Porgy and Bess

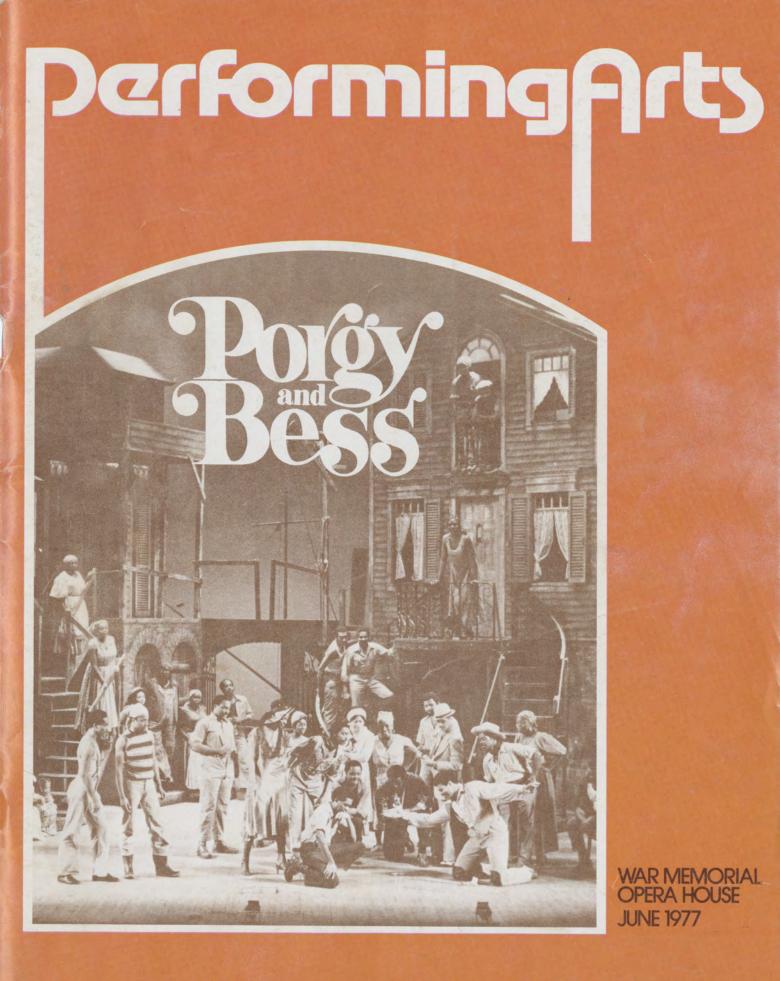
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"The ancient secret of Sidi-Bel-Abbes was within my grasp...and so was the girl?"

It was well after midnight. The sleek, black limousine slid around the corner and stopped under my terrace on the second floor of Marrackech's sumptuous La Mamounia Hotel.

It was the signal I had awaited. My heart raced. Was I about to uncover the ancient secret of Sidi-Bel-Abbes? So many times before it had slipped through my fingers. I tossed my smoldering gold-tipped Fatima cigarette into a wide brass ashtray and whisked on my trenchcoat. Then I reached for my Superscope C-104 Deluxe cassette tape recorder with built-in mike, Vari-Speed Pitch Control, Cue and Review,

three-digit tape counter, the works. I was ready. Following my instructions, I waited in the darkness behind the hotel. Suddenly she appeared. Silent as a stalking cat. Her dark eyes behind the veil seemed to penetrate my very soul. "The ancient secret of Sidi-Bel-

"The ancient secret of Sidi-Bel Abbes is within your grasp." Her voice was like the desert wind. "But in exchange you must give me your wondrous tape machine."

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PERSPECTIVE

June might well be termed "salute American creativity month" in the Bay Area. For those who were dismayed by the commercialism and the occasional honky-tonk atmosphere of last year's giant birthday party we urge attendance at the tasteful and distinctive performing arts events in June which exemplify the best America has to offer in a variety of entertainment mediums. Having a sense of pride in country has been out of style for some time now, possibly because we think it immature, naive, not *chic*. Why?

It can well be said that it is immature to proclaim loudly that everything we do is the best and the greatest; it might also be argued that our history is still too brief to tout our glorious past. But we cannot and should not deny our inventiveness and our resourcefulness, particularly in our contributions to the arts. We don't have a Michelangelo; we do have a Wyeth. We cannot call Wagner our own; Gershwin *is.* Diaghilev and Nijinsky did not travel on U.S. passports; Robert Joffrey and Gerald Arpino do. Consider also that Michael Bennett has continued a distinguished art form that is singularly American the musical.

We are not suggesting that you wrap yourself in a flag during the month of June, but you will be missing great experiences in the arts if you don't do all you can to insure your attendance at the splendid array of events happening in the first month of summer.

The Joffrey Ballet opens the "salute" and we would be hard-pressed to name a better curtain raiser. In Stephanie von Buchau's assessment of what Joffrey represents, the unregenerate Joffrey follower and the neophyte will each find a new perspective by which to appreciate the company. As her own fans already know, Ms. von Buchau's approach is always novel, and she never fails to come up with a new twist on a possibly familiar theme.

"A Chorus Line" has produced more comment and a greater rush to ticket windows than any musical in recent memory. Yet, how many know why it came to be? Blake Samson's enthusiasm as he details the birth of the show will make the last die-hard holdouts rush to the Curran box office. And well they should.

Magazines, unlike accordions, cannot be stretched and deadlines are as absolute as taxes. Both factors are to be deeply regretted in this month of superior presentations. By bringing in Houston Grand Opera's much-heralded "Porgy & Bess" San Francisco Opera has once again done the apparently impossible. Many a decade will pass before we have another chance to see as perfect an interpretation of "Porgy & Bess," the uniquely American opera. We aren't able to whet your interest with a story, but we can stress that it's a show not to be missed.

In a different though equally rewarding musical vein, "Grease" at the Concord Pavilion should be another stop on your peripatetic "salute America" journey. Try it—you'll want to go back for more.

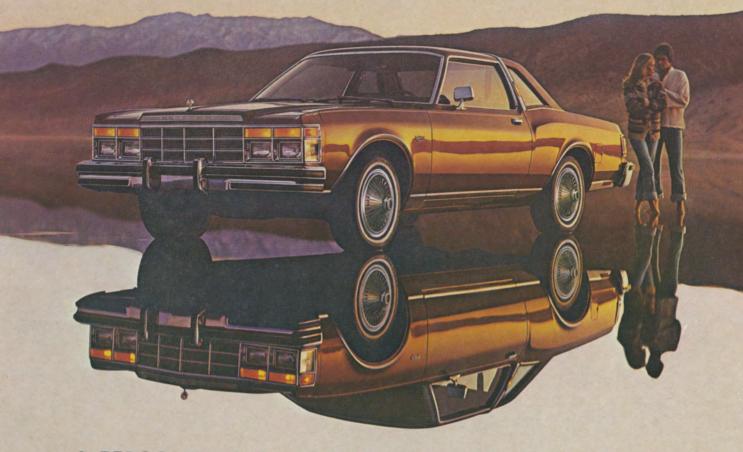
In the audience at each of these events, sitting in aisle seats, will be a handful of men and women who are seeing the show through our collective eyes. They may influence your evaluations, they may make you mad, and they won't hide their opinions. Critics cannot do that. We decided it was time to assess the function of the critic, and few can do it as authoritatively as does David Littlejohn; he's in the business of training the critics of tomorrow.

When you get home from the theater, in June or any other month, you will undoubtedly want to relax, maybe with a glass of wine in hand. *Performing Arts* now helps you to make even that choice. "Viva Vino" will glude you through the intricacies of the vineyards; Bob Goerner, your tour leader, will make sure you don't lose your way.

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Anita S. Moceri

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Joffrey Ballet: Mirror of America

by STEPHANIE VON BUCHAU

Discuss the dance form created by America, and you are talking about modern dance—Isadora, Denishawn, Martha Graham and their offspring. But discuss the dance that *reflects* America, and there is only one company you can honestly name: the Joffrey Ballet. Modern dance in all its diversity—from the fantastic environments of Nikolais to the stark gestures of Cunningham still has a relatively small audience; it is caviar for the connoisseur. But Joffrey is truly democratic;

it numbers among its enthusiasts balletomanes, high school kids, businessmen, grandmothers, all of them rising at the final curtain of Gerald Arpino's *Trinity* to shout for more.

America is a brash country, open and energetic; so is Joffrey. America is a country of incredible ethnic diversity in its cultural tastes; so is Joffrey. America is a questioning country, a place that—for all its self-assurance—doubts itself and reaches out to others. We have never been isolationists at heart, whatever the official policies of our government may have been; neither is Joffrey. America's sexual attitudes, unlike the cynical ones of European culture, are romantic, even naive. This is reflected in much of the Joffrey Ballet's repertory.

The most obvious fact about Joffrey's repertory is that

it is eclectic. The least obvious is that, for all their striking diversity, works have been chosen to complement each other; they are subtle as well as bold. Consider the Ashton

ballets which Joffrey does, The Dream and Monotones. The Dream has suffered from not having an Anthony Dowell in the company, although Burton Taylor gave Oberon a good try. But Ashton's Monotones, one of his most delicately poised classical ballets, regularly gets a better performance from Joffrey than any I can remember from the Royal Ballet.

> Denise Jackson and Kevin Mc-Kenzie in Tchaikovsky Pas de Deux

Other works by European choreographers celebrate the dance heritage of Europe between the two wars, a heritage foreign to us because of the political isolationism which we practiced in the 20's and 30's. Two important historical names in what might be called "modern ballet" (that is, classical steps with contemporary overtones of subject matter and movement) are widely represented in the Joffrey repertory: Leonide Massine (Beau Danube, Parade, Gaîté Parisienne, Pulcinella) and Kurt Jooss (Green Table, Big City, Ball in Old Vienna, Pavane).

Contemporary choreographers from Europe also figure on Joffrey programs. This season at the Opera House, the company will perform Pineapple Poll by the late John Cranko, head of the famed Stuttgart Ballet. Set to music of Arthur Sullivan, this 1951 work was created for the then Sadler's Wells Ballet. Based on a Bab Ballad by Gilbert, it tells of the girls of Portsmouth who are so enamoured of the handsome Captain Belaye that they disguise themselves as sailors and board his ship, the H.M.S. Hot Cross Bun. Both silly and touching, Pineapple Poll reminds us of a time when innocence reigned on the stage. Lest this romantic naiveté seem like Joffrey's only personality, the company is also bringing The Lesson (1963) by Fleming Flindt, head of the Royal Danish Ballet. Based on the lonesco play, The Lesson tells the grisly story of a professor so carried away by his work that he murders his pupil. The murder is almost incidental, a Grand Guignol finish to a ballet which gets its main punch from the steadily building atmosphere of menace in the professor's studio.

But one shouldn't dwell too much on European contributions to Joffrey's repertory, because American choreographers created the bulk of the works. choreographers from the classics of Balanchine (Tschaikovsky Pas De Deux, Square Dance), Robbins (Moves, N.Y. Export: Op. Jazz) and DeMille (Rodeo) to the contemporary works of Twyla Tharp and Gerald Arpino. Tharp is a law unto herself, and the Joffrey's continuing relationship with her is a tribute to the company's perspicacity and stamina as well as the ability of the dancers to adapt to Tharp's original movement.

Joffrey's Deuce Coupe was the ballet that started the Tharp boom and turned her into the most talked-about young choreographer in America. It was a long, disjointed work based on music of the Beach Boys' pop singing group; Tharp must have realized that its diffuseness worked against it, because the following season she reworked it, tightening it into Deuce Coupe II which has not left the Joffrey repertory since. Many viewers are instantly turned on to Tharp's loose-limbed, satirical style, but it takes repeated viewings (as well as her own internal adjustments of choreography) before the full impact of her structural devices becomes apparent. Thus, Tharp's ballets offer both instant pleasure and a deeper worth to those willing to search for it. This Joffrey season, As Time Goes By (one of Tharp's assaults on Haydn) and Cacklin' Hen, a work from the repertory of her own company, will be presented.

It would be difficult to find a major dance figure in America who is more controversial than Gerald Ar-

continued on p. 10



Joffrey Ballet continued from p. 9



Christian Holder in Trinity

pino, Joffrey Ballet's chief choreographer. In Arpino's case, it is the same clear-cut split that the great French choreographer, Maurice Béjart, suffers in his relations with the dance world: the New York-based cultural establishment, including most of the major critics, scorns these two creators, but the *people* love them. One has only to witness the closing night of a Joffrey season in San Francisco to see how far removed from the audience the pundits' sympathies are.

For several seasons now, Joffrey has closed with Trinity, that vivacious rock ballet which San Francisco never tires of seeing. Kinetic excitement builds in the theater through the quiet ending where the dancers place candles on the stage. Then the audience erupts, throwing flowers and screaming itself hoarse until Christian Holder, Dermot Burke and Gary Chryst are forced to whirl back onstage, endangering their limbs by dancing wildly among the flowers, repeating the hypnotic ending of the first movement. I have taken people to see Trinity who never saw a ballet before in their lives, and they have stumbled from the theater, gabbling incoherently about this wonderful art form. One hates to break the spell by

telling them that they are not going to get that particular thrill anywhere but at the Joffrey Ballet.

