



© BAYREUTHER FESTISHEL GmbH-HRAUHL

In July of 89 the Bayreuth Festival will present its third season of Werner Herzog's production of *Lohengrin*, with sets and costumes by Henning von Gierke. The concept of the design is the cycle of the seasons, depicted as scenes pass from one winter to the next.

GERMANY/PRODUCTION

LOHENGRIN AT BAYREUTH

I do not transport any movie tricks into the opera form," claims film director Werner Herzog. Best known for his direction of such German films as *Woyzeck*, *Nosferatu the Vampyre*, and *Fitzcarraldo*, Herzog has directed Richard Wagner's opera, *Lohengrin*, which will enter its third season at the Bayreuth Festival in July 1989. Despite Herzog's emphatic disclaimer, reviewers insist they see cinematic elements in his opera work. And since Herzog does not read music and had only staged one opera, Busoni's *Doktor Faust*, before he was invited to work at Bayreuth, it was suspected that festival director Wolfgang Wagner was seeking publicity by this choice.

Nevertheless, with Herzog's thoughtful staging and the stunning settings of his longtime designer-collaborator, Henning von Gierke, this *Lohengrin* has proved an artistic success. It has also led to further opera production invitations for the team. Herzog says he remains primarily a filmmaker, but he loves music. He is proud to point out that he uses music to

great effect in his major movies, such as *Fitzcarraldo*, whose hero builds an opera house in a Brazilian backwater.

Herzog defers to his designer in discussing the staging concept of *Lohengrin*. In fact, both agree that Herzog came to Bayreuth primarily because the challenge was something von Gierke longed to accept. "When there were problems," says the designer, "he'd point to me and say, 'You got us into this.'"

Von Gierke's designs are inspired by the cycle of the seasons and the circle of the year, which is visually emphasized as scenes pass from one winter to the next. Herzog and von Gierke wanted to extend this cycle metaphor to a circle of stones outside the theatre, with a laser beam crossing the valley of Bayreuth, reflecting eight miles back to the Festival House. Although the festival vetoed this, von Gierke does use lasers for the magical appearance and transformation of the swan-boy.

GLENN LONEY

GERMANY/ARCHITECTURE

RESTORING MUNICH'S PRINCE-REGENT THEATRE

It was entrepreneurial know-how, and a sentimental legacy, that saved Munich's historic Prince-Regent Theatre from the wrecker's ball. Constructed in 1901 by architect Max Littmann, the 1,000-plus seat theatre became a great music hall, housing the Bavarian State Opera. No one wanted to see the lights go out in the Prince-Regent, but in the early 60s the state was supporting two opera houses, an operetta house, a drama theatre, with the requisite ensembles, along with the Prince-Regent. Only a few months after the opera ensemble deserted it in the early 60s, state authorities closed the theatre as unsafe. Some spaces were later used for storage, construction, and rehearsals, but the Prince-Regent slowly deteriorated, inside and out. There was talk of turning it into a hotel or a restaurant.

Almost at the last minute, it was saved by the peculiar provision of a

will. In the early 80s, Frau Gertrude Proebst, daughter of Max Littmann, left 3 million DM (UK £.9 million, US \$1.62 million) to restore her father's masterpiece. The problem was that if it was not used by a certain date, the money would pass to a church group. Still that was not nearly enough to even begin work.

Enter August Everding, director of the Bavarian State Theatres in Munich. Everding spun into action, unwilling to lose the funding. He convinced the Bavarian Parliament to grant 39 million DM (UK £12 million, US \$21 million) for the proposed restoration, which would be matched in the private sector. Aggressive fundraising succeeded. Everding boasts scores of sponsorships, all of whom are properly noted by plaques throughout the theatre.

While detailed information regarding the companies involved in

the restoration and the equipment being installed is not currently available, it is clear that the restoration has been moving ahead—slowly and methodically. Rather than rush ahead on all fronts, Everding decided—after basic stabilising of the building—that the first major restoration should occur in the second-floor salon-suite. Artist Elmar Albrecht supervised this job, recreating the designs that had deteriorated over the years. With the salon restored, it provided a vivid demonstration of what the Prince-Regent could look like when finished. Private contributions helped restore the Garden Salon. Once decorated with tropical flora on its arched ceiling, it had been severely damaged by bombing in World War II.

Everding displayed his continued devotion to the project by moving into the space. Today he oversees both the Bavarian State Theatres

and the restoration from this vantage.

With the facade and most of the interior restored, Everding has one more mission. He cannot begin modernisation of the stage until another 40 million DM (UK £12.3 million, US \$21.6 million) is raised. Currently, plays are being offered in the auditorium on a temporary stage over the orchestra pit. The Munich Residence Theatre is temporarily based at the Prince-Regent until reconstruction of their theatre is completed. Everding is expecting the remaining funds to come from the Bavarian State and private contributions and is targeting 1990 as completion of the renovation.

GLENN LONEY