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1000-word review (WRITTEN)

Learning in the Digital Era

ADPA4001

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Welsh National Opera's co-production with Grand Theatre de Geneve, has creatively constructed Mozart's *commedia per musica* - The Marriage of Figaro (*Le Nozze di Figaro*), touring five locations between the 27th of February to the 6th of June 2025. (Mozart, 1786) The production of this popular *Libretto* is directed by Tobias Richter and Max Hoehn, both known for their exceptional experience in directing around the world. The admired opus, originally composed by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, in 1786, describes the 'love, laughter, and tangled affairs' (Welsh National Opera, 2025) of the upper-class, set-in count Almaviva's castle near Seville, Spain during the late eighteenth century. The opera's main themes centre around the relationships and misunderstandings between several characters, including Figaro, the Count's barber, his fiancé Susanna, the Countess's maid and the Count himself, who has designs on Susanna along with history of infidelity, within the opera. Through the opera's exploration of ideas like love, class and power dynamics, The Marriage of Figaro reveals the complexity of human nature, highlighting the tensions between social roles and individual desires. Welsh National Opera have delivered an abundance of other composer's work, from Puccini, Verdi to Rossini. Welsh National Opera are also currently staging Peter Grimes.

The introductory roles of Susanna and Figaro, in Act I scene I-II, are seamlessly played by Christina Gansch and Micheal Mofidian who represent the themes of love with the addition of comedic interpretation. Their performance is enticing, during the discussion of their forthcoming wedding, which is clearly noted as the main premise in this opera. The productions choreographer Denni Sayers beautifully incorporates notions of lust and anticipation between the two characters (within Act I) and the numerous intimate scenes throughout the opera undoubtedly allure the watcher into the thought-provoking relationships between characters. Performers were perceptibly engaged with one another throughout, and the use of spacing onstage was admirable. Their spatial awareness was clear, however, many scenes were set on stage right only, which arguably diminished interest for the audience sat in the restricted viewing areas.

All vocalists were technically strong and executed a satisfactory job of effectively conveying emotions. The leading roles handled vocal demands of the three hour and twenty minute opera wonderfully and the supporting ensemble were balanced while remaining steadfast for the commanding roles scenes.

Tenor Giorgio Caoduro's portrayal of Count Almaviva was emotionally charged along with an ongoing theme of comedic interpretation. His vocals complimented the Countess's, played by the dazzling Erika Grimaldi, and immense emotion was appreciated during their climactic duets. Erika Grimaldi as the Countess, delivered a somewhat heartbreaking performance during her solo *Dove Sono I Bei Momenti*, in Act III, where her vocal power matched only by her vulnerability expressed her character on a personal level.

The addition of the live orchestra enriched the overall experience for the audience and the performers. A live orchestra offers uniqueness, an increased immersive experience evident to the audience, and the energy and spontaneity adds to the magic of live performances. (Music396, 2025) Along with this, the orchestra was visible adding to the entire operatic experience and the Conductor Kerem Hassan lead through Mozart's score with vivacity during the performance.

Sue Blane, the costume director, created artistic and era-appropriate costumes that resembled each character's personality. The use of 'Jimmy Saville's' red lensed glasses for the role of Don Basilio accurately portrayed his coquettish advances towards the women in the opera and was found amusing by the audience with moments of laughter throughout. Cleverly, the Countess's gowns were lavish but also represented her inner turmoil, evident during the later acts.

The set designs bear a resemblance to the late eighteenth-century and enhanced the themes within the opera. Visuals were minimalistic but had an elegant blend of lively backdrops with spotlighting during solos. The simple yet effective background concept of varying ceiling to floor backdrops, provided the assortment of background visuals and these were substituted

between acts, as were the minimalistic set props, providing satisfying illustration for the eye without taking away from the central performance important for the characters.

Stage lighting by Linus Fellbom set the altering moods perfectly, specifically during the beginning of Act IV when the scene is set in the gardens, late at night. Lighting was dark, with spotlights aimed at the performing characters, really focussing us on the importance of the aria and dramatic points within the opera.

Accompanying surtitles were also provided above the stage to aid with the understanding of the *Italian-sung-opera*, however the translation sometimes lagged, creating confusion.

Acoustics within the Wales Millenium Centre complimented vocals and the dynamics between vocalists and instruments was exceptionally balanced with voices not being overpowered.

The overall experience from arriving to leaving was exciting, refreshing and enjoyable. The costumes and vocals stood out the most and the production lived up to my expectations.

Richter and Hoehn brought this world-renowned opus to Welsh National Opera, where they constructed an admirable and fresh version. The acts left the audience waiting on the edge of their seats for more, and reactions were abundant in the crowd.

I highly recommend seeing this masterpiece as the production was certainly value for money and a perfect opportunity for an entry into the operatic scene.

This production of the Marriage of Figaro was exciting and refreshing, bringing back to life the show stopping opera by Mozart. The creative cast did an amazing job of reviving the colourful eighteenth-century and putting it onto a stage. All the performers grasped the emotions and feelings of their characters perfectly and showed these ideas through their vocals. The orchestra followed Mozart's score perfectly and filled the house with dramatic music, complimenting each vocalist and ensemble. The scenes were separated by a moment of darkness on the stage which aided in understanding of the operas plot. Costumes were nice

on the eye and mood lighting reflected the emotions within the scenes. The Wales Millenium Centre itself is a beautiful venue which housed the opera spectacularly. My entire experience from arriving to leaving was thoroughly enjoyed and has enticed me into seeing other works produced by Welsh National Opera.

Word count: 1009

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Date Submitted: 27 March 2025

Link to Presentation:

<https://prezi.com/v/view/nzDlydkPzx1F6lbXPSVT/>

List of References

Latham, G.P. and Terence, M.R. (1978) Importance of Participative Goal Setting and Anticipated Rewards of Goal Difficulty and Job Performance. Journal of Applied Psychology. University of Washington. Vol. 63. No.2. pp. 163 - 171. [online] Available at https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Gary-Latham-3/publication/232504032_Importance_of_participative_goal_setting_and_anticipated_rewards_on_goal_difficulty_and_job_performance/links/53e5294b0cf25d674e97e1de/Importance-of-participative-goal-setting-and-anticipated-rewards-on-goal-difficulty-and-job-performance.pdf (Accessed: 25 Jan 2025)