

Elektra

1984

Thursday, October 18, 1984 8:00 PM

Tuesday, October 23, 1984 8:00 PM

Friday, October 26, 1984 8:00 PM

Thursday, November 1, 1984 8:00 PM

Sunday, November 4, 1984 2:00 PM

Wednesday, November 7, 1984 7:30 PM

Saturday, November 10, 1984 8:00 PM

SFO_PUB_01_SFO_1984_04

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San Francisco Opera Archives

San Francisco Opera

FALL SEASON 1984


Elektra



TO ALL THOSE WHO STRIVE FOR EXCELLENCE.

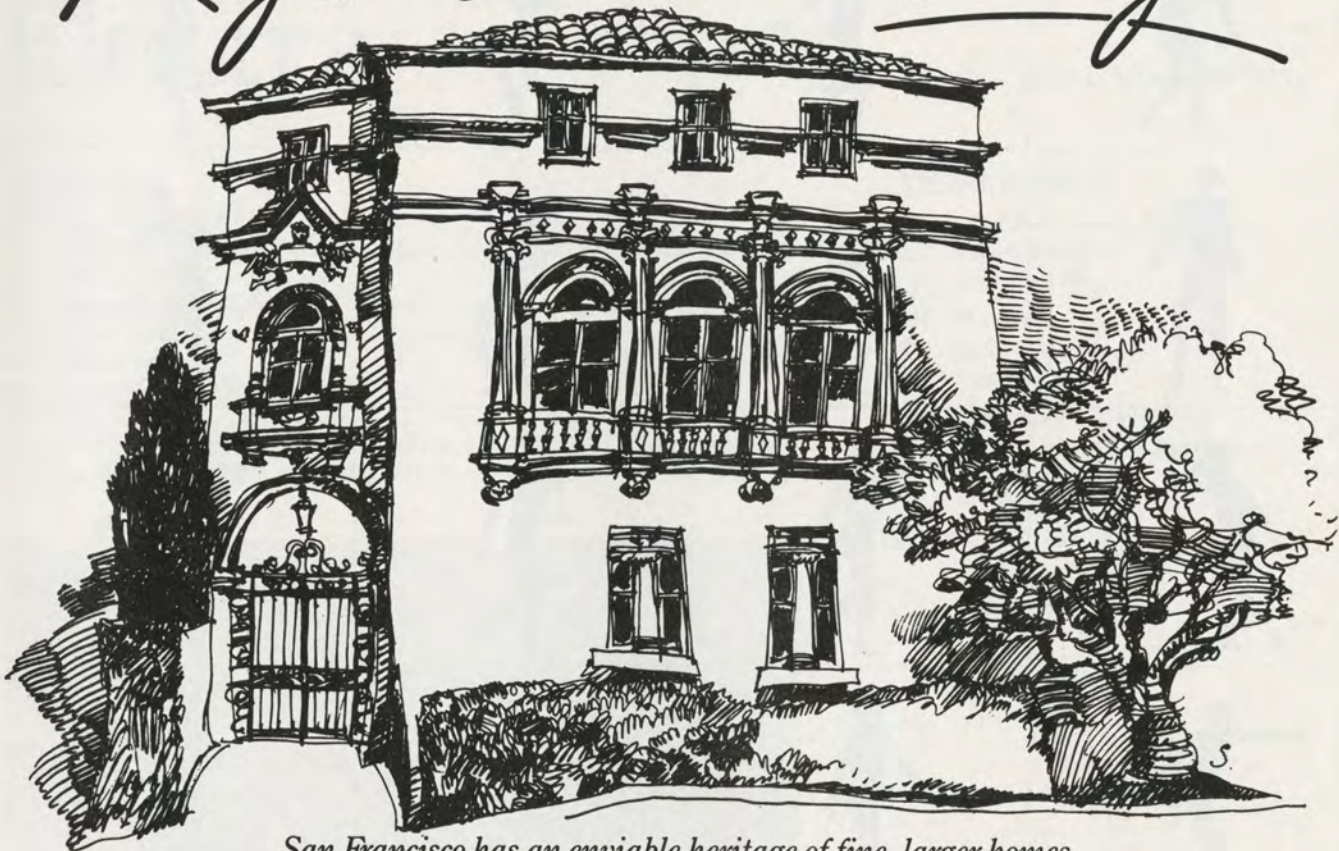
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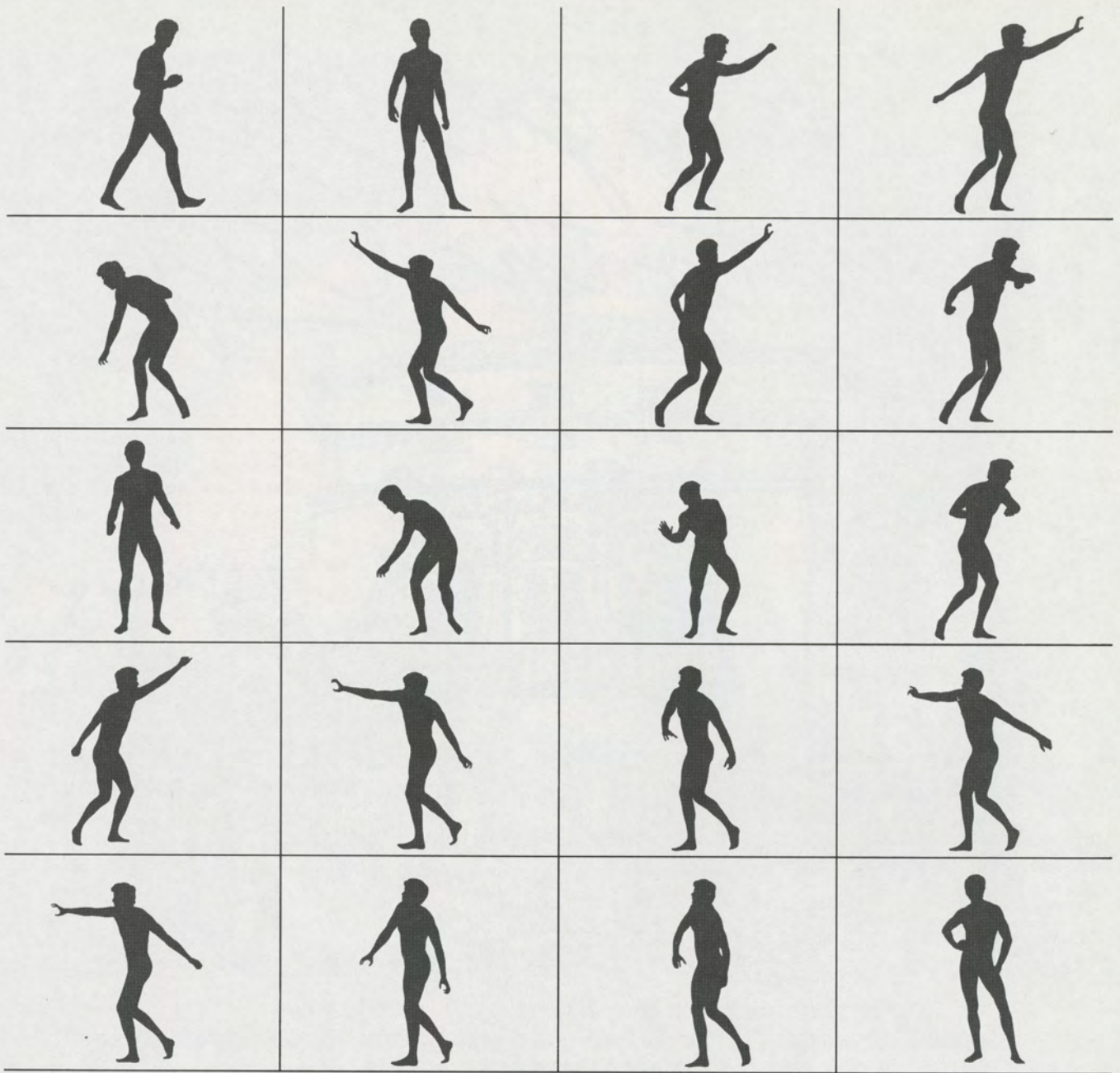
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Terence A. McEwen, *General Director*

Elektra

FALL SEASON 1984

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COVER:

Carl Morris (b. 1911)
Red Floe, 1961.
Oil on canvas, 46 x 72 in.
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From the President

ROBERT MESSICK



Welcome to San Francisco Opera's 62nd consecutive Fall Season, a season featuring an exciting array of many of today's greatest singers in repertoire ranging from beloved classics to such less well known masterpieces as *Anna Bolena* and *Khovanshchina*, both being given here for the first time.

Great singers, like priceless jewels, need appropriate settings to show their brilliance to greatest advantage. To provide such settings requires more than the artistry of designers and the talents of the many people required to construct the scenery and costumes; it takes the generosity of numerous individuals and groups who underwrite the enormous costs of

mounting grand opera on the scale our audiences deserve and have come to expect.

Assistance for production funding has come from a variety of sources: *Ernani* has been made possible by a generous gift in memory of George Quist, a member of the Opera Association Board of Directors from 1979 to 1982; presentation of *Khovanshchina* has been made possible through the generosity of the L.J. Skaggs and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation; and the expanded orchestra for *Elektra* was made possible through the generosity of Mr. and Mrs. Peter Hoefler, Mr. and Mrs. David Marsten, and Mr. Alex G. Spanos. Three productions were underwritten by generous donors in the past: *Madama Butterfly* was donated by the San Francisco Opera Guild, while *Rigoletto* and *Don Giovanni* were made possible in 1973 and '74, respectively, by generous gifts from the late James D. Robertson. The revival of *Madama Butterfly* is underwritten in part by Pacific Bell, while the remounting of *Don Giovanni* has been made possible in part by a gift from Mrs. Marion M. Miller. Our deepest thanks go to these generous "angels."

We have further cause to be thankful for the supertitles that will enhance our productions of *L'Elisir d'Amore* and *Khovanshchina*, as well as selected performances of *Madama Butterfly*, courtesy of a generous grant from Citicorp. In recognizing the public's positive responses to supertitles, Citicorp has demonstrated its innovative spirit and alert sensitivity to the need to broaden audiences for the performing arts.

Grand opera is the most expensive performing art form in existence and, with the addition of our Summer Season and a larger Fall Season commencing in 1981, we have incurred significant losses in recent years, as expected. Thanks to a generous matching grant of \$500,000 from the Paul L. and Phyllis Wattis Foundation and the one-time matching gifts from directors and a limited number of other major contributors, we have received a sum which exceeds the loss for 1983, which was the purpose of this special fund drive. This fantastic result, however, is a one-time effort, and we must increase the amount of annual funds raised to cover current costs and to amortize the remaining accumulated deficit.

Financing our opera is a major undertaking. Our 1984 expenses related to carrying out our total opera program will approximate \$18 million. Ticket sales are estimated to be about \$10 million (just about the same as in 1983). The resulting ratio of ticket sales to costs, 55 per cent, compares favorably with other major companies in the United States, and is far better than that of major European companies. But from where do we get the difference of \$8 million? A variety of sources—government grants, special events, income from our endowment and reserve funds, the San Francisco Opera Guild, production sponsorships—will provide about one-half of the gap. The other one-half, \$4 million (or 40 per cent of the price of your seats), must be raised from our supporting public, if we are not to incur a loss. We are dependent on the generosity of thousands of contributors to continue presenting grand opera of the quality on which our reputation has been built—a quality that we are determined to maintain. If you are not a contributor, won't you please become one? If you are, please accept our thanks with our hope you will consider a significant increase this year.

Once again it is a pleasure to express our gratitude to the National Endowment for the Arts, the California Arts Council, the Hotel Tax Fund, Mayor Dianne Feinstein, Chief Administrative Officer Roger Boas, the City and County of San Francisco, the San Francisco Opera Guild, and the War Memorial Board of Trustees. Their continued support has earned our deepest appreciation.

—WALTER M. BAIRD

Black tie to boardroom to back court.

Footwear to facials.

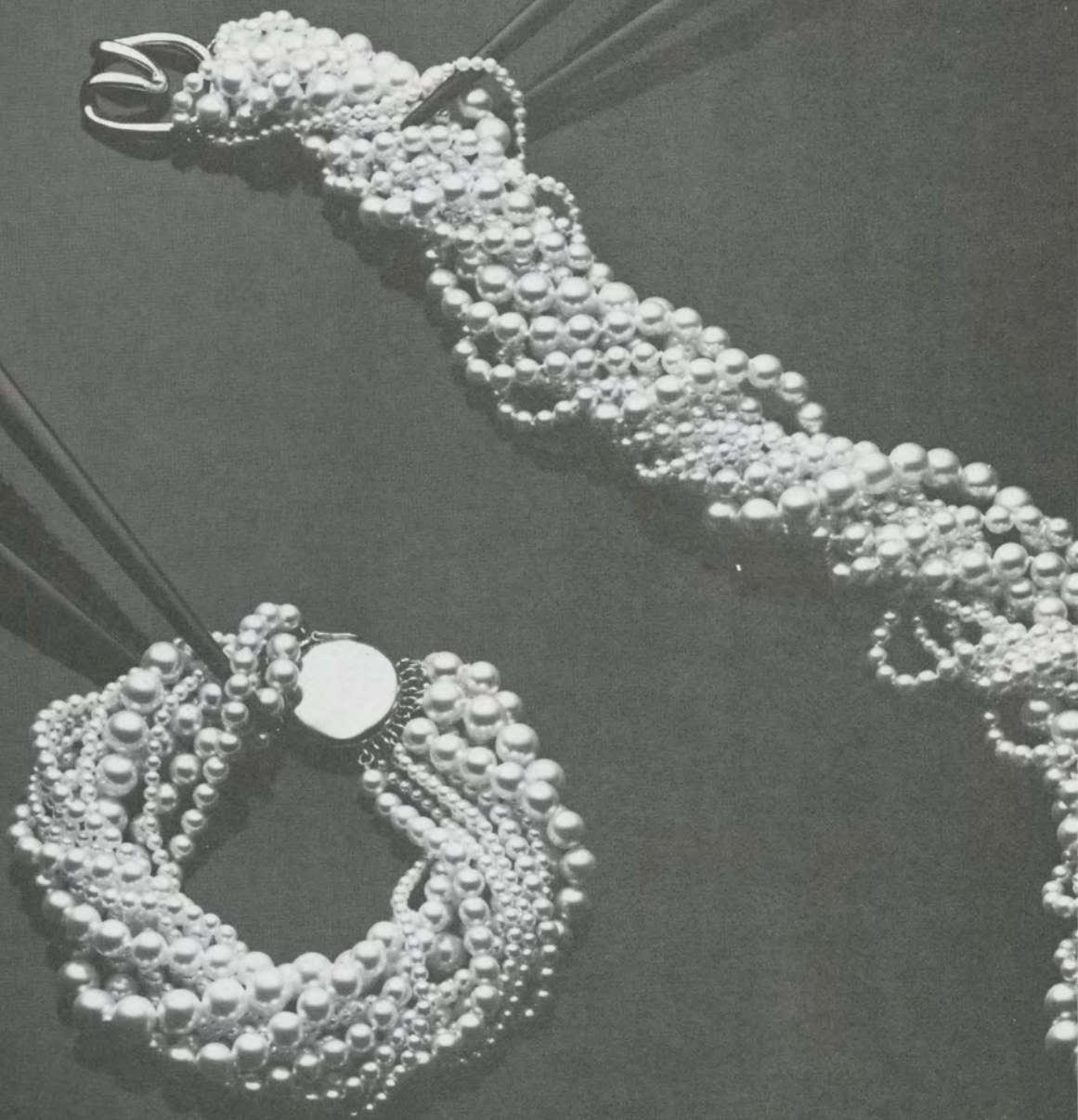
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General Director's Message

1984 is for us at the Opera House a year of consolidation, a year of artistic progress and administrative stability. We set ourselves some difficult goals and we are well on our way to achieving them.

This is the year we must stay within our budget and yet present to you the standard of artistic excellence that has become San Francisco's trademark. I hope by the end of the season, you will feel we have accomplished that.

It gives me immense personal satisfaction to see so many of the world's finest vocal artists on the Opera House stage this season, a roster that includes many of the superstars who have become household names, as well as some of today's most exciting and fastest-rising young operatic talents.

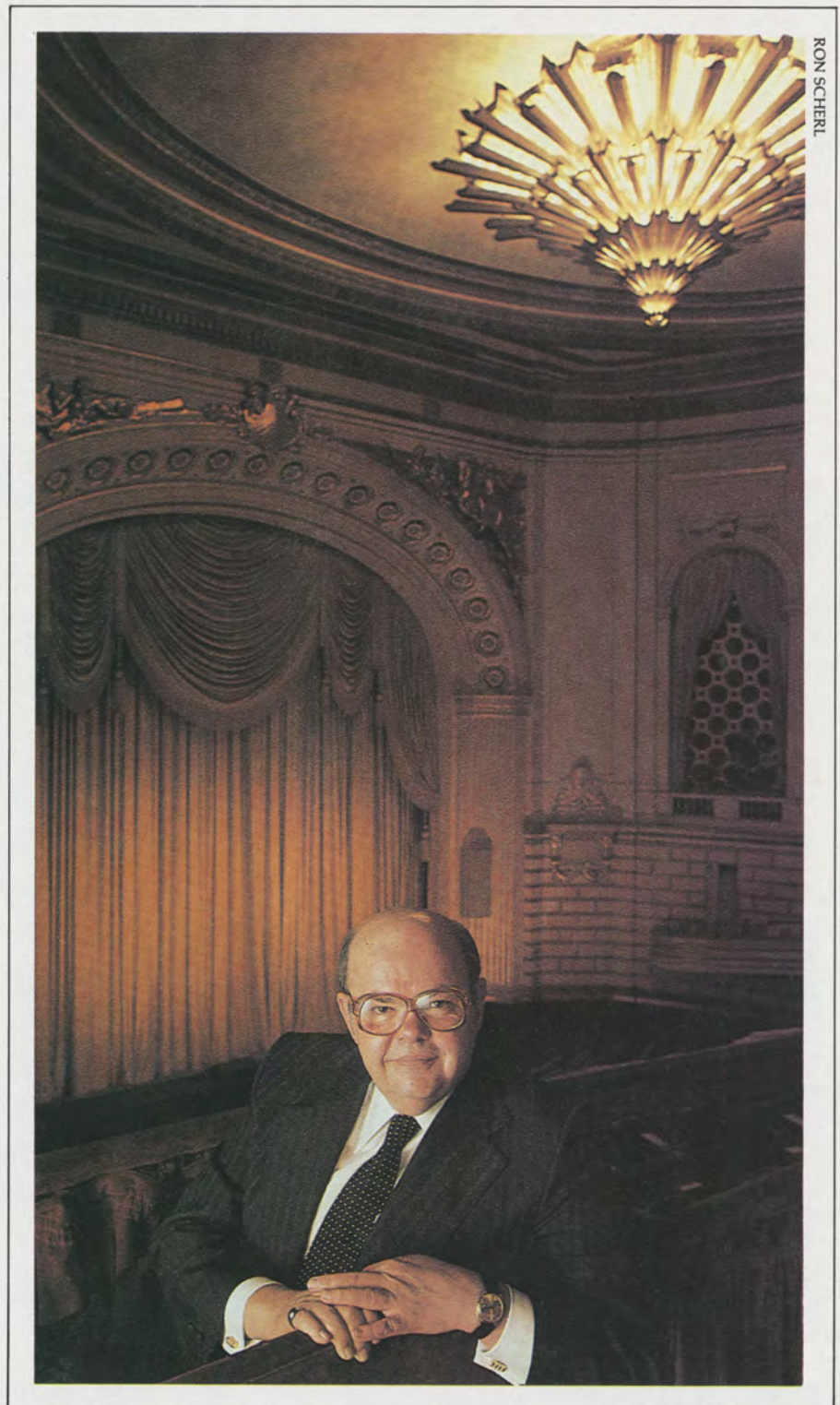
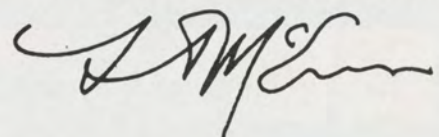
The operas in which they will be heard this season are drawn from the Italian, French, German and Russian repertoires, each exhibiting opportunities for superlative singing while making unique demands posed by widely disparate styles of lyric theater. From early Italian *bel canto* (both comic and tragic) to the landmark developments of Verdi; from Mozart's singular *dramma giocoso* to two verismo favorites; from the saga of 17th-century Russia to the devastating power of Greek tragedy, our 1984 Fall Season illustrates the broad spectrum of operatic expression. Such a season poses an enormous challenge to our Company's artistic resources, a challenge we have welcomed while in the course of preparing this season for you.

