



CANADIAN
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Prelude

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ANNA CHRISTY
LOSING HERSELF IN LUCIA

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CLEA MINAKER ADDS HER TOUCH
TO ATOM EGOYAN'S SALOME

BODY AND SOUL:
DIALOGUES DES CARMÉLITES

AFTER SCHOOL OPERA
CELEBRATES 15 YEARS!

A MESSAGE FROM GENERAL DIRECTOR **ALEXANDER NEEF**

ENGAGE AND ENJOY

Sometimes you fall in love with a piece of art – a painting, a soliloquy, an aria – immediately. But most great art isn't simple; it can be hard to fully appreciate at first. It is not willing to let you simply glance, smile and walk away. It asks more of you. It challenges you to look beyond the obvious, and to make your own decisions about what it is trying to express. It wants you to engage *with* it. Fortunately, once you take the time to ponder and to question what you see and hear, your understanding of it is almost always elevated and you benefit from a far greater experience.

As you know, opera can be instantly pleasing to the ear and to the eye, but it can also sometimes stretch your emotional



“JUST COME TO THE THEATRE OPEN TO THE POSSIBILITIES OFFERED – AND NOT JUST WHAT YOU TAKE IN WITH YOUR EYES AND EARS. BE PREPARED TO ENGAGE WITH IT.”

and intellectual boundaries. I'm not suggesting that an evening at the opera requires a lot of preparatory research. (Although, if you do want to learn more, we have lots of valuable behind-the-scenes information available at coc.ca.) In fact, when people ask me how to “prepare” before they come to an opera, I always say, “Just come to the theatre open to the possibilities offered – and not just what you take in with your eyes and ears. Be prepared to engage with it.”

And the possibilities are endless, because opera composers created their work to please, to incite, to entice, to challenge and to connect with their audiences. The last thing they would have wanted from their audiences was indifference.

Any opera company worth their while continues that historical example. That means that today's artists are creating

(or re-creating) the work for today's audiences and imbuing it with *our* collective history, mores, and cultural references. This is spectacularly exciting because it means that you are part of the process and part of the inspiration behind the work you see on stage.

But the best news is that you don't need to go to New York, Paris, Chicago or London for a transcendent, eye-opening operatic experience. The COC is now one of a small number of destinations for the world's greatest singers, conductors, directors and designers. These artists want to work with us. They like what we present to our audiences, and they appreciate our audiences' receptiveness.

So, don't miss your opportunity to participate. Renew your subscription and join us for another season of great art! ■

Prelude

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Front Cover: Mark Stone as Enrico and Anna Christy as Lucia in the English National Opera's production of *Lucia di Lammermoor*, 2008.
Photo: Clive Barda

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Benjamin Britten's *Peter Grimes* is a gripping psychological work and just one of the exciting productions from our 2013/2014 season.

The *Toronto Star* declared that our recent production of *Tristan und Isolde* is a “triumphant reminder” that Toronto is “a city with a truly great opera company.” As subscribers, you are the heartbeat that sustains us. We are **your** opera company and are proud to present a 2013/2014 season featuring “some of the biggest names in the world of opera” (*Toronto Star*).

The proof is in the list of just some of the incredible artists we have lined up for you next season: Sir Thomas Allen, Russell Braun, Alice Coote, Richard Croft, David Daniels, Giuseppe Filianoti, Ferruccio Furlanetto, Ekaterina Gubanova, Alan Held, Ben Heppner, Eric Owens, Adrienne Pieczonka, and Sondra Radvanovsky.

On top of that, you'll see new productions of *La Bohème*, *Così fan tutte* and *Hercules* by renowned international directors John Caird, Atom Egoyan and Peter Sellars,

respectively. If that isn't enough, the season also features three COC premieres: Donizetti's *Roberto Devereux*, Handel's *Hercules*, and Massenet's *Don Quichotte*.

These operas are presented within our usual mix of intriguing and diverse production styles, all featuring the phenomenal COC Orchestra and Chorus under Johannes Debus and



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LIGHT AND SHADOW: CLEA MINAKER ADDS HER TOUCH TO ATOM EGOYAN'S SALOME

By Suzanne Vanstone



The story of *Salome* has always been a shocking one. Be it the biblical account, Oscar Wilde's play, or Richard Strauss's opera, the subject matter is erotic and brutal. The young girl Salome, to the horror of her stepfather Herod, demands the head of John the Baptist in return for performing the Dance of the Seven Veils. Acclaimed film director Atom

"I was excited by her work... The shadow play in the dance was a little long and needed something more. It is one of the boldest parts of the opera with that amazing eight minutes of music that Strauss provides."

Egoyan first mounted *Salome* for the COC in 1996, and subsequently in 2002, and brings his searing production back this spring. Joining him for this re-mount is shadow designer and performer Clea Minaker, whose work with shadow and light will further unveil the abuse and violence at the opera's core.

An artist's work is influenced by so many factors and Egoyan discusses his thoughts about when he first directed this work. "I see this production as originally part of a trio of projects I had where I was dealing with the notion of abuse. In *Exotica* (1994), *Salome* (1996), and *The Sweet Hereafter* (1997), young women had been traumatized by a history of abuse. Each of the characters – Christina in *Exotica*, Salome, and Nicole in *The Sweet Hereafter* – react differently, but it is clearly an abusive situation. I don't understand how you can't address that in the production – it's there.

"*Salome* was a work that came from a certain period in European literature and music where there was the idea of the temptress, the female character having an unbridled sexuality that leads to ruin. We are not mounting



Read a background article with director Atom Egoyan in our house program at coc.ca/Publications

it in that period, and while we have to observe that this is a brilliant piece of text by Wilde, it is open to all sorts of interpretation. To fix it in that period seems limiting. In the 1990s there was a whole wealth of literature that was exploring the theme of abuse and this production was inspired by that. It would be very difficult to present *Salome* with anything but a dark portrayal of a supremely dysfunctional family. The violence that is extended to Salome – and the violence that she very naturally inflicts on Jochanaan – does not come out of nowhere. We see this with abused victims, especially when they are young – there is a repetition of the way that they have been treated.”

