

Newsletter • Bulletin

Summer 2007

Été 2007

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

Cabellissima! by Shelagh Williams

Cathedral Arts has done it again and brought us another superb opera singer, American lyric soprano Nicole Cabell, together with Scottish pianist Alan Darling for a recital of operas and art songs. Having won the 2005 BBC Cardiff Singer of the World Competition she has been showered with accolades but one is still not really prepared for Nicole Cabell in person — she has the voice, the looks, the presence, the whole package!

The first half of the programme was framed by well-known arias from Nicole's operatic repertoire. Each aria benefited from her having performed the associated roles and her ability to use her mobile, expressive face to convey the emotions involved. She began sorrowfully with Ilia's lament "Quando avran mai fine ... Padre, germani, addio" which opens Mozart's *Idomeneo*, then brightened up with two Puccini selections, Musetta's splashy, seductive entrance "Quando me n'vo" in *La Bohème*, and Lauretta's heartfelt plea to her father "O mio bambino caro" from *Gianni Schicchi*. The closing aria was Juliette's rapturous waltz "Ah! Je veux vivre" from Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette*. These were all marvellously done, and left us wanting more! Between the arias was a set of quieter Liszt songs in German and French, sung in the appropriate style, and providing a nice counterbalance to the opera arias. My only quibble was that it would have been nice to have had the texts for these songs, to appreciate them fully.

The second half of the concert highlighted works of American composers. These were sung in English, and with Nicole's excellent diction, required no texts for understand-

ing! Bernstein's *I Hate Music*, a song cycle of "Five Kid Songs", was sung with suitable actions and wide-eyed wonder, in a most entertaining manner. Among the other offerings, she really shimmered in William Bolcom's "Amore", and then after Kurt Weill's heartfelt "What good would the moon be" from *Street Scene*, closed with "And this is my Beloved" from *Kismet*.

This performance of superb technique and beautiful tone elicited a rousing standing ovation which was rewarded with an encore of "Summertime" from *Porgy and Bess*. This was an excellent concert and a rare chance to hear such an outstanding up-and-coming singer in Ottawa. Cathedral Arts is to be congratulated for consistently bringing us such top quality performers!

Nicole's debut solo disc, *Soprano*, with the London Philharmonic Orchestra under Sir Andrew Davis, which has just won the French Georg Solti Prize *Orphee d'Or 2007* and the May 2007 U.K. *Gramophone Magazine* Editor's Choice award, was available, and she graciously signed CDs and permitted photos after the concert.

May is Asian Heritage Month, and Nicole Cabell is of African American, Korean and European ancestry, and so Cathedral Arts provided the option of partnering the concert with a sumptuous multi-course Asian Dinner catered by award-winning MHK Asian Fusion, for a full evening's entertainment.

See page 5 for a related interview with Ms. Cabell.



Photo courtesy of Nicole Cabell

PRESIDENT'S REPORT: National Capital Opera Society Annual General Meeting, April 24, 2005

First the good news. The Brian Law Opera Scholarship Competition is well underway. The Board decided to change the date from January to November and Saturday, November 24th, 2007 will be the day of the competition. The jurors will be the same as four years ago in 2003. Roxolana Roslak, Christiane Riel and Darryl Edwards without hesitation have all consented to serve again. I have also been in contact with the 2003 winner, Joshua Hopkins, who has tentatively agreed to give the mini-recital while the jurors deliberate. Due to the continued financial support of our membership we are offering increased prizes of \$3,000 and \$1,500 plus the generous 3rd prize of \$500 donated by Pat Adamo and these should attract even more interest by contestants. With a good deal of help we should have an excellent competition which attracts the size of audience it deserves.

The curse of Alberich seems to have descended on our fundraising efforts last year. A proposed trip to Syracuse to see Julie Nesrallah's performance as Carmen turned out to occur at the wrong time for nearly everyone. The evening with Sandra Graham had to be cancelled because of her appearance in an opera premiere in Europe. Because of a rare engagement for Gerald Finley with the NACO we decided to hold a reception in his honour after one of his concerts. Unfortunately this coincided with *The Ring Cycle* in Toronto and many of our most loyal supporters were in Toronto riding with the Valkyries or assembling to Hagen's summons. The reception itself was excellent, Gerald could not have been more gracious and the food was delicious. My biggest complaint was the price for space rental that the NAC charges. There should be a special price for an activity which is directly connected to a presentation by the NAC itself. Why should an opera society honouring an artist who has just performed have to pay the same price as a business organization promoting a service or product? So we really didn't raise any funds but thanks to the generosity of some of our members we were able to break even.

