

Newsletter • Bulletin

Fall

1997

L'Automne

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

New York, New York!!

The NCOS Board feels that the Metropolitan Opera debut of Ottawa's own Gerald Finley truly deserves to be commemorated in a very special way. Consequently, we have arranged a bus tour to New York City which will include Gerald's debut as Papageno in *THE MAGIC FLUTE* on January 24th, the opportunity to meet Gerald and his family at a brunch sponsored by the Canadian consulate the following morning and three night's accommodation in a central Manhattan hotel. This tour is being organized by Congress Travel. Won't you join us? Call Congress Travel—234-3360—for more details and to reserve your space.

Furthermore, we are running a raffle with the Grand Prize as a package for two on the Gerald Finley Met debut bus trip to New York. The value of this prize is over \$1700. The draw for the prize will be held at HMV, Bank and Sparks Streets, on November 5 at 8:45 P.M. during a 7 to 9 reception sponsored by Deutsche Grammophon, Gerald's recording firm. Deutsche Grammophon will exhibit the full array of the Archiv label during the celebratory reception. Refreshments will be served. We need all Society members to buy, or sell, at least one book of tickets. Inquiries: please call 225-2652.



Tenor Ben Heppner became an honorary friend of the society at a reception held in his honor in July. The presentation was made by Bobbi Cain. See page 7 for more.

Ben Heppner Encounter

Adamo

President's Report

NATIONAL CAPITAL OPERA SOCIETY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, JUNE 8, 1997

I spoke last year of our environment, and the threat to it by many factors and the endangerment of many species. The arts are a major part of our environment and are just as endangered if we are not vigilant. They are not usually cast in that role, but wait— Mr. Webster defines environment as “surroundings, especially the material and spiritual influences which affect the growth, development and existence of a living being”. The spiritual being covers so many areas and foremost among those is a peoples’ culture, an element including the arts. Within the arts, opera is very unique as it combines so many elements — theatre, dance, music, creative art, to name several. You may say again that I am preaching to the converted, but in these days of austerity and realigned priorities we who love opera must make a loud noise. In Dr. Suess’s “Horton Hears a Who” all the “whos” would have been destroyed, but they shouted loudly and were heard. The National Capital Opera Society was formed because some of us wanted to make a loud noise, and some of that noise has been heard and acknowledged over the years and more recently.

Now a new Chief Executive Officer has been appointed at the National Arts Centre, a focal point of many of our activities and thoughts. Our discussions with John Crompton, the CEO, have been most encouraging. The summer festival is back, and with everyone’s support, Festival Canada will be a major feature from now on. Plans for opera on a somewhat different scale are gradually coming into place. The Centre wants to involve more of the community and more of the nation. After all, it is Canada’s National Arts Centre. This we heartily applaud!

With all that good news, you might say that our year has been a spectacular success. In some ways it has, but it has been cast also with great sadness. Early last September one of valued board members, John Clegg, died suddenly, and we were very sad. Since John did not like organ music, the

Society hired two prominent Ottawa musicians to supply appropriate cello and violin music in the Ashton church where the funeral was held. On behalf of the Society, the President delivered a tribute to John’s work and his wit. We miss him very much.

Later in September we hosted the postponed “Celebrity Auction” with MC Rob Clipperton and Auctioneer Dave Smith. Soprano Shawne Elizabeth and Kelly Robertson, tenor, offered a delightful program of opera favourites, accompanied by Frederic Lacroix. Everyone in attendance had a great time and got some really good bargains, but the number of those with us was very disappointing, and even with a break due to the Westin confusing the food order, the evening came in at a loss. We cannot afford to do this again. We need more support from our members and the community if we are to continue our important path of support of opera and young opera singers’ work. During the fall we supported the work of B’nai Brith bringing Victor Ullman’s inspiring opera *THE EMPEROR OF ATLANTIS* to Ottawa. This we feel is a major role for the Society.

We were greatly honoured in the fall to have Maureen Forrester, C.M., become Patron of the Brian Law Opera Scholarship. Much of the remainder of the fall of 1996 was devoted to preparations for this Scholarship, which was held in February 1997. The lead time for this enterprise is close to a year, from when notices are sent to educational organizations and other groups, to the receipt of applications, through the preliminary round, to the final competition. The preliminary jury, consisting of Barbara Clark, Sandra Graham and Thomas Annand, advised by a NCOS representative, met in late November to hear and consider submissions from seven candidates, from which four were chosen for the competition. The final jury consisted of soprano Roxolana Roslak and tenor Guillermo Silva from Toronto, and coach Michael McMahon from Montreal. Next year we will discuss the competition in full. As you will hear from

our treasurer, the endowment fund is close to \$15,000; however, we want to undertake a corporate fundraising campaign to propel it to at least \$25,000 or \$30,000 so that the Society does not have to use its own funds to run the event. Can you help us with that work?