All of this is possible only because of the kindness and generosity—both public and anonymous—of our special friends. We are also happy to introduce to the Fall Season our use of supertitles, which are underwritten this fall by Citicorp. (We hope to extend the use of supertitles to more operas in the future, as funding becomes available.) Your enthusiastic reception of supertitles in the past has convinced us of our audience's desire to extract the maximum satisfaction from their operatic encounters. It is a heartening trend and it once again confirms our operagoers' reputation as the world's

most dedicated opera audience.

That dedication is matched by the commitment of our entire staff, not only the artists and technicians whose work is visible on stage, but the many supporting personnel who help keep this great Company running smoothly. We are proud of our work and gratified by your recogni-

tion and assistance. It is with gladness that we anticipate the challenges and rewards of our ongoing artistic alliance with you.



RON SCHERL



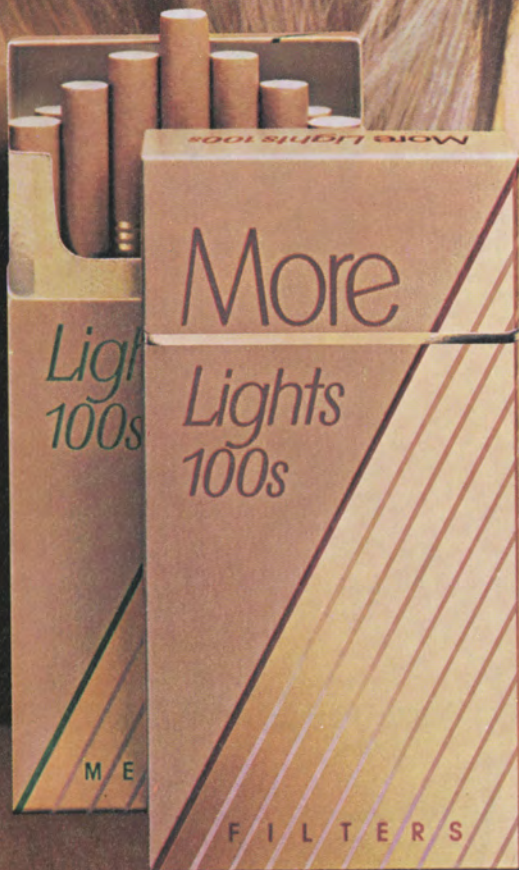
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Terence A. McEwen, *General Director*

1984 Fall Season

Opening Night

Friday, September 7, 9:00

Ernani Verdi

This production is dedicated to the memory of George Quist, San Francisco Opera Board of Directors, 1979-1982.

Caballé, Zajic/Todisco, Milnes, Plishka, Harper, Will
Gardelli/Joël/Benois/Munn

Saturday, September 8, 8:00

Carmen Bizet

Nafé**, Erickson, Gibbons*, Bruno/Ciannella*, Carlson, Thomas, Malis, Patterson, Matthews
Navarro/Ponnelle/Calábria/Ponnelle, Juerke/Munn

Tuesday, September 11, 8:00

Carmen Bizet

Wednesday, September 12, 8:00

Ernani Verdi

Friday, September 14, 8:00

Carmen Bizet

Saturday, September 15, 8:00

Ernani Verdi

Monday, September 17, 8:00

Carmen Bizet

Tuesday, September 18, 8:00

Production new to San Francisco

La Sonnambula Bellini

Production sets owned by Seattle Opera Company.

von Stade, Howe, Rice/O'Neill*, Ramey, Tate, Patterson

Rescigno/Macdonald/Dehò*, Sormani*/Macdonald/Arhelger

Wednesday, September 19, 8:00

Ernani Verdi

Thursday, September 20, 7:30

Carmen Bizet

Friday, September 21, 8:00

La Sonnambula Bellini

Saturday, September 22, 8:00

Ernani Verdi

Sunday, September 23, 2:00

Carmen Bizet

Tuesday, September 25, 8:00

La Sonnambula Bellini

Wednesday, September 26, 7:30

Ernani Verdi

Thursday, September 27, 8:00

Carmen Bizet

Saturday, September 29, 8:00

La Sonnambula Bellini

Sunday, September 30, 2:00

Ernani Verdi

Tuesday, October 2, 8:00 S

L'Elisir d'Amore Donizetti

Ferrarini**, Swenson/Lima, Del Carlo, Duesing

Agler/Sciutti*/Darling/Sakellariou/Arhelger

Thursday, October 4, 7:30

La Sonnambula Bellini

Friday, October 5, 8:00 S

L'Elisir d'Amore Donizetti

Saturday, October 6, 8:00

Madama Butterfly Puccini

This production was originally donated to the San Francisco Opera by the San Francisco Opera Guild.

Kincses* Rice, Gustafson/Cortez*, Krause, Thomas, Albert*, Will, Malis

Meltzer/Farruggio/Businger/Munn

Sunday, October 7, 2:00

La Sonnambula Bellini

Tuesday, October 9, 8:00 S

L'Elisir d'Amore Donizetti

Wednesday, October 10, 8:00

Madama Butterfly Puccini

Friday, October 12, 8:00

La Sonnambula Bellini

Saturday, October 13, 8:00 S

L'Elisir d'Amore Donizetti

Sunday, October 14, 2:00

Madama Butterfly Puccini

Tuesday, October 16, 8:00

Madama Butterfly Puccini

Mitchell, Rice, Gustafson/Cortez, Krause, Thomas, Albert, Will, Malis

Meltzer/Farruggio/Businger/Munn

Wednesday, October 17, 7:30 S

L'Elisir d'Amore Donizetti

Thursday, October 18, 8:00

Elektra Strauss

Martin, Neblett, Crespin, Adler*, Gustafson, Bruno, Hillhouse*, Zajic, Swenson, Howe,

Lancaster*/Bailey, Wimberger*, Patterson, Tate
Tate*/Resnik*/Siercke/Blatas*/Munn

Friday, October 19, 8:00

Madama Butterfly Puccini

Sunday, October 21, 2:00 S

L'Elisir d'Amore Donizetti

Tuesday, October 23, 8:00

Elektra Strauss

Wednesday, October 24, 7:30

Madama Butterfly Puccini

Thursday, October 25, 8:00

Production new to San Francisco

Anna Bolena Donizetti

This production of *Anna Bolena*, originated by the Canadian Opera Company, was made possible by a generous and deeply-appreciated gift from the Gramma Fisher Foundation,

The Archives for the Performing Arts invites you to view its exhibition of opera photographs by San Francisco artist, Ira Nowinski, currently on display in the War Memorial Opera House Museum. The exhibition, featuring a wide array of opera luminaries such as Montserrat Caballé, Luciano Pavarotti, Joan Sutherland, and Leontyne Price, is drawn from Nowinski's acclaimed book, "Backstage at the Opera." The Opera House Museum is located on the south mezzanine (box) level, adjacent to the Opera Boutique. Photographs for the exhibition, courtesy of the Stephen Wirtz Gallery, San Francisco.



through the auspices of the Lyric Opera of Chicago.
Sutherland, Budai, Gettler*/Blake*, Langan, Thomas, Will
Bonyngel/Mansouri/Pascoe/Stennett/Arhelger

Friday, October 26, 8:00
Elektra Strauss

Saturday, October 27, 8:00 S
L'Elisir d'Amore Donizetti

Sunday, October 28, 2:00
Anna Bolena Donizetti

Tuesday, October 30, 8:00
Madama Butterfly Puccini

Wednesday, October 31, 7:30
Anna Bolena Donizetti

Thursday, November 1, 8:00
Elektra Strauss

Friday, November 2, 8:00
Madama Butterfly Puccini

Saturday, November 3, 8:00
Anna Bolena Donizetti

Sunday, November 4, 2:00
Elektra Strauss

Tuesday, November 6, 8:00
Anna Bolena Donizetti

Wednesday, November 7, 7:30
Elektra Strauss

Friday, November 9, 8:00
Anna Bolena Donizetti

Saturday, November 10, 8:00
Elektra Strauss

Sunday, November 11, 2:00 S
Production new to San Francisco
Khovanshchina Mussorgsky
The San Francisco presentation of this production is made possible through the generosity of the L.J. Skaggs and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation.
Dernes, Gustafson, Adler/Salminen*, Bailey, W. Lewis, Howell, Noble, Tate, Albert, Busterud, Malis
Albrecht/Frisell/Benois/Sulich/Munn

Tuesday, November 13, 8:00
Anna Bolena Donizetti

Wednesday, November 14, 7:30 S
Khovanshchina Mussorgsky

Saturday, November 17, 8:00
Rigoletto Verdi
This production was made possible in 1973 by a generous and much-appreciated gift from the late James D. Robertson.
Serra*, Richards, Zajic, Parrish/Wixell, Raffanti, Patterson, Albert, Malis, Busterud, Harper
Adler/Ponnelle, Thompson/Ponnelle/Munn

Sunday, November 18, 2:00 S
Khovanshchina Mussorgsky

Tuesday, November 20, 8:00
Rigoletto Verdi

Wednesday, November 21, 8:00
Don Giovanni Mozart
This production was made possible in 1974 by a generous and much-appreciated gift from the late James D. Robertson.
Cook, Lorengar, Zimmermann/Brendel, Fissore, K. Lewis*, Will, Salminen
Chung/Copley/Businger, Munn/Munn

Friday, November 23, 8:00
Rigoletto Verdi

Saturday, November 24, 8:00 S
Khovanshchina Mussorgsky

Sunday, November 25, 2:00
Don Giovanni Mozart

Tuesday, November 27, 8:00 S
Khovanshchina Mussorgsky

Wednesday, November 28, 7:30
Don Giovanni Mozart

Thursday, November 29, 8:00
Rigoletto Verdi

Friday, November 30, 8:00 S
Khovanshchina Mussorgsky

Saturday, December 1, 2:00 S
Family Matinee
Madama Butterfly Puccini
This production was originally donated to the San Francisco Opera by the San Francisco Opera Guild.
Hartliep, Bruno, Gustafson/MacNeil, Busterud, Tate, Patterson, Will, Malis
Johnson*/Farruggio/Businger/Munn

Saturday, December 1, 8:00
Don Giovanni Mozart

Sunday, December 2, 2:00
Rigoletto Verdi

Tuesday, December 4, 8:00
Don Giovanni Mozart

Wednesday, December 5, 7:30
Rigoletto Verdi

Thursday, December 6, 8:00 S
Family Performance
Madama Butterfly Puccini

Friday, December 7, 8:00
Don Giovanni Mozart

Saturday, December 8, 8:00
Rigoletto Verdi

Sunday, December 9, 2:00
Don Giovanni Mozart

** American opera debut
* San Francisco Opera debut
S Performance with Supertitles

Repertoire, casts and dates subject to change

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Matinee for Senior Citizens and Disabled Patrons
Wednesday, October 31, 1:00

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Helga Dernesch
Kaaren Erickson
Alida Ferrarini**
Rachel Gettler*

Joan Gibbons*
Nancy Gustafson†
Nikki Li Hartliep†
Wendy Hillhouse*
Francesca Howe
Veronika Kincses*
Francine Lancaster*
Pilar Lorengar
Janis Martin
Leona Mitchell
Alicia Nafé**

Carol Neblett
Cheryl Parrish†
Laura Brooks Rice
Leslie Richards
Luciana Serra*
Joan Sutherland
Ruth Ann Swenson†
Frederica von Stade
Dolora Zajic†
Margarita Zimmermann

Donnie Ray Albert*
Dennis Bailey
Rockwell Blake*
Wolfgang Brendel
James Busterud
Lenus Carlson
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Miguel Cortez*
John Del Carlo
Dale Duesing
Enrico Fissore
Daniel Harpert†

Gwynne Howell
Tom Krause
Kevin Langan
Keith Lewis*
William Lewis
Luis Lima
Walter MacNeil
David Malis†
John Matthews
Sherrill Milnes
Timothy Noble

Dennis O'Neill*
James Patterson†
Paul Plishka
Dano Raffanti
Samuel Ramey
Matti Salminen*
Robert Tate
Jeffrey Thomas
Nunzio Todisco
Jacob Will†
Peter Wimberger*
Ingvar Wixell

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Myung-Whun Chung
Lamberto Gardelli
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Matthew Farruggio

Sonja Frisell
Nicolas Joël
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Graziella Sciutti*
Robin Thompson

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Toni Businger
Robert Darling

Enzo Dehò*
Thomas J. Munn
John Pascoe

Jean-Pierre Ponnelle
Alfred Siercke
Marialuisa Sormani*

COSTUME DESIGNERS

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Ramona Spiropoulos
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Lola Watson
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Kenneth Malucelli
Frederick Matthews
Jim Meyer

Daniel Pociernicki
Valery Portnov
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Sigmund Seigel
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Carolyn Houser

Debra Rose
Katherine Warner

Andrew Birkhoff
Eugene Bordallo
Peter Childers

Gregory Gonzales
Jay Johanni
Gregory Lara

Ian Leffler
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Beverley Finn

Lisa Louise Glenister
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Marena Lane
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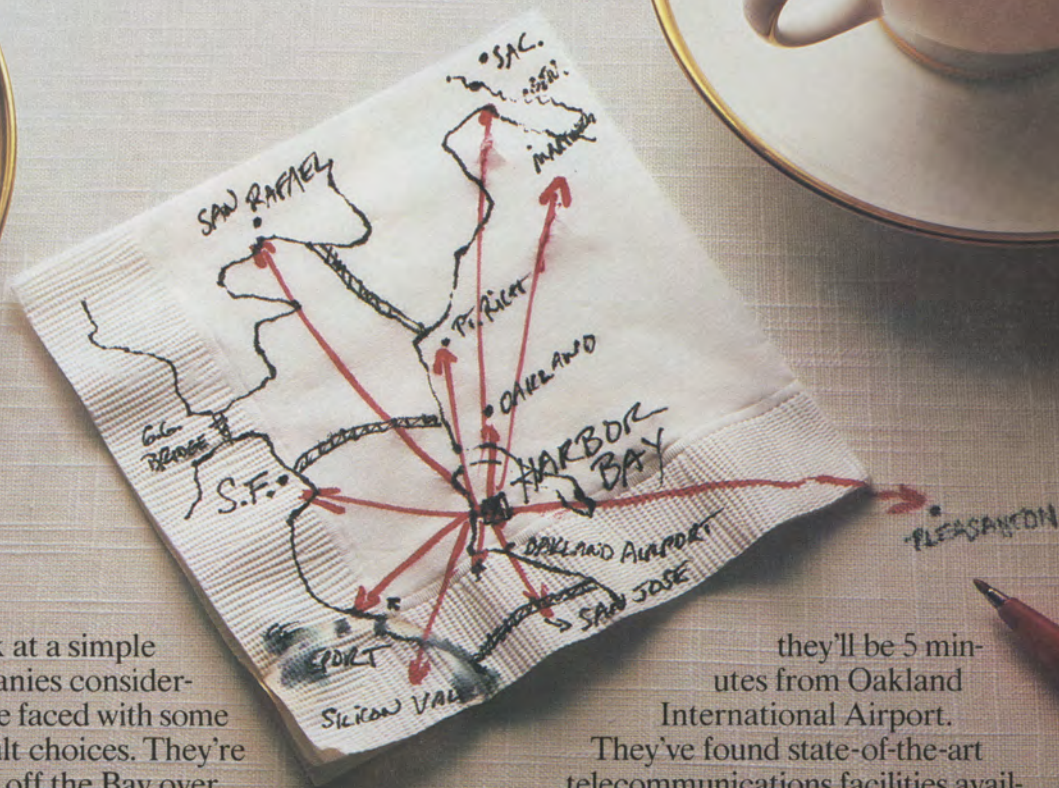
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Claire Nice
Dorothy Papo
Marianne Petroni

Miriam Preece
Ellen Sanchez
Stella Tatro
Beverly Terry
Karen Topp
Carolyn Waugh
Ann Williamson

Richard Ares
Sky Bamford
Stephen Bartlett-Re
Steve Bauman
Bruce Brown
Tony Bua
Stewart Clark
Bill Colligan
Don Crawford
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Toby Duisenberg
Hilbert Duperroir
Kermit DuVal
Bill Easley
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Rick Emmons
Peter Felleman
Kurt Frank
Mickey Frettoloso

Eugenio Gamez
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1984 BROADCASTS

Rebroadcasts of the San Francisco Opera can be heard nationwide on the member stations of National Public Radio beginning October 6th. Check local listings for the time in your area.

Broadcast production was made possible by grants from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, Chevron USA, Inc., and the L.J. and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation of Oakland, California.

In the Bay Area, the broadcasts may be heard on the following stations:

KCSM 91.1 FM

All San Francisco Opera Broadcasts begin locally at 8:00 p.m.

10/13 *Manon*
10/20 *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*
10/27 *Le Cid*
11/3 *Wozzeck*
11/10 *Aida* (1981)
11/17 *Tartuffe**

KQED 88.5 FM

All San Francisco Opera Broadcasts begin locally at 8:00 p.m.

11/2 *Manon*
11/16 *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*
11/23 *Le Cid*
11/30 *Wozzeck*
12/7 *Aida* (1981)
12/14 *Tartuffe**

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Adolf Bruk *Assistant Concertmaster*
Ferdinand Claudio
William E. Pynchon *Assistant Principal*
William Rusconi
Agnes Vadas
Mafalda Guaraldi
Barbara Riccardi
Robert Galbraith
Celia Rosenberger
Leonid Igudesman
Janice McIntosh

2nd VIOLIN

Virginia Price-Kvistad *Acting Principal*
Lev Rankov
Eva Karasik
Lani King
Gerard Svazlian
Tanya Rankov
Julia Kohl
Martha Simonds

VIOLA

Rolf Persinger *Principal*
Alison Avery
Lucien Mitchell
Asbjorn Finess
Jonna Hervig
Natalia Igudesman
Meredith Snow

CELLO

David Kadarauch *Principal*
Thalia Moore
Samuel Cristler
David Budd
Helen Stross
Victoria Parr

BASS

Charles Siani *Principal*
Jon Lancelle
Steven D'Amico
Shinji Eshima
Philip Karp

FLUTE

Alan Cox *Principal*
Alice F. Miller
James Walker

PICCOLO

James Walker

OBOE

James Matheson *Principal*
Deborah Henry
Raymond Dusté

ENGLISH HORN

Raymond Dusté

CLARINET

Philip Fath *Principal*
Joanne Burke Eisler
Gregory Dufford

BASS CLARINET

Gregory Dufford

BASSOON

Rufus Olivier *Principal*
Jerry Dagg
Robin Elliott

CONTRA BASSOON

Robin Elliott

HORN

William Klingelhoffer *Principal*
David Sprung *Principal*
Carlberg Jones
Brian McCarty
Paul McNutt

TRUMPET

James Miller *Principal*
Edward Haug
Timothy Wilson

TROMBONE

McDowell Kenley *Principal*
Donald Kennelly
John Bischof

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Robert Z.A. Spellman

TIMPANI

Elayne Jones

PERCUSSION

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Peggy Lucchesi

HARP

Anne Adams *Principal*

LIBRARIAN

Lauré Campbell

ORCHESTRA MANAGER Thomas B. Heimberg

Mary Hargrove, *Assistant*

The San Francisco Opera gratefully acknowledges a grant made by Mr. and Mrs. Lennart K. Erickson
for the purchase of a Cimbasso.

1984 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 \$20; Individual tickets are \$5. For further information, please call (415) 565-6432. Programs are subject to rehearsal changes.

Frederica von Stade/Samuel Ramey	9/19
"The Art of Bel Canto" Richard Bonyngel	
Nicola Rescigno/David Agler	10/10
Regina Resnik/Jeffrey Tate	10/24
Gerd Albrecht/Sonja Frisell	11/7
Susanna Lemberskaya	

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA GUILD PREVIEWS

MARIN

Previews held at Park School Auditorium, 360 E. Blithedale, Mill Valley; refreshments served at 7:30 p.m., previews at 8:00 p.m. Series registration is \$20.00 for 6 previews (\$15.00 for students and seniors). Single tickets are \$4.00 (\$3.00 for students and seniors). For further information, please call (415) 388-6789.

