

Der Stein der Weisen (The Philosopher's Stone) (1999)

Written by bluesever

Thursday, 21 February 2019 13:35 -

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Disc: 1 1. Overture 2. Introduction: 'Ihr Madchen! Ihr Junglinge!' 3. Dialogue 4. Aria; 'Alle Wetter! O Ihr Gotter!' 5. Dialogue 6. Aria; 'So Ein Schones Weibchen' 7. Dialogue 8. Chorus And Solo; 'Welch Reizende Musik' 9. Dialogue 10. Duet; 'Tralleralala! Tralleralla!' 11. Dialogue 12. Recitativ; 'Das Wirst Du Nie' 13. Dialogue 14. Chorus And Solo; 'Seht Doch! Mit Gold'nem Geweih' 15. Dialogue 16. Aria; 'Ein Madchen, Die Von Liebe Heiss' 17. Dialogue 18. Recitative; 'Das Wirst Du Nie' - Aria: 'Welch Fremde Stimme Horte Ich?' 19. Finale; 'Wohin Nadine' 20. 'O Leibster Vater' 21. 'Seht Doch! Mit Gold'nem Geweih' 22. 'Ihr Freunde, Ihr Madchen' 23. 'Erhebet Eure Haupter' 24. 'Wut Und Verzweiflung' 25. 'Ich Muss Nadin E Eilig Nach' 26. 'So Kommt Denn, Ohne Zu Verweilen' Disc: 2 1. Overture 2. Chorus With Solo And Recitative: 'Ach, Astromonte' 3. Dialogue 4. Aria; 'Den Madchen Trauet Nicht Zu Viel' 5. Dialogue 6. Marsch 7. Dialogue 8. Duet; 'Nun, Liebes Weibchen' 9. Dialogue 10. Aria; 'Nadir, Du siegst' 11. Dialogue 12. Aria; 'Ihr Gutigen Gotter' 13. Dialogue 14. Chorus; 'Astromont' Stirbt Durch Uns' 15. Dialogue 16. Arie; 'Die Lieb Ist Wohl Ein Narrisch Ding' 17. Dialogue 18. Aria; 'Mein Einziger, Liebster Nadir!' 19. Dialogue 20. Finale; 'Miau! Miau!' 21. 'Fuhl Meine Macht' 22. 'O Astromonte Hore Mich!' 23. 'Jungling, Nadine Ist Tot' 24. 'Fort, Armer Jungling' 25. 'Du Schwarzer Teufel' 26. 'Nadir, Ermord' Erst Diesen Hier' 27. 'Nadir! Nadir, Der Sieg Ist Dein' 28. 'Herr Astromonte, Wir Danken Euch'

Disc: 3

1. Discussion on the opera Der Stein Der Weisen

Jane Giering-De Haan (Soprano) Sharon Baker (Soprano) Judith Lovat (Soprano) Jane Giering-De Haan (Soprano) Sharon Baker (Soprano) Judith Lovat (Soprano) Gail Abbey (Soprano) Roberta Anderson (Soprano) Sabrina Learman (Soprano) Karyl Ryczek (Soprano) Paul Austin Kelly (Tenor) Kurt Streit (Tenor) Christopher Trakas (Baritone) Alan Ewing (Bass) Kevin Deas (Bass) Boston Baroque (Orchestra) Martin Pearlman (Conductor)

What this is not is a previously unknown opera by Mozart; what it is, is a sheer delight, a pastiche by several composers, including Mozart, performed in 1790 at the same theatre and by the same company that, in the following year, presented Mozart's Die Zauberflöte. In fact, Mozart's contribution to The Philosopher's Stone is limited to about five minutes of music, but his

