

Newsletter • Bulletin

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A FOLLOW-UP OF BRIAN LAW 2009 WINNERS

by Ute Davis

In the city for the Opéra de Montréal opening of *Tosca*, we decided also to attend the 29 January performance of *The Rake's Progress*. Staged at Pollack Hall by Opera McGill, *Rake's* cast included Philippe Sly, our recent Brian Law winner, singing the role of Nick Shadow. The other major roles were sung by senior (Master's level) students. Véronique Coutu acquitted herself well as Anne Trulove, the role being part of her requirement in completing a Master's degree in Musical Performance. Her *Quietly, Night find him and caress* blessing of her absent fiancé, as well as her rendition of *No word from Tom*, were beautifully sung. Frank Mutya proved an adequate Tom Rakewell but experienced some difficulty in projecting through the 30 piece orchestra under the baton of Julian Wachner and clearly sounded very tired before the opera ended. Wachner, the principal conductor of Opera McGill, brought his international experience to this performance that paralleled the rising and falling action of the story, underscoring moments of both comedy and tragedy with his music. Philippe Sly stole the show with an outstanding performance in his portrayal of Shadow. Guest artistic stage director David Lefkovich opted to take the character name literally and had Sly spend much of the evening in shadow. However there was no concealing the superiority of his vocal quality, excellent long lines and clarity of diction,

the complexity of the vocal score proving no problem. His natural stage presence and appreciation of the value of minimal movement greatly added to the inherent menace of the character. This was a well paced production with good quality work by the student cast which exhibited more than usual zest for the bawdyhouse scene. We enjoyed the performance sufficiently that we intend to go back 26 March to see the McGill production of *la Tragédie de Carmen* (Peter Brook's adaptation of Bizet's *Carmen*) with Philippe singing Escamillo. We are interested to learn that the Ottawa Choral Society, in its recent competition, awarded major prizes to our Brian Law first and second finalists, Philippe Sly and Wallis Giunta. Wallis, a member of the COC's emerging artists program will be appearing on the main stage starting next season. She is also appearing as Cherubino in Opera Atelier's *Nozze di Figaro* in April 2010. Philippe, who spent his March break in London, England with Composer Jonathan Dove (*Pinocchio*) will be spending four months in Austria this summer polishing his German diction, before completing the fourth year of his Bachelor degree at McGill.



Brothel Scene



Philippe in Grave Scene

photos by Emily Ding

President's Message

The selection of Wallis Giunta and Philippe Sly as two of the four Grand Prize Winners in the New Discoveries Auditions for Young Adults from a group of 53 entrants only confirms the judgment of the jurors in the 2009 Brian Law Competition. We will be able to hear them with the Ottawa Choral Society soon. I'm sure many of you were delighted to see Joyce El-Khoury in the Met telecast of *Simon Boccanegra*. Her performance in a supporting role in *Suor Angelica* won attention in a recent edition of Opera News. Joshua Hopkins has reported that, after his eight performances as Ping in the Met's *Turandot*, he was to "cover" the role for another eight performances in 2010. However, before the end of 2009 he was given a new contract which allowed him to continue to perform the part and not just cover it. Joshua has since gone to Victoria, performing in Strauss' *Capriccio* along with J. Patrick Raftery, one of our jurors in 2007. And right at home Shannon Mercer and Yannick-Muriel Noah are both performing at the *Black and White Soiree*. Our members have every right to be proud that they have helped these fine young artists in their careers.



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BORDEAUX 'LOVE POTION NUMBER NINE' FOR A VALENTINE'S DAY

by Ute Davis

As part of the series of Southminster Music and Charity Community concerts *L'Elisir D'Amore* was presented in the church at Bank Street on Sunday, 14 February. Organized by Dr. Fraser Rubens, this was an in-concert version of arias from the opera with minimal costumes and props. The success of the afternoon's entertainment owed much to the apt selection of arias, the rapid pacing throughout and the highly talented piano accompaniment of Esther Gonthier, who is not only the Opéra de Montréal répétiteur, but also teaches at the Conservatory there. Bob Rae moved from the Liberal front bench to the church front pew and smoothly introduced the music with a few political comments for good measure. He brought the house down when he referred to a prorogued marriage in the opera. Leslie Ann Bradley was a charming Adina singing with persuasive warmth and colour. Her *Prendi, per me sei libero* was especially well received. She wore a particularly attractive blue dress which used to belong to the late Lorraine Hunt-Lieberson, whom I had the fortune to enjoy greatly

in the Met's *Great Gatsby* some years ago. Sophie Martin made a charming and ingenuous Ginetta. Fraser Rubens proved a very convincing Nemorino, finding his voice and acting abilities much appropriate to the part. The audience loved his *Una furtiva lagrima*. Alexander Dobson, who will be seen in a Mahler concert at the NAC later this summer was a good quality Belcore, demonstrating good acting as well as vocal skill. However the highlight of the performance was the pure delight which Taras Kulish took in the "Doctor" Dulcamara role. He overcame the sentimentality of the plot with the pure joy he took in hoodwinking the "country bumpkin", all the while keeping his audience aware of the plot with asides delivered in quality bass-baritone tones! A very pleasant way to spend a Valentine's Day afternoon, reinforced by the fact that the proceeds went to the L'Arche Ottawa charitable organization.



Cold, Class, Change and Canadians at the MET

by Shelagh Williams

We had not been to New York's Metropolitan Opera for several years, and when ProMusica Tours announced its 20th Anniversary New Year's Celebration Opera Tour, featuring 6 MET operas in 7 days, we jumped at the chance! Ottawa native Larry Edelson, owner of ProMusica Tours, who has traded in his opera singing for opera directing, teaching, and commissioning new operas, still found time to personally guide this tour. The midwinter weather was unusually cold for New York City, with an unpleasantly bitter wind, and there were several changes in cast from what the MET had initially announced, but all of the productions and performers were very good, and the overall experience was most enjoyable.

