

Newsletter • Bulletin

Winter

2008

Hiver

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

The Best Show Ever by Ute Davis

The eighth Brian Law Competition Recital was truly a splendid evening! This event is maturing in very satisfactory fashion, further evidence that opera is alive and well in Ottawa. Seventeen entrants had been pared down to six, by three local jurors, for the final judging on 24 November at the Cleary Ave. First Unitarian Congregation. The church was almost full and the audience warmly received the finalists who were judged at this stage by Roxolana Roslak (Toronto), Christiane Riel (Montréal) and Patrick Raftery (Toronto).



Yannick-Muriel Noah

by Jean Desmarais and Frédéric Lacroix, reminding us that Ottawa is currently blessed with major talent in this field, as well as in vocal artistry.

While the judges conferred in camera, we were treated to a mini concert by baritone Joshua Hopkins, the 2003 Brian Law Prize Winner, accompanied by Jean Desmarais. Shrugging off a head cold, Mr. Hopkins showed us how a talented past winner is progressing and maturing into a major player in the highly competitive world of singing in opera. At that point the usual congratulatory message from Brian Law was read by M.C. Rob Clipperton. Then, the prize winners were announced:

We, the audience of assembled “amateur judges”, were treated to a superb evening of high calibre performance, making it truly difficult to select winners. Such were the vocal presentation standards that I felt bad for those who would be disappointed. Baritone Jonathan Estabrooks, soprano Sharlene Joynt, soprano Muriel-Yannick Noah, mezzo-soprano Jillian Yemen, soprano Maghan Stewart and mezzo-soprano Kathleen Promane serially showed their formidable talents. They were most effectively accompanied

were announced:

- 1st Yannick-Muriel NOAH (\$3000)**
- 2nd Sharlene JOYNT (\$1500)**
- 3rd Maghan STEWART (\$500 donated by Pat Adamo)**

The other competitors were each given \$200 to cover expenses partly through an anonymous donation of \$300 from one of our members. After the presentations we all adjourned for refreshment and to congratulate all the contestants on such a great competition.

(continued on page 6)



Jonathon Estabrooks

Sharlene Joynt

Kathleen Promane

Maghan Stewart

Yannick-Muriel Noah

Jillian Yemen

President's Message

OH! WHAT A BEAUTIFUL EVENING!

It all started back in April, 2006 when the Unitarian Congregation was reserved for the 2007 Competition. Actually it started before that when the Board decided to change the date from January to November. The first notices were sent out to all music schools in Canada in March with a second notice in late August. Also, the prize winner for 2003, Joshua Hopkins, was asked if he would be available to give the mini-recital at the 2007 event. Fortunately an engagement in Quebec City was to bring Joshua from his home in Houston just about the right time. Due to the increase in the scholarship prizes and because of special efforts to publicize the competition, we received a record number of seventeen entries, one of them entirely by email from Germany. Early in October the preliminary jury went through all the entries and picked the maximum number allowed – six – as finalists. As it happened only one of the finalists was in Ottawa so constant emails were necessary. Accompanists had to be found for some of them; each of the final jurors had to be provided with copies of each contestant's music. Somehow everything came together. The six accomplished young singers presented an extraordinarily varied program. Apart from their obvious talent all six of them impressed me with their professionalism and their willingness to help one another. Joshua Hopkins entertained with a program of his own choosing. What an outstanding performer he has become.

Members of the NCOS can take pride that their contributions and their participation in our fund-raising events has attracted finalists of such a high standard. As one of the jurors wrote to me: "I enjoyed ... hearing such a great group of young singers. They really did you proud and are a great reflection on your group."



Board of Directors 2007-2008

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Website: www.ncos.ca

All Opera Lovers

It is time to RENEW your membership or join NCOS for 2008!

The membership year runs from January to December. Please fill in the enclosed form and join us for another year of musical activities!

Membership has its privileges but it also has its responsibilities such as financial support of the NCOS and the Brian Law Scholarship. Even this newsletter costs money to produce and mail. Those of you lucky enough to have profitable investments might wish to donate stocks to the Brian Law Scholarship. Pay no capital gains and get a receipt for the full amount of your donation. Do it now before the government changes its mind!

