



Riel Revisited

by Shelagh Williams

The Canadian opera, *Louis Riel*, with music by Harry Somers and libretto by Mavor Moore, was composed for our Centennial in 1967. Its return 50 years later, for our sesquicentennial, was co-produced by the Canadian Opera Company (COC) and the National Arts Centre (NAC). The production was presented, as Alexander Neef, COC General Director, said in the COC programme, “not as an unchangeable artefact, but from a dynamic perspective that is in conversation with 21st-century Canada.”

Peter Hinton, former head of NAC English Theatre, was chosen to direct. He re-imagined the opera by adding to the traditional chorus a mute Indigenous chorus of Metis and First Nations performers. This chorus bore witness to and interacted with events, and represented those omitted from the opera originally. Hinton had the mentorship of a group of Cultural Advisors, including Queen’s University Professor Dylan Robinson and two Nisga’a performers, in his work, and laudably changed much of the French to Michif, the Metis language, adding it to the original English, French, and Cree.

The opera begins in 1867 at the point where the Hudson’s Bay Company has sold Rupert’s Land to Canada, with those actually settled and living there, including British, French, Irish, Metis and First Nations, neither consulted, compensated nor granted citizenship. Not surprisingly, the Red River settlers revolted and set up their own provisional government to deal with Canada. Metis leader Louis Riel was the President of the Legislative Assembly of Assiniboia and, as Peter Hinton notes in the COC programme, is today recognized as “the founding father of the province of Manitoba”, with his portrait finally hung in its legislature. Unfortunately for Riel, at the time of the two rebellions chronicled in the opera, this regard was not the case - which proved fatal for him when, after his defeat at Batoche, he was executed for high treason!

The opera was a tremendous undertaking, both then and now. With 17 scenes and 30 in the cast, playing 39 named characters, besides the COC Chorus, and now the Land Assembly, the sheer numbers involved emphasized that this was indeed a grand opera. Michael Gianfrancesco’s unit set, although adaptable, really resembled a courtroom, with the Cho-

rus often assembled across the back like an all-seeing jury in its box. Together with Gillian Gallow’s many costumes, which were attractive, appropriate and of the period, great production values were assured. Hinton himself supplied the afore-mentioned cohesive inspiration and the necessary direction to keep everything under control and moving along nicely.

At the COC, Music Director and conductor Johannes Debus led a huge COC Orchestra, with umpteen extra musicians, especially percussion, as well as his COC Chorus and huge cast. Meanwhile, in Ottawa, it was the turn of NACO Music Director and conductor Alexander Shelley who led an enhanced NACO and large cast. Of course, both did so marvelously! In Ottawa, Laurence Ewashko was chorus master of a group of Ottawa singers, among whom I recognized Opera Lyra Chorus and local choir members, and uOttawa Opera Co. alumni including BLOC finalist Ryan Hofman.

The individual performances of the cast members were quite amazing, and too numerous to enumerate. In the title role, baritone Russell Braun just shone, portraying the wide range of emotions and singing strongly as he carried us



with him down his tortuous life path. Mezzo Allyson McHardy supported him lovingly as his mother. As his wife Marguerite, soprano Simone Osborne sang to their baby, in Cree, the beautiful and poignant *Kiyas* aria - actually not a Metis song but a Nisga’a lament. She was trying in vain to dissuade Riel from returning with a delegation to Canada - and his death.

President's Annual Report, May 21, 2017

It is true that no matter how much has been accomplished this past year since our last AGM in promoting opera in our community we do miss Opera Lyra's annual performances. Still I feel that the National Capital Opera Society has made a good effort, and quite a successful one, to keep up interest in this wonderful art in our community. Our newsletter is regularly filled with notices publicizing coming local operatic happenings which should be of interest to our members. Following these performances, reviews serve to encourage local groups to continue their efforts in this regard. In addition, our ever growing numbers of excellent contributors reporting out-of-town opera performances keep our members up-to-date with opera developments both fairly reachable from our community and, it almost seems, even globally. No matter with how much enthusiasm the task is approached, anyone who writes a critique knows that there is always much hard work involved. All of our correspondents deserve praise for their interesting and knowledgeable reports. Keep up your excellent work. Guiding all of this is our estimable editor, David Williams, assisted by Tom McCool, and with the technical skill of Jim Burgess, our man in Munich. Lesley Robinson, our secretary, can always be relied on to keep members reminded of important events via email.

Expanding the *Opera alla pasta* offerings seems to be a success contributing to keeping alive the enjoyment of opera locally. Offering opera productions which were not part of the *Live from the Met* schedule seemed to work well as we have had better than average attendance. Many thanks are due to Ute Davis who has presented operas in my absence in an interesting and informative way and who has contributed door prizes of the opera productions being shown. Our technical success presenting the opera DVDs is mainly due to the much appreciated expertise of Mark Robinson and his wife, Lesley. Last year I invited our members and friends to suggest any opera productions that they

feel would be suitable for our viewing sessions. Please do so.

Another way to involve interest has developed through the admirable cooperation of Mary Frances Taylor and members of the former Opera Lyra Guild in presenting our *High C & High Tea* events. The appearance of Gerald Finley at the first joint offering of this nature, which was in his honour, was an unexpected delight. In just two weeks from now I will be giving a presentation at Ottawa City Hall entitled *A Tribute to Ottawa's Singers* which will feature accounts of and excerpts from past winners from the Brian Law Competitions. A scrumptious tea will follow as usual.

My appeal for new Board members has once again fallen on deaf ears. Sometimes people hesitate because they feel that they are inadequate for the task. To be really truthful we are all inadequate to some extent but we all have one thing in common – a love of opera and an interest in extending our enthusiasm for the art to others. The Board does not have many meetings a year and these are kept as informal as possible. I fear that with age and illness pressing down on some of our Board members that our mission to promote opera in the National Capital region will come to an end. But that would also mean the end of the Brian Law Opera Competition which has helped and inspired so many fine singers. You cannot let this happen. We need your help and we need it now. If you are interested merely contact me and I will arrange for your appointment.

Finally, I would like to commend all of the Board members for their help on behalf of our society. Some have not been as active as others due to serious family matters, changes of residence, and personal health problems. But all have been able to contribute good advice on the direction we should take to achieve our goals.

Murray Kitts

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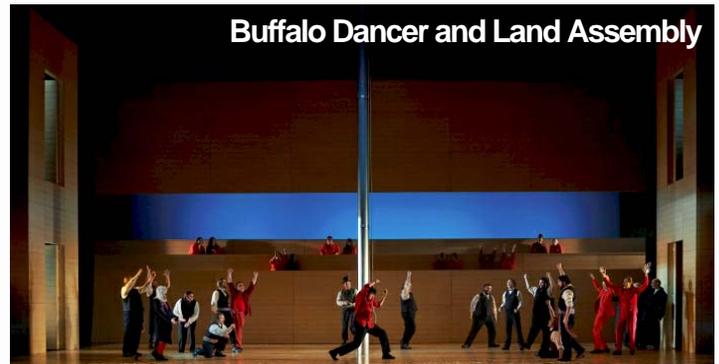
**For information on the National
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Riel Revisited (continued)

Most non-Aboriginal roles were presented in unflattering caricatures. Baritone James Westman was clad throughout in a garish red tartan suit and presented Sir John A. Macdonald surprisingly and unsympathetically as a comic buffoon. Tenor Jean-Philippe Fortier-Lazure took on the dual roles of Sir George-Etienne Cartier, in a bright blue tartan suit, and Father André in Frog Lake, Sask., leading a Roman Catholic mass. Moving between the two antagonists, bass Alain Coulombe as Bishop Taché was a stately negotiator. In the West, tenor Michael Colvin was a memorable and obnoxiously cantankerous Thomas Scott, whose execution helped seal Riel's fate.



