

NATIONAL CAPITAL OPERA SOCIETY
Newsletter

November 1992

SOCIÉTÉ D'OPÉRA DE LA CAPITALE NATIONALE
Bulletin

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Louis Quilico dining with the NCOS Board at the Lindenhof

Summary of forthcoming local events

Operatic Double Bill <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sutherland and Pavarotti• "Pavarotti in London"	Opera video	30 November	7:00 pm	Ottawa Public Library
<i>I Capuleti e i Montecchi</i> and <i>Roméo et Juliette</i>	Opera in concert	4 December	4:15 pm (dep. from Ottawa)	Montreal Opera
	Opera	5 December		
Brian Law Opera Scholarship	Competition	21 January	7:30 pm	St Andrew's Church

Louis Quilico's benefit recital

Our Evening with Louis Quilico was magical. The atmosphere in the Theatre was electric, the performance superb. Jacob Siskind called the recital "marvellous" and "a resounding success." As he reported in the *Citizen*—

Of **Louis Quilico**, Canada's world-renowned baritone: "It is a source of wonder and amazement that his voice has been so well preserved over his long career. It now sounds as marvellously rich and resonant as it did decades ago."

Of **Raul Melo**, the young tenor joining Mr Quilico for this recital: "Melo made a strong impression with the musicality of his phrasing and his sensitive use of colour" and "he has an important operatic career ahead of him."

Of **Thomas Muraco**, the pianist: "His playing was of the order that warranted his endorsement in the past by such singers as Phyllis Curtin, Maureen Forrester and Jennie Tourel."

Following the recital, there was a reception sponsored by Morgan Tours and Stinson Business Services. Our favourite radio announcer, Rob Clipperton, was our host for the evening. Our special guests included His Excellency Sergio Balanzino, the Ambassador of Italy, who presented Mr Quilico with a special medal; Jim Watson, Ottawa City Councillor, who presented Mr Quilico with a certificate making him an honorary citizen of Ottawa; and Frank Augustyn (Ottawa Ballet) and Jeannette Aster

The program

Quilico and Melo	Oh, Mimì, tu più non torni	<i>La Bohème</i> , Puccini
Quilico	The Gods of Battle Oh Jove	<i>Hercules</i> , Handel
Melo	Allerseelen Du meines Herzens Krönelein Zueignung	R. Strauss
Quilico	Madamina, il catalogo	<i>Don Giovanni</i> , Mozart
Quilico	Non più andrai	<i>Le nozze di Figaro</i> , Mozart
Melo	Ah! lève-toi, soleil!	<i>Roméo et Juliette</i> , Gounod
Quilico and Melo	Solenne in quest'ora	<i>La forza del destino</i> , Verdi
— Interval / Entracte —		
Quilico and Melo	Au fond du temple saint	<i>Les pêcheurs de perles</i> , Bizet
Melo	Addio Marechiare L'alba separa dalla luce l'ombra	Tosti
Quilico	Beau soir Voici que le printemps	Debussy
Quilico	Phidylé	Duparc
Melo	Poema en forma de canciones Dedicatoria (piano solo / solo de piano) Nunca olvida Cantares Los dos miedos Las locas por amor	Turina
Quilico	Vision fugitive	<i>Hérodiade</i> , Massenet
Quilico and Melo	Dio, che nell'alma	<i>Don Carlo</i> , Verdi

(Opera Lyra Ottawa) who shared some of their memories of working with Mr Quilico. Rob Clipperton read letters of praise from His Excellency Ramon John Hnatyshyn, Governor General of Canada; from Allan Gotlieb, Chairman of the Canada Council; and from Gary Relyea, Mr Quilico's friend and student. The formal proceedings ended appropriately with a message from Brian Law, read by Marion Pickering. Mr Quilico

was truly surprised and touched by the many honours bestowed upon him.

The Society is very grateful to Mr Quilico for giving us this benefit recital. It further acknowledges the help of Counterpoint Classics, the National Arts Centre, and Victoria Park Suites. Thanks to all who worked hard to make this happen and to those who attended the recital; it was indeed an evening to remember.

