

Newsletter • Bulletin

Spring

2000

Le Printemps

P.O. Box 8347, Station T, Ottawa, Ontario K1G 3H8

• C.P. 8347, Station T, Ottawa, (Ontario) K1G 3H8

Opera Very Much Within Reach

by Donald Metcalfe

L'Opéra de Montréal's latest production, Verdi's *OTELLO*, opened in the Salle Wilfrid-Pelletier, Place des Arts, on February 5. It is not without a certain amount of trepidation that one attends a performance of this opera in Montreal, not only because of the demands it makes on the three principals, but also because of previous performances in Canada and elsewhere over the decades that have established standards that are difficult to surpass.

Those of you in my age group will remember that in 1967, during the Expo year, we were offered *OTELLO* with Jon Vickers, Teresa Stratas, Louis Quilico and the Montreal Symphony under Zubin Meta. Such singing and such a performance would be hard to match in any opera house in the world. But since then, L'Opéra de Montréal has only given us one, not too memorable production of *OTELLO*, in October, 1987. The February, 2000, *OTELLO* was well worth a visit, as it featured Puerto Rican tenor Antonio Barasorda, whose stentorian voice and appropriate acting skills brought life to the role. Gino Quilico as Iago showed his skill as a singing actor, even if he seemed to be hanging back in the Act 1, possibly in anticipation of his famous aria in Act 2, "Credo in un Dio crudel...".

The big disappointment was Christiane Riel as Desdemona. Her acting was quite acceptable, but her voice had difficulty at times projecting above the late-Verdian score and occasionally suffered from intonation problems.

The secondary roles were well handled, particularly Marc Hervieux as Cassio, and Dina Martire in the smaller part of Emilia. Joseph Rescigno conducted the Montreal Symphony Orchestra and the adequate, if somewhat unimaginative, sets were borrowed from the Arizona Opera. At least we can be thankful for this first fully-staged production of the 1999-2000 season, having had to make do with semi-staged efforts for *SALOMÉ* and *LA BOHÈME* due to the ongoing technicians' strike. The Montreal Symphony Orchestra 1999-2000 season has been offering the most interesting programmes in our area, including those of our NAC Orchestra and the Toronto Symphony, the latter on strike until mid-December. Of great interest to opera fans has been a series of five operas in concert, all conducted by Charles Dutoit. These are works that one is unlikely to see fully staged, but which certainly deserve one's attention.

On October 5 and 6 it was 20th century Italian composer Luigi Dallapiccola's *IL PRIGIONIERO* with a superb cast including Phyllis Bryn-Julson, Janice Chandler and Howard Haskin in the title role. Fauré's *REQUIEM* completed that excellent programme.

The following week (October 12-13) in an all-Szymanowski concert, the *STABAT MATER* and the opera *KING ROGER* was presented. Since the singers were almost exclusively Polish the authenticity of the language was guaranteed. These concerts were, in effect, dress rehearsals for concerts on October 16 and 17 in New

(continued on Page 6)

Opera Alla Pasta — Sunday Afternoon at the Opera

2:00 p.m. Sunday, April 9, 2000 at St. Anthony's Soccer Club

THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO

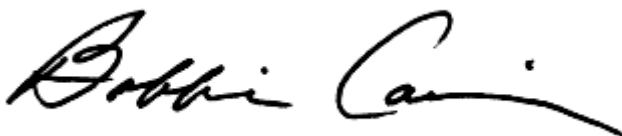
From the President...

I have just listened to the first video-tape of the set giving us the extraordinary performance of Mozart's "The Marriage of Figaro" presented at the opening of the refurbished Glynbourne Theatre. Our own Gerald Finley as Figaro is a treasure to behold as he works with Susanna, Alison Hagley, and the Countess, Renee Fleming, to outwit the manipulative Count, Andreas Schmidt. We are showing this full production on April 9, 2000 as our last "Opera a la Pasta" this season. The bar at St. Anthony's Soccer Club will be available to complement the delicious buffet dinner featuring pasta and other Italian specialties to be served following the showing. Won't you join us for this special showing in the spring? Our video showing in January of Boito's "Mefistofile" was greatly applauded, but rather sparsely attended. We will not be able to continue these afternoons if you do not support them. Call 225-0124 to book!

