

OPERA NEWS

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Die Fledermaus

MUNICH

Staatstheater am Gärtnerplatz

4/7/22

DIE FLEDERMAUS HAD ITS MUNICH PREMIERE at the Gärtnerplatz on

July 10, 1875, slightly more than a year after the world premiere in Vienna. Underscoring the importance of Johann Strauss's operetta for Munich's second house, the company's new production, staged by Intendant Josef E. Köpplinger, is the eighth since the Gärtnerplatz re-opened after World War II (seen April 7 and 10). The Gärtnerplatz had the luxury of being able to present two "first nights," each with an almost completely different cast. (The soprano scheduled to sing Rosalinde in the so-called "B-Premiere" fell ill, and the A-Rosalinde replaced her.)

Director Köpplinger updated the story to 1920s Vienna, added or changed some dialogue, created some non-speaking characters and moved Act II outside, to a snowy Vienna City Park (complete with statue of Johann Strauss). Köpplinger unsubtly gendered a bit but with his usual skill and sense of timing he presented the audience with a fine-tuned, wonderfully entertaining evening. Rainer Sinell's sets are stunning, full of detail and, in the outer acts, highlighted by angles and slanted walls. Alfred Mayerhofer's costumes are as elegant as they would have been in the free-wheeling Vienna of the 1920s. Carl Alfred Schreiner's choreography for Act II, the dancers all costumed unisexually as bats, was paced furiously.

To seem natural in operetta's artificially constructed world is not an easy task. It was amazing that in exactly the same production, both casts being of high quality, one evening can be so right and the other not quite so right. Perhaps due to the constellation of singers, the B-premiere (April 10) was a total

success in every respect. There were more laughs, there was more applause, each singer seemed to be at one with his or her role and characters related seamlessly to each other. Tenor Maximilian Mayer (B) was not only a charming, enchanting Gabriel von Eisenstein but he sang with incomparable beauty of tone. Daniel Prohaska's (A) voice has more of a baritone timbre, which is fine for Eisenstein. Prohaska tends to dominate the stage which, in this case, was not always to the ensemble's advantage. Soprano Jennifer O'Loughlin is the well-deserved reigning diva of the house. Still, operetta is a challenge and she seemed somewhat ill-at-ease, both vocally and dramatically, as Rosalinde in the A-premiere (4/7). All of this changed a few days later when, repeating the part, she absolutely shone, throwing off high notes, rounding phrases and acting up a storm as if she were born to the role. Emma Sventelius' (A) laser-streamed voice and trumpet like tone made for an imposing Orlofsky but Anna-Katharina Tonauer (B), sumptuous in all ranges and elegant of delivery, presented a more complete character. Tenor Lucian Kraszec (A) sang a flawless, awe-inspiring Alfred but Alexandros Tsilogiannis (B), more dramatic of voice, while as impressive was much funnier. Both Daniel Gutman (A) and Ludwig Mittelhammer (B) were outstanding as Dr. Falke. The same can be said for Ilia Staple (A) and Andrea Zidaric (B) as Adele, the character wonderfully acted and sung by both, the diction of both artists leaving room for improvement. The acrobatic Reinhard Mayr (A) gave a better sung and acted Frank than Alexander Franzen (B). Juan Carlos Falcon (A) was a prissy Dr. Blind, Caspar Krieger (B), with better diction and fewer airs, made the more solid impression. Both actors who played the drunken Frosch are well-respected Viennese stage veterans. Robert Meyer (B) was absolutely wonderfully dissolute and very funny, Michael Dangl (A) got far fewer laughs from these age-old jokes. The Chorus (Dovilé Siupényté) was exceptionally good. Conductor Anthony Bramall brought much Viennese style in a fine, stylish interpretation. Only in the Champagne-Ensemble of Act II did his penchant for extreme speed leave his singers gasping for air.

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