Aida

1977

Saturday, October 15, 1977 8:00 PM
Tuesday, October 18, 1977 8:00 PM
Friday, October 21, 1977 8:00 PM
Monday, October 24, 1977 7:30 PM
Sunday, October 30, 1977 2:00 PM
Saturday, November 5, 1977 1:30 PM

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SAN FRANCISCO OPERA MAGAZINE 1977

Aida

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"...her voice was honey, and I was a hungry bear."

so enchanting, a melody so mesmerizing--it was as if her voice was honey and I was a hungry bear. I followed that voice through streets of stumbling sailors. Down a dark littered alley an oil lamp flickered through an open window. I threw one leg over the splintered ledge and climbed into the room. In the smoky dimness of the yellow lamplight I saw a vision that haunts me still. It was not the beautiful Malaysian songstress I had imagined--but a Superscope stereo music system! At first I thought her voice came from the AM/FM stereo radio. But then I saw the record spinning on the built-in automatic turntable. The sound through the three-way extended range speakers was incredibly real! Luckily with the built-in 8-track recorder/player I could tape that honeyed voice. Now I'll always hear her, wherever I am. But what of the girl herself? I may never find her. But I did find that in the world of sound, Superscope is everywhere."

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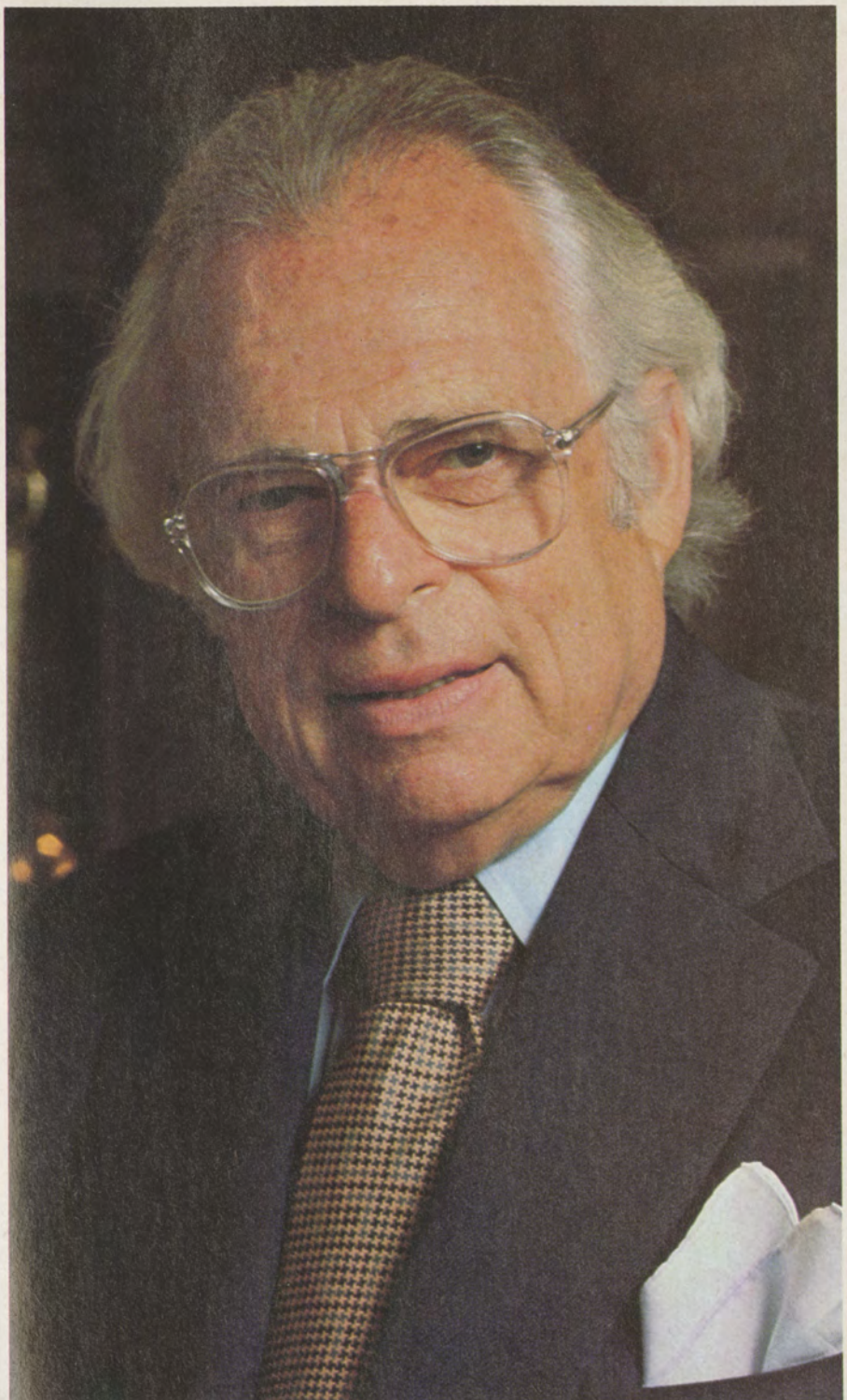

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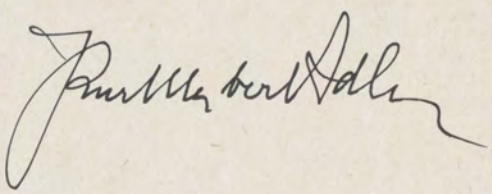

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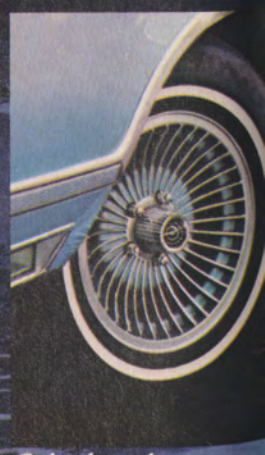

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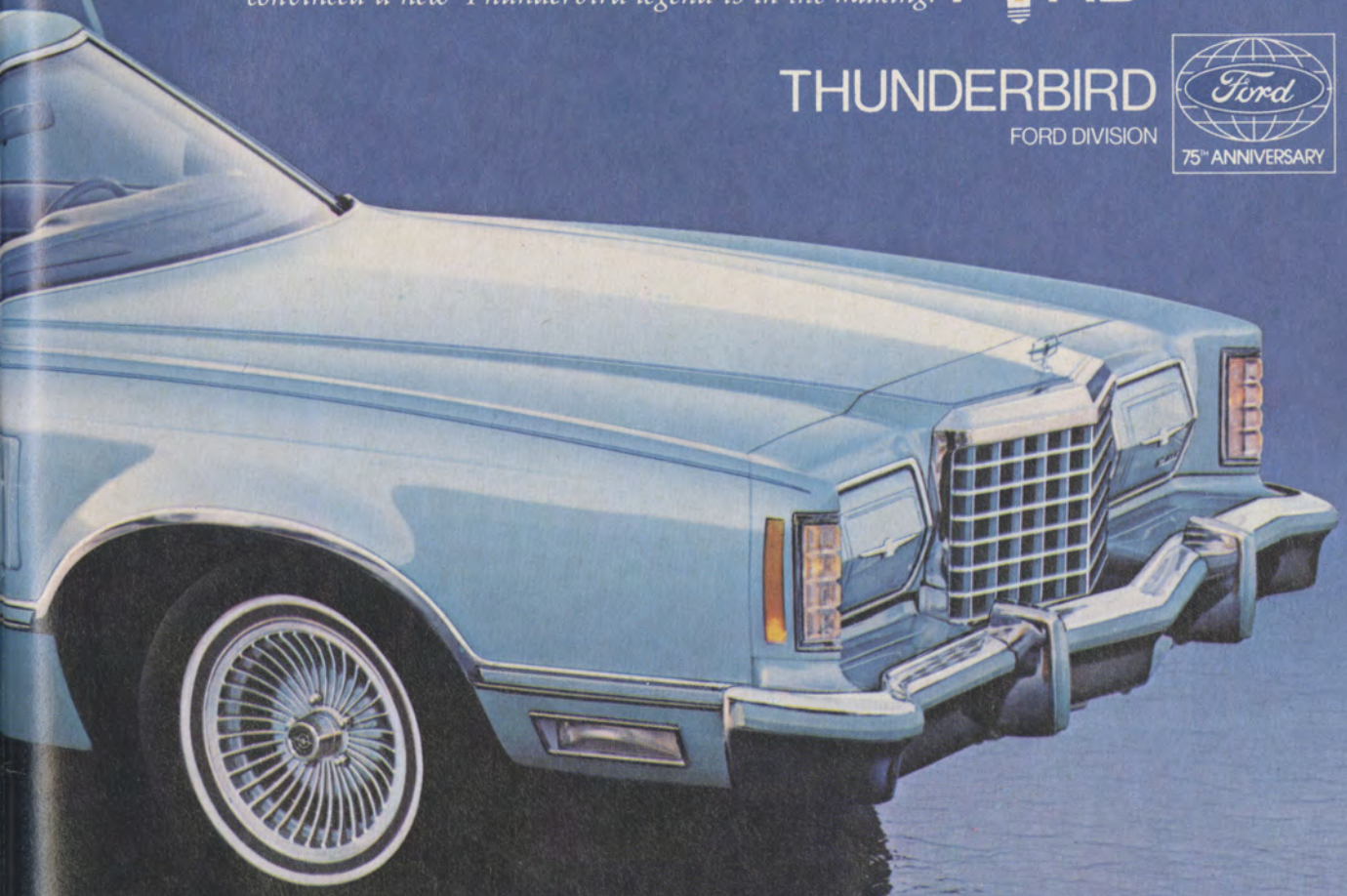

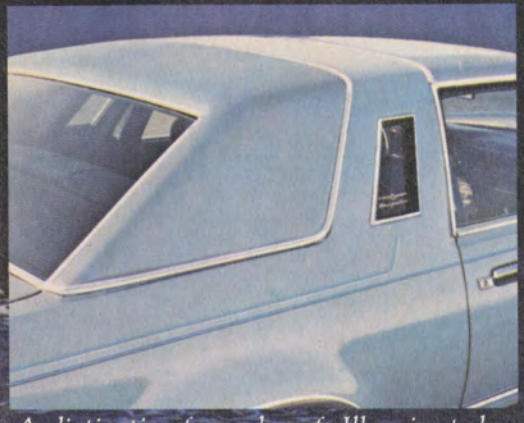

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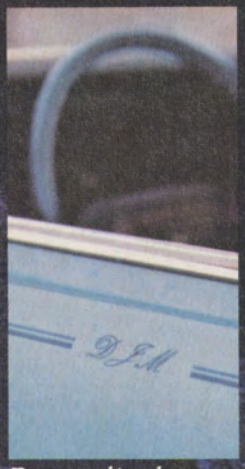

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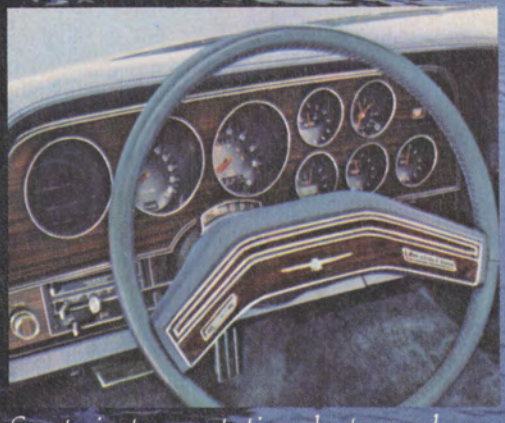

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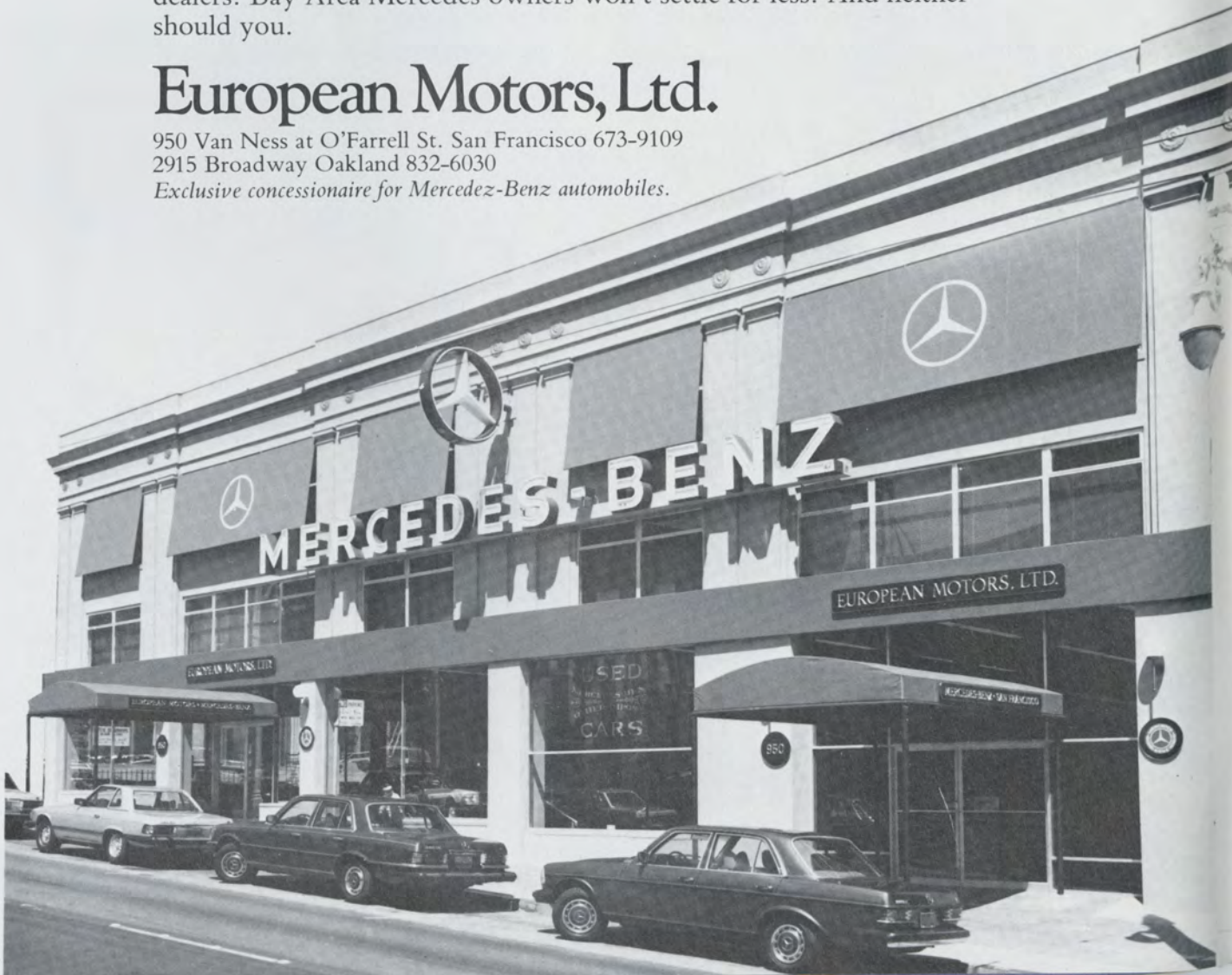


What Happened in Cairo, Giuseppe?

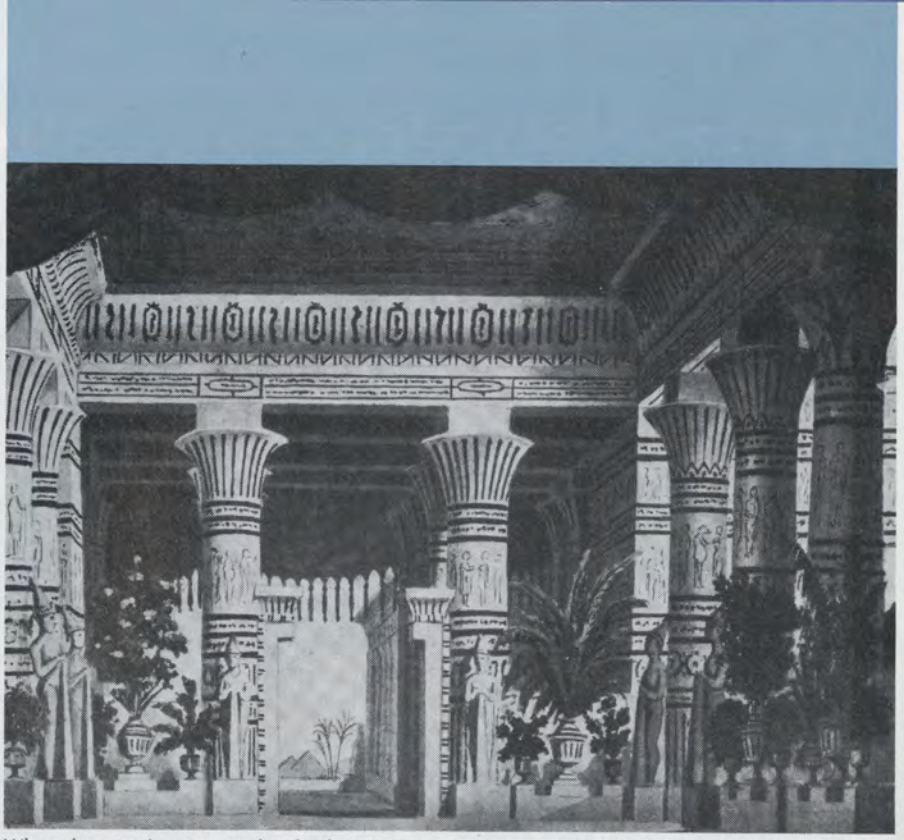
by David Littlejohn

Although destroyed by fire a few years ago, this is one of the most recent photographs of the Cairo Opera House, where Verdi's *Aida* had its world premiere on Christmas Eve of 1871.

Ever since I first learned that Verdi's *Aida* had its premiere performance in Cairo, I have been fascinated by the idea of that performance, and curious about its details. I read in record albums that it was commissioned by the Khedive of Egypt, and wondered what a khedive was. Program notes informed me that it had something to do with the opening of a new opera house, and the Suez Canal, which only sharpened my curiosity, and enlarged my fascination.

It is as if Puccini's *Turandot* were first performed in Peking. No: It is as if the Governor of Utah had engaged Richard Wagner to compose *Die Indianerdämmerung* to celebrate the completion of the transcontinental railroad, on the condition that it have its premiere at Salt Lake City in 1869. Because, with the single exception of *Aida, no* opera in the regular repertory had a premiere outside of Europe or the United States—or was composed under such an exotic commission.

It all began with Ismail, son of Ibrahim, grandson of Muhamed Ali. Ismail, fifth in his line, was the extravagant and Europeanizing governor of Egypt



When the curtain went up for the first time on the first scene of the first act of *Aida*, this is the King's Palace at Memphis that the audience saw in Cairo in 1871.

from 1863 to 1879. His country had been part of the Ottoman Empire since the 16th Century, so Ismail was officially a viceroy of Sultan Abdul Aziz at Constantinople. (He is sometimes called "Ismail Pasha"; but "Pasha," like "Bey" or "Effendi," is a Near Eastern title, not a name.) In 1867 he bribed the Sultan into granting him the additional title of "Khedive," which lifted him to a slightly higher level than his fellow viceroys.

When Napoleon occupied Egypt briefly at the end of the 18th Century, he left behind a number of French *savants* and *instituts*, to assure the country the blessings of *civilisation*. After that time, Egypt's leaders tended to look to Paris for cultural direction, and Ismail Pasha was no exception. Before ascending the viceregal throne at 32, he had educated and amused himself in Paris, where he met (among others) Camille Du Locle, who was later to be director of the Opéra-Comique.

In Cairo, he depended a great deal on another distinguished Frenchman (also a friend of Du Locle's), Auguste Mariette, who had directed every step of the country's extensive archeological activity since 1858. A fussy, ambitious, dedicated man, who fretted under Ismail's absolute rule, Mariette probably knew more about ancient Egypt than anyone else living. (A monument to him still stands in the main square of Cairo, raised "To Mariette Pasha, from a Grateful Egypt.")

A third, even better known Frenchman enters into this story: Ferdinand de Lesseps, the retired diplomat (and distant cousin of the Empress Eugénie) who, in 1854, had won from his old friend Said Pasha, Ismail's uncle and predecessor, "the exclusive right to form and direct a *compagnie universelle* for the construction and operation of a canal through the isthmus of Suez."

This colossal project took ten years (instead of the projected six) to complete, and cost 86 million dollars (instead of the projected forty). When it was nearly finished, Ismail wrote to all the crowned heads of Europe inviting them to the opening festivities.

