

Newsletter • Bulletin

Winter

2003

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

OUR TENTH ANNIVERSARY BRIAN LAW COMPETITION

by Murray Kitts

FINALISTS SELECTED

This past November a preliminary jury made up of Barbara Clark, Garth Hampson and Charlotte Stewart selected five young opera singers to compete for the Brian Law Opera Scholarship at a competition to be held at 7:00 p.m. on January 25 at the First Unitarian Congregation. The finalists are:

PASCAL CHARBONNEAU, tenor, Montreal - member of Atelier lyrique de l'opéra de Montréal, actively performing in Opéra de Montréal's recent production of *I Pagliacci*.

MELANIE CONLY, soprano, Toronto - Toronto-based Royal Conservatory of Music graduate, voice teacher and performing artist.

JOSHUA HOPKINS, baritone, Montreal - finishing Master of Music (voice) at McGill; experienced in opera and stage performance and vocal competition.

KATHLEEN RADKE, soprano, Ottawa - McMaster and Wilfred Laurier trained and graduate, experienced vocal artist, of late on the Ottawa scene.

JILLIAN YEMEN, mezzo-soprano, Toronto - currently progressing in University of Toronto opera and voice performance program.

See page 3 for more information about these exciting young singers.

COMPETITION, RECITAL AND RECEPTION

For our special tenth anniversary evening we are delighted to welcome Honorary Patrons, G. Hamilton Southam, O.C. and his wife Marion.

Competitors will sing three arias each, at least one of the three to be preceded by a recitative. The judges, consisting of Darryl Edwards, Christiane Riel and Roxalana Roslak will then retire to decide who will be this year's winner of the \$2,000 scholarship. While the judging takes place, 1993 Brian Law Scholarship winner Laura Dziubaniuk will present a mini-recital. Following the announcement of the winner, a reception will be held so that the audience can meet our competitors and distinguished guests.

It was ten years ago that the judges including Ewan Edwards, Rosemary Landry, Brian Law, and Stuart Hamilton awarded the first Brian Law Opera Scholarship to Laura Dziubaniuk. We are greatly pleased to have her return for our tenth anniversary. As Laura was profiled in our last edition with the other winners let it suffice to remind you of her extensive training and performances in Europe. Besides her experience in opera and oratorio, Laura has a large repertoire of song-cycles being able to rely on her mastery of Eastern European languages and others as well in her performances. No one who was present on the night Laura won will easily forget her wonderful presentation of the Song to the Moon from Dvořák's *Russalka*. Perhaps we will be lucky enough to hear it again.

Laura
Dziubaniuk
First Brian Law
Scholarship
Winner



FROM THE PRESIDENT...

May I wish you all the very best for the New Year, for all good things to come to each of you, and for your active participation in the activities of the National Capital Opera Society.

Happy New Year!!



Welcome New Members

Barbara Clark
Melissa Pilon
Jane Yaraskavitch

N.C.O.S. Board of Directors

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Mark your calendar for May 4 –
Berlioz' *The Damnation of Faust* -
at Opera Alla Pasta.

OPERA ALLA PASTA - Sunday Afternoon at the Opera

February 16 – Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore*

Roberto Alagna and Angela Gheorghiu with the chorus and orchestra of
The National Opera of Lyon under the direction of Evelino Pido.

2:00 p.m. Feb 16 at St. Anthony's Soccer Club

Delicious Italian dinner at 5:00 p.m. Call 225-0124 for reservations

Saturday Afternoon at the Met

January 4	Francis Poulenc	<i>Dialogues des Carmélites</i>
January 11	Johann Strauss, Jr.	<i>Die Fledermaus</i>
January 18	Georges Bizet	<i>Carmen</i>
January 25	Leoš Janáček	<i>Jenufa</i>
February 1	Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart	<i>Die Entführung aus dem Serail</i>
February 8	Vincenzo Bellini	<i>Il Pirata</i>
February 15	Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart	<i>Don Giovanni</i>
February 22	Hector Berlioz	<i>Les Troyens</i>
March 1	Giacomo Puccini	<i>Turandot</i>
March 8	Giacomo Puccini	<i>La Bohème</i>
March 15	Giuseppe Verdi	<i>La Traviata</i>
March 22	Giuseppe Verdi	<i>Otello</i>
March 29	Charles Gounod	<i>Faust</i>
April 5	Giuseppe Verdi	<i>Nabucco</i>
April 12	Richard Wagner	<i>Parsifal</i>
April 19	Igor Stravinsky	<i>The Rake's Progress</i>

