

Manon

1981

Saturday, September 12, 1981 8:00 PM

Tuesday, September 15, 1981 8:00 PM

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Sunday, September 27, 1981 2:00 PM

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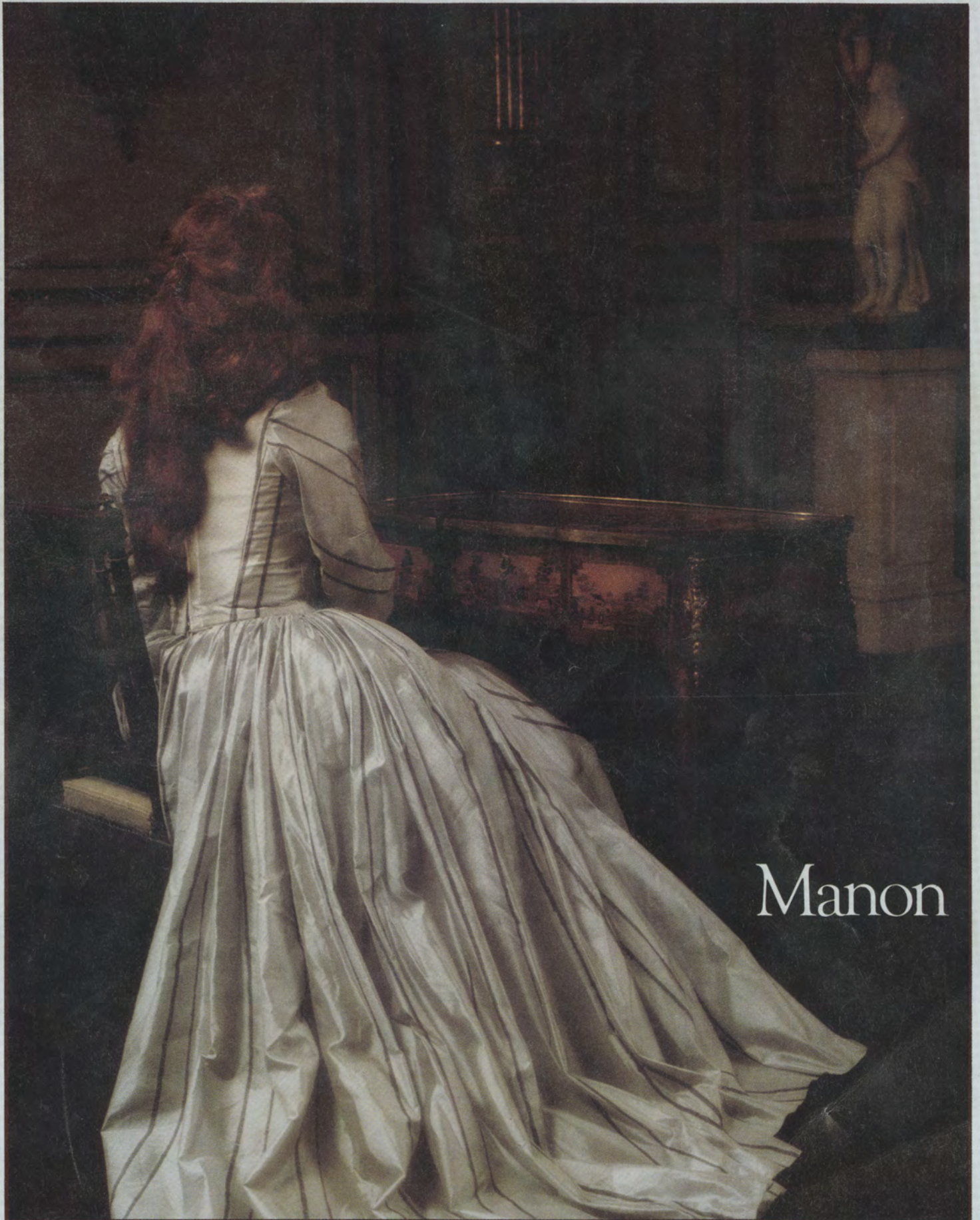
Saturday, October 10, 1981 (Radio broadcast)

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# SAN FRANCISCO OPERA



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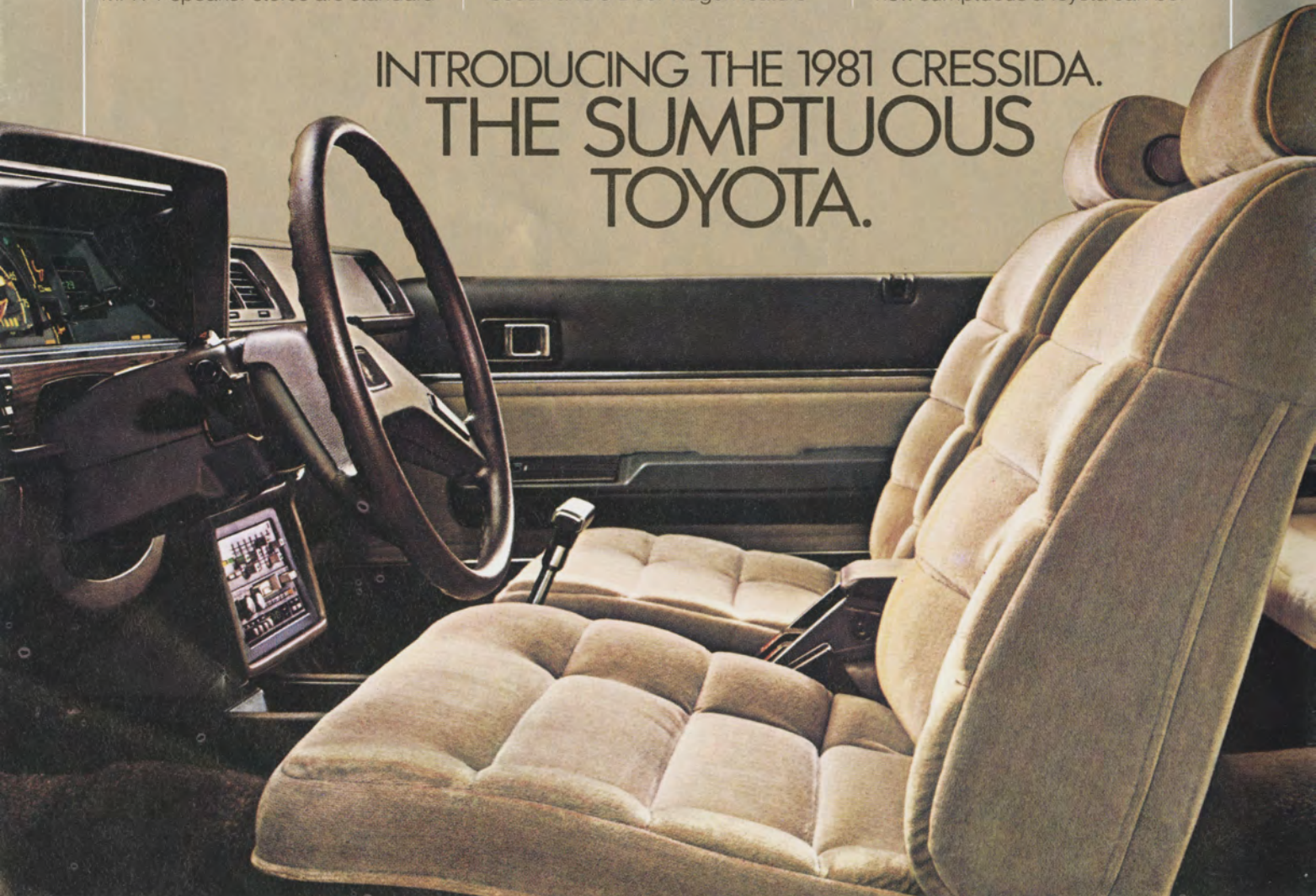
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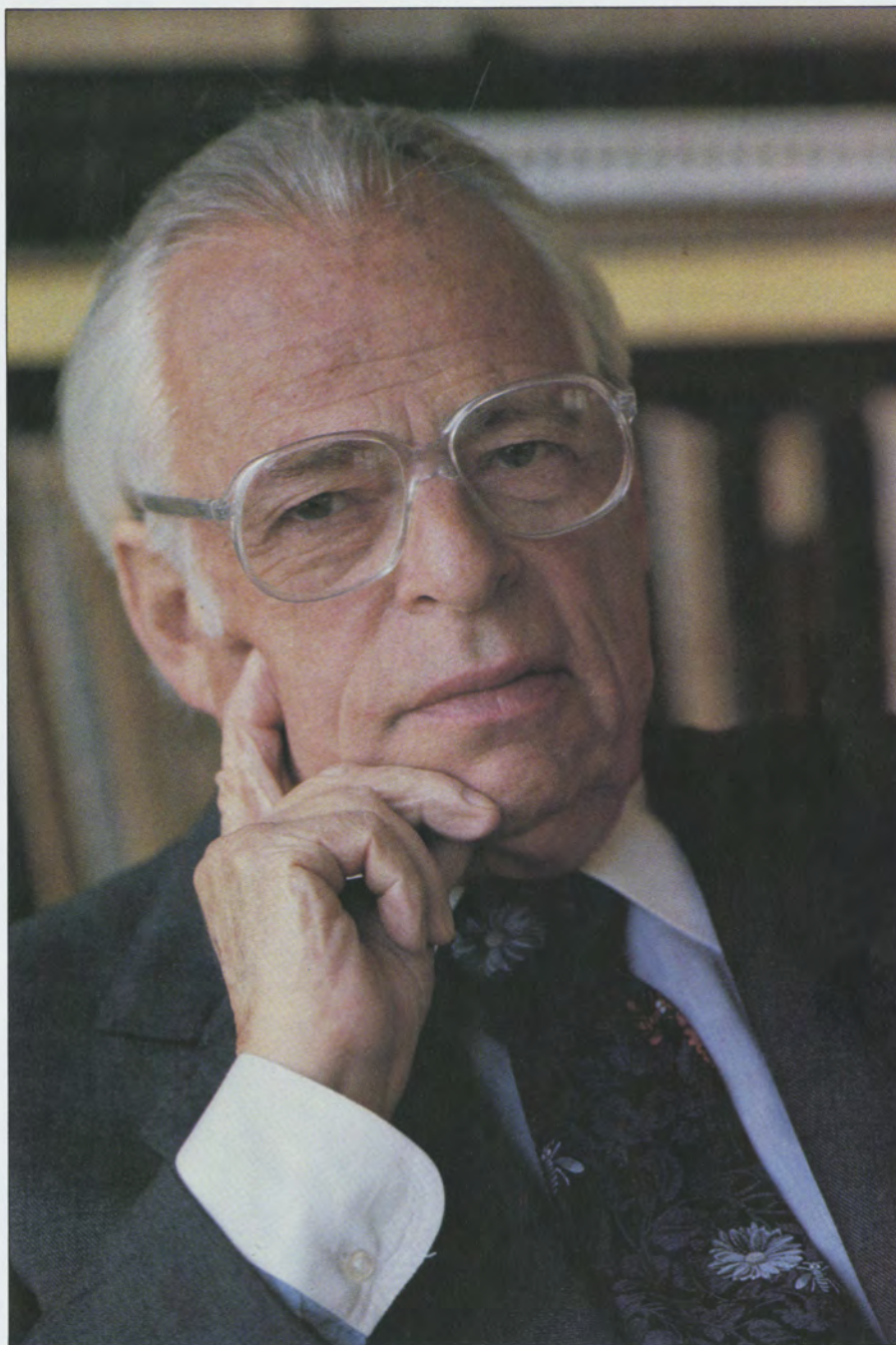
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A warm welcome to our 59th annual Fall Season, which climaxes the busiest year in the history of San Francisco Opera. We welcome back a host of dear friends of the Company and of mine, and we are also happy to introduce a number of exceptional artists 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.

*James McMillin*



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Editorial Offices: San Francisco Opera, War Memorial Opera House, San Francisco, CA 94102. Phone (415) 861-4008.

## MANON/1981

### FEATURES

#### Three Faces of Manon by Speight Jenkins 27

In the second half of the 19th century three famous composers gave the operatic stage three divergent views of Prévost's immortal heroine, Manon Lescaut.



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#### The Original Manon and Des Grieux by Eve Katz 36

The Abbé Prévost's 1731 novel about the Chevalier Des Grieux and Manon Lescaut brought a fresh look at human feelings which captivated the Romantic sensibility.



page 36

#### Phrases Massenétiques by M. Owen Lee 60

Its understatement, subtle imagery, conversational phrasing and graceful, sensual lyricism make *Manon* decidedly French in character.



page 60

#### 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.

*MANON*: "Young Woman at her Table," photo study by Ron Scherl, 1981, taken in the 18th-century Salon d'Humières, at the California Palace of the Legion of Honor, the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco.

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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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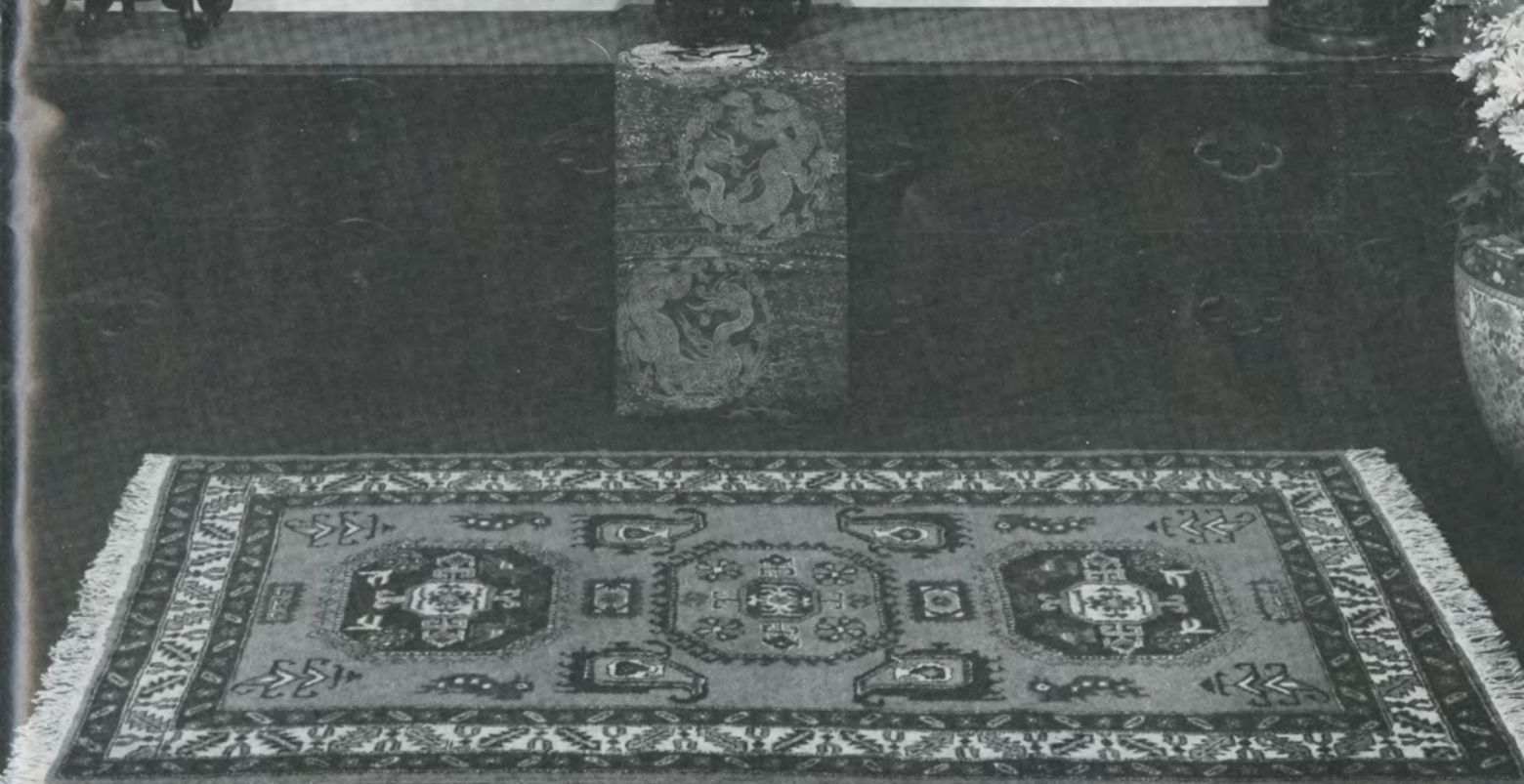
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New Production

## Carmen

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Bizet

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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)

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Berg

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**Merry Widow Bows  
with Benefit**

Franz Lehár's *The Merry Widow* will receive its first San Francisco Opera performance on Saturday, October 3, with a gala benefit premiere sponsored by the San Francisco Opera Association and the San Francisco Opera Guild. Tickets for this non-subscription performance, which features Joan Sutherland in the title role, are available now through the Opera Box Office. Prices range from \$13 to \$75, and a portion of all ticket prices is tax deductible.

