**Don Pasquale review – Hurn Court Opera**

**Performances:**

Tuesday, 12 April, Regent Centre, Christchurch

Thursday, 14 April, Blackledge Theatre, Godolphin School, Salisbury

Full cast and creative team details, and photo captions follow this review

**Review by Philip Blake-Jones, baritone and Artistic Director of London Festival Opera & Opera Interludes**

Hurn Court Opera gives performance opportunities to young opera singers providing valuable experience at the start of a professional career. The company also holds an annual singing competition and then features the winners and finalists in their productions.

Their impressive *Dido and Aeneas* performed in Salisbury and Bournemouth in 2021 was followed last week by performances of Donizetti’s comic opera *Don Pasquale* at the Regent Centre, Christchurch and the Blackledge Theatre in Salisbury.

The production transported us to a stylish and fun 1950s’ *Roman Holiday* setting, and the company created a thoroughly Italian atmosphere in the middle of southern England. The musical style and excellent Italian pronunciation were admirable and made for a most enjoyable evening at the opera. There was some fine singing. It was hard to believe that the soprano, Miku Yasukawa, had never appeared in an opera before. Her Norina had charm and a natural comic timing, and she displayed dazzling coloratura and impressive top notes. Her lover, Ernesto, was the tenor Chris Mosz, who is in his final year at the Royal College of Music in London. This is certainly a voice to watch with a rare elegance of tone and wide range that would be perfect for Rossini and Mozart roles in particular, which can be a challenge to cast. Donizetti gives us impressive duets throughout the opera and Malatesta and Don Pasquale were particularly well-matched and received a deserved encore for the Act III duo ‘Cheti, cheti immantinente’ where they both displayed virtuoso buffo style. Particularly charming was the ‘Nocturn’ duet ‘Tornami a dir che m’ami’ for Norina and Ernesto also in Act III. Thomas Chenhall (Malatesta) has a powerful stage presence and honey-toned baritone, and Louis Hurst was superb as Pasquale with excellent projection, a strong tone and he also brought a pathos to the title role, resulting in some sympathy for the poor Don, who is tricked and pays the price so badly through the prospect of romance. Though he did appear to find happiness with his devoted servant in the end (a character part excellently played by Madeline Robinson).

Lynton Atkinson, the Artistic Director of the company, conducted a perfectly formed chamber orchestra and accompanied the singers seamlessly throughout. The production, which brought out so much humour as well as romance, was directed by Joy Robinson. The quartet of young soloists (Daniel Bell, Adam Brown, Olivia Carstairs and Madeline Robinson) who sang the choruses deserve a mention for their beautiful ensemble and strong presence. The audience gasped at the reveal of the delightful fairy-lit Act III garden scene. Set design was Michael Hart and costumes Sue Grove.

Philip Blake-Jones

**Cast**

Don Pasquale    [Louis Hurst](https://www.louishurst.com/)

Ernesto    [Chris Mosz](https://www.chrismosz.com/)

Norina    [Miku Yasukawa](https://www.mikuyasukawa.com/en/index.html)

Dr Malatesta    Thomas Chenhall

**Creative team**

Director [Joy Robinson](https://www.wessexsolosingers.com/joy-robinson)

Musical Director [Lynton Atkinson](https://www.hurncourtopera.org/artistic-director)

Sets Michael Hart

**Photo captions:**

Miku Yasukawa as Norina in Hurn Court Opera’s production of Donizetti’s *Don Pasquale*

Miku Yasukawa as Norina and Thomas Chenhall as Malatesta in Hurn Court Opera’s production of Donizetti’s *Don Pasquale*

Miku Yasukawa as Norina and Chris Mosz as Ernesto in Hurn Court Opera’s production of Donizetti’s *Don Pasquale*

Chorus (Madeline Robinson, Daniel Bell Gray, Adam Brown and Olivia Carstairs) in Hurn Court Opera’s production of Donizetti’s *Don Pasquale*

Adam Brown as the Notary and Thomas Chenhall as Malatesta in Hurn Court Opera’s production of Donizetti’s *Don Pasquale*

Photo credit (all): Ash Mills

**Hurn Court Opera was set up in 2017 to provide quality performance opportunities to emerging young singers. Under Artistic Director Lynton Atkinson and President Sir Simon Keenlyside, HCO programmes a mix of opera, recitals and public masterclasses, which involve artists at the top of the profession and orchestras comprising experienced professional players.**

For more information please see: [www.hurncourtopera.org](http://www.hurncourtopera.org)

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