The Competitors

Baritone **Joshua Hopkins** has set two goals for himself - first competing in several international opera competitions including the Cardiff Singer of the World and the Metropolitan Opera auditions, and second, auditioning to enroll in a leading Opera Apprentice Artist Training program in North America. Working at McGill University to complete his Master of Music credential, he has actively participated in the varied opera program offered by that institution. He appears in the upcoming Opera Lyra Ottawa/NAC "Black and White" production.

After finishing his Bachelor of Music, Voice program at McGill, tenor **Pascal Charbonneau** is now a member of the Atelier lyrique de l'opéra de Montréal. A finalist in the 2002 national level Canadian Music Competition and second prize winner in the "Concours des 100 associés". He has recently appeared in the Opéra de Montréal production of Leoncavallo's *I Pagliacci* as a energetic Contadino. With other Atelier members he will be traveling to France this coming summer for master class workshops and auditions.

Soprano **Melanie Conley** says she has been singing her "whole life" and hopes it continues to her dying breath. Involved in the production of new Canadian productions such as Andrew Ager's upcoming "Frankenstein", she also actively pursues performance opportunities such as co-producing a concert for two sopranos, "A Blonde and a Brunette OPERA-ation". As well as vocal opportunities, she considers acting an integral part of her performance spectrum.

Ottawa audiences have been fortunate to enjoy the clear soprano tones of **Kathleen Radke** over the past two years. Now a student of Soprano Donna Brown, she aspires to gain exposure in several upcoming competitions including that of the Oratorio Society of New York. She plans to audition for the Britten-Pears school, the Carmel Bach Festival, and the Banff Music Centre in hopes of continuing her education and gaining valuable feedback.

Mezzo-soprano **Jillian Yemen** is actively involved in the opera education and performance programs of the University of Toronto. Exposure as a participant in the Brian Law Opera Scholarship competition will allow her further musical development, as well as an opportunity to mingle with companion young singers pursuing the same goal of the development of a Canadian and international opera career.

Song for Donald Metcalfe

by Bob Stelmack

These words are from the pen of Beethoven. *"Music is the mediator between the spiritual and the sensual life. Although the spirit be not master of that which it creates through music, yet is it blessed in this creation, which like every creation of art, is mightier than the artist"*.

And from another: *"Music is the harmonious voice of creation; an echo of the invisible world; one note of the divine concord which the entire universe is destined to sound"*.(Manzini)

And another *"All musical people seem to be happy; it is to them the engrossing pursuit; almost the only innocent and unpunished passion"* (Sydney Smith)

I have chosen these words to introduce this brief eulogy, in respect and remembrance of the life of Don Metcalfe, because Don truly did love music. Moreover, in my view, this devotion to music was not so much a passion but a religion, a faithful and comfortable way of life, in which music was attended every day, either at the concert hall, at home or traversing from here to there. This engrossing pursuit of music was a continuous source of happiness and pleasure for him, and for his friends too. It is from this perspective that I would like to reflect on the life of Don Metcalfe in the form of a song, as a chorale or symphony really, and I would invite you, too, to consider this composition from your own memory and recollections of him.

To begin, as an aside, I wish I could sing, but I can't. Don couldn't sing either. But he certainly had musical talent and acumen. He knew the score and he could easily tell when a note was sung on or off the key. Now, I won't sing...an assertion that, I'm sure, will bring some relief to my wife and others who know my voice in the elusive pursuit of a melody. As I said, Don couldn't sing, but he did. When he was studying music at the University of Ottawa a few years ago, his program required that he complete an exercise in ear training called "solfeggio" in which he sang notes that had been played on the piano. He really was intimidated by this challenge. "But, I can't sing", he emphatically declared. However, he did endure the test and he was successful. Although, personally, I never heard him sing a note, I do know that he did take some measure of pride and pleasure in this vocal achievement. Notwithstanding these

limitations in singing ability, both mine and Don's, we will begin the Song for Donald Metcalfe with a short prelude

Don was born in Ottawa and he subsequently spent most of his life in this city. He attended Glebe collegiate where he was identified as a gifted student. He demonstrated high ability in both verbal and mathematical skill. It was at this time too, that his foundation in music was developed. This position at the high end of the intelligence scale was sustained throughout his life and it was expressed most clearly, one might even say exclusively, in his musical world. For Don, this prelude is brief and composed largely of high notes that reflect his nascent talents.

