

Newsletter • Bulletin

Fall

2004

Automne

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

Exciting "OPERA ALLA PASTA" Season

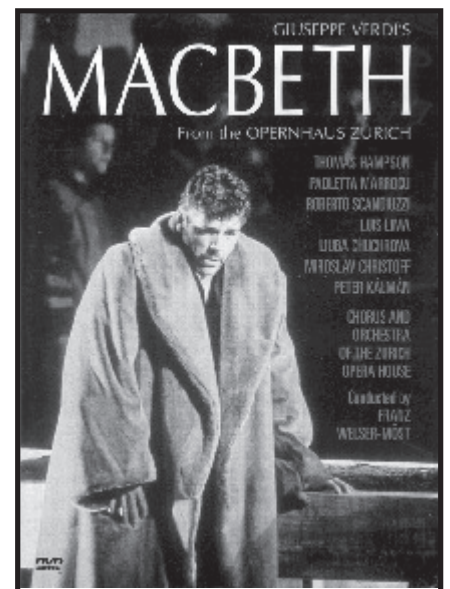
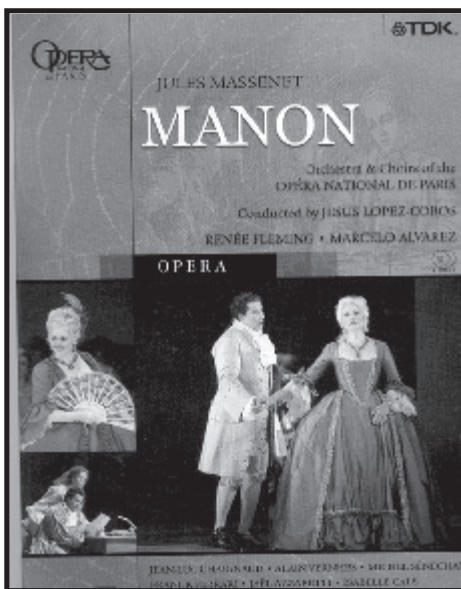
For the first time the people regularly attending the Sunday Afternoon at the Opera showings were invited to cast votes on what operas they would like to see next season. Here are the results:

November 14, 2004 *MANON* by Massenet. This is a splendid production from the Opéra de Bastille, Paris starring Renée Fleming in the title role with the sensational tenor Marcelo Alvarez as Des Grieux. The Orchestra and Chorus of the Opéra National de Paris performs under the direction of Jesus Lopez-Cobos. Very effective lighting effects rather than elaborate scenery is used in this traditional production.

February 20, 2005 *LUCREZIA BORGIA* by Donizetti. This 1980 production from Covent Garden stars the incomparable Joan Sutherland at the peak of her career. Matching her command of the bel canto style is the elegant tenor Alfredo Kraus. At the podium conducting the Royal Opera Orchestra and Chorus is Richard Bonyng, renowned for his championship of this type of opera. Extravagant costumes and sets complement the florid singing and dramatic action.

April 24, 2005 *MACBETH* by Verdi. Another recent production, this time from the Opernhaus Zürich. This staging of Verdi's version of Shakespeare's great play marked the debut in the title role of Thomas Hampson, a performance not to be missed. The Lady Macbeth of Paoletta Marrocu rises to the great vocal and dramatic heights demanded of her. The Chorus and Orchestra of the Zurich Opera house are conducted by Franz Welser-Möst. The Zurich Operas is noted for its unusual stagings of opera and this one certainly fits into this category, emphasizing the darkest impulses of the main characters.

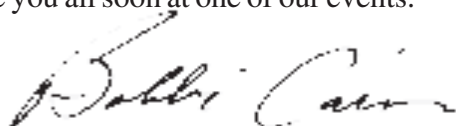
As usual all of our opera showings are followed by a special meal prepared by the chefs at St. Anthony's Soccer Club. Antipasto, salad, a special pasta dish, meat or poultry, complementary vegetables, dessert and tea or coffee is our usual fare. Wine and other drinks can be purchased at the bar. All you have to do is make a reservation at least by the Wednesday preceding the performance. Call 225-0124 and join us for three wonderful afternoons of opera.



