Thaïs

1976

Friday, September 10, 1976 8:00 PM (Broadcast) Wednesday, September 15, 1976 8:00 PM Sunday, September 19, 1976 2:00 PM Saturday, September 25, 1976 8:00 PM Tuesday, September 28, 1976 8:00 PM Friday, October 1, 1976 8:00 PM

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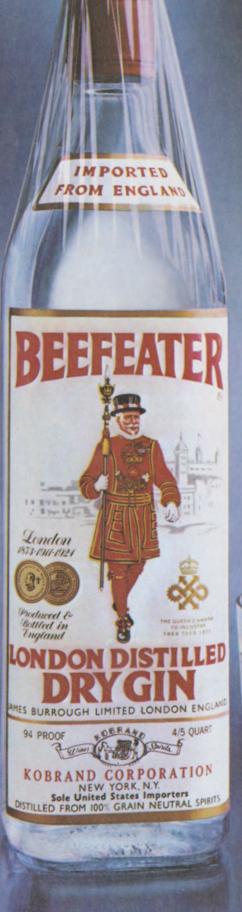
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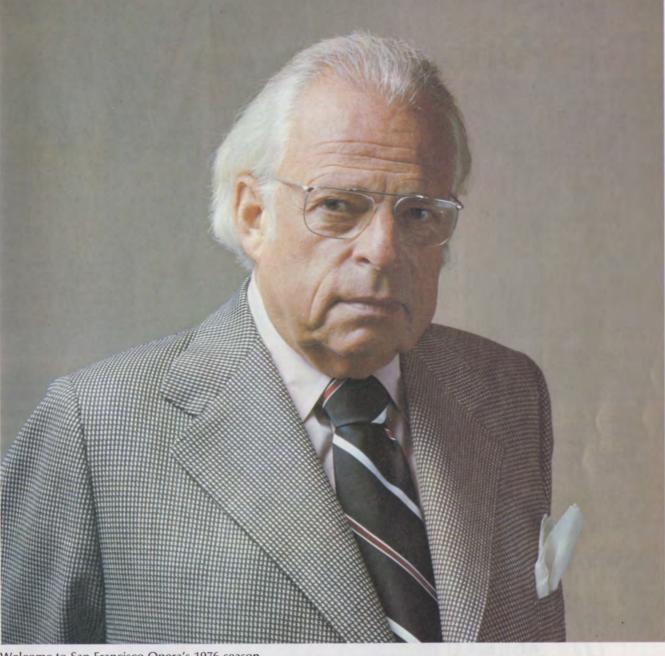
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Welcome to San Francisco Opera's 1976 season.

As you wait for the curtain to rise, we would like to point out to you several improvements: many seats have been reupholstered, a new floor covers a large part of the stage, and all our productions will benefit from a new and so-phisticated light board. The foregoing is a clear indication that physical restoration and updating of the Opera House has begun. Furthermore, the Opera has concluded its part in the planning of the new Performing Arts Center. Provided that the financial means can be found and the proper decisions made, we dare to hope that construction of the back-stage addition to the opera house may start in the very near future.

For the first time, we are using the pit extension, an original feature of our building; you will now hear operas performed with their original orchestration.

Our 54th season will be remembered for many notable events; preeminent among them will be a meeting in early November of the International Association of Opera Directors. Many of my distinguished colleagues, representing the leading opera houses of the world, will meet in our city to attend the world premiere of *Angle of Repose;* they will be joined by representatives of OPERA America, our own country's association of opera managers, and by heads of the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Opera Institute.

The hundreds who perform on stage, backstage, in the pit, in the offices, opera professionals from many nations are ready to give the best of their talent to our '76 season. Let me thank them warmly for their sincere dedication and may you, our audience, enjoy and support their efforts.

Burlly bert All

The Potion of Love.



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by Paul Chaplin

A huge swirling piece of sandstone dominates the stage of the War Memorial Opera House as mirror fragments of the *Thaïs* setting are moved into place. Everything will be perfect on the opening night of San Francisco Opera's 54th season, but at this moment stagehands and electricians are encountering the new sets for the first time.

"This is a very complicated production," sighs noted Argentinian stage director Tito Capobianco. Any opera production is a complicated web of scheduling singers, musicians, craftsmen, technicians and scenic artists; a new production is more complex because unfamiliar elements must be brought into perfect harmony for a performance. It is like inviting a stranger into the house for an extended visit and making the stay as pleasant as possible.

The sense and feel of the production, the responsibility for its effective communication with the audience, rests with the stage director. Despite his weariness from long hours of technical rehearsals, Capobianco is a master of the delicate art of introducing new works into a company's repertoire, as he did for New York City Opera with the Donizetti trilogy-Roberto Devereux, Maria Stuarda and Anna Bolenaand for Baltimore Opera with the recent world premiere of Pasatieri's Ines de Castro. Speaking with Capobianco, one senses a quiet certainty about Massenet's Thaïs and how it will be pre-

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Massenet's Exotic Love Modern Audience

sented in its first San Francisco Opera staging.

"Many people think *Thaïs* is superficial. What we are dealing with is a Massenet extravaganza of many things: aesthetic people, dogmatic people, self-flagellation, sacrifices of the flesh. Anatole France, author of the novel which Massenet used for his libretto, was a classicist, a humanist always looking for the truth and beauty. He was convinced that people need each other and must work together. He was against barbarianism, a fighter against corruption. He hated injustices in either politics or religion.

"It's stylistically difficult to bring the romantic extravagance of *Thaïs* to our continued on p. 10



Tito Capobianco works with Beverly Sills in a rehearsal of Thais. Photo: Caroline Crawford



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Massenet's Exotic Love Story

continued from p. 9



The director in rehearsal with Beverly Sills and Sherrill Milnes. Photo: Caroline Crawford

time. It's much easier to deal with a straight play where you can mix styles and periods because you are only dealing with words, not music. But here, with *Thaïs*, I have Mr. Massenet to inspire me to use his music as best I can."

Capobianco has sought to create a feeling for fourth century Egypt, rather than an accurate portrayal of an exact historical place in time. "I use history in my favor, in favor of the show I'm directing, not to produce the show, but to use history for a better interpretation of the show, to project emotion to the audience and into the audience."

The director and production designer Carl Toms have chosen to present the opera in a unit setting. "I wanted to convey a sensual feeling," Capobianco says, "a feeling of opening and closing. We will use mirrors for reflection of the stage action, as well as for representing the self-reflecting nature of the characters, a constant theme of the opera. I hope to create a feeling of sensuality, not unlike Narcissus, a love of the self. The form of the set will help me create an atmosphere of sensuality for the singers, but the set can also be used austerely for the religious scenes. The mirrors in Nicias' house continued on p. 13

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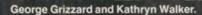
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Independence Approaches—The Declaration	September 27	Sarah Vaughan & Buddy Rich
John Adams—American in Europe	October 4	National Symphony, conducted by Andre Kostelanetz, Yehudi Menuhin, soloist
John and Abigail—in London	October 11	Verdi's Requiem. National Symphony, University of Maryland Chorus, Julius Rudel conducting
John Adams—Vice President	October 18	Donizetti's Roberto Devereux, starring Beverly Sills. Julius Rudel conducting, with John Alexander, Susan Marsee and Richard Fredricks
John Adams—President	October 25	World Series of Jazz. Dizzy Gillespie, Earl "Fatha" Hines, Billy Eckstine
John Quincy Adams—Diplomat	November 1	Bonnie Raitt & Mose Allison
John Quincy Adams—Secretary of State	November 8	Galina & Valery Panov
John Quincy Adams—President	November 15	Cleo Laine & John Dankworth
John Quincy Adams—Congressman	November 22	New England Conservatory Ragtime Ensemble, directed by Gunther Schuller
Charles Francis Adams— Minister to Great Britain	November 29	Dionne Warwick
Henry Adams—Historian	December 6	Mikhail Baryshnikov with Gelsey Kirkland, Martine Van Hamel and Marianna Tcherkassky
Charles Francis Adams II—Industrialist	December 13	Preservation Hall Jazz Band
	December 20	National Symphony, Andre Kostelanetz conducting Tchaikovsky

The Adams Chronicles was produced by WNET/13, New York. Made possible by grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and Atlantic Richfield Company.

Check your local Public Broadcasting Station for exact time. For information about college credit courses based on this series, contact the Public Information officer at your local PBS station.

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ARCO



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are representative of illusions as well; people who are trying to escape from reality have to create illusions to accommodate themselves."

The world dominated by illusions is not confined to Thaïs and her revelers, but, according to Capobianco, also touches the Cenobite monks, especially Athanaël.

"A difficult element to convey to the audience in the staging of the opera is the neurotic personality of Athanaël. How did he become so deeply involved in conquering this woman's soul for God? In France's book, Athanaël knew Thaïs when he was a boy. He went to her house when he was fifteen and just stood there in the doorway. Maybe he was frightened, or perhaps he could not afford her. He becomes a Cenobite monk to escape Thaïs, not because he was called by God. He has a subconscious love for Thaïs. Religion is used to justify his seeing her.

"The Cenobites, like Athanaël, live in the desert. The female is their enemy. A woman is a personification of sin; she provides pleasure and is dangerous. The Cenobites are playing a theological game, saying 'Beware the entrapment of the spirit; stay away from the common touch of the people.' They believe the most beautiful thing you can give God is your suffering, a concept we must make clear in our production. It was a Christian belief at that time that one should flagellate ones self to sacrifice the flesh, and fast to encourage visions of ugly animals as devils.

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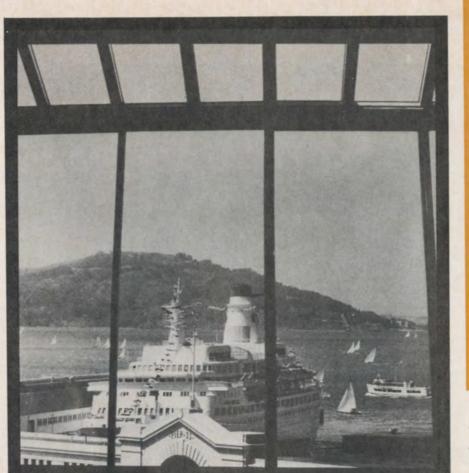
(shown) an ethereal robe of flowing mink.

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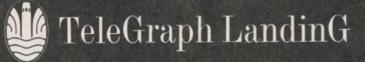
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Massenet's Exotic Love Story

continued from p. 13

"Across the river, however, Thaïs is in a society of orgies and perversion. In France's novel, she had been instructed in Christianity by a family servant Ahmés, who was crucified for his belief. Fearful of the consequences of Christianity, Thaïs turns to a life of pleasure. She is out in the streets with sailors before she reaches puberty. She believes in everything — Jesus Christ, amulets, evil spirits, the number thirteen. In the novel she is terrified of the future and the thought of the inevitable end of her youth."

Departing from tradition, Capobianco has decided to stage the Meditation Scene, an interlude in the second act, well-known for its poignant violin solo. "In the mirrors of her house, Thais will encounter herself growing older and older. She is not totally convinced of Athanaël's philosophy, not certain of following him through the door and into the desert, leaving everything behind. When he tells her of Albine, a daughter of the emperor who has converted to Christianity, Thaïs thinks what he proposes may be a way out for her. There is nothing left for her to look to."

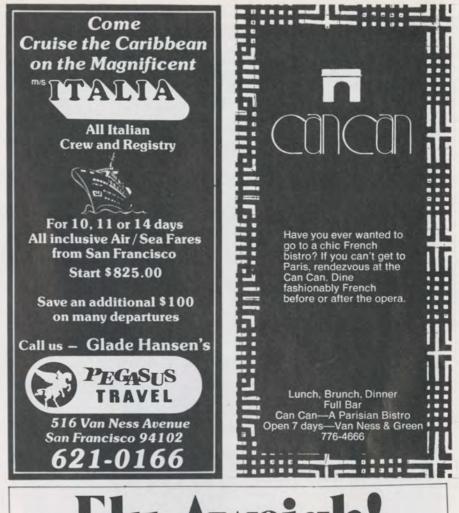
Does the religion Athanaël offer Thaïs allay her fears?

"Yes, she finds peace. If you tell me

you've found peace and God, I can't take that away from you. At the end of the opera, I cannot doubt the sincerity of Thaïs, when she sees God. It's funny; Thaïs hated people who did not fear the future. She can't understand people not being afraid of the future. She hates Nicias' living for the moment, neither hoping in the future nor fearing it. There is religious training in her subconscious. Who can say her final conversion is not a result of her early training in Christianity.

"There is a strange parallel between Thaïs and Athanaël: Thaïs in her short lifetime goes from one extreme to another and then back to Christianity again. Athanaël starts by not believing in God, goes to belief, and, at the end of the opera, returns to sensuality. He rejects religion to love Thaïs, as he had when he was fifteen, ten years before. This is important, for I will portray Athanaël as 25, and Thaïs as 30. They come back to where they were in the beginning. Athanaël shouldn't be older. The power of Athanaël's body is stronger than his religious convictions." Capobianco smiles gently. "An older Athanaël's soul would be stronger."

Paul Chaplin is the staff writer for San Francisco Opera.



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As a student organization (sponsored by the San Francisco Opera Guild), the COA seeks to stimulate interest in the opera among members of colleges and universities in the Bay Area. COA activities bring to members a closer look at and, thus, a better appreciation of the different efforts that go into and the many people who contribute to the making of grand opera-on the administrative, production, artistic as well as technical levels. Last year, for example, COA members had a chance to meet with directors, scenic designers, wig and make-up artists and stage technicians. The list of world famous artists who participated in COA functions, thus enabling members to get to know them personally, included Judith Blegen, Giacomo Aragall, Jose Carreras, Placido Domingo and Paolo Montarsolo. The production of L'Elisir d'Amore was enjoyed with special relish as COA members could follow its development through the various stages of rehearsals.

Association

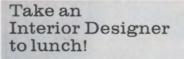


This year, another opera has been chosen for a similar project. And, as in previous years, students of our member campuses can obtain tickets to some 1976 Fall season performances at a substantial discount. The ticket program is being made possible through a generous subsidy by the San Francisco Opera Guild.

In order for students of the various campuses to benefit from our program, we need members of those campuses to be involved with us actively to plan and coordinate events and to publicize them. The advantages of membership in the COA are many; it is an exciting and entertaining way to broaden one's operatic dimensions. We heartily encourage any student or faculty member of a Bay Area college to join us for the 1976 season.

