

NATIONAL CAPITAL OPERA SOCIETY
Newsletter

June 1992

SOCIÉTÉ D'OPÉRA DE LA CAPITALE NATIONALE
Bulletin

juin 1992

P.O. Box 8347, Main Terminal, Ottawa, Ontario K1G 3H8
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The 1992 Gala: Music and Spain

This year's gala evening was a great success!

Thanks to the generosity of many local businesses and individuals, and creative auctioneering by Dave Smith, the NCOS raised funds for its work. We thank everyone who donated items for the auction, and we list them below. (When you think of spending money, think of who supports the NCOS.)

Following the auction was a superb concert. Ed Honeywell and Leo Marti-Aguilar treated us to an excellent program of flamenco guitar, and opera singers Laura Dziubaniuk and Mary Ann Swerdfeger, accompanied by Judith Ginsburg on the piano, delighted us

with music by Mozart, Ravel, Bizet, and Granados. Rob Clipperton was our host for the evening.

We were very pleased to have as our guests three members of the Spanish diplomatic community—Chargé d'Affaires Sr Bellver and Sra. Bellver, and Counsellor Montesino. The Embassy of Spain provided us with *Cava*, which went down when Sr. Bellver honoured us with a toast.

Thank you to those who came and made the evening a success. We hope to see you there next year!

MC

CBC
Bobbi Cain
Counterpoint Classics
John & Marjorie Clegg
Ruth Davis
Don Alfonso
El Mesón
Embassy of Spain
Focus Scientific
Frameland
Girol Books
Glass Concepts
Great Canadian Theatre Co
Haveli
Hilton Hotel
Ibérica Travel
David Ireland
Murray Kitts

P.O. Box 8478, Ottawa
Nepean
46 Murray St., Ottawa
Ottawa
Ottawa
434 Bank St., Ottawa
94 Beechwood Ave., Vanier
350 Sparks St., Ottawa
1054 Bank St., Ottawa
Westgate Shopping Centre, Ottawa
120 Somerset St. W., Ottawa
18 Pretoria Ave., Ottawa
910 Gladstone Ave., Ottawa
87 George St., Market Mall, Ottawa
150 Albert St., Ottawa
160 George St., Ottawa
Kanata
Orleans

Le Chocolat Belge-Daniel	8-411 MacKay, Ottawa
Les Suites	130 Besserer St., Ottawa
Loblaws Supermarkets	22 St. Clair Ave E, Suite 601, Toronto
Morgan Tours	P.O. Box 6037, Station J, Ottawa
National Arts Centre	Box 1534, Station B, Ottawa
Opera Lyra Ottawa	2 Daly, Ottawa
Ottawa Little Theatre	400 King Edward Ave., Ottawa
Gilles Patry	Ottawa
Pflug Optical	1580 Merivale Rd., Nepean
Phulero Dola	111 Albert St., Ottawa
Place Muzik	Market Mall, 87 George St., Ottawa
Polonus Restaurant	87 George St., Ottawa
Restaurante Costa Brava	486 Albert St., Ottawa
Gerda Ruckerbauer	Nepean
Scrim's Florists	262 Elgin St., Ottawa
Shirley Leishman Books	Westgate Shopping Centre, Ottawa
The Place Next Door	320 Rideau St., Ottawa
Throop Photo Supply	1516 Merivale Rd., Nepean
Village Treats	2565 Baseline Rd., Ottawa
Westin Hotel	11 Colonel By Drive, Ottawa
Wilfrid's, Chateau Laurier Hotel	1 Rideau St., Ottawa

Annual General Meeting

As a result of our recent AGM, we have a newly-elected Board of Directors. Their names and responsibilities on the Board appear at the end of the newsletter.

Here is the President's message presented to the AGM:

This year has been a challenging and exciting one for the National Capital Opera Society.

Under its mandate to promote opera in the National Capital region, the NCOS has concluded a busy year which has included films, tours, and support of local performances of opera.

