

NATIONAL CAPITAL OPERA SOCIETY • SOCIÉTÉ D'OPÉRA DE LA CAPITALE NATIONALE

Newsletter • Bulletin

Winter

2010

Hiver

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

The 2009 Brian Law Opera Competition.....

A SIX-PACK OF EXCEPTIONAL STRENGTH AND BALANCE! by Ute Davis



Philippe Sly
2009 Scholarship Winner

It was “standing room only” at the First Unitarian Congregation on Cleary Avenue on 21 November 2009. The finals of the Brian Law Competition drew a highly appreciative audience of over 400 and a remarkably high calibre of presentation by the six finalists.

The distinguished panel of judges consisted of Susan Blyth-Schofield, Donna Brown and Richard Turp. They had their work cut out for them, as was not surprising since the finalists were selected from 23 entries.

Jonathan Estabrooks, Sharleen Joynt and Liliana Piazza sang very well indeed and were warmly received by the packed house but finished out of the major prize money. Each received a cheque from the National Capital Opera Society to cover expenses.

The third prize, donated and personally awarded by Pat Adamo went to tenor Graham Thomson who showed the range of his repertoire extending from “Ah! mes amis” (*La Fille du Régiment*) to a particularly attractive Kurt Weill “Lonely House” (*Street Scene*).

The second prize was presented to a highly deserv-

(continued on Page 6)

President's Message

It seems almost impossible that things finally worked out so well. Right from the beginning over a year ago we found out from the Unitarian Congregation that in addition to the usual fee we would have to pay a hefty insurance cost. To reduce that amount we agreed to drop the wine bar as this would force up the price of insurance even higher. Our invitation to our 2005 winner Joyce El-Khoury to give the mini-recital had to be refused because Joyce had already committed herself to opera performances. Luckily Yannick-Muriel Noah happened to be free and graciously consented to be our soloist. By 2011 and our next contest, Joyce, after appearing on the Met stage with Placido Domingo should be able to attract a great deal of attention from our supporters. Choosing six finalists from twenty-two applicants was not an easy job but the finalists themselves created a new problem. Two of the excellent jurors who had previously judged at our contests felt that they were too closely involved with several contestants to participate in this year's contest. A new hunt for jurors ensued and we were able to attract two excellent experienced jurors. For the first time we decided to allow people to reserve tickets in advance. Only about 150 did so but fortunately at least another 150 persons showed up the evening of the performance. For a change we had very nice weather which also provided an incentive to attend. And to top it off there were our two special donors. Again one of our members donated \$300 anonymously so that each of the runners-up could receive \$200 instead of the \$100 to help cover expenses. The big surprise of the night came with Pat Adamo doubling her donation of third prize from \$500 to \$1,000. What a night it was! What wonderful futures lie ahead for all these fine singers! Many thanks to all who helped.



New Members

Suzanne Bisson
Veronica Vaillancourt
James Winters

All Opera Lovers

It is time to RENEW your membership or join NCOS for 2010!

The membership year runs from January to December. Please fill in the enclosed form and join us for another year of musical activities!

Board of Directors 2009-2010

| | |
|----------------|---|
| President | Murray Kitts |
| Past President | Bobbi Cain |
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| Secretary | Jean Saldanha |
| Membership | Vera-Lee Nelson |
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| Events | Ute Davis |
| Webmaster | Peggy Pflug Pat Adamo Elizabeth Meller Jim Burgess |

Website: www.ncos.ca

Bravo Dr. Hampson!

Congratulations to NCOS member Garth Hampson who recently received an Honourary Doctorate from Thorneloe University, at Laurentian University, in recognition of his community and charitable activities. Garth has often served on the screening jury for our Brian Law Opera Scholarship Competition.

Thank you

Thank you to all those who have contributed to the newsletter during the past year.
Your grateful editors:
David Williams & Tom McCool

Opera Alla Pasta

SUNDAY AFTERNOON AT THE OPERA

DVD Presentations of outstanding operas from the great opera houses of the world followed by a delicious meal.

