



Society : **Kennet Opera**
Production : **Nabucco**
Date : **Friday 14th November**
Venue : **The Corn Exchange Newbury**
Report by : **Jeanette Maskell**

Report

On Friday 14th November I was delighted to be invited to review Kennet Opera's production of Nabucco.

Opera originated in Italy in the sixteenth century drawing on older medieval and renaissance entertainments, and soon became wide spread as an art form throughout Europe.

I really enjoy opera especially when sung in English; though do not profess to be an expert.

This group has now been in production for 20 years and though I have not seen all their productions I have seen enough to realise that they have gone from strength to strength; with Nabucco ranking among one of their best. I cannot say I understood everything that was sung, however I got the gist of it and was able to follow the plot. With a strong cast of principals and a chorus equal to the challenge of this powerfully dramatic piece, they brought the action to life and drew the audience in.

Julian Charles Debreuil – (Zachariah) – This was an impressively theatrical performance; his bearing and fine acting complemented his rounded and resonant singing voice.

Caroline Carragher – (Fenena) – I particularly enjoyed this expressive visual characterisation. Her singing had a lovely timbre whilst being quite demonstrative.

Randy Nichol – (Ismael) – This was a quietly understated portrayal; and his diction was spot on.

Demelza Stafford – (Abigail) – What a strong and powerful performance this was? Although I did not understand a lot of her singing; it was passionate and emotional. Her acting was dazzling and intelligent.

Chris Jacklin – (Nabucco) – An exceptionally fine all round characterisation from Chris. Again there was a lot of his singing I did not understand; however his acting more than compensated delivering the story with clarity. He was certainly in fine voice the evening of my visit.

Julie van Harperen – (Anna) – Although this was a cameo performance Julie made the most of her character; coupled with some accomplished singing this was a well-developed performance.

Jim Petts – (High Priest of Baal) – Here is another minor character integral to the plot and played with mastery by Jim.

Edwin Trout – (Abdullah) – This was a strong performance that should not go unnoticed. Edwin sang with all the traits and characteristics required for this role.

Duncan Powell – (Soldier) – A little bit part, however it was memorable and he carried it well.

Stage Chorus – What this chorus had achieved was a delight to watch. They moved around the stage with confidence and ease; and entrances and exits were well managed. Their singing was strong and accomplished. Some of the diction could've been clearer; and the men's chorus had a couple of sticky moments; however the overall sound was electrifying.

Pit Chorus – This small body of performers, aided the on stage chorus in their substantial numbers. I did have a sneaky peak and could see that as well as singing with gusto they were also enjoying themselves.

Ruth Mariner – (Stage Director) – Ruth must be extremely proud of the visual impact she had created. She had directed the piece in such a way as to produce all the drama and emotion to maximum effect. It was a spectacle of theatre pageantry.

Ben Hamilton – (Musical Director) – Ben had worked hard with the chorus which proved to be a real winner. He kept the small excellent orchestra under his watchful baton and they accompanied the singers with a sympathetic ear.

Natalie Parsons – (Stage Designer) – This was an imaginative set giving varied levels of staging and interesting entrances. It maximised the acting area ensuring the cast had ample room to move around without the stage becoming congested.

Jo Spratt – (Stage Manager) – The stage was well managed and the numerous heavy changes were effectively dealt with. The only thing I would say is due to the fact there was nothing to cover the changes and due to the size of pieces they had to move there were times when they were quite noisy.

Vicky Allen – (Lighting Design and Operation) – Vicky had gone to town with this lighting design; I really liked the way she had taken different colour schemes for the varied scenes, colour washing the stage and creating real atmosphere.

Gay Buchanan – (Props) – Gay had worked hard getting these props together; there were many that had clearly been made, and worked extremely well dressing the stage with colour. All had been well collated and perfect for what the director was aiming to achieve.

Lili Tuttle – (Director of Costume) – These were perfect for the period and nationalities, they were bright and colourful and when the curtain opened on Act 3 it was quiet breathtaking. Lili had obviously achieved everything she wanted.

Suzanne Thomson – (Hairdressing) – Hair is always the crowning glory of any character and this had not been overlooked. There were some good styles befitting the tradition and period.

Elizabeth Santos – (Makeup) – This had been well applied; not too heavy but enough so the actors faces did not disappear under the lighting

Mike Merchant/Don Crerar – (Programme) This was informative and original offering plenty of in depth reading.

Gerald Picton & Team – Front of House – They were well presented friendly and attentive. I would like to thank them for looking after me so well.

Thank you for a most enjoyable evening and I look forward to meeting you all again in the near future.

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Jeanette Maskell - NODA Representative - London Region - Area 13