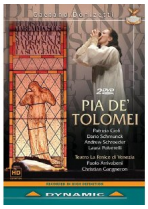
Gaetano Donizetti

1. Pia de Tolomei 2005 (Flv)

510 MB



Pia - Patrizia Ciofi Ghino degli Armieri - Dario Schmunck Nello della Pietra - Andrew Schroeder Rodrigo - Laura Polverelli Piero - Daniel Borowski Ubaldo - Francesco Meli Bice - Clara Polito Lamberto - Carlo Cigni La Fenice Theater Chorus & Orchestra Conductor : Paolo Arrivabeni Place : Venezia,Italy

This is the first dvd of Pia di Tolomei, one of Donizetti's lesser known tragic works. The production was filmed in Venice, and stars Patrizia Ciofi, who in recent years has established herself as a bel canto artist of not only great vocal accomplishment, but dramatic intensity. Dario Schmuck plays Ghino, who carries a torch for Pia, and Andrew Schroeder plays Nello, Pia's husband. And Laure Polverelli is in the travesti role of Rodrigo, with whom Pia exchanges loving letters.

First things first: the production is seriously one of the stupidest I have ever seen. Not untraditional (people are dressed in vaguely period style clothing), but the genius director had the great idea of indicating scene changes by huge panels that describe the scene in huge block letters. For example, Pia's garden is indicated by a huge panel that goes from the top to the bottom of the stage, and it says, in ginormous block letters, PIA. For the more complex scenes, even bigger panels and block letters. Sometimes multiple block lettered panels. Sometimes there are flags and banners hanging down with letters presumably describing the scene change. Whatever. It is simply mind-boggling. The rest of the production veers between the vaguely traditional (Pia's house, Rodrigo's prison) and mere panels to express scene changes.

I think this opera never gained much traction becaus of the bait-and-switch nature of the libretto. We think Pia has a lover (Rodrigo), but after a bunch of love letters and arias turns out Rodrigo's just her brother. And for this she gets poisoned? A bit silly, even for bel canto. Donizetti's music is also not at its most inspired. He writes beautiful arias for Pia, but music for the rest of the cast is somewhat by-the-numbers. Originally, the censors wanted a happy ending, so Donizetti supplied one, but this production goes back to the traditional tragic ending.

The singing, however, is fantastic. Patrizia Ciofi is one of those artists that just gets better every time I see/hear her. The first time I heard her, I thought her a bit screechy, but now I really appreciate her emotional intensity, and how she can color her voice to express so many different moods. Her final scene (of course, like all dying heroines, she has one last long aria before she expires) is beautifully sung. All the singing is excellent, and its a really large cast. I've never heard of must of them but they are all very idiomatic and intense, and act very well. But I just wish the directors had given just a wee bit of thought to this production, and come up with a better idea than block letter panels. After all, dvd's of Pia don't exactly grow on trees. --- Ivy Lin (NY NY)

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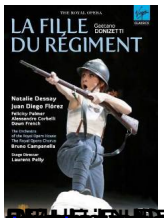
2. La Fille du Regiment 2007 (Mp4)

610 MB



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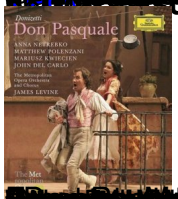

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