

I have spent the week with *Prospero*, a wonderful, engaging opera! I find it such a rich and involving work, I hardly know what aspect to mention first when talking about it.

The role of Prospero is immense! It reminds me of Wagner's Wotan in a number of ways, including the theme of renunciation (Entsagung). He even, like Wotan, breaks his spear! But the challenges that Prospero faces feel particularly up-to-date: when to grant freedom to Ariel; how much responsibility to place in Caliban's hands--and the hands of his own enemies--at the opera's end. Lombardi's Prospero is a Wotan for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The young lovers Miranda and Ferdinando set their elders an example by innocently loving across boundaries of language and culture. Many of Shakespeare's most unique creations--Caliban, Ariel--are here clothed in music specifically tailored for them.

The mixture of four languages, which I was prepared to hate, proves to be very effective. *Prospero* feels like a European Union opera! In the theater, supertitles will help audiences understand the passages that are not in a language familiar to them.

The music is immensely varied, with all kinds of wonderful effects. I love the way that the orchestra often continues "repeating" some words that a character has just sung (a bit like "wonnevoll" in the piano part of Brahms's "Wie bist du, meine Königin").

There are lots of wonderful "mood" interludes, flute and cello solos expressing the inner thoughts of Ariel and Prospero, and what may be the most effective processional music since Puccini's *Turandot*.

The use of exoticism is delicious: the augmented seconds when the shipwrecked men approach the mysterious island--and then that music recurs when Ferdinando sees Miranda for the first time (and again toward the end of the opera when he introduces her to his father).

I congratulate Luca Lombardi on putting this massive work together, and also getting such a committed and effective performance, not least from the singer in the title role of Prospero--what a demanding but many-sided and therefore gratifying part! Lombardi's *Prospero* is an immensely communicative opera that deserves to be produced and heard around the world.

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