Tobias Picker
Lili Elbe (2021)
an opera in two acts
libretto (Eng) by Aryeh Lev Stollman

World Premiere: October 22, 2023, 7:00 PM at Theater St. Gallen, Switzerland

Selected Reviews

"An emotionally charged masterpiece."
– *Voralberger Zeitung* (Andreas Marte), October 23, 2023

"***Lili Elbe*** **is an opera that is relevant today and worthy of remounting**...even though the titular lead must be sung by an artist who identifies as trans or non-binary, this is **the story of a great love that overcomes all obstacles, a universal theme that runs through all the operatic repertoire.**

Picker's opera flows like **a delicate work of music theater in two acts that builds towards an emotionally gripping apotheosis of death**... Lucas not only makes Lili's fate her own but allows her own fate to shine through. As directed by Krystian Lada, **the narrative unfolds in a straightforward manner as an Art Nouveau-expressionist arc, amidst a bright, symbolist stage."**
– *Die Welt* (Manuel Brug), November 10, 2023

"Tobias Picker has found a tonal language and a musical narrative that plays with the familiar and thereby develops something new from the musical history we are familiar with - so there are no breaks in listening habits and yet a constant creative output, which - and this is also important - plays an active role in the narrative, instead of mixing a diffuse modern score with the typical diffuse sing-song of singing parts suspended between atonality and tonality the task of telling the story to the text alone and a sensible director. **With his music, Picker creates time-spaces and moods that are able to evoke scenes, outline the concrete and the**

transcendental, almost without any additional hint; But above all, he succeeded in writing characterful vocal parts.”
– *Opernglas*, October 22, 2023

“Picker has created an opera of the kind that European composers are often unwilling or simply unable to write: real two-act opera with a linear plot that **arouses strong emotions in both connoisseurs and people who come to the theatre for well-told stories.**”
– *Upiór w operze* (Dorota Kozinska, transl. Anna Kijak), December 3, 2023

"Lili Elbe was the first person to undergo multiple gender affirmation operations in Berlin and Dresden in 1930 — at a time when such a thing seemed unthinkable around the world... **The opera owes its intensity** not only to this fact but also **to the extraordinary story of its protagonist, which the librettist Aryeh Lev Stollman has condensed into an opulent, pictorial arc**... The battle of the sexes rages here in the body and in the feelings of one and the same person. **With *Lili Elbe*, opera has definitely arrived in the 21st century.**"
Tobias Picker has created **a gripping and haunting score**....that **perfectly suits the moods of each of the scenes so cleverly conceived by librettist Aryeh Lev Stollman**. He uses a variety of musical means and instrumental colors, weaves jazzy rhythms, foxtrots, and waltzes into the social scenes, and puts the (beautifully playing) Metanola String Quartet on stage, led by Raul Campos-Calzada, who plays with dreamlike purity."
– *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (Anna Kardos), October 28, 2023

"Picker's vocal lines always remain committed to melody, **ariosi lead to large scenes with wonderful upswings and dramatic, self-aware arias. The psychedelic-tinged party at the Danish Countess is a bit of irresistible atmospheric musical theater.** Modestas Pitrenas and the St.Gallen Symphony Orchestra demonstrate their stylistic versatility with a gripping interpretation of the score...**This is great music!"**
– *Oper Aktuell* (Erstellt von Kaspar Sannemann), October 22, 2023

"An evening full of nightmares and hopes, with a fearless, always fascinating Lucia Lucas at the center, **an iridescent experience, moving in its truthfulness."**
– *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (Egbert Tholl), November 8, 2023

"This premiere made it clear that Picker's seventh opera not only captivates with attractive music but also adds a major new work to the repertoire addressing an important current topic. The audience obviously understood this and gave the impressive production a standing and sustained ovation."
– *Rocco Sound*

"...a work that resonates deeply with our times."
– *Kronen Zeitung* (Anna Mika), October 24, 2023

For more information about *Lili Elbe*, contact Norman Ryan, Vice President, Composers & Repertoire at norman.ryan@eamdc.com.