President's message

I want to thank everyone, especially the Members of the Board, for their concern about my health after my accident five months ago, followed by hospitalization and a long period of rehabilitation.

Hope to see you all soon at one of our events.



Attention All Singers

Thanks to Renate Chartrand publicity has been sent to all the local media. Many of you will have heard our good friend Rob Clipperton delivering the following message:

Young singers preparing for professional careers are invited to enter the competition for the \$2,000 Brian Law Opera Scholarship sponsored by the National Capital Opera Society. The competition is held every two years and is open to singers aged 22 to 32 who are either natives of or living in the National Capital area or who have studied here.

The deadline for applications is Nov. 15. Singers are required to submit a tape or CD featuring three operatic arias (one including a recitative) along with a résumé and a 200-word outline of career goals in the field of opera.

On November 27 the preliminary jurors Barbara Clark, Charlotte Stewart, Garth Hampson and Bobbi Cain will meet to choose up to six finalists, who will be announced in early December. They will compete at a public recital on January 29 at Ottawa's First Unitarian Congregation. Jurors will be Roxolana Roslak, soprano, Darryl Edwards, baritone, both from Toronto and Christiane Riel, soprano, from Montreal.

The scholarship was first awarded by the National Capital Opera Society in 1993 to honour Brian Law for his more than two decades on the Ottawa music scene.

Past winners have been sopranos Shannon Mercer, Sandra Stringer and Laura Dzuibaniuk, mezzos Julie Nesrallah and Mary Anne Swerdfeger and at the last competition in 2003 baritone Joshua Hopkins.

For more information and application forms call 225-0124 or visit the National Capital Opera Society's web site at <http://members.rogers.com/ncos>.

N.C.O.S. Board of Directors

President	Bobbi Cain
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Opera Lyra Ottawa Guild

Russian Opera Highlights

hosted by Murray Kitts

Part 1 November 2 & Part 2 November 30

Definitely the Opera

ANNA BOLENA (Donizetti) January 10, 2005

LES CONTES D'HOFFMAN (Offenbach) February 7

SAMSON ET DALILA (Saint-Saens) March 7

ANDREA CHENIER (Giordano) May 16

Opera Insights

LES CONTES D'HOFFMAN

With Joanne & Tyrone Patterson

March 22, 2005

**All presentations take place at the
National Library at 7:00 p.m.**

Joy of Opera

Luncheon and Concert

with Jill LaForty

November 28 at 12:30 p.m. at the R.A. Centre

Opera Lyra's *BUTTERFLY*

by Murray Kitts

Pinkerton

Addio fiorito asil...
 Di letizia e d'amor...
 Sempre il mite suo semblante
 Con strazio atroce vedrò.
 Addio fiorito asil...
 Non reggio al tuo squallor...
 Fuggo, fuggo...son vil!

Pinkerton

Farewell, flowery refuge
 Of happiness and love...
 Her sweet face will haunt me ever,
 Torturing me agonizingly.
 Farewell, flowery refuge...
 I can't bear your desolation...
 I must fly! I'm beneath contempt!

I must admit that I was astonished and displeased when the aria given above was not included in the OLO production of *Butterfly*. Yes, it can be argued that Puccini added it to the opera when he made revisions after the first performance. But it was performed just three months later and has always been included in any selection called *Highlights from Madame Butterfly*. On CD complete opera recordings it is cued so that the listener can go to it easily.

Was it deleted because it made the opera too long? Even with the interpolations by Sharpless it lasts less than two minutes in the recording with Bergonzi that I own. If a cut had to be made (the opera is not of Wagnerian length) why wasn't the long orchestral interlude (the whole thing lasts about ten minutes) separating the two parts of Act II cut? Puccini obviously did not follow Verdi's advice as follows: "Opera is opera, symphony is symphony; and I don't think it is a good idea to insert a symphonic piece into an opera just for the pleasure of letting the orchestra loose once in a while."

