



Adelaide Theatre Guide

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Supporting live theatre in South Australia

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THE MAGIC FLUTE ADELAIDE FESTIVAL

Festival Theatre
Until 3 March

Review by Tony Busch

Has there ever been a more entertaining Flute? I think not. Barrie Kosky and the team from 1927 have created a gem of a production that is not just a novel take on a classic, but one that brings greater clarity and meaning to what is regarded as one of the more fragmented and inconsistent librettos in opera.

The action is confined to the front of the stage backed by an enormous white wall that serves as a projection screen, pierced by a series of doors that open and close on pivots or slide forward to create rostra. Through these the cast appears and disappears with amazing speed and agility.

The projection screen provides the setting for each scene through an almost continuous series of animations, the visual inspiration for which came from sources as diverse as 18th century copper engravings and modern comic books. Think very early Disney meets steampunk and you have a fair idea of the style – though this does not really do justice to the continuous inventiveness the animation presents. From the opening sequence you know that this is going to be a fabulous ride. The animation is full of clever, funny detail and because it is so strongly tied to the narrative, it doesn't wear thin or become irritating.

Kosky and 1927 have cleverly dispensed with the dialogue and, in keeping with the silent film theme of the production, provide a clear narrative via intertitles and facial and body language reactions. This effectively condenses the action without losing any of the storytelling.

Add to this a cast of exceptional singers and you have a production that delivers in all aspects of entertainment.

While the animation requires the singers to perform very often without moving there are some wonderfully quirky and funny sequences and running gags that require precision timing to make believable and the cast is flawless in their delivery.

And what casts; there are two; one for the matinees and one for the evenings. We saw the evening cast which excelled in all roles, particularly Aleksandra Olczyk as the Queen of the Night whose "Der Hölle Rache kocht in meinem Herzen" brought the house down with its perfect clarity and stunning coloratura reminiscent of the great Rita Streich.

But there were glorious performances from Kim-Lillian Strelbel as Pamina and Aaron Blake as Tamino. Tom Erik Lie's Papagano was beautifully Buster Keaton; Andreas Bauer Kanabas was a rich and dignified Sarastro and Emil Lawecki brought a delicious tang of horror as a Nosferatu inspired Monstratos, whose very pale face added a little confusion to the "black man/white woman" libretto of his scene with Pamina.

The Three Ladies were beautifully matched as were the boys from the Tolzer Knaberchor who appeared as butterflies and sang like angels.



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What a coup for the Festival to provide Adelaide with such a stunning production. No wonder it was the hottest ticket in town.