Marcia Siegel, a New York dance critic, says sarcastically that Arpino's job is to "produce whatever number of new, preferably with-it ballets the company happens to need each season." This does seem rather to be missing the point, or at least applying an artificial and unnecessary standard. The idea of artists working only when it suits them, when "inspiration" strikes (which is what Ms. Siegel is implying Arpino doesn't do), is a leftover of the Romantic Age. Mozart created his major operas not when inspiration told him to, but when someone gave him a commission and said: Do it now. I don't 5020-P-A Edit feature story june bk. mean to couple Arpino with Mozart (you can't couple anybody with Mozart), but the point is that the craftsman is as important as the dreamer when it comes to creating viable dance theater.

Not all Arpino ballets have been successful, but the ones which have returned year after year (Viva Vivaldi, Kettentanz, Trinity) have done so because they received the approval of the audience which — despite any harsh words from the critics—is the continued on p. 12

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Joffrey Ballet continued from p. 10



Lisa Slagle and Charthel Arthur in Pineapple Poll

final arbiter. This season Joffrey revives Arpino's Sacred Grove on Mt. Tamalpais, one of his so-called "Berkeley ballets," born because Arpino found that something in the Bay Area love-child movement of the 60's sparked his creativity. (Trinity, of course, is another product of that spark.)

Sacred Grove is as much ritual as dance, a ritual which is enhanced by one of the aspects of the Joffrey Ballet that struck me the first time I saw them at Stanford in the mid-60's: the consummate taste and care that is given to the "look" of a work. One never sees a loose zipper or strings hanging from a gauze skirt at the Joffrey. Costumes invariably fit perfectly and are skillfully chosen to make the most of the dancers' attractions. (If you are one of those people who prudishly deny that ballet has anything to do with bodies, what on earth are you doing at the Joffrey?) Colors and lighting are subtly coordinated; everything looks polished, finished, professional.

Sacred Grove's stately eroticism gives way to physical exultation when flame-haired Russell Sultzbach begins a tour de force of free-spirited choreography that blends the best of two worlds: athletics and dance. He could be a pentathlon champion from anA second independent survey confirms it: American Airlines is the frequent flier's No. 1 choice for domestic air travel!

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But now the results are in from a new survey by the Opinion Research Corporation, Princeton, N.J. They interviewed 513 middle and top management executives from America's largest companies. <u>The question</u>: If you had your choice of any U.S. airline, to any United States destination, which one airline would be your first choice?

<u>The answer</u>: Again, more people chose American than any other airline.

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Joffrey Ballet continued from p. 12



Beatriz Rodriguez and Russell Sultzbach in Rodeo.

cient Greece, spinning, jumping, whirling, somersaulting and exciting the audience with his ability to move the way we who are earthbound can move only in our dreams.

Sultzbach also appears in *The Relativity of Icarus*, a work set to music written by Gerhard Samuel, former conductor of the Oakland Symphony. This strange, exotic ballet has been dubbed "homosexual" by those people whose imaginations are so limited



Photo: Jack Mitchell

that anytime they see two men dance together they can think only of sex. Not that there would be anything wrong with that—Margo Sappington has two guys who are obviously gay grooving in the first section of her effervescent Weewis—but Icarus is about events less ephemeral than sex. Even if one refuses to acknowledge the underlying structure of the Icarus myth and all it says about parental relationships, there is the pure dance to continued on p. 16 Come drive the Mercedes-Benz 450SEL. For you...for your passengers... it's a world unto itself.



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Joffrey Ballet continued from p. 15



The Relativity of Icarus

consider: the spinning pyrotechnics of Ann Marie d'Angelo which are so astounding that the audience always bursts into applause just where it shouldn't, and the power and intricacy of the *pas de deux* for Icarus and his father.

Two other Arpino works will be receiving first performances here: Orpheus Times Light², another mythological excursion which had its premiere last October, and Touch Me, a solo for Joffrey's giant Trinidad-born dancer, Christian Holder. If Arpino's work implies a certain eclecticism, there is no need for that word to be pejorative. America, after all, is an eclectic country, a place that borrows whatever it needs from other cultures and times; borrows it, uses it, expands it, sometimes treats it with less than respect, but always with vitality, energy and youthful hope. And so does the Joffrey Ballet.

Miss von Buchau is the Performing Arts Editor of San Francisco Magazine and the San Francisco Correspondent for Opera News.



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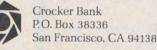
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WHO NEEDS CRITICS?

Critics are very hard people to love. Even if you happen to agree with a particular critic one day, you'll probably disagree violently with her the next. And all along you may be suspicious of the arrogance and nastiness, the pretensions of omniscience. "Who does she think she is, anyway? What makes her opinions any better than mine? Who *needs* her?"

Producers, performers, artists, and writers tend to be even more disrespectful of critics than laymen. The public may send postcards and make phone calls telling you that you're wrong, that you're stupid, that you're blind and deaf, that you don't know what you're talking about. But producers and performers can get downright vicious. They will ban you from their theatres. They will call your editor and apply pressure to get you fired. They will rent huge moving billboards in Times Square to attack your private life. Stanley Eichelbaum of the San Francisco Examiner was once punched in the nose by an unhappy actor. Sylvia Miles tilted a plate full of paté, steak tartare, cole slaw, and ripe Brie over the head of John Simon, America's hardest-toplease movie critic, who had said unflattering things about one of her performances.

If the public dislikes them, and performers detest them, do we really need critics at all? One way to answer is to ask yourself: how do 1 use critics?

First, I would guess, as consumer reporters: one to three stars in the Michelin Guide, that little man bored to sleep (or jumping out of his chair) in the Sunday *Chronicle* pink section. You want to see a new movie, or read a book, or buy a record. You don't want to waste time or money. You haven't the energy or leisure or contacts to do a thorough and informed job of research on everything going on. So what do you do? You may ask a friend; you may read a review.

Ideally, you do both at once. You read the reviews of a critic who seems like a friend—one, that is to say, you've found yourself agreeing with more often than not in the past, one whose style and standards you find congenial.

A second way most of us "use" our critics is the same way we use other reporters: to find out the news, to learn what's going on that matters, to "keep up." People read reviews of far more events than they can ever possibly attend or experience themselves. Often, in fact (in the case of one-time-only concerts or TV shows) it's impossible to use a review as consumer advice. The event is over and done with by the time the review appears.

In these cases, one is reading the review as *news*. How good *is* the San Francisco Ballet this year? Better than last year? What's their new *Romeo and Juliet* like?

"Keeping up," keeping abreast, keeping informed or au courant is a perfectly legitimate goal—even if it is done just to participate vicariously in someone else's more active and glamorous life; or because you've developed a kind of partisan affection for a local team or troupe; or because you want to keep your end up in conversations in the company cafeteria, the supermarket, the local bar. "Have you seen Viva La Mamma?" "No, but I read the reviews."

But there can be rewards deeper and more substantial in "keeping up" with the world of the arts. Good artists are often a kind of Distant Early Warning system of the world to come, of things that matter (or will matter) in the world outside of art. To keep up with their work, therefore, is also to keep alert to important changes in that larger world, and the conscientious and responsive critic can help you to do this. This is why I like certain long-winded critics in magazines, who, while reviewing the latest work, will also look through and beyond it: what does Taxi Driver say about the society that produced it? Is Joan Didion's new novel telling us something about America (or ourselves) that we should know? Is Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman?

A third reason for reading reviews and thus a third justification for critics—is that they can enrich, expand, and solidify the remembered experience of something you've already been through yourself.

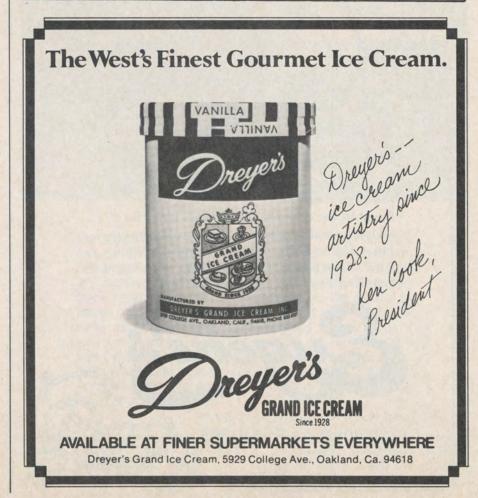
I greatly enjoy reading reviews after I've experienced the same event the critic has—and not just to see if we agree, although of course that's part of the fun. (If she does agree with you, you can enjoy feeling confirmed in your own taste and judgment, professionally backed up; or you can enjoy feeling angry and superior if she doesn't—"Why, the idiot; she has no taste at all!")

But what a really good critic can dowhether you end up agreeing or not —is to bring the event vividly back to mind, by the magic of skillful, evocative writing; recall parts of it you'd forgotten; point out qualities or aspects you may not have thought of yourself; and, in the end, make your own possession of it something surer,

continued on p. 20



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Who Needs Critics? continued from p. 19

more tangible, more rich. You enjoyed, let us say, watching Brando or Nureyev or Carol Burnett. The good critic can help explain to you *why* you enjoy them, and thereby enlarge and enrich your own recollection, double your capital of remembered pleasure.

Still, and finally, a lot of people read reviews-and I know this is true-just because they like to read reviews. They're the people who snatch the entertainment section of the newspaper first, the way others grab the comics or sports. They read Time or Newsweek back to front, starting with books and movies and working their way up to politics and foreign affairs. And not necessarily because they're all that devoted to art. They may just be devoted to clever, imaginative writing. The good critic or reviewer gets more opportunity to write cleverly and imaginatively than almost any other non-fiction writer. He's got to express his own subjective responses, and the challenge of describing a complicated, sensual, nonverbal experience in words forces him to become at least something of a poet.

I teach a course in critical reviewing a couple of times each year at Berkeley, often heavily oversubscribed you have no idea how many bright students would like to become professional critics. At the end of each term, I used to ask them to try in a page or two to describe the most important thing they'd learned in the course. A few years ago, one of the sharper ones came up with this:

The expression of a personal taste should not guide the tastes of others. Certainly even Clive Barnes himself would agree that the power he wields is undeserved and unfortunate.* Nor should one journalist's opinion be considered a definitive judgment of any kind. Aesthetic opinions, like political ones, are not right and wrong: they are expressions of temperament and prejudice and predilection. Nor can criticism truly be regarded as educational: what, after all, is it teaching?...

^{*}Indeed he does. If a Barbary ape were hired to review plays for his paper, Barnes once complained, "the various entertainment industries would go right on quoting the Times without even noticing the substitution."

Who finally cares whether Pauline Kael likes a movie or not? The value of criticism, if there is any, does not really depend on the judgment expressed.

Nor does it depend on the criteria employed. Certainly it is helpful to know how a critic arrives at his decisions, but the method itself is not at issue. Berlioz' music criticism employs a method patently absurd to modern listeners, but the value of his writings—and their popularity—remain more or less undiminished. We no more limit ourselves to critics whose methods we share than we do to critics whose opinions we share.

"The good critic," Edmund Wilson wrote somewhere, "is a good writer." Like many people, I enjoy reading good criticism. The purpose of criticism is the same as that of any other kind of writing (whatever that may be). Good criticism is good writing. It may not be the highest art, but it *is* art...

Well. That would seem, at least, to leave very few standards by which to distinguish good criticism from bad, and (abstractly, theoretically) I almost believe there are none. Plus-orminus judgment is certainly no test. Wise men disagree radically about every event in the world of art and entertainment.

I suppose I do hold to certain value distinctions in criticism: between the Uninformed and the Well-Informed, the Coherent and the Incoherent, the Well-Written and the Ill-Written.

But even this minimal list is of uncertain value. I can imagine (if not lay my hands on) a piece of criticism that was ill-informed, ill-written, and incoherent, and yet *still* valuable and useful; because, let us say,

—it was lit up here and there by flashes of real insight or provocative thought, like a bad opera with one or two great arias;

—its clumsiness and incoherence were the marks of a rugged effort to come to terms with difficult material, as opposed to the slickly packaged wit of many pros;

—its misinformation was simply the sign of a beginner who may have been looking freshly, as opposed to the tediously encyclopedic knowledge of the jaded veteran reviewer.

continued on p. 22



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Who Needs Critics? continued from p. 21

What makes a good critic? Not, necessarily, simply knowing a great deal about one's field, or else any number of near-unreadable academic experts could pass for good critics. (Ignorance, of course, is no help either. One has a right to expect even daily newspaper critics—even reviewers on TV—to obtain accurate information. But accuracy by itself affords us little.)

Nor, of course, is it necessary to have practiced successfully the art one is reviewing. Many good critics have been successful practitioners of their specialties, from Coleridge and Shaw to Virgil Thomson and Truffaut. But many others have not. Performers often regard the latter as bitter artists manqués, taking out a frustration of their own failure on people who do create primary works. Some critics can become almost pathologically cruel in print, I grant. But I doubt if a feeling of creative impotence has much to do with this. To the artist's taunt, "I'd like to see you do any better," the critic's reply should probably be, "No. I'd like to see you do better."

I once thought that a functioning critical theory, coherent and consistently applied, was an essential part of a good critic's equipment. But now I'm not so sure. The masters of aesthetics-the Aristotles and Ruskins, the Croces and Fryes, those original, Alpine intellects whose ideas set whole centuries to seeing and hearing differently - were usually theorists rather than evaluators of individual events. But to someone whose job it is to respond with alertness, freshness, openness and vigor to new works every day in the rapidly changing world of art, elaborately formulated aesthetic dogma may be more of a hindrance than a help. Maintain standards, by all means; but standards ever ready to be modified, enlarged, or even thrown out altogether under the irresistible pressure of something original and authentic.

