



OPERA

WINNER Ravel *L'heure espagnole. L'enfant et les sortilèges*

Enchanting Glyndebourne productions of Ravel's delicious one-act operas

Some people assert that it's French composers who write the best Spanish music. You could also argue that the best – or the most frequently performed – French operas have been written by composers who weren't French. From Gluck to Meyerbeer, Rossini to Offenbach, Donizetti to Verdi...even Lully, the founder of French opera, was Italian. Go to an opera by a native Frenchman, at least in the UK, and the odds are that it will be either *Carmen* or *Pelléas et Mélisande*.

Until now, that is. There are signs of a revival: Covent Garden has staged several operas by Massenet, and ENO and Glyndebourne have recently put on their first-ever operas by Rameau. So it's pleasing, and fortuitously appropriate, that two recordings on the Awards shortlist are of genuinely French operas. Berlioz was the greater composer, no doubt, but Ravel had a better sense of theatre. The score of *L'heure espagnole* contains an instruction that, with a couple of exceptions, the singing should be delivered *parlando* throughout, as in the recitatives of an *opera buffa*. In an opera about clocks, rhythm is all; and the London Philharmonic's razor-sharp playing from the Glyndebourne pit under Kazushi Ono mirrors the precise, conversational exchanges of a cast that includes three native French speakers.

Stéphanie d'Oustrac makes a wonderful Concepción, with her knowing asides to the camera, her understandable impatience with the two gentleman callers, and her lubricity as she



Ravel *L'heure espagnole.*

L'enfant et les sortilèges

Soloists; Glyndebourne

Chorus; LPO / Kazushi Ono

Stage director

Laurent Pelly

Video director

François Roussillon

Fra Musica © DVD

FRA008 (11/13)

119 votes

finally realises the potential of Ramiro, the muscular muleteer. Is her furious ironing a deliberate reference to another of Laurent Pelly's productions, Donizetti's *La fille du régiment*? The set matches the wit of the music – there's even a clock face on the washing machine – and the costumes are attractively bright.

All five members of the cast reappear in *L'enfant et les sortilèges*, Concepción and Ramiro rather nicely becoming the Cat and the Tom Cat. Scene follows scene in rapid succession and, again, Kazushi Ono and the LPO provide delicate, subtle support for the singers. The curtain rises on the Child sitting at a gigantic desk, so that the scale of the subsequent encounters with the Armchair, the Teapot and so on seems natural. Equally believable is Khetouna Gadelia as the Child. This DVD will cheer up the dullest day. **Richard Lawrence**

RUNNERS-UP



Berlioz *Les Troyens*

Soloists; Chorus and Orchestra of the Royal Opera, Covent Garden / Sir Antonio Pappano

Opus Arte © 2 DVD OA1097D (1/14)

105 votes



Wagner *Der fliegende Holländer* **Dietsch**

Le vaisseau fantôme **Soloists; Estonian**

Philharmonic Chamber Choir; Les

Musiciens du Louvre / Marc Minkowski

Naïve © 4 V5349 (4/14) **100 votes**



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