



The Show Must Go On! by Ute Davis

Pinkerton was not reunited with Cio-Cio-San but everything else was a triumph against all odds in Pellegrini Opera's *Madama Butterfly* performed on 22 Sept. '18 and operating on a shoestring budget (as Artistic Director Vincent Thomas put it "and we really can't afford the shoestring").

There was some grant money, the singers were in place, but it was difficult to find rehearsal space, let alone a performance venue. The company was close to running out of time since certain limits were attached to grant money. As arts organizations know, this is not a city which offers reasonably priced venues. At present the situation is more difficult than ever before because Dominion Chalmers United Church, the Pellegrini venue for many years, has been sold to Carleton University and is undergoing major renovation as well as relocation of the organ.

Pellegrini Opera had to settle for Ukrainian Hall, a west end community hall, not really suited for semi-staged performances and certainly not for fully-staged opera. The decision therefore was made for semi-staged.

Thus they were about to start their final dress rehearsal on Friday evening at the Ukrainian Hall on Byron Avenue. Musicians, singers and technical staff had just arrived when the first Ottawa tornado hit the area. Power went out. Darkness rapidly advanced outside. The eeriness was uncanny. Musicians and conductor were hastily equipped with flashlights, and emergency vehicle sirens made a continual background noise.

Around the corner, down Woodroffe Avenue, my son had his garden torn apart. His mother-in-law, living even closer to where the dress rehearsal took place, had her house destroyed and has since moved in with my son's family. I will spare you a description of her house, or what little remains of it.



Cio-Cio-San Pinkerton

Photos by Gabriel Dornier



Suzuki Sharpless

Back to *Madama Butterfly*; a performance less than 24 hours away and most tickets sold. There was no way of cancelling the hall rental with an almost sold out "house"! Happy anticipation turned into despair. Was this not worthy of an opera plot? The courageous decision was made by Vincent Thomas and the board to keep calm and carry on. Fortunately, there was no structural damage to the hall. By show-time on Saturday evening the building was one of the few sources of light in the western half of Ottawa. Due to the determination and technical skill of Bart Tecter power was provided by two generators. Two large standard lamps were then placed so that the audience could see the stage. We added lanterns to the foyer to go with the Japanese theme and various candles were placed in the bathrooms. The house was suddenly full. The audience was far greater than expected and extra chairs had to be provided. Many (having no electricity at home) were most appreciative of a warm, dry, well lit

building with entertainment thrown in.

The semi-staged presentation was much better than we had any right to expect in these circumstances. Under the talented guidance of conductor Andrew

President's Message December 1, 2018

There is lots of good news from NCOS. Brian Law is coming on a visit to Ottawa in July. Full details later.

Brian is sure to be as pleased as we are at the recent publicity in *Opera News* about previous BL Competition winners and finalists.

There were two sets of photos and comments in separate issues on Joshua Hopkins' career, the latest being his move to Washington to sing Valentin in Gounod's *Faust*. Philippe Sly was part of the cast of a recent CD of Berlioz's *Les Troyens* which was awarded The Best Opera Recording of the Year and The Best Recording of the Year by the prestigious *Gramophone* magazine. Not to neglect the ladies, *Opera News* had a stunning photo of Wallis Giunta who will be singing Carmen, Rosina and Octavian at Opera Leipzig this month and next one as well. In Philadelphia Sharleen Joynt was described as a "high-flying Canadian soprano ... showed a fluty, penetrating instrument at ease with cleanly executing difficult intervals" in the world premiere of Lembit Beecher's *Sky on Swings*.

Mark Robinson has been working successfully to arrange our next competition at the same venue as the past two years, Southminster Church. With him, the Board is in the process of revising the whole approach for applying for and participating in the Brian Law Competition. Announcements of changes will come in the New Year.

Opera alla pasta will continue its ambitious presentations of nine sessions this 2018-2019 season. First shown was Puccini's *Turandot* from Valencia with magnificent costumes and sets designed by Chinese artists. Second was a new production from La Scala of Verdi's *Giovanna d'Arco* with a tremendous performance by

Anna Netrebko as Joan. And third, a lively and colourful DVD from the Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg presented Rimsky-Korsakov's *The Tale of Tsar Saltan*. All three found approval from our group. The remaining six will be shown in the New Year with details later in this newsletter. As for suggestions for the following season, please send them to me or to Lesley Robinson as planning ahead is quite necessary for this activity.

We do try to avoid showing operas that have been recently shown by Live from the Met. The spectacular production of *Aida* had an excellent cast except for the tenor who had an off night. Much as it is interesting to use overhead cameras for backstage scene changes, I feel that this technique is overused in the ballet sequences. The production of *La fanciulla del West* was not new but seemed in a hurry to get over the sentimental parts which add much to the portrayal of the rough miners. Jonas Kaufmann is excellent as the bandit malgré lui, Eva-Marie Westbroek sang well but her portrayal of Minnie was somehow not American enough and Zeljko Lucic's constant scowl dominated his performance as the sheriff. *Samson and Delila* presented Elina Garanca as about as seductive a Delila as possible but I missed hearing a heldentenor for Samson despite Roberto Alagna's fine singing. Perhaps you saw the Robinsons at the performance of *La traviata*. Favorite tenor Juan Diego Florez sang the role of Alfredo for the first time at the Met.

It is sad to hear of the passing of Mary Vuylsteke, a long time member of NCOS, a Board Member for a short time and a frequenter of Opera alla pasta.

