

Ohio Light Opera: Emmerich Kálmán's *The Little Dutch Girl* (July 27)

by Kelly Ferjutz
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Most people attending operettas don't expect the plot to make much sense, thus avoiding a fair amount of confusion. A perfect example is *The Little Dutch Girl*, a delightful work by Emmerich Kálmán — and the final show in Ohio Light Opera's seven-production schedule to open the season.

At one time, Kálmán's name was frequently mentioned in the same context as that of Franz Lehár, Oscar Straus and Leo Fall, who today are all still better known than Kálmán. Thanks to artistic director Steven Daigle, this is the twelfth Kálmán work (out of twenty) to be produced by OLO. Daigle also doubles here as stage director.

The Little Dutch Girl (originally known as *Das Hollandweibchen*) is filled from beginning to end with lovely, enchanting, and exuberant action and music, plus a lot of dancing, especially in the short second act. The plot is loosely based on an early Hungarian movie which so impressed Kálmán and his librettists Leo Stein and Béla Jenbach that they promptly converted it into an operetta. Replete with nostalgia, it opened in 1920 in Vienna.

The plot? Um, sure thing. A prince of one country is betrothed to a princess of another country shortly after her birth, so we already know there will be at least one rebellion. Sure enough, Prince Paul (Clark Sturdevant) refuses to be married to a girl he's never even seen, regardless of how lovely she's reported to be. Princess Jutta (Meagan Sill) is content with the arrangement, and her whole court is aglitter in anticipation — seeing the entire company onstage at once was very impressive!



Baroness Elly (Jessamyn Anderson), Jutta's best friend, is assisted by the chatelaine Sallina (Gretchen Windt) and the Lord Chamberlain, von Stopp (Benjamin Krumreig) in preparing the princess for the wedding. But Dr. Udo von Sterzel (Samus Haddad), the Prince's ambassador, arrives to inform the princess that there will be no wedding, because the groom has disappeared. He refuses to say where the Prince is, but eventually that little tid-bit is wormed out of him, and the entire court packs up to journey to the port in Holland where the prince has traveled on his yacht.



As the second act opens, Jutta and Elly find themselves dealing with a grumpy hotel owner. His two nieces, Bella and Katje, were expected to help out as serving girls, but

they have not appeared. No matter, Jutta and Elly will substitute! One look and Paul has fallen tail over teakettle for Jutta. Arriving a bit later, von Sterzel has become enamored with Elly (as would any man with working eyes in his head to see Jessamyn Anderson).

Jutta's chamberlain, Stopp, joins with the two young ladies to cavort around the stage as though they're on steroids, singing and dancing and laughing all the while. The ministers from each country insist the wedding must take place, but Paul is still adamantly against it. He much prefers Bella! In a stunning turnabout, Bella reverts to her real self as the Princess and dumps him, reveling in the revenge she has exacted.

Two days later in Jutta's palace, both courts are again assembled. Wine is called for and the two young women join Stopp and Sterzel in a rousing quartet. Sterzel proposes to Elly, and she agrees, but with conditions. Paul begs Jutta for forgiveness, and after a few more shenanigans, she decides — to make him wait a bit longer for her final answer.



The pacing is *furiante* in this piece, with everyone rushing here and there, but it all works wonderfully well. This production genuinely puts the comedy into 'musical comedy.' It was delightful seeing veteran performer Spiro Matsos onstage for his 35th season at OLO. He was engaging as Von Ooppel, minister of Usingen.

Steven Byess conducts the OLO orchestra for this production, with choreography by Spencer Reese. The impressive sets are by Tymberley Whitesel while the costumes, both

chic and rustic, are by Stefanie Genda. Daniel Huston is the lighting director.

There are three more performances of *The Little Dutch Girl*: Tuesday, August 2 at 2 pm, Saturday August 6 at 2 pm, and Thursday, August 11 at 7:30. You really should not miss this *funderful* production. The laughs stay with you for a long while after the curtain comes down.

For ticket information, visit OLO's [website](#) or call the box office at 330.263.2345.

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