

## Verdi's "King for a Day" @ Glimmerglass 7/26/13

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Joseph Dalton

COOPERSTOWN – Glimmerglass' new production of Verdi's "King for a Day" resembles a sketch comedy. The quick pacing seldom lets up, there's lots of physical antics from the cast and the minimal set is off-kilter and colorful. References to a few pop culture icons are hard to miss.

The best of them all is Patsy, the blond sidekick from "Absolutely Fabulous." That British sitcom may not be commonly known to opera goers, but if you saw the show more than a time or two, it's impossible to miss that the Marchesa is Patsy. She wears smart designer clothing a bit too tight and styles her blond hair up in a beehive do.

Soprano Ginger Costa-Jackson plays it to a tee, especially when Patsy is in her most familiar state — smashed. That scene in the second act also happens to have the finest singing of the night. Costa-Jackson was a fine Carmen two years ago and proves to be the cast member most suited to comedy, both physical and vocal.

Otherwise, the soul of this production is in the vibrant orchestra led by conductor Joseph Colaneri, the company's recently named music director. Of all the positive changes at Glimmerglass in recent years, the consistently strengthened sound of the orchestra is among the most welcome. Actually Colaneri, a 15-year member of the music staff at The Met, hasn't conducted in Cooperstown since "La Cenerentola" back in 2009. But if this production is any indication he's the man to keep things in shape.

Unfortunately the unflagging good cheer of the Verdi score isn't too well embodied on the stage. Hard to say whether director Christian Rath kept the cast too busy or didn't push the craziness far enough. But the first act was tedious despite the constantly shifting stage picture. Fewer big ensembles and longer duets make the second act more coherent and satisfying.

A big mystery is why Glimmerglass went to the trouble of presenting this in a new English translation by Kelley Rourke, the company's dramaturge. It's not particularly understandable and the eye and the ear still rely on the supertitles. Most crucial, a lot of the singing feels pent up, as if the voices are longing to break out of the constricted language. There's a reason why so much opera — and good singing — is in Italian.

### OPERA REVIEW

Verdi's "King for a Day"

When: 7:30 p.m. Friday

Where: Glimmerglass Festival, Cooperstown

Duration: Two hours 30 minutes with one intermission