Murray Kitts

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Canadians Shine in Toronto! by Shelagh Williams

Our October Toronto long opera weekend was a marvelous opportunity to enjoy the variety and scope of Canadian operatic talent, especially some Brian Law Opera Competition (BLOC) finalists! The COC presented Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* and the world premiere of Rufus Wainwright's *Hadrian*, and Opera Atelier the double bill of Charpentier's *Acteon* and Rameau's *Pygmalion*.

Tchaikovsky knew how to write glorious, tuneful music, whether for ballet, symphony, or opera, and *Eugene Onegin* is no exception. Add on a great production from Canadians director Robert Carsen and designer Michael Levine and now owned and presented by the COC! Carsen tries to emphasize Eugene Onegin, starting with him on stage receiving Tatyana's written rejection during the overture, and then remembering the story as it flows clearly from scene to scene. To this end the scenery is almost non-existent - three walls, lots of autumn leaves, and many chairs - which I felt a bit odd when I first saw it at the MET. However, Levine's lavish costumes and Jean Kalman's lighting effects soon won me over. I'm not quite sure, however, that I can forgive Carsen for leaving most of the four lilting dance tunes not danced or the dancers so crowded as to be almost immobile! We had been spoiled by Opera Lyra's marvelous production, with Russell Braun, which was full of dancing! Nevertheless, Music Director and conductor Johannes Debus and the COC Orchestra played the music beautifully and the soloists and members of the chorus sang their hearts out!

Tchaikovsky originally produced the opera with young singers, and the COC did similarly, using mostly young Canadian singers. Tatyana was none other than the lovely 2005 BLOC winner Joyce El-Khoury! Appealingly shy at first, and in fine voice for the lovely Letter Writing Scene and then Onegin's subsequent rebuke, she became regal as the later sophisticated, unattainable Princess Gremin. However, the final scene between her and Onegin, well sung by baritone Gordon Bintner, was almost unbelievably tense and dramatic, as she now rejected him, having taken to heart his earlier lesson to her on controlling one's emotions!

Rounding out the all-Canadian trio of principals, Lensky was sung by handsome tenor Joseph Kaiser, whom we last heard live at Glimmerglass Opera, when he was still a baritone! His impassioned lament for life and love before the fatal duel was heartbreaking. Attending him in the misty morning as his second and duel

organizer, Zaretsky, in top hat and long coat, was 2015 and 2017 BLOC prize winner, deep voiced Joel Allison, in his COC main stage debut! Joel said afterward that it was marvelous sharing the scene with Joseph Kaiser and



experiencing him prepare and sing that aria, *Kuda, kuda*.

Armenian mezzo Varduhi Abrahamyan was a vivacious Olga, sister to Tatyana, and Russian bass Oleg Tsibulko, as Prince Gremin, provided a believable husband for Tatyana. He sang a lovely heartfelt tribute to her and to marriage as he presented her to the astonished Onegin. Two American mezzos, Helene Schneiderman and Margaret Lattimore, cared for the young Tatyana as her mother, Madame Larina, and nurse, Filipyevna.



Canadians Shine in Toronto! (continued)

Appropriately, French tenor Christophe Mortagne provided some comic relief as he sang Monsieur Triquet's French party piece, a tribute to Tatyana on her name day.

It was great to enjoy such a fine production of this melodious, well acted, emotion-filled work here at home in Canada, utilizing so many talented Canadians.



Who would have thought that the McGarrigle Sisters' dynasty would include an opera composer! *Hadrian* is Rufus Wainwright's second opera, and the COC's first commissioned main stage Canadian opera this century - since the Randolph Peters/Robertson Davies *The Golden Ass* in 1999 - and of course a world premiere!

Wainwright was fascinated by the gay love story of Roman Emperor Hadrian and the beautiful Greek youth Antinous, who drowned mysteriously in the Nile. The heartbroken Hadrian built a city on the site, named a star after Antinous, and deified him so that a cult of Antinous developed. The opera's libretto, by Canadian Daniel MacIvor, imagines Hadrian's last day, while endeavouring to explain both Antinous's death and Hadrian's political actions. In Act I, in Rome, Hadrian is dying and grieving Antinous, and so neglecting matters of state, especially in Palestine. Hadrian is the adopted protégé and successor of his cousin, the late Emperor Trajan, and is visited by Trajan and his wife Plotina, all in white as Roman deities, though invisible to all but Hadrian! Plotina persuades him to sign a decree to deal with Palestine by promising Hadrian two days with Antinous. Hadrian chooses the day 7 years before when he met Antinous (Act II) in Greece, and the day he lost Antinous (Act III) on the Nile. Act IV takes place back in real time in Rome where Hadrian signs the decree, is told the "truth" of Antinous's death, and dies, to be gloriously reunited with Antinous in the finale!



The COC pulled out all the stops to ensure a successful production. Canadian director Peter Hinton, erstwhile director of the NAC Theatre, managed his large forces in a straightforward and clearly historical manner. He re-enlisted his Canadian design team from last year's *Louis Riel*: Michael Gianfrancesco for sets, Gillian Gallow for costumes, and Bonnie Beecher for lighting, and added projection designer Laurie-Shawn Borzovoy for some marvelous visual background effects, especially in the Nile scene. They even had a special intimacy coach! I did have a couple of quibbles with the costuming,

**Hadrian's entourage
Dahl, Neher and MacMaster**

**young senators
Chan, Glenn and
Allison (standing)**

Canadians Shine in Toronto! (continued)

however, since the Greeks were dressed as a much earlier Greek civilization, and the 5 male dancers were dressed only in thongs! Opera Atelier's classy choreography and skin tight leotards can be much more suggestive than bare bums!

