

Eleganza enchants

Duets and dueling cats charm at Piccolo

by Dee Dee Arthur



When Eleganza's Rhiannan Giddens and Cheryse McLeod Lewis glided onto the stage wearing satin ball gowns, they looked like fairy tale princesses. They then launched into three sacred duets beginning with Vivaldi's "Laudamus Te," which immediately showcased the beauty of these two divinely matched voices, with piano accompaniment by Ben Blozan. Hearing two soloists meld their singing so seamlessly is a rare event and one that was fully appreciated by the rapt audience.

The theme of sisterhood was contained in the songs during the hour-long program, first with Johannes Brahms "Die Schwestern". Cheryse introduced the song and said it was "about sisters who are so much alike, but when we fall in love with the same sweetheart, this song is over!" Like it sometimes happens in true real life, their love turns to hate and the song abruptly and hilariously ends.

Later came Irving Berlin's "Sisters" from *White Christmas*, and then the fabulous "Stepsister's Lament" during which the duo really hammed it up, scratching themselves and making faces to try to imitate Cinderella's ugly stepsisters. For these stunning women, that feat requires extra acting chops.

As expected, the crowd loved the Rossini art song, "Duetto Buffo di due Gatti" (The Cat Duel), and it easily drew the most applause. It went something like this, in operetta: Meow. Hiss. Glare. Response. Things got even more theatrical as the singers used successive meows to one up the other and show their feline attitude along with their vocal prowess.

The music theater piece "For Good," from the musical *Wicked*, was performed near the end of the program and contains the lyric that Eleganza named their 2009 CD release after, "Because I Knew You".

The program wrapped up with a trio of spirituals as the evening light streamed through the glorious stained glass windows of St. Mark's. It was a proud moment for Piccolo as the audience gave a standing ovation to the gifted sopranos who we can only hope will make a return appearance in years to come.

Tags: Spoleto Review, Eleganza