Queen Victoria (to whom he addressed a particularly unctuous letter) couldn't come, nor could the Prince

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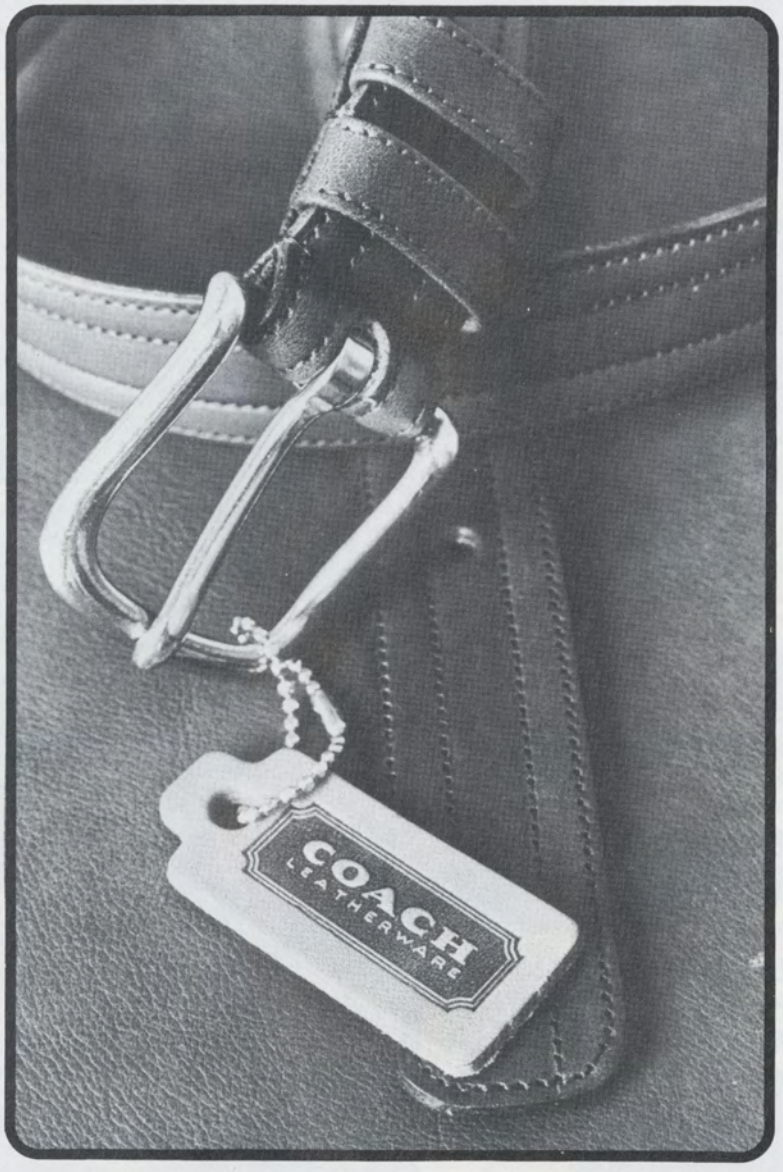

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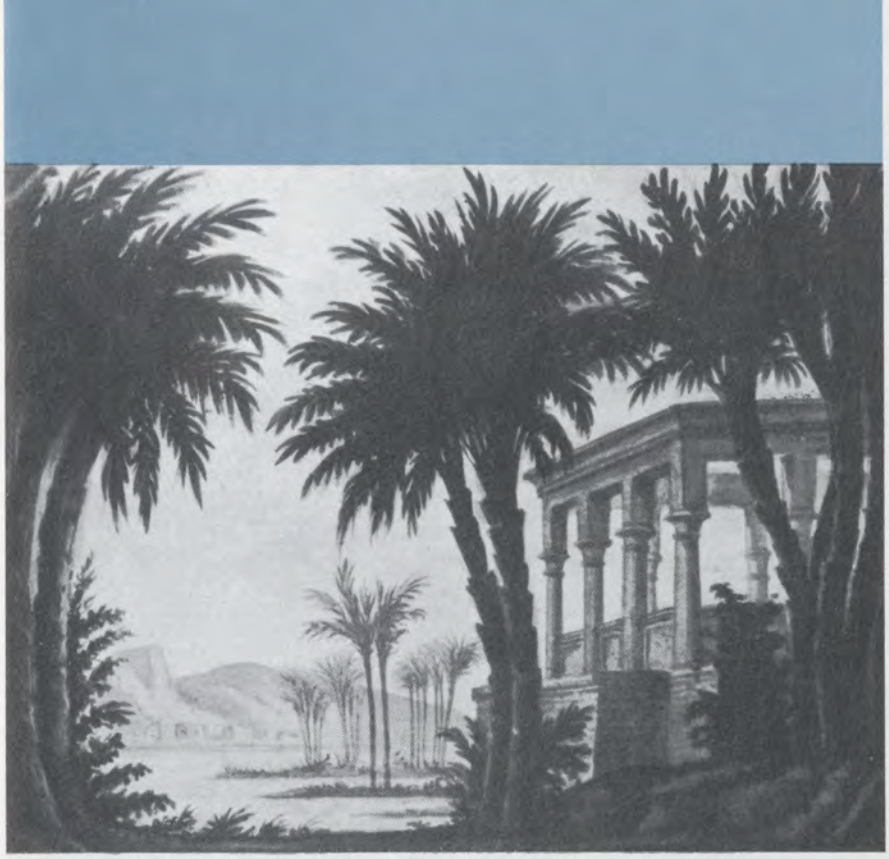

The third act Nile scene as seen in the world premiere of *Aida* in Cairo in 1871.

of Wales. The sovereigns of Italy, Greece, Russia, and Sweden sent regrets. From Washington, President Grant explained that with Congress in recess, he didn't even have the power to appoint a stand-in; so the U.S.A. went unrepresented.

But Empress Eugénie of France was there, with a retinue of 42 attendants, standing on the bridge of her yacht alongside her cousin de Lesseps, as she led the parade of tall ships through the canal on November 17, 1869. Behind the *Aigle* of France sailed 45 other ships (or 80, depending on which paper you read) bearing the Emperor of Austria, the Crown Prince of Prussia, the Prince and Princess of the Netherlands, the Russian ambassador, the British ambassador, and lesser dignitaries.

Ismail Pasha was determined to prove to the West that Egypt was both prosperous and cultured. In all, he paid the expenses of more than a thousand distinguished guests; and offered to 120 of the most distinguished (Ibsen, Gautier, scientists, socialites) a full *month's* luxurious hospitality—including a three week tour of the monuments of Upper Egypt planned by Mariette Bey. There were palaces to sleep in, banquets in the desert under cerise satin tents, illuminations and fireworks everywhere, whirling dervishes, and twelve year old Nubian whores "delicieuses de forme" (according to a famous French painter on the tour), "easy, laughing, inviting creatures . . . untamed, ingenuously shameless, charming to the eye and only slightly shocking to the mind." In Cairo, there were more feasts, plays, games—and an opera.

This month-long celebration cost the Egyptian Treasury ten million 1869 dollars; but, according to John Marlowe, "the fantastic extravaganza laid on to celebrate the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 was only one of an unending series of elaborate fetes staged mainly for the delectation and *empressement* of European visitors and guests." Egypt was bankrupt by 1876; half a billion dollars in debt by 1879; under total European economic control by 1882.

Ismail built and borrowed, borrowed and built—palaces, water works, railroads, docks, a race track, a circus, a

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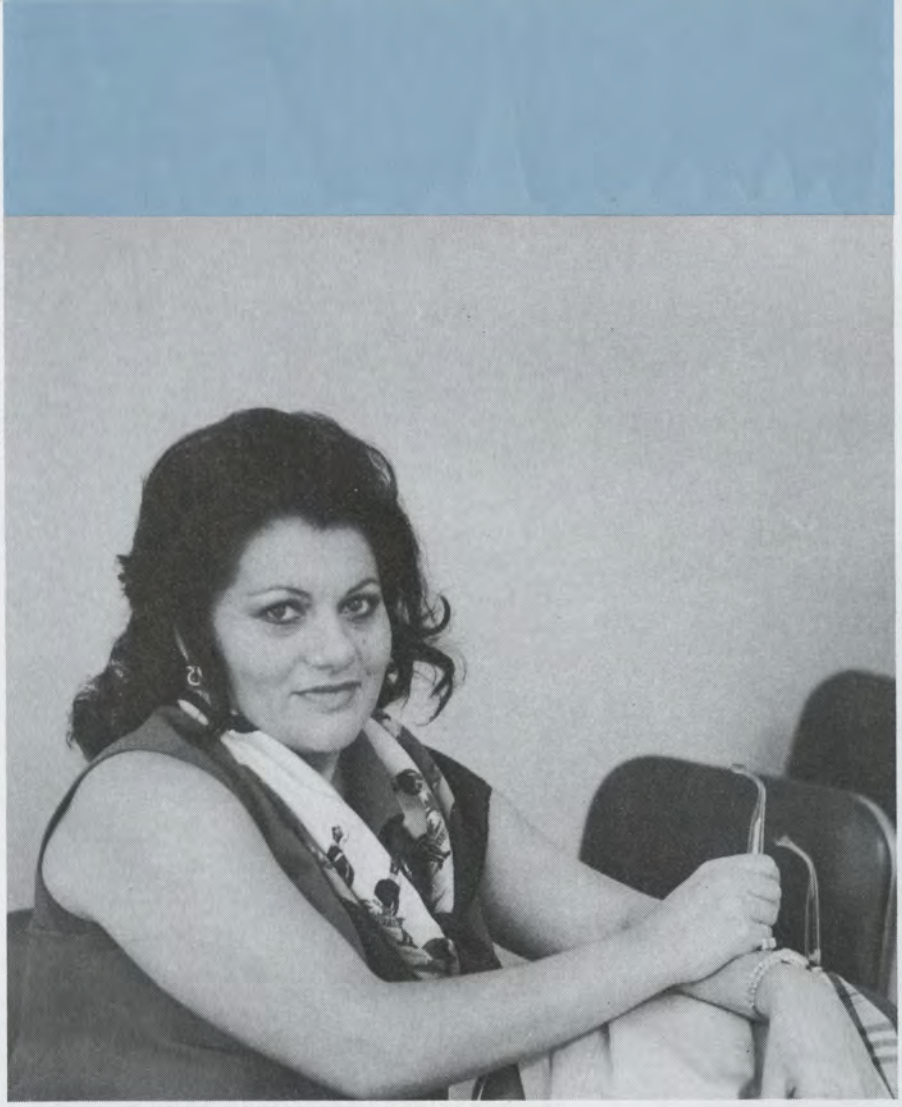

Photo by Robert Messick.

Soprano Maria Parazzini makes her American debut as Aida.

theater and a luxurious new European quarter in Cairo which included a white-and-gold, 800-seat opera house designed "in perfect taste" by an Italian architect.

Contrary to popular myth, Verdi was *not* invited to write a new opera for the opening of this house. He was asked instead to write a "hymn," to precede the first-night performance of his *Rigoletto*. But as he replied to Khedive Ismail's theater manager on August 9, 1869, "I must respectfully decline this honor, both because of my numerous current tasks, and because it is not my custom to compose 'occasional' music."

Soon after the celebrations were over, however, the Khedive became obsessed with the idea of commissioning a grand opera of his own for his new house, preferably something with an Egyptian theme, and preferably by Verdi. But "If Signor Verdi does not accept," he directed Mariette to write to Camille Du Locle, "His Highness asks that you knock on another door. Prince Poniatowski (who wrote the inaugural hymn when Verdi declined) is not likely to be acceptable. We are thinking of Gounod, even of Wagner." All through May 1870, Mariette kept pushing on Du Locle, and Du Locle (who had worked with Verdi on *Don Carlos*) kept pushing on Verdi:

> I await your answer to the Egyptian proposition, so that I can send your ultimatum to the proprietor of the Pyramids. If you were to ask for a pyramid (the biggest one, of course)

continued on p. 73

Aida Was Her Signature Role

by Arthur Kaplan

The reigning dramatic soprano of the San Francisco Opera in the 1940s, who speaks six languages–English, French, German, Hungarian and Italian, in addition to her native

Stella Roman photographed recently in her New York apartment.

Photo by Ken Howard.

Rumanian–would be the first to tell you that her name, Stella Roman (accent on the first syllable), does not quite translate as "Rumanian star," but to anyone who heard her perform during those years, that is precisely what she was.

In a ten-year period from 1941, when she debuted here as Tosca, to her final performances as the Marschallin in 1951, she sang a total of twelve roles with the San Francisco Opera. Although highly acclaimed for her Donna Anna, Mimi, Gioconda, Elisabeth in *Tannhäuser* and the Countess in *Le Nozze di Figaro,* Miss Roman was most noted as an interpreter of her favorite composer, Giuseppe Verdi. She sang both Leonoras *(Il Trovatore* and *La Forza del*

Stella Roman as Aida, a role she sang with the San Francisco Opera throughout the 1940's.

Destino) and both Amelias *(Simon Boccanegra* and *Un Ballo in Maschera),* along with Aida. It was as the Ethiopian slave-girl that she was perhaps best known, both to local audiences and throughout the continent. Taking over the mantle from another illustrious Aida, Elisabeth Rethberg, Miss Roman performed the role in four different seasons with the San Francisco Opera during the 1940s, including two opening nights, in 1942 and 1944.

Aida was the Rumanian soprano's signature role. She sang it for the first time in 1936 in the same Cairo Opera House for which Verdi wrote the world premiere in 1871. "I was very impressed by this theater, all white and gold. The scenery and even the costumes were from the original 1871 staging. They were such magnificent, grandiose scenes! We had a leopard on the stage, and the ballerina, painted all in gold, came in lying across an elephant. The third act I will never forget. It was such a transparent night! The water was transparent and trembling, and so was Aida. Her heart was trembling. The scene vibrates with passion, and it is here that the great drama develops. It's very difficult musically and requires a trained bel canto voice that can sing the pianissimos. To sing that third act you need great control. I know many singers who sing many Verdi operas, but have difficulty with *Aida* because of the third act. I studied it with (Hariclea) Darclée and (Giuseppina) Baldassare-Tedeschi, and developed a control of my voice so that I could cross the stage from one side to the other on the pianissimo high C.

"I remember one night in Cairo," continues Miss Roman in her intensely dramatic narrative style, as if she were reliving the moment, "after we had stayed up late with the chorus, I said that I would like to go to the Sphinx and see the sunrise on the Nile. We went and slept in the desert in the car; it was very cold. I saw the Sphinx and gazed at her for a long time. I wanted to ask her some questions, but then I remembered the story about Sarah Bernhardt. When she was there, she asked the Sphinx, 'Say something to me, just a word.' And they say that the Sphinx answered her and said, 'Mother!'

Gaetano Merola, founder of the San Francisco Opera, and Miss Roman participate in a savings stamp campaign to aid the war effort during World War II.

From there we went to a dam on the Nile, because I wanted to see where Aida had been. It was not as green as I'd thought, but very beautiful with bougainvillaea all around. I stood there thinking that maybe somebody would come out from behind the palms, just as Radames did. Well, nobody came, of course. I wanted very much to take back a souvenir, but what could I take? I couldn't take a flower, so I took a bottle of cologne I had in my bag, emptied it, rinsed it well, and took some water from the Nile. When I got back to Cairo, I bought a hand-carved ivory bottle and filled it with my water from the Nile. That started my collection of waters from all the rivers and seas.

"My second *Aida* was in the Teatro

Reale di Roma with Pertile and Serafin conducting. Later on I also sang it there with Gigli and Lauri-Volpi. I also remember a performance at the Baths of Caracalla, in the open air with over 10,000 people. In the Nile scene I came out for my aria. I could see some people moving about in the first row and smiling. Something was obviously wrong. Was it my dress? I looked down, and there was nothing wrong with it. Then I noticed that people were looking through their opera glasses towards the side. And there was one of those wild cats—the via Appia is full of them. She was walking towards the footlights, hypnotized, blinded by the lights. So I sang, 'O patria mia, mai più ti rivedrò,' then 'psscht!' under my breath. I said to myself, 'My God, it will jump into the orchestra!' So, I walked up to her, picked her up and put her here (pointing to her right shoulder). We finished the aria together, and both had great applause. I said to myself, 'Two prima donnas, no!', and put her on the side. It was one of the big dramatic moments in *Aida*."

In costume as La Gioconda in 1947, Stella Roman is backstage in Los Angeles' Shrine Auditorium where the San Francisco Opera used to perform following its Northern California season.

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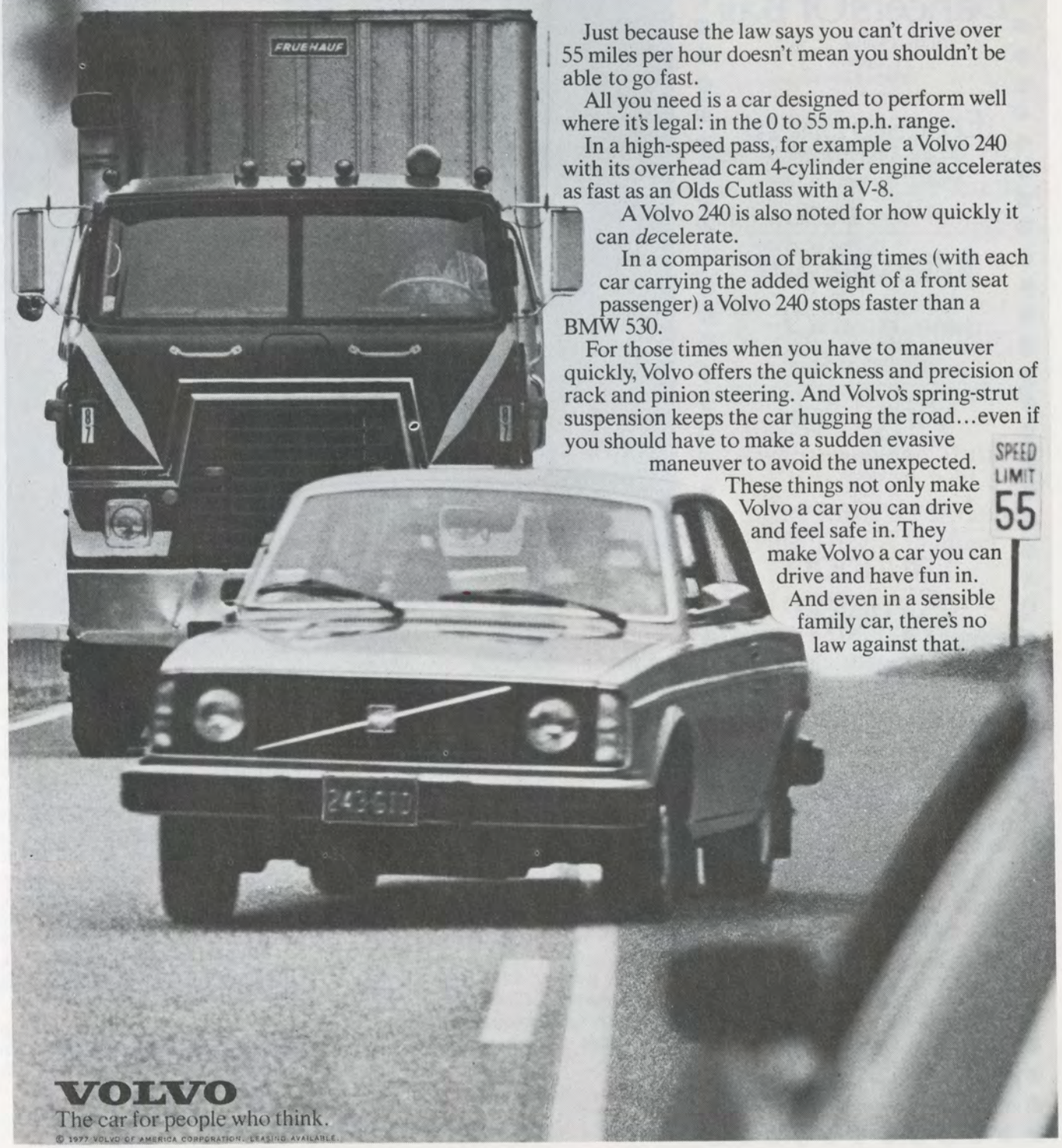

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The late Robert Watt Miller, president of the San Francisco Opera Association, backstage with Miss Roman before the third act of a *Tännhauser* performance in 1941.

For the interview Miss Roman was wearing a lovely pastel blue knit suit over a blue and white print blouse with an Egyptian-like motif, and a beautiful brooch—a pharaonic headress of ivory over a face of coral inlaid with tiny emeralds, all set in gold—commemorating her most famous role. *Aida* was the first opera she saw as a young girl of nine in Rumania. Although her memories of that performance are vague, she distinctly recalls the haunting impression made by the Act IV duet, "O terra addio." *Aida* was also the role of her Metropolitan Opera debut in January, 1941, with a dream cast including Giovanni Martinelli, Bruna Castagna, Leonard Warren and Ezio Pinza, conducted by Ettore Panizza.