The international cast joining Dame Joan Sutherland includes Canadian mezzo-soprano Judith Forst as Valencienne and three artists who are making their Company debuts: Swedish baritone Håkan Hagegård as Danilo, New Zealand tenor Anson Austin (also making his American debut) as Camille, and Canadian tenor Phil Stark as Baron Zeta. Richard Bonyngé conducts, Lotfi Mansouri directs, sets are by Murray Laufer, costumes are by Suzanne Mess and choreography is by Margo Sappington for this Canadian Opera Company production, which is sung in English.

A Premiere Party, on the stage of the Opera House, immediately follows the performance. Patrons who purchase tickets for the performance will receive an invitation to the party, for which there is an additional charge of \$50.00 per person. Those who choose to attend the party will be invited to "Maxim's," on the stunning Art Nouveau set of the final scene of *The Merry Widow*, to toast Miss Sutherland and other members of the cast with champagne and wine.

**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.

**Films of Interest**

In conjunction with the 1981 Fall Season of the San Francisco Opera, Pacific Film Archive has scheduled showings of two film classics: Andrzej Wajda's *Siberian Lady Macbeth* (1961), based on Nicolai Leskov's short story, *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*; and Werner Herzog's *Woyzeck* (1978), based on Georg Büchner's play and starring Klaus Kinski in the title role. *Siberian Lady Macbeth* is shown on Monday, September 28, at 7:30 P.M. and *Woyzeck* on Friday, October 30, at 7:30 and 9:00 P.M. at the University Art Museum in Berkeley, 2615 Durant Avenue.





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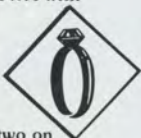
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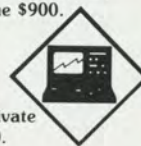
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# Three Faces of Manon

In the second half of the 19th century three famous composers gave the operatic stage three divergent views of Prévost's immortal heroine, Manon Lescaut.

By SPEIGHT JENKINS

Beautiful, sexy, pampered, more than a little giddy with the men and jewels in her life, Manon has presented a fecund image to every generation since her birth. A girl from the country, she goes on to become one of the most sought-after women in France. Her love of luxury constantly wars with her affection for an impoverished, aristocratic lover, and death overtakes her at the very moment she would have to prove if she could ever be faithful. Her character is so rich that her various creations, while often true to her original conception in a novel by the Abbé Prévost, reflect the era, nationality and personality of the different composers she has inspired.

The first major opera on the subject was Daniel-François-Esprit Auber's *Manon Lescaut*, in 1856. The composer was one of those in operatic

history who had a flourishing career during his lifetime but soon thereafter was forgotten. His period of influence, however, was considerable, encompassing the reigns of Charles X, Louis Philippe and Napoleon III, and he composed 44 operas, almost all produced in Paris. Though his *Fra Diavolo* is today the only one of his works that gets an occasional hearing, his greatest success was *La Muette de Portici* (*The Mute Woman of Portici*), in 1828. The opera's enduring fame came from something that happened in Brussels two years after its premiere. A duet in the second act, "Amour sacré de la patrie," so inflamed the Belgians that they tore into the streets and began the revolution that freed their country from the Dutch. Auber and his librettist, Eugène Scribe, were both amazed at what the music had done: their aims were hardly political. After the *réclame* surrounding this event,

however, Auber's works increased in popularity with the Parisians, a condition which continued through *Manon Lescaut*, his 43rd work, given its premiere 28 years later.

The opera made little splash at the time. Composed to the standard *opéra comique* pattern, it differed markedly from both Massenet's *Manon* and Puccini's *Manon Lescaut*, as well as from the novel of the Abbé Prévost, a predictable situation when one learns that Auber never read the novel and that Scribe cared little for the integrity of his source. The most amazing fact about Auber's *Manon Lescaut* is its lack of sex interest. The most sensual of love stories has been transformed into a standard, rather amusing romance, filled with improbable coincidence.

Of the three 19th-century works on the subject, Auber's alone opens *in medias res* — in the love nest of



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Poster by Chatinière for Massenet's *Manon*.

Manon and Des Grieux. Manon, so in love with Des Grieux that she is impervious to any advances to lure her away, foolishly gives Lescaut all the money they have, which he gambles away. In desperation, she gets money from a rich man by singing the Laughing Song (the opera's most famous number). Meanwhile, like Nemorino in *L'Elisir d'Amore*, Des Grieux has enlisted in the army to recoup the money they lost. Frantic not to lose him, Manon almost succeeds in getting the rich man to buy back Des Grieux's commission by giving him only a kiss. Complications ensue, however, and she is sent to Louisiana, with Des Grieux a stowaway on the boat. After their arrival they run afoul of the governor (a scene true to Prévost but not in either of the more famous operas), and Manon and Des Grieux must escape to the wilderness. Though Auber,

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Auber's *Manon* is a light-headed, innocent ingénue.

---

via Scribe and Prévost, buys the desert concept — so effectively dramatized by Puccini, who even more than Auber should have known better — he at least has his heroine and hero struggling across the arid Louisiana "desert" toward a great forest. In this final scene a new twist occurs: the lovers marry by exchanging personal vows, allowing Manon to die happy. Friends from New Orleans arrive just after Manon expires. Had they come only a few minutes earlier, she might have been saved.

The music for this opera is charming, light, very French and full of attractive, if unmemorable, tunes. The Laughing Song, mentioned above, has been recorded both by Bidú Sayão and Joan Sutherland and gives a coloratura soprano a chance to be especially mirthful. Certain other arias by the rich Marquess or Des Grieux have charm to them, but Manon is clearly the character in whom the composer was most interested. She emerges a light-headed innocent, an ingénue who is just as fresh and unspoiled at the end of her life as when we first meet her and one, incidentally, who may have had no relations with any man save Des Grieux.

Jules Massenet's setting of the story, though also written for the Opéra-Comique in Paris, hardly seems designed for the same plot as Auber's. The two composers did at one time have one biographical fact in common besides their French birth: transient fame. From the late 1870s until he died in 1912, Massenet's music ruled the French capital, managing even to stay afloat in the Wagnerian flood. After World War I, however, performances of his operas were vastly diminished in number, with *Manon* alone remaining popular in non-French speaking lands. Massenet at the time seemed destined for Auberian eclipse.

Within the last 15 years, however, an amazing revival has occurred. Of Massenet's 24 operas, some eight



Poster for Puccini's *Manon Lescaut*.





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or nine have been performed and recorded. San Francisco audiences have recently heard the more familiar *Werther* and *Thaïs* and the rarely performed *Esclarmonde*, and during the 1981 season will hear *Le Cid* as well as *Manon. Le Roi de Labore, Hérodiade, Don Quichotte, Sapho* and *Cendrillon* (my own candidate as Massenet's best opera after *Manon*) have been performed elsewhere. More and more, the public is turning a responsive ear to the composer's sweet melodies and chromatic harmonies. Perhaps *La Grand' Tante* (his first work) or, much more likely, *Le Jongleur de Notre-Dame*, Mary Garden's favorite opus, will soon appear at a major American opera house.

Massenet's first great triumph took place at the Opéra with *Le Roi de Labore*. A rather pale story with music

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### Massenet's *Manon* wiped Auber's opera off the stage.

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to match, it tapped the vein of exoticism that would so delight Massenet's audiences from then on. Though he later had vast success with his perfumed treatment of the Salome legend (*Hérodiade*), it was *Manon* which revealed him at his considerable best. Massenet came on the story by happenstance. Henri Meilhac, a librettist for both Bizet and Offenbach, had prepared a text which he brought to the composer's house. According to James Harding in his biography of Massenet, the composer found it unworkable and, averting his eyes from the disappointed librettist, looked all round his library. When his eyes fell on the Abbé Prévost's *Manon Lescaut*, he cried, "Manon!" as he pointed the book out to Meilhac. "What? It's *Manon Lescaut* you want?" asked the librettist. "No! *Manon*, just *Manon*, that's all." Though hard to believe, Meilhac had a synopsis of the first two acts of the opera in Massenet's hands the next day. Though later he took on a collaborator, Philippe Gille, the words were delivered to Massenet as fast as he could set them. All was not easy, however. Totally unlike Auber, who agreed to whatever Scribe invented, Massenet, in the tradition of most great opera composers, worried over every word, causing endless rewrites. Frustrated by the progress of the music, he at one point even went to Holland to compose in a room once occupied by the Abbé Prévost. Doubting and questioning, he finished the orchestration of the opera in July of 1883.

In accepting the work, the artistic director of the Opéra-Comique told



Marie Heilbronn, who created the title role in *Manon*.

Massenet that *Manon* would be performed "as though you were already dead," a strange compliment, but a compliment nonetheless. The first *Manon*, Marie Heilbronn, envisioned the plot as the story of her own life and fell in love with the part, while the tenor, Alexandre Talazac, was one of the most popular singers in that theater: only three years before he had

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### Both Massenet's *Manon* and Puccini's *Manon Lescaut* were called Wagnerian.

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sung the title role in the premiere of Offenbach's *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*.

On January 19, 1884, all of Massenet's worries came to an end. Though the critics were mixed, the public reaction was intensely favorable: *Manon* earned close to two million francs during the first 10 years of its existence. It first came to the United States in Italian (the Academy of Music in New York, 1885), with its premiere in French at the Metropoli-



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Cesira Ferrani, the first soprano to portray Puccini's Manon Lescaut.

tan Opera in 1895. Sybil Sanderson, the first Esclarmonde and Massenet's favorite soprano, sang the title role there, with Jean de Reszke as Des Grieux. San Francisco has heard a bevy of Manons over the years, including Queena Mario, Lucrezia Bori, Bidú Sayão, Licia Albanese and Beverly Sills.

The success of Massenet's opera, which wiped Auber's off the stage, makes even more intriguing the com-

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**"Massenet feels the story . . . with powder and minuets; I feel it . . . with desperate passion."**

---

position begun only five years later of a *Manon Lescaut* by Giacomo Puccini. Imagine what gall it took for a young, virtually unknown composer to set a text already successful the world over by the best-known French composer of the time. Yet Puccini seems never to have had a qualm. "Massenet feels [the story] as a Frenchman," he wrote his publisher, "with the powder and

the minuets; I shall feel it as an Italian, with desperate passion." And when he was specifically asked whether there was enough room in opera for another story about Manon, he said, "Manon is a heroine I believe in and therefore she cannot fail to win the hearts of the public." Add to this Puccini's love of competition, and one understands it all. Throughout his life he often composed operas to stories on which other composers were already working, such as Leoncavallo with *La Bohème* or Alberto Franchetti with *Tosca*. The challenge apparently stimulated him.

Both operas about Manon were called Wagnerian. Massenet indeed encouraged the charge by writing, "The whole work moves and develops upon some 15 motifs which typify my characters. These motifs run the length and breadth of the opera and are produced from act to act. In this way my characters keep their personalities distinct until the end." Such a statement, however, did not mean that Massenet borrowed from Wagner, but that he was only following the standard operatic practice of using a lead-



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Eugène Scribe, librettist of Auber's *Manon Lescaut*.

ing tune to represent a character, a tradition that goes back to Monteverdi. To have been truly Wagnerian, the motifs should have been orchestrally developed and, taken together, should have formed the orchestral basis of the score. This did not happen. Massenet's motifs are easily recognizable, short melodic themes. They serve much the same function as the motifs in the equally un-Wagnerian *Aida*.

Puccini, on the other hand, did use obvious Wagnerisms in his opera. The *Intermezzo*, depicting Manon's and Des Grieux's journey to the New World, opens with a passage not too removed from the Prelude to Act III of *Tristan und Isolde*; and the love duet is full of the deceptive cadence, the lack of firm ending to a phrase, that

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### Massenet's heroine is the classic *femme fatale*.

---

characterizes Wagner's composition in *Tristan*.

At the climax of the first scene — the only scene common to the two operas, incidentally — comes one of the great contrasts between the two works. In the Massenet opera the rich Guillot tells Manon there will a coach ready to take her off. When Des Grieux falls in love with her and she immediately says her heart and soul are his forever, she suggests that they elope in Guillot's coach. Des Grieux is swept up in her enthusiasm, but the real focus of their duet is not on their mutual love but on the magic of the place to which they elope, Paris. Manon might have been fascinated by the handsome chevalier, but she wanted to reach what she correctly perceived to be the center of her world. Puccini's heroine is cut from very different cloth. She has to be coaxed to use the carriage, which is suggested to Des Grieux by a student



Henri Meilhac, principal librettist of Massenet's *Manon*.

friend. When she finally agrees to go, it is only because she loves Des Grieux. There is no mention of Paris; indeed, she would have gone with him anywhere.

