

# Newsletter • Bulletin

Winter

2005

Hiver

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

## Outstanding Finalists for the Brian Law Competition

The  
National Capital Opera Society  
presents

### *The Brian Law Opera Scholarship Competition*

under the Patronage of Maureen Forrester, C.C.  
for a  
**\$2000 first prize**

*Finalists:*

Joyce El-Khoury - soprano  
Bryan Estabrooks - baritone  
Liliana Piazza - mezzo-soprano  
Maghan Stewart – soprano

*Jurors:*

Darryl Edwards, baritone, Toronto  
Christiane Riel, soprano, Montreal  
Roxolana Roslak, soprano, Toronto

\*\*\*\*\*

**January 29, 2005 7:30 PM**

First Unitarian Congregation  
30 Cleary Avenue, Ottawa

Special Recital by 2001 Scholarship Winner  
soprano Shannon Mercer  
while the jury makes its decision.  
A reception follows announcement of winners.  
Cash wine bar available

*Tickets:*

\$20, students \$10, at the door

For information call 225-0124

At the end of November 2004 the preliminary jury consisting of Barbara Clark, Garth Hampson and Charlotte Stewart met to choose the finalists from the large number of applicants received. Many thanks to Barbara, Garth and Charlotte for once again helping our organization.

We are pleased to announce that Joyce El-Khoury, Brian Estabrooks, Liliana Piazza and Maghan Stewart will be vying for top spot in the 2005 Brian Law Opera Scholarship Competition. The first prize is \$2,000 as usual but this year we are delighted to announce that, due to the generosity of NCOS Board Member Cavaliere Pat Adamo, a second prize of \$300 and a third prize of \$200 will also be given. Full details of each of the finalists education and musical experience is given on pages 4 & 5.

The contest will be held in the First Unitarian Congregation, 30 Cleary Avenue (off Richmond Road) on Saturday January 29, 2005 starting at 7:30 pm. The four finalists will each sing three arias (one with recitative) and will be judged by our distinguished panel consisting of Roxalana Roslak and Darryl Edwards of Toronto and Christiane Riel of Montreal. We are very fortunate in again having the services of these fine singers as jurors for our competition.

And then comes a special treat - a mini-recital by Shannon Mercer, winner of the Brian Law Scholarship in 2001. Shannon in Ottawa appearing in the Menotti operas (January 15, 17, 19, 22) at CentrepoinTE Theatre along with Julie Nesrallah, another of our scholarship winners. It is our great good fortune to have Shannon perform for us as she has a very busy schedule in Canada and abroad.

The mini-recital will provide enough time for the jurors to decide on the winners. After the announcement a reception will be held in the hall adjacent to the congregation hall.

We would like as many of the audience as possible to come to meet the contestants and the jurors, have a snack and some juice. For those who wish it a cash wine bar is also available. Do join us for what will no doubt be a memorable evening of song.



Shannon Mercer

# President's message

Holidays 2004

May I wish you all a pleasant holiday season enriched by great food, even better music and winter weather to nourish your hearts.

We are approaching a very important period in the society's schedule – the Brian Law Opera Scholarship Competition to be held on January 29<sup>th</sup>, staged at the Unitarian Congregation beginning at 7:30 pm. More details are available in other parts of this newsletter.

I just know that I will be there with my walker and will not be in the hospital as I am now. I want to express my sincerest thanks to my Board of Directors and especially to Murray Kitts, my Vice-president. Also thanks to the Elizabeth Bruyère Rehab Centre, in whose boardroom we have twice met.

May I wish you the best for the season and a great New Year. Take care and Happy Opera!



## WebSite

Check our WebSite at <http://members.rogers.com/ncos> to see all the new additions and revisions that have been recently implemented. Many thanks to Jim Burgess.

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

President	Bobbi Cain
Vice-President	Murray Kitts
Secretary	Jean Saldana
Treasurer	Gordon Metcalfe
Events	Peggy Pflug
Membership	Jean Saldanha
Newsletter	Murray Kitts
Publicity	Renate Chartrand
<b>Members-at-Large</b>	
Pat Adamo	Ute Davis
Dan Leeman	

# ATTENTION!!

## ALL NCOS MEMBERS

It is time to RENEW

your membership for 2004!

