

JOSE MARIA CONDEMI  
STAGE DIRECTOR

## SELECTED REVIEW QUOTES

### PROFESSIONAL PRODUCTIONS

#### FAUST (San Francisco Opera, July 2010)

**"INGENIOUS...**the production of Faust now at San Francisco Opera features s direct, ingenious and de-sentimentalized staging by Jose Maria Condem, a young Argentine-born director who makes no mistakes"

David LittleJohn for WALL STREET JOURNAL

**"GENUINE NEW LIFE...**This production directed by Jose Maria Condem brings the piece to genuine new life....it woke me up to the great beauty and dramatic power of the work. Do make it to the Opera House to see for yourself"

John Bender for SAN FRANCISCO CLASSICAL VOICE

**"HIGHLY RECOMMENDED...**Faust has suffered over the decades with productions that have ignored or misunderstood the underlying dramatic strength of the work. There is something about this production that has bewitched and enchanted reviewers in the aggregate. If I were attempted to characterize this collective opinion, it would be: "Wow! the production designer, stage director and singer-actors have found things in this piece that we were not aware were there!"...Condem's reworking of the ending gives us a more satisfactory sense of Divine Justice. I recommend it highly"

William Burnett for OPERA WARHORSES

**"WITTY...**the staging of director Jose Maria Condem hews dexterously to the main points while studding the action with witty asides"

Joshua Kosman for SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE

#### IL TROVATORE (Seattle Opera, February 2010)

**"EMOTIONALLY RESONANT...**it takes a brave company to produce Il Trovatore these days because the opera requires a stage director prepared to take on Verdi's much -lampooned plot...Seattle Opera has assembled a production that was artistically satisfying and consistently entertaining. Director Jose Maria Condem was able to use his imagination in creating a detailed, motivated concept that made particularly effective use of the crowd scenes. Condem gives the singers plenty of opportunities for emotional resonant performances"

Melinda Bargreen for CLASSICAL FM KING

**"WORTH TRAVELLING THE DISTANCE...**Condem is one of the younger generation of operatic stage directors whose work finds the opportunity for interesting innovations in familiar operas even while presenting the story absolutely straight...rather than dismissing the opera's libretto as a string of absurdities to be ignored, Condem has clearly given thought to each line of his text"...it is Condem's direction and the fine singing and acting that makes this Trovatore one worth travelling some distance to see"

William Burnett for OPERA WARHORSES

**ERNANI**  
(Lyric Opera of Chicago, October 2009)

"EXCELLENT...Lyric's new staging by Jose Maria Condemí pointedly reconfirmed Ernani's viability in the repertoire...the characters, as rendered through Piave's adaption of Victor Hugos' Hernani, do not exactly provide opportunity for great interpretative depth but Condemí admirably found a reasonable multi-dimensionality in them"

Mark Thomas Ketterson for OPERA NEWS

"THEATRICAL...Lyric's new Ernani was presented at a level of excellence that few opera companies could afford these days. Jose Maria Condemí's direction was a showing in good taste, precise staging and consummate theatrical flair"

Daniel Lara for OPERA ACTUAL

"A funny thing happened on the way to the final curtain of Lyric Opera of Chicago's new production of "Ernani". At the first intermission, the audience was buzzing, semi-stunned by the convolutions of the story set in 16th-century Spain. By the second intermission, the absurdities of this early Verdi opera and by the final curtain, they no longer mattered. Director Jose Maria Condemí's staging was equally deft, managing to keep both principals and chorus on the move without resorting to stale stage business"

Wynne Delacoma for MUSICAL AMERICA

"ROUSING...Jose Maria Condemí's staging is traditional, conservative and respectful of the drama. Visually it's a sumptuous show. Scott Marr has created a Spanish Renaissance fashion. The lavish sets, lit by Duane Schuler, include towering, ornately decorated, Moorish-style castle walls, carved mahogany doors and a serpentine column set on a steeply raked parquet floor."

John von Rhein for CHICAGO TRIBUNE

"The young Argentinean-born director Jose Maria Condemí in his first new production at Lyric understands the motivations of these melodramatic characters and is able to take them seriously while having some fun with them."

