

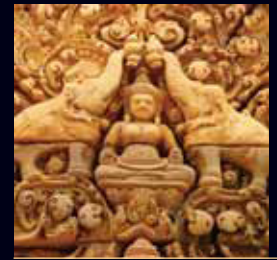


PARSIFAL

A BUDDHIST TALE

AN OPERA FILM PROJECT
BY TITUS LEBER





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*B. Geisterhaft, visionär, mit erhobenen
sehr leise, Händen.*

„Durch Mitleid wissend der reine Tor,

ehen Ma - le:

PARSIFAL – A BUDDHIST TALE



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OUTLINE OF THE PROJECT

The first premise for our opera film project is the little known fact that throughout the last 30 years of his life Richard Wagner was obsessed with the idea of composing an opera about the Buddha. Much of what he learned about Buddhism is reflected in the underlying structure of his last opera, Parsifal, which on closer view turns out to be a bold attempt to translate fundamental Buddhist concepts into the sensual audio visual language of opera.

A draft of this work, together with numerous references to it in diaries, notes and correspondence, are evidence of this astonishing truth. Wagner's extensive engagement with the ideas of Buddhism was to find expression in his last opera »Parsifal«, which on closer examination reveals itself not only to be a work strongly influenced by the Far Eastern body of thought, but in

fact as a bold attempt at a first comprehensive dramatisation of the teachings of the Buddha.

The second premise of our film, introduced by the author, is the question: „ What would have happened if the Holy Grail, which disappeared from medieval Europe, had resurfaced in Asia and met there with the ancient teachings of Buddhism?

Even the technique of using leitmotifs itself, which in this Wagner opera is used as in no other, can be traced back directly to inspirations he drew from the teachings of karma, as indicated by the composer's own comments.

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PARSIFAL – A BUDDHIST TALE



A MAJOR BRIDGE-BUILDER BETWEEN EAST AND WEST
CLASSICAL OPERA MEETS FAR EASTERN MYSTICISM

THE HIDDEN MESSAGE OF
RICHARD WAGNER'S FINAL OPERA,
AT LAST REVEALED!

USING THE ACOUSTIC SOUNDTRACK
OF AN ORIGINAL PRODUCTION OF »PARSIFAL«,
AN ENTIRELY NEW, FAR EASTERN VISION!

FILMED WITH LEADING ASIAN ACTORS
ON ORIGINAL LOCATIONS IN ANGKOR WAT!

Each of the characters in »Parsifal«
corresponds to one of the pillars of
buddhist teaching »»







PARSIFAL – A BUDDHIST TALE



THE PROJECT:

A »film« version, shot on HDTV, with a running time around four hours and based on the integral version of the opera, is designed both as a major cinematic event (a »must-see experience«) and with a view to television, primarily targeted to »major holiday scheduling« (e.g. one or more evenings over the Easter period), whilst also appealing to target groups in home video, DVD and art theatre markets.

Filmed exclusively in original locations in Cambodia and India, the protagonists (who will act in sync with a playback of the famous recording of the opera by the Berlin Philharmonic conducted by Herbert von Karajan – for which the consent of the Herbert von Karajan Foundation has been obtained) will all be of Asian origin. The Cambodian government has also already given its agreement in principle to filming in

Angkor Wat, the biggest and most spectacular temple complex in the world, semi-overgrown by jungle. UNESCO is examining the request to lend its patronage to the project, or possibly to even participate in the project itself.

The latest computer-aided editing techniques will be used, firstly to visually present all those elements which up until now it has not been possible to see or show on stage, and secondly for the very first time to use adequate means to do full justice to the demands of the leitmotif technique employed by Wagner with the aim of creating a future »total artwork«, a Gesamtkunstwerk.



THE ACTION, AND HOW IT IS STAGED



THE PREMISES

What would have happened, if the Holy Grail, after it disappeared in Europe, would have found its way to Asia and there met with Buddhist philosophy?

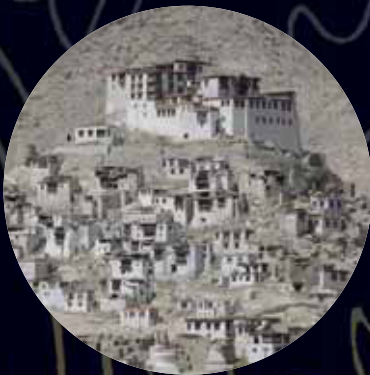


OVERTURE

Who may these mysterious Bodhisattva-warriors be, who have infiltrated the remote rice grower idyll of Herzeleide? To her little son, Parsifal , they appear to be angelic beings, and wanting to become like one of them, he runs away from his mother.

This is the beginning of a long journey which soon turns out to become a spiritual quest, a quest for the Holy Grail, which has arrived on meandering ways over the Silk Roads to Asia, to where it is being saved from turmoil shaken medieval Europe by Joseph of Arimathea /Titirel and his companions.

