

Ernani

1984

Friday, September 7, 1984 9:00 PM
Wednesday, September 12, 1984 8:00 PM
Saturday, September 15, 1984 8:00 PM
Wednesday, September 19, 1984 8:00 PM
Saturday, September 22, 1984 8:00 PM
Wednesday, September 26, 1984 7:30 PM
Sunday, September 30, 1984 2:00 PM

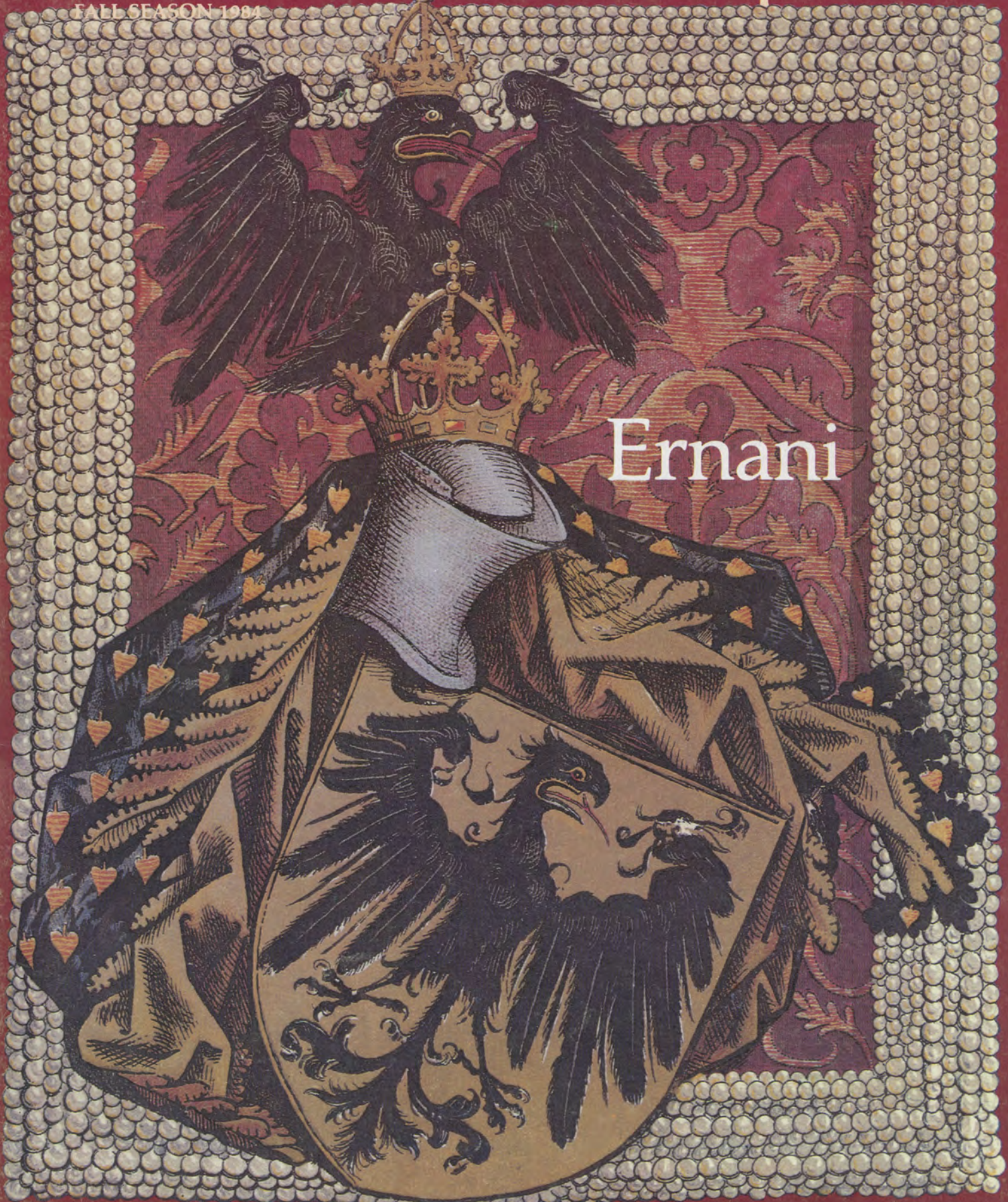
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FALL SEASON 1984



Ernani


PERFORMING ARTS NETWORK PUBLICATION \$1.50



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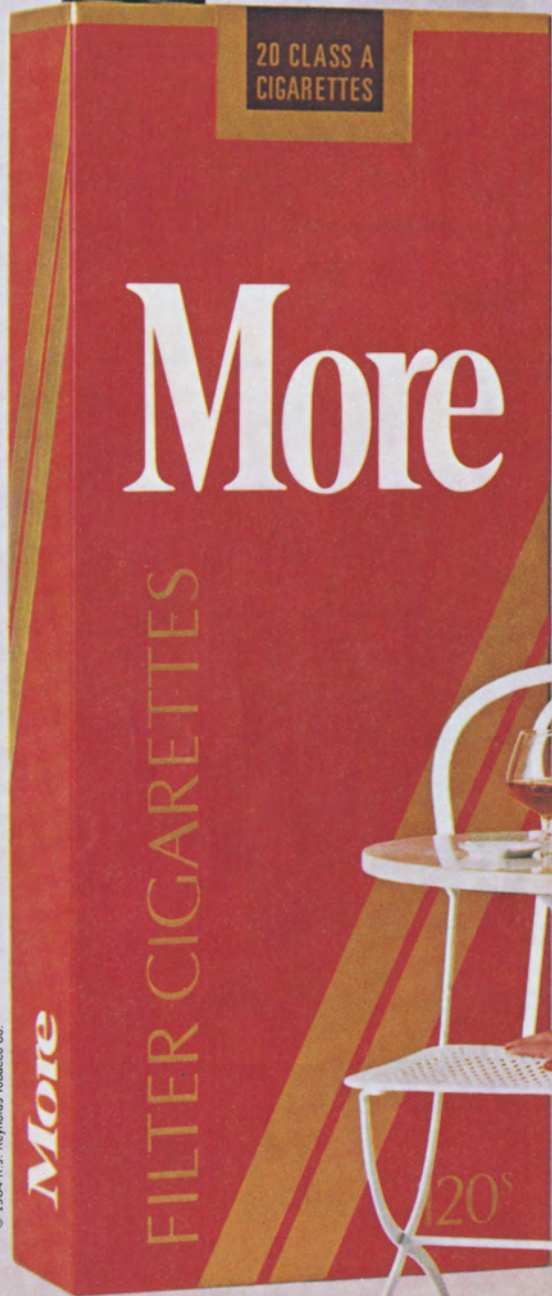
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San Francisco Opera

Terence A. McEwen, *General Director*

Ernani

FALL SEASON 1984

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by Julian Budden
An examination of the strengths of Verdi's early opera and the weaknesses of the landmark play on which it is based.
- 39 **Hugo Sung and Unsung: Or, Why We Put Up With Certain Opera Plots** by David Littlejohn
A consideration of why Victor Hugo's plays have virtually vanished from the legitimate theater while they provide the basis of several well-entrenched operatic masterpieces.
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A representation of the arms of the Holy Roman Empire, with images used by Charles V (Don Carlo in Verdi's *Ernani*) during his reign. Colored lithograph, made by H.G. Ströhl in 1899 after the original, then in possession of the Royal and Imperial House Court and State Archives of Vienna. Reproduced from: Arthur Charles Fox-Davies, *The Art of Heraldry—An Encyclopaedia of Armory*, published in London by T.C. & E.C. Jack, 1904.
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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.

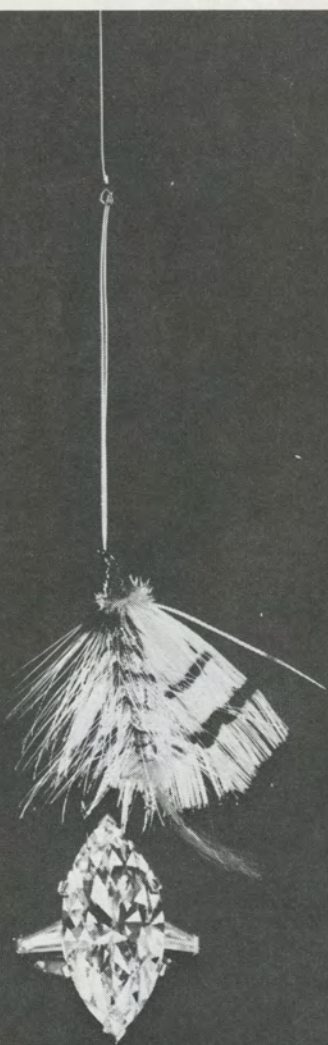
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General Director's Message

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.

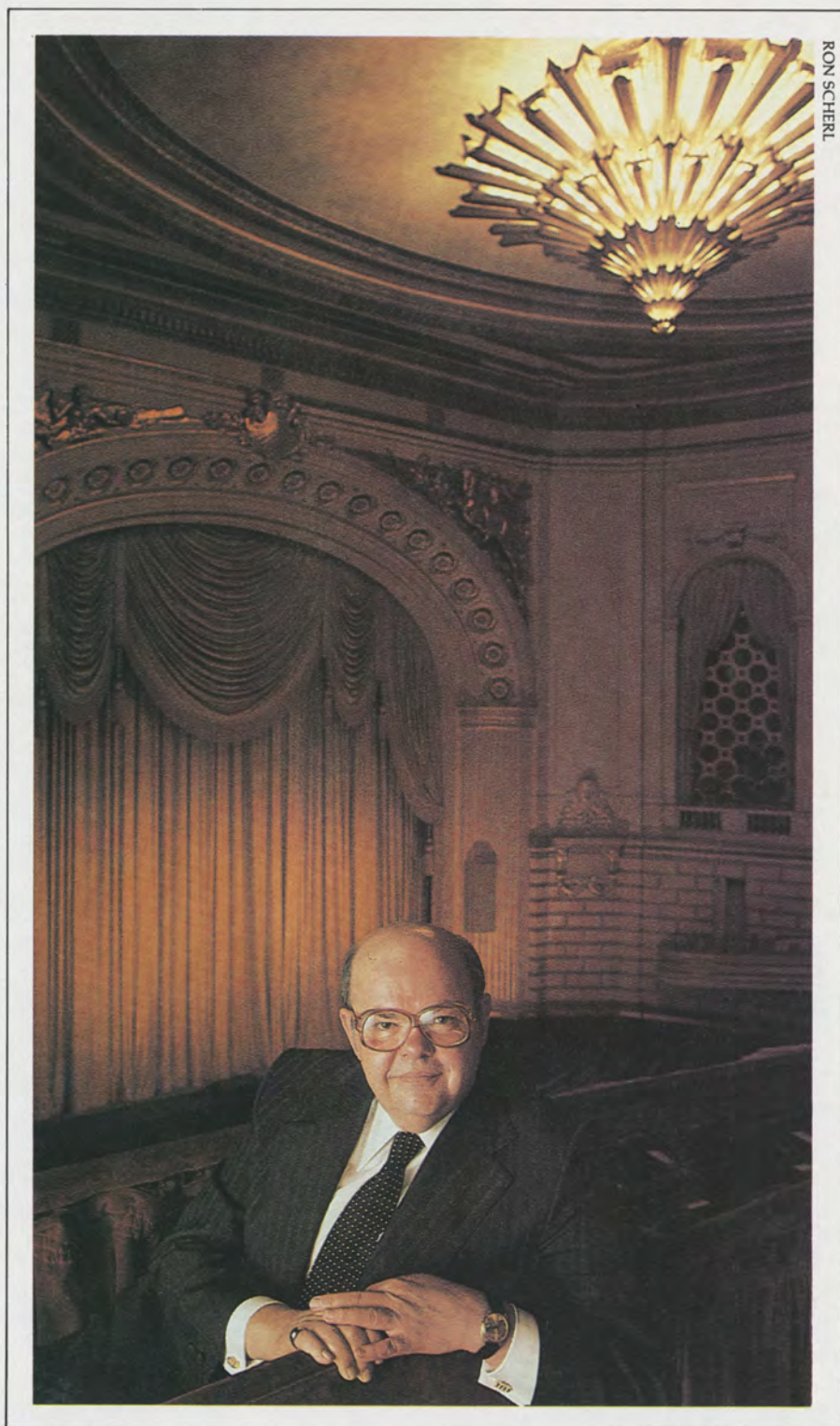
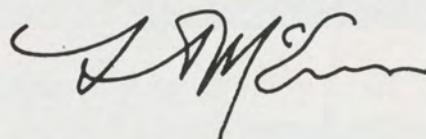
The operas in which they will be heard this season are drawn from the Italian, French, German and Russian repertoires, each exhibiting opportunities for superlative singing while making unique demands posed by widely disparate styles of lyric theater. From early Italian *bel canto* (both comic and tragic) 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.



