

**Société d' Opéra
de la Capitale Nationale**



**National Capital
Opera Society**

Fall 2019

NEWSLETTER : BULLETIN

Automne 2019

**The 2019 Brian Law Opera Competition
Saturday 19th October 2019, 2:00 p.m.
Southminster United Church
15 Aylmer Avenue at Bank Street**

Please mark your calendar for this, the National Capital Opera Society's principal event which is held every two years. Again there has been an exciting number and quality of applicants associated with the Ottawa area. The panel of first-round judges has chosen the following six talented young singers as finalists:

Susan Elizabeth Brown, soprano

Juliana Krajčovič, soprano

Adam Kuiack, baritone

Ellen McAteer, soprano

Lucie St-Martin, soprano

Mark Wilkinson, baritone

Their CVs have been listed on pp 2 and 3; somewhat abbreviated, but you should not have any problems finding more information on the internet.

On 19th October they will compete for prizes of \$7,500, \$3,500 and \$1,500; the other three finalists will each receive \$750. All will be judged by an expert panel.

General Admission is \$25; while Students pay \$10. Please come and invite all of your musical friends. For this modest price you receive a seat at the best vocal competition in Ottawa and attendance at a reception following the event to meet the competitors, their accompanists and the distinguished judges.

The National Capital Opera Society www.ncos.ca is, of course, a not-for-profit organization with registered charity status (should you consider a donation to this competition) and all moneys go to young singers trying to establish a career.

THE FINALISTS

Susan Elizabeth Brown, soprano



Soprano Susan Elizabeth Brown has appeared in the National Capital Region as Mimi (*La bohème*/Puccini), Adina (*L'elisir d'amore*/Donizetti), Gilda (*Rigoletto*/Verdi), Sophie (*Der Rosenkavalier*/Strauss), and Cunegonde (*Candide*/Bernstein). She is an alumna of the 2017 and 2018 National Arts Centre's Young Artist Program. She will represent Canada with Jeunes Ambassadeurs Lyriques in 2019/2020. She has performed internationally in concert in the United Kingdom and is newly based in Montreal.

Juliana Krajčovič, Soprano



Juliana Krajčovič, soprano, is currently studying for her Masters in Music in Opera Studies at the University of Toronto. She is a graduate of the University of Ottawa, student of Yoriko Tanno-Kimmons. She has won ORMTA's Young Artist Competition, the Ottawa Choral Society Trophy and Most Promising Award at NATS Ontario. She recently toured Ontario and represented Ontario at the CFMTA National Finals.

Adam Kuiack, baritone .



Baritone Adam Kuiack completed his B.Music in voice performance at the University of Ottawa with John Avey and Sandra Graham and is excited to return to the city where it all began! He has performed roles with the University of Ottawa and University of Toronto Operas and has sung in professional choirs and operas across Canada. He now studies at the University of Toronto Opera with Daniel Taylor, where he is a recipient of multiple scholarships.

THE FINALISTS

Ellen McAteer, soprano



Ottawa-born soprano Ellen McAteer has been described as a “powerhouse of dramatic assuredness, the ultimate in vulnerable intensity” (Opera Canada). She holds a M.Music from the University of Toronto, a B.Music from McGill and was a recipient of the Glenn Gould School’s Rebanks Family Fellowship, in addition to receiving career support from Jeunes Ambassadeurs Lyriques, the Jacqueline Desmarais Foundation and the Canada Council for the Arts.

Lucie St-Martin, soprano



Lucie St-Martin studied voice with renowned singers Donna Brown, Yolande and Marie-Danielle Parent (École de musique Vincent d’Indy), Jo-Anne Donoghue (Artishow) and Maria Pellegrini. She has distinguished herself in many operatic roles: Adèle in *Die Fledermaus*, Pamina in *Zauberflöte*, Colette in *L’ivrogne corrigé* and Pauline in *La vie parisienne*. She is the recipient of several bursaries including Desmarais, McAbbie and Desjardins Foundation. She is now completing the second year of her master’s at the Music Conservatory of Montreal with Donna Brown.

Mark Wilkinson, baritone



Canadian baritone Mark Wilkinson holds diplomas from the University of Ottawa, the University of Alberta and the Franz Schubert Institute. He is in the final year of a doctoral fellowship at the Ohio State University. He is active as a soloist, recitalist and chamber musician across North America.

President's Message – September 2019

We have an exciting and busy fall program planned. The highlight is the 2019 Brian Law Opera Competition on October 19th. Last month, we completed the first-round judging and selected, in my opinion, six excellent finalists who I hope will be future opera stars. The Competition this year starts at 2 p.m. Please bring friends, family and colleagues. If you are able to volunteer, please let me know. And most importantly, if you would like to make a donation to help cover the costs of the prizes, it would be greatly appreciated.

On September 22nd, our Past President, Murray Kitts, will be giving one of his excellent talks at our

High C and High Tea event at 2 p.m. at the Ottawa City Hall. It will be a great way to spend an early fall Sunday afternoon, which will comprise an amusing recollection of "Opera Goes to the Movies" followed by a delicious afternoon tea. (with real china, teapots and scones!)

In addition, we have scheduled our Opera Alla Pasta events which is covered elsewhere in this newsletter.

I look forward to warmly welcoming you to the above events, and I want to thank all our volunteers for making all this happen.

Mark Robinson

Brief Encounter

I am sure that many of our NCOS members, especially those who have donated to the BLO Competition Fund and given freely of their time to make the competitions such successes, wondered why our organization did not organize a meeting with Brian while he was in Ottawa. I can't remember when I first heard that there was a plan to bring Brian for a visit, but this was at a time when the NCOS was in financial difficulties and so we were never a partner in planning his schedule which was handled by the Music and Beyond Organization.

The first I heard of the visit was thanks to Renate Chartrand just a few days before his arrival but I hurried to buy tickets for the concert and reception to ensure personal contact between our distinguished visitor and the NCOS executive. The concert was splendid and was organized to illustrate the enormous contributions to all aspects of classical music and its performance made by Brian in his Ottawa years. It was really

by Murray Kitts

dazzling as Brian was at his wittiest with his introductions and the performers gave their all to honour him.