Miss Roman responds to the profoundly human feelings, the great drama and the great suffering which Verdi portrays so magnificently in *Aida*. "It's amazing that he never went to Egypt, but wrote this work which is so different from all his other operas. It transports you to the country of the Pharaohs; it's a different world. That great conflict between patriotism and love, this important general who betrays his country for love, I think it's fantastic. And look at Verdi's great humanity. He left his money to build and maintain a rest home for aged musicians in Milan, now called the Casa Verdi."

The artistic sensitivity and depth of feeling of the singer still make an immediate impression, even in con-

This man has a successful business, a secure future, and over $300,000 in earning assets.

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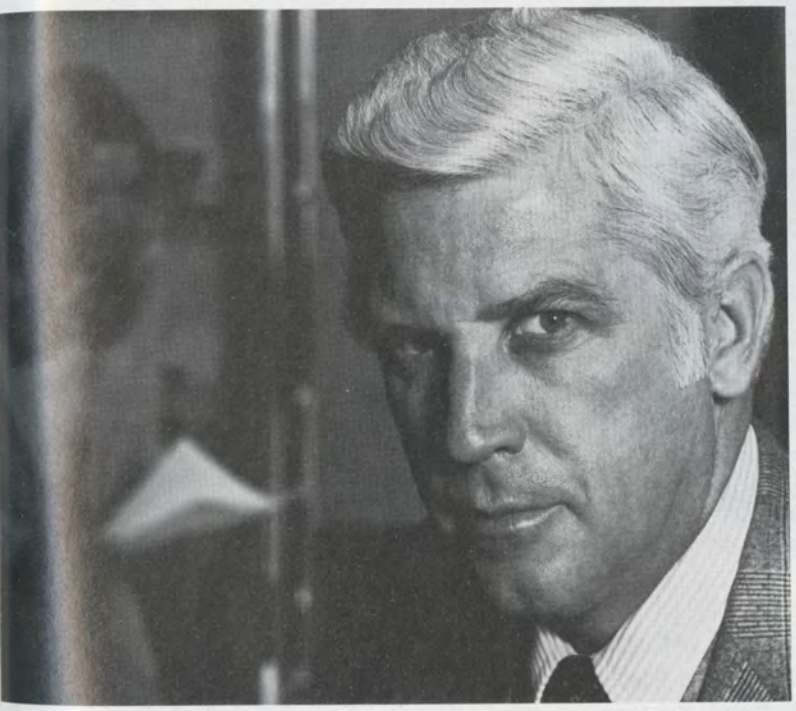

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versation. When discussing her favorite roles, she will suddenly launch into a musical phrase, and although the voice has lost much of its velvety sheen, the sincerity and understanding of a great artist are still there. She will sit back, raise her eyes skyward, and all of a sudden become Aida, or Leonora or Amelia. The opera stage is so obviously the core of her existence that long after she gave up her career, she continues to give master classes, judge vocal competitions, occasionally direct local opera productions and, most importantly, to translate her love of opera into painting.

In addition to floral compositions, portraits, still-lifes and landscapes, for which she has won numerous ribbons and prizes, Miss Roman has created vividly colorful oil canvases representing her impressions of her favorite operas: three ominous black birds over an eerie landscape with a castle in the background for *Götterdämmerung,* a passport, dagger, glove and crucifix for *Tosca,* a candelabrum with several domino masks and a painting of the king for *Un Ballo in Maschera.* Along with Aida, whose exile from her homeland in "O patria mia" she empathizes with greatly, the *Forza* Leonora clearly means a great deal to the soprano in personal terms. Her painting of Verdi's arguably most complex and variegated opera is quite stark—a single, large crucifix with a crown of thorns, casting a shadow against a wall. "It's the cross that we all carry with us through life," states Miss Roman with more than a trace of sadness, which only partially masks a well of personal suffering.

"In a career," she says, "you have to make great sacrifices. I gave the best years of my life, my most beautiful years, to study, and I sacrificed everything else. It took a great effort; the other young girls were going out and enjoying themselves. There are many mixed emotions, many setbacks, sometimes great sorrow. All life is like that, but the artist feels it more because he's so sensitive, like in Liszt's *Mephisto Waltz.*" In the mouth of someone else, this might sound like romantic hyperbole and posturing, but from Miss Roman, a woman of such sincerity, intelligence and sensitivity, it has the ring of emotional truth.

The brighter years were those of a glorious career, begun in Italy in the mid-1930s and lasting until her premature retirement in the early 1950s. While in Italy on a vocal scholarship,

she met and had the good fortune to study with Hariclea Darclée, Puccini's first Tosca. "Madame Darclée was then an elderly lady, retired for many years," remembers Miss Roman," but she could still phrase so beautifully. I never heard such coloring! She developed my musical taste and my interpretations. She was wonderful, giving me so much. She was a great influence on me." Another cherished colleague and fellow Rumanian with whom she studied was composer and violinist George Enescu. "We did some concerts together and made some records which were never released commercially. He was a beautiful personality and a great artist."

After three years of study in Milan, building a repertoire, the soprano made her debut in 1934 as Maddalena in Giordano's *Andrea Chenier* in Bologna. "I was very nervous, but it was most successful, and I was thrilled to encore the aria ["La mamma morta"]. The maestro didn't want to turn back the pages to repeat it, but the public was very enthusiastic. I was afraid I couldn't do it as well again. The first time, I started it sitting near Gérard's table and getting up to sing the main section. It would have been ridiculous to go back to the table, sit down and start it over exactly the same way. So, it came like a flash, I walked to the other side of the stage, passing Gérard, looking sideways, and repeated it another way. It was a great success.

"That reminds me of an incident in Mexico City," smiled Miss Roman. "Someone said to me, 'Madame Roman, last year you sat down during "Vissi d'arte." Are you going to sit on the sofa again?' I said to him, 'Monsieur, I never repeat myself.' And it's true; if you're an artist and you're master of the role, you can sing it from any place. There are people who say, 'Well, I have to take three steps.' I had such tenors—three steps here and two on the side, and that's it!"

As a capstone to a flourishing career in Italy ("a country I adore"), Miss Roman was chosen by Richard Strauss to portray the Empress in the 1940 La Scala premiere of *Die Frau ohne Schatten*. "It was the *culmine*. I've been impressed by so many theaters, but La Scala, it has everything—all that atmosphere. When you walk on the stage there, you feel that you're in heaven." Miss Roman actually *was* in heaven, or close to it, in the final scene of the opera. "I remember the final quartet, how difficult it was. I

Miss Roman in a 1941 studio portrait.

was so high in the sky. We had five or six assistant conductors on the steps going up, each one with a little light giving the next one the beat and the cue, because you couldn't even hear the orchestra, it was so high up." The soprano also worked with Strauss on the *Four Last Songs* and *Der Rosenkavalier*. "I was coached by him at Pontresina in Switzerland for the Marschallin. He told me not to be too dramatic. Although 33 was a mature woman at that time, the Marschallin was not old. She loses this flirt, this young boy, who represents youth to her. In the last act, however, when she sees the police officer and says, 'Kenn ich Sie noch?' ('Don't I know you?'), she remembers that he was probably one of her earlier flirts and thinks that she will probably have others. Strauss said to me, 'Don't be *eine Grossmutter!* Don't be tragic at the end, just melancholic.' "

In addition to coaching with Strauss, Miss Roman performed under the baton of the leading Italian verismo composers, who frequently conducted their own works. She sang in Cilea's own revised version of *Gloria* with Gigli, and in Pizzetti's *Lo Straniero*. Unfortunately, neither really caught on. The soprano, who is very much in favor of national support for the arts, says, "In Italy there are government subsidies, and they are therefore obliged to produce operas by eminent living composers. After all, you can't have *Aida*

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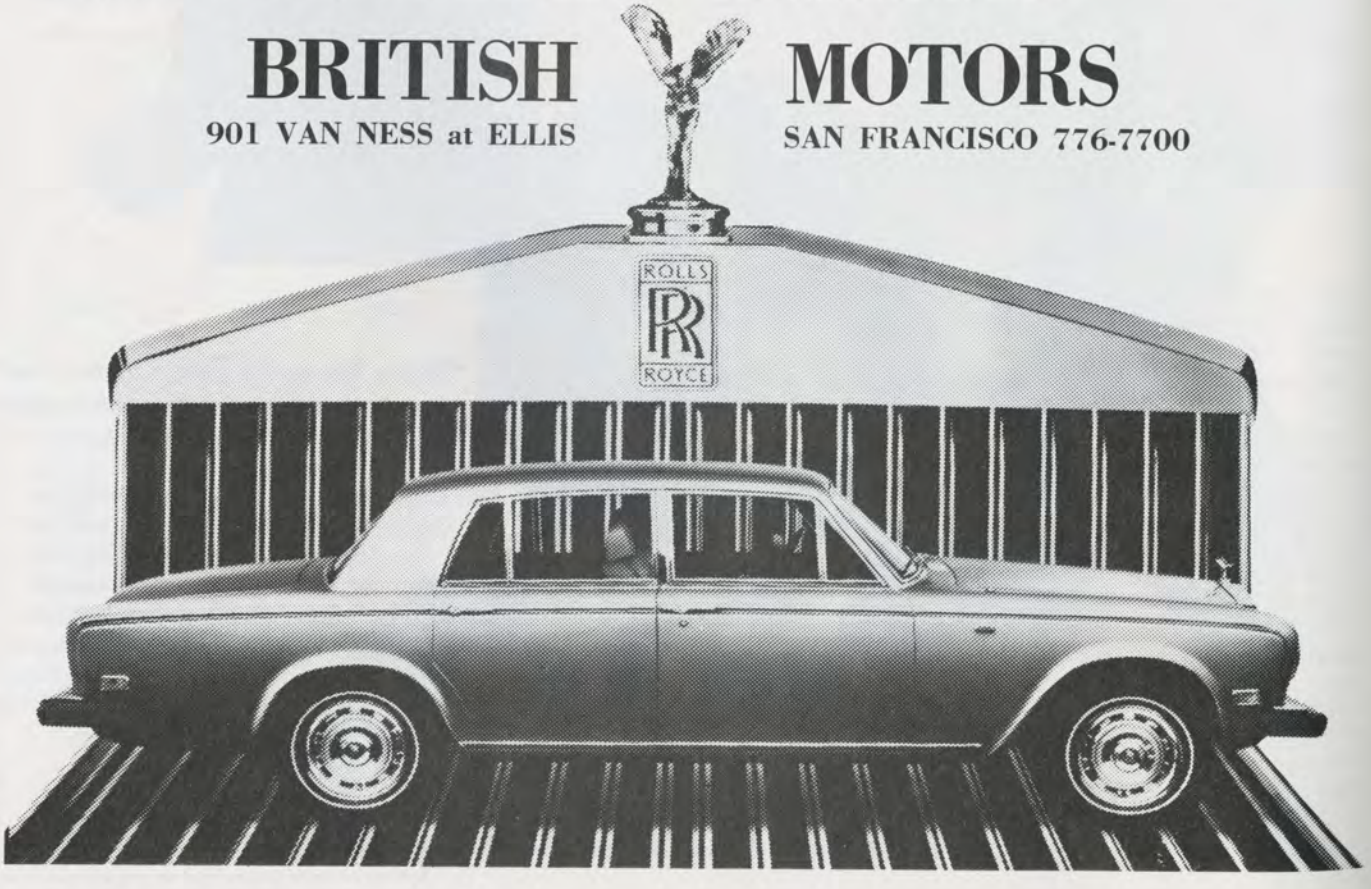

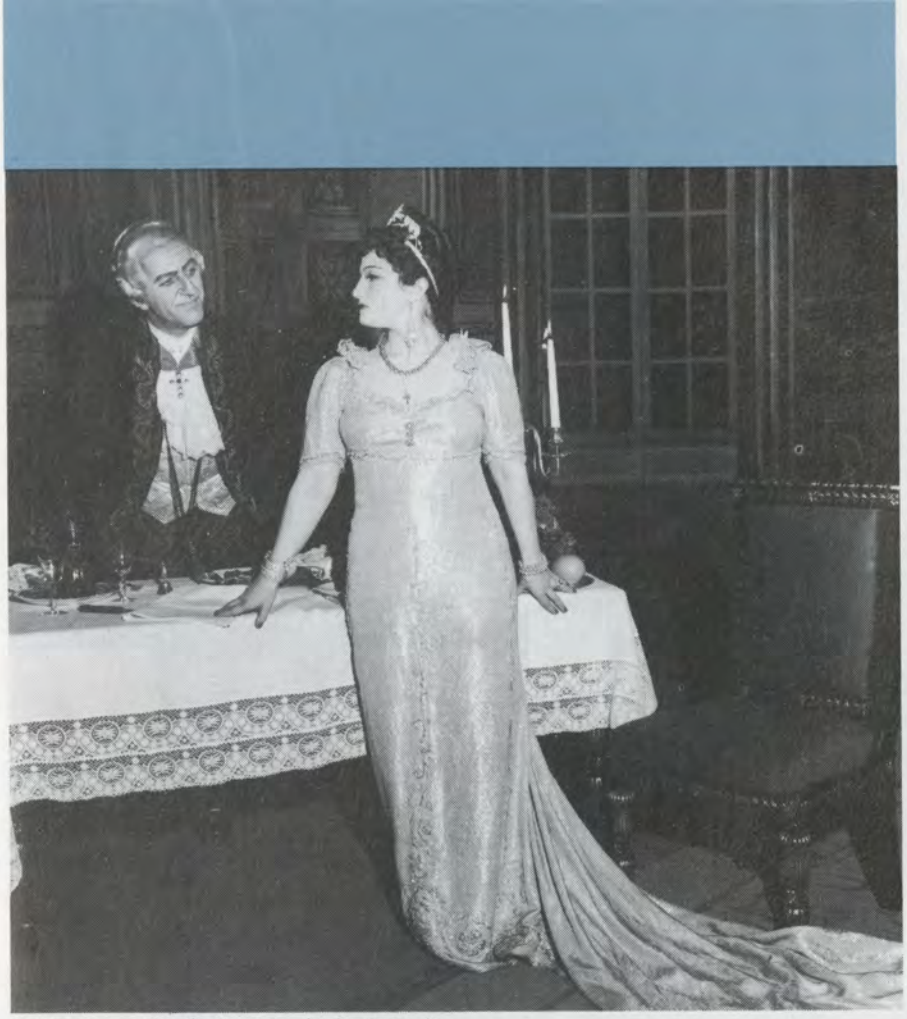

As Tosca opposite the Scarpia of John Brownlee.

and *Trovatore* all the time." With Giordano she sang not only *Andrea Chenier* and *Fedora,* but also such rarities as *Madame Sans Gêne* and *Siberia* on the radio. "He liked my interpretations very much and made very few criticisms, of which I was very proud. He was a charming man and a lovely person. You know," she added with a smile, "some of those composers loved their music so much that they delayed, enlarged, took exaggerated ritardandos—especially Giordano and Mascagni." One composer whom the soprano considers a wonderful conductor is Riccardo Zandonai. Of all the verismo composers, it is Zandonai that she would most like to have sung in the United States. "I adore *Francesca da Rimini.* I was in love with that opera. I would have sung it for free—anytime!"

Although she made no major commercial recordings, Stella Roman's voice is preserved on several private discs and on tapes from various Metropolitan Opera broadcasts in the 1940s. They reveal a dramatic soprano of great purity and beauty with a well-controlled and exciting vibrato, a sensitive use of dynamics and stunning dramatic conviction. No one has said it better than Olin Downes, the critic of the *New York Times,* who wrote of a 1946 Metropolitan Opera performance of *La Bohème:* ". . . the voice, not under perfect control, is none-the-less a superb one in its color and emotional quality . . . This was the unfolding of a woman's nature, revealed with exceptional sincerity and a native eloquence that came straight from the heart. Some opera singers achieve fame despite slender vocal equipment as 'singing actors or actresses' . . . Some have voices and vocal virtuosity that replace in a measure the absence of true dramatic feeling. Miss Roman . . . was a great singer . . . (and) a great dramatic interpreter, a great artist with something elementally true within her, revealed by gesture, action and supremely by the inherent qualities of a superb voice."

Miss Roman's American debut as Aida at the Met in January, 1941, was delayed because of the war. Her career in San Francisco, which began with her October 8, 1941, debut as Tosca, roughly parallels the one at the Met, although

A Standard Hour radio broadcast with Nicola Moscona.

she sang only ten roles in New York as opposed to twelve here. When asked to recall those days, Miss Roman's eyes brightened and she became quite lyrical. "I have wonderful memories of San Francisco. It was a highlight of each operatic year. That opera house is a jewel, and the public is so very warm and understanding and knowledgeable. Maybe they don't express everything so loudly, but they know music and they love music."

The Rumanian diva had lavish praise for Gaetano Merola, who first invited her to sing at the San Francisco Opera. "Maestro Merola was a genius. As a general director, as a conductor, *and* as a friend, he was fantastic. He produced beautiful performances, and we always looked forward to going to San Francisco. Everyone gave us so much attention and affection. You must give my love to San Francisco for the beautiful memories which I shall carry in my heart the rest of my life."

Referring to Maestro Adler, she continued, "Now you have a brilliant general director. When I was there he was assistant to Maestro Merola, and I think he learned very much from him. Then he developed his own ideas and became a great manager. With his talent, his intelligence, his musicality, I admire him greatly. And he's had the courage to do new operas. The programs he comes up with! I think he's a wizard."

Miss Roman is particularly enthusiastic about San Francisco Opera's year-round training programs for young singers. "Take the Merola Program, for example. It's the only one with that type of master classes in the country. In New York it doesn't exist; in Chicago it doesn't exist. But in San Francisco it's *permanente*. This is the sort of training we had back then at La Scala. Nowadays young singers who have studied voice get on the stage and they are lost. They don't know what to do—even those who win auditions. Too many young artists want a shortcut. It doesn't exist, and they refuse to understand that. So they look for a teacher who promises them that in six months they'll be singing in such and such a place and a year later at La Scala or the Met. Then they're not happy when they don't succeed with a certain teacher. They change him for another, hoping that one will achieve the miracle. Then a third, then a fourth, and so on. It's all so much time wasted. And the voice gets worn out and begins to have a wide vibrato (she imitates on the word *ballare)* because it's forced too much. How certain teachers can kill young talent—they should be taken out and shot! To find a good teacher is great luck . . . and to find a good pupil is great luck. In the United States I find there are very beautiful voices, but most young artists try to go too fast. The biggest mistake is to start performing if you're not prepared. In Italy, when we studied an opera, we used to say, 'Yes, I know the opera, *ma non ce l'ho in gola* (I don't have it in my throat), I haven't assimilated it yet, I haven't digested it yet, I haven't made it mine. I worked on a particular phrase from *Andrea Chenier* for six months to come forth with the correct attack, notes, legato, pianissimo, diminuendo, etc. It's very important to know

continued on p. 80

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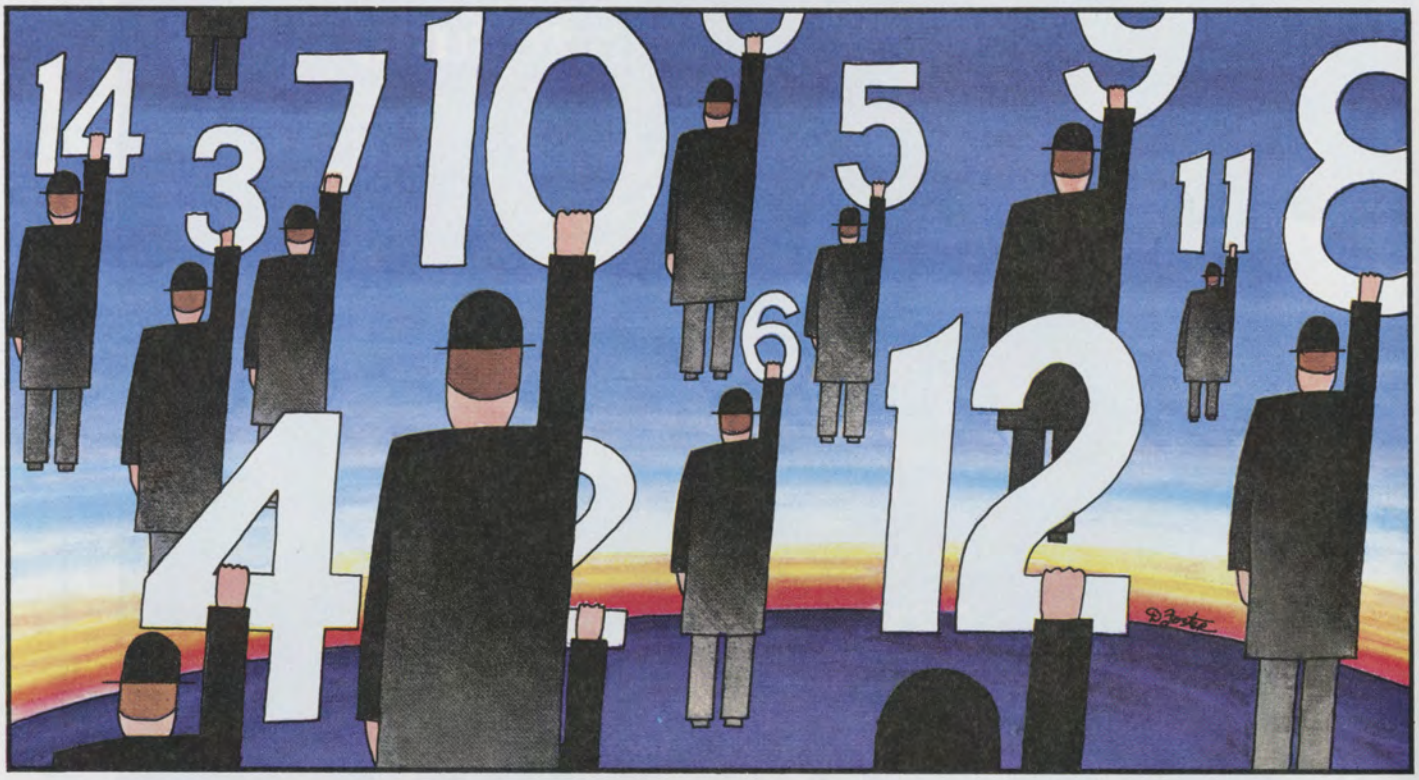
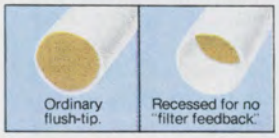


Any low-tar cigarette will give you a low-tar number. But there's something else that you should consider. We call it "filter feedback."



