

LYRIC OPERA

KANSAS CITY

DIE FLEDERMAUS

Johann Strauss II 1874

April 26, 30, May 2, 4, 2014

Laughter, love, and champagne

April 28, 2014

By Anthony Rodgers



KCMETROPOLIS.org
Kansas City's Online Journal of the Arts

Die Fledermaus is a class clown of German opera, accessible to both long-time opera-goers and someone looking for a good comedy. This weekend, Lyric Opera Kansas City performed an English version of this beloved operetta by Johann Strauss II at the Muriel Kauffman Theatre, delighting ears and tickling funny bones.

The Eisenstein household is worthy of its own sitcom with the potential to host a weekly dilemma and absurd evasion of extreme morality. As Gabriel von Eisenstein, Liam Bonner's voice was fluid and agile, crossing easily into registers that made this baritone sound like a tenor without hindering any rich, low tones—quite an impressive feat! A soprano unafraid to alter her voice for the sake of humor, Kelly Kaduce was a devious Rosalinde in her attempt to catch her flirtatious husband in questionable acts while in disguise. A Hungarian csárdás aria allowed Kaduce to show off her lovely vocal prowess, as slight teasing was inserted to lighten the mood instead of letting the sentimental song grow too serious. Anna Christy played the eccentric chambermaid Adele and gave the one of the best comedic opera role portrayals I have ever been privileged to see. Christy's over-the-top whining and perfectly-timed quips enhanced spoken parts. Her whimsy during sung moments, particularly during her "laughing song," mixed well with an endearing, delicate charm.

The constant singing by Alfred can quickly grow insufferable, but Gordon Geitz's voice did not, filling the hall with luxurious samples of famous arias and the occasional carol. Joyce Castle was incredible as Prince Orlofsky, dancing along a proverbial fourth wall with laughable graveness as the "play within a play" unfolded for royal entertainment. Some roles, including Dr. Falke (Paul LaRosa) and Dr. Blind (Scott Michael) were well sung but lacked a certain playful quality that set them apart from the others in this operetta. In the spoken role of Frosch, Kansas City actor Gary Neal Johnson doled out jokes for the opera fanatic and quick-paced references to local politicians, never letting a smile leave your face.

Of course, an opera is more than just singing on a stage. Members of the Kansas City Symphony performed Johann Strauss II's music with great balance, and various soloists were delightful throughout. The overture, however, was placid and did not have the dramatic flare that would have made it more

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enticing. As can-can girls, a group of dancers fell short without a uniformity expected from this art, although watching Logan Pachciarz spin effortlessly was invigorating. The sets were elegant and beautiful, and the lighting was spot on throughout the show.

Lyric Opera of Kansas City's production of *Die Fledermaus* has something for everyone, whether you're in search of high-quality artistic singing, oddball references and antics, or just a good laugh—"Chacun à son goût!"