

Newsletter • Bulletin

Fall

2006

Automne

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

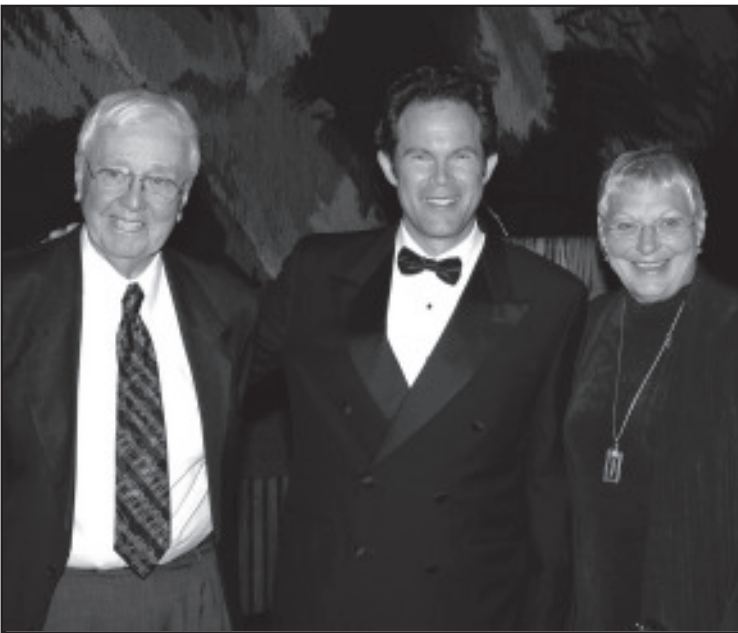
Magical Connections by Marjorie Clegg



The evening with Gerald Finley was magical. On September 20th and 21st, lucky Ottawa audiences listened to Gerald perform Mozart arias, including those associated with two of his signature roles (Papageno and Don Giovanni). Arias included “Der Vogelfänger bin ich ja” and “Ein Mädchen oder Weibchen” from *Die Zauberflöte*; “Se vuol ballare,” “Non più andrai,” and “Hai già vinta la causa” from *Le nozze di Figaro*; “Deh, vieni alla finestra” and “Finch’han dal vino” from *Don Giovanni*; and “Rivolgete a lui lo sguardo” from *Così fan tutte*. His singing and the accompaniment of the NAC Orchestra were perfect.

The warmth of his voice and his personality shone through, as did his fondness for Canada. During “Rivolgete a lui lo sguardo,” which actually mentions Canada (“To speak then of merit,/ I am sure, and so is he,/ That you will not find/ Our equals from Vienna to Canada”), Gerald unfurled a Canadian flag, much to the delight of the capacity audience. His a cappella encore (on September 21st) was a folk song expressing the feelings of those going off to war, a touching reminder of current events.

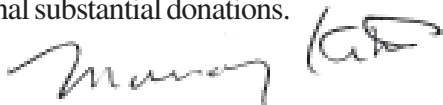
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President's Message

An embarrassment of riches or just too many things going on at the same time? A most successful production of *The Barber of Seville* by Opera Lyra Ottawa. An outstanding concert by Gerald Finley and the NAC Orchestra, not to mention the magnificent contribution by Yefim Bronfman. A delightful reception with excellent food for our hometown opera star after the concert during which he revealed his ambition to sing the National Anthem before a NHL game. The first performances in Canada of Wagner's *Ring Cycle*. And the first of four great Opera alla Pasta afternoons with the showing of Mozart's *La finta giardiniera*. All this in a matter of three short weeks.

All members of the Board of Directors worked very hard to make the reception a success but I would particularly like to thank Renate Chartrand for her work on publicity. Helping us were Klaus Siemsen, who took photos at the event, Marjorie Clegg, who updated the bios of our scholarship winners, and Tom McCool, who did a splendid job of the posters with our winners photos. I would also like to thank Yolande Noel, Marjorie Clegg, Tom McCool, Doreen Wilson, Carole Stelmack, and Eric Merkley for donations to the Brian Law Scholarship as well as to Ute Davis, Bobbi Cain and Peggy Pflug for their additional substantial donations.



The Opera Quiz

1. Engelbert Humperdink composed *Hänsel and Gretel*. Can you name any of his other operas?
2. Can you name the first and last operas for the following composers? a) Britten, b) Donizetti, c) Rossini, d) Tchaikovsky, e) Verdi, f) Wagner.
3. Which philosopher had a profound effect on Wagner?
4. In the first hundred years at Bayreuth which conductors gave the fastest and slowest performance of *Parsifal*?
5. In Wagner's Ring Cycle a) approximately how many named characters are there? b) which two characters figure in all four operas? c) what is the name of Siegmund's sword? d) who were Hagen's parents?
6. Who said "Wagner is obviously mad"?

