

Un Ballo in Maschera  
(A Masked Ball)

1985

Thursday, November 7, 1985 8:00 PM  
Sunday, November 10, 1985 2:00 PM  
Wednesday, November 13, 1985 7:30 PM  
Sunday, November 17, 1985 2:00 PM  
Wednesday, November 20, 1985 8:00 PM  
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# San Francisco Opera

FALL SEASON 1985

## Un Ballo in Maschera

PERFORMING ARTS NETWORK PUBLICATION \$1.50




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# San Francisco Opera

Terence A. McEwen, *General Director*

## Un Ballo in Maschera

FALL SEASON 1985

### FEATURES

- 24 **Verdi's Impossible Dream** by John Ardoin  
The strange birth chronicle of *Un Ballo in Maschera*, the opera that came into being over the dead body of *King Lear*.
- 32 **Scribe: Unlocking the Best** by William Huck  
Or, what does a librettist offer his composer.
- 58 **Bank of America: A Leading Role in the Arts** by Ron De Luca

### DEPARTMENTS

- 16 1985 Fall Season Repertoire  
34 Artist Profiles  
37 Cast and Credits  
38 Synopsis  
61 Opera Previews  
64 Box Holders  
65 Services  
67 Medallion Society  
71 Supporting San Francisco Opera



### COVER:

Wenceslas Hollar (1607, Prague - 1677, London)  
*The Muffs*, 1647  
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# From the Chairman of the Board and the President



Reid W. Dennis

As newly elected executive officers of the San Francisco Opera Association, it is our pleasure to welcome you to the San Francisco Opera's 63rd consecutive Fall Season. This "dream season" is a fitting close to a year that will long be remembered as one of significant achievement by our Company.

Our acclaimed 1985 Summer Festival production of Wagner's epic masterpiece, *The Ring of the Nibelung*, which drew worldwide attention, is a testament to the vision and leadership of our General Director and the generous support of our donors, our Board, and the entire staff of our Company.

Our current Fall Season has been made possible by the generosity of many donors. Special recognition goes to those who have underwritten new productions. Handel's *Orlando*, which we will be sharing with the Lyric Opera of Chicago, was made possible by an anonymous gift in honor of Bernard and Barbro Osher. A new Jean-Pierre Ponnelle production of Verdi's final opera, *Falstaff*, was made possible by a generous grant from the L.J. Skaggs and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation.

Other operas on our schedule are revivals. *Lear* was made possible in 1981 by a grant from the Carol Buck Sells Foundation and the S.F. Opera Guild. This Fall's *Tosca* was originally underwritten by a grant from the Charles E. Merrill Trust, while *Un Ballo in Maschera* was originally sponsored by a gift from an anonymous friend of the Opera.

Revivals of operas allow the Company to utilize its inventory of existing productions while presenting a wide variety of operas from the repertory. However, funds are still required to revive a production, since repairs and alterations must be undertaken before the opera can be presented. The re-mounting of Puccini's *Turandot* is being underwritten by the Ambassador Foundation of Los Angeles; Pacific Telesis awarded the Company funds to revive *Tosca*; while Bernard and Barbro Osher contributed the costs of presenting *Un Ballo in Maschera*. We are deeply grateful to these donors whose generosity further enriches our operatic experience.

It is a special pleasure to recognize our governmental funding sources this year. The National Endowment for the Arts has been a loyal supporter of the San Francisco Opera, and we join with other arts organizations and the citizens of this country to salute them during this, their 20th anniversary year. The Hotel Tax Fund, Mayor Dianne Feinstein, and Chief Administrative Officer Roger Boas have consistently demonstrated their commitment to the San Francisco Opera. We join with others in the arts community in commending the Hotel Tax Fund during its 25th anniversary year. In addition, we recognize the importance of the continued support of the California Arts Council to our operations.

Once again, we thank the San Francisco Opera Guild, the Merola Opera Program and the War Memorial Board of Trustees for their ongoing support. They have earned our deepest appreciation.

Our understanding and appreciation of our operas this fall will be heightened by the presence of Supertitles, sponsored by a generous grant from the American Express Family of Companies obtained through the efforts of the San Francisco Opera Guild. In making Supertitles possible this season, American Express has demonstrated its community spirit and sensitivity to the need to make the performing arts accessible to a broader audience.

We are pleased to report that our financial position has improved. We have



Tully M. Friedman

eliminated our accumulated deficit with the assistance of a special matching grant from the Paul L. and Phyllis Wattis Foundation. However, the underlying problem of financing opera, the most expensive of art forms, remains. Our budget for this year exceeds \$20 million, and ticket sales will cover approximately 55% of these costs. Although this earned income ratio is higher than most companies are able to achieve, it still leaves us with about \$9 million to raise in order to end the year in the black. Of this amount, government grants, income from our endowment, the San Francisco Opera Guild, and production sponsorships will provide approximately half. The remainder must come from foundations, corporations and, most important, a large number of individuals.

We have presented a very special year of operatic events. To maintain this operatic legacy that is such an important part of San Francisco life, we need your continued support.

In closing, we would like to commend the leadership of Walter M. Baird, who served for 12 years as President and Chief Executive Officer of this Association. His commitment and dedication played a significant role in ensuring the world-class status of the San Francisco Opera, and we will follow his example and seek his counsel as we lead the San Francisco Opera in the years ahead.

Reid W. Dennis, *Chairman*  
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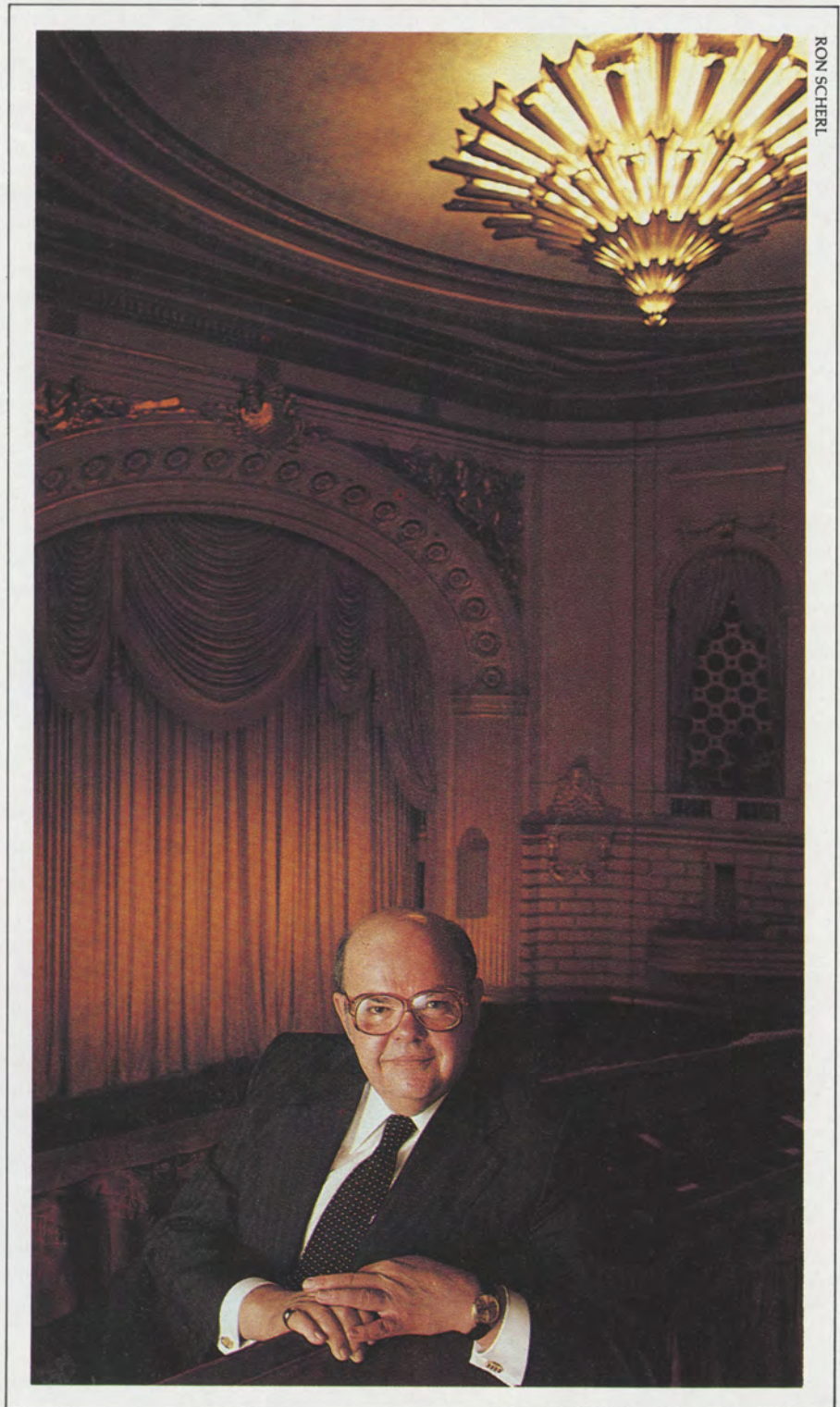
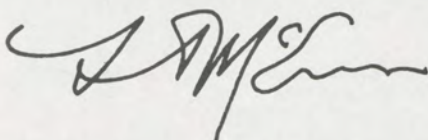
# General Director's Message

The year 1985 will undoubtedly go down in the annals of the San Francisco Opera as a very important one for the Company. The reason, of course, is that this year we accomplished a major task: the *Ring*. The international attention we have received and are still receiving because of it is gratifying indeed, and I would like to take this opportunity to salute every member of the Company involved in this endeavor. It was truly a team effort, with all members of the team doing their parts to perfection. We were lucky there were no illnesses or major mishaps, but it takes a great deal more than luck to bring off the monumental task we set ourselves. I am extremely proud to be a member of this San Francisco Opera team.

The 1985 San Francisco Opera Fall Season is a star-studded one, with much glamour and a great variety of repertoire, even though this year we don't have our customary Russian opera. We promise to return to the Slavic repertoire again during the next year.

With three productions new to our City, and the wonderful Supertitles being used in seven out of ten operas, we continue to maintain the excellence that has made the San Francisco Opera one of the leading companies of the world.

Our team welcomes you to the 1985 Fall Season.



RON SCHERL

# San Francisco Opera

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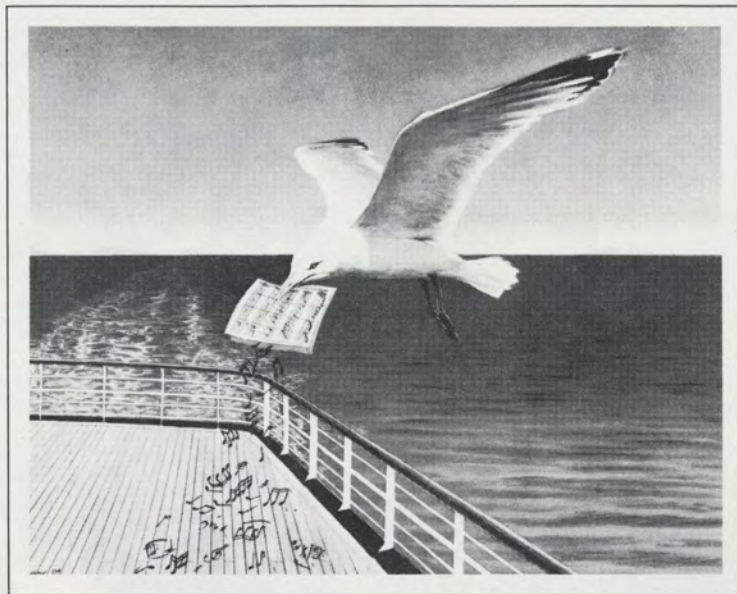


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# 1985 San Francisco Opera Company (Continued)

Although our program magazines regularly list members of the Administration and Company (please see pages 10 and 13), we know that those lists are by necessity incomplete. In order to give recognition to the many skilled professionals whose work has contributed so greatly to the quality of San Francisco Opera productions, we provide, once a year, a list of everyone involved in our international seasons. In this issue, department heads are listed in front of the magazine, as usual; the many others, upon whom so much depends, are listed below.

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# San Francisco Opera

Terence A. McEwen, *General Director*

## 1985 Fall Season

Friday, September 6, 7:30

*Opening Night*

**Adriana Lecouvreur** Cilea

Scenery and costumes from the Metropolitan Opera Association.

Freni, Ciurca\*, Gustafson, Cowdrick\*/Mauro, Nucci, Vernon\*, Green, Petersen\*, Skinner\*  
Arena/Mansouri/Cristini/Diffen/Sulich/Munn

Saturday, September 7, 8:00

**Lear** Reimann

This production was originally made possible through generous grants from the Carol Buck Sells Foundation and the San Francisco Opera Guild.

Silja, Dernesch, Greenawald/Stewart, Langdon-Lloyd, Ludgin, Knutson, Trussel, Ulfung, Duykers, Noble, Patterson, Anderson\*

Layer\*\*/Ponnelle/Ponnelle/Halmen/Munn

Tuesday, September 10, 8:00

**Adriana Lecouvreur** Cilea

Thursday, September 12, 7:30

**Lear** Reimann

Friday, September 13, 8:00

**Adriana Lecouvreur** Cilea

Saturday, September 14, 8:00

*San Francisco Opera Premiere*

**Orlando** Handel

Produced in cooperation with the Lyric Opera of Chicago, and made possible, in part, by an anonymous gift in honor of Bernard and Barbro Osher, Mrs. Paul L. Wattis, Mr. & Mrs. Gorham B. Knowles in memory of Richard K. Miller, and Mr. & Mrs. Alfred S. Wilsey.

Horne, Masterson, Swenson/Gall, Langan Mackeras/Copley/Pascoe/Stennett/Munn

Sunday, September 15, 2:00

**Lear** Reimann

Monday, September 16, 8:00

**Adriana Lecouvreur** Cilea

Tuesday, September 17, 8:00

**Lear** Reimann

Wednesday, September 18, 7:30

**Orlando** Handel

Friday, September 20, 8:00

**Lear** Reimann

Saturday, September 21, 8:00

**Orlando** Handel

Sunday, September 22, 2:00

**Adriana Lecouvreur** Cilea

Tuesday, September 24, 8:00

**Orlando** Handel

Wednesday, September 25, 7:30

**Adriana Lecouvreur** Cilea

Thursday, September 26, 8:00

**Turandot** Puccini

Produced in cooperation with the opera companies of Dallas, Houston, and Miami.

The revival of this production is made possible, in part, through a much-appreciated grant from the Koret Foundation.

