

ELAINE ALVAREZ
SOPRANO

Cuban-American soprano Elaine Alvarez burst onto the international opera scene in 2007, making a break-out company debut with her soulful portrayal of Mimi in Puccini's *La bohème* at the Lyric Opera of Chicago. Conducted by Sir Andrew Davis and directed by Renata Scotto, critics were unanimous with praise: "Conveying lyric pathos seems to come as naturally to Alvarez as breathing" (Chicago Tribune).

Characterized by a distinct "buffed bronze soprano" (Opera News), Alvarez has blossomed into a true *spinto d'agilita*, delivering performances rich with "melting, voluminous sound" (Frankfurter Allgemeine), "spectacular agility" (Opera World Magazine), and "a profoundly genuine sentimentality" (Miami Herald).

In June of 2019, Ms. Alvarez made a stunning 11th hour debut as *Aïda* under the baton of legendary Maestro Riccardo Muti, marking her debut with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Elaine previously joined Maestro Muti on tour with the Ravenna Festival Italy and the Orchestra e Coro Maggio Musicale Fiorentino in concert performances of Rossini's *Stabat Mater*.

Other notable engagements have featured Alvarez in numerous role and house debuts of iconic leading ladies including *Tosca* with Choregies d'Orange and Opera de Oviedo; *Kat'a Kabanova* with Boston Lyric Opera; a return to Mimi for Opera National de Bordeaux; a role and house debut for San Diego Opera as *Florencia en el Amazonas*; major Verdi debuts as Elvira in *Ernani*, Hélène in the rarely produced *Jerusalem*, and the title role of *Aïda* under the baton of long-time collaborator Speranza Scappucci for Opera Royal de Wallonie, with a return to ORW for her first foray into the *bel canto* repertoire as Donizetti's infamous Tudor Queen, *Anna Bolena*.

The 2019-2020 COVID-19 affected season featured a return to *Anna Bolena* at the Royal Opera House Muscat on tour with Opera Royal de Wallonie, the title role in *Cecilia Valdez* with the iconic Teatro de la Zarzuela in Madrid, a featured soloist debut with the Sphinx Virtuosi Ensemble of Manuel de Falla's *Siete Canciones Populares* for voice and chamber orchestra as well as cancelled performances as Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni* with Minnesota Opera, Beethoven's *Symphony No 9* with Jacksonville Symphony, and a company debut as *Tosca* for Chautauqua Opera. Engagements for this season and beyond include performances with the Columbus Symphony (cancelled) as well as appearances with Fort Worth Opera, Livermore Valley Opera, and the Jacksonville Symphony.

Alvarez made her professional debut in 2006 as Pamina in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* for Oper Leipzig. She then returned to the company for the following two seasons as a member of their Resident Ensemble, debuting repertoire that would go on to become signature roles for the young soprano, including first performances of Mimi, Violetta in Verdi's *La Traviata*, Donna Anna in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, and a triumphant turn as Magda di Civry in a new production of *La Rondine*.

Since then, Alvarez has gone on to perform at some of the world's leading opera houses including Oper Frankfurt, with celebrated performances of *La rondine* alongside Joseph Calleja, and Mimi in the company revival of *La bohème*; a return to Mimi for Teatro Carlo Felice in Genoa, Virginia Opera, Finger Lakes Opera and Arizona



Opera; Micaela in *Carmen* for Florida Grand Opera as well as the Lyric Opera of Chicago; the title role in Catan's *La Hija de Rappaccini* for Gotham Chamber Opera; Contessa Almaviva in *Le nozze di Figaro* with Opera Cleveland; another turn as Magda in *La rondine* for Lithuania's Pazaislis Music Festival; a new production of *La Traviata* for Theater St. Gallen in Switzerland; La Comtesse de Breuille in the world premiere of Stephen Hartke's *The Greater Good* for Glimmerglass Opera, commercially released by Naxos Records; and a Bayerische Staatsoper debut as Violetta alongside Jonas Kaufmann and Simon Keenlyside. Ms. Alvarez also joined the roster of the Metropolitan Opera understudying the roles of Mimi (2016-2017), (2018-2019) and Antonia in *Les contes d'Hoffmann* (2017-2018).

