

# Newsletter • Bulletin

Fall

2000

L'Automne

P.O. Box 8347, Main Terminal, Ottawa, Ontario K1G 3H8 • C.P. 8347, Succursale principale, Ottawa, (Ontario) K1G 3H8

## THE BRIAN LAW OPERA SCHOLARSHIP *The Fifth Biennial Competition* **by Bobbi Cain**

A \$2000 scholarship will be awarded to an aspiring young singer, aged 22 to 32 years, after a juried competition. The Brian Law Opera Scholarship was established in 1992 in honour of Brian Law, to commemorate his dedication over a twenty-five year period to young singers, to orchestral and choral music, and to opera, both at the National Arts Centre and at l'Opera de Montreal.

The upcoming scholarship competition will be held on Saturday, January 27, 2001 at the First Unitarian Congregation, 30 Cleary Avenue. Up to six young finalists will perform a selection of operatic arias, including one with recitative, before an audience gathered to hear them and a distinguished jury. The jurors will be Mary Lou Fallis (the Diva), soprano; Mark Pedrotti, baritone; and Roxolana Roslak, soprano; all from Toronto.

During the jury's deliberations, former Brian Law Scholarship winner, Mary Ann

Swerdfeger, will present a special recital. Mary Ann is working in New York City in a variety of roles, mostly of a light operatic nature, and we are happy to welcome her glorious, yet dulcet tones back to be with us in her hometown, Ottawa.

The competition evening begins at 7:30 P.M., and light refreshments will be available in the adjoining hall after the announcement of the winner. A considerable amount of parking can be found around the building, and buses run nearby. The charge for the competition is \$10.00, with tickets available at the door. Book this date now, and make sure you are with us for this exciting night.

For those of you who might be interested, it is our custom to present a smaller honorarium to the non-winners, monies not taken from the endowment fund. If you would like to donate a \$100 or \$200 prize designated in someone's name or for a cause in your life please contact us. Your assistance and interest would be greatly appreciated.

**Opera Alla Pasta — Sunday Afternoon at the Opera**

2:00 P.M. Sunday, October 22 at St. Anthony's Soccer Club

**Giacomo Puccini's**

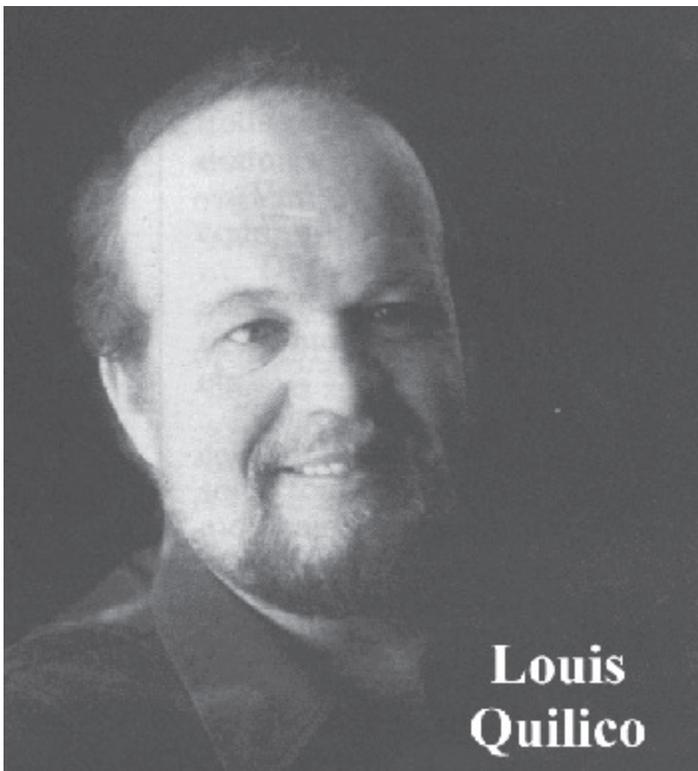
**LA FANCIULLA DEL WEST**

## Louis Quilico Memorial

A number of years ago the NCOS was greatly aided in its Brian Law Scholarship fund through a recital given in the Theatre of the National Arts Centre by Louis Quilico (and friends). At that time members of the NCOS came to know this remarkable man. Of course we knew him as a great singer, especially in Verdi roles. We gratefully accepted his generosity in helping our cause. We were captivated by the warmth of his personality and his wonderful sense of humour – a truly unforgettable man. His loss is a personal one for many of us.