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 SWut5herland 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**

## Opera Lyra Ottawa Guild

### *Russian Opera Highlights*

hosted by Murray Kitts  
Part 2 February 21, 2005

### *Definitely the Opera*

*ANNA BOLENA* (Donizetti) January 10, 2005  
*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.

## Saturday Afternoon at the Opera 2005

- [January 1](#) George Frideric Handel Rodelinda <sup>1</sup> 1:00  
[January 8](#) Giuseppe Verdi Otello 1:30  
[January 15](#) Jacques Offenbach Les Contes d'Hoffmann <sup>2</sup> 1:30  
(Originally broadcast on February 7, 1959)  
[January 22](#) Giuseppe Verdi Aida <sup>2</sup> 1:30  
(Originally broadcast on February 25, 1967)  
[January 29](#) Giacomo Puccini Turandot 1:00  
[February 5](#) Claude Debussy Pelléas et Mélisande 1:30  
[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 <sup>1</sup> 1:30  
[April 23](#) Richard Wagner Die Walküre 12:30  
[April 30](#) Charles Gounod Faust <sup>1</sup> 1:30  
[May 7](#) Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart La Clemenza di Tito 1:30
1. New production
  2. Complete opera from The Met archives

# Opera Lyra Ottawa

presents

## *THE TELEPHONE & THE OLD MAID AND THE THIEF*

by Gian Carlo Menotti

January 15, 17, 19, and 22, 2005

Centrepointe Theatre

Sung in English

Don't miss Ottawa's favourites, Julie Nesrallah in the role of the conniving  
Miss Todd and Shannon Mercer as Lucy and Laetitia

The METROPOLITAN OPERA Telecast

Richard Wagner's

# *DIE MEISTERSINGER VON NÜRNBERG*

Sunday, April 3, 2005 2:00 P.M.

# OPERA SCHOLARSHIP

## Joyce El-Khoury

Joyce El-Khoury is in her last year of the Bachelor's Program in Voice Performance at the University of Ottawa. Since 2001 she has been a member of the Opera Lyra Ottawa Young Artist's Program. She has taken masterclasses with such opera luminaries as Denyce Graves, Dalton Baldwin, Allan Monk, Tracy Dahl, Donna Brown and Rose-Marie Landry. Among her many honours are included the Vivian Asfar, National Association of Singing Teachers' and the Ottawa Music Club Awards as well as the William H. Kelly and the IODE Scholarships.

Her appearances in Ottawa began with the University of Ottawa's opera and concert program and with Opera Lyra's *ZEUS AND THE PAMPLEMOUSSE* (McCune). 2004 was a great year for Joyce. Besides her recitals at the Hugo Wolf International Symposium and on the CBC, she was soloist at the Governor General's Awards Gala and took part in the Dvorak Centennial Concert with the University of Ottawa Orchestra as well as Haydn's *The Creation* at the NAC. On stage she sang "The Second Lady" in Ottawa U's *DIE ZAUBERFLÖTE* (Mozart), "Giovanna" in Opera Lyra's *RIGOLETTO* (Verdi) and "Dorabella" in *COSI' FAN TUTTE* (Mozart) at the Teatro Bramante, Urbana, Italy.

Her upcoming engagements include performances of Handel's *Messiah*, Rossini's *Stabat Mater*, a concert appearance with the Philadelphia Youth Orchestra and the role of "Santuzza" in Ottawa U's production of *CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA* (Mascagni).

## Bryan Estabrooks

Bryan Estabrooks was born and raised in Ottawa. He received the degree of Bachelor of Music from the University of Toronto in 2002, and the further degree of Master of Music from the University of Michigan (where he was on full scholarship) in 2004. He has received a trophy and scholarships from the Kiwanis Music Festival as well as the Greta Kraus Memorial Scholarship.

Bryan began singing on the stage in important roles in various musicals such as *West Side Story*, *Forever Plaid*, *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*, and *A Chorus Line* at Centrepointhe Theatre, the Ottawa Little Theatre, and the Seagle Memorial Theatre.

