



## Memorial Concert for Stuart Hamilton

by Shelagh Williams

Canadian opera and music lovers were saddened at the beginning of this year by the death of Stuart Hamilton (1929-2017): pianist, author, fount of musical knowledge, witty raconteur, radio opera host and quizmaster, musical director/producer, BLOC judge and, above all, highly esteemed vocal coach. But, when life hands you lemons, make lemonade - in this case a marvellous memorial concert in his honour and memory!

Ottawa voice teacher Yoriko Tanno, on the faculties of both Ottawa and Carleton Universities, herself studied with Stuart Hamilton. They became such good friends that he came down every year to coach and MC her spring Shooting Stars Operatic Showcase. These concerts, usually incorporating an opera, were always such a delight. This memorial concert organized by Yoriko continued that great tradition, utilising musical friends and past and present studio stars to deliver both moving tributes and lovely musical highlights.

CBC's Lawrence Wall, as MC, interspersed introductions with knowledgeable comments to keep the evening running smoothly.

The star was, of course, BLOC winner Yannick-Muriel Noah, who had a four-day window in her busy schedule, and flew in from Germany especially for this concert! Accompanied beautifully by pianist Jean Desmarais, she favoured us with four glorious arias, interspersed throughout the concert. She started off the concert proper with Odabella's *Oh! Nel fuggente nuvolo* from *Attila*, which she is debuting this year with Theatre Bonn, where she is resident soprano. Her second aria was the lovely *O patria mia* from *Aida*, with which she had her breakthrough at the Canadian Opera Company. Her other arias were Tosca's *Vissi d'arte*, and, to close the concert, *Madama Butterfly's*

heavenly *Un bel di*. Her own heartfelt tribute emphasised that Stuart taught her to look for, and find, the beauty in every piece she sang. What a great frame on which to hang the other treats!

Music and stage director Luis Camacho introduced the concert with a lovely Piano Impromptu encompassing several operatic themes, finishing with a blown kiss to the huge portrait backdrop of Stuart Hamilton! He then accompanied the many excellent arias and ensembles by present studio members.

About half way through, pianist Frédéric Lacroix presented his tribute to Stuart, followed by adroitly playing Mozart's variations on *Twinkle, twinkle little star*, and Adolfo Fumagalli's variations on *Casta diva*, for the left hand only! He then accompanied several other returning singers. These included another international star, Valentina Cuden, who had studied voice with Yoriko and Stuart. Since 2009 she has been singing in Slovenia with the Maribor Opera

House. Her experience and natural stage presence shone through in a performance of Ophelia's aria from *Hamlet*. She then sang a highly entertaining version of *Glitter and be Gay* - "appropriate for Stuart" as Yoriko was quoted! Valentina also was appreciative of Stuart Hamilton's advice and encouragement. Of interest to NCOS members, soprano Alexandra Leblanc, third place 2013 BLOC finalist, beautifully presented Debussy's *Apparition* and *Non mi dir* from *Don Giovanni*.

The concert was rounded off by Luis Camacho in a great vocal selection in which he accompanied himself on the piano! At the end, Yoriko emotionally encouraged us to give Stuart a well deserved standing ovation. What a wonderful concert, one I am sure Stuart himself would have enjoyed!



## President's Message March 2017

by Murray Kitts

This message should be titled - Letter from Victoria - as I am returning to Ottawa at the end of this week, just past the deadline for submission of articles to our newsletter. Victoria possesses a dedicated arts community. Besides the opera which I will review elsewhere, there is a film festival and a fine series of symphony concerts conducted, in her final year as music director, by Tania Miller, who continues to show great enthusiasm and effectiveness in her conducting. Having attended an outstanding performance of Handel's oratorio *Theodora* last year I welcomed the opportunity to attend a concert by the Pacific Baroque Orchestra under the outstanding direction of Alexander Weismann. This concert was touted as Le Mozart Noir - Symphonies by Chevalier Saint-Georges, Mozart and Haydn. The Black Mozart was born on the island of Guadeloupe to a French plantation owner and one of his slaves. Taken to live and be educated in Paris, Joseph Bologne excelled in the arts of fencing, dancing and music, became a member of the King's Guard and was given the title of chevalier. His peerless achievements as a fencer were matched by his

virtuosity on the violin, which has led to the conclusion that he must have met Mozart when the latter visited Paris in 1776 and that he studied with the violinist and composer Jean-Marie Leclair. Fortunately the famous British violinist, Monica Huggett, was capable of playing the extraordinarily difficult violin passages by the Chevalier and by his contemporary, Leclair, with amazing skill. The orchestra was superb both in the accompaniments and in the symphonies by Haydn and Mozart which completed the program. Maestro Weismann conducted from the harpsichord. If you ever have the opportunity to attend a concert by this orchestra I would recommend it because of my own experiences.

I am looking forward to presenting Verdi's *Les vepres siciliennes* at Opera alla pasta on March 19. Called a "gorgeous visual and musical treat" by the critic of The Guardian, this is a new production from Covent Garden. This opera portrays the love of a patriot for his country, the love of father for his son, and the love of two people separated by a great conflict.

**Remember the AGM is on May 21 after the Opera alla pasta**

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### High C & High Tea

The date is set for another *High C & High Tea* presentation by Murray Kitts. It will be a celebration of past Brian Law finalists with appropriate DVD excerpts highlighting their careers. This event is scheduled for Sunday, June 4. Time, location and cost to be confirmed. Check with Murray nearer the date if you have not received this information.

For information on the National Capital Opera Society or the Brian Law Opera Competition, scheduled for October 14, 2017, contact Murray Kitts at 613-830-9827 or consult [www.ncos.ca](http://www.ncos.ca)

## SOPAC's *Suor Angelica* and *Pagliacci* - Superb Inaugural Productions!

by Shelagh Williams

That Ottawa has many opera lovers and excellent singers available was amply proved the first weekend of February, when the South Ottawa Performing Arts Collaborative (SOPAC) proudly presented three performances of its inaugural productions: *Suor Angelica* and *Pagliacci*. SOPAC's co-founders, Tania Granata and Morgan Strickland, assembled both singers and a technical team whose impressive CVs boded well and resulted in an all-round success, both well-sung and well-produced!

Artistic Director Alaina Viau was imported from Toronto, where she is the founder and Artistic Director of indie opera company Loose TEA Music Theatre, and may be remembered for directing Thirteen Strings' *L'Isola Disabitata* here last year. She handily recruited her father, Alan Viau, for Lighting and Tech! Music Director collaborative pianist and vocal coach Nadia Boucher is becoming known as an excellent music director for local companies, such as Opera Inside Out. Maureen Russell's costumes suitably evoked the 1950s era setting for the operas, and uOttawa Music grad Susanna Doherty brought her stage and directorial experience to bear as Stage Manager. It all worked!