On the concert platform, Ms. Alvarez made her New York recital debut in 2007 as a Grand Prize Winner of the Marilyn Horne Foundation Competition. She then appeared as a featured performer for the Horne Foundation's Annual Gala Concert at Carnegie Hall in 2010, alongside longtime mentor Warren Jones. Other notable concert credits include Mozart's *Mass in C minor* with the Gewandhaus Orchestra; a debut recital at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. for The Vocal Arts Society; featured guest artist with the New World Symphony; and Soprano Soloist in Vaughan-Williams' *Serenade to Music* and Beethoven's *Symphony No 9* with the Traverse City Symphony. In 2018, Ms. Alvarez joined fellow distinguished Manhattan School of Music alumni for Beethoven's *9th Symphony* in a Centennial Celebration Concert marking the 100th Anniversary of the famed New York City conservatory.

Ms. Alvarez has enjoyed the privilege of collaborating with some of the most distinguished conductors and stage directors working in opera today including Maestros Paolo Arrivabeni, Paul Daniel, Alain Altinoglu, Giampaolo Bisanti, Daniel Oren, Axel Kober, Dean Williamson, Roderick Cox, Pablo Gonzales, Maurizio Barbacini, Joel Revzen, Marc Soustrot, Adam Turner, Keri-Lynn Wilson, Neal Goren, David Angus, Joseph Mechavich, and Luciano Acocella; and Directors Jonathan Miller, Jean-Louis Grinda, Stefano Mazzonis di Pralafiera, Peter Konwitschny, Renaud Doucet, Rebecca Taichman, Tim Albery, Arnaud Bernard, Nadine Duffaut, Peter Kazaras, Chas Rader-Shieber, Candace Evans, Sam Helfrich, and Frank Corsaro, among others.

Born in Miami, Florida, Ms. Alvarez began her musical studies as a child with her mother Yasmin, a distinguished classical music professor trained in her native Cuba. It was in those early years that Alvarez's love of classical music would be nurtured and encouraged by her family and the wonderful teachers and mentors who came into her life, most especially Geraldine Suarez-Novak and the late Cuban tenor, Cesar-Antonio Suarez. Alvarez is a high school graduate of the prestigious New World School of the Arts and holds Bachelor's and Master's degrees from Manhattan School of Music, studying with Joan Patenaude-Yarnell and Warren Jones. Further study continued at the Music Academy of the West in Santa Barbara, California, the Academy of Vocal Arts in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia in Rome, Italy, studying most notably with Marilyn Horne and Renata Scotto. Ms. Alvarez currently studies with Manuel Perez and Anthony Manoli and resides in New York City with her Yorkshire Terrier, Lola the Wonder Pooch.

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ELAINE ALVAREZ
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SUGGESTED OPERATIC REPERTOIRE

