

Ohio Light Opera: Season Preview Part Two

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Special to ClevelandClassical.com



The year 1924 features strongly in the 2017 season at Ohio Light Opera. No fewer than three of the seven scores date from that year — and

all are vastly different from each other in setting, style, and country of origin.

It's almost inconceivable that anything by George Gershwin could be having an American premiere some 80 years after his death, but it's a fact! In 1924, George went to England for a bit, perhaps to study the musical comedy era from that viewpoint rather than the one at home in the US. He'd not yet become the success over here that he would achieve a short ten years later.

He wrote *Primrose* for London's West End. It is a sweet, sadly-neglected work that completely deserves its time in the spotlight. It ran for nearly a year before the composer fell in love with jazz, which was quickly rising in popularity in the States. While a production of *Primrose* was considered for New York, it was dismissed as being "too British." Bosh, I say, having seen it.

That same year, another composer was busily at work in America. Sigmund Romberg came up with *The Student Prince* — quite possibly the most well-known and popular of all his works. It hasn't lacked for staged productions, but is much better known for the film version of 1954, in which Edmund Purdom lip-synched to the voice of Mario Lanza in such glorious songs as "Serenade" and "Deep in My Heart, Dear." This year's production is the seventh time it'll be staged in Wooster.

Last, but by no means least, that same tune-filled year saw the premiere of yet another work — this one both famous and popular! Artistic Director Steven Daigle has brought the melodious works of the Hungarian composer Emmerich Kálmán to the forefront, this

year's staging of *Countess Maritza* being the sixth such production. In addition, he's also presented Kálmán's other works nearly once a year since 1993. They are filled with lush melodies that accompany dramatic tales, mostly set in his native Hungary. Once you've heard one of his operettas, you'll always be happy to hear more of them.

The final presentation this year is by the noted Irish-born, American composer/conductor Victor Herbert. He was not afraid to venture into fantastical fields for the subject matter of his operettas. If you were fortunate enough to have seen the 2014 production of "*Dream City and the Magic Knight*" you should be happy with this fanciful retelling of the Cinderella tale, titled *The Lady of the Slipper*. It dates from 1912, and this is its first go-round at Ohio Light Opera.

All productions will be at the Freedlander Theatre on the campus of College of Wooster, from now through Saturday, August 12. For tickets, call 330-263-2345 or visit the OLO [website](#).

Published on ClevelandClassical.com July 12, 2017.

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