



Society : Maidenhead Operatic Society
Production : **THE MAGIC FLUTE**
Date : Wednesday 28th November 2012
Venue : Desborough Suite, Maidenhead
Report by : Gordon Bird, NODA Representative, Area 14

Report

On Wednesday 28th November I was delighted to be invited to Maidenhead Operatic Society's *The Magic Flute* as this was the first time I have seen Mozart's popular operetta for about twelve years.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart composed the much loved score with Schikaneder's libretto and the show was first performed in Vienna in 1791. But this production had a refreshing new take from the original, a new translation by Howard Faulks, modified to be suited for a musical audience rather than opera.

This production certainly was very accessible. The music was familiar and the libretto seemed to be modern and inclusive.

The wonderful costumes, superb vocals and some deft direction from a talented group of performers, meant for an outstanding evening of entertainment. It was a shame that there was not a full house to see this updated version of Mozart's opera but I do hope the rest of the run was better supported.

WILLIAM BRANSTON (TAMINO)

William produced a good strong opening and I was impressed by his lovely vocal sound. His diction was exceptionally clear, I heard every word he said and sung. I wondered about the watch you were wearing and if it was part of the production – it had me nagging away if it was modern setting or not. Well done on a good performance.

BOB SPOONER (PAPAGENO)

The wonderfully colourful character of the bird catcher was superbly interpreted by Bob. There were some good reactions to what was going on stage. Bob diction was superb, I heard every word that he said and sung throughout the performance. Excellent.

DANNY SMYTH (SARASTRO)

As the part of the high priest, Danny performed a good characterisation. His singing was clear and precise. Well done.

ELIZABETH SLADE (QUEEN OF NIGHT)

Elizabeth showed excellent control of her voice and produced a lovely character. Reading her programme biography after the show, I realise how much experience Elizabeth has and this clearly showed in her performance as the Queen. A lovely, enjoyable performance.

JULIA WEATHERLEY (PAMINA)

Julia singing and acting was of the highest quality – her acting showed some very expressive reactions. Her singing was delightful and the duet “*A man who feels love & emotion*” was particularly memorable. Well done on an excellent performance.

STEVE McADAM (MONOSTATOS)

Steve performed a good “baddie” and has wonderful movement around the stage. He performed all of his arias with great assurance and control.

SIAN OXLEY (PAPAGENA)

This is the second time I have seen Sian and like her previous performance, she produced an excellent performance. She sang with lovely expressions – both vocally and facially. Her duet with Papageno, probably the most famous aria from the show, was excellent.

KIRSTY KINGE (FIRST LADY)

ANNE TROCME LATTE (SECOND LADY)

CATHY SPOONER (THIRD LADY)

These three ladies worked very well and produced some wonderful vocal harmonies.

CAT THOMPSON (FIRST SPIRIT VOICE)

ANNA HEMMING (SECOND SPIRIT VOICE)

PHILLIPA MORRIS (THIRD SPIRIT VOICE)

The vocal sound from all the performers was excellent and these three performers certainly enhanced the overall singing by performing in the wings.

CHORUS

The chorus produced a faultless display of movement and sound on the evening I watched. The male chorus produced a good comic moment with the magic bells. It looked like everyone was very well rehearsed and knew what they were doing, as entrances and exits looked smooth.

Director (PAUL SEDDON)

What a lovely idea of the “puppet” monster at the beginning of this piece and the blocking by the women to kill the monster was excellently choreographed. Paul certainly gave very clear direction as everyone on stage knew what they were doing and where they were going. I particularly liked the good spacing for the chorus in opening number. There was some lovely touches of comedy, for example, the shooting of the birds that was appreciated by the audience; and again a lovely comic moment with the appearance of the noose.

Musical Director (HOWARD FAULKS)

As musical director, Howard ensured that the orchestra and singers were nicely balanced, ensuring the vocalists were not overpowered by the live orchestral sound.

Set

I loved the opening scene, using the gauze with trees shining through, creating a wonderful atmospheric vista. The use of raised levels using blocks provided ample opportunity for some creative

choreographic moves, which this society used. The black cloth of painted columns was artistically enhanced by the yellow and green lighting for Act one, scene two. The set was open at the back and on the evening I attended it was a shame that there were no back curtains to hide a door off stage (USL) open and close. Overall, the set was very creative and suitably enhanced by imaginative lighting.

Stage Manager (ALICIA WALKER)

On the evening I watched the stage was very well managed with scene changes quickly and efficiently performed.

Sound (MATT SMITH)

The sound cues were well delivered and I felt the effect of thunder was at right volume, neither too loud nor too quiet.

Lighting Design (ANDY NICHOLSON)

Andy produced some very imaginative lighting that assisted on a rewarding experience for the audience. I particularly liked the use of LED lights through the gauze during the overture. Moving slowly from reds to greens to yellows to oranges and blues; it created a memorable opening for this production.

Lighting Technicians (ANNE HEWITT, ADAM CALLOWAY, DAVE GREENAWAY, JAMES GREENAWAY, MEGAN GREENAWAY)

Overall the lighting effects and setting lifted this production. The design was very imaginative. The operation on the whole was slick and on cue but on the evening I watched poor Papageno and Papagena were left in darkness in act 2 scene 5. I am not sure what the problem was but hopefully it was resolved for the rest of the run.

Makeup (ROS HAZELDINE)

The makeup looked very well applied and faces and, more importantly, expressions could easily be seen under the various lighting effects.

Costumes (JENNY HARRIS & LICHFIELD COSTUMES)

Costumes can help the spectacle of production and those involved in the production should take pride on some lovely costume ideas. Particularly effective were the use of brown costumes with masks for worn by the women's chorus. It put in my mind a Venetian masked ball. Then again, there were the excellent colourful costumes for Papageno and Papagena, creatively decorated with feathers to represent "birds". Other costumes also noted were the use of grey "morph" suits for the dances by the spirits and Tamino's lovely purple and the Queen's gorgeous blue dresses. Clearly, a lot of time and effort had been put into the costuming of this production so very well done.

Programme

The twenty four page programme was a wonderful read. The cast biographies were interesting and I enjoyed the articles about the writing of the musical (entitled "Notes on the Music") and the director's vision (under "Director's notes").

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Front of House

Once again I was made to feel very welcome by Alf Bramley and his front of house team.

I left the production wondering why I left it so long since my last Mozart! And the evening's wonderful entertainment meant my enthusiasm to see some more Mozart had returned and it will not be another 12 years! Thank you all for a lovely evening and I look forward to the next production.

Gordon Bird

NODA Representative

London Region, District 14