

A Night at the L.A. Opera

René Pape Recital

By Robert F. Adams / Special to CASA

THE SIMPLE, austere setting of a black Yamaha piano, a wood-grained backdrop, with vocalist and pianist greeted concert-goers as the L.A. Opera hosted internationally acclaimed bass, René Pape at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion. The one night only program was comprised of European romantic songs (lieder) penned by the German composers Schumann, Schubert, and even included poetry by Michelangelo set to music by Hugo Wolf.

René Pape is regarded as the leading lyric bass on the opera world stage. From the former East Germany, Pape experienced the hardships behind the Iron Curtain in Dresden as he trained and then emerged. He is celebrated for his Wagner repertory in the tradition of Hans Hotter, a prominent mid-century German singer. Last fall Pape played the title role in the Met's version of *Boris Godunov*. He holds two Grammys for recordings, and appeared in a celebrated film version of *The Magic Flute*, directed by Kenneth Branagh.

Tall and riveting, Pape's appearance was that of an old-school, elegant master singer in white-tie and tails who could also pass as an imposing European street thug. Pape's range extended from quiet low notes through formidable crescendos, delivered with emotional undercurrents. The songs were resplendently interpreted, demonstrating that his reputation as one of the finest singer-actors in the opera world is richly deserved.

Pape was sensitively accompanied by Brian Zeger on piano. An accomplished musician, teacher, and singer, Zeger has served on the faculty of the Music



Photo by Lenny's Studio

René Pape, leading lyric bass

Academy of the West and currently directs the vocal program at Juilliard. Between the two performers, the recital sustained a musical kaleidoscope of varying colorful passages.

Perhaps as a counterpoint to the profoundly serious evening of lieder-song, Pape sang a deeply felt encore of *Some Enchanted Evening* from South Pacific, which left the audience delighted.

For more information on LA Opera's season of productions and concerts, see www.laopera.com or call (213) 972-8001.

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