



■ ‘*Il borgomastro di Saardam*’ at last year’s Donizetti Festival in Bergamo

durable opera on the same theme with his 1837 *Zar und Zimmermann*. Oddly, this was Donizetti’s second opera covering Peter’s period in disguise—the first is the 1819 *opera buffa* *Il falegname di Livonia*.

It’s minor Donizetti, perhaps, but the score is attractive and nicely performed here. As the disguised Tsar, Giorgio

Caoduro cuts a fine figure (though he is not so tall as Peter’s six feet eight inches) and offers a striking baritone. His Russian friend Pietro Flimann is capably sung by the tenor Juan Francisco Gatell. The main *buffo* role is that of the comic mayor, Wambett, delivered in traditional fashion by Andrea Concetti. With her light soprano offering true, clean tone, Irina Dubrovskaya sings Wambett’s ward Marietta, who eventually—courtesy of the good-natured Tsar—pairs off with Flimann, her *innamorato*. The smaller roles are all well taken and the choral and orchestral forces are perfectly sound. The whole is kept nicely on the move by the conductor Roberto Rizzi Brignoli.

The production is less assured. It’s set in the early 20th century; a title sequence referring to grainy old black-and-white movies leads into a staging that references the Keystone Cops and, in the second act, projects silent film comedies and snippets of Eisenstein onto the backcloth, insistently distracting from the performers on stage. This was the first opera production by the 62-year-old film director Davide Ferrario, and the film seems to swamp the opera. GEORGE HALL

Cendrillon, Massenet

Kim-Lillian Strebel (*Cendrillon*), Katharina Melnikova (*Fairy*), Irina Jae Eun Park (*Noémie*), Anat Czarny (*Le Prince Charmant*), Silvia Regazzo (*Dorothee*), Anja Jung (*Madame de la Haltière*), Roberto Gionfriddo (*Dean of the Faculty*), Jongsoo Yang (*King*), Naoshi Sekiguchi (*Master of Ceremonies*), Juan Orozco (*Pandolfe*), Pascal Hufschmid (*Prime Minister/Herald*), Opern- und Extrachor des Theater Freiburg, Philharmonisches Orchester Freiburg, c. Fabrice Bollon, p. Barbara Mundel and Olga Motta, d. Olga Motta, video director Tiziano Mancini. Naxos DVD 2.110563/Blu-ray NBD0079V (139 minutes)

Massenet’s 1899 bonbon is given a serviceable production in this account from Freiburg (filmed in April and May 2017), though the budget is clearly limited and traditional glamour and magic are a good deal scarcer than desirable.

Barbara Mundel and Olga Motta’s staging instead offers an approach that constantly references circus and

occasionally *commedia dell’arte*: scissors and knives feature prominently, and at times alarmingly. Juan Orozco’s Pandolfe is the ringmaster and knife-thrower at the circus (Cendrillon gets attached to the board, though she never actually gets blades thrown at her); there’s no sense of a domestic environment or a family, however dysfunctional. It’s all rather