Opera Alla Pasta — Sunday Afternoon at the Opera

November 26, 2007

Prokofiev's *BETROTHAL IN A MONASTERY*

This opera began as a comic ballad opera called *The Duenna* by the great Irish playwright Richard Brinsley Sheridan and was first performed in 1775. Prokofiev was introduced to the original by Mira Mendelsohn, who adapted *The Duenna* and later became Prokofiev's wife. The composer's inspiration came from operas by Mozart and Rossini. This outstanding production (1998) is from the Marinsky Theatre under the direction of Valery Gergiev and features superstar Anna Netrebko as the young girl being forced to marry someone she doesn't love. Fortunately her duenna, sung by Larissa Diadkova in a truly outstanding comic performance, intervenes and saves the day. Because the original title does not translate well into Russian, *Bethrothal in a Monastery* is used, but the monastery scene with a lot of rowdy monks is only one scene in this colourful opera, set in Seville not far from Figaro's shop and Almadiva's estate.

The performance starts at 2:00 p.m. at St. Anthony's Soccer Club. Dinner follows.

Reservations required: 613-830-9827

Busy, Busy Barber

by Murray Kitts

Now don't get me wrong. I really enjoyed Opera Lyra Ottawa's production of Rossini's comic masterpiece, *The Barber of Seville*. Sets, costumes, lighting - all were great. I must say that I didn't find the orchestra to be drowning out the singers in this production any more than in previous ones. All the principal singers were excellent. Comic situations were fully exploited and sight gags came a mile a minute. These were most enjoyable. BUT, at what cost?

Poor Rosina, she has two important arias. The first is "Una voce poco fa...". This is a chance for a talented singer like Mariateresa Magisano to wow the audience with the beauty of her voice and the power of her characterization. But that doesn't happen when she is busy putting sugar in the tea, peppers in the water, blacking on the napkins and glue on the slippers. The audience is too busy trying to figure out what she is doing to pay much attention to this highlight of the opera. Her second aria is part of the singing lesson in Act 2. Here again the attention of the audience is distracted from her singing by Bartolo's twitchings which are too

many and go on for too long.

Similarly, Philip Cokorinos as Basilio doesn't get much of a chance to triumph in the famous "La calunnia" aria because everyone is watching Bartolo's comic reactions. It really pains me to suggest criticism of Peter Strummer (the Bartolo) - I consider him to be one of the greatest singer-actors I have ever seen - but, if he is upstaging others, it is up to the director to rein him in. However, his performance of Bartolo's "un dottor de la mia sorte" was comedy of the highest order.

The most successful musical numbers were by the splendid Figaro, Jeff Mattsey and by the Count, handling the difficult coloratura passages well, Michael Colvin. But they were not upstaged. Rebecca Haas and Pierre Brault as the servants added to the fun. The OLO chorus continues to get better and better and performed the finale to Act I well disciplined.

Finally, due mainly to the direction of David Gately and the acting ability of the cast, I enjoyed this as a splendid theatrical experience, but perhaps not as a great opera experience.

Trumpets Sound for Joshua

by Tom McCool

In the 50 years of its existence the Santa Fe Opera has established a tradition of bringing in the biggest names in the opera world for its annual summer festival. In the past these luminaries have included Stravinsky, Te Kanewa, von Stade, Horne and Finley to mention just a few. This year the headliners were French soprano Natalie Dessay and Swedish mezzo Anne Sofie von Otter. A less familiar name (but not unfamiliar to NCOS members) is that of Joshua Hopkins, the 2003 winner of the Brian Law Opera Scholarship. Hopkins sang the role of Papageno in *The Magic Flute* and one of the highlights of the production was the showstopper duet he had with Natalie Dessay (as Pamina) in the first act of the opera. Hopkins was a hit with the Santa Fe audiences and also with the critics. Some examples of the accolades he received: "An athletic Joshua Hopkins capered comically as the bird catcher, Papageno, ... Hopkins has a perfectly placed, resonant baritone with a gorgeous, easy sheen to it. ... he is a singer to watch and will doubtless attain real heights in both song and

opera for he has brains and joy to go with his voice." (Craig Smith, *The Santa Fe New Mexican*, July 3, 2006); "Joshua Hopkins brought to Papageno a mellow rich baritone and a delightful comedic characterization." (Alicia Solomon: *Los Alamos Monitor* July 3, 2006) and "Joshua Hopkins was effective as Papageno, his light attractive voice conveying the character's eternal youth and blithe spirit." (James Ostreich, *The New York Times*, August 5, 2006). Hopkins, now located in Houston, has a full schedule for the next year with engagements in Canada, the United States and Europe.

Also in Santa Fe this summer was 2005 Brian Law Scholarship winner, Joyce El-Khoury. Joyce was a member of the prestigious Apprentice Singer program at the Santa Fe Opera and sang in the chorus of four of the operas presented there this summer in addition to covering some of the principal roles. She also will be busy in the coming months with bookings, primarily in the U.S.A., extending into the summer of 2007.

