

Die Lustige Witwe  
(The Merry Widow)

1981

Saturday, October 3, 1981	8:00 PM
Tuesday, October 6, 1981	8:00 PM
Friday, October 9, 1981	8:00 PM
Tuesday, October 13, 1981	7:30 PM
Friday, October 16, 1981	8:00 PM
Wednesday, October 21, 1981	8:00 PM
Saturday, October 24, 1981	11:00 AM (Radio broadcast)
Sunday, October 25, 1981	1:00 PM
Wednesday, October 28, 1981	7:30 PM
Saturday, October 31, 1981	8:00 PM

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# SAN FRANCISCO OPERA



## The Merry Widow

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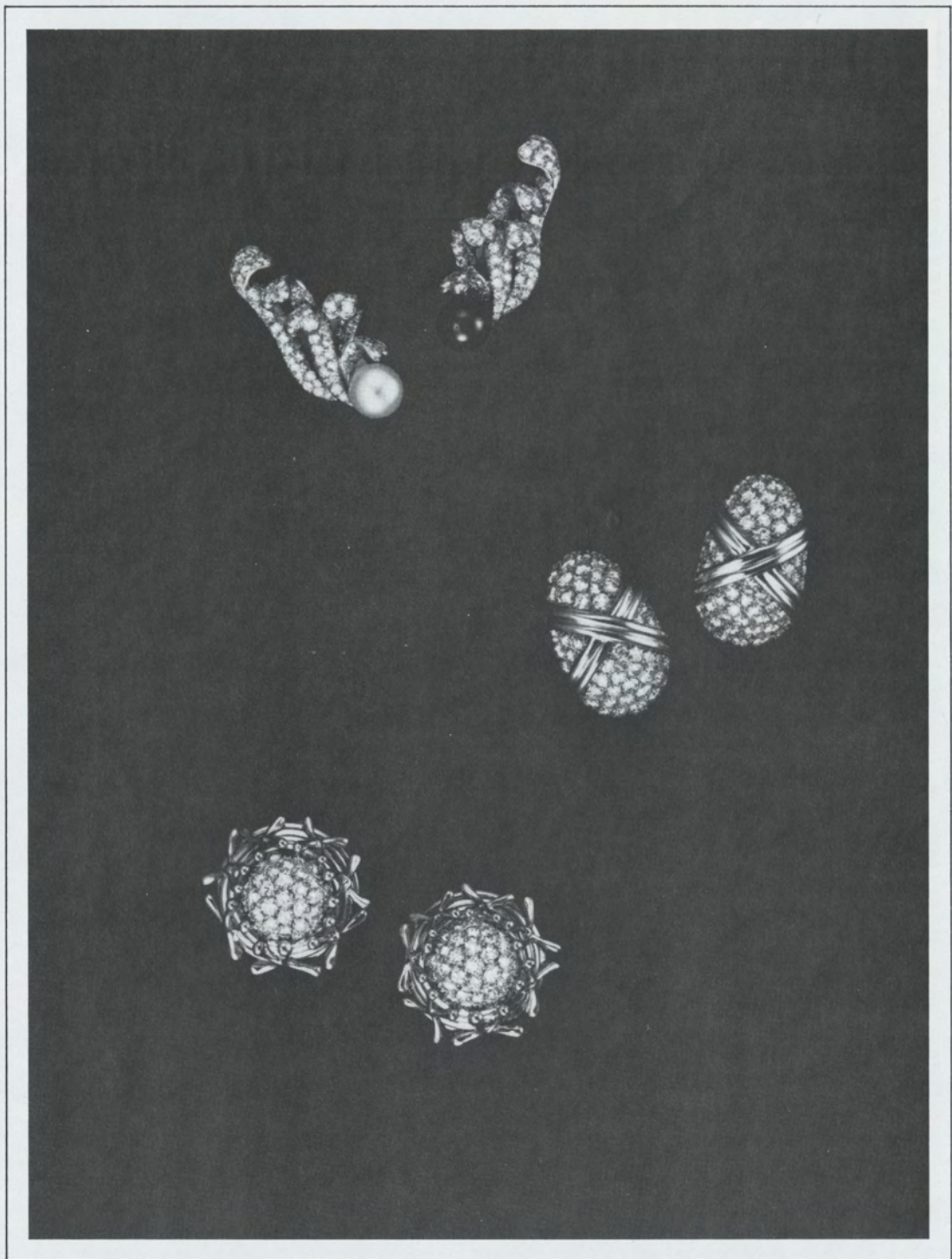


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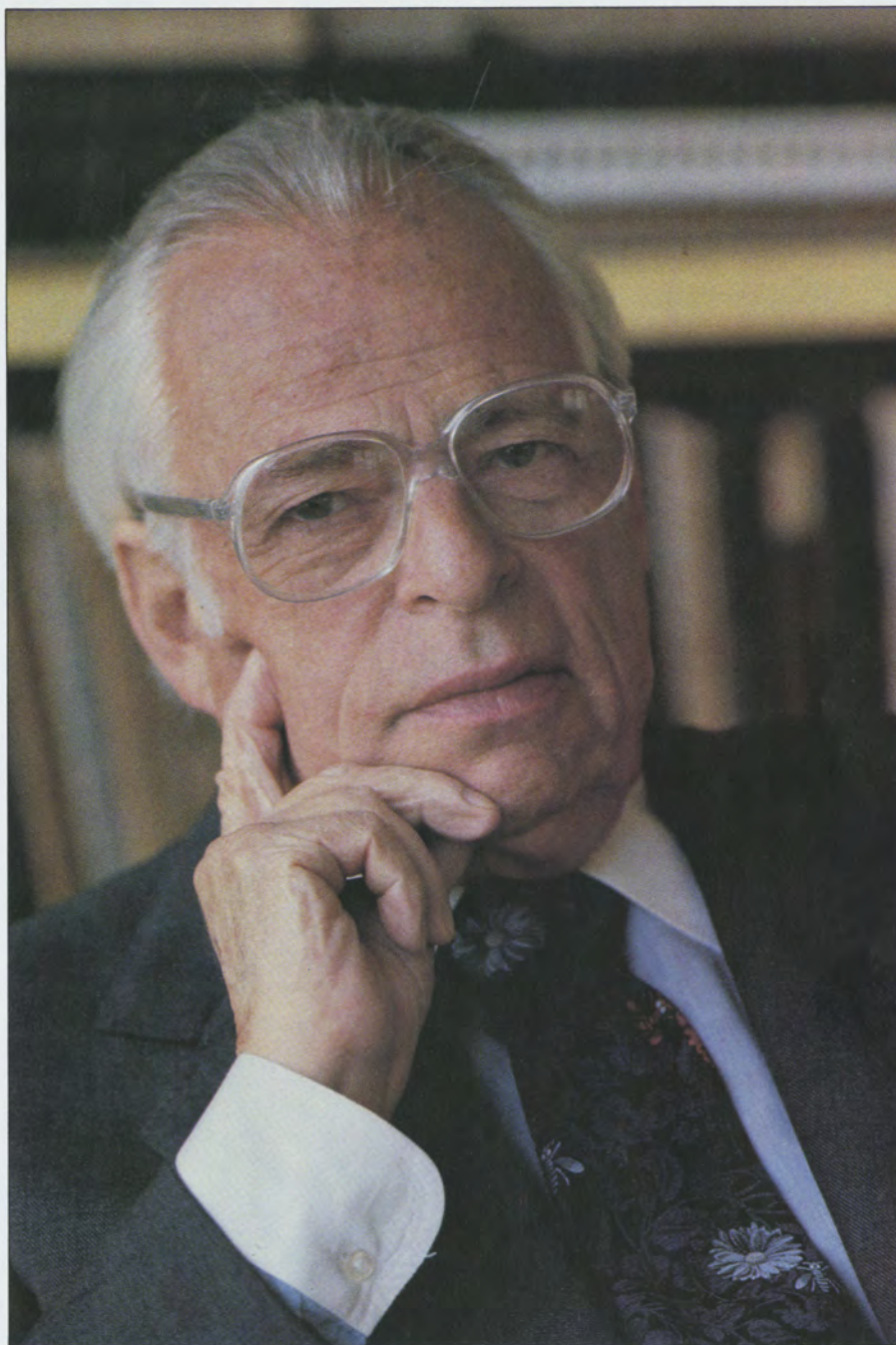
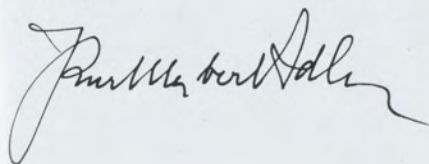
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A warm welcome to our 59th annual Fall Season, which climaxes the busiest year in the history of San Francisco Opera. We welcome back a host of dear friends of the Company and of mine, and we are also happy to introduce a number of exceptional artists new to San Francisco. Two of the most popular works in all opera — Verdi's *Aida* and Bizet's *Carmen* — receive new productions; the new *Aida* is San Francisco Opera's contribution to San Francisco's city-wide celebration of the 800th anniversary of the birth of St. Francis of Assisi, the City's patron. Three works are presented here in premiere performances: Rossini's *Semiramide*, Massenet's *Le Cid* (which has never before been heard in the American West) and Lehár's *The Merry Widow*. Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, the original version of *Katerina Ismailova*, is heard for the first time in 45 years in the United States. After this season, I will step down from the position of general director of the Company, having enjoyed 38 years of association with San Francisco Opera. Together with you, our audiences and faithful supporters, we have built an opera company of international renown. In 1954, when I assumed directorship, there were five weeks of grand opera in San Francisco; this year, we are proud to present a total of twenty in the War Memorial Opera House. With inauguration of the Summer Festival, an extended Fall Season and the activities of our affiliates, opera is now a permanent part of the vibrance that makes San Francisco such an enviable place to live. I hope this new season, and many more to come, will bring you the artistic satisfaction you desire. Thank you, and may you enjoy our sincere efforts.



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# SAN FRANCISCO OPERA

Kurt Herbert Adler, General Director

Editors: Thomas O'Connor, Arthur Kaplan • Art Director: Frank Benson • Editorial Assistants: Robert M. Robb, John Schauer  
Editorial Offices: San Francisco Opera, War Memorial Opera House, San Francisco, CA 94102. Phone (415) 861-4008.

## THE MERRY WIDOW/1981

### FEATURES

#### A Star is Born:

#### Lehár in Vienna

by Marc Roth 27

In *The Merry Widow*, Lehár wrote a work that captures the spirit and contradictions of *fin-de-siècle* Vienna.

#### Dame Joan: Loony Ladies

#### and Happy Heroines

by Quaintance Eaton 36

"La Stupenda" talks about her career's expansion from the realm of the mad heroines of the *bel canto* repertoire to the light-hearted ladies of operetta, like the Merry Widow.

#### What's a Girl Like You Doing

#### in the Opera House?

by David Littlejohn 68

After years of being exploited in low theatrical ventures, *The Merry Widow* has regained the respectability it enjoyed in the early 1900s.



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#### THE COVER

All 11 works in the 1981 Fall Season take their names from central characters. The covers for the magazines focus on non-operatic depictions of these title heroes and heroines, as seen through the filter of various other artistic media.

*THE MERRY WIDOW*: *Peinture murale* in Maxim's restaurant in Paris, the setting for Act III of Lehár's operetta. Photo courtesy of Maxim's.

### DEPARTMENTS

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# FROM THE PRESIDENT

When Kurt Herbert Adler lays down his baton after conducting the final performance of this 59th annual Fall Season, he will retire after nearly three decades as general director of the Company. It is characteristic that his last year in charge is a spectacular one of unparalleled activity and ambition. After launching a new San Francisco Summer Festival, he has assembled a fall opera season that, in breadth of repertoire and caliber of artists, is quite simply the dream of every opera lover.

We are deeply indebted to Mr. Adler for his development of San Francisco Opera to become one of the leading opera companies of the world. I know that all patrons of San Francisco Opera wish him good health and happiness in his retirement during the years to come, a retirement he has earned and richly deserves.

As I am sure you know, Terry McEwen takes on the responsibility of leading the Company this coming winter. He is committed to maintaining the exceptional standards of quality that have characterized the Adler years, and we are fortunate to have someone of his ability, determination and vision.

As mentioned in previous letters, costs of producing operas of the quality for which we are famous are staggering, and ticket revenues cover

only 55-60 per cent of the costs, even with sold-out houses. Further, the expenses of developing our new Summer Festival are significant and, of course, the ravages of inflation wreak particular havoc with our finances since we are a labor-intensive enterprise. As a result, our need for contributions to the annual fund drive is greater than ever. It is vital that we materially increase our contributed revenues this year if we are to maintain our financial health, which we must do if we are to continue our artistic strength. If you are one of our thousands of donors, I hope you will seriously consider increasing your contribution this year; if you are not, won't you please join them? We offer a host of attractive benefits to contributors, and a number of useful deferred giving plans have been developed. Please let us know how we can help you to help the San Francisco Opera, and please act now.

A number of the beautiful productions you see this fall are special gifts: *Semiramide* through a grant from the San Francisco Foundation, and the new *Aida* through the generosity of a friend of San Francisco Opera. *Manon* was made possible in 1971 through the sponsorship of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company and a gift from James D. Robertson, while our *Lucia di Lammermoor* was created in 1972 thanks



RON SCHERL PHOTO

Walter M. Baird  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
San Francisco Opera Association

to a gift from Cyril Magnin. We are also delighted this fall to present the Canadian Opera Company's production of *The Merry Widow*.

I would like to extend our continuing gratitude to the National Endowment for the Arts and its chairman, Livingston L. Biddle, Jr.; the California Arts Council and its chairman, Marl Young; the Honorable Dianne Feinstein, Mayor of San Francisco; Chief Administrative Officer Roger Boas; the City and County of San Francisco; the War Memorial Board of Trustees and the San Francisco Opera Guild for their invaluable support of the San Francisco Opera.

Enjoy the season!

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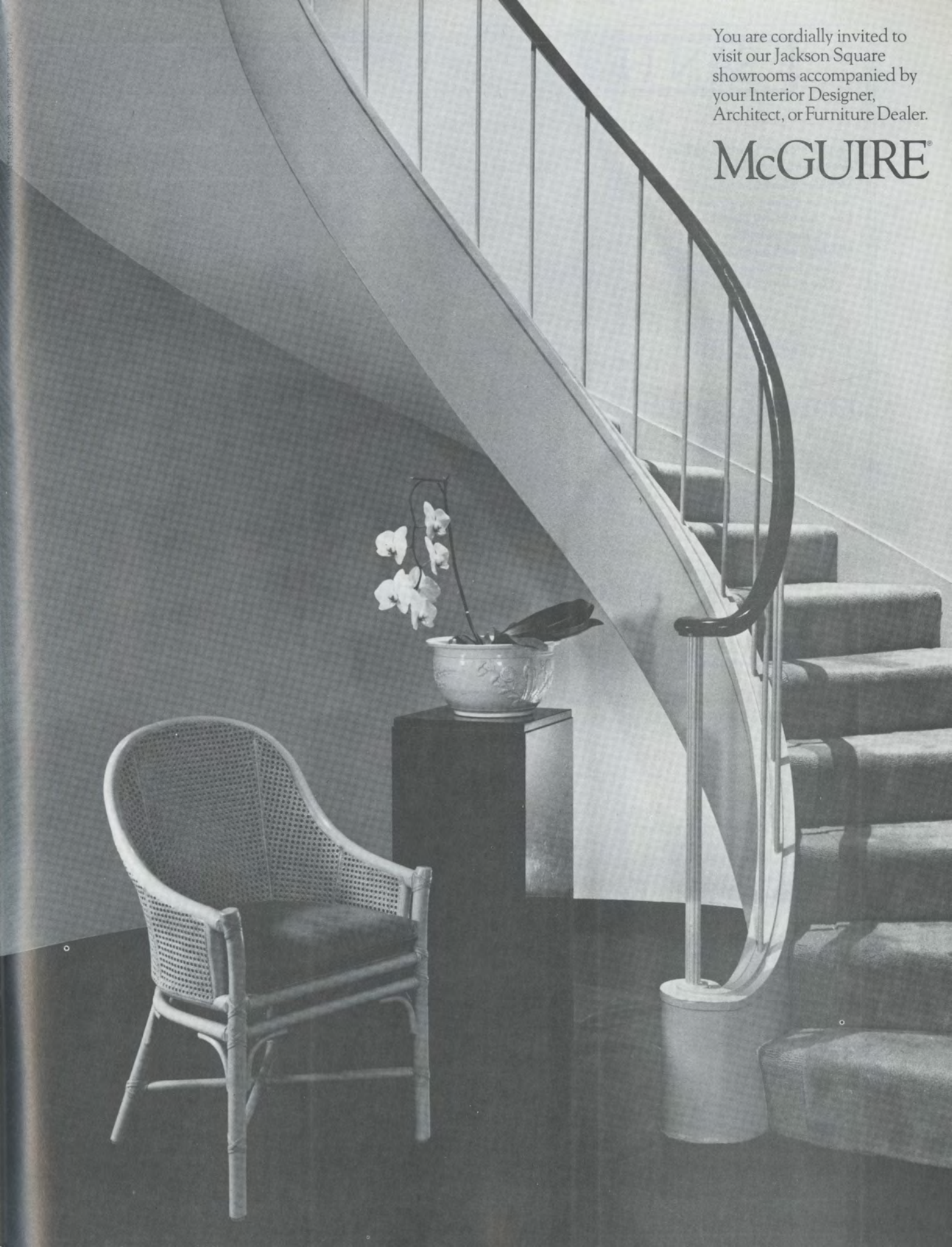
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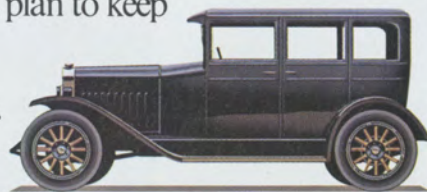
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Leonid Igudesman  
Gerard Svazlian  
Lani King  
Linda Deutsch  
Rise Patr†  
Sarah Usher†

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Jonna Hervig  
Ellen Smith  
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Judyaba  
Doug Ischar  
Jonathan Kramer  
Helen Stross

## BASS

Charles Siani *Principal*  
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Steven D'Amico  
Shinji Eshima  
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## FLUTE

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Alice F. Miller  
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James Walker

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James Matheson *Principal*  
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## ENGLISH HORN

Raymond Dusté

## CLARINET

Philip Fath *Principal*  
Joanne Burke Eisler  
Gregory Dufford

## BASS CLARINET

Gregory Dufford

## BASSOON

Rufus Olivier *Principal*  
Jerry Dagg  
Robin Elliott

## CONTRA BASSOON

Robin Elliott

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David Sprung *Principal*  
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Brian McCarty  
Paul McNutt  
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# 1981 SEASON

Kurt Herbert Adler, General Director

San Francisco Opera Premiere

## Semiramide

In Italian  
Rossini

This production of *Semiramide* was made possible through a generous and much appreciated grant from the San Francisco Foundation.

Caballé, Horne/Gonzales, Morris\*, Halfvarson, Green, G. Stapp

Bonyngé/Pizzi\*/Pizzi

## Manon

In French  
Massenet

This production of *Manon* was made possible, in 1971, through the sponsorship of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company and a gift from James D. Robertson.

Grist, South, P. Hunter\*, Quittmeyer, Ganz/Burrows, Duesing, Malta, Castel\*, Gardner, Noble, Glaum

Rudel/R. Levine\*/Mitchell-George/Sakellariou

San Francisco Opera Premiere

## Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk

In Russian  
Shostakovich

Silja, Nelson\*, de la Rosa, Olsson\*/W. Lewis, Trussel, Ludgin, Langan, Halfvarson, Harger, G. Stapp, Green, Freeman\*, Glaum, Noble, Woodman

Simmons/Freedman/Skalicki-Colangelo

San Francisco Opera Premiere

## The Merry Widow

In English  
Lehár

Production from the Canadian Opera Company

Sutherland, Forst, P. Hunter, Ganz, Olsson/Hagegård\*, Austin\*\*, Stark\*, Isaac\*, Green, Woodman, Harger, Wexler, Del Carlo

Bonyngé/Mansouri/Laufer\*-Mess/Sappington

New Production

## Carmen

In French  
Bizet

Berganza, Cook, South, Quittmeyer/Bonissolli, Estes, Eisler, Gardner, Langan, Noble

October 10, 14, 18 (mat), 22, 26, 30, November 3

Adler/Ponnelle/Ponnelle-Juerke\*

Schwarz, Mitchell, South, Quittmeyer/Domingo, Carlson\*, Eisler, Gardner, Langan, Noble

December 4, 7, 10, 13 (mat)

Adler/Ponnelle-Hope\*/Ponnelle-Juerke

San Francisco Opera and West Coast Premiere

## Le Cid

In French  
Massenet

(Stylized Concert Version)

Neblett, Ringo\*/Domingo, Furlanetto, Noble, Halfvarson, Green, Glaum, G. Stapp, Woodman

Rudel/Frisell/Munn

## Wozzeck

In English  
Berg

Martin, Nelson/Evans, Cox\*, R. Lewis, Kennedy\*, Harger, Green, Langan, Woodman

Rennert/Evans/Bauer-Ecsy—Mason

## Lucia di Lammermoor

In Italian  
Donizetti

This production of *Lucia di Lammermoor* was made possible, in 1972, by a generous and deeply appreciated gift from Cyril Magnin.

