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Subject: la traviata  
Posted by [Black Bear](#) on Tue, 07 Jul 2009 01:56:11 GMT  
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La Traviata is here.

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Subject: Re: la traviata  
Posted by [Black Bear](#) on Tue, 07 Jul 2009 02:14:24 GMT  
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never mind that they're 40 years old and zaftig playing a 20 year old dying of consumption.

SNRRFFFFFFF

It is one of those inexplicable laws of the snob class media that they don't tell you about shows that are going to sell out until they have sold out.

Yus, well--everybody who's ANYBODY knows these things, don'tyouknow? :) Pbbbt.

Hooray for you for getting there and seeing it, despite ME, email, plumbing crises galore! Sounds like it was well worth your effort.

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Subject: Re: la traviata  
Posted by [Julia](#) on Tue, 07 Jul 2009 02:50:19 GMT  
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Eeeeeek! Aaaaah! Yaaay! [those are ALL meant to sound exuberant, not frightened. Just to be clear]

Oh Well Done. I'm so thrilled for you. Fleming. La Trav. Yes.

Quote: The return of the horse and buggy? . . . I could go for that

You know what? Me too.

:)

Quote: The fellow on my left was obviously doing a Peter. He was there because his wife was an opera nut. I almost said "I have one of you at home"; and decided this could be misinterpreted.

heehee

Quote:^^ The thing I'm not drivelling on about is that the ME turned around and bit me again this morning. I was out hurtling hellhounds and quite suddenly, as often happens, between one stride and the next, I wanted to lie down and not move for several days. I compromised. I took taxis both ways between Waterloo and the ROH.

double well done you, then. Boo, ME.

Oh, and one more thing.

You are wonderful.

[I am aware that you will attempt to refute this, as you do every time I mention it. Or simply will pretend puzzlement and concern for my sanity. But it is true, and I haven't reminded you in a while.]

[p.s. Everyone else here is wonderful too. I try to make a habit of reminding people of this every so often... I'm not being creepy, I promise.]

:)

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Subject: Re: la traviata

Posted by [zerlina](#) on Tue, 07 Jul 2009 05:44:33 GMT

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I haven't seen Renee Fleming live, but I have seen her in Manon on DVD (Opera National de Paris). I wasn't impressed, and know exactly what you mean about the heartless flirt, because her Manon certainly is one. However, I think she was excellent in Eugene Onegin (Met), and I didn't expect her to be. Georghiu is excellent, too, as Violetta (Royal Opera 1994). She a singer I would rather watch than just listen to. Fleming I can listen to, without seeing.

I must google the tenor.

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Subject: Re: la traviata  
Posted by [Fake Frenchie](#) on Tue, 07 Jul 2009 05:55:41 GMT  
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I took my mother to see La Traviata at the Théâtre Sébastopol in Lille. It was good, but I didn't like the plot one bit. I think opera tends to victimize the female characters. But the singing is glorious.

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Subject: Re: la traviata  
Posted by [zerlina](#) on Tue, 07 Jul 2009 06:36:26 GMT  
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I agree. Plots usually are the worst thing, especially for women. Verdi's heroines are soppy, on the whole (exceptions the women in Falstaff, but they belong to Shakespeare). Puccini's are worse. Butterfly is so wet. Most of the women in Mozart have a bit of spark, though. (And Traviata is based on a true story - same one as the Lady of the Camellias).

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Subject: Re: la traviata  
Posted by [zerlina](#) on Tue, 07 Jul 2009 06:47:56 GMT  
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Um. I realise I sound just like one of those terrifying people Robin doesn't like getting stuck next to. Sorry.

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Subject: Re: la traviata  
Posted by [Diane in MN](#) on Tue, 07 Jul 2009 07:18:35 GMT  
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How splendid that you got there, and even more that it was a terrific performance. One in the eye for the ME, YESSS! I don't always like Fleming's performances--I don't think she has a Puccini voice--but the things she does well, she does very well indeed. I have heard Calleja--he sang Edgardo in Lucia here a few years ago--and he is very good. Hampson has been very good for a long time. Lucky you!

I saw a La Trav not all that long ago where Violetta spends the last act in bed, where she belongs, and the critics were complaining that it made the drama too static.

This is how it was staged in the Traviata done here a few years ago, and it was very effective.

