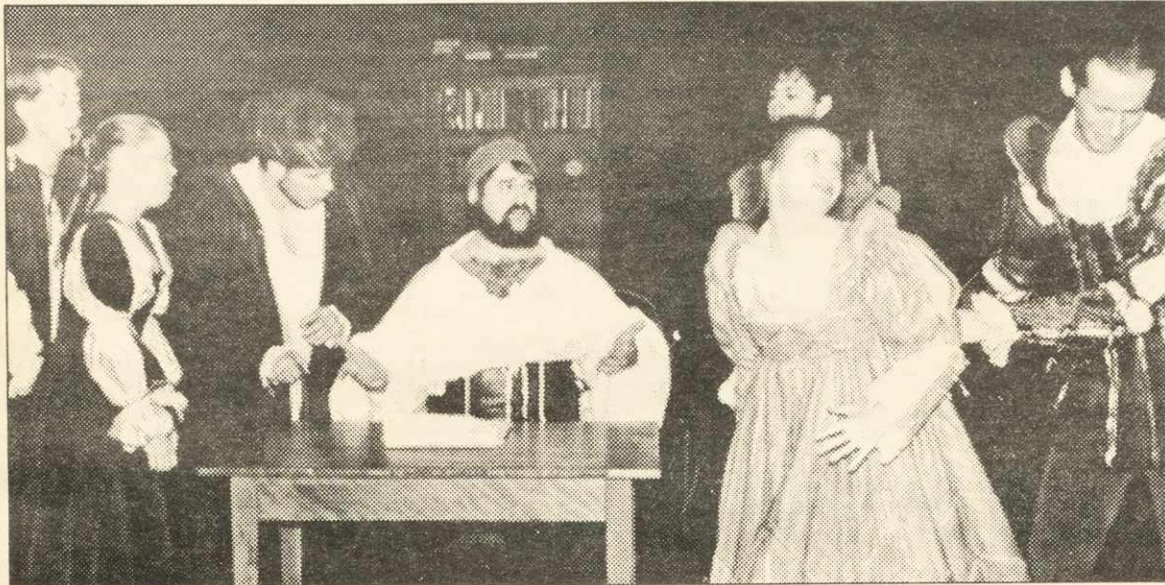


# arts & entertainment

Be early to get good seats

## Dal opera runs tonight through Saturday



The cast of Gianni Schicci, or fans of the Buffalo Bills?

DALPHOTO: MIKE DEVONPORT

by Geoff Ineson

Prepare for the vanishing act of the century folks. Now, the Dalhousie Opera is playing... soon, it will be gone. This special double-billing includes Leonard Bernstein's, God rest him, *Trouble in Tahiti*, and Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi*. Two very exquisite performances at very affordable prices.

Both shows are double-cast and are brimming with talented performers. The chief pleasure of any opera are the solo performances. In particular, the strong baritone, Vito DeFilippio, is magnificent as the somber Sam in *Trouble in Tahiti*. Vito has taken degrees in Biology and in Music at Dal and has studied voice in Germany and Vienna. He describes himself modestly as the "singing bartender". "I like the piece a lot," he said. "I like the jazz-base, modern touch to the music. It's not light-hearted, but in this day and age it may mean that people may be able to relate to it." February 2 and 4 are the performances to catch this rising star before he's called to audition in the international opera houses.

*Trouble in Tahiti* is 'anywhere' suburbia and "Every morning it's the same old thing". Vito stars with Amber Bishop, cast as Dinah, in a

present day tale of the 'goodship love' steaming towards the barrier reef of despair. The duets are so wonderfully sung and with such great conviction that there shouldn't be a dry eye in the house. Vito's gestures and Amber's glances are well choreographed and really capture the pensive (grave) feel of the disintegrating marriage life. A trio links the sorrowful scenes together with light jazzy interpretations of an idealized suburban life.

In addition to this, high-profile opera director, Dr. Gregory Servant, will play the role of Sam on February 3 and 5, with his real-to-life wife Kathryn McDonald-Servant as Dinah. I have had opportunity to hear Dr. Servant in a past performance of St. David at St. Paul's, or was it St. Paul at St. David's? Anyway, I know that the audience will be in for a special treat when they hear these two well seasoned singers perform.

