

Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*, the opening work of Granite State Opera's 2004-05 season, was a production that more than pleased the audience.

Performed last weekend at the Capitol Center for the Arts under the direction of Philip Lauriat, Granite State Opera's artistic director, the opera was greeted with frequent outbursts of laughter at the comedic situations.

The wild ovation at the end more resembled what's usually reserved for a winning football game than an operatic performance.

The outrageously funny situations of the plot and the way they are happily resolved are enough to make a hit play on their own. But Mozart's music, as sung by the cast and played by the Granite State Opera orchestra, remains the star attraction.

It's his ability to write music that's so familiar that you keep saying to yourself "Oh, I know that tune!" that makes *Marriage of Figaro* remain so popular after 200 years, and the cast and musicians were up to the task of bringing it to life.

At the Friday night performance, all the cast members were stars, and so many of the leads had voices that matched the great melodies of their arias.

The leading roles of Figaro and Susanna were played by David Cushing and Heather Parker, who both acted and sang their roles to perfection. Paula Murrihy, who didn't look like the boy she was supposed to be, sang the top hit tune of the entire opera, "Voi che sapete," to everyone's satisfaction.

Janice Edwards as Marcellina (who wants to marry Figaro but then finds out she's his mother!) gives one of her best performances in this role that I've seen. Another top star of the show was David Kravitz as the lecherous Count Almaviva. Kravitz has a wonderful voice, but his stage mannerisms are also really impressive and he has an innate comedic gift.

The characters who were indispensable in their supporting roles were Dan Sullivan as Dr. Bartolo, Darren Anderson as the Music Master Don Basilio, Sol Kim Bradley as Barbarina, daughter of the Count's gardener (played by Nikolas Nackley) and Beth Signoretti and Joelle Morris as Contadine.

Also, the ensemble of eleven "peasants, villagers and servants" contributed a lot to the hilarity. They're usually not mentioned in reviews, but they deserve it.

Credit should be given for the excellent staging and lighting effects. The two shafts of light projected on the stage's rear shifted from scene to scene to nearer the horizontal showing the single day's time span for the plot action in an ingenious way.

Granite State Opera's next production will be Verdi's *Rigoletto*, to be performed at the Capitol Center for the Arts on April 29 and May 1, 2005.