



Thirteen Strings Stages Rare Haydn Opera

by Tom McCool

Franz Joseph Haydn, one of the greatest names in music history, is considered to be the father of the symphony and the string quartet but is not usually thought of as an opera composer. However, for over thirty years he was responsible for the “entertainments” at the Esterhazy Estate located near Vienna. In that capacity, in addition to symphonies and chamber music, Haydn staged hundreds of operas. As many as fifteen were his own compositions. So, why is so little known about Haydn’s operas and why are they only rarely performed? The most plausible explanation is that the librettos for the operas were not of the same quality as the music Haydn composed for these works. The librettos might generously be described as silly or absurd as well as being extremely difficult to stage. For example, one of his operas is titled *The World on the Moon*. To be considered among the first rank of opera composers Haydn was in serious need of a good librettist. Most critics, however, are most laudatory in describing the music in these pieces.

Because the opportunity to experience one of Haydn’s operas does not happen very often, it was intriguing for opera aficionados to learn that a Haydn opera would be performed this spring in Ottawa. Thirteen Strings presented *L’isola disabitata* (or *The Desert Island*) at Dominion-Chalmers United Church on May 27. This work was first performed for the Esterhazy court in 1779 and has seldom been staged since.

It is the story of two sisters stranded on a deserted island for thirteen years. They are eventually rescued when one sister’s husband discovers them. To bring this unlikely tale to a happy conclusion the husband has a friend who becomes the other sister’s husband.

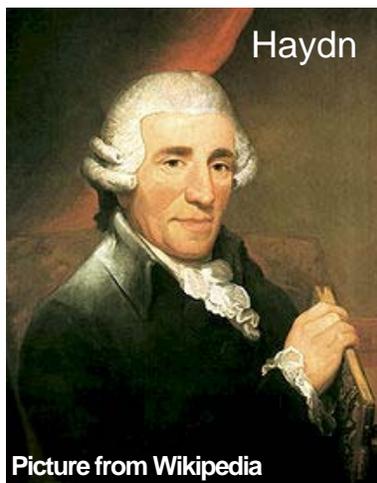
And everybody lives happily ever after.

The setting for the Thirteen Strings’ production was conveniently changed (although the original title remained) to an abandoned church that had been devastated in some kind of cataclysmic catastrophe. This is just one of a number of clever touches that the director, Alaina Viau, improvised. Dominion-Chalmers actually became part of the set and it worked extremely well. In this semi-staged production the orchestra was placed on the stage which left little room for any activity there but this really didn’t matter because any action there was occurred throughout the church, which in fact was Dominion-Chalmers.

For this production Thirteen Strings was augmented with additional players, most from the NAC Orchestra, which resulted in an orchestra of twenty musicians. This was probably the size of the orchestra when Haydn conducted the original performance. The orchestra, conducted by Kevin Mallon, played well. Probably the strongest element of the night was the four soloists: soprano Valérie Bélanger, mezzo Maude Brunet, tenor Stephen Bell and baritone Bradley Christensen. They were, without exception, excellent.

The strengths and weaknesses of Haydn’s operas mentioned earlier were very much in evidence in this production. The music was delightful but *L’isola disabitata*, despite some ingenious innovations, was lacking theatrically.

The biggest disappointment of the evening was that Dominion-Chalmers was perhaps only half full. This production deserved much better and, judging by the reaction of those in attendance, they thought it was just a great show.



President's Annual Report, May 2016

David Williams, the esteemed editor of our newsletter, is always telling me that if I don't begin an article or review with something positive no one will read it. Believe me that is not always possible. Certainly I would call our adoption of the email format of the newsletter a by-and-large success. It is a great storehouse of information and easy reference. There are photos in colour to add extra significance and meaning to the written word. There is less need to worry about how many pages will be necessary to keep the news part up-to-date. But let's face it. The real reason for the change is the cost of producing a "hard" copy and the cost of mailing it out to our members. We have to realize that the use of emailed newsletters, notifications and publicity is becoming general with most organizations like ours. True there are members who do not use the Internet as much as others and really want to have that paper in the hand. But it is possible to arrange to get such a copy, but at a cost, of course. Many thanks to all those who contribute such great articles and to the people like David Williams, Tom McCool and especially Jim Burgess for producing such a fine product.

On March 20th we had 30 opera lovers to see Placido Domingo in *Simon Boccanegra* at our Opera alla pasta presentation. This was the largest attendance that we have had at one of these get-togethers and this bodes well for the increasing popularity of this activity. Much of the credit for the increase in participation goes to Elizabeth Meller who used her vast experience in doing opera on DVD sessions, providing notes, synopses, colourful anecdotes for selections from her vast collection, and making copies where possible of the DVD presented to give away as door prizes. Unfortunately Elizabeth feels that her health will no longer enable her to continue doing what she does so well. All we can do is to thank her for such a splendid contribution to our group. I also have to commend Ute Davis for her fine presentation of the opera in February and for her many contributions to door prizes. At the summer meeting of the Board we will be able to discuss and

decide on a list of DVD selections for the coming season. Naturally any member can give me a suggestion of some opera or a special performance by a singer in an opera that they feel would be appropriate for our group.

The Board of Directors is still undermanned and will continue to remain in that condition as long as the present incumbents are dealing with health problems of themselves or family members. I had hoped that this summer we would be making special plans for the 150th Birthday of Canada. Instead our priority must be to find a way to recruit new members to our Board to share the burden of present undertakings and to plan for the future.

To plan for the future we must look to the past. The National Capital Opera Society was formed in 1983 to bring back a summer opera festival. Now the task is much larger with the demise of Opera Lyra Ottawa's opera season. I feel that we have an obligation to be part of a movement to provide the capital of our great country with live opera performances. This is the time to forget any divisions from the past and unite with all opera lovers in the National Capital Region - musicians, teachers, or simply enthusiasts - to revive this art in our community for the sake of generations to come.

We have had the loss of two valuable members lately that I would like to comment on.

Jackie Adamo, wife to Joe Adamo and sister-in-law to Pat Adamo, has for many years attended with her husband our fund raisers and supported our projects. She frequented the Opera alla pasta showings and will be missed by her many friends and by us.

John Nelson, husband of Vera-Lee Nelson the Board Member, contributed greatly to our organization. His generosity was not limited to financial contributions. When the Pflugs were unable to hold our summer meetings John and Vera-Lee were excellent hosts in their beautiful country home. John was a true gentleman and his friendliness will be remembered by all who knew him.

Murray Kitts

NCOS Board of Directors

At the AGM, Murray Kitts was elected as President. The following were elected by acclamation: Pat Adamo, Jim Burgess, Ute Davis, Murray Kitts, Peggy Pflug, Lesley and Mark Robinson. Board positions will be decided at the next board meeting.

Newsletter Editors: David Williams & Tom McCool. Webmaster: Jim Burgess

For information about the NCOS or the Brian Law Opera Competition contact Murray Kitts or consult the website: www.ncos.

Iolanthe - a Delightful Romp!

by Shelagh Williams

This year's Savoy Society offering *Iolanthe* was a totally class production! For a start, the great venue, the new and expensive Cedarview Alliance Church, had a proper stage, great sight lines, excellent acoustics, comfy seats, and air conditioning! Then the excellent programme included such extras as colour photos of cast, chorus, and production personnel, a list of musical numbers, and a handy Glossary of Briticisms! All this boded well before we heard a note!

Once the humorous preliminary admonition to noisemakers had been sung by Dante de Luca, as the impressively tall Grenadier Guard Private Willis, we knew that the music was going to be fine! He was accompanied by the excellent 13-piece orchestra under the capable direction of Music Director and Conductor Gloria Jean Nagy.

