

Singer puts major effort into minor role

Michigan Opera Theatre's 1993 Spring Grand Opera Season opens with Giacomo Puccini's "La Boheme," sung in Italian with English subtitles, Saturday, April 24. Performances Wednesday, April 29, Saturday and Sunday, May 1 and May 2 at Masonic Temple, 500 Temple, Detroit. For ticket information, call 874-SING or TicketMaster, 645-6666.



MARY JANE DOERR

Collins may seem like a minor role in Giacomo Puccini's "La Boheme" for bass James Patterson of Bloomfield Hills to debut with Michigan Opera Theatre. However, it is this selfless bohemian's last act effort that brings real meaning to the opera.

"This story is about the camaraderie among the bohemians and the extent friends will go to support each other," said Canadian Patterson, a graduate of Lakeland High School and the University of Michigan Music School.

In the opera's final touching moments, Patterson will sing the aria, "Vecchia zimarra," as the phi-

losopher Collins sets out, in the dead of winter, to pawn his overcoat to pay for a doctor for his sick friend Mimì.

"Often we see Collins portrayed as self-centered because in this aria he bemoans the loss of his valued coat, but Collins is really socially awkward. He backs off when dealing with people, preferring to crawl inside himself instead of talking to them."

This is the third time Patterson has sung in this opera, the opera he debuted in at the San Francisco Opera 10 years ago. Since then the 34-year-old singer, whose 6-foot-6-inch appearance is more like a basketball player, has been singing Patner in numerous "Der Ring des Nibelungen" (Richard Wagner's four series opera masterpieces) and appeared in the video of Peter Sellers' avant-garde "Don Giovanni."

"Collins is the first role I have sung where the character is younger than I am," said Patterson.

Age is vital to the visual success in any "La Boheme" production which with Patterson and other cast members in this production. They are all look like the young bohemians.

"La Boheme" is one of the ABC operas, one of the three most often produced operas in the world's major

houses. ("Carmen" and "Aida" are the other two.) Loved, because it centers on the artist's need for freedom of expression and their libertine life style, the parallels with America's Greenwich Village, the Beat Generation, and Hippie-dom are obvious.

"Even today, artists are still struggling to pursue their art," said Peggy O'Shea, the composer of a chorus member and veteran of 14 MOT productions. This will be her second "La Boheme" with MOT.

The young, struggling bohemians, talented and free, living in a garret has the romantic stuff that make Puccini the composer of passion while Patterson's interpretation of the meaning of the opera seems closer to the truth. The opera is about friendship.

Collins returns in the final act with bread and a herring, more like a red herring when the fun loving youths engage in playful antics turning away from the inevitable doom that follows. When Mimì arrives, sick and near death, the feeling turns to anguish. Musette goes off to pawn her earrings for a hand-rauff for Mimì.

As Collins, Patterson will sing Colline's aria bidding farewell to his youthful utopia as Mimì bids farewell to life. The opera ends with the final bars from that aria.



THOMAS DREW

Opera debut: Bass James Patterson of Bloomfield Hills makes his Michigan Opera Theatre debut as Colline in "La Boheme."

"It is not often a bass has the opportunity to be the focus of the audience," said Patterson.

Mary Jane Doerr of Troy is a full-time teacher and freelance writer who specializes in opera and musical theater. To leave a Voice Mail message for Mary Jane Doerr call 953-2045 on a Touch-Tone phone, mailbox 1855.

Dance festival

Sixth-annual International Folk Dance Festival 3:30-7 p.m. Sunday, April 18, at the Southfield Civic Center Pavilion at 26000 Evergreen, north of 10 Mile in Southfield. Tickets \$15 at the door. An international buffet featuring entrees and desserts, served by area restaurants, will be offered 3:30-6 p.m. For information, call 354-4854 or 871-8600.

Chef's salute

The Schoolcraft College Gourmet Club will present "A Salute to Michigan's Great Women Chefs," 7 p.m. Friday, April 16 at the Waterman Campus Center at Schoolcraft College, 18600 Haggerty Road, Livonia. Featured chefs include Chef Mary Brody of Diamond Jim Brady's, Chef Carolyn Haskins of the Townsend Hotel, and Chef Lorraine Platan of Sweet Lorraine's Cafe. Tickets \$75 per person includes a champagne and hors d'oeuvres reception, five course meal, bottle of wine per table with each course served to compliment the cuisine, a raffle drawing for prizes and booklet of recipes featured at the dinner. Call 462-4422 for ticket information.

Chautauqua

The Bloomfield Township Public Library, 1099 Lone Pine Road in Bloomfield Township, is hosting the Chautauqua Express which features American songs from every decade, 7-8 p.m. Tuesday, April 20. For information, call 642-5800.

Opera

Schoolcraft College, 18600 Haggerty, Livonia, will present soprano Beverly Rinaldi in a free concert noon to 1 p.m. Wednesday, April 21, in the college's Forum Building Recital Hall, F 530. A "Meet the Artist" reception will follow the concert. For information, call 462-4400, Ext. 5225.

Jewish Ensemble Theatre

Julius Feiffer's "Grown Ups" opens for preview performances 8 p.m. Wednesday, April 21 at the Aaron DeRoy Theatre, at the Jewish Community Center, 6600 West Maple Road, West Bloomfield. Regular performances begin 8 p.m. Sunday, April 25 through May 16. For ticket information, call 788-2900 or Ticketmaster, 645-6666.