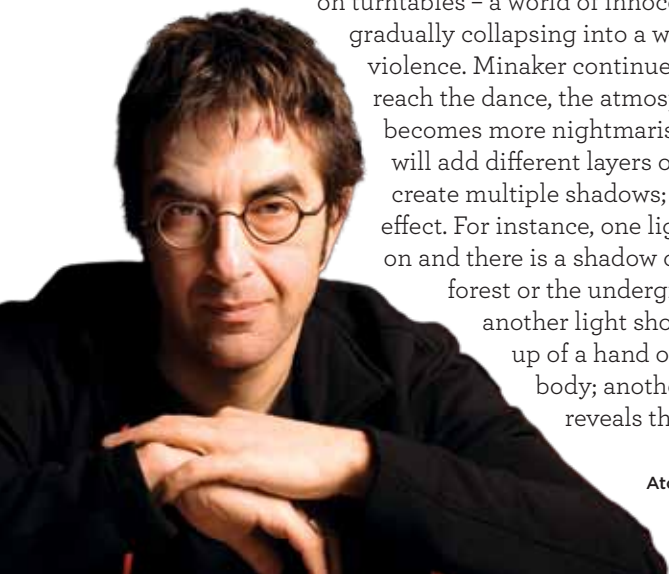


Tune in to a *Salome* listening guide at coc.ca/COCRadio

In the original production, Egoyan made use of multimedia elements, including film and video projections to heighten the opera’s impact. The Dance of the Seven Veils was performed behind a screen using elements of shadow and light and Egoyan’s theme of abuse further uncoiled as Salome fell victim to rape while Herod watched with relish. “Now that we have a chance to perform it again, I want to refine the storytelling in the Seven Veils scene. We know that Salome is being gang raped, but we don’t need to see it all – just glimpses. We need to integrate it into the drama of the piece. At the time, it was a pretty bold way to approach the dance, but now I feel we can take this whole section to another level and reinterpret it.”

Enter Clea Minaker. Egoyan first saw her shadow puppetry at a Feist concert and thought she would bring something very special to *Salome*. “I was excited by her work and loved what she was able to do with storytelling in a very childlike yet immediately identifiable way. The shadow play in the dance was a little long and needed something more. It is one of the boldest parts of the opera with that amazing eight minutes of music that Strauss provides.”

Minaker says, “Atom wanted to explore what the world of shadows could bring to the piece, not only during the dance but the moments with Salome leading up to it.” They discussed focusing on the world of childish play, perhaps Salome sitting while she fashions paper doll chains, with separate inspirations of toy ballerinas rotating on turntables – a world of innocence gradually collapsing into a world of violence. Minaker continues, “As we reach the dance, the atmosphere becomes more nightmarish, and we will add different layers of light to create multiple shadows; a montage effect. For instance, one light comes on and there is a shadow of the forest or the undergrowth; another light shows a close-up of a hand on Salome’s body; another light reveals the entire



Atom Egoyan



Egoyan asked Minaker to collaborate with him on *Salome*, after seeing her work with Feist in concert (above) in 2009. Below are elements that Minaker has used during the *Salome* rehearsal process.



scene; then it all disappears and we’re back in the forest. We have gone back to the original production and pulled out these worlds and extended them.”

But the real work begins in the rehearsal hall where the ideas are fleshed out. “Puppetry speaks through its imagery,” Minaker says, “and you have to explore what the images are and let them tell you what they can do. You can know what you’re looking for, but if you try to anticipate or plan it, it won’t work. The important thing for me is to create a space for the shadows to tell their story. Shadow theatre is unlike any other theatrical language and I am thrilled to bring it to this production.” ■

Salome is generously underwritten in part by Mark and Gail Appel.



Clea Minaker

THE OPERA SHOP



THIS SPRING, ALEXANDER NEEF RECOMMENDS...

Salome: A Tragedy in One Act

Aubrey Beardsley & Oscar Wilde, Dover Publications, \$16 including tax

An artist of the *fin de siècle*, Aubrey Beardsley was an influential illustrator of Oscar Wilde's *Salome*. This edition features Lord Alfred Douglas's translation of Wilde's great play – originally written in French – accompanied by a collection of Beardsley's distinctive illustrations. Introduction written by Robert Ross.

FEATURED RECORDINGS FOR SPRING 2013



Dialogues des Carmélites

Arthaus. Orchestra and Chorus of Teatro alla Scala, Milan, Riccardo Muti, conductor. Dagmar Schellenberger, Anja Silja, Gwynne Geyer,

Barbara Dever, Laura Akin, \$44.50 including tax

The COC's current Robert Carsen production is seen in its 2004 staging at Milan's Teatro alla Scala with Riccardo Muti conducting. Soprano Dagmar Schellenberger sings a moving Blanche, while two singers who have figured prominently in past COC seasons, Gwynne Geyer and Barbara Dever, sing the key roles of Madame Lidoine and Mother Marie respectively.



Lucia di Lammermoor

Decca Opera Series. Chorus and Orchestra of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, Richard

Bonyngne, conductor. Joan Sutherland, Luciano Pavarotti, Sherrill Milnes, Nicolai Ghiurov. \$26.50 including tax

This is Joan Sutherland's second recording of what was arguably her greatest role. By 1971, her interpretation had deepened, and she retained absolute command of the *bravura* passages which have rarely been sung with such a beautiful, large, rich sound. In Luciano Pavarotti, she had the ideal partner – the perfectly idiomatic "Donizetti tenor." This is probably the greatest of their many collaborations for the Decca label. A recent re-mastering of a must-have recording offered for the first time at a budget price!



Salome

Decca. Chorus and Orchestra of the Royal Opera House Covent Garden, Christoph von Dohnányi, conductor. Catherine Malfitano, Bryn Terfel, Kenneth

Riegel, Anja Silja. \$25.75 including tax

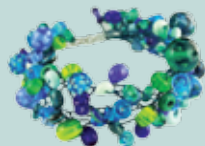
Director Luc Bondy's Covent Garden production focuses on the scorching family drama at the centre of Richard Strauss's *Salome*. Catherine Malfitano owns the title role – her acting is superb, both sexy and frightening, while her voice encompasses the extremes of lyricism and power demanded by this touchstone of the dramatic soprano repertoire. Bryn Terfel is simply one of the best Jochanaans on disc – his singing and acting of the half-mad prophet are scarily accurate!