One of the first tasks facing our new Board will be to re-evaluate our fund-raising strategy so that we can achieve more "bang for the buck". We also decided that our whole policy concerning tours would be revamped. As well, we are investigating new sources of CD discounts, opera video showings or movies. During this past year our Board began in a lean state with the resignations of new member Almut Fleuriau-Chateau and after the AGM, member Gaetan Fleuriau-Chateau, both due to a perceived conflict of interest. After John Clegg's death, the President appealed to the membership for a new Newsletter editor, as that was one of John's jobs. Member Tom McCool offered to do the job, and though not an official board member, has done a terrific job at relaying our news, opera schedules and reviews to our members. Later in the fall, we were delighted to have Krys Rudko join the Board as secretary and PR person. We still need more willing hands to share the work.

I wish to thank all those members and helpers of the Board of Directors - Pat Adamo; John Clegg and Tom McCool, newsletter; Murray Kitts, treasurer; Peggy Pflug, vice-president; Gerda Ruckerbauer, membership; Krys Rudko, secretary and PR; Norma Torontow, events, and Norma Mellon, Edith Orton and Sandy Stinson, assistance with events. To all others who helped, our thanks. This was a very busy year for everyone, and without such support, it would have been much less successful than it has been. We have great plans for 1997 into 1998 and we hope you will join us in our enthusiasm. I thank all the members for giving me the privilege of serving the Society.

— Bobbi Cain

Opera Lyra's
AIDA
 at the NAC
 October 18, 20, 22 & 25, 1997

An Immodest Proposal

On first hearing that **Opera Lyra** was doing **AIDA** I thought that their biggest problem would be the size of the chorus. Judging by past productions I envisaged an orchestra that would overwhelm the usual fairly small chorus. But this problem has been anticipated—the chorus is to be expanded to one hundred voices—and the Opera at the NAC will reverberate with trumpets, orchestra and a one hundred strong chorus. (No mention of elephants, however.)

Solving one problem of course leads to another as I found out in reading an appeal from the President of **Opera Lyra** to send money to clothe the exceptionally large chorus for the coming production.

Now this proposal is probably coming too late to do any good but it seems to me that what **Opera Lyra** should do is present the first nude **AIDA**.

Before you throw up your hands in holy horror at my immodest proposal consider some of the arguments in favour of such a production:

1) no money spent on costumes: money raised could be spent to hire elephants!

2) attraction of a new, heretofore unreached audience to opera. (Ballet is always doing nude dances and since there is a ballet in **AIDA** why not just expand the nudity to all the other scenes?)

3) local and provincial standards seem to accept nudity—consider the laws regarding beachwear and the sights to be seen on the Montreal Road and in parades in Toronto.

4) aesthetically even a slight acquaintance with ancient Egyptian art reveals a pictorial preoccupation with nudity—slaves, goddesses, dancing girls, and even pharaohs who seem to wear more on their heads than on the rest of their bodies.

5) a precedent was set in the recent production of **DIE FLEDERMAUS** when chorus members appeared in their underwear; it's only a short step to taking it all off.

6) finally, it is my belief that if **Opera Lyra** were to present a nude production of **AIDA** they would **NEVER EVER** have any difficulty in raising funds to clothe their chorus or anyone else in the future.

—MK

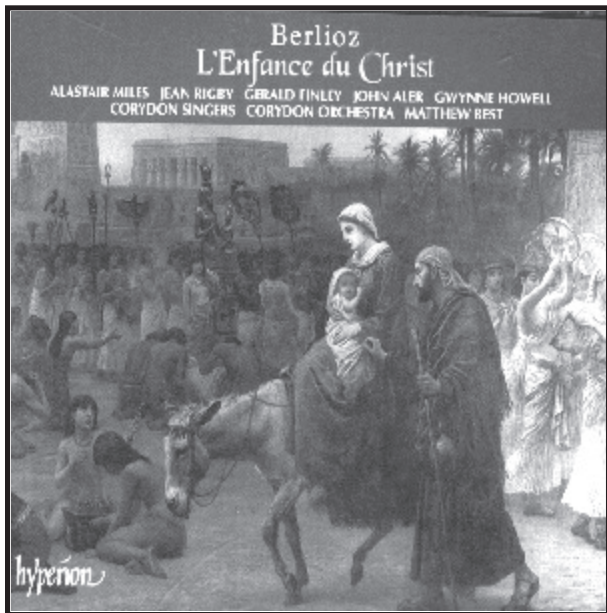
Gerald Finley

Prior to the Met debut of Gerald Finley and our draw for the New York trip to witness the event, I thought it might interest our members to know about some of the excellent recordings made by an artist whose reputation as a fine singer in Europe is reflected in the number and quality of his recordings.

