

SORCERER PRESS RELEASE

Magic, Mix-Ups and Mayhem in VLO's "The Sorcerer"



When the Valley Light Opera's production of Gilbert & Sullivan's "The Sorcerer" hits the stage for the first two weekends in November, audiences will be treated to even more magical transformations than were originally contained in this rarely performed comic gem. The buoyant mixture of mismatched romance, social satire and the occult sends up everything from snobbery to spiritualism and matrimony to Mozart.

The plot presents a topsy-turvy world that Harry Potter would feel at home in, where a magic spell turns the normal state of affairs on its head. In keeping with the plot's turnabouts, the VLO production – perhaps for the first time ever – casts a woman in the title role.

Performances are November 5-6 and 11-13 (with a reduced-price public dress rehearsal on the 4th) at Amherst Regional High School, 21 Mattoon Street, Amherst. Friday and Saturday performances begin at 8:00 p.m., Sunday matinees at 2:00 p.m. Tickets are \$20, \$17 for seniors and students over 12, and \$5 for children 12 and under. All seating is reserved with advance ticket sales available as described at [TICKETS](#). Tickets are also available at the door starting one hour before curtain time. (Admission to the Nov. 4th public dress is \$10, and \$5 for children 12 & under, paid at the door.)

"The Sorcerer" involves the idealistic but misguided attempt by a young aristocrat to level all class divisions by means of a love potion – which, however, induces confusion and chaos when everyone falls in love with the "wrong" partners. This early collaboration, first produced in 1877, introduced the character types and musical signatures that came to epitomize the Gilbert and Sullivan style. It has been performed only once before by the VLO, in 1988.

"The show is an unjustly neglected gem in the G&S canon," says Chris Rohmann, who is staging the comic operetta with musical director Phil Helzer. "It parodies Victorian class distinctions and social conceits more sharply than in any of the other works, and does it by upending established customs and expectations. We wanted to take that one step further, so we borrowed a gender-switching convention from the British pantomime tradition. In our production, the coveted 'patter song' role that's such a G&S trademark is given to a woman."

In the VLO's "Sorcerer," the title role of J.W. Wells is played by Heather Davies. Matthew Roehrig portrays stuffy Sir Marmaduke Pointdextre and Kathy Blaisdell plays the imperious Lady Sangazure. Alexis, the young nobleman who dreams up the love-potion scheme, is Steven Williams, and VLO newcomer Rebecca Ufema plays his fiancée Aline. Jonathan Evans portrays lovelorn Doctor Daly, Mary Ellen Sailer is "honest and clean" Mrs. Partlet, Elaine Crane plays her daughter Constance, and Glen Gordon performs the rickety old Notary.

Graham Christian is the show's choreographer and Jacqueline Walsh is stage manager. Set design is by Chris Riddle, costumes by Elaine Walker, lights by Michael Friedman, technical direction by Steve Morgan and props by Marese Hutchinson. The show is produced by a team headed by Connie Cappelli.

"The Sorcerer" is the 37th fall production of the Valley Light Opera, founded by Bill and Sally Venman in 1975. The VLO produces a fully staged opera and a less formal production each year. Over the years, the group has produced all fourteen Gilbert and Sullivan works as well as other pieces of the period. A community theater made up entirely of volunteers, the VLO promotes broad participation, with a mission to produce excellent light opera and to provide members of the community the opportunity to participate in its productions at all levels, and to afford both participants and audiences enjoyment and a deeper appreciation of light opera. For information on the company and opportunities for getting involved, visit vlo.org or email info@vlo.org.