Norma

1982

Saturday, September 11, 1982 8:00 PM
Tuesday, September 14, 1982 8:00 PM
Friday, September 17, 1982 8:00 PM (Live radio broadcast)
Saturday, September 18, 1982 11:00 AM (Radio broadcast)
Tuesday, September 21, 1982 8:00 PM
Sunday, September 26, 1982 2:00 PM
Wednesday, September 29, 1982 7:30 PM
Saturday, October 2, 1982 8:00 PM

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1982 SAN FRANCISCO OPERA

NORMA

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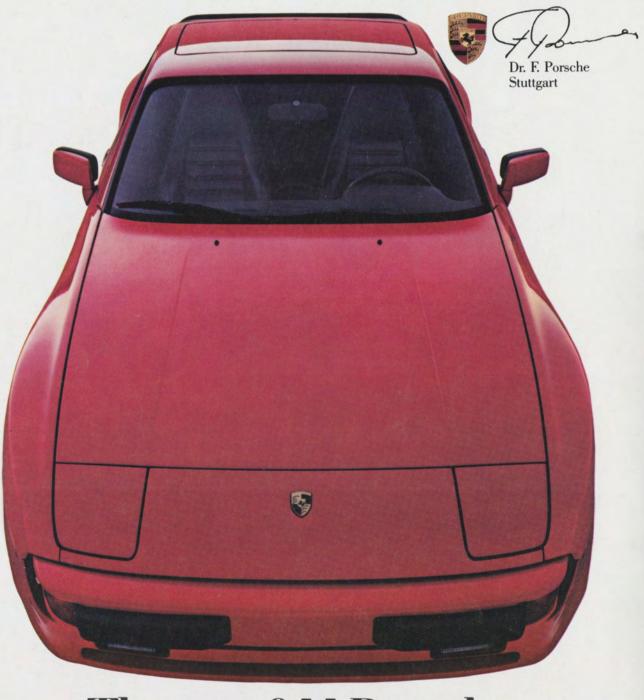
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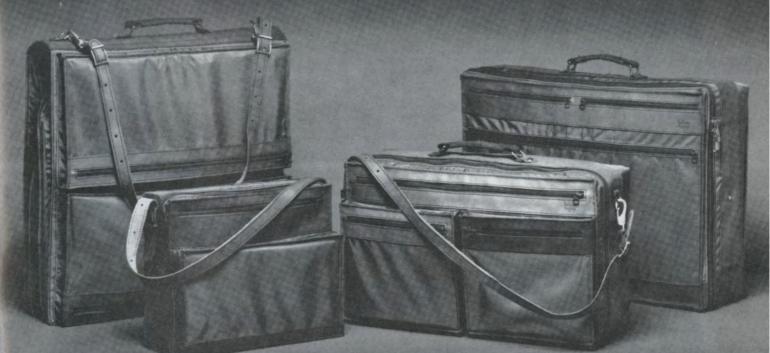
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General Director's Message

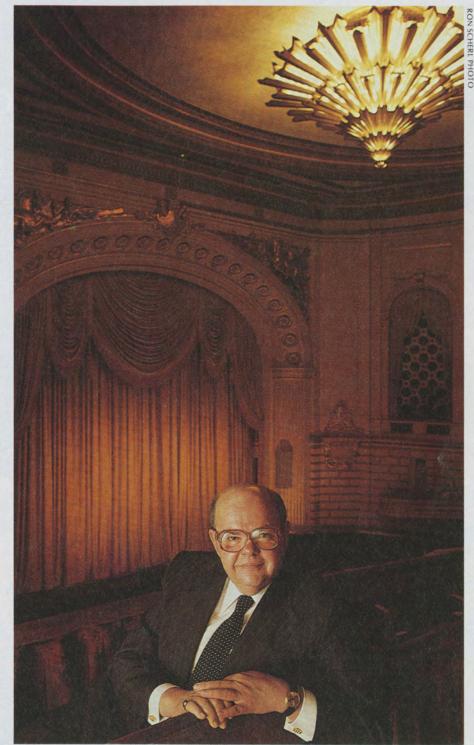
I am happy to welcome you to the 60th consecutive Fall Season of the San Francisco Opera, the 50th anniversary of our first season in the magnificent War Memorial Opera House.

In my first Fall Season as general director, I hope that I have presented a program and a roster of artists that you will thoroughly enjoy. I am proud that we were able to secure the services of so many distinguished performers, both in the category of artists known and loved here and those who are making San Francisco Opera debuts.

With the realization that I am following in the footsteps of two distinguished predecessors, much of my energy is going into the long-range planning of exciting future seasons.

It is perhaps for this reason that I continue to be concerned with the financial health of this great opera company. In order to remain one of the outstanding cultural institutions of the world, we must thrive and grow and continue to surpass the exacting standards we have set for ourselves.

With the help of my excellent staff and a community whose loyalty and support remain the envy of other opera houses, I am confident that our goals will continue to be met.



5



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Editor: Koraljka Lockhart. Art director: Frank Benson. Editorial assistants: Robert M. Robb, John Schauer. Editorial offices: San Francisco Opera, War Memorial Opera House, San Francisco, CA 94102. Telephone (415) 861-4008.

Featured on the covers of all 10 issues of the 1982 San Francisco Opera Fall season magazine are reproductions of works of art from the collections of the *Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco*: The M.H. de Young Memorial Museum in Golden Gate Park and the California Palace of the Legion of Honor in Lincoln Park, whose staff generously assisted in the search for the right subjects.

Moonlit Landscape RALPH ALBERT BLAKELOCK, 1847-1919, American. Oil on canvas, 27¼x48. Anonymous loan to

The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco M.H.de Young Memorial Museum California Palace of the Legion of Honor

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NORMA

Features

The Swan of Catania and the Druid Priestess by John Schauer

Bellini's career, set against the birth of Romanticism, with consideration of the energy that sparks the most famous score of this Romantic composer.

Norma's World by Bill Huck

Footnotes to Norma

Departments

Living in a society that was primitive and even bloodthirsty, the Druids were also priests, prophets and guardians of the sacred flame of knowledge.

The play and the personalities behind NORMA: an examination of literary and lyrical forces that converged and resulted in a masterpiece.

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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 Quartarato, Advertising Manager; Piper Parry, Editor; Frank Benson, Art Direction; Pat Adami, Administrative Assistant; Public Relations, Jerry Friedman Associates. ©All Rights reserved 1982 by Performing Arts Network, Inc. Reproduction from this magazine without written permission is prohibited.

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From the President

It is with great pride that we welcome you to San Francisco Opera's 60th consecutive Fall Season; it was on September 26, 1923, that Gaetano Merola conducted a performance of La Bohème in the Civic Auditorium, launching the first Fall Season of what was to become one of the great opera companies of the world. It is a happy coincidence that 50 years ago this October, the indefatigable Merola conducted Tosca at the start of our Company's first season in its beautiful home, the War Memorial Opera House. It is a fitting tribute to this great house that our final presentation this fall is a commemorative production of Tosca.

I would like to extend a special welcome to our new subscribers, who have joined the San Francisco Opera family on several new fall subscription series and during our recent Summer Festival. Congratulations are due to everyone concerned with the Festival, which was a stunning success; attendance was 83 per cent of capacity, more than 60 per cent higher than that for our first festival in 1981. This significant increase in support is most heartening.

One of the primary concerns of our general director, Terence A. McEwen, is long-range planning to secure a stable financial future for our Company. An important means for achieving this is our endowment fund, which serves two purposes: the interest earned by the fund supplements our annual earned income, while the principal is a cushion against the sort of unforeseen financial difficulty that hangs over every non-profit performing arts organization. Some of you may not be aware that San Francisco Opera entered a voluntary



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

moratorium on our endowment fund drive during the financing and completion of the Performing Arts Center. Now that the Center is completed, it is imperative that we direct our energy with renewed enthusiasm toward the growth of our endowment fund. A major step in that direction is this year's gala opening night benefit performance of Un Ballo *in Maschera,* the net proceeds from which have given our endowment fund drive a major boost.

As I have mentioned so often in these messages, we could not survive without the continuing support to our annual fund drive. Ticket revenues cover only about 55 per cent of our expenses, and we must look to annual contributions from our supporters for a substantial portion of the remaining 45 per cent. We are grateful to the thousands who make annual gifts to us; if you are not among them, won't you please join them.

We would like to extend our continuing 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. Their assistance remains a vital contribution to our endeavors.

Finally, I would like to welcome the 10 new members of the San Francisco Opera Board of Directors who were elected during the past few months. They join us in our commitment to work with the administration and staff to give the San Francisco public what it deserves: a Company that is both financially stable and artistically dynamic.

San Francisco Opera 1982

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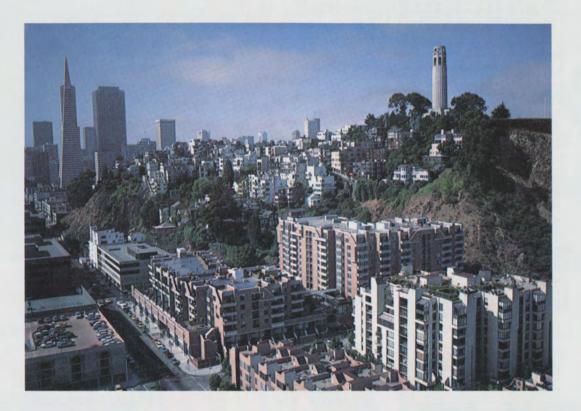
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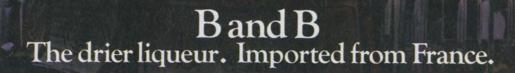
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Giacomo Aragall Francisco Araiza* Hermann Becht* Emile Belcourt* Sesto Bruscantini James Busterud* Silvano Carroli* John Davies John Del Carlo Michael Devlin **Justino** Díaz Stephen Dickson* John Duykers

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continued on p. 24

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San Francisco Opera

Terence A. McEwen, general director

1982 Fall Season

Gala Benefit Opening Night Friday, September 10, **7:00**

Un Ballo in Maschera Verdi This production was made possible by a very generous gift from a friend of the San Francisco Opera. Caballé, Battle, Baldani/Pavarotti, Carroli*, Langan, Stapp, Woodman, Thomas, Kazaras* Adler/Frisell/Conklin/Lamb/Munn

Saturday, September 11, 8:00

Norma Bellini This production was made possible in 1972 through the generosity of the late James D. Robertson. Sutherland, Horne, Richards/Mauro*, Flagello, Hensel* Bonynge/Mansouri/Varona/Sullivan

Monday, September 13, 8:00

Un Ballo in Maschera Verdi Caballé, Battle, Baldani/Moldoveanu*, Carroli*, Langan, Stapp, Woodman, Thomas, Kazaras Adler/Frisell/Conklin/Lamb/Munn

Tuesday, September 14, 8:00 Norma Bellini

Thursday, September 16, 8:00 Un Ballo in Maschera Verdi

Fridaý, September 17, 8:00 Norma Bellini

Sunday, September 19, 2:00 Un Ballo in Maschera Verdi

Tuesday, September 21, 8:00 Norma Bellini

Wednesday, September 22, 7:30 Un Ballo in Maschera Verdi

Friday, September 24, 8:00

Salome Strauss Barstow*, Dernesch, Quittmeyer, Hartliep/Belcourt*, Devlin, Hensel, Del Carlo, MacAllister, Duykers, Green, Tate, Busterud*, Wexler, Stapp, Glaum, Kazaras

Klobučar/Lehnhoff/Hoheisel**/Munn

Saturday, September 25, 8:00 Un Ballo in Maschera Verdi

Sunday, September 26, 2:00 Norma Bellini Monday, September 27, 8:00 Un Ballo in Maschera Verdi

Tuesday, September 28, 8:00 Salome Strauss

Wednesday, September 29, 7:30 Norma Bellini

Friday, October 1, 8:00 Salome Strauss

Saturday, October 2, 8:00 Norma Bellini

Tuesday, October 5, 7:30 New Production

Le Nozze di Figaro Mozart D'oese**, Popp*, Esham, Rice, Gamberoni*/Prey, Krause*, Langan, Green, Tate, Stapp Varviso/Frisell/Brown/Sullivan

Wednesday, October 6, 7:30 Salome Strauss

Friday, October 8, 7:30 Le Nozze di Figaro Mozart

Saturday, October 9, 2:00 Family Matinee

The Marriage of Figaro Mozart Cook, de la Rosa, Quittmeyer, Gamberoni/Davies, Woodman, Glaum, Thomas, Tate, Stapp Bradshaw/Thompson/Brown/Sullivan

Saturday, October 9, 8:00 Salome Strauss

Sunday, October 10, 2:00 La Cenerentola Rossini Horne, de la Rosa, Richards/Araiza*, Bruscantini, Montarsolo, Del Carlo Bernardi/Asagaroff/Ponnelle/Sullivan