Was it deleted because the tenor couldn't sing it? While Marc Heller does not have as beautiful a voice as earlier Pinkertons such as Caruso or Gigli he sang his part very well and would have done quite an excellent job with this aria.

Was it deleted to give more prominence to the role of Butterfly? With an artist as accomplished as



Liping Zhang

Liping Zhang as the heroine, surely that was not necessary.

The fact is that by deleting the aria the traditional meaning of the opera is changed – Pinkerton's remorse is not heard – "son vil" is a damning characterization of oneself. It's all very well for a Stage Director to be innovative; but not to the extent that a major aria is omitted and some essential part of the traditional plot is missing. I'm not even sure that the action on stage matched the music very well in the final scene. The idea of turning the screen movers into Butterfly's ancestors doesn't work at all if the audience doesn't know what is going on until a review appears in the newspaper. At least we were spared the explosion of the atomic bomb which ended one production of *BUTTERFLY* that I unfortunately witnessed.

I was not enchanted with the set from L'Opéra de Montréal. The house was the largest I've seen for this opera and I've never before seen a Japanese house with a hardwood floor. Because the house occupied the entire width of the stage all major entrances had to be made from the rear.

The orchestra called the Opera Lyra Ottawa Orchestra played well under the direction of Mladen Tarbuk. But in spite of all I've said I was swept away by the truly unforgettable performance of Liping Zhang, ably assisted by tenor Marc Heller, Allyson McHardy as Suzuki, and especially Gregory Dahl as Sharpless. All the minor roles were well done. I must mention that Luc Lalonde, one of the contestants for the Brian Law Scholarship in 2001, did a creditable job as the Imperial Commissioner. Luc is part of the Opera Lyra Young Artists Programme which is financially supported by the National Capital Opera Society.

All in all, a memorable evening.

Glimmerglass Musings

by Shelagh Williams

Our pilgrimage to the 30th season of Glimmerglass Opera in Cooperstown in upstate New York yielded four offerings of excellent quality, sufficient to warm the cockles of an opera lover's heart and offset the freezing unsummery temperatures outside (and inside) the Opera Theatre! The overall theme seemed to be houses, both as the opera settings and also as almost an additional character in several of the operas. These included Handel's *IMENEO*, Bennett's *THE MINES OF SULPHUR*, Puccini's *LA Fanciulla del West*, and Gilbert and Sullivan's *PATIENCE*.

We started off with a memorable presentation of Sir Richard Rodney Bennett's first full-length opera, *THE MINES OF SULPHUR*, commissioned by London's Sadler's Wells Opera in 1965. Bennett has made his living composing for films (*Four Weddings and a Funeral*) and is a marvellous orchestrator. However, he used 12-tone music in this opera, providing an eerie atmosphere for the engrossing Gothic ghost story based on a play by Beverley Cross, who also wrote the libretto. The setting is a dark, isolated 18th century manor house where three robbers kill the owner, then are entertained by travelling actors from London who arrive and present a play uncannily mirroring this murder. The troupe then disappears, leaving behind only Jenny, who suspensefully reveals a black spot — she has the Plague which will infect the murderers! The actors may or may not be ghosts, but the infection and retribution are real: the opera ends movingly with all participants singing a Kyrie. This was all powerfully brought off by director David Schweiser with a house interior by James Noone consisting mainly of criss-crossing staircases, all imaginatively lit by Kevin Adams. Glimmerglass Music Director Stewart Robertson skilfully led the large orchestra. Of the three conspirators, tenor Brandon Jovanovich was outstanding as the cruel ringleader Bocannon, ably abetted by mezzo Beth Clayton as the gypsy Rosalind and baritone James Maddelena as the tramp Tovey. Among the actors, soprano Caroline Worra (Amy in *LITTLE WOMEN* in 2002) as Jenny, and nimble mute actor Andrew Gorell as Trim were especially noteworthy. Bass-baritone Kristopher Imiter, in multiple roles as actor plus real and play victims, is scheduled to sing the four villains in Opera Lyra's *TALES OF HOFFMANN*. Although *MINES OF SULPHUR* is a "contemporary" opera, it is now nearly 40 years old and deserves to be better known.

