

NATIONAL CAPITAL OPERA SOCIETY
Newsletter

April 1994

SOCIÉTÉ D'OPÉRA DE LA CAPITALE NATIONALE
Bulletin

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Summary of forthcoming local events

Showcase for Emerging Stars	Recital with five singers	27 May	8:00 pm	Tabaret Hall, University of Ottawa	p. 2
Dinner and <i>Eugene Onegin</i>	Dinner, and Laser disc video	3 May	7:00 pm 8:00 pm	Counterpoint Classics, 266 Dalhousie St.	p. 2
Dinner and <i>Der Rosenkavalier</i>	Dinner, and Laser disc video	14 June	7:00 pm 8:00 pm	Counterpoint Classics, 266 Dalhousie St.	p. 2
Dinner with Dave Smith	Fund-raising dinner	28 June	7:00 pm	Dave Smith's house, Island Park Drive, Ottawa	p. 2
Annual General Meeting and video treat	AGM and extracts from the 100th anniversary of the Met	7 June	7:30 pm	Counterpoint Classics, 266 Dalhousie St.	p. 2
Music for a Sunday Evening	Recitals for later broadcast	1 May 29 May	7:30 pm	St Luke's Anglican Church, 760 Somerset St. W.	p. 3
Maria Pellegrini and the Ramada Present—	Recital with six singers	5 June	2:00 pm	Ramada Hotel and Suites, 111 Cooper St.	p. 4

Showcase for Emerging Stars

On 27 May the Society is putting on a program of operatic arias and ensembles by five local singers of great promise—

Kimberley Briggs, soprano
Janet Harach, soprano
Mary Ann Swerdfeger, mezzo-soprano
Jacques Fortin, baritone
Alexander Savtchenko, bass
with Denise Pepin, piano.

The narrator will be Rob Clipperton of CBC Radio, and the event will be held in Tabaret Hall at the University of Ottawa (Wilbrod and Cumberland).

'Showcase for Emerging Stars' is a major fund-raising event for the Society, so we hope that the turnout will be excellent. Tickets will cost \$15,

or \$10 for students and seniors, and can be bought at the door or obtained in advance by calling the President, Bobbi Cain, at 225 0124. They will also be on sale at Pflug Optical, Merivale Rd. (at Meadowlands). The proceeds will go towards the Brian Law Scholarship Fund, and in the likely event that you feel that you have received greater value than the cost of your ticket, you will be able to restore your psychic equilibrium by making a further donation.

With this Newsletter comes a flyer for the Showcase: please use it in the best way that you can think of for helping to sell tickets. And bring as many friends as you can.

JMC

Annual General Meeting

This year's Annual General Meeting will take place on 7 June at Counterpoint Classics, starting at 7:30 pm. As usual there will be the President's annual report and elections for the Board, among other treats. But the best treat will

be the later showing of parts of a laser video from the Metropolitan Opera's hundredth birthday party. Be sure to come.

BC

A dinner at Dave Smith's

Many of you will know Dave Smith, the auctioneer and caterer at two of our recent annual galas, 'An Evening in Spain' and 'From Russia with Music.' Others will know him as the proprietor of Nate's and The Place Next Door. And much of the city knows him as a tireless worker for all kinds of charities. You can even find his face on the new Regional Headquarters building between Lisgar and Laurier at Elgin. This year, on Tuesday 28 June, Mr Smith is most generously offering a dinner for up to twenty members of the NCOS at his house, and

the deal is that we charge for the dinner and keep the money for the Society, while he gets to make a speech. The price we are charging is \$25 a head.

Pat Adamo has made all the arrangements for what should prove to be an excellent evening. If you wish to go, you should call her at 729 9518 as soon as possible after getting this *Newsletter*, since the places are obviously limited. We think it best to allow no more than two per member.

JMC

Salome and other opera videos

The Society recently tried out a new kind of function for its members—an opera video showing in Counterpoint Classics. First there was a dinner in a nearby restaurant, followed by a showing of *Salome*, starring Teresa Stratas.

The quality of the picture and the sound was excellent, making us forget our rather miserable experiences at the Ottawa Public Library a year or two ago. But more importantly, the production was absolutely riveting, the cultivated audience

not making a squeak and being quite unable to pass an opinion on the comfort of the seats.

In the light of the success of this experiment, we have arranged two more shows.

Tuesday, 3 May. *Eugene Onegin*. James Levine and the Staatskapelle Dresden; Thomas Allen, Mirella Freni, Anne Sophie von Otter, and Neil Shicoff.

Tuesday, 14 June. *Der Rosenkavalier*. Carlos Kleiber and the Bayerisches Staatsorchester; Gwynneth Jones, Brigitte Fassbaender, Lucia Popp, and Francisco Araiza.

