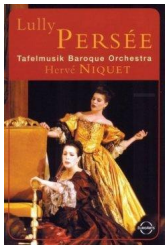
Jean-Baptiste Lully – Persée (2004)



1. Persee 2:06:29 Perseus - Cyril Auvity Phinee - Alain Coulombe Cephée, Méduse - Olivier Laquerre Andromède - Marie Lenormand Cassiope - Stephanie Novacek Tafelmusik Chamber Choir Tafelmusik Chamber Orchestra conductor - Hervé Niquet Opera Atelier (Toronto, Canada) – 2004

Jean-Baptiste Lully is regarded as the founder of French opera. Persée (1682) is one of Lully's greatest works for the stage. The opera concerns Perseus son of Jupiter, his love for Andromeda, and his killing of the snake-headed gorgon Medusa. The music is enchanting, with lots of celebratory choruses and orchestral divertissements.

The production on the new DVD is from a 2004 performance that was recorded live at the Elgin Theatre, Toronto. The production is sheer delight. The settings are beautiful and the costumes are sumptuous. The atmosphere of the rich artistic life at the court of Louis XV is effectively recreated using the décor, costumes and actors movements. The choreography of the dances seems to me as a very successful effort to restore dance movements of the French baroque style. To sum up, it is a feast for the eye.

The conductor is Hervé Niquet. He is doing a great job. The Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra produces precise and transparent sound on period instruments. The lutes are very prominent, and there are beautiful woodwinds solos (especially oboes). The Tafelmusik chorus is invisible but sings excellently. All the singers are great, with very beautiful voices, idiomatic baroque singing and excellent French.

The opera is called Persee, but Persee has not too much music to sing. It is a pity, because Cyril Auvity (tenor or haute contre) has one of the sweetest voices I have heard lately. One has to mention soprano Monica Whicher that is very moving as the wretched Merope (she loves Persee, but he is in love with Andromède, the excellent Marie Lenormand).

Technical quality is first class. Highly recommended. --- T. C., amazon.com

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