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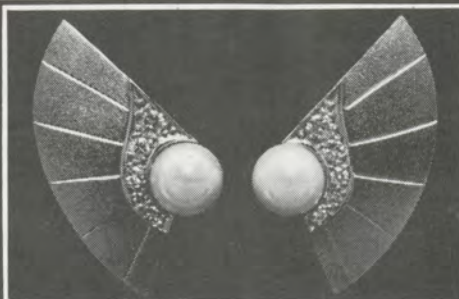
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Claudia Marita Siefer
Ramona Spiropoulos
Delia Voitoff
Lola Watson
Garifalia Zeissig

Daniel Pociernicki
Valery Portnov
Tom Reed
Sigmund Seigel
B. Chastaine Tredway
John Walters

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Peggy Davis

Andrew Birkhoff
Eugene Bordallo
Peter Childers

Carolyn Houser
Sherri Parks

Gregory Gonzales
Jay Johanni
Gregory Lara

Debra Rose
Katherine Warner

Ian Leffler
Karstyn McCoy
Dennis McDonald

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Kathy Anderson
Candida Arias-Duazo
Hilda Chavez
Marilyn Shonka Curtis
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Manfred Behrens
Michael Bloch
David Burnakus
Ric Cascio
Raymond Chavez
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Dale Emde
John L. Glenister

Lisa Louise Glenister
Liya Hoefling
Christina Jaqua
Marena Lane
Lola Lazzari-Simi
Cecilia MacLaren

Cameron Henley
Dennis Jones
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Robert Logue
Gregory Marks
Henry Metlenko
Eugene Naham
Steven Oakey
Stephen Ostrow
Autris Paige

May Murakami
Anna Marie Riesgo
Bonnie Shapiro
Sally Winnington
Susan Witt
Wendy Zaro

Robert Price
Jeffrey Putnam
Kenneth Rafanan
Robert Romanovsky
Karl Saarni
Kevin Skiles
Marc Smith
James Starkey
Clifton Word
Mark Ziemann

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Nathaniel Lunt
Andrew Mak
Michael Molina
Jonathan Olmsted
Jeffrey Pulley
Nicholas Safrit
Bernard Savant

John Paul Savant
Kelsey Siegel
Benjamin Silverman
Lyndon Ubana
Alexander Villanueva
Stanford White
Samuel Yan
Samuel Yen

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Lorna Bridges
Huguette Combs
Carol Dunlap
Joan Imbeau
Nina Izotoff
Esther Jennings

Paisley Knudsen
Donna Martin
Jan Moody
Holly Morrison
Claire Nice
Dorothy Papo
Marianne Petroni

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Stella Tatro
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Karen Topp
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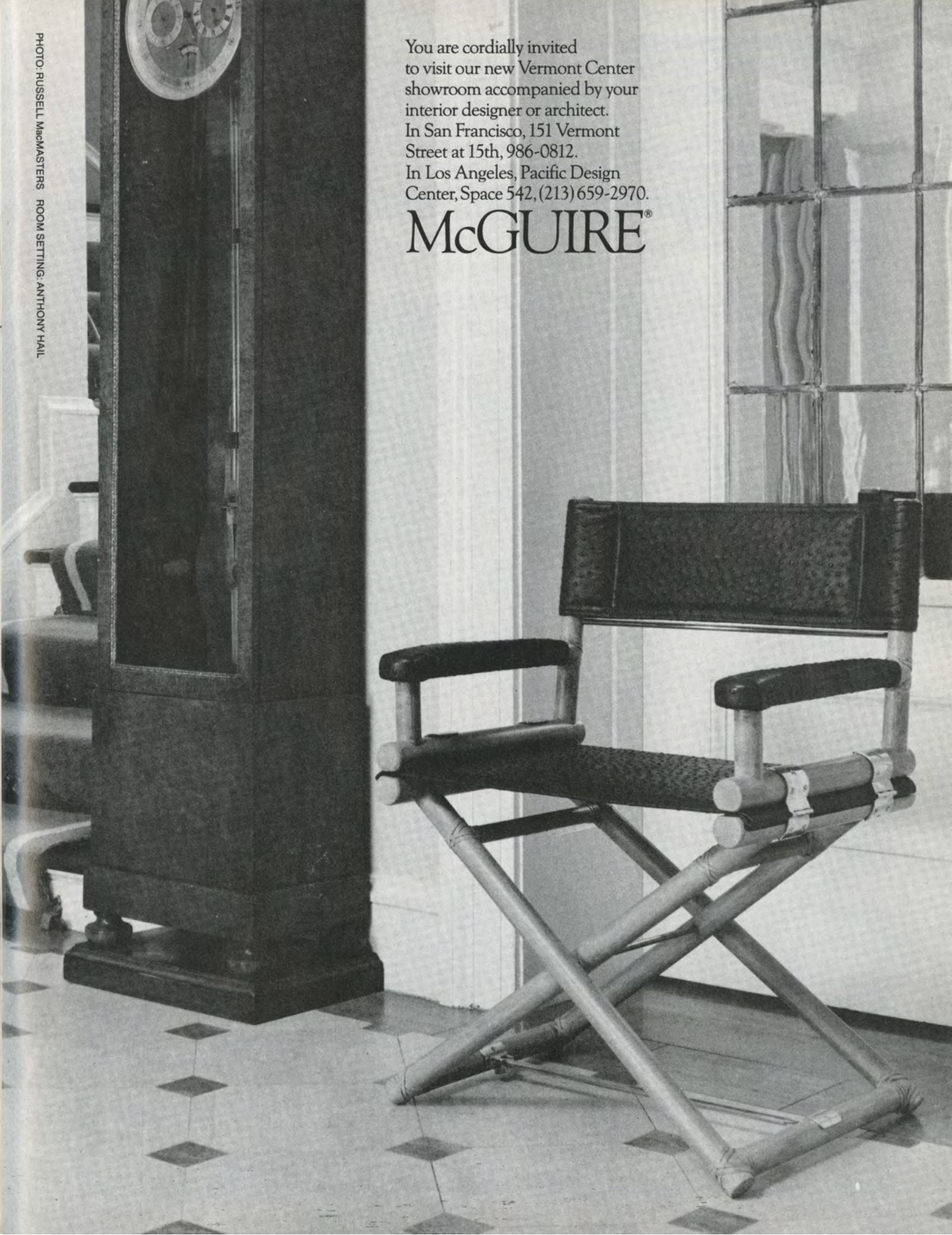
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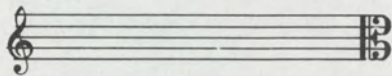
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Celia Rosenberger
Leonid Igudesman
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2nd VIOLIN

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Virginia Price-Kvistad
Lev Rankov
Eva Karasik
Lani King
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VIOLA

Rolf Persinger *Principal*
Alison Avery
Lucien Mitchell
Asbjorn Finess
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Thalia Moore
Samuel Cristler
David Budd
Helen Stross
Victoria Parr

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Jon Lancelle
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Shinji Eshima
Philip Karp

FLUTE

Alan Cox *Principal*
Alice F. Miller
James Walker

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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

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Robin Elliott

HORN

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

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James Miller *Principal*
Edward Haug
Timothy Wilson

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Donald Kennelly
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San Francisco Opera

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/Pavarotti, 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



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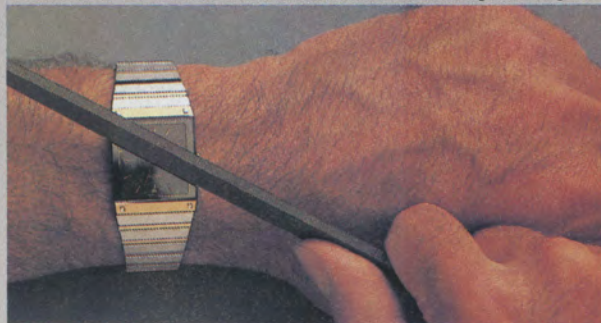
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Friday, October 12, 8:00
La Sonnambula Bellini

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,
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.
Dernesch, 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

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.

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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

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MADAMA BUTTERFLY

Puccini/in Italian

Wednesday, October 17, 1:00 Wednesday, October 24, 1:00

Matinee for Senior Citizens and Disabled Patrons

Wednesday, October 31, 1:00

These matinees will be performed with SUPERTITLES™ by Jerry Sherk and Francesca Zambello, San Francisco Opera, which are provided through the generosity of CITICORP.

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	9/20
Francesca Zambello	
ELEKTRA	10/11
Michael Mitchell	
ANNA BOLENA	10/18
James Keolker	
KHOVANSCHINA	11/1
Dale Harris	

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	9/27
Francesca Zambello	

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	9/18
Francesca Zambello	
FALL OPERA GALA	
Ramona Rockway	10/2
ANNA BOLENA	10/23
James Keolker	
KHOVANSCHINA	10/30
Dale Harris	
DON GIOVANNI	11/20
Ramona Rockway	

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

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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
ELEKTRA/Sophocles	10/7
LE ROI S'AMUSE/Hugo	10/21

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ERNANI



Interior of the Teatro La Fenice in Venice, site of the first performance of Verdi's *Ernani*.

That Ultra-classic Product of Romanticism

By JULIAN BUDDEN

Among Verdi's early (i.e. pre-*Rigoletto*) operas, *Ernani* enjoys one unique distinction: it is the only one which never even temporarily disappeared from the Italian repertoire. By the time of *Aida* such works as *Nabucco*, *I Due Foscari* and *Attila*, so much admired today, had sunk below the horizon; *Macbeth*, even in its updated form of 1865, was rarely heard; and when consulted by his French publisher about a possible revival of *I Masnadieri*, Verdi confessed to having lost all memory of it. But it was a performance of *Ernani* at La Scala, Milan, at the end of 1880, that finally reconciled him to Giulio Ricordi's choice of principals—D'Angeri, Tamagno, Maurel and Edouard de Reszke—for the revised *Simon Boccanegra*. *Ernani*, too, was one of the handful of Verdi operas that Bernard Shaw claimed to know as thoroughly as he knew the novels of Charles Dickens. Though not sufficiently popular to merit a publication in miniature full score, it had many successful revivals during the early part of the present century with tenors such as Fusati and Merli in the title role and, as Don Carlo, baritones such as De Luca and Mattia Battistini, whose decorations of the cabaletta "Vieni meco, sol di rose" may represent a tradition going back to Verdi's own day (Battistini was born as early as 1857).

Julian Budden, internationally renowned musicologist, is the author of a remarkable three-volume series, *The Operas of Verdi*.



Poster for the first performance of *Ernani*. Historical Archives of the Teatro La Fenice, Venice.

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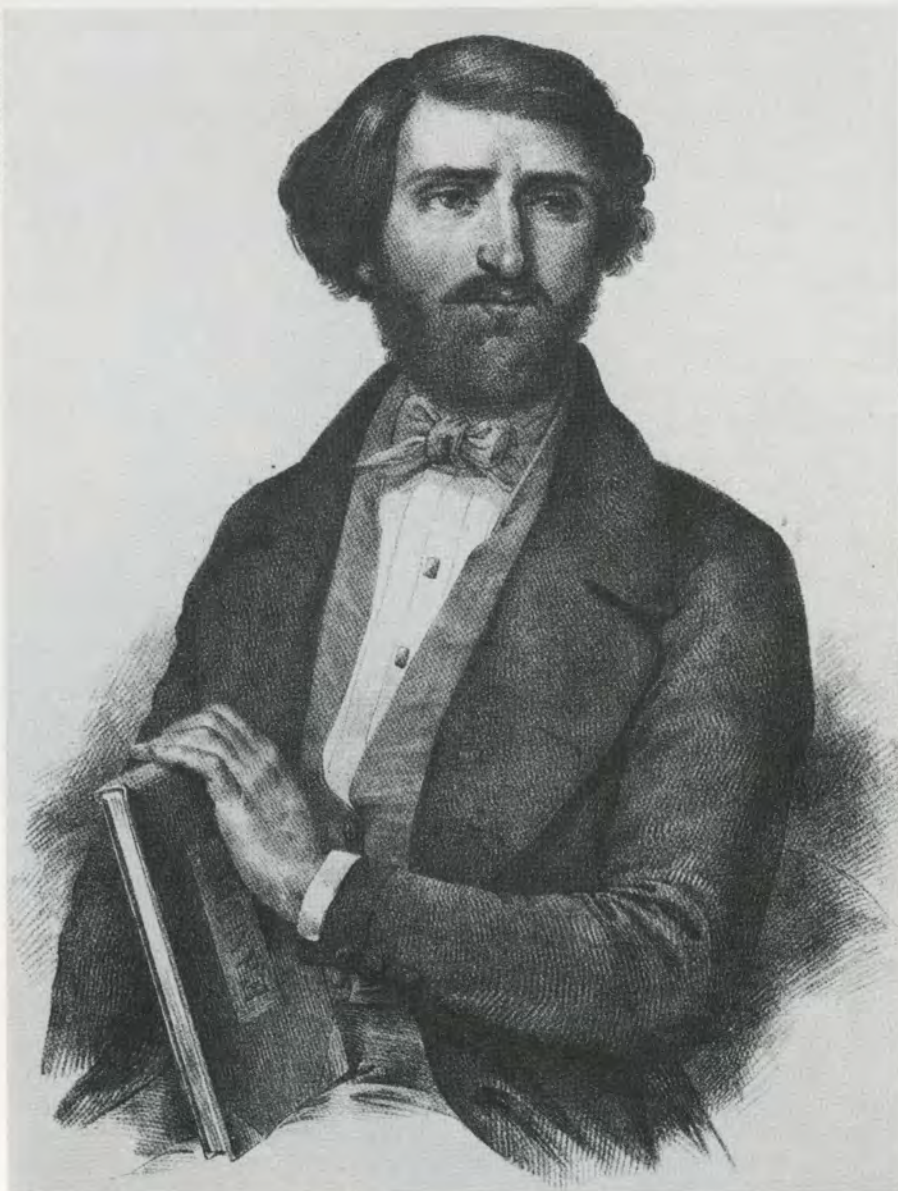
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Giuseppe Verdi in the mid-1840s with the score of *Ernani*. Lithograph by Gatti and Dura; Historical Archives of the Teatro Regio, Parma.

All the more strange, then, that so many writers of the inter-war period should unite in disparaging the opera itself. "In spite of the purple patches, a performance of *Ernani* is apt today to leave us cold," says Ferruccio Bonavia in his monograph of 1930. Francis Toye, in the first authoritative study of the composer's life and works to appear in English, accused Piave of having taken from Victor Hugo's play its situations while "discarding the

details that made them comparatively credible"; and he further accuses the librettist of undue compression. Dyneley Hussey (1940), who clearly knew his Toye, if not his Hugo, talks about "this highly melodramatic version of [Hugo's] drama, in which all the situations are exaggerated and the details that would make them at all credible are omitted owing to the need for compression. "*Ernani*," he continues, "is the first of many examples

among Verdi's operas of the mistake of attempting to turn a stage play into an opera without reorganizing the whole material from the very start." And he proceeds to a long exegesis of the differences between the two media. It was left to the German musicologist, Leo Karl Gerhartz, in his admirable dissertation, *Die Auseinandersetzungen des jungen Verdis mit dem literarischen Drama* (Berlin, 1968) to point out the obvious fact that the original *Hernani*, like so much of Hugo's theater, lacks dramatic cohesion almost entirely, and indeed is much more like an opera libretto than a spoken play. "When he writes for the stage," Gerhartz observes, "the poet becomes subject to a fallacy that was all too common in the nineteenth century: that a poetic image takes on dramatic form if it be placed directly before our eyes. In fact it is precisely because he relies on an exclusively visual apprehension of theater that Hugo is unable in his plays to achieve genuinely dramatic effects." The true dramatist, Gerhartz maintains, creates an illusion of reality by suggesting a logical background to the visual action and by subtle indications in the course of the dialogue as to what will happen in successive scenes. In *Hernani* only what we see in front of us has any reality. The play's acts are conceived in mutual isolation mainly as platforms for the poet's romantic rhetoric. Nothing in the course of each points forward or refers back. Every act except the fifth works towards an impasse that is prevented at the last moment by an unexpected twist of the plot. Between Don Carlos, as the adventurer and royal profligate of the first three acts and as the magnanimous sovereign of the fourth, there is no connection—though Toye professes to find one in the monarch's sense of humor. But for the Italian musician of Verdi's time this posed no problem. Such opera is not concerned with the motives behind an action but rather the emotions that accompany or result from it. Indispensable information must be conveyed as compendiously as possible in recitative and "scena" material. The important moment, i.e., the lyrical numbers, must above all be expressions of feeling, not ratiocination. What is more, music has its own way of creating consistency of character where



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none appears in the literary text. Shaw, with all the authority of a playwright, maintained that Don Carlos in the play was "sublime in feeling but somewhat tedious in expression. In the opera he is equally sublime in feeling but concise, grand and touching in expression, thereby proving that the abiding glory of Victor Hugo as a stage poet was to have provided librettos for Verdi."

