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The tenors in Metro Theatre's latest production, from left: Vicente Pimentel, Carlos Vela-Martinez and Mostafa Shaker.
Photo by Tracy-Lynn Chernaske

Great fun in classic farce

By Lorraine Graves
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The mood and locale started with the pre-show announcement. A usual one, but with a twist: "Ladies and gentlemen, as this is Paris 1936 when there are no cell phones so, please turn yours off."

With that, Metro Theatre opened its 56th season of high-quality amateur theatre. This offers a chance to strut the boards for those actors who have opted for regular pay cheques and a career outside theatre. Run by the Metropolitan Co-operative Theatre Society, Metro also offers a chance to young people who want to work in theatre, but who may not have access to classes due to family circumstances. Most of all, the theatre offers a chance for thespians of all backgrounds to polish a play and perform it for the public for a significant run.

The 2019 season opener, *A Comedy of Tenors*, is a skillfully written drawing room comedy. It is Ken Ludwig's sequel to his well-known Lend Me a Tenor. It it witty and has all the mistaken identities, opening and closing of doors, and love-eventually-conquers-all elements of a Noel Coward play. It's madcap but not frantic.

In a theatre company where everyone pitches in, volunteering their time and talents, Metro offers a few differences from paid theatrical companies. The director of one show may be the person selling treats at the other.

The specialized actors' microphones and the accompanying sound system are very expensive so the players were not miked. Because of that, they were sometimes a little hard to hear, but that was really only when they spoke towards the back of the stage or across the stage. When facing the audience, it was easy to hear. This is the way all theatre operated before amplification became the norm. It is theatre unplugged and adds a note of reality to everything.

The set was stunning. The costumes were sumptuous. The lighting, just the ticket. Because the plot concerns a concert with tenors, some of the singers were top notch.

There were a few opening night glitches where the light on the Eiffel Tower backdrop flickered occasionally and twice an actor answered a phone that had yet to ring. None of those issues are likely to continue and none interfered with the fun of the play.

A word about the seating. It is the most comfortable live theatre seating I've found. It is comparable to the chairs, recliners almost, at the renovated Old Auditorium at UBC. The backs are so tall that a shorter person might want to use one of the boosters kept handy but, for an average height person, the tall backs are luxurious.

Metro offers reasonably priced tickets for live theatre, reasonably-priced treats at intermission and a a licensed upstairs lounge with velvet settees that is like something out of a Hollywood movie. It's open before the show, during intermission and for a while after each performance. The Metro Theatre, just over the Arthur Laing Bridge from Richmond, has good entertainment and street parking at no charge. If you feel like an evening out without breaking the bank, go to tickets.metrotheatre.com *A Comedy of Tenors* runs through Oct. 19.

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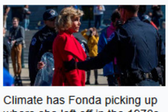

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