

Opera Review: Standing Ovation for Lowell House's Otello

I'm not much of an opera fan, but because friend Rachel was singing in the chorus I managed to take in the final performance of this year's Lowell House production: Otello.

The Verdi opera itself doesn't have much of a story (Rachel says it cuts back on the complexity of the Shakespearean drama to the point where it's just the villain Iago planting the lovely Desdemona's handkerchief in the home of his rival Cassio's home in order to provoke her husband's Otello's jealousy-so I found myself thinking that, if it weren't for the music, there wouldn't be much there.

But the music was spectacular. Even before the opera started, the tuning up phase brought palpable energy and anticipation to the audience. And throughout, the orchestra, a mix of student and professional musicians conducted by Channing Yu (who, in his other life, an attending physician at a Boston teaching hospital) played dramatical clashes and soothing lows that provided a vibrant backdrop for wonderful singing by both professional musicians and students.

I was particularly entranced by Andrew Young, who played the villain Iago so well that he was booed, during his graceful bow, at the end). I felt that his powerful performance upstaged Brian Landry's Otello, who, along with Malynda Davis, gave excellent performances-as did a slightly weaker Andre De Mesquita, playing Cassio. The principals, who also included Ana Ugarte as Emilia, John Erban, as Lodvico, an James Liu, as Montano, and DJ Robinson, as Roderego, were backed up by an enthusiastic (if slightly hard-to hear) chorus-including the soprano Rachel who appeared to be dressed

as a boy.

I never thought I was in Venice or at the Met, but the vibrancy and professionalism of the production and the performers far surpassed what I'd expected to hear—especially in a college dining hall.

I was happy to join a well-deserved standing ovation offered by the sold-out crowd.