Our first performance was the last of the season of Strauss's *Elektra*, in the venerable Otto Schenk production, with set and costumes by Jurgen Rose premiered in 1992. The severe set was basically naturalistic, but with a dangerous rake to the very uneven floor, probably symbolic of the dysfunctional House of Atreus, and a strange, broken horse statue filled half of the forecourt in front of the royal palace. The palace facade consisted of a large pair of doors accessed by slanted, awkward steps, and flanked by window openings through which the passage of lights indicated offstage, often gruesome, events. Italian Fabio Luisi managed to conduct the immense orchestral score lightly enough for the singers to be heard, without losing any of its strangeness, even after 100 years. It was for a January 1983 production of *Elektra* by the Canadian Opera Company (COC) in Toronto that surtitles were first invented and used, and I was as grateful for them then (my first encounter with *Elektra*) as I was this time, since otherwise two hours of such a non-stop onslaught of sound would be incomprehensible and unbearable! I had always wanted to hear British mezzo Felicity Palmer, and so was delighted that she sang Klytaemnestra, Elektra's mother, exhibiting her consummate acting skills to portray the scared and scary murderess. Almost unrecognizable in her attractive new svelteness, set off by the loveliest costume on stage, Deborah Voigt reprised the sweeter sister Chrysothemis role she sang in the 1992 premiere, soaring beautifully over the orchestra. Making her MET debut, British soprano Susan Bullock sang the title role of Elektra, sounding better than when we heard her in the role at the COC a couple of years ago. She was on stage throughout the opera, bringing out the various aspects of Elektra, while going slowly mad, and remained engaged throughout. Her only real fault was that she is

really no dancer, as revealed when she danced herself triumphantly to death! This opera provides three superb roles for female singers, and our participants, singing rather than shouting, took full advantage of their opportunities!

On our way to the MET for our second opera, Offenbach's *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, we heard that a cast change had been made within the last two hours. Canadian tenor David Pomeroy would be replacing the indisposed tenor, Joseph Calleja, in the title role; Calleja himself had replaced the original tenor choice, Roland Villazon, due to his vocal problems! This was Pomeroy's MET debut and we were able to reassure the others that we had heard him at the COC and knew he would be fine! - which was just as well, as no biographical info was made available by the MET, just a one-line programme insert with his name! Many years ago we were to hear *Hoffmann* in Montreal, only to be thwarted by a strike, and last time we were down to the MET for *Hoffmann*, especially to hear Welshman Bryn Terfel as the Four Villains, his back played him up and we heard instead Canadian John Fanning! - are we jinxed with this opera? This *Hoffmann* was a new MET production by American director Bartlett Sher in which he switched the scene order so that the Venetian episode was last, rather than central. Sher set it nominally in the 1920s, with design by Michael Yeargan (sets), Brit Catherine Zuber (costumes), and James F. Ingalls (lighting), and made it clear that he considered Hoffmann's tales were jumbled flashbacks by having characters from various episodes wander throughout all the scenes! As those of you who saw the Live in HD theatre production know, this resulted in a classy, clever, utterly fantastic production, which was even better live at the MET, since you could see all of the performers and staging, not just what was selected by the cameraman! In fact, it was almost too much, like a three-ring circus! Perhaps the sheer number of bodies to be dressed explained the almost complete lack of costume for some of the "ladies"! Our performance was well conducted by American John Keenan, who recently led *Rusalka* at the COC, and he drew a captivating performance from orchestra and singers alike. These included pert Korean coloratura soprano Kathleen Kim singing the doll Olympia with pinpoint accuracy; lovely, though no longer sylph-like, Russian soprano Anna Netrebko as both the delicate Antonia and Hoffmann's current love, Stella; Russian mezzo

Cold, Class, Change and Canadians at the MET (cont.)

Ekaterina Gubanova, seeming a little mature for the Venetian courtesan Giulietta, although she sang well enough; American mezzo Kate Lindsey omnipresent and attractive as both Muse and Nicklausse, Hoffmann's friend; baritone Alan Held, suitably and subtly threatening as Hoffmann's Four Villains; and British tenor Alan Oke, engaging as the four servants, and particularly as the servant who "can't sing"! And David Pomeroy? Well, he took a little while to warm up, but was soon acting and singing like the professional he is, and his good looks (better than Calleja's!), acting and voice more than made up for any disappointment from not hearing Calleja. Pomeroy received a generous share of applause and bravos and certainly made a good showing for his debut - he's sure to be back!

The next evening was New Year's Eve, with an early (6.30 pm) start to accommodate later revelries - in our case, a scrumptious dinner plus all the trimmings at an upscale eatery conveniently across the Plaza! Of course, nothing less than a brand new production premiere would do, of Bizet's *Carmen*, no less, and in charge was debuting British director Richard Eyre, for 10 years director of London's National Theatre. Zeffirelli's overblown production was replaced by a focused, grittier concept, set in the oppressive Franco era of the late 1930's, resulting in a traditional production, though with some nice touches and attention to detail. The set by debuting British set and costume designer Rob Howell was absolutely brilliant. Using the MET's rotating stage and huge concentric crumbling brick walls, Howell depicted the large town square, the tavern and the smugglers' mountain pass, for the big chorus scenes, then turned the walls fluidly to leave down stage the claustrophobic soldiers' barracks where Carmen enticed Don Jose and the constricted area behind the bullring, in which Carmen in turn could not escape Don Jose. Eyre also brought with him fellow Brits lighting designer Peter Mumford, choreographer Christopher Wheeldon and solo dancer Martin Harvey to flesh out his concept, ensuring a stunning opening. The stage curtain sported a vivid red slash which opened to reveal two dancers, Harvey and Marcia Kowroski, in a striking pas-de-deux to the overture, and again during the prelude after the intermission. We also got a classy ensemble Gypsy dance later in the tavern, started off with rhythmic hand

