Conrad Susa

The Love of Don Perlimplín

Opera in 1 Act

Libretto by Richard Street and Conrad Susa
Based on the play by Frederico Garcia Lorca

Voices:
2 Sopranos, Mezzo-Soprano, Baritone, Chorus of 6, Dancers

Instrumentation:
1(Pic)/1(EH)/2(BCl, Alto Sax)/1(CBsn) 1/1(Flugelhn)/1/0  T 3P 2Kybd (Harpsichord, Electric Piano, Piano, Celesta) H Mandolin Strings (3-2-2-2-1)

Length:
1 hour, 10 minutes

Commissioned by the San Francisco Opera and the Pepsico Summer Fare in April 1983
Revised Premiere by the San Francisco Conservatory of Music on March 13, 2010

A wealthy, bookish old bachelor is persuaded by his housekeeper to take a wife. The matching of old age to a young, lusty wife is disastrous and Perlimplín realises that Belisa will take lovers and he is filled with despair. But at the same time he has experienced love and learned to use his imagination. He devises a plan by which, disguised as a young man in a red cape, he woos and wins Belisa. Honor, however, demands that the husband kill the wife's lover. Since they are one in the same, Perlimplín makes a love sacrifice and kills himself. Belisa, who has truly experienced love for the first time, is transformed from a wanton, thoughtless girl into a woman capable of loving someone other than herself. Through this tragic act he gives her real life. Theirs is now a perfect union: Perlimplín reaches the only plateau he could have inhabited once his love for Belisa was enkindled, and she attains a stature she could never have reached alone.

Mr. Susa... adapted his own libretto from Lorca's play, and has attempted to retain its delicate balance of comedy and tragedy, eroticism and propriety. He is an unabashed conservative, yet one with a distinctly original musical language. Mr. Susa has a gift for arching, immediately accessible melodies, and his scoring is expertly deft, utilizing an unusual grouping of instruments, including the harpsichord, which gives the sound a bright neo-classical patina. Some yearning orchestral interludes contain passages of shimmering beauty. In addition, Mr. Susa keeps the viewer interested in the opera—in its action, and in the characters whom he has endowed with such vivid life.

—Tim Page, THE NEW YORK TIMES