

# The Evening



295 DAYS TO GO

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# Post



**RIAL BY FIRE** – National Opera singers Brian Green, left, who plays Monostatos in Mozart's *The Magic Flute* and Mark Luther, Prince Tamino, in *The Magic Flute* at the National Opera House's Foundry in Seaview. Picture: PHIL RE

## Martial arts provide perfect opera villain

By MEGAN LANE

IT'S not every opera that features a singer stripped to the waist.

But National Opera has the perfect candidate in Brian Green, a Jamaican opera singer and martial arts expert, who plays the evil Moor Monostatos in Mozart's *The Magic Flute*.

A former model and actor,

Green says he switched to opera training in his late 20s after an erotically charged encounter with a *Madama Butterfly* fan in a London bar. "[The encounter] encapsulated everything I love about opera – the passion and suspense of it," he said.

The opera features a mix of local and international talent, including Welsh tenor Mark Luther. He plays the romantic lead Tamino, a foreign prince who

falls in love with Pamina (Deborah Wai Kapohe), daughter of the duplicitous Queen of the Night (Australian Jane O'Toole).

Green and Luther share just one scene – Tamino is searching for Pamina and Monostatos decks him. Unlike Green, Luther started singing as a child.

"My father died when I was very young so it was a hell of a time for my mum. She was a school teacher and was away

working – by the time I was six, I was out every night.

"She discovered by accident that I could sing and I went off to a choral school. From eight to 13, I made records [and] sang for the Queen." Then his voice broke. By his late teens, Luther was singing again.

Now 34, he last appeared in Wellington as Jacquino at last year's International Arts Festival opera, *Fidelio*.