

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.

Saturday, January 18, 2014

[NEW POSSIBILITIES=NEW VOICE](#)



Lara Ryan, Kate Oberjat, Benjamin Perry Wenzelberg, Lidiya Yankovskaya, Alexandra LoBianco, Anna Noggle

A work in progress is not meant to be reviewed so let us just call this a "progress report". Benjamin Perry Wenzelberg's opera *The Sleeping Beauty* has been presented previously by Chelsea Opera in a piano reading. Now Act I has been orchestrated and excerpts were presented with the Bloomingdale School of Music Chamber Orchestra and members of the Chelsea Opera Chamber Orchestra, conducted by Lidiya Yankovskaya.

Our test for new operas is as follows: "Does the music add anything to the narrative". In this case it does. And how! The sophistication of Mr. W.'s music belies his youth (he is barely 14) and shows skill in writing for the voice with lovely melodies and interesting harmonies and textures in the orchestra. It is eminently listenable and accessible but not at all derivative.

The scenes excerpted from Act I included the christening of Rosamond with the Evil Wise Woman powerfully portrayed by huge-voiced Alexandra LoBianco who limned every nuance of evil. The Last Wise Woman was portrayed by Anna Noggle whose beautiful soprano conveyed benevolence in its color; her diction and phrasing were so fine that not a word was lost.

In the second scene Rosamond (Kate Oberjat) is now a young woman wandering the castle yearning for a prince. The use of the harp was lovely and the melismatic singing on the word "love" was gorgeous. Lovely harmonies emphasized the phrase "his heart would link in mine". As the young princess imagines the future there was a sprightly *allegro* passage.

In the third scene, our heroine encounters the Evil Wise Woman and her spindle. The brass section foreshadows the evil to come, along with the lower strings. And when she pricks her finger the bass drum gives us a feeling of dread.

Mr. W.'s work is being supported by a grant from the Nicholas S. Priore New Possibilities Fund, established by Leonarda Priore in memory of her brother. What an appropriate recipient is Mr. W.! He has a lifetime of possibilities ahead of him. We can scarcely wait to hear the rest of the opera.

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