

Italians hot and cold

Cristina Deutekom, quite frankly, is an enigma. Or so it appears to me after having attended performances of the Edmonton Opera Association's recent production - Bellini's *Norma* (with Miss Deutekom singing the title role).

Miss Deutekom is capable of producing sounds of extraordinary beauty: high-lying, intense, sustained pianissimos; forceful chest tones; eloquent phrasing; and compelling vocal and dramatic acting. One need only cite Miss Deutekom's exquisite realization of the phrase "Ah, padre! un prego ancor!" from Act III, where she pleads with Oroveso to save her children; and her confrontation with Pollione (also in Act III) where she sings "Preghi alfine? Idigno, e tardi" overwhelming with contempt and hatred, in a fashion which immediately brought Maria Callas to mind. However, one is left in a predicament, as she is a singer of many contradictions and inconsistencies.

Aligned against this array of assets, there lurk certain liabilities: a strong tendency to sing flat, a problem which seemed to correct itself as the performances progressed, but which made the duets with Adalgisa at times a tricky business. The aria *Casta Diva* from Act I appeared to elude her. She evinced no concept of the phrasing required by the aria and the results were startlingly heterodox. But as I cringed at her *Casta Diva*, so did I rejoice in her entire final act.

Joy Davidson (Adalgisa) possessed a mezzo-soprano of a strong and rich quality, moved with ease on the stage, and was visually striking. She appeared to be apprehensive of her top register which tended to sound shrill, but she was able to cope with the coloratura and the difficult duets with Norma.

One need say little about the Oroveso of Giorgio Tozzi. Mr. Tozzi is a singer with an extraordinary voice, a galvanic stage presence, and subtle and expressive acting abilities. Although the role is relatively small and not overly taxing for Mr. Tozzi, he was anything but

On people

How "You have to get out and do it now, but be careful not to overstep your capabilities. You have to keep pushing." The words are Larry Reese's, the fourth year music student who is currently the Musical Director and a member of the cast of the Citadel's production of *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dream Coat*. As Musical Director he is responsible for changes and additions to the score of the play which was written by the composers of Jesus Christ Superstar.

Another current Edmonton production, Theatre Three's *Grimm Brothers Road Show*, has a musical score written by Larry, but due to time restrictions Larry is not the Musical Director of this production. He explains, "Part of the director's job is to be at the rehearsals and make changes where the action of the play requires it. As I am not able to be there, other people have made the final changes to my score and also have made some additions."

Larry began his musical career in grade six when he taught himself guitar. Later he learned the french horn and



Norma: a 'static' opera executed with aplomb and zealously.

cavalier in discharging his responsibilities.

Tenor Jean Bonhomme, who undertook the role of Pollione (which he had never sung before), with only a few weeks' notice, has improved considerably vocally since his performances here last season in the EOA production of *Carmen*. However he still forces his top compass; and not only does his acting remain as impassive as ever, but he has acquired the annoying habit of conducting while he sings.

Lary Benson (Flavio) and Jacqueline Preuss (Clotilde) turned in solid performances in these comprimario roles. Miss Preuss's voice seems to grow in size and strength upon each successive hearing.

Sets by Phillip Silver varied, in their effectiveness, from the rather harsh, one-dimensional sets for Act II, to the effective Stonehenge monoliths for Act III.

Costumes, designed by Suzanne Mess, also varied greatly in quality, ranging from

the very striking costume for Oroveso, to the unfortunate shrouds provided for Clotilde and the Vestal Virgins.

The Edmonton Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of Anton Guadagno, gave a right, clean, and appropriately Italianate performance; while the chorus, prepared by Alexandra Munn, executed its demanding parts with aplomb and a certain zealously.

Norma, as everyone is aware, is a very static opera; as are many of the *bel canto* operas where the emphasis is on vocal beauty, rather than on forward motion. Which for me means that the Stage Director has a particular responsibility to create stagings which convey at least a simulation of activity. However, in many cases, Irving Guttman's stagings took on the appearances of concert performances with sets and costumes. Although I did not find them particularly offensive, neither did I find them imaginative.

F.N. Crory

The arts

Open your eyes to the best of them

Dempsey, Hugh A. (ed.) *The Best of Bob Edwards* Hurtig Publishers \$8.95 272 pp.

"Honest men are as scarce as silent women." - An aphorism coined by one of Alberta's earliest newspapermen, Bob Edwards, and turned with just a touch of the cynic... but the talk of a scarce honest man just didn't refer to old Bob Edwards at all.

Edwards was the spitting image of the frontier newspaperman; apt to use his editorial (and regular!) columns to poke fun at public institutions and satirize sacred issues, he was reporter, editor, and publisher, all in one. He kept a cross-Canada reading audience at bay with the exposes and political invectives published in the most famous of his newspapers, the *Eye Opener*. (Although often referred to as the 'Calgary Eye Opener', the paper was, in fact, published in a number of centers throughout Canada but with the longest and most permanent location in Calgary.)