I want to commend the work done by Jim Burgess on our web site. Jim not only has the ability to set out so much information on our organization but he is extremely diligent in keeping everything up-to-date. It's because of his efforts that we are able to use the Internet to get applications to prospective scholarship contestants and to give them all pertinent information. A job well done.

Before anyone else says it I want to say how much improved our Newsletter has become since I passed the editorship to Dave Williams. The most recent edition has a most interesting column called "Events You Could Have Enjoyed!" and a most useful one entitled "Events You Should Enjoy!". I hope these columns become a regular feature of the newsletter. The photographs have never been better. Thanks to all our contributors and especially Tom McCool.

Opera Lyra Ottawa continues to offer a high standard of opera presentations. I was very pleased to hear that a concert version of Thomas' *Mignon* will be presented this fall. This is one of the most popular operas ever written but has been sadly neglected in recent years. It has very beautiful music, for example, the arias "Connais-tu le pays" and "Je suis Titania" used to be concert staples. The use of a concert version, saving the expense of costumes and scenery, is an excellent way to reintroduce this lovely work. This presentation should please anyone who loves opera.

As long as you go early enough to get a good seat the opera simulcasts from the Met have been outstanding and the promise of eight additional productions next year will certainly be great news for the many opera lovers in our area. However, there does seem to be an unfavourable impact on the attendance of our "Opera alla Pasta" Sunday afternoons. This is an issue that the Board will have to tackle.

Speaking of the Board I wish to thank all of them for their help and cooperation this past year. We have just lost a valuable Board Member, Mary Vuylsteke, and I want to appeal to our members to join the Board to help us in our endeavours on behalf of the society and for the good of opera in the National Capital Region.

To all members, myself and all members of the Board would welcome any advice or suggestions as to how we can better participate in the development and encouragement of opera in our area, which is the prime goal of our society.



NATIONAL CAPITAL OPERA SOCIETY

Board of Directors

President: Murray Kitts; telephone 830-982
email: kmitts1637@rogers.com

Past President: Bobbi Cain

Newsletter: David Williams

The following members were elected to the board at the annual general meeting: Pat Adamo, Renate Chartrand, Ute Davis, Gordon Metcalfe, Peggy Pflug and Jean Saldanha. Appointments to specific positions will be decided at the first meeting of the new board.

Web site: www.ncos.ca

Wanted!! Volunteer



The Society needs a Membership person who would also be a Board Member. There are not many meetings to attend as much is done by telephone or e-mail. The membership duties also do not take too much time - keeping records and sending out receipts, etc. Jean Saldanha, 613-731-2734 would be happy to explain further. Please call Jean (or e-mail at Margaret.Saldanha@3web.net) or Murray Kitts, President, at 613-830-9827 (e-mail at kmitts1637@rogers.com).

The 2007 Brian Law Opera Scholarship Competition

Our most important event is approaching. Having changed the timing from January to November the scholarship competition will be held on Saturday, November 24th at the First Unitarian Congregation, 30 Cleary Ave.

The previous 1st prize of \$2000 has been increased to \$3000. A 2nd prize of \$1500 has been added and Pat Adamo has graciously offered a 3rd prize of \$500. Young singers of the National Capital Region are invited to submit their applications by September 28th. Up to six finalists will be chosen to compete. This makes a thrilling evening filled with suspense! As usual a reception will follow the presentation of the prizes and you will have a chance to meet the contestants and judges. Mark your calendar!

For this year's competition we are making good use of our web site, which gives easy access to information. There is no longer any need for costly brochures for potential applicants. All information regarding the format of the competition, vocal requirements, as well as the application form can be downloaded from our web site. Having the chance of seeing the list and accomplishments of our seven previous winners may be an inspiration to interested young singers.

For further information please visit www.ncos.ca

Opera Lyra Meets The Challenge Of *Otello*

by Murray Kitts

I must admit that when I first learned that Opera Lyra was going to perform *Otello* my expectations were not too high. After all, this is my favourite Verdi opera and, besides a number of classic recordings I possess, I have heard singers like Jon Vickers and Tito Gobbi in actual performances.

However, right from the start it was apparent that the opera company had risen to a new level in this performance. Never has the OLO chorus been so impressive as in this thrilling music and it continued to give an excellent performance throughout the opera.

