

NATIONAL CAPITAL OPERA SOCIETY
Newsletter

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SOCIÉTÉ D'OPÉRA DE LA CAPITALE NATIONALE
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The 1992 Gala: Music and Spain

This year's gala evening is a celebration of music and Spain, and we have planned some special entertainment for you. Ed Honeywell and Leo Marti-Aguilar will treat us to the wonders of the flamenco guitar; and opera singers Laura Dziubaniuk and Mary Ann Swerdfeger, accompanied by Judith Ginsburg on the piano, will delight us with music from and about Spain.

Please mark your calendars for **11 April 1992**. The gala is our annual fund-raising dinner and musical entertainment. It is a very important event for us because it is a main source of funds for the work of the Society, including the Brian Law Opera Scholarship and support for Opera Lyra Ottawa. We need your help in making this a success.

The most important way you can help is to come and enjoy yourself. Dave Smith, of *The Place Next Door* and *Nate's*, will be our caterer and auctioneer, for we are going to hold two auctions. Items for the main auction include tickets to operas, theatre, and concerts; weekends at elegant hotels; dinners at some of Ottawa's finest restaurants; CDs, opera glasses, and much more. We also plan to have a silent auction of smaller items; for those of you who have never heard of a silent auction (and I hadn't), it works this way: items are on display with a sign-up sheet for bidding; you may return and raise your bid at

Le Gala 1992: La Musique et l'Espagne

La soirée-gala de cette année sera une célébration de la musique et de l'Espagne, et nous avons prévu des divertissements exceptionnels pour vous. Ed Honeywell et Léo Marti-Aguilar nous régaleront des merveilles de la guitare flamenco ; et les cantatrices Laura Dziubaniuk et Mary Anne Swerdfeger, accompagnées de Judith Ginsburg au piano, nous enchanteront en interprétant de la musique d'origine espagnole et d'inspiration espagnole.

Veillez encercler le **11 avril 1992** sur vos calendriers. Ce gala constitue notre dîner-musical annuel de collecte de fonds. C'est un événement des plus importants pour nous, car c'est ce qui nous permet de recueillir les fonds nécessaires à l'oeuvre de la Société qui comprend la Bourse Opéra — Brian Law et au soutien de l'Opéra Lyra Ottawa. Nous avons besoin de votre soutien afin que cette collecte soit couronnée de succès.

Si vous tenez à nous aider, venez vous distraire. Dave Smith, de *The Place Next Door* et *Nate's*, jouera le rôle de traiteur ainsi que de commissaire-priseur. Car nous allons tenir deux ventes aux enchères. Les lots pour la vente principale comprendront des places à l'opéra, au théâtre, à des concerts; des weekends dans d'élégants hôtels; des dîners dans certains des meilleurs restaurants d'Ottawa; des disques compacts, et cetera. Nous comptons aussi tenir une vente aux enchères silencieuse pour des lots plus modestes; pour ceux d'entre vous qui n'ont

any time; the buyer is the person with the highest bid when bidding closes.

The setting is the new Ottawa-Carleton Regional Headquarters building on Lisgar Street. Ample parking is available underneath the building, or on nearby streets. The space we are using has quickly become a favourite place for special events, and the price is right, allowing us to keep our tickets down to \$50 per person, taxes included.

Please plan to come and bring some friends. Tables can be booked for groups of eight. We will be happy to arrange tables for singles. There is more than one way you can get your tickets and organize yourselves into groups:

1. You can fill in the form in the newsletter and send it to the person whose name and address are on it, with your cheque. You indicate what seating arrangements you are making or want made.
2. You can buy tickets at the outlets listed just before the last sheet of the newsletter, and phone Ms Ernie Belson at 592-6721 about the table arrangements you want.

In order to avoid confusion about where to sit on the night, we plan to put on each table the name of the organizer of the group, so we ask you to say who this will be. For those not organized into a group ("singles") we will put all the names on the table.

If you have items to donate to the auction, please phone Marjorie Clegg at 594-2988 (evenings).

We are counting on you, so please complete the form in the newsletter and join us on the 11th April. See you there!

MC

In the centre of this newsletter, between pages 8 and 9, you will find flyers for the Gala, and forms for ordering tickets, both in English and French. Please cut the sheet in half and display the flyer somewhere suitable.

jamais entendu parler d'une vente aux enchères silencieuse (dont moi), voici comment cela se passe: des lots sont exposés, accompagnés de feuilles d'inscription; on y inscrit le montant de sa mise, que l'on peut faire monter aussi souvent qu'on le désire; l'acheteur est celui qui aura misé le montant le plus élevé au moment de la clôture de la mise.

Le site de notre gala sera le nouveau Centre municipal d'Ottawa-Carleton dans la rue Lisgar. On peut trouver à se garer dans le garage souterrain de l'immeuble ou encore dans les rues attenantes. Le site choisi est vite devenu un endroit de choix pour les événements de marque, et les frais de location sont des plus raisonnables, ce qui nous permet de maintenir le prix modique de nos billets à 50 \$ par personne, toutes taxes comprises.

Venez-y et emmenez vos amis. On peut réserver des tables pour des groupes de huit personnes. Nous nous ferons un plaisir de préparer des tables pour les célibataires. Vous disposez de plusieurs moyens pour réserver vos billets et vos tables:

1. Vous pouvez remplir le formulaire qui se trouve dans ce bulletin et le faire parvenir, en y joignant votre chèque, à la personne dont le nom et l'adresse figurent sur ledit formulaire. Vous y indiquez la façon dont vous voulez disposer vos places ou qu'on les dispose pour vous.

