

OPERAVILLE

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2012

Opera San Jose: Die Fledermaus

November 10, 2012

Stage director Marc Jacobs has fashioned a raucous Fledermaus, making the most of the comic possibilities despite some flaws in his cast. The Act 2 party scene is so genuinely spontaneous and energetic, one is tempted to jump onstage and grab a bottle of bubbly.

Fledermaus's vast silliness demands a solid core, and Saturday's pair, soprano Melody King as Rosalinde and tenor James Callon as Eisenstein, proved a little low on presence. King had her moments – a solemn introduction to the insincere Act 1 trio “So muss allein ich bleiben?” – but her delivery of the Act 2 csárdás was terribly unfocused, particularly for a character who's trying to convince the party guests that she's a Hungarian duchess. Callon improves as he gets more fake-drunk, and he delivers some fetching top-notes by opera's end.

The supporting cast is packed with gems both musical and comical, beginning with OSJ alum Michael Dailey, the epitome of the dashing tenor Alfred, taking some time out from his bad accent to deliver a lovely rendition of the seduction song “Trinke, Liebchen, trinke schnell” (and later being throttled halfway through “La donna é Mobilé). Baritone Zachary Altman plays the practical joker Dr. Falke with a calm treachery, and gives a velvet performance of the poignant waltz “Brüderlein und Schwesterlein.” Bass-baritone Isaiah Musik-Ayala contributed his usual strong vocals to the jailer Frank, along with some hilarious visual comedy in the final act. Mezzo Nicole Birkland was suitably over-the-top as Prince Orlofsky, but did a few too many conductor staredowns, looking for cues.

BLOG ARCHIVE

- ▼ 2012 (21)
 - ▼ November (1)
 - [Opera San Jose: Die Fledermaus](#)
 - ▶ October (5)
 - ▶ September (4)
 - ▶ August (1)
 - ▶ June (5)
 - ▶ May (1)
 - ▶ April (1)
 - ▶ March (2)
 - ▶ February (1)
- ▶ 2011 (21)
- ▶ 2010 (14)
- ▶ 2009 (20)
- ▶ 2008 (23)

ABOUT ME



 MICHAEL J. VAUGHN

Michael J. Vaughn is the author of twelve novels, including the recently released "Operaville," available

But now I save the best for last. I've seen (and heard) Jillian Boye in many smaller roles, and have always loved her voice, a brilliant lyric instrument, light in flexibility but surprisingly powerful. It's wonderful to see her getting heftier roles, including last season's Musetta and, in Fledermaus, the fantastically entertaining soubrette Adele. Her evening began with the chambermaid's cadenzas of joy at the receipt of a party invitation, and continued into two of the opera's most entertaining pieces, the Act 2 'laughing song' ("Mein Herr Marquis") and the Act 3 tribute to bad acting, "Spiel' ich die Unschuld vom Lande," both delivered with great aplomb. Boye displayed a perfect comic sense, a seamless stage presence and a fake sob (à la Carol Burnett) that never failed to bring gales of laughter.

Prince Orlofsky's wild Act 2 ball is helped immensely by dancers from the Ballet San Jose school and their athletic polka, as well as the enthusiasm and some purposely bad dancing from the chorus. Conductor David Rohrbaugh and his orchestra proved especially adept at the score's many tempo changes and gradual accelerandos. Charlie Smith's all-purpose set is at its best as the Eisenstein's Act 1 conservatory, an airy solarium with soaring walls of faux glass. Costume designer Cathleen Edwards saved her best for Rosalinde, stunning dresses in, respectively, green, pink and copper, one for each act. The scrim was a clever touch, an enormous front page from a newspaper titled (what else?) Die Fledermaus, reporting on the events of the opera. And yes, someone managed to slip a quote from "Lady Marmalade" into the English (and sometimes French) dialogue.

Alternating casts. Sung in German, with spoken dialogues in English. Through November 25, California Theater, 345 S. First St., San Jose. \$51-\$111, 408/437-4450, operasj.org.

Michael J. Vaughn is the author of the novel Operaville, available at [amazon.com](#).

POSTED BY [MICHAEL J. VAUGHN](#) AT 12:50 PM

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