Tuesday, October 12, 8:00 Salome Strauss

Wednesday October 13, 7:30 La Cenerentola Rossini

Friday, October 15, **7:30** Le Nozze di Figaro Mozart

Saturday, October 16, 8:00 La Cenerentola Rossini Sunday, October 17, 2:00 Salome Strauss

Tuesday, October 19, 8:00 La Cenerentola Rossini

Wednesday, October 20, 7:30 Le Nozze di Figaro Mozart

Friday, October 22, 8:00 La Cenerentola Rossini

Saturday, October 23, 8:00 New Production

Dialogues of the Carmelites Poulenc This production from the Metropolitan Opera was made possible by a muchappreciated grant from the San Francisco Opera Guild. L. Price, Crespin, Vaness, Zeani*, Norden*, Petersen, Richards/Hensel, Halfvarson, Green, Thomas, Busterud Lewis/Dexter*/Reppa/Greenwood/ Wechsler

Sunday, October 24, 2:00 Le Nozze di Figaro Mozart

Monday, October 25, 8:00

La Cenerentola Rossini

Tuesday, October 26, 8:00 Dialogues of the Carmelites Poulenc

Wednesday, October 27, 7:30 Le Nozze di Figaro Mozart

Friday, October 29, 8:00 Dialogues of the Carmelites Poulenc

Saturday, October 30, **7:30** Le Nozze di Figaro Mozart

Sunday, October 31, 2:00 La Cenerentola Rossini

Wednesday, November 3, 7:30 Dialogues of the Carmelites Poulenc

Thursday, November 4, 8:00 New Production

The Queen of Spades Tchaikovsky Zylis-Gara, Resnik, Quittmeyer, Petersen, de la Rosa, Gamberoni/Svetlev, Krause, Dickson*, Green, Halfvarson, Thomas, Tate, Stapp Agler/Merrill/O'Hearn*/Sulich*/Munn

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Sunday, November 7, 2:00 The Queen of Spades Tchaikovsky

Tuesday, November 9, 8:00
Dialogues of the Carmelites Poulenc

Wednesday, November 10, 7:30 San Francisco Opera Premiere

Cendrillon Massenet Production from National Arts Centre, Ottawa, Canada Greenawald, Welting, Wallis, Forrester, Erickson*, Rice/Gramm, Busterud, Tate, Glaum Bernardi/Macdonald*/Bardon*/Mess/ Sullivan

Friday, November 12, 8:00 The Queen of Spades Tchaikovsky

Saturday, November 13, 8:00 Cendrillon Massenet

Sunday, November 14, 2:00
Dialogues of the Carmelites Poulenc

Monday, November 15, 8:00 The Queen of Spades Tchaikovsky

Thursday, November 18, **7:30** The Queen of Spades Tchaikovsky

Friday, November 19, 7:30

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Saturday, November 20, 2:00 Cendrillon Massenet

Monday, November 22, 8:00 **The Queen of Spades** Tchaikovsky

Tuesday, November 23, **7:30** Lohengrin Wagner

Wednesday, November 24, 7:30 Tosca Puccini This production was made possible in 1972 by generous grants from the Charles E. Merrill Trust and Mr. and Mrs. Robert A. Magowan, Trustees. Jones/Aragall, Díaz, Tajo, Halfvarson, Green, Glaum, Stapp Navarro/Farruggio/Ponnelle/Munn

Thursday, November 25, 8:00 Cendrillon Massenet

Friday, November 26, 8:00 Tosca Puccini Saturday, November 27, 8:00 **The Queen of Spades** Tchaikovsky

Sunday, November 28, **1:30** Lohengrin Wagner

Monday, November 29, 8:00 Cendrillon Massenet

Tuesday, November 30, 8:00 **Tosca** Puccini

Wednesday, December 1, 7:30 Lohengrin Wagner

Friday, December 3, 8:00 Cendrillon Massenet

Saturday, December 4, 8:00 Tosca Puccini

Sunday, December 5, 1:30 Lohengrin Wagner

Monday, December 6, 8:00 Cendrillon Massenet

Tuesday, December 7, 8:00 Tosca Puccini

Wednesday, December 8, 7:30 Lohengrin Wagner

Friday, December 10, 8:00 Tosca Puccini

Saturday, December 11, **7:30** Lohengrin Wagner

Sunday, December 12, 2:00 Tosca Puccini

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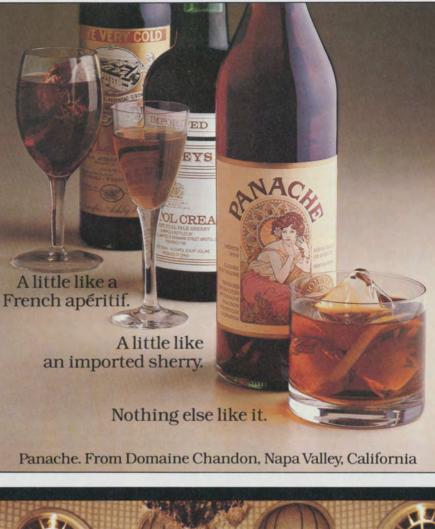
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	8 p.m., 11 a.m.
9/10	Un Ballo in Maschera
	7 p.m., 11 a.m.
9/17	Norma
	8 p.m., 11 a.m.
9/24	The Barber of Seville
	8 p.m., 11 a.m.
10/1	Turandot
	8 p.m., 11 a.m.
10/8	Nabucco
	8 p.m., 11 a.m.
10/15	Le Nozze di Figaro
	7:30 p.m., 10:30 a.m.
10/22	La 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
	8 p.m., 11 a.m.
11/12	The Queen of Spades
	8 p.m., 11 a.m.
11/19	Lohengrin
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The Sman of Catania and the Druid Priestess

By JOHN SCHAUER

It's a wonder Hollywood has never made a film of his life; Vincenzo Bellini had all the attributions of the archetypal Romantic Artist: astonishing precociousness in childhood, strikingly attractive looks, international fame and success at an early age, tempestuous love affairs and a tragically early death. It fairly cries out for dramatization.

Of course, what has by now become the stereotype of the Romantic composer, an image that began with Beethoven, was anything but a cliché during the brief decade of Bellini's operatic output. The "Swan of Catania," as he came to be lionized, was born there on November 3, 1801, and grew up in the era that gave birth to Romanticism, a time during which landmark masterpieces clocked in at what in retrospect seems an unbelievable rate that we can only contemplate with envy.

Bellini's first opera, composed while he was a student, was Adelson e Salvini, first performed in 1825, a year after the premiere of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, Bellini's success resulted in a commission from the Teatro San Carlo to compose Bianca e Gernando (sic), first performed in 1826, the same year as Weber's last opera. Oberon. Bianca made a sufficient impression upon Domenico Barbaja, the greatest opera impresario of his day, for him to commission Bellini's third opera, Il Pirata, which received its premiere at La Scala in 1827, the year of Beethoven's death. Il Pirata was an immediate and sensational success, and it established Bellini's reputation internationally. This was the same year that Schumann wrote in his celebrated review of Chopin's Opus 2 the oftquoted words, "Hats off gentlemen, a genius!"

Romantic genius continued to blossom, and 1828 saw the first performances of Marschner's Der Vampyr in Leipzig and Auber's La Muette de Portici at the Paris Opéra. The former is considered a milestone in the development of German Romantic opera (and one of Wagner's models for Der fliegende Holländer), while the latter is credited as the beginning of French grand opera in the strictest sense of the term. It was the year of Schubert's death, as well as the publication of his Winterreise song-cycle.



Vincenzo Bellini in a contemporary lithograph, made from a painting by Arienti.

The following year, 1829, brought forth the full development of French grand opera with Rossini's last opera, *Guillaume Tell*, as well as two new works by Bellini: *La Straniera*, written for La Scala, and *Zaira*, first performed in Parma. If *Straniera* had a success that rivalled even that of *Pirata*, *Zaira* was considered a failure, a fact Bellini conceded when he borrowed from it for four subsequent operas; he would not have reused music that he expected to be performed in its original form again.

The year 1830 broke new ground with the first performances of Berlioz's Symphonie Fantastique and Victor Hugo's Hernani — revolutions in symphonic music and legitimate theater — and Donizetti's first major success, Anna Bolena. Bellini himself was restored to the ranks of the successful with his I Capuleti ed i Montecchi.

In 1831, Meyerbeer's first French opera, Robert le Diable, brought fame to its composer and marked the birth of the Romantic ballet with its celebrated divertissement depicting an abbey of lapsed nuns dancing in the moonlight. It was also the year of the premieres of La Sonnambula and Norma, two vastly different works whose rapid, successive composition represents perhaps the climax of Bellini's career.

In 1832, Romantic ballet had its first full-length major work, La Sylphide (with music by Schneitzhöffer), and Donizetti produced L'Elisir d'amore. The following year - during which Wagner composed his first opera, Die Feen — Bellini gave Beatrice di Tenda to a world that did not appreciate it. Bellini himself did not consider it a failure, but its significance today seems to rest less on its place - or lack thereof - in the repertoire than on the fact that it was Bellini's last collaboration with Felice Romani, who had written the librettos for all of Bellini's operas since their first project as a team, Il Pirata.

During 1834 — the year that Schumann began composing Carnaval - Bellini rested. He was to write only one more opera, I Puritani, which received its premiere at the Paris Opera in January 1835, the year that also gave the world La Juive and Lucia di Lammermoor. By the end of the year, Bellini was dead from amoebic dysentery at the age of 33, a premature death that evokes the similar fate of Chopin, who met Bellini two years before the latter's death and who, on his own deathbed in 1849, asked for "Ah, non credea mirarti" from La Sonrambula to be played.

Bellini is today seen as the epitome of *bel canto*, an infuriatingly imprecise term that has been used for everything



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Bruna Castagna as Adalgisa in San Francisco Opera's first staging of Norma, 1937.

from Venetian opera of the early 17th century until verismo reared its supposedly realistic head toward the end of the 19th. Certainly as a composer of serious operas (and all but his first effort and La Sonnambula are highly serious) he was in the direct line of the opera seria tradition. Among those with whom he worked during his student years at the Conservatory of San Sebastiano in Naples was Girolamo Crescentini, the last of the great castrati. Rossini, who has been characterized by Donald J. Grout as "the last composer to write castrato roles and also one of the first to appreciate the value of contralto or mezzo-soprano voices in leading parts," was certainly a major influence. We know that Bellini owned scores of several Rossini operas; the first Naples performances of Rossini's Semiramide in 1824 are said to have profoundly impressed the student Bellini, and he continued the tradition of the female "trouser role" (exemplified by Arsace in Semiramide) by making Romeo in his own Capuleti a mezzo-soprano. In his letters, Bellini was explicit regarding his desire for librettos with highly dramatic situations and verses "designed to portray the passions in the liveliest manner," an ideal that recalls the barogue doctrine of the affections.

Music history seems fond of associating composers in pairs, such as Bach and Handel, Mozart and Haydn, Mahler and Bruckner, Debussy and Ravel. Bellini's name has thus become linked with that of Donizetti, and as in any such over-simplification, the generalizations usually made about the two tend to obscure as much as make meaningful the real distinctions of the individuals involved. Like Mozart and Haydn, the two Italians exerted a mutual influence. The traditional cant has been to extol the long, arched melodies of Bellini and the passionate, forceful declamation of Donizetti. As Andrew Porter has pointed out (in "Footnotes to Norma," page 38, and elsewhere), it was more likely Bellini who, with Il Pirata, influenced Donizetti's text-setting. And while there is no escaping the magnificence of Bellini's justly famed melodies, the emphasis writers have put upon the introspective and elegiac quality of some of his work belies the driving rhythmic pulse that gives Norma much of its thrust and impact. It is an aspect of the piece worth examining briefly.

The military aspect of the plot, the presence of the Roman soldiers and the battle aspirations of the Druids, is reflected in the steady, almost march-



Gina Cigna in the title role of San Francisco Opera's first presentation of Norma, 1937.



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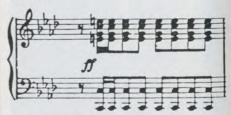


like beat of much of the opera. Indeed, one is struck by the fact that in the entire score of Norma, only one section - the andante of the trio in the finale to Act I - is in a genuine triple meter. It is interesting that the same section, which originated as a duet in Bellini's abandoned setting of Hernani, is the one section where the characters behave in a manner typical of the older opera seria: time is suspended as each character steps back figuratively from the drama and reflects upon his or her emotional reaction to what has immediately transpired, i.e., the revelation that Adalgisa's lover is the same as Norma's. [Richard Bonynge, in his recorded version of Norma, is one of the very few conductors to realize fully this ravishing moment of repose by taking the section at the leisurely andante Bellini indicated in the score, and by including the essential, though unpublished, stanza for Adalgisa.] Outside of this one interlude, the rest of the opera is composed in duple meter, giving the work a feeling of urgency and inevitability. At times Bellini will subdivide a duple meter into triplets, but the underlying pulse remains adamantly duple.

