

## Ohio Light Opera: *Brigadoon* opening performance (June 13)

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*Special to ClevelandClassical*



When Broadway composer Frederick Loewe and lyricist Alan Jay Lerner first proposed a musical based on the legend of Brigadoon, it was suggested that they change its setting from Scotland to the US. Fortunately, cooler heads prevailed, and here we are 68 years later with a sparkling production of *Brigadoon* that opened the Ohio Light Opera 2015 season last Saturday evening, and will run in repertory through August 7.

The legend of Brigadoon is surely among the most romantic tales ever told. It presents love, in all its guises, pure and simple, with just a wee bit of fantasy here and there. It's sort of an early example of time-travel, but to present it onstage with real people must have presented a huge challenge to stage technicians in March, 1947. However, the music was up to every demand. Even though they'd not yet established themselves on Broadway, Lerner and Loewe were well past the neophyte stage.

One mark of success is when audience members leave the theater humming melodies from the performance they've just seen. With songs like "I'll Go Home with Bonnie Jean," "Waitin' for My Dearie," "Come to Me, Bend to Me," and "Almost Like Being in Love," it was a banquet of gorgeous melodies. Granted, there were a few little bumps along the way, but nothing insurmountable.

If you remember the movie, you will not be disappointed in this version, with wonderful choreography by Carol Hageman, in conjunction with the fast-paced action established

by stage director Jacob Allen. The youngish cast is fully capable of providing all the emotion for which one could wish. The musicals of Lerner and Loewe require voices that are equally at home in opera and on Broadway. That is not a problem for OLO.



Costumer Charlene Gross had a full wardrobe of colorful plaids at her disposal, and they swirled and swung through the rousing dances. The multi-purpose set, with its looming trees on either side of the proscenium, was properly ominous in the night, but sunny in the daylight. The stage design by Michael Benson and lighting by Erich Keil enhanced every scene.

Another of OLO's great strengths is the marvelous full-sized orchestra, which somehow sounds better every year. Conductor J. Lynn Thompson kept a good pace throughout. There was even a piper in residence during the village fair in the second act: Victor Welsch.

As for the cast? It would be very difficult — if not impossible — to improve on this group of vocally and visually perfect singer/actors. OLO veteran baritone Nathan Brian as Tommy Albright has to be the romantic hero every young miss dreams of, tall and handsome with a gorgeous voice that can croon softly, or fill the house with sumptuous sound. Soprano Katherine Polit as Fiona is making her OLO debut this season, but is equally at home in the role. Soprano Emily Hagens plays her younger sister, Jean, whose beau, Charlie Dalrymple (tenor Stephen Faulk), nearly brought down the house with his rendition of "I'll Go Home with Bonnie Jean."



The fantasy element of *Brigadoon* begins with a hunting trip by two New Yorkers — Tommy and his friend Jeff Douglas (the dashing baritone Brad Baron). They suddenly find themselves in a place that apparently does not exist. At least, it certainly is not on their map — Brigadoon is not on any current map. It comes to life only one day every hundred years, as the result of a centuries-old ‘miracle.’ Only true, unending love can effect this miracle. Jeff wants to go back home, but having fallen in love with Fiona, Tommy is reluctant. After hearing the explanation of the ‘miracle’ by Mr. Lundie, the village schoolmaster (wonderfully portrayed by Ted Christopher), the two vow to depart. However, if any of the natives should leave, the village will disappear.

Of course, once back in New York without the fiancée he left behind, Tommy quickly realizes he has to go back to Scotland. Jeff is a bit hesitant, primarily because of ‘mad’ Meg Brockie, the village witch, exuberantly portrayed by Olivia Maughan. Nevertheless, they do return, and Tommy and Fiona are happily reunited. And the others? Well... go see for yourself!

*Brigadoon* plays through Friday, August 7. Click [here](#) for show times and ticket information.

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