



- News ▾
- Sports ▾
- Business ▾
- Entertainment ▾
- Lifestyle ▾
- Opinion ▾
- My Town ▾
- Tech ▾
- Marketplace ▾
- Tools ▾



[Home](#) →
[Entertainment](#)
[Story](#)

Review: Opera San Jose captivates with Mozart's 'The Magic Flute'

By Georgia Rowe | Correspondent

POSTED: 04/19/2015 11:29:34 AM PDT
| UPDATED: ABOUT 19 HOURS AGO 1 COMMENT

With its contrasting elements of light and dark, lofty sentiment and low humor, Mozart's "The Magic Flute" can be a challenging opera to bring to life.

The new Opera San Jose production, which opened Saturday at the California Theatre, manages to unite the competing threads of the composer's late-life score -- although, at times, it almost feels like two operas being performed on the same stage.

On one hand, it's a comic fairy tale with a prince and princess, a vengeful queen, fanciful puppets and some awfully cute kids. On the other, it's a behind-the-scenes look at a secret fraternity (the Masonic pledge that Mozart himself embraced late in life), with a temple of initiation, a series of fairly grim trials and lots of pondering on the nature of good and evil.

In his new production, director Brad Dalton strives to integrate both sides. Dalton, a frequent Opera San Jose director who staged a terrific production of Mozart's "Idomeneo" a while back, gives weight to each competing element (the opera is sung in German, with spoken parts in English). By evening's end, though, the lighthearted episodes still feel more consistently animated, while the darker scenes come across with far less flair.



PAT KIRK/OPERA SAN JOSE Hae Ji Chang, as the tortured princess Pamina, delivered a strong performance in Opera San Jose's opening night production of "The Magic Flute" on Saturday at the California Theatre. (Randy McMullen)

Dalton's staging tipped its hand in the first moments of Saturday's three-hour performance. As the overture began, the characters usually described as Three Boys -- here, Three Genies -- came onstage dressed as junior Mozarts, followed by a group of kids in animal masks, each one holding a puppet. The

opera took place inside a storybook frame. Even the giant menacing serpent was cute.

Advertisement



In contrast, the scenes around the temple of the evil Sarastro were fairly static. The stage was sparsely set, with a few neon palm trees to mark the exterior and a dark mirrored wall dominating the interior. The arias tended to be stand-and-sing affairs, with the chorus seated on risers, observing.

Despite the imbalances, this "Flute" was often captivating. Conductor Joseph Marcheso led a precise, enveloping

orchestral performance of Mozart's score. Andrew Whitfield's chorus sang with distinction, and the vocal soloists, many of them returning from February's excellent production of "Where Angels Fear to Tread," inhabited their roles with vitality.

Hae Ji Chang was an especially fine Pamina. Making her company debut, the soprano sang the role of the tormented princess with lovely, crystalline tone, rising to a touching "Ach, ich fühl's." Tenor Kirk Dougherty was a handsome Tamino, but his vague characterization of the young prince didn't make a very deep impression. As the birdcatcher Papageno, Matthew Hanscom got off to a slow start, but his singing became more robust as the evening went on, and his good-hearted antics were consistently endearing. He was particularly animated in his final scene with Jennie Litster's perky Papagena.

Isabella Ivy's Queen of the Night was theatrically vibrant, if not always tonally precise, and Silas Elash was a sturdy Sarastro. David Margulis deployed a smallish tenor as Monostatos, and Christopher Filipowicz was a bland Speaker. Some of the evening's most beautiful Mozart vocalism came from the Three Ladies, sung by Elizabeth Baldwin, Chloe Smart and Lisa Chavez. And those Three Genies -- Chris Salinas, Daniel Ostrom, and Winter Felton-

COMMUNITY TALK
Atrial Fibrillation

 **Stanford**
HEALTH CARE
STANFORD MEDICINE

APR 26 • 9:30am – 11:00am
Register here »

Priestner -- were irresistible.

'THE MAGIC FLUTE'

Presented by Opera San Jose

Through: April 26, and May 1-3Where: California Theatre, 345 S. First St., San Jose

Tickets: \$51-\$121; 408-437-4450, www.operasj.org

FROM AROUND THE WEB

selected for you by a sponsor



Tattoos Are Forever: Don't Be Like These People

Viral Nova



How People are Paying Next to Nothing for...

LifeFactopia



The 4 Best Farm-to-Table Restaurants in Aspen

Aspen - Defy Ordinary



10 Celeb Tattoos That Will Make You Insanely Jealous

Answers.com

MORE FROM THE WEB

3D Tattoos That Will Make You Want Ink! *Buzzlie*

Overcoming Fear, Setbacks and Obstacles:

Steve Harvey... *Strayer University*

How Do You Not Order Your Wine Online *The*

Huffington Post

6 Places You Didn't Know You Needed To Clean

BuildDirect

The Case For A Cat Raceway: To Build Or Not

To Build? *BuildDirect*

9 Hilariously Adorable Dog Sneezes *Rover.com*

YOU MIGHT ALSO LIKE

'Lord of the Rings' symphony extravaganza makes...

'Game of Thrones': How HBO's fantasy epic became...

Monday's TV picks: 'Gotham Returns' -- what's ahead?

Replacements: Here's what they played

Grunge classic 'Temple of the Dog':

Soundgarden's...

Cheryl North: Young voices raised in song --

Los...

Recommended by Outbrain

• [Article commenting rules of the road](#)

comments powered by Disqus

San Jose Mercury News



.