In Act II of both operas Manon proves to be unhappy in her surroundings. In the Massenet a life of genteel poverty with Des Grieux deprives her of the luxury she craves, and in Puccini the rich life with Geronte cannot make her forget her abiding love for Des Grieux. But the composers' differing views of their heroine come out best in the major duet between Manon and Des Grieux. In Massenet it happens in the second scene of Act III, in the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice. Des Grieux, though haunted by the vision of Manon, has taken religious vows. When Manon arrives, his attitude is unequivocal; she put him through hell, and he has resolved never to get involved with her again. Yet his angry intransigence acts as a stimulus to her coquetry, making her envelop him in the sensuality of her being. "N'est-ce plus ma main?" seduces any listener, including the man for whom it is intended. Yet it takes her two verses to do so. When Manon realizes she has



Luigi Illica (right) and Giuseppe Giacosa, two of Puccini's six librettists for *Manon Lescaut*.

finally won, she cries, "Enfin!" and, as only censorable action can follow, in 12 bars the curtain is rung down. *Manon*, after all, was composed in 1884, not 1981.

In Puccini the confrontation also takes place in Act II. Des Grieux, alerted by Lescaut, angrily storms into the rich man's house where Manon is living. Though he begins by denouncing her, she wins him over in a matter of moments. From then on they sing a basically conventional love duet. In Massenet's *Manon*, for all the intensity of her feeling, the heroine is the classic *femme fatale* who must seduce a man who rejects her; her actions in every way suggest physical conquest. In the Puccini she is a woman far more acceptable to the Italian audience, and probably to Puccini's own taste — not a wanton seductress but a loving woman who has made a single mistake.

Another point of difference, consistent with the earlier distinctions, takes place in the opera's final scene. Though Massenet places the lovers on the road to Le Havre and Puccini in the desert "near New Orleans," both are virtually two-person death scenes, short and effective. Puccini, as he promised, gives vent to "desperate passion." His Manon is terrified but still strong enough to sing "Sola, perduta, abbandonata," one of the most striking dramatic pieces Puccini ever composed. A great tragedienne, Manon has lived and lost and now goes to her death with all flags flying, her love for Des Grieux so intense that it brooks no question.

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### Puccini's Manon goes to her death with all flags flying.

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Though Puccini's work is supposedly one of the first examples of Italian operatic realism, Massenet's death scene is far more realistic. The Frenchman's heroine is physically at the end of her rope. Except for a few moments of recollection, she has no high or loud notes, and when she finally recites her dying words, "And this is the story of Manon Lescaut," she seems as fragile as Mimi in Act IV of *La Bohème* and, in the French tradition, ever elusive. Her beauty, her weaknesses, her coquetry, her passion and, above all, her divided love for Des Grieux and luxury make Massenet's heroine a faithful and memorable realization of one of the most endearing heroines in all of fiction. ■

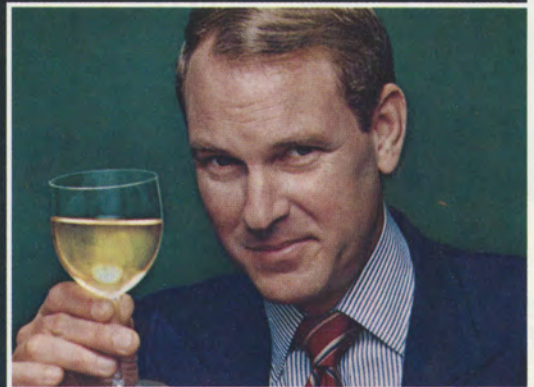
SPEIGHT JENKINS, who writes music criticism for the *New York Post*, is currently working on a book, *Opera Through the Eyes of Singers*, to be published by Alfred A. Knopf.



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# The Original Manon and Des Grieux

The Abbé Prévost's 1731 novel about the Chevalier Des Grieux and Manon Lescaut brought a fresh look at human feelings which captivated the Romantic sensibility.

By EVE KATZ

Anyone familiar only with Massenet's *Manon* would probably be surprised to learn that after reading the early 18th-century novel on which the opera is based, the French political philosopher Montesquieu, an author not known for his prudery, called the character Des Grieux a "scoundrel" and Manon a "whore." Montesquieu was commenting upon the last volume of a seven-volume novel by Antoine-François Prévost (known as the Abbé Prévost).

Published in 1731, *The Story of the Chevalier Des Grieux and Manon Lescaut* is a first-person narrative in which the chevalier tells his tale of misfortune and grief to the protagonist of the longer novel of which the work is a part. The plot is entirely independent from that of the other volumes, and the narrative was published separately, in a somewhat revised edition, in 1753. It is the only work of the Abbé Prévost, who left 113 volumes of translations and personal works, to endure.

Although its story line is full of the sort of unlikely coincidences characteristic of earlier novels, the book conveyed a new kind of realism — not of concrete detail but of atmosphere and intensity of feeling — that gave a quality of immediacy to the drama and suggested much that was to develop in literary art for the next hundred years and more.

Montesquieu was perceptive in explaining why this story of a scoundrel and a whore had such success: "All the bad deeds of the hero," he wrote in his notebook, "have as a motive love, which is always a noble motive, even if the behavior is vile. Manon loves too, which makes one pardon the rest of her character."



Study for a portrait of Mme. du Barry, whose early career parallels that of Manon Lescaut, by François Hubert Drouais.





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The Abbé Prévost (1697-1763) in a 1745 engraving by G.F. Schmidt.

What was it about this love story that so appealed to the readers of Prévost's day and to readers and artists of the following century? *The Story of the Chevalier Des Grieux and Manon Lescaut* conveyed something fundamental about human experience and did it in a way that captured aspects of a sensibility that was beginning to develop in Europe. Although Romanticism is considered a 19th-century artistic phenomenon, and although the first wave of pre-Romanticism in France is usually dated around 1760, this novel of some 30 years earlier contains elements that were to characterize the later artistic movement.

### Montesquieu called Des Grieux and Manon a "scoundrel" and a "whore."

Notwithstanding the novel's preface, which purports to present Des Grieux's story as an illustration of undesirable behavior, as "a terrible example of the power of passion," the effect on the reader, as Montesquieu recognized, is certainly not unqualified condemnation. Despite the fact that Des Grieux sacrifices his honor, his self-respect and his future, despite the fact that he sinks very low according to commonly accepted social and moral standards, so intense is his love — the sole motive for his behavior — and so convincingly does he describe it, that the reader is led not only to sympathize but in some sense to excuse him. The novel suggests that sincere passion can elevate the human soul. This is an essentially Romantic notion.

The exaltation of feeling, and with it the glorification of the individual, were to become central themes of Romanticism. The dominant mode would be subjectivity. Romantic art and literature were also to develop the theme of the exceptional being above society's laws and, consequently, the accent on originality and the notion of rebellion against authority. Prévost's story is of two exceptional characters who seem chosen by destiny for both love and unhappiness.

When the reader first encounters Des Grieux, he seems lost in a profound reverie. He eventually reveals himself to be extremely sensitive, prone to weeping and fainting. Like Manon, and in spite of his deeds — which include lying, cheating, stealing and murder — Des Grieux inspires admiration from those he meets during the course of the novel. It is as a victim that he depicts himself throughout, passive even in the act of murder: he blames someone else when he fires a gun that he himself did not load in order to escape from prison. The fact that worthy characters in the book sympathize with the protagonist prompts the reader to do likewise.

Although the author's preface, typical of those of the period, suggests that the characters should be judged by their actions, the first-person narrative of Des Grieux makes a direct appeal to us to consider their intentions. We are asked to judge the two lovers not by what they do but by what they are. This approach to behavior raises the moral problem of responsibility. It should strike a familiar chord to those who remember that in the late 1960s and early '70s, sincerity and "doing your own thing" were given as justification for many nonconforming, even criminal acts.

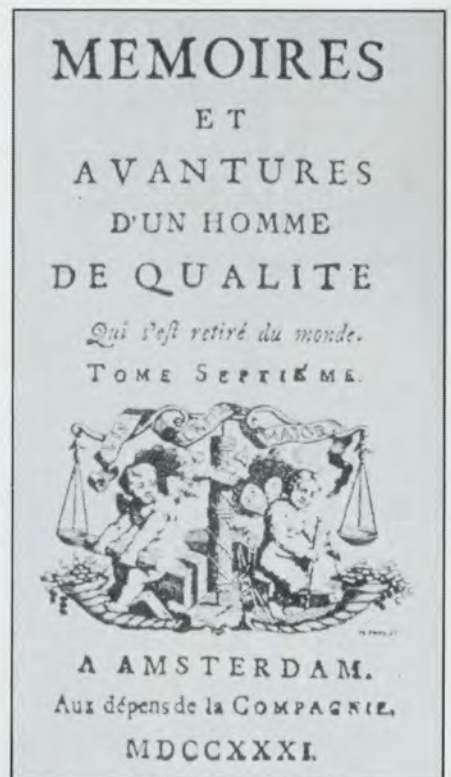
There is no question that some of the novel's troubling effect derives from the tension the reader feels between moral consternation and sympathy for the young lovers. Des Grieux has something about him of the Romantic hero, victim of his passion. Ultimately Des Grieux's passion — the same love that drove him to commit crimes — becomes a force capable of changing and purifying Manon. In Prévost's work, Des Grieux joins Manon as she is being deported to America along with other prostitutes. There, in the New World, Manon loses her obsession for luxury and social pleasures. Alas, just as she and Des Grieux wish to legitimize their union in the eyes of God, destiny strikes once more. Unlike the opera, however, the novel makes clear from the beginning that the love story ends in tragedy, thereby heightening the pathos.

It is possible to read *The Story*

of the Chevalier Des Grieux and Manon Lescaut as a tale of the individual in conflict with society (or, in perhaps simplistic Freudian terms, the id clashing with the superego). Manon and Des Grieux are constantly called "children," and their extreme youth suggests innocence and explains their drive toward gratification. Des Grieux, in particular, seems like a child, react-

### Prévost's novel conveyed a new kind of realism.

ing against — but seeking assistance from — not only his own father (whose importance is only suggested in the opera), but also from a series of paternal figures who do not play a role in the Massenet version. These paternal figures represent society's values: differing standards for men and women, and for various social classes (Manon is punished more severely in several instances than is Des Grieux); religion; and established authority. Des Grieux is torn by conflicting aspects of his character: love of the studious life, religion, chastity (represented by his friend Tiberge, absent from the opera), obedience and submissiveness (shown in his relationship to his father) on one hand, and the attraction of worldly pleasures, eroti-



The title page from the first edition of the seventh volume of Prévost's *Mémoires et aventures d'un homme de qualité*, usually referred to as *Manon Lescaut*.



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Pasquier's illustrations for the 1753 edition of *Manon Lescaut*.

cism and rebelliousness (manifested by his feeling for Manon) on the other.

To some extent the love between Des Grieux and Manon is doomed because they come from different social classes. Characters refer to Des Grieux as "le chevalier" (the knight), reacting to him in his social position. He is from a socially respected family. But Manon belongs to a different world. Her brother is a shady character, far from the opera's Lescaut, who is a cousin worried about preserving the Lescaut family honor. However, at the same time the brother personifies what Manon represents on a social level, his charmless and violent behavior serve to deflect onto him the moral blame that might be associated with Manon.

Whereas Des Grieux is known to others by his role in society ("chevalier"), the object of his passion is known by her sex and is referred to by almost everyone simply as "Manon" or "Manon Lescaut." To an even greater extent than in the opera, the Manon of Prévost's novel is an object that has a price (often self-designated, to be sure). The tinkle of coins in Act V of the opera captures the theme of money that weighs so heavily over the relationship between the young lovers. The novel is always precise about what sums are changing hands. It is worth noting that the presence of such realis-

tic details in a story of tragic nobility was something new at the time.

What is the cause of the tragedy? Is human misery brought about, as later political writers were to postulate in a variety of different works, by a repressive society? Would the relationship have prospered had Des Grieux's father, and others, been more understanding? In this context, perhaps the last scenes of the novel, set in New Orleans, are meant to suggest a land free of Old World restrictions. But insofar as misfortune pursues the lovers across the sea, they seem to be victims of something even larger than

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### Manon incarnates the desire for pleasure.

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societal conventions. In the novel they are definitively separated just as they seek to marry, that is, to reconcile Christian and profane love. So the tragedy goes beyond the conflict between society and the individual to become a tale of two lovers doomed by fate.

The powerful effect of Prévost's novel cannot be ascribed to the ingenuity or grace of its plot; the narrative consists of a series of rather similar episodes in which the lovers' life

together is interrupted by Manon's infidelity. Separation is followed by an eventual reunion, again interrupted by Manon's infidelity. The similarity among the episodes does give to each one the feeling of a fresh start and as such underlines Des Grieux's innocence and hope, a hope with which the reader is carried along even as he knows that it is vain.

Although the sequence of events is not at all memorable (we tend to forget which incident and secondary characters appeared when), there are some scenes in the novel that nevertheless leave keen impressions. These high points of the book are moments of intense drama, and several of them were adapted for inclusion in the opera: the pair's first encounter at the coach station; their reunion at the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice; and Manon's death.

Massenet's opera retains many aspects of the original novel. In both, Des Grieux and Manon meet when they are very young and fall in love as she is being sent away to a convent. Manon is sensual, giddy, given to deceit, in love with luxury and with Des Grieux. In both the book and the opera, we are led to sympathize with her and to find her tantalizingly ambiguous ("Ah! le beau diamant!" Manon sings of a star, even as she succumbs to death, repentant of her wan-



ton ways). Des Grieux is close to his father, struggling between worldliness and religion, unable to resist his passion for Manon and unable to satisfy her lust for material pleasure. Drawn into a sordid world in spite of himself, haunted by the memory of a purer life, he finally loses Manon forever.

The general characteristics of the lovers in the opera are, then, faithful to those of the novel. But, as Montesquieu's comment suggests, the novel is far darker than the opera.

The treatment of Manon's death is illustrative of many features that distinguish the original novel from its adaptation in Massenet's work. The opera ends with Manon's final, accurately descriptive words: "And this is the story of Manon Lescaut." By contrast, the book does not end at the moment of Manon's death. Prévost's work is basically about the knight and what happens to him as a result of falling in love. Manon serves as an agent. In the opera she sings, enchantingly; in the book she is described as enchanting. Her last words are explicitly not reported. Des Grieux says to his interlocutor:

Do not make me describe my feelings or report her last words. I lost her; she gave me signs of love even as she was dying. That is all I have the strength to tell you about this fatal and deplorable event.

In a scene suggestive of some of Romanticism's morbidity, Des Grieux,

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**The main character of the novel is Des Grieux, not Manon.**

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after more than 24 hours with his beloved's corpse, almost broken from hunger and grief, digs a grave in the sandy soil. He wraps Manon's body in his clothing, eventually brings himself to close the grave, and lying on it, waits to die. He survives, however. Just as the book's preface focuses on Des Grieux, its conclusion describes his return to France after Manon's death.

