

# Newsletter • Bulletin

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## Opera Lyra Ottawa's *La Traviata*

by Murray Kitts

What do you get when you attend a concert performance of Verdi's *La Traviata*? Only the music of the most popular opera ever written. You get to see and hear the orchestra, in this case our own NAC Orchestra, augmented for this score in the brass and percussion sections. Out of the pit and on the stage the orchestra seemed so large and yet the strings, which predominate in the preludes to Acts 1 and 4 and in the most poignant moments of the drama, have never sounded so beautiful. The great chorus under the expert direction of Laurence Ewashko is present on stage for Acts 1 and 3 and off-stage briefly in Act 4 and generally added excitement and gaiety to the grim story of a young woman with a fatal disease. As Violetta, Corinne Winters is young, beautiful and proved capable of singing one of the most difficult roles in all opera. Tenor Eric Magloire, as Alfredo, is ideal physically and vocally to portray a young man captivated by and devoted to a star of the Parisian demi-monde but capable of violent emotion when rejected. His father is sung by Gregory Dahl, familiar to Ottawa audiences for his appearance in *Lucia di Lammermoor*. The great duet with Violetta in Act 2 was followed later by his aria *Di Provenza il mar, il suol...* which did not calm Alfredo but was obviously appreciated by the audience.

The minor roles were all well done. Brian Law finalist Jonathan Estabrooks as Baron Douphol was deprived of an opportunity to shine when the gambling scene was cut completely, as unstaged, such a series of incidents would be awkward to present. All the singers attempted right from their first entrances to add movement and gesture to accompany their singing. Sometimes this didn't work

well, but most of the time their actions and reactions added to the story line.

There were moments when I wished that the conductor, Tyrone Paterson, had been more attentive to the intentions of the composer. For example, in Act 1 after the brindisi *Libiamo* an orchestra strikes up from a room offstage to which all the guests go save Violetta and Alfredo. Productions I have seen don't use a separate "banda" as it was called in Verdi's day but the music from the orchestra becomes much



GIUSEPPE VERDI  
LA TRAVIATA

softer in volume to suggest that it is being performed in this other room. There was no change in volume that I could detect. I'm not saying that the singers could not be heard over the loud music but that the music intruded on the real importance of the scene, the awakening attraction of Alfredo for Violetta. Verdi expert Julian Budden characterizes this music as "a string of commonplace

waltzes" and points out that "as usual Verdi does not specify the instrumentation". The off-stage music should not be prominent. I also feel that too much volume of brass was used from time to time especially in the final act. Of course the orchestra playing was superb, especially the strings and woodwinds.

It was gratifying to hear that ticket sales for these performances had exceeded expectations. It was a very fine concert performance. Still and all I can't forget the Met's touring performance of this opera many years ago in Minneapolis with a dream cast of Anna Moffo, Richard Tucker, and Robert Merrill. And, oh yes, there was the performance at the Baths of Caracalla in Rome with the guests arriving in horse-drawn carriages and a young tenor from Modena called Luciano Pavarotti just on his way up.

## President's Message

We can certainly be proud of our past Brian Law Competition winners. Here is a partial update on some of them. Busiest is Joshua Hopkins: Count Almaviva in *The Marriage of Figaro* at Glyndebourne in June and July; Marcello in COC's *La Bohème* in October; Schaunard in The Met's *La Bohème* in January; and Papageno in Washington National Opera's *Magic Flute*. Joyce El-Khoury will be singing Violetta in De Nederlandse Opera's *La Traviata* in May; Desdemona in the Castleton Festival's *Otello* in July and as Musetta, alternating with Mimi, in COC's *La Bohème* along with Joshua in October. We will get to see and hear Arminè Kassabian in two productions by Opera Lyra Ottawa - Mercedes in *Carmen* in September and Kate Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly* in April 2014. Also Arminè will sing the Composer in *Ariadne auf Naxos* for Pacific Opera Victoria in February 2014. As part of the Adler Fellowship Program, Philippe Sly sings Guglielmo in San Francisco Opera's *Così fan tutte* in June. After a successful tour of European festivals Pascal Charbonneau will appear in April as David in the Marc-Antoine Charpentier opera *David et Jonathas* at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. It certainly seems to me that we have been doing

something right and your interest and contributions will allow us to continue to assist aspiring young singers.

There is more opera trouble in The Big Apple. The Met is cutting ticket prices by \$25 in every category and is cutting back on the number of opera simulcasts from twelve this season to ten next season. Three of the ten, namely *Tosca*, *La Bohème* and *La Cenerentola* are productions seen previously but with different star singers in the main roles. New productions include *Eugene Onegin*, *Falstaff*, *Prince Igor* and *Werther* with great casts. The remaining operas are *Così fan tutte*, *Rusalka* and *The Nose*. I am really excited to be able to see a production of Borodin's great opera - wonderful music, spectacular ballet and those great Russian basses as soloists and in the chorus. *The Nose* should be fun. What at first sight looks lack-lustre may turn out quite dazzling. See you at the opera.

On a more sombre note, in the last few months we have lost two of our long time members - Rhoda Baxter and Adele Kline. Our condolences go out to their families and friends.



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## Opera Lyra Ottawa - 2013-2014 season



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After this year's success Opera Lyra Ottawa is back in full production and will present two fully staged operas in the coming season.

**Bizet's *Carmen*:** September 7, 9, 11, 14. NAC Southam Hall. *Carmen* will be sung by **Alessandra Volpe**, with **David Pomeroy** as Don Jose, **Lara Ciekiewicz** as Micaela, **Arminè Kassabian** as Mercedes, **Ben Covey** as Dancairo and **Alain Coulombe** as Zuniga. *Carmen* will be staged by director **Bernard Uzan** and conducted by **Tyrone Paterson**.

**Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*:** April 19, 21, 23, 26, 2014, NAC Southam Hall. *Madama Butterfly* features Chinese soprano **Shu-Ying Li** who was Liu in OLO's *Turandot*. She sings Cio-Cio San and will be joined by **Wallis Giunta** as Suzuki and **Arminè Kassabian** as Kate Pinkerton. **Tyrone Paterson** will conduct.

**Gilbert & Sullivan's *Pirates of Penzance*:** October 19 & 20, Arts Court Theatre. *Pirates* will be presented in an abridged version for families.

## Opera Lyra Ottawa Guild

The annual **Joy of Opera Luncheon and Concert**, this year featuring young artists from the University of Ottawa, will take place on **Sunday, April 7, 2013** at the Canada Room, RA Centre. 12:00 p.m. Reception and Luncheon; 1:30 p.m. Concert Performance. The Master of Ceremonies will be Rob Clipperton. Tickets must be purchased in advance - contact Melinda at 613- 236-9442 ext. 137 or Judy Burrows at 613-224-9638.

On **May 14, 2013** at 6.00 p.m. a **Fashion Fundraiser** will be held at Shepherd's store in the Trainyards. This is a new undertaking for the Guild, offering an opportunity to raise money for Opera Lyra and to shop at Shepherd's when the store is closed to other customers.

In **October 2013**, Murray Kitts has again agreed to host **High C and High Tea**. Further information will be available closer to the date of this event.

## Overcoming the Bleak Midwinter in Toronto by Shelagh Williams

On the day of Toronto's worst snow storm in five years, we travelled down - thankfully, by train! - for our winter fix of Canadian Opera Company (COC) operas - Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* and Mozart's *La clemenza di Tito*.

