

FROM 'OOMPAH' TO OPERA

Cascadia Opera's 'Don Giovanni' Review By BURNIE GARELICK

Nobody told the sunshine and toasty temperatures that September's song was over as the calendar page turned to celebrate Oktoberfest last Saturday at the Florence Events Center.

The flat floor was festooned with blue and white streamers under which folk dancers in festive frocks and lederhosen pranced and swayed to polkas and waltzes to the rhythm of squeezing accordions and a tuba's ompah-pah.

A continuous flock of festive feasters sang and danced along, applauded, and enjoyed brats and kraut, beer and hard black-berry cider, and German chocolate cake. The barrels rolled out, and everyone had a barrel of fun.

On Sunday, the remains of

the hay bales were swept out the door, and the FEC prepared for another afternoon delight, this time on the main stage. The Cascadia Concert Opera performed "Don Giovanni" with Mozart's dazzling music and Da Ponte's crisp lyrics, beautifully translated into English and capturing the rhythm, rhyme and humor of the Italian.

Concert opera is not full-blown opera like the Met and the Royal Opera House. Concert opera is a friendly program of songs and perhaps not as intimidating. Cascadia's troupe contained eight singers in modern dress singing in English, a conductor, and a pianist.

There were no sets or costumes and no orchestra. The tenors, basses and sopranos were excellent, and the pianist was absolutely superb.

All 88 keys of FEC grand were put through their paces and hadn't sounded so good in a long time.

Don Giovanni, better known as Don Juan, is the womanizing, skirt-chasing rogue of legend. This rich guy who gets his

way with the ladies and cuckolds their men is not a very nice man, and at the conclusion of the opera, everyone — even his servant/sidekick Leporello — is happy to see his arrogance and bravado get its comeuppance.

While all the vocalists excelled, Deac Guidi as Leporello was brilliant for his clarity, expression and acting.

It was a special pleasure for a longtime Florentine to see Bill

Hulings playing the role of Il Commendatore; Hulings was last seen on the FEC stage singing with the Emerald City Jazz Kings. Fine vocalists can excel in different genres.

Even though the numbers were much smaller than at the Oktoberfest, the opera-goers were enthusiastic, applauding with gusto this quality performance.

Had the opera been German,

perhaps Wagner's "Die Meistersinger," and the costumes and sets been inspired by Bruegel, visitors to both Oktoberfest and the opera would have been clinking steins and rolling barrels for tons of fun and mutual admiration.

As it is, we can be happy for the diversity in Florence as we continue to sample its many entertainments.

In the meantime, the new

season of Met Live in HD begins Saturday, Oct. 10, at the Newport Performing Arts Center, and the opera is Joe Green's "Troubadour," also known as "Il Trovatore" by Giuseppe Verdi.

For more about the joy of opera, read my books of Met opera reviews, "It's Not Over!" and "Mew and Cry," both available on Amazon.com.

Ride with a City Councilor Oct. 14

Do you have a great idea you would like to share with the Florence City Council? The City Council has started the "Ride with a Councilor" program so that community members can share their ideas.

Each month, a city councilor or Mayor Joe Henry will ride the Rhody Express to answer questions and hear your suggestions from the community.

Hop aboard and talk to Councilor Susy Lacer on Ride with a Councilor Day, Oct. 14, from 3:20 to 5:20 p.m. on the Rhody Express.

Councilor Lacer has challenged all members of the public who have not yet ridden the

Rhody Express and may be interested to come aboard and experience the service as well as have the opportunity to speak with her.

All members of the public are welcome and fares will be free during this event

For more information about the program, call the City Manager's Department at 541-997-3437.

For a detailed bus schedule, pick up a brochure at the Chamber of Commerce, City Hall, visit ltd.org/rhody.

For other information concerning the Rhody Express service, call Rhody Express at 541-902-2067.

Quattrosound to perform mini concert at library Friday

The Siuslaw Public Library kicks off its celebration of National Arts and Humanities month the weekend of Oct. 9, with an outreach performance by the highly talented and vibrant musical group, Quattrosound.

The performance will begin at 11:30 a.m. on Friday, Oct. 9, in the main library. Not only will the quartet play its eclectic mix of music but it will also discuss the history of the genres they have blended into their unique style. This program will be perfect for music-lovers of all ages, and is made possible through the support of Seacoast Entertainment Association.

Quattrosound is made up of

four musicians, all professionally trained. Each musician is now based in Los Angeles but they hail from around the world: Central America, Japan, Mexico and the United States.

Individually the members of Quattrosound have played for or with Bocelli, Barbara Streisand, Yo-Yo Ma, Annie Lennox, Michael Jackson, Layla Hathaway, Ricky Martin and Gloria Estefan.

There is no charge to attend the library event and this music concert is open to the public.

For more information, visit the Siuslaw Public Library, call 541-997-3132 or visit www.siuslawlibrary.org.

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