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New production fills the house

Don Giovanni, *The Electric Theatre*

Rating: ★★★★★

Judging by its first full-scale operatic venture, Black Cat Opera, founded late last year, has a great future. The company presented four performances of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* at the Electric Theatre last week.

Not only does the opera contain some of Mozart's most superb music, it is also an intense psychological drama and it is this element that came over in Black Cat's production.

Against three brick walls redolent of a Victorian industrial site (the costumes were likewise Victorian), Leporello, Giovanni's long-

suffering servant, is seen skulking in the shadows during the magnificent overture.

Throughout, he is a somewhat comic character, longing to escape his predicament and at the very end, as other members of the cast are commenting on the Don's dramatic demise, he is seen at the back chilling out with a bottle of wine!

He was wonderfully played by Phillip Guy-Bromley, with a potent bass voice too, although perhaps not as powerful as that of Giovanni himself, Philip

Smith, always a commanding presence.

The psychology comes over the most strongly in the grief-stricken Donna Anna and her desperate tones were well conveyed by Lynsey Docherty. But the most virtuosic soprano singing is reserved for Donna Elvira, the Don's former beloved, who pours out her grief in an incredible coloratura, borne out by Australian-born Allegra Giagu's Italianate virtuosity.

Don Ottavio, perhaps the most 'cardboard' of the characters but with some stunning music to sing, was a

good vehicle for James Savage-Hanford's lovely tenor voice (why was one of his arias omitted?).

Matthew Palmer's Masetto and Sarah Killian's Zerlina made a great couple: his petulant jealousy set off by her coquettish defensiveness but loving care when needed.

Nicolas Fisher's production involved much movement and entertainment (this is, after all, a *dramma giocoso*) but was somewhat quirky in the complete absence of a stone statue.

The Commendatore, strongly sung by Martin Robson, simply appeared and

used his fine voice to good effect in the scene where the Don is convincingly dragged off to hell.

The scaled down orchestra under Peter Ford gave its all to Mozart's glorious score and the only problem was some lack of co-ordination between pit and stage.

Shelagh Godwin
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