

Carmen Ileana Román: High Note

Luciano Pavarotti's legacy

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Ever since the maestro's death on Sept. 6, 2007, the opera world has seen many a tenor declare himself the heir apparent to **Luciano Pavarotti's** legacy.

One of the most outstanding tenors that I have witnessed who is sure to be in the running is one of Luciano Pavarotti's protégé. I am talking about the Italian tenor **Vittorio Grigolo**, who has recently turned in a stunning performance before more than 10,000 people at Chorégies d' Orange in France.

"**La Traviata**" (meaning, "The Fallen One") was inspired by **Alexander Dumas's** romantic novel "La Dame Aux Camellias." The tragic love story owes its enduring popularity to Italy's master melodist, **Giuseppe Verdi**.

The opera is brought to life with the innovative and magnificent voice of the up-and-coming Grigolo, who interpreted the role of Alfredo. His movie-star good looks and strong Bel Canto voice — with the typical Italian clarion — was fascinating to see in one so young. Physically, he is the embodiment of what one imagines as a romantic hero.

When he begins to sing, the audience is treated to the goose-bumping passion that is his voice and makes him someone to notice. His seemingly effortless high notes with beauty of tone, the emotion, exuberance and intuition that he puts into his role makes him stand high above the others.

His portrayal of the naïve and insecure Alfredo was full of depth, blending insight and originality. The challenge of this role is in overcoming the inane immaturity of the character, which Grigolo manages to do very well despite his own young age. His pace of the lively aria "Libiamo, ne'lieti calici" was superb, and the poignant aria at the end of Alfredo's pledge of love to the doomed Violetta shows the solid techniques which will no doubted expand with time.

When Grigolo performed last year at the Washington Opera House with **Lucrezia Borgia** with **Rene Fleming**, I had the privilege to meet him. Unpretentious and charming, this young man shares some of the qualities of his late mentor including the crossover into popular music that catapulted Pavarotti to international stardom. Grigolo's pop opera CD titled "Vittorio" has been the winner of the "European Border Breakers Awards 2007." However, what struck me most was his honesty and candor. When I asked if he wanted to be like Pavarotti he simply answered: "No one can be like Pavarotti; I simply want to be the best Vittorio that I can be.

I look forward with bated anticipation to see the development of the career of this young man, for he has surely passed with flying colors the obligatory rite of passage of the role of Alfredo in "La Traviata."

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