

# Newsletter • Bulletin

Spring

2005

Printemps

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

## A Grand Night for Opera by Jean Saldanha

Opera arias filled the Unitarian Church on January 29<sup>th</sup> as the seventh Brian Law Opera Scholarship competition was held. Bobbi Cain hosted the evening and welcomed the audience to what was to be an evening of musical treats. It was good to see her back on her feet after an extended hospital stay.

Thanks to the preliminary jurors, Barbara Clark, Charlotte Stewart and Garth Hampson, a fine group of four talented young singers were chosen for the night's finals.

First on stage was Joyce El-Khoury, soprano, who gave dramatic and moving presentations of the arias "Come scoglio" from *COSI FAN TUTTE*; Marietta's Lied "Gluck, das mir verblieb" from *DIE TOTE STADT*; and "Donde lieta uscì" from *LA BOHÈME*.



**WINNER: Joyce El-Khoury**

Next was Bryan Estabrooks, baritone, with arias "O Ruddier than the Cherry" from *ACIS AND GALATEA*; "Avant de quitter ces lieux" from *FAUST* sung with great feeling; and a spirited presentation of "Largo al factotum" from *IL BARBIERE DI SIVIGLIA*.

Liliana Piazza, mezzo-soprano, chose the arias "Va! Laisse couler les larmes" from *WERTHER*, "Ombra mai fu" from *SERSE* and "Must the winter come so soon?" from *VANESSA*. All were sung beautifully in a lovely clear voice.

Last, and to many the favourite, was Maghan Stewart, soprano, who easily handled the arias "Piangerò la sorte mia" from *GUILIO CESARE*, "In quali eccessi, oh, Numi" from *DON GIOVANNI* and "Mi chiamano Mimi" from *LA BOHÈME*. The latter aria was done so convincingly.

The contestants were very ably accompanied by Jane Perry, Chris Foley and Valerie Dueck.

The jurors, Darryl Edwards, Henry Ingram and Christiane Riel were then left with the difficult task of choosing a winner. While they were deliberating the audience was treated to a mini-recital by past winner Shannon Mercer, who was in town after her recent successful appearance in Opera Lyra's productions of *THE TELEPHONE* and *THE OLD MAID AND THE THIEF*. She is one of Canada's finest young sopranos and a worthy past winner of the Brian Law Opera scholarship.

Before starting her recital, Shannon, lovely in a brilliant long red dress, spoke of what it meant to her to have won the scholarship in 2001 and how she appreciated being able to be on stage this evening before friends and family. She introduced each of her arias and described the background to the pieces.



**Bryan Estabrooks Liliana Piazza Joyce El-Khoury Maghan Stewart**

*(continued on page 4)*

## President's message

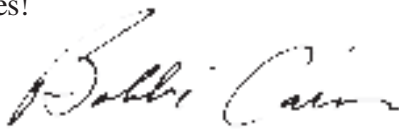
Greetings to you all as we move into a new season and bid farewell to the past year. In my case I bid a very great farewell as I am now home from hospital and living more like a human being. But on to more important matters.

On the back cover of the program for the Brian Law Opera Scholarship Competition you will have noticed the names of all those who have donated to the Endowment Fund supporting this endeavour. To those of you named who are not members of the society we have enclosed a copy of this program along with our latest newsletter expressing *our sincere gratitude to you for your continued support*.

To those of you who are members I would like to say a special thank you for your financial dedication to opera and in this case to those young people pursuing that most glorious of art forms.

As we move into the next period of time won't you join us and enjoy the celebration of great music, staging and acting.

Best Wishes!



## N.C.O.S. Board of Directors

President	Bobbi Cain
Vice-President	Murray Kitts
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## ATTENTION!!

### ALL NCOS MEMBERS

### It is time to RENEW your membership for 2005!

The NCOS membership year runs from January to December. Please fill in the enclosed form and join us for another year of musical activities!

## Opera Alla Pasta — Sunday Afternoon at the Opera

February 20, 2005

Donizetti's **LUCRETIA BORGIA**

Covent Garden production with Joan Sutherland and Alfredo Kraus

April 24, 2004

Verdi's **MACBETH**

Recent production from Opernhaus Zurich

The performance starts at 2.00 P.M. at St. Anthony's Soccer Club Dinner follows.