*Suor Angelica* requires a large number of good female voices and, remarkably, 13 were gathered for this presentation. The church (Glebe St. James United) was a perfect religious setting, and two lovely candelabra and the black and white habits helped set the mood. Pauline Van der Roest as the Abbess, Sonya Sweeney as the Monitor, and Carole Portelance as the Mistress of Novices all had the required gravitas for their roles, while Maria Bamford was perfect as gentle Suor Genovieffa, the shepherdess who missed her little lambs. Mezzo Leah Field, suitably attired, was almost over the top as the cruel and disdainful Princess, sternly browbeating her niece Suor Angelica, but she certainly put her character across! Soprano Naomi Eberhard had the requisite stamina and high notes for the taxing title role. However, my companion usually prefers a less strident, more gentle and almost submissive Suor Angelica as she prays to the Virgin for forgiveness near the end. The final Miracle itself is always tricky, but Naomi Eberhard really did pull it off, convincing us by her acting that she is indeed in her mind finally seeing her little son, now dead, accompanied by the Virgin in heaven, as she dies

herself by her own hand. A two-hankie ending, at least!

Good as *Suor Angelica* was, *Pagliacci* was in a class by itself. For this opera, male voices are in the majority, and the combination of good singers and their intensity really brought us into the story. We knew we were in for a treat as soon as baritone Peter Bass (Tonio) started a masterfully sung Prologue - and we were not disappointed in the rest of the opera! The Act II play-within-a-play of the itinerant acting company was very well staged, with the various levels up to the dais, and then the choir levels, well used to provide a good stage for the main action, and a very convenient curtained window opening behind, for various exits and entrances! Several chorus members were cleverly and naturalistically embedded in the audience, cuing us to the correct responses to the action!

In the title role (Canio) tenor Kijong Wi gave us a heart-felt *Vesti la giubba*. He had all the vocal and dramatic power to make us believe him as both the responsible master of the troupe and, when the play storyline parallels real life, the suddenly insanely jealous husband who kills both his erring wife and her secret lover, Silvio, who rushes from the audience to help her!

As the sole female in the opera, Canio's wife Nedda, soprano Morgan Strickland sang a lovely Act I aria about birds. She had to deal with both the dramatic ending and the previous comedy of the Act II play with red clown cheeks, all the while singing beautifully! The aforementioned Peter Bass, who had opened the opera, strongly embodied the vengeful Tonio who instigated the tragic ending, and closed the opera by singing the final line: The comedy is finished. The remainder of the exemplary cast included tenor Jeffery Boyd as the attempted peacemaker, Beppe, and baritone Alan MacDonald as Nedda's lover, Silvio. It was the final afternoon, and this opera was almost unbelievably powerful, and so well sung and acted - what a performance!

SOPAC is obviously a class act, even providing great surtitles, clear in meaning and large enough to read, on either side of the stage. It also has an excellent website, which previewed the programme so one could be prepared for the performance. I look forward to SOPAC's next presentation with great anticipation - don't miss it!

## Pellegrini Opera's Powerful *Tosca*

by Ute Davis

On March 10 (Fri) and 11 (Sat), 2017 Pellegrini Opera produced a *Tosca* many of us will remember with delight. This was a big advance from all previous productions by the company in that all three major roles were sung by experienced singers with mature voices. The conductor was similarly experienced.

Conductor Michel Brousseau introduced a rather different sound by the use of three keyboard players with a total of seven keyboards, as well as eight conventional instrumentalists. This produced a big sound which Brousseau used with great skill. The modified version developed by John Sarkissian for the multitude of keyboards was to make up for the difference between a full sized opera house orchestra playing Puccini and the number of musicians being used by Pellegrini Opera. To quote Mr. Sarkissian "the reduced musicians were assigned two or three digital keyboards which were set to various digitally re-mastered sampled orchestral sounds such as a full string section, brass or percussion. The balanced blend of the acoustic instruments together with the digital keyboards will now create the sound of a much larger orchestra".

Under the experienced guidance of Michel Brousseau the main role singers were able to make themselves heard through this augmented sound with ease and with no impairment in expressing the range of emotions in Puccini's superb music and the libretto of *Giacosa/Illica*, though the slightly toned down sound during the Saturday performance was appreciated by the audience who came to hear the singers over the sound of the orchestra. This was particularly true of the first act set in the church of Sant'Andrea in Rome and reinforced by use of the Dominion Chalmers church organ and resident music director, Ian Bevell.

The Vincent Thomas production was traditional and I liked it, there being none of the quirks often added by artistic directors. Stage entry through the audience was practical and effective in "bringing the audi-



ence into the drama". Costuming was generally very pleasing although I would have preferred Floria Tosca's more show-business-like costumes to have matched the male ones in elegance.

Tosca was beautifully rendered by Maria Knapik with a vocal comfort and finesse which belied the fact that she had not previously sung this part in a staged performance. Particularly on the second night her length of line and overall breath control were quite superb. At the curtain the audience gave her full recognition. Her duets with Steeve Michaud as Cavaradossi were as beautiful as her solo arias, the *Vissi d'arte* being especially moving.

Steeve Michaud gave every appearance of enjoying singing through the Brousseau big sound and was most effective in doing so. I found his voice a trifle coarse in act 1, but in act 3 he proved me wrong, giving a gorgeous delicacy to *E lucevan le stelle* and even more in his *O dolce mani mansuete e pure* on hearing Tosca's account of the death of Scarpia.

Jeffrey Carl as Scarpia followed up his truly impressive *Rigoletto* of a year ago with another strong performance. A commanding figure on stage, he was more sneering than suave and fully convincing throughout. Vocally he present-



Photos by Klaus

Scarpia

Spoletta

Cavaradossi

Tosca

## Pellegrini Opera's Powerful *Tosca* (continued)

ed some variable quality but was for the most part excellent.

Angelotti (Kyle McDonald), the Sacristan (Ryan Hofman), Spoletta (Corey Arnold), Sciarrone (Alain Franchomme), and the minor players all gave most creditable performances, with a special mention to the Shepherd boy sung by Vanessa Peterson at the start of act 3. Maestro Brousseau allowed her to sing in clear view at the second performance. The chorus did particularly well in the church setting, augmenting the big sound from the orchestra.

There were some organizational glitches which attracted comments from the audience. The orchestra with its size, position and elevated keyboards, with standing instead of seated musicians, resulted in obstructed vision for many of the seated patrons. The

much appreciated surtitles encountered some problems. On opening night the French side quit briefly in act 1 but recovered; the English lagged the sung lyrics throughout. Due to an error by the printers, programs were not available for the opening night performance, but artistic director Thomas made a very good job of giving the audience a plot outline of the action in advance.

