



Bianca Rossini

www.biancarossini.com

biancatvshow@gmail.com



Los Angeles Opera project *Recovered Voices* presented two exceptional one-act operas: **Alexander Zemlinsky's *The Dwarf*** (based on Oscar Wilde's *The Birthday of the Infanta*);— and **Viktor Ullmann's *The Broken Jug***. Both composers were Jewish. Ullmann perished in Auschwitz soon after writing his last opera in the Concentration Camp at Terezin; Zemlinsky, after fleeing the Nazis, died in anonymity in NY. When the curtain was raised at the Los Angeles Opera house, and the phenomenal stage design by **Ralph Funicello** for *The Dwarf* was revealed, I was transported instantly to an European Court - a first stunning prelude to one of the most beautiful operas I have ever seen. Conductor **James Colon's** passion for *The Dwarf* is undeniable. In his lecture prior to the final performance of the work with the LA Opera, he noted: "I've conducted *The Dwarf* about 30 times and, as with any masterpiece, I'm always discovering layers, depth, beauty. It's like seeing the works of *Rembrandt, Goya, Michelangelo*, you never get tired of it, you only discover more..."

But one had to actually experience it to fully appreciate its complexity and beauty. The story of *The Dwarf* is universal, as relevant today as it was nearly a century ago. When The Dwarf discovers how he looks and realizes that the object of his love has nothing but contempt for him, he's devastated — all the more so because his desolation represents the end of innocence and the death of the idea that "love conquers all." Like his lead character in "The Dwarf," Zemlinsky's charismatic personality also attracted the great love of his life — Alma Schindler. But, as in the opera, she soon mocked his ugliness and abandoned him for Gustav Mahler. Ironically, Zemlinsky's suffering over his own ugliness and small stature provided him with an emotional musical canvas to portray the dark, complex, but ultimately rich humanity of his character.

There were remarkable performances by **Mary Dunleavy** as a lively and cunning Infanta, But the star was clearly **Rodrick Dixon**, displaying a magnificent depth and vulnerability as *The Dwarf*, in a performance encompassing everything from joy, innocence and horror to fear, despair and profound sadness. **Susan B. Anthony** was a memorable Ghita, and the balance of the cast was superb. Stunning lighting design by **David Weiner** and atmospheric costumes by **Linda Cho** completed the impressive production. Ullmann's *The Broken Jug*, a brilliant comedy, starred **James Johnson** as Adam, **Melody Moore** as Eve. My favorite part was the minimalist staging at the start, in which the characters danced in silhouette to the accompaniment of the seven-minute overture. Without dialogue, color or words, it was clear where the story was heading, but in the end there was a big surprise. And this time, unlike the life of its creator, Justice prevails.

UCLA Live: **Aurélia's Oratorio** was one of the most cinematic, poetic, evocative, variety/circus shows I've ever seen. Imagine sitting at a lavish dinner with **Modigliani, Ravel, Isadora Duncan and Chaplin** all together. That's what it was like to watch *Aurélia's Oratorio* performed by the magical **Aurélia Thierrée** (grand daughter of Charles Chaplin), superbly directed and designed by **Victoria Thierrée Chaplin**.



Angélique Kidjo's performance at Royce Hall was almost instantly transformed into an all-join-in dance party with the music embracing everything from her native Beninese dance rhythms to funk, rock, blues and jazz.

The offbeat trio of singer **Bobby McFerrin**, pianist **Chick Corea** and drummer **Jack**



DeJohnette brought a musical happening to Disney Hall, combining spontaneous music-making and audience singalongs with humorous interaction between the players.



Guitarist/singer **John Pizzarelli's** Disney Hall performance was a stunning display of classic music, exploring the Frank Sinatra song book featuring Pizzarelli's warm voice and swinging guitar.



At the Getty, sexy Cape Verde singer **Maria de Barros** seasoned her traditional songs with the spices of Brazilian samba and Afro-Cuban salsa.

On the new CD *Banquet of the Spirits*, master Brazilian percussionist Cyro Baptista features keyboardist Brian Marsella, bassist and oud player Shanir Ezra Blumenkranz, and drummer Tim Keiper. Baptista also introduces the concept of "Anthropofagia Equals Cultural Cannibalism," reflecting the powerful impact that Oswald de Andrade's 1928 essay, *The Anthropophagite Manifesto*, had upon 20th Century Brazil. A contemporary global music pioneer, Baptista presents eight far-reaching originals and three classic songs written by Cherry and late sitarist/tabla player Collin Walcott.

In Love With the Music of Antonio Carlos Jobim at the Jazz Bakery employed the great bossa nova songs of Brazil in a show with great entertainment potential.

The Eighth Color of the Rainbow (A Oitava Cor do Arco-Iris) is the first feature film from the state of Mato Grosso, Brazil by director **Amauri Tangara**, released by Cinema Epoch & 8 STAR Entertainment, now available at Amazon.com ■

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