

## DESTINATION CHELSEA

### "Suor Angelica" shows its Extraordinary Women by Jess Lewis June 5, 2009

St. Peter's Church on 20th Street between 8th and 9th avenues is the perfect Chelsea location for Chelsea Opera's production of "Suor Angelica" (Puccini) and their presentation of "Women Extraordinaire," a nice mix of opera classics such as "Flower duet from Lakme," and more modern operatic choices such as "Things change, Jo" from "Little Women" (Adamo).

It was nice to have the show start with some familiar songs before getting into the lesser-known Puccini opera "Suor Angelica." The presentation of "Women Extraordinaire" was a great showcase of the people in the company. Soprano Casey Hutchinson and Mezzo-Soprano Kristen Allegri started the night off with grace and beauty. Allegri also showed her talent throughout "Suor Angelica." All the performers showcased here showed a fantastic understanding of all the components of opera: acting, singing and grace. Performers showcased a range of vocal types and ages. But the most impressive thing about this performance was the wide array of musical selections. I was particularly impressed with the modern selections such as "The Rape of Lucretia", "Little Women" and "A Street Car Named Desire." Darcy Dunn (mezzo-soprano) was a vivacious and dynamic performer who filled the whole room up with her stage presence and voice while singing the part of Meg from "Little Women." She had a strong voice and acting skills to match. Dunn became this character, much as Rachel A. Rincione did with her interpretation of the character Blanche in the operatic version of "A Street Car Named Desire." Rincione embodied the character of Blanche and showed her skill as both an actress and singer in her emotional interpretation of the solo "I want magic."

In the production of "Suor Angelica" Dulce Manzini portrayed La Zia Principesa beautifully. In her duet with soprano Anya Fidelia (Suor Angelica) she showed a great skill in both her acting and musicality. Her voice is of top quality and both she and Fidelia clearly had a feel for working well together. Their voice, emotions and presences filled the room. The way in which the two women interacted with each other showed off their skill that they have honed over many years of training and performing. Both performers exhibited a mastery of the music and language that is often not present in modern productions.

I was extremely impressed with the impact that the singers and musicians were able to make with such minimal space. Stage director Beth Greenberg certainly has a great understanding for staging an opera in any space, whether it be the main stage and New York City Opera or the small stage at St. Peter's Church. Additionally the orchestra played beautifully under the direction of Carmine Aufiero.

Each part of this production served to strengthen the other. It was clear that all that participated in the performance, as well as the audience, thoroughly enjoyed themselves. When leaving, murmurs could be heard through the audience about how this was a most impressive production, and possibly the best they had ever seen out of Chelsea Opera in its amazing 5 years of performances. Many of the audience members had seen the company perform this opera before in June of 2004, and seemed to be very impressed with how well and how much the company has grown in these few short years.

This production was great fun, and definitely something to see for both opera aficionados and those who just simply enjoy good music. If you are interested in going to the show it runs until June 7th! Visit the Chelsea Opera's website at <http://www.chelseaopera.org/> for details and to book tickets in advance.