

LYRIC OPERA

KANSAS CITY

THE ELIXIR OF LOVE

BY GAETANO DONIZETTI | MARCH 12, 16, 18 AND 20 2016

BWW REVIEW: THE ELIXIR OF LOVE AT LYRIC OPERA OF KANSAS CITY

March 17, 2016

By Alan Portner

Originally performed at Milan in 1832, Lyric Opera of Kansas City stages an updated rendition of Geatano Donizetti's comic opera "The Elixir of Love" at the Kaufman Center through March 20th. Instead of the original setting- a village in the Basque country of Spain, the audience is transported to the American Midwest in the years just prior to The Great War.



The central character is a beautiful school teacher named Adina and her two suitors. One is a local man, Nemorino, who sells ice cream from the back of his modified motor car. The other suitor, Sergeant Belcore, is a military man who has been sent to recruit young men for The Great War just coming into view.

The main set is a typical town square with a several sided bandstand built center stage.

Nemorino is a shy and humble man. He is afraid to tell Adina how he feels. Enter Dr. Dulcamara, a fast talking, sly, son of a gun who deals in potions and concoctions for ailments of all descriptions from the sidecar of the vintage motorcycle. You know the type. In another show, he might tell fortunes become mayor of an Emerald City or sell equipment for a boys' band.

Shy Nemorino approaches Dr. Dulcamara for a love potion, an elixir that might give him the courage to declare his love. There is no such Elixir, of course. Dr. Dulcamara has sold him an ordinary bottle of wine and he has cleaned out poor Nemorino's pocketbook.

By this time, Adina has agreed to marry Sergeant Belcore. Nemorino is bereft. The supposed Elixir will not become effective in time. He begs the Doctor for something faster and more effective. Dr. Dulcamara agrees, but offers the upgrade at a price he knows Nemorino cannot meet. Nemorino joins the army and gets the needed money from his signing bonus. Nemorino gets the upgraded elixir.

Meantime, Adina has postponed her wedding to Sergeant Belcore. She knows that she really prefers Nemorino. And Nemorino's Uncle has passed away with Nemorino as his only heir. Nemorino is rich in his own right. All turns out well and Nemorino gets the girl. Adina has been sweet on Nemorino this whole time, but she does like to flirt.

The attempt made to update the show by a century to a time more contemporary to the audience works for the most part. The set and the scrim are familiar to the audience. One would have to believe that Nemorino is kind of a dim bulb ala Gomer Pyle. Oddly enough, Jim Nabors (the actor who played Pyle) could have easily sung the part. Norman Reinhardt as Nemorino in this production is far from a dim bulb.

The main reason audiences enjoy Grand Opera is for the glorious music, the wonderful voices, and the lush orchestrations. This production comes through in all three categories with style and panache. Adina is soprano Susannah Biller. Nemorino is again tenor Norman Reinhardt. Sergeant Belcore is baritone Elliot Madore. Dr. Dulcamara is bass Patrick Carfizzi.