum opus. As in his other works from the war years, he continues to employ a musical vocabulary here that was already long out of date, if not in fact obsolete. We find much that is tonal and familiar, but so passionate and cleverly packaged that it doesn't just come across as utterly authentic and appropriate, but also as exciting, new, and deeply modern. Either way, it's unique!

This CD is essentially the second step of an unparalleled project that was initiated by the Bern University of the Arts. In his book "Zurück zu Eichendorff!" – Zur Neufassung Othmar Schoecks historisch belasteter Oper "Das Schloss Dürande", Thomas Gartmann offers a meticulous documentation of the whole process of restoration, so that everyone can judge for themselves if

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it has been a success – ethically, morally and artistically. Because in this second step, our concern is solely the music that everyone can now assess in its new context. It was our aspiration to present this ecstatic, richly colourful score on this CD as closely as possible to how it sounded at its recent world première.

So we have made hardly any edits, and engaged in no recording “tricks” at all. The singers mastered their task magnificently, and any little irregularities in their diction have been left untouched here. It is the listeners who will ultimately have to decide whether the implicit final step of our experiment can be undertaken: which is no less than the reintegration of Das Schloss Dürande into the operatic repertoire. ---Mario Venzago, claves.ch

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