In summary, Pellegrini Opera successfully staged a substantially more ambitious work than any they had previously undertaken. This effort was well supported by a large audience on each evening showing great enthusiasm and enjoyment of the company's ambitious production. I am personally gratified to see an Ottawa company showing increased efforts to better serve local enthusiasts of live opera.

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## Operottawa presents *Dido and Aeneas* by Shelagh Williams

For their third annual concert opera, Operottawa (OO) produced Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* in early March. Suitable costuming and makeup clearly differentiated the characters, and use was made of the entire First Baptist church where deemed desirable. Embodying Dido was mezzo Sonya Sweeney, seen recently as the Monitor in SOPAC's *Suor Angelica* (see p. 3), and here becomingly gowned and in fine voice. Her *Lament* was beautifully sung, and seemed even more poignant by her being pregnant! It was great to hear Cara Gilbertson in a role again, besides directing Opera Inside Out productions. She brought her bright soprano voice and accomplished stage presence to the role of Dido's sister and confidante, Belinda. Mezzo Carole Portelance, also seen

in SOPAC's *Suor*, here essayed the diametrically opposite role of the evil Sorceress! OO's founder, baritone Norman E. Brown, sang Aeneas, while tenor Antonio DiRienzo provided the comic relief as the Sailor. The remaining cast members (mainly witches and ladies-in-waiting) also cleverly combined to make up the excellent chorus when called for. Unfortunately, although sung in English, the diction of the singers was not clear, and one really had to have known the story to follow the plot. However, the indefatigable Frédéric Lacroix at the piano ensured that musical values were well maintained throughout the presentation. OO plans a chamber *Messiah* on Nov. 26<sup>th</sup>, 2017, with very good singers already engaged, and Menotti's *The Medium* in Spring 2018.

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## DVD Reviews

by Murray Kitts

Two new BluRay DVDs might interest our members. Jonas Kaufmann stars in the title role in Giordano's *Andrea Chenier*, giving a tremendous performance with Eva-Maria Westbroek as Maddalena and the great baritone Zeljko Lucic as Gerard, the revolutionary with a heart. Wonder of wonders, this production by David McVicar, first presented by Covent Garden in 2015, is set in the proper period with appropriate costumes and sets - a true *rara avis* these days. Antonio Pappano conducts with his usual mastery of the chosen score.

Many of us would like to have a memento of Sondra Radvonovsky's great portrayal of Norma. The Gran Teatre del Liceu, Barcelona, in 2015 has presented the opera in a fine staging by Kevin Newbury, not traditional, but quite in keeping with the libretto. The entire cast is excellent, including Gregory Kunde as Pollione (Norma's former lover and father of her children), Ekaterina Gubanova as Adalgisa (her handmaiden and secret rival), and Raymond Aceto as her father Orveso. Music director is the excellent Renato Palumbo.

## Carmen - a Sell-Out Success!

by Shelagh Williams

What can I say? The uOttawa Opera Company's (UOOC) latest production, *Carmen*, was quite marvelous! Building on last year's use of Tabaret Hall as venue and of the NACO's Youth and Family Conductor, Alain Trudel, to take charge of the excellent 34-piece Chamber Orchestra, UOOC recruited Doreen Taylor-Claxton to direct both music and staging for this production, coming up with a winning combination!

Taylor-Claxton successfully updated the story to 2020, setting it in a European Union "on the verge of collapse." To deal with arms smuggling across the Strait of Gibraltar, Canada has sent troops (the Royal 22e/Van Doos) to Seville. Cpl Jose (from Thunder Bay) was a hockey enforcer before joining up, Micaela is spending a gap year backpacking through Europe with a red Maple Leaf on her pack, and Escamillo is a mixed martial arts champ! And, with a young energetic cast and great production values, it all worked!

Tabaret Hall's balcony end was cunningly transformed into a square in Seville, then an Inn with windows, and finally the back of an arena, with a set designed originally by John Doucet for *Love's Labour's Lost* in 2015. The set cleverly incorporated a screen as backdrop which functioned for video projections during the overture to set the mood; for shadow projections of Jose in jail, and of Jose and Carmen exchanging rings during the Act III prelude; and announcing the Act IV contest of "Escamillo vs. El Torreau - The Bull" - all very neat. With good costuming and quick changes, most minor members of the cast doubled in the chorus and sang all four nights, giving them more stage experience and the audience larger and more varied crowd scenes!

The opera was double cast, so each ensemble sang twice. We attended Opening Night, with cast X, which exhibited a more excited demeanour, and the final afternoon, with cast Y, which by then was more comfortable and experienced in the roles.

Both casts were very good, and gave slightly different twists to the material. Each Carmen was both beautiful and a great mezzo, with a blonde Lydia Piehl in X and a brunette Alyssa Curto in Y. Alyssa was also the opera choreographer, and accompanied her exotic dance for Jose with castanets which she played herself, an extra little touch not



often encountered. The Y cast, both male and female, also seemed to dance more at Lilas Pastia's Inn. The tenors as Jose were Corey Arnold in X, and Philip Klaassen, in especially good voice, in Y, while we had a brunette Micaela, Jordanne Erichsen, in X and a blonde, Jeanine Williams, in Y, both quite lovely sopranos. Escamillo had two singers brave enough to march in bare chested for the bout: Adam Kuiack in Y and Kevin Burke in X, also sporting a full beard as his



"shtick"! Our two charming gypsies, Frasquita and Mercedes, were embodied by Lindsay Gillis and Madison MacIvor (X) and Kelsey Gordon and Adriana Godoy Smirnova (Y), with

some strong soprano voices. Special mention must be made of tenors Yanik Gosselin and Adam Laurenti, very good and funny smugglers (X), baritone Pascal Viens who sang Cpl. Morales in both casts, and baritone John Cook, returning to the UOOC after about a decade to sing a suitably more mature Captain Zuniga (Y) and lend a bit of age diversity to the cast.

The whole was done with enthusiasm and style, and with good clear explanations inserted into the dialogue (in English) where needed. Humour also helped, such as Carmen's plea of self-defence being labelled an "alternative fact" - that got a good hand opening night! The sight gags in Act II, where the smugglers hid under the table skirt, to later emerge, and in Act III, where a burly smuggler struggled mightily to pull a bag of contraband across the stage, while the slight Mercedes picked it up easily, kept us entertained. Jose's mother's letter to him contained the useful bit of information that the orphan Micaela would be inheriting her uncle's farm, and advised him to think about that! No wonder that closing afternoon they were scurrying around trying to find extra seats for people clamouring for tickets!

This run of *Carmen* was dedicated to bass baritone and uOttawa grad Denis Lawlor, who died almost a year ago. He it was who "dared" Sandra Graham to upgrade the Opera Workshops (whose scenes I remember fondly) to full opera productions - in which he charmingly starred! This production was a very worthy tribute to Denis' memory.

