

LOST IN THE STARS

By Kurt Weill

Opera Theatre of Pittsburgh, Virginia Arts Festival and Virginia Stage Company

April 25-April 27

Attucks Theatre

For tickets call 757-671-81

April 26 at 8:00 PM; Sunday at 4:00 PM

Hello, I'm Edgar Loessin with Loessin at Large.

If you act immediately, you still have an opportunity to see this masterpiece of musical theatre that opened in New York in 1949. Shows of this crowning achievement rarely happen on Broadway any more. It stands alone as an eloquent pinnacle of the combination of a superior score and a deeply sensitive book in the hands of hands of exceptional theatre craftsmen.

This epic musical is based on the novel *CRY, THE BELOVED COUNTRY* by Alan Paton. Set in apartheid South Africa it tells the story of a black priest and his family whose lives are entwined with a white planter and his son. It deals with the wrongs of apartheid but is mainly a tale of redemption and reconciliation through shared grief and understanding told with very detailed universal human behavior.

In the story, the young folks leave the rural hills of South Africa for the lures of the gold mines in Johannesburg. Stephen Kumalo, a priest, Herbert Perry, who with a powerful baritone and great emotional depth as an actor, performs with glory. He receives a letter from his brother in the city. It seems Kumalo's son, the most impressive and charismatic Eugene Perry, is running with a bad crowd. The father makes the arduous journey to rescue his son. He discovers that the boy is living with a pregnant girl friend, Irina, the stunningly unique, Dzidzodd Avouglan (Dee-zo-fay A-vu-glan) who captures the Weill musical style perfectly with her warm, rich soprano.. Ultimately the son murders a white man, who was an advocate for blacks, ironically, and is hanged.

It is the unforgettable Kurt Weill score that provides the soaring grandeur of this special theatre event. But, there must be talented singers and a knowledgeable production staff on hand to bring any theatre work to life. Here there is such a luxurious abundance of talent that I can't begin to name them all. At the helm is internationally acclaimed conductor Julius Rudel leading members of the Virginia Symphony. Director Jonathon Eaton has come up with a brilliantly simple production designed by Danila Korogodsky. Stephen Neely has directed a super fine chorus of 48 voices that is a show unto itself. Our own Larry J. Giddens sings the role of The Leader with noble strength and presence. Martin Giles as the white planter is a captivating actor who finds many layers of this troubled man. There are several other excellent performances that time prevents me from mentioning in this exceptional cast of 34.

The Attucks Theatre lends itself perfectly for this work. The chorus occupies the boxes outside the proscenium which is most effective. The intimacy of the building and easy parking right at the door make it one of our most pleasant venues to visit.

LOST IN THE STARS is one of my top ten experiences out of 60 plus years of going to the theatre. Here's a chance to add it to your list. Call 757-671-8100 right now.

This is Edgar Loessin with Loessin at Large and I'll see you at the next opening..