Andrew Patner for CHICAGO SUN TIMES

"ADMIRABLE...Director Jose Maria Condemí bravely took Piave's creaky libretto at face value and deftly mitigated many of the staging pitfalls, drawing admirable acting from his singers."

Lawrence A. Johnson for CHICAGO CLASSICAL REVIEW

"Lyric Opera has done immeasurable service to the cause of Early Verdi by creating a stylish new production of "Ernani". Stage director Jose Maria Condemí hit the ground running with his intelligent staging. The Lyric's production was an unqualified success musically, dramatically, and visually.

William Burnett for OPERA WARHORSES

**AINADAMAR**  
(Cincinnati Opera, July 2009)

"RIVETING...powerful, haunting and exquisitely crafted, Cincinnati Opera presented a new concept directed by Jose Maria Condemí. It was an artistic triumph and one of the most riveting musical experiences this city has ever witnessed"

Janelle Gelfand for CINCINNATI ENQUIRER

"TOUCHING DRAMA....Ainadamar was a huge musical and dramatic success. A new production gave director Jose Maria Condemí a chance to work closely with his singers and create a show of visual beauty, grace and touching drama"

Charles Parsons for AMERICAN RECORD GUIDE

**TOSCA**  
**(San Francisco Opera, June 2009)**

**"PURE POWER...**San Francisco Opera's latest production stressed pure energy and power both in its singing and acting...the differences come largely in the small touches and decisions notable those made by talented stage director Jose Maria Condemì"

**Michael Vaughn for THE OPERA CRITIC**

**"STRIKING...** Condemì proved that a director can follow all of Puccini's explicit stage directions and still make interesting innovations in the stage action...he approaches staging as do several contemporary stage directors, such as David McVicar. Each member of the chorus or "extra" in a non-speaking role becomes a personality with an individual story. But in "Tosca" it is absolutely crucial to be innovative only where one is not obtrusive on the opera's traditions. Condemì's "Tosca", as was his Chicago "Tristan", was a brilliant rethinking of how to move people around these familiar settings."

**William Burnett for OPERA WARHORSES**

**TRISTAN UND ISOLDE**  
**(Lyric Opera Chicago, January 2009)**

**"RESPLENDENT....**Lyric Opera cogently reaffirmed the masterwork's supremacy with a visually resplendent mounting...both principals made the deepest impression in the creation of palpable erotic chemistry...their physical interaction was so tenderly intimate that one almost felt like a voyeur"

**Mark Thomas Ketterson for OPERA NEWS**

**"SOARING...**There are reasons they call it grand opera and some of the best were on display when Lyric Opera of Chicago opened its mesmerizing production of Tristan und Isolde....it can be a static opera but stage director Jose Maria Condemì deployed the singers well"

**Wynne Delacoma for CHICAGO SUN TIMES**

**"EXCEPTIONALLY MOVING...**the combined elements produced a fine synergy that was as near as Gesamtkunstwerk as one might hope to experience anywhere...it is laudable to see Wagner's stage directions honored...attention to details give this production a firm sense of integrity"

**James L. Zychowics for SEEN AND HEARD INTERNATIONAL**

**"ELECTRIFYING...**by the end of the first act words like "powerful", "moving" and "intense" were in the lips of Lyric Opera of Chicago's patrons. At the end of the night, an even more select vocabulary had emerged: "monumental", "unforgettable" and even "historic ...few experiences in the opera rival a great Tristan und Isolde. Producing such a performance requires not only flawless singing but also true commitment on the part of the cast to psychological nuanced portrayals of their characters. Lyric Opera of Chicago showcased a cast that excelled in both areas and deserved all the superlatives lauded from the crowd after one of the most electrifying nights in Lyric's recent history"

**Paul Wooley for CONCERTONET.COM**

**ORFEO ED EURIDICE**  
**(West Bay Opera, February 2009)**

**‘Worth the wait...**the WBO audience had every reason to cheer. The care and imagination that director Jose Maria Condemì lavished on their ostensibly low-budget production made for a marvelous evening of theater and music. The production managed to balance Gluck’s rather static musical tableaux with constant movement”

