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Music in Review

By STEVE SMITH

Brooklyn Philharmonic
Brooklyn Academy of Music

The Brooklyn Philharmonic has earned a well-deserved reputation for adventurous programming, including ambitious multidisciplinary collaborations. On Saturday night at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, the orchestra inaugurated a three-year partnership with the Ridge Theater, a New York company known for innovative multimedia presentations, with a staged performance of the Polish composer Henryk Gorecki's Symphony No. 3. The two institutions previously worked together in a 2003 concert version of the John Adams opera "The Death of Klinghoffer."

Subtitled "Symphony of Sorrowful Songs," the Gorecki work sets three texts concerning bereavement to achingly slow, mournful music. Rather than a literal translation, the Ridge production, directed by Bob McGrath, offered a poetic abstraction of the music's emotional undertow.

The filmmaker Bill Morrison emphasized the first movement's oceanic depths with a slow aerial crawl along a shoreline, shown on a translucent front scrim. Behind the orchestra, Laurie Ollinder's projected images of outstretched hands underscored a sense of longing. The soprano Nathalie Paulin, at the rear of the stage in a black hood and cloak, sang with rich tone and compelling emotion.

Ms. Paulin stood near Michael Christie, the orchestra's music director, during the second movement, while on the rear screen a lanky child played on a beach. A film of rusted derelict ships suggested impermanence in the last movement, while placid faces projected during the radiant climax seemed to imply perseverance. Ms. Paulin, now in a pale gown, sang in front of the scrim, then processed up the center aisle as the music sank back into gloom and silence.

Mozart's motet "Exsultate, jubilate," which opened the concert, demonstrated Ms. Paulin's considerable skill in florid coloratura, buoyed by Mr. Christie's lithe accompaniment. An otherwise handsome account of Hindemith's "Mathis der Maler" was blemished slightly by patches of insecure intonation -- forgivable in the context of a presentation this thoughtful and rewarding. STEVE

SMITH

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