

# Newsletter • Bulletin

Summer

2010

Été

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Opera Lyra's *Macbeth*

## Another Crowning Success!

by Murray Kitts

Working on *Macbeth*, Verdi wrote to his librettist, Piave, as follows: "This tragedy is one of the greatest creations of man." Needless to say Verdi did his utmost to match the brilliance of the original play keeping within the conventions of mid 19<sup>th</sup> century Italian opera but also using his musical genius to enhance the tension and drama of the play. Only three witches do quite well for a play but opera needs a chorus and a good thing too. The Opera Lyra chorus shone in the performance both musically and dramatically. Another great leap forward artistically for the chorus under the direction of Laurence Ewashko. Verdi originally had definite ideas about the type of voice for the first Lady Macbeth. He rejected using a certain soprano with "...a marvellous voice, clear, limpid and strong..." in favour of a singer with a voice which was "...rough, hollow, stifled." Brenda Harris clearly was in the first category, her voice

soaring above orchestra and chorus in the ensembles, and quite brilliant in her solos. Perhaps she was not the most fearsome or loathsome of Lady Macbeths, but she gave a most enjoyable performance. Greer Grimsley was an ideal Macbeth, tall with the bearing of a successful warrior, outstanding voice, excellent actor, capable of delivering a definitive rendering of Macbeth's great aria "Pieta, respetta, amore..." in the last act. Another aria from the same act involved the very fine voice of tenor Luc Robert

who as Macduff had just received word of the massacre of his wife and children. Verdi had some difficulty persuading the first Banquo to play the ghost in the Banquet Scene as the latter felt it was below his dignity as a singer. Andrew Funk was quite cooperative in this regard as well as giving a strong characterization to the man perceived as a threat to Macbeth's ambitions. All the minor parts were well done including Dillon Parmer as Malcolm, Renée Lapointe as the Lady-in-waiting and young singer Brian Werhle, a member of Opera Lyra's Studio Program which is assisted by donations from the National Capital Opera Society. The NAC Orchestra under Tyrone Patterson played superbly, the woodwinds especially in the hauntingly lovely music of the Sleepwalking Scene. Whatever deficiencies there were in the set (from New Orleans) were

made up by the excellence of the lighting effects designed by Harry Frehner. The stage direction by Joseph Bascetta was consistently outstanding.

One small criticism - at times the English surtitles were quite puzzling and only by consulting the corresponding French surtitles was the meaning clarified. Strange, for a work originally written in English and adapted by an Italian librettist.

To sum up, soloists, chorus, orchestra, production, direction, were all excellent. Opera Lyra Ottawa goes from strength to strength. I'm sure all Verdi opera lovers truly appreciated the opportunity to attend such a fine performance of one of his early great works.

## Maureen Forrester 1930 - 2010

The National Capital Opera Society would like to join Canadian and international music lovers in paying tribute to the late Maureen Forrester. We have a special reason for mourning her loss as she was the distinguished patron of the Brian Law Opera Scholarship. Maureen showed her interest in our project on a number of occasions sending us one of her prized necklaces which raised a considerable amount at a celebrity auction. She will always be remembered for her magnificent voice and her generosity.

# PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT, MAY 16, 2010

Last year at this time the Board was struggling with the large increase in costs for the venue of the Brian Law Competition. We came to an agreement to again use the Unitarian Congregation after it was discovered that Board members could be individually liable for possible damage suits if we did not have insurance to cover our event. Jumping ahead to the competition itself in November our present concern is the question of the capacity of the Unitarian Congregation to hold our potential audience in the future.

There were many reasons for the more than capacity crowd on November 21, 2009. First, there was the increase in the prize money for the winners: 1<sup>st</sup>, \$5,000; 2<sup>nd</sup>, \$3,000, and 3<sup>rd</sup>, \$1,000 (the latter due to the generosity of Pat Adamo). These sums attracted a record number of applicants, twenty-three in all, of which one was ineligible and one sent the application to the wrong address (in spite of the fact that the proper address was printed on the application form). The preliminary jury had a field of twenty-one applicants from which to choose the maximum number of six. The audience was treated to very polished performances of many usual competition selections as well as some more unusual ones by Meyerbeer, Donizetti and Lalo. The mini-recital given by Yannick-Muriel Noah, fresh from her outstanding success as Madama Butterfly with the Canadian Opera Company, was a strong attraction for many. She did not disappoint her fans. Advertising for the event was even more successful than ever because of the hard work of Renate Chartrand. In addition Ute Davis used her connections with Pelligrini Opera and with Opera Lyra Ottawa to have ads inserted into appropriate opera performance programs at reduced rates. Our continuing use of Rob Clipperton as MC has brought us to the notice of a number of his former colleagues at the CBC with resulting announcements, even a contest for two free tickets, on radio broadcasts. So this year our problem is: do we need to move to another venue? One which has a larger audience capacity? One which is more centrally located? One which is less expensive to rent? The opinions of members on these questions would be appreciated. It has become apparent that the word "scholarship" is not appropriate for the prize money awarded at the Brian Law Competition as "scholarship" implies the use of the money for studies whereas there are no restrictions on how the money may be used. Again members are invited to give suggestions as to how to amend the title "The Brian Law Opera Scholarship Competition."

