

Opera in Review

Barber of Seville is well done

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Correspondent

The Cosmopolitan Opera Association is to be congratulated on at least two counts. First, it put on a very enjoyable performance last week of Rossini's Barber of Seville; and second, it has again chosen the Markham Theatre for Performing Arts as their home in the Metro area.

The Cosmopolitan is now celebrating its 10th season. It has already brought before the public such works as Carmen, La Bohème and La Traviata, and next November will present the double bill of Cavalleria Rusticana and Pagliacci.

If last week's Barber is any indication, this group will continue to grow and prosper.

It takes courage these days for a small company to produce The Barber of Seville, but the Cosmopolitan gave this opera the full-length treatment.

(The tenor aria Cessa di piú Resistere was omitted and Basilio's aria La Calunnia was lowered a tone, but these changes are usual even in much larger productions.)

The singers were accompanied by a 29-piece orchestra (including an electric harpsichord) under the able direction of Conductor Roberto De Clara and the tempo throughout was brisk, not an easy matter to accomplish with an orchestra that performs as a distinct unit only a few times each year.

This company's great strength,

though, lies in its ability to attract the best of our young singers, even those who are well-known to audiences of the Canadian Opera Company.

Gabriella Prata, a mezzo-soprano, sang the role of Rosina. For the past 100 years this role has been almost entirely taken over by the coloratura, and it was good to hear it performed by a mezzo in the way that Rossini intended.

Another treat was Prata's singing of Rossini's Contro un cor che Accende Amore during the Lesson Scene. Many singers substitute an aria or song that is guaranteed to get a good round of applause.

Lo, Hear the Gentle Lark! and Home, Sweet Home have both been used.

Peter Barcza was the barber, Figaro. His fine baritone voice sounded like Lawrence Tibbett's in the Markham Theatre auditorium. Barcza is a seasoned performer and he threw in a high A natural in the aria Largo al Factotum without any sign of strain.

The old guardian, Dr. Bartolo, was sung by Christopher Cameron, a bass-baritone from Scarborough. Cameron acted the role suitably with stiffened joints and drowsy senility.

John Dodington, a well-known operatic basso, is tall and lean, ideally suited in stature and voice to the role of Basilio, the music teacher.

In his aria, La Calunnia, he glided across the stage like a

large black vulture making the part believable in its absurdity.

The short role of Berta housekeeper to Dr. Bartolo, was played by Susan Porter. Sometimes her main aria, Il Vecchiotto Cerca Moglie, is cut — but not by the Cosmopolitan.

It was a great pleasure to hear this aria again and the reason for its inclusion — Porter's beautiful voice — was apparent to everyone.

Barry Stilwell was the amorous Count Almaviva. Stilwell is at his best in humorous roles and he excelled in his disguise as the

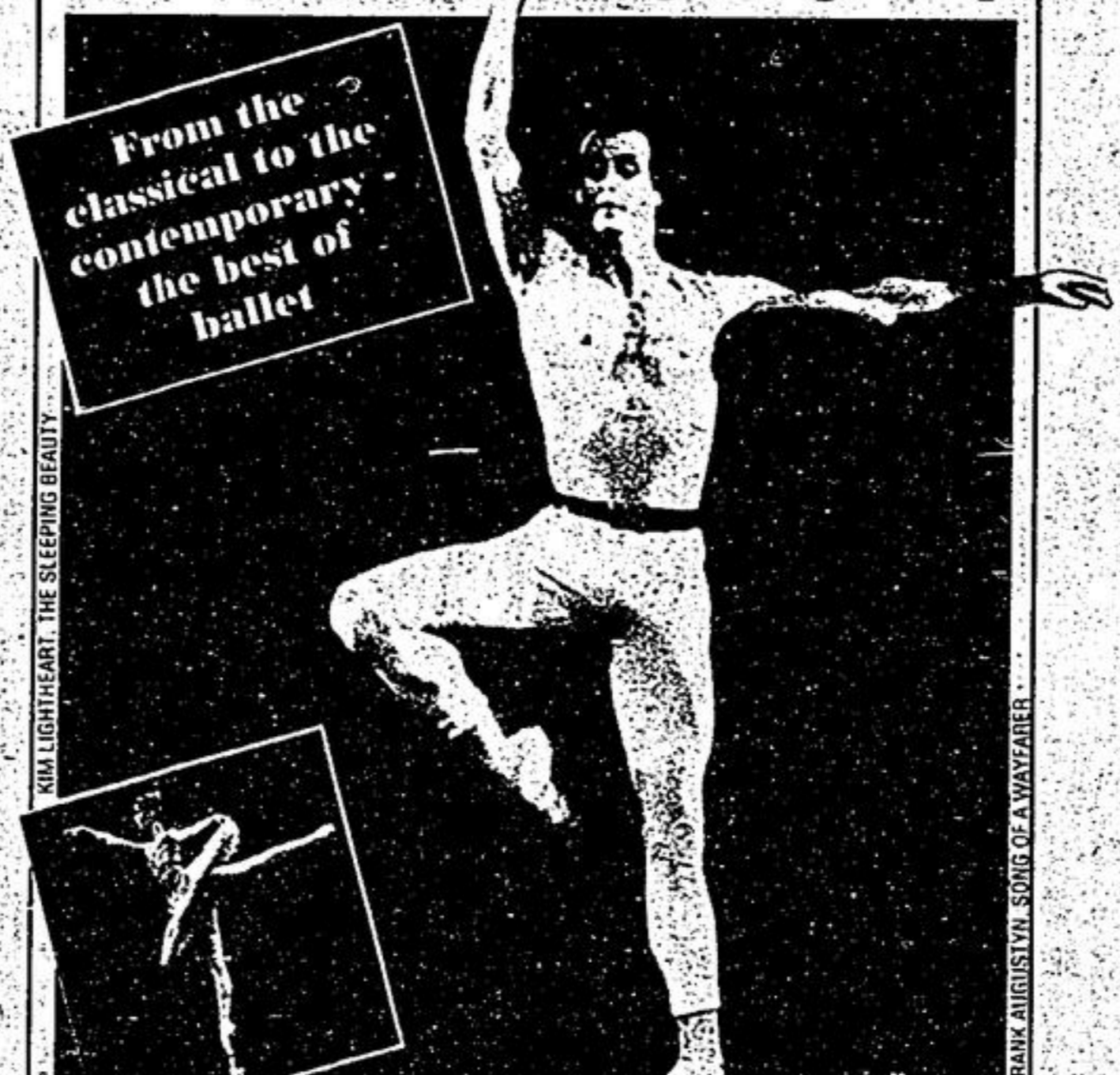
itinerant music teacher.

The Cosmopolitan Opera Association, with tenor Michele Strano as artistic director, can look forward to many more years of opera production chiefly because this company fills a need.

This group is a good training ground for our young professional singers while they build up confidence and voice, and the beautiful Markham Theatre seems to be the right setting. As Rossini might have said: "Bravo, Cosmopolitan! Bravissimo, Markham!"

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