Good criticism is a complicated, juggling business. You must treat art and artist with all the seriousness they deserve, select and combine words so scrupulously that you do full justice to the event and your experience of it. But at the same time, you have to talk directly and genially to thousands of invisible, nonspecialist readers, who expect reviews to be fun to read. In the end, I suppose, I'd list five criteria as essential to the makeup of a good critic.

First, an obsessive, irrational, abiding love of the field you're criticizing. Sainte-Beuve, I believe, would have preferred a world made entirely out of books; Eric Bentley was probably unhappy whenever a theatre curtain came down.

Second, a master craftsman's dedication to the uses and potential of the language—a rejection of anything less than the fullest, clearest, most accurate expression of your thought. Third, the rare trait of total attentiveness, of maximum receptivity; the ability to be, as Henry James put it, "one of those people upon whom nothing is lost."

Fourth, a generous, even anxious concern to reach and be understood by the people who read you: Who are those people out there? How can I get through to them?

And fifth, the fullest possible range of interest and involvement in the world outside your own specialty. Only by seeing an event in the context of the larger world that informs it can one really make judgments that count. Or, what do they know of rock 'n roll, who only rock 'n roll know?

What they're really engaged in, the better critics, is a kind of lover's quarrel with art: they care too much about it not to want it to be better, or to shut up when it's bad. The ideal critic is one who can talk you into becoming a critic yourself; someone (like him) who cares about good music, art, books, drama, film, television, all these expressive translations of life; who attends to them with intense and exaggerated concentration, all his senses and brain cells tingling and alert; but who makes careful discriminations while attending, moral, aesthetic, just plain hedonistic-this was more fun than that. He's someone who maximizes all his inlets of pleasure and enlightenment, who squeezes every last drop of joy or meaning out of art and of life, and believes that they are both the better for being examined as well as enjoyed.

David Littlejohn is a Professor and Dean in the School of Journalism at UC Berkeley, and a critic of long standing. His eighth book, and first novel, The Man Who Killed Mick Jagger, was published this year.

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THE RECORDING STAGE

BY GORDON ENGLER

As a mere sprout I remember seeing ads for Victor Records showing an incredulous artist with an ear cocked toward his speaker and a level glance aimed at his audience, trying to contain his emotion, which was teetering somewhere between rapture and ecstasy. The balloon over his head conveyed the message: he had never heard such lifelike sound.

Those marvelous vignettes, featuring everyone from Schumann-Heink to the latest matinee idol, appeared throughout the acoustic era, and later, when electric recording took over, even more boggled minds and open mouths sent us rushing to our music stores for the latest 78 rpm wonder. I suppose they really did seem like the last word in those dear naive times, but rehearing the tinny shrieks and metallic scratchings suggests that we had a long way to go before we approximated realism in sound. I write this as I sit with ear aimed at my own speaker, level glance directed at you, trying to contain my euphoria as I grasp for superlatives over the latest Philips records, and wonder if a future generation will find them primitive.

Make no mistake about it: when it comes to record labels I am unswervingly prejudiced in favor of the Dutch label. Inasmuch as I come in contact with a goodly gaggle of record collectors, I can safely assure you that I am far from alone. Philips has surely become the hallmark of honest sound; sound without gimmick, without boosted highs and booming lows -just genuine truly real McCoy concert hall sound. The reason for this outpouring of stammered compliments is Bernard Haitink's Schubert Symphony #9 (Philips 9500097). Is it really a great performance, or is the sound so seductive that my ears bear false witness? Well, there's the beauty of the situation; the Philips people haven't been content to only regale us with sonic splendor. After all, it is the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, which is arguably the world's greatest orchestra. And Maestro Haitink, in his quiet way, without benefit of podium hystrionics or advertising hoopla, is certainly becoming known

as one of the very great conductors. This young Dutch master (he's still on the sunny side of forty) has surely given us one of the finest readings of the C Major Symphony on records. Do yourself a favor: put this item on your shopping list along with eggs, butter and cheese.



I don't know about you, but as far as I'm concerned the newest entry in the Mahler sweepstakes has the sound of genius about it. Carlo Maria Giulini's only other recording of the Viennese composer was a distinguished performance of the First, but with this thoroughly thought out taping of the Ninth Symphony he places it squarely at the top of a list that includes Klemperer, Solti, Bernstein, Haitink and Kubelik. But then, it is the Chicago Symphony, and that's a hearty recommendation in itself. That organization would probably sound sensational at the other end of a tin-can telephone; the fact that the whole proceedings are giftwrapped with D-G's finest sound is philanthropic overkill. The work receives a broadly-paced reading, and there is a natural forward flow without giving in to the Mahlerian bombast that usually simmers just below the surface. More than is normally found, it's a world-weary Mahler in this portrait by Giulini; the disappointment in a less-than-perfect world shows here in a way that would undoubtedly have matched the composer's own concept of the work. (DG2707097)

There are those who consider the Tenth Symphony the highwater mark

of Dmitri Shostakovich. Count me among them. It is, I think, endlessly inventive and certainly unusually free of the feeling that Big Brother is watching and guiding the pen. Paavo Berglund and the Bournemouth Symphony give it its finest performance to date; there is a genuine zip and forward dash to the proceedings. Angel has invested good sound for the occasion. Turn up the volume and enjoy. (Angel 37280)

That music you hear so frequently that it sounds familiar but isn't is probably the Arriaga Symphony in D. The composer wrote this little masterpiece at nineteen and died prematurely at just twenty years of age. There is a wistful turn of phrase that brings Mozart to mind, but the sunny sound of castanets hovers around the fringes of this Spanish classic, and it serves as very choice opening shot from a brand new Illinois company, HNH records. Jesus Lopez-Cobos conducts the English Chamber Orchestra. Superb sound completes the sonic picture. (HNH 4001)

Telefunken has given us an absolutely glorious disc that pairs two great 19th Century liturgical masterpieces; the Te Deum in settings by Giuseppe Verdi and Anton Bruckner. One might reasonably expect these German forces to give the Austrian composer the fine performance that they do, but they are surprisingly idio-matic in the Verdi as well. Opera lovers may well take note of the fact that the astonishing Kurt Moll is the basso, proving that what we heard here in 1974 was indeed worthy of international fame. If his companions are less well-known, they are no less proficient; the orchestra is the now famous Philharmonia Hungarica, which aggregation gave us the Havdn symphonies en toto. The Verdi Te Deum is usually encountered in an integral recording of the Pezzi Sacri, but to my mind it makes a far stronger impression standing alone. Bruckner's setting has the massive sound associated with the Austrian composer, and this performance seems to me to be the finest available. I loved this L-P, and I think you will too. (Telefunken 642037)

continued on p. 47



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production of

PORGY AND BESS

Music by George Gershwin

Libretto by DuBose Heyward

Lyrics by DuBose Heyward and Ira Gershwin Founded on the play Porgy by Dorothy and DuBose Heyward

> starring (in alphabetical order)

Donnie Ray Albert Naomi Moody Wilhelmenia Fernandez Robert Mosley Wilma Shakesnider Delores Ivory-Davis Gail Nelson

also starring

Bruce A. Hubbard Elizabeth Graham Joanne Jackson George Robert Merritt Andrew Smith

and

Larry Marshall as Sportin' Life

Principal Conductor C. William Harwood Sets Robert Randolph Costumes Nancy Potts Lighting Gilbert V. Hemsley, Jr.

Additional scenic elements for Kittiwah Island designed by John Rothgeb

Choreographer and Assistant Director Mabel Robinson

> Assistant Conductor Paul Connelly

Musical Director and Chorus Master John DeMain Production Stage Manager and Assistant Director Helaine Head

> Musical Preparation George Darden

Production Directed By Jack O'Brien

Original Cast Album Recorded By RCA Records and Tapes

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The producers wish to express their gratitude to Louis Aborn, Mr. & Mrs. Ira Gershwin, Jennifer Heyward, Robert Kimball, Kay Swift, and Mrs. Edgar Tobin for their assistance, advice, and confidence.

CAST

(in order of appearance)

Jasbo Brown	PAUL CONNELLY
Clara	ELIZABETH GRAHAM
Mingo	WARDELL WOODARD
Jake	BRUCE A. HUBBARD
	JUBILANT SYKES
Sportin' Life	LARRY MARSHALL
	RONALD E. RICHARDSON
Robbins	RODRICK ROSS
Serena	DELORES IVORY-DAVIS
	WILMA SHAKESNIDER
	SHIRLEY BAINES
Jim	HARTWELL MACE
Peter	MERVIN WALLACE
Lily	BARBARA BUCK
Maria	JOANNE JACKSON
	GWENDOLYN SHEPHERD
Scipio	ERIC GRAHAM
Porgy	DONNIE RAY ALBERT
	ROBERT MOSLEY
	BRUCE A. HUBBARD
	MICHAEL SMARTT
Crown	GEORGE ROBERT MERRITT
	ANDREW SMITH
Bess	WILHELMENIA FERNANDEZ
	GAIL NELSON
	NAOMI MOODY
Detective	JOSEPH WARREN
Policeman	WILLIAM GAMMON
Undertaker	MICHAEL SMARTT
Annie	SHIRLEY BAINES
Frazier	RAYMOND BAZEMORE
Strawberry Woman Crab Man	LORETTA GILES
	STEVEN ALEX-COLE
Coroner	JOHN B. ROSS





Steven Alex-Cole Vanessa Ayers Shirley Baines Earl Baker Kenneth Bates Clyde Battles Raymond Bazemore Barbara Buck Loretta Giles Earl Grandison Alma Johnson Janet Jordan

Donald Walter Kase Christal Lockley Hartwell Mace

Ensemble

Barbara Mahajan Diane Matthew Patricia McDermott Margery A. Medina Dianne Randolph Dwight Ransom Ronald E. Richardson Rodrick Ross Gwendolyn Shepherd Michael Smartt Jubilant Sykes Mervin Wallace Daniel Washington Wardell Woodard Barbara Louise Young





PLACE: CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA TIME: 1935

ACTI

- Scene 1: Catfish Row, a summer evening
- Scene 2: Serena's Room, the following night
- Scene 3: Catfish Row, a month later
- Scene 4: Kittiwah Island, late afternoon

There will be a 15 minute intermission

ACT II

- Scene 1: Catfish Row, before dawn, a week later
- Scene 2: Serena's Room, the dawn of the following day
- Scene 3: Catfish Row, the next night
- Scene 4: Catfish Row, the next afternoon
- Scene 5: Catfish Row, a week later

Program subject to change./Latecomers will not be seated until first convenient pause in the performance./Use of tape recorders and cameras prohibited./Your use of a ticket constitutes acknowledgement of willingness to appear in photographs taken in public areas of the theatre and releases the theatre, its lessees, and all others from liability resulting from use of such photographs.





Understudies

Understudies never substitute for listed players unless a specific announcement is made at the time of performance. Porgy — HARTWELL MACE, DANIEL WASHINGTON; Bess - DIANNE RANDOLPH; Crown - MICHAEL SMARTT; Clara — ALMA JOHNSON; Maria — VANESSA AYERS; Sportin' Life - STEVEN ALEX-COLE; Robbins -RONALD E. RICHARDSON; Peter - KENNETH BATES; Frazier — EARL GRANDISON; Annie — BARBARA LOUISE YOUNG; Lily - LORETTA GILES; Strawberry Woman - BARBARA BUCK, JANET JORDAN; Undertaker - EARL GRANDISON, DONALD WALTER KASE; Jim -DONALD WALTER KASE; Detective and Coronet -WILLIAM GAMMON.

MUSICAL NUMBERS

ACTI

PIANO

CLARA

PETER

PORGY

PORGY

ENSEMBLE

ENSEMBLE

BESS and ENSEMBLE

PORGY and ENSEMBLE

PORGY and ENSEMBLE

JAKE and MEN

PORGY and BESS

ENSEMBLE

ENSEMBLE

SPORTIN' LIFE

SERENA

JAKE and MEN

Introduction PIANO Brown Blues Summertime A Woman Is A Sometime Thing. Here Come De Honey Man They Pass By Singin' Oh Little Stars Gone, Gone, Gone Overflow My Man's Gone Now Leavin' For The Promise' Lan' It Takes A Long Pull To Get There I Got Plenty O' Nuttin' Buzzard Song Bess, You Is My Woman Now Oh, I Can't Sit Down I Ain't Got No Shame It Ain't Necessarily So

and ENSEMBLE What You Want Wid Bess **BESS and CROWN**

ACT II

Oh, Doctor Jesus

I Loves You, Porgy Oh, Hev'enly Father Oh, De Lawd Shake De Heavens Oh, Dere's Somebody Knockin' At De Do' A Red Headed Woman Clara, Clara There's A Boat Dat's Leavin' Soon For New York Good Mornin', Sistuh! Oh, Bess, Oh Where's By Bess

Oh Lawd, I'm On My Way

SERENA, MARIA, PETER, LILY, PORGY PORGY and BESS ENSEMBLE

ENSEMBLE

ENSEMBLE **CROWN** and **ENSEMBLE** ENSEMBLE

SPORTIN' LIFE and BESS PORGY PORGY, SERENA, MARIA PORGY and ENSEMBLE



Gershwin at work on the score of "Porgy and Bess"



Fodd Duncan and Anne Brown, the original orgy and Bess (1935).