In memory of Louis Quilico, the NCOS would like to support the Christine and Louis Quilico Foundation for the Support of Young Artists, through donations made to NCOS for the memorial fund. We are asking our members to send their donations to the Treasurer, National Capital Opera Society, P.O. Box 8347, Station T, Ottawa, ON, K1G 3H8 made out to the NCOS Louis Quilico Memorial Fund. A tax receipt will be issued for each donation to this Fund. If every member of our society were to donate \$10 we would have a substantial amount. We hope to have our donation ready by the end of October of this year.

The Christine and Louis Quilico Foundation will be formally announced at the time of the release of his first posthumous CD release, "A Most Happy Fella".



## From the President . . .

I hope you have all had a pleasant summer, regardless of the unusual weather. Many of us enjoyed the various offerings of the "Great Composers Festival" at the National Arts Centre. But, wouldn't it have been even better if there had been one or two opera productions? We have corresponded with Maestro Zuckerman concerning this. Won't you join us in this effort? The address is The NAC, Box 1534, Station B, Ottawa K1P 5W1.

Your new Board of Directors is gradually getting into gear, and yes, we now have a Treasurer. Plans are in place for three "Opera Alla Pasta" afternoons at St. Anthony's, featuring the showing of an opera followed by a sumptuous buffet dinner, all for \$15. The next Brian Law Opera Scholarship Competition will be held on January 27, 2001, and is described more fully in an article on the front page of this newsletter. Put the date on your calendar now. Other plans are cooking in the coffers, so keep in touch and watch closely.

Soon the leaves will be turning! Enjoy Opera Lyra Ottawa's *LA FILLE DU RÉGIMENT*.

## Venite ad Aquas

A joint benefit concert on the theme of water in support of **WaterCan** and the **Cantata Singers of Ottawa**

The **Cantata Singers** will be directed by **Laurence Ewashko** with Countertenor **Daniel Taylor**, other invited guests and narrator, **Shelagh Rogers**.

Christ Church Cathedral, Friday, November 10, 2000 at 8:00 P.M.

Adults: \$40, Seniors & Student \$30

Information: 798-7113 or 230-5182

# ON OPERA GLASSES

by Murray Kitts

There is much to be said for opera glasses. Many people use them. They are helpful to see the singers' expressions and thus enjoy the opera more fully – at least that is the theory behind them.

I have never liked using opera glasses. I don't much like binoculars either. I am one of these people who, given a pair of opera glasses, can always manage to find a tiny loose screw – a screw essential to the operation of the glasses and irreplaceable. I never seek out this little screw. Somehow one of my fingers barely grazes the glasses and the process of disintegration begins. Never offer to lend me your opera glasses.

Besides, when one looks through opera glasses does what one sees always add to the enjoyment? After all, opera is a spectacle like no other. I would contend that sometimes it is well not to look too closely at singers. Distance lends enchantment.

To prove my point, let's consider opera as presented on TV. First of all we can dismiss from the argument all opera made as films. In this medium directors can indulge in all sorts of eccentricities and we are forced to look at them. For example in the recent film *LA TRAVIATA* (the one shot in Paris) the director chose to show us close-ups of singers' hands during the first part of the last act. Later the camera focused on other parts of the singers' bodies. Film directors can do this sort of thing for good or ill. Mostly ill.

Let's concentrate on live opera performances recorded on video and presented on TV. A recent telecast of *DER ROSENKAVALIER* will illustrate my point. The giant-size opera glass of television revealed that the singer portraying the Marschallin was in fact younger than the person singing

the role of Octavian, thus robbing the plot of one of its essential ingredients. Seen on stage without the aid of opera glasses the illusion of a very young man (sung by a female) with an "older" woman could be maintained.

This video was made some years ago and was enjoyable for historic reasons. Now, directors like Brian Large have become more adept at bringing enjoyable live performances to TV. But there are dangers. I recall seeing a performance of an opera where my attention was distracted by the close-ups of the lead singer. This young lady (amply endowed, as they say) had of course to take deep breaths in order to sing her role. Her costume was such that it amplified the pneumatic effect so that at each breath the bonds of decency were threatened. Very distracting. Not at all suitable for presenting a tragedy or for children under 14. In the opera house without opera glasses such distractions are not present.

It's even disturbing to sit too close to the stage in opera. I recall that having seen and enjoyed *AIDA* on the biggest stage in the world at the Baths of Caracalla in Rome, I was persuaded by a well-meaning friend to sit very close to the front. One could forgive the singer portraying Rhadames his physical deficiencies which betrayed his advanced age, but his habit of crossing his eyes when reaching for high notes spoiled the nature of a spectacle which had always been enjoyed from the cheaper seats at the back.

The use of opera glasses therefore should be confined to what I consider is their proper use – looking around the opera house to see who's there. Once the lights dim and the music starts, put them away. Of course, they should never be used by someone whose mere touch can send them to the junk heap.