2. Vous pouvez aussi acheter vos billets aux points de vente qui figurent à la dernière page du bulletin, et téléphoner à Mme Ernie Belson au 592-6721 pour lui faire savoir comment vous désirez être installés. Ou encore, vous pouvez simplement lui téléphoner et pour réserver vos billets et pour préciser les dispositions voulues. Afin d'éviter toute confusion le soir du gala, nous allons identifier chaque table selon le nom de l'organisateur de groupe que vous nous signalerez. Dans le cas des célibataires, nous identifierons chaque place.

Si vous avez des dons d'objets à proposer pour la vente aux enchères, veuillez téléphoner à Marjorie Clegg au 594-2988 (le soir).

Nous comptons sur vous; donc, remplissez le formulaire imprimé dans le bulletin et venez vous joindre à nous le 11 avril. Au plaisir de vous y retrouver!

Spain—land of opera

This summer, those fortunate enough to be able to go to Barcelona for the Olympics or to Seville for the World's Fair may not be aware that they have entered a land where opera locales and opera characters are to be found everywhere.

Even those most unfamiliar with opera could scarcely visit Seville without thinking of the most famous cigarette-roller of them all—just the sight of the Royal Cigarette Factory or the *Plaza de toros* should be enough to bring *Carmen* to mind. And there's the *Barber* advertising his services down all the old back streets of the city. Just outside the city on the Count's estate is where the *Marriage* took place.

Before we leave Seville remember that it is not a good place to shake hands with a statue, as Don Giovanni found out. It is a city in which love can triumph as it does in Prokofiev's *Love in a Monastery*.

When one thinks of Spain, names of composers like Beethoven, Bartok, and Wagner do not spring to mind. Yet among the castles is the fortress where Florestan was imprisoned until rescued by his wife, disguised as Fidelio. More sinister still is *Bluebeard's Castle*, no doubt not far from Klingsor's magic castle, but far away from the Castle of the Holy Grail in *Parsifal*.

When thinking of Spain, one should think of Verdi because four of his grandest of grand operas are set there—*Ernani*, *Il Trovatore*, *La Forza del destino*, and *Don Carlo*. Another opera giant, Donizetti, composed *La Favorita* about the intrigues of the Spanish court.

To return to famous Spaniards we mustn't forget the Knight of the Sorrowful Countenance represented in *Don Quichotte* by Massenet and in de Falla's *Master Peter's Puppet Show*. To the list of operas you can add Massenet's *La Navarraise* and de Falla's *La vida breve*.

Ravel's *L'Heure espagnole* is still prominent in the opera repertoire, whereas Milhaud's *La Mère coupable* (the third in the trilogy beginning with the *Barber* and the

L'Espagne — pays de l'opéra

Cet été, ceux qui auront la bonne fortune de pouvoir se rendre aux Jeux olympiques de Barcelone ou encore à l'exposition internationale de Séville ne sauront pas forcément qu'ils débarquent dans un pays où des lieux et des personnages ayant inspirés des opéras se trouvent un peu partout.

Même ceux qui connaissent peu l'opéra ne peuvent visiter Séville sans penser au plus célèbre des rouleurs de cigarettes — le simple fait d'apercevoir l'Usine royale de cigarettes ou la *Plaza de toros* ne peut manquer de nous faire penser à *Carmen*. Et puis, il y a le *Barbier* qui affiche ses services dans toutes les vieilles ruelles de la ville. C'est en bordure de la ville, dans la propriété du Conte qu'a eu lieu le *Mariage*.

Avant de quitter Séville, je tiens à vous rappeler que ce n'est pas un endroit choisi pour serrer la main d'une statue, comme l'a découvert Don Giovanni. C'est une ville où l'amour peut triompher comme dans *L'Amour dans un monastère*, de Prokofiev.

Lorsqu'on pense à l'Espagne, des compositeurs tels que Beethoven, Bartok et Wagner ne nous viennent pas à l'idée. Cependant, parmi les châteaux, il y a la forteresse où Florestan était emprisonné et d'où sa femme, déguisée comme Fidelio, l'a fait s'évader. Plus sinistre encore est le Château de Barbebleue, sans doute non loin du château magique de Klingor, loin du Château du Saint Graal dans *Parsifal*.

Lorsqu'on pense à l'Espagne, on devrait penser à Verdi, car quatre des plus grandioses de ses grands opéras ont ce pays pour cadre — *Ernani*, *Il Trovatore*, *La Forza del destino*, et *Don Carlo*. Un autre grand de l'opéra, Donizetti, a composé *La Favorita* en se fondant sur les intrigues de la cour d'Espagne.

Pour revenir aux espagnols célèbres, n'oublions pas le Cavalier de la triste figure représenté dans *Don Quichotte* de Massenet et dans le *Master Peter's Puppet Show* signé de Falla. À cette liste d'opéras rajoutons *La Navarraise* de Massenet et *La vida breve* signé de Falla.

Marriage), is rarely performed. However, another of Milhaud's operas with a partial Spanish setting, *Christophe Colomb*, is getting renewed attention.

So, opera lovers, go to Spain or watch the proceedings on television. But don't forget that Spain is a land of intrigue, romance, high comedy, passion and music all on a scale befitting the opera stage.

