

Newsletter • Bulletin

Spring

2003

Printemps

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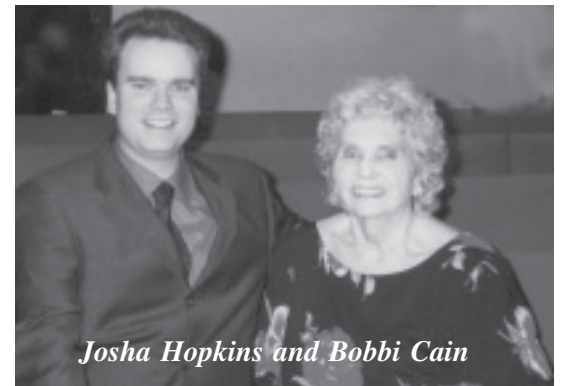
Best Competition Yet !!

by Murray Kitts



We were anxious to have a particularly fine competition in 2003 as this year marks ten years since the first scholarship was presented. What a delight to have as competitors the five gifted singers we heard on the night of January 25th. Special thanks go to Barbara Clark, Charlotte Stewart and Garth Hampson who chose the finalists.

With our honorary patron for the evening, Hamilton Southam, and the jurors in place with their musical scores, President Bobbi Cain opened the proceedings as she has done on every other competition night. It was great to have such outstanding singers and teachers as Christine Riel, Roxalana Roslak and Darryl Edwards donating their time to act as jurors.



Tenor Pascal Charbonneau chose two familiar Mozart arias to show the flexibility and fine quality of his voice using his third selection from Britten's *THE TURN OF THE SCREW* to demonstrate his ability to sing dramatic music. Soprano Melanie Conly sang a plaintive Handel aria as well as "The Willow Song" from Moore's *THE BALLAD OF BABY DOE* but it was "The Doll's Song" from Offenbach's *TALES OF HOFFMAN* that delighted the audience. Baritone Joshua Hopkins used his powerful voice to portray Donizetti's swaggering sergeant and Mozart's revenge-seeking Count, using an aria from Korngold's *DIE TOTE STADT* to demonstrate the beautiful

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FROM THE PRESIDENT...

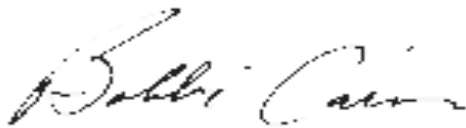
Today, it is freezing rain outside, and I sit warm and cozy at my computer, and hope that you are safe also. The days are getting longer and we know that spring is on the way.

As you will see in many other parts of this newsletter, the Society sponsored an artistically successful Brian Law Opera Scholarship competition on January 25th. For the first time, the men took over winning laurels with a resounding round of applause for a most promising baritone named Joshua Hopkins. You had another chance to hear him at the Opera Lyra Ottawa/ National Arts Centre 'Black and White Fundraiser' on February 15th.

The competition was an artistic success, but unfortunately the audience was not at capacity, and this impacts our bottom line. We were at close to seventy per cent, but perhaps the weather and other factors conspired against us. This evening is a major component of our activities, so the shortfall is unfortunate. However, we all had a great evening and I hope that you were with us.

It is very important that you support the Society's endeavors. At the same time, I want to thank every faithful soul who communicates their love of opera through their endorsement of our many activities.

Best wishes to you all.



N.C.O.S. Board of Directors

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Saturday Afternoon at the Met

March 1	Puccini	Turandot
March 8	Puccini	La Bohème
March 15	Verdi	La Traviata
March 22	Verdi	Otello
March 29	Gounod	Faust
April 5	Verdi	Nabucco
April 12	Wagner	Parsifal
April 19	Stravinsky	The Rake's Progress

OPERA ALLA PASTA

Sunday Afternoon at the Opera

2:00 p.m. May 4 at St. Anthony's Soccer Club
Delicious Italian dinner at 5:00 p.m. Call 225-0124 for reservations

The Damnation of Faust

Willard White and Vessalina Kasarova in the 1999 Salzburg Festival production of Belioz's "Legende dramatique".

"spectacular scenic realisation" - Allan Blyth in *The Gramophone*

Ottawa Singer at Carnegie Hall



Former Brian Law Scholarship contestant Maria Knapik sang the lead rôle in Verdi's *Alzira* on January 31, in a concert performance of the opera given in New York's Carnegie Hall. Well-known for her many appearances in Ottawa, Maria joined other soloists in a performance by the New York Grand Opera Company under the direction of conductor Vincent La Selva. This conductor is renowned for his presentation of 55 operas in upwards of 125 performances to audiences of over three million people since 1974. He is credited with the first fully-staged production of Verdi's *Alzira* which formed part of the presentation of all 28 Verdi operas in an eight year cycle.