As you smoke, tar builds up on the tip of your cigarette filter. That's "filter feedback." Ordinary flush-tipped filters put that tar build-up flat against your lips.

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Kings: 10 mg "tar," 0.6 mg nicotine—
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This year makes the 55th consecutive year that San Francisco Opera has presented its brilliant fall opera season. Advance ticket sales have been the highest in history, proof that the selection of operas meet with your approval and that you know the quality of the productions will be superb. San Francisco Opera is recognized as one of the great opera companies of the world, and we will do our utmost to continue to earn that reputation.

Three of the ten operas to be performed are new to San Francisco and, of the remaining seven, none has been seen in San Francisco for at least five years. Five of the productions come from other opera companies, two are new designs and only three have been seen in San Francisco heretofore. Productions exchanged with Metropolitan Opera for some of our productions include *Adriana Lecouvreur, Aida* and *I Puritani*. Two—*Idomeneo* from Cologne Opera and *Turandot* from Strasbourg Opera—were designed by Jean Pierre Ponnelle, who is well known to San Francisco audiences. The sharing of productions among opera companies is a trend of recent years to increase repertoires in an economical way. A new production of *Un Ballo in Maschera* was made possible by a gift from a friend of San Francisco Opera. Several other generous patrons have made special gifts to help defray the costs of *Katya Kabanova*.

Production of grand opera is expensive. Even when we enjoy 100% capacity attendance, revenues from ticket sales cover only approximately 60% of our costs. The remainder, which in 1977 is estimated at $2,800,000, must be raised from a variety of sources—generous patrons who finance new productions, guarantors, income from endowment funds, grants from local and federal governments, donations from the Opera Guild and from contributions to our annual Operating Fund campaign, the single biggest money raiser. Despite all of these generous contributors, we incurred a deficit of $150,000 in 1976; such deficits, of course, cannot continue. We work hard to keep costs to a minimum (e.g., the sharing of sets and costumes with other opera companies), but they continue to increase as a result of the increase in cost of living. More than 78% of our costs are for payroll and fringe benefits. These increased costs can be recovered only partly through ticket price increases. We must increase significantly the number of contributors to the Operating Fund. If you are not presently a contributor, won't you now join those who help each year? Your tax deductible contributions should be sent to San Francisco Opera Association, War Memorial Opera House, San Francisco, 94102. Our continued existence depends on you.

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 Roger Boas, 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. This year's five student matinees, sponsored, as in the past, by the San Francisco Opera Guild, will present Gounod's *Faust*. Thousands of young people, most for the first time, are exposed to grand opera and they enjoy it thoroughly.

Just as this letter was written, the good news was announced that the funds are now available to complete the Opera House, by extending the rear to Franklin Street to provide vitally needed storage space, chorus rooms and other facilities. This is part of the Performing Arts Center project which contemplates a new symphony hall on the block bounded by Van Ness Avenue, Hayes, Franklin and Grove Streets, a rehearsal hall suitable for opera and ballet and a parking garage to replace the parking facilities displaced by the proposed new symphony hall.

Once again, San Francisco Opera is indebted to Chevron U.S.A., Inc. and the L. J. and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation, Oakland, California, for making live radio broadcasts of the complete 1977 season possible as a public service. These live broadcasts are heard up and down the West Coast and in Chicago, in the Bay Area over station KKHI AM/FM. This year, for the first time, delayed broadcasts of all ten operas will also be heard over more than 120 member stations of National Public Radio beginning early in October, an expansion that will enable millions of opera lovers throughout the country to enjoy our fine performances.

Enjoy our season!

Walter M. Baird

WALTER M. BAIRD
President,
San Francisco Opera Association

San Francisco Opera 1977

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Master of Properties	Perrie Dodson

**San Francisco Opera debut **American opera debut †National Opera Institute Apprentice §Comprehensive Employment Training Act (C.E.T.A.) ‡Exxon/Arts Endowment Conductors Program*

The Knabe is the official piano of San Francisco Opera

The 1977 San Francisco Opera season is supported by a much-appreciated grant from the National Endowment for the Arts in Washington, D.C., a Federal Agency, and by a generous grant from the San Francisco Hotel Tax Fund.

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA 1977

A Vintage 55th Season And A Record Annual Giving Goal: $2.8 Million

We are privileged to enjoy the world's best opera here in the Bay Area year after year.

Like every major arts organization, San Francisco Opera faces a widening gap between earned income and expenses.

This year $2.8 million must be raised from diversified sources to offset inflationary costs and avoid a deficit.

Blessed in recent years with successful seasons, Company ticket sales and other earned income reflect an enviable 60% of our annual operating budget.

The remaining 40%, however, must be met by voluntary gifts, grants, and production sponsorships from numerous individuals, corporations, foundations and arts agencies to help us realize a successful 1977 season.

San Francisco Opera belongs to you, the many thousands who attend its performances and enjoy its radio broadcasts and the Bay Area whose cultural life it enhances.

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San Francisco Opera Association
Development Office
War Memorial Opera House
San Francisco, California 94102
(415) 861-4008, ext. 45

Artists

Kathleen Battle*
Eleanor Bergquist*
Montserrat Caballé*
Dorothy Cole
Fiorenza Cossotto*
Christiane Eda-Pierre*
Maria Ewing*
Gwendolyn Jones†
Susanne Marsee
Eva Marton*
Leona Mitchell
Carol Neblett*
Elena Obraztsova
Maria Parazzini**
Patricia Payne**
Leontyne Price
Katia Ricciarelli
Hanna Schwarz**
Renata Scotto
Nancy Shade
Beverly Sills
Elisabeth Söderström*
Pamela South†
Jocelyne Taillon*
Carol Todd
Tatiana Troyanos
Mildred Tyree*
Carol Vaness*†
Ruth Welting*
Beverly Wolff

Wolf Appel
Giacomo Aragall
Aldo Bramante**
José Carreras
Allen Cathcart*
Gianfranco Cecchele*
William Cochran
Lawrence Cooper
Rémy Corazza**
James Courtney
John Davies
Joszef Dene**
Dale Duesing
Joseph Frank
Bonaldo Giaiotti
David Cale Johnson*†
Robert Johnson*
William Lewis
Frank Little*
Chester Ludgin
Barry McCauley*†
James McCracken
Alexander Malta
Raymond Manton
Yuri Mazurok*
Norman Mittelmann
Franz Ferdinand Nentwig**
Luciano Pavarotti
William Pell*†
Ray Reinhardt*
George Shirley*
Cesar-Antonio Suarez*
Giuseppe Taddei
Michael Talley*
Eric Tappy
Giorgio Tozzi
Ragnar Ulfung
Ivo Vinco*
Ingvar Wixell
Giorgio Zancanaro*

**San Francisco Opera debut*
***American opera debut*
†San Francisco/Affiliate Artist—Opera Program

Chorus

Janice Aaland
Arlene Adams
Deborah Alexander
Kathy Anderson
Candida Arias-Duazo
Doris Baltzo
Norma Bruzzone
Louise Corsale
Beverley Finn
Lisa Louise Hill
Lola Lazzari-Simi
Cecilia MacLaren
Tamaki McCracken
Irene Moreci
Janet Marie Noffsinger
Rose Parker
Anna Marie Riesgo
Shelley Seitz
Bonnie Jean Shapiro
Claudia Siefer
Alma R. Simmons
Linda Millerd Smeage
Claudine Spindt
Ramona Spiropoulos
Sally S. Winnington
Arlene Woodburn
Garifalia Zeissig

Perry Abraham
Winther Andersen
Daniel Becker Nealeigh
Kristen Robert Bjoernfeldt
Duane Clenton Carter
David M. Cherveny
Robert Clyde
Angelo Colbasso
James Davis
Robert Delany
Bernard Du Monthier
Peter Girardot
Gerald Johnson
Conrad Knipfel
Eugene Lawrence
Kenneth MacLaren
Kenneth Malucelli
Jim Meyer
Thomas Miller
Eugene Naham
Charles L. Pascoe
Kenneth Rafanan
Thomas Reed
Robert Romanovsky
Philip L. Siegling
Francis Szymkun
James Tarantino
D. Livingstone Tigner
William Chastaine Tredway
John Walters
R. Lee Woodriff

Extra Chorus

Roberta Bowmann
Anne Buelteman
Cynthia Cook
Patricia Diggs
Margaret Hamilton
Christina Jaqua
Susan D. Jetter
Maureen Gail MacGowan
Elaine Messer
Penelope Rains
Nancy Wait

Gennadi Badasov
Michael Bloch
Riccardo Cascio
Joseph Ciampi
Angelo Colbasso
Kenneth Hybloom
Robert Klang
Joseph Kreuziger
Matthew Miksack
Karl Saarni
Karl Schmidt
Lorenz Schultz
Mitchell Taylor
Gerald Wood

Orchestra

1ST VIOLIN
Zaven Melikian
Concertmaster
Daniel Shindaryov
Concertmaster
Ferdinand M. Claudio
William E. Pynchon
Assistant Principal
Silvio Claudio
Ezequiel Amador
Mafalda Guaraldi
Bruce Freifeld
George Nagata
Ernest Michaelian
Michael Sand
William Rusconi

2ND VIOLIN
Felix Khuner *Principal*
Herbert Holtman
Virginia Roden
Barbara Riccardi
Robert Galbraith
Gail Schwarzbart
Carol Winters
Eva Karasik
Linda Deutsch

VIOLA
Rolf Persinger *Principal*
Detlev Olshausen
Lucien Mitchell
Asbjorn Finess
Thomas Elliott
Jonna Hervig
Ellen Smith

CELLO
David Kadarauch *Principal*
Rolf Storseth
Judiyaba
Melinda Ross
Tadeusz Kadzielawa
Helen Stross

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

FLUTE
Walter Subke *Principal*
Lloyd Gowen
Gary Gray

PICCOLO
Lloyd Gowen
Gary Gray

OBOE
James Matheson *Principal*
Raymond Duste
Deborah Henry

ENGLISH HORN
Raymond Duste

CLARINET
Philip Fath *Principal*
Donald Carroll
David Breeden

BASS CLARINET
Donald Carroll

BASSOON
Walter Green *Principal*
Jerry Dagg
Robin Elliott

CONTRA BASSOON
Robin Elliott

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Peggy C. Lucchesi

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Anne Adams *Principal*
Marcella De Cray

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Lauré Campbell

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Dixie Denis
Hilda Falkenstein
Kimberly Graves
Linda Suzanne Heine
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Sherri Parks
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Maria Angela Villa
Allyson Way

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Isom Buenavista
Charles Foster
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Glenn Palmer
Gerard Puciato
James Voisine

Rael Lamb, *Ballet Master*

Supernumeraries

Joan Bacharach
Dottie Brown
Madeline Chase
Barbara Clifford
Renee De Jarnett
Mary Joyce
Nancy Kennelly
Francesca Leo
Marilyn Mathers
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Edith Modie
Ellen Nelson
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Elizabeth Schultz

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SPRING OPERA THEATER

produced by
San Francisco Opera

Kurt Herbert Adler,
General Director

APRIL 1978

at the

Curran Theatre

Four operas will be presented in English with exciting staging and fresh young American singers. The repertoire will include standard and unusual works.

Watch for Season Announcement!

for information on membership in Spring Opera Theater please call (415) 861-4008, ext. 26

1977 Season Repertoire

San Francisco Opera Premiere
ADRIANA LECOUVREUR
Cilea
IN ITALIAN
Scotto, Obraztsova, South, Tyree*/Aragall, Taddei, Courtney, Frank, Davies, R. Johnson*

Conductor: Gavazzeni*
Stage Director: Vallone**
Set Designer: Cristini/Paravicini
Choreographer: Rose*
Chorus Director: Bradshaw**
Scenic production owned by the Metropolitan Opera Association
Friday, Sept 9 8PM
Gala Opening Night
Tuesday, Sept 13, 8PM
Friday, Sept 16 8PM
Saturday, Sept 24, 8PM
Wednesday, Sept 28, 7:30PM
Sunday, Oct 2, 2PM

San Francisco Opera Premiere
IDOMENEO
Mozart
IN ITALIAN
Neblett*, Eda-Pierre*, Ewing*/Tappy, Little*, Shirley*, Bramante**

Conductor: Pritchard
Production: Ponnelle
Designer: Ponnelle
Chorus Director: Bradshaw
Production owned by the Cologne Opera
Saturday, Sept 10, 8PM
Wednesday, Sept 14, 7:30PM
Sunday, Sept 18, 2PM
Tuesday, Sept 20, 8PM
Friday, Sept 23, 8PM

San Francisco Opera Premiere
New Production
KATYA KABANOVA
Janáček
IN ENGLISH
Söderström*, Wolff, Marsee, Jones, Tyree/Lewis, Cochran, Ludgin, McCauley*, Cooper

Conductor: Kubelik*
Production: Rennert
Set Designer: Schneider-Siemssen*
Costume Designer: Walek**
Chorus Director: Bradshaw
Saturday, September 17, 8PM
Wednesday, September 21, 7:30PM
Sunday, September 25, 2PM
Tuesday, September 27, 8PM
Friday, September 30, 8PM

DAS RHEINGOLD
Wagner
IN GERMAN
Schwarz**, Todd, Payne** (Oct 1, 4, 7) Taillon (Oct 12, 16, 22), Bergquist*, Tyree, Jones/Nentwig**, Ulfung, Dene**, Appel, Malta, Bramante, McCauley, Cooper

Conductor: Hollreiser*
Stage Director: Hager
Designer: Skalicki
Saturday, Oct 1, 8PM
Tuesday, Oct 4, 8PM
Friday, Oct 7, 8PM
Wednesday, Oct 12, 7:30PM
Sunday, Oct 16, 2PM
Saturday, Oct 22, 1:30PM

FAUST
Gounod
IN FRENCH
Shade, Marsee, Taillon*/Aragall, Zancanaro*, Tozzi, Davies

Conductor: Périsson
Stage Director: Karpo*
Designer: Skalicki
Chorus Director: Bradshaw
Wednesday, Oct 5, 7:30PM
Saturday, Oct 8, 8PM
Tuesday, Oct 11, 8PM
Friday, Oct 14, 8PM
Sunday, Oct 23, 2PM

Special Family-Priced Matinee

Todd, Jones, Cole/McCauley, Cooper, Courtney, Davies

Conductor: Bradshaw
Stage Director: Karpo
Rehearsed by: Farruggio
Designer: Skalicki
Chorus Director: Bradshaw
Saturday, Nov 26, 1:30PM

AIDA
Verdi
IN ITALIAN
Parazzini**, Cossotto*, Vaness*/McCracken, Mittelmann, Vinco*, Bramante, Talley*

Conductor: Gavazzeni
Stage Director: Frisell
Set Designer: Reppa*
Costume Designer: Hall*
Choreographer: Lamb*
Chorus Director: Bradshaw
Production owned by the Metropolitan Opera Association
Saturday, Oct 15, 8PM
Tuesday, Oct 18, 8PM
Friday, Oct 21, 8PM
Monday, Oct 24, 7:30PM
Sunday, Oct 30, 2PM
Saturday, Nov 5, 1:30PM

AIDA
Verdi
IN ITALIAN

Marton*, Troyanos, Vaness/Cecchele*, Wixell, Giaiotti, Bramante, Talley

Conductor: Gavazzeni
Stage Director: Frisell
Rehearsed by: Farruggio
Set Designer: Reppa
Costume Designer: Hall
Choreographer: Lamb
Chorus Director: Bradshaw
Production owned by the Metropolitan Opera Association

Friday, Nov 18, 8PM
Thursday, Nov 24, 8PM†
Saturday, Nov 26, 8PM

ARIADNE AUF NAXOS
Strauss
IN GERMAN

Price, Welting*, Troyanos, Bergquist, South, Jones/Cathcart*, Ludgin, Duesing, Malta, R. Johnson, Frank, Davies, Cooper, Pell*, Reinhardt*

Conductor: Ferencsik
Stage Director: Hager
Designer: Jenkins

Wednesday, Oct 19, 7:30PM
Saturday, Oct 22, 8PM
Tuesday, Oct 25, 8PM
Friday, Oct 28, 8PM
Sunday, Nov 6, 2PM

TURANDOT
Puccini
IN ITALIAN

Caballé*, Mitchell, South, Jones/Pavarotti, Tozzi, Duesing, Corazza**, Frank, Bramante, Manton

Conductor: Chailly*
Production: Ponnelle
Assistant Director: Joël**
Set Designer: Ponnelle
Costume Designer: Halmen
Chorus Director: Bradshaw
Production owned by the Strasbourg Opera

Saturday, Oct 29, 8PM
Tuesday, Nov 1, 8PM
Friday, Nov 4, 8PM
Wednesday, Nov 9, 7:30PM
Sunday, Nov 13, 2PM
Wednesday, Nov 16, 7:30PM
Saturday, Nov 19, 1:30PM

I PURITANI
Bellini
IN ITALIAN

Sills, Vaness/Suarez*, Zancanaro, Giaiotti, D. Johnson*, R. Johnson

Conductor: Peloso
Stage Director: Capobianco
Set Designer: Lee
Costume Designer: Hall
Chorus Director: Bradshaw
Production owned by the Metropolitan Opera Association

Wednesday, Nov 2, 7:30PM
Saturday, Nov 5, 8PM
Tuesday, Nov 8, 8PM
Friday, Nov 11, 8PM
Sunday, Nov 20, 2PM
Wednesday, Nov 23, 7:30PM

New Production
UN BALLO IN MASCHERA
Verdi
IN ITALIAN

Ricciarelli, Battle*, Payne/Carreras, Mazurok*, Bramante, Courtney, Cooper, Talley, Davies

Conductor: Adler
Production: Frisell
Designer: Conklin*
Choreographer: Lamb
Chorus Director: Bradshaw

Saturday, Nov 12, 8PM
Tuesday, Nov 15, 7:30PM
Saturday, Nov 19, 8PM
Tuesday, Nov 22, 8PM
Friday, Nov 25, 8PM
Sunday, Nov 27, 8PM

†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 p.m. Series registration is $8.50; single tickets are $2 ($1.50 for students and senior citizens). For information, please call (415) 388-2850.

September 8
ADRIANA LECOUVREUR
Gordon Engler

September 15
KATYA KABANOVA
Dr. Dale Harris

September 29
FAUST
Dr. Jan Popper

October 6
ARIADNE AUF NAXOS
Michael Barclay

October 27
TURANDOT
Dr. Dale Harris

SOUTH PENINSULA

Previews held at the Palo Alto Community Cultural Center, 1313 Newell Rd., at 7:30 p.m. Series registration is $10; single tickets are $2.50 ($1.25 for students with I.D.) For information, please call (415) 325-8451 or (415) 321-9875.

September 11
IDOMENEO
James H. Schwabacher, Jr.

September 18
KATYA KABANOVA
Dr. Dale Harris

October 9
ARIADNE AUF NAXOS
Dr. Jan Popper

October 16
TURANDOT
Dr. Jan Popper

October 30
I PURITANI
Dr. Dale Harris

Bus Service to San Francisco Opera performances is available. For information, please call (415) 493-8636.

JUNIOR LEAGUE OPERA PREVIEWS

All Junior League opera previews will be held at the Curran Theatre at 11:00 a.m. There is no admission charge. For information, please call (415) 567-8600.