With spring coming, our thoughts turn to re-birth, to new growth, and to the enrichment of new spirits. IT IS URGENT THAT WE GET A NEW TREASURER BY THE END OF MAY. Do you know someone of an operatic bent who can carry out this task? Please consider the enclosed advertisement in this Newsletter. Your Board of Directors needs help if it is going to carry out the program that you seem to support and appreciate. Your responses in the surveys we carried out were most encouraging, but we all know that many hands with many talents and with a few hours to spare can accomplish many things.

The next Brian Law Opera Scholarship Competition will be held in late January, 2001, and very soon preparations must begin. Help is needed with planning and with the production of the necessary documents in the fall of 2000. We need someone with a computer and some skill in using it; but most of all we need someone devoted to this most worthy cause. Please help us!!!

Soon the robins will be home! Happy springtime!!



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Yoriko and Her Shooting Stars: An Operatic Showcase

Sunday April 2, 2000 at 2:00 p.m.

Carleton University Alumni Theatre

Tickets \$15.00 (\$10.00 for students and seniors)

Information: 820-8691

See insert for more details

Wanted Treasurer

- Duties:** — Collecting and banking revenues
 — Overseeing all disbursements
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Phone Bobbi Cain at 225-0124

**National Capital Opera Society
 P.O. Box 8347, Station T
 Ottawa, Canada K1G 3H8**

Saturday Afternoon at the Opera

March 11	Gioachino Rossini	La Cenerentola 1:30
March 18	Dmitri Shostakovich	Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk 1:30
March 25	Richard Wagner	Das Rheingold 1:30
April 1	Richard Wagner	Die Walküre 12:30
April 8	Claude Debussy	Pelléas et Mélisande 1:30
April 15	Richard Wagner	Siegfried 12:30
April 22	Richard Wagner	Götterdämmerung 12:00



THE METROPOLITAN OPERA PRESENTS

March 22, 2000 8:00 P.M. March 29 , 2000

**Der
Rosenkavalier**
by Richard Strauss

Tosca
by
Giacomo Puccini

L'Opéra Français de New York

by Tom McCool

New York City has to be the opera capital of the world. One reason for this claim is the Metropolitan Opera with its roster of superstar singers, superb orchestra, vast repertoire, popular broadcasts and telecasts. But New York opera is much more than the "Met". Not counting the various "opera in concert" companies and the music schools which stage full scale productions there are at least ten other opera companies in the city. The New York City Opera, located just steps from the "Met" in Lincoln Center, has a repertoire almost as extensive (and perhaps more imaginative) not to mention tickets almost as pricey. Then there is the Regina Opera Company in Brooklyn, the Amato Opera, the Dicopo Opera Theatre and the Grand Opera of New York which presently is in the midst of staging the complete Verdi canon. And, I'm sure, there are others. The focus of this report, L'Opéra Français de New York, is one of those other opera companies that make New York an opera lover's paradise

L'Opéra Français de New York is the only professional opera company in America devoted exclusively to French language opera. Its mandate emphasizes "unusual masterworks not often explored by American companies." It continues, "we offer the opportunity to hear a broad sampling of the French repertoire. We engage the most promising young North American singers, directors, and designers, providing them with important opportunities and training in the French vocal style, as well as the benefits of New York exposure." In addition to works by native French composers their repertoire also includes many important works by composers such as Cherubini, Donizetti, Gluck, Meyerbeer, Rossini, Bellini and Verdi who used French texts to create op-

