

Newsletter • Bulletin

Winter

1999

Le Hiver

P.O. Box 8347, Station T, Ottawa, Ontario K1G 3H8

C.P. 8347, Station T, Ottawa, (Ontario) K1G 3H8

A NIGHT TO REMEMBER

It wasn't just the attractive centerpieces and well-researched pamphlets on composers that Gerda Ruckerbauer designed and placed on every table.

It wasn't just the excellent door prizes that Edith Orton collected for distribution that evening.

It wasn't just the number and variety of items, which made the silent auction so interesting and helped us realize around \$1,000.

It wasn't just the fine and substantial meal served by Mr. Keith and his staff.

It wasn't just that the incomparable Rob Clipperton was there to introduce the singers and give a mini-history of opera.

It wasn't just that Stacey Ingrey, David Milnes, Alison Smyth, and Michael Torontow, accompanied by Evelyn Greenberg, delighted the audience with selections from the great operas. It wasn't just that Yoriko Tanno-Kimmons and Bobbi Cain surprised and pleased everyone with their duet.

It wasn't just that the whole evening cost only \$35 a person.

It was all of these things put together and more. Here were over ninety opera lovers and their friends filling the room almost to capacity, enjoying the food, the entertainment, and each others' company.

If you missed this night to remember, be certain not to miss the next one.

by Murray Kitts

Photos: Ute Davis



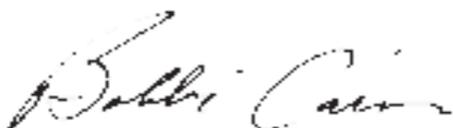
From the President...

I must extend a huge vote of thanks to all those who helped with the Millenium Celebration, who donated items for the silent auction, or who attended that joyful evening with us. It was a lot of fun, the food was great, the entertainment helped point us to the stars of the next millenium, and we only had one item left after the silent auction. At risk of missing someone I will try to name member donors. Thanks to Kate and John Freke; Beryl Anderson and her opera colleague; Ute and Michael Davis; Renate Chartrand; Gerda Ruckerbauer; Murray Kitts; Norma Torontow; Edith Orton; Barbara Bolton; Judy Burrows;and any others.

An advertisement is in this issue for a TREASURER to take over January 1, 2000. Make this a project for the new millenium. Murray Kitts is taking over the Newsletter, and he will do a great job at that. From January 1st the very busy President will take on the books (they are computerized) but I'm only going to do it until one of our members phones and volunteers. The Treasurer is a Board of Directors position (we meet quarterly) and your input is needed.

Also, I was saddened by the resignation of Norma Law from the Brian Law Opera Scholarship Committee. She has been an enormous help since the Scholarship's inception in 1992. We thank Norma for all her support and commitment to this important cause. Now it is someone else's turn - your turn, perhaps. We have to start working in the spring on the January 2001 competition. There is much exciting work to do. PleaseHelp!!!!

Finally, you all have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. I'm going to Texas for the Millenium celebration, so see you in 2000.



N.C.O.S. Board of Directors

President	Bobbi Cain
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Membership Dues

**Time
to
Renew!**

Wanted Treasurer

- Duties: – Collecting and banking revenues
 – Overseeing all disbursements
 – Acting as financial advisor to the society

Phone Bobbi Cain at 225-0124

National Capital Opera Society
 P.O. Box 8347, Station T
 Ottawa, Canada K1G 3H8

Saturday Afternoon at the Opera

December 11	Gaetano Donizetti	Lucia di Lammermoor 12:30
December 18	Richard Wagner	Tristan und Isolde 12:30
December 25	Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart	Le Nozze di Figaro 1:30
January 1	John Harbison	The Great Gatsby 1:30
January 8	Giacomo Puccini	Tosca 1:30
January 15	Giuseppe Verdi	Rigoletto 1:30
January 22	Pietro Mascagni/Ruggiero Leoncavallo	Cavalleria Rusticana/Pagliacci 1:30
January 29	Richard Strauss	Der Rosenkavalier 1:00
February 5	Giuseppe Verdi	La Traviata 1:00
February 12	Jacques Offenbach	Les Contes d'Hoffmann 1:30
February 19	Arrigo Boito	Mefistofele 1:30
February 26	Giacomo Puccini	Madama Butterfly 1:30
March 4	Franz Lehár	The Merry Widow 1:30
March 11	Gioachino Rossini	La Cenerentola 1:30
March 18	Dmitri Shostakovich	Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk 1:30
March 25	Richard Wagner	Das Rheingold 1:30
April 1	Richard Wagner	Die Walküre 12:30
April 8	Claude Debussy	Pelléas et Mélisande 1:30
April 15	Richard Wagner	Siegfried 12:30
April 22	Richard Wagner	Götterdämmerung 12:00