Indeed, for the composer himself, *Hernani* was a case of love at first sight. He had just achieved two consecutive triumphs at La Scala with *Nabucco* and *I Lombardi alla Prima Crociata* respectively—both essentially choral operas of a type that Verdi had made particularly his own. Since *Hernani* was his first commission from the Teatro La Fenice, Venice, he considered it time to strike out in a different direction and enter the lists with a drama of individuals. Various ideas were taken up and dropped for one reason or another: *King Lear*; Byron's *The Corsair* (no baritone of sufficient stature on the roster); *The Bride of Abydos*, also by Byron (no suitable librettist available); Bulwer-Lytton's *Rienzi* (too dangerous); Dumas's *Catherine Howard* (the characters too unpleasant); *The Two Foscari* (their descendants might take offense); and so on. All the well-known librettists having failed him, Verdi was compelled to fall back upon a totally inexperienced theatrical poet, a certain Francesco Maria Piave, recommended to him by the management's secretary, Guglielmo Brenna. It was Piave who offered, through Brenna, a libretto entitled *Cromwell*—not, as might be supposed, derived from Hugo's play of the same name but an adaptation of Walter Scott's *Woodstock*. Verdi consented, but as each act of the libretto arrived from Venice he became increasingly dissatisfied. In order to help resolve the problems and expedite the composition, Count Mocenigo, the theater's Presidente dello Spettacolo, visited the composer in Milan in the summer of 1843. The letter that Verdi wrote to him after his return speaks for itself:

"Certainly this *Cromwell* is not very exciting when one considers the requirements of the stage. The plot is smooth, clear and well worked out in general, but

miserably lacking in action—the fault of the subject rather than the poet. . . .

"Oh, if we could only do *Hernani*, that would be really wonderful. . . . Signor Piave has great facility in writing verses and in *Hernani* he would merely have to shorten and compress; the action is ready-made and it's immensely gripping. Tomorrow I will write at length to Signor Piave



Francesco Maria Piave (1810-1876), Verdi's *Ernani* librettist, in a contemporary engraving. Ricordi Historical Archives, Milan.

setting out all the scenes of *Hernani* that seem to me suitable. I've already seen how the whole of the first act could be compressed into a magnificent introduction, and we could finish the act where Don Carlo asks Silva for *Hernani*, who is hidden behind his portrait. Second act to be taken from act four of the play. Third act to end with a magnificent terzetto in which *Hernani* dies." As it turned out, the "magnificent introduction" was expanded into a separate act, opening with a scene for the hero and his followers which has no parallel in Hugo; otherwise Verdi had calculated right from the start the precise layout of his opera before the librettist had written a line of it. This was rare for an Italian composer of the time. Bellini, for instance, relied heavily on Romani for the general shaping of his operas; and in Romani's absence (as in *I Puritani*) his dramatic touch faltered. In all future dealings with Piave it was Verdi who decided on

**They say that behind every great man there's a woman.
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Sofia Loewe (1815-1866), the German-born soprano who interpreted the role of Elvira in the world premiere of *Ernani* in 1844.

dramatic structure; the poet was content to carry out his wishes without ever advancing opinions of his own. If his lines are often stiff, congested and, on occasion, comically bad as literature, they serve their purpose nonetheless as foundations for such masterworks as *Rigoletto*, *La Traviata*, *Macbeth* and *La Forza del Destino*.

The vocal distribution was not so easily arrived at. From the beginning Verdi was under pressure from the management to write a part for the popular contralto, Carolina Vietti, who excelled in trouser roles. *Ernani* (to give him his Italian name) was envisaged by Hugo as a beardless youth and could therefore be entrusted quite plausibly to a female *en travestie* (indeed the few sketches that survived from Bellini's projected opera on the same subject indicate a contralto heroine). Verdi at first consented to the idea, although, as the ballet master de Val reported to Count Mocenigo, "he is a sworn foe to the practice of having a man's part sung by a woman." But when the casting began in earnest he dug in his heels: *Ernani* must be

sung by a tenor. After some hedging the management gave way, and the heroine's three suitors became respectively tenor, baritone and bass, the last being altered to a "comprimario" or sub-principal role due to the absence of a leading basso profondo on the company's roster. But the difficulties did not end there. The season opened with a revival of *I Lombardi alla Prima Crociata*, in which the tenor cast for *Ernani* sang so badly that Verdi refused to consider him for his new opera. An alternate then singing in Verona proved no more acceptable; and the first night had to be put off until the tried and trusted Carlo Guasco, original hero of *I Lombardi*, could return from Spain to undertake the title role. Meanwhile, the Elvira (as Hugo's Doña Sol is called in the opera), the German soprano Sofia Loewe, was thoroughly put out at being deprived of the customary rondò-finale with which to finish the opera; but she too was forced to yield to the intransigent composer. Finally, the bass who was to have sung Silva fell ill; and it was once more Verdi who chose his



Antonio Selva (1820-1889), the first interpreter of the role of Silva in *Ernani*.

replacement from among the chorus—the young Antonio Selva, who five years later would create Count Walter in *Luisa Miller*.

Despite all these setbacks, the premiere of *Ernani* on March 9, 1844 was an unqualified success. If *Nabucco* had established Verdi's fame in the eyes of his countrymen, *Ernani* proclaimed it to the world. In many countries it was the first Verdi opera to be heard—preceded in America, rather oddly, only by *I Lombardi*. The bass role of Silva, however, continued to present problems; for in an age when singers were rigidly graded in the matter of status, it could never attract a leading artist. Prosper Dérivis, creator of *Zaccaria* (*Nabucco*) and *Pagano* (*I Lombardi*), aspired to the baritone part of Don Carlo, freely transposing and adapting it to suit his own compass—much to Verdi's annoyance when he heard about it. Yet in this Dérivis was merely following an accepted practice of the time. Ignazio Marini, on the other hand, who had starred in Verdi's first opera, *Oberto, Conte di San Bonifacio*, and who

continued on p. 70

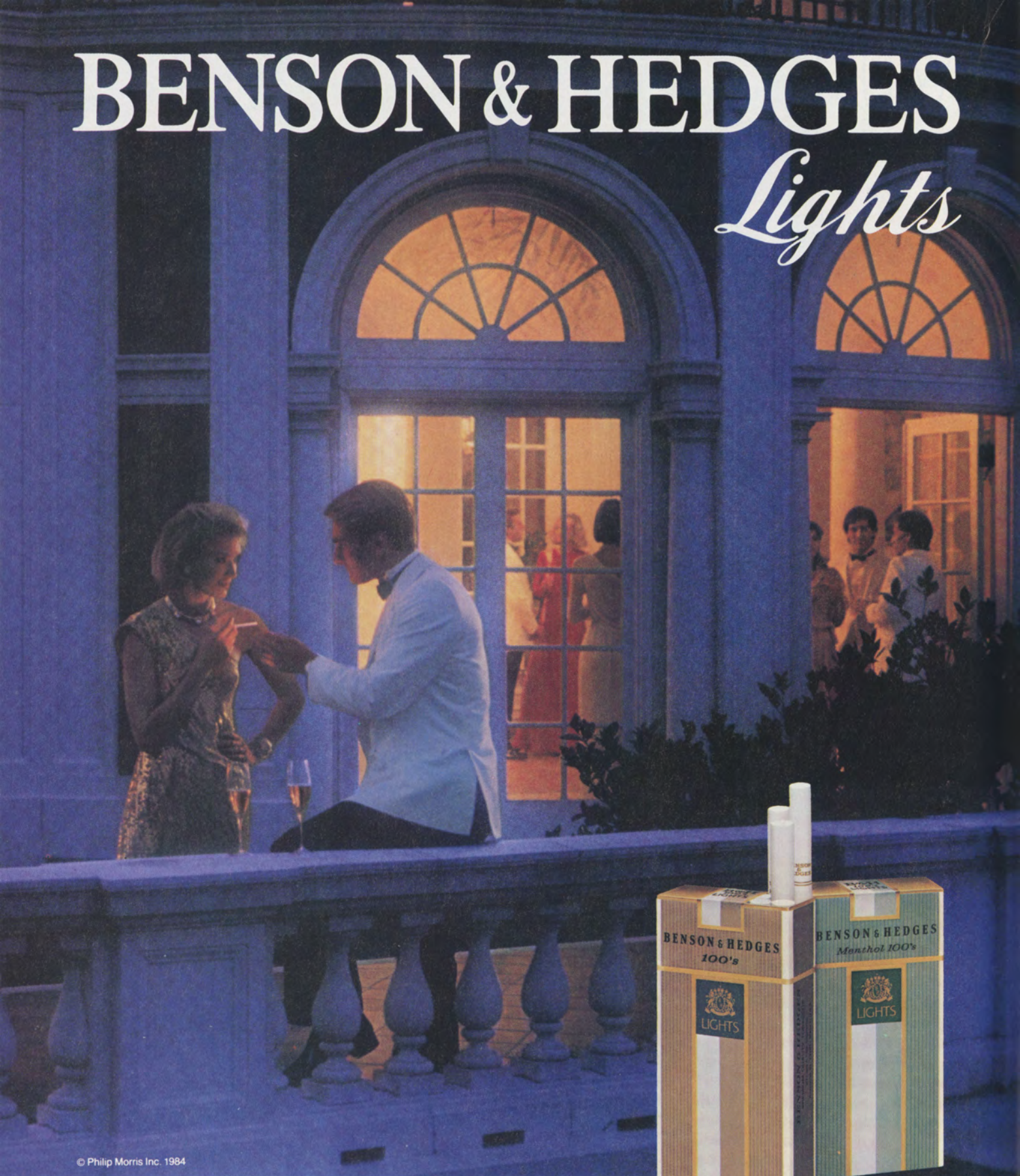
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Hugo Sung and Unsung: or, Why We Put Up With Certain Opera Plots

By DAVID LITTLEJOHN

Whenever Verdi's *Ernani* comes around, music critics who pretend to know it well try to find nice things to say about it. It's pretty good "for early Verdi;" it has some exciting arias, duets, and ensembles; it has its "occasional elegances." But there's no getting away from the fact that nowadays it's generally regarded as distinctly lesser Verdi—one of those dark, Spanish love-death-and-honor operas full of bouncy pop tunes, sung by romantic caricatures in elaborate 16th-century costumes who somehow have to work their way through a nearly incomprehensible plot.

Over the last ten years, the opera has usually been performed in two or three places somewhere in the world every season, which puts it about twelfth in the list of Verdi's most frequently heard operas. But if Verdi's *Ernani* has declined in favor since the 19th century (when it was one of the repertory staples), it is at least still regularly performed, and by some of the most famous singers in the world. The once-notorious play on which it is based—Victor Hugo's *Hernani, ou L'Honneur Castillan*—despite the determined "historic preservation" efforts of the Comédie Française—has virtually disappeared from the living stage. "No modern play-going au-



Victor Hugo in 1829. Lithograph made after a sketch by Antoine Maurin.

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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Louis Boulanger, *The Death of Hernani*. From the collections of La Maison de Victor Hugo.

dience," wrote William Weaver, "would sit through a straight-faced production of *Hernani*."

This is not 100% true—a few modern versions of the play seem to have worked. But, like many enduring 19th-century Italian operas, *Ernani* borrowed its characters and its plot from a once-popular play now far less well known than its lyric successor. Comparing the cases of Victor Hugo's plays and the music dramas they inspired may help us to understand what makes for longevity in opera, and why so many "standards" in today's opera repertory have been based on dramatic originals most of us would not tolerate on the spoken stage.

It is difficult today to conjure up the

semi-legendary reputation of Victor Hugo, who dominated so much of the imagination of his century. He can only be compared to other 19th century demigods like Goethe or Tolstoy—men who combined extraordinary creative powers with an equal cultural influence, and received the kind of mass adulation that turned them into near-mythical characters while they were still alive. By the end of his long (1802-85) life, Hugo was nearly adored by millions of Frenchmen; the respect of these millions almost equalled his own self-esteem.

His rise to glory was sudden, but well planned. "Je veux être Chateaubriand ou rien," he had written in his journal at 14;

continued on p. 56



MONTSERRAT CABALLÉ

One of the world's most renowned sopranos, **Montserrat Caballé**, sings the role of Elvira in *Ernani*, a role she will also sing at the Met this season. The celebrated Spanish singer, who appeared here last fall in the title role of *La Gioconda*, made her long-awaited company debut in 1977, singing the title role of *Turandot* for the first time in her career. She returned the following season as Tosca, sang the role of Queen Elizabeth I in *Roberto Devereux* in 1979, and returned to open the 1981 Fall Season in the title role of Rossini's *Semiramide* and the 1982 Fall Season as Amelia in *Un Ballo in Maschera*. Since her operatic debut in 1956, Miss Caballé has been in demand at all of the world's major opera houses. She rocketed to national attention in this country after her sensational 1965 American debut at Carnegie Hall in a concert performance of *Lucrezia Borgia*. She made a triumphant Metropolitan Opera debut the following year as Marguerite in *Faust*. Famed for her lush beauty of tone, the Catalan singer has put her personal stamp on over 100 roles from every period and style of opera, equally renowned for her performances of bel canto as for verismo roles. Her eclectic repertoire includes operas by Handel, Mozart, Rossini, Verdi, Bellini, Donizetti, Puccini, Strauss and Wagner, among others. Her engagements during the past season included *Don Carlo* at the Metropolitan Opera, a special performance of *La Vida Breve* with José Carreras celebrating United Nations Day, the recitals at Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center in New York, in San Antonio and Montreal as well as an orchestral concert in Miami. In Brussels she sang the title role in a concert performance of *Semiramide*, and she performed in *Don Carlos* in Orange, while her Barcelona appearances included the Marschallin in *Der Rosenkavalier* and the title roles of *Alceste* and *Ariadne*



DOLORA ZAJIC

auf Naxos. Her lengthy discography reflects her versatility with complete recordings of *La Gioconda*, *Aida*, *Un Ballo in Maschera*, *Don Carlos*, *Giovanna d'Arco*, *Luisa Miller*, *I Masnadieri*, *La Traviata*, *Il Pirata*, *I Puritani*, *Norma*, *Lucrezia Borgia*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Boito's *Mefistofele*, *Manon Lescaut*, *La Bohème*, *Salome*, *Tosca* and two recordings of *Turandot*, singing the title role in one and the role of Liù in the other. For her outstanding artistry she has received the Spanish government's highest award and title: "A Most Excellent and Most Illustrious Doña."

