

## THE ELIXIR OF LOVE

By Gaetano Donizetti

Presented by Virginia Opera

Harrison Opera House

Nov. 14-Nov.23 2008

For tickets call: 1-866.673-7282 or (757) 623-1223

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

When the curtain rises, those ubiquitous operatic happy peasants set the tone for this delightful comedy about the sweet mysteries of love. Thanks to director Dorothy Danner the stage pulses with life. She takes each and every one of those peasants and soldiers and gives him or her a specific character. Then she arranges them in compositions worthy of a master painter. She does the same with the principals. She never allows the faintest trace of the singer who stands stiffly with hands folded neatly at the diaphragm. Her opera performers become accomplished actors who sing in any physical position the action may demand.

Unlike Noel Coward's "potency or power of cheap music" as a stimulus, this whimsical romantic tale goes its merry way with the help of cheap wine. Our hero, the innocent, naive Nemorino, brought to life in a performance that is both amusing and emotionally rich, by the most pleasing, and sure tenor voice of Joshua Kohl is madly in love with the attractive, coquettish Adina, sung by soprano Jane Redding. Her easy coloratura and her vivacious presence bring joy and warmth to this winning romantic romp.

Nemorino has a rival. He is the army sergeant Beccore, the very essence of braggadocio and self adoration, as performed by the skillful Stephen Hartly. Back to that cheap wine. It arrives like a deus ex machina pawned off as an elixir of love by the spell binding antics of the clever, quack Dr. Dulcamara, drawn with perfection by Todd Robinson. The potion, or elixir, plus several other factors ultimately combine to bring our lovers together for a happy ending. After all, this is classic opera buffa.

Eduardo Sicangco's picture frame set is most effective and Ruth Hutson lights it beautifully with Italian sunshine or moonlight, if needed. Conductor Joseph Walsh maintains a brisk presence in the orchestra that neatly helps and underscores the action

The 1998 production of ELIXIR was, as I recall, rather effete, with a fat cupid flitting about on wires. This Danner dish of delight is robust and full bodied like a good Italian red. I like it much better..

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