September 7
ADRIANA LECOUVREUR
Michael Barclay

September 14
IDOMENEO
James H. Schwabacher, Jr.

September 20
KATYA KABANOVA
Dr. Jan Popper

October 18
ARIADNE AUF NAXOS
Stephanie von Buchau

October 27
TURANDOT
Dr. Dale Harris

SAN JOSE OPERA GUILD PREVIEWS

Co-sponsored by the San Jose Opera Guild and Sunnyvale Community Center. All presentations will be held in the Sunnyvale Community Center, 550 East Remington Drive, Sunnyvale. All participants (including members of San Jose Opera Guild) must register directly to De Anza's Seminar-Lecture Series 90. Registration fee of $3.00 entitles participants to attend one or all of the Opera Preview lectures. For information, please call Mrs. Artie Nicholson, (415) 967-3590.

Sept. 7, 7:30 p.m.
IDOMENEO
James H. Schwabacher, Jr.

Sept. 15, 10:00 a.m.
KATYA KABANOVA
Dr. Dale Harris

Sept. 22, 10:00 a.m.
ADRIANA LECOUVREUR
Dr. Jan Popper

Sept. 28, 7:30 p.m.
FAUST
James H. Schwabacher, Jr.

Oct. 6, 7:30 p.m.
AIDA
Dr. Marie Gibson

Oct. 13, 7:30 p.m.
ARIADNE AUF NAXOS
Dr. Arthur Regan

Oct. 20, 7:30 p.m.
UN BALLO IN MASCHERA
Dr. Marie Gibson

Oct. 28, 10:00 a.m.
TURANDOT
Dr. Dale Harris

Nov. 3, 10:00 a.m.
I PURITANI
Dr. Jan Popper

UC-BERKELEY EXTENSION LECTURE SERIES

DR. JAN POPPER LECTURES will be given on one Tuesday and nine Monday evenings at 7:30 p.m. at Richardson Auditorium, UC Extension Center, 55 Laguna St., San Francisco. Series registration is $40; single tickets are $5, on a space available basis, payable at the door. For further information, please call (415) 642-4141.

September 6 (Tues.)
ADRIANA LECOUVREUR

September 12
IDOMENEO

September 19
KATYA KABANOVA

September 26
DAS RHEINGOLD

October 3
FAUST

October 10
AIDA

October 17
ARIADNE AUF NAXOS

October 24
TURANDOT

October 31
I PURITANI

November 7
UN BALLO IN MASCHERA

NAPA COMMUNITY COLLEGE LECTURE SERIES

For the fifth 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 Jr. High School, 2447 Old Sonoma Rd., Napa, on Wednesday nights from 7-9 p.m. Registration for the entire series is $5.00. Ernest Fly will again teach the course, using his collection of complete opera recordings, filmstrips, and also introducing guest speakers and vocal artists. For further information, please call Mr. Fly at (707) 224-6162.

September 7
ADRIANA LECOUVREUR

September 14
IDOMENEO

September 21
KATYA KABANOVA

September 28
DAS RHEINGOLD

October 5
FAUST

October 12
AIDA

October 19
ARIADNE AUF NAXOS

October 26
TURANDOT

November 2
I PURITANI

November 9
UN BALLO IN MASCHERA

OPERA EDUCATION WEST

EAST BAY FRIENDS OF THE OPERA

Previews will be presented by Michael Barclay at the Marketplace Antiques in Emeryville. Individual admission is $3.00 with a $15.00 series ticket for the full series of 7 lectures. Complimentary refreshments before and after each lecture. All lectures begin at 8:00 p.m. For further information, please call (415) 526-5244.

September 5
ADRIANA LECOUVREUR

September 8
IDOMENEO

September 12
KATYA KABANOVA

September 19
DAS RHEINGOLD

September 26
ARIADNE AUF NAXOS

October 3
TURANDOT

October 31
I PURITANI

FRIENDS OF THE KENSINGTON LIBRARY

A Preview of *Un Ballo in Maschera* will be held on Monday, November 7 at the Kensington Library, Arlington Ave., Kensington. The preview will begin at 8:00 p.m. and admission is free.

COGSWELL COLLEGE LECTURE SERIES

Series will be given at Cogswell College at 600 Stockton Street on Tuesday evenings at 7:00 p.m. Lectures by Stephanie von Buchau, Performing Arts Editor of San Francisco Magazine, Arthur Kaplan, Staff Writer of the San Francisco Opera and Allan Ulrich, free-lance music writer. Series registration is $50; single tickets are $6, on a space available basis, payable at the door. For further information please call (415) 433-1994, extension office.

September 6
ADRIANA LECOUVREUR & IDOMENEO
(double lecture)

September 13
KATYA KABANOVA

September 27
DAS RHEINGOLD

October 4
FAUST

October 11
AIDA

October 18
ARIADNE AUF NAXOS

October 25
TURANDOT

November 1
I PURITANI

November 8
UN BALLO IN MASCHERA

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA

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Student Matinees

FAUST
Gounod
IN FRENCH

Tuesday, November 1, 1977, 1:30 p.m.
Wednesday, November 9, 1977, 1:00 p.m.
Friday, November 11, 1977, 1:30 p.m.
Tuesday, November 15, 1977, 1:00 p.m.
Friday, November 18, 1977, 1:30 p.m.

Our Generous Supporters

The San Francisco Opera Association extends its sincere appreciation to all those contributors who have helped sustain and maintain our Company over the past year. Listed below are those corporations, foundations and individuals whose gifts and pledges of $200 and over to the annual fund drive, the Guarantor Plan, production sponsorships, endowment payments, or other special projects were received between August 1, 1976 and September 1, 1977. Space does not permit us to pay tribute to the hundreds of others in our opera family of supporters who help make each season possible. To all we are deeply grateful for your continued support, so essential to the ongoing success of San Francisco Opera.

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Marshall Young

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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.

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Opera Museum

The 1977 exhibit in the opera museum, prepared by the Archives for the Performing Arts, represents a survey of the 1977 San Francisco Opera repertoire and a special retrospective devoted to the career of Licia Albanese with the 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 Herbert Scholder handling arrangements for the section on Licia Albanese.

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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Opera in four acts by GIUSEPPE VERDI
Text by ANTONIO GHISLANZONI

Aida

(IN ITALIAN)

Conductor
Gianandrea Gavazzeni

Stage Director
Sonja Frisell

Scenery designed by
David Reppa*

Costumes designed by
Peter J. Hall*

Chorus Director
Richard Bradshaw

Choreographer
Rael Lamb*

Lighting Designer
Thomas Munn

Musical Preparation
Louis Salemno

Scenery and costumes owned by the Metropolitan Opera Association and made possible through a gift to the Metropolitan Opera from the Gramma Fisher Foundation of Marshalltown, Iowa

First performance: Cairo, December 24, 1871

First San Francisco Opera performance: October 3, 1925

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 15 AT 8:00

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 18 AT 8:00

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 21 AT 8:00 (Live broadcast)

MONDAY, OCTOBER 24 AT 7:30

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 30 AT 2:00

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 5 AT 1:30

Additional performances of *Aida* with a different cast will be presented on

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 18 AT 8:00

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 24 AT 8:00

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 26 AT 8:00

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 and one-half hours

CAST

Ramfis	Ivo Vinco*
Radamès	James McCracken
Amneris	Fiorenza Cossotto*
Aida	Maria Parazzini**
The king of Egypt	Aldo Bramante
A messenger	Michael Talley*
A priestess	Carol Vaness*
Amonasro	Norman Mittelmann

Priests, priestesses, soldiers, ministers, officials, Ethiopian prisoners, Egyptian populace

Solo dancers	Kimberley Graves*, James Michael Voisine*
Corps de ballet	*The Little Lomo Dancers*

Auxiliary chorus in the Triumphal Scene composed of members of the Community Music Center's San Francisco Community Chorus

***American debut*
**San Francisco Opera debut*

PLACE AND TIME: Memphis and Thebes in the time of the Pharaohs.

ACT I Scene 1
The king's palace at Memphis
Scene 2
The temple of Vulcan

ACT II Scene 1
Amneris' apartment in the palace
Scene 2
A public square in Thebes

ACT III
The banks of the Nile, outside the temple of Isis

ACT IV Scene 1
The Judgment hall
Scene 2
A tomb below the temple

SYNOPSIS / AIDA

ACT ONE—In the royal palace at Memphis, Radames, a young captain of the guard, learns from the high priest, Ramfis, that Ethiopia has become a threat to the Nile valley and that a new army commander has been selected. Alone, Radames hopes he is the chosen one, envisioning a glorious victory so he can free his beloved Aida—the Ethiopian slave of Amneris, the King's daughter. Amneris, who loves Radames herself, comes in and questions him shrewdly; her suspicion that he loves her slave increases when Aida enters. Soon the King and his train arrive to hear a messenger report that the Ethiopian army, led by Amonasro, is marching on Thebes. The King announces Radames' appointment as Egyptian commander and leads the assemblage in a battle hymn. "Return victorious!" cries Amneris, echoed by the people, and alone Aida repeats the words, appalled that her beloved is going off to battle her father—for Aida is in fact the princess of Ethiopia. Torn by conflicting loyalties, she begs the gods for pity.

In the temple of Ptah, a solemn ceremony consecrates Radames to the service of his country. He now belongs to the god, and the fate of Egypt is in his hands.

ACT TWO—Radames has beaten the Ethiopians, and on the morning of his triumphal return Amneris is groomed by slaves and distracted from her romantic daydreaming by a group of dancing children. At Aida's approach she dismisses her attendants, hoping to confirm her impression that Aida loves Radames. To test her, she claims Radames has died in battle, then says he lives. Certain from Aida's reactions that this mere slave loves Radames, Amneris threatens her and leaves for the festivities as Aida reiterates her prayer.

At the gate of Thebes, a crowd welcomes the returning army; triumphal dances are performed. Radames is borne in to be crowned with a wreath by Amneris. Ethiopian captives too are led in, among them Aida's father, incognito. In an aside he warns her not to betray his rank, then pleads for his fellow prisoners' lives. Ramfis and the priests urge death for the captives, but Radames intercedes, and since the commander is the hero of the hour, the King releases all but Amonasro, then presents Radames with the hand of Amneris, dashing Aida's dreams of happiness.

ACT THREE—On a moonlit bank of the Nile, Ramfis leads Amneris toward the temple of Isis for a wedding vigil. Aida comes in to wait for a meeting with Radames; overcome with nostalgia, she laments her conquered homeland. Startled out of her reverie by Amonasro, she learns that her father is determined to save his people yet: Aida must trick Radames into revealing where the Egyptian army intends to enter Ethiopia. Threatening her, he breaks down her resistance. Amonasro hides as Radames appears, ardent with promises to make Aida his bride after his coming victory. She suggests instead they run off together, asking what route his army will take. No sooner has he answered than Amonasro steps out, triumphantly revealing his identity as king of Ethiopia. Amneris, leaving the temple, sizes up the situation and denounces Radames. Amonasro lunges at her with a dagger, but Radames shields her and surrenders himself to Ramfis as the two Ethiopans escape.

ACT FOUR—In a temple of judgment Amneris determines to save Radames. When he is led in, she offers to spare his life if he will renounce Aida. This he says he will never do. Enraged, Amneris sends him on to his doom but immediately repents, listening in despair as the priests three times demand his defense. Three times he is silent. They condemn him, and when they file past, Amneris curses them.

Radames, buried alive in a vault beneath the temple, turns his last thoughts to Aida, who now appears to him, having hidden in the crypt earlier that day to share his fate. Radames tries vainly to dislodge the stone that locks them in. Bidding farewell to earth, the lovers greet eternity while above them in the temple the repentent Amneris prays for Radames' soul.

Aida

by JOHN CULSHAW

If we were to play that word-association game which psychiatrists like so much, the name *Aida* would immediately suggest the word spectacle, and for very good reasons. Quite a lot of the work *is* spectacular, and never more so than in the second scene of Act Two, when the triumphant Radames returns with his captives. Stage directors can have the time of their lives with that scene, for there is no way of avoiding all the marching and the waving of flags and the blowing of ceremonial trumpets. Even Wagner at his most processional—in *Tannhäuser* or *Lohengrin* or *Meistersinger* or *Parsifal*—never brought off anything quite like the Triumphal scene in *Aida*, or at least he never brought it off with such amazing brevity. The whole thing, despite all the processing and the dancing, and the crucial first appearance of Amonasro which virtually stands the plot on its head, takes place in less than half an hour. It does not work on a small stage because it needs space; on the other hand if it is given *too* much space it can seriously alter the effect and proportions of the rest of the opera. This is the paradox of *Aida*, for it is really a very intimate opera with spectacular sequences, rather than a spectacular opera with intimate moments.

You discover this very quickly if you attend one of those open-air amphitheatre productions which the Italians offer in Rome or Verona. It is indeed thrilling to see Radames make his Triumphal scene entrance from the very far distance upon a chariot borne by two, four or even six galloping horses, except for the inevitable but irresistible thought that the whole lot of them might end up in the middle of the first violins if they failed to stop in time. The price you pay for such a spectacle is that the essentials of *Aida*—the very personal, intimate relationships and divided loyalties—can be lost altogether.

So while accepting on the one hand that this is Grand Opera in capital letters, so we should grasp with the other that for most of the time Verdi is dealing with human emotions that are as valid today as they were in ancient Egypt around 1200 B.C., which is where the action is set. The origins of the libretto are complex, but the original story was by a French Egyptologist, whose idea it was that it should be turned into an opera to celebrate the opening of the Suez Canal. The idea was accepted by the Egyptian authorities, and another French writer was invited to turn the story into an operatic libretto which would be offered first to Verdi, and then to either Gounod or Wagner if Verdi turned it down. Verdi did not turn it down, although he would not accept it in French; so he brought in an Italian librettist. Even that is not the end of the story, for Verdi—like Wagner—was a craftsman with an infinite capacity for detail, and from the evidence we have it seems that Verdi contributed quite heavily to the final text of *Aida*—including the words, or most of them, for the marvelous final duet.

Aida had its first performance in Cairo, but it celebrated neither the opening of the Suez Canal nor—as legend often has it—of the Cairo Opera House itself. Both of those institutions were functioning by the end of 1869, whereas *Aida* was supposed to have its premiere in January 1871. Verdi completed his work ahead of time, but to no avail, for the scenery for the Cairo production was being built in Paris and could not be shipped out of the city because the French were at war with the Prussians. The first performance finally took place, eleven months late, on Christmas Eve 1871, and was an immediate success. Verdi did not go to Cairo, partly because he realized that he would have little control over the production, whereas if he stayed in Italy he could at least make sure that the first performance at La Scala Milan, which was in February 1872, represented his wishes down to the finest detail.

It angered him beyond measure that *Aida* was attacked by a few critics as being Wagnerian in concept. He himself had no battle with Wagner, and indeed a month or two before the Italian premiere of *Aida* he had attended the first performance of *Lohengrin* in Italy, about which he had detailed reservations without ever being vindictive. He hugely admired Wagner's idea of the invisible orchestra, and wanted it for his own operas in general and for *Aida* in particular. He wrote, quite rightly, that the orchestra should represent "an imaginary world" and should be out of view. The wish was not granted to him for the concept of a specially built theatre on the lines of Bayreuth, which was to open four years later, was presumably unthinkable in Italy. Instead, Verdi devoted his attention to the proper casting of his opera, and in that area he refused to compromise. He wanted the best, dramatically speaking. He was not very interested in beautiful voices unless they could convey character. Then he was concerned not only with the choice of the principal conductor, but of all the sub-conductors who have to deal with the chorus and all the off-stage effects which are essential to *Aida*. He wanted to know about the size of the orchestra and then went on to insist on details of the seating plan and the pitch at which the orchestra would

play; and he wanted to be assured that the timpani and bass drum would be larger than those in normal use. He made some major additions to Act Three, and momentarily decided that the exquisite Prelude to Act One needed to be replaced by a full-scale Overture, which he promptly wrote—and equally promptly abandoned. His musical and dramatic instincts were invariably right.

Although *Aida* was an immediate success it was nonetheless criticized for various reasons, though they really boil down to one thing, which was that Verdi—like most composers of any stature at all—simply refused to repeat himself. He had not written another *Trovatore* or another *Rigoletto*. When *Don Carlo* was first performed, four years before *Aida*, Verdi was accused of imitating Meyerbeer; in *Aida* he was said by some to be copying Wagner, which must stand as one of the most unobservant and unhelpful criticisms of all time. Then there was the question of authenticity, which led several critics to fall headlong into traps they had dug for themselves. Thus when *Aida* reached London in 1876, the *Musical Times* had only three points to make, and all of them were wrong. The first was the familiar accusation that Verdi was copying Wagner; the second was the quaint prediction that *Aida* would not obtain a permanent hold on the musical public; and the third is worth quoting exactly as written, for it concerns a point of musical authenticity. The critic wrote "Signor Verdi no doubt has exclusive means of knowing the kind of music which was sung and played in the Egyptian temples at the time of the Pharaohs, but we may at least be excused for saying that he has used his local colour somewhat too thickly."

The fact is that Verdi, far from having exclusive knowledge about ancient Egyptian music, lost almost no sleep at all on the question of authenticity; he simply invented an idiom appropriate to the setting. The solo for the Grand Priestess which opens the second scene of Act One may sound vaguely oriental, but it is certainly not Egyptian. Verdi at one stage did some research into ancient Egyptian instruments but cared little for what he found, so he proceeded to invent his own kind of ancient Egyptian trumpet, and called for six of them in the Triumphal scene. Otherwise, his orchestra is conventional—but what he *does* with it is not. The opening of Act Three on the banks of the Nile in the moonlight is an astonishing invention—astonishing because of its utter simplicity and total effectiveness. Yet it is all done with muted first violins playing staccato octaves as softly as they can, with a solo flute melody from the fifth measure. You can almost feel the heat, and sense that there may be mosquitoes about. Again, there is nothing specifically Egyptian about it, but it sets the Egyptian scene perfectly.

To me, the most staggering thing about *Aida* has always been its melodic invention. It is true that Verdi's earlier operas are full of melodies, and some of them may be better than some in *Aida* but never before had there been such an outpouring. Indeed, I have sometimes felt that, in *Aida*, Verdi threw away more great melodies than most composers invent in a lifetime—and he only very rarely uses the big tunes twice. Once heard, they simply stay in your head and refuse to go away. Their variety is also astonishing, for although we may at first remember all the ceremonial pieces, it is in the more intimate moments that Verdi is at his most inventive. Think of Aida's brief prayer to the gods which ends the first scenes of both Acts One and Two; think of the chant of the high priestess at the opening of the temple scene, or of Amneris's voluptuous song at the start of Act Two. Then there is Aida's aria in Act Three, followed by the duet with Amonasro; and, perhaps most important of all, the sublimely beautiful duet between Aida and Radames which ends the opera. But if I had to award a prize for continuous melodic invention combined with dramatic intensity, it would go without hesitation to the first scene of Act Four, which is when Amneris first pleads with Radames to save his own life and then overhears the trial throughout which he refuses to speak. Now although we know perfectly well that he will be condemned, it is still a dramatic idea of genius to hold the trial off-stage, and thus throw the focus of attention entirely on Amneris, for she is the really tragic character in the whole story. Doomed though they are, he by verdict and she by choice, Radames and Aida love each other; Amneris has nothing except her royal stature. When the trial is over, she pours out her scorn on the priests who have condemned Radames, and she does so in an impassioned outburst and thus concludes a scene which, given its brevity, has no parallel that I can think of in terms of sheer melodic invention. But melodic invention by itself is never enough unless it adds up to something, and what it adds up to here is a complete portrait of Amneris who, despite all the trappings of power, can neither win the man she loves nor influence those who have condemned him. In writing a penultimate scene of such power Verdi of course created an enormous problem for himself, because he had then to write a final scene that would not be overshadowed by what had gone immediately before. Being the fantastic craftsman that he was, he succeeded. Twenty-five years ago, in the magazine *Opera*, Benjamin Britten wrote: "I am an arrogant and impatient listener; but in the case of a few composers, a very few, when I hear a work I do not like I am convinced it is my own fault. Verdi is one of those composers."