Maria "...sang with color and strength..." according to the Associated Press review. She has also received personal congratulations from listeners praising her "...sensational performance..." and being impressed by "...the ease and joy.." with which she sang. Congratulations to Maria!

LA VEUVE JOYUESE

This season Le Théâtre lyrique de Hull presents Franz Lehar's *The Merry Widow* - in French - *La Veuve Joyuese* - at 8 pm Feb. 21, 22, 27, 28, and March 1st with a matinée at 2 pm on Sunday, March 2. The production stars coloratura soprano Shawne Elizabeth in the title rôle and tenor George Valettas and will be held at The Auditorium, University of Quebec Campus, 101 St. Jean Bosco St., Gatineau (Hull)..

Tickets: \$20 -
Seniors and Students: \$15.
Information and tickets:
Director Bernard Gagnon - 744-5984;
Pat Adamo - 729-9518

SOUNDS OF SPRING

An evening of opera arias and popular songs from around the world
Saturday, May 17, 2003, 8:00 p.m.
National Library Auditorium
395 Wellington, Ottawa

Costa Kapsalis and his musical friends invite you to come and celebrate Spring with favourite opera arias and beautiful songs from Greece, Finland, and other countries.

Soprano Shawne Elizabeth
Tenor George Valettas
Soprano Ann Hynna
The Ottawa Finnish Singers
Chorus members of the Théâtre lyrique de Hull

The singers will be accompanied by pianist Sandra Kelly, cellist Jan Jarvlepp, and violinist Lisa Taras.

Also by bouzouki, guitar, drums and flute.

Admission \$15 at the door
(reservations recommended 726-1808)
If you identify yourself as a member of NCOS a \$10 rebate will go to help our society.

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qualities of his voice. Soprano Kathleen Radke sang Juliette’s brilliant waltz, portrayed the fearful Pamina, and concluded with the lovely “Caro nome” from *RIGOLETTO*. Mezzo Jillian Yemen presented three arias of great contrast, a lively one by Handel, a sad one by Purcell and a seductive Segudilla by Bizet.

But there was more to come. While the judges were making their decisions, soprano Laura Dziubaniuk, winner of the first Brian Law Opera Scholarship Competition, gave a mini-recital. With great poise, confidence and strength Laura used her beautiful voice to portray three famous Puccini characters, Laretta, Liu and Musetta. The “Song to the Moon” took many of us back to the night ten years ago when Laura used this aria to clinch her win. A Lehar number completed a delightful programme; however the audience demanded and received an encore.

While in no way diminishing the excellent accompanists Jean Desmarais and Erica Smith, special mention must be made of the contribution of Frédéric Lacroix who not only accompanied three of the five contestants and Laura Dziubaniuk as well, but also provided the sound of the clock-



work mechanism for the Doll and sang in the chorus of the Lehar song. Bravo Frédéric!

