

NATIONAL CAPITAL OPERA SOCIETY
 Newsletter

February 1994

SOCIÉTÉ D'OPÉRA DE LA CAPITALE NATIONALE
 Bulletin

février 1994

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Summary of forthcoming local events

| | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|---|------|
| Recital | Winterlude Opera Skate | 6 February | 2:00 pm | Ramada Hotel Suites, 111 Cooper St. | p. 2 |
| Dinner and <i>Salome</i> | Italian dinner, and Laser disc video | 22 February | 7:00 pm 8:00 pm | Mangia, Clarence St.; then Counterpoint Classics, 266 Dalhousie St. | p. 2 |
| <i>Tous les matins du monde</i> | Movie | 27 February 28 February | 2:00 pm 7:00 pm | Bytowne Cinema, Rideau St. | p. x |
| <i>Tosca</i> , by Puccini | Production by Opera Lyra Ottawa | 2, 4, and 6 April | 8:00 pm | The Opera, National Arts Centre | p. 1 |

Tosca

The next live opera in Ottawa will be *Tosca*, put on by Opera Lyra Ottawa.

Tosca will be sung by Heather Thomson, Cavaradossi by Louis Langelier, and Scarpia by Cornelius Opthof. Tyrone Patterson will conduct the Opera Lyra Ottawa Orchestra, and the stage director will be Jeannette Aster.

NCOS discount

Members of NCOS are offered a discount of 10% on seats in the mezzanine for the performance of 4 April. The standard price of these tickets is \$56 plus GST, so the price to members will be \$50.40. To accept this offer you should book your ticket from Opera Lyra Ottawa by phoning 233 9200 and mentioning that you want one of the block of NCOS tickets for that performance.

JMC

Winterlude Opera Skate

Maria Pellegrini has organized a recital for three young local sopranos, to be a part of the Winterlude festivities. The event takes place at 2 p.m. on Sunday 6 February in the Cambridge Room of the Ramada Hotel Suites at 111 Cooper St., Ottawa (between Elgin St. and The Driveway).

The performers are:

Shawne Elizabeth, soprano

Maria Knapik-Sztramko, soprano

Laura Dziubaniuk, soprano

Pierre Lacroix, flute

Robert Palmai, piano

Tickets cost \$8 at the door, but you are asked to make reservations by phoning 238 1331.

An Italian dinner and then *Salome*

The Society is holding a dinner for interested members and their friends at Mangia's, an Italian restaurant in Clarence St. (near Murray St.). People will pay their own bills, which are expected to be under \$10 a head, excluding drinks. The dinner starts at 7 o'clock on Tuesday 22 February.

Immediately afterwards, say around 8 o'clock, we repair to Counterpoint Classics—near enough not to have to get back in the car—to see a laser disc recording of *Salome*, conducted by Karl Böhm and starring Teresa Stratas. There will be no charge for this part of the show, but if you wish to sip a little something, other than the

coffee that we will supply, you should bring it yourself.

As you will realize, this is something new we are trying. I hope that plenty of people will come. At the end we will hold a little discussion to see if we should do this kind of thing again, with or without any changes that people might suggest.

Since we need to know in advance the numbers of people having dinner, please phone John Clegg at 765 4599 (at work), leaving a message on his machine if he is not there. Please include your name and the number of people in the message. If you want to come just to see *Salome*, you may do so, but it would still be helpful to know also how many intend to do this.

A movie with plenty of classical music

Although it is not about opera, we are sure that many members would enjoy the movie *Tous les matins du monde*, which is playing at the Bytowne Cinema on the 27 and 28 February, the first day at 2 pm and the second at 7 pm.

Everyone I know who has seen it recommends it very highly; and several have seen and heard it more than once.

JMC

Opera quiz

1 What famous opera composer considered writing an opera called *Women's Wiles Outsmarted*, or *The Happy Bear Family*?

2 What famous opera composer, when he was fourteen years old, wrote a five-act tragedy, modelled on Shakespeare, in which forty-two people died during the course of the play?