PORGY AND BESS

"No American opera house would or could have touched this music or this theme, and no American producer would or could have dreamt of a production approaching the operatic dimensions of the original."

With these words (Stereo Review, April 1976), composer-critic Eric Salzman both summed up the fortyyear history of Porgy and Bess and issued a challenge.

To their great credit, Sherwin M. Goldman and the Houston Grand Opera, led by its general director David Gockley, have eagerly accepted this challenge. So, at last we have a production of *Porgy and Bess* as its creators conceived it.

Ever since its first presentation by the Theatre Guild in 1935, Porgy and Bess has been a victim of the sobering realities of American cultural life. Version after version of Porgy has adjusted the work to the standards and limitations of the Broadway musical, an ambience where commercial considerations always have had a disproportionate influence over what has been presented on the stage.

Porgy and Bess is an opera. The existence of jazz and popular elements in Porgy does not make it any less an opera. Verdi was unabashedly "popular" and Mussorgsky made important use of folk materials, but their works are considered operas and performed as operas.

Many compromises were made in previous presentations of *Porgy*. The opening "Jasbo" or "Jazzbo" Brown nightlife scene that DuBose Heyward and George Gershwin wanted required an additional set. The Theatre Guild, which mounted the original production, did not want to spend the money to build the set and the scene was cut.

Wherever the show has played, especially in the United States, it has had to contend with the Broadway-type theatre. This has meant that the full range and power of Gershwin's orchestrations have been consistently diluted and altered.

In musical comedy an audience expects to see the same principals appear in every performance. But where the vocal requirements are as demanding as they are in *Porgy*, the leading singers, Porgy, Bess, and Serena, cannot possibly perform their parts in full voice seven or eight times a week without doing their vocal instruments irreparable damage. We do not expect the principals in grand opera to do this. Nor should they be expected to do so in *Porgy and Bess*.

Traditionally, "The Buzzard Song" and large chunks of the final scene have been cut from Porgy's part. In addition, recitatives were changed to spoken dialogue because even sophisticated theatre-goers such as Richard Rodgers felt that recitatives did not work for Broadway.

By restoring *Porgy and Bess* to its original operatic dimensions, everyone participating in this production is playing an historic part in letting one of the great works of the American imagination emerge with the full force and splendor it deserves.

Of course, Porgy and Bess does not reflect the social values of the 1970's. It was created in the 1930's and in the broadest sense was part of the cultural revolution that reflected the unrest and yearning of the Great Depression years when American materialism in its purest form was severely tested.

Politically, culturally, and spiritually America had lost its moorings in the 1930's. As a result, many of our most original creators sought to rediscover America, her land, her people, her folklore, her underlying values and traditions.

From the murals, court houses, and W.P.A. guide books to the states to searing social and literary documents like James Agee's and Walker Evans' *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* or Henry Miller's bitterly piercing vision of America as "The Air-Conditioned Nightmare," a panoply of artistic creation bore witness to the depth and intensity of our quest for a kind of national reawakening.

In *Porgy* man in his innocence and power is pitted in an eternal struggle with nature and social forces. Porgy is a spiritual brother to Melville's Ishmael and Fitzgerald's Jay Gatsby in the tragic dimensions of his strengths and limitations.

In the banjo song "I Got Plenty O'Nuttin'" he chants the anthem that whimsically and deliciously refutes the materialist credo. Yet he can offer little in its place except his reliance of man's ability to withstand all kinds of privation, and his own benign, almost mystical faith. Catfish Row with its tightly-knit society of primitive, eye-for-an-eye justice is a kind of pre-industrial island separate from the urban, technological world. But it is still dominated by the tantalizing presence of the city with its lure of sin, "happy dust," and the high life, so magnetically captured in Ira Gershwin's lyric for Sportin' Life, "There's A Boat Dat's Leavin' Soon for New York."

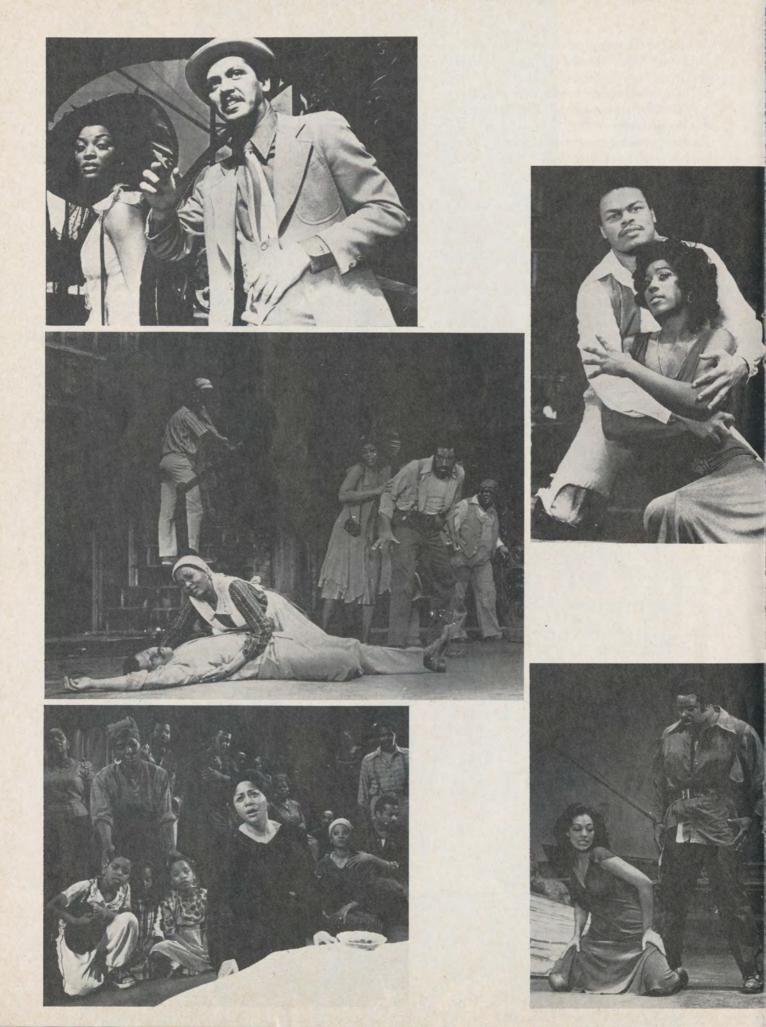
As the opera soars to its overwhelming conclusion, Porgy affirms man's capacity to pursue his dream. His journey to New York in search of Bess is a journey far from the golden age of innocence in which he lived.

Whether Porgy ever finds Bess or finds her only to lose her again, one thing is certain: the promised land is going to be filled with teeming tenements, and huge ghettos of anonymity where the value of the individual man, whom Porgy embodies, will mean less and less.

When Porgy sets out on his spiritual and physical journey "on the long, long way to the heavenly land," we are both exhilarated and moved to pity and tears. We hope it is just possible that Porgy's remarkable courage and unbreakable will might sustain him, just as the work's creators sustained their faith in what is now recognized as an American classic.

Robert Kimball Co-Author of *The Gershwins* — (Atheneum, 1973)







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WHO'S WHO



DONNIE RAY ALBERT (Porgy), is a Louisiana-born graduate of Louisiana State University and Southern Methodist University. In the spring of 1975, he was the Southwest regional winner of the Metropolitan Opera Auditions. That summer he made his first appearance with the Houston Grand Opera as Parson Alltalk in Joplin's Treemonisha, before joining the Wolf Trap company for his second apprenticeship. In the fall of 1975, he sang Sparafucile in Rigoletto with the National Symphony Orchestra. For the 1975-76 season he was resident artist with the Southern Opera Theatre in Memphis. In April 1976 he returned to Houston Grand Opera as Jake Wallace in La Fanciulla del West.



WILHELMENIA FERNANDEZ (Bess), a native of Philadelphia, is a graduate of The Philadelphia Academy of Vocal Arts, and The Juilliard School. She is a recipient of the Drexel University

Varsity Award in Voice and the Pollock Award for Advanced Study in Voice. Currently a member of the New Dra-Mu Opera Company, Ms. Fernandez made her debut with the company in the spring of 1974 as Giulietta and Antonia in The Tales of Hoffmann. In addition to operatic appearances as Marguerite in Faust, Flora in La Traviata and The High Priestess in Aida, Ms. Fernandez has been featured soloist with the Philadelphia Singers, the Philadelphia Oratorio Choir and the Lansdowne Symphony Orchestra. Next season she may be heard as Aida with the Kansas City Opera Company.



DELORES IVORY-DAVIS (Serena), a native of Detroit, studied music education at Wayne State University and taught for a year in the Detroit public schools before coming to New York in search of a performing career. During the past five years, she has had a Carnegie Hall Debut Recital, has performed major oratorio with choral societies in and around New York, performed as soloist with the New York Opera Title III Program, served as artist-in-residence with the St. Paul Opera, and recently recreated the role of Bess with the Springfield Symphony.



NAOMI MOODY (Bess), a native of Memphis, Tennessee, studied music at Tennessee State University and Hampton Institute in Virginia. As a member of the Pastiche Opera Group in Memphis, Ms. Moody performed the role of Monica in The Medium and the title role in Medea. She created the singing role in the suite Blood Memories for the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater and the soprano solo for Howard Roberts' Long Remembrance for the Hampton Institute Fine Arts Program. Ms. Moody recently toured colleges and universities with the Harlem Opera Society's production of Sam Rivers' and Emory Taylor's jazz opera, Solomon and Bathsheba.



ROBERT MOSLEY (Porgy), has sung the role of Porgy with the New York City Opera, in Lisbon and Detroit, and with the Los Angeles Civic Light Opera. Born and educated in Pittsburgh, he is a winner of the Marian Anderson Award, a first place winner of the Metropolitan Opera Regional Auditions (he placed second in the New York finals). A frequent guest artist with the New York Philharmonic, Mr. Mosley has also performed with the American, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Milwaukee Symphony Orchestras. During the 1975-76 season, opera audiences in Denver and Seattle witnessed Mr. Mosley's acclaimed Amonasro in Aida, and also during that season he received notable praise for two Opera South roles: the title role of The Flying Dutchman and Leonce in Bayou Legend.

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GAIL NELSON (Bess), the daughter of a Baptist minister, was born in Durham, N.C. A graduate of Oberlin College and holder of a Master of Music degree from the New England Conservatory of Music, she has also studied at the Mozarteum in Salzburg and the Metropolitan Opera Studio. A lyric soprano, Miss Nelson has appeared with the Vienna Chamber Opera, the Landestheatre in Austria, the Opera Orchestra of New York at Alice Tully Hall, the Symphony of the New World at Avery Fisher Hall, and with Teatro Massimo in a second premiere of The Barrier. On the Broadway musical stage she has had featured roles in Lost in the Stars, Six, Hello, Dolly! with Pearl Bailey, Applause with Lauren Bacall and Leonard Bernstein's revival of On the Town. During the 1975-76 season she received rave reviews for her performance in Music! Music! at City Center. Besides many appearances on television and recordings, Miss Nelson's film credits include The Way We Live Now, I Never Sang For My Father and Cotton Comes To Harlem. Miss Nelson is also an Affiliate Artist at Miles College, Birmingham, Alabama, for 1976-77.



WILMA SHAKESNIDER (Serena), is a native of Washington, D.C., and is a

graduate of Howard University and the Juilliard School of Music. Her performance credits include Santuzza in Cavalleria Rusticana with the Buffalo Philharmonic, the Queen's Sister in Didonas as part of the Clarion Concert Series at Alice Tully Hall in New York and Donna Anna in Don Giovanni, with the Lyric Opera Company of New York. During the 1973-74 season she sang Bess in a concert performance of Porgy and Bess with the Buffalo Philharmonic as well as Babekan in the highly-acclaimed Saint Paul Opera production of Werner Egk's Engagement in Santo Domingo. A former assistant professor of voice and black vocal literature at the University of Buffalo/SUNY, Miss Shakesnider was the recipient of a Federation of New York Musicians Grant in 1976 while studying with Stephanie Scourby.



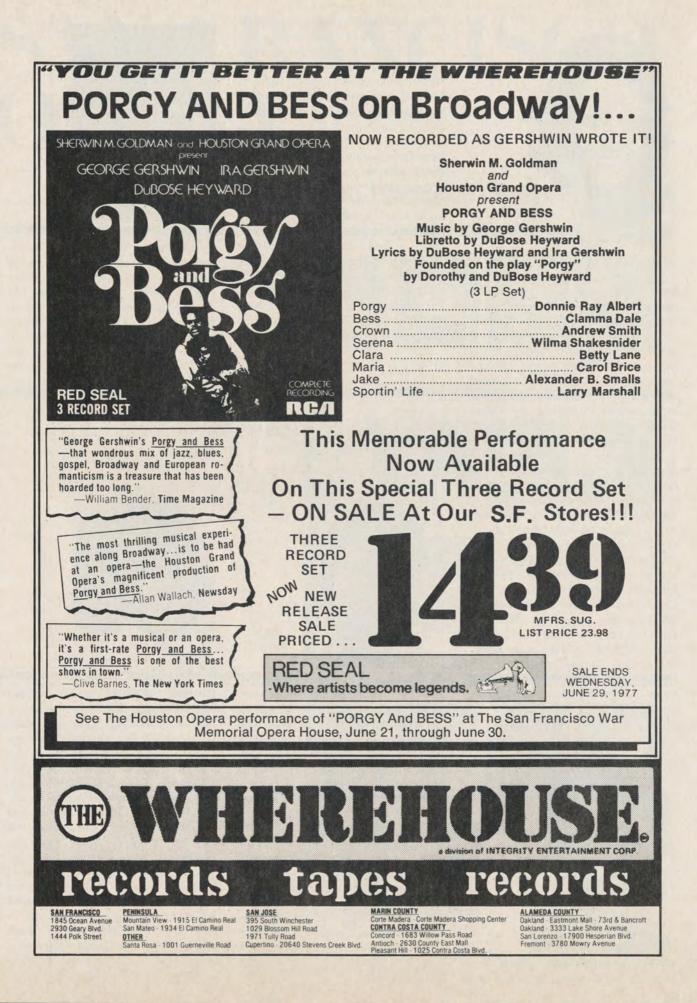
ELIZABETH GRAHAM (*Clara*) A native of Shelby, South Carolina, Elizabeth Graham attended the North Carolina School of the Arts and the Florida State University. She has worked at various office jobs which enabled her to keep up her study of voice. She is a three-time winner of the Metropolitan Opera Regional auditions and the Palm Beach Opera Awards. *Porgy and Bess* is Miss Graham's first professional engagement.



