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The Marriage of Figaro



The HGO has a proud tradition of giving young singers a chance to shine in fully staged productions and they are doing some particularly high level in the performance I saw (there are two alternating casts) Thomas Chenhall, a recent graduate from the Royal Academy of Music, has a fine baritone voice of real power – and he can back it up when needed with dramatic passion. I loved his performance of *Vedro mentr'io sospiro* as he swears that his servant will not enjoy a 'treat' that is denied to him. Camilla Harris as the Countess gave all the sadness and gravity needed for *Porgi amor* and, though I thought the direction made her and Susanna behave like pals rather than mistress and maid, it did yield a wonderful moment when she starts to imitate Susanna's less refined voice in Act 4 and the maid is outraged. Shafali Jalota was a fine Susanna, as much the source of the Count's undoing as her fiancé, and Louis Hurst was a vigorous and inventive Figaro with a deeper bass baritone voice than I am used to for this role but which fitted the military background – sergeant rather than barber perhaps? Esme Bronwen-Smith was a persuasively confused Cherubino. A final word for Becca Marriott as a very unusual black marketeer Marcellina – well sung and very funny.

The stage at Jacksons Lane is small but the inventive design gave us lots to look at, though I never quite came to terms with the mobile booth in which the Count usually arrived. And the strobe-lit Zeppelin raid that disrupted the wedding ceremony and reduced the mansion to metaphorical ruins was visually arresting but dramatically confusing. Mintzer followed the new convention of ending the opera without any real reconciliation between the Count and Countess despite the message in the music – I am all for a suspension of modern disbelief here. Despite these reservations, I welcome the HGO team's musical mastery and their obvious desire to refresh this old masterpiece and to send the audience away with a lot to talk about.

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Opera

Music Wolfgang Amadeuse Mozart

Libretto: Lorenzo Da Ponte

Director: Julia Mintzer

Conductor: Thomas Payne  
Producer: Hampstead Garden Opera  
Performers include: Thomas Chenhall, Camilla Harris, Shafali Jalota, Louis Hurst.  
Venue: [Jacksons Lane Arts Centre, Highgate \(https://www.jacksonslane.org.uk\)](https://www.jacksonslane.org.uk)  
Until: the 14th of November 2021  
Running time: 3 Hours 15 Minutes

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

[Owen Davies \(https://playstosee.com/author/owenmdavies/\)](https://playstosee.com/author/owenmdavies/).

Owen Davies was brought up in London but has Welsh roots. He was raised on chapel hymns, Handel oratorios and Mozart arias. He began going to the theatre in the 1960s and, as a teenager, used to stand at the back of the Old Vic stalls to watch Olivier's National Theatre productions. He also saw many RSC productions at the Aldwych in the 1960s. At this time he also began to see operas at Covent Garden and developed a love for Mozart, Verdi and Richard Strauss. After a career as a social worker and a trade union officer, Owen has retired from paid employment but is a student at Rose Bruford College studying for a BA in Opera Studies.

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