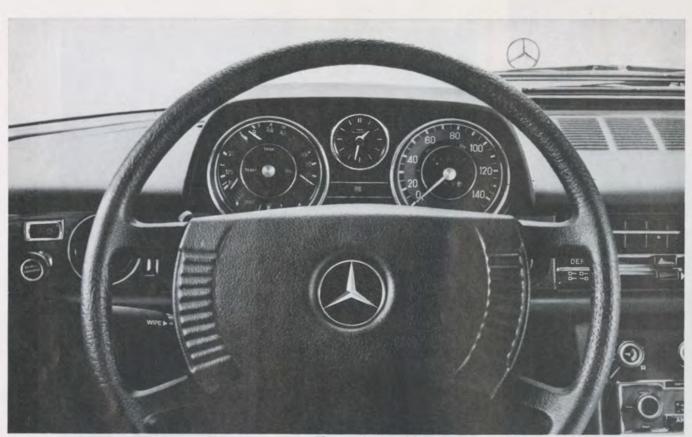
Further information on the College Opera Association can be obtained from:

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The graphic is a silk screen using three colors—silver, blue and black—diecut at the bottom to indicate the ruffle of the curtain.

The poster has been prepared in two versions: in a 13" x 39" format, on sale at the Opera Box Office for \$10.00, and a 231/4" x 70" collector's special edition for \$75.00. Information on the special edition may be obtained by contacting the Opera public relations department.

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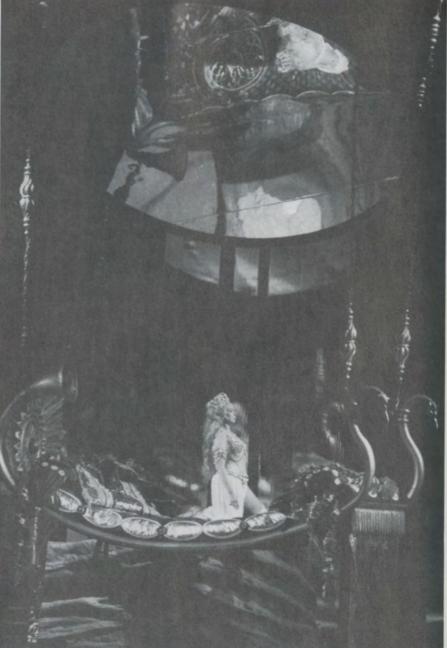
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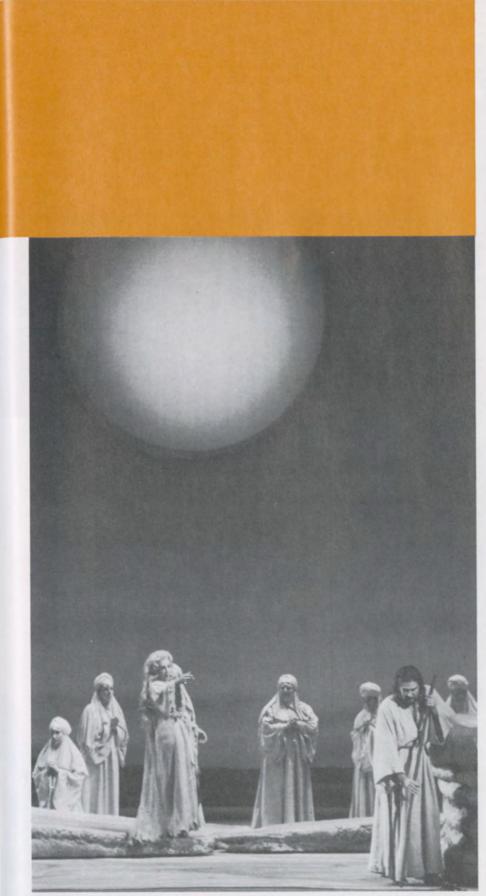
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In Rehearsal...



Beverly Sills on the spectacular bed in Thais.

Photo: Ron Scherl

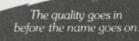


Beverly Sills and Sherrill Milnes in a late rehearsal.

Photo: Ron Scherl



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The li

Thaïs-From Novel to Opera

by Hervé le Mansec



"It was on my return from another visit to Vienna that my faithful and precious collaborator Louis Gallet paid me a visit one day at Le Ménestrel. My publishers had arranged a superb study where I could rehearse my artists from Paris and elsewhere in their parts. Louis Gallet and Heugel proposed to me a work on Anatole France's admirable Thais." Thus writes Massenet in his Recollections. The famous composer was immediately carried away by the idea. He could suddenly visualize Sybil Sanderson in the title role of the courtesan. Massenet was in love with the Sacramento-born Sanderson and had already paid tribute to her voice and beauty by writing *Esclarmonde*. He would pay tribute to her again in Thais by revealing her to the spectators in a "vision" similar to that of Esclarmonde. Massenet-already a master of the theatrical-envisioned the plot of Anatole France's highly successful Thais as one of the best plots he could borrow for the stage.

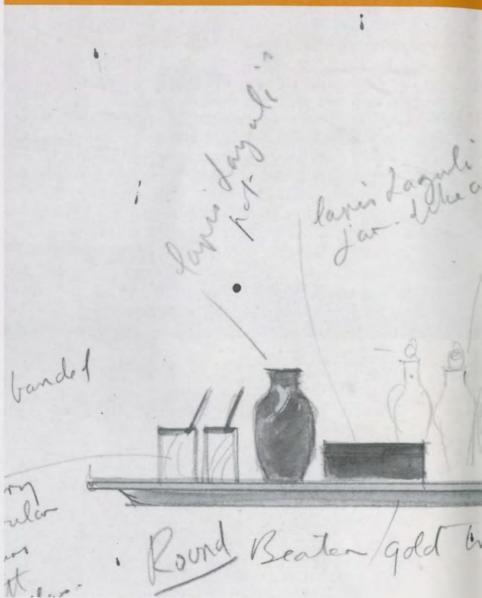
Massenet started a first draft in April 1892, and by July 15 of the same year, while on vacation, it was completed

continued on p. 24 m (disquere as bracelettis Scolo 1" to 1'a"



RECORDS & TAPES

Available at all Odyssey Record Stores From Novel to Opera continued from p. 23



Prop drawings for Thais by designer Carl Toms

at Neufchâtel-les-Samur near Boulogne. By the winter of 1893, rehearsals were on their way at the Paris Opéra. The original intention was to perform *Thaïs* at the Opéra Comique; but, unknown to Massenet, Sybil, dazzled by the opportunity to perform at the more exclusive Palais Garnier, had already signed a contract with Gailhard, the Director of the Opéra. Massenet had no choice but to follow his prima donna.

The premiere of *Thaïs* was given at the Paris Opéra on March 16, 1894. *Le Portrait de Manon* and *La Navarraise* also had their premieres in the same year. The original cast under the direction of Paul Taffanel was: Sybil Sanderson (Thaïs) Jean-François Delmas (Athanaël) Albert Alvarez (Nicias) Jeanne Marcy (Crobyle) Meyrianne Héglon (Myrtale) François Delpouget (Palémon) Laure Beauvais (debut, as Albine)

Massenet himself did not attend the premiere. A man shy by nature, he had fled to Normandy the previous night to be "alone and free from the excitements of the great city."

The reaction of the public was mixed. Many, although shocked by the purported immorality of the opera, seemed to have enjoyed the story of the beguiling courtesan Thaïs and the

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bewitched Athanaël. After all, courtesans were still the "in" thing on and off stage (and Massenet would have been the last to deny it!). In addition, Louis Gallet's portrait of the overzealous and bigoted monk with his mystical phantasmagories could not but please the generally anticlerical Frenchmen of the Third Republic. The opera's mood of doubt also struck a responsive chord in the skepticism of the French public caused by the trial and conviction of Drevfus in that same year. The critics were less satisfied. They accused Massenet of harping forever on the same theme-the eternal

2"6" diamotion

psychology (or lack of it) of "La Femme". According to them, he had turned Anatole France's hetaera into a tired nineteenth century "horizontale" -spineless and weak. Massenet was reproached for his repetitive musical style and lack of inventiveness. Léon Kerst discovered one dramatic scene in the whole opera-the death of Thaïs. He comments, "She dies. Why? One will never know." Félix Grenier of Le Journal concludes, "It is hardly probable that curiosity to see the ballet in the third act will suffice to keep this work in the repertory." The critics were unanimous on one point:

11 me 3'6"

continued on p. 27



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Detail of Carl Toms' designs for Thais

THAT:

in his adaptation, Massenet had failed to treat the central theme of the novel —the tragic fall of a self-righteous monk beset by carnal conflicts. Nevertheless, *Thaïs* was performed 27 times at the Paris Opéra in 1894—but only 4 times in the following year.

In 1896, *Thaïs* was performed in Brussels with G. Leblanc in the title role. Massenet had modified the role of



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Thais designs by Carl Toms

Thaïs to accomodate her particular soprano voice. The same year the opera premiered in Bordeaux. In 1897, *Thaïs* returned to Paris for three performances, and for one in Montpellier. The popularity of the opera was declining each year. Something had to be done. Massenet made two major revisions. He added a ballet to the second act and included the Oasis scene in Act III, one of the most lyrical and touching scenes of the opera. It is this scene that finally makes Athanaël something more than a one-dimensional character. The revised version was given at the Paris Opéra on April 13, 1898 and from then on, the attitude of the public gradually changed. The opera continued to be performed in Brussels, Paris, Marseille and Vichy. continued on p. 29

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Thais designs by Carl Toms

Its performance in Cairo was "well received". On October 16, 1903 at the Teatro Lirico in Milan, Lina Cavalieri, formerly of the Folies-Bergères, sang the title role. The opera was not given again until 1907, when it was revived at the Palais Garnier. *Thaïs* remained a part of the Paris Opéra repertory each year until Massenet died in 1912. In the decade following the composer's death, it maintained a prime place on the stage together with *Manon* and *Werther*. The 300th performance of *Thaïs* was celebrated at the Paris Opéra on January 12, 1924, with Maria Kousnietzoff as Thaïs. Between 1925 and 1940, *Thaïs* was given regularly at the Paris Opéra (Martial Singher made his Palais Garnier debut on December 21, 1930 as Athanaël). By 1956, *Thaïs* had been performed more than 700 times in Paris alone. During the Sixties, interest in Massenet's operas as a whole declined. This decline was not due to the work itself but to a general lack of interest in French opera. France was not producing singers of international renown, and abroad there was little enthusiasm continued on p. 63

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As Kurt Herbert Adler wrote in his introduction to this year's brochure, "San Francisco Opera takes pride in celebrating the Twin Bicentennial of the City of San Francisco and the nation by presenting a wide-ranging repertoire which strongly emphasizes artistic accomplishments of the 20th century." Each year, our fall season seems to surpass in excellence those which have gone before and 1976, our 54th consecutive year, will, I am confident, reach new heights. We open with the San Francisco premiere of Massenet's "Thais"; the title role will be sung by the glamorous and exciting Beverly Sills.

Our contribution to the Bicentennial will be the world premiere of "Angle of Repose". This opera is based on Wallace Stegner's Pulitzer Prize winning novel and was commissioned by the San Francisco Opera Association. Composer Andrew Imbrie and librettist Oakley Hall have adapted the novel to grand opera which will be sung by an all-American cast. Nine other operas, some old favorites, some of modern vintage, complete this wellbalanced season. Our brilliant general director, Maestro Adler, with his splendid staff and well organized company. will again demonstrate that San Francisco Opera continues to be included among the few great opera companies in the world. Advance ticket sales indicate that the community recognizes this and that we will continue the nearly 100% capacity attendance which we have enjoyed in recent years.

In addition to "Thais" and "Angle of Repose", we will have new productions of four operas. The wear and tear on sets and costumes is fantastic and it is also exciting to see old favorites in new clothes. However, new productions are terribly expensive and we must depend on substantial gifts by interested donors to make them possible. We are indebted to Cyril Magnin, a long-time friend of San Francisco Opera, for a generous gift making possible the new "Thais". "Angle of Repose" has been financed by substantial gifts from San Francisco Foundation, City and County of San Francisco, National Endowment for the Arts, as well as contributions by a number of arts patrons. For part of the new production of "La Forza del Destino" we are grateful to a number of arts patrons and the William H. Noble Estate. "Die Frau ohne Schatten" was made possible by the generosity of arts patron Cynthia Wood. Our vice president and treasurer, James D. Robertson, for the sixth consecutive year, has financed part of a new production-this year "Cavalleria Rusticana" and "I Pagliacci."

To all of these patrons go our special thanks.

Opera in San Francisco is not just the International Fall season which we are now enjoying, but is a year around program, all under the general direction of Mr. Adler and his staff. These activities include Spring Opera Theater, Western Opera Theater, Merola Opera Program, Brown Bag Opera and San Francisco Opera Auditions. Our total program is unique; no other opera company in the country can boast of such scope.

Opera is probably the most expensive performing art form. This can be readily understood when one considers the hundreds of people necessary to stage a production of the quality for which we are renowned. Our costs for 1976 are estimated at \$5,700,000. Ticket revenues cover just over 60% of these costs, a ratio which is probably higher than any major opera company in the world. To put this in perspective, if we were to depend solely on ticket revenues to cover our costs, our prices would have to range from about \$11.00 to \$41.50 per seat instead of our actual range of \$6.00 to \$25.00. You may have read recently that the portion of annual costs of the Paris Opera which are subsidized by the French Government have reached 17 million dollars, a figure almost three times our total costs. And vet, on a visit there a few months ago, my ticket cost me the equivalent of \$30.00!

How have we raised the remaining 40% of our costs? From generous patrons who finance new productions, from guarantors, grants from local and federal governments, income from our endowment funds, donations from the Opera Guild, and from contributions by corporations, foundations and individuals to our annual Operating Fund campaign. But costs continue to rise because of inflation and we must increase the number of contributors significantly if we are to avoid substantial deficits. Thousands of loyal opera lovers help each year, but thousands more are needed. If you are not presently a contributor to our annual fund drive, won't you please join now? Your tax deductible contributions should be sent to San Francisco Opera Association, War Memorial Opera House, San Francisco, 94102. Opera's future depends on you. Don't let us become a candidate for the list of endangered species.

