

## **TROUBLE IN TAHITI**

Lyrics and Music by Leonard Bernstein

An opera in one act

Hello, I'm Edgar Loessin with Loessin at Large. It's very difficult to evaluate a work for the stage when you can neither hear nor understand the words being sung or spoken. In this case they were sung.

Bernstein's one act opera is a satire on American suburbia in the 1950's. The action takes place in a day in the life of a married couple locked in a troubled marriage. In fact, it's as black and cold as the bathroom fixtures of those bygone days. The composer stated on numerous occasions that in no way should TROUBLE IN TAHITI ever sound like an opera. He said he was thinking Broadway and trying to avoid stock operatic traditions and styles which he felt were too phony for this piece.

Director Michael Philip Davis chose to ignore the composer. TROUBLE IN TAHITI is a very serious story laced with irony and comedic satire. The cardboard characters seem to call for a very light, airy style as they go about their empty lives drowning in materialistic values. It should be a jazzy, tuneful radio show tragedy. Davis went for unrelenting darkness..

In his defense, the casting of Kitt Reuter-Foss as the wife and Kristopher Irmiter as her spouse is unfortunate. They both have very impressive operatic credits and big, strong operatic voices. They are hired to do double duty and will be performing in EUGENE ONEGIN as well. They should be more comfortable with Tchaikovsky than with Bernstein and all that jazz. Neither of them articulates the words and their vocal qualities are too heavy for this little opera. Economically sensible casting that should be right for Russia ends up being troubling miscasting in Tahiti..

Emily Stauch, Kerry Lee Jennings and Larry J. Giddens Jr. are a sort of Greek chorus who comment on the action with radio jingle type tunes. I think they usually stand around a microphone and sing ala the Andrews Sisters. Not so in this case. Choreographer Todd Rosenlieb has them floating about the stage with gestures and such. As a result, they are ill at ease, inaudible and dilute the humor.

In most cases nowadays, a companion short opera is done with this piece to make a full evening's entertainment. I think that's a good idea.

Conductor Walter Attanasi guided the small orchestra with flare. The dark black set created a mood that was more Kremlin than American suburbia with its little white houses and fancy colored Frigidaires..

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

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