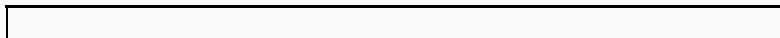
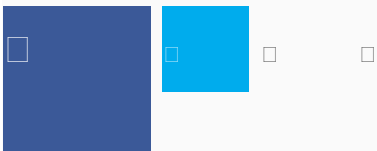


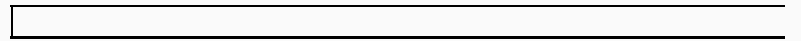
TRENDING:

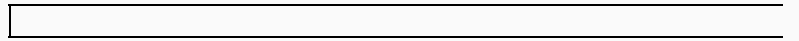
Highway 17 woes
Grammys: Adele vs. Beyonce
Avengers teaser
Cannon ditches AGT
San Jose women resist
Brown seeks Trump help

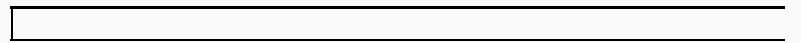
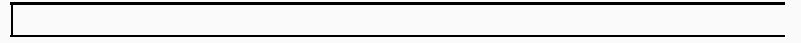
EntertainmentMusic

Review: 'Silent Night' opera gets stirring West Coast premiere in San Jose

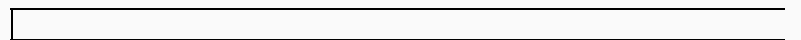
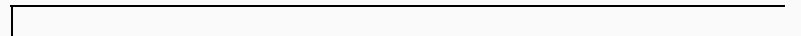


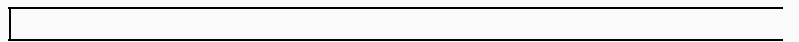
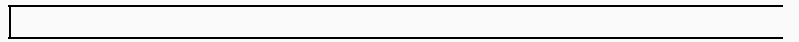


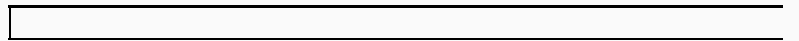
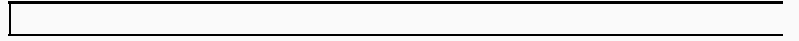


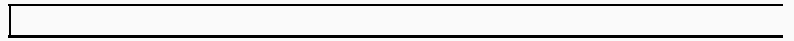
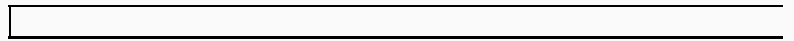


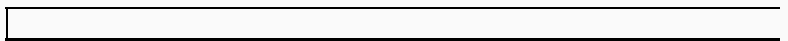
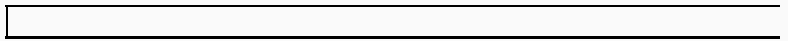
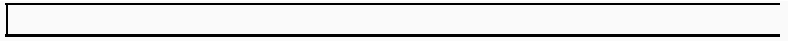
The California Theatre in San Jose, Calif. on Thursday

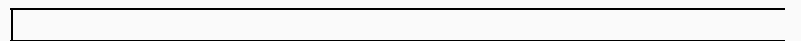


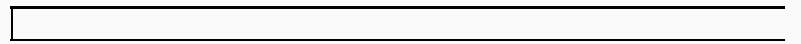
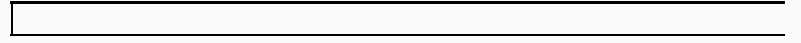


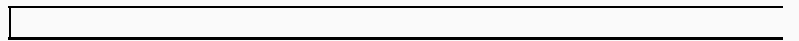
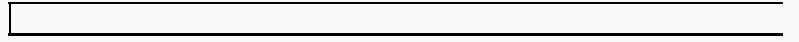


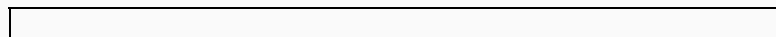
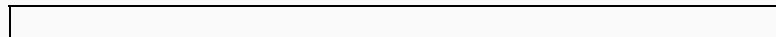












Show Caption

of



By **GEORGIA ROWE, CORRESPONDENT** | Mercury News

PUBLISHED: February 12, 2017 at 1:19 pm | UPDATED: February 12, 2017 at 6:26 pm

War, we are taught to believe, is the work of opposing forces. The characters of “Silent Night” are sworn enemies, soldiers from three countries facing each other in battle.

Yet, in Kevin Puts' splendid dramatic opera, they come together, finding common ground and joining together in brotherhood.

The opera, which made its West Coast premiere in a new Opera San Jose production Saturday at the California Theatre, is based on an incident from World War I, in which weary soldiers forged an impromptu Christmas Eve cease-fire (the story also inspired the 2005 French film "Joyeux Noel").

Puts' well-crafted score, with an excellent libretto by Mark Campbell, draws the audience into the action, and a strong cast, effective staging by director Michael Shell and a shapely orchestral performance led by conductor Joseph Marcheso made Saturday's performance an engrossing experience.

"Silent Night" begins in a German opera house in 1914, where two opera stars, soprano Anna Sorensen and tenor Nikolaus Sprink, are singing a duet. Puts' score evokes Mozart in loving detail.

Their performance is short-lived; a German officer bursts in to announce that Germany is at war, and Sprink is ordered to leave for the front.

Subsequent scenes move to a church in Scotland, where, to the dismay of their priest, William Dale persuades his brother, Jonathan, to join up, and to the Paris apartment of Lt. Audebert, who says goodbye to his pregnant wife to report for duty. The Prologue ends with a haunting choral number sung by men from each army in their respective languages.

