



nubile chick in his court. His voice has beautiful resonance in the lower registers but sounded strained at the top, but he's young and has all the charisma needed for this role.

Lilly Papaioannou applied every nuance of her faultless stage instincts and her rich mezzo voice to Maddalena, a small part of huge significance. She oozed sex and intrigue from her first shadowy appearance as the sidekick of the assassin Sparafucile, as he propositions Rigoletto.

This was a well-thought-out production that rose beyond the limitations of the space, deploying the chorus with skill and using every entrance and exit available to powerful dramatic effect.

RJ

Lismore Music Festival

COUNTY WATERFORD, IRELAND

The second year of the Lismore Music Festival, in a beautiful leafy part of west Waterford in Ireland, was if anything even more charmed than the first. The deluge will come, no doubt, but this year the place basked in Mediterranean temperatures (until the interval) to complement the tapassy pre-show grub and Sevillian flavour of Mozart's **Don Giovanni**.

As last year, the opera took place in the stable yard of Lismore Castle. Dieter Kaegi, usually an implacable Swiss modernist director, again showed his mellow side with a crowd-pleasing production that caused a touch of delighted outrage by way of a few bold words and contemporary dress, along with this year's momentous *coup de théâtre*: a lovely horse (equipped with earplugs) for Zerlina's entrance.

But nothing Kaegi does is stupid, and nor was this: fast and furious, done with terrific energy and edited for impetus, with Italian arias and Kerry profanities for the recitatives, the humour intentionally broad and with a saturnine villain of *Murder in the Red Barn* proportions at its centre (despite the usual lack of an identifiable crime).

Things had been relocated to Ireland, with the Don (Andrew Ashwin) an Ascendancy toff taking unpardonable liberties with colleens of all classes, including a Zerlina who seemed to have emerged from *My Big Fat Knacker Wedding*.

After a scratchy overture from David Adams's eight-piece LMF Chamber Orchestra, whose nature as klezmer band had been wisely rethought (but was still a bit sax-heavy), things evened out and muddled along until Cara O'Sullivan (Anna) set a fire with 'Or sai': a note of real desperation and passion, and sung with complete commitment.

A series of nice touches, later: Zerlina wrapping Masetto round her finger with 'Batti, batti', Giovanni's serenade bringing girls to the windows like moths to a flame, Anthony Kearns's beautifully-spun 'Il mio tesoro', a moment of still beauty in the turmoil. A lot of good energy here thanks to a distinguished cast (Fiona Murphy as derided Elvira and John Molloy the gobby Leporello).

The band became quite elegant and then fairly scary in the graveyard scene with Cora Venus Lunny's spooky fiddle scrapings and glissandos, but this is still the department that needs most attention.

RT



Robert Davies and Ilona Domnich
in Bury Court's *Rigoletto*