It's true that during the whole of the final performance Mark Lundberg had to frequently sip water as a consequence of his earlier illness. But this did not prevent him from turning in an outstanding portrayal of the tormented hero. By the way, I kept hearing friends referring to Lundberg as a baritone and discovered that it was due to the program notes which referred to him "as having the perfect baritonal Heldentenor colour". Baritonal colour does not make a baritone out of a tenor. Mark Lundberg is not a "great Otello" but he is a good one and has the potential to become great. The Iago, John Fanning, also has an excellent voice but needs to develop his dra-

matic technique if he is to present a truly memorable portrayal of this monster. Of the three principals I found Sally Dibblee as Desdemona the least satisfactory. She acts and sings well enough but there is some quality in her voice which I find unpleasant. Or at least unsuitable for this role. Well, according to Verdi expert Julian Budden, Verdi himself never found a Desdemona that he really liked. All the supporting singers were very good, especially Kurt Lehman as Cassio and Benoit Boutet as Roderigo.

The sets from New Orleans were functional rather than attractive. In general the staging was fine except for the final scene. Given the proper direction and with appropriate lighting, Otello's entrance to some of the most remarkable music in opera could have been much more dramatic. I'm still not sure how Otello killed her - broke her neck? her back? whatever? And to me the bed did not look like a bed - I'm sure that even in Cyprus beds have white sheets.

All in all, a very fine performance of this most challenging opera with excellent playing by the NAC Orchestra under Tyrone Patterson.

Shooting Stars Shine Again

by Marjorie Clegg

Thanks to the suggestion in the last newsletter, we decided to attend the 12th Annual Yoriko & Her Shooting Stars Operatic Showcase presented on March 31st at Carleton University. What a treat! The young performers (as young as 11 and many in their teens) delivered a spirited performance of "Revisiting Act Two of Johann Strauss II's *Die Fledermaus*".

During this act of the operetta, musical numbers from a variety of sources are performed by guests at a party. For this production, these numbers included such pieces as Rossini's "Duetto Buffo di Due Gatti", "Dore-mi" and "So long, farewell" from Rodgers &

Hammerstein's *The Sound of Music*, and the Doll Song from Offenbach's *The Tales of Hoffman*. Quite a range for young singers to master.

The Yoriko Tanno-Kimmons Studio, with Stuart Hamilton as Master of Ceremonies, Guillermo Silva-Marin as Stage & Artistic Director and Choreographer, and Evelyn Greenberg as Musical Director and Accompanist, gave us an evening filled with humour, smart choreography, and talented young singers. We hope to see some of them competing for the Brian Law Opera Scholarship some day.

Nicole Cabell in Conversation

with Shelagh Williams

Nicole Cabell is a charming, friendly, unassuming young woman who walked from her hotel to Christ Church Cathedral for her interview. She is one of those tall, slim, lovely young women who can look beautiful in a track suit - which certainly will not hurt her career!

In a wide-ranging conversation we touched on many aspects of her life and career. Nicole wanted singing to be her profession and had hoped for a pops or Broadway career, but six months into singing lessons it became clear that her voice was classical! Opera is therefore an “acquired” taste, but one she has learned to embrace. Hers is a Cinderella story, like Anna Netrebko scrubbing floors at the Mariinsky Theatre, for Nicole cleaned her voice teacher’s house in exchange for lessons! Nicole’s big break was of course winning the prestigious BBC Cardiff Singer of the World Competition in June 2005 — and then signing a recording contract with Decca in November 2005! Since then she has been extremely busy, learning new opera repertoire and performing in operas and concerts, many at short notice. She was at the right place at the right time when she stepped in for ailing soprano Angela Gheorghiu in a concert performance of Gounoud’s *Roméo et Juliette* at the Deutsche Oper in Berlin

in December 2006, with only three hours sleep! Nicole loves Puccini, and her signature role at the moment appears to be Musetta in *La Bohème*. She was very excited, and rightly so, about just having sung it in April in Munich with Anna Netrebko and Rolando Villazon, the current opera “dream team”. This was also recorded by Deutsche Grammophon which should give her career another boost. Nicole will be singing Musetta this summer at Santa Fe and next year at Covent Garden, Washington National Opera and the Lyric Opera of Chicago. She also enjoys Bel Canto and French impressionist music and sings several other roles, such as Lauretta in *Gianni Schicchi*, Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte*, and Clara in *Porgy and Bess*. “Summertime” from this last is a great favourite, and she sings it whenever she can! When asked if she had any roles she would like to sing, if given the chance, she said she would like to try Leila in *The Pearl Fishers* and Norina in *Don Pasquale*. Nicole is now being booked four years ahead, and with her looks, positive attitude, and pleasant personality, I am sure she will accomplish everything she sets out to do!

