

Mehul - Joseph In Aegypten (German) [1955]

Written by bluesever

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1. Overture Erster Akt 2. Recitav & Arie: Ach mit lacheln umsonst huldvoll des Konigs
Blicke 3. Romanze: Ich war Jungling noch und unerfahren 4. Ensemble: Nein, nein, noch ist
Gott nicht versohnet 5. Finale: Ha! Seine Nah ist furchterlich

Zweiter Akt

6. Entr'Akt 7. Lobgesang: Gott Israels! 8. Romanze: Ach, musste der Tod we guns nehmen 9.
Terzett: Musik hor ich fernher erschallen 10. Finale: Joseph, mein Sohn dich vergisst nie mein
Herz 11. So kommt, folgt mir beide

Dritter Akt

12. Lobfesang: Lobt den Herrn mit Sang und Saitenklang 13. Duett: Du bist die Schutzer
deines Vaters 14. Finale: Diese Schlangenbrut, melde sie!

Jakob - Alexander Welitsch Joseph - Libero de Luca Josephs Bruder Simeon - Horst Gunter
Benjamin - Ursula Zollenkopf Ruben - Rolf Kunz Naphtali - Gunter Genersch Utobal, Josephs
Vertrauter und Untergebener - Arnold van Mill Sinfonie-Orchester und Chor des NWDR
Wilhelm Schuchter - conductor Hamburg, 1955

One of the most celebrated of Mehul's operas, Joseph premiered at Paris' Opéra-Comique on February 17, 1807 to rave reviews. Its libretto is based on the biblical story of Joseph; the opera opens in Egypt, after he has already become a prominent minister of that country.

Baour-Lormian had recently produced a setting of the same story in which amorous intrigues were grafted onto the plot in order to overcome a perceived dullness to the story; Alexandre Duval insisted that an operatic libretto based on the story could be written that was both full of dramatic power and true to the content of the original. Although originally skeptical, Mehul agreed to set Duval's libretto to music.

Although largely unknown to modern audiences, Joseph was a favorite with such composers as Weber, Berlioz, Cherubini, and Wagner, who considered Mehul a mentor and pioneer in the use of thematic transformation; the overture to Joseph and the "Dieu d'Israel" showcase Mehul's skillful manipulation of melodic ideas; the composer used modal elements in the opera to create

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an atmosphere of antiquity. All of the characters in the story are written for male voice, giving the score a robust, occasionally dark sound quality. The one exception is the role of the youngest brother, Benjamin (scored for soprano), who has taken Joseph's favored place in his father's heart after the latter's supposed death. The youngest son and old, blind father, are always together; the contrast in their vocal timbres is expressive of that tender bond.

At the time of Joseph's composition, Napoleon and his regime preferred operas that served as propaganda for his government, and especially liked libretti that used heroic Greek and Roman themes from antiquity. However Joseph, with its simple Old Testament story of betrayal and forgiveness, was extremely successful and well liked; in fact, the French National Institute awarded Mehul a prize -- one designated by the Emperor himself -- specifically for the work.

Méhul's most important contribution to music was his operas. He led the generation of composers who emerged in France in the 1790s, which included his friend and rival Luigi Cherubini and his outright enemy Jean-François Le Sueur . Méhul followed the example of the operas which Gluck had written for Paris in the 1770s and applied Gluck's "reforms" to opéra comique (a genre which mixed music with spoken dialogue and was not necessarily at all "comic" in mood). But he pushed music in a more Romantic direction, showing an increased use of dissonance and an interest in psychological states such as anger and jealousy, thus foreshadowing later Romantic composers such as Weber and Berlioz. Indeed, Méhul was the very first composer to be styled a Romantic; a critic used the term in *La chronique de Paris* on 1 April 1793 when reviewing Méhul's *Le jeune sage et le vieux fou* Méhul's main musical concern was that everything should serve to increase the dramatic impact. As his admirer Berlioz wrote: was fully convinced that in truly dramatic music, when the importance of the situation deserves the sacrifice, the composer should not hesitate as between a pretty musical effect that is foreign to the scenic or dramatic character, and a series of accents that are true but do not yield any surface pleasure. He was convinced that musical expressiveness is a lovely flower, delicate and rare, of exquisite fragrance, which does not bloom without culture, and which a breath can wither; that it does not dwell in melody alone, but that everything concurs either to create or destroy it – melody, harmony, modulation, rhythm, instrumentation, the choice of deep or high registers for the voices or instruments, a quick or slow tempo, and the several degrees of volume in the sound emitted. ---theinfoalist.com

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