We continue to be grateful for the financial support from various organizations, without whose help we would find it almost impossible to continue— National Endowment for the Arts, National Opera Institute, Mayor George Moscone, Chief Administrative Officer Thomas J. Mellon, the City and County of San Francisco, and the War Memorial Board of Trustees. We are also indebted to Opera ACTION which continues to render all kinds of help to San Francisco Opera, not only reducing our costs but spreading the word of opera throughout our community.

For many years, each opera has been broadcast once over KKHI AM/FM in San Francisco and KFAC AM/FM in Los Angeles. This year, broadcasts will be extended to audiences in Sacramento, Fresno, San Diego, Portland and Seattle. These broadcasts are made possible by grants from Standard Oil Company of California and the L. J. and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation of Oakland, California, for which we are most grateful. The quality of the broadcasts is exceptional and you owe it to yourself to listen.

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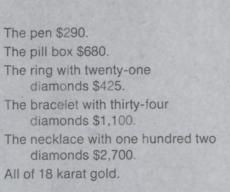
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Andrew Podell Peter Reilly Marco Remedios Stephen Rumph Jeffrey Silver John Smalley Dan Tadmor Clement Ulrichs James Urquhart Peter Vizcaino Bradley White Douglas Wing Thursday November 11th, 1976 8:30 Civic Auditorium

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Men

Jesse Alexander Steve Bauman Thomas Carlisle

Ronald Cavin **Rudolph Cook Burton Covel** Donald Crawford Everett E. Evans, Jr. Herbert Harvey Martin Izquierdo Kenneth Jakobs lanusz. **Julius** Karoblis Rodney McCoy Gregorio Mendoza Lawrence Millner Paul Newman James Preovolos Noble Edward Reynolds Paul Ricks Raymond Salazar Thomas Simrock Jonathan Spieler

Kent Spiers Colin Warner David Williams Joseph Williams Gerald Wood

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1976 Season Repertoire

New Production made possible by a generous gift from Cyril Magnin

San Francisco Opera Premiere

THAIS Massenet IN FRENCH

Sills, Jones, Cummings, South, Harned*/Milnes, Ahnsjö**, Malta**

Conductor: Pritchard Production: Capobianco Designer: Toms Choreographer: Falco* Chorus Director: Jones

Friday Sept 10 8PM Gala Opening Night

Wednesday Sept 15 8PM Sunday Sept 19 2PM Saturday Sept 25 8PM Tuesday Sept 28 8PM Friday Oct 1 8PM

DIE WALKÜRE Wagner IN GERMAN

Knie*, Rysanek (Sept. 11, 14, 17)// Martin (Sept. 22, 26, Oct. 2), Hesse*, Goreniuc*, Roark, Sherrard*, Garabedian, Jones, Harned, Petersen, Nadler/Vickers, Sotin*, Grant

Conductor: Suitner Stage Director: G. Hager Designer: Skalicki

Saturday Sept 11 7:30PM Tuesday Sept 14 7:30PM Friday Sept 17 7:30PM Wednesday Sept 22 7:30PM Sunday Sept 26 1:30PM Saturday Oct 2 1PM

New Production made possible, in part, by generous gifts from a number of arts patrons and the William H. Noble Estate

LA FORZA DEL DESTINO Verdi IN ITALIAN

Tomowa-Sintow, Marsee*, Jones/ Francesconi*, Bruson, Plishka*, Trimarchi*, Malta, Frank, Geiger*, Davies

Conductor: Adler Production: Fassini* Designer: Samaritani* Choreographer: Guidi* Chorus Director: Jones

Saturday Sept 18 8PM Tuesday Sept 21 8PM Friday Sept 24 8PM Wednesday Sept 29 8PM Sunday Oct 3 2PM

Kabaivanska, Marsee, Jones/Ilosfalvy, Boyagian**, Kovats**, Trimarchi, Malta, Frank, Geiger, Davies

-

DUBLIN

-

Conductor: Adler Production: Fassini Stage Director: Farruggio Designer: Samaritani Choreographer: Guidi Chorus Director: Jones

Sunday Nov 7 2PM Saturday Nov 13 1:30PM Friday Nov 19 8PM

TOSCA Puccini IN ITALIAN

Rysanek (Oct. 2, 5)//Martin (Oct. 8, 10, 16, 23)/Aragall, Wixell, Trimarchi, Johnson*, Frank, Strummer, Davies

Conductor: Peloso Production: Ponnelle Stage Director: Prohaska** Designer: Ponnelle Chorus Director: Jones

Saturday Oct 2 8PM Tuesday Oct 5 8PM Friday Oct 8 8PM Sunday Oct 10 2PM Saturday Oct 16 8PM Saturday Oct 23 1:30PM

PETER GRIMES Britten IN ENGLISH

Harper, Nadler, Petersen, Cummings, South/Vickers, Evans, Malta, Turnage*, Crook*, Geiger, Frank, Duykers

Conductor: Pritchard Production: Evans **Designer: Toms** Chorus Director: Jones

Wednesday Oct 6 8PM Saturday Oct 9 8PM Wednesday Oct 13 8PM Sunday Oct 17 2PM Friday Oct 22 8PM

New Production made possible by a generous gift from Cynthia Wood

DIE FRAU OHNE SCHATTEN R. Strauss IN GERMAN

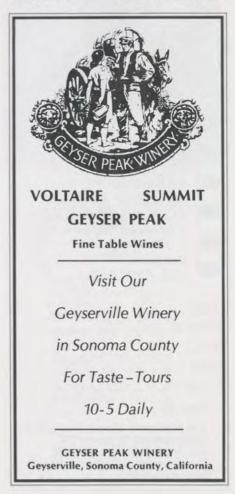
Rysanek, Schroeder-Feinen*, Hesse, Cummings, South, Roark, Jones, Harned, Petersen/Kastu**, Berry*, Johnson, Alvary, Hecht, Duykers, Hoback*, Turnage, Geiger, Byrd*

Conductor: Böhm* Production: Lehnhoff Designer: Zimmermann* Chorus Director: Jones

Friday Oct 15 8PM Tuesday Oct 19 8PM Sunday Oct 24 1:30PM Saturday Oct 30 8PM Tuesday Nov 2 8PM



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San Francisco Opera Association Development Office War Memorial Opera House San Francisco, California 94102 (415) 861-4008

Repertoire

continued

THE MAKROPULOS CASE Janáček IN ENGLISH

Silja, South, Jones, Harned/Lewis, Evans, Crook, Hecht, Manton, Rosenshein*, Davies

Conductor: Von Dohnanyi Stage Director: Pountney* Designer: Bauer-Ecsy Production Coordinator: Ecsy* Chorus Director: Jones

Wednesday Oct 20 8PM Saturday Oct 23 8PM Tuesday Oct 26 8PM Friday Oct 29 8PM Sunday Oct 31 2PM

New Productions made possible, in part, by a generous gift from James D. Robertson

CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA Mascagni IN ITALIAN

Troyanos (first 5 perfs.)//Crespin (Nov. 16, 21, 24, 27), Esham*, Petersen/ Domingo (first 6 perfs.)//Lloveras (Nov. 21, 24, 27), Janulako

and

I PAGLIACCI Leoncavallo IN ITALIAN

Rogers* (first 6 perfs.)//Kabaivanska (Nov. 21, 24, 27)/Domingo (first 6 perfs.)//Prevedi* (Nov. 21, 24, 27), Wixell (first 6 perfs.)//Glossop (Nov. 21, 24, 27), Ellis*, Frank, Hoback, Davies

Conductor: Schermerhorn Production: Ponnelle Designer: Ponnelle Chorus Director: Jones

Wednesday Oct 27 8PM Saturday Oct 30 1:30PM Friday Nov 5 8PM Wednesday Nov 10 8PM Saturday Nov 13 8PM Tuesday Nov 13 8PM Sunday Nov 21 2PM Wednesday Nov 24 8PM Saturday Nov 27 8PM World Premiere made possible by generous gifts from the National Endowment for the Arts, City of San Francisco, San Francisco Foundation and a number of arts patrons In celebration of the Twin Bicentennial of the U.S.A. and the City of San Francisco

ANGLE OF REPOSE Imbrie IN ENGLISH

Shade *, Marsee, Garabedian/Ludgin, Lewis, Duesing**, Hecht, Johnson, Byrd, Turnage, Davies, Hoback

Conductor: Mauceri* Production: Freedman* Set Designer: Schmidt* Costume Designer: Casey* Choreographer: McFall* Chorus Director: Jones

Saturday Nov 6 8PM Tuesday Nov 9 8PM Sunday Nov 14 2PM Thursday Nov 18 8PM (Tuesday evening prices) Friday Nov 26 8PM

IL BARBIERE DI SIVIGLIA Rossini IN ITALIAN

Von Stade, Hinson/Hagegard**, Brecknock*, Capecchi, Tozzi, Turnage, Duykers, Harvey

Conductor: Varviso Stage Director: G. Hager Designer: Siercke Chorus Director: Jones

Friday Nov 12 8PM Wednesday Nov 17 8PM Saturday Nov 20 8PM Tuesday Nov 23 8PM Thursday Nov 25 8PM† Sunday Nov 28 2PM

+Special Thanksgiving Night non-subscription performance, Friday evening prices

*San Francisco Opera debut **American opera debut

REPERTOIRE, CASTS AND DATES SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Special Events

OPERA ACTION PREVIEWS

MARIN

Previews held at Del Mar School, 105 Avenida Mira Flores, Tiburon. Lectures begin at 8:30 PM. Series registration is \$8.50; single tickets are \$2 (\$1.50 for students and senior citizens). For information, please call (415) 435-0191.

September 16 LA FORZA DEL DESTINO Ramona Rockway and Singers

October 14 DIE FRAU OHNE SCHATTEN Dr. Jan Popper

October 21 THE MAKROPULOS CASE Dr. Dale Harris

November 4 ANGLE OF REPOSE Robert Commanday

A Gala "Overture to the Previews" performance by San Francisco Opera's Brown Bag Opera singers will be held on September 23, 2 PM, at the Sausalito Women's Club, 120 Central Avenue. A donation of \$3.00 is requested. For reservations, please call (415) 332-3922.

SOUTH PENINSULA

Previews held at the Palo Alto Community Cultural Center, 1313 Newell Road, at 7:30 PM. Series registration is \$10; single tickets are \$2.50 (\$1.25 for students with I.D.). For information, please call (415) 321-9875, or 941-3890.

September 12 THAÏS

Dr. Dale Harris

September 19 LA FORZA DEL DESTINO Ramona Rockway

October 10 DIE FRAU OHNE SCHATTEN Dr. Jan Popper

October 24 THE MAKROPULOS CASE Dr. Dale Harris

October 31 ANGLE OF REPOSE Robert Commanday

Bus Service to San Francisco Opera Performances: Weekend bus service is available from Stanford Shopping Center. For information, please contact: Palo Alto (415) 493-8636 South Peninsula (408) 295-0073 or (415) 326-0856

JUNIOR LEAGUE OPERA PREVIEWS

All Junior League opera previews will be held at the Curran Theatre with the exception of Nov. 2, indicated below. Previews begin at 11 AM. For information, please call (415) 567-8600. October 1 PETER GRIMES Dr. Jan Popper

October 11 DIE FRAU OHNE SCHATTEN Michael Barclay October 20 THE MAKROPULOS CASE Dr. Dale Harris November 2 ANGLE OF REPOSE Robert Commanday (First Unitarian Church)

SAN JOSE OPERA GUILD PREVIEWS

Two series are offered: Daytime Series, presented in cooperation with West Valley College Community Services and Inter-Disciplinary Enrichment Seminars, at Saratoga Community Theater, Fruitvale Avenue, Saratoga, California. Previews held from 10 AM-12 noon. For 1/2 unit of college credit, please contact LS-90 Series Office, West Valley College, (408) 867-2200, extensions 407 or 363. For other information, please call Mrs. Jerrine Jeffery, (415) 984-3636 or Artie Nicholson, (415) 967-3590.

September 10 THAÏS Dr. Dale Harris September 24 TOSCA James H. Schwabacher, Jr. October 7 PETER GRIMES Dr. Jan Popper October 22 THE MAKROPULOS CASE Dr. Dale Harris

Evening Series, presented in cooperation with De Anza College as part of their Seminar Lecture Series-90. Previews held from 8-10 PM at De Anza College Campus, 21250 Stevens Creek Boulevard, Cupertino, California. There is a \$2 advance registration fee which permits entrance to one or all previews. For a ½ unit of college credit, please contact SLS-90, De Anza College, (408) 257-5550. For other information, please call (415) 984-3636 or (415) 967-3590.

September 17 LA FORZA DEL DESTINO Dr. Jan Popper October 1 DIE FRAU OHNE SCHATTEN Dr. Arthur Regan October 15 CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA/I PAGLIACCI James H. Schwabacher, Jr. October 29

ANGLE OF REPOSE (The Novel) Dr. Wallace Stegner, Author

November 5 ANGLE OF REPOSE (The Opera) Robert Commanday San Francisco Opera presents internationally renowned



in recital War Memorial Opera House Sunday, November 21, 8 p.m.



Miss Price, one of the world's best loved sopranos, with David Garvey at the piano, will include in her program some of the most beloved lieder, selected operatic arias, and spirituals.

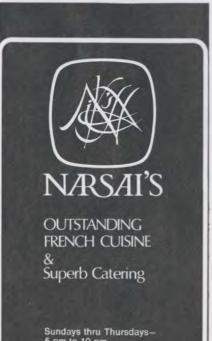
> Tickets available at the Opera Box Office

Orchestra	\$15.00
Grand Tier	15.00
Dress Circle	12.00
Balcony Circle	10.00
Balcony A-E	8.00
Balcony F-H	6.50
Balcony J-L	5.00
Box Seat	18.00

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Special Events

continued

Bus Service to San Francisco Opera Performances:

Weekend bus service is available from San Jose, Los Gatos and Palo Alto. For information, please call (408) 295-0073, 296-4597 or 241-9381.

