This 'Romeo and Juliette' smacks of reality

By Mary Jane Doerr special writer

Romeo and Juliette are live and in person at Masonle 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. They bring a love that has transcended their tomb since Shakespeare brought their story to life for the stage.

Ruth Ann Swenson (Juliette) and Gregory Kunde (Romeo) aren't just two singers hired by the Michigan

Opera Theatre to sing in Gounod's French opera "Romeo and Juliette," nor are they playing parts.

THEY ARE the real thing star-crossed lovers more interested in each other than they are in being

in each other than they are in compora stars.

Swenson is a legend in the happening, with a voice detined for fame. She ascends the ranges of her waitz "Je veuz vivre dans ce reve" with eloquence and artistry that should mark her as one of this generation's and starters.

great singers.

Now is the time to hear her. David
DiChiera of MOT was making plans

Kunde is Romeo incarnate. He knows that the opera's strength is in his four duets with Juliette.

vocally Kunde doesn't have the pathos of an Italian sound, but his bet canto style has depth, range and beauty — especially with Swesson. Their volces perfectly entwine in harmony and tone. His straightforward, sincere impersonation brings Romeo to life.

When these times are a second sound in the straightforward.

When these two are on stage, we forget they are following stage direction, we forget they are only act-

sages are.

SOUTHFIELD'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 sense of humor in the wedding scene and the judgment not to
sit on the dress in the chamber
scene, His serene bass voice tends
tranquility to the entire production.
Mezzo-toprano Susan Graham
(Stephano) is another significant tolcnt. She is charming in her "Que
fair-tu blanche tourterelle?" with a

voice that rivals Swenson's in size. Favorite locals David Jackson, Clar-itha Buggs and Steven Bryant also delivered strong performances.

TECHNICAL GLITCHES were a nuisance — curtains didn't fall, the shroud didn't rise and the scrim rip-

shroud didn't rise anu ture source, pled.
French-Canadian stage directure
French-Canadian stage directure
French-Canadian stage directure
French-Canadian stage directure
French-Canadian stage
French

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, but considered agreat 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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