3 What famous opera composer had a parrot called Papo and was quite devoted to him?

4 What famous opera composer intended to write an opera on the life of Buddha, but abandoned the project after considering it for twelve years?

5 What famous opera composer, although an avowed enemy of French music, admired Auber's *La muette de Portici* a great deal?

The answers are on page 7.

MK

Opera within reach

Ottawa

Opera Lyra Ottawa

Tosca, by Puccini. 2, 4, and 6 April 1994.
National Arts Centre.

Montreal

L'Opéra de Montréal

Falstaff, by Verdi. 26 and 28 February and 3, 5, 9, and 12* March.

Carmen, by Bizet. 16, 18, 21, 23, 27 and 30* April.

Les contes d'Hoffmann, by Offenbach. 28 April and 1, 3, 5, and 7 May.

La fille du régiment, by Donizetti. 28 and 30 May and 2, 4, 8, and 11* June.

The Student Prince, by Romberg. 13, 15, 16, and 18 June.

All performances are in the Place des Arts.

* For the operas and dates marked with asterisks there is a Morgan Tour taking a group to Montreal (722 7572).

Hamilton

Opera Hamilton

Macbeth, by Verdi. 16, 21, and 23 April.
Hamilton Place.

Toronto

Canadian Opera Company

Katya Kabanova, by Janáček. 15, 20, 23, 26, and 29 January and 1 and 7 February. Elgin Theatre.

Le comte Ory, by Rossini. 28 and 30 January and 2, 5, 8, 10, and 12 February. Elgin Theatre.

Madama Butterfly, by Puccini. 2, 8, 10, 13, 15, 17, 19, 21, and 23 April. O'Keefe Centre.

La traviata, by Verdi. 9, 12, 14, 16, 20, 22, and 24 April. O'Keefe Centre.

Opera In Concert

Der Vampyr, by Marschner. 5 and 6 February. St Lawrence Centre.

Lakmé, by Délibes. 9 and 10 April. St Lawrence Centre.

Toronto Operetta Theatre

Naughty Marietta, by Herbert. 26, 27, 28, 29, 30 April. St Lawrence Centre.

Entertainments, 2 p.m. at the St Lawrence Centre:

Summertime, 20 February.

D'Oyly à la Carte, 6 March.

Metropolitan Opera radio broadcasts

Here is the schedule for the remainder of the present season.

| | |
|------------------------------------|-------------|
| <i>Aida</i> | 5 February |
| <i>Le nozze di Figaro</i> | 12 February |
| <i>La fille du régiment</i> | 19 February |
| <i>Death in Venice</i> | 26 February |
| <i>Stiffelio</i> | 5 March |
| <i>Dialogues of the Carmelites</i> | 12 March |

| | |
|--------------------------------|----------|
| <i>Adriana Lecouvreur</i> | 19 March |
| <i>La bohème</i> | 26 March |
| <i>Otello</i> | 2 April |
| <i>Der Fliegende Holländer</i> | 9 April |
| <i>Tosca</i> | 16 April |
| <i>Ariadne auf Naxos</i> | 23 April |

There will also be a telecast on PBS of *I Lombardi* on 30 March.

Have you made your donation to the Brain Law Opera Scholarship?

On 18 November 1991 the Opera of the National Arts Centre was filled to capacity as Ottawa bade adieu to Brian Law, a major figure in the music community for the previous 25 years, as he was departing for the green pastures and the sheep of New Zealand. Many spokesmen from many areas of that community expressed to Brian their appreciation for his many gifts and contributions to choral, symphonic, and operatic music. We in the NCOS were delighted when Brian allowed us to establish The Brian Law Opera Scholarship in recognition of his many years of involvement in opera, with the National Arts Centre Festival Ottawa and later productions, with Opera Lyra Ottawa, and with Opéra de Montréal.

Since that time the first competition was held in January 1993, and a \$1000 scholarship was awarded to Laura Dziubaniuk. The next competition will be held in 1995, as the Board of

Directors has decided to make it a biennial event and to double the prize to \$2000. We look forward to this a great deal.