As we had not seen *Tristan und Isolde* since a lovely traditional production many years ago at the Montreal Opera - where an elderly gentleman gently snored in my ear through much of it! - I was really looking forward to this much-vaunted production, as Peter Sellar's COC directorial debut. It was the first time this production had been fully recreated since its premiere at the Paris Opera in 2005. It involved a major collaboration with artist Bill Viola who provided a huge video backdrop for the complete five-hour opera, with the screen for Acts I and II horizontal, but vertical for Act III. Some critics were ecstatic over the results, but since most of what was on the screen was in no way related to the opera being performed and certainly added nothing, I found it all downright annoying and distracting - especially in the first act when the video couple, better looking than our singers, proceeded to slowly remove all their clothing!! Talk about upstaging the singers!

This staging certainly appeared to be a cost-reducing measure since there was nothing of royalty or a court provided - there were no supernumeraries to pay, the costumes were almost all ugly and black with the men in scrubs, and there was no furniture or scenery other than a small platform, and so also few stagehands to pay! It also provided a fairly easy directorial evening for Sellars, as most of the action was stand/kneel and deliver, with occasionally a few singers and/or horns in the aisles or spotlighted up in the fifth ring! Fortunately, the COC Orchestra under Music Director Johannes Debus - who had to take over and learn the opera at short notice - was in good form, and the singers of the secondary roles were superb. Daveda Karanas, as would be expected from her spirited Glimmerglass Opera (GGO) Amneris last summer, made an excellent debut as Brangane, Isolde's companion - and actually had a becoming costume! Bass-baritone Alan Held, the COC's great Gianni Schicchi earlier, was strong and scary as Kurwenal, Tristan's faithful retainer. As King Marke, German bass Franz-Josef Selig made an amazing impression for his COC debut, with a great voice and some acting! For most of the run, Tristan was sung



by Ben Heppner, returning to the COC after 17 years, but we had the second cast of majors, in their opening night. A couple near us suddenly stood up and left just before the opening curtain, the lady exclaiming "Ben's not singing tonight. I'm not staying!" - and she was right! As *Tristan und Isolde* we had COC debutantes German tenor Michael Baba, who was surrounded by much stronger singers, and American soprano Margaret Jane Wray, who was not only huge, but shouted and tended to shriek! All in all, it was a long evening. The COC's new General Director, Alexander Neef, is certainly trying to bring innovative challenging productions to the COC - pity they don't always work without the star performers!

After the disappointment of *Tristan und Isolde*, *La clemenza di Tito* was an unexpected - though not entirely unalloyed - treat! Christopher Alden is not my favourite director, I having been stung by his earlier GGO and COC efforts, but this time he got it right! He originally mounted this *Clemenza* in 2009 to rave reviews at the Chicago Opera Theatre, and here in Toronto he had an extraordinary cast to work with, both as singers and actors. Alden and his American design team, Andrew Cavanagh Holland debuting on sets and Terese Wadden on costumes, set the opera in an ancient Roman empire, but somehow taking place in the 1960s, blending elements of both periods! The unit set was a long white marble wall - just right for painting on "Sic semper tyrannis"! - slanting forward and allowing two major entrances, but rather limit-



## Overcoming the Bleak Midwinter in Toronto (continued)

ing the playing space. Debuting American lighting designer Gary Marder gave us long shadows on this wall, literally foreshadowing singers' entrances! The costumes were a bit problematic and even risible at times, with Tito wearing purple pyjamas and carrying a golden security blanket throughout. The



ragtag Roman rabble chorus, in cheap and cheerful 1960s outfits, were rendered faceless with white half masks and head kerchiefs (even the men!). Alden seemed to be aiming for a lighter tone than one expects in an *opera seria*, with a bit of comic relief to keep one's interest, and some admittedly over-the-top direction, but it worked for me!

Musically, the production was absolutely marvellous. The COC Orchestra and Chorus on our night were ably led by Resident Conductor Derek Bate, although the major conductor was Israeli Daniel Cohen. Canadian bass Robert Gleadow gave us a stalwart Publio, Captain of the Guard, by turns menacing and comical in his "authentic" Roman Centurion uniform. Canadian soprano Mireille Asselin, in an airy tie-dyed dress, reprised her 2011 Opera Atelier role of Servilia, Sesto's sister, but in a much different style! Our BLOC second prize winner, mezzo Wallis Giunta, now at the MET in their Lindemann Young Artist Development Program, was, for me, a standout as Annio, the young Roman patrician in love with Servilia. To transform herself from the beautiful model she is into a believable gangly young teen-aged male jogger, with lanky hair, huge glasses and chunky footwear, forever comically doing stretches and running about, while still singing beautifully, showed real acting talent! To quote an overheard

fellow patron: "The little girl playing Annio was cute!" Vicious Vitellia, looking regal in a brown draped gown, was brought to life vividly by American soprano Keri Alkema, Giulietta in last year's *Tales of Hoffmann*. She orchestrated most of the action through her plot to assassinate Tito by manipulating the male characters with alternate bouts of vocal tirades against Sesto, and comical flirting with Publio. However, the major female part is the trouser role of Sesto, the young Roman patrician and Tito's friend, who is in love with Vitellia, and this was played and sung to the hilt by American soprano Isabel Leonard, in her COC debut. A former ballerina, she sang Miranda in the MET's Live in HD *The Tempest* earlier this season, and brought that same intensity and style to this conflicted role, managing to look lovely yet boyish in a short blue tunic!

We were looking forward to hearing Michael Schade in the title role of Tito but an announcement informed us that he would not be singing. However, he



would be replaced by young Canadian tenor Owen McCausland. Fortunately, we had nothing to worry about, as Owen has a splendid voice, and having sung the role two days earlier he played the part easily, and fit into Tito's pyjamas nicely! Once again, we did not hear the famous Canadian tenor in the major part, but this time we had a great replacement, and in fact enjoyed having such a very young, mainly Canadian, cast, in such a delightful production. Indeed, Alexander Neef is to be commended for bringing so many Canadian singers back home to sing at the COC!

## Many Paths to the Opera

As a little girl of about 9, growing up in a small city in Southwestern Ontario, life was pleasant and relatively uneventful. In retrospect it always seemed to be summer. Our proximity to a major American city brought lots of opportunities to attend major sports events, plays and “in person” appearances of stars from show business. This did not include concerts or classical music of any kind. My home was simply not musical in any way. What we did have was a plethora of reading material, books, journals, periodicals, magazines and newspapers. (I remain a news junkie to this day). My life was unblighted except for one thing, my red hair! How I hated the teasing that went with it. Even grownups who admired my shining auburn tresses could not resist the occasional “Hello, how’s carrot top today?” The freckles that went along with that colouring did not bother me nearly as much as the unfair teasing. I wore a lot of brown and green, to set off my hair said my Mom, who obviously had slighter different ideas of beauty than mine. Weekends were the best times as the papers rolled in to the house and I could esconce myself in a corner of the living room and read and read and read.

Then one day my perspective changed for good. I picked up the Saturday Evening Post and turned it over. There on the back cover was the most beautiful and glamorous person I could ever imagine. She was clothed in the dreaded green but it was emerald green velvet that set off her clear skin, her poise and her beautiful red hair. She was an opera singer and I knew I needed to know more about her, and also about opera. Rise Stevens, you have changed my life in many ways. Not least was giving me the confidence to believe one could be glamorous even with red hair but most importantly you opened a door to the world of opera.