eras which received their world premiere on French stages. (Perhaps it wouldn't be too much of a stretch to consider Pucini's *LA BOHEME*, *LA RONDINE* and *MANON LESCAUT* as "French".) If New York is the opera capital now, in the middle part of the 19th century that position certainly belonged to Paris. All of the composers named above, and all of the French composers, lived there at some time in their lives. Even Wagner had a connection with Paris. Consequently, there is no shortage of operas from which to choose. Since its founding in 1988 L'Opéra Français de New York has presented performances of 21 operas in concert, semi-staged and staged productions. The following list is indicative of the diversity of their repertoire – 1988/89: *ROMÉO ET JULIETTE* (Gounod); 1989/90: *LAKMÉ* (Delibes), *LES DEUX JOURNÉES* (Cherubini); 1990/91: *LES DEUX AVARES* (Grétry), *LE DOCTEUR MIRACLE* (Bizet), *IPHIGÉNIE EN AULIDE* (Gluck), *LA VOIX HUMAINE* (Poulenc), *LE PAUVRE MATELOT* (Milhaud); 1991/92: *MÉDÉE* (Cherubini), *LE PAUVRE MATELOT* (Milhaud), *ESTHER DE CARPENTRAS* (Milhaud); 1992/93: *LE COMTE ORY* (Rossini), *L'ÉTOILE* (Chabrier); 1993/94: *LA FAVORITE* (Donizetti), *LA PÉRICHOLE* (Offenbach); 1994/95: *ORPHÉE ET EURYDICE* (Gluck), *ORPHÉE AUX ENFERS* (Offenbach); 1995/96: *LA BELLE HÉLÈNE* (Offenbach), *LES MAMELLES DE TIRÉSIAS* (Poulenc), *LA DAME DE MONTE-CARLO* (Poulenc); 1996/97: *LA COLOMBE* (Gounod), *BÉATRICE ET BÉNÉDICT* (Berlioz); 1997/98: *BARBE-BLEUE* (Offenbach), *LA JOLIE FILLE DE PERTH* (Bizet) and 1998/99: *LA GRANDE-DUCHESSE DE GÉROLSTEIN* (Offenbach).

L'Opéra Français de New York has a Canadian link. The artistic director and conductor as well as one of the founders is Toronto native Yves Abel. Abel was a student at the Royal Conservatory of Music at the University of Toronto before going on to the U.S. for studies with the likes of Bernstein, Ozawa and Norrington. Abel will be familiar to Ottawa concert goers as he conducted at the NAC last spring. He is a rising presence on the world opera scene conducting in the past few years at such places as the San Francisco Opera, Opéra National de Paris, Seattle Opera, Glyndebourne Opera Festival and at the "Met" where he conducted *CARMEN* with Placido Domingo and Denyce Graves. This year he will be conducting *L'ELISIR D'AMORE* at Lyric Opera of Chicago, *LUISA MILLER* at Spoleto as well as a number of European assignments. He also recently completed his first recording for London/Decca, Massenet's *THAÏS*, featuring Renée Fleming, Thomas Hampson and Guiseppa Sabbatini which is scheduled for release this spring. He has received much critical acclaim for his work and appears destined to join that exclusive circle of "important" conductors. Abel will be conducting the only production to be offered by L'Opéra Français de New York this season. On April 3, 2000 Ferdinand Hérald's *ZAMPA* (OR *LA FIANCE DE MARBRE*) will be receiving its first New York performance in over 100 years. *ZAMPA*, the only French opera to include aspects of the Don Juan legend, will feature the sensational Canadian soprano Isabelle



Isabelle Bayrakdarian

Bayrakdarian in her New York debut. Bayrakdarian will be remembered for her concert last summer at the NAC and for her starring role in the Canadian Opera Company's *BARBER OF SEVILLE* last season. This concert version of *ZAMPA* will be performed at Alice Tully Hall in Lincoln Center. Tickets are available from the Box Office at Alice Tully Hall or by telephone from L'Opéra Français de New York at 212-349-709. Additional information is available at their website (<http://www.interlog.com/~abel/lofnyinfo.html>) which is the source of much of the material in this report. Incidentally, the website also has a Canadian connection. It was designed by a Toronto web design company and is well worth visiting.