Our future Scholarship winners will need all the help we can give them.

February 10, 2008

Tchaikovsky's ***THE MAID OF ORLEANS***

March 2, 2008

Rimsky-Korsakov's ***LE COQ D'OR***

The DVD showings begin at 2:00 p.m. at St. Anthony's Soccer Club. Following each showing, at about 5 P.M., there will be a delicious Italian buffet with salads, pasta, main meat dish with vegetables, dessert and coffee, all for only \$15.00. Reservations are required at least three days before the presentation. Contact Murray Kitts at 613-830-9827 or email kmitts1637@rogers.com.



Opera Lyra's Don Giovanni by Murray Kitts

I attended the final dress rehearsal and the final night of *Don Giovanni* and shared in the enthusiastic reaction of the audience. With this in mind, I wish I could write a completely positive review of Opera Lyra's *Don Giovanni*, but I can't. Led by the outstanding Aaron St. Clair Nicholson as the lecherous Don, the singing and acting of the cast as a whole was of a very high quality. This opera is very difficult to stage and the use of the scrim curtain to facilitate the many scene changes proved most effective. Having a large open playing area for the cast allowed for a good deal of purposeful movement both for individuals and for chorus and extras. The statue in the cemetery and at the supper were handled extremely well, Valerian Ruminski possessing the power to be a convincing Commendatore and the "man of stone" as Leporello puts it. The orchestra, chorus and musical direction were all fine.

"Some of the stage direction, however, stuck me as being either wrong or inappropriate."

Some of the stage direction, however, struck me as being either wrong or inappropriate. Before the famous duet "Là ci darem la mano" begins, the Don invites Zerlina to go to his little villa nearby. And during the duet he repeatedly sings "Come, let us leave" until finally Zerlina weakens and joins him in singing "Andiam – let us go" And what do they do? – they lie down on the ground where they are interrupted by Donna Elvira. It just doesn't make sense.

For all the importance of the role of the Don, he has only two fairly short solos in the whole opera. In Act 1 he has the so-called Champagne Aria, to show off his technical brilliance and in Act 2 the serenade. This is one of Mozart's loveliest melodies, matched with Da Ponte's seductive poetry – "Your mouth is sweeter than honey" and accompanied by a delightful mandolin solo. Does this become an opportunity to admire the music, the poetry, the beauty of the singer's voice? NO! Why? because there are constant streams of women coming out on both balconies distracting from the lovely scene.

It seemed to work all right when the women, representing conquests to the Don, first appeared. But stage director Henry Akina obviously agrees with Oscar Wilde

that "Nothing succeeds like excess". So, we have these women with us throughout the opera with their fans, their comments, their moving back and forth. Only by a deliberate effort was I able to keep from being distracted by them almost constantly. In the ballroom scene ending Act 1 what was the purpose of having women who were dressed like the inmates of a high-class bordello at the party? Their appearance for the final scene to grope the Don made some sense, but not being present at a wedding party designed to impress the peasantry. The on-stage orchestra for the ballroom scene should have been used for the final scene instead of the ludicrous group of nuns playing violins from which woodwind music was coming.

The use of the women to surround Giovanni and force him into the abyss was quite effective. If only the director had refrained from their overuse during the opera. Mozart's masterpiece doesn't need all of this.

Certainly the singers didn't need to have the audience distracted from their efforts. Maria Knapik as Donna Anna has finally been given a major role in an Opera Lyra production and has shown why she is invited to sing in New York so frequently. Both Wendy Nielsen as Donna Elvira and Mark Thomsen as Don Ottavio were excellent in their demanding roles. Michèle Bogdanowicz was a lovable, beautifully sung Zerlina and Matt Boehler's authentic portrayal of

"...the singing and acting of the cast as a whole was of a very high quality."

the country bumpkin Masetto did not disguise his fine voice. Not to take anything away from his acting ability, I would certainly prefer to hear Taras Kulish as Leporello than as Don Giovanni. Aaron St. Clair Nicholson has a wonderful voice, an excellent physique and a seductive manner. Perhaps, in time, he will portray a more aristocratic Don Giovanni such as the one which great singers like Ezio Pinza or Cesare Siepi created. It's difficult to appear aristocratic when women are jumping into your lap (even though during the overture) or when you are running around in shirt sleeves through much of Act 1.