Toronto Overcomes Ring's Curse in Triumph!

by Shelagh Williams

Finally, the time had arrived! The Canadian Opera Company (COC) and General Director Richard Bradshaw had got it all together and were opening their brand new Opera House, the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts (FSCPA), with Canada's first ever production of Wagner's complete Ring Cycle, in three successive week-long performances — just as Wagner's own Opera House had opened in Bayreuth!



Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts

The House itself is lovely, with comfy seats, good acoustics, and a huge orchestra pit, though few aisles. Ladies will welcome the news that two-thirds of the washrooms are for women and that the men's line-ups were longer than the women's! A fascinating talk and backstage tour by Julian Sleath, COC Technical Director, and part of the team working on the design and construction of the new House, revealed that in the Fly Room under the stage, due to budget constraints, the COC would still be utilizing reliable old-fashioned human skill and muscle to achieve its special effects, rather than expensive, but accident-prone, automatic machinery. The Subway linkup is soon to come although, at the moment, this construction is an ugly obstruction to circumnavigate. Aficionados of the pre-show chats should beware! They are now held in the grand-sounding Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre — in reality a set of wooden stairs to sit on — but woebetide anyone with sight or mobility problems trying to manoeuvre the tiny steps or find a spot among the inadequate 110 person seating.

Just prior to opening, the Ring's curse struck: Pavlo Hunka, engaged for his first Wotan, became ill during dress rehearsals with what was finally diagnosed as diabetes and was under doctor's orders not to sing for several months. What to do? Bring in the understudy, John Fanning, for *Das Rheingold* and bring back Peteris Eglitis,

who had sang Wotan in two of the operas during the three-year preparations. Eglitis had decided to eschew Wagner and to focus on Mozart but generously agreed to step in at the last moment. Other small glitches, such as Fricka, Judit Nemeth, having to cancel a performance because of emergency dental surgery, seemed minuscule by comparison! We had tickets to the Second Cycle and, in eager anticipation, arrived in Toronto only to learn with dismay that Adrienne Pieczonka had broken her ankle playing tennis the previous Saturday, and probably would not be able to act Sieglinda, but just sing from the sidelines — more of the curse?

Now to the operas themselves — no problems there! The designer for the complete Cycle of four operas was Canadian Michael Levine. He conceived the Ring in shades from black to white with red and gold accents and as starting in the nineteenth century with time elapsing throughout the Cycle and ending in the twenty-first century. Lighting designer David Finn had to deal with these different time periods, plus four different directors! Pulling it all together magnificently was conductor Richard Bradshaw with his brisk tempi and his COC Orchestra which improves with every outing. The larger, adjustable pit and the purpose-built House enhanced their performance.

The only brand new opera production was *Das Rheingold*, on Tuesday evening, which set the other three operas in context and helped make sense of many things which had seemed odd in the other operas in the preparatory years. The story in essence follows Wotan, King of the Gods, who does not want to pay the giants Fasolt and Fafner for Valhalla, which they have built for him, and so instead steals from Alberich, a Nibelung dwarf, his horde of gold, plus the golden magic helmet and Ring made from Rhine gold — eliciting from Alberich a death curse on any owner of the Ring. Michael Levine, both designer and director for this opera, evinced the Victorian era with corseted and bustled goddesses. However, he required the audience to make use of its imagination, for example representing Valhalla, the Gods' castle, in model form throughout most of the opera, and using drapery for the Rhine, the pile of gold, and even the dragon! However, he pulled it off thanks to imaginative lighting by David Finn although there was too little light in a few instances! The opera

opened charmingly with the three Rhinemaidens, Canadians Laura Whalen, Krisztina Szabo and

Allyson McHardy, singing and cavorting attractively with pillows in the Rhine. American baritone Richard Paul Fink was strong as Alberich, though without seeming evil; Ger-

Norwegian composer Edvard Grieg claimed that Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* was "the most extraordinary work of the whole of our history of culture."

man tenor Robert Kunzli snivelled as Alberich's brother Mime; and British tenor Richard Berkeley-Steele was delightfully wily as Loge, demigod of Fire and Wotan's ally in trickery. A brilliant stroke of Levine's was having the giants Fasolt and Fafner, excellently sung by Canadian basses Robert Pomakov and Phillip Ens, as leaders of working-class gangs of labourers who carried them about on their shoulders, foreshadowing later treatments of Fafner, and emphasizing Victorian class differences. On the distaff side, goddesses Fricka, Freia and Erde were well represented by Hungarian mezzo Judit Nemeth, debuting American soprano Julie Makerov and Danish contralto Mette Ejsing. However, triumphing in what must have been a difficult situation was Canadian baritone John Fanning, from his "entrance" as a sleeping Wotan while Alberich and the Rhinemaidens flirted around him and Alberich stole the Rhine gold, then being wakened by his wife Freia to deal magnificently with his real and real estate problems — it was definitely "local boy makes good"! This was a well performed and produced piece with plenty of action — quite delightful, all in all!