Throughout the year, the Society continued its Sunday movie season at the Bytowne Theatre. Though the audiences for the movies were often disappointing, they were not disappointed: we had an excellent series of opera films, including *The Music Master*, Bizet's *Carmen*, Puccini's *La Bohème*, and Verdi's *Macbeth*. Next year, we are hoping to try something quite different: we plan to use modern technology, in the form of laser discs, to show a wider range of opera productions. We will be making arrange-

ments soon, and will let you know the details.

With the cooperation of Morgan Tours, the Society is completing a successful series of opera tours to Montreal. Members attended opera performances (including *Eugene Onegin*, *Nabucco*, and *Rigoletto*), visited art galleries and museums, shopped, and enjoyed gourmet dinners. One more trip remains for this season (*La Belle Helène*); next year's operas include *Andrea Chenier*, *Romeo et Juliette*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, and *Madama Butterfly*. These trips also benefit the Society through donations for every member attending them, so please join us.

The Society does, of course, support live opera close to home. Over the years, the NCOS has sponsored singers in Opera Lyra Ottawa productions, hosted receptions afterwards, and helped in a variety of ways with activities such as publicity and fundraising. Most recently, we sponsored Mark Dubois in *The Magic Flute* and hope to support the upcoming production of *La Cenerentola*. We have also expanded our relationship with Opera Lyra through a

formal liaison, which has resulted in increased communication and cooperation between the two groups. During the course of the year, there were discussions about the NCOS becoming a guild for Opera Lyra, but the NCOS Board of directors decided that (1) since OLO was happy with the relationship as it then stood, there was no need to change it; and (2) the mandate of the NCOS was broader than the commitment to one opera company. In this respect, the society has recently formed links with Ottawa's Studio Opera Guild.

The NCOS also has a special relationship with the National Arts Centre. For several years, we have supported the NAC's opera productions through the Production Apprenticeship Scholarship. In July of 1991, we were pleased to award this scholarship to Carloyn Dufresne, who worked with the NAC Music Department in the production of *The Barber of Seville*. Prospects for opera production by the National Arts Centre look rather bleak at the moment, but we hope that we will soon be able to give another student the opportunity to work on opera production there.

Though we have no cause for celebration concerning opera production at the National Arts Centre, we do have reason to celebrate the appointment of Trevor Pinnock as Musical Director. Maestro Pinnock is known for his love of opera, particularly Baroque opera, and one of his first performances in his new role at the NAC was a production of Handel's *Acis and Galatea*. The Society was pleased to host the Opera Atelier cast and Mr Pinnock at a reception following the performance; members attending were delighted to hear Mr Pinnock declare his dedication to opera and his desire to bring it back to the NAC. We hope he will be successful, and will continue our own work to encourage the return of world-class opera production to the National Arts Centre.

Another aspect of the Society's work is to promote and encourage young opera singers. Over the past several years, we have highlighted the talents of some of our best local singers in recital at our annual spring fundraising gala. This year's gala, Music and Spain, included a concert by Laura Dziubaniuk and Mary Ann Swerdfeger,

accompanied by Judith Ginsburg. The concert also include the Flamenco guitar duo of Leo Marti-Aguilar and Ed Honeywell. Dave Smith was an inspired auctioneer; thanks to his efforts, and the generous donations of items from many businesses, we raised money for our work— including the Brian Law Opera Scholarship.

The Brian Law Opera Scholarship, initially set at \$1000, will be awarded to an aspiring opera singer next year. Our goal is to raise at least \$10 000 as an endowment fund for the scholarship, and the Scholarship Committee has been working hard to publicize the scholarship and solicit donations from corporate sponsors and individuals. Thanks to the donations of many individuals and corporations, the fund now stands at \$2700. Over the next few months, the Committee will be working to increase that fund and make arrangements for the first competition to take place early next year, to coincide with Brian Law's visit to Ottawa in the winter of 1993.

The way we will let you know about all of our activities is through the Society's newsletter. The newsletter is an excellent one, and I hope that members will submit articles or information of interest.