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 *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 Francis-



NUNZIO TODISCO

co 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.

Italian tenor **Nunzio Todisco** returns to the site of his 1978 North American debut (as Pollione in *Norma*) to sing the title role of *Ernani*, the part he first sang in 1977 in Parma and has since sung in nearly every major opera house in Europe. He made his professional debut at the 1971 Spoleto Festival as Canio in *I Pagliacci*, a role he went on to perform at the Rome Opera, the Teatro San Carlo in Naples, for his debut at La Scala in Milan, and at the Verona Arena, where he had previously bowed as Radames in *Aida*. Radames, along with *Ernani*, is regarded as one of Todisco's signature roles, and it was as Radames that he made his Covent Garden debut in 1977 and opened the 1980 season at the Teatro San Carlo, scoring a major triumph. He appears regularly in Barcelona, where he was applauded in *Ernani*, *Carmen*, *Pagliacci*, *Attila* and *La Gioconda*, and in Madrid, where he was heard in *La Forza del Destino* opposite Montserrat Caballé. He sings frequently at the Teatro Regio in Turin, the Teatro Verdi in Trieste, the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, La Fenice in Venice, the Teatro Verdi in Modena, the Petrucelli in Bari, Covent Garden, the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires, La Scala in Milan, and with the companies of the Bilbao Festival, Marseilles, Bordeaux, Monte Carlo, Berlin, Stuttgart, Dublin,

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SHERRILL MILNES

Lisbon, Budapest, Caracas and Seoul, Korea. Todisco won great critical acclaim when he opened the 1983 season of the Rome Opera in Verdi's *La Battaglia di Legnano*. This last summer he returned to the Verona Arena as Don José in *Carmen*, a role he repeated at the Orange Festival in France, and he was also heard at Rome's Baths of Caracalla Summer Festival as Radames. Following his assignment here he returns to Europe as Radames in Monaco with the Arena di Verona company; in *Manon Lescaut* in Brescia; in *Pagliacci* in Lecce; and in *Carmen* with Grace Bumbry at the Teatro Petrucelli in Bari. Two of the most recent additions to his repertoire are the title roles of *Otello*, which he will also sing in Bari, and *Samson et Dalila*, which he will perform in Bordeaux.

Baritone Sherrill Milnes, one of the most illustrious American singers of our time, makes his long-awaited return to San Francisco Opera as Don Carlo in *Ernani*, a role he performed earlier this year in a *Live from the Met* telecast and will repeat next April in Miami. He first appeared here in 1973 in the title role of *Rigoletto*, returning to open the 1976 Fall Season as Athanaël in Massenet's *Thaïs*. He has scored great successes around the world in a large number of Verdi roles, including Count di Luna in *Il Trovatore*, Don Carlo in *La Forza del Destino*, Iago in *Otello*, Miller in *Luisa Miller*, Renato in *Un Ballo in Maschera*, the Elder Germont in *La Traviata* and the title roles of *Rigoletto* and *Macbeth*—all of which he has recorded—as well as the title roles of *Simon Boccanegra* and *Nabucco*. His Verdi discography also includes complete recordings of *Aida*, *Attila*, *Don Carlo*, *Giovanna d'Arco* and *I Vespri Siciliani*. He made his 1964 New York City Opera debut as Valentin in *Faust*, the role of his 1965 Metropolitan Opera debut. Milnes has been a regular Met performer since then, having



PAUL PLISHKA

the distinction of opening three seasons and appearing in over a dozen new productions, as well as five national telecasts (*Otello*, *Luisa Miller*, *Don Carlo*, *I Pagliacci* and *Ernani*). He has bowed at a number of important international companies in Verdi works, including *Macbeth* (Vienna Staatsoper, 1970), *Un Ballo in Maschera* (Covent Garden, 1971; Hamburg, 1973), *Don Carlo* (Lyric Opera of Chicago, 1972) and *Il Trovatore* (Paris Opera, 1975; La Scala, 1978). As a concert artist he has sung many times with the orchestras of New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Cleveland, Chicago and Los Angeles as well as at the festivals of Tanglewood, Ravinia, Blossom, Saratoga and the Hollywood Bowl. This coming October will find him in Vienna and Berlin performing in *Tosca* and *Don Carlo*, followed by appearances in new productions of *Simon Boccanegra* and *Otello* at the Met. He has produced and starred in a documentary film, *Homage to Verdi*, and because of this and in recognition of his love and dedication to Italian music, he was awarded the title of Commander of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Italy.

Paul Plishka, leading bass of the Metropolitan Opera since 1967, sings Silva in *Ernani*. First seen here in 1976 in *La Forza del Destino*, the Pennsylvania native returned as Zaccaria in *Nabucco* during the 1982 Summer Season. He began his operatic career by winning first place in the Baltimore Opera Auditions and soon after joined the National Company of the Metropolitan Opera, becoming a member of the parent company with his official debut in *La Gioconda*. Since that time he has performed over 40 leading roles with the Met, and his assignments there during the 1983-84 season alone included *Les Troyens*, *Ernani*, *Don Carlo*, *Don Giovanni*, *Mahagonny*, *Macbeth* and *La Forza del Destino*. Plishka has also appeared frequently with

continued on p. 52

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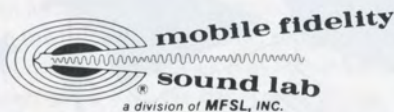
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Libretto by FRANCESCO MARIA PIAVE
After the play *Hernani* by VICTOR HUGO

Ernani

(in Italian)

Conductor

Lamberto Gardelli

Stage Director

Nicolas Joël

Designer

Nicola Benois

Lighting Designer

Thomas J. Munn

Chorus Director

Richard Bradshaw

Musical Preparation

James Johnson

Mark Haffner

Susanna Lemberskaya

Philip Eisenberg

Prompter

Philip Eisenberg

Assistant Stage Director

Francesca Zambello

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Gretchen Mueller

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First performance:

Venice, March 9, 1844.

First San Francisco Opera performance:

September 28, 1968

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 7 AT 9:00

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 12 AT 8:00

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 15 AT 8:00

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 19 AT 8:00

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 22 AT 8:00

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26 AT 7:30

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 30 AT 2:00

CAST

(in order of appearance)

Ernani, a bandit chief Nunzio Todisco
(*Don Juan of Aragon*)

Donna Elvira, Montserrat Caballé
Silva's cousin

Don Carlo, Sherrill Milnes
King of Spain

Giovanna, Dolora Zajic
Elvira's nurse

Don Ruy Gomez de Silva, Paul Plishka
a grandee of Spain

Don Riccardo, Daniel Harper
attendant to the King

Iago, Jacob Will
attendant to Silva

*Bandits, Silva's knights and retainers, Elvira's ladies-in-waiting,
knights of the King, members of the League, Spanish nobles and
ladies, Electors of the Imperial Court, guards*

TIME AND PLACE: 1519; Spain and Germany

ACT I THE BANDIT

Scene 1: In the mountains of Aragon

Scene 2: Elvira's apartments in Silva's
castle

INTERMISSION

ACT II THE GUEST

The grand hall in Silva's castle

INTERMISSION

ACT III CLEMENCY

The tomb of Charlemagne at
Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle)

INTERMISSION

ACT IV THE MASK

Ernani's castle in Saragossa

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

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

The performance will last approximately three hours.

Ernani/Synopsis

ACT I

SCENE 1: Don Juan of Aragon, a Spanish nobleman who was deprived of his wealth and placed under a ban by the king, has become the bandit chief Ernani. In his mountain camp he is meditating on the approaching marriage of Elvira, the woman he loves, to her elderly uncle, the grandee Don Ruy Gomez de Silva. Resolved to prevent this loveless union, he asks his followers to pledge their help in abducting Elvira. Shortly, Ernani and his men depart in the direction of Silva's castle.

SCENE 2: Elvira is alone, thinking about her coming marriage, which she is powerless to prevent. Grief-stricken, she calls upon her lover to rescue her; however, Don Carlo, King Charles I of Spain, who is also in love with Elvira, enters the room and tries to make love to her. Elvira spurns his advances, and he is about to carry her off by force when Ernani appears. The two men recognize each other at once. Carlo, in contemptuous pity, asks Ernani to flee and save his life, but Silva suddenly enters and challenges both men. The arrival of the royal esquire, Don Riccardo, reveals to Silva the presence of the king, and, though still enraged, the grandee bows in deference. Carlo ensures Ernani's escape by referring to him as a "trusted man." Ernani expresses his hatred but is urged by Elvira to flee.

ACT II

Elvira and Silva are about to be married. Ernani has disappeared, and reports have reached Elvira that he is dead. A squire announces that a pilgrim is outside seeking refuge. Silva, believing the pilgrim will bring happiness to the household that shelters him, instructs the squire to let him in. When Elvira enters in her bridal attire, the pilgrim throws off his cloak, revealing himself as Ernani, and offers his life as a wedding gift. His followers have scattered and he is pursued by the king's men, with a price on his head; but Silva assures him of protection in accordance with Castilian tradition of hospitality and goes off to see to the defense of the castle. He returns to find Elvira and Ernani embracing, but before he can do anything the king approaches, and true to his code of honor, Silva hides Ernani in a secret passage. When the king demands the fugitive, Silva offers his own head as forfeit; Carlo then threatens Silva with execution, and Elvira rushes forward to beg for mercy.

Silva's resolution is nearly broken when Carlo takes Elvira as a hostage, but he lets her go. He then demands satisfaction from Ernani; the bandit decides to fight but asks to see Elvira once more. Learning of her departure with the king, he exclaims, "He is our rival!" Ernani persuades Silva to let him join him in his fight against the king, and as a token of faith gives him his hunting horn, promising to kill himself whenever the old man sounds it. Finally, Ernani, Silva and his followers swear vengeance on Carlo.

ACT III

Carlo meditates before the tomb while awaiting the electors' choice of the new Holy Roman Emperor. Aware that a band of conspirators intend to meet there, he hides in the tomb with the hope of learning their identity. Soon the conspirators arrive, Ernani and Silva among them; lots are drawn to choose the king's assassin, and Ernani is selected. Three cannon shots announce that Carlo, now Charles V, has been elected Emperor; as Elvira enters with a crowd of courtiers, electors and soldiers, Carlo steps forward and orders the conspirators captured. The nobles are to be executed and the others imprisoned. Ernani then declares himself Don Juan of Aragon, whereupon Elvira once again begs mercy of Carlo. Addressing the spirit of Charlemagne, Carlo not only grants clemency to the conspirators but also gives Elvira to Ernani as wife. All raise their voices in magnificent tribute to the Emperor's magnanimity—all except Silva, who plans revenge.

ACT IV

At Ernani's castle in Saragossa a ball is in progress in celebration of his approaching marriage to Elvira. The lovers come onto the terrace and embrace; their idyll is interrupted by the sound of a distant horn, and Ernani realizes with horror what it means. As the sound comes closer, Ernani feigns illness and sends Elvira for medicine. Silva enters and demands fulfillment of the oath. Deaf to Ernani's pleas, Silva offers the young nobleman the choice of a dagger or poison. Elvira returns and adds her pleas to those of her lover, but to no avail. Ernani bids Elvira a touching farewell, seizes the dagger and, faithful to his promise, stabs himself.

