

The following was written by Isleworth Baroque's patron, the singer and broadcaster Catherine Bott, to Helena Brown, musical director of IB.

What a resourceful production - you made the best possible use of a quite difficult space, and the set/props/costumes were imaginative, explanatory and witty. Special mention to Satirino's denim pockets, Endymion's fleece hanky, the sparkly umbrellas and the Furies' rolling pins. The Childrens' Dance was lovely, and having everyone in evening dress worked a treat.

Musically it was very intelligently done too, with spoken dialogue, judicious cutting (leaving in all the best bits, I reckon) and the entirely authentic inclusion of a bit of Monteverdi (very well sung), with orchestration devised to use everyone to the full.

I was held up at the BBC in the afternoon, so I missed the prologue, but identifying the gods by their helpful sashes later on, I could hear that I'd missed some good singing. Comparisons are odorous, as Dogberry says (and btw, thank you to the whole cast for making the most of the humour in the work, so much funnier than some of Shakespeare) but there was lovely stylish singing throughout the evening, with sumptuous and sensual blending from Diana and Endymion, and heavenly purity from Calisto and her Echo. Juno's lament was very affecting, and Satirino and a very gutsy Pan gave us a great new double act.

Possibly the greatest achievement of the whole evening was that no-one in the audience (except me, of course!) would have had the faintest idea of what a difficult piece it is to bring off. I had the impression that several people were newcomers to opera, and your production, and performance, must have sent them away determined to come along to the next Isleworth Baroque show. I'm looking forward to that too.

All best wishes, Catherine
28 October 2007