Putnam\*, Richards/Shicoff\*, Zancanaro, Furlanetto, Eisler, Freeman

Agler/Frisell/Toms

Popular-priced performances in Italian

Ringo, Richards/Morales\*, Gardner, G. Stapp, Freeman, Harger

Bradshaw/Farruggio/Toms

New Production

## Aida

In Italian  
Verdi

This new production of *Aida* was made possible by a friend of the San Francisco Opera.

M. Price, Toczyska, Quittmeyer/Pavarotti, Estes, Mróz\*, Langan, Freeman

Navarro\*\*/Wanamaker\*/Schmidt-Casey/Sappington

## Die Walküre

In German  
Wagner

Nilsson (11/20, 25, 12/1), Kovács\* (11/28, 12/6, 12/12), Rysanek,

Denize\*, P. Hunter, Cook, Olsson, Quittmeyer, Morgan\*, Richards,

Rice\*, Shaulis\*/King, Schenk\*, Rydl

Suitner/Hager/Skalicki

## Il Trovatore

In Italian  
Verdi

L. Price, Cossotto, Richards/Lamberti, Brendel, Rydl, Freeman,

G. Stapp

Steinberg\*\*/Mansouri/Skalicki-West

Richard Bradshaw, Chorus Director  
Thomas Munn, Lighting Designer  
Joan Sullivan, Assistant Lighting Designer

\*San Francisco Opera Debut

\*\*American opera debut

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THOMAS O'CONNOR PHOTO



Mayor Feinstein, Kurt Herbert Adler.

## 'Adler Years' on View

San Francisco Mayor Dianne Feinstein was among the first visitors to the current season's Opera Museum display, "The Adler Years," a photographic exhibit honoring Kurt Herbert Adler's tenure as general director of San Francisco Opera. Feinstein presented Adler with a proclamation announcing a citywide "Kurt Herbert Adler Appreciation Day." The

exhibit was prepared for the San Francisco Opera by Ann Seamster and can be viewed throughout the Fall Season in the museum. The Opera Museum is located on the south mezzanine level, adjacent to the Opera Shop, and is supervised by the Friends of the War Memorial Performing Arts Center.

## Samson Telecast Nov. 23

The San Francisco Opera's 1980 production of *Samson et Dalila* will be seen nationwide on PBS television stations Monday, November 23, at 8 P.M. on WNET-TV's *Great Performances* series. The much-acclaimed new production of Saint-Saëns' opera, which opened the 1980 Fall Season in the War Memorial Opera House, starred Plácido Domingo and Shirley Verrett in the title roles, with Wolfgang Brendel as the High Priest. Julius Rudel conducted. The visually spectacular production was created by stage director Nicolas Joël and by designers Douglas Schmidt, Carrie Robbins and Thomas Munn. Taping of the production was partially funded through the generosity of a friend of San Francisco Opera and the San Francisco Opera Guild, and was supervised by television director Kirk Browning. The opera production itself was made possible by and produced through the cooperation of the Gramma Fisher

DAVID POWERS PHOTO



*Samson et Dalila*, 1980: Shirley Verrett, Plácido Domingo.

Foundation of Marshalltown, Iowa, the Lyric Opera of Chicago and San Francisco Opera.

## Film Masterpiece *Napoleon* at Opera House

As a special event the San Francisco Opera, in conjunction with Francis Ford Coppola, will present Abel Gance's 1927 film masterpiece *Napoleon* at 7 P.M. on October 23 and October 25 at the War Memorial Opera House. Carmine Coppola will conduct members of the San Francisco Opera Orchestra in his score, which accompanies the epic silent film.

*Napoleon*, which broke house records for attendance in New York and Los Angeles earlier this year, was hailed by Vincent Canby of the *New York Times* as "the best film event of the year." Charles Champlin in the *Los Angeles Times* recently called *Napoleon* "the measure of all other films, forever." With the advent of sound movies, *Napoleon* became one of the great lost masterworks of film history. Reconstructed through detective work by the English film-maker and historian Kevin Brownlow and others who used fragments and archival versions, *Napoleon* has now been restored to an almost complete version of the original.

Repeat showings are scheduled for next January 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10. Tickets are available now through the Opera Box Office.

## New 'ArtExpo' Preview To Benefit SFO

The October 21 preview of the first-ever ArtExpo California, a four-day international exhibition of fine art scheduled for the new Trade Show Building at the Showplace, will be a benefit for the San Francisco Opera. Over 200 international exhibitors, including both artists and dealers, will display paintings, drawings, sculpture, tapestry and graphics at ArtExpo, which will also include a lecture series on art and a special exhibit of Bay Area printmakers. The benefit preview will take place from 7 to 9 P.M. on October 21, and, in addition to the exhibition, will include hors d'oeuvres and wine, the latter courtesy of United Vintners. Benefit tickets are \$25 each, and an invitation can be obtained by phoning the San Francisco Opera Development Department at (415) 861-4008.





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## SFO Broadcasts Now on Saturday Mornings

Listen for the weekly, Peabody Award-winning broadcasts of the San Francisco Opera on Saturday mornings at 11 A.M. (Pacific Time) this fall on KQED-FM (88.5) in the Bay Area and on many other stations along the West Coast.

In an important shift from the Company's previous live, Friday night broadcasts, San Francisco Opera productions are now being heard simultaneously nationwide on most of the member stations of National Public Radio and other select stations on Saturdays at 11 A.M. Pacific, 12 Noon Mountain, 1 P.M. Central and 2 P.M. Eastern Times. (Certain stations may choose to delay the broadcasts in their area; check local listings or consult your NPR station if in doubt.)

The 1981 broadcasts include three operas from the Company's first International Summer Festival and nine of the 11 operas in the current International Fall Season. The broadcasts are produced by the San Francisco Opera in cooperation with KQED-FM. Executive producer is Robert Walker; associate producer Marilyn Mercur; announcer Gene Parish and engineer Fred Krock.



## Milton Glaser Visits new Opera Shop

Noted graphic artist Milton Glaser (left) chats with the distinguished director/designer Pier Luigi Pizzi at the opening of the San Francisco Opera Shop's display of Glaser posters in September. With them is the Opera's merchandising director, Irma Zigas. At the opening, Glaser unveiled his design for a San Francisco Opera 1981 Fall Season poster, honoring the final year of Kurt Herbert Adler with the Company. The new Opera Shop, located at Van Ness and Grove Streets, features a gallery area (at rear), with new opera-related displays slated for every month. The new shop is open daily 10 AM till curtain time, while the Opera Shop on the mezzanine level of the Opera House continues to be open before performances and during intermissions.



DAVID POWERS PHOTO

## Record Turnout for Park Concert

A record crowd, estimated by officials at over 25,000, jammed Golden Gate Park for the annual free Opera in the Park concert jointly sponsored by the Friends of Recreation and Parks, the *San Francisco Examiner* and San Francisco Opera on September 13. Montserrat Caballé and Marilyn Horne performed a wide range of excerpts under Kurt Herbert Adler's baton, accompanied by members of

the San Francisco Opera Orchestra. The superstar duo brought the afternoon to a stunning climax, and the overflow throng to its feet, with a mesmerizing rendition of the duet "Mira, o Norma" from Bellini's *Norma*. The concert was televised live over KQED San Francisco and KXRA Sacramento, complete with stereo simulcast on radio, and was rebroadcast the following evening.

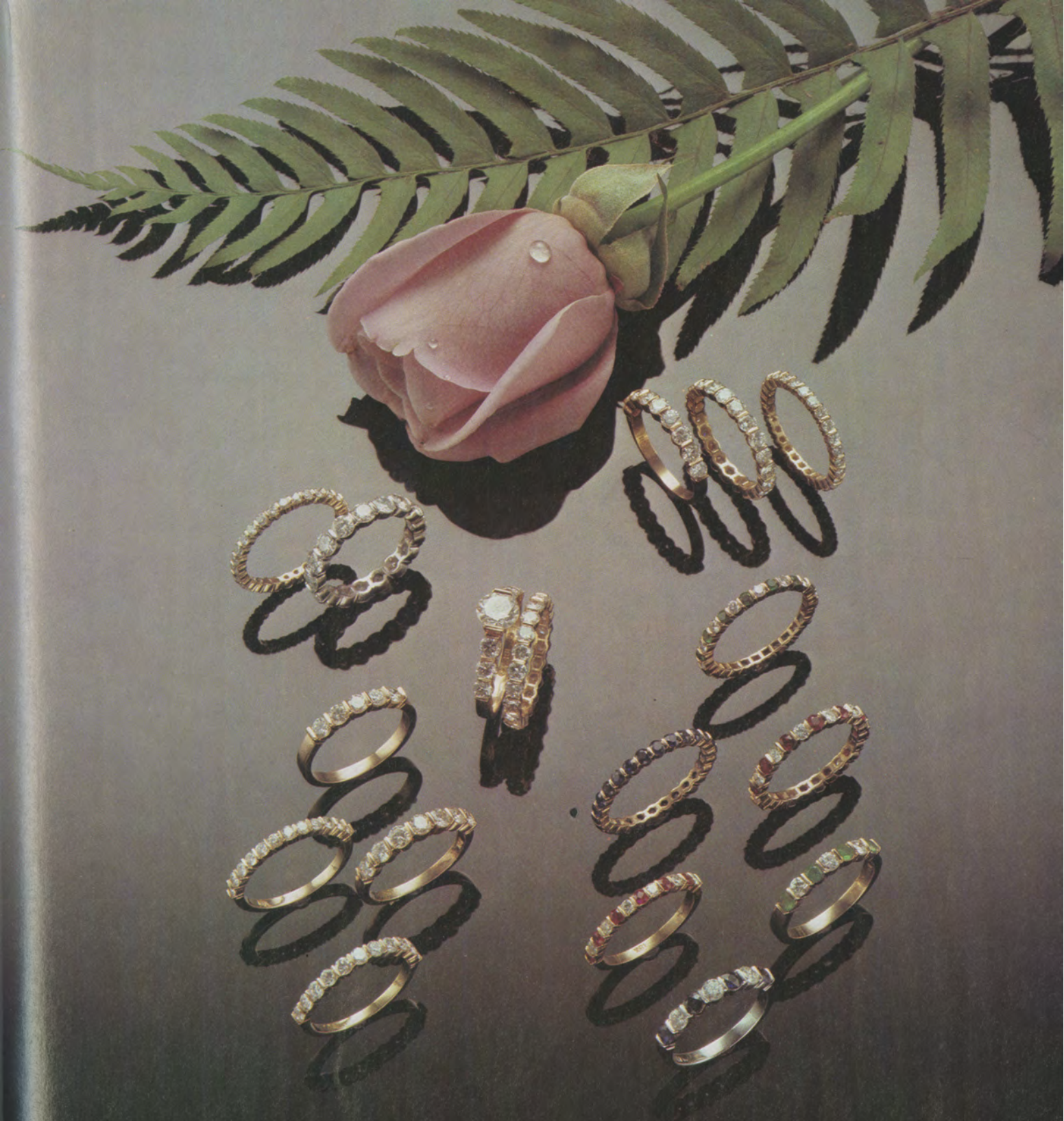
## Second Summer Festival Set

The San Francisco Opera's second Summer Festival will open on Friday, May 28, and continue through Sunday, July 4, 1982. Five operas will be given during the six-week season.

Handel's *Julius Caesar*, in English, is the opening production on Friday, May 28, and will be repeated on June 2, 5, 8 and 13 (M). The second work of the season will be Puccini's *Turandot*, which opens on Thursday, June 3, with additional performances on June 6 (M), 9, 12, 15 and 18. Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* will open on Friday, June 11, and also be performed on June 16, 19, 23, 27 (M) and July 1. Verdi's *Nabucco* will be the fourth production, opening on Thursday, June 17, with five more performances on June 20 (M), 22, 25, 30 and July 3. The three works by Italian composers will all be sung in Italian.

The final production to be presented in the 28-performance season will be Igor Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress*, with its first appearance on Friday, June 24. *The Rake's Progress*, sung in English, will be repeated on June 26 and 29, July 2 and 4 (M), 1982.





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# A Star is Born: Lehár in Vienna

In *The Merry Widow*, Lehár wrote a work that captures the spirit and contradictions of *fin-de-siècle* Vienna.

By MARC ROTH

When Franz Lehár arrived in Vienna in November 1899, he announced that "my whole aim and purpose is to make a name for myself." Such boasting was certainly not unique in Vienna at that time, especially coming from a brash Slovak-Hungarian military bandmaster. Scores of ambitious people from eastern and central Europe streamed into "the City of Dreams," intending to make a name for themselves or simply to make it. Like today's counterparts entering Hollywood or New York, most of those uttering Lehár's boast were quickly forgotten, but the 29-year-old bandmaster made a name for himself by composing three operettas (*Viennese Women*, *The Tinker* and *The Merry Widow*) and the prize-winning "Gold and Silver Waltz" by the time he was 35. His achievement was all the more remarkable when we consider not only his slim chances for artistic survival but the political and social obstacles facing him as well.

As an enterprising Slovak-Hungarian, Lehár could not have chosen a less opportune time to come to Vienna. By the 1890s the power base established by Austrian liberals in the '60s and '70s had eroded and was being replaced by Christian Socialist populism. As Carl Schorske points out in *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, the liberals, consisting primarily of Germans and German Jews in urban centers, kept their power by restricting the right to vote, which only helped the other competing parties to rally the disenfranchised. In 1895 Vienna elected as its mayor Karl Lueger, a very popular anti-Semitic Christian Socialist. His electoral strength came from the



Franz Lehár (1870-1948).

newly enfranchised lower-middle class, who feared the influx of "non-Germans" (i.e., Hungarians, Poles and Jews) into Vienna and were convinced that Emperor Franz Josef and the Liberals supported an international capitalist conspiracy. The emperor blocked Lueger from taking office after his first election. Two years later Lueger was re-elected after waging a fiercer campaign against Hungarians and Jews. He also won over the Viennese Catholic hierarchy; consequently, the emperor could not prevent him from taking office.

"I dislike the Hungarian Jews," Lueger proclaimed, "even more than I do the Hungarians. But I am no enemy of our Viennese Jews; they are not so bad, and we cannot do without them." Schorske notes that when Lueger's first election was eradicated by the emperor, Sigmund Freud smoked a celebratory cigar honoring the autocratic savior of the Jews. Arthur Schnitzler, who had some contact with Lueger through family connections, especially despised him for keeping ties with influential Viennese Jews at the peak of his anti-Semitism. In his autobiography he noted that Lueger "knew so well how to exploit the lowest instincts of the masses and general political atmosphere to further his own ends." One of Lueger's ardent admirers was a house painter from Linz who came to Vienna to study at the art academy and also spent many nights at the Theater an der Wien, standing for performances of *The Merry Widow*. After his election to the German chancellorship in 1933, he praised Lueger for showing him how to win over an urban audience.

The year that Franz Lehár came to Vienna to make a name for himself by composing waltzes and operettas was also the year in which the two masters of these genres, Johann Strauss and Karl Millöcker, both died. Since their last successful ventures in musical theater had taken place in 1884 (Strauss' *The Gypsy Baron* and Millöcker's *Gasparone*), the field of operetta became open territory during the 1890s with a wide spectrum of Viennese, ranging from journalists to race horse owners, all trying to compose the next *Fledermaus*. Competition at the prestigious carnival waltz



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Lehár in his bandmaster's uniform in 1900.

contest, an important stepping stone for composers of operetta, became unusually fierce and, according to one account in a leading newspaper, was poisoned by the ascendancy of Mayor Lueger:

Instead of the gay waltz, one hears only the cries of an excited brawling mob and the shouts of police trying to disperse the antagonists.

A major conquest for Lehár was winning the waltz competition of 1902 with his composition "Gold and Silver." But that same year, the simultaneous production of two of his operettas, *Viennese Women* and *The Tinker*, almost brought his rising star to an early end. The productions were scheduled at rival theaters with competing male leads in major roles. Lehár's librettist for *The Tinker* (and subsequently *The Merry Widow*), Victor Léon, was the manager of one of the theaters and saved the situation through skillful diplomacy. For his own part, Lehár, aware that he was making a name for himself by taking risks, hoped to end up on his feet.

The composer's father, Franz Lehár, Sr., also a military bandmaster, had tried to establish a reputation in Vienna in the 1850s. He returned to Hungary after a brief stint as an orchestra player at the Theater an der Wien, the arena where his son would enjoy great success some 50 years later. After failing in Vienna, Lehár

senior resumed the life of an itinerant military bandmaster, plunking his family down for brief stays in Transylvania, Budapest and Sarajevo, along with other, more obscure places. His biographer Bernard Grun suggests that the experience of being a "knapsack child" may have determined Lehár's destiny as a composer of Viennese operetta — a genre combining as many elements as possible from the various cultures of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Later in life, Grun notes, Lehár could seem a Viennese to the Viennese, a Hungarian to the Hungarians, and a Slovak to the Slovaks. Cosmopolitanism was an important feature of Lehár's musical and theatrical sensibility, but of equal importance was his adaptability — an essential quality for an *Ausländer* trying to survive in Vienna at the turn of the century.

Lehár Sr. determined that his son should follow in his footsteps and become a military bandmaster and, to further his plan, enrolled him in the Prague Conservatory. While a student there, young Lehár played for a distinguished guest who told him to hang up his fiddle and compose music. The purveyor of that advice was Antonin Dvorák, who at that time was at the peak of his fame. Nevertheless, the elder Lehár would not hear of his son getting sidetracked into composing. "Practice your instrument," he insisted. "A good violinist can always make a living!" He then reminded his

---

**"My whole aim and purpose is to make a name for myself."**

---

son of his own fate in Vienna. Franz Lehár took his father's advice — a decision he later regretted. He continued his violin studies at the conservatory and soon became the youngest bandmaster in the Imperial Army (breaking his own father's record by four years), but as a consequence his career in the musical theater was delayed for almost a decade.

We can well appreciate the need for escape in *fin-de-siècle* Vienna, and the finest operettas provided it by reconciling the tensions and contradictions of life in a decaying empire. One of the best portraits of Vienna at this peculiar time can be found in the opening pages of Robert Musil's novel, *The Man Without Qualities*:

On paper it called itself the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy; in speaking, however, one referred to it as "Austria" — that is to say, it was known by a name which it had, as a state, solemnly re-





# CHANEL BEAUTY

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Viennese society in the fashionable operetta-café Dobner in 1902.

nounced by oath while preserving it in all matters of sentiment, as a sign that feelings are just as important as constitutional law, and that regulations are not really the serious thing in life. By its constitution it was liberal, but its system of government was clerical. The system of government was clerical, but the general attitude to life was liberal. Before the law all citizens were equal: not everyone, of course, was a citizen. There was a parliament which made such vigorous use of its liberty that it was usually kept shut; but there was also an Emergency Powers Act, by means of which it was possible to manage without parliament. And, each time that everyone was just beginning to rejoice in absolutism, the Crown decreed that there must now again be a return to parliamentary government.



Karl Lueger, mayor of Vienna from 1897 to 1910.

