

## REVIEWS

Opéra de Québec presents a tragic *Lucie de Lammermoor*SHIRLEY NADEAU  
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It was a dark and foggy night onstage as the curtain went up on the Opéra de Québec's production of *Lucie de Lammermoor*; the French-language version of Gaetano Donizetti's opera created in 1839, two years after the Italian version. The original version was based on Sir Walter Scott's 1819 story *The Bride of Lammermoor*, which takes place in Scotland.

At the première performance at the Grand Théâtre on Oct. 21, the words of the performers may have been

in French, but the music was decidedly Italian.

The heroine, Lucie Ashton, magnificently portrayed by Belgian coloratura soprano Jodie Devos, is the only female character, other than the women in the chorus. She is surrounded by and manipulated by the men in her life, especially her brother Henri. The romanticism and deceitfulness of the story eventually lead to the madness of Lucie, whose dramatic arias soar to the heavens.

In a nutshell, Lucie loves Edgard Ravenswood (a member of another Scottish clan who are enemies of her family) but, for financial and political reasons, her older brother Henri plans

to marry her off to Sir Arthur Bucklaw. Lucie and Edgard secretly swear their love to each other by exchanging rings, but the hatred between their families leads to betrayal. Falsely convinced of her lover's infidelity while he is away fighting in France, Lucie yields to her brother's pressure to marry Sir Arthur.

When Edgard returns and discovers she is married, he curses the day he fell in love with her. Lucie goes mad and murders her new husband (offstage, no bloodshed is seen onstage). Edgard eventually learns the truth, but too late. Lucie dies of a broken heart and mind, and Edgard then kills himself, hoping to join his

beloved in heaven.

French tenor Julien Dran, whom *Bachtrack* magazine describes as having a "noble voice," portrays Edgard. Well-known Quebec baritone Hugo Laporte, who has appeared in many Opera de Québec productions in recent years, is Lucie's nasty brother Henri. French tenor Joann Le Lan is Henri's conniving valet Gilbert and Emmanuel Hasler is the hapless Sir Arthur. Last, but not least is Montreal bass Tomislav Lavoie, who portrays the chaplain Raymond who unites Lucie and Arthur in marriage.

*Lucie de Lammermoor* continues on Oct. 24, 26 and 28. For more details, visit [operaddequebec.com/en](http://operaddequebec.com/en).



Photo by Shirley Nadeau

The principal characters of the Opéra de Québec production of *Lucie de Lammermoor* – Yoann Le Lan, Emmanuel Hasler, Tomislav Lavoie, Hugo Laporte, Jean-Marie Zeitouni (director of the OSQ orchestra), Julien Dran and Jodie Devos – salute the audience at the end of the powerful performance at the Grand Théâtre. Members of the chorus of the opera company stand behind them.

## Club Musical features international performers

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The Club Musical de Québec launched its 130th season on Oct. 17 with the first of six concerts featuring renowned international performers at the Palais Montcalm.

Russian-Israel trumpeter Sergei Nakariakov, currently living in Paris, opened the evening. The undisputed master of his instrument displayed extraordinary breath control,

playing two intimate compositions by Robert Schumann, accompanied by Russian pianist Maria Meerovitch, who now lives in Belgium. Schumann composed *Three Romances*, opus 94 for his wife Clara, herself an accomplished pianist and composer, in only three days, and presented them to her as a Christmas present in 1849.

Japanese violinist Daishin Kashimoto then took to the stage, accompanied by Meerovitch, to play Edvard Greig's

dramatic Sonata for violin and piano, No. 3. Kashimoto studied at the Juilliard School of Music in New York when he was only seven years old, their youngest student ever. He is now the first violin of the Berlin Philharmonic orchestra.

After a brief intermission, the three musicians returned to the stage to perform Johannes Brahms' delightful and passionate Trio for piano, violin and horn, opus 40.

The Club Musical's Nov. 3 concert features Hungarian-

born British classical pianist and conductor Sir Andrés Schiff, one of the most renowned interpreters of Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert and Schumann. Sir Andrés will announce the works on his program onstage on the evening of the concert. For more details and tickets, visit [clubmusicaldequebec.com](http://clubmusicaldequebec.com).



