

Oxford Opera's stupendous Traviata

29 September 2023

The opening night of Oxford Opera's production of La Traviata at the Olivier Hall was stupendous. This is the first time the company has put on a fully-staged opera in the incredible Olivier Hall following their previously successful productions of Carmen, La Bohème and The Magic Flute.

Anna Sideris, as Violetta, is magnificent in this heartbreaking tale of a "fallen woman"- a beautiful, clever, entrancing courtesan who finds love with young Alfredo, beautifully sung by the emerging tenor Mark Christian Bautista.



Mark Christian Bautista Anna Sideris Credit @carysglynne

The supporting characters are all excellent, but special mention must be made to Eddie Wade, as Alfredo's pompous, conventional father, whose interference in their love affair leads to Violetta's early death, and Stuart Pendred as Barone Douphol.

The orchestra, conducted by John Warner, brought style, pace and professionalism to Verdi's exquisite score. As soon as we heard the first bars of the overture we knew that we were in excellent musical hands. The audience, including two large groups of school children, was buzzing with excitement, and hugely (and vocally) appreciative of a brilliant production.

The use of the space by Director Cecilia Stinton was wonderful. The simplicity of it allowing the characters and music to tell the story without distraction, and the bringing of Act 3 right to the very feet of the audience was a stroke of genius. To be so close to the heartbreaking end of the story elevated an already wonderful production to one of the best I've ever experienced.

But this is Violetta's story, and Anna Sideris is rarely off the stage, bringing warmth, charm and fine acting to an immensely taxing role. We are as captivated by the rich lyricism of Anna Sideris' voice as are all her suitors, friends and lovers, and are as devastated at her death. There was not a dry eye in the house.



Anna Sideris Eddie Wade Credit @carysglynne



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Oxford Opera, only founded in 2018 by Stuart Pendred and having survived the devastating Covid lockdowns, goes from strength to strength, bringing the best of opera to Oxford, and creating new and enthusiastic audiences as it goes.

I can't wait to see the next production, Tosca, in May '24 at the Oxford Playhouse!

Sheila Bailey – Theatre&Classical Reviewer for Ox in a Box

Oxford Opera
COMPANY

Verdi
La Traviata

Friday 29th & Saturday 30th
September 2023 | 7.30pm

Olivier Hall, St Edwards School, Oxford OX2 7NN
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