ERNANI	
Francesca Zambello	9/6
LA SONNAMBULA	
Robert Jacobson	9/13
L'ELISIR D'AMORE	
Francesca Zambello	9/20
ELEKTRA	
Michael Mitchell	10/11
ANNA BOLENA	
James Keolker	10/18
KHOVANSCHINA	
Dale Harris	11/1

NORTH PENINSULA

Previews held at St. Andrew's Lutheran Church Meeting Hall, El Camino Real and 15th Avenue, San Mateo. Lectures begin at 7:30 p.m. Series registration is \$20.00; single tickets are \$6.00. For further information, please call (408) 735-3757.

LA SONNAMBULA	
Robert Jacobson	9/12
L'ELISIR D'AMORE	
Francesca Zambello	9/27

ANNA BOLENA	
James Keolker	11/11
KHOVANSCHINA	
Dale Harris	11/25

SOUTH PENINSULA

Previews held at the Palo Alto Senior Center, 450 Bryant Street, at 8:00 p.m. (with the exception of 11/20, which will be held at the Palo Alto Cultural Center, 1313 Newell Road and the 10/2 Opera Gala which will be held at the Lucie Stern Community Theater, 1305 Middlefield Road, in Palo Alto). Series registration is \$18.00; single tickets are \$4.00. For further information, please call (415) 941-3890.

LA SONNAMBULA	
Robert Jacobson	9/11
L'ELISIR D'AMORE	
Francesca Zambello	9/18
FALL OPERA GALA	
Ramona Rockway	10/2
ANNA BOLENA	
James Keolker	10/23
KHOVANSCHINA	
Dale Harris	10/30
DON GIOVANNI	
Ramona Rockway	11/20

SAN JOSE OPERA GUILD

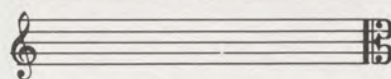
Previews will be held at the Saratoga Community Center (Senior Wing), 13777 Fruitvale Ave., Saratoga. Series is open to the public at a cost of \$4.00 per lecture, \$3.00 for students and senior citizens (free of charge to San Jose Opera Guild members). For further information, please call (408) 741-1331.

ERNANI	
Arthur Kaplan	10 a.m. 9/7
LA SONNAMBULA	
Robert Jacobson	10 a.m. 9/14
L'ELISIR D'AMORE	
Francesca Zambello	7:30 p.m. 9/25
ELEKTRA	
Michael Mitchell	7:30 p.m. 10/10
ANNA BOLENA	
James Keolker	7:30 p.m. 10/17
KHOVANSCHINA	
Dale Harris	10 a.m. 11/2

MAHLER #8, ERNANI, & EN VILLE.

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SONOMA COUNTY CHAPTER

All previews held at 10:30 a.m. at various locations (see below). Series registration is \$12.00 for 3 previews. Single tickets are \$5.00. For additional information, please call (707) 539-7157.

LA SONNAMBULA	9/12
Robert Jacobson	Piper-Sonoma Vineyards 11447 Old Redwood Hwy Healdsburg
ELEKTRA	10/17
Michael Mitchell	Vintners Inn 4350 Barnes Rd. Santa Rosa
KHOVANSCHINA	11/5
Dale Harris	El Dorado Hotel 405-1st St. West Sonoma

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 noon and there is no admission charge. For information, please call Peggy Olsen at (415) 342-7030.

ERNANI	9/11
Arthur Kaplan	
LA SONNAMBULA	9/18
Robert Jacobson	
ELEKTRA	10/16
Michael Mitchell	
ANNA BOLENA	10/22
James Keolker	
KHOVANSCHINA	10/31
Dale Harris	

NAPA OPERA LECTURE SERIES

"Adventures in Opera" is a 10-week course, now in its 12th year. The course, which accompanies the Saturday and Sunday series at the San Francisco Opera, will be held at 7:30 p.m. in St. Mary's Episcopal Church, 1917 Third Street, in Napa. Ernest Fly will again teach the course. Cost for the entire series is \$20.00. Individual lectures will be \$3.00. For further information, please call (707) 224-6162.

ERNANI	9/13
CARMEN	9/20
LA SONNAMBULA	9/27
MADAMA BUTTERFLY	10/4
L'ELISIR D'AMORE	10/11
ANNA BOLENA	10/18
ELEKTRA	10/25
KHOVANSCHINA	11/1
RIGOLETTO	11/8
DON GIOVANNI	11/15

OPERA EDUCATION INTERNATIONAL PREVIEW SERIES

Previews of operas of the 1984 Fall Season will be given by Michael Barclay, director of Opera

Education International, both in San Francisco and Hillsborough.

Hillsborough: Lectures will be presented on Monday evenings at 7:30 p.m. in the auditorium of the Crocker School, 2600 Ralston Avenue, at Chateau Drive. Series admission is \$55; individual admission at the door is \$6.00.

LA SONNAMBULA	9/10
L'ELISIR D'AMORE	9/24
MADAMA BUTTERFLY	10/1
ELEKTRA	10/8
ANNA BOLENA	10/22
KHOVANSCHINA	10/29
RIGOLETTO	11/5
DON GIOVANNI	11/19

San Francisco: Lectures are given in the auditorium of the Dr. William Cobb School, 2725 California Street, between Scott and Divisadero, at 7:30 p.m. Series subscription for five opera previews is \$27.50; individual admission at the door is \$6.00. For further information on both Hillsborough and San Francisco previews, please call (415) 526-5244.

ERNANI	9/6
LA SONNAMBULA	9/13
ELEKTRA	9/27
ANNA BOLENA	10/11
KHOVANSCHINA	11/8

ROBERT GOODHUE'S FALL OPERA COURSE

Ten two hour classes on all the fall operas (one class per opera). There is a choice of four sections: Section A (Mondays at 6:15 p.m., August 13 to November 26); Section B (Thursdays at 6:30 p.m., August 23 to November 15); Section C (five classes from 10:00 a.m. to noon and five classes from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. on August 25, September 15, October 6, October 20 and November 14); Section D (Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m., August 22 to November 14). Cost for the course is \$60.00; individual classes are \$7.00 if space permits. Classes are held at 13 Columbus Ave., San Francisco. For further information, please call (415) 956-1271.

HILLBARN THEATRE

Semi-staged dramatic readings of plays that served as inspiration for operatic masterpieces will be held in the Green Room of the Hillbarn Theatre, 1285 E. Hillsdale Blvd., in Foster City. All performances are on Sunday evenings at 7:30. Tickets are \$5 for individual performances, \$16 for the complete series. For information and reservations, please call (415) 349-6411.

HERNANI/Hugo	9/9
MADAM BUTTERFLY/Belasco	9/23
ELECTRA/Sophocles	10/7
LE ROI S'AMUSE/Hugo	10/21

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Elektra at 75

By WILLIAM MANN

How the years roll by! I first became acquainted with Richard Strauss' *Elektra* 41 years ago, when my brother-in-law-to-be, Norman Del Mar, played and sang the vocal score at first to, and later with me, on our days off from wartime service. The music was by far the most difficult to apprehend that I had ever encountered: I could sight-read most things on the piano, but I hadn't yet learned how to analyze music in terms of keys and chords, hadn't started "parsing" (as grammar describes it), so I couldn't explain to myself what the music was doing.

Twenty years later, I was writing a long chapter about *Elektra* for a book about all of Strauss' operas. Meanwhile I'd heard the work, in a concert performance, attended by the composer, conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham, and sub-conducted by my now almost brother-in-law, Norman: he beat time for the soloists, though Ljuba Welitsch, who sang Chrysothemis, resolutely beat her own time with a wagging finger for all to see. I had also seen *Elektra* many times on stage, beginning with a dumbfounding series of performances at Covent Garden masterminded, it subsequently transpired, by Erich Kleiber, who was content to be named only as conductor, though he is remembered to have influenced everything that we saw, as well as heard. I'd also seen *Elektra* abroad quite often, and heard records of it. Yet, when I wrote that chapter, I still regarded the music as rather difficult to like: there was a lot of Schoenberg that I found similarly dislikeable, but I had learned that some of the greatest and most typical Beethoven is meant to sound rough and ugly. I was a keen follower of the Darmstadt School, Boulez, Stockhausen, and their vanguard fellows, but *Elektra* still sounded like modern music, not like a work that had been

listened to for 55 years.

The new music of 1909 was, it must be said, rather less advanced than that of Strauss' *Elektra*. Stravinsky produced his orchestral *Scherzo Fantastique*, which resulted in the commission for *Firebird*. Schoenberg, to be sure, composed his first non-tonal music, with the Three Pieces, Opus 11, and his operatic monodrama, *Erwartung*. Bartók brought out his Second Suite for Orchestra, Rachmaninoff his Third Piano Concerto and *The Isle of the Dead*. When *Elektra* had its premiere at Dresden on January 25, the world's music critics were nonplussed, and dispersed ignorant or academic prejudice all over their newspapers, as was traditional in those days. In Britain, C.V. Stanford (composer of *Songs of the Sea*, etc.) voiced his indignation in an *Ode to Discord*, rather comic and perhaps worth disinterring. There were admirers, who soon put the work into modern operatic repertory: these don't seem to have included music critics, whom we now expect to guide us to the most worthwhile in new art.

When Strauss saw Hofmannsthal's *Elektra* acted as straight theater in Berlin, he at once recognized it as splendid opera material. Strauss was a classicist by schooling, had studied Sophocles' *Electra* and composed choruses for a school performance. He liked the Freudian psychological twist given to it by Hofmannsthal; he liked the preponderance of the female singing voice, his personal favorite, presupposed by the text (we do not hear a male voice for almost an hour). But he had just started composing *Salome*, to Oscar Wilde's play, and after it he wanted the respite of work on a comic opera. *Elektra* is no comedy: Strauss did not have long to wait for Hofmannsthal to deliver *Der Rosenkavalier*, but meanwhile he half-unwillingly took on *Elektra*, and it did

happen at the right time. All his previous work, the orchestral symphonic poems as well as *Salome*, had prepared him to perfect the particular musical diction, the right tone of voice for this *Elektra*.

The world of 1909, and the ensuing generations, found Strauss' *Elektra* difficult to accept. There is a famous story of an academic musician who declared, after curtain-fall, his need to go home and reassure his sanity by playing a chord of C major to himself: Strauss' opera had just ended with *five* of them, extremely noisy, but the professor did not hear them. Nowadays most of us will be surprised, if we haven't heard *Elektra* for a while, by the firmness of the key-centers throughout. It begins unequivocally in D minor, with the name of Agamemnon, Elektra's murdered and mourned father, thundered out by winds, brass and strings as the curtain rises, and we see the back courtyard of his palace at Mycenae, a palace forever dominated by his vengeful ghost. His spectral presence has preyed upon his murderers, Klytemnestra his wife and her paramour Aegisth; upon their slaves; and upon her daughter Elektra, whom trauma and physical degradation have rendered a bedraggled maenad. Their minds have all gone astray, and so their music deviates from our norm of major and minor keys. While that first imperious D minor chord is fading, we hear the haughty, sneering chatter of the servants, tugging the edges of the chord as if to rend it apart. Elektra makes a brief sortie from the palace, and her music sounds far removed from D minor or any other key. We hear her as the servants see her. Later, when she


William Mann is the author of books on the operas of Mozart and Richard Strauss. He recently retired from the staff of The Times of London, after 34 years, 22 of them as chief music critic. He is an associate editor of Opera magazine.



Interior of the Treasury of Atreus, Mycenae, c. 1300-1250 B.C.



Marvellee Cariaga, Gwendolyn Jones and Leona Mitchell, three of the maids in San Francisco Opera's 1973 presentation of *Elektra*.



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finds herself alone and starts to talk to the ghostly presence (we do not have to see the ghost on stage, since he is fully apparent in the orchestral music), her mind clears, and her music falls naturally into B flat minor, then C minor, for the new colossal Agamemnon theme, repeated Cs ascending through three octaves—like looking from the bottom to the top of a tall house when you are standing just outside it—and soon after that, when she begs him to reveal himself, a marvelously compassionate, dignified tune in noble and delicate A flat major.

Thereafter Elektra remains on stage until the end, and the opera chiefly devolves as a series of dialogues between her and several other characters. Her sister Chrysothemis, though oppressed by the aura of guilt in the house, has not been corrupted by it, so her music is frank, radiant, soaring in E flat major. Orest, the savior of the situation, dependable as a mighty rock, is portrayed in solemn common chords centered on D minor (Agamemnon's key). When his sister at last recognizes him, the musical tension is relaxed into A flat major again, a deliberate reflection of the earlier passage in that key. The servant who calls for a horse, the first male voice heard, makes a brief appearance in cloudless F major, Aegisth's key: when his foppish master arrives, the same key and themes are mercilessly lampooned (we might remember that this was Till Eulenspiegel's key). After the ghastly deed has been done, the servants and Chrysothemis stream from the palace to rejoice in a warm surge of E major, and Strauss enhances the radiance by turning some of his orchestral violas into extra violins (you'll sense, even if it doesn't suddenly hit you, the new brightness of the sound, when it happens).

The diatonic music in *Elektra*, the instantly likeable bits, is all associated with reasonable people. The least reasonable, most spiritually diseased character is Elektra's mother, the husband-murderess Klytemnestra, a woman drowning in her guilty conscience, and clutching at every available straw of superstition that just might relieve her constant nightmares. Hers is the most complicated music, tonally speaking, like ordinary music heard through a distorting filter. So is much of Elektra's music. But when the two converse, in the central duologue, Elektra's music becomes less wayward, more dependable, because she is less abnormal than her mother. Elektra must always be sensed as a heroine; Klytemnestra is an

COURTESY, LIM M. LAI



Marie Götze as Klytemnestra and Thila Planchinger as Elektra as seen in the Berlin premiere of the opera in 1909.

alarming caricature of womanhood and monarchy.

I'm drawing attention to the outstanding passages of diatonic, straight music in *Elektra*, because they are a salutary life belt for newcomers who haven't learned music as a foreign language, and who may still be nonplussed by the psychologically unhinged stretches of music in the work. Richard Strauss was a diatonic man himself: his own personal music (as we know it from *Ein Heldenleben*) was the extrovert E flat major which he allots here to Chrysothemis. Yet Strauss was already a great musical dramatist because he knew the craft of the musical actor, knew how to assume an impenetrable disguise as somebody else, indeed knew everybody involved in the play being set to music. We can hear Strauss impersonate Klytemnestra and Aegisth, and remark (if we know *Salome*) how much more convincing a chap is Orest than saintly Jokanaan.

Strauss' greatest achievement, perhaps in all his works, is his portrayal of Elektra. Her mental derangement is never softened; the final section of her first monologue, foretelling the slaughter and the ritual dances of rejoicing, is appalling in its imagined frenzy, and it's on the edge of Strauss' own natural vocabulary because she senses the normality obscured by her quest for divine vengeance. "I think I used to be beautiful," Elektra tells Orest. We know she looks horribly ugly, ill-nourished, scorned and exiled to animals' quarters, obsessed by hatred. At her first

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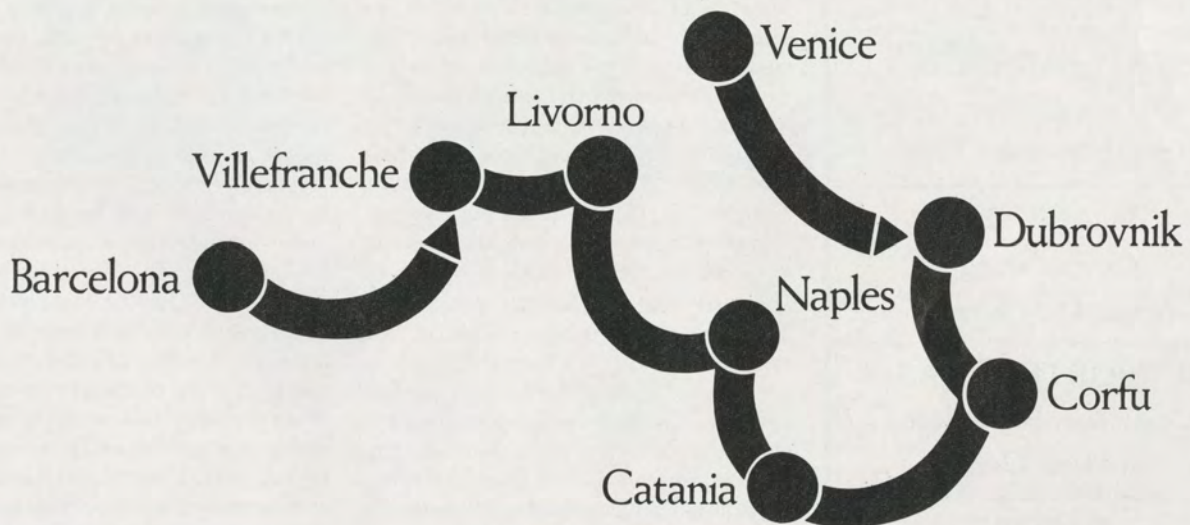


A caricature from 1907, showing Richard Strauss conducting an "orchestra he assembled for his next opera."

entry she swats at the servants, as if they were annoying mosquitoes, and that reminds her, as Strauss' music for her pantomime makes plain, that her one desire is to swat her mother with a sharp-bladed axe, repeatedly. When she thinks of her father, and recognizes his son, her music is that of a beautiful woman. I have seen one Elektra who was able to visualize this transformation: Gerda Lammers had a brief career, and Elektra was her best part, but those who saw her in it will find it hard to accept an Elektra who cannot bring off Lammers's physical *tour de force*. The ugly sack of potatoes was suddenly transmogrified into someone like Helen of Troy, loveliness and desirability personified (photographs alas didn't capture this magical transformation).

Richard Strauss' best music sometimes sounds as if it just poured out from him on to the paper, without thought or question. Of course it never did: Strauss was reared on the Viennese musical classics, Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, with their successors Mendelssohn, Schumann, Brahms and Wagner (not to mention Liszt, who became Wagner's father-in-law). His artistic ideal was always immediate, trouble-free communication. We know that in *Der Rosenkavalier* (which arrived two years later), he brought off this trick with a brilliant expertise that will never be dulled for as long as there are sympathetic interpreters around. His musical manipulation of characters in *Elektra* may be even more brilliant, just as it is more drastic. Every instant of the music

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


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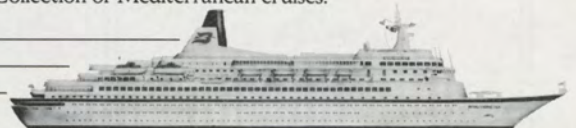
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had to be perfectly calculated, so as to convey dramatic rightness, as well as spontaneity.

He feared, at the time, that his music wouldn't be sufficiently different from that of his previous opera, *Salome*, because the subjects were both about abnormal female psychology (Freud was just becoming famous). He had no need for anxiety: the two operas are quite different. There is more viciousness in *Salome*, and more refinement. *Elektra* is as solid as the rocks that built the palace of Mycenae. With hindsight we may agree that both contributed to the language of *Der Rosenkavalier*, Strauss' next and best-loved opera. Now that we are becoming acquainted with Strauss' later operas, and discovering that, after *Rosenkavalier*, he did not retreat with his tail between his legs, but forged ahead on several levels, we may want to link *Elektra* with Strauss' later operas about classical Greece, not so much *Ariadne auf Naxos* as *Die Aegyptische Helena* and *Die Liebe der Danae*, both of which go in, less aggressively, for the monolithic effects of *Elektra*. Strauss visited Greece as a young man and, aware of its detailed literary associations (he was probably the most knowledgeable of all the great composers, literarily considered), could not help responding in the same classical manner to all Greek subjects for music.

