



# Taminophile

*A bel canto bear... in a verismo world*

Wednesday, April 15, 2015

## BYOB Opera in Upper Manhattan

Opera Company of Brooklyn (OCB) was founded in 2000 to give young singers experience with opera, and its Bring Your Own Beverage (BYOB) series of intimate readings began in 2005. With very little rehearsal as a group, OCB presents semi-staged readings (not yet memorized) of popular operas in intimate venues such as company founder and Artistic Director Jay Meetze's upper Manhattan apartment. The format of the BYOB series is to cut dialogue and most chorus music to focus on the music of the principal roles. On Saturday I was able to hear the group present the curious combination of *The Impresario* and *Pagliacci*.

Saturday night's performance began with Mozart's popular one-act opera *Der Schauspieldirektor* (*The Impresario*). Cutting all the dialogue left two arias, a trio, and a quartet, all beautifully sung. My favorite from this small cast was Aine Hakamatsuka, who sang Madame Silberklang with a light, agile sound, and acted the prima donna with the childish impetuosity required. Tenor Ivan Rivera was a fine Vogelsang in the famous trio, trying to make peace between the two warring prima donnas. Heidi Sauser as Madame Hertz and Boris Mitchell as Buff rounded out the cast.



Aine Hakamatsuka  
Courtesy ainehakamatsuka.com

It must have been the limited rehearsal time and the fact some of the singers had previously sung their roles in German that prevented Mr. Meetze from presenting the opera in English to really bring the comedy across. For shows like *The Impresario* and *Die Fledermaus*, I'm a big fan of performing in the local language and making the lyrics topical whenever possible.



Elana Gleason  
Courtesy elanagleason.com

The undisputed star of *Pagliacci* was Elana Gleason as Nedda. Although a lighter voice than one usually hears as Nedda, Ms. Gleason sang the role with great skill and beauty. Whether she was acting as Nedda, longing to run away with her lover, or play-acting as Colombine in the play within the play, one couldn't tear one's eyes away.

Nedda's young lover Silvio was well sung by Brian Ming Chiu. Villain Tonio was sung by Michael O'Hearn, who seemed impaired by allergies but otherwise fully committed to the jealous, vengeful clown. Canio, Nedda's husband, was sung by Byron Singleton. I don't think the role suits his voice, but he managed it capably.

Pianist Naoko Aita very capably accompanied both operas,

with Mr. Meetze conducting.

at 3:41 AM

Reactions: funny (0) interesting (0) cool (0)



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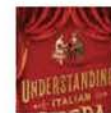


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