

'Student Prince' lacks polish

By PATRICIA BEACH SMITH

Michigan Opera Theatre's (MOT) "Student Prince" production is a noble effort—things about prices are supposed to be noble. But it is far from wonderful.

Most inane stories in opera are helped along by exquisite music, intriguing drama or some kind of action.

Only thing in MOT's "Student Prince" production that qualifies is a dashing sword fight that came much too late to help.

AN OPERA COMPANY should make mince-meat of Sigmund Romberg's simplistic and highly melodic operetta score. MOT did not. Instead, it was just so much cold sauerkraut with a little schmaltz to lubricate it along the way.

There were good things about the production. Unfortunately, the music wasn't one of them. The stagecraft was very good however. Delightful fairy-tale sets graced the stage and rear projections of handsome slides added a multi-media touch that was welcome.

The lighting was quite ambitious, yet repetitious. More variety in this department might have helped point out the passage of time from one scene to another.

As it was, there was no sign that time was passing. A cue like the dimming of lights or a change in color—or something—would have helped. One was consequently aback by sudden remarks like, "Well, Karl Franz, you've been here for four months." How time flies when you're having fun.

THE VIGNETTES lighted behind the scrim curtain were very effective, possibly the best features of the production.

Staging was imaginative and smooth. The fencing scene and ballet, both during the second act, were welcome relief from the normal proceedings of the rest of the operetta. They were cogent additions to the original.

Players were evenly matched. Only Andreas Poulitinos, in the role of tutor Dr. Engel, outshone his fellow major singing characters. Among the other roles, David Parsons, as Captain Tarnitz, was a robust surprise. His voice was the most interesting in the production.

Charles Roe appeared stiff in his Prince Karl Franz clothes. He never really let down as a student, except to fall in love with Kathie almost abruptly.

He practically devoured her with every kiss—very unprincely. Sex and the Student Prince don't mix well. After all, it was 1860 and one can hardly believe a prince would act in such way in those days—even in operetta.

Roe has a charming way, however, and a voice to match which more than made up for his other detractions. Kathie, sung by Mary Wakefield, was one of the few believable characters in the production, even if her voice was a bit weak.

MOST OF THE SMALL ROLES were well played and sung by the rest of the cast. Koryoung all but stole the show with his most enjoyable 19th century Felix Unger type character, Lutz the Prince's gentleman-in-waiting.

Impresario Ruder was amusingly portrayed by Antonio Cagliero and the various student corps leaders were well chosen.

The orchestra played poorly, but in some parts it actually went along with the setting—where a pick-up compa band was needed, as in most of the Inn of the Three Golden Apples scenes.

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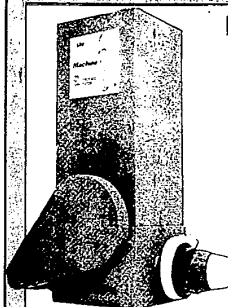
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Band of roses

Farmington Hills North Farmington High School student Phyllis Bieri (left) and Eric Baby (right) of Grass Lake represented Michigan in the McDonald's All-American High School Band, organized annually by McDonald's Restaurants to honor outstanding high school musicians across the country. Ms. Bieri had a chance to win the 1978 Tournament of Roses parade queen Maria Lynn Carron while practicing with musical director Paul Lavalle (center).

Room for Design

by Gloria Cohen



Getting to know period furniture

Last week's column left you on a leash leading to the designs and description in detail of period furniture.

Today, I will follow this to the end of a happy excursion through periods of days gone by and furniture that is always going to be around in one form or another whether it is an occasional piece, accessory or a room full of Louis XIV.

Whatever the case, you should know as much as you can if you are refurbishing or working around certain inherited pieces.

The description of each period is sketchy and brief at best, but hopefully have included the most obvious, identifying characteristics. Let's proceed.

are keys to this period which is informal but dignified. Furniture is large and geometric.

Chairs have rush, leather or wood seats. They are spiraled or heavily turned, often braced with iron, bun and Spanish scroll feet. Look for grilles and iron nail-heads, locks and key plates. Woods are oak, walnut, chestnut and red pine. Accessories are dramatic brick or tile floors in red, black and white, candelabra, stands, and floor cushions. Rugs are used as wall hangings. Colors and fabrics are red, black, blues and greens, lots of orange and yellow. Crewel embroideries, tooled leather and fringed velvet are used frequently.

FRENCH RENAISSANCE—Atmosphere is very grand, impressive, formal. Characteristics come from the Italian furniture with Gothic lines, Columns, fleur-de-lis, human forms and heads, woods of oak and walnut are typical. Accessories with parquetry floors, walls painted or covered with cloth, woods and brass, clocks, vases and statuettes. Color with rich reds, blues, greens yellows and purple in tasseled velvets and brocades. Generally, there's an abundance of art work.

LOUIS XIV—Regal or golden age of splendor and magnificence has massive forms, rectilinear and classic with the Louis XIV sunburst particularly distinctive. Ex-

pect to see pedestals, marble table tops, inlay, marquetry and lacquer. Woods are oak, walnut and ebony. Tortoise shell was everywhere. Much gilt, large gilt framed mirrors, black and white marble floors, wall sconces, Chinese porcelain, profuse use of valances, crystal chandeliers, heavy draperies with large patterns were all used. Fabrics were silk and brocades often worked with gold threads.

Further into French period you have Louis XV, Louis XVI, French Provincial, Directoire, French Empire, and more. I am merely giving you a "whiff" of certain periods which is all this column can hope to accomplish.

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