clapping! And just for good measure, the MET snagged crack-erjack young Canadian conductor Yannick Nezet-Seguin to make his MET debut! He took the reins and drove the orchestra at a breakneck speed in the overture, then managed his marvellous forces to give us a wonderful reading of the rest of the opera. And the forces? Angela Gheorghiu was originally slated to sing Carmen for her first time with tenor Roberto Alagna as Don Jose, but since they are now separated and undergoing a divorce, it is perhaps not surprising that she preferred not to have her estranged husband with a knife at her throat! Latvian mezzo Elina Garanca was moved out of the role of Nicklausse in *Hoffmann* to sing Carmen, which, fortunately, she had just sung with Alagna at Covent Garden. And what a Carmen she made: beautiful, self-assured, clever, gutsy, and, with her nimble Rossini mezzo, ideal for the role! Her Gypsy costumes were always colourful and extremely becoming, and her final striking ensemble of black lace mantilla and fitted black dress with the bright red slash was magnificent, tying in with the opening curtain and portending her doom. Roberto Alagna was excellent, as would be expected in one of his best roles, and looked better for a little weight loss I felt. The cold which made him skip the end of the dress rehearsal did not stop him giving us his all, both vocally and dramatically. Italian soprano Barbara Frittoli was an unusually good Micaela, resolute and plucky, but in her unattractive 1930s coat never stood a chance against Carmen! Polish baritone Mariusz Kwiecien, in tight matador costumes hand tailored by a Spanish master, looked and sounded a dashing Escamillo. To end it off even more dramatically, after Don Jose killed Carmen, the turntable revolved again to the inside of the arena to reveal Escamillo standing over the huge bull he had just killed - unforgettable! It may have been Richard Eyre's and Yannick Nezet-Seguin's debuts, but these two imports brought excitement and quality to this powerful new production of an old favourite.

The next night was another blockbuster: Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier*, four and a half hours in length! This was the very beautiful traditional, almost ancient, Nathaniel Merrill production, the 1969 sets and costumes by Robert O'Hearn having been carefully restored. Director Robin Guarino elicited straightforward, believable performances from his cast, for a most enjoyable result. We had expected to have Maestro James Levine in the chair, but his back surgery intervened, and the MET was fortunate indeed to secure Dutch conductor Edo de Waart, who gave us a lovely lush orchestra sound, and the

Cold, Class, Change and Canadians at the MET (cont.)

heavenly vocal result of a superb cast. Like *Elektra*, written only two years earlier, this Strauss opera provides three great female roles. The Marschallin and her lover, the Rosenkavalier, were none other than soprano Renee Fleming and mezzo Susan Graham, who had each last sung the roles together at the MET in 2000, and each was ideally cast! Our third singer was German soprano Christine Schafer as the lovely young Sophie who comes between the two, but whose voice blended beautifully with the other two in the final trio! The night we were there her young daughter was there with a nanny to hear her mother sing! The male roles were also very strongly cast, starting with Icelandic bass Kristinn Sigmundsson as a very large, very obnoxious, well named Baron Ochs (Ox!). It was a delight to see and hear English baritone Thomas Allen as Faninal, Sophie's beleaguered father. Our solo Singer was American tenor Eric Cutler, who will be debuting with the COC as Leicester in Donizetti's *Maria Stuarda* in the Spring. The huge supporting cast was excellent, with illness giving us another debut, that of soprano Erica Strauss (very apt!) as Marianne, Sophie's duenna. This was a well-acted, visually and musically sumptuous production of *Der Rosenkavalier* that left one humming Baron Ochs' waltz music contentedly on the way home in the wee small hours of the morning!

Our next opera was the final performance of the season of Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel*, a production from the Welsh National Opera, first produced at the MET in 2007 for the Christmas trade. In view of the lack of food that instigates the action of the opera, and the Grimm's fairy tale on which it is based, Richard Jones cleverly fashioned a food centred production, set in three different kitchens, with between scene drops portraying plates and mouths! Set and costume designer John Macfarlane gave us an especially unusual Act II, supposedly in the woods, with 14 fat chefs instead of 14 angels, accompanied by a butler with a fish head! Fabio Luisi was back to conduct the lovely score, and the singers, singing in English, were excellent, and even comprehensible most of the time. Since the leads were Austrian mezzo Angelika Kirschlager as a boyish Hansel and Swedish soprano Miah Persson, who had just debuted at the MET in the Fall as Sophie in *Der Rosenkavalier*, as Gretel, good English diction was not a guarantee, but their acting and singing were quite delightful. Baritone Dwayne Croft was an enjoyable father, but mezzo Rosalind Plowright was a bit over the top as the harried and harsh-voiced mother. English tenor Philip Langridge reprised

his star turn as the really ugly witch, and was quite entertaining, but, perhaps because it was the end of the run - although he should have known the role by then! - he missed several cues and seemed a bit out of it. Musically this performance was up to standard, but, as you may have guessed, the style of the production was not quite my cup of tea, leaving me underwhelmed!

Our final opera was the beautiful, grand, over-the-top Zeffirelli 1987 production of Puccini's *Turandot*. Debuting Latvian conductor Andris Nelsons brought young energy to the task, and he and stage director David Kneuss kept the huge forces together, no easy task! I was delighted that ours was the first night when much trumpeted tenor Salvatore Licitra took over the role of Prince Calaf, since I had been wanting to hear him, and was not disappointed. Ukrainian soprano Maria Guleghina was in powerful, good voice as Princess Turandot, although she as well as Licitra seemed to be shouting in a couple of places to cut through the huge though excellent orchestra and chorus. Chinese bass Hao Jiang Tian, a long-time MET singer, looked the part as the elderly Timur, Calaf's father. Stealing the show, as usual, was the slave girl Liu, here beautifully sung and played by Latvian soprano Maija Kovalevska. But the other special treat with this performance was to discover earlier in the week that in the outside MET posters the name of the scheduled Ping had been covered over by that of our own BLOS winner Joshua Hopkins, and so we were treated to actually seeing and hearing him live in his debut role! As Marjorie Clegg attested in her review of Joshua's actual debut, he was marvellous! Albeit rather old, this very lavish and traditional production was well done - "nothing succeeds like excess"! - and was certainly better than English National Opera's current production of *Turandot*, set in a Chinese restaurant!

The Live in HD Metropolitan Opera transmissions are fine, but actually walking across the Lincoln Centre Plaza, past the new fountain, and climbing the MET's grand staircase to take an excellent seat and watch live a marvellous production, for which no expense has been spared, always with the added excitement that another of its stable of first-rate singers may unexpectedly be stepping in to cover a role, more than justifies the trip to New York City.

Opera de Montreal's *Tosca* by James Winters

Of a recent production of Opera de Montreal's *Tosca*, a performance which I attended (February 11, 2010), the review in *The Gazette* commented, "what was needed to mark the company's 30th anniversary was a stellar production, but what we got was a middle-of-the-road *Tosca*. I can only agree.