Johannes Debus also conducted this opera, with the usual great orchestra and chorus, and what a cast he had to work with! Debuting at the COC were American baritone Thomas Hampson as Hadrian, Finnish soprano Karita Mattila as his forceful adoptive mother Plotina,

to an exciting or engrossing end-product, although the second half of the opera was much better than the first! I felt the marvelous cast was not really challenged vocally or dramatically, and some almost seemed hamstrung in their roles. However, they sang and performed well and the production was certainly first class. The opera itself was very interesting, especially as it is only Wainwright's second effort at the difficult genre. What will opera #3 be like?

Opera Atelier's double bill of Charpentier's *Ac-*



and American bass David Leigh as Turbo, Hadrian's friend and general. The rest of the cast was a roll call of great Canadians! Tenors Isaiah Bell and Roger Honeywell were busy as Antinous and former Emperor Trajan respectively. Lovely soprano Ambur Braid sang Hadrian's neglected wife Sabina while Ben Heppner returned to the stage as Senator Dinarchus. In Hadrian's entourage was a set of three characters which consisted of tenor John MacMaster as Fabius, baritone Gregory Dahl as Hermogenes and debuting Gatineau soprano Anna-Sophie Neher as Lavia. Finally, there were the three young senators, tenor Thomas Glenn and baritones Samuel Chan and, of course, Joel Allison!

Rufus Wainwright likes to write long lines of music, but not really memorable arias. This does not lead

to an exciting or engrossing end-product, although the second half of the opera was much better than the first! I felt the marvelous cast was not really challenged vocally or dramatically, and some almost seemed hamstrung in their roles. However, they sang and performed well and the production was certainly first class. The opera itself was very interesting, especially as it is only Wainwright's second effort at the difficult genre. What will opera #3 be like?

Opera Atelier's double bill of Charpentier's *Ac-*

teon and Rameau's *Pygmalion*, both sourced from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, was extremely balletic and also featured mostly Canadians. Artist in Residence tenor Colin Ainsworth sang the title role in both, while the female lead in *Pygmalion* was 2013 BLOC winner Meghan Lindsay, who somehow managed to stand still as a statue for ages, before coming to life! An innovation in the chorus for this production was Opera Atelier's use of members of UofT's Schola Cantorum and of the Theatre of Early Music, all under the direction of Daniel Taylor, a finalist in the very first BLOC! This production goes on directly to play the Harris Theatre for Music and Dance in Chicago and then the Royal Opera House Versailles after this run. (See page 9 for a full review.)

The Show Must Go On! (continued)

Ager and very commendably led by first violinist Christian Vachon, the small orchestra played very well. Stage size limitations had Ager upstage of the singers, but the experienced performers overcame this problem.

Maria Knapik sang a beautiful Cio-Cio-San with superb modulation of her powerful soprano as in *Un bel di vedremo* and heart-rending delicacy in her *Addio, fiorito asil*.

Danielle Vaillancourt, a Brian Law Competition finalist, as Suzuki, was delightful. She continues to impress with every appearance on stage. Vocally thoroughly convincing, visually she suffered from a decision to clothe her in modern occidental dress while Butterfly and the attending ladies' chorus were beautifully colourful in authentic Kimonos.

Corey Arnold rates a good review as Pinkerton, vocally reliable and interacting well both with Butterfly

and the U.S. Consul Sharpless who was sung by **James Levesque**. His baritone is certainly very pleasing and his buttoned-down stage presentation suited the "Western diplomat in the Orient".

Supporting singers included **Grayson Nesbitt, Ryan Hofman, Marek Korkusinski, Sean Wei and Abigail Freeman**. All were fine, although I was surprised to find that Pinkerton's American wife was a Japanese lady. The chorus ladies were impressive and delightful: **Hisako Hayashi, Mizuki Hoshino, Yukiko Iwasaki, Yuko Kimura Wigen, Andrea Kovago, Jo-see Lamothe and Ilene McKenna**.

So....a few minor criticisms, but I have to give huge credit to everyone associated with this production. It was a high quality offering at a time when all of Ottawa was under stress.

Caelis Academy Ensemble

Southminster United Church – fast becoming one of the "go-to" venues in Ottawa for excellent musical programming of many different kinds – was full to capacity on a recent Wednesday evening in November, as nearly 500 people came out to enjoy the opening concert of Caelis Academy Ensemble's second season. Joined by members of the Ottawa Baroque Consort, and a fine array of brilliant young soloists, the performance featured the iconic music of Johann Sebastian Bach, ranging in scope from the majestic *Magnificat*, the virtuosic *Singet dem Herrn*, the splendid Orchestral Suite in D, and the introspective motet *O Jesu Christ, mein Lebens Licht*. Headlining a terrific solo sextet was Ottawa native and international star bass-baritone Philippe Sly, who contributed arias from Cantata 159 (*Es ist Vollbracht*), and the St. Matthew Passion (*Mache dich*).

Caelis Academy Ensemble was founded in the summer of 2017 by former Christ Church Cathedral director of music, Matthew Larkin, with the intention of combining young boy and girl soprano voices with professional-standard altos, tenors, and basses, into a single choral community that is dedicated to the study and performance of classic masterworks in what might loosely be described as the European cathedral tradition. Over the past seventeen months, the choir has appeared in over a dozen concerts, frequently in tandem with the Ottawa Baroque Consort, in performances of works by Bach, Buxtehude, Finzi, Handel, Haydn, Purcell,

Vaughan Williams, among many others. Caelis is currently made up of 24 boy and girl sopranos, and eighteen professional adult singers.

