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Ressort: Kunst, Kultur und Musik

## "If you are unwilling then force will apply" from Erl King

Theater an der Wien, 12.02.2022 [ENA]

In the year 1782 wrote Johann Wolfgang von Goethe one of his most famous ballades about Erl king. The sentence of the Erl king "I love thee, I'm charm'd by thy beauty, dear boy; / And if thou'rt unwilling, then force I'll employ" in German original as „Ich liebe dich, mich reizt deine schöne Gestalt; Und bist du nicht willig, so brauch' ich Gewalt“ shows with all intensity the mixture of various feelings.

These feelings and emotions are obsession, will to possess and violence. The Erl king is portraited by Goethe as a power obsessed and narcissist personality who is ready to apply violence for satisfaction of his own needs and intimidation of other people. In 1978 the sociologist Marx Weber provided the following definition of power as “the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests”.

The opera Tosca at Theater an der Wien puts violence into the focus of the performance. The Chief of Police Baron Scarpia is ready to apply all possible kinds of violence. Giacomo Puccini wrote Tosca at the end of the 19th century. The action of the opera is at the beginning of the 19th century in Rome when Italy was invaded by the army of Napoleon. The opera contains torture, murder, and suicide but this happens not through invaders but rather through local police who is prosecuting the opposition.

The new interpretation of Tosca by Martin Kušej and Regula Rapp at the Theater an der Wien brings the discussion about violence to new dimension. This is not only violence and power abuse by the state through its executive powers such as police against the alternatively thinking opposition, as was performed in the original version of Puccini. But this is also violence at the personal level, in a family, between man and woman up to sexual abuse and harassment. The words of Erl king could be applied in the relationship between Tosca and Scarpia.

Scarpia is abscessed by the beauty of the body of Tosca and the wish to possess her but does not wish anything good to her and is ready to break her to fulfill his needs and wishes and to throw her out at once he satisfied his desire. Kristine Opolais, who comes from Lettland, is brilliant in the role of Floria Tosca and brings not only brilliant singing gift but also brilliant performance skills while performing the role of Tosca at such intensive and depth of feelings.

The Tosca at Theater an der Wien is not for weak nerves and the performance with almost naturalistic play

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and the stage decorations where victims of torture are visible is much more intense than the original version of Puccini. This leads to question if despite all efforts of progress and increases in quality of life the level of violence is actually increasing in our society? Is it due to growing divide?

Increasing uncertainty? Growing social pressure? The question remains open...

**Bericht online lesen:**

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