The complaining critics were way off the mark if they were looking for a lot of unnecessary stage action.

It is one of those inexplicable laws of the snob class media that they don't tell you about shows that are going to sell out until they have sold out. The latest Lloyd Webber is advertised for years in advance. Bryn Terfel in the Flying Dutchman you hear about on opening night.

But now you have bought a ticket and should be on the mailing list, which will enable them to send you lots of information about future performances and invitations to (a) become a subscriber and (b) donate money.

Good luck with the plumber--may he be immediately successful in finding and fixing the problem--and with the computer men.

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Subject: Re: la traviata

Posted by [NotLonely](#) on Tue, 07 Jul 2009 11:13:12 GMT

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I saw the title and went, Oooh! La Trav! And then saw \*who\* was singing. There's very little chance that any of those artists will visit South Africa, or that I'd be able to afford tickets, but what I hear on the radio often sends me off into raptures of dreaming.

Sigh. Sometimes the gods of coincidence beam upon us. I'm glad they beamed on you. Hopefully, those opera management folk will have managed to beat against the tide long enough to actually \*whisper\* put you on a mailing list so you will know what's happening.

I offer no defense of the plot, which is about a woman being repeatedly and cumulatively victimised by men.

I'm always torn between "mutter mutter women are people too, you know" and wondering how much leeway to give the composer/librettist for being a product of their time. Is it reasonable to expect them to conform to my 21st C expectations? How much of it was an unwritten understanding, and how much conforming to the standard of the day.

Modern artists, on the other hand, get no slack cut from me. One of the reasons I watch almost no TV and very few movies. Ugh.

people dying of consumption are not that lively. Nor that beautiful.

TB is a huge problem here, partly because no-one's found out how to treat it more quickly. I don't understand why the concept of sick people having no energy is so difficult to understand. Surely

the slightest bit of research - or even thought - is enough? And if you can afford top-notch artists you can afford a little time to think.  
Or am I being overly optimistic?

I trust you slept well, the ME \*waves magic wand\* decided to go away and best of luck with the plumber. Here's to Hot Water!

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Subject: Re: la traviata  
Posted by [jmeadows](#) on Tue, 07 Jul 2009 11:44:16 GMT  
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Oh yaaaay! I'm so glad you made it, and whoa, names I've heard before! (Okay, I've known about La Trav; it was one of those music memory things from my childhood I've told you about.)

\*glitterconfetti\* I'm so pleased for you! Especially that it was lovely, in spite of the spunky near dead woman. :)

Quote:I thought ten years ago that all trains would have outlets and internet connections by now

No kidding. I'm still upset about our lack of flying cars and vacations on the moon.

Quote:I almost said 'I have one of you at home'; and decided this could be misinterpreted.

Hee. Yes. Well, one of the nice things about a blog is you can report all the funny things you almost said. That is, if you can remember them. (Sometimes I have to write down conversations that actually took place, just so I can remember them later. The funny things in my head are usually gone for good.)

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Subject: Re: la traviata  
Posted by [Lucy Coats](#) on Tue, 07 Jul 2009 14:52:10 GMT  
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Ohhhhh. Thomas Hampson. I LOVE him. Saw him as the Count in Marriage of Fig at Glydebourne years ago. Memorably aristocratic and disdainful. Think La Traviata is in my top 3 too--first opera I ever saw, in Rome Opera House, with wonderful 'hospital' set made with clever lighting which made it look like white long room with huge sunny windows at an angle. I have never forgotten it--as I have never forgotten one of the G'bourne Marriages which featured a large virulently psychedelic green acrylic rug as a grassy mound in the last act (not a good memory,

that one). But it was quite funny when the poor singers suffered from visible electric/static shocks in the 'hiding' part. Yes, I know. I am warped in the sense of humour department.

Sorry to hear the ME is biting you again, Robin. I wish it bad 'cess, and you much G and B chocolate and working hot water for a soothing lavender/rose bath.

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Subject: Re: la traviata

Posted by [mayasings](#) on Tue, 07 Jul 2009 14:57:22 GMT

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only my favourite opera since I first heard it a few years ago... \*sigh\*

I have to say that Fleming isn't my favourite for that role, though. She's a wonderful Contessa and I love her as Rusalka, but not Violetta... I would've loved to have seen her just the same! when I was in NYC last October they were doing the Zefirelli (sp) production at the Met with a WONDERFUL soprano called Anja Harteros. she was a great Violetta, IMO. she also did the role in a concert production over here in Israel a few years ago and I was lucky enough to sing in the choir.