The Indigenous cast included Metis actor Cole Alvis as The Activist as part of the Land Assembly, which was clad in red at first, and appropriately in black in the last act. Metis performer Jani Lauzon in the added role of The Folksinger opened the opera with the unaccompanied *Riel sits in his chamber o'state*, and seemed omnipresent on stage, playing three other roles! Actor Billy Merasty was an impressive Poundmaker, as well as being the COC's Cree translator and language coach. Justin Many Fingers was the Buffalo Dancer.



Incidentally, in Vancouver, during a new opera workshop (see p. 10), the librettist for an opera based on an aboriginal legend explained that she was Red River Metis. Afterwards I spoke with her, mentioning I had just seen *Louis Riel* in Toronto, and she proudly said that her great grandfather was one of the two men who brought Riel's body back from Regina!

It was certainly interesting contrasting the two productions of *Louis Riel* in Toronto and Ottawa, with different conductors, orchestras and choruses, backing the same principals! A noticeable addition in Ottawa was the presentation of a Victory Dance before the opera by the Nisga'a dance groups Git Hayetsk and Kwhlii Gigaygum. These troupes are led by two of Hinton's Cultural Advisors, Mike Dangeli and Wal'aks Keane Tait (see p. 1), who also gave a lively pre-opera demonstration and explanation in the Foyer. Interestingly in Ottawa, sitting in front of us were the brother and family of Bernard Turgeon, who sang the role of Riel in 1967. Unfortunately, Turgeon died a few months ago, and so was unable to attend the 50th anniversary production of "the opera he loved so much." (COC programme)

Both iterations of the opera were very well produced, with the COC and NAC pulling out all the stops to give us a carefully considered and visually and aurally compelling presentation of *Louis Riel*.

Gerald Finley receives very special honour from the Queen

Today (June 16) Canadian bass-baritone Gerald Finley was appointed a commander of the Order of the British Empire in the Queen's 2017 Birthday Honours List. "My fervent wish is to continue to share with the world the joy and wonder of music that already exists and of music that is yet to come," said Finley in a press release. The appointment recognizes not only his tremendous achievements in opera and as a recitalist and prolific recording artist, but also his commitment to music education and charity work. He recently scaled Mt. Kilimanjaro for [Help Musicians U.K.](#) Born in Montreal, Finley did his

early musical training in Ottawa before enrolling in the Royal College of Music and King's College, Cambridge. He remains based in the U.K. Recent career highlights include Amfortas in Wagner's *Parsifal* at Vienna Staatsoper and a new album of Sibelius Songs, *In the Stream of Life*, released in January on Chandos. Finley makes his highly anticipated role debut as Scarpia in Puccini's *Tosca*, singing opposite fellow Canadian Adrienne Pieczonka in the title role, at the Royal Opera House in January 2018. He was recently featured on a Canada Post stamp.

Submitted by Ute Davis

Announcing the 2017 Brian Law Opera Competition

The National Capital Opera Society's thirteenth Brian Law Opera Competition will take place on Saturday, 14th October 2017, (7:00 p.m.) at the Southminster United Church in Ottawa. This year's competition will be jointly hosted by the NCOS and Southminster, as part of the church's fall concert series. The evening's programme will proceed as usual, with finalists performing three arias each, followed by the deliberations of our judges and the presentation of prizes.

The competition is open to singers (ages 20-32) with a connection to the National Capital region – they are required either to call Ottawa home or to have lived and studied here. Notices have gone out to faculties all over the country to seek out eligible young singers who are focusing on a career in opera. The application deadline is June 30th. Please encourage any aspiring young singers you know to apply. For more information on how to apply or about the competition in general, please contact: NCOS President, Murray Kitts - kmitts1637@rogers.com, 613-830-9827.

At the initial stage of the competition, applicants send in audio recordings. Our preliminary judges will listen to the recordings and select the finalists who will compete on October 14th. First prize is \$5000, second prize is \$3000 and third prize, donated by Cavaliere Pasqualina (Pat) Adamo, is \$1000. Please join us for this celebration of area talent, followed by a reception to honour the winners. Look for more details in the coming months in this newsletter and on the NCOS website www.ncos.ca.

The Brian Law Opera Competition is the focus of The National Capital Opera Society's fundraising efforts, in order to fulfill our goal of furthering the careers of young opera singers. Thank you to all of you who have already made a donation towards this year's competition. It is not too late to make a donation and all contributions will be welcome. These donations are tax-deductible. Please send your cheques to:

Mark Robinson, NCOS Treasurer, 20 Leonard Avenue,
Ottawa, ON K1S 4T7

Spring Floria (*Tosca*) in Toronto

by Shelagh Williams

Our spring Toronto opera long weekend was certainly eclectic, with Opera Atelier's *Medea* (see p. 12), and the Canadian Opera Company's (COC's) *Louis Riel*, plus opening night of Puccini's *Tosca*.

This lovely classic COC production was directed for the third time (after 2008, 2012) by Scottish director Paul Curran, along with his same lighting designer David Martin Jacques illuminating the great traditional sets and costumes of Kevin Knight. Curran is a master of movement and had some really nice touches, such as having the painter, Mario Cavaradossi, actually holding sketches to consult and show to Floria Tosca in the Act I church scene. He also had Tosca stab the villain, Scarpia, with the end of a cross!

Making her COC debut was Canadian maestra Keri-Lynn Wilson, easily demonstrating with the COC Orchestra and Chorus and Puccini's great music that she began as an Italian opera specialist before branching out to other repertoire.



Cavaradossi

Tosca

The singers were also great! The big draw was of course, in the title role, Canadian soprano Adrienne Pieczonka, who was marvellous. She sang opposite two COC debutants. The handsome Argentinean tenor, Marcelo Puente, was a delight to watch and listen to as Cavaradossi. The German bass-baritone, Markus Marquardt, was just the opposite, with a good voice, but quite believably vile, although not as scary a brute of a Scarpia as I have seen! Italian bass Donato di Stefano's comedic talents as Simone in *Gianni Schicchi* (2012) were evident in his

portrayal of the Sacristan, while debuting Canadian bass-baritone Giles Tomkins, seen earlier as Don Basilio in Opera Lyra Ottawa's *Barber*, was here a tall, implacable Sciarone.

Altogether, this was a most satisfying and enjoyable production in every way!



photos by
Michael Cooper

Tosca

Scarpia

If It's Tuesday, This Must Be La Scala by Lesley Robinson

2017 is a special year for the Robinsons. With a couple of special birthdays and a significant wedding anniversary, we are celebrating a total of 155 years and what better way to celebrate than with a memorable opera trip to Europe, including four operas in four cities in a week! How to plan? The first place I looked was, of course, Juan Diego Flórez's schedule, so that provided us with a starting point for our expedition.

Friday, March 31: We arrived in Zurich a little later than expected, but in good time to check in at the Opera Hotel (right behind the opera house) and enjoy a quick lunch on the sunny terrace of



the Bernhard Cafe next door, before our private backstage tour. Our tour guide, Brigitte, a former ballet dancer with intimate knowledge of all aspects of the house, greeted

us warmly and was happy to share her wisdom and esoteric anecdotes with us. Our tour began in the majestic foyer of the building, from where we headed straight to the stage. The stage was being set for the evening's final performance of *Don Giovanni*. It was fascinating to get a close up view of the planned pyrotechnics for the final scene, which featured fiery platters and candelabras and an exploding toaster! The highlight of the tour happened quite by chance. We spotted Juan Diego Flórez on his laptop in a backstage room and couldn't resist the opportunity to say hello and to wish him well for Sunday's premiere. With heart all a-flutter, I could not have hoped for a better start to the trip!