For more information on Nicole Cabell go to www.nicole-cabell.com or www.cabellissima.blogspot.com



Photo courtesy of Asalyn Meakin

West Coast Wonder

by Tom McCool

Pacific Opera Victoria was founded in 1980 and today, despite some early growing pains, is a flourishing concern with the highest subscriber renewal rate of any opera company in Canada and with almost all performances completely sold out. Even the pre-opera lectures are standing room only. POV has been able to achieve this while fostering young Canadian singers and presenting a season that could only be described as bold, if not foolhardy. What is truly surprising is that all this has been accomplished in a relatively small city with a population of less than 350,000. The primary challenge of every opera company in North America is to keep afloat financially. It seems that insolvency is always possible, if not probable, for even the most well-known opera companies. A secondary challenge is to design a repertoire that will satisfy its audience. All too often what opera companies do is present a program of the “tried and true”. The reason for this, of course, is that the “old war horses” usually play to capacity audiences which make it possible to balance the books at the end of the year. However, a constant repetition of *Carmens* and *Bohèmes* do not satisfy audiences who crave something new and different. POV definitely presents a challenging repertoire. The philosophy that guides the selection of operas that are staged every year has been enunciated by POV’s Music Director, Timothy Vernon: “I think the duty (of an opera company) is not to serve the public so much as to serve the art. If you serve the art with great dedication, at some level the

public will understand that, and you are seen to be doing your very best to present people with works you are convinced give value, rather than just present



Julie Nesrallah
in POV's 2004
production of
Carmen.

works you think they’re going to like.” Consequently, Victoria opera-goers in the past few years have been able to attend performances of Weber’s *Der Freischütz*, Montemezzi’s *L’amore dei tre re*, Giannini’s *The Taming of the Shrew* and Berg’s *Wozzeck*. In addition POV has also commissioned an original Canadian opera, *Erewhon*, by Louis Applebaum and Mavor Moore which was staged in 2000. This policy of presenting unusual offerings continues today as every season Victoria opera



Eugene Onegin
2005



Wozzeck
2002

audiences get the opportunity of experiencing an opera that is new to them. Last year it was Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia* and this year it was *Daphne* by Richard Strauss. Next year it will be Marc Blitzstein's *Regina* (an American opera based on Lillian Hellman's play *The Little Foxes*).

Michael Schade's first professional role on an opera stage was in the 1988 POV production of Beethoven's *Fidelio*. Since that time Schade has gone on to perform in the world's greatest opera houses and gained recognition as one of opera's finest tenors. Other



Canadian singers who made their professional debut performances at POV are Richard Margison (a Victoria native), Julie Nesrallah, Paul Frey and Barbara Livingston. Other now-prominent singers who were engaged early in their careers are Matthew White, Frédérique Vézina, Joanne Kolomyjec, John Fanning and Mark Pedrotti. POV has a clearly defined policy of supporting inexperienced but promising Canadian singers and, as evidenced by the names above,

POV has an eye (and ear) for true talent. It is usually difficult to get a start as an opera singer and this policy works extremely well for young singers as well as for Pacific Opera Victoria. According to Julie Nesrallah, "Almost every major role I learned, I learned with Timothy Vernon at Pacific Opera Victoria. The invaluable opportunity provided to me by Tim and POV at the formative stages of my career allowed me to learn and perform roles that have become part of my standard repertoire, while being introduced to world-class musicians and directors. If one can have an opera company as an alma mater, then POV is certainly mine!"

From its inception POV has enjoyed remarkable support from the local community. Not surprisingly POV has fostered close relationships with many seg-

ments of the community and this has entailed practices such as the hiring of the musicians of the Victoria Symphony for all main-stage productions and conducting joint fundraising events with the orchestra, a partnership with theatre and voice students at the University of

"If one can have an opera company as an alma mater, then POV is certainly mine!"

—Julie Nesrallah

Victoria and Victoria Conservatory of Music, and the dress rehearsal programme with area elementary and high school students and teachers which results in over 3500 students being able to experience live opera every year. As well, a 35-minute version of *The Barber of Seville* travels to Vancouver Island Schools exposing another 10,000 students to opera. Undoubtedly, some of these students will make up future audiences. Another noteworthy fact is that Pacific Opera Victoria is one of the few opera companies in North America that builds all its own sets, presenting exclusively original productions created in Victoria by its team of artists, artisans and technicians.