For the first part of this study, the music has a jazz beat or perhaps some funky dance music. This music reflects the period when Don played in orchestras for Champ Champagne at the old Standish Hall in Hull and for Moxey Whitney at the Chateau Laurier: having a beer with the boys in the band; smoking a joint; watching the beautiful girls glide by. Don also had his own band during this period. He had a particular talent for arranging music that was highly regarded by the musicians with whom he worked. The music for this first movement has a carefree, liberating, modern melody, maybe something inspired by Duke Ellington, Oscar Peterson or Dave Brubeck.

The second part draws on a grander scale. This is the period when Don crossed the Atlantic regularly. He toured the grand opera houses of Europe frequently and extensively. It was at this time that he accumulated such a rich treasure of experience with opera, orchestra and other music and stage performances. It was a time for the royal Opera House at Convent Garden, the Paris Opera, The Staats Opera in Vienna, the Salzburg Festival, Bayreuth, the Edinburgh Festival, and on and on. This was a period of cultural feasting... grand music, great plays, good books, fine food and wine. A musical image for this phase of Don's life, although you or he may not concur, is Rossini's opera *Il Viaggio a Reims*. . a multifaceted grand opera with varied plots and performances, excitement, entertainment, even a little intrigue, and all on a grand scale.

For the third part, we consider Don's family and friends. Don was blessed with a good family. He spoke with respect of both his parents and his brothers. The comfort and support that his brother Gordon and his family provided was constant and unwavering. Whether Don was sailing in smooth waters or rough seas, Gordon and his family offered a safe haven. Don's circle of friends was drawn together by an interest in music and an appreciation for his knowledge and experience of it. It is interesting too, how several of his friendships were struck at music performances. For example, his friendship with Jean Jacques Van Vlasselaer began when Jean Jacques repeatedly noticed Don, a familiar but unknown presence, at several opera houses in Europe. Finally, he approached Don and asked him if he was following him. Almost all of his friends were music lovers, Rhoda, Stuart, Roger, Leila, Murray, Elaine, Ken, Carole, Frank, Richard and many others. We all had the pleasure of his company at concerts and dinners. Don was a good cook, an amicable, entertaining and witty host and congenial guest. In this part of his song, the mood for this aspect of Don's life, concerning his family and his friends, is somewhat subdued perhaps more in the style of Bach than Beethoven.

For the fourth and final part, as for all of us, we consider the requiem. It is with much sadness and regret that his family and friends are here today to express their sorrow and their sympathy for Don's sudden death. This was a surprise that deeply affected his family and friends. Don confided just recently that he had attended 46 performances of Verdi's Requiem. He so thoroughly enjoyed the performance at the National Arts Centre that was dedicated to the tragedy of September 11 that he attended both performances. The orchestra, principal singers, ballet corps and choir were in fine form. If there is a choir of angels in the afterlife, as some envision, I am sure that Don will be at the head of the queue for the performance. And who knows, from his success with solfeggio, he may even join the choir. Don Metcalfe was a good man, and a good friend whose hospitality, kindness and companionship will be sorely missed. It is to you, Don, that we dedicate this song.

Of all the arts beneath the heaven
That man has found or God has given,
None draws the souls so sweet away,
as music melting, mystic lay;
slight emblem of the bliss above,
it soothes the spirit all to love (Hogg)

Requiem in Pace

*Written by Bob Stelmack for the memorial service for
Don Metcalfe on September 16, 2002*

**NATIONAL CAPITAL OPERA SOCIETY
SPECIAL TEN YEAR SCHOLARSHIP DONATION
LIST OF DONORS - 2002**

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Getting a Handel on London **by Shelagh Williams**

We visited London, England, in November, 2002, and felt duty bound to see an opera while there. The Royal Opera House Covent Garden does lovely, lavish productions, but we also like the work of the English National Opera (ENO) at the London Coliseum near Trafalgar Square. They perform interesting operas, with good production values and singers — Richard Margison had his first international recognition there — and the operas are sung in English, so there is no need for supertitles. Interestingly they have occasional performances where they provide sign interpretation for the deaf!! The tickets are less costly than Covent Garden, though still not inexpensive!