The picture of this beautiful redhead remained in my memory for the rest of my life. Then two quite disparate things happened; first, along came the internet. Then many years later, quite recently in fact, another glam redhaired mezzo soprano burst upon the scene. Ottawa’s own Wallis Giunta, a finalist in the Brian Law competition, is at

by Vera-Lee Nelson

the beginning of her career. She led me to think about another beautiful redhead I had so admired. I also realized why I probably have a predilection for mezzos! So to the internet. First I found sites that sold originals or copies of old publications and associated memorabilia. For a mere \$9 I am now the happy possessor of the very Camel cigarette ad that began all this. And of course Google produced vast quantities of information about her. Rise Stevens, born Steenberg, was a native of the Bronx. She studied at Juilliard then went for further training to Vienna where she made her operatic debut. Her long career is well documented and now, thanks to You tube, as well as her recordings we can still enjoy her magnificent voice in excerpts from her notable roles. This wonderful lady is still alive (maybe the cigarettes were a prop or given up after the 30 day taste test) and although very elderly she remains a lovely and much admired person. She was honoured by the Kennedy Centre in 1990 and continues to attend the galas there.

It would take a full volume to record the career



## Many Paths to the Opera (cont.)

and accomplishments of this beautiful lady and the editor will not allow for that so I will share some highlights of her long life that I found especially interesting.

She was married only once, to Walter Surovy from 1939 until his death in 2001. He was an Austrian stage and screen actor who fled the Nazis to New York and thereafter managed her career and publicity.

She has one child, actor Nicolas Surovy, who has had a career on stage and in television. He had a major role in the long running soap *All My Children*.

In the early sixties the Met season was to be lost due to a labour dispute. Ms Stevens made a personal appeal to President Kennedy to intervene, which he did. The season was saved.

She was a talented actress and had several movie roles beginning with *The Chocolate Soldier*, costarring with Nelson Eddy.

After a few movie roles, for which she was paid much more than as a singer, she returned to opera, her first love.

For 2 decades she was the Met's leading mezzo with salaries and recognition equal to the star sopranos and tenors. She created a recognized place for mezzo sopranos.

Starring in *Carmen* for 30 years at the Met, she made it her role and in fact it was her last performance. Initially they had been reluctant to give her this role but she sang *La Habanera* in the movie *Going My Way* to great acclaim and after that there was no alternative.

She was a very versatile performer and toured extensively giving concerts all over the United States. She also appeared in stage productions, notably as Anna in *The King and I*. There are many comments and articles about her and I noted that I was not the only one she had turned on to opera!

After her 1961 retirement from the Met stage, she took an active part in managing the Met's new National Company and when it ceased to function because of financing, she continued to play a role in the development of young singers.

And last but not least: a great lady Rise Stevens will celebrate her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday on June 11, 2013!!

## A Delightful Rarity

by Shelagh Williams

While we were in Toronto for the Canadian Opera Company (COC), we also enjoyed Friedrich von Flotow's rarely encountered *Martha* at an Opera Tea performance by the University of Toronto (UofT)'s Music Faculty. This is a tuneful confection with a plot worthy of Gilbert and Sullivan, beginning with mistaken identities as Lady Harriet and confidante Nancy, for a lark, hire themselves out as servants to the rich young farmer, Plunkett, and his foster brother Lionel, with the usual romantic results! After many twists and turns of plot, it culminates in Lionel being discovered to be not merely a farmer, but the long-lost titled heir to a fortune, and so he has the status to marry Lady Harriet, as true love conquers all! This performance was devised by director Michael Patrick Albano and Canadian baritone Russell Braun. Braun first played the overture fourhanded with pianist Sandra Horst, the COC's Chorus Master, then took centre stage to narrate as well as to conduct the piece!

The performance was fully staged and costumed, with even two spinning wheels for the Act II *Was soll ich dazu sagen?* (*Spinning-Wheel Quartet*), and a red rose for each time the well-known *Die Letzte Rose* (*The Last Rose of Summer*) was sung! The chorus was well-schooled and the five principals excellent, all pursuing their Master's degrees. Bass Dylan Wright successfully played Sir Tristan, Lady Harriet's foppish cousin, for laughs, and mezzo Melissa Peiou was a lively and flirtatious Nancy. Baritone Joshua Whelan, who was her entertaining foil as Plunkett and sang a great drinking song, will be joining Montreal Opera's Atelier Lyrique in the fall. As Lionel, Andrew Haji had a lovely tenor voice, especially for his aria *Ach, so fromm* (*How So Fair*), and as the second prize winner of the COC's Ensemble Studio Competition, will join it this fall. Last, but by not least, soprano Caitlin Wood as Lady Harriet/Martha had the high flexible soprano for her lovely *Die Letzte Rose* which so entranced Lionel, and us!

This was a very enjoyable performance, and a welcome chance to hear this now rarely performed musical comedy of an opera.



# Three Bats and a Vixen

by Ute Davis

I attend many opera performances. It amuses me that every so often I realize that I have not seen one opera or another for many years. Then, all of a sudden, everyone puts on the same opera. . . .

We recently saw *die Fledermaus*, in German, at the COC in Toronto. I was delighted. I had not seen *Fledermaus* since Opera Lyra had put it on many years ago. (It was not a box office success, though the recitative was provided in English and only the major arias were sung in German with local politicians and Ottawa references added for comic relief). Back to Toronto, it seemed as if I was the only one who thoroughly enjoyed the COC production until a lady, one seat over, suddenly started to laugh out loud in all the right places. At intermission I asked her if she spoke German. She laughed even harder and admitted to loving the production, because she had sung Orlofsky some years ago in Vancouver. Language and the ability of the audience to very quickly get on top of the surtitles in this fast-fire operetta, are clearly a recipe for success.

Wouldn't you know it, the following month Opéra de Montréal put on *la chauve-souris* in French, no German arias allowed. The moment Timothy Vernon raised his baton, I knew that Timothy, a friend who always addresses me in German because he spent many a year in Vienna, would be the perfect maestro for the evening's entertainment. His overture was truly sublime. However, despite his skills, the farcical and enjoyable operetta was not a success in my opinion. The rhythm and rhyme simply did not work in French. When talking to Timothy afterwards backstage, he admitted that even the Francophone cast found it hard to perform this one in French rather than the way most of the rest of the world performs *Fledermaus*. . . .

All good things come in three's as the Germans would say; exactly one week later we saw *Flaggermusen* at the beautiful Oslo Opera performed in Norsk. There was an English translation on a little flap, which we were unable to dislodge from the balcony wall to our left until Act III, the most crucial part, since every opera house performs this to suit their local sense of humour.

All three productions, apart from language problems, were possibly "over the top" artistically

speaking. It used to be that Orlofsky was often a bit "off his rocker", but in all three recent versions the whole party scene (Act II) was a most cross dressed affair, to the point where it was no longer funny. In the COC production Johannes Debus was superb at the baton, as I had expected. I very much liked Michael Schade, singing Eisenstein for the first time, after having been cast as the Italian tenor a hundred times in Austria and Germany. He cleverly added some Austrian dialect to his performance which amused me no end. Also most pleasing were James Westman and a funny David Pomeroy as the Italian tenor. In Montréal the outstanding one was Maestro Vernon and a "minimalistic" Emma Parkinson as Orlofsky. Oslo provided the most colourful evening, but absolutely whacky performances, with no one really standing out. I know the work by heart, therefore the performance language did not prevent my understanding, but nothing clicked in Norway. Act I and Act III were mostly awful with Act II being simply over the top. I had fun though matching cross-dressed people to make up matching pairs; but at the same time images of not so pleasant sketches by Otto Dix swirled around my head. All in all, Oslo opera provided a satisfactory balance since we also saw a most successful "Don Pasquale". All singers were of Scandinavian background, but sang in virtually perfect Italian in a sublimely enjoyable production.

