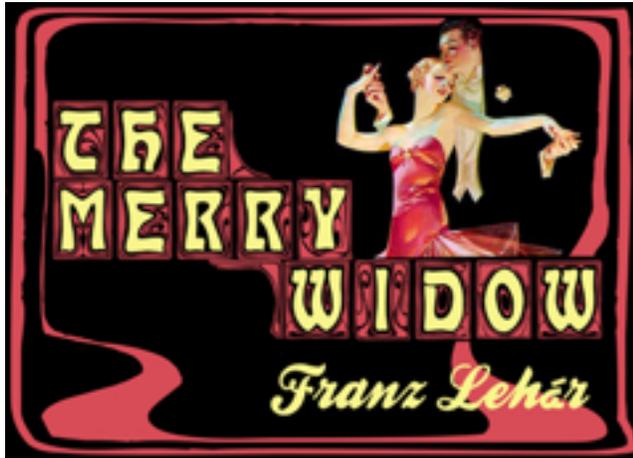

YOUNG CRITICS CIRCLE

VOL. 3 – “THE MERRY WIDOW” (JULY 26-30, 2016) & “GENTLEMEN PREFER BLONDES” (AUGUST 2-6, 2016)



The Merry Widow Review

by Brian Berestecky

I'm just gotta say that CLOC hit the jackpot with this one. I'm not even gonna start this with some seemingly smart intro, I just gotta say that this show sported such a brilliantly talented ensemble. I mean, every single actor was just so fantastic and so original in all of their characters. *The Merry Widow* is a show that I could not possibly recommend more to anyone else, it is just so funny with music so well composed. Why the audience was not sold out was beyond me, but it was quite remarkable to see how the show worked with the audience; it even had them clapping along. I also have to say that every single Tuesday I come to a show here, not once this season nor last was I apart of a standing ovation. Within reason I can see why there never is a standing ovation on a Tuesday (because everyone is so old), but if there wasn't one for this show, then there's something wrong with everyone in the audience. This was the show that got the standing ovation and it was so well deserved.

From the very short overture and forward, this show kept itself going at a fast pace, while still allowing time for some hilarious moments. Kicking off with scenarios of scandalous affairs, you pretty much knew from the start that this was going to be one funny show. If I had to pick who the funniest were, I'd have to say the two Frenchmen who were constantly at war with one another over a girl. But not just any girl, a girl who has 20 million dollars, or whatever they call currency in the made up country of Pontevedro. I was also extremely fond of Njegus (Evan LaChance), who definitely had the best role in the show. He was so cleverly woven into the plot, making remarkably funny comments and then leaving. And Madame Hanna Glawari... Oh wow, from the

moment she literally walked on stage it was just like a breathe of fresh air. They say once you've seen one movie, for example, you've seen them all. Now replace movie with theatrical performance. I've seen many shows and every single girls performance is reminiscent of one I've seen in the past(which isn't a bad thing, might I add). Sarah Nealley in this role proves that universal statement wrong. In fact, she proves that so wrong that she kicks it into outer space and sends it down a black hole. This girl gave the most original performance I have ever seen on stage. Every single movement she made was not what I was expecting at all. She was so believably the character she was playing! I can't emphasize enough how spectacular she was in this role, I'd go as far as to even say she gave the performance of a lifetime up there. It was just so PERFECT!

Dennis Wees also shows some real emotion with this one, most strongly in his happiness that he finds at the end of the show. Mr. Wees gave a beautiful, awesome, and charmingly funny performance; one that perhaps beats Mr. Wells from *The Sorcerer*. And the dancing; the best I've seen all season. Every song that required dancing was so perfectly fitting. Unlike the last show, every dancer in this one was just perfect. I could not have been more satisfied and happy with the overall outcome of this show, just really it was so fantastic. Director David Ward staged this perfectly. Each scene was a beautiful tableau, it could not have been a more perfect vision. I've already used the word "perfect" five times in this paragraph and believe me, the use of "perfect" will not terminate here. I'd even come back to see this perfect show again but due to my busy schedule I can't, but I'd encourage everyone to see this.

I also love how this wasn't a show that had an overall lesson to be learned; this was literally watching ridiculous rich people just be ridiculous rich people, and it was fantastic. Just being able to laugh and have a good time without having to think too much once in a while is really just an awesome experience which was so generously granted by CLOC. Josh Warner, the set designer, I think I'm gonna be watching on my TV someday accepting a Tony Award for Best Scenic Design of a Musical. CLOC is so lucky to have a man with skills of craft like his own, it's a privilege to see the sets he creates each week. This one was just such a majestic beauty that it makes the Taj Mahal look like a house in a Hooverville. You may think I'm over-exaggerating, but really, this guy has some serious talent. In each act, there is a performing space that has been blessed with the best sets you could ask for. No stage could possibly be better set, and the applause that happened when the curtain opened made me happy, because this guy's work got applauded. He doesn't get a bow like the actors; the moment the set is revealed is his "bow", and it's about time he got some clapping for a set reveal. Twice in one performance, might I add. Jenni Oughton's costumes were just terrific. Each man looked as if he were getting married, and each girl as if she were going to an 1800's prom. Everyone just looked so handsome/beautiful(which ever is most applicable), I mean it was just a delight to see all these people looking so vibrant while wearing such gorgeous outfits. The sets and costumes were perfect, I must congratulate them for such incredible work.

The Merry Widow, brought to Highfield Theatre by CLOC, is nothing more than one of the best shows you'll ever see here. It is truly art on the stage, it was just so perfect. Not once did it even falter, and usually I notice when something falters. Everyone had this show in the bag, it was really just so impressive to see how well composed everyone was in character and singing. This show is so original and exciting that you could leave the theatre feeling like a new man just because it was that refreshing. Nothing can brace you for the brilliant talent that is showcased in this production, so heed my warning for those who haven't seen it yet. This is the best show you will probably see all season, I'm honestly afraid that CLOC won't top this one. I'm just gonna end it here and leaving you with this: DO NOT miss out on this show, because if you do then you'll be missing out on one of the greatest stage shows you'll ever see.

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