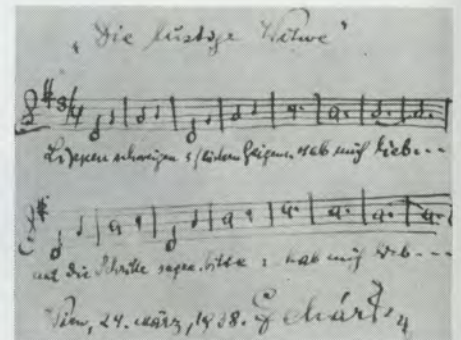
Operettas such as *Die Fledermaus*, *The Gypsy Baron* and *The Merry Widow* celebrate the happy fact that "regulations are not the really serious thing in life," and attempt to defuse the inconsistencies and antagonisms of Viennese life in songs and waltzes that exude narcissistic love for the City of Dreams. Not surprisingly, the success of the first major Viennese operetta, *Die Fledermaus*, followed upon the heels of two major catastrophes — the stock market crash of May 1873 (also known as "Black Friday") and a cholera epidemic that threatened to close the World Exposition. In response to these disasters, the Viennese public flocked to the Theater

### The best Viennese operettas reconcile the tensions of life in a decaying empire.

an der Wien to watch an operetta in which a wide spectrum of local society, ranging from parlor maids to public officials, attend a wild party where they drown their troubles in champagne provided by a bored aristocrat. Eleven years later, when the Pan-Germanic Union was successfully provoking antagonism towards Hungarians and Jews, Strauss turned to a novella by Marus Jokai for *The Gypsy Baron*, which promotes reconciliation between Magyar and German. Karl Millöcker, Strauss' rival, took on another aspect of the Slavic problem in *The Beggar Student* (1882), an operetta set in Poland during the Saxon rule. Throwing barbs in all directions, it spoofs both Polish nationalism and German autocracy.

Like its distinguished predecessors, *The Merry Widow* beautifully

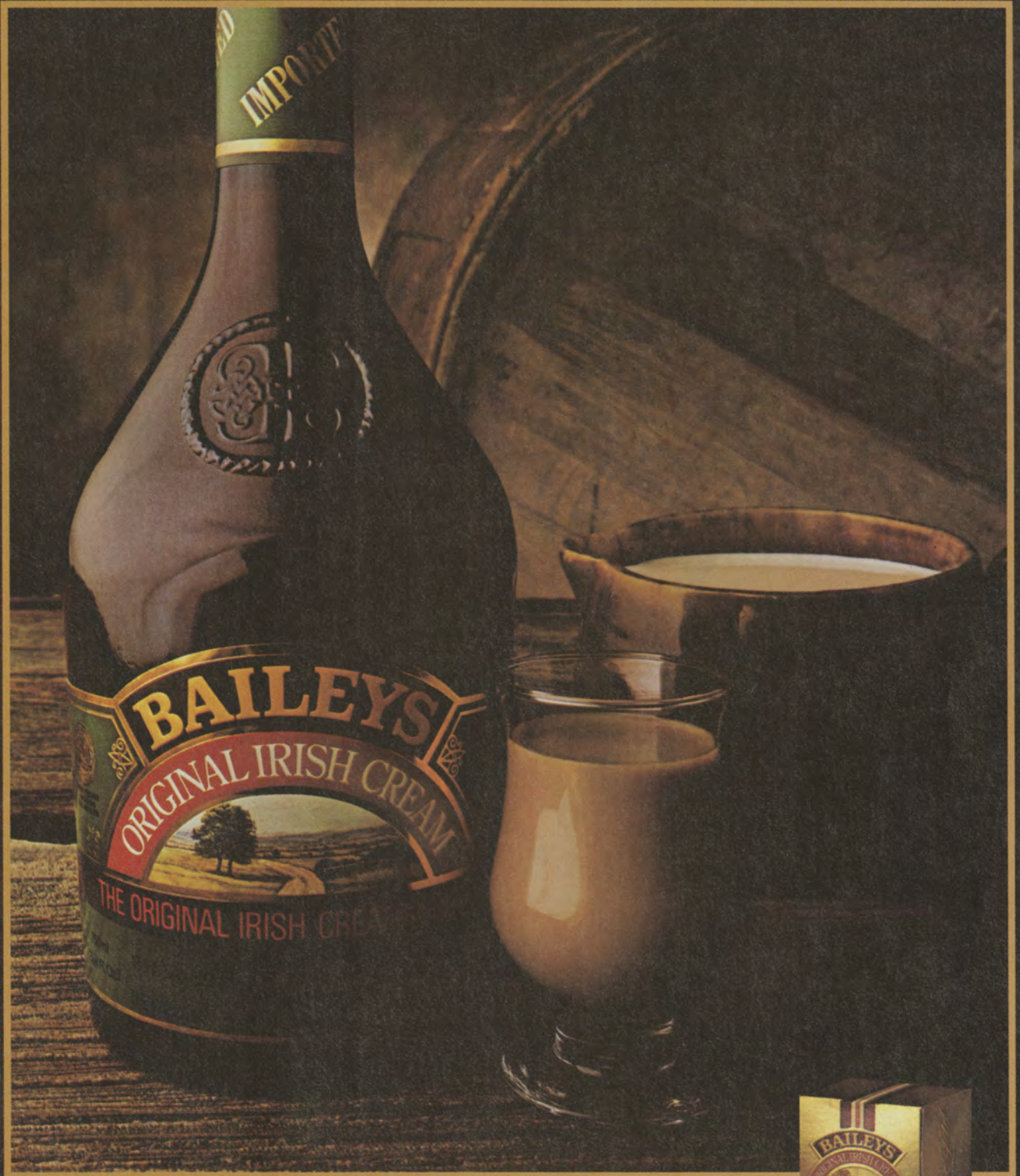
harmonized the class and ethnic differences of its audiences while ridiculing their amatory and political preoccupations. *The Merry Widow* is often considered a parody of turn-of-the-century Balkan politics. Its libretto, however, was lifted almost intact from a play by Henri Meilhac, *L'Attaché d'Ambassade* (1861), which had nothing to do with Balkan politics. The heroine is a Frenchwoman, Madeleine Palmer, presently the widow of a rich banker from the Electorate of Birkenfeld. The ambassador from Birkenfeld wants to prevent Baroness Palmer from marrying a Frenchman, and selects his attaché, the very debonair Count Prax, to intervene on behalf of the fatherland. The ambassador is also having his own domestic problems, since his wife is having an affair with a handsome Frenchman. When the wild party is over, Madeleine and Prax are united, and the ambassador decides he's had enough of Paris and returns home with his wife, leaving his embassy in the hands of his former attaché.



An autograph of the Merry Widow Waltz.

Lehár and his librettists Victor Léon and Leo Stein retained Meilhac's plot (prompting his relatives to file suit) and changed the name of the fatherland to something more provocative. Birkenfeld became Pontevedro, a name suggested by Lehár from the title of an obscure opera. Since the name strongly resembles the Balkan country of Montenegro, the characters' names were changed accordingly: Count Prax became Danilo, the name of the hereditary prince of Montenegro; the ambassador is called Zeta, after the country's largest valley; and the messenger, Njegus, was named after the ruling family. Selecting a Balkan concoction for a Viennese operetta was an understandable choice, since the Balkans had been a diplomatic thorn in the side of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy since the 1830s. While Lehár composed *The Merry Widow*, his rulers were in heated competition with Russia to preserve the Balkans as an important sphere of influence. A contemporary cartoon for





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Lehár surrounded by *Merry Widow* librettists Leo Stein (left) and Victor Léon in 1908.

example, shows Russia in the shape of an octopus wrapping two large tentacles around the Balkan countries while Austria watches with a club at its side. No doubt the creators of *The Merry Widow* wanted to cash in on local interest in Balkan intrigue. Two responses to their "political spoof" are worth mentioning. Montenegrins living in Vienna were offended enough to stage a lackluster protest, which was broken up by a single policeman. The real Count Danilo was then discovered to be alive, well and living in Paris. He said that he had no desire to protest his portrayal in the operetta since he found it so flattering

### ... songs and waltzes that exude narcissistic love for the City of Dreams.

Like other successful Viennese operettas such as *Die Fledermaus*, *The Merry Widow* did not immediately take the city by storm and had to survive more than its share of empty houses. Fortunately, it premiered near the end of the season and nothing could be found to replace it. Gradually, however, it won over the public, helped in part by the management's willingness to distribute free tickets in cafés while the music gained popularity through garden and park concerts. Most journalists were unkind in their appraisals of the operetta, and among these, one of the severest was Karl Kraus, publisher of the fortnightly *Die Fackel*. In recent years, Kraus has come to be appreciated as one of the most significant commentators on Hapsburg Vienna in its declining

years. "In such a period," writes Erich Heller in *The Disinherited Mind*, "Karl Kraus arrived like an elemental spiritual force in a beauty parlor of the soul." *Die Fackel* often included essays by Arnold Schönberg, Franz Werfel, Frank Wedekind and August Strindberg.

Kraus severely attacked what he perceived to be a degenerating culture and those who contributed to it, such as Lehár, Freud, Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Max Reinhardt. Of Freud and psychoanalysis Kraus observed:

"Nerve doctors who ruin genius for us by calling it 'pathological' should have their skulls bashed in with the genius' collected works!" Reinhardt's productions of von Hofmannsthal's plays contributed to the decline of the theater because "in earlier times the decorations were cardboard and the actors genuine; now the decorations are real beyond any doubt and the actors are made of cardboard." Some of Kraus' harshest criticism, however, was reserved for Lehár, whom he considered especially degenerate. According to Alan Janik and Stephen Toulmin, authors of *Wittgenstein's Vienna*, Kraus viewed Lehár as a barometer of the moral decline in Vienna because he catered to the audiences' basest instincts. Kraus was especially incensed by the treatment of sexuality in his operettas, which he found to be "too realistic and plausible." Such frankness, according to Kraus, destroyed the mysterious power which attracts male and female. Interestingly, Kraus said that he found the ideal treatment of sexuality in Offenbach. (Kraus was such an enthusiastic admirer of Offenbach that he adapted many of his operettas. He performed

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Karl Kraus, influential Viennese publisher and critic, who attacked Lehár, as well as Freud, von Hofmannsthal and Reinhardt, for contributing to a degenerate culture.

them seated at a table — taking all the parts himself — and accompanied by a piano.)

In his heated criticism, Kraus hit upon a reason why *The Merry Widow* deserves to be taken seriously as a cultural document. Lehár's operetta reflects a society where appearances count heavily and sexual duplicity is both endorsed and expected. In the context of her world, Anna Glawari is refreshingly "liberated" since she exploits the double standard for comparatively noble ends. The following account of Viennese sexual mores appears in William Johnston's book, *The Austrian Mind*:

While daughters fumbled in sexual ignorance, fathers urged sons to initiate themselves with some *süßes Mädel*, a custom that Nestroy satirized in *Das Mäd'l aus der Vorstadt* (1845). Girls of good family were so sheltered that they seldom left the house without a chaperon. Puzzled by sexuality, girls gushed with curiosity and yearning. They released libido in the only way their station in life permitted. On a dance floor, young ladies in circles huddled like deer, dressed exclusively in white. Because an unmarried woman of 30 labored under the same rules as a girl of 15, an old maid of good family might take refuge as a nun

or else join a secular order. As a *Stiftsfrau* she bore the title of Frau instead of Fräulein, while remaining free to marry.

Young men enjoyed far greater freedom. They were encouraged to grow a beard and even to frequent the demimonde, although its existence was ignored in polite society just as, in the words of Zweig, sewers remain hidden from pedestrians. Some fathers would have the family physician warn a son about venereal disease, while others would hire a Czech maid to initiate their son without his resorting to a *raffinierte Person*. When a little older, a young man would seek a liaison with a *süßes Mädel*, who might be a shopgirl, typist, washerwoman or dressmaker's employee. As described in Schnitzler's *Anatol* (1893), she would be flirtatious but well behaved, loving for love's sake without hope of permanent attachment.

Behind all the hand-kissing and waltzing lay a society which simultaneously promoted male libertinism and female repression.

As portrayed in Lehár's operettas and Schnitzler's plays, professed philanderers such as Anatol and Danilo practice their craft as an aesthetic outlet. Indeed, Danilo strikes one as a familiar figure from Viennese comedy — a slightly satiated cynic, but without

### *The Merry Widow* harmonized the class and ethnic differences of its audiences.

the customary melancholy. His motto, he tells us, is to fall in love often, get engaged seldom but never marry. For recreation and release from his not-too-demanding position, Danilo frequents Maxim's. There his girlfriends with similar sounding names help him forget about the fatherland. Initially, he and Anna play lighthearted variations on the type of sexual games found in such Schnitzler plays as *La Ronde* and *Light-of-Love*.

An interesting scene for comparison is the encounter in *La Ronde* between a young gentleman and a young wife (not his own) in an apartment reserved for such meetings:

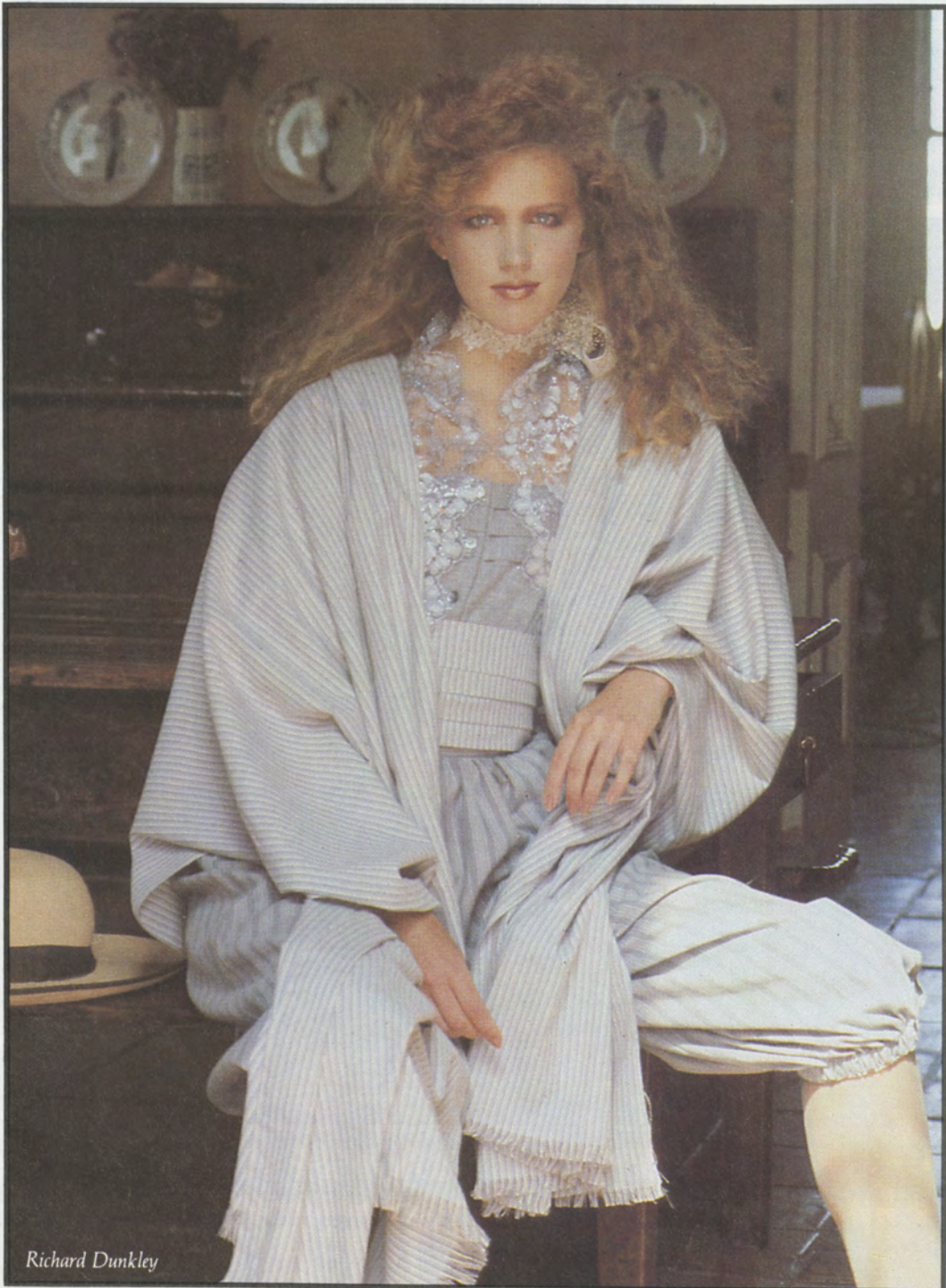
Young Gentleman [with the decanter in hand, he shakes his head sadly]: Emma, if you only knew how you are hurting me.

[The Young Wife pours herself a glass of cognac.]

continued on p. 80



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# Dame Joan: Loony Ladies and Happy Heroines

"La Stupenda" talks about her career's expansion from the realm of the mad heroines of the *bel canto* repertoire to the lighthearted ladies of operetta, like the Merry Widow.

By QUAINANCE EATON

"It is not so strange, after all, that I should sing operetta occasionally," said Joan Sutherland on the eve of her San Francisco appearance as Anna Glawari in Lehár's *The Merry Widow*. "We had very little opera in Sydney, where I was brought up, and what I knew most was operetta — *Katinka*, *The Merry Widow* and so on. I've always loved it. Gladys Moncrieff, the absolute star of operetta in Australia, was my great favorite. I saw her in a recent visit to Australia, and she was the same wonderful old gal. But of course they wouldn't let me loose to try my wings in lighter air, so to speak, until *The Daughter of the Regiment* in 1966."

The first public knowledge of the high spirits that lie like a counterfoil to the dignity and poise of this tall, handsome prima donna (she even bears the title of "Dame" conferred by Queen Elizabeth II in 1979, as well as being known universally as "La Stupenda") was that rollicking production of Donizetti's opera.

In 1966 Sutherland also revealed her affinity for the lighter side with *The Golden Age of Operetta*, a London album containing jeweled examples of Lehár, Friml, Strauss, Romberg, Rodgers, Kern, Herbert, Offenbach, Millöcker and others. She gave some thought as well to a Noel Coward album, perpetuating the songs of a cherished friend.

Dame Joan sat over tea at the Pierre in New York, her shoulder-length auburn hair freshly coiffed, her face as blooming as the great sheaf of flowers she carried, a gift from the admiring hairdresser. She talked about her forthcoming *Norma* in Toronto and her keenly awaited appearance in San Francisco in the latest of the operetta ventures that have proven to be such a grand change from the high-flying heroines she has served so well since her sensational appearance in *Lucia di Lammermoor* at Covent Garden in 1959.

Joan Sutherland as Elvira in the 1966 production of *I Puritani* (left) and as Rosalinda in the 1973 production of *Die Fledermaus*. Photos Carolyn Mason Jones and Ron Scherl.



*London Records Salutes*  
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"Of course it was mostly Richard's idea to have me do *The Merry Widow*," Sutherland explained, referring to Richard Bonyng, her conductor-husband and pilot of all her undertakings. "Myself, I had always yearned for *Fledermaus* — I loved to sing the Czardas. I got to do that first in San Francisco in 1973.

Then there was the double-diva *Fledermaus* in San Diego last year, when Joan Sutherland and Beverly Sills sang together for the first time. It was even planned that the two switch roles — Rosalinda and Adele — but at the last minute Joan was spared the possibility of getting mixed up in the dialogue when Beverly bowed out because of a hectic schedule. "I was rather relieved," confessed Sutherland, "because I could just imagine saying Rosalinda's lines at the wrong moment."

Dialogue has always been the stumbling block to Joan's perfect enjoyment of operetta — as it is to almost every opera singer, who must shift gears notably from singing to speaking voice. It was so on Bonyng's *opéra-comique* version of Offenbach's *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* as well. "You don't sing the same way you speak," Joan said.

That San Diego *Fledermaus* was an occasion of great galas, double excitement, champagne in the Southern California air. The opera company

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### "I've always loved operetta."

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solved one problem that had perplexed everybody — how to bill the two superstars. Whose name should come first? There was no such thing as "top billing." The decision was made to list them alphabetically. Sills was ahead of Sutherland in the ads and publicity, as well as the reviews. But the publicity department put out a perfect program: a colored portrait of one lady with all her photographs and blurbs following; then, upon turning the program upside down, the other smiling face with *her* photographs and blurbs, and a center spread between the two.

Joan had never met Beverly before, although she had sent congratulations on the American soprano's television show with Carol Burnett. (Bonyng had been scheduled to conduct a *Huguenots* concert performance in New York with Sills and Martina Arroyo a number of years earlier, but an illness forced cancellation.) Both singers enjoyed working with each other. Thoroughly professional, buoyed by each other's native wit and good humor, they had a ball, offstage as well as on.



Dame Joan as Anna Glawari in the Australian Opera production of *The Merry Widow*. Photo Branco Gaica.

San Francisco has always been one of Sutherland's favorite ports of call, ever since her debut there as Lucia in 1961. Kurt Herbert Adler had, as often before, beaten the Metropolitan's Rudolf Bing to a debut display of a rising — or risen — star. Although abscessed ears prevented her from making the opening-night assignment, she sang two performances and was acclaimed an immediate favorite by the San Francisco public.