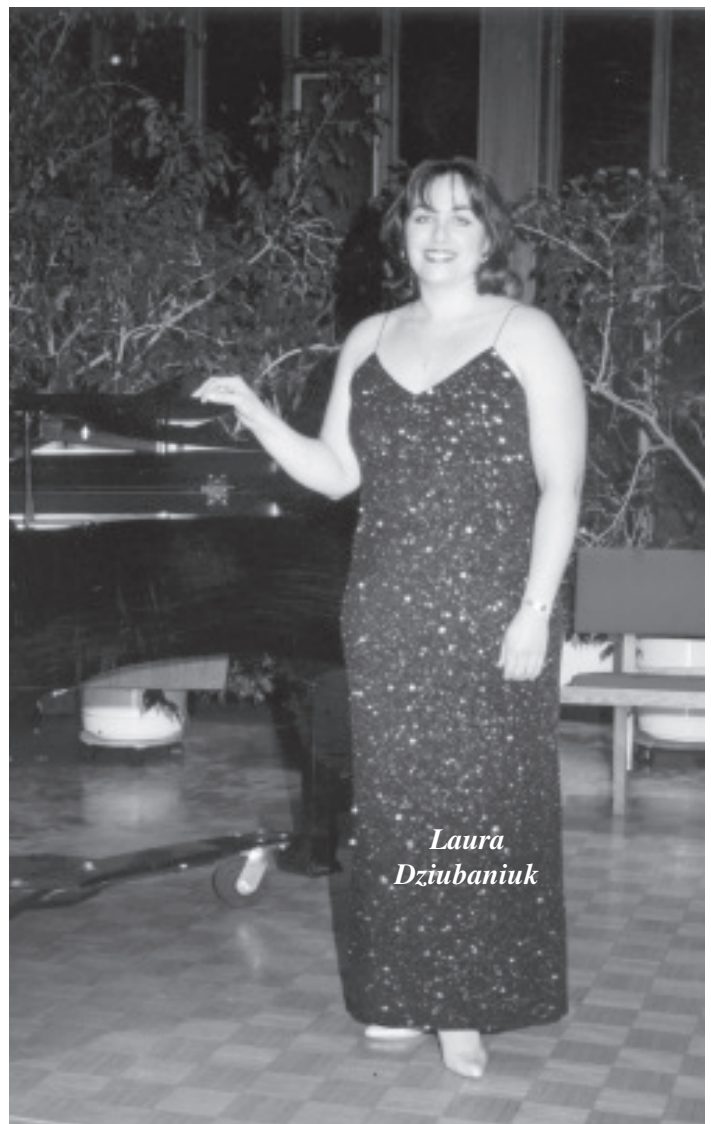
Then President Cain read a special greeting from Brian Law who always makes apparent his keen interest in the scholarship named him, even from far away. Juror Darryl Edwards announced the winners and Hamilton Southam presented the awards to : First: Joshua Hopkins; Second: Pascal Charbonneau; Third:Jillian Yemen with Kathleen Radke and Melanie Copley as runners-up.

There were several disappointments to the evening. Rogers TV committed itself to video-record-





ing the competition as they had on previous occasions but backed down when they discovered a conflict. Despite the excellent publicity the seats were only about two-thirds full. It's true that it was a cold night but what a shame to miss such a marvellous evening of song . The reception afterwards was attended by only a fraction of the audience leaving us with some untouched trays of fruit, cheese and biscuits. Don't miss the next competition and be sure to go to the reception.



*Laura
Dziubaniuk*

THE SORCERER is returning to Ottawa

by Tom McCool

After an absence of more than 50 years, Gilbert and Sullivan's operetta *THE SORCERER* will be returning to Ottawa next month. The homecoming will be staged at CentrepoinTE Theatre by the Savoy Society. Although this company has been producing Gilbert and Sullivan operettas in Ottawa for the past 28 years, this will be their first production of this particular piece.

THE SORCERER, other than the fact that it will be the Savoy Society's latest offering, is a significant work. It is the first successful full-length Gilbert and Sullivan operetta. Their first work, *THESPIS*, was a failure. (Most of *THESPIS* is now lost but Sullivan did recycle some of the music in later operettas). Their next operetta, *TRIAL BY JURY*, was very successful, but it is a short piece only 40 minutes in length that was, and still is, used as a "curtain raiser" in tandem with another production. The two-act *THE SORCERER* enjoyed a "modest success" when it premiered in 1877, although it was not the "mega-hit" that its two successors, *HMS PINAFORE* and *THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE*, became. Nonetheless, it has its merits and has been performed on an irregular basis ever since. It is significant for additional reasons as well. This was the first time that D'Oyly Carte produced a Gilbert and Sullivan show. Carte was to go on and produce all the subsequent original productions, and the D'Oyly Carte Company carried on with revivals well into the last century. In addition to Carte as producer, most of the actors brought together for *THE SORCERER* formed the foundation of the company that would be associated with the big hits to come. Another noteworthy feature of this work concerns the plot. Central to the story is a magic potion that is given to the inhabitants of a village by the title character. Although not a problem in 1877, *THE SORCERER* contained the seeds of discontent that led to artistic conflict between the two men. As time went on, Sullivan became extremely disenchanted with this very Gilbertian tactic of using a magical potion that turned everything "topsy-turvy". Eventually, because Gilbert resorted to this plot device again and again, a definite strain was placed on the relationship between

