

THEATRE



Idomeneo

BY CHRISTOPHER HOILE April 28, 2008 12:04

IDOMENEO

Featuring Measha Brueggergosman, Kresimir Spicer. Written by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Directed by Marshall Pynkoski. Conducted by Andrew Parrott. Presented by Opera Atelier. In Italian with English and French surtitles. Apr 29; May 1, 2, & 3. 7:30pm. \$30-\$165; \$20 students under 30. Elgin Theatre, 189 Yonge. 416-872-5555. www.operaatelier.com.

Opera Atelier is well known for the consistent quality of its productions, but sometimes a production rises above this already high level. Such is OA's new production of Mozart's opera *Idomeneo* (1781), in which Canadian soprano Measha Brueggergosman makes not only her OA debut but also her first performance in a Mozart opera. The production is so well sung, directed and conducted it holds you in its grip from the first note to the last.

In the plot, a Greek version of the Abraham and Isaac story, *Idomeneo* (Kresimir Spicer) returning to Crete after the Trojan War suffers a shipwreck and vows to Neptune (Curtis Sullivan) to sacrifice the first living being he encounters if Neptune spares his life. As fate will have it, that first being is his own son *Idamante* (Michael Maniaci), in love with the captive Trojan princess *Iliia* (Peggy Kriha Dye) and loved by Greek princess *Elettra* (Brueggergosman) of the doomed House of Atreus. Both director Marshall Pynkoski and

conductor Andrew Parrott emphasize that the opera represents a storm — one that rages both within and between characters and that for all but Elettra recedes to calm and peace by the end.

Parrott takes the music at a pace that draws breathtaking performances from all four of the principal singers. Brueggergosman may have received all of the publicity, but in fact, the four are so well matched and sing each of their showpiece arias so thrillingly it is impossible to choose one over the others. Croatian tenor Spicer has a dark-hued, amazingly agile voice unlike any other OA has fielded. Kriha Dye, an OA regular has never sung more emotion and beauty of tone than she does here. Maniaci, one of the world's few natural male sopranos, uses his eerily beautiful voice to uncover fine shades of nuance and expression. Brueggergosman works completely as part of a team but when her time to shine arrives, as it does in Elettra's terrifying final aria, she unleashes the full power of her voice to phenomenal effect.

As if this were not enough, dances by the Artists of the Atelier Ballet as choreographed by Jeannette Zingg enhance the impact of every choral scene and for once we get to see the usually excised final celebratory ballet in all its glory. The production is an absolutely thrilling experience that demonstrates that this fine company has risen to an even higher plane of excellence.