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Wagner's Mastersinger, Hitler's Siegfried: The Life and Times of Max Lorenz , and: Tannhäuser in 80 Minuten, Opernparodie nach der gleichnamigen Oper von Richard Wagner (review)

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moment of reverie during Mozart's *Fantasie* in C minor in which she dreamily narrates the harmonic events of the first movement as they go by. Here she is clearly speaking more to herself than the students clustered around her, and her commentary rarely goes beyond marking the large-scale events of the work, noting a modulation here, a cadence there, the return of a motif.

The film is too short to serve as an in-depth portrait of Boulanger either as a teacher or as a champion of new music during the twentieth century, although interviews with Igor Markevitch and Leonard Bernstein allude to her promotion of Stravinsky and the interest she took in young American composers during her long career. An interview with Monsiegeon interpolated through the film touches on her belief in God as the creator

of musical gift in individuals, and her belief that musicians so gifted have a responsibility to pass on and further that knowledge for others, as she has.

The DVD's packaging and accompanying booklet make it clear that *Mademoiselle* has not been updated since its 1977 release, and unfortunately the transfer for this release is rather poor. Especially disappointing is the lack of an audio remastering; the sound fades in and out, and worse, there is considerable distortion in the music that is played, making listening to the excerpts and performances in the film almost painful. Nonetheless, *Mademoiselle* is an interesting if by no means comprehensive record of Boulanger's last years of teaching.

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Wagner's Mastersinger, Hitler's Siegfried: The Life and Times of Max Lorenz. DVD. Directed by Eric Schulz and Claus Wischmann. Leipzig: EuroArts Music International, 2009, 2008. 2056928. \$24.99.

Tannhäuser in 80 Minuten, Opernparodie nach der gleichnamigen Oper von Richard Wagner. DVD. With Robert Meyer and Neue Wiener Concert Schrammeln. Music by Carl Binder. Libretto by Johann Nestroy. [Germany]: Phoenix Music Media, 2008. 804. \$29.99.

Max Lorenz is acclaimed universally as one of the greatest Wagnerian tenors of all time, but his reputation has been tarnished somewhat over the years by his alliance with the Bayreuth Festival during the years when Winifred Wagner openly accepted Hitler and the Nazi party as partners in reinvigorating the festival after years of decline. Lorenz made his debut there in 1933 and became the most highly prized singer on the roster, particularly as Siegfried. Like many artists of that time, Lorenz chose to distance himself from politics and stayed in Germany for his art. He was married to a Jew and was known to be homosexual, but his artistic clout saved him and his family. While he figured prominently in the Nazi propaganda that came out of Bayreuth, he was never a party member and after the war was allowed to travel abroad to perform, including to New York and Paris. In his later years he was highly regarded as a teacher and mentor, with the American helden-

tenors James King and Jess Thomas among his students.

This recent documentary makes no attempt to hide Lorenz' association with the Nazis, but it does not judge him, and it does cite his protection of his Jewish family and homosexual colleagues at Bayreuth. The focus of the film is Lorenz the artist, and the many audio and video clips of him attest to his greatness. Preeminent among the commentators are the singers Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, Rene Kollo, Waldemar Kmentt, and Hilde Zadek, and it is delightful to watch their expressions as they listen to Lorenz sing: smiles, raised eyebrows, knowing glances, and lip-synced text reveal their admiration for their colleague. Film clips include a dress rehearsal for the 1934 *Götterdämmerung* at Bayreuth with Frida Leider and several television appearances from the 1960s, with performances of Strauss' song "Zueignung" and Otello's death from Verdi's opera, in which the

technique may be going but the passion and vocal beauty are still there. Included with the DVD is a CD of excerpts from a 1938 performance of *Siegfried* in Buenos Aires. The sound quality ranges from poor to acceptable, but it is an invaluable document of Lorenz at his peak in collaboration with conductor Erich Kleiber and other notable Wagnerians of the era.

Jumping from the sublime to the ridiculous, we have a rare opportunity to see a parody of Wagner's opera *Tannhäuser* which was written in 1857, just two years after the first performance of the opera in Vienna. The playwright Johann Nestroy was a major figure in the history of Viennese theater, but his work is barely remembered elsewhere except as the source for the musical *Hello Dolly* (by way of Thornton Wilder). Writer, director, singer, and actor, Nestroy was a celebrated satirist and poked fun at many of his contemporaries. This parody of *Tannhäuser* was written in collaboration with Carl Binder, a forgotten composer whose work consists largely of such parodies. The score quotes Wagner but is made up mostly of songs and dances in the

operetta style. Nestroy's text narrates the story but with numerous jokes about Wagner and his "music of the future" (and how it will ruin your voice) as well as turning Venus into a barmaid in a seedy wine cellar. Most of the humor depends on knowledge of the original opera and an appreciation for Viennese accents and dialects, and as such it is more limited in its appeal than Offenbach's parodies or the comedy routines of Anna Russell.

In 2008, the Vienna Volksoper presented this piece as a one man show performed by actor Robert Meyer, who is currently the director of the company and a noted Nestroy expert. Accompanied by an ensemble of violins, guitar, and accordion, Meyer plays and sings all the roles with great relish and is extremely droll, but much of this gets lost in the translation and will appeal mainly to those who know Vienna and its people intimately, or with a special interest in musical parody.

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Tony Palmer's Film of At The Haunted End Of The Day, William Walton. DVD. Simon Rattle / Philharmonia Orchestra, Elgar Howarth / Grime-thorpe Colliery Band, Simon Preston / Christ Church Cathedral Choir, Oxford, Goldsmith Choral Union, Highgate Choral Society Los Paraguayos. Directed by Tony Palmer. Featuring Yehudi Menuhin, Julian Bream, Iona Brown, Ralph Kirshbaum, Yvonne Kenny, John Shirley-Quirk, Carmen de Sautoy. UK: Voiceprint, 2008. TP-DVD113. \$19.99.

Sir William Walton seems to have stumbled upon composing quite by accident. He was a chorister at Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford and wanted some way to distinguish himself so that he would be allowed to stay on in Oxford after his voice broke. Unable to play any of the instruments well, Walton felt that perhaps composition would be the only way he could avoid being sent back to his family, and so he gave it a try. This visually beautiful DVD was originally a film first broadcast in 1981 on Easter Sunday at the *South Bank Show* in London. The film is a deserving winner of the Prix Italia and provides stunning images of Sir William's estate on Ischia in the Bay of Naples. Superb performances of works such as "Drop, drop, slow tears,"

"Belshazzar's Feast," and the breathtakingly mesmerizing, unbelievably poignant aria "At the Haunted End of the Day" from Walton's opera, *Troilus and Cressida*, as well as many more works that musically illustrate the entire span of the composer's distinguished career form the backbone of the film.

Director Tony Palmer tells the story of Walton's life in ninety-nine minutes organized into fourteen segments that are presented in roughly chronological order. The early years are depicted in a series of flashbacks reenacted with Walton and other close relatives and life-long friends telling the story as the actors move through the story. The viewer gets a real sense of the bleakness of Walton's home life and the fact