Above all, don't miss the tribute to music and Spain at our gala on April 11.

MK

L'Heure espagnole de Ravel est toujours aussi important au répertoire de l'opéra, tandis que *La Mère coupable* de Milhaud, (le troisième de la trilogie qui comprend le *Barbier et le Mariage*), n'est que rarement interprété. Par contre, un autre opéra de Milhaud, *Christophe Colomb*, a de nouveau la cote.

Ainsi, amateurs d'opéra, rendez-vous en Espagne ou participez aux événements grâce à la télévision. Mais n'oubliez pas que l'Espagne est un pays d'intrigues, d'idylles, de comédie, de passions et de musique dont l'ampleur la hisse au niveau d'une scène d'opéra.

Surtout, ne manquez pas notre hommage à la musique et l'Espagne à notre gala du 11 avril.

Annual General Meeting

It is hard to believe, but we coming up to that time again. Our Annual General Meeting will be held on Sunday, 3 May, at 7.30 pm at the Lindenhof Restaurant, 965 Richmond Rd. This is an important occasion, as we will be electing the Board for the coming year. If you are interested in joining the Board, please contact Val Donnelly, Bobbi Cain, or Anne Marie Smith, our Nominating Committee; we sincerely encourage you to do so, as we need a full, strong Board to continue our work. Don't be shy! There are no initiation rites.

Please park in Byron Avenue, not in the Lindenhof car park. If you would like dinner in the restaurant after the meeting, please make your own reservation, mentioning the NCOS so that members can be seated together in known numbers.

Rencontre générale annuelle

Aussi incroyable que cela puisse l'être, nous y voici déjà presque arrivés. Notre rencontre générale annuelle aura lieu le dimanche 3 mai, à 19 h 30 dans le Restaurant Lindenhof, 965 rue Richmond. Ce sera un événement de première importance, car nous y élirons notre comité pour l'année à venir. Si vous désirez vous joindre au comité, veuillez communiquer avec Val Donnelly, Bobbi Cain, ou Anne Marie Smith, qui représentent notre Comité de nomination. Nous vous encourageons vivement à le faire, car il nous faut un comité complet et sûr afin de continuer notre oeuvre. Ne soyez pas timides! Il n'y a aucun rite d'initiation.

Discounts for members

The present arrangements for discounts to NCOS members who present their membership cards when making purchases are as follows:

A and A, Sparks St. 25% off all regularly priced CDs.

Counterpoint Classics, Murray St. \$2 off each regularly priced CD.

Rabais pour nos membres

Des rabais divers ont été négociés pour les membres de la SOCN qui présenteront leur carte de membre lorsqu'ils feront des achats aux magasins suivants:

A and A, rue Sparks. 25% de rabais sur tout disque compact à prix courant.

Counterpoint Classics, rue Murray. 2 \$ de rabais sur tout disque compact à prix courant.

Membership renewal

The 1991 membership year ended on 31 December. If you have not yet renewed, the last sheet of the December Newsletter was a renewal form for 1992 membership that could be removed without spoiling anything else. Your support is important to the Society: please encourage other members of your family and friends to join us too!

Réabonnement

L'abonnement 1991 a pris fin le 31 décembre. Si vous ne l'avez pas encore renouvelé, vous pourrez le faire en remplissant le formulaire de réabonnement qui se trouve à la dernière page du bulletin de décembre. Ce formulaire peut être retiré du bulletin sans en altérer le texte. Votre soutien compte pour beaucoup à la Société: n'hésitez pas à encourager vos parents et amis à se joindre à nous!

Thank you

Many thanks to three generous members of the Society who answered our plea for equipment in the last newsletter. We thank Eva and John Rolfe for a computer that is now complicating the life of the treasurer but will soon be simplifying it. And we thank Helen Pelcis for an electric typewriter. More is welcome! We are still looking for another computer or typewriter (especially one with a French keyboard), a fax machine, and a photocopier.

MC

Remerciement

Nous tenons à remercier trois bonnes âmes qui ont répondu à notre appel pour de l'équipement dans notre dernier bulletin. Nous remercions donc Eva et John Rolfe pour leur cadeau d'un ordinateur qui, pour le moment, complique la vie de notre trésorier, mais qui la lui simplifiera bientôt. Nous remercions aussi Helen Pelcis de son don d'une machine à écrire électrique. Ne vous arrêtez pas là. Nous cherchons toujours une imprimante, un autre ordinateur ou machine à écrire (de préférence à clavier à caractères français), un télécopieur et une photocopieuse.

Opera films at the Bytowne, updated

Our final film of the season is Zeffirelli's acclaimed production of *La Bohème*, on 1 March, with José Carreras and Barbara Hendricks. Mark the date now and plan to attend, regardless of the weather, which, if history is anything to go by, will be excellent for the time of year! At the showing there will be a draw for a prize.

We have been rather disappointed at the attendance at the opera films this season, not only because they are very good and our members would enjoy them, but also because the higher the attendance, the more money raised for the scholarships awarded by the Society. We realize that many of you have seen some of the films before, but like the operas themselves they are usually worth

Opéras filmés au Bytowne — Mise à jour

Le dernier film de la saison, *La Bohème* de Zeffirelli, sera projeté le 1 mars. Notez bien la date et assistez-y, sans vous préoccupez du temps qu'il fera et qui, si on se fie aux années précédentes, sera excellent pour la période de l'année! Il y aura un tirage au cours de la séance.