The evening's opera was Puccini's *LA Fanciulla del West* — the first Spaghetti Western?! The setting was Assistant Artistic Director John Conklin's attractive evocation of the Old West of the California Gold Rush, with a mine head on the left and a beautiful backdrop of mountains on the right. However, there were so many rocks and boulders and different levels that one feared for the singers' safety, and there was precious little flat space for Minnie's saloon or her rather elaborate two-story cabin! Constance Hoffman's costumes also contributed greatly to the overall aura of authenticity — though for Minnie's last-second rescue of the hero I did miss the horses on stage which we saw at the Verona Roman Arena. An added attraction was the presence of two tall, handsome, young Canadian singers in principal roles: tenor Roger Honeywell as the gentlemanly outlaw-hero Dick Johnson, his years at the Shaw and Stratford Festivals showing in his strong characterization, and baritone Aaron St. Clair Nicholson as miner leader Sonora. As Minnie, soprano Emily Pulley was visually and vocally excellent, while baritone Earle Patriarco portrayed romantic rival Sheriff Jack Rance. Director Lillian Groag successfully guided the principals and the large cast of miners in an exciting, dramatic reading with some innovative staging, especially of Minnie's pivotal poker game! Stewart Robertson again conducted the whole masterfully. This opera, like *MADAMA BUTTERFLY*, is based on a David Bellasco play, but this story came from his and his father's experiences out West — it was appropriately world premiered in 1910 at the N.Y. Metropolitan Opera, with Caruso.

The third production was Gilbert and Sullivan's comic opus *PATIENCE*, which satirizes the Aesthetic Movement, and especially Oscar Wilde and Algernon Charles Swinburne, on whom the two rival poets in the piece, Reginald Bunthorne and Archibald Grosvenor, are based. Devotees of Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* will recognize Bunthorne as the imaginary friend who must be visited! Director Tazewell Thompson approached the characters and the story of *Patience*

with sympathy, rather than ridicule, and produced a charming, amusing, and thoroughly entertaining result. It was cleverly set by Donald Eastman on a surprisingly bare stage centred by the large exterior of Castle Bunthorne, which rotated to reveal an interior room, whose decor changed as needed for the story. The costuming, by Merrily Murray-Walsh was attractive and mainly traditional Gilbert and Sullivan. The plot involves the innocent and beautiful milkmaid, Patience, whom Bunthorne loves; together with “20 lovesick maidens”, who love in turn, a brigade of dragoons, Bunthorne, and Grosvenor. The subtitle is Bunthorne’s Bride, but in the end Patience and Grosvenor and the maidens and dragoons all pair off, leaving Bunthorne with no bride! The casting included baritone Jake Gardner as Col. Calverley with his requisite jet-speed patter song, mezzo Joyce Castle as Lady Jane who actually played her own cello accompaniment and Glimmerglass favourites tenor Jeffrey Lentz as the slightly over-the-top Bunthorne and bass Kevin Burdette as Grosvenor, whose duet and dance number were a treat. In the title role young soprano Sarah Coburn, was lovely both to look at and listen to. Andrew Bisantz zestfully conducted the orchestra and well supported his contention that Sullivan was a great orchestrator as well as a great melodist.