Ernani

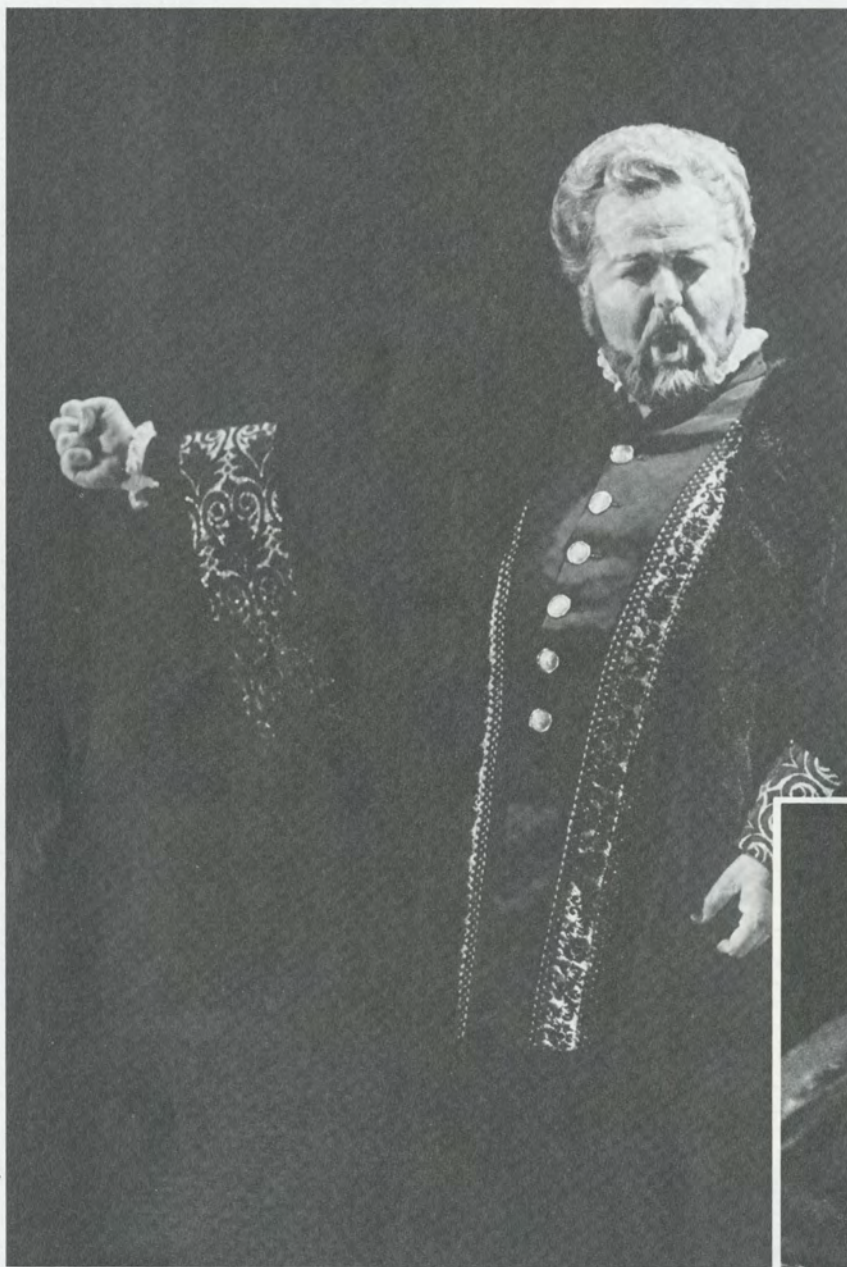


Nunzio Todisco

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Finis

Photos taken in rehearsal

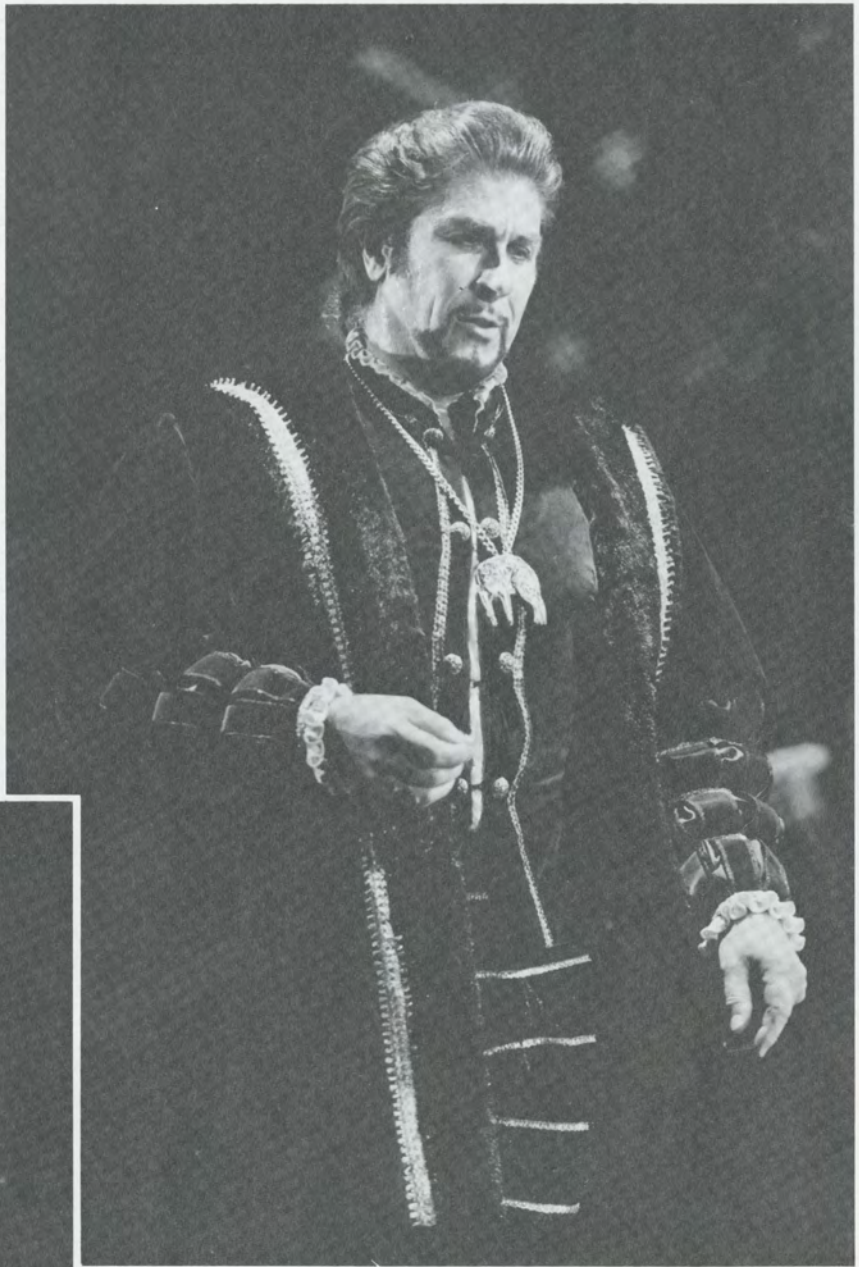


Paul Plishka



Sherrill Milnes, Montserrat Caballé

rsal by David Powers



Sherrill Milnes





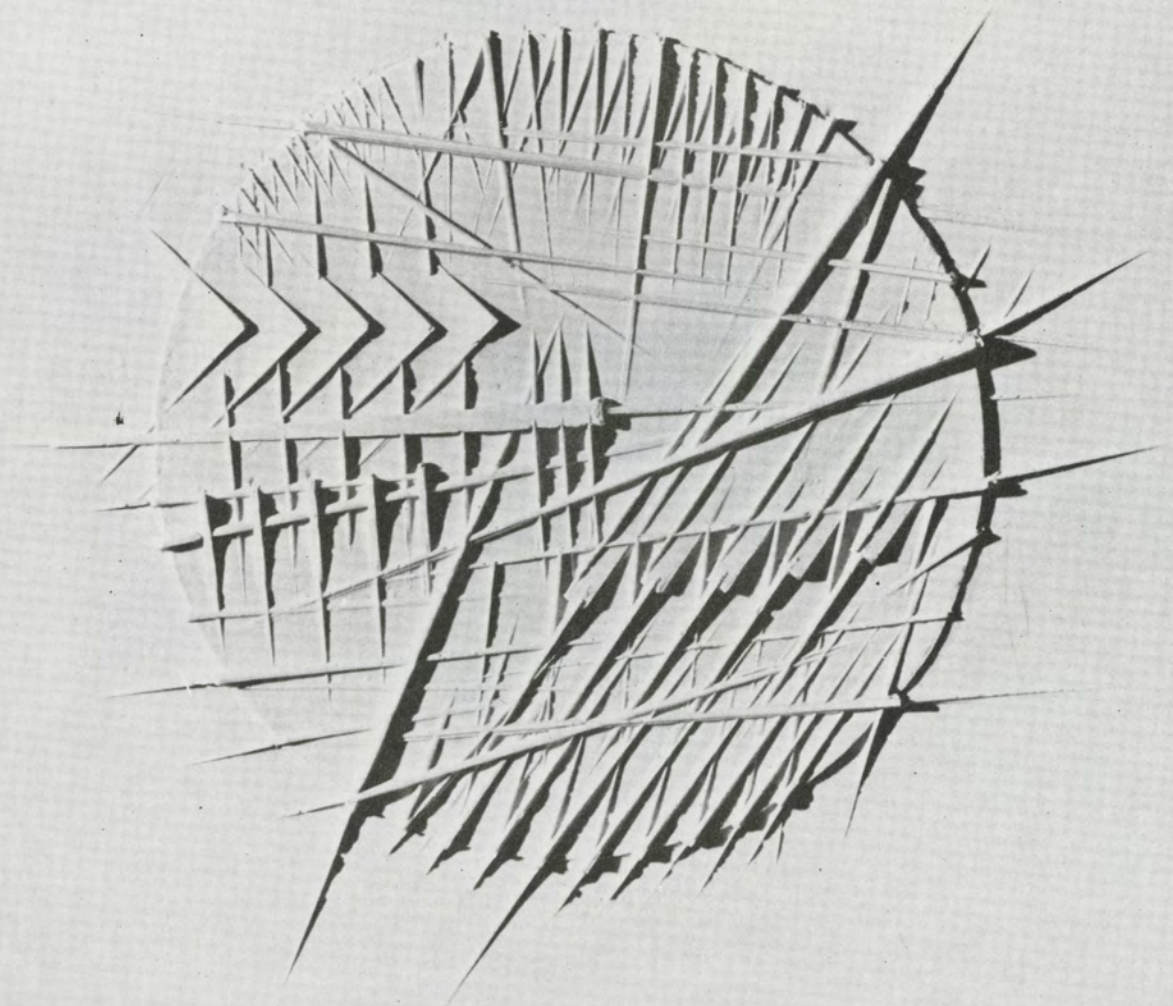
Sherrill Milnes, Paul Plishka, Members of the San Francisco Opera Chorus



Montserrat Caballé, Dolora Zajick

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SAN FRANCISCO OPERA



DANIEL HARPER

continued from p. 42

such major North American opera companies as those of Philadelphia, Houston, Pittsburgh, San Diego, New Orleans, Chicago, Toronto, Ottawa and Vancouver, as well as the Opera Orchestra of New York. In Europe, he has been applauded at La Scala, Covent Garden, the Hamburg Staatsoper, the Paris Opera, Munich Staatsoper, as well as the companies of Berlin and Zurich and the festivals in Salzburg and Spoleto. A successful concert artist, he has sung with the orchestras of New York, Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, Cincinnati, San Francisco, Washington, D.C. and Toronto. His concert appearances last season included Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with the San Francisco Symphony and the Cleveland Orchestra; the Verdi Requiem with the Detroit and Toronto Symphonies; Act II of *Tristan und Isolde* in concert with the Philadelphia Orchestra; and a concert performance of *Nabucco* at Carnegie Hall with the Opera Orchestra of New York. He has made recordings on the Angel, ABC, CBS, Erato, London, RCA and Vox labels.

Tenor **Daniel Harper** is Don Riccardo in *Ernani* and Borsa in *Rigoletto*. He made his Company debut as a Messenger in this year's Summer Season production of *Aida*. As a member of the 1983 Merola Opera Program, he sang the title role of Offenbach's *The Tales of Hoffmann* at Stern Grove and won the Gropper Memorial Award at the 1983 San Francisco Opera Auditions Grand Finals. He appeared as Pinkerton in the 1983 Western Opera Theater touring production of Puccini's *Madame Butterfly*, and is a 1984 Adler Fellow with the San Francisco Opera Center. A graduate of North Park College in Illinois, the young singer has won numerous awards, including the Opera Society of Chicago Young Artists Award, the Society of American Musicians Young Ar-



JACOB WILL

tists Award and third place in the Metropolitan Opera National Council Central Region Auditions. Harper has extensive concert credits in the Chicago area, including performances of *Elijah*, *Messiah*, the Mozart Requiem and Rossini's *Petite Messe Solennelle*. He was heard this year in the Verdi Requiem with the San Francisco Bach Choir, and in April participated in concert performances and a recording of Schoenberg's *Moses und Aron* with the Chicago Symphony under Sir Georg Solti.

Bass-baritone **Jacob Will** undertakes four roles during the 1984 Fall Season: Iago in *Ernani*, the Imperial Commissioner in both casts of *Madama Butterfly*, Rochefort in *Anna Bolena*, and Masetto in *Don Giovanni*. The young singer bowed with San Francisco Opera as the Customhouse Guard in the 1983 Summer Season production of *La Bohème*, and returned last fall to sing seven roles in five operas. Born in South Carolina, Will was a participant in the 1982 Merola Opera Program, during which he appeared at Stern Grove as the Speaker in *The Magic Flute* and at Villa Montalvo as Count Monterone in *Rigoletto*. For the 1983 Merola production at Stern Grove, he sang the role of Dr. Miracle in *The Tales of Hoffmann*. Will is currently in his second year as an Adler Fellow with the San Francisco Opera Center. Pursuing his Master of Music Degree at the University of Cincinnati under the tutelage of Italo Tajo and Andrew White, his roles at that institution included Masetto, Don Alfonso in *Così fan tutte* and Don Basilio in *The Barber of Seville*. He has also appeared in *Madama Butterfly* with the Columbia Lyric Opera and in Rossini's *La Gazzetta* at the American Opera Auditions in Cincinnati. At the most recent Carmel Bach Festival, Will won high praise for his performances in Haydn's *Orlando Paladino*, Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* and Mozart's Mass in C minor.



LAMBERTO GARDELLI

Noted Verdi conductor **Lamberto Gardelli** conducts *Ernani*, one of more than a dozen Verdi operas the maestro has recorded complete. His first San Francisco Opera engagement was *Simon Boccanegra* for the 1980 Fall Season. He began his career as a professional pianist and double bass player in his native Italy. His studies also included voice and composition, and after studying at the Liceo Musicale Rossini in Pesaro, he served as assistant conductor to Tullio Serafin for eight years, during which time he also worked with Pietro Mascagni. From 1946-55 he was permanent guest conductor for the Royal Swedish Orchestra in Stockholm. Maestro Gardelli was on the podium for the reopening of the Drottningholm Theatre after 100 years of disuse and was made court conductor. From 1955-'61 he led the Danish Radio Symphony Orchestra in Copenhagen and then succeeded Otto Klemperer at the Budapest Opera as well as with the city's three orchestras. He made his British debut at Covent Garden in 1954, leading *Otello*, and has returned often to that house. He bowed at Glyndebourne in 1963 with *Macbeth* and made his American debut that same year with *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* at Carnegie Hall. He scored a great triumph with *Andrea Chénier* for his 1966 debut at the Metropolitan Opera, to which he has frequently returned. He has also conducted opera in London, Rome, Naples, Florence, Berlin, Cologne, Stuttgart and Monte Carlo, and his many symphonic activities have brought him to the podiums of the major orchestras of Great Britain, Holland, Switzerland, Austria, Italy, Hungary, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Israel, Germany and France. A composer in his own right, Gardelli has in the last four years conducted his own symphonic works in London, Budapest and Vienna as well as numerous cities throughout Italy, Sweden, Denmark, Holland and Switzerland. His lengthy discography has earned him



NICOLAS JOËL

worldwide renown, particularly for such Verdi rarities as *Alzira*, *Attila*, *La Battaglia de Legnano*, *Il Corsaro*, *I Due Foscari*, *Un Giorno di Regno*, *I Lombardi*, *I Masnadieri* and *Stiffelio*, in addition to dozens of other complete operas, both Italian and non-Italian. As chief conductor of the Radio Symphony of Copenhagen, he led 20 concerts with the group last year and will take the orchestra on a tour of Germany next year and England in 1986. He is currently the chief conductor of the Radio Orchestra of Munich.