The choice of certain finalists led to two of the experts who had agreed to be final jurors withdrawing because of their connection with one or more of the finalists. This was particularly unfortunate because both of these experts had served as jurors more than once previously. However, due to personal contacts by Renate Chartrand and Ute Davis, we were able to obtain three outstanding jurors: Susan Blyth-Schofield, Donna Brown, and Richard Turp, who were able to find unanimity in their decisions.

In order to reduce insurance costs we decided to omit the usual wine cash bar. This allowed us to avoid the cost of a liquor licence and for glass rentals. As usual Peggy Pflug arranged a fine selection of food and drink for our large audience. Peggy's husband, Bob, was only one of the many spouses, relatives, friends of Board members who assisted in many capacities during the evening. House management was under the capable control of Jean Saldana, the fifth member of the Brian Law Scholarship Committee, the others being Renate Chartand, Ute Davis, Peggy Pflug and myself. The extensive program was again the work of former NCOS president Marjorie Clegg. It was decided to encourage potential audience members to reserve tickets by telephone. Around 150 tickets in a hall which seats 300 were reserved by phone and were ready for pick-up on that evening. Obviously this procedure is valuable and should be continued.

The competition itself demands a great deal of time and thought. But our society would not function without the excellent work of all our Board members: Vera-Lee Nelson handles membership and issues receipts for all donations; Gordon Metcalfe keeps the books and wisely invests our funds for maximum returns; Jean Saldana keeps the records of meetings and reminds the president of important dates; Jim Burgess, assisted by Renate Chatrand in her publicity capacity, is our excellent web master and can always be relied on to keep our information right up-to-date; Elizabeth Meller has become an invaluable help in the Opera alla pasta events with her long experience in opera DVD presentations; and Pat Adamo's connections with the opera-loving Italian community make her an invaluable resource. David Williams and Tom McCool continue to produce an excellent newsletter attracting more new contributors and keeping everyone aware of important opera happenings. Tribute must be paid to the annual hospitality of the Pflugs who open their country home to Board members and spouses at a summer meeting. Somehow the gourmet potluck meal accompanied by a glass of wine leads to a most pleasant and agreeable meeting.

Finally I must personally thank all the Board members, especially Vice President Ute Davis, for their concern and help for me during the period of a serious health problem which arose before the competition. I should also thank all those young talented prospective competitors with whom I was exchanging emails at the time. Faced with such talent, ambition and optimism for the future, who would have occasion to feel apprehensive and depressed?



Opera Lyra's *Manon*

# Manon Captivates NAC Audience

One problem that appears to be common to all opera companies regardless of size or status is a financial one. Operas are just so expensive to produce that opera companies find themselves continually facing financial challenges. One solution is to raise ticket prices to exorbitant levels; a better one, in my opinion, is the "opera in concert" format. "Operas in concert" are less expensive to produce because there are (usually) no costumes and no sets. Consequently, there are no costly sets to construct and, furthermore, time-consuming and awkward set changes are eliminated. Also, certain operas are just so incredibly difficult to stage that they are seldom, or never, performed. Another factor is that greater prominence is given to the orchestra and the conductor who are on stage rather than hidden in the orchestra pit. If the most

important element of an opera is the music rather

than grandiose staging then opera enthusiasts will be happy with a concert version. Opera Lyra Ottawa obviously shares this opinion because, in addition to the conventional staging of two operas every season, they have produced operas in concert form for the past few years. The last of these presentations, and the most impressive, was *Manon* at the National Arts Centre on May 26.

Jules Massenet's opera, *Manon*, is based on a French novel, *L'histoire du chevalier des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut*, written in 1721 by Abbé Prévost. A number of works – ballets, plays, popular songs, operas - were spawned by this novel but the most well known are operas by Massenet and by Puccini (*Manon Lescaut*). Both operas have the same basic plot and many of the same characters but while they are similar the two operas are definitely not the same. One obvious differ-

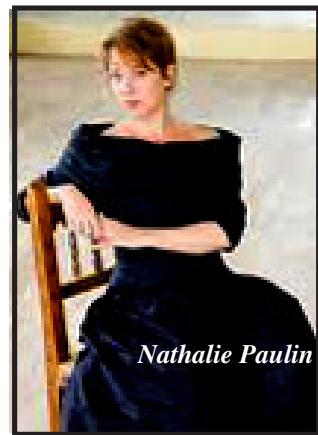
...there were many spectacular musical moments in this performance...

ence is the ending. Which of the two is the superior remains a matter of opinion but both have their merits and both deserve a more prominent place in today's operatic repertoire. Thus, it was good to hear that *Manon* was coming to Ottawa.

