

Busoni



Doktor Faust – excerpts

Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau *bar* Faust

Richard Lewis *ten* Mephistopheles

Ian Wallace *bass-bar* Wagner

Heather Harper *sop* Duchess of Parma

John Cameron *bass* Duke of Parma

Ambrosian Singers; Chorus from the Royal Academy of Music; London Philharmonic Choir and Orchestra / Sir Adrian Boult

LPO (M) LPO0056 (74' • ADD • S)

Recorded live at the Royal Festival Hall, London,

November 13, 1959



Boult's carefully chosen suite from Busoni's Faust

Busoni started composing his *Faust* – based not on Goethe but on 16th-century puppet plays – after rejecting the Wandering Jew, Leonardo da Vinci and Don Juan as potential subjects for an opera. (No pressure there, then.) He didn't live to finish Helen of Troy's appearance in scene 2 or the quite optimistic closing scene in which Faust gives his life for a child. Until sketches for these scenes were discovered in 1974 (a new edition was made then by Antony Beaumont), the world, such as it cared about the opera, made do with a completion by Busoni's pupil Philipp Jarnach. A skein of successful productions, starting with ENO's in 1987, have since confirmed the work's worth on stage.

Busoni's own polemics stressed that, unlike Wagner's, his words and music fulfilled different functions and that each section of the work had a distinct symphonic form – scene 1 a dance suite, scene 2 a *scherzo*, chorale and fugue. The scale of the opera is still late-Romantic, and its sound world an obvious contemporary of Strauss, Schreker and even Berg, although the music remains tonal. Busoni's method of assembling his score from unfinished or already existing works parallels that of Karlheinz Stockhausen for some of his *Licht* cycle.

The present release continues the interest shown by the LPO's own label in historical material and in less established repertoire. Characteristically unblushing notes by John Amis (both from 1959 and now) introduce the

project. Boult – who conducted the work in Britain for the first time in 1937 with his then BBC Symphony Orchestra – presents here a concert suite of nuggets from the score (75 minutes out of some three hours), reportedly after consultation with Fischer-Dieskau, then the work's leading interpreter. The performance can hardly have been over-rehearsed but proceeds with confidence – this conductor was always at home with German operatic music. Alongside Fischer-Dieskau, a cast of British worthies work hard on unfamiliar territory (Richard Lewis and Heather Harper especially) to match the German's fluent Faust.

This issue does provide a historic starting point for investigating the score that sounds quite OK for its age – although the LPO should certainly have made a link to a libretto accessible. But, as with *Lulu* without its completed Act 3, it's the wrong version. Nagano's recording of the complete opera, with Dietrich Henschel as Faust (and Fischer-Dieskau in the spoken role of the Poet), includes both Jarnach's and Beaumont's completions – unlike the recent DVD from Zurich, which opts for Jarnach. **Mike Ashman**

Selected comparisons:

Lyon Op, Nagano (11/99) (ERAT) 3984 25501-2

Zurich Op, Jordan (3/08) (ARTH) DVD 101 283; 101 284

Campra

Le carnaval de Venise

Marina De Liso *sop* Léonore

Salomé Haller *sop* Isabelle

Alain Buet *bass* Léandre

Andrew Foster-Williams *bass* Rodolphe

Les Chantres du Centre de Musique Baroque de Versailles; Le Concert Spirituel Chorus and Orchestra / Hervé Niquet

Glossa (M) (2) GCD921622 (129' • DDD)



Niquet conducts a work with its feet set both in France and Italy

André Campra (1660–1744) was born to an Italian father and French mother; so it's peculiarly fitting that he should have been the composer of this curious but attractive work which is set in Venice to a libretto that veers between languages. *Le carnaval de Venise* is a