

## THE DAUGHTER OF THE REGIMENT

Opera comique composed by Gaetano Donizetti

Presented by Virginia Opera

Harrison Opera House

Nov. 14, 18, 20, 22

For tickets: 757.623.1223

Hello, I'm Edgar Loessin with Loessin at Large.

How does one dispel the gloom and doom of a particularly nefarious Northeaster? First, you have to have the prescience to schedule this enchanting opera a year before the storm hits and open it as the last drop of rain has fallen. Virginia Opera once again revealed its skill at musical magic and in this case a little musical mischief as well.

Then you engage our beloved Manon Strauss Evrard who is sheer perfection in the titular role and our equally cherished director Dorothy Danner. Give Danner a by and large fine cast to have fun with and an excellent chorus of stout hearted men and women and she'll soon give you more and more musical sunshine.

Historically this opera comique foreshadows Offenbach and Gilbert and Sullivan. Danner says it helped usher in the Golden Age of European operettas. As she has directed the piece, one detects her vast experience in modern Broadway musical theatre influencing the performances and her intricate impeccable staging. Her singers "dance" there way through much of the show. Because of its war time setting, as she says, it occasionally resembles a 19<sup>th</sup> century episode of "M.A.S.H." Although we are in the Tyrolean Alps in 1815, there is a "today" style in the action...

Marie is a lively tomboy brought up by a regiment of French soldiers. She falls, literally, in love with Tonio, a local Swiss lad. Complications, of course, involving regal family, arranged marriage, confused loyalties to family and true love occur. Evrard doesn't miss a note of humor along with a little pathos that Donizetti's score makes possible. She takes full advantage of the vocal freedom he provides with joyous results. Gennard Lombardozi, as Tonio, is a handsome young man with a tenor voice that at this point does not know what it is doing or where it is going. He's simply not up to the demands of this role. Bass Todd Robinson as Sergeant Sulpice gets every possible laugh without resorting to the clichéd opera buffoon... He makes you feel as if he has just had the right amount of fine French champagne. Two tres grande dames, a Marquise and a Duchess, add to the merriment as performed with panache by Josepha Gayer and Jenni Harrison respectively. David Barron, Hortensius, is endearing as the crotchety servant to the Marquise of Berkenfeld.

Joseph Walsh keeps the orchestra bouncing along with appropriate humor, military precision and good balance. Erhard's sets are effective and I especially liked the simple elegance of the Act II apartment in the Marquise's chateau. Ken Steadman's lighting adds mood and dimension.

The music for The Daughter of the Regiment is catchy and tuneful, just like a good old Broadway show. You leave humming bits and pieces of this happy score. If you don't already have a ticket get on the phone and make arrangements to visit the Harrison Opera House right now. You'll enjoy a sunny, blue sky musical confection or to put it simply, a Donizetti delight by Danner.

This is Edgar Loessin with Loessin at Large and I'll see you at the next opening.