In the style of the day, the preface to the novel informs the reader that the book he is about to read has a moral purpose: A terrible example of the power of passion will be provided by revealing the ambiguous character of Des Grieux, a mixture of vice and virtue, of good intentions and bad actions, a man able to predict his mis-

continued on p. 71



Chagall, PROFILE EN BLEU, JAUNE ET BLANC, oil on canvas, 1977

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# PROFILES



## RERI GRIST

Soprano Reri Grist returns to San Francisco Opera to portray Massenet's *Manon* for the first time in her career. Miss Grist's early professional experience was in drama and musicals on and off-Broadway, most notably as Consuela in the original Broadway production of *West Side Story*, whose composer, Leonard Bernstein, consequently engaged her for a performance of Mahler's Fourth Symphony. She made her operatic debut as Blondchen in *The Abduction from the Seraglio* at Santa Fe in 1959, the same year as her New York City Opera debut. Her European debut was as the Queen of the Night in *Die Zauberflöte* at the Cologne Opera in 1960, and during the next three years she appeared at Covent Garden, the Vienna State Opera, the Zurich Opera and the Washington Opera. In 1963 she bowed with the San Francisco Opera, singing three roles that season: Rosina in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, Despina in *Così fan tutte* and Sister Constance in *Dialogues of the Carmelites*. Debuts at the Piccola Scala, the Munich State Opera and the Lyric Opera of Chicago quickly followed, and she first appeared at the Metropolitan Opera in 1966 as Rosina. Miss Grist has since performed at most of the major opera houses in Europe and South America, as well as at the world's major festivals, including Spoleto, Glyndebourne, Holland, Munich, Vienna and Salzburg, where she appeared for 13 consecutive seasons in Mozart and Richard Strauss roles. From 1964 to 1969, her roles at San Francisco Opera included Susanna in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Sophie in *Der Rosenkavalier*, Zerbinetta in *Ariadne auf Naxos*, Oscar in *Un Ballo in Maschera*, Adina in *L'Elisir d'Amore* and Gilda in *Rigoletto*. A well-

known personality on German and Austrian television and radio, Miss Grist has made numerous recordings, sung in concert around the world with the New York Philharmonic, Vienna Philharmonic, Boston Symphony Orchestra and the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, among others, and has sung with such conductors as Böhm, Karajan, Abbado, Ozawa and Mehta. A frequent lieder recitalist, Miss Grist gave performances this year in Paris and at the opening of the Dresden Music Festival.



## PAMELA SOUTH

In her seventh consecutive year with the San Francisco Opera, soprano Pamela South is heard as Poussette in *Manon* and Frasquita in *Carmen*. During the first Summer Festival she appeared as Zerlina in *Don Giovanni* and Drusilla in *L'Incoronazione di Poppea*, and in the past three fall seasons sang Lola in *Cavalleria Rusticana*, Karolka in *Jenůfa*, Despina in *Così fan tutte* and Musetta in *La Bohème*. She won critical acclaim for her comic talents as the Prima Donna in *Viva la Mamma* and the title role in *La Perichole* with Spring Opera Theater and has also performed in *Titus*, *The Italian Girl in Algiers* and *Transformations* with that company. A member of the Merola Opera Program in 1974, Miss South toured with Western Opera Theater in 1975 and 1976 in such roles as Susanna in *The Marriage of Figaro* and Zerlina in *Don Giovanni*. Other Mozart roles include both Pamina and Papagena in *The Magic Flute*. She will sing Pamina with Opera/Omaha in 1982. California audiences have also heard her with the San Francisco Pops under Arthur Fiedler, in the *B Minor Mass* at the Carmel Bach Festival, in performances of *Messiah* and Poulenc's *Gloria* throughout the state, and most

recently, with the San Diego Symphony under Kurt Herbert Adler. This summer she also sang the soprano lead in *Fables*, an opera by Hugh Aiken produced by Central City Opera. In 1979 she sang the title role in *Daughter of the Regiment* with the Portland Opera. Miss South spent two years as an Affiliate Artist in the San Francisco/Affiliate Artists-Opera Program.



## PHYLLIS HUNTER

In her debut season with the San Francisco Opera, soprano Phyllis Hunter sings Javotte in *Manon*, Olga in *The Merry Widow* and Helmwige in *Die Walküre*. Earlier this year she was heard as Iphigeneia 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.

## SUSAN QUITTMAYER

Susan Quittmeyer sings four roles this season: Rosette in *Manon*, Mercédès in *Carmen*, the Priestess in *Aida* and Waltraute in *Die Walküre*. Her performance as Cherubino in the 1981 Spring Opera Theater production of *The Marriage of Figaro*



# PROFILES



marked her third consecutive year with SPOT, following appearances in *La Traviata* in 1979 and Susa's *Transformations* in 1980. She portrayed Hermione in John Harbison's *Winter's Tale* and Elmire in Kirke Mechem's *Tartuffe* in the two world-premiere productions that inaugurated the American Opera Project. The mezzo-soprano made her San Francisco Opera debut during the 1979 season as La Ciesca in *Gianni Schicchi* and Dorabella in *Così fan tutte*, and during the 1980 fall season was heard in *Simon Boccanegra*, *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, *Jenufa*, *La Traviata* and *Madama Butterfly*. She has also appeared with the Asolo Opera Theater in Florida, the Opera Theater of St. Louis and as an apprentice with the Santa Fe Opera in 1978. In 1980 she sang Siebel in *Faust* with the Baltimore Opera. Miss Quittmeyer was the U.S. Steel Affiliate Artist in the San Francisco/Affiliate Artists-Opera Program, and in March of this year appeared as Giulietta in *The Tales of Hoffmann* with the Mobile Opera. In April she portrayed the Composer in the Los Angeles Opera Repertory Theater production of *Ariadne auf Naxos*, and in July was heard as a soloist in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra.

## SARA GANZ

Soprano Sara Ganz was first heard with the San Francisco Opera as Jano in *Jenufa* 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*. 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 Mas-



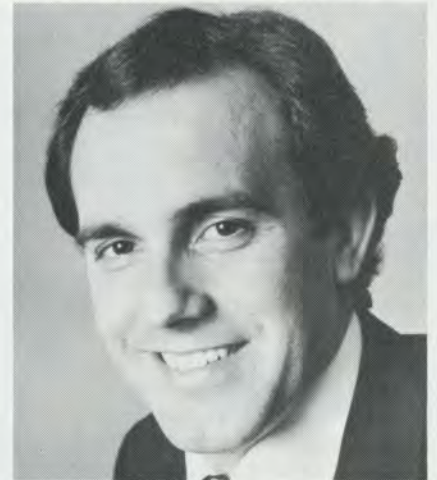
son Mountain Winery, and received a Merola Award in the Grand Finals of the San Francisco Opera Auditions. Earlier this year she toured with Western Opera Theater as Adina in *The Elixir of Love* and Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet*, and made her Spring Opera debut as Wanda in *The Grand Duchess of Gerolstein*. 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*.



## STUART BURROWS

Welsh lyric tenor Stuart Burrows makes his first appearance with the San Francisco Opera in 10 years as Des Grieux in *Manon*. He made his operatic debut with the Welsh National Opera in 1963 as Ismaele in *Nabucco*. His first engagement outside Britain was a 1966 performance of the title role in Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex* in Athens with the com-

poser himself conducting. He made his American debut at the San Francisco Opera when he sang Tamino in *The Magic Flute* during the 1967 season, and was also heard in *Louise*, *Manon Lescaut* and *Tristan und Isolde*. During the 1969-71 seasons, Burrows' San Francisco Opera assignments included Nemorino in *L'Elisir d'Amore*, Fenton in *Falstaff*, Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly*, Lensky in *Eugene Onegin*, Leicester in *Maria Stuarda* and another Tamino. The last role served as the vehicle for his debuts at Covent Garden in 1968 and the Metropolitan Opera in 1970. He has since added numerous roles at those houses, as well as at the Vienna State Opera, the Paris Opera, the companies of Salzburg and Geneva and most major European houses. Burrows also maintains an extensive schedule of concert and recital dates, ranging from the festivals of Tanglewood, Orange and Holland to the Brahmsaal in Vienna. His numerous recordings of complete operas include *Die Zauberflöte*, *A Midsummer Marriage*, *Maria Stuarda*, *Anna Bolena*, *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, *Don Giovanni* and *Eugene Onegin*. He has been the star of two series of BBC television programs, *Stuart Burrows Sings*, and for the same network has performed the title role in *Faust*, the Duke in *Rigoletto* and Rodolfo in *La Bohème*.

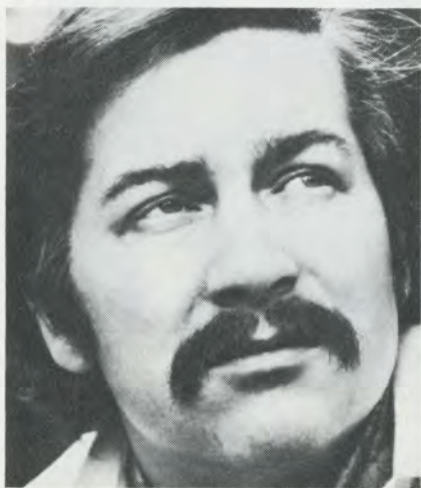


## DALE DUESING

In his fifth consecutive season with the San Francisco Opera, where he made his American debut as Oliver Ward in the world premiere of Andrew Imbrie's *Angle of Repose* in 1976, baritone Dale Duesing sings his first Lescaut in *Manon*. In 1976 he also performed Figaro in the student matinee performances of *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*. The following year he was heard as Arlecchino in *Ariadne auf Naxos* and as Ping in



*Turandot*. In 1978 he received unanimous praise in the title role of *Billy Budd* and as Schaunard in *La Bohème*, and was equally well applauded for his Pelléas in the 1979 production of *Pelléas et Mélisande*. That year he also sang Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte* and returned last season as Papageno in *The Magic Flute*. Duesing began his operatic career in Germany, where he was a member of the Deutsche Oper am Rhein in Düsseldorf for several years and where he made his debut as Guglielmo at the Hamburg Staatsoper in 1973. In 1976 he first appeared at the Glyndebourne Festival as Olivier in Strauss' *Capriccio* and in 1980 was heard there in Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Last summer he also performed at the Edinburgh Festival in *Così fan tutte*. He appeared at the Salzburg Festival for four consecutive years as Masetto in *Don Giovanni*, which he recorded under Karl Böhm, and as Arlecchino. Duesing made his Metropolitan Opera debut in 1978, singing both Arlecchino and Papageno, and during the 1979/80 season there he performed Dr. Malatesta in *Don Pasquale* and Silvio in *I Pagliacci*. Last season he sang Papageno at the Met. Other recent engagements include Eisenstein in *Die Fledermaus* in Tulsa and Janáček's *The Cunning Little Vixen* in Philadelphia. An accomplished orchestral soloist, Duesing has sung with the New York Philharmonic, the Berlin Philharmonic, the Chicago Symphony and the RAI Orchestra of Italy and has been heard in recital throughout the United States and Europe.



**ALEXANDER MALTA**

Alexander Malta returns to the San Francisco Opera for his fifth season as the Comte Des Grieux in *Manon*. The Swiss-born bass made his American debut with the Company in 1976, appearing in *Thaïs*, *La Forza del Destino* and *Peter Grimes*; in 1977 he portrayed Fasolt in *Das*



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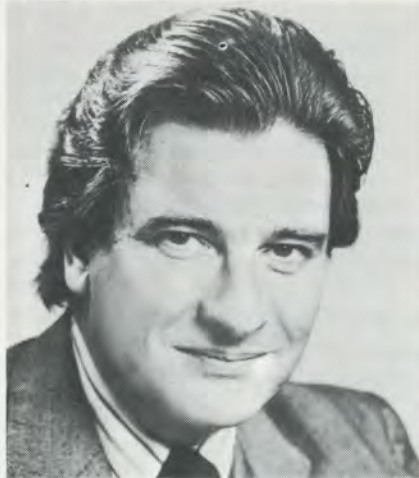
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# PROFILES

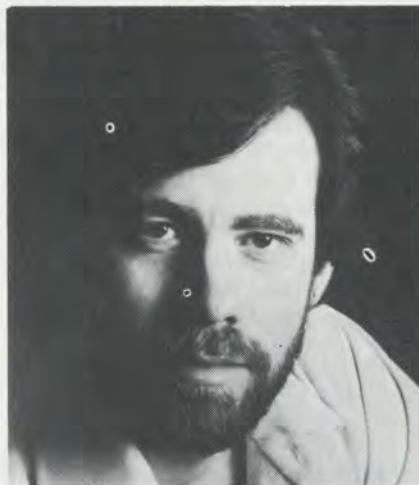
*Rheingold* and Truffaldino in *Ariadne auf Naxos*; in 1978 he was Don Fernando in *Fidelio* and the Police Commissioner in *Der Rosenkavalier*; and last season was heard as Count Waldner in *Arabella* and Don Pasquale in the English-language performances of the Donizetti opera. His early career began in Stuttgart and he has since been heard in most of the major European houses, including Berlin, Hamburg, Frankfurt, Munich, Brussels, Paris and Vienna. In 1977 Malta sang Colline in *La Bohème* and Golaud in *Pelléas et Mélisande* in productions by Jean-Pierre Ponnelle in Strasbourg, and Méphistophélès in both Gounod's *Faust* and Berlioz' *La Damnation de Faust*. He also appeared in television productions of Nicolai's *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and Ullmann's *Der Kaiser von Atlantis*. In 1979 he made his debut in Brussels as Osmin in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* and in 1980 appeared in *La Bohème* in Hamburg and Lisbon, in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* in Switzerland and France, as Orest in *Elektra* in Rome and as Fasolt in the new Ring cycle at the Florence Opera. Earlier this year Malta took part in performances of Handel's *Ariodante* at the Piccola Scala in Milan. He can be heard on the recent recording of *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* for Angel Records.



## NICO CASTEL

Tenor Nico Castel makes his San Francisco Opera debut as Guillot de Morfontaine in *Manon*. Born in Lisbon, Portugal, and raised in Venezuela, Castel began his musical education at the Caracas Conservatory before graduating from Temple University in Philadelphia. He continued his studies in Germany and Italy and made his operatic debut at Santa Fe Opera in 1958. Since then he has

appeared with the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, the festivals of Spoleto, Tanglewood and Caramoor, and opera companies in Washington, D.C., San Diego, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Cincinnati, Houston, San Antonio and New Orleans, among others. A specialist in the character-tenor field, Castel has a repertoire of 165 roles, many of which he performed during his 12 seasons with the New York City Opera. He is currently a member of the Metropolitan Opera, and is the founder and a singing member of the Metropolitan Opera Madrigal Singers. Other Met duties include his recent appointment as staff diction coach. He also teaches diction for singers at New York University. Castel has made numerous recital and concert appearances with orchestras such as the Boston Symphony, Richmond Symphony and New York Philharmonic. His recording credits include complete recordings of *Manon*, *La Bohème* and *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*.