2013 SPRING COLLECTION

We are excited to feature a range of fresh one-of-a-kind jewellery by local Canadian artisans for the spring season: WhiteLotus Design, Alicia Niles and Monikque Jewellery.



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Saturday, May 18, 4:30 p.m. **ALICIA NILES JEWELLERY**

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BODY AND SOUL: *DIALOGUES DES CARMÉLITES*

CHATTING WITH THREE CANADIAN STARS

By Jon Kaplan

Francis Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites* is an opera in which the action happens as much on the level of the spirit as in the everyday world, perhaps even more so. Premiered at La Scala in 1957, the opera, set against the bloody background of the French Revolution, largely eschews traditional arias and ensembles, relying instead on conversational style exchanges in an examination of faith and fear.

Both are embodied in its central figure, the young aristocrat Blanche de la Force, who, in the first scene, requests that her father allow her to enter the Carmelite order. The sisters follow a life whose rules include strict obedience to their prioress, constancy in prayer, a general withdrawal from the world and vows of poverty and toil.

Over the course of the opera, Blanche faces a battle between her unspecified dread and her attraction to the peace offered by the convent, which

ultimately, of course, is peace in God. After the Revolution forces the order's dissolution, Blanche is even more uncertain, until the work's climactic episode sets her firmly on the path to her God.

The COC has staged *Dialogues des Carmélites* several times in the past, but the current production is an especially starry one. In this opera that features mostly female voices, the company has cast three celebrated Canadian singers: Isabel Bayrakdarian as Blanche; Judith Forst as Madame de Croissy, the old prioress who accepts Blanche into the order; and Adrienne Pieczonka as Madame Lidoine, who becomes prioress after the death of her predecessor.

"I consider it an honour to portray Blanche," says Bayrakdarian, who returns to this production, directed by Robert Carsen, after having performed it at the Lyric Opera of Chicago. "It's a sacred, special process for me to travel

on her journey, a process like no other role I've done. Blanche undergoes such a spiritual growth, a human process of maturity. We're never quite sure what her fear is at the start of the opera, whether it's a fear of death or of life. She tries to run away from her problems – something we all do, thinking that by leaving them behind we avoid them – but of course they come with her.

"I think her fear is a sign of doubt, of not having enough faith. Over the course of the opera we watch her maturing from a timid person who flees from all the things that scare her to a confident woman who faces them head-on, ultimately besting those fears and coming out victorious. By the end, she conquers death by accepting it, looking down on it from above rather than worrying about it and cowering down below."

Forst has done the opera a number of times, in fact playing three different



Isabel Bayrakdarian



Judith Forst



Adrienne Pieczonka



For Isabel Bayrakdarian (kneeling, right), “It’s a sacred, special process... to travel on [Blanche’s] journey.”

parts over the years – Lidoine, the stubborn Carmelite Mother Marie and, most recently, Croissy; she’s just finished a British Columbia production performing the old prioress.

“There aren’t many operas where you can do that,” offers Forst, “to explore different roles at various points in your career. Usually you fit into one and that’s it.” Croissy only has two scenes, the first in which she interviews Blanche and the second, a remarkably powerful death scene. “No matter which role I sing, the piece offers quite a journey. Croissy has such an impact given that we only see her twice. When we meet her, you get a sense of all the years she’s been committed to the belief in God and what prayer can do. But now, she knows she’s dying and can’t stop the suffering she’s feeling.

“Meeting Blanche at this time in her life, she sees through this needy girl – I think of Blanche as a deer caught in headlights – and she understands her. That’s often the case when a person has things happening in her own life; it makes her open and understanding of someone who acts and thinks in seemingly inappropriate ways. Croissy sees beyond that side of Blanche.” In the next scene, on her deathbed, Forst thinks that “something about Blanche sustains Croissy in her pain. It’s a reaffirmation of a quality she saw in Blanche earlier, something that she feels the convent women need.”

Croissy’s successor, Lidoine, is a new role for Pieczonka, but this production

isn’t her first exposure to the opera. “I have powerful memories of the first time I saw the work, in my student days at the UofT opera school. I didn’t sing in the chorus but had friends who did, and I remember being touched and finally riveted by the work. As a young woman, I was deeply moved watching equally young women going off to their deaths.”

Lidoine is a strong figure who delivers two speeches to the nuns, one in which she makes her first address to them as their new leader, another when they have all been arrested for illegally practicing their religion. These speeches are arguably the closest that Poulenc came to writing arias for *Carmélites*.

Initially opposed to the idea of martyrdom – she speaks of a different kind of courage that the sisters are called upon to show – by the end

 Read an interview with director Robert Carsen and set designer Michael Levine in our house program at coc.ca/Publications

she understands that's where God is leading the order. Pieczonka says, "She has no trappings of wealth, unlike Blanche, and emphasizes that humility and service to God is all that's necessary. She sees martyrdom as a slippery slope, not an act that should be done for personal glory. Mother Marie, in contrast, wants that blaze of exaltation, and there's a sense that initially the other sisters hoped Marie would be their new head; I sense a slight friction when the outsider, Lidoine, takes over instead."


Echoing the title of the piece, the score is conversational, resembling through-composed speech. Its only

betrayal that are central to Verdi or Puccini. Yet it's still a riveting journey, one we constantly grapple with in our concerns over love, anxiety, comfort, mortality."

"In daily life, talk about the trivial sometimes turns to something profound and then back to the ordinary," says Bayrakharian. "The same is true in the music. The nuns shuttle around and suddenly they're singing the "Ave Maria," some of the most sublime music I've ever performed, and then they're back to daily-life music. Our existence is like that, neither always dramatic nor always quiet. With its interjections

vocal parts aren't easy because the scoring is often spare and there's little there but the words. From a technical standpoint, it's hard to get a breath, so you have to know exactly how to sing it."

