Operetta 'Die Fledermaus' comes to UConn



The cast of "Die Fledermaus" in costume at their final show in von der Mehden Recital Hall. The play originally premiered in 1874 in Vienna, Austria.

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"Die Fledermaus," an operetta translating to "The Bat", premiered in 1874 at the Theater an der Wien in Vienna, Austria.

On Friday, March 27, the operetta traveled from Austria to perform with the University of Connecticut's School of Fine Arts at the von der Mehden Recital Hall for a night of music, including unexpected branches of the college, such as puppetry, to the required acting.

The music for this three-act operetta was written by Johann Strauss II, and the libretto originally by Karl Haffner and Richard Genée. However, the libretto used at UConn was done by Spencer Reese, with additional dialogue by Christopher Gallerani.

Coattails and flapper dresses, clandestine parties, a puppet dog and more were seen that night. This slightly revised version of "Die Fledermaus," follows Gabriel and Rosalinde Eisenstein, a married couple. Gabriel comes home with news that he is to spend eight days in jail, meanwhile Rosalinde meets with her lover, Freda. However, side character Falke has different plans, making Rosalinde and Gabriel, as well as their chamber maid, attend Prince Orlofsky's party. Throughout this night, each individual assumes different identities as they let their worries slip free, forgetting about potential consequences.

Opera is a very difficult art form, so the ability to perform a three-act show with very little mistakes is incredibly impressive.

In an interview with Kelly Whitesell and Christopher Gallerani, who played Mr. And Mrs. Eisenstein, Whitesell said that one of the harder parts for her is a duet with her co-star, Gallerani, because of how technical it is.

Chloe Chan, a member of the audience and a second-semester accounting major at UConn, said, "I love how it sounds. I also really like, kind of like the music accompanying behind it."

In addition to acting and singing, the set was also an important part of the performance. Each scene required a different set, but with small changes.

Act 1 contained a few chairs to replicate a living room; act 2 had a coat rack because it's a party, and act 3 had a jail cell. The first and third act sets were easy to make sense of but for act 2, unless told, it may be difficult to figure out the setting.

Finally, due to a lack of tenors, the role of Freda was created to replace Alfred, Rosalinde's original lover. This switch was not only necessary given the available cast but also leaves a hidden queer relationship in the show.

Gallerani said this keeps the show "contemporary and fresh," by adding a new layer. Meanwhile, Whitesell said that it "gives so much more" to her character, rather than just being a cheater.

Gallerani and Whitesell shared that their process started in the summer when they got the score. It took them months of practicing and translating to prepare for the show.

Both artists said that everyone should experience musical theater at least once.

"It's an art form that has given birth to so many other kinds of performance that are still really vital and important," Gallerani said. "This production is so interdisciplinary, we have participation from every department within the school of fine arts."

The performance involved contributions from all sorts of fine arts majors. Art being hung in the lobby of the theater, the singers performing alongside the puppeteer and the orchestra providing them with the necessary music — all coming together to present an exceptional performance.



The cast for "Die Fledermaus." The music for this opera was originally written by Johann Strauss II.

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