The critical importance of musical education and opportunity is central to the mandate of Caelis, and the results of similar forms of musical training can be seen and heard on the concert stages of today. Many of the soloists featured in November's concert have backgrounds in excellent young peoples' choirs: countertenors Matthew Muggeridge and Andrew Robar, tenors Jean-Philippe Lazure and Nicholas Savage, as well as the aforementioned Philippe Sly, sang as choristers under Larkin's direction at both Ottawa's St. Matthew's Church and Christ Church Cathedral, while sopranos Mikayla Jensen-Large and Ellen McAteer both hail from Ottawa, and began their singing careers in the city.

On February 8th, Caelis will mount another in a series of baroque blockbusters in a performance of Handel's very first oratorio, *Israel in Egypt*, again alongside the Ottawa Baroque Consort, and featuring again Ellen McAteer and Andrew Robar, who will this time be joined by soprano Linda Tsatsanis, tenor Asitha Tennekoon, and bass-baritones Clarence Frazier and Jorell Williams. The performance will again take place at Southminster United Church at 7:00 PM on that date. For further information on Caelis, its activities, performances or events, please visit www.ottawabaroque.ca, the Caelis Academy Ensemble Facebook page, or write to the choir at caelisacademyensemble@gmail.com

Autumn in Montreal

by Lesley Robinson

The Opéra de Montréal 2018/19 season began in September with a production of Verdi's *Rigoletto*. Since this is the music that runs around in my head more frequently than any other, I was excited at the prospect. The production did not play around with time and place, but used the standard setting and sixteenth century costumes. (The opera is based on the Victor Hugo play *Le roi s'amuse*, the king in question being François Ier, France's contemporary of Henry VIII.)

There were a couple of little quirks however in the staging. In the first act, Monterone's daughter appears on stage as he recounts her unfortunate seduction and he appears to stab her in his anger, thus providing an eerie foreshadowing of how *Rigoletto* will all but administer the tragic blow to his own daughter. The bitter irony of the curse is intensified. In the final moments of Gilda's demise, she sings, not from the sack in the arms of her distraught father, but from on high – as if she has already ascended to heaven to join her beautiful, but unfortunate, mother.



Rigoletto Curtain call

This was a predominantly Canadian cast, with only American tenor René Barbera singing the role of the Duke of Mantua and with Italian conductor Carlo Montanaro at the podium. Baritone James Westman, seen as Sir John A MacDonal in last year's revival of *Louis Riel*, sang the title role with a good dose of pathos. Myriam Leblanc who sang the role of Gilda, is a young artist in the Atelier lyrique de l'Opéra de Montréal. Her Gilda was fresh and vulnerable. Award-winning bass-baritone Vartan Gabrielian is rapidly making a name for himself. His performance as Sparafucile was appropriately chilling. I always think it must be somewhat of a challenge not to raise a titter when delivering the line: *Un ladro son forse? (Am I a thief?)* when the murderer is claiming scruples. Mezzo-Soprano Carolyn Sproule who sang the role of Maddalena is another up-and-coming Canadian artist. She has al-

ready performed multiple roles at the Met and made her European debut at the Wexford Festival.

In November Opéra de Montréal treated us to a magnificent new production of *Das Rheingold*, the first episode of Wagner's *Ring*. Staging Wagner is always a challenge, since so much of the drama is in the music and much of the libretto is narrative rather than action. The requirement of a large orchestra, 85 members, would have been a squeeze in the pit, so the orchestra was onstage and the pit became part of the set. It doubled for the depths of the Rhine and the depths of Nibelheim, while a platform above the orchestra represented the domain of the gods. In addition, the back wall of the stage as well as a scrim curtain were used for projections of the water and the magnificent palace of Valhalla. All this had a number of effects. The sound was altered: instead of the singers singing over the orchestra, the orchestra was playing through the singers, which made the music sound a little more distant.

The music begins with a single low, reverberating note on the double bass, seemingly coming out of nothing. Unfortunately the whirring of a smoke machine, which was situated between the orchestra and the audience, made it impossible to hear that single note emanating from nothingness. There were a number of quirky little features that enhanced the overall impression.

Many of the characters seemed like cartoon characters. The giants, for example, were ingeniously portrayed. They were communicating with Wotan from afar, wanting to be paid for their work, while he constantly attempted to push back against them. They communicated by means of an imaginary telecommunications device—they spoke in front of a camera and their monochromatic live images were projected for the audience to see. Mime was another character who seemed to come from the world of car-



The Giants

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Autumn in Montreal (continued)



Mime



Alberich

Erda

toons and many characters seemed to speak directly to the audience. Sitting in the first row, with the singers performing in what would normally be the pit, they were incredibly close. At times it felt as though one could feel their passion, their pain, their greed.

Once again OdM fielded a mostly Canadian cast. The first scene of the Rheinmaidens meeting the dwarf Alberich was totally Canadian: Woglinde, Wellgunde and Flosshilde were sung by Canadian soprano Andrea Núñez, and mezzo-sopranos Florence Bourget and Carolyn Sproule. Alberich was bass-baritone Nathan Berg whose performance was totally compelling. Renowned

American bass-baritone Ryan McKinny took some time to warm up as Wotan. I wonder if he is still a little young for the gravitas of Wotan, a challenging and massively flawed father figure. More impressive Canadians in major roles were Aidan Ferguson as Fricka, Roger Honeywell as Loge, Gregory Dahl as Donner (another cartoonish character wielding an oversized hammer,) and Catherine Daniel as Erda. Kudos to the two giants, American bass Soloman Howard as Fafner and British Bass Julian Close as Fasolt. Their performance was at once disturbing and endearing. In addition, American tenor David Cangelosi was engaging as Mime.