As most of the ushers were volunteers it took some time for me to find where the reception was being held. But not Brian, who had been detained by musicians and admirers in the backstage area. A friend of mine suggested that I could catch him in the hallway and that is exactly what happened. In the few minutes we had together I told him that we hoped that he could find a bit of time before leaving to meet the new NCOS. He said that he had my telephone number and would try to arrange a meeting. But that was not to be. I really felt that I could not intrude on his reunion with so many friends, colleagues and pupils. This was only the fourth time that I had met Brian Law in person but I corresponded with him many times since I became responsible for the BLOC.

Board of Directors

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For information on the National Capital Opera Society or the Brian Law Opera Competition contact Murray Kitts at 613-830-9827 or consult www.ncos.ca

OPERA MAKES A TRIUMPHANT RETURN TO THE NAC

The Marriage of Figaro, National Arts Centre production, June 14, 2019

By Marjorie Clegg and Tom McCool

The Marriage of Figaro has all the ingredients for a successful opera: a great composer, Mozart; a brilliant librettist in da Ponte; an engaging story based on a popular and controversial stage comedy written by Beaumarchais; the NAC Orchestra conducted by Alexander Shelly; and a cast of singers who are among the finest in the land. Add an enthusiastic capacity audience and a successful production it most certainly was!

This NAC presentation was a concert version, or more precisely, a semi-staged production. Two of the most expensive parts of putting on an opera are the set and the costumes. Though we miss those aspects in a concert version, in this case there were appropriate and cleverly-used props on stage and, unlike some traditional concert versions of operas, the singers moved around and interacted with each other showing all the emotions relevant to the story.

Of course, most important of all are the music and the singers. The NAC orchestra under the baton of Alexander Shelley was superb, as always, in their interpretation of the music and support of the singers. The mostly Canadian cast was an excellent ensemble led by Erin Wall as the Countess, Joshua Hopkins as the Count, Adriana Chuchman as Susanna, and Gordon Bintner as Figaro. It was somewhat unnerving to see our Brian Law Scholarship winner Joshua Hopkins in the role of the Count, given that he is usually associated with the more comic role of Figaro (especially in *The Barber of Seville*), but Joshua's acting ability allowed all anger, misbehaviour, and highhandedness of the Count to come through.

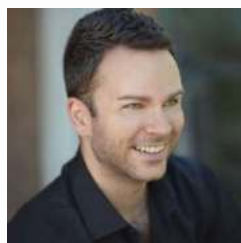
At its premiere in 1786 *Figaro* was an innovation in the opera world of the late 18th century in a most significant way. Prior to *Figaro* the subject matter of operas revolved around gods and goddesses, kings and emperors and the nobility. In *Figaro* most of the cast are ordinary people and the two principals are a valet (Figaro) and a maid (Susanna). Not only do they have the biggest roles, and many of the best arias, but they control most of the action of the piece. The two nobles, the Count (especially the Count) and Countess are certainly the least admirable of the cast and when it comes to matching wits with their servants they find themselves sadly lacking. In many ways the opera reflects the dawn of the revolutionary age, with the accompanying social upheaval, which was on the horizon.

Just as *Figaro* was significant in terms of the depiction of the changing social order, so too was it noteworthy in terms of the music. This work is frequently rated as one of the greatest operas of all. Certainly in the Top Ten! Johannes Brahms speaking of this work said, "in my opinion each number in *Figaro* is a miracle: it is totally beyond me how anyone could create anything so perfect; nothing like it was ever done again, not even by Beethoven." This NAC *Figaro* was not perfect – there were, for example, problems with the projected supertitles. Nevertheless, Brahms would have been very satisfied with this performance.

Opera has not had a presence at the NAC for the past few years but this production gives every indication that opera could make a comeback at the NAC.



Wall



Hopkins



Bintner



Chuchman

Photos credit-simon-pauly__square

Glimmerglass – Still Flourishing!! by Tom McCool

The Glimmerglass Festival has grown from humble origins 45 years ago when *La bohème* was staged in the gym of Cooperstown High School. Now, two months of the summer are filled with operas, musicals, concerts, dinners, lectures and seminars to mention only some of the activities that are presented in their own theatre on their picturesque campus near Lake Otsego, just south of Cooperstown. Over the years there has been great growth but also a multitude of significant changes. One has been an emphasis on youth. The Young Artists program now numbers 54 with an additional 65 summer interns involved in all the various aspects of arts administration. A recent innovation has been the inclusion of an American musical on the main stage every summer. This year that musical was *Show Boat* which, along with *La traviata*, will be the focus of this report.

Show Boat was created in 1927, a Jerome Kern-Oscar Hammerstein II collaboration. Despite the fears of Hammerstein that it was destined to be a flop, 90 years later it is still going strong.

Show Boat continues to tour across the country, has been revived numerous times on Broadway and has been made into at least three movies. What makes it special and, perhaps, accounts for its longevity are the issues that dominate the plot: racism, spousal abuse, alcoholism, miscegenation and addiction. Based on an Edna Ferber novel, this is a very serious work and the issues “are still with us today. Kern wrapped it in joyous and heart-breaking songs that have become part of the fabric of our lives. The work is compellingly historic and contemporary all at once.” -- *Francesca Zambello*. This was “the first musical driven by a serious plot, the first musical where book and music merged. An enormous success, it forever changed the course of American

musical theatre.”--*Berkshire on Stage*. Directed by Francesca Zambello, the Festival Artistic Director, this production has all the elements that result in a great musical: wonderful music (with a multitude of hit tunes such as *Ol’ Man River*, *Can’t Help Lovin’ Dat Man* and *Make Believe*), spectacular dancing, impressive sets and costumes, and an excellent orchestra in the pit. *Show Boat* requires a big cast and in this production there were no weaknesses. The one standout among many was Lauren Snouffer, a graduate of the Young Artists Program, who played the principal role of Magnolia Hawks.

Verdi’s *La traviata* was first presented to the public in 1853 at La Fenice in Venice. The premiere was a fiasco but now, 166 years later, and based on the number of performances in the last year, it is the most popular opera in the world. Its popularity was very much in evidence at the final presentation of the Glimmerglass season: it was standing room only. And with good reason! Directed once again by Francesca Zambello, this was a production that was exceptional in every way: musically, dramatically,



courtesy Glimmerglass Festival

Ravenal

Hawks



Photo: Karli Cadel

Annina

Violetta

sets, costumes and exuberant dancing. In the final analysis the success of *La traviata* usually comes down to the singer who portrays Violetta. This Violetta was Amanda Woodbury and she was simply terrific.