The title role was sung by a German soprano, Nicola Beller Carbone, whose previous credits include highly praised performances of Richard Strauss' *Salome* at Turin's Teatro Reggion, in the role of Mariette in Korngold's *Die tote Stadt*, and at the Teatro Massimo in Palermo. Of the latter, it was noted that her exotic interpretation livened up that Sicilian city! Having seen her sensual, well-acted interpretation of *Tosca*, it is no problem for me to believe that. That she had commitment in the role was never in doubt. However, the voice itself, though with sufficient amplitude, lacked that warm Italianate roundness of tone that was such a glory of Tibaldi and other Southern divas in the role.

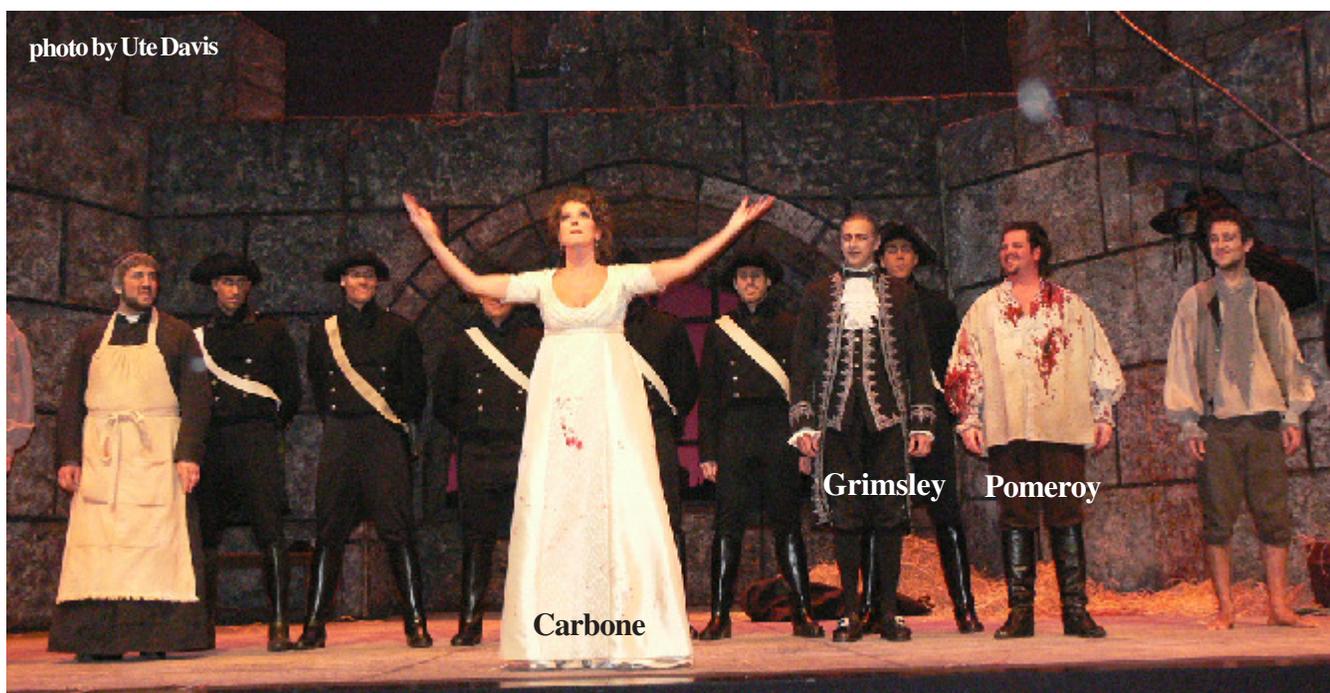
For me, the finest of the protagonists was the American bass-baritone, Greer Grimsley, who performed, vocally and histrionically, at a higher level as the evil Scarpia, despite the fact that his voice is more Germanic than Italianate, in colour and delivery. It is not surprising, therefore, that his metier is proving to be

primarily in the Germanic repertory, including the formidable role of Wotan, for which he has been praised in performances of Wagner's *Ring Cycle* in Seattle, Washington. Of him, in that role, he was considered to be, "an adept actor, never overplaying his hand, and relating to the rest of the cast with unflagging intensity." Such attributes will, I trust, be of critical importance in the role of Verdi's *Macbeth*, which he will perform for us at Opera Lyra in the near future.

Like his confreres in the two other leading roles, the young Canadian tenor, David Pomeroy, though able to belt out the Act II *Vittoria, Vittoria*, with stentorian power, was deficient in vocal warmth and smooth legato. Perhaps due in part to lugubrious tempi, adopted all too frequently by the American conductor, Paul Nadler, Cavaradossi's two "hit" arias, *Racondita armonia* and *e lucevan de stelle*, failed to make much of an impression on the audience.

The stage sets, from the San Francisco Opera, presented us with rather gloomy but functional facsimiles of the Church of San Andrea della Valle, the Palazzo Farnese and the Castel San Angelo.

Though *Tosca* is indestructible as a melodrama, it often gets less artistic attention than it deserves.



A Man of Many Talents

by David Williams

Some of our members will remember Lawrence “Larry” Edelson singing in the Kiwanis Festival at the same time as Julie Nesrallah. Others will remember him as a Bachelor of Music Degree candidate in voice performance and musicology at the University of Ottawa when he organised opera tours to New York City. A few may remember that he took dance lessons at The School of Dance in Ottawa to improve his movement and stage presence as a singer. This led to a full scholarship at The Joffrey Ballet School and a subsequent career as a dancer first with Boston Ballet II and then with Boston Ballet, Ballet West and BalletMet. As well as dancing a variety of roles with these companies Larry also choreographed works for the Joffrey Ballet School and Joffrey Concert Dancers. More recently he has choreographed the dance and combat sequences for Opera Columbus’ *Carmen*, *Bedtime Stories* for BalletMet, *Patience* for New York City Opera; *Orpheus in the Underworld* for Des Moines Metro Opera; and productions of *Chérubin* and *Le Coq d’Or* in Tel Aviv.



In addition to his dance credits, Larry has also sung principal roles in opera, oratorio and musical theater including Chevalier de la Force in *Dialogues des Carmelites*, Tybalt in *Romeo et Juliette*, Der Tanzmeister in *Ariadne auf Naxos*, Mercury in *Orpheus in the Underworld*, Lucano in *L’incoronazione di Poppea*, Ricardo in *Chérubin*, Baby John in *West Side Story*, Jeffrey in *Godspell*, and Joseph in *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*.

