

# Lucia di Lammermoor

Clonter Opera  
2011



Clonter Opera's summer presentation marked the debut of a new production team, with Clive Timms as conductor and Ashley Dean as director. This performance of *Lucia*, sung in Italian and with stark designs by Cordelia Chisholm, was the most consistently well-sung since I first visited Clonter in 1975. There have been some fine individual performances in that time, but this *Lucia* exemplified what Clonter has always been about: giving singers at the start of their careers the opportunity to learn and act roles on a stage. Jeffery and Anita Lockett, who founded the enterprise on their Cheshire Farm, have seen it progress from an audience sitting on hay-bales to today's splendid 400-seat theatre and dining facilities, and from piano accompaniment to a small orchestra housed in its pit. There are other events there throughout the year.

Sensational would not be an exaggerated description of the Lucia of the Welsh soprano Natalya Romaniw, now in her second year of the opera course at the GSMD and a winner of several competitions including Young Welsh Singer of the Year. She has a strong fulsome tone and sang the mad scene magnificently (a few wild notes easily excusable). She is a talent to note, as many companies already know. The male roles were excitingly sung and portrayed. The Japanese baritone Koji Terada was impressive as the hapless Enrico; a South Korean tenor, Jung Soo Yun, was a fearsome Edgardo; and Adam Smith showed further progress as Arturo. If I were a talent scout I would keep my eye on the soprano Beth Mackay who sang Lucia's companion. Clive Timms, once a regular in the north, conducted with his customary zeal, making the sextet the centrepiece it should be. Welcome back.

The audience was wildly enthusiastic, and no wonder. Looking through the list of those who have learned something at Clonter, you will find many well-known singer on today's British and other opera stages. Keenlyside, Roocroft, Royle - and dozens more like them. ... For this to disappear would be a sad day and a foolish one.