"San Francisco, like New Orleans, is one of the most interesting cities," Sutherland said. "San Francisco, Seattle and Vancouver remind me so much of home." It is the setting, on fascinating bodies of water such as Sydney's, that apparently does the trick.

In San Francisco the Bonynges invariably stay with friends across the Golden Gate Bridge, and drive to the city only for rehearsals, performances,

a rare social occasion and necessary shopping — or visits to the dentist or the masseuse who helps keep Joan's troublesome back in line.

They are very private people and like to "keep themselves *to* themselves," as the English are fond of saying. They relish performing for Adler and will also be happy with their new

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### San Francisco has always been one of Sutherland's favorite ports of call.

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West Coast mentor, Terry McEwen, a friend since their early London days. It was Terry who shared Richard's love for Bellini and Chopin, and who steered them through their many recordings for London Records.



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Curtain calls following the double-diva *Fledermaus* in San Diego with Beverly Sills as Adele and Joan Sutherland as Rosalinda. Photo Danilo Capobianco.

San Francisco has witnessed some near-disastrous mishaps inflicted on the leading lady. She recalled one of them: "I fell off the porch at *Les Avants*, our house in Switzerland. It was the silliest kind of accident. We had been entertaining and had strung up lots of paper lanterns in the

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**"It was mostly Richard's idea to have me do *The Merry Widow*."**

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garden, lighted by candles. Then a storm came up. I hurried down the steps to put out the candles before they set the lanterns afire in the wind. But it had already started to rain, and the stair railing was slippery. My hand slipped and I fell and twisted my foot. I needn't have worried," she added

ruefully, "because the rain came in torrents and put out the candles anyway." Unfortunately, this was just before they were coming to do *Fledermaus* in San Francisco in 1973, and Joan "was required," as she said, to dance a few steps. Perhaps because of the fall, her back struck up one of its periodic interludes of pain, so she had some cortisone injections. "That cured the foot at least," she laughed, "and so I was able to dance — or make a stab at it."

Another nick-of-time rescue came in 1975 with *Il Trovatore*, which she was doing for the first time in her career. Nervous enough in any case, her anxiety was compounded by an abscessed tooth that swelled her lower face to balloon proportions just a few days before opening night. Once again she was saved by medical attention, but the first performance was sung

with a mouth that seemed just a little stiff. Improvement set in thereafter, and she sang the other performances freely.

"But San Francisco added something," she remembered. "I got my first contact lenses there." She explained that they were for reading music on the stage — not in opera, of course, but in oratorio, or the times she carries a word-book in concert. She never has been able to memorize all the words to the dozens of songs in her repertoire.

Joan first departed from the realm of the "loony ladies" who made her famous and whom she professed to love — Lucia, Elvira in *I Puritani*, Amina in *La Sonnambula* — with Marie in *La Fille du Régiment* at Covent Garden in 1966. The idea no doubt originated with Richard, and the results were to be far-reaching. London did not quite approve. Sandro Sequi's direction was thought to be a bit on the vulgar side, and as for the queen of tragedy becoming a hoyden, eyebrows were lifted. Startled, even shocked, by their idol stepping down off her high pedestal, some of the critics disapproved and some of the

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**"I've never had so much fun on stage in my life," she said to the Queen.**

---

audience tut-tutted. But a few realized the comic potentialities of the Australian diva.

Felix Aprahamian told *Opera News* that Joan could be seen and heard as a jollier if no less human being, and said that the unexpected delight of the performance — all vocal attributes remained, as usual, on glittering display — was her hilarious acting, her rubber-faced, outsize regimental tomboy. He continued: "The 'exquisites' were displeased by the overtly comic spectacle." For his part, he found the "vulgarity" healthy and consistent.

Joan Ingpen, Joan's first manager in London (now in charge of the cubic jigsaw puzzle of schedules at the Metropolitan), recalls that she considered the *Regiment* casting "not obvious." But her husband, actor Sebastian Shaw, was delighted. He told Sutherland: "I had no idea you were such a good comic actress!" Her jaunty reply: "I can face another 10 years of mad scenes now!" And to Queen Elizabeth, after a command performance: "I've never had so much fun on stage in my life!"

As for her Tonio, the huge, bouncy tenor, Luciano Pavarotti, it was his first real bite of the public cake

continued on p. 78



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# PROFILES



## JOAN SUTHERLAND

Acclaimed as "the voice of the century" and one of the leading interpreters of the *bel canto* repertoire, Joan Sutherland appears for the second time at the War Memorial in operetta as Anna Glawari in *The Merry Widow*. It was during the 1973 season here that she first essayed a role for which she has become known the world over, Rosalinda in *Die Fledermaus*. She most recently sang Rosalinda opposite Beverly Sills as Adele in the historic San Diego Opera production of the Strauss classic last fall. Miss Sutherland first displayed her talent for comedy in *La Fille du Régiment* at Covent Garden in 1966. She made her American debut in the title role of Handel's *Alcina* in 1959, followed by debuts at the San Francisco Opera, the Lyric Opera of Chicago and the Metropolitan Opera in *Lucia di Lammermoor*, the opera which catapulted her to international fame in 1959. Subsequent appearances in San Francisco include Amina in *La Sonnambula* (1963), Violetta in *La Traviata* (1964), Elvira in *I Puritani* (1966), the title roles in the American stage premiere of *Maria Stuarda* (1971) and of *Norma* (1972). In addition to Rosalinda, the Australian diva sang two other career firsts here, the title role in *Esclarmonde* in 1974 and Leonora in *Il Trovatore* in 1975. Miss Sutherland was recently heard for a third consecutive year at New York's Avery Fisher Hall in a recital televised *Live from Lincoln Center*, in which she shared the stage with Luciano Pavarotti and Marilyn Horne. With Richard Bonyng she has made numerous opera, operetta and recital recordings for London Records. Recent engagements with the Australian Opera include Donna

Anna in *Don Giovanni*, Elettra in *Idomeneo*, the title roles in *Lucrezia Borgia*, *Suor Angelica*, *The Merry Widow*, *La Traviata* and *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Amalia in *I Masnadieri*, Marguerite de Valois in *Les Huguenots* and Desdemona in *Otello*. Miss Sutherland was named Dame Commander of the British Empire by Queen Elizabeth II in 1979.



## JUDITH FORST

Following widely praised appearances as Preziosilla in the 1979 production of *La Forza del Destino* and Suzuki in *Madama Butterfly* last year, Canadian mezzo-soprano Judith Forst portrays Valencienne in *The Merry Widow*. She made her debut with the San Francisco Opera in 1974 as a Flowermaiden in *Parsifal* and as Suzuki. Miss Forst was the first contestant ever offered a Metropolitan Opera contract following auditions in the national semi-finals and she performed with the Met for seven seasons in a wide range of roles. During the 1978-79 season she sang her first Octavian in *Der Rosenkavalier* with the Canadian Opera Company and her first Carmen with Vancouver Opera. The following year she appeared as Charlotte in *Werther* in Toronto and sang the title role in *La Cenerentola* in Victoria, as well as Musetta in *La Bohème* in Hamilton. During the 1980-81 season she made her debut with the New York City Opera in *Carmen* and as Sesto in *Giulio Cesare*. With Miami Opera she was heard as Nicklausse in a new version of *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* and sang Rosina in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* in Winnipeg. Her schedule for this season includes a return to New York City Opera for *Carmen*, and Cherubino in *Le Nozze di Figaro* in Milwaukee, Winnipeg and Calgary.



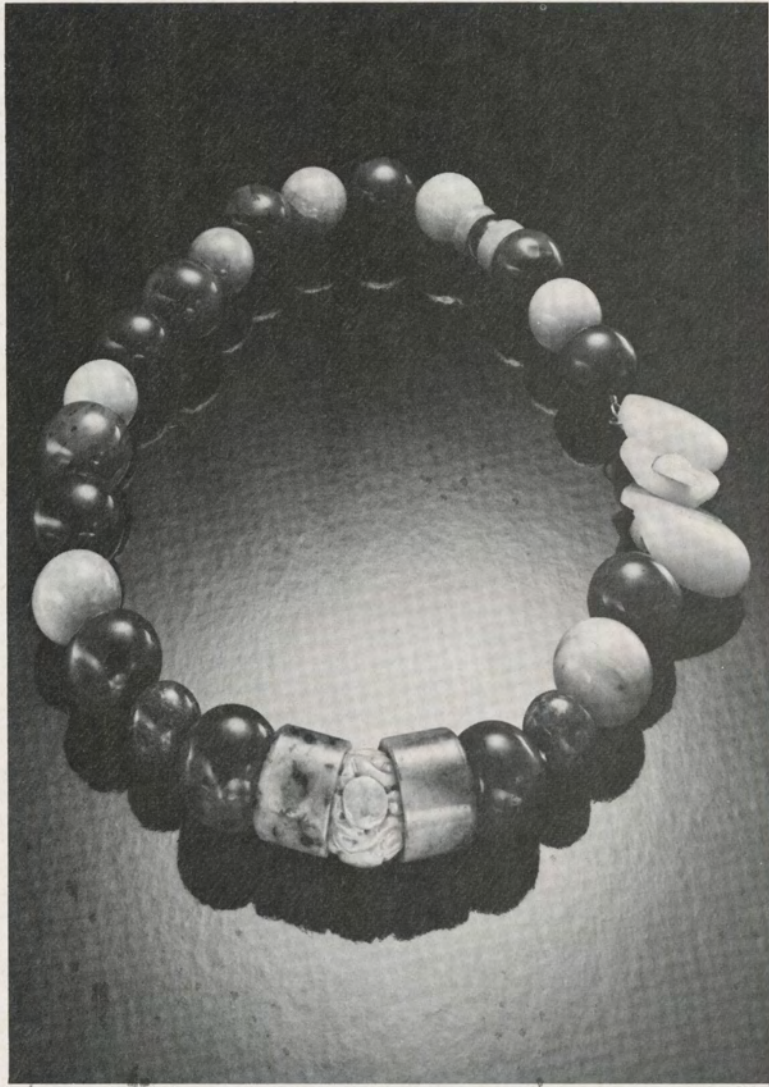
## NANCY BLEIWEISS

Nancy Bleiweiss makes her San Francisco Opera debut as Zozo in *The Merry Widow*. A native of San Francisco, Miss Bleiweiss became famous locally as co-founder and star of the *Beach Blanket Babylon* and *Beach Blanket Babylon Goes Bananas!* musical revues. She was a regular cast member of the *New Laugh-In* television series and hosted her own NBC variety special. In 1977 she performed with Beverly Sills at a Gala for the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce. During the 1979-80 season, she appeared in a benefit for the San Francisco Ballet, and also performed on the War Memorial stage for a 1980 Merola Opera Program benefit. Miss Bleiweiss has played nightclubs in San Francisco and Los Angeles and has appeared in numerous television commercials. She is currently preparing for a new musical that will open later this year.

## SARA GANZ

Soprano Sara Ganz was first heard with the San Francisco Opera as Jano in *Jenůfa* during the 1980 season and appeared as the page in *Rigoletto* during the first Summer Festival. Her current Fall assignments are a servant in *Manon*; and Sylviane in *The Merry Widow* and a Female Convict in *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*. As a member of the 1980 Merola Opera Program she performed the roles of Lisette in *La Rondine* at Stern Grove and Emmie in *Albert Herring* at the Paul Masson Mountain Winery, and received a Merola Award in the Grand Finals of the San Francisco Opera Auditions. Earlier this year she toured with Western Opera Theater as Adina in *The Elixir of Love* and Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet*, and made her Spring





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# PROFILES



Opera debut as Wanda in *The Grand Duchess of Gerolstein*. Miss Ganz sang Clorinda in *Cinderella* and Gretel in *Hansel and Gretel* with the Opera Guild of Southern California and portrayed Rosina in *The Barber of Seville* with Orange County Opera. She has been heard as Marzelline and Zerlina at the Carmel Bach Festival. A member of the 1979 Lyric Opera of Chicago School, Miss Ganz performed Laurette in Bizet's *Doctor Miracle* and Musetta in *La Bohème*.



## PHYLLIS HUNTER

In her debut season with the San Francisco Opera, soprano Phyllis Hunter sings Javotte in *Manon*, Olga in *The Merry Widow* and Helmwig in *Die Walküre*. Earlier this year she was heard as Iphigenia in John Eaton's *The Cry of Clytaemnestra* and as a Heartless Lady in Monteverdi's *Il Ballo delle Ingrate* with Spring Opera Theater. After two years as an apprentice with Santa Fe Opera, she toured with Western

Opera Theater, performing such roles as Musetta in *La Bohème* and Inez in Cherubini's *The Portuguese Inn*. A specialist in the dramatic coloratura repertoire, she recently made her debut with Chattanooga Opera as Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni* and with the Houston Grand Opera as the Queen of the Night in *The Magic Flute*. Miss Hunter has also been heard with the Fort Worth Opera and Cincinnati Opera and in oratorio with the New York City Choral Society, the San Antonio Symphony and the Corpus Christi Symphony.



## INGRID OLSSON

Soprano Ingrid Olsson makes her San Francisco Opera debut as Praskovia in *The Merry Widow* and later sings Ortlinde in *Die Walküre*. Originally a mezzo-soprano, she made her operatic debut in *The Consul* at New York City Opera in 1974. She has since been engaged by companies including the Opera Society of Washington, the National Opera Orchestra, the Lincoln Center Musical Arts Club, the St. Paul Light Opera and New York's Bel Canto Opera, and has participated in performances at the New York YMHA and Alice Tully Hall. She has sung roles in *Die Walküre*, *Oberon*, *Suor Angelica*, *Arabella* and *Aida*, among others, and has made numerous concert appearances in New York, London and Philadelphia in such works as *Messiah*, the *St. John Passion*, Verdi's Requiem, *Elijah*, the *B Minor Mass*, the *St. Matthew Passion* and Mozart's Requiem. She has been the recipient of awards from the Ford Foundation and Metropolitan Opera Studio.



## HÅKAN HAGEGÅRD

Swedish lyric baritone Håkan Hagegård makes his San Francisco Opera debut singing Danilo Danilowitsch in *The Merry Widow*. He made his operatic debut in 1968 at the Stockholm Royal Opera as Papageno in *Die Zauberflöte*, a role he subsequently portrayed in Ingmar Bergman's film version of the Mozart opera. Other credits in Stockholm include Dr. Malatesta in *Don Pasquale*, the role of his successful Metropolitan Opera debut during the 1978-79 season, Figaro in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, Pelléas in *Pelléas et Mélisande*, Sid in *Albert Herring*, Valentin in *Doktor Faust* and Count Asdrubal in Rossini's *La Pietra del Paragone*, the latter two roles at the Drottningholmstheater. An accomplished interpreter of lieder, Hagegård has performed extensively in recital throughout Scandinavia. He has also participated in several Swedish television productions such as Schubert's *Winterreise*. He made his American debut as soloist with the Seattle and Cincinnati Symphonies in 1977 and has since been heard with the Dallas Symphony, Pittsburgh Symphony, Kansas City Philharmonic, at the Cincinnati May Festival and with the symphony orchestras in Atlanta and Baltimore. Hagegård performed the role of Figaro in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* with Santa Fe Opera this summer.

## ANSON AUSTIN

New Zealand-born tenor Anson Austin makes his American debut with the San Francisco Opera as Camille de Rosillon in Lehár's *The Merry Widow*. Success in several music



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## PROFILES



competitions led to engagements with Radio New Zealand and concert appearances. In 1966 he went to London to perform with the BBC Singers and gave solo recitals and oratorio performances in Britain before returning to New Zealand for concert appearances in 1969. In 1970 he made his debut with the Australian Opera as Rodolfo in *La Bohème*. For the opening of the Sydney Opera House in 1972, he portrayed Tamino in *The Magic Flute*. Other roles he has performed with the Australian Opera include Camille in *The Merry Widow*, Almaviva in *The Barber of Seville*, Nemorino in *The Elixir of Love*, Gerald in *Lakmé* and Ferrando in *Così fan tutte*. He sang the last-mentioned role at the Glyndebourne Festival in 1975. During the Australian Opera's 1978 and 1979 seasons, Austin sang Alfredo in *La Traviata* opposite Kiri Te Kanawa and Joan Sutherland. His 1980 roles with the company include the title role in *Fra Diavolo*, the Duke in *Rigoletto* and Lysander in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. His 1981 assignments with the Australian Opera include the title role in *The Tales of Hoffmann* and Raoul in *Les Huguenots*.

### PHIL STARK

Canadian tenor Phil Stark portrays Baron Zeta in *The Merry Widow*. A member of the Canadian Opera Company for many years, he has also appeared with the Stratford Festival, the Guelph Spring Festival and the Vancouver Opera, as well as on CBC Radio and Television in Toronto and Montreal. Stark has performed extensively in the United States with such companies as the Seattle Opera, the Cincinnati Opera and New Orleans Opera, as well as the com-



panies of Toledo and Dayton. He won international notice in the role of King Herod in Strauss' *Salome*, with which he made his Metropolitan Opera debut during the 1973-74 season. Other assignments at the Met have included Mime in *Siegfried* (1974-75) and Aegisth in *Elektra* (1975-76), as well as a repeat of his Herod (1977-78). In Europe, he has sung with many of the major companies, including those in Bordeaux, Zurich, Graz, Wiesbaden, Nuremberg, Bremen, Cologne and Heidelberg. Recent North American engagements have included appearances as Herod with the Canadian and Portland Operas, and with the Vancouver Opera in *Die Fledermaus* and *The Merry Widow*.



### GERALD ISAAC

Actor Gerald Isaac makes his San Francisco Opera debut as Njegus in *The Merry Widow*, a role he first played in January 1981 with the Canadian Opera Company and repeated at



the Lyric Opera of Chicago during the 1981 summer operetta festival. A graduate of the National Theater School in Montreal, he became a member of the Stratford Festival company for four seasons, playing a wide range of roles including Moth in *Love's Labours Lost*, Amiens in *As You Like It*, Maximillian in *Candide* and Robin in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. He has also appeared in productions mounted by Theater London, the Charlottetown Festival and the Toronto Young People's Theater, as well as the Canadian Opera Company production of *The Glove*.



#### JONATHAN GREEN

After winning critical raves for his portrayal of the title role in Kurka's *The Good Soldier Schweik* with Spring Opera in 1980, tenor Jonathan Green made his San Francisco Opera debut last fall as the First Priest in *The Magic Flute*, the Shepherd in *Tristan und Isolde* and Beppe in *I Pagliacci*. A frequent performer with the New York City Opera, he bowed there as Don Basilio in *The Marriage of Figaro* in 1977 and sang 12 other roles that season. Highlighting the following season were performances as Lippo Fiorentino in Weill's *Street Scene*, telecast last year over PBS, the creation of the role of Raymond Pocket in the world premiere of Dominick Argento's *Miss Haversham's Fire*, both with NYCO, and a debut with the Cincinnati Opera as the Abbé in *Adriana Lecouvreur* and as Goro in *Madama Butterfly* with the Milwaukee Symphony. The last role served for his Lake George Opera Festival debut in 1980 following an appearance in Offenbach's *Monsieur Choufleuri* at the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. Other engagements during the 1980-81 season included *The Tales of Hoffmann*

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# PROFILES

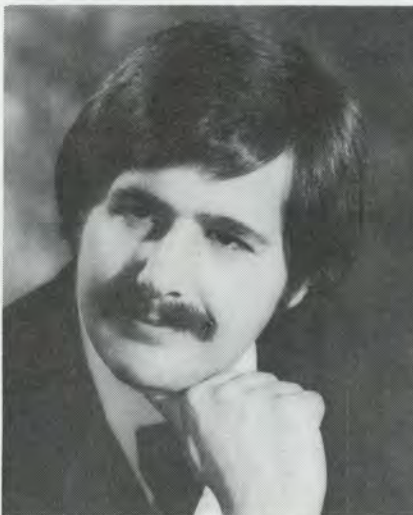
and *Falstaff* with the Opera Company of Philadelphia, and *Manon* and *La Belle Hélène* with the Lyric Opera of Kansas City. This summer at the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. he repeated *Monsieur Choufleuri* and added Gluck's *L'ivrogne corrigé*, which he also performed at the Spoleto Festival in Italy. Green's fall season assignments are Mitrane in *Semiramide*, the Teacher in *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, Vicomte Cascada in *The Merry Widow*, Don Arias in *Le Cid* and the Fool in *Wozzeck*.