In addition, there are several rhythmic figures that pervade the score of *Norma*, in both the vocal lines and the accompaniment. Perhaps the most immediately noticeable is the fanfarelike rhythm



(sometimes with the first note either implied



or displaced by an octave). It is first heard as an introduction to the processional tune that signals Norma's imminent entrance; it provides a similar flourish to the start of the cabaletta to "Casta Diva." As an accompaniment figure, it frequently punctuates Adalgisa's duet with Pollione in Act I, a function it also serves in the great Norma-Adalgisa duet of Act II. It precedes the "Guerra! Guerra!" chorus and turns up prominently in Norma's extended duet with Pollione at the end of the opera.

The dramatic bite of the figure is unmistakable; it is not surprising that it dominates the section in which Norma speaks directly to Pollione for the first time in the opera, her furious outburst of "Oh non tremare." It is probably the most obvious when heard in the final cadence of a section, as in the conclusions of Pollione's cabaletta (just before the coda), the Adalgisa-Pollione duet, the Norma-Adalgisa duet of Act I, the finale of Act I, the Norma-Adalgisa duet of Act II, and the duet between Norma and Pollione just before the finale of the opera.

Another figure that is strikingly prominent is



the main feature of which is the trochaic rhythm on the weak, or second, beat. Such a rhythm marks the first words in the opera sung by Adalgisa ("Sgombra è la sacra selva"), Pollione (in augmentation, "Svanir le voci!") and, in a slightly modified but still readily recognizable form. Norma herself ("Sediziose voci"). It is the rhythm to which the men's chorus launches into "Dell'aura tua profetica." and in augmented form is sung at the first entrance of the mixed chorus on the words "Sorta è la Luna, o Druidi." It serves as accompaniment to Pollione's cabaletta, giving it an unavoidable resemblance to Norma's entrance march, and is the opening figure of the cabaletta to "Casta Diva." It underpins Norma's first words in the second act, "Dormono entrambi," and highlights numerous important phrases such as Norma's plaintive cry of "O rimembranza." It occurs with remarkable frequency throughout the opera, sometimes more often than it would appear from a quick glance at the score, since the undotted rhythm



is, in some performances, altered to conform to triplet figuration in the

San Francisco's Grand Luncheon.

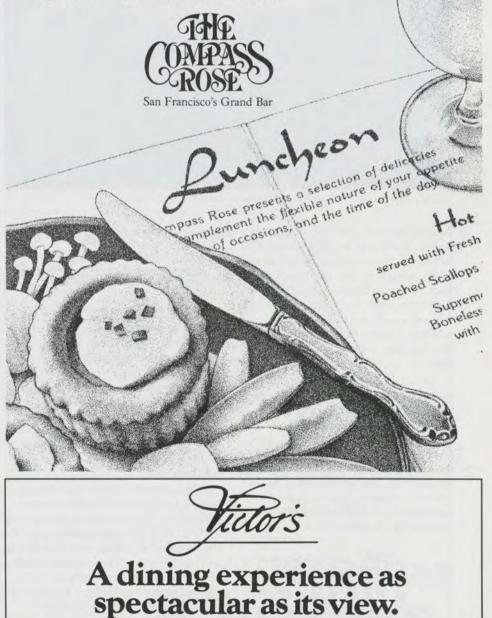
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Norma's children in the 1937 San Francisco Opera production of Bellini's Norma.

accompaniment. [The idea of altering a written rhythm in one part to conform to another — most often where two notes are written against three — goes back to the baroque period. The degree to which it was done in the 18th century is still hotly debated by scholars; how far the practice extends into the 19th century, if at all, is at this point an open question.]

It would be unproductive to try to find every instance of these and other rhythmic figures in Norma. It is important to remember that these are not rhythmic leitmotifs; they do not serve any structural function and are not symbolic of any particular character or idea. They are not unique to Norma; while they appear there in profusion, they also occur in other of Bellini's operas. The cadential



appears in *La Sonnambula*, too, for instance, although it is conspicuously absent in the first half of that piece, and appears only infrequently in the second. Philip Gossett has identified the

Sgombraela sa.cra

motive as endemic to Giulietta's themes in *I Capuleti ed i Montecchi*, and it no doubt appears many other places as well. It may have been common to all Italian opera of the period, although we will not be sure until we know more of the works of lesser composers whose collective output forms the background against which the accomplishments of Bellini and Donizetti stand out.

The point is that the frequent use of such rhythms gives Bellini's operas, and Norma in particular, an energy and a drive that is too often glossed over in performance and discussion of Bellini's works, giving the false impression that his operas are primarily ethereal, longwinded spans of melody, like immense musical jellyfish with no rhythmic backbone.

Such a misunderstanding was reinforced by Bellini's image as a dandy. Heinrich Heine, who met Bellini in Paris in 1835, wrote of him that "he always reminded me of one of the young shepherds who simper about coyly in our pastoral plays, with little pastel jackets and breeches and beribboned crooks. And his gait was so virginal, so elegiac, so ethereal. The whole man looked like a sigh in dancing-pumps."

If Heine could be devastatingly sardonic, he was also capable of unfortunate prescience. Mme. C. Jaubert, in her *Souvenirs* of 1881, records a conversation in which Heine addressed Bellini (as translated by Herbert Weinstock):

> "You are a genius, Bellini, but you will pay for your great gift with a premature death. All the great geniuses died very young, like Raphael and Mozart . . . let's hope, my friend, that the world has been mistaken about you, and that in fact you are not a genius. The good fairies, what is more, gave you a thousand other gifts: they



Bellini monument at the Père Lachaise cemetery, Paris.

granted you the face of a cherub, the candor of a boy, and the stomach of a stork. Let us hope that the evil fairy didn't intrude among those good ones and ruin everything by stirring in genius . . ."

The world was not mistaken; Bellini was a genius. The evidence, however, lies not in his dramatically early death, but in the immortal monuments of music he left behind, the greatest of which is *Norma*.

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Norma's World

By BILL HUCK

Tonight's opera is set in a far away place at a far away time. That, in itself, is a common enough proposition. You could be at the court of the Empress of China. In war-torn Egypt. Or sunny Seville. To one Italian composer, Sacramento seemed exotic fare; to another, Boston.

Vincenzo Bellini, when he read Soumet's tragedy about Norma, found perhaps the most mysterious of all of opera's outlandish settings. Norma herself is a Druid priestess, living in primitive France among a people called the Celts.

Many a tall tale has been told of these people. They gave William Butler Yeats the Irish legends of his plays. Like Norma, Deirdre was a Celtic heroine; the story of her sorrows has been recounted often, perhaps most poignantly by John M. Synge. Behind much of the mythology of William Blake's fantastical epics stand these same Druids. Theirs were the feet in ancient time that walked on England's green and pleasant land.

Specifically, the Druids in Norma were the priests of their community. They served it as theologians, as ambassadors, prophets, storytellers and diviners, physicians and magicians. In the class structure of their society, they surpassed even the barons who fought the wars. Since they were elected officials, the Druids were a more select group than the warriors, whose distinction was based on heredity. In short, the Druids were the intellectuals of their world: the ones cherished for what they could remember.

Before we investigate what it was they had to remember, let us look at the material reality the Druids faced. Their people, the Celts, were a collection of Iron Age tribes whose dominion was Northern Europe. United by linguistic bonds, common customs and beliefs, the Celts at one time held sway over an area that was not to be reconstituted again until Napoleon. At their maximum extension, the Celts ranged from as far east as modern-day Turkey, through Hungary-Austria, the Rhineland, France, England and Ireland. There is further evidence to be found of them across the Pyrenees in Spain and across the Alps in Northern Italy. Their power peaked around 100 B.C. They faded before the rising star of Rome.

Economically, the most important

is headed at the end of tonight's opera is part of the long shadow fire cast upon the Druids.

Among these iron-working people, blacksmithing was naturally the most prestigious craft. Not only were tools such as knives, shears and axe-heads made throughout the Celtic world, but so were more elaborate pieces designed for decorative and domestic use. By adding copper and tin to the iron ore, the Celts made bronze, which they then used not only for huge



Sacred forest of the Druids from Act I of Norma. Illustration from Beauties of the Opera, Paris, 1845.

fact about the Celts is that they worked in iron. Besides its ramifications in the weapons this enabled them to make, their metallurgy meant the plough and other hard-edged tools.

A necessary element in the casting of iron is fire. The Celtic need for fire had therefore wide implications in their culture and determined many of the peculiarities of their religious system. The blaze toward which Norma cauldrons, but smaller bowls, flagons, mirrors and other ornaments. In matters of metalwork, the ancient Celts were no less skillful than their contemporaries in Greece and Rome and often superior to their successors in medieval Europe.

As with most peasant peoples, one can assume a large body of traditional medicine lying behind the few specific continued on p. 66







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1982 Fall Opera Previews

Information on opera previews and lectures is carried in San Francisco Opera Magazine in order to enable patrons to make advance plans. The following is a list of previews and lectures that are open to the public.

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA GUILD

Opera "Insights" held in the Herbst Theatre, Veterans Building, Van Ness and McAllister, in San Francisco. All panel discussions begin at 6 p.m., doors open at 5:30 p.m. Series subscription for Guild members is \$12; Non-Guild members \$16; Individual tickets are \$4. For further information, please call (415) 565-6432. Program subject to rehearsal schedule of the artists.

Joan Sutherland/Richard Bonynge	9/23
Marilyn Horne	10/5
Sesto Bruscantini/Paolo Montarsolo	10/14
Regina Resnik	11/9

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA **GUILD PREVIEWS**

MARIN

Previews held at Park School Auditorium, 360 East Blithedale, Mill Valley; refreshments served at 7:30 p.m., previews at 8:00 p.m. Series registration is \$17.50 for 6 previews (\$15.00 for students and seniors). Single tickets are \$3.50 (\$3.00 for students and seniors). For further information, please call (415) 388-6789. SALOME Michael Barclay 9/23 LA CENERENTOLA Harold Rosenthal 10/7

DIALOGUES OF THE CARMELITES	
Speight Jenkins	10/14
CENDRILLON	
Arthur Kaplan	10/28
THE QUEEN OF SPADES	
Dale Harris	11/4
LOHENGRIN	
Blanche Thebom	11/18

NORTH PENINSULA

Previews held at William Crocker School, 2600 Ralston Ave., Hillsborough. Lectures begin at 7:30 p.m. Series registration is \$20.00; single tickets are \$5.00. For further information, please call (415) 595-4137.

LA CENERENTOLA/CENDRILLON	
James Keolker	10/11
THE QUEEN OF SPADES	
Eugene Marker	11/1
LOHENGRIN	
Blanche Thebom	11/15

There will be a special Gala, featuring arias and ensembles from operas of the fall season, on September 13 at 7:30 p.m., also at the Crocker School. Admission is \$6.00 SOUTH PENINSULA

Previews held at the Palo Alto Cultural Center, 1313 Newell Road, at 8:00 p.m. Series registration is \$18.00; single tickets are \$4.00, students half price. For further

information, please call (415) 494-8519 or 325-8451.

SALOME Arthur Kaplan	9/21
LA CENERENTOLA Harold Rosenthal	10/5
DIALOGUES OF THE CARMELITES Speight Jenkins	10/12
THE QUEEN OF SPADES Dale Harris	11/2
CENDRILLON James Keolker	11/9
LOHENGRIN Blanche Thebom	11/16

SAN JOSE OPERA GUILD

Previews will be held at the Saratoga Community Center, 13777 Fruitvale Ave., Saratoga. All lectures are on Thursday mornings at 10:30. Series is open to the public at a cost of \$3.00 per lecture, \$2.00 for students and senior citizens (free of charge to San Jose Opera Guild members). For further information, please call (408) 741-1331. NORMA James Keolker 9/16 SALOME Arthur Kaplan 9/23 LE NOZZE DI FIGARO Arthur Kaplan 9/30 LA CENERENTOLA Harold Rosenthal 10/7DIALOGUES OF THE CARMELITES Speight Jenkins 10/14 CENDRILLON James Keolker 10/21 LOHENGRIN Blanche Thebom 10/28THE QUEEN OF SPADES **Dale Harris** 11/4 JUNIOR LEAGUE OPERA PREVIEWS All Junior League opera previews will be held in Herbst Theatre in the Veterans Building, Van Ness at McAllister. Lectures begin at 11 a.m. There is no admission charge. For information, please call Barbara Labagh at (415) 349-3521. SALOME Michael Barclay 9/22 LE NOZZE DI FIGARO Arthur Kaplan 9/29 LA CENERENTOLA Harold Rosenthal 10/6DIALOGUES OF THE CARMELITES 10/11 Speight Jenkins THE QUEEN OF SPADES 11/3**Dale Harris** CENDRILLON 11/10 Arthur Kaplan LOHENGRIN 11/19 lames Keolker A special "Evening with Leontyne Price"

is offered on October 13, 5:30 p.m., in Herbst Theatre. Miss Price will be

interviewed by Speight Jenkins. The event is free of charge and open to all. This program is being presented by the Junior League of San Francisco to celebrate 35 years of previews of opera, ballet and the A.C.T.

