

Werther

1975

Saturday, October 25, 1975 8:00 PM

Tuesday, October 28, 1975 8:00 PM

Sunday, November 2, 1975 2:00 PM

Friday, November 7, 1975 8:00 PM (Broadcast)

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WERTHER

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA MAGAZINE 1975



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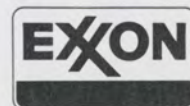
In Victorian society, a genteel woman did not marry a man half her age or (Heaven forbid!) practice politics. Jennie did.



She was Winston Churchill's mother.

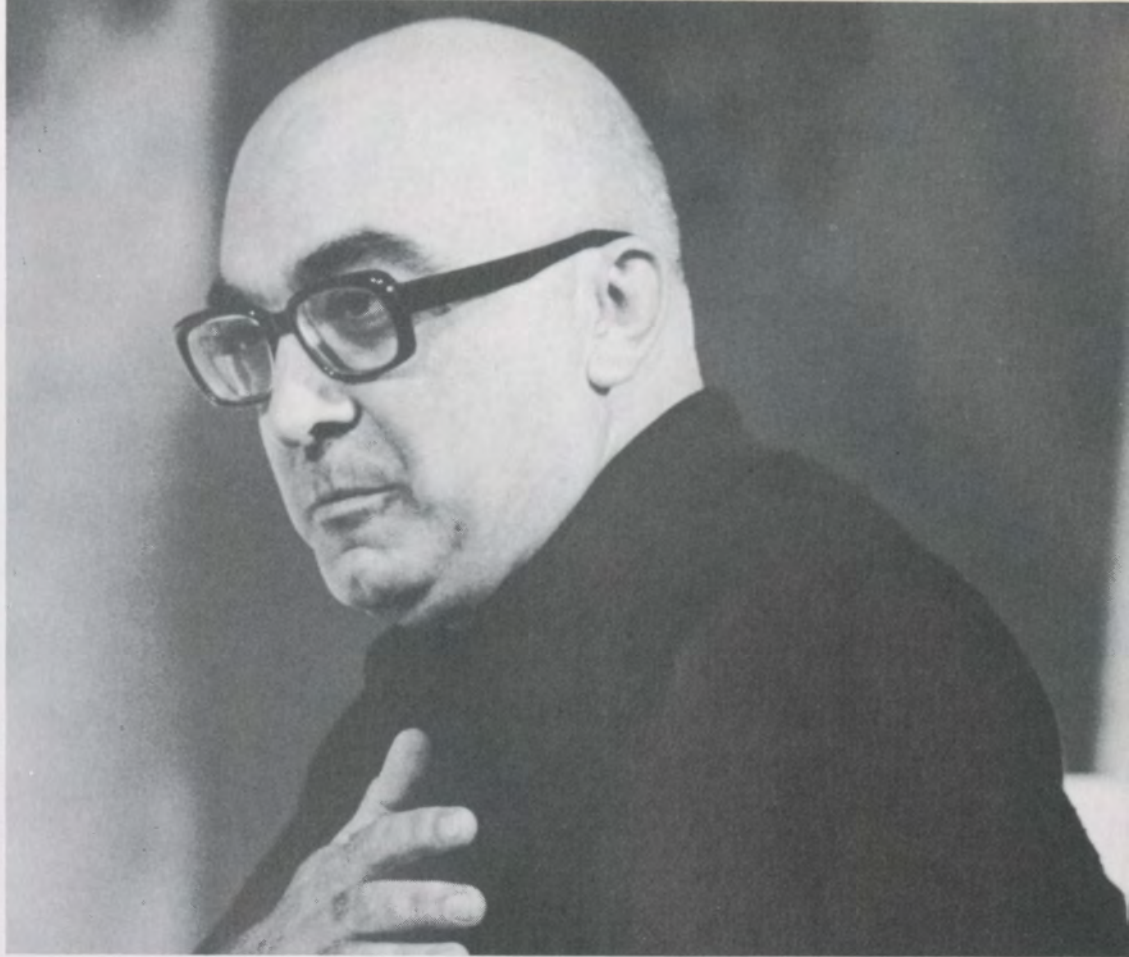
She was a playwright. An author. A political campaigner. A divorcée. And the mother of "the greatest ever Englishman," Winston Churchill. She was Jennie Churchill, the extraordinary girl from Brooklyn who dazzled and daunted the whole of Great Britain. Now, the fascinating story of her life comes to television, as Lee Remick stars in JENNIE, the lavish seven-part PBS series made possible by a grant from Exxon.

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Photo: Caroline Crawford



LOTFI MANSOURI: Keeping it Intimate

by Armistead Maupin

When Lotfi Mansouri gets excited about something, his eyebrows look like parentheses doing push-ups.

"People used to be very snobbish about *Werther*," exclaims the genial director, suddenly animating his expressive face. "Not too long ago it was quite fashionable to say that Massenet's music was sugary and cheap, that it wasn't worthy of serious consideration. The people who said that completely overlooked the composer's remarkable sense of theater."

continued on p. 9

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"Thank God people are beginning to take a second look. Massenet was a musician of tremendous dexterity as well as an excellent exponent of the kind of French verismo which later influenced such Italian composers as Mascagni and Leoncavallo. His works had a strong aura of sincerity and theatricality that one should never underrate."

The Iranian-born Mansouri speaks from experience. His dazzling 1974 production of Massenet's *Esclarmonde* at San Francisco Opera (the first American staging since 1893) will be performed at the Metropolitan Opera this season. Mansouri interpretations of *Manon*, *Don Quichotte*, and *Thaïs* have delighted audiences in Geneva, and San Francisco Opera's 1975 version of *Werther* is the director's fourth handling of the opera. (The previous productions were in Genoa, 1964; Geneva, 1966 and Chicago, 1972.)

"From a director's standpoint," says Mansouri, "*Werther* is an extremely dangerous opera. Unlike, say, *Rigoletto* or *Bohème*, it lacks blood-and-thunder. *Werther's* charm is its delicacy, the intimate emotional scale which differs so radically from most of the larger-than-life operas. The danger comes when you try to communicate that intimacy to an audience in a huge opera house. It is vitally important that you don't destroy the realism and humanity of the story with a lot of stylizing or exaggeration."

Humanity is the key word in *Werther*, the director stresses. "The people of Wetzlar are plainly bourgeois; they are neither mythical nor heroic, and Massenet has embellished this aspect of Goethe's tale by adding secondary characters like Johann and Schmidt, who emphasize the earthy qualities of the townspeople."

"Furthermore, the librettists (Edouard Blau, Paul Milliet and Georges Hartmann) have made a very clever adaptation of a novel which is basically about thoughts and feeling. They have taken a rather rambling narration and converted it into four well-constructed acts which progress very convincingly."

Because many of *Werther's* emotions are internalized by the characters, Mansouri faces the problem of conveying those emotions lucidly without destroying the subtlety of the work. "Charlotte, for instance, does not openly communicate her love for the poet until Act III, when, all of a sudden, it explodes like lava from a volcano. Nevertheless, it is essential to show the audience what is going on in Charlotte's mind. This must be indicated through the physical behavior of the young woman, the tension she feels in the presence of *Werther*, the very sudden, yet minute signs of her loss of control, which she overcomes immediately."

The director says his aim with *Werther* is to recreate the kind of brooding intensity that made Goethe's novel a sociological trendsetter of astounding impact. "*The Sorrows of Young Werther* inspired the youth of 18th century Europe to effect blue coats and leather vests and provoked an incredible rash of suicides. Even Napoleon went crazy over the book, reading it eight times during his Egyptian Campaign."

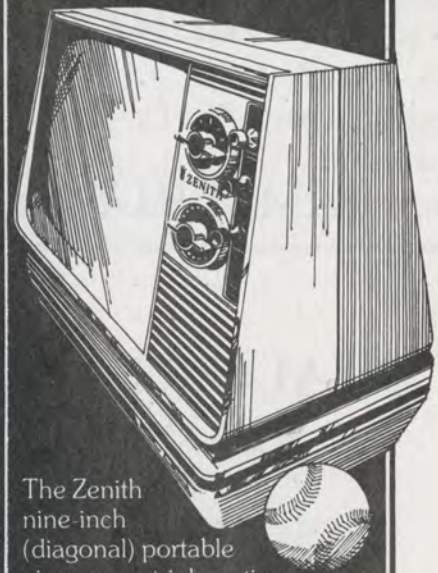
"There are a lot of parallels," adds Mansouri, "between the introspective romanticism of the *Werther* story and the so-called Flower Children of the 1960's. Both phenomena reflect a preoccupation with self-examination, as well as a need for exploring the limits of human emotional possibilities. They also share an infatuation with things of the earth, as reflected in *Werther's* opening tribute to the beauty of nature."

"At the core of *Werther* is the purest sort of romanticism, the delicious sadness of loving something that is hopelessly unavailable."

Mansouri, who is also staging San Francisco Opera's 1975 productions of *L'Elisir d'Amore* and *Andrea Chenier*, has been named general director of Toronto's Canadian Opera Company, effective July, 1976. More Massenet awaits him in 1979 when he will direct *Thérèse* for the Holland Festival. ■

Mr. Maupin is the staff writer for San Francisco Opera.

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I WORK FOR THE OPERA

by Kerry Quillin

I work for the opera. In San Francisco, these five words alone are often sufficient to conjure up visions of walking down cool, tapestried marble halls, or of trembling in the wake of some tempestuous artist, pen and paper in hand. However, the reality of the position of administrative intern with San Francisco Opera is somewhat less glamorous than one might imagine. The Opera I know best is not composed of internationally known singers, designers or directors, but of simple working people on the job. As corny as this sounds, the real distinction of these people lies in their love of opera. Some San Francisco Opera staff members actually live and breathe it, like an element as vital as water or air. In spite of incredibly long hours, a frenzied atmosphere and low pay, it is this core of people who are responsible for the fact that the curtain will go up for you this evening.

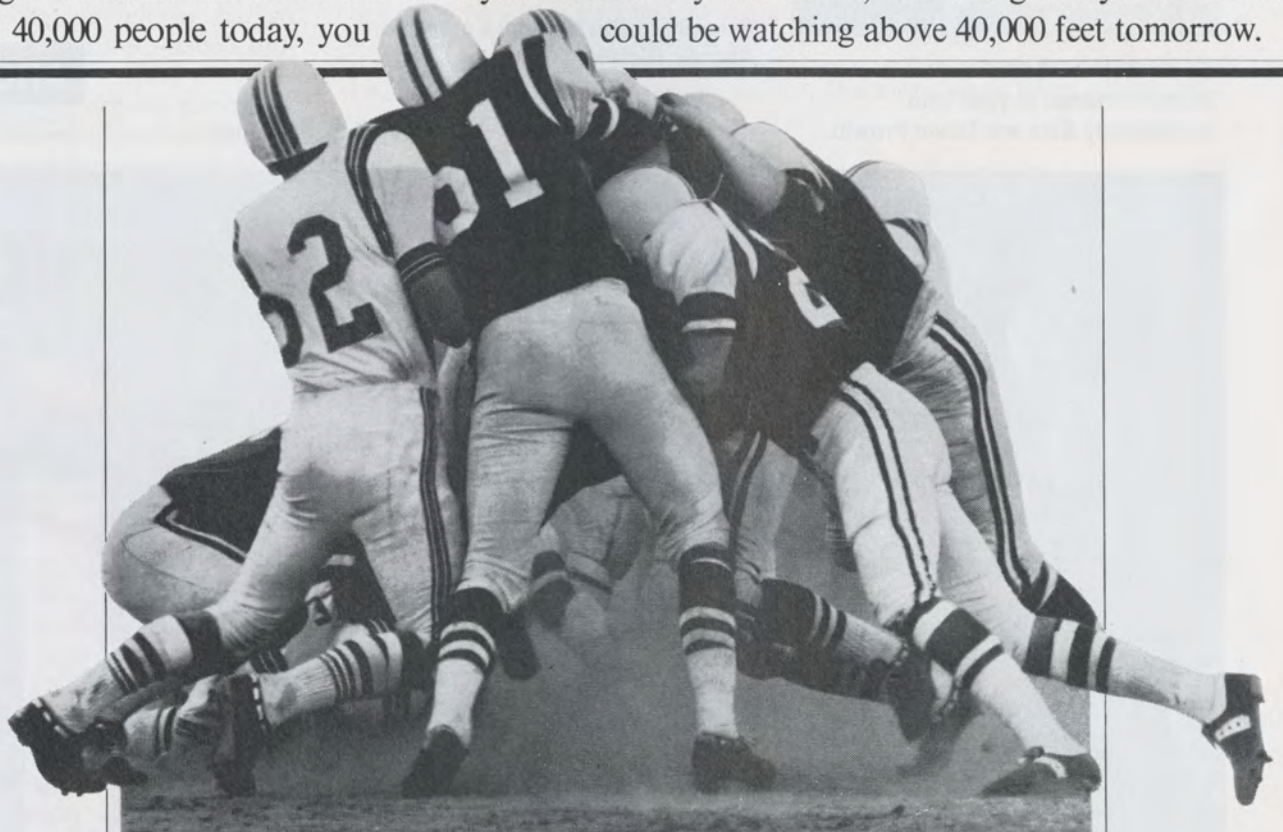
I started working for San Francisco Opera four months ago through the Comprehensive Employment Training Act, which provides federal funding for on the job training in non-profit organizations and governmental agencies. I soon realized that the difference between San Francisco Opera and other places I had worked was its unusually volatile atmosphere, exaggerated as the roles its stars played on-stage. The determining factor in this

continued on p. 13

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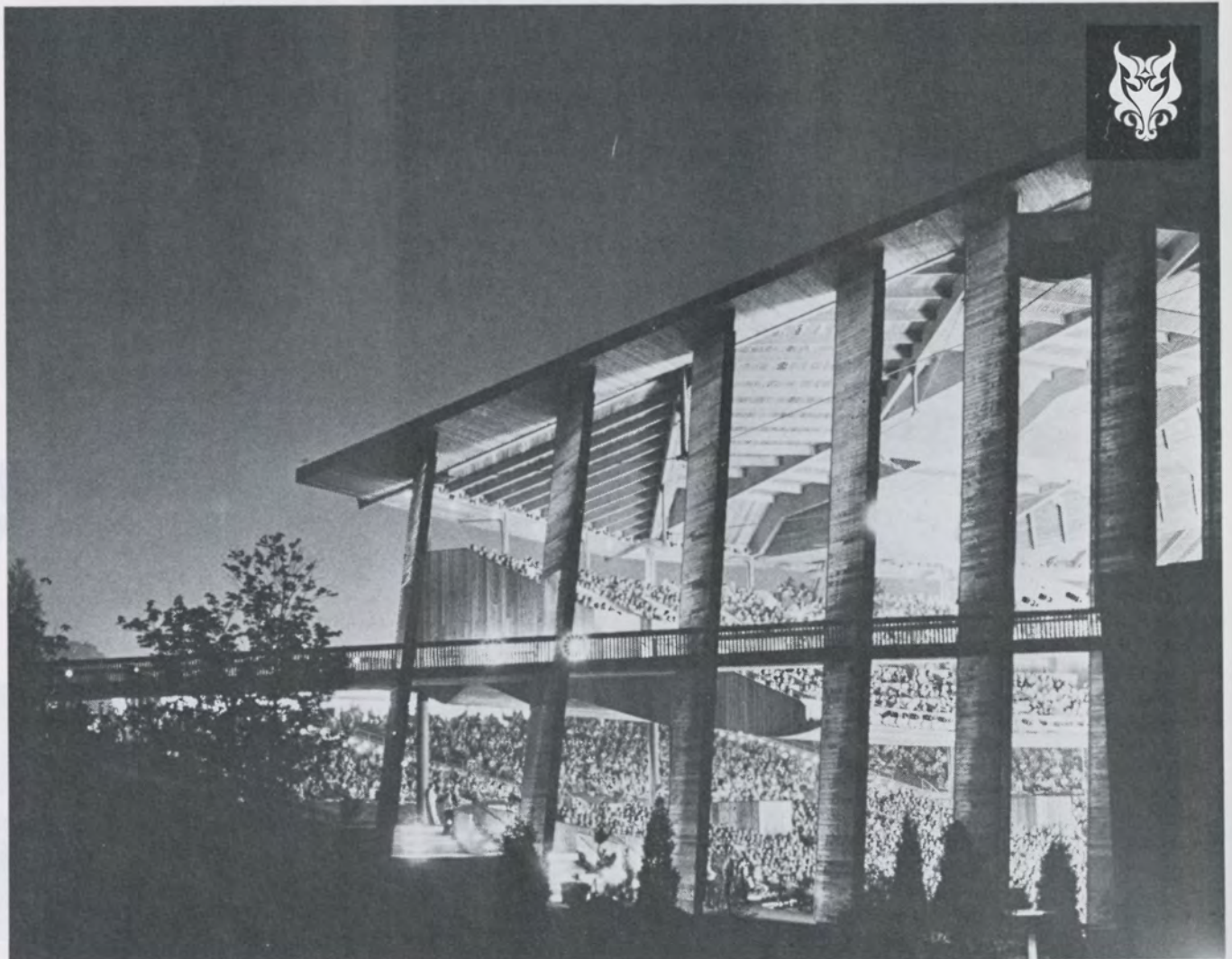