UC-BERKELEY EXTENSION LECTURE SERIES

DR. JAN POPPER LECTURES will be given at 2 locations: San Francisco Series, Monday evenings at 7:30 PM at UC Extension Center, 55 Laguna. Series registration is \$40; single tickets are \$5, on a space available basis, payable at the door. For further information (on either the San Francisco or Berkeley series), please call (415) 861-6833, or

642-4111. September 13 THAÏS

September 20 DIE WALKÜRE

September 27 LA FORZA DEL DESTINO

October 4 TOSCA

October 11 PETER GRIMES

October 18 DIE FRAU OHNE SCHATTEN

November 1 THE MAKROPULOS CASE

November 8 CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA/I PAGLIACCI

November 15 ANGLE OF REPOSE

November 22 IL BARBIERE DI SIVIGLIA

Berkeley Series, Tuesday evenings at 7:30 PM at 125 Morrison Hall on the Berkeley Campus. Series registration is \$20; single tickets are 5, on a space available basis, payable at the door.

September 21 DIE WALKÜRE

September 28 LA FORZA DEL DESTINO October 5 TOSCA

October 12 PETER GRIMES October 19

ANGLE OF REPOSE

NAPA COMMUNITY COLLEGE LECTURE SERIES

For the fourth year Napa Community College is offering a ten-week course called ADVENTURES IN OPERA. The course, which introduces the Sunday Series at San Francisco Opera, will be held in the Library of Ridgeview Junior High School, 2447 Old Sonoma

Road, Napa, California, on Wednesday nights from 7-9 p.m. Registration for the entire series is \$7.00. Ernest A. Fly will again teach the course, using his collection of complete opera recordings, Metropolitan Opera filmstrips, and also introducing guest speakers and vocal artists. For further information, please call Mr. Fly at (707) 224-6162.

September 15 THAÏS

September 22 DIE WALKÜRE September 29 TÓSCA

October 6 PETER GRIMES

October 13 DIE FRAU OHNE SCHATTEN

October 20 THE MAKROPULOS CASE

October 27 LA FORZA DEL DESTINO

November 3 ANGLE OF REPOSE

November 10 CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA/I PAGLIACCI

November 17 IL BARBIERE DI SIVIGLIA

YWCA LECTURE SERIES

For the fifth year, the Downtown Center of the YWCA is offering an eight-week course called OPERA SPECTRUMS. The course, held on Monday evenings from 7-9 p.m., at 620 Sutter Street, includes the use of recordings, rare films, slides, live vocal and musical demonstrations, and group discussions of performances attended. Music critic, William Aguiar, Jr., will be the lecturer. Series registration is \$30; single tickets are \$4, on a space available basis, payable at the door. For further information, please call (415) 775-6500.

September 20 THAIS

September 27 DIE WALKÜRE

October 4 LA FORZA DEL DESTINO

October 11 TOSCA and THE MAKROPULOS CASE

October 18 DIE FRAU OHNE SCHATTEN and PETER GRIMES

October 25 CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA/I PAGLIACCI

November 1 ANGLE OF REPOSE and a Survey of contemporary American opera

November 8 IL BARBIERE DI SIVIGLIA San Francisco Opera

Broadcasts

made possible by Standard Oil Company of California and the L. J. and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation of Oakland, California.

KKHI-AM 1550/FM 95.7	S
KFAC—AM 1330/FM 92.3	L
KING—FM 98.1	S
KOIN-FM 101	F
KFBK—FM 92.5	S
KMJ—FM 97.9	F
KFSD—FM 94.1	S

San Francisco Los Angeles Seattle Portland Sacramento Fresno San Diego

Friday, September 10 Friday, September 17 Friday, September 24 Friday, October 8 Friday, October 15 Friday, October 22 Friday, October 29 Friday, November 5 THAÏS DIE WALKÜRE LA FORZA DEL DESTINO TOSCA DIE FRAU OHNE SCHATTEN PETER GRIMES THE MAKROPULOS CASE CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA/ I PAGLIACCI IL BARBIERE DI SIVIGLIA ANGLE OF REPOSE

Friday, November 12 Friday, November 26

All broadcasts will begin at 7:50 p.m. with the exception of DIE WALKÜRE, which will begin at 7:20 p.m.

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SUNDAY MORNING AT THE OPERA

Recorded operas with John Roszak, host. Gene Parrish interviews artists of the 1976 San Francisco Opera season during intermission. 11 a.m. every Sunday.

ARTS REPORTING SERVICE

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

KPFA FM 94.1

OPERA REVIEWS ON THE AIR

KPFA critics Bill Collins, Melvin Jahn and Bob Rose talk about the 1976 San Francisco Opera productions each Sunday afternoon at 4:30 p.m.



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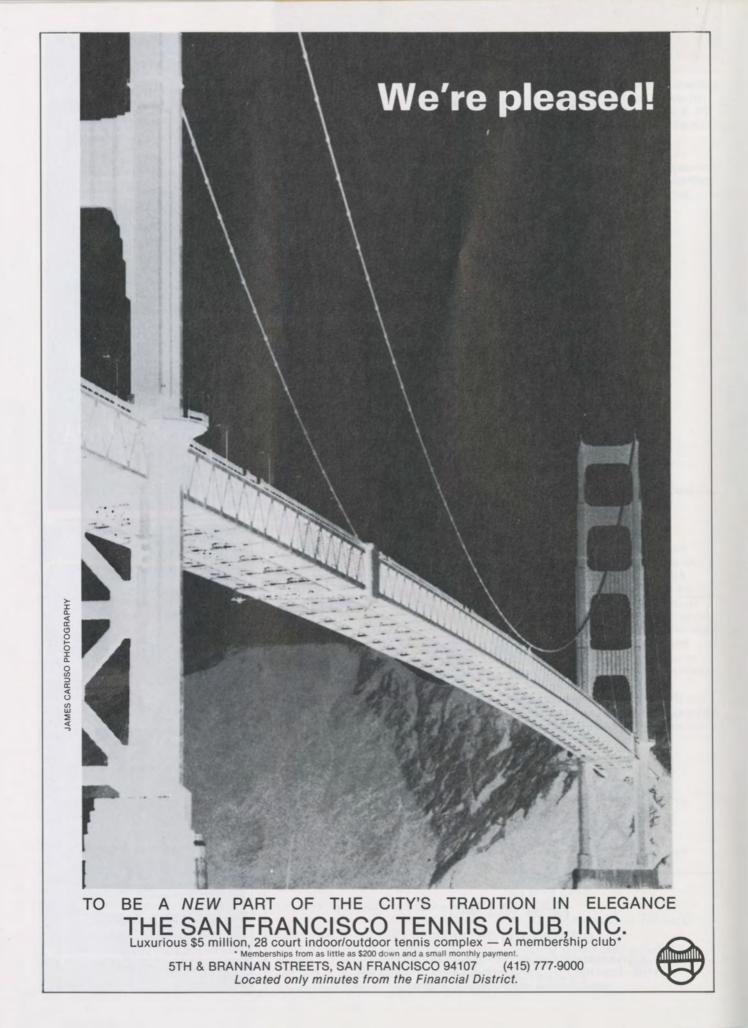
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THE BARBER OF SEVILLE Rossini IN ENGLISH Tuesday, November 9 Friday, November 12 Wednesday, November 17 Thursday, November 18 Wednesday, November 24

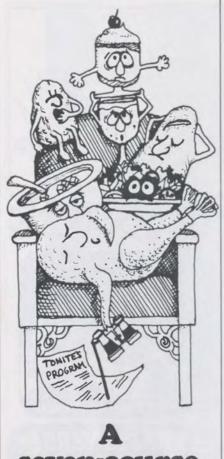




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opera program

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merola opera program

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Thursday, September 23 Stanford Court Ballroom 6:30 PM Cocktails 7:30 PM Dinner and show \$75 per person

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

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

In San Francisco	861-4008
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1976-1977 Season December 1, 1976 - May 22, 1977

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7,500	132.40	7 yrs	3,621.60	11,121.60
7,500	107.60	10 yrs	5,412.00	12,912.00
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San Francisco Opera Premiere New production made possible by a generous gift from Cyril Magnin



Opera in three acts by JULES MASSENET Text by LOUIS GALLET After the novel of ANATOLE FRANCE

Conductor JOHN PRITCHARD

Production TITO CAPOBIANCO Designer

CARL TOMS

Chorus Director ROBERT JONES

Choreographer LOUIS FALCO*

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TIME AND PLACE:

ACT I, Scene 1 Scene 2 INTERMISSION ACT II, Scene 1 Scene 2 Scene 3

INTERMISSION

ACT III, Scene 1

Scene 2

Scene 3

First performance: Paris Opéra, February 16, 1894 First San Francisco Opera performance: September 10, 1976

> FRIDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 10, 1976 AT 8:00 -Opening Night of the season; Broadcast WEDNESDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 15, 1976 AT 8:00 SUNDAY AFTERNOON, SEPTEMBER 19, 1976 AT 2:00 SATURDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 25, 1976 AT 8:00 TUESDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 28, 1976 AT 8:00 FRIDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 1, 1976 AT 8:00

CAST

(in order of appearance) Palémon Athanaël Servant of Nicias Nicias Crobyle Myrtale Thais La Charmeuse Albine

Alexander Malta** Sherrill Milnes John Davies Claes H. Ahnsjö** Pamela South Shirley Lee Harned* **Beverly Sills** Claudia Cummings **Gwendolyn** Jones

Figurantes (Act II)-Wendy Greene, Dianne Kesslinger, Wendy Kinsel, Wendy Kwan, Sidonie Young

Cenobites, actors, comedians, philosophers, friends of Nicias, populace, nuns

*San Francisco Opera debut **American opera debut

END OF THE FOURTH CENTURY; EGYPT

The Hermitage, in the Egyptian desert The mansion of Nicias, Alexandria

The house of Thaïs The Meditation A square in front of Thaïs' house

A place in the desert

The Hermitage

Albine's refuge in the desert

Please do not interrupt the music with applause

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

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

The performance will last approximately three hours

Flowers for San Francisco Opera's Gala Opening Night made possible by a generous donation from Banco di Roma and by valuable services from Rossi & Rovetti Flowers

SYNOPSIS/THAIS

ACT I Scene 1: A hermitage in the Egyptian desert. At a time, the 4th century A.D., when Christianity, though recognized by the Emperor Constantine, coexisted uneasily with paganism, the holy men of North Africa fled the decadent towns and went to live in the desert.

An order of ascetic monks, known as Cenobites, has gathered to share an evening meal. Under the leadership of an aged monk, Palemon, they speak of their friend and brother, Athanaël, who has been absent for some time.

As night descends, Athanaël returns. His journey has led him to Alexandria where the influence of the actress-courtesan Thaïs, with whom he was obsessed in his youth, dominates the city, corrupts the people; he declares it his duty to rescue Thaïs, turn her to God. Palemon warns him of the dangers of earthly involvement.

The monks withdraw; Athanaël lies down to meditate . . . and, in ecstacy, he sees Thaïs, who appears to him as the goddess Venus. Devastated, he awakens, vows to set out at once. Again Palemon counsels restraint; Athanaël departs.

Scene 2: Alexandria—the mansion of Nicias. Arrived in the city, Athanaël goes to seek out his boyhood friend, Nicias, a man of great wealth. Waiting for Nicias to appear, the monk stands on a terrace overlooking Alexandria, curses his native town for its libertine ways and prays to God for guidance. Then, as Nicias appears, he ask his friend to be presented to Thaïs.

Nicias, who has been living with the actress, answers that she will be coming to his home that evening from the theater for a feast in her honor. It is to be their last night together. Generously, he offers Athanaël proper attire in which to meet the courtesan and bids two female slaves, Crobyle and Myrtale, to attend to him.

At length Thaïs appears—magnificent—attended by admirers. She reaffirms to Nicias the end of their full week of love. Then she feels the harsh glance of the visitor upon her. After they are introduced, her voluptuous sensuality devastates him once again, as it had in his vision. He rushes out, horrified, vowing to redeem her soul.

ACT II Scene 1: Thaïs' house. The courtesan, back from the feast, is in solitude, fearful that her beauty will desert her. She looks in the mirror, prays that Venus might safeguard her charms and youth.

Athanaël appears, declaring he has come to save Thaïs. At first she taunts him; but her bantering changes to fear as he stands before her as a monk and bids her embrace another life, ruled by faith and purity. She must decide that night. He will await her on the threshold until dawn.

At that moment, the voice of Nicias is heard far off, still singing of pleasure. Frightened of the unknown future, Thaïs bursts into hysterical laughter, then into sobs, and collapses into deep meditation. Her meditation leads her into a nightmare in which she sees herself losing her beauty. In despair she remembers her childhood Christian upbringing, and hears the call of God.

Scene 2: The square before Thaïs' house. As the courtesan submissively joins Athanaël before daybreak, the monk reveals his plan: Thaïs is to leave Alexandria, travel with him across the desert to a cloister over which the venerated Albine, descendant of the Caesars, presides. But first she must destroy all remnants of her former life.

When the courtesan pleads for just one object that is dear to her—an exquisitely wrought statue of Eros —Athanaël, on learning the object is a gift from Nicias, destroys it in a jealous outburst. Then he leads Thaïs into her house, where they will burn all of her belongings.

Now Nicias enters with his friends. They have been gambling, and Nicias decides to celebrate his regained wealth by improvising a Bacchanal, led by an enchantress. When they learn that the monk is depriving them of their cherished actress, the crowd becomes enraged. To divert attention and assure the safety of Thaïs, Nicias scatters the coins he has won. As the people scramble for them, Thaïs escapes with Athanaël.

ACT III Scene 1: A place in the desert. Thaïs, worn from the long journey, is driven onward by Athanaël. He relents only when he sees that her feet are bleeding, seeks water and fruit to refresh her. They are near the cloister; and soon Albine comes to receive the novice. As Thaïs turns away, assuring the monk they will meet in the next life, he is torn by despair.

Scene 2: A hermitage in the Egyptian desert. Athanaël, returning, avows to Palemon that he is haunted by Thaïs. Palemon can bring no consolation. Exhausted, the monk collapses. Once more, in an hallucination, he sees the courtesan, hears her alluring song, her mocking laughter . . . then hears distant voices predicting the death of Thaïs. On awakening, in an outburst of passion, he renounces his faith and rushes to Thaïs.

