

## G. Verdi – RIGOLETTO

**If the rest of the season matches this production in artistic quality, it's going to be one hell of a good season for opera in Boston!**

"This is the 8th season of touring in the U.S. for this hardworking European company, and its opening in Boston with Verdi's popular **RIGOLETTO** was a propitious occasion, indeed. With smart and colorful sets and a moody use of lighting this production had all the feel of big theater. The sets filled the stage of the Cutler Majestic fully and added to a mood for this production that was at times both elegant and at others ominous. But sets and lighting were not all that shone last night. The magic of this production was an outstanding cast that could not only sing, but act as well. I must acknowledge at the start the wonderfully honed instrument of Russian soprano Larissa Yudina, whom we saw dazzling the audience in last year's "The Magic Flute." She thrilled us then with her Queen of the Night rendition of "Der Halle Rache Kocht in Meinem Herzen" (The wrath of hell is burning in my bosom), and she thrilled us again last night as the vulnerable and innocent Gilda. Ms. Yudina is gifted with amazing tonal clarity and vocal agility, and she put it all to good use in a performance that was wonderfully moving in all the right places. Equally up to the task was baritone Vytautas Juozapaitis who's tortured characterization of Rigoletto was near flawless, strong and acted with intelligence and emotional depth. Mr. Juozapaitas has a full baritone that displays nice range and clarity, and coupled with the ease with which he commanded the stage, provided just the right measure of appeal that communicated to the audience the conflict and suppressed rage the character, no doubt, felt toward those who used and mocked him. In the role of the Duke of Mantua was tenor Igor Borko. Mr. Borko has a markedly flexible tenor voice that is balanced and smooth, and when reaching for the higher notes, is remarkably flexibly and full even at the higher range. He gave a realistic and underplayed performance that made his character seem more human and flawed than evil and devilish. As with the rest of this fine cast, he remained consistently vocally strong throughout and navigated the stage nicely and with solid presence. I particularly liked the deep, rich bass sound of Mikhail Kolelishvili, who sang the dark role of the assassin Sparafucile, and the lovely, of mezzo- soprano tones of Viara Zhelezova who sang the role of Sparafucile's sister. Ms. Zhelezova was particularly sensuous as she enticed the Duke, while gliding her hands along her

exposed midriff and hips — a nicely adept addition, adding to the realism of the part she played. The role of the chorus and orchestra here was and is important, and last night this chorus was both animated (natural in their movements on stage) and full-sounding. It was a well-balanced performance that added considerably to everything else that was taking place on the stage. The orchestra, under the leadership of Krassimir Topolov gave a fine rendition of the score, a performance that, in the end, had to be considered a big plus for all. Teatro's **RIGOLETTO** had all the shine of a big stage production supplemented by the talents from a superb cast of performers who could sing up a storm and act as well. In a word: Wonderful! If the rest of the season matches this production in artistic quality, it's going to be one hell of a good season for opera in Boston."

*OPERAONLINE. US — Paul Walkowski*

### **Players noteworthy in jester's dark tale - (Boston)**

"Teatro Lirico D'Europa brings Verdi's opera **RIGOLETTO** to Boston's Majestic Theatre every couple of years and did so again last night for a weekend run. You can never get enough of a genuine classic, and with hits like the soprano's "Caro nome," the Act III Quartet and the tenor's ultra-famous "La donna e mobile!" Teatro Lirico production, directed by company artistic director, Giorgio Lalov, remains thoroughly traditional and Krassimir Topolov led the orchestra with the vigor we've grown happily accustomed to from from this conductor. A performance of **RIGOLETTO** ultimately stands or falls on the merits of the principal singers. Tenor Igor Borko, as the Duke, displayed a good-sized, attractive voice, his highest notes have a nice bloom to them, and I admired the way he underplayed his big aria rather than just belting it out. As Gilda, soprano Larissa Yudina won me over immediately with her bright, cool sound. In the pivotal title role, Vytautas Juozapaitis — fondly remembered for his marvelous performance of the title role in Mozart's "Don Giovanni" with the Lirico here in 2003 — sang with a dark, commanding, tragedy-tinged baritone that vividly conveyed the character's flawed humanity and despair. He masterfully delivered the role's two big arias. The crucial but smaller roles of assassin-for-hire Sparafucile and his Duke-bait sister Maddalena were excellently filled by Mikhail Kolelishvili and Viara Zhelezova." *THE BOSTON HERALD — T. J. Medrek*