"I love Poulenc's musical palette in the opera, its musical washes," says Pieczonka. "Lidoine's music is fluid, like moving water. It moves along at a recognizable clip and then suddenly these high notes pop out, jarring and quite angular; I see them as battle-rousing moments, breaking up the sometimes dreamy quality of the score."

 Tune in to a *Dialogues des Carmélites* listening guide at coc.ca/COCRADIO

Ultimately, *Dialogues des Carmélites* is an opera about community, not only that of the Carmelite order but also of the women who perform Poulenc's drama. Bayrakharian, Forst and Pieczonka all look forward to sharing both rehearsal hall and stage with each other and the rest of the cast.

"This is one rehearsal process that's never trivial," adds Bayrakharian. "There's a strength and *gravitas* to it. If you believe what you're singing, there's a certain sheltered feeling in the rehearsals, most of which only involve the women in the company. The nuns and chorus members include a diverse range of singers at all stages in their careers, and we talk about everything; there's a real sense of trust and openness that results in a tight ensemble, perfect for this opera. It's as if we create our own sanctuary and get to cleanse our souls." ■

Jon Kaplan is senior theatre writer at NOW Magazine.

Dialogues des Carmélites is generously underwritten in part by Tim and Frances Price.

With additional support from: Cecily and Robert Bradshaw, Nani and Austin Beutel, Walter M. and Lisa Balfour Bowen, Michael and Linda Hutcheon, Judy and Wilmot Matthews, Don McQueen and Trina McQueen O.C., Sue Mortimer, Dr. Noëlle Grace and The Shohet Family, Samara Walbohm and Joe Shlesinger, Rosemary Speirs, Anonymous

Ms Bayrakharian's performance is generously sponsored by Robert Sherrin.

Ms Forst's performance is generously sponsored by Marjorie and Roy Linden.

Ms Pieczonka's performance is generously sponsored by Jack Whiteside.



ensemble numbers are traditional church prayers in Latin set by Poulenc: an "Ave Maria" when Lidoine becomes head of the order, an "Ave Verum Corpus" when the order is broken up and, most powerfully, a "Salve Regina" sung in the shadow of the guillotine.

This really is an opera in which people talk to each other, stresses Pieczonka. "The content is made up of discussions about fear, death, faith and so many other things," she continues. "Esoteric and intellectual and theoretical, it doesn't have a big tune like the "Anvil Chorus" in *Il Trovatore*, lacks a conventional love story and ignores the deception and

of the sublime into the everyday, *Carmélites* is a unique opera.

"And while the music may be easy to memorize, it can be hard to perform. With a line here, an interjection there, it's sometimes difficult to recall which comment follows another. I wouldn't compare it to performing recitative but more, in its conversational aspect, to *Pelléas et Mélisande*."

Forst argues for the precision required to sing the opera. "It's not a piece for sissies," she smiles. "You have to be very particular with it, not creative at the last minute as you launch into a phrase. All the musical parts ask for attention to detail; you've got to sing or play exactly what's on the page. The

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WORKING HARD



Our Free Concert Series in the Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre continued through the winter with some outstanding performances, including a January concert featuring members of the COC Orchestra performing Wagner's *Siegfried-Idyll* (main photo above). Another treat was an incredibly energetic dance performance on January 10 courtesy of Jade's Hip Hop Academy! For more information on our spring concerts, see page 22, or visit coc.ca/FreeConcerts.



Hailed as a “transcendent experience” by Richard Ouzounian in the *Toronto Star*, we are so proud to have presented such a thrilling production of *Tristan und Isolde*. This production would not have been such a success without the incredible talents of video artist Bill Viola and executive producer of video, Kira Perov. They are pictured above (left), at the *Tristan* opening night party, alongside Cecily and Robert Bradshaw (right), who generously sponsored Bill Viola. Pictured inset right are (l-r) COC Music Director and *Tristan* conductor Johannes Debus, our magnificent *Tristan* tenor Ben Heppner, and our *Isolde*, soprano Melanie Diener.



PLAYING HARD



Members of our Ensemble Circle (EC) celebrated the Ensemble Studio performance of *La clemenza di Tito* at a post-performance party at the Four Seasons Centre. Above are (l - r) EC committee member Daniel Faria, EC member Rui Amaral, and EC committee member Anne Maggisano. Pictured right are Marcia Lewis Brown with soprano Mireille Asselin, who she generously sponsored. Mireille performed the role of Servilia in the mainstage performance of *La clemenza di Tito*.



On March 8, participants of the After School Opera Program (ASOP) winter term delighted audiences with the world premiere of a new opera by Dean Burry, *The Secret Life of Pigeons*. The performance included lots of singing, acting, and even some rap! For more information on the ASOP and other COC education initiatives, please visit coc.ca/Explore.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

MEMBERS OF OUR COMMUNITY WHO MAKE EXTRAORDINARY CONTRIBUTIONS IN SUPPORT OF THE COC'S ARTISTIC PROJECTS

PRODUCTION UNDERWRITING IS A SOURCE OF PRIDE

With two productions this spring underwritten by individual donors, we are immensely proud of what this reflects about our supporters: they are some of the most engaged arts patrons in Canada.

They are Mark and Gail Appel, for example, who are underwriting in part our production of Richard Strauss's *Salome* directed by Atom Egoyan.

Or, there's a consortium of 20 women, hailing from different personal and professional backgrounds, but all equally committed to making a difference in our cultural scene.



Salome



Dialogues des Carmélites

The group has put together \$100,000 in support of Robert Carsen's production of *Dialogues des Carmélites*.

Meanwhile, long-time supporters Tim and Frances Price matched the gift dollar for dollar, making the total commitment for *Dialogues des Carmélites* even more significant.

Our many production underwriters recognize the value of keeping great opera in Toronto. Moreover, they lead by example to make it happen. And that's something in which we can all take pride. ■



BACK TO THE U.S.

This February, COC board members and donors travelled to New York for the premiere of a new production of Wagner's *Parsifal* at the Metropolitan Opera. Staged by renowned French-Canadian director François Girard, with set designs by Michael Levine, this new *Parsifal* is a co-production of the COC, the Met, and Opéra national de Lyon. The production will arrive in Toronto as part of a future season, but the dedicated COC-ers got an advance look at the work, including an opportunity to discuss it over brunch with Girard and Levine at the New York home of Mark and Gail Appel.

