

Opera Theater season varied

By IFAN PAYNE
Music Critic

One of the most consistently important musical events in this region over the past several years has been the annual season of the Opera Theater of Saint Louis.

Last year the Opera Theater's presentation of *Così fan tutte* staged by Jonathen Miller was, to read the national and international musical press, one of the international operatic high points of the year.

Readers will recall that the mercurial Dr. Miller spoke in McCain Auditorium during the period prior to the opening of the opera in St. Louis.

Jonathen Miller was scheduled to join the Opera Theater again this year in order to prepare a new production of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, however Dr. Miller, who is a qualified medical doctor, decided to quit the

music and production business and return to medical practice. The production will be staged instead by Mark Lamos with Louis Otey and Greg Ryerson alternating in the title role.

The Opera Theater of Saint Louis has been hit by a double tragedy this year for not only has Dr. Miller retired from the scene but the brilliant young conductor Calvin Simmons, who was scheduled to conduct with the company again, was killed last year in an boating accident.

There are, however, exciting things afoot at the delightful Loretto-Hilton Center on the campus of Webster Grove where the Opera Theater is based in a sylvan setting. Perhaps the most noteworthy event will be the world premiere production of Frederick Delius' *Margot La Rouge* (on a double bill with Poulenc's wonderful comedy, *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*), which will be conducted by the Delius scholar and amanuensis, Eric Fenby. No less notable is the fact that both operas will be produced by the brilliant and sometimes provocative Frank Cosaro.

For those with a sweeter tooth for more familiar fare, there will be the production of Verdi's *La Traviata*, conducted by Henry Lewis, and for the more adventurous there will be an opportunity to hear and see Hector Berlioz' *Beatrice and Benedict* in a production staged by Colin Graham and conducted by John Nelson.

There are a host of associated activities, including lunchtime concerts, an evening with Eric Fenby, champagne buffets and as always picnic on the lawn, but most of all there will be the distinctive, civilized style of the Opera Theater of Saint Louis.

The productions continue until June 26 and more information concerning both the productions and tickets may be obtained by calling (314) 961-0171.

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