PIEDMONT ADULT EDUCATION OPERA PREVIEW SERIES

Previews of all 1982 fall season operas will be given by Arthur Kaplan at Piedmont High School, 800 Magnolia Avenue, Piedmont, at 7:30 p.m. Series registration is \$45; \$40 for Piedmont residents. Single tickets are \$5.00. For further information, call (415) 653-9454 or 658-3679.

UN BALLO IN MASCHERA	9/2
NORMA	9/9
SALOME	9/20
LE NOZZE DI FIGARO	9/30
LA CENERENTOLA	10/4
DIALOGUES OF THE CARMELITES	10/18
THE QUEEN OF SPADES	11/1
CENDRILLON	11/8
LOHENGRIN	11/17
TOSCA	11/22

NAPA OPERA LECTURE SERIES

For the 10th year there will be a 10week course called "Adventures in Opera" in Napa. The course, which accompanies the Saturday and Sunday series at the San Francisco Opera, will be held at 7:30 in St. Mary's Episcopal Church, 1917 Third Street, in Napa. Ernest Fly will again teach the course. Cost for the entire series will be \$20.00. Individual lectures will be \$3.00. For further information, please call Mr. Fly at (707) 224-6162.

UN BALLO IN MASCHERA	9/
NORMA	9/1
SALOME	9/2
LE NOZZE DI FIGARO	9/2
LA CENERENTOLA	10/
THE QUEEN OF SPADES	10/1
DIALOGUES OF THE CARMELITES	10/2
CENDRILLON	10/2
LOHENGRIN	11/
TOSCA	11/1

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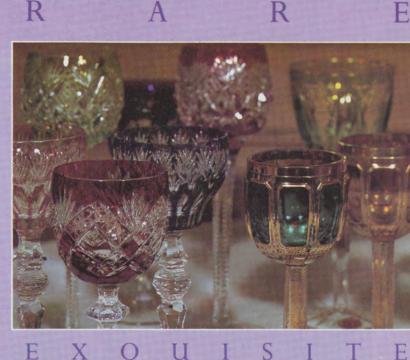
A free lecture featuring Michael Barclay will be presented from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. on Thursday, October 7, at the Kensington Library, 61 Arlington Ave., Kensington. The preview will compare and contrast Rossini's La Cenerentola with Massenet's Cendrillon. For further information, please call (415) 524-3043.

MERRITT COLLEGE **OPERA LECTURE SERIES**

Merritt College will offer a tuition-free course on all of the fall operas. The previews include recordings and films and will be held Tuesday evenings at 7:00 p.m. beginning September 14. They will be held at Merritt College, 12500 Campus Drive, Building R, Room 125, in Oakland. For further information, please call (415) 436-2430.

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Giulia Grisi as Norma in an anonymous painting from 1846

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Footnotes to NORMA

By ANDREW PORTER

This is not an essay on the eloquence and beauty of Bellini's melody (to which Verdi and Stravinsky, among many others, have paid homage); nor a defense of his apt, skillful orchestration; nor a tribute to Felice Romani's masterly libretto. They are no longer needed. If anything, Bellini has been overpraised in recent years. His weaker operas have not been sufficiently distinguished from the strong. With the uneven pieces, delight in the general rediscovery of a style once despised but now newly appreciated may have obscured perception of the specifically Bellinian achievements. The composer himself once said he disliked two passages of Norma: the tenor's cabaletta and the whole of the Adalgisa-Pollione duet. Perhaps we can agree that the first is the only number in Norma which drops into Ottocento cliché. It is hard to agree with him about the second.

This is, rather, a collection of notes to that appreciation of Norma which no longer needs writing. There could have been more of them: about the lampshade that Pasta sent to the composer on the day of the premiere; about the 1841 production at Covent Garden for which Adelaide Kemble adopted authentic Druidess costume as described by Strabo, with six colored stripes on her gown. But first things first, and I concentrate on the circumstances, the ideas, and the diverse people who came together so happily in the creation of a masterpiece.

Bellini composed ten operas. Two of them, both produced in 1831, are masterpieces of their genres: the melodramma or opera semiseria La Sonnambula, and the tragedia lirica Norma. His last opera, the melodramma serio of 1835, I Puritani, is musically their equal and in some ways even more refined in its working, but as a drama it is all over the place. I love I Puritani and am guite prepared to defend its "integrity" as a musical construction, but as a dramatic whole it lacks the formal perfection and the sure easy flow of the earlier pair. The other seven operas contain very fine scenes. They are ambitious works; Bellini was always ambitious. But some episodes are weak, and others conventional. Within a few measures we find melodies of purest Bellinian inspiration collapsing into formulae.

It is hard to see and say just why La Sonnambula and Norma should be so much stronger than, say, the operas that came just before and just after it I Capuleti ed i Montecchi (1830) and Beatrice di Tenda (1833). Speed can have little to do with it. I Capuleti was run up in haste - but then so was La Sonnambula, when Bellini suddenly dropped an Hernani he was working on to turn to the pastoral subject. Norma, on the other hand, was composed in what for those days was an unusually long time. The subject was chosen by July 1831. The composition was begun in September and finished in late November, allowing nearly a month's rehearsal before the Scala season began on December 26th. Three whole months! Thus, in the words of Bellini's biographer Francesco Pastura, "Bellini had the opportunity to work calmly, to give his imagination full play." In the Bellini Museum in Catania, there are sheaves of sketches for the opera, while the Accademia Chigiana in Siena owns a folder containing 31 close-written sheets, most of them covered on both sides, in which the libretto is worked out, scene by scene, in Romani's neat, difficult hand, with alterations and suggestions in Bellini's.

Soumet's "Norma"

Bellini had composed for La Scala before (Il Pirata in 1827, La Straniera in 1828, both with Romani librettos). But Giuditta Pasta, though already internationally famous, had for some reason not yet sung there. After the immense success of both Pasta and Bellini with La Sonnambula, given at the Carcano, a smaller Milanese theater, something very special had to be created to open the Scala season and present Pasta's debut there on opening night. In Norma, Bellini wrote to Pasta in September, the soprano would find a role suitable to her "encyclopedic character." Alexandre Soumet may perhaps have come to his and Romani's attention when Rossini's Le Siège de Corinthe, of which Soumet was co-librettist, reached La Scala in 1829 and was the great success of the season. His play Norma had been given at the Odéon, in Paris, in April 1831 (a month after La Sonnambula appeared in Milan); and Soumet tells us that in the title role the actress Mlle. Georges "had a clamorous success. Having been in turn, in the first four acts, the Niobe

of the Greeks, Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth, M. de Chateaubriand's Velléda [the heroine of his novel Les Martyrs], having run through the whole gamut of passions that can be contained in the female heart, she then in the last scene, the mad scene, rose to heights of inspiration which can perhaps never be reproduced."

Soumet had won a prize from the Académie in 1835 for his poem *The Discovery of Vaccine*. As a playwright, he took classical drama to the threshold of Romanticism. He was not modest: when critics pointed out that his *Norma* resembled *Medea*, he declared: "I have just one answer to make. *Norma* resembles *Medea* as *Hamlet* resembles *Orestes*, as *King Lear*



Giuditta Pasta in a contemporary lithograph.

resembles Oedipus." Romani, for his part, had already had some experience with Norma-like characters. For Simone Mayr in 1813, he had written Medea in Corinto (one of Pasta's most famous roles), and for Giovanni Pacini in 1813 La Sacerdotessa di Irminsul. Strikingly, however, when he came to write Norma he omitted the most closely Medea-like - and the most patently "operatic" - episode of Soumet's play: the fifth act, the tremendous mad scene. Norma has murdered one of her children, and at the close of the drama she hurls herself, with the other, over a precipice!

Otherwise, Soumet's first four acts correspond, more or less, to the action of the opera. Romani added the Druid assembly at the start. (The play begins with Pollione and Flavio; but operas almost invariably began with a chorus enclosing a solo — the standard Rossinian introduzione to which Verdi so often had recourse, right up to Otello.) He added, too, the first chorus of Act II; but the "Guerra!" chorus has its counterpart in the play, as a fiery prophetic utterance from Norma punctuated by symphonies et prodiges, and choral cries. The librettist also built the trio-finale of Act II from two successive dialogues of Soumet's play. This was unconventional. The Scala management asked, instead, for the usual ensemble finale but did not get it. The management also wanted Norma, at the end, to ascend the pyre and deliver a brilliant cabaletta from its height. Poet and composer refused; and it is interesting to note in the Norma autograph (which has been published in facsimile) that Bellini further struck out, on the penultimate page, six measures that contain a melodramatic stroke: a crash of the gong, and cries from Norma, Pollione, and Oroveso as a black veil is placed on the priestess' head. No such obvious effect would mar their noble finale.

Before leaving Soumet, we may just note that his Clotilde (one of Joan Sutherland's early roles, incidentally) is a Christian nanny, and her charges, Norma's children Agénor and Clodomir, are speaking roles, Agénor indeed being quite voluble. Act III begins with a conversation in which Agénor remarks that he doesn't care much for his mummy's god, Irminsul, and for that matter is rather uncertain about his father's, Jupiter, Clotilde thereupon produces a picture of her God, who, she says, may seem to be only a baby on his mother's lap, but is far more powerful than either of the others. It's not an important motif in the play, and it was not taken up in the opera.

The Soprano

Giuditta Pasta (1796-1865), the first Norma, is a singer rather difficult for the operatic historian to fathom. Tributes to her abound. Bellini wrote of her and to her in terms of the highest admiration and enthusiasm. He called her his inspiration, and the parts he composed for her — Amina in La Sonnambula, Norma, and Beatrice di Tenda — are eloquent of it. In early years, she sang Donna Elvira (and later Donna Anna), Cherubino, Fiordiligi,

continued on p.60



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SPECIAL FALL EVENTS

Saturday, November 6, 1–4 PM: MEET IRA NOWINSKI AND JOAN CHATFIELD-TAYLOR at a special signing of their new book, *Backstage At The Opera*, published by Chronicle Books featuring the San Francisco Opera.

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On August 22, Beringer Vineyards and the Opera Guild Auxiliary honored Terence McEwen at a tasting of rare Chardonnay wines in Beringer's historic Rhine House at St. Helena.

The highlight of the tasting, led by Winemaster for Beringer Vineyards Myron Nyhtengale, was a 1980 Private Reserve. This extraordinary wine was the only Chardonnay to win the Double Gold Medal at the 1982 San Francisco Fair and Exposition.

Mezzo-soprano Laura Brooks Rice, member of the Adler Fellowship Program, and soprano Nikki Li Hartliep, both appearing during the 1982 Fall Season, performed arias and duets during the afternoon. Attending this welcoming party in honor of Mr. McEwen were members of the Boards of Directors of the Opera Association, Opera Guild, Opera Guild Auxiliary and the Merola Opera Program.

Members of the Opera Guild Auxiliary wish to express their thanks to Beringer Vineyards for assisting in presenting this event to welcome Mr. McEwen as General Director of the San Francisco Opera. PRIVATE RESERVE ESTATE BOTTLED ESTATE BOTTLED BECINGEC 1980 Napa Valley Chardonnay This private reserve Chardonnay was produced exclusively from Chardonnay was produced

exclusively from Chardonnay grapes grown on the Beringer Estate Vineyards. The grapes were picked at 24.4° Brix, 1.10gm/100ml total acid. The wine was aged for seven months in Limousin and Nevers Oak barrels. Grown, produced and bottled by Beringer Vineyards, St. Relena, Napa Valley, California.



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This production was made possible in 1972 through the generosity of the late James D. Robertson. Opera in three acts by VINCENZO BELLINI Text by FELICE ROMANI Based on a play by LOUIS ALEXANDRE SOUMET



Conductor

Richard Bonynge Stage Director Lotfi Mansouri Set Designer losé Varona Lighting Designer Joan Sullivan **Chorus Director Richard Bradshaw Musical Preparation** Martha Gerhart Mark Haffner Prompter Susan Webb Assistant Stage Director **Robin Thompson** Stage Manager Gretchen Mueller First performance: Milan, December 26, 1831 First San Francisco Opera performance: November 13, 1937

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 11 AT 8:00 TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 14 AT 8:00 FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 17 AT 8:00 TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 21 AT 8:00 SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 26 AT 2:00 WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 29 at 7:30 SATURDAY, OCTOBER 2 AT 8:00

Norma radio broadcast on September 17 at 8 p.m. and September 18 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.

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

The performance will last approximately three hours.

Opening night flowers courtesy of John Tallerino Designs. Plants courtesy of Green Valley Plant Rental.

CAST

Oroveso Pollione Flavio Norma Adalgisa Clotilde Norma's children Ezio Flagello Ermanno Mauro* Howard Hensel* Joan Sutherland Marilyn Horne Leslie Richards Alianna Jaqua Thomas Garadis Jonathan Rapoport (Sept. 17)

Priests, priestesses, warriors *San Francisco Opera debut

PLACE AND TIME: Gaul, during the Roman occupation in 50 B.C.

