



Ressort: Kunst, Kultur und Musik

A Delightful Celebration of Viennese Charm

Bühne Baden, 02.09.2024 [ENA]

The recent performance of Johann Strauss's operetta *Wiener Blut* was a resounding success, offering a delightful and joyous tribute to the beloved spirit of Vienna. Led by the musical direction of Michael Zehetner and staged under the expert guidance of director Michael Lakner, this production brought to life the wit, elegance, and effervescence that defines Strauss's work.

The audience was treated to a night of humor, romance, and unforgettable melodies, all set against the backdrop of 19th-century Vienna's glamorous social scene. With superb musical direction, charming performances, and exquisite visual design, this *Wiener Blut* was a captivating and enchanting experience. Under the baton of Michael Zehetner, the orchestra played Strauss's iconic score with both precision and flair. From the very first notes of the overture, it was clear that the evening would be a celebration of Strauss's genius as the King of the Waltz. Zehetner's conducting was masterful, capturing the buoyant rhythms and lilting melodies that characterize Strauss's music.

The orchestra's performance was crisp and lively, bringing out the nuances of the score and infusing it with the infectious energy and warmth that makes *Wiener Blut* so beloved. The music was further enhanced by the inclusion of some of Strauss's most famous waltzes, including the titular "Wiener Blut" waltz, which encapsulates the spirit of Vienna—its charm, sophistication, and joie de vivre. Zehetner's direction ensured that these moments were highlights of the evening, drawing the audience into the sweeping, romantic world of Strauss's Vienna. Each orchestral passage was delivered with elegance and precision, creating an atmosphere of lightness and joy that resonated throughout the performance.

Director Michael Lakner brought a fresh and imaginative approach to the staging of *Wiener Blut*, striking a perfect balance between tradition and innovation. Lakner's direction was both witty and sophisticated, capturing the humor and irony of the operetta's narrative while staying true to the essence of Strauss's work. The pacing of the production was brisk, maintaining the lighthearted energy and keeping the audience engaged from start to finish.

Lakner's skillful use of the stage ensured that the complex web of romantic entanglements in the story was presented clearly and effectively. The farcical elements of the plot were handled with a deft touch, emphasizing the comedic timing and situational humor that are integral to the operetta's charm. The staging of the ball scene, where all of Count Zedlau's love interests meet, was particularly well-executed, capturing

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the chaos and confusion with a delightful sense of playfulness. Lakner's direction made full use of the physical comedy, ensuring that every moment was filled with lively interaction and clever visual humor.

The production's visual elements, crafted by set designer Erich Uiberlacker and costume designer Friederike Friedrich, were nothing short of stunning. Uiberlacker's sets were a feast for the eyes, evoking the opulence and grandeur of 19th-century Vienna. The design of the ballroom, with its glittering chandeliers and elegant furnishings, transported the audience to a world of aristocratic glamour, while the rustic charm of the Heuriger in Hietzing provided a perfect contrast, highlighting the operetta's exploration of Vienna's diverse social settings.

Friederike Friedrich's costumes were equally impressive, capturing the elegance and style of the period. The lavish gowns worn by the female characters were beautifully crafted, each one reflecting the personality of the wearer. Gabriele's sophisticated attire stood in stark contrast to the more playful and flirtatious outfits worn by Franziska Cagliari and Pepi Pleininger, visually emphasizing the differences in their characters. The attention to detail in the costumes added an extra layer of authenticity to the production, enhancing the overall sense of immersion in the world of Wiener Blut.

The success of this production was due in no small part to the exceptional performances of the cast, who brought their characters to life with charm and charisma. As Balduin Graf Zedlau, Clemens Kerschbaumer was delightful, perfectly embodying the carefree and flirtatious nature of the character. Kerschbaumer's comedic timing was impeccable, and his tenor voice was both powerful and expressive, making his scenes a highlight of the performance. His portrayal of the Count's attempts to juggle his various romantic entanglements was both endearing and amusing, earning him well-deserved laughter and applause from the audience.

Sieglinde Feldhofer's portrayal of Gabriele, the Count's wife, was equally compelling. Feldhofer brought a sense of grace and dignity to the role, and her soprano voice was clear and resonant, particularly in her more introspective moments. Her character's emotional journey, from suspicion to reconciliation, was portrayed with nuance and sensitivity, adding depth to the operetta's comedic narrative.

Nicole Lubinger shone as Franziska Cagliari, the vivacious dancer who captures the Count's fancy. Lubinger's performance was full of energy and charisma, her vibrant stage presence perfectly matching the character's lively personality. Her scenes were infused with a sense of fun and spontaneity, and her chemistry with Kerschbaumer's Count was palpable. Verena Barth-Jurca also gave a delightful performance as Pepi Pleininger, the lively and flirtatious maid. Barth-Jurca's comedic instincts were spot-on, and her playful interactions with the other characters added to the production's overall sense of joy and merriment.

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Franz Frickel as Fürst Ypsheim-Gindelbach and Andy Lee Lang as Kagler, the carousel owner, provided strong support, their performances adding humor and depth to the story. Beppo Binder's portrayal of Josef, the Count's loyal valet, was also noteworthy, with his comedic presence contributing to the production's lighthearted atmosphere.

This production of Wiener Blut was a joyous celebration of Viennese culture, capturing the spirit of the city through its music, humor, and elegance. The collaboration between Michael Zehetner, Michael Lakner, and the talented cast and crew resulted in a performance that was both faithful to Strauss's vision and refreshingly contemporary.

The operetta's themes of love, mischief, and the pursuit of happiness resonated deeply, reminding us of the timeless appeal of Strauss's work.

The audience's enthusiastic response, marked by frequent applause and laughter, was a testament to the success of the production. This Wiener Blut was more than just an operetta; it was an experience that transported its audience to a world of beauty, charm, and joy, showcasing the enduring power of Strauss's music and the vibrancy of Viennese cultural heritage. It was a night to remember, filled with the magic of waltzes, the sparkle of chandeliers, and the timeless allure of Wiener Blut.

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