

## Glimmerglass' "Camelot," a sumptuous feast for the eyes and ears

By David Lowenstein

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When arriving at the Glimmerglass Festival, I am always awed by the fairy tale setting. But never was it more apropos as I pulled up my chair to King Arthur's round table d' haute cuisine. With Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe's romantic musical perfectly served by conductor James Lowe and a super-sized orchestra, I left both satiated and wanting more.

In 1960, the original cast album of "Camelot" was the top selling album in the country for 60 weeks. Chew on that while I continue, for it is the music that sweeps you away to the far off land created in T.H. White's novel "The Once and Future King.

In the musical we find a nervous King Arthur awaiting his unenthusiastic bride, Guenevere. They fall victim to each other's charms, into each other's arms, and begin a happily ever after. Stir in the most dashing, loyal, and virtuous Lancelot whose allegiance to the king is compromised by his passion for the queen. Add a pinch of the devious Mordred, the king's bastard son, and the plot not only thickens, it nearly burns at the stake. Not to worry, the ingredients in this production, directed by Robert Longbottom and choreographed by Alex Sanchez, come together to make a beautiful evening of Musical Theater.

As the overture transports us to this mythical place the curtain rises on Kevin Depinet's magnificent set. Strips of metal peeling up from the floor stage left, a large banner depicting the castle torn and tattered on the bias hangs upstage, and a gigantic chandelier high in the air stage right. We are everywhere we need to be with the addition of just a few pieces of furniture and shrubs. The abstract visual represents just the right balance of history and fantasy. At the end of Act I the chandelier is lowered becoming the famed round table. The simplicity is dramatically effective. No Phantom necessary.

The costumes are equally ravishing. Paul Tazewell uses contemporary fabrics, metallic, glittering, in story book silhouettes on the ladies, while the knights are strapped in shining armor and leather. All that glitters here is gold and Tazewell has the taste to make it appropriately opulent.

As King Arthur, David Pittsinger brings a genteel sensibility to this most unlikely monarch. His rich bass-baritone gives new life to Loewe's melodies that in too many productions have been "Rex Harrison-ized." His relaxed and affable demeanor, while engaging, works against him when more bite is required in the delivery of Lerner's witty and sardonic lyrics. And this lack of specific, energized connection to the text betrays him at the end of Act I as Arthur is supposed to experience the pain and fury of infidelity.

The infidels, Guenevere and Lancelot, have the lion's share of the passionate, romantic score and both Andrianna Chuchman and Nathan Gunn offer their impressive talents in service to the music and lyrics, if not the king.

Jack Noseworthy, a personal friend and one time colleague, enters in Act II as Mordred and sparks the energy and vitality of the entire proceedings. With an acrobatic physicality and razor wit he stirs the plot and riles the knights making the usually cut "Fie on Goodness" a showstopper.

Once again the Glimmerglass Festival offers the opportunity to enjoy a classic American Musical with all the makings of a five star gourmet meal. *Bon appetite!*

## **DETAILS**

**The Glimmerglass Festival presents Camelot, 7/13 - 8/23 at The Alice Busch Opera Theater, Cooperstown, NY**

**Ticket info:** 607-547-0700 or [www.glimmerglass.org](http://www.glimmerglass.org)

**Performance Length:** 2 hours 50 minutes with intermission

**Attendance:** nearly sold out at the Friday evening's performance, 7/19

**Family Guide:** for all ages