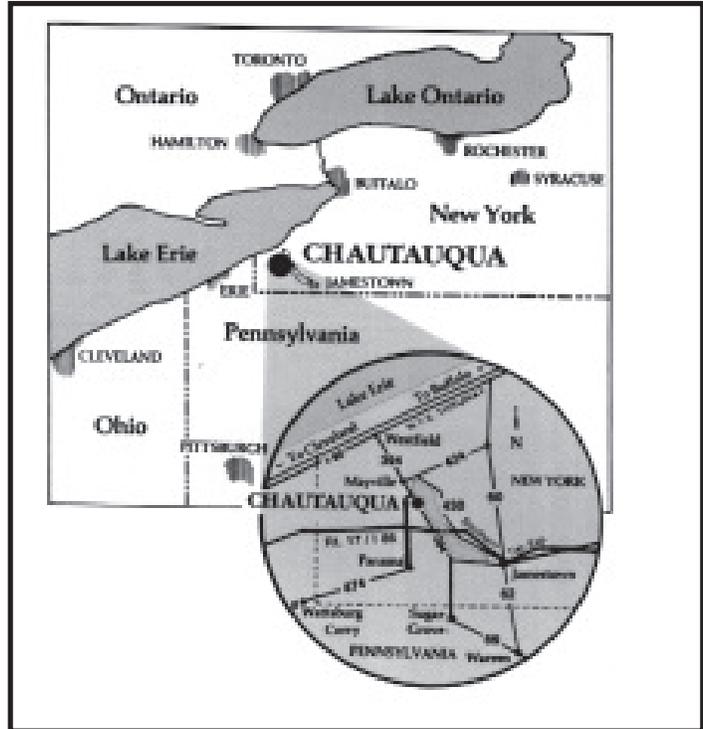


Chautauqua Opera

by Tom McCool

Summer opera festivals in Europe and the U.S.A. have achieved an unprecedented level of popularity. It is definitely a scalpers' paradise at places like Bayreuth, Verona and Santa Fe as tickets are usually impossible to get, regardless of the price one is willing to pay. Opera scalpers would not prosper in Canada! Ever since the National Arts Centre abandoned its production of summer operas in 1983 the summer opera scene is, with the exception of the occasional road show, non-existent in this country. Consequently, Canadian opera aficionados have to leave the country to attend an opera. Luckily this does not mean traveling very far for residents of Ottawa as the Glimmerglas Opera in Cooperstown N.Y., is located within easy reach of the Canadian border. Glimmerglass has achieved an enviable reputation of late but in many ways a more intriguing option is located due west of Cooperstown in the village of Chautauqua in the south-eastern part of Upper New York state. Chautauqua is easy to find as it just off the New York State Thruway, near the Pennsylvania state line. Here you will discover the Chautauqua Opera and it is a discovery you will be happy you made.

The Chautauqua Opera is just one of the many educational and artistic endeavours sponsored by the Chautauqua Institute, an organization founded 126 years ago which, although not as prominent nor as influential as it was earlier in its history, has had a profound effect on the cultural life of Americans. The Institution, originally the Chautauqua Lake Sunday School Assembly, was founded in 1874 as an educational experiment in out-of-school, vacation learning. It flourished from its inception! In 1881 it introduced the first successful correspondence educational program in America focusing on modern and classical literature and history. In the early 20th century lecturers, such as renowned orator, lawyer and politician, William Jennings Bryan, and thousands of other speakers and performers were sent out from Chautauqua to all parts of the U.S.A. It has been estimated that one third of the U.S. population was participating in some aspect of the Chautauqua movement at its peak in 1924. After World War I music became increasingly important at Chautauqua. A symphony orchestra season became part of the regular program

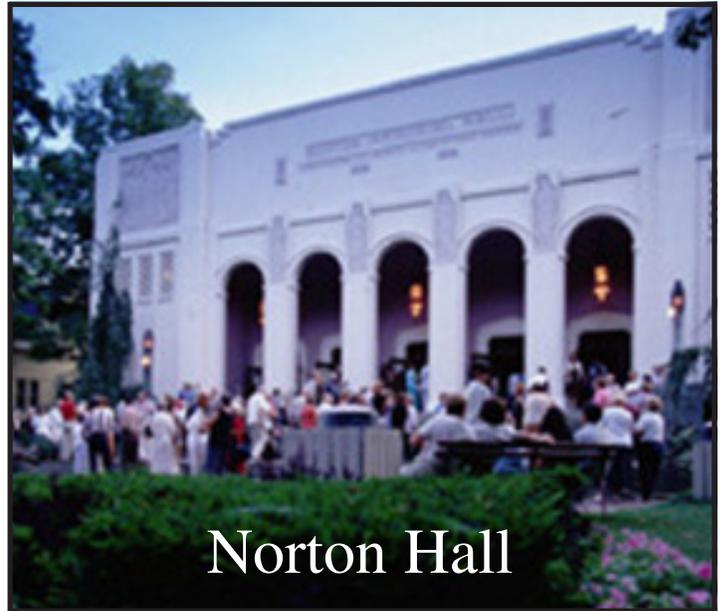


in 1920 and an opera company was founded in 1929. This musical emphasis continues today as lectures and classes in all genres of music are offered at levels from beginner to professional. As well, a multitude of performances ranging from chamber music to country singer, Wynona Judd, and everything in between are scheduled throughout the summer.