In preparing for the end of his dancing and singer careers Larry obtained his Bachelor’s Degree in Stage Direction from New York University in 2001. Since 2002 he has been a Freelance Stage Director and Choreographer and has developed an international reputation as an innovative director. He has served as a Staff Director for Glimmerglass Opera, where he taught for the Young American Artists Program, and was the Assistant Director on multiple productions. He has been a guest member on the directing staff of New York City Opera, where he restaged *Little Women* twice: for the

work’s Lincoln Center premiere, and for the company’s tour to Japan. Lawrence’s original productions include *La Voix Humaine* at New York’s Maison Française; the American Premiere of Telemann’s *Orpheus* for Wolf Trap Opera; *Carmen* for Toledo Opera; *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* for Hawaii Opera Theater and the New York premiere of Fauré’s rarely produced *Pénélope* for Manhattan School of Music. Larry is a member of the faculty of the International Vocal Arts Institute in Tel Aviv, where he has directed original productions of Adamo’s *Little Women* and Britten’s *A*

Midsummer Night’s Dream. In the 2008-2009 season, Lawrence was one of the first winners of OPERA America’s Director/Designer Showcase, sponsored by The National Endowment for the Arts. Most recently he has directed a new production of *Così fan tutte* for Boston University’s Opera Institute at the Huntington Theater.

Larry’s style of directing is to try to make opera speak effectively to contemporary audiences. Some reviewer’s comments have been “in Toledo Opera’s new production of *Carmen*, director Lawrence Edelson’s savvy staging heightens the drama of this tempestuous story” and “Figaro on a Segway? It may sound crazy, but it had a kind of dramatic logic in Hawaii Opera Theatre’s production of Rossini’s *Barber of Seville*. Director Lawrence Edelson built his concept around Europe’s commedia dell’arte tradition”. For his recent *Così* Larry chose to set it in the 1960’s and portrayed his characters as participants in a reality TV show with Don Alfonso as the reality television show host. He felt that the flamboyant ’60s attire was more plausible and worked better as disguises. In the final scene he also left the audience with questions. “Is there a level of forgiveness? Is there a lesson learned?”

As an entrepreneur Larry founded and has served as President of Pro Musica Tours since 1989. In 2004 he completed his Master’s Degree in Performing Arts Administration at New York University and in 2005 founded American Lyric Theater (ALT) in New York City, and serves as its Producing Artistic Director. In Larry’s words “ALT’s mission is to build a new body of operatic repertoire for new audiences. ALT’s programs include the only

A Man of Many Talents (continued)

full time mentorship initiative for emerging opera composers and librettists; commissioning and developing new operas; and collaborating with larger opera companies in the US and abroad to produce works developed through ALT's programs".

Currently for ALT, Lawrence is overseeing the development of *The Golden Ticket*, a new opera based on Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, which will premiere at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis in 2010 and at the Wexford Festival; as well as a trilogy of one-act operas inspired by the fiction of Edgar Allan Poe, and a full-length opera based on Ibsen's *The Master Builder*. Gerald Finley was involved in the development of *The Golden Ticket* and one can find on the internet a short video of Gerald singing an extract from this opera. If you are interested in seeing this opera ALT/ProMusica Tours is organising a group tour in St. Louis in June 2010.



Black and White Opera Soiree

by Shelagh Williams

This year's NACO and OLO benefit presentation, *Opera on the Hill*, boasted a stellar cast and reverted from last year's all Gilbert and Sullivan works to the more usual "opera's greatest hits" format. Our Brian Law Competition winners, sopranos Shannon Mercer and Yannick-Muriel Noah, were of course crowd pleasers, the latter recreating her COC *Madama Butterfly* triumph with the gorgeous love duet, sung with tenor Richard Margison, and the famous solo *Un bel di*. Shannon sang the lovely solo *O mio babbino caro*, plus Susanna's letter-writing duet from *Marriage of Figaro* with the Countess sung by soprano Arianna Zukerman. They then sang the sublime final trio from *Der Rosenkavalier*, where they were joined by mezzo-soprano Anita Krause in, surprisingly, her only contribution of the night. Baritone Phillip Addis favoured us with a lively *Largo al Factotum* and joined Richard Margison for the divine duet from *Don Carlo*. The finale was a preview of OLO's upcoming *Turandot*, an excerpt with full chorus plus Shannon and Phillip, and Richard Margison who, in spite of bronchial problems, finished off with *Nessun Dorma*!

Canadian content included Sheila Capps and Maxime Bernier as hosts, the latter's "lost" script retrieved by Mayor Larry O'Brien and his dog! Soprano Mary Lou Fallis both directed and furnished a rendition of *Indian Love Call* from *Rose Marie*, accompanied by full chorus and red-clad Mounties, herself engagingly attired in a red and white bustled dress, an ear-flapped helmet and extra large snowshoes! Among the "Hill" political appearances was the excellent and well-rehearsed MP5 quintet, fronted by a surprisingly mellow-voiced Chuck Strahl, doing a humorous *The Rumour Mill*. Accompanying all this, plus several ensembles, were the ever steady NACO under Andrew Grams and the ever ready OLO Chorus under Laurence Ewashko.

Events You Could Have Enjoyed!

by Shelagh Williams

The Bremen Town Musicians: This year's Christmas offering by Opera Lyra Ottawa (OLO)'s Opera Studio was the premiere of its newly commissioned opera *The Bremen Town Musicians*. It was enjoyable when workshopped in March, with its Canadian composer and librettist Dean Burry in attendance, and the current fully staged production was even better - a real treat! Designer Michael Rutland provided a simple yet ingenious set and appropriate and witty costumes, such as the tenor Chanticleer obviously togged out as Pavarotti, complete with handkerchief, and the Cat emulating Madonna (according to the singer)! Director Ann Hodges kept the action interesting and fast paced, with the obligatory audience participation and a Question and Answer session at the end. Baritone Mark Gough and soprano Christina Tannous reprised knowingly their roles of Donkey and Cat, while newcomers mezzo Sarah Christina Steinert, tenor Graham Thomson (our BLOS third prize winner) and bass Brian Wehrle brought lively performances of, respectively, Dog, Rooster, and the multiple villains (Miller, Wolf, Witch, Robber). We enjoyed having Evelyn Greenberg at the piano, while at other performances Music Director Judith Ginsburg held sway. These short operas provide training and experience for the OLO Opera Studio participants, exposure to opera for youngsters and school children, and a delightful entertainment for all!

