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## Chautauqua Puts on *Lucia of Lammermoor*

By ROBERT W. PLYLER

CHAUTAUQUA - There is some spectacular singing on stage at Chautauqua Opera in this week's production of Donizetti's *Lucia of Lammermoor*.

The story is one of opera's more exotic ones. It takes place in the highlands of Scotland during the Jacobite Uprisings of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Lucy Ashton (Lucia) is a member of the clan which governs Lammermoor. Her family has long feuded with the ruling family of Ravenwood, and shortly before the opera begins, the Ashtons have killed the head of the Ravenswood family and claimed his property.

Walking in the woods, one day, Lucy has been attacked by a wild boar, but was saved by Edgar (Edgardo) the son of the slain governor of Ravenswood. The two have fallen in love and sworn a marriage vow before God, although not in church.

In the meanwhile, Lucy's brother, Henry (Enrico) has become involved in the uprisings, and his side has been defeated. He expects to be executed for his activity, and the only person with

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power enough to save his life is Sir Arthur Bucklaw (Arturo.) He is willing to help, because he loves Lucy.

When Edgar is sent to France on an important mission, Henry intercepts all the letters between the loving couple. He also has forged a letter indicating that Edgar has been unfaithful. Believing her lover unfaithful, and pressured by both her brother and the local clergymen that if she doesn't marry Arthur, she will be responsible for her brother's death, Lucy goes through with the wedding, but on her wedding night, she loses her sanity, murders her new husband, then dies of her misfortunes.

Indira Mahajan displayed a very large and powerful vocal instrument in the role of Lucia. For some reason, she didn't win the hearts of the audience, but her singing was beautifully set in the role. In the first act, there was a bit of metallic timbre in her voice, but by her third act mad scene, she was making beautiful sounds.

Baritone Michael Chioldi was a strong and very effective presence as

brother Henry. Philip Cokorinos had the authoritative bass needed for the role of the clergyman.

Tenor Robert Breault did win the audience's hearts as a heroic Edgar, although the *Braveheart* costume and make up were a downer.

Quick praise for tenor Jeffrey Hallili, the captain of Henry's guard, who has been putting in first-rate small performances all summer.

The production was directed by Marciem Bazell. It was effective, if lacking somewhat in energy. No doubt a hot, muggy evening in a hall which isn't air conditioned deserves the blame for that. Ron Kadri's sets and Don Darnutzer's lighting created a mood of firelight, candlelight and starlight which gave the production much gravity.

The orchestra, conducted by Gil Rose, became a bit too robust at times, but was otherwise praiseworthy.

*Lucia of Lammermoor* was reviewed in dress rehearsal, at the company's request. It will be performed for the public on Friday and Monday in Norton Hall, on the grounds of the Chautauqua Institution.