By the time you have recognized the special musical language of *Elektra*, and even perhaps found a special pigeonhole for it among the works of Strauss that you know quite well, you will also have discovered how subtle and calculating his compositional methods were. There was nothing at all harum-scarum about Strauss as a composer: everything was worked out in his head before he put pen to paper—even the melodious passages that seem to flow in a spontaneous torrent of invention, like the wild mountain-stream in his garden, are scrupulously balanced within, and weighted precisely to match what precedes and follows them. At first *Elektra* may sound like a play set to music rather than an opera. The action does not, as in the best-known operas, pause for set musical numbers, arias or duets, even though it is a series of duologues, for the most part. But it's more than recitative with symphonic accompaniment: you can find arias here or there all the way through, when a character expounds at length, as Elektra does in the second scene, beginning at "Allein, weh, ganz allein." That solo is effortlessly formulated like a *scena* in Italian opera, with a sung introduction, an aria

("Agamemnon, Vater"), and a conclusion, when she imagines the hunting and death of Klytemnestra. This bloodthirsty passage is reflected in the approach of Klytemnestra and her slaves, leading animals to sacrifice, which begins before the preceding duet of Elektra and Chrysothemis has finished—the dovetailing is so neat that the overlap may escape notice, though it is perfectly plain to hear. Chrysothemis, in that duet-scene, has her own aria, "Ich hab's wie Feuer in der Brust." Of simultaneous duetting there is none until the finale, when the sisters can, at last, share a state of emotional eloquence and therefore sing together. In *Elektra*, Strauss held to Wagner's principle, and did not ask an audience to listen to two distinct, emotionally disjunct, texts sung simultaneously: he was already concerned with setting words so that they might all be understood. There is a famous story of a rehearsal for *Elektra* in which Strauss called to the conductor, Ernst von Schuch, noted for his elegant orchestral timbres, "Louder, louder, I can still hear the singers." If the accuracy of this witticism had not been corroborated, I would have pronounced it bogus: at an early age, Strauss learned to respect the importance of verbal audibility in vocal music, and he took great care about word-setting all his days, not the least in *Elektra*. The central scene, for Klytemnestra and Elektra, is marvelously rich in orchestral color and neurotic suggestibility: yet it is vital to know, at every moment, what the characters are saying, and Strauss makes this possible, when conductor and singers are working responsibly together. The orchestral music, weird and wonderful as it is, with its suggestions of dark, slippery pools of blood, and cobwebs hanging over the furniture indoors, the clanking of Klytemnestra's talismans and the creaking of her exhausted bones, is not meant to distract attention from the words, but to heighten and comment on them, make them more meaningful. Amid all the nightmare music of this Klytemnestra scene, how unexpected is the passage of pure, serene C major, when Klytemnestra talks of sick people soothing their sores in water at the cool of evening. Their scene together ends with Elektra's gleeful announcement of the cure for her mother's anxiety: her own violent death, which is prophesied in grimly relished detail, reaching a climax in triumphant B flat major on full orchestra. Before Klytemnestra has time to expire of a stroke, her horror is turned to insane, gloating de-

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Singing Greek Tragedy

By DAVID LITTLEJOHN

From the very beginning of what we now call opera—Rinuccini's *Dafne* (1598), Peri's *Euridice* (1600), Monteverdi's *Orfeo* (1607)—to the end of the 18th century, composers depended very heavily for their plots on classical Greek legends; and often on the dramatic versions of those legends written by the three great tragic playwrights whose works had survived. Then, through the 19th century—the glory years of grand opera, the years when most of the operas we still hear were performed—these ancient Greek sources were virtually abandoned. They seemed too simple and austere to carry the freight of a full-out romantic score, and the opulent productions the age demanded. In our century, opera composers have returned to these earliest dramatic models. Their unique fusion of simplicity and primal passion, their union of aesthetic purity with human experience at the bloody edge of nightmare, seems once again attuned to the feelings and ideas that musicians want to express.

What little was known of Greek tragedy around 1600 led a number of Florentine humanists to experiment with various means of reviving it, or at least synthesizing something like it. They knew that it was sung, or chanted, or at least clearly declaimed in varying intervals and rhythms, which changed depending on the emotion expressed. The texts proved that long set "arias" by the principal actors alternated with antiphonal "duets," and more intensely poetic choral lyrics (which were sung in unison, we now believe, by an all-male chorus—all the actors were men—of fifteen). Other evidence suggested dance-like movements and instrumental accompaniment. These and other elements of classic drama, translated through the preferred instruments and tonalities of the late 16th century, led to the stately, courtly, still-expressive early "operas," works intended to evoke (while being in fact very different from) the 5th century B.C. plays of Aeschylus, Sopho-

cles, and Euripides. "Indeed," writes the *New Oxford Companion to Music*, "it is very probable that if we could hear a piece of Ancient Greek music accurately performed, we should regard it as bizarre, uncouth, and possibly barbaric."

These early Renaissance humanists, penetrated by their awe for Greek and Roman wisdom, were trying to recapture it whole. In their enlightened naiveté, they created something altogether new, and quite wonderful. As the 17th century progressed, the dawn-freshness of this



Eileen Farrell in the title role of Cherubini's *Medea*, the work that had its American stage premiere at the San Francisco Opera in 1958.

new creation became codified and regularized, and discovery gradually turned into Style. The novelty of Monteverdi's Orphic song grew into lavish, "academic" court entertainments. (Lully's *Alceste* of 1674 is almost as extravagant as Versailles.) But these entertainments were still frequently based on the prestigious texts of the Greek and Latin playwrights. The unique esteem in which "*literae humaniores*" (as Oxford University still calls Greek and Latin literature) were held through the 18th century helps to explain why artists like Corneille and Racine, Dryden and Pope, Lully and Gluck continued to turn to them for their sources

and models.

The very elements in classical tragedy that had appealed to the aristocratic *Camerata* of Florence rendered it unserviceable to the composers of a more popular and more spectacular form of opera, opera more dependent than theirs on elaborate vocal, orchestral, and scenic displays. The 32 surviving Greek tragedies are more varied than some commentators pretend; but they *did* make use of a single, simple façade set (usually representing a single place), and played out a single action—usually the action of one day—more or less continuously. They are short (1000 to 1500 lines), and have no intermission breaks; Athenian audiences used to watch three of these plays, plus a comic afterpiece, in a single day. Dramatic, even horrible events occurred in them—but usually offstage. They were communicated to the audience after the fact by long-winded messengers, or *tableaux morts* rolled out on wheeled platforms. There were never more than three actors onstage, or for that matter in a production; when a play called for more than three characters, the male leads just changed masks and vocal tones. The 15 chorus members, in three rows of five, chanted and danced on a lower level than the actors. Costumes were simple and traditional; all actors wore masks; props were minimal. The entire effort was tightly focused, lucid, and direct, but in no way "realistic." Ritual action and heightened language were designed to touch deep levels of the moral imagination, not to thrill the senses by lifelike or "virtuosos" effects.

Once opera producers and audiences had come to expect lavish costumes and gorgeous stage settings, the fixed, flat stage-house and "unity of action" plots of the Greeks were of little more use. Mighty singing choruses of peasants and soldiers, onstage wars, duels, abductions, and apparitions, *bel canto* vocal showpieces full of trills and repeats, inset ballets, and three- or four-act structures were impossible to draw out of or graft upon classical roots.

The wheel turned again. The respectability of creating exotic Italian-French spectacles dwindled sometime before *Turandot*, and many modern composers turned back to the Greeks. They might

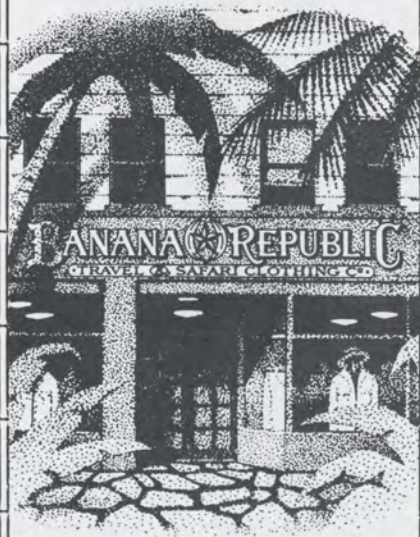
David Littlejohn is a writer, critic, and Professor of Journalism at U.C. Berkeley, who regularly reviews West Coast opera for the London Times. His latest book, *Architect: The Life and Work of Charles W. Moore*, was just published by Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

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Rose Pauly in the title role of San Francisco Opera's 1938 staging of Strauss' *Elektra*.

find what they needed in the stripped, otherworldly rituals of Aeschylus; in the balanced classical humanism of Sophocles; or in the "neurotic" passions and vernacular intensity of Euripides. At the same time, French and American playwrights (Cocteau, Anouilh, Giraudoux, Gide, Sartre, Jeffers, O'Neill), film makers (Cocteau again, Cacoyannis, Pasolini), and important stage directors in Europe and America were "rediscovering" the Greeks, frequently in order to turn them to novel political or psychological ends.

Most of the hundreds of classically derived operas have long since been dropped from the active repertory. I found reports of 25 works based on Greek tragedies performed on the world's opera stages (some on very small stages, I admit) during the last ten years. Of these, four—Gluck's *Alceste*, after Euripides (1767); Cherubini's *Medea*, after Euripides (1797); Strauss' *Elektra*, after Sophocles (1909); and Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex*, after Sophocles (1927)—lead the list.

By the time Hofmannsthal and Strauss took on Sophocles' *Elektra* (1903-09), they could feel free of the binding conventions under which both Gluck and Cherubini labored, free to ignore the presumptions of both "neoclassicism" and "grand opera," free to make whatever use they wished of what David Grene has called Sophocles' "best constructed and most unpleasant play." "The tightness and cogency of the

plot," wrote Grene (one of Sophocles' translators), "go together with the absence of nobility and magnitude in the chief character in a way which never occurred again in the extant plays."

In some ways, it may appear as if—freed of conventional demands—these 20th-century artists were able to come closer to the spirit and style of the Greeks. Like Sophocles, they could present a single unbroken action set in a single place; no intermissions, no set changes, no subplots, no dramatized past action: total unity of time, place, and action. The opera, like the play, represents an awful, inexorable, arrow-straight progress from will to deed, the horrifying climax of *Elektra's* many years of wretchedness and waiting.

And she is, as in Sophocles, unquestionably the protagonist. Every scene in the opera, like every scene in the play, is focused on or manipulated by her. In proper Greek fashion, the key episodes take the form of carefully crafted confrontations: *Elektra* and her weakfish sister, *Elektra* and her hated mother, *Elektra* and her long-lost brother. The chorus, although individuated into separate characters, is reduced once again to a small, coherent band of worried observers, servant-maids at Aegisthus's palace.

It cannot be denied that Hugo von Hofmannsthal (who wrote his German adaptation of the play first) and Richard Strauss (who then collaborated with him to transform it into an opera) followed

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JANIS MARTIN

Janis Martin sings the title role of *Elektra*. The Sacramento-born soprano began her operatic career as a mezzo-soprano in the Merola Opera Program and made her Company debut in 1960, performing more than 25 roles here—including Paulina in *The Queen of Spades* and Preziosilla in *La Forza del Destino*—during her first four seasons. In 1962 she won the Metropolitan Opera Auditions and sang mezzo-soprano roles with that company for three seasons. She undertook her first major Wagnerian role in 1966 for San Francisco Opera, portraying Venus in *Tannhäuser*, the vehicle of her 1967 La Scala debut as well as her debut at the Paris Opera the following year. Acclaimed as a Wagnerian singer, Miss Martin has been applauded around the world in such roles as Brangäne in *Tristan und Isolde* (heard here in 1970), Senta in *Der Fliegende Holländer*, Elisabeth in *Tannhäuser* and also Ortrud in *Lohengrin*, which she sang for the first time in her career in 1978 at San Francisco Opera. Her Bayreuth Festival credits include Eva in *Die Meistersinger*, Sieglinde in *Die Walküre* (which she sang here in 1976) and Kundry in *Parsifal*, the role of her triumphant return to the Met in 1974. The most recent addition to her Wagner repertoire is *Isolde*, which she sang at Lyric Opera of Chicago in 1982 and has performed in Zurich, Barcelona and Monte Carlo. A soloist with the Deutsche Oper in Berlin since 1970, Miss Martin has appeared there as *Tosca*, *Eva*, *Ortrud*, *Sieglinde*, *Kundry*, *Senta*, *Ariadne* and the *Marschallin* in *Der Rosenkavalier*. Among the highlights of her appearances with San Francisco Opera are the *Composer* in *Ariadne auf Naxos* (1969) and the title role



CAROL NEBLETT

of *Tosca* (1976). In 1979 she was the Mother in the San Francisco premiere of Dallapiccola's *Il Prigioniero*, and she returned here in 1981 as Marie in *Wozzeck*, which she has sung at the Met and La Scala. She is a frequent guest artist at the Vienna Staatsoper and has won acclaim at Covent Garden as well as with the companies of Munich, Cologne, Stuttgart and Hamburg. Her record credits include complete versions of Schönberg's *Erwartung*, also Wagner's *Rienzi* and *Der Fliegende Holländer*. As a concert artist, she has appeared with many of the world's most famous orchestras under such conductors as Karl Böhm, Sir Georg Solti, Lorin Maazel, Claudio Abbado, Pierre Boulez, James Levine, Wolfgang Sawallisch, Eugen Jochum and Antal Dorati. Roles she will be adding to her repertoire in coming seasons include the Dyer's Wife in *Die Frau ohne Schatten* in Zurich, and Brunnhilde in *The Ring of the Nibelung* at Helsinki.

Soprano **Carol Neblett** returns to San Francisco Opera as Chrysothemis in *Elektra*, the role of her 1975 debut at the Lyric Opera of Chicago. Born and raised in California, Miss Neblett performed regularly from 1969 to 1975 with New York City Opera, where her assignments included *Violetta* in *La Traviata*, the Queen in *Le Coq d'Or*, Margherita in *Mefistofele*, Marguerite in *Faust*, and the title roles of *Manon*, *Louise* and *Ariadne auf Naxos*, as well as *Marietta/Marie* in Korngold's *Die Tote Stadt*, which she recorded with Erich Leinsdorf for RCA. From 1976 to 1979 she appeared at the Salzburg Festival as *Vitellia* in Mozart's *La Clemenza*



VIORICA CORTEZ

di Tito and repeated that assignment for the Unitel film of that opera directed by Jean-Pierre Ponnelle. She bowed at San Francisco Opera as *Elektra* in the 1977 production of Mozart's *Idomeneo*, returning here in 1979 for one of her most celebrated portrayals, *Minnie* in *La Fanciulla del West*. She also performed that role for her 1976 Vienna Staatsoper debut and in a production directed by Harold Prince for Lyric Opera of Chicago, as well as recording it for Deutsche Grammophon under Zubin Mehta and on video laser disc with the Royal Opera at Covent Garden. Other recording credits include *Musetta* in *La Bohème* under James Levine and Mahler's Second Symphony with Claudio Abbado. Miss Neblett returned to San Francisco for *Le Cid* during the 1981 Fall Season, and since her 1979 Metropolitan Opera debut as *Senta* in *Der Fliegende Holländer* has returned to the Met each season as *Donna Elvira* in *Don Giovanni*, *Amelia* in *Un Ballo in Maschera* and the title roles of *Manon* and *Tosca*, among others. Future Met seasons will feature her as a number of Verdi heroines. Her numerous appearances with Johnny Carson on "The Tonight Show" have won her acclaim for her wit and humor as well as her singing. Miss Neblett resides in Southern California with her husband, Dr. Philip Akre, and their two children.

Romanian mezzo-soprano **Viorica Cortez** is *Klytemnestra* in *Elektra*. Born in Bucium, she participated in local concerts by the age of 17 and made her operatic debut in 1965 as *Dalila* in *Samson et Dalila* in Toulouse. She became a member of the Bucharest Opera and won a series of vocal

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ARLENE ADLER

competitions, one of which resulted in an invitation to perform at the Paris Opera. It was as Carmen that she was first heard at Covent Garden in 1968, and in 1969 she made her Italian debut in Naples as Amneris in *Aida*. She bowed at La Scala as Dalila in 1970, returning there for the next two seasons. Her American debut took place in 1970 in Philadelphia, where she appeared as Carmen, followed by appearances in Seattle, Pittsburgh and at Carnegie Hall before her 1971 Metropolitan Opera debut, again as Carmen. Since then, Miss Cortez has appeared regularly at the Met in a wide variety of roles, most recently as Amneris, Azucena in *Il Trovatore*, Adalgisa in *Norma*, Giulietta in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* and Princess de Bouillon in *Adriana Lecouvreur*. Her debut at Lyric Opera of Chicago took place in 1973, when she appeared opposite Montserrat Caballé in *Maria Stuarda*. With a large repertoire that encompasses roles in Russian, Italian, French and German, she has sung with all of the world's major opera companies, including the Vienna Staatsoper, the Deutsche Oper Berlin, Teatro San Carlo in Lisbon, the Rome Opera, the Verona Arena and, in this country, the Dallas Opera and Houston Grand Opera, among others. She has also been applauded at the Festivals of Aix-en-Provence, Orange, Athens and Salzburg.

During her first season with San Francisco Opera, soprano **Arlene Adler** appears as the Overseer in *Elektra* and Susanna in *Khovanshchina*. She has appeared extensively on the East Coast with the New York City Opera, the Queens Opera Company, New York Lyric Theatre, New York School of Opera and Opera di Camera. She sang the role of Abigail in an English-language production of Verdi's



DOLORA ZAJIC

Nabucco for the Greater Miami Opera Association, and won praise singing the title role of *Aida* in English for the Cincinnati Opera Company. Other operatic credits include the title roles of *Tosca* and *Turandot*, Amelia in *Un Ballo in Maschera*, Leonora and Inez in *Il Trovatore*, Santuzza in *Cavalleria Rusticana*, Dorabella in *Così fan tutte*, Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni* and Violetta in *La Traviata*. For the Puccini Foundation of New York, she appeared as Elisetta in Cimarosa's *Il Matrimonio Segreto*. She has been a featured guest on various radio and television shows, and has sung numerous recital and concert dates, including a highly acclaimed Mozart Requiem with the Queens Symphony.

Mezzo-soprano **Dolora Zajic** sings three roles during the 1984 Fall Season: Giovanna in *Ernani*; a Maid in *Elektra*; and Giovanna in *Rigoletto*. Last summer she made her San Francisco Opera debut as a Priestess in *Aida*. A native of Nevada, she has appeared with the Nevada Opera Association as the Mother in *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, Siebel in *Faust*, the Third Lady in *The Magic Flute*, Tisbe in *La Cenerentola*, the Third Witch in *Macbeth*, Mrs. Ott in *Susannah* and Kate in *The Pirates of Penzance*. Other credits include the Principessa in *Suor Angelica* with the John Brownlee Opera Theater, Santuzza in *Cavalleria Rusticana* with the Regina Opera Company in New York and the same role with the Metropolitan Y Orchestra in New Jersey. Currently an Adler Fellow with the San Francisco Opera Center, she participated in the 1983 Merola Opera Program and sang in *The Tales of Hoffmann* at Sigmund Stern Grove. She also portrayed Suzuki at Villa Montalvo and sang the same role in Western Opera Theater's 1983 touring production of



WENDY HILLHOUSE

Madame Butterfly. A regional finalist in the 1981 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, she was winner of the Leona Gordon Lowin Memorial Award in the 1983 San Francisco Opera Auditions Grand Finals. She scored a major triumph when she earned the bronze medal at the VII International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow, making her the only non-Soviet winner and the first American to place in that event in 12 years. This year she created the role of Marcolfa in the world premiere of Conrad Susa's *The Love of Don Perlimplin*, produced by the San Francisco Opera Center.