BRUCE A. HUBBARD (Jake and Porgy), a native of Indianapolis, Indiana, attended Indiana University School of Music where he studied voice with Roger Havranek. In the summer of 1975, he was an apprentice artist with the Santa Fe Opera Company where he sang the role of El Dancairo in Carmen. In the summer of 1976, Mr. Hubbard appeared in the role of Joe in Show Boat which starred Shirley Jones. His first Broadway appearance was in the Alan Jay Lerner/Leonard Bernstein musical 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. He has performed Brahms' German Reguiem conducted by Robert Shaw of the Atlanta Symphony. Mr. Hubbard has also studied jazz singing with Eileen Farrell and is presently studying with Ellen Faull in New York City where he makes his home.



JOANNE JACKSON (Maria) is from Newton, Iowa, where she received a Maytag Scholarship to attend Drake University in Des Moines. There she studied voice with Andrew White and with Genevieve Ballard and continued her piano and violin training. She was the first freshman to be admitted into the Drake Symphony and later became Concertmistress of the Newton Symphony. She began her professional career singing in clubs. Later she formed a group called Witches' Brew to tour the United States and Canada which played Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas. Also in Las Vegas she performed in "Guys and Dolls" at the Aladdin Hotel. Miss Jackson has also made numerous appearances on radio and television.





GEORGE ROBERT MERRITT (Crown), comes from North Carolina and is a graduate of Hartt College and Catholic University. He is an Alice Peyton Du-Pont Award winner in the Atlantic Regional Metropolitan Opera auditions. He has performed principal roles with the New Haven Opera; appeared in the Park Concerts with the New York Municipal Orchestra; was baritone soloist for the premiere of Mario Braggiotti's Gettysburg Cantata; and played Walter in the Hartford Producing Guild production of To Be Young, Gifted and Black.



ANDREW SMITH (Crown), a native of Lexington, Kentucky, was the winner of the Chicagoland Music Festival Contest and recipient of the R. R. Mc-Cormack Foundation Grant. At that time the Chicago Tribune described him as having "one of the richest baritone voices to hit the scene in years." In 1974 he made his formal operatic debut as Amonasro in Aida at New York State's Artpark under the baton of Christopher Keene, and the following summer he sang Rodrigo in Lulu at Spoleto. Mr. Smith has appeared with The Cleveland Orchestra, the Chicago Symphony, Buffalo Philharmonic, Milwaukee Symphony and Louisville Symphony, and he holds the distinction of being a cantorial soloist in one of Chicago's largest and bestknown synagogues, Sinai Temple.



LARRY MARSHALL (Sportin' Life), recently played Hamlet in the Broadway musical, Rockabye Hamlet. He was also seen on Broadway in the leading roles of Hud and Berger in Hair, as Valentine in Two Gentlemen of Verona and in Inner City, At Lincoln Center he appeared as Puck in A Midsummer Night's Dream. He was featured soloist in Leonard Bernstein's Mass which opened the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., and played at the Metropolitan Opera House. In 1966 Mr. Marshall was soloist with U.S. cultural exchange tours in Spain and Russia. In 1969 he was the first act to be held over at the Apollo Theatre in Harlem in 26 years. His film appearances include Panic In Needle Park and the role of Simon Zealotes in Jesus Christ Superstar.

JACK O'BRIEN (Director), is one of the most active directors in the country. A graduate of the University of Michigan, he began his professional career with Ellis Rabb's famed APA repertory company, and has subsequently directed for A.C.T. in San Francisco, the Globe Theatre in San Diego, the Loretto Hilton in St. Louis, Trinity Square in Providence, and in Los Angeles he directed Marsha Mason in The Heiress. He served as Associate Artistic Director for John Houseman's Acting Company for two years and has directed opera for the Dallas Civic Opera, Spring Opera, San Francisco Opera and The American Opera Center at Juilliard. Mr. O'Brien has translated Orpheus in the Underworld and Le Cog D'Or into English and has authored the Broadway musical The Selling of the President with jazz artist Bob James.

JOHN DEMAIN (Musical Director), is one of only nine Exxon/Arts Endowment conductors in the United States today. He has been music director of the Houston Grand Opera's Texas . Opera Theatre since 1975 following two seasons with the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra. A graduate of the Juilliard School and a 1972 recipient of the Julius Rudel Award, he was with the New York City Opera for two seasons (1972-73) as an assistant conductor. He has also been an assistant conductor at NET Opera Theatre and for San Francisco's Spring Opera Theatre. He has guest conducted the Pittsburgh Symphony, the San Diego Symphony and the Young People's Concerts and performances of Messiah for the Houston Symphony. In April 1976, Mr. DeMain conducted the American premiere of Goffredo Petrassi's Il Cordovano for the American Opera Center at Juilliard, and later led the Texas Opera Theatre's production of Sousa's El Capitan, which played at the Kennedy Center last summer. He recently conducted a new production of Le Nozze di Figaro, also for Texas Opera Theatre.

C. WILLIAM HARWOOD (Principal Conductor) A native of Richmond, Virginia, C. William Harwood graduated cum laude from Yale University in 1970 and then became the Yale School of Music's first conducting major. At Yale he served as assistant conductor of the Opera Workshop and of the orchestra of the School of Music. The first recipient of a fellowship from Yale to study at the Staatliche Hochschule für Musik in Berlin, Mr. Harwood worked with Hans-Martin Rabenstein of the Deutsche Oper and coached many singers in the Deutsch Oper. Returning to Yale in 1974 to become Music Director of the Yale Symphony Orchestra, Mr. Harwood has also served as Music Director of the Yale Repertory Orchestra, the New Haven Chorale and the Eastern Opera Theater of New York and the New Haven Opera Theater. His recent opera successes include Mozart's Idomeneo. Puccini's Madama Butterfly, the New York premiere of Cavalli's La Calisto, the American premiere of Piccinni's La Buona Figliola for the Fourth International Congress on the Enlightenment, and the world premiere of Debussy's La Chute de la Maison Usher. Mr. Harwood has recently been named Music Director of Texas Opera Theater and Assistant Conductor of the Houston Symphony Orchestra.

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HELAINE HEAD (Production Stage Manager and Assistant Director) began her professional career with three years at the American Conservatory Theatre, stage managing productions directed by Ellis Rabb and William Ball, among others. She was Production Stage Manager for Ain't Supposed To Die A Natural Death; Raisin and The Royal Family on Broadway; David Rabe's The Orphan for the New York Shakespeare Festival; and for Vinette Carroll's Your Arm's Too Short To Box With God at Spoleto's Festival of Two Worlds. As a director, Miss Head fulfilled engagements at the American Conservatory Theatre in San Francisco, the Negro Ensemble Company, the Afro-American Total Theatre, the Marin Shakespeare Festival in California, the Henry Street Settlement, the Vest Pocket Theatre in Detroit, the Urban Arts Corps, and the Black Theatre Alliance Festival.

MABEL ROBINSON (Choreographer and Assistant Director) recently choreographed the Urban Arts Corps production of I'm Laughin', But I Ain't Tickled and Play Mas as well as Your Arms Too Short To Box With God for the Spoleto Festival of Two Worlds. In addition, she has choreographed industrials for Seven-Up, CocaCola and Pontiac, as well as the national touring company of Don't Bother Me, I Can't Cope. As an actress/dancer, she has appeared on Broadway in Cope, Murderous Angels, Treemonisha, Golden Boy and Black Nativity. Her motion picture credits include feature parts in Cotton Comes To Harlem, Stand Up and Be Counted and Funny Lady. On television she has been featured in numerous prime-time series and specials including Barefoot in the Park, Love, American Style and The Bill Cosby Show. A graduate of the Juilliard School of Music, Miss Robinson has made numerous appearances in stock and repertory shows such as Sweet Charity, Hallelujah, Baby!, Six Characters in Search of an Author and in the Improvisational Theatre Project to the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles. She is currently appearing on Broadway in Your Arm's Too Short To Box With God.

GILBERT V. HEMSLEY, JR. (Lighting Designer), a graduate of the Yale Drama School, has designed for several productions including Madama Butterfly, La Traviata, Der Rosenkavalier and Lucrezia Borgia. Besides his extensive work in the opera field, he has designed lighting for several Broadway shows including Jumpers, Cyrano and, this year, Your Arm's Too Short To Box With God. In the spring of 1975, Mr. Hemsley was Production Supervisor for the Bolshoi Ballet and the Bolshoi Opera at the Metropolitan Opera in New York. He has also created the lighting for the Metropolitan Opera's new productions of Aida and Esclarmonde. He has worked frequently for Sarah Caldwell's Opera Company of Boston; where he recently took charge of lighting and special effects for the American premiere of Roger Sessions' Montezuma, Mr. Hemsley teaches at the University of Wisconsin in Madison and combines his teaching and professional career by using his students as professional assistants.

ROBERT RANDOLPH (Set Designer), originally conceived this production of Porgy and Bess for the 1974 Los Angeles Civic Light Opera season. Receiving Tony nominations for his productions of Sweet Charity, Skyscraper, Anya, Bye, Bye Birdie, Golden Rainbow, Little Me and Applause, he also created the scenery and lighting for the Pulitzer Prize-winning musical, How To Succeed in Business Without Really Trying. A former instructor of Architectural Design at Iowa State University where he earned both his B.A. and M.F.A. degrees, Randolph has also designed numerous outstanding television productions such as Liza With A Z and the Tony Awards specials annually from 1968 to 1974.

NANCY POTTS (Costume Designer), has over one hundred and twenty-five major productions to her credit. She is a three-time Tony Award nominee, and as Principal Designer for New York's renowned APA Repertory Company earned the Maharan Distinguished Design Award for her productions of Chekhov's The Cherry Orchard and lonesco's Exit the King. Her first departure from the classical theatre was the history-making rock musical Hair, for which she earned the Theatre Yearbook Best Costume Design Award and subsequent special design citations in London, Paris, Munich and Tokyo. She has also designed for the Alvin Ailey Dance Theatre, the Kansas City Opera and the Dallas Civic Opera. She is currently Visiting Professor of Theater at the University of Maryland.

SHERWIN M. GOLDMAN (Co-Pro-

ducer), a native of Fort Worth, Texas, graduated magna cum laude from Yale College, spent a year in post-graduate study of politics and economics at Balliol College, Oxford, and graduated Order of the Coif from Yale Law School. The next five years were spent in the private practice of law, but in 1969, Mr. Goldman decided to accept the post of President of American Ballet Theatre in order to combine his love for the performing arts with his knowledge of law and finance. During his five year tenure, American Ballet Theatre became recognized as one of the major performing arts companies in the world. Since leaving American Ballet Theatre in the fall of 1974, Mr. Goldman has been active in real estate development and in gas and oil exploration, as well as in bringing to fruition his long held dream of producing the full operatic treatment of Porgy and Bess as George Gershwin conceived and wrote it. After fifteen months of intensive planning and negotiation, that dream became a reality. Porgy and Bess marked Mr. Goldman's debut as a theatrical producer.

HOUSTON GRAND OPERA (Co-Producer), now concluding its 22nd season, has achieved, under the directorship of David Gockley, the reputation of being one of the most exciting, versatile and artistically successful performing arts entities in America. The company offers six major music theatre productions each season in its home facility, Jones Hall and, in addition, boasts America's most extensive opera educational program; a renowned annual Spring Opera Festival; the Texas Opera Theatre, a touring affiliate taking performances throughout the southwest; Houston Opera Studio, a training ground for young artists; as well as national tours of such works as Treemonisha (presented on Broadway in the fall of 1975), El Capitan and, with co-producer Sherwin M. Goldman, Porgy and Bess. Credited with two world premieres of operas by American composers (Pasatieri's The Sea Gull and Floyd's Bilby's Doll) and three recent American premieres of European works, HGO is dedicated to expanding the music theatre experience of its substantial audiences by presenting quality productions of familiar operatic favorites and the best of American musical theatre as well as by pioneering new directions in lyric repertoire and stagecraft.