French director **Nicolas Joël** returns for his sixth season with San Francisco Opera to direct *Ernani*. His most recent Company assignment was last fall's revival of the production of *Samson et Dalila* that he first staged in 1980 at which time it was seen in a national telecast. Previous San Francisco Opera credits include a new production of *La Voix humaine* in 1979. In 1973 he became the principal resident stage manager at the Strasbourg Opera, where he directed the first staging of Haydn's *L'Infedeltà Delusa*. He also co-designed a production of Rossini's *Elisabetta, Regina d'Inghilterra* starring Montserrat Caballé for the 1975 Aix-en-Provence Festival. For three years he assisted Patrice Chéreau in mounting the controversial centennial production of Wagner's *Ring* cycle at Bayreuth, a production that was telecast nationally last year in the United States. More recently, Joël has staged Wagner's *Ring* in Lyons and Strasbourg, and his busy schedule has been occupied with productions of Verdi and Wagner operas for the Netherlands Opera in Amsterdam, the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen and for the opera company of Göteborg, Sweden, to mention only a few. He won great acclaim for his production of *Aida* that opened the 1983 season of the Lyric Opera of Chicago, and was recipient last year of the coveted Critics Award in



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NICOLA BENOIS

France for his production of Gounod's *Faust* in Toulouse, which was also taped for French television. His work has also been seen at the Bergen Festival in Norway. Joël's 1984 projects include *Dido and Aeneas* at the Paris Opera with Jessye Norman, followed by his Vienna Staatsoper debut with *Aida* last April, and he has also launched a new *Ring* cycle in Wiesbaden. Next year he will stage *La Traviata* in Zurich, and he has already begun work on a new production of *Les Troyens* for the 1986 Berlioz Festival in Lyons.

One of the most revered names in theatrical design in our century, **Nicola Benois** is responsible for the sets for *Ermani*, revised from his designs for the production seen here in 1968, and both sets and costumes for *Khovanshchina*. A native of St. Petersburg, Benois began his studies under the supervision of his father, Alexandre, and made his debut with the set and costume designs for a production of *Khovanshchina* at La Scala in Milan in 1925. His work so impressed La Scala's director, Arturo Toscanini, that Benois was engaged the following year for the now historic Scala production of *Boris Godunov*. In 1927 he became head of production at the newly formed Rome Opera, where he stayed for five years. He assumed the position of chief set and costume designer for La Scala in 1937, a post he held for over 30 years. During his long and distinguished career, Benois has created designs for more than 350 opera and ballet productions around the world. His work has been praised at the Salzburg Festival, the Vienna Staatsoper, the Paris Opera, the Deutsche Oper in Berlin, the Verona Arena, the Kirov in Leningrad and Bolshoi in Moscow, and the companies of Buenos Aires, Hamburg, Munich, Dresden, Florence, Naples, Trieste, Venice, Monte Carlo, Barcelona, Stockholm, Geneva and Zurich, while in this country he has designed productions



THOMAS J. MUNN

for Lyric Opera of Chicago, the Metropolitan Opera and the Greater Miami Opera, where he designed a three-year Verdi/Shakespeare cycle that included *Macbeth* in 1977, *Otello* in 1978 and *Falstaff* in 1979. In addition to his operatic projects, Benois has also designed extensively for theater and television and is an accomplished lighting designer, stage director, painter, illustrator and architect.

In his ninth year with San Francisco Opera, **Thomas J. Munn** is responsible for lighting seven productions this fall: *Ermani*, *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 Gérolstein*, *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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Hugo continued from p. 40

he would be either the equal of the great early romantic master, or nothing. He set out by entering (and winning) prestigious poetry competitions, and attracting high-placed support, with pompous pro-royalist odes. The popularity of Walter Scott, and the visit to Paris of a troupe of English Shakespearean actors in 1827, led him to try his hand at passion-filled, anti-classical verse dramas set in earlier times and un-French places. The first, based on Scott, was a one-night fiasco; the second, a wildly unhistorical romance called *Cromwell*, turned out to be unperformably long; the third, *Marion Delorme*, was banned by the state censors; the fourth, *Hernani*, was a hit.

It was a hit partly because Victor Hugo and his circle of would-be literary revolutionaries packed the house on opening night, and for 38 nights thereafter, by distributing hundreds of free tickets to their friends—and to longhaired students and artists who could be depended on to make noise on their behalf. The ensuing "*bataille d'Hernani*" has become part of the Hugo myth, a colorful episode now entrenched in French literary history.

At first, the outrageous spectacle of these exuberant young dandies drowning out the hisses of their disgusted elders convinced people that a revolution of sorts had taken place, and that Victor Hugo's new liberal romanticism had displaced for all time the tired decorums of the classical theater. (Locked in a dark theater for five hours before the opening night curtain, the Hugolians had also led radical cheers, sung revolutionary songs, left sausage skins in the foyers, and urinated in the corridors.) The play drew record crowds (who kept on hissing and cheering), was disliked by most of the actors and critics, and was written about by a great many of the people who attended.

"It was enough to cast your eyes on the audience to realize that this was no ordinary performance. Two ways of life, two parties, two armies, two civilizations, even—I am not overstating—were there, hating one another cordially (as one can only hate in literary quarrels), asking only for war, and ready to convert one into the other. The general attitude was hostile, elbows were getting sharp, the least contact would be enough to set off the battle; and it wasn't hard to see that this particular longhaired young man was soon going to find the well-barbered gentleman next to him an unspeakable cretin, and find

himself unable to keep this opinion to himself." (Théophile Gautier, *Histoire du Romantisme*)

Hugo went on to write three more, increasingly melodramatic plays for the Comédie Française (he could turn out a play in three weeks), and three for the commercial, or "boulevard" theaters. In the same period (1830-43), he fixed his reputation as the most popular French romantic author by publishing *Nôtre Dame de Paris* and four new volumes of verse; befriended the Duchesse d'Orléans, wife of the heir-apparent; was elected (on his fifth try) to the Académie Française; established his lifelong liaison with Juliette Drouet, who had acted a small part in one of his plays; imagined himself somehow "saving" France; and grew immensely rich. By the end of this time, another young cultural/political revolutionary—Giuseppe Verdi, the composer of *Nabucco*—was being hailed in Italy as "the Victor Hugo of his party."

The dismal failure in 1843 of *Les Burgraves*, the last play Hugo wrote for the stage, marked the end of the short reign of high romantic drama, as far as new Paris offerings were concerned. But for most of the next century, actors and actresses of the broad, grandiloquent style (like opera stars of today) insisted that these works be kept in the repertory as display-pieces for their talents. Mlle. Rachel, a stage goddess of the 1840s and 50s, relished the juicy role of Tisbe in Victor Hugo's *Angelo*—the prototype of Ponchielli's *La Gioconda*. In 1867, *Hernani* was given a lavish revival for the Paris International Exposition, which nearly led to a second *bataille*—since its author (like his hero) was then a political exile, sulking in the Channel Islands and hurling poetical insults at a government he despised. When the Second Empire collapsed in 1870, Hugo returned to Paris in triumph, to witness the immortal pairing of Sarah Bernhardt and Mounet-Sully in both *Ruy Blas* (1872) and *Hernani* (1877). The Divine Sarah made these two plays her standard vehicles for the rest of a long and fabulous career, helping to keep them alive in the U.S. as well as in Europe. She also undertook revivals of Hugo's more melodramatic *Angelo*, *Lucrece Borgia*, and *Marion Delorme* in 1905 and 1911, when she was in her sixties. Throughout her career, Bernhardt favored works like Hugo's, because they provided her with opportunities for stage spectacles, passionate confrontations, great death scenes, and sublime solo "ari-

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The Battle of Hernani, lithograph by J.J. Granville, depicting the passionate outburst at the end of the first performance of Hugo's play. From the collections of La Maison de Victor Hugo.

as" for her silvery voice. "Avoiding any trace of interpretive nuance," wrote the critic Francisque Sarcey of one of her Hugo performances, "she presented a sustained caress of sound, the very monotony of which possessed indefinable delicacy and magnetism. All she needed to do was add the music of her voice to the music of the verse."

At Hugo's death in 1885, two million people watched his state funeral procession. His hearse was followed by eleven wagonloads of flowers to the Panthéon; streets were renamed in his honor. Beginning with the centennial of his birth in 1902, a spectacular revival of *Les Burgraves* was followed, night after night, by a worshipful ceremony of tribute onstage, at which the two leading ladies recited his verses and crowned his bust with a laurel wreath.

By 1920, *Hernani* had been performed 734 times at the Comédie Française—most frequently between 1877 and 1910, when it was given an average of 15 times a year. (The total count for all his plays at the French national theater by 1920 was

1,694; by 1980, 2,748.) In 1927, the Comédie celebrated the centennial of the Romantic Movement (which they dated from Hugo's 1827 "Preface to *Cromwell*") by offering, among other things, glamorous new productions of *Hernani* and *Ruy Blas*. The *Hernani* centennial in 1930 brought a new Paris production and a flood of newspaper and magazine articles on the 1830 *bataille*. Colette thought a 1938 centenary revival of *Ruy Blas* by Paul Dux, with its stylized and witty decors, the theatrical event of the year.

Since then, Hugo—specifically via *Hernani* and *Ruy Blas*, both now around the 1,000 mark—has been one of the ten "staples" of the Comédie Française repertoire. This may, of course, be attributed to the conservative nature of the house and its audiences; shifting tastes over the past two decades there have led to fewer performances each year of non-comic 19th century works. Many serious critics, over more than a century, have persisted in regarding Hugo's stage works as hopeless.

Even so, at a time when the 300-year-old "Maison de Molière" was venturing

into Arrabal, Beckett, Ionesco, and Brecht, there were notable new productions of Hugo's *Ruy Blas* in 1960 and 1979, and of *Hernani* in 1952, 1972, and 1974. Both have been filmed, recorded, and shown on French television. Some of the new regional and experimental theaters in France, although usually identified with avant-garde playwrights and directors, have also had a go at reinterpreting Victor Hugo.

These occasional resurrections do not add up to anything like a Hugo revival, or a return to the "Hugolatry" of the 19th century. At each new production, critics have usually shown grudging respect for the two "museum piece" classics (*Hernani* and *Ruy Blas*), while dismissing the lesser plays as Manichean melodramas with comic strip plots. On the whole, they save their praise for the daring of the producer and the skill of the actors, who have somehow managed to inflate these moribund works back into a semblance of life.

In non-French-speaking countries today, Hugo's reputation rests primarily on two novels, *Nôtre Dame de Paris* (or, if you prefer, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*) and *Les Misérables*. It could be argued that so rapturously poetic a playwright (Hugo's better plays were written in rhymed verse, and are full of intricate sonic effects) was bound to suffer from translation. But for a good part of the 19th century, bad translations and atrocious rewritings of Hugo's plays held the stage in England and the U.S., despite the fulminations of puritan critics at their tasteless French freedoms. (The French romantic theater, wrote Fanny Kemble in 1836, was the result of reckless experimenting on the part of "M. Hugo and his fellow radicals—a disgrace to any Christian and civilized people.") In time, they gave way to even simpler crowd pleasers, like *The Count of Monte Cristo* and *Cyrano de Bergerac*—the only French 19th century romantic costume drama still regularly performed in this country. Albert Takazackas's off-off-Broadway production of *Hernani* in 1974 was the first revival of that play in New York in 103 years.

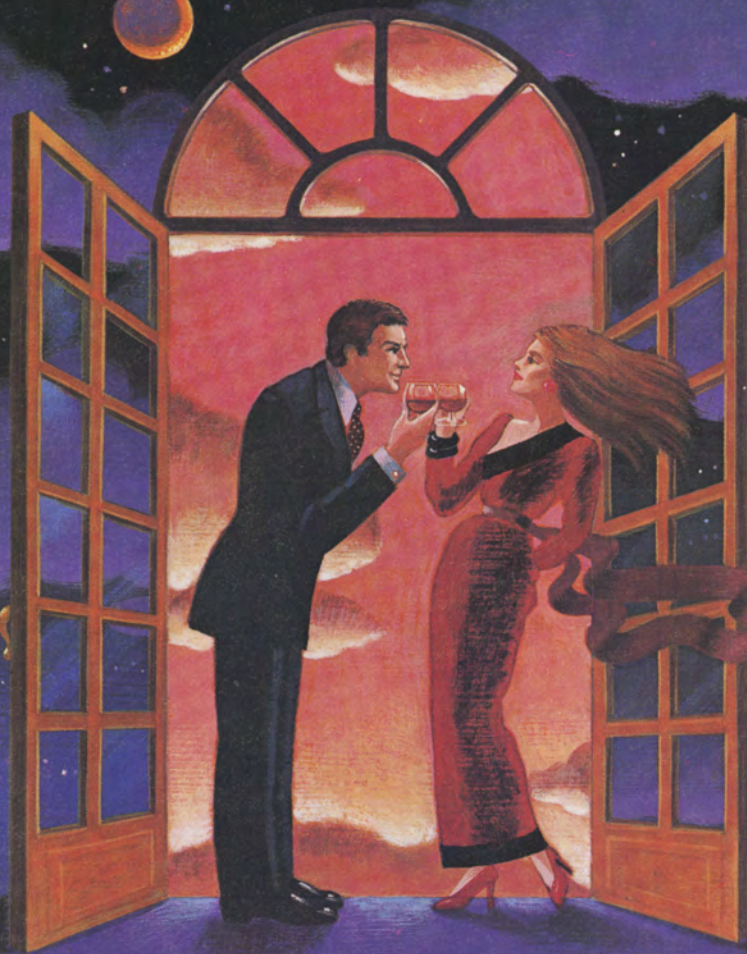
Since the Hugo boom ended, the point has been tiresomely often made that, however despised or ignored or forgotten he may have become as a playwright, his characters and plots have survived—thanks to the opera stage. "It is depressing to note," Eric Bentley wrote in 1948, "that French Romantic Drama is a portentous failure, that *Hernani* is a schoolmaster's classic far



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Marie Dorval of the Comédie-Française in Hugo's *Angelo, tyran de Padoue*, the play that continued life as the basis of Ponchielli's *La Gioconda*. The drawing is by Célestin Nanteuil, made in 1835.

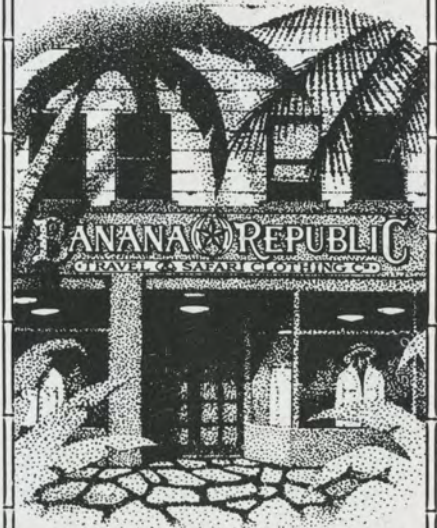
inferior to anything of Schiller's (not to compare it with Shakespeare, as Matthew Arnold did), and that the plays of the French Romantics succeeded best, when they succeeded at all, on the operatic stage for which God, if not always their authors, intended them." George Bernard Shaw put it even more succinctly, when reviewing a London production of *Ernani* in 1892: "The chief glory of Victor Hugo as a stage poet was to have provided libretti for Verdi."