Love Thomas Hampson. must also look up this Tenor if you say he's that good an Alfredo. I have to agree with you about Alfredo's character... pretty wimpy.

I'd give a lot to see Bryn Terfel live in anything... (Wagner included, though it would be hard for me, lol).

but YAY for Trav!

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Subject: Re: la traviata

Posted by [Mrs Redboots](#) on Tue, 07 Jul 2009 14:58:14 GMT

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I am not a fan of opera, I regret to inform you, but oh, I do make an exception for Bryn Terfel, who has one of the loveliest voices I've ever heard!

So sorry to hear the ME turned round and bit you - :sends a large packet of spoons from the 99p shop!

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Subject: Re: la traviata  
Posted by [Guest](#) on Tue, 07 Jul 2009 16:34:25 GMT  
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Renee Fleming! GASP!

I actually did gasp aloud when I read this post, though on cabdriver/intimidating performance goer scale of opera knowledge, I fear that I likely fall closer to the cabbie-in my defense, I love opera, but have spent far too many years as a perennially broke graduate student too busy scrounging for beer money to contemplate opera tickets- to be well informed even about the local productions-anything on the scale of Glyndebourne or the Met has been nothing but a happy, stratospherically distant fantasy. Congrats on the lucky ticket!

jmeadows wrote on Tue, 07 July 2009 07:44

Quote:I thought ten years ago that all trains would have outlets and internet connections by now

No kidding. I'm still upset about our lack of flying cars and vacations on the moon.

I'm in total agreement! I am absolutely sure that the Jetsons, not to mention innumerable futuristic movies, quite explicitly promised us flying cars and robot maids by the year 2000. Here it is 2009 and whadda we got? Laptops and Blackberries and cell phones, etc.-ten thousand gadgets and gizmos to pressure us into doing more work and create the expectation of constant availability-pffft, I say! Maybe I could settle for a return to the horse and buggy in lieu of the flying cars, especially if it came with the return of the concept of being 'out of the office', but where's my robot maid?! (in this day and age I would expect and prefer that it was an a non-gendered robot housecleaning device, of course, rather than the cartoon culmination of the dehumanizing effects of sexism, but still-make with the maid!)

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Subject: Re: la traviata  
Posted by [AJLR](#) on Tue, 07 Jul 2009 20:18:02 GMT  
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Quote:And here's a pettest pet peeve: Halfway through the last act or so Violetta tells Annina to take half her remaining money and give it to the poor. What about Annina, you dumb schmuck? What about your faithful maid who has followed you into poverty and exile, and who is about to be out of a job when you piss on out of this life??

Perhaps Annina is so (secretly) relieved at the thought of soon being able to leave this

advantage-taking professional victim, when she goes to the great can-can in the sky, that she really doesn't mind giving some of it away? She will, after all, soon be able to get a really well-paid job with someone who will also not expect such 24-hour devotion... :)

I'm glad you had such a good time and hope that the ME has retreated enough today for you to chivvy, energetically, the plumber and Computer Men into getting your various systems up and running well again.

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Subject: Re: la traviata  
Posted by [Caryn](#) on Tue, 07 Jul 2009 21:16:08 GMT  
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Ooo. Thomas Hampson has the most gorgeous hands. I saw the live broadcast of the Gala this year from the Met, which included Act II of Traviata with Fleming and Hampson, and the marvelous Ramon Vargas as an innocent and immature Alfred, which mostly worked. But that was only live on a big screen in a movie theatre.

Spectacular.

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Subject: Re: la traviata  
Posted by [Robin](#) on Tue, 07 Jul 2009 22:46:43 GMT  
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Oh . . . well . . . yes, it does, but if you're going to enjoy it you do have to take it as it comes. And if you can't you can't, like people who don't like fantasy because it's too . . . fantastic. I get this, I just feel sorry for them because they're missing out. Dickens, barring a few tragic crazy ones, mostly did awful drooping Victorian women, but I wouldn't want to be without Dickens. For example. It's how your boundaries run. And one of the things I noticed about La Trav \*before\* I knew there was some personal feeling (presumably) involved for Verdi is that Violetta is clearly the moral superior of either of the two dreadful (male) Germonts, whatever her line of work.

