

La Traviata led to success by conductor

MURIEL LEEPER
Opera Critic

The opera *La Traviata* is timeless in its appeal. Based on the well-known *La Dame aux Camelias*, by Alexandre Dumas it is most familiar in its dramatic form as *Camille*.

The Cosmopolitan Opera Association staged the tragic love story at the Markham Theatre last Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

The success of the opera depends entirely upon a conductor who can guide the singers and orchestra through a sensitive, lyrical interpretation of the music while imperceptibly

lightening the tension through the four acts to a dramatic, emotional finale.

The company wisely looked for such a conductor, and brought the acclaimed Brazilian musician Tullio Colacioppo to rehearse and conduct the production. The audience was delighted. They responded to each highlight, and there were many, and rose with one accord to offer a standing ovation to the conductor, singers, and orchestra.

Director Steven Thomas, founding artistic director of Opera Hamilton through the past seven years, worked well with Colacioppo. As a team, the vocal,

dramatic, and visual aspects were in harmony.

With this production of *La Traviata* the Cosmopolitan Opera has underlined the real possibility that a second opera company can succeed within the area of Metro Toronto. With outstanding conductors and directors such as was experienced last weekend, a splendid level of artistic performance can be achieved using some of our top local artists.

North Toronto artists sang the leading roles in this second production by the Cosmopolitan Opera at the Markham Theatre. Hungarian-born Veronica D'Ecclis was the Parisian courtesan, Violetta.

She gained complete sympathy from her listeners, particularly through the last two acts. After a somewhat tense opening, which flawed her singing, her flowing lyricism and beautiful pianissimo highlighted the pathos of the libretto. Vocally and through her acting, she touched the hearts of many in the audience.

Tenor, Michele Strano as Violetta's lover, Alfredo also had his audience in the palm of his hand. He is a dramatic singer, creating some fine vocal highlights. The duet of the two lovers, Violetta and Alfredo *Un di felice* was one of those highlights. The colorful dance interlude

brought a change of pace to Act III when guests dressed as gypsies and matadors brighten the reception in Flora's Parisian house. Here again, Maestro Colacioppo created a mood through the orchestra that caught and held the audience.

Alix Klenman was the charming Flora (Violetta's friend) David Varjaba a vocally appealing Giorgio Germont (father of Alfredo) and Susan Bortot as Anina, an attractive confidante to Violetta, was convincing.

Other singers in the cast were Algirdas Kynas, bass-baritone as Doctor Grenville, Bernard

Jackson as Baron Duphol (Alfredo's rival), Christopher Tracey as Gastone, Franco Arturi as the Servant, Lou Carmichael as the Marquis and Arlen Lapidus as Giuseppe.

With this successful production, the Cosmopolitan Opera has established itself as an attractive

and important part of North Toronto and Markham's entertainment scene.

The company is negotiating to re-engage the brilliant Maestro Colacioppo for their spring production, to be held again at the Markham Theatre.

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