Co-hosts for this season's
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College Opera Association

The College Opera Association, a student organization sponsored by the San Francisco Opera Guild to further interest and involvement in the opera, invites you to look into and participate in activities now being planned for 1975-1976.

Among College Opera Association projects this year is a program which affords members a chance to follow the various stages of efforts that go into putting together this season's production of Donizetti's *L'Elisir d'Amore*. Some members will actually participate in the performance of *Andrea Chenier* as supers—a rare opportunity to be involved on the other side of the operatic stage. In addition, the College Opera Association will also be sponsoring meetings with directors, stage technicians, make-up artists and opportunities to get together informally with world famous artists appearing with San Francisco Opera. For the 1976 Season, members will again be able to obtain tickets to certain performances for themselves and their campuses at a substantial discount.

Thus, the College Opera Association is able to add extra dimension to the operatic experience for its members. We hope that you, too, if you are either a student or a faculty member of a Bay Area college, can benefit from our events.

Further information on the College Opera Association can be obtained from:

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times, in watching Merola and Brown Bag rehearsals, I was impressed with the ease and fluidity of his direction, giving a new dimension to the music.

Anyone who works for SFO sooner or later gets the grand tour of the House, conducted by none other than Colin Harvey, librarian and member of the Opera Chorus for 38 years. Colin's stories of performing with most of the great opera stars of our time make him the unofficial historian for the Company, and resident "character." It is people like these, Ruth Felt, Iris Vaughan, Margaret Norton, Anita Mocerri, whose names are not common knowledge, who in my mind make up the backbone of San Francisco Opera.

As the summer progressed Brown Bag became involved in a series of performances at the Golden Gate Park Band-Shell and in Bay Area shopping centers. Coincidentally, I began to understand what I had heard about Mr. Adler. There is not one administrative or artistic decision to be made in San Francisco Opera and all its affiliate companies that does not cross his desk, and in which he does not have a say. The time element alone involved in keeping track of all the comings and goings of a multi-million dollar operation is staggering. One wonders how one man can do it all, but his was the incredibly far-reaching vision that made San Francisco Opera what it is today.

The summer blocking rehearsals for the Fall Season started in July. By August the rapid increase of activity had really charged the air. New faces crowded the elevators, production staff, directors, singers. The conversation on the fourth floor seemed like Berlitz gone berserk. People spoke and responded in Italian, French, German, Russian, and sometimes combinations of two or three. The regular staff people talked excitedly about this year's repertoire and stars, and also remembered funny incidents in previous seasons. Lotfi Mansouri swept effusively through the House. Patrick Libby, a little more cautiously, came in and said hello. A colorful troupe of costume and wig designers, assistant directors, musical coaches, and comprimarios paraded through the offices. A hundred exotic names, Hadjimishev, Troyanos,

Maximowna, Capobianco, planted themselves in my brain, creating fantastic images of the mysterious and unexplored.

It was through the Public Relations department that I was initiated into the reality of working for a professional arts organization. I sat in on a staff meeting which started out with a feeling of energy and *esprit de corps*. Then it hit us: synopses to write, articles, releases, snakes, pictures, development campaign promotion, interviews, press receptions, molding public opinion, the program magazine, the Nevelson poster, press tickets, libretti orders, promotion manuals, meetings with graphics consultants; the list went on and on, all somehow to be done by 5:00 tomorrow, with whatever grace you could muster and a smile on your face. The job would get done, but only because someone was willing to work twelve hours a day, six sometimes seven days a week. The same dilemma seemed to settle in every office, production and administrative. At times the only relief was the sound of the rehearsals onstage coming in on the intercoms, the most beautiful music of all time, La Stupenda, Pavarotti, Troyanos, Wixell. After working all day, many would sit in on the lengthy evening rehearsals. This, after all, was what they were working for.

Opening night — September 12th. I came to the House that morning to find florists arranging huge bouquets of carnations. Long stem roses for the artists would arrive later that afternoon. In the office Matt and Colin laughed and reminisced about their many years at San Francisco Opera, and the time before they came to work here; the one-night stands touring across country, singing outdoors drenched to the skin, old vaudeville stages, staying in cheap hotels. The humanity of their quips and anecdotes was the most lasting point of education for me: how opera people behind the scenes could give their lives to art, and never care about being recognized by you, their audience. ■

Kerry Quillin is an administrative intern at San Francisco Opera, through the Comprehensive Employment Training Act.

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OBSERVATIONS ON MASSENET'S VERSION OF GOETHE

by Gary Schmidgall

The strengths and limitations of musical drama often become apparent by turning attention to the literary source on which an operatic work is based. Why a composer chooses a particular novel, poem, short story or play, to what extent he is disloyal or loyal to his source, and how the ultimate impact of the source and the musical version compare—the consideration of these questions often gives us insight into the composer's personality and art.

This is certainly true of Massenet's *Werther*, the opera which most abundantly displays—even more than *Manon*—Massenet's special gifts as a writer for the lyric stage. Every now and then in the history of opera an especially fruitful equivalence of artistic sensibility occurs between an author and composer. Mozart's *Nozze di Figaro*, Verdi's *Otello*, and Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande* come immediately to mind. Massenet's version of Goethe's short epistolary novel, *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, is yet another happy combination of creative powers. To appreciate this we must look at *Werther* from the perspective of its literary source.

WERTHER

(d'après GOETHE)


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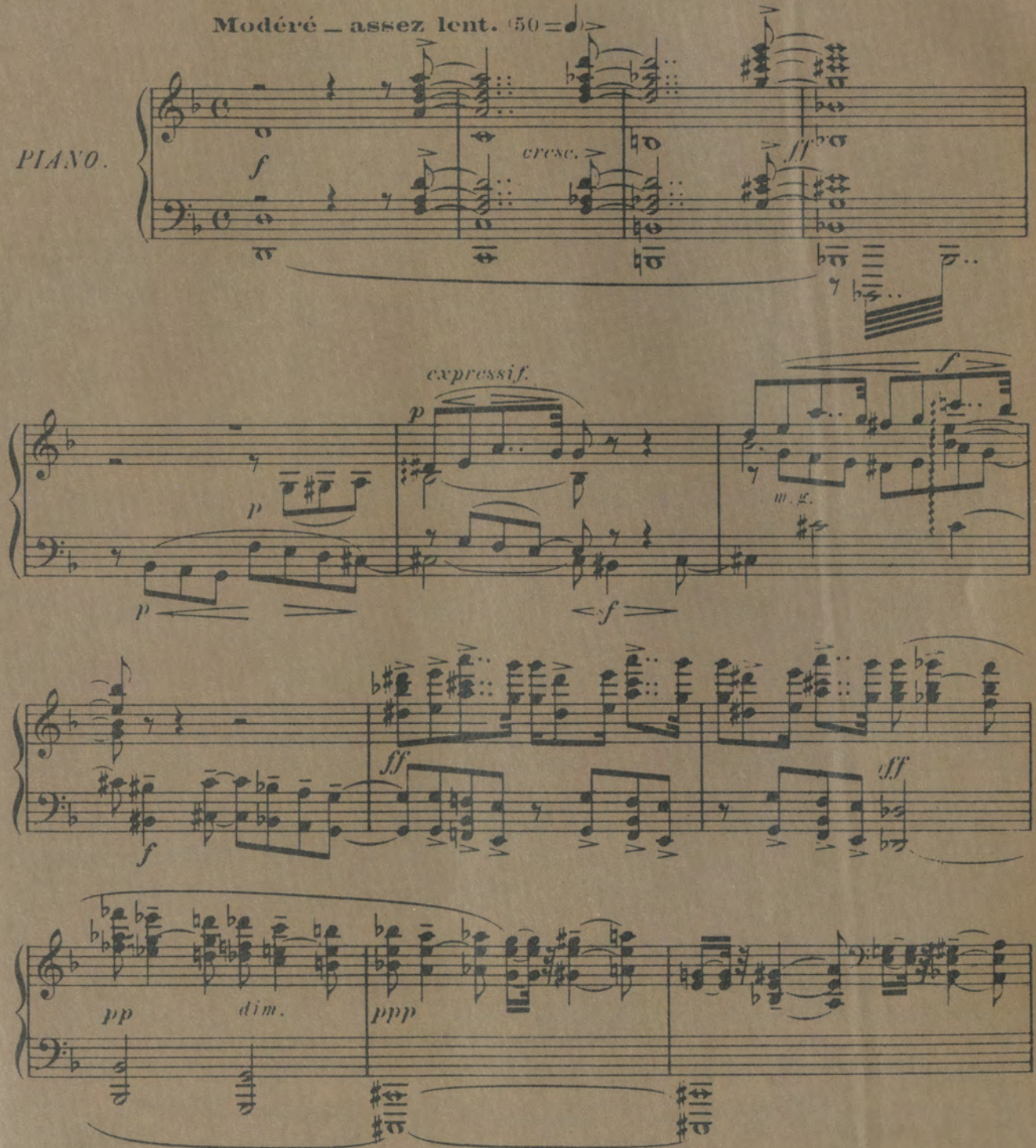
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
J. MASSENET.

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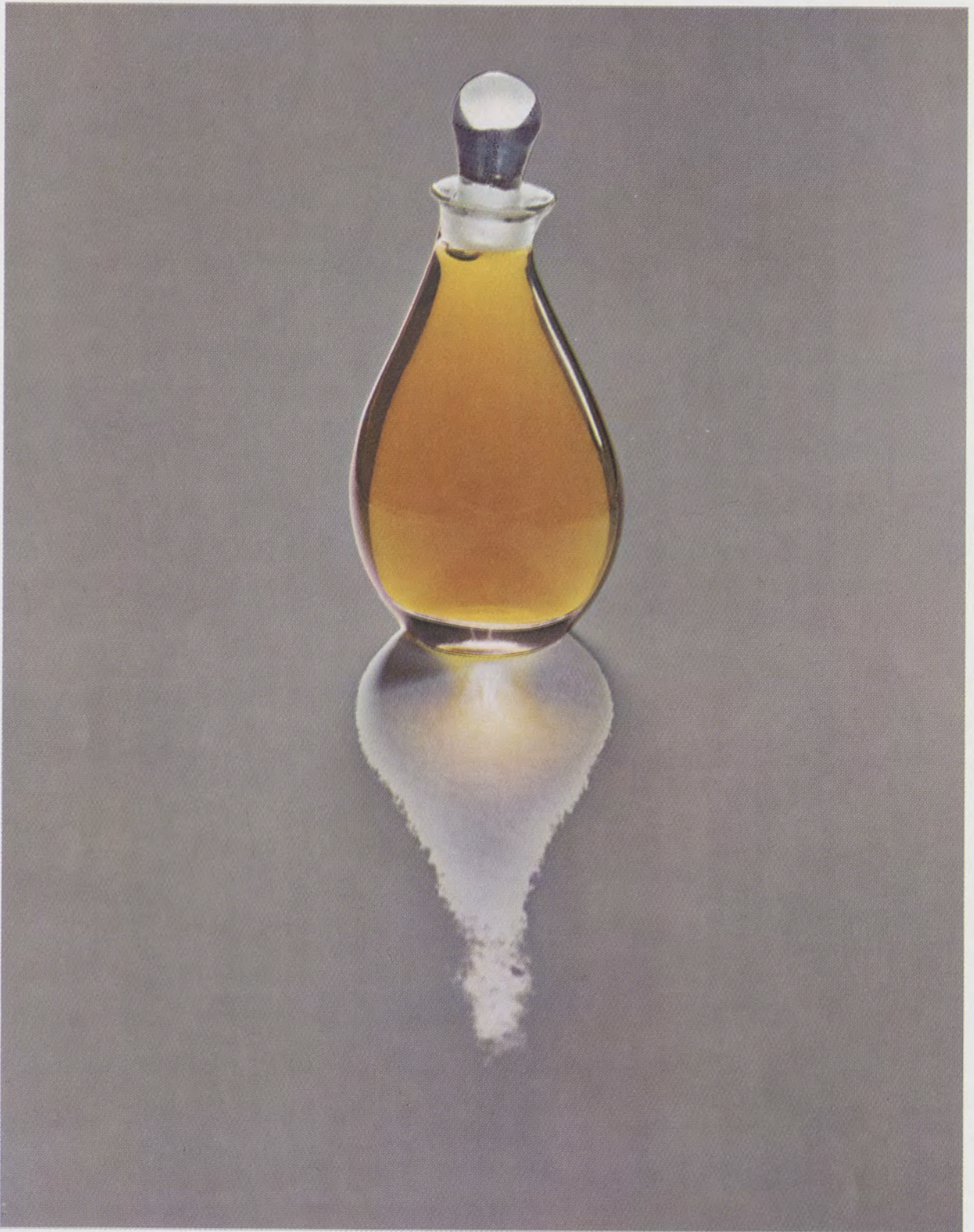
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The musical score is written for piano and consists of four systems of music. The first system is marked 'Modéré — assez lent. (50 = )' and includes dynamic markings *f* and *cresc.*. The second system is marked *expressif.* and includes *p* and *f*. The third system includes *ff*. The fourth system includes *pp* and *dim.*. The score features complex chordal textures and melodic lines in both hands.