Costume Mistress Ellen Boynton's costumes were marvelous. The fairies were helpfully differentiated by their costumes, even those of less importance to the story. Their wings were gossamer light, as were their little tutus, for "tripping hither, tripping thither". The entrance of the House of Lords was especially grand, the peers processing down the centre aisle in full regalia: coronets and long red ermine trimmed robes over court dress!

Director Meredith Matthews has successfully milked her 40 years' experience with the Savoy Society, starting off as its first *Iolanthe*, and playing her twice more, and now directing the work for the second time! She also wisely enlisted the help of an excellent Set Designer, Julie Dusten, and choreographer, DeNeige Dojack. Matthews followed the tradition of keeping G and S relevant, and, with her team, produced amusing and gently barbed comments on our various new government personalities and especially on the peccadilloes of our upper house (Senate), keeping us all in stitches! Although, of course, all was in English, two large screens, on either side of the stage,

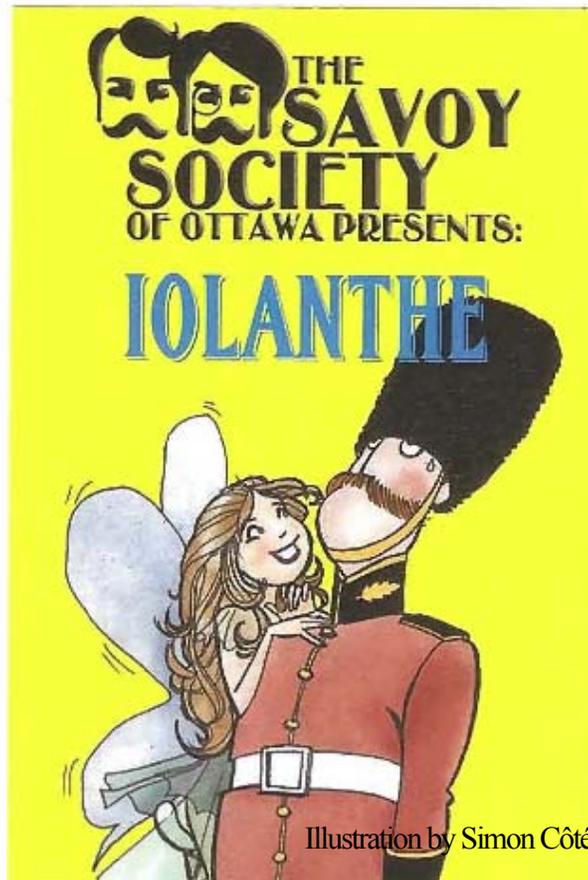
supplied very welcome surtitles to ensure our comprehension of all of the sung witticisms! The director even had a quick vignette at the start of Act II where a mischief-bent fairy was scooped up and carried off by Glenn McCue, as Captain Shaw, in the style of Kevin Vickers, our Ambassador to Ireland, much to everyone's surprise and delight! Two unusual Act II extras were the nimble dancers of the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society, and, in a cameo at the end, the great Sneezy Waters!

Of course, all these production values, however great, needed a talented cast to carry the show off. In the all-important role of the "very susceptible" Lord Chancellor, Bruce Patterson shone, wearing his huge wig and big robes with style, while clearly enunciating his droll patter songs. As the young lovers, Kara Morris as Phyllis had all the high notes, while good looking Paul Simonyi as Strephon had a pleasing voice and nice manner. Darcy Dalton and Dave Woycheshin brought the two lords Dalton and Mountararat to laughable life. At the curtain they hilariously upset two hopeful fairies by preferring to choose each other over the fairies! Bianca Gabriel looked suitably young yet motherly in the title role as Strephon's fairy mother, while Veronica Verdicchio doubled as an elegant Queen of the Fairies and Properties Mistress. An energetic chorus of fairies and peers completed the ensemble.

This was obviously a labour of love by all concerned, resulting in a most enjoyable production!

Tony Bogert, an early stalwart of Opera Lyra Ottawa, was before that a founder of the Savoy Society in 1976. Thank goodness the Savoy Society is still alive!

This is yet another Ottawa musical group mourning the passing of baritone Denis Lawlor.



Seven Encores - The Wonderful Juan Diego Florez at the Royal Albert Hall

by Lesley Robinson

Planning to be in Europe for a month, I eagerly scanned Juan Diego Florez's schedule in the hope of enjoying another magical experience. (Regular readers of this newsletter might be familiar with my obsession with the indisputably supreme bel canto tenor of our era.) Although the planned concert performance of Massenet's *Werther* at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées was already sold out, I was able to get excellent seats for March 29th's concert at the Royal Albert Hall in London.

The programme was eclectic and perhaps not entirely to the taste of every opera enthusiast, but as far as I am concerned, Juan Diego can do no wrong. He clearly enjoys everything he sings and his enthusiasm is infectious. Most of the operatic content came in the first half of the concert when we were

treated to Mozart, Rossini and Verdi. The energetic Filarmonica Gioachino Rossini Orchestra, under the capable direction of Christopher Franklin, played overtures from *Die Zauberflöte*, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* and *Nabucco* and these were interspersed with arias by all three composers. The Royal Albert Hall has notoriously poor acoustics and the nonsensical presence of microphones and some amplification made the orchestra sound a little muffled from the first few rows. Mr. Florez quickly took the situation in hand, engaging with the audience and asking for the technicians to fix the problem, which they duly did.

Juan Diego was in fine voice and I was unable to stop myself from leaping to my feet to applaud after *Cessa di più resistere* (which he sings like no one else

in the world). By the end of the evening even the most staid of the British public were on their feet as well. I also particularly enjoyed *Mercé, diletti amici* from *Ernani*.

The second half of the concert featured Italian songs from Mr. Florez's most recent CD. He was accompanied by some fabulous musicians, notably Avi

Avital on mandolin and accordionist Ksenija Sidorova who both feature on the recording. At the end of the programme, not only did the audience insist on encore after encore, but the orchestra too remained



Juan Diego

Lesley

in place, applauding until they were called upon to play again. Juan Diego came out seven times for encores, sometimes singing with the solo accompanists, sometimes with the orchestra, and even playing the guitar himself. It all seemed fairly improvised and at one point he and the orchestra lost each other in the middle of a song and had to stop and restart. He told the audience that this is what happens when you don't rehearse, then admitted that they had rehearsed briefly, but it happened anyway!

At the end of the evening an exhausted Mr. Florez graciously signed autographs and posed for photographs with his adoring fans. I told him that I am without doubt his biggest fan in Canada!

I look forward to perusing his schedule next time I am travelling.

Three Spring Premieres in Toronto!

by Shelagh Williams

This spring one had the chance in Toronto to enjoy three novelties, all well produced.

Toronto Operetta Theatre (TOT), now 30 years old, has always beckoned to me with its attractive repertoire. When they announced the Canadian premiere of a Spanish zarzuela, Jacinto Guerrero's *Los Gavilanes* (*The Sparrow Hawks*), I just had to go!

The simple story involves Juan who, after a financially successful 20 years in Peru, returns to his poor village. Like a sparrow hawk, he is attracted to the attractive young daughter, or chick, Rosaura, of his former beloved, Adriana, now widowed. However, in the end, true love triumphs and Rosaura and her betrothed Gustavo are happily married. The future of Juan and the resentful but still beautiful Adriana is left ambiguous, but this variation on the *Merry Widow* seems determined to end happily!

Los Gavilanes premiered in 1923 and Guerrero supplied lively and melodious arias, ensembles and choruses, in almost every dance rhythm possible! The small but well-chosen orchestra under Larry Beckwith provided an energetic background for the excellent cast. Guitarist Bill Bridges ensured the Spanish flavour of the music was not lost, while percussionist Ernest Porthouse had an amazing array of noisemakers to deal with the many interesting sounds in the score! The zarzuela was sung in Spanish with English surtitles, and accompanied by English dialogue, delivered with impeccable diction, so that there was no problem in following the intricacies of the story.

