

JUAN PABLO IZQUIERDO
INDIANA UNIV. PHILHARMONIC
(OPERA), MARCH 1968

CHICAGO TRIBUNE, MONDAY, MARCH 4, 1968

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Henze Opera a Hoosier Success

BY THOMAS WILLIS

Bloomington, Ind.

HANS-WERNER HENZE'S "Elegy for Young Lovers" is not quite seven years old, but it is already plain that it is one of the handful of masterpieces created for the contemporary operatic stage. Its libretto by W. H. Auden and Chester Kallman at once evokes the past. The spirits—tho not necessarily the ghosts—of Ibsen, Hofmannsthal, Chekhov and Thomas Mann infuse and enfold its characters.

The "Of Time and Eternity" theme sounds with every stroke of its multi-layered bells. Its distant train whistle could be that of an ultra-worldly "Our Town" temporarily misplaced near a magic mountain where the snow is at once enemy and friend of those who long to stop time in its tracks, and who does not now and then?

But more than almost any work I know, it brings its audience up to a prime fact of an artist's life: To freeze life into art takes a photographer's detachment from subjects, however human and pitiful they may be. More than that—or at least so the opera maintains—the artist in search of eternity often destroys life around him, using and using up the people who

sustain and support him.

To those reared on the melodrama of the 19th Century works which make up the standard repertory, all this might seem too much for opera—but the first half of our century proved such a point of view shortsighted.

Schoenberg, Debussy, Webern, Berg, and Stravinsky have all demonstrated that the musical stage can extend, expand, and illuminate almost any words and underscore practically any mode of human behavior. The truth about writing an opera which belongs to true theater is not that it is impossible, only exceptionally difficult.

At Indiana university Saturday night, the school of music's justly renowned opera theater presented the first of four scheduled performances of the "Elegy" under the direction of a young conductor, Juan Pablo Izquierdo, who most certainly is a find. Under his direction, the orchestra and singers sailed thru one of the most complicated scores as tho born to both its idiom and its delicate shadings.

In a score whose incredible draftsmanship leaves everyone precisely enough room to speak and to move, timing is of paramount importance and he had every moment paced

to a nicety. The singers were given crystal-clear cues when necessary, but only then. What is more, the vocal ensemble was razor sharp rhythmically and exactly tuned in most cases. It was as impressive a display of musicianship on the part of everyone concerned as you will see anywhere in America, professional houses not excepted.

In this layered work, lovers go in pairs of opposites. There is a poet and his wealthy, spinsterish secretary. With them on an inspiration-collecting trip to the Alps is the poet's mistress and a sycophantic physician.

The object of their trip is to visit a local madwoman, crazed since the death of her lover 40 years before on the high Hammerhorn glacier. While the party is there, her husband's frozen body is found and, regrettably for the poet, she abruptly turns "Merry Widow" sane. But the pretty young mistress finds and sells the doctor's ardent son, home from school on a visit. They are the lovers of the title—or are they?

To gain grist for his mill-poem, the poet consents to the match, but asks the couple to stay a day so he can finish his poem in time for the state party celebrating

his 60th birthday. He sends them up the mountain for edelweiss, but when the guard comes to warn of an impending blizzard, the poet says there is no one on the mountain. The secretary remains silent, surrendering her secret love for the young man in return for a shared, lonely bond with the murderer.

The last scene takes place at the party. In one of the most striking moments in contemporary theater, the poet mouths his elegy without speaking as the music twines its intricate motifs around the motionless members of the cast.

The University now is presenting its performances in the 600-seat theater of the University High school while its new building is being completed. Within the limitations of the tiny stage, the technical and design crews also functioned expertly, tho the use of projections on a scrim was less than effective. Mixing media is all very well, but this opera is so thoroly rooted in the theater of life that abstract elaboration impedes the very clarity for which it aims.

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I.U. Philharmonic thrills concert crowd

By LISA KRATHWOHL
Daily Student Arts Writer

The I.U. Philharmonic Orchestra sounded different last night and the difference was thrilling. Perhaps this was due to two notable changes. The orchestra did not try to introduce a new piece and play little-known contemporary music; instead it stayed with standard concert repertoire.

More important, the orchestra was conducted for the first time in concert by Juan Pablo Izquierdo, former assistant conductor of the New York Philharmonic.

To watch the orchestra one could see an energy and willingness which previously was not marked. Mr. Izquierdo proved himself to be the master of tempos in the overture to Goethe's drama "Eunon" by Beethoven. The orchestra used wholehearted dynamics. The forte passages were not merely loud, the soft were suggestive.

In the "Reformation Symphony" by Mendelssohn the orchestra was extraordinarily supple. There was strength in the low strings and only the brasses "blew it" in a few spots. Written for the tercentenary of the constitution of the Protestant faith, the first movement showed religious upheaval and the final triumph. Like Wagner, Mendelssohn used the "Dresden Amen" and like Bach the "Mighty Fortress is Our God" chorale but he employed

them as only Mendelssohn could.

The solos came out better than ever—there was freedom in them. The players were not so caught up in pedantic details that they missed the reality of the music.

When Mr. Izquierdo conducts there is always something happening in the music, more than just musical conflict and working away from this conflict. Also there is blend not just among instruments but a blend from one section of music to another.

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