***indicates role performed

BELLINI	<i>Norma</i>	Norma
BIZET	<i>Carmen</i>	Micaela***
BRITTEN	<i>The Turn of the Screw</i>	Governess
CATALANI	<i>La Wally</i>	Wally
CATAN	<i>La hija de Rappaccini</i>	Beatriz***
	<i>Florencia en el Amazonas</i>	Florencia Grimaldi***
CHARPENTIER	<i>Louise</i>	Louise
CILEA	<i>Adriana Lecouvreur</i>	Adriana
DONIZETTI	<i>Anna Bolena</i>	Anna Bolena
	<i>Lucrezia Borgia</i>	Lucrezia Borgia
	<i>Maria Stuarda</i>	Maria
		Elisabetta
DVORAK	<i>Rusalka</i>	Rusalka
GOUNOD	<i>Faust</i>	Marguerite
HARTKE	<i>The Greater Good</i>	Comtess de Breville***
JANACEK	<i>Jenufa</i>	Jenufa
	<i>Kat'a Kabanova</i>	Kat'a***
LEONCAVALLO	<i>Pagliacci</i>	Nedda
MARTINU	<i>Mirandolina</i>	Mirandolina***
MASCAGNI	<i>L'amico Fritz</i>	Suzel
MASSENET	<i>Le Cid</i>	Chimene
MOZART	<i>Così fan tutte</i>	Fiordiligi***
	<i>Don Giovanni</i>	Donna Anna***
	<i>La clemenza di Tito</i>	Vitellia
	<i>Idomeneo</i>	Elettra
	<i>Le nozze di Figaro</i>	Contessa***
PUCCINI	<i>La bohème</i>	Mimi***
	<i>La rondine</i>	Magda***
	<i>Le Villi</i>	Anna
	<i>Madama Butterfly</i>	Madama Butterfly
	<i>Manon Lescaut</i>	Manon
	<i>Suor Angelica</i>	Suor Angelica
	<i>Tosca</i>	Tosca***
	<i>Turandot</i>	Liù
ROSSINI	<i>Guillaume Tell</i>	Mathilde
VERDI	<i>Don Carlo</i>	Elisabetta
	<i>Ernani</i>	Elvira***
	<i>Falstaff</i>	Alice Ford
	<i>I Lombardi/Jerusalem</i>	Giselda/Helene***
	<i>I vespri Siciliani</i>	Elena
	<i>Il trovatore</i>	Leonora
	<i>La traviata</i>	Violetta***
	<i>Luisa Miller</i>	Luisa
	<i>Otello</i>	Desdemona
	<i>Simon Boccanegra</i>	Amelia
	<i>Un ballo in maschera</i>	Amelia

ELAINE ALVAREZ

SOPRANO

CRITICAL ACCLAIM

AÏDA – OPERA ROYAL DE WALLONIE

"The Cuban American soprano Elaine Alvarez portrays the heartrending, suffering Ethiopian king's daughter Aida, who is torn between her love for her fatherland and her love for the enemy Radamès. . . It is an impossible love, a silent suffering of fate, which Verdi demands from his Aida with enormous emotional outbursts. Alvarez is vocally convincing, even in the high register."
-Barbara Röder, **Klassik.com**

"... the cast offers an excellent level . . . starting with Elaine Alvarez in the title role. . . one can only admire the way in which the Cuban-American soprano faces all the obstacles of the spinto soprano range that this part calls for (and which she possesses!), also bearing a deep low register and a fleshy middle: without ever forcing her means, she draws a passionate Aida and moves us deeply in her great aria of the third act, as well as in her farewell to life." -**Opera Online**

FLORENCIA, FLORENCIA EN EL AMAZONAS – SAN DIEGO OPERA

"Elaine Alvarez is stunning in her role debut as Florencia, a world-famous but heartbroken opera singer returning to the wilds of her native Brazil to find her lost love. Her rich, supple voice glides and soars effortlessly through the florid, note-rich score and she acts the role with a sensitivity and emotional conviction normally seen only in veterans of a role."
-Pam Kragen, **The San Diego Union-Tribune**

"In the title role of Florencia Grimaldi, Elaine Alvarez employed her ample, plush, verismo-honed soprano to thrilling effect in each of her big solo arias—Catán aptly gave his opera star leading lady an extended aria in each act. . . she carried off Grimaldi's innate dignity with cool security."
-Ken Herman, **San Diego Story**

"Alvarez's soprano is rich, full and supple, with stratospheric top-notes. She soars throughout, but especially at the end, when she makes a most magical transformation."
-Pat Launer, **Times of San Diego**

"[San Diego Opera] employed a superb, engaged cast with the radiant Elaine Alvarez in the title role...with death surrounding the ship, Alvarez's Florencia sings herself into some otherworldly sphere just before the curtain closes. It was magic, and a moment worth waiting for."
-James Chute, **Opera News**