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Harrah's Tahoe (South Shore Room)-(Reservations toll free 800/648-3773) thru July 14-Lawrence Welk July 15-21—Jim Nabors and Chita Rivera July 22-Aug. 1—Sammy Davis, Jr. Sahara-Tahoe (High Sierra Room)-(Reservations toll free 800/648-3327) thru July 6—Johnny Cash July 7-13—Danny Thomas and Charo July 14-20-Lou Rawls July 21-Aug. 3-Rich Little Cal-Neva Lodge (The Showroom)-(Reservations toll free 800/648-3880) Current-The Barry Ashton Revue LAS VEGAS Caesars Palace (Circus Maximus)-(Reservations toll free 800/634-6661) thru July 6-Shirley MacLaine and David Brenner July 7-20—Andy Williams July 21-Aug. 3—Buddy Hackett Desert Inn (Crystal Room)-(Reservations toll free 800/634-6906) July 1-31-to be announced Dunes (Casino Showroom)-(Reservations toll free 800/634-6971) Current-"Casino de Paris-77" Flamingo Hilton (Flamingo Room)-(Reservations 415/771-1200) Current-"Playgirls on Ice" Frontier (Music Hall)-(Reservations toll free 800/634-6966) thru July 6—Bobbie Gentry July 7-28—Robert Goulet July 29-Aug. 11—Roy Clark Las Vegas Hilton (Hilton Showroom)—(Reservations 415/771-1200) thru July 4—Liberace July 5-25—Bill Cosby July 26-Aug. 10-John Davidson MGM Grand (Celebrity Room)—(Reservations toll free 800/634-6363) thru July 13-The Carpenters July 14-20—Gordon Lightfoot July 21-Aug. 3—Helen Reddy Riviera (Versailles Room)-(Reservations 415/421-6466) thru July 13—Lola Falana and Jim Stafford July 14-Aug. 3—Glenn Campbell Sahara (Congo Room)-(Reservations toll free 800/634-6666) thru July 6-Totie Fields and Sandler & Young July 7-13—Don Rickles July 14-27—Tony Bennett and Joey Heatherton July 28-Aug. 10-Charo Sands (Copa Room)-(Reservations toll free 800/634-6901) thru July 19-Wayne Newton and Dave Barry July 20-Aug. 2-Ginger Rogers Stardust (Lido Room)-(Reservations toll free 800/634-6757) Current-"Lido de Paris" Tropicana (Folies Showroom)—(Reservations toll free 800/634-6693) Current—"Folies Bergere"





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The Recording Stage continued from p. 25



A new "Faust" is here, and while it will be released domestically in time for the San Francisco production this fall, early birds may find it in stores that carry a substantial line of imports, such as Sea of Records, Discount or Tower. Montserrat Caballé is well cast as Marguerite; her "King of Thule" is generally pensive, while the Jewel Song glitters as brilliantly as the gems themselves. Giacomo Aragall's Faust is another clever choice of casting; his sweet tenor carries exactly the right overtone of poignant disbelief. Paul Plishka is a Mefistofele of style-sinister, persuasive, mocking, debonair and eminently musical. Alain Lombard conducts the Strasbourg Philharmonic with conviction, although his tempi are a trifle deliberate. The sound is exemplary; you may cheerfully add this set to your operatic collection. It's a winner. (RCA Erato ZL 30556)

San Francisco Opera lovers have a special affection for Ingvar Wixell, and the mere announcement that his first recital record is now released will send them scurrying to their favorite record shops. The collection is entirely of Verdi arias, and Mr. Wixell is fabulously musical in the roles of Iago, Renato, Ford and Rigoletto, among others. (Philips 6580171)



Herbert von Karajan has another go with Brahms' German Requiem, and I believe he has improved upon the altogether excellent one he made for DG a decade ago. Anna Tomowa-Sintow and Jose van Dam are the featured voices, and they are breathtaking. The Vienna Singverein and the Berlin Philharmonic are in top form, the sonics are splendid, and the fourth side contains both the Haydn Variations and the Tragic Overture. I won't part with my copy, so you'll have to buy your own. (Angel SB 3838)

London Records has released for the first time in the United States the legendary George Szell Tchaikovsky Fourth Symphony, with the London Symphony Orchestra. The British company has placed it on the market with minimum fanfare, but your own good judgment will tell you it belongs at the top of the heap. The blazing performance has the Szell discipline in every groove, yet he breathes life and warmth into it as well. We don't have to tell you about London's sonic triumphs; this is another of them. (London 6987)

Kirsten Flagstad's collection of Grieg songs has been reissued by London on its budget Richmond label. Here is certainly a treasury of style and content by one of the finest singers of all time. Edwin McArthur accompanies, (London Richmond R 23220) and yes, "Jeg Elsker Dig!" is included.

The late Jean Martinon conducts the Dukas Symphony in C Major with love and a sure hand for a work that carries shadowy overtones of Saint-Saens, Chausson, d'Indy and Franck in its sprawling pages. The work is far more sophisticated than its Franckian predecessor, however, and if you are looking for something resembling "The Sorcerer's Apprentice" you won't find it here. An especially valuable bonus is the Introduction to Act III of "Ariane et Barbe-Bleue" that rounds out Side Two. The Orchestra National de l'O.R.T.F. is in top form, and the fine Pathe-EMI sound has been preserved. (Connoisseur 2134)

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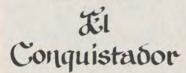


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SIGHT AND SOUND

BY LAURENCE VITTES

HIGH-ENDISM

For many people, the idea of going into a "high-end" stereo store, one that carries a limited number of lines and emphasizes the most expensive and most esoteric of equipment, is intimidating. Arnold Federbush, a Los Angeles-based writer who responded to my recent invitation by writing two delightful letters, put it perfectly: "I never even knew there was such a thing as a high end store. I always divided the world into Federated and the May Company."

There are a number of advantages to shopping in a high-end store. You will get an idea of what the most important qualities in a good sound system are, and you will actually be able to hear components that possess those qualities. The qualities of being "open," having fast transient or dynamic response, having clean, tight bass, and so on, are definitely not mythical beasts.

Second, unless you go into a highend store, it is likely that the salespeople you encounter will not have extensive experience with the best equipment, which means that their standards are founded on insufficient information. The odds are against your encountering in a high-end store the kind of salesperson who spouts forth the following arguments, quoted by Arnold:

"A loudspeaker needs some coloration. Otherwise, it's boring."

"Of course it sounds overbright. It's your record. A normal record sounds normal."

"You're looking for perfection, and it doesn't exist."

Third, high-end stores stock equipment made by the small manufacturers who are the vanguard of new sound development and research. These small manufacturers, e.g. Electro-Research and Linn-Sondek, cannot afford to spend the huge sums necessary to advertise on a national scale, so it is possible you will not have heard of them. Yet, they quickly become the standards against which the industry measures its products.

Recently, a classic example of an industry standard arrived in California: the Spendor loudspeakers. The original design, the BC I, was designed by Spencer Hughes for monitoring use by the British Broadcasting Corporation. Later, the more extended BC III, a large four-way system, followed and guickly became the best available box system, with incredible mid-bass detailing and an uncannily realistic feeling of depth and presence. The importer is keeping prices on these speakers at a reasonable level, \$275 each for the I's and \$690 each for the III's. Do listen to them, for they are responsible for influencing much modern design. For instance, the excellent Polk loudspeakers were designed using the Spendors as a reference. Another offshoot of the Spendors was the Rogers LS3/5A, meant for monitoring by the BBC in mobile trucks and studios. They are small and lack thundering bass; yet, they are perhaps the most accurate speakers on the market (\$225 each).

Which brings us to this month's history lesson (don't worry, it's not academic enough to bite, and there is a suitable reward waiting at the end). We are all righteously and rightfully concerned with things being hi-fi; yet, how many of us know the meaning of that odd term? Of course, your neighbor will probably turn to you and say something about high fidelity; however, don't be tempted by that. Let me enlighten you.

Based on research by Arthur Ord-Hume, the days of early sound reproduction were dominated by Mouseblaster, the most famous name in gramophone horns, the Rolls Royce of gramophones. The Mouseblaster Involuted Triple-Tone Florid Horn was the mainstay in discerning homes. The scion of the firm was the legendary Sinus Pulstrode Mouseblaster and his daughter was the lovely Fiona. Fiona was a gay young thing who affected big floppy hats, ankle-length skirts, and a look of cultivated innocence which drove her numerous suitors crazy. Together, Fiona and the Mouseblaster horn made the Twenties roar considerably!

On Fiona's eighteenth birthday, her father presented her with the very latest invention, a portable gramophone fitted with the latest in horns, the Mouseblaster Stentorian Type 97/B. She giggled with glee and packed herself and her present off to Brighton for a holiday. One lazy afternoon, while munching on watercress and crumpets (those were daring times), and listening to Strauss tone poems on her gramophone, Fiona was boldly approached by an imperiously handsome young man, bedecked in the magnificent uniform of His Majesty's Horse Guards. This swain, after gazing rapturously upon the beauty of Fiona and being swept away by the music, exclaimed the words which have become legend: "Hi, Fi!"

The Reward: as promised, this bit of history is not without redemption, for in addition to gaining valuable knowledge, you have an opportunity to win for yourself a Sumiko Professional Record Cleaner. Consisting of a special, thick pile moquette which provides a multiplicity of tiny bristles, each reaching deep into the record grooves to loosen and carry away dirt and dust particles which can cause annoying ticks and pops, the Cleaner (a \$6.98 value) can be had by answering the following question: What was Sinus Pulstrode Mouseblaster's middle name? Please write (do not phone) me c/o Performing Arts, 9348 Santa Monica Blvd., Beverly Hills 90210. Also, if you have any questions concerning your present equipment or prospective purchases, I will be glad to answer them.

The Audio Astrologer: this irregular feature tells all about Cancer (June 21-July 22). Cancer is something of a closed book: like a chocolate-covered cherry, hard on the outside and soft on the inside. The difficulty is in getting to the center. Cancer never shows enthusiasm, even if secretly impressed. Instead, you get a few crisp, penetrating comments about coloration, transient response, and intermodulation distortion. The fact is that no stereo system known to the civilized world could make a true Cancer really happy. Unless, that is, he listens to my System of the Month: Advent receiver, Polk Model 7 loudspeakers, and a Connoisseur BD2/A turntable (roughly \$650 with a suitable Goldring cartridge).



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Even after many years of familiarity with Champagne, of opening countless bottles, I still confess to a slight feeling of uneasiness as I approach the uncorking. It usually goes smoothly enough but what about this time? Is the cork going to be obstinate or will it be so eager to leave the bottle that it takes off for the ceiling without warning? Connoisseurs, wine merchants and champagne makers alike have faced and solved these problems so take heart, you are not alone.

At a recent Marin dinner of a longestablished wine-tasting group, one of the wine merchant members brought an advance release of a new California champagne from his San Francisco store. The trip across the bridge must have riled up the wine, for no sooner had he removed the restraining wire than the cork left the bottle. As I watched, the capsule slowly began to rise, like a Mariner struggling to leave the launching pad, and at the moment I began a warning it was already too late. With a resounding pop that turned the heads of the other diners the cork headed for the ten foot ceiling. The ricochet journey downward landed between tables, luckily.

In defense of my friend let me say, first, that his Volkswagon obviously needed a new set of shocks and, second, that examination of the cork showed it was much smaller than normal, 18 millimeters at its widest, where it contacted the wine inside the bottle, instead of the more usual 27-28 mm.

What the cork and the wire hood have to restrain is some 60 pounds of pressure or about four times the atmospheric pressure at sea level. In the earlier days of champagne production, before automatic machines achieved a reasonable uniformity in bottles, the secondary fermentation period, when pressures reach 90 pounds or more, set off many explosions in flawed bottles. Not a place to visit without your flak suit. The disgorging process, wherein the plug of collected solids frozen in the neck of the bottle is expelled, accounts for the drop of two atmospheres and should give present day bottles an adequate safety margin.

Without wishing to slight the wine itself, certainly the most complex and delightful of beverages, the cork can make the difference between a good and a bad bottle. André Simon writes in his volume on Champagne "of all the problems which a shipper has to face, one of the most difficult always has been to find good corks." Obviously, if the cork does not maintain a tight seal the carbonic acid gas may leak out and oxygen seep in, spoiling the wine. If it does its job too well, it may refuse to come out of the bottle.

What we are dealing with here is the non-uniformity of the slow growing bark of the cork oaks, mostly in Spain and Portugal. Decades ago the cork growers allowed twenty or thirty years to pass before stripping the trees of their bark. The result was

continued on p. 52





Viva Vino continued from p. 51

bark thick enough to make Champagne corks in one piece. Reducing the waiting time by more than half also reduced the thickness of the bark and made necessary the glueing of two or more pieces together. When a process was perfected to make corks out of cork dust, so as to utilize all of the bark, it was discovered the binding glue tainted the wine. Now, if you examine a Champagne cork, you will see it is built up of several layers of natural bark before the solidified cork dust and only the natural cork face is presented to the wine.

So there you are, about to inaugurate a festive occasion, chilled bottle wrapped in a clean towel, resting on a table at 30° or so away from you. You have stripped off the decorative capsule, you have carefully untwisted the wire hood with a finger atop the cork to receive advance warning of a premature launching. You have loosened the cork by turning it in one direction only and you feel it rising to the occasion. As host, your glass is at the ready to receive the wine should it foam out. But if you exert some downward pressure on the cork, not allowing it to suddenly pop out of the bottle, and bend it slightly toward you, the pressure will escape with a gentle sigh and the expensive bubbles will remain in the wine.