## THOMAS WOODMAN

Baritone Thomas Woodman, recently heard in *Die Meistersinger* and *L'Incoronazione di Poppea*, sings four roles this fall: the Porter in *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, Raoul de St. Brioche in *The Merry Widow*, the Moorish Envoy in *Le Cid* and the Second Traveling Artisan in *Wozzeck*. He made his Company debut last fall in *Die Frau ohne Schatten* and *I Pagliacci* and portrayed Prince Paul in the 1981 Spring Opera production of *The Grand Duchess of Gerolstein*. Woodman sang the title role in the world premiere of Henry Mollicone's *Emperor Norton* in a series of Brown Bag Opera performances given in San Francisco this spring. As a member of the 1980 Merola Opera Program, he was heard as the Count in *The Marriage of Figaro* and as Mr. Gedge in *Albert Herring*, and received a Merola Award in the Grand Finals of the San Francisco Opera Auditions. The young baritone made his professional debut with Central City Opera in 1979 in *The Merry Widow*, conducted by Kurt Herbert Adler. Other credits with that company include *The Barber of Seville*, Mollicone's

*The Face on the Barroom Floor*, Cadman's *Shanewis* and Susa's *Black River*. With the Connecticut Opera he has appeared in *La Traviata* and *Madama Butterfly*. A 1980 Metropolitan Opera Council Finalist, Woodman is an Atlantic Richfield Affiliate Artist in the San Francisco/Affiliate Artists-Opera Program.



## JOHN DEL CARLO

A member of the San Francisco Opera Chorus from 1973 to 1976 and now in his fourth season as soloist with the Company, baritone John Del Carlo sings Bogdanowitsch in *The Merry Widow*. He was co-winner of the first-place award in the 1977 San Francisco Opera Grand Finals following participation in the Merola Opera Program that year. In 1978 he made his debut with Spring Opera as Achilles in Handel's *Julius Caesar*, returning for Offenbach's *La Perichole* in 1979, Kurka's *The Good Soldier Schweik* in 1980 and General Boom in Offenbach's *The Grand Duchess of Gerolstein* this year. Del Carlo scored a triumph in the title role of Kirke Mechem's *Tartuffe*, which received its world premiere with the American Opera Project in 1980. In the past three seasons he has sung 16 roles with the San Francisco Opera, including Zuane in *La Gioconda*, which he recorded for London Records. Most recently he was heard as Kothner in *Die Meistersinger* during the first Summer Festival. The baritone won the Giacomo Puccini Award in the San Diego Opera Center Program and with San Diego Opera he has sung Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly* and Silvio in *I Pagliacci*. In 1980 he made a highly acclaimed European debut at the Opera Barga in Italy and per-

formed the role of Dr. Dulcamara, among others, on tour with Western Opera Theater this season. A graduate of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, Del Carlo has appeared with Brown Bag Opera, the Oakland Symphony and the California Bach Society.



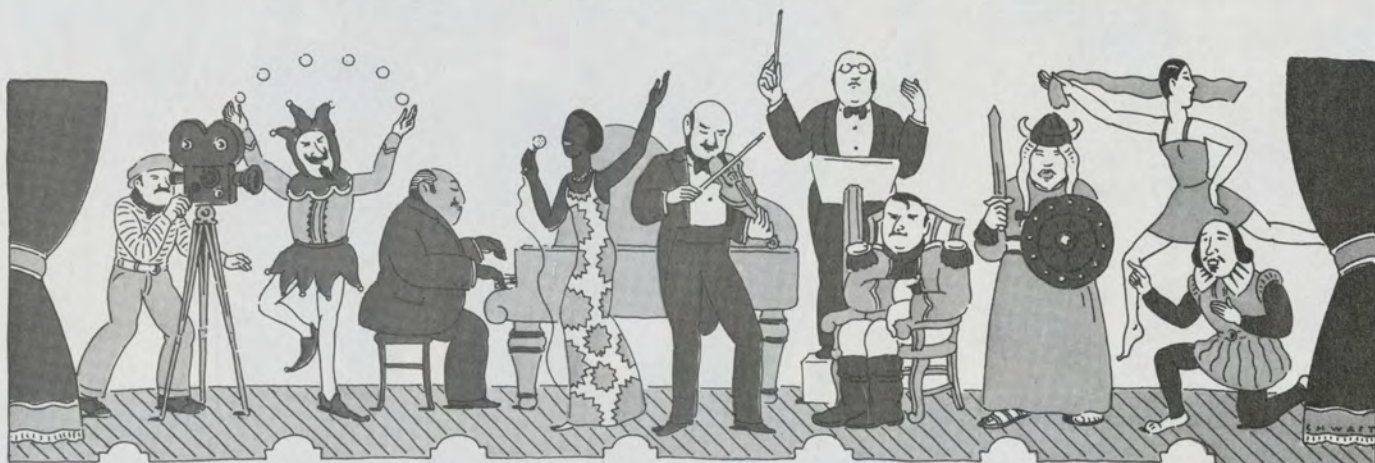
## GARY HARGER

After two years of touring with Western Opera Theater in such roles as Alfredo in *La Traviata*, Eisenstein and Blind in *Die Fledermaus*, Nemorino in *The Elixir of Love* and Romeo and Tybalt in *Romeo and Juliet*, tenor Gary Harger made his San Francisco Opera debut this summer in *Die Meistersinger* and *L'Incoronazione di Poppea*, and portrays the Shabby Peasant in *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, Pritschitsch in *The Merry Widow*, Andres in *Wozzeck* and Normanno in the student and family matinee performances of *Lucia di Lammermoor* during the Fall Season. This year with Spring Opera he was heard as Tybalt in *Romeo and Juliet*. Harger began his career as an apprentice with Santa Fe Opera. In New York he appeared as Ernesto in *Don Pasquale* and Captain Dick in *Naughty Marietta* for Eastern Opera Theater. Other New York credits include Belmonte in *The Abduction from the Seraglio* for the Bronx Opera, Pedrillo in the same work for the Chautauqua Opera Association, and Ferrando in *Così fan tutte* for the Brooklyn Lyric Opera. Originally trained as a musical theater performer, he has starred in numerous musicals across the country and was featured in the original cast of the Tony Award-winning musical *Shenandoah*.

continued on p. 58



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# The Merry Widow

Photos taken in rehearsal by David Powers ◦





Joan Sutherland



Håkan Hagegård



Clockwise from top center: Phil Stark, Thomas Woodman, Jonathan Green, Gary Harger, Stanley Wexler, Gerald Isaac, John Del Carlo, Håkan Hagegård

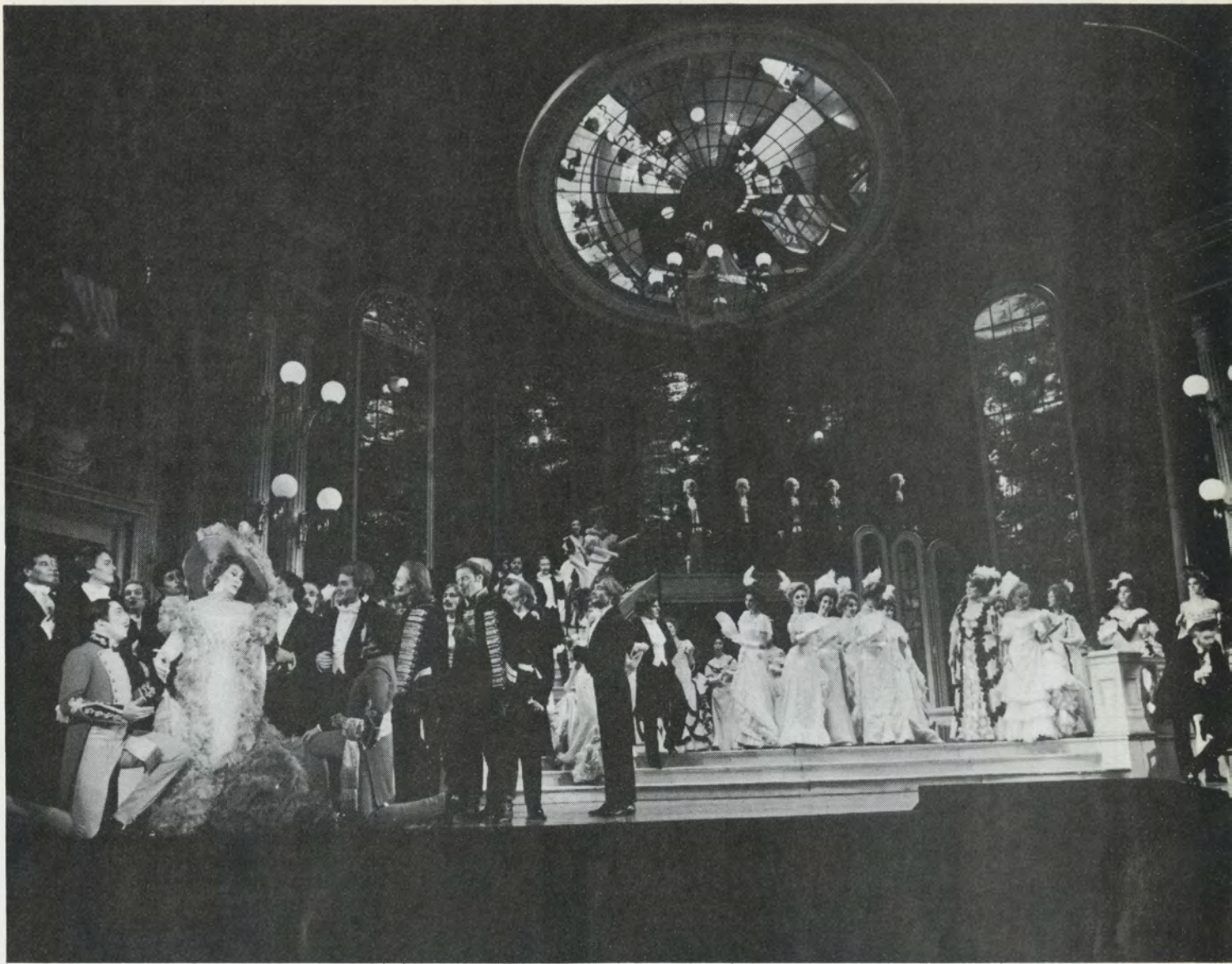


Judith Forst, Anson Austin



Phil Stark, Joan Sutherland





Phil Stark, Håkan Hagegård



Joan Sutherland, Håkan Hagegård



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# The Merry Widow

(in English)

*Conductor*

Richard Bonyng

*Stage Director*

Lotfi Mansouri

*Set Designer*

Murray Laufer\*

*Costume Designer*

Suzanne Mess\*

*Lighting Designer*

Joan Sullivan

*Choreographer*

Christian Holder\*

*Sound Designer*

Roger Gans

*Chorus Director*

Richard Bradshaw

*Musical Preparation*

Kathryn Cathcart

*Prompter*

Gordon Jephthas

*Assistant Stage Director*

Anne Catherine Ewers

*Stage Manager*

Gretchen Mueller

*Production from the*

Canadian Opera Company

*First performance: Vienna, December 30, 1905*

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FRIDAY, OCTOBER 9 AT 8:00

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 13 AT 7:30

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 16 AT 8:00

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 21 AT 8:00

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 25 AT 1:00

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 28 AT 7:30

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 31 AT 8:00

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*Please do not interrupt the music with applause.*

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

*The performance will last approximately three and one-half hours.*

CAST

(in order of appearance)

*Baron Mirko Zeta, Pontevedrian ambassador in Paris*

Phil Stark\*

*Valencienne, his wife*

Judith Forst

*Camille de Rosillon, a Parisian gentleman*

Anson Austin\*\*

*Vicomte Cascada, a Latin diplomat*

Jonathan Green

*Raoul de St. Brioche, a French diplomat*

Thomas Woodman

*Kromow, Pontevedrian military councillor*

Stanley Wexler

*Olga, his wife*

Phyllis Hunter

*Pritschitsch, Pontevedrian consul*

Gary Harger

*Praskowia, his wife*

Ingrid Olsson\*

*Bogdanowitsch, Pontevedrian military attaché*

John Del Carlo

*Silviane, his wife*

Sara Ganz

*Njegus, an embassy secretary*

Gerald Isaac\*

*Anna Glawari, the merry widow*

Joan Sutherland

*Danilo Danilovitch, first secretary to Baron Zeta*

Håkan Hagegård\*

*Maître d'hôtel at Maxim's*

Abe Kalish\*

*Zozo*

Nancy Bleiweiss\*

*Grisettes:*

Peggy Davis,  
 Anne Elizabeth Egan,  
 Carolyn Houser,  
 Marti Kennedy,  
 Kathryn Roszak,  
 Katherine Warner

*Solo Dancers:*

Lynda Meyer\*,  
 Vane Vest\*

*Members of Pontevedrian and Parisian society, dancers, servants, waiters*

\*\*American debut

\*San Francisco Opera debut

Linda Meyer and Vane Vest appear through the courtesy of the San Francisco Ballet, Lew Christensen and Michael Smuin, Directors.

TIME AND PLACE: The early 1900s, Paris

ACT I The Embassy of Pontevedro in Paris

INTERMISSION

ACT II The garden of Anna Glawari's mansion

INTERMISSION

ACT III Maxim's



# SYNOPSIS

## The Merry Widow

### ACT I

In the Pontevedrian Embassy in Paris, a great ball is being held in honor of the Grand Duke's birthday. Valencienne, the beautiful wife of Baron Zeta, the elderly ambassador, is flirting with a young French officer, Camille de Rosillon, but her husband at the moment has a more serious problem: How can he save his country from impending bankruptcy? Anna Glawari, a young widow of a Pontevedrian banker who has left her 50 millions, has just arrived in Paris. If she marries a Frenchman, her millions will be lost to the Fatherland. The ambassador is determined that Anna, the Merry Widow, shall marry a Pontevedrian husband, and has selected the first secretary of the embassy, Danilo Danilovitch, as the ideal bridegroom. But the ambassador is worried. The handsome Danilo has not yet appeared at the party. Now Anna Glawari arrives. Escorted by a galaxy of hopefuls, the Merry Widow sweeps into the ballroom. In the waltz that follows, she reflects that she might be loved for her millions rather than for herself. The ambassador escorts Anna to supper. Meanwhile Danilo, who has been found at his favorite spot, Maxim's, surrounded by Lolo, Dodo, Jou-Jou, Clo-Clo, Margot and Frou-Frou, has arrived at the command of the ambassador. Alas! he hasn't slept for several nights, so he decides to have a little rest. Anna Glawari appears and wakes the sleeping Danilo. The two meet — again. Years ago Danilo had wanted to marry Anna, but she was the daughter of a small farmer, and his aristocratic family would not consent to such a misalliance — and so Anna married the rich banker Glawari. She reminds him of their old affair, but Danilo tells her that for all her money she will never hear him say "I love you." Anna returns to the hall, and Valencienne and Camille enter. As she has forbidden him to declare his love, Camille has written on her fan the words "I love you," and now she has lost the fan. But the fan has meanwhile been found by a member of the embassy staff, Councillor Kromow. He is furiously jealous by nature and, reading the inscription, assumes that it belongs to his wife, Olga. In order to calm him, the ambassador begs Valencienne to acknowledge the fan as hers. After these complications, the ambassador confides to Danilo that his country needs him to marry Anna so that the Fatherland will not be deprived of her millions. Danilo refuses, but promises to save her money by removing all foreign suitors. When ladies' choice is announced, all the men hope to be the widow's choice. She chooses Danilo, but he refuses and puts the dance up for auction — 10,000 francs to dance with the widow, the money to go to charity. That stops the impecunious suitors. Anna and Danilo are left alone, and to a swirling waltz she lets herself be caught up in his arms.

### ACT II

The following evening Anna Glawari is giving a real Pontevedrian garden party in her house. Anna agrees to sing a national folk song of the forest nymph, Vilia. When Danilo arrives, the ambassador confides to him his suspicion that Camille is the most dangerous of the widow's suitors. He shows Danilo the fan, and Danilo immediately recognizes Camille's writing and is anxious to discover who the lady in the case may be. He then encounters Anna, who is concerned that he should be avoiding her. They sing a teasing duet, but try as she may, Anna cannot get a declaration from Danilo. Valencienne and Camille meet for a rendezvous in the garden pavilion. But the ambassador has summoned his staff to meet him for an emergency meeting in the same little pavilion. Finding the door locked, he looks through the keyhole and believes that he sees his wife with Camille. Furiously he tries to break down the door, while Valencienne escapes by another door and Anna, in order to protect her from the ambassador's jealousy, takes her place. Both the ambassador and Danilo are amazed when Anna and Camille come out of the pavilion and she announces their engagement. Everyone joins the chorus of congratulations, and Danilo, for the marriage ahead, tells the widow of the story of the prince and princess, who had parted because the princess was faithless and the prince went away. And Danilo proposes to do the same — he goes off to Maxim's. Anna is jubilant, realizing that he has fallen into her trap — he loves her!

### ACT III

Everybody meets at Maxim's, where Zozo and the grisettes perform their famous can-can. The ambassador is in despair over the alleged engagement between Anna and the Frenchman, which will mean bankruptcy for the Pontevedrian economy. Danilo is sent off to appeal to Anna's patriotism. He is delighted when she explains to him what really happened in the little pavilion and that she has no intention of marrying Camille. But still he will not declare himself. Now the ambassador, convinced that his wife is having an affair with Camille, decides to divorce her, and in the name of the Fatherland he asks for Anna's hand. She tells him that unfortunately, by the will of her late husband, she loses all her money if she marries again. Danilo interrupts her: "Is this true? You would have no money?" This alters everything, and he can now really say the three words he had sworn he would not say. And she, triumphant, explains to him that in losing the money, it becomes the sole property of her husband!



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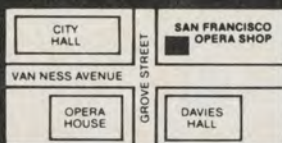
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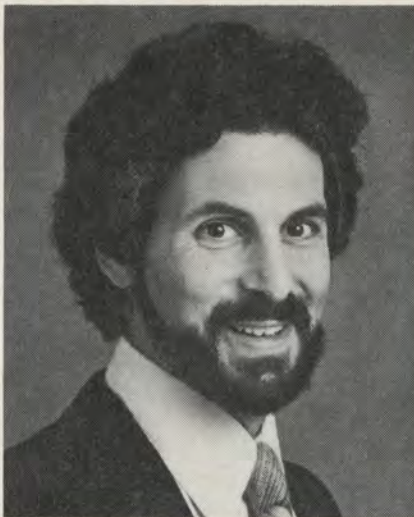
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## PROFILES

continued from p. 48



### STANLEY WEXLER

Following his debut season with the San Francisco Opera in 1980, when he appeared in *Samson et Dalila*, *Don Pasquale*, *The Magic Flute*, *La Traviata* and *Madama Butterfly*, bass-baritone Stanley Wexler sings Kromow in *The Merry Widow*. Earlier this year he was heard in the title role of *The Marriage of Figaro* with Spring Opera, a role he also portrayed as a member of Western Opera Theater during the 1976-77 seasons and with the Lyric Opera of Kansas City. He had made his Spring Opera debut the previous year in Conrad Susa's *Transformations*, having performed in the 1978 PBS telecast of the work from the Minnesota Opera. With that company he has also appeared in Virgil Thomson's *The Mother of Us All* and Menotti's *The Consul*. His engagements in Kansas City include the King in *Aida*, Sonora in *The Girl of the Golden West* and the title role in *Don Giovanni*. Wexler has sung Pistol in *Falstaff* with Portland Opera and Sulpice in *The Daughter of the Regiment* with Augusta Opera. His credits include appearances with Santa Fe Opera, the Wolf Trap Company and the Goldovsky Opera Company. He performed as soloist with the San Francisco Pops in 1977 and again last summer in the Rodgers and Hammerstein program.

### ABE KALISH

San Francisco actor Abe Kalish makes his San Francisco Opera debut as the Maître d'hôtel in *The Merry Widow*. Most recently he has been seen by local audiences as Zig in the long-running hit *Bleacher Bums* at



the Little Fox Theater. Other recent roles include Kulygin in *The Three Sisters* at Mills College, and P.H. in the Magic Theater production of *Autobiography of a Pearl Diver*. He has appeared with the Actor's Workshop, the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, the Eureka Theater, Mill Valley Center for the Performing Arts, the Marin Shakespeare Festival, the Playhouse and Festival Theater. His roles have ranged from the Coach in *That Championship Season*, Captain Wirtz in *The Andersonville Trial* and Morrie in *The Blood Knot* to Mr. Glass in *Slow Dance on the Killing Ground*, the Landlord in *Moonchildren*, Bunny Berry in *Naomi Court* and Hortensio in *The Taming of the Shrew*. In addition to acting, Kalish has produced and directed for a number of local companies and has appeared in numerous films and commercials made in San Francisco.