The Vixen at the equally beautiful Copenhagen opera house compensated for all those strange "bats". I had never seen Janáček's *den fiffige lille raev* or *the cunning little Vixen* before. When we entered the glass encased foyer, we found ourselves surrounded by large numbers of happy children, who had clearly not been forced into an afternoon performance at the opera. My guess is that at least 50% of the audience was of school age that day. How do they do it? I assume it could be attributed to the Sunday afternoon formula/time frame. The production was sung in Dansk only, no subtitles. Fortunately I had done my homework and was able to follow, but the chil-



# Three Bats and a Munich's Modern Boris Vixen (continued)

by Catherine Lodge

dren had more fun. It was beautifully staged, mostly white, brightly lit with colourful accessories to the white costumes to identify the various characters and animals; a little feather here, a colourful tail there. It all looked like precisely cut-out shapes, forming a beautiful cardboard origami fest. The singing was excellent and I imagined Isabel Bayrakdarian in the role of the vixen, which she has performed in Japan. In contrast to the more frequently performed *Fledermaus*, *Vixen* is a rarity and thus there is not the same pressure on the producer to be 'different at all costs'. As a result, simplicity won out and the inherent visual and musical charm of the work was preserved.

Both the Oslo opera house as well as the Copenhagen one are simply beautiful and are very much worth visiting. You could start by googling both as well as the beautiful sculpture in the water next to the Oslo Operaen (the opera house). It is one of eight projects carried out by seventeen artists. The clearest example is one 'liberated from the architecture'. This sculpture, by Italian Monica Bonvicini, who teaches and lives in Germany, is called "She Lies" and is a three-dimensional, semi-transparent interpretation of Caspar David Friedrich's painting "das Eismeer" (the ice sea). Should you visit Oslo in the summer you will be able to climb all the way up to the roof of the stunning building. To the side of the front entrance stands a lonely bronze figure of Kirsten Flagstad who was the leading Wagnerian soprano of the day and the director of the Norwegian Opera 1959-1960.

To my surprise I found four *Vixen* DVDs in my collection:

1. 1996 BBC Animated Film
2. 2004 Walter Felsenstein Archives; remastered, Berlin
3. 2008 Opera Bastille, Paris
4. 2009 Chatelet, Paris

For those of you in whom the music to Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov* conjures up gilded onion domes, rich pomp and glory, ceremonial gowns encrusted with precious stones, and the eternal majesty of tyrannous dictatorship, the new production in Munich's Nationaltheater will provide some uncomfortable surprises.

The subtle, underlying message, the portrait of an reluctant tsar whose responsibilities sit heavily on his all-too-human shoulders and who is overwhelmed with the impossible expectations made of him, is presented here in tabloid headlines, just in case we did not get the message that power corrupts. The oppressed, overawed and hopeless population parade obediently, holding high their banners, banners displaying the likenesses of such present-day heads of state as Putin, Sarkozy and even David Cameron. The sombre, depressing and sometimes violent scenes are familiar to us from television reports of riot squad police, of city low-life, and of amoral politicians in expensive grey suits. A puzzling and unconvincing irritation was the role of Boris Godunov's son, Feodor, sung as always by mezzo-soprano but here also actually played as a school-girl in uniform, a thankless task for Yulia Sokolik, to say the least. The German supertitles, furthermore, highlighted the discrepancies between the score and the present-day interpretation, particularly with respect to the monastic roles of Pimen and Warlaam.

The version produced this time in Munich is the original, shorter form, so the lack of an interval allows the opera to pack a punch and maintain interest and tension right to the last minute. The choir and the strong complement of soloists demonstrated complete mastery of the timbre and texture of the Russian language and, despite the modern-day production, Kent Nagano's interpretation did perfect justice to Mussorgsky's beautiful and powerful score by creating a musical depiction of Russia's rich and unique history. The strong complement of soloists, with special mention to Alexander Tsymbalyuk as Boris Godunov, received the acclamation they deserved.

# Live *At* the Met and Live *From* the Met - the Same, But Different

by Lesley Robinson

We were fortunate enough to see a performance of Verdi's *Un Ballo in Maschera* live at the Metropolitan Opera in New York City before watching an encore presentation of the same opera, "Live" in HD at the cinema. Although the production was the same, the experiences were markedly different.

The most notable difference between the two experiences was that we were privileged in New York to attend the debut performance in a major Verdi role of soprano Amber Wagner, who sang the role of Amelia. Ms. Wagner was a Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions winner in 2007 and was featured in the film *The Audition* which chronicles the experiences of the finalists. Her debut performance brought a freshness and youthful vulnerability to Amelia. The role was sung in the HD broadcast by Sondra Radvanovsky, whose portrayal by contrast gave Amelia an aura of sophistication and maturity.

The overall vantage point of the audience is altered by the HD camera work and although the cinema viewer has the advantage of seeing close-ups of the acting, from the auditorium it is possible to view the whole of the Met stage and the set in all its grandeur. So the visual spectacle is enhanced in a live performance, whereas the drama is heightened by the HD broadcast. Movement is important in the staging of this production and the chorus plays a major and highly choreographed role, the scope of which is far better appreciated from the auditorium. In the first act the chorus and supernumeraries appear as grey-clad functionaries, heel-clicking soldiers and white-gloved servants. The lighting creates large shadows on the grey wallpaper. Chorus members appear as functionaries seated at metal desks in rows, performing repeated, mundane tasks with large gestures and exaggerated movements. In another scene, they appear as waiters, high-kicking in Broadway style, while carrying trays of glasses. King Gustavo's entourage accompanies him disguised in sou'westers and wellington boots, carrying umbrellas and swaying as if on deck on a stormy sea. In the ballroom scene the dancers move with a stylized grace and even the soloists' movements are choreographed. The set makes good use of the vastness of the Met's space. The ever-present painted ceiling depicts Icarus falling to earth, but to me it also suggests a fallen angel. It is the king's favourite, his best friend and right-hand man who falls from grace, consumed by jealousy. This impression is enhanced by the

black-winged figures in death's head masks who surround the conspirators in the murder scene. In the first scene of the third act the set contracts into a small room in harsh black and white. The drama closes in, in this claustrophobic space inside the huge stage and the audience witnesses an intimate scene between husband and wife. This contrasts with the expansive public space of the ballroom in the final scene. We first see the mirrored walls of the ballroom in darkness when Gustavo is alone, seeking an honourable solution to his situation. Light and shadow provides contrast throughout the opera.

The close-up camera shots of the HD broadcast render the acting more important (and more challenging) than ever before in the history of live opera performance. The singers are required to act with more than their voices when the camera is close enough to pick up a falling tear or a threatening glance. In *Un Ballo in Maschera* there are scenes of darkness and light. Intense political drama is juxtaposed with joyful humour. In the first act the interchanges between King Gustavo (Marcelo Álvarez, tenor) and his page, Oscar (Kathleen Kim, soprano) are delightfully playful. Stephanie Blythe portrays a deliciously menacing Madame Arvidsson, the fortuneteller visited by Gustavo in the first act. She rummages mysteriously in her handbag in a way that is not easily seen from the auditorium, but adds to the atmosphere of intrigue which is enhanced by the camera.