Scene 3: Albine's refuge in the desert. As Thaïs lies in agony, the nuns, led by Albine, are gathered in prayer. Athanaël arrives and passionately confesses his love to Thaïs. She dies . . . and the monk, in a final blasphemy, succumbs to possession by the devil. Regarding Thaïs

by ROBERT LAWRENCE

Jules Massenet ranks among the most prolific of composers for the theater. In the time of the baroque, when it was permissible and even expected for top musicians to borrow from their own earlier scores, or in the era of *bel canto* with creators modeling their newest works on formulas of long standing, this productive state might not necessarily have meant diversity of ideas. But in the case of Massenet, internal contrasts — vivid, affecting shaped his output and his career.

It would be too much, even for a passionate admirer, to pretend that all twenty-five of his operas are of equal interest. Probably no composer of comparable fame changed altitude so often, alternated vital masterworks with faded *pièces d'occasion*. Massenet was willing to try every genre and he did, from the grandiose (*Hérodiade*) through the lyric (*Manon*), rhapsodic (*Esclarmonde*), sentimental (*Werther*), contemporary (*Sapho*), archaic (*Le Jongleur de Notre Dame*).

In the course of one very special year, 1894, he produced two stage works of the strongest imaginable contrast: Thais and La Navarraise. The key to the difference between them lay in the casting of the title rôles. Thais, given its premiere not at the cozy Comique, Massenet territory, but at the big Opéra in Paris, was tailored for the California soprano, Sybil Sanderson, who ruled the composer romantically until her death at the age of thirtyeight. She, of the high-flying, sensuously tinted voice, for whom he had conceived Esclarmonde, was to embody in Thais a perfumed personality that, for years following, would be the goal of every good-looking soprano with a fluent high D (and others without it, who took the printed option provided in the final scene). To them, and to audiences of the day, this was the epitome of chic.

Seven months later a violently contrasting opera by Massenet was given its world premiere at Covent Garden . . . and the leading part of Anita, woman of Navarre, became one of the great verismo vehicles for Emma Calvé, already famous for her earthy Carmen. La Navarraise came, esthetically, as the composer's challenge to Mascagni, who had broken out of obscurity three years earlier with that extraordinary piece of naturalism, Cavalleria Rusticana. The construction of both operas was identical—a single act bisected by an orchestral intermezzo; and Anita was, if anything, an extension of Santuzza, plain to look at but of volcanic temperament.

After an international run lasting about thirty years, *La Navarraise* dropped from the picture, to return only recently to new acclaim in this country. The story of *Thaïs* differs in that it has protractedly been a semi-repertory item, an inner-outer reappearing at odd intervals with fluctuating success not only here but in France. It still awaits the transforming touch needed to bring its lush and purple attitudes definitively into our time; and one presumes that Beverly Sills, not only a gifted singer but an actress consummately aware of modern theatrical require-

ments, will work that magic in San Francisco's revival.

The problem lies with a tradition established many vears ago by such figures as Mary Garden and Maria leritza, both of whom aroused a susceptible public with their Thaïs. According to photographs, reviews and word-of-mouth reports from an older generation, these ladies were monumentally seductive along lines appealing at the time (the Theda Bara syndrome) but remote from the theatrical practices of today . . . a silent-screen technique of acting that has served its purpose and departed. Thais has destroyed many a more recent soprano who has offered either too little of what is now a legendary but passé interpretation, thereby disappointing the keepers of scrap books and readers of ancient fan magazines, or else too much, provoking modern laughter. In short, we are in search of something to replace the attitudinizing of an earlier day. At stake is the work's innate value. Does it exist, or has it always been an illusion? I should venture the belief that Thaïs remains a viable opera, distinguished by well wrought atmosphere and coloration, at times by soaring lyricism. What it lacksthe irony animating its source-was drained away by Massenet's librettist, Louis Gallet, before the composer took up his pen.

Let us, then, set our sights on the original Thaïs, a novel by Anatole France, published four years before the appearance of the opera. The author, hotly dedicated to the cause of justice (he was among the more prominent supporters of Colonel Dreyfus in the affaire) and to the fight against hypocrisy, used as his literary weapon not a rapier but a needle; and Thaïs, as it came from his workroom, was a barbed attack on religious zeal masquerading as righteousness. In its outer events, the story-via the downfall of its crusading anti-hero in trying to "save" a woman he really desires-anticipates a later, better known tale by Somerset Maugham about the Reverend Davidson, another disturbed evangelist, and the prostitute, Sadie Thompson; but France's novel goes deeper in its condemnation of piety rampant.

Unlike Maugham's Miss Thompson, Thais, the beautiful courtesan, is no middling-cheap whore but a gifted actress, venerated in her native Alexandria almost to the point of being a goddess. Indeed her intellectual equipment surpasses that of the bumbling monk who would reform her. She is a votary of Venus, whose cult she has practiced as an art. We learn that luxury was not always the way with this woman idolized by all classes of her native city. She had grown up there poor; been converted to Christianity then backslid into paganism. Escaping from her wretched surroundings to the town of Antioch, she trained there as musician, mime and dancer, excelling as well in the finer points of love. Then she returned to Alexandria in triumph, presiding over its license, opulence and knowledge. It was at this point in her life that she came to meet the fanatical monk, Paphnuce (or, as he is called in the opera, Athanaël).

Gallet, in adapting France's novel to the stage, not only softened but elided, omitting all details of Thaïs past, retaining only her status as actress-courtesan, her growing ennui, a fear of aging (with its loss of physical beauty), and-in the end-a will to holiness. These surviving qualities, when totaled, are not enough to make of her the intellectual and emotional adversary to the monk that we find in the original . . . a foreshortening redeemed in part through the colors of Massenet's score, his tone painting of Alexandria, city of the courtesan's pride, then later of the desert, where she finds salvation. What the character of Thaïs means to us in performance comes almost exclusively by way of the music; for Massenet's librettist has furnished us with little more than a sketch. For today's singingactress, a convincing projection of the part must be, in effect, a reconstruction.

Not so with Athanaël, who dominates the opera dramatically. His impact is felt in the opening scene when, motivated by a vision of Thaïs and what he takes to be her spiritual needs, he sets off for Alexandria in a state of prayer. Not long after, on arriving in the city where he was born, the monk alternates between hatred for its luxuriant softness and a subconscious attachment to this very quality, commingled with hope for heavenly guidance. Over the next two acts, his fanaticism, yielding at times to bursts of tenderness, erupts at last into the longing that lies at its heart during a second vision of Thaïs in the desert-a scene traditionally, and outrageously, omitted in most performances of the opera and now, in its San Francisco revival, restored. The end is ordained, with Thaïs dying in celestial bliss and Athanaël-who has rushed to her side-reduced to a groveling psychotic. Gallet, while deleting most of the absurdity, even black comedy, attached to Athanaël in the original, has come up, on the whole, with a fascinating characterization.

And Massenet has given his monk the full treatment, the man's spiritual deterioration, progressive torment mirrored in a rôle that is one of the great plums for baritone. As previously noted, Thais has less dramatic latitude . . . she reacts rather than initiates . . . yet her music offers more in theatrical ebb and flow than one might have imagined by a reading of the text. From the sweep of her entrance -one of the glamor appearances of all time-at the party given by Nicias, through the self-doubts of her first duet with Athanaël, the inner strength of her two further encounters with him, and the radiance of her farewell to the world, the character grows expressively. The final scene of the opera, as Thaïs sees the firmament open and Athanaël attempts to call her back to earth, remains one of the glories of French opera.

Any skilled soprano can rise to this climax. More

problematical is the end of the first act, when the singer must command the stage vocally and sexually, take a gleaming high C and simultaneously—with a glance at Athanaël—bare her bosom. The scene rarely succeeds, except once or twice every other decade . . . but when properly rendered—not as a carnival "strip" but a godlike gesture in the tradition of Venus whom she serves—the moment becomes incandescent, carries all before it.

Still, when all impressions are in, and without minimizing the importance of the two chief characters, one comes to feel that the dominant rôle in this opera is played by the orchestra. The most celebrated "aria" falls to neither soprano nor baritone, but to the solo violin that sings the familiar Meditation during the intermezzo of Act Two. Through years of mistreatment in the palm courts of grand hotels, this passage-smeared indulgently to the tinkle of tea cups-has alienated as many listeners as it has charmed. But when played straight and heard in context, the melody does suggest a gravely sweet dialogue of Thaïs with herself: continue or renounce the pagan life? . . . From its first appearance, this music takes on the guise of a leading motive, adroitly developed, especially searing as Thaïs, at the oasis, leaves the monk to enter the cloister and he, in desolation, cries out "Je ne la verrai plus!" ("No more shall I behold her!"). Ultimately transfigured, it paints in the opera's closing page a portrait of beatific death. (Among other orchestral motives in the work are a rugged passage depicting the unrest of Athanaël, played at his initial entrance, then repeated; and a broad-lined, sensuous theme of the courtesan, introduced during the monk's first vision, then brought back with provocative effect for Thais' disrobing in the flesh).

Throughout, the orchestra brings an intricate application of color, a running blend of the sacred, voluptuous, and occasionally the stormy (as in the interlude that links the sixth and final scenes without interruption). Perhaps the most evocative page precedes the arrival of the monk in Alexandria—a city almost as much the protagonist in this work as is Paris in *Louise*. A symphonic sun shimmers on the port, the calls of the street sound brassily . . . all to return as background to Athanaël's monologue, "Voilà donc la terrible cité!"

One cannot claim the opera for consistently major Massenet; yet it sends out scintillating sparks and sometimes flames. A final assessment in performance depends, beyond the orchestra, upon the two leading singers . . . for, more than most, this is a personality piece. Given an eloquent pair, *Thaïs* lives.

Robert Lawrence is artistic director and conductor of Friends of French Opera in New York City. He is also the author of a forthcoming book, "The Great French Operas—and The Famous," to be published early in 1977 by Dodd, Mead and Co.

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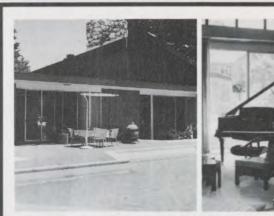
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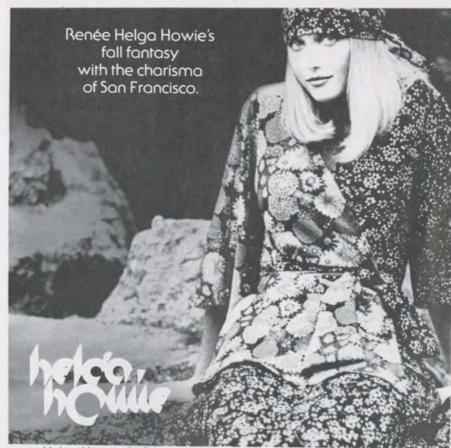
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Opera Museum

The 1976 exhibit in the opera museum, prepared in its entirety by the Archives for the Performing Arts, represents a detailed historical profile of the beginnings of opera in the city of San Francisco, tracing our art form up through the founding of San Francisco Opera.

Archives for the Performing Arts, which serves as a repository for invaluable collections pertaining to opera, dance, music and theater, is a non-profit, tax exempt corporation, with headquarters in the San Francisco Public Library, Presidio Branch. The museum display represents countless hours of research and preparation of visuals by Archives' director, Russell Hartley, and Judith Solomon, his assistant, with Lim M. Lai serving as overall consultant on the project.

The specific purpose for which Archives for the Performing Arts was formed was to collect, preserve, classify and exhibit all types of memorabilia pertaining to all the performing arts and to make the educational and historical material accessible to the general public on a continuing basis.

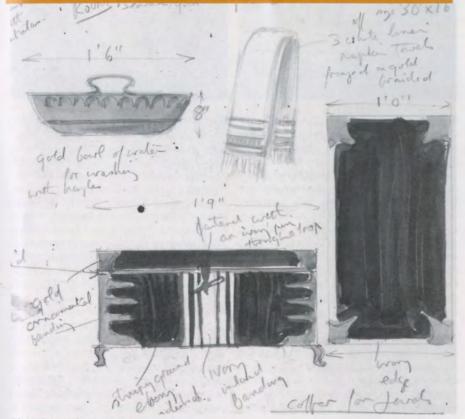
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continued from p. 29



Thais designs by Carl Toms

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On this side of the Atlantic, in New York, Oscar Hammerstein had created the Manhattan Opera Company. In order to better acquaint American audiences with modern French opera, he brought practically the whole troupe of the Opéra Comique to New York from Paris. On November 25, 1907 *Thaïs* had its American premiere with Mary Garden, "Queen of the Parisian stage," as Thaïs, and Maurice Renaud as Athanaël. In the American version of the opera, Athanaël's confession scene and his subsequent temptations in Act III were omitted. This, however, created an unfortunate break in the development of the story. The New York critics did not particularly like the opera. They considered the music uninspired, "for the most part colorless and saccharine", but they did concede that it was theatrically effective. As for the singers, Renaud, and Dalmorès in the role of Nicias, were "simply superb". Mary Garden was recognized as an accomplished actress but her singing drew sharp criticism. (Few in the audience realized she was quite ill. After subsequent performances, however, she went on to make continued on p. 71

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Profiles

Beverly Sills opens the San Francisco Opera 1976 season in the company's premiere production of Thais, singing the role of the fourth century courtesan for the first time on any stage. One of the world's favorite sopranos, Miss Sills is remembered here for electrifying performances as Manon, Lucia di Lammermoor, Violetta in La Traviata and Marie in The Daughter of the Regiment. Her vocal abilities were first displayed with this company when Gaetano Merola hired her in 1953 to sing Elena in the opening night production of Mefistofele, as well as Donna Elvira in Don Giovanni and roles in Die Walküre and Elektra. Miss Sills received international recognition with her sensational La Scala debut in 1969 in Rossini's The Siege of Corinth, the opera in which she first sang at the Metropolitan Opera in 1975. Her repertoire of over 70 roles includes her acclaimed interpretations of the Donizetti trilogy of Roberto Devereux, Maria Stuarda and Anna Bolena, Händel's Giulio Cesare, Bellini's I Capuletti ed I Montecchi and Norma. The soprano, who has recorded over 14 operas, appears regularly on the television series "In Performance at Wolf Trap," numerous entertainment-discussion programs, and television specials, such as last year's CBS-Texaco "Look-In at the Met," with Danny Kaye. After singing with San Francisco Opera, Miss Sills performs La Traviata in Dallas, then to New York where she portrays Lucia di Lammermoor for the Met. Rosina in Il Barbiere di Siviglia for New York City Opera and prepares for her 1977 engagement with the Opera Company of Boston in La Sonnambula. An active civic leader, Miss Sills additionally serves as a member of the Council of the National Endowment for the Arts.