Signifying another change at Glimmerglass is the fact that next summer all four main stage productions (*Rinaldo*, *Die Feen*, *Don Giovanni* and *The Sound of Music*) will be directed by women and two of the four will be conducted by women. As well, next year’s Artist in Residence will be the Metropolitan Opera’s Isabel Leonard who will also be featured in *The Sound of Music*.

Glimmerglass, Based (Sometimes Somewhat Loosely) on...

by Lesley Robinson

The 2019 Glimmerglass mainstage productions included four diverse pieces with some thematic connections. It can be enlightening to take a look at the source materials for each production—what were they based on, what did the composers emphasize, and how might they relate to each other? Two of the mainstage productions are set in the United States and two set in France, although neither of these is in French. In fact, three of the four pieces have English libretti.

Show Boat by Jerome Kern, with book and lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II, was based on the 1926 novel of the same name by Edna Ferber. The novel tells the story of three generations of performers on the show boat, Cotton Blossom, which meandered its way along the Mississippi, stopping at small towns along its banks to perform for local audiences. The action moves to Chicago and New York before coming full circle to the Mississippi. Ferber conducted research before writing her novel. She wanted to understand the show boat experience and in 1925 she took a journey to North Carolina to spend some time on one of the few remaining working show boats at that time. She conducted interviews and met some of the real-life characters on whom she based the characters on board the Cotton Blossom. The novel was a nostalgic and touching representation of this dying performance genre.

The musical version premiered in 1927, just one year after the book, so it was based on contemporary material. There are changes to the story which are inevitable in a two-and-a-half-hour presentation of a story that spans 30 years of narrative. The novel begins with the purchase of the Cotton Blossom when the owner's daughter Magnolia, who is to become the leading lady of the musical version, is only ten years old. Life aboard the show boat is presented much more darkly in the novel, whereas the genre of the musical comedy inevitably treats themes with somewhat trivial banality. The incident in the first act dealing with the theme of anti-miscegenation laws (which remained in force in some US States until 1967) is treated only briefly and leaves the audience wondering where that important idea went. In the novel Magnolia falls in love and elopes with her leading man. The musical has her disapproving mother attempt to interrupt the wedding. In the book, Captain Andy (Magnolia's father) falls overboard and drowns, yet in the musical he's still alive and well (although still severely henpecked) in the second act. Bizarrely the musical presents his dysfunctional marriage as the one that lasts, when Magnolia's and Julie's are plagued by addiction and abandonment. Is the only way to stay together to remain *unhappily* married for years?



Klea Blackhurst as Parthy, Justin Hopkins as Joe, Judith Skinner as Queenie, Lauren Snouffer as Magnolia, Conductor James Lowe and Michael Adams as Gaylord

Glimmerglass, Based (Sometimes Somewhat Loosely) on.... (cont.)

When we arrived at our B&B for this year's festival, our delightful hostess told us that guests had described this year's production of *La traviata* as the best they had ever seen—high praise indeed. Verdi's 1853 opera was based on the 1852 play *La Dame aux camélias* by Alexandre Dumas fils, adapted from his own 1848 novel of the same title. Dumas's work was semi-autobiographical. The fallen woman in his book/play was named Marguerite Gautier and was based on a real-life courtesan, Marie Duplessis, with whom he had a brief affair. The young Dumas was indeed very young at the time, the novel appearing when he was only 23 years old, not unlike his romantic hero, the young and passionate bourgeois, Armand Duval. Incidentally, Marie Duplessis died of consumption at the age of only 23.

Verdi chose to base his opera on contemporary sources and wished fervently to set it in the (then) present day. He faced fierce opposition from the management of La Fenice, where the opera was premiered, and finally reluctantly agreed to staging it in early eighteenth-century costume. The unfortunate casting of Fanny Solvani-Dona-telli in the title role, then 38 years old, considerably overweight, and unconvincing as a frail, consumptive young woman, led to some booing from the audience. The singers cast in the tenor and baritone roles were also unfavourably received by the audience. In a letter to a friend the following day Verdi commented, "*La traviata* last night a failure. Was the fault mine or the singers'? Time will tell." Verdi was determined to make his opera a success and, following some musical revisions, *La traviata* was finally performed

with a new cast at Venice's Teatro San Benedetto on 6th May 1854 to the great acclaim it deserved. Time certainly did tell.

Verdi's version of the story, other than the changed names, closely follows the plot of *La Dame aux camélias*. Dumas's novel is narrated by the hero Armand and another frame narrator. The opera begins with the plaintive music which returns later and foreshadows Violetta's demise, such that we see the whole story from the point of view of Violetta. In many productions (indeed in this one) the story is presented as the recollections of Violetta on her deathbed, coming full circle to her final moments. Dumas's hero believes right until the end that Marguerite left him for another man.



Curtain call. From left to right: Adrian Timpau as Giorgio Germont, Amanda Woodbury as Violetta, Kang Wang as Alfredo and Lindsay Metzger as Flora



The magnificent screen adorning the pre-performance stage

The brief life of Marie Duplessis, the real-life inspiration for both Marguerite of the novel and play and Violetta of the opera, ended in 1847, just a year before Dumas's novel appeared. Born into a humble family in Normandy, she went to Paris to make her own way in life. She inhabited what was known as the "demi-monde", a particularly French social group between the aristocracy and the lower classes. She hosted a salon, a gathering place for writers, politicians and artists where wit and conversation flourished. She is believed also to have had an affair with the composer Franz Liszt. Like the Violetta we know and love, she was greatly admired, holding court among rich and powerful men who could never invite her into high society.

Glimmerglass, Based (Sometimes Somewhat Loosely) on.... (cont.)

Of this year's Festival productions, the most interesting adaptation for me was *The Ghosts of Versailles* (1991) by John Corigliano, based, somewhat loosely, on the third play in Beaumarchais's Figaro trilogy, *La Mère coupable*. There was in fact another 20th century operatic adaptation of the play which premiered in 1966 by French composer Darius Milhaud with a libretto by his wife, Madeleine Milhaud. Corigliano's adaptation is interestingly constructed with a whole cast of ghosts who do not appear in the play, so that it becomes a play within a play.