Mezzo-soprano **Wendy Hillhouse** makes her San Francisco Opera debut as a Maid in *Elektra*. A participant in the 1981 Merola Opera Program, she sang the role of Prince Orlofsky in the Merola production of *Die Fledermaus*, and for the San Francisco Opera Center's Showcase series has appeared as Emily Dickinson in Vivian Fine's *The Women in the Garden*, Erminio in Scarlatti's *The Triumph of Honor*, and Nerillo in Cavalli's *L'Ormino*. A frequent and favorite performer with Pocket Opera, she has also portrayed Rosina in *The Barber of Seville* for Sacramento Opera, and last season bowed with San Francisco Concert Opera as Orsini in *Lucrezia Borgia* and with Opera Columbus as Maddalena in *Rigoletto*. Miss Hillhouse has won respect for her numerous concert appearances and has given recitals at Stanford University and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music as well. Her assignments this season include Handel's *Messiah* for her debut with the Pittsburgh Symphony; Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* with the Sacramento Symphony; *The*

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Opera in one act by RICHARD STRAUSS
Text by HUGO VON HOFMANNSTHAL
Based on the play by SOPHOCLES

(By arrangement with Boosey & Hawkes, Inc., publisher and copyright owner)

Elektra

(in German)

Conductor
Jeffrey Tate*

Stage Director
Regina Resnik*

Set Designer
Alfred Siercke

Costume Designer
Arbit Blatas*

Lighting Designer
Thomas J. Munn

Sound Designer
Roger Gans

Musical Preparation
Jeffrey Goldberg
Mark Haffner
Kathryn Cathcart
Philip Eisenberg

Prompter
Philip Eisenberg

Assistant Stage Director
Robin Thompson

Stage Manager
Gretchen Mueller

Choreographic Assistance
Marika Sakellariou

First performance:
Dresden, January 25, 1909
First San Francisco Opera performance:
October 25, 1938

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 18 AT 8:00
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 23 AT 8:00
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 26 AT 8:00
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 1 AT 8:00
SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 4 AT 2:00
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 7 AT 7:30
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 10 AT 8:00

CAST

(in order of appearance)

<i>First maidservant</i>	Dolora Zajic
<i>Second maidservant</i>	Wendy Hillhouse*
<i>Third maidservant</i>	Donna Bruno
<i>Fourth maidservant</i>	Nancy Gustafson
<i>Fifth maidservant</i>	Francine Lancaster*
<i>Overseer of the servants</i>	Arlene Adler*
<i>Elektra</i>	Janis Martin
<i>Chrysothemis</i>	Carol Neblett
<i>Klytemnestra</i>	Viorica Cortez*
<i>Her confidante</i>	Ruth Ann Swenson
<i>Her trainbearer</i>	Francesca Howe
<i>A young servant</i>	Robert Tate
<i>An old servant</i>	John MacAllister
<i>Orest</i>	Peter Wimberger*
<i>His tutor</i>	James Patterson
<i>Aegisth</i>	Dennis Bailey
<i>Servants</i>	

*San Francisco Opera debut

PLACE AND TIME: Mycenae after the Trojan War

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 one hour and forty-five minutes.

Elektra/Synopsis

Agamemnon and Klytemnestra were the rulers of the great kingdom of Mycenae. They had four children: Elektra, Chrysothemis, Orestes (Orest) and Iphigenia. When Agamemnon left to fight the Trojan War, he sacrificed the infant Iphigenia in order to win the favor of the gods. In his long absence, Klytemnestra took his cousin, Aegisth, as her lover and consort. After 10 years, Agamemnon returned and was murdered by his queen and her lover in vengeance for the death of Iphigenia. Orest has been exiled, Chrysothemis lives among the servants, and Elektra—crazed and obsessed with revenge—lives in solitary misery awaiting the return of her brother Orest, who by ancient tradition must kill his mother in order to avenge his father's death.

In the palace courtyard, Klytemnestra's maids are looking for Elektra to emerge from her rocky hiding place. They gossip maliciously about her crazed behavior, then leave the courtyard. Elektra delivers her great monologue, calling to her father, as she does every evening at the same hour. She describes his murder and swears to him that his death will be avenged.

Chrysothemis, full of anxiety, warns Elektra that their mother has had evil dreams that night and that Elektra will be locked in a tower. She asks her sister to leave the kingdom and seek freedom. She also pleads for love and children and normality. Elektra derides her sister and says she will wait and confront her mother. Sounds of wailing and whipping are heard. A sacrificial procession has been ordered by the Queen. Chrysothemis flees.

Klytemnestra enters, deranged, asking the gods why they have been so cruel to her. Once proud and beautiful, she is now demented and beset with nightmares about the return of Orest, who will murder her in order to avenge the death of Agamemnon. Elektra, taunting her mother in riddles, leads her to believe she will give her some answer that will relieve her torment. The Queen reveals her nightmares, her secrets and her fears. Elektra seizes the moment to tell Klytemnestra that when the Queen's blood flows, and only then, will her dreams stop. Klytemnestra collapses. The palace door opens and the Queen's confidante brings her the false news that Orest is dead. Triumphant, Klytemnes-

tra leaves the courtyard and goes into the palace, exulting over the end of her torment.

Chrysothemis confronts Elektra with the false news of Orest's death. Elektra, desperate, tries to persuade, cajole, and even seduce her sister in order to get her help in murdering the Queen. Terrified, Chrysothemis tells Elektra she cannot. Elektra curses her and says she herself will kill her mother.

She begins to dig for the axe that killed her father. In the darkness, a towering stranger appears. She tells him to leave. When he says he must stay to fulfill a prophecy, he arrests her attention. Finally, Orest reveals himself to Elektra. In ecstasy, they are reunited in poignant memories of their childhood. They join in swearing vengeance. Orest's tutor interrupts them, saying the Queen is alone in the palace. Aegisth is absent. The moment has come; Orest enters the palace. Death screams fill the courtyard. Chrysothemis and the maids enter and find Elektra at the palace door. They see Aegisth coming. Elektra waits for him in the darkened courtyard and lights his way into the palace, where Orest and his tutor are waiting for him. With the death of Aegisth, the prophecy has been fulfilled. Elektra proclaims that Agamemnon has heard everything and knows he is avenged.

Chrysothemis announces that Orest is being hailed by thousands carrying torches. Elektra begins her dance of joy and triumph. Chrysothemis watches as Elektra dies on her father's grave. Chrysothemis calls out for Orest, in vain, as the curtain falls.



DONNA BRUNO

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Barber of Seville with the Opera Company of Philadelphia; and Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* with the Oakland Symphony.

Mezzo-soprano **Donna Bruno** appears this fall as Mercédès in *Carmen*, Suzuki in the special Family performances of *Madama Butterfly* and the Third Maid in *Elektra*. She made her San Francisco Opera debut as Siegrune in the 1983 Summer Season production of *Die Walküre* and returned the following fall in *Katya Kabanova*, *La Traviata*, *La Grande Duchesse de Gérolstein* and *Manon Lescaut*. Currently an Adler Fellow with the San Francisco Opera Center, Miss Bruno participated in the 1982 and '83 Merola Opera Programs and performed the role of Maddalena on Western Opera Theater's 1982 national tour of *Rigoletto*. For the Center's Showcase series, she sang the role of Mirinda in Cavalli's *L'Ormindo* (1983) and, most recently, appeared in the 1984 Seasons' Preview. The Chicago native has sung several seasons with the Lake George Opera Festival and the DuPage Opera Repertory Theater, and has appeared with Chicago's Music of the Baroque. Recent engagements include Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with the San Francisco Symphony and Rosina in *The Barber of Seville* for California Coast Opera. During the 1984 Carmel Bach Festival she scored great success as Alcina in Haydn's *Orlando Paladino*.

Soprano **Nancy Gustafson** is Kate Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly*, a Maid in *Elektra* and Emma in *Khovanshchina*. The Illinois native made her Company debut during the 1983 Summer Season as Woglinde in *Das Rheingold*, appearing also as Helm-



NANCY GUSTAFSON

wige in *Die Walküre* and returning during the 1983 Fall Season as Flora in *La Traviata*. As a participant in the 1982 Merola Opera Program, she appeared in productions of *The Magic Flute* and *Rigoletto*, and received the Gropper Memorial Award in the 1982 San Francisco Opera Center Auditions Grand Finals. For the Center's 1983 Showcase series she was heard as Sicle in Cavalli's *L'Ormindo* and for the 1984 Showcase sang in the 1984 Seasons' Preview. Currently an Adler Fellow with the Center, she has also performed with such groups as the Chicago Opera Theater, Opera Midwest and at Harvard and Northwestern Universities. Miss Gustafson sang the role of Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte* for the Carmel Bach Festival, and took part in the special concert for Queen Elizabeth II during the monarch's 1983 visit to California. She recently was soloist in Mahler's Eighth Symphony with the San Francisco Symphony, and created the role of the Mother in the world premiere of Conrad Susa's *The Love of Don Perlimplin* at the State University of New York at Purchase. This December she makes her European debut as Caroline (Rosalinda) in a French-language production of *Die Fledermaus* at Théâtre Musical de Paris (Châtelet).

Soprano **Francine Lancaster** makes her first San Francisco Opera appearance as the Fifth Maid in *Elektra*. A student of Estelle Liebling and Jennie Tourel, she participated in the 1978 Merola Opera Program and sang in the ensemble of Britten's *Death in Venice* for the 1979 Spring Opera Theater. The numerous competitions she has won include the Metropolitan Opera Regional Auditions, the San Francisco Opera Regional Audi-



FRANCINE LANCASTER

tions, the New Jersey State Opera Auditions and the Minna Kaufman Awards for Women. She is also a lifetime winner of a William Sullivan Foundation Grant. In this country, Miss Lancaster has appeared with San Diego Opera, New York Lyric Opera, Annapolis Opera, the Aspen Music Festival and Pocket Opera, while her foreign credits include performances at the Oxford Music Festival in England, performances for BBC Radio and with the Orquesta Sinfonica Estado de Mexico in Mexico City. She recently was soprano soloist in the world premiere of Henry Brandt's *Litany of Tides* with the San Jose Symphony, and sang a benefit for the Showcase Concert Series in Palm Springs for the Metropolitan Opera. Last August she participated in the world premiere of Conrad Susa's *The Love of Don Perlimplin* at the State University of New York at Purchase.

Soprano **Ruth Ann Swenson** is Giannetta in *L'Elisir d'Amore* and a Confidante in *Elektra*. The young New Yorker made her Company debut as Despina in the 1983 Summer Season production of *Così fan tutte* and returned last fall as Echo in *Ariadne auf Naxos*, Olga in *La Grande Duchesse de Gérolstein* and as Xenia in *Boris Godunov*. A participant in the San Francisco Opera Center's Merola Opera Program for two years, Miss Swenson appeared in productions of *Die Fledermaus*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *Rigoletto*. She was a winner of the San Francisco Opera Auditions in 1981 and 1982, and during the Center's first Showcase series in 1982 sang the role of the First Attendant in Harbison's *Full Moon in March*, presented under the auspices of the American Opera Project. Miss Swenson continued to ad-



RUTH ANN SWENSON

vance within the Center's training programs and toured with Western Opera Theater's 1982 production of *Rigoletto*, singing the role of Gilda. During the 1983 Showcase she appeared as Erisbe in *L'Ormino* and Lucia in *The Rape of Lucretia*, and this last spring she appeared in the Center's 1984 Seasons' Preview. Currently in her second year as an Adler Fellow, she participated in the Center's Singers Tour of concert presentations of *Die Fledermaus* and created the role of Belisa in the world premiere of Conrad Susa's *The Love of Don Perlimplin* at the State University of New York at Purchase. She made her San Francisco Symphony debut last May with Nielsen's Third Symphony and most recently returned for Mahler's Eighth Symphony. She will make her Seattle Opera debut this February as Adina in the Silver Series performances of *L'Elisir d'Amore*.

Soprano **Francesca Howe**, a well-known Bay Area performing artist, returns to San Francisco Opera after a long absence as Lisa in *La Sonnambula* and a Trainbearer in *Elektra*. With a repertoire that ranges from Monteverdi to Berio, Miss Howe has won acclaim in performances with the Carmel Bach Festival, San Francisco Symphony and the Cabrillo Festival, as well as San Francisco Ballet, Oakland Ballet, Pacific Ballet and, in New York, Contemporary Ballet. She has won special recognition for her series of appearances with Pocket Opera, having sung leading roles in no fewer than eight Handel operas with that group. For three seasons she performed with the Netherlands Opera in Monteverdi's *L'Incoronazione di Poppea* under the direction of Alan Curtis, with whom she has also performed Purcell's



FRANCESCA HOWE

The Fairy Queen and Rameau's *Pygmalion* and *La Naissance d'Osiris*. She has also appeared on concert tours with Curtis on harpsichord and baroque flutist Frans Brueggen. An active concert soloist, Miss Howe performed many of the standard as well as lesser-known oratorios, symphonies and concert masses. Her assignments in 1983 included Ravel's *Sheherazade* for San Francisco Ballet, Stravinsky's *Les Noces* with the San Francisco Symphony, and the role of Tatiana in Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* with Pocket Opera. Other ballet projects have included Barber's *Hermit Songs*, Berio's *Sequenza III* and Wilde's *The Happy Prince* for Pacific Ballet and, for Oakland Ballet, Stravinsky's *Les Noces* and Poulenc's *Les Biches*. This October she will perform Mozart's C Minor Mass with the San Francisco Ballet on their tour to Hawaii.

Tenor **Dennis Bailey** sings Aegisth in *Elektra* and Prince Andrei in *Khovanshchina*. He made his Company debut as Tom Rakewell in the 1982 Summer Season production of *The Rake's Progress*, and he returned in the fall of 1983 to sing Bacchus in *Ariadne auf Naxos* and Mark in the American premiere of Tippett's *The Midsummer Marriage*. It was as Bacchus that he made his professional opera debut with New Orleans Opera in 1974 and his European opera debut at Glyndebourne in 1981, repeating the assignment in his London debut at Royal Albert Hall. He has been a frequent guest with the Chicago Symphony under Sir Georg Solti since his triumphant 1980 debut in a concert version of Act III of *Siegfried*. His appearances with them during the 1982-83 season included Bartók's *Cantata Profana*, Kodály's *Psalmus Hungaricus* and the role of



DENNIS BAILEY

Froh in *Das Rheingold*, an assignment he repeated with that orchestra in New York's Carnegie Hall. Bailey had made his New York debut earlier that season at the Frick Museum, where he performed Schubert's *Die Schöne Mullerin* accompanied by Jeffrey Tate. During the summer of 1982 he bowed at Santa Fe Opera as Midas in Strauss' rarely heard *Die Liebe der Danae*. Last season he sang the tenor lead in *The Dream of Gerontius* opposite Dame Janet Baker and was featured in performances of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony that were broadcast by the BBC from Royal Festival Hall. He also appeared in *Norma* with the Winnipeg Opera in addition to numerous concert engagements. A busy concert artist, he has sung with such major American orchestras as the Boston Symphony—including their 100th anniversary worldwide tour—the Pittsburgh Symphony, Minnesota Orchestra and St. Louis Symphony. This past summer he appeared in *L'Incoronazione di Poppea* for Glyndebourne's 50th anniversary season and returned to the United States for his Hollywood Bowl debut with the Los Angeles Philharmonic under Michael Tilson Thomas and four appearances at the Minnesota Orchestra's "Sommerfest."

Bass-baritone **Peter Wimberger** makes his San Francisco Opera debut as Orest in *Elektra*. A native of Vienna, he made his first public appearance there singing in Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* under Karl Böhm. Engagements followed in Dortmund, Mainz and Freiburg, and from 1968 to 1972 he was a principal artist with the Deutsche Oper am Rhein, singing both bass and bass-baritone roles. Since

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Elektra

Photos taken in rehearsal
by William Acheson



Janis Martin



Ruth Ann Swenson, Viorica Cortez, Francesca Howe



Viorica Cortez

Viorica Cortez, Janis Martin



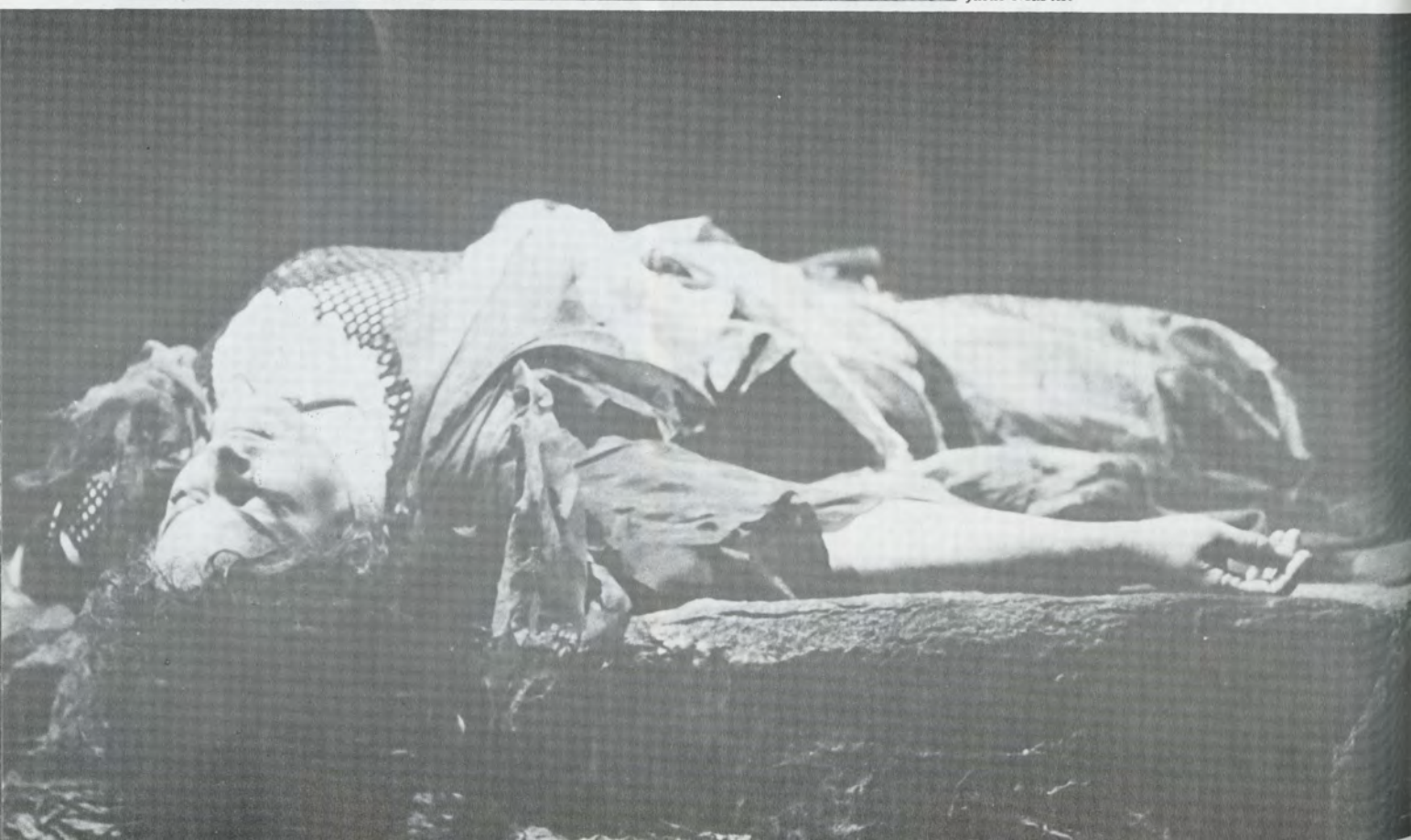
Janis Martin, Peter Wimberger

Janis Martin





Janis Martin





Richard K. Miller
(1926-1984)

Until his untimely death on September 27, 1984, Richard K. Miller, Chairman of the Board of the San Francisco Opera Association, served the Opera with a rare dedication, one that stemmed from a lifelong passion and concern for his favorite art form.

A Vice-president of Pacific Gas and Electric Company, Richard K. Miller was a member of the Opera Board since 1965 and was on the Executive Committee of the Board since 1967. At the time of his election as Chairman, in 1982, he was head of the Endowment Fund Committee.

His love for San Francisco Opera began early. His father, Robert Watt Miller, served as President of the San Francisco Opera Association from 1937 to 1942 and again from 1951 until 1966. Born and raised in San Francisco, Richard Kendall Miller began attending San Francisco Opera in 1935, at the age of nine. His devotion to the lyric theater and to this Company in particular grew through the years, and his supportive attention to the needs of San Francisco Opera distinguished his years of service as a member of the Board.

Richard K. Miller was admired and respected by everyone in the Company who came into contact with him. An active philanthropist, he was involved in numerous Bay Area charitable organizations. The example he set in both his personal and professional life will not be soon forgotten by the city and opera company that he served so well and unselfishly.

San Francisco, October 1984.



PETER WIMBERGER

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1972 he has been a member of the Vienna Staatsoper and regularly sings leading roles in the major houses of Germany, France, Italy, Spain and Switzerland. It was at the Vienna Staatsoper that he sang Wotan in *Die Walküre* under Zubin Mehta, with whom he performed the entire Ring cycle in Florence and who invited Wimberger to make his American debut with the New York Philharmonic in a 1982 concert performance of Wotan's Farewell. The following year Wimberger returned to New York for Strauss' *Gunttram* with the Opera Orchestra of New York. Other assignments during the 1982-83 season included his first Kurwenal in *Tristan und Isolde* and Monterone in *Rigoletto* in Vienna, and Jokanaan in *Salome* in Munich. Last season he made his North American stage debut as King Henry in *Lohengrin* with the Edmonton Opera, recorded the role of Monterone for a complete recording of *Rigoletto* for Deutsche Grammophon and made his Metropolitan Opera debut during the company's Spring Tour as Wotan in *Die Walküre*. His North American assignments this season include Jokanaan in *Salome* with the Montreal Opera.