## JAKE GARDNER

Baritone Jake Gardner returns to the San Francisco Opera to portray De Brétigny in *Manon*, Dancairo in *Carmen* and Enrico in the student and family matinee performances of *Lucia di Lammermoor*. He made his company debut during the 1979 season as Sonora in *La Fanciulla del West* and Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte*, following his success as James Stuart in the Spring Opera production of Thea Musgrave's *Mary, Queen of Scots* earlier that year. Gardner created the role in the Musgrave opera at the 1977 Edinburgh Festival and repeated his portrayal in Norfolk, Virginia; in Stuttgart, Germany; in a concert of excerpts from the opera at Wolf Trap Park; and on records. Gardner recently received international attention when he per-

formed Dr. Falke in the San Diego Opera production of *Die Fledermaus* opposite Joan Sutherland and Beverly Sills and subsequently was featured in the final quartet from *Il Trovatore* on the nationally televised gala concert from Lincoln Center with Miss Sutherland, Marilyn Horne and Luciano Pavarotti. For the past two summers he has appeared at the Spoleto Festival USA, first in Susa's *Transformations* and then in the world premiere of a trilogy of works by Stanley Hollingsworth, singing in *The Selfish Giant* and *The Mother*. In 1979 he was heard in the American premiere of Michael Tippett's *The Ice Break* with the Opera Company of Boston. He made his New York debut in Massenet's *Le Cid* in 1976 and later participated in the recording of the opera. This was followed by an appearance with the Opera Orchestra of New York as Zurga in *Les Pêcheurs de perles* opposite Nicolai Gedda. He has sung with the Washington Opera in *Die Zauberflöte*, with the Houston Grand Opera in *Faust*, with the Opera Company of Boston in *La Bohème*, with Opera/Omaha in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, with the San Antonio Symphony in *Così fan tutte*, with Arizona Opera in *Don Giovanni* and in Chautauqua in *Eugene Onegin*.



## TIMOTHY NOBLE

Following his debut with Spring Opera Theater as Agamemnon in *The Cry of Clytaemnestra*, a role he created at the work's world premiere at Indiana University, baritone Timothy Noble made his first appearance with the San Francisco Opera as Albany in Reimann's *Lear*, which inaugurated the first Summer Festival. He returns this fall as a sergeant in *Manon*, a shop man and an officer in *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, Morales in *Carmen* and the King of



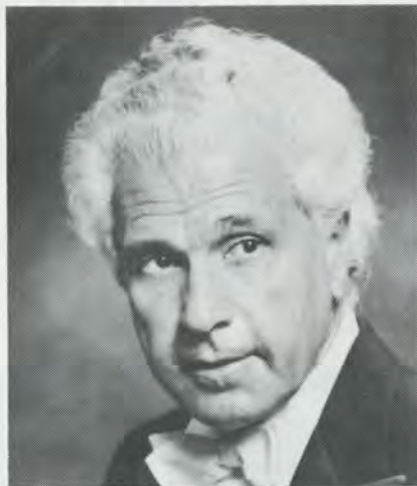
Spain in *Le Cid*. As a student at Indiana University, Noble also appeared as Michele in *Il Tabarro*, the four villains in *The Tales of Hoffmann*, Robespierre in John Eaton's *Danton and Robespierre*, and in the title roles of *Rigoletto* and *Don Giovanni*. He has sung Schaunard in *La Bohème* with the Indianapolis Opera and has been heard with the symphony orchestras of Indianapolis, Atlanta and St. Louis. Noble recently performed Germont in *La Traviata* with Colorado Summer Opera and was soloist in a Rodgers and Hammerstein concert with the Chicago Symphony at the Ravinia Festival. He makes his European debut in March 1982 as Miller in Verdi's *Luisa Miller* in Nancy, France.



#### CARL GLAUM

Bass Carl Glaum appears in three roles this fall: l'hotelier in *Manon*, a guard and a millhand in *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* and Don Alonzo in *Le Cid*. A member of the 1981 Western Opera Theater company, he sang Dulcamara in *The Elixir of Love* and Friar Lawrence in *Romeo and Juliet*, and later made his initial appearance with the San Francisco Opera as Hans Schwarz in *Die Meistersinger* and Marullo in *Rigoletto* during the first Summer Festival this year. He was also heard in the Spring Opera productions of *Romeo and Juliet* and *Il Ballo delle Ingrate*. Glaum began his career with the Illinois Opera Theater and the Lake George Opera Festival in 1971. He made his Lyric Opera of Chicago debut in the 1974 production of *Peter Grimes* and remained a member of that company for six years. In 1978 he portrayed the title role in the Chicago Opera Theater's production of *Don Pasquale* and was a resident artist with the Minnesota Opera Company, where he sang Don Bartolo in *The Marriage of Figaro* and created the role of Colonel Blagden in the world premiere of Robert Ward's *Claudia*

*LeGare*. With Skylight Comic Opera of Milwaukee he recently performed in Donizetti's *Viva la Mamma*, Offenbach's *Orpheus in the Underworld* and Blitzstein's *Regina*. Last June Glaum sang the role of Morton in the Midwest premiere of Thea Musgraves's *Mary, Queen of Scots*.



#### JULIUS RUDEL

Following highly acclaimed appearances in French opera, conducting *Pelléas et Mélisande* in his Company debut in 1979 and *Samson et Dalila* last season, Julius Rudel returns to the War Memorial podium for two Massenet works this season, *Manon* and *Le Cid*. In the fall of 1979 he assumed musical directorship of the Buffalo Philharmonic, after resigning as director of the New York City Opera, a post he held for 22 years. In the early 1970s Rudel held five administrative posts simultaneously: music director of the Kennedy Center in Washington, the Cincinnati May Festival and the Caramoor Festival, music advisor of Wolf Trap and director of the New York City Opera. At the Kennedy Center he was responsible for all the opening festivities, for the premiere of Ginastera's *Beatriz Cenci* and the first staged performance in this country of Handel's *Ariodante*. Rudel frequently conducts at such major European opera houses as the Vienna State Opera, the Paris Opera and the Hamburg State Opera. For the June Festival in Vienna he led performances of *Carmen*, *La Bohème*, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, *La Traviata*, *Cavalleria Rusticana* and *I Pagliacci*, and *Die Fledermaus*. Recent engagements in Hamburg include *La Traviata* and *La Bohème*. In recognition of his seven years as regular guest conductor of the Paris Opera he was made Chevalier des Arts et Lettres. Rudel appears frequently in guest engagements with the world's most prestigious symphony orchestras: the Vienna Symphony, the Israel Phil-

harmonic, and the orchestras of Chicago, Philadelphia, Cleveland, Boston, Pittsburgh and New York. In October he leads the Buffalo Philharmonic in a concert at the Louise M. Davies Symphony Hall and returns there for his debut with the San Francisco Symphony in February. Maestro Rudel made his Metropolitan Opera debut in 1978 with *Werther* and has most recently conducted *Dialogues des Carmélites* there. He has recorded several complete operas, including *Manon*, many with his longtime colleague Beverly Sills.



#### RHODA LEVINE

Remembered for her Spring Opera stagings of Kurka's *The Good Soldier Schweik* (1980), the American premiere of Viktor Ullmann's *The Emperor of Atlantis* on a triple bill with Holst's *Savitri* and Monteverdi's *The Combat* (1977) and Mascagni's *L'Amico Fritz* (1976), director Rhoda Levine makes her San Francisco Opera debut with Massenet's *Manon*. At the Netherlands Opera since 1974, she has been directing such varied works as the world premiere of the Ullmann opera, the Kurka opera, *From the House of the Dead*, *Macbeth*, *Of Mice and Men*, *The Love for Three Oranges*, *The Medium*, Lulu and Susa's *Transformations*. Her latest assignment there was Massenet's *Don Quichotte*. Other recent credits include *Ariadne auf Naxos* with the Atlanta Civic Opera, *Rigoletto* with the Michigan Opera Theater and her children's opera, *Harrison Loved His Umbrella*, at the 1981 Spoleto Festival USA. She staged *The Rape of Lucretia* and *Abraham and Isaac* at the Festival of Two Worlds in Spoleto, Italy, and *Pierrot Lunaire* at the Jerusalem Festival. Miss Levine directed *The Gondoliers* at the Wolf Trap Festival, *Madama Butterfly* with Philadelphia

continued on p. 57



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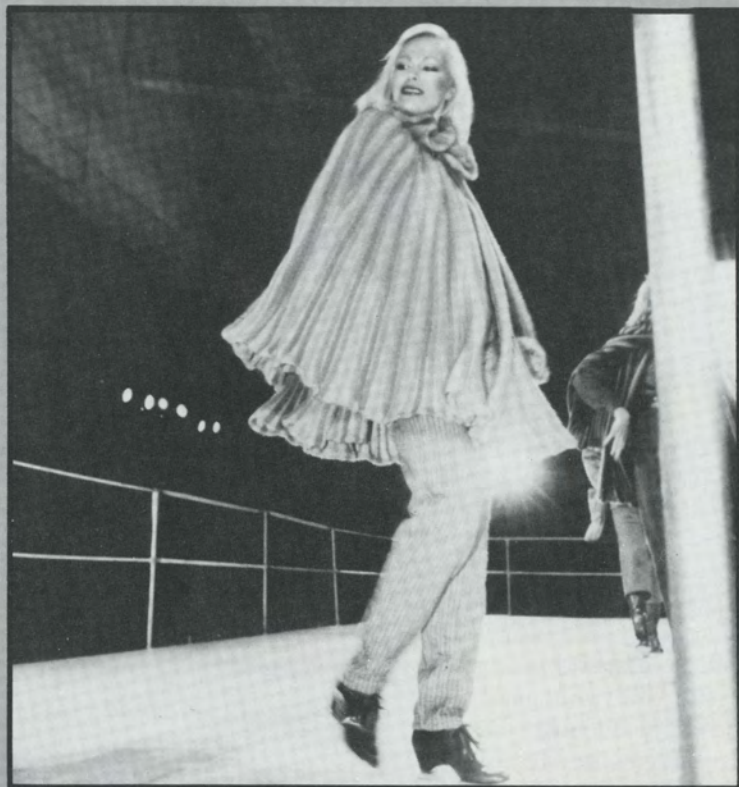
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# SYNOPSIS

## Manon

### ACT I

SCENE 1 — In the courtyard of an inn at Amiens, an elderly roué, Guillot de Morfontaine, has ordered dinner for three actresses, Poussette, Javotte and Rosette, and his friend Brétigny. While they are dining, a swaggering officer, Lescaut, comes to wait for his young cousin, Manon, who is expected to arrive by coach on her way to the convent. Manon is greeted by her cousin and describes the excitement of her journey. While Lescaut goes off to look for her luggage, Guillot makes advances toward the girl and offers his carriage for an assignation. Left alone, Manon reflects wistfully on the merriment of his companions. When the handsome Chevalier Des Grieux arrives and is taken by her charms, she is easily persuaded to run off with him, in Guillot's coach, to Paris.

SCENE 2 — Manon and Des Grieux are living happily in their Paris apartment, although the girl already conceals the fact that an unknown suitor has been sending her flowers. Having agreed to separate the couple, Lescaut and Brétigny, who is disguised as a soldier, force their way into the apartment. The former demands that Des Grieux marry Manon; the latter warns her that the Chevalier is about to be abducted by his father, the Comte Des Grieux. Brétigny then advises her to turn to himself for support and security. When Des Grieux assures Lescaut that he has every intention of marrying Manon, the intruders leave. As Des Grieux goes off to mail a letter asking his father's permission to marry Manon, she sadly bids farewell to the little table where they have so often dined. Des Grieux returns, dreaming of an idyllic life with his beloved. A knock is heard at the door, and when the Chevalier answers it, he is seized by his father's emissaries.

### ACT II

SCENE 1 — A holiday crowd fills the Cours-la-Reine. Manon, accompanied by her new lover, Brétigny, exults in the joys of youth and pleasure, but when she overhears the Chevalier's father, the elderly Comte Des Grieux, talking with Brétigny, she is distressed to learn that the young Chevalier is about to take Holy Orders. Having learned the whereabouts of her former lover, she orders her cousin to call her coach. She departs for the church of St.-Sulpice, where young Des Grieux is preaching.

SCENE 2 — In the dimly lit church, members of the congregation praise the eloquence of the new orator. Skeptical of his son's new-found virtue, the Comte tries to persuade the young man to renounce his vocation and find a suitable girl to marry. Spurning his father's advice, Des Grieux prays for the strength to forget Manon. When she arrives at the seminary, she pleads with him to return to her. After he tries in vain to resist her, the lovers are reunited.

### ACT III

SCENE 1 — The Hôtel de Transylvanie, a clandestine Parisian gambling house, is crowded with pleasure-seekers, among them Guillot, his three companions and Brétigny. Manon and Des Grieux arrive, and Manon urges the Chevalier to improve their fortune by gambling. Des Grieux reluctantly agrees and plays cards with Guillot. Losing every hand, Guillot accuses Des Grieux of cheating and goes off to call the police. They arrive with the Comte, and arrest the young lovers, threatening Manon with deportation.

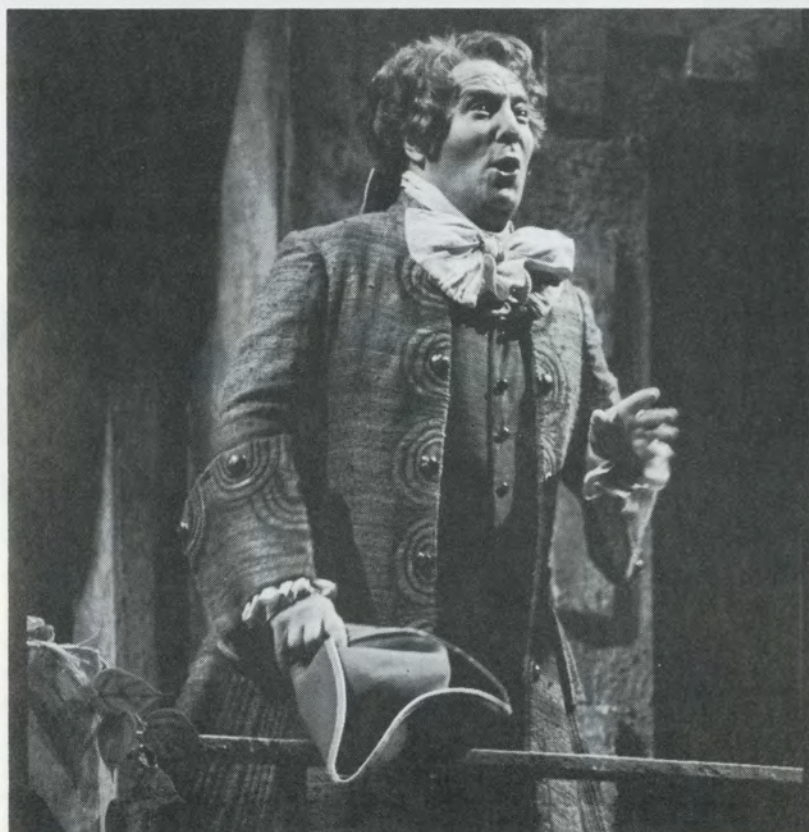
SCENE 2 — On the road to Le Havre, where Manon is to be deported, the Chevalier attempts, with Lescaut's help, to intercept the convoy of delinquent women and rescue his beloved from exile. They succeed by means of a bribe. Manon falls exhausted into Des Grieux's arms. Realizing that she is near death, she asks Des Grieux for his pardon. Dreaming of their past happiness, Manon dies.