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It is especially important to look back to Goethe's novel—he wrote it in 1774 at the age of twenty-five—because it occupies an extraordinary place in the history of world literature. One can safely say that no work of such slender proportions and humble intentions has ever been so popular among so many social classes, in so many countries, and for such a long period of time as Goethe's *Sorrows*. It infuriated the orthodox (for its favorable portrayal of a suicide and erstwhile adulterer), charmed the huge eighteenth century audience for sentimental romance, and spurred hack poets, novelists and dra-

matists to every imaginable form of adaptation, plagiarism and travesty. There has never been—before or since—anything approaching the extended, hysterical rage for *Werther* and *Wertheriana*.

Many were the sins committed against Goethe's novel. Just one year after it appeared, the author wrote: "I'm sick of this digging up and dissecting of my poor *Werther*." Thirty years later, as one might well imagine, Goethe was quite fed up: "when I make something the way it suits me, the consequences are not my affair. If there are fools who take harm from reading *Werther*,

continued on p. 21

Giacomo Aragall in a rehearsal of San Francisco Opera's 1975 production of *Werther*.



Photo: Ron Scheri

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then, damn it, so much the worse for them."

Harm? We may wonder today how this unpretentious story could harm anyone. But it genuinely shocked and titillated its first readers (as Henry Miller shocked a few decades ago). To prudes and moralists it was a dangerous book; they said it caused a rise in the European suicide rate. Byron, tongue partially in cheek, wrote to Goethe: "I really believe that Werther has put more individuals out of this world than Napoleon himself—except by way of his profession."

* * *

Composers often rush into literary sources where more sober minds would fear to tread. And *Werther* might seem an odd choice with its utterly simple plot and a hero who has only two active moments: when he tries to steal a kiss from Charlotte and when, off-stage, he shoots himself. The novel is largely a study, not of deeds, but states of mind, namely, Werther's infatuation, Charlotte's sturdy virtue, Albert's placid respectability, and Sophie's juvenile insouciance. There is no "drama" in the novel because the characters do not really conflict with each other but move on separate planes, Albert as a man of commerce, Charlotte as a chaste wife and surrogate mother to her siblings, Sophie as a carefree girl (she is only eleven in the original), and Werther as a desperate lover.

But what is not "dramatic" may in fact be most "musical." Music is peculiarly able to evoke differing planes of existence, and Massenet succeeds brilliantly in discriminating for us in his music between the lyric turmoil of Werther's inner thoughts, the more mundane and yet appealing grace of both Albert and Charlotte, and the complacent, rustic society which so to speak surrounds the central action.

* * *

The novel is made up of Werther's own correspondence, except for the last pages in which an anonymous narrator takes over as the hero loses

continued on p. 22



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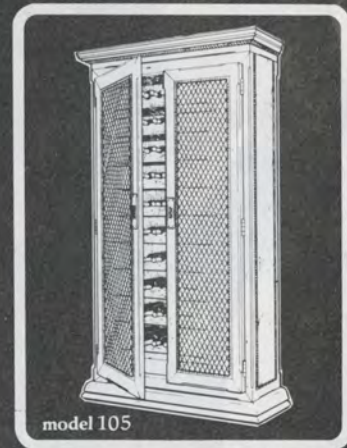
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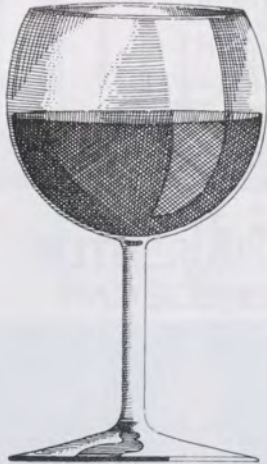
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self-control. This might seem problematic for a librettist, but in fact Werther's letters are already very thinly disguised dialogues — what Goethe called in his *Reflections on Werther* "a conversation in spirit which is closely related to correspondence." It took little distortion to turn the oblique dialogue of the letters into music.

The flow of the letters in the original is, in fact, by its very nature operatic. That is, almost all of them represent emotional climaxes—either of elation, depression, or a wracking mixture of both. They are the passionate highlights of Werther's year-and-three-quarters struggle with a hopeless love. They describe exalted states of consciousness, and this was exactly the potent material for Massenet to turn into highly charged lyric explosions. Thus, for example, Werther's letter dated October nineteenth—its full text is, "Oh, this void, this dreadful void in my breast! Often I think—if just once I could press her to my heart, it would be filled!" — becomes in the opera



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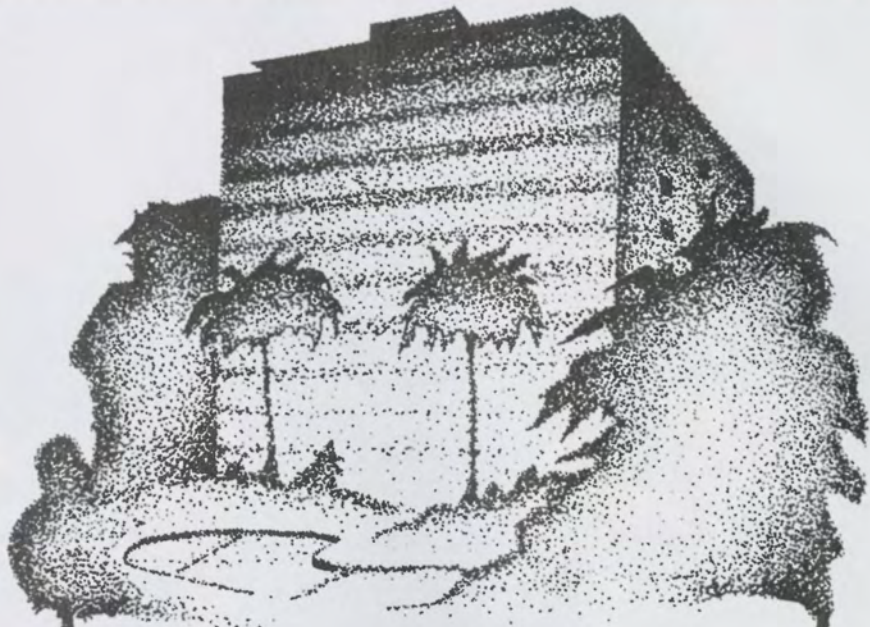
Werther's palpitating little aria in Act II (*J'aurais sur ma poitrine*).

Werther's letters are the chronicle of an increasing loneliness and despair. Their torrential verbal outpouring Massenet was able to capture frequently in his *Werther*. Indeed, the title role is one of numerous highly affective but brief lyric moments. Most notable among these are *O nature!*, *Ah! pourvu que je voie*, and *Rêve! Extase!* in Act I, *Lorsque l'enfant revient* in Act II, and of course the climactic *Prends le deuil, ô nature!* in Act III.

* * *

Opera thrives upon exaggeration, and there is happily much emotional hyperbole in Werther's letters: "Adieu! I can see no end to this misery but the grave!" "She is preparing a poison that will destroy her and me, and with voluptuous delight I drink the cup she hands me." If we find Massenet's hero conventionally operatic in his emotional self-indulgence, we should not blame Massenet. This is in the original.

continued on p. 65



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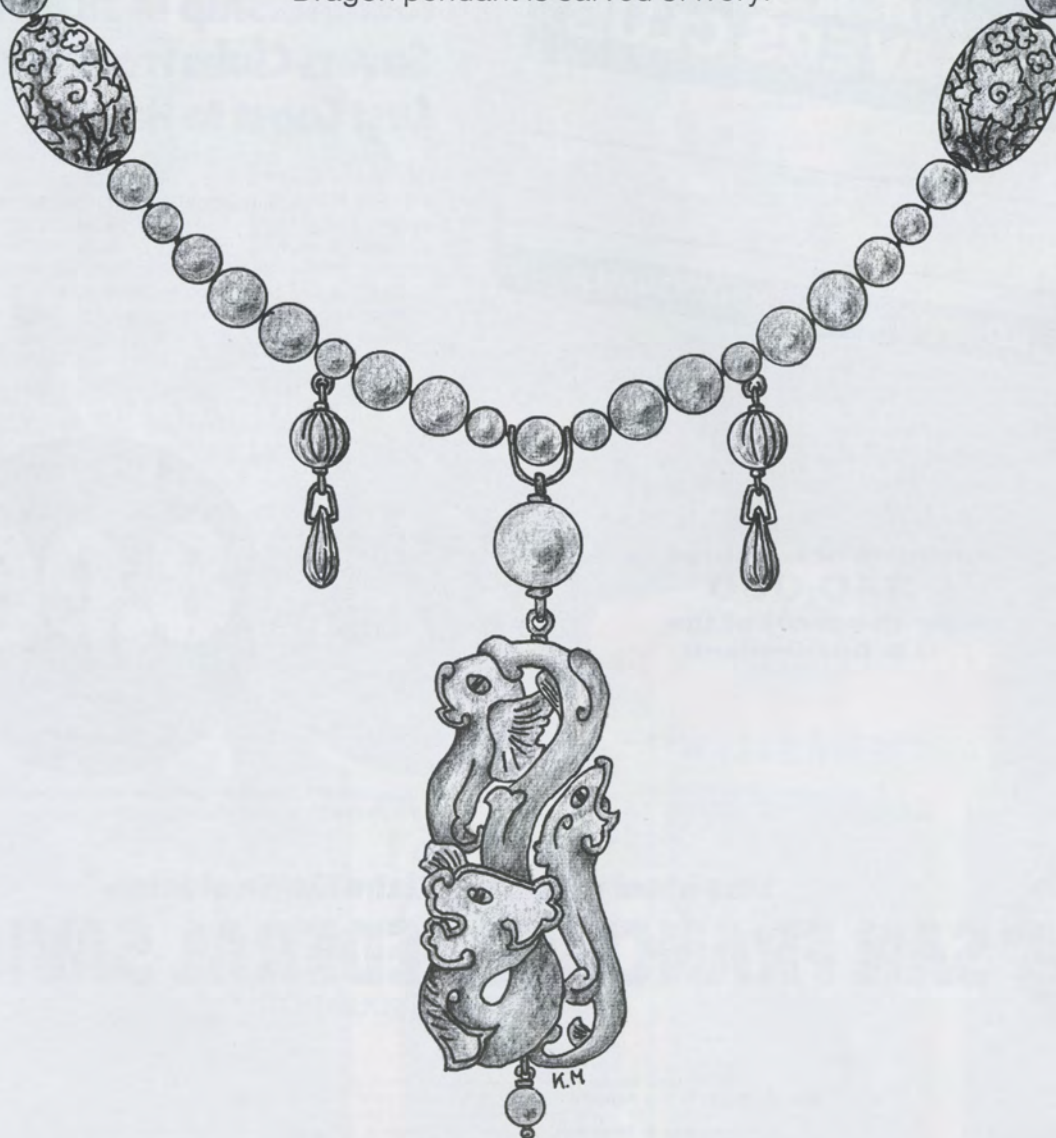


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In addition to "L'Incoronazione," we will have the pleasure of four new productions. New productions are expensive and we must depend on large donors to make them possible. We are indebted to a group of patrons who wish to remain anonymous for substantial gifts to defray the costs of "L'Incoronazione." "Der Fliegende Holländer" is made possible in part by a generous grant from the Gramma Fisher Foundation and its president, J. William Fisher (who gave us "La Favorita" and "Peter Grimes," jointly with

Lyric Opera of Chicago in 1973). For the fourth year in a row, our treasurer, James D. Robertson, has presented us with a new production, this year "Gianni Schicchi." To all of these people, our special thanks. The costs of "Andrea Chenier" and "Werther" will be shared with Houston Grand Opera and Seattle Opera, respectively.

As has been mentioned in these letters in previous years, opera of the quality for which San Francisco is noted is expensive and, of course, the costs have greatly accelerated in recent years as a result of inflation. Ticket sales cover only a little over 60% of these costs; this percentage incidently is probably the highest in the international opera world—the remainder must be secured from a variety of sources. We are grateful for the significant direct and indirect financial support which we have received from the National Endowment for the Arts, National Opera Institute and the Ford Foundation, to Mayor Joseph L. Alioto, Chief Administrative Officer Thomas J. Mellon, the City and County of San Francisco and the War Memorial Board, which assist our efforts in so many ways. We also appreciate the cooperation of OPERA America, of which we are a member. Opera ACTION continues to perform a myriad of services for San Francisco Opera which not only reduces our costs but spreads the word of opera throughout the community. To its members, we express our appreciation.

As it has for many years past, the San Francisco Opera Guild has financed the student matinees which are applauded enthusiastically by our young people. This year, there will be five such matinees of "L'Elisir d'Amore." The Opera Guild also furnishes important additional financial help to our subsidiary organizations, and undertakes the Opera Ball and the very popular Fol de Rol.

Despite all of the aforementioned support, we must have an annual Operating Fund Drive and this year the drive must raise \$750,000 in order to balance our budget of approximately \$5,000,000; this is approximately \$200,000 more than we needed last year. If you are not presently a contributor to our

annual drive, won't you join the hundreds who presently do support us? Your tax deductible contributions should be sent to San Francisco Opera Association, War Memorial Opera House, San Francisco, 94102. Thank you for thinking of us!

We are continuing the Endowment Fund campaign commenced in 1973 with the announced goal of \$5,000,000. This campaign, under the leadership of Emmett G. Solomon, retired chairman of Crocker National Bank, was launched with a gift of one million dollars from an anonymous donor; our Board of Directors subsequently pledged an amount exceeding \$1,000,000. While income from the Fund will help toward meeting our unavoidable annual deficit, it should again be emphasized that the Endowment Fund will not eliminate the need for the annual fund drive or the need for continuing contributions from other sources.

Thanks to Standard Oil Company of California and the L. J. and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation of Oakland, California, radio listeners will again be privileged to hear a live broadcast of each opera over KKHI AM/FM in San Francisco and, thanks to several organizations who have released their regular program time, also over KFAC AM/FM in Los Angeles.

San Francisco Opera exists solely to provide the public with opera of the highest quality. But when we think of San Francisco Opera, we must remember the various segments of our opera family—the International Fall Season, now with us; Spring Opera Theater; Western Opera Theater; Brown Bag Opera, and the Merola Opera Program. Opera has become a year around activity in San Francisco, bringing its joys to tens of thousands of opera lovers. With the loyal support of the staff and the public, we will still continue to grow.

