A mediocre report card for "Athalia" and Hogwood

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con’s performance was not consistent: she was far from her best when matched with Fireman — the two supposed lovers sang with all the order of wooden puppets. There is little positive to say about the other soloists.

Boston Concert Opera gives concert performances, as its name suggests, and the soli- cists appeared in recital dress, posi- tioned in front of the orchestra. It is diffi- cult to convincingly develop relationships between two-dimensional protagonists in such a well-known and dramatic work as "Tosca," and questionable, therefore, whether it was an appropriate choice for the efforts of this company.

There was an attempt at acting, howev- er, under Stage Director Thaddues Monika. Malcolm Rivers succeeded in adding depth through this attempted the- ater, his icy pacing sent shivers down the spine. But the other soli- cists’ dramatic at- tempts mostly came across as eccentric and awkward. If anything, they detracted tension from the production.

The Chorus was in good form and the orchestra played well at times, developing a rich and intoxicating sensuality. David Stockton did not, however, succeed in maintaining tension, and the music drifted without interest for too many measure...

I n ENGLAND THERE IS A DREADED SO- phist- school teachers reserve to get talented but errant pupils in their place: Christopher Hogwood, your report reads, "Could do better."

Hogwood’s "Athalia," performed at Symphony Hall last weekend, was limp. The orchestra played well, even insightful- ly at times, but with elegance rather than brilliance. There were several instances of delightful solo work — a recorder solo performed by Christopher Krueger and Stephen Handset was one of them — and there was strength to the chorus. But solo singing was mostly of a low caliber and devoid of characterization or emotion.

Towards the end Judith Nelson blew some life into the part of Jocaboth but her singing, though often pretty, was colorless insubstantial. Janice Fety had her mom- ents in the role of Athalia: she was "To darkness eternal" was strongly projected, but it was too late by this point to estab- lish the character’s powerful central role.

Derek Lee Rapin, singing Soad, also briefly shone, but generally failed to im- press. His "Let harmony breathe soft around," was done with care and contempla- tion, helped along by the sublime theo- cero accompaniment of Paul O’Dette. This apart, though, his presence tended to fade into the background. Bartrons Greg- ory Rainbaker, singing Abner, did better: he was the only soloist to consistently inject life into his work, but his voice was not always as clear and crisp as might have been desired.

Not only was this cast of singers unable to project drama, they were unable to sill Symphony Hall, an unfortunate choice of venue for voices which might sometimes be capable of delicate ornamentation but which were lacking in voice. Hogwood should seriously consider using a more in- timate setting for his chamber-scaled per- formances of baroque oratorio.

Janice Fety, mezzo-soprano, performs the title role in "Athalia."

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