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REVIEW

'Barber of Seville' is deliciously wiggly

Comic opera opens Skylight's 50th season

By ELAINE SCHMIDT

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Mirth and melody are at center stage in the Skylight Opera Theatre production of "The Barber of Seville" that opened Friday.

Rossini's quintessential comic opera is full of colorful characters, hilarious situations and gorgeous music. The Skylight production, directed by Bill Theisen to open the company's 50th anniversary season, adds a grand set by Van Santvoord, beautifully detailed costumes by Carol J. Blanchard and an 18-piece orchestra conducted by music director Pasquale Laurino.

Based on a play by [Beaumarchais](#), the plot is both simple and complex. Boy loves girl . . . girl loves boy . . . they marry - but not without false identities, comic confusion, a foiled elopement and some tongue-in-cheek operatic self-consciousness.

In short, Count Almaviva enlists the help of a local barber/entrepreneur named Figaro to win the heart of lovely, wealthy Rosina, whose guardian, Bartolo, wants to marry her (and her money) himself.

Figaro concocts several plots to finagle a costumed Almaviva into Bartolo's house, creating situations that disintegrate into complete chaos.

Skylight's ensemble cast of strong, theatrically savvy singers make both the music and the shenanigans work.

Andrew Wilkowske is a charming, easy-going Figaro. He sings with power and character, making the arias a natural extension of his comically conspiratorial character.

Katherine Pracht delivers a delightful Rosina, singing the role masterfully. She creates a dimensional character, often speaking volumes with mere facial expressions.

Gregory Schmidt is a dramatic shoo-in for the role of the often-disguised Almaviva. Singing recitative passages with perfect fluidity on Friday, he labored a bit over some of the melismatic passages of his arias.

Jason Budd is deliciously ridiculous as Bartolo, balancing physical comedy with a commanding voice to create an ineffectual yet menacing character.

Daniel Klein (Basilio), Kathy Pyeatt (Berta), Bryce Lord (Ambrogio) and Doug Clemens (Fiorello) give thoroughly enjoyable, polished performances, joined with equal strength by Peter Voigt, David Flores and a male chorus for larger numbers.

A slow-motion fight scene worked beautifully, allowing singers to sound their best amid a physical uproar. The orchestra, pared down some from Rossini's original score, delivered strong full-ensemble bits but faltered in some of the more delicate, exposed passages.

If you go

Skylight's "The Barber of Seville" runs through Oct. 4 at the Broadway Theatre Center, 158 N. Broadway. For tickets, call (414) 291-7800 or visit www.skylightopera.com

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