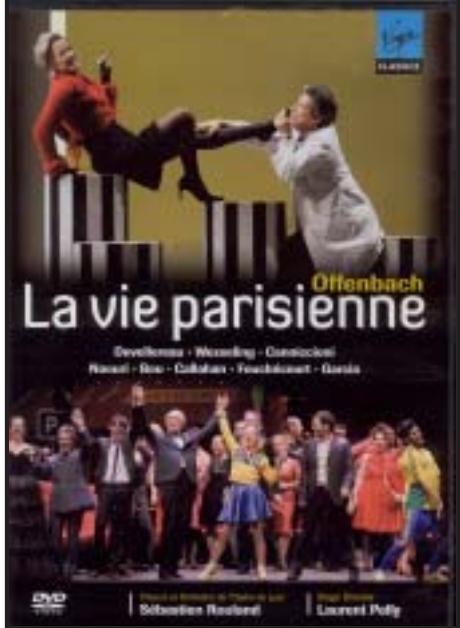
The Place: St. Anthony's Soccer Club

The Time: 2:00 p.m. The Cost: \$20

2010 Dates To Remember

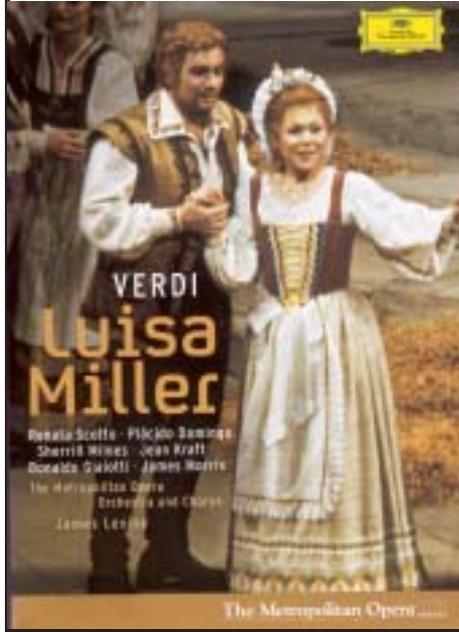
January 24

Offenbach



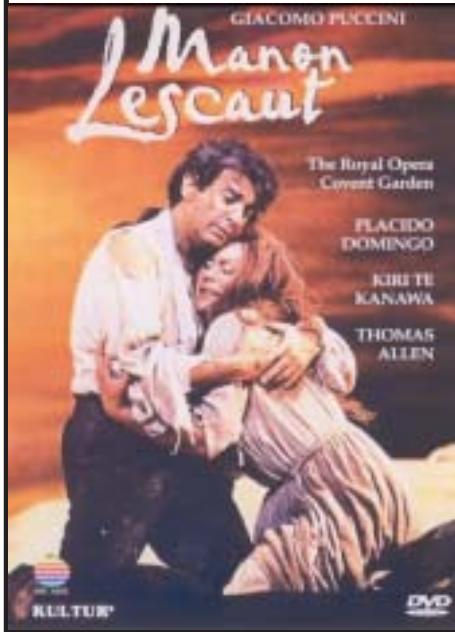
March 7

Verdi



May 9

Puccini



Call 613-721-7121 at least 3 days before the date of the video presentation in order to reserve a place.

Music, Music, Music!

by Vera-Lee Nelson

There is never too much music in our lives and when a superb operatic experience comes up framed by two other musical evenings, different but excellent, it is about as good as it gets. In October our eldest grand daughter turned 18! As she is nearby at university in Waterloo (as opposed to her hometown of Fort Frances) this year, it was a good chance to do something special for her on her milestone birthday. Early on an October Thursday we picked up Andrea and her boyfriend Steve in Guelph and took them to Stratford. Knowing how the appetites increase when Grandma and Grandpa are treating, we headed for the Olde English Parlour for a bang up meal. Then we proceeded to the Festival Theatre to see the production of *West Side Story*. A joyous experience for us to see this again and, for the kids their first experience of the thrust stage. The setting and interpretation made the performance soar. Although the story and music were well before the time of our young companions they were truly entranced. Themes of racial conflict and prejudice are universal, and whereas this particular story is set in a time and place that no longer exists, still the story remains timeless. The music by Leonard Bernstein is as ageless as ever, by turns haunting, beautiful, vigorous and symphonic. The stage must have presented a real challenge to the choreographer but it was met superbly. Every inch of the stage was used for the energetic dance sequences, and particularly in the fast moving fight scenes. The youthful cast gave it their all, moving and singing with assurance. But is it a musical? More than that, surely. *West Side Story* meets our definitions of opera and as a creation of Bernstein, a prodigious musical talent, pianist, conductor, composer and educator it will continue to endure as one of the musical world's most dynamic and beloved musical experiences. We dropped off our sleepy guests and headed for the Metropolitan Hotel in Toronto.