On the opera stage in Ottawa he was in the Opera Lyra chorus for virtually all productions between 1994 and 1998, singing the role of "The Registrar" in *MADAMA BUTTERFLY* (Puccini) in 1996. Since then he has appeared as "The Cat" in *L'ENFANT ET LES SORTILÈGES* (Ravel) with the University of Toronto, "Ariodate" in *XERXES* (Handel) and "Marco" in *GIANNI SCHICCHI* (Puccini) with the University of Michigan. Most recently he sang "Belcore" in *L'ELISIR D'AMORE* (Donizetti) with the Camp musicale de St. Jean, "Sciarrone" in *TOSCA* (Puccini) with the Jackson Symphony Orchestra and "Germont" in *LA TRAVIATA* (Verdi) with the Seagle Music Colony.

In 2004 he participated in performances of Mozart's *Requiem* in Toronto and in March of that year Bach cantatas at Christ Church Cathedral, Ottawa. In December he is appearing as "Death" in *THE SUMMONING OF EVERYMAN* (Wilson) and in multiple roles in *DREAM PLAY* (Sullivan) with Opera in Concert.

# COMPETITORS - 2005

## Liliana Piazza

Liliana Piazza was born in the National Capital Region and studied here with Yoriko Tanno-Kimmons and Sandra Cooke before going to Toronto to attend the Vocal Performance Programme at the University of Toronto where she is now in her third year. She has won a trophy and scholarship from the National Capital Region Kiwanis Music Festival and in 2003 the National Association of Teachers of Singing Senior Scholarship.

While in Ottawa she appeared in the sixth and seventh annual Shooting Stars: An Operatic Showcase, as well as singing with the Ottawa University Choir. In Toronto she has appeared as soloist with the Macmillan Singers and took part in a showcase called Great Young Canadian Singers. Besides an active participation in the chorus of Opera in Concert Liliana has sung major roles with that company such as "Ninetta" in *I VESPRI SICILIANI* (Verdi) and "Frasquita" in *EL GATO MONTES* (Penella). This past year she also participated in productions of *The Chocolate Soldier* with Toronto Operetta Theatre and sang the role of "Metella" in *LA VIE PARISIENNE* (Offenbach) with Summer Opera Lyric Theatre.

Besides the major operatic roles for mezzo-soprano Liliana's repertoire comprises an extensive collection of art songs and oratorio arias.

## Maghan Stewart

Maghan Stewart began her training at the University of Toronto completing the Bachelor of Voice Performance in 2001 and going on to complete the Master of Voice Performance degree at the University of Ottawa in 2004. Besides her participation in the years 2001-2004 in the Opera Lyra Young Artist Program she has attended Oberlin College's summer program at Cassalmaggiore, Italy, Banff Arts Festival (called Opera as Theatre), and L'Académie internationale d'été de Nice under the direction of Dalton Baldwin.

At the University of Toronto she won the Lois Marshall, Greta Kraus and Douglas Bodle Scholarships and in Ottawa the Vivian Asfar and the Galaxie Rising Stars of the CBC Awards. In the past year she was a semi-finalist (out of 200 singers participating) in the Dutch International Voice Competition's-Hertogenbosch 2004.

In addition to several concert and oratorio appearances Maghan has already already been seen on the operatic stage in a number of important roles: "Cherubino" in 1998 **and** "The Countess" in the following year in *LE NOZZE DI FIGARO* (Mozart) in Casalmaggiore, **and** "Puck" in *A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM* (Britten) **and** "Nanetta" in *FALSTAFF* (Verdi) with the Banff Arts Festival. With Opera Lyra Ottawa she sang "The Slave" in *SALOME* (Strauss), "Nananina" in *ZEUS AND THE PAMPLEMOUSSE* (McCune) and most recently she appeared as "Countess Ceprano" in *RIGOLETTO* (Verdi).