"The music making was superlative, starting with the vocals. In the title role, Elaine Alvarez made a stunning impression. Her pliable spinto soprano easily encompassed every demand of three wide-ranging arias. The rich, pulsing tone was absolutely even throughout the wide-ranging part, and her alluring vocal presence anchored the performance with a poised, polished musical presence. Ms. Alvarez made us abundantly aware of why the public was in awe of her towering talents."
-James Sohre, **Opera Today**

"Ms. Alvarez (in the title role), has three arias, the first of which is the longest and most difficult introductory aria in memory. In other words, "nice to meet you, Florencia...and...wow." Her final aria closes the show. Although the composer hasn't left any room for applause throughout the opera, the audience could not contain itself after Florencia's final note. The orchestra finished the show under a hail of "bravas" (one from this reviewer)." -Loren Lester, **Schmopera**

"Soprano Elaine Alvarez threw herself into the role of Florencia with striking passion. In three unusually long arias her rich supple voice cut through Catan's Puccini-like score with ease. Alvarez's voice was filled with beauty and emotion in the long final aria. Then, in a last stunning moment, as the orchestra played the majestic final bars, she slowly and silently raised her arms to transform beautifully colored dress fabric into the wings of her lover's elusive rare butterfly."
-Ron Bierman, **BroadwayWorld**

HELENE, JERUSALEM – OPERA ROYAL DE WALLONIE

"Thanks to her tessitura and power, the Cuban American soprano Elaine Alvarez convincingly renders the strong character of Helene, a role likely difficult to cast perfectly, and her virtuosity allows her to confront her cabaletta's without difficulty."
-Sebastien Foucart, **ConcertoNet.com**

"[Roberto Scanduzzi's] power is impressive, almost as much as that of Elaine Alvarez: we can reproach a certain instability in the voice at full throttle of the Cuban-American soprano, but what breath, what generosity, and what suppleness of timber."
-Nicolas Blamont, **La Libre**

"The cast was dominated by the soprano Elaine Alvarez, whom we had already admired here in Liege in Ernani. . . what strength in her [Act I aria] 'Ave Maria', what power in her [Act II] aria 'Quelle ivresse, bonheur supreme', what temperament, above all!"

-Bruno Peeters, **Crescendo Magazine**

"As the object of Gaston and Roger's love, Hélène, Elaine Alvarez . . . had the ideal size of voice and agility for the role. Her soprano was at its best in technically difficult moments of the part"

-Stephen J. Mudge, **Opera News**

"A soprano *drammatica d'agilita* we then have in Elaine Alvarez as Helene, who faces the difficult role with the courage of a lioness. Although there is some occasional pressing in the highest notes, she has rendered Verdian agility in the French style with the proper voice and spirit."

-Natalia Di Bartolo, **OperaeOpera.com**

"the Cuban-American soprano Elaine Alvarez, already heard last season in Ernani, prevails progressively in the role of Helene through to the very end of the performance, both on the strictly vocal level as well as in her expressive intensity: she offers a brilliant execution of the polonaise 'Il respire! O transport!' before arguing, in the great scene of the third act, 'Que m'importe ma vie', with beautiful piano coloring, even in the extreme high notes." -**Opera Online**

MIMI, LA BOHÈME - VIRGINIA OPERA

"Elaine Alvarez, however, takes the show away as Mimi, the dying seamstress. Alvarez, a young singer making her Virginia Opera debut, has already made a name for herself singing this role, as others. She brings to the part a tender voice that is expressive and vulnerable yet bright. From her first aria: 'Si mi chiamano Mimi', to her sorrowful departure in the last act, Alvarez's role is one of sincere beauty, her performance lovely."

-Sam Hall, **DC Metro Arts**

"Soprano Elaine Alvarez was radiant as the consumptive seamstress Mimi. With long, silvery phrases and crystalline high notes, she enchanted her lover, the poet Rodolfo in Act I. Her dark, poignant tones as she struggled against death in Act IV were heartbreaking."

