Nabucco
(Nebuchadnezzar)

1981

Thursday, June 17, 1982	7:30 PM	
Sunday, June 20, 1982	2:00 PM	
Tuesday, June 22, 1982	8:00 PM	
Friday, June 25, 1982	8:00 PM	
Wednesday, June 30, 1982	8:00 PM	
Saturday, July 3, 1982	8:00 PM	
Thursday, October 8, 1982	8:00 PM	(Radio broadcast)
Friday, October 9, 1982	11:00 AM	(Radio broadcast)

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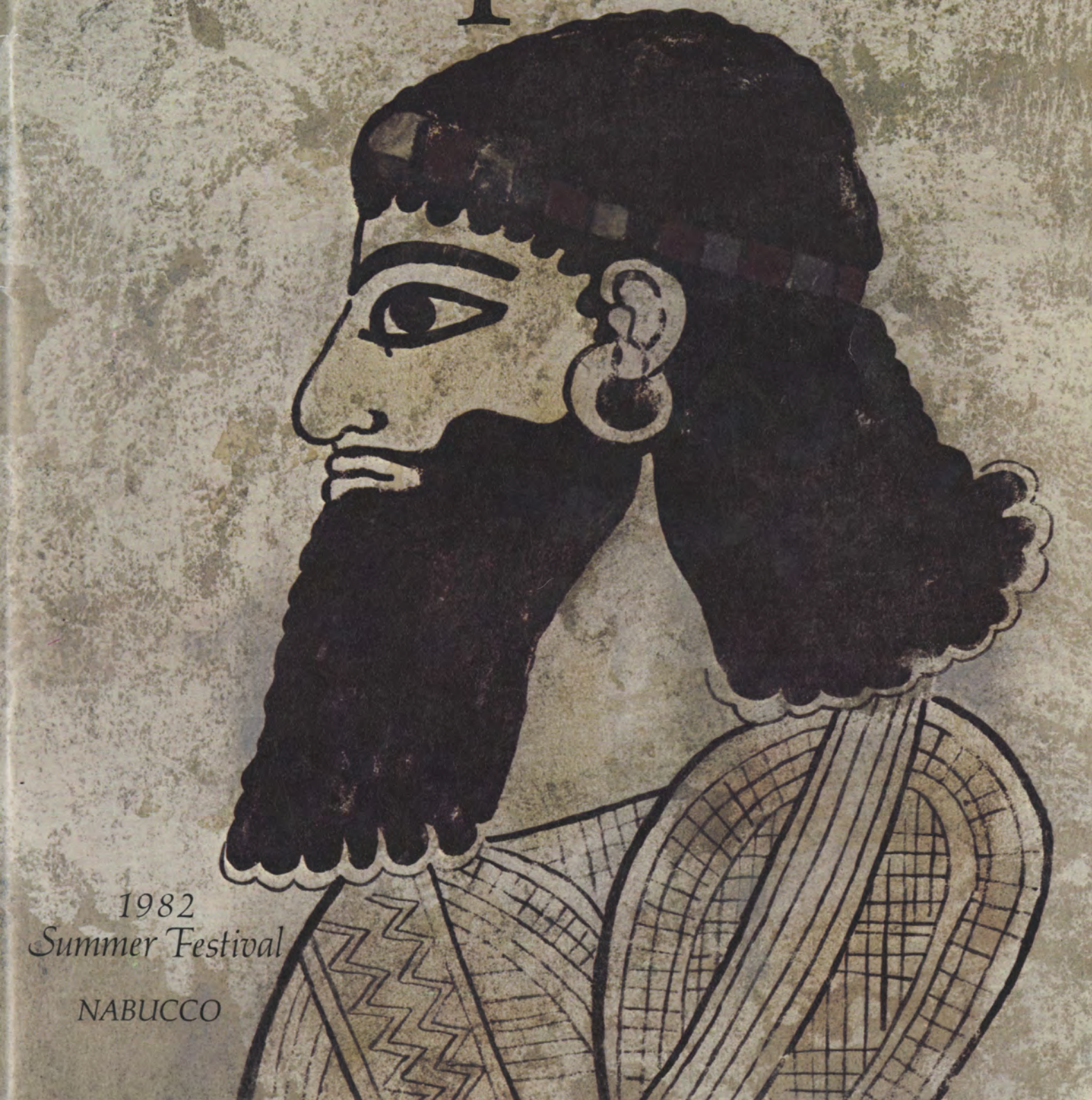

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I am delighted and honored to succeed two extraordinary men, Gaetano Merola and Kurt Herbert Adler, who made the San Francisco Opera into a great international company. Conscious of the responsibility of following in their footsteps, and very much aware of the high standards of our loyal public, I am determined to keep those standards up, and to keep our reputation international.

Having inherited an excellent staff whose energies are now extended over two major seasons per year rather than one, I feel certain they have the strength of purpose and staying power to give me the support I need.

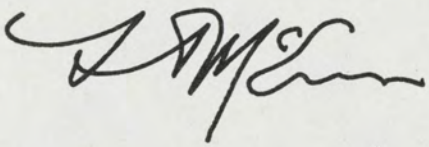
It is becoming a cliché to say that these are difficult times, but the enterprising spirit which will continue to be a part of this company can, when necessary, make ingenuity take the place of dollars we lack. An example of this ingenuity is our present Summer Festival. Of the five colorful productions being offered, four are new to our local audiences, yet the total cost to the San Francisco Opera has been nowhere near the large investment currently required to build four new productions.

Perhaps because of my business background I am very anxious for the company to have as healthy a financial future as possible and I thank, in advance, those of you who have understood the need for more active and varied fund-raising.

Planning ahead in the world of opera has changed completely in the last few years. The services of top-flight artists must now be contracted years in advance. This means that I must commit the Company to a definite artistic future. We must rebuild much of the standard repertoire and still maintain the excitement of new productions and new works. The plans I have made are both traditional and adventurous.

Somehow, the combination of traditional and adventurous seems appropriate for an artistic endeavor in our great city. I am proud to be part of a community which has such great respect for the past and is at the same time a leader and an innovator.

IRA NOWINSKI PHOTO



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1982 SUMMER FESTIVAL **NABUCCO**

Features

A Note on Nabucco by Andrew Porter **20**

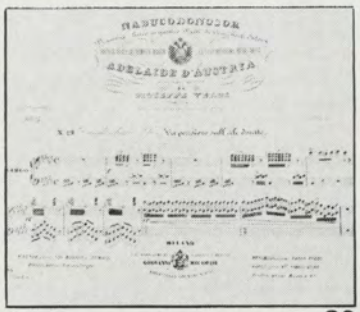
The noted musicologist and music critic of The New Yorker *provides the background to Verdi's* Nabucco, *along with a concise musical analysis.*

The Real Babylon by David Littlejohn **28**

Babylonian fact and fiction: a trip into the past, through the Ishtar gate, along the Processional Way, inside the fortifications, bastions and towers of the Mesopotamian metropolis.

Verdi's French Connection by Arthur Kaplan **40**

Auguste Anicet-Bourgeois and Francis Cornu's Nabuchodonosor, *the source of* Nabucco, *is compared to the opera, Verdi's first unqualified success.*



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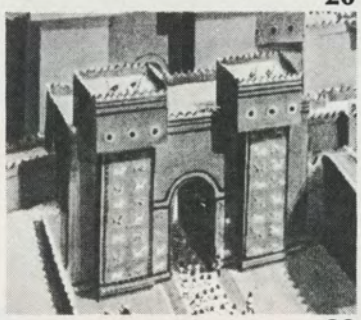

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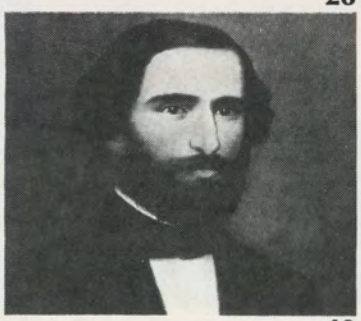

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San Francisco Opera Magazine 1982 is a Performing Arts Network publication: Gilman Kraft, President; Lizanne Leyburn, Associate Publisher; Irwin M. Fries, National Sales Director; T.M. Lilienthal, Advertising Director; Florence Quartararo, Advertising Manager; Piper Parry, Editor; Frank Benson, Art Direction; Pat Adami, Administrative Assistant; Public Relations, Jerry Friedman Associates.

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From the President

We are pleased to welcome you to our second summer season. This year the San Francisco Opera is participating in the San Francisco Summer Festival, a new and larger concept that coordinates the presentations of the entire arts community into a major, multi-faceted attraction for both residents and tourists.

Strong promotional efforts plus the critical acclaim that followed our 1981 Festival have resulted in greatly increased ticket sales for the 1982 summer season. We are greatly encouraged by this increased base of audience support for our new summer venture.

This summer San Francisco Opera audiences will see four operas presented in productions that are new to San Francisco and a revival of one of our own favorites, Rossini's *The Barber of Seville.* The San Francisco Foundation has generously underwritten the cost of presenting the beautiful English National Opera production of Handel's *Julius Caesar,* and a grant from the L.J. Skaggs and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation has made possible the David Hockney production of Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress,* originally created for the

RON SCHERL PHOTO

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

Glyndebourne Festival Opera and Teatro alla Scala, Milan. A sumptuous new production of Verdi's *Nabucco* created for San Francisco Opera and a new production of Puccini's *Turandot,* produced in cooperation with the opera companies of Dallas, Houston and Miami, round out a varied and visually stunning season.

As you no doubt know, ticket revenues cover approximately 55 per cent of our expenses; the difference must be made up with contributed income. Therefore, while we applaud the enthusiastic response from our subscribers, we must at the same time explore new sources of support. Those of you who do not currently contribute to the San Francisco Opera we ask to share the burden of presenting world-class opera; those of you who have given us your loyal support over the years we ask to continue. We have striven to keep projected expenditures for 1982 to a modest increase over those of 1981. We ask that you consider one of the many ways in which you can help the San Francisco Opera, from outright donations to the many vehicles of deferred giving. We welcome your calls and the opportunity to discuss your role in preserving this great cultural institution, the San Francisco Opera.

In addition to the above-mentioned sponsors, we would like to extend our gratitude to the National Endowment for the Arts, the California Arts Council, the Hotel Tax Fund, Mayor Dianne Feinstein, Chief Administrative Officer Roger Boas, the City and County of San Francisco, the San Francisco Opera Guild, and the War Memorial Board of Trustees. But most of all we would like to thank you, our audience and donors, for making possible this grand new tradition of summer opera.

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In Memoriam
JAMES D. ROBERTSON
August 17, 1920 - February 23, 1982

The officers, Board of Directors, staff and members of the San Francisco Opera Association express their deep sadness and regret at the death of James D. Robertson. Vice president and treasurer of the Executive Committee of the San Francisco Opera Association since 1970, Mr. Robertson also served on the Boards of the San Francisco Symphony and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. His influence extended nationally: he was a member of the National Council on the Arts and the Board of the Metropolitan Opera, as well as a trustee of the National Opera Institute. His special relationship with the San Francisco Opera is exemplified by his generosity in sponsoring productions here of *Manon, Norma, Rigoletto, Don Giovanni, Gianni Schicchi, Cavalleria Rusticana* and *I Pagliacci.* The arts community has lost a loyal friend and generous patron. His leadership, enthusiasm and support have left an indelible mark upon the San Francisco Opera.

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Local broadcasts will be Friday evenings and Saturday mornings on KQED-FM, 88.5, at the times listed below. Broadcasts may also be heard Saturdays at 1:30 p.m. on KCSM, 91.1 FM, and Sundays at 1 p.m. on KALW, 91.7 FM (all times are Pacific Time).

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8 p.m., 11 a.m.
9/24 The Barber of Seville
8 p.m., 11 a.m.
10/1 Turandot
8 p.m., 11 a.m.
10/8 Nabucco
8 p.m., 11 a.m.
10/15 Le Nozze di Figaro
7:30 p.m., 10:30 a.m.
10/22 La Cenerentola
8 p.m., 11 a.m.
10/29 Dialogues of the Carmelites
8 p.m., 11 a.m.
11/5 The Rake's Progress
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11/12 The Queen of Spades
8 p.m., 11 a.m.
11/19 Lohengrin
7:30 p.m., 10:30 a.m.
11/26 Cendrillon
8 p.m., 11 a.m.

For broadcast times outside the Bay Area, contact your local NPR station or consult local listings. Executive producer for the San Francisco Opera broadcasts is Robert Walker; producer, Marilyn Mercur. Gene Parrish is host, and Fred Krock the audio engineer.

San Francisco Opera

Terence A. McEwen, general director

1982 Summer Festival Season

Handel, **Julius Caesar**
New production Performed in English

Tatiana Troyanos, Valerie Masterson, Sarah Walker, Delia Wallis*/ James Bowman, Jeffrey Gall*, Stanley Wexler, Gregory Stapp
Conductor: Charles Mackerras
Production: John Copley*
Set designer: John Pascoe**
Costume designer: Michael Stennett*

Production from the English National Opera
May 28, June 2, 5, 8 at 7:30 p.m., June 13 at 1:30 p.m.

Puccini, **Turandot**
New production Performed in Italian

Linda Kelm*, Barbara Daniels/Nicola Martinucci*, Kevin Langan, David Gordon, Jonathan Green, Thomas Woodman, Eddie Albert*
Conductor: Myung-Whun Chung
Production: Bliss Hebert
Set and costume designer: Allen Charles Klein*

Produced in cooperation with the opera companies of Dallas, Houston and Miami
June 3 at 8 p.m., June 6 at 2 p.m., June 9 at 7:30 p.m., June 12, 15 and 18 at 8 p.m.

Rossini, **The Barber of Seville**
Performed in Italian

Margarita Zimmermann* (6/11, 16, 19), Kathleen Kuhlmann* (6/23, 27; 7/1), Regina Sarfaty* (6/11, 16, 19), Evelyn de la Rosa (6/23, 27, 7/1)/Dano Raffanti*, Dale Duesing, Enrico Fissore*, Cesare Siepi
Conductor: Andrew Meltzer*
Director: Julian Hope
Set and costume designer: Alfred Siercke

June 11, 16, 19, 23 at 8 p.m., June 27 at 2 p.m., July 1 at 7:30 p.m.

Verdi, **Nabucco**
New production Performed in Italian

Angeles Gulin*, Susan Quittmeyer, Nikki Li Hartliep*/Matteo Manuguerra, Gordon Greer*, Paul Plishka, Quade Winter, Gregory Stapp
Conductor: Kurt Herbert Adler
Production: Gerald Freedman
Set designer: Thomas Munn
Costume designer: Beni Montresor

June 17 at 7:30 p.m., June 20 at 2 p.m., June 22, 25, 30, July 3 at 8 p.m.

Stravinsky, **The Rake's Progress**
New production Performed in English

Diana Soviero*, Mignon Dunn, Regina Sarfaty/Dennis Bailey*, Donald Gramm, Kevin Langan, Jonathan Green
Conductor: David Agler
Production: John Cox
Set and costume designer: David Hockney*

Production made possible through the generosity of the L.J. Skaggs and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation. Production originally created for the Glyndebourne Festival Opera and Teatro alla Scala, Milan
June 24 at 7:30 p.m., June 26, 29, July 2 at 8 p.m., July 4 at 2 p.m.

**American opera debut
*San Francisco Opera debut

Casting and program subject to change

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This season is part of the San Francisco Summer Festival

1982 Summer Festival Previews

Information on opera previews and lectures is provided in order to enable patrons to make advance plans. The following is a list of previews and lectures which are open to the public.

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA GUILD

"Opera Insights" are held in the Herbst Theatre, Veterans Building, Van Ness at McAllister. Admission is free to Guild members and Summer Festival subscribers presenting membership or subscriber cards. General admission is $4.00 at the door. The panel for each event will include artists and members of the production staff. For additional information, please call (415) 565-6432. "Insights" begin at 6 p.m.

THE RAKE'S PROGRESS June 16

JUNIOR LEAGUE OPERA PREVIEWS

All Junior League opera previews will be held in Herbst Theatre, Veterans Building, Van Ness at McAllister. Lectures begin at 11 a.m. There is no admission charge. For information, please call (415) 567-8600.

NABUCCO
Arthur Kaplan June 15

THE RAKE'S PROGRESS
Michael Steinberg June 24

SAN FRANCISCO COMMUNITY COLLEGE PREVIEWS

The San Francisco Community College District will sponsor a series of free previews Wednesday mornings from 10 a.m. to noon at 33 Gough Street in the auditorium. The previews will be given by Robert Finch, president of the San Francisco Chapter of the Opera Guild. For further information, please call (415) 239-3082.

TURANDOT June 2
THE NEO-CLASSICAL SCHOOL June 9
THE RAKE'S PROGRESS June 16

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MUSEO DEL RISORGIMENTO, MILAN

A Note on Nabucco

By ANDREW PORTER

Often in a great composer's catalogue there appears an early work that seems to have caught the first full flame of his genius: a work cast in forms created by his predecessors, — in part, at least, consciously modelled on them, yet fired by his invention — strangely prophetic, youthfully vital. Later compositions may be more masterly, subtler, deeper; but this early work has a special quality. Such works are Mozart's *Idomeneo* and *Entführung* (the latter, Weber once said, has a freshness that Mozart never recaptured), Beethoven's *Cantata on the Death of Joseph II* — and Verdi's *Nabucco*. Of *Idomeneo*, Edward Dent wrote: "There may not be here the delicate psychological detail that we find in *Figaro* or *Così fan tutte*, or the sublime naturalness and simplicity of *Die Zauberflöte* . . . but there is a monumental strength and a white heat of passion that we find in this early work of Mozart's and shall never find again." And of *Nabucco*, Francis Toye wrote: "Not till *Rigoletto* did the composer produce again an opera so satisfactory as an artistic whole . . . *Nabucco* is essentially a product of genius, more, not less, lovable because of certain youthful crudities, certain obvious flaws."

