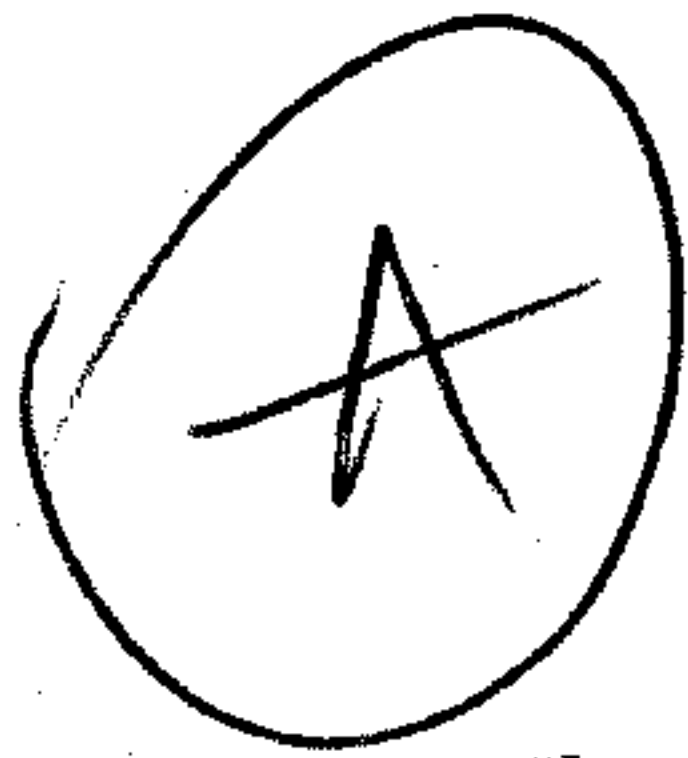


Anna Wostenberg
Broadway
Dr. Sullivan
15 November 2015



*Nice balance
Wostenberg
Great enthusiasm with
your evaluation, yet
great objectivity with
the review.*

The King and I

The production of *The King and I* at Lincoln Center was phenomenal. Kelli

O'Hara played an incredible Anna as did Hoon Lee the King of Siam. From the very beginning I was engaged and my attention didn't really drift or fade, as it sometimes can during Sunday matinee shows. The entire performance was seamless, not a single mistake made. This was refreshing in comparison to the last show we saw, in which Matthew Broderick stumbled over one of his lines. This play was simply on a completely different level than any show I've seen on Broadway. There's something about being at Lincoln Center that creates a whole new vibe about theatre performances. The air seems fresher up there. I'm not just stepping off a crowded Times Square street into a theatre; I'm reveling in the beautiful outside areas of Lincoln Center and welcomed graciously into the theatre which has a much more open concept. It feels so much more upper class. It is wonderful.

*Good
metaphor*

The staging was amazing. I was enamored when the white billowy curtain was released from the ceiling and floated down like a cloud. It really gave the illusion that we were entering a fairy tale or some other world and set the tone of the play very well. It was a very unique way to begin a performance. I loved how the overture began and I could watch the orchestra play. But it was also really cool when the middle of the stage moved over the orchestra pit so that everything was covered except the conductor. The way the stage was utilized was beautiful and choreography of its own. The boat at the beginning broke apart into three separate pieces that were used to create the town of Siam, which was awesome. The pillars

ambient

and the willowy flowers that came down from the ceiling were very cool as well. They transformed the stage so efficiently but also so convincingly throughout the entire play; I really believed that Tuptim and Lun Tha were meeting on the outskirts of the palace. It was a huge stage, but I never felt as though it was so large because it never swallowed the actors. They commanded it so well.

The two stars, Kelli O'Hara and Hoon Lee, clearly stole the show. It can become so mundane for actors to do the same performance day in and day out but I would have thought that this was day one of the performance because it seemed so fresh. The raw emotion present on the King's face when Anna stands up for Tuptim and when she calls him a barbarian was just so believable. It was chilling for the audience because I really felt like Hoon Lee was experiencing those feelings for the very first time. I think it is very difficult to find an actor who can be that convincing every single time. Kelli O'Hara, while she didn't have as many demanding emotions with her character, did an equally stellar job. Her character is such a strong feminist and I adore her for that. There aren't many people, let alone women, who would stand up to a king and demand her own home, especially in the era of *The King and I*.

I questioned, however, if, under today's extreme need to always be politically correct and offend no one, *The King and I* may be perceived a bit racist against the Siamese. Perhaps I am being oversensitive, but it seemed to me as though the Siamese, represented by the king, were portrayed as unintelligent and had a hard time grasping our wiser, Western knowledge. The children couldn't fathom the concept of snow and the King couldn't grasp that he sometimes behaves like a

The 1950s -
remember,
though more
liberal than many
from that era.

barbarian. It seemed to me that the West, Anna, came over to the East, the Siamese, and brought with her all the knowledge that they were lacking, opening up their eyes to the ways of the West, where women are respected and educated. I must remember, however, that this was written in a much less sensitive era. I'm certain that Rodgers and Hammerstein meant no offense when they wrote it, but I couldn't help but notice the trends throughout while I watched the show.

from front

yes

Overall, however, the performance of *The King and I* was stellar. I absolutely recommend it to anyone who appreciates the classical musicals of Rodgers and Hammerstein. It did not disappoint and I was enraptured from the very first second to the last. I could have sat there all evening watching the phenomenal performances that took me away to another time and place. It was so pleasant. Every aspect of the show was so professionally and well done and it was on a completely different caliber than anything I've seen. Kelli O'Hara and Hoon Lee stole the show in their respective roles and it would be a treat for anyone to have the opportunity to see them working together.