

Newsletter • Bulletin

Fall

2000

L'Automne

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

THE BRIAN LAW OPERA SCHOLARSHIP *The Fifth Biennial Competition* **by Bobbi Cain**

A \$2000 scholarship will be awarded to an aspiring young singer, aged 22 to 32 years, after a juried competition. The Brian Law Opera Scholarship was established in 1992 in honour of Brian Law, to commemorate his dedication over a twenty-five year period to young singers, to orchestral and choral music, and to opera, both at the National Arts Centre and at l'Opera de Montreal.

The upcoming scholarship competition will be held on Saturday, January 27, 2001 at the First Unitarian Congregation, 30 Cleary Avenue. Up to six young finalists will perform a selection of operatic arias, including one with recitative, before an audience gathered to hear them and a distinguished jury. The jurors will be Mary Lou Fallis (the Diva), soprano; Mark Pedrotti, baritone; and Roxolana Roslak, soprano; all from Toronto.

During the jury's deliberations, former Brian Law Scholarship winner, Mary Ann

Swerdfeger, will present a special recital. Mary Ann is working in New York City in a variety of roles, mostly of a light operatic nature, and we are happy to welcome her glorious, yet dulcet tones back to be with us in her hometown, Ottawa.

The competition evening begins at 7:30 P.M., and light refreshments will be available in the adjoining hall after the announcement of the winner. A considerable amount of parking can be found around the building, and buses run nearby. The charge for the competition is \$10.00, with tickets available at the door. Book this date now, and make sure you are with us for this exciting night.

For those of you who might be interested, it is our custom to present a smaller honorarium to the non-winners, monies not taken from the endowment fund. If you would like to donate a \$100 or \$200 prize designated in someone's name or for a cause in your life please contact us. Your assistance and interest would be greatly appreciated.

Opera Alla Pasta — Sunday Afternoon at the Opera

2:00 P.M. Sunday, October 22 at St. Anthony's Soccer Club

Giacomo Puccini's

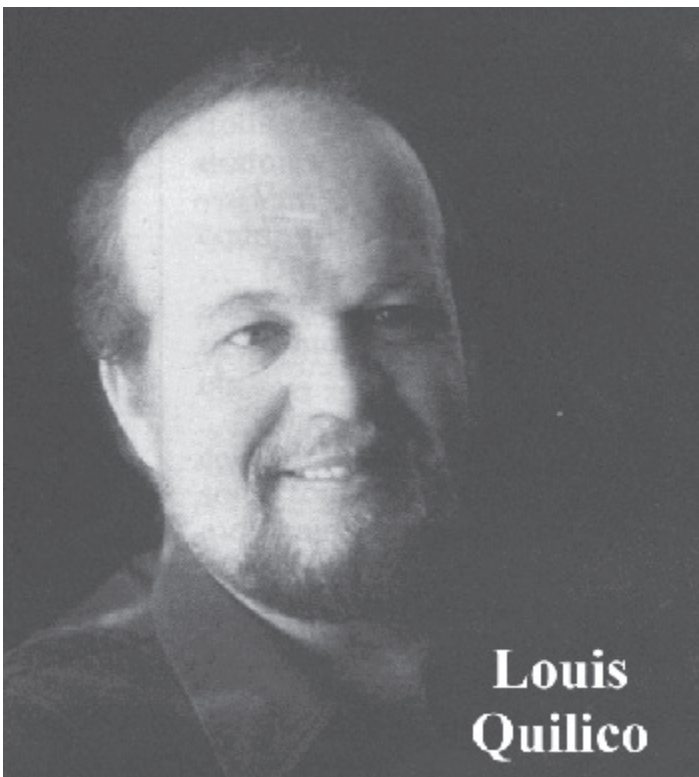
LA FANCIULLA DEL WEST

Louis Quilico Memorial

A number of years ago the NCOS was greatly aided in its Brian Law Scholarship fund through a recital given in the Theatre of the National Arts Centre by Louis Quilico (and friends). At that time members of the NCOS came to know this remarkable man. Of course we knew him as a great singer, especially in Verdi roles. We gratefully accepted his generosity in helping our cause. We were captivated by the warmth of his personality and his wonderful sense of humour – a truly unforgettable man. His loss is a personal one for many of us.