The view from the stage

All photos by Lesley

Sunday, April 2:

Werther by Jules Massenet (Premiere) at **Opernhaus Zürich**

Conductor	Cornelius Meister
Director	Tatjana Gürbaca
Sets and Lighting	Klaus Grünberg
Costumes	Silke Willrett

Cast

Werther	Juan Diego Flórez
Charlotte	Anna Stéphany
Sophie	Mélissa Petit
Albert	Audun Iversen
Le Bailli	Cheyenne Davidson
Schmidt	Martin Zysset
Johann	Yuriy Tsiple

Philharmonia Zürich

Opera Zürich Children's Choir

From the first notes it was clear that the orchestra was going to provide an extraordinary vehicle for Massenet's emotional and dramatic score, precisely directed by the young Maestro Cornelius Meister. This was an innovative production with an imaginative set, adapting to the needs of each scene. The set was basically a wood-paneled room with many cubbyholes, drawers and cupboards, providing lots of surprises. A linen closet becomes a doorway, which in turn becomes an organ and finally a window on the universe. The costumes had a quirky feel about them with mismatched clothing, mirrored sunglasses and sequined high heels, and the children were dressed in happy, sunny yellow. Some clever stop-action staging in the first act allowed us to focus on Werther's inner thoughts.

There were some notable performances, particularly from Anna Stéphany as Charlotte, Auden Iversen as Albert and Mélissa Petit as Sophie and the high quality of the acting matched that of the voices. Ms. Stéphany gave a skilful portrayal of Charlotte's torment and desire to yield to Werther, although she somehow manages to bring herself back from the brink each time. Mr. Iversen's rich baritone gave his character warmth in the early scenes and added to the jealous anger to which he finally succumbs, when he realizes the depth of the betrayal he has suffered. Ms. Petit's bright portrayal of Sophie emphasized her passage from naivety to an understanding of the adult world, while the children's ardent and radiant voices highlighted their innocence, which contrasts so greatly with the mature drama going on around them.

If It's Tuesday, This Must Be La Scala (continued)

That being said, the night, of course, belonged to the fabulous Juan Diego Flórez. His voice was full of emotion, perfectly expressing Werther's passionate yearning and inordinate suffering. The third act's climax *Pourquoi me reveiller?* was unbelievably moving in its moments of softness. The highlight of this production for me was Werther's death scene, which was presented as a fantasy of enduring love. Unlike in most productions, it becomes clear that Werther is actually already dead as he falls into the room with blood on his shirt from a wound on his temple. Charlotte is already too late, but here fantasy takes over, so that instead of dying in her arms, he gets up to greet the eternity of their love with joy. The closed room of the set, which had earlier emphasized how Charlotte was boxed in, a prisoner of her vow to her dying mother and of her own conscience, now opened up to reveal the earth spinning through the universe. When Werther tells her that instead of being over, his life is just beginning, he is speaking of the eternity of their love. As they profess their feelings for each other, we see an elderly couple dancing and fondly embracing. This impossible image of them growing old together serves as a poignant symbol of their enduring union beyond this world. Not a dry eye in the house!

Tuesday, April 4



Anna Bolena by Gaetano Donizetti

Teatro alla Scala Chorus and Orchestra
Grand Théâtre de Bordeaux Production

Conductor	Bruno Campanella
Staging	Marie-Louise Bischofberger
Sets	Erich Wonder
Costumes	Kaspar Glamer
Lights	Bertrand Couderc

CAST

Anna Bolena	Federica Lombardi
Jane Seymour	Sonia Ganassi
Smeton	Martina Belli
Lord Percy	Piero Pretti
Enrico	Carlo Colombara



Our visit to Milan has been wonderful. Mark has been here many times, but this was my first visit. Our hotel was very close to the Duomo and to La Scala and we spent a lot of time wandering around the back streets, soaking up the atmosphere. We began the day with a visit to La Scala's museum, which has a charming collection of art and artefacts. There was a special exhibition on the life of Arturo Toscanini, but the highlight of the visit was a sneak peek, from the vantage point of a box, at a rehearsal of *La gazza ladra* which was going on stage.

Tonight's production of Donizetti's *Anna Bolena* seemed a little weary. The set was somewhat abstract and obscure. One scene in the second act was back dropped by images of ominous-looking black birds, with a few stuffed birds being ceremoniously paraded around by a supernumerary in the background. It was unclear whether



this was a reference to the ravens at the Tower or just a general portent of evil! Costumes were "period" although not really exclusively of the *same* period. No matter, for Donizetti had already cast historical accuracy aside in favour of a more romantic and rather less unsavoury version of Anne's downfall.

If It's Tuesday, This Must Be La Scala (continued)

The throne was almost always present on the stage as a constant symbol of the ambition of those who sought to become queen. Was it the throne or Henry that they loved? The throne itself finally, weighty with symbolism, turned into the steps of the scaffold, showing that Anne's ambition led inevitably straight to disaster.

The cast seemed a little long in the tooth, apart from the appropriately youthful Martina Belli in the role of the lovesick musician Smeaton. For the most part, the staging was in the "park and bark" mode, preferred by some, but lacking in dramatic verve. The music and singing were nevertheless magnificent. The immaculately hair sprayed conductor, Bruno Campanella, was somewhat dishevelled by his energetic performance by the end of the evening. All of the principles gave spirited performances. Soprano Federica Lombardi was a passionate, intense Anne and, despite the fact that she was clearly not, in real life, the younger model that Henry chose to replace his queen, Sonia Ganassi gave a fine portrayal of the conscience-stricken Jane Seymour. Piero Pretti's ringing tenor voice was right for the ardent Lord Percy and Carlo Colombara was a booming and authoritative Henry.

The behaviour of the La Scala audience was somewhat baffling. There was plenty of talking going on during the overture and even beyond. At times there were people standing up in the boxes and despite the usual reminders to turn off cell phones, we could clearly see faces lit up by phone screens and more than one phone actually rang during the performance. There was plenty of booing during the curtain calls which I found totally unfathomable - the conductor and some of the singers were subjected to significant displays of displeasure.

Thursday, April 6



Rigoletto by Giuseppe Verdi

CONDUCTOR	Riccardo Frizza
STAGE DIRECTOR	Monique Wagemakers
SET	Michael Levine
COSTUMES	Sandy Powell
LIGHTING DESIGNER	Reinier Tweebeeke

COPRODUCTION	Gran Teatre del Liceu and Teatro Real Madrid
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Symphony orchestra and chorus of the Liceu Opera Barcelona	
Chorus director	Conxita Garcia

CAST

Duke of Mantua	Javier Camarena
Rigoletto	Carlos Álvarez
Gilda	Desirée Rancatore
Sparafucile	Ante Jerkunica
Maddalena	Ketevan Kemoklidze
Giovanna	Gemma Coma-Alabert
Conte di Monterone	Gianfranco Montresor
Marullo	Toni Marsol
Matteo Borsa	Josep Fadó
Conte di Ceprano	Xavier Mendoza
Contessa di Ceprano	Mercedes Gancedo



Milan street art, across the street from La Scala



Contessa di Ceprano
Mercedes Gancedo

I love Barcelona with its quirky architecture, bustling thoroughfares, winding backstreets and late night buzz. (The whole of Barcelona is open late, so there's no problem finding somewhere to eat after the opera!) Like La Scala, the Liceu is an unassuming building on the outside. Stepping up from the metro when we arrived, I almost missed the unobtrusive facade amid

If It's Tuesday, This Must Be La Scala (continued)

the hustle-bustle of Las Ramblas. Tardis-like, the building is magnificent and sumptuous on the inside. Our day began with another private tour, with Estefania, our warm and knowledgeable guide. The entire auditorium and stage were gutted by a devastating fire in 1994. Luckily the private club area of the building was spared, with its intricate art nouveau decor, but most of the building needed to be completely reconstructed. The foyers and auditorium were magnificently restored to their former glory, right down to the dragon light fittings. Just a couple of clever little details in the ceiling paintings serve as a nod to the fact that they are not the originals.



