

# Nice: the triumph of "Guru"

Tuesday, February 20, 2024



Dominique Jaussein

[Watch the video](#)

When all the cult members were down and the lights went out, the Théâtre de Nice exploded in bravos. We had just witnessed a new opera that is sure to be one of the strongest lyrical performances of the season on French stages: Laurent Petitgirard's *Guru*.



This was the French premiere of a work that had its world premiere in Poland in 2018, and we're betting it will be a landmark show.

In a clear evolution from his previous opera *Elephant man*, Laurent Petitgirard has achieved a musical synthesis between the French tradition of Debussy and Ravel and the modernism of contemporary writing. Instead of serially torn melodies, Petitgirard creates a fluid language that could be described as "sung theater". The singing is done at the rate of one syllable per note, making it as intelligible as possible. The orchestra slips into the darkness of the drama, giving impetus to the action. Brass instruments communicate their energy, strings unfurl their voluptuousness or mystery. The percussion is active on all sides, cracking a whip, tinkling a bell, clashing a Chinese block or shattering a glockenspiel. Farther away, they unleash a thunder of timpani or bass drums to give body to the tragedy. At the far end of the orchestra and stage, the great brassy circle of a gong (tam-tam) stands out, appearing like a sun in the half-light.





The story is about a guru who is challenged on his island by an enemy named Marie. The guru's name is "Guru". This island must be running out of o! At the end, a collective suicide takes place. The booklet has been endorsed by Georges Fenech, a lawyer and member of parliament specializing in sects in France, who gave a first-rate talk on the dangers of sectarianism on the eve of the performance.

Muriel Mayette-Holtz's staging is admirable! Exemplary is the mastery with which she handles the crowd movements (choirs, dressed in black, forming a tragic circle around the guru's white dawn) as well as the individual acting of the characters, whose faces appear on a screen. Under her direction, the singers became actors. Among the images she created was that of the guru on the verge of madness, throwing pebbles into a pond like a lost child.



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Guru is sung by a baritone who is a revelation: Armando Noguera. His character captivates his followers, and he captivates the audience. Alongside him, we are touched by the excellent soprano Anaïs Constant, the mezzo Marie-Ange Todorovitch, well voiced, well in her role, the triumphant tenor Frédéric Diquero and the fine bass Nika Guliashvili. Then there's Marie. This spoken role (to a rhythm written in the score) is played by the moving tragedienne Sonia Petrovna.

The chorus is excellent. The Nice Philharmonic is in top form. Laurent Petitgirard accomplishes the feat of conducting with the singers behind him. And everything works like Swiss clockwork.

To salute this show, we can use the two o's that weren't used in Guru and shout bravooo!

**André PEYREGNE**

February 20, 2024

Musical direction: **Laurent Petitgirard** Stage

direction: **Muriel Mayette-Holtz** Sets and

costumes: **Rudy Sabounghi**

Video production : **Julien Soulier**

**Distribution :**

Guru: **Armando Noguera**

Marie: **Sonia Petrovna**

Iris: **Anaïs Constans**

Victor: **Frédéric Diquero**

Carelli: **Nika Guliashvili**

Marthe : **Marie-Ange Todorovitch**

Six followers: **Rachel Duckett ; Noelia Ibañez ; Aviva Manenti ; Raphael Jardin ;**

**Eduard Ferenczi Gurban; Trystan Daguerre Opéra**

**de Nice Chorus**

**Nice Philharmonic Orchestra**