

Dal Music serves 'The Elixir of Love'

by Danny Robichaud

Recently I had the pleasure of interviewing three women from the Dalhousie Music Department. Kristen Kuttner, Heather MacKay, and Paula Phillips are triple-cast for the lead in the comic opera *The Elixir of Love* by Gaetano Donizetti. The opera is building up for a climactic opening this week. It runs from Thursday, January 25, to Saturday, January 27. It is directed by music professor Jeff Morris and will be performed in the James Dunn Theatre at the Arts Centre. Tickets are \$8 for students and seniors and \$10 for adults.

→ Tell us about *The Elixir of Love*. Is it a romantic or a tragic opera?

It is very much a romantic

opera. It deals with a love triangle between a naive young man, an educated, confident woman, and a police sergeant. At the opening, the women, Adina, tells the story of Tristan and Isolde in which Tristan drinks the elixir of love and Isolde falls in love with him. The opera shows the young man, Nemorino, being given a bottle of wine which he believes is a magic potion. He thinks it will give him enough confidence to win over Adina. Meanwhile, Sgt. Belcore comes in with his troops and sweeps Adina off her feet, but she is only using him to get Nemorino, the man she unconsciously loves.

Opera has a certain style. The movement is flamboyant and big, yet mostly stationary, and the acting is declamatory. Does this make it easier or more challeng-

ing compared to conventional naturalistic theatre?

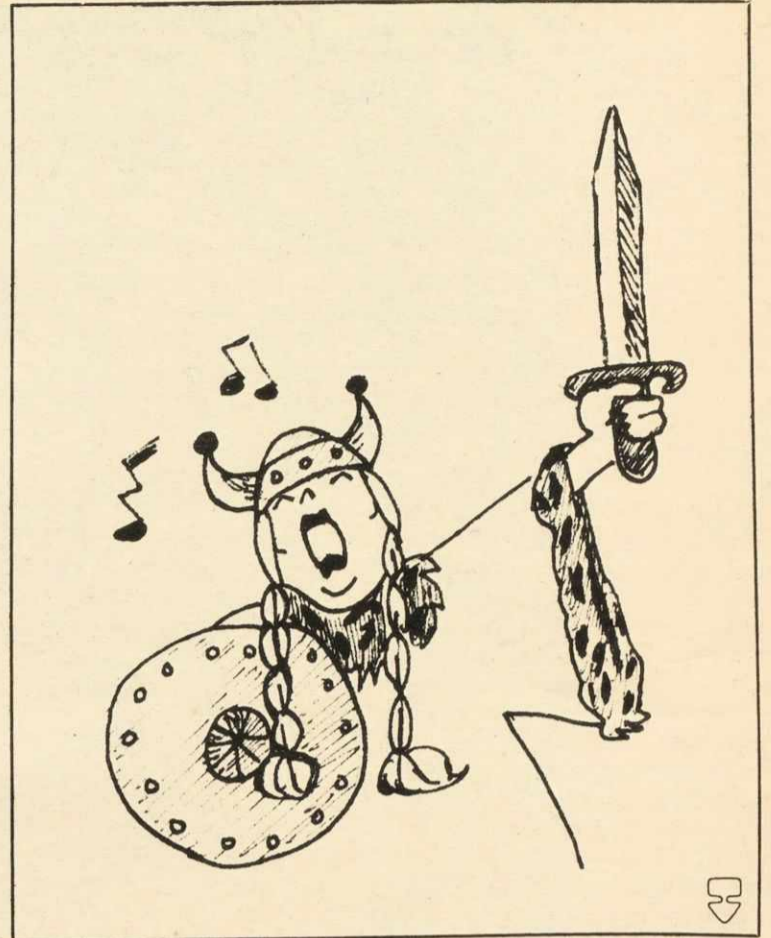
We had a minor conflict about how to stage it. Opera is moving away from simply standing and singing. We are trying to implement as much movement as possible, but the most important this is still the singing. We cannot sacrifice the music for movement. In *The Elixir of Love*, the music calls for movement, and when you have that combination it makes for a better opera. Jeff Morris, the director, has done this particular piece as a singer, so he knows what he is looking for. Jeff likes to mix mime and music in operas and he is very open to suggestions if something is not working.

