

25 - years of Boris Christoff

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P. S.

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Twenty-five years of Boris Godunov - Boris Christoff celebrated the anniversary of his 1949 Covent Garden debut in the title role of Mussorgsky's opera. And while the singer was vocally not far below his superb best, the interpretation seemed to have further mellowed with the passing of time and, if such was possible, deepened. This served to emphasize that of Boris's three appearances the first is a mere nondescript episode in an all-round recital of historical events. The opera in fact does not really start until its second act if the musical exteriorization of psychological contents be of the essence in this genre.

Here Elizabeth Gale's attractively colored singing as the new Xenia and the innocent banner of the excellent Anne Pashley and Johanna Peters as Czarevitch and Nurse provided much-needed treble relief after a solid packet of low male tessitura.

It also made a poignant prelude to Boris's lonely battle with his guilt. Mr Christoff engaged one's sympathy with the murderer no less compellingly here than in Act IV, at any rate once the clinical symptoms of hypertension marking his last entry began to be supported by vocal equivalents.

This scene was sung and acted most movingly and also proved difficult to accompany. Otherwise Yuri Ahronovitch gave a splendidly live and authentic reading.