After escaping from the reclusive and well protected world of his mother, young Parsifal soon finds himself painfully awakening to the realities of life embodied by sickness, old age and death.





PARSIFAL – A BUDDHIST TALE



At a spiritual place far removed from the world and »beyond space and time«, called Monsalvat/Angkor Wat (the filming location is the majestic temple ruins of Angkor Wat in Cambodia), the Holy Grail is being kept. The Grail is a mystical chalice which at some earlier time had been brought to South-East Asia on unknown routes by a disciple of Christ. Its Keeper, Amfortas, has

been suffering from an incurable wound since the time when he lost the Holy Spear, having been distracted in an act of lust; his wound is representative of all the sufferings of mankind (the key concept of »dukkha« in Buddhism). In connection with this, a mysterious part seems to be played by Kundry, a raging wild woman symbolising »yearning and inconstancy«.

An ancient prediction tells of an innocent fool who is to come to bring redemption. Could this be Parsifal, who unsuspectingly makes his way into the spiritual sanctuary of the Grail and here makes his first step towards becoming »enlightened by compassion« through the feelings of guilt he experiences from the killing of a swan and the news of the death of his mother?

ACT 1



The young fool's entire conduct stands for »ignorance« - the all-encompassing fundamental failing of the world. The old seer Asita (Gurnemanz) initiates the young fool into the mysteries of the Grail cult: amidst a round table of charismatic monk-abbots from all epochs and drawn from the Far East and Europe, Amfortas relives the psycho-drama of his fall from grace – thereby

creating a powerful panorama of history, allowing the question of religious fanaticism across all ages to be conjured up in powerful images before our eyes.

But Parsifal is far from being able to understand anything of these powerful connections...

PARSIFAL – A BUDDHIST TALE



The Great Evil One Mara (alias Klingsor), who has stolen the Spear from Amfortas, resides in a magic castle (Bayon in Angkor Thom). He has created an artificial world of magic for himself there, which we set in stimulating contrast to »actual« reality using the latest 3D computer animation techniques: it is a world filled with captivating flower-maidens and many-armed demons

which lend a new sensuousness to the ancient iconographic traditions of Asia. In a cynical move, he deploys every means available to him to divert Parsifal from winning back the Holy Spear (= achieving Enlightenment); firstly his warriors and demon hordes, and then his bewitchingly beautiful flower-maidens embodied by the Apsaras (heavenly dancers) from the relief carvings

on the temple walls in Angkor. But Parsifal/Maitreya resists each of these temptations. Finally, Klingsor tries to seduce the youngster through Kundry, a seductively beautiful femme fatale who errs from one reincarnation to the next.

She attempts three times to cast her spell on Parsifal, but at the end he succeeds in thwarting her seductive arts and in winning back the Holy Spear.

ACT 2



To an astonishing degree, the musical and dramatic structure of this Act mirrors precisely the structure of the events which, according to the narrative passed down, occurred in that night when the chief demon Mara sought by all possible means to prevent the Buddha from achieving Enlightenment.

PARSIFAL – A BUDDHIST TALE



A curse wished on him by Kundry has caused Parsifal to wander for many years through a wasteland which in many ways is symbolic of an apocalyptic time whose bleak manifestations are revealed to Parsifal with every step.

Far away from the deprivations of the Knights of the Grail, the ancient Asita/Gurnemanz is living in a hermitage, accompanied by the penitent Kundry.

Parsifal appears, the saving Spear in his hand. He is called to become the new Keeper of the Grail. As Asita is anointing him, the Good Friday miracle takes place: at once, the meadows around burst into flower, and it seems as if the whole universe is awakening to new life – a wondrous vision also familiar in Buddhism, as each time a new Buddha appears every flower in the

ACT 3

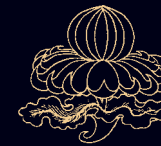


universe comes into bloom and every instrument sounds out in wonderfully-tempered harmony!

Within the Grail temple Anfortas, the ailing fishing and Keeper of the Grail, is attending the funeral ceremony of his father, Titurel, and is himself driven by the most violent desire for death. Parsifal approaches

and saves him. A new era of the Grail can begin: the cup of blood transforms into a cup of light, into a thousand-petalled lotus-bowl of enlightenment and tolerance!

AUTHOR AND DIRECTOR TITUS LEBER



The filmic work of Titus Leber, which has won numerous awards, is characterised by the striving for new forms of visual expression for classical music in particular. His works repeatedly set the trends which others follow, whether in his short film classic »Kindertotenlieder« (»Songs on the Death of Children«) which used avantgarde multilayering methods, the journey through time »Schubert – Fremd bin ich eingezogen« (»Schubert - A stranger I came«) or in the music film »Anima-Symphonie Fantastique« (with Mathieu Carrière and Charo Lopez) screened as part of the official selection of the Cannes film Festival; or in his experimental works for television (»Symphonie aus der Neuen Welt« – »New World Symphony«, in collaboration with NASA, or »Nuclear Requiem«), his ground-



breaking interactive works (»Wien Interaktiv« – »Vienna Interactive«, »Mozart Interactive«, »The Great Louvre« in HDTV/3D) or in over 60 classical music videos accompanying music by Mozart, Mahler and Beethoven.