Some of you may remember TOT founder and General Director (GD) Guillermo Silva-Marin as a charming young tenor singing *Una furtiva lagrima* in *Elixir of Love* with Opera Lyra many years ago! He has since branched out, and is also founder and GD of the

Summer Opera Lyric Theatre and GD of Opera in Concert. In the present production he directed, designed the simple set and lighting, and wrote the English dialogue, as well as singing the title role! His voice is still in fine shape, and he commanded the stage, performing the role very well, besides holding the story together!



The other two major leads are deservedly TOT favourites. BLOC finalist soprano Miriam Khalil, seen in Ottawa last summer in Against the Grain Theatre's *Uncle John*, is a lovely, lively Adriana, not letting the returning tycoon take her for granted a second time! Mexican tenor Ernesto Ramirez as Gustavo has a marvellous voice, caressing one's ears with beautiful

sounds, yet possessing an emphatic volume when needed. Young soprano Sarah Forestieri, in her TOT debut as Rosaura, was suitably small, sweet and pretty, with a lovely voice. The rest of the large and beautifully costumed cast and chorus combined their acting and vocal talents with the ability to launch into a lively fandango at the drop of a hat!

TOT's wide ranging lyric taste and experience results in well produced, innovative and interesting programming, in this case even receiving support from the Spanish Embassy in Ottawa!

The same weekend we attended another premiere, Rossini's *Maometto II*, at the Canadian Opera Company (COC), also probably the Canadian premiere of this rarely performed work. We had seen this marvellous production at Santa Fe in 2012, the original opera's first outing since its debut in Naples in 1820, and were very taken with it both visually and vocally - we had to see it again! Although we missed the backdrop of the real Santa Fe mountains and Maometto's dramatic entrance through a wall was not as scary, the COC production was, if anything, even better!

Rossini's music was, of course, beautifully performed by the COC Orchestra and Choruses, under British conductor Harry Bicket's expert direction. The opera calls for four exceptional voices, and the COC wisely imported, for their COC debuts, three of the superb singers from Santa Fe: bass-baritone Luca Pisaroni in the title role, soprano Leah Crocetto as Anna, and tenor Bruce Sledge as her father, Paolo Erisso. They



Juan with villagers. Photo by Gary Beechey

Three Spring Premieres in Toronto! (continued)



have grown into their roles and were in fine voice. COC favourite Elisabeth DeShong sang the mezzo trouser role of Venetian General Calbo, and her long Act II aria defending Anna was stupendous! What an evening!

Wait a minute - I hear you say - is this the same Rossini we all know for his comic operas like *Barber of Seville*? Yes, he is, and therein hangs a tale. Between 1815 and 1822 Rossini was invited to work in Naples by the impresario Domenico Barbaja, who ran both the Teatro San Carlo and the casino. Rossini was in charge of both San Carlo and Teatro del Fondo and was expected to write two operas a year. Rossini had access to San Carlo's stable of superb singers and wrote music to match their capabilities. He also had the use of the great Neapolitan orchestras and so was able to accompany the recitatives with full orchestra, not just a harpsichord and cello, and thus make everything more dramatic. Thus he had the forces to perform opera seria and wrote accordingly, our present opera being one of these works.

The story is based on history, with Sultan Maometto II having conquered the Byzantine Empire in 1453 and planning to take Europe, starting by besieging Venetian Negroponte. The central character is noblewoman Anna, daughter of the Governor Erisso. She is in love with Uberto of Corinth, not Calbo who loves her and is her father's choice. When the siege ends, she finds that Uberto is actually Maometto! Since he still loves her, he pardons her father and Calbo (whom she says is her brother) and offers to marry her. However, she betrays Maometto's forces to her father and marries Calbo beside her mother's tomb. When Maometto returns for revenge, she defiantly kills herself by impaling herself on Maometto's sword!

Leah Crocetto has a voice with the requisite

power and agility for this difficult role, while with her acting she visibly grew in strength to choose honour over love. Bruce Sledge as Anna's father held his own vocally, alternating love for Anna and suspicion of her loyalty. It was at least 40 minutes into the piece before Luca Pisaroni made his exciting entrance - tall, handsome and possessed of a flexible voice capable of easily delivering his brilliant entrance aria - and all the ensuing recits! Again, Elisabeth DeShong's powerhouse performance amazingly outshone everyone else, and, with the best aria, elicited a huge ovation!

David Alden directed this glorious production, enlisting a great crew to help, including COC debutantes Duane Schuler for stunning lighting and choreographer David Laera for the slinking ninja black-clad Turks accompanying Maometto's entrance and the athletic stage combat. Jon Morrell integrated set and costumes to go with Alden's simple, straight forward, yet skilful staging. The versatile unit set consisting of large curving white moveable walls provided on the right ample room for a huge portrait of Anna's dead mother. On the left a panel could be raised to reveal a Madonna and Child in a niche for a church setting, or lowered to reveal Maometto's chariot and three horses (statues) for an impressive exit! Maometto's outfits were especially elegant but the costumes were all attractive and easily distinguished Venetians and Turks.

What a treat to see an already magnificent production restaged even more successfully - the COC ended the season on a high note!

The third production was Opera Atelier's sumptuous *Lucio Silla*. (See full review, p. 12)

Three great productions by three great companies - we are so lucky to have them all within reach!

Washington Diary

The Ring at the Washington National Opera

by Lesley Robinson

Saturday, April 30 - Opera 1 - *The Rhinegold*

An early start with breakfast at YOW was required for the first day of our trip. An hour's delay at the airport did not prevent us from checking-in in good time at our home base in Foggy Bottom, a mere six-minute walk from the Kennedy Center, where we headed directly to pick up our package of tickets. Fortunately, we had been able to switch to our preferred seating (front row, a little to the left of the conductor) at the last minute.

A chance encounter at a Foggy Bottom restaurant led to a very enjoyable lunch, chatting with Hélène and Peter Hunt from Toronto. Later, on the way into the auditorium, we met Sue Elliott of the Royal Conservatory of Music, Toronto, who will be speaking at the Ring Cycle Symposium that we'll be attending on Tuesday. As we took our seats, we found ourselves next to a very proud mother whose ten-year-old son was a supernumerary, a delightful, scampering little Nibelung. (The same proud mother will be heading to New York tomorrow to see her 12 year-old daughter perform in a youth event at Carnegie Hall.)

On to the first episode of *The Ring*. A few words about the whole production: This *Ring* has been a long time coming. It is the project and labour of love of Artistic Director, Francesca Zambello, whose vision and perspective brought to fruition this distinctly American *Ring*. The projected scenery evokes wild America (although I couldn't help noticing that the painting of Niagara Falls which provided the inspiration for the opening scene was painted from the Canadian side!). The theme of the greed for gold at the expense of all else works well with the representation of the setting of the first opera as the American gold rush. Alberich the dwarf is depicted as a forty-niner, prospecting for gold and stealing what he cannot find

for himself. He is served by his cowering Nibelung minions. The gods have an air of the swanky indolence of the nouveau riche, yet they are ready to scheme and steal to get their hands on more of the power that wealth brings, oblivious to the dangers to the environment. With the help of some liberal translation, this setting works. The playful Rhinemaidens of the first scene, with their golden corsets and golden hair, return at the end of this prologue, muddled and desperate, pleading for the return of what has been plundered from them and evocative of the pillaged environment. *The Ring* demonstrates how absolute power corrupts absolutely. You can't have it all and the price is the most precious of emotions, the love that is dearest to the soul.