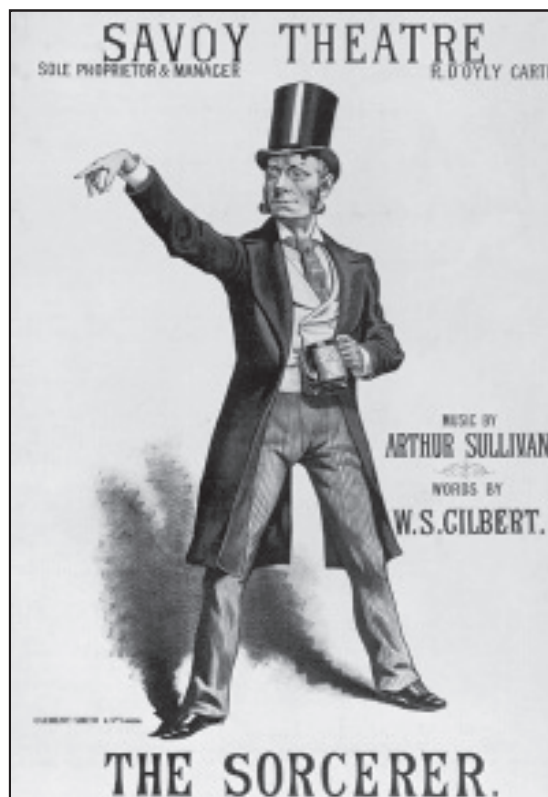
the two men... a relationship that was sufficiently strained as it was.

The Gilbert and Sullivan partnership was, to say the least, an odd collaboration. It wasn't so much that they disliked one another; it was more that they had, aside from their work, virtually nothing in common. They traveled in completely different circles! They were usually civil to each other but, in spite of the fact that they lived in the same city, much of their communication was by mail. In fact, D'Oyly Carte's greatest contribution to the collaboration was the fact that he somehow managed to keep them together. Ironically, although both did a lot of other work individually, and with other partners, it was their 14 operettas that brought them fame and fortune and is the main reason for their lasting legacy today.

Indeed, regardless of the term you choose to use - opera, operetta, *singspiel*, music drama or whatever - the musicals of Gilbert and Sullivan are the most successful of all staged musicals. That was true when they were first produced, and it is still true today. The operettas have been performed by an array of companies ranging from slick professional organizations, such as the Stratford Festival, to school drama classes in virtually every country in the world and in a multitude of

languages. Today, Gilbert and Sullivan societies continue to thrive on every continent on the globe. The appeal of Gilbert and Sullivan is universal and timeless. Perhaps the best evidence of their successful legacy is the fact that *THE SORCERER*, produced in 1877 in London, promises to delight audiences in Ottawa 125 years later when it is performed at CentrepoinTE Theatre beginning on March 28.

Additional information on *THE SORCERER* and on Gilbert and Sullivan, as well as ticket details, can be found at savoyociety.org.



Love Conquers All in Janacek's *JENUFA*

by Shelagh Williams

For its 2003 January-February pair of operas in Toronto the Canadian Opera Company appropriately chose stories about love. Janacek's *JENUFA* is dark and gruesome but in the end love and forgiveness prevail.

JENUFA was Janacek's third opera, written while his own daughter was dying, and had its premiere in 1904 in provincial Brno. Unfortunately for Janacek, Karel Kovarovic, the composer of an opera which Janacek had once scathingly reviewed, became head of opera at the Prague National Theatre, and it was 1916 before Kovarovic would allow Janacek's opera in his house. Kovarovic also insisted on revising and reworking the score producing a much richer orchestration. Ironically it was this revised version that gave Janacek the international recognition in his sixties which encouraged him to write 5 more operas in his remaining 12 years. The Kovarovic version was the score used until 1982 when Sir Charles Mackerras reconstructed Janacek's original Brno score — the Mackerras reconstruction is the score used by the COC.

Janacek's libretto for *JENUFA* was inspired by Gabriela Preissova's play *Her Stepdughter* which was based on actual events and Preissova's years living in Moravia. Her play was popular with audiences, but the critics did not like to see their fellow Czechs portrayed as unwed mothers, drunkards and murderers, nor to have their plays in Moravian dialect, rather than standard Czech. Following harsh reviews the play was withdrawn after a few performances, one of which Janacek fortunately saw. With such a history, it was a gamble for Janacek to use the play for his libretto, but it tied in with his pride and interest in his native Moravian music and speech.