From there, the opera moves to the front. Puts' score expresses the battles in forceful musical terms; as casualties mount, Audebert sings a gentle aria filled with sorrow for the dead and longing for his wife. Clearly, the loneliness and uncertainty of life in no man's land affects everyone; in the timeless episode that follows, the men sing of the simple pleasures of sleep. With the first snow falling behind them, it's an aching tableau.

Then it's Christmas Eve, and the truce happens. Nikolaus, coming out of the trenches, sings a Christmas song. His voice is a beacon; others follow, and soon men from each army are sharing cognac and chocolate, pictures of wives and children. The first half ends with Anna singing a *Dona Nobis Pacem* that sounds as lustrous as moonlight. Even amid the cease-fire, the sense of loss is unmistakable.



Act II brings retribution. The generals, outraged by the fraternization, come down hard, sending soldiers away to newer, bloodier battles.

Shell's fluid production accommodates the opera's shifts in time and locale. Set designer Steven Kemp has created a blasted landscape, with large bunkers that regroup to suggest trenches and headquarters. Lighting by Pamila Z. Gray and costumes by Melissa Nicole Torchia clarify allegiances.

Puts' score is assured and distinctive in the opera's grim marches and choral outpourings; again and again, he produces powerful moments with massed voices. The score is less affecting in the writing for solo voice. The arias are beautiful but don't always soar.

Still, there are moments of great potency throughout the production: a gorgeous duet for the lovers Anna and Nikolaus, who sing of green fields and flowers blooming, a mournful march as the troops bury the dead; a poignant men's chorus reading letters to loved ones.



Nikolaus Sprink (played by Kirk Dougherty, left) and Anna Sorensen (Julie Adams) are lovers torn apart by war in "Silent Night." Nhat V. Meyer/Staff

The cast is outstanding. Soprano Julie Adams is an ardent, radiant Anna, and tenor Kirk Dougherty sings handsomely as the shellshocked Nikolaus. Ricardo Rivera is a warm, articulate Audebert, and Brian James Myer exudes appeal as his aide, Ponchel. Matthew Hanscom is a robust Lt. Gordon, Mason Gates a sympathetic Jonathan, Branch Fields an expressive William. Christopher Bengochea, Nathan Stark and Vitali Rozyanko are the generals; Colin Ramsey, Kirk Eichelberger, Kisenia Popova make fine contributions. Kyle Albertson is an excellent Horstmayer, a German Jew whose final scene foreshadows the next world war. By the end, the bunkers are empty. Something unforgettable has happened, but the war goes on.

‘SILENT NIGHT’

Score by Kevin Puts, libretto by Mark Campbell, presented by Opera San Jose

Through: Feb. 26

Where: California Theatre, 345 S. First St., San Jose

Running time: 2 hours, 40 minutes, one intermission

Tickets: \$56-176, \$10 students 25 and younger; 408-437-4450, www.operasj.org

Tags:
Classical Music
Opera



Georgia Rowe, Correspondent

Subscribe Today! All Access Digital offer for just 99 cents!
blog comments powered by Disqus

Sign up for our newsletters!

SUBSCRIBE

Follow Us



MOST POPULAR

1

Oroville Dam: Feds and state officials ignored warnings 12 years ago

2

Live Updates: Oroville Dam spillway crisis eases; evacuation advisory remains

3

Ask Amy: Why am I angry when Dad gave up so much for me?

4

Oroville Dam: Crisis eases, but more than 100,000 evacuated

5

California storms: Brown turns to Trump for aid

6

The Latest: State officials await dawn to inspect spillway

7

San Jose: Speeding Tesla crashes, injures 3

8

Fremont: Big rig fire on I-580 extinguished, traffic alert lifted

More in Music

Acclaimed jazz singer performs Feb. 16-19 at the SFJAZZ Center in San Francisco.

Dianne Reeves brings 'Songs of Love' to SFJAZZ

February 13, 2017, 12:00 pm

Acclaimed jazz singer performs Feb. 16-19 at the SFJAZZ Center in San Francisco.

How streaming music has become the leading format

February 13, 2017, 11:43 am

The 59th Grammy Awards were Sunday, and even if you have never heard any of the music nominated for album of the year, one thing is for certain: How people buy those albums continues to change

Lady Gaga's body-shaming revenge: a very revealing Grammys outfit

February 13, 2017, 10:35 am

Get out the double-sided tape: Lady Gaga sure needed it to keep her top in place while she strutted the Grammys red carpet.

Adele tops Beyonce at Grammys, then basically apologizes for it

February 13, 2017, 5:11 am

Adele apologetic as she bests Beyonce in all three of the night's biggest categories – record, album and song of the year.

[Member Services](#)

[News Alerts](#)



[Subscribe](#)

[Manage Your Subscription](#)

[All Access Subscriptions](#)

[Today's e-Edition](#)

[Newsletter Sign-Up](#)

[Mobile Apps](#)

[Contact Us](#)

[Corrections](#)

[Reprints](#)

[Archive Search](#)

[Lottery](#)

[Classifieds](#)

[Autos](#)

[Jobs](#)

[Real Estate](#)

[Place an Obituary](#)

[Place a Legal Ad](#)

[Advertise With Us](#)

[Today's Ads](#)

[Weekly Ads](#)

[Local Guide](#)

[Fry's Ad](#)

[Public Notices](#)

[© 2017 Digital First Media](#)

[Site Map](#)

[Copyright](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Arbitration](#)

[Powered by WordPress.com VIP](#)

[Bay Area News Group](#)