In the previous Newsletter (October 1993) a form was enclosed for your donation to the endowment fund established by the Society. Now is your opportunity to show your appreciation of Brian Law's talent in a very tangible way—make your contribution today and speak to your friends! Cheques should be payable to the National Capital Opera Society (Brian Law Fund). At present we have a base of \$10 000 in a trust fund, and our goal is a minimum of \$15 000. Please encourage your other musical friends to join us in making this Scholarship a sound and solid project for the Society.

BC

List of donors

We publicly thank everyone who made donations in 1993 to the Brian Law Scholarship fund and to the Society, by listing their names here.

Brian Law Scholarship

Marjorie Clegg
Ruth Davis
Dr and Mrs Edward Dodson
L. E. Harvey
Murray Kitts
Mr and Mrs W. Kolokoski
Brenda Lane-Eraut
Norma Mellon
N. Patsouris
Ralph and Lois Reynolds
Eric O. Smith
Dr and Mrs D. Williams
Joan Yanofsky

The Society

Ruth E. Astley
Margaret E. Blair
Marjorie Clegg
Lorena and Frank Foerster
Mrs K. E. Freke
Jean-Marc Mahel
Norma Mellon
Dr A. J. J. Nuyens
P. K. Pal
William M. Park
Helen K. Radford
Go Sato
Eric O. Smith
Miss Aline Tyne
Jean Webb

Editor's excuse

We are sorry that it's such a long time since anything appeared here in French, except the membership form. We would like to translate at least parts of our newsletter, but the excuse is that translation can't be undertaken until the English version is virtually finished, with whatever polish we manage to apply. Since there always seems to be a rush to issue the newsletter to give notice of some closely approaching event,

there is never the time for translation, typing, and checking.

Some day we hope to be ahead of schedule, or we hope—weakly—that there will be no impending event, and the French component can return. Meanwhile, if anyone were to submit an article in French, we could publish it as it stood, proof-read by a colleague of the editor.

The problem with Wagner

One of the joys of retirement is that it allows a person to read some of those books neglected during one's career. In the case of books on Wagner there is certainly no shortage of material. One critic estimates that only Jesus and Napoleon have had more books written about them.

You might care to start with Wagner's own *My Life* (available at the Ottawa Public Library). This covers only part of Wagner's life, up to the time of his sponsorship by King Ludwig II of Bavaria. Anyone who has read memoirs of politicians or generals might know what to expect. It is a record of poor Richard, the misunderstood and misused genius, and of all those who have tried to hamper him in achieving what he has accomplished so far. Naturally, most of this is a lot of hogwash. However, there are many incidents which give an insight into a more human and less formidable person that you can find in other sources. For example, his relationship with his dog and his parrot are not only amusing but represent a small chink in that all-encompassing self-centredness which is characteristic of Wagner. Given Wagner's proclivity for vicious attacks on his enemies, the moderate tone of his account is remarkable only if one is unaware that this testament was intended not only for posterity but for King Ludwig, whom Wagner knew must be hoodwinked right, left, and centre if their relationship, essential to Wagner's financial well-being, was to continue. And so the great genius dictated this hymn of praise to himself to the dotting and uncritical Cosima, who later became his wife. In spite of everything, this is enjoyable reading as long as one takes most statements with a ton of salt.

A useful but not entirely complete antidote is found in Ernest Newman's massive four-volume

Life of Richard Wagner. Make no mistake, Newman loves Wagner's music. He does try to understand or minimize some of the excesses, and skips over others, but generally does expose the lies, betrayals, inconsistencies, outrageous behaviour, self-indulgences, and hypocrisies which made up this tormented man. This is a great read—well-written, interesting to the general reader as well as to music lovers. Besides the account of the fascinating and revolting Wagner himself, Newman looks at other giants of the age like Bakunin, Liszt, Berlioz, and Nietzsche. Add to these the Mad King Ludwig and all those women who felt that Richard needed them to help him in his artistic endeavours. There are two problems with the Newman biography. I found some difficulty in getting a copy of it, but the University of Ottawa library has a copy and it should be available through Inter-Library Loan. The second problem is that Newman completed his biography before quite a lot of additional information became available and the full extent of the impact of Wagner on the Nazi Party and specifically on Adolf Hitler was known. Before leaving Newman it should be mentioned that his *Wagner Nights* (now known as *The Wagner Operas*) includes plot summaries of the major operas.

