

Opera Company Finks Out

Fifth Estate Collective

1968

The May 28th performance of “Lysistrata and the War” at Community Arts Auditorium was permanently canceled, due in part to the war which the opera opposes: one of the leading male singers was drafted.

The people in charge of the production postponed the performance until June 14, to be held, with a new singer, in a room with much smaller seating capacity.

However, the postponement was deliberately kept secret for two days from the composer, Bob Fink, even though the directors knew that he planned to spend further time and money in advertising, and even though the opportunity to tell him of the postponement presented itself both during a rehearsal and in telephone conversations about the original date!

At the next rehearsal Fink, by then having obtained use of Community Arts auditorium for June 17, asked if the Opera Workshop directors would agree to his new time and place.

Celeste Cole, the director, said the performance’s political connotations were not acceptable and that these aspects were “going to be played down” because whatever the composer’s own personal political beliefs might be, the Opera Workshop was “not a political organization.” She said the smaller room was therefore the proper place for such a production.

Fink then decided to withdraw his opera permanently.

“I hoped the opera would be done, not undone, and that it would not be hidden ‘safely’ away because of its political viewpoint.” “On the contrary”, the composer said, “why shouldn’t it have been given the widest possible hearing? Is the Workshop above involvement with the issues and problems of our times?”

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