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Photo: Ron Scherf

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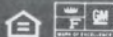


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 Jan Budzinski
 David Cherveney
 Joseph Ciampi
 Ken Criste
 Robert Delany
 John Del Carlo
 Dale Emde
 John Glenister
 Ross Halper
 William Hinshaw
 Kenneth Hybloom

Gerald Johnson
 Robert Klang
 Conrad Knipfel
 Eugene Lawrence
 Kenneth Maclaren
 Kenneth Malucelli
 R. Clyde McCracken
 Thomas McEachern
 James Meyer
 Thomas Miller
 Eugene Naham
 Kent Nagano
 Charles Pascoe
 Thomas Reed
 Robert Romanovsky
 Lorenz Schultz
 John Segale
 Francis Szymkun
 James Tarantino
 D. Livingston Tigner
 William Tredway
 John Trout
 John K. Walters
 R. Lee Woodriff

BALLET

Women
 Laura Brown
 Regina West Brown
 Judanna Lynn
 Marilyn Mather

Juliana Sakowsky
 Katherine Warner
 Deirdre Wilson

Men
 Ric E. Abel
 Dudley Brooks
 Michael S. Gleason
 John Sullivan
 Edward J. White

Orchestra

1ST VIOLIN

Peter Schaffer *Concertmaster*
 William E. Pynchon
 Ferdinand M. Claudio
 Ervin Mautner
 Silvio Claudio
 Ezequiel Amador
 Mafalda Guaraldi
 George Nagata
 Everett O'Bannon
 Ernest Michaelian
 Harry Moulin
 Michael Sand

2ND VIOLIN

Felix Khuner *Principal*
 Herbert Holtman
 Bruce Freifeld
 Barbara Riccardi
 Robert Galbraith
 Gail Schwarzbart
 Carol Winters
 Eva Karasik
 William Rusconi

VIOLA

Rolf Persinger *Principal*
 Detlev Olshausen
 Lucien Mitchell
 Asbjorn Finess
 Kenneth Harrison
 Jonna Hervig
 Ellen Smith

CELLO

David Kadarauch *Principal*
 Rolf Storseth
 Tadeusz Kadzielawa
 Sally Kell
 Helen Stross
 Judi yaba

BASS

Michael Burr *Principal*
 S. Charles Siani
 Carl H. Modell
 Donald Prell
 Philip Karp

FLUTE

Walter Subke *Principal*
 Lloyd Gowen
 Gary Gray

PICCOLO

Lloyd Gowen
 Gary Gray

OBOE

James Matheson *Principal*
 Raymond Duste
 Deborah Henry

ENGLISH HORN

Raymond Duste

CLARINET

Philip Fath *Principal*
 Donald Carroll
 David Breeden

BASS CLARINET

Donald Carroll

BASSOON

Walter Green *Principal*
 Jerry Dagg
 Robin Elliott

FRENCH HORN

Arthur D. Krehbiel *Principal*
 David Sprung *Principal*
 James Callahan
 Jeremy Merrill
 Paul McNutt

TRUMPET

Donald Reinberg *Principal*
 Edward Haug
 Chris Bogios

TROMBONE

Ned Meredith *Principal*
 Carla Rosenblum
 John Bischof

TUBA

Floyd Cooley

TIMPANI

Elayne Jones

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Lloyd Davis
 Peggy C. Lucchesi

HARP

Anne Adams
 Marcella De Cray

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William Ballard

Music Director
 Donald E. Osborne
Assistant Music Director
 Joellen Piskitl
Accompanist

Gregory Applegarth

Eric Brudos
 Keith Cerny
 Peter Chamberlin
 Laramie Crocker
 Peter Curran
 Douglas Doppelt
 James Dreer

George Fernandez

Brian Gordon
 Eric Green
 Zachary Griffin
 Matthew Hethcoat
 Eric Jewell
 Ethan Kaplan
 Martin Kovach
 Robert Kruzner
 Martin LaPlaca
 Mark Louden
 Richard Morrison
 Christopher Nomura
 Scott Palmer

Mark Paxson

Jerome Pembrook
 Todd Perry
 Damir Priskich
 Marco Remedios
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 Richard Robin
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 Jeffrey Silver
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 Dan Tadmor
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 Jonathan Yuen

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 William Bopp
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after October 20

II TROVATORE

Verdi
IN ITALIAN

Sutherland, Obratsova*, Roark*/
Pavarotti, Wixell, Grant, Burgess,
Duykers, Davies*

Conductor: Bonyng
Stage Director: Libby*
Designer: Skalicki
Chorus Director: Jones

Friday Sept 12 8PM
Wednesday Sept 17 8PM
Sunday Sept 21 2PM
Saturday Sept 27 8PM
Tuesday Sept 30 8PM
Friday Oct 3 8PM

Scotto, Randova, Petersen/Lloveras**,
Quilico, Dworchak, Burgess, Duykers,
Davies

Conductor: Adler
Stage Director: Libby
Designer: Skalicki
Chorus Director: Jones

Saturday Nov 22 1:30PM
Wednesday Nov 26 8PM
Saturday Nov 29 8PM

New Production

San Francisco Opera Premiere

L'INCORONAZIONE DI POPPEA

Monteverdi
IN ITALIAN

Troyanos*, Wolff*, Forrester, Malone,
Hendricks*, Roark/Tappy**, Stilwell,
Meven**, Wahman, Burgess, Duykers,
Frank, Long*, Davies

Conductor: Leppard*
Stage Director: Rennert
Designer: Maximowna*
Chorus Director: Jones

Saturday Sept 13 8PM
Tuesday Sept 16 8PM
Friday Sept 19 8PM
Wednesday Sept 24 8PM
Sunday Sept 28 2PM

New production sponsored in part
by a generous gift from the
Gamma Fisher Foundation,
Marshalltown, Iowa

DER FLIEGENDE HOLLÄNDER

Wagner
IN GERMAN

Napier, Petersen/Adam, Lewis*,
Rintzler

Conductor: Schermerhorn*
Stage Director: Ponnelle
Designer: Ponnelle
Chorus Director: Jones

Saturday Sept 20 8PM
Tuesday Sept 23 8PM
Friday Sept 26 8PM
Wednesday Oct 1 8PM
Sunday Oct 5 2PM

L'ELISIR D'AMORE

Donizetti
IN ITALIAN

Blegen, South*/Carreras, Wixell,
Montarsolo

Conductor: Cillario
Stage Director: Mansouri
Designer: Darling
Chorus Director: Jones
Choreographer: Lordon*

Saturday Oct 4 8PM
Tuesday Oct 7 8PM
Friday Oct 10 8PM
Sunday Oct 12 2PM
Friday Oct 17 8PM

NORMA

Bellini
IN ITALIAN

Caballé*/Hunter*, Troyanos,
Fely/Merolla**, Grant, Burgess

Conductor: Cillario
Stage Director: Capobianco
Designer: Varona
Chorus Director: Jones

Saturday Oct 11 8PM
Tuesday Oct 14 8PM
Sunday Oct 19 2PM
Wednesday Oct 22 8PM
Saturday Oct 25 1:30PM
Friday Oct 31 8PM

PIQUE DAME

Tchaikovsky
IN RUSSIAN

Vishnevskaya*, Resnik, Terzian**,
Petersen, South/Gougloff**, Monk,
Edwards*, Dansby*, Burgess, Duykers,
Frank, Courtney

Conductor: Rostropovich**
Stage Director: Hadjimishev**
Designer: Skalicki
Chorus Director: Jones
Choreographer: Lordon

Wednesday Oct 15 8PM
Saturday Oct 18 8PM
Tuesday Oct 21 8PM
Friday Oct 24 8PM
Sunday Oct 26 2PM
Saturday Nov 1 1:30PM

Flowers for San Francisco Opera's
Gala Opening Night made possible by
the donation of valuable services by
Bill A. Taylor and Wedekind's Wild-
flower of Sonoma.

New Production in cooperation
with Seattle Opera

WERTHER

Massenet
IN FRENCH

Harper*, Malone/Aragall, Hedlund*,
Manton, Long, Dansby

Conductor: Shapirra*
Stage Director: Mansouri
Designer: Rubin*

Saturday Oct 25 8PM
Tuesday Oct 28 8PM
Sunday Nov 2 2PM
Friday Nov 7 8PM
Saturday Nov 15 1:30PM

Production from Lyric Opera of
Chicago, donated by the Gramma
Fisher Foundation of
Marshalltown, Iowa

SIMON BOCCANEGRA

Verdi
IN ITALIAN

Te Kanawa, Felty/Wixell, Merighi,
Talvela, Monk, Courtney, Duykers

Conductor: Peloso**
Stage Director: Frisell*
Designer: Pizzi
Chorus Director: Jones

Wednesday Oct 29 8PM
Saturday Nov 1 8PM
Tuesday Nov 4 8PM
Sunday Nov 9 2PM
Friday Nov 14 8PM

New Production in cooperation
with Houston Grand Opera

ANDREA CHENIER

Giordano
IN ITALIAN

Ligi**, Terzian, Garabedian, Hinson*/
Domingo, MacNeil, Davià, Dworchak,
Long, Frank, Davies, Hooper,
Courtney, Wahman, Dansby

Conductor: Buckley*
Stage Director: Mansouri
Designer: Skalicki
Chorus Director: Jones
Choreographer: Lordon

Wednesday Nov 5 8PM
Saturday Nov 8 8PM
Tuesday Nov 11 8PM
Sunday Nov 16 2PM
Friday Nov 21 8PM

FIRE NOTICE: There are sufficient exits
in this building to accommodate the
entire audience. The exit indicated by
the lighted "Exit" sign nearest your seat
is the shortest route to the street. In
case of fire please do not run—walk
through that exit.

II TABARRO

Puccini
IN ITALIAN

Roberts*, Barbieri, South/Merolla,
Sarabia, Manton, Davià, Frank,
Wahman

Conductor: Shapirra
Stage Director: Libby
Designer: Bregni
Chorus Director: Jones

and

New Production made possible by a
generous gift from
James D. Robertson

GIANNI SCHICCHI

Puccini
IN ITALIAN

Poventud*, Barbieri, South,
Felty/Gramm*, Gimenez*, Davià,
Duykers, Hooper, Strummer, Davies,
Courtney, Dansby, Harvey

Conductor: Shapirra
Stage Director: Ponnelle
Designer: Ponnelle

Wednesday Nov 12 8PM
Saturday Nov 15 8PM
Tuesday Nov 18 8PM
Sunday Nov 23 2PM
Friday Nov 28 8PM

THE MAGIC FLUTE

Mozart
IN ENGLISH

Te Kanawa, Donat**, Roark, Felty,
Garabedian, South/Harness, Titus*,
Monk, Lloyd**, Frank, Burgess,
Dworchak, Wahman, Courtney

Conductor: Adler
Stage Director: O'Brien*
Designer: Businger
Chorus Director: Jones

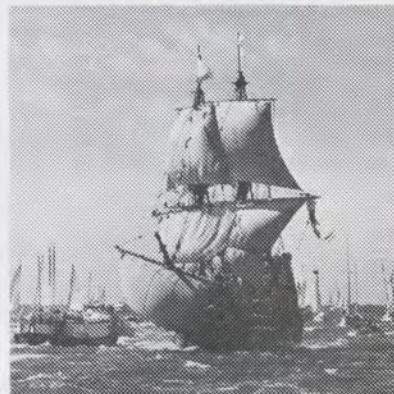
Wednesday Nov 19 8PM
Saturday Nov 22 8PM
Tuesday Nov 25 8PM
Thursday Nov 27 8PM
Sunday Nov 30 2PM

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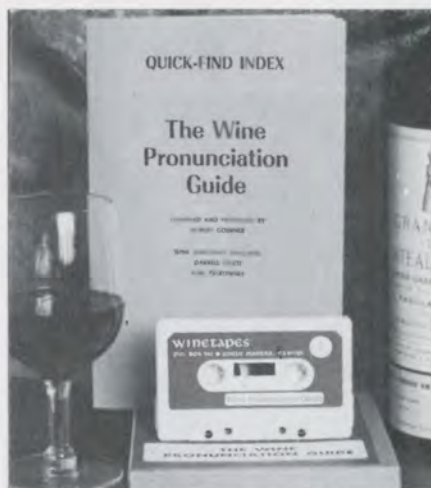
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Live Broadcasts — 7:50 P.M.

September 19
L'INCORONAZIONE DI POPPEA
September 26
DER FLIEGENDE HOLLAENDER
October 3
IL TROVATORE
October 10
L'ELISIR D'AMORE
October 24
PIQUE DAME
October 31
NORMA
November 7
WERTHER
November 14
SIMON BOCCANEGRA
November 21
ANDREA CHENIER
November 25
THE MAGIC FLUTE
November 28
IL TABARRO/GIANNI SCHICCHI

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Special Events

OPERA ACTION PREVIEWS

EAST BAY

The East Bay Opera ACTION preview will be held at 8 PM. Admission is \$2 (\$1 for senior citizens and students.) For information, please call (415) 653-7839 or 865-2556.

October 15
WERTHER
Dr. Jan Popper
Lake Merritt boathouse
Bellevue Avenue, Oakland

MARIN

All Marin Opera ACTION Previews will be held at Del Mar School, 105 Avenida Mira Flores, Tiburon (Take Tiburon turn-off 2.5 miles from Highway 101, turn left on Avenida Mira Flores). Coffee will be served at 8 PM; the lecture will begin at 8:30 PM. Single tickets are \$1.50 (\$1 for students). For information, please call (415) 435-0191.

October 16
ANDREA CHENIER
Ramona Rockway Shaneyfelt

October 23
WERTHER
Dr. Dale Harris

SOUTH PENINSULA

South Peninsula Opera ACTION Previews will be held at the Palo Alto Community Cultural Center, 1313 Newell Road, at 7:30 PM. Single tickets are \$2.50 (\$1.25 for students). For information, please call (415) 326-0856, 321-9875, or 326-0588.

October 12
PIQUE DAME
Dr. Jan Popper

October 19
WERTHER
Dr. Dale Harris

Weekend subscribers of FALL OPERA, do you need transportation? If so, San Francisco Opera ACTION will assist you; please call: San Jose (408) 354-4268; Marin County (415) 435-0191; Napa/Sonoma/Vallejo (707) 226-5002; South Peninsula (415) 326-0856, 321-9875 or 323-6305

The following schedule will be in effect for the South Peninsula:

SUNDAY SERIES buses leave promptly at 12:30 p.m. from in front of Blum's at the Stanford Shopping Center.

Series	Round-trip Single	Round-trip Full Series
M	\$3.75	\$41.25
N	3.75	22.50
O	3.75	18.75

SATURDAY SERIES buses leave promptly at 6:30 p.m. from in front of Blum's at the Stanford Shopping Center.

Series	Round-trip Single	Round-trip Full Series
J	\$3.75	\$41.25
K	3.75	22.50
L	3.75	22.50

SAN JOSE OPERA GUILD PREVIEWS

The San Jose Opera Guild previews are presented in cooperation with De Anza College as part of their Seminar Lecture Series 90. All previews will be held at De Anza College, 21250 Stevens Creek Boulevard, Cupertino, California. There is a \$2.00 registration fee which permits entrance to one or all of the previews. For further information, please call (408) 257-5550, Ext. 368.

October 17
PIQUE DAME
Dr. Dale Harris
8-10 p.m., Building A-11

October 20
SIMON BOCCANEGRA
Dr. Dale Harris
10 a.m.-12 noon, Council Chambers

October 23
WERTHER
Dr. Jan Popper
8:15-10:15 p.m., Building A-91

November 6
ANDREA CHENIER
Dr. John Rockwell
8:15-10:15 p.m., Building A-91

For the safety and comfort of our audience all parcels, backpacks, luggage, etc., must be checked at the Opera House cloakrooms.

Hot buffet service in lower level one hour prior to curtain time.

Refreshments in the box tier on mezzanine floor, grand tier and dress circle during all performances.