Of course the sound is experienced differently in the movie theatre. The magnificent sound of the Met orchestra, conducted by Fabio Luisi, can be affected by distortion at loud volume through the speakers and nothing can compare to the clarity experienced in the auditorium where it is possible to attend to specific instruments or sections of the orchestra.

The ultimate moment of our experience at the Met was meeting Amber Wagner and her family in the Italian restaurant across the street from the opera house after the performance. Our coats were mistakenly delivered to the only other table left in the restaurant. When we went to retrieve them we were able to congratulate the entire party, still buzzing with the excitement of the occasion. Such moments cannot be replicated in HD!

## Sunday Afternoon at the Opera

by Ute Davis

This concert on 10 Feb was thoroughly enjoyed by a large audience almost filling Dominion Chalmers Church and giving the Ottawa Choral Society, musicians and soloists a standing ovation at the close. Major credit for the excellent performance is due to artistic director and principal conductor Jordan de Souza, strongly supported by chorus master Kevin Reeves. De Souza has brought an ambitious approach and dynamic intensity to the Ottawa Choral Society, one which left this audience crying for



Jordan de Souza

more. The program consisted of works from the repertoires of Verdi (born 200 years ago), Wagner (200), Bizet (175), Britten (100) and Bernstein (95) - thus pleasing a wide range of operatic tastes and cultural origins.

The imaginative concept of using the organ and the talents of Jonathan Oldengarm, together with the percussion ensemble "Architek" proved to be a remarkably successful strategy. The resultant richness of sound was matched by the well-rehearsed choral group and these alone were worth the price of admission!

In addition, arias were sung by four high-calibre soloists. Jacqueline Woodley's soaring, clear soprano tones reinforced the excellent impression made on the Ottawa audience when she stepped in to sing in the NAC *Messiah* production in December 2012. Her opening aria *caro nome*, was especially effective, no

surprise to me since I had the advantage of having much enjoyed her voice in the operatic repertoire during her term in the COC Young Artists' Ensemble.

Emma Parkinson has a warm mezzo voice and delivered arias from *Carmen* better than I have heard in live performance for some years. She had been very strong as Prince Orlofsky in the recent Opéra de Montréal *die Fledermaus*. Tenor Isaiah Bell hails from Western Canada and is new to me. However, my initial impression is of a strong and supple voice with a pleasing maturity. He combined beautifully with Woodley in the Bernstein section of the program.

Baritone Geoffrey Sirett trained at U.W.O. and the U of T. He seems to have a very pleasing timbre with a strong lower register, but I did find him somewhat awkward in his stage presence. His *O du mein holder Abendstern* lacked conviction for me, but then I have been spoiled by having heard Philippe Sly's superb rendition of this piece on several occasions. By the way, both the ladies and Jordan de Souza are recent products of the Schulich School of Music at McGill.

This was de Souza's third offering as the new choral expert in town. His first appearance included a delightfully relaxed musical conversation with the soloist of the night, Philippe Sly. This concept of talking at length with the singer who is about to perform the piece was both informative and entertaining and led to increased enjoyment and understanding of the presentation.

His second offering was Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* which I had not previously heard in Ottawa. Tenor James McLean, countertenor Daniel Cabena, who was the winner of this year's Virginia Parker Prize, soprano Shannon Mercer and bass-baritone Philippe Sly each received a complimentary review from Richard Todd. The diction of McLean drew particular praise, no surprise to me as I had first met him while he was living in Germany during the nineteen eighties and specializing in Mozart. He had spent many years there and was fluent in spoken and sung German. On a typical rain swept Ruhr Valley evening we drove him from the Aalto opera house in Essen to the railway station after we had enjoyed his performance. I did not see him again for another 20 years until he sang "Ping" in Opera Lyra's *Turandot*. To my surprise, he immediately remembered me.



## Events you should enjoy!

by David Williams

**Carleton University Baroque Opera Ensemble** will present a concert version of Lully's *Armide*, Sunday, April 7, 2013, 7:30 p.m., Kailash Mital Theatre. [www2.carleton.ca/music/events/](http://www2.carleton.ca/music/events/)

**Les Jeunesses Musicales** will present *Così fan tutte*, April 18, 2013, 8:00 p.m., Shenkman Arts Centre. Arminè Kassabian will sing Dorabella and Jana Miller will sing Despina.

**Pellegrini Opera** will present *The Barber of Seville*, April 19&20, 2013 at Dominion-Chalmers Church. [www.pellegriniopera.org](http://www.pellegriniopera.org)

**The Savoy Society of Ottawa** will present Gilbert and Sullivan's *HMS Pinafore*. April 11-13 & 18-20, Algonquin College Commons Theatre. [www.ottawasavoyssociety.org](http://www.ottawasavoyssociety.org)

**University of Ottawa:** Students present recitals during April, May and June. [www.music.uottawa.ca](http://www.music.uottawa.ca)

**The Kiwanis Music Festival** takes place from April 8th to 27th, 2013. Check their web site for information on the senior and open voice schedules.

**St. Luke's Recital Series** will present Handel's arias and music with Norman Brown and Frédéric Lacroix. May 5, 2013 at 7:30 p.m. 760 Somerset W. [www.stlukesottawa.ca/](http://www.stlukesottawa.ca/)

**The Ottawa Choral Society** will present *The Muse of Song* featuring **Nathalie Paulin** and **Jordan de Souza**. May 31, 2013, 7:30 p.m. St. Andrews Church. [www.ottawachoralsociety.com](http://www.ottawachoralsociety.com)

**Seventeen Voyces and the Ottawa Baroque Consort** will present the world premiere of Andrew Ager's opera *Casanova*. Saturday June 8, 2013 at 7:30 p.m. St. Matthew's Church. [www.seventeenvoyces.ca](http://www.seventeenvoyces.ca)

**Orpheus Musical Theatre** will feature *Carousel*. May 31 - June 9, at the Centrepointe Theatre. [www.centrepointetheatre.com](http://www.centrepointetheatre.com)

**Ottawa Classical Choir** will present *Verdi's Greatest Arias and Choruses* with Maria Knapik, Beste Kalender, Steeve Michaud and Jeffrey Carl. May 4, 7:30 p.m. Dominion-Chalmers United Church. [www.ottawaclassicalchoir.com](http://www.ottawaclassicalchoir.com)

## U of Ottawa Voice Professor

by Shelagh Williams

Ottawa University is hiring a new voice professor and three candidates have given recitals and masterclasses. It will be interesting to see who gets the position!

The first recital was given by soprano **Carolyn Hart**. She presented a well-balanced chronological art song programme, ending with three very nicely introduced Canadian songs, and book ending the whole with operatic arias!

The second candidate, soprano **Christiane Riel**, was on our BLOC 2007 jury. She started with two long operatic arias, then continued with art songs, introducing all beautifully and fluently in both English and French.

The third candidate, tenor **John Tessier**, has sung locally with OLO and Glimmerglass Opera, and in many other venues. He gave a multi-lingual art song programme, in chronological order, then wowed us with two Donizetti arias: *Una furtiva lagrima* from *L'elisir d'amore* and *Ah, mes amis* from *La Fille du regiment*!

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## Events you should enjoy!(cont.)