### RICHARD BONYNGE

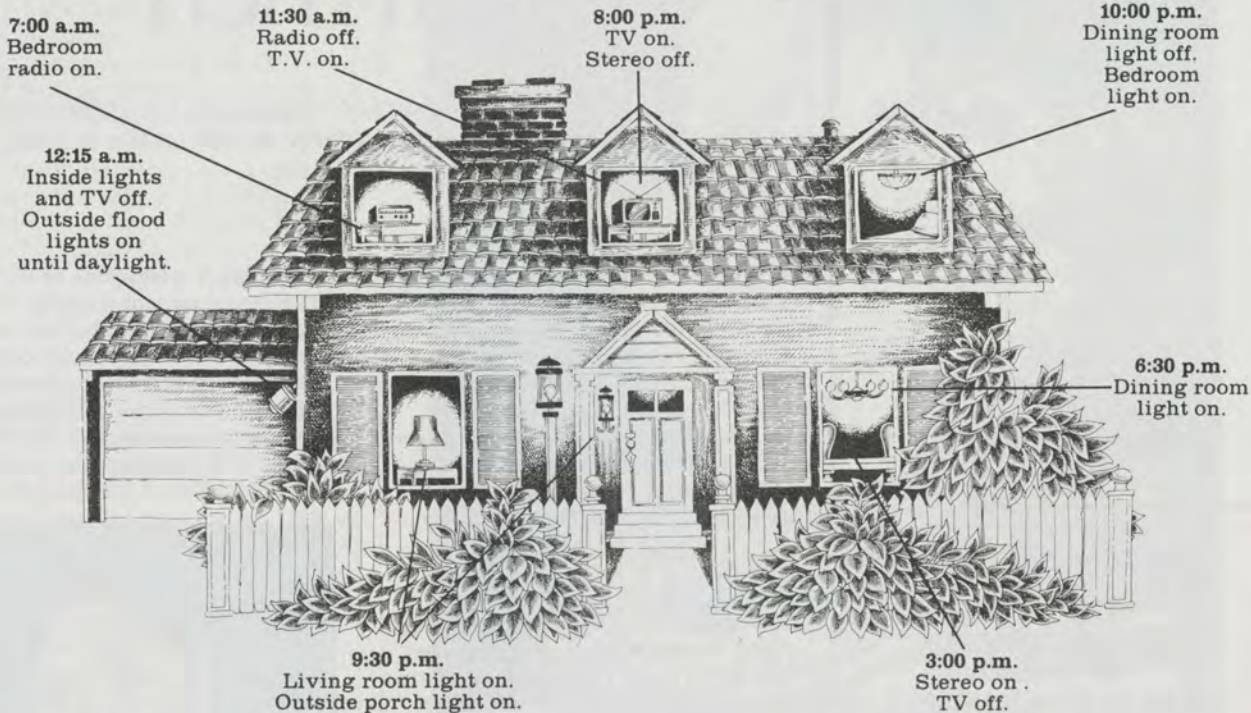
Richard Bonyngé returns to the San Francisco Opera to conduct Rossini's *Semiramide* and Lehár's *The Merry Widow*, the latter in his own performing edition. Bonyngé left his native Australia in 1950 to continue his piano studies in London, where he became accompanist and coach for Joan Sutherland. His official conducting debut was in 1962 with Rome's Santa Cecilia Orchestra, followed quickly by appearances at the Hollywood Bowl and the Vancouver Opera Association. He soon acquired a reputation as a master of the bel canto style and has rescued many works from oblivion or neglect. He made his San Francisco debut conducting *La Sonnambula* in 1963 and has since



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# PROFILES



appeared on the podium in major houses throughout the world. For the American Opera Society he led a concert performance of *Semiramide* in 1964, followed by staged versions in 1965 in Melbourne and Boston. He later conducted the work at Lyric Opera of Chicago in 1971 and for Vancouver Opera Association in 1975. His Metropolitan Opera debut was a 1966 production of *Lucia di Lammermoor*. San Francisco Opera engagements for Bonyngé have included *La Traviata* (1964), *I Puritani* (1966), *Maria Stuarda* (1971), *Norma* (1972), *Die Fledermaus* (1973), *Esclarmonde* (1974 — the first presentation of the work anywhere in over 40 years) and *Il Trovatore* (1975). He has served as music director for the Vancouver Opera Association, where he conducted *Norma*, *Faust*, *Pique Dame*, *Mignon*, *Un Ballo in Maschera*, *Le Roi de Lahore* and *La Fille du Régiment*, and serves in the same capacity for the Australian Opera in Sydney, where he has led *Carmen*, *Lakmé*, *The Magic Flute*, *Lucrezia Borgia*, *Suor Angelica*, *Nabucco* and, in 1978, *The Merry Widow*. During the 1980-81 season, his Australian performances included a new production of *Les Huguenots* and revivals of *The Beggar's Opera* and *La Traviata*. This season he will be seen there leading new productions of *Alcina* and *La Buona Figliuola* and a revival of *Rigoletto*. His work has been heard by millions on the historic series of three *Live from Lincoln Center* telecasts featuring Joan Sutherland in concert with Luciano Pavarotti and Marilyn Horne. In 1977 he was honored during the Silver Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II, who named him a Commander of the British Empire.

Bonyngé's discography on London Records comprises excerpts and complete recordings of both familiar and rarely heard ballet and opera scores, including *Semiramide* and *The Merry Widow*.



## LOTFI MANSOURI

Noted stage director Lotfi Mansouri returns to the San Francisco Opera for his 14th season to direct *The Merry Widow* and *Il Trovatore*. Last year he staged the new production of *Don Pasquale* and in 1979 was responsible for *La Gioconda*, which was subsequently seen over live television in the United States and in Europe. The Iranian-born director has staged a total of 28 different works for the company, including such rarities as Bellini's *La Sonnambula* (1963) and Massenet's *Esclarmonde* (1974) (both with Joan Sutherland), Donizetti's *Daughter of the Regiment* (1974) with Beverly Sills, Auber's *Fra Diavolo* (1969) with Mary Costa and Nicolai Gedda, and Meyerbeer's *L'Africaine* (1972) with Shirley Verrett and Plácido Domingo. From 1960 to 1965 he served as resident stage director of the Zurich Opera and from 1965 to 1974 was head stage director at the Grand Théâtre in Geneva. While in Switzerland, Mansouri was director of dramatics at both the Zurich International Opera and the Centre Lyrique in Geneva. In 1976 he made his Metropolitan Opera debut with *Esclarmonde* and his Vienna State Opera debut with *La Fanciulla del West*. General Director of the Canadian Opera Company since 1978, his stagings there include *Don Carlos* (in the original French), *Wozzeck*, *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Don Giovanni*, Tchaikovsky's *Joan of Arc*,



*Carmen, Tristan und Isolde, Simon Boccanegra, Peter Grimes, Otello, Lulu, Norma and The Merry Widow.* For Netherlands Opera he has directed Strauss' *Capriccio, Tosca, Carmen* and Offenbach's *La Vie Parisienne*. In 1979 he staged *The Merry Widow* with Joan Sutherland for the Australian Opera and this year with Elisabeth Söderström for the Canadian Opera Company. Other recent credits include *Lucia di Lammermoor* with Ashley Putnam in Santa Fe (1979), *Norma* in Rio de Janeiro and Verdi's *Giovanna d'Arco* in San Diego (1980) and earlier this year *Les Huguenots* with Miss Sutherland in Sydney.

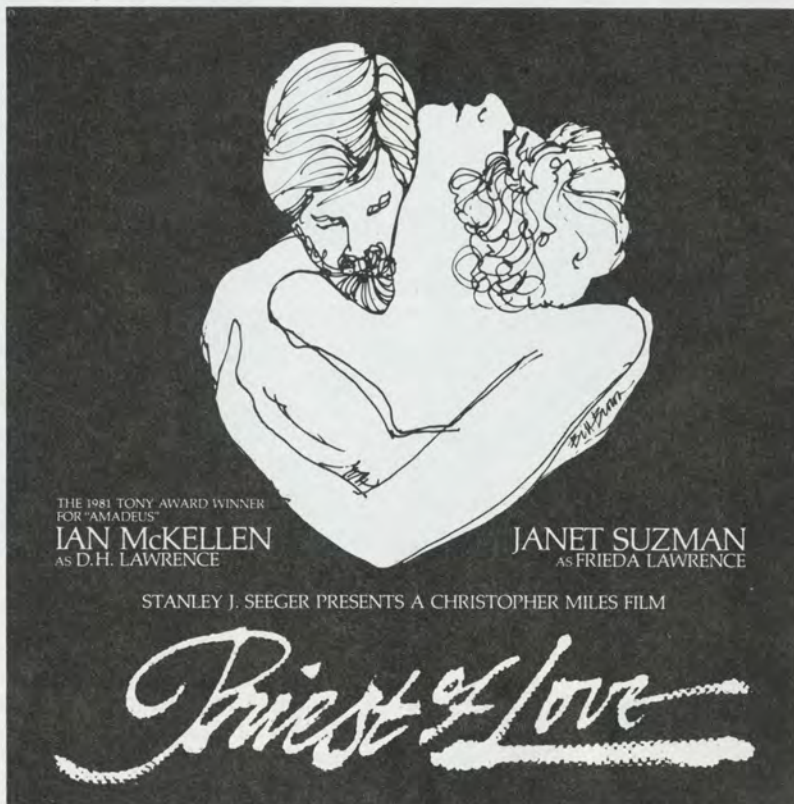


**MURRAY LAUFER**

Murray Laufer designed the sets for *The Merry Widow*, staged by Lotfi Mansouri for the Canadian Opera Company in 1981. Other Canadian Opera scenic credits include *Aida* (1963), *Louis Riel* (a work staged in 1976 as Canada's gift for the American Bicentennial), *Fidelio* (1970), *Siegfried* (1972), *Götterdämmerung* and the world premiere of *Heloise and Abelard* (1973), and *Bluebeard's Castle* and *Der Fliegende Holländer* (1974). As resident designer for Toronto Arts Productions, he provided the decor for numerous plays, including *The Misanthrope* and *Tre-lawney of the Wells*. For the Stratford Festival he designed *The Marriage Broker*, and he was recently commissioned by the Royal Winnipeg Ballet to create the physical production for a new work based on the play *Johnny Belinda*. In May 1979 he was named Commissioner General for Canada's participation in the Prague Quadrenniale of Scene Design, Costumes and Architecture in the Theater.

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## PROFILES



### SUZANNE MESS

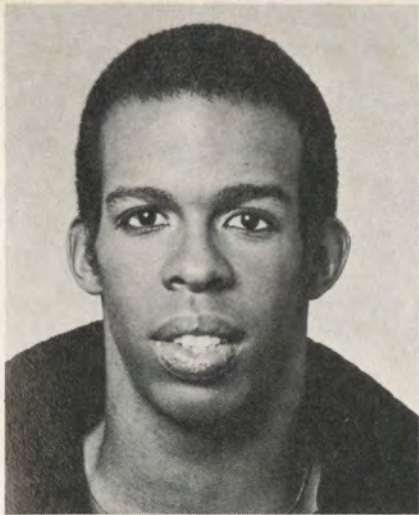
Suzanne Mess designed the costumes for Lotfi Mansouri's production of *The Merry Widow*, staged by the Canadian Opera Company in 1981. She has created designs for more than 35 productions by the Canadian Opera Company, including the world premiere of *Heloise and Abelard* (1973); *Der Fliegende Holländer* and *La Traviata* (1974); *Don Carlo* (1977); *Rigoletto* and *Don Giovanni* (1978); *Peter Grimes* and *Lulu* (1980); and this year's production of *Un Ballo in Maschera*. She has been associated with the National Arts Centre in Ottawa, for which she designed *Cendrillon*, and has created costumes for the Dallas Civic Opera's production of *Manon Lescaut*. Other costume credits include *Andrea Chenier* for the New York City Opera and *Madama Butterfly* for the Miami Opera, as well as a new work for the National Ballet of Canada (*The Newcomers*). Her designs have also been seen on numerous CBC Television productions.



### JOAN SULLIVAN

In her second year with the San Francisco Opera, assistant lighting director Joan Sullivan is responsible for the lighting of *The Merry Widow*, *Le Cid* and *Il Trovatore*. Last year's credits include *Simon Boccanegra* and *Arabella*. In a similar post with the Lyric Opera of Chicago from 1974 through 1979, she worked on all the company's productions and also recreated the lighting for the Chicago production of Penderecki's *Paradise Lost* in the work's European premiere at La Scala in 1979. In Chicago she also served as lighting designer for the Lyric Opera School, where her credits included Britten's *Turn of the Screw* and *The Rape of Lucretia*, Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress*, Cimarosa's *Il Matrimonio Segreto* and Bizet's *Doctor Miracle*. For the Lyric Ballet she created the lighting for works by such choreographers as Balanchine, Jerome Robbins and Jacques d'Amboise. She was lighting designer for the Virginia Opera Association in 1976 and 1978, where she was responsible for *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *The Barber of Seville* and *Così fan tutte*, and in a similar post with the Kentucky Opera Association from 1978 to 1980, she designed the lighting for *The Magic Flute*, *I Pagliacci*, *The Impresario* and *Il Trovatore*. Miss Sullivan was lighting designer for the 1981 Spring Opera season.





**CHRISTIAN HOLDER**

Christian Holder makes his debut as a choreographer with the San Francisco Opera with *The Merry Widow*. For the past two seasons he was seen as guest artist in the "Dance of the Hours" ballet sequence in *La Gioconda* and the Bacchanale in *Samson et Dalila*, and will appear later this season as the soloist in the *Aida* ballet. He first studied dance in London and then took classes at the High School of Performing Arts in New York. He was discovered by Robert Joffrey when he was studying at Martha Graham's School of Contemporary Dance and joined the Joffrey Ballet in 1966 at the age of 16. Known to Bay Area audiences as principal dancer of that company for 13 years in such pieces as Gerald Arpino's *Trinity* and *Touch Me*, José Limon's *The Moor's Pavane* and Kurt Jooss' *The Green Table*, he has since danced extensively throughout Europe. His first choreographic effort was *Five Dances* for the Joffrey Ballet in 1975. In 1979 he choreographed *Variations for Six* for the North Carolina Dance Theater and earlier this year made his European debut as choreographer in Paris with *Passeggiando*, in which he danced alongside Martine van Hamel and Kevin McKenzie. Holder has designed the costumes for Margo Sappington's *Sfere di Mercurio* in Italy and *Les Cerises Perdues* with the Pacific Dance Theater in Seattle. He also designs clothes for himself and rock star Tina Turner, among others. He recently assisted Miss Sappington for the New York City Opera's premier production of *Attila*, directed by Lotfi Mansouri.

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# 1981 PREVIEW

## 1981 OPERA PREVIEWS

Information on opera previews and lectures is always carried in the San Francisco Opera program magazines. To enable patrons to make advance plans, we are printing a list of all previews and lectures which are open to the public.

### SAN FRANCISCO OPERA GUILD PREVIEWS

#### SAN FRANCISCO OPERA GUILD AUXILIARY

Opera "Insights" held in the Green Room of the Herbst Theatre, Veterans' Memorial Building, Van Ness & McAllister, in San Francisco. Lectures are free to the public and feature some of the season's outstanding artists in discussion. Schedule to be announced. For additional information, please call (415) 565-6432.

#### MARIN

Previews held at Park School Auditorium, 360 East Blithedale, Mill Valley; refreshments served at 7:30 p.m., previews at 8:00 p.m. Series registration is \$17.50 for 6 previews (\$15.00 for students and seniors). Single tickets are \$3.50 (\$3.00 for students and seniors). For further information, please call (415) 565-6432.

#### LE CID

James Keolker 10/8

#### WOZZECK

Dale Harris 10/22

#### DIE WALKÜRE

Henry Holt 11/19

#### NORTH PENINSULA

Previews held at William Crocker School, 2600 Ralston Ave., Hillsborough. Lectures begin at 7:30 p.m. Series registration is \$15.00; single tickets are \$4.50. For further information, please call (415) 342-8674 or (415) 343-7620.

#### WOZZECK and LE CID

Arthur Kaplan 10/12

#### DIE WALKÜRE

Henry Holt 11/16

#### FRIENDS OF THE KENSINGTON LIBRARY PRESENTS GENERAL LECTURE ON VERDI

A general lecture on the operas of Giuseppe Verdi, with an emphasis on *Il Trovatore* and *Aida*, will be given by Michael Barclay on Thursday, November 5 at the Kensington Library, 61 Arlington Avenue, Kensington. The lecture will begin at 7:30 p.m. and admission is free. For further information, please call (415) 526-3043.

#### PIEDMONT ADULT EDUCATION OPERA PREVIEW SERIES

Previews will be held at the auditorium of Piedmont High School, 800 Magnolia Avenue, Piedmont, at 7:30 p.m. on two Tuesday and ten Monday evenings. Lectures will be given by San Francisco Opera Magazine editor Arthur Kaplan and Opera Education International director Michael Barclay. Series registration is \$45; \$40 for Piedmont residents. Single tickets are \$5.00. For further information call (415) 653-9454 or 658-3679.

#### WOZZECK

Michael Barclay 10/5

#### LUCIA

Michael Barclay 10/12

#### AIDA

Arthur Kaplan 11/2

#### DIE WALKÜRE

Michael Barclay 11/16

#### IL TROVATORE

Arthur Kaplan 11/23

#### JUNIOR LEAGUE OPERA PREVIEWS

All Junior League opera previews will be held at the Herbst Theater in the Veterans' Auditorium, Van Ness and McAllister. Lectures begin at 11:00 a.m. There is no admission charge. For information, please call Darrylyn Saladino at (415) 931-0266.

#### WOZZECK

Michael Barclay 10/14

#### NAPA OPERA LECTURE SERIES

For the ninth year there will be a ten-week course called ADVENTURES IN OPERA in Napa. The course, which accompanies the Saturday and Sunday series at the San Francisco Opera, will be held on Wednesday nights from 7:30 to 9:00 p.m. at St. Mary's Episcopal Church, 1917 Third Street, in Napa. Ernest Fly will again teach the course. Cost for the entire series will be \$18.00. Individual lectures will be \$3.00. For further information, please call Mr. Fly at (707) 224-6162.

#### CARMEN 10/7

WOZZECK/LE CID 10/14

#### LUCIA 10/28

#### AIDA 11/4

DIE WALKÜRE 11/11

IL TROVATORE 11/18

#### OPERA EDUCATION INTERNATIONAL PREVIEW SERIES

Previews of all the operas of the 1981 season will be given by Arthur Kaplan, editor of the San Francisco Opera Magazine; Michael Barclay, director of Opera Education International; and James Keolker, editor of *Opera Companion*. All lectures are given in the auditorium of the Dr. William Cobb School, 2725 California Street, between Scott and Divisadero, at 7:30 p.m. Free parking is available in the schoolyard outside the auditorium. Discount series tickets for all 11 lectures, including Barclay's discography "The 1981 Season on Records," is \$45. Individual admission is \$5. For further information call (415) 526-5244.

#### LE CID

Arthur Kaplan 10/7

#### WOZZECK

Michael Barclay 10/20

#### LUCIA

Michael Barclay 10/29

#### AIDA

Arthur Kaplan 11/5

#### DIE WALKÜRE

Michael Barclay 11/10

#### IL TROVATORE

Arthur Kaplan 11/16



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### SAN JOSE OPERA GUILD

Previews will be held at the Saratoga Civic Theater, 13777 Fruitvale Ave., Saratoga; November 9 lecture at West Valley College Theater. Series is open to the public at a cost of \$3.00 per lecture, \$2.00 for students and senior citizens (free of charge to San Jose Opera Guild members). For further information, please call (408) 741-1331.

#### WOZZECK

Dale Harris 10/23, 10 a.m.

#### LUCIA

Donald Pippin 10/26, 7:30 p.m.

#### AIDA

James Keolker 11/6, 10 a.m.

#### DIE WALKÜRE

Henry Holt 11/19, 7:30 p.m.

### SOUTH PENINSULA

Previews held at the Palo Alto Cultural Center, 1313 Newell Road, at 8:00 p.m. Series registration is \$15.00; single tickets are available. For further information, please call (415) 941-3890.