Fricka

Loge

Wotan

Opera Atelier Takes Double Bill on Tour by Lesley Robinson

Toronto's Opera Atelier's first production of the 2018/19 season was a resplendent double bill of Charpentier's *Actéon* and Rameau's *Pygmalion*. Immediately after the Toronto run in October, the company packed up and took the production on tour, first to the Harris Theater for Music and Dance in Chicago (the company's US debut), and then to the Royal Opera House at Versailles where the company has been invited over successive years.

The production contained all the elements that make Opera Atelier so special: the beautiful baroque music, interpreted authentically by the Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra under the direction of conductor David Fallis; elegant ballet, choreographed by the incomparable Jeannette Lajeunesse Zingg and performed by the adept artists of the Atelier Ballet; sumptuous sets by Gerard Gauci with gorgeous costumes for *Actéon* by Gauci and for *Pygmalion* by Michael Gianfrancesco; and, of course, glorious singing from regular company members along with the chorus made up of the Chorus of the University of Toronto Schola Cantorum combined with members of the Choir of the Theatre of Early Music under the direction of Lead Vocal Consultant and Chorus Master Daniel Taylor. This production con-

tained an additional element: the world premiere of *Inception*, a new composition for baroque instruments by violinist/composer Edwin Huizinga, who performed the piece onstage, accompanied by a solo dancer, as a prelude to *Pygmalion*.

Although the two pieces end very differently, the first tragically and the second joyfully (and it is always agreeable to end on a happy note), they seem to fit together well, each with its classical roots and fairytale atmosphere. Another element of cohesion was provided by the fact that the principal singers took on roles in both pieces. Internationally renowned Canadian tenor Colin Ainsworth sang both the title roles of Actéon and Pygmalion. Ottawa native, soprano Mireille Asselin sang the part of Diane in *Actéon* and gave a playful rendition of the role of Amour in *Pygmalion*. 2013 Brian Law Opera Competition winner, Meghan Lindsay took on a total of three roles in the evening: Aréthuze, a Hunter and Galatée and mezzo-soprano Allyson McHardy also sang three roles: Junon, Hyale and Céphise.

With such a noteworthy and exuberant display of Canadian talent, this was surely Canada's top export of the year.



The cast applaud the orchestra. At the front of the stage from left to right are: violinist/composer Edwin Huizinga, Meghan Lindsay, Colin Ainsworth, Mireille Asselin and Allyson McHardy.

Events You Could Have Enjoyed

by Shelagh Williams

Renée Fleming

A rare treat for opera lovers: Renée Fleming in concert at the NAC! With excellent pianist Richard Bado and looking stunning in first a glittering silver gown and then a striking red number with princess sleeves and train, she sang a varied programme, all enhanced by Southam Hall's new acoustic shell!

Ms. Fleming favoured us with a charming Schubert set, followed by excerpts from Kevin Puts' cycle *Letters from Georgia* (O'Keefe), written for her. Her expertise with art songs reminded us of a great concert we heard her give years ago, in NYC, of settings of Emily Dickenson poems, both older ones and new ones she had commissioned from contemporary composers such as Andre Previn, in attendance! Three lovely film pieces which she recorded for the sound tracks of *Bel Canto*, *Three Billboards*, and *Shape of Water* completed the first half.

She returned with a welcome set of Italian works including Liu's *Signora ascolta* from *Turandot*. The final grouping of songs from musicals was beautifully presented. The standing ovation prompted, as encores, three great arias: Puccini's *O mio babbino caro* from *Gianni Schicchi*, *Summertime* from *Porgy and Bess*, and *Song to the Moon* from *Rusalka* - what an ending!

Lots of our opera friends were there to enjoy this entertaining recital. If only the welcome surtitles had been darker, rather than white on grey, and a larger font, we would have had no quibbles with this absolutely marvellous concert!

Juliana Krajcovic

Juliana Krajcovic won this year's Provincial ORMTA Young Artist Competition, entitling her to a provincial tour, beginning in Ottawa on Oct.12th, with two more concerts that weekend in the Toronto area, then in Kingston and Kitchener-Waterloo the next two weekends! She will represent Ontario at 2019's summer National Voice Competition in Winnipeg. Juliana, like BLOC winner Jennifer Olenic, studies with Yoriko Tanno and is currently working on her Masters at uOttawa, having just completed her B.Mus. degree there.

Juliana was accompanied in her challenging programme by the excellent pianist Luis Camacho, ensuring a great concert. Like Renée Fleming, she sported two becoming gowns and treated us to lovely renditions of Schubert's *Gretchen am Spinnrade* and *O mio babbino caro*. It was great to hear the latter sung by a fresh

young voice, as Puccini intended. Songs by Duparc, Strauss and Rossini and the cycle *Jesus, my love, my joy* by Canadian composer Nancy Telfer were accompanied by two more arias: one of my favourites, *Come scoglio* from Mozart's *Così* and, to finish off with, the dramatic *To this we've Come* from Menotti's *The Consul*. But the most beautiful selection was her heartfelt rendition of Schubert's *Ave Maria*.

Juliana will be singing Donna Anna in uOttawa's *Don Giovanni* this winter - don't miss it!

Krisztina Szabo

Canadian mezzo Krisztina Szabo, more normally seen in Toronto, made a rare appearance in Ottawa with the NACO's *Music for a Sunday Afternoon* at the National Gallery on Nov. 4th. She does sing worldwide, and last year debuted both at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden and here with the NACO!

In a striking red and black gown, she of course presented and sang beautifully a very interesting programme. With NACO flutist Joanna G'froerer she sang *Three Irish Folksong Settings* by John Corigliano and a most unusual wordless *Toccata for Soprano and Flute* written by Canadian composer Harry Freedman for his wife, soprano Mary Morrison!

