

# OPERA SUPERS OF IOWA CITY NEWSLETTER

VOLUME ONE NO. 6 JUNE 1986

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30 BROOKFIELD DR., IOWA CITY, IA 52240

REMINDER: Next scheduled meeting is Monday, June 9, 1986, 7 p.m. in the lounge of the Music Building.

## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR:

If the newsletter fails to reach you before the meeting of June 9th, it will be the fault of your editor who apparently suffered more of a let-down and loss of energy following BORIS than he let on, all things considered. But now is the time to take on new challenges and find new sources of energy, not only for the production of MADAME BUTTERFLY but for the future of Opera Supers and Opera Theater. Considering the financial bind facing the School of Music and performing arts units not included in the Hancher Circle umbrella (changes in Arts Center fund drive policies), developing sources for support for opera and other School of Music activities may become one of our greatest needs. What has to be done and how we can help remains to be worked out and will be determined in the future.

There is something you can do now, as a favor to your editor if not for yourselves. I have learned from a reliable source that KSUI-FM is considering dropping the weekly program "The Vocal Scene." To those of you not acquainted with it by name or reputation, this is George Jellinek's one hour program presenting one of the finest anthologies of serious vocal music, opera and lieder ever collected from recordings. Periodically he included interviews with artists. He covers recordings from the earliest ones ever made to the current, and offers gems that are either out-of-print or never before released. The "Vocal Scene" has been on KSUI for years on Saturdays during the hour preceding the Met Opera or Saturday afternoon opera broadcasts. Letting the program go would be a grievous loss. What can you do? Write to KSUI-FM, Iowa City, IA 52242 and ask that they retain the program or replace it with something comparable. The "Vocal Scene" is still on Saturdays. If you haven't listened to it yet, do so over the summer. If you have heard the program, you know its quality and what I mean by suffering its loss. Either way, please write KSUI now. Bit-by-bit our music souls are being nibbled away, and I don't like it. Is it that we get so used to having free or low cost (to us) "entertainments" here that we forget that there are costs? I know that KSUI needs funds. Unlike KUNI-FM which also needs funds, our university PBS station acts as if it is demeaning to have a fund drive over the air and would instead allow something valuable to slip away. It is time to be open and honest with the consumer. How about our free University Symphony concerts, faculty recitals, the Stradivari Quartet, the Opera Theater Workshop performances, etc.? I remind you that these ventures are not cost-free, nor are they adequately subsidized by the regent controlled state funds. Think about these matters and ask yourselves what you would be willing to do to ensure the survival of such endeavors. Would you purchase tickets to attend the performances we now get free?

I have allowed myself to get carried away, but I do not apologize. These matters have been on my mind and I want to share them with you. I welcome your reactions and comments.

TAMAKI MIURA, the first Japanese-born soprano to make an international career (debut in 1909) first sang Cio-Cio San in the U.S. in 1915. As an aside, Miura formed the Salmaggi or Manhattan Opera Company after singing with the San Carlo Company for a number of years.

#### EARLIER BUTTERFLIES

The story of Madame Butterfly by John Luther Long that was used by David Belasco for his play first appeared in the Century Magazine in 1897. In part it was based on a true incident reported to Long by his sister, the wife of a missionary stationed in Nagasaki and in part on Piere Lot's Madame Chrysanthème (1887). The latter had already been turned into a light opera by Andre Messager and first presented at the opening of the Theatre-Lyrique de la Renaissance Paris on January 30, 1893.

#### CALLAS AND BUTTERFLY

MARIA CALLAS made her American debut as Cio-Cio San in Chicago in 1955. This was preceded by the issuing of a recording of her doing TOSCA with Di Stefano and Gobbi which bought her great acclaim. This album, in my view, is one of the greatest of all TOSCA recordings, and has been "remastered." I have the old one. Earlier in 1946, Edward Johnson, the general manager of the Metropolitan Opera had invited Callas to sing Madama Butterfly, but she turned him down, as the story goes, because she feared she was too heavy to sing Cio-Cio San onstage. She also turned him down for FIDELIO because she did not want to sing it in English.

JOSE CARRERAS, the tenor, made his debut as Pinkerton in 1972 with the New York City Opera. Referring to the NEW YORK CITY OPERA, do you know when and who formed the company? It was founded by the then mayor of New York, FIORELLO LAGUARDIA and the president of the New York City Council, NEWBOLD MORRIS, on February 1, 1944.

I have no idea how many famous sopranos made their debut in the title role in MADAME BUTTERFLY. How many can you come up with?

#### MADAME BUTTERFLY QUIZ

I had promised a Quiz Contest for this issue. I hope that more of you will take up the challenge and submit entries. There will be prizes. What, I have not decided yet, but trust me. The prizes will be worth your effort and will please you. To be eligible you must be a reader of the Opera Supers of Iowa City Newsletter (i.e. on our mailing list), but not a member of the Music faculty, singing in the cast of BUTTERFLY, or involved in any official function of the BUTTERFLY production that requires you to be using the libretto of the opera. The questions are derived from the librettos using the full texts of the 1904, 1906 and 1907 versions! (That is just to impress you. The questions are simple enough to be answered from the new standard 1907 version.) The winner will be the first person to answer all questions correctly or whoever comes closest to the correct answers. The runner-up will also receive a prize.

Quiz Questions on back.

MADAME BUTTERFLY QUIZ

- #1. What district of Nagasaki is Cio-Cio San from?
- #2. What name does Cio-Cio San's baby have and what is it to be change to under what circumstances?
- #3. How many relatives of Cio-Cio San attended the wedding ceremony?  
How many can you identify as to the nature of relationship?
- #4. What is the name of Pinkerton's ship?

Mail your answers to the editor before July 21.

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IMPORTANT DATES

MADAME BUTTERFLY performance dates: July 25 at 8 p.m. and July 27 at 3 p.m.

Next Opera Supers Meeting: June 9 at 7 p.m., Music Building Lounge

CONTACT PEOPLE

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Iowa City, Iowa 52242

The University of Iowa School of Music Presents  
Giacomo Puccini's  
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University Symphony Orchestra conducted by Michael Lamkin  
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