ACTI	Scene 1: Scene 2:	Sacred forest of the Druids Outside Norma's secret dwelling
		INTERMISSION
ACT II		Inside the dwelling
		INTERMISSION
ACT III		Sacred forest of the Druids

Synopsis NORMA

ACTI

Oroveso, the Druid high priest, comes into the sacred grove of Irminsul with other Druids and warriors of Gaul. They are waiting for the moon to rise, at which moment Norma, high priestess and seeress, will cut the sacred mistletoe and make her prophecies. They all hope she will predict war against the hated Roman oppressor. When the men have gone, the Roman proconsul Pollione enters with his centurion, Flavio. Pollione has seduced Norma, who has betraved her vows and secretly borne him two children. Now, however, he proclaims his love for Adalgisa, a young novice in the temple of Irminsul. As the Druids are heard returning, Pollione and Flavio leave. Before her people, Norma performs the mystical rites, at the same time trying to allay the Druids' warlike impulses. After invoking the moon goddess, she utters her secret feelings: her continued love for Pollione despite the torment caused by his neglect. When the sacred grove is again deserted, Adalgisa enters. Overcome by doubts, she awaits her lover. Pollione appears and persuades her to come away with him to Rome.

In her hidden retreat, Norma reveals to her confidante Clotilde the fear that Pollione, who is about to leave for Rome, will not take her with him. As someone is heard approaching, Clotilde leads the children away. Adalgisa comes in and confesses to Norma that she is in love. Norma, recalling her own weakness, forgives Adalgisa and releases her from her vows. When Pollione suddenly appears and Adalgisa innocently indicates that he is her lover, Norma becomes enraged. Once she reveals to the stunned Adalgisa Pollione's former love for her, the young novice, loyal to her high priestess, spurns the Roman. The sacred bronzes of the temple ring out, summoning Norma to the rites.

ACT II

In desperation, Norma is on the point of killing her children, but her maternal love is stronger than her fury against the faithless Pollione. She sends for Adalgisa and proposes that the young girl go off with the Roman, imploring her at the same time to take the children with her and look after them. Adalgisa dissuades Norma from suicide and promises to induce Pollione to return to her. The two swear eternal friendship.

ACT III

Near the Druids' grove, the Gallic warriors, still impatient to fight the Romans, are reluctantly persuaded by the Archdruid Oroveso (Norma's father) that the time for war has not yet come. Norma learns that Adalgisa's entreaties to Pollione have failed. In a furious rage, Norma summons her people and declares war on the Romans. The Gauls are overjoyed. Norma is about to name the sacrificial victim when a sudden tumult reveals the sacrilegious presence of a Roman in the temple sanctuary. It is Pollione who has followed Adalgisa there. His rash act must be punished by death. Norma announces that a renegade priestess will also be burned on the pyre. Pollione begs her to spare Adalgisa. When Norma utters the victim's name, it is, to everyone's surprise, her own. She confesses her guilt and prepares to ascend the pyre. Her nobility reawakens Pollione's love. Norma's final thought is of her children. She pleads with her father to give them refuge. He finally consents and forgives her, as she and Pollione prepare to die together.



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Profiles



JOAN SUTHERLAND

Affectionately dubbed "the voice of the century" and universally regarded as one of the world's leading interpreters of the bel canto repertoire, Australian soprano Joan Sutherland appears in the title role of Norma, a role she sang here in 1972 during the 50th anniversary season of the San Francisco Opera. She made her American debut in Dallas in 1960, singing the title role of Handel's Alcina, followed by debuts at the San Francisco Opera, the Lyric Opera of Chicago and the Metropolitan Opera in Lucia di Lammermoor, the opera that catapulted her to international fame after her appearance in the historic Covent Garden production of 1959. Subsequent appearances in San Francisco include Amina in La Sonnambula (1963), Violetta in La Traviata (1964), Elvira in I Puritani (1966), and the title role in the American stage premiere of Maria Stuarda (1971). During the 1973 season here she first essayed the role of Rosalinda in Die Fledermaus. Other career firsts for Miss Sutherland at San Francisco Opera include the aforementioned Maria Stuarda, the title role of Esclarmonde in 1974 and Leonora in Il Trovatore in 1975. Her most recent appearance with the Company was as Anna Glawari in The Merry Widow during the 1981 Fall Season. She sang Rosalinda in her native Australia this

season, where other recent assignments include Les Huguenots and the title roles of Lucrezia Borgia and La Traviata. She appeared opposite Beverly Sills in the historic San Diego Opera production of Fledermaus in 1980, and was seen in three nationally telecast recitals in the Live from Lincoln Center series with Marilyn Horne. Luciano Pavarotti and conductor Richard Bonynge. Miss Sutherland's spectacular career has been closely interwoven with Bonynge's; they had studied together at the Sydney Conservatory and were later reunited in London, where Bonynge became her accompanist, coach, adviser and, eventually, her husband. Miss Sutherland has made numerous opera, operetta and recital recordings for London Records. In 1979, she was named Dame Commander of the British Empire by Queen Elizabeth II.



MARILYN HORNE

Internationally renowned as one of the leading Rossini interpreters of our time, mezzo-soprano Marilyn Horne sings Adalgisa in Norma and the title role of La Cenerentola, a role she has not sung since her student days in Southern California. The Pennsylvania native made her first major American operatic appearance with San Francisco Opera in 1960, appearing as Marie in Wozzeck and Zita in Gianni Schicchi. Her subsequent credits with the Company include Marzellina in Fidelio, Hermia in A Midsummer Night's Dream and Marina in Boris Godunov (1961); Musetta in La Bohème, Marie in Daughter of the Regiment and Nedda in I Pagliacci (1962); Eboli in Don Carlo (1966); and the title role of Tancredi (1979), the role in which she first appeared to great acclaim at the Rome Opera in 1977. Miss Horne is perhaps Spring Opera Theater's most illustrious alumna, having portrayed Carmen (1961), Rosina (1962) and the title role of L'Italiana in Algeri (1964), three roles that have won her critical plaudits at the Met and elsewhere. She made her highly acclaimed Met debut in 1970 as Adalgisa to Joan Sutherland's Norma. A noted exponent of "trouser roles," she first appeared at La Scala in 1969 as Neocle in L'Assedio di Corinto and has since been praised for her portrayals of Gluck's Orfeo, Vivaldi's Orlando, Bellini's Romeo and Handel's Rinaldo, which she most recently sang at Canada's Ottawa Arts Festival this summer. In 1980 she scored a great triumph at the Aix-en-Provence Festival as Arsace in Semiramide, a role she had previously sung with the American Opera Society, Boston Opera, the London Opera Society and Lyric Opera of Chicago and repeated for the opening night production of San Francisco Opera's 1981 Fall Season. She sang at last year's televised Golden Gate Park concert, and during the coming year will be heard at Carnegie Hall in concert performances of Tancredi, Semiramide and La Donna del lago.

LESLIE RICHARDS

Mezzo-soprano Leslie Richards sings Clotilde in Norma, Tisbe in La Cenerentola and Mother Jeanne in Dialogues of the Carmelites. She made her Company debut in the fall of 1980 in Die Frau ohne Schatten and Jenůfa. In the 1981 Fall Season, Miss Richards was heard in productions of Lucia di Lammermoor, Die Walküre and II Trovatore and, most recently, as Leonora in the 1982 San Francisco Opera's Showcase production of The Triumph of Honor. She created the roles of Mme. Pernelle in the American Opera Project's world premiere of Kirke Mechem's Tartuffe in 1980 and



Marla in the world premiere of Mollicone's Emperor Norton with Brown Bag Opera in 1981. As member of the 1980 Merola Opera Program, she appeared as Nancy in Albert Herring and Berta in excerpts from The Barber of Seville. A native of Los Angeles, she participated in the San Diego Opera Center Program and made her debut with that company as Sofia in Verdi's I Lombardi in 1979. In addition to operatic engagements, she has recently sung with the San Francisco Concert Orchestra in Mahler's Des Knaben Wunderhorn and in a concert version of Carmen with the Ventura Symphony. Miss Richards is currently an Adler Fellow with the San Francisco Opera Center.

ERMANNO MAURO

Ermanno Mauro, a leading tenor with the Metropolitan Opera, makes his San Francisco Opera debut as Pollione in Bellini's Norma. Born in Trieste, he made his Canadian debut with the Edmonton Opera as Manrico in *II* Trovatore in 1962, his American debut in 1974 as Cavaradossi in Tosca with the San Diego Opera and his New York debut later the same year as Calaf in Turandot with the New York City Opera. The year 1978 marked his Metropolitan Opera debut as Canio in *I Pagliacci*; his La Scala debut as Manrico in *II Trovatore* and Des Grieux



in Manon Lescaut; and his Rome Opera debut as Radames in Aida. With the Metropolitan Opera this season he gives 38 performances in Il Trovatore, Madama Butterfly, and adds La Forza del destino and Macbeth to his repertoire, which includes a wide range of operas by Verdi, Puccini, Bellini, and works by French composers. Last season he appeared at the Munich Staatsoper, the Edmonton Opera, Opera Metropolitana in Caracas and the Portland, Tulsa and Baltimore operas. He sang his first Otello with the Buffalo Philharmonic and traveled to the Orange Festival in France to sing Don Alvaro in La Forza del destino opposite Montserrat Caballé. Later this season he will appear with the New Orleans Opera, as Rodolfo in La Bohème, a role he performed this spring in Venezuela.

EZIO FLAGELLO

World-renowned bass Ezio Flagello returns to San Francisco Opera to portray Oroveso in Norma. His 1956 professional debut in Rome was in the role of Dulcamara in L'Elisir d'amore. The following year the native New Yorker made his debut at the Metropolitan Opera as the Sacristan in Tosca, and within two weeks he was asked to step in for an ailing colleague as Leporello in Don Giovanni. He has



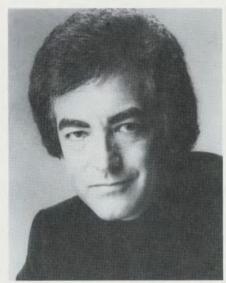
since gone on to perform more than 30 major roles for the Metropolitan, among them the title roles of Falstaff and Gianni Schicchi, Dr. Dulcamara in L'Elisir d'amore, Rodolfo in La Sonnambula, Timur in Turandot, Colline in La Bohème, Ramfis in Aida. Wurm in Luisa Miller, King Phillip in Don Carlo, Silva in Ernani, Giorgio in I Puritani and Padre Guardiano in La Forza del destino. Flagello's career has taken him to the world's opera capitals, including La Scala, the Vienna Staatsoper and the Deutsche Oper in Berlin. In this country he has performed with the Philadelphia Lyric Opera, the Houston Grand Opera, the Dallas Opera, the Connecticut Opera, the Florentine Opera of Milwaukee and the San Francisco Opera, where he made his 1968 debut in Ernani. He returned to San Francisco in 1971 as Pogner in Die Meistersinger. An active concert performer, Flagello has sung with the orchestras of New York, Cleveland, Philadelphia, Boston, Los Angeles, Detroit, Denver, Chicago, Atlanta, St. Louis, Pittsburgh, Indianapolis and Minnesota, as well as the National Symphony. He has been a featured artist at the music festivals of Saratoga and Meadowbrook. Flagello is also in demand as a recording artist and can be heard on London, Deutsche Grammophon and RCA records.

Profiles



HOWARD HENSEL

Iowa-born tenor Howard Hensel makes his San Francisco Opera debut as Flavio in Bellini's Norma, Narraboth in Salome and the Chevalier in Dialogues of the Carmelites. A regular with the New York City Opera since his 1975 debut, he has participated in productions of L'Incoronazione di Poppea, Idomeneo, Salome, Die Meistersinger, The Ballad of Baby Doe, Lucrezia Borgia, Un Ballo in Maschera, Die Fledermaus and The Merry Widow. The latter he has also performed at Central City Opera with Kurt Herbert Adler conducting, Last season included his debut with the Michigan Opera Theater: several performances with New York's Festival Opera as Jacquino in Fidelio opposite James McCracken; a return to the Miami Opera; his first Don José in his Minnesota Opera debut in Carmen; and his first appearance with the Cleveland Orchestra at the Blossom Festival. Hensel's concert engagements include Beethoven's Ninth Symphony in Washington, D.C.; Messiah with the Baltimore Handel Society; and the Bach B Minor Mass at the Kennedy Center. This season marked his debut in Paris as Don José in the widely discussed adaptation of Carmen by Peter Brook.