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Mrs. Joseph L. Ruegg
S. W. Sackett
Mrs. C. R. St. Aubyn
Mr. and Mrs. Bertram Sampson
Dr. and Mrs. John J. Sampson

*Deceased

continued on p. 91

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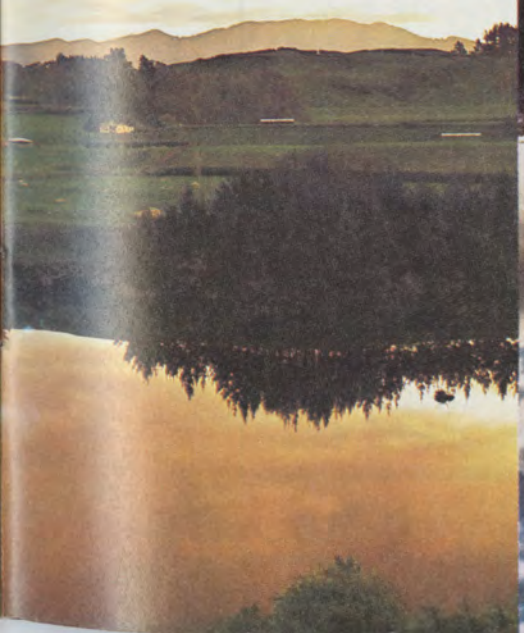

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Profiles

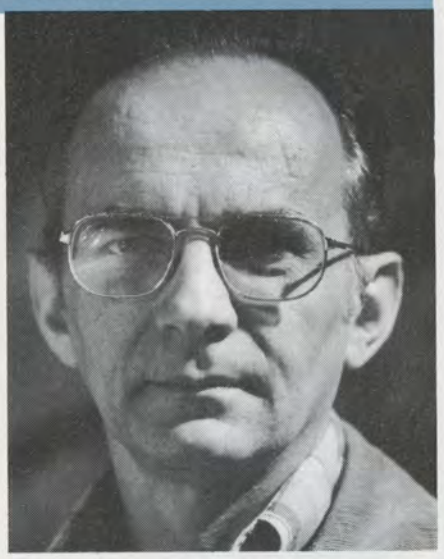
GIANANDREA GAVAZZENI

Dean of Italian conductors, Maestro Gavazzeni makes his San Francisco Opera debut this season leading all performances of *Adriana Lecouvreur* and *Aida*. Born in Bergamo, the birthplace of Gaetano Donizetti, he studied with Ildebrando Pizzetti at the Verdi Conservatory in Milan. He debuted with La Scala in 1948 and remained there for twenty consecutive seasons as principal conductor (with ten opening nights) until becoming its artistic director in 1967. He held that post until 1972. Considered a leading interpreter of the works of Verdi, he also has a predilection for the *bel canto* repertoire and the verismo works of his close friends Mascagni, Giordano, Zandonai, Pizzetti, Catalani and Cilea. Outside of Italy Maestro Gavazzeni has conducted at the Vienna Staatsoper and at the Salzburg Festival, in Geneva, throughout Germany, in Budapest and at the Teatro Colon in Buenos Aires. In the United States his first appearance was with Chicago's Lyric Opera in 1957, where he returned in 1959 and 1960. His Metropolitan Opera debut occurred on the opening night of the 1976-1977 season with *Il Trovatore*. He conducted the first intercontinental opera radio broadcast live by satellite in January 1977—a performance of *Norma* from La Scala with Montserrat Caballé and Tatiana Troyanos. Maestro Gavazzeni has recorded for various companies and has written over twenty volumes of music criticism, journals and various other works on music and literature.

SONJA FRISELL

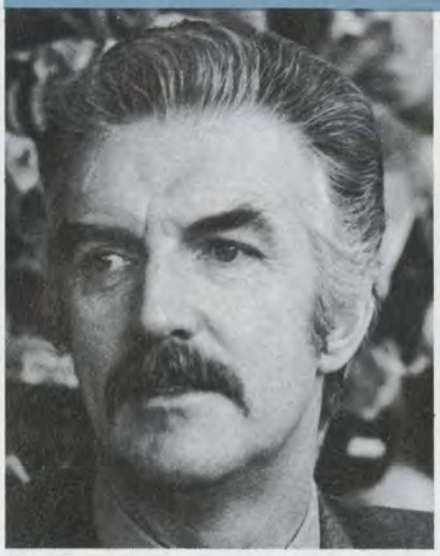
Renowned stage director Sonja Frisell was born in England of Swedish-Canadian parents. Widely acclaimed for her staging of *Simon Boccanegra* with the San Francisco Opera in 1975, she is back for two other Verdi assignments, *Aida* and a new production of *Un Ballo in Maschera*. While attending the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London, she joined an amateur theater group and took a course in acting based on the teachings of Stanislavsky. She became a student director for two years at the Glyndebourne Festival and spent a year studying with Carl Ebert in Berlin. In 1960 Miss Frisell received a grant to further her studies in Italy, where she has worked continuously ever since. Before joining the staff of La Scala in 1964, she was an assistant director at the Verona Arena summer festival and an aide to both Franco Enriquez and Margharita Wallmann. In 1975 she was appointed head stage director of La Scala. Miss Frisell's productions in opera have included *Khovanshchina* (1969) and *Lucia di Lammermoor* (1970) in Chicago and *La Traviata* and *Lucia* again in Toronto (1971). Recent successes have been stagings of Donizetti's *La Favorita* in Bregenz and the same composer's *Don Pasquale* for Festival Canada in Ottawa.

DAVID REPPA



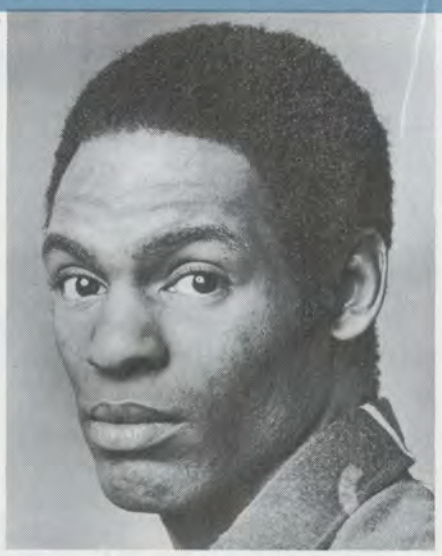
The work of Metropolitan Opera's staff scenic designer, David Reppa, appears for the first time at the San Francisco Opera with this season's production of *Aida*, on loan from the Metropolitan. He made his debut there in 1974 with the scenic and costume designs for the double bill of Bartok's *Bluebeard's Castle* and Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi*. Since then Reppa's designs for the Met include scenery and costumes for Puccini's *Il Tabarro* and *Suor Angelica* and scenery for Poulenc's *Dialogues of the Carmelites*, in addition to *Aida*. Reppa has also worked with Sarah Caldwell's Opera Company of Boston and with the North Shore Opera. In 1972 he assisted Jerome Robbins on his ballet, *Watermill*, for the New York City Ballet. As staff scenic designer for the Metropolitan, he has collaborated with virtually all of that company's scenic designers, supervising the construction and painting of their productions, as well as adapting those productions for the company's spring tours.

PETER J. HALL



The 1977 San Francisco Opera productions of *Aida* and *I Puritani,* borrowed from the Metropolitan Opera, mark costume designer Peter J. Hall's debut with the Company. A native of Great Britain, he first worked with Franco Zeffirelli in 1958 when he designed the costumes for the director's Old Vic production of *Romeo and Juliet.* He came to the United States in 1960 and worked with Zeffirelli on several productions for the Dallas Civic Opera, where he was later named to his present position as chief designer. In addition to numerous works there, he has also designed operatic productions for La Scala, the Lyric Opera of Chicago and the Spoleto festival, where he made his debut as an opera designer in 1961. Not limited to the opera stage, his designs have also been seen in the American Ballet Theatre's production of *Giselle,* John Gielgud's staging of *Othello* at Stratford-on-Avon, the motion picture *Dr. Faustus,* and the American premiere of Tennessee Williams' *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore* on Broadway. Hall made his Metropolitan Opera debut in 1972 as costume designer for the new production of Verdi's *Otello* and has since designed costumes for *Aida, La Forza del Destino, I Puritani, Boris Godunov* and *Lohengrin* for the New York company.

RAEL LAMB



Rael Lamb makes his San Francisco Opera debut this season as ballet master and choreographer for *Aida* and *Un Ballo in Maschera.* Previous assignments in opera include the American premiere of Sessions' *Montezuma* with the Boston Opera Company in 1976 and Menotti's *Amahl and the Night Visitors.* Founder and director of the Boston-based Dance for the New World (1974-1977), Lamb has worked with Twyla Tharp and the Rod Rodgers Dance Company, among others. For Dance Spectrum in San Francisco he presented his rapturously received *Butterfly* this past spring, which was repeated in the Summer Dance series. In August, Lamb performed in his own *Mudbird,* a tribute to the late Martin Luther King, Jr. An alumnus of the North Carolina School of the Arts and Juilliard, Lamb has received scholarships and choreographic grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Detroit Urban League, Alvin Ailey, Maurice Béjart, the Martha Graham School and American Ballet Theatre, among others. Lamb has several film credits to his name and has staged revues, fashion shows and the first Black Arts festival in North Carolina. The young choreographer is already well known for his master classes and works widely with young people in hospitals, public schools and city sponsored recreational projects.

MARIA PARAZZINI

Thrust into the international spotlight in October, 1972, at the Edinburgh festival as a last-minute replacement for an ailing colleague, young Italian soprano Maria Parazzini captured the audience and critics alike with her impassioned Odabella in Verdi's *Attila*. Invitations followed from major European opera houses: *La Traviata* in Palermo and Munich; *Cavalleria Rusticana* in Milan, Rome and Frankfurt; and *Aida* in Vienna and Berlin. It is as Aida that Miss Parazzini makes her American debut with the San Francisco Opera. She performed the role this past summer at the Baths of Caracalla in Rome and at the Arena in Verona. She also sang "Ritorna vincitor" on the internationally televised UNICEF gala in June. A student of the great Italian dramatic soprano Gina Cigna, Miss Parazzini made her Italian debut as Maddalena in *Andrea Chenier* in Palermo and opened the 1974/75 season there as Odabella in *Attila*, followed by Leonora in *Il Trovatore*. She sang the same role at La Scala and, most recently, at the Macerata festival in July. In 1976 the soprano opened the Rome season with Mercadante's *Il Bravo*. After her San Francisco engagement, she will inaugurate the Naples season as Paolina in Donizetti's *Poliuto*.

FIORENZA COSSOTTO

Italy's leading mezzo soprano, Fiorenza Cossotto, is making her eagerly anticipated San Francisco Opera debut as Amneris in *Aida*, one of her most celebrated roles. She performed the Egyptian princess at Covent Garden opposite Montserrat Caballé and Placido Domingo in June and July. Other recent Verdi assignments include Azucena in *Il Trovatore* (the Metropolitan Opera, the Liceo in Barcelona and the Salzburg Easter festival) and Eboli in *Don Carlo* (Hamburg, Naples and the 1977 Salzburg festival). In November, 1976, she was heard at Carnegie Hall in the Verdi *Requiem*, conducted by von Karajan. After studying at the Conservatory in Turin, Miss Cossotto won several awards in vocal competitions and debuted at La Scala in the 1957 world premiere of Poulenc's *Dialogues of the Carmelites*. Following performances as Jane Seymour in Donizetti's *Anna Bolena* at the Wexford festival and Romeo in Bellini's *I Capuleti ed i Montecchi* with RAI in 1959, she scored a tremendous success at La Scala during the 1961/62 season in two other bel canto roles: Leonora in Donizetti's *La Favorita* and the Page Urbain in the now historic production of Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots*. Since then, Miss Cossotto has appeared at all the major opera houses in Italy and throughout the West. At the Vienna Staatsoper this spring she sang Adalgisa opposite the Norma of Montserrat Caballé, and will appear with both the Spanish soprano and Renata Scotto as the Princess de Bouillon in *Adriana Lecouvreur* during the 1977/78 Metropolitan season.

CAROL VANESS

After a stunning debut with Spring Opera Theater as Vitellia in Mozart's *Titus,* Pomona native and California-trained soprano Carol Vaness makes her first appearance with the San Francisco Opera as the Priestess in *Aida,* Queen Enrichetta in *I Puritani* and a lady-in-waiting in *Turandot.* At California State University Northridge, where she recently earned an M.A. in music, her leading opera roles included Ottavia in *The Coronation of Poppea,* Cleopatra in Barber's *Anthony and Cleopatra,* Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni,* Ellen Orford in *Peter Grimes* and the title role in *Tosca.* Miss Vaness was the 1976 winner of the Schwabacher Award for first place in the San Francisco Opera Auditions. As Los Angeles regional winner that year, she joined the Merola Opera Program and performed Giulietta in *Tales of Hoffmann.* She was also among the national finalists in the 1977 Metropolitan Opera Auditions. As a guest soloist, Miss Vaness has appeared with the Stern Grove Symphony Orchestra under Kurt Herbert Adler, the Desert Symphony, the Irvine Master Chorale and, most recently, at this year's Carmel Bach Festival. Miss Vaness is the Atlantic Richfield Company Affiliate Artist in the San Francisco/ Affiliate Artists-Opera Program.

JAMES McCRACKEN

Dramatic tenor James McCracken returns to the San Francisco Opera for the first time in six years to portray Radames in *Aida,* a part he has sung here twice in the past. Local audiences will also remember him in such heroic roles as Manrico in *Il Trovatore,* Samson in *Samson et Dalila,* Hermann in *The Queen of Spades,* and his most famous interpretation, the title role of *Otello.* It was as the jealous Moor that McCracken made an historic second debut at the Metropolitan Opera in 1963, having left that company in 1957 after four years in comprimario roles to spend six years in Europe building his career. In the past four years he has starred in four new productions at the Met: as Otello; as Don José in *Carmen;* as Radames in *Aida;* and as Jean de Leyde in Meyerbeer's rarely heard *Le Prophète.* During the 1977/78 season he will sing the title role in the new production of *Tannhäuser,* his first excursion into the Wagnerian repertoire. Although an acknowledged *tenore di forza,* McCracken is one of the very few tenors to use a head tone when it is so required by the score—witness the end of "Celeste Aida" and "The Flower Song" from *Carmen.* In this regard he was highly praised by the majority of music critics for his singing in *Le Prophète,* an interpretation which has recently been committed to records. His rise to international eminence is related in *A Star in the Family,* written in collaboration with his wife, mezzo soprano Sandra Warfield.

NORMAN MITTELMANN

Canadian baritone Norman Mittelmann, who sings Amonasro in *Aida* in his return to the San Francisco Opera, is particularly noted for his Verdi roles. He has performed all the baritone leads, with the exception of Monforte in *I Vespri Siciliani*, from *Rigoletto* through *Falstaff* (both Ford and Falstaff), in addition to such earlier parts as Nabucco, Ezio in *Attila* and Macbeth. Mittelmann studied at the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia with Martial Singher and Richard Bonelli. After making his 1959 operatic debut as Marcello in *La Bohème* with the Canadian Opera Company, he went to Europe and has realized the major part of his career there. Roles with which he is especially associated include the title role in *Falstaff*, which he portrayed to enthusiastic critical praise in Hamburg in 1974 and 1975, and Mandryka in Strauss' *Arabella*, which served as his debut role at La Scala in 1969 and in which he has been heard in London, Munich, Buenos Aires, Hamburg and Zurich. During the 1976 season he sang 19 performances in the French, Italian and Russian repertoires with the Lyric Opera of Chicago: the four villains in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, Rigoletto and the Boyar Shaklovity in Mussorgsky's *Khovanshchina*. In addition to Amonasro, Mittelmann has previously sung Nelusko in Meyerbeer's *L'Africaine* and Rodrigo in *Don Carlo* in San Francisco.

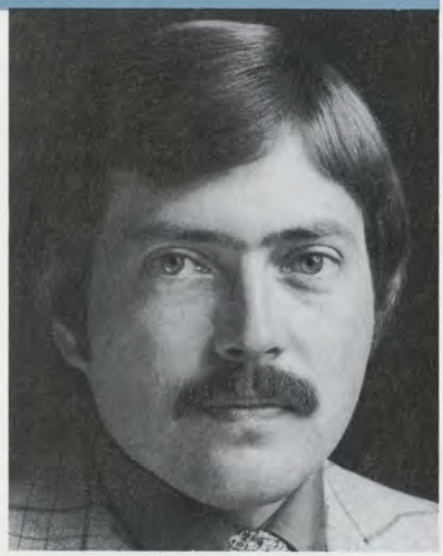
IVO VINCO

A leading artist in all the principal theaters in Italy, bass Ivo Vinco appears for the first time with the San Francisco Opera as Ramfis in *Aida*, the role of his 1954 operatic debut in Verona. Vinco bowed at the Metropolitan Opera as Oroveso in Bellini's *Norma* in 1970 and recently participated in the 1977 Metropolitan Opera tour as Ferrando in *Il Trovatore*. Other Verdi roles include King Philip in *Don Carlo*, Silva in *Ernani*, Padre Guardiano in *La Forza del Destino*, Banquo in *Macbeth*, Zaccaria in *Nabucco* and Fiesco in *Simon Boccanegra*. Vinco has appeared extensively outside of Italy at such opera houses as Covent Garden, the Vienna Staatsoper, the Liceo in Barcelona and the theaters in Hamburg, Lisbon, Munich and Paris, among others. He has been featured on many radio and television broadcasts for RAI-TV in Italy and in many opera recordings. Vinco is the husband of mezzo soprano Fiorenza Cossotto.

ALDO BRAMANTE

In his American debut season with the San Francisco Opera bass Aldo Bramante sings five roles: the Voice of the Oracle in *Idomeneo,* Fafner in *Das Rheingold,* the King in *Aida,* a Mandarin in *Turandot* and Samuele in *Un Ballo in Maschera.* After studying at the Milan Conservatory and La Scala's Centro Artisti Lirici, he won a television competition dedicated to Rossini in 1972 and participated in two televised concerts and a filmed version of the composer's *L'Italiana in Algeri.* In 1974 and 1975 he won vocal competitions in Lonigo, Treviso, Macerata and Legnano. He has sung in both opera and concert throughout Italy in such theaters as La Scala in Milan, and Teatro Donizetti in Bergamo, the Teatro Bibbiena in Mantua, the Teatro Comunale in Genoa and the Teatro Regio in Turin. Since 1972 he has been a regular guest at the Autunno Musicale in Como and in 1974 and 1975 he performed during the Settimana Musicale in Siena. For Italian television he took part in the filming of Pergolesi's *La Serva Padrona.* Recently he sang in *Notte Tempo,* an opera ballet dedicated to composer Silvano Bussotti, at the Teatro Lirico in Milan. At the Vienna festival he performed in Rossini's *La Gazzetta,* Paisiello's *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* and Haydn's *Il Mondo della Luna.* This summer he appeared in Verdi's *I Masnadieri* at the Montepulciano festival under Riccardo Chailly.

MICHAEL TALLEY



Young Texas-born tenor Michael Talley bows with the San Francisco Opera as the Messenger in *Aida* and a Judge in *Un Ballo in Maschera.* A winner of the St. Louis regional auditions of the San Francisco Opera, he joined the Merola Opera Program this past summer and sang Rodolfo in *La Bohème* at Stern Grove and Don Ottavio in Gazzaniga's *Il Convitato di pietra* at the Paul Masson Winery. He won the Il Cenacolo award for his performance at the 1977 grand finals of the San Francisco Opera auditions in August. Talley is currently completing a doctorate in vocal performance at Indiana University, where he studied with former Metropolitan Opera star Margaret Harshaw. At the university he had lead roles in *Carmen, La Traviata, Idomeneo* and *Masked Ball.* He has also been heard in *I Pagliacci* with the Kentucky Opera Association and in *Madama Butterfly* with Norfolk, Virginia Opera. As a soloist Talley has appeared with the Houston, Shreveport and Dallas Symphonies.

> as a bonus, he's just the sort of person who might give it to you. . . . I'm being bombarded with letters and telegrams, asking me finally if I detect *any* chance of your accepting this Egyptian business. . . . Whatever you want they will do, whatever fee you ask they will pay.

Finally he sent Verdi the now famous four-page plot outline of *Aida*, written by Mariette, which aroused the Maestro's theatrical imagination.

> I have read the Egyptian scenario [Verdi wrote Du Locle]. It is well done, splendid in its stage effects, and there are two or three situations which, if not completely novel, are certainly most beautiful. But who wrote it? There is in it the trace of an expert hand, versed in the craft, who knows the theatre well. Now let us learn the Egyptians' pecuniary conditions, and then we will decide.

The story from this point has been told many times. Verdi first had Du Locle write him a full-length libretto in French prose, then engaged the poet Antonio Ghislanzoni to help him render it into singable Italian verse. On July 29 he signed a contract with terms equal to a small pyramid, at least: a 150,000 franc fee ($30,000 then; $250,000 today?); complete casting control; retention of all world rights outside of Egypt; and so on.

Most of the story of *Aida* between July 1870 and December 1871 concerns the creation of the opera itself, not of the Cairo production. While Verdi and Ghislanzoni were "working like dogs" on words and music in Italy, Mariette was in Paris, overseeing the design of sets and costumes, and answering the composer's questions regarding historical detail. He was not altogether pleased with the assignment. "Verdi has already signed a contract for 150,000 francs with the Viceroy," he complained in a letter to his brother. "Du Locle will do very nicely with his author's share. Draneht will get his percentage of all the expenses. The designers and costumiers will all get their money. As for me, I shall go bankrupt paying my Paris hotel bills!"