-B.J. Atkinson, **The Virginia Pilot**

"As Mimi, Elaine Alvarez revealed an ample, rather plush soprano. If her dynamic range didn't vary a great deal, the warmth in her singing counted for a lot, as did her impressive legato phrasing, notably in 'Donde lieta usci'. And there was a remarkable gleam in her spot-on off-stage top note at the close of Act I. Her spaciouly paced 'Si mi chiamano Mimi' included a lovely, subtle physical detail when, as she sang the word 'poesia', she clutched a verse-filled paper that Rodolfo had handed her during his aria."

-Tim Smith, **Opera News**

"Soprano Elaine Alvarez and tenor Jason Slayden make willing suspension of disbelief easy as Mimi and Rodolfo. They share an achingly romantic chemistry early on. Their pure and effortless voices wash over the Carpenter Theater again and again. Alvarez made her mark as Mimi at the Lyric Opera of Chicago, and she has continued to make the role her own. They're the brightest -- but hardly the only -- stars in the production."

-Roy Proctor, **Richmond Times- Dispatch**

ELVIRA, ERNANI - OPERA ROYAL DE WALLONIE

"...Elaine Alvarez offers singing still somewhat young, lacking in maturity for this role, but the vocal color is beautiful and the technique much more accomplished than the tenor's...the lower notes are sumptuous and the phrasing remarkable. She excels especially in cabaletta's where her agility is particularly spectacular: an artist to follow."

-Corinne Le Gac, **Opera World Magazine**

Elaine Alvarez assumes the role of Elvira with a certain honorable placidity...her voice is radiant, her beautiful lower register and her splendid medium voice make her an artist rich with promise." -Emmanuel Andrieu, **OperaOnline.com**

"Elaine Alvarez has a promising, rich timbre and the right weight of voice for Elvira. The soprano sang with conviction, particularly in the last act..."

-J. Mudge, **Opera News**

"Elaine Alvarez's Elvira impresses with her power and projection..."

-Nicolas Blanmont, **La Libre**

"And in contrast, adorned with all the mysteries of femininity, with tender and dusky colors, is the imperious vocal interpretation of Elaine Alvarez, royal and serene despite the intensity of her suffering. She receives very well deserved cheers and enthusiastic applause during the numerous curtain calls."

-**Arts et Lettres**

"To start with, the young Cuban-American soprano Elaine Alvarez as Elvira, with a smooth and flexible voice that vocalizes with great naturalness, even if some notes are less powerful than others, is very promising for the future and in fact [General Director] Mazzonis has already signed her for another opera the following season. Without a doubt, the best on stage."

-Alma Torretta, **Il Giornale della Musica**

TITLE ROLE, KATYA KABANOVA - BOSTON LYRIC OPERA

"In the title role, Elaine Alvarez ably embodied the religious, superstitious Katya. Her voice is large but flexible and easily carried over the other singers on stage and the orchestra. Her tone on Sunday was nicely distributed across her range."

-Jonathan Blumhofer, **Arts Fuse Magazine**

"Alvarez magnificent in BLO's mixed premiere of Janacek's 'Katya': The opera's throbbing heart is Katya... For much of the first act, Elaine Alvarez was a little stiff, and her soprano sounded pinched above the staff. The voice eased as the performance unfolded, and the fitful woodenness seemed to make dramatic sense: this was a woman who was so simple and so full of passion she could not quite figure out how to act. By the end, Alvarez had attained a level of magnificence, and was singing with breathless, full-throated abandon. Janacek's masterful and haunting portrayal of madness was especially well-executed in her hands."

-Angelo Mao, **Boston Classical Review**

"...soprano Elaine Alvarez bravely threw herself into the title role and by the final act ably conveyed the intensity of Katya's roiling inner world..."

-Jeremy Eichler, **The Boston Globe**

TITLE ROLE, LA HIJA DE RAPPACCINI - GOTHAM CHAMBER OPERA

"Gotham Chamber Opera was able to assemble a superb cast of singers for this production. Soprano Elaine Alvarez clearly understood the mysterious allure of Beatriz, the title character; as in Hawthorne's story, one wished to know more about this lonely but enchanting young woman."