Wednesday evening's production of *Die Walkure* was directed by Canadian film director Atom Egoyan on a shambles of a set with the doors of Valhalla in the background — this time at least we could figure out what they were — and a broken tree trunk in the centre, hiding the magic sword, Nothung. The chaotic unit set was supposed to mirror the opera's dysfunctional family for everyone was related by blood or by marriage; the COC's souvenir programme helpfully included a family tree! Canadian Frances Ginzer, returning from 2004, sang Brunnhilde in the Second Cycle (Susan Bullock sang in the First and Third Cycles) and acquitted herself admirably. She and her sister Valkyries, all in lovely black bustled dresses with breast-plate-like bodices and red-wrapped wrists, made a lively chorus as they hoisted and threw about the white body bags of the dead heroes! The costumes of the other characters echoed the tattiness of the set. Fortunately, this time they opted to play more of the action near the front of the stage, so one could see what was happening! Also reprising their roles from 2004 were powerful American tenor Clifton Forbis as Siegmund and Judit Nemeth as Fricka, while Philip Enns added Hunding to his Ring roles. Despite falling on the littered set in both the First and Second Cycles, per-

haps because of lack of rehearsal time, bass-baritone Peteris Eglitis sang without a stumble to give us a strong Wotan. And what of our injured star, Canadian soprano Adrienne

"The Ring Cycle complete is greater than its four individual parts and hearing it, as Wagner intended over just 6 days, is an experience one will not soon forget."

Pieczonka? Well, she decided to grit her teeth and perform Sieglinde as scheduled — a long costume and boots cover a lot — and she did a marvellous job! Since singing it for the COC in 2004 she has sung it to rapturous acclaim in Bayreuth, and she sang it for us clearly and beautifully, all the while acting her part — though she did hop on for her bows! When questioned the next day Julian Sleath allowed as how Adrienne had come in early to check out the stage and a few things had been placed more handily for her! Also, he explained the lack of fire: Frances Ginzer is allergic to smoke and so they had to resort to projected fire while she sang and the Valkyries carried on torches only at the end, for the ring of fire, when she was no longer singing — isn't backstage info interesting? This

is a powerful human drama taking place over just a day, with lots of dramatic moments, and the COC did it very well.

Friday afternoon brought *Siegfried*, directed by another Canadian film director, Francois Girard. This opera had one of Levine's most innovative concepts: most of the action took place in Siegfried's mind, as if in a dream, with almost all of the cast, including Siegfried, in white pyjamas! To illustrate this in Acts I and II, Siegfried sat on the tree stump from *Die Walkure* with a marvellous tree canopy above, filled with elements of his genealogy, thoughts and memories — though seemingly not as full as in 2005, since the proscenium arch in the FSCPA is not as large as in the Hummingbird Centre! The lighting for these scenes had been improved since 2005 so that



the indication of the canopy object of brain activity was now better spotlighted, and in different colours, especially when Siegfried's parents and their leitmotifs occurred. The action of the opera takes place over three days, covering our hero Siegfried's reforging of his father's sword, his slaying of the dragon Fafner to obtain the magic helmet (Tarnhelm) and the Ring, and his meeting with Brunnhilde. In the title role, German heldentenor Christian Franz returned in even better form than in 2005, while Francis Ginzer as Brunnhilde, Peteris Eglitis as Wotan, Robert Kunzli as Mime, Richard Paul Fink as

(Continued on Page 10)

(Magical...continued from Page 1)

Despite making his home in England, Gerald's connection to Ottawa and Canada is still strong. His mother still lives here and his sister, who was traveling with him on this occasion, lives in British Columbia (in the same small town as my son!).

During several media interviews on radio and in the newspaper, Gerald talked about growing up in Ottawa and specifically mentioned his gratitude to Brian Law. This connection has meant strong support for the Brian Law Opera Scholarship. We were thrilled to put on a reception in the NAC Salon for Gerald after the concert on the 21st and are pleased to include here some of the photographs taken at that event. In addition to welcoming speeches by President Murray Kitts and Gerald Finley, there were displays of the winners of the scholarship, as well as a brochure with detailed information about them. Guests had an opportunity to learn more about—and donate to—the scholarship, meet Gerald and his family, and sample the inviting after-concert buffet. A splendid way to end the evening!

This is not the first time Gerald has lent his support to the National Capital Opera Society and especially the Brian Law Opera Scholarship. We thank him and look forward to his next visit.





Photography by
Klaus Siemsen
and
Pat Adamo



Outré Occupations at Glimmerglass

by Shelagh Williams

The title characters in the three operas which we saw at Glimmerglass Opera this year all had rather unusual or even doubtful “professions”. They were all new productions and were well-produced, as befitted the farewell season for both artistic director Paul Kellogg and music director Stewart Robertson.

