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OPERAVILLE

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2013

San Jose's Hansel and Gretel a Sublime Vision



Opera San Jose
Humperdinck's "Hansel and Gretel"
Nov. 17, 2013

It's easy to underestimate Humperdinck's *kinder* opera, with its singable, simple folk songs and bouncy orchestrations, but then you arrive at the grand sublimity of the Sandman Theme (sung here by Antonia Tamer), and the lovely Father's Prayer, and then the children fall asleep and turn into ballet dancers (Gabriel Mata and Hannah Vaughan) and leap about the stage, surrounded by cherubim wearing wreaths of golden lights. For anyone three years old to a hundred (okay, for anyone breathing), this is divine stuff, and in this pivotal scene alone OSJ has given me images that I won't soon forget.

Stage director Layna Chianakas leads her cast in an energetic performance, beginning with a title duo who firmly suit their roles: mezzo Kindra Scharich as an impish, obstinate Hansel; soprano Sara Gartland as the wiser and bossier sister, Gretel.

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 ABOUT ME

Baritone Krassen Karagiozov endows father Peter with a fun sense of swagger, while soprano Christine Capsuto does the same for the Dew Fairy, her too-brief appearance filled with athletic leaps, exploding streamers and even a Kaepernick bicep-kiss.



As the witch, tenor James Callon is a full-fledged delight, ramping it up bit by bit until he's stripping to his San Franciscan undergarments and trading in his broomstick for a pink Segway. The set designs by Larry Hancock are Grimm Brothers portraits, trees spread out to eternity, and Elizabeth Poindexter's costumes are gorgeous, particularly the Sandman's purplish patchwork cloak and Mother Nature's (Rita Elizabeth Horiguchi's) brilliant emerald gown. Joseph Marcheso and his orchestra treated the score with great affection, particularly the quiet, lovely sweeps at the beginning of the overture.

Through Dec. 1, California Theatre, 345 S. First Street, San Jose. Alternating casts, in English with English supertitles. \$51-\$111, www.operasj.org, 408/437-4450.

Images: Tenor James Callon as the witch, soprano Sara Gartland as Gretel and mezzo-soprano Kindra Scharich as Hansel. Soprano Sara Gartland as Gretel and mezzo-soprano Kindra Scharich as Hansel. Photos by Pat Kirk.

Michael J. Vaughn is the author of the novels [Operaville](#) and [Gabriella's Voice](#), and a twenty-five year opera critic.

POSTED BY [MICHAEL J. VAUGHN](#) AT 7:09 PM



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Michael J. Vaughn is the author of six novels, including *Frosted Glass* (Dead End Street, Seattle) and *Rhyming Pittsburgh* (LBF Books, Pittsburgh). His poetry has appeared in more than fifty journals, including *Skidrow Penthouse* and *The Chaffin Journal*, and he works as a judge for several *Writer's Digest* competitions. He lives in San Jose, and plays drums for the San Francisco rock band *Exit Wonderland*.

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