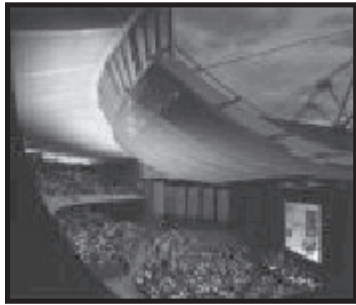
Last but not least was the Baroque offering, Handel’s second last opera *IMENEO*, first performed in London in 1740, and revived in Dublin 2 years later. By this time the voice of the young tenor playing Imeneo had changed to a baritone, necessitating rewriting of the part. Also two arias reappeared in Messiah which premiered 20 days later! The decision of which version of a Handel opera to use is never easy: Glimmerglass gave the North American premiere of a new critical edition by Donald Burrows. The story is fairly straightforward for a Handel opera: sisters Rosmene and Clomiri had been abducted by pirates, and their rescuer, Imeneo, claims Rosmene from her father, Argenio, as his reward. Unfortunately, Rosmene and Tirinto are already in love, while Clomiri loves Imeneo, and so most of the opera consists of Rosmene deciding between heart and duty. It is basically a sad story of unrequited love, all set to beautiful music! Designer Marsha Ginsberg

has updated this production to an overpowering white clapboard house in mid-19th century America, with costumer Doey Luthi supplying dark, formal clothes, the theory being that Victorian society was as unyielding as society in Ancient Greece. Director Christopher Allen used the first act setting of tin porch roof and second storey rooms and windows to arrange various formal tableaux to illustrate the inflexibility of the atmosphere. He also had several very funny touches, including the hilarious second act dinner party where the unhappy family plus the two suitors glared at each other and clattered silverware and teacups during recitatives. Unfortunately, being Christopher Allen, he also added some inexplicable and rather distracting stage business, which was very annoying. Nevertheless, the cast and orchestra music under conductor William Lacey were superb. Canadian tenor John Tessier, Ernesto in Opera Lyra’s *DON PASQUALE* last year, sang the insensitive, egocentric Imeneo well, even managing a difficult love aria while simultaneously shooting ducks overhead, which amusingly came down — or did not! — from the spot he shot at! Soprano Amanda Pabyan handled the crucial role of Rosmene with fine acting and singing. Megan Monaghan, also a soprano, ably portrayed unhappy sister Clomiri’s understandable petulance, while bass-baritone Craig Phillips was a solid Argenio. The highlight of the show was male soprano Michael Maniaci singing the intricate, originally castrato role of Tirinto, who surprisingly here does not get the girl! He brought his beautiful, flexible, flawless singing to this sad, tortured role — small wonder that the audience acknowledged every aria with gusto. We heard him sing Medoro last summer in Orlando at Glimmerglass and earlier he was Nerone in *L’INCORONAZIONE DE POPPEA* at Toronto’s Opera Atelier. The chorus sang and acted well as the family’s servants. This is Glimmerglass’s sixth Handel opera since *TAMERLANO* in 1995 and the productions continue to get better with the years!

Next year’s season, June 30-August 23, 2005, will include Mozart’s *COSI FAN TUTTE*, with John Tessier; *LE PORTRAIT DE MANON* plus *LA VOIX HUMANE* by Massenet and Poulenc, respectively, with Theodore Baerg; Donizetti’s *LUCIE DE LAMMERMOOR* in French with Sarah Coburn (this year’s Patience); and Britten’s *DEATH IN VENICE* — unfortunately, no Baroque opera and no countertenors, but a nice mix.

The Santa Fe Opera

by Tom McCool



The Santa Fe Opera staged its first production in an open air makeshift theatre in 1957. Its origins are remarkably similar to those of the Stratford Shakespearean Festival and, like Stratford,

