

Newsletter • Bulletin

Winter

2001

L'Hiver

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

The Fifth Brian Law Competition

FINALISTS SELECTED

This past November a preliminary jury made up of Barbara Clark, Charlotte Stewart, and Garth Hampson selected five young opera singers to compete for the Brian Law Opera Scholarship at a recital to be held at 7:00 P.M. on January 27 at the First Unitarian Congregation. The finalists are Isabelle Lacroix, Luc Lalonde, Anick Lamarche, Shannon Mercer and Tanya Turner. One of these singers will win the \$2,000 first prize. See pages 4-5 for profiles of all the competitors.



Mary Ann Swerdfeger

RECITAL AND RECEPTION

While the contestants sing three arias each for a panel of judges consisting of Mark Pedrotti, Roxalana Roslak and Marcia Swanston, 1995 scholarship winner Mary Ann Swerdfeger will present a mini-recital. Following the announcement of the winner, a reception will be held so that the audience can meet the singers. We are particularly pleased to welcome back Mary Ann. Since winning the Brian Law Opera Scholarship in 1995 Mary Ann has performed in a diverse range of theatrical productions including opera and musical theatre. After graduating from the New England Conservatory Opera Program with a Master of Music and a Graduate Diploma in Vocal Performance Mary Ann performed in various festivals including: the Pacific Music Festival in Sapporo, Japan; the Ashlawn Highland Festival in Charlottesville, Virginia; and the Aspen Opera Theatre in Aspen, Colorado. She has performed the roles of Rosina, Isabella, Polly (*THREEPENNY OPERA*) and Kate Pinkerton. Since moving to New York City in 1997 she has also performed in the Maury Yeston version of *PHANTOM*, Goldie in *TWO BY TWO*, and Mrs. Paroo in *THE MUSIC MAN*. Other shows include *THE NEW MOON* (Rohmberg) and *THE ALL NIGHT STRUT*. Her voice over credits include various commercial projects with Trifecta Music for Film and Television and original cast recording of *THE NEW MOON*. Mary Ann currently studies with Irene Gubrud and coaches with Phill Hall and David Rebhun in New York City.

NATIONAL CAPITAL OPERA SOCIETY
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From the President . . .

As we draw to the close of this first year of the new millenium, we move with great excitement to the fifth biennial Brian Law Opera Scholarship. The price is right, the time is right, and we urge you to bring all your friends to this competition featuring five young artists from our region, plus a bonus recital by Mary Ann Swerdfeger. You'll hear much more about that in this newsletter, but I urge you to come, come, come!!

Here in December it is my privilege to wish you all the best for the Holiday Season. Enjoy it!!!

Next year, 2001, will be just as exciting, so won't you please support us.



A REFLECTION – JOAN MAXWELL

Mezzo-soprano Joan Maxwell, a staunch supporter of the activities of our Society, died on December 17th in Toronto. After her performing career was terminated in 1969 by a severe back injury, Joan turned to teaching and coaching. She was Professor of Music at Ottawa University for some years, founding several programs granting performing exposure to young artists. When the Society produced the SHOWCASE FOR EMERGING STARS in May

1994, Joan worked with us and her students to assemble a sparkling program of opera favorites. She continued to work with us until her retirement a few years later including presenting, along with her husband, Harvey Rempel, reminiscences of Glenn Gould who had been a close family friend and godparent of one of their children. Joan will be remembered as a gentle, caring and loving person who always gave unselfishly of herself.

Opera Alla Pasta — Sunday Afternoon at the Opera

February 11 2:00 P.M. - *DON GIOVANNI* by Mozart - Canadian Opera Production with Louis and Gino Quilico

April 8 2:00 P.M. - *NABUCCO* by Verdi Arena di Verona production

Location: St. Anthony's Soccer Club, Preston and Queensway (parking is behind the building)

Opera videos on a huge screen, followed by a delightful pasta meal including salad, chicken and dessert.