At this point, I wish to thank the Board members for their work during the past year: Jeffry Morgan, Gilles Patry, Val Donnelly, Murray Kitts, Anne Marie Smith, Helen Morgan, Ruth Davis, Gerda Ruckerbauer, Maureen Donnelly, John Clegg, and especially Bobbi Cain, without whose support and guidance I could not have survived the year.

One of our Board members, Ruth Davis, will be retiring from the Board; I wish to thank her for her work in the past and wish her well in her new pursuits. We will miss her.

To those members remaining on the Board and those who will be joining us, I wish all good fortune and good will in continuing our work for opera in the National Capital region.

MC

Studio Opera Guild

Ottawa's Studio Opera Guild is presenting *An Evening of Opera* on Sunday 7 June at De La Salle High School, 501 Old St. Patrick. Curtain time is 8 pm.

Currently in its second season, Studio Opera Guild is devoted to the performance of quality opera and operetta by local performers, many of whom have won major awards and trophies at the Kiwanis Festival, appeared on CBC broadcasts, and performed with notable music groups, including the Ottawa Music Club, Théâtre lyrique de Hull, Opera Lyra Ottawa, and the NCOS.

Joan Maxwell, distinguished mezzo-soprano and teacher, is the founder and artistic director of Studio Opera Guild. Eric Trudel is vocal coach and accompanist; Stuart

Hamilton, founder and director of *Opera in Concert*, acts as special advisor.

An Evening of Opera features works by Strauss, Puccini, Rossini, Bellini, Lecoq, Délibes, Dvorak, and von Suppé. Also included in the performance is a staged English version of Mozart's complete one-act opera *The Impresario*. Shelley Solmes, of the CBC's *Music Ottawa*, will host the evening.

Tickets are available at l'Atelier Grigorian, 345 Dalhousie, and at the door on the evening of the performance. Ticket prices are \$15 for adults and \$12 for students and seniors. For more information, call 596-1923 or 729-4967.

"I know the real name of Choo-Choo Laverne" or Hollywood looks at opera

Of course there are many good opera films; but in this article I want to discuss how Hollywood has portrayed opera and opera singers.

It should come as no surprise that Hollywood thinks that opera is mostly useful in comedies. Take the quotation which forms the title of this article. This line is sung by Danny Kaye in *Wonder Man*. Kaye is singing in an unknown opera, trying to escape from gangsters who are about to kill him, and attempting to tell the District Attorney, who is attending the opera, the real name of the secret witness who can testify to the real killer of his dead twin brother. All this has to be seen and heard but I can tell you that it is hilarious. And it is especially hilarious to someone who loves opera because such a person is familiar with many of the absurdities and the conventions which must be accepted if that person is to enjoy opera.

Among the films that spring to mind in this vein, *A Night at the Opera* is hard to beat. Seeing Harpo's reaction to Azucena is an unforgettable experience. Beside the high jinks on the opera stage, there is also a lesson

in forming a contract for an opera singer, an action which borders on lunacy.

Naturally, Hollywood made movies based on the plots of real operas, like Auber's *Fra Diavolo* and Balfe's *The Bohemian Girl*. And who are the stars of these operas? Why, Stan and Ollie of course. Fortunately, neither of them does the singing, which is presented in an incidental way. The most far-fetched opera plot cannot rival the most memorable scene when Laurel fills the bottles of wine from a barrel using a siphon. His fingers get stuck in the bottlenecks, he sticks the hose in his mouth until he can free his fingers You can imagine the rest.

Another unlikely person to appear in a film with opera is Mae West. She sort of sings "My dear, at the sweet voice" from *Samson et Dahlila* as part of a soirée she gives in *Goin' to Town*. She does this because she hopes to convince society that she is a respectable person. She succeeds. The power of opera!

In other Hollywood films, such as *San Francisco*, a real singer, Jeanette Macdonald, tackles the Jewel Song from *Faust*, but this is treated as a serious business. The same

scene is used in the Lon Chaney version of *The Phantom of the Opera*, but the musical accompaniment on the version that has been shown on TV does not use Gounod's music. This sort of sets a trend, for in the Claude Rains *Phantom*, music for the operas is taken from such non-operas as Schubert's March Militaire and the last movement of Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony. Well, what can you expect from ersatz opera that isn't even funny?

