

CIM Opera Theater: Cherubini's *Medea* (Nov. 10)

by Daniel Hathaway



Though filicide is one of the more distasteful varieties of murder, the story of Medea, who slew her children in revenge for the deceit of her husband Jason, has attracted the attention of numerous playwrights, authors, filmmakers, and composers since ancient times. Luigi

Cherubini's opera on the subject, regarded as his masterpiece, received a strong and confident production by the Cleveland Institute of Music Opera Theater in Kulas Hall on Friday, November 10.

Compact at just two hours in length and musically solid — Cherubini was admired by his contemporary, Beethoven — *Medea* was a good choice by stage director David Bamberger for his opera students.

Friday's cast was notable for the accomplished singing of Nayoung Yeo, the powerful soprano who played a formidable Medea, and Benjamin Liu, the compelling tenor who took the role of Jason. Mezzo-soprano Merav Eldan was a standout as Medea's servant Neris, and soprano Emily S. Brown distinguished herself as Glauce, the daughter of King Creon — who is engaged to Jason and thus becomes the catalyst for Medea's rage. Though appearing a bit stiff onstage, bass Xiaoyang Zhang sang the role of Creon with authority.

The CIM Orchestra, led by Harry Davidson, sounded impressive from the first notes of the overture, and contributed increasingly ominous music as the story grew darker. An elaborate oboe obbligato by Michael Ripple decorated a first-act chorus, and Neris's aria at the top of act two was accompanied by a lyrical bassoon solo played by Marisa Esposito. Davidson paced the opera expertly with only a few

coordination problems — notably between the stage and the back of house chorus in the second act.



Lorena Jiz Tovanche and Ian McLaughlin winningly played Medea's children, their left-behind dolls almost unbearably symbolizing their fate at the end of the opera.

Dave Brooks' set remained the same for both acts with subtle changes in lighting between scenes (also by Brooks). Inda Blatch-Geib's costumes evoked Greco-Roman antiquity. Bamberger's own supertitles were nicely done.

The chorus, prepared by John Simmons, took its traditional role in Greek drama, and contributed importantly to the production. At the end, to symbolize the end of the world for these tragic characters, the chorus all fell dead to the stage at once. A dramatic conclusion to a gripping opera.

Published on ClevelandClassical.com November 21, 2017.

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