But instead of eating at a restaurant first, we will have food brought to the shop for 7 o'clock, with the operas starting at 8. The price of the dinner will be \$15 a head, and the price of seeing the

opera without having the meal first will be a modest \$5, so that we can keep adding small sums to the Brian Law Scholarship Fund. There will be a door prize given at each show, probably an item of the kind of merchandise traded at Counterpoint Classics.

So that the right amount of food can be ordered and the proper number of chairs provided, would you please call John Clegg's office phone, 765 4599, to say you are coming; leave a message if he is not there. Please say also how many people you are speaking for and leave your phone number just in case.

Counterpoint Classics is at 266 Dalhousie St., in the Market. Free parking nearby is fairly easy to find.

JMC

Music for a Sunday Evening

This radio program is well-known to local lovers of classical music. On Sunday 1 May there will be a recital in St. Luke's Anglican Church by a young soprano whom we have had the chance of hearing on earlier occasions, and CBC will be recording it for later broadcast on Artscape on CBC Stereo one Sunday at five minutes past noon, compered as usual by Shelley Solmes. The soprano is Shawne Elizabeth, who will be accompanied on the piano by Louise-Andrée Baril.

Another program will be recorded on Sunday 29 May, at the same place and at the same time. The soloist on this occasion will be Marion Doyle. For both of these recitals there is no formal admission charge, but it is hoped that you will make free offerings.

For further information about this event, call Pat Adamo at 729 9518.

JMC

Italian Week in Ottawa

This year the celebrations of Italian Week run from Friday 10 June until Sunday 19 June. The Week starts with the 'Italian week opening special,' with Maria Pellegrini and the Bel Canto Quintet, in the Great Hall of the National Gallery. The show is sponsored by the Italian Canadian Associations. Admission is free to those who request invitations by phoning the National Gallery.

According to Pat Adamo, there are hopes that Maria Pellegrini will also give an outdoor concert on 18 June, in a space on Preston St. a little south of the Queensway. Watch the press for

further information, or call Pat Adamo at the usual number nearer the time.

Pat says—and I agree with her—that you should pay a visit to Little Italy during that week even if the hoped-for concert doesn't happen. You will enjoy yourselves.

JMC

Maria Pellegrini and the Ramada Present—

Another recital with six singers will take place at the Ramada Hotel on 5 June at 2 pm. This is the second recital (we think) put on by the opera-loving manager and the popular local international star Maria Pellegrini. The soloists will be:

Delon Palmer, tenor
Fraser Ruben, tenor
Maria Knapik-Sztramko, soprano

Marion Doyle, soprano
Kimberley Wiseman, soprano
Melvin Claridge, baritone
with Robert Palmai, piano.

Tickets can be bought at the door and will cost about \$8. We are not certain about this price, but for this or other information you could call Pat Adamo nearer the day.

Opera within reach

With the 1993–1994 season almost at an end, there is not much left of live opera that can be easily reached from Ottawa, so our dwindling section draws towards its close once more.

Montreal

L'Opéra de Montréal

Carmen, by Bizet. 16, 18, 21, 23, 27 and 30* April.

Les contes d'Hoffmann, by Offenbach. 28 April and 1, 3, 5, and 7 May.

La fille du régiment, by Donizetti. 28 and 30 May and 2, 4, 8, and 11* June.

The Student Prince, by Romberg. 13, 15, 16, and 18 June.

All performances are in the Place des Arts.

* For the operas and dates marked with asterisks there is a Morgan Tour taking a group to Montreal (722 7572).

Toronto

Toronto Operetta Theatre

Naughty Marietta, by Herbert. 26, 27, 28, 29, 30 April. St Lawrence Centre.

Opera Lyra's *Tosca*

I'm sure most of our readers attended one of the performances of *Tosca* and enjoyed the experience. This is not to say that there were no faults with the production.

In Act I, in spite of the fact that everyone else in the cast has free access to the Church of Sant' Andrea della Valle, Floria Tosca does not. Are we to believe that she is kept locked up in a side chapel or in a vault when she is not singing for the Queen of Naples? Is there any serious purpose in all this coming and going of monks, nuns, sightseers, and so on? It was a constant distraction from the singing and the action. If it were done deliberately to try to conceal some of

the deficiencies of the tenor, then it might be understandable.

The director was constrained to some extent by the set. The final scene with the procession and *Te Deum* was not very effective, either visually or musically; neither the chorus, the orchestra, nor the small organ were adequate for this scene. But bravos to Peter Strummer as the sacristan and to the Boys' Choir for their thoroughly professional performances.

Act II presented no similar problems in staging or direction. Both Heather Thomson and Cornelis Ophof continued to give the excellent performances as Tosca and Scarpia they had begun in Act I.