Do you know that at one time what passed for sophisticated society used swizzle sticks in their champagne glasses to stir the bubbles out? Saucer glasses, naturally. The saucers still unfortunately remain but it's been a long time since swizzle sticks. Champagne, of course, can be served in any wine glass and is, at tastings where many different types of wine are poured. The so-called "all-purpose" glass is indispensable when storage space in the home is limited. However the tulip champagne shows off the wine to its best, the glass being blown in such a way that the bowl descends deep down into the stem, allowing the bubbles to be viewed on their long ascent.

Now the problem of the occasional recalcitrant cork, unbudgable as though it were welded to the neck. I have seen fine beads of perspiration on my hosts' brows while trying to cope. I, myself, when host, have visions of it all being a bad dream from which I will surely awaken. What to do? First off, as doctors seem to have an affinity for wine, ask if





there is a surgeon in the house. If so, allow him to operate. If not, remember the afore-mentioned description of the cork, built up layer by layer, and *do not* twist the cork back and forth. It could separate. One direction only, please. Here a pair of slipjoint pliers to grip the cork may save the day.

But then, that doesn't work. In spite of your precautions, the cork breaks inside the neck. There is nothing for it but to try the corkscrew, with towel now around the neck of the bottle; should the neck break or the wine come forth like a geyser. This was standard procedure years ago in England when corks were unreliable and the Champagne firms supplied sommeliers with free corkscrews for this purpose. It just so happened, as I was writing this column, that I had to resort to these extreme measures. Have courage, my friends, and proceed as outlined.

This may be more than you wanted to know about opening Champagne. Let's get to the latest about what's in the bottle. The big news in California is the arrival on the market of the initial bottlings of the sparkling wine made in the Napa Valley by the Moet-Hennessey conglomerate. Notice it is not called "Champagne." The French are very touchy about this and in 1960 obtained a judgment in England preventing the importation of "Spanish Champagne." "Sparkling wine" it must be. And so now we have Chandon Napa Valley Brut and a second entry, Cuvee de Pinot Noir, both priced at \$7.80. While their own vines are growing into maturity, Domaine Chandon purchased grapes from local Napa growers and even some Ugni Blanc from faraway Temecula in Southern California

Just a few weeks ago their winery was opened to the public at Yountville. Take Highway 29 and turn off at the Yountville exit and proceed west toward the Veterans' Home. Just before the guardhouse, turn right to Domaine Chandon. Presently visiting hours are 11 am-5:30 pm except Tuesday and Wednesday. You will get a tour, taste the cuvees and purchase the wine, should you wish.

Personally, I would wish. The color is not in the usual lemon yellow to gold range. Call it bronzed or touched with salmon. The nose is unmistakably fruity California. No French aroma complexed with toast, yeast, nuts or meal. Taste follows along the same lines but is in drier style than the parent cuvees. Make no mistake, this first release is definitely in the class with the best our state can offer and portends for tremendous leaps ahead in future years.

Not all French vintaged Champagne is worth a struggle with a cork. Perhaps it was an off bottle but the 1969 Gosset (who?) was miserably maderized and couldn't even qualify as carbonated sherry. At about the same price, in the \$12 range, is the 1970 Ayala Brut. Reports from elsewhere speak of soapiness and a lack of bubbles. A local connoisseur had a special batch brought in for his friends which fortunately had none of these problems. It was the previously-mentioned wine with the broken cork. Had the critical review been received first, this very satisfying wine never would have been ordered. So differences in shipments or even in single bottles can account for your disappointment in a highly-rated wine. Or vice versa.

I have had an unusual experience with another new California "champagne" release, the 1974 Almadén "Eye of the Partridge," translated from the French Oeil de Perdrix, a description increasingly seen on our wines from our state. First, I received glowing reports from the Southland. Next came a verdict of poor quality from local possessors of discriminating palates. So I brought a bottle to the wine group for their assessment. As all wines are, it was served concealed in a brown bag which, however, did not hide the different shape of the bottle. The initial guesses were French! Shock came with the disclosure that it was California and even more shock when the bag was pulled off and Almadén was there for all to see. This firm has a reputation as a reliable, somewhat dull producer of middle-of-the-road commercial "champagne," so there was nothing to prepare us for the dryness of a Brut or the unexpected complexity from the three grapes in the blend, Pinot noir, Pinot blanc and Chardonnay. At around \$6.50 it seemingly was an excellent value. When I relayed the news to the merchant who ordered it for me, he countered with the word on a bottle from the same case he had opened the previous night. Dull, uninteresting, over-priced and a wine he didn't intend to re-order. What's going on? Four bottles, two good, two poor. In the trade it's called "bottle variation."

So much for expert comment. You're on your own. And watch where you aim the cork.



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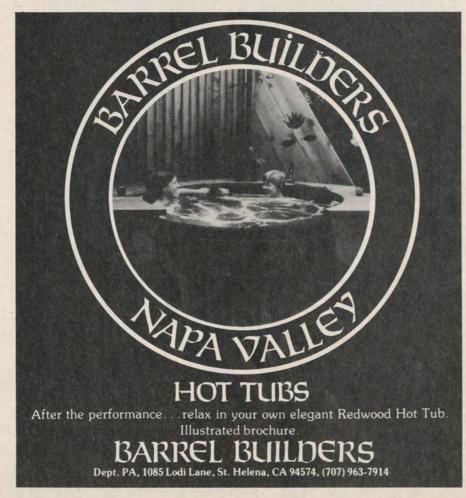
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EPICUREAN OLLOW SPO BY FRED CHERRY

LA MERE DUQUESNE

The lovely Normandy auberge located in the midst of San Francisco's downtown hotels and theatres has come a long way since it opened a year ago. Then everyone had ecstatic things to say about the cozy provincial decor-modeled after the family estate in the north of France, with its colorful floral prints, brass chandeliers, draped and mirrored windows, heavy lace underskirts on tables set with French porcelain. There was considerably less ecstacy about the food. The menu was creative and well-planned, but what was served-when it finally was-just did not live up to its enthusiastic billing.

We tried it again a few weeks ago, in a party of four. The dining rooms were as beautiful as ever and the menu essentially unchanged. What had changed, however, was the food the young waiter brought (more promptly than in the past).

La Mere Duquesne is the French mother of Gilbert, one of the proprietors of the eminently successful Le Camembert in Mill Valley; that restaurant quickly established a reputation for authentic and imaginative French cuisine. Then La Mere opened a similar place in downtown San Francisco, an event hailed in the society columns.

Each one of our party decided to order a different entreé, including one of the famous specialties, to give us a chance to sample the food "a vear later."

Le Pot au Feu "Mere Duquesne" is country food at its best; a simple dish so flavorful that diet-conscious epicures have elevated it to 3-star rank. Slices of almost-tender beef, tongue, a chicken leg, a marrow bone, plus carrots, leeks and turnips make up the dish—all in a delectable broth which reflected a concentration of natural meat and vegetable flavors. At times, there are unlisted specials; the waiter recommended veal sweetbreads with asparagus. Sweetbreads are difficult to clean of sinews and many restaurants, pleading the high cost of labor, simply don't do it anymore. These tenderly-cooked sweetbreads were as clean and as succulent as any I ever had even in pre-inflationary times. The asparagus procontinued on p. 56



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HARCOURTS GALLERY 535 Powell Street San Francisco, CA 94108 (415) 421 3428 Epicurean Follow Spot continued from p. 55

vided an enticing foil, an unusual combination of flavors and textures.

L'Escalope Viennoise was flavorful in a straightforward way: smooth lemon butter added a pleasant lift to the blandness of sautéed scallops of veal —which were of considerably better quality than in the establishment's earlier days.

Our fourth dish was *Le Canard Montmorency*, a creative use of black cherries with roast duck. We asked that the cherry sauce be served separately, better to assay the crispness of the duck; it passed every test.

There are fifteen or so entrees, all modestly priced—and they are served with a choice of a garlicky paté or soup, a green salad, and sherbet. A number of interesting appetizers and desserts are available á la carte.

The wine list is excellent—if you know a bit about wine; it's a trap if you don't. Some of the prices are unreasonably high, others are spectacular bargains. A good California house wine is modestly priced at \$4.00 the large carafe (\$2.75 the small). A better buy is the French white or red burgundy bearing the house label: better than average at prices lower than average, (\$6.50 fifth; \$3.50 tenth).

What wines did we order . . . and recommend? The St. Veran, a burgundy similar to and from the same district as Pouilly Fuisse, for \$8. This was followed by a finer Rhone, Coté Rotie, than the famous Chateauneuf du Pape.

Our evening in this exciting and beautiful restaurant was most encouraging; it was obvious that the establishment had overcome its growing pains. And our elegant repast—about \$75 for four, including wines — was certainly a bargain in this day and age.

LA MERE DUQUESNE: 101 Shannon Alley (between Jones and Taylor, in El Cortez Hotel, just off Geary); San Francisco. 776-7600. Lunches Monday through Saturday 11:30 to 2:30; Dinners every day 5:30 to 10:30. Credit cards accepted; reservations recommended.

THE MARRAKECH RESTAURANT

"If thou hast two pennies," a Chinese philosopher once said, "buy bread with one penny and, with the other, *violets*, for the soul." Nourishment is more than nutrition; it is, or ought to be, a total experience. The Marrakech was built with this in mind. Today, eight years later, and despite the establishment of half a dozen newer Moroccan restaurants, it is still unique and alone possesses that rare combination of setting, style, pace and decor which sets it apart from its competitors.

It started with a love affair, owner Roselyne Dupart tells me—a headover-heels enchantment with Morocco, which blossomed anew with each holiday there and she and her husband decided to bring an authentic bit of their enchanted land to San Francisco.

They imported everything from Morocco, even a chef. Arabesque entrance arches quickly evoke the mood of North Africa. The walls in the dining area are wainscoted with handmade, handlaid Moorish tiles, the white walls above the tiles and the dark blue ceiling complete the restful theme.

The floors and low benches in each of the dining areas are covered with luxurious antique Berber rugs. The lights, perforated brass hanging lamps, cast graceful shadows. Soft velvet pillows cushion you as you loll back and prepare your senses for the gastronomic seduction which awaits you.

Your food is placed on low brass etched trays. A fez-capped waiter explains each course and takes your order. Then a graceful girl in flowing gown appears with a brass vessel of warm water and towels; the washing of hands is tradition and necessity in Moslem lands, for here your fingers are your eating implements, as they are in Morocco.

There follows a succession of gastronomic delights compounded of familiar spices mixed in strange and wonderful ways. The *salade marocaine*, subtly seasoned with cumin, is a surprisingly delicious mix of peeled green peppers and tomatoes. Then *harira*—a peppery lentil soup that has as many versions as there are cooks in Morocco.

Pastilla follows—everyone's Moroccan favorite. An unusual melange of all the basic tastes and most of the textures—sweet and sour, salty and bitter, crisp and soft, and wet and dry. It takes days to prepare: thin layers of flaky *filo* filled with chicken and eggs, almonds and onions—plus an improbable assortment of spices like cinnamon and sugar and saffron and ginger and cumin.



EVERY SO OFTEN... YOU'VE GOT TO DO IT R IGHT:



HYATT REGENCY SAN FRANCISCO There are captivating main courses of rabbit, hare, lamb and chicken. The *brochette* de *kebab* is lamb of better quality than you'll find in Morocco—and a good choice for the less adventurous.

My favorite was *Lnam mrhosia*, spring lamb coated with thick honey and toasted almonds, again emphasizing the way the Moroccans, like the Chinese, use sweet flavors as accents and contrasts in their compelling cuisine.

A word about the *tagines*: there are three on the menu. Essentially they are elaborate stews slowly cooked until the meat has fallen apart and the liquid is a thick and lovely sauce flavored with lemons or olives or onions, as the case may be.

There's more; this is a banquet which demands two or three hours. *Couscous fassi*, a semolina cereal which is the national dish, is flavored with raisins and chick peas, carrots, and bits of lamb. And finally, a big bowl of perfect fruits and sweet hot mint tea poured from a filigreed silver teapot held high above gold rimmed crystal glasses—with nary a miss!

We made a single departure from Morocco, and it enhanced the meal: we ordered wine. Champagne was the perfect way to start, and would have been great throughout the meal. But we enjoyed an Alsatian Gewurztraminer with the spicy fare—though any white wine of good body would have been excellent. The light reds which come from North Africa are sometimes on hand.

There are now many followers in the culinary path Rosalyne Dupart and her husband pioneered, but none provide the total dining experience which only loving devotion makes possible.

And yes, you get violets with the bread at Marrakech.

MARRAKECH, 417 O'Farrell Street, (near Taylor), San Francisco. Dinner from 6 p.m.; closed Sundays. Valet parking. Major credit cards accepted. Full bar service. For reservations: 776-6717 NOTE: MARRAKECH is now offering theatre-goers a late-evening supper of special Moroccan delicacies. Monday through Saturday until 1 a.m.