## Board of Directors of the NATIONAL CAPITAL OPERA SOCIETY 2000 – 2001

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President	Bobbi Cain	729-9518
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This classic recording with libretto in English and French paralleling the Italian text features the "dream cast" of Joan Sutherland and Luciano Pavarotti with Spiro Malas as Sulpice and Monica Sinclair as the Marquise. Richard Bonyngue conducts the wonderful score. This is available on two disks at full price from London, set number 414 520-2.

Those of you who enjoyed *LA FILLE DU RÉGIMENT* might be interested in *LA FIGLIA DEL REGGIMENTO*, the Italian version of Donizetti's French opera. *LA FIGLIA* is similar to, but not the same as, the original *LA FILLE*. The CD to the right (Opera D'Oro OPD-1147) is an inexpensive – under \$20 – live recording, with all the advantages and disadvantages of such recordings, from a 1969 La Scala performance. It is the complete opera but there is no libretto.



# OPERA LYRA'S *LA FILLE DU REGIMENT*

by Murray Kitts

Let me confess at the outset that I have been educated to believe that comedy is much more difficult to stage than tragedy. That's why I have some reservations about the production I saw on opening night.

The NAC Orchestra under Maestro Paterson played the lovely score with verve inserting the proper martial effects when called for. The sets from Washington Opera were excellent. The costumes from the same source were also very good, with one important exception. Somehow Marie's costume in Act 1 seemed to emphasize her diminutive stature and in Act 2 her gown was rather drab. Lighting was properly theatrical – thank goodness, no return to attempts at natural lighting as in past productions.

Of course in a *bel canto* opera it is the singing, the “beautiful singing”, that is most important. Tracy Dahl as Marie did sing very well technically and expressively; but hers is not a beautiful voice in itself. Curt Peterson as Tonio was almost perfect for the part – some vocal trouble – but to be forgiven in a live performance. Steven Condy was an outstanding Sulpice. Their trio “Tous les trois reunis” in Act 2 was delightful. The voice of the Marquise, played by Elizabeth Turnbull was lost in all the ensembles, although her solo parts were quite good. Minor roles were well sung and acted and the chorus, an essential part to a successful performance of this opera, was in very good voice.

All very well and good. So it was the interpretation and the staging of the opera that made me feel that full justice had not been done. For example, the portrayal of the Marquise as an aristocratic lib-

ertine destroys the charm of this fable about the baby reared by the regiment, then reunited with her aristocratic mother. The business with the cannon and the Marquise at the end of Act 1 was completely out of character. In practically every scene of the opera there was excess – too much movement, too much repetition of the same business, too many attempts to get cheap laughs. The opera is a comedy; but it is not a farce. It has farcical elements, as in the dancing lesson, but these should not predominate. The soldiers are not the clowns from *The Barber of Seville*; they can't be fools one minute and then be portrayed as a menace the next.

There is real beauty in this opera – the affection and loyalty of Marie and the regiment and the delightful courtship of Marie and Tonio, their sorrowful parting, their joyful reunion – all expressed in lovely music and often accompanied by dazzling vocal gymnastics.

Perhaps it was the presence of Tracy Dahl, so gifted an artist, so accomplished an actress, so energetic, and the abilities of the two male leads that prompted Stage Director Michael Cavanagh to go to excess. Perhaps I am

just too fond of this opera. I enjoyed much of this production, but can't help feeling that it missed being cohesive in interpretation and the triumph that it might have been.

Incidentally, although I thought that Mary Lou Fallis' appearance with moose antlers fell flat with the audience, I was surprised to hear her say as an exit line “Leopold, wir geh'n!” the exact same words as Baron Ochs uses for his exit in the final act of Richard Strauss' *DER ROSENCAVALIER*. For the life of me I can't see any connection between the two characters.





# Saturday Afternoon at the Opera

September 23

**VIENNA STATE OPERA**

**Die Frau Ohne Schatten** (Strauss)

Conductor: Giuseppe Sinopoli

Cast: Johan Botha, Deborah Voigt,  
Marjana Lipovsek, Wolfgang Bankl

September 30

**VIENNA STATE OPERA**

**Lulu** (Berg)

Conductor: Michael Boder

Cast: Anat Efraty, Graciela Araya,  
Franz Grundheber, Jorma Silvasti

October 7

**RESIDENZHOF, SALZBURG**

**Iphigénie en Tauride** (Gluck)

Conductor: Ivor Bolton

Cast: Susan Graham, Thomas Hampson,  
Paul Groves, Philippe Rouillon, Olga Schalaeva