Ceiling detail - The central panel, depicting a scene from *Die Walküre*, is painted as if it has been raised to reveal a reflection of the seats in the auditorium below

The rebuilding following the fire afforded an opportunity to modernize the stage and backstage spaces and a modern foyer area has been added to increase public areas for pre-performance and intermission socializing.

Tonight's performance of *Rigoletto* was the last of the run and last nights as well as first nights always seem to have a special atmosphere. This was a co-production with Teatro Real (Madrid), based on an original production by Dutch National Opera. The period costumes were somewhat stylized, with lots of red and gold signifying the decadence of the first scene. The set was simple, yet ingenious. It consisted of a single platform with a trapdoor and some steps. The platform could be raised or lowered to designate various locations; at one time it formed a table for the chorus of henchmen to sit around; later it was the floor of the vast hall, with the chorus looking down on it from above. The simplicity of the set put the focus on the acting and we were not disappointed. At moments alone and vulnerable on the bare set, Carlos Alvarez gave an impassioned performance as Rigoletto. This was Javier Camarena's role debut as the debonair Duke of Mantua. It

was easy to see how Gilda could fall for his charm and his clear, ardent voice. Gilda too, portrayed by Desirée Rancatore, was believable in her naivety and her fresh and girlish persona. Overall this was a magnificent presentation of Verdi's great (greatest, in my view) masterpiece.

Saturday, April 8



L'Italiana in Algeri by Gioachino Rossini

Conductor	Evelino Pidò
Production	Jean Pierre Ponnelle

CAST

Mustafà	Adam Plachetka
Lindoro	Maxim Mironov
Isabella	Margarita Gritskova
Taddeo	Paolo Rumetz

Few places have as extensive a musical history as Vienna. It was fun to wander around and notice the plaques commemorating where composers and musicians lived and died and take pictures of street signs such as "Mozartplatz" and "Schikanedergasse".



The opera house itself is one of Vienna's major tourist attractions, so the tour we took here was totally different from the others. The English tour group consisted of around 40 people and despite being herded around in such a large group, we were able to see and learn a lot. The sumptuous building was completed in 1869. Unfortunately, neither of its hapless architects, August Sicard von Sicardsburg and Eduard van der Nüll (who committed suicide

If It's Tuesday, This Must Be La Scala (continued)

because of criticism of the project) would live to see its completion. Much of the building was gutted in 1945 as the result of an American bombing raid. Luckily the front parts of the building, including the main foyer and grand staircase, were untouched. The parts that have been rebuilt are decorated in a far less extravagant style. The house has a capacity of 1709 seated and an impressive 567 standing. It is worthy of note that the most expensive standing places (sold on the day on a first come, first served basis) are located directly below the Imperial box where there is an excellent view for a mere 4 Euros! For those not fortunate enough to get a standing ticket, there is yet another option. On one side of the opera house is a big screen where seats are set up, so that the public can watch performances "Live am Platz". Our tour included some backstage areas and we were able to watch the stage being set for the evening's performance of *L'Italiana in*



“Live am Platz” screen

Algeri. Seeing the set, I realized that it was a production that I have watched frequently on YouTube, recorded for TV at the Teatro Regio, Torino, dating from 2001 and (of course) starring a young Juan Diego Flórez (an excellent reason for putting up with the Greek subtitles!).

Tonight's production was brilliantly cast. Adam Plachetka, a young Czech bass-baritone, sang with gusto and delightfully hammed up his role of Mustafa. The equally youthful Russian mezzosoprano Margarita Gritskova was a spirited and commanding Isabella and Russian tenor Maxim Mironov (Lindoro) is fast making a name for himself in the bel canto repertoire. The entire cast clearly had a lot of fun and the audience did too. The orchestra played brightly and with energy under the able direction of Evelino Pidò. This was a delightful ending to our trip. (We noticed, by the way, that the following day's performance was *Parsifal*, featuring our own Gerald Finley as Amfortas. What a disappointment that we had not realised this in advance, so that we could have delayed our departure for one more day.)



Parsifal poster featuring Gerald Finley

Opera within reach 2017-18

The Canadian Opera Company 2017-18 season is:

Arabella

The Elixir of Love

Rigoletto

The Abduction from the Seraglio

The Nightingale and Other Short Fables

Anna Bolena

The Opéra de Montréal 2017-18 season is:

Tosca

La Cenerentola

JFK

Svadba

Roméo et Juliette

Vancouver Opera's Inaugural Festival a Great Success!

by Shelagh Williams

When Vancouver Opera (VO) announced their change in production schedule to a three-opera spring festival format, we were hooked! We hadn't been to Vancouver in decades, and to arrive with everything in bloom - even lilacs - was just fantastic! Plus we took in all the opera extras in the tent in the plaza adjoining the two theatres: master classes, workshops of new opera scenes written and performed by UBC Master's students, and a fascinating stage fighting presentation. In the evening a multi-screen video and sound installation called *5 Octave Range* by Paul Wong lit up a corner of the plaza. And in the plaza's Opera Bar hung some lovely old hand painted posters, including one featuring our own Maria Pellegrini in *La Traviata*.



In addition, the Vancouver Art Gallery had a fantastic retrospective of Coast Salish artist Susan Point's marvellous prints and sculptures - different from the Northern B.C. art we are familiar with. Of course, we also visited Granville Island, where 300 grads of the Emily Carr University of Art and Design had their huge annual *The Show* - and the weather was great!

The operas did not disappoint, either. Since the Queen Elizabeth Theatre stage is large, but lacks adequate wings to accommodate stage sets for two complete operas run in repertory, the set and imagery designer Erhard Rom brilliantly designed one very versatile set, in a neutral grey, built by Pacific Opera Victoria. This incorporated a long sweeping staircase for *Otello's* Cyprus fortifications and palace, with a central area which could pull out and adapt into smaller rooms for prison scenes in *Dead Man Walking*, as needed. Projected visuals were the icing on the cake, providing everything else required!

We started with Verdi's *Otello*, in a marvellous production. It began with a tremendous projected storm - a lot drier than at Montreal Opera decades ago with real water! *Otello's* dramatic appearance was presaged by his ship's chains being pulled across the stage - chains seemed to hang threateningly everywhere throughout! Glorious costumes, from Montreal Opera, meant the remaining scenes were suitably colourful and grand. Incidentally, seeing at Opera alla pasta the DVD of Rossini's earlier version, set entirely in Italy, clarified some aspects wherein Verdi deliberately differentiated his *Otello*, set entirely in Cyprus.



The opera is not often done (36 years since 1981, in VO's case) because the title role is difficult to sing, unless you have Domingo, Heppner, or Botha, as we did in our last *Otello* at Chicago Lyric Opera. VO was very lucky to get Italian tenor Antonello Palombi for his VO debut in the role. He had both the necessary vocal plus emotional power and also a lovely softer tone. His Italian olive skin was sufficient colour without any black makeup. They added two great Canadians, the lovely soprano Erin Wall as Desdemona and baritone Gregory Dahl, very fierce in shaved head, as Iago.



John Cudio's Cassio was suitably good looking and Martin Sadd's Rodrigo was more active than in most productions.

VO Music Director, conductor Jonathan Darlington, and director, Michael Cavanagh, had a good cast, chorus and orchestra to work with and they made the most of them, for a lovely classical production. It was certainly a nice touch having *Otello* smother Desdemona with her own wedding gown at the end. It

was so satisfying to go home happy that a great opera had received such a grand and sympathetic presentation, one that the composer would recognize!