## Siegfried's Death – *Götterdämmerung* at the COC

by Lesley Robinson

When Wagner started work on *The Ring* in 1848 he began with the end of the story, then worked his way backwards through the prequels. He initially called the last opera *Siegfrieds Tod* (Siegfried's Death) and this in fact seems like a more appropriate title. The gods, after all, hardly feature in this final chapter of the saga, other than in lengthy narrative. The Norns assemble in the prologue to gab about the past, present and future, as they weave the rope of destiny, but disappear when the rope suddenly breaks. Meanwhile Wotan had wandered off into obscurity back in Act 3 of *Siegfried*. This final opera of the tetralogy might well be summed up by the headline *Siegfried Dies, Brünnhilde Sacrifices Self to Save the World!* so *Siegfried's Death* would indeed be an apt title. As the curses of the ring are fulfilled and the ring comes full circle by being returned to its rightful owners, the Rhine maidens, and with Valhalla finally consumed in flames, it really does feel like the end.

The COC's production of *Götterdämmerung* does justice to the climax of this epic chronicle. In an interview in the program, Conductor and COC Music Director Johannes Debus discusses the "monumentality" of the *The Ring*, which draws in everyone: musicians, singers, backstage crew and, of course, the audience. He says that Wagner's larger-than-life work requires a buy-in from everyone. His favourite musical moments in the score are Siegfried's *Funeral March* and Brünnhilde's *Immolation Scene* in Act 3. Wagner's music brings the orchestra together as they explore it and develop together. Sitting close to the orchestra provides a musical education, as the music moves around from instrument to instrument. The orchestra is a character in itself. The pre-opera chat, given by Sue Elliott (Director of Education for Seattle Opera) gave some interesting insights – one of them gave me something to listen for in the brass – there are three horn blasts that sound like the sirens that go off when the home team scores at a hockey game and yes, I heard them, exactly as they were described!

The singing was world class. Christine Goerke, who has been COC's Brünnhilde over the last three seasons and is fast becoming the Brünnhilde of choice, led the cast with her stunningly powerful performance. Austrian tenor Andreas Schager specialises in Wagner

roles, although his Siegfried was none too boyish. Estonian bass Ain Anger was a profoundly malevolent Hagen. American Lindsay Ammann's rich mezzo-soprano has depth and luxuriance. She sang two roles: the First Norn and Flosshilde (one of the Rhine Maidens, whose scene was delightfully playful.)



photos by Michael Cooper



The COC's *Ring* spanned a century in its setting, culminating in a contemporary setting for *Götterdämmerung*. The minimalist set kept the focus on the drama. There was very little furniture – just a bed for Siegfried and Brünnhilde and a huge boardroom table and a couch for the Gibbichungs. Costumes were contemporary – business suits for the men and simple gowns for the women. The chorus were dressed in identical grey suits and carried stainless steel spears.

This was a thoughtful and effective production of a complex and challenging work, with a great deal of music and very little action. It was hard to believe that six hours could pass so quickly.

## Courtly Love, Passion, Tragedy and Dysfunction - December at the Met

by Lesley Robinson

A week spent in New York City in December afforded plenty of opportunities to enjoy what the Met has to offer and in a variety of ways. Arriving with tickets for a couple of must-sees (we already had tickets for *Salome*, with Patricia Racette, and *Manon Lescaut*, with Anna Netrebko), we decided to take advantage of other events on the calendar.

Our preference generally is to sit as close to the front as possible, but we were happy to experience some additional productions from a different vantage point. Before I say anything else, I would like to point out that although opera is thought to be elitist, it is possible to buy seats in the Family Circle at the Met for as little as \$30. You'll never find value like that at a Broadway show. Despite the fact that the Family Circle is right at the back and right at the top of the enormous auditorium and the view is distant, the sound is probably better there than anywhere in the house. So the week we were there, we decided to see *L'Amour de loin*, literally "de loin", as well as the famous, spectacular, perennial Zeffirelli production of *La Bohème* that we have already seen on multiple occasions, so it was well worth enjoying with fabulous sound and at low cost. We also added *Aida* (with our preferred seating) and made reservations for the first ever Sunday brunch to be served in the Met's restaurant and followed it with a backstage tour.

On our first evening in New York we saw *Aida*, conducted by Marco Armiliato (who also conducted *La Bohème* and *Manon Lescaut* the same week). The role of Aida was sung by Latonia Moore of Houston, Texas, who put her heart and soul into the performance. She has made the role her own, having stepped in at short notice at the Met back in 2012. At the time the New York Times reported on her appealing stage presence and the palpable emotion that she brought to her portrayal of Aida. Seasoned Italian tenor Marco Berti was the hero Radamès and Russian mezzo-soprano Ekaterina Gubanova made a somewhat softer and more vulnerable Amneris than audiences might expect. Another notable performance was from bass Solomon Howard who is rapidly making a name for himself in American opera houses from coast to coast. This was a revival of the Met's opulent 1988 production complete with huge numbers of people and prancing horses onstage, larger than life and every bit as dramatic.

Richard Strauss's *Salome*, based on Oscar Wilde's dark and disturbing drama is a chilling portrayal of

macabre and dysfunctional manoeuvres. One always has to suspend one's disbelief somewhat at the opera and Patricia's Racette's task of portraying a young girl teetering on the boundary between innocence and experience was no mean feat. This factor was compounded by the fact that Nancy Fabiola Herrera, playing Salome's mother, is indeed the same age as Patricia Racette, and Gerhard Siegel, as her stepfather Herod, is a mere two years older. Nevertheless, Ms. Racette made a petulant and believable Salome and her willingness to bare all (Full Monty style) for the dance of the seven veils is testament to the fact that this was both vocally and dramatically an all-in performance. Another performance worthy of note was that of young Australian-Chinese tenor Kang Wang as Narraboth. Mr. Wang is a member of the Met's Lindemann Young Artist Development Program and Narraboth was his very impressive Met debut. The setting was described by the Met as "a non-specific contemporary setting". For me it had somewhat of the glitzy art nouveau look of a Klimt painting. The Judean Hills were suggested by undulating chipboard forms in the background with armed, black-clad angel of death figures hovering over them. The music's system of leitmotifs calls for a 100-piece orchestra, at times with a tinkling clarity, at others building to its ominous dramatic climax. The orchestra, under the baton of COC's Johannes Debus, was as magnificent as ever.