Reservations required: 225-0124

# FILUMENA

*FILUMENA*, a new opera coming to Ottawa, is an all-Canadian work performed in English that premiered in Calgary to great acclaim on February 1, 2003. The opera was revived for the Banff Summer Festival that same year. The National Arts Centre's **Alberta Scene Festival** in association with Opera Lyra Ottawa will be presenting *FILUMENA* at the NAC on April 28<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>, 2005. Filled with passion, romance, drama and tragedy this is the perfect story for the grand themes and production values of opera.

*FILUMENA* is a truly Canadian story, based upon the compelling tale of Florence "Filumena" Losandro, a young Italian immigrant to the Crowsnest Pass region of Alberta and British Columbia in the 1920s. Born at the beginning of the twentieth century in Southern Italy, she went to her death on the gallows at Fort Saskatchewan penitentiary when she was 22 years old.

During the summer of 1915, when still only a teenager, she married Charlie Losandro, a man 10 years her senior, in the small town of Crowsnest Pass. This was not a happy marriage but it did bring her into contact with one of Southern Alberta's greatest characters, Emilio Picariello, "The Emperor Pic". Picariello, a modern-day Robin Hood, engaged in business activities both legal and illegal. Prohibition legislation was enacted in Alberta in 1915 and "The Emperor Pic" continued his business of providing entertainment, food and beverage except now the beverage business had to be done under the table. Charlie Losandro was one of "Emperor Pic's" employees and Filumena eventually became involved in bootlegging through her love for Picariello's son, Steve.

## Opera Lyra Ottawa Guild

### Russian Opera Highlights

hosted by Murray Kitts

Part 2 February 21, 2005

### Definitely the Opera

*LES CONTES D'HOFFMAN* (Offenbach) February 7

*SAMSON ET DALILA* (Saint-Saens) March 7

*ANDREA CHENIER* (Giordano) May 16

### Opera Insights

*LES CONTES D'HOFFMAN*

with Joanne & Tyrone Patterson

March 22, 2005

All presentations take place at the National Library at 7:00 p.m.

In September, 1921 a bizarre police chase ended with Steve Picariello being shot in the wrist by Constable Lawson. Steve's father, "The Emperor Pic", and Filumena went to confront Constable Lawson and the dispute ended with Lawson being fatally shot and dying in front of his wife and children. Emilio Picariello and Filumena Losandro were jointly convicted of murder and, although their trial was confusing and contradictory, both were sentenced to hang. Both sought the clemency of the courts, and then the Minister of Justice and Prime Minister, but to no avail. Filumena was the last woman in Alberta, and one of the last in Canada, to be hanged.

The composer of *FILUMENA*, John Estacio, is currently Resident Composer with both the Banff Centre and Calgary Opera. He has composed works for the Calgary Philharmonic, the Edmonton Symphony, the Toronto Symphony, the Manitoba Chamber Orchestra and the Penderecki String Quartette. John Murrell, the librettist, is internationally renowned as one of the most frequently produced of all Canadian playwrights and at present is Artistic Director and Executive Producer of Theatre Arts at the Banff Centre. His most recent project is a play about Friedrich Nietzsche for the Shaw Festival.

From April 28 to May 10 the **Alberta Scene Festival** will be celebrating the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of Alberta at the NAC. The wide variety of performances, including dance, theatre, popular singers, comedians and much more, promises that there will be something for everybody. It is good to see that opera lovers will not be left out. Now it is up to those who want to see more opera in Ottawa to support this endeavour.

## Saturday Afternoon at the Opera

February 12 Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart **Le Nozze di Figaro** 1:30

February 19 Giacomo Puccini **La Bohème** 1:30

February 26 Giuseppe Verdi **Nabucco** 1:30

March 5 Camille Saint-Saëns **Samson et Dalila** 1:30

March 12 Gioachino Rossini **Il Barbiere di Siviglia** 1:30

March 19 Giuseppe Verdi **Don Carlo** 1:00

March 26 Pietro Mascagni/Ruggiero Leoncavallo **Cavalleria Rusticana/Pagliacci** 1:30

April 2 Richard Strauss **Der Rosenkavalier** 12:30

April 9 Giacomo Puccini **Tosca** 1:30

April 16 Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart **Die Zauberflöte** 1:30

