



## CRITICAL ACCLAIM FOR NICOLA LUISOTTI

### **On *Turandot* with the Royal Opera, Covent Garden**

Conductor Nicola Luisotti had the sweep and swoon and shimmer of a score that makes love and death almost indistinguishable.

-Edward Seckerson, *The Independent*

The other stars of the night? Conducting, Nicola Luisotti lavishes care on Puccini's still-startling sonorities – the curdled piccolo, the death-rattle percussion – and binds the score together with superb assurance.

-Neil Fisher, *The Times*

Paata Burchuladze's gravelly Timur is also impressive, as is Luisotti's propelled yet finely detailed conducting.

-Barry Millington, *The Evening Standard*

First to be said is that this revival of "Turandot" boasts some exceptional conducting by Nicola Luisotti who is the music director designate of San Francisco Opera. Together with The Royal Opera Orchestra on absolutely blistering form he delivered a taut, theatrical and thrilling interpretation of Puccini's wonderfully colourful score. It had pace and captured absolutely the *tinta* of the piece and the elemental originality of some of the composer's most progressive orchestration. The sheer volume of the early pages – particularly the moment when the bloodthirsty chorus summons the executioner to behead the unfortunate Prince of Persia – was exhilarating and appropriately savage. One was also nervous for the principal singers. However, when their moments came Luisotti was unfailingly responsive to their needs – the texture was kept remarkably spare and this allowed the details to emerge afresh. The undercurrents to the "silencio, silencio" passage in Act One and to the delivery of Turandot's second riddle were instances in point. The placing of the harps in the Stalls Circle also helped one appreciate how vital their contribution. The percussion had a field day! Tempos were generally fleet and the gradual acceleration of tempo at the end of Act One before Calaf strikes the gong was perfectly judged. How the piece needs this immediacy of approach rather than an over-indulgent one!

-Alexander Campbell, *Classical Source.com*

Conductor Nicola Luisotti galvanised the superbly augmented chorus and orchestra to give a rip-roaring performance. Never before have I heard so much orchestral detail and what a score! Dissonances vie with highly original takes on Eastern music to make this not only Puccini's greatest score, but one of the most original of the twentieth century.

-Keith McDonnell, *Music OMH*

All of this makes *Turandot* one of the most complex and original scores of the twentieth century. Every detail was illuminated by Nicola Luisotti's exuberant conducting which perfectly blended brash dissonances with textural power and thrilling climaxes, but which also allowed for refined detail such as the episode when the moon rises in Act I, Ping, Pang, Pong's lamentations at the start of Act II and Liù's funeral in Act III. I cannot remember hearing the Covent Garden orchestra perform this music better. The significantly augmented Royal Opera Chorus were their usual dependable selves and sang out lustily. Together with the orchestra provided a rich dramatic background for the soloists.

-Jim Pritchard, *Seen and Heard International*

### **La Bohème at San Francisco Opera**

...Luisotti led an almost hyperactively attentive performance. His tempos were dynamic to a fault—slowing down and speeding up with each slight change in the emotional temperature—and he punctuated the score with countless moments of emphasis or hesitation.... The impression of a conductor treating each stretch of music—each measure, sometimes—with fresh attention was invigorating, and the orchestra played with extraordinary clarity and fervor.

-Joshua Kosman, *San Francisco Chronicle*

### **Macbeth at Bavarian State Opera**

On the podium, Nicola Luisotti keeps the pace brisk and the mood thrilling. He also shapes the melodic lines with care and listens to his singers. Choir and orchestra are excellent. In all, if you can overlook Kusej's lapses in taste, this is one of the best "Macbeth" productions on the circuit. Rating: \*\*\*\*

-Shirley Apthorp, *Bloomberg News*, October 3, 2008

### **At Festival del Sole**

Luisotti's shaping of this work [Prokofiev's Symphony No. 5 in B-flat Major] — which at times reflects the anguish of war — with his most responsive orchestra gave just the right glitter and hardness to the score that made it truly convincing.

