

CONCEPT



Painting by ROBERT CARMICHAEL

AT THE jubilee

tosca: spectacle, passion, personality

If you detest opera, you should go to Tosca tonight at the Jubilee, because if you are not converted, you will at least learn what it is that you can't stand.

For Act Two of Edmonton's Tosca is opera at its finest: a masterpiece of spectacle, passion, and personality.

If nothing else, this Tosca will make you more tolerant of the opera devotee and perhaps help you, as it did me, understand why the French symbolistes found opera an ideal mixture of intellect, sense and emotion.

Inevitably, Tosca is FLAWED. Despite his fine rich voice, the hero Ermanno Mauro, seems too restrained and self-conscious. The villain Scarpia, Walter Cassel, is an ordinary lecher instead of the despicable brute which the drama demands.

Napoleon Bisson is a delightful sacristan, as red-nosed, spastic, bumbling and endearing as Puccini could have wished. His vocal placement, however, is imprecise. The staging of the first few moments of Act One (one, Angelotti stumbling around the icon in centre stage) is silly. The shepherd's song at the opening of Act three is ludicrously overdone.

(Imagine: Tosca has just murdered the villain and the action has moved to the prison where both she and her lover will die.)

But before they appear on stage there is a "pastoral interlude" complete with shepherd's song in the distance. We have it broadcast through the whole auditorium from above, like a choir of angels. A beautiful effect, perhaps, but completely inappropriate.)

But in fairness, one must admit that these faults are minor; and the performances noted are, if not superb, very good.

And then there is Tosca herself, PAULINE TINSLEY, a true master of the hybrid art of opera: an expressive and exact singer; a clever and convincing actress. If Mauro is prone to frequent glances at the conductor and to conventional, wooden gestures; if Cassel's tone is more paternal than bestial, Tinsley is both spontaneous and passionate.

She is capable of broad gestures visible in the second balcony (when she repulses Scarpia's embraces, for example) and of finer delineation (when she mimes her indecision about killing him).

Her tone soars from the lyricism of the love duet in Act one to enraged jealousy under Scarpia's barbs and plummets again to guttural harshness when she orders him to die.

So her performance contributes to one's sensory and emotional satiation. But credit must also go to set designer Gail McCance and to artistic director Irving Guttman. For despite one's fears that an opera which has only two on-stage choruses will be bleak and sparse in performance, Tosca is SPLENDID.

The sets are crowd pleasers, but they're also functional. The stage management shows a nice sense of exactly how much movement it takes to fill the stage when the audience is preoccupied with the music.

(The audience is splendid, too, to the point of opulence. Maybe the response to the opera was restrained because everyone was busy staring in their own show.)

Curtain time tonight is 8 P.M. Any unsold tickets are available to U of A students for half price (\$1.50 to \$5) after 7:30.

Candace Savage

symphony guest conductor

The three concerts featuring guest conductors and soloists from the orchestra will end on February 17-18 in a concert featuring works by Corelli, Mendelssohn, and Brahms.

Pierre Hetu, Canada's best gift in this decade to orchestral podiums and one of the three contenders for the post of Music Director of the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra, will conduct Corelli's *Concerto Grosso Opus 6, No. 9* in F Major, and Mendelssohn's *Symphony No. 3*, (The Scotch).

He will be joined by the Edmonton Symphony's newest principal players in a performance of Brahms' *Double Concerto for Violin and Cello*.

James Keene, the Symphony's new Concertmaster, comes to Edmonton from the renowned Pittsburgh Symphony, where he was Assistant Concertmaster under William Steinberg.

Ryan Selberg hails from Percy Faith's Orchestra and Zubin Mehta's Los Angeles Philharmonic.

Pierre Hetu was born in Montreal in 1936. In 1961 after extensive musical studies he won first prize in the International Competition of Young Conductors in Besancon, France.

hetu —

the third contender

In 1962 he was selected to be one of the three active students of Charles Munch at the Boston Symphony Orchestra's Tanglewood Festival. He was next engaged with the Montreal Symphony Orchestra as assistant to Zubin Mehta and Director of

the Young People's Concerts, a position he held for four years. While engaged at Montreal, Mr. Hetu conducted extensively for the CBC. He also conducted Andre Prevost's "Terre des Hommes" for Expo's gala opening concert. Mr. Hetu shared with Zubin Mehta the distinction of conducting the Montreal Symphony Orchestra's first commercial recording. In 1968 Mr. Hetu became Music Director of the Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra, to which duties in 1970 he added those of Associate Conductor of the Detroit Symphony.