One of Mariette's major problems was that just two weeks before Verdi had signed his contract, the French had set out on a hopeless war against Prussia. By September, the City of Light was encircled by 250,000 German troops. In November, the gas was cut; the lights went out. The rich were reduced to buying animals from the zoo to eat; the poor to eating dogs, cats, and rats. Every available working man was drafted into the National Guard; work on the Khedive's sets ground to a halt. "I'm writing you in my National Guard uniform, my fingers still numb from rifle practice," Du Locle wrote to Verdi. The only way out of Paris was by pigeon post or balloon, which could not have carried Mariette's decors even if they were finished.

From the start, the old patriot Verdi was sympathetic with the French in their battle with "these damned Goths," and he insisted that two thousand francs of his fee be donated to the care of their wounded. But as the German siege extended to four months, and was followed by four *more* months of internal chaos in Paris, he began to lose patience. His contract gave him the right to mount a production of his *own* if Cairo didn't get theirs on the boards by January. He had promised the European premiere to La Scala, and had half a mind to go ahead and give it to them now.

> You tell me that M. Mariette is locked up in Paris [he wrote to Du Locle]. I have nothing to say about that; if he wishes to share in his country's fate, I can only admire his deed. But I still find it very strange that the administration in Cairo has not written me *one word!* This negligence annoys me. I could very well say, "I have finished my work, I have fulfilled the conditions of my contract. Now you fulfill yours." If the costumes and sets are still in Paris, that is no business of mine.

Photo by Robert Messick.

Tenor James McCracken, who sings Radames in the first six performances this season of *Aida*.

When word of this reached Cairo, the Khedive's functionaries panicked, cried foul, hinted at legal action:

> Signor Muzio informed me, to my great astonishment, of your intention to have your new opera presented at La Scala in Milan. . . . I do not want to invoke here our right of priority, nor the legal grounds of *force majeure*. It is to your loyalty, Maestro, that I appeal, to your tact and your delicacy. . . . To deprive His Highness of the premiere would not only be an injustice; worse than that, it would be a cause to His Highness of the greatest chagrin.

Verdi graciously conceded: "You may assure His Highness the Khedive, that I would never be one to invoke my rights (presuming I have any) at a time like this, and that, with great regret, I am giving up all desire of presenting my opera this season either in Cairo, or at La Scala.

It was not until July 1871 that Mariette returned to Paris, and work resumed on his costumes and sets. Verdi made use of the extra months to redraft many portions of the score. He offered the Khedive's opera manager advice on suitable artistes, and grudgingly accepted his fourth-choice tenor and third-choice conductor. (All his first choices either refused to go to Cairo, or asked too much money. "As soon as one mentions the name of H.H. the Viceroy, people think that he has mines of gold to pour down artists' throats!")

Mariette began packing up his meticulously researched sets to ship to Cairo in October. The mezzo-soprano's measurements were two years out of date; the bill for 42 wigs had not been paid; the armor was late; a month before opening, production expenses had mounted to $64,000. But everything was ready.

So Verdi's *Aida* had its premiere, almost a year behind schedule, on Christmas Eve, 1871. The Khedive, ever anxious for a favorable European press, had invited a number of leading French and Italian critics. When Verdi learned of this, he exploded with rage. The last thing on earth he wanted was to have his opera turned into a publicity event.

> I feel disgusted, humiliated! . . . what a fuss about an opera! . . .

Photo by Robert Messick.

Mezzo soprano Fiorenza Cossotto and her husband, bass Ivo Vinco, examine a prop backstage at the War Memorial Opera House.

Photo by Robert Messick

Maestro Gianandrea Gavazzeni cautions a singer to take a phrase "pianissimo" during a musical coaching session for the current *Aida* production, as assistant conductor Louis Salemno observes.

Journalists, artists, singers, directors, professors, etc., etc., must all carry their stone to the temple of *publicity,* to build a cornice out of wretched gossip that adds nothing to the worth of an opera, but only obscures its true merits. . . . All I want for this opera is a good, and above all an *intelligent* production . . .

By all accounts, he got it. Even the dress rehearsal (which went on for eight hours) was a triumph. Verdi sent the conductor last minute instructions, and begged him to report how it went. On Christmas day, Bottesini wired:

> *Aida* enthusiastic success culminating second finale all performers celebrating Orchestra superb. Huge ovation Viceroy applauding.

The French critic Sigurd Reyer (more a Wagnerite than a Verdian) thought the Cairo premiere clear proof that Verdi (for all his customary "exaggerations" and "outbursts") was moving on: this was a new Verdi, he declared, more musically sophisticated, far beyond *Don Carlos*. The Maestro had obviously been studying his Berlioz, his Meyerbeer, his Gounod, his Wagner. ("After 35 years, to be called an imitator!" Verdi fumed.)

Verdi was right about the fog of publicity. It is very hard to discern, from the opening night reviews, exactly *what* the Cairo premiere was like. We have color sketches of Mariette's magnificent costumes and decors. We know there were Arab trumpeters, a local military band, and 300 people onstage. The soprano must have been all right; she went on to sing in the opera in seven other cities. But contemporary European critics (like me) were so fascinated by the exotic and unlikely locale that some of them devoted more space to the audience than to the performance. One critic wrote of ticket speculators' prices; of chattering society dames; of the Copts and Jews in the audience, "with strange headgears, impossible costumes and colors that clashed so violently that nothing worse could be imagined." *Every* reporter there took note of the three boxes in the second tier covered by white muslin, where the Khedive's harem sat screened from public view.

Actually, Verdi didn't take the Cairo premiere very seriously, except for his 150,000 franc fee. To him, the European premiere—which he directed personally—was the only opening that mattered, even though (as he admitted) "we certainly won't have the opulence of the Cairo production."

The Scala opening was another huge success, with 32 curtain calls and a bejeweled sceptre for the composer. Before the decade was out *Aida* had been performed at 159 other theatres, from Moscow to Sao Paolo. It reached San Francisco—at the new theater in

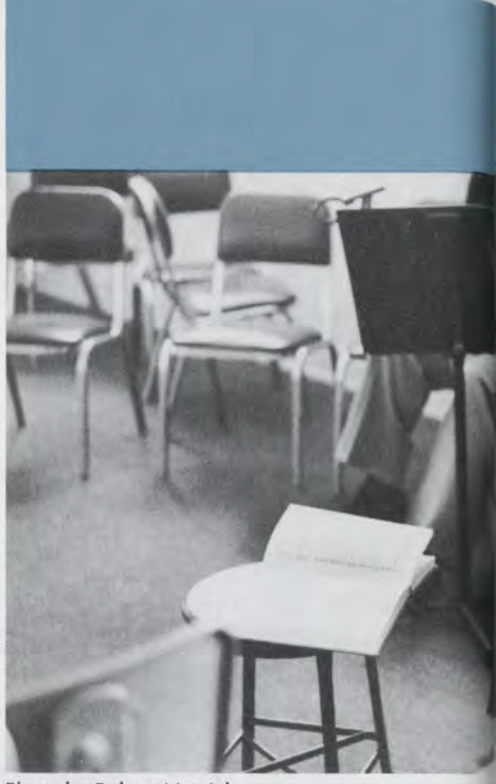


Photo by Robert Messick.

Lucky Baldwin's lavish Market and Powell hotel—in October, 1877. They did it under the stars at the Pyramids in 1912. Billy Rose, with elephants and nudes, did it. Everybody does it. *Aida* is probably the world's most popular opera: it had racked up over 600 performances at the Met by 1976.

The Italian Opera troupe at Cairo went on doing *Aida* every chance they got —about 300 performances in the first hundred years. In 1971, Saleh Abdoun, an Egyptian artillery officer-become-opera director, was making ready a gala centennial performance of the work that had made his opera house famous.

The Times, London
Cairo, October 28, 1971.

The Cairo Opera House, a landmark of the city, was destroyed today by fire. Several fire brigades were called to the theatre, which was built by the Khedive Ismail in 1869 to celebrate the completion of the Suez Canal. There were no casualties.

The fire started on the top floor of the Renaissance-style building. Hundreds of people gathered in Opera

Canadian baritone Norman Mittelmann prepares for Amonasro.

Square as news of the fire spread. Several Egyptian actors who had performed at the Opera House rushed to the scene, some of them sobbing.

The fire occurred at a time when preparations are going on for the celebrations of the centenary of the first performance of *Aida* . . .

Emperors, kings, presidents, and heads of government have attended performances at the Cairo Opera House. Performances have been given by companies such as the Bolshoi and the Comédie Française.

Stage sets, curtains, furniture, and busts of famous actors were scattered among the ruins today. . . . The Opera House was among the richest in the world in equipment, scenery, and costumes, all of which were destroyed.

The site, today, is a parking lot. □

David Littlejohn is a writer, critic, and Professor of Journalism at the University of California in Berkeley. He is the author of eight books, including *The Man Who Killed Mick Jagger*, a novel published earlier this year.

Aida Was Her Signature Role
continued from p. 34

it perfectly musically, to know everybody's parts, before going on stage. There's so much else to do when you're on the stage that if you're not really in complete control of a role, if you're not *very* prepared, you will give very little. There's more to opera than just memorizing the musical notes.

Of course there's not just one way to sing a phrase. Each voice is different and each artist is different. You don't want to be a carbon copy of Muzio. Maybe I can achieve a different effect with my voice than she did with hers. When I was singing *Forza* with Bruno Walter, he said to me, 'Stella, how do you sing it here? How shall we do it together?' I said, 'I'll look at you and you look at me,' and we were *benissimo*. It was magnificent the way he could conduct Italian opera with an Italian sensitivity. He had a great nobility of character and really helped the artists. You know, great conductors are not rigid. They're much more flexible than mediocre ones, who often have some *idée fixe* about the way the music must sound."

At the mention of Bruno Walter, she recalls other conductors with whom she sang in the United States — Szell, Leinsdorf, Steinberg, Rudolph. She rushes off to get two huge scrapbooks full of photos which show her in various roles and with various colleagues —Walter, Richard Strauss, Zandonai, Gigli, Pertile, Lauri-Volpi, Melchior, Bjoerling, etc. Her face lights up as she relates anecdotes about certain performers and performances, and darkens when she cannot immediately remember the name of a former colleague. The past floods back with all its emotional impact. Any earlier hint of wariness and reticence, which belied an all-too-human vulnerability, as if she were afraid of being misrepresented after many years' absence from the public eye, has completely disappeared and given way to the natural expansiveness and warmth of a compassionate artist and human being.

A resident of the Los Angeles area for over 25 years, Miss Roman has recently returned to New York City to live. ("I always knew I'd go back to New York. It's such an exciting place.") For one thing, it brings her closer to her son Flavio, who is a neurologist in Boston and whose four sons have evidently inherited their grandmother's musical talents. "They already have their own quartet," says the soprano with obvious pride. She would like to be a part of forming an academy to help young

Stella Roman's last role with the San Francisco Opera was the Marschallin in *Der Rosenkavalier* in 1951.

singers prepare for a career. This would mean assisting them not only to correct and improve the voice, but to interpret roles by working on entire scenes in a master class situation. "I trained with great singers, composers and conductors. I think I can share my experience with young singers. You can learn more from a singer than a vocal coach because a singer knows what it means when the curtain goes up. Then no one can help you; not the impresario, not the manager, not the secretary, not mamma and papa, not your friends. You have to be ready yourself. It cannot come from anybody else." □

From Booty-Bearers to Women Attendants!

by Madlyn Resener

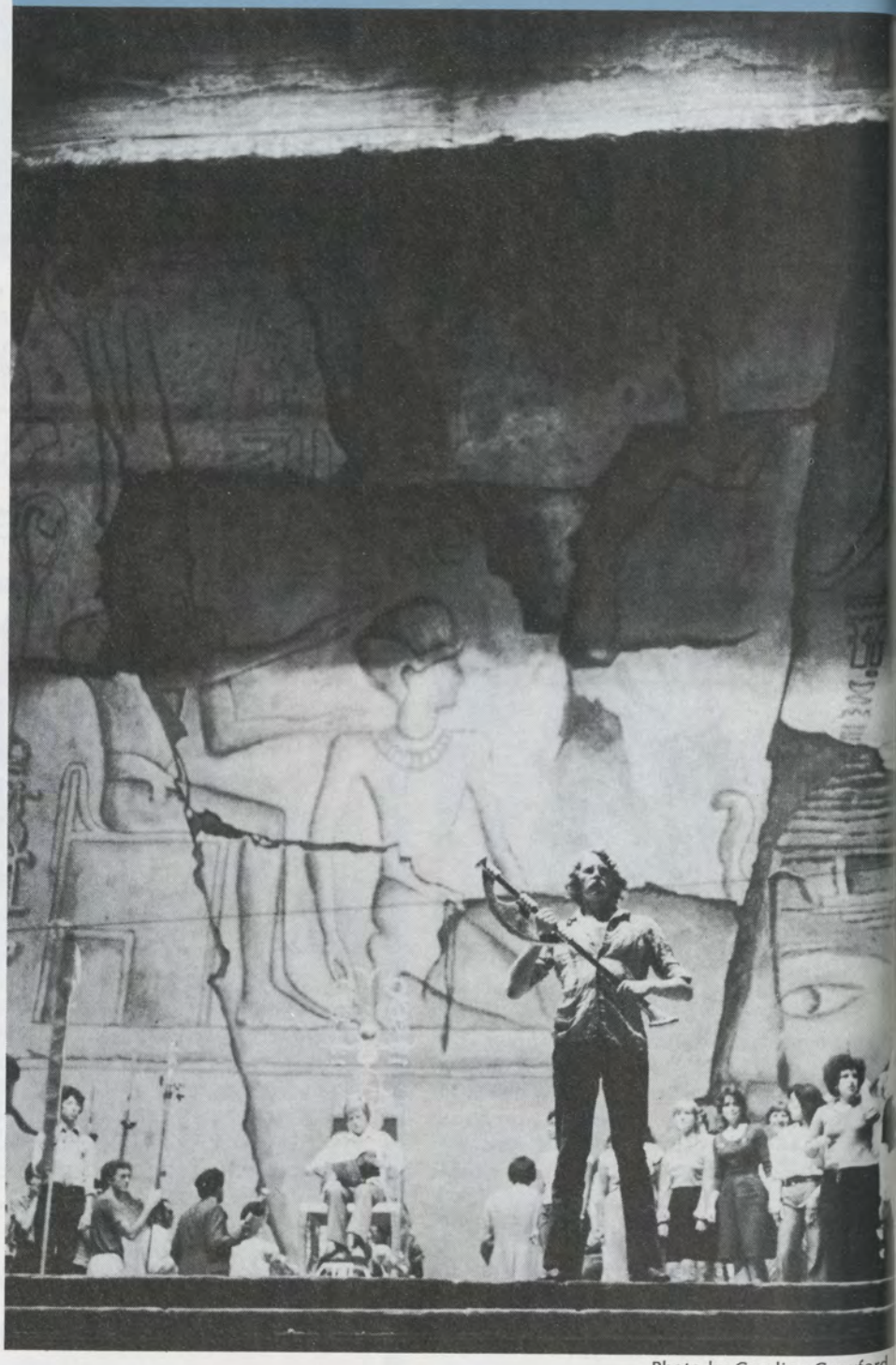


Photo by Caroline Crawford.

Paul Ricks has never sung a note on stage but he has crowned Boris Godunov czar of all Russians, beheaded Maria Stuarda, and stood guard for Otello in San Francisco Opera productions. Paul is a "supernumerary," that is, a non-singing cast member, referred to more generally in theater as an "extra." Basically, supernumeraries are used to fill up stage space, to make a crowd scene look more crowded. On another level, however, "supers" contribute to the making of grand spectacle opera, to a highly theatrical production of opera.

Because they have traditionally been used to swell the ranks of warriors, supers are often called "spear carriers." Modern opera productions, though, make considerable use of extras. Parts in which they are cast range from "the perambulatory potted palm to a 10-second stroll across the stage, to being on stage a long time and doing very complicated and crucial business," says Tom Curran, captain of the supernumerary department. Some opera libretti have written into them non-singing parts, for jugglers, acrobats, and the like. But most simply call for troops, crowds, or party guests, leaving their numbers and staging up to the director's discretion.

In *Aida,* for instance, parts for supers include soldiers, guards, priests, archers, booty-bearers, chair-carriers, and women attendants to Amneris. Their

Enjoying his moment of glory at a rehearsal of *Aida* is supernumerary Ron Cavin.

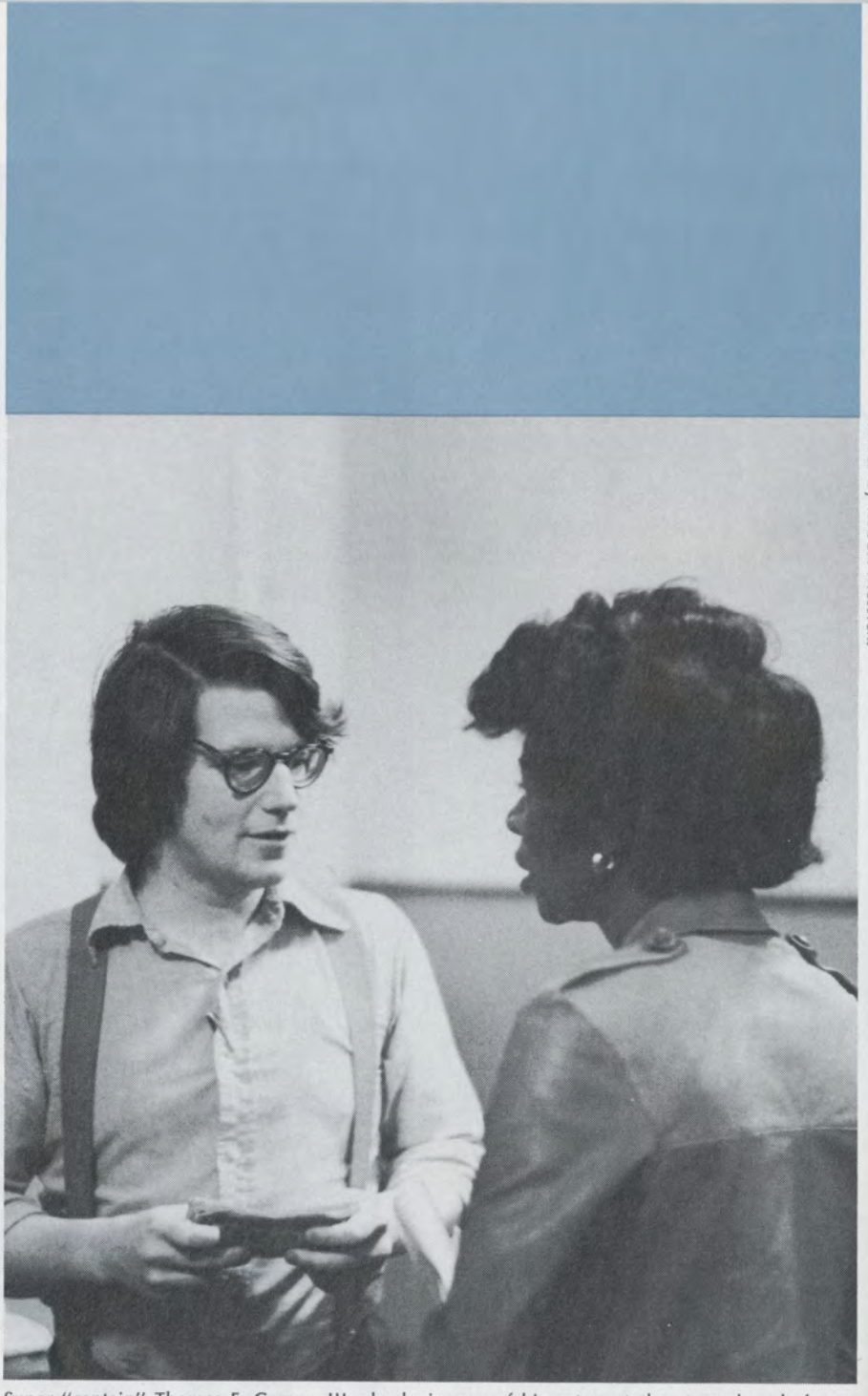


Photo by Robert Messick.

Super "captain" Thomas E. Curran, III, checks in one of his extras at the stage door before a performance.

numbers vary greatly from one production to another. Sonja Frisell has cast 115 in her production this year, the Metropolitan Opera uses 86 in its production, and some European companies call for an extravagant 300-400. Occasionally, supers will be used in *Aida* as prisoners and victims, Memphis citizens and flower maidens.