MC

The Brian Law Opera Scholarship

Below this paragraph is a list of donors who have contributed to the The Brian Law Opera Scholarship Endowment Fund. In addition, the National Capital Opera Society itself has made a substantial contribution from its fundraising efforts over the past year, more than doubling the amount of the fund. We are over one-third of the way towards our goal of \$15 000, which would provide an annual scholarship of \$1000.

If you have not yet made your donation to the Scholarship Fund or have friends who will join us in this effort, please mail your

submission to "The Brian Law Opera Scholarship Fund" in care of the Society, indicating the amount contributed and the name under which you would like the donation registered.

The first scholarship competition will take place on 21 January 1993 at St Andrew's Church, Ottawa, before a distinguished panel of judges, with application forms required by 15 November 1992. For further information, contact the Scholarship Chairperson, Bobbi Cain, at 225-0124.

BC

List of Donors to the Brian Law Opera Scholarship Endowment Fund

Marjorie and John Clegg	Marjory Cornett	Lita Classen
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Jean A. Loates	Mrs. R. H. Evans	<i>The Ottawa Citizen</i>

(The second appearance of a name means a second donation.)

As of 12 October 1992

Opera encores

La Cenerentola

What a delightful production Opera Lyra gave us of this Rossini masterpiece! The sets were designed for quick transformations and this allowed the conductor to keep up a fast-moving tension in the action of the plot. There was outstanding singing from Mark Dubois and Linda Maguire, two Honorary Friends of NCOS, and excellent comic characterizations from the other principals.

Afterwards, in spite of demands of family, and of the other cast members who were holding a final-night party, Linda Maguire took the time to go to each table and to say a few words (at least) to each person present with the NCOS group in Le Café. Opera Lyra Ottawa was presented with our donation of \$1250 and Linda Maguire with her honorary membership.

We plan to have another special evening at *La traviata*, followed by an informal get-together. Perhaps you will join us then.

Aida

The heavy rain warnings in effect that evening probably account for the fact that this showing was so poorly attended. Those who did come, however, found free parking in the Ottawa Public Library underground parking facility (entered from Laurier Avenue).

In going from the motion picture format to the projected laser disc format, some disadvantages were found: the projection equipment cannot be adjusted to give a good focus for the subtitles. This disadvantage is more than offset by the enormous range of operas available to us on laser discs and by the tremendous decrease in overhead costs of the showing.

Andrea Chénier

A group of lucky NCOS members (and others) made the trip down to Montreal on 26 September to see Giordano's masterpiece given by the Opéra de Montréal at the Place des Arts. After the usual smooth trip and stops at museums, exhibitions, shopping areas, and gourmet dining places, the opera fans were treated to an opera production exceptional even for the Opéra de Montréal in

the grandness of scenes and authenticity of costumes. The principals, Ermanno Mauro as Chénier and Stefka Evstatieva as Maddalena, sang passionately and beautifully under the shadow of the guillotine. This was truly grand opera and the Orchestre symphonique de Montréal under Michelangelo Veltri provided a powerful (sometimes a little too powerful) accompaniment to the stirring events on stage.

The next opera tour

The next opera excursion will leave late enough on a Friday afternoon to allow people to complete their work week and still enjoy the opera in Montreal that evening. This will happen on 4 December at 4:15 pm. The opera will be Bellini's *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* and, after an overnight stay in Montreal, Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette* the following evening.

The Flying Dutchman

Not everyone in the small but appreciative audience who witnessed the controversial Bayreuth production approved of the interpretation, but all agreed that the singing and intensity of performance were both remarkable.

Our next showing will be on 30 November at 7:00 pm, starring Joan Sutherland and Luciano Pavarotti.

Louis Quilico

It's true! His voice is still wonderful. His fellow artists lived up to his recommendations. It was an evening of great enjoyment, not only for music lovers, but for all those who can be touched by a person of great warmth and humanity. We must never forget the generosity of Louis Quilico in performing this benefit for us.

MK

O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou a German?