GWENDOLYN JONES



Gwendolyn Jones returns to San Francisco Opera as Albine in Thaïs, Siegrune in Die Walküre, Curra in La Forza del Destino, a child and a solo voice in Die Frau ohne Schatten, and a charwoman in The Makropulos Case. The mezzo was last heard here in 1974 in productions of Manon Lescaut, Parsifal, Madama Butterfly and Luisa Miller. Miss Jones is a four-year veteran of Spring Opera Theater, having sung in The Saint Matthew Passion (1976), L'Ormindo (1974), Orfeo (1972) and Titus (1971). She was a finalist in the 1970 San Francisco Opera Auditions, receiving the Merola Opera Program's Gropper Memorial Award that year. Miss Jones has won numerous vocal competitions, including the 1968 Metropolitan Opera National Auditions Finals and the 1971 Philadelphia Lyric Opera Final Auditions. She received early performing experience at Santa Fe Opera in productions of Der Rosenkavalier, The Elixir of Love, The Magic Flute and Henze's The Bassarids. Married to John Miller, a baritone with the San Francisco Opera family, Miss Jones is scheduled to sing Thisbe in Rossini's La Cenerentola for the opera companies of Seattle and Portland in March, 1977, and two months later will assume the title role in La Cenerentola in an English production at Tucson Opera, where she is an Affiliate Artist.

CLAUDIA CUMMINGS







Claudia Cummings' versatility as a singing-actress is displayed in her diverse roles at San Francisco Opera this season: a Charmeuse in Thaïs, the First Niece in Peter Grimes, and a servant, a child, a solo voice and the Guardian of the Temple in Die Frau ohne Schatten. A native of California. she made her debut with this company in 1972 as the Forestbird in Siegfried, and performed Adina in a student matinee performance of L'Elisir d'Amore in 1975. For Spring Opera Theater, the singer portrayed the Soprano in the 1976 production of Meeting Mr. Ives, and was a member of the ensemble for Death in Venice in 1975. She has interpreted leading coloratura roles with the opera companies of San Diego, Seattle, Kansas City and Miami, including Rosina in The Barber of Seville, Norina in Don Pasquale, the Queen of the Night in The Magic Flute and the title role in Lucia di Lammermoor. In addition to operatic performances, Miss Cummings has been a featured soloist with the symphony orchestras of Los Angeles, San Diego, San Jose and Denver, and has performed with numerous community orchestras throughout California, presented through the sponsorship of Standard Oil. Most recently the soprano sang with the Bay Area Midsummer Mozart Festival and Carmel Bach Festival. An accomplished interpreter of modern works, she has sung with numerous contemporary chamber music groups. Miss Cummings is equally at home in musical and dramatic theater, having performed the lead roles in "The Sound of Music," "My Fair Lady" and Shakespeare's "Othello."

For her second season with San Francisco Opera, Pamela South sings Crobyle in Thaïs, the Second Niece in Peter Grimes, a child and a servant in Die Frau ohne Schatten and Christa in The Makropulos Case. In her 1975 debut season, the pert and vivacious soprano was Giannetta in L'Elisir d'Amore, Mascha in Pique Dame, the First Lover in Il Tabarro, Nella in Gianni Schicchi and Papagena in The Magic Flute. A participant in the 1974 Merola Opera Program, she sang Pamina that year in the special Merola Fund Benefit performance of The Magic Flute, performed at the Paul Masson Mountain Winery. Recently she completed her second season with Western Opera Theater, including a month-long residency in Alaska, interpreting alternately Susanna and Barbarina in The Marriage of Figaro and Gabriela in The Portuguese Inn. Recipient of a Martha Baird Rockefeller grant, the soprano was a winner of the San Francisco and Metropolitan Opera Regional Auditions. Miss South made her operatic debut in 1973 at Seattle Opera in Rigoletto, singing the role of Countess Ceprano. In both 1975 and 1976, she was a soloist with the San Francisco Symphony Pops Concerts, conducted by Arthur Fiedler. After her performances at San Francisco Opera, Miss South will perform as a soloist with the Anchorage Symphony.



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SHIRLEY LEE HARNED



In her debut season with San Francisco Opera, Shirley Lee Harned portravs Myrtale in Thaïs, Rossweisse in Die Walküre, and also a solo voice in Die Frau ohne Schatten and a chambermaid in The Makropulos Case. The mezzo, a winner of the 1971 San Francisco Opera Regional Auditions, joined the Merola Opera Program that year, singing Mrs. Trapes in The Beggar's Opera at the Paul Masson Mountain Winery, and Mamma Lucia in Cavalleria Rusticana and the Monitor in Suor Angelica at Sigmund Stern Grove. A regular member of Seattle Opera, she was a winner of that company's 1973 Cecilia Schultz Auditions. Among her Seattle Opera roles have been Alisia in Lucia di Lammermoor, Annina in La Traviata, Javotte in Manon, La Ciesca in Gianni Schicchi, as well as Marianne in Der Rosenkavalier, Madame Larina in Eugene Onegin and Pauline in Thomas Pasatieri's The Seagull. In the summer of 1975, Miss Harned interpreted three roles in both the German and English Der Ring des Nibelungen for the Pacific Northwest Festival, repeating her performance in this year's festival. A featured soloist with several Northwest symphonic orchestras, she has performed in Händel's Judas Maccabeas, the Bach B Minor Mass, Rossini's Stabat Mater and the Verdi Requiem.

SHERRILL MILNES



Sherrill Milnes, remembered for his triumphant debut here as Rigoletto in 1973, joins San Francisco Opera this season as Athanaël in Thaïs. A member of the Metropolitan Opera since 1965, Milnes has interpreted 13 Verdi roles there, establishing himself as America's foremost Verdian baritone: His international reputation has been confirmed by critical successes with the opera companies of Paris, Hamburg, London, Munich, Berlin, Frankfurt, Cologne and Zurich, among other cities. A highlight of his 1974-75 Metropolitan season was his enthusiastically received portraval of Don Giovanni. That same year he captivated London opera-goers and critics with his Covent Garden debut as Renato in Un Ballo in Maschera. His most recent exploration of the bel canto repertoire found him singing with Joan Sutherland in the new Metropolitan Opera production of I Puritani last season. In addition to his busy schedule of operatic and recital performances, Milnes has appeared as guest soloist with virtually all the major U.S. orchestras, and at most of this country's major summer music festivals. A prolific recording artist, with over 30 albums to his credit, Milnes and his colleague and great friend Placido Domingo have made a recording in which each conducts for the other. During the 1976-77 season, Milnes is scheduled to sing in La Forza del Destino and Tosca for the Metropolitan Opera, Rigoletto for Cologne Opera and Macbeth for Covent Garden, under the musical direction of Sir Georg Solti.

CLAES H. AHNSIO



ALEXANDER MALTA



Swedish tenor Claes H. Ahnsjö makes his first appearance with an American opera company as Nicias in the San Francisco Opera performances of Thaïs. After only three years of voice study, he made his operatic debut in 1969 singing Tamino in Die Zauberflöte with Royal Opera of Stockholm. He was subsequently heard there as Des Grieux in Manon, Ernesto in Don Pasquale, as well as Albert Herring and King Gustavus/Prince Charles in the premiere of Hans Hohan Werle's Tintomara. Ahnsjö joined Munich State Opera in 1973 and debuted that year at the Munich Festival in Don Giovanni. He earned critical praise for leading roles performed at Stuttgart Opera during its 1974-75 season. During his second season at the Munich Festival, he sang in Il Barbiere di Siviglia, Die Entführung aus dem Serail, Fidelio, Falstaff and Henze's Boulevard Solitude. In 1975 he added roles in Idomeneo, From the House of the Dead and Carl Orff's Antigone to his Munich repertoire, and sang Tom Rakewell for Gunther Rennert's television produc-tion of The Rake's Progress. That same year, he was heard at Cologne Opera in three operas in its Mozart cycle, designed and directed by Jean Pierre Ponnelle - Die Entführung aus dem Serail, Die Zauberflöte and Don Giovanni. A highlight of Ahnsjö's fourth season with the Munich Festival was his performing in the world premiere of Josef Tal's Die Versuchung this past August. The tenor, married to mezzosoprano Helena Jungwirth, is scheduled to sing in Cimarosa's Il marito disperato and L'Elisir d'Amore for Cologne Opera in 1977.

Making his American operatic debut with San Francisco Opera, Alexander Malta displays his singing and acting abilities in the roles of Palemon in Thaïs, the Marchese di Calatrava in La Forza del Destino, Swallow in Peter Grimes and Don Basilio in the student matinee performances of The Barber of Seville. The Swiss bass, married to American soprano Janet Perry, is presently a member of the Staatstheater am Gartnerplatz in Munich. Fluent in five languages, Malta has explored a wide repertoire, ranging from works of the early Baroque era to contemporary compositions. In Munich he has delighted audiences with his interpretations of such serious and comic roles as Raimondo in Lucia di Lammermoor, the Speaker in Die Zauberflöte, the title role in Don Pasquale, Isaac Mendoza in Prokofiev's The Betrothal in a Monastery and the old convict in Shostakovich's Katerina Ismailova. He has sung both operatic and concert engagements in Frankfurt, Berlin, Vienna, Geneva, Venice, Madrid and Paris. Malta portrayed a cat for the Bonn Opera world premiere of Francesco Valdambrini's Der gestiefelte Kater (Puss in Boots). He has additionally sung for several operatic recordings, including Saint-Saëns' Samson et Dalila and Monteverdi's L'Orfeo.







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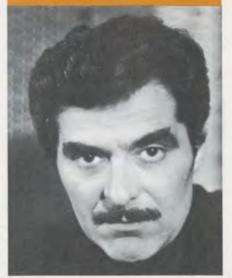
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JOHN PRITCHARD



Eminent English conductor John Pritchard marks his fourth season with San Francisco Opera with performances of Thais and Peter Grimes. For his debut with the company in 1970, Pritchard worked with Jean Pierre Ponnelle on a new production of Cosi fan tutte and in 1974, he led the orchestra in the designer-director's revival of La Cenerentola, as well as the August Everding staging of Don Giovanni. Pritchard, celebrating his 25th year with England's prestigious Glyndebourne Festival, has been a principal conductor and artistic counselor there since 1963, and was appointed the festival's music director in 1969. He was music director for the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic from 1956 through 1962, and for the London Philharmonic from 1962 through 1966. Pritchard led the London Philharmonic on its 1973 Far East tour, the first time a Western symphonic orchestra appeared in Red China. He has conducted at the world's major opera houses, among them the Metropolitan, Vienna Staatsoper, the San Carlo in Naples, and Teatro Colon in Buenos Aires. His 1975 conducting assignments included La Clemenza di Tito for Royal Opera, and a reunion with Ponnelle for Le Nozze di Figaro at Cologne Opera and Lyric Opera of Chicago. In March, 1976, he conducted La Clemenza di Tito for the Royal Opera visit to La Scala, and this summer wielded his baton for the Glyndebourne Le Nozze di Figaro and Falstaff, marking the debut of Jean Pierre Ponnelle at the famed festival. Pritchard additionally conducted Cologne Opera performances of Strauss' Arabella. In February, 1977, he travels to Houston for Peter Grimes, and then returns to England for L'Elisir d'Amore with Royal Opera.

TITO CAPOBIANCO



Tito Capobianco, Argentinian director of international stature, directs the first San Francisco Opera staging of Thaïs. Audiences will remember his productions of Manon, Lucia di Lammermoor and La Traviata with Beverly Sills, Maria Stuarda and Norma with Joan Sutherland and last season's revival of Norma with Rita Hunter. Presently, Capobianco is artistic director of San Diego Opera and the Canary Islands Festival. Beginning his stage career in his native country, he came to the United States in 1962, working with opera companies in Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia and New Orleans. He made his New York City Opera debut in 1965 with The Tales of Hoffmann, the start of a successful association with Miss Sills which has led to acclaimed productions of Manon, Roberto Devereux, Maria Stuarda, Anna Bolena, I Puritani, Lucrezia Borgia and Giulio Cesare. Capobianco has also staged works for Deutsche Oper Berlin, Paris Opera, Hamburg State Opera, the Spoleto Festival, and the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. Additionally, in 1974, he inaugurated Australian Opera's new Sydney Opera House with The Tales of Hoffmann, with Miss Sutherland and conductor Richard Bonynge. In 1975, Capobianco directed five productions at the Las Palmas Festival in Spain, a new production of Simon Boccanegra for Australian Opera, and the American premiere of Dvorák's Russalka for San Diego Opera. This past spring he staged the world premiere of Pasatieri's Ines de Castro for Baltimore Opera, and this summer directed II Trovatore at the Holland Festival, Norma at San Diego Opera and La Traviata at Wolf Trap Farm Park.

CARLTOMS



THOMAS MUNN



This season two San Francisco Opera productions bear the design signature of Carl Toms: the opulent costumes and bold, mirror-reflecting setting for Massenet's Thaïs, and the bleak seacoast village for Benjamin Britten's Peter Grimes. The English designer previously created settings for this company's staging of Lucia di Lammermoor in 1972. His recent design assignments have been for the San Diego Opera production of Norma and La Traviata, the latter produced this summer at Wolf Trap Farm Park. Last season, Toms' settings for the New York City Opera Die Meistersinger were seen in New York and on tour in Los Angeles. In 1974, he designed Un Ballo in Maschera for Netherlands Opera and in 1973 created settings and costumes for the New York City Opera staging of I Puritani. In his own country, he has designed for Royal Opera, English National Opera (formerly Sadler's Wells), Welsh National Opera, as well as the festivals of Glyndebourne, Edinburgh and Chichester. No alien to the world of legitimate theater, Toms' work has been at all of London's major west end theaters, in classic and modern works, from Shakespeare to Sheridan to Stoppard. Several of his productions seen in this country via Broadway and touring productions include "Vivat! Vivat, Regina!," "Sleuth," and the Royal Shakespeare Company production of "Sherlock Holmes," which earned Toms the 1975 Antoinette Perry Award and the Drama Desk Award for best set design.

