

An Evening with Patricia Racette

By Robert F. Adams / Special to CASA

PRODUCED BY OPERA SANTA BARBARA, Patricia Racette came to the Granada on Sunday, November 21st to sing arias and duets for a gala concert performance. Well-attended, the interest in seeing famed soprano Patricia Racette was keen. After all, the reviews were sensational when she performed as Cio-Cio in the late film director Anthony Minghella's acclaimed London production of *Madama Butterfly*.

Opening the concert was a performance of Richard Wagner's overture from *The Flying Dutchman* (*Der fliegende Holländer*). Maestro Ryvkin weaved the complex themes of this music to its soaring crescendos, deftly handling the tempo transitions played by the committed orchestra.

Ms. Racette arrived onstage to thunderous welcoming applause and provided an appealing aria "L'altra notte in fondo al mare" from *Mefistofle*. A dramatic interpretation

of a piece describing emotional turmoil, she captured the stirring moments beautifully with her tonally focused voice.

Ms. Racette was joined by delightful and glamorous up-and-coming mezzo-soprano Daniela Mack (along with Ms. Racette, she is a graduate of the famed *Merola Program* at the San Francisco Opera). Ms. Mack sang a difficult piece from Rossini's *L'Italiana in Algeri*, handling vocal and acting transitions exquisitely, delighting the crowd. She is going on to star in the same opera at the Opéra National de Bordeaux in early 2011.

The evening was composed of back and forth arias, duets and solo pieces, as the performers shared the stage with the music selections. Highlights in the first part of the concert included Ms. Racette's interpretation of an aria from Verdi's *Il Trovatore*, buoyant and joyful. A duet with Ms. Racette and Ms. Mack from the familiar French Opera *Lakme* was a treat. But the real thrill came with Ms. Racette singing the climactic aria from

Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*. Her voice and acting carried a piercing emotional resonance.

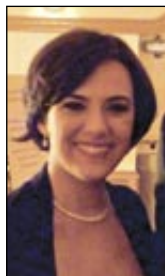
After intermission, high moments included Ms. Mack's performance of a humorous song from Leonard Bernstein's *Trouble in Tahiti*. Ms. Racette sang an enticing solo from Puccini's *Tosca*, followed with *Song to the Moon* from Dvorak's *Rusalka*. The grand finale from Ms. Racette was a powerful selection from a more contemporary opera, Menotti's Pulitzer Prize winning *The Consul*. The audience was provided a glimpse of the important work that Ms. Racette has accomplished with newer composers, who tend to highlight current perspectives in their works.

Furthermore, Ms. Racette will be receiving a major opera award alongside opera superstars Jonas Kauffman, conductor Richard Muti, opera luminary bass-baritone Bryn Terfel, and famed Dame Kiri Te Kanawa. Ms. Racette is currently starring in the Met's production of Verdi's *Il Trovatore*. In fact, preliminary rehearsals between the singer and conductor Valéry Ryvkin were held in New York City for this special occasion.

Throughout this enchanting



Patricia Racette and Robert Adams



Daniela Mack,
mezzo-soprano



Patricia Racette

evening of music, the performers were "thrilled" with the acoustics of the Granada Theatre. The patrons and sponsors, staff, and Board of Opera Santa Barbara have every right to be proud of their accomplishment in bringing this level of artistry to local audiences.

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Myron Shapero, Susan Keller, and Michael Towbes