... Within Reach *(continued from Page 1)*

York at Carnegie Hall.

In January, as part of an all-Poulenc programme, the one-act opera *LA VOIX HUMAINE* was given, with Francoise Pollet as the distraught woman trying over the telephone to salvage what she can of an affair with a lover who has abandoned her. The performance was absolutely gripping.

Still to come on April 2 and May 16-17 are two Stravinsky works, first the opera buffa *MAVRA* and then the opera-oratorio *OEDIPUS REX*, both with interesting casts.

One other event in Montreal that should be mentioned was the concert version of Delibes' *LAKMÉ* on January 23rd in celebration of the 20th anniversary of L'Opéra de Montréal. Both Aline Kutan in the title role and Jianyi Zhang as Gerald did a most creditable job, as did the young and promising conductor Yannick Nézet-Séguin with the Orchestre Métropolitain.

Meanwhile in Toronto the Canadian Opera Company presented Wagner's *FLYING DUTCHMAN* and Mozart's *DON GIOVANNI* on February 1 and 2. Like *LA TRAVIATA* last fall, *THE FLYING DUTCHMAN* was a disaster, attempting to update the action, this time to the holocaust in Nazi Germany in World War II. Updating is always valid provided you remain consistent with your thesis. Those of you who had the good fortune to attend the English National Opera's *RIGOLETTO*, updated from 16th century Mantua to 1950's Little Italy in New York, will understand that the concept can work.

With *THE DUTCHMAN* we were offered an incomprehensible mishmash of irreconcilable anachronisms. We learn that the ship's handleless steering wheel in Scene 1 eventually becomes an oversized spinning wheel in Scene 2. But what about the spiral staircase on

Daland's ship? Are we to assume that this is the Dutchman's direction towards his redemption, or is it just a "staircase to paradise"? In Scene 3 with the sailors transformed into Nazis wearing green armbands and the ladies sporting green boas and shawls, what are we to make of all that?

I became so confused with trying to understand what the director's point of view was that it became more expedient for me to just close my eyes and enjoy the music.

As for the singing, I had no complaints. Richard Paul Fink, replacing Gidon Saks as the Dutchman, was excellent, as was Susan Marie Pierson in the role of Senta. David Rendall as Erik, Raymond Aceto as Daland and Gordon Gietz as the Steersman were all in good voice. Richard Bradshaw conducted.

On the following night it was *DON GIOVANNI* in a revival of the 1992 COC production originally staged at the Elgin Theatre. This production corresponded very nicely to the traditional approach last fall to Donizetti's *L'ELISIR D'AMORE*. The evening was successful given the fine conducting of Nicholas Cleobury along with a most acceptable cast.

Davide Damiani in the title role, Gilles Cachemaille as Leporello, Monica Colonna and Alwyn Mellor as Donna Anna and Donna Elvira respectively, Michael Colvin as Don Ottavio, and Kristine Szabo as Zerlina all managed to bring the necessary life to this great opera. My only regret is that on February 2nd Isabel Bayrakdarian did not sing Zerlina. The original COC programme made no mention that the role would be sung by two different singers at different performances.

Editor's Notes

Apologies go to Norma Mellon who was identified as Norma Law in the last newsletter. Norma Law is another lovely lady who lives in Fort Frances, Ontario.

Many thanks go to Tom McCool whose expertise produced the last newsletter and has created this one.