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SAN JOSE—\$4.00 rd. trip \$2.25 one way—
Every Sat. & Sun. from Rose Garden Branch
of San Jose Library—Naglee & Dana Sts.

LOS GATOS—\$4.00 rd. trip \$2.25 one way—
Saturdays ONLY from Medical Center—
15955 Samaritan Dr.

PENINSULA—\$3.50 rd. trip \$1.75 one way—
Saturdays ONLY from Stanford Shopping
Center—

SATURDAY DEPARTURE TIME/
Curtain 8:00 P.M.

San Jose—Leave 5:45
Los Gatos—Leave 6:05
Peninsula—Leave 6:30

SUNDAY DEPARTURE TIME/
Curtain 2:00 P.M.

San Jose only—Leave 11:45 A.M.

**NAPA COMMUNITY COLLEGE
LECTURE SERIES**

For the third year Napa Community
College is offering a course
called ADVENTURES IN OPERA.
The course, which introduces the
Sunday Series at San Francisco
Opera, will be held in the Library of
Ridgeview Junior High School, 2447
Old Sonoma Road, Napa, California,
on Thursday nights from 7-9 p.m.
Registration for the entire series is
\$5.00. Ernest A. Fly will again teach
the course, using his collection of
complete opera recordings,
Metropolitan Opera filmstrips, guest
speakers and vocal artists. For further
information, please call Mr. Fly at
(707) 224-6162.

October 16
PIQUE DAME

October 23
WERTHER

October 30
SIMON BOCCANEGRA

November 6
ANDREA CHENIER

November 13
IL TABARRO/GIANNI SCHICCHI

November 20
THE MAGIC FLUTE

**UC-BERKELEY EXTENSION
LECTURE SERIES**

DR. JAN POPPER LECTURES will be
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Single tickets are \$4, on a space
available basis, payable at the door.
For information, please call
(415) 642-4111 or 861-6833.

October 13
PIQUE DAME

October 20
WERTHER

October 27
SIMON BOCCANEGRA

November 3
ANDREA CHENIER

November 10
IL TABARRO/GIANNI SCHICCHI

November 17
THE MAGIC FLUTE

JUNIOR LEAGUE OPERA PREVIEWS

Junior League opera previews will
begin at 11 AM. For information,
please call (415) 567-8600.

October 22
PIQUE DAME
Dr. Dale Harris
First Unitarian Church

November 11
IL TABARRO/GIANNI SCHICCHI
Stephanie von Buchau
Curran Theatre

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San Francisco Opera ACTION was created in 1967 to increase awareness of San Francisco Opera and to stimulate interest in opera in general. Opera ACTION works in close cooperation with the Company's staff, enabling it to greatly extend its reach and activity.

Those interested in actively working on behalf of the San Francisco Opera should call:

In San Francisco	673-2263
In Marin	435-0191
In the East Bay	653-7839
In the North Peninsula	343-1948
In the South Peninsula	326-0856

Western Opera Theater

1975 ~ 1976 Season
December 11, 1975 ~ May 16, 1976

Repertoire

The Barber of Seville
The Marriage of Figaro
new production
Trouble in Tahiti

and a new production
of a one - act work
to be announced.

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA

Broadcasts

KKHI/AM 1550/FM 95.7 San Francisco
KFAC/AM 1330/FM 92.3 Los Angeles

Friday, October 24	PIQUE DAME
Friday, October 31	NORMA
Friday, November 7	WERTHER
Friday, November 14	SIMON BOCCANEGRA
Friday, November 21	ANDREA CHENIER
Tuesday, November 25	THE MAGIC FLUTE
Friday, November 28	IL TABARRO/GIANNI SCHICCHI

All broadcasts will begin at 7:50 p.m.

KQED FM 88.5

SUNDAY MORNING AT THE OPERA—Recorded operas with John Roszak, host. Gene Parrish interviews artists of the 1975 San Francisco Opera season during intermission. 11 a.m. every Sunday.

ARTS REPORTING SERVICE—Charles Christopher Mark, publisher of *Arts Reporting Service Newsletter*, speaks from Washington, D.C. on the state of the arts in the United States and elsewhere. 9:00-9:05 a.m. Monday through Friday.

KPFA FM 94.1

OPERA REVIEWS ON THE AIR—KPFA critics Bill Collins, Melvin Johns, Arthur Regan, Bob Rose, and Allan Ulrich talk about the 1975 San Francisco Opera productions each Sunday afternoon at 4:30 p.m.

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New Production

WERTHER

(IN FRENCH)

Opera in three acts by JULES MASSENET

Libretto by EDOUARD BLAU, PAUL MILLIET
and GEORGES HARTMANN

Based on Goethe's "Die Leiden des Jungen Werther"

Conductor
ELYAKUM SHAPIRRA*

Production
LOTFI MANSOURI

Designer
STEVEN RUBIN*

Musical Preparation
PHILIP EISENBERG
THOMAS FULTON

Lighting Designer
ROBERT BRAND

Costumes Executed by
GRACE COSTUMES, INC.

SAN FRANCISCO BOYS CHORUS
Director: William Ballard

CAST

(in order of appearance)

The Bailiff WILLIAM DANSBY

Children:

Hans TODD PERRY
Gretel JANE GEFTER* (Oct. 25, Nov. 2, 15)
NINA KENT* (Oct. 28, Nov. 7)

Karl ROBERT KRUZNER
Clara JENNIFER HEYNEMAN* (Oct. 25, Nov. 2, 15)
SUKY PATTON* (Oct. 28, Nov. 7)

Max ZACHARY GRIFFIN
Fritz ERIC BRUDOS

Johann JAMES HOOPER
Schmidt RAYMOND MANTON

Sophie CAROL MALONE
Werther GIACOMO ARAGALL

Charlotte HEATHER HARPER*

Brühlmann JOHN DAVIES

Kätchen JANICE FELTY

Albert RONALD HEDLUND*

Villagers
Corps de ballet

*San Francisco Opera debut

TIME AND PLACE: 178_, IN THE VICINITY OF FRANKFURT, GERMANY

ACT I In front of the house of the Bailiff

INTERMISSION

ACT II A street in the village of Wetzlar

INTERMISSION

ACT III—Scene 1 In the house of Albert
Scene 2 Werther's study

First performance: Vienna Imperial Opera, February 16, 1892

First San Francisco Opera performance: November 22, 1935

SATURDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 25, 1975 AT 8:00

TUESDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 28, 1975 AT 8:00

SUNDAY AFTERNOON, NOVEMBER 2, 1975 AT 2:00

FRIDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 7, 1975 AT 8:00 (Broadcast)

SATURDAY AFTERNOON, NOVEMBER 15, 1975 AT 1:30

Please do not interrupt the music with applause

Latecomers will not be seated during the performance after the lights have dimmed in order not to disturb patrons who have arrived on time

The use of cameras and any kind of recording equipment is strictly forbidden

The performance will last approximately two hours and forty-five minutes

SYNOPSIS / WERTHER

Act I

In the garden of his house, the Bailiff is teaching his younger children a Christmas carol. A widower and father of a large family, he reminds them that their elder sister Charlotte can hear and will not be pleased with their performance. His two friends, Johann and Schmidt, come to lure him away for an evening at the local inn, but he says he must first see Charlotte safely off to a ball given by friends in town. She is being escorted by Werther, a serious young man, in place of her fiance Albert who is away on business. The Bailiff promises to meet them later and they leave as Werther comes to call for Charlotte. Overcome by the rustic charm of the surroundings, he extols the beauties of Nature. As he awaits her to complete her duties, he has the chance to observe the tranquility of her ordered domestic existence, becoming greatly touched by her charm and grace. He has already fallen in love with her as they go off together. Sophie, remaining home to take care of the other children, insists her father go to meet his friends and he allows himself to be persuaded. When all have gone, and Sophie is left alone, Albert returns unexpectedly, eager to see his betrothed and to know what has been happening during his six months' absence. Finding Charlotte not at home, he leaves, binding Sophie to secrecy and promising to return the next day.

The evening passes, and Charlotte and Werther stroll home from the ball, arm and arm through the garden. She finds it difficult to dismiss him, being attracted to him. Then the voice of the Bailiff announcing Albert's return brings her back to reality. She confesses to Werther that Albert is the man she had promised her dying mother to marry, and he is reduced to stunned despair. However, he bids her remain true to her word—and as for himself, he declares, "I will die of it."

Act II

On a Sunday afternoon in a public square near the church and a tavern, a service is about to begin. Outside the tavern sit Johann and Schmidt commenting on the passers-by. Charlotte and Albert, now married for three months, arrive for the service, presenting a picture of contentment. Contemplating them from a distance, Werther is distraught at the idea that another is her husband. Once the service is over, Albert comes to comfort him, as does Sophie who in her innocence is eager to console the young man. Despite Werther's

assurances to Albert that his infatuation for Charlotte is over and that nothing but friendship remains, it is evident when she comes to join him that this is far from the truth. She receives his renewed protestations of love with intentional coldness and insists he must not see her again. Relenting before his miserable state, she suggests he come and visit them at Christmas. Left alone, Werther prays for God to accept his solution of suicide. Ignoring the wedding procession forming, he runs off, leaving the tearful Sophie to break the news of his hurried departure "forever" to Charlotte. Albert realizes that, for all his fine words, Werther cannot forget his wife.

Act III

On Christmas eve, Charlotte is alone in her room, unable to dismiss Werther from her thoughts as she re-reads his passionate letters and realizes just how much he means to her. Sophie comes in, her holiday gaiety only increasing her sister's melancholy. Alone again and praying, Charlotte is taken by surprise when Werther suddenly appears in the doorway. He has come to keep his Christmas appointment with her, as they had agreed. He reads some verses about storms and sorrows by Ossian, and then they recall the happy moments shared together in the past, each growing more and more passionate. But Charlotte, coming to her senses, insists on a final break. Unable to believe his ears, Werther rushes off, but not before giving clear indications of his intention to do away with himself. Albert, returning with the news that Werther has been seen in the district, senses the distraught atmosphere in the room. A note arrives from Werther announcing his immediate departure on a distant journey and asking his friend to lend him his traveling pistols. Coldly, Albert orders his wife to give them to the messenger. But as soon as her husband has gone to his room, she, full of foreboding, hurries out to try to prevent the imminent tragedy.

Werther is lying on the floor of his room with a bullet through his head, but still breathing. As Charlotte arrives in terror and bewilderment, there is nothing she can do for him—except declare that she has always loved him. Werther, now at peace with himself and actually welcoming death, dies in her arms, while from the distance come the sounds of the children's carol and the festivities of the Christmas party.

This new production of *Werther* has been built in the San Francisco Opera Scenic Shops for joint use by the San Francisco, Seattle and Portland opera companies.

Background, Massenet's "Werther"

by ROBERT JACOBSON

A little over one hundred years come between the creation of two masterpieces, one literary, the other musical. The two works serve as kind of bookends to that phenomenal period known as Romanticism, one that ran the gamut through literature, painting, music, politics, everything. In 1774, the year after America's Boston Tea Party and the setting in motion of the War for Independence, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe published his first novel, *Die Leiden des Jungen Werther* (The Sorrows of Young Werther), whose impact was vast throughout Europe not only for the Romantic sentiments it embodied and the hero's ultimate suicide in the name of love, but also for the larger vista in its questioning of values in a world now filled with the air of revolution. Then in 1886, as Romanticism of every nature was on the wane, the composer Jules Massenet (1842-1912) was in Germany for a performance of *Parsifal* at the Wagner-shrine, Bayreuth. With his publisher George Hartmann they visited Wetzlar and the house where Goethe had written his fiery novel. At a nearby tavern, the French composer began to immerse himself in the series of letters that relate the unhappy romance between the excessive Werther and the more provident, duty-bound Charlotte. "Such rapturous and ecstatic passion brought tears to my eyes," he is said to have exclaimed. "What moving scenes, what thrilling moments it could all give rise to! *Werther* it was! There was my third act."

Fired by the inspiration of Goethe's novel, Massenet orchestrated his score in less than six months. His principal successes up to this point had been *Manon* (his fifth opera), staged at the Opéra-Comique on January 19, 1884, followed by *Le Cid* in 1885 and *Esclarmonde* in 1889; *Thaïs* would follow *Werther* in 1894. These works, as in most of Massenet, deal with the Eternal Feminine. But with *Werther*, in a stunning change of pace, the composer (and his librettists Edouard Blau, Paul Milliet and Hartmann) were dealing with a lovelorn romantic hero, an altruistic heroine and a bourgeois German setting far from the exoticism that so often flavors Massenet's output. It did, however, inspire one of his finest creations. Yet when he played it for the director of the Comique, the latter found it depressing, lacking interest and doomed from the start. Massenet then traveled to Vienna, where *Manon* had recently scored a triumph at the Imperial Opera; asked if he could offer them a new work, he promptly gave them *Werther*. With Ernest van Dyck in the title role, it was received with tremendous acclaim on February 16, 1892. A year later it conquered Paris at the Comique (January 16, 1893).

Goethe's novel of letters (ending with Goethe as editor and narrator) is largely autobiographical, stemming from his experiences in Wetzlar, a small provincial center near Frankfurt, where he had gone to begin his law practice. The young man, already known for his published poems and plays, had undergone a radical change in his thinking at that time, swayed from his initial French-oriented neo-classic trends of rationalism to the new spirit of self-expression. Goethe repudiated his

Leipzig University learning in favor of the influence of the brilliant avant-garde poet and critic Johann Gottfried von Herder. He began to look to the past for expressions of the human spirit—to Gothic architecture, Shakespeare, the Bible and folk literature. With these seeds went Goethe's propensity for unhappy love affairs, emotional unsurity, romantic adventures that produced his most poetic and dramatic works.

Arriving in Wetzlar, he met Johann Christian Kestner, who was attached to one of the embassies and engaged to Charlotte Ruff, the daughter of a local official. Coming into the girl's circle, he admired her features: a good figure, blonde hair, blue eyes. And she in turn admired the brilliant, handsome young man, perhaps even flirting with him. The susceptible, passionate poet fell in love with Lotte, and she accepted him as a friend. Finally Goethe, for whatever reason—acceptance of the inevitable, boredom—returned to Frankfurt to bury himself in his work. In the midst of his own suffering, he received a letter from Kestner narrating the death of a Karl Wilhelm Jerusalem, who had been in love with a married woman, had borrowed Kestner's pistols and then had shot himself. Goethe would later immortalize this man as his Werther. Having himself even toyed but quickly with the idea of suicide in the wake of leaving Lotte, he was struck by the similarity of these experiences. Unrequited love was a subject topmost in his mind at the time, and Jerusalem provided the denouement. Later visiting Kestner to learn more about the episode, he saw the room where the man had died, carefully noting its furnishings, which he faithfully reproduced in his *Werther*. Goethe's frustrated meeting with Maximiliane von Laroche Brentano, a pretty young girl married to an Italian many years her senior, finally drove him to his novel and he began writing, producing *Werther* in a month's time.