Nous avons été assez déçus de la participation à l'actuelle série d'opéras filmés, non seulement parce qu'ils sont très bons et que nos membres les aimeraient beaucoup, mais aussi parce que la recette de ces projections approvisionne les bourses décernées par la Société. Nous savons que plusieurs d'entre vous ont certes déjà vu certains de ces films, mais comme pour les opéras eux-même, ils valent la peine d'être vus à plusieurs reprises. Dans le cas de *Macbeth*,

seeing several times. In the case of *Macbeth*, the film had not been very widely shown, so the low attendance was particularly disappointing.

Tickets are \$7 including taxes and can be bought from Board members or at the door. (They will not this time be on sale at our ticket outlets.) Allow enough time to find parking on neighbouring streets, and join us for complimentary refreshments at 1:30 pm. The film starts at 2 pm. Remember: Sunday, 1 March.

HM

The Impresario

There will be a performance of Mozart's *The Impresario*, sung in Italian, at the National Library on 1 April at 8 p.m. (The opera is also known as *Der Schauspieldirektor*.) It is being put on by *Les Jeunesses musicales du Canada*. The singers are Dominique Blier, Claudine Côté, and Hugues St-Gelais, with Roger Lord, piano. The adaptation and staging are by François Racine. Admission is free—first come, first served—but you should phone 992-8304 to say that you are coming. It is advisable to come at least half an hour early.

Happy birthday, Gioacchino

Don't forget on 29 February to raise a glass of bubbly (even if it's only soda water) to salute the 200th anniversary of the most sparkling, bubbling, and effervescent opera composer, Gioacchino Rossini, born 200 years (or by *Pirates of Penzance* count, 48 birthdays) ago in Pescara.

MK

Tours for members, updated

On Saturday 29 February, the National Capital Opera Society will attend the Montreal Opera production of *Eugene Onegin*. Unfortunately there are no places remaining for this trip.

par exemple, nous avons été particulièrement déçus de la faible participation, car le film n'avait pas été souvent projeté.

Les billets coûtent 7 \$ (toutes taxes comprises) et peuvent être obtenus à nos points de vente (voir liste ci-dessous) ou à l'entrée. Veuillez prévoir suffisamment de temps pour trouver une place de stationnement pour votre auto dans les rues attenantes, et venez vous désaltérer en notre compagnie à 13 h 30. Le visionnement est prévu pour 14 h 00. Nota: dimanche, 1 mars.

L'Imprésario

Le 1 avril à 20 h 00 aura lieu une représentation de *L'Imprésario* de Mozart, chanté en italien, à la Bibliothèque nationale. Ce spectacle sera donné par *Les Jeunesses musicales du Canada*. Les chanteurs seront Dominique Blier, Claudine Côté, et Hugues St-Gelais, et au piano, Roger Lord. La mise en scène et l'adaptation sont de François Racine. L'entrée est libre (premier arrivé, premier servi). Par contre, nous vous recommandons de vous annoncer au 992-8304 et d'arriver de préférence une demi-heure à l'avance.

Bon anniversaire, Gioacchino!

Le 29 février, n'oubliez pas de lever votre verre de mousseux (même s'il ne s'agit que de soda) pour marquer le 200^e anniversaire du brillant, pétillant et effervescent compositeur d'opéra, Gioacchino Rossini, né il y a 200 ans à Pescara (ou selon le calcul des *Pirates de Penzance*, son 48^e anniversaire).

Tours pour membres — Mise à jour

Le samedi 29 février, les membres de la Société d'opéra de la Capitale nationale assisteront à la représentation de *Eugene Onegin* à l'Opéra de Montréal. Il ne reste malheureusement aucune place pour ce voyage.

For *Nabucco* in April an extra bus is being arranged for one week earlier than the previously announced visit. Present availability is:

<i>Nabucco</i>	11 April	20 places left
	18 April	sold out

For the remaining tour, this is the situation :

<i>La Belle Hélène</i>	29 May	6 places left
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Please make your plans now to avoid disappointment. These performances are almost completely sold out on subscription, so individual ticket availability is limited.

Please call **Morgan Tours** at 722-7572 for registration or other details.

JDAM

Par contre, pour la représentation de *Nabucco*, en avril, on a réservé un autocar supplémentaire. Le nombre de places disponibles est le suivant:

<i>Nabucco</i>	11 avril	20 places
	18 avril	aucune

Pour le reste de la tournée, il reste:

<i>La Belle Hélène</i>	29 mai	6 places
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Veillez réserver vos places le plus tôt possible afin d'éviter d'être déçus. Presque toutes les places ont été retenues par abonnements, ce qui veut dire que les billets vendus au détail se font rares.

Pour de plus amples renseignements ou pour réserver, n'hésitez pas à appeler les représentants de **Morgan Tours** au 722-7572.

The stars in *La Belle Hélène* are James Dietsch, Linda Roark-Strummer, and Paul Plishka, and the conductor is Alfredo Silipigni.

Each tour is \$144.45, inclusive of taxes. This covers transport by private motorcoach, mezzanine seating at the Place des Arts, and tour travel within Montreal. Meals are not included in the tour cost. Departure for Montreal is in the early afternoon, allowing time for visiting shops or museums or for exploration.

