

Voce di meche

We are here to encourage the development of gifted young singers and to stimulate the growth of New York City's invaluable chamber opera companies. But we will not neglect the Metropolitan Opera either. Get ready for bouquets and brickbats.

Wednesday, March 25, 2015

[NEVER ENOUGH PUCCINI](#)



Jon Thomas Olsen, Jessica Sandidge, Sonja Krenek and Steven Wallace

We can never get enough Puccini! Hours after Chelsea Opera presented an evening of scenes from Puccini's opera, we are still singing the wonderful melodies. We think it's likely that many people in the audience are doing the same. The concert was underwritten by Project 142; Christ and St. Stephen's Church on the Upper West Side was filled to overflowing, with bridge chairs hastily being commandeered in an attempt to accommodate the capacity crowd.

The evening opened with scenes from *Turandot*, the opera Puccini never finished. Ping, Pang and Pong (sorry but we can never remember which is which) have a wonderful trio and tenors David Kellett and Jon Thomas Olson with baritone Scott Lindroth brought it to vivid life.

Liù's suicide scene was movingly performed by soprano Rosa Betancourt who created a sympathetic character and enlivened her with some persuasive acting. She has a lovely *vibrato* and we enjoyed her later performance of "*O mio babbino caro*" from Gianni Schicchi.

From the very early *Edgar*, composed when the master was only 26 years old, we heard bass-baritone Bryan Glenn Davis sing "*Questo amor, vergogna mia*". We liked him even better as the evil Scarpia from *Tosca* when he sang "*Tre sbirri...Una Carrozza...Presto!*" which suited him well.

From *Le Villi* we heard soprano Sonja Krenek sing "*Se come voi piccina*". She made a fine Mimi in the "breakup" scene from *La Bohème* with tenor Steven Wallace as Rodolfo. The heartbreaking scene was given comic relief by the embattled lovers Musetta (soprano Rosa Betancourt) and Marcello (baritone Scott Lindroth) whose music is in counterpoint with Mimi and Rodolfo's.

Our *Tosca* for the evening was the versatile Megan Nielsen who wowed the audience with her "*Vissi d'arte*". What a change from the character she portrayed just before--Suor Angelica from the eponymous opera. Talk about heartbreak! The poor woman was put away in a convent by her aristocratic family, after bearing an illegitimate child. Her aunt, La Zia Principessa, cold-heartedly tells Angelica that the child has died. Mezzo-soprano Elizabeth Moulton, a lovely jovial person in real life, demonstrated fine acting chops as she assumed her imperious manner. Poor Angelica sings out her grief in "*Senza mamma*".

Tenor Taras Chmil sang the favorite tenor aria of audiences everywhere--"*E lucevan le stelle*" from *Tosca*. We realized that Puccini wrote his best music for characters who were about to die! Mr. Chmil also sang "*Ch'ella mi creda*", Dick Johnson's aria from *La fanciulla del West*. Fortunately, Dick Johnson does NOT die!

Stacey Canterbury has a sizable soprano and used it well in "*Un bel di*" from *Madama Butterfly*, another heartbreaker. We got to hear her again as Magda in "*Ch'il bel sogno*" from *La Rondine*.

Soprano Julia Rolwing sang Manon's final aria from *Manon Lescaut*--"*Sola, perduta, abbandonata*"--another death aria! David Kellett sang Des Grieux's "*Donna non vidi mai*".

The delightful closing scene was from *La Rondine* featuring the quartet from the photo above. For this scene, Magda was sung by Sonja Krenek with soprano Jessica Sandidge

impressing us with her sweet voice and sparkling personality as Lisette. Steven Wallace sang Ruggero and Jon Thomas Olsen sang Prunier. Happily, the rest of the cast became the onstage partygoers and, as directed by Lynne Hayden-Finley, were completely convincing.

In place of an orchestra, we had Christopher Cooley, who accompanied beautifully.

The delightful evening served to whet our appetite for the upcoming *Tosca* which will be performed in St. Peter's Church in Chelsea on 6/4 and 6/6. It seems pretty far down the road but Chelsea Opera will also present *Suor Angelica* in a year's time. We would be happy to hear Megan Nielsen once more in that role.

(c) meche kroop

Posted by Meche Kroop **Tuesday, March 24, 2015**