The new Robert Lepage production of *L'Amour de Loin* by Finnish composer Kaija Saariaho was visually remarkable. From our high vantage point, we were able to see the whole stage, which was a sea of LED lights, representing the water which both separates and connects the lovers. Even the chorus pops up from among the waves. The story is based on a 12th century tale of idealized love which allows Ms. Saariaho to explore the perennial operatic themes of love and death in an abstract way. It deals with the unfathomable nature of an ennobling and all-encompassing love. Amin Maalouf's French libretto highlighted for me once again a disappointing omission on the part of the Met: its fabulous seat-back titles are not available in French. This is particularly exasperating when the text itself is in French and no translation is even required – it would simply be welcome to be able to follow the original text. Notably, this was only the second staged production at the Met by a female composer (the last being Ethel Smyth's *Der Wald* in 1903). In addition, conductor Susanna Malkki is



## Courtly Love, Passion, Tragedy and Dysfunction - December at the Met (continued)

only the fourth woman to take the podium at the Met (the others being Sarah Caldwell, Simone Young and Jane Glover.) This production was well cast. The New York Times described soprano Susanna Phillips as “radiant” as Clémence, the object of love from afar, bass-baritone Eric Owens as “achingly vulnerable” as the lover Jaufré, and mezzo-soprano Tamara Mumford as bringing “mellow sound and calm dignity” to the androgynous role of the pilgrim.

We were present for a rare event during Korean soprano Hei-Kyung Hong’s only performance this season as Mimi in *La Bohème*. At the end of the second act, as the audience prepared to head for the bars and washrooms for the first intermission, Peter Gelb, General Manager of the Metropolitan Opera, came out on stage to salute Hei-Kyung Hong’s long and stellar career at the Met. He spoke of her “incomparable vocal beauty and incandescent presence” during her more than 30 years gracing the stage of the MET. She has sung the role of Mimi here 66 times, so this was a good opportunity to salute her long and celebrated career. Mr. Gelb pointed out that only the very few and the greatest have been honoured on this famous stage. He noted that, although the Met has no physical Hall of Fame in which to induct its Most Valuable Players, this was as close as it gets and, unlike baseball players, Met singers need not retire in order to be honoured! Ms. Hong was presented with a framed sketch of her costume as the Countess in *The Marriage of Figaro*, one of her favourite roles. She acknowledged the applause of both the hundreds on stage and the thousands in the auditorium. She said that it was a privilege to be on the stage of the Met, which she considered to be the greatest in the world, and thanked the audience who make everything possible by coming out to encourage and support.

Perhaps the highlight of the week’s opera was Puccini’s *Manon Lescaut* starring Anna Netrebko and Marcelo Álvarez. You may remember the 2016 HD live broadcast featuring Kristine Opolais and Roberto Alagna (a last minute stand-in for Jonas Kaufmann.) This was a little different. Ms. Netrebko, the ultimate sultry diva, gave a convincing and passionate portrayal of Manon’s development from naïve beauty to society libertine and of her poignant regret at having left behind her true love. Mr. Alvarez’s emotionally charged voice is the ideal vehicle for des Grieux’s aching yearning for his love. The other principle roles were taken by British baritone

Christopher Maltman and bass Brindley Sherratt. Mr. Maltman, in the role of Lescaut, Manon’s brother, vacillated between his willingness to enrich himself thanks to his sister’s charms and his genuine regret and affection for her. Mr. Sherratt made a gruff and imposing villain as the lecherous Geronte who seduces Manon with his riches and power. The original story was set in around the year 1720. This production’s removal to 1940s Nazi-occupied France raises many questions, but focuses on the same themes of greed vs. need and love vs. pragmatism. It is love that wins out, but love cannot ensure survival. In the original setting, Manon dies of thirst in a desert in Louisiana. In the current production, the set of the final scene evokes the degeneration of the previous opulence that Manon had enjoyed.

Sunday brunch at the Met was an agreeable and entertaining experience. We arrived early to enjoy some creative sparkling wine cocktails and to soak up the atmosphere before ordering our two-course brunch. The food was excellent and similarly creative. The entertainment was delightful. Canadian-Tunisian mezzo-soprano Rihab Chaieb from Montreal sang a selection of arias, beginning with the *Habanera* from *Carmen* and ending with an enchanting rendition of *La vie en rose*. Ms. Chaieb was previously in the Canadian Opera Company’s Ensemble program and is now in the Lindemann Young Artist Development Program at the MET. Her Met debut was in 2016 in the role of Zulma in *L’Italiana in Algeri* and she will perform the role of one of the Cretan women in *Idomeneo* in March 2017. After brunch we headed for the tour. This year marks the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Met’s current home at the Lincoln Center and we spent some time looking at the special exhibition commemorating the opening season. We saw a collection of costumes, photographs and letters about the building project and the productions of the first season. Backstage we saw costume and scenery workshops, props, wigs and costumes from current productions. We visited rehearsal rooms and dressing rooms. The most impressive thing we saw was the massive elevator for moving scenery up to the stage. To give you an idea of the scale, our tour guide told us that the going rate for the square footage of the elevator would be about \$2000 per month in the Manhattan real estate market!

Thank you to the Met for a wonderful week of music, drama and extravagant spectacle. We’ll be back.

## Sharleen Joynt wows Victoria opera lovers

by Murray Kitts

If a regional opera company like Pacific Opera Victoria can fill the theatre to capacity for five performances, plus a number of exclusively student performances, they must be doing something right. The choice of Mozart's *The Magic Flute* was an excellent one as it is rated as one of the top ten most performed operas. Fortunately, they were able to assemble a cast to cover the almost twenty singing and speaking roles with singer/actors whose talents ranged from good to outstanding.

Second-prize winner of the Brian Law 2007 Competition Sharleen Joynt was the "hit" of the evening, characterized by a local critic as *...an unforgettable Queen of Night (sic), bull's-eyeing inhumanly high notes like a sharp-shooter*", an apt description from this island of hunters and fishermen. She was helped by her physical loveliness and by her costumes which were ironically dazzling white in colour.

Soprano Simone Osborne sang beautifully in her duets with Papageno and Tamino and was outstanding in her suicide aria *Ach, ich fühl's*, but her dress, also white, was unbecom-

ing for a princess. She will appear in Ottawa in Harry Somer's revised *Louis Riel*.

Justin Welsh has appeared in a number of baritone roles in Victoria and in a number of Canadian cities. His formidable comedic talents were assisted by the fact English was used for the spoken dialogue while arias and ensembles were sung in German - a fairly common practice nowadays in English-speaking countries.

Tenor Adam Luther (Prince Tamino) had to deal with one of the most beautiful arias Mozart ever wrote, *Dies Bildnis ist bezaubernd schön...*, having been wrapped up by a very inadequate cloth snake and forced to lie on the stage floor while the Three Ladies get things sorted out. Quite a challenge for a young singer but his costume as Prince in an India-style mode was one of the more appropriate ones.