The weekend concluded with a dinner, hosted by Mrs. Louise Blouin, recognizing Canadian-American collaboration through the arts. COC General Director Alexander Neef, who has just been appointed an honorary board member of the Council for Canadian American Relations, was a fêted guest, alongside Girard and Levine, as well as Canada's ambassador to the U.S., his Excellency Gary Doer, and the Canadian Consul General in New York, John F. Prato. ■

KPMG SPONSORS OUR IN-DEMAND RUSH SUBSCRIPTIONS

We are delighted to announce KPMG as the Presenting Sponsor of our Weekday Rush Subscription, a ticketing initiative that guarantees patrons a Ring-5 seat, but automatically moves them into best available seating on the day of the performance. With this sponsorship, KPMG continues a 25-year history of support for the COC. Their past involvement has ranged from sponsorship of the KPMG Opera Golf Classic, to the capital campaign to build the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts. ■



YEAR-END MATCHING APPEAL TOGETHER, WE ACHIEVE MORE

Our patrons know better than anyone that opera depends on the efforts of countless individuals. From the collaborative work of the original composers and librettists, to the present-day creative teams putting together exceptional performances, success in opera has always been a matter of collective endeavour.

The same is true of our fundraising efforts - they depend on key collaborations designed to increase the impact of individual commitments. Bearing that in mind, every season we reach out to our community with the Year-End Matching Appeal, inviting our patrons to make a gift that will be matched, dollar for dollar - in effect doubling your support.

The COC's creative and artistic achievements are made possible, in no small part, by the invaluable support of our loyal subscribers and donors. The collaborative spirit of philanthropy continues this year with an anonymous gift that allows all donations received by June 30, 2013 to be matched in value.

Thank you for playing a part in the success of the COC. Please consider making a donation that will help write the future of your opera company.

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COC BOARD MEMBER ARTHUR R. A. SCACE HONoured WITH NATIONAL AWARD



Earlier this year, the association for opera in Canada - Opera.ca - paid tribute to Arthur R. A. Scace with the 2013 National Opera Directors Recognition Award. The prize honours "his extraordinary contributions to the Canadian Opera Company" and recognizes him as a model for "excellence in opera governance," said Christina Loewen, executive director of Opera.ca.

It's well-deserved praise, which reflects Mr. Scace's unwavering dedication to the COC. For 15 years, he has served the company in a variety of capacities, including

terms as president and chair of the board of directors, co-chair of the capital campaign cabinet and president of the Canadian Opera House Corporation. A defining achievement is the key role Mr. Scace played in the building of the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts. In addition to the many personal donations totalling in the millions he has made to the company, Mr. Scace has always been a tireless advocate of the artform, and the COC will continue to rely on his guidance to ensure that the company remains a viable institution in the future. ■

Arthur Scace (right) is pictured with Patrick Corrigan (left), executive director of Pacific Opera Victoria and chair of the board of Opera.ca.

LOSING HERSELF IN LUCIA

AN INTERVIEW WITH COLORATURA SOPRANO ANNA CHRISTY

By Gianmarco Segato

American coloratura soprano Anna Christy makes her COC debut this spring in the title role of Gaetano Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*. This 2008 English National Opera production by David Alden was largely developed around her considerable vocal and acting talents. It was such a success that ENO quickly revived it in 2010 and now we have the thrill of seeing it here in Toronto.

Gianmarco Segato, the COC's adult programs manager, recently sat down with Ms Christy and here's a portion of their conversation. For more, check out "The Big COC Podcast" which can be found at coc.ca/COCRADIO.

Had you sung Lucia before the 2008 premiere of the ENO production we'll be seeing in Toronto?

The first time was in 2004 at Opera Omaha, in Italian. Then I had to learn it all again in English, and in the higher key for London. At the time, the higher key fit me a little bit better. Now that I'm singing it again in Italian for the COC, we're lowering it back to the key that most people sing it in, so it does feel a little bit different.

What is the process like to flip back and forth between the English translation and the original Italian?

It's interesting. When I was learning the English version for ENO, it felt very foreign because the Italian was already so entrenched in my mouth and ear. But then I got used to it, and creating that production with David, in the setting he uses (Victorian Scotland), it made so much sense to be singing it in English. After a while I didn't even think about it. Now that I'm preparing it for the COC, to feel



the Italian again in my teeth, my lips, my mouth – feels so good. Certainly Italian is easier to sing in!

Is there an aspect of this character with which you particularly connect?

I always relish the opportunity to lose it; to go into a character and not worry about how far because there is no "too far." I also relish the opportunity to work with someone like David again because with Lucia, there's this kind of typical "mad scene persona" that singers often bring on – you're shaking, you're bloody and you're acting maniacally. However, I remember with David the first time we created it for ENO he said, "Less, less, less!" I trust him completely, so I thought, "Okay, I'm just going do whatever he tells me," and the mad scene ended up being much more eerie.

When you come to the COC, it will be the third time you've done this particular production, but I imagine things must develop even though it's the same production, the same director – how does that process work for you?

It's always great to refresh something. I'm certainly a different artist now than when I first did the production. It's only five years ago, but a lot has happened in my life and my voice

feels better and different. Art cannot be stale; this just can't happen. I'm really looking forward to returning to the production in Toronto.

Lucia's mad scene can be viewed in lots of different ways – as the end result of the bullying and domination she has endured for most of her life. By contrast, there are some who view it as Lucia's moment of empowerment. What are your feelings about this?

I see it as the moment when she has been truly broken – she's fragile from the beginning, so you take a journey with her from the first moment you meet her when she has already been so oppressed. You see how everything has been forced on her over the course of Act I, and then in Act II you see the result of what happens when a young, impressionable girl who has been treated thus for her whole life – what happens when the ultimate crime in



 Read an interview with David Alden in our house program at coc.ca/Publications



**ANNA CHRISTY SAYS ABOUT LUCIA:
“SHE’S FRAGILE FROM THE BEGINNING,
SO YOU TAKE A JOURNEY WITH HER
FROM THE FIRST MOMENT YOU MEET HER.”**

her mind has been committed [her lover, Edgardo’s accusation that she has been untrue]. She is completely broken. It’s enough that she feels she has lost her love and is being forced to marry somebody against her will, but I think she has been abused in other ways, and to put all of that on somebody so young and fragile... she can’t bear it. That’s my own personal look at it because I feel there has to be something incredibly powerful for somebody to be so broken. I suppose it could be seen as a moment of strength for her, but I feel [killing her husband and subsequently going mad] was the only thing that she could have done.