Marton (September 26,29; October 2,5), Kelm (October 9, 12, 15, 18), Anelli\*/Bonisoli, Macurdy, Kelley, Green, Malis, Harper, Pederson\*, Anderson Klobucar/Hebert/Klein/Munn

Friday, September 27, 8:00

**Lear** Reimann

Saturday, September 28, 8:00

**Adriana Lecouvreur** Cilea

Sunday, September 29, 2:00

**Turandot** Puccini

Wednesday, October 2, 8:00

**Turandot** Puccini

Thursday, October 3, 8:00

**Orlando** Handel

Friday, October 4, 8:00

**Werther** Massenet

The revival of this production was made possible through a generous grant from the Ambassador Foundation.

Scotto, Parrish, Kilduff\*/Kraus, Dickson, Capecchi, Petersen, Patterson, Maxham\* Plasson\*/Uzan\*/Rubin/Munn, Arhelger

Saturday, October 5, 8:00

**Turandot** Puccini

Sunday, October 6, 2:00

**Orlando** Handel

Wednesday, October 9, 7:30

**Turandot** Puccini

Thursday, October 10, 8:00

**Werther** Massenet

Saturday, October 12, 8:00

**Turandot** Puccini

Sunday, October 13, 2:00

**Werther** Massenet

Tuesday, October 15, 8:00

**Turandot** Puccini

Wednesday, October 16, 7:30

**Werther** Massenet

Friday, October 18, 8:00

**Turandot** Puccini

Saturday, October 19, 8:00

**Werther** Massenet

Sunday, October 20, 2:00

*New Production*

**Falstaff** Verdi

Produced in cooperation with the opera companies of Chicago and Houston. This production is based upon that originally mounted at the Glyndebourne Festival in 1976, sponsored by the Fred Kobler Trust and the Corbett Foundation of Cincinnati, Ohio.

The San Francisco presentation of this production is made possible through a generous grant from the L.J. Skaggs and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation.

Lorengar, Horne, Quittmeyer, Swenson/Wixell, Titus, MacNeil, Frank, Corazza, Langan

Arena/Ponnelle/Ponnelle/Munn

Tuesday, October 22, 8:00

**Werther** Massenet

Wednesday, October 23, 8:00

**Falstaff** Verdi

Friday, October 25, 8:00

**Werther** Massenet

Saturday, October 26, 8:00

**Tosca** Puccini

This production was originally made possible through a grant from the Charles E. Merrill Trust.

The revival of this production is made possible, in part, by a grant from Pacific Telesis Foundation.

Slatinaru/Giacomini, Morris, Capecchi, Wexler, Kelley, Pendergraph\*, Pederson Cillario/Ponnelle/Farruggio/Ponnelle/Arhelger

Sunday, October 27, 2:00

**Falstaff** Verdi

Tuesday, October 29, 8:00

**Tosca** Puccini

Wednesday, October 30, 7:30

**Falstaff** Verdi

Saturday, November 2, 8:00

**Falstaff** Verdi

Sunday, November 3, 2:00

**Tosca** Puccini

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9-11

Tuesday, November 5, 8:00

**Falstaff** Verdi

Wednesday, November 6, 7:30

**Tosca** Puccini

Thursday, November 7, 8:00

**Un Ballo in Maschera** Verdi

This production was originally made possible through a gift from a friend of the San Francisco Opera. The revival of this production is made possible through the generosity of Bernard and Barbro Osher.

M. Price, Cossotto, Mills/Bergonzi (November 7, 10, 13, 17, 20, 23), Aragall (December 1,6), Carroli, Langan, Patterson, Malis, Petersen, Anderson Pritchard/Frisell/Conklin/Carvajal/Munn

Friday, November 8, 8:00

**Falstaff** Verdi

Saturday, November 9, 8:00

**Tosca** Puccini

Sunday, November 10, 2:00

**Un Ballo in Maschera** Verdi

Tuesday, November 12, 8:00

**Tosca** Puccini

Wednesday, November 13, 7:30

**Un Ballo in Maschera** Verdi

Thursday, November 14, 8:00

**Billy Budd** Britten

Costumes from the Royal Opera, Covent Garden

The revival of this production is made possible, in part, by a generous grant from IBM Corporation.

Duesing, King, Morris, Glossop, Busterud, Garrett\*, Wexler, Schwisow\*, Gudas, Kelley, Harper, Parce\*, Pederson, MacAllister, Pendergraph

Leppard/Coleman/Munn, Piper/Munn

Friday, November 15, 8:00

**Tosca** Puccini

Sunday, November 17, 2:00

**Un Ballo in Maschera** Verdi

Tuesday, November 19, 8:00

**Billy Budd** Britten

Wednesday, November 20, 8:00

**Un Ballo in Maschera** Verdi

Thursday, November 21, 8:00

*Production new to San Francisco*

**Der Rosenkavalier** Strauss

Sets from the Lyric Opera of Chicago. Costumes from The Royal Theatre, Copenhagen.

Te Kanawa, Fassbaender, Parrish, Cook, Hartliep, Kilduff, Chen, Cowdrick, Shaghoian\*/Moll, Di Paolo, Capecchi, Andreolli\*, Harper, Petersen, Gudas, Garrett, Patterson, Potter\* Pritchard/Neugebauer/Schneider-Siemssen/Schröck\*/Arhelger

Friday, November 22, 8:00

**Billy Budd** Britten

Saturday, November 23, 8:00

**Un Ballo in Maschera** Verdi

Sunday, November 24, 2:00

**Der Rosenkavalier** Strauss

Monday, November 25, 8:00

*Family Performance*

**Falstaff** Verdi

Hartliep, Zajic, Cowdrick, Chen/Pendergraph, Malis, Schwisow, Peterson, Harper, Pederson Bradshaw/Ponnelle/Thompson/Ponnelle/Munn

Tuesday, November 26, 8:00

**Der Rosenkavalier** Strauss

Wednesday, November 27, 7:30

**Billy Budd** Britten

Friday, November 29, 8:00

**Der Rosenkavalier** Strauss

Saturday, November 30, 1:00

*Family Matinee*

**Falstaff** Verdi

Saturday, November 30, 8:00

**Billy Budd** Britten

Sunday, December 1, 2:00

**Un Ballo in Maschera** Verdi

Monday, December 2, 8:00

**Der Rosenkavalier** Strauss

Tuesday, December 3, 8:00

**Billy Budd** Britten

Wednesday, December 4, 7:30

**Der Rosenkavalier** Strauss

Friday, December 6, 8:00

**Un Ballo in Maschera** Verdi

Saturday, December 7, 8:00

**Der Rosenkavalier** Strauss

Sunday, December 8, 2:00

**Billy Budd** Britten

\*\*American opera debut

\*San Francisco Opera debut

All performances with Supertitles except *Lear*, *Billy Budd* and the international cast *Falstaff*. Supertitles are provided by the generous support of American Express.

Repertoire, casts and dates subject to change.

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FALSTAFF

Verdi/in Italian with English Supertitles

Wednesday, October 23, 1:00

Tuesday, October 29, 1:00

Friday, November 22, 1:00

Matinee for Senior Citizens and Disabled  
Patrons

Thursday, October 31, 1:00

These matinees will be performed with Supertitles by Paul Moor.

## Kirsten Flagstad Exhibition

The Archives for the Performing Arts invites you to view its exhibition of opera photographs documenting the career of Wagnerian soprano Kirsten Flagstad, currently on display in the War Memorial Opera House Museum. Flagstad, who would have been 90 this year, performed frequently in the Bay Area, making her local debut in San Francisco Opera's first complete *Ring* cycle in 1935. The Opera House Museum is located on the south mezzanine (box) level, adjacent to the Opera Boutique. Materials for the exhibition are from the Archives' Kirsten Flagstad Collection — the largest Flagstad archives outside of Norway.

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**April 27-May 19, 23 Days**

Vienna, Munich, Frankfurt, Strassbourg, Geneva, Bordeaux Music Festival, TGV train to Paris, London. All inclusive costs \$4,750.00, \$425.00 single supplement.

The April 6 departure may be combined with the April 27 tour for a total of 44 days. All inclusive costs \$7,475.00, \$875.00 single supplement.

It is also possible to arrive or depart on either tour at Munich or Frankfurt at adjusted prices.

**July 15-August 3, 20 Days**

Not an opera tour although there will be a performance or two at the Verona Festival. Three nights French Chateaux Country, Maas-tricht, 4 day all inclusive first class Rhine Cruise, Berne, Stressa, Verona, Garmisch-Par-tenkirchen, Gravenbruch. All inclusive costs: \$3,650.00, single supplement \$325.00.

**October 22-November 23, 33 Days**

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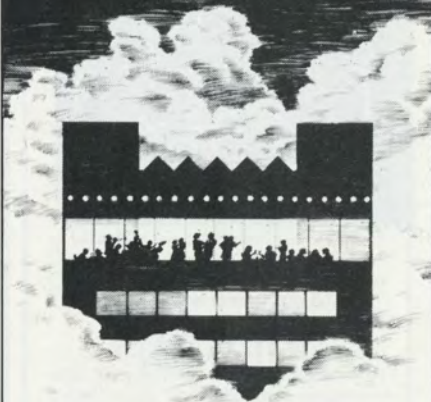
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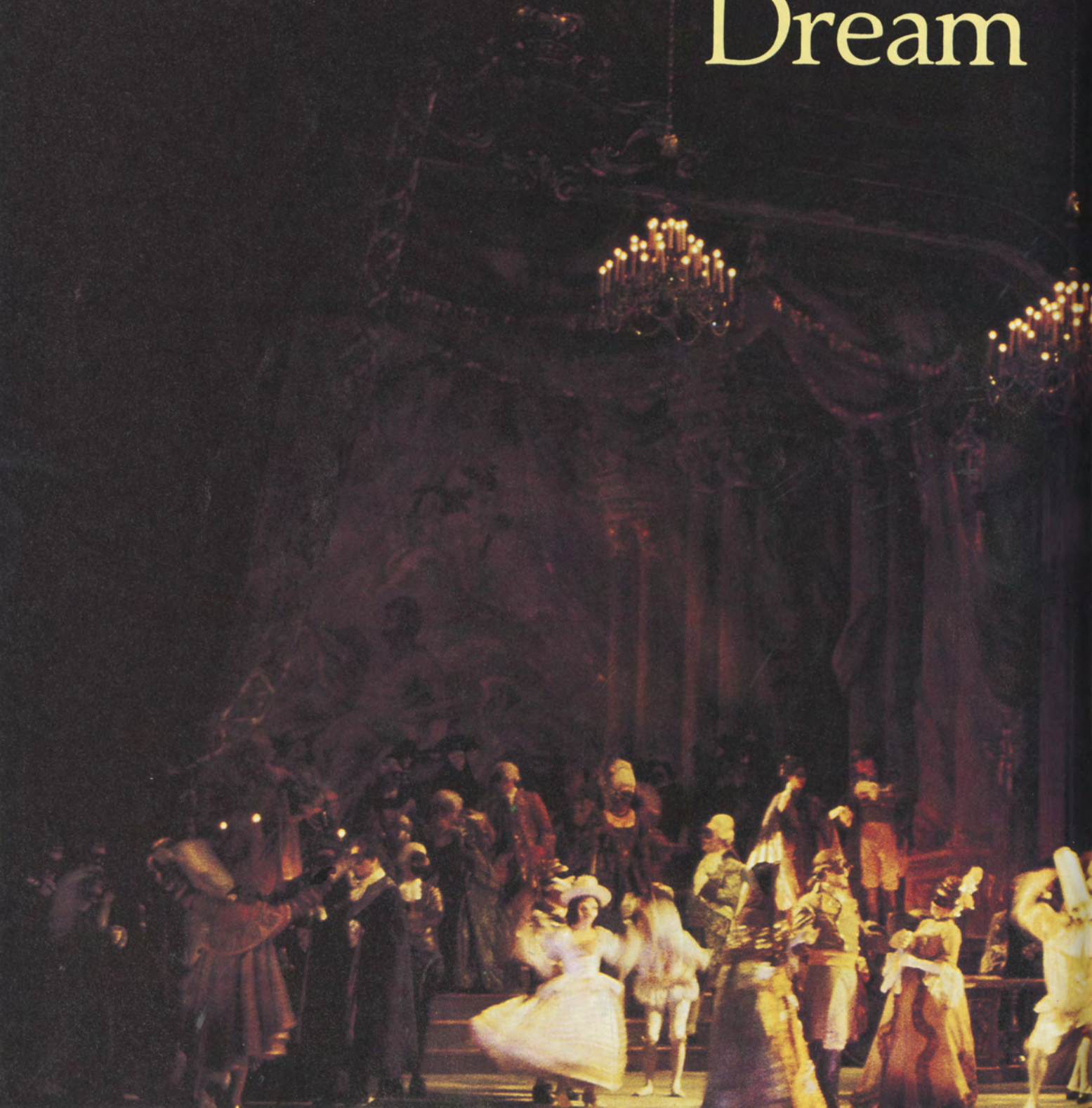
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# Verdi's Impossible Dream



By JOHN ARDOIN

If Giuseppe Verdi had lived long enough to hear Aribert Reimann's opera *Lear*, he would probably have disliked it. But he would have admired Reimann's courage in setting this darkest of Shakespeare's plays to music. It was a challenge that eluded him for over fifty years. The closest Verdi came to making his dream a reality was in 1857, when he signed a contract with the Teatro San Carlo in Naples for an opera based on *King Lear*. The libretto by Antonio Somma had been completed several years earlier, and following the composition of *Simon Boccanegra*, Verdi seemed finally ready to face the enormous dramatic problems the play posed. The score Naples eventually

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*John Ardoin is music critic of The Dallas Morning News and author of The Cal- las Legacy and the recently published book The Stages of Menotti (Doubleday).*

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*Final scene of the current San Francisco Opera production of Verdi's Un Ballo in Maschera.*

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received, however, was not *Re Lear* but *Un Ballo in Maschera*, and there is a fine irony in the fact that San Francisco is producing both *Ballo* and the only important operatic treatment ever given the elusive *Lear* during the same season.

Behind Verdi's promise of *Lear* for Naples and his delivery of *Ballo* hangs a fascinating tale of theatrical life and intrigue as serpentine as any nineteenth-century Italian libretto. To grasp it fully, we must move back in time to 1843 and Venice. It was for the Teatro La Fenice that Verdi first seriously considered an operatic *Lear*. At this time he conceived the title role for a baritone or a bass, and when Fenice could not offer him an exceptional artist for the part, the project was shelved. However, it continued to exert a strong pull on Verdi's imagination, and three years later when Benjamin Lumley, the impresario of Her Majesty's Theatre in London, asked for a new opera, Verdi offered to set *King Lear* once he was done with the premiere of *Attila* in Venice. Verdi made one stipulation: Lumley must provide the reigning bass of the day, Luigi Lablache, for the title role.