After a comfortable night and an impressive Chinese meal at Lai Wah Heen restaurant in the hotel, we set off on the easy walk to the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts. This was our first visit and there was much to impress us. The airy and welcoming glass lobby gave a pleasant venue for drinks, socializing, coat checking, shopping at the opera boutique and just gawking in general. Inside the house the wood, and the lighting, were very agreeable and the seats comfortable and roomy (even for my 6'4" companion.) We had chosen seats in the orchestra, determined to see this performance as well as we could. When the curtain went up on *Madama Butterfly*, and as soon as Yannick-Muriel Noah began to sing, we knew we were in the right place at the right time. Her big vibrant sound and inspired acting commanded the performance.

Two years ago, at the Brian Law competition, my husband had poked me after Noah sang and whispered "She is the one!" How right he was. There is nothing I could possibly add to the rave reviews received by this performer and this production. What an incredible performance and a thrill to be there. And I must mention the small figure of Sorrow who was played gently and beautifully by a diminutive person who turned out to be Noah's own daughter, Sierra.

In the interval we took time to have a refreshing drink, easily accessible and no waiting, before setting off to explore a little more. We went up to the Grand Ring and then one ring further up. The movable seating in the boxes allows both superb viewing and comfort. Generally it is easy to move about and the sightlines are excellent everywhere. As we do not expect to have more than one visit a year it is worth it for us to get the best seats we can, so we will try one of these locations, if seats are available, next time. But nothing will ever eclipse our first visit and the magnificent performance of Yannick-Muriel Noah.

We were still on a musical high as we returned to our home in Almonte the next day.

For 30 years there has been a concert series in Almonte which began with small musical evenings in house groups and has evolved to a sell out series of 6 concerts a season in the Almonte Old Town Hall. Known for the incredible acoustics and the Steinway grand piano purchased a few years ago by supporters, this is a first-class concert hall and was, for many years, a venue for concerts recorded and rebroadcast by the CBC. Many emerging artists have played this hall, as well as established singers and groups. Musicians from the NAC orchestra have come to perform, singly or in trios or quartets. Measha Brueggergosman was featured a few years ago, before she was at all well known. The Christmas concert this year will feature the popular Quartetto Gelato. But this time our musical weekend was completed in Almonte by Louise Bessette, one of Canada's leading interpreters of the piano music of our time. The music was intense and required a lot of concentration as she showcased the chimes and peals of a number of composers. An interesting musical offering.

We are drawn together by our love of opera in all its forms and variations. A love of classical music is the root of all this, of course. In our three days we had three very different and outstanding musical experiences, and I think it may be a while before we are able to repeat that!

Josh Hopkins Makes Met Debut

by Marjorie Clegg

On October 28th we were at the Metropolitan Opera for a very special event: Joshua Hopkins, the 2003 winner of the Brian Law Opera Scholarship, was making his debut as Ping in the Met's lavish production of *Turandot*.

The role of Ping is a significant one requiring a great deal of singing and acting, both of which Joshua performed wonderfully. We were so proud to be there on opening night to cheer him on!