Cash Bar . Total Cost — \$15.00 per person

Reservations at 225-0124 by two days before so we will know how many we are going to feed.

Join us for this fun time!

AN OPERA-GOER'S DIARY

by Donald Metcalfe

The 2000-2001 opera season in the Montreal-Ottawa-Toronto corridor got off to a most auspicious start on September 9 in Ottawa with Opera Lyra's production of Donizetti's *LA FILLE DU RÉGIMENT*, featuring Tracy Dahl in the title role. She is perfect for the part, petite in stature, but with a voice that belies this. She portrayed Marie in an exemplary fashion, displaying appropriate acting skills.

Curt Peterson as Tonio was more of a question mark. After a shaky start one became apprehensive as to how he would manage the famous aria, "Eh bien?...Pour mon ame quel destin", with all those top C's. He survived respectably, followed, almost audibly, by a sigh of relief from the audience.

Steven Condy as Sulpice was fine indeed, as was Mary Lou Fallis in the cameo role of the Duchess of Krackenthorp. All in all, a great start to Opera Lyra's season which includes *IL TROVATORE* next spring.

My next stop was the opening night of Mozart's *COSÌ FAN TUTTE* on September 16 presented by the Opéra de Montréal in an attractive production from the Washington Opera. This and a subsequent opera was fully staged despite the ongoing technicians' strike (now in its second year). Although this work requires six singers of equal ability Director Bernard Uzan succeeded admirably with his cast of Lyne Fortin (Fiordiligi), Daniele Leblanc (Dorabella), David Miller (Ferrando), Alexander Dobson (Guglielmo), Karen Driscoll (Despina) and Daniel Lichti (Don Alfonso). I liked the production so much as to return again on September 27. But then *Così* is probably my favourite Mozart opera.

Now on to Toronto to what looks like a most interesting season. On October 3 I attended Verdi's *OTELLO* in a new production conducted by Richard Bradshaw. Having heard both Jon Vickers and Plácido Domingo as Otello one has to make comparisons. Victor Borgachov did remarkably well, with an appropriately stentorian voice and adequate acting skills. I was less impressed with Zvetelina Vassileva as Desdemona but liked Alain Fondary as Iago. Also I did not like the single set production of this four act

opera, even if it did allow for only one intermission. Probably I've been too accustomed to Zefferelli extravaganzas at the Met.

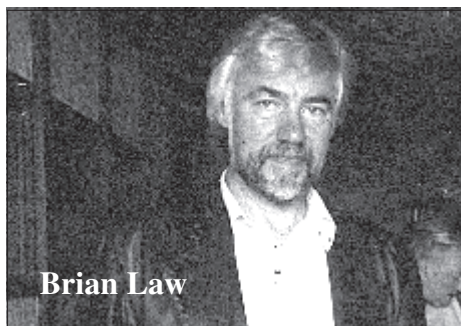
The following night, October 4, I attended Smetana's *THE BARTERED BRIDE* conducted by Kenneth Montgomery, sung in Czech, featuring Eva Urbanova as Marenka and Miroslav Dvorsky as Jenik. What a delightful evening! Richard Bradshaw seems to have the knack of putting together casts who can not only sing but act as well.

Still to come in January-February 2001 are Hans Werner Henze's *VENUS AND ADONIS* and Puccini's *LA FANCIULLA DEL WEST*, hardly the normal fare of the COC but most welcome nonetheless. For those of you who like to plan ahead the 2002 season will offer us the start of Wagner's *RING* cycle, not as usually done in a week marathon, but rather one opera a year. Perhaps by 2006 we can hope for the complete cycle at one time, assuming that we have all survived until then.

The Montreal Symphony is continuing its policy of presenting a number of operas in concert. This year Falla's two act opera *LA VIDA BREVE* was presented as part of an evening of Spanish music. The cast was well chosen, with the marvellous Alicia Nafé as the grandmother, Maria Jose Monteil as Salud, and Manuel Cid as Paco. A great performance! Still to come in concert versions are Ravel's *L'HEURE ESPAGNOLE*, Gershwin's *PORGY AND BESS* and, in May, Strauss' *ELEKTRA* with Elizabeth Connell in the title role.