But then Verdi fell ill, and his doctors refused to let him travel abroad. Lumley got his opera in 1847, not *Re Lear*, however, but *I Masnadieri*. Another three years went by (during which time Verdi produced *Il Corsaro*, *La Battaglia di Legnano* and *Luisa Miller*) before the idea of *Lear* cropped up again. This time, Verdi decided to initiate the *Lear* project on his own and turned to Salvatore Cammarano for a libretto, providing him with a detailed scenario. In an accompanying letter, dated February 28, 1850, he writes to the librettist:

"*King Lear* at first sight is so vast and intricate that it seems impossible one could make an opera of it. However, on examining it closely, it seems to me that the difficulties, though no doubt immense, are not insuperable. You realize that there is no need to make *King Lear* into the usual kind of drama we have had up until now; rather, we must treat it in a completely new manner, on a large scale, and without regard for mere convenience. I believe the roles could be reduced to five

principal ones: Lear, Cordelia, the Fool, Edmund, Edgar. Two secondary female roles: Regan and Goneril (though perhaps the latter would have to be made a second leading lady). Two secondary bass roles (as in *Luisa*): Kent and Gloucester. The rest, minor roles."

Interestingly enough, at the same time, Giulio Carcano, a friend of Verdi's and an Italian translator of Shakespeare, offered the composer a libretto based on *Hamlet*, an idea Verdi seems never to have seriously considered. What is significant is that in refusing Carcano's idea, Verdi commented to the poet that "unfortunately these huge subjects take up too much time. I have had, for the time being, to give up *King Lear* as well, and commission Cammarano to adapt the drama at some other more propitious moment. Now if *King Lear* is difficult, *Hamlet* is even more so. And, pushed as I am by two commissions, I have to choose easier and shorter subjects to be able to fulfill my obligations." Thus *Stiffelio*, rather than *Lear*, was born. These were indeed the "galley years."

Three further operas—*Rigoletto*, *La Traviata* and *Il Trovatore*—followed before Verdi's attention again focused on *Lear*. By this time, Cammarano had died, and Verdi began working seriously with Somma on a libretto, writing to him that "I prefer Shakespeare to all other dramatists, including the Greeks." In a later letter he tells Somma he has just reread *King Lear* and that "I'm appalled by the need to span such a tremendous canvas in a narrow frame without detracting from the originality and grandeur of the characters. But, let's have courage, perhaps we will be able to achieve something above the usual with it."

A month later, Verdi tells Somma "There are two things about this project that worry me. First, it seems to me that the opera is turning out to be too long, especially the first two acts. Therefore if you can find anything to cut out or be shortened, do so; the effect can only benefit from it. If this can't be done, do your best to say things as briefly as possible in the less important scenes. Second, it seems to me that there are too



Giuseppe Verdi in 1859. Oil painting by Achille Scalese.



Cover illustration for the first edition of the *Ballo in Maschera* piano-vocal score. Design by N. Focosi.



King Gustaf III of Sweden in a contemporary engraving by Girardet.

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King Gustaf III of Sweden at the approximate age of ten. Oil painting by an unknown author after an engraving by Gustaf Lundberg.

many changes of scene. The only thing that has always prevented me from treating Shakespearean subjects more often has been [the] necessity to change scenes at every moment. When I used to go to the theater it annoyed me greatly. I felt as if I were watching a magic lantern show. In this the French are right. They plan their dramas so as to need only one scene for each act. Thus the action flows freely without hindrance, and without anything to distract the attention of the public. I understand very well that in *Lear* it would be impossible to have only one scene for each act, but if you could manage to do without some of them, it would be excellent."

For two years, this sort of meticulous exchange of ideas about *Lear* and the needs of theater are found in a wealth of correspondence that provide extraordinary insights into Verdi's dramatic thinking and the role he played in the shaping of his libretti. Eventually a text was produced that satisfied Verdi, but by then he was deep in the composition of *Les Vêpres Siciliennes* for the Paris Opera. In 1857, at last, Verdi signed a contract for *Lear* that was to use Somma's libretto and to have its premiere in Naples during the 1858 season.

Again, however, Verdi made a stipulation in terms of the casting: he was determined to have soprano Maria Piccolomini for the role of Cordelia. When San Carlo was unable to engage her, Verdi refused to accept the soprano they offered. By this time, one begins to agree with Verdi scholar Charles Osborne that the composer "was grasping at excuses to postpone tackling *Lear*." Perhaps the idea presented Verdi with so many dramatic problems that it became a frightening specter, one he was afraid to face. Though we find Verdi suggesting *Lear* for Paris in 1863, and discussing it twenty years later with Arrigo Boito (his librettist for *Otello* and the final Verdi-Shakespeare opera, *Falstaff*, also a part of the 1985 Fall Season), it is hard to believe his heart was any longer in the project.

A footnote to the Verdi-*Lear* dream came in 1896, when the 83-year-old composer offered Somma's libretto to the young Pietro Mascagni. When Mascagni

asked Verdi why he had never written the opera, the old man, as Mascagni recalled, "closed his eyes for a moment, perhaps to remember, perhaps to forget. Then softly and slowly he replied: 'The scene in which King Lear finds himself on the heath terrified me.'"

In retrospect, Verdi might well have wished he had gone ahead with *Re Lear* for Naples, Piccolomini or no Piccolomini, specter or no specter, considering the battle he faced once he decided to set instead Eugène Scribe's *Gustave III ou Le Bal Masqué*. Scribe had originally written the libretto for Daniel François Auber, and their version had been given in Paris in 1833. A decade later, Cammarano had adapted the plot as *Il Reggente*; it was set to music by Saverio Mercadante and produced in Turin. Verdi had Somma retranslate Scribe's libretto, recast it from five to three acts and retitled it *Gustavo III di Svezia*.

Since the plot was based on historical fact and dealt with the assassination in 1792 of a monarch, Sweden's Gustaf (Gustavus) III, at a masked ball, Verdi anticipated trouble with the Neapolitan censor. These were, after all, politically troubled times, and an attempt had been made on the life of the King of Naples by one of his soldiers just a year earlier. Verdi expected to be asked to make his characters fictitious and even alter the locale as he had been forced to do with *Rigoletto*. He had taken the matter up with Somma late in 1857, and Somma had suggested keeping the Swedish setting but moving the story back to the twelfth century.

In a letter written November 26, Verdi rejected this idea saying, "I really think the twelfth century is a little too remote for our Gustav. It is such a raw and brutal period, especially in those countries, that it seems a serious contradiction to use it as a setting for characters conceived in the French style as Gustav and Oscar are, and for such a splendid drama based on customs nearer our own time. We shall have to find some great prince or duke, a rogue whether of the North or not, who has seen something of the world and caught something of the atmosphere of the court of Louis XIV."

Verdi and Somma finally decided to move the action, if necessary, to

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VERDI NELLE IMMAGINI, 1943  
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Verdi and the censor of *Un Ballo in Maschera* in a caricature by Melchiorre Delfico.

seventeenth-century Stettin, in Pomerania, and change the title to *La Vendetta in Domino*. You can imagine Verdi's shock when he received the censor's verdict on arriving in Naples in January 1858. That month, a bomb had been thrown under the carriage of Napoleon III in Paris, and the changes required of Verdi by a frightened censor were massive and, to his mind, impossible. He detailed them for Somma on February 7:

1. Change the hero into an ordinary gentleman, with no suggestion of sovereignty.
2. Change the wife into a sister.
3. Alter the scene with the fortune-teller, and put it back to a time when people believed in such things.
4. No ball.
5. The murder to be off-stage.
6. Omit the scene of the drawing of the name. And, and, and!

"As you imagine, these changes are out of the question, so no more opera. So the subscribers won't pay the last two installments, so the government will withdraw the subsidy, so the directors will sue everyone, and already threaten me with damages of 50,000 ducats. What hell!"

In hopes of saving the situation and placating the censor, the management of the San Carlo prepared an altered version of the libretto called *Adelia degli Adimari*, set in Florence in the fourteenth century. Verdi was furious: "My drama has been totally mutilated, and it is therefore impossible that the music can achieve the effect imagined by me. *La Vendetta in Domino* consists of 884 verses. In *Adelia* 297 have been changed, many have been added, very many cut. I ask further if, in the drama by the management, there exists, as in mine:

The title?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No.
The poet?	<input type="checkbox"/>	No.
The period?	<input type="checkbox"/>	No.
The place?	<input type="checkbox"/>	No.
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The drawing of lots?	<input type="checkbox"/>	No.
The ball?	<input type="checkbox"/>	No.

"A maestro who respects his art and

himself could not and should not dishonor himself accepting as subject for music, written to quite another plan, these oddities which distort the most obvious principles of dramaturgy and outrage the artist's conscience."

Upon Verdi's refusal of *Adelia*, the theater took legal action. Verdi initiated a countersuit. The matter was settled out of court in Verdi's favor, and the contract was dissolved. The settlement, which allowed Verdi to produce *La Vendetta in Domino* in another theater, contained only one condition: Verdi had to return to Naples in the fall and produce *Simon Boccanegra*, which had not yet been heard in Naples.

During the legal battle, Verdi turned to the Teatro Apollo in Rome, which accepted the opera subject to the approval of the papal censor. Though this approval was also qualified, the restrictions were minor compared with those in Naples. Chiefly, Rome wanted the setting changed to a non-European country. This Verdi could live with, and after casting about for different locales, including the Caucasus, he and Somma settled on Boston during the American War for Independence. Gustavus became Richard, Count of Warwick and Governor of the colony of Massachusetts, Madame Arvidson became the Negress Ulrica and the title reverted back (in Italian) to the Scribe original, *Un Ballo in Maschera*.

Verdi and Somma were also forced to alter a number of lines in the libretto because, as Verdi pointed out, "a second litigation would have been scandalous and ridiculous. In the theater, of course, one has to make sacrifices, and it's useless for anyone who hasn't the courage to do this to expose himself to this severe trial." He urged Somma to "arm yourself with courage and patience, particularly with patience. . . . The lines and expressions deleted by the censor are numerous, but it could have been worse." Besides, he countered almost philosophically, "A great many lines would have had to be changed [anyway], since the king is now only a governor."

The changes were successfully made, and from all accounts the first night in Rome, February 17, 1859, was a triumph

with the public, though the press was lukewarm. Still, the reception given *Ballo* must have gone a long way to lifting Verdi's spirits after his battle in Naples and the fiasco a revival of *Simon Boccanegra* had suffered at La Scala the month before, due to a mediocre cast. Shortly before the premiere of *Ballo*, Verdi had written his publisher Tito Ricordi, "Let them be severe. I accept their hisses on condition that I don't have to beg for their applause.

"We poor gypsies, charlatans, or whatever you want to call us, are forced to sell our labors, our thoughts, our dreams for gold. For three lire, the public buys the right to hiss or to applaud. Our fate is one of resignation, and that's all. But, whatever my friends or enemies say, *Boccanegra* is in no way inferior to many other operas of mine which were more fortunate. Perhaps this one needed more care in performance and an audience which really wanted to listen to it. What a sad thing the theater is!"

In this century, there has been a trend back to Verdi's Swedish setting, and it is in the original version that San Francisco is presenting *Ballo* this season. As Osborne has written, no "great harm is done to the opera by using the historical names, though there is not the slightest need to use them. Verdi's music is no more Swedish in character than it is American. It does, however, as he himself claimed, have something of the eighteenth century in its elegance, wit and lightness of touch. But whether Amelia's lover is called Riccardo, Gustavus, Gustavo or Gustave, seems hardly to matter. The character has little in common with King Gustavus III of Sweden, and there is no more justification for giving Verdi's Riccardo the name of Scribe's Gustave than there would be in changing the Duke of Mantua in *Rigoletto* back into Victor Hugo's François I."

But, however *Ballo* is given, it is difficult to hear it without thinking of *Lear* and what nearly was. Surely no one would want to be without the passion and pulse of *Ballo*, but was a Verdi *Lear* too great a price to pay? There can never be a satisfactory answer, and, however tantalizing, this remains a desert island question. But to me a *Ballo* in the hand is worth several *Lears* in the bush. ■

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# Scribe: Unlocking the Best

By WILLIAM HUCK

When Verdi was casting about for a subject for the opera that became *Un Ballo in Maschera*, he was at the height of his infatuation with *King Lear*. Aribert Reimann with his emphasis on speech rather than song could turn Shakespeare's towering tragedy into opera, but it says a great deal about what a 19th-century composer looked for in a libretto that Verdi eventually chose Eugène Scribe's *Gustave III, ou Le Bal Masqué* instead.

Scribe had written *Le Bal Masqué* 25 years earlier for the composer Daniel Auber. A grand opera in five acts, it had its premiere in Paris in 1833, with the tenor Adolphe Nourrit, baritone Nicholas Levasseur and soprano Cornélie Falcon. Indeed, when Verdi's own *Ballo in Maschera* reached London in 1861, the perceptive, if conservative, critic Henry Chorley fondly remembered the earlier opera. "I was never fully aware of the value of Auber's music," Chorley wrote, "until I heard the assault made by Signor Verdi on the same subject."

Verdi was not the only composer to follow Auber's lead. In 1834, Scribe's libretto caught the attention of Vincenzo Bellini, who like Verdi offered it to the San Carlo Opera in Naples. "Magnificent, spectacular, historical," wrote Bellini from Paris. "We won't have Gustave killed (if that is what they [the censors] want), but the situations are fine, really fine and new." Bellini never did write this opera for

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William Huck is a San Francisco-based music critic and opera librettist. His writing appears in the *Sentinel*, *Opera Quarterly* and the *Los Angeles Times*.

Naples. In his short life there was time left for only one more work, *I Puritani*, for Paris. But Bellini's suggestion that the Neapolitan censors would be troubled by Scribe's plot certainly turned out to be the case. Verdi, who would not countenance



Eugène Scribe, 1791-1861.

this opera without the murder of Gustave, ran directly afoul of the authorities and eventually had to relocate both his premiere and the setting of the tragedy.

Even with the censorship problems, two other Italian composers set Scribe's plot to music before Verdi. Both were likewise forced to put the drama into new historical contexts. In 1841 the now forgotten Vincenzo Gabussi produced *Clemenza di Valois* for Venice and in 1843

the almost forgotten Giuseppe Mercadante wrote *Il Reggente* for Turin with the action transported to Scotland during the reign of the infant James VI, and the hero turned from a hereditary ruler to a regent.

This clamoring for *Le Bal Masqué* was typical of contemporary composers' response to the libretti of Eugène Scribe. Everybody wanted to set Scribe's work to music. Today we may condescend to the pedestrian nature of Scribe's poetic talents, but in his own time he was the acknowledged master. That so many of the best composers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries turned to his work testifies to the admiration these creative artists had for Scribe's dramatic works. The fact that so many of these Scribe operas constitute their composer's lasting claim to fame demonstrates something even more important. Scribe had that special ability given only to a very few librettists: he could unlock what was best in a composer.