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Subject: Re: la traviata  
Posted by [Robin](#) on Tue, 07 Jul 2009 22:59:23 GMT  
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zerlina wrote on Tue, 07 July 2009 02:36l agree. Plots usually are the worst thing, especially for

women. Verdi's heroines are soppy, on the whole (exceptions the women in Falstaff, but they belong to Shakespeare). Puccini's are worse. Butterfly is so wet. Most of the women in Mozart have a bit of spark, though. (And Traviata is based on a true story - same one as the Lady of the Camellias).

Well . . . no. I don't agree. Deluded, but not necessarily soppy. A lot of them it seems to me are astonishingly brave. Often misguidedly so--like Gilda letting herself be killed to save the Duke she \*knows\* is an utter villain--or Aida creeping into the tomb to die with Rhadames. Given Aida's choices at that point that seems to me a pretty good one really, but it sure takes courage. Butterfly is NOT wet. Jeez. She's TERRIBLY brave. What \*choice\* did she ever have? Her samurai family has no money; she's saving them as well as herself by marrying this joker, even if she's getting herself written off in the process. And then, having been rejected by her family . . . she soldiers on. Un bel di, for all its terminal overdoneness--if it hasn't been used to sell loo rolls I'd be surprised--is still breathtakingly tragic--and I think it is as \*sad\* as it is because you hear that \*Butterfly\* knows it's a delusion too. But she's a samurai's daughter. And behaves accordingly.

And La Trav is SORT of based on a true story. Have you ever tried to read Dumas' Lady of the Camellias? Speaking of grotesque male filters on female experience. Give me Verdi any day.

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Subject: Re: la traviata  
Posted by [Robin](#) on Tue, 07 Jul 2009 23:03:18 GMT  
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To be USEFULLY on their mailing list you have to become a 'Friend'. I'm a 'Friend' of the ENO, which for a quarterly mag and a fortnight's lead before tickets go on general sale I find a trifle expensive . . . but to become a 'Friend' of the Royal is \*\*eighty frelling quid.\*\* I think I may have to go on missing things. (And yes, I am now enough on their mailing list that they want me to give them money just for \*laughs\*, not only for performances. gah.)

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Subject: Re: la traviata  
Posted by [Robin](#) on Tue, 07 Jul 2009 23:20:36 GMT  
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[quote title=NotLonely wrote on Tue, 07 July 2009 07:13][size=2]  
I'm always torn between "mutter mutter women are people too, you know" and wondering how much leeway to give the composer/librettist for being a product of their time. Is it reasonable to expect them to conform to my 21st C expectations? How much of it was an unwritten understanding, and how much conforming to the standard of the day.

Modern artists, on the other hand, get no slack cut from me. One of the reasons I watch almost no TV and very few movies. Ugh.

people dying of consumption are not that lively. Nor that beautiful.

TB is a huge problem here, partly because no-one's found out how to treat it more quickly. I don't understand why the concept of sick people having no energy is so difficult to understand. Surely the slightest bit of research - or even thought - is enough? And if you can afford top-notch artists you can afford a little time to think.

Or am I being overly optimistic?

\*\*\*\*\* The product of their time thing is always a problem. I grew up adoring LOTR which has \*no\* women in it--and Merry kills the lord of the Nazgul, not Eowyn. Tolkien couldn't even give the only woman in all of LOTR who DOES anything that much. I was just defending Puccini's Butterfly--but I've seen her played as a simpering little teenage twit--in fact I walked \*out\* of an ENO performance because wasting my money was less painful than watching some fat middle-aged moron mangling the role. I suppose what bothers me worse than that so many operatic heroines are 'weak' is that they NEVER HAD ANY CHOICES. Lucia breaks her promise to her lover . . . but her brother had stolen all his letters so she believed he'd already broken faith with her . . . and WHAT CHOICE DOES SHE HAVE? She doesn't have any money or autonomy; her brother controls her. Going mad and killing the husband she never wanted again seems like a pretty good choice, given her LACK of choice. Why didn't it ever occur to any of these \*men\* who clearly have some \*sympathy\* with their dead-by-the-third-act heroines to take it a step FURTHER and give them some OTHER CHOICE? You can still kill her off if you insist--lots of men died of TB too--but she could have, you know, DONE something first.

