

- [Home](#)
- [Paid gigs/small presses](#)
- [About](#)
- [Links](#)
- [Masthead](#)
- [Research connections](#)
- [Submission Guidelines](#)

Synchronized Chaos

an interdisciplinary art, literary, science, cultural, and travel writing webzine

Opera San Jose Delivers a Charming Rendition of Verdi's "La Traviata"

February 21st, 2012

Reviewed by Kandake E. Brockington (Author of *Journey through Darkness: Book I of the Journey Saga*)

[Opera San Jose](#) delivered an emotionally gripping performance for the Sunday February 12th matinee presentation of Giuseppe Verdi's *La Traviata*. I won't spend this review discussing roulades, librettos, and other terms I honestly know very little about. I am an author of fantasy fiction, a mother, and a long-time resident of San Jose. Until last week I had never been to the California Theatre, but I was in for a delightful surprise.

Located in downtown San Jose, the heart of Silicon Valley, the California Theatre on Almaden Blvd is a small, elegant theater within walking distance of the light rail station and San Jose State University. Upon entering the grand lobby the theatre is dimly lit and romantic, an appropriate setting for an opera. The California Theatre website gives a description of an intimate setting and that is pretty accurate. The seats and rows are very close together with little room for stretching. It was also very warm inside as the auditorium appeared packed to capacity.

Once the performance began, a hush fell over the theatre as everyone anticipated the arrival of our heroine of *La Traviata*, Violetta Valery, played wonderfully by guest

artist Rebecca Davis. *La Traviata*, loosely translated as "the fallen woman," is the tragic story of Violetta, a courtesan who changes her life around after falling in love with one of her adoring suitors, Alfredo Germont. After finding true love for the first time, Violetta is forced to leave behind the only happiness she's ever known when Alfredo's father Giorgio Germont makes her feel guilty for living scandalously with his son.

The lighting of the stage revealed a set of tables and chairs, and a beautiful larger than life-size painting of the courtesan on the back wall. The opening act was full of lighthearted music and Violetta appeared in a billowing yellow gown surrounded by her friends dressed in purple and black. I found the wardrobe colors of the opening act a little odd, as did my neighbor, a fellow reporter of another Silicon Valley publication. We agreed that Violetta did not stand out very well in the dress and we would have preferred to see her in something bolder to flaunt her wealth and courtesan status, but overall that was quickly overlooked once the spotlight was on Davis. Her soprano voice commanded the emotional themes of love, sacrifice, and remorse throughout the performance.

One of the most standout scenes for Davis was in Act II when Violetta interacts with Giorgio Germont, Alfredo's father, played by baritone Evan Brummel. Violetta passionately tells Giorgio that she will die if he forces her to leave Alfredo. This is where the translation, provided in English supertitles above stage, added depth to the performance. My neighboring reviewer actually debated with my friend, a Pistoia native—and Italian speaker—over the literal meaning of Italian words. But the translation, along with Davis' performance, worked well at displaying Violetta's fear of isolation. The translation captured her despair and complete loss of hope.

Tenor Michael Dailey was handsome and charismatic in the role of Alfredo and his standout performance came from Act III when Alfredo disrespects Violetta by throwing money at her feet. But Dailey really shines in the final act when the lovers are reunited after a huge misunderstanding. In Act IV, Dailey conveys a wide range of emotions. Upon their reunion Alfredo is remorseful and joyful, but after realizing the extent of Violetta's illness he becomes fearful and then devastated in her death scene.

Some other details worth mentioning were the acoustics of the theater which were excellent. The orchestra pit was nearly invisible from the orchestra section; however the director, San Jose State University professor of music, David Rohrbaugh was lively and riveting.

I was moved by *La Traviata* and mesmerized by the spirit of Violetta Valery. This production is highly recommended for its breathtaking music, memorable performances, and poetic translations of the libretto. For first-timers, the free 45-minute lecture given before each performance provides an in-depth introduction to opera. For opening performances, matinee attendees have the option to meet members of the cast, the stage director, and conductor immediately following the performance.

Contact Kandake E. Brockington at kandake@live.com

Opera San Jose Presents "La Traviata"

California Theatre