Our second opera was Jake Heggie's first opera, *Dead Man Walking*, based on a true story about a nun, Sr. Helen Prejean, and her counselling of a Louisiana State Penitentiary Death Row inmate, called here Joseph De Rocher. For this opera the set

Vancouver Opera's Inaugural Festival a Great Success! (continued)

became first the canvas for the projected forested backdrop for the re-enactment of Joseph's murderous crime during the overture. Later, as Sr. Helen made her first long hot drive to the prison, a video of the trees and skies going by emphasized the length of the trip, and then changed to show the prison itself and its grim watch towers as she arrived - all very well done.

The opera was commissioned in 2000 for San Francisco Opera by Lotfi Mansouri, earlier of the COC, from Jake Heggie and Terence McNally, and has since been produced all over, remarkable for a modern opera. This probably has to do with its accessible music and its balanced treatment of the prisoner, the nun and her anti-capital-punishment ideals, Joseph's mother, the murder victims' parents, and the death penalty itself - we can feel sympathy for everyone.

Joel Ivany, Founder and Artistic Director of Against the Grain Theatre, directed, and Jonathan Darlington again conducted. They kept things moving along nicely, helped by an excellent



Sr. Helen

Joseph

cast, especially the main four. Canadian bass-baritone Daniel Okulich has sung the title role several times and knew how to put it across - even singing while doing push-ups! VO debutantes mezzo J'Nai Bridges,

the first woman of colour to play the large role of warm yet feisty Sr. Helen, and soprano Karen Slack as her confidante Sr. Rose, were a strong and believable pair. The latter has sung the role four times now, and brought a bit of humour to the role, as she explained in her well run Master Class earlier. Finally, Canadian mezzo Judith Forst was great as Joseph De Rocher's mother, touchingly delicate and frail, yet still strongly supporting him and not wanting to believe his guilt. Other smaller roles were also well sung and portrayed, including former BLOC judge, tenor J. Patrick Raftery, as Father Grenville in the prison and bass-baritone Thomas Goerz as an enraged bereaved father. At the very end De Rocher told his story to Sr. Helen and repented, saying "I hope my death brings you some peace" to the watching parents. A most powerful and sad work, very well done.

Our final treat was a delightful *Marriage of Figaro*, staged in the smaller Vancouver Playhouse, perfect for Mozart and his depiction of a topsy-turvy wedding day. The VO wisely decided on a young double cast, a just-married director, Rachel Peake, and a young up-and-coming Canadian fashion designer, Sid Neigum, to ensure the production was energetic and entertaining, to match the opera itself.

The director chose a mash up of 1786 and 2026 for the setting, with costumes to match, and Drew Face's simple sets had mirrored floors, reminiscent of fashion runways. The designer colour-coded the characters' costumes, which helped when disguises were used and also emphasized class distinctions. Susanna was always in white, with a beautiful very modern wedding dress,



Susanna

Countess

while Figaro was in black. Upper class characters were in strong colours: the Count in browns; the Countess in bright red, one of her gowns in high Baroque style; Marcelina in a green cocktail dress. The lower classes were in a more muted range of colours. It was all very attractive to the eye.



Basilio

Marcellina

Count

Bartolo

VO Associate Conductor, Leslie Dala, and his chamber sized orchestra kept a nice pace for the well directed cast, all of whom were in good voice and obviously enjoying themselves. We saw the second, extra young cast, of mainly VO YAPs and alumni. According to the pre-show lecturer, they were especially thrilled to

Vancouver Opera's Inaugural Festival a Great Success! (continued)

have custom designed costumes tailored especially for them, rather than hand me downs, and sent selfies to their friends!

Brockville's Iain MacNeil, a baritone from the COC's Ensemble Studio, debuted at VO as an energetic Figaro, well matched with soprano Rachel Fenlon as Susanna. Baritone Aaron Durand was a suave Count, and soprano Lara Ciekiewicz a winning Countess. Those who saw SOPAC's *Suor Angelica* in Ottawa will remember mezzo Leah Giselle Field as a stern Principessa, and here she was an equally strong, but funny, Marcelina. Similarly adept at bringing out the comedy were bass-baritone Scott Brooks as an extremely long and lean Bartolo and tenor Ryan Downey as a very precise Basilio. Finally, mezzo Pascale Spinney was a most engaging Cherubino, slithering smoothly out of the chair in the first act to get out of the Count's way, and larking about charmingly throughout.



Final scene

Cherubino

Figaro

When everything in an opera production comes together so perfectly, it is a wonderful experience.

In all aspects, the VO Festival lived up to its advance billing!

Photo credits: Traviata poster Michael Mann, other photos by Tim Matheson. All photos courtesy of Vancouver Opera.

A Marvellous, Murderous *Medea*!

by Shelagh Williams

Opera Atelier (OAt) produced an exciting and emotional performance of Marc-Antoine Charpentier's opera about the murderess Medea. His only tragedy, it is unfailingly dramatic, and the perfect canvas for OAt's multiple talents.

Under the ever capable leadership of Marshall Pynkoski, director, and Jeanette Lajeunesse Zingg, choreographer, the story unfolded clearly. Medea has sacrificed all for Jason, only to be cast aside for the lovely Creuse. However, Medea is a sorceress, and she really knows how to take revenge!

Gerard Gauci's always lovely sets framed Michael Legouffe's vibrantly coloured costumes, setting off the intricate and athletic Atelier Ballet sequences. The highlight was the meticulously choreographed sword fight, which was mesmerising. David Fallis conducted the glorious Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra, led by the new Music Director Designate, Elisa Citterio. And what a cast to work with! Favourite, soprano Peggy Kriha Dye, was



photo Bruce Zinger

Jason

Medea

superb, vocally and dramatically, as Medea, slowly building her character until it exploded in vengeance. Tenor Colin Ainsworth was amazing, transforming his usually amiable and sweetly lyric portrayals into the personification of a self-centred, arrogant cad. His macho hair style with the little braid captured his insouciance perfectly! Soprano Mireille Asselin cleverly played the sweet voiced Creuse, ensnaring Jason, and then dying in agony from Medea's gift of a poisoned golden gown, for her pains. One must not forget the solid contributions of bass-baritone Stephen Hegedus as King Creon; baritone Jesse Blumberg as Oronte, Creuse's other suitor; and Meghan Lindsay as Nerine. With the Tafelmusik Chamber Choir, they all did the music justice.

This was a great production and was deservedly off to the Royal Opera House Versailles in May as part of Canada's sesquicentennial celebrations in France!

High C and High Tea

by Shelagh Williams

As a prelude to this Fall's BLOC our president, Murray Kitts, presented another *High C and High Tea*, highlighting our past BLOC finalists. The programme handily listed our 12 biennial BLOC winners, and Murray went through them chronologically, noting prominent runners-up.

Our first winner, in 1993, soprano Laura Djubaniuk, sent in an account of music teaching internationally, attested to by a video of her briskly conducting her choir in Qatar in the Ukrainian *Carol of the Bells*.

1995 winner, Mary Ann Swerdfeger, continues to be a much admired teacher at the prestigious US Laguardia High School of Art and Performing Arts.

The rich contralto of our 1997 winner, Julie Nesrallah, of CBC2 *Tempo* and *Carmen on Tap* fame, was highlighted in a lovely rendition of the beautiful Bellini song, *Vaga luna*, with Caroline Leonardelli on harp.

Currently on the staff of the music faculty of the University of Lethbridge is Sandra Stringer, 1999, who went to Western Canada to find performance and teaching opportunities.