Opera Lyra's *Manon* was outstanding! Massenet's melodic and dramatic score was well played by the NAC Orchestra conducted by Tyrone Patterson. The singing by a large and talented cast of Canadian opera singers (Michael Schade, Brett Pollegato, Theodore Baerg, Michael Corbeil and Alain Coulombe) and the Opera Lyra chorus was superb. There were many spectacular musical moments in this performance but the high-

light of the evening was the superlative singing of New Brunswick soprano Nathalie Paulin who was *Manon*. She captivated the audience and was most deserving of the numerous ovations she received.

The ingredients that combined to make *Manon* an excellent production were an exceptional opera, top quality singing, full orchestral accompaniment, Southam Hall, projected supertitles and, perhaps, the earlier starting time. The success of *Manon* should encourage Opera Lyra Ottawa to produce more "operas in concert" in the future.



Nathalie Paulin

## Membership Renewal

A gentle reminder. The annual membership dues for the NCOS are for the calendar year. If you have not yet renewed for 2010 please forward your payment for renewal and any changes of information to the Treasurer, Gordon Metcalfe, 1782 Devlin Crescent, Ottawa, ON K1H 5T6

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**IPHIGÉNIE EN TAURIDE (Gluck)**  
Met Opera - Summers: Graham, Domingo, Groves, Hawkins

**ROMÉO ET JULIETTE (Gounod)**  
Met Opera - Domingo: Gheorghiu, Boulianne, Bezzola, Meacham, Morris

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# Isis & Osiris

by Don Harper

## (Opera You Could Have Seen and Will Have Another Chance)

When Lois & I moved from Toronto onto Thistle Crescent 41 years ago, she immediately set up her piano teaching activities. It was our good fortune to find that the Mack family was on the same street, and Betty Mack was a piano teacher too. In fact, we taught some of each others children.

Many in Ottawa will know Colin Mack through his piano teaching, tuning and a variety of solo, chamber, orchestral, vocal, choral commissions and film works he has composed. We've followed his eclectic career with interest. We heard that he had composed music for a new opera with Toronto librettist Sharon Singer, whose work Colin said had "a wonderful musical resonance."

The one act opera resulted from Sharon's delving into the secrets of Ancient Egypt for more than 30 years, researching arts, archaeology, sculpture, architecture, language, imagery, religious writings in the Pyramid Texts and the Book of the Dead. She realized there was an amazing story to tell beginning with Isis (Queen of the Gods, wife of Osiris) and Osiris (King of the Gods, Lord of the Dead, the god who taught the secrets of civilization), their son Horus (progenitor of all future pharaohs) and Seth (god of Evil and brother of Osiris).

The two realized they had potent material for a new opera. So *Isis & Osiris*, the opera, was born.

Colin and Sharon's Ariaworks and Opera in Concert in partnership with the Art Gallery of Ontario (who coincidentally were presenting their King Tut Exhibit) and supported by the Egyptian Tourist Authority presented the first public showing of *Isis & Osiris* March 31 in a packed Walker Court at the AGO to an appreciative audience.

The cast featured Douglas Tranquada as the Royal Scribe, Joseph Angelo as a thoroughly evil Seth, Amanda Jones not only sang Isis beautifully, she was Isis and Stefan Fehr was a thoroughly believable Osiris. The costuming was suitably Egyptian and the set was minimalist but created the proper ambiance. David Eliakis was Music Director and Accompanist, and the Stage Director was well-known Guillermo Silva-Marin.

The script tells of Seth who murdered his brother Osiris, cut his body into 14 pieces and buried them all over Egypt except for the phallus which he threw into the Nile where it was devoured by fish. Isis, who has magic powers, is intent on resurrecting Osiris to provide him with an heir.. She recovers all but the phallus which she recreates, restoring Osiris to life long enough to make love and to create Horus, then he passes away again to become Lord of the Underworld.

Wow! If that isn't a script for a full scale memorable opera I'll be really surprised. In fact this one act opera is an excerpt that Colin and Sharon are developing into a full blown opera for presentation in Toronto and Ottawa in 2012!

I for one, can hardly wait! In fact, since it has been said that Egypt is where it all began, if Wagner had a Ring Cycle, Mack & Singer probably have enough material to create a magical "Nile Cycle!"

# Canadians Star at Spoleto

by Shelagh Williams

In late May we embarked for Charleston, South Carolina and the opening night of the Spoleto and Piccolo Spoleto Festivals. The Spoleto Festival, founded by composer Gian Carlo Menotti, is a most comprehensive arts festival, comprising two weeks of world class Opera, Ballet, Theatre, and Orchestral and Chamber Music, while the Piccolo Spoleto Festival is a parallel festival of concerts, readings and art exhibitions held mainly in churches and smaller venues, by more "local" artists. It was our first foray with Great Performance Tours, and they provided excellent seats for the seven Spoleto Festival events they scheduled, while we easily managed the entrances to Piccolo Spoleto ourselves.