In memory of Louis Quilico, the NCOS would like to support the Christine and Louis Quilico Foundation for the Support of Young Artists, through donations made to NCOS for the memorial fund. We are asking our members to send their donations to the Treasurer, National Capital Opera Society, P.O. Box 8347, Station T, Ottawa, ON, K1G 3H8 made out to the NCOS Louis Quilico Memorial Fund. A tax receipt will be issued for each donation to this Fund. If every member of our society were to donate \$10 we would have a substantial amount. We hope to have our donation ready by the end of October of this year.

The Christine and Louis Quilico Foundation will be formally announced at the time of the release of his first posthumous CD release, "A Most Happy Fella".



From the President . . .

I hope you have all had a pleasant summer, regardless of the unusual weather. Many of us enjoyed the various offerings of the "Great Composers Festival" at the National Arts Centre. But, wouldn't it have been even better if there had been one or two opera productions? We have corresponded with Maestro Zuckerman concerning this. Won't you join us in this effort? The address is The NAC, Box 1534, Station B, Ottawa K1P 5W1.

Your new Board of Directors is gradually getting into gear, and yes, we now have a Treasurer. Plans are in place for three "Opera Alla Pasta" afternoons at St. Anthony's, featuring the showing of an opera followed by a sumptuous buffet dinner, all for \$15. The next Brian Law Opera Scholarship Competition will be held on January 27, 2001, and is described more fully in an article on the front page of this newsletter. Put the date on your calendar now. Other plans are cooking in the coffers, so keep in touch and watch closely.

Soon the leaves will be turning! Enjoy Opera Lyra Ottawa's *LA FILLE DU RÉGIMENT*.

Venite ad Aquas

A joint benefit concert on the theme of water in support of **WaterCan** and the **Cantata Singers of Ottawa**

The **Cantata Singers** will be directed by **Laurence Ewashko** with Countertenor **Daniel Taylor**, other invited guests and narrator, **Shelagh Rogers**.

Christ Church Cathedral, Friday, November 10, 2000 at 8:00 P.M.

Adults: \$40, Seniors & Student \$30

Information: 798-7113 or 230-5182

ON OPERA GLASSES

by Murray Kitts

There is much to be said for opera glasses. Many people use them. They are helpful to see the singers' expressions and thus enjoy the opera more fully – at least that is the theory behind them.

I have never liked using opera glasses. I don't much like binoculars either. I am one of these people who, given a pair of opera glasses, can always manage to find a tiny loose screw – a screw essential to the operation of the glasses and irreplaceable. I never seek out this little screw. Somehow one of my fingers barely grazes the glasses and the process of disintegration begins. Never offer to lend me your opera glasses.

Besides, when one looks through opera glasses does what one sees always add to the enjoyment? After all, opera is a spectacle like no other. I would contend that sometimes it is well not to look too closely at singers. Distance lends enchantment.

To prove my point, let's consider opera as presented on TV. First of all we can dismiss from the argument all opera made as films. In this medium directors can indulge in all sorts of eccentricities and we are forced to look at them. For example in the recent film *LA TRAVIATA* (the one shot in Paris) the director chose to show us close-ups of singers' hands during the first part of the last act. Later the camera focused on other parts of the singers' bodies. Film directors can do this sort of thing for good or ill. Mostly ill.

Let's concentrate on live opera performances recorded on video and presented on TV. A recent telecast of *DER ROSENKAVALIER* will illustrate my point. The giant-size opera glass of television revealed that the singer portraying the Marschallin was in fact younger than the person singing

the role of Octavian, thus robbing the plot of one of its essential ingredients. Seen on stage without the aid of opera glasses the illusion of a very young man (sung by a female) with an "older" woman could be maintained.

