

in einen neuen, wilden Traum. Die Herren neigen zum Toten- und Heldenkult und zu schwarzen Uniformen, die Damen zu fließenden Empire-Kleidchen. Zwar bleibt seiner Meinung nach insgesamt doch ein leidlich klares Bild einer etwas verschwommenen Story, aber das Konzept trägt nicht, und die nicht ganz geschmackssicheren Balletteinlagen (Reininghaus) nach Andrew Georges etwas alberner Choreographie (Wagner) werten die szenische Umsetzung ebenfalls nicht auf. Das Resümee nach Reininghaus: Musikalisch sind die stimmlichen und technischen Möglichkeiten der Gegenwart der „Euryanthe“ ganz gewachsen; was ihr fehlt, ist ein moderner Regisseur, der mit ihrer doppelten Historizität umzugehen und ihre enormen Triebkräfte freizusetzen versteht.

Poor Euryanthe!

Weber at Glyndebourne
by John Warrack, Rievaulx/GB

Still, in England, she languishes in a desert of neglect, awaiting rescuing huntsmen to seek her out and restore her to the arms of posterity. The 19th century saw a few English productions, but mostly, in a country that for so long lacked opera houses outside the capital, the opera was dependent on student or amateur groups. Even in the last half century, with our vastly improved operatic conditions, England has had only a handful of performances. In 1962 the amateur Philopera Circle staged a performance in London's St Pancras Town Hall (where in the Sixties many rare operas were revived); but the conductor Franz Manton reduced the work to two acts and in the second of them made cuts and transpositions and shuffled the music around between different characters, wreaking havoc with motive. A complete concert performance in 1969 by the excellent semi-professional Chelsea Opera Group under Nicholas Braithwaite (in Lincoln's Inn) aroused admiration, especially as it had the young Rita Hunter as Eglantine. But nothing followed until 1975, when the University College Music Society gave a respectable performance under George Badacsonyi (in the translation by William Thornthwaite originally made for a Royal College of Music performance in 1900). In the same year the amateur West Riding Opera of Leeds gave the opera, in Natalia Macfarren's translation from the Novello vocal score, conducted by Martin Binks (a good Weberian whose enthusiasm extended to *Oberon* in 1984 and *Der Freischütz* with the Berlioz recitatives in 1993). 1976 saw a Liverpool Philharmonic concert performance under Sir

Charles Groves, who in the following year conducted the first British professional production since 1882 with English National Opera (in a translation by the present writer). Expectations were high, but Groves was unwell and one of the leading singers did not trouble to conceal disbelief in the work. The chief pleasures in a disappointing production by the usually excellent John Blatchley were Sally Burgess making a delightful début as Bertha, and a commanding Eglantine from Elizabeth Connell.

She it was whom Mark Elder recruited for his revelatory concert performance, with Christine Brewer a splendid Euryanthe, in the Queen Elizabeth Hall on London's South Bank in 1994 – revelatory in that the players were the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and that Elder is a distinguished opera conductor who has a total belief in the work. Even those of us who had long known the score (or thought we did) were astonished by the effect of using contemporary instruments and playing techniques. Weber's use of instrumental colour as a function of the drama had never seemed more convincing: the heroic clarity of the full orchestra in the chivalric music, the eerie effect of vibrato-less strings for the ghosts, the freshness of wooden flutes („Fröhliche Klänge“ indeed), the purity of the fanfaring hand horns, the light but pungent trombones and the forlorn sound of Euryanthe's bassoon, „dicht am Quell“ – there was hardly a page of the score that did not seem as if layers of varnish had been removed to reveal Weber's pristine colours. None of this would have had its full meaning without Elder's grasp of the opera and his belief in it. Weber, he understood, was not just a coloristic orchestrator but a great dramatic one.

Yet there were no consequences (if one excepts a 1996 production by the amateur New Sussex Opera in Eastbourne) until last year. The Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment had started to play regularly at Glyndebourne in 1989, but it needed Elder's associate Nicholas Snowman at the South Bank to take over (briefly) as General Director at Glyndebourne for *Euryanthe* to be put into the programme. Expectations were high.

As far as the musical side was concerned, they were met. Elder and the orchestra had deepened and in some ways developed their relationship with the score, so that the playing was more in their bones, more natural and, without any loss of tension or excitement, more relaxed. Moreover, it benefited from the sympathetic Glyndebourne acoustics. And there was some excellent singing. Anne Schwanewilms had no difficulties with the often taxing melodic lines, and could spin a fine tone in „Glöcklein im Thale“; she was mistress of the role, lost and tragic, haunted and at the end still in

a state of shock. Lauren Flanigan flung herself energetically into the role of Eglantine, and produced a sinister but also tortured impression of the dark sorceress. John Daszak was a creditable Adolar, Pavlo Hunka a powerfully malevolent Lysiart who rose eloquently to the self-questioning in Act II.

Yet none of them made their best effect because of a production that seemed to work against the opera rather than for it. Costumes that would have been more in place in *Wozzeck* were imposed by John Macfarlane on singers (a bald Adolar in a kind of prison uniform) who had to move in grim, spiky scenery with high blank walls that spent most of the time creaking across the stage of its own volition. In Richard Jones's production there was no sense of chivalry, of contrast between light and dark, of colour varying from brilliance to the most sinister murkiness. The tomb scene had Eglantine clambering over a giant head and taking hold of a ludicrous rubber hand protruding from it so as to secure Emma's ring. A vacuous-faced moon stared down, as if in disbelief. Always tricky to stage, the serpent could be made in some way a projection of Eglantine's villainy; here, the wretched Adolar was made to fight with a inflated dummy caricature of himself that lumbered about the stage, testing the audience's sense of humour to breaking point. And so on ... We are used nowadays to producers imposing themselves upon masterpieces, rather than re-interpreting them. There is a case for novel, challenging, even disruptive ideas coming along when an opera is long established in the repertory, and the producer can appeal to an audience for new responses across a history of familiarity. Other operas, however masterly, still need to be helped into an audience's appreciation. Poor *Euryanthe*!

Eine total ver-,„puffte“ Wolfsschlucht

Der Freischütz am Opernhaus Leipzig (2. Aufführung 23. Mai 2003)
besucht von Joachim Veit, Detmold

Ingeborg Bachmanns „Inhaltsangabe“ des *Freischütz*, die sie 1967 für die Hamburger Staatsoper verfaßte und die auf den ersten Seiten des Leipziger Programmhefts 2003 abgedruckt ist, gab wohl die „Initialzündung“ für die Interpretation dieses Singspiels als (sexuellem) „Initiationsritus“ – ein Terminus, den der Regisseur Guy Joosten in seinen eigenen Bemerkungen zum Stück ins Spiel bringt. Bachmann wies in ihrem Text auf zweifellos vorhandene Doppelbödigkeiten des Librettos, auf die offenkundige Symbolik