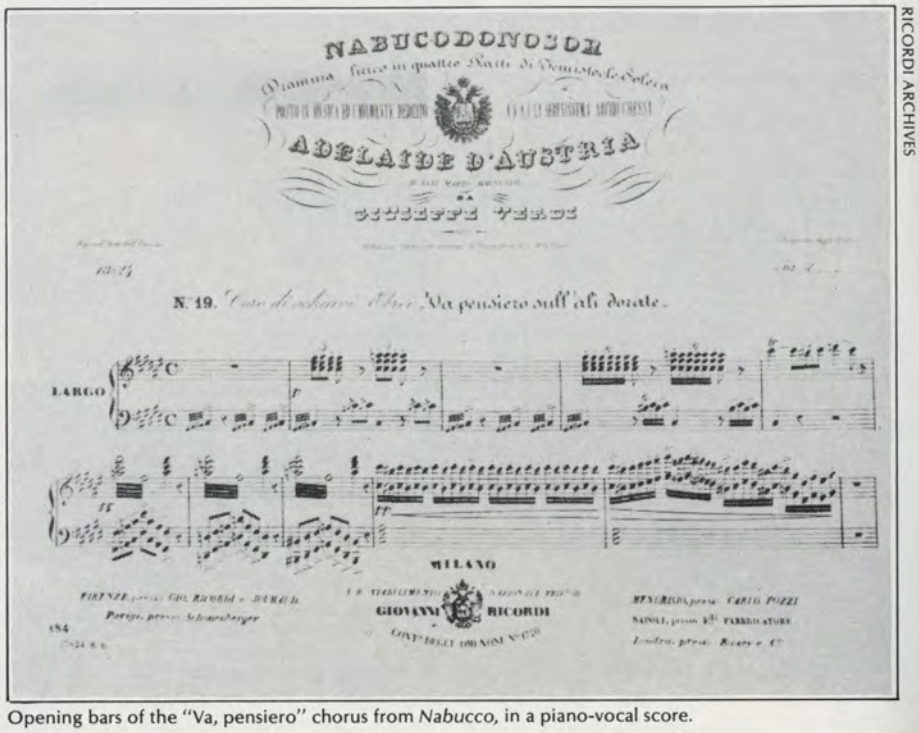
It occupies a key place in Verdi's career — the work that established him and swiftly carried his name throughout Italy and then through the world. Verdi, aged 18, came to Milan as a student in 1832. His master was Vincenzo Lavigna, an opera composer and a *maestro concertatore* at La Scala. According to Verdi's rather grudging account, "in the three years I spent with him I did nothing but canons and fugues, fugues and canons of every kind. No one taught me orchestration or dramatic music." But at La Scala he could hear the operas by Rossini, Bellini and Donizetti on which, above all, his own early operas were to be founded. His first opera, a rather mysterious *Rocester*, was rejected by Parma in 1837; whether some of it survives in *Oberto, Conte di San Bonifacio* has not been established. *Oberto* appeared at La Scala in 1839, and had a run of 14 performances — success enough for Bartolomeo Merelli, the Scala impresario, to give Verdi a contract for three new operas, to be brought out at eight-month intervals. The first of them to appear was a comedy, *Un Giorno di Regno*. It bombed. There was but a single, disastrous performance. Verdi's personal life was already in ruins: his daughter, his son, and his young wife had died, the last a few months before the production of *Un Giorno di Regno*. Now his professional life seemed shattered, too. He resolved never to compose again.

The astute Merelli persuaded him to change his mind. He pressed a libretto upon Verdi and insisted that the composer should take it home and read it. In the composer's words:

> On the way, I felt a vague uneasiness, a deep sadness, an anxiety that swelled my heart. Once home, I flung the manuscript almost violently on the table and stood stiffly before it. As it hit the table, the copy fell open of its own accord. Without my knowing why, my eyes fixed on the page before me, and encountered this line:
>
> *Va, pensiero, sull'ali dorate.*
>
> I read the following lines, and they made a great impression, the more so because they were almost a paraphrase of the Bible, which I had always enjoyed reading. I read one passage, read another: then, firm in my resolve to compose no more, I forced myself to close the copy and went to bed! . . . But . . . *Nabucco* kept running through my head! . . . Sleep would not come: I got up and read the libretto not once, not twice, but three times, so that by morning you could say I had the whole of Solera's libretto by heart.

The next day, when Verdi went to Merelli's office to return the libretto, the impresario simply stuffed it into the composer's pocket and pushed him out of the room, insisting that he set it to music. "One day one line, one day

Giuseppina Strepponi, the first Abigaille, with the score of *Nabucco*.



RICORDI ARCHIVES

Opening bars of the "Va, pensiero" chorus from *Nabucco*, in a piano-vocal score.

another, now a note, now a phrase . . . bit by bit the opera was composed." That laconic sentence is amplified in another account of the *Nabucco* composition, based on a conversation Verdi had with the novelist Michele Lessona in 1869:

> The young composer went home with his drama, but threw it aside without looking at it any more . . . Then one fine day, toward the end of May, this blessed drama turned up again: he reread the last scene, the death of Abigail, and almost mechanically approached the piano — that piano which had stood mute for so long — and set the scene to music. The ice was broken. Within three months the libretto was composed.

The two accounts are contradictory, and their differing emphases happily draw attention to two themes or situations that regularly captured Verdi's imagination throughout his career. First, the patriotic sentiment, the griefs and aspirations of a people exiled or otherwise afflicted and oppressed. The Jews by the Waters of Babylon, the parched Crusaders in *I Lombardi*, the Scots fleeing Macbeth's reign of terror provide four potently affecting choruses (the Scots chorus was set twice over, in 1847 and 1865); the war-stricken French in Act I of *Don Carlos* and, even more, the plight of the oppressed Flemings inspire some of that opera's most vivid music. And second — equally important — the passionate emotions of a human being in an unusual, extreme situation (often the result, as in *Aida*, of a conflict between patriotic duty and personal affection). Temistocle Solera, the librettist of *Nabucco*, was at once a young patriot with a colorful career (his father was imprisoned by the Austrians for revolutionary activity; he himself ran away from school to join a circus and was recaptured in Budapest), the composer of two operas, *Ildegonda* (1840) and *Il Contadino d'Agleiate* (1841), that had a fair success at the Scala, and a dramatist who — Verdi said later — might have become the foremost librettist of the day had his character been steadier. Solera wrote three other "patriotic" operas for Verdi: *I Lombardi, Giovanna d'Arco* and *Attila*, all of which combine the two "themes" mentioned above. Franceso Maria Piave was generally the author of his more personal dramas.

The ultimate source of Solera's *Nabucco* libretto is a play, *Nabuchodonosor,* by Anicet-Bourgeois and Francis Cornu, that had been performed and published in Paris in 1836. But its immediate source is the five-act Scala ballet *Nabuchodonosor,* by Antonio Cortesi, produced at La Scala in 1838. (Previous *Nebuchadnezzar* operas had been Reinhard Keiser's *Die gestuerzte und wieder erhoehte Nebuchadnezar,* done in Hamburg in 1704, and Attilio Ariosti's *Nabuccodonosor,* done in Vienna in 1706. Benjamin Britten's *The Burning Fiery Furnace* deals with a later incident of Nebuchadnezzar's reign.) Some historical context for the plot may be useful. In 2 *Kings* 23-25, 2 *Chronicles* 36, and *Jeremiah* 52, we can read of the Kingdom of Judah after the death of King Josiah (608 B.C.),* torn between invading Egyptians under Pharaoh Necho and the Babylonians under King Nebuchadnezzar, paying tribute now to one great neighbor, now to another, and submitting to the kings imposed on them. Necho set Jehoiakim on the throne of Jerusalem; eleven years later, Nebuchadnezzar carried him off as captive to Babylon. During the reign of Jehoiachin, Jehoiakim's son, Nebuchadnezzar made his first attack on Jerusalem (579 B.C.) and the city surrendered. Nebuchadnezzar carried off to Babylon the temple and palace treasures and the flower of the populace. "None remained save the poorest sort of people," and they were allotted a puppet king, Zedekiah (who grew impatient with the preaching of Jeremiah). Nine years later Zedekiah revolted; in 588 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar advanced again on Jerusalem, captured it after a two-year siege, put it to the fire and sword, destroyed the temple, and took off such people as still remained to join the earlier exiles in Babylon. In 538 B.C., Cyrus of Persia conquered Babylon and gave the Jews permission to return to their country. The years of Exile were ended.

*The dates are those determined by Archbishop Usher in the mid-17th century and inserted in the margin of the Authorized Version. They should be treated with caution. Usher dated the creation of heaven and earth 4004 B.C., the Flood 2348 B.C., etc.

Milan's La Scala in a contemporary painting by Inganni.

So Verdi's opera opens in 586 B.C., with Nebuchadnezzar's entry into Jerusalem. His adopted and rightful daughters, Abigail and Fenena, are invented characters. So is King Zedekiah's nephew Ishmael. In the Bible, Zechariah is a post-exile prophet. The Zaccaria of the opera seems to be a conflation of Jeremiah (who did not in fact go to Babylon) and Ezekiel (who did). Each of the four parts (or acts) into which the libretto is divided — "Jerusalem," "The Wicked One," "The Prophecy" and "The Shattered Idol" — is prefaced by a paraphrase, rather than an exact quotation, of a passage from *Jeremiah.*

The immediate musical model for the opera is plain: Rossini's *Moïse* (1827), his grand-opera revision of *Mosè in Egitto* (1818). In Italian translation, it came to Milan in 1835 and was revived at La Scala in 1840. The parallels are close. In each opera, the bass is the leader and prophet of the Jews. The baritone is the leader of their enemies. Soprano and tenor are in love but belong to opposite sides. The correspondences can be traced to minor roles (in each opera the bass has a sister called Anna, used mainly to provide an extra solo line in ensembles). Only the ambitious Abigaille has no counterpart in Rossini's opera. In large structures and in details the influence of *Moïse* can be traced. But the vocal manner is not Rossinian. With its violence, its leaps of register, its demands for sudden cries and for sudden dynamic contrasts, it represents the new *canto d'azione* that Verdi's first admirers found so exciting — and that Verdi's detractors feared (not without reason) would destroy voices trained in a less robust school of *bel canto.* When Giuseppina Strepponi, the first Abigaille, retired from the stage and went to Paris to teach, she gave some concerts, generally including music by Verdi, and the Paris critics were quick to note that she was the exponent of a new, impassioned and energetic vocal manner:

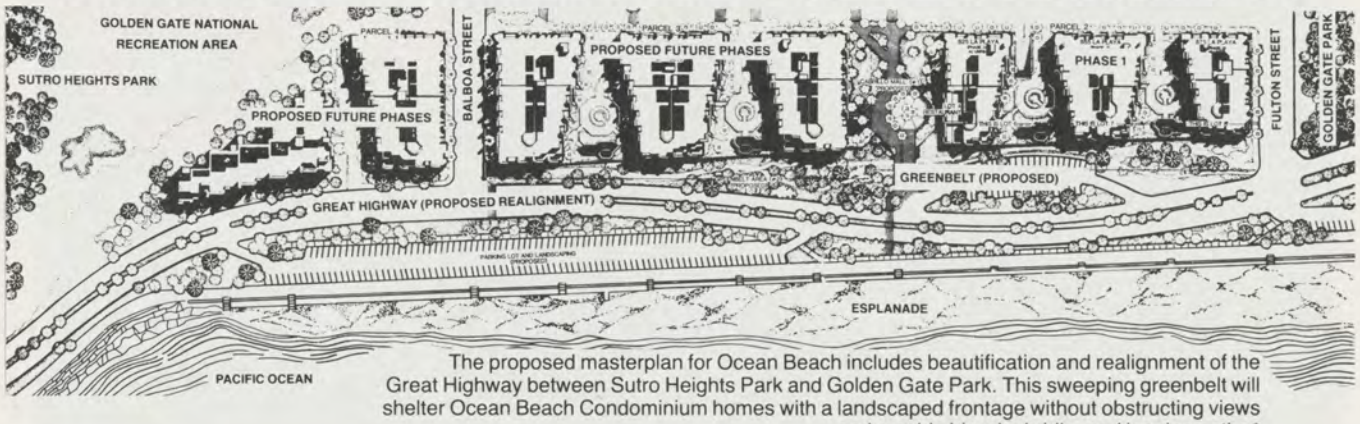
> Strepponi has become one of the most ardent champions of the new school, one of the most cogent interpreters of dramatic singing. Giuseppe Verdi wrote *Nabucco* for her. The music of the new school is not as easy as some people would make out: the style is fervent, powerful, and demands above all the utmost intelligence. The music is filled with contrasts and unexpected effects. (*La France Musicale,* 4 October 1846)

Berlioz, incidentally, was one of the critics who reviewed Strepponi. He said:

> Mme Strepponi is a magnificent prima donna. She sings broadly and nobly, with an exceptionally powerful voice, a good style, and irresistible warmth. (*Journal des Débats,* 20 November 1846)

The opening scene of *Nabucco* owes much to *Moïse,* and perhaps something to Bellini's *Norma*: the assembly of the people, the entrance of the prophet, and the move to C major as he assures them of the Lord's care for them. When Ismaele tells of Nabucco's advance, his recitative is accompanied by a figure like that to which Ophide, in *Møïse,* tells of new plagues. Zaccaria's cabaletta borrows from Oroveso's in *Norma* the chorus's intermittent participation in the main

OCEAN BEACH CONDOMINIUMS: Seaside homes in San Francisco.



The proposed masterplan for Ocean Beach includes beautification and realignment of the Great Highway between Sutro Heights Park and Golden Gate Park. This sweeping greenbelt will shelter Ocean Beach Condominium homes with a landscaped frontage without obstructing views and provide bicycle, bridle, and jogging paths.*

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NOT TO SCALE

theme. After the martial outburst, there is — as in the first scene of *Norma*, in the same key — a quiet dispersal passage. Three applause-catching crashes at the end are a sign of Verdi's youth; but since they regularly do give the signal for enthusiastic applause, they may also be deemed an early instance of Verdi's sure theatrical instinct. After Abigaille's very powerful entrance recitative and a brief trio, Verdi builds toward the climax of the act. First, a quasi-fugato — but not in any sense a strict fugue. The successive entries of the agitated theme mirror the alarmed groups hurrying into the temple; then close-packed strettos suggest the huddled, frightened crowd. Verdi has already given us a first hearing of two of his recurrent marches in the overture — the Hebrew March and the Babylonian Triumph March — but, like Rossini in *Moïse*, he has kept one in reserve: the Babylonian Ceremonial March. Now it breaks out, advancing from the distance and reaching a climax as Nabucco rides up to the threshhold of the temple. At the first performance, Verdi tells us, the public burst into applause as the band reached the stage. Twentieth-century directors often underestimate the popular appeal — and the theatrical effectiveness — of a big marching band.

A few more musical points: Abigaille's recitative in Act II is *canto d'azione*; her aria, as has often been noted, is indebted to "Casta Diva." Her cabaletta, vigorously declaimed over a *polacca* rhythm, is Donizettian, but if Donizetti had composed it it would be called Verdian. Haydn is a strong but often unrecognized influence on Italian 19th-century composers. His string quartets were used for teaching. Verdi's first public appearance was conducting *The Creation*. That work, I think, left its mark on the introduction to Zaccaria's prayer. The scoring of the prayer represents one of those "special effects" to be found in most of Verdi's operas — until, with increasing mastery, *everything* becomes special. A single bass line is the bass's only support until, as the melody moves into smooth cantabile, divided solo strings halo the voice with a dusky glimmer, almost suggesting the sympathetic resonances of a viola d'amore. The second finale opens with a canon-quartet. We need not look back to *Fidelio* for a precedent; there is a fine example in *Moïse*. Nabucco's recitative, announcing that he is God, climbs semitone by semitone to its blasphemous climax. Instead of the customary *tutti*, the act ends with a solo for the bewildered, stricken king, one in which the accents of Macbeth and of Rigoletto are both prefigured.

In Act III, we have the first of Verdi's extended, great duets for soprano and baritone, a combination of voices that — especially when the characters are in an actual or a quasi daughter-father relationship — regularly inspired him. The chorus "Va, pensiero" (a free paraphrase of "By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept," Psalm 137) is famous. In the Milan of 1842, smarting under Austrian occupation, it was naturally invested with patriotic overtones. In 1847, the conductor Angelo Mariani, we are told, was threatened with imprisonment for "giving the scene too openly rebellious a character." What can follow it without anticlimax? Solera's idea was a love duet for Fenena and Ismaele. Verdi insisted on its replacement by Zaccaria's prophecy, a powerful scene with somber brass scoring and sudden bursts of violence during the vision of Babylon, the great city laid low.

