

Lucia di Lammermoor – Mercury Theatre October 10, 2014



Directed by Raymond Hawthorne

I don't know much about opera, but I can tell you that Lucia di Lammermoor is one hell of a night out.

The TV term 'soap opera' was coined when soap manufacturers sponsored the early shows, and with themes of burning love and cold revenge Lucia di Lammermoor is like **Home And Away** on steroids.

Lucia falls in love with Edgardo, a man who saved her from a wild boar. Unfortunately Edgardo is the mortal enemy of her family – literally. In fact her family killed his family and are now living in his castle, but Edgardo loves her anyway (if you've seen Marlena Devoe, who plays Lucia, you'll understand why).

Meanwhile Lucia's brother Enrico has fallen into political disfavour and can sense his power slipping away. But he has a plan – if he can convince Lucia to marry a man from a politically important family, he can save his fortune. Lucia's not keen until Enrico tricks her into believing that Edgardo's hooked up with someone else.

Edgardo crashes the wedding ceremony and causes a ruckus – just like when Stuart interrupted Lionel and Kirsty's wedding on Shortland Street that time. Too late, Lucia realises Edgardo did love her after all. Spoiler: this opera does not end happily. .

What could make an exciting plot, filled with weddings, blood and glinting swords, even better? Music, of course, and with the Auckland Chamber Orchestra on board and Australasia's hottest opera talent treading the hallowed boards of the Mercury Theatre, Raymond Hawthorne's perfectly pitched Lucia di Lammermoor is something truly special.

Singers David Woodward as dashing Edgardo and Phillip Rhodes as the evil Enrico both shine like stars. David brings sweet tenderness to Edgardo's impassioned pleas for Lucia's love, while Phillip's rich voice and devilish cape-twirling make him the villain you love to hate.

But the performer who sent shivers down my spine with the very first note she sang was Marlena Devoe as Lucia. She has absolute control of her dazzling voice, whether it's light with love, heavy with fury or avant-garde with insanity. If you can get through the whole opera without Marlena making you cry, you deserve some kind of award for stoicism.

I don't know much about opera, but if you want to be enthralled by a good story, entranced by spectacular music and treated to the otherworldly beauty of some incredible voices, get yourself down to the historic Mercury Theatre for a night out you won't forget in a hurry. Pro tip: wear your tiara.

Kathryn Van Beek

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