This video was made some years ago and was enjoyable for historic reasons. Now, directors like Brian Large have become more adept at bringing enjoyable live performances to TV. But there are dangers. I recall seeing a performance of an opera where my attention was distracted by the close-ups of the lead singer. This young lady (amply endowed, as they say) had of course to take deep breaths in order to sing her role. Her costume was such that it amplified the pneumatic effect so that at each breath the bonds of decency were threatened. Very distracting. Not at all suitable for presenting a tragedy or for children under 14. In the opera house without opera glasses such distractions are not present.

It's even disturbing to sit too close to the stage in opera. I recall that having seen and enjoyed *AIDA* on the biggest stage in the world at the Baths of Caracalla in Rome, I was persuaded by a well-meaning friend to sit very close to the front. One could forgive the singer portraying Rhadames his physical deficiencies which betrayed his advanced age, but his habit of crossing his eyes when reaching for high notes spoiled the nature of a spectacle which had always been enjoyed from the cheaper seats at the back.

The use of opera glasses therefore should be confined to what I consider is their proper use – looking around the opera house to see who's there. Once the lights dim and the music starts, put them away. Of course, they should never be used by someone whose mere touch can send them to the junk heap.

Board of Directors of the NATIONAL CAPITAL OPERA SOCIETY 2000 – 2001

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This classic recording with libretto in English and French paralleling the Italian text features the "dream cast" of Joan Sutherland and Luciano Pavarotti with Spiro Malas as Sulpice and Monica Sinclair as the Marquise. Richard Bonyngue conducts the wonderful score. This is available on two disks at full price from London, set number 414 520-2.

Those of you who enjoyed *LA FILLE DU RÉGIMENT* might be interested in *LA FIGLIA DEL REGGIMENTO*, the Italian version of Donizetti's French opera. *LA FIGLIA* is similar to, but not the same as, the original *LA FILLE*. The CD to the right (Opera D'Oro OPD-1147) is an inexpensive – under \$20 – live recording, with all the advantages and disadvantages of such recordings, from a 1969 La Scala performance. It is the complete opera but there is no libretto.



OPERA LYRA'S *LA FILLE DU REGIMENT*

by Murray Kitts

Let me confess at the outset that I have been educated to believe that comedy is much more difficult to stage than tragedy. That's why I have some reservations about the production I saw on opening night.

The NAC Orchestra under Maestro Paterson played the lovely score with verve inserting the proper martial effects when called for. The sets from Washington Opera were excellent. The costumes from the same source were also very good, with one important exception. Somehow Marie's costume in Act 1 seemed to emphasize her diminutive stature and in Act 2 her gown was rather drab. Lighting was properly theatrical –thank goodness, no return to attempts at natural lighting as in past productions.

Of course in a *bel canto* opera it is the singing, the "beautiful singing", that is most important. Tracy Dahl as Marie did sing very well technically and expressively; but hers is not a beautiful voice in itself. Curt Peterson as Tonio was almost perfect for the part – some vocal trouble – but to be forgiven in a live performance. Steven Condy was an outstanding Sulpice. Their trio "Tous les trois reunis" in Act 2 was delightful. The voice of the Marquise, played by Elizabeth Turnbull was lost in all the ensembles, although her solo parts were quite good. Minor roles were well sung and acted and the chorus, an essential part to a successful performance of this opera, was in very good voice.

All very well and good. So it was the interpretation and the staging of the opera that made me feel that full justice had not been done. For example, the portrayal of the Marquise as an aristocratic lib-

ertine destroys the charm of this fable about the baby reared by the regiment, then reunited with her aristocratic mother. The business with the cannon and the Marquise at the end of Act 1 was completely out of character. In practically every scene of the opera there was excess – too much movement, too much repetition of the same business, too many attempts to get cheap laughs. The opera is a comedy; but it is not a farce. It has farcical elements, as in the dancing lesson, but these should not predominate. The soldiers are not the clowns from *The Barber of Seville*; they can't be fools one minute and then be portrayed as a menace the next.

