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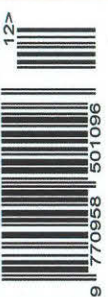
Saying boo to Bayreuth

PLUS
REVIEW
OF THE YEAR
The hits and misses of 2013

CHRISTMAS GIFTS

MARINA REBEKA

Shooting star



R

Performance of the night: Carmen Giannattasio sounded effortless as she floated shimmering bel canto phrases and negotiated Violetta's mercurial moods with solid vocal technique.

BRITTEN Aldeburgh Festival

Peter Grimes

Staged on the beach in Aldeburgh, the Suffolk town of Britten's birth, this *Peter Grimes* proved to be an astonishingly bold theatrical coup by director Tim Albery. The impressive but simple set comprised five large fishing boats, with a backdrop of swooping seagulls, the sound of the rushing wind and the rumbling of the North Sea. As Peter Grimes disappeared into the sea in total darkness, a more haunting conclusion to an opera would be difficult to imagine. There's little chance of this *Grimes* being repeated in the near future; but it certainly won't be quickly forgotten.

Performance of the night: Alan Oke's *Grimes* was a portrait of complexity: rough, tough and terrified.

FESTIVAL CHOICE

Aix-en-Provence Festival

Elektra

Patrice Chéreau's production of Strauss's opera deliberately rejected the hammer-blow clichés usually associated with productions of *Elektra* for something more thoughtful and dramatically cohesive. *Elektra* is no longer the furious harridan, but a woman of restless dignity. Esa-Pekka Salonen and the Orchestre de Paris's wonderfully lyrical reading reached into the depths of this compelling score to reveal its most intricate details.

Performance of the night: German soprano Evelyn Herltzius was stunning in the title role and is bound to be remembered as one of the great *Elektras*. Her top notes are searing and incisive; far from causing the usual embarrassment, her final, jerky 'dance of death' was genuinely disturbing.

OPERETTA OF THE YEAR

Opera Theatre Saint Louis

The Pirates of Penzance

Gilbert and Sullivan's tale of pirates, policemen and fair young maidens was a delight. James Schuette's clever set and ▶



Elemental power: Aldeburgh Festival's *Grimes* on the Beach starring Alan Oke

◀ wonderful Victorian costumes treated the piece with respect and verve; so did Seán Curran's sharp, witty direction and Ryan McAdams's snappy conducting. Deanna Breiwick and Matthew Plenk were bright and affecting as the young lovers; the chorus, composed of singers from OTSL's Young Artists Program, sang and danced with authority and a great sense of fun.

Performance of the night: Bradley Smoak was a hilarious Pirate King, complete with high kicks.

completely new that honours the original while revealing things you never knew before. Barry's comedy-nightmare vision of Oscar Wilde is a homage that produces something violently different and spiritually precisely in tune with a play whose jovial surface conceals a profound weirdness. Sam Brown's staging in Nancy set the piece amid cosy, Woosterish stereotypes of aunts, gadabouts and flittery girls.

Memorable moments: Cecily and Gwendolen squabble through megaphones to the accompaniment of 48 smashed dinner-plates; then they shoot each other. Lady Bracknell (a bass, marvellously performed by Alan Ewing) drops into German at the slightest provocation and launches into a Hitlerian rant on the subject of how chins are being worn this season.

Performances of the night: Tito Muñoz led the musical rampage with perfect

WORLD PREMIERE OF THE YEAR

Opéra National de Lorraine, Nancy

The Importance of Being Earnest

The best literary operas savage their sources and add, through music, something



Opera Theatre of Saint Louis's hilarious *Pirates of Penzance*