



Opera For All!

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Spring Production Multicultural Billing to make Opera History in Atlantic Canada

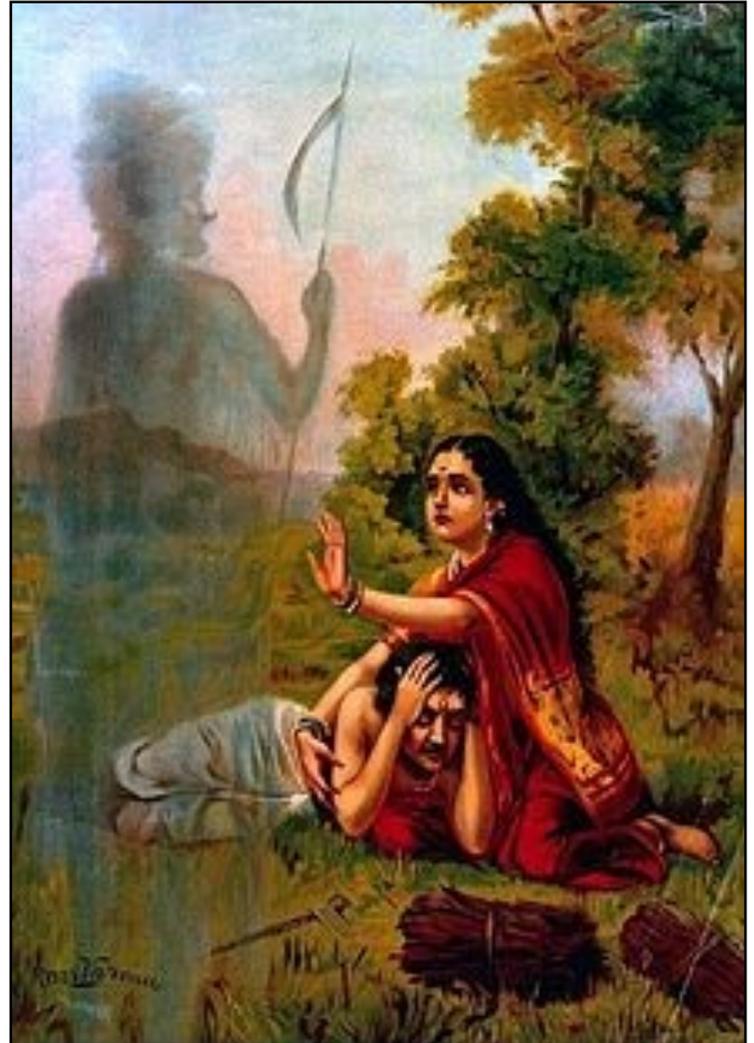
Opera Nova Scotia's Spring Production 2017 is titled " 'Devotion' and 'Truth': two chamber operas on a Hindu Legend". It plays in the Sir James Dunn Theatre Friday and Saturday, May 26 and 27, 7:00 p.m.

Tickets are on sale now at the Dalhousie Arts Centre Box Office in person or by telephone 494-3820 or toll free 1-800-874-1669. General Admission \$35.00, seniors \$30.00, students \$10.00.

"This will be an event making Atlantic Canadian opera history, the art form operating within a multicultural context of special reference to Nova Scotia", says ONS Artistic Director Dr. Walter H. Kemp.

The two works being produced under the umbrella title " 'Devotion' and 'Truth' " open with a hauntingly beautiful setting by Gustav Holst of *Sāvitrī*, concerning the foremost woman of honour in the Hindu Pantheon. The second has been specially commissioned by ONS from the husband and wife team of Nova Scotia's Indian-Canadian performing and creative artists Vineet Vyas and Bageshree Vaze. Each work is approximately 35 minutes in length.

The Subject. Both works deal with the Legend of Sāvitrī from the Mahābhārata. Daughter of the Sun God, Sāvitrī marries the woodcutter Satyavān despite knowing that he is destined to die in a year's time. Through her wisdom she convinces Death to restore Satyavān to life. Sāvitrī is honoured for her womanly Devotion, which is linked to Satyam, the Truth that leads to Godliness.



Holst's *Sāvitrī* consists of lyric narration by the three soloists representing Sāvitrī , Satyavān, and Death, with

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Vineet Vyas



Bageshree Vaze

wordless female voices offstage. This production will employ piano accompaniment.

