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***Opera - Tourette's Diva* ***, BAC, London, Maddy Costa**

...Many people who attend the Royal Opera House are shocked to see a rucksack in their hallowed auditorium. Heavens knows what they'd make of the foul-mouthed work that is Tourette's Diva. Composer and librettist Richard Thomas is enamoured of both the image of opera - the extravagant gestures, heightened emotions, ladies with proclivities to suicide - and the playground humour: incessant swearing, provocations and obscene insults. His sometimes surreal, often hilarious work is at its best when the gap between the two is eradicated, and the two mezzo-sopranos stand, arms aloft, eyes aflame, elegantly singing of masturbating with vegetables.

There is a structure, of sorts. Daughter Diva, immaculately sung by Lucy Stevens, is undergoing a nervous breakdown and receiving little sympathy from her mother, sung with equal beauty but less consistent volume by Lore Lixenberg. "How come I've got a penis?" Daughter wonders. "You're kidding no one - it's a banana," Mother replies. Their lengthy catfights amuse and bore in equal measure; far more entertaining are the lewd sketches and one-liners that link these scenes and betray Thomas's past as a stand-up comedian. Mother lavishing praise on the internet, concludes: "Without it my clit wouldn't have been seen by a school in Nantucket."...