-Arlo McKinnon, **Opera News**

"The cast was excellent, led by the tenor Daniel Montenegro as Giovanni and the soprano Elaine Alvarez as Beatriz, both with appealing quivers of emotion in their voices..."

-Zachary Wolfe, **New York Times**

"The most intoxicating flower in the evening's bouquet of voices, however, was Elaine Alvarez in the title role. . . In Gotham's *La hija*, Alvarez was clearly in a class all her own and was perhaps the only singer who truly channeled the dark sensuality of Catan's score."

-Stephen Raskaukas, **Bachtrack.com**

"His love interest and *La hija* was played by soprano Elaine Alvarez with the same mix of beauty and danger, the crucial theme to the opera. Ms. Alvarez has star appeal, pure and simple. The range of colors in her glorious soprano is electrifying. She sings with a controlled recklessness that is rarely found on operatic stages."

-Minda Larsen, **TheaterOnline.com**

"Elaine Alvarez is a stunning young beauty with black hair, dark eyes, a strong voice, musicality and acting chops to make her someone to watch. In this role she conveys the innocence of a child mixed with the ultimate femme fatale, who's poisonous touch will doom both lovers... In her tour-de-force death scene, Alvarez shows off her control of voice and range when she asks Giovanni if his words were not more poisonous than her nature."

-Humberto Capiro, **Los Angeles Magazine**

MICAELA, CARMEN - FLORIDA GRAND OPERA

"In tone and in stage comportment, Elaine Alvarez's Micaela was reminiscent of the young Maria Callas."

-Robert Carreras, **Opera News**

"The role of Micaela saw the belated Florida Grand Opera debut of the soprano Elaine Alvarez. . . her voice was pure and radiant in the middle, and her impassioned singing of '*Je di que rien ne m'epouvante*', when she tries to gather her courage to reach Don Jose in the mountains, was a highlight of the night."

-David Fleshler, **The Miami Herald**

"The Micaela of Elaine Alvarez is a luxury in this production. Having a singer of her stature - who has interpreted Traviata's and Mimi's - in a smaller role, is something that must not be missed, because the young soprano knows how to use every moment she is on stage and credit must be given to [Renaud] Doucet for his direction of the character."

-Daniel Fernandez, **El Nuevo Herald**

"Miami soprano Elaine Alvarez shone in the thankless role of the goody-two-shoes Micaela. Her third act aria expressing her fear of confronting Carmen to save Don Jose was profoundly moving."

-Bill Hirschman, **The Sun Sentinel**

MAGDA, LA RONDINE - OPER FRANKFURT

"At the podium was the ideal pairing of Elaine Alvarez and Joseph Calleja: two equally strong, extremely homogeneous and bright open voices, which literally ignited together. Excellent was the timbre of Elaine Alvarez with plenty of power in the top and a sparkling middle."

-Bernhard Uske, **Frankfurter Rundschau**

"At his side stood Alvarez, an experienced Magda. She unveiled quintessential Puccini style and melded the idiom with a melting, voluminous sound."

-Guido Holze, **Frankfurter Allgemeine**

"Leading the cast was Elaine Alvarez as Magda, a bountiful, focused and alluring bright soprano voice."

-Andreas Bomba, **Frankfurter Neue Presse**

MAGDA, LA RONDINE - OPER LEIPZIG

"On stage there is the incarnation of femininity: Elaine Alvarez, a triumph of luxuriance and sensuality (same as her singing), totally dominating the stage. With finesse she played the depraved Magda; a kept woman who, greedy for luxury, sells herself to a Duke, but at the same time dreams of romantic, fulfilling love - a very dangerous mixture in women."

-Wolf-Dieter Krönig, **Bild Leipzig**

"Elaine Alvarez's creation of Magda is outstanding. With subtle nuances she makes Magda's drama and inner conflict audible. This stylistic, sensitive and carefully elaborated comprehension of the role fascinated the public..."

