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Tensions and manipulations: La Cuisine de Nice welcomes Laurent Petitgirard's *Guru*

By [Manon Decroix](#), February 21, 2024

While the city of Nice vibrates to the rhythm of the carnival festivities, the [Opéra de Nice](#) presents the disconcerting *Guru*, a work by [Laurent Petitgirard](#) created in 2018 in Poland, in a new production by the Opéra and Théâtre National de Nice. An opportunity for the institution to experiment with a new performance venue: the [Théâtre de La Cuisine](#) stage.

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"an intense musical experience".

Reviewed at Théâtre National de Nice - La Cuisine, Nice, February 20, 2024

PROGRAM

Petitgirard, *Guru* (French premiere)

ARTISTS

Nice Opera

Laurent Petitgirard, *Director*

Muriel Mayette-Holtz, *Director*

Rudy Sabounghi, *Sets, Costumes*



Guru at the Théâtre National de Nice

Dominique Jaussein

Mental manipulation, rape and murder are on the menu of this libretto, inspired by a tragic event that took place in Jonestown in 1978. Through the charismatic and frightening character of Guru, the composer and his librettist Xavier Maurel paint a portrait of a society plagued by power struggles and blind submission to a charismatic leader. By highlighting the mechanisms of mental manipulation, they alert audiences to the insidious dangers lurking in our modern societies.

It's 8 p.m. and the muggy heat of the room transports the audience into the stifling atmosphere of an isolated island where the action of *Guru* takes place. From the very first bars, the orchestra, richly supplied with brass and percussion, envelops the stage with a powerful, bewitching sound, heralding an intense musical experience. Petitgirard's writing, with its dissonant melodic lines and complex, irregular rhythms complex, irregular rhythms, amplifies the oppressive atmosphere on the island.

Nice Philharmonic Orchestra

Chœur de l'Opéra de Nice

Julien Soulier,

Videographer Armando

Noguera, *Baritone* Sonia

Petrovna, *Actor* Anaïs

Constans, *Soprano*

Frédéric Diquero, *Tenor*

Nika Guliashvili, *Bass*

Marie-Ange Todorovitch, *Soprano*



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Eccentric Odyssey into the world of Zappa at Opéra de Nice

Manon Decroix, December 4th In an audacious and eclectic style, the transposition on the of Tony Palmer and Frank Zappa's docu-fiction to the Opéra de Nice stage produces an unusual and delightful show.

★★★★★

Laurent Pelly's Japanese *Lakmé* at Opéra de Nice

Manon Decroix, 2nd October With a completely renewed vocal line-up and under the ideal direction of Jacques Lacombe, the production inaugurated last year at the Opéra-Comique is a resounding success.

★★★★☆

Kristian's *Bohemia* Frédéric provokes the Opéra de Nice



Guru at the Théâtre National de Nice

Dominique Jaussein

The unique set, composed of a particularly elaborate floor (sand, maritime plants, small pond...), offers a minimalist setting. The absence of an orchestra pit puts the musicians right at the heart of the action, while the surtitles on the sides sometimes make it difficult to follow the story. The use of a screen, projecting images of the beach in real time and close-ups of the singers' faces, allows us to plunge deep into the interiority of the characters, even if there are occasional interruptions to the narrative. The focus is on interiority, rather than on movement, which is clearly reduced by the constraints of the stage.

In a convincing cast, [Armando Noguera](#) brilliantly embodies the character of Guru, combining charisma and menace in every gesture and note. His voice, though showing a few signs of fatigue, remains captivating and imposing. [Sonia Petrovna](#), in the spoken role of Marie, brings a touching fragility to her character, contrasting with the vocal power of her colleagues. [Anaïs Constant](#) (Iris) shines with her dazzling high notes and warm timbre, while

Manon Decroix, 1st June

While Cristina Pasaroïu shines in the role of Mimi, Kristian Frédéric's staging by Kristian Frédéric misses the mark in its attempt to transpose the work to the 1990s, making it unnecessarily cumbersome.



Daniel Benoin's *Falstaff* squats at the Opéra de Nice

Manon Decroix, 3rd April

Verdi's humorous work is well served by an original and effective staging, a committed orchestra and a first-rate cast.



Surprises and coups de théâtre for *Lucia di Lammermoor* in Nice

Manon Decroix, 22nd February

The Opéra de Nice faced up to its curse by programming Donizetti's opera, not without a few scares... But the unexpected Vladimir Stoyanov and Zach Borichevsky saved the production.



Big Brother-like *Fidelio* at Opéra de Nice

Manon Decroix, 25th January

Cyril Teste's cinematic staging hits the nail on the head, and the cast is equal to the challenge of Beethoven's only opera.



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Marie-Ange Todorovitch (Marthe) impresses with a round, powerful voice that fills the entire auditorium. Despite a few imperfections, notably in the balance between Frédéric Diquero's voice (Victor) and the orchestra conducted by the composer, the performance offers a theatrical and musical experience that goes far beyond mere entertainment.



Guru at the Théâtre National de Nice

Dominique Jaussein

Through their singing, the chorus represents the collective soul of the sect, reflecting both fervent adherence to Guru's doctrine and the internal tensions that are beginning to crack the facade of unity. The choristers' interventions mark the dramatic turning points in the story, underlining moments of jubilation and despair, as evidenced by their remarkable rises in intensity. The soprano section in particular resonates powerfully, expressing the constant pressure exerted by the followers.

★★★★☆ ?