The Spoleto Festival is another organization with a renovated space to inaugurate - in this case the historic Dock St. Theatre, which had been closed for three years for a \$20-million restoration. The first festival event in the renovated theatre was the opening concert in the all-important chamber music series, which boasts two concerts per day, at 11 a.m. and 1 p.m., with 11 different programmes. Taking over this year as director of chamber music is Geoff Nutall, first violinist of the excellent Canadian St. Lawrence String Quartet, long a mainstay of the festival. Geoff announced the programme from the stage, with interesting comments and highlights to keep us amused!

Equally stellar are the Spoleto Festival's own productions of unusual operas and, to celebrate the occasion of the Dock St. Theatre reopening, the festival mounted an extra special opera, a rare production of the English ballad opera *Flora*. In 1735 *Flora* was the first staged opera production in Charleston and the United States and was repeated the next year in the just built Dock St. The-

atre! This was an ambitious project, since the libretto existed and the song tunes are still known, but the score was problematical, and needed to be worked on and orchestrated. This was ably accomplished by composer Neely Bruce, who also conducted from the harpsichord. Direction and set, costume and lighting design by Brit John Pascoe were exemplary - beautiful period costumes to enliven an attractive, adaptive set consisting of three manually moved stone walls and lovely backdrops - probably of the same simplicity as the original production! The production was lively and funny, no doubt due to the able assistance of fight director B.H. Barry and choreographer Sara Erde, both of whom work at the Met. The story is the age-old one of Lady Flora, young, beautiful and wealthy, walled up in an English castle by her mean old uncle, Sir Thomas Testy, while her handsome beau, Mr. Tom Friendly, tries to extricate her from her predicament, with the assistance, or otherwise, of various servants and serfs. The musical forces were all enthusiastic and the five principals were well cast. Flora's resourceful maid Betty was sung by mezzo Leah Wool. As comic relief, tenor Robert McPherson enlivened the stupid country bumpkin, Hob, dancing and whistling up a storm! The avaricious uncle, trying to thwart true love, came alive in the hands and voice of veteran character baritone Timothy Nolen. However, the true stars were the two Canadians who played the young couple - a real treat to both see and hear. Handsome baritone Tyler Duncan was the romantic lead, helping Flora escape to happiness. The title role of

wronged heiress Flora was sung by Adriana Chuchman, who looked lovely, acted well, and sang the high tessitura beautifully. This was a delightful performance of a tuneful resurrected work which certainly merits further production!



# Tiptop Toronto Trio

by Shelagh Williams

The Spring Canadian Opera Company (COC) offerings included Wagner's *Flying Dutchman*, Mozart's *Idomeneo*, and Donizetti's *Maria Stuarda*, a wide range of music and musical styles, but all were within the COC's capabilities to perform superbly.

The production of *Flying Dutchman* was musically marvellous, with Johannes Debus jetting in (he is not yet living in Toronto) to helm his first COC Opera production since being announced as the COC's new Music Director in January, 2009. However, before discussing *Flying Dutchman*, I must first state a personal bias - Christopher Alden is my least favourite opera director! He has ruined several Glimmerglass Opera (GGO) productions and now is ranging further north to wreak havoc with COC productions! Under Alden's

**He has ruined several Glimmerglass Opera (GGO) productions and now is ranging further north to wreak havoc with COC productions!**

weird and distracting direction, set and costume designer Allen Moyer produced a strange single set piece - a huge wooden box angled at an awkward slope, sitting on decaying timbers, and accessorized with a multitude of straight-backed chairs hung on the wall, a spiral staircase and a huge wheel. This COC revival was used earlier, first in 1996, and then in 2000, when we saw it, but fortunately this time they could afford higher watt lights, under designer Anne Militello, so that we could at least see what was happening! Unfortunately, the costumes we saw were of the 1920's, and pretty drab, along with the unbecoming pale skin and dark eyed makeup, except when they added garish lime green accents, dressing up for a party! Similarly, the Dutchman and his crew were depressingly clad in concentration camp stripes, although the Dutchman's were covered most of the time by a dirty long black coat! Alden asserted his position as a modern-day director with the signature use of chairs as his main decor and as an American with his obsession with guns, as seen earlier in GGO productions. Instead of Senta jumping into the sea as Wagner intended, he had her disappointed beau Erik bring on (and mishandle) a shotgun and then shoot Senta! Fortunately, maestro Debus and his musical forces were so well-matched with Wagner's soaring music that all was not lost. Although you wouldn't know it, it was Debus' first time conduct-

ing *Flying Dutchman*, and he chose to do it as intended, in one act, with no intermission, thus getting through it faster, but probably also cutting drastically into the bar receipts! Inexplicably, debuting Russian bass-baritone Evgeny Nikitin as the Dutchman and also Canadian tenor Adam Luther, as the Steersman, were directed to lurch about like Zombies, but still managed to sound great. Strong voiced American soprano favourite Julie Makerov as Senta overcame her dowdy dress and wild fiery red wig to redeem the Dutchman. Returning to the COC, German tenor Robert Kunzli as Erik, Swedish bass Mats Almgren as Senta's father, Daland, and American mezzo Barbara Dever as Mary all contributed to the excellent musical sound. Similarly superior were the orchestra and the chorus, with the latter's sudden banging of chairs usefully waking me during one interminable section! It was a beautifully sung and played production which, unlike children, was better heard and not seen!