Act III provided the tenor with his big moment and exposed the deficiencies of Louis Langelier's vocal and acting abilities. Tosca seemed to jump into a hole in the floor and would probably have broken a leg or two landing on the next level of the Castel Sant'Angelo. A bit of simulated crenellation would have been enough to suggest that she did indeed go over the edge.

All in all, however, this was quite an enjoyable evening. As an opera promoter, I brought with me to *Tosca* two people who had never attended an opera before. Much to my pleasure, not only did they enjoy the performance, but also they plan to attend *Rigoletto* in September and bring another friend.

MK

Viva Verdi!

Having fulminated in a previous article about the lack of opera performances on TV, I now have to report a spate of Verdi performances all of which are worth seeing.

Taking them in order of composition, L'Opéra de Montréal's *Nabucco* was presented on one of the 'Beau dimanches' programs which I told you to look out for. This was an excellent production. The sets were majestic and some of the theatrical effects—such as the smashing of the giant statue of Baal—were outstanding. The singing honours were shared by James Dietsch in the title role, Linda Roark-Strummer as the evil Abigaille, and Paul Plishka as Zaccaria. Contributing as the High Priest of Baal was Alexander Savtchenko, who will be singing for us in 'Showcase for Emerging Stars' on 27 May. The only drawback to the TV presentation was that during the *sinfonia* or overture, and during other musical introductions or interludes, the viewer was given images of the recent war in Iraq, with Saddam Hussein appearing when music suggesting Nabucco was heard, and George Bush embodying (I suppose) the Jewish High Priest. The best approach is to close one's eyes during such nonsense.

Less than a year after *Nabucco* was premiered, Verdi saw a successful first performance of *I Lombardi alla prima crociata*. More popular than its predecessor at first, this opera was not successful outside Italy and then fell into neglect even there. It has many of the rough and ready elements that made *Nabucco* so popular and yet has certain refinements that are quite remarkable. Certainly the Met's premiere production on PBS was elaborate. Two superstars, Samuel Ramey and Luciano Pavarotti, were joined by an excellent soprano named Lauren Flanigan in the famous trio and in other arias and ensembles;

only Bruno Beccaria as Arvino was inadequate to his role. Although some of the effects seem questionable—for example, the appearance of a gigantic crucifix in Act I, Scene 2, and when in the final scene of Act IV Pagano is supposed to see Jerusalem—the overall impression was good. Having an opportunity to see this opera is a great joy to Verdi enthusiasts. Why Pavarotti chose to sing this opera on the anniversary of his debut is perhaps a bit puzzling, since he doesn't appear in Act I at all, and only briefly (as a ghost, with an aria) in Act IV.

Why Plácido Domingo chose *Stiffelio* for his anniversary is easier to understand. Here is a neglected minor masterpiece well suited to Domingo's talents. The Met-PBS telecast featured an outstanding cast, including Sharon Sweet (whose debut in *Il trovatore* some of us witnessed a few years ago), Vladimir Chernov, Paul Plishka, and Peter Riberi. The overall settings were rather gloomy, understandably given the nature of this opera; however, the final scene of forgiveness in the church was beautifully staged. If you don't know *Stiffelio* already, it is well worth your attention; after all, the next opera Verdi wrote was *Rigoletto*.

In addition to early and obscure Verdi, the Met-PBS presented one of Verdi's greatest works, *Falstaff*. Some critics argue that it is *the* greatest; certainly it represents another witness to Verdi's love for Shakespeare and to the excellence of Boito as librettist. I must confess that I didn't think that Paul Plishka, who seems to have only two facial expressions—one with his eyes open and one with his eyes closed, would make an ideal Falstaff. However, he rose to the occasion and the supporting cast, including such luminaries and Marilyn Horne and Mirella Freni, as well as the production by Franco Zeffirelli, make this well worth viewing.

Of course, seeing opera live is really the only way to enjoy it properly, and L'Opéra de Montréal presented *Falstaff* not long ago. The sets and costumes were from the Greater Miami Opera Association and they were excellent. The staging by Fabrizio Melano was most effective in the famous laundry basket scene in Act II. Act I, Scene 1, was fairly static, and the final scene in Windsor Park lacked some of the poetry it should have, the 'dancers' detracting rather than adding to the scene. Timothy Noble as Falstaff has a beautiful voice but has not been

able to project a fully-rounded character. In other roles, notables include Eva Zsella as Alice, Kathleen Brett (who sang in some Mendelssohn here recently) as Nanetta, and the reliable Michael Rees Davis as Fenton. This opera company continues to present excellent opera productions and deserves our support.

Opera Lyra will be presenting its tribute to Verdi in September with our beloved Louis Quilico as Rigoletto.