it grew from humble beginnings to become one of the premiere summer festivals in the world. Now housed in a spectacular opera house that rises magnificently from the desert floor a few miles from Santa Fe, the SFO plays to packed houses during their summer season. In fact, some productions are sold out months before the opera festival opens in early July. In addition to attracting capacity audiences the SFO is able to lure singers, musicians and other opera talent with international reputations to this out-of-the way desert location every summer. Noteworthy is the repertoire. Each year among the 5 operas that are presented there is always something very familiar (this summer it was *DON GIOVANNI*) and something rarely performed. This year *AGRIPPINA*, *LA SONNAMBULA* and *BEATRICE ET BENEDICT* would fit into the "rarely performed" category. The fifth opera in 2004 was *SIMON BOCCANEGRA*. This summer's lineup for the first time in many years did not include a Richard Strauss work. Frequently there is a world premiere. (One of the most anticipated events in the opera world is the premiere of *BEL CANTO*, based on Ann Patchett's best selling novel of the same name. This opera was commissioned by the SFO and was scheduled for the summer of 2006 with French soprano Natalie Dessay. Unfortunately, *BEL CANTO* was recently postponed because the composer claimed that he did not have sufficient time to complete the score.) To call the programming adventurous would be an obvious understatement. Next year's lineup is most intriguing: *TURANDOT*, *THE BARBER OF SEVILLE*, Mozart's *LUCIO SILLA*, *PETER GRIMES*, and Golijov's *AINADAMAR*, "The Fountain of Tears", a world premiere about the life and death of the Span-

ish poet and playwright, Federico Garcia Lorca. Usually every opera is a new production and, once again, the word adventurous is an appropriate description of each opera production.

SFO strives to have at least one or two "big names" each season and in 2004 it was Natalie Dessay (who was brilliant as Amina in *LA SONNAMBULA*). The headliners next summer will be Susan Graham, Dawn Upshaw and controversial director Peter Sellars. The list of artists who have worked at Santa Fe in the past includes many who are (or were) prominent in the opera world. Stravinsky, Ramey, Hampson, Finley, Troyanos, Horne and Kanawa are examples. But, what is just as impressive as the principal singers, conductors and directors is the chorus which is made up of young singers who participate in the SFO Apprentice Singer program. The chorus was superb in all the productions this past summer.

Aside from the Santa Fe Opera there are numerous other reasons to visit the capital of New Mexico. Santa Fe was the original capital of the Spanish province when Spain controlled most of what is now the American west. Much evidence of this period remains today. Though not a large city Santa Fe has a disproportionate number of art galleries, museums, boutiques and restaurants. As well, there is a highly regarded chamber music festival which runs at the same time as the opera festival. It is definitely a tourist friendly town.

Two negatives about Santa Fe are the distance and the weather. In regard to the latter it can get very hot during the day but it cools off nicely in the evening when the operas are performed. The fact that Santa Fe is approximately 2100 miles from Ottawa is the unfortunate reality. Nevertheless, the Santa Fe Opera is so exceptional that you won't regret the effort (and cost) to go there.

Addition information about the SFO is available at <http://www.santafeopera.org/>

Opera and Ballet at Saratoga Springs, N.Y.

by Jean Saldanha

An excellent combination of opera and ballet can be found by driving south of Ottawa through the Adirondacks to Saratoga (about 5 hours). The Saratoga Performing Arts Center (SPAC), (<http://www.spac.org/tickets/pricing/html>) which is set in a very large beautiful park just on the outskirts of town, consists of several buildings where opera, ballet, orchestra and chamber music concerts are held.

Lake George Opera puts on two operas in early July (some seasons an opera and a musical) as well as a concert of opera favourites in either late spring or fall. The operas are held in the Spa Little Theatre. This past summer the productions were *THE ELIXIR OF LOVE* and *CANDIDE*. Last summer they did *LA CENERENTOLA* and *SUSANNAH*. Next year it will be *THE ITALIAN GIRL IN ALGIERS* and *THE MIKADO*. We have been attending productions for several years and have found the singers and staging to be very good. A small orchestra accompanies the opera. (Tel: 518-584-6018 / www.lakegeorgeopera.org) This year we paid \$55 US for a seat in the balcony which is preferable since the theatre is small.