April 23 Richard Wagner **Die Walküre** 12:30

April 30 Charles Gounod **Faust** 1:30

May 7 Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart **La Clemenza di Tito** 1:30



# The 7th Brian Law Opera Scholarship Competition

(continued from page 1)

Shannon's arias from *UN BALLO IN MASCHERA*, *THE OLD MAID AND THE THIEF*, *GUILIO CESARE* and *IL BARBIERE DI SIVIGLIA* were lively and sung beautifully. She brought the house down with her last song, the humorous "A word on my ear" by Flanders and Swann. In this number she showed her great charm and acting ability. Judith Ginsburg accompanied Shannon beautifully.

Bobbi Cain then read a message from Brian Law. He said he had hoped to make a trip back from New Zealand to attend the competition but at the last minute had agreed to take on the position of choir director for the men's and boy's choirs of Christ Church, thus coming full circle in his career (having come to Ottawa many years ago to do the same at Christ Church here). He sent his best wishes to the audience, all competitors and praised Bobbi for her work in organizing the competition.

The moment of decision arrived and juror Henry Ingram took to the stage to describe some of the deliberations - the jurors all come from different backgrounds in music and therefore look for different qualities in the contestants. He also told the contestants that these competitions are good experience for them in their future careers and in life in general, having to be at their best at the moment when it counts in spite of mundane difficulties during the day or days leading up to the event. He complimented all the contestants on their attractive gowns and suit. He then announced the winner - Joyce El-Khoury. The \$2000 scholarship was presented by board member Gordon Metcalfe and flowers presented by Shannon Mercer. Through the generosity of Pat Adamo, a \$300 award was presented by Pat to first runner-up Maghan Stewart as well as \$200 to the second runner-up, Liliana Piazza. Gordon Metcalfe presented a donated \$100 award to third runner-up, Bryan Estabrooks.





Photos by  
Klaus Siemsen  
and  
Pat Adamo





# Boy Meets Girl in Toronto

by Shelagh Willams

The January offerings of the Canadian Opera Company were Puccini's *LA BOHÈME* and Wagner's *SIEGFRIED*, the third part of the **RING** cycle.

The revived traditional production of *LA BOHÈME* held no surprises but was still a delight for the ears and eyes. The vintage (1989) sets and costumes by the husband-and-wife team of Wolfram and the late Amrei Skalicki were well lit by Stephen Ross and realistically and beautifully portrayed Paris of the 1830's. Director Robert McQueen and conductor David T. Heusel drew marvellous performances from the cast and chorus. Greek soprano Elena Kelessidi as Mimi, Turkish tenor Bulent Kulekci as Rodolfo, and dishy Italian baritone Gabriele Viviani as Marcello were making their COC debuts — where do they find all these great singers!! Equally excellent performances were given by Canadians mezzo Kristina Szabo, almost unrecognizable as a blonde Musetta, bass Robert Gleadow movingly mourning his coat as Colline, baritone Peter McGillivray as Schaunard, and veteran COC bass-baritone Cornelis Ophthof, in his 45th season, comically portraying both Benoit and Alcindoro. Even without a “name” star, the cast formed a lovely, cohesive ensemble, making the two-hanky ending believable and satisfying.

The marathon length *SIEGFRIED* was a new and decidedly non-traditional production! The overall concept was innovative: almost all of the action takes place in Siegfried's mind, as if in a dream, and designer Michael Levine had Siegfried and almost all of the cast in white pyjamas. In Act I the scenery consisted of the tree stump from *DIE WALKÜRE*, above which hung elements of Siegfried's genealogy, thoughts and memory in the shape of a tree canopy. This was a startling vision and became even more striking in Act II when the perspective was changed so that it appeared that the audience was actually in the vortex looking down at Siegfried! By Act III when Siegfried had made his way through the fragments of his past, the stage was bare of paraphernalia as he encountered Brunnhilde, someone completely new to him and consequently not dressed in pyjamas. To maintain the dreamlike, meditative quality, director Francois Girard slowed the stage movement to a crawl. Brain activity seemed to be indicated within the tree canopy by spotlighting an object when its leitmotif was played or by slight movements of a female body when Siegfried's mother was mentioned. Unfortunately it was often difficult to know where to look and significant actions were easily missed. For instance Mime's fussy potion brewing upstaged Siegfried while he was re-forging his father's broken sword — surely at least some