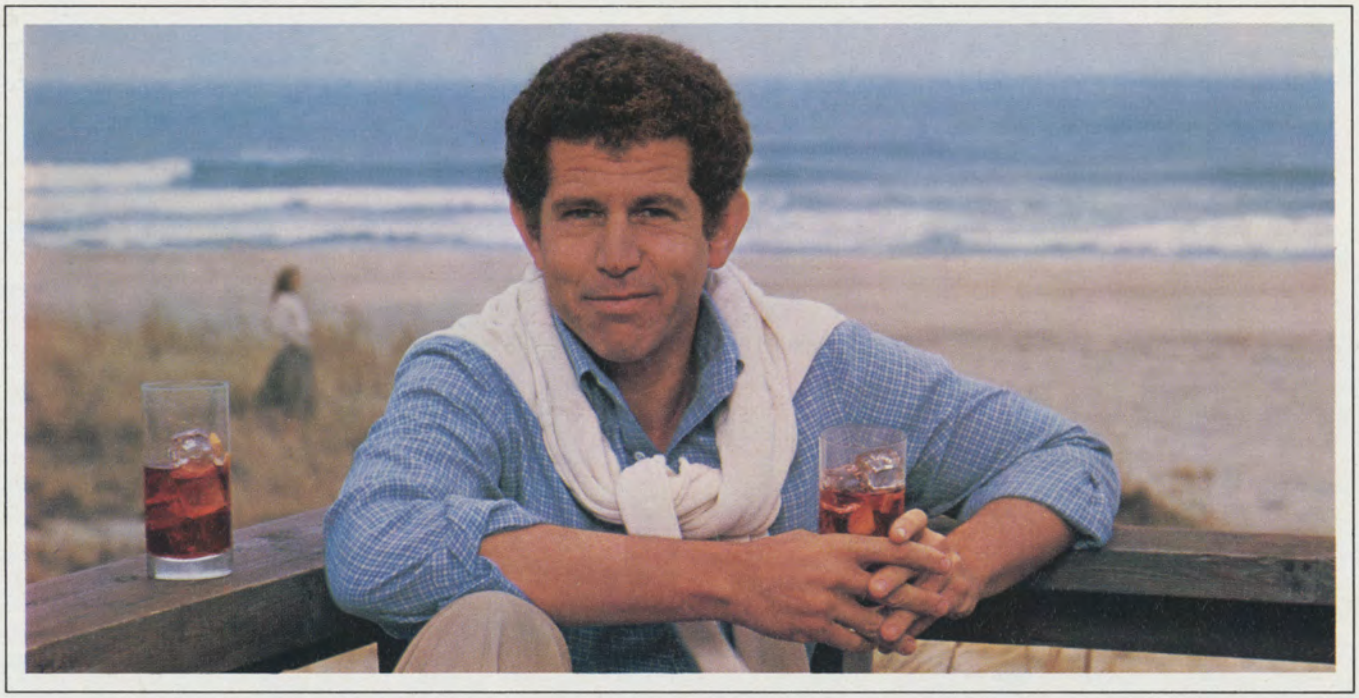
The first scene of Act IV (Act III, Scene 3 in this production) comes closest to a biblical episode. *Daniel* 4 tells how the mad Nebuchadnezzar "lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned to me, and I blessed the most High . . . At the same time my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me. Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honor the King of Heaven." The prelude and recitative are a remarkable depiction of a mind disturbed: fragments recalling the monarch's former glory — scraps of the ceremonial march — alternate with melancholy, agitated passages. The flute seems to descend as a sign of heavenly grace.

Beneath Nabucco's ensuing prayer, there may linger a memory of the tune "Home, sweet home," which Donizetti had already used in *Anna Bolena*. Nabucco's prayer, like Fenena's in the next scene, has a simple "Casta Diva" arpeggio accompaniment. When the idol is shattered, there is an unaccompanied ensemble — one of the traditional effects in an Italian opera of the time (there is a fine example in *Moïse*). But once again, instead of a final *tutti* there is a solo. Once again, the solo flute seems to cast its benediction, this time upon Abigaille. This solo close was evidently deemed *too* unconventional, for after the first few performances it was dropped; the opera ended with the chorus "Immenso Jehova."

When Verdi took his completed *Nabucco* to Merelli, the 1841-42 Scala season had already been planned. The impresario said he already had three new works in hand, but at Verdi's insistence *Nabucco* was added, and five performances were slipped in at the end of the season (under its full original title, *Nabuccodonosor*, which was soon abbreviated). The opera then opened the 1842 fall season and was given 57 times — a figure not merely unusual but unprecedented — and subsequently unmatched — in the annals of the theater. Revivals were frequent. By the end of the century, only *Ernani* and *Il Trovatore*, of Verdi's operas, had had more performances there.

Nabucco was soon heard all over Italy. In 1843 it reached Austria (Donizetti conducted it in Vienna) and Portugal; in 1844, Spain, Germany and Malta; in 1845, France and Algiers; in 1846, Turkey, Hungary and England. The American premiere was at the Astor Place Opera House, New York, in 1848. *Nabucco* was first heard in San Francisco in 1854, at the Metropolitan Theater, and there were San Francisco revivals, either there or in Maguire's Opera House, in 1862, 1863, 1865 and 1866. The San Francisco Opera gave its first performance of *Nabucco* in 1961, and revived it in 1964 and 1970. ■

Andrew Porter, the music critic of The New Yorker, *was the Bloch Professor at UCB last year, and gave his lectures on Verdi. He wrote the Verdi entry for the* New Grove Dictionary *of* Music. Nabucco *is one of the eight Verdi operas of which he has made English singing translations.*



Tony Roberts talks about his first time.

ROBERTS: It was exactly seven years, eleven months, two weeks and five days ago, at 7:00 PM on Fire Island.

INTERVIEWER: You remember the exact moment?!

ROBERTS: Of course. A man never forgets his first time.

INTERVIEWER: It must have been quite an experience. You must tell me about it.

ROBERTS: I was at a beach party comparing tan lines, when an exotic woman in a red sarong sauntered over in my direction. I immediately noticed that she had the best tan on the beach.

INTERVIEWER: Go on.

ROBERTS: She looked me straight in the eye and said, "Campari?"

"I'm sorry," I replied, "I don't speak Italian."

"Neither do I," she said. I was so embarrassed.

INTERVIEWER: I can see why!

ROBERTS: Anyway, she handed me a Campari and orange juice, and sipped a Campari and soda herself. Then I understood.

INTERVIEWER: How was it?

ROBERTS: At first I thought it was bitter. Then I realized it was sweet, too. I guess bittersweet is the only way to describe it.

INTERVIEWER: Was she amused?

ROBERTS: Very. She said, "You'll acquire a taste for it, Tony. Most men do."

She was right. My second time was much better. And now I like to have it as often as I can.

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever see the young woman again?

ROBERTS: No, but I keep hoping I will. I've enjoyed it so many ways since my first time... now I could teach her a thing or two.

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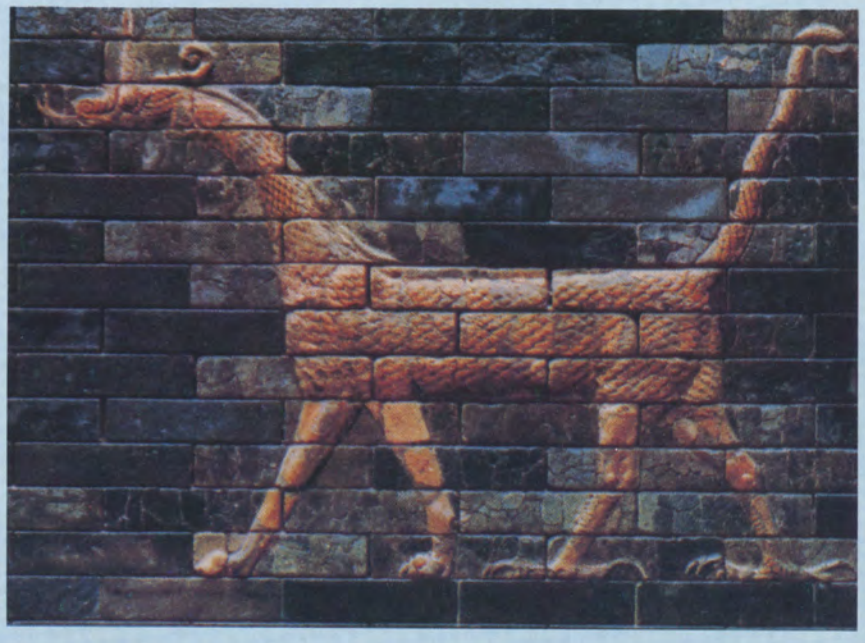
Dragon (top) and bull (bottom) on the Ishtar Gate.
BERLIN MUSEUM



The Real Babylon

By DAVID LITTLEJOHN

Until quite recently, biblical accounts of the ancient Near and Middle East were accepted as history by virtually all literate Europeans. They simply took it as a matter of fact that Babylon, for example, had been destroyed for its wickedness, like Sodom and Gomorrah, at the command of an angry God.

So remarkably have things changed since then — so skeptical have people become of merely biblical history — that today many people think of Babylon as a mythical place, like Atlantis or Shangri-La.

But they're wrong. There *was* a real Babylon, in the now near-desert lands 50 miles south of Baghdad, Iraq. Unfortunately for us, all that's there today are a lot of trenches dug by Arab workmen (under German direction) 70-plus years ago, plus a number of brick walls their trenches uncovered.

Alongside the adjacent railroad track stands a sign reading, in English and Arabic: "Babylon Halt: Trains stop here to pick up passengers." There is no village, no station: just a sign in the desert where trains on the Baghdad-to-Bassorah run will stop for you, if you hold up your hand.

And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldeans' excellency, shall be as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when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.
It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation; neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there.
But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures, and ostriches shall dwell there, and he-goats shall dance there.
And the wild beasts of the coastlands shall cry in their desolate houses, and jackals in their pleasant palaces; and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged.
(Isaiah 13: 19-22)

BERLIN MUSEUM

The Ishtar Gate of Babylon in a reconstruction by Dr. Robert Koldewey.

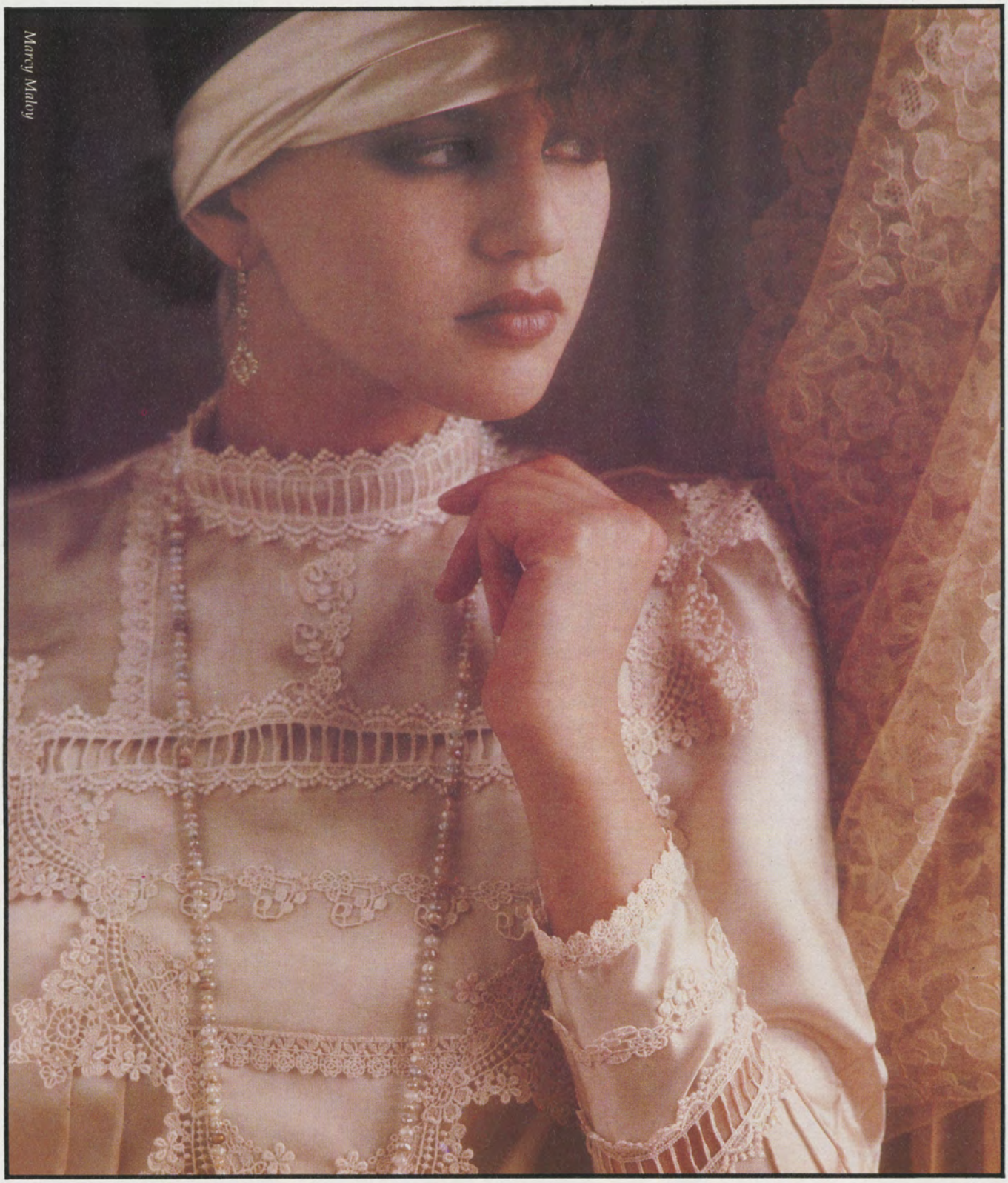
The real city of Babylon, in the time of *Nabucco,* occupied a walled, uneven rectangle about a mile and a half by a mile (perhaps 900 acres) in area, split down the middle by the river Euphrates, flowing south. (The river has since shifted its course to the west, so it no longer runs through the ruins.) It was by far the largest city of the ancient East: "Such is its size and magnificence," wrote Herodotus, "that no other city approaches it."

Beyond the city limits, Nebuchadnezzar (the opera's Nabucco, who ruled Babylon from 605 to 562 B.C.) had built an outer defensive wall that extended about a total perimeter of more than 10 miles, both to protect his fortress-palace outside the old city, and to shelter Babylonian countrymen in the vicinity in time of war. This rampart was formed of a double circuit of brick walls, each 20 to 25 feet thick. The Inner Wall, enclosing the city proper, was equally impregnable: parts of it had been in existence since the 19th century B.C. Inside a bastion 10 feet wide and (perhaps) 50 feet high, moated on the outside, the builders had left an open space about 25 feet wide, in which attackers who breached the three outer walls should find themselves trapped. Within that was another 20-foot-thick wall. The whole circuit of fortifications was elaborately crenellated on top, punctuated by defensive towers perhaps 90 feet high, and vertically lined with thick buttressing or pilasters. Wonder of the world or not, it still left the city — like all old, walled cities — susceptible to siege. But chariots could be driven two abreast along the top of the inner wall, and visitors — from Herodotus in the fifth century B.C. to the German architect Robert Koldewey, who first uncovered it in this century — were phenomenally impressed.

The strongest walls in the world still had to part to let people (there were eight gates) and the Euphrates river in and out. It may have been via the river route, in fact (with the aid of local traitors), that Persian troops under Cyrus entered and seized the city in 349 B.C., and began its decline into nothing. Nebuchadnezzar tried to minimize the river risk by building immense forts north of town, extending the city walls along the banks, and diverting a part of the broad, deep waters into a circumferential moat.

