

Skylight offers second part of Figaro story

By Julie McHale
TimeOut Theater Critic

This season, the Skylight Opera Theater has presented two of the operas based on Pierre Beaumarchais' Figaro trilogy: "The Barber of Seville" by Rossini was followed by "The Marriage of Figaro" by Mozart.

Even though the stories have been staged in sequence, "The Barber of Seville" was written 30 years after Mozart's creation.

Perhaps after seeing that Mozart's opera was so successful, Rossini decided to dig up the story that preceded it. Many of the same characters are featured in both operas.

In "Barber," we find Figaro assisting Count Almaviva in extricating Rosina from the clutches of her guardian, Dr. Bartolo, who has designs on her himself.

In "Marriage," however, the clever barber is a servant rather than a cohort of the Count. In fact, after 10 years of marriage to

landering, and one of his targets is his servant Susanna, who is betrothed to Figaro. No wonder Figaro is outraged.

The plot is quite intricate, with all sorts of intrigues and schemes impending. Barbarina wants to marry Cherubino, who is in love with almost every woman he sees, including Rosina and Susanna.

Marcellina, Bartolo's servant, wants to marry Figaro, but he's not interested. An odd twist of fate prevents that from happening.

If you're looking for credibility, don't look to opera, for it seldom occurs there. But if you want sweet, powerful music and humor, you'll find both in this very entertaining work.

Both Alicia Berneche as Susanna and Tanya Kruse as the Count's wife, Rosina, have exquisite voices. Kurt Ollman (The Count) and Andrew Wilkowski (Figaro) are well suited for their roles both vocally and dramatically.

Berneche and Wilkowski



Submitted photo

The Skylight Opera Theater's presentation of "The Marriage of Figaro" will continue through Feb. 14. The history of this timeless story dates back to 1786, when it was first staged.

Diane Lane takes on a difficult role as Cherubino, the charming boyish Casanova. She is very flexible in her movements and very crisp in her diction. The cameo roles are well executed and the ensemble

numbers are absolutely beautiful. Thomas J. Weis (Dr. Bartolo), Jennifer Clark (Marcellina), William Lavonis (Don Basilio/Don Curzio), Susan Wiedmeyer (Barbarina) and Ryan Matthew Porter (Antonio) fill out the able cast.

The score is directed by Jamie Johns, who enhances but never overpowers the vocalists.

The set design (Van Santvoord) is grand, and the costumes (Carol J. Blanchard) are exquisite. Director Bill Theisen delivers as always, bringing all the elements together in harmonious synchrony.

It was a delightful way to spend an evening. I thought Mozart's music surpassed Rossini's in this particular twosome. There were times I found myself forgetting to breathe.

The production runs through Feb. 14. The Skylight Opera Theater is located at 158 N. Broadway, Milwaukee. Call 414-291-7800 for times and tickets.

Even if opera is not your thing, I'm betting that few could resist this one.