Photo by Shirley Nadeau

Daishin Kashimoto, Maria Meerovitch and Sergei Nakariakov are warmly applauded by the audience at the first concert of the 130th season of the Club Musical de Québec on Oct. 17.

## Study finds link between economic vulnerability, COVID prevalence

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Residents of poorer neighbourhoods in Québec City were more vulnerable to COVID-19 infections than their fellow citizens in wealthier areas, a recent study has found.

The study was carried out by researchers from Université Laval and the public health directorate (DSP) of the Centre intégré de santé et de services sociaux de la Capitale-Nationale (CIUSSS-CN) and the results were published in English in the journal *BMC Public Health*. The study explored COVID prevalence within the 1,206 census subdivisions of the Capitale-Nationale region from March 2020 through November 2021.

"The spread of the epidemic was concentrated in the most disadvantaged areas, especially in the densely populated areas. Socioeconomic inequality appeared early and increased with each successive pandemic wave. The models showed that areas with economically disadvantaged populations were three times more likely to be among the areas at highest risk for COVID-19," the authors wrote.

Dr. Slim Haddad, one of the study's lead authors, is a professor in the department of social and preventive medi-

cine at Université Laval and a medical advisor at the regional public health directorate. He explained that researchers wanted to work on a granular level, using the census to divide the city's population into clusters of 500-700 people. "Thanks to the census, we know the level of poverty, the proportion of immigrants, the number of people who spend a significant proportion of their income on housing, in each part of the city. We can evaluate their level of [economic] defavorization and make a link with [COVID] transmission. We managed to objectively [show] that transmission was higher in poorer milieus. Our study doesn't directly answer the question why, but we do have some hypotheses based on our experience of how social inequality affects public health."

One hypothesis has to do with housing arrangements. "If you're in a small dwelling with a large number of other people, you're close together and there might be less ventilation, less capacity [to self-isolate]." Employment is another probable factor, according to Haddad: "People who are economically disadvantaged often have jobs where they're directly serving the community – home care aides, people working in the food industry or with delivery services. You can't work from home when you have a job like that, and you're often in contact with the clientele, more

exposed to other people."

Local author Nora Loreto, who began chronicling deaths from COVID in care homes and workplaces early in the pandemic, said the study's findings "weren't a shock at all."

"People were advised to isolate in their spare bedrooms [if they had COVID]," she recalled. "That's great advice if you live in a small apartment. Just under half of Canadians live in a single detached house ... but those who didn't were erased. Politicians aren't living in these neighbourhoods where people are most at risk. If we orient policies toward people who are most [at risk], they're more efficient."

## Access to information

Haddad said people who are economically disadvantaged are often less able to access or interpret quality health information than their wealthier counterparts.

Marie-Noëlle Béland is the director of L'Engrenage, a civic participation organization in Saint-Roch. According to data released by the city in 2019, the average annual income in Saint-Roch is \$10,000 lower than in the city as a whole. One in seven residents is an immigrant (compared to about one in 14 in the city at large) and one in six has no high school diploma (slightly higher than the city at large).

For Béland, a former literacy educator, the study's results

are a cautionary tale about access to information. She said since the beginning of the pandemic, the organization has gotten creative with its efforts to inform residents, many of whom don't have reliable Internet access or access to news.

"A lot of people in Lower Town have issues with the digital divide, but also sometimes with reading comprehension," she said. A hasty flyer campaign early in the pandemic gave rise to a community bulletin board, and a "town crier" – Charles-Auguste Lehoux – reads community news bul-

letins aloud two afternoons a week. Béland also said she hopes to work with community organizations on using more accessible language. "There's a significant access-to-information issue when most media outlets are aimed at educated people. It takes a lot of translation to be able to take language used by highly educated people and make it accessible to everyone in the population," she said.

DSP spokesperson Mariane Lajoie said the results will help public health officials prepare for a COVID resurgence or a future epidemic. Ultimately,

according to Haddad, COVID is far from the "great equalizer" that it was portrayed as early in the pandemic. "It's not a democratic illness [and] it didn't arrive in a vacuum. It arose in a context of social inequality. It doesn't affect everyone in the same way, and it won't affect everyone in the same way in the future."

*This is the second story in an occasional series about the ongoing impact of COVID-19 in Québec.*

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