

Pavarotti: Opera singer had an unteachable charisma and a magnetic smile

■ FROM A20

And what of his groundbreaking professional path, moving from a career exclusively in opera to major concert events with the Three Tenors and U2? Would he have been the superstar that he was without the help of his manager, Herbert Breslin?

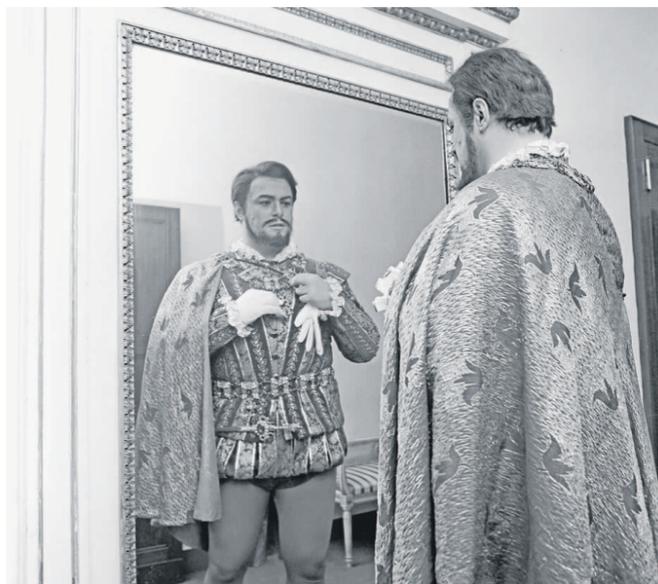
The story that Howard chose to tell is surprisingly mundane. It is a story of an opera singer who studied his craft with great focus, who spent enormous amounts of time away from his family, who had bouts of loneliness and a confusing dual life as a beloved figure and a private person. It's true that Pavarotti reached a unique level of fame, far beyond what most opera singers realistically hope for, but all that stuff about hard work and public

pressure and struggles with isolation is par for the course among opera singers, in any generation. But of course, Pavarotti is special. His instrument is visceral, even a bit superhuman in its ability to survive decades with that risky, wide-open vocal technique. He had unteachable charisma, a magnetic smile that is, in certain lights, completely sexy.

I imagine that it is Pavarotti's existing fans who are most itching to see this new documentary. As a collection of candid and on-stage footage, Howard's work is satisfying; yet, as a story of an extraordinary life, *Pavarotti* is frustratingly diluted.

Pavarotti is now playing in Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal.

Special to The Globe and Mail



Opera singer Luciano Pavarotti drapes himself in a costume as he prepares to perform. The Pavarotti documentary contains interesting footage, but misses key areas of the singer's life, such as charity work.

THE ERNA BAIRD MEMORIAL GRANT

Scientific Research Update 2019

HEIGHTENING AWARENESS FOR AUTOIMMUNE DISEASE



Autoimmune disease is a major health threat that is increasing worldwide. An autoimmune disease develops when the body's immune system attacks and destroys healthy body tissue by mistake. More than 80 autoimmune diseases exist, emphasizing the urgent need for better awareness and research to improve treatment options and health outcomes for patients.

The Erna Baird Memorial Grant (EBMG) was established seven years ago to advance biomedical research into one of the rarest, most debilitating, and potentially fatal autoimmune diseases originally called Wegener's Granulomatosis - now known as GPA (Granulomatosis with Polyangiitis).

GPA affects people of all ages, genders and ethnicities. For individuals living with *GPA*, a disrupted immune system and inflammation of the blood vessels cause devastating and painful damage to almost any organ in the body including the skin, joints, lungs, kidneys, gastrointestinal tract, eyes, brain, nerves, sinuses, nose and ears. Like all autoimmune diseases, *GPA* is challenging to diagnose and treat, cannot be prevented or cured and may lead to early death. Genetics interact with various environmental factors to influence both disease onset and outcome.

The EBMG provides ongoing and vital funding for research led by Dr. Kathy Siminovitch, a leading geneticist in the field of autoimmune disease at University Health Network and Mount Sinai Hospital in Toronto. *The Grant* publishes its annual update disclosing its most recent medical research developments at this time of year in memory of Erna Baird - beloved wife, mother and grandmother who suffered from *GPA* and passed away on June 6, 2011.

DISCOVERING NEW TARGETS FOR TREATMENT

With the support of the *EBMG*, Dr. Siminovitch and her collaborators have identified the genetic alterations key to the development of *GPA*. **After analyzing over 2000 *GPA* patients, a study by the Canadian research group and a USA-based vasculitis research consortium revealed four genes - all involved in the functioning of immune cells - as pivotal contributors to risk for this condition.** These studies also show that genetic markers can be used to help distinguish patients with *GPA* from a clinically similar condition known as Microscopic Polyangiitis or MPA, a distinction that is important in terms of selecting most effective treatment. Currently the research group is conducting additional genetic analyses, and initiating a collaboration with scientists in the UK and Europe so as to identify other genes influencing risk for and outcome of *GPA*.

By partnering with researchers from South Korea, vital genetic information has been used by the Canadian researchers to identify the specific immune cellular pathways that are involved in disease development, representing new opportunities for developing more targeted and effective treatment. Furthermore, over the past year, the *EBMG* has enabled the exploration of the immune cell alterations associated with poor clinical outcomes in *GPA*, especially those which concern the failure to respond to treatment and with post-treatment disease recurrence. **This research builds on patient interest and involvement in advancing understanding of *GPA* and on new technology allowing for very comprehensive characterization of a person's immune system status at any point in time.** Results to date show that **this approach can illuminate immune system changes reflective of treatment response and potentially allow for testing that predicts failed treatment responses thus providing a window of opportunity to intervene with new treatment so as to prevent reactivation of the disease and concomitant complications.**

This new immune profiling strategy is applicable not only to *GPA*, but potentially to all autoimmune diseases, such as rheumatoid arthritis and lupus. Through this research, the *EBMG* is providing an unprecedented opportunity for Dr. Siminovitch and her team to forge a more personalized approach to care for *GPA* and other autoimmune diseases, whereby the genetic and immunologic profiles of an individual will be used to guide the timing and selection of treatment in order to ensure the best possible outcome for every patient

PATIENTS AND SCIENTISTS PARTNERING TO FIND A CURE

The *EBMG* and Dr. Siminovitch are grateful to **Vasculitis Foundation Canada (VFC)** for providing support for Canadians living with *GPA* and their families. **VFC is a national, not-for-profit organization dedicated to improving care and advancing groundbreaking research.** Under the leadership of its dedicated President, Jon Stewart, **VFC has assisted the EBMG-funded studies by encouraging members, patients and families to provide the biological samples needed to conduct this research.**

Together with patients, healthcare providers and researchers, **the Erna Baird Memorial Grant continues to support the pursuit of new knowledge that will lead to innovative and powerful diagnostic tests, improved genetic counseling for patients and families, and the building blocks of finding a cause and cure for *GPA*.**

For more information, or to support this research, please contact **Josh Lai** at University Health Network (UHN) at **416-340-5204** or visit **www.ernabairdmemorialgrant.com**