

LYRIC OPERA KANSAS CITY

THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO

by W. A. Mozart

NOVEMBER 5, 9, 11 AND 13, 2016

With “Figaro”, Lyric’s season is off to a strong start

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By Kelly Luck

KCSTAGE

The Lyric’s inaugural work of the season is one that many fans have been looking forward to seeing ever since the company’s move to the Kauffman, Mozart’s “The Marriage of Figaro”. Considered by many to be his best work--and in many circles, the best comic opera, period--“Figaro” is hard to beat as a season opener, and this production (co-produced with companies in Philadelphia, San Diego and Palm Beach) is very well done.

“Figaro”, like Rossini’s “Barber of Seville”, is based on Pierre Beaumarchais’ trilogy of plays starring the eponymous haircutter. In this one, Figaro (Adam Lau) is about to wed fellow servant Susanna (Maureen McKay). Susanna is worried that the Count (Edward Parks) has put their new room so close to his, as she fears he will try to reinstate the droit du seigneur which he himself banished previously. The Countess (Katie Van Kooten), feeling the heartbreak of her husband’s disinterest, conspires with Susanna to teach him a lesson. Meanwhile, Figaro must deal with Marcellina (Margaret Gawrysiak), who loaned Figaro a considerable sum of money on the understanding he would either pay her or marry her. Now, she has come to collect--one way or another.

What follows is pretty much a nonstop rondelay of people running around, adopting disguises, hiding, fooling and pretending to be fooled by each other. It’s interesting to see something that hews so closely to the tropes of what we think of as a traditional English farce on display over a hundred years previous. The comedy is done well, the performers letting the material do the work and be naturally humorous as it is.

The performers gave a fine account of themselves on the opening night, in full voice “out of the gate” to Mozart’s often-energetic score. Samantha Gossard capably takes on the trouser role of Cherubino, and gives us a particularly lovely rendition of “Voi che sapete”. Steven Cole’s Don Basilio is also very well sung & acted, though persons unfamiliar with “Barber” may not understand where his vendetta is coming from when he agrees to help Marcellina. A minor quibble, and no reflection on the performance.

Lorenzo Da Ponte’s libretto manages to avoid the old issue of the heroes being the least interesting characters in the story, with Figaro and Susanna being dynamic and entertaining in and of themselves. And of course, we would

be remiss if we did not note Mozart's masterful score--the overture alone is possibly the perfect representative of its kind this side of Tannhauser.

The technical aspects of the production are also noteworthy: Leslie Travers' set design is creative and flexible, moving from one scene to another with minimal fuss (he was also responsible for the costume design). This reviewer particularly liked Thomas C. Hase's lighting design, particularly the opening of Act II, when we see the Countess, lamenting her unhappy relationship with the count, framed (caged, really) by the shadow of her marriage bed. Rather neat touch, that.

All in all, it must be said that the season is off to a very strong start. Given the sheer variety of material to come (with some very contemporary works bookended by a couple of acknowledged classics), this should prove to be a very interesting season indeed.