The POV operas are staged in the Royal Theatre, a building with 1400 seats located in downtown Victoria. Each opera has a run of five performances which are given in the fall, winter and spring for a total of 15



per season. The operas that are scheduled for next season are Mozart's *Idomeneo*, Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* and the aforementioned *Regina*. Should you find yourself in the Victoria vicinity at any of these times make it a point to attend a production of one of North America's most impressive opera companies. For more detailed information on Pacific Opera Victoria check their website at <http://www.pov.bc.ca/>

Pacific Opera Victoria Goes Green

by Laura Clegg

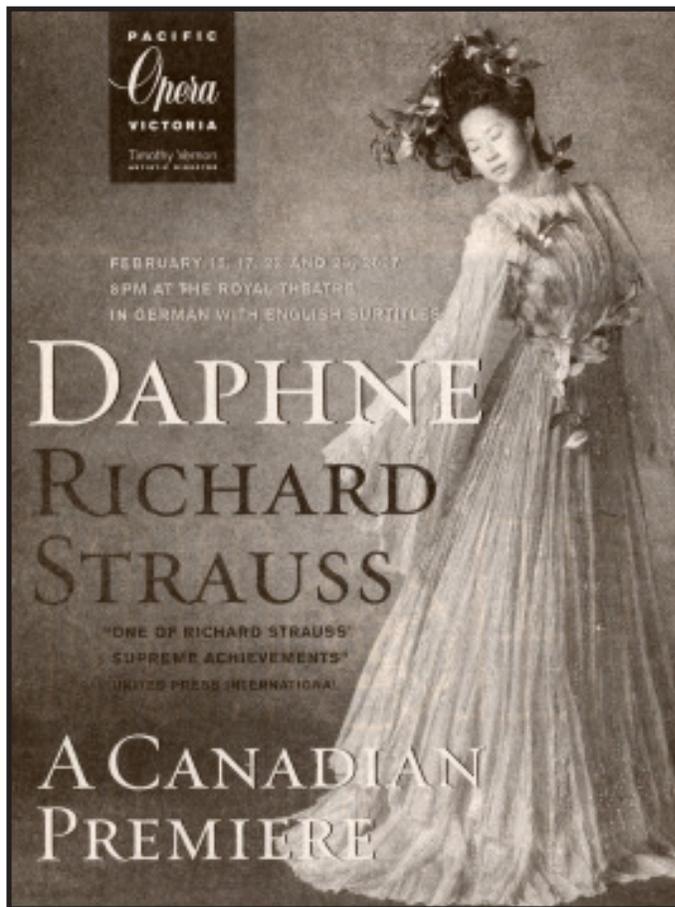
When I was about ten years old, my family attended the NAC's screening of *Der Rosenkavalier* – and enjoyed it so much we left at intermission. This was a rather inauspicious introduction to Strauss, and I managed to avoid further contact with his operas until this past February, when Pacific Opera Victoria (POV) staged a production of *Daphne*. *Daphne* is so seldom performed that this was its Canadian premiere. And what better place to stage a tale of a girl who wants to be a tree than the tree-hugging West Coast?

Daphne is an ancient Greek myth of which there are several versions. Essentially, the beautiful, antisocial nature-lover Daphne attracts the unwelcome attentions of two men: Leukippos, who tricks her into friendship by dressing as a woman (he is always killed for his trouble, usually by women), and Apollo, who pursues her through the forest until someone else – often Zeus – rescues her by turning her into a laurel tree.

In Strauss' version at POV, there is a Dionysian feast happening in the neighbourhood and everyone but Daphne is excited; she is determined to avoid it, preferring to remain chaste and safe in the forest with her true friends, the trees. Her friend Leukippos (who, of course, wants to be more than a friend), some sexy water nymphs, and even her mother, Gaia, try to persuade her, but nobody's getting anywhere until Apollo shows up in his leather trench-coat and sweet-talks her about nature. Soon, Apollo gets carried away with lust for Daphne and "flashes" his presumed rival Leukippos – his disguise just discovered - with a blinding and deadly light. At this point, Daphne decides that the only way to avoid this terrifying sex nonsense is to be a tree. Apollo eventually capitulates and performs the necessary godly magic.

POV created a beautiful woodland setting for this production. A multitude of vines hanging from the rafters descended and ascended incrementally, which had a pleasing visual effect. The aforementioned nymphs emerged from a pool and Gaia disembarked from a tree-trunk. Amusing touches, such as plants sprouting from the ground as Gaia sang of Spring, and a trio of pelvic-thrusting, fleecy-thighed goat men, representing the drunken debauchery of the Dionysian world, balanced the earnestness of Daphne's persistent struggles.

Critics of this opera often lament the difficulty of staging Daphne's transformation into a tree. POV director Wim Trompert had Daphne slowly meld with the hanging



vines, then gracefully extricate herself and wander the stage, her arms gracefully undulating, ever more slowly until she stopped. It resembled a vertical death scene, and it worked.

