

DON GIOVANNI

Composed by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Presented by Virginia Opera

Harrison Opera House

Feb. 13, 17, 19, 21

For tickets: 1-866-673-728

Hello, I'm Edgar Loessin with Loessin at Large.

Seductions galore, interspersed with humor, and a superior cast of strong singing actors add up to a compelling, volatile Valentine in this operatic comedy-drama.. Lillian Groag's direction, sharp and sure, gives special meaning to every note of Mozart's score that ranges from opera buffa to eloquent and darker tragic elements.

Erhard Rom's fluid set is dominated by a background drop that makes one recall images of those carnal flowers painted by Georgia O'Keeffe. It, enhanced with various spectacular lighting effects by Kendall Smith, makes Don Giovanni's insatiable lust for women omnipresent. In a perfectly modulated performance, Mathew Worth, captures the libertine, party animal nature of the Don with amoral abandon. If a man is faithful to one woman all the others will have hurt feelings is his credo. His grand baritone is rich in nuance when needed and has a lightness that is right for a gentleman who is totally about self gratification and oblivious to the pain of others.

Groag and her fine cast make it very clear that Don Giovanni is never about brutal force or rape of his conquests. He charms and promises marriage.. They acquiesce. Donna Anna, sung with power and beauty by Nicolle Foland, is holding onto her seducer when we first encounter her, not running from him. The sensuous soprano Cristina Nassif as Donna Elvira manages to combine pathos and humor in her passionate love/hate feeling for her former lover. She is a vocal sensation. Cute and pert Sarah Jane McMahon's Zerlina succumbs to Giovanni on her wedding day. In the overture, through a scrim, we see a comely lass slowly undoing her corset while a man watches her. She sets the tone for the other women in this highly sexual opera. It takes two to tango one might say.

Tenor Chad A. Johnson is the moral rarity in this lot of noble bed hoppers. He has a sympathetic presence that is moving. Bass baritone Daniel Mobbs is full of mischief and vinegar as Leporello. He enjoys the clownish aspects of the servant but finds the other realities of frustration as well. He sings with unusual clarity and color. Young David Krohn has charm and a most pleasing baritone as the betrayed bride groom Masetto. Nathan Stark is a strikingly haunting presence as the ghost of the commendatore

The wonderfully theatrical ending with Don Giovanni refusing to repent even as the flames of hell consume him is everything it should be. Groag adds an ironic touch to the sextet as they comment on the death of the sinner Giovanni. Singing directly to the audience they are smug and self righteous and one senses a there-but-for-you-go-I feeling among them.

Don Giovanni has been called "the opera of operas". This production validates that comment and then some.

This is Edgar Loessin with Loessin at Large and I'll see you at the next opening.