Le Nozze di Figaro: The Ottawa University Opera Company (OUOC)'s January presentation of Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro* was a class production, a credit to the excellent musical and stage direction of Professor Sandra Graham. It was set in Great Britain in 1912, to tally with the English language recits, which greatly helped comprehension, and was entirely in stylish black and white, except for the red kilt(!) of Antonio, the gardener. A full chamber orchestra accompanied, an indication of the quality of this production. Each singing role was double or triple cast, and the final day's ensemble, which we enjoyed, boasted the three winners of the School of Music's Concerto Competition, whose finals we were fortunate to attend the week before: soprano Kareen Lacasse, mezzo April Babey, and flautist Christian Paquette, as the three Cs, Countess, Cherubino and Conductor of the orchestra, respectively - talk about being multitalented! Mention should also be made of Mark

Leslie Wilkinson as a tall, energetic Figaro, Jean-Philippe Fortier-Lazure as a lively Basilio, and first year student Kyle Merrihew as a most self-assured Count, among the many excellent performers we saw. We were sorry to miss seeing the other performers in these roles. The singing was good, the direction snappy and funny, the stage business entertaining, the design witty - this marked a new high in production standards of the OUOC, and was well worth attending!

15th Annual Shooting Stars Operatic Showcase: This year Yoriko Tanno took the bold step of commissioning a new opera *The Park*, rather than adopting her usual practice of adapting an existing work. Composer Jose Hernandez, who wrote with the students' vocal development in mind, also directed and conducted the production from the piano and synthesizer, with added percussion and flute players! The opera takes place in a park which is about to be closed, and mirrors the seventy year life of Kodi from 1935 to 2005, allowing the opera's music to vary with the era portrayed. The many people who used the park over the years provided roles for the cast of 50 in solos, duets, smaller ensembles, and as a complete multi-part chorus, which was performed and blended especially well. Miss Tanno herself had a small, but distinctive, role, while Stuart Hamilton, the usual compere, was ill and unable to perform, and so his roles were taken, at short notice, by Ingemar Korjus. The singers' enjoyment in performing this work especially tailored to their talents was very evident and, in the final ensemble, the complete cast enthusiastically surrounded us in the aisles!

OLO Opera Studio Competition: This year's OLO competition among its young Opera Studio members was held conveniently at the NAC Fourth Stage, in a cabaret style setting, with bass Christopher Mallory a beautifully spoken bilingual host, who clearly set out the judges' criteria. The judges, from OLO's upcoming *Macbeth*, consisted of the Director, Joseph Bascetta; Lady Macbeth, Brenda Harris; and Macbeth himself, Greer Grimsley, no

Events You Could Have Enjoyed! (continued)

less! Each competitor sang two arias, accompanied by Principal Repetiteur and Studio Manager Judith Ginsburg. Mezzo Sarah Christina Steinert gained the Emerging Artist \$500 Award. Our BLOS contestant, tenor Graham Thomson, again essayed *Ah, mes amis* from *La Fille du regiment*, and received \$500, again donated by Pat Adamo! Baritone Mark Ellis Gough, who sang the extra *Così fan tutte* aria which mentions Canada won the \$1000 New Sun Award, and soprano Christina Tannous received the \$1500 Spotlight Award from Ty Paterson. The clear winner was bass Brian Wehrle, who gave us quality Handel and Strauss arias, meriting both the judges' approbation and \$2500 donated by Judy Burrows, and the new Audience Choice Award of \$200! A good time was had by all - and Lady Macbeth cocktails by many!

Isabelle Lacroix: It was great to hear soprano Isabelle Lacroix's lovely voice again, as she sang her well-attended Master's Recital at the Ottawa University School of Music where she had returned to study under Ingemar Korjus. You may remember her as one of the two gypsies in OLO's main stage *Carmen* and as the 2nd prize winner in the 2001 Brian Law Competition. With her brother, well-known accompanist Frederic Lacroix, on organ and harpsichord, Brian Yoon on cello, and other chamber musicians and singers as required, she presented a beautiful concert of Bach and Handel cantata extracts. A highlight was a Bach duet with mezzo Sandra Graham, Ottawa University voice teacher and the Opera Company Director. With Frederic now on piano, Isabelle finished by singing extracts from one of his compositions, and a triumphant *Alleluja* from Mozart's *Exsultate Jubilate*! This was a quality concert, showcasing both Isabelle's talents, and those of the other Ottawa University students who accompanied and sang with her. One of many excellent Bachelor and Masters Recitals at the Ottawa University School of Music and all for free!

The Medium: The Ottawa University's March production of Menotti's *The Medium* was smaller than their *Figaro* in January, but no less excellent. Sandra Graham was music and stage director and Katrina Pak deftly supplied the piano accompaniment. Only the so-

prano role of the daughter Monica was double cast and in the opening performance we heard appropriately, Monica Botelho! Sophie Bertrand was scheduled to sing Monica in 2 of the 4 performances. Suitable period costumes from Orpheus, appropriate atmospheric lighting including candles, and good sound work set the eerie scene for the seance. The three clients of the medium were sung well by sopranos Rachael Jewell and Allison Jackson and baritone Christian Paquette. The three major players were even better. Monica Botelho projected Monica's youth, innocence and compassion clearly. Trent Richardson, in the mute role of the gypsy boy Toby, cleverly managed to convey his thoughts and emotions to us subtly and believably. The star of the show was mezzo Sonya Sweeney as the medium, Madame Flora, a superb actress as well as singer who drew us in, so that we could feel her terror as her spirits - in which she did not believe! - manifested themselves to her, both at the seance and later in broad daylight - a truly scary experience! That we could be so enticed in to the opera story attests to the overall quality of this production.