**Jason Victor Serinus for OPERA NEWS**

**“AIMING FOR THE STARS....**even in these tough economic times, West Bay Opera presented a well-conceived production that caught much of the radiant splendor of Gluck’s masterpiece....Condemì’s staging abandons fussy period trappings in favor of a clean contemporary setting...what registered on Condemì’s staging was characterization and dramatic focus as well as flashes of wit”

**Georgia Rowe for SAN FRANCISCO CLASSICAL VOICE**

**DIE ZAUBERFLÖTE**  
**(Opera San Jose, April 2008)**

**“SPECTACULAR...**Fly to the California Theater as Opera San Jose is presenting a production of The Magic Flute that is big fun, deeply cast, stunning to look and sophisticated in whole new ways for this company...the key to the production if director Jose Maria Condemì, who has universalized the story by layering in an Asian element...the final scene is a spangled fairy tale come to life”

**Richard Scheinin for SAN JOSE MERCURY NEWS**

**“LAVISHLY STAGED...**Opera San Jose continues to enthrall audiences with a completely rethought and lavishly stage production. The concept that director Jose Maria Condemì brought to life was a mixture of Asian influences ranging from Japanese Noh play to giant puppets and masks...it all operated on several levels with an opening night audience appreciating the voices on display as much as the intricate staging”

**Mort Levine for MILPITAS POST**

**LA BOHÈME**  
**(Seattle Opera, May 2007)**

**“FLAWLESS....**Seattle Opera’s handsome, impressively crafted La Bohème. Director Jose Maria Condemì gives us the piece straight...this production expertly realized some many of those moments that make the opera beloved, living an breathing as a Bohème ought do to...it left me not only thoroughly engaged but freshly amazed at what a supreme example of music-theater this is”

**Gavin Borchert for SEATTLE WEEKLY**

**“GEM OF LA BOHÈME AT SEATTLE OPERA...**is such a well-crafted opera that in can survive almost any production but Seattle Opera isn’t serving just any production. The show is a gem in which handsome sets, believable staging and careful casting all combine to great effect....the action speeds along at an effortlessly natural pace, thanks to director Jose Maria Condemì. He has done a brilliant job at sorting out an impossible melee of street vendors and all the Bohemians in Act II. Condemì keeps the acting natural, perfectly attuned to both music and libretto...remember to bring your hankies, this one has a deathbed scene to wring the heart”

**Melinda Bargreen for SEATTLE TIMES**

**“THIS BOHÈME IS FRESH AND WARM AND TRUE TO PUCCINI...**Seattle Opera’s production is old-fashioned in style and intentions. It is also splendid and immensely satisfying. Jose Maria Condemì’s staging works in defining character, creating tableaux and keeping the action moving. I suppose this is all predictable but the question is whether a production is fresh and warm. This one is”

**R.M Campbell for SEATTLE POST- INTELLIGENCER**

**"SEATTLE'S DEFT BOHEMIAN RHAPSODY...**Seattle Opera's production is solidly grounded and sincere. Gimmicks and fussiness are absent, allowing Puccini to work his sure magic. The second act epitomizes a director's challenge. Director Jose Maria Condemi is sensitive and alert to Puccinian detail"

Thomas May for CROSSCUT SEATTLE

**"ALL THE RIGHT NOTES...**Under the able direction of Jose Maria Condemi, the singers have scrupulously developed their characters and relationships so that every moment builds on the one before it in an production that is emotionally gratifying and anything by stale"

Maggie Larrick for QUEEN ANNE NEWS

**"MASTERFUL...** the stage action is managed in masterful fashion by director Jose Maria Condemi...he never puts a foot wrong, whether in the intimate scenes of the outer acts or in elucidating the tumultuous crush of persons that congregate in Act II"

Bernard Jacobson for SEEN AND HEARD INTERNATIONAL

**LUISA MILLER**  
**(Canadian Opera Company-April 2007)**

**"VERDI'S LUISA NOT BETRAYED...**a clear operatic production where the director, conductor, singers and design all work towards a common purpose: telling a good story"