This financially successful production pleased the audience and, I suppose, this is what counts in the long run. Opera Lyra should continue to concentrate on assembling first-class singers and actors to present opera masterpieces.

Doing Richard and Bluma Proud!

by Shelagh Williams

Despite the recent much lamented loss of two great arts personalities, Richard Bradshaw and Bluma Appel, opera is alive and well in Toronto! The fall 2007 season included three magnificent opera offerings: Opera Atelier's *Return of Ulysses* by Monteverdi and the Canadian Opera Company (COC)'s *Don Carlos* by Verdi and *Marriage of Figaro* by Mozart — the show must go on!

Bluma Appel was for many years a generous supporter of, and advocate for, the arts, and specifically of Opera Atelier and the Canadian Stage Company, and they have both dedicated the 2007-2008 season to her memory. Opera productions at Opera Atelier (OA) are always a visual and aural delight: good looking, fit young singers, charming dancing, beautiful costumes and settings, and an excellent Baroque orchestra in the pit. OA's co-artistic directors, Marshall Pynkoski, as director, and Jeannette Zingg, choreographer, know just how to "marshall" their forces, relying on their resident designers, Dora Rust D'Eye for costumes, Gerard Gauci on sets, and Kevin Fraser on lighting, to ensure stylistic success. The charming set designer Gerard Gauci gave an informative pre-show chat, outlining *Ulysses*' place historically in the canon, and also explaining the three principal constraints within which he must work. Firstly, the Elgin Theatre is an old vaudeville stage with little depth, necessitating the use of painted drops, extremely expensive painted scrims, and even more expensive Chinese silk lengths to produce depth and difficult effects. Secondly, baroque operas specify the use of machinery to facilitate the arrival of the person or god - "deus ex machina" - who solves a plot's difficulty, and he must supply this! Thirdly, baroque operas contain much dance, and so the floor must be kept as clear as for ballet! Needless to say, he delivers in spades! For those of us who had just seen the *Penelopiad* at the NAC Theatre, this 1640 Monteverdi opera had a more traditional, refreshing and entertaining slant on the story. Director Pynkoski kept the production fast paced and interesting, and under three hours in length, and was aided by the brisk tempi of resident music director David Fallis, in charge of the excellent and augmented Toronto Consort - you must have three theorbos for Monteverdi! As mentioned earlier, the mainly Canadian cast was superb, with most singing two

roles to cover the large cast of characters. In the title role of Ulysses, bass baritone Olivier Laquerre was tall, handsome, and quite believable as the only man on stage strong enough to string Ulysses' bow, and so overcome the suitors pestering his faithful wife, Penelope, the lovely mezzo Stephanie Novocek. Meddling in the affairs of the mortals were the goddess Minerva, beautifully sung by the soprano Carla Huhtanen, and the god Neptune, played by another handsome bass-baritone, American Christopher Temporelli, who was Pluto in Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo* at Glimmerglass this past summer. Other standouts included tenor Lawrence Wiliford from the COC as Ulysses' shepherd Eumaeus, and bass baritone Curtis Sullivan as a particularly obnoxious suitor, but the whole cast could sing and move beautifully. Add in the artists of Atelier Ballet for the two formal ballet set pieces, and you had the complete package - a beautiful production sensitive to the baroque style, but accessible and entertaining for the 21st century audience.

