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Lotte de Beer?s Perspectival Masterstroke

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Lotte de Beer's revelatory production of Mozart's Le Nozze di Figaro, premiered at Festival d'Aix-en-Provence in 2021 and now electrifying Vienna Volksoper through June 2026, transforms Beaumarchais's "folle journée" into a kaleidoscopic meditation on sex, power, and perspective. Each act reframes the Almaviva household through a different lens—Count, Susanna, Countess, Barbarina—yielding four distinct visual worlds.

These worlds illuminate Mozart and Da Ponte's subversive genius with MeToo-era acuity. Lotte de Beer's podium mastery, wielding hammerklavier continuo, propelled the evening with theatrical propulsion, balancing buffa sparkle and dramma giocoso depth. Act I erupts in the Count's garish sitcom palace: neon-drenched rooms evoking reality TV farce, with oversized bed, spiral staircase, and servants' laundry chaos. Pablo Santa Cruz's Figaro—baritonal swagger incarnate—measured the bridal chamber with "Se vuol ballare," his earthy timbre slicing through the orchestra's bubbling strings.

Lauren Urquhart's Susanna sparkled with Viennese Schnitzelwitz, her crystalline soprano navigating "Via restate!" with razor wit. As the predatory Count, Michael Arivony's bass-baritone oozed aristocratic menace, his "La vendetta" a chilling vow that Wellber underscored with ominous woodwinds. Susanna's Act II vista plunges into psychedelic anarchy: collapsing walls, graffiti-scrawled Cherubino murals, costumes exploding into carnival excess. Annelie Sophie Müller's trouser-role Cherubino embodied adolescent hormonal frenzy, her mezzo soaring in "Non so più," voice blooming like forbidden fruit amid Rae Smith's revolving set.

Ulrike Steinsky's Marcellina—mezzo of molten fury—clashed gloriously with Santa Cruz in the recognition sextet, their sudden mother-son embrace a comic coup de théâtre. Urquhart's "Deh vieni" aria, cradling the disguised page, ached with poignant sensuality, Wellber's lithe tempos revealing Mozart's symphonic architecture. The Countess's Act III shifts to glacial modernism: a glass-cubed bed under neon strobes, evoking emotional isolation. If the cast list promised vocal fireworks, reality delivered transcendence—Theresa Dax's Susanna dueting "Sull'aria" with the Countess (cast rotating, but evoking Sabine Devieilhe's Aix purity), their voices intertwining like silken threads.

Stefan Cerny's buffo Bartolo blustered hilariously, while Timothy Fallon's oily Basilio slithered through "In quei fumi." Wellber's hammerklavier punctuated the concertante with crystalline bite, honoring

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Mozart's fortepiano mandate. Barbarina's Act IV culminates in surreal domesticity: a colossal crocheted tree sprouts from the bed, figures donning gender-fluid knitwear that blurs master-servant binaries. Jaye Simmons's Barbarina—heartbreaking in "L'ho perduta"—embodied innocence ravaged, her fragile soprano piercing the night.

The garden finale's "commedia degli equivoci" unfolded in choreographed frenzy (Roger Díaz-Cajamarca's precise staging), climaxing with the Count's humiliated kneel. Santa Cruz's vengeful "Aprite un po' quegli occhi" earlier seethed with cuckolded rage, resolved in collective forgiveness. Jorine van Beek's costumes—sitcom vulgarity to haute couture abstraction—mirrored the perspectival shift, Alex Brok's lighting morphing from garish fluorescents to shadowy intimacy.

De Beer's direction, hailed at Aix for "virtuosic efficacy" and feminist edge, avoids didacticism: phallic props and power inversions amplify Mozart's class warfare without preaching. Wellber, stepping in after Ben Glassberg's illness, infused the score with idiomatic zest—overture's Sturm und Drang fury yielding to lyrical expanses, winds trilling like mischievous sprites. Volksoper's chorus, drilled by Díaz-Cajamarca, excelled in the Act IV contredanse. This Figaro—bawdy, profound, visually audacious—confirms de Beer's Volksoper reign and Mozart's eternal relevance. Sex and power remain Figaro's battlefield; love, its triumphant arbiter. Vienna's mad day reaffirms opera's revolutionary soul.

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