A single stone bridge on five piers spanned the river between the great Temple of Marduk and its ziggurat (the so-called "Tower of Babel"). Its plank roadway was removed at night to prevent the passage of robbers and smugglers from the Old Town on the

Jessica McClintock



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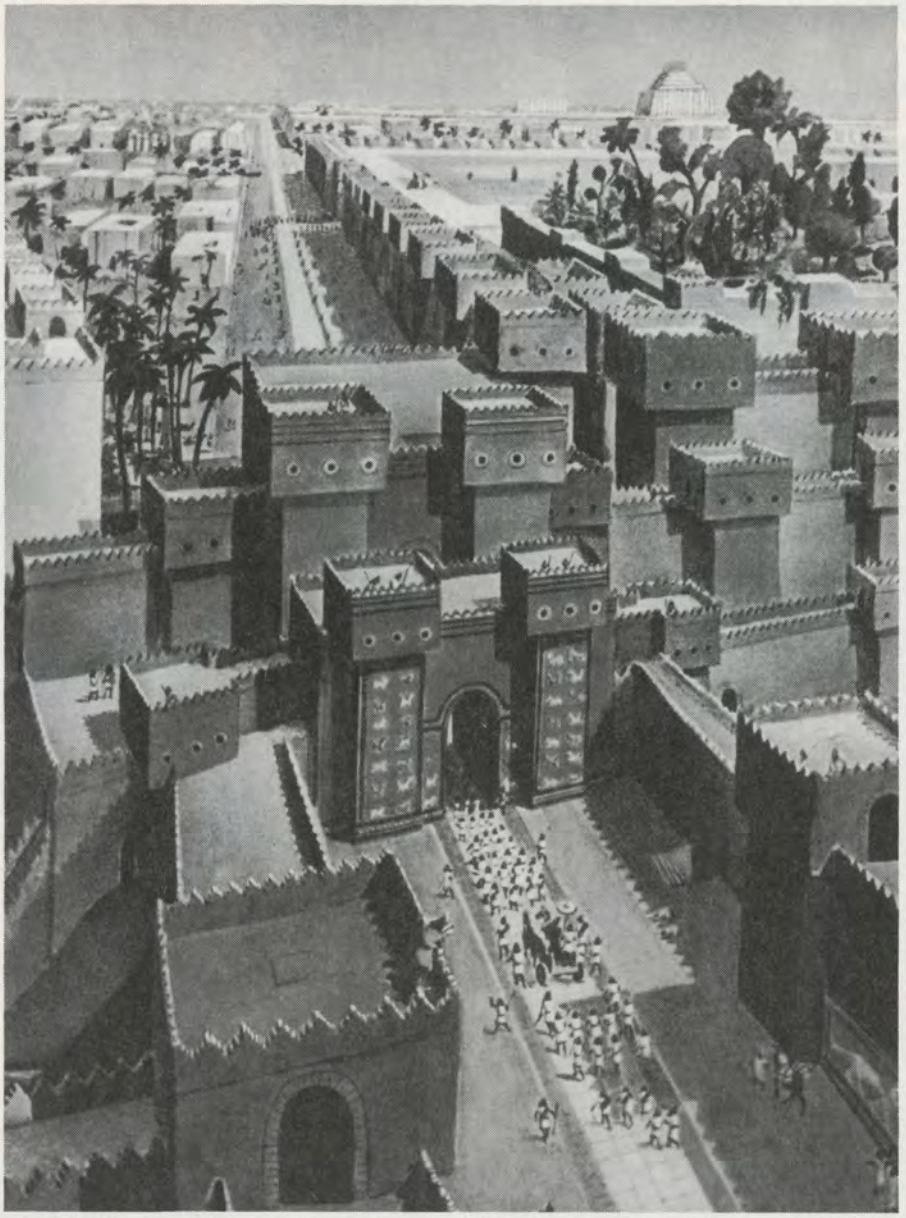

Babylon's Ishtar Gate and Processional Way in the time of King Nebuchadnezzar II. Reconstruction by E. Unger.

east bank to the new suburbs on the west. Offices, exchanges and warehouses stood along the banks of the river, busy with water-borne commerce of the richest trading center in the world.

Only one of the gates of ancient Babylon has been fully excavated, but it remains — even as a ruin — one of the most impressive city gates in all history. After 15 years of tedious digging (or *directing* tedious digging: 250 local Arabs did the work), Dr. Koldewey had uncovered mountains of clay brick and rubble, but nothing to equal the glorious and attention-getting finds of Khorsabad, Mycenae or Tutankhamun's Tomb. Then he discovered the 40-foot-high remains of the major north entrance to the city, called the Ishtar Gate — "the largest and most striking ruins of Babylon," he wrote, and with one exception — "all of Babylonia." On this spectacular twin-towered entry portal — a small castle in itself — Nebuchadnezzar had ordered the positioning of at least 575 dragons and bulls made of blue, yellow and white enameled, low-relief bricks, "for the amazement of all peoples." If not quite as dazzling as the winged bulls of Khorsabad — the greatest Assyrian city dug up so far — these creatures, and the great gate they adorned, give some sense of the splendid effect one's first entry into the city must have made.

Through the Ishtar Gate ran the great "Processional Way," paved by Nebuchadnezzar with one-meter-square limestone flags and flanked by high brick walls, decorated with 120 of the symbolic lions of Ishtar. Behind these walls lay great defensive citadels, providing additional protection for the city. Along this road (30-50 feet wide), during each Spring Equinox Festival, the solid gold idol of Marduk was drawn in a great chariot, accompanied by thousands of soldiers, priests and worshippers, as well as other gods and their devotees come from distant provinces.

The Processional Way continued in a straight line almost a thousand yards, passing first the great Southern Citadel, then the sacred precincts of the Temple of Marduk, dominated by its seven-tiered ziggurat. Between the temple and the tower the road made a 90° turn west, to meet the Euphrates river bridge. On each paving stone was inscribed, "I am Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, son of Nabopolassar, King of Babylon. I have paved the road of Babylon with blocks of stone brought from the mountains for the procession of the great lord Marduk. May Marduk, my lord, grant me life for ever."

Beyond the Processional Way, the city was divided into a number of rectangles by wide, unpaved roads. Inside these, minor roads and alleys wandered off at more irregular angles, following the lines of the dense and crowded houses, which presented — as residential quarters in the Middle East do today — blank, whitewashed faces to the passer-by.

The monumental remains of ancient Egypt and Greece are more impressive today than those of Babylon for one reason: they were made of stone. Both stone and wood were sparse in Mesopotamia, so almost all building was of sun-dried clay bricks, which have collapsed in heaps over the centuries. This makes it impossible to

continued on p. 52

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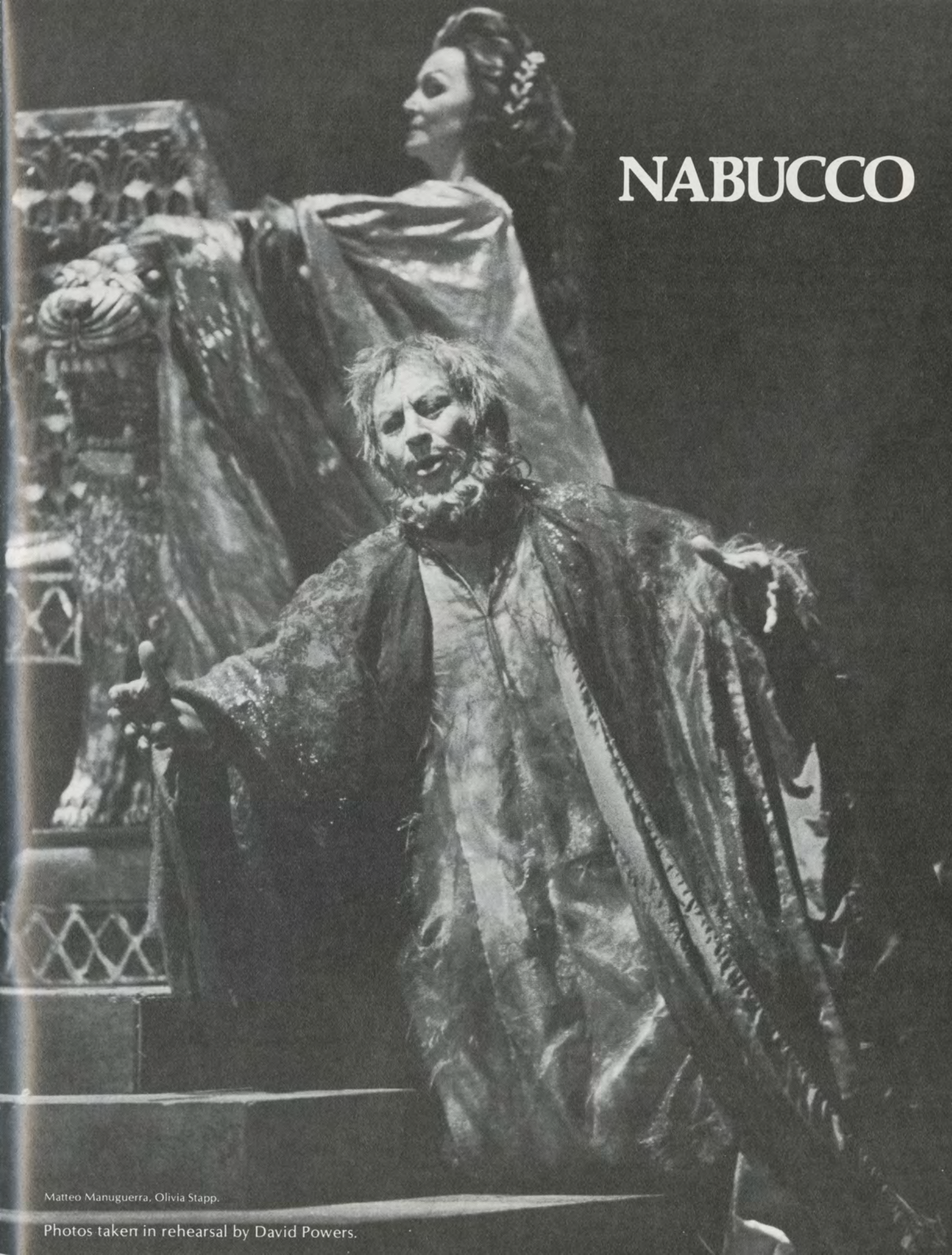
NABUCCO



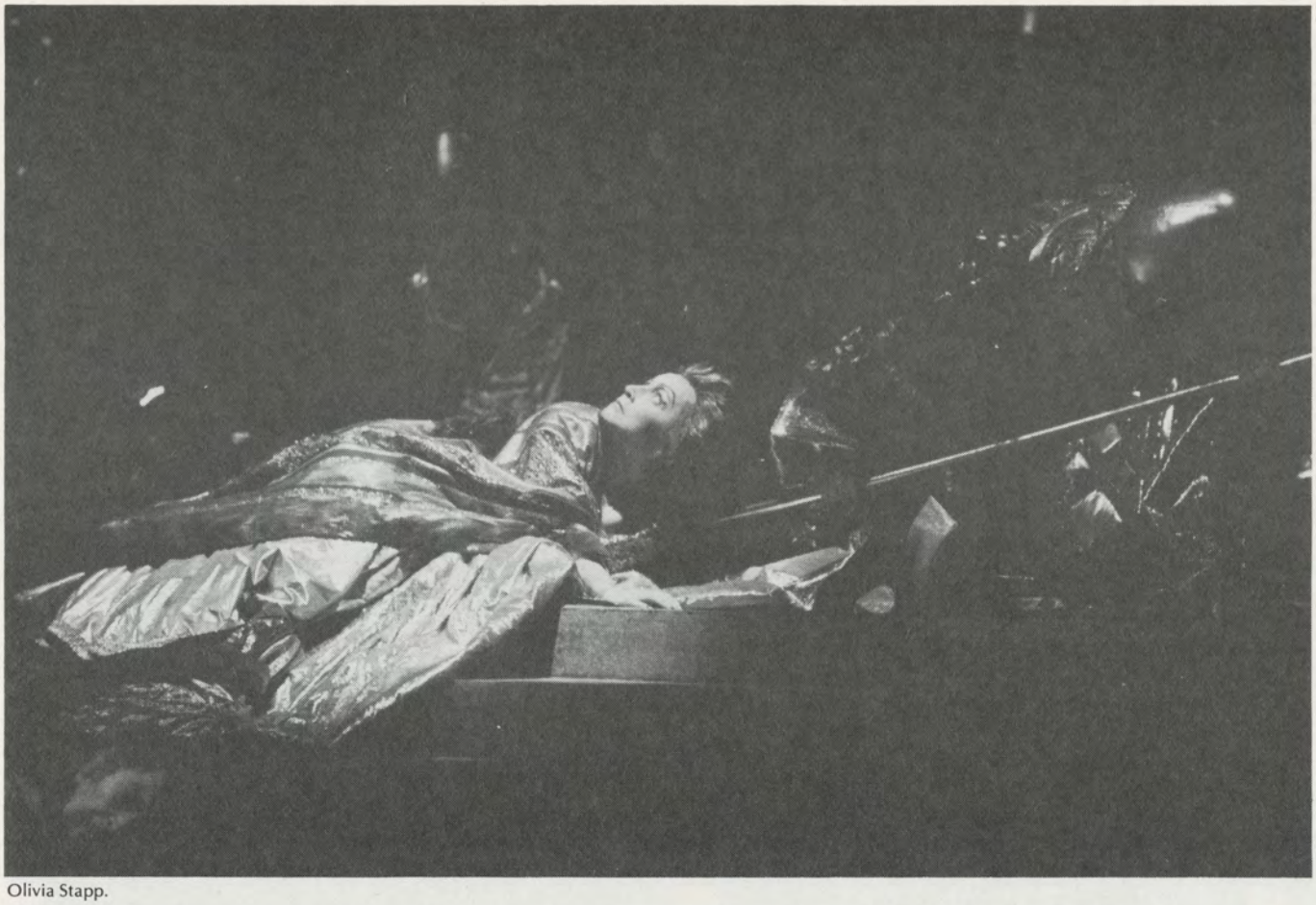
Matteo Manuguerra, Olivia Stapp.

Photos taken in rehearsal by David Powers.

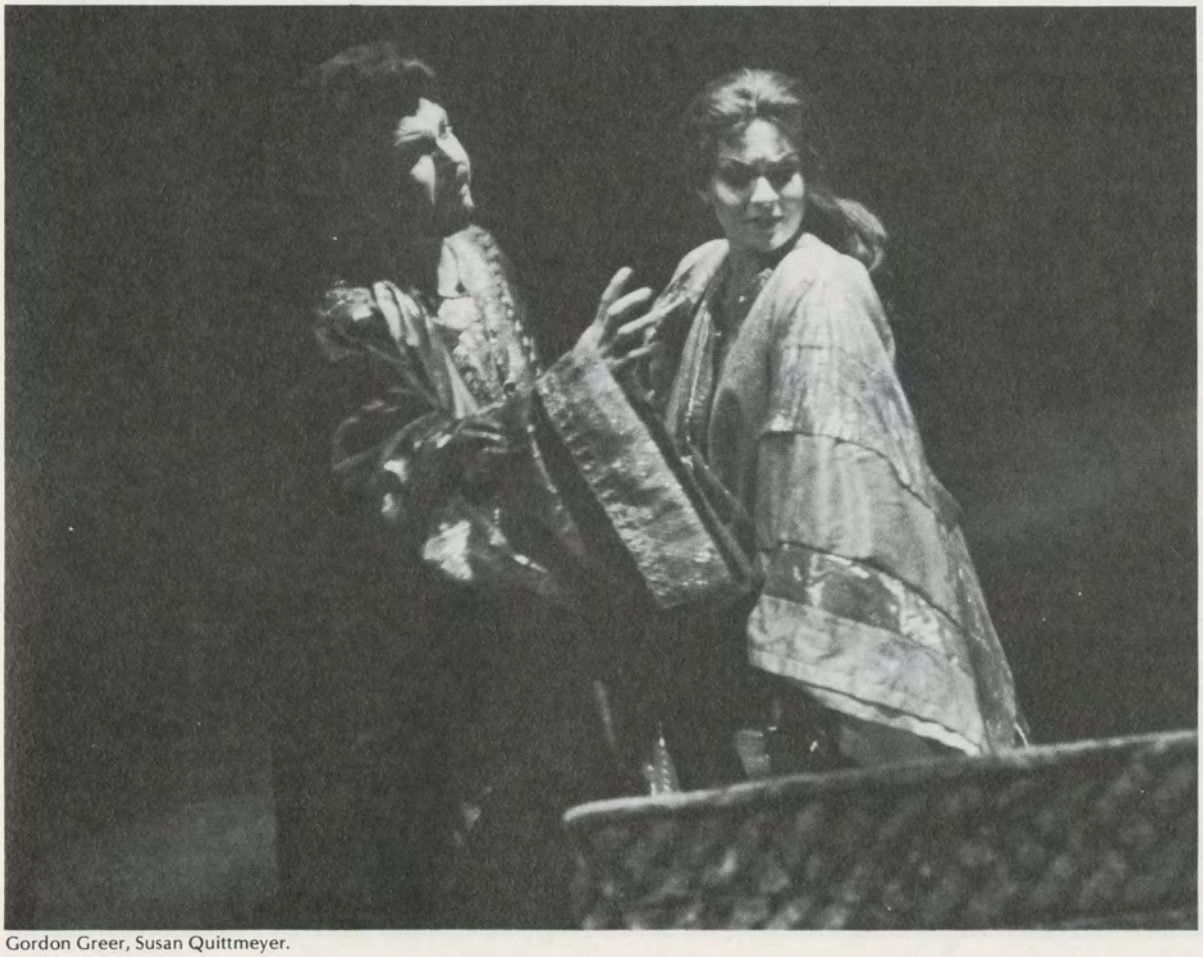
Olivia Stapp, Gregory Stapp.

Paul Plishka, Susan Quittmeyer.