We’re very excited that you’ll be making your COC debut - have you ever sung in Toronto or Canada before?

I’ve never been to Canada - which is ironic as I was actually named after *Anne of Green Gables*! I know it’s a



Enjoy a *Lucia di Lammermoor* listening guide at coc.ca/COCRadio

total cliché but my mother read all of the Montgomery novels when she was a young girl in Japan, in Japanese. Then when I reached the right age, she peppered me with the books, and I fell in love with them. I actually looked up online to see if I could get from Toronto to P.E.I. on my days off and I just think it’s going to be a little too far, and a little too difficult.

I’m so excited to be coming to Toronto. I have friends there and I’ve heard so many wonderful things about what a vibrant city it is. For me, with all the travel that I do, I really enjoy coming to places that are alive and vital.

We’re also excited that you’ll be giving a recital along with Ensemble Studio Head Liz Upchurch on May 21 called “Bel Canto Bliss,” as part of

our Free Concert Series in the Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre. What repertoire will you be singing? Will it be *bel canto* songs or arias, both?

A little bit of both. I’m looking through the operatic repertoire I already know. But *bel canto* composers also wrote some beautiful songs and so I’m definitely going to be pulling from that repertoire. I’ve done a few of those types of songs already, but wouldn’t mind picking up a few more which I’ve always wanted to sing. And certainly the performance period is so long, I’ll have a good amount of time after *Lucia* opens to work with Liz Upchurch. ■

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Singing from the Scaffold: *Dialogues des Carmélites*

Saturday, May 11, 2013
9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Featuring Steven Huebner (McGill University), Michael and Linda Hutcheon (University of Toronto), plus an exploration of Poulenc's vocal music with COC Ensemble Studio soprano Sasha Djihanian and Head of the COC Ensemble Studio, Liz Upchurch, at the piano.

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Salome: Two Perspectives

Sunday, May 26, 2013 • 1 p.m.

TIFF Bell Lightbox, 350 King St. W.

Opera Connect concludes its inaugural season with a trans-Atlantic discussion about Richard Strauss's viscerally shocking opera *Salome*. CBC Radio's Brent Bambury interviews celebrated Canadian filmmaker and *Salome* director, Atom Egoyan, and Norwegian stage director Stefan Herheim, whose own take on the opera is being mounted by the Norwegian National Opera and Ballet this spring. Herheim will participate from Oslo via video-link as the two directors share their individual approaches to this notoriously scandalous work.



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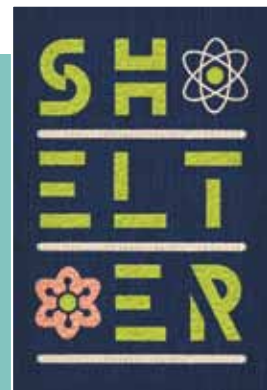
After leading a successful course this winter that explored the history of opera recording, Stephen Clarke will return with a new series of classes for the 2013/2014 season. The topic of the course is still to be determined, but is sure to draw on Mr. Clarke's wealth of opera knowledge, as well as the expansive collection of rare opera recordings which he expertly curates and presents to the public.

For more information, visit coc.ca/Courses. ■

THE CANADIAN OPERA COMPANY IS PROUD TO BE A SUPPORTER OF THE TORONTO PREMIERE OF TAPESTRY'S POWERFUL OPERA, *SHELTER!*

Composed by Juliet Palmer with libretto by Julie Salverson, *Shelter!* runs June 6, 7 and 8 (7:30 p.m.) and June 9 (2 p.m.) at the COC's Imperial Oil Opera Theatre. Tickets are \$50, with general admission seating.

Please visit tapestryopera.com/tickets or contact boxoffice@tapestryopera.com/416-537-6066 x. 243 for information and tickets.



Shelter!

A nuclear family adrift in the atomic age. Since Prometheus stole fire from the gods, we have flirted with the dangerous beauty of science. In this "intriguing, darkly comic fable" (Heidi Waleson, *The Wall Street Journal*), a father protects his family at any cost.

COC OPERATOURS 2012 | 2013

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HERE'S WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT THEIR COC OPERATOURS EXPERIENCE:

“The hotels were wonderful, and in excellent locations for getting around the city and most importantly to the opera houses... It was magical walking into La Scala... I can still taste the risotto and grilled fish at the Busa alla Torre... Grazie mille!!!!”

- Melanie Whitehead Mersch (Milan and Venice, 2012)

“Many thanks for planning such an interesting trip for us to London. I cannot remember when I have gone to so many wonderful performances.”

- Lois Fleming (London, 2011)

“Great mix of travellers, varied musical program and the touring was great – the guide, Tatiana, was excellent – also the hotel was excellent... look forward to my next COC adventure!”

- Mary Lloyd (St. Petersburg, 2012)

For more information, please visit our website at coc.ca/Operatours or e-mail operatours@golden.net. Members of the Golden Circle, President's Council and Friends of the COC receive priority enrollment.

VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION



The Canadian Opera Company thanks the 150 volunteers who committed over 45,000 hours this year in support of the COC's initiatives! From our devoted board members to individuals who help archive COC materials, stuff thousands of subscription packages, support education and outreach programs, deliver pre-performance chats, run the Opera Shop, provide stellar customer service at the Free Concert Series, give building tours, and welcome patrons in the Friends Lounge:

WE COULDN'T HAVE DONE IT WITHOUT YOU!



AFTER SCHOOL OPERA PROGRAM CELEBRATES 15 YEARS!