-Sebastian Schmidler, **Leipzig Almanach**

"Tiberius Simu, as the poet Prunier, preludes at the piano '*Chi bel sogno di Doretta*'. With clear articulation and a sensual melodiousness, Elaine Alvarez brings it quasi improvising to its conclusion, with a superbly balanced messa di voce elegance. This is one of the most excellent scenes in *La rondine*."

-K.G.v. Karais, **Opernglas Magazine**

SOLO RECITAL - VOCAL ARTS SOCIETY, KENNEDY CENTER

"Alvarez is a charming artist - with a delightfully warm stage presence and a healthy, hearty and agile voice that is still coming into flower - and it does not surprise me that she made a terrific Mimi. She was quite wonderful in a closing set of Spanish and Cuban songs by Fernando Obradors and Eduardo Sanchez de Fuentes, in which she stepped out of what had sometimes seemed an interpretive corset and relaxed as though the hall were filled with old friends, which, by the end of the evening, seemed to be the case."

-Tim Page, **Washington Post**

MIMI, LA BOHEME - LYRIC OPERA OF CHICAGO

"Cuban-American soprano Elaine Alvarez rendered Mimi with an ample, buffed-bronze soprano that contrasted nicely with Aronica's brighter sound...she displayed a lissome, floated top for the offstage '*Amor*' at the close of the first scene, a sensitively shaped '*Donde lieta usci*' and an excellent final act. Her portrayal was, moreover, compellingly characterized, subtly naturalistic and fully drawn. Alvarez received a huge ovation in the final curtain calls, a tribute well deserved for intrepid grace under pressure - and for coming through with an intelligent, musically satisfying performance."

-Mark Thomas Ketterson, **Opera News**

"Elaine Alvarez looked and sounded fully prepared to take on this touchstone Puccini role. Far from displaying any obvious nerves, Alvarez looked and sounded like a poised veteran. As the consumptive seamstress Mimi, Alvarez on Monday revealed an appealingly natural stage presence and a big, vibrant lyric soprano the color of deep burgundy. The voice bloomed under pressure the way you want a Puccini voice to bloom, yet kept its warm tonal finish when she floated the high pianissimos opera lovers wait for in rapt anticipation. Conveying lyric pathos seems to come as naturally to Alvarez as breathing. She reserved her most deeply affecting singing for the third act, investing her duets with Quinn Kelsey as the Bohemian painter Marcello and Roberto Aronica as her lover, the poet Rodolfo, with shimmering beauty. When the estranged lovers agreed to remain together until the first rustles of spring, even audience members who have seen hundreds of *Bohemes* got misty-eyed. Alvarez saved the day, and then some. After her smooth, confident Lyric debut, the opera world surely will be taking notice."

-John von Rhein, **Chicago Tribune**

"As if her understudy, Cuban-American soprano Elaine Alvarez, who blossomed into a luminous performance on Monday, had been Lyric's choice for Puccini's doomed Mimi all along. [Alvarez's] Mimi was clearly passionate, and the dark cast to her strong, well-projected soprano added depth and emotional richness to her initial duet with Roberto Aronica's Rodolfo. By the festive *Cafe Momus* scene in Act II, her singing had become juicy and lyrical, and her wrenching Act III encounter with Rodolfo, frantic at the thought of Mimi's impending death, was luminous." -Wynne Delacoma, **Chicago Sun-Times**

"From the start, Alvarez proved to be entirely at ease on stage, projecting easily and deploying her warm soprano with great sensitivity. You couldn't help but be taken in by her shy singing of Act I's '*Si mi chiamano Mimi*', and she generated an incredible pathos in Act III, as she realizes that she and Rodolfo must separate. By the time she died in Act IV, her successful debut was a foregone conclusion. Any singer who can make this role dramatic and not melodramatic deserves a place on the world's major stages."

-Marc Geelhoed, **Time Out Chicago**