John Terauds for TORONTO STAR

**"STRONG...**the Canadian Opera Company production of Luisa Miller is strong...young argentinian director Jose Maria Condemi uses economy for strength in storytelling"

Paula Citron for CLASSICAL 96.3 FM

**"A DARING, MUST-SEE EXPERIENCE....**Director Jose Maria Condemi makes postmodernizing Verdi's 1849 love story look easy. The spectacle has an absorbing sheen and wherever the production isn't provocative, it's still spot on"

John Keillor for NATIONAL POST TORONTO

**MARIA PADILLA**  
**(Minnesota Opera- March 2005)**

**"EMERGING TALENT ...**Minnesota Opera is presenting a major emerging talent in director Jose Maria Condemi, a thoughtful man whose creative vision is at the service of opera and audience"

William Randall for MINNEAPOLIS/SAINT PAUL MAGAZINE

**"MINNESOTA OPERA SHINES ...**Maria Padilla may be rarely performed but it's equally rare to have a creative team bring its vision to life with such success as this"

Rob Hubbard for PIONEER PRESS

**"DELECTABLE RARITY ...**Jose Maria Condemi's direction was efficient and particularly effective in the handling of the large chorus, which had and ominously military precision of movement, all contributing to a thoroughly enjoyable evening"

Heidi Waleson for the WALL STREET JOURNAL

**"OPERATIC TREASURE...**Minnesota Opera has found operatic treasure with its new production of Donizetti's *Maria Padilla*...Stage director Jose Maria Condemi's movement told the story clearly"

John Koopman for OPERA NEWS

**DON GIOVANNI**  
**(Cincinnati Opera-July 2004)**

**"STUNNING"** ... the production, directed by Jose Maria Condemí, made excellent use of the stage: people appeared and disappeared through a series of trap doors. Playing spaces were well defined and the atmosphere was appropriately dark and foreboding. There were marvelous details"

**Brian Kellow for OPERA NEWS**

**"SUPERB"** ...Director Condemí's staging never overdoes the slapstick and he inserts clever stage business that heightens the character's personalities. It all moves gracefully and is a successful mesh of music and movement"

**Anne Arenstein for CITYBEAT**

**"ARRESTING.....**the Mozart opera, directed here by Jose Maria Condemí, was visually arresting, proceeded with the right kind of ambiguous tone (despite the comic elements, this is, after all, a tale of callous and murderous amorality) and featured a strong cast that impressed for its individual strengths and its sense of ensemble

**Wayne Gooding for OPERA CANADA**

**COSI FAN TUTTE**  
**(San Francisco Opera-June 2005)**

**"THIS TIME THEY GOT IT RIGHT ...** the San Francisco Opera Summer reprise of last fall's production of Cosí fan Tutte opened with changes in personnel that turned the trick...the four principals who returned from last time all seemed much surer and in command than before, more interesting, more nuanced...the production went smoothly this time under the direction of Jose Maria Condemí"

**Robert Commanday for SAN FRANCISCO CLASSICAL VOICE**

**"THIS COSÍ DOES NOT CHEAT ...**Jose Maria Condemí's revival continues to illuminate this familiar work with the help of just a few well-chosen directorial conceits, balancing the demands of comedy and seriousness"

**Joshua Kosman for SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE**

**ROMÉO ET JULIETTE**  
**(Festival Opera- August 2004)**

**"COMPELLING ...**five years ago, Jose Maria Condemí was an apprentice stage director in the San Francisco Opera Merola Program. Today, he is one of the most promising and impressive directors in all opera. Condemí's production of Roméo et Juliette would be a fine accomplishment anywhere but here in Walnut Creek it's a virtual miracle. Condemí's job was to produce an opera on a near-zero budget; out of that challenge came staging that was contemporary, compelling and consistently supportive of the work itself. In other word, a Regieoper on behalf of the composer, the music, and the audience, not for the director's own greater glory. It was all fluent, credible and thoughtful. Throughout the evening Condemí presented a consistently gripping and satisfying production"

**Janos Gereben, for OAKLAND POST**

**"CLEVERLY PRESENTED ...**if ever there was a testament to the virtues of making do, it's the surprisingly effective production of Roméo and Juliette being presented by Festival Opera. Condemí deployed his players with understated cunning."