Soprano Shannon Mercer, 2001, sings more oratorio than opera these days, and Murray treated us to a performance of Carissimi's rarely encountered but most celebrated oratorio, *Jephthé*. In this staged production at Seattle's Anglican Cathedral, she beautifully sang the role of the doomed daughter, pleading with her father.

2003 was a banner year. The winner, Pembroke native, baritone Joshua Hopkins, made his MET debut as Ping in the Zeffirelli production of *Turandot*, and we enjoyed the three Mandarins bewailing their work and wishing they were home in the country! Second place Pascal Charbonneau, a haute contre, has used his very high voice for a career mainly in baroque opera, as evidenced in his emotional aria as David, saying goodbye to his dying friend Jonathan, in Charpentier's *David et Jonathas*.

Soprano Joyce El-Khoury, 2005, is singing all over these days, and wowed us with a brilliant and deliciously over the top rendition of Musetta's entrance aria from *La Bohème*.

Now resident soprano with Theatre Bonn, soprano Yannick-Muriel Noah, 2007, gave us a powerful *Pace, pace* from *La*

Forza del Destino. Runner-up Sharleen Joynt has had the beginning of an international career, appearing recently as The Queen of The Night in Victoria.

2009 was another super year. First place winner bass-baritone Philippe Sly has also been singing all over, and just recently in Paris as Guglielmo in a weird production of *Così* which some of us were able to catch in an encore Gatineau cinema release. The excerpt reminded us that even in those circumstances, Philippe sang with style and panache! Second place, mezzo Wal-lis Giunta, is based in Leipzig, and, looking gorgeous as always, entertained us with the *Prologue to The Seven Deadly Sins* - in German!

Mezzo Arminè Kassabian who was top winner in 2011 maintains a lively career performing all over Quebec opera venues and commuting to Ottawa to teach. Runner-up Bethany Horst sent in a delightful account of her career as a singer and as a mother.

Soprano Meghan Lindsay, 2013, is a member of Toronto's Opera Atelier (OAt), and presented herself in an OAt video advertising its current *Medea*, soon to be presented at Versailles. Second place Frédérique Drolet sent in a fascinating account of her work with children to get them to love opera as much as she does.

Finally, from the 2015 winners we learned that runner-up Joel Allison will be singing Dr. Malatesta in *L'elisir d'amore* at the Stratford Festival this summer.

Mark Robinson introduced Murray and handled all the technical aspects of the presentation, and Lesley Robinson looked after publicity, prepared the programme, and assisted with food. Vera-Lee Nelson and Ute Davis were on the reception desk. The arrangements for the presentation were made by super efficient Mary Frances Taylor who with ladies from the former Opera Lyra Guild produced a scrumptious High Tea, with Carole Stelmack pouring tea. It was enjoyed by all, and gave us a great chance to talk opera!

Murray had found some truly unusual musical selections to illustrate our BLOC finalists' talents, and we all had a most enjoyable and educational afternoon.

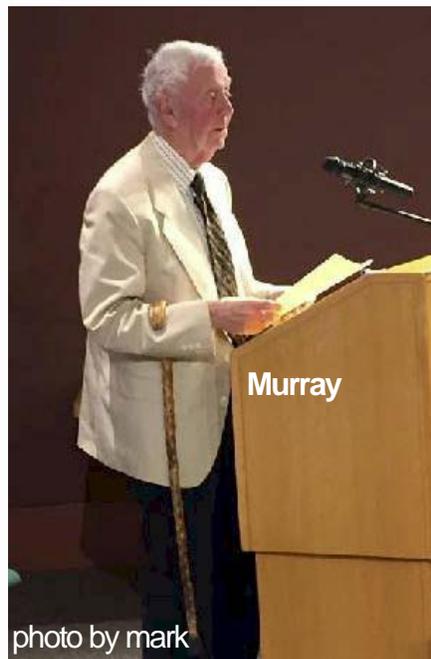


photo by mark

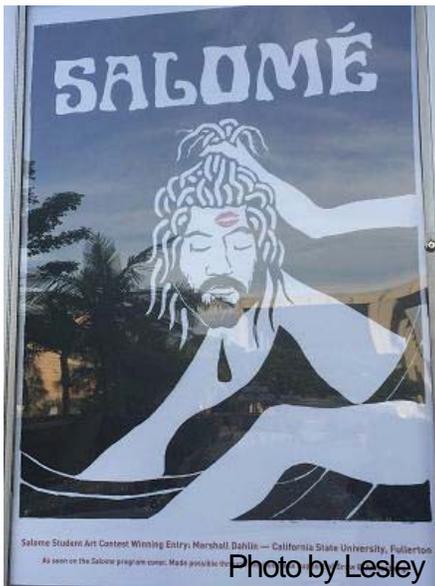
Come see and hear the 2017 BLOC winners live. The National Capital Opera Society's thirteenth Brian Law Opera Competition will take place on Saturday, 14th October 2017, (7:00 p.m.) at the Southminster United Church in Ottawa.

Opera Goes to Hollywood - *Salome* and *The Tales of Hoffman* at the LA Opera

by Lesley Robinson

Despite its proximity to Tinsel Town, the LA Opera under General Director, Plácido Domingo, and Music Director, James Conlon, is a top quality operation. This spring we were privileged to attend *Salome* by Richard Strauss and *The Tales of Hoffman* by Jacques Offenbach.

Salome starred the outstanding Patricia Racette in a more traditional production than we saw her in earlier this season at the Met. In fact the production featured in LA Opera's inaugural season in 1986. Tradition notwithstanding, this version featured a vigorous dose of nudity (and bravura) from Ms. Racette, whose portrayal of the petulant, yet sullen, Salome was nuanced and sensual. You can get an idea of the production from this YouTube trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y60Ko73Galo>.



Another fine performance was given by Icelandic baritone Tómas Tómasson as Jochanaan (John the Baptist). We always enjoy conductor James Conlon's preperformance chats, but on this occasion we enjoyed a real treat afterwards – we went to the post performance conversation between Maestro Conlon and Stephen Fry who was in the audience that day.

Strauss's *Salomé* is based on Oscar Wilde's scandalous play and Mr. Fry is a devotee of all things Oscar Wilde, having even played him in the 1997 film *Wilde*, so it was entertaining and enlightening to hear his insights. The play was first performed in French in Paris because it could not pass the censors to be produced in London. The problem was neither the risqué dance of the seven veils nor the gruesome denouement, but the fact that it was not permitted at that time to portray biblical characters on the stage. The opera's libretto is a direct translation of the original French text, so Strauss's task was to set the complete one act play to music. Wilde himself had referred to the play in musical terms, so it makes sense for it to be transformed into this dark and dramatic opera.

E.T.A. Hoffmann, on whose stories Offenbach based *The Tales of Hoffman* also had his dark side, so this made a

fitting follow-up to *Salome*, although with somewhat more light relief. This production was plagued by bronchitis, but the show must go on, and on the first night indeed it did. It was originally planned for Diana Damrau to play all four heroines and objects of Hoffmann's love, but illness prevented her from taking on such a taxing responsibility. Instead, So Young Park, a graduate of LA's Domingo-Colburn-Stein Young Artists Program, was brought in to play Olympia, the wind-up doll, and Kate Aldrich stepped in as Giulietta. The biggest problem came at the last minute when French bass-baritone (and Ms. Damrau's husband) Nicolas Testé succumbed to the bronchitis and was unable to sing the four villains who sabotage Hoffmann's love affairs. The solution was



for the valiant Wayne Tigges to sing all four parts from the pit whilst Mr. Testé acted and lip-synced the parts on stage. The effect was unusual – from where we were sitting, we were able to see the singer in the pit and hear that the sound was coming from a different source from the man on stage. At the same time we were occasionally able to hear Mr. Testé whispering

the words as he mouthed them. It was a new operatic experience, but overall the evening was by no means marred by it.

