

all the notes and was suitably ardent when at ease, but the higher phrases were cautiously and nervously negotiated rather than sung with that intense abandon for which Rubini was so famous. Nicola Alaimo also struggled a little with Ernesto's taxing coloratura. The minor roles were well served, as is usual at La Scala, by Francesco Pittari (Itulbo), Riccardo Fassi (Goffredo) and Marina de Liso (Adele). But the night belonged to Sonya Yoncheva's Imogene, by turns imperious, fragile, scared and furious. A few top notes wobbled, and occasionally diction was clouded, but the voice filled the auditorium thrillingly even in the lowest reaches of the tessitura, and the characterization was mesmerizing, especially in the final Mad Scene. Both orchestra and chorus made positive contributions to the performance, surely and often poetically conducted by Riccardo Frizza. Emilio Sagi's black-and-white, anodyne production does not deserve more than a few words. Locating the action around the time of the work's composition (1827) contributed nothing to the drama; neither did the *Personenregie*—or lack thereof. Only the final scene made an impression: a black veil that initially hung over the stage became an immense, suffocating cape that enveloped the troubled Imogene.

The annual production of the ACCADEMIA, La Scala's young artists' programme, brought back on stage an Italian version of Luigi Cherubini's *Ali Baba, ou Les Quarante Voleurs* (1833) prepared for the theatre in 1963—when it was almost universally panned, according to a sample of reviews in the programme book, despite being sung by the likes of Teresa Stich-Randall, Alfredo Kraus and Wladimiro Ganzarolli. I had never previously encountered this rather comic *tragédie lyrique*, originally in four acts and a prologue, but I assume significant cuts were made. It still seemed too long, but it was hard to tell whether the problem lay with the piece or the performance. Liliana Cavani's production (seen on September 9) framed the action in a modern-day university library, where students became immersed in the story they were reading, but otherwise it offered a picture-postcard and occasionally rather embarrassing version of the Middle East. Coordination between stage and pit went awry more often than it should have, and the orchestra of the Accademia was often too loud under Paolo Carignani's baton. All the young singers displayed notable vocal and dramatic skills, and, even if no one made an indelible impression, the principals—the baritone Paolo Ingrasciotta (Alì Babà), soprano Enkeleda Kamani (Delia), soprano Marika Spadafino (Morgiane), tenor Hun Kim (Nadir) and bass Eugenio Di Lieto (Aboul-Hassan)—all deserve mention.

EMANUELE SENICI

Spoletto

For the last three years, the FESTIVAL DEI DUE MONDI has opened proceedings with one of the Mozart-Da Ponte operas but this year, to inaugurate the 61st festival, the Sovrintendente Giorgio Ferrara and artistic consultant Alessio Vlad jointly agreed to go for the challenge of contemporary music, and to continue with that challenge for the next two years. The first of these was Silvia Colasanti's *Il minotauro*, which was given its premiere in the TEATRO NUOVO GIAN CARLO MENOTTI on June 29. Last year at Spoleto, Colasanti's *Requiem* for the victims of the earthquake that destroyed so many villages in central Italy had made a favourable impression and this led to the commission for this opera.

The 43-year-old Colasanti was born in Rome, where she studied at the Conservatorio Santa Cecilia, before going on to further studies with Fabio Vacchi, Azio Corghi, Pascal Dusapin and Wolfgang Rihm. She feels a particular connection to the music of the Renaissance and Baroque periods. *Il minotauro* is an 80-minute work in ten scenes