Most of the opera seems to be a continuous argument between Daphne and everyone else. The score is appropriately dramatic and full of florid soprano singing. Sookhyung Park, as Daphne, spends the whole production onstage; it is a very demanding role, and she carried it off admirably.

Daphne had no intermission, so I couldn't leave early – but this time, I didn't want to!

If you missed the broadcast of this production on CBC's Saturday Afternoon at the Opera on June 16th, 2007 you might be interested in a recently released CD of this opera on Decca featuring Renée Fleming in the title role. For more information about the history of *Daphne*, see http://www.pov.bc.ca/pdfs/daphne_study_guide.pdf

Laura Clegg is a former NCOS Board Member who now lives in Victoria B.C. and is a regular operagoer at Pacific Opera Victoria.

Events You Could Have Enjoyed! by Shelagh Williams

If you missed the Savoy Society's production of their annual Gilbert & Sullivan operetta you missed an excellent evening of musical entertainment. This year it was *Iolanthe* and it was one of Savoy's best shows ever. The G & S operettas that were produced between *The Pirates of Penzance* and *The Mikado* (*Patience*, *Iolanthe* and *Princess Ida*) are not considered to be of the same caliber as the better known G & S works. In spite of that opinion it would be difficult to convince members of the capacity audiences at Centrepointe Theatre this spring that this production of *Iolanthe* was not G & S at their very best.

The NAC was packed for Kammersanger Michael Schade's very welcome performance of Rossini and Mozart arias — although some may also have come to hear the Montreal Symphony Orchestra under its excellent new conductor, Kent Nagano — and no one was disappointed by soloist or orchestra!

The world premiere of conductor Matthew Larkin's lovely and moving *Wife in Winter* opened the Ottawa Choral Society concert. The main work was Orff's *Carmina Burana*, in the composer's own arrangement for two pianos and percussion. This meant that choir and soloists tenor Michiel Schrey, baritone Peter Barrett and the always delightful soprano Pascale Beaudin were not overshadowed, but could shine in their own right, to everyone's enjoyment.

In Holy Week the Strings of St. John's and choir, under Gordon Johnston, performed Faure's *Requiem*, a quiet, contemplative requiem, with Cara

Gilbertson, soprano, and Phillip Holmes, bass, as soloists. On Good Friday the Christ Church Cathedral Choir of Men and Boys under Matthew Larkin's direction presented John Stainer's *Crucifixion* with soloists Michael Carty, tenor, and Gary Dahl, baritone. On Pentecost Sunday the same forces presented the Benjamin Britten cantata *Jubilate Agno* (*Rejoice in the Lamb*). All three excellent productions showcased our good local operatic singers.

A delightful performance of Beethoven's arrangements of Irish and Scottish Folk songs accompanied the National Ballet's ballet *A Footstep of Air* which necessitated the importation from Toronto of three accomplished opera singers: soprano Stacie Carmona, tenor Adam Luther, and baritone Peter Barrett.

At this year's Kiwanis Festival the adjudicator for Senior and Open Vocal classes was tenor Torin Chiles, who has sung with OLO in the past and was McAlpine in *Filumena*. Alongside performing he teaches at University of Western Ontario in the Music Faculty, and proved to be an efficient, entertaining and knowledgeable adjudicator, fully capable of illustrating his points vocally! The Open classes are always good, and this year's Gilbert and Sullivan trophy class was especially enjoyable. The 2007 Ottawa Choral Society Open Trophy was won by Wallis Giunta, a soprano with a lovely voice who has been studying at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto and last year won the Senior Trophy.

Events You Should Enjoy by David Williams

Michele Bogdanowicz and Lawrence Williford will sing in the Aber Diamond Debut Series at the NAC on June 15th.

The Canadian Opera Company will open the LeBreton Flats festival park in Ottawa with two evenings of *Opera Under the Stars*. The free performances, conducted by the COC's Richard Bradshaw, will be held June 29 and 30, 2007, expanding Canada Day celebrations.

Joyce El-Khoury and Jonathan Estabrooks will sing at the NAC (14:30 & 19:30) as part of the July 1st celebrations.

Opera Lyra's "Italian Garden Party" will be held July 11th (18:00) at the Italian Ambassador's.

As part of the Ottawa Chamber Music Festival, the East Village Opera Company will present a free concert on July 31st. Check with the OCMF for additional vocal performances.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE CHILD CONCERT

Dominion Chalmers United Church, 14 April 2007

by Ute Davis

This concert was given as a benefit for the International Day of the Child. Proceeds were donated to orphanages in Ukraine and Poland.



