

Press Release: November 9, 2007

**A lean, mean 'Lucia'. Hippo Press**

A lean, mean 'Lucia': For its season-opener, Granite State Opera staged an economical but effective production of Donizetti's "Lucia di Lammermoor," with one performance each at the Portsmouth Music Hall and the Capitol Center for the Arts. The Portsmouth performance, staged Friday, Nov. 9, showed an abundance of strengths, chief among them the voices artistic director Phil Lauriat assembled for the lead roles.

In the demanding lead role, soprano Barbara Kilduff was outstanding. Kilduff's agile voice brought all aspects of the part to life with passion, and her amazing rendition of the opera's signature "mad" scene in Act 3 brought prolonged and thunderous cheers from the crowd at the Portsmouth show. I have never heard or seen this part sung better.

Other leads were equally good. Tenor Eric Fennell made a compelling Edgardo, while baritone Jimi Jones dominated any scene he was in with his rich, commanding voice.

Local singer Mark Cleveland was a fine Raimondo, while Brent Wilson as Normanno, Jacques Wilson as Alisa, and Seven Carpenter as Arturo contributed solid work. The famous "sextet" in Act 2 was a wonderful blend of beautiful singing and fine ensemble work.

Lauriat led the production at a crisp pace. This "Lucia" moved along with the snap and crackle of a Verdi potboiler. Lighting and costumes were fine, helping to overcome one noted lack: set design seemed not up to the company's usual standards. Too often, it was simply a bench or two and a backdrop, which might have been intended to help us focus on the music or necessitated by the small stage space. But if opera is a total fusion of all theater and musical arts, then the visual aspect of this 'Lucia' fell a bit short.