



# REVIEWS

## Oman, RTÉ NSO/Maloney NCH, Dublin

### ANDREW JOHNSTONE

Applause redoubled when presenter Eileen Dunne congratulated soprano soloist Sandra Oman (right) on her new baby. No one could have guessed that it had been Oman's first performance after barely a month's maternity leave.

Her selections took in arias for two of Mozart's jilted women and Puccini's Mimi – all roles familiar to this firmly established artist. The Duchess Elena's bolero, *Mercè, dilette amiche*, from Verdi's *I vespri siciliani*, was thrown in too.

The Mozart items – Elvira's *Ah! chi mi dice mai*, from *Don Giovanni* and Despina's *In uomini, in soldati*, from *Così fan tutte* – were complementary studies in shrewishness.

The former, shorn of its asides from the Don and Leporello, had a fragmentary and somewhat martial feel. In both, however, Oman conjured up all the requisite spite without concession to focus or fruitiness of tone.

Mimi and Musetta, the principal soprano roles of Puccini's *La bohème*, are so sharply contrasted that few singers tackle both. Oman does, however, and it would be hard to say which one suits her better. On this occasion, her choice of *Mi chiamano Mimi* was endorsed not so much by her characterisation of the demure seamstress as by a full-bodied zenith against which the orchestra had little need of holding back,

Taking their cue from Oman's contributions, the orchestra included the overtures to *Don Giovanni* and *I vespri siciliani*. Additionally (and for the third year running in an RTÉ summer concert), there was the ballet music from Gounod's *Faust* – not merely the announced excerpts, but all seven movements.

This concert was one of many return visits by Gavin Maloney, who was assistant conductor of

the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra from 2004 to 2007. The naturalness of his baton technique, and his readiness to seize each musical moment in the right way, continue to impress.



Sandra Oman.  
Photograph: Cyril Byrne