

'Camelot' has plenty to enjoy

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Cooperstown

There's a line that King Arthur sings when introducing fair Guenevere to the wonders of "Camelot" that Friday evening's audience at Glimmerglass seemed to like hearing: "A law was made a distant moon ago here: July and August cannot be too hot."

Sounds like a fine place, that Camelot.

Besides the temperate lyrics, there's much to enjoy in this new production of the classic Lerner and Loewe musical. It's not as lighthearted a piece as the company's musicals from the past two seasons ("Annie Get Your Gun" and "The Music Man") but it's tuneful, gently comic, and generally well paced.

Radiant is the word that immediately came to mind for the voice of soprano Andriana Chuchman, who plays Guenevere with an easy glow. She's a standout in the fine cast, which includes bass-baritone David Pittsinger as Arthur. Two years ago at Glimmerglass Pittsinger played the tired, old and angry Eugene O'Neill in "A Blizzard on Marblehead Neck." Yet he's a rather youthful and unassuming Arthur and vocally he brings out the melodic shape of songs that are more commonly heard in that half-spoken, Richard Burton manner.

Playing Lancelot is the star baritone Nathan Gunn, who's also Glimmerglass' artist in residence. It's great that he's back for such an extended commitment, but he underplayed the handsome and vain Lancelot by half. Gunn drew applause for walking onstage and got some laughs in "C'est Moi." Yet in his one other big song, "If Ever I Would Leave You," he was almost singing under his breath. Otherwise, he used an occasional French accent, which mostly came off as the quirk of an opera singer in a speaking role.

Director Robert Longbottom kept the stage picture varied, though the show itself has little action. The liveliest number is "Fie on Goodness," when the knights start to rebel under the leadership of Mordred. Jack Noseworthy makes the role into an attractive weasel, while relying on that patter-style delivery of song.

Review Lerner and Loewe's "Camelot"

When: 7:30 p.m. Friday

Where: Glimmerglass Festival, Cooperstown

Length: Two hours 45 minutes; one intermission