

OPERA NEWS

[In Review \(http://www.operanews.org/operanews/templates/review.aspx?date=11/1/2018\)](http://www.operanews.org/operanews/templates/review.aspx?date=11/1/2018) > North America

Tancredi Rifatto

PURCHASE, NY

Teatro Nuovo

8/5/18

WILL CRUTCHFIELD'S **TEATRO NUOVO** offered a scholarly endeavor labeled *Tancredi rifatto* to close out its first week-long season in the Concert Hall at Purchase College. Earlier in the week the group had performed the original text of *Tancredi*, dating from its 1813 La Fenice premiere; in *Tancredi rifatto*, Crutchfield assembled alternative numbers that Rossini wrote for later in the Venice run and subsequent productions in Ferrara and at La Scala, placing them within the context of a complete performance of the piece, which here underwent considerable changes. All of the title character's arias were substitutes, even his entrance number, with meant that the opera lost its hit tune, "Di tanti palpiti." Similarly, the two arias for Argirio, the *primo tenore*, were replacements, although the soprano heroine Amenaide retained two of her three solos.

The biggest change involved the replacement of the Venice "happy ending" finale with the final scene that the composer wrote for Ferrara, depicting the hero's death. Oddly enough, this offered the most familiar music: the dramaturgy of the somber Ferrara finale is more in accord with today's tastes, and is offered at least as often as the bravura Venice version. It worked beautifully at the August 5 performance: after more than three hours of virtuoso vocal display, the unadorned Ferrara finale—Monteverdian in its simplicity—proved truly satisfying.

Until then, *Tancredi rifatto* registered more as a compendium of bel canto scenes than as music drama: a function less of the patchwork nature of Crutchfield's edition than of the implausibility of Gaetano Rossi's libretto, hinging on a tragic misunderstanding between the lovers Tancredi and Amenaide that a few words could easily explain away. But it was an effective showcase from some wonderful young singers. Aleks Romano was the hero, her chocolately mezzo-soprano a lovely instrument in and of itself; her use of it exact and agile. The Amenaide was Christine Lyons, displaying a generously scaled lyric soprano, her rapid vibrato adding lushness to the tone while slightly inhibiting her articulation of all those tiny little notes. The work of David Margulis, as Argirio, gave me yet a new occasion to be grateful for the current profusion of Rossini tenors. His voice was slender but focused, his phrasing was sensitive, and his articulation of rapid coloratura was expert. James Harrington brought his dark, sturdy bass-baritone to the role of Orbazzano, the opera's heavy, and Augusta Caro seized her fleeting moments as Amenaide's confidante Isaura, the tang in her mezzo-soprano distinguishing it from Romano's mellower instrument.

If anything, though, the performance's most remarkable musicmaking emerged from the pit. Teatro Nuovo assembled a fine, largely youthful group of musicians, playing period instruments, and arranged them pattern derived from the orchestra configuration of Teatro San Carlo in 1813. Crutchfield, guiding the singers from the cembalo, shared conducting duties with concertmaster Jakob Lehmann; the players fanned out around them, with the instrumental choirs interspersed among each other, rather than segregated into individual sections. The resulting sound was unusually cohesive but also transparent: a bracing imposition of historically informed practice. Too bad more people didn't get a chance to hear it: the late-afternoon performance was thinly attended. Teatro Nuovo merited a better crowd, and well deserves a place in New York's operatic life. —*Fred Cohn*