Casting a suitable Sarastro, the supposed villain/real hero of the opera, is almost as difficult as finding a suitable Queen of the Night. Jeremy Bowes did not have the power to fully realize this role and was not helped by his costume, with a longer kilt than the other

members of his entourage and wearing an ill-matched jacket as a totally inadequate sign of his authority. The fine chorus of almost exclusively men looked like they had been fitted out at the local thrift store with unmatched tops over long kilts, bearing long poles for some reason. The Three Boys, called the Three Spirits in this production, appeared at first as creatures out of a sci-fi movie. Later they dispensed with the tiny light framed hoods. Papagena, Spirits, Three Ladies, the Speaker, and the Two Priests all were fine singers and actors. Of course the excellence of the chorus is due in large measure to the redoubtable Timothy Vernon who conducted this fine musical performance.

There is no doubt that this opera with its many scenes is difficult to stage. Director Oriol Tomas opted to use large mirrored pyramids, as he explained, as *mirrors in which the characters constantly see themselves, confront themselves and their own feelings*. This is all very well, but every time the sets were moved light was being flashed into the eyes of the audience and, in the second act

when the Three Ladies added their own personal circular mirrors, the light flashes were almost unbearable.

In general the stage action was too busy, unnecessarily so. For example, during Papageno's delightful introductory aria the attention of the audience was distracted by two men waving sticks to which dozens of paper coloured birds were attached by strings. No wonder Papageno did not receive the well-deserved applause that he deserved at the end of his number. The masked "animals" who danced to the sound of the magic flute looked like they had come out of an ancient Egyptian tomb. As for the ordeals that the two lovers had to endure, the fire was represented by dancers dressed in red who really performed too long, and the water by long strips of silver balloons. The rites of the sacred order are mysterious enough in the libretto without making them look foolish.

Audiences really enjoyed this opera but it is questionable whether they would want to see this particular production again.

Photo by Pacific Opera Victoria.



Sharleen Joynt

## Vancouver Opera Festival: Come Join the Celebration!

by Peter Moskos

When, in the summer of 2016, the Vancouver Opera Association announced its season for 2017, many traditional patrons were initially dismayed. Instead of its four major operas spread from October to May, Vancouver Opera would focus on a two-week festival period in the spring (April 28-May 13). The Festival would present three major productions running simultaneously. The festival would also include a host of exciting smaller events: master classes, composer and singer workshops, films, panels and lectures in a festival tent just outside the main theatre.

Why switch from a four-opera season to a festival format? One reason is that the festival format allows for more diverse programming, over a concentrated period of time, which in turn will attract new audiences. Vancouver Opera's General Manager, Kim Gaynor, says the festival will attract regional audiences and the not-too-distant tourists from the interior of BC (Kelowna, Kamloops, Prince George). It will also draw from the United States (Seattle, San Francisco); and then there are audiences from the rest of Canada: Calgary, Winnipeg, Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal. Vancouver in the spring is an attractive destination and offers an opportunity to combine opera with other Vancouver attractions.

The Festival provides Vancouver Opera opportunities to include different formats such as operas in concert, recitals, and choral concerts. It will create opportunities to involve singers from its Yulanda M. Faris Young Artists Program, as well as budding composers, directors, stage crew and costumers. And importantly it allows Vancouver Opera to develop partnerships with other Vancouver cultural institutions. With the Festival, Vancouver Opera looks to the future and to expanding its program into new areas.

Thinking of coming? General Manager Kim Gaynor invites you to "join the celebration". "You can see the three main productions and many of other performance, educational and social activities in just three days," Gaynor says.

Here are some main reasons to come:

*Otello*, Verdi's late masterpiece is a highlight of the Festival. It features acclaimed Italian tenor, Antonello Palombi, in the title role. Palombi will be making his Canadian debut with Vancouver Opera. Erin Wall, a powerful Vancouver-raised soprano, is Desdemona and Canadian baritone, Gregory Dahl, a favourite of Vancouver audiences, is Iago. The opera is conducted



Palombi



Wall

by the Vancouver Opera's Music Director, Maestro Jonathan Darlington, leading an 85-piece symphonic orchestra.

*Dead Man Walking* is based on the Oscar winning movie of the same name. It tells the story of a Louisiana murderer who is befriended by a Catholic nun seeking to understand the nature of divine forgiveness. The score incorporates gospel, pop music and brilliant sound effects. Singers include Daniel Okulitch as the convicted murderer, Judith Forst as his mother, and J'Nai Bridges as Sister Helen Prejean. Speaking guests at the Festival include the composer, Jake Heggie, and Sister



Okulitch

Helen Prejean. This will be a wonderful opportunity to hear a contemporary American classic.



J'Nai Bridges

*The Marriage of Figaro*, long an opera favourite, will feature costumes by Canadian fashion Superstar, Sid Neigum, whose lines have triumphed at Fashion Week in New York and London. The cast includes emerging opera stars from the Young Artists' Program. The first two operas are in the large Queen Elizabeth Theatre; *Figaro* will play in the smaller, more intimate Playhouse.



Spinney

## Vancouver Opera Festival: Come Join the Celebration! (Continued)

A Festival Plaza and tent outside the Queen Elizabeth Theatre will be home to a host of smaller events. These include master classes for younger singers conducted by principals from the three main operas; a new opera project in which young composers will receive coaching from the Maestro Jonathan Darlington as well as singers from the main productions and chorus; a collaboration between VO and the Delta School Board involving students from Grades 8 to 12; a lecture on the three main composers, Verdi, Heggie and Mozart; films and video installations.

Other festival highlights include Ute Lemper in *Last Tango in Berlin* (at Vancouver's Orpheum Theatre); Tanya Tagaq, renowned Canadian throat singer (at the downtown Vogue Theatre); Paul Wong, a Canadian visual artist; and a Choral Immersion event, one of the largest massed opera choruses in the city's history, conducted by Jonathan Darlington and chorus director Leslie Dala. In a unique and entertaining evening of choral singing, members of invited regional professional, semi-professional and amateur choirs come together onstage with the VO Chorus and VO Orchestra to sing famous opera choruses. (Queen Elizabeth Theatre).

If some traditional audiences were initially disappointed in the festival format, as things have progressed,

most of the disenchantment has dissipated. This may be due to the fact that Vancouver Opera recently presented two smaller operas, Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel* and a condensed adaptation of Verdi's *Macbeth* from South Africa. Both were outstanding successes. With this pattern, Gaynor suggests, Vancouver Opera may be evolving into a "festival in a season" format.

Vancouver's 2017 Opera Festival provides opera lovers from the National Capital Region a tremendous opportunity to hear great opera and to take in all sorts of opera-related activities. If you are thinking of coming you can get all the details plus tickets from [www.vancouveroperafestival.ca](http://www.vancouveroperafestival.ca).

For accommodation, meals and Vancouver city attractions, check out Tourism Vancouver's website: [www.tourismvancouver.com](http://www.tourismvancouver.com).