MK

Radio broadcasts of opera on CBC

The last Metropolitan Opera broadcast of the present season is of *Ariadne auf Naxos* on 23 April. As usual during the summer, CBC and Radio Canada will broadcast operas at the same Saturday afternoon time, the recordings coming from various sources. Here is the schedule until the end of August, as far as we have been able to discover it.

CBC Stereo (103.3 MHz)

30 Apr	<i>La vestale</i> , Spontini
7 May	<i>Maometto II</i> , Rossini
14 May	<i>Beatrice di Tenda</i> , Bellini
21 May	<i>Fedora</i> , Giordano, and <i>I pagliacci</i> , Leoncavallo
28 May	<i>The Marriage of Figaro</i> , Mozart
4 Jun	<i>La traviata</i> , Verdi
11 Jun	<i>Don Quichotte</i> , Massenet
18 Jun	<i>Susannah</i> , Floyd

25 Jun	<i>Il trovatore</i> , Verdi
2 Jul	<i>Billy Budd</i> , Britten
9 Jul	<i>Carmen</i> , Bizet
16 Jul	<i>Béatrice et Bénédict</i> , Berlioz
23 Jul	<i>Mireille</i> , Gounod
30 Jul	<i>Iphigénie en Tauride</i> , Glück
6 Aug	<i>Kullervo</i> , Sallinen
13 Aug	<i>Samson et Dalila</i> , Saint-Saens
20 Aug	<i>Le roi Arthus</i> , Chausson
27 Aug	<i>Jakobin</i> , Dvorak

Radio Canada (102.5 MHz)

30 Apr	<i>Così fan tutte</i> , Mozart
7 May	<i>Mariage de Camacho</i> , Mendelssohn
14 May	<i>La belle Hélène</i> , Offenbach
21 May	<i>Carmen</i> , Bizet
28 May	<i>I disingamati de Calabria</i>

Membership renewal

We try not to be boring, but it's time to remind many of you about membership renewals for 1994. The fees and membership categories are given on the membership form on page 8. With the basic fee still at \$20, the NCOS remains one of the least expensive organizations you can be a member of, anywhere.

Note. It has unfortunately proved necessary to repeat this item. If the readers' response is

adequate, we promise to omit it from the next *Newsletter*.

Discount for members

Counterpoint Classics is now well established in its new premises at 266 Dalhousie St., near Murray and not very far from its former spot. The standard discount of 20% off each regularly priced CD is offered to any member on presentation of the NCOS membership card.

NCOS Board Members

President	Bobbi Cain	Newsletter	John Clegg
Vice-President	Peggy Pflug	Publicity	Marjorie Clegg
Past-President	Marjorie Clegg	Events	Peggy Pflug, Stuart Baxter
Treasurer	Murray Kitts	General Liaison	David Shore
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Scholarships	Bobbi Cain	Members	Pat Adamo, Judith Miller

Some telephone numbers

Bobbi Cain	225-0124 (h)
Marjorie Clegg	594-2988 (h)
Peggy Pflug	226-5482 (h)
Pat Adamo	729 9518 (h)
John Clegg	765 4599 (w)

1994 Membership Form

Formulaire d'abonnement 1994

This is a renewal _____ new membership _____

	Amount
Yes, I wish to be a member in 1994 (please see membership categories below)	\$ _____
*I wish to make a tax-deductible donation to the Society	\$ _____
*I wish to make a tax-deductible donation to the Brian Law Scholarship fund	\$ _____
Total	\$ _____

Enclosed is my cheque for \$_____, payable to the National Capital Opera Society.

* If you wish your name as a donor recorded in a particular way, say how here:

.....

Name(s):

Address:

City: Province

Postal Code: Telephone(s)

Il s'agit d'un réabonnement _____ d'un abonnement _____

	Montant
Je souhaite m'abonner pour 1994 (veuillez consulter la liste de catégories d'abonnement ci-dessous)	\$ _____
* Je souhaite faire un don déductible aux fins de l'impôt à la Société	\$ _____
* Je souhaite faire un don déductible aux fins de l'impôt à la Bourse Opéra—Brian Law	\$ _____
Total	\$ _____

Un chèque de _____ \$ se trouve sous-pli (libellé à l'intention de la Société d'opéra de la Capitale nationale).

* Si vous désirez que le nom du donateur soit consigné d'une façon particulière, l'indiquer ici:

.....

Nom(s):

Adresse:

Ville: Province

Code postal: Téléphone(s)

Membership categories		Les catégories d'abonnement	
Life	\$1000	A vie	\$1000
Patron	250	Protecteur(trice)	250
Benefactor	100	Bienfaiteur(trice)	100
Friend	50	Ami(e)	50
Family	30	Famille	30
Member	20	Membre	20
Student	15	Etudiant(e)	15
Senior	15	Aîné(e)	15