October 14

**GROSSES FESTSPIELHAUS, SALZBURG**

**Don Giovanni** (Mozart)

Conductor: Lorin Maazel

Cast: Ferruccio Furlanetto, René Pape,  
Renée Fleming, Marina Mescheriakova

October 21

**FELSENREITSCHULE, SALZBURG**

**Médée** (Cherubini)

Conductor: Sir Charles Mackerras

Cast: Kristinn Sigmundsson, Christine Schafer,  
Michael Schade, Angela Denoke, Norine Burgess

October 28

**FELSENREITSCHULE, SALZBURG**

**Saul und David** (Nielsen)

Conductor: Michael Schonwandt

Cast: Robert Hale, John Mark Ainsley  
Stig Andersen, Inga Nielsen, Randi Stene

November 4

**OPERA LYRA, OTTAWA**

**La Traviata** (Verdi)

Conductor: Bernard Labadie

Cast: Lyne Fortin, Raul Hernandez,  
Gaetan Laperriere, Michelle Sutton

November 11

**L'OPERA DE MONTREAL, MONTREAL**

**L'Incoronazione di Poppea** (Monteverdi)

Conductor: Yannick Nezet-Seguin

Cast: Suzie LeBlanc, Daniel Taylor,  
Terry Murphy, Odette Beupre

November 18

**EDMONTON OPERA, EDMONTON**

**The Rake's Progress** (Stravinsky)

Conductor: Bramwell Tovey

Cast: Gordon Gietz, David Pittsinger,  
Jackalyn Short

November 25

**CANADIAN OPERA COMPANY, TORONTO**

**L'Elisir d'Amore** (Donizetti)

Conductor: Maurizio Barbacini

Michael Schade, Henriette Bonde-Hansen,  
John Del Carlo, Louis Otey, Tamara Hummel

December 2

**CANADIAN OPERA COMPANY, TORONTO**

**The Flying Dutchman** (Wagner)

Conductor: Richard Bradshaw

Cast: Richard Fink, Frances Ginzer,  
Raymond Aceto, Gordon Gietz, Susan Shafer

## Texaco Metropolitan Opera Broadcasts

December 9 **DER ROSENKAVALIER** (Strauss)

December 16 **DER FLIEGENDE HOLLÄNDER**

(Wagner)

December 23 **THE MERRY WIDOW** (Lehár)

December 30 **LA TRAVIATA** (Verdi)

January 6 **FIDELIO** (Beethoven)

January 13 **IL TROVATORE** (Verdi)

January 20 **DOKTOR FAUST** (Busoni)

January 27 **AIDA** (Verdi)

# Opera Within Reach

## OTTAWA

### National Arts Centre

**Kiri Te Kenawa GALA** October 3  
**Renée Fleming** November 7  
**Dimitri Hvortovsky** November 8 & 10  
**Handel's MESSIAH** December 19 & 20  
 Information: 947-7000, ext 280

### Opera Lyra Ottawa

**CINDERELLA** by Rossini (at Taberet Hall)  
 Dec 8, 9, 10, 15, 16 & 17

**Black & White Opera Soiree** Feb 17, 2001

**IL TROVATORE** by Verdi April 21, 23, 25 & 28  
 Information: 233-9200

## MONTREAL

### L'Opéra de Montréal

**COSI FAN TUTTE** by Mozart.  
 Sept 16, 18, 21, 23, 27 & 30

**KATYA KABANOVA** by Janacek.  
 Nov 4, 6, 9, 11 & 15

**The GALA** Dec 10

**Ruth Ann Swenson** Jan 21, 2001

All performances are in the Salle Wilfred Pelletier  
 in the Place des Arts

Information: 1-800-361-4595

## TORONTO

### Canadian Opera Company

**OTELLO** by Verdi  
 Sept 21, 24, 27, 30 Oct 3 & 6

**THE BARTERED BRIDE** by Smetana  
 Sept 22, 26, 28 Oct 1, 4 & 7

**VENUS AND ADONIS** by Henze  
 Jan 19, 23, 25, 28, 31 & Feb 3, 2001

**LA FANCIULLA DEL WEST** by Puccini  
 Jan 20, 24, 26, 30 Feb 1 & 4

All performances are at the Hummingbird Centre.

Information: 1-800-250-4653

### Opera Mississauga

**CARMEN** by Bizet  
 Dec 2, 4, 6 & 9

**LUCIS DI LAMMERMOOR** by Donizetti  
 March 17, 20, 22 & 24, 2001

**RIGOLETTO** by Verdi  
 May 4, 8, 10 & 12

All performances are in Hammerson Hall at The  
 Living Arts Centre in Mississauga

Information: 1-905-306-0060