Don Carlos has been called Verdi's greatest opera - it is certainly one of his longest, in the complete original French language version, with the Fontainebleau opening act! When we first saw it, at Covent Garden, many years ago, it went from 6 to 11, with a dinner break, but with beautiful scenery and costumes and such a stellar cast - Samuel Ramey, Katia Ricciarelli, Dennis O'Neal, Gino Quilico - that it was riveting. The COC has brought us a co-production with Welsh National Opera in a Welsh/Toronto version that incorporates "new" music - missing passages from sections of the opening act which had been literally folded down in the original performance score - which makes even more dramatic sense of the first act, which in itself sets the scene for the whole opera, and whose omission in the pursuit of brevity robs the opera of coherency. In a nutshell, French princess Elizabeth meets and falls in love with her betrothed, Spanish prince Don Carlos in Fontainebleau (Act I), then finds out that she is to be married instead to his father, King Philippe, setting the tragedy in motion. The first obstacle for the COC in producing this opera was find-

ing at short notice a suitable conductor to replace Richard Bradshaw, and they came up trumps with debuting Italian conductor Paolo Olmi, music director of l'Opera National de Nancy. Canadian-born British director John Caird was also debuting, and he kept the very complicated story clear, having already directed the Welsh National's production. His set designer, Johan Engels, also debuting, gave us a rather nondescript basic black modern style setting of steps, plus huge slanting crosses which seemed to appear and disappear at will, but fortunately lighting designer Nigel Levings livened things up with spectacular red lighting whenever he had the chance! The costumes of Carl Friedrich Oberle were an interesting mishmash of periods and styles, ranging from court women in appropriate 17th century finery, the Spanish Inquisition in red KKK outfits, the men in Franco-era uniforms, the secret police and Don Carlos in trench coats, and the commoners in dark rags. Fortunately, Verdi's music and the cast, chorus and orchestra under maestro Olmi made up for any visual deficiencies. Stars of the show, both dramatically and vocally, were Canadian soprano Adrienne Pieczonka as Elizabeth de Valois and Norwegian bass-baritone Terje Stansvold, whom we heard as Pizarro in *Fidelio* in June at Covent Garden, as King Philippe II of Spain. Almost equally effective were tenor Mikhail Agafanov as Don Carlos and debuting American baritone Scott Hendricks as his best friend Rodrigue, Marquis of Posa, and their famous duet was breathtakingly well sung. Strong performances were put in by American mezzo Mary Phillips as spiteful Princess Eboli, the fly in the ointment who precipitated the final denouement, and Armenian bass Ayk Martirosian as the Grand Inquisitor who demanded it. Instead of the usual staging having Don Carlos saved by a monk, this production, in an unusually bloody and horrific ending, had both Elizabeth and Don Carlos handed over to the Inquisition for execution, and Don Carlos actually blinded and killed on stage - a fitting match for the earlier auto da fe scene where the heretics were burned alive! Again, this was a musically and dramatically superior production of a long, difficult work, but it would be nice if the COC stopped buying trench coats every time Stollery's has a sale, and gave us some attractive costumes to look at!

The COC is making up for years in the Mozart-unfriendly Hummingbird Centre by opening

its seasons in the new Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts (FSCPA) with a Mozart opera. *The Marriage of Figaro* is a revival of the COC's 1993 production in the Elgin Theatre, and started off appropriately with a ghost light at centre stage, in memory of and homage to Richard Bradshaw, whose personnel choices ensured an excellent production. First off, English conductor Julia Jones made use of her extensive European conducting experience and carefully, yet briskly, shaped the score and led her singers, with Steven Philcox on continuo fortepiano. Visually the "cardboard" scenery of Morris Ertman and charming costumes of Ann Curtis, in muted colours, were nicely lit by Kevin Fraser, Opera Atelier's resident lighting designer. Debuting director Guillaume Bernardi kept things lively on stage, to match the pace of the music and libretto, and keep the audience entertained throughout. But, of course, it was the superb, mostly Canadian cast that stole the show! From Ottawa, in smaller roles, were bass-baritone Andrew Stewart as the gardener Antonio, and soprano Teiya Kasahara as the first bridesmaid, now both in the COC Ensemble Studio. Studio graduate, soprano Jessica Muirhead brought a stateliness to her portrayal of the Countess Almaviva, while American mezzo Sandra Piques Eddy was a pert Cherubino, and looked just right in the pants role. Canadian baritone Russell Braun appeared and, of course, sounded marvellous as Count Almaviva. We were fortunate indeed to have soprano Isabel Bayrakdarian as our Susanna. Obviously pregnant, in spite of a huge full-length apron over her costume and an empire-line wedding dress, she was nevertheless in fine voice and quite active, aiming a vigorous kick at Marcellina in one scene! (However, she was visibly tired during the curtain calls.) Young Canadian bass-baritone Robert Gleadow in the title role is one to watch - great voice, mobile face, good stage presence, and fine timing for comedy. It was a great show: Richard would have been proud!