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spirit pervades. This premiere recording includes a bonus CD with a discussion of the piece as well as musical illustrations. Textually, almost every character in Magic Flute has a parallel in this work: Papageno and Papagena are here Lubano and Lubanara, for example, and musically they are eerily alike as well. The world is one of fairy tale and alchemy. It never plumbs the depths of Mozart's late works, but there's joyously good music to latch onto nonetheless. The entire cast is good, with special kudos going to Paul Austin Kelly, who sings tenor music that is difficult enough and chock full of coloratura to match the Queen of the Night's acrobatics. If the entire score is without extra-special brilliance, at least what we get is top-level, very-late-18th-century generic music--sort of like Salieri and company mixed with Mozart. And this definitive performance, on period instruments led by Martin Pearlman, will please everyone. Mozart, not quite; necessary, absolutely. ---Robert Levine, Editorial Reviews

Some readers of Gramophone will no doubt remember, in 1997, the publicity surrounding the discovery of 'new' music by Mozart. It was then that David Buch, an American musicologist from Iowa, working on the scores in Hamburg that the Russians had purloined after the war and belatedly returned, stumbled on the words 'von Mozart' in the score of the compositely-written fairy-tale opera, *Der Stein der Weisen* ('The philosophers' stone). It has long been known that Mozart contributed music to this *Singspiel*, which was put on by Emanuel Schikaneder and his company in September 1790, just a year before *Die Zauberflöte*, but it was generally presumed to be restricted to a single number, the duet 'Nun, liebes Weibchen' (K625/K592a). Dr Buch, however, found that Mozart's name appears three times in the Hamburg score (which originated from Vienna), on this duet and on two sections of the Act 2 finale; other numbers are attributed to Johann Baptist Henneberg, a conductor in the company (ten pieces in all), to Benedikt Schack, the original Tamino (five pieces) to Franz Xaver Gerl, the original Sarastro (four pieces), and to Schikaneder himself (two pieces); several numbers are unattributed.

Listeners can amuse themselves guessing whether Mozart composed any further pieces, and also how far his contributions to the finale extended (they are followed by unattributed sections). My own guess would be that he did little beyond what is attributed, although there is certainly one passage in the finale that I am sure he wouldn't have been embarrassed to own up to, including a brief but solemn and elevated choral number. We can be reasonably certain, I think, that the three attributions are correct: the one previously known is corroborated by an autograph in a Paris library and the other two have a Mozartian ring, even though the opening of the finale is to the words 'Miau! Miau!' (one of the characters has been turned into a cat). There is an assurance about them that most of the other numbers lack, and also some typical touches in the scoring. The Schikaneder company, however, were a very talented crew, and the music in the rest of the work is at worst competently written: there are some stormy, menacing pieces for the villainous god, Eutifronte, noble and exalted ones for the beneficent one, Astromonte, comic

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numbers for the men and pretty ones for the women, if rather too many in a jolly 6/8 meter, all in the vein that we know from Die Zauberflote, of which there are many pre-echoes. One can point to specific resemblances, as Martin Pearlman does in his talk on the extra CD here, but these aren't particularly significant – what is interesting is that Mozart, a year later, with a libretto not so very much superior to the one here, was able to transmute the company's newly established musical style into something capable of touching new depths and new areas of human feeling.

This recording is made by the artists who gave the work's first modern performances, which I heard in Boston last autumn. Pearlman directs it with a firm hand, and does well to let us hear the orchestral detail so clearly. He draws sure singing from the choir. I can, however, imagine a more animated, more sharply characterized reading. Outstanding among the singers are Kurt Streit, strong and full-toned in Astromonte's music, and Alan Ewing, a characterful bass who sings the evil Eutifronte with plenty of spirit. Kevin Deas shows a ripe voice in the Schikaneder, Papageno-ish role of Lubano; Paul Austin Kelly does well in most of Nadir's music but is understandably strained by the very demanding display aria in Act 2, full of rapid music and going up to a top D. I enjoyed the contributions of Sharon Baker, whose glowing voice serves well for the Genie, and there is singing of charm from the two country girls. Nadine and Lubanara (even when feline), taken respectively by Judith Lovat and Jane Giering-De Haan. Mozartians will certainly want to hear this set, partly for the 'new' pieces, partly for the fascinating context it provides for Die Zauberflote. If they want to follow the libretto printed in the booklet, they will need a magnifying glass.' ---Stanley Sadie, gramophone.co.uk

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