That he did twice, for *Ernani* and *Rigoletto* (which is taken from his 1834 play *Le Roi s'amuse*); Verdi also considered operatizing *Cromwell* and *Ruy Blas*. This world's-most-famous author, who had nothing but scorn for Italian opera, and who twice went to court to keep musical adaptations of his works off the Paris stage, became, against his will, one of the most fruitful sources of plots for 19th-century composers. Unfortunately, these composers never sent the author a penny in royalties—which was the main reason for Hugo's

scorn, and his litigiousness. Although a friend of many men of music (Berlioz, Liszt, Saint-Saëns), he *did* generally regard contemporary composers (especially Italians, and more especially Rossini) as woefully inferior to the earlier masters. "Music has brutalized Italy," he once wrote to Meyerbeer, explaining his refusal to another opera proposal, "and at this moment it is on the way to brutalizing France. I do not wish to participate in their work of devastation."

But even if (as a French critic once said) Victor Hugo didn't love music, music certainly loved Victor Hugo. Hostile critics today tend to call his plays "operatic;" friendly 19th-century composers agreed. The *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* credits him as the source of 68 completed operas (including 19 based on his novel *Nôtre Dame de Paris*, the first five to his own libretto); as well as sketches or projects for other operas by Bellini, Bizet, D'Indy, Honneger, Massenet, and Musorgsky. His texts and plots also served

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Gustave Worms in the role of Don Carlos in *Hernani*, as seen at the work's Comédie-Française reprise in 1877.

the composers of ballets, overtures, serenades, film scores, symphonic poems, and incidental music. His poems (there are 20 volumes of them) provided lyrics for songs by Saint-Saëns, Berlioz, Fauré, Franck, Liszt, D'Indy, Lalo, Massenet, Rachmaninoff, Chabrier, Delibes, and Gounod; even Wagner had a try. Hugo, naturally enough, preferred his own "verbal music" to theirs. He accepted incidental music in his play *Lucrece Borgia* (he even helped to write it) on the condition that it not be so good that it would distract people's attention from his words.

Of these 68 operas, only four survive in the world repertory: Donizetti's *Lucrezia Borgia* (1833); Verdi's *Ernani* (1844) and *Rigoletto* (1851); and Ponchielli's *La Gioconda* (1876)—although Terence McEwen threatens to revive Saverio Mercadante's *Il Giuramento* of 1837. Like Ponchielli's opera, it is based on Hugo's *Angelo, Tyran de Padoue*; Mr. McEwen's thrifty notion is to use the same sets for both operas.

One explanation for Hugo's popularity with opera composers was offered by Francisque Sarcey, writing in *Le Temps* in the 1870s. He compared Hugo's methods, intentions, and effects to those of the librettist and composer of an opera, and concluded they were in many essential ways the same. Like a typical 19th-century opera composer, he wrote, Hugo stressed collisions of passions and spectacular tab-

leaux, often at the expense of dramatic plausibility. He included pauses in the action where the "musician" in him could take over, with a poet's versions of arias, duets, trios, and choruses. He supported these scenes of verbal music with extreme and "operatic" gestures. (Doña Sol, the heroine of *Hernani*, is given 87 acting directions in the script—falling to her knees, fainting, etc.) Sarcey's analysis of scenes from Hugo's plays shows them to be constructed precisely like operatic *scenas*, with cavatina-cabaletta arias preceded by recitatives, and love duets that are "pure verbal music." Doña Sol's wedding night "duet" with Hernani, for example, was one of Sarah Bernhardt's triumphant moments. Her "vocal success with Victor Hugo's Spanish heroines" (a biographer has written) "was that of a lyric soprano interpreting *jeunes premières rôles* in romantic verbal operas."

People at every level of sophistication enjoy making fun of Italian opera plots. The resident faculty of my Harvard house, pressed to come up with a particularly ludicrous skit for its annual Christmas feast, seriously considered doing a straight reading-through of the English libretto to *Il Trovatore*. (Our first rehearsal was so chaotic and silly we abandoned it for Max Beerbohm's *Savonarola Brown*.) A San Francisco television critic can fill a whole column with the plot of a current opera-on-TV, presumably to amuse his down-to-earth readers by proving the ludicrousness of this upper-class art.

Ernani can seem, in the printed text, more than usually foolish, because of the extraordinary condensation of Hugo's story. Verdi's librettist (Francesco Maria Piave) had to perform. Singing words takes a good deal longer than speaking them on-stage; a play of 2,000 lines of French verse has to be reduced to an opera libretto of fewer than 1,000 lines of Italian. Carlo's famous soliloquy at the tomb of Charlemagne ("Costor sui sepolcrali marmi") includes 87 words; Hugo's original, one of the most celebrated spoken arias in all romantic drama, contains 1,537. Room also had to be left, in about the same overall viewing time, for orchestral overtures and interludes, and the obligatory Italian-opera choruses, which rarely do anything to further the action; the opening chorus of *Ernani* is a piece of totally gratuitous "local color." Critics have had harsh words for Victor Hugo's long speeches of trans-

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parent exposition ("Let me tell you all about your childhood, my daughter..."). But by pruning them all ruthlessly, Verdi and Piave leave us often totally bewildered as to *why* their characters are behaving so passionately and so strangely. It takes Hugo a full act to explain Elvira's (he called her Doña Sol, but "Elvira" scans better in Italian) confusing personal relationships with her demon-lover Hernani, and her protector Don Ruy Gomez de Silva; Piave gets it all over with in twelve lines, and concludes, "Si rapisce"—let's abduct her. Ernani's colorful band of brigands immediately and jauntily agrees. Any audience following the script can be forgiven for finding the whole business highly unlikely. A few lines later, Ernani makes a fleeting reference to "the sadness of his exile"—what exile?, one may well ask; exiled why?—a matter that Hugo had time to explain at exasperating length. Scene Two has scarcely opened, with Elvira lamenting her enforced nuptials and her true love's absence, when the King, suitor #3, forces his way into her chamber, tries in a few lines to seduce her, fails, then tries to drag her off, when (surprise!) Ernani emerges from a secret door and stops him, and then Don Ruy Gomez enters through another door—shame, chaos, confusion, quartet with chorus, end of act.

One can relate similar confusions (or absurdities) due to condensation in the libretti of the other surviving "Victor Hugo" operas: *Rigoletto*, *Lucrezia Borgia*, and *La Gioconda*. In each case, whatever its own weaknesses, Hugo's original is both clearer and richer, with more complex and better motivated characters, more interesting admixtures of the comic, the grotesque, and the political, more spectacular moments of theater, and verbal outbursts and combats of far greater emotional intensity. Of course, these are precisely the elements that the composers tried to supply by music.

Changes in popular taste with time are no easier to explain than popular taste at any *given* time. Theatrical history asserts that the likes of Ibsen and Shaw displaced, and in time wiped out, the high-minded historical tragedies (and melodramas) of Schiller, Dumas, Hugo, and their successors—just as they were supposed, in their time, to have displaced the last tired wave of neo-classicism. Exposure to more authentic forms of realism, to more persuasive and intelligently constructed plots, to characters, actions, and language closer to



Sarah Bernhardt as Doña Sol in Hugo's *Hernani* in 1877.

our own lives (so goes the argument) left a new generation of theatergoers embarrassed by the very plays their parents and grandparents had adored. The showy, poetic tirades, the pompous emotional pretenses, and the absurdly entangled intrigues of 19th-century "costume drama" came, in time, to be virtually banished from Western theater stages—only to find themselves preserved in Western opera houses.

Why are we still listening to *Ernani* today (and, on other stages, or other days, to *Rigoletto*, *La Gioconda*, *Lucrezia Borgia*)? Why should plots, characters, themes, speeches, and motivations we regard as intolerable on the spoken stage still be perfectly acceptable to us in opera—in-

deed, deserving of \$50 tickets, bravos, and tossed bouquets?

Any "explanation" of such a cultural phenomenon can only be speculation; you know why you came better than I do. But let me offer a few possible reasons.

1. Singers who can guarantee full houses (either because they sing well, or because they're famous, or both) still want to sing roles in these operas. So to fill up an opera house, you let them name the operas they want to perform. Why do they want to sing these roles? In part because of cultural lag (their idols and teachers sang them, they learned the parts long ago, they're part of the standard repertoire); in part because, in the accepted manner of 19th-century Italian opera,

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Caricature of Victor Hugo, published in 1841: sitting on his books, adored by the little people (bearing bags of gold), with one foot on the Théâtre Français, the other on the Académie Française, leaning against Notre Dame and meditating.

these roles were written as display pieces designed to show off the beauty and skill of brilliant voices. The case is identical to Sarah Bernhardt's performing in Hugo's tragedies well into this century, because she (and her audiences) loved the opportunities they offered her to display *her* "operatic" talents.

2. In a similar way, opera impresarios (and to a lesser degree, conductors and music critics), who know much more about music history than you and I do, have a personal stake in keeping alive these operas of the past. Like the singers, they have devoted much of their careers to studying them, and their taste to admiring them. (One may win points among one's professional peers for "rediscovering" forgotten old masterpieces.) Authentic audience taste, in the modern world of high-priced opera, has only a marginal effect on repertory choices. In the 19th century of Hugo and Verdi, plays and operas lived or died (like Broadway shows today)

on the basis of popular appeal. Today, subsidies, season ticket sales, foreign-language performances, and the somewhat sheepish behavior of opera audiences, trying hard to like what they're told they should, greatly muffle the effect of popular appeal.

3. We, the audiences, actually *do* love (a) the show-off arias and ensembles, however dramatically irrelevant or impossible they may be; and (b) the jaunty (or luscious, or clever, or hummable) music of Donizetti or Verdi or Ponchielli. We love it so much we don't care if it surrounds and supports a logically impossible, humanly incredible, or morally reprehensible drama. Let Lucrezia poison five enemies on a whim, and still insist that we admire her for her motherly love. Let a hunchbacked, foul-mouthed jester pay to have his lecherous boss murdered, and then find the body of his dying daughter (dressed as a boy) in the sack instead. Let La Gioconda keep forgiving her hated rival, because she

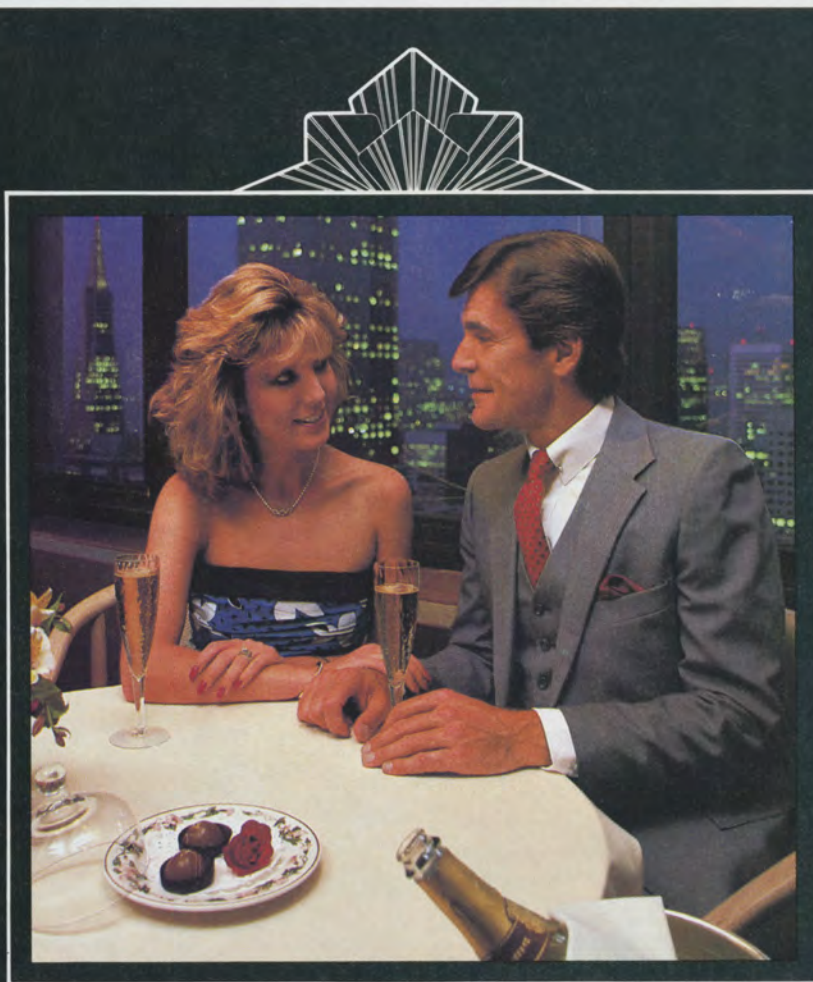


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
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happens to be wearing a rosary that reminds her of her long-suffering mother. Let everybody keep pouring out poison, and then antidotes for poison, or make-believe Romeo-and-Juliet poison till you can't tell the dead and dying from the healthily napping. We don't care.

We don't care, as long as we get to hear Pavarotti singing "La donna è mobile," or Caballé singing "Ernani involami," or Domingo singing "Cielo e mar," or Sutherland singing "Com'è bello," or any one of a hundred other worthy singers rendering other memorable tunes from these operas, and a good orchestra sweeping us through the interludes and bouncing us through the dances. We can't usually understand what these people are saying when they sing in opera anyway (almost never, in Verdi's "crossed-purpose" ensembles). Bewildered as we may be when we read the libretto, we still tend to yield to voice, music, and spectacle in the opera house. "The public still goes to the opera to achieve that wordless transport effected through song," wrote Charles Affon, in a book on Hugo and Musset. "Absurdities of plot and character . . . are forgotten because a singer makes beautiful sounds . . . Disbelief is suspended because it cannot for a moment be engaged."

4. This argument may seem anti-intellectual and unfashionable, but there is also the possibility that our great-grandparents were right: whatever we may pretend, we secretly *do* like melodrama. And perhaps we should. No one I know has put the case for the seriousness of melodrama more powerfully than Eric Bentley—the same wise critic who dismissed Hugo's *Hernani* as "a schoolmaster's classic":

"Intensity of feeling justifies formal exaggeration in art, just as intensity of feeling creates the 'exaggerated' forms of childhood fantasies and adult dreams. It is as children and dreamers—one might melodramatically add: as neurotics and savages too—that we enjoy melodrama . . . Melodramatic acting, with its large gestures and grimaces and its declamatory style of speech, is not an exaggeration of our dreams but a duplication of them. In that respect, *melodrama is the Naturalism of the dream life.*

"The melodramatic vision is in one sense simply normal. It corresponds to an important aspect of reality . . . Melodrama is not a special and marginal kind of drama, let alone an eccentric or decadent

one; it is drama in its elemental form; it is the quintessence of drama."

