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La Traviata moves audience

by Sierra Barroza, published on February 28, 2010 at 8:22PM

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The Sacramento Opera presented Giuseppe Verdi's *La Traviata* to a full house Friday night at the Community Center Theater.

From the opening number, the audience was captivated by lead Karen Slack (soprano), who played Violetta Valery, and Alexander Boyer (tenor), who played Alfredo Germont.

Conducted by Timm Rolek, the Sacramento Philharmonic Orchestra accompanied the cast in the two-and-a-half-hour performance.

Slack and Boyer's voices complemented each other, bringing the dramatic storyline to life.

La Traviata follows Valery, a courtesan, and Germont, a respectable young man, as they fall in love and later feel the pain of being torn apart by Alfredo's father, Giorgio Germont, played by baritone Kenneth Overton. The opera's climax comes when Violetta pretends not to love Alfredo. In return, Alfredo renounces his love for her. Tragedy takes center stage; their love cannot be denied, but fate has other plans.

The opera's beautifully detailed set and elegant costumes gave the audience the feeling that they had stepped back into the 19th century.

This was my first time seeing *La Traviata*, but I spoke with a few audience members who had seen the play before.

"It is first rate," said Dr. Pichle, attending with his wife, Rita. "The lead singers are excellent, polished, with very nice, smooth, silky voices."

Judy Haeling, who has seen the opera many times, said, "Every opera is a little different, but I think Violetta (Slack) has a strong, gorgeous voice."

"The performances put on by the Sacramento Opera are a wonderful part of our community and a wonderful asset," she said.

I also spoke with Marlynn Smith, an opera singer in Sacramento with a

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masters degree in voice performance.

"Karen Slack nailed it, her different timbre and style were very powerful," she said. "You could feel her expression in her voice and the beauty of the music makes you still joyful even though the play is so tragic."

She was joined by her mother, Dorothy Smith, who said that the staging was great and the orchestra sounded fantastic.

Ted and Elba White related this performance to the many operas they have seen in other countries.

"We have seen other operas where the lead had a weak voice and tonight's performance is not the case," he said.

The opera was in Italian, but the English subtitles made it easy to follow. As the leads sang, the audience could glance above the stage to better understand the performance. The supertitles also made it easier to recognize what was being sung and to pay more attention to the acting.

The opera's heart-wrenching finish brought the audience to its feet as the cast stepped back on stage for their final bows.

The play's last performance will be Tuesday at 7:30 p.m.

Tickets are available and can be purchased online at sacopera.org.

Photos:

- 1. *Karen Slack, (Violetta)*
- 2. *Alexander Boyer, (Alfredo)*
- 3. *Kenneth Overton, (Germont)*
- 4. *Erin Neff, (Flora)*

Conversation

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