

Fanes – the Musical Poem of the Dolomites Successful premiere at the City Theatre of Bolzano ®

On September 23, the curtain of the City Theatre in Bolzano arose to represent the sad story of the Kingdom of Fanes. The work consisted in two acts, both encompassing a sequence of little musical pieces. These musical fragments were inserted in a large musical structure which made great use of “Leit Motives”. Author of the booklet was Roland Verra, a famous Gardena born author, while the music was composed by Susy Rottonara.

The plot revolved around the forbidden love between the princess of Fanes Dolasila and the enemy prince Ey de Net, in a fancy milieu, where the blind thirst for might of the King of Fanes ruined the apparent idyllic realm.

The stage was essential like the gestures of the characters: it was completely void with a maxi-screen on the background, showing pictures of the Dolomite Mountains. On the left side the Concentus Clivi Choir commented the events as in an ancient Greek tragedy. Notably, its members were dressed in long red tunics. It was not by chance, because the color of the dresses was also the color of the bloody tragedy.

We can split up this really singular work in two components, i.e. in a dramatic and in a poetic one. While the first was in charge to develop the action, the second commented the plot. As previously said, it was the Choir to ponder on the meaning of the events. On the contrary, the action was carried forward, according to the situation in issue, by the ABC Ballet Dancers of Bolzano, by instrumental music and by Rottonara’s singing. We must not forget the *rôle* of the maxi-screen in this context. It showed to the audience that the legend of Fanes was not a private affair, but a structural inheritance of the entire Ladin people and that by its own essence this lore belongs to the land, set of the tale. Then, the audience could see Dolomites crying for Dolasila’s death, weighing on its future, bleeding in the fights.

All the story is presented as dreamt by a little boy, entering at the beginning and at the end of the opera and giving to the work a cyclical development. In the meantime, a voice behind the scene

told the story helping the audience to grasp the main events of the saga. After this *résumé*, the first act works as a prologue in which music reigns sovereign.

The second act, on the contrary, works out the elements introduced in the prologue. Princess Dolasila falls in love with Ey de Net, despite the disapproval of her father, who banishes Ey de Net from the Kingdom of Fanes. In the same time, Dolasila's warlike gifts fade away, just when the enemies of the Fanes aggregate under the leadership of the wicked Spina de Mul. When the king of Fanes realizes that things turn bad, he betrays his own people to serve his previous enemy Spina de Mul. A false step. He dies being transmuted into stone by Spina de Mul. Also princess Dolasila will die fighting; her twin sister Lujanta, brought up underground by the marmots, will take her place. The opera ends with the hope in the promised time, when the Kingdom of Fanes will take revenge of its enemies and goes back to the ancient might.

The absolute protagonist of this event was Susy Rottonara, who was able to shape her singing according to the events, exhibiting a voice sometimes dark in a late-straussean way, sometimes light and dazzling. In any case, mastering a fine and articulate vocality, without useless artifices.

Rottonara's music made no use of folk songs, aiming to characterize with minimalistic gestures the supposed elementary tunes of Fanes' people. The orchestration was by Dario Tosolini and Roberto di Marino, who preserved from the original score the insistence of wind instruments and percussions, with the strings having an harmonic function. Sometimes, the octaves of the woodwinds acquired a skew character, à la Shostakovich. Maestro Alessandro Arigoni conducted the Orchestra Filarmonica Italiana, perhaps with excessive softness disregarding a more incisive and carved sound.

Verra's verses were recited in Italian or Ladin (with subtitles) by a voice behind the scenes.

Any character was mute but Susy Rottonara, as invisible voices spoke for the actors.

Patrizia Binco envisaged a fine choreography, suited to the atmosphere of the legend. Finally, the costumes, created by the Lia

Culturala Fanes, were deliberately naif to reproduce the simplicity of Fanes' people and of popular theatre.

The event was entirely successful, with the protagonist deeply moved.

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