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MARVELOUS
The only suitable word to describe OSJ's "LUCIA"
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KIRK DOUGHERTY & SYLVIA LEE as Edgardo & Lucia

SAN JOSE, CA – DONIZETTI's three act work LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR, which opened the 2016-2017 Season of OPERA SAN JOSE at the California Theatre on September 10th, was flawless. On its opening night, it ran with the precision of a fine watch.

The Orchestra, conducted by MING LUKE was in tune, and LUKE's perfect acoustics control let the singers voices to be heard over the orchestra's instruments. The flute and the harp solos showed the purity of their sound. SEAN KEMP'S sets: the forest, the garden, the cemetery and the wood-paneled interior of the Ashton's Palace transported us, visually, to the sites of the action. The lighting of SEAN A. RUSSELL, was a little dark, but utilized the red light at the suitable times. And the sumptuous costumes, designed by B. MODERN, had a touch of authenticity, and genius, by including the green and red color plaids (Tartans) wore in the second scene by Lucia and Edgardo, to demonstrate that the couple belongs to two different Scottish Clans. As for the singing, all the voices sounded marvelous. .

The entrancing melodies of "LUCIA" were written by Italian composer GAETANO DONIZETTI in 1835, (revised in 1839) in the integral musical style of the operas lovers in the Italy of the 1830's, which is the reason why in the score, DONIZETTI held a consistent orchestral coloring from the prologue onwards, underlining the mood with melismas (several notes sung to one syllable of text).

When first written, DONIZETTI wanted the "MAD SCENE" accompanied by a glass harmonica, which was never done, and as of today, nobody knows for sure who wrote the celebrated Cadenza for the flute, that "urges" Lucia to match its sound note by note going higher and higher, because the Flute's music, does not appear in the original DONIZETTI's score.

Written by SALVADORE CAMMARANO, Librettist and Playwright, LUCIA's libretto is based on a few sentences taken from the pages of *The Bride of Lammermoor*, a novel that relates a fictional version on an actual incident that took place in the history of the Scottish DALRYMPLE FAMILY, who lived in The Lammermuir Hills (Scotland) in 1669. The novel is one of several Sir WALTER SCOTT's novels illustrating the aspects of the Scottish region at the time.



The tragic love story told in LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR the opera, is the story of a noble Scottish girl, Lucia (SYLVIA LEE) who is in love with Edgardo (KIRK DOUGHERTY) a noble Scottish man who belongs to Lucia's enemy clan. In battle, Lucia's brother Enrico (MATTHEW HANSCOM) killed Edgardo's father and stole, Lammermoor, his castle. Because the castle is now in decay and the family destituted, ENRICO arranged for his

sister to marry Arturo (MICHAEL MENDELSON) an old rich man.

Prompted by Raimondo, (COLIN RAMSEY) their priest, who serves as Lucia's and Enrico's tutor because they have no parents, and convinced that Edgardo loves somebody else because Enrico destroyed all the letters that Edgardo wrote to her, Lucia marries ARTURO. When Edgardo returns, he rejects Lucia and curses her for breaking her promise to him. Lucia goes crazy. On her wedding night, she kills Arturo. Shortly after she becomes insane, she gets ill and dies. Knowing that he had lost her forever, EDGARDO kills himself. (*pictured left, MATTHEW HANSCOM as Enrico and SYLVIA LEE as Lucia*)

The Opera begins with Enrico (HANSCOM) in the forest outside Lammermoor, searching with his soldiers for the man, he had been told by Normanno (YUNGBAE YANG) a soldier, that Lucia (LEE) has been meeting behind his back. Learning that the man is Edgardo (DOUGHERTY) his mortal enemy, he gets very upset.

In OSJ's production, the scene delighted the audience with the voices of a rich-sounding men's chorus (ANDRE WHITFIELD, Chorus master) the pleasant, but too soft, voice of tenor YANG and a realistic impersonation of Enrico who HANSCOM represents masterfully as a selfish, and cruel man.

The scene is followed by the scene at the fountain, that musically, is the best scene in the Opera for the beauty of its melodies. Here we hear the duet between Alisa (ANNA YELIZAROVA) Lucia's lady in waiting, and Lucia in which Lucia tells her the story of the woman that was killed at the fountain, (They are both looking at) whose ghost she (Lucia) admits seeing once. Lucia's revelation, is sang in pure Bell Canto (perfect scene production) singing the highest Lyric soprano's tones ornamented by melismas. LEE, mastered both, her dramatic role (BENJAMIN SPIERMAN directed the Production as Stage Director) and the difficult singing, which in her exquisite tone of voice sounded majestic. On that night, her aria, was followed by loud BRAVOS, and applause.



And because the performers were superb, there were many loud BRAVOS heard. The sonorous mellow voice of Lyric Bass RAMSEY, (*pictured below with LEE as Lucia*) helped to put realism in his role as priest, telling Lucia in that by marrying Arturo, she may have a miserable life here on earth but that she will eventually find peace and be rewarded in heaven, was heard when warning both Enrico (HANSCOM) and Edgardo (DOUGHERTY) who are about to fight (with their swords) that "*He who lives by the sword dies by the sword.*" And at the end, in a powerful performance, was heard softly, when standing in front of the wedding guests tells them the horror that

he has just seen in Lucia's bed chamber. His voice still resonant but singing at a slower tempo, modulating every tone, his hands still dripping with Arturo's fresh blood. RAMSEY's acting of the role was powerful.

And probably, more powerful, was his remorse for his actions as a priest, and as a man. Because he knows that he had double crossed Lucia, the girl he was supposed to protect. As Raimondo, the character he played, he knew how much Lucia loved Edgardo. He knew that Enrico had hidden Edgardo's letters to Lucia. He knew that as a Priest, Lucia, who had just lost her mother, trusted him and believed he was on her side, and knowing that, he lied to her and helped Enrico convince her that the letter he, Raimondo, showed Lucia, in which Edgardo admitted loving other woman, was a fake. So in his acting, RAMSEY had to show a lot of guilt while playing Raimondo, because it was he who drove Lucia to insanity. He was convincing.

The best performance of a night, in which every performance was true to life, however, goes to the South Korean soprano, SYLVIA LEE (*pictured below*) Her "mad scene" was wonderful, represented with such realism, that brought tears to our eyes. And her singing in which she imitates every note of the flute, plays going up the pentagram and embellishing some notes with melismas, was a perfect Bell Canto. Her ovation was long and the BRAVOS loud.



LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR was one of the best productions presented by OPERA SAN JOSE. Its opening night performance had many solo arias followed by applause, loud bravos and a long standing ovation at the end. It can only be described with one adjective: MARVELOUS.

LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR will play at the California Theatre until September 25. To order tickets call the box office at 404-437-4450 or order them online at <https://www.operasj.org/>

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