Appropriately, on All Saints' Day, the COC had a memorial concert in the FSCPA for Richard Bradshaw. We were in Toronto that week for the above operas, and thanks to the kindness of Ute and Michael Davis we obtained tickets to the concert. Various pieces of music that Bradshaw had loved were beautifully performed by soloists and/or chorus with the COC orchestra. The finale was suitably the "Liberate me" from Verdi's *Requiem*, sung by soprano Joni Henson and the COC chorus, and finally finishing with a huge projected photo of Bradshaw in the pit of "his" opera house - there was not a dry eye in the house!

(continued from page 1)

The smooth and seamless presentation was a credit to the hard work of Murray Kitts and his National Capital Opera Society committee. However it was also yet another example of the generous donation of time and talent by the recently retired voice of CBC, Rob Clipperton. One of the judges commented privately "great timbre in his speaking voice; I'd like to hear him sing".

Thus the Brian Law Scholarship Competition has come of age. The number of contestants, and in this listener's opinion, the calibre of contestants exceeded all eight previous competitions. The presentation of the event and the size of the audience it attracted may lead the Society to consider seeking a larger venue, a good problem to encounter.





Photography by Gordon Metcalfe
and Klaus Siems

Brian Law Opera Scholarship Winners **PAST and PRESENT**

Congratulations to Yannick-Muriel Noah, who has just joined the illustrious winners of the Brian Law Opera Scholarship. Our previous winners have taken many roads to success; we wish Yannick-Muriel all the best in her journey. As Brian Law says, we “realise the need to encourage and tangibly help these singers as they start their careers. The dedication and tenacity they need to reach their goals is awesome, the costs are shattering.” The National Capital Opera Society is pleased to help them on their way.



Joyce El-Khoury 2005



Laura Dziubaniuk 1993



Mary Ann Swerdfegger 1995



Joshua Hopkins 2003



2007

**Yannick-Muriel
Noah**



Julie Nesrallah 1997



Shannon Mercer 2001



Sandra Stringer 1999

Events You Could Have Enjoyed!

Madrid's *La Bohème* at the World Exchange

It seems that a number of opera (and ballet) companies are following the very successful precedent of the Metropolitan Opera by bringing high definition opera transmissions into big screen theatres. On Saturday, November 10 in one of the Empire 7 cinemas at the World Exchange Plaza, Ottawa opera aficionados could see Madrid's Teatro Real production of *La Bohème*. Unlike the Met's live shows, this was a film of a live production and, although it lacked the immediacy of the Met's cinema presentations, it made for a superb afternoon of opera. Everything about the Madrid production was excellent: the sets, the costumes, the orchestra and the singing. While the singers were not well-known they were first rate. The picture quality on the big cinema screen and the sound quality in the theatre were excellent. The only negative was a small audience as only about 25 people were in attendance. One reason for this was poor promotion. According to theatre management there will be more operas with better promotion in Empire theatres in the coming months, and not just from the Met. Look for them! If this production was any indication they will be well worth the price if admission, which in this case was \$22. A bargain for an outstanding show.

-Tom McCool

Rigoletto in Syracuse

Among the previous winners of the Brian Law Competition the name of Julie Nesrallah again recently surfaced when she performed superbly as Maddalena in the Syracuse Opera production of *Rigoletto*.