Dr. Servant has a unique effect on his students. He's been described as; "wonderful", "supportive", "encouraging", "brilliant", "an excellent teacher", and personally, I've seen a

great deal of mutual respect expressed between the cast and their director. Rebecca Hiltz, a second-year voice student, enjoys the fact that the roles are double-cast. "You learn a lot from each other because you have two different interpretations of a character, which helps a lot."

The second opera of the evening is Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi*, a comic

*The audience will cheer her to the rafters*

tale of greed and assumed identity set in 1299 Florentine Italy. This is an extremely hilarious one-act opera with extravagantly lavish costumes. The late Buoso Donati has left his entire fortune to the friars of Florence, which sends his relatives into a desperate panic to rewrite the will before the lawyers arrive. Not being able to help themselves, the family turns to Gianni Schicchi for

help. Schicci devises a plan to dictate a new will and proceeds to acquire the largest portion of the Donati estate for himself.

Jason Parkhill is excellent as the clever peasant Gianni Schicchi. His colossal voice and talent brings a new standard to meaningful delivery of the flawless aria. He also handles the movements well which rounds him off as an opera performer. Jason is very convincing as Dante's 'Inferno' refugee and is sure to arouse pity from the audience in each night's performance.

Patricia Murray, a second-year student, makes the whole night worth attending. I think that her voice is why postmen agree to travel through rain, sleet and snow. When her bright, light tone and profound musicality wraps around "O Mio Babbino Caro" the audience will surely cheer her to the rafters. That is, of course, if they're not too busy going for their hankies. Patricia plays the role of Lauretta, Gianni's love-struck daughter on February 4. The role of Lauretta is double-cast with Amber Bishop who by every means will sing the part unequivocally well.

It will be refreshing to see both Alan Porter and Shawn Henry in the cast of Rinuccio, Lauretta's lover. Both singers have been steady staples in the voice productions of Dal for the last few years. Both have proved well that their peers are few and far between.

I think that the amateur audience, myself included, will especially enjoy Gianni Schicchi as it is not a self-indulgent opera at all, which is a stereotype that sometimes falls against the opera (or so I'm led to understand). I think that this is an excellent choice of pieces which together move from the serious to the funny. One may well find oneself, as I found myself, leaving the James Dunn with

mucho allegro in the heart and with much thanks in it too, that so many worked so hard to bring our spirits up. An extra special ovation should go out to the legendary Helen Murray and Dean Bradshaw whose piano accompaniments are simply splendid.

It does seem hard to understand why the administration tried to rid Dal of its pinnacle bastion of culture. There's an indispensable amount of educational experience from the stage managing to the managing of lights and costumes. The pulling together of efforts made here in the Arts Building should set a precedent for the Board of Governors, not act as a target for the means in which they enrich their expense accounts.

Dr. Servant expressed much confidence in the cast at the end of Monday's dress rehearsal. I hope you all enjoy the show and join me in wishing the respective Dal Art departments continued longevity and success.

The show starts at 8 pm at the Sir James Dunn Theatre, Dal Arts Centre. Tickets are \$10 and \$8.

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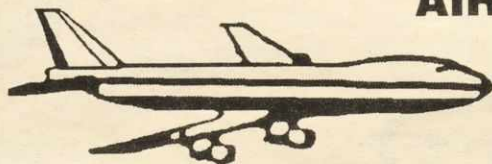
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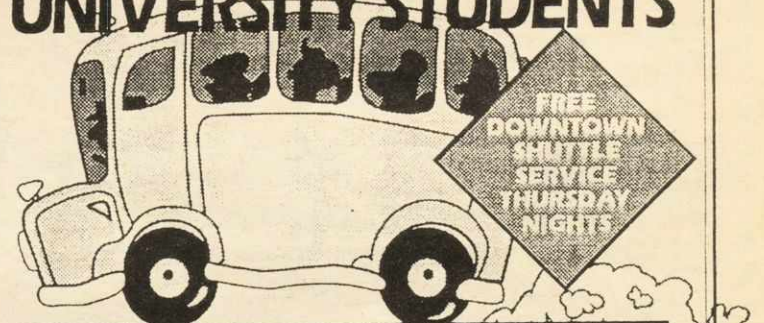
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