Latest news. Morgan Tours announce a two-day visit to Tanglewood to see Eisenstein's movie *Alexander Nevsky* accompanied by Prokofiev's music, which will be played by the Boston Symphony Orchestra, with the Tanglewood Festival Chorus and soloist Janice Taylor, conducted by Seiji Ozawa. Departure is on the morning of Friday 24 July, with return on the evening of the following day. Among the choices for the Saturday morning is the dress rehearsal of a concert that includes Alicia de Larrocha playing the Schumann piano concerto. Friday night is to be spent at a resort geared to country pursuits like swimming, golf, and fishing (for which you would have to miss Miss de Larrocha). The cost is \$279 each; for further details, call Morgan Tours.

A definition of opera

The Devil's Dictionary, by Ambrose Bierce, recently seen as the protagonist of the movie *Old Gringo*, is filled with unflattering definitions of almost anything. Here is the entry on opera, which few of our members would agree with.

A play representing life in another world, whose inhabitants have no speech but song, no motions but gestures and no postures but attitudes. All acting is simulation, and the word simulation is from *simia*, an ape; but in opera the actor takes for his model *Simia audibilis* (or *Pithecanthropos stentor*)—the ape that howls.

The actor apes a man—at least in shape;

The opera performer apes an ape.

JMC

Une définition de l'opéra

The Devil's Dictionary d'Ambrose Bierce, récemment jugé comme le protagoniste du film *Old Gringo*, déborde de définitions peu flatteuses d'à peu près tout. Voici ce qu'on y trouve pour le mot «opéra» ce sur quoi peu de nos membres seraient d'accord.

Une pièce représentant la vie dans un autre monde, dont les habitants n'ont aucun autre discours que la chanson, aucun mouvement mais des gestes et aucune posture mais des attitudes. Tout jeu de scène est de la simulation, et le mot simulation vient de *simia*, ou singe; mais dans l'opéra le comédien a comme modèle le *Simia audibilis* (ou *Pithecanthropos stentor*) — le singe qui hurle.

Le comédien singe l'homme — en tout cas en matière de forme;

L'interprète d'opéra singe le singe.

Opera within reach, updated

This is a repeat of our previous listings of accessible operas, minus those that have already finished.

Montreal

The Montreal Opera has four more productions this season. A Morgan Tour for NCOS members pays a visit to each opera on those dates marked by asterisks.

Eugene Onegin, by Tchaikovsky, on 22, 24, 27, and 29* February, and on 4 and 7 March.

Nabucco, by Verdi, on 11*, 13, 16, 18*, 22, and 25 April.

Così fan tutte, by Mozart, from 24 April to 2 May.

La Belle Hélène, by Offenbach, on 29*, 30, and 31 May, and on 1, 3, and 4 June.

Toronto

In Toronto the Canadian Opera Company is performing:

Roméo et Juliette, by Gounod, on 22, 25, 28, and 30 January, and on 1, 4, 7, and 9 February.

Falstaff, by Verdi, on 9, 11, 14, 16, 18, 22, 24, and 26 April.

Il Barbiere di Siviglia, by Rossini, on 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 27, and 28 June.

All these are at the O'Keefe Centre. At the Elgin Theatre there is:

Mario and the Magician, by Somers, on 19, 21, 23, 26, 28, and 30 May.

Hamilton

At the furthest distance we consider within reach, there is Opera Hamilton with the following production remaining:

Tosca, by Puccini, on 9 and 11 April.

L'Opéra «accessible» — Mise à jour

Nous vous présentons à nouveau la liste des opéras «accessibles» (sur le plan de la distance à parcourir pour y assister), liste dont nous avons éliminé ceux qui ont déjà été représentés.

Montréal

L'Opéra de Montréal présentera quatre autres productions cette année. Il y aura une «Morgan Tour» organisée pour les membres de la SOCN aux dates indiquées par un astérisque.

Eugene Onegin de Tchaïkovski, les 22, 24, 27 et 29* février, et les 4 et 7 mars.

Nabucco de Verdi, les 11*, 13, 16, 18*, 22, et 25 avril.

Così fan tutte de Mozart, du 24 avril au 2 mai.

La Belle Hélène d'Offenbach, les 29*, 30 et 31 mai, et les 1, 3 et 4 juin.

Toronto

Au Centre O'Keefe, la «Canadian Opera Company» présentera:

Roméo et Juliette de Gounod, les 22, 25, 28 et 30 janvier, et les 1, 4, 7 et 9 février.

Falstaff de Verdi, les 9, 11, 14, 16, 18, 22, 24 et 26 avril.

Il Barbiere di Siviglia de Rossini, les 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 27 et 28 juin.

Au Elgin Theatre on présentera:

Mario and the Magician de Somers, les 19, 21, 23, 26, 28 et 30 mai.

Hamilton

À l'«Opera Hamilton» qui est selon nous à la limite de l'accessible il y aura :

Tosca de Puccini, le 9 et 11 avril.

JMC

Opera Lyra Ottawa news

Plans are well advanced for the Cinderella Auction taking place in the Ballroom of the Château Laurier Hotel on Wednesday 1 April. The evening opens with a reception at 7 pm, when you can examine the items up for bid in both live and silent auction. After

dinner and wine, auctioneer Pat Smith offers for sale works of art, trips to Rome, fur coats, embassy dinners, opera tickets, and other treasures—even a glass slipper: for the auction introduces this September's production of *La Cenerentola* at the NAC in

celebration of the 48th birthday of Rossini, born 200 years ago.

Tickets are \$60 a person, including GST; call OLO at 233-9200 for tickets or further information.