Most people know about *Romeo and Juliet* through the celebrated play by Shakespeare. After all, this play, and *Hamlet* and *Richard III*, are Shakespeare's most popular plays. Looking at the musical interpretation of the story of the ill-starred lovers, devotees of Shakespeare might be shocked, even repelled, by changes in the plot.

At first sight it looks as though Gounod, or rather Jules Barbier and Michel Carré, made an honest attempt to be faithful to Shakespeare, given the necessity to condense and cut the original play to opera libretto proportions. Some of the lines themselves are as close to the original as possible.

When we arrive at the last scene, however, Juliet revives before Romeo dies, just in time for a duet which concludes with the simultaneous deaths of the two lovers, ending the opera at this point. Now, one could say that this is not as bad a perversion of Shakespeare as Thomas's *Hamlet*, which has a happy ending (happy for Hamlet, anyway), but this is not the point. The fact is that there are a number of versions of this story; some of them have Juliet reviving before Romeo dies. Therefore, it is not just an operatic convention that comes into play in this opera.

One of the greatest admirers of Shakespeare in the 19th century was Hector Berlioz, and we have his magnificent *Roméo et Juliette* as witness of his enthusiasm and of the profundity of the influence of Shakespeare on his genius. Berlioz was enraged at what he called a travesty when he attended a performance of Bellini's *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*. What Berlioz didn't realize was that Bellini's opera was not based so much on Shakespeare's play as on other sources that had been either unknown to, or discarded by, Shakespeare.

Take for example this description of one of the leading characters in Act I, Scene 1 of the opera: ". . . the most abhorred, evil and violent of the Ghibellines." And who is this nasty character? Why, Romeo, of course: Romeo who has killed Capellio's son and who comes to the castle of the Capulets in the guise of an envoy from Romeo to suggest a

marriage alliance with Juliet as a solution to the constant warring. Now this has practically nothing to do with Shakespeare's plot.

Shakespeare based his play on Arthur Brooke's poem *The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet* and on the prose story in Painter's *Palace of Pleasure*. Shakespeare's main addition was the character Mercutio, who figures in both Gounod's and Berlioz's versions of the story. Bellini's librettist, Felice Romani (who was the librettist for almost all of Bellini's operas), follows Matteo Bandello's *Giulietta e Romeo*, which was written about 1554. Fortunately, Romani did not follow Bandello's story completely, otherwise we would have Romeo disguised as a German in order to get to Juliet's tomb. When Juliet awakes she is terrified (for some strange reason) to find a German lying down outside her coffin. Fortunately she is able to recognize Romeo before he dies and before she dies herself of sorrow, and not of the self-inflicted wound of the Shakespeare-Gounod version.

Opera lovers owe a vote of thanks to Romani for rejecting this disguise business. We are getting pretty close to the Pyramus and Thisbe story as performed by the rude mechanicals in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In Luigi Da Porto's version of Romeo and Juliet, Romeo goes to the Capulet ball disguised as a nymph, another disguise that was fortunately never included, at least if one wishes to tell a tragic story.

There are very few characters in Romani's libretto—only five. Apart from the two principals, Giulietta (a soprano) and Romeo (a mezzo-soprano), there appear only Tebaldo (a tenor—a combination of Tybalt and Paris), Capellio (a baritone, who emerges as the villain of the piece), and Lorenzo (a bass, alias Friar Laurence) who loses his tonsure for this version and becomes a doctor. The reference above to the Montagues and the Ghibellines puts the story in the context of warring factions in Italy, the Guelphs (Capulet side) supporting the Pope and the Ghibellines supporting the Holy Roman Emperor.

Therefore if you are going to Montreal on our tour to see both the Bellini and Gounod operas, don't be surprised if the plot takes certain unexpected turns. Suffice it to say that with two opera masters the music is great. If Bellini's opera plot doesn't follow Shakespeare it provides the framework for some glorious *bel canto* singing. Wagner, who didn't have much good to say about any opera or composer, had some praiseworthy words for Bellini and this opera specifically. As for Gounod, his *Roméo* was the greatest success of his musical career. It's not difficult to understand why.