It was planned that American Christian Van Horn would perform the parts, in costume and on stage, on the following Thursday and it was hoped that Mr. Testé would return for the final four performances of the run. The overall experience of the first night was nevertheless magnificent. Plácido Domingo conducted and his wife Marta conceived and directed the production. Despite taking a smaller part than planned, Ms. Damrau was dazzling, and her two deputies performed to great acclaim from the audience. Vittorio Grigolo gave a glorious performance as Hoffmann. He was energetic and earnest, passionate and animated. His singing was breathtaking and his acting was enchanting, giving the gullible and impulsive Hoffmann an adorable charisma. It was a momentous and enchanting evening.

Three Delightful “Little” Gems

by Ute Davis

Though these wonderful local concerts are never particularly well advertised, I recently managed to find several of them in a row, by email info at that.

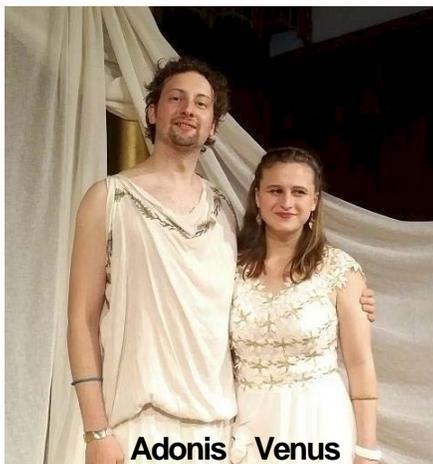
The first surprise was the very well produced and presented *Venus & Adonis* composed by Dr. John Blow, presented at Southminster United Church, 26 and 27 May 2017, by “Seventeen Voyces” under its highly talented director, Kevin Reeves. The composer is supposed to have created this little baroque piece in 1683 to entertain King Charles II, no less. At that première *Venus* was played by Charles’ mistress, the actress and singer Mary “Moll” Davies. Their illegitimate daughter, Lady Mary Tudor, then ten years old, played the part of the young Cupid with his impertinent features. Still entitled a “Mask”, *Venus & Adonis* remains the first English Opera to have survived to the present day. The following year it was performed by the pupils of the famous Josia Priest boarding school, where *Dido & Aeneas* would be created in 1689. Mr. Priest’s daughter acted *Adonis*, probably raising eyebrows in those times.

There is a striking similarity between the two works, leading us to conclude that Purcell, Blow’s pupil, composed *Dido & Aeneas* on the model of *Venus & Adonis*, which he quotes openly in his composition. The libretto, long assumed to be the work of Aphra Behn, was recently attributed to Anne Kingsmill Finch, Maid of Honour to the Duchess of York.

Baroque operas were often re-written to have happy endings but *Venus & Adonis*, like *Dido & Aeneas*, ends tragically. While embracing her son Cupid (Ryan McDonald, countertenor), *Venus* (Bronwyn Thies – Thompson, soprano) is scratched by one of his arrows, and falls in love with the beautiful youth *Adonis* (Joel Allison, baritone). She warns him against hunting dangerous game, but he tracks a



Cupid



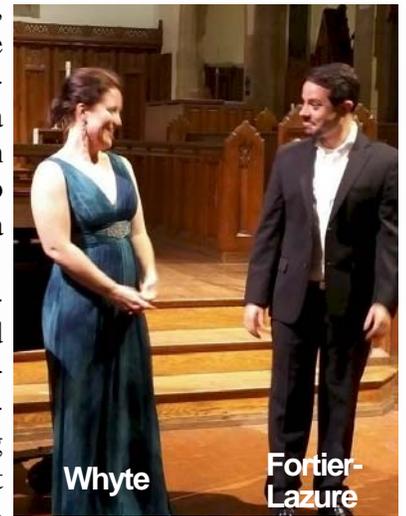
Adonis Venus

wild boar and is mortally wounded. When *Venus* finds his body she transforms his blood into a flower. I tend to have a soft spot for counter-tenors, but have to admit that not only McDonald, a young masters student with a

strong Toronto CV, sounded absolutely sublime, as did Thies-Thompson, with a lovely mature voice, clean and clear as a bird. Joel Allison, whose voice also has matured so very beautifully, has become a good actor to boot. The wonderful little opera was introduced and augmented by a group of charming ballet dancers, led by choreographer and artistic director Michelle McKernan of “Makin’ Moves-Children’s Dance Theatre Program” in Old Ottawa South. It was entertaining to watch the ballet acting out the plot.

The first half of the evening comprised a number of delightful songs of nature, unfortunately not listed in the program. These lovely renditions made us realize what a beautiful sound *Seventeen Voyces* delivers; hats off to Kevin Reeves, an Ottawa treasure.

The following evening, 27 May, we ventured north to Christ Church Cathedral where Matthew Larkin accompanied two young singers most sensitively at the piano. *Opera in the Ca-*



Whyte

Fortier-Lazure

thedral was a delight to see and enjoy. Katherine Whyte, a Canadian soprano, appears to be making a career in the States as well as China. She sang in the Met Opera productions of *Jenufa* and *Rigoletto* in 2016-17. Whyte and our own Jean-Philippe Fortier-Lazure, fresh out of the COC’s Ensemble Studio, made a delightful team, very much at ease. We have seen Jean-Philippe in many COC roles during his training in Toronto where one had the feeling that Alexander Neef, the general director, liked his voice and efforts. Jean-Philippe has gained huge confidence and his voice has matured beautifully. We saw him in two lead roles in the recent Canada 150 project of *Louis Riel*, first in Toronto and then, twice, in Ottawa. Jean Philippe was not only cast as Cartier in acts I and II, but also as Frère André in the final act. He has acquired great poise on stage and presented very effectively in these roles in *Riel*, attributes which he displayed equally effectively in this concert at the Cathedral. His “Quanto e bella” and, later “Una furtiva lagrima”, both from Donizetti’s *L’elisir d’amore* made me realize how very far he has come. His Rossini and Mozart were a delight with a special mention of Händel’s “Where’er you walk” from *Semele* as well as a piece from Lalo’s *Le Roy d’Ys* called “Vainement”. He and Ms. Whyte sang several duets and made a charming pair of young people who know how to entertain. Katherine Whyte has a delightful voice, demonstrating length of line

Three Delightful “Little” Gems (continued)

and breath control. However her habit of adding embellishment from the beginning of an aria caused me to wonder what she could add later to the piece. Her “Jewel Song” from Gounod’s *Faust* as well as the Floyd *Susannah* piece “Ain’t it a pretty night” and the Puccini *La Rondine* selection “Chi bel sogno di doretta” were well chosen to suit her voice, and she and Jean-Philippe excelled in their duets. Last, but not least, our most talented organist and pianist Matthew Larkin showed great sensitivity while accompanying these accomplished singers. Matthew will be greatly missed when he leaves for Toronto.

Our next vocal outing took us east to MacKay United Church at Dufferin and MacKay on Wed, 7 June. It was billed as “*A Classical Treat*” sponsored by the Swedish Embassy, and the Canadian Nordic Society. Overall I enjoyed the concert very much. Sung in Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, Russian, Italian, French and German, the brief explanations by both singer and pianist proved most helpful. The crystal clarity of Ylva Stenberg’s soprano voice was very pleasing. It was best displayed in the beautiful “O luce di quest’anima” from Donizetti’s *Linda di Chamonix* or perhaps in the even more popular “Caro nome” from *Rigoletto*. Ms. Stenberg, although Swedish by birth and early training, is a product of the Hannover College for Music, Theatre and Media and at present the Hannover Opera Studio in Germany. She demonstrates a polish which belies her youth and relative inexperience and she has a strong upper register which will serve her well in the more spinto roles, proven by the fact that she has already sung the Queen of the Night as

well as Zerbinetta in *Ariadne auf Naxos*. Her present tour follows her winning the Jenny Lind prize which allows her to perform “in the places where Jenny Lind made a lasting impression in Canada and the USA”. I have to add that her exquisite green gown with beautiful flower additions, continuing into her hair, was the most impressive I have seen anyone wear in a recital. She had it designed and made in Copenhagen, Denmark, using some of the prize money she received from the competition. She looked like a portrait any art gallery would be happy to display.



