

NATIONAL CAPITAL OPERA SOCIETY
 Newsletter

October 1993

SOCIÉTÉ D'OPÉRA DE LA CAPITALE NATIONALE
 Bulletin

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This was the cheerful scene recently in the house of Pat Adamo, seen here standing between Eilana Lappalainen and Daniel Lipton, the Lucia and the conductor of Opera Lyra's *Lucia di Lammermoor*. Pat, a member of our Board, is also one of Opera Lyra's volunteers. She helped with looking after and entertaining the soprano

during her two weeks in the city. Helping Pat on this occasion were her brother Joe Adamo (left) and a friend, Italo Tiezzi. Apart from this involvement with *Lucia*, Pat also interviewed Miss Lappalainen, Mr Lipton, and the tenor Louis Langelier for the local Italian TV station Tele-30, of which she is President.

Summary of forthcoming local events

Concert	Studio Opera Guild	6 November 1993	8:00 pm	Chapel-Tabaret Hall (Laurier at Cumberland)
Tosca, by Puccini	Production by Opera Lyra Ottawa	2, 4, and 6 April 1994	8:00 pm	The Opera, National Arts Centre

An evening with Gary Relyea

This was not the same kind of evening that a similar title referred to a year ago, with Louis Quilico's name in it; it was a Saturday evening at the Delta Hotel where members were invited to come at the cost of nothing more than their own dinners. Gary Relyea and his wife, on a night when *Lucia* was having one of her nights off, were the guests of the Society. Jeff Morgan was also our guest and accepted on behalf of Opera Lyra Ottawa a cheque for \$1000 as our sponsorship of Mr Relyea. The Society made Mr Relyea an Honorary Friend of the NCOS, at which he was most pleasantly surprised.

We already knew that Mr Relyea deserves his bravos for his singing on the stage; we discovered that off the stage and in the dining room, his warmth and amiability are worth many

more. Fortunately for us, he will be singing several more times in Ottawa in the present concert season.

Your editor, speculating with the other people at his table on the place of origin of Mr Relyea's surname, correctly guessed Ireland, although the grounds for his guess proved to have nothing to do with reality. It actually descends from O'Reilly; an ancestor of that name long ago went to live in France and begat generations who carried a francized (I understand that this is an official English word in Quebec) version of the name. Years later, the name was changed again (anglicized?) when a more recent one of our singer's ancestors came to Canada.

JMC and MK

Studio Opera Guild

This organization provides opportunities for local singers to be heard performing selections from opera. Their next performance is very soon (if we can get this Newsletter out quickly enough)—Saturday 6 November, at 8 p.m. in the Chapel-Tabaret Hall at the University of Ottawa.

Admission is \$15, unless you are a student or a senior (60 or more), in which case it is \$10. For

this event we are promised a splendid guest artist whose identity I can reveal as the baritone Henri Loiseau.

The Studio Opera Guild is a charitable organization that deserves our enthusiastic support. Let us hope that many of our members will be there. For further information, the number to call is 778 1540.

Opera within reach

Ottawa

Opera Lyra Ottawa

Tosca, by Puccini. 2, 4, and 6 April 1994.
National Arts Centre.

Montreal

L'Opéra de Montréal

La traviata, by Verdi. 20, 22, 25, and 27
November and 1 and 4* December.

Falstaff, by Verdi. 26 and 28 February and 3, 5,
9, and 12* March.

Carmen, by Bizet. 16, 18, 21, 23, 27 and 30*
April.

Les contes d'Hoffmann, by Offenbach. 28 April
and 1, 3, 5, and 7 May.

La fille du régiment, by Donizetti. 28 and 30
May and 2, 4, 8, and 11* June.

The Student Prince, by Romberg. 13, 15, 16,
and 18 June.

All performances are in the Place des Arts.

* For the operas and dates marked with asterisks there is a Morgan Tour taking a group to Montreal (722 7572).

Toronto

Canadian Opera Company

Le nozze di Figaro, by Mozart. 4, 6, 11, 13, 16, 19, 21, 24, 26, and 28 November. Elgin Theatre.

Die Zauberflöte, by Mozart. 12, 14, 18, 20, 23, 25, and 27 November and 1, 3, and 5 December. Elgin Theatre.

Nosferatu, by Peters. 8, 10, and 12 December. Du Maurier Theatre Centre.

Katya Kabanova, by Janáček. 15, 20, 23, 26, and 29 January and 1 and 7 February. Elgin Theatre.

Le comte Ory, by Rossini. 28 and 30 January and 2, 5, 8, 10, and 12 February. Elgin Theatre.

Madama Butterfly, by Puccini. 2, 8, 10, 13, 15, 17, 19, 21, and 23 April. O'Keefe Centre.

La traviata, by Verdi. 9, 12, 14, 16, 20, 22, and 24 April. O'Keefe Centre.

