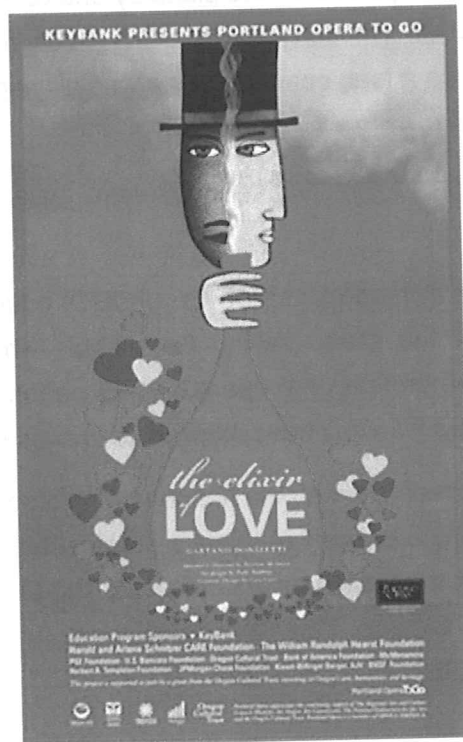


Portland Opera To Go – A brilliant way for kids to hear stories sung

by Dot Rust on March 16, 2011



Portland Opera's Education and Outreach division presented a reduced version of Donizetti's "Elixir of Love" specifically for kids at the Hamilton Opera Center.

This performance was staged in the studio space with the stage only a few feet in front of the first row of seats. It was a wonderfully intimate setting, allowing kids to see and hear the performers close-up.

With only four performers, the action was simple and the characters easy to differentiate, making it easier for young audiences to follow the plot and not get lost in a sea of characters and subplots.

Introduced by Alexis Hamilton, the Manager of Education & Outreach for Portland Opera, the set-up puts kids into the right frame of mind to appreciate what opera is all about. And really, in its simplest terms, it really is just a story that you sing.

So with that, the performance began with tenor Daniel Buchanan as Nemorino professing his love for Adina, quite wonderfully sung by soprano Ainsley Soutiere, who only has eyes for the pilot Belcore, sung with oily gusto by Erik Hundtoft, who stumbled onto the farm after crashing

his airplane. The final character to emerge is a traveling snake oil salesman, Duclamara, sung with brilliant comic wit by Stacey Murdock, who sells a potion to Nemorino that will make Adina fall in love with him.

The performers were ably accompanied on the piano by one of the members of the musical staff at the Hampton Opera Center. I'm sorry that I didn't catch his name, but the playing was top-notch and rock-solid. Quite a feat, considering he was playing with 10 fingers what an entire orchestra usually plays.

The sets were simple, the props minimal, but they were quite enough to convey the scenes visually.

This production is part of the Portland Opera to Go (POGO) educational outreach program that takes the company all over the state, playing for schools where kids wouldn't have many opportunities to hear and see professional opera singers performing opera repertoire. A great program, one I'm sure my folks wouldn't have allowed us to miss in our little town growing up.

POGO has also forged an agreement with the McMenamins organization and will be performing this work along with a 50 minute concert of opera's greatest hits and Broadway standards, old and new, at eight locations in the McMenamins universe: The Grand Lodge, The Sandtrap, The Crystal Ballroom, The Hotel Oregon, The Kennedy School, The Old St. Francis School, The Edgefield and the Olympic Club.

And best of all? It's free!

So take your kids and expose them to something different. Opera is a great art form, and this production is a brilliant way to introduce new audiences to it. Take advantage of it. *(Pssst! It's a great introduction for grownups, too!)*

Tags: education outreach, Family, Hamilton Opera Center, kids, Opera, Portland Opera To Go



Dot Rust

Dot Rust has enjoyed a career in music spanning a few decades. An accomplished classical and jazz musician, Dot has performed and recorded throughout the US on horn as well as bass. It was her gigs in the recording studios, though, that caught her imagination so she set off for LA to supplement her degrees in music with more training in recording engineering. After a few years in a recording studio and production facility engineering, mastering and doing administrative work, she landed a job with a leading independent media distributor where she ultimately wound up as a product manager for a division that specialized in family music. This gave her instant access to artists and labels all over the US, on major labels and indies, and it was this interaction with the artists that opened her eyes to the burgeoning segment that is so often just an afterthought for most people. Family music is currently the only genre enjoying real growth in the music industry, and Dot hopes to bring even more awareness to Oregon and the northwest.