Ylva Stenberg

photos by Ute

The second half of the program was perhaps more enjoyable and we were able to evaluate her Italian, German and French diction. Again we could only admire the polish and vocal quality on display. Ms. Stenberg was very well supported by piano accompanist Allan Timofeitchik, of Belarussian background, born in Sweden. He is studying at Malmö Academy in his second year of a master’s degree. Allan has worked with Ylva for many years and is making this tour with her. He has a most interesting piano technique which he learned in Oslo, Norway, some years ago. He called it “Timone” which I will have to research. The program came to a popular and happy conclusion with the rousing “Oh Värmeland, you fair one” sung in Swedish, of course, by Ylva Stenberg, who hails from the Province of Värmeland, supported by a recruited Norse tenor, Trygve John Ringereide, and the many Swedish people in the audience. We are indebted to the hospitality of the Swedish Ambassador, Mr. Per Sjögren, and the efficient organization of Mr. Costa Kapsalis for a most satisfying evening.

The Met Live in HD 2017 - 2018

October 7, 12:55 p.m.
 October 14, 12:55 p.m.
 November 18, 12:55 p.m.
 January 27, 12:55 p.m.
 February 10, 12:00 p.m.
 February 24, 12:30 p.m.
 March 10, 12:55 p.m.
 March 31, 12:55 p.m.
 April 14, 12:30 p.m.
 April 28, 12:55 p.m.

Norma
Die Zauberflöte
The Exterminating Angel
Tosca
L’Elisir d’Amore
La Bohème
Semiramide
Così fan tutte
Luisa Miller
Cendrillon

Ticket on sale dates
SCENE™ and Met members:
 Wednesday July 19

General Public:
 Friday, July 28, 2018

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

Events you should enjoy

by David Williams

Music and Beyond:

Myriam Leblanc in Concert: July 5, 17:00. Soprano Myriam Leblanc, with pianist Maxime Dubé, performs works by Mozart, Barber, Puccini and Gounoud. First Baptist Church, 140 Laurier Ave W.

The Elmer Iseler Singers: July 5, 19:30, St. Joseph's Church, 174 Wilbrod Ave. Program TBA.

Whitehorse Chamber Choir: July 6, 12:00, Tabaret Hall, 550 Cumberland St. Program TBA.

400 Years of Opera: July 6, 14:00, First Baptist Church, 140 Laurier Ave W. Presenting Pierre Vachon, host, soprano Myriam Leblanc, mezzo-soprano Marjorie Maltais, tenor Danny Leclerc, baritone Max van Wyck and pianist Maxime Dubé-Malenfant.

400 ans d'opéra: July 6, 19:30, First Baptist Church, 140 Laurier Ave W.

New Brunswick Youth Orchestra with Measha Brueggergosman: July 7, 19:30, National Arts Centre. Music by Tchaikovsky, Beethoven and Howard Shore.

A Silent Night – A WWI Memorial in Song: July 9, 13:00, Sacred Space, Beechwood Cemetery, 280 Beechwood Ave. Presenting baritone John Brancy and pianist Peter Dugan. Program TBA.

Studio de musique ancienne de Montréal: July 12, 12:00, St. Barnabas, 70 St. James Street. Presenting *Of Love, Drinking and Revelry/D'amour et d'ivresse*.

Wallis Giunta: July 14, 19:30, Southminster United Church, 15 Aylmer Avenue. *The Hermit Songs* (Samuel Barber), *The Confession Stone* (Robert Fleming) and *Selections from Songs for Lulu* (Rufus Wainwright).

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

If Music Be the Food of Love: July 7, 19:00, University of Ottawa, Freiman Hall. A night of Purcell, Schubert, and Ravel with Kevin Burke, bass-baritone, Kieran Foss, tenor, and pianist Ylan Chu.

Ottawa Chamberfest:

The Bicycle Opera Project Goes to Almonte – Sweat: July 23, 14:00, Mississippi Valley Textile Museum. Plunging headfirst into the ethical conundrums of the garment trade, a capella opera *Sweat* offers a window into the lives of the workers who clothe us.

The Italian Queen of France: July 24, 19:00, Dominion-Chalmers United Church. Early music ensemble the Toronto Consort and the School of Atelier Dancers present Catherine de Medici's musical legacy, with music by Adrian LeRoy, Claude LeJeune and Guillaume Costely.

The Bicycle Opera Project – Sweat: July 24, 22:00, La Nouvelle Scène, 333 King Edward Avenue .

Kyra Millan and Tina Faye Present: The Opera! July 31, 22:00, La Nouvelle Scène. Join Kyra Millan and her accomplice Tina Faye on a soprano's exhilarating and hilarious journey to becoming an opera singer.

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

A Special Event: July 23, 24, 25. *Sing Ottawa en chœur* is a three-day festival featuring multiple concerts and other events by the combined forces of the Cantata Singers of Ottawa, the Capital Chamber Choir and Regional Youth Choir to celebrate Canada 150. When you get to the webpage, be sure to click further on Festival Events to see all the possibilities

Information: <https://www.singottawaenchoeur.com>

Ottawa Recitalists Art Song Academy: July 21, 19:30, University of Ottawa, Freiman Hall. Students of Denis Boudreault and Frédéric Lacroix will present an art song recital.

Summer 2017 Opera Festivals

Glimmerglass Opera

Porgy and Bess (Gershwin)
July 7, 13, 18, 22, 27, 29 & 31
August 5, 7, 13, 17, 19 & 21

Oklahoma (Rodgers & Hammerstein)
July 8, 14, 21, 23, 25 & 30
August 3, 5, 8, 11, 14, 20 & 22

Xerxes (Handel)
July 15, 17 & 20
August 1, 6, 12 & 18

The Siege of Calais (Donizetti)
July 16, 22 & 24 August 4, 10, 12, 15 & 19

Chautauqua Opera

L'Orfeo (Respighi)
July 8

Don Pasquale (Donizetti)
July 28 & 31

Hydrogen Jukebox (Glass & Ginsberg)
July 27 & August 1

Opera North

Kiss Me Kate (Porter)
August 2, 6, 8, 10 & 13

Madama Butterfly (Puccini)
August 4, 6, 11 & 13

La belle Hélène (Offenbach)
August 1, 3, 5 & 9

Opera Saratoga

Falstaff (Verdi)
July 1, 6, 10 & 15

Zémire et Azor (Grétry)
July 2, 8 & 14

The Cradle Will Rock (Blitzstein)
July 9, 11, 13 & 16

Summer Opera Lyric Theatre

Carmen (Bizet)
July 29, August 1, 3 & 6

The Marriage of Figaro (Mozart)
July 29, August 2 & 4

Night Blooming Cereus (Beckwith) and *A Northern Lights Dream* (Rose)
July 28, 30, August 5

Highlands Opera

Richard Margison Masterclasses
August 3, 4 & 5

From Opera to Broadway
August 9 & 12

Wūkondiwin (Feast)
August 19

Così fan tutte (Mozart)
August 27, 29, 30 & 31

Westben Arts Festival

Michael Schade Recital
July 15