Harold Rosenthal in his *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Opera* has compiled a list of the composers who based operas either directly on Scribe's libretti or adapted one of his plays for their purpose. Auber heads this list with 38 Scribe operas, including *Fra Diavolo* and the first operatic *Manon Lescaut*. Adolphe Adam set seven Scribe libretti. Fromental Halévy weighs in with six, among them *La Juive*, which alone kept his work in the repertory for almost a hundred years. Donizetti wrote five, including the effervescent *Elisir d'Amore* and the somberly dramatic *Favorite*.

Though Giacomo Meyerbeer set

*continued on p.48*

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FIORENZA COSSOTTO

Soprano **Carol Neblett** returns to the San Francisco Opera as Amelia in *Un Ballo in Maschera*, a role she has sung recently at the Metropolitan Opera. She was last seen here as Chrysothemis in the 1984 Fall Season performances of *Elektra*; that role was also the vehicle of her 1975 debut at the Lyric Opera of Chicago. Born in Modesto and raised in Southern California, she began her vocal studies at age 16 and made her professional debut at 19 in Respighi's *Laud to the Nativity* at the Los Angeles Music Center. From 1969 to 1975, she performed regularly with the New York City Opera, where her assignments included Violetta in *La Traviata*, the Queen of Shekhah in *Le Coq d'Or*, Margherita and Elena in *Mefistofele*, Marguerite in *Faust*, *Louise* and *Ariadne auf Naxos*, as well as Marietta/Marie in Korngold's *Die Tote Stadt*, which she later recorded under the baton of Erich Leinsdorf. From 1976 to 1979, Miss Neblett appeared at the Salzburg Festival as Vitellia in Mozart's *La Clemenza di Tito* and repeated that assignment for the Unitel film of the opera, directed by Jean-Pierre Ponnelle. She bowed at San Francisco Opera as Electra in the 1977 production of Mozart's *Idomeneo*, returning here in 1979 for one of her most celebrated portrayals, Minnie in *La Fanciulla del West*. She also performed that role for her 1976 Vienna Staatsoper debut and in a production directed by Harold Prince for the Lyric Opera of Chicago, as well as recording it for Deutsche Grammophon under Zubin Mehta and on video laser disc with the Royal Opera House at Covent Garden. Other recording credits include Musetta in *La Bohème* under James Levine and Mahler's Second Symphony with Claudio Abbado. Miss Neblett returned to San Francisco for *Le Cid* during the 1981 Fall Season, and since her Metropolitan Opera debut as Senta in *Der Fliegende Holländer* has returned to the Met each season in such roles as Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni* and the title roles of *Manon Lescaut* and *Tosca*, Amelia in *Simon Boccanegra*, and, most recently, Alice Ford in *Falstaff*. Her numerous appearances with Johnny Carson on "The Tonight Show" have won her acclaim for her wit and humor as well as her singing. A long distance swimmer, Miss Neblett is active in numerous outdoor sports and resides in Southern California with her husband, Dr. Philip Akre, and their two children.

Illinois-born soprano **Erie Mills** returns to San Francisco Opera as Oscar in *Un Ballo in Maschera*, a role she has sung in Houston and New Orleans. A graduate of the College of Wooster, Ohio, with a master of music degree from the University of Illinois, Miss Mills made her Lyric Opera of Chicago debut in 1979 in Prokofiev's *The Love for Three Oranges*. She bowed with San Francisco Opera the following season, when she sang Fiakermilli in *Arabella* and Norina in the English-language performances of *Don Pasquale*. She returned for the 1981 Summer Festival to appear as Damigella and Amor in *L'Incoronazione di Poppea*. Since her acclaimed 1982 New York City Opera debut in *Candide*, she has won praise for numerous assignments with the company, including Morgana in *Alcina*, the Fairy Godmother in *Cendrillon*, Anne Trulove in *The Rake's Progress* and, most recently, the title role of *La Fille du Régiment*. In June 1983 she made her European debut in the Vienna Festival production of Mozart's *Impresario* and bowed at the Edinburgh Festival with the Opera Theatre of St. Louis. The 1983-84 season saw her first performances in the title role of *Lucia di Lammermoor* with Tulsa Opera, her Santa Fe Opera debut as Carolina in *Il Matrimonio Segreto*, her Carnegie Hall debut with the Milwaukee Symphony, and performances with the Los Angeles Philharmonic. In the spring of 1984 she made her La Scala debut as Giunia in Mozart's *Lucio Silla*, the vehicle of her debuts last season at Amsterdam's Concertgebouw and Patrice Chéreau's theater in Nanterre, France. Last season saw her as Zerbinetta in *Ariadne auf Naxos* in Hamburg, as Pamina in *The Magic Flute* for Houston Grand Opera and in appearances with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Erich Leinsdorf. Her assignments this season include the title role of *The Daughter of the Regiment* for Washington Opera and productions of *Le Comte Ory* and *Ariadne auf Naxos* with Houston Grand Opera. A busy concert artist, Miss Mills has sung with the orchestras of San Francisco, Houston, Montreal, Minnesota and St. Louis as well as the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra. She has also sung at the major American festivals, including those at Tanglewood, Ravinia and the Hollywood Bowl.

Celebrated as one of the great dramatic mezzo-sopranos of our time, **Fiorenza Cossotto** returns to San Francisco Opera with one of the most recent additions to her distinguished list of Verdi interpretations, Ulrica in *Un Ballo in Maschera*, which she has recorded under the baton of Riccardo Muti. Her previous San Francisco Opera appearances were also as memorable Verdi characters, Amneris in *Aida* (1977) and Azucena in *Il Trovatore* (1981). A leading artist at Milan's La Scala since her 1957 professional debut as Sister Mathilde in the world premiere of Poulenc's *Dialogues of the Carmelites*, she has since appeared in all of the world's major opera houses and festivals. Her British debut at Wexford in 1958 as Jane Seymour in *Anna Bolena* led to her engagement the following year singing Neris in *Medea* at Covent Garden. It was her performance in the title role of Donizetti's *La Favorita* at La Scala in 1962 that catapulted her to international stardom. She made her American debut with the Lyric Opera of Chicago in 1964 in the same work and three years later gave her first New York performances when Herbert von Karajan led the Scala company in the Verdi Requiem. She bowed at the Metropolitan Opera as Amneris in 1968, and has since appeared with that company as Adalgisa in *Norma* (the role of her 1965 Paris Opera debut), Azucena, Laura in *La Gioconda*, Eboli in *Don Carlo* (including the 1980 "Live from the Met" telecast), Santuzza in *Cavalleria Rusticana* and again, in the 1985 telecast of *Aida*, Amneris. Recent engagements have included Dame Quickly in *Falstaff* at the Met; Azucena in Australia, Hamburg, Verona, Munich, Mannheim and Palermo; *Adriana Lecouvreur* in Catania and Rome; a new production of *Un Ballo in Maschera* in Paris; *Werther* in Genoa; and Amneris in Australia and Macerata. Widely praised for her many recordings, Miss Cossotto has an extensive discography on the RCA, London, Seraphim, Philips, Deutsche Grammophon and Everest labels, including complete recordings of Verdi's *Aida*, *La Forza del Destino*, *Un Giorno di Regno*, *Macbeth*, *Rigoletto*, *Il Trovatore* and the Requiem, as well as *Norma*, *La Sonnambula*, *La Favorita*, *Cavalleria Rusticana*, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *La Gioconda* and *Madama Butterfly*. Next year she returns to the Met to appear in *Aida* and *Falstaff*.



CARLO BERGONZI



GIACOMO ARAGALL



SILVANO CARROLI

Internationally renowned tenor **Carlo Bergonzi** makes a long-awaited return to San Francisco Opera as Gustavus/Riccardo in *Un Ballo in Maschera*. Born in Busseto, he began his career as a baritone and made his 1948 operatic debut in the title role of *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*. In 1951 he made his debut as a tenor, singing the title role of *Andrea Chénier* in Bari. A series of Italian radio broadcasts of Verdi operas—including *I Due Foscari*, *Giovanna d'Arco*, *Oberto*, *Simon Boccanegra* and *La Forza del Destino*—brought Bergonzi to international attention, and he has since appeared regularly in the major opera houses of the world, including La Scala, the Vienna Staatsoper, the Rome Opera and Covent Garden, where earlier this year he scored a major triumph as Edgardo opposite Joan Sutherland in *Lucia di Lammermoor*. He made his American debut in 1955 at the Lyric Opera of Chicago, singing Luigi in *Il Tabarro*, and that same season also appeared as Avito in *L'Amore Dei Tre Re*. Subsequent Chicago appearances have included Radames in *Aida* (1960); Edgardo in *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Faust in Boito's *Mefistofele* and Alvaro in *La Forza del Destino* (1961); Cavaradossi in *Tosca* (1971); and Nemorino in *L'Elisir d'Amore* (1981). He bowed at the Metropolitan Opera in 1956 as Radames and has since made numerous appearances with that company. In December 1981 the Met celebrated the 25th anniversary of his house debut with a gala concert in which Bergonzi was heard in three of the roles in which he has won international acclaim: Cavaradossi, Riccardo, and Alfredo in *La Traviata*. Other Met credits include *Pagliacci*, *La Gioconda* and *La Forza del Destino*. Widely hailed for his Verdi interpretations, Bergonzi first appeared with San Francisco Opera as Don Alvaro in 1969, and since 1980 has been heard in a number of Verdi rarities, including *I Lombardi* at San Diego Opera; *Attila* in Tulsa; *I Lombardi* as well as *Ballo* in New Orleans, and concert performances of *Il Corsaro* and *I Due Foscari* in New York. Most recently he won critical praise for a concert performance of *Giovanna d'Arco* at Avery Fisher Hall with Margaret Price and Sherrill Milnes under the direction of Richard Bradshaw. An acclaimed recitalist, he has appeared at Carnegie Hall and in cities across America and Canada in programs of French and Italian song literature. In addition to

numerous albums of arias and songs, Bergonzi has recorded nearly 30 complete operas, including Verdi's *Aida*, *Attila*, *Don Carlos*, *Ernani*, *La Forza del Destino*, *Luisa Miller*, *Macbeth*, *I Masnadieri*, *Oberto*, the Requiem, *Rigoletto*, and two recordings each of *Un Ballo in Maschera* and *La Traviata*.

Celebrated lyric tenor **Giacomo Aragall** returns for his ninth season with San Francisco Opera to sing Gustavus/Riccardo in *Un Ballo in Maschera*, a role he has sung in recent years in Hamburg, Cologne, Marseilles and Washington, D.C. Born in Barcelona, Aragall went to Italy in 1963 to continue his vocal studies and that same year won first prize in the International Vocal Competition at Busseto. He made his operatic debut in Verdi's *Gerusalemme* at Teatro La Fenice in Venice also in 1963, scoring a success that resulted in immediate engagement at the Teatro Massimo in Palermo. Later that year his career assumed international significance with his La Scala debut in *L'Amico Fritz* and *La Bohème*. Assignments in all of the important Italian houses quickly followed, with special recognition accorded his 1965 Verona Arena debut as the Duke in *Rigoletto*, a triumph he was to repeat with the world's great opera companies. Important debuts followed in quick succession: Vienna and Berlin in 1966; Montreal in 1967; and Covent Garden and the Metropolitan Opera in 1968. He made his 1973 San Francisco Opera debut as Verdi's Duke; subsequent Company assignments included the historic revival of Massenet's *Esclarmonde* with Joan Sutherland in 1974, when Aragall also sang Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly*. The next year local audiences applauded him in the title role of *Werther*, while 1976 brought him back to the Company for one of his most renowned interpretations, Cavaradossi in *Tosca*. He opened the 1977 San Francisco Opera season as Maurizio in *Adriana Lecouvreur* and that same season sang the title role of *Faust*. Other Company credits include Rodolfo in *La Bohème* (1978), the title role of *Don Carlo* (1979) and a reprise of *Tosca* (1982). An outstanding athlete as well as musician, Aragall would have been a member of the Spanish gymnastic team at the 1964 Olympics had he not received a scholarship to study in Italy. Recent engagements include *Tosca* in Verona,

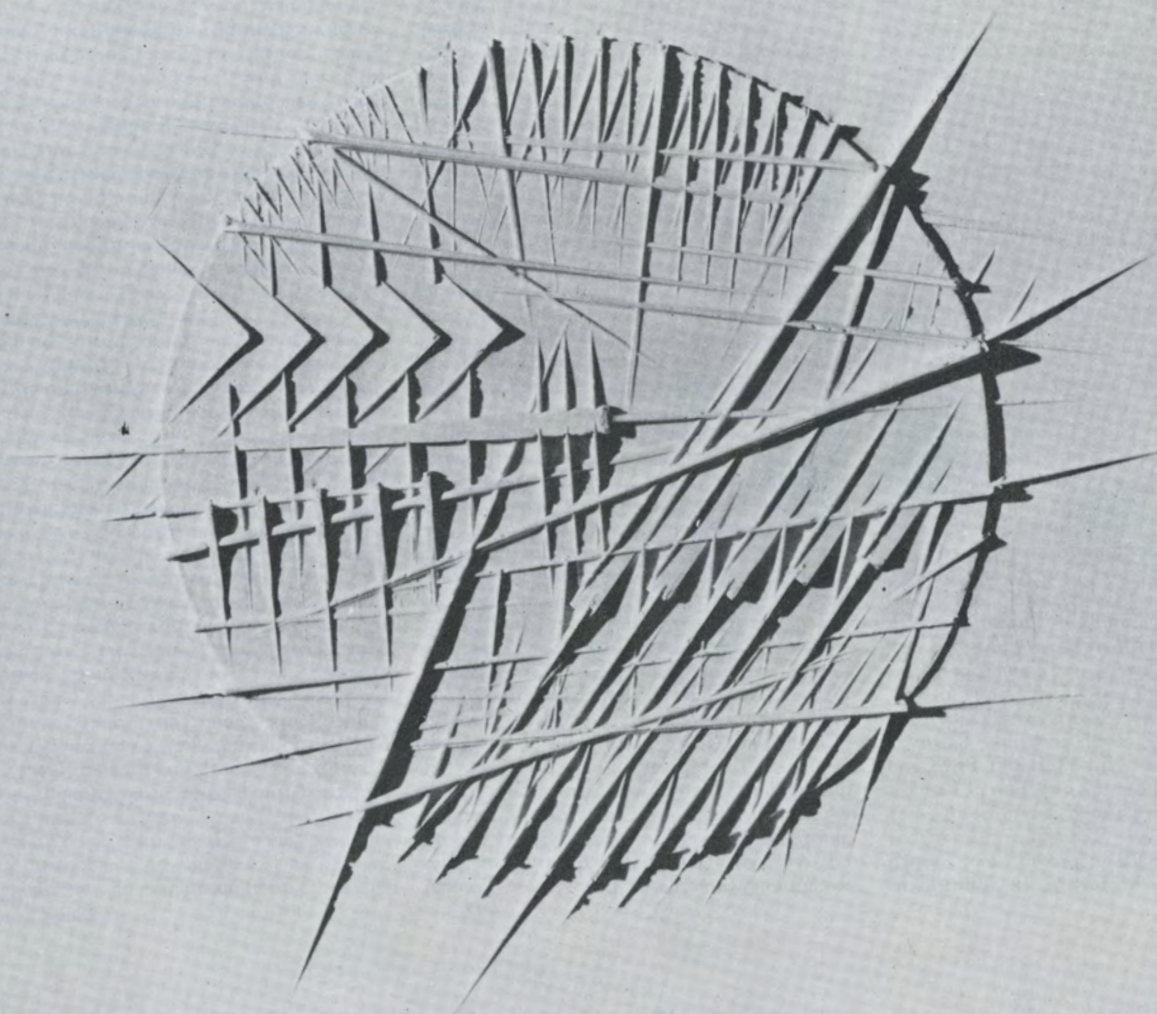
Bregenz, London, Berlin and Frankfurt; *Don Carlo* in Marseilles, New York, Naples and Orange; and *Faust* in Bologna. Among his recordings are complete versions of *La Traviata*, *Lucrezia Borgia* and *Esclarmonde*, and an album of zarzuela arias.