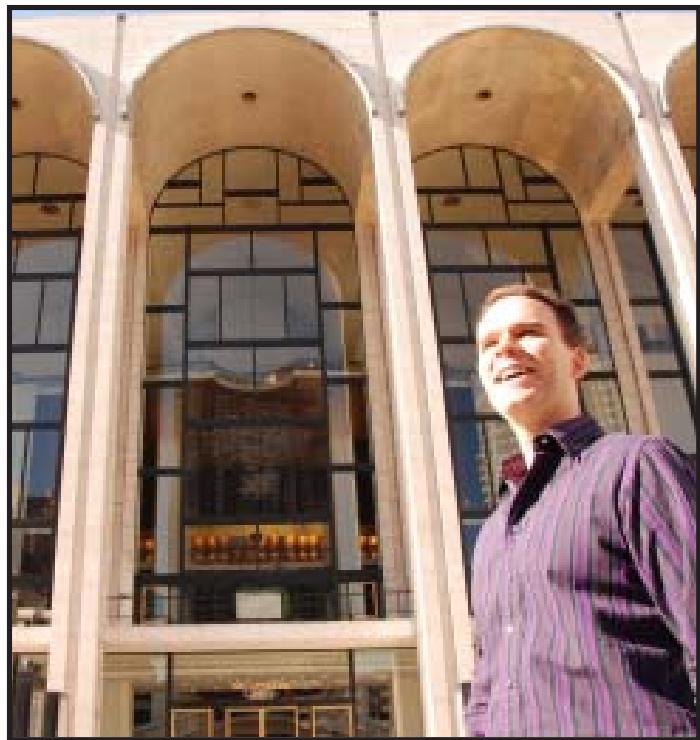
I asked Joshua about his experience at the Met and here is what he told me (much of the following appeared in the *Citizen* on November 6):



*Opening night was October 28 and apart from the excitement and anticipation I felt for making my debut at the Met, Maria Guleghina cancelled at the last minute and Lise Lindstrom, set to do 2 performances later in November, was called to sing *Turandot*. The first performance went extremely well, and I couldn't have asked for a better experience - the entire upper echelons of the Met staff came to say hello in my dressing room before the show. My dressing room happens to be in between Marcello Giordani's and Sam Ramey's, and I can hear the different ways they vocalize through the walls, which can be quite entertaining. Before heading out to the stage area for my first entrance, I took a look at myself in a full-length mirror located in the hallway leading to the stage door. I took a moment to realize that the next time I would see my reflection in this mirror, I will have made my Met debut and there would be no going back.*

My wife attended the show, and my Dad was also in attendance having travelled from London, ON to see my debut. All sorts of family and friends are coming to NYC to see me during the course of the run, and many will be attending the HD broadcast as well.

Last night, during our third performance, the cameras were recording a "scratch taping" so it could be tweaked before the live broadcast on Saturday.



day. The only thing that I have noticed needing any change for the broadcast is that the makeup be less heavy, as every detail is accentuated in the HD format. Otherwise, I will give the same energized, engaging performance that I would give any other night (or afternoon) and enjoy the thrill of singing for audiences across the world!

We were excited to see Joshua again, this time on the screen at our local Cineplex. Despite the transmission problems from the Met, it was wonderful seeing the opera once again, and this time we could see all the expressions and acting at close range. In New York, we had seen Lise Lindstrom in the title role, an unexpected debut performance for her due to Maria Guleghina's illness; she was so thrilled with the audience's response to her that she jumped up and down on the stage when taking her first bow! I found her voice a bit harsh at times and was pleased to hear Maria Guleghina in the simulcast. Tenor Marcello Giordani (the prince), uneven in the opening night performance, sounded better in the simulcast, though his "Nessun dorma" was still lacking something. Maria Poplavskaya as Liù the slave girl was lovely both times and, to my mind, stole the show.

Congratulations again to Joshua Hopkins! We look forward to seeing him again and again at the Met.

(continued from Page 1)

ing Wallis Giunta, mezzo-soprano. Singing first in the competition she set a standard of vocal presentation and stage presence which proved a major challenge to her competitors. “Una voce poco fa” (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*) brought the audience to life and “Nobles seigneurs, salut!” (*Les Huguenots*) and “Smanie implacabili” (*Così fan tutte*) were superbly interpreted demonstrating both sweet mezzo quality and vocal power.

Finally, the high point of this great evening arrived. Richard Turp noted that the judges were unanimous in awarding the \$ 5,000 cheque to bass-baritone Philippe Sly. His submissions were “Vedro mentr’io sospiro” (*Le Nozze di Figaro*), “Votre toast” (*Carmen*) and “In youth the panting slave” (*The Rake’s Progress*). His polished vocal tone made clear the major potential of this young man’s singing career. Tall, slim and handsome he has a stage presence, both graceful and gracious. The audience clearly agreed with the judges and rose to greet his success. Philippe is only twenty and still in the undergraduate program at McGill but we shall follow his highly promising career with great interest.