Tickets are available for \$3.50, \$4.50, \$5.50, and \$6.50 by telephoning 433-2020, 24 hours a day, at all Bay Gift Wraps, and at the McCauley Plaza Box Office. Student Rush Tickets are available for \$1.00 an hour before the concert commences.

tomorrow, ravi shankar

Tomorrow evening, Ravi Shankar is in Edmonton, for one show only. To give some idea of his performance in advance, a review of a recent Flint, Michigan concert by this famous sitarist follows.

"Ravi Shankar, a pioneer in bringing Indian classical music to the United States, gave a brilliant performance of three "ragas" Sunday night at Whiting Auditorium.

Perhaps he is better known for having given ex-Beatle George Harrison lessons on the sitar (rhymes with guitar) than

as a concert artist. Yet he demonstrated to the crowd of 850 that Western ears can become attuned to the so-called exotic sounds of the east.

INDIAN MUSIC is as complex and subtle as our own, and maybe even more so because of the meditative and spiritual aspects.

First, the ragas are unlike anything in Western music. They are a melodic framework that is somewhat akin to our jazz improvisations. Instead of calling for certain chords such as in our blues patterns, ragas are grounded on specific note patterns.

In Indian classical music, melody greatly overshadows rhythm, and what we know as harmony and the interweaving of melody we call counterpoint just do not exist.

SO IT WAS with the opening evening raga that the interplay between the melody Shankar produced on his multistringed sitar and the rhythm poured out by Alla Rakha that caused the excitement.

Rakha, in this and two other ragas, tapped out regular patterns on his two small drums as Shankar worked the notes of the raga over and over. As Rakha's and Shankar's improvising grew more and more complicated they began punctuating the regular patterns with smiles of delight, apparently pleased that out of a mystery of melody and rhythm they landed on beats precisely together.

THESE SMILES, in themselves, were cues to the audience that something interesting was happening and that they should follow more closely what was happening. Their verdict: A standing ovation at the end of the concert.

Shankar said that he and his men (the tambura, a stringed instrument used as a drone, was played by Nodu Mullick) played differently Sunday night because they were getting good "vibrations" from the audience. He said they played as if they were back home in India.

David Friedo

miles davis blows through in march

On March 29 at the Jubilee Auditorium, Chow Dog Cafe Productions, Ltd., under the auspices of Chris Dobbin, will present Miles Davis. There will be one 90-minute set commencing at 8:30. Appearing with Davis will be his nine-piece band.

Davis and group will make a grand circle tour including Vancouver March 30 and Calgary April 1. Tickets can be purchased at Mikes for \$5.50, \$4.50 and \$3.50.

Miles Davis has shaped a generation of creative musicians. He has worked a quite obvious effect on innumerable trumpeters, some of whom have based whole careers on one aspect of the master's work, particularly his bittersweet way with love songs. Less dramatic has been his almost ubiquitous

influence on jazz-group musical format: original themes, often complex in structure, stated by trumpet and saxophone over convolute rhythm section, followed by extended solo improvisations. The least obvious but in several important ways most significant contribution Davis has made to his fellows is his approach to music--his ever-seeking, never-satisfied open-mindedness has continually led him to develop new means to artistic goals.

His teacher in East St. Louis, Edgar Buchanan, taught him the value of playing lightly and fast.

Two trumpeters in the St. Louis area reiterated in performance what the teacher advocated, and Davis to this day cites the two--Clark Terry and Buddy Anson--as major influences on

his playing.

Young Davis first gained wide recognition after he joined alto saxophonist Charlie Parker's quintet around 1946. Though his playing was not fully developed at the time, there was unmistakable indication of the measure of his talent.

The first proliferation of a Davis approach came in 1949 when he recorded several performances as leader of a nine-piece group that included such jazz limonaries as Gerry Mulligan, Lee Konitz, John Lewis and Max Roach. The recordings were memorized by legions of young musicians, who swore allegiance to the group's musical manifesto--later called the "cool school" of jazz.

But it was at the 1955 Newport Jazz Festival that today's Miles Davis was born--or at least that was the moment

when everything seemed to meet at one point: after Davis' gorgeous improvisation on "Round Midnight", the crowd rose in ovation, and such public support made it possible for him to form a working quintet. From that firm base, the Davis mystique grew--the public clamor, the walking off the stage during others' solos, the legends celebrating his eccentricities and frankness. But out of it all has come an immense musical contribution--for Davis, despite the mystique, the clamor, the legend, never ceased to develop as an artist, never rested on his many laurels (he probably has won more music polls and received more rave reviews than any other jazz artist), never was fully satisfied musically--which is the common denominator of all uncommon musicians.