However, the meat of her programme was the world premiere of an NACO commission of Canadian composer Ian Cusson's setting of poems by Canadian author Joy Kogawa, entitled *Where there's a Wall* for mezzo and sextet. Fortunately, a pre-talk (at the NAC!) with both Kogawa and Cusson explained the context of the poems, reflecting Kogawa's experience in an internment camp during WWII and, somehow, Cusson's as a Metis. Although written in the 60s and 80s the poems are, sadly, still very relevant today. The two amazingly had not met before the pre-chat, yet the poems are very well and appropriately set, with Szabo's voice and dramatic abilities in mind. Best of all, Szabo's performance of the disturbing poems was very powerful and persuasive - not easily forgotten!

Eine Schubertiade at uOttawa

Imagine a vocal quartet so lovely it brought tears to my eyes! This was the opening of Prof. Laurence Ewashko's Master's Art Song recital of Schubert lieder in late November. The meaning of each song which followed was carefully presented by the singer and then sung with the collaboration of a variety of piano and

Events You Could Have Enjoyed (continued)

guitar artists. The result: a programme of beautiful music beautifully performed - and they finished off with one of my favourites, *The Trout!*

Two days later, in a delightful master class given by Garry (Voice) and Kathleen Lohrens Gable (Collaborative Piano), several of these singer and pianist couples had their song performances even further polished!

UOttawa School of Music: Concerts

The term end concerts are always a treat. The middle of the three Chamber Music Noon Hours was especially diverse and included some charming vocal repertoire. Of special interest were two early works with an excellent string quartet collaborating with two Masters sopranos from the previous evening's Art Song Class. First Carmen Harris sang a great first movement of a Pergolesi *Salve Regina* which really suited her voice. The concert concluded triumphantly with Lynlee Wolstencroft in three movements of Vivaldi's *O qui coeli terreaque serenitas*, which started off heavenly and ended in a marvellous *Alleluia!*

The Vocal Repertoire Class (Undergrad) under Prof. Julien LeBlanc treated us to French Art Songs and German Lieder. The *Le Bestiaire* poems by Apollinaire, nicely illustrated, provided the basis for older settings by Poulenc and Durey, and new ones by composer Rachel Laurin, who was in attendance! The concert concluded with the Schumann song cycle *Liederkreis*, op.39, handily provided with English translation.

The *Musical Offering for Christmas* always serves to get one into the spirit, and this year was no exception. With two choirs (Choral and Calixa-Lavallee Ensembles), a vocal quartet, a choir of 10 cellos, piano and harp soloists, four readers, and the opportunity to sing four Christmas carols in four different languages with great choirs, what more could one ask for?

Christmas Candlelight Concert: Joel Allison with Thirteen Strings

This was the first concert on the new enlarged stage in the just renovated Dominion-Chalmers United Church! The concert started with the Thirteen Strings playing several delightful *Instrumental Noels* by Marc-Antoine Charpentier. A spirited Vivaldi concerto for recorder starred the outstanding Canadian Vincent Lauzer, who didn't seem to stop for breath during the three movements - quite fantastic!

However, the highlight was Bach's *Magnificat*, and the Strings pulled out all the stops! A new choir, the Thirteen Strings Chamber Choir, under Jamie Loback, was assembled. Four superb soloists were engaged: soprano Myriam Leblanc, contralto Marjorie Maltais, tenor Asitha Tennekoon, and BLOC prize winner, bass Joel Allison. Organ, tympani, and three trumpets were added to the Strings themselves, and, of course, all acquitted themselves admirably. We finished off with everyone singing two Christmas carols with the orchestra. Altogether a perfect prelude to Christmas.

Membership Renewal

You will find included with your printed newsletter a 2019 membership form.

Forms can also be obtained from our web site www.ncos.ca

In October 2019 the NCOS will be holding the next Brian Law Opera Competition; therefore, your financial support is much appreciated.

Best wishes to all of our readers and contributors for the coming year.

Please continue to submit your articles, etc. to the newsletter.

David Williams

French repertoire Live at the Met: *Samson et Dalila* and *Les Pêcheurs de Perles* by Lesley Robinson

The September 28th performance of Camille Saint Saëns's *Samson et Dalila* began with one of those uh-oh moments when an announcer steps onstage before the curtain rises, usually to deliver bad news. In this case the news was that Roberto Alagna was recovering from a cold, but nevertheless he was going to sing. Phew, what a relief - one of the main reasons to attend this performance was to hear Mr. Alagna and to enjoy his terrific chemistry with Elīna Garanča (they had starred together in an HD broadcast of *Carmen* in 2010, the Met debut production of Yannick Nézet-Séguin.)

Fortuitously, I was unable to detect any shortcomings in Mr. Alagna's performance due to a stuffy nose. It is always a special treat to hear him perform French repertoire for which he has special sensitivity. The vocal performance of both principals was elegant as well as powerful and their rapport was striking, particularly in the love scene of the second act.

This exciting new production (the first in 20 years) is full of rich colour. It marks the directorial Met debut of Darko Tresnjak. Alexander Dodge's sets took full advantage of the Met's magnificent space. The larger-than-life set of the final act, together with Austin McCormick's sensuous choreography of the ballet scenes, depict the opulent decadence of Philistine society, emphasizing the extravagant pride that inevitably precedes a divinely ordained fall. (As is frequently the case, the sensuality was toned down for the HD broadcast.) Sir Mark Elder, former Music Director of the English National Opera and current Music Director of the Hallé orchestra in Manchester, UK, conducted the magnificent orchestra in a rare Met performance.



