



Taminophile

A *bel canto* bear... in a *verismo* world

Sunday, July 29, 2018

All is not well in Syracuse

I was delighted to see a concert (sort of) performance of Mr. Rossini's *Tancredi* Saturday night at the new home of Will Crutchfield's **Bel Canto [no longer] at Caramoor**--the new **Bel Canto Festival** presented by **Teatro Nuovo** at Purchase College. Although a long opera, it was full of delights. (I must admit that *Tancredi* is one of those operas everyone has heard of, but I had not yet seen.)

The singing was stellar across the board--not a dud in the bunch. The star of the show was Tamara Mumford as *Tancredi* himself, who of course loves the daughter of a family that is sworn enemies of his own. It is opera, after all. (To complicate matters, a letter from the young lady to *Tancredi* is intercepted, and her loving words are perceived to be directed toward the leader of a rival clan. You know how opera works. After much wailing and gnashing of teeth, there is usually a happy ending. Unless the soprano dies.) Getting back to the many talents of Ms. Mumford, we were thrilled with her free and beautiful sound, her even tone throughout her voice, her agility, and her characterization. We have seen Ms. Mumford in a few things at the Metropolitan Opera, where she was a member of the Lindemann Young Artist program, and we hope to see a lot more of her in the future.



Tamara Mumford
Photo: Dario Acosta

Amanda Woodbury was *Amenaide*, the maiden I mention above. We first saw Ms. Woodbury at the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions in 2014, when she was selected as one of the winners. We loved her singing then, and we love it now. I believe the role of *Amenaide* is a little bit schizophrenic. Or perhaps bipolar. Much of it smacks of *Donna Elvira*, but there are some crazy



Amanda Woodbury
Photo: amandawoodbury.com

moments of Konstanze in there just for spice, as well as a hint of the Queen of the Night. Ms. Woodbury was equal to all of the vocal demands, and gave a perfectly beautiful performance of this demanding role. Another artist I hope to see often in the future.

We've seen Santiago Ballerini before, as well, as Fernand in the production of *Le Favorite (La Favorita)* presented by Bel Canto at Caramoor in 2015. We still admire his singing. Everybody say it with me--freedom of tone, evenness of scale, ease and agility. All of the technical things we like to hear, while also enjoying artistry and beauty of interpretation. (It's not that hard to please me--just get all of those things right, and you're golden.)

As I say all the singing was good. And I was pleased with the orchestra, under the direction of Mr. Crutchfield. Again, I'm not that hard to please--give me phrasing, clarity, artistry, and playing at the highest technical level. How hard is that?

But. I think Mr. Crutchfield's organization is still becoming accustomed to the beautiful Performing Arts Center at Purchase College. The entrances and exits, mostly of the chorus but occasionally of the principals, seemed a little awkward. I found the presentation long. Although most of the singers acted their roles admirably, there wasn't much of a feeling that this wasn't simply a concert. I'd almost rather have had risers and chairs to make it truly a concert performance. If they called this semi-staged, that was a bit of a stretch.

A few thoughts:

- I counted no fewer than three man-buns in the chorus. What are these young people thinking?!
- Gentlemen--please make sure you have the coat sleeves of your tux fitted. If you're getting hired as a principal, you can afford a seamstress.
- Ladies--I like a beautiful dress as much as the next opera blogger (shut up!), but I do believe the lady in the primary role should have the flashiest dress.
- While usually not a big fan of deadpan park-and-bark singing, I would advise at least one principal in this production to flail about less and stand still more as she is singing. It presents a much stronger image and is also likely a good thing vocally.

Obviously, if I can't find more to complain about than the mezzo sidekick's dress upstaging the prima donna's completely tasteful and appropriate black dress, then it was a very fine performance.

at 1:01 AM



Labels: [crutchfield](#), [Mumford](#), [review](#), [Tancredi](#), [Teatro Nuovo](#), [Woodbury](#)