Maria Knapik

The Dominion Chalmers Church again produced a very appropriate atmosphere for the program which also benefitted from the good acoustics in this church.

A delightful tone was set by Maria Knapik's "Bel Canto Children's Choir" with a couple of popular children's pieces, complete with costumes and mime. "The opera stars of tomorrow, helping to raise funds for the orphan-

ages of today".

Rob Clipperton then introduced Maestro Brousseau's New World Philharmonic Orchestra and Choir, reinforced by the Ottawa Classical Choir and Les Chanteurs de Ste. Thérèse. Guest conductor for the evening was Vasyl Vasylenko, a highly respected

conductor and composer from Ukraine, and the soloists were Maria Knapik (soprano), Julie Nesrallah (mezzo-soprano) James O'Farrell (tenor) and Marc Boucher (baritone).

The first half consisted of Vivaldi's *Gloria*. Following a brief interval, the Ambassador from Ukraine paid tribute to the victims on the twenty-first anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster. The second half of the program was Mozart's *Vesperae Solennes de Confessore*.

Not only did Maria demonstrate her excellent coaching and encouragement of the children, but she was in excellent voice for the adult part of the concert. Julie Nesrallah was also in superb form, a meticulous performance, and I was impressed by the voice of Marc Boucher, whom I had not previously heard.



Julie Nesrallah

Kingston Symphony Concert by Ute Davis

22 April 2007

This was an unusual, but interesting afternoon.

With sponsorship from the Ontario Arts Council, maestro Glen Fast and the Kingston Symphony delivered a program, in which two of the three pieces were specific commissions for this event.

Beltaine, by Dr. Mark Sirett was a very pleasing celebration of the Celtic May Day Festival, well rendered by the symphony and Sirett's own Cantabile Choirs of Kingston.

The *Tapestries of Love Symphony for Soprano and Orchestra* had also been specially composed by Peter Paul Koprowski, a beautiful love poem, set to music.

The interpretation of moments of delicacy and intense passion were delivered with such emotional conviction by Maria Knapik, that members of the audience were moved to tears. Glen Fast's reading of the score reinforced this level of emotion resulting in great satisfaction being expressed by audience and composer alike.

The second half of the concert consisted of a thoroughly satisfactory rendering of Beethoven's fourth piano concerto by Angela Cheng.

I understand that a recording was made of Maria's presentation of Koprowski's *Tapestries* for inclusion on a CD to be released late this year.

Where Are They Now?

Four local singers with ties to the National Capital Opera Society as a result of the Brian Law Competition have enjoyed a very busy past few months and all appear to be just as busy for the rest of the year. Partial lists of their past and future activities are outlined below.

Julie Nesrallah returned to Ottawa to sing in the concert at Dominion Chalmers described on page 10 and will be performing soon in Vivaldi's *Petite Messe Solennelle* with Mad River Chorale in Vermont. This will be followed by her role of Suzuki in *Madama Butterfly* at the Greenmountain Opera Festival in Vermont. Following her amazing success as Carmen at Syracuse Opera last October, Julie has been asked to return as Maddalena in *Rigoletto* in October of this year.

Maria Knapik had just returned from starring in *Halka* (Stanislaw Moniuszko) at Sarasota Opera and Teatr Wielki in Warsaw, Poland before her engagements at Dominion Chalmers in Ottawa and in Kingston. Later in the summer she will be singing the role of Nedda in *I Pagliacci* in Central Park in New York. Next November she will be returning home to sing the demanding role of Donna Anna in Opera Lyra Ottawa's production of *Don Giovanni*.

Shannon Mercer received praise for her performance of Despina in the Canadian Opera Company

production of *Così fan tutte* last fall. Recently she performed in *Burnt Toast*, a TV series which will be shown on Bravo! in July. Next she was featured in *Not the Messiah (He's a Very Naughty Boy)* with Eric Idle of Monty Python fame. Peter Oundjian conducted the Toronto Symphony Orchestra at the world premiere of this comic oratorio in May. Coming up in the fall she will sing the role of Pamina in *The Magic Flute* for Opera Hamilton and on September 30 she will be in Ottawa singing in the much anticipated concert performance *Mignon* by Ambrose Thomas.

