The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

History Hits a High Note in 'Count Orlov'

By Felix White-Thomson

June 22, 2015



If you enjoy being told a good story and even like having a good story sung at you, the hit musical "Count Orlov" may be right up your alley. But if a story is sung at you in a completely different language with important plot points and exposition filtered through an endless series of vowels and quavering melismas, this night at the light opera might pose a slightly more daunting prospect.

I expected the evening to be challenging. And so it was with a certain wariness that I entered the Moscow Operetta Theater on Friday to watch a production of "Count Orlov," which is one of Moscow's most successful plays. The play is set in the second half of the 18th century, during the reign of Catherine the Great, and deals with the usual tropes of love, deceit, betrayal and death. With a libretto written by renowned playwright Yuly Kim and music written by Roman Ignatyev, the cast and crew have won numerous awards since the show opened three seasons ago. The current run coincides with the release of the production's new English-language website.

Visually the show is very impressive, with excellent choreography, sets and costume design, and the music is suitably dramatic and emotive. However, none of this makes the story any

easier to follow. There is no English program available at the theater, so you should commit the website's synopsis to memory ahead of time. While I was able to understand the occasional line of dialogue, my knowledge of Russian was not up to scratch to keep up with the narrative. Sometimes the lyrics were drowned out by the incredibly loud music, so at least I had something else to blame my incomprehension on.

A familiarity with the story, good Russian (spoken and sung), and a love of musical theater in general is more or less a prerequisite for anyone wishing to get the most out of the evening. That said, it's perfectly possible to enjoy the visuals and music without knowing Russian — although it's still worth reading the synopsis if you want to follow the plot.

Operetta Theater, 6 Ulitsa Bolshaya Dmitrovka. Metro Okhotny Ryad, Teatralnaya. 495-925-5050. At 7 p.m. Until June 28. Tickets are available at www.orlov-musical.ru/eng/.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2015/06/22/history-hits-a-high-note-in-count-orlov-a47584