Opera Lyra is now holding its series of events known as “Guess who’s coming to dinner,” for further details of which you should call OLO at the number just given.

GP

The original Don Juan

As is well known, the *Don Giovanni* of Mozart and Lorenzo da Ponte is far from being the first treatment of the theme of an unrepentant libertine being sent to damnation by the statue of a man he had killed. The original unification of the ancient threads of philandering, trickery, and the avenging statue was a play by the Spanish monk Gabriel Téllez, better known by his pseudonym of Tirso de Molina, written and first performed in about 1620. As one might expect from the play that introduced the fictional character that has given rise to more “reincarnations” than any other, it is a very powerful play that continues to resonate down to our own days.

By the times of Mozart and da Ponte there were Don Juan traditions not only in theatre and opera but also in the “vulgar” entertainments of puppeteers and fairground shows (whence originated the list of Don Juan’s conquests). It is known that a major source of da Ponte’s libretto was that by Giovanni Bertati for Giuseppe Gazzaniga’s opera *Don Giovanni o sia Il convitato di pietra* (1787), but it is not known, but it seems unlikely to me, whether da Ponte had read *El burlador de Sevilla y convidado de piedra*, Tirso’s play. “*Burlador*” has no equivalent in English—it is a combination of libertine, trickster, joker, and scoundrel—so we have to translate the title something like “The prankster of Seville and the stone guest.”

Just as the producer of *Don Giovanni* has to decide between the Prague and Vienna versions (both authentic) or find some compromise of the two, so does Tirso’s play have two source manuscripts that are not the same (but in this case neither is original). The title of the other is *Tan largo me lo fiáis*, which means “there’s plenty of time (to repent),” and this is a phrase that Don Juan repeats throughout the play whenever death is

mentioned in connection with a call for reform or repentance.

Spanish plays of the Golden Age—1520 to 1680—were fundamentally sermons consisting of plenty of action with an underlying theological message inspired by the Counter-reformation zeal of the times. The lesser known title, *Tan largo*, clearly warns that it is very risky to rely on there being plenty of time to repent when the moment and method of death can come as a surprise.

The plot of *El burlador* consists of four *burlas*, or seductions with trickery and betrayal, interspersed with the vain attempts of kings and courtiers to put an end to Don Juan’s escapades and finally to his life. The last episode is two dinners with a statue and Don Juan’s descent into hell.

In the opening *burla*, Don Juan pretends to be his friend Don Octavio in an assignment arranged for his fiancée Doña Isabela’s bedroom in the palace of the King of Naples. The Spanish ambassador is entrusted with the arrest after Doña Isabela sees her mistake and raises the alarm. The ambassador is Don Juan’s uncle, who allows him to escape and then lies to the King in explaining what happened. The King is led to believe that Don Octavio is the perpetrator, so he also decides on leaving Naples in haste. Don Juan, with his servant Catalinón, the comic, cowardly, and usually hungry servant who went with every principal character in the plays of those days, set off for Spain and are shipwrecked off the coast of Tarragona. A fisherwoman called Tisbea, hitherto proudly immune to the calls of love, rescues and revives the pair and falls for Don Juan and his promise of marriage. After the seduction, Don Juan and Catalinón steal Tisbea’s horses and make their escape.

Arrived in Seville, Don Juan meets his old brothel-creeping friend the Marqués de la

Mota, who has designs on his own beautiful cousin Doña Ana de Ulloa. Don Juan is entrusted with a message from Doña Ana for Mota that tells him to come to her house at eleven o'clock that night, wearing a coloured cape so that the servants will let him in. Don Juan passes on the message, except that he gives the time as midnight and shows up himself at eleven, wearing Mota's cape. After the seduction, Doña Ana sees what Isabela had seen and raises a shout. Her father Don Gonzalo de Ulloa appears, challenges Don Juan, and is killed. Don Juan escapes, and when Mota arrives at midnight he is arrested as the murderer and sentenced to death.

Don Juan, previously ordered out of Seville, stops in a village where he comes across a peasant wedding feast. He sits in the bridegroom's place at the table and sets to work on Aminta the bride. He takes her hand and says it is much too fine to be wasted on a bumpkin. All this causes obvious resentment and pointed remarks about the state that chivalry has sunk to in Spain. He promises to become her husband by taking the place of the groom and to give her the life of a fine lady at court. His lies to the groom and to Aminta's father demoralize them, and he spends the bride's wedding night in her bed.

By morning he is gone, back to Seville where he and Catalinón stay out of the limelight by wandering into a church, where they come across Don Gonzalo's statue with an inscription threatening revenge. Don Juan pulls its beard and generally shows great lack of respect. The statue speaks. Don Juan invites it to dinner; it comes, dines, and offers a return invitation, which is accepted over the terrified advice of Catalinón. The following evening the statue expresses surprise that Don Juan has kept his word, to which he replies that nothing frightens him. After a meal of scorpions and similar fare, the statue asks for the Don's hand. As the statue takes it, Don Juan realises that he is dying and asks for a confessor. "Too late," says the statue, "This is God's justice. What a man does, he must pay for."

As these events have been proceeding, the various offended people—Octavio, Isabela, Tisbea, and Aminta and her family (who later play the *buffa* roles of peasants at court)—

have been converging on Seville seeking justice. There the King of Castile has at various times been arranging marriages, sometimes as rewards, sometimes for justice, sometimes even in accordance with the wishes of the principals. The King finally sentences Don Juan to death, with the consent of his father whose every effort at reforming Don Juan has met with scorn. But all these efforts always lag behind the action. When news of Don Juan's death reaches the court, the King makes a final arrangement of forthcoming marriages and normal order is restored.

