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Parisian Violet in a New Light

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Parisian charm, artistic ambition and a heroine discovering her independence form the appealing heart of Bühne Baden's forthcoming "Das Veilchen vom Montmartre." In the Max-Reinhardt-Foyer, this salon adaptation brings Emmerich Kálmán's operetta into an intimate setting. With musical adaptation by Katrin Schweiger and textual adaptation by Juliane Weigel-Krämer and Cornelia Ertl.

This directorial debut promises an affectionate yet questioning encounter with the work. Its central proposition is enticing: familiar romance reconsidered through the women who give the story its emotional life. Ertl's enthusiasm is rooted in a declared love of operetta and of Kálmán in particular. Yet affection has sharpened rather than softened her critical response. Repeated readings left her increasingly dissatisfied with the painter Raoul Delacroix, prompting a significant change: Violetta's eventual partner in this version is the composer Florimond Hervé. Florimond consequently assumes greater dramatic importance.

The alteration is more than a change of romantic destination; it invites audiences to reconsider which qualities the story rewards, and whose desires determine its resolution. The more substantial shift, however, concerns Violetta and Ninon. Ertl identifies both as the production's guiding figures. Ninon, although financially supported by men, remains determined to pursue her own path. Violetta develops from a shy young girl into a woman capable of deciding how her life should continue. This emphasis gives the interpretation a persuasive foundation: neither woman need be reduced to an object of fascination within a colourful male artistic community.

Their contrasting experiences can instead become the means through which that community is understood. Mariella Hofbauer plays Violetta Cavallini, with Ivana Zdravkova as Ninon. Their roles suggest complementary rather than interchangeable forms of self-possession. One character's growing confidence and the other's determined navigation of dependence offer fertile material for musical storytelling. The attraction of this concept lies in its potential to make a romantic ending feel chosen, not merely arranged. Whether that promise is realised must await performance, but the stated approach offers both singers a clear dramatic purpose.

Musically, the production's scale is especially intriguing. Eight orchestral musicians, in addition to piano, will perform under Ioannis Poulakis. The salon arrangement offers an opportunity to hear relationships between voice and accompaniment with particular attentiveness. Rather than treating reduced forces as a

Redaktioneller Programmdienst:
European News Agency

Annette-Kolb-Str. 16
D-85055 Ingolstadt
Telefon: +49 (0) 841-951. 99.660
Telefax: +49 (0) 841-951. 99.661
Email: contact@european-news-agency.com
Internet: european-news-agency.com

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substitute for grandeur, listeners can approach them as a different expressive resource: one that may bring detail, phrasing and the interplay of individual instrumental colours closer to the centre of the experience.

The treatment of “Heut Nacht hab’ ich geträumt von dir” crystallises that ambition. According to the production materials, this celebrated number is absent from the original piano-vocal score, yet it will feature here in a distinctive form. Assigned to Florimond, it will be accompanied by piano alone. Ertl anticipates that this simplicity will make it especially touching. Dramaturgically, the choice also creates a musical space for the character whose importance the adaptation has increased.

For a musical-theatre audience, the prospect is attractive because it connects arrangement to character. Removing orchestral support can expose the expressive weight of a phrase, while a familiar melody placed in a revised dramatic relationship may acquire fresh significance. The artistic question is not how much sound the production supplies, but how purposefully sound shapes attention. Here, intimacy appears to be a governing idea rather than merely a consequence of venue size.

Ertl sets the action in 1920s Paris, seeking the atmosphere of its bohemian milieu. Christoph Gerhardus appears as Raoul, Branimir Agovi as Henry Murger, and Jens Emmert as Florimond. Michael Duregger undertakes several roles, while Beppo Binder plays the bailiff François Pisquatschec. Ramesh Nair provides choreography, Gerhard Nemec the stage design and Roland Papst the costumes. Together, their contributions will establish the balance between social bustle and private feeling.

This evening offered an attractive invitation: to encounter operetta without assuming that affection requires unquestioning preservation. Its revised relationships and intimate musical resources suggest a production interested in making emotional choices audible. For newcomers and devoted enthusiasts alike, this Parisian violet promises not simply decorative sweetness, but the pleasure of discovering familiar charm illuminated by a fresh perspective.

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European News Agency

Annette-Kolb-Str. 16
D-85055 Ingolstadt
Telefon: +49 (0) 841-951. 99.660
Telefax: +49 (0) 841-951. 99.661
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