special effect could have indicated that this momentous task was finally complete! Lighting designer David Finn and choreographer Donna Feore, with 6 dancers and 24 supernumeraries, combined cleverly to give some very good effects for the forge's fire, the “dragon” of dancers linked together as a towering monster, and the ring of fire around Brunnhilde. An excellent cast was assembled for this production and, working with Maestro Richard Bradshaw and the COC orchestra, the singers ensured that the production never lagged or lost one's interest throughout the entire 4¾ hours. In the title role, German heldentenor Christian Franz used his experience at Bayreuth and elsewhere to good effect, never flagging, but maintaining his tone and strength throughout — a Herculean task, since he was on-stage almost continuously either singing or watching the action. Returning from the *DIE WALKÜRE* production were bass-baritone Peteris Eglitis as Wotan and Canadian soprano Frances Ginzer as Brunnhilde — in the best costume on stage: her tatty-looking Valkyre dress from last year! Strong performances were delivered by tenor Robert Kunzli, as Mime, and English bass-baritone Pavlo Hunka as Alberich, especially in a confrontation with Wotan where only the latter's eye-patch and staff distinguished two elderly, bearded, pyjama-clad figures on stage! Other interesting characters in the opera were the “dragon” Fafner, sung by unseen Canadian bass Philip Ens; the Bear, mimed by actor George Molnar; and the Forest Bird, sung and flown by debuting Canadian soprano Laura Whalen. It was, all in all, an original, well-thought-out, well-delivered, enjoyable production of *SIEGFRIED*.

The Canadian Opera Company with the Munk Centre for International Studies at the University of Toronto have combined to form the Opera Exchange, which presents symposia on selected COC operas. They consist of interesting and informative speakers on various related topics and finish with a panel discussion by the COC artistic team. Highlights of this year's *SIEGFRIED* seminar were Scott Irvine, COC principal tuba, playing his solo as Fafner, the dragon; Wayne Gooding, editor of *Opera Canada*, illustrating various approaches which have been taken to the many problems inherent in staging the opera; and designer Michael Levine explaining the concept and difficulties of the production! It was an excellent preparation for experiencing *SIEGFRIED*.

# Wine, Women and Song by Shelagh Willams

It was Opera Lyra Ottawa's 20th Anniversary Celebration, at Centrepointe Theatre in mid-January, and they did themselves proud! From the Canterbury High School vocal students serenading patrons before the opera, through the provision of tiny scissors to cut the red ribbons at everyone's seat and non-alcoholic bubbly for toasting, to the marvellous female singers plus one excellent male and the two delightful operas themselves, it was a class act.

Italian composer Gian-Carlo Menotti (born 1911) moved to the United States at age 17 and remained to work mainly there. He wrote his operas to his own English libretti, which language he feels is ideal for opera! The two Menotti operas presented by OLO were *THE OLD MAID AND THE THIEF*, commissioned in 1939 by NBC, the first opera expressly composed for radio, and *THE TELEPHONE*, first performed in 1947. Both operas were well produced with a lively small orchestra (the OLO Chamber Orchestra) under Maestro Tyrone Paterson, OLO Artistic Director and Principal Conductor. The stage direction was in the capable hands of Michael Dobbin, the new OLO General Director and CEO.

Scenery and costume designer Arthur Penson gave *THE OLD MAID AND THE THIEF* a charming bijou setting, consisting of a well-appointed parlour with steps curving up to the old maid's very feminine bedroom on the second floor. Headlining the strong cast were Ottawa hometown favourites mezzo Julie Nesrallah as Miss Todd, the old maid, and soprano Shannon Mercer as her maid Laetitia — both past winners of our Brian Law scholarship! Baritone Doug MacNaughton provided a believable tramp Bob, attracting the two ladies of the house with his good looks and voice, and soprano Susan Blyth-

Schofield played busybody Miss Pinkerton perfectly. With the text in English, no surtitles were provided, and so it was fortunate that all of the major singers, except occasionally for Miss Blyth-Schofield, had very good diction. This was a most satisfying production.