Mozart's *Idomeneo* is in the older opera seria form and so not as vibrant as his livelier later works, but the music is so glorious that a good production like this one keeps one's eyes and ears glued to the stage. There are conflicts galore in the story. Idomeneo, King of Crete, returning from the Trojan Wars, is saved by Neptune in a storm at sea because he promises to sacrifice the first person he meets when he reaches home - a trifle hard on that person, I feel! Of course, that person is his son Idamante, which presents a bit of a problem. In addition, Idamante is in love with the sweet captured Trojan princess, Ilia, while in turn being coveted by the Greek princess Elettra, no shrinking violet! After many twists and turns in the story, Neptune relents, setting Idamante and Ilia on the throne, for a happy ending for all but the unlucky Elettra. This was a quality co-production with Opera National du Rhin, under two debuting artists. The clever unit set was by German designer Siegfried Mayer who often works with Francois de Carpentries, here both director and lighting designer. On the right of the stage was an elaborate fountain, backed by moveable curved walls, while the left side was fairly bare, but susceptible to the dropping of scrims for effect, and all converted cunningly by lighting into palace, sea-shore, garden or temple as required. De Carpentries managed to instil enough action into the proceedings, but had a tendency, unfortunately common in directing in this type of opera, to upstage lovely pieces, and deprived us of sight of Neptune's sea monster! However, the costumes by Belgian designer Karine Van Hercke were more problematic, being a mishmash covering all eras from ancient Greek to present

day - whatever happened to ancient Greek tunics on ancient Greeks? The poor Trojan prisoners didn't even get costumes, and once freed were then deprived of their blankets, leaving them uncovered and naked! The Cretan chorus were in modern blue cottons, some of which they kindly shared with the aforementioned Trojans, and the guards were in brown uniforms. King Idomeneo at

**Although opera seria has a reputation of being static, this was a great production of a truly lovely opera which proved both enjoyable and interesting.**

first, when shipwrecked, was a scruffy outcast, but by the end was in a smart modern uniform. Idamante was in an elegant white suit and Elettra a red evening gown. Only Ilia was in a recognizably Greek/Mediterranean costume! English conductor Henry Bicket specializes in early music, and it showed! He drew beautiful performances from the COC orchestra, the chorus, and his splendid, mostly Canadian, cast. Isabel Bayrakdarian in the role of Ilia was a delight for both the ear and the eye, since her exotic costume suited her beautifully! American soprano Tamara Wilson was a convincing Elettra, but paled by comparison with the ferocity of Measha Brueggergosman in the role in the Opera Atelier production of a couple of years ago. In the male roles, mezzo Krisztina Szabo sang Idamante and being tall and slim looked the part in her pants suit, while tenor Michael Colvin contended successfully with the blindness and blindfold (!) of Arbace, Idomeneo's confidante. American tenor Paul Groves was making his COC debut in the title role of Idomeneo and brought a vigorous interpretation to the role. Although opera seria has a reputation of being static, this was a great production of a truly lovely opera which proved both enjoyable and interesting.

Next day at noon in the COC's Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre there was a free performance by the COC Ensemble Studio of *Idomeneo Highlights*, as a precursor to their May 19th production of the opera. Michael Colvin, as a former Studio member, successfully moved up from Arbace on the main stage to sing Idomeneo. However, of even more interest to us was our BLOS second prize winner, mezzo Wallis Giunta, who proved a first rate Idamante! At the end, there was even real thunder to introduce the Oracle's pronouncement - unfortunately that meant rain on the way out! It was a nice reminder of the previous night's

excellent performance.