**RIGOLETTO: Emotional, Enlightening Show! - Lied Center of Kansas**  
Teatro Lirico D'Europa to filled the roles with singers that elevate Verdi's music and cause the audience to leap to its feet! **RIGOLETTO** staged with a full orchestra contained all the elements of grand opera, a majestic set, period costumes, a deep baritone, a strong tenor and a sailing soprano!"

*LAWRENCE JOURNAL WORLD – Jan Bliss*

### **Opera Has Place on Kansas Stage!**

"A sold-out crowd jammed into the Leid Center for the Teatro Lirico D'Europa's exuberant production of **RIGOLETTO**. Hailing each aria, each duet and the show-stopping quartet of Act III with hearty rounds of applause, the audience was transfixed. This was a 'Rigoletto' that put the "grand" into grand opera, captivating hard core opera devotees as well as a host of young people. Thanks to Teatro Lirico's excellent cast and orchestra, G. Verdi's masterpiece soared. Nicolai Dobrev (Rigoletto) sang his heart out with a huge voice that filled the Leid. As Gilda, Kenneithia Mitchell showed off an expressive coloratura voice and a crystal shattering top range that left us in awe. As the charismatic Duke, tenor Roumen Doikov also took bows. It was a wonderful evening. An enthusiastic audience stood and cheered for Teatro Lirico D'Europa's heartfelt performance."

*TOPEKA CAPITAL JOURNAL - Chuck Berg*

### **Dazzling RIGOLETTO - (Rochester, NY - Eastman Theatre)**

"Teatro Lirico D'Europa is fast becoming a fixture in Rochester. On Friday Teatro gave a splendid rendition of Verdi's **RIGOLETTO** in every respect a fitting finale to Opera Rochester's season. The sets were traditional and colorful, the acting sincere and believable and the singing often dazzling. Much of the credit goes to the intelligent planning of artistic Director Giorgio Lalov. **RIGOLETTO** is a tough opera to produce. Lalov called on his cast to give performances that were down to earth and believable. Lalov kept the action sharp, focused and inevitable. Teatro's orchestra, expertly conducted by Krassimir Topolov, performed with sweep and vitality, providing solid ground for the singers; the fine male chorus sang with attention to detail and precise diction. The singing and acting were uniformly strong. Rigoletto is perhaps the most demanding role for a baritone and Nikolai Dobrev was equal to the task. His stenorian instrument was always clear and resonant. His Act I aria "Pari siamo" was sensational. Soprano Kenneithia Mitchell was a delightful Gilda and her

performance of "Caro nome" was the highlight of the evening. This piece is always a show stopper but Mitchell's rendition seemed to actually stop time. Her warm, plummy voice was capable of stupendous high notes and she dispatched trills, runs and other embellishments with easy elegance. Tenor, Roumen Doikov, portrayed the Duke with Renaissance elegance. His singing was technically fabulous. Opera Rochester has invited Teatro back for next season. I can hardly wait."

*DEMOCRAT AND CHRONICLE – John Pitcher*

### **Sangamon Auditorium RIGOLETTO**

"I'm not alone in hoping that Giorgio Lalov, the talented singer turned creator of Teatro Lirico D'Europa stays well, healthy and continues to bring us such magnificent productions as last Friday's **RIGOLETTO!** Do you remember last years' AIDA? This production was equally well done – the sets were not skimpy as in some traveling shows and oh, those voices! We can only hope to see more from this company in years to come."