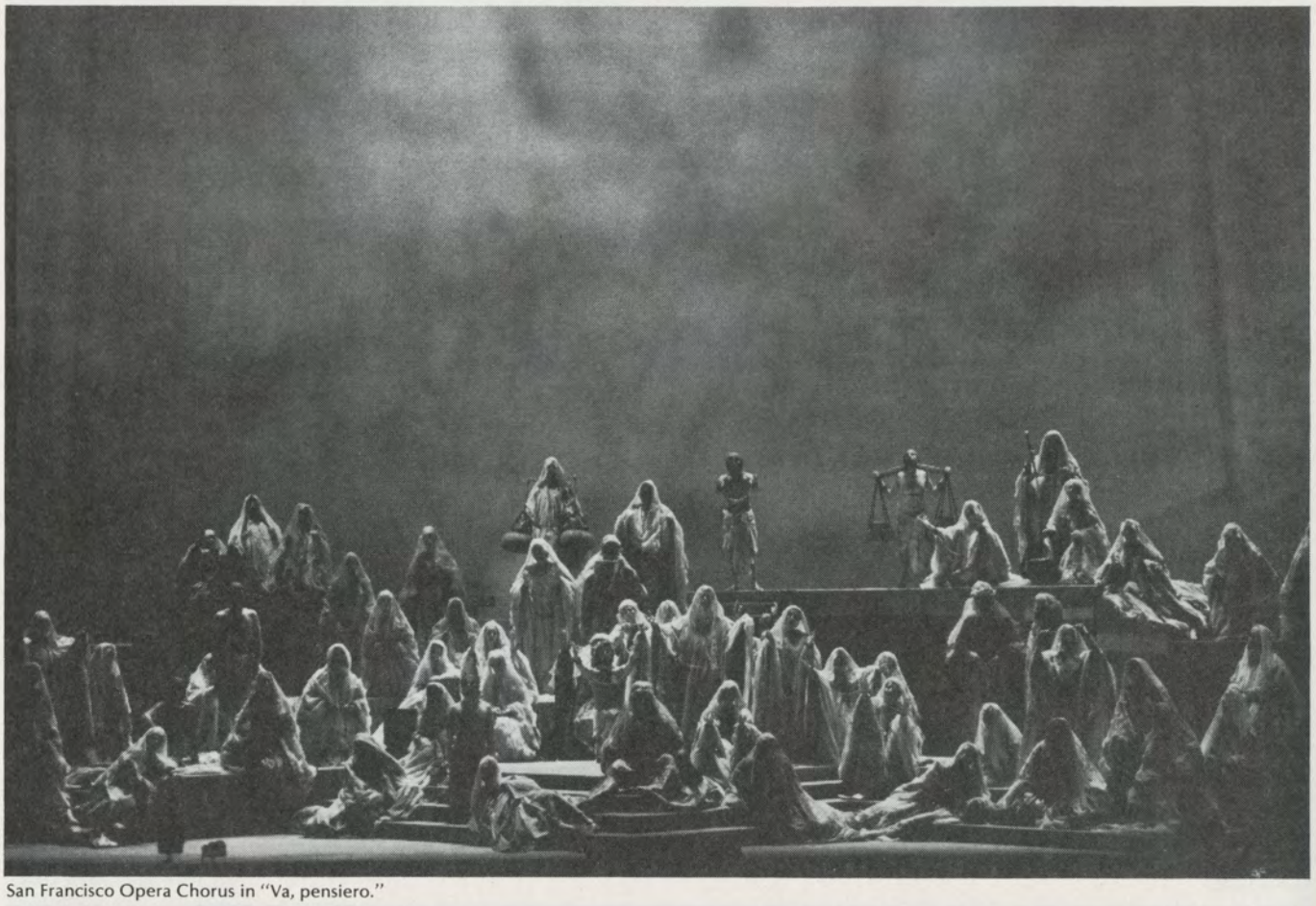
Matteo Manuguerra, Quade Winter



Olivia Stapp.



Gordon Greer, Susan Quittmeyer.



San Francisco Opera Chorus in "Va, pensiero."

Paul Plishka.

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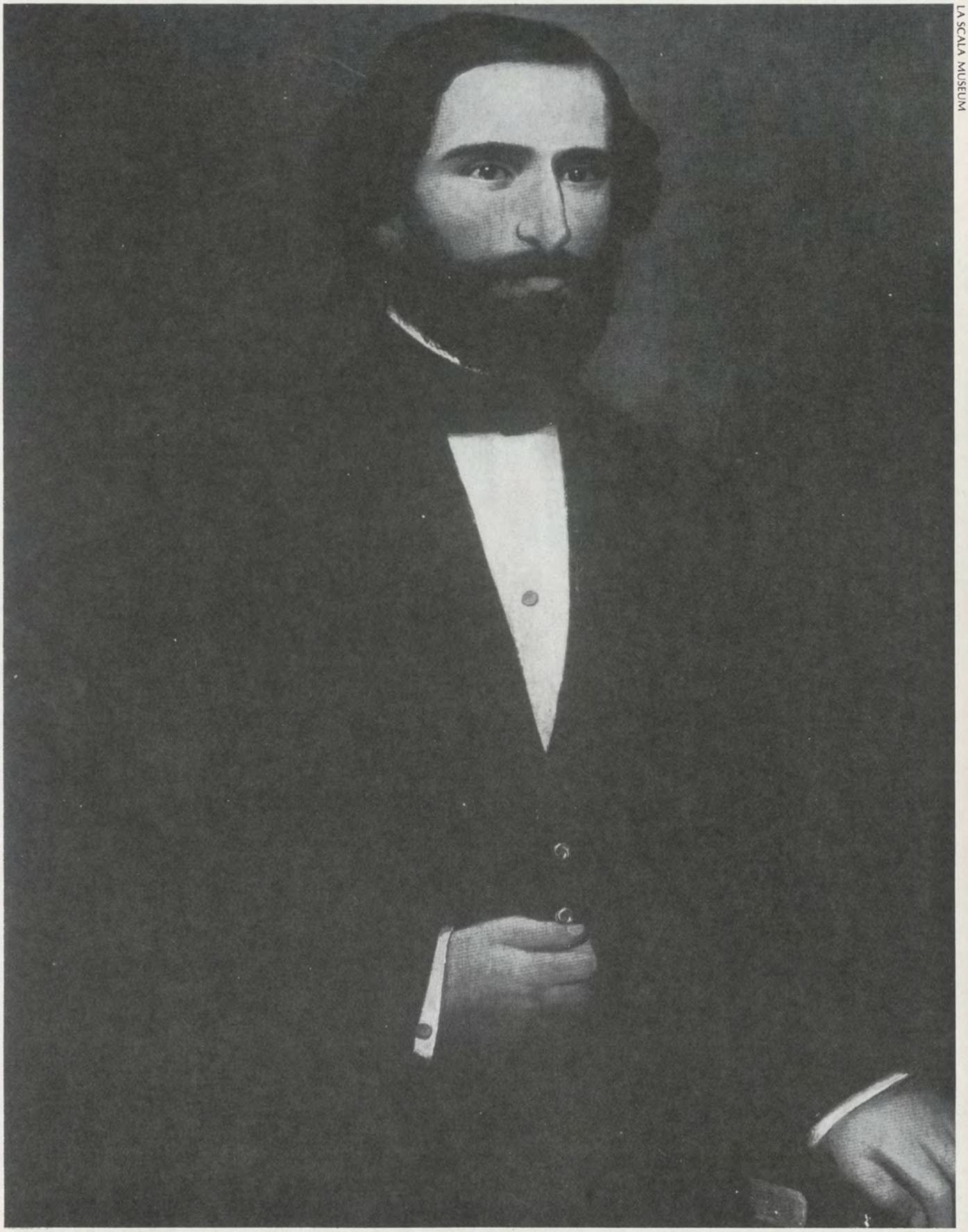

LA SCALA MUSEUM

Giuseppe Verdi in a portrait by an unknown artist, done around the time of composition of *Nabucco*.

Verdi's French Connection

By ARTHUR KAPLAN

In the early 19th century, as in the two previous centuries, French culture dominated Europe. The Napoleonic hegemony, followed closely by the explosion of French-style Romanticism on the literary scene, had far-reaching reverberations on the continent. When Victor Hugo's *Hernani* had its tumultuous and triumphant 1830 premiere at that bastion of French conservative tastes, the Comédie Française, Romanticism received its official sanction. It then swept like a tidal wave through France and across the Pyrenees and the Alps.

Almost all of Bellini's mature works are based on contemporary French plays, and some of Donizetti's early triumphs, such as *Anna Bolena, L'Elisir d'amore, Lucrezia Borgia, Roberto Devereux* and *Linda di Chamounix,* likewise had their origin on the Paris stage. Of Verdi's 26 operas, only *I Lombardi alla prima crociata,* drawn from an epic poem by Tommaso Grossi, can boast a purely Italian origin. Nearly half of his operas are based on French source material, more than twice as many as from any other national literature.

The two early works of Verdi that still form a part of the international repertory, *Nabucco* (1842) and *Ernani* (1844), are both taken from French plays of the 1830s. Something in Victor Hugo's dramaturgy clearly struck a responsive note in Verdi's soul. Although the merits of Hugo's *Hernani* as a vehicle for operatic treatment have been examined at length by various writers, few have paid much attention to the source material for *Nabucco,* a four-act drama by Auguste Anicet-Bourgeois and Francis Cornu, *Nabuchodonosor.* The pseudo-biblical drama had its premiere at the Théâtre de l'Ambigu-Comique, one of Paris's most popular theaters on the so-called "Boulevard du Crime," on October 17, 1836. Although completely forgotten now, the play enjoyed a considerable success at the time.

Like many of the well-made plays in the manner of Eugène Scribe, it was written as a collaborative effort and abounded in spectacular scenic effects, *coups de théâtre* and ingeniously contrived twists of plot. Today the co-authors of *Nabuchodonosor* are mere footnotes in French literary history among the thousands of prolific scribblers that singly or in pairs furnished the French stage with multitudinous, eminently forgettable concoctions designed to titillate the unsophisticated tastes of the bourgeois theatergoers of the July Monarchy. Anicet-Bourgeois and Cornu both collaborated with scores of playwrights, including Alexandre Dumas, Eugène Scribe, Ludovic Halévy and Emile Augier, to produce comedies and vaudevilles as well as dramas and melodramas.

Though *Nabuchodonosor* seems to have been well known in Italy, Temistocle Solera adapted his libretto for the opera from a five-part historical ballet based on the play by composer/conductor Antonio Cortese that had received 35 performances at La Scala in the autumn of 1838. Following the example of the ballet scenario, Solera had reduced the number of characters and substantially simplified a rather complicated plot, replete with attempted rescues and flipflopping reversals of fortune.

Despite the title of the opera and the play, the biblical story of Nebuchadnezzar serves merely as a framework for the drama. King Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylon, who ruled from 606 to 562 B.C., did twice lay seige to the Judean capital of Jerusalem. According to the Bible, Nebuchadnezzar, made arrogant by his successes, built himself a golden statue near Babylon and threatened those who refused to bow down to it with being burned alive. The playwrights skillfully weave these biblical incidents into a totally fictious web of intrigue in the Babylonian court, where the sibling rivalry between Abigaïl and Phénenna forms the chief mechanism of the plot.

The balance between the two supposed sisters, who have equally important roles in the French play, was radically transformed by Solera. By reducing Phénenna's role to that of a *comprimaria,* he seriously altered the dramaturgy of the play. One might successfully argue that the several scenes in which Phénenna and Ismaël discover that each has long harbored a secret love for the other are expendable.

It is more difficult, in fact impossible, to argue that by eliminating the scenes of mutual devotion between Nabuchodonosor and his beloved daughter Phénenna, Solera did service to either the original playwrights or, more importantly, to his composer. If

continued on p. 60

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New Production
Opera in three acts by GIUSEPPE VERDI
Text by TEMISTOCLE SOLERA

NABUCCO

(in Italian)

Conductor
Kurt Herbert Adler

Production
Gerald Freedman

Set, Lighting and Projection Designer
Thomas Munn

Costume Designer
Beni Montresor

Projection Design and Photography
Ron Scherl

Sound Designer
Roger Gans

Chorus Director
Richard Bradshaw

Musical Preparation
James Johnson
Mark Haffner
Philip Eisenberg

Prompter
Philip Eisenberg

Assistant Stage Director
Jay Lesenger*

Stage Manager
Gretchen Mueller

Scenery constructed in San Francisco Opera Scenic Studios

Costumes originally created for the Paris Opera

Objects from the collections photographed for projections by courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum, London

First performance:
Milan, March 9, 1842

First San Francisco Opera performance:
October 6, 1961

THURSDAY, JUNE 17 AT 7:30
SUNDAY, JUNE 20 AT 2:00
TUESDAY, JUNE 22 AT 8:00
FRIDAY, JUNE 25 AT 8:00
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 30 AT 8:00
SATURDAY, JULY 3 AT 8:00

Nabucco radio broadcast on
October 8 at 8 p.m. and October 9 at 11 a.m.

Please do not interrupt the music with applause.

Latecomers will not be seated during the performance after the lights have dimmed.

CAST

Zaccaria, High Priest of Jerusalem	Paul Plishka
Ismaele, nephew of the Hebrew king	Gordon Greer*
Fenena, Nabucco's daughter	Susan Quittmeyer
Abigaille, Nabucco's adopted daughter	Olivia Stapp (June 17, 20, 22, 25) Judith Telep-Ehrlich* (June 30; July 3)
Anna, Zaccaria's sister	Nikki Li Hartliep*
Nabucco, King of Babylon	Matteo Manuguerra
High Priest of Babylon	Gregory Stapp
Abdallo, officer in Nabucco's army	Quade Winter

Soldiers, priests, citizens of Jerusalem and Babylon

**San Francisco Opera debut*

TIME AND PLACE: 6th century B.C.; Jerusalem and Babylon

ACT I — The temple in Jerusalem

INTERMISSION

ACT II — Scene 1: Babylon, in Nabucco's palace
Scene 2: Near the palace

INTERMISSION

ACT III — Scene 1: The throne room
Scene 2: The banks of the Euphrates
Scene 3: Nabucco's prison cell
Scene 4: Near the palace

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

The performance will last approximately two hours and forty-five minutes.

Synopsis

NABUCCO

ACT I

The people of Jerusalem lament their defeat at the hands of Nabucco (Nebuchadnezzar), the King of Babylon, but the Hebrew priest Zaccaria asks them to have faith ("Sperate, o figli"). Ismaele, the nephew of the Hebrew king, brings the news of Nabucco's advance to the city, and is then left alone with Fenena, Nabucco's daughter, who is being held by the Hebrews as hostage. Ismaele has been in love with Fenena ever since she rescued him from a Babylonian jail. They are interrupted by Abigaille, Fenena's supposed sister, who enters with an advance of Babylonian soldiers, disguised as Hebrews. Abigaille also loves Ismaele, and she tells him that by returning the affection he can save his people. Ismaele rejects her and she leaves. Zaccaria returns, saying that the Babylonian troops are on their way to the temple; in a moment they arrive, led by Nabucco and Abigaille. Zaccaria threatens to kill Nabucco's daughter Fenena, should her father desecrate the temple, but is prevented from doing so by Ismaele. Nabucco, enraged, orders the temple sacked and burned, and the Hebrews led into captivity.

ACT II

Scene 1 — Fenena, appointed regent in Nabucco's absence, is envied by Abigaille who becomes even more resentful when she discovers a document proving that she is not the King's daughter, but a slave ("Anch'io dischiuso un giorno"). She thinks of Ismaele, and then works herself into a rage, vowing to bring down her father, sister and herself before her true birth can be made known. The High Priest of Babylon tells her that Fenena plans to liberate the captive Jews, and that Nabucco has been killed in battle, urging Abigaille to seize power herself.

Scene 2 — Zaccaria goes to Fenena's chambers at her bidding and converts her to Judaism. Nearby the Hebrews are gathered in prayer ("Tu sul labbro"). They demand punishment for Ismaele, who they feel betrayed them by setting Fenena free, but Zaccaria's sister Anna announces to them Fenena's conversion to Judaism. Nabucco's aide Abdallo brings the false news of Nabucco's death and in a moment Abigaille enters to demand the crown from Fenena. Suddenly Nabucco comes in, seizes the crown and proclaims himself god. A bolt of lighting strikes the crown from his head, leaving the King demented. Abigaille assumes the crown, announcing that the glory of Babylon is not yet dead.

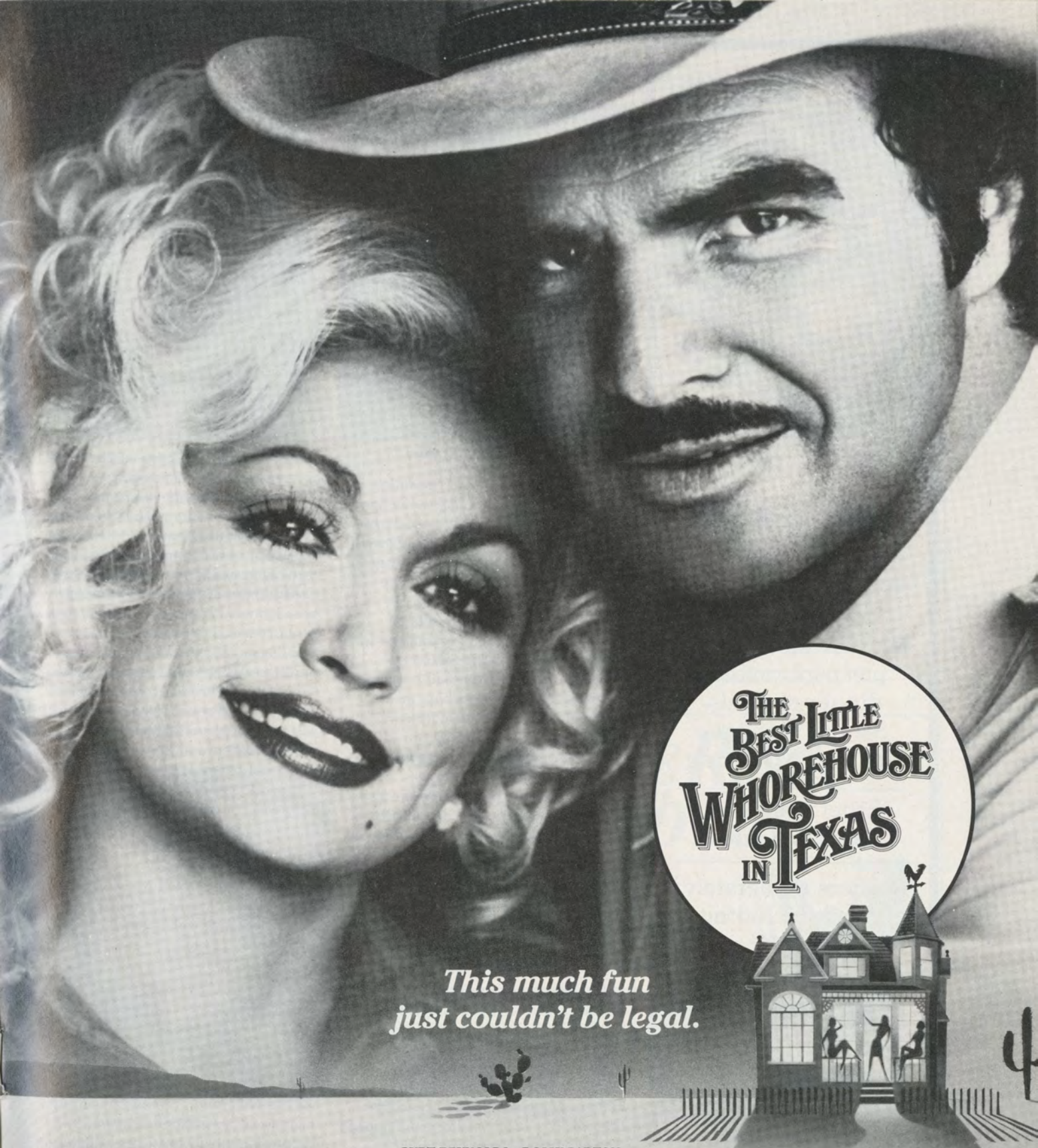
ACT III

Scene 1 — Abigaille is now regent, and she intends to have all the captive Jews put to death. The mad Nabucco wanders in. He is confused at finding someone else on the throne and tells Abigaille about her humble origin, but she destroys the secret document ("Donna chi sei?"). Taking advantage of Nabucco's mental state, she persuades him to sign a death warrant for the Hebrews, including Fenena, then informs him that he is no longer King, but a prisoner.