Joshua Hopkins received accolades for his performance as Masetto in the Opéra de Montréal's production of *Don Giovanni* this spring. Recently he was one of the finalists in the Concours Musicales Internationales de Montréal which was broadcast on CBC Radio. This summer he will be returning to the Santa Fe Opera where he will be singing in the Rameau opera, *Platée*. After this engagement he will be going to London, England for the Wigmore Hall International Song Competition and before Christmas he will be one of the featured soloists in Handel's *Messiah* with the NAC Orchestra in Ottawa.

Opera Under the Stars

Isabel Bayrakdarian & Russell Braun

June 29 & June 30, 2007 8:30 p.m. (Prelude 8:00 p.m.)

Lebreton Flats Park

(located between the War Museum & the Ottawa River)

The National Capital Commission and the Canadian Opera Company will present an all-Canadian cast starring Isabel Bayrakdarian, Russell Braun and a contingent of rising stars from the COC's Ensemble Studio in two free concerts presented by the NCC. Both concerts will feature the COC Orchestra and the Opera Lyra Ottawa Chorus under the direction of Richard Bradshaw and will be presented in the newly-created festival site, Lebreton Flats Park. There's something for everyone: opera highlights span Verdi to Rossini, Bizet to Bellini, Mussorgsky to Mozart, with everything from large choral and orchestra works to intimate duets and trios. For additional information: www.1857.gc.ca

Saturday Afternoon At The Opera

- June 23 *Lakmé* (Delibes) Opera de Montreal
- June 30 *Frobisher* (John Estacio) Calgary Opera
- July 7 *Salome* (Strauss) Chicago Lyric Opera
- July 14 *Il Trovatore* (Verdi) Chicago Lyric Opera
- July 21 *Dialogues of the Carmélites* (Poulenc)
Chicago Lyric Opera
- July 28 *Così fan tutte* (Mozart) Chicago Lyric Opera
- August 4 *Les Troyens* (Berlioz) Paris National Opera
- August 11 *Aida* (Verdi) La Scala
- August 18 *La Fille du régiment* (Donizetti) Vienna
State Opera
- August 25 *Faust* (Gounod) Canadian Opera
Company
- September 2 *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Donizetti)
Theatre Antique
- September 9 *Parsifal* (Wagner) Bayreuth Festival
- September 16 *Tannhäuser* (Wagner) Grand Theatre
- September 23 *Idomeneo* (Mozart) Salzburg
- September 30 *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*
(Mozart) Salzburg
- October 7 *Le Nozze di Figaro* (Mozart) Salzburg
- October 14 *Don Giovanni* (Mozart) Salzburg
- October 21 *La Clemenza di Tito* (Mozart) Salzburg
- October 28 *Norma* (Bellini) Bavarian State Opera

Opera Within Reach

Glimmerglass Opera

- L'Orfeo* (Monteverdi) July 28, 30m, August 5m, 11,
14m, 17, 20m, 23, 25m.
- Orphee et Eurydice* (Gluck) July 8m, 14, 22m,
August 3, 6m, 9, 11m, 19m, 25, 28m.
- Orpheus in the Underworld* (Offenbach) July 7, 9m,
15m, 24m, 29m, August 2, 4m, 7m, 10, 13m, 18, 26m.
- Orphee* (Glass) July 21, 23m, 31m, August 4, 12m,
16, 8m, 21m, 24, 27m.
- L'Anima del Filosofo* (Haydn) Concert Version
August 5, 19, 2007. (11:00)
Evening Performances (20:00). Matinee times vary.
Tickets: 607-547-2255, www.glimmerglass.org

Lake George Opera

- La Bohème* June 27 and July 2 (14:00); June 30
and July 7 (19:30).
- Tartuffe* June 28 at (19:30), July 1 and 3 (14:00).
- La Vie Parisienne* July 6 at (19:30) and July 8 (14:00).
- Tickets: 518-587-3330, www.lakegeorgeopera.org

Opera North

- Falstaff* August 16, 18, 21, 24 (19:30).
August 23 (Family Matinee)
- Turandot* August 11, 14, 17, 22, 25 (19:30).
August 19 (14:00).
- Information: www.operanorth.org

Opera Lyra Ottawa

- Mignon* (in concert) September 30 (14:00)
Dominion-Chalmers United Church
Information: 233-9200 x221, www.operalyra.ca

Canadian Opera Company

- The Marriage of Figaro* Oct. 2 - Nov. 2
Don Carlos Oct. 12 - Nov. 3
All performances are at the Four Seasons Centre.
Information: 1-800-250-4653, www.coc.ca

L'Opéra de Montréal

- Un Ballo in Maschera* Sep. 22 - Oct. 4 (20:00)
All performances in Salle Wilfrid-Pelletier at Place des Arts.
Information: 1-877-385-2222 www.operademontreal.com