

OPERA SUPERS OF IOWA CITY NEWSLETTER

Vol. I No. 5, May 1986

Editor: Arthur Canter 338-1217

30 Brookfield Dr., Iowa City, IA 52240

REMINDER: Next scheduled meeting is Monday, May 12, 1986 at 7:00 p.m. in the lounge of the Music Building.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR:

All of us should feel proud over the success of the production and performance of BORIS GODUNOV. There was that initial disappointment when the news came that Simon Estes would be unable to perform, but this was quickly replaced by the excitement of having our own star, Kimm Julian, take over the role he had been rehearsing all the time. As one who was able to enjoy the thrilling experience of working in the production as an onstage super, I can report first hand that it was exciting and a great joy to see and hear Kimm Julian as BORIS. By now it is redundant to list all the congratulations and kudos to the many people who helped make the University Opera Theater production such a great success. But I do want to remind everybody that we are indeed fortunate to have Beaumont Glass, Margaret Wenk and their assistants to design, direct and produce operas here in Iowa City. Again, speaking from backstage, Meg Sump, you sure were a prod, but without you things could have fallen apart. I should have done something like this (performed in an opera) forty years ago. I thank everybody, especially Beaumont, for the opportunity at this period of my life.

Now we turn our attention to the summer production of MADAME BUTTERFLY. Your editor will continue the general format of the newsletter that has been used to date.

REPORT ON MEETING OF APRIL 14, 1986

A little more than two handfuls of Supers were present for the last meeting centered around the production of BORIS. No specific agenda was followed. Committee chairpersons will be asked to report at the next meeting when they will give summaries of their committee's work. Mona Shaw indicated to the group that the Supers have made a great impact on the community, preparing everybody for BORIS, arousing interest in the opera and the events surrounding it. The Downtown Merchants Association was very helpful in these endeavors. Through the efforts of the Supers and Mona's particular contribution as Public Relations Coordinator, BORIS has received more publicity than any of the previous productions put on by Opera Theater.

Mona also gave a first hand account of the party held by the Richardsons for persons not usually interested in opera. The affair was a great success and led to many of those attending to go out and buy tickets for a performance after they heard cast members sing selections from BORIS.

We discussed strike-party arrangements, details, and needs that were yet to be met for BORIS, rehearsal problems, and the nights of the actual performances.

The meeting ended with a sense of satisfaction and pride in our activities to date and we gave ourselves a round of applause. Then, as is our custom, we enjoyed coffee and pastries to complete the evening.

BORIS AFTERNOTES

The videotape of BORIS is scheduled to be aired by Iowa Public Television (locally channel 12) on Saturday, May 10th, from 7:00-10:00 p.m. Those of you not fortunate enough to have seen the live performance can view it then. Those with VCR's can add it to your libraries.

The following note from Betty McCollister failed to be included in the last newsletter because I ran out of space allotment.

Quoting Chaliapin: "BORIS GODUNOV appealed to me to such an extent that, not content with learning my role, I sang the whole of the opera, all parts, male and female. Now I realize the usefulness of studying a whole opera...The more I delved into Mussorgsky the more did I realize that one could act Shakespearein opera."

Your editor knows the feeling. He, too, sang all parts, male and female, but to himself, during the rehearsals and final performances.

MADAME BUTTERFLY IS NEXT

Your editor welcomes bits of news, trivia, comments, suggestions for the Newsletter on the topics of Puccini, MADAME BUTTERFLY, singers, and events associated with the opera.

It is important for you to attend the next meeting of the Supers, short as the notice is. We must begin to organize committee work and goals, assignments, the usual volunteer activities which we can contribute to the production, publicity and arrangements for the July 25 and 27 presentations of BUTTERFLY. Now is the time to become informed about the opera and its composer in detail enough to whet your appetite to make it a more meaningful and enjoyable experience. We did it for BORIS and we can do it for BUTTERFLY. There will be a BUTTERFLY QUIZ in the next issue and prizes will be awarded.

It is most likely that Beaumont Glass will prepare and issue some materials on the background and story of the opera, as he did with BORIS. It is also very likely that many more of you are already acquainted with the plot of BUTTERFLY, if not its details, than was true of BORIS. BUTTERFLY is not as complicated an opera, but it does have its own subtleties that will be better appreciated if understood in advance. Hearing it in English, of course, will help in this respect. However, the background of its composition, the period of Puccini's life when he composed the opera, and his personal problems and character are all fascinating. I have already begun my research and want to tempt you. But Beaumont will be allowed to have his say first. I do not want to chance his inadvertantly giving away answers to some Quiz questions I have in mind.

BUTTERFLY NOTES

As you know, many a great name among the sopranos and tenors of the opera world have sung in MADAME BUTTERFLY, among them Farrar and Caruso. They were recording the love duet from the first act in which Caruso's Pinkerton sings a phrase (in Italian) translated as "I hold you trembling." Farrar's Butterfly, instead of replying, "Yes

for life," sang "He had a highball." In Italian the two phrases have the same number of syllables. Caruso giggled, making his next line unintelligible. However, the recording was not altered and may be found in several Caruso/Farrar anthologies.

That kind of jocularly while not exactly rare among the superstars of opera, is unlikely to occur where a serious opera is presented in the language of the country. Do you see what I mean by being able to get the subtleties when you hear opera in English? You aficionados of opera in its original language, do you think you would catch an ad lib, funny or otherwise, during a live performance? Maybe we are missing out on private jokes. I can imagine the foregoing Farrar/Caruso interchange going across quite well in English in an appropriate spot during Die Fledermaus, but not BUTTERFLY!

SILVER SCREEN TRIVIA

In a nonmusical version of MADAME BUTTERFLY made in Hollywood in the 1930's, Sylvia Sydney played Butterfly and Cary Grant, Pinkerton. I did not use this as a quiz question because finding the answer would not teach you about the opera or its composer.

REMINDERS, ADDITIONAL NOTES

Committee Chairpersons: Be prepared to give a summary report of your committee work.

Readers not currently on our mailing list for the Newsletter or inactives who do receive it, please consider becoming active as a Super. To be a Super does not require you to carry out volunteer activities week-in-week-out, let alone daily. All you have to do is to give us of yourself at some occasion or for some simple activity when the need arises. For example: make some phone calls, help stuff envelopes, bake something, contact somebody with respect to do some need or goal, look up a bit of information, etc. During opera productions volunteers are particularly needed to assist in the scene shop, costume shop, securing props, chaperoning, etc. The experiences the Supers have are rewarding and we have fun--ask any of the Opera Supers. The next meeting of the Opera Supers is Monday, May 12th at 7:00 p.m. at the usual place: Lounge of the Music Building. Bring guests and potential Supers to the meeting. Even if a Super, or Super-to-be plans on being away during the summer, participation now can be of value to the group in its plans for next year.

IMPORTANT DATES AND NUMBERS:

Next Meeting: Monday, May 12th, 7:00 p.m., Music Building Lounge

Committee Chairpersons, bring your reports.

Newsletter: Arthur Canter, 338-1217

Coordinator: Mona Shaw, 353-5626

Opera Production Manager: Dwight Sump, 353-7428

MADAME BUTTERFLY performance dates: July 25th and 27th

The University of Iowa

School of Music

Iowa City, Iowa 52242



Arthur and Miriam Canter
30 Brookfield Dr.
Iowa City, IA 52240