The Cast

Fricka – Elizabeth Bishop
 Loge – William Burden
 Alberich – Gordon Hawkins
 Mime – David Cangelosi
 Wotan – Alan Held
 Fafner – Soloman Howard
 Fasolt – Julian Close



Photo by Lesley

This almost exclusively American cast performed admirably. (Bass Julian Close was tonight's token Brit.). Particularly notable were Alan Held (seen recently as Oreste in *Elektra* in Montreal and as the Wanderer in *Siegfried* at the COC) and Soloman Howard (who was a magnificent Banco in Verdi's *Macbeth* at Glimmerglass). The entrance of the giants was spectacular. Lowered from the ceiling seated on a beam, their enormous feet appeared first. It was clear that moving on stilts and manipulating their extended Edward Scissorhand-like

***The Ring at the Washington National Opera* (continued)**

digits presented a gargantuan challenge for the giants, but they managed it with aplomb and provided some welcome humour. I greatly look forward to seeing more of David Cangelosi who made a deliciously squirming and malevolent Mime.

Sunday, May 1 (my birthday) - Choral concert

Today's rain did nothing to dampen our spirits. We wandered around Georgetown and brunched in a French bistro, then meandered along the waterfront back to base to get ready for the concert. The Washington Chorus presented *Parisian Spring*. Here's the programme:

Maurice Duruflé - *Réquiem*, Op. 9

Louis Vierne - *Kyrie* from *Messe Solennelle*, Op. 16

Gabriel Fauré - *Cantique de Jean Racine*

Julian Wachner - *At the Lighting of the Lamps*

Maurice Duruflé - *Messe "Cum Jubilo"*

Julian Wachner was a delightful host, providing tidbits and insights. French choral work stems from the Catholic liturgical tradition and provides a massive contrast to the Wagnerian opera going on this week in the opera house next door! A highlight of the performance was an improvisation by French organist Thierry Escaich.

We partook of a spectacular French birthday dinner at Chez Billy Sud. Tomorrow it will be back to things German!

Monday, May 2 - Opera 2 - *The Valkyrie*

This morning was spent at the Arlington National Cemetery, which was well worth a visit.

Tonight's performance began with one of those ominous announcements that elicits groans from the audience. There was in fact bad news and good news. The bad news was that tonight's scheduled Brünnhilde (and one of tonight's token Brits), Catherine Foster, had injured herself during rehearsals and would not be able to perform. The good news was that Christine Goerke (seen recently in the same role at the COC in *Die Walküre* and *Siegfried*) was able to step in at the last minute and sing the role. This last piece of news was met by enthusiastic applause and I must say I was happy to hear Ms. Goerke again.

At the outset of the second opera we are conscious of the passage of time since the end of the first - the costumes are now of a new century. Other than a few brief references to Alberich, the Giants and the accursed

ring, we hardly feel like this is the same story. The theme of the pillage of nature continues however, giving some cohesiveness to the series. Act I begins with projections of the natural world and the action takes place in Hunding's hunting lodge. In Act II we find ourselves in Wotan's Art Deco penthouse office, reminiscent of *Citizen Kane*. Its view over smog-covered skyscrapers is evocative of a sort of blighted Gotham City. In the next scene we move to a backdrop of urban decay, complete with the detritus of inner-city degeneration. In the third act the flight-suited Valkyries parachute onto what feels like an urban roof top and we are at the summit of Wotan's world. Brünnhilde's rock appears like the roof of a military bunker. The final scene of catharsis contains the culmination of tonight's themes of doomed love, loss and mortality.

The Cast

Brünnhilde – Christine Goerke

Sieglinde – Meagan Miller

Fricka – Elizabeth Bishop

Siegmund – Christopher Ventris

Wotan – Alan Held

Hunding – Raymond Aceto

Once again the cast acquitted themselves admirably. The first notes out of Raymond Aceto's mouth (as Hunding) brought forth a reverberating chill. Christopher Ventris was a passionate Siegmund and Meagan Miller a touching and vulnerable Sieglinde, clearly the victim of domestic violence. The stand out performances were undoubtedly from Alan Held and the valiant Ms. Goerke. Both their singing and their acting were enthralling. Mr. Held captured the inner contradictions of Wotan, who is at turns domineering and vulnerable, unyielding and fragile, irascible and pathetic. He is both tyrant and henpecked husband - there are moments of humour when he avoids speaking to Fricka on the telephone and buries himself in his newspaper when he doesn't want to listen to her. We see the twists and turns of the father-daughter relationship between Wotan and Brünnhilde. When we first see them together there is tremendous playfulness in their interaction. She is Daddy's favourite girl, sent to do his bidding and earn his approbation. As the action progresses we see Wotan making every mistake imaginable as he vacillates between cruelty and remorse, yet never quite able to accept or act upon his own feelings. He can only backtrack to appease Fricka, not to right a wrong or to compensate

***The Ring* at the Washington National Opera (continued)**

for reckless misjudgement. Wotan struggles with the curse of immortality, yet he fails to recognize the ironic gift of mortality that he bestows on Brünnhilde in seeking to punish her. It is poignant that, in the final moments of the opera, it is Brünnhilde who comforts her father.

Tuesday, May 3 - Ring Cycle Symposium and Washington National Opera: Stars of Tomorrow: The Domingo-Cafritz Young Artists in Concert

At under four and a half hours including lunch, the symposium was a relatively speedy event and we enjoyed it very much. The first speaker, Jeffrey Buller of Florida Atlantic University, was extremely engaging and spoke without notes about patterns and themes in *The Ring*. He pointed out how Wagner used alliteration in his text to represent different ideas - words beginning with w- being evocative of awakening and new life, whereas words beginning with sch- evoke sleep and death. He also spoke at length about the theme of the *Blick*, German for *glance* which has a monumental number of occurrences in the text. Much of the communication between characters occurs in glances conveying for example love, disgust or disdain. Much of this is included not only in the libretto, but also in Wagner's stage directions.

The second speaker was Sue Elliott from Toronto. Her topic was Wagner's musical alchemy and she offered some insights into some of his techniques for musical scene setting. She spoke of how he grabs the audience and pulls them in. *The Ring* begins with a single low reverberating E flat from the double basses, which are then joined by the bassoons. The audience waits expectantly, having no idea of where the music is going until the horns join in and finally there is melody. Musical "descriptions" of action are repeated when a character later narrates the same action. Another topic for discussion was the many things that audiences are left to wonder about at the end of *The Ring*.

These talks were followed by a boxed lunch and a Q & A session with Artistic Director Francesca Zambello and other production staff members who were later joined by cast members.

The Stars of Tomorrow concert was delightful. We particularly enjoyed the male singers, baritones Hunter Enoch and Timothy J. Bruno and tenor Michael Brandenburg, one of the sopranos, Ariana Wehr and mezzo, Aleksandra Romano. We had seen most of them before as participants in the Glimmerglass Young Artists

Program and we look forward to hearing their names again in the future.

Wednesday, May 4 - Opera 3 - *Siegfried*

The morning was spent at the Holocaust Memorial Museum. We visited the compelling and insightful permanent exhibition with its theme of "Never Again" and I learnt a lot. I found the presentation of the historical roots of anti-semitism in Europe particularly enlightening. I would highly recommend this experience.

Siegfried was a compelling experience of a different sort. Perusing the open score on the podium before the performance, I noticed that the piece was orchestrated for eight double basses (the WNO had six), 12 celli (I counted eight) and a staggering total of six harps, although tonight there were only two. The sound was already rich and booming and the pit was full to capacity, but I would love to hear the full version!