While the judges convened, the audience was enter-

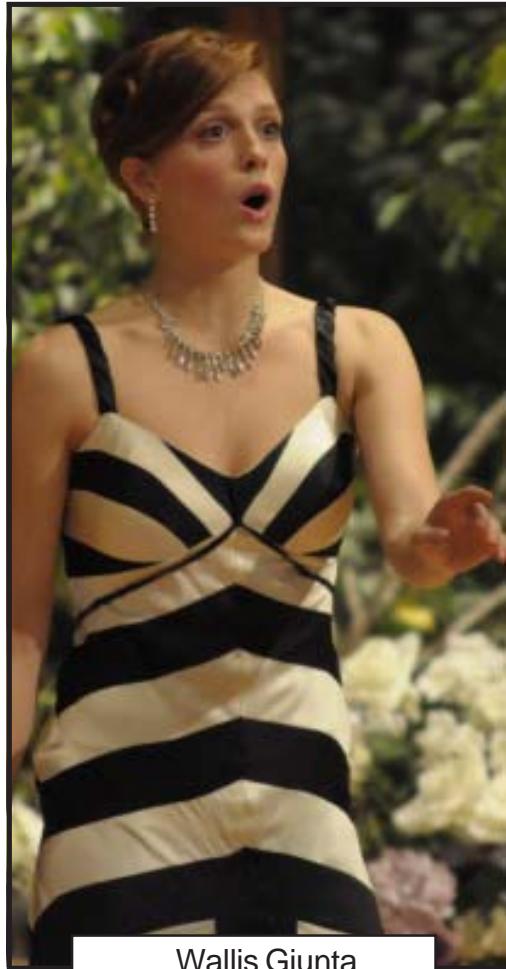
tained by the 2007 Brian Law winner Yannick-Muriel Noah. In her very popular mini-concert she included a beautiful rendition of “Ebben?...Ne andrò lontana” from her Klagenfurt/Austria success in *La Wally* and “Un bel di” from the highly acclaimed Madama Butterfly she sang for the COC in Toronto.

A prolonged standing ovation indicated the audience’ appreciation of this outstanding young talent. This was a well organized event. Rob Clipperton again acted as a tactful and talented M.C., ensuring a smooth flow of the evening’s entertainment.

It was he who thanked the accompanists. Jean Desmarais, Judith Ginsburg, Tea Mamaladze and Naomi Piggott played with sensitivity and passion, each making a major contribution to the singers’ success and the audience’ pleasure.

What a fine evening of entertainment! What a great achievement.

All the singers benefitted by the stage experience gained and audience popularity achieved, as well as prize money for some. The Brian Law Competition goes from strength to strength. More competitors; more prize money; a bigger audience every year. Well done the N.C.O.S!



