

## **IL TROVATORE**

An opera by Giuseppe Verdi

Virginia Opera Company

Harrison Opera House

Oct. 3, 5, 8, 10, 12

Fairfax Va. Oct. 17 and 19; Richmond Oct. 24 and 26

For tickets call: (757) 623-1223

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

This is Maestro Peter Mark's 100th production with Virginia Opera. It is appropriate that this quintessential opera is being done on this remarkable occasion. It is a work of grandeur and passion. That Peter Mark is passionate about opera is evident in every production I've seen come to life under his baton. He has devoted 35 years of his career to create majestic operatic theatre for the state of Virginia. Viva la passione! Bravo Maestro Mark!

Fire, both literally and metaphorically, is an important element in IL TROVATORE. The principal characters are engulfed and destroyed by the flames of passion. Others have been literally been burned alive. We only see the latter events as the ghosts of the victims make fleeting appearances. Blink an eye and they are gone. They are the brilliant will-o'-the-wisp creations of stage director Lillian Groag.

The dramatic structure of this opera imposes stringent challenges to its performers and directors. Much of the libretto is a narration of past events. We are told about what happened instead of seeing and experiencing the horrors the characters encounter. Each one is trapped in a whirl pool of deadly conflict of passion that is all consuming. The intense, emotional score by Verdi reveals the agony they are forced to endure. The performers are transmitters of this musical power. They must hold the stage by seemingly doing very little. Most of the time there is little physical activity but constant, unrelenting, raging psychological inner action. Enrico Caruso defined this work by saying it was easy to do and that all you needed was the world's four greatest singers.

We are fortunate to have Maestro Mark, Director Lillian Groag and four very fine singers who take on these demanding tasks with great skill and understanding. For me, mezzo-soprano Jeneice Golbourne best captures the goal of letting the Verdi score consume the performance. As the mad, obsessed with vengeance gypsy, Azucena, her presence is riveting and her restrained but vocally astonishing performance is unforgettable. The troubadour Manrico, as performed by the splendid tenor Gustavo Lopez Manzitti, reflects the suffering and decency of this tortured man. Nmon Ford finds many facets in the persona of the basically evil Count di Luna that he makes clear with his rich baritone. Soprano Eilana Lappalainen as Leonora is destroyed by the love and lust of two men. She has most a impressive emotional ebb and flow in her musical approach that builds to her fatal ending.

Michael Ganio's wonderful set is like a caldron with fire and smoke that consumes those drawn to it. Richard Winkler's lighting is lush and living and enhances the searing happenings of destruction.

There's much I've not said about this rather special rendition of a difficult work. Director Groag and Maestro Mark have promised us a thrilling production and that it is. The beauty of the Verdi score is ever present and is given extra potency by a rich psychological subtext created by the production team.

This is an opera that has lent itself to parody by Gilbert and Sullivan and is the opera being done in the madcap movie "A Night at the Opera" with the Marx Brothers. The Gypsy Curse, lost brothers, baby burning, lust, love, poison and a final stage strewn with bodies has long been the essence of grand opera. Long may it live.

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