

## *Camelot*

Glimmerglass Music Festival

Reviewed by Herbert Wolff

WAMC/Northeast Public Radio

Okay, here's a question: When was the first time you encountered the legendary King Arthur...The Knights of the Round Table...Camelot? Was it in high school when they still had courses in English literature, and Alfred Lord Tennyson's blank-verse narrative, *Idyll's of the King*, was required reading? Or in 1958, when T.H. White's *The Once and Future King* was a welcome reading assignment?

In all instances, reference to Camelot becomes a symbol of Arthur's reign...and his dream that all disputes could be resolved if warring parties sat as equals at a round table.

It was T.H. White's novel that was the inspiration for Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe to write and compose the 1960 musical, *Camelot*. It was a huge Broadway success, and the original cast album was America's top-selling LP for over a year. And, it became associated with the John F. Kennedy administration, when – after the president's assassination – Jacqueline Kennedy quoted a line from one of the songs: "Don't let it be forgot, that once there was a spot, for one brief shining moment that was known as Camelot." She went on to say: "There'll be great Presidents again, but there'll never be another Camelot."

The musical was also adapted into a 1967 motion picture. But, there's nothing like a "live" performance to provide full enjoyment of this fine musical, and such an opportunity now awaits you at Glimmerglass Music Festival. The production is first class in every aspect.

The role of Lancelot is handsomely played by Nathan Gunn, a Metropolitan Opera star, who is spending his summer at Glimmerglass as Artist in Residence. Gunn projects in both voice and physical appearance the passion of a man of honor who wishes to serve this noble king. Canadian soprano Adriana Chuchman is Guenevere. She embraces the role with clarity and pathos. As King Arthur, David Pittsinger – remembered for his riveting performance two years ago as Eugene O'Neill in the Glimmerglass production of *A Blizzard on Marblehead Neck* – is once more a commanding presence.

The supporting roles...those of the Round Table knights and the ladies of the court...are performed with total vocal and movement excellence in their singular and ensemble scenes.

This production of *Camelot* is no "Broadway light." This is a fully-staged performance. The settings are imaginative for both the interior of the castle and the surrounding woods...the costumes are glamorous on the ladies...and the men are armored for jousts and/or battle.

The orchestra, under the direction of James Lowe, is well-balanced – and it's always a pleasure when singers can project and be heard without the necessity of mics.

So...in response to the question and musings about encountering Camelot...here is an opportunity to experience this wonderful musical.

*Camelot* plays throughout the summer at the Glimmerglass Music Festival in Cooperstown, New York.

This is Herbert Wolff for WAMC.