

An Enjoyable Evening of Opera Scenes

by Margaret Little

You didn't have to be an opera lover to enjoy **An Evening of Opera Scenes** at the Sir James Dunn Theatre at 8:30 on March 3. These scenes were presented by members of the Dalhousie Music Department's Opera Workshop under the direction of Prof. Jefferson Morris with the assistance of Ms. Sheila Piercey, of the Music Department, and Prof. David Overton of the Dalhousie Theatre Department. The Opera Workshop consists of Dalhousie music students and alumnae and community vocalists.

The eight opera scenes spanned a great variety of time periods from the classical to the contemporary. They also described many emotions: love, seduction, joy,

regret, humour, and tragedy.

The first was a comic opera, "Cosi Fan Tutti" by Mozart. Ray Grant played the part of Guglielmo, the seducer. Marlene Scott as Dorabella acted her part well. Both voices had excellent vibrato but they did not blend in places.

The second opera, by Mozart, changed the atmosphere when Lorraine Traynor, as Dona Anna, sang a lament about her love for her murdered father. Ernie Couillard played the role of the consoler. His voice had great range in dynamics. These voices blended better but the soprano was somewhat harsh.

"Manon" composed by Massenet was an opera of regret. Carmel Rooney sang "Adieu notre petite table" as she reminisced on the happy

hours she had spent at the table with her lover.

Donizetti's "Don Pasquale" followed the plot of a conspiracy between Norina and Dr. Malatesta against Norina's lover. Paulette Paulin playfully acted the comic scene. Her range was especially precise despite the difficult and demanding passages. The audience was eager to follow her emotions and actions.

In Mozart's playful opera, "The Magic Flute", William McLellan charmed the audience with his light song and puppet dance.

The next opera, "Sour Angelica" by Puccini changed the mood entirely. The voice of the spirit (Marlene Scott) and her accompaniment created a mysterious atmosphere. Eleanor Burton's sweet voice

was well suited for her role as a young mother who was lamenting her son's death. This was an intensely dramatic scene.

Michael Turney sang "La Boheme", also by Puccini, with quiet sensitivity.

"Company" by Sondheim

ended the programme with a contemporary touch and comic relief.

The performance was an excellent opportunity to become acquainted with eight major operas all in one evening.

MacLauchlan changes tune

by donalee Moulton

Last week Murray MacLauchlan appeared at the Rebecca Cohn for the fourth consecutive year. Two years ago he travelled with a back up band and added an element of rock to his music. Now he has only a bassist for accompaniment and is returning to the folds of folk music. Gone is the shiny silver jacket, in are the striped t-shirts; out are the slick well-rehearsed stage lines, in is the sincere, humble well-rehearsed storytelling.

But do all these changes improve MacLauchlan's show? Yes and no. Yes because he is now more relaxed and can build an

informal relationship with his audience. It is not a star/fan rapport but a one to one (or in this case one-to-many). However in keeping with his new image MacLauchlan has altered many of his songs to include more talking: he seldom sings any one piece all the way through (Carmelita was a fine exception).

His concert changes his image, on disc he has orchestration and harmony. He has neither on stage. For the audience raised on the folk rock of the sixties it must be a return to the past and an enjoyable one. The younger audience can perhaps identify with his life style (MacLauchlan makes a big production out of drinking half a can of beer).

His lyrics however have a more universal appeal (some would say Canadian but MacLauchlan has a wider musical experience than what we hear of locally). There is always the fatalist in MacLauchlan, even the songs which admit that there is such a thing as hope are cynical in this mission. But nonetheless there remains in this personal despair something of value to the rest of us.

As always MacLauchlan is first rate on the piano and with the harmonica—these are the only times when a back-up band would not enhance his music. But after the initial shock/disappointment that the old MacLauchlan was no more, one could relax and be comfortably entertained.



Irina Arkadina (Florence Patterson) with her son Kostya (Brent Carver) in a poignant scene from Chekov's *The Sea Gull*, currently playing at Neptune Theatre in Halifax.



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