-Ute Davis

Ooh La La Opera (October 27, 2007)

I recently had the pleasure of hearing again the Ooh La La Opera Company at the Fourth Stage at the National Arts Centre. A large appreciative audience found this interesting presentation very charming indeed.

George Valetta – tenor, producer, director and author - joined Shawne Elizabeth, noted Ottawa coloratura, in a bevy of arias and songs nicely framed in a short story written by George. The singers were accompanied by a more than able pianist, René Villemarie - **Pat Adamo**

Maria Knapik and Friends (November 23, 2007)

Opera lovers in Ottawa have been blessed this November to have so many excellent opera events. One of the more enjoyable was held at the Dominion Chalmers Church and consisted of a variety of mainly Sicilian artists with Ottawa's Maria Knapik. Pianist Gianfranco Pappalardo Fuimara, a graduate of the Verdi Conservatory in Milan, played Bach and Mozart and lyric soprano Alexandra Oikonòmou sang some well known pieces by Tosti etc., accompanied by her husband, Daniele Petralia, a graduate of the Bellini Conservatory. The tenor, Andrea Raiti, had an excellent voice and gave what could be called an expressive performance "a l'Italiana". Our own local baritone, Pierre-Étienne Bergeron, gave a standout performance and brought the audience to its feet with his toreador aria from *Carmen*. Maria Knapik gave us her usual special performance and must be complimented for bringing us this very exciting and diverse evening of a group of talented artists from Sicily and Italy. Congratulations also to Maria in supporting orphans in Poland and around the world.

-Pat Adamo

Events You Should Enjoy

Ooh La La Opera

Where Love Dies
NAC Fourth Stage
February 15 & 16, 2008
Little Red Riding Hood
St. James United Church
in the Glebe
May 2, 2008
Information: oohlalaoopera.ca

Maria Knapik and Friends

February 20, 2008 and
May 9, 2008

The Nutcracker in High-Definition

Ottawa ballet and Tchaikovsky lovers will have an opportunity to see two different versions of this famous classic: one from the National Ballet of Canada and the other from the San Francisco Ballet. Both will be transmitted in high definition and can be seen in Ottawa theatres. Unfortunately, both will be shown on the same afternoon (December 22). The National Ballet production will be at Cineplex Odeon theatres and the San Francisco version will be shown at the Empire. Check the theatre box offices for ticket information.

Luisa Fernando

The Spanish light opera equivalent to Offenbach and Gilbert & Sullivan is "zarzuela". One of the best known zarzuela works is *Luisa Fernando* and its most well known champion is Plácido Domingo. Domingo is one of the principals in this high-definition transmission from Teatro Real in Madrid. It will be presented at the Empire Theatre on Jan 19 at 1 p.m.

Live From the Metropolitan Opera

This season the Metropolitan Opera is transmitting eight live high-definition opera presentations to theatres around the globe. A comprehensive and more detailed listing is available on the Met's website (www.metopera.org.) Theatre tickets can be purchased on the Met website or at participating theatre box offices. In the Ottawa area this year the Met operas will be shown in four theatres: the Coliseum, Silver City Gloucester, Cineplex Odeon South Keys and Gatineau 9.

Roméo et Juliette – Gounod Saturday, December 15, 2007 (1:00 – 4:30 pm)

Gounod's ultra-sensual interpretation of Shakespeare is an ideal vehicle for star soprano Anna Netrebko and the remarkable tenor Roberto Alagna, both of whom bring their incandescent appeal to the title roles. The irresistible Nathan Gunn is Mercutio and Plácido Domingo presides on the podium.

Conductor Plácido Domingo; Production Guy Joosten; Anna Netrebko, Isabel Leonard, Roberto Alagna, Nathan Gunn, Robert Lloyd

Hansel and Gretel – Humperdinck Tuesday, January 1, 2008 (1:00 – 3:35 pm)

Most fairy tales, though charming on the outside, have darker underpinnings. Alice Coote and Christine Schäfer play the siblings lost in a shadowy world of unknown menace, pursued by the Witch (portrayed by tenor Philip Langridge) who seeks to devour them. The English-language production of Engelbert Humperdinck's masterful treatment of the beloved story by the Brothers Grimm is the second in the Met's annual series of special holiday presentations.