-L. Pierce Carson, *Napa Valley Register*, July 21, 2007

Leading the Russian National Orchestra...Luisotti filled Yountville's Lincoln Theater on Wednesday night with energy, dynamism, wit and emotion -- all the qualities that opera thrives on. No one hearing a concert this exciting could fail to be struck by the brilliance of Luisotti's orchestral conducting or to be infused with optimism about what he may achieve at the War Memorial Opera House in seasons to

come. There is a rhythmic buoyancy to Luisotti's work that speaks of high drama, as well as a gift for bringing both humor and ripe expressiveness to a high boil... And Luisotti is a blast to watch in action... Throughout the concert, he cued phrases with whatever body part seemed appropriate -- wrist, elbow, shoulder, hip -- and did it in a way that seemed not only natural but also illuminating.

-Joshua Kosman, *San Francisco Chronicle*

### **Il Trovatore at the Royal Opera, Covent Garden**

The opening was a wake-up call. Raymond Aceto sang Ferrando's narration vividly, the men's chorus was vigorous to a man, and the conductor Nicola Luisotti set off into the opera as though every note was going to matter.

It is a coincidence that the Royal Opera has hired Luisotti for a pair of operas - this second revival of Elijah Moshinsky's production of *Il trovatore* and a *Madam Butterfly* - just after he has been appointed music director of the San Francisco Opera. After a decade of Donald Runnicles's expertise in Wagner, San Francisco has made a 180-degree change of direction. To judge from his urgent conducting of *Il trovatore* Luisotti is Italian to the core. In an opera full of images of fire everything here flared into life - from the flames that flicker round Azucena's story- telling to the fireball of energy that sends Manrico racing off to rescue his mother.

-Richard Fairman, *The Financial Times*

The main reason for the revival's success, however, is the utterly gripping conducting of Royal Opera debutant Nicola Luisotti (who returns in February for *Madama Butterfly*). Rarely in recent times have the chorus and orchestra of the Royal Opera House sounded so well rehearsed or so decided in their performances; I don't think I've heard such an outstandingly conducted Verdi production since Edward Downes led the company in *Rigoletto* in 2005. Even the Prelude was striking: the timpani rolls were genuinely arresting, the string melody lovingly shaped. Luisotti evidently appreciates how fine an orchestrator Verdi was, too, because I heard many woodwind colours that often go overlooked by others, and the important role of the offstage voices and instruments was here given its due prominence. This young conductor is a marvel: let's have him back soon.

-Dominic McHugh, *OMH*

Nicola Luisotti (Donald Runnicles's successor as music director of San Francisco Opera) conducts one of Verdi's most elemental scores with a Muti-like combination of brilliance and precision. Tempi are swift, the phrasing is keenly edged.

-Rupert Christiansen, *The Daily Telegraph*

The double stars of the evening were the Italian conductor Nicola Luisotti and the Argentinian tenor Marcelo Alvarez as Manrico. Luisotti gives singers rein to shape a phrase while keeping strict, buoyant control. The orchestra responded energetically, with notable playing from lower strings and lower woodwind.

-Fiona Maddocks, *The Evening Standard*

## Macbeth at Seattle Opera

Nicola Luisotti, the conductor, was another audience favorite, and rightly so. Quite frankly, I have never seen such dynamic range in orchestra and chorus. The program mentions Luisotti's concern for Verdi's *sotto voce* markings, but no words can describe the chilling effect of these moments. He also filled the house with blasting fortissimos, and clearly had a strong relationship with soloists as well as the ensembles.

-Rebecca Packard, *ConcertoNet.com*

He [Luisotti] is a conductor who understands the sweep and dimensions of Verdi, propelling the orchestra -- which played very well for him -- to cut into phrases, to deliver a long-limbed line, to take a breath when you least expect it, to shine, to threaten. He is a major, major talent.

-R.M. Campbell, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*

This production brought the Seattle debut of conductor Nicola Luisotti, who led the orchestra, chorus and principals with a sure touch and a great sense of drama. An active and exuberant maestro, he kept all the forces in balance, whether the scene was quiet and intimate or one of those all-stops-out Verdi finales.

-Melinda Bargreen, *The Seattle Times*

Italian maestro Nicola Luisotti drew powerful and lyrical performances from the singers, the ensemble and the orchestra. His conducting showed a great understanding of and appreciation for Verdi's melodic lines.

