

Newsletter • Bulletin

Summer 1999

Été 1999

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

From the President . . .

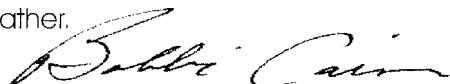
Isn't it marvelous that spring is finally here? I want to report to you that the trip to New York to hear Daniel Taylor in his "Met" debut in Handel's "Guilio Cesare" went very well. It was a visually stunning production and musically, it was great also. Maybe some of you heard it on the following Saturday afternoon production on CBC2. The brunch for Daniel the following morning seemed to go well, and he really appreciated our efforts to make it a special occasion. Picture will follow.

We are coming up to our Annual Meeting, a constitutional requirement when we review our past and plan our present and future. We hope to see many of you at brunch on May 30th, as indicated in the formal notice. I might add that we are in desperate need of more assistance on the Board of Directors. We are now working on a committee system, and the actual board only meets a maximum of four times a year, plus an initial potluck supper meeting to welcome the new board. We're very friendly.

Won't you consider joining us?

We are very concerned about matters at the National Arts Centre and took the opportunity to attend the first-ever-public Board of Trustees meeting. My statement made at that session is reprinted further into this newsletter. We have to keep reminding both the public and private sectors that opera is not an elite art form, that it dwells in the hearts and souls of many folks in this country and requires support from all areas.

Best wishes to you and yours, and enjoy this fine weather.



Notice of Annual Meeting

Sunday, May 30th at 11:30
AM

Green Valley Restaurant
1107 Prince of Wales Drive
(north of Heron Rd. Bridge)

*Join us for our brief business meeting,
and then enjoy your choice of a
great lunch from menu (your cost).
Have a chance to meet the new
Board of Directors, and converse
with them about your wishes for
the work of the Society.*

For reservations, call

225-0124

No later than May 28th.

We need to know how many people
to expect for lunch.

Do join us!

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National Capital Opera Society
1998-1999**

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Mary Ann Swerdfeger

This picture was supposed to be in the spring Newsletter along with the write-up in "Where are they Now?". The US Postal Service and its Canadian counterpart conspired to make it late for publication, so we present this photo of the lovely lady here. Editor

Re Scholarship letter (page 4):

The Society strives to present the Scholarship Competition in the most balanced and meaningful way possible, both to enhance the environment for the competitors, and for the attending audience.

----- Bobbi Cain.

Announcement

We wish to announce that Lynnette Murphy has taken over as Editor of the NCOS Newsletter. She is very skilled in the computer production business and we sincerely thank her for her interest in the work of the Society.

----- Bobbi Cain

Letter

To the National Capital Opera Society Board and Members:

In January, I was very fortunate to win the draw prize for the trip to New York City to attend the performance of Handel's opera *Guilio Cesare*. Since I am one of those persons that always buys tickets but never wins the prize, it was a real thrill to be the recipient of such a wonderful trip. I had already made a payment for the trip; so, I was very sorry to hear that the trip had to be cancelled by Congress Travel. They have always made their trips interesting and pleasant. They made arrangements for my companion (Bobbi Cain) and me to fly down to NYC on the Friday afternoon (returning the following Monday afternoon). We arrived at LaGuardia Airport in the rain and we saw very little on the way to the Mayflower Hotel.

Bobbi had purchased tickets for the Friday evening opera, *Susannah*, with Samuel Ramsey and Renee Fleming. The singing was wonderful, as was the staging. The entire cast was "in good voice" - so thank-you Bobbi for the treat. The only problem was the seating. Congress Travel had made arrangements with the Metropolitan Opera for seats that would be accessible for someone who required an aisle seat. It was therefore disappointing to find that we had to go up eight steps to a small landing and then down four steps to cramped seats. Still the opera itself was marvelous. Having been spoiled in the past by having transportation provided by the Tour Company, I did not realize that getting a taxi to take one between the hotel and Lincoln Centre (and Back) was impossible when there is drizzle or rain.