John Corigliano takes a bow, applauded by conductor and Glimmerglass Music Director Joseph Colaneri

The play itself (Beaumarchais's last) premiered in 1792, just one year before the execution of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette. The connection between Marie Antoinette and Beaumarchais dates from the publication of *Le Mariage de Figaro* in 1778 when King Louis XVI was so shocked by its subversive content that he banned the play outright. It was the queen's support that resulted in the play finally being performed publicly. A creative interpretation of this connection allows for the contrivance of Beaumarchais being in love with Marie Antoinette. It is the story of the ghosts of Versailles that supplants that of *La Mère coupable* in the opera. The plot of Beaumarchais's play is incredibly complicated and the parts of it that we see supply enough craziness and buffoonery to satisfy the most ravenous comedic appetite. Suffice it to say that Figaro once again saves the day. There is a little hint of *Back to the Future* in *The Ghosts of Versailles*. Whatever Beaumarchais might hope for, it would be unwise to disturb the space/time continuum; in other words we cannot safely change the course of history, so the hapless last queen of France cannot be saved.

The final production of the 2019 season, *Blue* by Jeanine Tesori with a libretto by Tazewell Thompson (who also directed) is based on neither play nor novel, but takes its inspiration from the reality of contemporary American life. According to the Los Angeles Times, American black men are 2.5 times more likely to be shot by the police than their white counterparts. The annual rate varies by age with young men the most likely to be killed. According to university studies, police use-of-force is a leading cause of death for this group.

Blue had its world premiere at Glimmerglass this season. In an early draft of the opera, the father in the story was a jazz musician. Mr. Thompson initially resisted Ms. Tesori's suggestion to make the father a police officer, but the irony, the conflict and the pathos inherent in the situation won him over. He interviewed black police officers in Washington, D.C. and Harlem to gain insights into their family and work relationships. The characters in the story are not named. They are simply the Father, the Mother, the Son, friends and colleagues. This universalises their experience - it is not only the story of one fictional family, but the everyday reality of many black American families, living with the anxiety and the conflict looming in their lives. The Father clashes with the son he seeks only to protect. Nevertheless, there are touching hopeful moments. We meet the Mother when she is pregnant and joyful, looking to the future. We witness a happy childhood and a loving family. The epilogue is a poignant scene of the family at the dinner table. There is a tender reconciliation between Father and Son and they speak of the latter's plans for the future. He will attend just one more peaceful protest.



The Reverend—Gordon Hawkins, The Mother Briana Hunter, The Father—Kenneth Kellogg, The Son—Aaron Crouch, Congregant—Ariana Wehr

Chamber Opera Company Ottawa (COCO)

By Judith Ginsburg

Chamber Opera Company Ottawa (COCO), a professional company founded by Judith Ginsburg, longtime Principal Repetiteur with Opera Lyra Ottawa, is pleased to announce its 2019-2020 season. COCO's mission is to nurture and introduce children to the multifaceted and thrilling art form of opera; present concerts with vocal and chamber music components; present chamber operas. The company has had great success with performing Humperdinck's opera *Hansel and Gretel* in an abridged version for children in English and French at local elementary schools and at the Shenkman Arts Centre Music Studio (see cast photo from the the Shenkman performance taken by photographer Lois Siegel). The various productions of *Hansel and Gretel* have included sopranos Ania Hejnar, Isabelle Lacroix, Mary Zborowski; mezzo-sopranos Sonya Sweeney, Armine Kassabian; Judith Ginsburg as pianist and narrator; students from the Ottawa Suzuki Strings music school portraying the Gingerbread Children.



Back Row, left to right - Sonya Sweeney, Ania Hejnar, Judith Ginsburg. Kneeling in front - Mary Zborowski. The children in the photo are students from the Ottawa Suzuki Strings music school.

Save the dates for COCO's exciting and eclectic 2019-2020 season as follows:

Piazzolla and Pinot: Saturday, October 12th, 2019, 2:00-4:00 p.m., KIN Vineyards, 2225 Craig's Side Rd, Carp, ON K0A 1L0

Ticket \$30 includes 3 wine tastings accompanied by a charcuterie and cheese board. Cash bar. Tickets available on Eventbrite

KIN Vineyards celebrates the release of its Fall 2018 Pinot Noir in its enchanting surroundings in partnership with Chamber Opera Company Ottawa by presenting a concert of tango and gypsy-inspired works by composers including Piazzolla, Albeniz, Kreisler and Weil. Featuring Christiane Riel, soprano; Jean-Hee Lee, violin; Martin de Zuviria, guitar; Judith Ginsburg, piano.

An Evening of Opera Highlights:

Friday, November 29th, 2019, 7:30 p.m., House Concert in Ottawa South; **Seating is limited. To reserve, email john.royle.1@gmail.com or call 613-233-6345. Reservations begin Friday November 1st.**

Admission is by donation, a minimum donation of \$20 is recommended. Net proceeds go to the musicians.

Get close to opera in a salon setting featuring some of opera's most beloved arias performed by Ania Hejnar, soprano. Other featured artists are Jean-Hee Lee, violin; Desiree Abbey, cello; Judith Ginsburg, piano. Meet the artists at the reception following the concert.

Beauty and the Beast, Opera For Children:

Saturday, March 28th, 2020, 3:30-4:30 p.m., Richcraft Theatre, Shenkman Arts Centre, 245 Centrum Blvd, Orléans, ON K1E 0A1. Ticket Prices: Adult - \$20; Child - \$15. Tickets will be on sale at Shenkman Box Office

With the support of a grant from the Shenkman Arts Centre ARTicipate Endowment Fund, Chamber Opera Company Ottawa presents *Beauty and the Beast*, an opera by André Grétry in a thrilling adaptation for children. Set in Southeast Asia on an enchanted island in the Indian Ocean, the cast includes Ania Hejnar, soprano, Sonya Sweeney, mezzo-soprano, Jeffery Boyd, tenor, Ryan Hofman, baritone, and children's chorus, all under the direction of Judith Ginsburg, Music Director & Pianist, and Kathi Langston, Stage Director.

Click the following link to see the press release announcing COCO as a grant recipient.

<https://artsnetottawa.ca/announcing-the-2019-2020-articipate-project-grants/>

Orlando at the Boston Early Music Festival by Lesley Robinson

With only four performances of a fully staged opera every two years, attending the Boston Early Music Festival is a rare and special treat. *Orlando* by Agostini Steffani with a libretto by Ortensio Mauro was first performed in 1691. The opera is a delightful romp with a complicated plot complete with knights, princesses, sorcerers and the pangs of love. Seventeenth century style special effects are employed, although as may well have happened over three hundred years ago, they don't always work. The cast was left to improvise when a "cloud" failed to descend from on high, and did so admirably. Visually the production was fabulous with colourful costumes by Anna Watkins, a vibrant set by Gilbert Blin and Kate A. Knoll, and magnificent dancing choreographed by Marie-Nathalie Lacoursière.

