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## Classical Notes

**By Ellen Pfeifer, Globe Correspondent The Boston Globe,  
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**Soprano Michele Capalbo** says she relishes the opportunity to sing the title role of "Tosca," and particularly the second-act confrontation between the passionate diva and the vicious Baron Scarpia. It gives her an opportunity to indulge "in all that bad behavior," she says.

The Canadian soprano will appear in a concert version of "Tosca" presented Jan. 13 by the Newton Symphony Orchestra, Chorus Pro Musica, and conductor Jeffrey Rink. Because this won't be a staged production, she won't get to wrestle with Scarpia in quite so physical a way. But listeners will have an opportunity nonetheless to hear a young singer who is starting to generate some heat on the international opera scene. As conductor Rink puts it, "she possesses a rare combination of vocal power and beauty and was recently a resounding success in this difficult role with the Quebec Opera."

A native of London, Ontario, Capalbo was awarded the George London Foundation Grant for Canadian singers last March. In June, she was awarded the 2001 Vancouver Opera Guild Career Development Grant. She was also first-place winner in the 1999 Liederkrantz Awards for Voice in New York City.

Opera buffs in the region will recall her New England debut last March, when she sang the title role of "Aida" at Mechanics Hall in Worcester. She has also been featured in the last three New York

Central Park opera performances, singing Aida there last summer. Given the strong choral tradition of Canada, it is not surprising that Capalbo and her two sisters began singing in choruses. "There were a lot of local festivals," she recalled during a recent telephone conversation. "There were Christmas shows and spring shows" - lots of opportunities to perform. Opera did not beckon immediately, she said. In fact, when she saw her first opera, "La Boheme" by the Canadian Opera Company, "it didn't hook me right away." What drew her in finally was listening to recordings of Maria Callas and Zinka Milanov. "The individuality and color of their voices" were irresistible, Capalbo said. "I thought I'd like to try that."

Capalbo went to New York to study privately with Arthur Levy, who coaches, among others, Audra MacDonald and Elizabeth Futrell. It was in New York's Central Park that she made her operatic debut in 1999, singing the role of Helene in Verdi's "Les vepres Siciliennes." She made her European debut in 2000, singing Aida at the Strasbourg Festival.

Ideally, she would like to divide her time equally between Europe and North America and is particularly interested in singing more engagements in Germany, where she says there are opportunities to sing unusual repertory. "They perform a lot of Czech operas, obscure German works, Wagner, and Strauss, as well as the beautiful operas of Dvorak that aren't done here except as a star vehicle."

Along with Capalbo, the Newton "Tosca" will feature tenor Mark Nemeskal as Cavaradossi and baritone Robert Honeysucker as Scarpia. The 7:30 p.m. performance takes place at Rashi Auditorium, 15 Walnut Park, Newton Corner. Tickets are \$35, \$25, and \$20 (for students and seniors). For information, call 617-965-2555.