The commissioned theatre piece by Vineet Vyas and Bageshree Vaze is entitled *Satyam* (Truth). In it a 21st century Hindu girl confronts the challenges of reconciling received family traditions with the ways of a new universal society. Bageshree's performance of her contemporary interpretation of the Sāvitrī story will be presented within the extended traditions of Indian Khatak narrative dance and song, supported by a male dancer and female singer. Vineet has organized an instrumental trio combining the sound and performance practices of the West and the improvisatory art of North Indian Classical music employing sitar, tabla and vibraphone.

The Concepts. The Holst chamber opera, written at the beginning of the 20th century but professionally premiered in 1921 is to be implemented by Director David Overton as the typical "Dream of the East" held by the British Raj, costumed by Bageshree Vaze in the salon oriental style of Ruth St. Denis who popularized such exoticism during the 1920's. The scenography, derived from the artwork of Bageshree's mother, Dr. Pratibha Vaze, will be minimal, suggestive of an Indian forest.

As suits the contemporary setting of *Satyam*, Bageshree's costuming is a modernization of traditional Indian performance garb, set on a bare stage with scenographic atmosphere conveyed through computerized videography. To guarantee authenticity in costuming both works, Bageshree has worked in consultation with a guru of Indian theatre costume history; materials have been selected from New Delhi markets. For *Satyam*, Vineet's musicians will engage both with a written score and in improvisations based on Ragas suitable to the hours of the piece's public presentation.

The Artists

Sāvitrī

Paula Rockwell stars in the title role. One of Opera Nova Scotia's favorite musical personalities, Paula is host and Music Director of Opera Valentine, performed the role of Baba the Turk in Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress*, and often has been featured in concert "Informoperals," most recently as Mignon and as the Mother in *Louise*.

Marcel D'Entremont (Satyavān) is rapidly becoming recognized as one of the Province's leading young male vocalists. He has toured the Province and debuted in France. He has been a regularly featured soloist at the Royal Nova Scotia International Tattoo. He has been a member of *Les jeunesses musicales* touring opera, heard in *Romeo et Juliette* and *La Traviata*. For ONS he has sung at several Opera Valentine Galas. This is his first stage appearance in an ONS Spring Production.

Jon-Paul Décosse (Death) has sung with almost every major opera company in Canada. Since moving to Halifax from Ontario, he has appeared with Symphony Nova Scotia (*Messiah*), Maritime Concert Opera, and various independent vocal projects. For ONS he has been a principal lead in Spring Productions of *Luisa Miller*, *Don Giovanni*, and *La Serva Padrona*, in a concert Informoperal of *Fidelio*, and in last month's coproduction with Cecilia Concerts in *Le Jongleur de Notre Dame* with Suzie LeBlanc.

Greg Myra (Pianist), who holds an undergraduate degree in piano from Dalhousie University and a Masters in Collaborative Piano, University of Manitoba, makes his first appearance with the ONS coaching and accompanying staff.

Satyam

Vineet Vyas is a Canadian exponent of the tabla. Raised in Nova Scotia, he undertook extensive training in Benares with his guru before embarking on an international career on the Indian music circuit, accompanying some of its greatest artists. His breakthrough CD "Taalworks" was released by Times Music in India to great critical acclaim. Featured on the Bravo channel documentary "Fingers of Fire", he has been soloist with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra as well as playing in major venues in India, North America, Japan and Europe. He has been a finalist for the Toronto Arts Foundation Muriel Sherrin award for

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International achievement in Music (2015), and a nominee for the Dora Mavor Moore Award.

Bageshree Vaze is an Indo-Canadian dance artist and musician. Raised in St. John's, Newfoundland, she initially trained in Bharatha Natyam in Michigan and in Bombay, as well as studying Hindustani vocal music with her father. Her later Kathak training was in New Delhi and her advanced vocal studies were in Mumbai. Now based in Toronto, Bageshree has choreographed numerous dance works and issued three CDs as a vocalist. "Tarana", a CD of songs arranged for Indian dancers is accessed by dancers worldwide. She has received commissions, and invitations, for dance performances and festivals in North America and New Delhi. In April 2015 "Paratopia" (with music by Vineet) premiered as part of Dance Works Mainstage season, and was remounted at the 2016 Canadian Dance Festival.