The authentic baroque Boston Early Music Festival Orchestra plays facing each other without a conduc-

tor and the continuo features Musical Directors Paul O'Dette on theorbo and Stephen Stubbs on baroque guitar (see photo). The orchestra were a joy to listen to.



Photo by Mark

We owe a great debt to them for keeping such rarely performed music alive. For extracts google orlandobemf.

Opera alla Pasta

Nov 17 - *Les Huguenots* - Meyerbeer

Dec 1 - *Les Indes gallantes* - Rameau

March 22 - Opera TBA

April 5 - *Beatrice di Tenda* - Bellini

May 3 - *Evgeny Onegin* - Tchaikovsky

May 31 - AGM. Opera TBA

DVD presentations begin at 2 p.m. at St. Anthony's Soccer Club and are followed by a delicious meal. Cost: \$25. Call 6138309827 4 days before the video presentation to reserve.

Events You Could Have Enjoyed

by Shelagh Williams

Ottawa Fringe Festival: What do you know about Winnipeg-born actress and singer Deanna Durbin, a much bigger star than Judy Garland in the 1930s and '40s? The two were fellow child musical stars at MGM, but Deanna went on to Universal Studios, saving them from bankruptcy, to become the highest paid actress in the world!

In *Ingénue*, Canadian opera-trained singer Melanie Gall cleverly introduced Deanna Durbin being interviewed just after the untimely death of Judy Garland. She insisted that the two were both friends, though rivals, as she recounted Deanna's story and sang her repertoire, ranging from opera to popular standards, in a most entertaining and informative musical show. It was well produced, with a classy programme including a song list, and CDs available afterwards. Deanna was beloved during WWII, yet at age 27 she left the screen - and offers from the MET - to retire quietly and happily in France after the war. She lived until 2013, while Judy Garland died early, in 1969 - so Deanna made the right choice for herself, if not for her public! Another great - if forgotten - Canadian singer!

Thousand Islands Playhouse (TIP): How often can you enjoy a Canadian Classic marvellously performed, in your backyard? Well, Gananoque's Thousand Islands Playhouse (TIP) provided this, in spades, with their production of *Anne of Green Gables, The Musical!*

Director/choreographer Stephanie Graham took the musical by Donald Heron and Norman Campbell and with a superb cast, great design, and talented musicians, returned us to a gentler time. Set designer Sean Mulcahy gave us such low-tech, amusing concepts as a train station which flipped to the Green Gables two-story homestead and Matthew Cuthbert's buggy with a delightful mechanical horse! Costume designer Robin Fisher's outfits were apt and charming. Music Director Chris Barillaro conducted from the piano, with a spirited 5-piece band. As mentioned, Graham choreographed the dancing and especially the chorus and directed the huge cast, handling everything extremely well. Even Matthew's death - a sore point with my companion - was dealt with gently and tastefully, with the pressed-wood rocker just suddenly becoming empty.

Most of the cast were debuting with TIP, including Emily Robertson as Anne Shirley, Conor Scully as Gilbert Blythe, Larry Monnell as Matthew Cuthbert, Kelsey Verzotti as Diana Barry, and Seanna Knudsen as Josie Pye. However, the all-important Marilla Cuthbert was sung by TIP musical favourite Marcia Tratt, who was earlier in their production of the sequel, *Anne and Gilbert!*

What a treat to enjoy a great production of Canada's longest running musical - since 1965 in Charlottetown, P.E.I.! I judge a production by the rendition of my favourite piece, *Ice cream*, and they passed with flying colours!

NAC Summer Music Institute Young Artists Programme (YAP) by Shelagh Williams

This annual training programme, founded by Pinchas Zukerman, has been going for 21 years, much to the enjoyment of local fans and the enlightenment of young musicians. The latter, comprising players of orchestral instruments, plus pianists and singers, receive expert coaching and also perform in Works In Progress Concerts, Master Classes and Showcase Concerts.

We were especially interested in the four young singers: Canadians mezzo Danielle MacMillan, who starred in *Kopernikus* in the spring; tenor Yanik Gosselin, a uOttawa voice grad, now at McGill; baritone Marcel Sokalski and American soprano Zarah Brock.

Their first concert was an amazing double master class, with singers and pianists marvellously coached by soprano Arianna Zukerman and pianist Bryan Wagorn (uOttawa grad and now Assistant Conductor at the MET!). They performed and worked on a couple of arias and a duet. What a revelation and what a resulting improvement! - a true collaboration if properly done!

A highlight was Arianna Zukerman interviewing Joyce

El-Khouri. The two are friends, having sung in Opera Lyra's *Magic Flute*. Joyce, a BLOC winner and uOttawa music grad, now sings all over the world. With deft questioning and some probing queries from, mainly, the voice YAPs, we learned about far flung opera houses (Savonlinna), good acoustics (Concertgebouw), favourite roles (Elizabeth I), recording rare operas, dealing with people, even just surviving! And to never, ever check your performance score or outfit - unless there's a Sacks handy!

The final vocal concert was a delight. Each number was accompanied by a piano or harpsichord ensemble, a string quartet, or Jean Desmarais and Fred Lacroix together on piano! The singers sang solos, duets and a quartet, and Arianna graciously sang two numbers also. Two especially noteworthy offerings were Sokalski's rendition of *Dover Beach* and MacMillan's heartfelt *Il Tramonto (Sunset)* by Respighi, both with the Ulysses String Quartet. Altogether a most satisfying evening!

It was a shock to learn that this would be the final NAC YAP.

Another Vocal Showcase at Music and Beyond Festival! by Shelagh Williams

I After last year's great vocal and operatic slant on the festival (see Fall '18 Newsletter), Julian Armour continued this year in a similar vein to celebrate the festival's 10th anniversary. The first such concert was *An Afternoon of Song* with Ottawa's own beloved soprano **Donna Brown**, with **Stephane Lemelin** on piano! At uOttawa, before each moved to Montreal to work, Donna taught the Art Song course and Stephane was Music School Director and piano professor, plus they have recorded together, and so they were used to working together, and it showed! Donna wore a becoming black gown and explained at the start that she would be singing as if she were at the Schumann's home, with friends - which was slightly hampered by the first 5 rows being empty! They began with Schumann's great *Leiderkreis* song cycle, which Stephane nicely introduced. In the second half, in the Debussy and Mahler, Donna sang more freely with the lovely creamy voice we know so well! It was great to hear the two performing so beautifully together again.