Bass **James Patterson** returns to San Francisco Opera for four roles: Zuniga in *Carmen*, Alessio in *La Sonnambula*, the Bonze in *Madama Butterfly* and Sparafucile in *Rigoletto*. Currently an Adler Fellow with the San Francisco Opera Center, he made his Company debut as a Custom-house Guard in the 1983 Summer Season production of *La Bohème* and sang Fafner in the last performance of *Das Rheingold*. During the 1983 Fall Season he appeared in *Ariadne auf Naxos*, *La Traviata*, *La*



JAMES PATTERSON

Gioconda and *Boris Godunov*, while the 1983 Summer Season saw him as Fafner in *Siegfried* and the King of Egypt in *Aida*. As a participant in the 1982 Merola Opera Program he appeared in productions of *Rigoletto* and *The Magic Flute*, and went on to portray Sparafucile in Western Opera Theater's 1982 touring production of *Rigoletto*. During the 1983 Showcase series, Patterson appeared as Ariadeno in *L'Ormindo* and Collatinus in *The Rape of Lucretia*, and he portrayed Osmin in this year's Showcase production of *The Abduction from the Seraglio*. During the summer of 1981 Patterson was an apprentice artist with Santa Fe Opera, where he appeared as Simone in *Gianni Schicchi*. His concert credits include Herod in Berlioz's *L'Enfance du Christ* with the Marin Symphony and, during last year's Festival of Masses, the bass solos in the *St. Matthew Passion* and the Verdi Requiem under Robert Shaw. This last summer he appeared as Fafner in both *Das Rheingold* and *Siegfried* at the Pacific Northwest Wagner Festival in Seattle.

Tenor **Robert Tate** appears this fall as a Notary in *La Sonnambula*, Goro in the Family performances of *Madama Butterfly*, the Servant in *Elektra* and the Scrivener in *Khovanshchina*. Since his 1980 Company debut in *Samson et Dalila*, he has appeared in over a dozen different productions, most recently as Missail in *Boris Godunov* during the 1983 Fall Season. He attended the San Francisco Conservatory, and after his 1979 Spring Opera Theater debut in the ensemble of *Death in Venice*, took part in the world premieres of Harbison's *Winter's Tale* and Mechem's *Tartuffe*, both under the auspices of the American Opera Project. During the 1982 San Francisco



ROBERT TATE

Opera Center Showcase series, Tate won plaudits in the travesty role of Cornelia in Scarlatti's *The Triumph of Honor*. Other Bay Area credits include Ferrando in *Così fan tutte* and Lindoro in *The Italian Girl in Algiers* with Pocket Opera, and Stravinsky's *Les Noces* with the Oakland Ballet. In 1983 he made his Wolf Trap debut as Ferrando, and earlier this year bowed with Portland Opera as Vasek in *The Bartered Bride* and portrayed Scaramuccio in *Ariadne auf Naxos* for the Spoleto Festivals in Italy and the United States.

In his sixth season with San Francisco Opera, bass **John MacAllister** is the Old Servant in *Elektra*. A finalist in the 1971 San Francisco Opera Auditions, he was a participant in that year's Merola Opera Program. He made his Company debut as a soloist during the 1973 Fall Season, during which he sang five roles. His Company credits include Lieutenant Ratcliffe in *Billy Budd* (1978) and the Marquis d'Obigny in *La Traviata* (1983). With Spring Opera Theater he appeared in Cavalli's *L'Ormindo* and Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*, and he participated in the American Opera Project's world premiere of John Harbison's *Winter's Tale* at Herbst Theatre. He has performed frequently with the San Jose Symphony, singing in their productions of *Madama Butterfly*, *La Traviata* and *Carmen*, and he has been heard at the Bear Valley Music Festival in *The Barber of Seville*, *Gianni Schicchi* and *The Marriage of Figaro*. Among his numerous concert engagements are Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* and Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with the San Francisco Symphony; Mahler's Eighth Symphony and

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light, as news is whispered of the death of Orest, which Chrysothemis soon brings, loudly weeping, to Elektra—and here Strauss, in a rare excess of didactic punctiliousness, writes a double bar, before the beginning of the scene, and starts marking the rehearsal numbers in the score from 1A, to signal the half-way mark: there is not, however, an intermission; *Elektra* plays in one otherwise unbroken act of about a hundred minutes, but so intense and emotionally charged that few opera-goers have ever wanted to experience it as part of a double bill (it was tried in harness with *Salome* once, and all, supped full of horrors, agreed that the two operas best belong on programs of their own).

This second of three scenes for Chrysothemis and Elektra is interrupted by the tenor servant, who is to take the news to Aegisth out in the fields, perhaps hunting. But it is felt as a single musical entity, perhaps as a musical development section (rather as Elektra's bloodthirsty solo, at the end of the previous scene, is sensed as a development of the similar prophecy closing her first solo *scena*). When Chrysothemis runs off, Elektra begins grubbing in the earth for the axe that killed Agamemnon, and which must now be wielded by her on the murderess. Here we may hear a recapitulation of the opera's opening music, or rather Elektra's part in it, and by now her themes sound much less abnormal or repellent. We are moving towards the resolution of the drama, and so the music itself moves steadily in the direction of diatonic normality, the *status quo ante* which the characters suppose will be restored as soon as Klytemnestra and Aegisth have been violently disposed of. The instrument of resolution is to be Orest, so far from dead that he has come, with his elderly tutor, to bring private confirmation of the report with proof so striking that the masters of the palace will doubt no more, because they will be dead.

The nub of this crucial scene for Elektra and Orest is her absurd, and pitifully convincing, reluctance to recognize her brother. With her poignant, self-releasing cry of "Orest!" the gloom is dispelled, and the musical air clears marvelously. This duet reaches the unity of purpose that allows Strauss to remind us, fleetingly, of the real, simultaneous duets which we love in Italian operas, and which he subsequently admitted without apology, indeed with enthusiasm, into his operas, beginning gloriously in *Der Rosenkavalier* only two years later. It ends, like all the previous scenes, with Elektra singing alone, an inspired C



Kerstin Thorborg (Klytemnestra) and Rose Pauly (Elektra) surrounded by maids in San Francisco Opera's 1938 staging of *Elektra*.

MORTON

major hymn to her resolute brother. "Blessed (*selig*) is he that . . . blessed he that . . ." and so on. I long ago put out of mind the connotation of Jesus' Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount ("Blessed are the poor in spirit, etc"). But recently I read that Hofmannsthal, in order to suggest an ancient cultural setting, deliberately copied the diction of Luther's Bible, and clearly this is an example.

I used to be told that Elektra's sanity cracks when Orest goes inside the palace doors, and she realizes that she has not given him the axe. If there is such a moment, then it occurs when Orest leaves Elektra to walk towards the palace doors (not the front doors, by the Lion Gate, through which the rightful heir of Atreus would properly enter, but the servant's entrance at the back, we may remind ourselves). But the "mad" music of the opera's first scene doesn't persist in what follows; rather, there is a release of tension. Relics of the old fear persist here and there, but Agamemnon's ghost has been laid to rest, and all is rejoicing. Elektra, of course, has to prepare for her long-promised triumphal dance (that Strauss chose a Viennese waltz for the purpose may offend pure taste, but may have been inevitable for Strauss since Superman's Dance in *Zarathustra*, though he claimed no kinship with the Viennese waltzing dynasty).

All seems set for a jubilant curtain. But Elektra falls dead at the height of her triumphal dance, as well she might do, untrained as she was for such exertions and such a massive relief from suffering. The tragic conclusion is not really her death, though she is the heroine: she has become

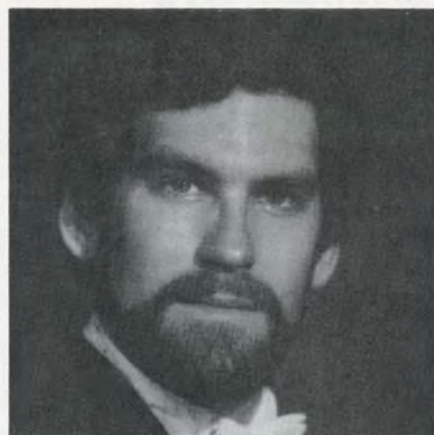
the sacrificial victim. The real living victim is her brother Orest who stands inside the palace, beside the corpses of Klytemnestra and Aegisth, horrified at having murdered the mother who bore him. Old Greek religion insisted that his father's murder must be revenged, yet also insisted that to murder a parent was *tabu*. So Orest is being hunted by the Furies, or *Eumenides*, as the Greeks named them with superstitious understatement (the word means "kindly people," which these three ladies certainly were not). The emptiness of inexorable doom hangs over the last bars of *Elektra*, which call vainly for Agamemnon, then Orest, and are answered by those C major chords with their fateful, pouncing rhythm underneath, remembrances of the ghost, and the anxious tutor and galloping horses, now representative of the hunt that begins for Orest. He will escape the Furies and win the pardon of Athene: but Strauss' *Elektra* cuts the story short, and leaves us on unrelieved tenterhooks.

Have I convinced you that Strauss' *Elektra*, so far from bewildering and outraging its present-day listeners, makes its horrifying effect ("Tragedy," declared Aristotle, "purges us by pity and terror") by scrupulous confrontation of outrageous vanguardism with Strauss' inherited, still vigorous diatonic language, the latter representing human normalcy? Let me end with a story of the Strauss devotee who asked, "Why do you put so many discords into your music?" Strauss answered: "Lady, if I didn't put the discords in, the consonances wouldn't sound so beautiful." ■

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JOHN MacALLISTER

continued from p. 50

Handel's *Messiah* with the Oakland Symphony; and Mozart's *Solemn Vespers* with the Midsummer Mozart Festival.

Jeffrey Tate makes his first appearance with the San Francisco Opera conducting *Elektra*. A native of England, he began his conducting studies at the London Opera Centre and got early experience with the Royal Opera at Covent Garden, where he assisted such conductors as Sir Georg Solti, Sir Colin Davis, Rudolf Kempe and Carlos Kleiber. He served as assistant to Pierre Boulez for the Bayreuth Festival Ring cycle from 1976 to 1980, and assisted the same conductor for the world premiere of the three-act version of *Lulu* at the Paris Opera. He has also been associated with the Cologne Opera and Göteborg Opera in Sweden. Currently principal conductor of the Geneva Opera, Tate made his Metropolitan Opera debut in 1980 with *Lulu*, and has returned since for *Così fan tutte*, *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Idomeneo*, *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*, *La Bohème*, *Don Giovanni* and a Stravinsky triple bill. He made his Royal Opera debut with *La Clemenza di Tito* in 1982 and the following year bowed at the Paris Opera with *Ariadne auf Naxos*. His concert work includes many performances with the English Chamber Orchestra, and he has appeared at the festivals of Aldeburgh and Edinburgh. He made his London Symphony Orchestra debut last July and led the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande in a concert version of *Das Rheingold*. This season, Tate returns to the Met for *Così fan tutte*, *Wozzeck* and *Lohengrin*, and to Covent Garden for *Ariadne auf Naxos*. He will also make his North American sym-

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JEFFREY TATE

phonic debut with the Toronto Symphony and bow with the Orchestre National de France with a concert version of *Don Giovanni*. Next summer he will conduct the world premiere of Henze's reworking of Monteverdi's *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria* at the Salzburg Festival.

Elektra marks the directing debut of **Regina Resnik** in the house where she celebrated her 40th anniversary on the operatic stage by singing the Countess in the 1982 Fall Season production of *The Queen of Spades*. At the closing of that production, Miss Resnik, who also sang Tchaikovsky's Countess here in 1963 and 1975, received the San Francisco Opera Medal, the Company's highest honor. Born in New York City, Miss Resnik began her career as a soprano, making her professional debut with the New Opera Company as Lady Macbeth in 1942. The next few years saw her with New York City Opera and the opera company of Mexico City, and she made her 1944 Metropolitan Opera debut as Leonora in *Il Trovatore* and her 1946 San Francisco Opera debut as Leonora in *Fidelio*. Subsequent soprano portrayals with the Company included Gutrune in *Götterdämmerung*, Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni* and the title role of *La Gioconda* in 1947; also Mistress Ford in *Falstaff* and Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni* in 1948. After appearing as Sieglinde at Bayreuth in 1953, Miss Resnik moved to the mezzo-soprano repertoire, in which she established one of the great operatic careers of our time. She sang in all of the world's major opera houses, with frequent engagements particularly at the Metropolitan Opera,



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REGINA RESNIK

ARBIT BLATAS

Covent Garden in London and the Vienna Staatsoper, as well as such festivals as those of Bayreuth and Salzburg. Her most celebrated mezzo roles include Carmen, Klytemnestra in *Elektra*, Amneris in *Aida*, Mistress Quickly in *Falstaff*, and the Countess in *The Queen of Spades*, all of which she has recorded and (with the exception of Mistress Quickly) performed in San Francisco. Other Company credits in the mezzo category include Madame de Croissy in *Dialogues of the Carmelites* and Fricka in *Die Walküre* (1963); Azucena in *Il Trovatore* (1964); and Claire Zhananassian in *The Visit of the Old Lady* in 1972. As of the present time, Miss Resnik has sung 80 roles, and since 1971 she has been successfully pursuing a career as stage director together with her husband, artist Arbit Blatas, as designer. Their productions of *Salome*, *Falstaff*, *Elektra*, *The Medium* and *The Queen of Spades* have been seen in Warsaw, Sydney, Lisbon, Hamburg, Venice, Strasbourg, San Diego and Vancouver. Their Hamburg Staatsoper production of *Carmen*, with Plácido Domingo as Don José, was televised internationally. In 1982 this beloved performer undertook her first film project, *The Historic Ghetto of Venice*, which she produced, directed and narrated and which was telecast nationally in this country by the PBS network.

Internationally renowned painter and sculptor **Arbit Blatas** created the costume

designs for this year's production of *Elektra*, his first project for San Francisco Opera. Born in Kaunas, Lithuania, Blatas was already exhibiting in his native country at the age of 15. He then moved to Paris and in only a few years became the youngest member of the "School of Paris" and a colleague and friend of such major figures of Parisian artistic circles as Soutine, Picasso, Braque, Utrillo and Léger. He became an American citizen at the outbreak of World War II, and after his return to France, he became equally known as a sculptor as well as a painter. He exhibits regularly in the principal galleries of New York, Paris and London, and among the many museums that own his work are the Jeu de Paume and Orangerie in France; the Museum of Modern Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art and Whitney Museum in the United States; and prominent museums in Switzerland, Italy and Wales. In collaboration with his wife, singer and stage director Regina Resnik, Blatas has designed a number of operatic productions, including *Elektra* (Teatro La Fenice in Venice), *Carmen* (Hamburg), *Salome* (Teatro San Carlos in Lisbon), *Falstaff* (Grand Theatre, Warsaw, and Venice), and *The Queen of Spades* (Sydney Opera House, Australia). In 1978 he was named Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur by the French government for his contribution to French art. On April 25, 1980, his Monument of the Holocaust

(seven bronze bas-reliefs) was dedicated in the Historic Ghetto of Venice. Since then, another has been placed in the Shrine of the Unknown Jewish Martyrs in Paris, and in 1982 a third cast was consecrated in Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza in New York. This past summer in Venice, an entire exhibit of paintings, sculpture and lithographs inspired by *The Threepenny Opera* was a highlight of artistic events in Venice.

Alfred Siercke designed the set for *Elektra*, first seen here in 1966 and revived in 1973 and '79. His Company debut was marked with his celebrated three-tiered set for *The Barber of Seville* for the 1963 Fall Season and subsequently revived for the Fall Seasons of 1965, '68 and '76 and the 1982 Summer Season. In a career spanning over four decades, he has created scenic and costume designs for more than 1,000 theatrical and operatic productions in Europe and the Americas. Born in



ALFRED SIERCKE

Hannover, Siercke received his early schooling in Hamburg and studied at Frankfurt, majoring in history and art history. After graduation, he was appointed assistant to the designer Gowa, and in 1930 designed his first opera, *Die Walküre*. His association with stage director Günther Rennert began in 1946 at the Hamburg Staatsoper and continued throughout his residency. The designer's works have been seen in Milan (at La Scala), Düsseldorf, Stuttgart, Florence and Berlin, among other cities. In addition to his work on operas from the standard repertoire, Siercke has been involved with the world premieres of operas by Henze, Dallapiccola and Orff.

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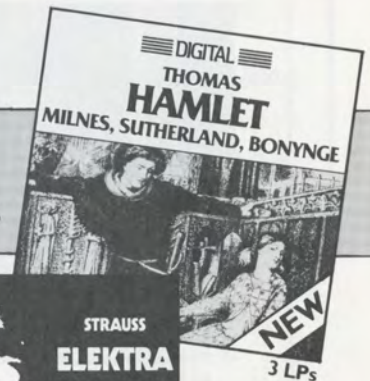
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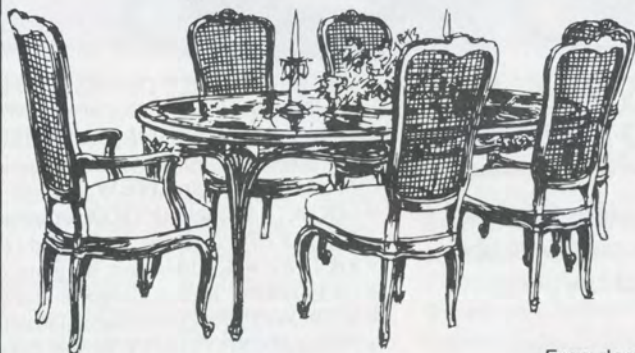
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THOMAS J. MUNN

In his ninth year with San Francisco Opera, **Thomas J. Munn** is responsible for lighting seven productions this fall: *Ernani*, *Carmen*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Elektra*, *Khovanshchina*, *Rigoletto* and *Don Giovanni*. Since 1976, he has designed the lighting and special effects for over 70 San Francisco Opera productions. He created the lighting for all of the 1984 Summer Season productions (*Don Pasquale*, *Siegfried*, *Aida* and *Die Fledermaus*) and his 1983 assignments included new lighting designs for *Das Rheingold*, *Die Walküre*, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, *La Grande Duchesse de Gêrolstein*, *Boris Godunov* and the American premiere of *The Midsummer Marriage*. He has also designed the scenery as well as the lighting for *Nabucco* and *Salome* in 1982, *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* in 1981, *Roberto Devereux* and *Pelléas et Mélisande* in 1979 and *Billy Budd* in 1978. In addition to his numerous design credits for the War Memorial stage, Munn has designed for Broadway, Off-Broadway and regional theater companies throughout the United States and Europe. Recent projects include productions for the Hartford Ballet, Netherlands Opera and Lyric Opera of Chicago. His television credits include San Francisco Opera productions of *La Gioconda* (for which he received a 1979 Emmy Award), *Samson et Dalila* in 1980, *Aida* in 1981 and the Pavarotti concert in 1983. He is currently a consultant on new theater projects for the Netherlands Opera.

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Greek Tragedy *continued from p. 40*

Sophocles' scheme and action very closely. But what they did in addition was to "open it up," as other 20th century artists have done with other Greek tragedies, by trying to provide the characters with elaborate psychological profiles far in excess of anything Sophocles thought necessary. They thereby transformed a kind of supreme morality play into a hyper-Freudian horror story, communicated on heated currents of imagery, diction, and (especially) music far more willfully voluptuous and discordant than anything a 5th century B.C. Greek artist, however inspired or demented, would have dreamed useful.

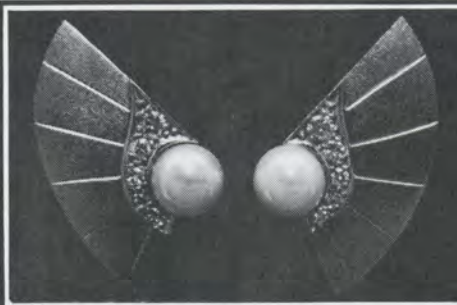
Every element of Sophocles' tragedy that has led commentators to find it "unpleasant" or "ignoble" has been screwed by Hofmannsthal and Strauss to a pitch of intensity that renders their version far more "ugly" and shrill. Almost every element of formal control or ritual order that gave a bearable shape, a possibly salutary meaning to the Greek original has been dropped. And what has been added in the way of language, characterization, and music only stresses the new sense of chaos and uncontrol.