Opera Ateller

Mozart's Magic Fantasy. 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18 December. Elgin Theatre.

Opera In Concert

Martha, by von Flotow. 4 and 5 December. St Lawrence Centre.

Der Vampyr, by Marschner. 5 and 6 February. St Lawrence Centre.

Lakmé, by Délibes. 9 and 10 April. St Lawrence Centre.

Toronto Operetta Theatre

Orpheus in the Underworld, by Offenbach. 27, 28, 29, 30, and 31 December, and 2 January. St Lawrence Centre.

Naughty Marietta, by Herbert. 26, 27, 28, 29, 30 April. St Lawrence Centre.

Entertainments, 2 p.m. at the St Lawrence Centre:

Vienna Silver, 21 November.

Fin de siècle, 16 January.

Summertime, 20 February.

D'Oyly à la Carte, 6 March.

St Paul's Anglican Church

Hasten to Come before Winter. 24, 25, 26, and 27 November.

Hamilton

Opera Hamilton

Cavalleria rusticana, by Mascagni, and *I pagliacci*, by Leoncavallo. 27 November and 2 and 4 December. Hamilton Place.

Popera. 22, 27, and 29 January. Hamilton Place.

Macbeth, by Verdi. 16, 21, and 23 April. Hamilton Place.

Metropolitan Opera radio broadcasts

Here is the schedule for the coming season.

<i>Rusalka</i>	11 December
<i>Fidelio</i>	18 December
<i>Il barbiere di Siviglia</i>	25 December
<i>Les Troyens</i>	1 January
<i>Madama Butterfly</i>	8 January
<i>I Lombardi</i>	15 January
<i>Elektra</i>	22 January
<i>Lucia di Lammermoor</i>	29 January
<i>Aida</i>	5 February
<i>Le nozze di Figaro</i>	12 February
<i>La fille du régiment</i>	19 February

<i>Death in Venice</i>	26 February
<i>Stiffelio</i>	5 March
<i>Dialogues of the Carmelites</i>	12 March
<i>Adriana Lecouvreur</i>	19 March
<i>La bohème</i>	26 March
<i>Otello</i>	2 April
<i>Der Fliegende Holländer</i>	9 April
<i>Tosca</i>	16 April
<i>Ariadne auf Naxos</i>	23 April

There will also be telecasts on PBS of *Stiffelio* on 27 December and of *I Lombardi* on 30 March.

Favourite opera books

One of our readers, Alice Hanak, having complimented us on the quality of the newsletter, asked if we could suggest the names of some books on opera that would help to increase knowledge and enjoyment of opera.

We know that there are many books available; but what is your favourite opera book? Why not send in a suggestion to the editor at our address given on the front and back pages?

In the meantime, let me suggest the book called *Conducted Tour*, by Bernard Levin, available at the main branch of the Ottawa Public Library. While not exclusively about opera, it is a delightful introduction to music festivals where opera often takes place. If you have ever regretted not having gone to Bayreuth, read the chapter on the Wagner Festival there; you may thank your lucky stars that you never went.

MK

Montreal's *Dutchman*

At the outset, let me confess that this is one of my favourite German operas. This may account for some of the superlatives to follow. The principals, the chorus, the orchestra, the conductor, the sets, the staging—all were superb.

However, this is not exactly the same opera that you have seen in the opera house or heard on disc before. The music is somewhat different, and the ending is very different. Let me say that I prefer the later version with the overpowering redemption music at the end. What we have here is Wagner's earliest undertaking, minus all his and others' revisions. To present the original for the first time in North America is a worthy undertaking and it has deservedly attracted world-wide attention.

Apart from the musical changes, who cares if the opera is set in Scotland rather than Norway and

that Daland is called Donald, and Eric, George? It would be difficult to find a singer today who could match the power and drama brought to the Dutchman's role by the German baritone Helmut Welker. Mary Jane Johnson's Senta was absolutely flawless; her ballad, a great vocal and emotional triumph! Also from Germany, Victor von Halem used his beautiful bass voice and considerable acting ability to create a memorable sea captain. And finally, the American tenor Keith Boldt handled the difficulties of the role of the spurned suitor admirably. The staging worked well, with excellent lighting effects.

I will never forget witnessing a performance of this opera by the Met with George London, Leonie Rysanek, and Jon Vickers in the leading roles. The Montreal performance is worthy to stand beside it.

MK

Opera on the boob tube

With few movies available and our laser disc projection scheme not too successful, opera lovers are left at the mercy of what is offered on TV.

First the good news: PBS is still telecasting the Met productions live; for example, this September brought us Verdi's *Falstaff*, and PBS will continue to do selections from the current Met repertoire.

Even more exciting opera comes in October with Trevor Nunn's Glyndebourne production of Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*. If you are familiar with the sound recording of this production you

know that you are in for a great experience. This is a joint Great Performances and American Playhouse production on PBS.

