

**REVIEW: La Traviata @ Opera Western Reserve 11/12/10**

By: Kelly Ferjutz, *Cool Cleveland*

**Just because an opera** is more than 150 years old, and considered one of the “warhorses” of the repertoire, doesn’t mean it has to be stodgy and dull.

A bright, functional (authentic-looking) set, colorful and appropriate costumes, brisk staging and glorious voices — when combined with musical excellence from the orchestra and music director — can all work together to make such an “antique” as fresh and satisfying as this morning’s pastry.

**Just ask those in attendance Friday evening** at Youngstown’s Stambaugh Auditorium when Opera Western Reserve presented Giuseppe Verdi’s grand romantic tragedy *La Traviata* before a very full house of appreciative opera-lovers.

David Vosburgh, as usual, did triple duty. He’s executive director of the company, but also does the set design and stage direction. Actually, he did quadruple-duty, as he also provided the translations for the supertitles. Lighting was by J. Anthony Ferrello, and costumes by Barbara Luce. The excellent orchestra (which seems to sound better each year) was conducted by its marvelous musical director Susan Davenny Wyner. Matty Sayre was the very capable production stage manager, keeping everything moving smoothly and as it all should. The chorus, which might have benefited from having a few more voices, was well-prepared by its director, Dr. Hae-Jong Lee.

**But of course, it’s the singers** who determine the success or failure of the venture. And this was a resounding success! Two of the three principals were local: tenor Timothy M. R. Culver as Alfredo, and baritone Brian Keith Johnson as his father Giorgio Germont. These two performers always enhance any stage on which they find themselves. They also had a great Violetta to work with in soprano Jessica Stecklein.

Supporting roles were admirably filled by Shafica Kaleel (Anina), Kathryn Copeland (fortune teller), Rachael Pavloski (Flora), Enrique Bernardo (Gastone), Max J. Pivik (Baron Duphoul) and Trevor Coleman (Dr. Grenvil).

**Next year, Opera Western Reserve will present Puccini’s *Tosca* on Fri 11/11/11, at 7:30PM. For more information, call 330-480-0693 or visit the website:<http://www.OperaWesternReserve.org>.**