-*Seattlest*

Italian conductor Nicola Luisotti, in his Seattle Opera debut, justifiably received vigorous applause on opening night. Not only did he understand the reach and complexity of Verdi's score; with his direction, the voices of the different instruments remained distinct, so that each played its own critical supporting role.

-Maggie Larrick, *Queene Anne News/Magnolia News*

A big part of this opera's success rests with conductor Nicola Luisotti, making his Seattle Opera debut in 'Macbeth.' The Italian knows his Verdi, and he conducted the score with an enthusiasm, warmth and understanding that swept everyone into the glories of the Verdi score.

-Mike Murray, *The Herald*

Thanks to remarkable restraint from conductor Nicola Luisotti and orchestra, Zelenskaya and Otey were able to perform the duet, *Fatal mia donna! un murmure* in astonishingly subdued tones, just the terror-inducing pianos that Verdi intended.

-Michael J. Vaughn, *The Opera Critic*

Conductor Nicola Luisotti also deserves praise. The fine musicians of the Seattle Opera Orchestra play with winning Italianate style and passion, thanks to his often-feverish ministrations.

-*Bloomberg.com*

His [Luisotti] reading was clearly inspiring for the singers and also alert to the work's musical colour.

-George Loomis, London's *Financial Times*

### **La Forza del Destino at San Francisco Opera**

In the pit, Nicola Luisotti, making his S.F. Opera debut, led a vigorous, atmospheric performance of Verdi's music. The conductor is sympathetic to the singers, yet he remained a driving force throughout, from the opera's boisterous Overture to its quietly touching finale.”

-*San Jose Mercury News*

The orchestra conveyed Verdi's music with great precision, conducted by the young and very passionate Italian maestro, Nicola Luisotti.

-Editors: Eve Batey, Rita Hao, *SFist*

Thank the opera gods for conductor Nicola Luisotti, whose phenomenal company debut kept those emotions well in view. It was Luisotti, in collaboration with a mostly splendid cast, who offered a counterweight to the weirdly abstract military yarn that the production team had come up with...Luisotti set the tone right from the first pages of the overture, driving the orchestra hard through the coiled opening melody and then opening things out for the more expansive sections...As the opera unfolded, Luisotti kept a tight rein on the proceedings while still allowing for plenty of expressive freedom. The orchestra played magnificently all night long -- the strings rich and edgy, the brass well-blended.

-Joshua Kosman, *San Francisco Chronicle*

“Presiding magisterially in his local debut, Nicola Luisotti confirmed earlier impressions that he is a conductor with uncommon dedication to the sweep, lyricism and subtle detail in the best of Verdi.”

Allan Ulrich, London's *Financial Times*

### **Pagliacci at Los Angeles Opera**

In the opera's most famous moment, Nicola Luisotti's orchestra whipped up a fine emotional storm under the famous outcry of 'Ridi, Pagliaccio.'

-Alan Rich, *Daily Variety*

In the pit, Nicola Luisotti brings out warm instrumental details, phrases with a measured lyricism, shadows his singers knowingly and never lets the intensity flag. What more could you ask for?

-Timothy Mangan, *The Orange County Register*

It takes strong performers to make an impression on such a stage, stronger than those L.A. Opera has assembled. But that hardly hinders the conductor, Nicola Luisotti. Perhaps the most impressive aspect of Sunday's performance was the physically imposing playing he got from the orchestra. He is of the school of conductors who believe the foundation of the orchestra is the bass instruments, and he coaxes from them deep, rich, expressive playing.

-Mark Swed, *Los Angeles Times*

Nicola Luisotti conducted the score with a conviction presumably only native Italians can muster. His ability to engage the orchestra to share his enthusiasm should be noted, for too often such music trudges when it should rage.

-*Los Angeles Daily News*

Conductor Nicola Luisotti led a fluid, skillfully modulated account of the colorful score that showcased the Opera Orchestra's superb playing.

-Carl Byron, *Opera News*

**Un ballo in maschera at Canadian Opera**

As for the music, fortunately this marvellous 23rd opera of Verdi can depend enormously on its rich and beautiful orchestral and choral fabric, well served Friday by the COC orchestra and chorus under Nicola Luisotti.

-Ken Winters, *The Globe and Mail*