From Festival Canada's programmes I can enthusiastically recommend several CD sets. It would be hard to find a better recording of the Berlioz *L'ENFANCE DU CHRIST* (Hyperion CDA66991/2) in which Gerald is joined by such renowned singers as Jean Rigby, John Aler and Gwynne Howell, as well as the St. Paul

Cathedral Choristers. Still in the oratorio field a new recording of Haydn's *THE CREATION* features Gerald, Ottawa's Donna Brown, as well as Canadian tenor Michael Schade under the direction of John Eliot Gardiner (Archiv 449 217-2). I would consider these two sets as essential to any well-rounded collection.

Turning to opera, *DON GIOVANNI* (EMI 7 54859 2) may not reflect the delightful comic mood of the performance seen in Ottawa by Opera Atelier in this summer's Festival Canada; rather, it is a serious reconstruction using authentic instruments and allowing the listener to programme the player so that either the complete Prague or the complete Vienna versions of the opera can be listened to. This scholarly approach is conducted by Roger Norrington and the cast includes Gerald Finley as Masetto and Andres Schmidt as the Don.



Sings on CD

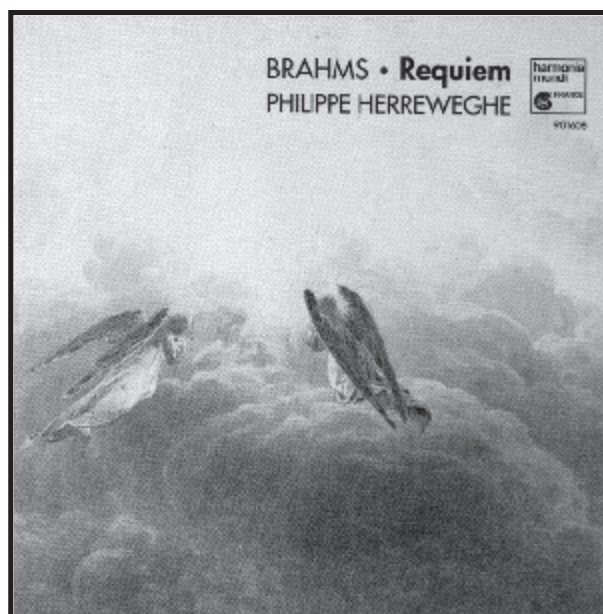
To hear how Gerald Finley sounds as Papageno in *THE MAGIC FLUTE*, an excellent new version under John Eliot Gardner (Archiv 449 166-2) has recently been released. In my view this opera is one of those operas where a perfect recording has not and probably never will be made. These discs certainly hold their own with other more recent versions and in my view surpasses them. There are videos available of a live performance with the same cast to give the opera lover some idea of the outstanding acting ability of Gerald Finley. I am fortunate enough to own a video of *THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO* done at Glyndebourne with Gerald as a lively, convincing Figaro.

Not as successful is the *COSÌ FAN TUTTE* conducted by Simon Rattle (EMI 5 56170 2) although Gerald Finley's Guglielmo is outstanding and in the Appendix he sings the alternative aria, "*Rivolgete a lui lo sguardo*", which refers to Canada which he sang for us at his recital for NCOS last winter.

Finally in this Brahms anniversary year mention must be made of a very moving performance of *THE GERMAN REQUIEM* with Gerald as soloist along with Christine Oelze (the Pamina from *THE MAGIC FLUTE*) under the superb direction of Philippe Herreweghe (Harmonia Mundi 901608)

If listening to any of these performances doesn't compel you to sign up for the trip to New York it certainly should encourage you to buy and sell tickets for Gerald's Finley's debut at the Met.

—M.K.