The ENO were singing Handel's *Xerxes* while we were there, and by going to the box office immediately on arrival in London we were fortunate to obtain excellent seats in the second row. The opera's story is a tangle of adolescent-like love: Xerxes, king of Persia, is engaged to Princess Amastris, but falls in love with and wants to marry his brother Arsamenes' fiancé, Romilda, who in turn has a sister, Atalanta, who also loves Arsemenes and will try any scheme to get him! Of course, after many twists of plot and comic moments, all is resolved and the original lovers are reunited, leaving only Atalanta alone and unhappy. This prize-winning production was designed by David Fielding for the Tercentenary of Handel's birth in 1985, and provided a setting appropriate to the comedy of the work. The locale was Vauxhall Gardens in Handel's time, with contemporary (to 1738!) costumes, and with a statue of Handel as centrepiece! Visual puns such as deck chairs continuously put up and taken down and sat on, the curtain descending to become a hedge to clip, exhibits for the chorus to study, and a tea party for all, combined with

quick scene changes kept one amused and attentive. In the original Handel production, Xerxes was played by a castrato and Arsamenes by a soprano. However, in the ENO production Xerxes was sung by a mezzo-soprano, Sarah Connolly, a Company Principal, who both acted well and sang strongly, while Arsamenes was the countertenor Robin Blaze, a Professor at the Royal College of Music, who sang and acted beautifully and looked like he should have at least six females chasing after him! Of the two soprano sisters, Rebecca Evans as Romilda was sweet in both voice and demeanour; however, Mary Nelson was even more entertaining as the lively, determined and energetic Atalanta. The conductor, Harry Bicket, kept the musical proceedings flowing at a good pace. This was a superb production, well worth getting there for a 7 p.m. curtain and staying until 10.30!

While in London, we had another Handel treat to accompany our opera. Almost exactly a year ago, the Handel House Museum opened, in the very house at 25 Brook Street where Handel lived, composed, held practices and concerts, and sold tickets and music. The house has been lovingly restored and furnished to Handel's time. We were able to visit the house and see his bedroom, rehearsal and performance salon, and the room where he composed "Messiah". The neighbouring no. 23 has also been taken over, for an exhibit relating to Handel, plus several manuscripts, including one in Mozart's own hand. A few steps away, through an archway leading out of the back courtyard, is a fascinating wall mosaic of Handel and his London. There is always so much to see and do in London!

WATERCAN will present a recital by pianist *Anton Kuerti* and his wife, cellist *Kristine Bogyo* at 6:00 pm on **Wednesday, February 12, 2003**, in the salons of the **French Embassy**, 42 Sussex Drive. The music will be followed by a buffet. Tickets are \$100 per person of which a \$50 receipt for income tax purposes will be issued. The proceeds will be used to help citizens of developing countries build sustainable water supplies. A donation would be appreciated from anyone unable to attend. Tickets can be ordered from (or donations sent to) Ute Davis, 79 Eco Drive., Ottawa, K1S 5P6; Tel.236-3736; Fax 236-7022; e-mail: muted@rogers.com

OLO'S CARMEN

by Murray Kitts

All in all, it was a great success. All four performances were sold out long before opening night. The leading women, Angela Horn and Donna Brown were outstanding. It was good to see an attractive, Rubenesque, Carmen for a change. Eduardo del Campo as Escamillo was in better voice at the dress rehearsal than for the final performance. Audiences who heard Randolph Locke as Don Jose witnessed a much better singer and actor than Massimiliano Drapello, dropped after the opening performance. The sets looked good, but required laborious changes which lengthened intermissions and the running time of the opera. Costumes were all right, but I found the outfits for the bullfight fairly drab as these things go and the props for the bandarilleros and picadores inaccurate. Stage direction was good, especially in handling the crowds onstage. The NAC Orchestra and the Opera Lyra Chorus never sounded better under the direction of Ivo Lipanovich. The children are to be commended.