I would say that the first act of *Siegfried* has been a highlight of this *Ring* so far. Continuing with the theme of the despoiling of nature, the set was magnificent. Mime's forge was located in a junk yard next to a rusting trailer, with pylons and power lines in the background. The humour in this act was played to the full. Siegfried's entrance was heralded by the appearance of a pantomime bear lumbering clumsily around the set. (The bear returned later to steal a bag of Lay's potato chips from the open window of the caravan, escaping triumphantly with his prize.) The singing and acting was superb. Daniel Brenna makes a fine young and convincing Siegfried. In the first scene he was mouthing Mime's words behind his back - just like a petulant and fractious teenager. I had been right to look forward to the return of David Cangelosi as Mime - his was a fine and energetic performance. His Mime was full of comic malevolence and he was all over the stage, at one moment climbing on the roof of the trailer and at another dancing or turning gleeful cartwheels. Act II was set in what seemed to be a deserted warehouse. Fafner, the giant, had transformed himself into a great beast in the form of a massive, steaming machine to guard his hoard. Solomon Howard tumbled awkwardly out of the driving seat to die spectacularly on stage. The Forest Bird who guides Siegfried was beautifully sung by Jacqueline Echols. She appeared not as a bird, but as a young woman whose language was unfamiliar to Siegfried. She communicated with him at first using signs, until he began to understand her song.

***The Ring* at the Washington National Opera (continued)**

Tonight saw the return of Catherine Foster as Brünnhilde (and this evening's token Brit). She moved tentatively, but sang in full voice. Although their love was pre-ordained and eternal, Brünnhilde and Siegfried approached each other tremendously cautiously, only giving in to an embrace in the very final moment of the opera. Can't wait for the conclusion!

The Cast

Brünnhilde – Catherine Foster
 Siegfried – Daniel Brenna
 Erda – Lindsay Ammann
 Mime – David Cangelosi
 The Wanderer – Alan Held
 Alberich – Gordon Hawkins

Thursday, May 5 - Theatre at the Kennedy Center - *Shear Madness*

The morning was spent in a little indulgence for me. The Folger Library, located near the Capitol, has 82 copies of Shakespeare's First Folio (the first collection of his plays, published in 1623, seven years after his death). Only 235 copies of the original printing (estimated to have been of around 750) are known to be still in existence, so the Folger collection is of tremendous importance. We were greeted warmly and given a little private tour by the enthusiastic staff. It was a thrill to look at the glass-cased original and to peruse its contents electronically.

Our experience at the theatre was the most disappointing event of the week. *Shear Madness* is a comedic whodunit that lets the audience solve the crime. Set in Washington in an election year, we had high hopes for some topical humour. Unfortunately, what we were not told was that the play was aimed particularly at a young audience, so that although it was well done and raised a few giggles, it was not quite what we were expecting. We went to the early performance which gave us plenty of time to stroll through leafy neighbourhoods for our dinner reservation at a French brasserie called Le Diplomate. This provided a most enjoyable conclusion to the evening.

Friday, May 6 - Opera 4 - *The Twilight of the Gods*

This morning we went to the Kennedy Center for a tour. The tour group consisted of us and a Danish couple, visiting Washington to attend the ballet this evening. Joan, the volunteer tour guide, gave us an hour and a half

of her time and the tour was surprisingly detailed and interesting. We visited all the public spaces and auditoria of the Kennedy Center and were treated to the details and provenance of all the chandeliers and art works.

This evening was a triumph. It felt like coming to the end of a long journey. The set and projections depicted the complete degeneration of the world. Nature seemed to have withered and died and we were left with a blighted industrial landscape. The Norns, instead of weaving the rope of Destiny, are connecting electrical cables inside the workings of a giant computer. Lights flash and sparks fly as the whole thing becomes disconnected and they know that the end is coming. The Gibichung family are portrayed as wackily dysfunctional. Guttrune is like a blonde Morticia Addams and Hagen has the look of a sleazy, bathrobed Hugh Hefner. Catherine Foster (still moving tentatively on her injured leg) and Daniel Brenna headed another fine performance by this accomplished and dedicated cast. Ms. Foster was a commanding presence, hitting the heights of agony and ecstasy with precision and emotion. I particularly enjoyed the performance of Eric Halfvarson as Hagen. His rich bass oozed malevolence and his acting was masterful. He was the perfect baddie. The final scene was resonantly and hauntingly cathartic. We were left with the final image of a child planting a tree, hinting at the possibility of redemption for the world.

The Cast

Brünnhilde – Catherine Foster
 Guttrune – Melissa Citro
 Waltraute – Jamie Barton
 Siegfried – Daniel Brenna
 Gunther – Ryan McKinny
 Alberich – Gordon Hawkins
 Hagen – Eric Halfvarson

I had approached this week as a sort of Wagnerian virgin. My preparatory Google searches had yielded essays with titles such as *Wagner, Sex and Capitalism; Tolkien, Wagner, and the Rings of Power; Wagner's 15-hour Ring Cycle ... in two and a half minutes. The Guardian* had this to offer: "Why do politicians love the Ring cycle? Perhaps because it's about the intimate relationship between love and power." How very fitting for Washington DC! Thanks to Francesca Zambello and her valiant team for an excellent initiation.

Dan School of Drama and Music, Queen's University

by Shelagh Williams

As of July 1st, 2015, the new Queen's School of Drama and Music was formed, less than a year after the opening of the Isabel Bader Centre for the Performing Arts, which facilitated new collaborations between music and drama, with Craig Walker, from Drama, as the new Interim Director.

Shortly after, Aubrey and Marla Dan offered Queen's University an outstanding donation of \$5 million dollars to facilitate both short and long term programmes of the School of Drama and Music. This would be "a sufficient sum to make a difference" said Mr. Dan! Plans are envisioned to support teaching, scholarships and research - plus undertakings such as the teaching of dance, starting in the fall, and more collaboration with St. Lawrence College (SLC).

Aubrey Dan is the founder of Dancap Productions, a commercial theatre company which has won 5 Tony awards for such productions as *The Drowsy Chaperone*, a Canadian musical. He is also the proud father of a recent Queen's drama grad, now working in theatre in London, England. Mr. Dan had been very helpful with a production of *The Drowsy Chaperone* when his daughter was still at Queen's, and was so impressed with the University that he wished to enhance the resources of the School of Drama and Music.

To celebrate this donation and the renaming of the school as the Dan School of Drama and Music, a celebratory concert was held April 7th, the day of the announcement, at the Isabel Bader Centre for the Performing Arts. Faculty, alumni, and students provided a veritable feast for the ears, ably MC'd by Greg Wanless, founder of the Thousand Islands Playhouse in Gananoque. A faculty piano quintet began by playing a John Burge arrangement of *Some Enchanted Evening*, the Baders' "song", in their honour. A brass choir provided a fanfare, interspersed among the many excellent musical theatre performances. It all wrapped up in a grand finale, with Mr. Dan himself joining in on stage!

Of especial interest among the many Queen's alumni singers were two handsome baritones. Phillip Addis sings at the COC, and we heard him just last fall in *Pyramis and Thisbe*, while Philip Kalmanovitch is from Ottawa, and is making his career in NYC. Both were of course charming at the later reception, and Phillip Addis reminded us of his upcoming COC roles!

At the reception we were also able to meet Mr. and Mrs. Dan and congratulate them on their support of the School of Drama and Music. It is so great to be able to report positive happenings in the arts! - such generous donations as the Baders' and Caps' are a rarity!



Michael Jackson (SLC), Marla and Aubrey Dan, Shelagh and David Williams



Greg Wanless and Aubrey Dan

For further information on and photos of this event, consult *Queen's Alumni Review*, Volume 90, Issue 2, 2016.

