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The Cunning Little Vixen. color. 97 min. Nicholas Hytner, Théâtre du Châtelet, dist. by Kultur, 2010. DVD

Though written in 1924, Leoš Janáček's opera has a modern, almost postpunk look and sound, especially as directed by Hytner (artistic director, London's National Theatre; Broadway's *Miss Saigon*). This live recording of the opera as produced and performed at the Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris relays the straightforward story, based on a Czech cartoon, weaving the infinite themes of the cycles of both humankind and nature. There is as much dance as song and dialog, and the choreography by Jean-Claude Gallotta keeps the forest folk magically alive. The libretto is sung in the original Czech, but it matters little to the storytelling; the gorgeous music and melodic singing are key. The costumes of Bob Crowley are edgy yet simple; his two-dimensional sets fare less well. Even the uninitiated will appreciate the crisp conducting of Sir Charles Mackerras. Recommended for all ages and all collections.

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