Samson Dalila

This season's reprise of the stunning 2015 production of Bizet's *Les Pêcheurs de Perles* began with the image of divers venturing into the deep. Dancers "dived" from the roof of the stage which represented the surface of the ocean, swimming downwards to the ocean

floor before going back up to the surface. This was a beautiful and effective evocation of the depth and danger of the undersea world, using a theatrical technique which might otherwise be used to represent flying.

This season's production featured a different cast from the 2015 HD broadcast. The only repeating cast member was the dashing Mariusz Kwiecien as Zurga, but when Mr. Kwiecien fell ill half way through the opening night, the young American baritone Alexander Birch Elliott made his unexpected Met debut for the second act. This was not an easy task, but his performance was well received and from the fourth performance, he took over officially for the remainder of the run. It was his portrayal of Zurga that we saw on December 1st and we were treated to a beautiful rendition of one of my favourite moments in opera, the bromance duet between old friends Zurga and Nadir (sung by



Zurga Leïla Nadir

Javier Camarena) - "Au fond du temple saint".

The voices of both Javier Camarena and Pretty Yende, as the virgin priestess Leïla, soared in their solo arias and duets. Mr. Camarena was an ardent lover, aloof from the religious observance of the community which forbade his love for Leïla. Ms Yende's interpretation of Leïla had a shining clarity, highlighting her earnestness in pleading for the life of the man she loves, despite her vows of chastity.

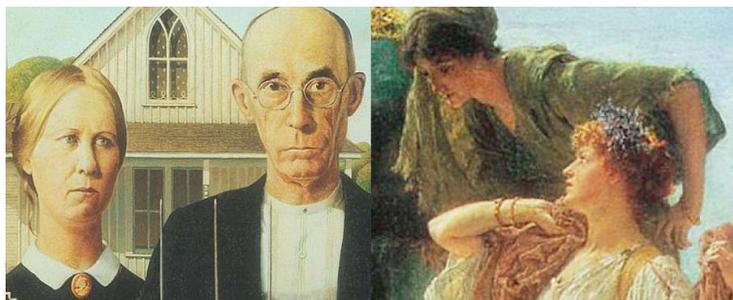
It was also a joy to watch French conductor Emmanuel Villaume, who, directing the orchestra without a baton, used bold and sweeping hand gestures. At times he almost seemed to be dancing and at dramatic moments was definitely singing along under his breath.

Dick Bird's creative set brings out the sharp contrast between the ancient and the modern. I particularly noticed an advertising billboard in the background (that I had not noticed in the HD broadcast.) The advertisement is for elegant jewellery, an extravagance for the rich, created thanks to the labours of the poor. In the final act, the billboard is broken, evoking the fragility of the coastal community at the mercy of the elements. This was a thought provoking as well as a moving production.

Events You Should Enjoy

by David Williams

Gian Carlo Menotti: *The Old Maid and the Thief* and
Henry Purcell : *Dido et Aeneas*



Reba Sigler, music and stage director

Saturday, January 12, 2:00 pm

Sunday, January 13, 2:00 pm

Freiman Hall, Pérez Building, uOttawa

Mozart: *Don Giovanni*



University of Ottawa OPERA COMPANY

with Chamber Orchestra, Sandra Graham, music and stage director, Donnie Deacon, conductor

Thursday, February 14, 7:00 pm

Friday, February 15, 7:00 pm

Saturday, February 16, 2:00 pm

Huguette Labelle Hall, Tabaret, uOttawa



March 2019: *Trouble In Tahiti* (Leonard Bernstein)

May 2019: *Gallantry - A Soap Opera* (Douglas Moore) & *The Telephone* (G. Menotti)



Nosferatu: A Comic Chamber Opera by Kevin Reeves

Seventeen Voyces

Friday, May 31, 2019; 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, June 1, 2019; 7:30 p.m.

Glebe-St James United Church

Saturday Afternoon at the Opera

CBC Matinee Broadcasts from the Metropolitan Opera

2018

Dec 15 1:00 *La Traviata*, Verdi
 Dec 22 1:00 *La Fanciulla del West*, Puccini
 Dec 29 1:00 *The Magic Flute*, Mozart

2019

Jan 5 1:00 *Otello*, Verdi
 Jan 12 1:00 *Adriana Lecouvreur*, Cilea
 Jan 19 12:30 *Pelléas et Melisande*, Debussy
 Jan 26 1:00 *Marnie*, Muhly
 Feb 2 1:00 *Carmen*, Bizet
 Feb 9 12:30 *Iolanta*, Tchaikovsky and
Bluebeard's Castle, Bartók
 Feb 16 1:00 *Don Giovanni*, Mozart
 Feb 23 1:00 *Rigoletto*, Verdi
 Mar 2 1:00 *La Fille du Régiment*, Donizetti
 Mar 9 1:00 *Das Rheingold*, Wagner
 Mar 16 1:00 *Falstaff*, Verdi

Mar 23 1:00 *Samson et Dalila*, Saint-Saëns
 Mar 30 1:00 *Die Walküre*, Wagner
 Apr 6 1:00 *Tosca*, Puccini
 Apr 13 11:30 *Siegfried*, Wagner
 Apr 20 1:00 *La Clemenza di Tito*, Mozart
 Apr 27 11:00 *Götterdämmerung*, Wagner
 May 4 1:00 *Les Pêcheurs de Perles*, Bizet
 May 11 12:00 *Dialogues des Carmélites*,
 Poulenc

Complete cast listings (singers, conductors, directors, etc.) and additional details are available on the Met's website: www.metopera.org. The 2018-19 season marks the 88th year of the Saturday broadcasts and will again be heard on CBC2 in Canada.