The **Ottawa Bach Choir** with baroque orchestra and soloists will present *Baroque Magnificence*: Bach's early cantata, *Himmelskönig, sei willkommen*, BWV 182, Handel's early choral masterpiece, *Dixit Dominus*, and Charpentier's *Exaudiat Pour le Roy*. Saturday, May 4, 8:00 p.m. St. Matthew's Anglican Church. [www.ottawabachchoir.ca/en/home](http://www.ottawabachchoir.ca/en/home)

The **Summer Opera Lyric Theatre's** opera workshop, June 9th to August 4th 2013, will culminate in a series of public performances at the Robert Gill Theatre, University of Toronto. The operas to be presented are Händel's *Alcina*; Rossini's *Semiramide* and Puccini's *La Bohème*. [www.solt.ca](http://www.solt.ca)

## Opera DVD Talk by Murray Kitts

Having won approval from our erudite editor to write a DVD column I was pleased to arrive at an excellent opportunity to do so. The March edition of Opera News refers to two DVDs that are available at the Ottawa Public Library.

The first is Cavalli's *Ercole Amante* which has such a startling cover showing Luca Pisaroni in a costume so extraordinary that it caused the clerk at the library to remark on it. Cavalli's opera is 261 minutes long, starts out as a typical Baroque opera but has some bizarre incidents, one with an enormous baby. After all, to kill an attacking snake, a baby has to be big. However, there is much excellent music. Francesco Cavalli (1602-1676) wrote forty-one operas, some of which have been recently issued on DVD with startling covers. *Il Giasone* shows a semi-naked Jason being caressed by two pairs of hands from under the sheets and *La Didone* (Dido) sports a huge dead stag prominently on the cover.

The other DVD available from OPL is Ildebrando Pizzetti's *Assassinio nel Cattedrale*, an Italian language adaptation of T.S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*. Filmed in 2006 in Bari's Basilica di San Nicola and featuring a great performance by Ruggiero Raimondi this is a 20<sup>th</sup> century opera that anyone would enjoy. The choral work is outstanding. There is a complete article in Opera News on the forthcoming new production of this opera in San Diego.

Hans Werner Henze, who died just last year, is represented at the OPL by *Der Junge Lord*, another 20<sup>th</sup> century opera which traditionalists might enjoy. This satire attacking the values of the people of a small German town is excellently presented by the Deutsche Oper Berlin.

WARNING - Avoid buying Rossini's *Mose in Egitto*, a preposterous, insane staging of a fine opera from Opus Arte and Verdi's *Alzira* in the Tutto Verdi edition, unstaged and with an Alzira whose singing ability could be characterized as amateurish.

## Arminè Kassabian rises to the top of the Ottawa Opera scene

by Catherine Kitts

Arminè Kassabian, Orléans resident and De La Salle High School graduate, says her voice is "made for opera". That's likely why she starred in Opera Lyra's version of *Cinderella*. "It's a different interpretation, but it's very similar," explains Kassabian, who performed at the Arts Court, in downtown Ottawa, for select student audiences. "It's a lot of fun; there are magic tricks and lots of entertainment. The kids are laughing a lot. They just love it." Opera Lyra put on the Rossini version adapted to be performed in English and after three performances at the National Arts Centre (NAC), the show was performed in schools across the city and at the Arts Court, downtown. "I love my hometown crowd," said Kassabian. "It's encouraging and they're so supportive. I love starting my career in Ottawa, it seems so fitting".

Kassabian got her start in the world of music by taking piano lessons at a young age. She eventually developed a love of singing. "Mostly Celine Dion songs," she laughs. It wasn't until she enrolled at De La Salle that she was introduced to classical music and her love of opera was born. "Opera is one of the healthiest ways to sing, and my voice was well suited for it." The mezzo soprano then took her talents to McGill University, where, after eight years of schooling, she came away with a Bachelors, Masters and Artist Diploma. It was then that she decided to return to her hometown, and thankfully, landed a spot as a studio artist at Opera Lyra. "Obviously luck is part of it, contacts too, but really you need to work hard. You always start a struggling artist, but you have to keep going."

After being the winner of the Brian Law Opera Competition and finishing second in the New Jersey Verismo Opera Association Competition, the 28-year-old has no sign of slowing down with a whole host of performances penciled into her 2013 schedule. "There are a lot of opportunities; you just have to seize them."

*Editor's note: This is a slightly edited version of the article which originally appeared in the Orléans Star in 2012.*

## The Intendant Problem

by Jim Burgess and Helga Jaudes

Near the end of February, I was saddened to see the news on the front pages of the local newspapers that Wolfgang Sawallisch had died. I lived in Munich from 1970 to 1977 and he was the Generalmusikdirektor (GMD) of the Bavarian State Opera. While I was here, those seemed like good-and stable-times. I returned to Canada at the beginning of September, 1977. I now read in a Wikipedia article that trouble was already brewing about that time. A new Intendant (general manager, director), August Everding, was appointed for the State Opera. An Intendant isn't a musician, but he's the boss. It wasn't long before there was friction between Everding and Sawallisch. In 1982, the Bavarian Ministry of Culture promoted Everding to Generalintendant of Bavarian State Theatres and Sawallisch to State Opera Director, thus putting Sawallisch in charge of the State Opera. Although I wasn't here during that time, I have to conclude that it worked, because Sawallisch stayed at the State Opera until 1993.

This takes us to the departure of Kent Nagano at the end of this season. In 2006, Nagano took up his position not only as GMD, but also as Artistic Director of the opera, since the opera was "between Intendanten." It was the intention of Hans Zehetmair, the Minister of Culture at the time the contracts were signed, that Nagano would be GMD and work with a new Intendant, Christoph Albrecht, formerly Intendant at the Dresden State Opera. However, about the time of Nagano's arrival, the new Minister of Culture, Thomas Goppel, cancelled Albrecht's contract in favour of Nikolaus Bachler, the former Intendant of the Burgtheater (and before that, the Volksoper) in Vienna.

Since Bachler wasn't available until 2008, Nagano ran everything himself for his first two years. However, in 2008, Bachler arrived. He promptly declared that the artistic direction of the GMD didn't interest him. His interests are described as Italian opera, with its high drama and opportunities for gala opening nights and star casts. By contrast, the Italian repertoire is not Nagano's specialty. He prefers instead the avant-garde and 'leaner,' insightful interpretations of the Austrian-German Romantic.

In 2011, Nagano issued a statement that he would not be extending his contract when it expired at the end

of the 2012 - 2013 season. The official version is that he did this voluntarily. The unofficial version, as printed at the time by the leading local newspaper, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (SZ), is that the Minister of Culture, Wolfgang Heubisch, first told him that his contract would not be renewed when it expired in 2013 and then strongly suggested that he issue a statement saying that he would not be available for an extension of his contract. Bachler wanted someone else as GMD.

After the departure of Christian Thielemann as chief conductor of the Munich Philharmonic and the firing of the Intendant of the Gärtnerplatz Theatre, the failure to renew Nagano's contract marked the third upheaval within a year in the Munich cultural scene.



What will Nagano's legacy be?

For his first two years, until Bachler's arrival, Nagano was in charge. All reports indicate that he was very successful. His programming and his productions were very well received by the public. He also appears to be very popular with the members of the State Orchestra, the formal name of the orchestra in the pit.