*ILLINOIS TIMES – Ann Kerr*

### **RIGOLETTO Hits All the Right High Notes! (Buffalo, NY)**

"Monday evening's production of **RIGOLETTO** got everything right. The sets worked because attention was paid to details from the hall of the ducal palace with its erotic central painting to the effective tromp-d'oeil painted backdrop of the palace. This production featured three strong lead singers. Nicolai Dobrev sang the part of Rigoletto with confidence. He used the full range of his rich baritone voice to shape a convincing character performance, moving from bitter sarcasm to the most tender love for his daughter, before his final fall into despair. Dobrev was particularly effective in conveying the lightning quick shifts of mood in his aria "Pari siamo." American soprano Kenneithia Mitchell proved to be an ideal Gilda, bringing the role of Rigoletto's daughter alive with vivid emotion. Mitchell's warm, vibrant voice easily stood up to Dobrev's in their duets, while her beautifully shaded phrasing in her aria "Caro nome" brought the house down. Roumen Doikov has a clear, well-projected tenor and there was something irresistible about his portrayal of the hormonally driven Duke. The first few notes of "La donna e mobile" brought a shudder of recognition from the audience and Doikov gave them exactly the kind of performance they had come to hear. Bass, Alexi Ivanov, made an effective Sparafucile and mezzo Elena Marinova sang a surprisingly strong

Maddalena, with both at their best when joining Dobrev and Mitchell in the exquisite last act quartet. The choral singing was very well focused and conductor Topolov elicited a well-paced, detailed performance."

*BUFFALO NEWS – Jan Jezioro*  
*Performance at Shea's Perf. Arts Center*

### **BOSTON RIGOLETTO**

"Teatro Lirico D'Europa examined one of the great black comedies, Verdi's **RIGOLETTO**. The singing filled the whole neighborhood. They sing like they've got opera deep in their bones. The performance was a direct injection of European taste, coming from a place where opera is a true passion, not a passing thought. The singing was extraordinary from the beginning. Nicolai Dobrev played the jester, a noble baritone with a facile instrument. Kenneithia Mitchell [GILDA] soared up and above her part with ease. As the Duke, Roumen Doikov seduced all with audacity. The chorus sang with gusto and confidence. The orchestra under Krassimir Topolov sounded terrific." *BOSTON HERALD – Keith Powers*

### **RIGOLLETO - Boston**

"In the title role of **RIGOLETTO**, 33- year-old Nicolai Dobrev found an appropriate venue for his imposing voice. He underlined the nastiness of the jester's mockery and his pain felt real. Soprano Kenneithia Mitchell revealed a voice of rose petal loveliness and quicksilver agility and an appealing earnest personality. When she emerged for her curtain call she greeted the rapturous applause in an uninhibited victory gesture. Teatro Lirico's star tenor, Roumen Doikov's top notes are among the best in the tenor business today, right on target and with a golden gleam. Once again the magnificent chorus was worth the price of admission. A thoroughly enjoyable, full-blooded and welcome production."

*BOSTON PHOENIX – Lloyd Schwartz*

### **RIGOLETTO Delivers Grand Opera to Valley! (Palm Desert, CA)**

"The Palm Springs Opera Guild of the Desert had to be pleased with its selection of Teatro Lirico D'Europa's **RIGOLETTO** Sunday at the McCallum Theater. **RIGOLETTO** is a crowd pleaser made even more appealing to the sold-out crowd by the fine voices of Europe 's largest touring company. Baritone, Nicolay Dobrev, sang the title role with passion and power but it was his duets with sensational young American

soprano, Melody Alesi, as Gilda that received the most applause. Their soaring voices blended beautifully, creating moments of aching poignancy and completely capturing the emotions of the enthusiastic audience. Alesi takes the stage with style and intelligence and possesses the voice of a world-class opera star. Tenor, Roumen Doikov's Duke was full of swagger and hubris!" *PALM DESERT SUN – Jack Lyons*

### **Clowning Around in a Fine Fashion! RIGOLETTO - for Syracuse Opera**

"A gripping production, musically and theatrically. Costumes and sets are gorgeous, and the stage is filled with color and vitality. Tenor Gabriel Gonzales not only sings wonderfully but gives the Duke and immense appeal. Theodore Lambrinos gives an equally rich performance as the hunchbacked jester, Rigoletto. His easy, unforced baritone gives full expressive strength to his "Pari siamo" and to his rage filled "Cortigiani". Soprano Melody Alesi won the audience's heart as Rigoletto's daughter Gilda. Alesi gave the aria "Caro nome" virtuoso singing."