#### WOZZECK

Dale Harris 10/20

#### LUCIA

Donald Pippin 10/27

#### DIE WALKÜRE

Henry Holt 11/10

### CHABOT COLLEGE LECTURE SERIES/OPERA FOR EVERYONE

A ten-week series of introductions to the 1981 San Francisco Opera season. Offered by Chabot College and conducted by Eugene Marker, these 10 lectures are open to all, free of charge, and will be given on ten consecutive Thursday evenings. All lectures are from 7:00 to 9:15 p.m. beginning on Thursday, September 10, and are located at the City of San Leandro Community Library Auditorium, 300 Estudillo Avenue, San Leandro. For further information, please call (415) 786-6632.

THE MERRY WIDOW 10/1

CARMEN 10/8

LE CID 10/15

WOZZECK 10/22

AIDA 10/29

DIE WALKÜRE 11/5

IL TROVATORE 11/12

### BANK OF AMERICA PREVIEW SERIES

Previews will be held at the Bank of America, 555 California St., San Francisco, in the A.P. Giannini Auditorium, at 12:05 p.m. The series is open to the public at no cost. For further information, please call (415) 953-1000.

LE CID 10/8

LUCIA 10/27

AIDA 11/6

IL TROVATORE 11/19

### U.C. BERKELEY EXTENSION LECTURE SERIES

Eleven illustrated previews will be given by Jan Popper, professor of music emeritus, UCLA (8/31 to 10/5), and Natalie Limonick, professor of music, USC (10/12-11/16). All previews on Mondays (except Tuesday, 9/8) at 7 p.m. in the auditorium of the UC Extension Center, 55 Laguna St. (at Market), San Francisco. Series \$65, pre-registration advisable; single previews \$7 at the door if space is available. For more information, please call (415) 642-4111.

LE CID 10/5

WOZZECK 10/12

LUCIA 10/19

AIDA 10/26

DIE WALKÜRE 11/9

IL TROVATORE 11/16

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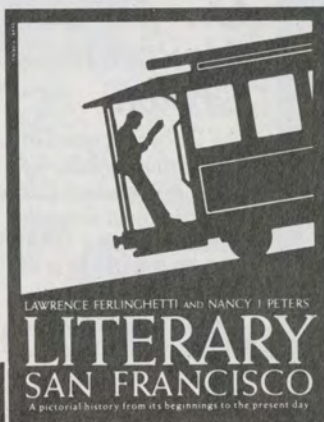
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Theodotia Hartman  
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Anne Huffington  
Liya Kushnirskaya  
Marena Lane  
Lola Lazzari-Simi  
Cecilia MacLaren  
Roberta Maxwell  
Susan McClelland

Anna McNaughten  
Iris Miller  
Linda Moody  
Susan Sheldrake  
Lorice Stevens

Winther Andersen  
Mamoru Arimoto  
John Beauchamp  
Manfred Behrens  
Raymond Chavez  
Thomas Clark  
Angelo Colbasso  
David Durrett  
Dale Emde

Peter Girardot  
John L. Glenister  
Edgar C. Harris  
David House  
Conrad Knipfel  
Henry Metlenko  
Steven Meyer  
Eugene Naham  
Stephen Ostrow  
Autris Paige  
Robert Philip Price  
Robert Romanovsky  
Kevin Skiles  
Micaele Sparacino  
James Starkey  
James Tipton

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Deidre Atkinson  
Malieka Bundy  
Anne Coriston  
Teresa Davis  
Sharon D'Cunha

Samantha Graff  
Karla Haerberle  
Martha Hicks  
Julia Hunt  
Ann Huppert  
Anna Marie Jegers

Alissa Kingsbury  
Rachel Lopez  
Jennifer Marshall  
Kristin McCarthy  
Stefanie Naifeh  
Amy Sharp

### Boys Chorus

Paul Bemesderfer  
Brian Butler  
Adam Colety  
Jonathan Couchman  
Brian Darby  
James Datri  
John Datri  
Geoffrey Dunn

Patrick Egly  
Michael Folk  
Timothy Genis  
George Graham  
Kenyan Hopkins  
Gary Jones  
David Kersnar  
Christopher Lev  
Ian Luce

David Martin  
Eric Marty  
Peter McKean  
Torin Newsome  
Daniel Patasz  
Aaron Shapiro  
Carl Smith  
William Weber

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Dorothy Baune  
Barbara Clifford  
Renee De Jarnatt  
Diane Graham  
Leisha Hartman  
Mary Joyce  
Leslie Landberg  
Jan Moody  
Holly Morrison  
Barbara Norton  
Marianne Petroni  
Miriam Preece  
Katherine Prongos  
Nathalie Rubens  
Louise Russo  
Ellen Sanchez  
Nikki Scofield  
Sally Scott  
Susie Scott  
Stella Tatro  
Claudia Waugh  
Janet Weil  
Susan Weiss

Andrew Alder  
Sky Bamford  
Steve Bauman  
Mike Boehm  
Allyn Butcher  
Thomas Carlisle  
Rudy Cook  
Tom Curran  
Chas Dargis  
Hilbert Duperrior  
Allan Ellis  
Manoel Feliciano  
Robert Flax  
Mickey Frettoloso  
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Berri McBride  
Larry Millner  
Gary Morgret  
Paul Newman  
Mark Nichol  
Tim Perez  
Raul Piccardo  
Michael Pitkin  
Jason Porter  
Joel Posner  
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Paul Ricks  
Robert Schmidt  
John Schultz  
Ronald Sickman  
Rick Skarolid  
Kent Speirs  
Nathaniel Stookey  
Barry Tucker  
Robert Turner  
Joe Willis  
Arthur Zigas

### Dancers

Peggy Davis  
Anne Elizabeth Egan  
Carolyn Houser  
Marti Kennedy

Kathryn Roszak  
Katherine Warner  
Peter Childers  
Greg Gibble

William Sanner Ramsdell  
Pete J. Shoemaker  
John Sullivan  
Charlie West

### Actors

Alan Blumenfeld  
Colin Harvey

Abe Kalish  
Claudia Siefer



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- 10/3 Semiramide
- 10/10 Manon
- 10/17 Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk
- 10/24 The Merry Widow
- 10/31 Carmen
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# What's A Girl Like You Doing In The Opera House?

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After years of being exploited in low theatrical ventures, *The Merry Widow* has regained the respectability it enjoyed in the early 1900s.

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By DAVID LITTLEJOHN

**OPERETTA:** Type of light opera with a frivolous, sentimental story, often employing parody and satire and containing both spoken dialogue and much light, pleasant music.

*(New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians)*

The city of Vienna has worked out a comfortable solution to the problem of what to do with operetta, that antiquated form of popular entertainment a portion of the public persists in wanting to see. They have given over one theater in town — the Volksoper — almost entirely to the performance of classical operettas in rotating repertory.

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After 76 years, *The Merry Widow* is still the world's favorite operetta.

---

That leaves the "serious" opera house in town — the Vienna State Opera — free to ignore this dubious genre altogether (with the exception of *Die Fledermaus*) and concentrate on the heavier fare.

Something like this pattern is followed by other cities on the international opera circuit that boast two companies or houses — though the repertoire in house number two is usually more varied than the Volksoper's. In New York, London, Paris, East Berlin and Munich, the premier opera companies tend to settle for

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Composer Lehár with Louis Treumann (Danilo) and Mizzi Günther (the Widow) on opening night of the world premiere of *Die lustige Witwe*.

nothing lower than comic operas by Rossini and Donizetti. Offenbach's *Tales of Hoffmann* will pass, since scholars have decided it's a serious opera; but none of the composer's sillier stuff. The absolute lowest they'll stoop is *Hansel and Gretel* (for the children) and *Die Fledermaus* (for New Year's Eve).

That way, the second companies — the New York City Opera, the English National Opera, the Salle Favart and the Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris, the Komische Oper in Berlin, the Theater an Gärtnertplatz in Munich — can not only choose from the whole "serious" repertoire (at cheaper prices, in the audience's language, and with

home-grown singers), but can also dispense all the bonbons they desire from the operetta repertoire.

One-house towns have to resolve this high/low problem within a single season. Interestingly enough, in what feels like an age of inflating pretensions, most of them still make room for a sizable dose of operetta. Looking over the repertoires of 100-plus opera companies for 1980 and '81, I found more than 160 operetta productions. (A thorough search, I'm sure, would turn up far more: the smaller the company, the more likely it is to deal in lighter works.)

Jacques Offenbach led my list with 59 productions (not counting *The*



*Tales of Hoffmann*). Johann Strauss, Jr., had 33, 19 of them of *Die Fledermaus*. Thirty-two were by Franz Lehár — including 20 *Merry Widows*.

After 76 years, apparently, *Die lustige Witwe* is still the world's favorite operetta. If you missed her in San Francisco, you could still have seen Anna Glawari, since January of last year, in Avignon, Barcelona, Berlin, Budapest, Cincinnati, Dresden, Fort Worth, Frankfurt, Ghent, Leeds, London, Miami, Minneapolis, Nice,

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**It ran 483 nights in its Vienna premiere.**

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Nuremberg, Tokyo, Toronto or Zurich.

It's a far cry from 1905-1910, when sometimes 100 or more companies were playing *The Merry Widow* at once. It ran 483 nights in its Vienna premiere, 778 in London, 416 in New York, over 1,000 in Paris. On one Saturday in 1907, I read somewhere, it played 10 times (matinees and evenings) in Buenos Aires — in five different languages. It was filmed by Erich von Stroheim and Ernst Lubitsch. Fifty million recordings of it



The Vienna Volksoper, where operetta classics are performed in repertory.

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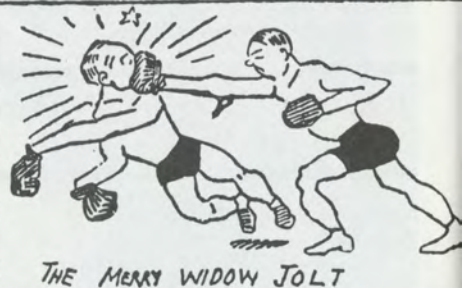
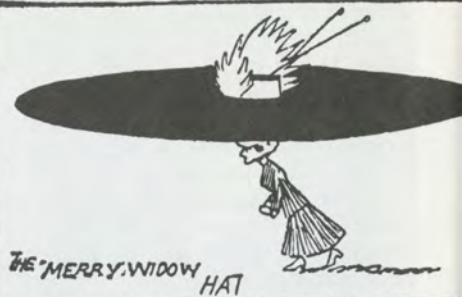
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The "Merry Widow" in New York, cartoon from *The Evening American* (1909).

and half that many scores or arrangements were sold. It was performed at least 18,000 times during its first five years.

Still, it's remarkable that *The Merry Widow*, along with a few other examples of a form of popular entertainment consciously designed to suit the fashions of times and places almost unrecognizably alien to ours, continues to earn a place on world opera house stages. What is more, these supposedly transient baubles manage to wedge themselves in between *Tristans* and *Don Giovannis* and *Otellos* — operas obviously intended to endure. The last great marble shrines of "serious" opera appear to be cracking. The Deutsche Oper of West Berlin gave in to the





lusty widow in 1979; last summer, the Lyric Opera of Chicago; this year, for the first time, the San Francisco Opera yields to her charms.

This is not to say that class distinctions have been entirely erased.

Richard Strauss called Lehár's operettas "theatrical sewage."

*The Merry Widow* is not mentioned in several recent handbooks or encyclopedias of opera. It is listed in the *Schwann Record and Tape Guide* under "Musicals, Movies, TV Shows"; proper operas (like *Porgy and Bess*) are listed in the front, by composer.

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always felt that his voice *per se* was not the greatest, and there were critics who agreed. But he was indefatigable in dedicating himself to the interpretation of a role in all its fine points, and rarely if ever did a review question his artistry. Once, in a retrospective remark, he said he could remember only five really good performances in which he had taken part. "That is fairly good for one life," he added.

Their "coronation," so to speak, in the Wagner roles on both sides of the Atlantic marked the zenith of the de Reszkes' careers, and while they continued to hold audiences in thrall for several more years before Jean's retirement in 1902 and Edouard's in 1903, nothing quite equalled that dazzling peak. Before Jean's announcement that he would sing in public no more — typically, a simple statement followed by no "farewell" performances — he had been suffering intermittently from the bronchial weakness which had always dogged him, and although he never "lost" his voice as was so often rumored, it was not on its former level.

---

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David and Jonathan.

---

The perfectionism that was a hallmark of Jean's performing career carried over into its teaching phase, upon which he embarked soon after retirement, with overwhelming success. Students flocked to him, first in Paris, and then at his home in Nice, the Villa Vergemère, where Reynaldo Hahn served as pianist for the lessons. During his days on the stage he liked to be known just as "Jean," but his students always spoke to and of him respectfully as "Master," a name which implied not only veneration but also devotion.

Among them, in their youthful days, were such illustrious artists as Louise Edvina, Maggie Teyte and Bidú Sayão. Asked recently about her recollections, Sayão, who was 16 years old when she became his pupil in Nice, said: "His greatest gift as a teacher was all the beautiful little things he taught us. He taught interpretation, not technique. He put so much feeling into the words. Diction must be clear as a bell. He was no longer the great tenor, but he was such an artist. He was always very reserved; when the lesson finished, he always said, 'Good-bye, thank you very much.' It was all very formal." But there was one informal touch. The Brazilian soprano remembered specially de Reszke's parrot, Koko, which always sat on his shoulder and imitated the singers. "He





Director Erich von Stroheim poses with Mae Murray, the star of his 1925 film version of *The Merry Widow*.

had been petitioning the Vienna State Opera for a hearing since 1898 — when, in 1934, the "Big House" finally agreed to put on a production of his quasi-operatic (and short-lived) *Giuditta*, starring Jarmila Novotna and Richard Tauber.

In some ways, *The Merry Widow's* reputation may have been hurt more than helped by the long-running London and New York productions of 1907 and the attendant "Merry Widow craze," as well as by things like a 1928 *Widow* spectacular in Berlin, and the Hollywood films.

What these did was to create an image of *The Merry Widow* at once more farcical, more sentimental and more spectacular than the original. They set multiple precedents for deforming its text and score at will ("After all, it's only an operetta") and helped identify the whole thing with some vague idea of Romantic Old Vienna. (This is usually typified by a celebrity actress in a low-cut, wasp-waisted black gown, with feathers in

her hair and plenty of diamonds, waltzing with a Balkan nobleman in uniform. Surround them with can-can dancers, cases of champagne, and swooning violins.)

Performances around the world continued virtually without halt after 1905, including major revivals in London (1923, 1943), Paris (1925, 1934), and New York (1921, 1943). There have been at least 27 complete recordings, in seven languages. But it was probably the first LP recording (EMI-Angel) in 1953, with Elisabeth Schwarzkopf singing Anna, that began to bring the Widow Glawari and her friends back to the degree of respectability they possess today. Of this album, Ernest Newman wrote, "It is good to hear, for once, the full resources of the art of singing turned upon 'light' music. . . . A cast of this all-around distinction, indeed, is hardly to be expected in the average operetta performances; yet the best possible staging and playing is no whit too good for the best of Lehár's music."

### Celluloid Widows

There have been three major film versions of *The Merry Widow*, all made in the U.S.A. In 1925, Erich von Stroheim made a silent version, with John Gilbert, Mae Murray and Roy d'Arcy. Ernst Lubitsch made the first sound

version in 1934, with Maurice Chevalier and Jeanette MacDonald. A third film, made in 1952 by Curtis Bernhardt, could only have come from Hollywood: it starred Fernando Lamas, Lana Turner and Richard Haydn.

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Jeanette MacDonald, Edward Everett Horton and Maurice Chevalier in Ernst Lubitsch's 1934 version of *The Merry Widow*.



Lana Turner and Fernando Lamas perform the Merry Widow Waltz in Curtis Bernhardt's 1952 film *The Merry Widow*.



Serious, near-operatic revivals at New York City Opera and Sadlers' Wells/ENO, along with several new recordings (one conducted by Herbert von Karajan), helped the cause. The final step to the opera house was taken when world-class singers (like Joan Sutherland in 1976, Beverly Sills in 1977, Elisabeth Söderström earlier this year) agreed not only to record *The Merry Widow*, but also to perform in it onstage. August Everding's 1979 Berlin production included, as *Opera* magazine put it, "two Lohengrins and a Brünnhilde" (René Kollo, Siegfried Jerusalem and Gwyneth Jones). Whether the vehicle could always sustain the freight remains an open question.

The operetta that once literally swept the world, then got itself exploited for all manner of low theatrical

---

"... a work of irrepressible invention and freshness."

---

ventures, had settled by my early opera-going years into the safe, unexciting realm of Civic Light Opera revivals and Gordon MacRae crooning a much-abridged version with Dorothy Warenskjold on radio's *Railroad Hour*. Thirty years later, Andrew Lamb can declare that *The Merry Widow* is "recognized as a work of irrepressible invention and freshness, full of refined vocal and harmonic writing, and superbly orchestrated — worthy material, in fact, for the attentions of the very finest singers, conductors and producers. Here, at last, popular appeal and quality go hand in hand." ■

DAVID LITTLEJOHN is a writer, critic and professor of journalism at the University of California in Berkeley, who regularly reviews West Coast opera for the London *Times*. His second novel (and ninth book), *Going to California*, was published earlier this year.



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## Dame Joan

continued from p. 40



Regina Resnik as the Marquise de Birkenfeld and Joan Sutherland as Marie in Donizetti's *La Fille du Régiment*, which marked the soprano's first fling in the lighter repertoire.

that was to be offered him so freely from then on. He had virtually been discovered by the Bonynges in 1962-3 and taken on their Australian tour with their own company in 1965.

When Marie, her faithful Tonio (Pavarotti), the guardian Sulpice (Fernando Corena instead of London's Spiro Malas) and the Marquise de Birkenfeld (Regina Resnik) arrived at the Metropolitan in 1972, the shock wave had long since abated; and Chicago was treated to the same fare (with Alfredo Kraus — taking the nine high C's — and Malas as the male leads). In both cases only a few holdouts could not bear the unbending of their goddess.

The San Francisco *Fledermaus* came next in the soprano's lexicon of lightness. The cast boasted Judith Blegen as Adele, Walter Slezak as Frosch, Nolan Van Way as a long, lanky Eisenstein and Ragnar Ulfung as the short and ebullient lover, Alfred. Robert Commanday in the *Chronicle* wrote that Sutherland's voice was sumptuous, and that her vowels even sounded Hungarian in the *Czardas*. She seemed to the comic manner born, with ideal timing, excellent dialogue and large gestures. When Rosalinda made the remark in the ball scene that the diminutive Adele was wearing *her* gown, Joan muttered *sotto voce*: "My gown, cut down!"

The Bonynges have been faithful to San Francisco. Now, after *Lucia* (1961), *Sonnambula* (1963), *Traviata* (1964), *Puritani* (1966), *Maria Stuarda*

(1971), *Fledermaus* (1973), *Esclarmonde* (1974) and *Trovatore* (1975), the prima donna and her husband bring San Francisco their delicious *Merry Widow*.

Vancouver, where Bonyng had just taken over as general director, was the first city treated to the lady's Anna Glawari. Bonyng had made a new version of the score, and Lotfi Mansouri directed, as he will here. It is lively and fun-filled, with lots of amusing ballet and a luscious aria (plucked

**"It's like *Traviata*. No one could possibly believe the story if it were set today."**

from Lehár's *Paganini*) for Joan in the last act.

Vancouver (as well as Australia, which saw the operetta in 1978 and 1979) wasn't quite sure what to make of it. One or two Canadian critics, rather displeased with the whole new Bonyng regime, chided Joan for stepping down off her pedestal. But audiences left no doubt — they reveled in the spectacle, in the soprano's vibrant singing of "Vilia" and the charming antics of bygone comedy.

"You have to keep it in style," said Joan firmly. "You have to know and feel the period and play it seriously. It's like *Traviata* — no one could possibly believe the story if it were set today. To update it is ridiculous and impossible."





The comic talents of the Australian diva were first seen locally in the 1973 production of *Die Fledermaus*. Photo Carolyn Mason Jones.

So Anna will go her merry way — in gorgeous costumes and, of course, a "Merry Widow hat" or two. (One Vancouver critic complained that the hat seemed to impede the heroine's dancing.) The last-act costume was a frou-frou of ruffles, gown and coat, enveloping the singer's tall figure like a marvelous, mobile meringue. She came offstage afterwards, clasping its frothy folds high, face radiant with joy, and said, "Get a picture of this!" The stately prima donna had truly let down her hair and kicked up her heels. This is the only role in which La Stupenda has enjoyed a young and eager male entourage. What's more, which *bel canto* opera offers the opportunity for a real kiss? ■

QUAINTANCE EATON is the author of several books, including two well-known volumes on *Opera Production*. She is currently at work on a biography of Joan Sutherland and Richard Bonyngé to be published next year.