The supposed connection between Wagner and Nazism presents no problem to neo-Nazis who no doubt worship the master while ignoring the fact that Wagner's main philosophy is completely opposed to the Nazi creed. The Israelis who refuse to have Wagner's music performed in their country are taking an understandable if unfortunate position for the musical life of their country. But what is everyone else to make of this?

To answer this question one might turn to Martin van Amerongen's *Wagner: a Case History* (available in the Ottawa Public Library). This book points out some of the most outrageous paradoxes surrounding Wagner. The author of an anti-Semitic tract read and treasured by Hitler, Wagner was described as 'the best and noblest of men,' and it was pointed out by the same writer that 'posterity will one day realize that Wagner was as fine a human being as he was an artist.' These phrases were used by Hermann Levi, the conductor of *Parsifal* and later pallbearer at Wagner's funeral, in a letter to his father, the Chief Rabbi. Much of this book doesn't really explain anything but does allow the reader to realize that there is no room for simple explanation where Wagner is concerned.

The well-known writer on music, Charles Osborne, has a volume on *The Complete Works of Wagner*, in much the same format as his other volumes on Verdi, Mozart, Puccini, and Strauss. This music-lover was horrified to learn that the favourite Nazi opera was not *Siegfried* with its probable appeal to the Hitler Jugend or *Parsifal* which seems to have formed the basis for a good deal of the Nazi 'religion,' but rather *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, during the last scene of which—where Hans Sachs delivers his warning to Germany's neighbours and extols German art—the Bayreuth audience in the 1930s rose to their feet and gave the Nazi salute until the end of the opera. (This is my favourite Wagner opera and I confess that I always found this particular section to be one of the 'boring bits.')

No doubt the fact that the heroine of the opera was named Eva (as in Braun) made this opera even more attractive to Der Führer. Osborne's book is particularly valuable on the earliest operas which no one, not even Wagner himself, has much to say about.

The *Ring* cycle, presented at the Met in the past few years, and in the process of being presented in Chicago, has always elicited a great deal of comment, some of it very positive, e. g., Gerhard Hauptmann calling it 'perhaps the mightiest work of art of the last millenium,' some of it very negative, e.g., Leo Tolstoy, who called

Siegfried 'counterfeit art—mere hypnosis and maniacal ravings,' and all other reactions in between, including the humorous, e.g., Anna Russell. The best short introduction to the *Ring* cycle is M. Owen Lee's *Wagner's Ring: Turning the Sky Round*. Father Lee, of St. Michael's Toronto, is a frequent commentator on the Met radio broadcasts, and this book is substantially the talks that he gave on the air during the radio broadcasts of the cycle. Subsequently the Met performances were telecast on PBS and on TV Ontario. There is a section on 'Further Reading' which lists two of my favourites, George Bernard Shaw's *The Perfect Wagnerite*, which should only be read by someone aware of the Shavian brand of wit, and the marvellous *I Saw the World End: A Study of Wagner's Ring*, by Deryck Cooke. The latter deals with the sources for the librettos that Wagner wrote and begins an analysis of the operas, never completed because of Cooke's untimely death. Lee's bibliography also contains a book that is not one of my favourites, although it has been very influential. This is Robert Donington's *Wagner's Ring and its Symbols: The Music and the Myth*. This is an attempt to put all that the *Ring* contains in a Jungian straitjacket. Some insights are very valuable, but the overall argument is unconvincing and some of the details are ludicrous, e.g., Fafner, the dragon, is supposed to represent Siegfried's mother.

If you have read all of the above and would like to have a convenient reference work to tie most of the material together, see Philip Hodson's *Who's Who in Wagner's Life and Work* (available at the Ottawa Public Library). This is an alphabetical encyclopaedia of the persons, places, literary works, operatic characters, and singers both historical and contemporary—all connected with Wagner and his lasting influence. This is a great book for browsing; in spite of the repetitions of material (as in the *Ring* itself) the text can be read from beginning to end.

