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Opera Review: 'Salome'

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URY EPPSTEIN, THE JERUSALEM POST

The Israeli Opera

Salome

By Richard Strauss

The Opera House

November 18

Richard Strauss's *Salome*, performed by the Lithuanian National Opera in collaboration with the Israeli Opera, can be classified as the most unappetizing opera. With Salome fondling Jokanaan's (St. John's) decapitated head, it is a celebration of perversity.

Such a situation requires extremely subtle and restrained direction in order to render it digestible. American-born director David Alden can be credited with employing the utmost sensitivity and refined taste in this problematic scene, presenting it suggestively and mercifully leaving whatever possible to the audience's imagination, while still providing forceful impact.

Salome's Seven Veils Dance, concealing more than it revealed, may have disappointed Herod - and the audience - but also inspired the imagination to supply what may have been missing on the stage.

The Lithuanian Opera's singers turned out to be of an admirably high artistic level. German-born Johannes von Duisburg's warm and expressive bass, in the role of Jokanaan, made it easy to understand Salome's falling in love with him.

Siquite Stonyte's impressive soprano represented a domineering Salome that may easily have aroused Jokanaan's antipathy. Her frenzied final scene created a forceful sub-climax.

Kazakhstan-born Pawel Wunder's lyric tenor convincingly impersonated an irritated, excited Herod. His closing outcry "Let this woman be killed!" was the performance's overwhelming climax.

The Lithuanian Opera Orchestra, conducted by Polish-born Jacek Kaspszyk, effectively provided the tense emotional atmosphere, but sometimes overshadowed the singers with its volume.

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