For those who like to familiarize themselves with a work before hearing it, there is a good recording of the Gounod opera on EMI CDCC 47365, with a fine cast led by Alfredo Kraus and Catherine Malfitano and including such luminaries as José Van Dam and Gino Quilico.

For the Bellini opera there is a recording of a live performance from Covent Garden under Riccardo Muti with Agnes Baltsa and Edita Gruberova (EMI CDS 7473888), but this is difficult to obtain unless specially ordered from Britain.

There are some other recordings of the Bellini including one made in 1967 at the World Festival as part of Expo '67. This version is rather contemptuously referred to as the Abbado/Bellini opera, since the part of

Romeo is sung by a tenor. It is true that Bellini was once required to transpose the part of Romeo for a soprano voice, since a particular opera house didn't have a mezzo to sing Romeo. However, he never had a tenor singing the part.

It might easily be deduced that the only reason for the issuance of the Montreal performance in 1967 and the Milan performance in 1968, both by La Scala Opera under Abbado, is the presence of Luciano Pavarotti in both performances. Quite correctly Pavarotti is singing not Romeo but Tebaldo, and is worth a hearing for his *bel canto* style. Be forewarned that the quality of these recordings varies from fair to dreadful. The Montreal version on Butterfly Music—Pavarotti Collection, BMCD 012, has a libretto in Italian only. The Milan version, only available on a four-disc set that includes *La Bohème*, is called "Luciano Pavarotti Sings The Great Operas" (GO2-5101-1/4), and omits any libretto or notes in any language; but it is very cheap. Pavarotti again sings Tebaldo, with Renata Scotto as Juliet and Giacomo Aragall as Romeo.

In other words, unless you have easy access to a recording of *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*, better just go to Montreal ready to be enthralled by one of the greatest works of one of opera's greatest composers.

MK

President's message

I have put this message in writing because I want it to become part of the official Board records.

We often spend our Board meetings talking about how things could or should be done differently. This is necessary, of course, but we can lose sight of the many things we do well. I wish to acknowledge some of those good things:

Our minutes are well-taken and distributed in good time.

Our books are in excellent order, receipts and repayments are efficiently handled, and we have up-to-date financial reports.

Letters are sent quickly on request.

The liaisons with Opera Lyra Ottawa and the National Arts Centre have been very productive and effective.

The membership database is kept current, and we have up-to-date labels for our newsletters and other mailings.

We have a much-praised newsletter with well-written and interesting articles.

Our members are provided with opportunities for many exciting, professionally-directed tours, and the Society has benefited financially.

There are promising new arrangements for our video screenings at the Ottawa Public Library. The program for the next few

months is excellent, and there is a good possibility of our making a reasonable profit.

We have increased our visibility in the community through our widening publicity.

We have organized several successful events, and have ideas for many more.

All of the many necessary, complex arrangements for the Brian Law Opera Scholarship are progressing well.

It's sometimes easy to forget that we are all volunteers who work hard for something we love. We deserve to have our efforts acknowledged. Thank you—all of you.

29 September 1992

MC

Opera within reach, 1992-1993

Here is our usual reminder of the remaining operas this season that it is reasonably easy to get to:

Ottawa

The production of Opera Lyra Ottawa:

La traviata, by Verdi. 10, 12, and 13 March.

Toronto

The Canadian Opera Company is performing:

Don Giovanni, by Mozart. 4, 6, 10, 12, 14, 17, 19, 21, 25, 27, and 29 November and 2, 4, and 6 December.

Così fan tutte, by Mozart. 11, 13, 15, 18, 20, 22, 24, 26, and 28 November and 1, 3, and 5 December.

Hänsel und Gretel, by Humperdinck. 15, 19, 21, 23, 25, 27, and 30 January and 2, 5, and 7 February.

Bluebeard's Castle, by Bartók, and *Erwartung*, by Schoenberg. 22, 26, 28, and 31 January and 3 and 6 February.