There have been many appearances of opera singers in Hollywood films, both as characters in the plot, or as "themselves," as they say. I can remember seeing the undoubtedly greatest heldentenor of all time bumping bellies while trying to embrace with Helen Traubel in a Wagnerian scene. I thought that it was funny at the time and Melchior must have also. Most of these appearances of opera singers occurred in films which featured a hodge-podge of music and usually starred Deanna Durbin. Many of the performances by opera singers as characters in the plot have not been very

successful—witness Pavarotti's recent attempt* According to Leslie Halliwell, the oddest success of an opera singer in films was Mary Garden, who appeared in silent films.

If you are a mystery-thriller fan, don't miss *Charlie Chan at the Opera*, one of the best films in that series with a Mephistopheles played by Boris Karloff. A particularly gruesome murder is committed during a performance of *Cavalleria Rusticana* in *Godfather III*. Perhaps this will set a trend, although the relation between violent killers and opera has always been part of the popular view.

By the way, the real name of Choo-Choo Laverne is Minnie Smith.

* Amazingly among the opera stars who have succeeded as film stars (not necessarily in Hollywood) are such superstars as Grace Moore, Lily Pons, Tito Gobbi, Richard Tauber, Lauritz Melchior, Ezio Pinza, and Gladys Swarthout.

MK

Celebrate *La Cenerentola*

Of Opera Lyra Ottawa's several performances of *La Cenerentola* in September this year, the final one will be on the 18th.

Members of the National Capital Opera Society are invited to attend together on that evening. Opera Lyra Ottawa is holding some of the best seats in the house for us, but *only until the end of June*. If you wish to join the group, please call Opera Lyra Ottawa at 233 9200; be sure to tell them that you want to sit in the NCOS reserved seating. You can book by phone if you use a credit card; otherwise you may visit their office and pay by cheque or cash.

Following the performance, we plan to have a special get-together for our members. We will be reserving several tables in the National Arts Centre Café; members will pay for their own drinks and dessert. The Society will invite the principal artists from the cast to join us for a toast to opera. If you are interested in celebrating with us, please call Peggy Pflug at 226 5482.

So: 1—Call Opera Lyra Ottawa for tickets to the opera; 2—Call Peggy Pflug if you are going to the Café afterwards.

MC

Membership renewal

The 1991 membership year ended on 31 December. If our records show that you have not yet renewed for 1992, then there is a coloured ring around this piece of text. A renewal form for 1992 membership is on the

last page of this newsletter. Please renew now: your support is important to the Society. Encourage your friends and other members of your family to join us too!

Opera within reach, updated

This is the last remnant of our previous listings of accessible operas, the season now being almost over.

Toronto

At the O'Keefe Centre in Toronto, the Canadian Opera Company is performing:

Il Barbiere di Siviglia, by Rossini, on 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 27, and 28 June.

JMC

Opera Lyra Ottawa news

Opera Lyra seeks volunteers to help with their telemarketing on Tuesday evenings. Would anyone who is interested or willing please call Gilles Patry, whose number is given under the list of Board members.

The NCOS has decided to contribute to *La Cenerentola* by sponsoring Linda McGuire to the tune of some \$1200 in the September production.

GP

Apology

The editor apologises for being in too much of a rush to allow time for any of this issue to be translated into French. The immediate panic was caused by the need to inform everyone of Studio Opera Guild's imminent

event, and we still don't know if we can get the newsletter printed, folded, taped, licked, stamped, and mailed in time.

JMC

NCOS Board Members

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First Vice-President	Anne Marie Smith	Publicity	Mary Anne Griffith, Brenda Lane-Eraut
Second Vice-President	Gilles Patry	Films	Helen Morgan, Ruth Davis
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Tours	Jeffrey Morgan, Helen Morgan, Val Donnelly	Archives	Val Donnelly

Some telephone numbers

Marjorie Clegg	594-2988 (h)	Anne Marie Smith	828-7062 (h)
Bobbi Cain	225-0124 (h)	Gilles Patry	829-4762 (h)