By Katherine Semcesen

The 2012/2013 season marks the 15th anniversary of the COC's After School Opera Program (ASOP). Since 1997, ASOP has encouraged children ages seven to 12 to engage in opera through fun, interactive and educational activities under the leadership of composer Dean Burry (seen top right). During each 10-week term, Dean and the participants sing, stage and design a world premiere of a new opera inspired by relevant themes and timeless topics including fairy tales, food, the internet, time travel, mythology, the War of 1812, bees and the Olympics!

The success of ASOP is truly something to sing about. Over the past 15 years the COC has:

- Introduced 4,876 children and their families to opera
- Produced 48 operas written for children by composer Dean Burry
- Invited over 45 guest artists including mimes, choreographers, Baroque movement specialists, make-up artists, Peking opera artists and North Indian Kathak dancers and musicians to teach the young participants about different artistic disciplines
- Expanded the program to include a new partner, the Boys and Girls Club of East Scarborough, led by conductor, director and choreographer Markus Howard
- Maintained an accessible registration fee (\$5 to \$15 per term depending on the location) thanks to generous support from our corporate and individual funders and foundations

Congratulations to all the participants and their families, artists, program assistants, volunteers and funders for their contributions and support of the program! Here's to another 15 years! ■

Presenting Sponsor:  Scotiabank®

 **Where are they now?** Past participants and program partners chat about ASOP at coc.ca/Parlando

 Interested in enrolling a child? Visit coc.ca/Explore



LOOK ONLINE!

Follow Alexander Neef and the COC on twitter.com/alexanderncoc and twitter.com/canadianopera. Discover more about our exciting new season by watching our 2013/2014 trailer and exploring our interactive digital brochure found at coc.ca/DigitalBrochure.

For all COC news including behind-the-scenes reporting, productions in progress, Q & As with the stars, and much more, visit our blog *Parlando* at coc.ca/Parlando.

This spring in the house program, director David Alden reveals his concept behind *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Atom Egoyan delves into Richard Strauss's *Salome*, and Robert Carsen and Michael Levine discuss their take on Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites*. Our house programs are available online at coc.ca/Publications.

At coc.ca/COCRADIO, enjoy podcasts, behind-the-scenes videos, listening guides featuring complete tracks from the Universal catalogue, video trailers, performance highlights, audio and video interviews with artists, and much more!

The Free Concert Series in the Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre continues this spring. To see the full schedule and learn more about our performers and varied repertoire, visit coc.ca/FreeConcerts.

LET'S VISIT THE OPERA HOUSE! WITH ALFRED CARON, DIRECTOR OF THE FSC

By Suzanne Vanstone

The COC patron experience is not solely what happens on stage, but begins when one first walks through the front doors of the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts. What occurs “front of house” is as important for one’s overall enjoyment of opera as what occurs onstage. To ensure that patrons enjoy every aspect of their time with us and can quickly and easily achieve what they need to during pre-performance and intermissions, it is crucial to have a great staff. Fortunately we have one of the best, starting with Alfred Caron, Director of the Four Seasons Centre. Before joining the COC in 2002, Alfred held prestigious positions in the hospitality business (including helping to set up their infrastructure) for various organizations such as Magna Golf Club, 360 Restaurant, Bistro 990, Roy Thomson Hall, and Café des Copains, and is renowned for his exceptionally high standards.

When we moved to our new house in 2006, it was a massive endeavour on many fronts, particularly for our patrons. Many had been with us for over 30 years and would need help adjusting to the new building. Alfred says, “I came from varied, intricate businesses where the challenges were to adapt to a new environment. The company asked that we protect our patrons’

experience and offer them the most care and attention possible. We knew the auditorium sound was going to be fabulous and we knew the operatic experience was

“We respect the artform. That is what’s great about the COC, and it’s why I’m here and love working for the company.”

going to be fabulous, but we also wanted to become a centre of excellence for the service we provided

service and the delivery of expectations.”

To accomplish that, the FSC has 150 part-time front-of-house staff comprised

of both young retired professionals and students who often juggle two and three jobs in order to

of interviews in order to find the best people for the position. Once hired, it can be challenging to schedule and re-schedule their hours according to their needs, but we want to keep the same front-of-house staff returning year after year. I am very fortunate to work with the people I work with because I have been given a lot of freedom to meet the challenges – and the challenges are what motivate me. We are very proud of what we have achieved here.

“We work in the arts and this building has a lot of soul. We



behind-the-scenes. I use the same business principles here as I did in any other business I managed. I wanted to establish the same standards, or better, that I wished to experience when travelling or attending the theatre. It’s about

complete their studies. The management team at the FSC look for three essential criteria when recruiting staff and training employees – passion, integrity and loyalty. “We take time during the interview process – we have three different levels

have excellent, responsible financial management at the COC, but we don’t control solely by the bottom line. We respect the artform. That is what’s great about the COC, and it’s why I’m here and love working for the company.” ■

SPRING 2013

APRIL 2013

Tue	2	12 p.m.	Nova Bhattacharya and Louis Laberge-Côté, dancers/choreographers*
Thu	4	12 p.m. Ballet Jörgen* 12:15 p.m. Opera Connect: <i>Lucia di Lammermoor</i> , Waterfall & 1:15 p.m. Stage, First Canadian Place	
Tue	9	12 p.m.	Christopher Mokrzewski, piano*
Thu	11	12 p.m.	Artists of the COC Orchestra*
Sat	13	5:30 p.m.	Youth Opera Lab: <i>Salome</i>
Tue	16	12 p.m.	Canadian Art Song Project (CASP)*
Wed	17	7:30 p.m.	<i>Lucia di Lammermoor</i> Opening Performance
Thu	18	12 p.m. Stephen R. Clarke, lecturer* 6 p.m. Fine Wine Auction, Design Exchange	
Sat	20	7:30 p.m.	<i>Lucia di Lammermoor</i>
Sun	21	2 p.m.	<i>Salome</i> Opening Performance
Tue	23	12 p.m.	Michael Barrett and Adam Luther, tenors; Peter Barrett, baritone; Sandra Horst, piano*
Thu	25	12 p.m.	The Arkadas Quartet*
Fri	26	7:30 p.m.	<i>Lucia di Lammermoor</i>
Sat	27	4:30 p.m.	<i>Salome</i>
Tue	30	12 p.m. Queen of Puddings Music Theatre in Concert; Krisztina Szabó, mezzo-soprano* 7:30 p.m. <i>Lucia di Lammermoor</i>	