Saturday Afternoon at the Opera on C. B. C. Two

- September 13 *VENUS*(Schoek)
Grand Theatre, Geneva
- September 20 *THE QUEEN OF SHEBA* (Goldmark)
Concertgebouw, Amsterdam
- September 27 *DIE FRAU OHNE SCHATTEN* (Strauss)
Grand-Theatre, Geneva
- October 4 *RINALDO* (Handel)
Grand-Theatre, Geneva
- October 11 *ATILIA* (Verdi)
La Scala, Milan
- October 18 *I VESPERI SICILLANI* (Verdi)
La Scala, Milan
- October 25 *FAUST* (Gounod)
Opera Lyra, Ottawa
- November 1 *MADAMA BUTTERFLY* (Puccini)
Edmonton Opera
- November 8 *THE MAGIC FLUTE* (Mozart)
Calgary Opera
- November 15 *SUSANNAH* (Floyd)
Vancouver Opera
- November 22 *LES PECHEURS DE PERLES* (Bizet)
L'Opera de Montreal
- November 29 *BEATRICE ET BENEDICT* (Berlioz)
Canadian Opera Company

Detailed program, including conductors and casts,
is available from: CBC Audience Relations
205 Wellington Street West
Toronto, Ontario M5V-3G7
Phone (416) 205-3700 or at the
CBC Website on the Internet

N.C.O.S. Board Members

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Opera Lyra Guild Presentations

Opera Insights Series

October 6 — AIDA

February 23, 1998 — IL BARBIERE DI SIVIGLIA

These presentations will include a talk by Jeffrey Morgan and discussion with the principal singers of both productions. Cost: \$15.

Definitely the Opera Series

November 17 — MANON LESCAUT

January 19, 1998 — TOSCA

April 20, 1998 — TURANDOT

The three Puccini operas will be introduced by Jeffrey Morgan and will be presented in full from laser disc on a large screen.
Cost : \$10 or 3 for \$25

The location for all presentations will be the National Library of Canada, Room 156 at 7:00 P.M. Tickets are available by calling the Opera Lyra Ottawa Guild at 565-7194 or Opera Lyra Ottawa at 233-9200.



An Affair to Remember!!

What a year's wait! NCOS's reception—"Encounter with Ben Heppner"—postponed from last year to July 2 this year, certainly turned out to be our event of the season.

After a wonderful concert, Ben Heppner, accompanied by Bobbi Cain, joined his enthusiastic—and adoring—fans for an informal get-together hosted by the NCOS and Lois & Don Harper.

Bobbi Cain welcomed Ben and presented him with an engraved certificate, which

was charmingly accepted. Ben then went on to share many interesting and exciting anecdotes of his highly successful career. He circulated and spent time chatting with everyone, answering every question, and graciously posing for me for many souvenir photos, a few of which are seen on this page.

Our very special thanks to Ben Heppner for providing this revealing glimpse into his life and career for opera lovers. Our thanks, also, to Lois and Don Harper for their always generous collaboration and to everyone who contributed to this truly memorable event.

—P.A.



Opera Within Reach

OTTAWA

Opera Lyra

AIDA by Verdi
October 18, 20, 22 & 25
All performances are in the Opera of the NAC. Information: 233-9200

National Arts Centre

Jessye Norman in Concert
October 4 in the Opera
Jennifer Larmore (Recital Series)
November 29 in the Opera
Information: 594-9400

Corel Centre Pavarotti November 5

HAMILTON

Hamilton Opera

DON GIOVANNI by Mozart. Oct 18, 23 & 25
DIE FLEDERMAUS by Strauss. Nov 22, 27 & 29
All performances begin at 8:00 p.m. in the Great Hall of Hamilton Place.
Information: 1-800-575-1381

TORONTO

Canadian Opera Company

SYMPHONY OF PSALMS/OEDIPUS REX by Stravinsky.
Sept 27, Oct 3, 7, 9, 15 & 19

TURANDOT by Puccini. Oct 2, 5, 8, 11, 14 & 17

All performances are at the Hummingbird Centre. Information: 1-800-250-4653

THE EMPEROR OF ATLANTIS by Ullmann.
Nov 23, 25, 27, 29 & 30

All performances are at the Tanenbaum Centre. Information: 1-800-250-4653

MONTREAL

L'Opéra de Montréal

FAUST by Gounod. Sept 20, 22, 25, 27 Oct 1 & 4.
LA VOIX HUMAINE and a *Selection of Melodies* by Poulenc. Oct 23, 25, 27 & 29

All performances are in the Salle Wilfred Pelletier in the Place des Arts

Information (514) 985-2258