On Saturday there was rain for most of the day and again there were no taxis available at the Mayflower hotel. Fortunately, the hotel is within walking distance of "the Met". The performance itself was absolutely wonderful. The New York Times had a splendid review of the

opera in the Monday morning paper in which all singers were lauded. The review also said that the supporting singers - Julien Robbins, Mariusz Kwiecien and DANIEL TAYLOR were excellent. "This is Handel that meets the modern world with intelligence, talent and style". Again the only quibble was with the Opera House itself, or rather their programming of their operas. The Powers-that-be chose a long opera for their Saturday afternoon opera broadcast and at 8 PM (20hr00) start for the lengthy Handel opera. This meant that *Guilio Cesare* was not over until 11:50 PM (23hr50) which meant that they had a very tired but still appreciative audience. Yes, there were a few New Yorkers that left early who missed some excellent singing.

On Sunday morning, there was a Brunch at the Mayflower Hotel for Daniel Taylor and with ten of us there to meet and chat with Daniel.

Bobbi and I took the time on Sunday afternoon to visit the Cloisters. The artifacts displayed at The Cloisters come from various parts of Europe, dating from the 14th to the 18th Century. The gardens are modelled on various Abbey and Church gardens. Although it was really too early to fully enjoy them, especially the herb garden, it was a worthwhile visit - and the weather too was nice.

It was a truly lovely weekend (despite some rain) with excellent singing.

Thank-you



Brian Law Scholarship Competition

March 24, 1999

When we read the column by Tom McCool on the front page of the Spring Newsletter, we were at first incensed at what we assumed were his gratuitously negative comments about Alex Fleuriau Chateau: "Problem...threatened the success...unexpectedly withdrew...creating a situation..." Since talking to Mr. McCool by phone, we realize that he was simply writing up facts as they had been presented to him. What a shame that no one thought to inform him that, due to an unavoidable conflict of dates, Alex was unable to attend the final competition. He had hoped to the last that, as a chorus member, he might be released from the dress rehearsal of "Xerxes", but since he also had a mute role involving some complex staging, the Canadian Opera Company (his employer!) could not let him miss that evening. Did it occur to anyone at the Society (which surely should be encouraging, not condemning young singers?) that not being able to attend was a huge blow to Alex, who was unable to accept two engagements with the Choeur Classique de l'Outaouais? How much kinder to have offered some supportive words along the lines of regrets, good wishes and so on, rather than accusations of "ruining my evening". How unflattering, by the way, to the two female finalists even to imply that they by themselves were not enough to hold an audience or assure the "success of the concert". An honest explanation would have satisfied an audience composed, after all, of people who just want to wish young singers well... which is what several hundred enthusiastic audience members did when Alex sang on the CBC noon-hour concert on February 11. Lest you say "Ah parental carping", a look at your records will show that we were among the first contributors to the Brian Law Scholarship Fund immediately after its inception, long before any, more personal involvement.

Yours Sincerely,


Almut Fleuriau Chateau


Gaëtan Fleuriau Chateau

Presentation to NAC Board of Trustees Public Meeting

March 19, 1999 (3-minute limit)

The National Arts Centre is an institution of which all Canadians from coast to coast can be proud. We occasionally get immersed in questions of how best to use the sandstone building and its somewhat forbidding vista to downtown Ottawa. However, the building lives, breathes and becomes vitalized by what takes place inside and around it. It is there for the glorification of the arts in its many forms, and not only the artistic culture of Canada, but of the world. We strongly urge the Board of Trustees to establish priorities for the future programming of the NAC, priorities that speak to many population sectors. That lack of vision for the future has been a sad omission in the institution over the past many years, and it is terribly important to all its devotees that cultural activity such as opera, join our marvelous NAC Orchestra as resident in Canada's superior national performing institution.

We of the National Capital Opera Society may be accused of having an obsessive interest in opera, and we plead guilty. But opera in its many forms-staged, semi-staged, concert-is a glorious compilation of many artistic areas. Just think: music-be it orchestra, vocal or choral; drama-be it comedy, intrigue and greed; often ballet-be it classical, with animals, or with tiny soldiers; and implicitly-often literature. The sets and costumes need not be elaborate-the singing must be superb! It provides balm for our troubled souls and soothes many a restless heart from the very young to those in their golden years.

Bobbi Cain

National Capital Opera Society