

Opera "Rinaldo" featured at Festival Ottawa at National Arts Centre

Celebrating its twelfth season this year, Festival Ottawa Opera Plus held its most ambitious season ever from July 3-29 at the National Arts Centre and was highly successful both in the productions and audience-appeal.

Originally known as Festival Canada at its inception in 1971, Festival Ottawa, renamed after its host city, is an international arts festival highlighting Canadian and world talent and is considered to be one of the finest such festivals in the world of music and opera.

Included in the program at the festival this year were three full-scale opera productions, one concert presentation, 13 chamber or solo presentations, 16 opera-on-film presentations and 11 video-tape screenings of opera, ballet and music.

Baroque opera

George Frederic Handel's rarely produced 270-year-old baroque opera, *Rinaldo* had its Canadian *première* on the opening day and was the featured production of the festival. Amidst dramatic sets by Gil Wechsler and lighting by Mark Negin, coloratura mezzo-soprano Marilyn Horne starred in the leading role with Benita Valente, John Alexander, Samuel Ramey, Noelle Rogers and John Dodington singing the other major roles and Mario Bernardi conducting the National Arts Centre Orchestra.

The Festival Ottawa production of *Rinaldo* will be given to the Metropolitan Opera in New York to mark its one-hundredth anniversary and will form part of the 1983-84 season there with the first performances scheduled for January 1984. It is a "tribute to the Metropolitan for its outstanding contribution to lyric art", said National Arts Centre manager Donald McSween.

The second opera presented at the festival was Mozart's comic Byzantine singspiel, *Seraglio*, with Costanza Cuccaro, Erie Mills, Michael Myers, Gunter von Kannen, Bernard Fitch, Donald Bell and the Festival Ottawa chorus. It opened on July 10, almost exactly 200 years to the day of its world *première*. Using sets and costumes from the Metropolitan Opera, the production was directed by David Alden with Mario Bernardi conducting the orchestra.

Donizetti's original autograph version of *Lucia Di Lammermoor* was the final full-scale opera presented at the festival. This romantic opera starred June Ander-

son as the ill-fated Lucia, with Allan Monk, Pierre Charbonneau, Rockwell Blake, Bernard Fitch and Mona Kelly completing the cast. Paolo Peloso conducted the orchestra for this production.

Anniversaries commemorated

The final operatic production at the close of the festival was the presentation of two operas in concert. Acknowledging the two-hundred-and-fiftieth anniversary of Franz Joseph Haydn's birth, *L'Infedelta Delusa* was sung by Ruth Welting, Rockwell Blake, Bernard Fitch and Allan Monk. The second feature, *Stabat Mater*, sung by Janice Taylor, Ruth Welting and Allan Monk with the Cantata Singers of Ottawa under Brian Law commemorated the centennial of Polish composer Karol Szymanowski. Polish conductor Stanislaw Skrowaczewski conducted the performance.

The chamber music series also paid tribute to Haydn and Szymanowski as well as Igor Stravinsky's centennial with performances by three French piano virtuosos Michel Béroff, Jean-Philippe Collard and Jean-Paul Sévilla; the Emerson and Varsovia quartets as well as the Canadian Orford Quartet; the Trio Pasquier with pianist Jean-Claude Penner; and Polish violinist Wanda Wilkomirska. The Trio Pasquier also performed music by Hungarian Zoltar Kodaly, another composer whose centenary falls this year.



A sketch of one of the costumes designed for Armida in the opera *Rinaldo*.

The full-length opera productions on film were presented courtesy of the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany and included *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Freischutz*, *Wozzeck*, *Oberon*, *Fidelio*, *Die Zauberflote* and *Tales of Hoffmann*.

The Canadian Broadcasting Company archives provided the videotapes which included a variety of opera and ballet productions as well as documentaries of special interest.

Special performances and courses

A number of special programs were offered in conjunction with Festival Ottawa this year, including an "Opera in Perfor-



The Canadian Orford Quartet performed in the chamber music series (from left to right): Andrew Dawes, Kenneth Perkins, Denis Brott and Terence Helmer.