



Adelaide Theatre Guide

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DIE FLEDERMAUS

South Australian Light Opera Society

Goodwood Institute

Until 27 April 2008

Review by Simon Slade

The South Australian Light Opera Society presents something of a mixed bag in this production.

Using the Hanmer and Park version of Strauss's opera means that it is in English, and the chorus parts are more substantial than in the original, where the chorus does not appear until Act II.

To its credit, the company is introducing some younger, very talented performers, but this production suffers from some technical issues, and also from some glaring inconsistencies in the styles and abilities of different performers.

A prime example of this is Mark Paxton, who plays Gabriel. He is a very talented performer, both with his acting ability, and his singing. His voice would be well suited to musical theatre, but seems a little out of place when all of the other performers here adopt an operatic style.

The standout performer is Danielle Ruggiero. She plays the buxom feisty maid, Adele, and her vocal talents are used to fantastic effect. Her top notes are clear and fully formed, and she also has a talent for comedy. The scenes where she pretends to be Olga, a Polish actress, and her audition for the gaoler, are hilarious.

Young tenor, Alex Bond, plays Alfred, and whilst he seemed young enough to be Rosalinda's son – or even grandson! - that only added to the comedy in their affair. He added a few lines sung from other operas, and had the audience in fits of laughter. As Rosalinda, Maria Geraghty runs out of power at the top of her range.

Myfanwy Tilley, in the breeches role of Orlofsky, does very well, although her choice of make-up makes the Prince look a bit too much like Peter Cushing!

Some of the costumes are atrocious; the ball gowns in Act II seem like they are out of a bad advert for an ice cream shop – 39 flavours and all cone shaped. The featured costumes, for Rosalind and Adele, are much better, as are most of the male costumes.

The lighting is patchy, and although the designer has tried to use dark elements, particularly in the gaol scenes, these are not carried off very effectively. This, combined with poor blocking, detracts from a number of scenes.

The orchestra was kept under tight control by conductor Daphne Harris, although there are some problems with the strings remaining in tune.

It may have its faults, but there are some future stars here.