On the Saturday we had a busy day with two performances, starting with the world premiere of *The Greater Good, or The Passion of Boule de Suif* by rising American composer Stephen Hartke, who spoke during the pre-show chat! Based, by librettist Philip Littell, on Guy de Maupassant’s short story, it recounts the social interactions and events during the flight of a diverse group of mainly middle-class French citizens during the Franco-Prussian War. Boule de Suif, a courtesan by trade, is an acknowledged beauty and, when they reach an inn, she is propositioned by the Prussian commandant as a condition of their safe passage. She is the most sympathetic character in the work, warm-heartedly sharing her food with the others in the coach, and eventually satisfying the commandant for “the greater good”. However, the self-centred French bourgeoisie are seldom grateful and even become hostile and cruel in the final scenes — not a happy ending! Stephen Hartke’s music, of course, is modern but it has some interesting, even amusing touches, with extra percussion: horses’ hooves clatter, carriage wheels bounce along, tuned soup spoons play at dinner, an icy cold is felt, and bedsprings creak seemingly for ever! Some of the soliloquies were humorous, such as one of the wives’ “I miss my cat” and another’s “If I had to, I would do it!” (sleep with the handsome Prussian!) However, the interpolation of a bel canto-like aria from the old nun seemed most out of place as the group tried to persuade Boule to overcome her patriotic scruples. Conductor Stewart Robertson held it all together with efficacy and director David Schweizer, who had worked with the composer and librettist in the development of the piece, kept the story in clear focus. The set was quite bare but Mark Wendland had designed a clever black stagecoach that was rather clumsily lifted and manoeuvred manually around the stage to indicate movement and which eventually opened, as I had expected, to reveal the 10 voyagers inside. Christopher Akerlind lit singers and highlighted situations well in general but in the first act the stage and coach were so dark that the elderly lady beside me complained that she had no idea what was happening, or where! This darkness was not helped by the fact that designer David Zinn’s clothes, although in period, were essentially black! Boule’s costuming was especially interesting since the singer had to be padded, to approximate the then fashionable voluptuous figure indicated by her nickname, roughly “Butter ball”! — though surely an overweight soprano would not have been hard to find! In this role, soprano Caroline Worra, who has worked her way steadily up from Young American Artist (YAAP) to title role, triumphed over her costume to deliver a well sung and acted performance. Of

the rest of the cast of 14, with no chorus, the three dreadful husbands and one wife were excellently sung by baritone Christopher Burchett, bass-baritone Andrew Wentzel, tenor John David DeHaan and mezzo Christine Abraham. Soprano Jeanine Thames and mezzo Dorothy Byrne effectively performed as the old nun and the innkeeper’s wife, as did bass-baritone Seth Keeton who played Cornudet, the one reasonable passenger. This was a well-produced opera with some engaging moments, but it went on a bit, and it was hard to elicit

“Some of the most adventurous and innovative opera productions in New York take place far from Manhattan, in the upstate village of Cooperstown. Glimmerglass is respected throughout the international opera community for the consistently high quality of its productions.”
- (Vanity Fair)

any real interest in, or sympathy for, any of the characters, with the possible exceptions of Boule de Suif, the put-upon innkeepers, and the hapless young Prussian guard, endlessly relaying messages between Boule and the commandant! Some editing and tightening of the libretto would definitely improve the piece!

That evening we returned to the opera house for Gilbert and Sullivan’s (G&S’s) delightful and lovingly produced *Pirates of Penzance or the Slave of Duty* about young Frederic mistakenly apprenticed as a pirate, instead of as a pilot! It was G&S’s first American opera, which they premiered themselves to combat the “piracy” their H.M.S. Pinafore had endured! Although prepared by Stewart Robertson, in later performances, including ours, Gary Thor Wedow, former head of the COC’s Ensemble Studio, took over admirably as conductor. We were fortunate to have him give the pre-show chat since he was a wealth of information. He pointed out Sullivan’s gift for melody, thanks to his Irish-Italian ancestry, and for parody, as in the similarities between the aria “Je veux vivre” (Gounoud) and the heroine Mabel’s “Poor wandering one”, plus the Anvil Chorus (Verdi) and the pirate’s chorus “Come, friends, who plough the sea” (or “Hail, hail, the gang’s all here!”). He also highlighted Glimmerglass’s own additions: a flute accompaniment to the heroine’s aria echoing *Lucia*’s mad scene theme, the triumphal march from *Aida* encouraging the timid policemen, and bars of the *Flying Dutchman* illustrated by a small sailing boat! Director Lillian Groag, author of *The Magic Fire* being staged at the Shaw Festival this summer, accompanied the mu-