Thomas Munn debuts with this company as lighting designer and director for the International fall season at San Francisco Opera, which includes new productions of Thaïs, La Forza del Destino, Die Frau ohne Schatten, Cavalleria Rusticana, I Pagliacci and the world premiere of Angle of Repose. A versatile designer whose productions have been seen on Broadway, off-Broadway and in films and television, Munn recently created lighting and scenery for the Netherlands Opera production of Macbeth, in conjunction with co-designer Robert Israel. Prior to that Munn designed lighting for the Dutch musical The Angel of Amsterdam, written and produced to celebrate the 700th anniversary of that city. He was responsible for the lighting designs for the Lake George Opera Festival productions of The Crucible. Tosca, Rigoletto, Die Fledermaus and La Traviata, and designed the sets and lighting for the Minnesota Opera Company's The Magic Flute. In addition to his work in opera, Munn has designed over 20 industrial shows, and for the past six years has served as principal designer for the Mary Anthony Dance Theater of New York. Between design assignments he has served on the faculty of Columbia University, and has worked as a scenic artist on numerous films, commercials and television productions.

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LOUIS FALCO



Louis Falco makes his San Francisco Opera debut this season creating the choreography for Thaïs. A native New Yorker, Falco started his dance career in 1960 when he joined the Jose Limon Dance Company, and toured throughout North and South America, Europe and the Far East. While continuing his association with Limon, Falco formed his own company in 1967 and worked with both troupes for three years. The Louis Falco Dance Company has toured extensively and presented annual programs in New York at City Center, the ANTA Theater and Alice Tully Hall. Participating in the National Endowment for the Arts Dance Touring Program, the company has appeared at colleges and universities across the country as artists-in-residence, offering workshops as well as performances. Independently, Falco has choreographed for the Boston Ballet, the 1968 Opera Society of Washington production of Amahl and the Night Visitors, staged by Gian Carlo Menotti, the Caramoor Festival, Ballet Rambert and completed his fourth work for the Netherlands Dance Theatre. In 1975, he appeared at the Uris Theater in New York with Rudolf Nureyev and Merle Park in "The Moor's Pavane," Limon's dance interpretation of "Othello."

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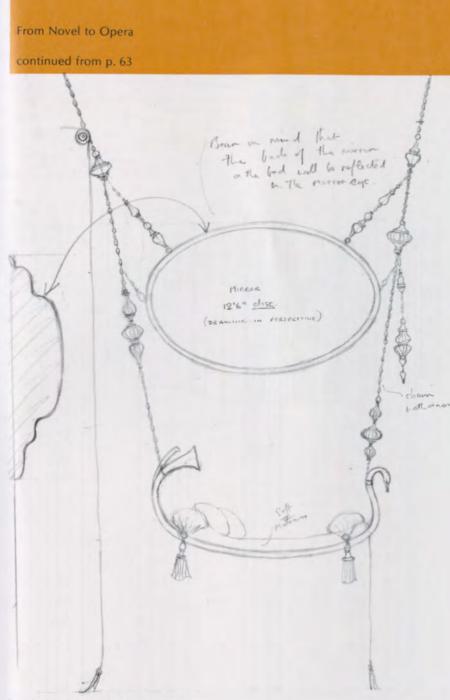
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Detail of Carl Tom's designs for Thais

Thais one of the crowning glories of her career.) Thais remained the best draw in the Manhattan repertory for three seasons, Oscar Hammerstein's only complaint being that the public ignored all other operas to see Massenet's work. Garden's name was now synonymous with Thaïs in Philadelphia, Boston and Washington. In 1909, she even threatened to resign from the Manhattan Opera Company if the role of Thaïs were given to Marguerite Sylva. The vogue of Thaïs in America was to last as long as Garden and Renaud assumed the principal roles. When there were no longer such artists, so thoroughly familiar with the French tradition, the popularity of the opera declined. It is only recently that Massenet's works have regained attention due to the interest of such international artists as Joan Sutherland and Beverly Sills, and producers and directors of opera houses such as the General Director of the San Francisco Opera, Kurt Herbert Adler.

Opera versus Novel

The main source of Anatole France's novel *Thaïs* is considered to be *Paph-nutius*, a tenth century "comedy" by

continued on p. 72





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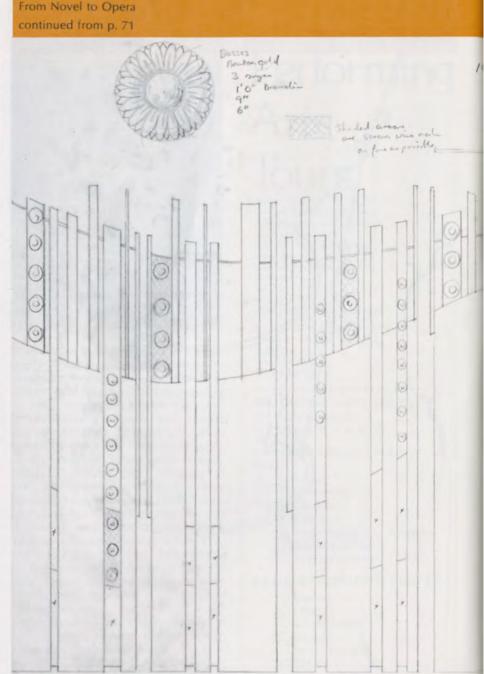
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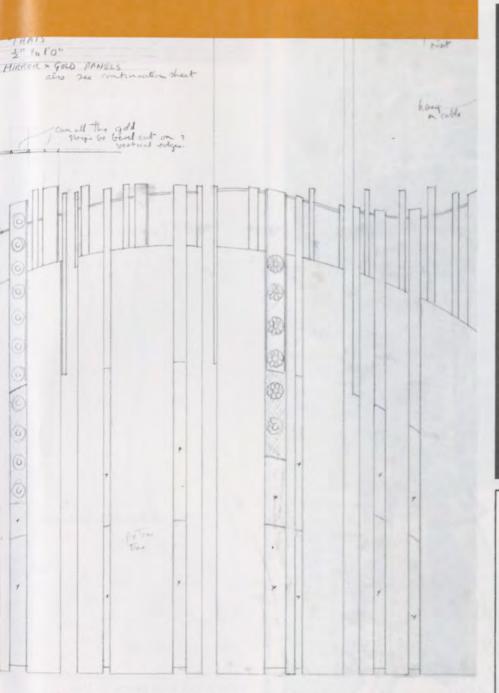
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Detail of Carl Toms designs for Thais

the German abbess Hrothsvitha which was later translated into French by Magnin in 1845. The Golden Legend, a compilation of the lives of saints by Jacobus de Voragine which includes a Sainte-Thaïs, as well as Brochard's Les Sceptiques Grecs provided France with additional information for his novel. France's story of "a sinner who becomes a saint and a saint who becomes a sinner" was first serialized in La Revue des Deux Mondes in 1889. The story, with its classical style and setting, expressed and exploited a contemporary mood of doubt which immediately appealed to the French public. In a letter to the author, Mme. de Cavaillet writes, "You join to the adorable purity of Antiquity, the expression and emotions of our time." France's Voltairian mockery of religion, his attacks on religious fanaticism and an anti-Semitic, anti-liberal Christianity also appealed to the vastly humanist and liberal French reading public. He accused the Church and orthodox religion of degrading to the level of sin the most obvious manifestations of love and of stifling the most precious values in life such as beauty and joy.



France's fervent monk slipped into sin when he fell desperately and carnally in love with Thaïs. His way to Hell was paved with holy intentions. The monk becomes a vampire when he persuades Thaïs to give up her youthful beauty and joy for an absurd religious mortification and premature death. France blasts the pretense, presumption and puerility of his hypocritical cleric and in so doing has his revenge on both the French religious and political establishments.

Anatole France is more interested in the development of his characters than in a cliché plot. The major portion of his book is devoted to the psychological profiles of the monk and of Thaïs. The character of Thaïs is developed at length, starting with her early childhood in a tavern of questionable repute and then her baptism. The character of the monk is unfolded through a series of painful and agonizing episodes in which he must come to grips with pangs of conscience and overwhelming internal desires. Both characters are completely developed by France in the novel. The fate to which each is destined — conversion and condemnation — seems a logical

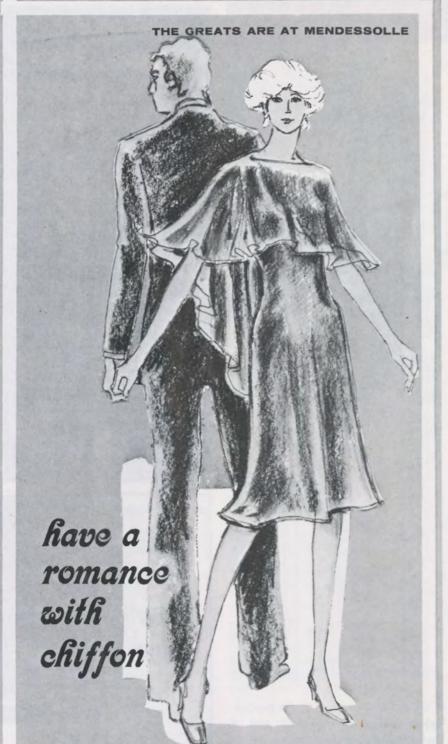


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From Novel to Opera

Detail of Carl Toms designs for Thais

and credible progression within the literary structure of the novel.

The libretto of *Thaïs* is a very condensed and considerably altered adaptation of France's novel. From the start, Gallet and Massenet were able to see the inherent wealth of possibilities for dramatic and scenic effects of the novel. In order to achieve these effects successfully, the novel had to be altered somewhat. Some changes were fortunate, some unfortunate; others were important, still others were negligible. For example, France's monk Paphnuce was rebaptized Athanaël for

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the simple reason that Gallet could only manage two rhymes, "puce" and "prépuce"—two words hardly suitable to the description of a holy man. Athanaël at least rhymes with "ciel" and "autel"!

One of the most important changes made by Massenet and Gallet involves the development of the monk's character. In their adaptation they decided to eliminate completely the terribly agonizing, long episodes of the monk's struggle to regain his peace of mind. Unfortunately, this decision considerably altered the veracity of the characcontinued on p. 76





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continued from p. 75



Beverly Sills and Sherrill Milnes in a rehearsal of Thais' famous bed scene. Photo: Ron Scherl

ter in the opera. In addition, they omitted from the opera's final scene the novel's closing lines when Paphnuce-Athanaël in desperation must face his total destruction with the words "'A vampire! A vampire!' He had become so repulsive that passing his hand over his face, he felt his own hideousness." The monk of the opera comes to no such unpleasant end.

In general, the opera lacks the logic of France. The emotions, feelings, and psychological motivations are either unexplained or given secondary importance next to theatrics and dramatic effects. Of course, these changes and alterations must be considered within the capabilities of the opera as a medium of expression.

What Massenet loses in psychological acumen, he gains in theatrical effect for he fixes his attention from the very beginning on dramatic contrasts and atmosphere. Both Thaïs' mirror scene and the Méditation in Act II are masterpieces of "condensation". Massenet's characterizations of Thaïs and Athanaël are, according to E. M. Forster's old classification, "flat". But this flatness or lack of dimension in both characters achieves for Massenet an unexpected end. Thaïs and Athanaël



transcend their individual personalities and become in Jungian terms "archetypes". Their confrontations are not merely clashes of two individuals, they are clashes of two worlds-one materialistic and the other mystical, both expressing in their own individual ways opposing views of the central theme of the opera-love. The final and most tenuous result of Massenet's disregard for psychology is that the responsibility for creating the veracity and credibility of the characters rests with the singer and his dramatic interpretation of the role. (The initial success of Thaïs, it should not be forgotten, was due to the powerful and dramatic interpretations of the major roles by welltrained and talented artists.)

Any shortcomings in the libretto are, of course, greatly compensated for by Massenet's score. The expressiveness of his music alone effectively conveys in a few short bars the lengthy descriptions and thought processes of France's novel. Athanaël's reactions to the city of Alexandria are expressed in musical phrasing which is passionate and voluptuous at one time, oriental and more delicately sensuous at others. Another example of Massenet's continued on p. 78





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From Novel to Opera

continued from p. 77

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mastery of musical expression is Thaïs' conversion scene. Her meditative mood is paralleled by lyrical melodies which are both sad and peaceful, consoling and uplifting. Her meditation and subsequent conversion are mirrored in an intuitive way by Massenet's

Massenet, the musician, undertook a formidable task when he attempted to adapt Anatole France's novel Thaïs to the medium of opera. Of course, changes had to be made because of the limitations inherent in adapting any work of one medium to another.

music.

quet bur OL Elode garage Sor with applequed Randon sug Nº 4. 7. 3 0 . ò 0 0 0 It food curtar 0 10 1. Ida mille the 0 lian of the good 0 ranal 080 00 0 00 0 0 0 5 0 0 .0000 . 80000 0 0 0 Detail of Carl Toms' designs for Thais What can be achieved in literary expression cannot, by its very nature, be duplicated in musical expression. Massenet, subject to his own limitations as an artist and to his own partialities, created a work which, if it is not faithful in every respect to the novel on which it is based, remains, nevertheless, one of the most dramatic, effec-

tive, and seductive operatic representations adapted from a novel. Hervé Le Mansec is a professor at Cabrillo College, a music critic for the Erench weekly France-Amérique and

Cabrillo College, a music critic for the French weekly France-Amérique and West Coast correspondent for the Paris monthly Opéra.



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The People's Composer

by Maralyn Edid

When *Thaïs* premiered at the Paris Opéra in 1894, its composer Jules Emile Frédéric Massenet (1842-1912) was in Dieppe hiding from unforeseen mishaps and potential bad reviews. When *La Navarraise* opened at London's Covent Garden the same year, Massenet missed an introduction to an admiring Prince of Wales because he was again absent from the premiere of another new opera.

In fact, through most of Massenet's fifty-year career as one of the more prolific and financially successful composers of his day, opening night jitters never left him. He told a contemporary journalist that he avoided the theater on those special nights because his job was finished; he did not want to be pestered by last-minute preparations or gratuitous inquiries into his satisfaction with the production.

But a more plausible and frank explanation for this self-effacing behavior comes from Massenet's autobiography, Mes Souvenirs: "I have said already that I always tear myself away in this fashion from the feverish uncertainties which hover over every work when it faces the public for the first time. No one can tell beforehand the feeling that will move the public, whether its prejudices or sympathies will draw it towards a work or turn it against it. I feel weak before the baffling enigma, and had I a conscience a thousand times more tranguil, I would not want to attempt to pierce the mystery!"