Tosca, by Puccini. 2, 7, 9, 12, 14, 17, 20, 22, and 25 April.

The Bartered Bride, by Janacek. 8, 10, 13, 16, 18, 21, and 24 April.

Montreal

A Morgan Tour for NCOS members pays a visit to L'Opéra de Montréal on those dates marked by asterisks. (The tour to the two Romeo and Juliet operas, which are on consecutive nights, includes an overnight stay in Montreal.) The telephone number for Morgan Tours is 722-7572.

I Capuleti e i Montecchi, by Bellini (in concert). 4* December.

Roméo et Juliette, by Gounod. 21, 23, 26, and 28 November and 2 and 5* December.

Lucia di Lammermoor, by Donizetti. 27 February and 1, 4, 6, 10, and 13* March.

Madama Butterfly, by Puccini. 17, 19, 22, 24, and 28 April and 1* May.

Die Fledermaus, by J. Strauss. 29 and 31 May and 1, 3, 5, and 7 June.

Hamilton

At the furthest distance we consider within reach for the purposes of this summary, there is Opera Hamilton with the following productions:

La Cenerentola, by Rossini. 26 and 28 November.

Madama Butterfly, by Puccini. 1, 6, and 8 May.

Opera screenings at the Public Library

As you will know, the NCOS and Counterpoint Classics have been presenting a series of benefit screenings of operas in the Ottawa Public Library at Metcalfe and Laurier streets. The shows are on Monday nights at 7:00 pm in the auditorium. The next screening is:

Operatic Double Bill. 30 November 1992.

“An Evening with Joan Sutherland and Luciano Pavarotti.” Metropolitan Opera

highlights of *La traviata*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, and *Rigoletto*. Richard Bonyngé conducts.

And—

“Pavarotti in London.” A Royal Albert Hall gala with Kurt Herbert Adler conducting the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra.

All events are \$7 at the door. For further information, call 721-0172 or 830-9827.

Board meets Jack Mills

The President and several members of the Board recently had a meeting with Jack Mills, Music Producer at the National Arts Centre, to discuss the prospects for the return of opera to the NAC produced by the NAC. While he was as keen as anyone to see the return of opera as in the good old days, he explained that there simply isn't the money available during the present recession. Ticket sales are down throughout North America for most classical music—even world-renowned artists can barely half-fill a hall for a recital these days. Although ticket prices had remained the same at the NAC for *Così fan tutte* in 1991 as for *Don Giovanni* in 1990, there had been no further sell-out.

On top of reduced sales, costs are rising—utility costs faster than the inflation rate—and appropriations are being clawed back. This picture of gloom was unfortunately rather convincing for the present; it is up to bodies like the NCOS to keep alive and increase public interest in opera, so that when better times return and operatic events resume, there will be someone sitting on every seat.

Back issues of *Opera News*

One of our members has a few years of back issues of *Opera News* that she would like to give away. If you want them, call Jenny Birks at 745-4648. A donation to the Brian Law Scholarship fund from the lucky receiver of the magazines would be most welcome.

This is the second and final time of asking.

Membership renewal

The 1992 membership year ends on 31 December, so now we have to mention the need to send in your money for 1993. A renewal form is in this *Newsletter*, giving the prices of the various forms of membership. We hope you will all renew, and that many of you will be able to persuade new members to join: the more members we have, the more we can do and the more effectively we can do it.

Discount for members

The kind of Christmas presents that many members like can be conveniently and economically bought at Counterpoint Classics, where we are given a good discount. You should present your membership card when making purchases.

Counterpoint Classics, Murray St. 20% off each regularly priced CD.

Letters from members

As far as I can remember, this Newsletter has not had a section for members' letters. Why not? Presumably because no one has written any. May I therefore invite letters on anything of interest to our readers. Naturally the editor would reserve all the usual autocratic rights, but you can be sure that their exercise would be only to further the good of opera in the area and to maintain the finest standards of decorum.

JMC

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Some telephone numbers

Marjorie Clegg	594-2988 (h)	Anne Marie Smith	828-7062 (h)
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