sical shenanigans with visual humour, starting with caricatures of G&S and other composers and pictures of ships to highlight the overture. A large stern bust of Queen Victoria appeared several times throughout the evening to keep an eye on the action! Ms. Groag kept proceedings moving at a fine clip, never overdoing things, but not letting the energy or our interest flag. Associate Artistic Director John Conklin's initial witty caricatures settled down to mainly simple scenic flats which dropped in as needed throughout the piece, and which were well lit by Pat Collins. Jess Goldstein gave us beautiful period costumes which filled the stage with colour and design. The choruses of pirates, maidens and policemen, made up mainly of YAAPs, were excellent musically, with good diction and dancing, and this quality extended to the principals. Versatile mezzo Dorothy Byrne (also in *Boule de Suif*) leapt out of Frederic's birthday cake as an unusually young and attractive Ruth, now a pirate maid of all work, but formerly nursemaid to Frederic, nicely portrayed as a dutiful dimwit by tenor Chad Johnson. His love, the orphan Mabel, the Pirate King, and the Sergeant of Police all had strong proponents in soprano Megan Monaghan, baritone Michael Todd Simpson, and bass-baritone Craig Phillips. The only problem was the diction of the maidens' guardian, Major-General Stanley, whose difficult rapid-fire patter song "I am the very model of a modern Major-General" somewhat escaped tenor Anthony Laciura, although he was otherwise fine. The requisite happy ending left everyone amused and smiling, and the audience exited humming the catchy tunes.

Sunday afternoon our treat was Rossini's *Barber of Seville*, in a principally "Canadian" production, with tenor John Tessier as Count Almaviva and baritone Aaron St. Clair Nicholson as Figaro, all directed by Leon Major — and even Theodore Baerg was initially slated until he got the call from Stratford for *South Pacific*! A more sprightly, entertaining and well directed production would be hard to find! Major and set designer John Conklin again illustrated the overture, this time with living silhouettes, as the Count's musicians, all in black, assembled for their opening serenade, and later accompanied the storm scene with figures with umbrellas blowing about! The sets themselves, imaginatively lit by Jeff Harris, were simple, varying from flat house fronts for exterior scenes to detailed individual rooms which appeared singly or in tandem to allow simultaneous and humorous actions to be seen in the different rooms of Dr. Bartolo's house. The production was updated to the Victorian era and David Roberts' costumes supplied any needed colour. This updating also extended musically, with the more dynamic forte piano



Rossini

replacing the harpsichord for recitatives (the better to hear it my dears!). Irish conductor David Angus matched the humour of the piece with good pacing, marvellous Rossini crescendi, and funny accompaniments, such as the maid Berta cleaning the piano to a *Marriage of Figaro* aria! The cast, both individually and in the ensembles, was well up to the challenge,

"A more sprightly, entertaining and well directed production would be hard to find!"

both dramatically and vocally. In the smallest role as elderly servant Ambrogio, Steven Walker had a running visual joke as he slowly and carefully followed Dr. Bartolo throughout the piece with a cup of coffee like the "hand in your pocket" ad — then in the end drank it himself just as the doctor finally turned for it! Mezzo Judith Christin was a perky maid Berta and bass-baritone Argentinean Edward Chama was an excellent, much put upon guardian Dr. Bartolo. The other bass-baritone, Australian Daniel Sumegi, provided an interesting contrast with his portrayal of Don Basilio as a serious, not the usual ridiculous, music teacher who meant his menacing "La colonna". As Rosina, mezzo Katherine Goeldner had a mobile, expressive face, the necessary volume and coloratura technique, and the ability to switch from all sweetness and light to problem child in the blink of an eye! As we know from his Ernesto in *Don Pasquale* with Opera Lyra Ottawa (OLO), John Tessier has a lovely voice, good diction and can act, whether outwitting Rosina's guardian by impersonating a drunken soldier or as the fake singing teacher, Don Alonzo! In the title role, baritone Aaron St. Clair Nicholson, our recent excellent Mercutio in OLO's *Romeo and Juliet*, entered amusingly on a bicycle, gave us his patter song "Largo al factotum" with ease — is it surprising that Rossini and Sullivan were friends? — and smoothly dealt with all the comic situations of his conniving without going over the top. Rossini may have written *Barber* in thirteen days, but he produced a satisfying, tuneful musical treat which ended our weekend on a high note — it will be interesting to compare this with the OLO production!

This year's rear of theatre exhibition focussed on Rossini and among the many interesting photos was a rare one of Maria Callas as Rosina which she sang for only 5 performances at La Scala. The caption notes that of the 23 operas she sang there, it was her only failure: radishes were thrown on stage!

This year we managed to fit in, among our operas, a concert in the Cooperstown Chamber Music Festival, now in its eighth year. We were fortunate to hear their Mozart Birthday Celebration, which combined a concert in historic Christ Episcopal Church, where James Fenimore Cooper's family is buried, with a reception and silent art auction afterwards in the Smithy, built by his father, Judge Cooper. The concert, featuring flutist and artistic director Linda Chesis, combined a serious first half with a fun, though appropriate, second half, of which Mozart would surely have approved!