*SYRACUSE POST AND STANDARD – Neil Novelli*

### **RIGOLETTO - Syracuse Civic Center - for Syracuse Opera**

"A dramatically compelling and generally splendid vocal performance. Teatro Lirico's singers are fervent and musically accurate, and their chorus work continues to be quite remarkable and singular in the opera world at large. The handsome set and lavish costumes were evocative and beautiful. Theodore Lambrinos' portrayal of **RIGOLETTO** was edgy and dramatically vivid. He gave a wistful plangency and flawless musicianship to his "Deh non parlare al misero" and a forceful ringing account of his "Cortigiani" with exquisite portamento in the abrupt, final pleading before his tormentors. His duet with his daughter, "Si vendetta" was flawless in timing and vocal contrast. The Gilda of young American soprano, Melody Alesi, was stunning. Her steady and completely unforced tone, pitch perfect coloratura and soaring pianissimi were among the vocal highlights of the evening along with her breathtakingly lovely singing of "Caro nome." Mexican tenor Gabrielle Gonzales brought appropriate good looks, fine vocal support and phrasing and plausible acting to the role of the Duke. From a vigorous "Questa o quella" to a fine account of "Parmi veder" he displayed smooth legato, excellent breath control, lots of flexibility and beautiful top notes." *ITHACA JOURNAL – Stephen Landesman*

### **Teatro Lirico's RIGOLETTO, a Performance to Savor! (Providence, RI)**

"Last night's **RIGOLETTO**, the latest from Teatro Lirico D'Europa, was a keeper, one of the best traveling operas to come through here in a long, long time. But then Teatro Lirico has emerged as top dog among touring companies. The company has always boasted great singers. Their **RIGOLETTO** boasted an appealing cast. Rather than stylized staggers, we got true-to-life responses to deeply felt emotion. As the night's GILDA, American soprano, Melody Alesi, slid into a melting "Caro Nome," her big first-act aria, she stretched her arms heavenward, as though feeling love for the first time. This was a big orchestra – so big it spilled out of the Vet's pit onto the corners of the stage. Duke, John Fowler, was more than up to the task, especially in those ringing high notes. His top voice was true and clear. But the big voice in the show belonged to Russian baritone, Sergei Moskalkov who sang his heart out as the crippled Rigoletto. Alesi, as Gilda, was no less impressive. Her "Caro Nome" was perfection, with bell-like high notes and butter smooth runs."

*PROVIDENCE JOURNAL – Channing Gray*

### **McCain Auditorium RIGOLETTO**

"Opera's "road warriors," Teatro Lirico D'Europa, were back at McCain Auditorium with a wonderful production of Verdi's **RIGOLETTO**. Splendid by any standards, the presentation was especially stunning for a touring company. Soloists, chorus, pit- orchestra, musicians, sets, costumes, you name it-Teatro Lirico delivered it all first-class. Teatro Lirico went the extra mile by mounting a company of artists committed to making their every performance glow with unique conviction and special intensity. Sergei Moskalkov's (RIGOLETTO) voice is nimbly powerful and tenderly expressive, and his physical portrayal totally centered. Soprano, Veselina Vasileva, made a lovely, doll-like Gilda of wide-eyed innocence and trusting naiveté. Her far from doll-sized voice made itself heard alike over fellow singers and a full-blown orchestral storm. Even her dying tones had carrying weight. John Fowler cut a fine figure as the selfish Duke. High marks as well for the excellent chorus that contributed significantly with both vigor and precision. Finally, much credit is due Maestro Matakiev, who maintained a perfect balance between pit and stage throughout."