The novel had enormous impact on the world when it appeared. Its flawed, brooding hero, egocentric in his constant self-searching was immediately understandable to the young of his day. People were no longer accepting the credo of pure reason, "I think, therefore I am." These rebels of the 1770s were asking, "Why am I? What am I? What is my relation to nature and to the divine spirit?" They were sick of the world as it existed, suffering from *Weltschmerz*. It was the period of *Sturm und Drang* (storm and stress), named after a 1776 play by von Klinger and reflected in the works of Schiller, Haydn and others. In *Werther*, too, Goethe celebrated the rise of the middle class, while subtly denigrating the pretenses of an entrenched but decaying nobility.

Thomas Carlyle commented on the impact of *Werther*, which went into fourteen editions during the first year: "*Werther* rose like a literary meteor on the world and carried its author's name not only over Germany but into the remotest parts of Europe." It was the sense of values of his time that drove the youth to suicide, Carlyle says. "*Werther* is but the cry of that dim, rooted pain under which all thoughtful men of a certain age were

languishing; it paints the misery, it passionately utters the complaint; and the heart and voice all over Europe loudly and at once respond to it. . . . For *Werther*, infusing itself into the core and whole spirit of literature, gave birth to a race of sentimentalists who have raged and wailed in every part of the world, till the better light dawned on them, or, at worst, exhausted nature laid herself to sleep, and it was discovered that lamenting was unproductive labor." Mme. de Staël remarked that *Werther* had caused more suicides than the most beautiful woman, and Byron agreed by stating that it had put more people out of the world than Napoleon himself. The Italian philosopher Benedetto Croce observed that Goethe's contemporaries who welcomed it "with an approval so enthusiastic as to reach almost to the point of fanaticism, who hailed in it the defence of passion and of nature, the protest against social rules, prejudices and conventions, and even the reasonings in favor of suicide, who wertherised in practice and some of whom, as is well known, were incited by it to make away with themselves," made the book "conform to their own sentiments and needs and perplexities and despair." A whole wave of poetry, plays, novels, painting and engravings followed, all pursuing this dramatic subject.

That Massenet should pick up on this by-then old-fashioned subject 112 years later may have been surprising, but it did offer the kind of self-pity, weak character, poignant sentimentality, melancholy, nostalgia, sensuality and theme of unrequited love that he immersed himself in with most of his operas. Only the intellectual source of Goethe seems a bit alien to him and to the milieu for which he wrote his operas. Critic Martin Cooper has noted that actually *Werther* shows Massenet at his most natural: "Beneath the man-of-the-world charm, the tactful comments and the apt witticisms for which he was famous, there persisted the dreamy-eyed young man who looks out from the early portraits, romantic as a girl behind his facade of cynicism. The sheer innocence of Charlotte and her surroundings caught Massenet's imagination; the humble bourgeois setting answered perfectly to the musical language of a composer who could still write tender cadences à la Gounod without self-consciousness. If there is a Wagnerian note here and there, it is in the closer integration of voice and orchestra, in a willingness to allow the voice to take secondary place (notably in Charlotte's Act III soliloquy) or in the still further deformalization of melody, as in Werther's 'O spectacle ideal d'amour et d'innocence.'"

Certainly, *Werther* is among the handful of Massenet's chefs-d'oeuvres, despite its excesses of sentiment; it stands because of its full exploration of dramatic character in the two leading roles, and because of its charm and gentleness. The air of Wagner permeates it too, since the acts stand alone as entities without one being aware of individual musical numbers in the rich orchestral sonorities. The presence of the children (who at the end provide the ironic "Noels" at Werther's death), the character of Sophie, the drinking of the two friends of the Bailiff all provide theatrical contrast to the despairing main storyline. Act III brings the drama to its summation in both character and musical portrayal. Here Charlotte's maternal feelings for Werther emerge as she reads his letters, filled with hysterical threats. Her own feelings are given vent in the "Air des Larmes," climaxed with Werther's reappearance, his tragic "Pourquoi me reveiller" and the ensuing love scene. The writing of this act is emotion-laden from start to finish. Gabriel Fauré reacted strongly to the Act I scene in the moonlit garden: "At this point the music, blossoming out in gentleness, raises itself to a pitch of the most concentrated, all-embracing and enveloping charm. Here M. Massenet reveals himself constantly and completely with his finest gifts, his most attractive qualities, and an extraordinary sureness of touch."

George Bernard Shaw declared at the London premiere: "Werther is a more congenial subject for Massenet than even Manon was. When he gets away from the artificial and rhetorical into the regions of candid sentiment and the childlike sincerities of love and grief he is charming. Des Grieux, a hero whom we forgive even for cheating at cards, suited him well: Werther suits him still better. The surroundings suit him too. The constant noisiness of the children when they are not rehearsing their carol or munching the bread-and-butter, make the first act quite delightful to a jaded critic sitting in a well-situated and comfortable stall. . . . At all events, he (Massenet) has succeeded in keeping up the interest of a libretto consisting of four acts and of a love-lorn tenor who has only two active moments, one when he tries to ravish a kiss from the fair as aforesaid, and the other when he shoots himself behind the scenes."

Robert Jacobson is editor of Opera News magazine, as well as frequent record annotator for Columbia Records, contributing editor to Cue and After Dark, and author of the recently published "Reverberations: Interviews with the World's Leading Musicians," pub. by William Morrow and Co.

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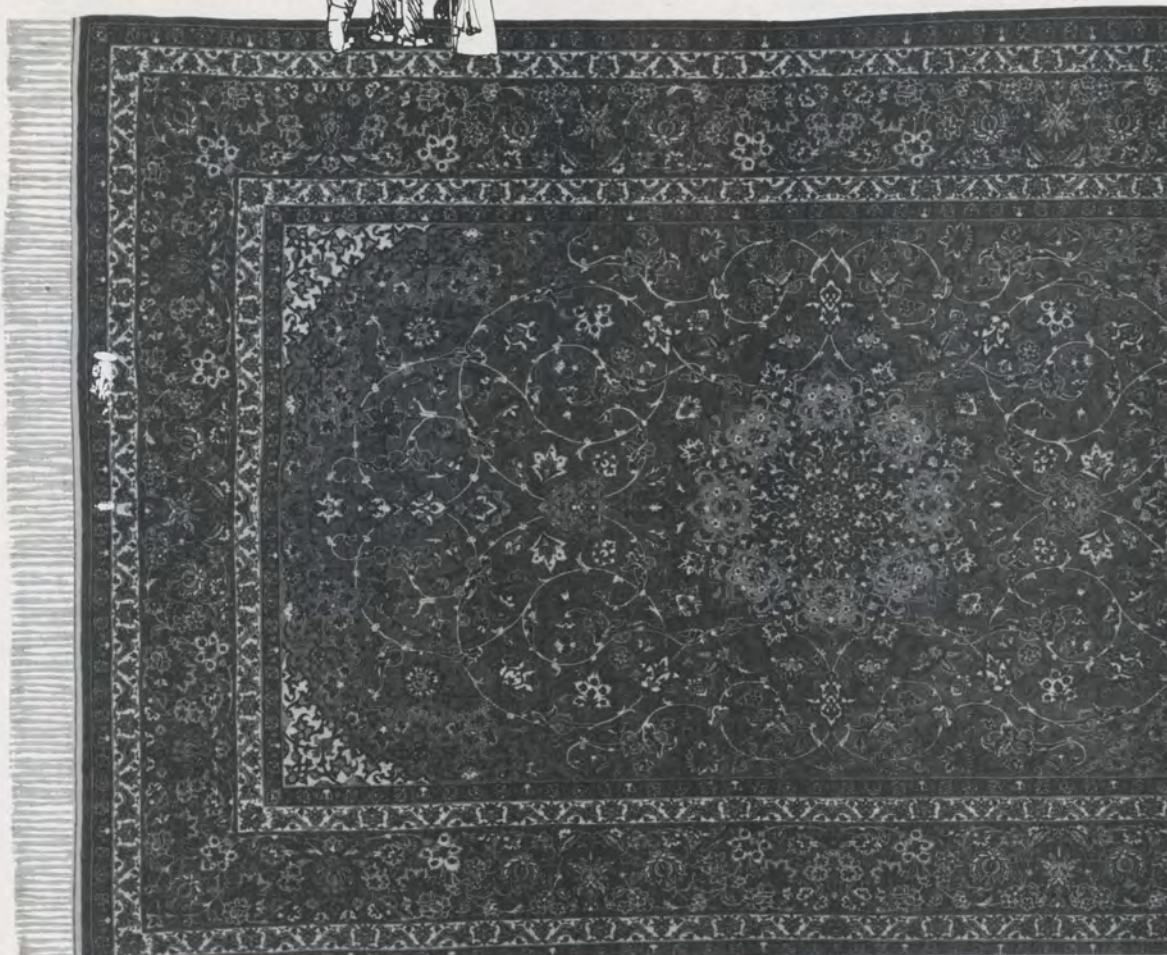


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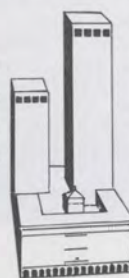
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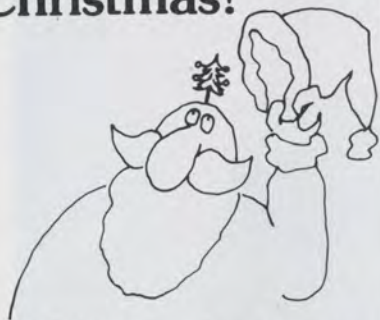
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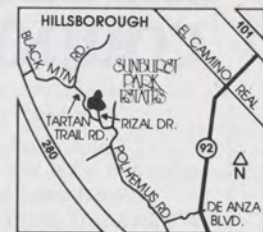
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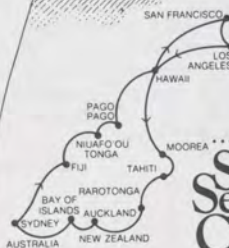
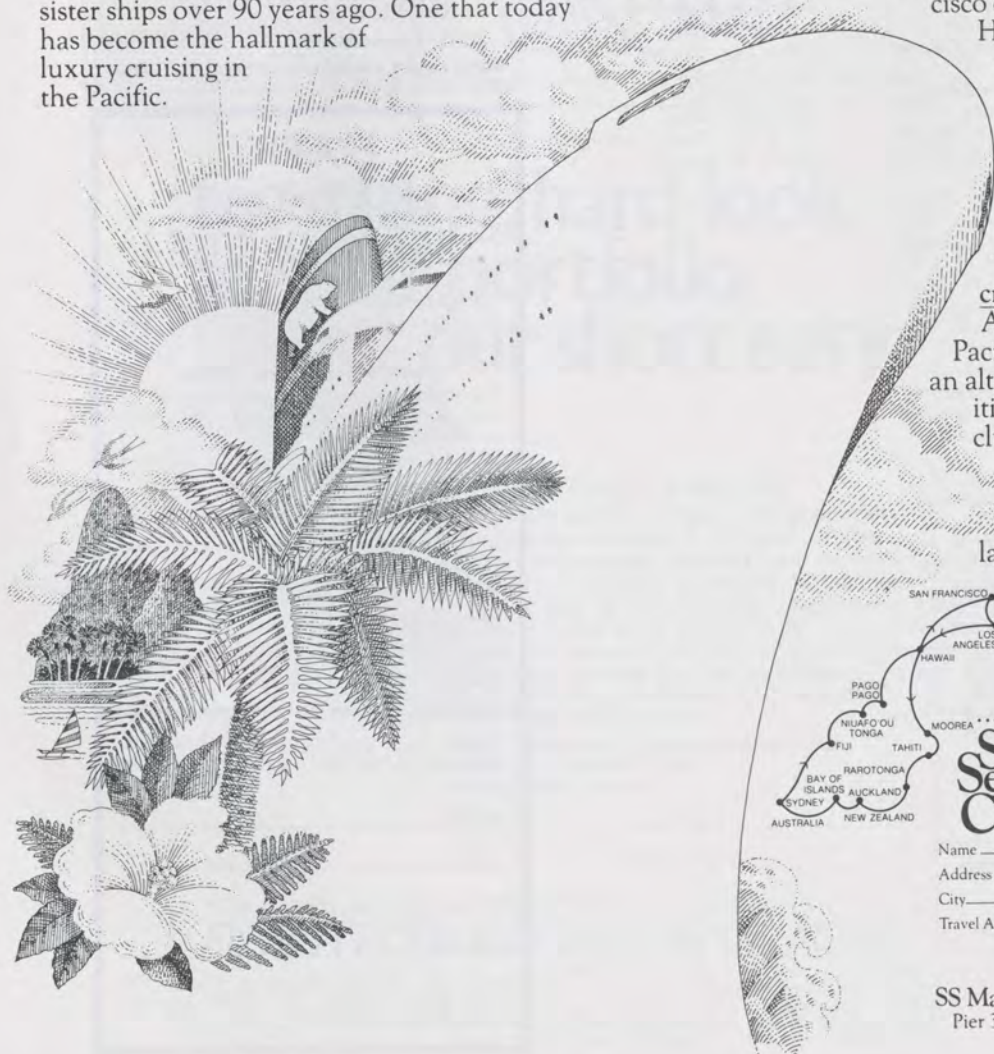
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Many Opera goers who live in the northern section of San Francisco are regular patrons of the Municipal Railway's special "Opera Bus".

This bus is added to Muni's north-bound 47 Line following all evening performances of the Opera, Symphony, Ballet and other major events. The service is also provided for all Saturday and Sunday matinees.

Look for this bus, marked "47 Special", after each performance in the north-bound bus zone at Van Ness Avenue and Grove Street — across Van Ness from the Opera House.

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IMPORTANT NOTICE: The box office in the outer lobby of the Opera House will remain open through the first intermission of every performance. Tickets for remaining performances in the season may be purchased at this time.

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Patrons who are unable to attend a performance may make a worthwhile contribution to the San Francisco Opera Association by returning their tickets to the Box Office or telephoning (415) 431-1210. Their value will be tax deductible for the subscriber. If tickets are re-sold, the proceeds will be used to benefit the San Francisco Opera.

Taxi Service

At all Opera performances, an attendant will be stationed at the taxi entrance of the Opera House, and persons wishing a taxi after the performance are requested to so advise the attendant upon their arrival. Shortly after the start of the performance, the attendant will telephone the dispatcher and inform him of the total number of taxis requested. Although the Opera Association cannot guarantee that a taxi will be available for each patron requesting one, we believe this procedure will help to improve post-performance taxi service for our patrons.