On November 4 I attended the opening night of Janacek's *KATYA KABANOVA*. Although the composer was in his late 60's when this opera was completed some of his finest works are from this period of his life. I loved the production. Bernard Uzan devised basically a single effective set (to be shared with the Florida Grand Opera). The work was sung in Czech with Oksana Krovytska (Katya), Thomas Studebaker (Tichon), Noella Hunt (Kabanicha) and Allan Glassman (Boris). Stewart Robertson conducted the Orchestre Metropolitain.

If the Opéra de Montréal continues productions like this one and *Così* it could easily rival the COC and even other major companies in North America.



Brian Law

The Brian Law Opera Scholarship was established in 1991 to recognize and honour the contribution made by Brian Law to opera in the National Capital Region and beyond. It is managed by a sub-committee of the Board of Directors of the National Capital Opera Society. The first competition was held in 1993 with Brian present. The scholarship is under the distinguished patronage of Maureen Forrester, C.C.

Some ten months before the final juried recital, notices and application forms for the upcoming competition culminating in January, are sent out to former competitors and most musical educational organizations across the country. The scholarship is designed for students aged 23 to 32, focusing on an opera career, and either a native of, or a resident in, the National Capital Region as defined by the National Capital Commission.

Applications, a package consisting of a tape of three operatic arias, one with recitative, plus a musical CV and a 200 word statement of why opera is so desirable, must be received postmarked no later than November 15. Next, a preliminary jury is convened and up to six finalists are chosen (both male and female if possible), and then notified early in December. The five finalists this year are profiled on these pages.

Brian Law

OPERA

Isabelle Lacroix

Soprano Isabelle Lacroix is finishing her Bachelor of Music degree at the University of Ottawa, studying with Ingemar Korjus. As a member of the Opera Lyra Ottawa Young Artists Program, She sang the role of Hansel in last year's production of *HANSEL AND GRETEL* and starred as Cinderella in the recent production of Rossini's *CINDERELLA* under the direction of Tyrone Paterson. She has sung the roles of Zerlina in Mozart's *DON GIOVANNI* and Fiodiligi in *COSÌ FANTUTTE* with the Ottawa University Opera Workshop, and will appear as Ines in Opera Lyra Ottawa's production of *IL TROVATORE* this coming April.

Luc Lalonde

Baritone Luc Lalonde is currently enrolled at McGill University in the Bachelor's Program in Vocal Performance. In January 2001 he will be on stage as Bartolo in Opera McGill's performance of Mozart's *LE NOZZE DI FIGARO*. A native of the National Capital Region, he has performed a number of minor roles in McGill opera productions including the more important role of Dulcamara in Donizetti's *L'ELISIR D'AMORE*. At the Orford Arts Centre he performed in Menotti's *THE MEDIUM* and also in Gluck's *L'IVRONGE CORRIGÉ*.

SCHOLARSHIP FINALISTS

Anick Lamarche

Soprano Anick Lamarche is completing the Bachelor of Voice Performance Program at the University of Toronto under the guidance of Jo-Anne Bentley. Before transferring to Toronto she studied with Robert Miron in Cornwall and with Darquise Bilodeau in Montreal. During this period she achieved success in a many festival competitions in Eastern Ontario and participated in a three week opera workshop program at the Orford Arts Centre. She is now a member of the Opera Chorus of the University of Toronto and has performed as soloist at that university's Walter Hall.