Lucio Silla, a Baroque Opera I Really Liked

by Ute Davis

This beautiful little opera is a Mozart piece which has escaped me since I started attending live opera at the tender age of 10. The first time I came close to seeing it was when our own Toronto Opera Atelier was asked to choreograph it first for the 2013 Salzburg Mozartwoche, then for the regular Summer Festival the following summer. Rolando Villazón was in bad voice, there was no cover and it was decided to shut it down after three performances. I arrived in Salzburg the morning after... Subsequent performances took place at the Bremen Music Festival in Germany and in 2015 at La Scala in Milan. There will be a DVD of the La Scala performance, expected this fall!

Back to Opera Atelier in Toronto. Having seen every one of their productions since the turn of the century, I have become somewhat critical of the baroque works of the producers Marshall Pynkoski and wife and choreographer/lead dancer Jeanette Lajeunesse Zingg. Specializing in the baroque period, they have staged two operas per season with each demonstrating their strengths, namely superb colour of costumes and sets, skilful use of the limited stage and house at the Yonge Street Elgin theatre and outstanding integration of ballet into the opera, incidentally teaching many singers a lot about ballet and stage movement. Cast vocal quality has varied from good to very good, rarely great, while the Tafelmusik Orchestra under the baton of David Fallis has been excellent in every production I can remember. However the limited repertory, reinforced by the return engagement of many of the singers, has led to a degree of repetition, indeed “cookie cutter sameness”, in the productions. Apart from the well received *Lucio Silla*, Pynkoski and Zingg have made excellent progress in gaining new audiences in the past years, having several of their French productions staged at Versailles, with Lully’s *Persée* resulting in a DVD. Glimmerglass, a 4 opera summer festival in upstate New York, has brought Opera Atelier to Cooperstown, not for baseball, but to show off their popular *Armide* a few summers ago.

Attending the 10 April performance of this new *Lucio Silla*, I was very pleased to find that they are starting to shed their rigidity. Mozart wrote the work when he was only 16 and it is that rarity, an opera seria with a happy ending. In brief, Silla is a Roman General, turned dictator, in love with Giunia, he is frustrated by her love for the previously banished Cecilio who has secretly returned to Rome. Silla’s sister Celia is in love with Cinna, a noble who supports Cecilio, and everybody

is busy laying plots in true baroque opera style. After bringing Cecilio to trial in the Senate, Silla is so impressed by the constant love of Giunia and Cecilio for each other that he forgives all for plotting against him and declares a double wedding of Giunia to Cecilio and Celia to Cinna.

The music of Mozart is thrilling with many hints of his works of genius to come and the lively production is in keeping with the composer’s age. As Cinna, Inga Kalna, an import from Latvia, opens the opera with an aria in which her powerful rich soprano and her stage presence lay down a challenge for the rest of the cast to match. An excellent debut. Peggy Kriha Dye is very effective as Cecilio. She has sung many roles for this company but this is her first trouser role and I found her a thoroughly convincing sympathetic figure. Meghan Lindsay, better known to Ottawa audiences as one of our Brian Law winners, sang beautifully with runs and trills showing how well suited she is to the baroque repertoire. Her blending duet with Dye was quite superb. Mireille Asselin, an Ottawan who trained in the Ensemble program of the COC, recently made her Metropolitan Opera debut as Poussette in *Manon*. She sang an extraordinarily pretty Celia and showed both vocal and physical sparkle perfectly in keeping with the dynamic youthfulness of the music, further endearing herself to the audience by sitting at the footlights with legs dangling into the pit for an Act II aria; excellent direction! Less pleasing to me was another veteran of the company, Krešimir Špicer as Silla. He continued to run around the stage, punching the scenery and slashing the portraits with a knife, long after he had made the point that he was an ill tempered tyrant whose love-life was not going according to plan. I also found his voice lacking in subtlety and the



Photo by Bruce Zinger

Krešimir Špicer, Peggy Kriha Dye and Meghan Lindsay

Lucio Silla, a Baroque Opera I Really Liked (continued)

director's bringing him down to sing one aria in front of the orchestra and just a few feet from my front-row seat failed to charm, especially in contrast to Ms. Asselin.

The story of *Lucio Silla*, K. 135 is somewhat reminiscent of *la Clemenza di Tito*, K. 621, a much later work of the composer. Well, let us blame it on the librettist, certainly not on my favourite opera composer. However there was considerable visual and musical beauty in this opera which convinced me to renew my subscription for the next Opera Atelier production in October, particularly as it is *Dido and Aeneas*, starring Ottawa's Wallis Giunta in the title role. It appears that Ottawa has indeed produced a surprising number of very fine young singers. Philippe Sly is most likely by now in rehearsal at Glyndebourne for *Béatrice and Bénédicte*, right on the heels of a very modern and unusual, semi

staged performance of the *St. Matthew Passion* with Kent Nagano in Hamburg. The review in the German press was less than friendly. There was only one nice sentence in it for the baritone singers. It was for the one who sang the role of Jesus, Philippe Sly, who received more applause than Ian Bostridge apparently and was said to have an "elegant noblesse" in his voice. In January of next year he will be singing Guglielmo in *Così fan Tutte* at the Paris Opéra Bastille.

Congratulations to Maestro Yannick Nézet-Séguin. His appointment to the Met to succeed James Levine created pure delight in my household. Hopefully, his close professional relationship with Philippe will finally bring our young friend back to the Met where he won the Council Auditions a few years ago.

Adaptation - Play, Film, Opera *Les Feluettes* at Opéra de Montréal by Lesley Robinson

This was a world premiere production of a new opera by American/Australian composer Kevin March with a libretto by Canadian Michel Marc Bouchard, based on his own play. The pre-opera chat was, in this case, indeed a real chat. As noted by the host, it is most unusual for both the librettist and composer of an opera to be alive and present, so it was a special treat to listen to the two of them chatting with Montreal's resident musicologist, Pierre Vachon.

The first theatrical version of this work was presented in 1985 in Ottawa at the Théâtre de la Vieille 17 and at the French Theatre of the National Arts Centre. The 1987 version, under the title *Les Feluettes ou la répétition d'un drama romantique*, took the francophone world by storm and was translated in various versions into English, Dutch, Spanish, Italian and Japanese.

In 1996 Bouchard adapted his play for the screen. The film, directed by John Greyson, premiered at the Toronto Film Festival to high acclaim. It was nominated for 14 Genie awards, winning four, including Best Picture. Stage plays do not always adapt well to the big screen, but the migration of *Les Feluettes* from stage to screen gave it a whole new artistic life. (It is not easy to find the DVD, but it is available in PAL format from a specialist vendor through Amazon.) In the cinema it is possible to be transported to a variety of settings, so that the play within the play could be seen as if in flashback in the actual setting, rather than being acted out in a

single location. This gave the film an opulence that is totally absent from the stage (and indeed from the operatic) version. It was described by various critics as stunning, poetic and sumptuous. This also changed the dynamic of the all male cast. In the opera we are watching the events of 40 years earlier, acted out by prison inmates in costumes cobbled together from the materials available. In the film, the full costume and make up give somewhat of a drag queen campiness to the female characters, still played by men. We are challenged to confront the contradictions between memory and reality, between the truth and lies, between guilt and innocence, between confession and denial.

The further adaptation to an opera seems completely logical. Here is a story which cries out for operatic treatment: love, both fulfilled and unrequited, envy, denial, death and retribution. Composer Kevin Marsh explained during the pre-opera chat that when he first saw the film and heard the spoken words, he could already hear the music in his head. The text (although considerably abbreviated) was so perfect for the adaptation, that it seems almost as if it composed itself. Marsh spoke of how he is frequently moved to tears by music and how the emotional content of this piece stirs a poignant response from him at every performance. This was a masterful adaptation, superbly performed by the orchestra and singers, thoroughly engaging the audience in the drama and emotion of the piece.

