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(TRANSLATED FROM THE POLISH ORIGINAL)

By WIESLAW KOWALSKI

Castor et Pollux "by Jean Philipp Rameau, who is considered a master of the French baroque, at the Warsaw Chamber Opera it gained the shape of an intelligent work, thanks to its references to tarot, esotericism and astrology, also universal and skilfully leading a contemporary dialogue with the past. The set design (Francesco Votoli) is minimalist, but thanks to the use of multimedia and the phenomenal use of light, it gains clarity, deepening the interpretative tropes of the director (Deda Cristina Colonna). Simplicity prevails in building stage situations, from the variety of dances, ballet arrangements, arias and scenes with the participation of the choir, but thanks to the suggestive stage movement (especially in the case of a choir it will be a very important gesture, composed naturally, delicately and without pretended emphasis) for all our senses and the emotional demand of the viewer that appears during perception. The static nature of the action is conquered by an innovative attempt to look at the ancient heroes, which tries to depart from purely baroque conventions and breathe new life into the form. Colonna and Vitali do not try to recreate the presented world, dominated by myths and references to antiquity, in a fairy-tale way, but when looking for a metaphor they go towards creating their own, strong world marked by intimacy, in which each image will be combined with its nobility with baroque music and the one that which in its content is still in essence important and eternally valid.

In terms of vocals, the performance can be considered to be sung very stylishly and nobly. Almost all artists have been gifted with interesting voices, and they are undoubtedly no strangers to the secrets of old techniques. The most convincing was Kieran White in the role of Castor, his voice had the brightness appropriate to French music, but also the lightness that is the basis for the performance of this type of repertoire. Only Kamil Zdebel was slightly behind him as Pollux; both singers, thanks to resignation from an unnecessary impression of exaltation, achieve a high degree of stage truth, sometimes even distance, which is not easy to achieve in this type of libretto. On their faces, every surprise, fear, happiness or emotion caused by the unexpected turn of events was discreet, but not devoid of internal tension. Aleksander Rewiński was a bit worse with the sounds in the upper register, but fortunately the parts he performed (Un Spartiate, Un Athlete, Mercure) were not the most important in this performance. Among the ladies, I liked Ingrida Gapova (Cleone, Une Suivante d'Hebe, Une Ombre Heureuse) the most, too majestic and dignified I found Telaire in the interpretation of Toska Rousseau, while Anna Werecka hit the tones of envious, still intriguing Phebe.

The MACV Early Instruments Orchestra of the Warsaw Chamber Opera, led by the Australian conductor Benjamin Bayl, was characterized by freshness in articulating a clear and lively musical line, properly reflecting the temperature and richness of moods contained in the Rameau score. The harmoniousness of the sound combined with the vocal interpretations of the soloists was also impressive. Bayl excellently moved from sequences of crazy storms or sequences of great dramatic power, not only emotional, to heavenly moments bringing gentle relief or peace of love confessions, including brotherly ones.

An important role in the drama of this Baroque composer, sometimes even dominant, is played by the ballet (Alberto Arcos, Elisa Bermejo Gomez, Sławomir Greś, Valerie Lauer, Joanna Lichorowicz-Greś, Adrian Navarro, Aleksandra Pawliczuk, Dominik Skorek), which not only creates, but also deepens the aura of uniqueness and mystery of what is happening between the main protagonists, not only in the emotional layer. Of course, the power of love, also between the title brothers, is extremely important, the more so when Jupiter leaves the sky to try to soothe the aching hearts of ancient heroes. The beautiful choreography for which the director of this production is responsible reveals the original movement aesthetics to the viewer, which in the technique of baroque dance very strongly uses hand gestures that enter into dialogue with the movement of the feet and individual steps. The ensemble of dancers, composed in symmetrical lines and harmoniously creating geometric figurality, in an impressive and extremely precise way shows all the variability of rhythms, which have a huge impact on the narrative flows of the story itself. For what is the most important in our life and what constitutes interpersonal relations. Because next to love, war also appears in the Pierre-Joseph Bernard libretto and takes its toll.

The WOK choir, perfectly prepared by Krzysztof Kusiel-Moroz, deserves special recognition and distinction. The power of its sound was so impressive and suggestive that it sensationally connected the spaces of two mythical worlds and at the same time helped the antagonists find themselves in a reality suspended between the cosmos and the earth, between what is assigned not only to human but also to divine nature.

The sky and the stars rule this world and the souls of the protagonists, reaching their most secret nooks and crannies, the torn hearts and inner contradictions of human reason, mysterious and full of contrasts.