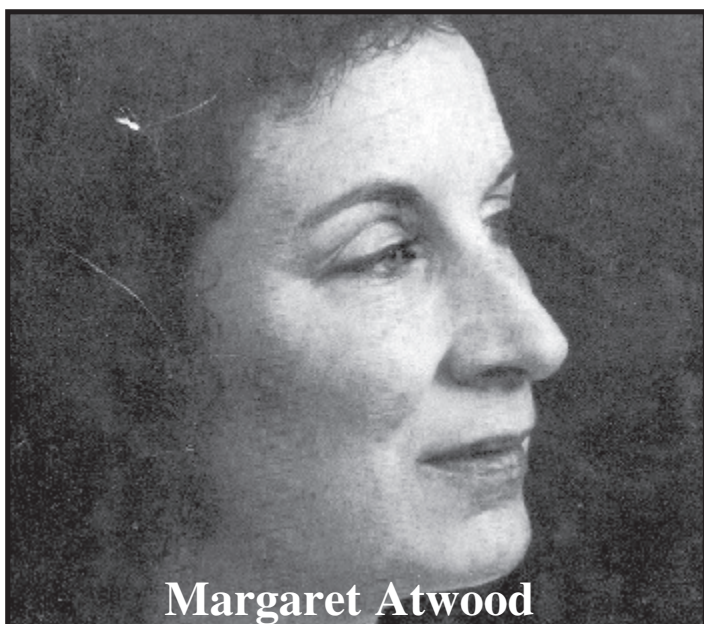
With her recent experience in Holland behind her she intends to enter more vocal competitions such as the Eckhardt-Gramate in Manitoba and the Jeunesse Musicales in Montreal. She has been personally invited to audition for the Dusseldorf Opera Studio.

# They Done Her Wrong **by Shelagh Williams**

Although set in different times and places, both of the Canadian Opera Company's fall productions dealt with women badly mistreated, the one by the state (*THE HANDMAID'S TALE*) and the other by her family (*LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR*).

The production of *THE HANDMAID'S TALE* by Danish composer Poul Ruders with a clever libretto by Paul Bentley, based on Margaret Atwood's book, was premiered by the Royal Danish Opera in March 2000 and was financially supported in Toronto through the Danish cultural celebration SuperDanish. The story about a dystopia (a negative utopia) is set in the future in the former United States, now the brutal Republic of Gilead dicta-

tumes provided a suitably plain, clinically white atmosphere as a backdrop for the colour-coded cast: the elite wives in light colours and commanders in black, the controlling "aunts" in dreadful green long frocks and matching bonnets, and the handmaids in humorously inappropriate Flying Nun head-dresses and red habits! The COC wisely enlisted Briton Phyllida Lloyd, who directed the premier Danish production, and she brought her experience to bear with smooth, swift scene changes, good characterization, and clear, straightforward staging, especially of the flashbacks to pre-revolutionary times (the Time Before). A younger Offred, called the Double, often appeared on stage with the older handmaid Offred when the two time periods were superimposed. The music itself is an eclectic mixture of styles, with both tonality and atonality, but it fits the libretto well, and maestro Richard Bradshaw, the orchestra, and the excellent cast made the most of it. A highlight was a "duet" between Offred, played marvellously by debuting Canadian mezzo Stephanie Marshall, who performed the role at the English National Opera, and the Double, played by mezzo Kristina Szabo, in which both worried about the safety of their "disappeared" daughter. The rest of the superb cast included young tenor Victor Micalle as Offred's husband Luke, American bass Kurt Link as Commander Fred, mezzo Jean Stilwell as a glacial Serena Joy (Fred's wife), soprano Frederique Vezina as handmaid Ofglen and tenor Stephen McClare as a predatory gynaecologist. Among so many mezzo voices American Helen Todd's screeching soprano was very effective as Head Aunt Lydia, a role she played in the Minnesota Opera's U.S. premier of the work. The opera was not all gloom and doom, as some of Atwood's black humour shone through, as in the scene where Commander Fred complained to Offred that their encounters were so impersonal, and she got a big laugh with her response, "Tell me about it!" Also the outcome is unclear. At the end of the opera, as a quartet of Offred, Serena Joy, Commander Fred and the maid sing of their fear of the consequences of their collective failure to conceive, the secret police break in to arrest Offred. However, since Offred did indeed record her tale, she must have escaped at some time and the police

