

Opera Despite the Plague



Last night I risked death for the sake of Art. Thus, I went out to the Metropolitan Opera. The temperature was mild but the misting rain made the plaza slick and worrisomely wet. The surging mob was huge and fairly frightening to someone on a walker, but the mask-police were even more terrifying. If your mask slipped even a bit below your nose, even for an instant, they were immediately on you. One time-honored entry ramp was closed, the other very far from the bank of elevators that lead to the Gran Tier where we had seats. We thought we'd made a canny decision by getting a seat in the back row and on the aisle where, it turned out, there was too little leg room.

But it was Puccini's TOSCA and the review assured everyone that the production, with Sondra Radvanovsky and Brian Jagde, "caught fire," was "extraordinary," and filled with "crackling energy."

The TOSCA was alright, okay, good enough, but something was missing...Ah, it was Radvanovsky, who was not on stage and the

Met did not announce this other than on a slip of slender paper inserted into the program, something that I did not even notice until I came home. Jagde was magnificent. The set was comfortingly traditional as were the costumes. The conducting was brisk and just about perfect.

But I left after Act One. My rule of thumb is this: If my hair does not catch fire, I leave. If my hair is all aglow, I linger and am among the last to depart. But in truth, I was not comfortable with a mask on my face all that time, my legs were cramped, I was hot, I kept my vest and coat with me and they were heavy on my lap, nothing was relaxed or comfortable.

When I came home, I immediately found my favorite arias from TOSCA online and I heard Radvanovsky and Callas and Pavarotti sing their magnificent hearts out. And, I can always watch the past Metropolitan Opera productions which are live-streamed right into my living room.