Rigoletto, a good choice by Pellegrini Opera by Ute Davis

Ottawa's smaller opera company's April offering this year was Verdi's *Rigoletto*, the tale of an unpopular court clown with a malicious tongue who is cursed by a courtier whose daughter has been seduced by the Duke of Mantua. Rigoletto's own daughter, Gilda, is abducted, then seduced by the Duke and finally she voluntarily submits to an assassin's dagger to save the Duke.

This is an opera people tend to love because the music is so wonderful, therefore a good choice for any opera company. It has a powerful dramatic plot with extraordinarily powerful music from a Verdi just entering the golden middle period of his composing career. In this production the music was excellent throughout. Conductor Vito Lo Re, imported from Milan for the purpose, smoothly overcame the disadvantages of having only a chamber orchestra at his disposal and worked with his eleven musicians to give us a superbly dramatic interpretation while highly sympathetic to the voices. By the close, several cast members each owed Lo Re a glass of Prosecco for his patience in coaching and musical skills.

Jeffrey Carl, as Rigoletto, was clearly the star of the show, the high tessitura of the role admirably suited to his voice. His extensive stage experience was evident in his convincing performance with good timbre and power as in his *Pari siamo*

and the passion of his *Cortigiani, vil razza dannata!* when the courtiers get under his skin. Susan Elizabeth Brown, as Gilda, has a very pretty soprano voice. She sang well and her *Caro nome* was delicate and delightful. However, she could have been a bit more convincing in this ingénue role, proving awkwardly stiff at times and apparently lacking directorial assistance to overcome this. She has acted perfectly fine when seen in other recent productions.



Andrzej Stec acted superbly as the physically attractive and dynamic Duke. At final dress rehearsal his voice was fine and pleasing. Perhaps the "opening night jitters" got hold of him and allowed for a singular "slight crack" with the highest male note of the evening, a crucial factor in such a demanding and unforgiving role. Kyle McDonald played and sang well as the professional assassin



Sparafucile.

The supporting cast acquitted themselves creditably. The direction was quite peculiar, Vincent Thomas having decided to put his stamp on the work by having a "fortune teller" produce a series of giant Tarot cards surrounded by dingy decorations of similar colour which made the "cards" look even more gigantic/intrusive. The Fortune teller kept an annoying grin on her face, producing it whenever she peeked around the various curtains. Instead she should have tried to remember the order of her Tarot cards, which she muddled up at times. At least the audience had the benefit of a full program page of detailed explanations as to these cards, in each official language at that, and entertaining.

It will be interesting to see how Pellegrini Opera progresses over the next couple of years. Maria Pellegrini appears to be progressively relinquishing artistic control of the company to her son Vincent Thomas who presently resides in Toronto. There is, of course, an opera vacuum in Ottawa following the 2015 implosion of Opera Lyra Ottawa. However, we shall see what happens to a possible resurrection of a professional opera company once the Canadian anniversary year 2017 with *Louis Riel* has disappeared from people's minds.

There is hope on the horizon with the seldom seen *Amahl and the Night Visitors* planned as a fundraiser for Pellegrini Opera in the fall or very early 2017 and an early spring main opera with the ever popular Maria Knapik singing the lead role of *Tosca*, an all Canadian production which will be conducted by Michel Brousseau.

Events You Could Have Enjoyed

by Shelagh Williams

Eastertide Offerings: Easter, like Christmas, tends to bring out church choir directors' best, and this year was no exception.

For Palm Sunday, the Strings of St. John's, with an almost equal amount of winds and brass, plus choir, performed British composer Robert Chilcott's 2010 *Requiem*. The soloists were soprano Cara Gilbertson and tenor Grayson Nesbitt, with Cara's *Pie Jesu* especially lovely. Conductor Gordon Johnston always finds interesting repertoire for the Strings, while Concertmaster Janet Roy knows how to lead the Strings, thus ensuring their concerts are both entertaining and well performed.

On Good Friday, Matthew Larkin, Organist and Director of Music at Christ Church Cathedral, pulled out all the stops, with a fully realized Canadian premiere of Scottish composer James MacMillan's 2014 *St. Luke Passion*. Scored for chorus, children's choir, organ and orchestra (here the excellent Ottawa Music Co.), but no soloists, the setting made use of all of the choral forces of the Cathedral. The voice of Christ was sung by the combined Boys' and Girls' Choirs, to indicate innocence, in the balcony, while the Men of the Cathedral Choir and the debuting Cathedral Women's Schola in the Chancel provided the main chorus, surrounding us with sound. Satisfyingly, the Passion of St. Luke, chapters 22 and 23, is framed by a Prelude referencing the Annunciation, taken from the earlier chapters, and a Postlude incorporating the Resurrection and Ascension, to round out the story, all of course performed understandably in English, with good diction. The whole was marvelously performed, with James Calkin on the organ, and all under Matthew Larkin's firm direction - a most satisfying presentation.

UOttawa School of Music: The Student Association, ADEMSA, staged four noon hour competitions, one per student year, in late March and early April, with monetary prizes. This of course attracted high calibre students, and resulted in great concerts, each packing into an hour a wide variety of short, high quality performances, and getting better through the years!

This year's Donor and Scholarship Recipient Celebration was highlighted by the performance of a very rarely performed Hindemith composition, *Apparebit repentina dies*, which conductor Daniel Gress said he had only performed once before himself! This is because it requires the unusual forces of a Brass Ensemble, a choir, here their elite Calixa Lavallee Choir, besides a

baritone soloist, Kevin Burke, which of course the Music School was able to provide!

Prof. Ewashko's Art Song Interpretation Class this term presented *Cantus Exoticus: Italian, Spanish and Slavic Art Song*. This was a rare chance to enjoy this repertoire, especially with both piano and guitar accompaniment available to suit the individual song!

NAC Theatre: *Belles Soeurs, The Musical*: Michel Tremblay's 1965 play *Les Belles-Soeurs* spawned a musical adaptation in 2010, and then in 2014 an English version, which finally made it to Ottawa! The story of Germaine, who has won one million merchandise stamps, and her 11 friends, supposedly helping her paste the stamps in the books, has its dark sides. However, the lively musical put a brighter, lighter spin on the story. A strong singing cast of 12 women with a nice little accompanying combo brought the show to life in a delightful manner, well worth waiting for!

Operottawa: *Giulio Cesare*: Operottawa's (OpO) third production was Handel's *Giulio Cesare*, a brave and ambitious project. With the accomplished Frederic Lacroix at the piano, and an excellent programme including both a detailed synopsis of the plot and a very helpful list of aria highlights, they did their best to make the three hour long opera audience-friendly, given the absence of surtitles or English recits.

Basic costuming helped differentiate characters, and OpO founder, bass-baritone Norman E. Brown, sang the taxing title role in a gold laurel wreath. Soprano Hayley Swanton, looking lovely, sang Cleopatra's great music very well and at the end sang her sad aria *Piangero (I shall weep)* especially affectingly. Mezzo Jean-E Hudson as Cornelia, Pompey's wife, changed appropriately into mourning for the second half. In a trouser role, Carole Portelance used her lovely mezzo voice to bring Tolomeo to life. Similarly, mezzo Heidi Jost embodied Sesto, Cornelia's son, who avenged his father's death by killing Tolomeo, in the big action scene of the opera! Tenor Corey Arnold sang both Achilla and Curio, while Ken Mak, with a sweet counter-tenor, portrayed Cleopatra's confidante, Noreno.

I enjoyed and appreciated the presentation, and marveled at Fred Lacroix's playing, with only a 10 minute break, for the three hour marathon!

In memory of Denis Lawlor, some of the profits were to go toward a NATS scholarship in his name.

Events you should enjoy

by David Williams

Music and Beyond:

Leopold Godowsky A life in music: July 6, 12:00. Carl Petersson piano & host, Hélène Brunet soprano and Julian Armour cello .

