

# MARIANNA TSVIETINSKA GEDROOMDE VIOLETTA

PETER 'T HART · 24 NOVEMBER 2024

**D**irigent **Jeroen Weierink** en regisseur **Marc Krone** toeren wederom (na *Aida* en *Parelvissers*) met leden van de Oekraïense Kamer Opera en Camerata Amsterdam-Kiev door Nederland. Nu met Verdi's *La Traviata* als kameropera, zo is de aankondiging. Geen koor en geen decor. Als dat de verwachtingen tempert blijkt dat onterecht bij het zien van de voorstelling in het **Amphion Cultuurbedrijf** in Doetinchem. Coupures zijn er nauwelijks en men haalt het maximale uit de kleine bezetting – allemaal solisten immers.



## KAMEROPERA?

De koorpassages worden dus gezongen door solisten. Eigenlijk wordt er op geen enkel puur koor gemist, hoogstens misschien bij de scène uit de tweede akte op het feest van Flora Or *tutti a me*. – *Questa donna conoscete?* Natuurlijk kennen de toegesnelde solisten de vrouw in kwestie, ze stellen haar eigen bubbels van vrienden en elite voor. Deze passage is met (groot) koor logischer. Maar muzikaal kan de opera prima met ensemble.

## MARIANNA TSVIETINSKA DREAMED VIOLETTA

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Conductor Jeroen Weierink and director Marc Krone are once again (after *Aida* and Pearl Fishermen) touring the Netherlands with members of the Ukrainian Chamber Opera and Camerata Amsterdam-Kiev. Now with Verdi's *La Traviata* as a chamber opera, the announcement says. No chorus and no scenery. If that dampened expectations, it proved unjustified when seeing the performance at the Amphion Culture Company in Doetinchem. There are hardly any cuts and they make the most of the small cast – all soloists, after all.

## CHAMBER-OPERA?

So the choral passages are sung by soloists. Actually at no point is chorus missed, at most perhaps in the scene from the second act at the feast of Flora Or *tutti a me*. – *Questa donna conoscete?* Of course the superannuated soloists know the woman in question; they represent her own bubble of friends and elite. This passage makes more sense with (large) chorus. But musically the opera can do just fine with ensemble.

The label “chamber opera” also refers to the minimalist or, if you prefer, intimate setting: the background in Doetinchem is black cloth and the only scenery consists essentially of tables and chairs. These are deftly pulled out by the soloists, as are the cards of course in the second act, and this proves sufficient to narrate the whole *Traviata*. The party, the gambling hall and the countryside (with tussocks of grass in the background to provide distinction) are credibly portrayed.

And the orchestra? There is indeed no full orchestra; this would not fit in the Doetinchem pit either. The chamber orchestra (under the name Camerata Amsterdam-Kiev) consists of musicians from Ukraine, the Netherlands and in Europe and is led with a steady hand by Weierink. Whether the sound mixes well is difficult for me to judge, I am sitting directly in front of the bin. The high violins sound a bit thin, but further down the hall this

need not be the case at all. So the limitations of perhaps a smaller budget were handled incredibly well.

## WORLD CLASS

The trio *Violetta* – Alfredo – Germont is superbly cast by Marianna Tsvietinska\* – Maxime Vorochek – Olexandr Forkushak. Tsvietinska is world class. That she can be admired so briefly in Doetinchem, where I saw the performance, is actually absurd. With her lived-in playing, carried piano passages and solid colouratura, she is the dreamed-of *Violetta*.

In the first act, Krone makes the courtesan act very dominantly. She determines how things go in her house and is more mistress and less of a hostess. The role is then essentially identical to *Carmen*, who also turns all the men's heads in such a way. But it is true – *Violetta* does not want to appear weak because of her illness. Her ‘conversion’, with a beautifully restrained *Ah, fors'è lui*, is also completely believable and in the second act she is relaxed and settled – to confront Germont full of emotion and vulnerability. When she then resumes life as a courtesan, at the side of Baron Douphol, the discomfort can be felt; the return to her old life is full of reluctance. Also deathly ill and battered with a vulnerable *Addio, del passato*, Tsvietinska is phenomenal, even if the direction does require her to walk around a lot in her dying hour.

Next to her, Vorochek is somewhat soft, but that is also true: Alfredo is a lyric tenor. Actually, Vorochek is likewise the dream Alfredo. Good in his playing, beautiful timbre, fine lyricism.

Forkushak is a surprising Germont. He sounds like basso profondo. There are mean high passages in the part. By adjusting his timbre in those places, he achieves those notes. It must be at the top end of his range, which presumably goes much further into the lows.

## DOMINANT FATHER

Germont as a dictator, because that's what you might call his appearance in this direction, makes me think. Just look at the review of *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*\*\* where I also zoomed in on the role of the father.

The first *Traviata* I ever saw was a conventional film version; Germont here was an old frail man who cried along with *Violetta* to the full. But meanwhile, of course, very manipulative and out to have his own way. Indeed, the vocal text leads us in that direction.

In this direction by Krone, it is a man who goes straight for his goal and does not expect *Violetta* to argue much. He continues to listen coldly, saying he understands her, but shows no sign of empathy. *Qual figlia m'abbracciate*, sings *Violetta*. Clumsily Germont allows himself to be embraced. *Generosa*, comes out as a formal thank you.

We only see emotion in Germont when it comes to his son. As soon as Alfredo wants to run away, facing *Violetta*, he finds himself in a real embrace: Germont does not want to lose his son.

## THE REMAINING ROLES

*La Traviata* has nine more small to very small roles. These fall to a six-member ensemble, which also sings the choral passages. In fact, the chorus is not missed at all. An ensemble of six soloists, all of whom also have roles in the story, works fine for this opera.

The six soloists are not all Ukrainians, as the marquis we see Latvian Philip Krauklis, who lives in the Netherlands, and two other soloists (Daniël Attema and Fabian Homburg) are also Dutch.

Homburg plays the doctor, or rather death. The opera opens with him encountering *Violetta* in the set. At the end, Death comes to get her. He comforts her, but there is no attempt to cure her. She has already given up.

*Violetta* must necessarily die on a chair. Krone needs it to make the performance cyclical: once again there is death, covering her with a sheet. Everything is again as it began.