The story is complicated. Beautiful Jenufa is engaged to and already pregnant by the young mill owner Steva, a self-centred, alcoholic lout, but is also loved by Steva's older half brother Laca. Jenufa's widowed stepmother, the Kostelnicka (Sextoness), loves Jenufa as her own daughter and is afraid that marriage to Steva, nephew and carbon copy of her own dreadful husband, will subject Jenufa to a life of hardship and penury such as she had endured. Not knowing of Jenufa's pregnancy she declares that Jenufa and Steva cannot marry until Steva has been sober for a year. Hearing this, Laca tells Jenufa of his love, and when she rejects him, angrily slashes her cheek with his knife, disfiguring her. On discovering the pregnancy, the Kostelnicka hides Jenufa until after the birth and then confronts Steva with the child. He

rejects both his new born son and the disfigured Jenufa and announces he is to marry the Mayor's daughter. Desperate for Jenufa's future, the Kostelnicka tells Laca of the pregnancy but encourages him to marry Jenufa by saying the baby had died. Then, while Jenufa is in a drug-induced sleep, she drowns the baby under the ice of the frozen river, and tells Jenufa that the baby died while she was ill. Broken hearted, Jenufa agrees to marry Laca but, on their wedding day, the baby's corpse is found by ice-cutters and identified by a grief-stricken Jenufa. The angry villagers are ready to stone Jenufa to death, but the Kostelnicka admits she killed the baby, and when the whole truth comes out Steva is shunned by all. Jenufa, realizing that it was love for her that drove the Kostelnicka to infanticide, forgives her stepmother as the Kostelnicka is arrested. Only Laca still stands by Jenufa who finally understands and reciprocates his steadfast love.

This was a revival of the 1995 COC signature production using the same director and designers. Nicholas Muni in his direction stressed the Kostelnicka's role, showing her point-of-view and portraying her sympathetically. The set, by Derek McLane, consisted of high tilted walls, sparse furniture, and a raked stage, all in grey, all very grim, and centred by a half-buried millstone, symbolic of the hard life and buried emotions of the protagonists. The costumes, by Martin Pakledinaz, were realistic though plain. Musically, the production was of the high calibre we have come to expect of the COC. The Kostelnicka, sung by Eva Urbanova, was firm of voice and character. Helen Field, last year's COC Salome, was able to seem young and vulnerable throughout, yet show her internal strength at the end. Slovak tenor Miroslav Dvorsky, as Steva, had sung the role in the 1995 COC production, and elsewhere, and his experience was amply evident. Canadian tenor John Mac Master was in fine form as Laca and handled his difficult role and his odd cane/leg brace very well. COC General Director Richard Bradshaw conducted masterfully, building emotion as the drama unfolded. In the final act, the tension built until at the end, the young couple was left alone on the stage. Then the simple act of Laca taking his hand off his cane and extending it to Jenufa indicated that there was hope and love in the future for them — at least a two hankie ending. This was a stunning production, raw and emotional, but always under control and credible. Everything that had happened had been the result of love, however misguided. *JENUFA* is a compelling amalgam of music and drama and, when it is performed again by the COC, I strongly recommend that you see it.

OPERA WITHIN REACH

Opera Lyra Ottawa

Un ballo in maschera

April 5, 7, 9 & 12, 2003

Information: 233-9200 www.operalyra.ca

Savoy Society

The Sorcerer

March 28, 29 & 30 April 2, 3, 4 & 5
(All performances at 8:00 p.m. except 2:00 on March 30)

at Centrepointe Theatre

Information: www.savoyociety.org

L'Opéra de Montréal

Die Zauberflöte

March 15, 20, 22, 24 26 & 29, 2003

The Rape of Lucretia

April 11, 13, 15 & 17, 2003

L'Italiana in Algeri

May 31, June 5, 7, 11 & 14, 2003

Information 1-514-985-2258 www.operademontreal.com

Canadian Opera Company

Madama Butterfly

March 28, April 2, 5, 8, 10, 13 & 15, 2003

L'Italiana in Algeri

April 1, 4, 6, 9, 12 & 17, 2003

Information 1-800-250-4653 www.coc.ca

Syracuse Opera

Boris Godunov

Performed by Teatro Lirico D'Europa
March 15 & 16, 2003

Macbeth

May 2 & 4

Information: 1-305-476-7372
www.syracuseopera.com

Opera Mississauga

Il Trovatore

April 26, May 1 & 3

Information 1-905-306-0060 www.operamississauga.com

Opera Lyra Ottawa Guild

Both events: 7 P M at National Library

Opera Insights

March 24, 2003 *Un ballo in maschera*

Definitely the Opera

March 11 *Rigoletto*

For additional details: www.operalyra.ca