

# La Nación, 13 June 2014

---

By Jorge Aráoz Badí

## Truly Faulknerian Atmosphere

Our opinion: Excellent

Interpreting the components of literature, such as that of William Faulkner, through visual media and lyrically-driven sound is in itself a creative exploit. Faulkner's precise, unadorned and strict prose, his clear, poetic images and often cold and direct realism, leave almost no space for nuance, and can push the fantasies of a writer-adaptor to work in another genre. Albert Camus tried transforming "Requiem for a Nun" into a play with rather dubious results.

Such is not the case for Canadian Matthew Jocelyn, the director of this production, and close artistic collaborator of Strasnoy's. At no time in his adaptation does he undermine Faulkner's writing, nor does he omit any of the essential information contained in the novel as so often occurs in the relationship between original source and operatic libretto. His clear and truly inspired staging manages to reveal the outpouring of tormented passions while at the same time maintaining a high level of refinement, and uses to the fullest the possibilities of opera and its vast emotional arsenal.

On Tuesday, in the Teatro Colón, readers of the American writer must have noticed that the stage seemed to breathe within a truly Faulknerian atmosphere. Clearly Jocelyn appears as the central perpetrator of this accomplishment. But the Argentine Oscar Strasnoy is the undisputed father of this memorable experience, as he successfully engages the audience with everything that an opera has to offer, this genre that speaks to all the senses and leaves no-one indifferent.

This operatic maturity of Strasnoy (which seems amazing for such a young composer) is manifest in the convivial, accessible relationship he establishes with the audience, as it is in the unclassifiable score, with its comfortable yet remarkably expressive music. The impeccable orchestration makes no attempt to overtly illustrate the extreme morbid or neurotic emotional states. Rather, the orchestra serves as a point of contrast, a shadow to the light, or a meditation to underscore an outburst of hysteria in the text.

The Argentine conductor Christian Baldini was particularly scrupulous, clear and thorough, communicating the enjoyment of a score full of nuances, and its perfect marriage with the staging. He got a performance of a very high quality and remarkable transparency from the orchestra, with a wonderful presence from the brass and percussion sections.

There were five principal soloists all of whom combined great voices and outstanding acting performances: Siphine McKenzie as Nancy, the sober, dignified maid; James Johnson as Gavin; Brett Polegato as Gowan and Cristian De Marco as the Governor. As for Jennifer Holloway who played Temple Drake, she is the true star of the production, with her splendid musical performance and her genuine dramatic sense. But everything is in tune in this production: the sober set, meticulous

lighting design, discreetly tasteful costumes by Aníbal Lápiz and even an intelligent translation of the text, thanks to Monica Zaionz.

A final and highly-deserved nod to the chorus and its director, Miguel Martinez, which throughout the whole "Requiem", as envisaged by Strasnoy, evokes the role of a Greek chorus, an impetus for action and reflection.

Original article: <http://www.lanacion.com.ar/1700765-consumado-clima-faulkner>