

Operation Adelmo-Daniel Kelley Aug 12, 2008

Opera has a reputation for being an impenetrable art form that takes itself extremely seriously. This is not always the case. *Operation Adelmo: Hours of Operation* presents classically trained opera baritone Adelmo Guidarelli singing opera, speaking English, and not taking himself too seriously. The show takes the form of a cabaret of classical and contemporary music that is tied together by a lighthearted tour of what opera is, and how it is present in contemporary culture.

The most successful part of this piece is early on when Adelmo sings a medley of opera arias, showing how they pop up in different places in contemporary culture. He goes from the familiar (singing through the old Bugs Bunny cartoon "What's Opera, Doc?" based on *Die Walkure* by Wagner) to the more obscure (a phrase from Andrew Lloyd Weber's "Music of the Night" being taken verbatim from Puccini's cowboy opera *La Fanciulla Del West*). He also demonstrates how several classic American songs are actually based around famous Italian arias—his rendition of the famous Elvis song "It's Now or Never" (based on the famous Italian song "O Sole Mio") is especially good. The reason that this section is so successful is because of the way its framed—we know why he's singing these songs and are excited to hear how they relate to one another.

As for the music itself, Guidarelli singing never tires from start to finish. He a robust baritone, and can hit some thrilling top notes. He easily moves back and forth between styles, whether its classical, blues, country, or character singing. Peter Saxe does a great job of arranging the various pieces, whether they're classical or contemporary, and David Maiullo's accompaniment has a great light touch. Mike Wills—who conceived the piece—also does a great job directing it, making good use of the Spiegeltent space. The uncredited costumes are also quite impressive.

Whether you like opera or not, *Operation Adelmo: Hours of Operation* is so well-meaning and well put together, that's it'd be hard not to walk out with a smile. If you're looking for some lighthearted fun, check it out. It'd be a great way to introduce kids to opera, so bring the whole family!