

**Ohio Light Opera:
Lerner & Loewe's *Brigadoon***

by Daniel Hathaway



Alan J. Lerner and Frederick Loewe's 1947 *Brigadoon* owes much of its popularity to the familiarity of its music — and people who have never seen the show can find themselves carrying tunes like “The Heather on the Hill,” “Come to Me, Bend to me,” and “Almost Like Being in Love” around in their ears, not knowing where they came from.

Equally as compelling are its Scottish Highland dances, which are numerous, authentic, and as one commentator noted in a review of *Brigadoon*'s debut, so well-integrated into the plot that ‘it is impossible to say where the music and dancing leave off and the story begins.’

Engagingly directed by Jacob Allen, with lively choreography by Spencer Reese, and Wilson Southerland leading the excellent OLO Orchestra, Ohio Light Opera's alluring production of *Brigadoon* opened on June 19 in Freedlander Theater at the College of Wooster.



In accordance with a mystical charter enacted two centuries ago, the Scottish village of Brigadoon rises out of the mist for a single day every hundred years, provided that none of the villagers seize that window of opportunity to leave. But by special arrangement, OLO audiences will have a dozen opportunities to visit this summer, with performances running through August 1.

The story begins when one morning, when Tommy Albright (Jack Murphy) and Jeff Douglas (Spencer Reese), game hunting tourists from New York, stumble across a village in Scotland that doesn't show up on their map. The denizens of Brigadoon are busy organizing a fair and celebrating the forthcoming marriage of Charlie Dalrymple (Timothy McGowan) to Jean McLaren

(Camryn Finn).

Matters get complicated when Jean's older sister Fiona (Rachel Wresh) and Tommy immediately hit it off — even though Tommy has a fiancé back in New York — and when the “brazen village lass” Meg Brockie (Maggie Langhorne) puts the moves on a reluctant Jeff in a hilarious cat and mouse scene in a shed in the forest. The New Yorkers also piece together bits of evidence that they've been magically transported in time back to the 18th century.



Oh, and meanwhile, the village hothead Harry Beaton (Spencer White) has been infatuated with Jean, leading to a jealous, sword-brandishing standoff incorporated into a Wedding Dance and a Sword Dance at the end of Act One. Harry threatens to leave the village and Tommy accidentally kills him during a frantic search to prevent his escape, setting the stage for a keening solo funeral dance accompanied by a piper.

As Brigadoon's once-in-a-century day draws on, Tommy has to decide whether to stay and enter village life or return to the city. He decides to go back in an emotional scene with Fiona, and the show moves to a bar in New York to muse about love, loss, and the difference between the real and the fantastical. If Tommy and Jeff try to return, will the village still be there?



Simple sets and projections make plenty of room onstage for the full company dances that drive this production, and a fog machine proves to be an essential tool in creating the hazy ambiance of Brigadoon. Clan-specific costumes by Michelle Hunt-Souza added to the show's air of authenticity.

Spencer Reese's choreography fueled the show with kinetic energy, and the company executed it flawlessly — no mean feat for an opening performance. Led by Charlie (Timothy McGowan), the ensemble belted out a rousing "I'll go home with Bonnie Jean," turning up the heat even further for its reprises. As Meg, Maggie Langthorne made a special moment out of "My Mother's Wedding Day," and Fiona and Tommy (Rachel Wresh and Jack Murphy) sang a moving valedictory in "From This Day On."

Jacob Allen's attentive direction was on display in every corner of this production, especially in such details as dialect. The villagers sounded authentic, but their words were still understandable.

Lots of questions remain unanswered at the end of *Brigadoon* — no fault of Ohio Light Opera — but those can wait for the next sighting of the village in a hundred years. Meanwhile, this delightful show is well worth a trip to Wooster.

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