Operas showing at Cinema Aylmer

Staatsoper unter den Linden – *MacBeth*, Verdi - January 25th, 3pm; January 30th, 7pm

The Royal Opera – *La Traviata*, Verdi – February 15th, 3pm; February 20th, 7pm

Teatro Real – *Madama Butterfly*, Puccini - March 29th, 3pm; April 3rd, 7pm

The Royal Opera – *La Forza del Destino*, Verdi - April 12th, 3pm; April 17th, 7pm

Opera National de Paris – *Lady MacBeth in Mzensk*, Chostakovitch - April 26th, 3pm; May 1st, 7pm

The Royal Opera – *Faust*, Gounod - May 10th, 3pm; May 15th, 7pm

For detailed information check www.cinemaaylmer.com

Live in HD from the Met 2018-19

Puccini's *La Fanciulla del West* (October 27, 2018): Jonas Kaufmann and Eva-Maria Westbroek star in the Puccini opera under maestro Marco Armiliato.

Encores: Jan. 5, Jan. 7, Jan. 9 & Jan. 20.

Muhly's *Marnie* (November 10, 2018): Isabel Leonard leads the new production. Christopher Maltman and Iestyn Davies also appear in the Muhly opera.

Encores: Jan. 26, Jan. 28, Jan. 30 & Feb. 17.

Verdi's *La Traviata* (December 15, 2018): Yannick Nézet-Séguin leads Diana Damrau, Juan Diego Flórez, and Quinn Kelsey in a new production by Michael Mayer.

Encores: Feb. 9, Feb. 11, Feb. 13 & March 3.

Cilea's *Adriana Lecouvreur* (January 12, 2019): The New Years Eve new production will also get a run on the big screen with Anna Netrebko and Piotr Beczala in leading roles. The new production is by David McVicar and also stars Anita Rachvelishvili.

Encores: Feb. 23, Feb. 25, Feb. 27 & March 17.

Bizet's *Carmen* (Feb. 2, 2019): Clémentine Margaine takes on her signature role opposite Roberto Alagna under Louis Langrée. Aleksandra Kurzak also stars.

Encores: March 9, March 11, March 13 & March 31.

Donizetti's *La Fille du Régiment* (March 2, 2019): The Donizetti work will showcase Pretty Yende and Javier Camarena in the leading roles alongside Stephanie Blythe as the Marquise of Berkenfield and Alessandro Corbelli as Sulpice.

Encores: April 6, April 8, April 10 & April 16.

Wagner's *Die Walküre* (March 30, 2019): The second opera in Wagner's tetralogy gets an HD showcase with a cast that includes Christine Goerke, Eva-Maria Westbroek, Stuart Skelton, Jamie Barton, and Greer Grimsley under Phillippe Jordan.

Encores: April 27, April 29, May 1 & May 5.

Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites* (May 11, 2019): Nézet-Séguin leads a cast that includes Isabel Leonard, Adrienne Pieczonka, Erin Morley, and Karita Matilla among others in Poulenc's masterwork.

Encores: June 8, June 10, June 12 & June 23

--from *OperaWire* (operawire.com)

Cinemas may not show all encores. Check with your local cinema for exact dates.

Opera alla Pasta

DVD presentations of outstanding operas followed by a delicious meal.



January 20th - *Werther* by Massenet:

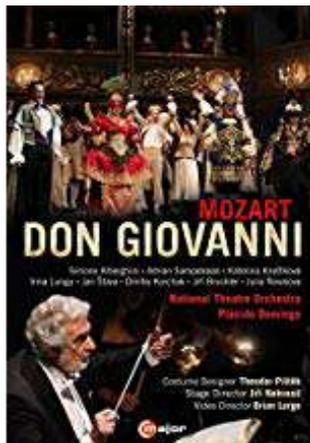
In this recording from the Opernhaus Zurich, Juan Diego Florez, Anna Stephany, Cornelius Meister, and Tatjana Gurbaca, along with the orchestra of the Opernhaus Zurich, bring a new and modern flair to this dramatic work.

This is a very convincing performance in which the staging oscillates between reality and dream worlds. Florez is a nearly perfect performer for the role of Werther; Stéphanie provides a sublime contrast. The music is played colourfully and with a lot of finesse.



February 24th - *La Favorite* by Donizetti:

La favorita in its original French form; a tale of love and war that represents a glorious mix of Italian bel canto and 19th c. grand opera. Vincent Boussard's arresting Toulouse production does full justice to this newly renewed masterpiece. Chinese tenor Yijie Shi is a 'revelation' as Fernand. The rich-toned, authoritative French baritone Ludovic Tezier as King Alphonse XI and lauded American mezzo Kate Aldrich plumbed the emotional depths of the music. Conductor and bel canto specialist Antonello Allemandi adds to the passionate proceedings onstage.



March 17th - *Don Giovanni* by Mozart:

Conductor Plácido Domingo came up with a unique *Don Giovanni* at the Estates Theatre Prague. The production boasts an original classic scene, traditional costumes designed by Theodor Pištěk and authentic stage direction matching the performance features from 1787. It is conceived as a replica of the legendary staging by the National Theatre Opera from 1969. The opera shines under the direction of Jirí Nekvasil, which is further enhanced by stars of the Czech opera scene. Also adding vitality to the production are four winners of Operalia: Irina Lungu, Dmitry Korchak, Julia Novikova, and Simone Alberghini.

Opera alla Pasta presentations are held at St. Anthony's Soccer Club at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday afternoon. The cost is a modest \$25. Call Lesley Robinson at 613-769-5957 at least 3 days before the date of the DVD presentation in order to reserve a place or for additional information about Opera alla Pasta.