

Entr'acte

The Opera
Supers of
Iowa City
Newsletter

Volume VIII, No. 4, June 1993

Editor: Arthur Canter 30 Brookfield Dr., Iowa City, IA 52245

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

The Spring opera, *The Bartered Bride*, was an artistic success. In fact, judging from the comments by people who ordinarily do not care much for "grand" opera but who came to a performance of this comedy, it was a hit! Too bad we did not entice larger audiences to attend. The only near-full house we had was the Thursday morning performance put on for the school age groups brought in as part of the Arts Outreach program. And that audience was the most enthusiastic one of all. Where were all the Czech-Americans from Cedar Rapids who were expected to flock to the opera? Apparently merely having a Czech heritage does not impart one with a fondness for Czech opera, or classical music for that matter. Having served on the Board of Directors of the Cedar Rapids Symphony Orchestra for a number of years, your editor can tell you that there is no greater affinity for classical music among the Czech population of Cedar Rapids than any other ethnic group; for polka and other Czech pop-type folk music, perhaps yes, but "fine art" music, no.

Did any of the readers listen to the Chicago Lyric Opera's performance of the *Bartered Bride* broadcast on KSUI Saturday May 15? Wasn't that a dismal production from a professional company? It was not helped any by the poor quality of the broadcast. The sound was terrible, muffled and distant-sounding, as if the microphones were back stage. The principals did not sound as good as ours. Their Vasek could not match ours in voice, interpretation or acting. Our chorus was much more exciting. Glass's translation was far superior to the one the Lyric used. A conversation with a Czech lady from Cedar Rapids who had attended both the Chicago production and the University Opera Theater one, confirmed my reactions. She amplified further by describing how incongruous the setting and costuming used in the Chicago production were with the story and time of the opera--The Chicago group had it take place in the 1920's when the whole idea of the marriage-contract and "selling" the bride-to-be, even in a small Bohemian village, was unlikely. The costumes were inappropriate and drab. She volunteered the observation that our Supers' beer-serving added a finesse lacking in the Chicago production. Now, aren't those of you who failed to attend the spring opera sorry? You should be. You can begin to make up for it by attending the summer opera production of Dvorak's *The Jacobin*. As its story is unlikely to be familiar to you, a detailed synopsis of the opera is embodied in the text of this newsletter.

--- Arthur Canter

REPORT OF MEETINGS

The Meeting of April 6, 1993 : Mona was unable to attend because of the knee injury. Miriam Canter acted as facilitator. There were announcements of need for button sewers and scene painters. The potluck will be on May 1 at Mary Wall's. The group agreed to do a reception following the Opera Class recital in May. Anna Stranieri listed the needs for the strike party food. Each contributor is to bring enough for 12. Professor Glass imparted

more information about the summer opera, **The Jacobin**. Next meeting is set for June 14.

The meeting of June 14, 1993: Announcements were made about the Summer Orchestra program Wednesday July 7. David Nelson will conduct. The Evening of Arias program of June 18 will be repeated on June 22 in the Iowa City Public Library so that it can be videotaped. The Green Room decoration is to be carried out by the University after all, but this will not include any furniture. Donations of pieces are welcome. The location of the Summer potluck is to be decided. The date is Saturday, August 7. The food theme will be "American Picnic" chosen on the assumption that Dvorak may have enjoyed a picnic during his stay in Spillville. Bobbe Akre reported on the visit that the grandson and great grandchildren of Dvorak are to make in Iowa City during the Dvorak festival. It may be possible to have them attend the opera. Details are to be worked out. The meeting adjourned to hold a birthday celebration (cake, etc.) for Mona Shaw and a slide show by Patrick Nefzger reprising the Opera Theater's 1987 production of **Don Giovanni** with Stephen Dickson in the title role.

The next meeting of the Supers will be on Monday July 12. at 7:00 p.m. in the Lounge of the Music Building.

ANNOUNCEMENTS, NOTES :

The Opera Theater will feature a double-bill on Sunday, 2:00 p.m., October 17, 1993, in the Opera Studio. The operas will be an American premiere of Jiri Laburda's **Red Tape and Rival Divas** (translated from Czech by Glass) and Mozart's **The Impresario** (also in translation by Glass).

Next summer (1994) the Opera Theater will present two Purcell works: **Dido and Aeneas** and **Saul and the Witch at Endor**. These will be presented in Clapp Hall with a chamber orchestra.

Patrick Nefzger is to be commended for his distribution of 301 (don't ask why not 302, etc.) posters for the spring opera this past April. He is to break his record in the near future.

The Iowa City Public Library has added to their fine collection of CD opera albums of works by English, French, Czech, Russian, German and Italian composers. All you need is a library card to check them out for three weeks. ICPL also has a collection of videotapes of operas. They recently added a tape that will be of interest to Supers who haven't been in our own productions: "Making Opera. The Creation of Verdi's **La Forza Del Destino**". It was made by the Canadian Opera Company and includes Stefka Evstatieva and Allen Monk in the cast. The videotape goes through the opera's day-by-day staging.