Venetian-born **Silvano Carroli** recreates the role of his 1982 San Francisco Opera debut, Count Anckarström (Renato) in *Un Ballo in Maschera*. His most recent Company engagement was in one of his signature roles, Iago in *Otello* for the 1983 Fall Season. Considered a true Verdi baritone, Carroli began his career by winning first prize in the Palermo National Voice Competition in 1957 and in the Teatro La Fenice Contest in Venice in 1963. He was invited to join the Fenice opera school that same year, and made his professional debut with that company as Marcello in *La Bohème*. He has since carved a major career in the world's important houses, including La Scala, Covent Garden, the Vienna Staatsoper, and the companies of Berlin, Hamburg, Munich, Paris, Rome and Barcelona, among others. He made his American debut in the title role of *Simon Boccanegra* during La Scala's 1976 tour to Washington, D.C., and gave his first performances with an American company the following year when he portrayed Scarpia in *Tosca* for the Opera Society of Washington, D.C. He made his debut at the Lyric Opera of Chicago in 1978, singing Ezio in *Attila*. In 1983 he bowed with Opera Colorado as Iago, and that fall made his East Coast debut in the title role of *Macbeth* for the Connecticut Grand Opera. Late that season he made his Metropolitan Opera debut as Don Carlo in *La Forza del Destino*. Carroli has scored successes at many of the world's major music festivals, including those at Orange, Verona, Sofia and the Pro Musica Festival in Spain. Last December he sang the title role of *Don Giovanni* in Rome and last spring portrayed Scarpia for Opera Colorado. Other recent engagements include *Macbeth* and *Escamillo* in *Carmen* in Barcelona, *I Lombardi* at La Scala and the Paris Opera, and *Attila* in Turin. Upcoming assignments include Iago in San Diego, Gérard in *Andrea Chénier* and Jack Rance in *La Fanciulla del West*. He can be seen as Jack Rance on a videodisc of the Covent Garden production of *Fanciulla*.

continued on p. 44

OPERA PLAZA AND GHIRARDELLI SQUARE - SAN FRANCISCO

# MODESTO LANZONE'S



This production was originally made possible through a gift from a friend of the San Francisco Opera.

The revival of this production is made possible through the generosity of Bernard and Barbro Osher.

Opera in three acts by GIUSEPPE VERDI

Text by ANTONIO SOMMA

Based on Scribe's libretto for Auber's opera *Gustave III, ou Le Bal masqué*

# Un Ballo in Maschera

(in Italian)

*Conductor*

John Pritchard

*Production*

Sonja Frisell

*Designer*

John Conklin

*Lighting Designer*

Thomas J. Munn

*Chorus Director*

Richard Bradshaw

*Choreographer*

Carlos Carvajal

*Musical Preparation*

Susanna Lemberskaya

Robert Morrison

Svetlana Gorzhevskaya

James Johnson

*Prompter*

Jonathan Khuner

*Assistant Stage Director*

Paula Williams

*Stage Manager*

Jerry Sherk

Scenery constructed in

San Francisco Opera Scenic Studios

Costumes executed by

San Francisco Opera Costume Shop

First performance:

Rome, February 17, 1859

First San Francisco Opera performance:

September 19, 1931

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 7 AT 8:00

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 10 AT 2:00

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 13 AT 7:30

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 17 AT 2:00

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 20 AT 8:00

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 23 AT 8:00

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 1 AT 2:00

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 6 AT 8:00

**CAST**

(in order of appearance)

*Count Horn (Samuele)* Kevin Langan

*Count Ribbing (Tommaso)* James Patterson

*Oscar* Erie Mills

*Gustavus III (Riccardo)* Carlo Bergonzi  
(Nov. 7, 10, 13, 17, 20,23)

Giacomo Aragall

(December 1, 6)

*Count Anckarström (Renato)* Silvano Carroli

*A judge* Dennis Petersen

*Madame Arvidson (Ulrica)* Fiorenza Cossotto

*Christian (Silvano)* David Malis

*Amelia's servant* Kevin Anderson

*Amelia Anckarström* Carol Neblett

*Courtiers, chiefs of staff, deputies, conspirators,  
inhabitants of the port area*

*Corps de ballet*

PLACE AND TIME: 1792 in Stockholm, Sweden

*ACT I Scene 1:* Levee in the king's bedroom

*Scene 2:* Madame Arvidson's house on the waterfront

INTERMISSION

*ACT II Scene 1:* A lonely spot on the seashore

*Scene 2:* Count Anckarström's study

INTERMISSION

*ACT III Scene 1:* The king's box at the opera

*Scene 2:* Inside the Stockholm opera house

*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 and fifteen minutes.*

1985 Fall Season Supertitles underwritten through a generous grant from American Express via the San Francisco Opera Guild.

All performances of *Un Ballo in Maschera* feature Supertitles by Jerry Sherk, San Francisco Opera.

# Un Ballo in Maschera/Synopsis

## ACT I

A morning levee in the king's bedroom. Among those waiting are a group of rebellious courtiers led by Count Ribbing and Count Horn. Oscar, the royal page, announces King Gustavo and asks his approval of the invitation list for a masked ball. Seeing the name of Amelia, wife of his chief minister Anckarström, the king, who is romantically attracted to her, momentarily loses himself in thought of a future meeting. As the others leave, Oscar admits Anckarström, who says he knows the cause of the king's distressed look: a conspiracy against the crown. Gustavo refuses to take him seriously and continues his grooming. The minister of justice arrives with a decree banishing the fortune teller, Madame Arvidson, who has been accused of witchcraft. Oscar proclaims her innocent and describes her skill at stargazing. Deciding to see for himself and overruling Anckarström's objections, the king light-heartedly bids the court to join him in an incognito visit to the soothsayer.

After she has invoked the dark spirits before a group of fearful and fascinated women, Madame Arvidson tells the seaman Christian that he will soon prosper. Gustavo, disguised as a sailor, surreptitiously slips money and a promotion into Christian's pocket. When he finds it, all are suitably impressed. The king stays in hiding when Madame Arvidson sends her visitors away to grant an audience to Amelia, who comes seeking release from her illicit passion for Gustavo. The fortuneteller instructs Amelia to find a magic herb that grows at the foot of the gallows outside the city gates and must be picked at midnight. Amelia, though horrified, will go there that very night, and Gustavo resolves to follow her. The disguised courtiers are now heard arriving as Amelia hurriedly departs. The king, still incognito, asks Madame Arvidson to read his palm. When she says that he will die by the next hand he shakes, he laughs and invites anyone in the company to give lie to her prophecy. When they refuse to do so, he clasps the hand of Anckarström, who had just arrived. Gustavo is then recognized and hailed by the crowd.

## ACT II

A frightened Amelia arrives at the gallows as midnight strikes. Gustavo appears and declares his love for her. She admits her own love for him, but begs him to think of her honor. Anckarström rushes in to warn the king to flee the approaching assassins. Gustavo asks Anckarström to escort the hooded lady back to the city gates without attempting to discover her identity. Receiving his promise, the king leaves and the conspirators arrive shortly thereafter.

Finding Anckarström instead of their intended victim, they curse their luck. Anckarström draws his sword against Horn, and as Amelia rushes to defend her husband, Ribbing pulls back her hood, revealing her identity. The conspirators make fun of Anckarström's discomfiture. He asks Ribbing and Horn to meet him at his home in the morning and, as the conspirators leave, coldly reminds his wife that he had sworn to escort her to the gates of the city.

Amelia, left by her husband at the city gates, has returned home alone and fearfully awaits his arrival. He enters, declaring that death is the only possible punishment for her betrayal, but accedes to her request for a last meeting with her son. Amelia leaves and Anckarström, in anger and sorrow, deplores the double loss of friendship and love. He is interrupted by Ribbing and Horn. When he asks to join the conspiracy, they are at first suspicious, but become convinced when he offers his own son as hostage. United in purpose, they cannot agree who should have the privilege of assassinating the king. Amelia returns just as the men are about to draw lots. Seeing the irony in Amelia's choosing her lover's assassin, Anckarström forces his wife to draw a name from the urn and rejoices when it is his own. A moment later Oscar brings an invitation to the masked ball. While the men hail this chance to execute their plan and arrange to identify themselves at the ball by the color of their costume and a red ribbon in their cloaks, Amelia determines to warn Gustavo.

## ACT III

In his box at the Royal Opera House, Gustavo realizes that honor compels him to renounce his love and resolves to send Amelia and Anckarström on a diplomatic appointment abroad. Oscar delivers a note to the king from an unknown lady, warning him of a murder plot. He decides to ignore it, not wanting his absence to be taken as a sign of cowardice.

In the confusion of the masked ball, Anckarström informs Ribbing and Horn that the king will not be present. Oscar, playfully identifying Anckarström through his disguise is, in turn, unmasked by the minister. The page lets slip the news that the king is, after all, present, and when Anckarström insists that he must speak to the king on urgent state business, Oscar reveals Gustavo's disguise. Amelia, recognizing the king, urges him to leave as his life is in danger. He refuses, but tells her of the foreign assignment for her husband, and bids her an ardent farewell. Anckarström discovers them and shoots him. The dying Gustavo, surrounded by his grieving court, forgives Anckarström, who learns too late of his wife's innocence.

# Un Ballo in Maschera

Photos taken in rehearsal by David Powers



*Carol Neblett, Carlo Bergonzi*



*Carol Neblett*



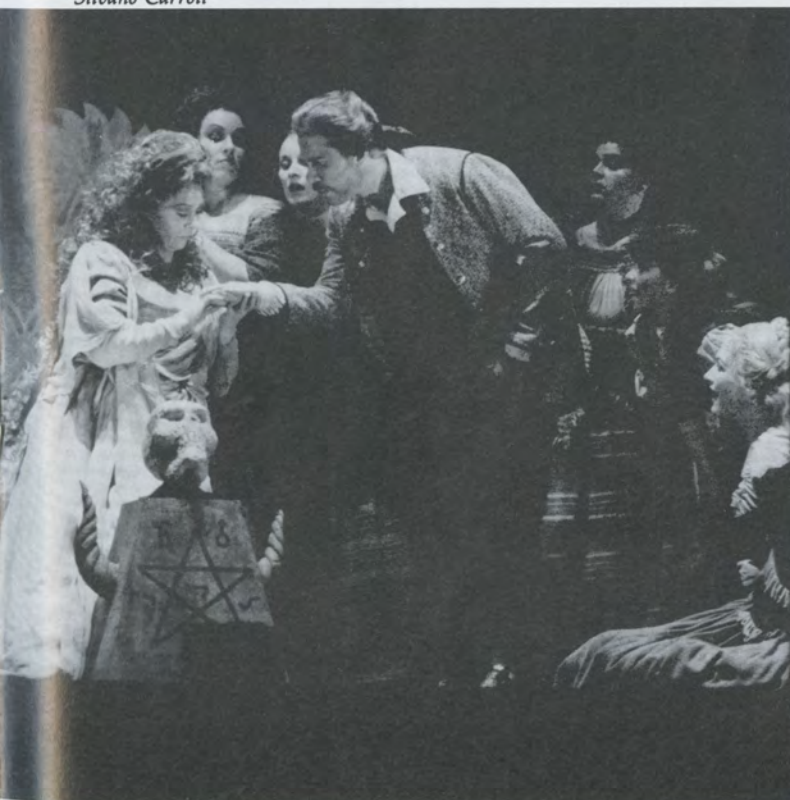
*Fiorenza Cossotto*



*Fiorenza Cossotto, Carlo Bergonzi*



Silvano Carroli



Fiorenza Cossotto, David Malis

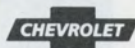


Kevin Langan, James Patterson



*Carlo Bergonzi, Erié Miis*

# BLAZER



NOW APPEARING WHERE BETTER CARS ARE PARKED.

Let's get it together...buckle up.





KEVIN LANGAN



JAMES PATTERSON



DAVID MALIS



DENNIS PETERSEN

A favorite of San Francisco Opera audiences, bass **Kevin Langan** returns for his sixth consecutive season with the Company to sing Zoroastro in *Orlando*, Pistola in *Falstaff* and Samuele in *Un Ballo in Maschera*. He was most recently seen here last fall as Henry VIII in *Anna Bolena*, a portrayal that won him enthusiastic critical praise. He participated in the 1979 and 1980 Merola Opera Programs, and made his Company debut as the Old Hebrew in *Samson et Dalila* during the 1980 Fall Season. Since then he has earned distinction in 25 San Francisco Opera productions. He has appeared extensively throughout North America, singing a wide variety of roles with New York City Opera, the Canadian Opera of Toronto, San Diego Opera, Santa Fe Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Vancouver Opera, Opera/Omaha and the companies of St. Louis, Tulsa, Detroit, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Los Angeles, Palm Beach and San Jose, as well as in his home state with New Jersey State Opera. He made his 1979 recital debut in London under the sponsorship of Elisabeth Schwarzkopf and the late Walter Legge, and in 1980 was a Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions winner. His European operatic debut took place in 1982 when he appeared as Osmin in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* in Lyons, France. Recent appearances include a triumphant New York recital debut at Carnegie Recital Hall in April 1984, Méphistophélès in *Faust* last January in Toronto, followed by Sarastro in *The Magic Flute* in Houston in February, and May performances as Padre Guardiano in *La Forza del Destino* in Winnipeg. Among his future engagements are *The Magic Flute* in Winnipeg and Santa Fe, *Le Nozze di Figaro* in San Diego, *Aida* and *Boris Godunov* in Toronto, and *L'Incoronazione di Poppea* in Santa Fe.