Scene 2 — On the banks of the Euphrates, the enslaved Hebrews sing a psalm ("Va, pensiero"). Zaccaria preaches to them, trying to lift their spirits, and predicts the downfall of Babylon ("Del futuro nel buio discerno"). The aroused slaves raise their chains in defiance.

Scene 3 — In a prison cell, Nabucco wakes from a nightmare, his sanity restored. Through his window, he sees Fenena being led to execution. He prays for forgiveness ("Dio di Giuda") when Abdallo comes in. Seeing that the King has regained his sanity, he frees him and follows him out of the jail in order to rescue Fenena.

Scene 4 — At the place of execution, the Hebrews prepare themselves for death ("Oh, dischiuso è il firmamento"). Nabucco and some troops loyal to him arrive, the idols are destroyed, Nabucco announces his conversion to Judaism and all join in a prayer of thanksgiving. Abigaille, who in her remorse has taken poison, dies, calling for God's forgiveness. Zaccaria promises great glory to the follower of Jehovah, Nabucco.



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Profiles

OLIVIA STAPP

Portraying Abigaille in the 1982 Summer Festival production of Verdi's *Nabucco* is Olivia Stapp. The dramatic soprano, former resident of the Bay Area, has sung the role of Abigaille over 40 times in many of the world's opera centers. Following her San Francisco Opera debut as Donna Anna in the 1978 production of *Don Giovanni,* she also appeared with the Company as Santuzza in two performances of *Cavalleria Rusticana* in 1980. Beginning her operatic career as a mezzo-soprano, her first appearance with the New York City Opera in 1972 was as Carmen. During the 1975-76 season, she launched her soprano repertoire in Italy, including Lady Macbeth in Palermo and Santuzza in Bari. In 1981 she made her Washington Opera debut in *Macbeth* and in 1982 starred in a new Pizzi production of the same work in Paris. Her 1982 season included performances of the title role of Strauss' *Elektra* at the Vienna State Opera, as well as appearances in *Ernani* in Barcelona, *Macbeth* in Berlin and Minnie in Puccini's *La Fanciulla del West* in Paris for Radio France. Other roles in her repertoire are Medea, Tosca, Odabella in Verdi's *Attila* and Mascagni's Iris. During the 1982-83 season, Miss Stapp will make her Metropolitan Opera debut as Verdi's Lady Macbeth.

JUDITH TELEP-EHRLICH

Soprano Judith Telep-Ehrlich makes her San Francisco Opera debut as Abigaille in Verdi's *Nabucco,* a role in which she made her professional debut with the New York Grand Opera in 1975. In 1977 she made her debut with the New York City Opera as Margherita in *Mefistofele.* Since that time, Miss

Telep-Ehrlich has been heard with that company in New York, Los Angeles and Washington, D.C., in *Tosca, Andrea Chénier* and *Cavalleria Rusticana.* Her Canadian debut was in the 1979 Southern Alberta Opera Association's production of *Il Trovatore,* in which she sang Leonora. In 1980 she was heard for the first time in Fort Worth as Leonore in *Fidelio.* She made her Florentine Opera debut in 1981 singing the title role of *La Gioconda,* and made a highly successful European debut at the Frankfurt Opera that same year in *Aida, Trovatore* and *Fidelio.* She has been invited back to Frankfurt as a guest artist this season to reappear in *Fidelio* and *Cavalleria Rusticana.* Miss Telep-Ehrlich will also appear as Leonore with the Charlotte Opera this year and will return to the Southern Alberta Opera as Leonora in *La Forza del destino.*

SUSAN QUITTMEYER

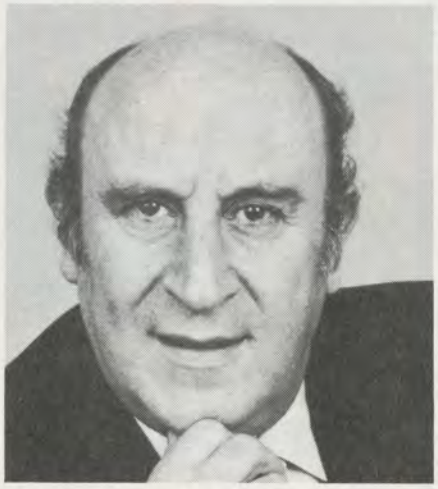
Mezzo-soprano Susan Quittmeyer appears as Fenena in the Summer Festival production of Verdi's *Nabucco.* For the San Francisco Opera 1981 Fall Season, she sang Rosette in *Manon,* the High Priestess in *Aida,* Mercédès in *Carmen,* and Waltraute in *Die Walküre.* Her most recent appearance was in the San Francisco Opera Center's Showcase production of John Harbison's *Full Moon in March.* A New York native, Miss Quittmeyer made her professional debut in the St. Louis Opera Theatre's production of Soler's *The Tree of Chastity;* during that same 1978-79 season, she performed the role of the Baroness in the East Coast premiere of Rota's *The Italian Straw Hat* with the John Brownlee Opera Theater. As an apprentice with the Santa Fe Opera, she was heard as the Page in *Salome.*

She later made her debut with the Asolo Opera Company in *The Rape of Lucretia* and *La Traviata*. Miss Quittmeyer was a participant in the San Francisco Opera's Affiliate Artist Program in 1979. During her two-year association with the program, she sang Dorabella in *Così fan tutte*; Cherubino in *The Marriage of Figaro* with Spring Opera Theater; and two leading roles in world premieres given by the American Opera Project: John Harbison's *Winter's Tale* and Kirke Mechem's *Tartuffe*.

NIKKI LI HARTLIEP

Soprano Nikki Li Hartliep makes her San Francisco Opera debut as Anna in the 1982 Summer Festival Production of *Nabucco*. Born in Okinawa, raised in Alaska and Chicago, she received her Bachelor of Music Degree in Voice from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music where she was awarded a vocal scholarship. She has performed several roles with the San Francisco Conservatory Orchestra, including the title role in *Suor Angelica* by Puccini and Blanche in *Dialogues of the Carmelites*, as well as Dido in *Dido and*

Aeneas with the Musique Entre Nous Chamber Orchestra in Chicago. She recently performed in the San Francisco Opera Center's Showcase production of *La Bohème*. As a member of Western Opera Theater she performed the role of Mimì in *La Bohème* and Countess Almaviva in *The Marriage of Figaro* during the WOT 1982 Spring Tour.



MATTEO MANUGUERRA

Baritone Matteo Manuguerra returns to the San Francisco Opera to sing the title role in Verdi's *Nabucco*. He first appeared here as Rigoletto during the first Summer Festival in 1981. Born in Tunisia, Manuguerra studied in Buenos Aires before making his opera debut in 1962 at the Opéra de Lyon as Valentin in *Faust*. In 1968 he made his American debut with the Seattle Opera as Gérard in *Andrea Chénier*, and in 1972 appeared at the Metropolitan Opera for the first time when he sang Enrico in *Lucia di Lammermoor*. Since that time; he has performed at the Met in *La Bohème, Cavalleria Rusticana, I Pagliacci, La Forza del destino, Rigoletto, Aida, Falstaff, Un Ballo in Maschera* and *Tosca*. Manuguerra made his Covent Garden debut in 1981 as Renato in *Un Ballo in Maschera*. Recent engagements include *Lucrezia Borgia, Francesca da Rimini* and *L'Africaine* with the Opera Orchestra of New York in Carnegie Hall, and *Rigoletto* in Providence, as well as *Cavalleria Rusticana, I Pagliacci* and *Rigoletto* with the Lyric Opera of Chicago. Included in his repertoire are such roles as Escamillo in *Carmen*, Belcore in *L'Elisir d'amore*, Athanaël in *Thaïs*, Barnaba in *La Gioconda* and Scarpia in *Tosca*, but he has specialized in roles by Verdi. These include Amonasro in *Aida*, Rodrigo in *Don Carlo*, Don Carlo in *La Forza del destino* and Germont in *La Traviata*, as well as the title roles of *Nabucco* and *Rigoletto*.

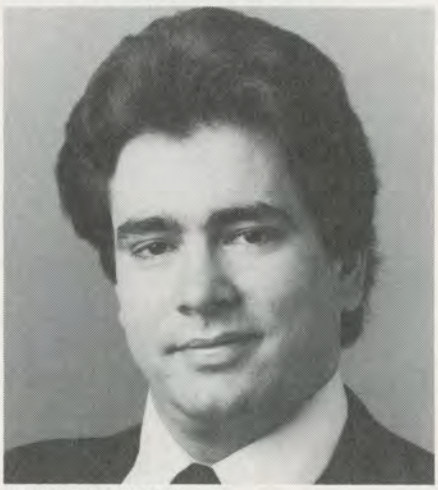
GORDON GREER

Tenor Gordon Greer makes his first San Francisco Opera appearance as Ismaele in Verdi's *Nabucco*. Currently a leading tenor with the Oper am Rhein, Düsseldorf, the young American made his European debut with that company in 1974 as Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly*. In that same year he was awarded second prize in the renowned Bavarian Radio/Television Network Competition in Munich. In 1981 Greer appeared as Bacchus in *Ariadne auf Naxos* in Frankfurt, *La Traviata* in Düsseldorf, *La Damnation de Faust* in Barcelona and *Nabucco* in Duisburg, Germany. This year he has been heard in *Il Trovatore* with the Phoenix Symphony, *Lucia di Lammermoor* and *Madama Butterfly* in Duisburg and will make his debut as Bacchus in *Ariadne auf Naxos* with the Kentucky Opera and *Tosca* with the Anchorage Opera. In addition to his operatic engagements, Greer sings a diversified concert repertoire, including works of Handel, Haydn, Dvořák and Mahler, as well as Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and Verdi's Requiem, which he performed with the Montreal Symphony in May of this year.

PAUL PLISHKA

Paul Plishka, leading bass-baritone of the Metropolitan Opera since 1967, sings the role of Zaccaria in *Nabucco*. First seen here in 1976 in *La Forza del destino*, this Pennsylvania native began his operatic career by winning first place in the Baltimore Opera Auditions and soon after joined the National Company of the Metropolitan Opera. Plishka's 1980-81 season included a variety of roles with the Met; a Verdi Requiem performance with the New York Philharmonic under Zubin Mehta,

which was nationally telecast; Mozart's Mass in C with the Philadelphia Orchestra at Carnegie Hall; Handel's *Messiah* with Musica Sacra in New York; and *Khovanshchina* and *Lakmé* with the Opera Orchestra of New York. Aside from numerous Met roles, he has performed at the Munich Staatsoper, Paris Opera and the Dallas Opera. His recent performances include *Luisa Miller* and *Aida* at the Metropolitan Opera, *Macbeth* and *Fidelio* with the Lyric Opera of Chicago, plus *The Barber of Seville* and *Turandot* with the San Diego Opera. Other engagements include an appearance with the Toronto Symphony and two live radio broadcasts of the Verdi Requiem from Avery Fisher Hall in New York.



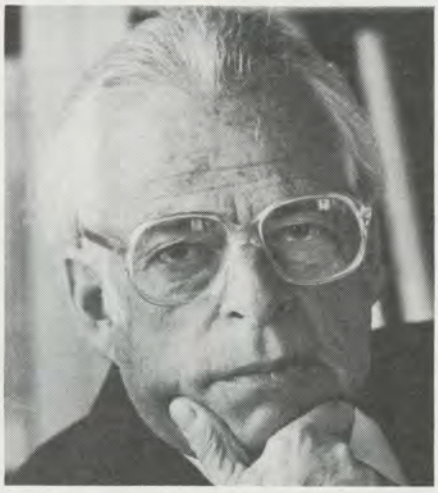
QUADE WINTER

Tenor Quade Winter returns to the San Francisco Opera to sing Abdallo in *Nabucco*. Having made his Company debut in the 1980 production of *Tristan und Isolde*, he also appeared in *Die Meistersinger* in 1981. As a member of the Merola Opera Program in 1979 and 1980 he portrayed Max in *Der Freischütz* under the baton of Kurt Herbert Adler at Stern Grove and sang in Britten's *Albert Herring*. A native of Oregon, he has appeared throughout

the Bay Area and Pacific Northwest. He sang the Duke in *Rigoletto* with the Eugene Opera, Alfredo in *La Traviata,* Canio in *I Pagliacci* with the Rogue Valley Opera, and tenor solos in Handel's *Israel in Egypt* and Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* with the Portland Symphonic Choir. In 1980 he won awards in both the San Francisco Opera and Metropolitan Opera Auditions, and appeared with the Portland Opera in *Fidelio.* In 1981 Winter portrayed Mazal in Janáček's *The Excursions of Mr. Brouček* with the Berkeley Symphony Orchestra and performed in *Lélio* with the San Francisco Concert Orchestra.

GREGORY STAPP

American bass Gregory Stapp appears as Achillas in *Julius Caesar,* a mandarin in *Turandot,* the High Priest of Babylon in *Nabucco* and the Keeper of the Madhouse in *The Rake's Progress.* A graduate of the Academy of Vocal Arts in Philadelphia, he has appeared with both the symphony orchestra and opera company of that city. In 1980 he sang the role of Charlemagne in the American premiere of Schubert's *Fierrabras* with the AVA Opera Theater. Currently an Adler Fellow, Stapp was for two years the Atlantic Richfield Affiliate Artist in the San Francisco/Affiliate Artists-Opera Program. He made his Company debut during the 1980 fall season in *The Magic Flute* and *La Traviata.* During the 1980 Spring Opera season, Stapp was heard as Pluto in *Il Ballo delle Ingrate,* Ajax in *The Cry of Clytaemnestra* and Friar Lawrence in *Romeo and Juliet.* During the first San Francisco Opera Summer Festival in 1981, he appeared as Hans Foltz in *Die Meistersinger* and an Usher in *Rigoletto.* During the 1981 fall season, the young bass was featured in five operas: *Semiramide, Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk, Le Cid, Lucia di Lammermoor* and *Il Trovatore.* In April 1981 he appeared as a soloist with the Los Angeles Chorale in a program conducted by Kurt Herbert Adler, and this last March was a soloist in the San Francisco Symphony performances of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion.*



KURT HERBERT ADLER

Kurt Herbert Adler, general director emeritus of the San Francisco Opera, returns to the Company for the first time since his retirement to conduct Verdi's *Nabucco.* His long career in musical theater began in 1925, when he conducted at the Max Reinhardt Theater in his native Vienna. In 1938 he moved to the United States and spent five years with the Chicago Opera. Adler joined the San Francisco Opera in 1943 as chorus director and conductor, making his podium debut with *Cavalleria Rusticana.* He held the post of assistant to general director Gaetano Merola from 1949 until Merola's death in 1953, when Adler was named artistic director. He became general director in 1957, serving in that capacity until his retirement at the end of the 1981 season, during which he led two casts in 11 performances of *Carmen.* Other productions Adler has conducted for San Francisco Opera include *Aida* in 1950; *Madama Butterfly* in 1953, 1960 and 1974; *Le Nozze di Figaro* in 1958; *Così fan tutte* in 1960; *La Traviata* in 1973; *Un Ballo in Maschera* in 1977; *Lohengrin* in 1978; *La Forza del destino* in 1979; *Tristan und Isolde* in 1980; and *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* during the first San Francisco Opera Summer Festival in 1981. He has also conducted annual summer concerts at Sigmund Stern Grove and the annual Golden Gate Park Concert in the fall. Other organizations for which he has conducted include the San Diego Symphony, the Los Angeles Master Chorale, Central City Opera, and the Philadelphia Opera, where he has conducted *Tosca* and, most recently, *Il Trovatore.* He has conducted recordings with Luciano Pavarotti, Leona Mitchell, Maria Chiara, Renata Scotto and Placido Domingo. As general director of the San Francisco Opera, he brought the Company to world-class standards and initiated various affiliate programs for the development of young singers. A recipient of numerous academic honors and foreign government titles, Adler has also been active as an arts advocate and has served on a number of government panels and councils. He was most recently appointed president of the National Advisory Council of the National Opera Institute. Adler made his screen acting debut as himself in the soon-to-be-released MGM film *Yes, Giorgio* starring Luciano Pavarotti, and will join Pavarotti again at the Hollywood Bowl on September 5 for a Pension Fund benefit concert. He just returned from a six-week visit to China, where he conducted the Shanghai Symphony and held master classes at the Shanghai Conservatory. He will be on the San Francisco Opera podium again this fall for Verdi's *Un Ballo in Maschera,* including the special Opening Night gala, and will conduct the cast of that production at the annual free concert in Golden Gate Park.