Since his monumental interactive CD-Rom triptych »What Did the Buddha Teach?«, created over four years in a work commissioned by the Royal Court of Thailand, the author has been considered one of the leading specialists for media realisations of Far Eastern cultural and spiritual content.

The author is currently working on a 12 part TV mini-series about the life of the Buddha, based on the reliefs of the Borobudur Temple in Indonesia, the largest Buddhist monument in the world.

SELECTED WORKS:

Films:

»Anima- Symphonie Fantastique«, with Mathieu Carrière and Charo Lopez. Presented at the Official Selection of the Cannes Film Festival 1981.

»Kindertotenlieder« (Songs of dead Children by Gustav Mahler)
(»Espigia de Oro« for best short film -Valladolid Int. Film Festival,
»Grand Prix Musique et Image« – Paris, Colombe d'Or-Cannes,
Austrian nomination for Oscar Academy Awards)

»Schubert – A Stranger I came«, selected by Cannes' »Semaine de la Critique«.
Austrian National Award for outstanding achievements in the art of Cinema

TV productions:

For Austrian TV (ORF): »Nuclear Requiem«

»Symphony of the New World« (in collaboration with NASA).

Screenplays for feature films :

»New Age« and »Magistra Ludi-The Glass Bead Game«

Research Fellow at MIT's Center for Advanced Visual. R&D work setting up the »Image Reactor«, an installation to simulate visual thinking. Work at MIT's Medialab.

Interaktive und multimediale Arbeiten:

CD-ROM triptych »What Did the Buddha Teach?« .Translated in English, Thai and Chinese.

»Vienna Interactive« (Mercuriale Award for best cultural Heritage Disc).In cooperation with FUJITSU. Distributed by Pioneer Japan and The Voyager Company, USA

»Mozart Interactive« 30.000 DVDs sold worldwide. Translated in 5 languages

»The Great Louvre« in HDTV and 3D in collaboration with SONY PCL, Tokyo, Beta System Tokyo, The Louvre Museum and UNESCO.

Creator and director of »Europe Interactive« for IBM

»The World of Louis Pasteur« for Pasteur Institute, Paris. Award IAMS for best scientific CD ROM in 1995

»Borobudur-Paths of Enlightenment« – Bringing the Borobudur to Cyberspace

INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROJECT



SCREENPLAY:

A complete, very detailed script has been developed, specifying some 1400 shots which will translate the score on several, partly superimposed image layers. The script follows the integral version of the opera with a total length of 4 hours and 20 minutes. A detailed production plan is available.

MUSICAL REALISATION:

Instead of a »conventional« opera film with singers, our filming relies on the acting power of typecast screen actors who will perform in synch with a playback of an existing, high quality recording of the opera. The intended soundtrack makes use of Herbert von Karajan's legendary recording with José van Dam, Kurt Moll, Barbara Hendricks, Peter Hofmann and Dunja Vejzovic and the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. The availability of the music rights has been cleared.

Editing, using state of the art visual multilayering techniques to render the intricate patterns of the interwoven leitmotifs which characterize this work will play a key role.

LOCATIONS:

The main locations are provided by the extensive temple complex in and around Angkor Wat and Angkor Thom in Cambodia. Our film project has already been presented to the highest authorities in Cambodia, and can count on the full support of the government, the royal court and UNESCO.

Additional locations: Northern India or Nepal (Himalayas), desert scenes: Morocco (Atlas Studios). Green-screen studio shooting: Bangkok or Seoul.

CAST:

A cast of top movie and TV stars with Asian background is intended to play the lead roles. We are thinking of names such as Gong Li or Karo Hui for the role of Kundry and Louis Koo for the role of Amfortas.

BUDGET:

A detailed budget foresees below the line costs of about 8-10 million Euros for a shooting time of approximately 20 weeks.

TECHNOLOGY:

The project will be shot in HDTV. A leading FX supervisor from Hollywood and the cooperation of renowned Animation Studio »Imagimax« from Bangkok have already been secured.

PARTNERSHIPS:

The project is developed in perspective of the upcoming Richard Wagner Memorial Year in 2013, when worldwide celebrations will be held to commemorate the composer's 200th birthday. A huge PR effect will be generated by the mutual interaction of five events featuring some of our stars, namely well known singers from the Asian rock scene, with the broadcasting/screening of our film in major Asian and European capitals and at the Bayreuth-Festival.

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