There is real beauty in this opera – the affection and loyalty of Marie and the regiment and the delightful courtship of Marie and Tonio, their sorrowful parting, their joyful reunion – all expressed in lovely music and often accompanied by dazzling vocal gymnastics.

Perhaps it was the presence of Tracy Dahl, so gifted an artist, so accomplished an actress, so energetic, and the abilities of the two male leads that prompted Stage Director Michael Cavanagh to go to excess. Perhaps I am

just too fond of this opera. I enjoyed much of this production, but can't help feeling that it missed being cohesive in interpretation and the triumph that it might have been.

Incidentally, although I thought that Mary Lou Fallis' appearance with moose antlers fell flat with the audience, I was surprised to hear her say as an exit line "Leopold, wir geh'n!" the exact same words as Baron Ochs uses for his exit in the final act of Richard Strauss' *DER ROSENCAVALIER*. For the life of me I can't see any connection between the two characters.



Opera Alla Pasta — Sunday Afternoon at the Opera

For All Members and their Guests —

Location: St. Anthony's Soccer Club, Preston and Queensway (parking is behind the building)

Time: 2:00 pm

Program: October 22, 2000 - *LA FANCIULLA DEL WEST* - Puccini
 Royal Opera, Covent Garden
 featuring Placido Domingo and Carol Neblett

February 11, 2001- *DON GIOVANNI* - Mozart
 Canadian Opera Company
 featuring Louis and Gino Quilico

April 8, 2001 - *NABUCCO* - Verdi
 Arena di Verona

Opera videos on a huge screen, followed by a delightful pasta meal including salad, chicken and dessert. Cash Bar . Total Cost — \$15.00 per person
 Reservations at 225-0124 by two days before so we will know how many we are going to feed. *Join us for this fun time!*

OPERA LYRA OTTAWA GUILD

Definitely the Opera

Lecture & laser disk presentation of three great operas
 7:00 P.M. at the National Library

NORMA November 20
SALOME January 22, 2001
MACBETH February 26

\$12 each or \$30 for all three

Exploring Opera

7:00 P.M. at the National Library

January 23, 2001 “Why Opera?”
 January 30, 2001 “Why Opera?” Part 2
 presented by Donald Metcalfe
 February 6, 2001 “Opera Goes to the Movies”

Information: 565-7194

Opera Insights:

Discussion & the principals of *IL TROVATORE* \$15 Date: TBA

Metropolitan Opera Telecast

December 27, 2000 *DON GIOVANNI* (Mozart)
 with Renée Fleming and Bryn Terfel

Saturday Afternoon at the Opera

September 23

VIENNA STATE OPERA

Die Frau Ohne Schatten (Strauss)

Conductor: Giuseppe Sinopoli

Cast: Johan Botha, Deborah Voigt,
Marjana Lipovsek, Wolfgang Bankl

September 30

VIENNA STATE OPERA

Lulu (Berg)

Conductor: Michael Boder

Cast: Anat Efraty, Graciela Araya,
Franz Grundheber, Jorma Silvasti

October 7

RESIDENZHOF, SALZBURG

Iphigénie en Tauride (Gluck)

Conductor: Ivor Bolton

Cast: Susan Graham, Thomas Hampson,
Paul Groves, Philippe Rouillon, Olga Schalaeva

October 14

GROSSES FESTSPIELHAUS, SALZBURG

Don Giovanni (Mozart)

Conductor: Lorin Maazel

Cast: Ferruccio Furlanetto, René Pape,
Renée Fleming, Marina Mescheriakova

October 21

FELSENREITSCHULE, SALZBURG

Médée (Cherubini)

Conductor: Sir Charles Mackerras

Cast: Kristinn Sigmundsson, Christine Schafer,
Michael Schade, Angela Denoke, Norine Burgess

