

**Opera Western Reserve:
*Lucia at Stambaugh (Nov. 10)***

by Robert Rollin



Last Friday night Opera Western Reserve presented Gaetano Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* at Stambaugh Auditorium, sung in Italian with production director David Vosburgh's fine supertitles. The excellent cast, coupled with

Susan Davenny Wyner's adroit conducting, a terrific orchestra, and Austin Pendleton's well-paced staging, made for a very successful single performance.

Salvatore Cammarano's libretto is based on Sir Walter Scott's historical novel *The Bride of Lammermoor*, set in 17th-century Scotland. Lucia Ashton and Edgardo di Ravenswood, like Romeo and Juliet, are destined to die at their own hands because of family rivalries.

Randa Rouweyha was stunning as Lucia. Her light lyric soprano voice, strong stage presence, and charm brought the role to life.

Foreshadowing her coming madness, Lucia sings sadly to her friend Alisa, ably performed by mezzo-soprano Rachel Pavloski, about being threatened by a woman's ghost killed by one of the Ravenswoods. A beautiful accompanimental arpeggio played by principal clarinet Alice Wang supported her aria.

With real pathos and grace, Rouweyha sang, "Were he but here, oh ecstasy, naught would I know of sorrow." Lucia reaffirms her sadness after Edgardo arrives, planning revenge. Rouweyha's lovely vocal quality and entreaty gestures worked beautifully. The two sang a gorgeous duet expressing their love and marriage vows.

Lucia's brother Enrico, sung darkly and beautifully by tenor Michael Young, conspires with Normano, Captain of the Guard, portrayed effectively by Xu Yue Qing, to forge a

love letter showing Edgardo's unfaithfulness. The orchestra's horns sensitively supported the dark moments. Deeply crestfallen and accompanied by fine oboe and clarinet solos, Lucia agrees to marry Arturo.

After the chorus comments, "Nothing can part our two families," Arturo, sung with bright color by tenor Timothy Culver, complains that Lucia has been seeing Edgardo.

The priest Raimondo, sung with masterful deep timbre by bass Jonathan Stuckey, carries out the marriage ceremony. The entry of Edgardo precipitates great conflict and begins a beautiful sextet displaying all the principal characters' inner thoughts. The combination of the six soloists, chorus, and orchestra produced one of the finest musical segments — the magnificent long ensemble closing Part 1.

Part 2 begins with the chorus and Scottish dancers. Raimondo runs in explaining that Lucia has stabbed her new husband Arturo to death. Lucia enters in a bloodstained dress, grasping a bloody knife.

Rouweyha carried off the famous "Mad Scene" as though unaware of her surroundings and imagining Edgardo's presence. Principal flute Kathryn Umble's glorious recurring obbligato — symbolizing Lucia's love — echoed Rouweyha's gorgeous trills and skillful melodies.

Tenor Michael Vickers' portrayal of Edgardo seemed stiff early on, but in the closing scene he was exceptionally expressive, both vocally and in his gestures. The horns underlined his despondency.

As a single bell tolls for Lucia, Edgardo declares, "Death will reunite us." Michael Gelfand's plaintive cello solo marked Edgardo's passing as the chorus chanted, "Forgive him." The finale elicited a standing ovation.

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