Occasionally—and you have to be very sharp-eyed and diligent in your search of TV listings—you can find some opera on TV5, the French European channel. The RAIUNO production of *Tosca* filmed in the actual locales in Rome with an astoundingly good cast (Raimundi as Scarpia is stupendous) was telecast last year in Italian with no subtitles, but with no interruptions for commercials or for any other reason.

The Learning Channel has presented a charming and delightful opera programme using computer animation to illustrate and accompany musical and vocal selections from opera. This may be repeated. Even Vision TV presented recently a film made some years ago on the rehearsals for the Canadian Opera's production of Verdi's *La forza del destino*.

The Arts and Entertainment channel, when it is not devoting its programming to weapons of war or crime documentaries, sometimes presents opera on 'Sunday Morning with the Arts'. Bizet's *Carmen* in the Covent Garden production was recently shown. The bad news is—and very bad news it is indeed—that these productions of films are stopped from time to time for commercial messages almost regardless of the action on the opera; that is to say, breaking into a scene or an act and causing a disruption in the action. But there is worse! When this interruption occurs, a kind of signature music unconnected with the opera breaks in to really destroy the mood and any feeling of continuity.

Fortunately the showing of the Zeffirelli film of Verdi's *La traviata* was not interrupted in the middle of scenes, but this cursed signature music is used and is very obtrusive.

This is bad, but TVO has dropped the Met completely and has substituted nothing else. And the CBC—don't bother to look at the English network: you're out of luck. Try the French network on the hit or miss basis suggested for foreign channels. From time to time you can catch opera on 'Les beaux dimanches' or on some other programme; productions of the Opéra de Montréal or opera films are sometimes shown. Of course, like Aesop's fox, we can say that the sound on TV is never very good and that live productions have all sorts of deficiencies. But short of buying a laser disc player and borrowing from the extensive collection of opera on laser disc at the Central Branch of the Ottawa Public Library, opera lovers of the region will have to content themselves with the few operas, some well presented and others not so well, available on TV.

MK

Who was that masked woman?

One of the few things that this reviewer disliked about Opera Lyra Ottawa's production of *Lucia de Lammermoor* was bringing on the veiled ghost in the final scene. In spite of the difference in stature of the Lucia and the ghost I'm afraid I kept expecting Edgardo to uncover our heroine—recently departed for happier realms. I can understand introducing the ghost into the first scene and even into the marriage contract scene. But it would seem that in the final scene it only adds confusion to the drama. Why then do it?

The answer may lie in a consideration of the famous mad scene. Directors are always being told that opera is too static, that as much action as possible should be introduced. So Lucia has to go down the stairs, go up the stairs, nearly fall off the stairs, lie on the floor, bury her face (and voice) in someone's chest. Watching all this, one tends to forget not only what is being sung, but also the emotional impact of the music heightening the meaning of the text. That's what opera is all about; not how much movement can be put into a scene. Not that I would advocate little or no action—but the drama conveyed by

words and music must always be paramount and stage movement should add to, not detract from, the drama.

As a young singer attempting her first Lucia, Eilana Lappalainen performed with great skill and verve. Her first-act appearances did not require her to be all over the stage and thus did not diminish the effectiveness of her performance, as it did in the mad scene. Her most effective scene was with Raimondo, clearly the best-sung role on opening night and probably on the other nights. Gary Relyea was the sponsored artist of NCOS and he did us proud. Of the other principals, Peter Barcza as Lucia's brother Enrico possesses a lovely voice but one which falls a bit short of true operatic power; and we have been assured that Louis Langelier (Edgardo) was ill on opening night and that much better things are in store for us in the future.

The chorus was fine for its size. The sword drill at the beginning of the last act reminded me of a Grade One concert that I participated in when I was five years old. One doesn't know who should be more embarrassed, the participants or

the director. The orchestra playing was splendid under Daniel Lipton, who saved the day more than once by getting the singers back on track. Sets were quite adequate for the drama and scenes were changed easily so as not to interfere with the flow of the action.

Judging by audience reaction, the greatest moment on opening night was the justly famous sextet—it was a triumph for all concerned. All in all, this was a great evening for Opera in Ottawa and we can all look forward to *Tosca* in April.

MK

Membership renewal

Unless your editor is suffused with an unexpected burst of energy, in combination with a surprising amount of free time, this will be the last newsletter of 1993. This makes now the time to remind you about membership renewals for 1994. If you forget, as you pause to gather steam before the Christmas rush, to act on this reminder, another will surely come in the first of next year's newsletters. But let us hope that for most of you it will be redundant.

Discount for members

A reminder that we get a good discount if we present our membership cards when making purchases at—

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

If you are a generous Christmas shopper, you can save yourself an impressive amount in this one shop!

NCOS Board Members

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Some telephone numbers

Bobbi Cain	225-0124 (h)
Marjorie Clegg	594-2988 (h)
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