

Time Out

New York

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MUSIC

isn't going to do his level best to convince you otherwise—and despite earlier cancellations caused by a vocal ailment, the tenor is indeed scheduled for tonight's performance. In Sondra Radvanovsky's *Roxane*, Domingo is keeping decidedly good company.

★*Darkling*

East 13th Street Theater. Thu 9–Sat 11, Tue 14 at 8pm; \$30–\$45. In an American Opera Projects presentation that stretches the very definition of opera, director Michael Comlish employs a fine quartet of operatic vocalists, speaking actors, electronic soundscapes and string quartet in an absorbing, visually striking adaptation of Anna Rabinowitz's book-length poem, based on fragments of letters by a family sundered by the Holocaust. Just as Rabinowitz's work is constructed as an acrostic on a Thomas Hardy poem, Stefan Weisman's melancholy score explodes themes from a Lee Hoiby song setting of that poem.

L'Elisir d'Amore

Regina Hall. Sat 11 at 7pm, Sun 12 at 4pm; \$17 seniors \$12, teens \$5, children free. The



FACE THE MUSIC

The chorus tunefully commemorates the dead

Darkling

Based on a poem by Anna Rabinowitz. Dir. Michael Comlish. Music by Stefan Weisman. With ensemble cast. *East 13th Street Theater* (see *Off Broadway*).

An unlikely collaboration of Wagner, Sally Bowles and Steven Spielberg could have spawned *Darkling*, a Holocaust chamber opera with satirical cabaret touches. Based on the 2001 poem by Anna Rabinowitz, the multimedia work follows fragmented memories of a Jewish family before and during World War II. Letters and photographs pertaining to the relatives of Rabinowitz's father illustrate these severed bonds between those who escaped to America and those who remained behind. The author constructed her verse as an acrostic to Thomas

Hardy's mournful poem "The Darkling Thrush," which is colorfully set to music for the final song and grafted onto measures in the rest of Stefan Weisman's expressionistic score. The irony of a Holocaust piece sung operatically in English, in all of its Germanic affectation, is hard to ignore, especially when combined with a keening string

quartet perched above the main stage.

A translucent scrim encloses a black box, separating the audience from the actors, whose impassioned performances make up for small voices ranging from soprano to bass-baritone. Prerecorded *parlando*, or operatic speech, mingles with live singing, subtitles and projected film to create a sense of chaos, helplessness and anomie. Director Michael Comlish steers his inventive production with a blend of Brechtian *verfremdungseffekt* ("alienation effect") and abstract, dancerly movement. Although *Darkling*'s vocalists may not match the powerhouse prima donnas of the Met, opera snobs and novices alike won't regret wandering downtown for more-daring fare.—Lisa Quintela

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£3.00



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