



Opera review: Mozart goes to the movies in LOON's 'Don Giovanni'

By [Lawrance Bernabo, for the News Tribune](#) on Jun 23, 2018 at 1:05 p.m.

◀ 5



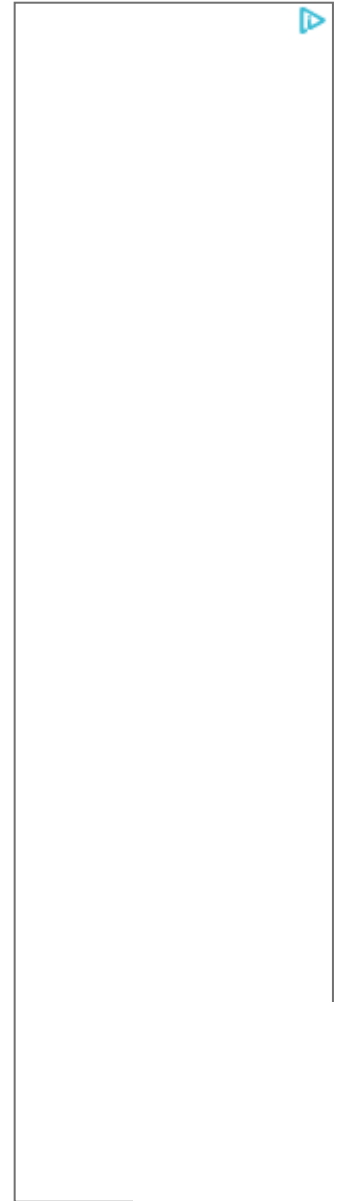
Gennard Lombardozzi (Don Ottavio) performs during a dress rehearsal of Lyric Opera of the North's production of 'Don Giovanni' is set in 1930s Hollywood. Clint Austin / caustin@duluthnews.com

A hallmark of Lyric Opera of the North productions is that the staging is as important as the singing. With their Mozart meets the movies production of "Don Giovanni," LOON once again has a show to enchant first-timers while enthralling longtime opera devotees.

Stage director Christina Baldwin setting the opera in 1930s Hollywood is a cleverly exploited conceit that pays immediate dividends as the overture is staged as shooting a

movie scene. Each LOON chorus members has a distinctive studio personnel role.

Don Giovanni is now a major movie star who assumes every woman wants to sleep with him. Played by Calland Metts, it is easy to believe he is a legendary lover, especially when he turns on the charm in his "Deh vieni alla finestra" serenade.



But this production's mission is to reduce the lecherous lothario to a ludicrous libertine (it is so deliciously meta Metts is television's Happy Sleeper guy). You have to laugh at the idea a movie icon puts on a small black mask or exchanges a cloak for a scarf and is suddenly totally unrecognizable.

Lee Gregory's LOON debut as Leporello, Don Giovanni's assistant, is a resounding success. Gregory's rich baritone voice resonates throughout the evening. He shows a flair for mugging, juggling and using a variety of props during "Madamina, il catalogo è questo."

Leporello is now comic without being a clown, since servants being smarter than their rich bosses is more tragic reality than comic contrivance in modern times.

As Donna Elvira, Vicki Fingalson charts the opera's arc of passion, from full-throated vengeance in "Ah, chi mi dice mai" to compassionate pity in "Mi tradi quell'alma ingrata" as she gets ready for her close-up.

Erin Persick's Zerlina was another major delight of the evening, sweetly wielding a sword while singing "Batti, batti o bel Masetto" in the first act and playfully delivering the innuendo inundated "Vedrai carino" in the second. William Bryan's towering Masetto, wearing lederhosen and carrying a sheep, is a charming foil to her entreaties.

As Don Ottavio, tenor Gennard Lombardozzi has his moment in a rather pesky spotlight with "Il mio tesoro," providing a lovely mix of tone and technique. This is matched later when soprano Sarah Lawrence, as his fiancé Donna Anna, delivers an exquisite "Non mi dir."

Then there is bass Andrew Gangestad as Il Commendatore, the statue ex machina with the death stare who puts the unrepentant Don Giovanni on a final red carpet...to Hell. Small part, big voice, big impact.

The recitatives are done in English and unnecessarily accompanied by supratitles. Understanding what is being said is not a problem, and it was distracting when what we could read and hear did not match up.

The first opera in the new NorShor sounds great, even with conductor Dirk Meyer's orchestra stationed under the stage.

Ann Gumpfer's scenic design extends the NorShor's artwork over the dressing room doors, and the two ladies flanking the stage have their moments to shine as well.

If you go

What: Lyric Opera of the North's production of Mozart's "Don Giovanni"

Where: NorShor Theatre, 211 E. Superior St.

When: 3 p.m. Sunday

Tickets: Adults \$38-60; Students \$15. Available at NorShor Box Office, (218) 733-7555 or at www.loonopera.org (<http://www.loonopera.org>) .

ADVERTISEMENT