

I Hate Opera (But I Love Madama Butterfly)

Review by Jan Narveson:

K-W Chamber Music Society's presentation of the Voice Afire Pocket Opera Production of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*, with a short variety program to start off, was a resounding success in their diminutive Music Room on July 3, 2009. The hall was filled literally to capacity - the last patron was wedged into a corner - and the audience was rapt and enthusiastic. Voice Afire has managed to avail itself of outstanding performers for this venture, with Natalie Donnelly and Romulo Delgado, soprano and tenor, singing not only all of the main arias and duets of Act One, but also the Jewel Song from *Faust*, and *Libiamo* from *Traviata*. In this production, the well-known veteran Canadian actor Colin Fox takes over several of the subordinate roles in a speaking part, enabling the audience to understand the action to an extent not easy to replicate in a full operatic production. Fox was superb throughout, effectively adopting the persona of the Japanese marriage broker, the American ambassador Sharpless, and others as needed. In such a production, of course, the voices will be the centre of interest, and no one had any problem with the admirable sounds of this soprano and tenor. They sang with fine tone, passion, and warmth, and had the audience eating out of their hands. Equally impressive was the superb little orchestra - piano, violin, clarinet, and cello, each in the hands of a superb musician (two from producer Raymond Luedeke's home base, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra). Delicious solos from each musician, and reliable support from pianist Chris Donnelly, kept everything moving beautifully throughout. It's a very different experience from hearing opera in a big hall, but the 85-seat Music Room offers an intimacy that no hall can match, and everyone felt it. Great show!

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Program, Part I

Doug Riley Peace Dance (piano solo)

Charles Gounod --- The Jewel Song (from *Faust*)

Giuseppi Verdi --- Libiamo from Verdi's *La Traviata*

Jerome Kern -- Smoke Gets in Your Eyes

Intermission

Part II

Madama Butterfly (Act I and Un Bel Di)

Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924)

Madama Butterfly.....**Natalie Donnelly**

Pinkerton..... **Romulo Delgado**

Trouble..... **Colin Fox**

Jin-Shan Dai, violin; Robyn Cho, clarinet; Winona

Zalenka, cello; Chris Donnelly, Piano

Act I (complete):

includes:

Dovunque al mondo – The whole world over (Pinkerton)

Amor o grillo – Love or Fancy (Pinkerton, Sharpless)

Nessuno si confessa - There's no one likes to own (Butterfly)

Vieni amor mio! - Come my love (Pinkerton, Butterfly)

Bimba, bimba little one, little one (Pinkerton, Butterfly)

Vieni la sera – Evening is falling (Pinkerton, Butterfly, Suzuki)

Act II

un bel di – one fine day (Butterfly)

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