5. One can argue that the music of a good Italian romantic opera tells a story of its own, apart from and as if parallel to the stories told by the libretto. In the best cases, this independent "musical plot" can be coherent, "logical," organically unified, and legitimately moving—whether the on-stage action and words are or are not. I feel this to an impressive degree with Donizetti's *Lucrezia Borgia*; not at all with Ponchielli's *La Gioconda*.

6. And finally, there are cases where the music does illuminate, enhance, uplift, ennoble these admittedly somewhat flimsy stories; by some peculiar alchemy, an inspired score seems able to render them almost mythical or sublime, and make their "unnatural" actions and emotions matter profoundly.

"Hugo's *dramas* in particular competed, over the author's objections, with Shakespeare's plays and Scott's novels as the most popular source of opera plots. *Le Roi s'amuse* is much better known to the theater world through its transformation into *Rigoletto*; *Angelo* into *La Gioconda*. The simple fact was that the *drame romantique* hungered for musical adornment. The unbelievable characters and the contrived plots it shared with the *melodrame* were admirably suited to musical enhancement, whereas plays offering air-tight, credible incident and psychological insight were not. Hugo, tone-deaf and anti-operatic though he was (he was amazed that Verdi could make four people speak at the same time in *Rigoletto*), realized this too late, as his attempts to shore up his moribund *dramas* with music amply testify. It is very likely that the greatest theatrical event of the 19th century in Western Europe was the opera. It sucked the blood out of all the other forms of drama and left them lifeless." (A. Richard Oliver, "Romanticism and Opera," 1969)

I could argue such a case with no difficulty for *Rigoletto*, in which I think Verdi and Piave definitely spun Victor Hugo's straw into gold. Hugo (who also came to admire *Rigoletto*, and was enraptured by the Quartet) may have been correct, however, in regarding Verdi's version of *Hernani* as a crude and cheapened travesty of his play. It requires, at the very least, singers, a producer, a conductor—and an audience—who can somehow force themselves to take it all with the utmost seriousness. ■

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ERNANI continued from p. 36

took part in the Viennese premiere of *Ernani*, had a neater solution to offer. Verdi had already written him a new cabaletta to sing in a revival of *Oberto* in Barcelona in 1841, which was to remain his personal property. As both *Oberto* and *Silva* are old men bent on vengeance, Marini saw no harm in tacking this cabaletta onto *Silva's* short cantabile "Infelice, e tuo credevi," so converting the role into a principal one, such as he could assume without loss of dignity. This, then, is the origin of the



Carlo Guasco (1813-1876), Verdi's first Ernani. Historical Archives of the Teatro La Fenice, Venice.

aria-movement "Infin che un brando vindice," the demonstration of which we owe to the researches of Professor Roger Parker of Cornell University. So long as Marini's career lasted, he alone incorporated the cabaletta into performances of *Ernani*. After his retirement it found its way into vocal scores of the opera, presumably with his consent. Nor did Verdi raise any objection, though in its new context it presents the rather absurd phenomenon of an exit aria without an exit (it will be included in these performances). What is still more surprising is that from the evidence of the autograph, "Infelice, e tuo credevi" was itself a last-minute interpolation of Verdi's—a plum for the young Antonio Selva who had so nobly saved the situation.

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Indeed, no composer of that time could afford to disregard the special requests of star singers. So when no less a person than Rossini begged the favor of an entirely new grand aria for his protégé Nicola Ivanov to sing in *Ernani*, Verdi agreed. But where to place it? Verdi opted for the end of Act II, where the original score has a duet with chorus for Silva and Ernani. The chorus is again present, but this time it consists not of Silva's household but of Ernani's own followers, who have traced his whereabouts and seem curiously disposed to put their heads into a noose by entering Silva's castle—for how could they have learned that Silva and Ernani have become temporarily reconciled? Ernani swears a solemn oath to avenge his father's wrongs ("Odi il voto, O grande Iddio"), a memorable cantabile, both grand and tender, after which he leads the chorus in a rousing cabaletta ("Sprezzo la vita") in the tradition of Arnold's "Suivez-moi!" from Rossini's *Guillaume Tell*. It makes an effective if somewhat illogical curtain to the act, and it is to be heard in the present production.

Compared to *Le Roi s'amuse*, the other Hugo play that inspired a Verdian masterpiece, *Hernani* suffers from one limitation—namely a tendency of the situations to repeat themselves. Even in the opera, the confrontations of Ernani, Elvira and Don Carlo in Act I and of Ernani, Elvira and Silva in Act II show a certain family likeness. But as Goethe remarked, it is within limitations that mastery first reveals itself; and it is within the rigid "données" of Hugo's plot that the full force of Verdi's musical personality is first unleashed. In contrast to the somewhat indiscriminate variety that marks the musical language of *I Lombardi*, that of *Ernani* may appear narrow. Many of its melodies are marked by a rising sixth from sol to mi in the opening phrase—a "topos" which from Mozart to Richard Strauss frequently (though not invariably) carries connotations of romantic love, whether in Tamino's apostrophe to Pamina's portrait in *Die Zauberflöte* or the Donna Anna theme in the tone poem *Don Juan*. In *Ernani* it serves as a touchstone whereby to define the principal characters. The youthful Ernani and Elvira either take it in a single

continued on p. 74



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It is often hard to discern which is the more difficult challenge—producing high quality performances of international grand opera, or raising the funds necessary to do so. Thus, when Mrs. Paul L. Wattis stepped forward to propose a contribution from her Foundation to the San Francisco Opera, her gift was most aptly named. It was a Challenge Grant of \$500,000 which would be awarded to San Francisco Opera if the Company raised additional, new contributions to match it.

Well known as a generous and responsive philanthropist, Mrs. Wattis is a member of the Opera's Board of Directors and its Executive Committee, and her offer was designed to enable the Company to take a major step forward in eliminating its accumulated deficit of nearly \$3 million. Rather than requiring that the grant be matched by contributions from the wider Bay Area community, however, she issued the challenge to her fellow

board members and other major donors. Effectively creating a special campaign to reduce the deficit, Mrs. Wattis specified that matching gifts had to be made over and above regular annual donations to the Opera, so that the Company's annual operating campaign would not be supplanted. Pledges made toward the challenge goal had to be fulfilled by September 1984.

Determined to meet the challenge, San Francisco Opera's Executive Committee asked Executive Vice President William W. Godward to spearhead an intensive campaign of personal solicitations to attain the goal. With the assistance of the officers and other board members, each San Francisco Opera board member and selected major donors were approached to secure the contributions required to qualify for the Wattis grant. "Theirs was a tireless and altogether extraordinary effort," stated General Director Terence A. McEwen. "Quite simply, the success of this Chal-

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lenge Grant is due entirely to the board—to Mrs. Wattis for having the perceptive insight to make a grant of this kind, for this purpose; and to our Executive Committee, for having the dedication and energy to secure the match from their peers and fellow donors.”

Though the Wattis grant and the matching contributions virtually cut the San Francisco Opera's deficit in half, the Company still faces another challenge in eliminating the balance of its accumulated debt. Our deepest thanks go to Mrs. Wattis, the San Francisco Opera's Board of Directors, and those major donors whose support enabled us to raise the required match. To our audiences and public, on whom we depend for general operating support every year, we extend our sincere request for your continued assistance in helping us to balance our budget and wipe out the remainder of our deficit. ■

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ERNANI *continued from p. 71*

leap (see "Come rugiada al cespite," "Ernani, Ernani involami") or else include it within an upward-reaching arpeggio whose inherent energy carries it beyond the octave ("O tu che l'alma adora" and "Tutto sprezzo che d'Ernani"). Don Carlo, on the other hand, takes in at least one intervening note, as befits a mature, less impulsive man ("Da quel di che t'ho veduta," "Lo vedremo, veglio audace," "Vieni meco sol di rose"). The aged Silva drags himself with difficulty over the interval, taking more than two bars to reach the highest note in his cantabile "Infelice, e tuo credevi." Where Don Carlo's line abounds in vigorous movement and accent, Silva's tends to cling to one note and to proceed by small steps. In this way Verdi is able to establish once and for all certain vocal archetypes; the baritone who epitomizes power and the bass who sums up resistance: the irresistible force and the immovable object. It is upon such elementary clashes that the theatrical effectiveness of *Ernani* is built; the same is true in still greater measure of *Il Trovatore*.

Yet there is something more there, a certain freshness of invention that is more easily felt than described. Many of the melodic features of *Ernani* will recur in later operas such as *Attila* and *Il Corsaro* but never with the same newly-minted quality. The grand unison chorus in Manzoni's decasyllabics, which audiences had come to expect ever since "Va pensiero" set the example, is present in the robust "Si ridesti il Leon di Castiglia," which in no way recalls its predecessor as did the corresponding chorus of *I Lombardi*. Simple ideas such as the crowning phrase of Don Carlo's "O de' verdi anni miei" have an unselfconscious nobility that takes them beyond the world of Italian operatic commonplace to which, when viewed on paper, they might seem to belong. Above all, within its own terms of reference, *Ernani* is wonderfully consistent; indeed so sure is the touch that even an audience acquainted with *Otello* can respond to what Shaw called an example of "that ultra-classic product of Romanticism ... in which the executive art consists in a splendid display of personal heroics and the drama arises out of the simplest and most universal stimulants to them." ■

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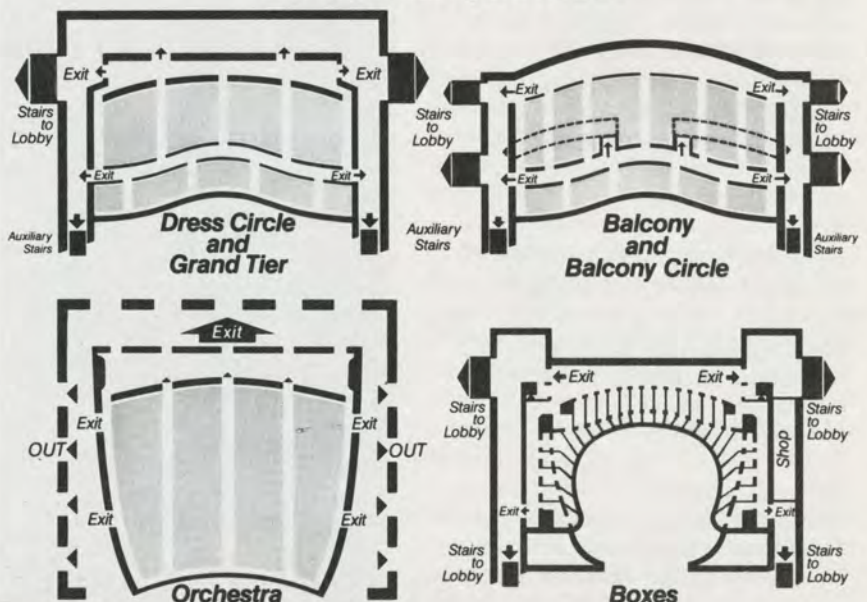
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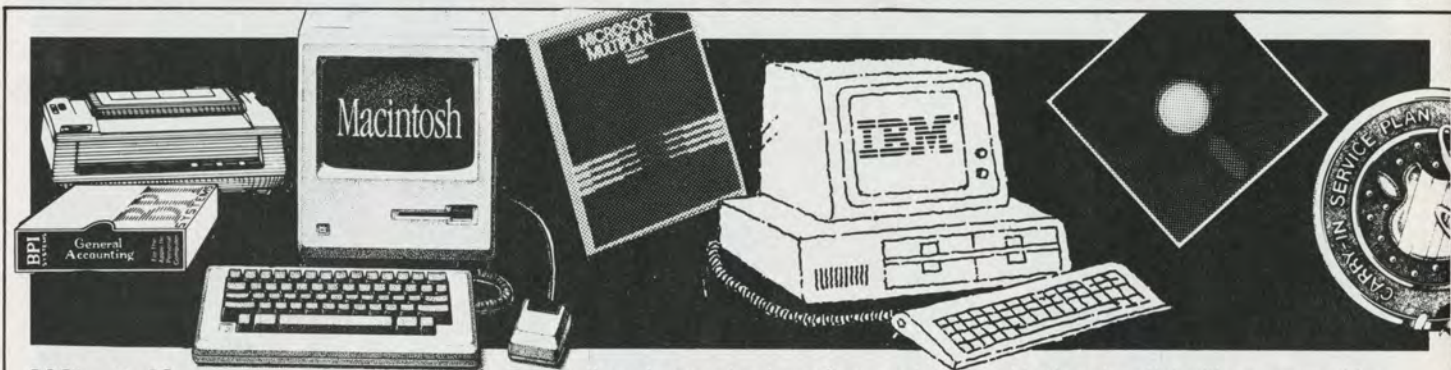
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The Wattis Challenge

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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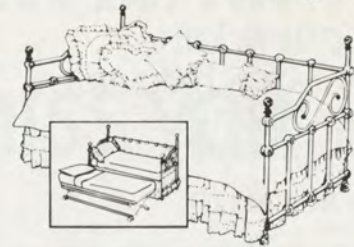
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GIULIANO CIANNELLA

Making his San Francisco Opera debut, Italian tenor **Giuliano Ciannella** sings the role of Don José for the first time in his career and performs the title role of *Ernani* on September 26 and 30. He first attracted international attention after his appearance in Verdi's *I Masnadieri* at La Scala during the 1977-78 season, returning the following seasons for productions of *Madama Butterfly* and *I Due Foscari*. His first American engagement was as Alfredo in the Metropolitan Opera production of *La Traviata* that was performed in New York parks during the summer of 1979. He has performed in each regular Met season since then, appearing in *Manon Lescaut*, *La Bohème*, *Il Trovatore*, *Der Rosenkavalier* and *Madama Butterfly*. He bowed with Lyric Opera of Chicago in 1982, singing Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly*, and later in the same Lyric season he scored great success as Rodolfo in *Luisa Miller*. His Met assignments last season included his first performance in the title role of *Don Carlo*, heard in a national broadcast, and he also sang Macduff in *Macbeth*, the role of his 1981 Ravinia Festival debut with the Chicago Symphony under James Levine. He also appeared in the special televised celebration of the Met's 100th anniversary, and returned to Chicago for *La Bohème*. He has been applauded with the major European companies, including those of Zurich, Munich, Paris and Hamburg, as well as the Verona Arena. This season he makes his first appearance with Greater Miami Opera in *La Gioconda*, sings in *William Tell* in San Antonio and appears in a gala concert with Katia Ricciarelli in Palm Beach. His European assignments include his Geneva debut in Verdi's *I Vespri Siciliani*, his first performances in *Un Ballo in Maschera* in Lyon, and *Tosca* at the Paris Opera.

