

Uthe stands out in fine rendition of Puccini's 'Edgar'

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The Civic Opera Theater of Kansas City and the **Kansas City Civic Orchestra** presented a fine production of the rarely performed opera "Edgar" by Italian composer Giacomo Puccini at the Folly Theater last weekend.

"Edgar" was Puccini's second opera, written for Milan's Teatro alla Scala in 1889. While it does not approach the name recognition of the composer's more mature works ("Madama Butterfly," "La Bohème" and "Tosca"), "Edgar" contains its fair share of voluptuous melodies.

The semi-staged production featured an onstage orchestra partially hidden from view by sets, a small chorus veiled in monks' robes, and five principal singers. The placement of the orchestra resulted in a better balance between voices and instruments than has been the case in previous productions employing the Folly pit.

The opera was cast well, particularly with regard to the women's roles. Megan King portrayed the pure-hearted shepherdess Fidelia, and sang splendidly with her lovely, light soprano voice.

Stacey Stofferahn Uthe was the standout singer in the role of the lusty and wild Tigrane. The darker coloring made a fine contrast with King's, and her rapid passages were nicely delivered. In her opening piece, though, the low range did not project well.

Bruce Burstert as Frank and Robert Grady in the title role of Edgar generally sang well and with expression. Grady sang with a tight upper range that was not always attractive in Act I, but improved markedly in later acts.

Opera librettos can be convoluted, but that of "Edgar" was downright silly at times, with plot twists and references that make you want to jump up and say "huh?" **The music was wonderful, though, and included a welcome number of marvelous orchestral interludes, played with passion by the Civic Orchestra under the direction of Andy Anderson.**

The Civic Opera and Orchestra are to be commended for taking a chance on a little known work by a major composer and turning into a wonderful evening of summer opera.