(Continued on Page 10)

Events You Should Have Enjoyed! by Shelagh Williams

Canadian tenor Richard Margison headlined the gala opening concert of this year's Chamber Music Festival with a selection of art songs and operatic repertoire, finishing spectacularly with *Nessun Dorma*, which he also used as an encore! The gala closing concert included Brian Law Scholarship winner Shannon Mercer both performing and receiving the Canada Council's \$25,000 Virginia Parker Prize!

The Stratford Festival has a real winner this year with Rodgers and Hammerstein's *South Pacific*. Starring Cynthia Dale as a sparkling nurse Ensign Nellie Forbush and operatic baritone Theodore Baerg as her dashing French planter, Emile de Becque, it combines excellent production values, lively dancing and well-turned comedy with a sensitive treatment of serious matters for a first-rate show.

The Shaw Festival staged the extravagant *Magic Fire*,

the semi-autobiographical play by Lillian Groeg, an opera director currently directing *Pirates of Penzance* at Glimmerglass Opera. The title refers to Brunnhilde's protective "magic fire" in the Ring Cycle, while the play itself, in the author's words has "opera as its central character"!

Opera Lyra's Opera Prelude to *Barber of Seville* in late August included an introduction by Ingemar Korjus and an informative panel discussion and Q&A session, featuring Director David Gately and performers Peter Strummer (Dr. Bartolo), Philip Cohorinos (Don Basilio), and Pierre Brault (Ambrogio). An enchanting mini-concert of opera and operatic favourites by tenor Michael Colvin (Count Almaviva), soprano Mariateresa Magisano (Rosina), baritone Jeff Matsey (Figaro) and principal repetiteur Judith Ginsburg concluded the evening.

(The Ring...continued from Page 5)

Alberich and Mette Ejsing as Erde continued strongly. Phillip Ens sang Fafner, this time sight unseen, since choreographer Donna Feore used 6 dancers to form a towering dragon — not unlike the earlier portrayal of Fafner in *Rheingold*. Incidentally we again got smokeless fire, this time in the guise of Donna Feore's 6 dancers plus 24 supernumeraries whose waving hands produced the forge's fire and Brunnhilde's ring of fire. There were several distinct improvements of the earlier 2005 staging. Canadian soprano Laura Whalen returned to sing the Forest Bird but this time actually flew ahead to show Siegfried the way to Brunnhilde's mountain. Siegfried's reforging of his father's broken sword was much clearer and more dramatic, and the final love duet between Siegfried and Brunnhilde ended with not only an embrace but a kiss to give us a happy ending to this original and most enjoyable production of *Siegfried*.

Finally, on Sunday afternoon, we enjoyed *Götterdämmerung* and it was a real pleasure not to have an extra sheet in the cast list explaining who was ill or injured or substituting — we actually got the correct cast! Designer Michael Levine and director Tim Albery brought *Götterdämmerung* into the 21st century and set it fascinatingly in a high-tech corporate office with a huge boardroom table and red-screened computer monitors, and business-suited Gibichungs and flunkies. The excellent cast included a chorus, plus the Rhinemaidens from *Das Rheingold*, and three Norns in the prologue to introduce the opera. Returning in good voice were Frances Ginzer as Brunnhilde and Christian Franz as a country "hick" Siegfried who was easily duped by the Gibichungs — not surprisingly, considering his

inbreeding! Canadians John Fanning and soprano Joni Henson reprised their February 2006 roles as Gibichung royalty, Gunther and Gutrune, and successfully pulled off the switch whereby Siegfried forgets Brunnhilde to fall in love with Gutrune, and Gunther gets Brunnhilde, to her dismay. However, the star again was tall Swedish bass Mats Almgren, with a beautiful voice and great stage presence, as Hagen, the mastermind behind the treachery. At the instigation of his father, Alberich (Richard Paul Fink), Hagen tricked his half-siblings, the Gibichungs, into doing his dirty work, and then killed Siegfried himself. Like Girard in *Siegfried*, director Tim Albery made needed improvements in *Götterdämmerung's* staging since its inception earlier this year, especially to the finale, which now had a more appropriate, stately procession at the end. As the first of the Ring opera libretti to be written, but the last to be composed, this is a great summing up of the story, and although over five hours in performance, the quality of both libretto and music, plus the COC's execution, made for a fantastic finish to the Ring Cycle. The COC had done itself proud — no wonder we were all out of our seats, clapping and cheering in a long standing ovation!

The Ring Cycle complete is greater than its four individual parts and hearing it, as Wagner intended over just 6 days, is an experience one will not soon forget. The music, the scenic concept, the continuing mythic story — all come together in a joyous amalgam.

(Glimmerglass...continued from Page 9)

Next year Michael MacLeod, the new general and artistic director, has planned a season of 4 operas inspired by the Orpheus story. These are Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo*, celebrating its 400th anniversary in 2007; Berlioz's version of Gluck's *Orpheus et Eurydice*; Offenbach's *Orpheus in the*

Underworld; and Glass's twentieth century *Orpheus*, which we saw in a production last year in London. The return of such delightful singers as Michael Maniaci, Roger Honeywell, and Caroline Worra should ensure a well-sung season.