Although he started his journalistic career in the Winnipeg *Free Press* and then moved to a rural weekly of his own, the Wetaskiwin *Free Lance*, it was in the pages of the *Eye Opener* that Bob Edwards most clearly showed his wit, his eye for aphorisms, and his conviction that what was corrupt and immoral should be brought to light by the press. He once said that "taking things philosophically is easy if they don't concern you," but it wasn't true in his case.

Or perhaps it's more correct to say that Edwards *did* take things philosophically when they didn't concern him. It's just that, unlike most people, anything he observed was of concern to him, particularly in regards to public officials who

ran contrary to his moral ethical code. And he dedicated his life to telling about it.

In the course of the tellings, Edwards revealed a wit that reflected the dryness of his Scottish ancestry and sparkle with a ribald reflection of the frontier. His satire, too, often used humour and scathing facetiousness to bite deep into whatever issue he chose to direct it at - be that a corrupt politician, the hypocrisy of an organized church, or a real estate fraud being perpetrated on people in the more populated centres in North America.

The collected pieces of Alberta-historian Hugh A. Dempsey has put together in this volume are well chosen so that they reflect not only the side but the many facets of Edwards' journalistic skills. The pieces are grouped effectively under different headings of subjects Edwards concerned himself with, but the book is the type that you can sit down and read through in any type of coherent manner. It is designed to be read at leisure, for thoughts to be turned over and savoured.

For those who do read the collection, it will come clear that it was by no accident Edwards used the royal 'we' in referring to himself in the pages of his newspapers, for, in a sense, he was the king of Canadian journalists. Not afraid to expose himself to abuse and possible legal complications in order to fulfill his obligations to the public, Edwards established his role as a conscience of the Albertan, and even the Canadian, populace. In so doing, he also established for himself a singular niche in Canadian history.

Kevin G.

How to be both a student and a success

played in the Edmonton School Boys Band. His family moved to Dacca, now part of Bangladesh and while there Larry learned the sitar, which was then gaining popularity through the Beatles. Back in Canada he played the french horn in the Edmonton Youth Orchestra. In his final year of high school Larry formed a group called Manna which did some recording and toured with Jesus Christ Superstar. While on tour he picked up the banjo. After taking a year off from studies, he came to the U of A as a french horn major in the music department. Halfway through he switched to composition where he is now.

In the past couple of summers Larry has been the Musical Director of the Northern Lights Theatre, as well as an actor, and has performed the same duties in the Barter Theatre's production of *Jacques Briel is Alive and Living in Paris*. He has also worked with Shirley Higginson on several recordings of children's stories.

Larry plans to attend Yale and work on a Master of Drama. "I have formal training in music

but not in drama," he explains. "Eventually I would like to write for the theatre and act, combining the two."

Indeed this is what he is doing at the present time, but he adds, "I hope that I have not reached my peak. It is an ongoing process of learning."

By most standards Larry Reese can be considered successful, yet he is reluctant to admit it, or to say how he has reached the level he is at. However, when pressed he gives this explanation:

"I had an advantage when I came back from Dacca in that I played the sitar. I was playing at Zorba's and met Gaye DeLorme, who now writes for Cheech and Chong as well as Stephen Sills. He is a great guitar player and we got together and played sitar and guitar at places like the Hovel. Later I think I built up my reputation playing with Manna."

"The main thing is that I went out and pushed. It took me a year to get into the position where I was able to write my first score for Theatre Three. During that time I was there, offering to do anything. You have to push,

but at the same time be careful not to push too hard or you will become unpopular. All the time I was making acquaintances who led me on to other people, who were sometimes able to help me. I think that I've been pushing ever since I got back from India in 1968."

A famous saying states that genius is a combination of 90% perspiration, 10% inspiration. When asked if this applies to himself, Larry answered "I have to stop and think about that. I don't really know. I have a strong desire to get out and do things, maybe it is ego. I hope not."

It is not easy being a full time student and working at the same time. "The problem is keeping up with my studies which are training me for the work I am doing at the present time. I have to find a balance."

Again refusing to admit that he is successful, Larry states, "I think there are people who are much further ahead than I am, but they are not in the public eye yet. They will hit and hit hard. However there is a danger a person can wait too long and miss the boat. I decided that I

didn't want to wait but I began my work while I was learning. There may be a problem with this because I become a jack of all trades and a master of none."

Brent Koster

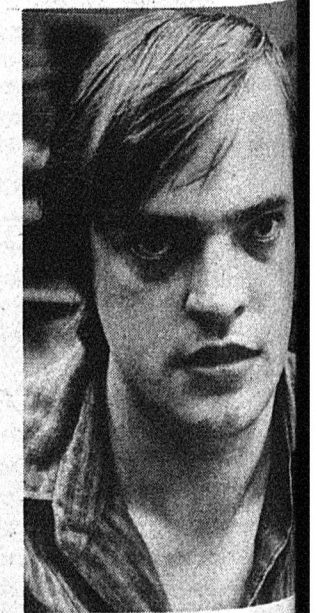


Photo by Brent Koster
Larry Reese - seeking a future...through balanced dedication