It is not often that one gets a chance to hear Donizetti's Tudor operas, and so when the COC was doing *Maria Stuarda* (Mary, Queen of Scots) we jumped at the chance of hearing it - it was a premiere for the COC and Canada's first fully-staged production. Since this is opera, historical accuracy, or even our accepted point of view, cannot be guaranteed! For a start, Donizetti was writing for a Roman Catholic audience to whom Queen Elizabeth I of England was both illegitimate and a heretic. Secondly, he based the opera on Schiller's play *Maria Stuart*, in which Mary and Elizabeth meet and confront each other, which of course never happened, but which provides marvellous drama! This production comes from Dallas Opera, and English director Stephen Lawless and Belgian set designer Benoit Dugardyn have used the example of Shakespeare's Globe Theatre in a concept similar to Glimmerglass Opera's setting for their season of Shakespeare-based operas of a couple of years ago. The raised centre stage is surrounded by galleries, on which the chorus can stand and comment on the action, with moveable curtains strung across to contain or conceal events and worryingly wobbly drawbridges to facilitate entrances and exits. For events at Fotheringay Castle, where Mary was imprisoned, the centre back of the galleries opened to reveal an idyllic country landscape backdrop. Debuting Ger-

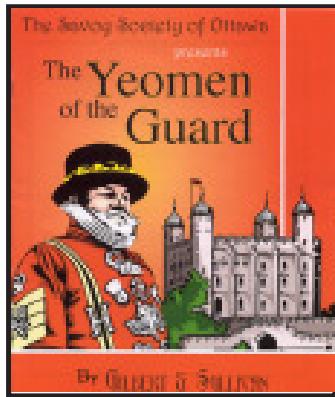
**Since this is opera, historical accuracy, or even our accepted point of view, cannot be guaranteed!**

man costume designer Ingeborg Bernerth provided luxurious Elizabethan period costumes, except at the end when the spell was broken by some of the cast inexplicably removing their robes to reveal jeans underneath - why ruin the effect? All in all the direction of Stephen Lawless was good, although the omnipresent stairs presented some problems, since they were tricky to negotiate, and, in the absence of furniture, tended to be used by the cast to loll about in a most unseemly fashion! There could, however, be no quibbles with the work of Australian conductor Antony Walker, making his COC debut, since he made good use of Donizetti's great score, the always dependable COC orchestra and chorus, and his excellent cast. The three male leads, all American, included bass-baritone Patrick Carfizzi as Mary's compassionate guardian Talbot and debuting baritone Weston Hurt as Cecil, Elizabeth's scheming chief minister and Mary's enemy, suitably hiding behind an arras in an allusion to the tradition that Cecil was the model for

(Continued on page 9)

# Events You Could Have Enjoyed!

## *The Yeomen of the Guard*



The Savoy Society of Ottawa has been producing Gilbert & Sullivan operettas since 1976 and over the years has developed an enviable tradition of excellence. This year the tradition continued with its main production of *The Yeomen of the Guard*. This comic opera is not performed all that often and provided an opportunity for Ottawa audiences to enjoy one of the less popular Gilbert & Sullivan creations. Of all the G & S musicals *The Yeomen* is considered to be the most operatic and is not the merry romp that audiences have come to expect from *Pinafore*, *Pirates* and the other G & S comic operas. It has dark overtones and not a very happy ending. However, *The Yeomen* does have excellent music and the usual humorous, somewhat absurd, storyline. This production was enthusiastically received by a near capacity audience at Centrepointe Theatre.

The Society's main production for next year, *The Merry Widow* by Franz Lehár, will be a departure for the Savoy as it is not a Gilbert & Sullivan operetta. The Savoy Society has decided to expand its repertoire to include, in addition to the dozen or so Gilbert and Sullivan comic operas, "selections from originators of operetta, contemporaries and successors of Gilbert & Sullivan". This decision will undoubtedly disappoint many G & S aficionados but it will broaden the base from which future selections of operettas can be made.

—Tom McCool

## *Carmina Burana*

The Ottawa Classical Choir and Maria Knapik presented *Carmina Burana* at Dominion-Chalmers United Church. The highlight of Carl Orff's work, *Carmina Burana*, is an unusual cantata requiring an enormous classical choir, 3 soloists, a boys' choir, an orchestra and a vigorous conductor to get through the 25 movements. This work does tend to polarize people, some of us love it, others just do not get it. It goes without saying that the "fans" were out in force that evening. The choir and the soloists, Susanna Eyton-Jones (soprano), Pascal Mondleig (tenor) and Jeffrey Carl (baritone) interpreted the piece skilfully, demonstrating the required sharpness, intonation and volume control essential for a high-quality performance. Michel Brousseau conducted with energy and intensity. He was a pleasure to watch! Also the Boys Choir of Christ Church Cathedral performed the childrens' parts admirably. These young boys, under the inspired tutelage of Matthew Larkin, are gaining skill and confidence and appearing in more and more accompanying roles in classical music productions.

The evening opened with an incredible Chopin piano solo by 12 year old Robin Pan, followed by the J.S. Bach *Concerto in C minor* for 2 pianos with Gianfranco Pappalardo and Roberto Carnevale. Maria Knapik herself delighted the audience with an unscheduled solo performance. A very full musical evening indeed.