# Manon



Reri Grist



Stuart Burrows

Photos taken in rehearsal by David Powers





Reri Grist



Dale Duesing



Alexander Malta, Reri Grist





Nico Castel, Reri Grist, Stuart Burrows



Stuart Burrows, Reri Grist







Jake Gardner, Nico Castel



(Clockwise from top) Pamela South, Phyllis Hunter, Susan Quittmeyer



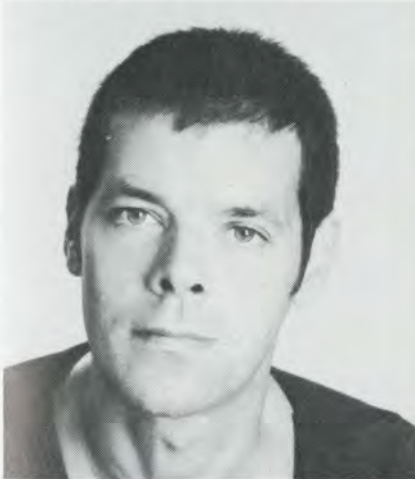
Reri Grist, Stuart Burrows



# PROFILES

continued from p. 47

Opera, *Falstaff* with the Opera Theater of St. Louis, *The Bartered Bride* with Opera/Omaha, *The Ballad of Baby Doe* with Dallas Civic Opera, *The Marriage of Figaro* with the Houston Grand Opera, *The Emperor Jones*, *I Pagliacci* and *The Magic Flute* with Michigan Opera Theater, *Tosca* and *Don Pasquale* with Augusta Opera and such various works at the Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels as *Albert Herring*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Il Mondo della Luna*, *La Fille de Madame Angot*, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* and the world premiere of Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*. The versatile director has also worked extensively in television and the legitimate theater as both director and choreographer, has served on the faculty of the Yale School of Drama and the Curtis Institute of Music, and is the author of several children's books.



## HAL GEORGE

Hal George made his San Francisco Opera debut as costume designer for the 1971 production of *Manon* being revived this year. Previously a painter and stage director, George turned to scenic and costume design and made his theater debut with the American Shakespeare Festival at Stratford, Connecticut, in 1964. He designed his first opera costumes for a 1965 production of *Elegy for Young Lovers* at the Juilliard School; his first opera sets appeared in Amsterdam for *Così fan tutte* in 1969. Since then he has created designs for the opera companies of Boston, Kansas City, San Diego and Santa Fe as well as for the New York City Opera. His opera assignments have included productions of Cavalli's *L'Ormindo*; Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *La*

*Clemenza di Tito* and *Die Zauberflöte*; Orff's *Antigonae* and *Die Kluge*; Puccini's *La Bohème*; Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*; Rossini's *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*; Verdi's *Otello*; Schönberg's *Jakobsleiter*; and Weill's *Dreigroschenoper*.



## DAVID MITCHELL

David Mitchell designed the sets for the current San Francisco Opera production of *Manon*, first seen in 1971. A set and costume designer for theater, film and television as well as opera, Mitchell has served as resident designer for the New York Shakespeare Festival, for which he designed his first show, *Medea*, in 1965. Other credits there include *Henry V*, *The Family*, *Hamlet* and *Mrs. Warren's Profession*. He has created sets at the Eastside Playhouse, Vivien Beaumont Theater and St. Clement's Church in New York, as well as for the Goodman Theater in Chicago. He has been particularly successful on Broadway, where audiences have seen his settings for *I Love My Wife*, *The Gin Game* and *Annie* (all three in 1977), *I Remember Mama* (1979) and *Barnum* (1980). Other theater design credits include *In the Boom Boom Room* (1974), *Little Black Sheep* (1975), *Apple Pie* (1976) and *The Price* (1979). Mitchell's first opera designs were for a production of *Madama Butterfly* at the Juilliard School in 1966. Since then he has worked for the opera companies of Toronto, Paris, Cincinnati, Houston, Philadelphia and Washington, D.C., as well as for the New York City Opera and the Deutsche Oper Berlin. The operas he has designed include Boito's *Mefistofele*, Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov*, and Verdi's *Aida*, *Macbeth* and *Il Trovatore*.

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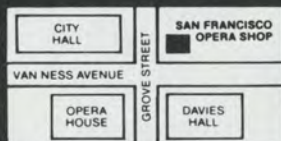
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## PROFILES



### THOMAS MUNN

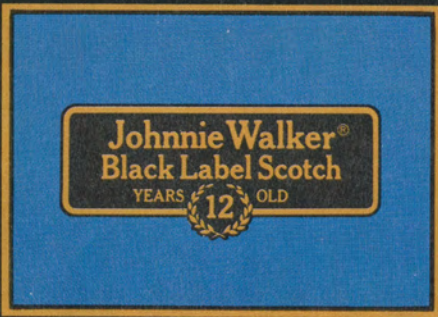
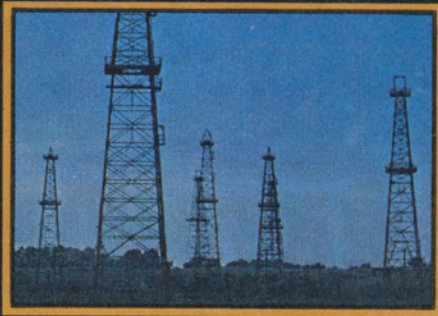
In his seventh year as lighting designer/director of the San Francisco Opera, Thomas Munn is responsible for the lighting designs for *Manon*, *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, *Carmen*, *Wozzeck*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Aida* and *Die Walküre*. He also created additional scenic design for *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*. Audiences saw his lighting designs for *Lear*, *Don Giovanni* and *Die Meistersinger* during the first Summer Festival and in 1980 for the new productions of *Samsen et Dalila* and *Don Pasquale*. In 1979 he won an Emmy Award for the new production of *La Gioconda*, which was seen internationally on television. That year he also designed the scenery for *Roberto Devereux* and *Pelléas et Mélisande*. In past seasons he has created special effects for the Company's productions and served as supervising set designer for *Adriana Lecouvreur*, *Faust* and *Billy Budd*. Since 1976 he has designed the lighting for nearly all of the new productions of the San Francisco Opera, including the world premiere of Imbrie's *Angle of Repose*. Munn created the scenery and lighting for *Macbeth* and *Lulu*, and the lighting for *Don Quichotte* with Netherlands Opera. He is currently theater lighting consultant for the Muziektheater in Amsterdam, due to be completed in 1984. In 1980 he designed the lighting for the Washington Opera Society's productions of *Tristan und Isolde* and *Lucia di Lammermoor*, and early next year will create the design for the world premiere of Robert Ward's *Abelard and Heloise* for the Charlotte Opera Association. Munn has designed numerous regional productions in addition to his work in television, film, ballet and legitimate theater throughout the country.



### MARIKA SAKELLARIOU

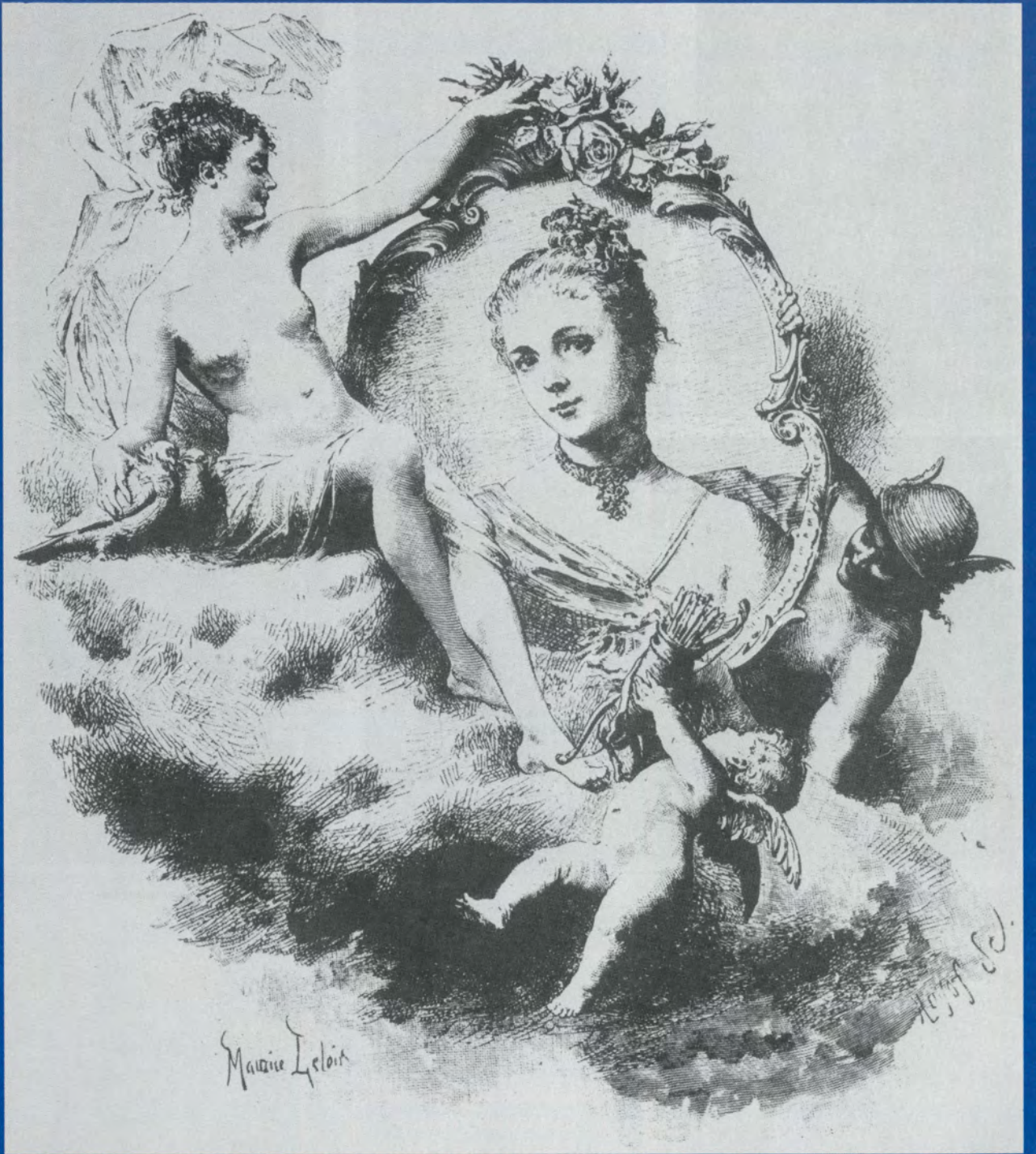
Following her San Francisco Opera debut during the 1981 Summer Festival with *Don Giovanni*, *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* and *Rigoletto*, Marika Sakellariou is responsible for the choreography for *Manon* during the Fall Season. She was choreographer for the 1981 Spring Opera season, creating dances for *The Marriage of Figaro*, *The Grand Duchess of Gerolstein* and *Romeo and Juliet*, and danced in *Il Ballo delle Ingrate*. She is founder and director of the Marika Sakellariou Dance Company, which has performed throughout the Bay Area during the last five years. Miss Sakellariou studied at Connecticut College and the Juilliard School of Music and continued her training with Martha Graham and Merce Cunningham, among others. She has also performed with the José Limon Dance Company of New York, the Xoregos Performing Company of San Francisco and the San Francisco Opera ballet. Her other choreographic credits include the San Francisco Dance Theater, the Opera Folde Rol and the Marin Civic Ballet.





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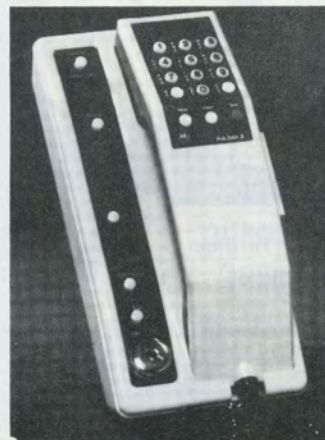
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ts understatement, subtle imagery,  
conversational phrasing and  
graceful, sensual lyricism make  
*Manon* decidedly French in  
character.

By M. OWEN LEE

As Massenet's musical dramas are best  
remembered for the women in them,  
it should come as no surprise that it  
was his mother who first taught him  
the pleasures of both music and self-  
dramatization. She introduced him to  
the keyboard and gave him his first  
notebook, with the words, "If you have

Illustration by Maurice Leloir for Prévost's  
*Manon Lescaut*.



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"L'Enlèvement nocturne," engraving by Nicolas Ponce after Baudoin.

said or done anything that you realize is wrong, you must confess it in writing in these pages. Perhaps it will make you hesitate to do wrong during the day."

Young Jules Émile Frédéric, youngest of his father's 21 children, began bravely recording a theft of chocolate squares, and received a warm, maternal embrace. After that, he says in his modestly immodest volume *Mes Souvenirs*, "when I munched on other and better chocolate, I always obtained permission."

There is hardly a hint in Massenet's recollections of the poverty of his youth and the compulsive ambition that drove him to write nearly 30 operas and much other music. The pages of his *Souvenirs* are filled with exclamations and sighs, with elegant Latin quotations, with glimpses of works of art seen in Italy and affectionate reminiscences of the Gounods

and Godards that peopled his life at home. Writing operas seemed not much more than the effortless recording in a notebook of confessions of women who hesitated only slightly before doing wrong.

---

Massenet saw art existing to  
give pleasure.

---

If we can believe it, Massenet dropped a hint to Henri Meilhac, the most famous librettist of the day, regarding Prévost's *Manon Lescaut*, and not long after the librettist sent an invitation to lunch at Vachette's. "And there I found beneath my napkin the first two acts of *Manon*. The other three followed in a few days." The music, too, came easily because, "The



dream of writing this piece had haunted me for a long time." Massenet spent a quiet summer in a room in the Hague where the author of the original novel, the Abbé Prévost, had once lived, sleeping in the Abbé's bed — "a great cradle shaped like a gondola" — and rising to stroll, for inspiration's sake, through the dunes of Schlevenigen or the woods of the royal palace. "There I made delightfully exquisite little friends of the deer who brought me the fresh breath of their damp muzzles."

A further inspiration, almost as Disneyesque, was a young girl selling violets for two sous on the Boulevard des Capucines. "Her looks obsessed me, and her memory accompanied me constantly." Massenet never spoke to her, but kept her face in his mind's eye as he wrote and, when his work was done, saw to it that she was given a pass for the first season's run of performances.

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*Manon* is something like Paris itself.

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Not for Massenet the unabashed, extroverted ways of Italy or Wagner's relentless quest for profound spiritual insight. A Frenchman, he chose to understate. And he saw art as existing, first and always, to give pleasure. But it would be wrong to think of his work as somehow wanting in passion or complexity. In every detail he gives us about writing *Manon* — the napkin, the bed, the deer, the flower girl — there is a studied spontaneity, an insistent laziness, an almost innocent pre-occupation with sexuality. And the same ambivalence, passionate and complex in its way, can be found on virtually every page of the score.