Indeed, a curious fear for a composer who had captivated the public's fancy, won academic and official recognition, and amassed a small fortune in royalties.

Yet the charming, urbane, and witty musician was forever anxious about his

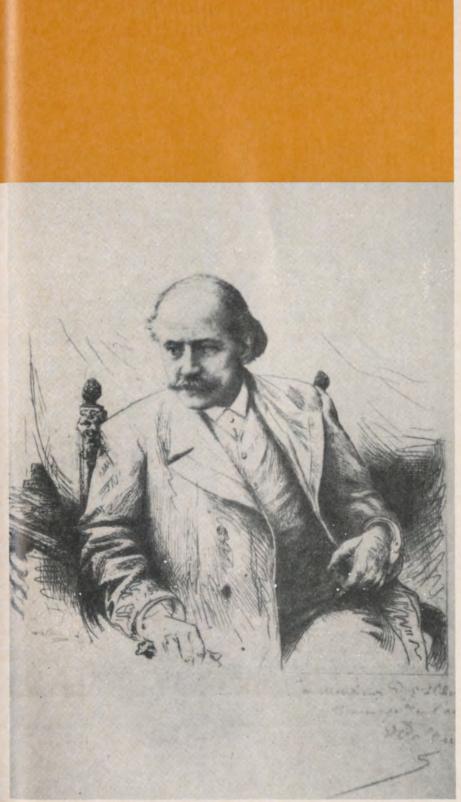
popularity and his finances. He tried hard to please his public, his friends and even his enemies. His music reflected and flattered popular taste; and his critical remarks were always couched in ambiguous terms—probably because he himself was so sensitive to adverse comments. But with all his public praise of fellow musicians, Massenet was tight-lipped about Debussy, who eventually replaced Massenet in the public's esteem and on the stage at the Opéra-Comique.

Massenet placed great importance on the visible signs of achievement. In 1876, he was welcomed into the Legion d'honneur with a bright red ribbon that he proudly displayed in his buttonhole for years. He was elevated to the rank of Grand-Officer in 1899 and despaired that he never received the Grand-croix, the Legion's highest honor.

In 1878, the composer became the youngest man elected to the Academie des Beaux Arts, an honor shared with the most renowned artists, writers, and musicians of the day. That same year, he was appointed professor of advanced composition at the Conservatoire, venerated home of France's musical establishment, where he taught for almost 20 years. Even the principality of Monaco, where Massenet's last works premiered, conferred on him several honorary distinctions.

Beyond the time when there was cause to worry, Massenet was anxious about his financial well-being. For with the success of *Hérodiade* in Brussels in 1881 and *Manon* in Paris in 1884, his career was set. Indeed, in 1900 Massenet's operas were performed in Paris theaters 84 times.

Yet it was rumored that he was tightfisted, guilty about his success, but



Jules Massenet in his later years.

quite generous in unexpected ways. He supported the local band of Egreville (his country retreat) with money and even some original music. On the other hand, when a young composer asked Massenet for permission to stage his one-act opera as a curtain-raiser for Massenet's Sapho (1897), Massenet indignantly replied that this would cut into his royalties. (In those days, composers received 12% of the box office receipts, which were split if there was more than one composer for the evening's performance. When Massenet staged a curtain-raiser in 1867 - La continued on p. 82



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The People's Composer

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Massenet as a boy.



Massenet at the Villa Medici.

Grand'tante his first opera to be performed — he only earned 1%. Thirty years later, curtain-raisers were entitled to 4%, and Massenet was not going to settle for the 8% left to the senior composer!)

Massenet was an emotional and impressionable romantic. One popular story claims that he decided to write Werther when his publisher, Georges Hartmann, brought him to the town in Germany where Goethe wrote the Sorrows of Young Werther. Knowing Massenet's weaknesses, Hartmann handed him the tale of unrequited love to read. As expected, Massenet was so overcome by the emotional force of the story and his surroundings, that he cried and determined to turn Goethe's story into an opera.

Massenet seemed happily married to his wife Ninon, but he was easily smitten by beautiful women—especially young, voluptuous singers. With the exception of Werther and le Jongleur de Notre Dame, all of his operas revolve around alluring, seductive female leads. A profile of the composer published by L'Echo de Paris in 1892, reported that an eternal light graced a photo-reproduction of Raphael's Sistine Madonna in his home.

Massenet even composed several operas with particular singers in mind, such as *la Navarraise* for Emma Calvé. Lead parts were often tailored to the particular talents of his favorite singers. *Esclarmonde* was written to show off the three-octave range of Sybil Sanderson, the darling of Massenet's middle years.

To complement his dreamy-eyed romanticism, Massenet was an accomplished musical craftsman with a strong instinct for theater. His operas have been described as stage pieces



set to music. He wrote at a time when the French middle-classes looked to music for its value as light entertainment and an alternative to theater. His music was agreeable, singable, and sensuous — the necessary ingredients for guaranteed popularity.

He was sensitive to popular taste and his works reflected the demand for grandeur and myth with guasi-religious and erotic overtones. When verismo, or naturalism, appeared on the scene in the closing decades of the nineteenth century, Massenet accommodated the changing times by incorporating this new motif in la Navarraise. His compositions ranged from opera to music for contemporary plays, from piano pieces and songs to orchestral suites; they were heard in fashionable salons and at neighborhood parties. Massenet's genius lay in his ability to please the more discriminating music audience while building a strong following among musical neophytes.

Massenet carefully cultivated his public image. He tried hard to keep gossip about his family out of the press and rumors about later health problems very quiet. Even his appearance conformed to the image of a musician with hair tumbling down over the ears and collar. As early as the 1850's, Massenet admitted:

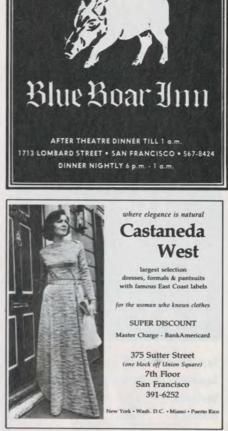
"I wore my hair ridiculously long, as was the fashion with virtuosos, and this outward resemblance suited my ambitious dreams."

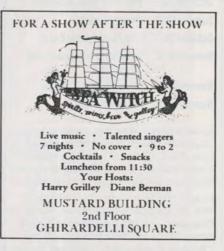
Massenet was equally particular about the final shape of his operas. He kept a tight rein on his works by attending and actively participating in most rehearsals. For years, Massenet hopscotched around Europe keeping up with premieres and revivals of the most popular of his 27 operas. Within one month in 1896, he went from the Hamburg staging of Werther to Bordeaux to look in on *Thaïs*. Even when Massenet lay sick in bed in 1912, he listened to rehearsals of *Roma* for two hours every day over the telephone.

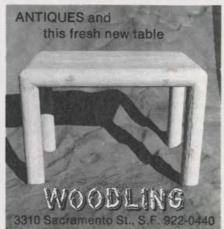
So that his operas would be presented exactly as he intended, Massenet gave continued on p. 86

Massenet with Prince Albert I of Monaco.











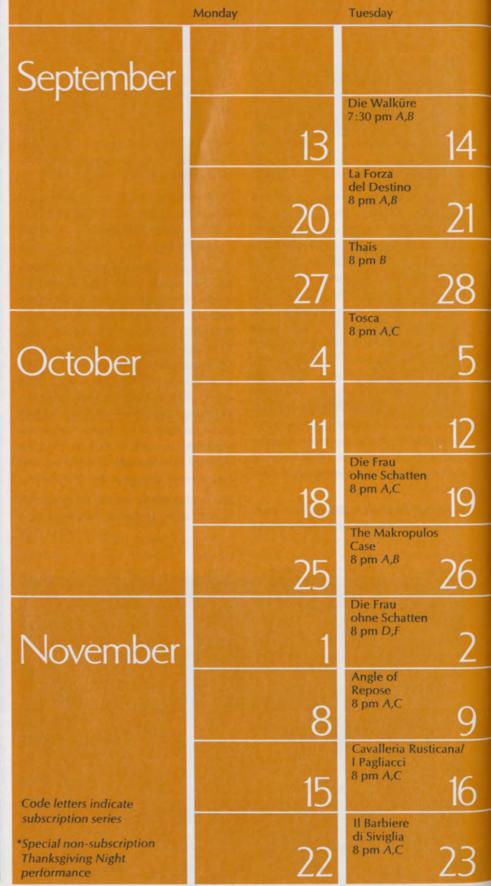
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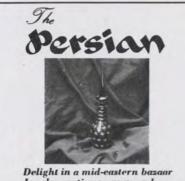
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The People's Composer

continued from p. 83

explicit instructions to costumers, set designers, singers, conductors, and musicians. Some contemporaries considered him an outstanding producer who would evoke just the right gesture or nuance from his singers. His manuscripts often included detailed instructions for the conductor and careful notations on the special effects needed to heighten dramatic impact. For *la Navarraise* he wrote:

"It is ESSENTIAL, that these two BELLS have a very SOLEMN and very DEEP sound — they will be placed off-stage in such a way as to produce, for the audience out front, a *powerful, distant,* and *melancholy* sound — they must be struck VERY HARD with emphasis on the F sharp. If bells aren't available, use powerful sheets of steel (the same deep sound to be obtained)—then strike the F sharp on a low-toned gong to increase the note's vibration."

To further insure that his works would not be distorted, and to prevent a conductor or theater director from making any changes in the score, Massenet had all his manuscripts engraved before rehearsals even began. When the manuscripts were returned, he placed the elegantly bound volumes on his shelves; they now line the shelves of the Opéra library.

Yet occasionally, complete control eluded him. *Le Jongleur de Notre Dame* was written without a female role, but famed American soprano



Massenet aged twenty.

Mary Garden decided she wanted to play the juggler. At first Massenet was outraged, but ultimately confessed that she triumphed in the role originally created for a tenor.

Massenet was an indefatigable worker, typically rising before dawn and writing through midday. He claims to have allowed himself little leisure time and wrote in his memoirs:

"I must say, it's only in this way, in steady toil kept up tirelessly over several years, that one can produce large-scale works."

Everywhere he went, his work accompanied him. Whether in the French countryside, a hotel in Turin or Vienna, Massenet was always busy on



some project. While one opera was in rehearsal, he was at work on another. In 1894, three new operas were staged while he worked on *Cendrillon* and *Sapho*, roamed throughout France and visited London. Yet Massenet was most at ease in the isolation of the countryside, seashore, or mountains, where he could indulge his penchant for long walks in the tranquil surroundings.

Massenet's ability to work wherever he found himself was facilitated by his talent for composing in his head before committing any notes to paper. He rarely relied on a piano to test out an idea. The score that won him the Prix de Rome - a five-year stipend, studies in Italy, and a chance to stage a curtain-raiser - in 1863, was composed without a piano because he could not afford to rent one for the competition. He mischievously cultivated the misconception that he didn't even have a piano in his home. The truth, however, was that he kept a piano in both his Paris apartment and his country home in Egreville; one ingeniously disguised as a table, the other hidden behind some paneling.

When scoring an opera, he would memorize each libretto so the musical seed could germinate unconsciously in his mind. His manuscripts, written on luxuriously thick paper known in the trade as "papier Massenet," were orderly, neat and almost free of erasures.

They were, however, peppered with little notes about daily goings-on. He

used the manuscripts as a diary, where he remarked on the weather, his moods, his family's activities, the current status of his many operas. In his score for the ballet *le Carillon*, for instance, Massenet wrote: "September 23—Today, third rehearsal on stage of *Manon*," or "October 6, Tuesday morning: . . . admirable weather the past two months."

Massenet was superstitious about the number 13. It seems that the first opera he was commissioned to write, *Don César de Bazan*, for the Opéra-Comique in 1872, survived only 13 performances. From then on, Massenet disavowed number 13: 12*bis* comes between pages 12 and 14 on his manuscripts; he did not work, start a trip, or allow a premiere on the thirteenth day of any month.

During the last ten years of his life, Massenet began to fall from favor with both musical directors and audiences in the opera capitals. The composer who once was considered a mirror and catalyst of public taste was now being replaced by younger, more innovative composers. Happily he found a secure outlet in Monaco, where the climate, the Prince, and the crowds gratified his ailing body and ego.

About that time, he began work on Mes Souvenirs. Always eager to keep himself in the public eye, Massenet found a publishing opportunity when L'Echo de Paris asked his rival, Saint-Saëns, to write his memoirs for their continued on p. 88



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One of the last photographs of Massenet, sitting in his flat in the rue de Vaugirard

Sunday edition. Massenet immediately offered to give the paper his. To prevent any unpleasant complications, L'Echo de Paris published each composer on alternate Sundays. Massenet's series outsold Saint-Saëns; perhaps because his prose was livelier, perhaps because he was still a popular personality.

Curiously, Mes Souvenirs contains a self-styled post-mortem on Massenet's death which speculates what his friends and the public would do upon hearing he had died. Writing of his burial, the closing paragraph is either a model of fawning modesty or uncanny prescience:

"As the carriage took me farther and farther away, the talking and the noises grew fainter and fainter, and I Knew, for I had my vault built long ago, that the heavy stone once sealed would be a few hours later the portal of oblivion."

Maralyn Edid is a freelance writer and a graduate student in journalism at the University of California, Berkeley.



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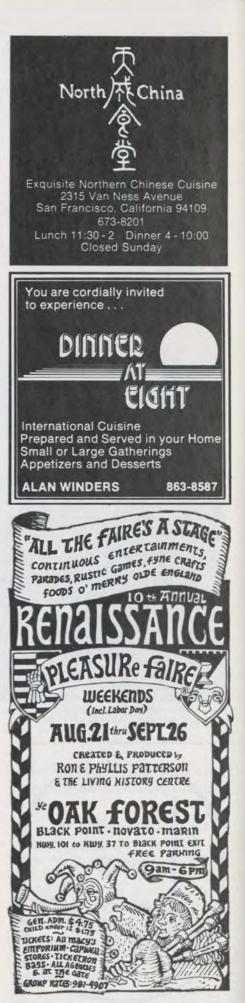
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APA survey results published March, 1976. This is the third consecutive APA survey to name American the No. 1 domestic airline.

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