

From the remains of civilisation: Calixto Bieito stages Richard Wagner's „Parsifal“

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Music Director Manfred Honeck conducts Wagner-Opera

Apocalyptic sentiment and questions of meaning is what Calixto Bieito deals with in his interpretation of Richard Wagner's "Parsifal", which premieres on March 28th, 2010 at 4 pm in the Stuttgart opera house. "Who are the bad ones?" Parsifal asks. Does Gurnemanz know the answer? The Catalonian director Calixto Bieito and conductor Manfred Honeck seek to find answers in the score.

Interpreting the title role of Parsifal, Andrew Richards makes his debut in Stuttgart. The American baritone Gregg Baker sings Amfortas. Stephen Milling and Johann Tilli take turns at presenting Gurnemanz. Christiane Iven, member of the ensemble, sings Kundry, Claudio Otelli Klingsor.

After his staging of "Der fliegende Holländer", based around the theme of the economic crisis, in "Parsifal" it is a spiritual crisis that forms the core of Bieito's concept. According to the director, the artificial religion Wagner created by borrowing various religious motifs is fatal: "The person of Parsifal is a new symbol of this empty religion, he is just a new victim being formed into a new Amfortas".

For Bieito, Wagner's libretto shows obsessed characters, which are exposed to manipulation through guilt and harm— there is no possibility of salvation in afterlife. Love and trust in this life alone can convey security and confidence. In that way one gains responsibility and respect for one's environment and one's own life. Parsifal becomes aware of his responsibility during the stages of his "aventure". "In the end", Bieito says, "the light will come from within ourselves".

Inspired by the novel "The Road" by American author Cormac McCarthy, Bieito's Parsifal is confronted with the remains of civilisation. The protagonists in the novel, father and son, wander through post-apocalyptic, deserted and desolate America. Accordingly, Bieito sees Parsifal set in an apocalyptic scenery. Stage designer Susanne Gschwender creates a destroyed landscape covered by ash, where a ruined motorway bridge is the only evidence of a bygone civilisation. Mercè Paloma provides the characters with an existential basic outfit: Protection from heat, cold and pollution.

The Staatsoper Stuttgart is amongst Europe's most important Opera Houses. It is also part of a theatrical complex which is run explicitly in a three-branch-form and represents the largest theatre of its kind in Europe. The Württemberg State Theatres consist of the Staatsoper Stuttgart, the Schauspiel Stuttgart and the Stuttgart Ballet.

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