The Electra of legend—like Sophocles' *Antigone*, or Shakespeare's *Hamlet*—begins as a child burdened and obsessed by a sacred duty. She feels she must avenge her father's murder by punishing her guilty mother, and her mother's sinful consort. Although she hopes to obtain the aid and support of her sister and her brother in the act, she feels strong-willed enough to kill Clytemnestra and Aegisthus herself if she must. "Necessary" the deed may ritually be, but all the reasonable people around her (notably, in Sophocles, her sister and the chorus) beg her to calm down, cast off her excess of grief, and accept the existing order. Alas, she replies, she cannot. She is lucid enough to know that she's obsessed. But she takes her filial obligations too seriously, and regards Clytemnestra's and Aegisthus's sins as too mortal to be forgiven.

In such a state, my friends, one cannot be moderate and restrained, nor pious either.

Evil is all around me, evil is what I am compelled to practice.

Strauss' *Elektra* takes this obsession several steps further, to a point of what may well seem clinical, "certifiable" insanity. She lives with the dogs, digs in the ground with her fingers for an axe, lewdly



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lusts for her young sister's flesh, and torments her mother near to madness with a detailed and grisly image of the death that awaits her. Even her brother Orest, when he finally recognizes her beneath her rags and sunken cheeks and filthy hair, recognizes also that she is hopelessly far gone. In Strauss, then, you begin the drama not with a passionate agent of moral vengeance, but with a nutcase.

The surrounding characters, in Sophocles, are varied and personalized only insofar as the legend requires. He never individualized his people very deeply, and usually allowed to each a degree of self-justification sufficient to keep the moral combat tense and alive. Chrysothemis is less vengeful and dedicated than her sister; but, in compensation, more sweet, more sane, more sensible. In their line-for-line exchanges, it is impossible to say who makes the stronger case. Clytemnestra and Aegisthus *did* kill Agamemnon; but they can offer good reasons, too. In her great showdown scene with Electra, Clytemnestra comes off as neither a villainess nor a fool. Both Orestes and Aegisthus seem strong and reasonably noble, trapped by their roles in the legend.

Each of these, in the opera, is twisted into something neurotic or morally weak, or both. Orest seems at first frightened of his mad sister (as who would not be?) and unwilling to act; later, a melting Tristan to her rapturous Isolde. Aegisth is explicitly called a "woman," and shown as a blustering fool. Chrysothemis is obsessed by her barrenness, and desperately envies "normal" women. Klytemnestra, in the opera, is transformed into a manic hag, bloated, diseased, and insanely superstitious. She hangs her sick body with magic stones, and slaughters fields full of beasts, in the vain hope of dispelling the incubus that covers her in sleep.

The poetry of Sophocles is rich, varied, worldly, and expressive: dawning bird-song, blazing stars, well-bred horses fill and broaden the lines. Even Electra cries and laments in terms of Niobe and robbed nightingales as well as axes and blood and beds; and the chorus offers her what is meant to be genuine and heartfelt consolation.

Take heart, take heart, my child.

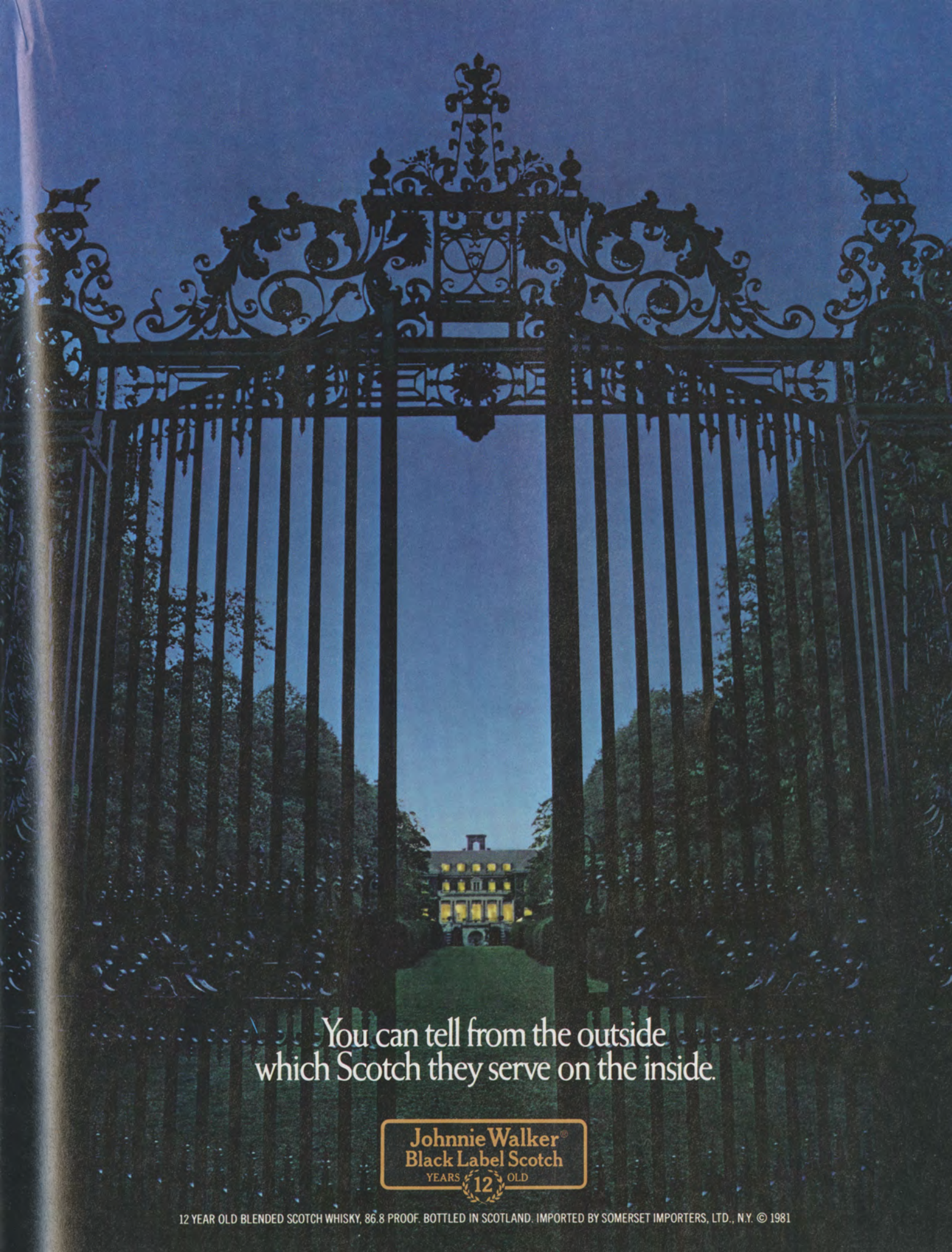
Still great above is Zeus,
who oversees all things in sovereign power.

Confide to him your overbitter wrath.
The greatest "set piece" in the play is a pretend-messenger's fictional account of Orestes' death in a chariot race, as brilliant

and compelling as any comparable account in the *Iliad*.

Hofmannsthal's verbal texture, by contrast, could not be more relentlessly repulsive, particularly the language of his two madwomen. We are given carrion, blowflies, corpses, breeding vultures, hanged bodies, dog's slop—all in the early lines of the first scene. Klytemnestra's similes are as grotesque as she is: "I will open up my soul, as sick people do when, sitting by the pool in the evening, they expose their ulcers and their suppurating wounds to the cool evening air." Elektra's lesbian lovesong to her sister is a piece of overripe, *commencement de siècle* Viennese fruit. Characters reach beyond language to laugh hysterically, whimper like wounded animals, shriek in agony. Elektra visualizes her father's death, then her mother's and her other enemies', in scenes and lines overflowing with blood, Blood, Blut, a hundred throats gushing with it, pouring out like pitchers, a surging wave of blood, a swollen stream of blood; kill the horses, slaughter the hounds, purple fumes will rise in the air and I will dance around the pile of bodies! Meanwhile, the music sweeps and surges and screams around her, apparently as hysterical as she is.

For all the bare-bones similarities between their *Electras*, therefore, it is obvious that the imagination and moral vision of Hofmannsthal and Strauss were worlds removed from those of Sophocles. Virtually from start to finish, the unfettered music proves this more clearly than any verbal demonstration could do. The moral and physical horrors of Sophocles' "unpleasant" play are controlled and contained by a taut, shapely structure of strophe and antistrophe, answering lines and choral intervals, precise and complex rhythms small and large. The far more explicit horrors of the Austrian opera are blasted and blatted, shrieked and squealed by voices and instruments meant (despite *their* underlying structures) to seem mad themselves, on the edge of splitting and bursting. Voluptuous waves of strings keep rolling up to manic bursts and fortissimo crescendos; then melting into sour-honey streams, punctuated by axe-blows and whiplashes and clubfooted waltzes. Impelled by the pressures and insights of his time, Hofmannsthal, like Freud, leapt willingly into the realm of the irrational. His nightmarish text, seconded by Strauss' nightmarish music, twisted Sophocles' mad heroine and her world into an unearthly (and riveting) "case study" in *psychopathia sexualis*. ■



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Janis Martin as Marie in *Wozzeck*, given during San Francisco Opera's 1981 season.

Creating *Elektra*

By ARTHUR KAPLAN

"The director of *Elektra* is never really the entire creator of the stage action because so much depends on the stamina and the inside gut feelings of the title character regarding how she should sing and play the part. No matter what you might wish to project as a complete rainbow of interpretation in the area of direction, in the end it remains entirely with *Elektra*, on the vocal strength of the singer in this 100-minute role. She hardly ever leaves the stage, and the only rest she ever gets is watching Klytemnestra rage for about 20 minutes."

So stated Regina Resnik, one of the most famous Klytemnestras in the 75-year history of Richard Strauss' masterpiece, who is making her San Francisco Opera directorial debut with a work she knows intimately. She has previously staged *Elektra* at La Fenice in Venice, at the San Carlos in Lisbon, at the Opéra du Rhin in Strasbourg and, most recently, with the San Diego Opera.

The protagonist is internationally acclaimed dramatic soprano Janis Martin.

Although she is singing the grueling title role for the first time on the opera stage, Martin is no stranger to its vocal demands. In April, she sang the role of the vengeance-driven Greek princess in Zurich in a concert performance ("They broke the house down; they screamed and yelled and just wouldn't stop applauding—it was incredible, fantastic"), repeating the feat later at the Helsinki Festival.

"When I was first offered *Elektra*," said the former Merola Opera Program graduate who performed 36 roles with the Company from 1960 through 1970 as a mezzo-soprano, "I thought, 'Oh my god! What a killer!' I was scared of it because everybody speaks of it as a voice-killer and the hardest part in the repertory, which it is. But I worked it out nicely so that it's very much in my voice. In Zurich, I sang the last two performances with only one day's rest. When I looked at the calendar, it looked hair-raising. But when I did it, I could have sung it all over again each time."

Arthur Kaplan is a free-lance writer, critic, lecturer and tour director in the field of opera.

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I had a really good time singing it. With the concert in Helsinki coming up on September 5, it will kind of flex my vocal muscles again just before San Francisco."

This interviewer had the opportunity to speak to these two intelligent, candid and down-to-earth *prime donne* during a few relaxing moments in their summer schedules: Miss Resnik in her lovely Venetian residence on the Giudecca; Miss Martin at the Kulturhaus in the charming West German town of Traunstein as she was preparing the female lead in Franz Schreker's *Die Gezeichneten* for the Salzburg Festival.

Although the two artists had appeared together at the War Memorial in the mid-'60s in *The Queen of Spades* and *Die Walküre* (1963), and Janis Martin had sung *Mercédès* to Miss Resnik's *Carmen* in 1964, they have not worked together since. It was clear that both were eagerly anticipating the reunion. "We haven't seen each other in years," said the soprano, "but there was always this basic respect and admiration between us. I was a very young singer when I first met Regina. When we were performing in *Carmen* together, I remember being so impressed with her knowledge of stagecraft. She knew everything about the lighting, for example." In turn, Resnik recalls their early days in San Francisco with pleasure. "I'm looking forward to working with Janis very much. As you know, we were in switched, parallel, positions. She started as a mezzo and I as a soprano; she went up and I went down."

There is the impression that the elaboration of the pivotal title role will be a true *col-laboration*, a working together in the best sense of the word. Though as of August they had not yet had the opportunity to communicate ideas, there was a surprising similarity of approach to a role open to a variety of interpretations.

"I performed *Klytemnestra* with every *Elektra* that ever sang the role for the last 25 years," declares the great exponent of the Mycenaean queen, rattling off an impressive list of names. "The big thing is whether or not on this set *Elektra* is going to be very active or very quiet. I sang it opposite Inge Borkh [San Francisco's *Elektra* in 1953], who was an obelisk. She hardly did a thing, but when she did...! She put *Klytemnestra* constantly on the defensive. She made us all walk around her. Now that's interesting, but it can be too stationary, and it sometimes isn't good



Regina Resnik, *Klytemnestra* in San Francisco Opera's 1966 presentation of *Elektra*.

for the whole opera. But if *Elektra* can be changeable, then you have 100 minutes of alternating between the offensive and the defensive, which is the way I think it should be done.

"If Janis agrees and it doesn't wear her out—because it ultimately depends on how she feels about it—that would prove even more interesting in this igloo set, which does not give us a great deal of room in which to move around. We don't have things to lean on. There are no columns, no stairs. We really only have one side of the stage or the other. It will be an interesting challenge because in this reduced space it's going to revolve around how we communicate with each other about the words, the text."

The soprano's conception of *Elektra* seems to fit wonderfully with the director's. "I'm a kind of doer on the stage," says Martin. "I'm not one to stand stock still and stare. I'm probably going to be more active than most. I don't throw myself around or grovel a lot if I don't have to, but I'm an aggressive actress. I think I'm Resnik's type. I don't overdo, but I'm very intense. Parts like this take so much out of you. If you were to live your life like you sing these parts, you'd be dead in ten years!"

Both artists agree that though *Elektra*

may be play-acting when she's with the other characters, she's never false to herself. "She's always sincere within," the soprano stresses. "She knows exactly what she wants. That's why everything she does has a purpose. She'll do anything to kill her mother. But she knows that she can't do it by herself; she needs someone to help her. In the monologue, which is like a meditation aloud, she asks Agamemnon in a way to give her moral support. She's tried, repeatedly, with every means she has, to get her sister on her side. She's angry with her because she can't accept her lack of desire for revenge. I suppose she thinks Chrysothemis didn't love their father as much as she did. It isn't that she doesn't love her sister; she just hates her weakness. As a last resort in her attempt to enlist her sister's aid she even tries to arouse her sexually—whether it's lesbian or incestuous, I don't know. There are several ways to interpret it. When Elektra finally curses Chrysothemis at the end of the scene, it's her weakness that she's cursing.

"Of course she's play-acting with her mother too, until the very end of their scene when she finally approaches her and tells her the truth. Before that, she's just spinning her web, leading her on before the attack. Then later she's totally insincere in that wonderfully ironic scene with Aegisth."

In Resnik's interpretation, Elektra has only two moments of sincerity with the other characters in the opera, the two human moments when she is herself. "One is the young princess who has found her brother and falls in blessed relief into his arms. She is overjoyed to have won in him, without falseness, the idea that they will exact their revenge together. The other is the daughter alone with her father. I feel the opening soliloquy is an incantation she probably does every evening at sunset. It is her only way of talking with Agamemnon—of telling him what she thinks and how much she knows about what happened in the past, and reassuring him that she'll never forget what she knows. After the incantation, she plays everything for what it's worth according to her purpose. It's all there in the music as well. It goes from feigned lyricism with Klytemnestra to insinuations of eroticism with Chrysothemis, to childlike reminiscences with Orest, to outright falseness with Aegisth. I would have wanted to play Elektra as a chame-

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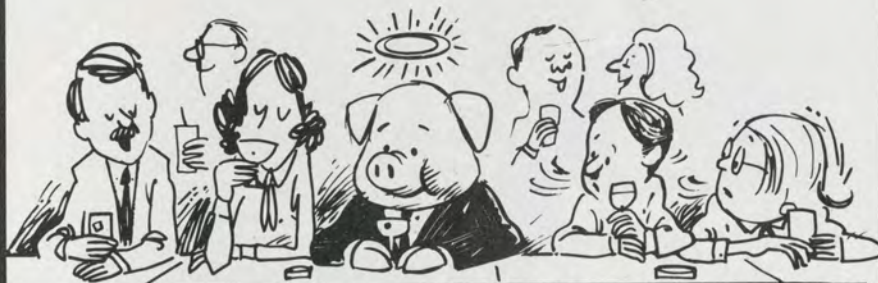
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leon and a comedian—that is, a play-actor. My own feeling is that if the singer has enough technical facility—the more chameleon-like that voice is, the more she will last until the end. So there's a way to embrace the opera vocally that also fits the dramatic situation and, I think, saves the voice."

Few people realize that as a young soprano Resnik sang the role of Chrysothemis and fewer still that just prior to her shift to the mezzo-soprano repertory she learned the part of Elektra. "I was on the three Strauss operas when I made the vocal change. I had already learned Salome and was about to sing it with [conductor Fritz] Reiner. I had already sung the Marschallin in the first act of *Der Rosenkavalier* in concert. I was learning Elektra, but I wasn't sure whether I could last on stage with the way I wanted to sing and act it. Elektra is a big money part, and when you're in demand for it [Janis Martin already has five contracts to sing the role on stage], it's not only hard to say 'no,' but it's hard to combine that with the rest of the repertory and not let something else suffer. It's like *Otello* for the tenor. I very much regret not having sung it. It was the last part I studied as a soprano. I should have tried it once even if I decided never to sing it again. But it was the time of this tremendous crisis: Do I stay on as a soprano or do I make the change? I regret the Marschallin even more than I regret Elektra. It would have been one of those special challenges, a real treat for me. But I never really regretted making the change. It was obvious that's where I belonged. Just listen to the way I speak," she added in that wonderfully resonant Resnik chortle that seems to emerge from baritone depths.

Coincidentally, neither does Janis Martin have the slightest regrets concerning her *Fachwechsel*, as she calls it, using the German term which comes naturally to a resident Berliner. "I never really was a mezzo," she admits with no sheepishness whatsoever. "I was 20 years old when I got my first contract and my voice wasn't mature yet. I didn't know what I could do. When I got to Germany, and started singing a lot, I found my voice was going up and up, and it was easier and easier to sing the high notes all the time. I never really had a chesty voice. In San Francisco I started out singing one of the three orphans in *Der Rosenkavalier*. Then I went on to Annina, then to Octavian, and now



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I sing the Marschallin, which is one of my favorite parts. In *Ariadne* I started with the Composer and now sing only Ariadne, although sometimes I think I'd like to do the Composer again.

"People have been trying to get me to do Elektra, Fidelio and Brünnhilde for ten years, and I've just started singing these kinds of roles. I've done Isolde [including performances in Chicago in 1982 with Jon Vickers as Tristan] and it really suits my voice, just like Elektra. Elektra is more continually dramatic. With Isolde, right after the dramatic sections—such as in the first act—there are sections that are quite lyrical. It goes back and forth; it's not as hard on the voice. It doesn't keep going relentlessly like Elektra. That's a killer because it starts out with such intensity. And before the monologue, you've been groveling around on a dirty stage and you tend to have dust in your throat. There are a few places where Strauss could have been kinder to the voice. It's not just because of the high notes, but the way they come. You're at the end of a long, intense scene and you're tired ... and then come the high notes! And in *Elektra*, it's almost always over a tremendous orchestra. Very little of Elektra's music is soft.

"What a contrast in the recognition scene with Orest! Isn't it gorgeous?" she asks rhetorically. "The hardest thing about that scene is not to get carried away and start crying. It just tears you apart. But you've got to be able to keep your senses or your throat clamps up and you can't sing at all. It's the audience that has to get the goosebumps, not you. You need so much concentration for this kind of singing. If you're distracted, you can't do it well."