—Vera-Lee Nelson

## *Haydn's Creation*

The strings of St. John's (augmented) and the Choir of St. John the Evangelist under conductor Gordon Johnston presented two performances of Joseph Haydn's *The Creation* in mid-May. This was an ambitious project which they brought off admirably, aided and abetted by three superb soloists: soprano Cara Gilbertson, tenor Dillon Parmer and bass-baritone Jean-Sebastien Kennedy. (The latter sang well, despite having just lost his mother days before.) This small orchestra, led by concertmaster Janet Roy, former head of the NACO's second violins, has a conductor, Gordon Johnston, who programmes a series of invariably interesting, and often rare, or even virtually unknown, repertoire, which is always a joy to hear.

—Shelagh Williams

# Events You Could Enjoy!

## Opera Under the Stars

Friday, July 23, 2010 at 7:30 p.m. This will be a free concert featuring Michael Schade, Isabel Bayrakdarian and other singers accompanied by the National Arts Centre Orchestra. The venue will be LeBreton Flats Park in front of the War Museum. The program will include selections from *Don Giovanni*, *The Barber of Seville* and other popular operas.

## Sarasota Opera

If you are contemplating a Florida getaway next winter you might include the Sarasota Opera in your plans. The operas being performed next year are *La Bohème*, *I Lombardi*, *Don Giovanni* and *The Crucible*. The opera season in Sarasota begins in early February and ends in mid-March and because the operas are performed in repertory it is possible to attend all the operas in 3 or 4 days. Check their website ([www.SarasotaOpera.org](http://www.SarasotaOpera.org)) for additional details.

## Music and Beyond

**Kathleen Battle** July 6, 8 p.m. at the NAC's Southam Hall.

**Daniel Taylor** July 10, 11 p.m. at St. John the Evangelist & July 11, 8 p.m. at Knox Presbyterian

**Nancy Argenta** July 13, Noon at Knox Presbyterian

**Baroque Celebration** July 13, 8 p.m. with Daniel Taylor, Nancy Argenta and Donna Brown at Dominion-Chalmers United Church

## Santa Fe Opera

**Joshua Hopkins**, former Brian Law Competition winner, will be returning to Santa Fe this summer to repeat his signature role of Papageno in Mozart's *The Magic Flute*. He will also be singing the role of Sid in Britten's opera *Albert Herring*.

## Tiptop Toronto Trio

(Continued from page 7)

Shakespeare's Polonius in *Hamlet*! As the object of both queen's affections (in this opera!), Roberto, Earl of Leicester, was suitably represented by the good-looking and big-voiced tenor Eric Cutler, also debuting - you may remember him as the Italian Tenor in the Met Live in HD broadcast of *Der Rosenkavalier*. Among the women, it was great to hear young Vancouver soprano Simone Osborne as Mary's faithful companion Anna Kennedy - we had heard her sing in Ottawa in a B.C. Scene concert and were gratified that her voice and presence translated so well onto the operatic stage. As the queens, the two sopranos - Bulgarian Alexandrina Pendatchanska as Elizabeth and Italian Serena Farnocchia as Maria - were superb, especially in

their confrontation scene. Debuting Pendatchanska was a regal Elizabeth, portraying her hauteur and jealousy (although Maria and Leicester were never an item in real life!) while hitting all her high notes with verve. In the title role, Farnocchia gave us a strong "vil bastarda" as she confronted Elizabeth and sealed her own fate, but was much more sympathetic at the end, as befitted a martyr preparing for her execution. When everything in a production comes together so beautifully, as here, then the total effect is magnificent - historical accuracy be damned!

The two new COC directors, Alexander Neef and Johannes Debus, seem to be getting things right, at least musically - it was quite amazing to have three such great productions, each one better than the last, for a glorious visit to the COC!

# The Met: Live in HD

## 2010–11 Season

October 9

**Wagner's *Das Rheingold***

James Levine; Wendy Bryn Harmer, Stephanie Blythe, Patricia Bardon, Richard Croft, Gerhard Siegel, Bryn Terfel, Eric Owens, Franz-Josef Selig, Hans-Peter König

October 23

**Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov***

Valery Gergiev; Ekaterina Semenchuk, Aleksandrs Antonenko, Oleg Balashov, Evgeny Nikitin, René Pape, Mikhail Petrenko, Vladimir Ognovenko

November 13

**Donizetti's *Don Pasquale***

James Levine; Anna Netrebko, Matthew Polenzani, Mariusz Kwiecien, John Del Carlo

December 11

**Verdi's *Don Carlo***

Yannick Nézet-Séguin; Marina Poplavskaya, Anna Smirnova, Roberto Alagna, Simon Keenlyside, Ferruccio Furlanetto, Eric Halfvarson

January 8

**Puccini's *La Fanciulla Del West***

Nicola Luisotti; Deborah Voigt, Marcello Giordani, Juha Uusitalo

February 26

**Gluck's *Iphigénie en Tauride***

Patrick Summers; Susan Graham, Plácido Domingo, Paul Groves, Gordon Hawkins

March 19

**Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor***

Patrick Summers; Natalie Dessay, Joseph Calleja, Ludovic Tézier, Kwangchul Youn

April 9

**Rossini's *Le Comte Ory***

Maurizio Benini; Diana Damrau, Joyce DiDonato, Susanne Resmark, Juan Diego Flórez, Stéphane Degout, Michele Pertusi