One may call Massenet's art facile or bland or sentimental. Or one can see it as having its own peculiarly French qualities. Romain Rolland spoke, albeit not flatteringly, of "the Massenet that slumbers at the heart of every Frenchman." *Manon* is something like Paris itself. If the hurried tourist is not impressed, Paris does not care. Massenet will make the effort to please, but not to overwhelm. So very French, so understated is *Manon* that Massenet cannot, as he ought to have, put his heroine aboard ship for deportation. Let Puccini, if he will, have her mount the gangplank ignominiously to sail toward New Orleans. In Massenet, she stays in France to die.

The libretto, put together from Prévost's novel by Henri Meilhac and



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"Le Matin," engraving by Larmessin after Lancret.

his new collaborator, Philippe Gille, is a remarkable piece of work, condensing the original into six scenes, each of them set in a different locale to give some idea of the novel's sweep and variety of backgrounds. Puccini's later version is actually more faithful to Prévost in plot details, but the scenes are disconnected, the atmosphere is not Prévost, nor is the bombast, and there are scarcely two secondary characters of any consequence. Massenet preserves the essence of the original, moves gracefully and consistently, and provides a whole gallery of interesting characters.

It is true that the librettists had to make Prévost's sordid tale conform to the bourgeois tastes of the Opéra Comique. Their Des Grieux does not turn thief and murderer (in the novel, where he tells the story to the author and remains the psychological center, his disintegration is complete). Similarly, the libretto's Lescaut, a scape-

grace but not a pander, becomes the heroine's cousin, not her brother. The sinister Guillot is made a figure of fun, and Manon herself is far less promiscuous. But for all the libretto's simplifications, we are touched, as with the novel, by the story of two innocents too much in love and spiraling downwards.

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**Massenet provides a whole  
gallery of interesting  
characters.**

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The text is also distinguished by subtle patterns of imagery. Just before Manon steps from the coach at Amiens, when all the luggage is in disarray, a lady traveler exclaims, "Who has seen my birds and my bird-cage?" Then Manon, describing the



journey enthusiastically to her cousin, says, "Sometimes I thought I had wings and was flying away to heaven." Des Grieux, writing his father from the love-nest in the Rue Vivienne, compares Manon to "the bird that follows the spring wherever it goes," and is afraid that their happiness, "a bird of passage," is so light that it may take wing. He closes his eyes to dream of a humble retreat far from Paris ("En fermant les yeux") with rustling leaves and singing birds — paradise if only she would live with him there. But she leaves him because (in the Gavotte) "youth soon spreads its wings and disappears, never to return," or alternatively (in the Fabliau) because she envies the doves their freedom and must rise, like a lark, to sing of love and youth. And when she repents, she is "the bird who flew away from what she thought was captivity, only to return at night to beat, with desperate wings, at its cage."

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The singing in *Manon* is almost always close to conversation.

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Massenet made many suggestions about *Manon's* text and is largely responsible for the inclusion of the scenes at Saint-Sulpice and the Hôtel de Transylvanie. But more important is how he brought all six scenes to musical life. His contributions, to *Manon* and to French opera generally, are three.

The first of these was to turn spoken dialogue, that hallmark of *opéra-comique* style, into melodrama, to provide expressive orchestral accompaniment to spoken words. Mozart had experimented with this in *Zaide*, as had Beethoven — powerfully — in the grave-digging scene of *Fidelio*. But they had also allowed long stretches of unaccompanied speech in those works, and the effect of the melodramatic passages was largely lost. Massenet provides virtually continuous music, and when the characters converse intimately over the familiar melodies — when a solo violin distills the essence of Des Grieux's spoken words at the lovers' first meeting — the effect is extraordinary.

It would be virtually impossible to incorporate such delicate effects into the musical texture if the general melodic line were as expansive as in Italian or German opera. So Massenet's second contribution is the *phrase Massenétiq*ue — a kind of shortening of formal musical structure,



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a calculated imbalance that makes the musical line irregular, more hesitant and tentative than the listener, conditioned by past traditions, ever expects. The singing in *Manon* is almost always close to conversation (and it takes a stylish and sensuous artist to bring it off in performance).

Gounod had already scaled down French operatic singing from its Meyerbeerian extremes, virtually inventing the lyric soprano in his *Marguerite* and writing an intimate "conversation" for her and Faust when they first meet on the street. Massenet reduces the scale further. By artful expansions and contractions of the melodic line in the conversation when his lovers meet, he gives the impression that there are no precise rhythms determining his musical structures at all. Just as Prévost's original was important for its psychological realism, anticipating the great French novels of a century later, so Massenet's copy, done in *phrases Massenétiqes*, may

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Massenet's enemies called him "Mlle. Wagner."

---

be thought innovative, naturalistic and psychologically probing.

Although Massenet's phrasing is deliberately shaped to suggest intimate conversation, many individual phrases are also visually suggestive. Debussy wrote of *Manon*, "The music is alive with emotion, surges of passion, and voluptuous embraces. The harmonies can be likened to the arms, the melodies to the slender necks of women. To listen to it is like leaning over a woman so as to discover what is hidden behind her white brow. Philosophers and other simple people may say there is nothing there, but M. Massenet proves the contrary." Debussy, like Rolland, may not have been unambivalently impressed. All the same, *Manon* left the way open for his *Pelléas* and for Ravel's *L'Enfant et les sortilèges*.

Massenet's third contribution is his discreet use of leitmotifs. His compatriots were not happy about this Germanizing, and his enemies, after *Manon*, referred to him less as "la fille de Gounod" and more as "Mlle. Wagner." It hardly seems controversial now to cite *Manon* as the first calculated use of Wagnerian technique in French opera (the musical reminiscences in *Faust* and the recurrent fate-motif in *Carmen* notwithstanding). Massenet's motifs are not nearly so



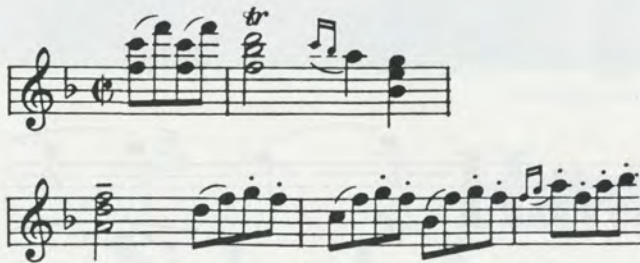


"Promenade des remparts de Paris," engraving after St. Aubin.

extensively developed as Wagner's, and never sounded in combination, but they are almost as pervasive. "The whole work," he wrote, "moves and develops upon some 15 motifs which typify my characters." Actually, one can extend the number almost to 30 if one considers as motifs the themes associated with the coach, the crowd at the Cours-la-Reine, the seminary, the

gambling den and so on.

All the motifs are shaped, again, by Massenet's extraordinary visual sense. He had a truly Wagnerian aptness for synesthesia. The Cours-la-Reine theme that opens the opera is instantly evocative of the period and, somehow, of the novelettish quality of the piece to follow:



The Church of Saint-Sulpice, site of the seminary scene in *Manon*.

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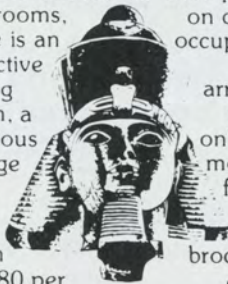
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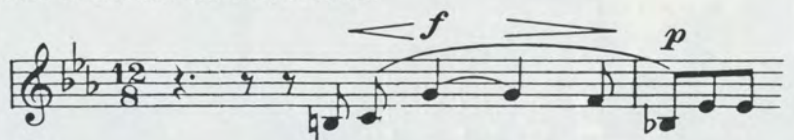
Des Grioux's broad cello motif admirably suggests the young nobleman with fine manners:



Lescaut's two themes as surely convey the impression of an extroverted loser who must turn opportunist to survive.

Massenet can use his motifs as Wagner and, long before, Gluck had done — to tell the truth in the orchestra when the characters onstage lie, to others or to themselves. When Manon

tries to stop Des Grioux from opening the door of their apartment on the Rue Vivienne, sure that his abductors await, she says, "I want to stay in your arms." But the orchestra intones what she really wants. It plays the yearning motif of De Brétigny, who has promised her wealth as well as affection:

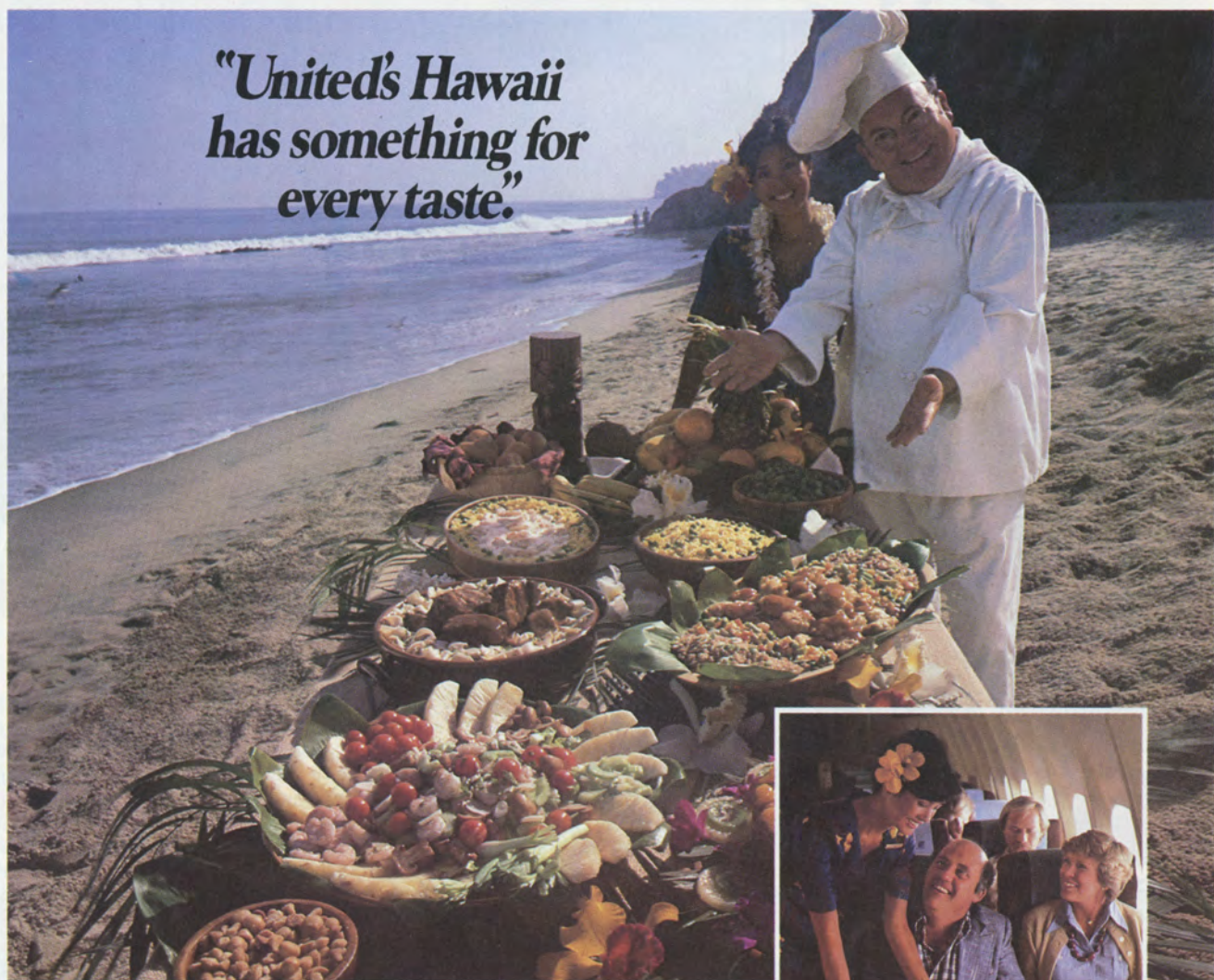


Manon herself may be said to have a different motif in each of the six scenes. She is characterized musically as an ingénue at Amiens, a

coquette in the Rue Vivienne, a courtesan at the Cours-la-Reine, a seductress at Saint-Sulpice, an "astonishing Sphinx, a veritable Siren" at the Hôtel



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Illustration of the death of Manon.

de Transylvanie, and a pathetic prisoner on the road to Le Havre. Was ever a Wagner heroine so lavished with motifs? The fifth of Manon's themes actually sounds like Sieglinde's "Du bist der Lenz" in *Die Walküre*, and the sixth, evolving subtly out of the song of the soldiers near the port of deportation, comes to sound like a strain in Beethoven's sonata "Les Adieux." Possibly we are meant to mark these similarities (both themes are featured prominently in the opera's prelude), but only a lively imagination will hear the *Ring's* fate-motif in the last scene and a suggestion of Brünnhilde in the Wagnerian turn of the melody Massenet devised for Manon's death-scene.

It might be instructive to conclude these remarks on *Manon* with some details of three other death scenes — Des Grieux's (unconsummated), Prévost's (almost forestalled) and Massenet's (anticipated).

Des Grieux's seems at first more Puccinian than Massenetique. In the novel, he lies with Manon's corpse on the Louisiana sands for a full day, and only buries her when he fears the attack of wild beasts — digging the grave with his bare hands, wrapping the body in his own clothes, covering it after a long vigil, and then awaiting his own death prostrate on the grave. To the end he loves desperately: "I committed to the earth forever the sweetest, the most perfect creature that had ever trod upon it." The details are shocking, but the restraint in the narrating of them, and the utter faithfulness of the narrator, are qualities Massenet, though of course not touching on the incident, conveys in his young nobleman.

Prévost, after a life more picaresque and vacillating than his hero's, collapsed from an attack of apoplexy at a roadside cross. A doctor began a premature post-mortem examination, and the failed Abbé actually died not from the attack, but under the knife. So perhaps his death, more than the moralizing foreword he added to his cautionary tale, was a sermon on the wages of sin.

And that brings us back to Massenet's mother, her moral strictures and the notebook. At the end of his life, Massenet appended some *Pensées Posthumes* to his *Souvenirs*: "I have departed from this planet and have taken up life amid the sparkling splendor of the stars . . . I never was able to get such lighting for my scenes at the Opéra." Meanwhile the mourners are exclaiming: "I loved him so much. I always had great success in his pieces" (that from a beautiful woman), and "Now that he is dead, they'll play him less, won't they?" The *Souvenirs* conclude, "I knew, for I had my vault built long ago, that the heavy stone once sealed would be a few hours later the portal of oblivion."

Not so. It was 100 years ago this month that Massenet first began work on *Manon*. In the interim, his chef d'oeuvre has had more than 2,000 performances at the Opéra Comique alone. The Paris that destroyed Manon has kept *Manon* alive, and no oblivion threatens her creator yet. ■

Father Lee, who teaches Latin at Bishop O'Dowd High School in Oakland, has written books on Virgil and Horace and has contributed to *Opera News*.