Sharon Chohi Kim, soprano, is an active soloist in recital and contemporary opera on the West Coast of the United States. She is a specialist in collaborative performance, involving experimental, electronic and musical theatre, exploring the sonic possibilities of human vocal expression. Holding an MFA from the California Institute of the Arts,

she is member of the voice faculty at the American Musical and Dramatic Academy, Hollywood.

Kevin Ormsby, male dancer, has been dancing in Jamaica, the USA, and Canada, for over twenty years. He was Assistant Artistic Director of Ballet Creole, and a member of the internationally acclaimed Garth Fagan Dance, Rochester, NY. His unique dance history has taken its form from blending the influences of Afro Caribbean culture through modern and classical techniques.

Rajib Karmakar, sitar, is undoubtedly one of the finest young sitar players of today. To the traditional elements of the art he adds imaginative experiments in world musics, adapting his classical knowledge and skills to international fusion projects. He is the inventor of the double-necked electric sitar.

Trevor Brandenburg, vibraphone, is a graduate of the Dalhousie University music program, and is becoming recognized as a young percussionist of major talents. In December of this Season his artistry was evidenced in the ONS production of Elizabeth Raum's *Time of Trouble*.

Enthusiastic Audience Response to Massenet Opera

The concert performance of Massenet's opera *Le Jongleur de Notre Dame* Palm Sunday afternoon April 9 at Lilian Piercey Hall received an enthusiastic response from the approximately 150 person audience, at this first collaboration and co-production between Cecilia Concerts and Opera Nova Scotia. Headed by the touching and sensitive interpretation of the poor street musician Jean rendered by Cecilia Concert's Artist-in-Residence Suzie LeBlanc, the cast of Gregory Servant, Jon-Paul Décosse, John Lindsay-Botten, Leander Mendoza, Alan Manchester and the soloists and choristers of the Walter Kemp Singers communicated the medieval legend's pity, poetry and piety to great effect. Pianist Lynette Wahlstrom well deserved the burst of applause accorded her at the conclusion of the performance. An appropriate prelude to Holy Week, the work was quite unfamiliar to almost everyone present, and new friends for Massenet and this beautiful music were won: an admirable example of the ONS mandate to present fresh repertoire to our community.



Jean the *Jongleur* flanked by the Abbey of Cluny's *Cuisinier* and Prior.
L to R: Jon-Paul Décosse, Suzie LeBlanc, Gregory Servant.
(Photo by Stan Salsman).

Opera Quiz

By Dappertutto



The content is similar to a previous Quiz, but posed differently. Opera goers have been intrigued by peoples and places of the Mystic East. Can you match the given plot clues to the titles listed below?

1. A British soldier is loved by a Brahmin Priestess during the British Raj in India.
2. In ancient Ceylon, two friends have been enthralled by the voice of a Brahmin Priestess.
3. A French sailor seduces, and then abandons, a Geisha girl of Nagasaki: based on the same novel as Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*.
4. Not a traditional Peking Opera, but Hollywood could give it a cinematic treatment as "Sleepless in Peking".
5. Set partly on an island in the Indian Ocean hailed by the leading tenor as a veritable Paradise.
6. A simple Japanese maiden hurls herself to death from a brothel gallery in shame.

- a) *L'Africaine* (Meyerbeer);
- b) *Le Coq d'or* (Rimski-Korsakov);
- c) *Iris* (Mascagni);
- d) *Lakmé* (Delibes);
- e) *Madame Chrysanthème* (Messager);
- f) *Nixon in China* (Adams);
- g) *Pacific Overtures* (Sondheim);
- h) *The Pearl Fishers* (Bizet);
- i) *Le Roi de Labore* (Massenet);
- j) *Turandot* (Puccini).

Answers

7. An Astrologer presents a love affair between a foolish King and the Tsaritsa of Shemakha, who sings "Hymn to the Sun".
8. Chairman Mao is visited by the Republican Party.
9. Admiral Perry's opening of Japan to Europe is witnessed by the locals.
10. A Priestess of the Vedic God Indra is involved in a political plot, set in an ancient city which now is the capital of Pakistan.

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