In a subsequent article, some of the recordings of Wagner's music will be considered.

MK

Anniversary dinner

In 1993 the Society was ten years old. To celebrate this milestone, Don and Lois Harper, two of the original Board members, invited all past and present Board members to a dinner in their apartment on 28 November. Although there was nothing operatic about the event except the conversation, everyone enjoyed the splendid main courses cooked by the hosts and the great

array of desserts brought by the guests. I made a list of everyone who was there, so that by putting all their names here we could be assured of several extra sales; unfortunately, I mislaid the piece of paper and I don't want to risk offending anyone by trusting to memory.

JMC

Opera quiz answers

The answer to all the questions is Richard Wagner.

Membership renewal

We try not to be boring, but it's time to remind many of you about membership renewals for 1994. The fees and membership categories are given on the membership form on page 7. With the basic fee still at \$20, the NCOS remains one of the least expensive organizations you can be a member of, anywhere.

Discount for members

Counterpoint Classics has moved from Murray St. The shop is now at 266 Dalhousie St., near Murray and so not very far from its former spot. The standard discount of 20% off each regularly priced CD is still offered to any member on presentation of the NCOS membership card.

NCOS Board Members

| | | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|
| President | Bobbi Cain | Newsletter | John Clegg |
| Vice-President | Peggy Pflug | Publicity | Marjorie Clegg |
| Past-President | Marjorie Clegg | Events | Peggy Pflug, Stuart Baxter |
| Treasurer | Murray Kitts | General Liaison | David Shore |
| Secretary | Brenda Lane-Eraut | Membership | Gerda Ruckerbauer, David Shore |
| Scholarships | Bobbi Cain | Members | Pat Adamo, Judith Miller |

Some telephone numbers

| | |
|----------------|--------------|
| Bobbi Cain | 225-0124 (h) |
| Marjorie Clegg | 594-2988 (h) |
| Peggy Pflug | 226-5482 (h) |

1994 Membership Form

Formulaire d'abonnement 1994

This is a renewal _____ new membership _____

| | |
|---|-----------------|
| | Amount |
| Yes, I wish to be a member in 1994 (please see membership categories below) | \$ _____ |
| *I wish to make a tax-deductible donation to the Society | \$ _____ |
| *I wish to make a tax-deductible donation to the Brian Law Scholarship fund | \$ _____ |
| Total | \$ _____ |

Enclosed is my cheque for \$_____, payable to the National Capital Opera Society.

* If you wish your name as a donor recorded in a particular way, say how here:

.....
 Name(s):
 Address:
 City: Province
 Postal Code: Telephone(s)

Il s'agit d'un réabonnement _____ d'un abonnement _____

| | |
|---|-----------------|
| | Montant |
| Je souhaite m'abonner pour 1994 (veuillez consulter la liste de catégories d'abonnement ci-dessous) | \$ _____ |
| * Je souhaite faire un don déductible aux fins de l'impôt à la Société | \$ _____ |
| * Je souhaite faire un don déductible aux fins de l'impôt à la Bourse Opéra—Brian Law | \$ _____ |
| Total | \$ _____ |

Un chèque de _____ \$ se trouve sous pli (libellé à l'intention de la Société d'opéra de la Capitale nationale).

* Si vous désirez que le nom du donateur soit consigné d'une façon particulière, l'indiquer ici:

.....
 Nom(s):
 Adresse:
 Ville: Province
 Code postal: Téléphone(s)

| Membership categories | |
|-----------------------|--------|
| Life | \$1000 |
| Patron | 250 |
| Benefactor | 100 |
| Friend | 50 |
| Family | 30 |
| Member | 20 |
| Student | 15 |
| Senior | 15 |

| Les catégories d'abonnement | |
|-----------------------------|--------|
| A vie | \$1000 |
| Protecteur(trice) | 250 |
| Bienfaiteur(trice) | 100 |
| Ami(e) | 50 |
| Famille | 30 |
| Membre | 20 |
| Etudiant(e) | 15 |
| Aîné(e) | 15 |