*MANHATTAN MERCURY NEWS – Ben Nyberg*

## **Lirico's RIGOLETTO Steals Hearts! BOSTON**

"**RIGOLETTO** proved to be yet another in the company's string of successes in what's becoming an eagerly anticipated annual Boston residency. Lucky Boston! Teatro Lirico's secret? Its artistic director, Giorgio Lalov, trusts opera and the singers who put their throats and hearts on the line for us and their art every night. Not for one minute did Lalov's staging follow the modern approach seen far too often at Boston Lyric Opera, by trying to improve on the beautiful original, which speaks so eloquently for itself. Here there were no gimmicks, no tricks, just Verdi's tale from the composer through the singers to us. Heaven."

*BOSTON HERALD – T. J. Medrek*

## **Peabody Auditorium, Daytona Beach, FL - 1600 seats sold**

"Wonderful **RIGOLETTO**. Everyone loved it. Gilda, Rigoletto, the Duke...everyone was great! We thought the sets and costumes were so beautiful. We are so glad to have such a great working relationship with you and your company...we feel blessed, so thank you!"

*Nancy and Dallas Weekly - Daytona Beach Symphony Society*

"**RIGOLETTO** was FABULOUS!! I have had so many people tell me how much they loved it. And you sent us the most wonderful cast! I can't thank you enough. I'm very excited about having 2 operas next season. LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR and BUTTERFLY. Wow! Thank you again for making Daytona Beach a happy cultural place."

*Carol Anderson, GM - Daytona Beach Symphony Society*

## **NEW LONDON, CT - RIGOLETTO**

"Last night was a glorious night! The costumes were beautiful and the sets lovely. The audience gave **RIGOLETTO** A STANDING OVATION – both after the performance and in the lobbies while they left to face the freezing night air, and this morning. I have received phone messages and emails galore!"

*Jeanne Sigel, Development & Marketing Director*

*Garde Arts Center, New London CT*

## **OPERA NEW HAMPSHIRE RIGOLETTO**

"The performance **RIGOLETTO** was wonderful! The cast was superb, and the sets beautiful. Our audience loved your Rigoletto! Thank you for a

great season ending performance, and we look forward to MADAMA BUTTERFLY an TURANDOT next season (we had many subscribers sign up last night already!)"

*Richard Bojko, General Manager; President, Board of Directors  
Opera New Hampshire – Palace Theatre, Manchester, NH*

### **WARFIELD CONCERTS RIGOLETTO**

"Everyone in the **RIGOLETTO** cast was chatty and friendly, backstage and I enjoyed myself! I know the audience did too! The company's enthusiasm was infectious. The costumes by the way, were absolutely beautiful. Let me know what you are planning for next year. We have been wondering if TOSCA would be a possibility. Love you."

*Maureen Jones – Warfield Concerts*

### **QUEENSBORO RIGOLETTO**

"Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to present, once again, one of your world-class Operas. This past Saturday we presented Verdi's **RIGOLETTO**. As the show played on, it was not uncommon to hear cheers coming from the audience. The performers and the orchestra were excellent. Not only are the actors good, but also the set and the costumes are also exceptional. We look forward to the continuation of a mutually beneficial relationship. Bravo!"

*Susan Agin, Executive and Artistic Director  
Queensborough Performing Arts Center*

### **NEWBERRY OPERA HOUSE RIGOLETTO**

"**RIGOLETTO** was superb, your soloists soared. You could hear a pin drop as "La donna e mobile" began and the applause that followed was thunderous. Thank you again for a great show – and as always your crew and performers are so easy to work with. Looking forward to next year."

*Deborah Smith -Newberry Opera House, Newberry, SC*

### **Ft. Myers, FL RIGOLETTO at Barbara Mann Hall**

"**RIGOLETTO** was GREAT! Looking forward to LA TRAVIATA next year and maybe some ballet after that too!"

