

TDO's Turandot does not disappoint

Written by BY TERRY MATHEWS, News-Telegram Arts Editor
Monday, 08 April 2013 11:26



From the first, distinctively dramatic notes until the emotionally-charged finale, The Dallas Opera's current production of Giacomo Puccini's "Turandot" is a feast of sight and near-heavenly sound.

Normally, opera reviews briefly mention the orchestra near the end.

In this case, I'm leading with the orchestra because they really stepped it up.

The first five notes put the audience on notice – the action is about to begin, and it's not light comedy.

Throughout the three acts, visiting maestro Marco Zambelli led TDO's orchestra expertly and with a great deal of passion. Zambelli received positive reviews for his 2011 TDO debut of "Romeo et Juliette" – for good reason.

Zambelli's skills allowed him to coax every ounce of musicality from the orchestra. Although they are normally brilliant, Zambelli lifted them to new heights during Sunday's matinee.

The audience doesn't really have time to absorb the beginning of the music because the curtain rises to a fully occupied set (see top photo).

Allen Charles Klein's design is over 20 years old, but remains regal and omniscient.

"Turandot," Puccini's final masterpiece, centers around a brutal princess who delights in the death of her many suitors.

No one can win her hand until they answer three riddles – called enigmas.

In Act One, we see the beautiful but mute Prince of Persia led to his death, one of 13 axed during the year. His head is later brought out on a stake and put on public display alongside the others.

Of course, a wise and handsome prince will finally win the ice princess' hand and warm her heart, but it takes three acts to get to the glorious moment.

Taking us on this journey are: TDO's expert chorus and delightful children's chorus; Turandot; her father; Calaf, the handsome prince and his long-lost father; and a devoted slave girl named Liu.

Providing comic relief to the drama are Puccini's three stooges, Ping, Pang and Pong.

Although the opera's title is "Turandot," make no mistake about it – its driving force is Liu's love for Prince Calaf. So steadfast is her heart that she makes the ultimate sacrifice for him.

Hei-Kyung Hong's portrayal of Liu enchanted the audience. With every perfectly placed note, she cast a spell. In fact, during her final aria, no one around me moved – or breathed. The roar and "bravas" from the crowd after her last breath and during the encore showed their appreciation for her talent and skill.

Soprano Lise Lindstrom has a tough job as Turandot. Through two acts, she has to be aloof and almost evil in her rejection of lovers. Then, at the last minute, she has to come alive with a new-found passion for Prince Calaf.

Lindstrom, who is making her TDO debut, proves up to the task. Her regal bearing plays well across the footlights. There even seemed to be a frost in her voice until she finally gives in to

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her feelings for the prince. Then, her heart – and her vocal chords – seemed warm and open.

Antonello Palombi made an impressive Prince Calaf. Seen earlier this season as Ramades in “Aida,” Palombi is every inch a dramatic tenor, with a voice to match his effective theatricality.



Ping, Pang and Pong are always a treat – and so welcomed as they lighten up the somber, bloody theme of the plot. TDO’s casting was spot on. Jonathan Beyer (Ping), Joseph Hu (Pang) and Daniel Montenegro (Pong) were among the crowd favorites. Kudos to them for their near-perfect comedic timing.

Of course, the most dramatic moment of “Turandot” comes in Act Three, with the chorus singing “Nessun Dorma,” leading up to Prince Calaf’s world-famous aria.

While a single tenor can never compare to three (think Jose Carreras, Placido Domingo and Luciano Pavarotti singing the aria live in Los Angeles), Palombi’s performance filled the hall with power and passion.

When TDO’s chorus joined in for the final moments, everyone sighed. The people sitting next to me were from Waco, New York and California. Behind me were a ladies who traveled from New Orleans. We had all come to the Winspear for this moment – and we were not disappointed.

Additional performances of “Turandot” will be April 10, 13, and 19, with a matinee on Sunday, April 21. Tickets for these performances begin at \$19. Log on to www.dallasopera.org for seating and ticket information.

There will be a simulcast of the opera at Cowboys Stadium on Saturday, April 13. There is no charge to attend the simulcast, but you must register at the Dallas Opera website at www.dallasopera.org/cowboys.

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NESSUN DORMA (Translation from Italian)

Nobody shall sleep!...
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Even you, o Princess,
in your cold room,
watch the stars,
that tremble with love and with hope.
But my secret is hidden within me,
my name no one shall know...
No!...No!...
On your mouth I will tell it when the light shines.
And my kiss will dissolve the silence that makes you mine!...
(No one will know his name and we must, alas, die.)
Vanish, o night!
Set, stars! Set, stars!
At dawn, I will win! I will win! I will win!

Click [here](#) to watch a video of The Three Tenors performing "Nessun Dorma."

Click [here](#) to see Pavarotti's 2006 solo performance at the Torino Olympics.