RICHARD BONYNGE

Richard Bonynge conducts Norma, the opera he first led here in 1972. Originally a pianist, Bonynge left his native Australia in 1950 to study piano in London, where he was reunited with his fellow student from the Sydney Conservatory, Joan Sutherland. Bonynge has been the single greatest influence in Miss Sutherland's career, serving as her coach, adviser and, eventually, her husband. Regarded as a master of the bel canto style, Bonynge has rescued many works from oblivion or neglect, and his attention to musicological details has become one of the hallmarks of his performances with Miss Sutherland. His official conducting debut was in 1962 with Rome's Santa Cecilia Orchestra. followed quickly by appearances at the Hollywood Bowl and with the Vancouver Opera Association. He made his San Francisco Opera debut conducting La Sonnambula in 1963 and has since appeared on the podium of the world's major houses. His Metropolitan Opera debut was a 1966 production of Lucia di Lammermoor. His San Francisco Opera assignments have included La Traviata (1964), I Puritani (1966), Maria Stuarda (1971), Die Fledermaus (1973), Esclarmonde (1974 - the first presentation of the work anywhere in over 40 years) and II Trovatore (1975). He has been music

director of the Vancouver Opera Association, where he conducted Norma, Faust, Pique Dame, Mignon, Un Ballo in Maschera, Le Roi de Lahore and La Fille du Regiment, and serves in the same capacity for the Australian Opera in Sydney, where he has led Carmen, Lakmé, The Magic Flute, Lucrezia Borgia, Suor Angelica, Nabucco and, in 1978, The Merry Widow, which he conducted here last fall. During the 1982 season, his Australian performances include Die Fledermaus, Hamlet, Manon, Norma and Lucrezia Borgia. In 1977 he was honored during the Silver Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II, who named him a Commander of the British Empire.



LOTFI MANSOURI

Noted stage director Lotfi Mansouri returns to the San Francisco Opera for his 15th season to direct Bellini's Norma. Last year he staged The Merry Widow and II Trovatore and, in 1979, was responsible for La Gioconda, which was seen over live television in the United States and Europe. The Iranianborn director has staged over 28 different works for the Company, including Bellini's La Sonnambula (1963), and Massenet's Esclarmonde (1974), both with Joan Sutherland;

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Fly the friendly skies of United. Call United or your Travel Agent. Donizetti's Daughter of the Regiment (1974) with Beverly Sills; Auber's Fra Diavolo (1969) and Meyerbeer's L'Africaine (1972). From 1960 to 1965 he served as resident stage director of the Zurich Opera and from 1965 to 1974 was head stage director at the Grand Théâtre in Geneva. While in Switzerland, Mansouri was director of dramatics at both the Zurich International Opera and the Centre Lyrique in Geneva. In 1976 he made his debut at the Metropolitan Opera with Esclarmonde and his Vienna State Opera debut with La Fanciulla del West. General Director of the Canadian Opera Company since 1978, his stagings there include Don Carlos (in the original French), Wozzeck, Der Rosenkavalier, Don Giovanni, Tchaikovsky's Joan of Arc, Carmen, Tristan und Isolde, Simon Boccanegra, Peter Grimes, Otello, Lulu, Norma and The Merry Widow. In 1979 he staged The Merry Widow with Joan Sutherland for the Australian Opera and in 1981 with Elisabeth Söderström for the Canadian Opera Company. Other recent credits include Norma in Rio de Janeiro, Verdi's Giovanna d'Arco in San Diego (1980), and Les Huguenots with Miss Sutherland in Sydney (1981).

JOSÉ VARONA

Recognized as one of the world's foremost opera and ballet designers, José Varona returns with Norma, the vehicle of his San Francisco Opera debut in 1972. His career began in his native Argentina with ballet designs executed for Cuyo University in Mendoza. Varona's first opera was II Trovatore, a 1958 open-air presentation of the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires. A series of assignments with that company followed, including The Love for Three Oranges, The Rake's Progress, L'Italiana in Algeri, Castro's Proserpina and the Stranger, Così fan tutte and Mavra. The designer's first North American credits were for 1964 productions of the New York Shakespeare Festival mobile unit. In 1966 he made his debut as costume



designer for New York City Opera's celebrated production of Giulio Cesare. Subsequent designs with that company included Manon, Le Coq d'Or, Bomarzo, Lucia di Lammermoor, Roberto Devereux and Maria Stuarda. Recent opera credits include the costumes for Die Entführung aus dem Serail in 1976 and L'Incoronazione di Poppea in 1978, both for the Paris Opéra; Orfeo et Eurydice, Gianni Schicchi and Il Tabarro for the Holland Festival in 1977; The Merry Widow for the Deutsche Oper, Berlin, in 1979; and the sets for La Bohème at the Ottawa Arts Festival in 1980. Ballet set and costume creations include the Stravinsky/Christensen Le Baiser de la Fée for the San Francisco Ballet in 1977, the Berlin Opera Ballet production of Prokofiev's Cinderella in 1978, and the Delibes/Balanchine Coppélia in Geneva in 1977 and Pennsylvania in 1978.

JOAN SULLIVAN

In her third year with the San Francisco Opera, associate lighting designer Joan Sullivan has designed the lighting for the 1982 Fall Season productions of *Norma, Le Nozze di Figaro* and *Cendrillon.* She is also the lighting director for this season's production of *La Cenerentola.* During the 1982 Summer Festival she was responsible



for II Barbiere di Siviglia and The Rake's Progress. The 1981 season included her work on such productions as The Merry Widow, Le Cid and Il Trovatore, and her 1980 credits included Simon Boccanegra and Arabella. In a similar post with the Lyric Opera of Chicago from 1974 through 1979, Miss Sullivan worked on all the company's productions and also recreated the lighting for the Chicago production of Penderecki's Paradise Lost in the work's European premiere in 1979 at La Scala. In Chicago she also served as lighting designer for the Lyric Opera School, where her credits included Britten's Turn of the Screw and The Rape of Lucretia, Stravinsky's The Rake's Progress, Cimarosa's Il Matrimonio Segreto and Bizet's Doctor Miracle. As lighting designer for the Kentucky Opera Association from 1978 to 1980, she designed the lighting for The Magic Flute, I Pagliacci, The Impresario and Il Trovatore. This year, Miss Sullivan's lighting assignments included Simon Boccanegra with the greater Miami Opera and Elektra with the New Orleans Opera.



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and Servilia in La Clemenza di Tito. She became a Rossini specialist (though perhaps that term is inappropriate, since every soprano who wanted a career had to be a Rossini specialist in those days when his operas dominated the repertory); she was especially praised as Rossini's Desdemona and as Semiramide. But it is hard to square her fame with the detailed accounts of her performances. Eighteen months after the Norma premiere, Pasta brought the opera to London. She was thirty-five. And this is what J. E. Cox, a sensible critic, had to say about her:

"So faulty was her intonation that in the celebrated duet 'Mira, o Norma,' she had gradually got a whole tone down, to which the string players were cleverly accommodating themselves, while those who had to deal with the wind instruments gave up altogether as a hopeless affair. . . . Pasta's tone still continued to ebb and flow to the end of the opera. Yet, in spite of this deficiency, her acting covered it." Well, acting can cover a lot, but I doubt that any soprano today, however well she acted, could get away with singing whole stretches a tone flat. Or even a semitone flat. Henry F. Chorley, later the author of one of the most eloquent of all tributes to Pasta, declared of this Norma performance: "She steadily began her evening's task half a tone too flat." And added: "Her acting was more striking and powerful than ever, if that could be."

When I hear those oft-made claims that, whereas in the bad old days it was enough to sing, we nowadays expect our singers to be able to act as well, I sometimes wonder whether the words "act" and "sing" shouldn't be reversed!

The Second Soprano

By which, of course, I mean the Adalgisa, nowadays a role more often than not taken by mezzo-sopranos, but first performed by Giulia Grisi (1811-1869), an undoubted soprano. Adalgisa came early in her career, soon after her debut. She was 20 at the time. She'd made her Scala debut the previous season. Before long, Grisi moved up to Norma. She was beautiful (whereas Pasta was grandly majestic). She was a fine actress; there are vivid accounts of her flashing eyes in moments of anger or passion (in those happy days when footlights allowed singers' eyes to be seen). An uncommonly fine singer, with a schooled, beautiful, and even voice, she was, in effect, London's prima donna from 1834 (she sang La Sonnambula in her first London season) until her retirement in 1861, spanning a repertory from Rossini to the new works of Verdi and Meyerbeer. Bellini's Elvira, in I Puritani, and Donizetti's Norina, in Don Pasquale, were composed for her (both in Paris, for it was in Paris and London that she made most of her career). Accounts of her Adalgisa are few, but Chorley has this to say about her Norma:



Giulia Grisi in a contemporary lithograph.

"Her Norma, doubtless her grandest performance, was modelled on that of Madame Pasta - perhaps, in some points, was an improvement on the model, because there was more of animal passion in it; and this (as in the scene of the imperious and abrupt rage which closes the first act) could be driven to extremity without its becoming repulsive, owing to the absence of the slightest coarseness in her personal beauty. There was in it the wild ferocity of the tigress, but a certain frantic charm therewith which carried away the hearer - nay, which possibly belongs to the true reading of the character of the Druid priestess, unfaithful to her vows."

But what were those old critics looking for? When Chorley came to discuss Adelaide Kemble's Norma, mentioned earlier, he said: "Miss Kemble's Norma could be compared with that of Madame Pasta — could be preferred (apart from comparisons of voice and person) to that of Madame Grisi." Grisi sang better, she looked more beautiful, and — Chorley almost says — she acted better than Pasta. I suppose Kemble shared with Pasta that quality for which Chorley most admired the older singer: "a sense for the measurement and proportion of time . . . due recognition of accent and phrase." I'm not sure that that quality could, for me, redeem persistent outof-tune singing.

About the end of the century, Adalgisa became the province of mezzo-sopranos - except in Germany, where Lilli Lehmann sang both Norma and Adalgisa (like Dame Joan, she began as Clotilde); where the duet was recorded by Grete Forst (a Lakmé, Lucia, and Olympia) and by Gertrud Förstel (a Gilda and Susanna). Förstel sang "Mira, o Norma" with Margarethe Siems as the Norma. Siems was a dramatic coloratura who had Isolde in her repertory; she was Strauss' first Chrysothemis, Marschallin, and Zerbinetta. Any attempt at "categorizing" soon produces anomalies, so let us pass on to:

The Tenor

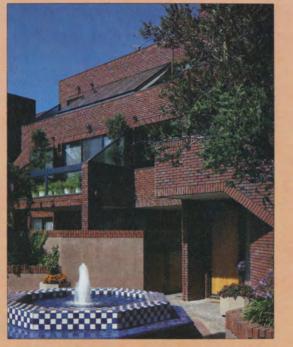
At 41, the first Pollione, Domenico Donzelli, was something of a veteran. Back in 1815, Rossini had composed Torvaldo e Dorliska for him. In 1822, he turns up at one of Beethoven's concerts in Vienna, singing in the trio "Tremate, empi, tremate." When Donzelli heard that he had been engaged for the 1831 Scala opening, and that Bellini was to write the opening opera, he wrote at once to the composer (with whom he had not worked before) "to give precise details of my style of singing, my range, and the character of my voice; to direct your inspirations so that I can render them in a way that corresponds to the effect you will want, and which will contribute to the success of your music and of my art. . . . The range of my voice, then, is nearly two octaves, from low D to top C. Chest voice to G; and it is in this range that I can declaim with vigor and sustain all the force of the declamation. From G to high C, I can use a falsetto that, employed with art and with power, provides a means of decoration. I have a fair amount of agility, but find descents much easier than ascents."

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Footnotes

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A glance at Pollione's music will show how carefully Bellini undertook to display Donzelli's best points and make them an effective part of his own music. The full two-octave range is employed, but with emphasis on fullvoiced G's. There is just one "decorative" high C; and in coloratura passages, downward runs are commoner than upward ones. The role is very different from the elegant, highflying tenor notes in the earlier operas - and the later one, Arturo in I Puritani - that Bellini wrote for Giovanni Battista Rubini, Conscientious tenor! It is a pity to read that after the first night the composer remarked that, although Donzelli was a good singer. he didn't know his part well enough.

Mention of Rubini brings up another tenor point. Conventionally, Bellini is characterized as the author of long, beautiful melodies, and Donizetti as the originator of a more vigorous declamation, leading toward Verdi. But in fact it was Bellini who pioneered the energetic manner, and Donizetti who adopted it from his colleague. Their mutual influence - not unlike that passing to and fro between Haydn and Mozart - forms a long and complicated story. It is enough here to note that Bellini made his name with the vigorous, energetic Il Pirata (La Scala, 1827), and that there are credible accounts of Bellini and his tenor. Rubini, declaiming Romani's Pirata libretto in forceful dramatic speech finding the natural accents and emphases of an actor before trying to find the music that would embody them. And when it came to I Puritani, composed for Paris, Bellini refused to commit any of Arturo's music to paper until Rubini had arrived in the city, and the part could be worked out in consultation with him.

The bass plays a small part in our story, for the contribution of Vincenzo Negrini, the first Oroveso, seems to have been largely negative. He suffered from a weak heart, and therefore, we are told, Bellini abandoned his idea of including a vigorous denunciation of Norma by Oroveso in the finale. But Bellini regularly made virtue of necessity: the long sweep of that ensemble finale, with its great double crescendo, is one of the noblest things he ever wrote.