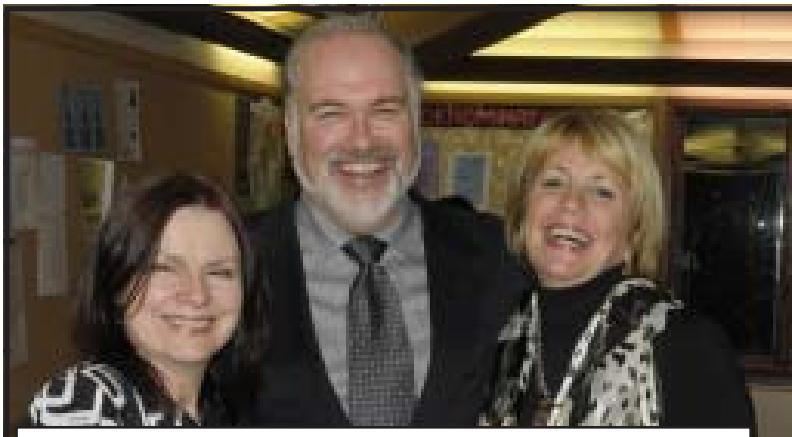
Wallis Giunta



Jonathan Estabrooks



Sharleen Joynt



Susan Blyth-Schofield Richard Turp Donna Brown



Murray Kitts Philippe Sly



Philippe Sly

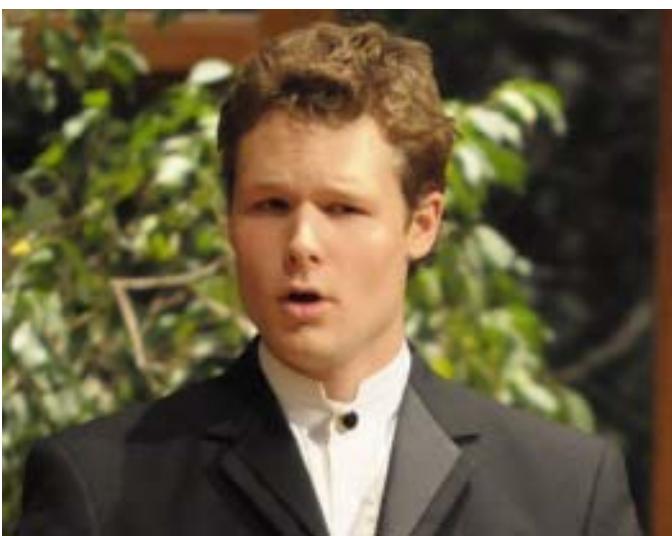


Liliana Piazza



Graham Thomson





Competition Organizers

Renate Chartrand, Ute Davis, Murray Klits
Peggy Pflug, Jean Saldanha

Program Marjorie Clegg

Photography

Klaus Siemsen, Ute Davis,
Gordon Metcalfe

Events you Could Have Enjoyed

by Shelagh Williams

Pellegrini Opera: *La Serva Padrona*

Carrying on her tradition of staged and costumed opera productions featuring young singers, Maria Pellegrini presented a delightful English-language production of Pergolesi's one-act comedy *La Serva Padrona* (*The Maid as Mistress*). Bass Christopher Mallory (Uberto), soprano Nicole Bower (his maid) and tenor Michael Cartt (his servant) brought to life the sprightly tale of the clever maid who "marries up" to become mistress of the establishment! Pianist Michel Ross, also in period costume, and stage director David MacAdam ensured the success of the enterprise. The second half of the evening consisted of arias sung by students of Mme. Pellegrini, with a final ringing *Nessun Dorma* by tenor Steeve Michaud!

Songs of Travel

If you wanted to hear a program sung in English, the *Songs of Travel* at Southminster United Church in October was just the ticket! Three former boy choristers, tenor Dr. Fraser Rubens, NACO violist David Thies-Thompson and organist/pianist extraordinaire Matthew Larkin, joined forces for an interesting programme of music by English composers Vaughan Williams (the song cycle of title and a *Romance for Viola and Piano*), and Gerald Finzi (settings of Shakespeare songs) and opera composer John Corigliano (Irish Folksongs accompanied by viola). All three joined in an encore of Burn's *My love is like a red, red rose* so that everyone went home contented!

An Evening With Gilbert and Sullivan

No, it's not what you think! It was two one-act pieces, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*, an early Gilbert play, and *The Zoo*, an operetta by Sullivan with libretto by Bolton Rowe. The Ottawa Little Theatre production of the *Hamlet* parody was very funny, a real twist of the tragedy! Interestingly, both Gilbert and George Bernard Shaw appeared in a 1904 benefit performance of this play.

The Zoo was superb: a little gem, replete with clever choreography, clear diction, precise singing, witty setting and attractive costuming for which the Savoy Society is known. In under an hour, two pairs of lovers happily overcame the usual obstacles of class, wealth or the lack thereof, and parental opposition. This Ottawa premiere of *The Zoo*, which had been lost in the 1870s and only rediscovered in 1966, was well worth watching, and we exited merrily humming the finale!

Events you Could Enjoy

by David Williams

Opera Lyra Guild

Behind the Scenes - The A-Z of running an opera company by Tyrone Paterson, Judith Ginsburg and Marilyn Lawrie. This will take place on January 26, 2010, at 7 pm in the Library and Archives Canada Building.

The Joy of Opera Luncheon and Concert will be held February 21, 2010, at the RA Centre at noon. The concert will feature singers from the University of Ottawa Music Program.

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.

www.operalyra.ca or 613-233-9200 x221

University of Ottawa

The U of O Opera Company will present Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro* on January 22-24 & 29-31, 2010, at 7 pm in the Alumni Auditorium.