Opera Museum

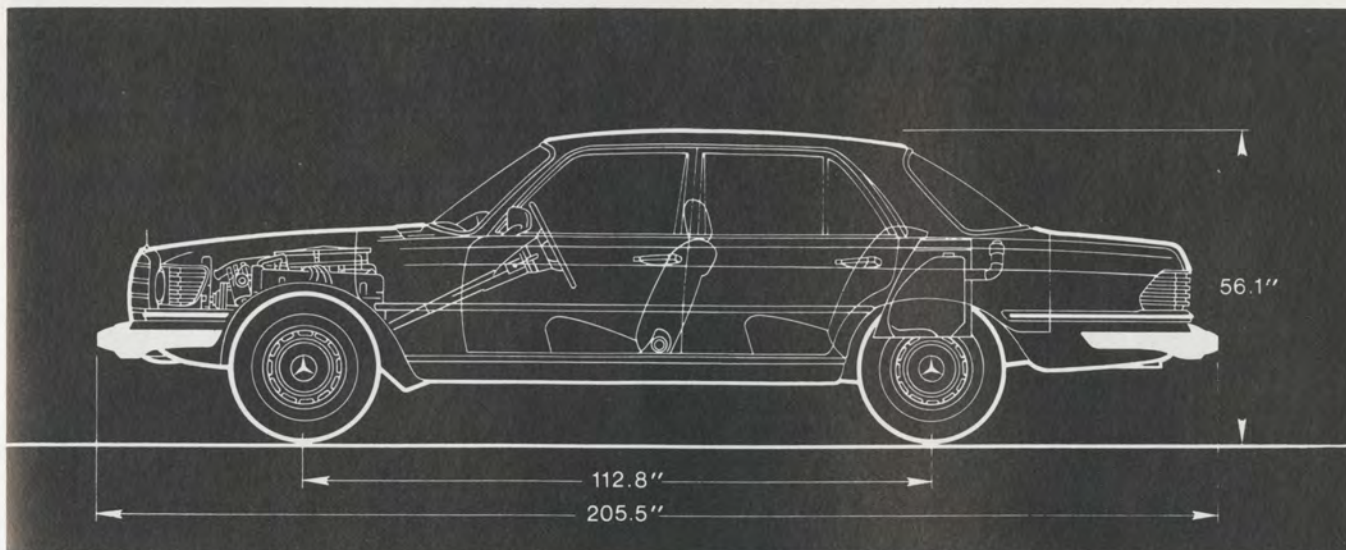
The exhibit in the Opera Museum has a new look this year: instead of presenting memorabilia from past seasons and past productions, the display consists of the work done privately by the many talented and fine artists who comprise the Opera Scenic Shop.

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The exhibit will be changed periodically so that San Francisco Opera audiences will have the widest possible exposure to the work of this most able group. In addition to supplying the materials for the exhibit, the scenic artists have also mounted the entire show.

A special feature in the Opera Museum is a display of dolls created by Mr. Mark Farmer. Mr. Farmer independently designed these miniature representations of key female protagonists in operas included in the San Francisco Opera 1975 repertoire and has generously loaned them to the Museum.

As in past seasons, the Opera Museum is open, free of charge, during all performances in the south foyer, box level



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Profiles



HEATHER HARPER

Heather Harper, the distinguished Irish-born, London-based soprano, makes her San Francisco Opera debut this season portraying Charlotte in *Werther*. Originally aspiring to be a concert pianist, Miss Harper studied the instrument at London's Trinity College of Music where she won a voice scholarship that changed the course of her career. She made her professional debut with the Oxford University Opera Club as Lady Macbeth, and since then she has sung principal roles at Covent Garden, Sadler's Wells and at the Glyndebourne and Bayreuth Festivals, appearing many times on BBC-TV both in concert and opera. On the concert platform the soprano has scored major successes during tours of North and South America, Australia, the Far East and Middle East, as well as the music capitals of Europe. In the summer of 1975, Miss Harper was heard at Covent Garden in *Die Frau ohne Schatten* (June) and in Benjamin Britten's *Peter Grimes* (July); she later appeared as the Countess in *The Marriage of Figaro* at the Edinburgh Festival. During the 1974-75 season she performed with the Music Aeterna Orchestra in New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art singing Handel's *Silente Venti* and the Schubert G Major Mass, with the Chicago Symphony under Sir Georg Solti singing Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*, at Covent Garden in the title role of Strauss' *Arabella*, and in numerous other concert and operatic appearances around the world.



CAROL MALONE

Carol Malone, who made her American opera debut last season singing Zerlina in San Francisco Opera's new production of *Don Giovanni*, returns to the house to interpret Drusilla in *L'Incoronazione di Poppea*, Adina in student matinee performances of *L'Elisir d'Amore*, and Sofie in *Werther*. During the 1974-75 season she was heard in the Bavarian State Opera's new production of *Die Fledermaus*. After studying music at the University of Indiana, Miss Malone left the United States in 1964 when she was awarded a scholarship for music study at the Hochschule für Musik in Hamburg. She was awarded another grant the following year for further studies in Cologne, and, since then, has been extremely active on the European opera scene; she is a permanent member of the Deutsche Oper Berlin. In 1974 she participated in the world premiere of Nabokov's *Love's Labours Lost* at the Deutsche Oper Berlin, a performance she repeated later that year at the Berlin Festival. She was heard in *Hansel and Gretel* and *The Magic Flute* in Berlin in 1973, and the previous year she portrayed Susanna in *The Marriage of Figaro* at Lyon Opera and Aix-en-Provence. She sang Blonde in *The Abduction from the Seraglio* in 1971 at the Edinburgh Festival and the Munich Opera, and appeared in a television production of *The Magic Flute* as Papagena with Hamburg Opera.



JANICE FELTY

Janice Felty, a recipient of San Francisco Opera's Kurt Herbert Adler Award, made her debut here last season, performing as a Flower Maiden in *Parsifal*, the Slave in *Salome* and as Kate Pinkerton in the November subscription performances of *Madama Butterfly*. During Western Opera Theater's 1975 season, she was heard as Nicklausse in *The Tales of Hoffmann*, Rosina in *The Barber of Seville* and Vivian in *What Price Confidence*. A participant in the 1974 Merola Opera Program, the young mezzo also sang Rosina that year for Merola's annual performance at the Sigmund Stern Grove Midsummer Music Festival. She was the winner of the James H. Schwabacher Memorial Award at the 1974 San Francisco Opera Auditions Grand Finals. The previous year she sang Isolier in Rossini's *Le Comte Ory* in the Merola Opera Program's production at the Paul Masson Mountain Winery in Saratoga. Miss Felty is also remembered for her portrayals of Hansel in Western Opera Theater's production of *Hansel and Gretel* in 1973 and Nerillo in Spring Opera Theater's *L'Ormino* (1974). She is a 1974 Metropolitan Opera Regional Auditions winner as well as a recipient of the 1973 San Francisco Opera Auditions' Florence Bruce Award. This past summer Miss Felty sang Dorabella in *Così fan tutte* with Santa Fe Opera. During the 1975 San Francisco Opera season she portrays Clotilde in *Norma*, *Kätzchen* in *Werther*, Amelia's servant in *Simon Boccanegra*, La Ciesca in *Gianni Schicchi* and the Second Lady in *The Magic Flute*.



GIACOMO ARAGALL

Giacomo Aragall, the exciting Catalan tenor who made his debut here in 1973 as the Duke of Mantua in *Rigoletto*, and won great acclaim for his interpretation of the Chevalier Roland in San Francisco Opera's 1974 production of *Esclaimonde*, returns to the house to portray the title role in *Werther*. The Spanish artist has sung in virtually every operatic theater in the world, receiving unqualified critical praise for his debuts in Vienna (1966), Montreal (1967), and at Covent Garden and the Metropolitan Opera (1968). Aragall, who sang in the famed boys choir in the Church of Santa Maria del Mar in Barcelona, began his operatic studies at 20 under Maestro Francesco Puig. After winning second prize in the International Competition of Bilbao in 1962, he was awarded a scholarship for further studies in Milan by Barcelona's Teatro del Liceo. The following year the young singer took part in the International Competition of Verdi Voices in Busseto, and, upon winning first place, was immediately signed by La Scala for the 1963-64 season. An accomplished athlete, Aragall would have been named to the Spanish gymnastic team for the 1964 Olympics had his musical career not progressed so rapidly. Last year the tenor's numerous engagements included a new production of *La Traviata* with the Bavarian State Opera in München and performances as Cavaradossi in *Tosca* at Rouen.

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RONALD HEDLUND

Ronald Hedlund, who makes his San Francisco Opera debut as Albert in *Werther*, will be remembered by audiences here for his much-acclaimed portrayal of the seven baritone roles in Spring Opera Theater's 1975 West Coast premiere of Benjamin Britten's *Death in Venice*. Hedlund also appeared last year as Scarpia in *Tosca* and as Antony in Samuel Barber's *Antony and Cleopatra* at the American Opera Center of the Juilliard School of Music. The previous season he was seen in the title role of Verdi's *Macbeth* and as Trigorin in the world premiere of Thomas Pasatieri's *The Seagull* at Houston Grand Opera. Hedlund portrayed Juan in Pasatieri's *The Black Widow* at the Lake George Festival in 1972. Following his operatic beginnings with the Metropolitan Opera National Company and the American National Company with Sarah Caldwell, he performed with the Lyric Opera of Chicago and the Boston, Philadelphia and New Orleans opera companies. Hedlund's extensive repertoire includes Nick Shadow in *The Rake's Progress*, Junius and Tarquinius in *The Rape of Lucretia*, John Proctor in *The Crucible*, Germont in *La Traviata*, the Athlete in *Lulu*, Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly*, and the Four Villains in *The Tales of Hoffmann*, among other roles.



RAYMOND MANTON

Raymond Manton, now in his 21st season with San Francisco Opera, appears in this year's productions of *Werther* (Schmidt) and *Il Tabarro* (Tinca). Manton's impressive list of credits at this house includes, among other roles, the Simpleton in *Boris Godunov* (1956, 1961, and 1973), Don Curzio in *The Marriage of Figaro* (1958, 1961, 1964, 1966, and 1972), Remendado in *Carmen* (1960, 1962, 1964, 1966, and 1970), Pang in *Turandot* (1961, 1964, 1968, and 1969), Andreas in *Wozzeck* (1962), Bardolph in *Falstaff* (1962, 1963, and 1966), the Hunchback in *Die Frau Ohne Schatten* (1959, 1960, and 1964), Prince Yamadori in *Madama Butterfly* (1971) and Loby in *The Visit of the Old Lady* (1972). Last season the tenor was heard at San Francisco Opera as the Lamplighter in *Manon Lescaut*, the Third Jew in *Salome* and as the Shepherd in *Tristan und Isolde*. Manton scored a great success with Spring Opera Theater in its 1975 season as Guglielmo Antolstoinolonoff, the off-key Russo-Italian tenor in Donizetti's opera spoof, *Viva La Mamma*. He also portrayed Baron Puck in Spring Opera Theater's 1973 and 1974 productions of *The Grand Duchess of Gerolstein*. In addition, Manton, a resident of San Francisco, has appeared with opera companies in Houston, Seattle, San Diego, Los Angeles, Portland and Boston, and has been a frequent soloist with the San Francisco Symphony and other major West Coast orchestras.



JAMES HOOPER

James Hooper made his debut at San Francisco Opera last season singing the role of Sharpless in the student matinee performances of *Madama Butterfly*. A veteran of three seasons with Western Opera Theater (San Francisco Opera's touring and educational subsidiary), Hooper appeared with the company this year as Germont in *La Traviata*, Sam in *Trouble in Tahiti* and Hoffmann's rivals in *The Tales of Hoffmann*. He was also heard as Massetto in a special series of performances of *Don Giovanni* for Street Opera and the Sigmund Stern Grove Midsummer Music Festival. A graduate of Trenton State College in New Jersey, Hooper has sung with the Amato Opera Showcase, the Opera Society of Northern New Jersey and the Opera Theater of New Jersey. At the Opera Theater in 1970 he performed the role of Peter in *Hansel and Gretel* with Frederica von Stade and the role of Morales in *Carmen* with Mignon Dunn. In 1972 he appeared in the world premiere of Selig's *Chorcorus* and the American premiere of Weill's *Der Jasager* during the Tanglewood Music Theater Project. A 1974 recipient of a Sullivan Foundation Musical Award, the baritone will be heard this season at San Francisco Opera as Johann in *Werther*, Dumas in *Andrea Chenier* and Marco in *Gianni Schicchi*.



WILLIAM DANSBY

William Dansby, a 1975 member of Western Opera Theater, was heard in that company's productions of *The Barber of Seville* (Basilio) and *The Tales of Hoffmann* (Dr. Miracle). A native of Texas, Dansby performed last fall with the Eastern Opera Theater where he sang in *La Bohème* as well as in the New York premiere of *Postcard from Morocco*. The baritone also played the role of Banquo in the New York Lyric Opera's 1974 production of Verdi's *Macbeth*. In November he sang the title role of *Boris Godunov* in student performances with the Michigan Opera Theater of Detroit. A graduate of Southwestern University, Dansby received a masters degree in voice from North Texas State University. His subsequent experience included summer and winter stock at the Houston Music Theater and a year-long tour with a choral group called *The Mid-America Chorale*. After moving to New York in 1968, Dansby performed with a number of opera companies in the area, including the Bel Canto Opera, Young Artists Opera, Long Island Opera and Princeton Opera Association. Since then he has interpreted major roles with both Minnesota Opera and Santa Fe Opera. This season he makes his San Francisco Opera debut appearing as Sourin in *Pique Dame*, and follows with the bailiff in *Werther*, Il Maestro di Casa in *Andrea Chenier* and Spinelloccio in *Gianni Schicchi*.

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JOHN DAVIES

John Davies, a young veteran of Western Opera Theater, appeared with that company this year as Bartolo in *The Barber of Seville*, Crespel in *The Tales of Hoffmann*, and as Leporello in *Don Giovanni* (a special WOT production for Street Opera and the Sigmund Stern Grove Midsummer Festival). A native of Boston, the bass-baritone went on tour last winter with Sarah Caldwell's Opera New England, singing the Bonze in *Madama Butterfly* and the Crapshooter in Lukas Foss' *The Jumping Frog of Calaveras County*. In October, 1974 he performed the title role in the coronation scene of *Boris Godunov* with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra at the Worcester Music Festival. A graduate of the Boston University School of Fine and Applied Arts, Davies appeared last year in the New Opera Company's production of *The Marriage of Figaro* and the Opera Company of Boston's production of *War and Peace*. He has also performed in youth concerts with the Boston Symphony Orchestra and as a recitalist for the Welsh Music Hour on BBC-Wales (1973). This season he makes his San Francisco Opera debut as the Old Gypsy in *Il Trovatore*, Littore in *L'Incoronazione di Poppea*, Schmidt in *Andrea Chenier*, and Amantio di Nicolao in *Gianni Schicchi*.



ELYAKUM SHAPIRRA

Elyakum Shapirra won a competition in his native Israel, conducting the Israel Philharmonic while he was still in his teens. Leonard Bernstein, one of the judges in that event, later became Shapirra's teacher with Koussevitsky in Tanglewood and subsequently appointed him assistant conductor of the New York Philharmonic. Shapirra achieved his first success there and was soon conducting the orchestra both in New York and on tour in Canada and Japan. From 1962 to 1968 he was on the podium for over a hundred concerts each season with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, and he also appeared with the orchestras of New York, Philadelphia, Chicago and Pittsburgh. During this time, through the encouragement of Rosa Ponselle of Baltimore Opera, he had his first opportunity to conduct an opera orchestra. In 1968 he was appointed musical director and chief conductor of Sweden's Malmö Symphony Orchestra. He subsequently toured Australia and Israel and emerged as an outstanding operatic conductor, with performances in Stockholm and Hamburg. Shapirra has also made appearances with the London Philharmonic, the Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra, the London Symphony and the Stockholm Symphony. Last season the conductor was on the podium in Frankfurt (*La Juive* and *Faust*) and Sydney (*Tosca*), in addition to conducting symphony concerts in Tokyo and Israel. Following his San Francisco Opera debut in *Werther*, Shapirra will go to Frankfurt for *Cavalleria Rusticana*, *I Pagliacci* and *Lohengrin*.