II Later that day, we had another treat, the new **Aureas Voces Early Music Ensemble**, formed last year by **Nick Veltmeyer**. Entitled *An Ocean Apart: English and Nova Scotian Song*, Purcell songs and Veltmeyer's arrangements of N.S. folksongs beautifully melded with accompaniment and instrumental selections by violinist Jeremy Rhizor, lutenist/guitarist Jonathan Stuchbery, and Nick Veltmeyer on harpsichord. With perfect pitch and tremendous breath control, the ensemble featured soprano Janelle Lucyk and tenor and lutenist Kerry Bursey, and included countertenor Simon Honeyman and soprano Bronwyn Thies-Thomson from Ottawa, and was quite marvellous.

III Next evening a block buster: *Dixit Dominus: A Handel Celebration!* Fortunately, a pre-show chat with **Daniel Taylor** and **Charles Daniels** helped prepare us, although the miking was poor. We were first regaled with four Handel arias gorgeously sung by BLOC winner soprano **Meghan Lindsay**, mezzo **Lillian Brooks** and tenor **Charles Daniels**, and two duets expressively sung by **Meghan** and countertenor **Daniel Taylor**, all accompanied by the **Theatre of Early Music** and **Matthew Larkin** on harpsichord (and later organ). The first half concluded with the first three movements of Handel's *The Ways of Zion Do Mourn*, conducted by Daniel Taylor with the **Choir of the Theatre of Early Music** and most of the **Aureas Voces**

heard the day before. Finally, Handel's masterpiece, the psalm *Dixit Dominus* with these full forces, plus the soloists, burst forth - what an achievement for a young 22-year old composer!

IV The following evening there was a delightful recital by Canadian coloratura soprano **Jane Archibald**, in her Ottawa debut, with COC Ensemble Studio Head **Liz Upchurch** on piano. Jane, with her blonde hair down and wearing a lovely flowing flower-covered long gown, illustrated why she sings around the world. She began with an amazing *Hark! The Ech'ing Air* plus more Purcell, a Mozart aria, and three Debussy songs. She finished the first half in spectacular style with Schubert's *Shepherd on the Rock*, with clarinettist Dominic Desautels joining in energetically, and the final lovely verse *Spring will come* resonating this year especially with we weather-beaten Ottawans!

The second half began with a lovely rendition of four of Britten's *Illuminations* (in French) and two marvellous English sets by Quilter and Burns. She then wowed us with three of Strauss's *Six Songs* and, again with the clarinettist, completely conquered all to end with the *Csardas* from *Fledermaus*, for a great finale - what a party piece! They encored with *Spring* from *Shepherd* and a lovely lullaby written by Liz Upchurch, to send us home contented!

V The next day we enjoyed a truly amazing *Ora squisita* of Italian repertory sung by Canadian tenor **Steeve Michaud**, accompanied beautifully and attentively by former Opera Lyra Ottawa repetiteur **Judy Ginsburg**. Steeve wisely opened with a Tosti song, *Ideale*, to show off his lovely full voice, then launched into operatic arias from Meyerbeer's *L'Africaine: O Paradis* and Boito's *Mefistofeles: Giunto sul passo estremo*, before returning to more Tosti songs. Now in full flow, he delivered a gorgeous *Recondita armonia* from Puccini's *Tosca* and, with full force, Salvatore Cardillo's *Core n'grato* - which they loved in Sicily! Finally, of course, came *Nessun dorma* from Puccini's *Turandot* - what a programme! As an encore, we enjoyed a gentle *I'll be seeing you* - and we hope he returns soon!

VII Next day it was the turn of Emerging Artist baritone **James Coole-Stevenson**, accompanied

Another Vocal Showcase at Music and Beyond Festival! (Contd.)

beautifully by pianist **Tea Mamaladze**, to entertain us. With a programme exhibiting a Spanish influence, he first displayed his attractive voice in Massenet's *Nuit d'Espagne*. Then he returned to his title role in uOttawa Opera Company's *Don Giovanni* with a lively *Finch'han dal vino* and the more lyrical *Deh vienni alla finestra*. Poulenc's *Le Bestiaire* song cycle led into the Ravel set beloved of baritones, *Chansons de Don Quichotte a Dulcinee*, which he was really into, especially *Chanson a boire!* He concluded with four of his favourite songs, of which the Gluck *O del mio dolce ardor* really suited his voice. James encored his varied programme with *Songs my Mother Taught Me*, sung to his mother in the audience!

VIII This year's blockbuster finale was the **Brian Law Gala**: 250 musicians all conducted by **Brian Law!** - the NACO and Thirteen Strings plus members and alumni of the Cantata Singers and many of the other Ottawa musical entities he was involved with and/or founded in his 25 years in Ottawa from 1965 to 1990. Julian Armour feels that Brian Law probably made a greater contribution to music in Ottawa than anyone else in its history! And, of course, the NCOS patron Gerald Finley was nurtured in St. Matthew's Men and Boys Choir, and our opera competition is named after Brian Law!



photo Rachel Dawson

The fantastic concert began with Brian conducting, from the harpsichord, the **Thirteen Strings** (13S), of which he was founding conductor, in Handel's grand *Arrival of the Queen of Sheba*, followed by Mozart's *Divertimento #1*, and then countertenor **Daniel Taylor**, also a St. Matthew's

alumnus, with *Where'er you walk* from Handel's *Semele*. Brian prepared the **Cantata Singers** in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* for their very first gig working with Mario Bernardi at the NAC, and they reprised two numbers, including Dido's evocative *Lament* with soprano **Ellen McAteer**, with 13S, before launching into two lovely church cantatas by Bruckner and Healey Willan. To remember recently deceased composer and Brian's mentor Derek Holmes, they played Holmes' *Largo*, followed by Brian's own vocal arrangement of the *Huron Carol*. The first half concluded with composer and organist **Paul Haley**, also a St. Matthew's alumnus, playing his own brilliant *Tocatta Andromeda!*

The second half was heralded with the **Ottawa Symphony Orchestra** brass in two exuberant fanfares from Dukas and Copland, followed by the Gentlemen and Alumni of the **St. Matthew's Choir** singing Byrd's *Ave Verum Corpus* a cappella and Bendnall's Pentecost motet *Come, Holy Ghost* - repertoire carefully chosen since few are still singing treble! The **NACO** trooped in for the overture to the first opera he conducted at the NAC, Mozart's *Figaro*, and Ravel's *Pavane*. The climax came when the huge chorus filed in behind the NACO and on both sides of the balcony for Brahms' glorious *How lovely is thy dwelling place* and the *Dona Nobis Pacem* from Bach's *B Minor Mass*, with organ, Brian's first piece with the **Ottawa Choral Society** at the NAC. For the finale the NACO was replaced by 13S and we were wowed by the magnificent sound of the huge chorus in the *O Fortuna* from *Carmina Burana* - What a concert!