They will also present Menotti's *The Medium* on March 13 & 14, 2010, at 1 and 7 pm in Freiman Hall.

Soprano Monica Botelho will give a Master's degree recital on December 8, 2010, at 7 pm in Tabaret Hall. Students frequently present recitals - check www.music.uottawa.ca for future information.

Southminster Music

Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore* featuring Maria Knapik and Taras Kulish will be performed on February 14, 2010, at 2:30 pm at Southminster United Church. www.southminsterunited.ncf.ca

Yoriko Tanno

Yoriko's Operatic Showcase will present a new opera, *The Park*, by Jose Hernandez on March 6, 2010, at Carleton University. www.ykstudio.com

Productions Lyriques de Gatineau

Lehar's *La Veuve Joyeuse* will be performed March 19-21, 2010, at 8 pm at the Canadian Museum of Civilization.

Pellegrini Opera

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

Ottawa Pocket Opera

Details of their 2009/10 season will be announced soon at www.ottawapocketopera.ca

The Metropolitan Opera Live in HD

Les Contes D'Hoffmann

Offenbach

Live: December 19, 2009

Encore: January 23, 2010

Featuring: Anna Netrebko and Kate Lindsey

Der Rosenkavalier

Strauss

Live: January 9, 2010

Encore: March 6, 2010

Featuring: Renée Fleming

Carmen

Bizet

Live: January 16, 2010

Encore: March 13, 2010

Featuring: Elina Garanèa

Simon Boccanegra

Verdi

Live: February 6, 2010

Encore: March 20, 2010

Featuring: Plácido Domingo

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

Metropolitan Opera Broadcasts

Il Trittico December 12, 2009 / 12:30 pm

Les Contes d'Hoffmann Dec 19, 2009 / 1:00 pm

Elektra December 26, 2009 / 1:00 pm

Hansel and Gretel January 2, 2010 / 1:00 pm

Der Rosenkavalier January 9, 2010 / 1:00 pm

Carmen January 16, 2010 / 1:00 pm

Vanessa - Archive Broadcast from February 1, 1958
January 23, 2010 / 1:00 pm

Stiffelio January 30, 2010 / 1:00 pm

Simon Boccanegra Feb 6, 2010 / 1:00 pm

La Fille du Régiment Feb 13, 2010 / 1:00 pm

Ariadne auf Naxos Feb 20, 2010 / 1:00 pm

La Bohème February 27, 2010 / 1:00 pm

The Nose March 13, 2010 / 1:00 pm ET

From the House of the Dead - Performance from Fall 2009
March 20, 2010 / 1:00 pm

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

Additional details for Live HD Transmissions and
Saturday Afternoon Broadcasts:
http://www.metoperafamily.org/metopera/broadcast/on_air.aspx

Opera Within Reach

Ottawa

Opera Lyra Ottawa

The Bremen Town Musicians

December 12 & 13, 2009 (at 4th Stage, NAC)

Black & White Opera Soirée February 27, 2010
(at the NAC)

Macbeth by Verdi
March 27, 29, 31 & April 3, 2010 at the NAC

Manon by Massenet (Opera-in-Concert)
May 26 at the NAC

Information: <http://operalyra.ca>

Savoy Society

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

Information: www.savloysociety.org

Orpheus Society

The Adventures of Tom Sawyer
March 5-14, 2010 (at Centrepointe Theatre)

Information: www.orpheus-theatre.ca

Montréal

Tosca by Puccini Jan 30, Feb 3, 6, 8, 11 & 13, 2010

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

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

Information: www.operademontreal.com

Toronto

Canadian Opera Company

Carmen by Bizet

Jan 27 & 30 Feb 2, 5, 7, 9, 11, 14, 17, 20, 23 & 27, 2010

Otello by Verdi

February 3, 6, 10, 13, 16, 19, 22, 25 & 28

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

Information: www.coc.ca

Opera Atelier

The Marriage of Figaro by Mozart

April 24-May 1, 2010

Information: www.operaatelier.com

Syracuse

The Flying Dutchman by Wagner

February 26 & 28, 2010

Hansel & Gretel by Humperdinck

April 23 & 25

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