

# Review: THE AUDITION

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**A wacky night before the opera:** "The Audition," the first show of the Anchorage Opera Dark Night series features Carolyn Morris in horns as Carmen Carmen, John Fraser as the opera workshop director and Liz Millikan as Heddy Ingeborg Giselle Iceberg. Photo: Bill Roth.

Evidence of Anchorage Opera's efforts to get more local singers on stage can be seen in the current production of "Sister Angelica" with an all-Alaskan cast (previously reviewed) and Tuesday evening's "Dark Night" presentation of Martin Kalmanoff's "The Audition." "Audition" is as comic as "Angelica" is tragic and, though the silly music of the former makes no attempt to match the nobility of the latter, the audience at the Discovery Theatre didn't seem to mind, laughing and applauding heartily after each solo.

And there were plenty of solos to applaud. The "plot" involves tryouts for a single open soprano slot at an opera workshop with a bevy of zany cantatrices vying for it with some of the most improbable repertoire ever sung.

Such as "Little Bo Peep" as it might have been written by Handel (as sung by Annie Nilsson), "Humpty Dumpty" as envisioned by the 8 year old Wagner (Mary Olsen), "I Love Little Pussy" from the pen of Richard Strauss (Liz Millikan), or the entire plot and music of "Aida" abridged to 3 minutes (Hedwig Faber). A nervous non-student (Nancy Guiley) belted out "Resolutions for Singers" to which a costumed Valkyrie (Carolyn Morris) responded with "Resolutions for Critics." And then there was the lady who claimed to have channeled an aria from "the missing act of 'La Boheme'" (Dorothy Hight).

Throughout, the director (John Fraser) wrestled with exasperation, particularly when one man showed up accompanying himself to an aria from "Magic Flute" while riding a unicycle (Gunnar Knapp) and another tried to pass himself off as a Russian diva in a bright pink robe (Martin Eldred).

Most of the arias were clever parodies of the composers' styles; Olsen, for instance, mouthed the last half of Debussy's take on "Jack and Jill" because "the composer marked those bars 'inaudible.'"

But a couple of pieces early on let good singers get serious for a moment. Katie Stevenson, as Fraser's "worthless assistant" had an aria about the grind of auditioning and Laura Albright gave a good performance of "The Kiss" - despite having to do so in the character of a stewardess named "Alice K. Airlines."

Andrew Sweeney, who provided both musical and stage direction and also directs the group Bel Canto, whose singers were featured in the show, had triple duty in that he was also the "worthless accompanist," though his accompaniment was perfectly serviceable for this kind of farce.

After this amusing fluff, Anchorage Opera's double bill of "Angelica" and "I Pagliacci" resumes at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, 8 p.m. Friday and 4 p.m. on Sunday, in the Discovery Theatre.