

'Die Fledermaus' given with humor and style

By James Danner
Special to the Staff

"To each his own" is Prince Orlofsky's motto in Johann Strauss' operetta "Die Fledermaus."
It was everyone's preference Saturday evening at Troy Athens High School at the Michigan Opera Theatre in Residence tour production of this Austrian masterpiece.
Rightfully so. Nine well-cast singers, backed by a 25-piece orchestra, gave the sell-out crowd one of the best shows put on by this educational arm of MOT in recent years.
This is MOT's 15th season touring Michigan between main stage productions in Detroit. The company

consists of lovers past with such guests as Kathleen Pattle. Last year they had the advantage of opening "La Bohème" with the Windsor Symphony. This year, though, their lead singers possess a solid combination acting and vocal ability.
William Kirk's traditional, but active stage direction keeps the action moving during the three-hour standard cut of "Die Fledermaus".
MOT's costume Ulla Hettner dressed the leads and chorus of 20 local singers in striking Victorian-era costumes. William M'Arch McCarty's free standing sets gave the impression of high Baroque Viennese buildings.
Troy's decision to hire in a pick-up

orchestra for the performance made the cost difference. In most communities, the tour production is backed by a piano and small ensemble, adequate, but hardly inspiring. What could have been a nice, but ordinary run through, turned into a sensational evening for both the performers and the 1,300 people attending.
"Die Fledermaus" (meaning bat in German) is the operetta for special occasions. Its humor, charming story and potentially elegant Act II ball scene, are always a joy, especially when it is done, as this one was, in understandable English.
California beauty queen Kimberly Altman, soprano, was a natural in

the difficult Rosalinda role. Quick-witted acting helped her carry the show, since she is on stage most of the three hours.
David Jackson was a great example of bad-singing Italian tenor Alfred. Ordinarily, Jackson has a graceful lyric voice. It may have made his character funnier for him to hook his attacks on the musical phrases, but extended use of that technique is questionable.
This semi-theater-in-the-round type auditorium is attractive. Mezzo soprano Janet Hopkins Marin, as the crude Russian Prince Orlofsky, cut through the orchestra's power and the variance in the acoustical levels, with a voice that was almost too at-

tractive for her character.
A handsome Fred Schmidt as Eisenstein matched the suave Robert E. Lauder as Dr. Falke. John Riley fittingly carried off the double assignment, a stuttering Dr. Blind and a drunk Frosch. David Ludwig made a believable Frank.
As Adele, coloratura Carol

Meyer's was superb in her difficult "Herr Margalo".
The performance turned in by the 29-member chorus was notable, especially since they had only one week to master the music and learn the blocking. The production moves on to St. Clair Shores, Escanaba, Negaunee, Ishpeming and South Haven.
Men, if you're about to turn 18, it's time to register with Selective Service at any U.S. Post Office. It's quick. It's easy. And it's the law.

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