Borrowings

At least six passages in Norma are taken from earlier Bellini works. From the abandoned Hernani, a duet composed for Elvira and Don Carlos yielded first the melody of "O! di qual sei tu vittima" (the trio-finale of Act I), and then, without change of text, Norma's and Adalgisa's "Si, fino all'ore" (the cabaletta of "Mira, o Norma"). The chorus after this ("Non parti?") comes from the expanded version of Bellini's second opera, Bianca e Fernando, put on in Genoa in 1828. Romani collaborated with Bellini on the Bianca revision, and in places no change of his text was necessary.



Domenico Donzelli in a contemporary etching.

The Norma sketches show that in the other three instances the borrowing was a solution adopted only after other things had been tried. For the cabaletta of "Casta Diva," which now has the text "Ah! bello a me ritorna," Bellini first used other words, set to a rather square tune; then he decided to replace it with an elaborated version of a cabaletta from the revised *Bianca* ("Contenta appien quest'alma"), set into the first-act finale. Pollione's "Sol promessa al Dio tu fosti" (in his duet with Adalgisa) seems to have given the composer particular trouble, and it formed a kind of point-of-entry for ideas that landed elsewhere in the opera. Bellini's first notion for it later went into the trio. His second notion went into the Norma-Pollione duet. His third notion was a theme borrowed from *Hernani*; it didn't suit Pollione, but it happily became Oroveso's "Ah! del Tebro." Finally, for Pollione, Bellini had recourse to his 1829 arietta "Bella Nice."

And thus all the elements came together. The occasion was special. The company, the composer, and the librettist had been chosen. The subject - a brand-new play - was found, one matched to the talents of the singers and challenging to a composer who had never worked in guite this classicromantic vein before. Old scores were raided - the abandoned Hernani: Bianca, which had not been heard in Milan — but borrowed material was introduced only when it had become clear to Bellini that it would serve his purpose even better than other things he tried. And there resulted the opera eloquently described by Lilli Lehmann, the great soprano who turned down all invitations to sing the title role until, only after she had mastered Donna Anna, Leonore, and Isolde, she felt ready for a part she deemed "ten times as exacting as Leonore." Norma, Lehmann said, is a work

> rich in melody, the passionate action of which has more human grandeur than many a bungled modern composition that has received great applause. Norma, which bears so much love within it, may not be treated indifferently or just polished off. It should be sung and acted with fanatical consecration, rendered by the chorus and the orchestra with artistic reverence, led with authority by the conductor. To every single eighth-note should be given the musical tribute that is its due.

Andrew Porter is music critic of The New Yorker. Verdi's "Macbeth": A Sourcebook, which he has edited with David Rosen, is due soon from W. W. Norton.



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Norma's World

continued from p. 34

references to herbs used by the Celtic Druids. Norma, as a member of this priestly class, would have known extensively about these herbs. In fact, the mistletoe she cuts for the "Casta Diva" was the most important of the Celtic medicinal secrets, as well as the most sacred of their totems.

Norma's society was rough: her people lived in a near-constant state of tribal warfare; they were almost entirely illiterate. Compared to their contemporary Athenians, they were barbarians, living in a cold, wet world. But they were not ill-equipped to face that world. They could get iron and copper and tin from the ground. They knew enough to let an exhausted field lay fallow or to plow animal waste into it.

The Celts could not build extensive shelters because they had no mortar for cement; their building powers, besides enabling them to arrange massive slabs of stone, produced only timber huts with thatched roofs. Hence, these people lived much of their lives out-of-doors, using animal skins for clothing and warmth. Despite the tradition of *Norma* productions garbed in Roman togas, it is to the Celts we owe the pants we wear.

Though they could not read or write, the Celts could remember. In fact, as already noted, they had a separate class, the Druids, whose function it was to recite the ancient lore. As a priestess, Norma was then one of the individuals of her society responsible for keeping this knowledge alive. The most immediate question to ask about Norma herself is whether as a woman she could actually have been a member of this sacred caste.

First of all, we can pretty much guess the sources that Bellini, Felice Romani, his librettist, and Louis-Alexandre Soumet, the playwright whose tragedy the other two adapted, must have read about the Druids. These were the classical Latin authors who chronicled Rome's conquest of Gaul. In Tacitus's *Annals*, XIV, 30, there is a striking passage which contains the seed of *Norma*'s final tableau. "On the shore stood the opposing army with its dense array of armed warriors, while between the ranks dashed women in black attire like the Furies, with hair dishevelled, waving brands. All around, the Druids, lifting up their hands to heaven and pouring forth dreadful imprecations, scared our soldiers by the unfamiliar sight and sound, so that, as if their limbs were paralysed, they stood motionless and exposed." (Translation by Church and Brodribb, London, 1876.)

Here women dressed in black seem to be an active ingredient in the Druid ceremony, but separated from the Druids themselves. The vestal virgin cult to which Norma and Adalgisa belong probably descends from Tacitus's reference here to the Furies, overlaid with the Catholic nuns of later times. The vow of chastity that plays such an important part in Norma's undoing is nowhere mentioned in the classical or archaeological sources. This element seems entirely the addition of the Christian sensibility of Norma's creators.

Yet the power that the heroine of Bellini's opera wields was not entirely outside of her reach. Stuart Piggott, whose *The Druids* (New York, 1968) is the most lucid account of the subject and source for much of the above, has specifically noted the existence of important Druid females: "The documentary evidence from Britain shows, in the intimidating personalities of Boudica and Cartimandua, that women could be elected to the status of tribal 'queens.'" He further points to the corroboration of richly furnished graves entombing some women.

What we know of the careers of Boudica and Cartimandua makes difficult reading for the queasy. They were warrior maidens of an Amazon type and particularly harsh on their captured enemies. Nevertheless, they did exist among the Druids, were respected and became the subject of song and legend. Though their distinguishing characteristics were different from hers, they can serve as distant models for Norma.

If Norma had risen to the high place given her by Soumet and Bellini, this was not because of her warrior skills. Being a religious leader, Norma's greatest virtues were probably her poetical talents. According to Piggott, the Druids were "a class of learned

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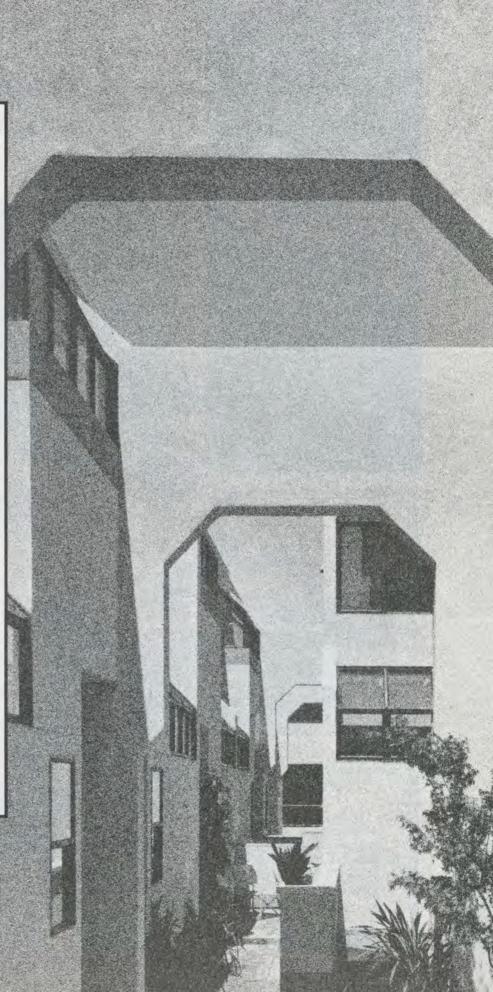
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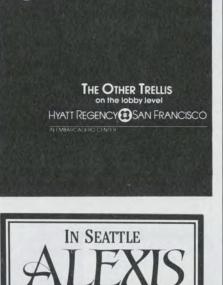
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Norma and her children. Illustrations from Beauties of the Opera, Paris, 1845.



men, repositories of the traditional wisdom of the tribe, whether it concerned the gods or men; the way to write a poem or construct a calendar; the due rite of sacrifice and the correct interpretation of omens." As a description of Norma's duties, this is quite apt. She knows, for example the hymn to the moon and the rituals for cutting the mistletoe and the portents upon which military victory depends. Since Norma's knowledge was all memorized — she had no written language, though she may have been able to transact business matters in Latin — her novitiate could last up to 20 years. It did not have to, and we are allowed to think Norma herself an especially quick pupil and so account for her exalted place in society.

Since they never wrote anything out, we know little about the actual

religion the Druids fostered in their community. Yet two specifics of their faith have come down to us. Chicken Little, who so feared the sky falling on her head, was originally a Druid domestic animal. She caught her fright from the people she lived among.

In the court of Alexander the Great, Ptolemy was present when ambassadors from the Celts responded to the emperor's summons to sign a compact which would permit him to attack Persia and Phoenicia. As they sat drinking, Alexander asked the envoys what they feared most. "We fear no man," they replied. "There is but one thing we fear: that the sky should fall on us."

When the Druids bound their vow to Alexander, they gave further evidence of their peculiar obsession. "If we observe not this agreement, may the sky fall on us and crush us; may the earth gape and swallow us up; may the sea burst out and overwhelm us."

The central - and from the perspective of the student of comparative religions, the most advanced - dogma of the Druid faith concerned the immortality of the soul. Ancient commentators thought that the Druids had borrowed this belief from Pythagoras, but most modern experts seem to opt for its intrinsic origins in Druidic mythology. Not only was the soul immortal, but it passed from one body to another. Like the Buddhists believing in the transmigration of the soul, the Druids imagined that their spirit could reappear in a wide variety of animals and plants. From the Druids comes our saying "knock on wood." It was their way of propitiating the good spirit of a tree.

So certain were the Celts of their immortality, reports one source, that they would even lend money on a promissory note to be redeemed in the other world.

Besides knowing the religious rituals, the secrets of immortality and the nature of transmigration, the Druids of Gaul served as the judicial arm of their society. Together with "professors of wisdom," the epithet frequently found describing the Druids is "the most just of men." Caesar, for example, emphasized the Druids' widespread power, their authority in

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595 Francisco Blvd., San Rafael, California 94901 Phone 415-454-0582 nearly all civil and criminal cases as well as in questions of property and boundaries. He added further that they could excommunicate an individual or tribe who did not accept their rulings. Norma's legal mind is consulted when Adalgisa wants release from her sacred vows and then by the whole community when they want to know who should be sacrificed at the opera's end.

It is indeed these human sacrifices and the blood-stained altars for which they were responsible that have most tainted the Druids' historical reputation. As Oroveso says in the last act of Bellini's masterpiece, "Never has the altar lacked victims." Truly it is a the human sacrifice to which Norma and Pollione go was well within the practice of the Celtic world. The most alarming of these customs was meticulously described by Caesar in his *Gallic Wars*. There the Roman general told of large wickerwork human figures whose limbs were filled with living men and set on fire.

All commentators who bother to identify the victims in these sacrifices claim that they were criminals of one sort or another, and that such burnings were an elaborate form of capital punishment. Caesar, for example, reported: "The gods are supposed to prefer those caught red-handed; but if there is a shortage of these, the



Pollione and Adalgisa. Illustration from Beauties of the Opera, Paris, 1845.

barbaric ethos we are facing.

Before we plunge into this sanguine subject, a caveat must be observed. Most of what we know about the Druids comes from their losing encounter with Rome. The Latin writers who followed these battles were trying to justify the wholesale extermination of a culture. A similar predicament arose in the American West, when English-speaking writers wanted to prove that the Indians were heartless savages deserving of the genocide we wreaked upon them.

However, that warning aside, it must be quickly and definitely said that

innocent are made to take their place." This fits Norma's situation, for she is tempted to sacrifice the relatively innocent Adalgisa, but in the end condemns her own guilty self.

The fact that burning seems to have been the favored form of human sacrifice returns us to the central place fire had in the minds of these ironworkers. Several particulars of Druid culture converge on this same point.

Back in the time when primitive man knew how to make use of fire, but not how to make it, he would sometimes let it go out. In order to get it back, he had to wait for lightning to strike a tree. Now we know that the oak grove was the sacred haunt of the Druids. In the forests that cover Northern Europe, the oak is far outnumbered by both the beech and the Scotch pine, but according to modern statistics gathered by W. Warde Fowler, the oak is much more likely to be struck by lightning (cf. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*).