And yes. Dying people are generally \*kind of low energy.\* A good director/producer could WORK with this.

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Subject: Re: la traviata

Posted by [Robin](#) on Tue, 07 Jul 2009 23:22:23 GMT

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Snork. Yes. There are \*advantages\* to having a blog to spill things into that would otherwise be WASTED. This is a FEATHER in the scales of time and effort but if a feather is what we've got a feather is what we'll take. :)

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Subject: Re: la traviata  
Posted by [Robin](#) on Tue, 07 Jul 2009 23:24:14 GMT  
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Hampson is excellent, and has been excellent a long time, and doesn't seem to get any \*older.\* :)  
So I hope we'll have him for a long time yet.

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Subject: Re: la traviata  
Posted by [Robin](#) on Tue, 07 Jul 2009 23:26:56 GMT  
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'advantage taking professional victim'? WHAT? This sounds like pistols at dawn . . .

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Subject: Re: la traviata  
Posted by [NotLonely](#) on Tue, 07 Jul 2009 23:27:41 GMT  
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Robin wrote on Wed, 08 July 2009 01:03 To be USEFULLY on their mailing list you have to become a 'Friend'. I'm a 'Friend' of the ENO, which for a quarterly mag and a fortnight's lead before tickets go on general sale I find a trifle expensive . . . but to become a 'Friend' of the Royal is \*\*eighty frelling quid.\*\* I think I may have to go on missing things. (And yes, I am now enough on their mailing list that they want me to give them money just for \*laughs\*, not only for performances. gah.)

\*furiously translates pounds to rands\*

\*faints\*

Eighty pounds. That's... half a month's groceries... gah indeed. and feh. Thanks, but I like to eat. And \*that\* is the reason I know very little about opera. Oh, I studied music for cough several cough years, but the closest I got to opera was the orchestra pit.

You really don't get much action, plot or even voice when you're sitting under the stage, facing the audience.

On the other hand, I do (guiltily) know how much it costs to keep an orchestra or choir running. Even discounting the book taxes we have to pay, it's scary. I pity art managers/directors.

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Subject: Re: la traviata  
Posted by [Caryn](#) on Tue, 07 Jul 2009 23:29:41 GMT  
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Possibly useful idea, Robin:

I notice Ticketmaster has a list of operas at

[http://www.ticketmaster.co.uk/browse?category=13&tm\\_link=tm\\_arts\\_b\\_13&root=10002&dma=](http://www.ticketmaster.co.uk/browse?category=13&tm_link=tm_arts_b_13&root=10002&dma=)

and I know I have subscribed to their email list for various things here in Vancouver, so if you created a Ticketmaster account, they would be responsible for emailing you information on whatever is coming up, often -before- tickets even go on sale.

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Subject: Re: la traviata

Posted by [blondviolinist](#) on Wed, 08 Jul 2009 01:15:37 GMT

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Robin wrote on Tue, 07 July 2009 19:20

Why didn't it ever occur to any of these \*men\* who clearly have some \*sympathy\* with their dead-by-the-third-act heroines to take it a step FURTHER and give them some OTHER CHOICE? You can still kill her off if you insist--lots of men died of TB too--but she could have, you know, DONE something first.

What makes it even more frustrating is that these were the types of stories that were the big operatic money-makers in the 19th century. (Women in 18th cent. opera fared much better, and women in 17th cent. opera were usually taken directly from Greek and Roman mythology.) What kind of society \*likes\* to see strong women be victimized and die? Why is female heroism and courage never allowed to save the day? And why can't the guy die a tragic death once in a while? (At least in 17th cent. opera tragic deaths were spread more evenly between the sexes.)

I think the opera death that angers me the most is the death of Liu in Turandot. I could smack the Prince six ways from Tuesday for ignoring Liu. Just marry \*her\*, and forget about stupid Turandot!

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Subject: Re: la traviata

Posted by [abigailmm](#) on Wed, 08 Jul 2009 04:40:12 GMT

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So this is the "middle opera" you were being coy about a couple weeks ago. Well done to nab the ticket (in spite of technology) and to get there, ME or not! Every now and then these chances

come along, and it's up to us to carpe that old diem.

