

## Charles Gounod - Roméo et Juliette 2010

Wpisany przez bluesever  
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1. Act 1: 40 min 2. Act 2: 27 min 3. Act 3: 35 min 4. Act 4: 37 min 5. Act 5: 19 min Duke of Verona - Simon Neal Paris - ZhengZhong Zhou Capulet - Darren Jeffery Juliette - Nino Machaidze Gertrude, Juliette's nurse - Diana Montague Tybalt - Alfie Boe Roméo - Piotr Beczala Mercutio, Roméo's friend - Stéphane Degout Stéphano, Roméo's page - Ketevan Kemoklidze Gregorio, Capulet's servant - James Cleverton Frère Laurent - Vitalij Kowaljow The Royal Opera Chorus Dulwich Children from St Anthony's Catholic Primary School The Orchestra of the Royal Opera House Daniel Oren – conductor 1 November 2010 ROYAL OPERA HOUSE, COVENT GARDEN

Charles Gounod's Roméo et Juliette is almost more musical than opera. Everyone knows the story, and it would be hard to compete with Shakespeare. Gounod wisely focused on music, rather than drama. Hence the reputation of this opera has rested on its showpiece arias, and on good performances. Piotr Beczala defined this production at the Royal Opera House, London with an excellent Roméo, well shaped vocally and expressively full of character.

Beczala is relatively new to Roméo, having created it at Salzburg in 2008, and again in August 2010. Nino Machaidze sang Juliette at Salzburg this year too, at later stages of the run, which started with Anna Netrebko and Beczala. Pairing Beczala and Machaidze for the London production was an inspired choice. Although the productions in Salzburg and London are completely different, Beczala and Machaidze carried over what they'd built previously.

The London production is Stephen Barlow's revival of Nicholas Joel's production, revived only for the second time since 1994. The sets are like picture postcards, and the pace of movement staid, almost unnatural. It's worrying when the most vivid scenes are choreographed by the Fight Director, Philip Stafford. Admittedly, Gounod's treatment of Roméo et Juliette doesn't lend itself to intellectual depth, but fortunately Beczala and Machaidze injected enthusiasm into the

production.

Beczala's Roméo defined the performance. Excellent pitch control, luscious timbre. A wonderful and deeply expressive "L' amour, oui, son ardeur a troublé tout mon être!". The love duets were beautiful, even if Beczala overshadowed Machaidze's Juliette. Still, that's not surprising, as he's just more experienced. With Netrebko he must have been superb. In the last act, Beczala's "Salut, tombeau sombre et silencieux!" was well modulated, emotionally profound. marred very slightly when he had to turn backwards, projecting sound awry. I loved Beczala's Shepherd in Szymanowski's Król Roger and enjoyed hearing him develop over the years. Romantic Heroes are now his forte, but he has the depth, I think, to eventually tackle Heldentenor territory.

Machaidze looks like Olivia Hussey in Franco Zeffirelli's 1968 film of Romeo and Juliet, which adds piquancy to her portrayal. Her voice is light and agile, the brightness of her timbre expressing Juliette's youthful innocence, her firm lower register expressing the wilder parts of Juliette's character. Like many 14 year olds, Juliette does extremes, as Shakespeare observed. Machaidze may not have the polish of many much more famous and experienced singers but she's convincing enough. When she sings of waking too soon, holding Tybalt's bloodstained hand, she sings with such fervour that you realize that this Juliette knows what risks she's taking. Sweet as she is, Machaidze's Juliette has a brain.

Good performance standards all round. Darren Jeffrey as Capulet towers physically over the other players, which is as well, for Gounod develops the part well. Vitalij Kowaljow's Frère Laurent was also notable and Stéphane Degout as Mercutio. Ketevan Kemoklidze's Stéphano, Roméo's Page, makes a delightful impression in the song about doves and vultures, but artistically the vignette adds little.

Alfie Boe as Tybalt received prolonged applause which he acknowledged as if he were a principal. He has a huge following because he does popular song but that adulation might be his undoing. Not long ago a fan complained when he was unwell and couldn't adequately be replaced. That kind of audience isn't into opera as such, but in chasing celebrity. Gounod's choruses are justly celebrated and the Royal Opera House chorus responded well. Here they were directed to maximum advantage, and as usual, their performance was well executed. ---  
Anne Ozorio , operatoday.com

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