

This 'Romeo and Juliette' smacks of reality

By Mary Jane Doerr special writer
Romeo and Juliette are live and in person at Masonic Temple.
Juliette is gorgeous with thick, long, blond hair. Romeo is handsome and loving. Together they are passionate, deeply in love and perfectly matched in looks and voice.

Opera Theatre to sing in Gounod's French opera 'Romeo and Juliette,' not are they playing parts.
THEY ARE the real thing — two star-crossed lovers more interested in each other than they are in being opera stars.
Swenson is a legend in the happening, with a voice destined for fame. She ascends the ranges of her waltz 'Je veux vivre dans ce reve' with eloquence and clarity that would mark her as one of this generation's great singers.

to engage her again even before the final dress rehearsal.
Kunde is Romeo incarnate. He knows that his opera's strength is in his four duets with Juliette.
Vocally Kunde doesn't have the pathos of an Italian sound, but his bel canto style has depth, range and beauty — especially with Swenson.
Their voices perfectly entwine in harmony and tone. His straight-forward, sincere impersonation brings Romeo to life.

ing and how difficult the vocal passages are.
SOUTHWEST'S METROPOLITAN opera star Ara Berberian, as Friar Laurence, has an actor's instincts — a hand motion calming Juliette as she is told she will marry Paris, a serene humor in the wedding scene and the judgment not to sit on the dress in the chamber scene. His serene bass voice lends tranquility to the entire production.
MEXICO-SOPRANO Susan Graham (Stephan) is another significant talent. She is charming in her 'Que fair-tu blanche tourterelle?' with a

voice that rivals Swenson's in size. Favorite locals David Jackson, Claritha Bugas and Steven Bryant also delivered strong performances.
TECHNICAL GLITCHES were a nuisance — curtains didn't fall, the shroud didn't rise and the scrim rippled.
French-Canadian stage director Bernard Uzan, who mounted this production for his L'Opera de Montreal, kept the interest through the 3 1/2 hours with focused group acting. He didn't surrender to the odds in the set design — painted crowds on the backdrop in the street scene.

A cover scrim of Michelangelo's Creation of Adam represents a painting done near the time of Shakespeare's play and parallels the Baroque-styled sets and Renaissance costumes.
It is hard to understand why this opera, so magnificently performed by the orchestra and leads, isn't considered a great one. This tender, passionate music, with its lush melodies and use of the harp, is sometimes regarded as sentimental.
There is nothing sentimental about this 'Romeo et Juliette.' This is grand opera at its finest. The final performance is Saturday.

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