Shannon Mercer

Soprano Shannon Mercer's passion is early music, an obsession which increases her flexibility as a singer. She is a member of the Canadian Opera Company's Ensemble Studio Program in Toronto, having completed a year of study at the University of Toronto's Opera School. In June 1999 she gained her Bachelor of Music (Honours) with High Distinction in Performance (voice) from McGill University in Montreal. Her love of early music led to a tour of Nova Scotia with the early chamber music group ARION as soprano soloist. Over the years her wealth of solo experience has led to associations with many respected coaches and conductors.

Tanya Turner

Soprano Tanya Turner's academic achievement will culminate this year with the Master of Music, Performance, at the University of Toronto with principal instructor Darryl Edwards. Over the past decade she has, among other roles, appeared in Gluck's *L'IVROGNE CORRIGÉ* and Menotti's *THE MEDIUM* at the Orford Centre for the Arts; in Ulman's *DER KAISER VON ATLANTIS* and Puccini's *LA RONDINE*; in Mozart's *DER ZAUBERFLÖTE* and Bernstein's *CANDIDE* in concert with the Second Company, Waterloo; and in Nicolai's *THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR* and Berlioz's *BÉATRICE ET BÉNÉDICT* at the University of Ottawa's Opera Workshop. Many concert appearances have also taken place.

THE PEKING OPERA

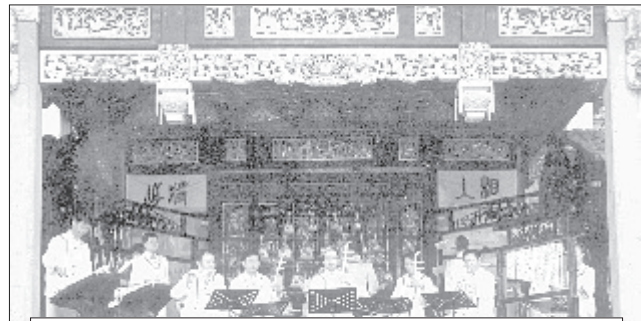
by Murray Kitts

Peking rather than Beijing? - yes. Opera? - yes and no. The Peking Opera was one of the great Chinese cultural traditions attacked during the Cultural Revolution. It did survive however and is now being kept alive on its way to a full-scale revival by means of live performances for tourists and by television productions.

On a recent visit to China our tour group was hustled by our guide into an auditorium balcony to attend a performance of the Peking Opera. Some tour groups were downstairs being served their evening meal (we had already eaten our Peking duck elsewhere). The auditorium balcony was full and, unfortunately, not everyone present respected Chinese cultural heritage.

The orchestra, consisting of traditional Chinese instruments, played on one side of the stage. As this type of theatre was presented originally on the streets of Peking there was no scenery and props were kept to a minimum. However, the costumes and masks used were dazzling in colour and variety. An attempt was made by a narrator to explain the action before each segment. Also titles were projected at each side of the stage to translate the dialogue. Unfortunately the English used was not the Queen's nor mine nor yours but a very peculiar Chinese type of English that may make sense to English-speaking Chinese but does not convey too much to the ordinary English-speaker.

The first tableau presented a Princess singing about her love. The singer (a male I presume if tradition is followed) sang in a very high pitched voice. When I



Shanghai: Porcelain orchestra

江西景德镇歌舞团瓷乐演奏

say very high pitched I really mean it. Unfortunately that curse of modern technology in the theatre, amplification, was used and this made the very high pitched voice even more penetrating and overwhelming.

What followed was peopled and sung by male characters exclusively so that amplification was no longer such a problem. And what followed was simply marvellous. This was the combat between the Monkey God and the Twelve Protector Gods. The Monkey God was so clever, so amusing, so agile, so entertaining, I have no doubt that he must be one of the best mimes in China. Each combat was different. Each god was dressed in a costume more extravagant than the previous one and each succeeding mask was more detailed and ferocious than the one before. The acrobatics were truly fantastic.

Was this opera? What little I saw on television leads me to think that the Peking Opera is just as much opera as western opera. As for the presentation that I saw, there were sung elements and what was presented was only excerpts. What is certain is that this is great entertainment. Long after we will have forgotten the Imperial Dancers at Xi'an and the Shanghai Acrobats and Jugglers the Peking Opera will still be remembered as one of the highlights of our tour.



