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The Little Prince: Successful World Premier

The audience in the Great Hall at Salzburg's Mozarteum reacted to the world premier of Nikolaus Schapfl's *The Little Prince*, based on the story by Antoine de Saint Exupery, with a standing ovation and prolonged cries of "bravo." The work was presented in concert version with costumes.

The enthusiasm was directed towards the entire ensemble around lead conductor Elisabeth Fuchs and the Salzburg Youth Philharmonic, but above all towards the composer and his music. Schapfl has written a harmonious, appealing and melodious, as well as a refined and at times almost kitschy-but-beautiful opera.

Modern but Anchored in Musical Tradition

Schapfl, who was born in Munich and is a graduate of the Mozarteum in Salzburg, certainly knows his craft. His *Little Prince* is exactly what the public is longing for -- modern and yet anchored in the musical tradition of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Wagner and Debussy could have been the godfathers of this opera every bit as much as the great composers of operettas and film music. And yet in no way is Schapfl's music a potpourri of pilfered ideas and concepts overtaken by musical developments.

Sing-able, Voice-friendly Notes

The 40 year-old adoptive Salzburger has devised a series of interesting melodies and motifs, and given the singers sing-able, voice-friendly notes to sing. Above all, he has conveyed the story of the Little Prince with great sensitivity. Sadness, disappointment, child-like joy, and astonishment at earthly wonders here become audible and perceptible.

The desert, the loneliness of the planet, the toxicity of the snake, and the contradictions of such characters as the Drunkard and the King, are cleverly composed and plausibly rendered. All of this is done in common time (4/4) and in quite normal major and minor keys. Two hours of serious entertainment music -- or, if you will, of entertaining serious music. At long last, these outdated notions are beginning to become blurred on the opera stage.

The Salzburg Youth Philharmonic

Elisabeth Fuchs and "her" Salzburg Youth Philharmonic have again shown that they can play and rise to serious challenges. Apart from a certain monotony in the playing of the wind section during the Overture and a few small mistakes, the ensemble played worthily and maturely in the best sense of the word. Fuchs gave clear direction; she motivated, held together, and formed this orchestra into a unified body of sound (*Klangkoerper*).

Ensemble of Singers

Yvonne Moules as the Little Prince sang and acted appealingly. Monika Waeckerle as the Rose and the Snake was convincing in every respect. Particularly notable among the men were Bernhard Berchtold as the Pilot and the Lamplighter, the bass Christoph Stephinger as the King and the Drunkard, as well as Einar Gudmundsson as the Vain Man and the Businessman.

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