**Joshua Kosman for SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE**

**SUSANNAH**  
**(Festival Opera- August 2002)**

**"POWERFUL ...**Festival Opera's powerful new production boasts the same musical and dramatic assurance that enlivened so many of its earlier offerings...Saturday night's performance was a keeper, marked by first-rate singing, starkly evocative stage direction by Jose Maria Condemi and strong conducting...the production wisely underscores the plain-spokenness of Floyd's writing to create an effect of rough-hewn eloquence..."

**Joshua Kosman for the SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE**

**"RIVETING...**Carlisle Floyd surely would be ecstatic with the riveting production of his masterpiece at Festival Opera...The show benefited from excellent direction...Jose Maria Condemi's production built on Floyd's taut pacing. Condemi has marvelous cinematic eye, especially useful in crowd scenes and his use of slow motion movement to shift focus is effective and wholly in keeping with the music. He also has done excellent work with the actors; the singers are emotionally committed and clearly thinking what's going on and they actually listen to each other"

**Michael Zwiebach for SAN FRANCISCO CLASSICAL VOICE**

**YOUNG ARTISTS TRAINING PRODUCTIONS**

**LA CENERENTOLA**  
**(Merola Opera Program, July 2007)**

**"CENERENTOLA BEFITS MEROLA'S GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY....**what training program? The young artists produced a near-flawless, thoroughly professional production. There have been many notable Merola productions in the past but I cannot remember one with more all-around excellence, quite without a weak link. Director Jose Maria Condemi was the self-effacing, efficient stage director"

**Janos Gereben for SAN FRANCISCO EXAMINER**

**"A FAIRY-TALE CINDERELLA...**Jose Maria Condemi's direction often coordinated the action with the phrasing of the music...he let the personalities of the singers and their acting come through while occasionally obtruding his own work"

**John Bender for SAN FRANCISCO CLASSICAL VOICE**

**COSI FAN TUTTE**  
**(Seattle Opera YAP- April 2004)**

**"YOUNG TALENT STRONG WITH ENSEMBLE ENERGY ...**one feels the singers working genuinely with one another. They actually act as well as sing, moving in ways that trained actors do but not always singers....everything made sense, aided by Jose Maria Condemi's staging. Condemi has a sprightly hand, at once exuberant and extravagant"

**R.M Campbell for the SEATTLE POST INTELLIGENCER**

**"Director Jose Maria Condemi kept the comedy light on its feet with pitch perfect characterizations wedded to clever staging....** the company's emphasis on credible acting was evident"

**Maggie Larrick for the QUEEN ANNE NEWS**

**LA BOHÈME**  
**(Merola Opera Program, July 2002)**

**"DAZZLING....**an operatic performance as wondrously vibrant and moving as Saturday's La Bohème does more than just provide a grand night of musical theater. It gives you hope for the future. The singing was beautiful...yet there was something else at work here, a sense of the importance of making opera into more than simply vocal display. One got the feeling that these singers understood what it meant to inhabit a role fully and to use their vocal abilities toward dramatic ends. Part of that was due to the production, a sumptuously detailed and imaginative staging directed by Jose Maria Condemi. "

**Joshua Kosman for the SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE**

**"A WINNING BOHÈME ...**Few things in theatrical life are as certain as the electric effect of a

well-managed production of La Bohème. The Merola Opera Program proved that again on Saturday night. Director Jose Maria Condemi placed the production in the Paris of the 1960's, a perfect setting for the idealistic artists like Marcello and Rodolfo. Condemi had several excellent staging ideas; the play-fight in Act IV was delightful; his best idea was his conception of the Latin Quarter crowd scene in Act II...using stop-action poses, slow motion movement and broad stroke lighting changes, Condemi ingeniously created separated spaces when he needed to"

**Michael Zwiebach for SAN FRANCISCO CLASSICAL VOICE**