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OPERA REVIEWS

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Reviews

The Festival Verdi opens with a well received production of Luisa Miller

by Silvia Luraghi

Verdi: Luisa Miller
Festival Verdi
1 October 2007



The restyled version of the Verdi Festival, now called the Festival Verdi, opened in Parma on October 1 with a new production of Verdi's *Luisa Miller*.

The festival, which used to take place in late spring, has been moved to October to avoid conflicts

with other similar events. Compared to the last few years, the number of productions has been increased to three (*Luisa Miller*, *La Traviata*, and *Oberto*), and other locations in the Emilia Romagna region have also been involved, including Busseto, Modena, Reggio Emilia, and some smaller towns near Parma. Beside operas and concerts, the festival, which will last until October 28, will feature a wide array of daily afternoon events that will explore all of Verdi's works.

To judge from opening night, the festival started in the best possible way: a star studded cast, and an interesting production received several ovations from the audience, with little dissent. Director Denis Krief, who also designed the sets and costumes, left the stage almost empty. Some moving sets sufficed to indicate indoor space, a modest table indicated that the action was set in Miller's home, a velvet sofa was Count Walter's living room. At the back of the stage a green projected forest appeared during outdoor scenes. The somewhat exaggerated dancing of chorus members and principals indicated the cheerful and innocent village atmosphere.

In the title role, Fiorenza Cedolins sang with elegance, even though at some moments she gave the impression of producing the top notes with effort. Tenor Marcelo Alvarez, in his debut as Rodolfo, was in great shape and sang flawlessly, with a passionate ringing voice. Leo Nucci as Luisa's father Miller, in spite of his age, was also perfect: his voice showing no sign of deterioration and his

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acting resulted in a very touching interpretation, especially in the final act. Giorgio Surian was an impressive Count Walter, tall and noble looking, displaying an evenly colored, well trained voice. Rafal Siwek highlighted the insidious side of Wurm, and Francesca Franci completed the cast as Federica.

In the pit, Maestro Donato Renzetti conducted the orchestra in a highly professional manner.

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