This year the Chautauqua Opera will be presenting four operas - *The Barber of Seville*, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, Puccini's *La Rondine* and *Street Scene* by Kurt Weill. This line-up is typical-one very well-known and one very obscure opera with the others being familiar but certainly not among the "top ten" that are always performed. Last year's lineup was *Hansel and Gretel*, *Don Pasquale*, *Two Widows* and *Die Fledermaus*. Sometimes there will be a theme to the season. In 1997 the focus was on "family values", and the operas that summer were *Rigoletto*, *The Pirates of Penzance*, *Regina*, *Sister Angelica* and *Gianni Schicchi*. The previous year the operas were again different but the mix was similar. This makes for a more appealing list of productions

compared to the usual fare offered by other companies. Each opera is presented only twice-on Friday and the following Monday and all operas are staged at Norton Hall, the interior of which is reminiscent of a high school auditorium. The building may not be the "Met" but many of the singers have performed there and the sets, costumes and orchestra are equal to those of any opera company anywhere. The production values are high but what is more important is the existence of an unpretentious vitality which, without sacrificing quality, runs counter to the pomposity and elitism sometimes associated with opera. All of the productions I've attended there have been excellent and *Don Pasquale* last year was as fine a show as I have ever experienced. This, in spite of the fact that the mandate of the company is that the operas must be sung in English. This is usually a negative factor but it doesn't seem to be a problem here. An additional consideration for opera goers is the cost of tickets. At Chautauqua the tickets are moderately priced by opera standards even taking into account the unfortunate status of the Canadian dollar. The most expensive ticket last year was \$39. Another attractive feature for many is that the recommended dress is casual.

In addition to opera and other musical and theatrical productions there are countless more activities at Chautauqua. There are classes and lectures in such diverse subjects as yoga, classic films, remarriage, wild mushrooms, computer skills, basics of investing, Stalin's managerial style, Ukrainian egg decorating, juggling and many foreign languages. There is also instruction



Norton Hall

in and facilities for crafts, tennis, golf and boating. And this list is illustrative rather than comprehensive! Last year over 140,000 people took part in Chautauqua's summer program.

Located in a dramatic lakeside setting just outside the village of Chautauqua the Chautauqua Institution is a large enclave which, because of its Victorian architecture, looks like a turn-of-the-century Disney World. Every summer it comes alive! It is described as "a festival for the mind and body" and it really is a summer camp for adults. Why not get your kids to send you! Information regarding tickets and accommodations is available by calling 1-800-836-ARTS or by accessing their excellent website at <http://www.chautauqua-ins.org>.



New Opera Seasons in Montreal and Toronto

by Donald Metcalfe

The week of September 18-25 offered four operatic opening nights in the Ottawa-Montreal-Toronto areas, and in spite of certain reservations, all of them justified our attention.

Because of my Opéra de Montréal subscription, I missed the first Opera Lyra performance of Bizet's *LES PÊCHEURS DE PERLES* on September 18, having to wait until the 22nd to view this admirable production.

The Montreal première of *SALOME* on September 18th was more successful than originally anticipated, given the technicians' strike at Place des Arts that forced the company to provide only a semi-staged performance.

That situation did not at all turn the evening into a disaster, with the costumes intact, and the one-act format allowing the stage movement to proceed acceptably. However, with the Orchestre Métropolitain under David Agler's firm direction required to perform on stage behind the action, Eilana Lappalainen's Salome tended occasionally to be overpowered by the Straussian orchestration, forcing her voice to become, at times, strident.

Of the other principals, American baritone Richard Paul Fink as Jochanaan probably gave the best performance of the evening, but Alan Glassman as Herod, Kathryn Day in the smaller role of Herodias, and Thomas Studebaker as Narraboth were all convincing.

The big surprise, however, was having a mezzo of the calibre of Kathleen Hegierski singing the relatively minor part of the Page. All in all, a very worthwhile evening of opera, and an auspicious start to Opéra de Montréal's 1999-2000 season.

On September 23 and 24 I attended opening nights in Toronto of the Canadian Opera Company's production of Verdi's *LA TRAVIATA* and Donizetti's *L'ELISIR D'AMORE*.