According to Richard Todd, local critic, the version used here (the Vienna version) is much inferior to the original version using spoken dialogue instead of the accompanied recitatives. Of course, then you must have a cast which can cope with spoken French and can project their speaking voice in a large hall. It might also be worth noting that the Vienna version was used successfully for seventy-five years. Richard Todd describes Ernest Giraud who fulfilled Bizet's contract with Vienna by setting the dialogue to music after Bizet's sudden death as a "hack". Giraud, like Berlioz and Bizet, was a winner of the Prix de Rome, became a life-long friend of Bizet after meeting him in Rome. He was a professor at the Paris Conservatoire where he taught harmony and composition. Among his students were Paul Dukas and Claude Debussy. Besides composing the recitatives for *Carmen* he arranged the Second Suite from Bizet's *L'Arlesienne* and completed and orchestrated Offenbach's *Tales of Hoffman*. He has been described as a musician whose "...output was probably limited by his inability to put his own work before his concern for that of his friends and students." We could use more hacks like him.

MONTREAL'S CAV & PAG

One set for two operas? - it worked all right as the town square with a tavern and a church exists in most Italian towns especially in Sicily and just across the Straits in Calabria, which are the respective settings for *Cavalleria Rusticana* and *I Pagliacci*.

In *Cav* the Turiddu, Vladimir Grishka, has a fine tenor voice and good stage presence, but can't disguise the fact that his is a Slavic not an Italianate voice. Jeffrey Kneebone as Alfio, after a bad start, was quite convincing as Alfio. Sonia Racine, the Santuzza, has a big voice but her movements and gestures onstage are mechanical and distracting. Marcia Swanton as Mamma Lucia looked younger than her son but has a very lovely voice.

The star of *Pag* is Canio and John MacMaster gave a star performance. He was helped by Jeffrey Kneebone as Tonio, even better than in *Cav*, and by the excellent acting of the Nedda, Christiane Riel, who will again be one of our judges for the Brian Law Competition. In addition, Pascal Charbonneau (one of our upcoming Brian Law competitors) did a creditable job as one of the villagers.

Marco Parisotto did an excellent job leading the Montreal Symphony and the Opera Chorus.

To my taste, *Cav* is a much finer work, but on this occasion I enjoyed *Pag* more due to the much better acting in the latter.

**Membership Dues
Time to Renew!!**

OPERA WITHIN REACH

Opera Lyra Ottawa

Opera Appetizer

January 18, 2003
(at Centrepointe)

Black & White Opera Soirée

Feb 15 at NAC

Un ballo in maschera

April 5, 7, 9 & 12, 2003

Information: 233-9200 www.operalyra.ca

Savoy Society

The Sorcerer

March 28 - April 5 (at Centrepointe)
Information: www.savoyociety.org

L'Opéra de Montréal

Rigoletto

Feb 8, 13, 15, 17, 19 & 22, 2003

Die Zauberflote

March 15, 20, 22, 24 & 29, 2003

Information 1-514-985-2258 www.operademontreal.com

Canadian Opera Company

A Masked Ball

Jan 24, 29 & 30 Feb 2, 5, 8 2003

Jenufa

Jan 25, 29, & 31 Feb 4, 6 & 9

Information 1-800-250-4653 www.coc.ca

Syracuse Opera

Boris Godunov

Performed by Teatro Lirico D'Europa
March 15 & 16, 2003

Information: 1-305-476-7372
www.syracuseopera.com

Opera Mississauga

The Barber of Seville

Feb 22, 23, 25 & 27 & March 1 2003

Information 1-905-306-0060 www.operamississauga.com

Opera Lyra Ottawa Guild

Opera Insights

March 24, 2003 *Un ballo in maschera*

Definitely the Opera

Feb 11, 2003 *La cenerentola*
March 11 *Rigoletto*

Opera Perspectives

Jan 13 Yoriko Tanno-Kimmons
(Voice Teacher)

Jan 20 Laurence Ewashko
(Chorus Master)

Jan 27 Richard Todd
(Music Critic)

All events: 7 P.M. at National Library

For additional details: www.operalyra.ca