Bass **James Patterson** sings four roles for San Francisco Opera's 1985 Fall Season: The King of France in *Lear*, Johann in *Werther*, Tommaso in *Un Ballo in Maschera*, and the Police Commissioner in *Der Rosenkavalier*. A graduate of the 1982 Merola Opera Program, he appeared in productions of *Rigoletto* and *The Magic Flute*, and went on to portray Sparafucile in Western Opera Theater's 1982 touring production of *Rigoletto*. He was heard in Opera Center Showcase productions of *L'Ormino* and *The*

*Rape of Lucretia* in 1983, and for the 1984 Showcase was Osmin in *The Abduction from the Seraglio*. Since his Company debut as a Customhouse Guard in the 1983 Summer Season production of *La Bohème*, he has sung nearly a dozen roles here, including Dr. Grenvil in *La Traviata*, the King of Egypt in *Aida*, Zuniga in *Carmen*, Alessio in *La Sonnambula*, Sparafucile in *Rigoletto*, Orest's Guardian in *Elektra*, a Border Guard and Cherniakovsky in *Boris Godunov*, and a Monk in *La Gioconda*. His most recent Company appearances were as Fafner in *Das Rheingold* and *Siegfried* during the 1985 Ring Festival. Last year, he sang both Fafners for the Pacific Northwest Wagner Festival in Seattle. During the summer of 1981, he was an apprentice artist with Santa Fe Opera, where he appeared as Simone in *Gianni Schicchi*. His concert credits include Herod in Berlioz's *L'Enfance du Christ* with the Marin Symphony, and for the 1983 Festival of Masses he was bass soloist in the *St. Matthew Passion* and the Verdi Requiem under the baton of Robert Shaw.

Baritone **David Malis** sings three roles for the 1985 Fall Season: Ping in *Turandot*, Silvano in *Un Ballo in Maschera*, and Ford in the family performances of *Falstaff*. He made his Company debut during the 1984 Summer Season in *Don Pasquale*, and performed four roles during the Company's 1984 Fall Season. A native of Georgia, Malis graduated from the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music, where he was a student of Italo Tajo, and participated in the 1982 and '83 Merola Opera Programs, appearing in *Madama Butterfly* and *Rigoletto* at Villa Montalvo and in *The Magic Flute* and *Tales of Hoffmann* at Sigmund Stern Grove. He appeared as Sharpless and Yamadori in Western Opera Theater's 1983 tour of *Madame Butterfly*. Currently an Adler Fellow with the San Francisco Opera Center, he was heard in the 1985 Showcase production of Susa's *The Love of Don Perlimplin*, repeating the title role that he created in the work's world premiere at the State University of New York at Purchase in 1984. Earlier this year he toured with the San Francisco Opera Center Singers as Eisenstein in *Die Fledermaus*, and was featured in the Schwabacher Debut Recital Series. In this year's National Institute of Musical Theater competition, Malis won the gold medal and a \$10,000 George London award, going on in

June to win the Cardiff Singer of the World Competition, sponsored by the Welsh National Opera and the BBC. As a result of the latter award, he was chosen to replace an indisposed Hakan Hagegard for a series of three concerts with the Stockholm Chamber Orchestra in the Royal Palace. Future engagements include a concert performance of Strauss' *Intermezzo* at Carnegie Hall, Orff's *Carmina Burana* with the symphonies of Modesto and Marin next April, and, in 1987, his San Diego Opera debut as Belcore in *L'Elisir d'Amore*.

Iowa-born tenor **Dennis Petersen** undertakes five roles in his debut season with San Francisco Opera: Poisson in *Adriana Lecouvreur*; Schmidt in *Werther*; Bardolfo in the Family performances of *Falstaff*; a Judge in *Un Ballo in Maschera*; and the Major-Domo in *Der Rosenkavalier*. He made his professional opera debut in 1979 in two Bizet operas produced by the Theater Opera Music Institute, *Don Procopio* and *Djamileh*. His 1980 engagements included Don José in *Carmen* with the White Water Opera Company of Indiana, Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly* with the Natchitoches Symphony Society of Louisiana, and Count Almaviva in Cleveland Opera Theater's production of *The Barber of Seville*. That fall, he sang his first Rodolfo in *La Bohème* with the Brooklyn Lyric Opera, a performance that led to an invitation to tour in that opera with the Texas Opera Theater. After a year of study in Europe, he returned to the United States to sing Rodolfo with the Center for Opera Performance and a concert production of Wagner's *Rienzi* with the Opera Orchestra of New York. Subsequent engagements with that group include *Benvenuto Cellini* in 1983, and *Nabucco* and *William Tell* in 1984. During the 1982-83 season, he added four new roles to his repertoire: Nemorino in *L'Elisir d'Amore*, Faust in *Mefistofele*, Edgardo in *Lucia di Lammermoor* and Edoardo in Verdi's *Un Giorno di Regno*. Recent engagements have included *La Traviata* and Beethoven's Ninth Symphony in Eugene, Oregon; a tour of *Rigoletto* with the New York City Opera National Company; Mendelssohn's *Die Erste Walpurgisnacht* with the New York Choral Society; and a major triumph as a last-minute replacement for the tenor soloist in Britten's *War Requiem* with the Philadelphia Orchestra.



KEVIN P. ANDERSON



JOHN PRITCHARD



SONJA FRISELL

Tenor **Kevin Anderson** makes his San Francisco Opera debut as a Servant in *Lear* and appears as the Prince of Persia in *Turandot* and Amelia's Servant in *Un Ballo in Maschera*. A graduate of the University of Wyoming, he participated in the Merola Opera Programs of 1983 and '84, during which he appeared in productions of *The Tales of Hoffmann*, *Madama Butterfly* and *Falstaff*. He toured for two seasons with Western Opera Theater, portraying Goro in *Madama Butterfly* in 1983 and Ramiro in *La Cenerentola* in 1984. He has also toured with the San Francisco Opera Center Singers as Nemorino in *The Elixir of Love*. For the Chautauqua Opera Festival, his credits include the roles of Little Bat in *Susannah* and the Tenor in *The Impresario*, and in 1984 he made his Michigan Opera Theatre debut with the company's 1984 residency tour, during which he portrayed Martin in Copland's *The Tender Land* in addition to appearing in *The Brementown Musicians* and two musical revues. He has sung in the San Francisco Symphony's Pops Concerts series, and his assignments with Pocket Opera include Leicester in *Maria Stuarda* (heard in a local broadcast) and Pluto in *Orpheus in the Underworld*, in addition to a program of music by Kern and Gershwin. Among his 1985 engagements is the role of Vitaliano in Vivaldi's *Il Giustino* at the Teatro Olimpico in Vicenza, Italy. Next January, he makes his Carnegie Hall debut in a concert performance of Strauss' *Capriccio*.

Appointed to create the position of music director of San Francisco Opera beginning next January, **Sir John Pritchard** is on the podium this fall for *Un Ballo in Maschera* and *Der Rosenkavalier*. He made his Company debut in 1970 with *Così fan tutte* and returned for *Peter Grimes* (1973 and '76), *Don Giovanni* and *La Cenerentola* (1974), *Thaïs* (1976), *Idomeneo* (1977) and, most recently, *Così fan tutte* (1979). A protégé of Fritz Busch, Pritchard made his operatic conducting debut at Glyndebourne in 1951 with three Mozart operas: *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *Così fan tutte* and *Don Giovanni*. That same year he made his Vienna Staatsoper debut leading *La Forza del Destino*. He opened the 1952-53 season at Covent Garden with *Un Ballo in Maschera* for his first assignment with that company and conducted more than 80 performances of 11 operas in his first two seasons there. He has returned virtually every season since; among the historic performances he led there are the world premieres of Britten's *Gloriana*, Tippett's *King Priam* and *The Midsummer Marriage*. From 1956 to 1962 he was musical director of the Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, which earned a royal charter during his tenure. He was musical director of the London Philharmonic Orchestra from 1962 to 1966, and in 1963 he was appointed principal conductor and artistic counselor of the Glyndebourne Festival, where he had conducted at least one production every season since 1951. In 1969 he became music director for the Glyndebourne Festival and in 1973 was appointed musical director of the Huddersfield Choral Society. In 1978 he relinquished his Glyndebourne post to become chief conductor at the Cologne Opera, a position he continues to hold. In 1980 he became principal guest conductor with the BBC Symphony and since 1982 has been chief conductor of that organization. At the beginning of the 1981-82 season, concurrent with Brussels becoming capital of the European Economic Community, he was named music director of the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie. He continues to make numerous appearances with a wide variety of musical groups, and has led numerous important tours. He was named Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 1962 and in 1983 received a knighthood for his services to music.

In her tenth season with San Francisco Opera, **Sonja Frisell** directs the production of *Un Ballo in Maschera* that she conceived and directed here in 1977 and revived in 1982. She has also staged the work for the Paris Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago and Houston Grand Opera. Her first San Francisco Opera assignment was the 1975 production of *Simon Boccanegra*, which she then directed in 1979 in Chicago and revived here in 1980. At the War Memorial she was also responsible for *Aida* in 1977, returning the following year for *Norma* and *Werther* and for *Don Carlo* in 1979. Subsequent San Francisco projects include *Lucia di Lammermoor* and *Le Cid* for the 1981 Fall Season; *Così fan tutte* in the summer of 1983; and last fall's critically acclaimed *Khovanshchina*, the vehicle of her 1969 American debut at the Lyric Opera of Chicago. She has been on the staff of La Scala for 19 years; in 1968 she became staff producer (director) there and from 1972 through 1979 was director of production. Among Miss Frisell's many production credits are Vivaldi's *Tito Manlio* at the Piccola Scala, *Fidelio* and Handel's *Agrippina* in Venice, *La Favorita* in Bregenz, *Don Pasquale* at Montepulciano and, in this country, *Lucia di Lammermoor* and *La Bohème* at the Lyric Opera of Chicago, *Andrea Chénier*, *Ernani* and *Il Trovatore* in Miami, *Der Rosenkavalier* in Tulsa, and *Carmen* and *Lucia* with Dallas Opera. Her Canadian credits include *Traviata* and *Lucia* in Toronto; *Don Pasquale*, *Bohème* and *Traviata* in Ottawa; and various productions in Winnipeg and Edmonton. Last summer she scored a personal triumph with a production of *Carmen* for her debut at Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires. Future engagements include *Rigoletto* in Miami, *Salome* in Seattle, *Die Zauberflöte* in Edmonton and Winnipeg. Her production of *Il Trovatore* will open the 1987 season at Lyric Opera of Chicago, and her San Francisco Opera production of *Un Ballo in Maschera* was selected for the Opera Company of Philadelphia by Luciano Pavarotti, who will appear in it with the prize-winning young singers of the Pavarotti Vocal Competition.



JOHN CONKLIN



CARLOS CARVAJAL



THOMAS J. MUNN

**John Conklin** designed the sets and costumes for *Un Ballo in Maschera* as his first San Francisco Opera Fall Season assignment in 1977, a production that also opened the 1982 Fall Season. Last summer he received international acclaim for his designs of the four operas of Wagner's *Ring of the Nibelung*, which had been unveiled in 1983 (*Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre*), 1984 (*Siegfried*) and 1985 (*Götterdämmerung*). Local audiences first saw his work in Spring Opera Theater productions of *Orfeo* (1972), *Death in Venice* (1975 and '79) and *Julius Caesar* (1978). In 1980 he designed the Fall Season production of *Don Pasquale* that was seen again during the 1984 Summer Season. Conklin's designs have been applauded in numerous opera, ballet and legitimate theater productions. He created designs for such companies as The New York Shakespeare Festival, the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis, the Arena Theater in Washington, D.C., the Long Wharf Theater in New Haven and the Hartford Stage Company. He has also designed productions for the Joffrey Ballet and London's Royal Ballet. His long association with Santa Fe Opera has resulted in productions of *Così fan tutte*, *Salome*, *Fedora*, *Eugene Onegin*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, and the American premieres of Henze's *We Come to the River* and the three-act version of *Lulu*. For New York City Opera his production credits include *Il Turco in Italia*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and the world premiere of Argento's *Miss Havisham's Fire*. Other American opera projects have been for St. Louis Opera, the Opera Society of Washington and Pittsburgh Opera, while on the other side of the Atlantic he has been responsible for production designs for the Holland Festival and Scottish Opera. He most recently designed costumes for a new production of Mussorgsky's *Khovanshchina* for the Metropolitan Opera, his first assignment with that company.

**Carlos Carvajal** choreographed the dances for *Un Ballo in Maschera*. The San Francisco-born choreographer's first work for San Francisco Opera was the 1970 production of *Carmen*, followed during the 1971 season by *Eugene Onegin* and *Carmina Burana*. His most recent Company assignment was the highly acclaimed production of *Khovanshchina* last fall. Carvajal was a dancer with San Francisco Opera before joining the San Francisco Ballet in 1952 and, in Europe, the Grand Ballet du Marquis de Cuevas. He appeared as premier danseur étoile with the Bremen Opera, the Grand Théâtre de Bordeaux and the National Ballet of Venezuela. In Bordeaux and Caracas he was also choreographer and created dances for over 78 ballet, opera and television productions. Returning to the United States in 1965, he rejoined the San Francisco Ballet as ballet master and associate choreographer, producing 18 new works in five years. In 1970 he founded the San Francisco Dance Spectrum, for which he has set over 50 works—including three full-length pieces—during its 12 years of existence. As a guest choreographer he has worked with the Oakland Ballet, North Carolina Dance Theatre, Pacific Northwest Ballet, Pacific Ballet of Vancouver, the Puerto Rican Dance Theatre and Dance Theater of Harlem. Among his most significant original works are *Voyage Interdit* (1967), *Totentanz* (1969), *Genesis '70* (1970), *Wintermas* (1973), *The Crystal Slipper* (1976) and *Synergies*, which received its world premiere with the Oakland Ballet last year to high acclaim. Recently he created the ballet *Tidescapes* to music by Takemitsu for the company in Jacksonville, Florida. Last spring he unveiled three works in the Bay Area: *Three Aquarelles*, set to music of Ravel, for San Francisco Theatre Ballet under a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts; *Episodes*, set to Poulenc's Sextet, for the Marin Ballet; and the prelude to *Pegasus*, a new opera by Ron MacFarland. Currently a director of the San Francisco Dance Coalition, Carvajal is currently planning a 1986 trip to mainland China, where he will do choreography and teach.