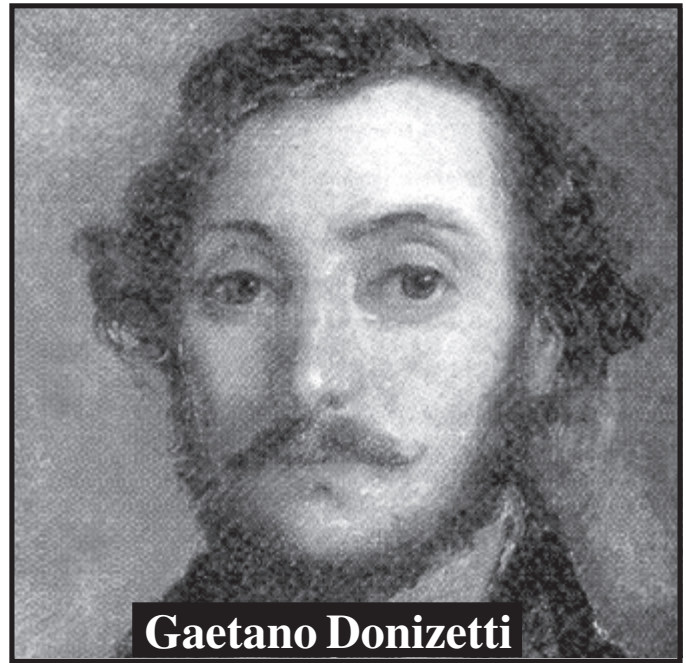


**Margaret Atwood**

torship. Gilead has been established by Christian fundamentalists after a series of catastrophes resulted in widespread cancer and infertility, plus political instability. Women are especially repressed, not allowed to read or write, nor to have jobs or own property. This last was accomplished in one day by invalidating their credit cards! (Atwood imagined this result of centralized computerized data back in 1985!) Our young, proven fertile heroine has lost her name, her freedom, her husband and her daughter and has become the breeder handmaid to Commander Fred, and his wife, and has been given his name Offred ("Of Fred"). The monthly procreative ritual was a bit too graphic for one couple seated front row centre, and they stormed out in opposite directions, disturbing everyone else! Peter McKintosh's original sets and cos-

may really have been disguised underground fighters helping her to escape to Canada. This possibility allowed a positive ending to the nightmare. Although this reviewer did not like the opera's overall story and some of the scenes were repugnant, *THE HANDMAID'S TALE* was very well done and played much better than one might have expected. It's not everyday a Canadian novel becomes a fully-staged opera and this was a Canadian operatic event of the year not to be missed!

And now for something completely different: Donizetti's lushly romantic opera *LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR*, based on Sir Walter Scott's novel, *The Bride of Lammermoor*. Scott is second only to Shakespeare as an inspirer of opera libretti, and having a Scottish grandfather may have additionally attracted Donizetti to his works. Unfortunately, the COC is saving its money these days to pay for its Wagner Ring cycle, and the production it rented from the Minnesota Opera was definitely bargain basement! They must have got a special on corrugated material, which was used for "walls" which were pushed around to change the various scenes and were appropriate for none! The set designer had a fixation on winter (or Minnesota?), with backgrounds in black and white, and the snow which fell in the first scene remained on the ground even indoors! Despite the Scottish setting, there was neither a tartan nor kilt in view — quite upsetting for those of us who are connoisseurs of a well-turned male leg! In general the costumes ranged from merely unsuitable for lairds at a wedding to unbecoming for most characters. Lucia's were downright dreadful, especially in her all-important mad scene, where she wore an ill-fitting ruffled eyelet daubed liberally with purple jam! American stage director James Robinson was obviously challenged by the absence of a grand hall or staircase, and had to make do with Lucia appearing through a hole in the wall and climbing onto a table in her mad scene! He did, however, make Lucia's usually unexplained death absolutely clear: having her carry on-stage a full-length blood-covered Claymore with which she slit her own throat! Thanks to the two lighting designers, Scott Zielinski as the original and Aaron Black as the re-creator, there were a couple of good effects using red lighting: in the Wolfscrag tower scene Lucia was silhouetted in a tower high above