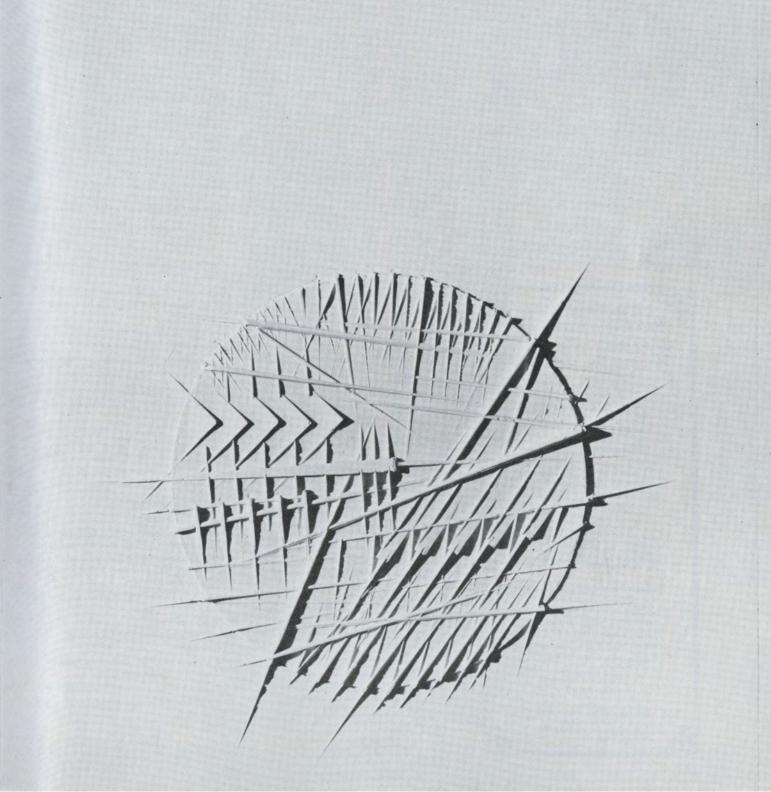
The grove of the oak was the temple of the Druids, but the mistletoe that grew on one of these trees was the sacred object. This was true, of course, for many reasons. Most importantly, the mistletoe was used as herbal medicine. The Druids called it "allhealing" and claimed for it special powers in treating children's ailments. Secondly, it was sacred because it was a gift from the sky. As a plant that never touched the ground, the mistletoe seemed to belong more to the air than to the earth. It was mysterious and healing, a combination the primitive mind could not resist.

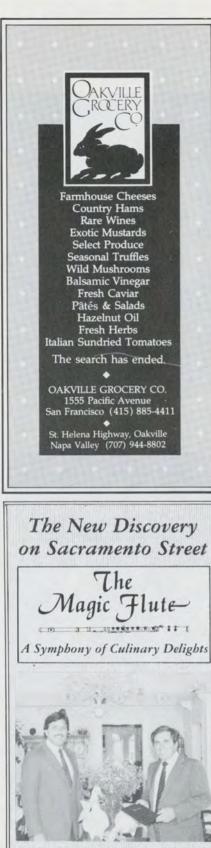
Thirdly, it brought another gift from the sky. In a storm, mistletoe acts as a lightning rod. The tree, in particular the oak, adorned with mistletoe, attracted the fire for which Norma's forefathers prayed. Caesar's giant wicker figure, filled with human sacrifice, may perhaps harken back to this burning tree. I am claiming no literal connection between the two events; they are separated by hundreds of years, but the ritual fires the Druids set may have been their way of commemorating the ancient return of the flame.

Human sacrifice for the purpose of remembering a near-forgotten event, for ensuring good luck or even for punishing criminals is barbaric in the extreme. No amount of romanticizing about Norma's world can remove the bitter taste these sacrifices leave in the mind. They made great theater for Bellini, but their reality is a painful reminder of what man can do to man, whatever the reason.

Bill Huck is a writer on music. His performance reviews appear weekly in two San Francisco newspapers, The Sentinel and The Voice. His essays appear locally in City Arts and nationally in The Advocate. OPERA PLAZA AND GHIRARDELLI SQUARE - SAN FRANCISCO

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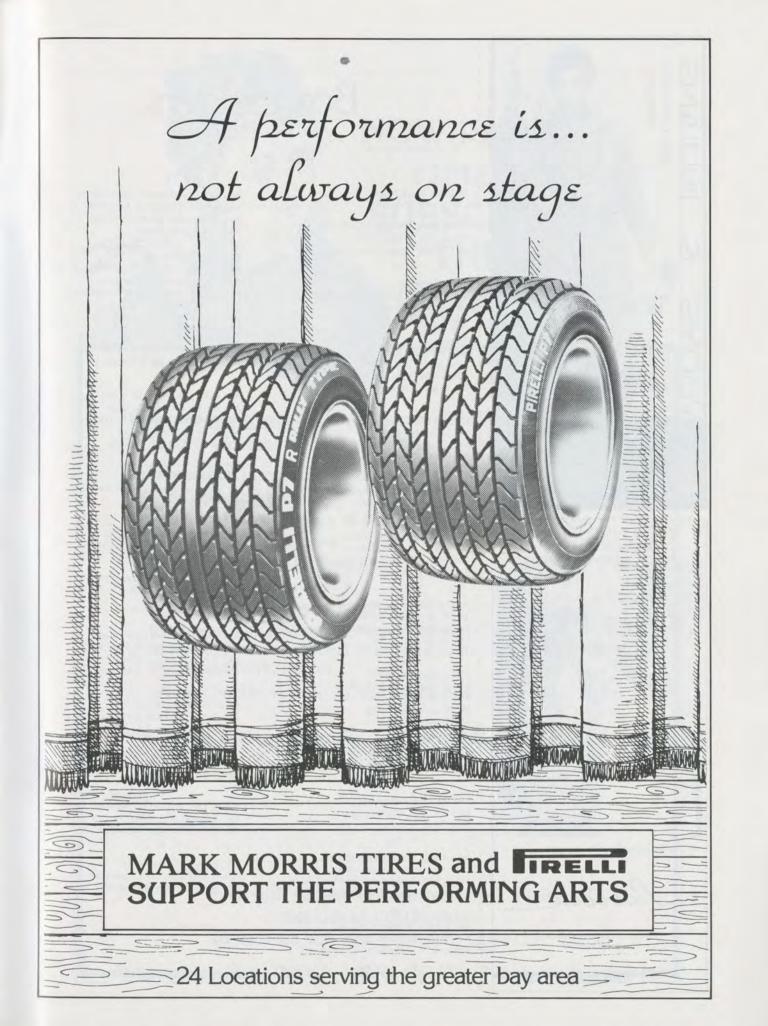
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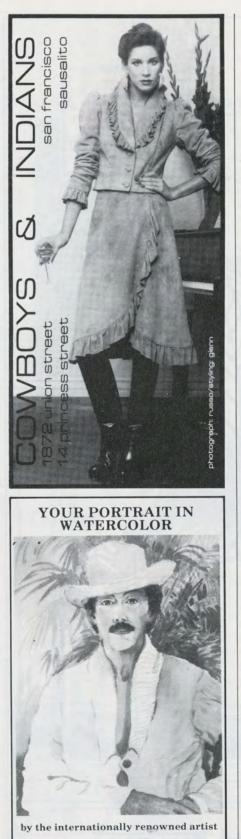
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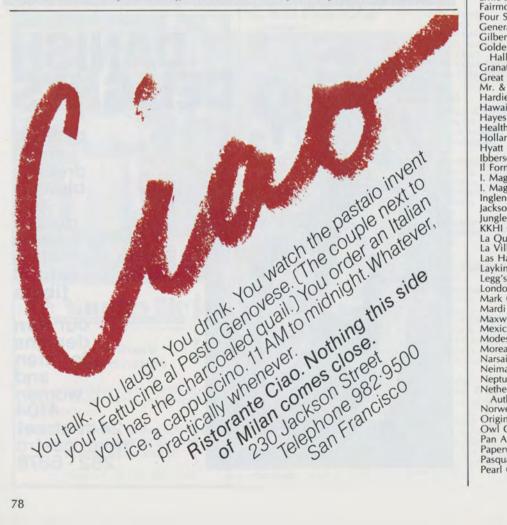


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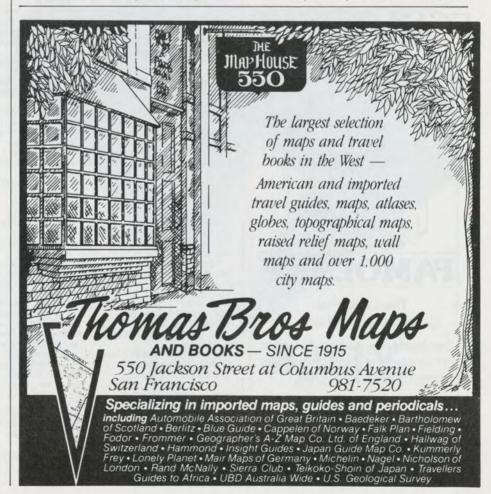


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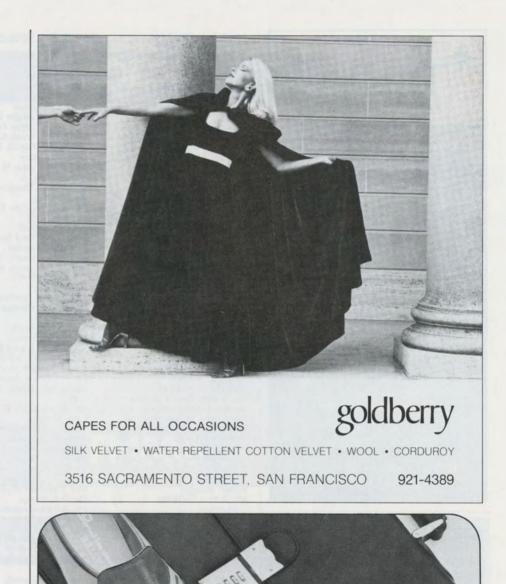
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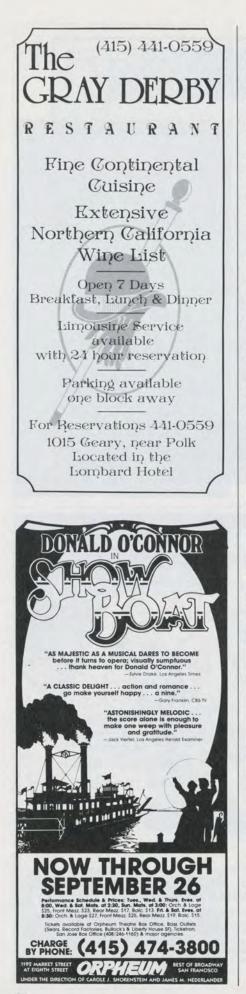
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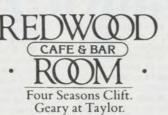


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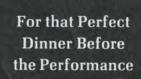
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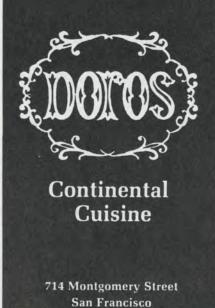
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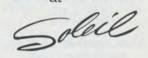
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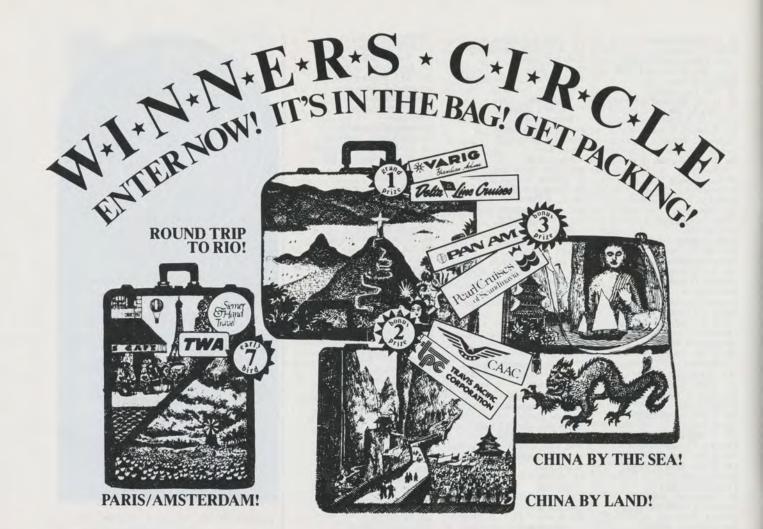
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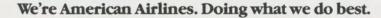
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A whole <u>carton</u> of Carlton has less tar than a single <u>pack</u> of...

	Contract				NICOTINE mg./cig.	100's	TAR mg./cig.	NICOTINE mg_/cig_
	Carlton		Kent	12	1.0	Kent 100's	14	1.2
	100's		Winston Lights	11	0.9	Winston Lights 100's	12	0.9
-	AIR-STREAM FILTER		Marlboro	16	1.0	Benson & Hedges 100's	16	1.1
and the second se		Carlton	Salem	14	1.1	Parliament Lights 100's	12	0.9
Carlton	The shade	MENTHOL	Kool Milds	11	0.9	Salem 100's	15	1.1
			Newport	16	1.2	Marlboro 100's	16	1.1
6		69	TAR & NI	COTINE NUMBE	ERS AS R	EPORTED IN LATEST FTC RE	PORT	
	an multiple relations		Carlton Kings Carlton Menthol	Less than 0.5 Less than 0.5	0.1 0.1	Carlton Box 100's Less th	an 0.5	0.1

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



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

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