

Moshinsky's *La Traviata*

By [Victor Kline](#) ArtsHub | Monday, January 25, 2010



Elvira Fatykhova playing the tragic heroine *Violetta* in *La Traviata*

If you haven't got your tickets yet, go and get them straight away! This is a beautiful and inspiring production of Verdi's classic opera, given the very best of everything by director Elijah Moshinsky.

The opera is based on the famous *Les Dames au Camélias* by Alexandre Dumas fils which in turn is based heavily on the novelist's own life experience with the beautiful demi-mondaine Marie Duplessis, and influenced by his reading of the other famous work featuring a beautiful high class courtesan Manon Lescaut (which gave rise to operas by Massenet and Puccini).

The world has always been fascinated by the concept of the beautiful and sought after prostitute with the heart of gold, preferably if she is willing to give up the lucrative glitter of a thousand rich and noble courtiers for the love of a penniless poet, (or in the case of the modern American equivalent in *Pretty Woman*, a rich man with the heart of a poet), and especially if she is willing to make the necessary sacrifice at the end and die in the arms of her lover.

Moshinsky understands what is needed here. He steadfastly resists giving us a melodrama, instead ensuring that his cast find all over again the real tragedy inherent in the scenario. He draws fine acting from not only the leads and other principals but from every member of the chorus. Everyone is given something logical to do at every moment, be it physical logic or emotional logic, or both. The result is that the entire cast enjoys their acting, each feels he or she has a contribution to make to the audience, and each does in fact make a contribution.

Moshinsky understands the value and importance of interesting angles and sight lines and is not afraid to give us leads singing across stage or even upstage when the dramatic moment demands

it. The result is that we are given a story that doesn't just underpin the singing but walks hand in hand with it to create a powerful dramatic whole.

He has worked effectively too with designers Michael Yeargan, Peter J Hall and Nigel Levings to create extremely beautiful and highly effective sets, costumes and lighting respectively.

The singing is superb. The three leads Elvira Fatykhova as Violetta, Aldo Di Toro as Alfredo and Jonathan Summers as Alfredo's father are always on the money. Fatykhova sings with sweetness and amazing assurance, Di Toro gives just what is needed and Summers' amazing vocal powers surprise and delight throughout.

However it is in the duets that the opera reaches its apogee. All great singers in their own right, in the duets the leads play off one another and combine musically and dramatically with such tenderness and assurance, one would think they have been working together for years.

Whilst all the duets were exhilarating, the one between Summers and Fatykhova in Act II Scene I, where Alfredo's father comes to beg her to give up his son, was quite literally a show stopper.

And all this was underpinned by the inspired conducting of Philippe Auguin.

Congratulations to Opera Australia on this close to perfect production. Long may she reign.

Venue: Opera Theatre, Sydney Opera House

Dates: January through March 2010.

Bookings: www.sydneyoperahouse.com

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Victor Kline started his working life as Sydney's youngest barrister. He is now Editor of the Federal Court Reports, and an award winning playwright, director and actor who has worked extensively in theatre in Sydney and off Broadway in New York. He is also author of the novel 'Rough Justice'.

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