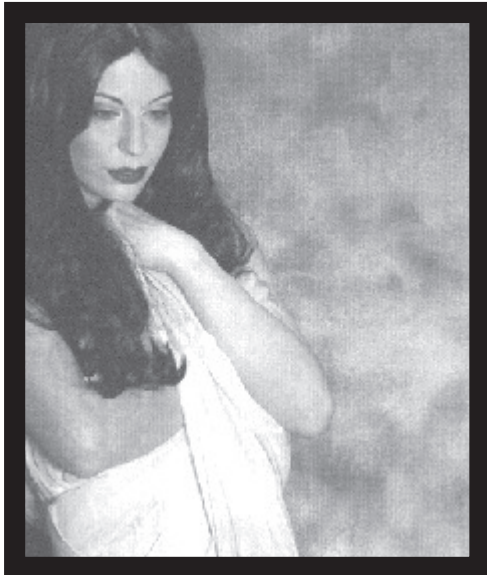
At the last moment I have been asked to inform you of a concert and dinner called **Voices of Spring** to be held at the Villa Marconi, 1026 Baseline Road (one block east of Merrivale) on Saturday, April 22 at 6 p.m. The concert which includes opera selections as well as songs in Italian, Greek and Finnish will feature Shawne Elizabeth, soprano, Eugene Oscapela, baritone, George Valettas and Nick Michelis, tenors, and the Finnish Singers with Julie Burkelaas at the piano. The home-style Italian dinner and concert (to be held in the chapel) must be booked before Monday, April 17 at 726-1808, 727-6201, or 729-6518, and cost only \$30 per person, \$25 for early birds.

Opera Alla Pasta — Sunday Afternoon at the Opera

2:00 p.m Sunday, April 9, 2000 at St. Anthony's Soccer Club

THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO

OPERA LYRA OTTAWA



LA TRAVIATA by Giuseppe Verdi

March 25, 27, 29 & April 1
National Arts Centre

Lyne Fortin....VIOLETTA
Don Bernardini.... ALFREDO
Gaetan Laperrière....GERMONT

with
the National Arts Centre Orchestra
and the Opera Lyra Ottawa Chorus

SAVOY SOCIETY OF OTTAWA **25th Anniversary**

The **Pirates of Penzance**
By Gilbert and Sullivan

March 31, April 1, 2, 5-8 2000
Dinner Theatre April 8th
(entered by Thyme & Agala)

Tickets on sale now!
727-6650

Supporting the Children's Wish Foundation

2000-2001 Opera Lyra Presents *LA FILLE DE RÉGIMENT* and *IL TROVATORE*

Opera Within Reach

OTTAWA

Opera Lyra

LA TRAVIATA by Verdi
March 25, 27, 29 & April 1

All performances are in the Opera of the NAC. Information: 233-9200

National Arts Centre Orchestra

REQUIEM by Fauré
April 26, 27

Savoy Society

THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE by Gilbert & Sullivan
March 31, April 1, 2, 5-8
at Centrepointe Theatre 727-6650

MONTREAL

L'Opéra de Montréal

DIALOGUES DES CARMÉLITES by Poulenc
March 11, 13, 16, 18, 22 & 25

L'INCORONAZIONE DI POPPEA by Monteverdi
April 1, 4, 6 & 8

IL BARBIERE DI SIVIGLIA
May 27, 29, June 1, 3, 7, 10

All performances are in the Salle Wilfred Pelletier
in the Place des Arts

Information: 1-514-985-2258

TORONTO

Canadian Opera Company

LA BOHEME by Puccini
April 6, 8, 11, 14, 16, 19 & 22

PELLÉAS ET MELISANDE by Debussy
April 7, 9, 12, 15, 18 & 20

Ford Centre

GIOVANNA D'ARCO by Verdi March 18

Jennifer Larmore March 30

ST MATHEW PASSION by Bach April 15 & 16

Opera in Concert

Voices of Spring March 11

THE SHIVAREE by Beckwith April 15 & 16

U of T Faculty of Music

LA RONDINE by Puccini March 2, 3, 4 & 5

LA CENERENTOLA by Rossini April 9

Roy Thomson Hall

April 2 — Susan Graham

May 12 — Frederica von Stade