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## The Noose's Alaric Tay takes on Die Fledermaus with the Singapore Lyric Opera



Alaric Tay rehearses his role as the drunken jailor, Frosch, for the Singapore Lyric Opera's Die Fledermaus. PHOTO: SINGAPORE LYRIC OPERA

**Shawn Hoo**

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SINGAPORE – “I like shocking people,” says Alaric Tay, 43, of his debut opera outing in Singapore Lyric Opera’s (SLO) Die Fledermaus, which opens at the Esplanade Theatre on Dec 16.

“The fact that I can’t sing and I say I am in an opera raises eyebrows,” says the actor, who is best known for playing a nasal-voiced news reporter in parody series The Noose (2007 to 2016).

Audiences can expect him to flex his comedy chops in the speaking role of Frosch, a drunken jailer, for SLO's take on Austrian composer Johann Strauss II's 1874 comic operetta.

SLO manager Gena Ng, 31, says Tay was invited for the role in April, as the company had hoped to cast an experienced comedian who was "out of the opera circle".

Die Fledermaus is about a motley crew of characters who disguise themselves to infiltrate Prince Orlofsky's grand party, to hilariously disastrous effect. The operetta is full of catchy romps through the composer's signature waltzes and polkas.

Director Tang Xinxin, 42, says the show, which is packed with laughs, is the perfect last hurrah for any year-end repertoire, pointing to the Vienna State Opera's tradition – dating back to 1900 – of staging this well-loved classic on New Year's Eve.

The show, she says, is a way of cheering audiences up after a trying year.

With 138 cast and crew onstage and behind the scenes – including a full chorus of 33 singers – this production is a confident leap forward for the company. SLO's 2021 double bill featured just 24 members onstage with no chorus.

Jonathan Charles Tay, whom the director calls "Singapore's best tenor", plays the lead role of Gabriel von Eisenstein. He last charmed audiences as Don Jose in SLO's 2019 staging of French composer Georges Bizet's Carmen (1875).

The 37-year-old lyric tenor is an unusual choice, as von Eisenstein is typically played by middle-aged baritones. It is part of the director's decision to adapt the script to a powerhouse cast.

Tang, who has directed more than 20 operas internationally, has also written a new monologue for Frosch.

She says she has given Alaric Tay free rein in rehearsals for his quirky brand of local humour and is encouraging the actor to improvise on show day. "He knows exactly what he is good for."

Tang also teased a modern-day Singaporean twist to this 19th-century Viennese classic, promising sprinkles of Singlish and cultural references that will resonate with local audiences.

Laughs aside, first-timer Tay is confident his family and friends, although not frequent operagoers, will have their "minds blown" by the cast's soaring vocals, just as he was upon stepping into a rehearsal room full of professional singers.

While he has no plans to start a singing career any time soon, he adds cheekily: "Who knows what the future holds?"



The cast of the Singapore Lyric Opera's Die Fledermaus rehearsing at the Esplanade Theatre on Dec 13, 2022. ST PHOTO: ARIFFIN JAMAR

## Book It/Die Fledermaus

**Where:** Esplanade Theatre, 1 Esplanade Drive

**When:** Dec 16 and 17, 8pm

**Admission:** \$18 to \$128

**Info:** [str.sg/wCH3](http://str.sg/wCH3)

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