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LOTFI MANSOURI



STEVEN RUBIN

Lotfi Mansouri, who directed *Esclarmonde* and *The Daughter of the Regiment* here last season, returns to San Francisco Opera for *L'Elisir d'Amore*, *Werther*, and *Andrea Chenier*. The internationally-known Iranian director is also remembered here for his productions of *L'Africaine* (1972) and *Die Fledermaus* (1973). As chief resident stage director at the Grand Theatre, Geneva, he has mounted productions of *Samson et Dalila*, *Idomeneo*, *L'Elisir d'Amore* and *Der Zigeunerbaron*, among many others. Mansouri moved from Iran to this country to study psychology, but after receiving his BA from UCLA turned to opera as a career. He directed a special production of *Carmen* in the new opera house in Teheran on the occasion of the celebration of the 2,500 anniversary of the founding of Iran. Active in broadcasting, he has produced *School for Wives* for Swiss-German television in Zurich and *Manon* for French television with Wolfram Skalicki. Last season the director made his debut with Dallas Opera, staging *I Puritani*, and produced *Ariadne auf Naxos* for the Netherlands Opera in Amsterdam. He is slated to direct a new production of *The Merry Widow* for Vancouver Opera in April, 1976.

Steven Rubin, the young American designer who created sets and costumes for Spring Opera Theater's production of *L'Ormindo* (1974) and *The Abduction from the Seraglio* (1975), makes his San Francisco Opera debut in *Werther*. Also in 1975 Rubin designed costumes for the San Diego Shakespeare Festival's production of *Measure for Measure* and a much-heralded new interpretation of Eugene O'Neill's *Ah, Wilderness at the Circle in the Square*, New York City. In the 1975 season he designed a new production of Offenbach's *The Tales of Hoffmann* for Western Opera Theater, the touring and educational subsidiary of San Francisco Opera. A former lecturer and resident designer at the Yale School of Drama, Rubin has created sets and costumes for the Yale Repertory Theater, the Long Wharf Theater of New Haven, the Williamstown Summer Theater and the American Ballet Theater. Among his design credits for legitimate theater are productions of *Morning's at Seven*, *Under Milkwood*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Guys and Dolls*, *Androcles and the Lion*, *Tartuffe*, *The Three Sisters*, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* and *Antigone*.

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College Opera Association

The College Opera Association, a student organization sponsored by the San Francisco Opera Guild to further interest and involvement in the opera, invites you to look into and participate in activities now being planned for 1975-1976.

Among College Opera Association projects this year is a program which affords members a chance to follow the various stages of efforts that go into putting together this season's production of Donizetti's *L'Elisir d'Amore*. Some members will actually participate in the performance of *Andrea Chenier* as supers—a rare opportunity to be involved on the other side of the operatic stage. In addition, the College Opera Association will also be sponsoring meetings with directors, stage technicians, make-up artists and opportunities to get together informally with world famous artists appearing with San Francisco Opera. For the 1976 Season, members will again be able to obtain tickets to certain performances for themselves and their campuses at a substantial discount.

Thus, the College Opera Association is able to add extra dimension to the operatic experience for its members. We hope that you, too, if you are either a student or a faculty member of a Bay Area college, can benefit from our events.

Further information on the College Opera Association can be obtained from:

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* * *

When Massenet first offered *Werther* to Carvalho, the director of the Paris Opéra-Comique, the latter said: "I had hoped you would bring me another *Manon*! This dismal subject lacks interest. It is damned from the start." Carvalho was utterly wrong—on at least three counts. *Werther* went on to become Massenet's second most popular work. There is very much of *Manon* in *Werther* (Sophie is a superb embryo of *Manon Lescaut*, and there is much of *Des Grieux* in *Werther*). And Carvalho failed to see how perfectly the Goethe story suited Massenet's style.

* * *

Debussy yoked Massenet's *Werther* with Thomas' *Hamlet* and Gounod's *Faust* as a sacrilege against literary art. Surely Debussy was wrong. Given the limitations of opera, Massenet and his librettists successfully translated many of the crucial aspects of Goethe's original. As in Goethe, the inner struggle of the hero unifies the action. The breathless course of events in the novel is also preserved (one can read the novel in approximately the time it takes to see the opera in the theater). There is no musical padding—even the stage-business with Johann, Schmidt, Sophie and the children is all calculated to

continued on p. 66

Heather Harper and Carol Malone in a rehearsal of *Werther* at San Francisco Opera.

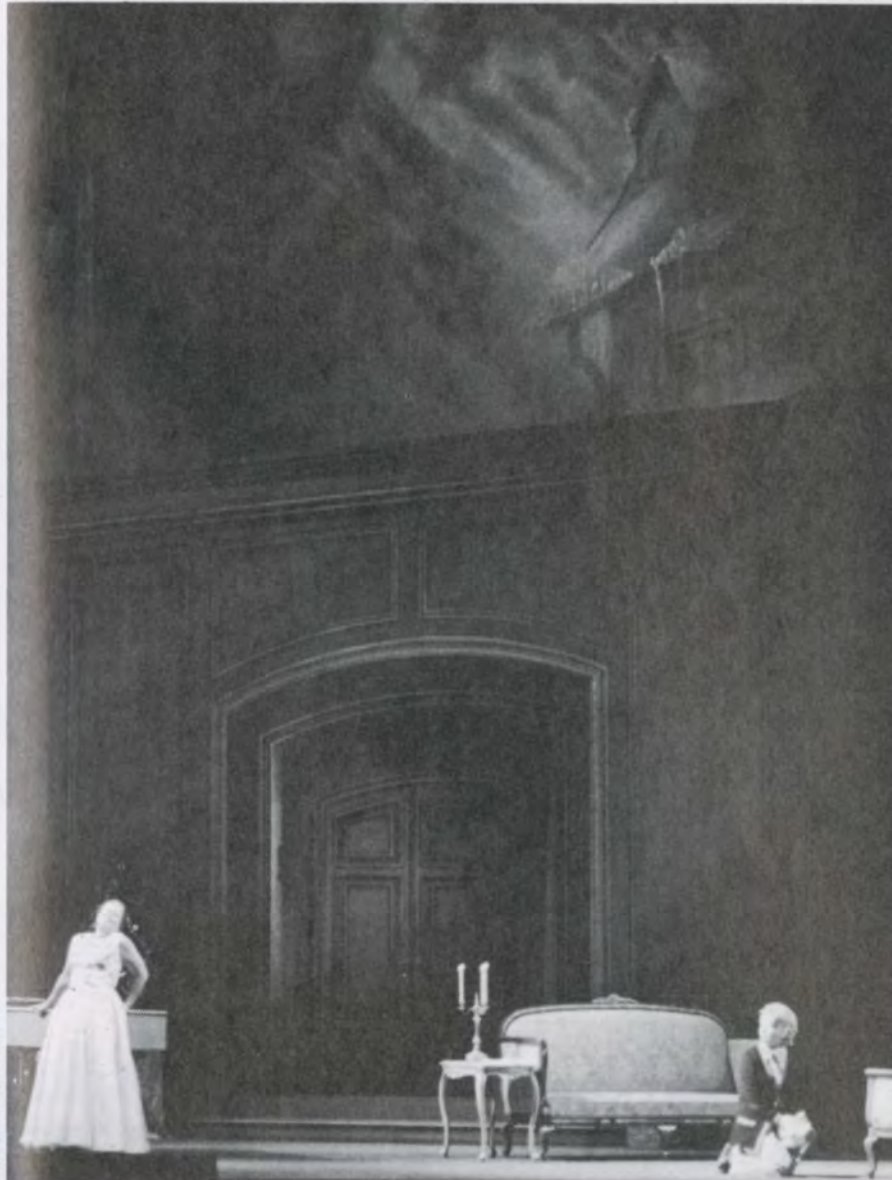


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Observations—continued from p. 65

make more poignant Werther's isolation.

Other proportions of Goethe's novel are carefully observed: we learn just enough of Albert to know he is "a worthy, kindly man whom one simply has to like" and yet his presence does not become oppressive; we sense that violent mixture of joy and despair which is at the heart of Werther's own desperate question: "Why does that

which makes man happy have to become a source of his misery?" And the climax of the novel (the conclusion of the reading from Ossian) is also the climax of the opera.

But most importantly we find in Massenet's opera those central qualities of *The Sorrows of Young Werther*—energy, simplicity, and intensity. Massenet's methods as a composer were extremely simple (his scores are a sight-

continued on p. 68

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Observations—continued from p. 66

reader's delight), and yet his almost naively plain style did not inhibit him from achieving intensely moving lyric effects, especially where charming delicacy or intimacy were called for. And they were frequently required in *Werther*.

* * *

The major change made in Goethe's text is the return of Charlotte to Werther's side after he has shot himself. The narrator in Goethe primly observes toward the end of the piece: "We scarcely dare to express in words what was going on in Lotte's soul during this time." Massenet was not so prim and

put into music Charlotte's dilemma. The result is the fine scene for her in Act III. And the dramatic efficacy of Charlotte's return in Act IV was likewise irresistible (just as the invented scene of Charlotte weeping on Werther's grave became so popular among printmakers in the nineteenth century). The fine pathos and musical understatement of Act IV, at any rate, are its own defense.

* * *

Two important features of Goethe's hero were not amenable to musical translation—his strong ideas and a certain philosophical detachment from the

continued on p. 70

A rehearsal of San Francisco Opera's 1975 production of *Werther*.



Photo: Ron Scherl

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process of his own demise. Goethe's hero is a man of exaggerated conviction as well as violent passions, but since music cannot express ideas, Massenet could only fill out the latter part of Werther's character in music.

Werther, too, has a detached, self-analysing side. He is a very acute observer of himself. Thus, there is a kind of Jekyll-Hyde schizophrenia in him, as exemplified by these two passages:

Oh, how wildly my blood courses through my veins when, by chance, my hand touches hers. I start away as if from a fire, a mysterious power draws me back, and I become dizzy!

Is mine not the voice of a man cowering within himself, a man who has lost himself, hurtling inexorably downhill?

Opera does not thrive upon ironic distance, and so Massenet was drawn to passages of the former sort. He was interested in Werther's passionate attachment, not his ironic detachment. The opera's hero is, as Goethe put it, "lost in a fantastic sensitivity and infinite passion."


* * *

Though Massenet's hero is only a part of the complete literary Werther, he is certainly more attractive. W. H. Auden summed up the Goethe hero with unveiled distaste:

To us (Werther) reads not as a tragic love story, but as a masterly and devastating portrait of a complete egoist, a spoiled brat, incapable of love because he cares for nobody but himself and having his way at whatever cost to others . . . What a horrid little monster!

This is not Massenet's hero. Distinctly less bathetic and gushily self-pitying, the operatic Werther is a far more congenial figure. Goethe intentionally gave his hero a disagreeable puerility in order to distance the reader from him and to avoid sentimental over-kill. But distance is subversive in Romantic opera, and so Massenet dismantled the ironic barrier around the original hero.

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 L'ELISIR D'AMORE

13

14 8 PM (A,C)
 NORMA

20

21 8 PM (A,B)
 PIQUE DAME

27

28 8 PM (A,C)
 WERTHER

November

3

4 8 PM (A,C)
 SIMON BOCCANEGRA

10

11 8 PM (A,B)
 ANDREA CHENIER

17

18 8 PM (A,B)
 IL TABARRO/GIANNI SCHICCHI

24

25 8 PM (A,C)
 THE MAGIC FLUTE

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In just this way Tchaikovsky ignored the ironic content of Pushkin in his opera *Eugene Onegin*—the opera, incidentally, with which *Werther* has most in common.

* * *

Auden's remarks on *Werther* are relevant to a statement the late English poet made in a superb essay on the nature of opera. Opera, Auden observed, is "an imitation of human willfulness; it is rooted in the fact that we not only have feelings but insist upon having them at whatever cost to ourselves." The greatest operas in the repertory—*Don Giovanni*, *Norma*, *Otello*, *Tristan*, *Wozzeck* to name a few—support this insight. To these *Werther* can be added as an example *par excellence*: its hero is an epitome of that "passionate and willful state of being" which according to Auden is the essence of opera.

* * *

It may be difficult for us moderns to take *Werther's* story seriously. Thackeray's devastating burlesque—here is



Costume design: Steven Rubin

the last verse:

*Charlotte, having seen his body
Borne before her on a shutter,
Like a well-conducted person,
Went on cutting bread and butter.*

—is hard to exorcize once one has read it.

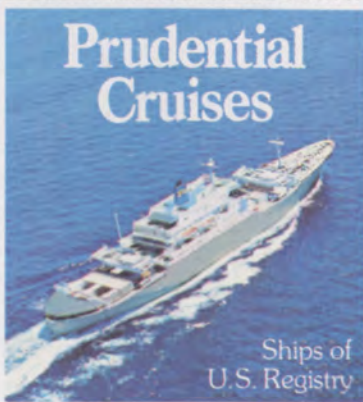
But there is a way to recapture the power of the story, and that is by considering its autobiographical nature. As is well known, Goethe based his story on his own affair with Charlotte Buff (her Albert was Johann Kestner). The real-life denouement, as Goethe relates it, was of course quite different: "I finally laughed at myself, threw off all hypochondriac specters, and decided to live." To help distance himself from his passion, Goethe wrote *The Sorrows of Young Werther*. And yet . . . the power of that passion never left Goethe. Fifty years afterward he confided in a letter:

I have re-read Werther only once since its publication, and have taken good care not to do so again. It's sheer high
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Observations—continued from p. 75

explosive! To read it fills me with an uncanny feeling, a dread of being involved once again in the pathological state of mind by which the novel was inspired.

How we live with our great passions after they have mounted to Wertherian heights, how we see them in retrospect, in the cooling aftermath as Goethe did—that is the interest lurking behind Massenet's opera. That is the high explosive in the story.

* * *

Forty-four years after Goethe left Charlotte, the widowed Frau Kestner visited relatives in Weimar. During her stay she met Goethe again. A letter she wrote to her son reporting the reunion shows she was still a very "well conducted person."

I have made a new acquaintance, with an old man who, if I had not known he was Goethe, and even knowing it, made on me no pleasant impression. You know how little I promised myself from this renewed, or rather this new acquaintance, and so it did not touch me. And in his stiff way he did all he could to show me courtesy.

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Gary Schmidgall lectures in the English Department at Stanford University and is currently completing a book entitled *Literature as Opera*.



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We built this Toronado Brougham for Bob Boyer, who likes knowing front wheel drive is there, even when he doesn't need it.

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Can we build one for you?

Bob likes the way front wheel drive pulls him around corners and along straightaways, rather than pushing. And he likes its traction on wet, slippery roads.

But front wheel drive is more than just a foul-weather friend. It's a symbol of the innovative engineering Oldsmobile has built into every Toronado—engineering that makes it a good feeling to have Toronado around you.

Of course, Bob likes Toronado's distinctive styling. And the sumptuous Brougham interior. But he really expected people to comment on Toronado's engineering.

Instead, he hears things like, "Helen, are you ready for this? It's as classy inside as outside."

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