The female lead is triple-cast, which means you all have just one night each to perform. Do you find this difficult and frustrating?

Yes. We started to work on this in September and it is frustrating to have only one night because if you blow it, there is not second chance. It puts a little more edge on your nerves, but if you have a chance to perform you take it. We also have to say that the reason they triple-cast the lead is to give everybody an opportunity to perform, which is the most important thing.

Is it feasible to perform two operas in a year?

No. In the past they have done several one-act operas, but those do not compare to a full opera. We started rehearsals in September and some of us earlier, so it takes five months to put this



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10:30 am. Worship Service

Sermon — *Fools for Christ*, Rev. Adele Crowell

Music — Gibbons, Mendelssohn, Buxtehude

12:00 pm. College and Careers Luncheon; Topic: Ecumenism

Topic: *Christian Values*

Wednesday, January 31

7-8 pm. *Our Spiritual Journey — Relationships*

Rev. John E. Boyd, Minister

Rev. Adele Crowell, Associate

David MacDonald, Director of Music

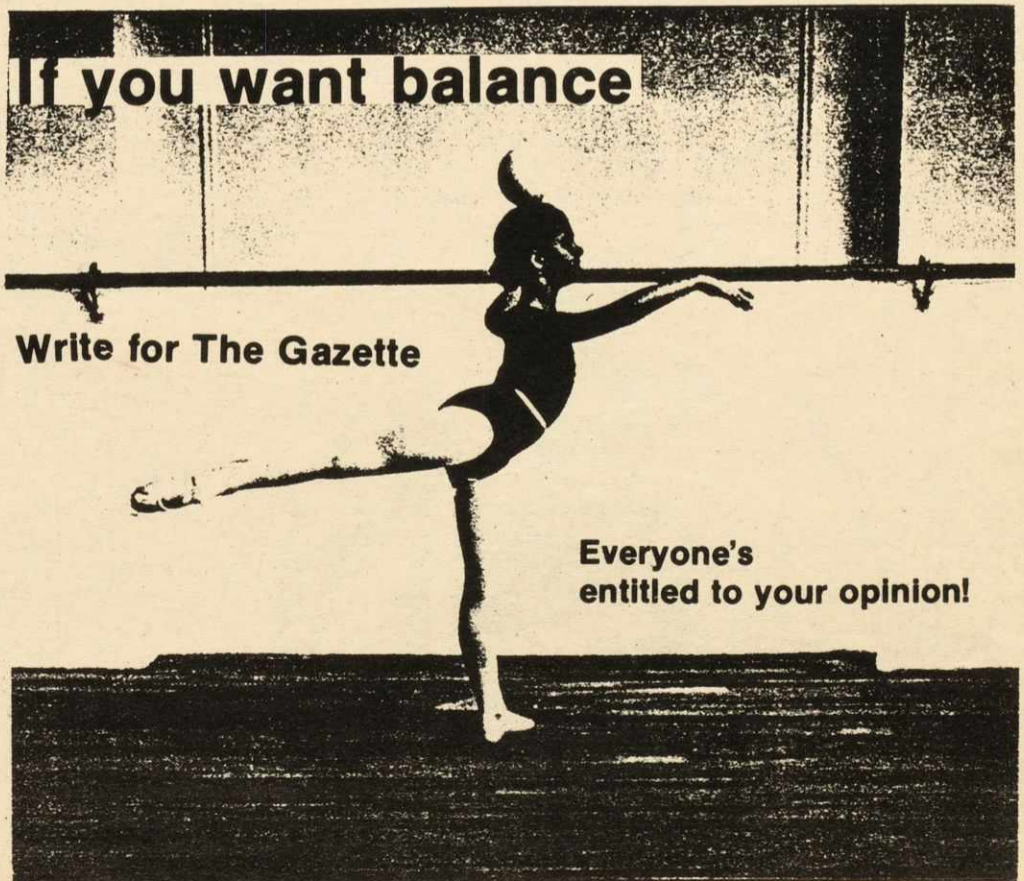
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