

# RICHARD BONYNGE

## CONDUCTOR

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### STATE OF THE ARTS

#### Ronald McCoy - Opera Australia: *Lakmé*

09 May 2006

With superb singing and glorious sets, Opera Australia's production of Delibes' *Lakmé* is a wonderfully entertaining production that should please traditional opera-going crowds.

**Richard Bonyngé's familiarity with this score shone through in a wonderful lyricism that the singers exploited to their full advantage.** All were well cast in their roles, which resulted in the high standard of singing.

Emma Matthews revelled in the difficult role of Lakmé, which demands moments of both lyricism and coloratura. There are so many audience favourites in this opera, and so expectations are high, but she more than delivered the goods with precise intonation, clear diction and clean lines.

Sally-Anne Russell sang the role of Malika with fine lyricism, which blended well with Matthews in their famous flower duet.

Due to the lack of tenors these days, I think Jaewoo Kim is often cast in roles that are not necessarily best for his voice, but he was well suited to this role and I particularly enjoyed his phrasing and tone, which again balanced well with Matthews.

Graeme Macfarlane as Hadji was imposing, and Tiffany Speight, Taryn Fiebig and Rosemary Gunn looked as if they had stepped right out of *A Passage to India*, much to the delight of the audience. Warwick Fyfe's Frederic was also sung to his usual high standard.

The wonderful Opera Australia chorus successfully created the impression of a bustling India in the opening and the market place. Their fine singing in the opening especially helped to evoke the exotic setting.

The sumptuous music of *Lakmé* was right at home within Mark Thompson's colorful naturalistic sets, totally consistent with the spectacle of the evening.

In the final cut, *Lakmé* – like a lot of operas – has a pretty silly story. However, this performance shows that if you have a fine cast, glorious singing and solid musical and production values, then you also have a wonderful piece of entertainment.

*Colbert Artists Management Inc.*

111 West 57th Street, New York, New York 10019  
(212)757-0782 - Fax (212)541-5179 - West Coast (858)794-0182  
E-mail: NYC Colbert@ColbertArtists.com