The last chance I had to do this was a couple of years ago when I heard on the radio, just by chance, that the dance troupe Pilobolus would be nearby for a one-night engagement. I snatched at a \$45 ticket, and it was magical. I last saw them when I was a grad student in NYC, when they were a very new group, thirty years ago. I was afraid they might have lost their vision or verve, but happily not so.

Abigail

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Subject: Re: la traviata

Posted by [Diane in MN](#) on Wed, 08 Jul 2009 04:52:49 GMT

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Robin wrote on Tue, 07 July 2009 17:46And one of the things I noticed about La Trav \*before\* I knew there was some personal feeling (presumably) involved for Verdi is that Violetta is clearly the moral superior of either of the two dreadful (male) Germonts, whatever her line of work.

M. Owen Lee has a good essay about Traviata (in A Season of Opera) in which he calls her, quite seriously, probably a saint. It's hard to argue with this.

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Subject: Re: la traviata

Posted by [Diane in MN](#) on Wed, 08 Jul 2009 05:07:18 GMT

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Robin wrote on Tue, 07 July 2009 18:20Tolkien couldn't even give the only woman in all of LOTR who DOES anything that much.

I'm not sure that this isn't because he was writing that particular story, rather than the reflection of a general attitude. Luthien in Silmarillion certainly qualifies as a woman who does things; she's as much of a hero as Beren.

Quote:I was just defending Puccini's Butterfly

Yes, and absolutely rightly. She is a very young woman who grows up on stage; she's motivated by love and hope and honor, and she's very brave. I think Butterfly is tremendously more effective on stage than in a recording, and unless you get a production with an idiot director or completely incompetent singing actress, you can't leave a performance thinking that Butterfly herself is a

doormat or a wimp.

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Subject: Re: la traviata

Posted by [Diane in MN](#) on Wed, 08 Jul 2009 05:14:26 GMT

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blondviolinist wrote on Tue, 07 July 2009 20:15

I think the opera death that angers me the most is the death of Liu in Turandot. I could smack the Prince six ways from Tuesday for ignoring Liu. Just marry \*her\*, and forget about stupid Turandot!

Pauline Kael wrote in a review of An Officer and a Gentleman that it was the kind of story in which the minor characters have tragedies so that the major characters can learn Lessons About Life. Seems applicable, doesn't it.

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Subject: Re: la traviata

Posted by [zerlina](#) on Wed, 08 Jul 2009 07:41:28 GMT

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Robin wrote on Wed, 08 July 2009 10:59

Well . . . no. I don't agree. Deluded, but not necessarily soppy. A lot of them it seems to me are astonishingly brave. Often misguidedly so--like Gilda letting herself be killed to save the Duke she \*knows\* is an utter villain--or Aida creeping into the tomb to die with Rhadames. Given Aida's choices at that point that seems to me a pretty good one really, but it sure takes courage. Butterfly is NOT wet. Jeez. She's TERRIBLY brave. What \*choice\* did she ever have? Her samurai family has no money; she's saving them as well as herself by marrying this joker, even if she's getting herself written off in the process. And then, having been rejected by her family . . . she soldiers on. Un bel di, for all its terminal overdoneness--if it hasn't been used to sell loo rolls I'd be surprised--is still breathtakingly tragic--and I think it is as \*sad\* as it is because you hear that \*Butterfly\* knows it's a delusion too. But she's a samurai's daughter. And behaves accordingly.

And La Trav is SORT of based on a true story. Have you ever tried to read Dumas' Lady of the Camellias? Speaking of grotesque male filters on female experience. Give me Verdi any day.

I admit, I haven't seen Butterfly yet. The most recent NZ production (five or six years ago) was set in a brothel, with Butterfly as a prostitute, so I didn't go, even though I could have. Doesn't she

have enough indignities without that as well? Anyway, I suspect the setting was devised with logic along the line of "all women are wither virgins or whores. Butterfly is not a virgin, therefore she must be..." I am on the lookout for a good DVD.

Gilda irritates the heck out of me. I think she is stupid rather than brave. Co-dependent, perhaps?

The men in these operas do have a lot to answer for. If Alfredo and Pinkerton had a shred of decency, or if Rigoletto had educated his daughter instead of wittering on about how pure she was, the outcomes for the women might have been much better. Would the operas have been as good?

Yes, I have read "Lady of the Camellias." It is awful, even allowing for time and place.

I'm glad the hot water is sorted out. I hate cold baths, and have been suffering with you.

---