The Studio de musique ancienne de Montreal: Colours of Orlando: July 7, 19:30. The Studio de musique ancienne de Montreal performs the music of Renaissance composer Orlando Di Lasso.

Measha Brueggergosman: July 10, 19:30. A special appearance by the dazzling and sublime soprano Measha Brueggergosman.

Celebrating Vienna: Marco di Sapia, baritone. July 11, 19:30.

Hélène Brunet: July 14, 12:00. Soprano Hélène Brunet presents a concert.

The Music of Ola Gjeilo: July 15, 19:30. A choral performance featuring over 150 musicians with special guest Ola Gjeilo, one of the world's leading choral composers.

Chanticleer: July 16, 20:30 - 22:00.

Closing Gala: The Seven Deadly Sins: July 17, 19:30. The Music and Beyond Festival concludes with a concert entitled *The Seven Deadly Sins* that features the Thirteen Strings and some of the artists who have performed during the Festival.

Information: 613-241-0777, www.musicandbeyond.ca

Orpheus Musical Theatre Society will present *Spring Awakening*, September 21-25, 2016 at CentrepoinTE Theatre Studio, Ottawa. Book and Lyrics by Steven Sater and music by Duncan Sheik. *Spring Awakening* is billed as "the must-see musical of a new generation" and is set to a pop-rock score.

Under the Pines Music Festival presents *Operamania 4*, July 24, 19:00 at Coronation Hall, Bristol, Quebec. Enjoy famous opera arias, duets, and ensembles performed by the festival artists and special guests. Information: 613-298-9806, www.under-the-pines.ca

Ottawa Chamberfest:

Marie-Josée Lord: Femmes: Thursday 21 July 2016, 19:00. She explores the women who inhabit her, who drive and inspire her.

Festival Gala: Gryphon Trio and Friends: Friday 22 July 2016, 19:00. Gryphon Trio, Russell Braun, Monica Whicher, Graham Oppenheimer, and Ewashko Singers celebrate the 125th anniversary of Ukrainian settlement in Canada.

The Theatre Songs of Leonard Bernstein: Saturday 23 July 2016, 19:00. Join Rob Kapilow for a remarkable evening of Leonard Bernstein's most important contributions to American lyric theatre.

Kongero: Thursday 28 July 2016, 12:00. This all-female, Swedish a capella ensemble delivers a noontime performance of sophisticated harmonies and infectious energy.

An Evening with Against the Grain Theatre: Saturday 30 July 2016, 19:00. Lauren Segal and Colin Ainsworth join forces with AtG music director Christopher Mokrzewski in a reading of Janacek's emotional and mysterious *Diary of One Who Disappeared*. Ottawa-born soprano Miriam Khalil and a cohort of 11 instrumentalists unleash Argentinean-born composer Osvaldo Golijov's much celebrated song cycle *Ayre*.

The Great Mozart Mashup: Sunday 31 July 2016, 19:00. Hosted by Eric Friesen, this season's Mashup offers a captivating blend of anecdotes, insights, and excerpts from Mozart's chamber, concerto, and vocal repertoire. Featuring performances by celebrated Canadian pianist Janina Fialkowska, Metropolitan Opera sensations Mireille Asselin and Robert Pomakov, Lafayette String Quartet, Ewashko Singers, Gryphon Trio, and clarinetist James Campbell.

Festival Gala: Bach's B Minor Mass: Wednesday 03 August 2016, 19:00. The 2016 festival closes with Bach's supreme achievement, the *Mass in B Minor*.

Information: 613-234-8008, www.chamberfest.com

The Met Live in HD 2016 - 2017

Tristan und Isolde - October 8, 12:00 p.m.
Don Giovanni - October 22, 12:55 p.m.
L'Amour de Loin - Dec.10, 12:55 p.m.
Nabucco - January 7, 12:55 p.m.
Roméo et Juliette - January 21, 12:55 p.m.
Rusalka – February 25, 12:55 p.m.
La Traviata - March 11, 12:55 p.m.
Idomeneo - March 25, 12:55 p.m.
Eugene Onegin - April 22, 12:55 p.m.
Der Rosenkavalier - May 13, 12:30 p.m.

For additional details (conductors, casts) of these HD presentations check the Met's website:
<http://www.metoperafamily.org>

Ticket on sale dates

SCENE™ and Met members: Thursday July 14
General Public: Friday, July 15, 2016

Box office and Cineplex.com/Opera will open at 9:30AM local time.

Saturday Afternoon at the Opera

June 18, 2016 *Le Roi Arthur* (Ernest Chausson)
 June 25, 2016 *The Damnation of Faust* (Berlioz)
 & *Svadba (Wedding)* (Ana Sokolovic)
 July 2, 2016 *Mefistofele* (Boito)
 July 9, 2016 *Romeo and Juliet* (Gounod)
 July 16, 2016 *Andrea Chenier* (Giordano)
 July 23, 2016 *La Clemenza di Tito* (Mozart)
 July 30, 2016 *Un Ballo in maschera* (Verdi)
 Aug. 6, 2016 *die Meistersinger von Nurnberg*
 (Wagner)
 Aug 13, 2016 *Peter Grimes* (Britten)
 Aug. 20, 2016 *Gianni Schicchi* (Puccini)
 & *Pagliacci* (Leoncavallo)
 Aug. 27, 2016 *Moby Dick* (Heggie)

Additional information (including casts) is available at the CBC website: <http://music.cbc.ca/#!/Saturday-Afternoon-at-the-Opera>

Membership Renewal

If you have not renewed for 2016 please submit your payment for renewal and indicate any changes of information to the Treasurer.

Membership and Renewal forms are on our website (ncos.ca). Simply print the appropriate form (French or English) and submit it to The Treasurer: Mark Robinson, 20 Leonard Avenue, Ottawa, ON K1S 4T7

Summer 2016 Opera Festivals

Glimmerglass Opera

La Bohème by Puccini

July 8, 17m, 24m, 26m, & 28

August 1m, 6, 9, 11, 13m, 19, 22m & 27

Sweeney Todd by Sondheim

July 9, 18m, 22, 30, 30m

August 4, 6m, 13, 15m, 21m, 23 & 26

The Thieving Magpie by Rossini

July 16, 25m, & 29

August 7m, 12, 16m, 20 & 25

The Crucible

July 23, & 31m

August 2m, 5, 8m, 14m, 18, 20m & 27m

Information: www.glimmerglass.org

Chautauqua Opera

La traviata by Verdi

July 9

The Mikado by Gilbert & Sullivan

July 29 & August 1

Song from the Uproar by Mazzoli

August 8

Information: ciweb.org/opera

Opera North

Tosca by Puccini

August 5, 7, 9 & 12

Evita by Lloyd Webber

July 29 August 2, 4, 6, 10, 11 & 13

Daughter of the Regiment by Donizetti

July 31 August 3, 6 & 10

Information: www.operanorth.org

Opera Saratoga

Le Nozze di Figaro by Mozart

June 24, 27 July 9 & 15

The Witches of Venice by Glass

July 2, 11 & 17

Il Postino by Catán

July 7, 10 & 16

An Evening on Broadway July 14

Information: operasaratoga.org

Summer Opera Lyric Theatre

The Tales of Hoffmann by Offenbach

July 30, August 2 & 4.

Giulio Cesare by Handel

July 30, August 3 & 5.

A Tale of Two Cities by Davies and Benson

July 29 & 31, August 6.

Please check their website for additional details.

Information: www.solt.ca

Highlands Opera

The Brothers Grimm &

The Bremen Town Musicians

August 18 & August 20

Faust by Gounod

August 28, August 30, August 31 & September 1

Information: www.highlandsoperastudio.com/

Westben Arts Festival

The Pencil Salesman.

June 25 & 26, July 1, 2 & 3.

Information: <http://www.westben.ca>