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*Peter Moskos spent his professional life in Ottawa. In 2004 he retired to Vancouver where he has been involved in the West Coast opera scene. Peter is a member of the Vancouver Opera Guild and takes voice lessons at the Vancouver Symphony School of Music where he occasionally sings baritone solos in opera and song recitals.*

## The Royal Opera House in HD - *Il trovatore*

by Murray Kitts

Covent Garden's take on Verdi's *Il trovatore* was shown to a sparse audience at The Vic theatre which is connected with the Victoria Film Festival. The outstanding vocal performance was by Georgian mezzo Anita Rachvelishvili as the gypsy Azucena. This was not only a great performance of this role but became unusual as no effort was made either in makeup, hair colour or dress (slinky black with sequins) to hide the fact that she appeared young enough to be Manrico's daughter, not his mother. Sharing vocal honours was Armenian soprano Lianna Haroutounian as Leonora, soon to be seen and heard in Opera alla pasta's showing of Verdi's *Sicilian Vespers*. Gregory Kunde, an American tenor,

who has had a long career in Europe, sang the role of Manrico and can still perform *Di quella pira* with vigour despite his sixty years. Ukrainian baritone Vitaly Bilyy as the Count has a powerful, clear voice but not a beautiful one like that of Dmitri Horovstovsky whom he replaced. This production introduced some new elements in the story - a tank, a dancing bear, lots of barbed wire with dark, unpleasant sets. Of course there were some ludicrous moments when Leonora cut "L loves M" into a tree while awaiting his appearance. Also the outline of a huge heart appeared at the end in the large pile of straw in which Azucena was to be burnt alive. The Eurotrash was directed by David Bosch.

## Opern Himmel - Berlin recollections fall 2016

by Gerard Lavelle

With four professional opera companies Berlin has to be mecca for opera lovers. Himmel. Seventh heaven!

Though I have yet to attend a Neuköllner work, and I missed their production of *Frau Luna* by a week, the Komische Oper remains my favourite company and venue. For several reasons.

The Komische is a dazzling, 700 seat, neo-ro-cocco jewel encased by huge modern concrete cubes fronting on Behrenstrasse with its rear box office on Unter den Linden, steps east of the Brandenburger Tor. Quintessential Berlin. Originally built to present operettas, this contemporary Opernhaus now presents innovatively updated operettas and classical operas most often with non-traditional interpretations. Productions are usually presented *auf Deutsch* with subtitles handily on seat backs.

Edgy and provocative, iconoclastic and shocking, the Komische productions provide music lovers with first rate musical fare. The performers, for the most part, are young, lithe, and sexy. Nudity not uncommon. Very wise artistic direction in the Komische's bid to woo new and younger fans from contemporary audiences. Productions often incorporate elaborate dance routines and acrobatics along with digital graphics, not to mention contemporary references. More often than not conga lines and chorus lines outnumber minuets or waltzes. In the 2010 production of *Marriage of Figaro* a drunken reveller intoned bars of Sinatra's "My Way" AFTER 200 kilos of green apples were dumped on stage! Memorable as well as passionate and spectacular, all that opera aspires to.

October '16, I caught two stunning productions,

*Barber of Seville* and *Russalka*. *Barber* made Opera Lyra's final production of *Barber* seem mild, though it was set in a 1948 Italian movie studio with a Bugs Bunny reference. Director Kirill Serebrennikov exploited the contemporary obsession of "being connected" throughout. The narrative unfolded via iPhone, Facebook, You Tube, Twitter, and END-less selfies. A tad gimmicky but perfectly down to date matching youth's frantic and hilarious chase of love, all galloping to Rossini's mischievous and jolly music. Time and gender bending also imbued the production, especially when Figaro showed up at Dr Bartolo's in radical drag but forgot to remove patent heels when reverting to Figaro.

*Russalka*, on the other hand, though equally contemporary in goth artistic direction, conjured visceral and violent scenarios but beautifully counterpoint to Dvorak's soaring, lyric music. The disturbing tension, however, emphasized the difficulty of any creature trying to transcend original form. Both Yezibaba's denymphing scene and the palace kitchen scene featured thunderous cleaver chops and bone removal which beautifully set up the awkward and desperate 'non-human' choreography when *Russalka* attempted to dance with the Prince. Nadja Mchantaf's balletic movements, stumbling into humanity, became tragically poetic. Deeply memorable. Director Barrie Kosky's interpretation wasn't the expected romantic work but was fitting to many current issues of shifting citizenship and identity.

The fillip to both evenings was the plate of canapés and a glass of Prosecco in the elegant black mirrored atrium during intermission. The best musical revenge, really!

## A Great Gala - with Arminè!

by Shelagh Williams

During the heaviest snowfall of the winter (Feb.13<sup>th</sup>) we joined a happy throng warmly ensconced in the NAC Salon for a sold out fundraising luncheon/recital, *Hopes and Dreams*, for the Stellae Boreales (Ottawa Suzuki Strings' premier violin ensemble) and the Almonte General Hospital Obstetrical Department - an interesting combination! The delightful music programme had a South American flavour since Stella Boreales is travelling in March to Buenos Aires, and the guest of honour was the Ambassador of Argentina, who supplied the wine!

Stella Boreales played several pieces between lunch courses, but of course the highlight for us was the

performance of BLOC winner Arminè Kassabian, accompanied by Judy Ginsburg, Pianist and Administrator with Suzuki Strings. Stunningly turned out, as always, Arminè finished off her short programme with *Yo soy Maria*, from Piazzola's opera *Maria de Buenos Aires*, which she performed here several years ago. Both ladies later joined the great fashion show of Paddy Mann of Pakenham to model two lovely gowns each. In her second one, Arminè came to our table of opera-lovers and gave us an impromptu *Habanera* to match her red gown! It reminded me fondly of the OLO Guild's Joy Of Opera Luncheons. Who cares if the weather outside is frightful!

## Canada Post Celebrates Opera !!

In time for the 2017 opera season, Canada Post has launched five stamps celebrating two significant Canadian-penned operas and three individuals who helped to put modern Canadian opera talent on the world stage.

In their stamp design debut, Parcel Design Inc.'s creative director Gary Beelik and designer Kristine Do, with illustrator Peter Strain, have created a bold five-stamp issue that embodies the colour and drama of modern operatic performances.

Two of the highly theatrical stamps depict significant Canadian operas. *Filumena* – composed by John Estacio with a libretto by John Murrell – tells the true story of the only woman ever to be hanged in Alberta: an Italian immigrant convicted of murdering a police officer. The opera is being restaged by the Calgary Opera in celebration of Canada's 150th birthday, and held its opening performance on February 4.

