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"La Cenerentola"

Italian opera adds twist to classic fairy tale

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Having heard the Disney version of the Cinderella story many times, I was skeptical about what the "La Cenerentola," an Italian opera of Cinderella, would bring to the story.

To my surprise, I was delighted by the overwhelmingly talented singers and orchestra that made the story spring to life.

Opera San Jose presented "La Cenerentola," an Italian opera of the fairy tale Cinderella, held at the California Theatre on Saturday night.

The only way I was able to understand what each character was saying was by glancing up at a large screen that displayed the translations for the opera in English.

The screen was helpful to understand the snide comments, but I felt the subtitle screen took away from the opera, since my eyes were distracted looking back and forth at the screen and the characters.

The theater lights dimmed and the opera began, as a frail woman named Cinderella stood onstage in a patched skirt. She is hunched over as she irons her master's clothing. Her eyes looked up and gazed into the audience as she parted her lips to sing.

Her immaculate voice filled the theater as she sang an Italian opera song about a prince looking for a bride.

The music enhanced the mood of the opera and added drama.

The music was conducted by Anthony Quartuccio, who commemorated his sixth assignment with Opera San Jose.

Different emotions were brought to the familiar tale through the music.

Though I don't understand Italian, the music helped me understand the emotions of the characters, so I could understand what they were feeling without even knowing what they were saying.

Stringed instruments complemented the high musical notes sung by the characters. Each actor's ability to carry a note almost took my breath away, and my ears stung with the length of notes held in such a light airy tone carrying emotion throughout the theater.

Cinderella's bratty stepsisters pranced onstage in brightly colored and elaborate dresses as they sang about their beauty and ordered Cinderella around as she frantically tended to their every need.

The stepsisters had the best costumes of the night, with an elaborate hairdo that consisted of mounds of hair sitting atop each of their heads. Their wardrobe was full of bright pastels and crisp white ruffles as each outfit looked like it was made for an adult-sized

12-year-old girl.

The stepsisters sported bright blue eyeshadow and exaggerated eyebrows that emphasized their unfortunate looks.

The comedic satire of the play updated the classic Cinderella story and the snide remarks and humor added a much-needed lift to the familiar story.

The opera added a new twist to the story by creating a fake prince to lure the stepsisters away, so the true prince could find his Cinderella.

A handsome squire dressed in a dapper, sky-blue coat and sash captivated the hearts of the stepsisters as they fumbled for the prince's hand in marriage.

The true prince, a tall, dark and handsome man dressed as a squire, is enamored by the young Cinderella, who fell in love with the prince, not knowing about his power or wealth.

His deep voice tones carried throughout the theater as he expressed his undying love for Cinderella.

Cinderella was played by Betany Coffland, who has been a part of Opera San Jose for three other plays and has acted in opera halls across the country.

The prince, played by Michael Dailey, has been in numerous plays by Opera San Jose as well as opera halls and festivals nationwide.

Opera San Jose's "La Cenerentola" was a cultural experience that brought new insight into a popular fairy tale.

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