

Symphony Nova Scotia opens season Stand-up Madama Butterfly a success

by Scott Neily

Madama Butterfly has long been considered one of the finest historical operas in the field of dramatic music. In a surprising move, Symphony Nova Scotia opened its sixth season on October 12 with a high quality, low budget version of Giacomo Puccini's beloved opera, performed in a full concert style.

Sung in English, the show departed from the traditional dramatic presentation in favour of the less expensive concert performance. The opera featured the diverse talents of such vocal luminaries as Canadian soprano Stephanie Bogle in the title role, American tenor John Wolver-

ton as the American naval officer who abandons the faithful Butterfly, and Canadian mezzo-soprano Linda Maguire as Suzuki, Butterfly's servant. The opera also featured baritone Erik Oland and tenor Ross Thompson in the roles of Sharpless and Goro, respectively, and tenor Ronald Birmingham as Madama Butterfly's uncle, the Bonze.

Local cast members included Margaret Chlebowska, the Aeolian Singers and male singers from the Dalhousie Chamber Choir, and Dalhousie student Paul Moreau. Moreau, currently in his fourth year of study, began his academic training at Acadia University and spent three years there before moving to Dal-

Although he has performed extensively in the operatic field, *Madama Butterfly* is his first professional venture.

First staged in 1904, *Madama Butterfly* is today one of Puccini's most popular operas. However, the initial response from its La Scala audience was negative, to say the least. Most of the second act could not be heard through the jeers and cat-calls of the audience, who were offended both by the exotic setting of Japan and the appearance of the two male leads in contemporary American dress. Puccini withdrew the production and revised the score. It reopened to critical acclaim three months later, and has since become a staple of ope-

ratric repertoire, performed to enthusiastic audiences the world over.

The story is a tragic one. Pinkerton, an American Naval lieutenant, leases a house in Nagasaki, Japan, and marries Cho Cho San (*Madama Butterfly*), the young Japanese woman who has captivated him. Having renounced her own religion, she is rejected by her relatives. Pinkerton, however, does not regard the marriage as permanent, and upon returning to America, takes an American bride.

Butterfly has a child by Pinkerton but remains faithful and stays optimistic about the eventual return of her husband. It is not until he returns to Japan three years later and enters the house

with his new wife that she realizes her plight. She is gracious, but at the first opportunity to find privacy, she bids a tearful goodbye to her child and takes her own life with her father's sword.

In terms of performance, Symphony Nova Scotia's production was a success. The singers were excellent in their respective roles and the orchestra was at its usual impeccable best. However, it was a pity that such a colourful and dramatic opera was forced by budget restrictions to be limited to a simple stand-up version. Hopefully, the future success of SNS will bring about the capability to present the public with the opera as it should be, with dramatic costumes and full theatrical sets.

Communists . . . continued from page 5

introduced, and the unanimity clause freezes out future reform such as a labour bill of rights, native and women's rights. The Constitution should reflect the fact that Canada is really two nations in one state. I mean, "distinct society", what the hell does that mean?

On Free Trade

It allows U.S. business interests to be treated the same as Canadian ones. But interprovincial discrimination will remain. In the U.S., companies don't have to pay as much into programs for their employees. As a result, there will be pressure on provinces to opt out of federal programs to remain competitive. And Meech Lake will allow them to do so.

On PC defence policy

The White Paper on Defence is essentially a document put forward by the Business Council on National Issues with the subma-

rines added on by the Tories. The Tories postponed the subs so they could kill them as an election issue. They're trying to buy their way through to another term. The worker's don't want to build frigates. These aren't real jobs.

On the Liberals

In spite of their anti-Free Trade stance, they're still a big business party. That's one of the reasons they're broke.

On the NDP

We see the election of an NDP government as the best possible result. But (with the NDP rejection of the trade deal) Canada's sovereignty would still be on the line. There would still be pressure from Business to make some other sort of deal.

The NDP is an important part of the left, but they don't have a monopoly ... We think the NDP fighting the Liberals to become the opposition is a short-sighted tactic. What concerns me with that approach of taking the Liberals' territory is the resultant move to the right. If they went too

far, they could drop the New (in their name) and be just like the Democrats in the States.

On the Communist Party today

We are a revolutionary party, but not a conspiratorial one. It is possible to have a relatively peaceful transformation to

socialism, and we believe that this will come about through democratic mass action. Non-peaceful methods only result in great suffering, mainly among the working class. We aren't prepared to go to the hills. Even talking of terrorism means expulsion from the party.

On the public perception of 'communism'

I do a lot of door-knocking, and the odd person will react with a look of stunned horror ... (but) people are looking for answers more than they have in the past. They're more prepared to discuss critical issues with us.



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