In his tenth year with San Francisco Opera, **Thomas J. Munn** is responsible for lighting seven productions this fall: *Adriana Lecouvreur*, *Lear*, *Orlando*, *Turandot*, *Falstaff*, *Un Ballo in Maschera* and *Billy Budd*. In addition, he has designed the sets for *Billy Budd*. Since 1976, he has conceived the lighting and special effects for over 70 San Francisco Opera productions. He created the lighting for all four of the operas of last summer's Ring Festival, and last fall designed lighting for seven productions, including *Ernani*, *Carmen*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Elektra*, *Khovanshchina*, *Rigoletto* and *Don Giovanni*. He 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, Lyric Opera of Chicago and the Netherlands Opera. 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. Last spring, he served as TV lighting consultant to American Ballet Theatre for an upcoming television series and is at work on sets and lighting for a new multi-media production of *Coppélia* that will have its premiere with the Hartford Ballet next April.

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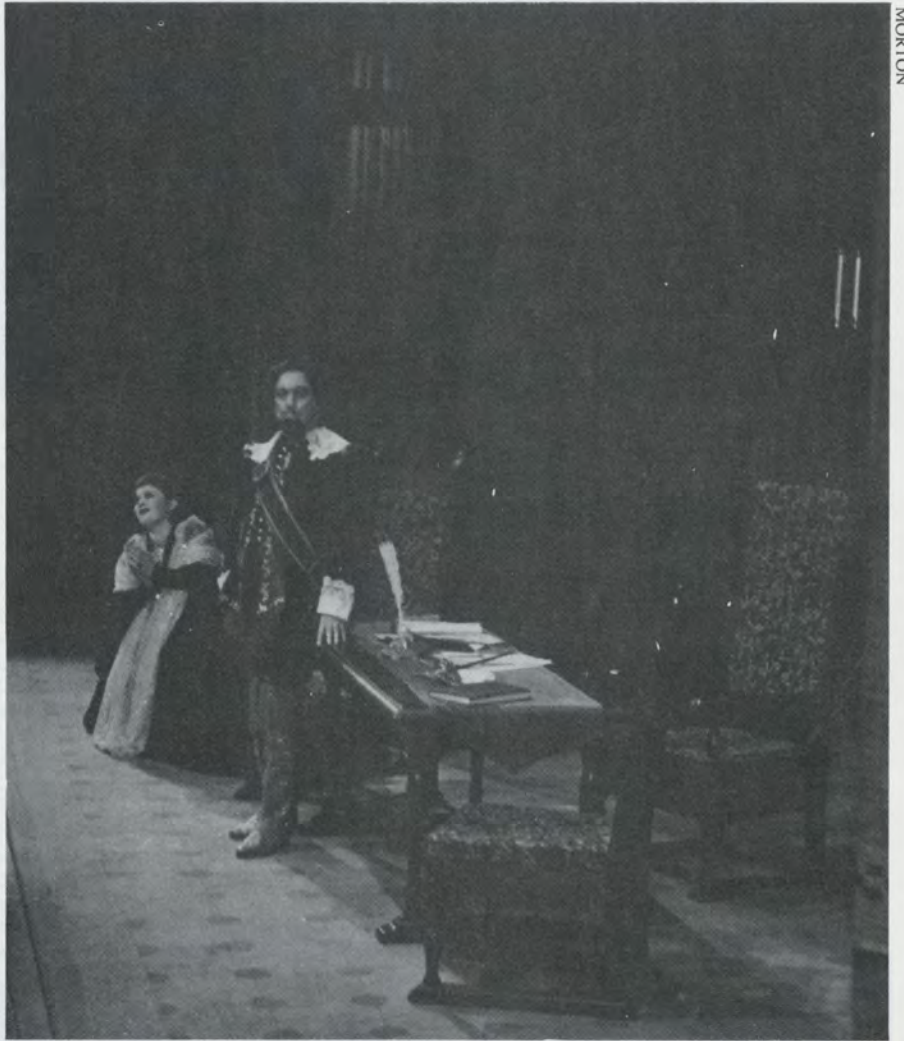
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Scribe continued from p.32



MORTON

Stella Roman as Amelia; Richard Bonelli as Renato in San Francisco Opera's 1942 staging of *Un Ballo in Maschera*.

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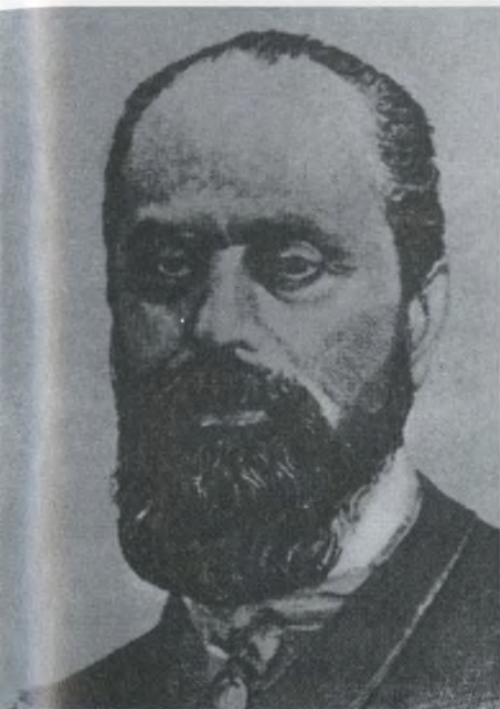
only five Scribe libretti to music, those operas revolutionized music in the mid-1800s. *Robert le Diable*, *Les Huguenots*, *L'Étoile du Nord*, *Le Prophète* and *L'Africaine* may not have been the very first grand operas, but their overwhelming success changed the course of musical history. From then on, serious opera meant grand tales with vast historical canvases, elaborate ballets and expensive spectacles. Perhaps even more pertinent to our discussion of what a librettist can do for a composer is the fact that it was through Scribe's libretti that Meyerbeer found his true voice. With them, Meyerbeer flowered.

Rosenthal's list continues with four operas by Boïeldieu, including *La Dame Blanche*, and two by Offenbach, including *The Cat Turned into a Woman*. Among the composers who used one of Scribe's works were Bellini in *La Sonnambula*, Luigi

Cherubini in *Ali Baba*, Francesco Cilea in *Adriana Lecouvreur*, and Rossini with his delightful comedy *Le Comte Ory*, as well as Charles Gounod, Franz von Suppé and Riccardo Zandonai.

And, of course, there was Verdi, with two Scribe operas. *Les Vêpres Siciliennes*, Verdi's first work for Paris, had a libretto written directly for him by Scribe, though in that case Scribe merely reworked a libretto originally given to Donizetti, *Le Duc d'Albe*. Verdi's second Scribe opera was *Un Ballo in Maschera*, for which he had Antonio Somma adapt what Scribe had written for Auber.

The question remains: What attracted all these composers to Scribe's dramas? For the answer we need only return to Bellini's enthusiastic response to *Le Bal Masqué*. To the nineteenth-century composer, Scribe's "situations" seemed "really fine and new." Verdi is even more



Antonio Somma, 1809-1865.

precise. When he petitioned Scribe to create the libretto for *Les Vêpres Siciliennes*, he catalogued the virtues for which Scribe was sought by so many major composers of his time.

"I need," Verdi wrote, "a subject that is grandiose, impassioned and original; a mise-en-scène that is imposing and overwhelming. I have constantly in view so many of those magnificent scenes to be found in your poems, among others the Coronation in *Le Prophète*. In this scene no other composer could have done as well as Meyerbeer; but then too with such a spectacle and above all with a situation so original, grandiose and at the same time so charged with passion, no composer, however devoid of feeling, could have failed to produce a grand effect! Indeed these scenes are miracles! But you work them so often that I hope you will work one for me."

The Coronation Scene to which Verdi refers constitutes the crowning moment of Meyerbeer's spectacular history of the Anabaptist uprising that convulsed Germany and the Low Countries from 1532 to 1535. From this episode of fanaticism, debauchery, tyranny and slaughter, Scribe wove for Meyerbeer a tale of love, both matrimonial and maternal.

In the second scene of the fourth act,

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Giovanni Martinelli as Riccardo (seated) is attended to by Elisabeth Rethberg (Amelia, left) and Audrey Farncroft (Oscar, right) in the last scene of San Francisco Opera's 1931 production of *Un Ballo in Maschera*.

we are in the Münster Cathedral, where a grand coronation is in progress. Jean of Leyden, the Prophet of the opera's title, appears crowned with a scepter in his hand amid rich pageantry. He is now almost convinced that he is the chosen leader, the son of God. His mother, Fidès, believing him dead, has joined the mob crowded into the Cathedral. She recognizes Jean and cries out "My son!" This is blasphemy to the Prophet's followers, who are ready to kill the old woman.

Jean stops them, saying she is mad. He tells her to kneel before him, puts a hand on her head and calls for divine assistance. He bows down gently to Fidès, asking, "Woman, did you love your son?" Then he addresses the multitude, "People

draw your swords if I am her child, if I have deceived you, punish the impostor." Turning once again to Fidès, he puts the question, "Am I your son?" The distraught mother can only reply "No, no, he is not my son!"

The curtain falls to the chorus's cries of "A miracle! A miracle! Her reason is restored," while in the background a Latin hymn is intoned by the clergy and in the foreground Fidès imagines the Prophet's inevitable downfall.

The modern sensibility calls this kind of action melodramatic. Undoubtedly it is. The characters themselves have been subordinated to the situation. They have had their roundness flattened to serve a huge spectacle. Jean of Leyden has become

the archetypal fanatic manipulating a willing mob. Fidès has been reduced to her position as his loving mother. What the audience will remember is the grand procession that opens the scene and then the moment when Jean, his chest bared to the swords of the Anabaptists, calls for his own death if he is this woman's son.

Melodrama aims at purifying the audience's response to its characters. In such a drama the evil characters accumulate images of guilt, while the good characters bask in images of purity. Here, Jean of Leyden prepares for his own demise by reaching the level of utter degradation: he denies his own mother. But Fidès has become the true mother, who, like the woman in the story of Solomon and the baby, would give up her son rather than see his death. The contrasting movement between the two characters further compels the audience to unqualified value judgments.

Verdi loved melodrama. This scene from Meyerbeer's *Prophète*, as we saw, excited him greatly. He wanted its grand passions, its archetypal characters and extreme situations. In this, he was a typical composer of the mid-nineteenth century.

What the modern sensibility forgets and what Eugène Scribe saw so clearly was the affinity between music-drama and melodrama. Indeed they are the same word. *Melos* is the Greek word for song; we get our term "melody" from it. It is therefore hardly surprising that opera composers have always been attracted to melodramatic stories, or that Scribe, the master of melodrama, became one of the most sought-after librettists in the history of opera.

This does not mean that a composer like Verdi was satisfied with the barest bones of melodrama. After Verdi had finally given up the idea of writing a *King Lear*, he wrote to the San Carlo Opera director Vincenzo Torelli, complaining, "I'm in despair! In these last months I've looked through an infinite number of plays, some of them really beautiful, but not one of them will do for me . . . At present I'm scaling down a French drama, *Gustavo III di Svezia*, libretto by Scribe, performed at the Opéra twenty years ago. It's vast and grandiose; it's beautiful; but it too has conventional things in it like all operas—something I've always disliked and now find intolerable."

Yet Scribe's *Gustave* won the day and



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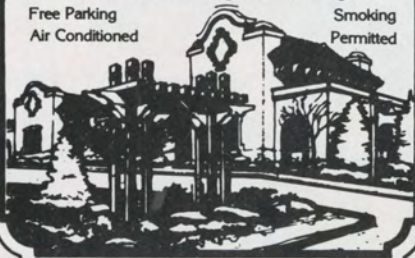
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*Jussi Bjoerling as Riccardo and Elisabeth Rethberg as Amelia, pausing backstage between acts of San Francisco Opera's 1940 presentation of Un Ballo in Maschera.*

the opera Verdi wrote upon it has a fluidity, a variety of textures and a graceful charm new to the composer. Though these qualities were Verdi's own accomplishment, still they were the result of his encounter with Scribe's original libretto. Let us take Oscar, the page, as an example of how Verdi grew through his work on *Un Ballo in Maschera*.

Oscar is not a complicated character. He is a court dandy: pert, even frivolous. The music Verdi gave him is in certain ways a throwback to the earlier coloratura soprano. Bright and sparkling, Oscar's music is usually sung by ladies who specialize in earlier music and lighter heroines, such as Norina in *Don Pasquale*, Zerlina in *Don Giovanni* or even the Queen of the Night in *Die Zauberflöte*.

Mercadante's Oscar followed the usual Italian tradition of using a darker-voiced mezzo-soprano for a trouser role. But Verdi knew better. In giving the part of the pageboy to a soprano leggiero, in making him a soubrette Despina rather than a mezzo Cherubino, Verdi kept to a French tradition and lightened his drama considerably. Auber's Oscar had been a soprano, though Julian Budden in his massive study of Verdi thinks that his real model here was another Scribe creation, Urbain, the page in Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots*, a role which was inevitably transposed down in Italian performances of Verdi's time.

Oscar's words, both in Scribe's original and Somma's adaptation for Verdi, bespeak a saucy lad at once impertinent and flirtatious. Melodrama thrives on black and white contrasts. Oscar, though shallow, is blameless and he shines most brightly when he is surrounded by shadows. Verdi caught this perfectly with quicksilver melodies and a brightness designed to cut through the thickest ensemble. By understanding the special place that Scribe gave to Oscar in this world, Verdi reached a new level of musical and dramatic integration.

The essential moment in all versions of Scribe's libretto is the unmasking of Amelia on the lonely field outside of the city walls. It is the peripeteia or turning point in the drama. From here on, the king's downfall is inevitable. As such, it parallels the Coronation Scene we investigated in *Le Prophète*. The emotions here are less overwrought than they were in *Prophète*, the scene is less grand, but the way Verdi handled it characterizes the

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Emanuel List and Norman Cordon as Sam and Tom; *Un Ballo in Maschera* San Francisco Opera, 1937.

individual drama of *Ballo in Maschera*. This scene gives to *Ballo* its special color, or what Verdi and Andrew Porter following him call the "tinta" of the work. I refer, of course, to the laughter of the conspirators.

At the conclusion of their love duet Amelia and Gustavus are joined by Amelia's husband Renato, who warns the king

of approaching assassins. Amelia fears for the king's life and sends him off, after he has laid upon Renato the injunction never to seek to know the identity of his veiled companion. When the conspirators arrive, they demand to see the lady's face. Their music has a mocking tone. The wit that Oscar brought to this drama is being expanded now to include even the enemy.