Conductor Vladimir Jurowski; Production Richard Jones; Christine Schäfer, Alice Coote, Rosalind Plowright, Philip Langridge, Alan Held

Macbeth – Verdi Saturday, January 12, 2008 (1:30 – 4:50 pm)

Giuseppe Verdi's longstanding affinity for Shakespeare is explored in Adrian Noble's dark yet exhilarating vision for this disturbing work. James Levine conducts and acclaimed baritone Lado Ataneli stars in the towering title role. Bass-baritone John Relyea plays the role of the doomed Banquo.

Conductor James Levine; Production Adrian Noble; Maria Guleghina, Roberto Aronica, Lado Ataneli, John Relyea

Manon Lescaut – Puccini Saturday, February 16, 2008 (1:00 – 4:41 pm)

On the heels of her triumph in *Jenufa*, Finnish phenomenon Karita Mattila adds another landmark role to her Met repertory, the free-spirited beauty Manon Lescaut. The story of the magnetic attraction between two young lovers is the perfect vehicle for the soprano's exhilarating charisma, especially when matched by the ardent tenor of Marcello Giordani. Music Director James Levine conducts his first Met performances of the work since 1981.

Conductor James Levine; Karita Mattila, Marcello Giordani, Dwayne Croft, Dale Travis

Peter Grimes – Britten Saturday, March 15, 2008 (1:30 – 5:15 pm)

Peter Grimes is under investigation for unthinkable transgressions, yet Benjamin Britten's probing exploration of the nature of guilt and judgment implicates an entire fishing village. Director John Doyle, a Tony Award® winner for his interpretation of Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd*, makes his Met debut answering the challenges of this modern masterpiece. Tenor Anthony Dean Griffey takes on the complex title role. The riveting Patricia Racette plays Ellen Orford, the woman who refuses to abandon him. Featuring what may be 20th-century opera's most impressive tenor role, *Peter Grimes*, with its sweeping orchestral beauty, will be an engrossing and haunting theatrical journey.

Conductor Donald Runnicles; Production John Doyle; Patricia Racette, Anthony Dean Griffey, Anthony Michaels-Moore

Tristan und Isolde – Wagner Saturday, March 22, 2008 (12:30 – 6:05 pm)

Met Music Director and eminent Wagnerian James Levine conducts this much anticipated revival. Deborah Voigt, one of the world's most celebrated Wagnerian sopranos, undertakes this iconic role for the first time at the Met. The leading Tristan of our time, Ben Heppner, portrays the other half of this archetypal couple on their mystical journey of love, sex, and death.

Conductor James Levine; Production Dieter Dorn; Deborah Voigt, Michelle DeYoung, Ben Heppner, Eike Wilm Schulte, Matti Salminen

Opera Lyra Ottawa Guild *Definitely the Opera*

Simon Boccanegra

Monday January 15, 2008 7:00 P.M.

Xerxes

May 6, 2008 7:00 P.M.

DVD big screen presentations of the operas.

Opera Preludes

La traviata

March 4, 2008 7:00 P.M.

Hosted by Ingemar Korjus

Verdi Rarities

January 22 & February 25, 2008 7:00 P.M.

Hosted by Murray Kitts

Lohengrin & Parsifal

April 6, 2008 & April 13, 2008 1:00 p.m.

Hosted by Wilkie Kushner

All of the above events take place at in the auditorium at Library and Archives Canada, 395 Wellington Street.

Joy of Opera Luncheon

January 27, 2008. 12 Noon, RA Centre 2451 Riverside Drive. Information: 613-233-9200 x334
www.operalyra.ca. Advance reservations required.

Saturday Afternoon at the Opera “From the Met”

The Toll Brothers Metropolitan Opera Saturday Afternoon Live Radio Broadcasts from Lincoln Center in New York.