IX Amongst our other vocal experiences, we must not omit Ottawa mezzo **Sandra Graham** and tenor **Nils Brown** who sang during the opening **Music and Circus Gala**, the returning Boston-based vocal ensemble **Tapestry** which we caught in an interesting programme prepared for the WWI Armistice Centenary, and soprano **Joan Fearnley** who introduced and sang beautifully and clearly *Three Songs* by Amy Beach.

Two operas were also presented: *Sleeping Rough*, which we saw last year (see Fall'18 Newsletter) and the children's opera, *The Snow Queen*, featuring the CCOC, which we didn't get to. However, we did get to 29 concerts, of the 100 advertised! For a 10th anniversary, wasn't that a party!

Summer Musicals Within Reach

by Shelagh Williams

Stratford: *Billy Elliot: The Musical*: This year the big budget musical at the Stratford Festival was *Billy Elliot* about Billy, the son of a coal miner, with a passion for dance. Director-choreographer Donna Feore worked her magic on the huge Festival thrust stage, helped by Elton John's music and Lee Hall's book and lyrics dramatizing the 1984-85 British miners strike. The star was 11-year old Nolan Dubuc, from Vancouver, with the required dancing, singing and acting skills, plus stamina, and himself inspired by seeing the musical at age four! Perennial Stratford musical star Dan Chameroy brought his acting skills to bear as Billy's beleaguered father, and Blythe Wilson was the heroine, the ballet teacher, Mrs. Wilkinson, who recognized Billy's talent and helped him. Billy's best friend Michael, as played by Emerson Gamble, a student at Canada's National Ballet School, was a standout in both dancing and acting. The huge cast, comprising the community, which eventually rallied to support Billy, was unfailingly great, as was the orchestra - definitely worth the drive!

Niagara-on-the-Lake: *Brigadoon*: The Shaw Festival's big musical was Lerner and Loewe's brilliantly scored romantic fantasy *Brigadoon*, bursting with melodies and with good voices there to sing them! Even I remembered the tunes and words of *I'll go Home with Bonnie Jean*, *The Heather on the Hill*, *Come to Me*, *Bend to Me*, *Almost Like Being in Love*, and *There but for You go I*, and who could forget the hilarious *My Mother's Wedding Day :... for I was there!* The two leads, Alexis Gordon as Scottish Fiona and George Krissa as visiting American Tommy, were exceptional, but you could tell that all of the singers really loved singing this score! New York City Opera has even produced the show! Add in great dancing, including a Scottish sword dance (with three men!), plus jigs and reels to go with the Highlands locale, and you got a lovely,

lively crowd pleaser, with a happy ending - another winner!

Ottawa: *Come From Away*: After being in Toronto and New York City, the Canadian musical *Come From Away (CFA)*, by Irene Sankoff and David Hein, finally made it to Ottawa! We had visited Gander in 2004 only three years after the events portrayed in the musical, and so just had to see it! Fortunately, in preparation, we viewed the CTV documentary *You Are Here: a Come From Away Story*, broadcast 9/11/2018, and were able to refresh our memories before attending *CFA*.

And what a show it was! With a cast of 12 to play umpteen roles and a lively Newfoundland style band of eight (including flute, fiddle, accordion, guitars, and bodran drum) we careened through the tumultuous events of that week, starting with 9/11 and the US-bound planes being diverted to Gander. We saw things from the perspectives of the various Gander folks, the air traffic controllers, a female pilot, the airplane passengers, even the Humane Society - you name it and it was covered with wit and/or song! The opening *Welcome to the Rock* got us in the Newfoundland mood, then *38 Planes* set the scene, and *Blankets and Bedding* showed us the caring and generosity with which the Newfoundlanders responded to the needs of their unexpected guests! This included a *Screech In* to make them honorary Newfoundlanders! Closing with the 10 Year Reunion tied up things nicely. It was an ensemble piece, well staged and choreographed, with a marvellous cast of singing and dancing actors with the ability to quickly and believably change clothes and character and move chairs for the next scene! The energy and creativity of all aspects of the production explained why it was nominated for (and won) so many awards, and why it is such a hot ticket on Broadway and in the West End and Toronto!

Future Musicals Within Reach

by David Williams

The Stratford Festival 2020 season features **CHICAGO**. The hit musical, which holds the record for longest running musical revival on Broadway, will be entirely reimaged by Donna Feore.

The Shaw Festival 2020 season will feature the classic musical **GYPSY**. The 1959 Broadway smash hit plays at the Festival Theatre in a production directed and choreographed by Kimberley Rampersad.

The NAC Broadway Across Canada Season begins with Jonathan Larson's **RENT**. Next in line, **WAITRESS**, an empowering musical featuring original music and lyrics by Sara Bareilles. Andrew Lloyd Webber's **CATS** will return to the National Arts Centre stage featuring new production elements. Closing this season is **HAMILTON**, the story of America's Founding Father Alexander Hamilton, an immigrant from the West Indies who became George Washington's right-hand man.

uOttawa School of Music Golden Anniversary Celebration



Saturday, October 5, 2019. For Alumni, Students and Friends

Full information and Registration on the School of Music 50th Anniversary website - <https://arts.uottawa.ca/music/fifty>

Open Doors Showcase of current students' creative activities: 12:30-2:30 p.m. – Wander through the hallways and rooms of **Pérez Hall** and engage with current students to hear about their research projects and observe them in performance rehearsals. Visit the CreatorSpace to hear one of the fascinating papers being presented as part of the Clara Schumann Study Day. We will open our doors and give you a first-hand view of the musical training that is happening in 2019.