As we have come to expect from the COC the singing was exemplary, and as usual included a few names new to the Canadian scene; in the case of *LA TRAVIATA*, Bulgarian soprano Zvetelina Vassilevo as Violetta, Ukranian tenor Vladimir Grishko in the role

of Alfredo, and Krisztino Szabo as Violetta's friend, Flora.

More familiar to us, of course, were Gaetan Laperriere as Gogio Germont, and the remarkable Cornelis Ophthof as Baron Douphol.

Unfortunately the new production by Russian director Dmitry Bartman, making his North American debut, was a disaster. Done in black and white - the black no doubt representing the heroine's knowledge of her imminent death by consumption; the white possibly her dream world - the staging became very much a distraction, forcing the audience to concentrate more on what Mr. Bertman was trying to tell us about his interpretation than enjoying Verdi's marvellous score.

For example, do we need Flora's party to take place in a disco, complete with strobe lighting and guests gyrating inappropriately to the music?

To be successful a production must offer a synthesis of music and stage action. The run from September 25 until October 8 was completely sold out, indicating that the COC did not take much of a chance in presenting a different approach to a familiar opera, but if it doesn't work, why bother? I miss the old Metropolitan Opera production by Cecil Beaton which unfortunately was replaced by the more gaudy Franco Zefferelli effort.

By contrast the *L'ELISIR D'AMORE* opening the following night in a traditional production borrowed from the Pittsburgh Opera was a sheer delight. Well cast, featuring Michael Schade as Nemorino, Danish soprano Henrietta Bonde-Hansen in the role of Adina, Louis Otey as Belcore, and the best Dr. Dulcamara, American bass-baritone John Del Carlo, that I have heard since the old days when it was Geraint Evans' domain at the Royal Opera, Covent Garden in London.

Another asset to this handsome production was the marvellous conducting by Maurizio Barbacini. The director was Paolo Montarsolo, with set designer Naoji Kawaguchi.

Opera Alla Pasta

January 9, 2000 *MEFISTOFELE*

MEFISTOFELE is Arrigo Boito's masterpiece. This video presentation features Samuel Ramey, Gabriela Benackova and Dennis O'Neill in a lavish production by the San Francisco Opera Company conducted by Maurizio Arena. Verdi's librettist for *OTELLO* and *FALSTAFF*, Boito completed only one opera to his own libretto. His version of the Faust story is based on Goethe's great drama, but includes different material from the libretto used by Gounod for his more famous opera. Long considered one of the major achievements in the Italian repertoire, *MEFISTOFELE* was a favourite opera of such great singers as Feodor Chaliapin and Enrico Caruso. Our presentation of this opera coincides with new productions in Montreal and at the Met in New York.

For reservations call Norma Torontow at 225-2652 or Renate Chartrand at 741-3290 no later than January 6.

The opera begins at 2:00 p.m. at St. Anthony's Soccer Club (off Preston Street at the Queensway) and will be followed by a Italian style dinner. The cost for the opera and the dinner is just \$15.

April 9, 2000 *THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO*

(Glyndebourne production with Gerald Finley)

Opera Within Reach

OTTAWA

Opera Lyra

Black & White Opera Soiree
Feb 19

LA TRAVIATA by Verdi
March 25, 27, 29 & April 1

All performances are in the Opera of the
NAC. Information: 233-9200

National Arts Centre Orchestra

Ewa Podles & Jon Villars
Jan 5, 6

REQUIEM by Fauré
April 26, 27

MONTREAL

L'Opéra de Montréal

OTELLO by Verdi Feb 5, 7, 10, 12, 16 & 19

MEFISTOFELE by Boito March 11, 13, 16, 18, 22 & 25

L'INCORONAZIONE DI POPPEA by Monteverdi
April 1, 4, 6 & 8

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

Information: 1-514-985-2258

TORONTO

Canadian Opera
Company

DER FLIEGENDE HOLLANDER by Wagner
Jan 20, 23, 26, 29 Feb 1 & 4

DON GIOVANNI by Mozart
Jan 21, 25, 27, 30 Feb 2 & 5

LA BOHEME by Puccini
April 6, 8, 11, 14, 16, 19 & 22

PELLEAS ET MELISANDE by Debussy
April 7, 9, 12, 15, 18 & 20

Ford Centre

GIOVANNA D'ARCO by Verdi March 18
Jennifer Larmore March 30
ST MATHEW PASSION by Bach April 15 & 16

Opera in Concert

ERNANI by Verdi Jan 23
Voices of Spring March 11
THE SHIVAREE by Beckwith April 15 & 16

U of T Faculty of Music

LA BOHEME by Puccini March 2, 3, 4 & 5
LA CENERENTOLA by Rossini April 9

Roy Thomson Hall

April 2 — Susan Graham
May 12 — Frederica von Stade