

Il Trovatore



Tenor Alexander Boyer as Manrico and OSJ Chorus.
Photo: Pat Kirk.

Monday, February 18, 2013

Il Trovatore at Opera San Jose

Il Trovatore (The Troubadour)...what a conundrum. What a piece of work! Vile cruelty with tales of dreadful injustice in which a falsely accused woman is burned at the stake as a witch and then demands her daughter avenge her and so the daughter casts a small child (who happens to be the son of the man who condemned the woman) into the flames to be consumed as well! But... oops! In her confusion she inadvertently threw the wrong child in, her own! Over and over in Verdi's dark opera, the pyre and its cruel flames get recounted, sometimes in pornographic completeness:

Look at the terrible flames!
They're touching her already!
Her burning hair already
sends sparks up to heaven!
Look at her eyes,
hanging out of their sockets!



Alexander Boyer as Manrico and soprano Cecilia Violetta Lopéz as Leonora.
Photo: Pat Kirk.

But wait, *Il Trovatore* is a love story after all in which a beautiful, virtuous woman, the incomparable Leonora, is cursed to be loved by two men, the heroic soldier troubadour Manrico and the dark hearted Count di Luna who is determined to possess her no matter her desires on the question. It is tragic that such noble, opera beauties always have to die to prove their virtue and constancy.

Set amidst all this dark drama and Spanish cruelty, Verdi's music soars sublimely even as our hearts feel for Leonora and her impossible plight and Opera San Jose's production is exquisitely staged with voices that do justice to the material. **Cecilia Violetta López** thrills as Leonora with a soprano voice of purest gold that shows power and nuance throughout her range and control that can spin out a diminuendo into gossamer. Tenor **Alexander Boyer** matches her as the troubadour Manrico with his sustaining power and pure clear tone. As the Count di Luna, **Zachary Altman's** glowering presence and menacing demeanor are fully expressed in his rich baritone voice. As the vengeful Azucena, daughter of the wrongly executed "witch," **Nicole Birkland** is simply magnificent as she recounts the story of her mother, the little boy and

her love fc



Mezzo-soprano Nicole Birkland as Azucena.
Photo: Pat Kirk.

Il Trovatore boasts a magnificent opera chorus highlighted by the famous second act “Anvil Chorus” accompanied by real anvils vigorously rung by Gypsy blacksmiths with gleaming hammers.

Physically, *Il Trovatore* is beautiful with impressive, soaring stone architecture by designer **Steven C. Kemp** and appropriately moody lighting by **David Lee Cuthbert**. The large cast of principals and chorus are handsomely costumed by **Elizabeth Poindexter**.

Il Trovatore continues through February 24 at the California Theatre in Downtown San Jose.

[< previous](#)

[next >](#)