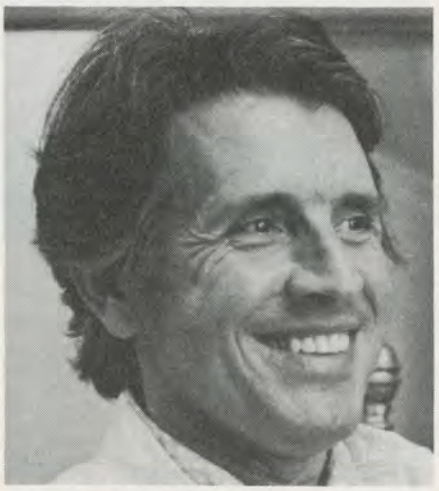
GERALD FREEDMAN

Director Gerald Freedman returns to the San Francisco Opera to stage Verdi's *Nabucco.* Receiving international recognition for his work on Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo,* Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* and Britten's *Death in Venice* for Spring Opera Theater, he made his San Francisco Opera debut in the 1976 world premiere of Andrew Imbrie's *Angle of Repose.* His most recent work at San Francisco Opera

was the highly acclaimed 1981 Fall Season production of *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*. Additional opera credits include the world premiere of Ginastera's *Beatrix Cenci* in 1971 for the Opera Society of Washington; *Die Fledermaus, L'Incoronazione di Poppea* and *Idomeneo* for New York City Opera in 1974; and *Jenůfa* and a synthesis of Molière's *The Would-Be Gentleman* and *Ariadne auf Naxos* (as originally conceived by Strauss and Hofmannsthal) for the American Opera Center. His theater credits include the original off-Broadway production of *Hair* and the recent revival of *West Side Story*. As artistic director of the New York Shakespeare Festival and the American Shakespeare Festival, he was responsible for numerous stagings of the Bard, and earned an Obie for *The Taming of the Shrew*. He directed the award-winning *Colette* with Zoe Caldwell and, for television, Anouilh's *Antigone* with Geneviève Bujold.

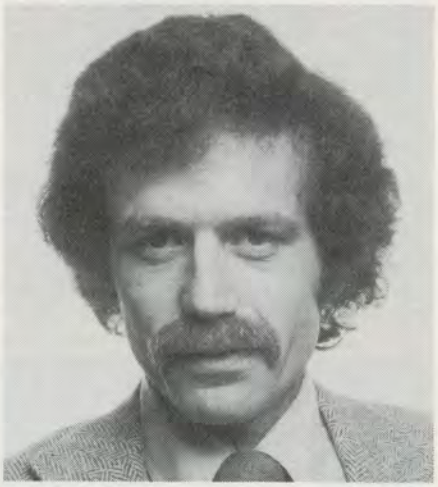
THOMAS MUNN

In his eighth season as lighting designer/director of the San Francisco Opera, Thomas Munn is responsible for the lighting designs for the 1982 Summer Festival productions of *Julius Caesar* and *Turandot*, and the lighting and set design for *Nabucco*. During the 1981 Summer Festival Season, his designs were seen in *Don Giovanni, Lear* and *Die Meistersinger*. In 1980 he created the lighting designs for the new production of *Samson et Dalila* and *Don Pasquale*, and the previous year won an Emmy Award for the new production of *La Gioconda* that was telecast internationally. 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 *Don Quichotte* with the Netherlands Opera and, last year, designed the lighting for the Washington Opera Society's productions of *Tristan und Isolde* and *Lucia di Lammermoor*. He has designed numerous regional opera productions in addition to his work in television, film, ballet and theater throughout the country.



BENI MONTRESOR

Remembered by San Francisco audiences as creator of the delightful sets and costumes for both *Esclarmonde* and *The Daughter of the Regiment* during the 1974 season, and *Lohengrin* in 1978, Verona-born Beni Montresor is the costume designer of the 1982 Summer Festival Season production of *Nabucco*. He made his operatic debut in 1961 with Barber's *Vanessa* at the Spoleto Festival. This was followed by *Pelléas et Mélisande* at the Glyndebourne Festival in 1962, Menotti's *The Last Savage* at the Metropolitan Opera in 1964, *La Cenerentola* for the Metropolitan National Company in 1965 and *La Gioconda* in 1966. That same year, he also designed Berlioz' *Benvenuto Cellini* for Covent Garden and *The Magic Flute* for the New York City Opera, in which he also made his debut as stage director. More recently, his designs for *Turandot* were seen at the New York City Opera, for *L'Elisir d'amore* at Covent Garden and for Rameau's *Platée* at the Opéra Comique in Paris. His Broadway credits include Paddy Chayefsky's *Middle of the Night* and the Rodgers/Sondheim musical *Do I Hear a Waltz?* He has also furnished designs for the Royal Ballet and the New York City Ballet. A noted author and illustrator of children's books, Montresor has won the prestigious Caldecott Award and the Society of Illustrators' Gold Medal.



RON SCHERL

Ron Scherl created the projections seen in *Nabucco* from photos taken on special assignment for the Company at the British Museum in London. He has photographed virtually every San Francisco Opera production since 1973 and has done projections for the Company's productions of *Katya Kabanova* in 1977 and *Billy Budd* in 1978, as well as for the Hartford (Connecticut) Ballet's production of *The Nutcracker* in 1979. A native of New York City, Scherl has been in San Francisco since 1967, and has become nationally known from the many photos he has shot on assignment for such publications as *Time, Newsweek, Fortune* and the *Los Angeles Times*. In the theatrical realm, he has photographed national touring productions of *A Chorus Line, The Elephant Man, Sly Fox, Chapter Two* and *Whose Life is it Anyway?*, while local shows he has shot include *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, The Mousetrap, Streamers* and *The Fantasticks*, as well as productions at the American Conservatory Theatre. He has also worked for many of the Bay Area's other leading arts groups, including the San Francisco and Oakland Symphonies. His photos of San Francisco Opera productions have appeared in most of the major music publications of the world, and were also featured in *The Opera Calendar* distributed locally last year.

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The Real Babylon

continued from p. 32

BRITISH MUSEUM

The Tower of Babel, as imagined by a 15th century French manuscript illustrator in the *Book of Hours of the Duke of Bedford.* 1425-1430.

determine building elevations with any assurance (the heights of the "Tower of Babel" and the Hanging Gardens are still the subjects of scholarly quarrels). But since the fallen rubble tends to cover up and protect the lowest levels, excavations — if carried deep enough — can usually uncover fairly accurate ground plans.

The largest and most thoroughly unearthed complex in Babylon is the so-called "Southern Citadel," to the west of the Processional Way just inside the Ishtar Gate. Trapezoidal in shape, about 900 feet long and more than 600 feet wide (larger than most old, walled cities), it was the royal palace precinct, containing a sequence of five great, open courts surrounded by mazes of rooms — which were probably living quarters (each with its own minor court) for the royal guard and administrators, and government offices. In the third and largest court stood Nebuchadnezzar's throne room, about 50 by 150 feet, of which the elegant, glazed-brick decoration has survived. The royal residence seems to have lain safely and grandly off the fourth court. The fifth appears to have been part of an earlier palace, built by Nabopolassar. Beyond *that* stood the most mind-boggling of Nebuchadnezzar's citadels, with walls 65 to 80 feet *thick* — conceivably meant as a last, impregnable retreat for the royal household in time of absolute emergency.

Two problems surround the notorious Hanging Gardens: first, the adjective "hanging," which led people to imagine something floating in air; and secondly the many fanciful reconstructions that have been built in thin air, as it were, to go with the phrase. In fact, they seem to have been nothing more or less than a terraced roof garden perhaps 100 feet square (a surviving series of 14 10-foot-wide supporting stone vaults outlines their probable location), in the northeast corner of Nebuchadnezzar's Palace, watered by an ingenious system of pumps or buckets on chains from underground wells. If far from the imaginary "Wonder of the World" tradition has led us to conceive, they may still have seemed astonishing to travelers of antiquity, lifting palm fronds and other mirage-like greenery high over the huge city walls, just to the right of the Ishtar Gate.

One is free to imagine them built to the order of the queen-regent Semiramis (the "Semiramide" of Rossini's opera) around 800 B.C., and restored by Nebuchadnezzar around 600; or simply built by the latter in the first place, as a wedding present for his queen, who (supposedly) longed for the mountain greenery of her native Persia.

The second largest precinct in Babylon, the "Esagila," was reserved for the Temple of Marduk, the presiding deity of the town. In all, his precinct covered more than 60 acres. (It has, so far, been only partially uncovered.)

After each invasion of the city, the major temple — which dates back to the First Dynasty (1894-1595 B.C.) —was rebuilt, but never more splendidly than by Nebuchadnezzar. The gold alter-ego of the god, decorated with precious jewels and kept in the central shrine, or *cella*, was more than once carried off by invading armies, but each time fetched back by the Babylonians. One approached the main temple from the Processional Way through a holy gate (opened only three times a year, for the spring celebrations), or one of 11 others, into a gigantic court. The temple itself stood on a high terrace, surrounded by other smaller buildings — residences, offices, storerooms and the like — and a great deal of daily activity.

Nothing of any particular splendor has been unearthed here — robbers were active in Babylon for many centuries before honest archaeologists. But Herodotus, a colorful if untrustworthy Greek traveler and historian, says that he *saw* the great idol, with its canopied throne and offering table, all three made of gold, and weighing together 24 tons (768,000 ounces). He visited Babylon about 450 B.C., after the depredations of its Persian conquerors. He could have been reporting second-hand, or been fooled by gold plate, or glittering yellow tiles. But it does seem likely that the shrine, with its statue and its furnishings, were in King Nebuchadnezzar's time at least elaborate and costly enough to justify a great number of awed reports.

The ground plan of the temple, and various inscriptions, indicate that it was built and rebuilt, decorated and enlarged by numerous kings over 1,400 years. Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar were particularly zealous. There was no better way to keep Marduk happy, and Babylonia prosperous. The main building —about 250 feet square — seems to have contained about 28 rooms around a central court, including shrines to gods other than Marduk. His own chapel (130 by 65 feet) had pillars adorned with alabaster and lapis lazuli, a ceiling of gold-plated cedarwood beams, and paneling studded with gems. Nebuchadnezzar tells us he plated the walls with gold.

According to one ancient inscription, "There are altogether in Babylon 53 temples of the great gods, 55 shrines dedicated to Marduk, 300 shrines belonging to earth divinities, 600 shrines for celestial divinities, 180 altars to the goddess Ishtar, 180 to the gods Nergal and Adad, and 12 other altars to various deities." Many of these may have been no more than wall-niches, but the numbers are still impressive. With a population (my personal wild guess) of perhaps 200,000 within the city walls, Babylon must have been a greater City of Churches than Brooklyn.

The best-preserved shrine of ancient Babylon is the Temple of Ninmah (goddess of the underworld) just inside the Ishtar Gate. Like all Babylonian temples, it is completely and solidly walled, with an opening to the north flanked by projecting towers. The dark vestibule leads to an open court. At the south end of it stood the ante-chapel and chapel, with its raised shrine of the goddess. Along the sides of the court were living quarters for priests, offering rooms, and a stairway to the roof. A large, thick-walled Temple of Ishtar was discovered east of the Processional Way, with the sacred shrines at a right angle to the entrance axis. Two similar minor temples have been unearthed near the south city wall.

The gold figure of Marduk — ten feet high? eighteen? — like almost all other objects of ready exchange value in Babylon (including a great many bricks) has long since disappeared. Surviving images of the god depict him as standing in profile, thickset and columnar, with the huge eyes and squared-off curly beard of most Mesopotamian kings. He wears a tunic covered with star-inscribed discs, a chain around his neck from which hang three large similar discs, and a feather-topped cylindrical crown. He carries a curved-blade weapon and a scepter; a slim, horned "dragon" always sits at his side. The idol (or the god) was provided with a bedroom and a throne room, and furnished (like his male worshippers) with live female companions — the notorious "sacred prostitutes," who may explain the disgusting image of Babylon (the harlot arrayed in purple and scarlet) in the Book of Revelations. Marduk's statue was taken outside for the sacred processions, during which the king had to grasp his hand in order to retain the right to rule. The rites that surrounded him seem to have been a unique blend of pious austerity and overwhelming spectacle. On the one hand, according to an historian, the annual gathering of the gods in his honor "must have been the most splendid religious festival the world has ever known." On the other, declares a second,

> The monotheistic strain in the prayers and hymns addressed to Marduk is sometimes so pronounced that if one susbstitutes Yahweh or God for Marduk, they might form part of a Jewish or Christian service of today. . . . The spirit of reverence and humility does not fall short of the attitude towards Yahweh in the Psalms, and the conception of Marduk rises to a height of spiritual aspiration which comes to us as a surprise in a religion that remained steeped in polytheism and that was associated with practices and rites of a much lower order of thought.

The ziggurat, or symbolic mountain adjacent to the temple, by which the god was invited to descend to earth each year, has gained more than its share of ill fame by being identified for many centuries with the "Tower of Babel" of Genesis, chapter 11. Since there is nothing left of it but the base (a 300-foot square) and some steps, anyone is free to reconstruct what went on above. On the evidence of a clay tablet description, Herodotus's account and Dr. Koldewey's digs, archaeologists have posited a symmetrical solid-brick step-tower of seven stories on a base, rising to 300 feet. At the top level, it is believed, stood a temple with blue-enameled walls containing a golden table and an ornate bed, on which slept (Herodotus says) the one Babylonian woman chosen each year to be the consort of the god. The ruins suggest that at least the two vertical lower-level blocks, ornamented with straight buttresses or

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Opera Shop Special Events

Two legendary stars will make personal appearances at the Opera Shop during the Festival. Elisabeth Schwarzkopf will be signing copies of her book, *On and Off the Record: A Memoir of Walter Legge*, on June 15 from 3 to 5 p.m. Dorothy Kirsten will be the guest on June 26 from 1 to 3 p.m., when she will be signing copies of her autobiography, *A Time to Sing*, as well as three new recordings never before released.

* * *

The Opera Shop Logo Contest offers patrons a chance to win a signed Hockney poster. Participants may pick up entry forms at the Shop on Grove Street or at the Opera Shop Boutique on the mezzanine level of the War Memorial Opera House. No purchase is required; just identify the silhouettes in the Opera Shop logo. The winner will be announced on July 6; in case of more than one correct entry, multiple prizes will be awarded.

* * *

Of course, the Opera Shop also offers its regular outstanding selection of arts-related merchandise, including libretti, scores and recordings of all five Summer Festival productions. Pre-performance browsing can be not only pleasant, but productive as well.

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The Real Babylon

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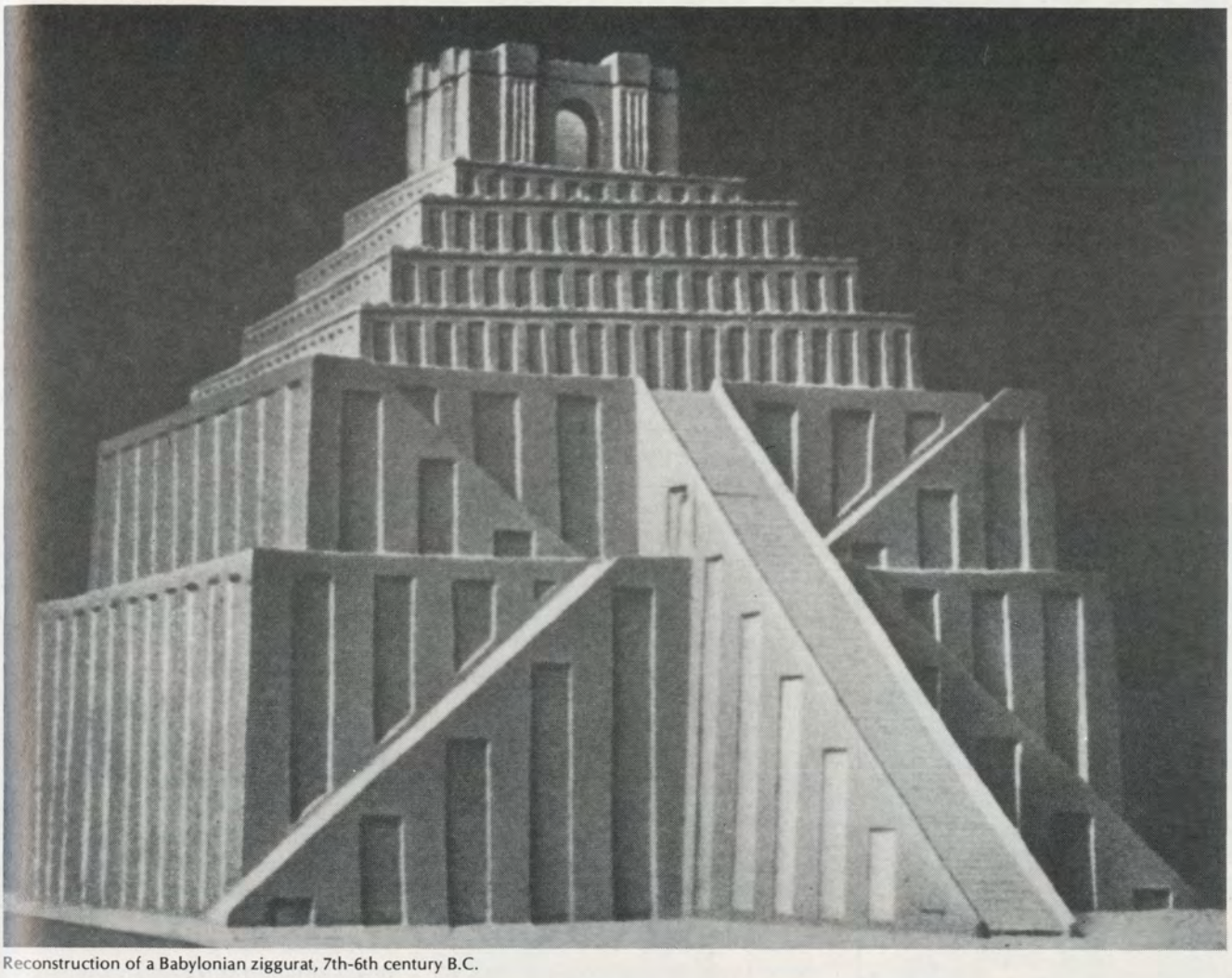

Reconstruction of a Babylonian ziggurat, 7th-6th century B.C.

pilasters, were accessible by a colossal run of formal stairs, perhaps 150 feet high. The next four levels — each about 20 feet high — may have been connected by interior stairs or a circumferential ramp, culminating in a cubic *shahuru,* or temple, perhaps 50 feet high.