Concentration and intensity were the trademarks of any Resnik performance as well. As Klytemnestra, her 20-minute scene with Elektra has to be ranked among the great musical and dramatic characterizations of our time. Bay Area operagoers who witnessed her searing interpretation in 1966 are not likely to forget it.

"I didn't have too many great directors when I was singing Klytemnestra," she declares. "My interpretation arose basically out of a very strange production in Stuttgart. It was Wieland Wagner's first *Elektra*, and it failed miserably. At Klytemnestra's entrance, he had her playing out the murder of Agamemnon with the axe



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through a labyrinth of steel meshes where you went in and out of the shadows. Not uninteresting, but completely unworkable. With all the difficulty and failure of that *Elektra*, it was my work with him—just himself and myself working a very, very long time together on the text and the words—that stayed with me the whole time.

"And it was Wieland Wagner who invented my exit. That hysteria was his idea. We discussed it for days. I have to tell you that when I look back on it now, I don't know how I did the exit and my own screaming afterward. That scene and that hysterical laugh used to cost me so much that when I came off the set, I just sat. I never got to my dressing room until a good ten minutes later. It's probably the most exacting 30 minutes in opera." Other reminiscences about memorable *Elektra* performances began to pour out.

"Klytemnestra is a fascinating role," she continued, by now completely caught up in the essence of what she called Strauss' "greatest mental and intestinal creation." "She knows what's in the cards. According to tradition it will be the son who comes to avenge the father's murder, not the daughter. She has done everything in her power to see that Orest has been treated badly as a boy. But she really doesn't know what has happened to him and when the strike will come. She suspects that Elektra knows and tries to pry it out of her. Her nightmares have been about the return of Orest. There is no question but that she takes hallucinatory drugs; there is no question but that many of the things she has drunk and ingested have given her cirrhosis of the liver and have eaten away her organs; there is no question but that her mental state is on the brink.

"The interesting part about Klytemnestra, however, is that this illness and decadence have come about so young. I remember seeing Irene Pappas play Klytemnestra in Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris*, which is about the sacrifice of her eldest child at the hands of Agamemnon. It was in an arena theater, and at the very end of the piece after Iphigenia is drowned and thrown into the sea to appease the gods, Pappas walked far upstage with her back to the audience. When she turned around and faced the public again just before the curtain went down, it was the Klytemnestra that I was now going to sing. I'll never forget how she looked—beautiful but already ravaged, her life completely

changed. This made a tremendous impression on me and gave me a basis for the way I looked. I adored looking well when I first came out, and then letting the audience see me destroy myself. The Klytemnestra who walks out on the stage even after all the sacrifices and the bad dreams is still a remnant of one of the two most beautiful women in Greece, along with her sister, Helen of Troy. She still has to project an animal vitality, because it isn't only out of sheer personal magnetism that she's kept Aegisth. Elektra speaks about their orgies, so there has to be a semblance of what is sexually imaginable."

Resnik's fascination with the first Strauss-Hofmannsthal creation is in evidence throughout her apartment in Venice. *Elektra* is the opera she has most frequently directed, as various theater posters and photos in her memento-filled den attest. Upon entering the apartment, the guest is at once struck by a beautiful painting of the mezzo-soprano as Klytemnestra done by her artist husband, Arbit Blatas, which covers an entire wall of the living room opposite the front door. It is a scene from their collaborative production first seen in Venice in 1971, with its handsome Minoan-style costumes, designed by Blatas, which are being used in the current San Francisco Opera production.

"When I undertake to direct an opera in which I've sung before, it's not because I want to make anyone over in my image. I think that was proven in my first staging assignment with *Carmen* in Hamburg in 1970. There might have been fear that somebody was going to come out in my mold, but neither of the singers did. [Tatiana] Troyanos came out very much the lioness, and [Huguette] Tourangeau came out very much the kitten—and neither of them was anything like me. I've had the faculty to allow singers to come out of themselves in their roles without imposing everything that I've ever felt about the part. I see myself as a catalyst, giving them whatever they want out of my experience so that they can formulate a characterization of their own. Ideally, it should be a meeting of minds, especially in a role like *Elektra*, where there are so many ways it can be played.

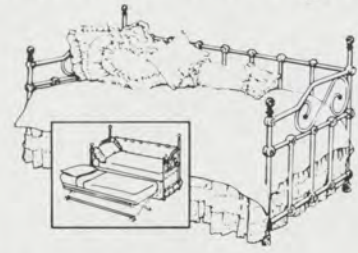
"Probably the most amusing story that ever happened to me in this opera was not as director or as Klytemnestra. It was when I was still singing Chrysothemis and

I was five months pregnant with my son. I didn't want anyone to know, and Reiner was completely unaware of the situation. He was very fond of me and kept saying, 'You're getting fat; you're getting fat. What's the matter with you? Don't you want to have that slim Greek line?' Fortunately the costume—a very beautiful white and gold one—was fitted in such a way that the lower part flowed outward. I came on stage at the first costume rehearsal and began the big soliloquy, 'Kinder will ich haben.' Reiner put the baton down and said, 'So that's it!' and stopped the whole rehearsal. He said to me, 'Are you sure you're strong enough to do all that?' and I answered resolutely, 'Yes, I'm strong enough to do all that.' Then he said, 'Also, weiter' (So, let's go on), and we continued with the scene.

"There was one wonderful evening on stage in Vienna that I'll never forget as long as I live. It was Nilsson, Rysanek and myself in the second Wieland Wagner *Elektra*. Böhm was conducting, and when we got out in costume for the orchestra rehearsal, it was very loud. Birgit, who never minced words and had a great regard for the maestro, and we all did, said, 'I can't do it; it's too loud. I have to tell him there isn't a moment in the music where I can rest.' It was getting louder and louder with Böhm buried in the score when it came to my scene. I found myself giving as much voice as I possibly could and knowing that I didn't come through that wall of sound. So I stopped and said, 'Excuse me, maestro. Do you understand my text?' And he said, 'What?'" she remembers with a laugh as she mimics his German accent perfectly. "I repeated, 'Do you understand what I am singing? Because I can't hear myself.' Then he said, 'I suppose you want me to play a little less.' And I said, 'Would you please today, maestro? It's not your fault, it's mine. I don't have that much voice.' And it worked like a charm for the whole opera.

"The one night with that cast that stands out in my mind was the Vienna State Opera performance at the Montreal Expo in 1967. The audience was hit by something that night it did not expect. It was a superlative performance, and when the curtain came down there was dead silence for about 30 seconds. But what happened after that would have wiped out the birth of a volcano!" ■

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This bus is added to Muni's north-bound 47 line following all evening performances of the Opera, Symphony, Ballet and other major events. The service is also provided for all Saturday and Sunday matinees.

Look for this bus, marked "47 Special," after each performance in the bus zone at Van Ness Avenue and Grove Street—across Van Ness from the Opera House. Its route is: North on Van Ness to Chestnut, then left to Divisadero where it turns left to Union. It continues on Union over Russian Hill to Columbus, then left to Powell—then right to the end of the line at North Point.

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

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

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

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

Ticket Information San Francisco Opera Box Office, Lobby, War Memorial Opera House: Van Ness at Grove, (415) 864-3330. 10 A.M. to 6 P.M. Monday through Saturday. 10 A.M. through first intermission on all performance days.

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

Unused Tickets Patrons who are unable to attend a performance may make a worthwhile contribution to the San Francisco Opera Association by returning their tickets to the Box Office or telephoning (415) 864-3330. Donors will receive a receipt for the full value, but the amount is not considered a contribution to the fund drive or fulfillment of a fund drive pledge.

Opera glasses are available for rent in the lobby. Please note that no cameras or tape recorders are permitted in the Opera House.

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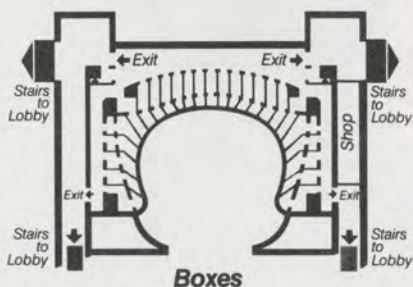
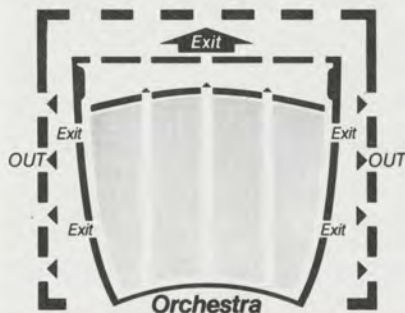
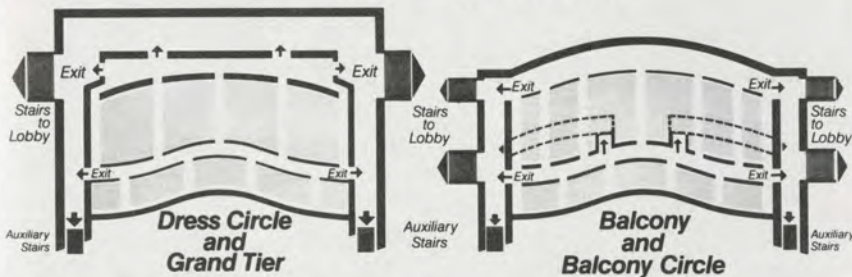
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Taxi Service Patrons needing a cab at the end of the performance should reserve one with the doorman at the Taxi Entrance before the end of the final intermission.

Performing Arts Center Tours Tours of the San Francisco Performing Arts Center, which include the War Memorial Opera House, the Louise M. Davies Symphony Hall and the Herbst Theatre take place as follows: Mondays, 10:00-2:30 on the hour and half hour. Davies Hall only: Wednesday 1:30/2:30—Saturday 12:30/1:30. All tours leave from Davies Symphony Hall, Grove Street entrance. General \$3.00—Seniors/Students \$2.00. For further information, please call (415) 552-8338.

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In March of this year the Paul L. and Phyllis Wattis Foundation offered the San Francisco Opera a \$500,000 challenge grant, the purpose of which was to eliminate the 1983 deficit. We are deeply indebted to the Foundation for its insight and for its concern for the welfare of both the Company and the City, and to the generous donors who made it possible for us to receive this award. We wish to thank the donors listed below whose contributions, above and beyond their customary annual gift, helped us qualify for this grant.

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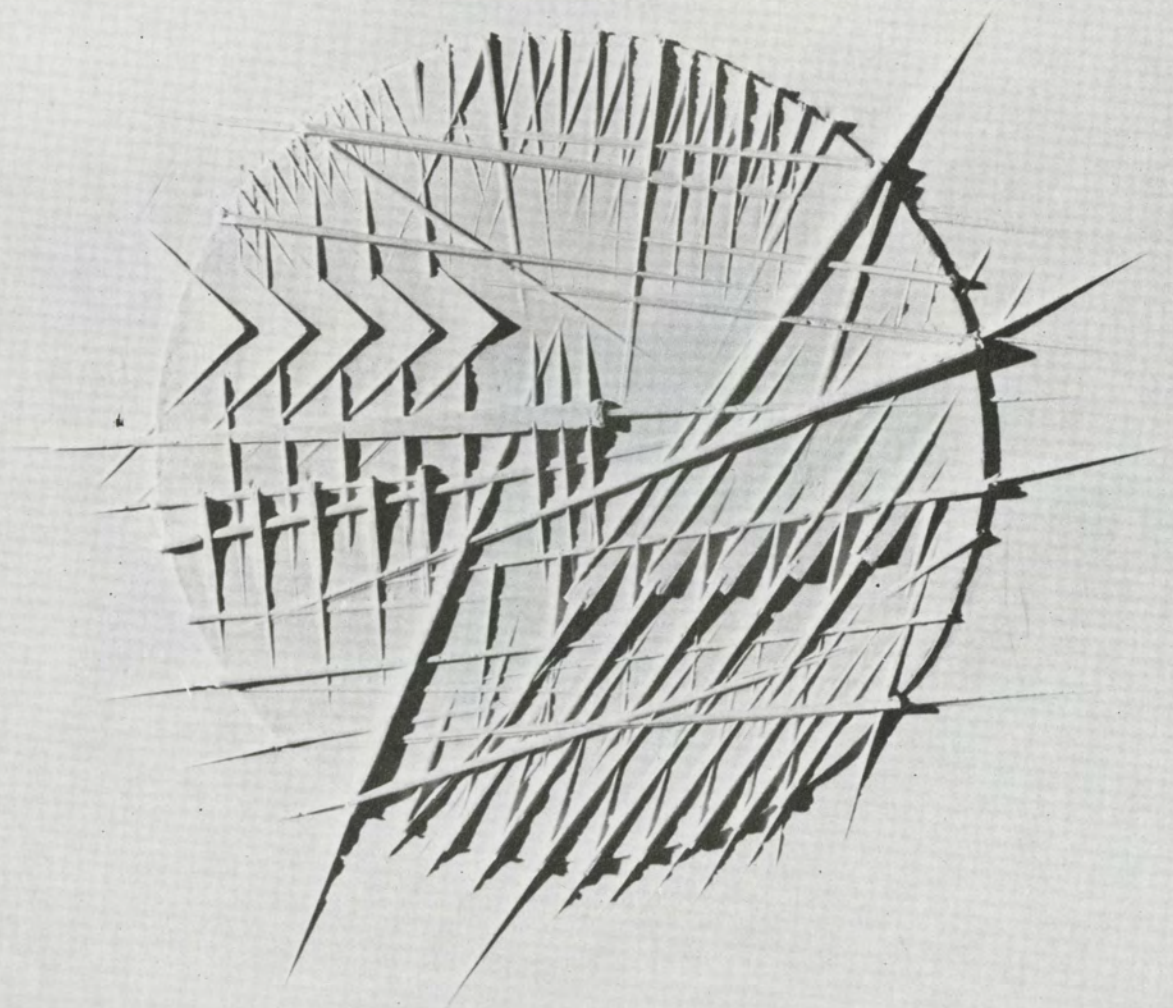
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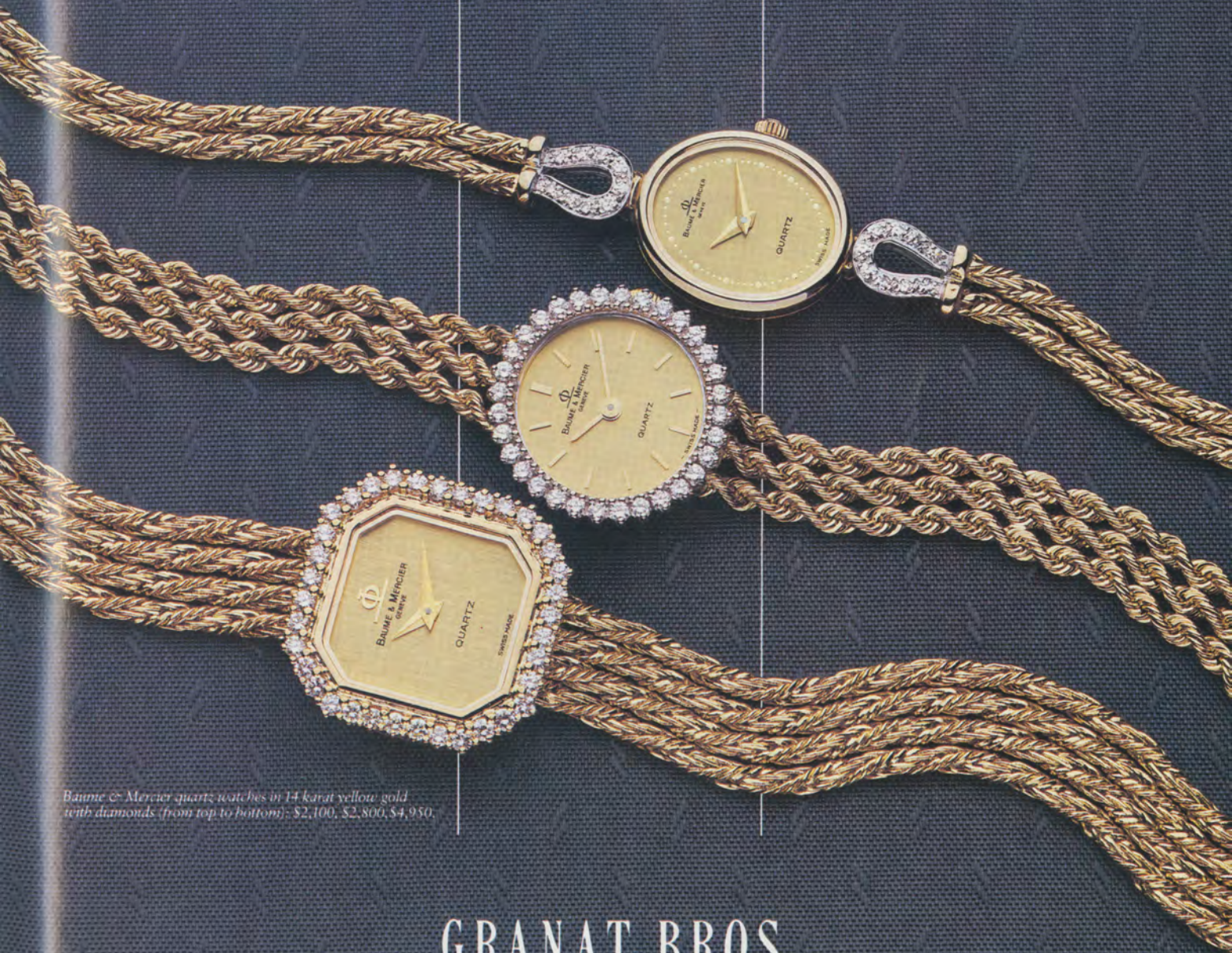
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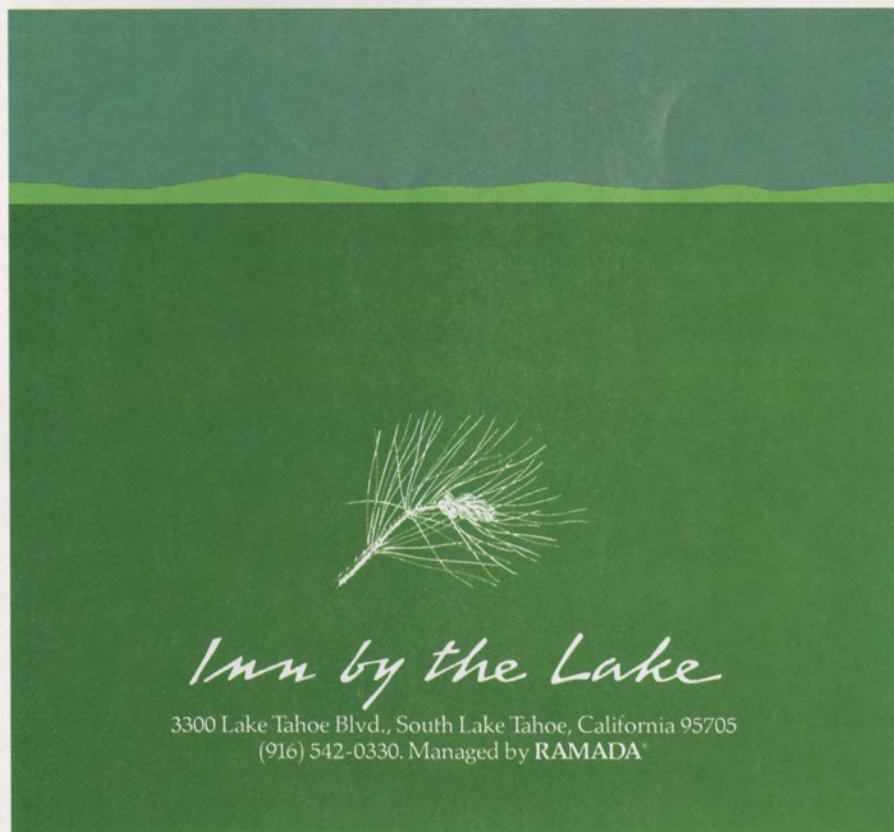
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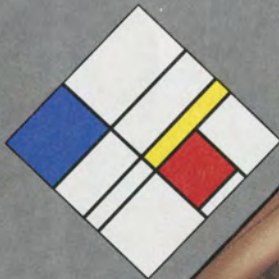
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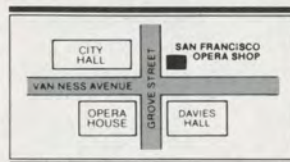


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