The comic two-hander, *THE TELEPHONE*, received an upscale, updated treatment with designer Arthur Penson providing a very smart, though minimal condominium loft, lavishly accessorized with multiple products of Bell Canada, the season sponsor: regular phones, cordless phones, cell phones, even a Bell workstation complete with laptop! Shannon Mercer, as phone-addicted Lucy, and Doug MacNaughton as her resourceful beau Ben, trying to get a word in edgewise, made an enjoyable and attractive couple, in another finely crafted presentation.

*"...a very gratifying evening, an appropriate showcase for the successful company that OLO has become!"*

The icing on the cake was the *20-Carat Cabaret*, which began with Julie Nesrallah in a couple of nightclub numbers accompanied by OLO Music Manager, pianist Judith Ginsburg. Julie then introduced as a special "surprise", the founding Artistic Director of OLO, soprano Diana Gilchrist, looking and sounding marvellous, to favour us with the final selection of the evening! Twenty years ago, when we first saw OLO perform Mozart's *IMPRESARIO* in the Market and *COSI FAN TUTTI* in Carleton University's leaky Alumni Theatre, who would have thought that OLO would have made such astonishing progress — this was overall a very gratifying evening, an appropriate showcase for the successful company that OLO has become!

**THE METROPOLITAN OPERA PRESENTS**

Richard Wagner's

***DIE MEISTERSINGER VON NÜRNBERG***

**PBS**

Sunday, April 3, 2005 2:00 pm

# OPERA WITHIN REACH

## OTTAWA

### Opera Lyra Ottawa

**Black and White Opera Soirée**  
February 19, 2005

**LES CONTES D'HOFFMANN**  
April 2, 4, 6 & 9, 2005

All performances begin at 8:00 P.M. in Southam Hall at the National Arts Centre.  
Information: 233-9200 [www.operalyra.ca](http://www.operalyra.ca)

### National Arts Centre

**FILUMENA** (April 28 & 30) presented with Opera Lyra

**Richard Margisson and Measha  
Brueggergossman** May 25 & 26

All performances begin at 8:00 P.M. in Southam Hall at the National Arts Centre.  
Information: 947-7000 [www.nac-cna.ca](http://www.nac-cna.ca)

### Savoy Society

**PATIENCE** April 8, 9, 10, 13, 14, 15 & 16

All performances begin at 8:00 P.M. except 2:00 P.M. on April 10 at CentrepoinTE Theatre.  
Information: 580-2700 [www.savoyociety.org](http://www.savoyociety.org)

### Orpheus Society

**DAMN YANKEES** March 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 & 12

**OLIVER** June 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11

All performances begin at 8:00 P.M. except 2:00 P.M. on March 6 and June 5 at CentrepoinTE Theatre.  
Information: 580-2700 [www.orpheus-theatre.on.ca/](http://www.orpheus-theatre.on.ca/)

## MONTRÉAL

### L'Opéra de Montréal

**AGRIPPINA** March 12, 17, 19 & 23, 2005  
(in Salle Wilfrid-Pelletier at Place des Arts)

**DIDO AND AENEAS** April 8, 9 & 10  
(in Salle Ludger-Duvernay at the Monument-National)

**CARMEN** May 21, 26, 28, 30 & June 1  
(in Salle Wilfrid-Pelletier at Place des Arts)  
Information 1-514-985-2258 [www.operademontreal.com](http://www.operademontreal.com)

## TORONTO

### Canadian Opera Company

**IL TROVATORE** March 31, April 1, 5, 7, 10, 13 & 16, 2005

**TANCREDI** April 1, 5, 7, 10, 13 & 16  
All performances are at the Hummingbird Centre.

Information 1-800-250-4653 [www.coc.ca](http://www.coc.ca)

### Royal Opera

**CAVALERIA RUSTICANA / PAGLIACCI**  
Feb 17, 19, 20, 22, 24 & 26 March 1, 3, 5, 10 & 12

**MADAMA BUTTERFLY**  
April 21, 23, 24, 26, 28 & 30 May 3, 5, 7, 12 & 14

Information: 1-866-322-0456  
[www.royalopera.com](http://www.royalopera.com)

### Opera in Concert

**MARIA STUARDA**  
April 1, 2005 at the Jane Mallett Theatre  
Information: 1-800-708-6754 [www.operainconcert.com](http://www.operainconcert.com)