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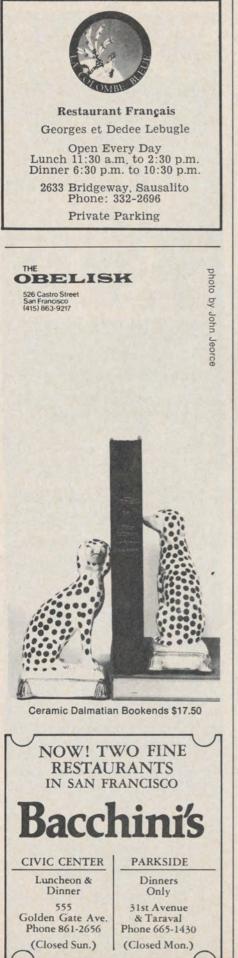
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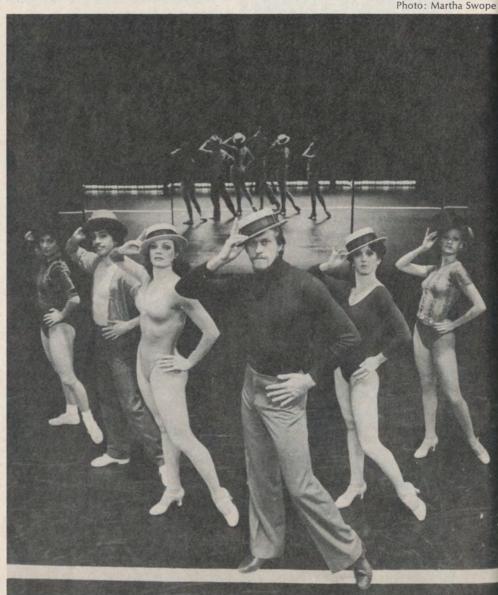
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On the line (l. to r.) Gina Paglia, Tommy Aquilaz, Jane Summerhays, Eivind Harum, Christine Barker, Karen Jablons.

SINCE 1888

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OF LINE

by BLAKE A. SAMSON

A single white line bisects the stage. A Chorus Line begins there, and ends there, and in between travels a phenomenal breadth of human experience and imagination. It is a show about the theater itself, a shattering portrait of that hitherto unheralded mainstay of the American musical the chorus dancer.

The show is fundamentally about dancing and the dancers whose careers are on the line with each audition; the performers are acutely conscious that *A Chorus Line* is their show, written for them about their lives. Though *A Chorus Line* is probably the most sophisticated backstage story yet told, to think of it as just another show about the theater is seriously to underestimate its reach.

A Chorus Line may have started out to be about show business but it ended up being about life and it did so by never leaving that single, stark white line. Everyone, at one time or another in his life, has been "on the line" and that metaphorically is what A Chorus Line is all about-the courage of putting everything on the line. The immutable metaphor of the show is that in the lives of all of us there is a white line the width of the stage which demands the challenge of selfrevelation as does the audition which the seventeen dancers undergo. When the show comes to the point of choosing its "four and four"-the four women and four men who will get the roles-many in the audience find themselves strangely ambivalent and indifferent to this or that particular actor's success or failure. Any one of them would have filled the role superbly. To have put one's self on the line was sufficient.

continued on p. 60

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Gestation of A Chorus Line continued from p. 59

A Chorus Line began the summer of 1973. It was a bad year for Broadway and for Michael Bennett, the mastermind behind the show. "I hadn't danced in two years and I was 25 pounds heavier. That summer I sat out in Bridgehampton thinking 'God, truth! Would I like to see some truth in life! Would I like to see some truth on the stage!" "

He began to think of his own life. "I was not then a very successful human being in my own eyes. I'm someone who works 24 hours a day and I had relationships that were screwed up because work came first. It was a sickness. I wanted desperately to be honest with myself and I started to spend a great deal of time alone. Then I told myself I was too young to be a hermit, I'd better get back with my people. I found I hadn't changed. I was still the Michael who had danced in the chorus all those years.

"That's when I decided that before I left New York for good, I'd do one more show for my people-Broadway's beautiful, brilliant chorus dancers. I would pay them back for all the work they'd done for me over the years."

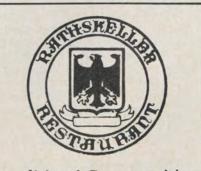
When two dancers, Tony Stevens and Michon Peacock, came to him saying they'd like to help, he thought, "let's get a group of dancers together and just talk about why we are dancers. You see, dancers are very honest people. When you spend your life in front of a mirror, you learn to face the realities of things."

So, at midnight, January 18, 1974, Michael met with 24 other dancers and friends in a studio on 23rd Street. "We danced for hours and then we went into a room and talked about it -about why we started dancing and why we had headed for New York." Other sessions followed until there were 30 hours of tapes.

"Michael set the tone that evening," lyricist Ed Kleban recalls, "by telling his own life, going into it in tremendous detail." "Michael has a way about him of giving you confidence to take the shot," adds actress Carole Bishop. "I don't think anybody knows how it happened or how to explain it," says Renee Baughman. "There was a great deal of support from everyone, and everybody was really trying to understand and to relate to everybody."



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Photo: Martha Swope



They all played a part-front (I. to r.) James Kirkwood, Michael Bennett, Nicholas Dante, back (I. to r.) Edward Kleban and Marvin Hamlisch.

"Good, bad, or indifferent," Robert LuPone explains, "everybody laid it on the line." "It was just the facts," tells Donna McKechnie, "but with the facts, all the feelings were there." "Now I know that he came there as a dancer, just to talk with and about dancers," Nicholas Dante admits, "but, in my mind, he was still the director and I was a dancer on that line. I didn't know if I would be able to tell about my life. But as the evening wore on, slowly, it all came out."

"What happened was amazing," Bennett now recalls, "it had been years since they had thought about their childhood and how they had become dancers. Everyone was getting these triggered memories and they were all talking to me. Then I realized it was like an audition, the strangest kind of audition. What those kids had been doing was auditioning their lives for me."

That idea of an audition provided the central concept for *A Chorus Line*. The next nine months were spent processing, ingesting, discarding, writing and rewriting—turning the transcript of the tapes into a script.

Nicholas Dante and James Kirkwood were asked to form the book. "It was like building a house," Kirkwood explains, "the foundation took thirty hours to build; the house took a year and a half." "I told Joe Papp I had an idea for a show and needed a workshop 'to get the bumps out,' " Bennett says. The Newman Theater became their hothouse. "When Michael brought it to us," Bernard Gersten, associate producer of the New York Shakespeare Festival remembers, "he didn't know what he had. He said he had these tapes and maybe had something, 'a rock opera, or a rock opera with dance'"

"Nick, Michael and I would get together," Jim Kirkwood explains, "and play what if?—what if we had one of the dancers get hurt? What if the director had an affair with one of the dancers?"

Marvin Hamlisch, who had just won his Oscars for "The Sting," was called in to do the score, piecing out the lyrics with Edward Kleban from the assorted tapes. "Can you afford to stop your career?" Hamlisch's agent had asked. "Suppose it doesn't work out?" "I finally told him," Hamlisch recounts, "when you smell a good idea, you've got to go with it."

And so, A Chorus Line progressed.

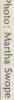
Scenes were improvised, then "set" by Michael and his colleagues. Steadily, common denominators kept appearing: I used to dance in front of the mirror. I put shows on in the garage. I got interested in my sister's dancing classes. My mother pushed me into it. My parents were alcoholics. My father was a brute. I had to continued on p. 62

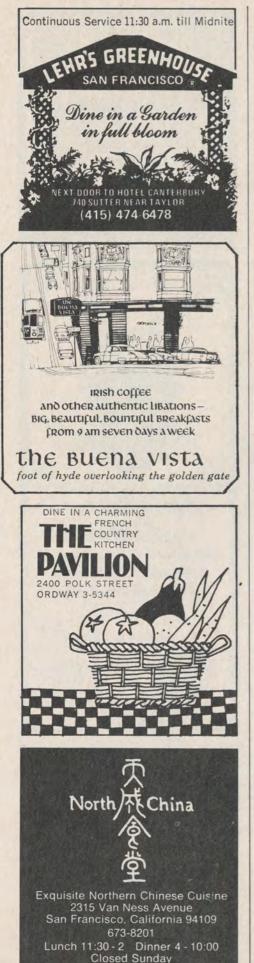


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Gestation of A Chorus Line continued from p. 61



The chorus line

get out of Buffalo. I saw "The Red Shoes." I studied ballet at age three, tap at age four, jazz at age five, modern at age six.

The tape sessions were like a giant spillover at the confessional, a peculiar whirlpool of Studs Terkel, Alex Haley and Sigmund Freud. Common hangups floated to the surface: fantasy escape from a sordid or frustrated or broken home life; the terrifying discoveries and confusions at adolescence; the personal and professional pain of pursuing a career. It's a hundred and one stories, seemingly quite ordinary as performers' autobiographies go, but as each dancer steps out to the forestage and dredges up his gut feelings - the accounts transcend the banal, self-absorbed, unreal world of most theater tales.

For all their similarities, these are not carbon copy cutouts but rather seventeen singular individuals in a tragicomedy with a common dignity and a common love. What is endearing, what has staying power, is the honesty and the humor of the telling, the communion of each coming together into the artificial but tightlyknit group and confessing.

What could have easily become a run-of-the-mill public orgy of self-

revelation, recrimination and breastbeating became instead a special, inspiring and intimate sharing with each member of the audience, a ritual of giving and rebirth done with such precision that individual stories emerge briefly, subtly, with individual impact, without any one story upsetting the precarious and essential feeling of ensemble.

Instead of making a chorus out of individuals, *A Chorus Line* succeeded in making individuals out of a chorus. For samplers, there's Connie Wong, the peanut on pointe, born December 5, four thousand six hundred and forty-one, the Year of the Chicken. Or, Richie Walters, Herculanium, Missouri, born on a full moon on June 13, 1949 and black . . . the best black dancer in the city and cocky as hell.

Robert Charles Henry Joseph Mills the Third, the quasi-upper-middle-class kid from upstate New York who can't remember the name of the town, having blocked it out.

Mike Costa, used to be Costafalone. Alan DeLuca from the Bronx. Sidney Kenneth Beckenstein. Very East Side. Was Rochmel Lev Ben Yakov Meyer Beckenstein, now uses the professional name Gregory Gardner.

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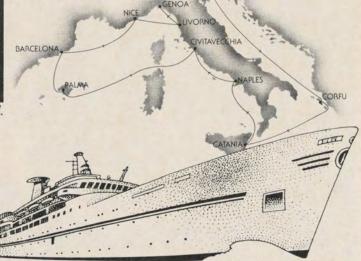
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George Shearing Cleo Laine Mel Torme Lily Tomlin Polly Bergen Sarah Vaughn Phyllis Diller Gestation of A Chorus Line continued from p. 62



A. William Perkins and some of the "A Chorus Line" company

There they stand, seventeen aspiring, sweat-soaked bacchantes toeing the line; the bare, glossy, black floor ricocheting back their reflections and hopes. They're hungry, damnably hungry, so eager and earnest, they're desperate.

It's the never-ending beauty contest, the last judgment, the ultimate job interview, the unparalleled encounter group, a trial by inquisition, a psychological striptease. You're a number; a small, medium, or tall; a blonde, brunette, or redhead. God, I zigged when I should have zagged! What can I possibly say that will please the director doing the hiring? Man, I need this job!

And, the longer you last, the more you want the job. You say to yourself, 'Please God, I want it. I want it so much I can taste it.' You want it so much that if somebody falls down and breaks a leg, you say 'Gee, what a shame' and you keep on dancing and praying and looking straight ahead.

This is a community, a family if you will, made one by sweat, laughter and some tears, but most of all it's the on-rushing of dance that one feels. It sucks you in like a vortex, the pace sweeps the audience up and doesn't set them down until the last, final, devastating crescendo. It's an example of consummate stage craft. What you see is a work every moment of which, every sound of which, every sight of which is totally controlled.

The first song in the show just sneaks up on you and it's almost over before you know it, but from that moment on the music carries the day. It's a synthesis of writing foreground music, which is theater song, and background music, which is the underscoring you hear in films.







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Gestation of A Chorus Line continued from p. 65

Many of the speeches are given straight out-without interruptionsincerely and unelaborately staged. Others splinter and intercut in such a way to further tighten the already tight pace. It's a series of emotional rushes, shocks and surprises that never lets up. Concentration doesn't drop for a millisecond.

One could do the whole show with a work light, if one wanted to be completely naturalistic about this being an audition, but "that's not theater," lighting designer Tharon Musser explains. "My basic concern was to bridge the reality of the audition to what we've termed the 'internal thoughts' of the dancers." Similarly, Robin Wagner's mirrored panels rotate from silver to black as the action moves back and forth from reality to make-believe. That the backdrop, which splits into sections and pivots open or closed, can form a stagewide mirror for dancers and audience alike is of course significant. A mirror doesn't lie.

The pressure-cooker intensity builds even unto the final cut, at which point Bennett throws in his final kicker. The full orchestra strikes up and suddenly a great parade of precisely matched dancers in champagne-colored satin, top hats and all, emerge driving forward one of those pounding Busby Berkeley routines.

The contrast between the genuine and vulnerable backstage life we've been watching and the confident, polished bravura of the grand finale is overpowering. The individuality that has moved us so potently is snuffed out. Each member of the chorus is submerged into the drill. It suddenly makes everything seem a horrifying, hard type of work and the irony that has underpinned the show from the beginning is realised in a final, unforgettable crescendo.

After the first night that I saw A Chorus Line I walked around downtown for half an hour in a daze, desperately wishing I could cry-for the joy and sorrow of it all-and thereby exorcise it, but the damn show won't give me an instant catharsis for the price of a ticket.

That's too easy.

Blake A. Samson is director of The Fine Arts News Service. His articles appear frequently in the San Mateo Times, Sacramento Bee and San Jose Mercury-News, among others.



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