As it became clear that Nagano's contract wouldn't be extended, the SZ wrote: "Heubisch can hardly criticize Nagano from an artistic standpoint. In four years, Nagano has

conducted his way into the hearts of the public and the orchestra. His music-making has brought previously unimagined lightness into the opera house, and a hitherto unknown collegial partnership: glamour - free and with total emphasis on content. That brought the orchestra a significant step forward and garnered it invitations from around the world-not a common thing for an opera orchestra.

"In the past four years, Nagano has concentrated very heavily on Munich. With amazing passion, he placed the tradition of the orchestra at the centre of his vision of the sound. By doing so, he didn't just serve the tradition; he developed it fur-



## The Intendant Problem (continued)

ther, purified it and revitalized it.

“His understanding of tradition has little to do with the conservative understanding of the term. Some people held that against him, dismissing him as ‘boring’ because he never swamped his public in great waves of sound or with an ‘avowal of the soul.’ But that is no loss; rather, it’s a sign of a completely different aesthetic that found and still finds many admirers in Munich.”

This past September, after doing its annual poll of 50 international music critics, the German magazine *Opernwelt* declared the State Orchestra to be the best opera orchestra in the country.

Mozart, Wagner and Strauss are considered the house gods of the State Opera. Nagano continued that tradition, while also offering many other works. His biography on the State Opera website says he conducted the world première of Rihm’s *Das Gehege*, new productions of *Salome*, *Billy Budd*, *Chowanschtschina*, *Eugene Onegin*, *Idomeneo*, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, *Wozzeck*, *Lohengrin*, *Trouble in Tahiti*, *Don Giovanni*, *Dialogues des Carmélites*, *Die schweigsame Frau*, *Saint François d’Assise*, and the world premières of Unsuk Chins’ *Alice in Wonderland* and Minas Borboudakis’s *liebe nur liebe*. In the 2011/12 season, he conducted new productions of *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, Maurice Ravel’s *L’Enfant et les sortilèges*, Alexander Zemlinsky’s *Der Zwerg* and Alban Berg’s *Wozzeck*.

Apart from his work on the podium, during his tenure several new projects have been started to ensure the future of the State Opera, namely the Opera Studio and ATTACCA.

Nagano started the new Opera Studio upon his arrival in 2006 to develop highly talented young people and give them practical training to prepare them for careers as opera singers. The training lasts from one to three seasons and consists of role studies, vocal instruction, acting and movement training, and language instruction. The young singers take on smaller parts in the productions of the State Opera and participate in numerous concerts and lieder evenings.

Workshops, visits to rehearsals, and discussions with singers, conductors and employees from different areas of the State Opera round out the training.

The second project is ATTACCA. On its website, the State Opera writes, “In February of 2007, the Musical Academy of the Bavarian State Orchestra and the Bavarian State Opera founded the youth orchestra ATTACCA under the patronage of GMD Kent Nagano in cooperation with the State Ministry of Education and Culture.” ATTACCA is led by Allan Bergius, the assistant principal cello in the orchestra and also a trained conductor. This past summer, I was present at a free, open air concert in a courtyard behind the State Opera. The concert opened with several pieces by ATTACCA, conducted by Bergius. That was followed by several works played by the State Orchestra under Nagano. The concert concluded with several works played by the combined orchestras conducted by Nagano. Formally, Nagano is just the patron of ATTACCA. But is it really just coincidence that this new organization came into being just a few months after Nagano’s arrival?

Nagano leaves Munich very popular with audiences and orchestra. And Munich’s loss is Hamburg’s gain: In 2015 he becomes GMD of the Hamburg State Opera - just in time for the opening (if all goes well!) of Hamburg’s new concert hall, the Elbphilharmonie.

Meanwhile in Munich, the next crisis has already happened: Edita Gruberova recently announced that

she will be leaving the State Opera when her contract expires on 27 July 2014. Although she is now 65, reports are that she is still singing beautifully and is certainly enormously popular with the public. As one person put it, “Whatever character she portrays on stage, it is always moving, sometimes to tears.” However, she has noticed that the number of her performances is being constantly reduced and she isn’t being offered any new roles. She has therefore reluctantly come to the conclusion that the “the State Opera is no longer interested in a collaboration.” One telling comment was, “How would it be if the Intendant left, and not Gruberova?”



## Events You Could Have Enjoyed

by Shelagh Williams

**Ottawa U Opera Company (OUOC)'s *Così fan tutte*:** Once again Prof. Sandra Graham, as OUOC's Music and Stage Director, excelled in presenting an amusing and musically superior opera presentation, this year of Mozart's comedy *Così fan tutte*. Her use of English recitatives meant that the story was intelligible, and her lively and witty direction of the singers kept the story moving entertainingly. It helped that she had two choice sets of principal singers to work with, the men refreshingly strong and not overpowered by the women's voices. Her concept and staging were innovative - she set the opera in the States in the '50's, at the time of the Korean War, under the shadow of the Draft, with appropriate dance and costume styles - and Despina as an Elvis impersonator to perform the mock marriage! An indication of the singers' dedication was Joel Allison's sacrifice of his long full curly head of hair for a short military style haircut for his role - we hardly recognized him! The Ottawa U Chamber Orchestra under Prof. Rennie Regehr was both large and very good, and provided firm support for the cast and chorus. It was altogether a class production, with the exemplary lighting including strobe effects, and even production photos in the programme. I am pleased to report that both times we attended the house was full and the audience justifiably enthusiastic!

**National Arts Centre Orchestra (NACO): *Mozart Requiem*:** It is always a treat when the NACO presents a choral work highlighting our excellent Ottawa choruses and four topflight opera singers, and the *Mozart Requiem* was no exception. The soloists were soprano Arianna Zukerman, and Canadians BLOC finalist mezzo-soprano Wallis Giunta, gorgeous in green, tenor Lawrence Wiliford, and bass Robert Pomakov. Incidentally, the NACO's first performance of the *Mozart Requiem*, in 1975, was led by Brian Law!

**Chris Oliveira and St. David's Day:** The Ottawa Welsh Society's annual St. David's Day Lun-

cheon always features entertainment with a singer, and this year we heard young Ottawa tenor Chris Oliveira. The McGill grad interspersed two Wales-related songs - *St. David's Day* and *Myfanwy* - between three great arias: *Una furtiva lagrima*, the *Flower Song* from *Carmen*, and *Nessun dorma!* It was a lovely preview of his voice for his Count Almaviva in the upcoming Opera Pellegrini production of *Barber of Seville*.

**Beste Kalender:** The Turkish Embassy sponsored a delightful concert with pianist Jean Desmarais playing a Mozart concerto and then collaborating with Turkish mezzo Beste Kalender. She has a lovely voice and started off with two French art songs by Reynaldo Hahn. She then launched into operatic repertoire with arias from two pants roles as Sesto, first in Handel's *Giulio Cesare*, and then in Mozart's *Clemenza di Tito*, with an excellent rendition of the well known *Parto, parto*. Many may have heard her in the recent Pellegrini Opera *Carmen*, and finally, from this, she favoured us with a spirited *Habanera!* She will be singing with the Ottawa Classical Choir in *Giuseppe's Greatest Hits* in May.

