

## Theatre



### Glyndebourne On Tour: Falstaff in Plymouth (review)

*03rd December 2009*

There seemed one notable omission from the cast list in Richard Jones's superbly-played production of Verdi's only major comic opera – namely, who literally had a hand in the three different feline glove puppets that might even have upstaged the main players.

In the event this charming little touch merely added to the comedy, which was delivered with great timing throughout by singers who could also act, and which made this performance so entertaining.

Of course, with such a finely-crafted Falstaff, impeccably sung by Jonathan Veira, Glyndebourne was on a winner, especially with an equally strong supporting cast distinguished by Rachael Lloyd (Mrs Page), Jessica Muirhead (Mrs Ford), and Guido Loconsolo as Ford.

Factor in Rosa Klebb-lookalike Kathleen Wilkinson as Mistress Quickly, the Shakespearean Laurel and Hardy equivalent of Harry Nicoll (Bardolph) and Sion Goronwy (Pistol), some obligatory love interest in the shape of Elena Tsallagova as Nanetta and Nicholas Phan as Fenton, and you simply have a winning formula.

The orchestra, under conductor Thomas Blunt, made its telling contribution and, if the brass clearly were enjoying getting their tongues around Verdi's highly effective writing, occasionally at the singers' expense, it wasn't enough to detract significantly.

It's debatable what effect this truly enjoyable tale will ultimately have on adult obesity, but it's certainly well worth getting along to see it, perhaps before considering that visit to WeightWatchers.

PHILIP R BUTTALL



[See [below](#) for Philip's review of 'Jenufa']

## Theatre



### **Glyndebourne On Tour: Jenufa in Plymouth (review)**

*04th December 2009*

As plots go, Jenufa is certainly the equal of anything which even the most harrowing soap opera storyline could probably come up with.

Janacek's shocking tale of misdirected love, violent jealousy, moral cowardice and desperate infanticide must be one of the most gripping operatic experiences ever, and this production by Nikolaus Lehnhoff must arguably rank as one of Glyndebourne's best ever.

Of course Janacek's score is second to none, and musically so much more effective in that the composer was setting his own text, based on a story by Gabriela Preissova.

However it still needs the very best resources to bring this folk opera and psychological drama convincingly to life in the theatre, and which is where this production was second to none.

Vocally or dramatically there was little to distinguish between the superb contributions from Giselle Allen in the title role, Peter Wedd (Laca), Anne Mason (Kostelnicka), and Pavel Cernoch (Steva), together with such equally strong supporting roles, authentic choreography, and highly effective sets and lighting.

The musical direction by Robin Ticciati drew every nuance and subtlety from the writing, and the orchestral playing was first-rate, strong yet never over-powering, and with some ravishing textures in the quieter moments.

Jenufa has definitely raised the stakes for those opera companies touring to the city, and should undoubtedly prove an extremely hard act to follow next year.

PHILIP R BUTTALL