April 23

**Strauss's *Capriccio***

Andrew Davis; Renée Fleming, Sarah Connolly, Joseph Kaiser, Russell Braun, Morten Frank Larsen, Peter Rose

April 30

**Verdi's *Il Trovatore***

James Levine; Sondra Radvanovsky, Dolora Zajick, Marcelo Álvarez, Dmitri Hvorostovsky

May 14

**Wagner's *Die Walküre***

James Levine; Deborah Voigt, Eva Maria Westbroek, Stephanie Blythe, Jonas Kaufmann, Bryn Terfel, Hans-Peter König

# Opera Within Reach

## Opera Lyra Ottawa

*Turandot* (Puccini) September 11, 13, 15 & 18

Information: [www.operalyra.ca](http://www.operalyra.ca)

## Opera de Montreal

*Rigoletto* (Verdi) Sept 25, 29, October 2, 4, 7 & 9

*Roberto Devereux* (Donizetti) November 13, 17, 20, 22 & 25

Information: [www.operademontreal.com](http://www.operademontreal.com)

## Canadian Opera Company

*Aida* (Verdi)

October 2, 6, 9, 15, 18, 21, 24, 27 & 30

November 2 & 5

*Death in Venice* (Britten)

October 16, 19, 22, 25, 28 & 31

November 3 & 6

Information: [www.coc.ca](http://www.coc.ca)

## Summer Opera Festivals

### 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 August 2, 6, 9, 15, 20 & 22

*Tolomeo* (Handel) July 18, 23, 31  
August 8, 12, 14, 17 & 23

Information: [www.glimmerglass.org](http://www.glimmerglass.org)

### Opera North Lebanon, New Hampshire

*La Bohème* (Puccini) Aug 7, 12, 14, 15, 18 & 20

*Don Giovanni* (Mozart) August 13, 17, 19 & 21  
Information: [www.operanorth.org](http://www.operanorth.org)

### Chautauqua Opera Chautauqua N.Y.

*Norma* (Bellini) July 13

*Cavaleria Rusticana* (Mascagni) / *I Pagliacci* (Leoncavallo) July 30 & August 2

Information: [opera.ciweb.org](http://opera.ciweb.org)

### Lake George Opera Saratoga Springs NY

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

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

Information: [www.LakeGeorgeOpera.org](http://www.LakeGeorgeOpera.org)

# Saturday Afternoon at the Opera

June 26, 2010

**Manon** - Jules Massenet  
Opera Lyra Ottawa

July 3, 2010

**I Puritani** - Vincenzo Bellini  
Vienna State Opera

July 10, 2010

**Mireille** - Charles Gounod  
Paris National Opera, Palais Garnier

July 17, 2010

**Une éducation manquée** - Emmanuel Chabrier & **La Cambiale de Matrimonio** - Gioaccino Rossini Wexford Festival Opera

July 24, 2010

**The Plays of Mary** - Bohuslav Martinu  
Prague National Opera

July 31, 2010

**The Tsarina's Slippers** - Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, London

August 7, 2010

**Otello** - Gioachino Rossini Lausanne Opera

August 14, 2010

**L'Etoile** - Emmanuel Chabrier  
Grand Théâtre de Genève

August 21, 2010

**The Cunning Little Vixen** - Leoš Janáček  
Maggio Musicale Chorus & Orchestra

August 28, 2010

**Iphigénie en Aulide** &  
**Iphigénie en Tauride** - Christoph Willibald von Gluck La Monnaie, Brussels

September 4, 2010

**Die Meistersinger von Nürenberg** Richard Wagner Welsh National Opera / BBC Proms

September 11, 2010

**L'Arbore di Diana** - Vicente Martínez Soler Teatro Real, Madrid

September 18, 2010

**Emilie, opera in nine scenes** - Kaija Saariaho Orchestre de l'Opéra de Lyon

September 25, 2010

**Ernani** - Giuseppe Verdi  
Lyric Opera of Chicago

October 2, 2010

**Kat'a Kabanova** - Leoš Janáček  
Lyric Opera of Chicago

October 9, 2010

**The Merry Widow** - Franz Lehár  
Lyric Opera of Chicago

October 16, 2010 & October 23, 2010 **TBA**

October 30, 2010

**Idomeneo** - Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart  
Canadian Opera Company, Toronto

November 6, 2010

**Maria Stuarda** - Gaetano Donizetti  
Canadian Opera Company, Toronto

November 13, 2010

**Der Fleigende Holländer** - Richard Wagner  
Canadian Opera Company, Toronto

November 20, 2010 - encore

**Carmen** - Georges Bizet  
Canadian Opera Company, Toronto



Additional Details: [www.cbc.ca.ca/sato](http://www.cbc.ca.ca/sato)