There are clearly many differences between the play and the opera. For one, Don Juan has a much better batting average during the play. For another, Donna Elvira is completely absent from the play, and Tisbea from the opera, as are all kings and courtiers. The characters of Isabela and Ana are combined as Donna Anna, and her father is killed at the start of the opera. Some of these changes are essential, if only because you cannot have fifteen important singing parts in an opera.

But what strikes me is how much worse Don Juan's crimes are than Don Giovanni's. Not only is there his uncontrolled lust, but for Don Juan

The greatest pleasure that I can get is tricking a woman and leaving her dishonoured,

and his pride is in his renown as the greatest *burlador* in Spain. He abuses the traditions of hospitality (as does the statue, much to Don Juan's surprise), he profanes the sacrament of marriage, he betrays friends and drops them into serious trouble, he swears false oaths, and he mocks the dead. In his only soliloquy in the play—like Don Giovanni he is not very reflective—he reveals that he is not so much brave as afraid of being seen to be not brave.

So if *Don Giovanni* seems weaker than *El burlador* in some respects, what gives it the strength that leads Gounod, among others, to call it the greatest opera ever written? The message of Tirso's sermon changes from a warning against delayed repentance to a warning against defying God by refusing to repent: still an important message. But Mozart and da Ponte are not putting Tirso's play to music: they are stimulated (indirectly,

as we have seen) to create something new on a similar theme.

The reason for the opera's success is, as every opera lover knows, the music. This tells us much more than just the words and actions on the stage, and tells it more beautifully. Just the opening chords of the overture tell us that something awesome is going to happen. When Giovanni and Zerlina sing *Là ci darem la mano*, we can tell that the Don is usually successful, and in the audience we are a little compromised just as we too are nearly seduced. Tirso compromises his audience similarly, for we know about the tricks before they are carried out (except for the statue's trick). Who is not frightened by the music that accompanies the Commendatore's statue? Do we ever wonder if Donna Anna is not telling quite the whole story of what happened before her father was killed? Who could not forgive a flirting wife who sings *Vedrai, carino, se sei buonino?*

Don Giovanni is less episodic than *El burlador*. The attempted seductions and the pursuit take place simultaneously before us, whereas in the play they occur in alternating scenes. Act I especially is always progressing, even during the several arias, which are sung to other people on the stage. An example is Leporello's catalogue aria *Madamina, il catalogo è questo* where he not only enlightens Donna Elvira and the audience, but at the same time shows us his own character and tells us more about Giovanni. I read in books that one of Mozart's secrets is unifying the drama by means of "harmonic context and thematic reminiscence," but I am not enough of a musician to speak of such things, or even to understand them properly when others speak of them. Hence I cannot fully explain the magnificence of *Don Giovanni*, and I shall stop right here.

JMC

The passing of the dinosaurs?

Does opera continue to evolve? Toscanini said that, after Puccini's *Turandot*, there had been no opera of any consequence written. Is this true? Believe it or not, many people, fanatic opera lovers, hold this to be true. If it is, then our society has turned its back on one of the most powerful artistic voices that the human soul has ever created. If it is not, then where are all those people who support the creation of new opera, and where are the new creators of this art form? After Shostakovich and Prokofiev, do we tolerate Olivier Messiaen, Philip Glass or R Murray Schafer? Whatever happened to Harry Friedman's *Louis Riel*? Why does the *status quo* not support "modern opera" or "modern interpretations" of existing opera? Or does it?

Perhaps the issue is more how we can keep grand opera somewhere available for those people who are devoted to the greatest voices and the greatest spectacles and who want to see some sort of clone of the original version, versus creating a wider acceptance of the possibilities of using the same story and music to bring out different things in different ways. There is absolutely nothing wrong with this first scenario, and I agree that one can hear the same cast perform the same

opera five nights in a row, and still be left with five different, individual experiences, and that this can be very positive—but isn't there more, another level perhaps? The Peter Sellers Mozart operas recently broadcast used very exceptional singers and the musical interpretation was exciting, but they were set in an entirely controversial venue. Is this scenario acceptable?

When I think of "monuments" in a city, I think of government buildings and museums, of course, but I also look at banks and opera houses. All of these buildings are expensive to build, impressive to look at, and were created to withstand the passing of time, to span the ages. They are the institutions that verify our history. Yes, even opera houses. I often wonder if the traditional productions in the opera house today are not simply renderings of what once were historically controversial subjects. We sometimes forget that opera was not only controversial—it was meant to be so—but was created by some of the leading lights of the artistic world. Beaumarchais's and Shakespeare's works come to mind, as do Verdi's passion for songs "of country" and Wagner's Ring Cycle. Can you imagine why many operas, including the

above, were actually banned from performance? And why were so many others, ones that today we call masterpieces, complete failures?

Our society does not like to look at itself in the mirror at the best of times. It is so much easier to look back on “other times” where we have a perspective and context of “other people,” not ourselves. But is not one of the functions of “artists” to explore the truths and falsehoods of the times in which they live? Think of the people who have directly affected our historical perspectives—mostly military or political figures, researchers, or artists. The greatest of these were the ones who used the power of the mind and the imagination to teach, and to make sure that each society could take a good look at itself.