Pacific Opera Victoria's *Capriccio*: If you had been in Victoria a few weeks ago you could have enjoyed the Canadian premiere of *Capriccio*, the last opera of Richard Strauss. Featured in the cast was former Brian Law Scholarship winner, Joshua Hopkins, and among the other singers familiar to Ottawa opera enthusiasts in an excellent, mainly Canadian, cast were Erin Wall, James Westman, Kurt Lehmann and Michael Colvin. This production was acclaimed in the local and national media. According to the Victoria Times-Colonist *No one interested in opera should miss this rare opportunity to see Capriccio, especially when it has been mounted with so much skill and commitment -- and love.* The Globe and Mail said *This Capriccio is a musical delight. It is also the most fun I've ever had at an opera.* As this production was recorded by the CBC for a future Saturday Afternoon at the Opera broadcast you can tune in and judge for yourself. **Tom McCool**

Events you Could Enjoy by David Williams

Opera Lyra Guild: *High C and High Tea* on April 18, 2010, at 1 pm will feature Murray Kitts who will present DVD excerpts with commentary on the greatest bel canto operas. Library and Archives Canada, 395 Wellington Street. www.operalyra.ca or 613-233-9200 x221

University of Ottawa: Students present recitals during March, April and May. www.music.uottawa.ca

Southminster Music: Southminster United Church will present a Mother's Day Music Hall with Garth Hampson, Evelyn Greenburg and Kitchener's lady of song and laughs, Sue Doran. Go laugh and cry at these wonderful iconic Canadian performers! Sunday May 9th, 2010 at 2:30 pm. www.southminsterunited.ncf.ca

Pellegrini Opera: An evening of opera and more. Mozart's *Don Giovanni* will be performed on April 24, 2010. www.pellegriniopera.com for details.

Afternoon at the Opera on Sunday April 25, 2:30 pm, at the Grand Theatre, 218 Princess Street, Kingston. Marianne Fiset, Julie Nesrallah, Marc Hervieux and

Bruce Kelly with the Kingston Choral Society will perform favourite arias and choruses from operas by Puccini, Verdi, and Bizet. Contact the Kingston Symphony Association: www.kingstonsymphony.on.ca or 613-546-9729 for more information.

The Kiwanis Music Festival takes place from April 6th to May 1st. The senior and open voice sections are provisionally scheduled for April 12-17, 2010.

St. Lukes Anglican Church in its Sunday evening recital series will feature singers on March 28th, April 25th and May 2nd, 2010, at 7:30 pm. www.stlukesottawa.ca

Two Distinguished Singers Coming to Ottawa: Opera fans in Ottawa are in for a great treat when Greer Grimsley sings the title role in *Macbeth* (27 March through 3 April). He sang a superb Scarpia in the recent Opéra de Montréal's *Tosca* and was even more outstanding as the Dutchman in the Syracuse Opera production at the end of February. His Senta was sung by a very accomplished Wagnerian Lori Phillips, who is slated to appear in the lead role of the Opera Lyra Ottawa *Turandot* come September. **Ute Davis**

ANNOUNCING: LOIS & DON'S CRUISE TOUR TO THE BIRTHPLACE OF OPERA!!

They depart Oct. 27/10 to Rome with a renowned Canadian Opera singer to sing and talk about favourite Opera arias on board, to talk about the fascinating history of opera from its beginning in 1603, and the funny things that have happened in opera.

Before the cruise attend an entertaining dinner in Rome with opera being sung between courses and an opera in a **classic opera house**.

Cruise for 7 days in an elegant ship with the opera singer, Rome to Genoa, Marseille, Barcelona, La Goulette (Tunis), Valletta (Malta), Messina (Taormina), Rome.

After the cruise enjoy *La Traviata* performed by The Virtuosi d'Opera Di Rome before you fly home Nov 6.

or

If you've always wanted to hear an opera in world famous La Scala, in Milan, you will be astounded by *Carmen* conducted by the dynamic Gustavo Dudamel (recently appointed conductor of the San Francisco Symphony) in an optional extension that also includes an opera in restored **La Fenice** in Venice. You'll return home a day or two later.

For full details call Lois or Don Harper soon (613-234-3360) or (800-267-8526) since, as you can imagine, tickets are limited. Itinerary subject to confirmation.

Pellegrini Opera presents



W.A. Mozart's

Don Giovanni

Staged & Costumed Production

| | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Maria Pellegrini | <i>Artistic Director</i> |
| Vincent Thomas | <i>Stage Director</i> |
| Christian Paquette | <i>Conductor</i> |
| Michel Ross | <i>Pianist</i> |

Don Giovanni - Luc Lalonde
 Don Ottavio - Rory McGlynn
 Masetto - Mark Gough
 Leporello - Chris Mallory

Donna Anna - Chantal Parent
 Donna Elvira - Stephanie Piercey
 Zerlina - Nicole Bower
 Commendatore - Fred Bradley

Saturday April 24, 2010 7:30 PM
Dominion Chalmers United Church
355 Cooper St. at O'Connor

Opera & Reception

Student \$15 Senior \$30 General Admission \$40

**Tickets available at The Leading Note,
 CD Warehouse, Compact Music & at the door**
Information (613) 236-3736 or (613) 798-1479

Saturday Afternoon at the Movies

by Vera-Lee Nelson

Once upon a time there was a certain order to things. Going to the movies was a recreation, a sort of everyday everyman event. Going to the opera was a rare and special occasion. It usually meant a trip to another city or waiting for the infrequent visit of a traveling company, with of course little or no choice of which opera one would see. Then it was an all out dress up affair. I was well grown up before I was able to become a true opera enthusiast. The movies were another thing altogether; I was a movie fan from a young age. Who could imagine that some day the two would come together?

On Saturday afternoons in our neighbourhood when I was young, all the kids went to the show. The show was the Tivoli theatre, on Wyandotte Street, about 8 blocks from my house. There were 5 of us from our block who went together, my friend Nan, her brother Jack, Doug from the middle of the block, another Jack from further down the street and myself. First, one of us went to get the tickets, usually Jack the little brother. Then we crossed the street and went around the corner to the Heather Bell Fish and Chip shop where we each bought a small paper bag filled with fresh chips for a dime. Then to the theatre to settle in for the afternoon. Sometimes the feature movie was already playing but that did not seem to matter. The plot of the musical or the adventure story was simple enough to pick up quickly anyway. After the feature ended there were often one or two short serials, almost comic strip in character and then the news. Yes, the Movietone news, featuring a sonorous and serious announcer as we were treated to such things as ship launchings or Royal visits to somewhere. Then the main feature was shown again and we watched until we got to the point where we had come in, then we left to go home via the Peerless Dairy where we might have a nickel for an ice cream cone.