**Gaetano Donizetti**

scratching her fingers down a red window pane, after killing her unwanted new husband, while her brother and true love hurled challenges below; and for the final scene a large blood-red moon appeared, with both lovers now dead or dying. Thankfully the production was musically very good, under Italian maestro Maurizio Barbacini. Canadian baritone Russell Braun looked and sounded marvellous as the evil brother Enrico, stalking around and stealing every scene. Japanese tenor Yasu Nakajima made his North American debut giving us an excellent performance as Lucia's love, Edgardo, with his fine acting and lovely voice. Similarly, Turkish bass Burak Bilgili as chaplain Raimondo, and Canadians tenor John Krier as guard captain Normanno, Luc Robert as short-lived husband Arturo, and Joni Henson as Lucia's companion Alisa were all so strong that no cuts were made of scenes. In fact, the usually omitted dramatic Wolfscrag tower scene between Edgardo and Enrico was thankfully restored, with the above-mentioned addition of Lucia herself! As Lucia, Russian soprano Marina Mescheriakova had a lovely voice, but was disappointingly underwhelming in the mad scene, not providing all the traditional fireworks we have come to expect, though it must be admitted that the high C's are optional, and the usual interpolated high E-flat ending is not actually in the score. Despite the shortcomings of the rented scenery and costumes, Donizetti's magnificent score shone through and was well served by the COC. For those wishing a different slant on this work, next summer Glimmerglass Opera in Cooperstown will present the French version: *LUCIE DE LAMMERMOOR*.

# Opera Within Reach

## Ottawa

### Opera Lyra Ottawa

*THE TELEPHONE & THE OLD MAID AND THE THIEF*  
(Menotti)

Jan 15, 17, 19 & 22 2005  
(at Centrepointe Theatre)

### Black and White Opera Soirée

Feb 19, 2005  
(at the NAC)

*LES CONTES D'HOFFMAN* (Offenbach)

April 2, 4, 6 & 9  
(at the NAC)

Information: 233-9200 x221 [www.operalyra.ca](http://www.operalyra.ca)

## Savoy Society

*PATIENCE* (Gilbert & Sullivan)

April 8 to 10 and 13 to 16, 2005  
Centrepointe Theatre

Information: 825-5855 [www.savoyociety.org](http://www.savoyociety.org)

## Montréal

### L'Opéra de Montréal

*DON PASQUALE* (Donizetti)

Jan 29, 31 Feb 3, 5 & 9, 2005

*AGRIPINNA* (Handel)

March 12, 17, 19, 21 & 23

All performances are in Salle Wilfrid-Pelletier at Place des Arts  
Information: 514-985-2258 [www.operademontreal.com](http://www.operademontreal.com)

## Toronto

### Canadian Opera Company

*LA BOHÈME* by Puccini

Jan 23, 28 & 30 Feb 3, 6 & 8 2005

*SIEGFRIED* by Wagner Jan 27 & 30 Feb 2, 5, 8 & 11

All performances are at the Hummingbird Centre  
Information: 1-800-250-4653 [www.coc.ca](http://www.coc.ca)

## Opera in Concert

*L'AMOUR DES TROIS ORANGES* (Prokofiev) Feb 6, 2005

*MARIA STUARDA* (Donizetti) April 1

All performances are at the Jane Mallett Theatre  
Information: 1-800-708-6754,

[www.operainconcert.com](http://www.operainconcert.com)

## Royal Opera

*CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA / I PAGLIACCI*

Feb 17, 129, 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:

[www.royaloperacanada.com](http://www.royaloperacanada.com)

## Syracuse

### Syracuse Opera

*THE BARBER OF SEVILLE* March 11 & 13, 2005

*MADAMA BUTTERFLY* April 29 & May 1

Information: 315-476-7372 [www.syracuseopera.com](http://www.syracuseopera.com)