What about the cost of opera? A good seat at La Scala costs about \$200, at the Vienna Staatsoper \$150, and at the Lyric Opera of Chicago \$100. The costs of mounting a production can be in the millions of dollars, yet these houses are consistently sold out. They are able to stay that way by presenting not only the great voices of today, but a blend of traditional and modern views of existing opera, plus programming that includes lesser known and new works, including works by their own, commissioned composers. In other words, they are educating and challenging their public to investigate all forms of opera. If the public will not pay these kinds of prices, and rejects the challenge, then the whole scenario breaks down, with a resultant lessening of standards. If we want opera to survive, we must be prepared to pay for it. Think of the costs of hiring a full orchestra, stage crew, lighting and costume people, a directing team, renting an opera-house-sized hall, rehearsal time, advertising, royalties, and the list goes on—and we haven’t even paid the singers yet: and we all know what they command, especially the good ones. How many people do we know who balk at buying a \$65 ticket to *The Barber of Seville* (but might spend \$75 on *Les Misérables*), and then complain that our NAC is planning sixteen weeks of *Miss Saigon* but no further opera productions? Look at the facts—if 2000 people (a full house) attended five performances with an average ticket price of \$50, this would trans-

late to a revenue of only half a million dollars to mount and finance an entire production, and a comparatively small-scale production at that. If we, and that means you and I, don’t pay for opera, who does?

Of the major houses in the world, perhaps only New York’s Metropolitan Opera has been able to insulate itself from some type of balanced programming. They have been presenting, for the most part, very conservative interpretations of the standard repertoire. But now this is changing. As attendance at the Met drops, the management is looking at Janacek and Britten to give them something new. They commissioned the new John Corigliano opera *The Ghosts of Versailles*, which was, according to artistic director James Levine, “the most significant operatic event since *Anthony and Cleopatra* and *Morning Becomes Electra* were performed 25 years ago” (and it was)—and this to rave reviews by the audience but lukewarm reviews by the press. Next year we look forward to Philip Glass’s *Voyage*.

I once attended a performance of Luciano Berio’s *La vera storia* in Florence. The house was sold out. I must admit that not everyone stayed to the end. Some people, including several whom I was with, left before the second act. When the performance was finished there was a tremendous ovation. The ensuing discussions, with both the group that left and the one that stayed, were very stimulating. Everybody had their own opinion on the value of the performance, and were quite adamant in their beliefs. We certainly didn’t reach agreement on *La vera storia*, but we surely discussed and dissected it for days (some of us still do even today). One of the best performances of *The Magic Flute* I ever saw was at the Edinburgh Festival, performed in Swedish by the Swedish Folköpern. It started with the members of the cast, dressed in fantastically coloured bird costumes, walking through the audience calling to each other with squawks and whistles. The three attendants to the Queen of the Night were costumed as electricians, and things progressed from there. If this sounds bizarre, it was—but the orchestra was tremendous and the singing exquisite. Again, the performance was the subject of tremendous and passionate debate. This February

sees Domenic Argento's opera, *The Voyage of Edgar Allen Poe*, in Dallas. I heard the broadcast from Chicago this past summer and can hardly wait for the performance.

Something new to feast on, either pro or con we'll see, but I know I'll have something new to debate over for quite some time.

What is it that makes an opera become great?

There have been some 50 000 operas

written. The standard repertoire contains (arguably) 250 or so. What about the rest?

As we tire of seeing another *Carmen*, can't we look beyond, to *Les Pêcheurs de perles*, or *Djamileh*, to experience Bizet? And if we have to see another *Carmen*, does it always have to be the same costumes and staging?

Cannot the values of the opera be acted out anywhere from Spain to the moon? Isn't this what Peter Sellers was reaching for when we saw *The Marriage of Figaro* set in the Trump Tower? Wasn't he saying that an updated setting can still bring the same powerful messages to this masterpiece, for those who care to look? And for those who don't, for those who dismiss it because "it's not Mozart," isn't he saying, "Wait a minute, if you open your ears it *is* Mozart, and Beaumarchais, but if you open your *mind*, you can look at *our* times (and yourself) a little, and isn't it just as important to do this as it is to look at the story as it was set in the 1700s (and don't forget, this was a modern-day setting for Mozart and da Ponte)."

Consider the example of church music passing out of the Gregorian Chant phase, to the point where four-part harmony was sung. As far as opera is concerned, what about the day Wagner wanted the house lights turned out, and the entire work performed with the audience sitting quietly in the dark? What about the first performance when a female actually sang the female role, the first hundred-piece orchestra performance, or *La Bohème*'s parallel fifths. Isn't it all only a part of the evolution of the operatic art form?

I am not suggesting that every new venture will be the next masterpiece in the repertoire, just that we continue the search for new opera, and try to find new meaning in existing ones. If we passively accept the *status quo* and fail to insist that opera continue to evolve, then we are helping to ensure the passing of those dinosaurs alluded to in the

title. Perhaps there is no place in our world for dinosaurs any more—and anyway that's too late to change. It's like anything else we want to save—whales, elephants, the rain forest, clean water and air—it's up to us; and there will always be a cost.

Opera is not only our legacy from the immediate past, but an important reflection of the times we live in. Its growth (or lack of it) is one of the yardsticks of how our society may can be viewed in the future, and what we, as a society, had to say. Opera must not only perpetuate itself, but say something new and significant—or, like the dinosaurs, have its bones consigned to museums and its images to picture books.

See you at the Opera!

JDAM

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