Meadow Brook Theatre

Banjo picking and Bible thumping will be heard at Oakland University's Meadow Brook Theatre when the bluegrass gospel musical comedy "Smoke on the Mountain," opens 9 p.m. Thursday, April 22. Performances will be given Tuesdays through Thursdays until May 16 on the university campus in Rochester Hills. For ticket information, call 377-3300 or Ticketmaster, 645-6666.

Avon Players

Avon Players will present "A Chorus Line" weekends starting 8 p.m. Friday, April 30, through Saturday, May 22, at the playhouse in Rochester Hills. For ticket information, call 375-1390.

Concerts to feature outstanding musicians

If your musical tastes lean toward classical, you'll find a host of concerts to choose from this month. Make a note of these upcoming performances.

The Julius Chajes Music Fund Concert series will present Brazilian-born pianist Flavio Varani in concert at the Jewish Community Center of Metropolitan Detroit, 6600 W. Maple Road, West Bloomfield, 3:30 p.m. Sunday, April 18.

The concert will be in the Janice Charach Epstein Museum and Gallery at the center. For concert and ticket information, call Annette Chajes, 621-1000, Ext. 852.

The Festive Oakland Symphony will herald the arrival of spring with a special performance featuring works by Tchaikovsky, 7:30 p.m. Sunday, April 18 at the historic Strand Theatre, 12 N. Saginaw in downtown Pontiac. Guest conductor is Karen Nixon Lane, founder of Farmington-based "Group Du Jour." Featured guest soloist is Debra Fayrolin, Detroit Symphony Orchestra cellist. Tickets are \$10, seniors and students, \$5, and will be available at the door. For information, call 354-6024.

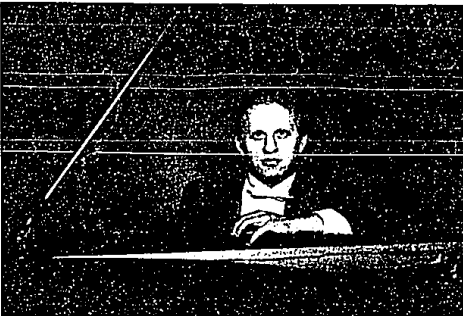
The Festive Farmington's Philharmonic, presents Bech to the Future - subtitled "The Old World, The New World and Out of This World," 8 p.m. Friday, April 23, at Mercy Center, 28600 11 Mile Road, Farmington Hills. Come early for the 7 p.m. pre-concert coffee hour featuring chamber music from the Renaissance to avant-garde. Orchestral selections include Antonin Dvorak's "Symphony No. 9," "From the New World," and excerpts from Gustav Theodore Holst's "The Planets." For ticket information, call 478-2075.

Musica Viva International Concert series will feature the spell-binding artistry of Cuban-born Manuel Barrueco, classical guitar, 8 p.m. Friday, April 23, at the Smith Performing Arts Theatre on the campus of Oakland Community College, Orchard Lake Road at I-696, south of 12 Mile Road, Farmington Hills. For ticket information, call 478-2228.

Mark your calendars, the Michigan Flute Festival, featuring various flute ensembles, the Michigan Flute Orchestra, Mass and flute choirs with more than 300 participants from all around Michigan, will be 6:30 p.m. Sunday, May 23, at Orchestra Hall, 3711 Woodward, Detroit. Call 833-3700 for ticket information.

The Birmingham-Bloomfield Symphony will perform "Great Romantic Symphonies" including Johannes Brahms' "Symphony No. 2 in D Major" and Peter Tchaikovsky's "Symphony No. 4 in F Minor," 7:30 p.m. Sunday, April 25, in the sanctuary of Temple Beth El in Birmingham. For ticket information, call 645-BBSO.

Celebrate the French masters of the 18th century when Chamberworks presents Music at the French Court 8



Featured pianist: Steven Rosenfeld will perform at the Birmingham Temple in a concert featuring works by Scarlatti, Beethoven, Chopin and Schubert on April 25.

p.m. Friday, April 25, at Christ Church Cranbrook, Guild Hall, 470 Church Road, Bloomfield Hills. Call 643-7788 for ticket information.

Pianist Steven Rosenfeld will perform at the Birmingham Temple's Vivace Performing Arts Series, 7:30 p.m. Sunday, April 25. The program - "Forms of Music: Concert and Commentary" will include music of Scarlatti, Beethoven, Chopin and Schubert. Afterglow will follow concert. Admission \$10, students and seniors, \$9. The Birmingham Temple is at 28611 W. 12 Mile Road, Farmington Hills. Call 647-4632 for ticket information.

The Schoolcraft College Community Choir will present a "Choral Celebration," featuring Brahms, Nanci, selections from Mendelssohn's "Elijah," and traditional folk music, 4 p.m. Sunday, April 25, at Northville's First United Methodist Church, 777 Eight Mile, Northville, and 8 p.m. Saturday, May 1, at Faith Lutheran Church, 3000 Five Mile, Livonia. Donations will be accepted during intermission. For information, call 462-4448.

The American Artists Series wraps up its 23rd season with flutist Ervin Monroe, 3 p.m. Sunday, April 25. For ticket information, call 851-5044.

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