



# A Triumphant Staging of 2 Opposing Giants of Opera



By Max González

**I**t was going to be a great concert. You could tell from the beginning. Three great voices and a first-rate orchestra.

Concertone, an institution presided over by Guillermo Martínez, was responsible for this most welcome event.

Giuseppe Verdi and Richard Wagner were in the spotlight as the two representatives of the opera world of the 19th century. Two controversial geniuses. Verdi as the producer of melody, Wagner the revolutionary orchestral "maestro."

Actually, Wagner underestimated Verdi. Once, he belittled his music at a park where an organ grinder (organillero) with a well-dressed monkey was playing the medley "Caro nome" (Dearest Name) from "Rigoletto." Wagner said to his friend, "There is the right place for that Italian music."

In contrast, Verdi was a fan of Wagner. He even traveled to Bayreuth, incognito, for the "Ring Cycle." Wagner never bothered to attend any performances of works by his contemporary.

Verdi came first in this past weekend's program. "Il trovatore" (The Troubadour), one of his most popular works, led things off, with "Stride la Vampa" performed by a powerful chorus directed by Carmen Acevedo, emphasizing "la zingarella" (the gypsy) in a reinforced refrain. Azucena, the gypsy character in "Il trovatore" as portrayed by Russian mezzo-soprano Anita Rachvelishvili, unfolded the tragic event. Her enormity of a voice is too big for such a small place; in spite of an evident vibrato at the start of "Soli or siam" her bravura carried on well dramatically.

Act 2 of "Aida" was the other Verdi work to introduce Rafael Dávila, a Puerto Rican tenor who is setting foot on every world famous opera stage nowadays. His wide range sometimes has a baritone quality. "Celeste Aida" was delivered in a rather unusual fashion with a heroic intonation, distinct from the velvety "bel canto." At the end of the program, as an

encore, he sang the popular song "Genesis" by Vengas Lloveras, which appealed greatly to the public.

After the intermission, the Wagnerian music took over. Wagner's main concern was orchestration; singers came second. He even remodeled the number of instruments and their place at the Bayreuth theater built for him and financed by young King Louis.

"The Rheingold," "Walure," "Götterdämmerung," three selections of Wagner's most difficult dramas, integrated the second section. Wagner, unlike Verdi, wrote his own libretto mostly from the German mythological characters, whereas Verdi brought to his works the currency of literary classics.

Deborah Voigt used to be an overweight, monumental prima donna who transformed herself into a ravishing beauty with a most delightful Wagnerian color of a voice. As Brunhilde, the unfortunate Walkiria in love with

Anita Rachvelishvili



Rafael Dávila

Siefried, she enacted the immolation scene at the end of the Rheingold Trilogy, "Ocaso de los Dioses."

In her long, moving lament, she goes into an outburst of past events in an overwhelming tessitura that brought down the tragic end of the drama.

Perhaps the most touching melodic line ever composed parallel to that of Parsifal and Tristan-Isolde. Wagner gives the whole heavenly message to the grand and magnificent orchestration that director Maximiano Valdés exalted to the orchestra, the real "star" of the evening.

Congratulations Guillermo Martínez, and here's to future concerts like this one under the exclusive Concertone enterprise.