Fast forward to a new century and once again we are going to Saturday afternoon at the movies. The Met live in HD. When they began several years ago the Met Broadcasts were a real thrill. An array of operas and stars that we could never have hoped to see in our

home town for many years, if ever. Because there were no reserved seats in the beginning, one soon learned to go early to get a good seat. At mid day this meant packing a lunch to eat before the show. What fun! The first thing to do was look around and see all the folks one knew, people we had known for years and never realized were opera buffs! Then we unwrapped our sandwiches and popped open our Tupperware for lunch. Some chose hot dogs, onion rings or popcorn purchased at the theatre so it soon smelled as the Met never would! And the attire! No black tie, or any tie for that matter. Jeans are the dress of choice, comfort the key. There was lots of happy chatter between friends in the theatre. In the beginning there was some experimentation and strange camera angles,

such as from behind the performers out to the audience. Occasionally one could glimpse the camera whizzing along the track. The backstage interviews and set changes were detailed and fascinating, even going into the dress-

ing rooms on occasion. Things have become much more professional now, the staging is set for broadcast with many more close-ups of the singers and the performance. To some extent one does lose the feeling of actually being at the performance and on some occasions one loses the panorama of the staging to the featuring of the singers. The between act interviews are set and staged to give the performers more respite time. The system of reserved seats is certainly convenient and eliminates the need to go at least an hour early but it also eliminates the convivial chatter in the theatre before showtime.

Who knew? Saturday afternoon at the movies, surrounded by pals, has lasted a lifetime. Who knows what will come next? Having just seen Avatar in 3D and Alice in Wonderland to come, can we soon expect the opera in 3D? I can think of at least several men who will be pretty enthusiastic about a 3D Anna Netrebko. See you at the movies.

Having just seen Avatar in 3D can we soon expect to see opera with a 3D Anna Netrebko

The Metropolitan Opera Live in HD

Hamlet

Thomas

Live: March 27, 2010

Encore: April 24, 2010

Featuring: Natalie Desay

Armida

Rossini

Live: May 1, 2010

Encore: May 22, 2010

Featuring: Renée Fleming

Saturday Afternoon at the Opera

The Toll Brothers Metropolitan Opera Saturday Afternoon Live Radio Broadcasts from Lincoln Center

Hamlet March 27, 2010 / 1:00 pm

Aida April 3, 2010 / 1:00 pm

Die Zauberflöte April 10, 2010 / 1:00 pm

La Traviata April 17, 2010 / 1:00 pm

Tosca April 24, 2010 / 1:00 pm

Armida May 1, 2010 / 1:00 pm

Lulu May 8, 2010 / 1:00 pm

The CBC Radio 2 schedule for May and June is still to be announced

Summer Opera Festivals

Green Mountain Opera

Central Vermont

Orlando (Handel) June 13 & 17, 2010

Lucia di Lammermoor (Donizetti)
June 18 & 20, 2010

Information: greenmountainoperafestival.com

Lake George Opera

Saratoga Springs NY

Carmen (Bizet)
July 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 2010

Viva la Mama (Donizetti)
July 9, 11, 15, 17, 2010

Information: www.lakegeorgeopera.org

Opera North

Lebanon, New Hampshire

La Boheme (Puccini) August 7, 12, 15, 18, 20

Don Giovanni (Mozart) Aug 13, 17, 19, 21

Information: www.operanorth.org

Glimmerglass Opera

Cooperstown N.Y.

Tosca (Puccini) July 9, 11, 16, 24, 26, 29, & 31
August 3, 7, 10, 13, 16, 19, 21 & 24

The Tender Land (Copland) July 10, 13, 19,
25 August 1, 5, 7, 14, & 21

The Marriage of Figaro (Mozart) July 17,
20, 22, 24, 27, 30 Aug. 2, 6, 9, 15, 20, & 22

Tolomeo (Handel) July 19, 23, 31
August 8, 12, 14, 17 & 23

Information: www.glimmerglass.org

Opera Within Reach

OTTAWA

Opera Lyra Ottawa

Macbeth by Verdi

March 27, 29, 31, April 3, 2010

Manon by Massenet May 26, 2010

All performances are at the NAC.

Information: 613-233-9200 x221

www.operalyra.ca

Orpheus Society

The Adventures of Tom Sawyer by Don Schlitz
March 5-14, 2010 (at Centrepointhe Theatre)

Chicago by Fred Ebb & John Kander
June 4-13, 2010 (at Centrepointhe Theatre)
Information: www.orpheus-theatre.ca

Savoy Society

The Yeoman of the Guard by Gilbert & Sullivan
April 21- 25, 2010 at Centrepointhe Theatre

Information: www.savoyociety.org

MONTREAL

L'Opéra de Montréal

Simon Boccanegra by Verdi March 13, 17, 20, 22 & 25

Cendrillon by Rossini May 22, 26, 29 & 31 & June 3

Performances are in Salle Wilfrid-Pelletier at Place des Arts
Information 1-514-985-2258
www.operademontreal.com

TORONTO

Canadian Opera Company

The Flying Dutchman by Wagner

April 24 & 28 May 2, 8, 11, 14, 17 & 20

Maria Stuarda by Donizetti

May 1, 4, 10, 13, 22, 26, 28 & 30

Idomeneo by Mozart

May 9, 12, 15, 18, 21, 25, 27 & 29

All performances are at the Four Seasons Centre.
Information: 1-800-250-4653 www.coc.ca

Opera Atelier

The Marriage of Figaro by Mozart
April 24-May 1, 2010

All performances are at the Elgin Theatre.
Information: 1-416-872-5555 www.operaatelier.com

Opera in Concert

I Puritani by Bellini
March 28, 2010

Performances in the Jane Mallett Theatre.
Information: 416-922-2147 www.operainconcert.com

SYRACUSE

Syracuse Opera

Hansel & Gretel by Humperdink
April 23 & 25, 2010

Information: 1-315-476-7372 www.operasyracuse.com

Check for times and other details on the Websites.