REMINDERS:

The next meeting of the Opera Supers will be Monday, July 12, at 7:00 p.m. in the Lounge of the Music Building.

The summer opera, Dvorak's **The Jacobin** will be given on August 5, 6, and 8 in Mabie Theater. The August 8 (Sunday) performance will be a matinee.

The Supers Potluck will be held on Saturday, August 7, location to be determined by the next meeting. Watch for announcement.

SYNOPSIS OF THE JACOBIN

Time: 1793, when news of the aftermath of the French Revolution had spread to Bohemia.

Act I: Curtain opens to reveal a small Bohemian town on a Sunday afternoon. Bohus and Julie (his wife) have just arrived incognito from abroad and are enchanted by the sounds of the organ and choir singing from the church. Bohus has memories of his happy childhood spent in the town. Julie reproaches herself for having caused the break between father and son. Their hope is that Bohus's father will finally become reconciled with his son. The unpopular Filip, (the "Castle Warden" appointed by the Count to oversee the chateau and village serving it), greets the schoolmaster Benda who is accompanied by his daughter Terinka and her sweetheart, Jiri. Filip wants to have Terinka as his wife and has been pressuring Benda toward this end. Benda is in conflict about this for, although he is aware of the advantages of such a marriage, he is fond of Jiri, a musician and tenor. He is counting upon Jiri to help to make a success of the cantata Benda has written for the forthcoming festivities that are to mark the transfer of the Count's estate to the new generation. Jiri provokes an attack on the Castle Warden's clumsy advances toward Terinka by improvising and singing a song mocking him in front of all the young people gathered in the town square. Filip swears he will avenge himself against his mockers and threatens Jiri. Bohus and Julie arrive on the scene and, presenting themselves as artists, ask Filip to take them to meet the Count. Filip is suspicious of these strangers and decries the kindness the Count is known to show visiting artists, especially young people who may remind the Count of "his good-for-nothing son" who ran away to Paris to join the revolutionary Jacobins. When the strangers admit they are from Paris he becomes more suspicious of them. The Count arrives with a procession. The schoolmaster greets him, thinking that the young man who accompanies the Count is the Count's son. The Count corrects him, telling him the young man is Adolf, his nephew, who is to become the new lord of the estate the next day. Bohus and Julie, upset by this news, remain silent even though Bohus is actually the Count's son.

Act II: A rehearsal for the music of the festivities is taking place in Benda's classroom which is part of his house. Terinka and Jiri are practicing the solo parts. When the rehearsal ends Terinka, now alone, expresses sorrow about being forced into a marriage with the Castle Warden, confessing her love for Jiri. Jiri, returning, hears this and a passionate love duet follows. They are interrupted by Benda, the schoolmaster, and pretend they are practicing a duet for the festivities. Benda sees through this and angrily tells Terinka she has to go through with the marriage to Filip. The couple threatens to spoil the performance of the cantata when townspeople rush in to tell everybody that two rebels, "Jacobins", have appeared in town. Bohus and Julie enter in search of temporary accommodations. At first, the schoolmaster refuses to take them into his house, in fear of the consequences, but relents after hearing them out about their love for music and singing and how it helped them during their troubles while travelling abroad. When Bohus and Julie are taken to another room of the house, Filip enters the classroom carrying a bouquet of flowers. He is annoyed by the presence of Jiri who pretends he has to copy some music. Jiri overhears Filip's offer of marriage to Terinka and is dismayed by her evasive reply. Once again he comes into conflict with the Castle Warden who now threatens to conscript him into the army. Adolf enters the room. He reminds Filip that he should arrest the mysterious stranger.

Jiri, misunderstanding who Adolf is, appeals to him to take action against the Castle Warden's threat to send him into the army. At this point Bohus enters and asks to be taken to the Count, declaring that he is the Count's son. Adolf calls him a fraud and a Jacobin. Musketeers, brought in by the Castle Warden, enter to arrest Bohus as the act ends.

Act III: Jiri goes to the chateau to inform the Count of the real state of affairs but is apprehended by Filip and put in prison before he can do this. Adolf orders that no one be admitted to see the Count, but the old nurse, Lotinka, secretly allows Bohus and Julie to enter the chateau. Benda tries to persuade the Count to be reconciled with his son but the Count refuses to change his attitude and departs. Julie in the next room, inspired by a portrait of the deceased Countess and her harp, plays the old instrument she finds there, and sings a cradle song taught to her by Bohus. The Count hears this and returns to talk with Julie who tells him the whole story about Bohus, his role in the revolution, his change of heart and joining the Girondists against the radical wing of the revolutionists who sentenced Bohus to death. The sound of the procession and opening festivities for the transfer of the rule of the estate interrupt the Count before he can take any action. After things are well underway he orders all prisoners be released. The intrigue of Adolf and the Castle Warden is revealed, Jiri and Terinka can be married, and a reconciliation between father and the son and his wife takes place. The opera comes to an end on the joyous closing song of the chorus, the last bars of which are based on the motif of the serenade composed by Benda for the festivities and that of Bohus's mother's cradle song.

The University of Iowa
School of Music
 Iowa City, Iowa 52242

