

LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR
By Gaetano Donizetti
Presented by Virginia Opera
Mar. 28 through Apr. 6, 2008
For tickets: 757-623-1223 (Southside)
757-877-2550 (Peninsula)

Hello, I'm Edgar Loessin with Loessin at Large.

Exceptionally strong, athletic voices create a potent performance that is a showcase of Virginia Opera at its finest in this highly emotional production.

Maestro Peter Mark implies in his program notes that voices such as these are mandatory to bring a bel canto opera, of which LUCIA is a prime example, to life. Each aria offers "cascades of ornamented vocal lines" relevant to the emotional subtext.

The action of the piece takes place at a time of feuding estates in eighteenth century Scotland, in this case the Ravenswoods and the Ashtons. Lucia is an Ashton and she has been having trysts with her family enemy Edgardo who is a Ravenswood. To reclaim the family fortune, her brother, Enrico, ultimately forces her to marry Arturo. The final result, of course, is a nuptial of blood, madness and death.

In the very first act, the stunning Manon Strauss Evrard makes it quite clear that she IS Lucia in every note and nuance. She tells her confidante Alisa of a ghost who haunts the fountain where they await a secret visit by Edgardo. This aria foreshadows the horrors to come. He arrives and they share exalted music as they declare their love. Tenor Israel Lozano has the richly textured voice to make clear his intense passion. He makes his anguish very real and haunting in an exceptionally well conceived performance.

Sebastian Catana as Enrico is a dynamic performer. One senses a struggle within himself over the love for his sister and the practical needs of his action. His ardent feelings embellish his manly, compelling baritone vocal renditions, even if he does have a tendency to sing to the conductor at times.

Christian Van Horn, Lucia's spiritual counsel, sings with pleasant force and manages to capture the duplicity and many facets of his character. It's a neat, noteworthy performance. Gregorio Gonzalez, Brandon Wood, and Amanda Ingram function most effectively in their respective roles..

This is the night of nights for Manon Strauss Evrard. She floats through the intricate and prismatic melodic modes of the bel canto score with angelic grace. Her madness evolves like a spider's web that completely captures us in a shattering tour de force climax.

Joseph Walsh's chorus sings with clarity. The credit, over all, for this splendid mounting of Lucia, is shared by the ever creative and theatrically sensitive stage director Dorothy Danner and Maestro Peter Mark. And, it couldn't happen, of course, without Manon Strauss Evrard.

There are quintets of basket ball players pounding away to be number one. Virginia Opera has already achieved that distinction, and more, in this LUCIA, its unique version of March Madness.

This is Edgar Loessin with Loessin at Large and I'll see you at the next opening.