Xi'an: Street theatre

SATURDAY AFTERNOON AT THE OPERA

TEXACO-METROPOLITAN OPERA RADIO BROADCAST SEASON 2001 SCHEDULE



January 6	Ludwig van Beethoven	Fidelio	1:30
January 13	Giuseppe Verdi	Il Trovatore	1:30
January 20	Ferruccio Busoni	Doktor Faust	1:00
January 27	Giuseppe Verdi	Aida	1:00
February 3	Georges Bizet	Carmen	1:00
February 10	Giuseppe Verdi	Un Ballo in Maschera	1:30
February 17	Gioachino Rossini	L'Italiana in Algeri	1:30
February 24	W. A. Mozart	Così fan tutte	1:30
March 3	Jules Massenet	Manon	1:00
March 10	W. A. Mozart	Die Zauberflöte	1:30
March 17	Giacomo Puccini	La Bohème	1:30
March 24	Giuseppe Verdi	Nabucco	1:30
March 31	Sergei Prokofiev	The Gambler	1:30
April 7	Richard Wagner	Parsifal	12:00
April 14	Richard Strauss	Ariadne auf Naxos	1:30
April 21	Alban Berg	Lulu	1:30

Metropolitan Opera Telecasts on PBS

March 21, 2001

TRISTAN UND ISOLDE

with

Ben Heppner & Jane Eaglen

TBA

The Met Celebrates Verdi

OPERA LYRA OTTAWA GUILD

Information: 565-7194

Definitely the Opera

Lecture & laser disk presentation of great operas
7:00 P.M. at the National Library

SALOME January 22, 2001
MACBETH February 26

Exploring Opera

January 23, 2001 "Why Opera?"

January 30, 2001 "Why Opera?" Part 2

presented by Donald Metcalfe

February 6, 2001 "Opera Goes to the Movies"

with Murray Kitts

7:00 P.M. at the National Library

Opera Insights: Discussion & the principals of *IL TROVATORE* \$15 Date: TBA

Opera Within Reach

OTTAWA

National Arts Centre

CARMINA BURANA by Orff March 21 & 22

Information: 947-7000, ext 280

Opera Lyra Ottawa

Black & White Opera Soirée Feb 17, 2001

IL TROVATORE by Verdi April 21, 23, 25 & 28

Information: 233-9200

CentrepoinTE Theatre Orpheus Society

MAN OF LA MANCHA March 2-10

THE WIZARD OF OZ June 1-9

Savoy Society

RUDDIGORE MARCH 30 — APRIL 7

Information: 727-6650

MONTREAL

L'Opéra de Montréal

Ruth Ann Swenson Jan 21, 2001

LUCIA DE LAMMERMOOR by Donizetti

Feb 10, 12, 15, 17, 21 & 24

MEFISTOFELE by Boito

March 10, 12, 15, 17, 21 & 24

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

Information: 1-800-361-4595

TORONTO

Canadian Opera Company

VENUS AND ADONIS by Henze

Jan 19, 23, 25, 28, 31 & Feb 3, 2001

LA FANCIULLA DEL WEST by Puccini

Jan 20, 24, 26, 30 Feb 1 & 4

BILLY BUDD by Britten

April 6, 8, 11, 14, 17, 19

IDOMENEO by Mozart

April 7, 10, 12, 18, 20, 22

All performances are at the Hummingbird Centre.

Information: 1-800-250-4653

Opera Mississauga

LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR by Donizetti

March 17, 20, 22 & 24, 2001

RIGOLETTO by Verdi

May 4, 8, 10 & 12

All performances are in Hammerson Hall at The
Living Arts Centre in Mississauga

Information: 1-905-306-0060

Roy Thomson Hall

Mathias Goerne March 27

(with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra)

Renée Fleming April 22