What really drew us to Saratoga many years ago was the fact that it is the summer home of the New York City Ballet. Performances take place in July for three weeks, Tuesday through Saturday, in a large, partially open theatre with covered stage and audience. It is easy to combine an opera with a ballet on a three day visit. There are reasonably priced matinees of ballet on Thursdays and Saturdays (adults \$25 and seniors \$20 US). The ballet programmes vary from full length ballets to mixed programs and performances are always exciting. (Tel: 518-587-3330 / www.spac.org)

There are many other interesting things to do in Saratoga. The Dance Museum has changing exhibits and connected to it is a summer ballet school where one can watch young aspiring dancers being tutored. Saratoga is historically famous as a spa town and for its racing season. The racing museum is also very interesting. There are many lovely big Victorian homes, some of which are B&Bs. The Philadelphia Orchestra presents concerts in August with top-notch soloists. In planning a trip to Saratoga, one thing to take into consideration is that once the racing season starts (last weekend in July) accommodations double in price!

Saturday Afternoon at the Opera

TEATRO LIRICO, CAGLIARI

October 16 *Hans Heiling* (Marschner)

CONCERTGEBOUW, AMSTERDAM

October 23 *Mlada* (Cui, Mussorgsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, Borodin)

GRAND THEATRE, GENEVA

October 30 *Manon* (Massenet)

BAYREUTH FESTIVAL 2003

November 6 *Tannhauser* (Wagner)

BAYREUTH FESTIVAL

November 13 *Parsifal* (Wagner)

SALZBURG FESTIVAL

November 20 *King Arthur* (Purcell)

SALZBURG FESTIVAL

November 27 *Cosi fan tutte* (Mozart)

SALZBURG FESTIVAL

December 4 *Die Tote Stadt* (Korngold)

SATURDAY AFTERNOON AT THE MET

December 11 *I Vespri Siciliani* (Verdi)

December 18 *Tannhauser* (Wagner)

December 25 *Kat'a Kabanova* (Janacek)

January 1 *Rodelinda* (Handel)

January 8 *Otello* (Verdi)

January 15 TBA

January 22 TBA

January 29 *Turandot* (Puccini)

February 5 *Pelleas et Melisande* (Debussy)

February 12 *Le Nozze di Figaro* (Mozart)

February 19 *La Boheme* (Puccini)

February 26 *Nabucco* (Verdi)

Opera Within Reach

Ottawa

Opera Lyra Ottawa

THE TELEPHONE & THE OLD MAID AND THE THIEF

by Menotti

(at Centrepointe Theatre)

January 15, 17, 19 & 22 2005

Black and White Opera Soirée

(at the NAC)

February 19, 2005

LES CONTES D'HOFFMAN by Offenbach

(at the NAC)

April 2, 4, 6 & 9

Information: 233-9200 x221 www.operalyra.ca

Montréal

L'Opéra de Montréal

ARIADNE AUF NAXOS by Strauss

November 6, 8, 11, 13 & 17

Le Gala

December 5

DON PASQUALE by Donizetti

January 29, 31 Feb 3, 5 & 9, 2005

AGIPINNA by Handel

March 12, 17, 19, 21 & 23

All performances are in Salle Wilfrid-Pelletier at Place des Arts

Information: 514-985-2258 www.operademontreal.com

Toronto

Canadian Opera Company

ALBERT HERRING by Britten

(at Harbourfront Centre Theatre)

November 30 Dec 2, 3 & 5

LA BOHÈME by Puccini

January 23, 28 & 30 Feb 3, 6 & 8 2005

SIEGFRIED by Wagner

January 27 & 30 Feb 2, 5, 8 & 11

All performances (except *ALBERT HERRING*) are at the Hummingbird Centre

Information: 1-800-250-4653 www.coc.ca

Opera in Concert

EL GATO MONTES by Penella

October 30 & 31

DREAM PLAY by Sullivan and

THE SUMMONING OF EVERYMAN by Wilson

December 5, 2004

All performances are at the Jane Mallett Theatre

Information: 1-800-708-6754,

www.operainconcert.com

Hamilton & Kitchener-Waterloo Opera Ontario

DON PASQUALE by Donizetti

October 16, 21 & 23 (H) Oct 29 (KW)

Popera November 25 & 27 (H) Nov 28 (KW)

ABDUCTION FROM THE SERAGLIO by Mozart

February 5, 2005 (KW) February 12, 17 & 19 (H)

Information: www.operaontario.com