Keep up to date at coc.ca/Calendar

Photo Credits: **Page 2:** COC General Director Alexander Neef. Photo: bohuang.ca, 2012; **Page 3:** (l - r) Taryn Fiebig and Lorina Gore as Auntie's Nieces and Stuart Skelton as Peter Grimes in the Opera Australia (OA)/Houston Grand Opera co-production of *Peter Grimes*, 2009, OA. Photo: Branco Gaica; **Page 4:** Dancer Carolyn Woods in a scene from the Canadian Opera Company (COC) production of *Salome*, 2002. Photo: Michael Cooper; **Page 5:** (top) Shadow performer Clea Minaker's work on tour with indie performer Feist; (middle) Samples of puppetry elements for *Salome* by shadow performer Clea Minaker. Photos: supplied by Clea Minaker; **Pages 9 and 10:** (page 9) Felicity Palmer as Madame de Croissy and Isabel Bayrakdarian as Blanche de la Force; (page 10) Patricia Racette (centre) as Madame Lidoine. Both photos from Lyric Opera of Chicago's (LOC) production of *Dialogues des Carmélites*, 2007. Photos: Robert Kusel; **Page 12:** (top, main photo) Members of the COC Orchestra perform in the Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre; (top, small photo) Dancers from Jade's Hip Hop Academy. Both photos from the Free Concert Series in the Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre, 2013. Photos: Chris Hutcheson; (bottom) Photos from *Tristan und Isolde* opening night party, 2012. Photos: Dave Cox; **Page 13:** (top) Photos from Ensemble Circle reception, 2013. Photos: Dave Cox; (bottom) Photos from the After School Opera Program performance of *The Secret Life of Pigeons*, 2013. Photos: COC; **Page 14:** (top) Roger Honeywell as Narraboth and Helen Field as Salome in the COC production of *Salome*, 2002. Photo: Michael Cooper; (middle) Isabel Bayrakdarian as Blanche de la Force in LOC's production of *Dialogues des Carmélites*, 2007. Photo: Robert Kusel; (bottom) A scene from the COC/Metropolitan Opera (MO)/Opéra national de Lyon co-production of *Parsifal*, 2013, MO. Photo: Ken Howard; **Page 15:** (l - r) Patrick Corrigan and Arthur Scafe. Photo courtesy of Opera.ca; **Pages 16 and 17:** (Page 16, bottom) Anna Christy as Lucia; (Page 17) A scene from *Lucia di Lammermoor*. Photos from English National Opera's production of *Lucia di Lammermoor*, 2008. Photos: Clive Barda; **Page 18:** (bottom) Christine Duncan and Peter McGillivray, 2013. Photo: Michael Mori; **Page 19:** COC volunteers and staff. Photos: COC; **Page 20:** After School Opera Program participants over the years. Photos: COC; **Page 21:** Alfred Caron in the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts. Photo: COC

MAY 2013

Wed	1	7:30 p.m.	<i>Salome</i>
Thu	2	12 p.m.	Artists of the COC Ensemble Studio*
Sat	4	7:30 p.m.	<i>Salome</i>
Tue	7	12 p.m. Winds of the COC Orchestra; Johannes Debus, conductor* 7:30 p.m. <i>Salome</i>	
Wed	8	7:30 p.m.	<i>Dialogues des Carmélites</i> Opening Performance
Thu	9	12 p.m. Mauro Bertoli, piano* 7:30 p.m. <i>Lucia di Lammermoor</i>	
Fri	10	7:30 p.m.	<i>Salome</i>
Sat	11	9:30 a.m. The Opera Exchange, <i>Dialogues des Carmélites</i> , UofT, Walter Hall 7:30 p.m. <i>Dialogues des Carmélites</i>	
Sun	12	2 p.m.	<i>Lucia di Lammermoor</i>
Mon	13	5:30 p.m.	Artists of the COC Ensemble Studio - The Christina and Louis Quilico Awards*
Tue	14	12 p.m. Classical India 3* 7:30 p.m. <i>Dialogues des Carmélites</i>	
Wed	15	7:30 p.m.	<i>Lucia di Lammermoor</i>
Thu	16	12 p.m. Against the Grain Theatre* 7:30 p.m. <i>Salome</i>	
Fri	17	7:30 p.m.	<i>Dialogues des Carmélites</i>
Sat	18	4:30 p.m.	<i>Lucia di Lammermoor</i>
Sun	19	2 p.m.	<i>Dialogues des Carmélites</i>
Tue	21	12 p.m. Anna Christy, soprano; Liz Upchurch, piano* 7:30 p.m. <i>Dialogues des Carmélites</i>	
Wed	22	12 p.m. Cellos of the COC Orchestra; Johannes Debus, piano* 7:30 p.m. <i>Salome</i> Closing Performance	
Thu	23	12 p.m. Artists of the COC Ensemble Studio* 7:30 p.m. <i>Dialogues des Carmélites</i>	
Fri	24	7:30 p.m.	<i>Lucia di Lammermoor</i> Closing Performance
Sat	25	4:30 p.m.	<i>Dialogues des Carmélites</i> Closing Performance
Sun	26	1 p.m.	Opera Connect: <i>Salome</i> , TIFF Bell Lightbox
Tue	28	12 p.m.	Toronto Summer Music Festival*
Thu	30	12 p.m.	Linda Ippolito, piano*

JUNE 2013

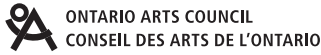
Tue	4	12 p.m.	Keir GoGwilt, violin; Matthew Aucoin, piano*
Wed	5	12 p.m.	Wen Zhao, pipa; Roman Smirnov, flamenco guitar*

*These performances are part of the Free Concert Series in the Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre, supported by the Free Concert Series Endowment Fund, established in honour of Richard Bradshaw by an anonymous donor.

GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

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Isabel Bayrakdarian as Blanche de la Force (centre) in Lyric Opera of Chicago's production of *Dialogues des Carmélites*, 2007. Photo: Robert Kusel

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