Iphigénie en Tauride December 8, 2007

Roméo et Juliette December 15, 2007

War and Peace December 22, 2007

Hansel and Gretel December 29, 2007

Un Ballo in Maschera January 5, 2008

Macbeth January 12, 2008

La Bohème - Archive Production, January 19, 2008

Il Barbiere di Siviglia January 26, 2008

Die Walküre February 2, 2008

L'Assedio di Corinto - Archive Production,
February 9, 2008

Manon Lescaut February 16, 2008

Carmen February 23, 2008

Otello March 1, 2008

Lucia di Lammermoor March 8, 2008

Peter Grimes March 15, 2008

Tristan und Isolde March 22, 2008

Ernani March 29, 2008

La Bohème April 5, 2008

The Gambler April 12, 2008

Satyagraha April 19, 2008

La Fille du Régiment April 26, 2008

Die Entführung aus dem Serail May 3, 2008

Additional information: www.metopera.org

Critic's Corner

In Vienna a well known critic had just died in utter poverty. One of his few friends approached Richard Strauss to ask if he would like to join other musicians and contribute 50 kroner to help pay for the poor fellow's burial. Strauss replied, "Here's 100 kroner. Now you can bury two critics."

A critic whom Igor Stravinsky particularly disliked was Paul Lang of the *New York Herald Tribune*. Here is a snippet from a Stravinsky telegram to the *Herald Tribune* which that paper published: "the only blight on my eightieth birthday is the realization my age will probably keep me from celebrating the funeral of your senile music columnist."

The *New York Times* critic, commenting on *Carmen's* American premiere in 1878, judged the opera was "neither very good nor very original" and was probably in "bad taste".

Italian critic, Carlo Bersezio, after the world premiere of Pucini's *La Bohème*, wrote, "*La Bohème* has not made a deep impression on the listeners, nor will it leave much of a trace in the history of the opera stage. The composer would be wise to write it off as a passing error. Let him consider *La Bohème* an accidental mistake in his artistic career."

Lawrence Gilman of the *New York Herald Tribune* on Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*: "Sure-fire rubbish!"

from *Opera Antics and Anecdotes*

Opera Within Reach

OTTAWA

Opera Lyra Ottawa

Black & White Opera Soirée February 23, 2008

La traviata by Verdi March 15, 17, 19 & 22, 2008

All performances are at the NAC.

Information: 613-233-9200 x221 www.operalyra.ca

Orpheus Society

Thoroughly Modern Millie by Tesori
March 7-15, 2008

The Sound of Music by Rodgers & Hammerstein
June 6-14, 2008

Savoy Society

The Pirates of Penzance by Gilbert & Sullivan
April 4-6 & 9-12, 2008

Orpheus and Savoy performances are at Centrepointe Theatre. Information: 613-580-2700
www.centrepointetheatre.com

MONTREAL

L'Opéra de Montréal

Il Barbiere di Siviglia by Rossini
February 2, 6, 9, 11, 14 & 16

Madama Butterfly by Puccini
May 24, 28 & 31 June 2, 5 & 7

Performances are in Salle Wilfrid-Pelletier at Place des Arts

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

TORONTO

Canadian Opera Company

Tosca by Puccini

January 26, 29 February 1, 3, 6, 9, 12, 14, 17, 20 & 23

From the House of the Dead by Janáček
February 2, 5, 7, 10, 13, 16, 19 & 22

Eugene Onegin by Tchaikovsky
April 2, 6, 10, 12, 15, 18, 24, 26 & 30

All performances are at the Four Seasons Centre.
Information: 1-800-250-4653 www.coc.ca

Opera Atelier

Idomeneo by Mozart

April 26, 27, 29 May 1, 2 & 3

All performances are at the Elgin Theatre.
Information: 1-416-872-5555 www.operaatelier.com

Opera in Concert

The Snow Maiden by Rimsky-Korsakov April 6

Performance 2:30 p.m. in the Jane Mallett Theatre
Information: 416-922-2147 www.operainconcert.com

SYRACUSE

Syracuse Opera

Don Pasquale by Donizetti March 7 & 9

Information: 1-315-476-7372 www.operasyracuse.com

Check for times and other details on the Websites.