

Love makes the world go round in 'Merry Widow'



MARY JANE DOERR

Even the moon dances in three-quarter time in Michigan Opera Theatre's production of "The Merry Widow" with its rich folk melodies and artistic Edwardian beauty.

In this "alther" story set in Gay Paree turned upside down like the flowers on the chandeliers, the rich daughter of a tenant farmer sets her heart on marrying a prince. Her prize, Prince Danilo, is really a prince of poverty and of insobriety. Debonair Ron Raines in this master of impropriety, who can capture the heart of any flower.

Judy Kaye is the rich merry widow with her wealth in her

REVIEW

money notes. She dances with the grace of an angel, spins the yarn "Vilja" with drama and a sweet high B flat, has the spunk to win the heart of her long lost lover, and the diction for the audience to savor every word of it. She brings *saavi-faire* to the French *laissez-faire* view of love.

At the heart of the "Phantom of the Opera" craze when she received her Tony, Kaye gives heart to this love story with its

music so beautiful and revered it made composer Franz Lehár's Jewish wife out of a WWII concentration camp.

This is a time when men signaled with handkerchiefs and women held fans to ward off the excitement of those passes. The beautiful Mary Callaghan Lynch fits right in. As Valencienne, her operatic voice never has a chance to soar, but her acting comes off without a hitch.

Love makes the world go around, and Fred Love, Valencienne's French lover, Camille,

sends Lynch spinning in this world of pink champagne with his lovely planisiums in their duets.

Stage director Dorothy Danner uses a delightful Puffer translation and made the jokes funnier with her meticulous details and the timing of some wonderful actors.

The best is Jonathan Hammond who, as Njagus, is turning his role in "Forbidden Broadway" into hiding in. Hammond's performance sets up veteran actor Marshall Borden as Baron Zeta for lots of funny scenes.

No one ever makes it to Chez Maxims as excitement at the Pontrevedrian Embassy flourishes. There a tuneful MOT orchestra with Mitchell Krieger's effortless conducting, saves the last dance, the "Merry Widow Waltz," for die-hard romantics who agree with Lehár:

"All the world is in love with love."

Mary Jane Doerr of Troy is a full-time teacher and freelance writer who specializes in opera and musical theater.

ON STAGE

"MERRY WIDOW"
 • Theater: Michigan Opera Theatre presentation at the Fisher Theatre, 3011 West Grand Boulevard at Second, Detroit.
 • Curtain time: 10 a.m. Thursday, Nov. 18; 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday, Nov. 19-20; 2 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 21.
 • Tickets: Range from \$11 to \$63, seniors and students receive half-off tickets one hour prior to curtain, subject to availability. Call 874-SING (7464) or Ticketmaster, 645-6666.

CURTAIN CALL

On Stage lists upcoming theater performances. Send items to be considered for publication to: Keeley Wygonik, Entertainment editor, the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150. Our fax number is 591-7279.

COLLEGE

■ HENRY FORD COMMUNITY
 "The Grapes of Wrath," 8 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 11, Fridays and Saturdays, through Nov. 21 in the Adray Auditorium of the Mackenzie Fine Arts Center on the main campus, 5101 Evergreen, Dearborn. Call 845-6478.

COMMUNITY

■ PLYMOUTH THEATRE GUILD
 Agatha Christie's "The Mousetrap" opens 8 p.m. Friday, Nov. 19 at the Water Tower Theatre on the campus of the Northville Regional Hospital, 41001 W. 7 Mile Road, Northville. Shows weekdays through Dec. 4. Call 349-7110 for information.

■ AVON PLAYERS
 "Musical Comedy Murders of 1940" 8 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays, 2 p.m. Sundays, through Nov. 20 at the playhouse, 1185 Washington Road, Rochester. Tickets \$10, senior and student discounts available. Call 375-1390.

■ TEMPLE ISRAEL
 "Simply Simon" an array of songs and scenes from four Neil Simon plays, 8 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 20 at Temple Israel, 5725 Walnut Road, West Bloomfield. Afterglow follows show. Tickets \$12.50 per person, call 661-5700.

■ TROY THEATRE ENSEMBLE
 "The Diviners" will present 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday, Nov. 18-20 at Troy High School Auditorium, 4777 Northfield Parkway, Troy. Call 952-6206 for tickets and information.

PROFESSIONAL

■ MEADOW BROOK
 "Black Coffee" will be presented through Nov. 21 at the theater on the campus of Oakland University in Rochester. Call 377-3300 for times and tickets.

■ BIRMINGHAM
 "Jake's Women" continues through Dec. 5 at the Birmingham Theatre, 211 S. Woodward. Call 644-3533 or Ticketmaster, 645-6666.

■ MILLENNIUM
 "Life Is A Beach" continues through Dec. 5 at the Millennium Theatre Center, 15600 J.L. Hudson Drive, Southfield. Call 552-7000 or Ticketmaster, 645-6666.

YOUTH

■ ANDOVER HIGH
 "Bye Bye Birdie," 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Friday and Saturday, Nov. 18-20 and 2:30 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 21 at Andover High School, 4200 Andover, Bloomfield Hills. Call 737-0322 for tickets.

■ PAPER BAG PRODUCTIONS
 "Bebes in Toyland" Saturdays and Sundays, through Dec. 19 at the Players Club, 3321 East Jefferson, Detroit. Lunch followed by show, call 1-800-824-8314.

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