

ITALY

Bergamo

A staged production at last! Following on from the London concert performances (see September 2018, p. 1273), *L'Ange de Nisida* made a happy landing at the TEATRO DONIZETTI and was the high point of the 2019 Donizetti Festival. I caught the performance on November 21. Obligated to deal with a space that is still undergoing restoration, the director Francesco Micheli (who is also the festival's artistic director), with vital contributions from Angelo Sala (sets) and Margherita Baldoni (the wonderful costumes), came up with an inspired staging. The audience was positioned in the boxes and on a podium on stage; the orchestra was in the pit as usual, while the chorus either looked down from the amphitheatre or streamed into the still-empty stalls where the principals and actors were enacting the sombre tragedy. The theatre, in its current building-site state, was thus transformed into a kind of arena involving the spectators in the action.

Such an engaging production amply made up for, if not quite eclipsed, the not entirely fantastic singing. Lidia Fridman, a heartbreaking Sylvia in her desperation, and Florian Sempey, an utterly cynical Don Fernand d'Aragon, sang well enough, but with little nuance. Konu Kim (Leone) fired off some stunning top notes but repeatedly showed a tendency to spread the sound in the lower octave. Federico Benetti was adequately authoritative as the Monk, and Roberto Lorenzi, despite forcing at times, emphasized the deceitfulness of the shady Don Gaspar. The conductor Jean-Luc Tingaud gave a striking account of the score, one that focused on the dark nature of the story, made the most of the exciting orchestral contrasts, and kept a steady hand in the choral passages.

Lucrezia Borgia was performed at the TEATRO SOCIALE (November 24) in the critical edition by Roger Parker and Rosie Ward based for the most part on the version given in Paris in 1840, which involved some revisions to the original La Scala score of 1833. The second strophe of 'Com'è bello' was replaced by the cabaletta 'Si voli il primo a cogliere', Gennaro's new aria 'Anch'io provai le tenere' was inserted at the start of the second act, the arioso 'Madre se ognor lontano', composed for the London performances of 1839, was retained, and Lucrezia's final cabaletta was reduced to a single strophe. In Bergamo, the tenor and contralto duet, cut from the Paris performances, was reinstated.

Riccardo Frizza conducted the Orchestra Giovanile Luigi Cherubini and gave a vigorous, busy account of the score, but also one aware of its subtleties, and attentive to the singers'

L'Ange de Nisida receives its stage premiere in Bergamo



needs. Carmela Remigio, making her debut in the title role, confirmed once again her gift for phrasing, gave due weight to all the conflicting emotions that Lucrezia is prey to, and made a decent job of the coloratura. Marko Mimica, an overbearing, violent Alfonso, has just the right vocal colour for the role, but his Slavonic accent does not fit well in this repertoire. Xabier Anduaga (Gennaro) and Varduhi Abrahamyan (Maffio Orsini) were the very picture of youthful exuberance, but the