

## **From the Sublime to Bliss**

*Palm Sunday in what was Breslau, now Wroclaw, the weather was perfect. The evening's entertainment was anticipated, with mixed feelings. Opera Wroclawska was premiering its first Parsifal in 70 years. Georg Rootering was stage director, set design Lukas Noll and Walter E Gugerbauer musical direction. A new production! It is a tradition of the opera company to give gifts to the audience in honour of the premiere. A book titled "The Wroclaw Opera- European Traditions" highlighted the productions of the opera house, especially Wagner, what a delicious enticement to return.*

*The opera house has undergone refurbishment, is comfortable and I enjoyed a good uninterrupted view of the stage.*

*From the opening bar to the last note, delightful. The set was of no particular era, revolving centre piece, with steps forming part of the outer edge. Utilitarian but effective. At first Gurnemanz appeared in a lounge suit, a little disappointing. Once he donned a robe all was well. The Grail Knights wore all white, from the wigs to the tips of the toes, they also donned long robes. The spell was cast. For me the whole production worked extremely well, if I had to nit pick and I am in no position to be so picky, Amfortas didn't sound as if he would last to the end. But maybe that was a deliberate effect, he did last! The production seemed to follow Wagner's Parsifal closely. Kundry fell at the end, as so few seem to these days. The sublime ending to Palm Sunday, something, one day, I would love to repeat.*

*The Cast List :- Amfortas- Boguslaw Syznalski; Titurel- Janusz Zawadzki; Gurnemanz- Johann Tilli; Parsifal- Michael Baba; Klingsor- Zbigniew Kryczka; Kundry- Elzbieta Kaczmarzyk-Janczak.*

*Good Friday was spent in Cologne, at the Koln Philharmonie, for a concert production of Parsifal.*

*The Cast List:- Amfortas- Franz Grundheber; Titurel- Franz Mazura; Gurnemanz- Robert Holl; Parsifal- Marco Jentsch; Klingsor- Samuel Youn; Kundry- Evelyn Herlitzius.*

*The Kolner Philharmonie is huge, the seating well tiered so the line of sight is brilliant. The production utilized the "theatre in the round", chor placed on different balconies certainly added to the feeling of being part of something mystical not just an observer. The balconies behind the orchestra were used by Klingsor, Parsifal and Titurel. The Graal Knights or the Blumen Madchen sang from a narrow walkway behind the orchestra. Evelyn Herlitzius was absolutely stunning, (in looks and more importantly in voice).*

*From the moment Markus Stenz, musical director, raised his baton the audience was captured. As the last note faded, the cast, orchestra, Markus Stenz and the audience were held as if in suspended animation to savor the moment. Only when the baton was lowered, the instruments were lowered and the audience responded.*

*These few lines do not convey the absolute wonder, the mystery, and the sheer pleasure of Richard Wagner's Parsifal, in this almost "pure" form. Breathtaking!*