NCOS Board of Directors

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Opera Lyra Ottawa Guild

Definitely the Opera

Lucie de Lammermoor

Tuesday November 7

Le Nozze di Figaro

Monday January 15

The DVD big screen presentations of both operas take place at 7:00 P.M. in the auditorium at Library and Archives Canada, 395 Wellington Street.

Passionately Yours, Puccini

Ooh La La Opera!, a new and exciting opera company on the National Capital Region entertainment scene, proudly presents "*Passionately Yours, Puccini*" on October 21, 2006 at the NAC's 4th Stage. Tickets are on sale through *Ooh La La Opera!* directly at www.oohlalaopera.ca, through Ticketmaster and the 4th Stage box office or by calling 613.755.1111. Tickets are \$25.00. "*Passionately Yours, Puccini*" officially launches *Ooh La La Opera's* inaugural artistic season.

Saturday Afternoon at the Opera

- October 21 *La Clemenza di Tito* (Mozart); SALZBURG FESTIVAL
 October 28 *Norma* (Bellini); BAVARIAN STATE OPERA
 November 4 *The Cunning Little Vixen* (Janáček); GRANDE
 THEATRE GENEVA
 November 11 *War and Peace* (Prokofiev); BOLSHOI THEATRE
 November 18 *Die Tote Stadt* (Korngold); GRANDE THEATRE
 GENEVA
 November 25 *Il Cappello di Paglia di Firenze* (Rota); GRANDE
 THEATRE GENEVA

"Fom the Met"

The Toll Brothers Metropolitan Opera Saturday Afternoon Live Broadcasts from Lincoln Center in New York.

- December 2 TBA
 December 9 *Idomeneo* (Mozart)
 December 16 *Rigoletto* (Verdi)
 December 23 *Don Carlo* (Verdi)
 December 30 *The Magic Flute* (Mozart)
 January 6, 2007 *I Puritani* (Bellini)
 January 13, 2007 *The First Emperor*

Opera Quiz Answers

1. *Dornröschen, Die Heirat Wider Willen, Königskinder, Die Marketenderin, Gaudeamus.*
2. a) *Paul Bunyan, Death in Venice*, b) *Enrico di Borgogna, Dom Sébastien*, c) *La Cambiale di Matrimonio, Guillaume Tell*, d) *The Voyevoda, Yolanta*, e) *Oberto, Falstaff*, f) *Die Feen, Parsifal.*
3. Arthur Schopenhauer.
4. Boulez (1967) 3 hours 38 minutes, Toscanini (1931) 4 hours 48 minutes.
5. a) thirty-five, b) Wotan and Loge, c) Nothung, d) Alberich and Grimhilde.
6. Hector Berlioz.

Opera Within Reach

OTTAWA

Opera Lyra Ottawa

Simply Opera (at Dominion Chalmers United Church)
November 19

Little Red Riding Hood by Barab Dec 8, 9 & 10

Black & White Opera Soiree February 17, 2007

Otello by Verdi March 31, April 2, 4 & 7, 2007

All performances (except Simply Opera) are at the NAC.
Information: 233-9200 x221 www.operalyra.ca

Cathedral Arts

Nathaniel Dett Chorale November 11

Erin Wall December 16

Performances are at Christ Church Cathedral
Information: 567-1787 www.cathedralarts.com

Orpheus Society

Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* by Menken Nov 17-25

All performances are at Centrepointe Theatre
Information: 580-2700 www.orpheus-theatre.on.ca

MONTREAL

L'Opéra de Montréal

La Traviata by Verdi Nov 4, 8, 11, 13, 16 & 18

Lakmé by Delibes Feb 3, 8, 10 & 14, 2007

All performances are in Salle Wilfrid-Pelletier at Place des Arts
Information 1-514-985-2258 www.operademontreal.com

TORONTO

Canadian Opera Company

Così fan tutte by Mozart
Oct 17, 19, 21, 24, 26, 28 Nov 1, 3 & 5

Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk by Shostakovich
Jan 31, Feb 3, 7, 10, 15, 18, 20 & 23, 2007

Faust by Gounod
Feb 1, 4, 6, 9, 11, 14, 17, 21 & 24, 2007

All performances are at the Four Seasons Centre.
Information: 1-800-250-4653 www.coc.ca

Opera Atelier

The Magic Flute by Mozart November 17-25

All performances are at the Elgin Theatre.
Information: 1-416-872-5555 www.operaatelier.com

Opera in Concert

Les Dialogues des Carmélites by Poulenc
November 19 at 2:30 p.m. in the Jane Mallett Theatre

Information: 416-922-2147 www.operainconcert.com

SYRACUSE

Syracuse Opera

Carmen by Bizet Oct 27 & 29

Information: 1-315-476-7372 www.operasyracuse.com

Check for times and other details on the Websites.