October 28

FELSENREITSCHULE, SALZBURG

Saul und David (Nielsen)

Conductor: Michael Schonwandt

Cast: Robert Hale, John Mark Ainsley
Stig Andersen, Inga Nielsen, Randi Stene

November 4

OPERA LYRA, OTTAWA

La Traviata (Verdi)

Conductor: Bernard Labadie

Cast: Lyne Fortin, Raul Hernandez,
Gaetan Laperriere, Michelle Sutton

November 11

L'OPERA DE MONTREAL, MONTREAL

L'Incoronazione di Poppea (Monteverdi)

Conductor: Yannick Nezet-Seguin

Cast: Suzie LeBlanc, Daniel Taylor,
Terry Murphy, Odette Beupre

November 18

EDMONTON OPERA, EDMONTON

The Rake's Progress (Stravinsky)

Conductor: Bramwell Tovey

Cast: Gordon Gietz, David Pittsinger,
Jackalyn Short

November 25

CANADIAN OPERA COMPANY, TORONTO

L'Elisir d'Amore (Donizetti)

Conductor: Maurizio Barbacini

Michael Schade, Henriette Bonde-Hansen,
John Del Carlo, Louis Otey, Tamara Hummel

December 2

CANADIAN OPERA COMPANY, TORONTO

The Flying Dutchman (Wagner)

Conductor: Richard Bradshaw

Cast: Richard Fink, Frances Ginzer,
Raymond Aceto, Gordon Gietz, Susan Shafer

Texaco Metropolitan Opera Broadcasts

December 9 **DER ROSENKAVALIER** (Strauss)

December 16 **DER FLIEGENDE HOLLÄNDER**

(Wagner)

December 23 **THE MERRY WIDOW** (Lehár)

December 30 **LA TRAVIATA** (Verdi)

January 6 **FIDELIO** (Beethoven)

January 13 **IL TROVATORE** (Verdi)

January 20 **DOKTOR FAUST** (Busoni)

January 27 **AIDA** (Verdi)

Opera Within Reach

OTTAWA

National Arts Centre

Kiri Te Kenawa GALA October 3
Renée Fleming November 7
Dimitri Hvortovsky November 8 & 10
Handel's MESSIAH December 19 & 20
 Information: 947-7000, ext 280

Opera Lyra Ottawa

CINDERELLA by Rossini (at Taberet Hall)
 Dec 8, 9, 10, 15, 16 & 17

Black & White Opera Soiree Feb 17, 2001

IL TROVATORE by Verdi April 21, 23, 25 & 28
 Information: 233-9200

MONTREAL

L'Opéra de Montréal

COSI FAN TUTTE by Mozart.
 Sept 16, 18, 21, 23, 27 & 30

KATYA KABANOVA by Janacek.
 Nov 4, 6, 9, 11 & 15

The GALA Dec 10

Ruth Ann Swenson Jan 21, 2001

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

Information: 1-800-361-4595

TORONTO

Canadian Opera Company

OTELLO by Verdi
 Sept 21, 24, 27, 30 Oct 3 & 6

THE BARTERED BRIDE by Smetana
 Sept 22, 26, 28 Oct 1, 4 & 7

VENUS AND ADONIS by Henze
 Jan 19, 23, 25, 28, 31 & Feb 3, 2001

LA FANCIULLA DEL WEST by Puccini
 Jan 20, 24, 26, 30 Feb 1 & 4

All performances are at the Hummingbird Centre.

Information: 1-800-250-4653

Opera Mississauga

CARMEN by Bizet
 Dec 2, 4, 6 & 9

LUCIS DI LAMMERMOOR by Donizetti
 March 17, 20, 22 & 24, 2001

RIGOLETTO by Verdi
 May 4, 8, 10 & 12

All performances are in Hammerson Hall at The
 Living Arts Centre in Mississauga

Information: 1-905-306-0060