Da Capo 2019: A Celebration: 3:00-5:00 pm – Tabaret Hall - Reception to follow (cash bar). Learn about new developments and future plans for the School of Music. Join us in honouring founding professors Evelyn Greenberg and Jean-Paul Sevilla, and special guest Joyce El-Khoury (BMus '05), inaugural recipient of the Angela Hewitt Distinguished Alumni Award. Catch up with former classmates, professors and administrative staff.

High C and High Tea

Murray Kitts will once again delight us with his wit and wisdom. His talk, entitled “**Opera Goes to the Movies**,” will begin at 2 p.m. on Sunday, 22nd September 2019 in the Colonel By Room at Ottawa City Hall, 110 Laurier Avenue. The talk will be followed by a sumptuous High Tea

in the Councillors' Lounge.

Admission will be \$30 or \$25 for NCOS members at the door. For reservations, please email ncosottawa@gmail.com or call or text Lesley at 613-769-5957.

See you at the opera!

OperOttawa

OPERA GALA: Sun, 29 September 2019, 7:30 p.m., \$25

RINALDO (Handel): Sun, November 17, 2019, 7:30 p.m., \$30

Both at First Baptist Church, 140 Laurier Avenue West.

Events You Should Enjoy

by David Williams

"FRANKENSTEIN" the Opera 2019

by Andrew Ager



The Ottawa Premiere of Andrew Ager's acclaimed *Frankenstein - The Opera 2019* in a fully staged multi-media production takes place in the Dominion Chalmers Theatre, 355 Cooper Street. Thu, 31 October, 7:30 p.m. and Fri, 1 November 2019, 7:30 p.m.

Frankenstein - The Opera 2019 stars Constantine Meglis (the Monster), Lenard Whiting (Frankenstein), and features Bronwyn Thies-Thompson, Jeffrey Boyd, Gary Dahl, James Coole-Stevenson, Carmen Harris, and New Edinburgh resident Elliott Mennier (William).

Tickets are available at Eventbrite.ca (Frankenstein - Ottawa), at the door or at Books on Beechwood (\$47.50 reg/ \$73.50 VIP). VIP tickets include preferred seating and a cast reception after the performance. Students (and anyone wearing a Hallowe'en costume!) receive a discount.

Pellegrini Opera

Roméo et Juliette
Charles Gounod

presented fully staged and costumed with chamber ensemble
présenté entièrement mis en scène et costumé avec ensemble de chambre

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Sung in French, with English surtitles

Friday October 25th Vendredi 25 Octobre	7:30pm
Saturday October 26th Samedi 26 Octobre	7:30pm & 2:00pm

TICKETS:
613-580-2700
meridiancentrepointe.com

www.pellegriniopera.org

Stage & Fight Director - Vincent Thomas
Music Director - Geoffroy Salvat
Chorus Master - D Kai Ma
Pianist - Aude Urbancic
Orchestral arrangement - Andrew Ager

Starring:

Cian Horrobin, Susan Elizabeth Brown
James Levesque, Cesar Bello
Beste Kalender, Norman E Brown
Corey Arnold, Danielle Vaillancourt
Kyle McDonald, Marek Korkusinski
Ryan Hofman, Grayson Nesbitt
Rachael Jewell, Marie Lyne Tremblay

MET Opera HD LIVE 2019-20 Season

GIACOMO PUCCINI

TURANDOT

LIVE:
October 12, 2019
ENCORES:
November 2, 4, 6
and 10, 2019

JULES MASSENET

MANON

LIVE:
October 26, 2019
ENCORES:
December 14, 2019,
January 13, 15 and
19, 2020

GIACOMO PUCCINI

MADAMA BUTTERFLY

LIVE:
November 9, 2019
ENCORES:
January 25, 27, 29
and February 9,
2020

PHILIP GLASS

AKHNATEN

LIVE:
November 23, 2019
ENCORES:
February 15, 17, 19
and 23, 2020

ALBAN BERG

WOZZECK

LIVE:
January 11, 2020
ENCORES:
March 7, 9, 11
and 15, 2020

THE GERSHWINS

PORGY AND BESS

LIVE:
February 1, 2020
ENCORES:
March 28, 30,
April 1 and 5, 2020

GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL

AGRIPPINA

LIVE:
February 29, 2020
ENCORES:
April 18, 20, 22
and 26, 2020

RICHARD WAGNER

DER FLIEGENDE HOLLÄNDER

LIVE:
March 14, 2020
ENCORES:
May 30, June 1, 3
and 7, 2020

GIACOMO PUCCINI

TOSCA

LIVE:
April 11, 2020
ENCORES:
June 13, 15, 17
and 21, 2020

GAETANO DONIZETTI

MARIA STUARDA

LIVE:
May 9, 2020
ENCORES:
June 20, 22, 24
and 28, 2020

Presentations may not be available at all participating theatres for all advertised dates.

Cinema Aylmer 2019-20 Season

La traviata, Verdi (Opéra National de Paris): Friday November 1st - 15h. Wednesday November 6th, 2019 – 19h. The Opera Orchestra and Chorus with Pretty Yende and Benjamin Bernheim in Simon Stone's production.

Don Pasquale, Donizetti (Royal Opera House): Friday November 29th, 2019 – 15h | Wednesday December 4th, 2019 – 19h. Damiano Michieletto directs the Orchestra and Chorus of the Royal Opera House with Bryn Terfel, Olga Peretyatko and Mariusz Kwiecień.

Il Trovatore, Verdi (Arènes de Vérone): Friday January 24th, 2020 – 15h | Wednesday January 29th, 2020 – 19h. Anna Netrebko and Yusif Eyvazov will be the stars of the Franco Zeffirelli production.

Aïda, Verdi (LICEU): Friday February 21st, 2020 – 15h | Wednesday February 26th, 2020 – 19h

La Bohème, Puccini (Royal Opera House): Friday March 27th, 2020 – 15h | Wednesday April 1st, 2020 – 19h

Fidelio, Beethoven (Royal Opera House): Friday April 17th, 2020 – 15h | Wednesday April 22nd, 2020 – 19h

Cavalleria Rusticana / Pagliacci, Mascagni / Leoncavallo (Royal Opera House): Friday May 29th, 2020 – 15h | Wednesday June 3rd, 2020 – 19h

As always check dates and times with the cinema at <http://www.cinemaaylmer.com>