*Mary Lee Mann – Barbara Mann Theatre, Ft. Myers, FL*

## **Panama City RIGOLETTO**

"I was worried how **RIGOLETTO** would go over. It is, after all, a dark and brooding opera. But the cast and the performance lifted the situation to a level where the audience could appreciate and identify with the essential humanity of Gilda and Rigoletto. The soprano role (Gilda) was particularly well sung and it was joy to have Simon Kyung Lee back again in a lead role, this time as the villainous Duke. The baritone role of Rigoletto (Dobromir Momekov) was powerfully sung. The audience loved the performance and gave the cast a vociferous and enthusiastic response. Another winning production from Teatro Lirico D'Europa! As for the post opera reception. It was simply wonderful. Giorgio and the four cast members he brought along were cordial, warm, receptive, and conversational. All are thoroughly delightful persons who thrilled our guests with beautiful music and camaraderie."

*Bob Borich, Talent Chairman - Panama City Music Association*

## **REVIEW: BALTIMORE RIGOLETTO**

"Thursday, March 11, 2010, at the Hippodrome Theater in Baltimore, Giuseppe Verdi's **RIGOLETTO** presented by Giorgio Lalov and Baltimore Opera Theatre. From the first notes of the overture to the final curtain there were abundant orchestral and vocal performance highlights to assure a successful evening. Led by conductor Krassimir Topolov, the orchestra capably supported the vocal and dramatic achievements of the talented soloists and able chorus. For regional opera, the sets, costumes, and lighting were grand. The staging was remarkable. The appreciative audience rewarded the performers with boisterous applause throughout the evening. This was a first-rate production. The role of Rigoletto was performed by young Verdi baritone Nelson Martinez, who began his career in Cuba and who, at this juncture, has sung several roles in a number of venues across this country and abroad. His voice is larger than life, deeply expressive throughout the entire vocal range of the role. From poignantly and plaintively delivered pianissimos to super-grand explosions of sound with power to spare, his dramatic emotional impact was always impressive. With his immense vocal and acting talents, he convincingly portrayed the old and deformed court jester, capable of hurling derisive insults himself, but profoundly vulnerable to the terrifying curse that humbles him and portends the tragic outcome that unfolds. The Duke of

Mantua was portrayed with vocal ease and a great deal of polish and swagger by Ukrainian tenor Igor Borko. With numerous credits in this country and abroad, Borko brought a wealth of experience and exceptional timbre and stamina to his impressive performance. Most notable were the Act I aria about a life of pleasure with as many women as possible (Questa o quella – "This woman or that") and the more famous Act III aria about the wonderful inconstancy of women (La donna e mobile – "Woman is fickle"). Gilda as sung by Puerto Rican soprano Magda Nieves was performed exactly as you would want. She was the epitome of youth and innocence. She was tender, pure, and articulate in vocal delivery and dramatic portrayal. I found her exceptionally demure and pleasing in her Act I aria in which she adoringly repeats the name of her newly found love, Gaultier Malde (Caro nome – "Dearest name"). Of the many others in the cast, William Powers, an American, as the assassin Sparafucile and Viara Zhelezova, from Bulgaria, who sang both Maddalena and Countess Ceprano, were standouts. Lest you think I forgot, I must mention how well performed was the famous and abundantly loved quartet in the final act. The four singers gave a spacious and well – tendered account, each voice given its perfect due!"

*Andrew Pappas – THE BALTIMORE SUN*

### **RIGOLETTO - PALMETTO OPERA - KOGER CENTER**

"I thought the standing ovations would never stop! Emotionally charged, vocally superb, a great director and beautiful sets! What more can you ask in a grand opera production? Thank you for the outstanding performances you have brought to South Carolina's capital over the past six seasons! It felt like a family reunion with so many familiar faces in the **RIGOLETTO** cast! Our season opener was a night to remember!"

*Kathy Newman, Booking Agent and Chairperson  
Palmetto Opera – Koger Center – Columbia, SC – February 2016*