# Manon and Des Grieux

continued from p. 41

fortunes but unable to avoid them. The author introduces what he calls a "moral treatise" rendered in a pleasant manner. How sincere Prévost was in affirming the moral purpose behind his love story is difficult to say. Contemporary authors almost invariably made such claims for their fiction by way of justification before the critics, who considered the novel to be a pernicious literary form that spoiled a reader's taste and corrupted his morals. One thing is certain, however: Preface and novel present the main character as Des Grieux, not Manon.

But just as readers may be more taken with the pleasure of the story than enlightened by pondering its moral treatise, they have tended to share Des Grieux's fascination with Manon and seen her as the focal point of the book. So it is that the novel has come to be known as *Manon Lescaut*. And so it is that Massenet's opera makes her the central character.



Pasquier's illustration for the 1753 edition of *Manon Lescaut*.

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In the novel, we see Manon almost entirely through the eyes of her bewitched lover. What in fact do we know of her looks? She is young, beautiful, charming. After more than a year away from her, Des Grieux sees Manon at Saint-Sulpice:

Heavens! What a surprising apparition! I saw Manon there. It was she, but more lovable and more dazzling than I had ever seen her. She was in her 18th year. Her charms surpassed anything one could describe. It was such a delicate look, so sweet, so engaging, the look of Love itself. Her whole appearance seemed magical to me. This is all we ever learn of Manon's physical appearance.

What do we know about her nature? She loves pleasure, and seems also to love Des Grieux. But she is first portrayed thinking about his reactions when she sends him a girl for company while she is off with someone else. This comes more from a projection of her own inability to tolerate solitude than from any sensitivity to

---

**Des Grieux has something of the Romantic hero, victim of his passion.**

---

Des Grieux's feelings. She is only true to him in her fashion (believing in a fidelity of the heart) and, given Des Grieux's lack of wealth, favors a *ménage à trois* that includes a rich man. She seems to incarnate the desire for pleasure.

To be sure, Manon, who had replaced God in Des Grieux's life, does change in the book. Toward the conclusion of the novel, she is described as a kind of saint, and her voice is heard directly with greater frequency. But in the end, Manon remains a creation of the reader. This young woman, both good and evil, is an enigma. Des Grieux himself comments on the difficulty of knowing another person. And the reader is even less able to grasp her true nature since he is limited to seeing Manon almost always filtered through Des Grieux's passion. The first-person narrative influences our ability to judge, and the narrator's reliability is not enhanced by Des Grieux's talents as an actor, revealed on several occasions throughout the novel.

Even though Des Grieux speaks of his feelings from beginning to end, he does not really analyze them. An insinuating characteristic of the novel is its ambiguity. Des Grieux describes,





Pasquier's illustration for the 1753 edition of *Manon Lescaut*.

but he is not lucid. Although he tells his interlocutor about Manon over and over, she remains mysterious. There is an impenetrable quality to many other aspects of the novel as well. Several of

**A tale of two lovers doomed by fate.**

the secondary characters become indistinguishable. The separation between the social classes is blurred. The various parts of Paris as well as the Old and the New World seem to merge.

Moral judgment is obscured. All this leaves the reader unsettled but somehow heightens the emotional power of the story. As Montesquieu understood so well, although Manon sells herself and Des Grieux lies, cheats and kills, love exonerates them both. ■

EVE KATZ holds a Ph.D. in French Literature from Yale University. Former director of the Middlebury College School in Paris, France, she is currently director of Higher Education Programs at the American Council of Life Insurance in Washington, D.C.



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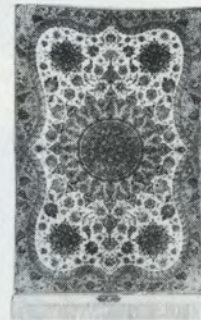
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Look for this bus, marked "47 Special," after each performance in the north-bound bus zone at Van Ness Avenue and Grove Street — across Van Ness from the Opera House.

Its route is as follows:

North on Van Ness to Chestnut, then left to Divisadero where it turns left to Union. It continues on Union over Russian Hill to Columbus, then left to Powell — then right to the end of the line at North Point.

## Taxi Service

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.

## Food Service

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.

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

## Emergency Telephone

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.

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Patrons are reminded to please check that their digital watch alarms are switched OFF before the performance begins.

## 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.

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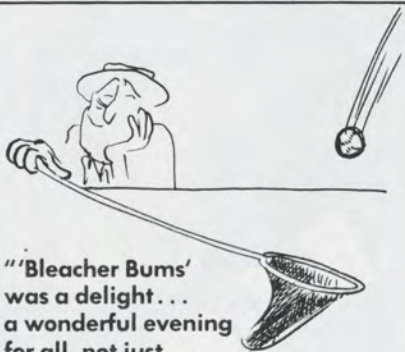


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 Roberta Maxwell  
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Anna McNaughten  
 Iris Miller  
 Linda Moody  
 Susan Sheldrake  
 Lorice Stevens

Winther Andersen  
 Mamoru Arimoto  
 John Beauchamp  
 Manfred Behrens  
 Raymond Chavez  
 Thomas Clark  
 Angelo Colbasso  
 David Durrett  
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 David House  
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 Autris Paige  
 Robert Philip Price  
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 Kevin Skiles  
 Micaele Sparacino  
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 Renee De Jarnatt  
 Diane Graham  
 Liza Groen  
 Jennifer Heglar  
 Jennifer Holmes  
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 Candace Kahn  
 Donna Martin  
 Leslie McCorkle  
 Jan Moody  
 Tricia O'Brien  
 Jessica Poli  
 Katherine Prongos  
 Gwen Reynolds  
 Louise Russo  
 Ellen Sanchez  
 Janet Weil  
 Mary Angela Whooley

Sky Bamford  
 Jason Baron-Pinder  
 Gil Bates  
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 Roy Castellini  
 Dave Clover  
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 Andrew Einkauf  
 George Freiday  
 Mickey Frettoloso  
 Michael Grinnage  
 Joe Hay  
 Donald Jack  
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Lamont Lee  
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 Neil Nevesny  
 Philip Pena  
 Stephen Pinson  
 Michael Pitkin  
 Dan Prezioso  
 Paul Price  
 Paul Ricks  
 Robert Schmidt  
 Rick Skarolid  
 John Vassalo  
 Lachland Waterbury  
 Brett Weil  
 Joseph Willis

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 Anne Elizabeth Egan  
 Marti Kennedy  
 Cathy Pruzan  
 Kathryn Roszak  
 Katherine Warner

Peter Childers  
 Greg Gibble  
 William Sanner Ramsdell  
 Pete J. Shoemaker  
 John Sullivan  
 Charlie West



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Broadcasts of the San Francisco Opera can be heard nationwide on the member stations of National Public Radio and on other selected stations.

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- 10/24 The Merry Widow
- 10/31 Carmen
- 11/7 Le Cid
- 11/14 Wozzeck
- 11/21 Die Walküre
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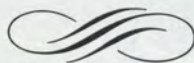
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Thursday, November 19, 1:00 p.m.

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# 1981 PREVIEWES

## 1981 OPERA PREVIEWES

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 PREVIEWES

#### 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.

SEMIRAMIDE  
Arthur Kaplan 9/3

LADY MACBETH  
Speight Jenkins 9/17

CARMEN  
Robert Jacobson 9/24

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.

SEMIRAMIDE AND SEASON  
HIGHLIGHTS  
Ramona Rockway and singers 9/8

CARMEN  
Robert Jacobson 9/28

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.

SEMIRAMIDE  
Arthur Kaplan 9/1

MANON  
Arthur Kaplan 9/8

LADY MACBETH  
Michael Barclay 9/14

CARMEN  
Arthur Kaplan 9/21

LE CID  
Arthur Kaplan 9/28

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 PREVIEWES

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 Darralyn Saladino at (415) 931-0266.

SEMIRAMIDE  
Arthur Kaplan 9/10

MANON  
Speight Jenkins 9/15

LE CID  
Dale Harris 9/22

WOZZECK  
Michael Barclay 10/4

#### 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.

SEMIRAMIDE 9/9  
MANON 9/16

LADY MACBETH 9/23  
MERRY WIDOW 9/30

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 Bar-





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# 1981 PREVIEWES

clay, 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.

**SEMIRAMIDE**

Arthur Kaplan 9/2

**MANON**

Arthur Kaplan 9/9

**LADY MACBETH**

Michael Barclay 9/17

**CARMEN**

James Keolker 9/22

**MERRY WIDOW**

Michael Barclay 9/28

**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

### 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.

**SEMIRAMIDE**

Arthur Kaplan 9/11, 10 a.m.

**MANON**

Speight Jenkins 9/14, 7:30 p.m.

**LADY MACBETH**

Speight Jenkins 9/17, 10 a.m.

**CARMEN**

Robert Jacobson 9/25, 10 a.m.

**LE CID**

Dale Harris 10/2, 10 a.m.

**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.

**LADY MACBETH**

Speight Jenkins 9/15

**LE CID**

Arthur Kaplan 9/22

**CARMEN**

Robert Jacobson 9/29

**WOZZECK**

Dale Harris 10/20

**LUCIA**

Donald Pippin 10/27

**DIE WALKÜRE**

Henry Holt 11/10

There will be a special Champagne Gala Preview of *SEMIRAMIDE* with singers on September 15 at 8:00 p.m., also at the Cultural Center. Admission is \$5.00.

### 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.

**SEMIRAMIDE 9/10**

**MANON 9/17**

**LADY MACBETH 9/24**

**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.

**SEMIRAMIDE 8/27**

**MANON 9/15**

**LADY MACBETH 9/18**

**DIE WALKÜRE 9/23**

**CARMEN 10/26**

**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.

**SEMIRAMIDE 8/31**

**MANON 9/8**

**LADY MACBETH 9/14**

**THE MERRY WIDOW 9/21**

**CARMEN 9/28**

**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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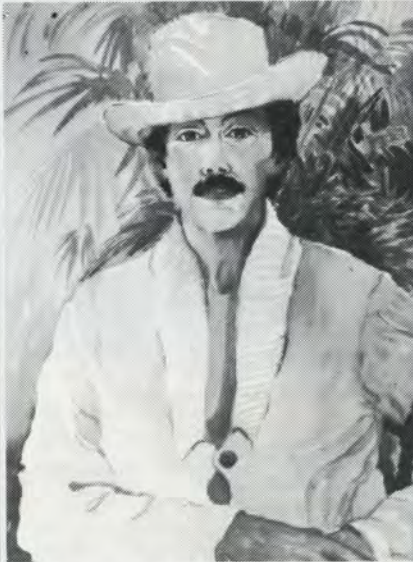
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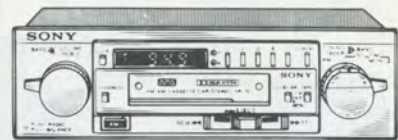
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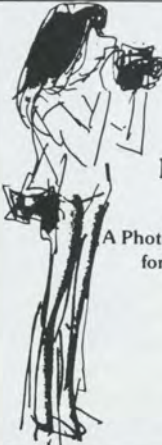
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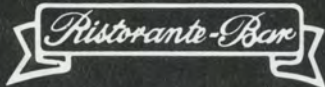
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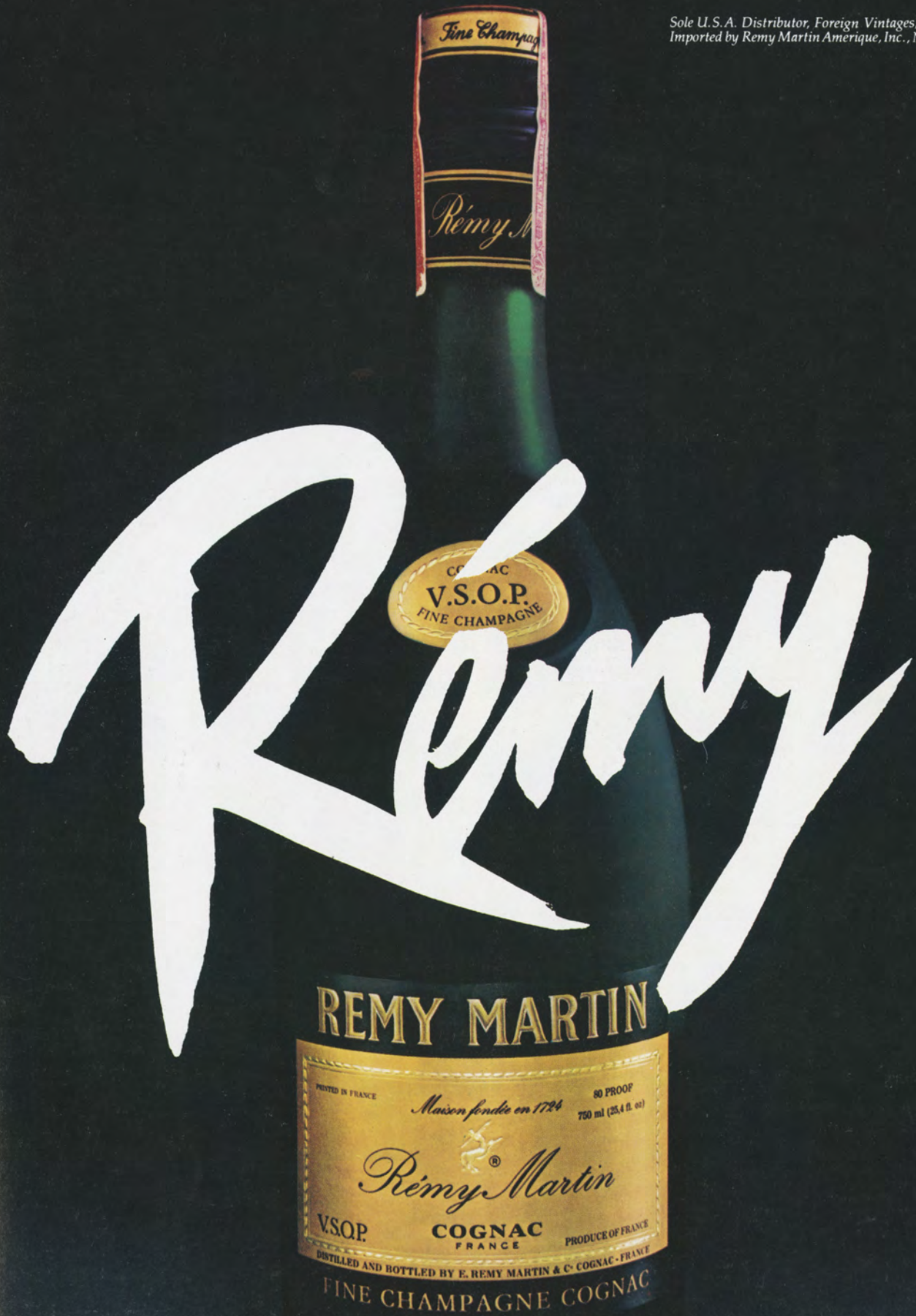
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