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## A Star is Born

continued from p. 34

Young Gentleman: I want to tell you something, Emma. If you are ashamed to be here — if I mean absolutely nothing to you — if you are unable to feel that for me you are all the joy in the world, then I think you had best leave.

Young Wife: Yes, I shall do exactly that.

Young Gentleman [taking her by the hand]: But if you are able to realize that I cannot live without you, that to kiss your hand means for me more than the endearments of all the other women of the world . . . Emma, I am not like these other young people who know how to court a woman — perhaps I'm too naive . . . I . . .

Young Wife. And what if you were like those other young people?

Young Gentleman. Then you wouldn't be here — because you aren't like other women.

Danilo finds in Anna someone who is not like other women and who can play the game better than he can himself. After the substitution trick that saves the "honor" of the gullible

---

**Anna Glawari is refreshingly "liberated."**

---

ambassador, but leaves Danilo gasping for breath, Anna effectively ridicules the Viennese double standard by insisting upon the same rights for herself:

We'll lead a lively married life,  
Quite in Parisian style.  
We'll love each other, that is clear  
Quite in Parisian style,  
While each one goes his own  
sweet way,  
Quite in Parisian style.

In response to this, Danilo vows to spend his time at Maxim's, where, he says, he'll feel at home among his ladies. But his ladies are now employed by Madame Glawari, and, led by the ambassador's wife Valencienne, they sing about what they do:

As the spiders in their nets  
Zippel-zippel — zapp — zapp  
Catch the little butterflies,  
So we catch the men — zapp!  
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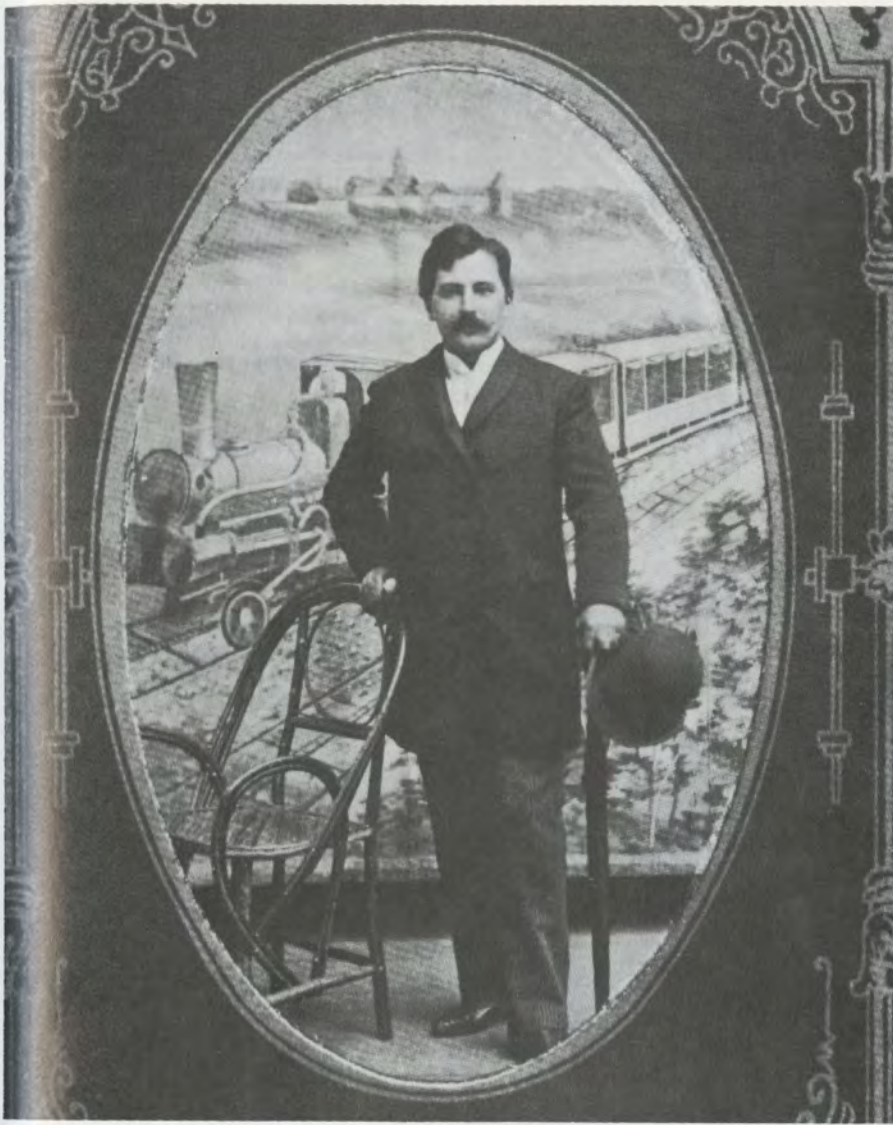


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Arthur Schnitzler, whose plays such as *La Ronde*, like Lehár's operettas, presented a picture of the sexual duplicity in *fin-de-siècle* Vienna.

Prompted respectively by the grisettes and Anna Glawari, Danilo declares his love for her in the most famous moment of the operetta. Her status as a merry widow about to end, Anna leads the final chorus, a reprise of Danilo's earlier refrain, "The study of women is hard."

The erotic subject of *The Merry Widow* fits perfectly within the context of Viennese comedy at the turn of the century, and poses an interesting contrast to an opera by another Viennese composer that had its premiere three weeks earlier. Richard Strauss' *Salome* provides its own shattering variation on the idea that "the study of women is hard." Contemporary critics loudly objected to the subject of Strauss' opera (as Kraus did to Lehár's) and further complained that his symphonic accompaniment for Wilde's text was not music. This latter objection was also voiced by Lehár's employers Léon and Karczag (the manager of the Theater an der Wien)

during the rehearsals of *The Merry Widow*. To this objection Lehár responded, "Can't [they] hear I'm trying to give a different melody for a different age? I'm a man of the present, not an echo of the past. *The Merry Widow* is an experiment."

Despite its subsequent popularity, we should appreciate the experimental

***The Merry Widow* deserves to be taken seriously as a cultural document.**

quality of everyone's favorite operetta and applaud the artistic and professional brashness of the composer who made himself the king of operetta in *fin-de-siècle* Vienna. ■

MARC ROTH teaches in the dramatic arts department of the University of California, Berkeley.

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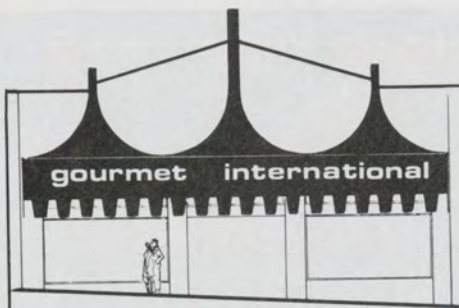
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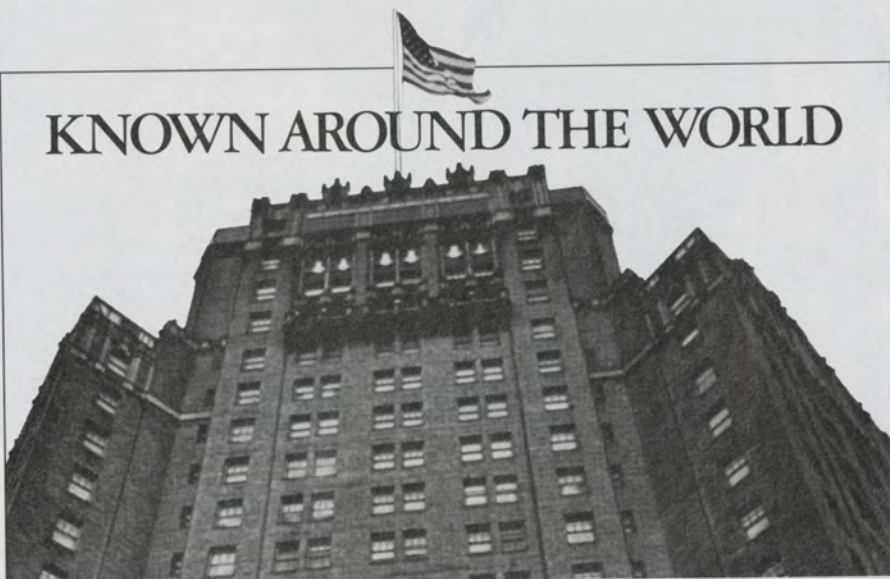
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Look for this bus, marked "47 Special," after each performance in the north-bound bus zone at Van Ness Avenue and Grove Street — across Van Ness from the Opera House.

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Patrons needing a cab at the end of the performance should reserve one with the doorman at the Taxi Entrance before the end of the final intermission. Anyone desiring a taxi at other times of the evening may use the direct telephone line at the Taxi Entrance to summon a cab.

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The lower lounge in the Opera House is now open one and one-half hours prior to curtain time for hot buffet service. Patrons arriving before the front doors open will be admitted at the Carriage entrance.

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The telephone number 431-4370 may be used by patrons for emergency contact only during performances. Before the performance, patrons anticipating possible contact should leave their seat number at the Nurse's Station in the lower lounge, where the emergency telephone is located.

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

## Ticket Information

San Francisco Opera box office. Lobby, War Memorial Opera House: Van Ness at Grove, (415) 431-1210. 10 A.M. to 6 P.M. Monday through Saturday. 10 A.M. through first intermission on all performance days.

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

## Unused Tickets

Patrons who are unable to attend a performance may make a worthwhile contribution to the San Francisco Opera Association by returning their tickets to the Box Office or telephoning (415) 431-1210. Donors will receive a receipt for the full value, but the amount is not considered a contribution to the fund drive or fulfillment of a fund drive pledge.

Opera glasses are available for rent in the lobby.

Please note that no cameras or tape recorders are permitted in the Opera House.

Children of any age attending a performance must have a ticket.

Management reserves the right to remove any patron creating a disturbance.

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Tours of the San Francisco Performing Arts Center, which include the War Memorial Opera House, the Louise M. Davies Symphony Hall and the Veterans' Memorial Building take place as follows:

Mondays, 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. \$3.00  
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Meet at North Stage Door of Opera House for admission to main floor Opera guild office.

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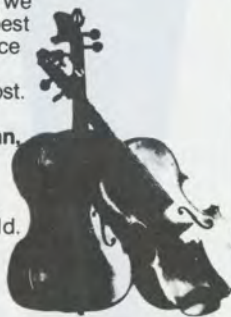
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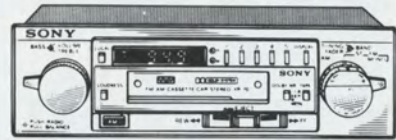
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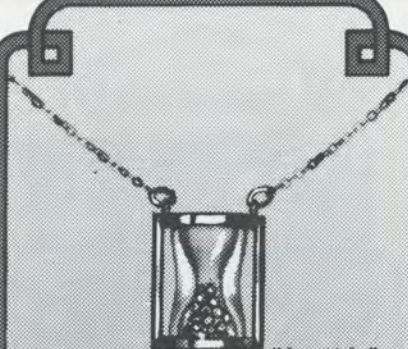
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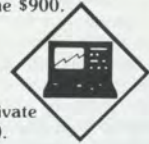
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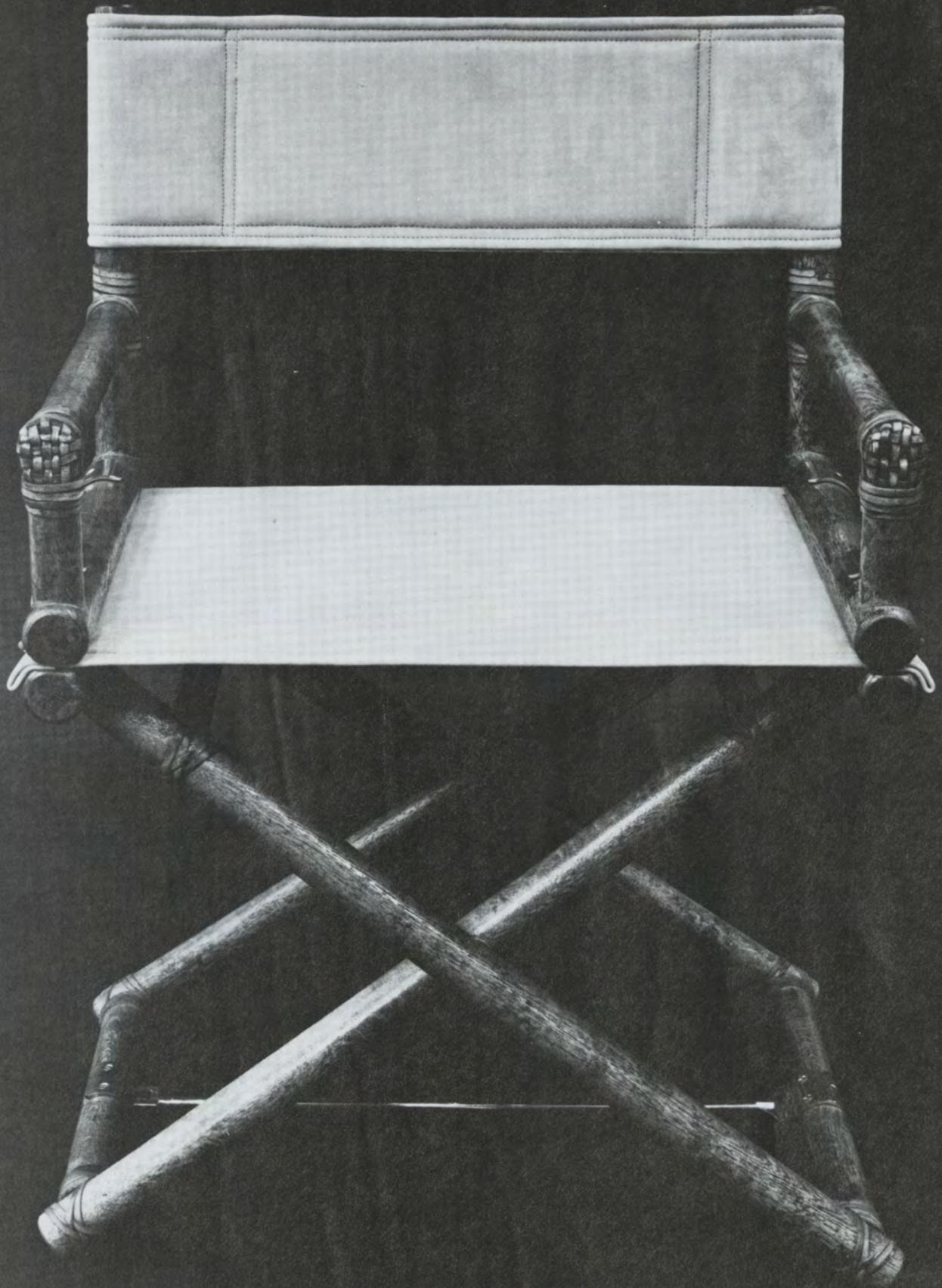


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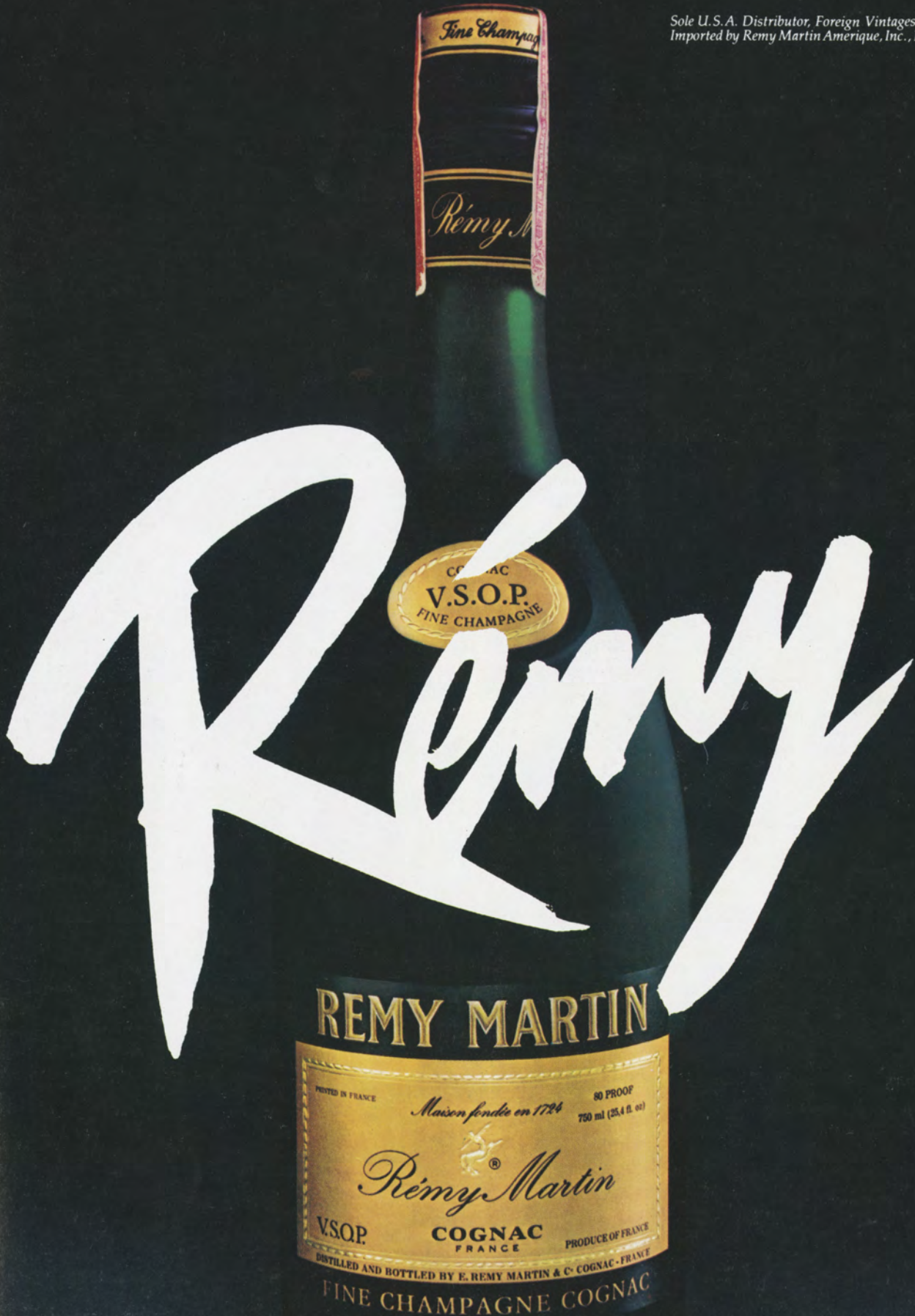
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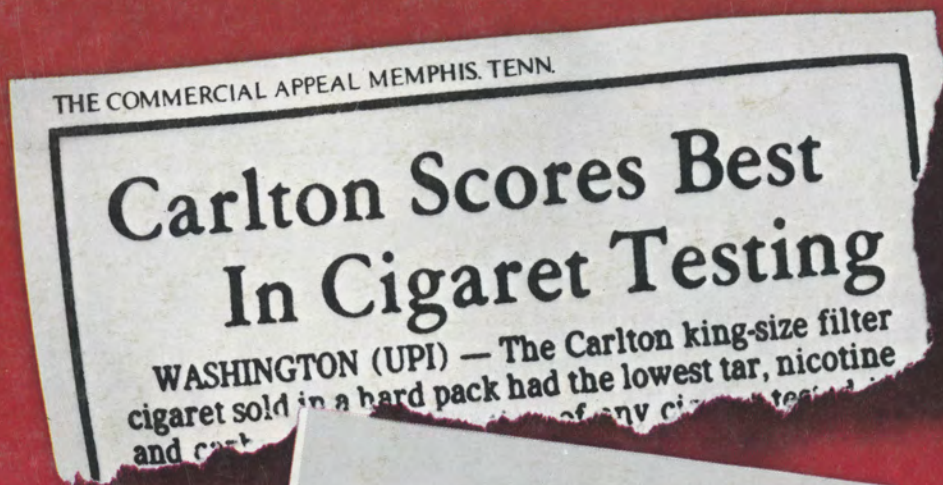
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