In a wonderful book by André Parrot of the Ecole de Louvre (*Ziggurats et Tour de Babel,* 1949) are assembled 24 fanciful reconstructions of the biblical Tower of Babel, from an 11th century ivory at Salerno to the famous spiraling, Matterhorn-high mountains of Brueghel and Doré, swarming with their doomed and blasphemous builders. They compose an awesome gallery of images of man's defiance of the heavens — the Original Sin that is architecture — but they have, alas, nothing at all in common with the squat, four-square ziggurat of Marduk at Babylon (which was *still,* of course, mightily impressive — the tallest building on earth for many centuries).

How and when it got mixed up with the Jack-and-the-Beanstalk-like Genesis story no one seems to know. It may simply be one more instance of the Israelites' implacable hatred of all things Babylonian. Far from trying to equal or challenge their god with a gesture of overweening pride, the kings, priests, and people of Babylon were trying to build for him a half-way house, so that he might deign to come down and dwell among them, and they might share in his good will and protection.

> In the Third Millenium B.C., the human race was still reaching out towards the invisible, by which it felt surrounded and dominated. The ziggurat is the architectural proof: an anguished prayer, not a shout of defiance; a hand held out, not a clenched fist. (André Parrot)

On the whole, this communal aspiration strikes me not as vain and evil, but as something at once more noble and more comprehensible than the aspirations of the builders of either the Great Pyramids of Egypt, or the thousand-foot skyscrapers of our day. ■

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Verdi's French Connection

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one looks ahead to comparable scenes of father-daughter affection in *Luisa Miller, Rigoletto* and *Simon Boccanegra,* one cannot help but think that Verdi would have been deeply touched by Act III, scene 2, and Act IV, scene 8, of the French drama. He might well have composed for them extremely heartfelt music, especially since his own daughter, Virginia, had died less than three years before.

Perhaps in consequence of reducing the scenes of sibling rivalry for their father's affections, Solera added a love rivalry between the sisters that does not exist in the play. It is given prominence in the opera's second scene where, in an aside, Abigaille addresses to Ismaele words almost identical to those uttered some 30 years later by another powerful Near Eastern princess to another warrior who has spurned patriotism for love (c.f. *Aida,* Act IV, scene 1): "I loved you. I would have given my kingdom and my heart for your heart. This love is now a raging fury; it can give you life or death."

Verdi felt that the romantic interest diverted attention from the main thrust of the story. "In the third act he [Solera] had made a love duet between Fenena and Ismaele. I did not like it because it cooled the action and it seemed to me to detract somewhat from the biblical grandeur that characterized the drama . . ." Verdi's instincts, as usual, were right. It's a shame that he was not yet well enough established to insist that Solera eliminate the love interest entirely. Since it all but disappears from the opera after the opening scenes, it gives audiences a false expectation of its importance in the drama. Perhaps it was unthinkable for a young composer who had not as yet had his first major success to go against both the wishes of a successful librettist and the conventions of Romantic opera. As it is, *Nabucco* contains the least significant romantic love story in all of Verdi's operas.

Anicet-Bourgeois and Cornu borrowed a few dramatic situations and key phrases (*parole sceniche,* as Verdi would have called them) from non-biblical sources. Two of Phénenna's lines immediately bring to mind famous antecedents. When Ismaël urges her to save herself by disassociating herself from his plight and his religion, she responds: "Since I have sacrificed everything for thee, I can no longer leave thee . . . and whither thou goest . . . I will go." Since, like Ruth, she has become a convert to Judaism for the sake of those she loves, the allusion could not easily have passed unnoticed. (There is, coincidentally, a Noémi, a Jewish woman who befriends Phénenna, in the play.) In an earlier scene, Phénenna receives the message from her father that she must bring Ismaël to his appointed death. Horrified by the order, she cries out, "*Ismaël condamné! et c'est moi . . . moi, qui dois livrer sa tête au bourreau!*" ("Ishmael condemned! and I . . . I am the one who must deliver his head to the executioner!"). The 1836 French audience would certainly have recognized an echo of the most famous lines from the operatic hit of the previous season in Paris, Halévy's *La Juive.* Eléazar, in his despair over his daughter's imminent death, sings repeatedly, "*Et c'est moi qui te livre au bourreau!*" in the aria "Rachel, quand du Seigneur."

There are also two significant borrowings related to Nabuchodonosor's madness. As the king is about to strike down Phénenna for her abjuration and treason, a thunderclap is heard. The sword falls from his hand and the crown is wrenched from his head. Driven insane, he sees an avenging spirit before his eyes and cries out, "Save me . . . Don't you see this terrible phantom that rises up and moves forward? . . . it seizes me and throws me down." A very similar ghostly apparition confronts Assur in the mad scene from Voltaire's *Sémiramis* (and Rossini's *Semiramide*). Both play and opera, also Babylonian in locale, were performed in Paris during the 1820s and 1830s. They are the probable source of the protagonist's mad scene in the Anicet-Bourgeois/Cornu play. Finally, before Nabuchodonosor regains his senses, and imagining that he has killed Phénenna, he sees a drop of blood on his hand and turns in horror to Abdal: "I have struck her dead . . . do you see this spot I had here? . . . it's her blood

— my daughter's blood. All night long I have tried to blot it out . . . " Stains and strains of *Macbeth*!

If the authors of *Nabuchodonosor* were not above appropriating certain elements from previous works, they did invent all of the leading characters, save the eponymous hero, and the plot development. Unfortunately, what little psychological depth occurs in the play has been all but eliminated from the opera. Phénenna's and Ismaël's struggle between love and honor is dealt with summarily by Solera, and the several lengthy confrontations between Abigaïl and Nabuchodonosor are compressed into a single scene, albeit the finest one in the opera.

In the play, it is the king himself who informs Abigaïl of her sin-tainted birth (she is the offspring of Nabuchodonosor's wife and her paramour, one of the king's ministers, not the child of slaves as in the opera) by showing her a document he wears close to his heart. She is not his blood relative, he says, but a slave before her master. Only if she promises to renounce the throne and become a high priestess (the Babylonian equivalent of entering a nunnery) will he keep the adulterous crime of her forbears silent. Abigaïl justifiably reproaches him for exposing her to such humiliation. "After showing me power, glory and the throne, you have exchanged all that for shameful ignominy," she says. Her desire for vengeance, which Verdi and Solera have translated brilliantly in the opening *scena* in Act II of the opera, is far more forcefully motivated in the play. Furthermore, at the point in the play where the king loses his senses following the prodigious thunderclap, Abigaïl takes advantage of the general bewilderment to seize the fatal document from Nabuchodonosor's breast and mounts the throne, exclaiming, "Babylonians! you have a queen! . . . Jews! you are still slaves!" Later on, as in the opera, she scornfully tears up the document before the helpless king's eyes.

In fact, both Abigaïl and Nabuchodonosor are portrayed in darker, more violent colors by the French playwrights than by Solera. The king is pitiless toward the suffering Hebrews. At one point, presaging a

MARGARET NORTON PHOTO

Nabucco at the San Francisco Opera in 1970: Act III, Scene 2.

Hitlerian pronouncement still a century off, he declares, "Babylonians, the god Baal only asked for the sacrifice of a few victims . . . Nabuchodonosor wants the complete destruction ["*en holocauste,*" in the French text] of a race." He is equally pitiless toward Ismaël, Abigaïl and even his real daughter Phénenna.

It is only through divine intervention — a real throwback to the *deus ex machina* of classical tragedy — that his turnabout is achieved. Having failed by all other methods to save his renegade daughter from the wrath of the Babylonian priests, in desperation the king falls to his knees and prays to the God of the Jews: "Save my daughter and I will rebuild your altars and kiss the dust of your temples. . . . Give me back my daughter and I will sing your praises." This is exactly what comes to pass in the play's dénouement. Phénenna is slain by the executioner on Abigaïl's orders. Nabuchodonosor, having recovered both mind and strength because of his prayer, kills the unrepentant Abigaïl with his sword. The mighty thunderclap is now heard once again. As celestial music begins to play, a ray of light shines on Phénenna's lifeless body. She comes slowly back to life and embraces her awestruck father. The Hebrew leader Zacharie explains that God has accomplished what the greatest king on earth could not. Nabuchodonosor removes the chains and frees all the Jews. The curtain descends as Babylonians and Hebrews alike praise the glory of the God of Israel.

Solera opted for a less supernatural and more decorous finale. Nabucco rushes to save Fenena, checks the executioner's hand and orders the idol he had erected to deify himself shattered. It falls of itself and all kneel in wonder to acclaim the true God, the God of Israel. At this point Solera provides the anticlimactic and improbable scene of Abigaille's repentance in the face of death. Having taken poison, she drags herself before the crowd and asks for pardon. She begs forgiveness of Fenena and asks Nabucco to bless the love of Fenena and Ismaele (who, contrary to the play, where he is indeed executed, is saved for the happy ending). Abigaïl, too, now lifts her voice to the God of Israel. Asking not to be damned, she collapses and dies.

This final scene rings false after the black-hearted perfidies perpetrated by Abigaille earlier in the opera. (The death scene was judiciously cut in many 19th-century performances of *Nabucco,* a cut apparently sanctioned by the composer himself.) It is too facile a resolution to the fascinating

and memorable character that clearly served as a model for Verdi's later treatment of Lady Macbeth. It is not the repentant convert that audiences take away with them from a performance of *Nabucco,* despite Solera's intentions, but the arch-villainess created by Verdi in some of the most powerful and demanding music ever written for the soprano voice.

The major difference betwen *Nabuchodonosor* and *Nabucco,* however, is the importance given by librettist and composer to Zaccaria and the Hebrews. It was at Verdi's insistence, as we have seen, that Zaccaria's prophesy, "Del futuro nel buio discerno," replaced the Ismaele-Fenena duet written by Solera. In fact, the Hebrew prophet has more set-piece solos than any other principal (a *cavatina* in Act I and a *preghiera* in Act II, in addition to the abovementioned *profezia*). Finally, there are four full-scale choruses for the Hebrews, not to mention various choral interventions in other numbers. Among the former is the most famous piece in the score, "Va, pensiero, sull'ali dorate," in which the plight of an oppressed people yearning to throw off the yoke of foreign domination is given voice. There is only the slightest germ of material for such choral outbursts in the original drama.

It is precisely these passages, however, that determined the initial success of *Nabucco* and started Verdi on the road to fame and fortune. "Va, pensiero" and "O Signore, dal tetto natio" from the next Verdi/Solera collaboration, *I Lombardi* (1843), became so popular as thinly-disguised manifestations of resurgent Italian patriotism that Verdi became known to the Milanese as *"il papà dei cori."*

Whether or not Verdi consciously strove to capture and give musical expression to the longing of his own people for independence in *Nabucco,* the opera represents the first in a series of works constituting one of the most remarkable conjunctions of composer and *Zeitgeist* in the history of music. ■

Arthur Kaplan, formerly co-editor of this magazine, is now a freelance writer, critic and lecturer on opera.

San Francisco Opera Commissions Hockney Festival Poster

The moral of *The Rake's Progress* is explicit: at the end of the opera, the five principal characters warn us, "For idle hands/ And hearts and minds/ The Devil finds/ A work to do."

David Hockney needn't worry about the Devil; there are too many others ready to find him a work to do, such as the San Francisco Opera, which commissioned the world-renowned artist to create a special poster in celebration of the second annual San Francisco Opera Summer Festival. Hockney, born in England but currently a resident of Southern California, is the designer of the production of *The Rake's Progress* that will be presented during the 1982 Festival. Inspired by Hogarth's famous series of engravings, Hockney's vision of *The Rake's Progress* was his first opera production, originally created for the Glyndebourne Festival in England. Hockney later adapted the production for the larger stage of La Scala in Milan, and his lavishly praised designs for this piece are now being seen in this country for the first time.

Hockney's sets and costumes were the focus of critical comment when the production first appeared. "This production is plainly going to be known as David Hockney's," said one, while others called his designs "vividly evocative," "full of arresting, unexpected ideas" and "the most vivid new art about." Particularly singled out for mention was the Bedlam scene. Hailing Hockney's bold conception of the madhouse as "memorable," "most striking" and "hallucinatory," critics went on to say, "In presenting the

The San Francisco Opera Summer Festival poster, designed by David Hockney, is part of an exhibit of Hockney posters on display both in the Opera Shop Gallery and the south Box Level Boutique.

inmates of Bedlam as a box-pewed congregation enclosed by walls upon which the engraving techniques have now degenerated into schizoid graffiti, Hockney achieves a visual *frisson* to match the dramatic situation." "In Bedlam," wrote another, "where Tom's fellow-inmates arise like spectres from their symbolic cells, we have a *coup de théâtre* both disturbing and poignant."

It is this memorable scene that Hockney has chosen as the basis for the 1982 Festival poster. Measuring 34 by 39 inches, the poster is available exclusively at the San Francisco Opera Shop, 199 Grove at Van Ness, for $25. A limited edition of the poster, signed by the artist, is also available, for $100.

An exhibit of posters by Hockney is currently on view at the Opera Shop Gallery for the duration of the Festival. The display includes his most recent designs for the New World Festival in Miami, the Young Playwrights Festival in New York and the Barbican Center in London, plus 18 other posters. All items, including the Summer Festival poster, are available for purchase.

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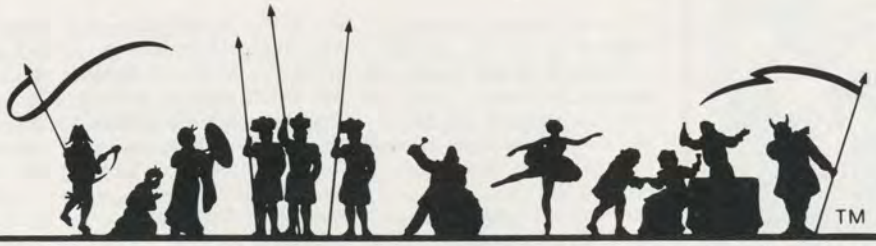

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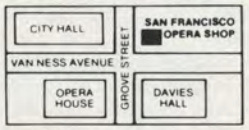

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King, Menthol or Box 100's:

A whole carton of Carlton has less tar than a single pack of...

...KINGS	TAR mg./cig.	NICOTINE mg./cig.
Kent	12	1.0
Winston Lights	11	0.9
Marlboro	16	1.0
Salem	14	1.1
Kool Milds	11	0.9
Newport	16	1.2

...100's	TAR mg./cig.	NICOTINE mg./cig.
Kent 100's	14	1.2
Winston Lights 100's	12	0.9
Benson & Hedges 100's	16	1.1
Parliament Lights 100's	12	0.9
Salem 100's	15	1.1
Marlboro 100's	16	1.1

TAR & NICOTINE NUMBERS AS REPORTED IN LATEST FTC REPORT

Carlton Kings	**Less than**	**0.5**	**0.1**
Carlton Menthol	**Less than**	**0.5**	**0.1**
Carlton Box 100's	**Less than**	**0.5**	**0.1**

Box—lowest of all brands—less than 0.01 mg. tar, 0.002 mg. nicotine.

Carlton is lowest.

U.S. Government laboratory tests confirm no cigarette lower in tar than Carlton.

Warning: The Surgeon General Has Determined That Cigarette Smoking Is Dangerous to Your Health.

Box: Less than 0.5 mg. "tar", 0.05 mg. nicotine; Soft Pack, Menthol and 100's Box: Less than 0.5 mg. "tar", 0.1 mg. nicotine av. per cigarette, FTC Report Dec. '81.