

Barrington Stage Company, Pittsfield, MA

A Little Night Music, Book by Hugh Wheeler, Music and Lyrics by Stephen Sondheim,
based on the 1955 film “Smiles of a Summer Night” by Ingmar Bergman.
Choreographed by Robert La Fosse, Directed by Julianne Boyd. Reviewed by J. Peter Bergman.

“Hi Ho, The Glamorous Life.”

This summer in The Berkshires take advantage of the opportunity to spend some summer in Sweden where the sun won't set, where the lovers are well met, where the waltz won't let you get in trouble for getting wet. Enjoy the smiles of a warm summer night at Barrington Stage Company's Stephen Sondheim fest at “A Little Night Music.” Director Julianne Boyd and choreographer Robert La Fosse will leave you dancing, or at least wishing you were dancing, through the lobby after the show. A bright and handsome company of players deliver the fine impact of a show about what it means to love and to acknowledge it, what it means to find the love you've longed for, whether it's a grand actress or the miller's son or a dragoon or a student. Boyd's production of this classic Stephen Sondheim show is just about as good as it can get and I'll joyously tell you why.



Sierra Boggess, Cooper Grodin, Jason Daniele, Sabina Collazo,
Noah Wolfe, Sophie Mings; Photo: Daniel Rader

It's all about beauty. Beautiful people on a beautiful set by Yoon Bae wearing beautiful costumes by Sara Jean Tosetti beautifully lit by David Lander making beautiful music conducted by Darren R. Cohen is all you need to make a beautiful show. Fortunately, Boyd has all of these elements well in hand. And the beauty doesn't end with the physical production. Not at all.

Emily Skinner makes beautiful music as Desiree Armfeldt. So does Sierra Boggess as Countess Charlotte Malcolm. They are joined by the handsome Jason Daniele as Fredrik Egerman and Cooper Grodin as Count Carl-Magnus Malcolm. All four sing beautifully together and apart. They all exhibit passion and they all do it beautifully. The only thing they miss is connection, the physical connection denied them by the script. It takes a maid (Sophia Mings), and a majordomo to introduce passion with a kiss and more into the proceedings. Once they take that step the others fall in love and fall hard. Even Henrik (handsome Noah Wolfe) and Anne (pretty Sabina Collazo).



Emily Skinner; Photo: Daniel Rader

Of course the Greek chorus of dancing singers bring us romance from the first moments of the show to the last. They are a grand quintet of players, romantic in dress and attitude. They are the beautiful Adam Richardson, Rebecca Pitcher, Stephanie Bacastow, Andrew Marks Maughan and Leslie Jackson. They are, essentially, the show's own signal lights, the mascots, the idiom of this musical. They are there to point the way, to hold the compass, to point to the past while admiring the present and predicting the future. They "Remember" and they live in "Perpetual Anticipation."

It is that sense of anticipation in a world where "the sun won't set" that moves this show apart from what Sondheim did before and would grow into after this. It is the only show Sondheim wrote that produced a pop-song hit, "Send in the Clowns," and that was an after-thought, not part of his dream when he and Hugh Wheeler adapted a twenty year old Swedish film into this musical.



Kate Day Magocsi, Mary Beth Peil;
Photo: Daniel Rader

It's singer, Desiree, is the middle generation of women in the Armfeldt family. There is also her daughter, played delightfully by Kate Day Magocsi. It is impossible to ignore Desiree's irascible, wheelchair-bound mother, the very determined and prejudiced Madame Armfeldt, engagingly played by the glamorous Mary Beth Peil who sings her reminiscences of her romantic "Liaisons" with kings and dukes.

In case you are put off by a show with this much romance and dancing, don't despair. There is melancholy, murder, suicide and Russian roulette to deal with

before the night is over.

But its beauty is almost impossible to ignore. At every turn, every change of scene, this show grows more entrancing. Robert Le Fosse's dances fill the stage with very few dancers, and though the chorus is limited to only five people no one dances alone for long which merely multiplies the romance and the remembrances in the songs they sing. One final, and very personal, note on the production: among the understudies is the remarkable Teri Ralston who was one of the original quintet and with whom I worked in "Jacques Brel is Alive and Well and Living in Paris."



Andrew Marks Maughan, Stephanie Bacastow,
Sierra Boggess, Adam Richardson, Cooper Grodin,
Rebecca Pitcher; Photo: Daniel Rader

If, like me, you are addicted to romance there is no better place to find it than at Barrington Stage Company's fine production of "A Little Night Music," in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. Try not to miss something that you know "would have been wonderful."

+ 08/11/2022 +

A Little Night Music plays at Barrington Stege Company's Boyd-Quinson stage, Union Street, Pittsfield, MA through August 28. For information and tickets call 413-236-8888 or go on line at www.barringtonstageco.org.