Still, there is potential violence beneath the playful surface. The conspirators surround the couple and threaten murder. To save her husband, Amelia drops her veil and reveals her identity. Immediately the conspirators point their verbal daggers. "Wonderful victory," they exclaim in the French original. Here Scribe knew best how to humiliate a husband: laugh at him. "A happy couple can find themselves tête-à-tête in the strangest places." Scribe keeps up the lively humor. The conspirators laugh, "We've not had such a jolly encounter in a long time."

The opportunity is superbly musical. Verdi makes of it a rondo based on the mocking melody he wrote for Somma's Italian version of the ironically happy couple on the moonlit plain. He intersperses episodes expressing first Renato's anger and then Amelia's tears. And then combines them all. The conspirators' scornful laughter will haunt Renato to the final bars of this act, even though he has now joined the conspiracy himself.

The effect of this finale is the more pointed and the more painful, because Verdi understated his case. How different a huge revenge cabaletta for the baritone would have sounded in place of this bouncing rondo. While the special wit of the conspirators' theme and the lyrical power of Amelia's prayer are Verdi's own, they owe much to Scribe's imaginative situation. Here Verdi realized in his music the potential Scribe set for him in words.

A librettist offers his composer the raw materials of music-drama. Hugo von Hofmannsthal gave Richard Strauss subtler characters than Scribe ever dreamed of. Arrigo Boito, working through the agency of William Shakespeare, later gave Verdi himself deeper human issues with which to deal. Lorenzo da Ponte, in his libretti for Mozart, showed how the inner depths of characters are mirrored by their actions and feelings. These are literary virtues Scribe could not attain.

But Eugène Scribe knew how interpersonal situations could become music. Not all of Scribe's situations are as good as this mocking Act II finale. This is the melodramatist at his best, and yet it is also typical of him. When a composer could take advantage of what Scribe had to offer, as Verdi could, then Scribe could accomplish the librettist's most important task—to help the composer find in himself ever richer strains of music drama. ■

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Opening scene of Act II of *Die Walküre*, presented during the 1985 Ring Summer Festival. James Morris was Wotan (left); Gwyneth Jones, Brünnhilde (center); Helga Dernesch, Fricka (right).

## Bank of America—A Leading Role in the Arts

By RON DE LUCA

"When evaluating projects seeking funding, we tend to choose those where our support is going to make a difference," stated Victoria Wood, Contributions Officer at the BankAmerica Foundation. The evaluation process must be effective since the difference that the BankAmerica Foundation makes to the arts in San Francisco has been recognized with both local and national awards this year.

Nationally, the Bank of America is the recipient of 1985's prestigious Business in the Arts Award sponsored by the Business Committee for the Arts, Inc. and *Forbes* magazine. This is the second time that the Bank has won this award. They are one of 11 corporations in the country to receive a Return Award in 1985. On behalf of the Bank, Victoria Wood received the Award and a limited-edition woodcut by contemporary American artist Lois Lane in ceremonies in Pittsburgh, PA on October 1.

Earlier this year, Bank of America was honored by the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce with its Business/Arts Award for leadership over "many years in diversified support of the arts." What is prompting such recognition for Bank of America's effort on behalf of the arts?

### Leadership in the Arts

These awards serve to confirm Bank of America's leadership position in corpo-

rate funding of the arts. Bank of America has a long history of providing support for the arts. In 1968, BankAmerica Foundation was established as the philanthropic arm of Bank of America Corporation. Since that time, the Foundation has contributed nearly \$10 million to arts organizations.

From the outset, the Bank recognized that corporate giving was yet another facet of the corporation's stated mission: "to provide leadership in serving people." To do this most effectively, the Corporation established the BankAmerica Foundation as a separate legal entity. The parent corporation allocates funds for the Foundation each year.

The *Business in the Arts Awards* are presented annually to recognize and honor businesses for their outstanding support to the arts in America. This national Awards Program was created in 1966 and is sponsored by the Business Committee for the Arts, Inc. and *Forbes Magazine* to encourage new and increased business support to the arts.

### Business in the Arts Award

This year's award was given to Bank of America for their initiative in granting multi-year funding awards. The Bank was cited for its leadership role:

Through grants totaling \$725,000, BankAmerica Foundation . . . initiated multi-year funding commitments. These funds were applied to support both operating budgets and special projects of selected arts organizations. This approach relieves arts organizations of the year-to-year uncertainty about funding sources and allows them to plan long-range activities.

Bank of America was selected by the judges for having "one of the finest art support programs in America." According to Wood, this Award is particularly gratifying because the panel of nine judges included many renowned artists such as choreographer Laura Dean, architect Richard Meier, violinist Isaac Stern, the Artistic Director of Lincoln Center Repertory Company, Gregory Mosher, and State Department Ambassador for Cultural Affairs, Daniel J. Terra.

The judges based their decisions on the impact of the business support to the arts, the effect of the business support on the community and/or society, the originality of the business support program, the initiative demonstrated by the business to support the arts and the level of support as compared to the size of the business.

In the case of the San Francisco Opera, BankAmerica Foundation's multi-year commitment was a three-year grant of \$175,000 designated for underwriting

construction of the *Ring* cycle that was so successfully presented this summer. The *Ring* grant was a "wonderful opportunity," according to Wood "to focus international recognition and acclaim on the San Francisco Opera and to enable the company to undertake a project of such magnitude." In addition, it was "an unparalleled opportunity for the BankAmerica Foundation to support the Opera and to share in the *Ring's* success."

From the Opera's viewpoint, this grant was enormously helpful. It enabled the company to proceed with its multi-million-dollar plans to build a completely new four-opera *Ring* cycle. "Knowing that a portion of the costs were underwritten was a tremendous boost to us financially, artistically, and in terms of morale. Multi-year funding for arts organizations is a forward-looking assistance that corporate funders can offer arts organizations," said General Director Terence A. McEwen of the San Francisco Opera.

BankAmerica Foundation also awarded multi-year grants to the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and the San Francisco Symphony. Along with the Opera, these grants were for "a special project representing either a significant



ACHESON

William Lewis as Loge in *Das Rheingold*, shown in the scene involving the Giants and Freia (Nancy Gustafson). San Francisco Opera 1985 Ring Festival.

artistic endeavor or community service program."

**A Multi-faceted Arts Support Program**

In local circles, Bank of America is considered a leader in arts funding as well.

The San Francisco Chamber of Commerce Award specifically recognized Bank of America for its "financial assistance to a broad base of arts organizations," for having "one of the finest business arts collections in the Bay Area," and for the



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*Eva Marton as Brünnhilde in Siegfried, presented as part of S.F. Opera's 1985 complete Wagner Ring cycle.*

use of the bank's auditorium for performing arts activities which "help build new audiences and potential supporters for the arts."

Wood points out that the Foundation is "trying to be responsive to community needs and so responds favorably to small organizations as well as to the prominent." She is very proud of the Foundation's support of small arts groups because she feels that their support has substantially increased outreach efforts. She points to underwriting the membership brochure for San Francisco Performances and for San Francisco Cameraworks as ways the Foundation has helped emerging groups expand their base of support.

Other avenues that the Foundation uses to bolster arts groups include support for the Arts Loan Fund, which enables groups to obtain needed funds via low-cost loans. The Bank's matching gift program also encourages employee financial support of the arts while doubling the employee's gift. Last year, the Bank of

America's Matching Gift program generated \$191,488 in donations for arts groups and approximately \$10,000 for the San Francisco Opera. In addition, a number of corporate executives serve as members of boards of directors of various arts groups.

**Continuing a Leadership Role**

When asked about the future direction of BankAmerica Foundation's support for the arts, Ed Truschke, Senior Vice President of the Foundation, stated that they will look for opportunities where their gifts will make a difference. "Our overriding theme is community service—to make the arts available to the community at large by supporting programs such as the admission-free evenings at the Museum and concerts at Stern Grove."

Wood concluded that the Foundation will "continue to take risks and to look for those projects, such as the San Francisco Opera's production of the *Ring*, where we can provide assistance for major artistic endeavors." ■

# 1985 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 PREVIEWS

### MARIN

Previews held at Park School Auditorium, 360 E. Blithedale, Mill Valley; refreshments served at 7:30 p.m., previews at 8 p.m. Series registration is \$20 for 6 previews (\$15 for students and seniors). Single tickets are \$4 (\$3 for students and seniors). For further information, please call (415) 388-6789 or (415) 388-6982.

*Der Rosenkavalier*

Speight Jenkins 11/14

### NORTH PENINSULA

Previews held at the Kohl Mansion, 2750 Adeline Dr., Burlingame, at 7:30 p.m. Series registration is \$20; single tickets are \$6. For further information, please call (408) 735-3757 or (415) 342-9123.

*Der Rosenkavalier*

Speight Jenkins 11/13

### SOUTH PENINSULA

Previews held at the Palo Alto Senior Center, 450 Bryant Street, at 8 p.m. Series registration is \$18 (students \$9); single tickets are \$4 (students \$3). For further information, please call (415) 941-3890.

*Billy Budd*

Michael Mitchell 11/12

*Der Rosenkavalier*

Speight Jenkins 11/19

### SAN JOSE OPERA GUILD

Previews will be held at the Villa Montalvo Center for the Arts, 15400 Montalvo Rd., in Saratoga. Series is open to the public at a cost of \$4 per lecture; \$3 for students and senior citizens (free of charge to San Jose Opera Guild members and members of Montalvo). For further information, please call (408) 741-1331.

*Billy Budd*

Michael Mitchell 11/12

*Der Rosenkavalier*

Speight Jenkins 11/15

### SONOMA COUNTY CHAPTER

Previews held at various times and locations (see below). Series registration is \$15 for 4 previews. Single tickets are \$5 (students \$3). For further information, reservations and the cost for receptions and luncheons, please call (707) 539-7157.

*Der Rosenkavalier*

Speight Jenkins 11/12, 6 p.m.

reception;

7 p.m. preview

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### 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 (415) 347-6920 or (415) 342-2463.

*Billy Budd*

Michael Mitchell 11/8

### OPERA EDUCATION

#### INTERNATIONAL PREVIEW SERIES

Previews of operas of the 1985 fall season will be given by Michael Barclay, director of Opera Educational International. Lectures are given in the auditorium of the Dr. William Cobb School, 2725 California Street, between Scott and Divisadero, at 7:30 p.m. Admission to the full series of 8 opera previews is \$32; individual admission at the door is \$5. For further information, please call (415) 526-5244.

*Billy Budd*

11/11

*Der Rosenkavalier*

11/18

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#### PUBLIC LIBRARY LECTURE SERIES

Under the sponsorship of the San Francisco Public Library, William Huck will give four free opera previews. They will be given at 7 p.m. at the following locations: 8/29 at the Sunset Branch Library, 19th and Judah; 9/17, 10/8 and 11/5 at the Marina Branch Library, 1890 Chestnut St. For further information, please call (415) 346-9336.

*Billy Budd*

11/5

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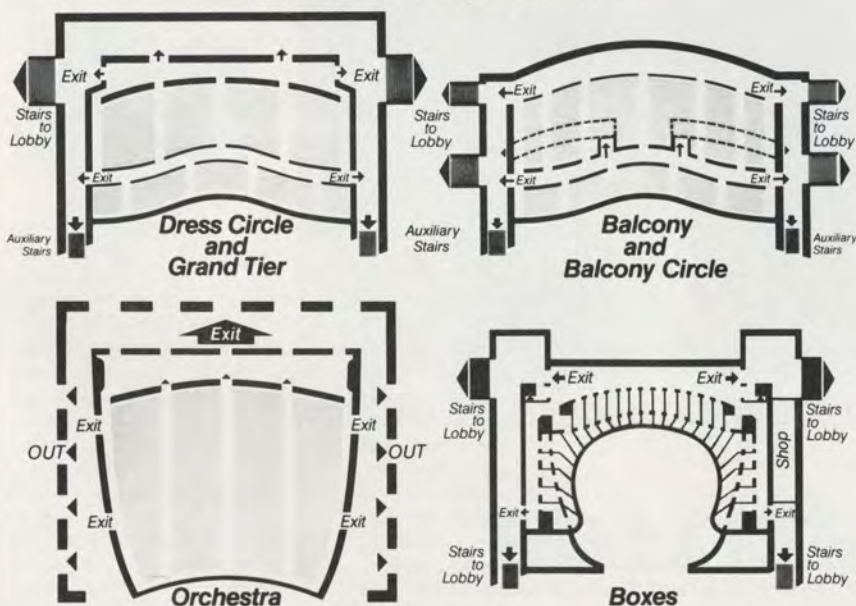
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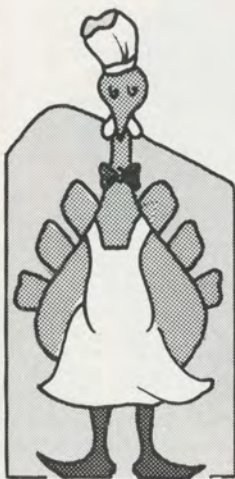
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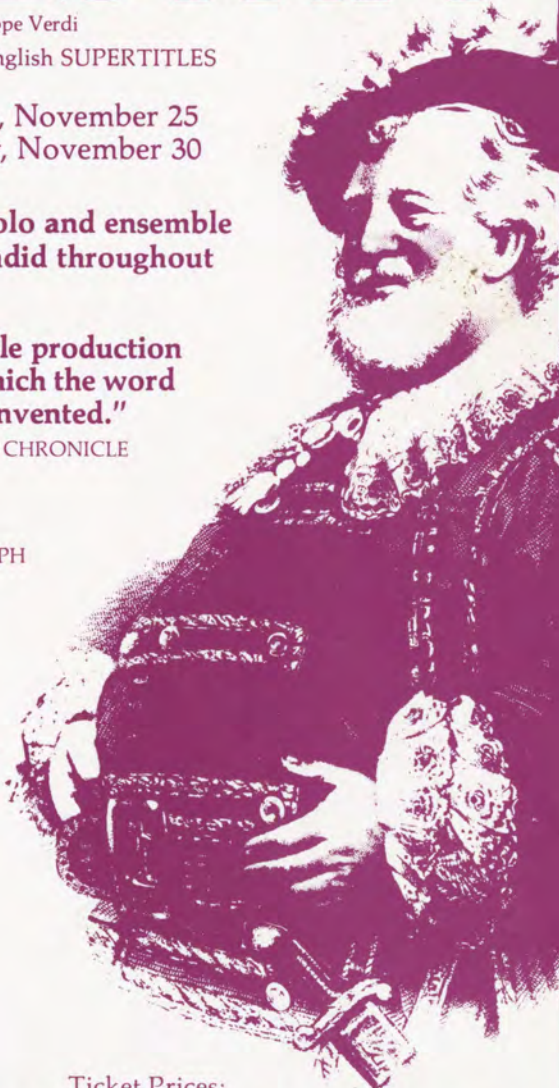
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