

## **Fine Boris**

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The combination of a new conductor, Yuri Ahronovitch, and the much-loved Boris Christoff made last Wednesday's revival of Boris Godunov at Covent Garden one of the finest of recent years. Mr. Ahronovitch, who comes to London via Leningrad and Israel, gave an impassioned reading of the Rimsky-Korsakov version of the Mussorgsky score, eliciting exciting playing from his orchestra and some of the best choral singing heard at the Royal Opera for a considerable time.

What is there new to say about Christoff's now classic Boris. Which he first sang in London 25 years ago? He seems to have discovered new reserves of vocal power and his soft singing, especially in the death scene, was unfailingly beautiful and moving. Dramatically, there were the familiar flashing eyes and large-scale gestures. And then, suddenly, as in the confrontation with Shuisky, admirably played again by John Lanigan, there were new inflections and new movements which brought the scene vividly to life.

The presence of Ahronovitch and Christoff had an electrifying effect on the rest of the fine cast. As well as the familiar Josephine Veasey (Marina), Michael Langdon (Varlaam), Gwynne Howell (Pimen) and Anne Pashely (Feodor), there were several newcomers, including Elizabeth Gale's attractive Xenia, Raimund Herinex's sinister Rangoni, Robert Tear's sensitively-sung Simpleton and Jon Andrew's heroic Dimitry. The production, now nearly 27 years old, does not carry its years as well as Mr. Christoff carries his. It should be quietly retired.