Commissioned to celebrate Canada's centennial in 1967, *Louis Riel* – composed by Harry Somers and featuring a libretto by Mavor Moore in collaboration with Jacques Languirand – romanticizes the life of the legendary Métis leader. It is being restaged in 2017 to mark both the 50th anniversary of its debut by the Canadian Opera Company and Canada's sesquicentennial.

The additional stamps pay homage to the artists who bring magic to the stage. Bass baritone Gerald Finley and soprano Adrienne Pieczonka are regarded internationally as being among the greatest operatic voices on the modern stage. Director Irving Guttman, known as “the father of opera in western Canada” for his artistic vision, is credited with discovering and fostering some of the country's greatest talent.



In reply to Murray Kitt's letter of congratulation, Gerald Finley wrote:

*Dear Murray,*

*Thank you for writing. It is indeed an honour to be thus featured on a stamp during this 150 year and to promote the art in whatever way possible.*

*My father always said I deserved a good licking! (Not really, but he would have quipped something similar...)*

*I am in rehearsals for Parsifal, set in a famous Viennese hospital. If anyone is interested, it will be streamed live on April 13, as part of the State Opera's internet efforts. Please go to the Vienna State Opera Live website for further details, or my website nearer the time.*

*All my very best wishes to everyone at the NCOS.*

*Gerald*

## The Met Live in HD 2016 - 2017

**Dvořák** *RUSALKA* (New Production)  
Encore: April 8, 2017

**Verdi** *LA TRAVIATA*  
Live: March 11, 2017 Encore: April 15, 2017

**Mozart** *IDOMENEO* (Rare MET revival)  
Live: March 25, 2017 Encore: May 6, 2017

**Tchaikovsky** *EUGENE ONEGIN*  
Live: April 22, 2017 Encore: June 3, 2017

**R. Strauss** *DER ROSENKAVALIER*  
Live: May 13, 2017 Encore: June 17, 2017

## Saturday Afternoon at the Opera, 2017

March 18	<i>Guillaume Tell</i> Rossini
March 25	<i>Idomeneo</i> Mozart
April 1	<i>Fidelio</i> Beethoven
April 8	<i>Tristan und Isolde</i> Wagner
April 15	<i>Aida</i> Verdi
April 22	<i>Eugene Onegin</i> Tchaikovsky
April 29	<i>Der Fliegende Holländer</i> Wagner
May 6	<i>Cyrano de Bergerac</i> Alfano
May 13	<i>Der Rosenkavalier</i> Strauss

Complete details on these broadcasts are  
on the Met's website: [metopera.org](http://metopera.org)

## The Met Live in HD 2017 - 2018

The Met will present ten Live in HD operas during the 2017-18 season, beginning on October 7 with a simulcast of *Norma*. Subsequent performances transmitted to movie theaters worldwide will include *Die Zauberflöte* (October 14), *The Exterminating Angel* (November 18), *Tosca* (January 27), *L'Elisir d'Amore* (February 10), *La Bohème* (February 24), *Semiramide* (March 10), *Così fan Tutte* (March 31), *Luisa Miller* (April 14), and *Cendrillon* (April 28).

## The Royal Opera House in HD

Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* - Ermonela Jaho as Butterfly, with Marcelo Puente as Pinkerton and Elizabeth DeShong as Suzuki. Saturday, April 29 at 1:00 p.m., ByTowne Cinema.

## Opera on television

If you are able to access the Knowledge Network on your PC, you can watch Los Angeles Opera's production of Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi*. Woody Allen's riotous staging of Puccini's comic masterpiece stars Plácido Domingo and Andriana Chuchman. This is available for viewing until March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

# Opera alla Pasta

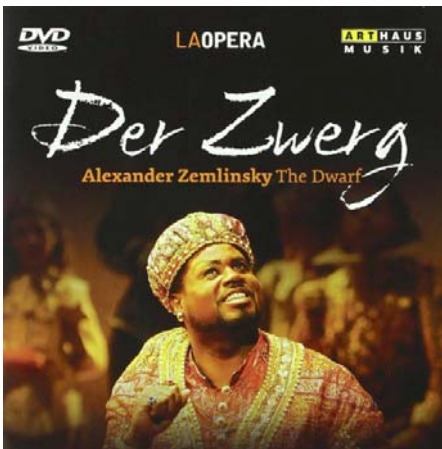
## Sunday Afternoon at the Opera

DVD presentations of outstanding operas from the great opera houses of the world followed by a delicious meal.

Two delightful operas that are guaranteed to make your day!  
Two for the price of one!

### May 21, 2017 at 2:00 p.m.

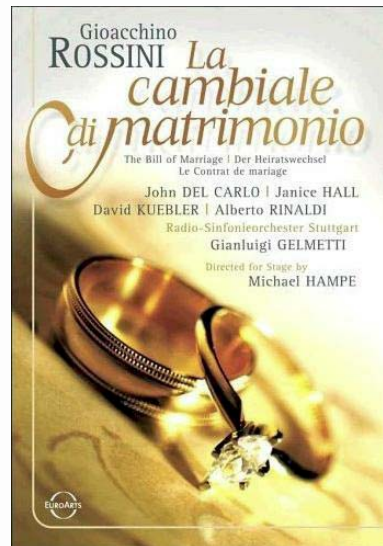
#### Zerlinski's *Der Zwerg*



*Der Zwerg* (The Dwarf), is an opera in one act by Austrian composer Alexander Zemlinsky to a libretto by Georg Klaren, freely adapted from the short story "The Birthday of the Infanta" by Oscar Wilde. *Der Zwerg* is an effective opera in a style of late romanticism, and is

beautifully sung in this premiere DVD. Passionate and enchanting best describes this rare performance by opera tenor Rodrick Dixon and Mary Dunleavy. An amazing and dramatic performance by baritone James Johnson as well as an excellent orchestration by the L.A. Opera musical director James Conlon. The ending packs a punch to your head and your gut.

#### Rossini's *La cambiale di matrimonio*



If you appreciate Rossini, you'll surely enjoy this production of one of his smaller, less well-known operas. Most of the music will be fresh in your ears, not appropriated from other compositions, and many of the ensemble pieces rank with Rossini's most brilliant. The staging in the antique theater of Schwetzingen is the height of elegance, with distinctly English period costuming for an English story. The acting is excellent, and the camera-work captures that expressive excellence. The orchestra is top-notch, particularly the horns and flutes, and the conductor is worth the price of watching for his expressive face. The singing is highly polished.

ing is excellent, and the camera-work captures that expressive excellence. The orchestra is top-notch, particularly the horns and flutes, and the conductor is worth the price of watching for his expressive face. The singing is highly polished.

Opera alla Pasta is held at St. Anthony's Soccer Club at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday. The cost is \$25. Call Murray Kitts at 613-830-9827 at least three days before the date of the DVD presentation in order to reserve a place.