About one third of the present 150 members of the San Francisco Opera supernumerary department got their start in the 1972 *Aida*. Many had had little or no theater experience before their appearance in the second act as the victorious Egyptian troops returning to Memphis. Supers are by and large non-professionals in theater or music; they are most often simply opera-lovers who relish the chance to

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Photo by Robert Messick

In costume for her walk-on part in *Adriana Lecouvreur* earlier this season is supernumerary Barbara Clifford.

work with the world's best in opera.

"About half of them are mad about opera, and half are a little bit hammy," is how Curran, who has headed the supers department since 1972, describes the crew. He adds: "We have two bona fide millionaires, attornies enough to start a law firm, a couple of college professors, several school teachers, one junior high school principal, a bank manager, the art director for a large department store, various salesmen, housewives, students, the professionally unemployed. We have black, white, Chinese and Filipino supers."

Tom himself works as a museum technologist at the Oakland Museum, where he is responsible for pulling good photographic prints from old glass film plates in fragile condition. Though he no longer acts, or "supers," in opera productions, Tom is perhaps the busiest of the supers, being responsible for the recruitment, casting, minor coaching and directing, and general keeping track of department members. He receives from the opera directors requests for supers and then assigns parts accordingly, consulting the charts he keeps on each super, which list parts played and "body specifications."

Often directors are quite specific in their requests; this year Tom got calls for one rotund executioner, four acrobats, 60 men, women, and children under 5'6" tall, several jugglers, and two "little people." The number of supers asked for ranged from 115 for *Aida* to one for *Katya Kabanova*.

"For their time and commitment, it's no minor contribution supers make, and they do it uncomplainingly," Tom says. Supers are paid a pittance for rehearsals and performances, really just enough to cover transportation costs for many, who commute from as far away as San Jose to the south, Concord to the east, and Sonoma to the north. A role as a super in an opera generally involves from 10 to 12 rehearsals, and 6 to 10 performances.

Although in theory supers are silent performers, they are on occasion asked to move their mouths as if talking or singing, or to make "miscellaneous noise," such as schreiks, screams, groans, or laughter. In *Das Rheingold*, for example, supers cast as the munchkin inhabitants of the underground region of Nibelheim scatter screaming when they are visited by the opera principals.

Occasionally, a super will be used as the double for a principal singer, to indicate some symbolic change in character. In Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi*, in 1975, Janusc of the supers department played the corpse of Buoso Donati. In ghastly green and grey makeup, his jaw strapped shut, he was dragged around by Donati's relatives, intent on finding the dead man's will. Janusc's performance was widely applauded, and he was given a curtain call which had him popping out of a chest in which he had been shoved. This season, Janusc doubles for *Faust* in the first scene of that opera, as the old man reflects back regretfully on a life ill-spent.

Sometimes rather elaborate stage maneuvers are required of supers, demanding of them great coordination of their group movements on stage. In the 1974 production of *The Daughter of the Regiment*, director Lotfi Mansouri arranged a piece for four supers, who came out on a bare stage dressed in powdered wigs, yellow coats, paisley waistcoats, bringing with them chairs, a harpsichord and a sofa. They were asked to walk in perfect waltz-time, to place down the furniture, bow to one another and exit, all to the music. As Tom remembers it, "not one note was wasted."

In *The Flying Dutchman*, in 1975, supers were cast as the dead crew of the Dutchman's ship, and for several minutes held center stage alone, taking their cues from the music only, and looking ghastly and hideous as they lowered an anchor and rigged a sail, lurching ominously all the while.

And in the 1973 Spring Opera production of the *St. Matthew Passion*, director Gerald Freedman cast ten supers as apostles, who were on stage for three-fourths of the show-time, and who were responsible for carrying the show visually, since the chorus was stationary. Reviewers of the show raved about the performance. Don Crawford, a

super since 1969, recalls the intense emotional involvement of the supers in that opera. A number of them who appeared in the first act as apostles, were cast in the second as part of a mean, screaming, rowdy crowd, jeering Jesus of Nazareth as he stood before Pontius Pilate. In addition to the fast switch of character called for, many of the supers reacted strongly to Douglas Lawrence's portrayal of Jesus Christ. "It was so damn real you began shaking," Don says. "The greatest danger is being overwhelmed by it all. You can find you are the only super standing on stage with your spear. The rest have all exited and you're still marveling at the soprano."

Before he appeared in *Aida,* Don had very little interest in opera. During the opera performances he attended at the insistence of a friend, he found himself watching the non-singers on stage, wondering how they fit into the whole show. Hearing that supers were needed for *Aida* "in all sizes and shapes," Don showed up to audition. He was picked, he says, because the director needed a group captain who could march, and marching came easy to an ex-Navy man like Don. Since that first *Aida,* Don has been in 32 operas, giving a total of 158 performances. Some seasons that means putting in an average of 30 hours a week. By profession Don is a graphic artist who does technical illustrations for a publishing house. Because his work schedule is flexible, he is often asked by other supers to substitute for them in daytime performances. The parts he has played have been as varied as a houseboy in *Madama Butterfly* whose name translated as "rose petals falling from the sky," to Robespierre in *Andrea Chenier.* He regrets only that at his height (5'8") he has never played a cardinal, though he has twice been a bishop.

"I was a rotund little monk for years," he says, with a smile to show he's not too bothered by that bit of type-casting.

For Don, as well as the other supers, one of the greatest rewards of performing as an extra is that it often brings one into direct contact with the principal singers of an opera. Don tells of one literal run-in he had with Joan Sutherland in the 1971 *Maria Stuarda.* During the blocking rehearsals held in the summertime, long before the principals had arrived, Don had been coached to charge down a ramp to arrest Joan Sutherland, then indicated by a spot on the floor. All went well until the first full rehearsal when, just as Don made his dash across the stage, Miss Sutherland turned unexpectedly to face him, resulting in collision, rather than capture. Don was still searching for something to say when he was saved by the grande dame's wry, "You're supposed to take me off dear, not stop me."

Asked what makes the long rehearsals, the great expenditure of time and energy worthwhile, Don replies: "Even if you're just standing there with a spear in your hand, if you have the world's greatest tenor and the world's greatest baritone and bass, and a soprano or two, and they are singing out with a full chorus, and the orchestra's booming away in the pit, and you are right in the middle of it all, then there is no greater sound.

"Maybe you're just walking across the stage, but if you're leading the procession, you know everyone is looking at you."

An enthusiastic audience can mean a lot. "If people are in good voice, and you hear the house coming down, the spirit affects the whole cast, even the makeup people." Supers will then "march very sharp," he adds.

For Paul Ricks, the trickiest part of supering is the exact timing needed for responding to word cues sung in foreign languages. Especially when sung in chorus, rather than by a solo voice, it can be a challenge for the musically untrained ear to pick them up. In *Rigoletto,* for example, Paul was to rush on stage at the exact moment Monterone finished an aria and take him away to be executed. Too early an entrance would have distracted from the song, too tardy a one would have left Monterone waiting foolishly for his own arrest.

Since supers are often cast in multiple parts for one opera, they must often undergo complete costume changes —including changes of wig, makeup and beard, in as little as five minutes. Between the church scene and the public square scene of the third act of *Faust,* 27 supers must be changed, have their wigs re-combed, and new makeup applied. Usually, such hasty changes are done in the wings of the stage. Often, too, supers are "overdressed," that is, dressed in layers, with articles of clothing from each different costume.

With a forehead that stops at the top of his head, long, grey strands of hair, highly arched eyebrows, large ears and ruddy complexion, Paul Ricks looks like the monk he is often cast as. This season he played a sullen drunk in *Katya Kabanova;* he was the only super used in the opera, and shared the stage alone with Elisabeth Söderström in her last act aria, as he silently menaced her. In other seasons, he has played the parts of beggar, knight, soldier, clown, chef, innkeeper, waiter, patriarch, altar boy, lackey, coachman and Syrian spy. His very first role was in *La Traviata* in 1969, when he walked across the stage as a waiter carrying a turkey on a tray, afraid he'd fall at any moment into the orchestra pit.

Although he works a regular shift as a receptionist in the medical outpatient clinic of Letterman hospital, Paul figures that at peak season he easily puts in a 40-hour week as a super. Often this involves working a "turn-around day," with a matinee of one opera in the afternoon, and another show in the evening. He uses his vacation time from work for daytime shows and rehearsals.

Barbara Clifford, a super since the 1972 *Aida*, says that women supers are less used in opera productions because "there are more calls for soldiers and priests than for maids and whores." But even so, some directors make special use of supers because they seek a more "theatrically active" presentation. Several of the parts Barbara has played were written into the show as an option by the director. Such was the case in the 1974 *Don Giovanni*, where she played Donna Elvira's maid and was staged in the second act listening coquettishly from an upstairs balcony to Don Juan's serenade.

"There is so much latitude in supering," Barbara says. "Supers provide the ballast in stage productions; from mass scenes to those lovely, juicy bit parts in opera."

Barbara first supered in *Aida* as a substitute for a friend. Before that, her theater experience had included classes in movement and ballet at San Francisco State university, and twelve years of music study as a piano major at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. Drama has been an essential part of her life since she first memorized Shakespearian lines as a child to overcome a bad stammer. She works now as a free-lance translator, commuting to the opera house from her east bay apartment. Supers are all "theater rats," she will tell you, they often put much extra time into strengthening their parts, however small, by reading librettos and studying scores. In the 1974 production of *Manon Lescaut*, Barbara added her own touch to her role as a flower girl in Paris by throwing out the plastic flowers provided her and substituting real chrysanthemums and carnations of her own, spending on them more than she earned for the show.

Barbara sees a trend towards the "theatricalization of opera," in which "the opportunities for acting are becoming greater and greater. Those supers who are conscientious are going to have a good time." She can think of many ways in which supers could be used to dramatize opera scenes. Her own fantasy role would be as a double for Marguerite in the last act of *Faust*, to be hoisted to heaven by wires. "It may mean going to Hamburg," she says with a laugh, since European opera companies are more likely than American to use such techniques.

Supering demands much time and dedication of those involved. But on their nights off, many supers are in the audience. Don Crawford, who had never seen an opera performance before moving to San Francisco 10 years ago, now says, "If I'm not on stage, I'm out there watching."

Some supers may keep in mind the possibilities for advancement in opera work. A couple of supers with trained voices have in fact auditioned for openings in the chorus. And then there's the story of Lotfi Mansouri, now director of the Canadian Opera in Toronto, whose first involvement in opera was as a super for the San Francisco Opera during a run in Los Angeles. But most supernumeraries say that what keeps them coming back each season is those special moments on stage, hearing one's favorite aria sung by Beverly Sills just fifteen feet away. □

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continued from p. 64

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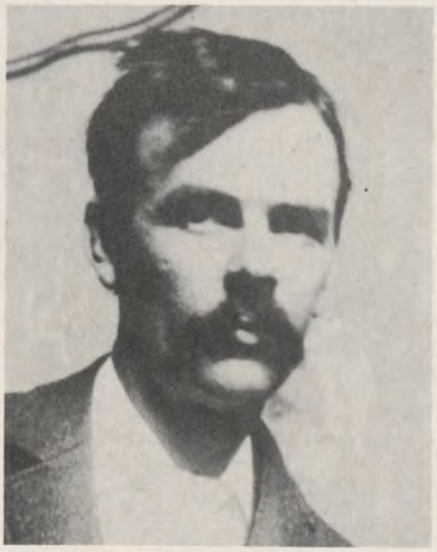
The Covers

Audiences will undoubtedly have noticed that the covers of the 1977 San Francisco Opera Magazine are strikingly different from any in the past. Each program features the reproduction of a creation by a California artist, which conveys the mood and spirit of a particular opera. The inspiration for this idea, which coincidentally celebrates the ties that have existed between art and music over the centuries, came from the tremendous response to last year's *Angle of Repose* poster. A painting by Sam Tchakalian was chosen for reproduction to commemorate the world premiere of Andrew Imbrie's opera based on the Pulitzer Prize winning novel by California writer Wallace Stegner.

The works of art featured on the 1977 covers are not commissioned, but selected from among existing compositions by San Francisco Opera's Director of Public Relations, Herbert Scholder,



Das Rheingold:

Arthur F. Mathews (1860-1945), *The Wave* (circa 1910), Oakland Museum

Renowned artist and teacher Arthur F. Mathews and his wife Lucia were leaders in the "California Decorative" style which was so important in the post-earthquake reconstruction of San Francisco. Mathews did extensive interior decorations for private and public buildings, including the murals for the Curran Theatre, executed in 1922. His early work, reflecting a background in architecture and French academic training, shows the influence of the late 19th century classical revival. *The Wave*, with its prominent frame, is clearly within the Art Nouveau tradition.

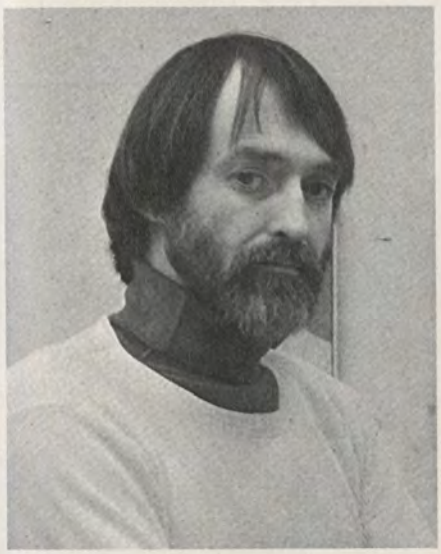
Faust:

Bruce A. McGaw (1935-), *Figure* (1957); Oakland Museum

Berkeley-born Bruce A. McGaw studied painting at the California College for the Arts and Crafts with Leon Goldin and Richard Diebenkorn. Currently teaching at the San Francisco Art Institute, he has exhibited in museums and galleries, primarily in the Bay Area, since 1956. *Figure*, painted when McGaw was involved in the Bay Area figurative art movement, which reacted against the limited humanistic possibilities of purely abstract art, looks forward to his later work, combining the concrete and the abstract and touching on myth and metaphor.

who initiated the project. The ten selections, eight paintings and two sculptures, represent a cross-section of California artists, living and dead, men and women, abstract and representational. Some of them may prove controversial, and it is not expected that everyone will agree with all of the choices.

The San Francisco Opera would like to extend its thanks for assisting in this project to Harvey L. Jones, Deputy Curator of Art, the Oakland Museum; Ursula Gropper, Grapestake Gallery, San Francisco; Jacqueline Anhalt, Jacqueline Anhalt Gallery, Los Angeles; Betty Asher, Curatorial Assistant, Modern Art, Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Ruth Braunstein, Braunstein/Quay Gallery, San Francisco, and Edwin Janss, Jr., The Janss Foundation/University Art Museum, University of California, Berkeley.



Aida:

Llyn Foulkes (1934-), *Blue Landscape* (1963); Los Angeles County Museum of Art

Painter Llyn Foulkes now resides in Los Angeles and has taught there at UCLA and the Art Center. Exhibiting since 1959, he has won several awards, including the first prize Medal of France at the Fifth Biennale at the Musée d'Art Moderne in Paris. Foulkes has had one-man shows in Paris, New York and various places in California, and group shows throughout the United States and Europe. His works are represented in the collection of such museums as the Museum des 20. Jahrhunderts in Vienna, the Musée Beaubourg in Paris, the Chicago Art Institute and the Whitney, The Guggenheim and the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

Ariadne auf Naxos:

Setsko Karasuda (1949-), *Green Wave* (1976); Fluor Building, Santa Ana

Young Japanese-born Setsko Karasuda received her B.A. in Art from UCLA and her M.A. from Fresno State University, specializing in oil painting. She had her first one-woman show in October, 1976, at the Anhalt Gallery in Los Angeles. In connection with *Green Wave*, Ms. Karasuda states, "The ocean is a capricious being for me. At times I see it as a calm water that reflects the clouds and sky above like platinum. At other times it is deep blue and jade green and lovingly plays and beckons me to its frolic."

1977 San Francisco

	Monday	Tuesday
September		
	12	Adriana Lecouvreur 8 pm *B* 13
	19	Idomeneo 8 pm *A,C* 20
	26	Katya Kabanova 8 pm *A,B* 27
October	3	Das Rheingold 8 pm *A,C* 4
San Francisco Opera FAIR Sunday, October 9, 1977 Noon to 6 pm War Memorial Opera House	10	Faust 8 pm *A,B* 11
	17	Aida 8 pm *A,B* 18
	Aida 7:30 pm *D,E* 24	Ariadne auf Naxos 8 pm *A,C* 25
November	31	Turandot 8 pm *A,B* 1
San Francisco Opera Guild FOL de ROL Monday, November 14, 1977 8:30 pm Civic Auditorium	7	I Puritani 8 pm *A,C* 8
	FOL DE ROL 8:30 pm 14	Un Ballo in Maschera 7:30 pm *D,F* 15
	21	Un Ballo in Maschera 8 pm *A,C* 22

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Opera Calendar

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
		Opening Night Adriana Lecouvreur 8 pm *A* 9	Idomeneo 8 pm *J,K* 10	11
Idomeneo 7:30 pm *D,E* 14	15	Adriana Lecouvreur 8 pm *G,H* 16	Katya Kabanova 8 pm *J,L* 17	Idomeneo 2 pm *M,N* 18
Katya Kabanova 7:30 pm *D,F* 21	22	Idomeneo 8 pm *G,I* 23	Adriana Lecouvreur 8 pm *J,L* 24	Katya Kabanova 2 pm *M,O* 25
Adriana Lecouvreur 7:30 pm *D,E* 28	29	Katya Kabanova 8 pm *G,H* 30	Das Rheingold 8 pm *J,K* 1	Adriana Lecouvreur 2 pm *M,N* 2
Faust 7:30 pm *D,F* 5	6	Das Rheingold 8 pm *G,I* 7	Faust 8 pm *J,L* 8	S.F. OPERA FAIR Noon to 6 pm 9
Das Rheingold 7:30 pm *D,E* 12	13	Faust 8 pm *G,H* 14	Aida 8 pm *J,K* 15	Das Rheingold 2 pm *M,O* 16
Ariadne auf Naxos 7:30 pm *D,F* 19	20	Aida 8 pm *G,I* 21	Rheingold 1:30 pm *X* Ariadne 8 pm *J,K* 22	Faust 2 pm *M,N* 23
26	27	Ariadne auf Naxos 8 pm *G,H* 28	Turandot 8 pm *J,L* 29	Aida ? pm *M,O* 30
I Puritani 7:30 pm *D,F* 2	3	Turandot 8 pm *G,H* 4	Aida 1:30 pm *X* I Puritani 8 pm *J,K* 5	Ariadne auf Naxos 2 pm *M,N* 6
Turandot 7:30 pm *D,F* 9	10	I Puritani 8 pm *G,I* 11	Un Ballo in Maschera 8 pm *J,L* 12	Turandot 2 pm *M,O* 13
Turandot 7:30 pm *E* 16	17	Aida 8 pm *H* 18	Turandot 1:30 pm *X* Ballo 8 pm *K* 19	I Puritani 2 pm *M,N* 20
I Puritani 7:30 pm *E* 23	Aida** 8 pm 24	Un Ballo in Maschera 8 pm *G,I* 25	Faust 1:30 pm *X**** Aida 8 pm *L* 26	Un Ballo in Maschera 2 pm *M,O* 27

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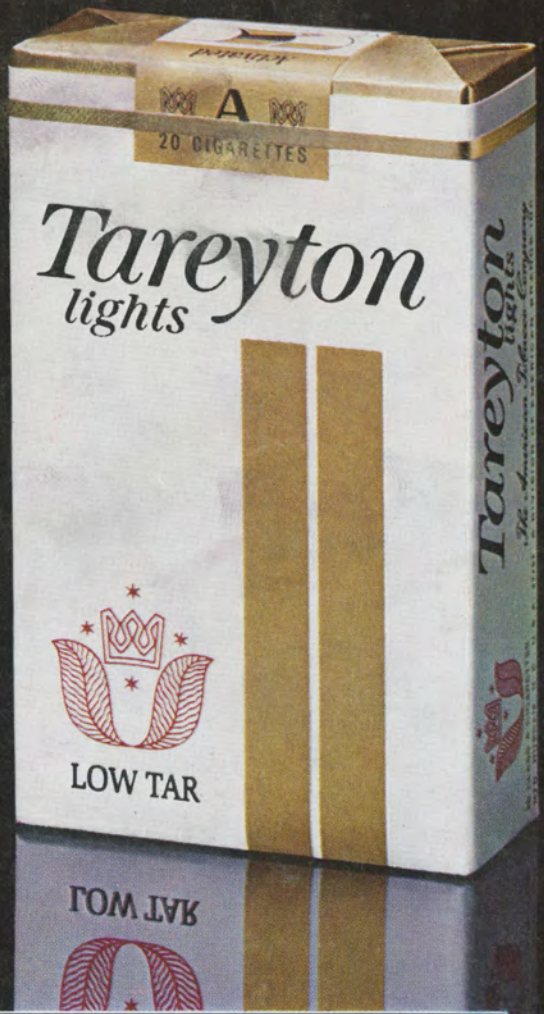

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