

# Lucia di Lammermoor at Dorset Opera

Russell Burdekin, August 8, 2018

Dorset Opera have been going for over 40 years. Originally based in Sherborne School, they moved after a near death experience to Bryanston School, Blandford Forum, and its purpose built theatre. The whole operation still retains something of the carnival feel of its earlier days but now has evolved into a larger, more professional and sophisticated operation offering two fully staged productions. At its heart is a chorus of some 70 or more people, many of them music students looking to get some stage experience and who pay nearly £1000 to take part. They come together with professional soloists and orchestra for an intensive fortnight of rehearsal ahead of a week of performances, currently three performances of two operas, this year *Lucia* and *Nabucco*. The results have varied over the years from an outstanding *Flying Dutchman* to a rather lacklustre *Faust* but it's always an enjoyable visit.

The stage at Bryanston is not particularly large and lacks many of the latest gizmos. Thus sets are rather restricted if long scene changes are to be avoided. In this production a stark background of large obelisks on a raised hillock was used throughout. While appropriate for the opening and final scenes it did not make much sense for the indoor scenes. However, the main handicap was in forcing much of the action into quite a small space at the front of the stage and it was very impressive that the large chorus managed to negotiate this seamlessly. Less happily, the director introduced a "ghost" who often appeared in tandem with Lucia and it became a slight distraction looking to see if they were exactly mirroring each other's actions. Rather less of it would have made it more effective at key moments.

The Lucia was the Romanian soprano, Letitia Vitelaru. She was at her best when using her upper register which rang out clear and true in the climaxes of the opera. Some of her runs and trills were less impressive but she gave an affecting mad scene, which drew well deserved applause from both audience and, unusually, the orchestra. Excerpts of her Lucia (not the Dorset performance) can be seen at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P9vPgJoltfs>.

The Edgardo was David Junghoon Kim, perhaps familiar to Donizetti Society members from his recent performance in Opera Rara's belated premiere of *L'Ange de Nisida*. While not a particularly instinctive actor, his singing was first class, carefully nuanced and weighted and a joy to listen to. Brett Polegato was a fine Enrico, portraying him as caught between a certain sympathy for his sister and the desperate need of her compliance. Pauls Putnins was an imposing Bidebent and Jung Soo Yun made more of the Arturo role than is often the case. The choir were at their usual enthusiastic best and the orchestra, complete with glass harmonica, gave good support under José Miguel Esandi. Overall, this *Lucia* was one of the best productions that I've seen there.

Unfortunately, Dorset Opera do not take press photographs of their productions. Russell saw the production of July 27, 2019.