***The Medium and A Hand of Bridge*:** The OUOC had a second offering this season of two fully staged 20th century one act operas, well directed by graduate student Zachary Windus. Four singers entertainingly brought to life Samuel Barber's *A Hand of Bridge*, a light musical confection concerning two couples ruminating about their own concerns - certainly not about bridge! The meatier half of the playbill was Gian Carlo Menotti's *The Medium*, a spooky ghost story about a seance which became too real for the medium! Gabriel Roberge was the embodiment of the young mute gypsy Toby, with a real talent for juggling! The medium's daughter Monica was sung by Marjorie Villeneuve, who managed the very high tessitura with ease. The star was the medium herself, dramatically sung and acted by Erika Churchill. The cast brought out all the scary elements of the story for the enjoyment of the large and appreciative audience.

## The Met: Live in HD 2013-14 Schedule

**Eugene Onegin:** Tchaikovsky, October 5, 12:55 p.m.  
 Conductor: Valery Gergiev, Production: Deborah Warner, Set Designer: Tom Pye, Costume Designer: Chloe Obolensky, Lighting Designer: Jean Kalman, Choreographer: Kim Brandstrup. **Cast:** Mariusz Kwiecien (Eugene Onegin), Anna Netrebko (Tatiana), Oksana Volkova (Olga), Piotr Beczala (Lenski), Alexei Tanovitsky (Gremin)

**The Nose:** Shostakovich, October 26, 12:55 p.m.  
 Conductor: Pavel Smelkov, Production: William Kentridge, Set Designer: William Kentridge & Sabine Theunissen, Costume Designer: Greta Goiris, Lighting Designer: Urs Schönebaum. **Cast:** Paulo Szot (Kovalyov), Andrey Popov (Police Inspector), Alexander Lewis (The Nose)

**Tosca:** Puccini, November 9, 12:55 p.m.  
 Conductor: Riccardo Frizza, Production: Luc Bondy, Set Designer: Richard Peduzzi, Costume Designer: Milena Canonero, Lighting Designer: Max Keller, **Cast:** Patricia Racette (Tosca), Roberto Alagna (Cavaradossi), George Gagnidze (Scarpia), John Del Carlo (Sacristan)

**Falstaff:** Verdi, December 14, 12:55 p.m.  
 Conductor: James Levine, Production: Robert Carsen, Set Designer: Paul Steinberg, Costume Designer: Brigitte Reiffenstuel, Lighting Designer: Robert Carsen and Peter Van Praet. **Cast:** Ambrogio Maestri (Falstaff), Lisette Oropesa (Nannetta), Angela Meade, (Alice Ford), Stephanie Blythe (Mistress Quickly), Jennifer Johnson Cano (Meg Page), Paolo Fanale (Fenton), Franco Vassallo (Ford)

**Rusalka:** Dvorák, February 8, 2014, 12:55 p.m.  
 Conductor: Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Production: Otto Schenk, Set Designer: Günther Schneider-Siemssen, Costume Designer: Sylvia Strahammer, Lighting Designer: Gil Wechsler, Choreographer: Carmen de Lavallade. **Cast:** Renée Fleming (Rusalka), Emily Magee (Foreign Princess), Dolora Zajick (Jezibaba), Piotr Beczala (Prince), John Relyea (Water Sprite)

**Prince Igor:** Borodin, March 1, 2014, 12:00 p.m.  
 Conductor: Gianandrea Noseda, Production: Dmitri Tcherniakov, Set Designer: Dmitri Tcherniakov, Lighting Designer: Gleb Filshinsky. **Cast:** Ildar Abdrazakov (Prince Igor Svyatoslavich), Oksana Dyka (Yaroslavna), Anita Rachvelishvili (Konchakovna), Sergey Semishkur (Vladimir Igorevich), Mikhail Petrenko (Prince Galitsky), Štefan Kocán (Khan Konchak)

**Werther:** Massenet, March 15, 2014, 12:55 p.m.  
 Conductor: Alain Altinoglu, Production: Richard Eyre, Set & Costume Designer: Rob Howell, Lighting Designer: Peter Mumford, Video Designer: Wendall Harrington, Choreographer: Sara Erde. **Cast:** Jonas Kaufmann (Werther), Lisette Oropesa (Sophie), Elina Garanca (Charlotte), David Bizic (Albert), Jonathan Summers (Le Bailli)

**La Bohème:** Puccini, April 5, 2014, 12:55 p.m.  
 Conductor: Stefano Ranzani, Production: Franco Zeffirelli, Set Designer: Franco Zeffirelli, Costume Designer: Peter J. Hall, Lighting Designer: Gil Wechsler. **Cast:** Anita Hartig (Mimi), Susanna Phillips (Musetta), Vittorio Grigolo (Rodolfo), Massimo Cavalletti (Marcello), Patrick Carfizzi (Schaunard), Oren Gradus (Colline), Donald Maxwell (Benoit/Alcindoro)

**Così fan tutte:** Mozart, April 26, 2014, 12:55 p.m.  
 Conductor: James Levine, Production: Lesley Koenig, Designer: Michael Yeagan, Lighting Designer: Duane Schuler. **Cast:** Susanna Phillips (Fiordiligi), Isabel Leonard (Dorabella), Danielle de Niese (Despina), Matthew Polenzani (Ferrando), Rodion Pogossov (Guglielmo), Maurizio Muraro (Don Alfonso)

**La Cenerentola:** Rossini, May 10, 2014, 12:55 p.m.  
 Conductor: Fabio Luisi, Production: Cesare Lievi, Designer: Maurizio Balò, Lighting Designer: Gigi Saccomandi, Choreographer: Daniela Schiavone. **Cast:** Joyce DiDonato (Angelina), Juan Diego Flórez (Don Ramiro), Pietro Spagnoli (Dandini), Alessandro Corbelli (Don Magnifico), Luca Pisaroni (Alidoro)



# Opera alla Pasta

## Sunday Afternoon at the Opera

April 14, 2013 Wagner's *Lohengrin*

The visual part of this DVD may not be pleasing to all, it being a "radical" new production from the 2009 Munich Festival. However, the soloists are vocally spectacular. Jonas Kaufmann is the best Lohengrin of this generation and possibly of the past half century. Anja Harteros and Michaela Schuster are authoritative interpreters of Elsa and Ortrud in this most beautiful score. The remainder of the cast, the chorus and the orchestra under Kent Nagano are simply wonderful. **Early start at 1:00 p.m.**

May 26, 2013 Bizet's *Les pêcheurs de perles*

This is one of those rare operatic gems. A very easy opera to stage, yet not staged enough. A surprisingly strong performance from Venice's Teatro Malibran with a talented young cast. Beautifully conducted by veteran Viotti, the Fenice orchestra and chorus are superb. **Regular start at 2:00 p.m.**

DVD presentations are held at St. Anthony's Soccer Club and are followed by a delicious meal.  
Cost: \$20. Reserve at least 4 days prior to the showings by calling Elizabeth Meller at 613-721-7121

# The Met: *Live in HD*

April 27 12 p.m. Handel's *Giulio Cesare*

## Encore Presentations

*Rigoletto* April 6, 12 p.m., April 8, 6:30 p.m.  
& April 24, 6:30 p.m.

*Parsifal* April 20, 12 p.m.

Zandonai's *Francesca da Rimini* May 4, 12:55 p.m.  
*Giulio Cesare* June 1, 12 p.m. & June 3, 6:00 p.m.

# Saturday Afternoon at the Opera

## The Metropolitan Opera Radio Broadcasts

March 30 *La Traviata*

April 6 *Das Rheingold*

April 13 *Die Walküre*

April 20 *Siegfried*

April 27 *Giulio Cesare*

May 4 *Dialogues des Carmélites*

May 11 *Gotterdammerung*

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