



Lesley Garrett and Steven Page in Don Giovanni at the Coliseum

PHOTOGRAPH: DOUGLAS JEFFERY

ters — his treatment of the problematic finale, economising on the tempo changes and avoiding the structural risks, is more for effect than for real.

Coliseum

Tom Sutcliffe

Don Giovanni

THERE are two catches, if you're producing the Mozart/Da Ponte operas: familiarity and the fun quotient. Both take over in Jonathan Miller's Don

Giovanni, where the prevailing concern (I feel) was a sexy relishable Don.

Miller's opera productions, for all his brainy reputation, have mostly aimed at brawn — that is, entertainment and theatricality with few pretensions. He did not make a sharp-edged Don Giovanni. But it's an appealing, accessible, rather homely version which the public can safely flock to, and which ENO can play another 18 times before the season ends in June.

Things weren't helped by the appearance of American so-

prano Elizabeth Hynes as Donna Elvira. Ms Hynes, far from being set to pursue the Don like a frenzy on her first entrance, took in the entire Coliseum audience with a friendly smile as if to say, "Well, I'm here, and this is it." Whatever it was, it had little to do with the Miller staging which Karen Stone was reviving for the second time.

Hynes's Elvira sang with impact if insufficient focus, but created a sense of being in another production altogether. All those ham gestures and that meaningful acting out of the rests in her first aria made an Elvira just too camp. And the scream when she met the stone guest at the end was positively polite and ladylike.

The main virtue in this ENO Giovanni is the emphasis on ensemble. Philip Prowse's pirouetting ruins seldom keep the energy of scenes tight, so it's up to the performers who mostly work at the front of the stage. Words are clear: "The highest common factor is the girl who's still intacta . . ." — Leporello's line gets a good laugh, and the Holdens translation is a hard-working attempt to modernise the language without committing too many solecisms. However, period sexy jokes like the Don's "I would spend all for your satisfaction" to Donna Anna fall flat.

With four strong principal performances, the production will probably get livelier as it works in. Steven Page's idio-

syncratic singing has grown to fill the house, and his acting has persuasive style and egocentric flair. Richard Van Allan's veteran Leporello is immaculately crafted, full of business I don't recall from Miller's original — such as his continuing intrusion in the initial action between Anna and Giovanni (which takes some of the fun out of the mimed serenading of Elvira in the second act).

Rita Cullis has stature and a thrilling timbre, though she should command her scenes more aggressively. And Lesley Garrett is a spunky Zerlina, full of bubble and well tuned. Jane Glover's conducting is energetic and sensible. What the opera really wants, though, is class, a feeling that precision matters, that things are on the edge.

St Luke's, Chelsea

Frank Barker

Pärt's Passion

PREDICTING who might be the next cult figure in contemporary music is a tricky business. Who would have thought, for instance, that such status would come the way of Arvo Pärt, the Estonian exile, all of whose works are inspired by his religious faith, most of them

Sutcliffe on Giovanni

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