

Billy Budd

1985

Thursday, November 14, 1985 8:00 PM  
Tuesday, November 19, 1985 8:00 PM  
Friday, November 22, 1985 8:00 PM  
Wednesday, November 27, 1985 7:30 PM  
Saturday, November 30, 1985 8:00 PM  
Tuesday, December 3, 1985 8:00 PM  
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FALL SEASON 1985

Billy Budd

PERFORMING ARTS NETWORK PUBLICATION \$1.50




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# San Francisco Opera

Terence A. McEwen, *General Director*

## Billy Budd

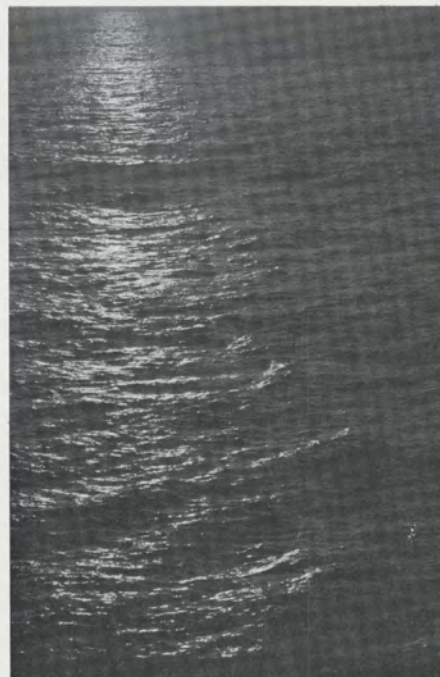
FALL SEASON 1985

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Editor: Koraljka Lockhart  
Art director: Frank Benson  
Editorial assistants: Robert M. Robb, John Schauer

Editorial offices: San Francisco Opera,  
War Memorial Opera House, San Francisco, CA 94102  
Telephone: (415) 861-4008

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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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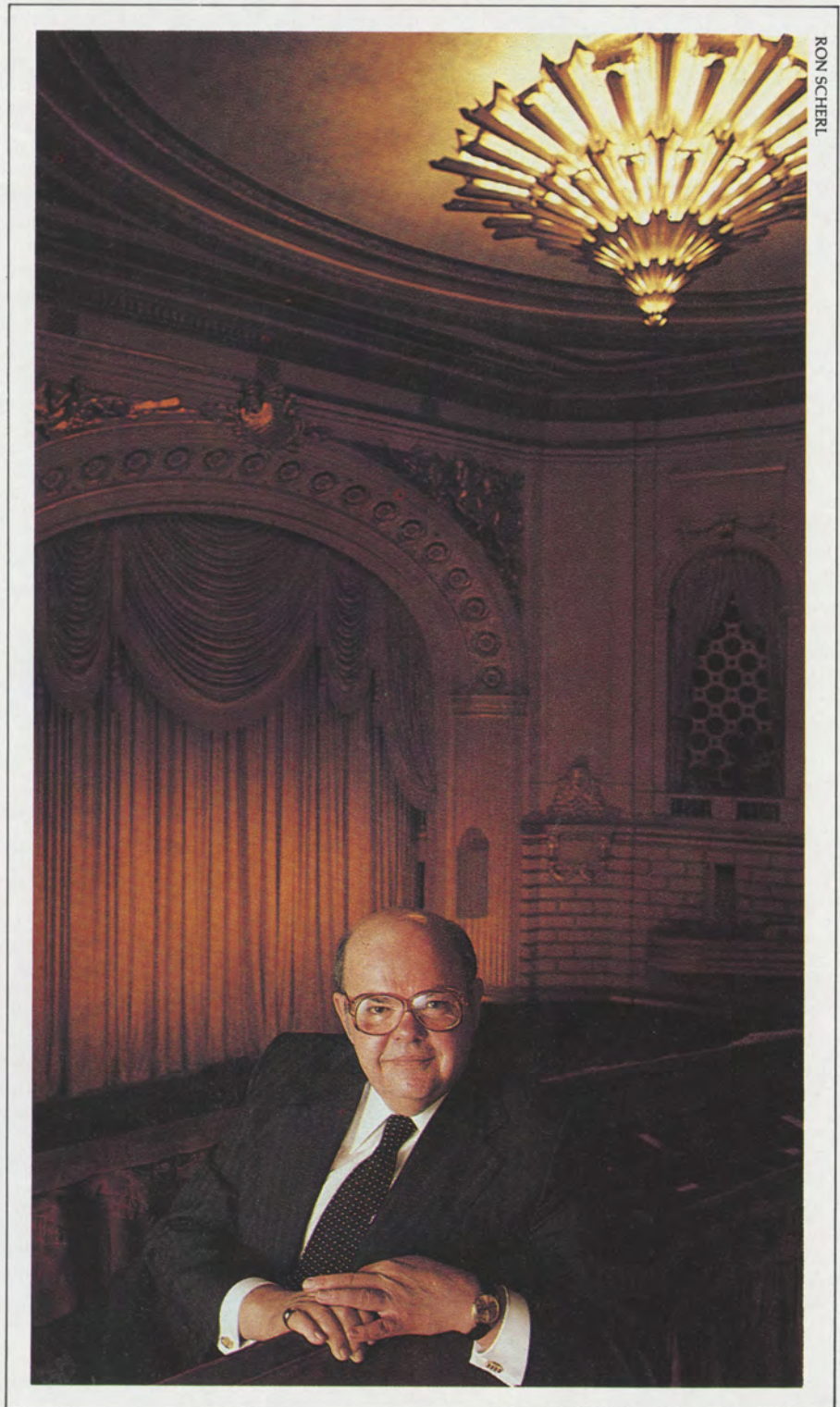
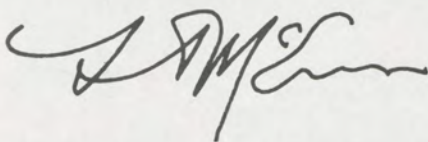
# General Director's Message

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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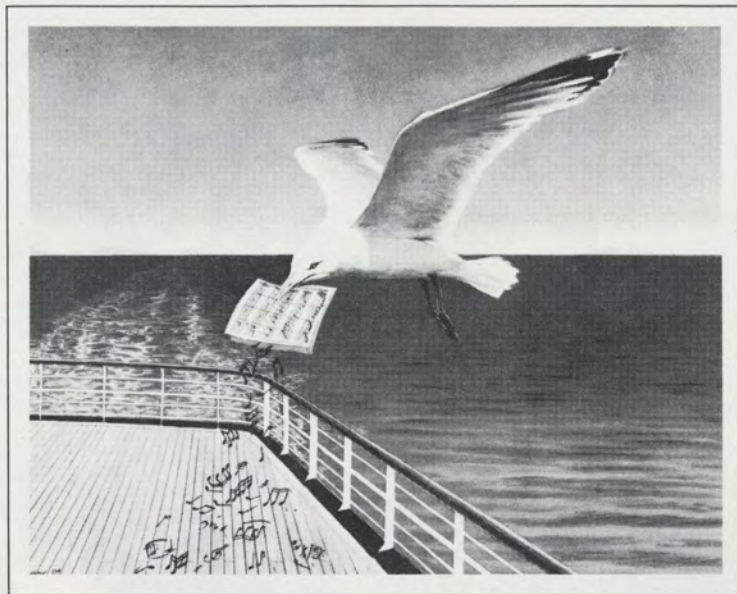


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# 1985 San Francisco Opera Company (Continued)

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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**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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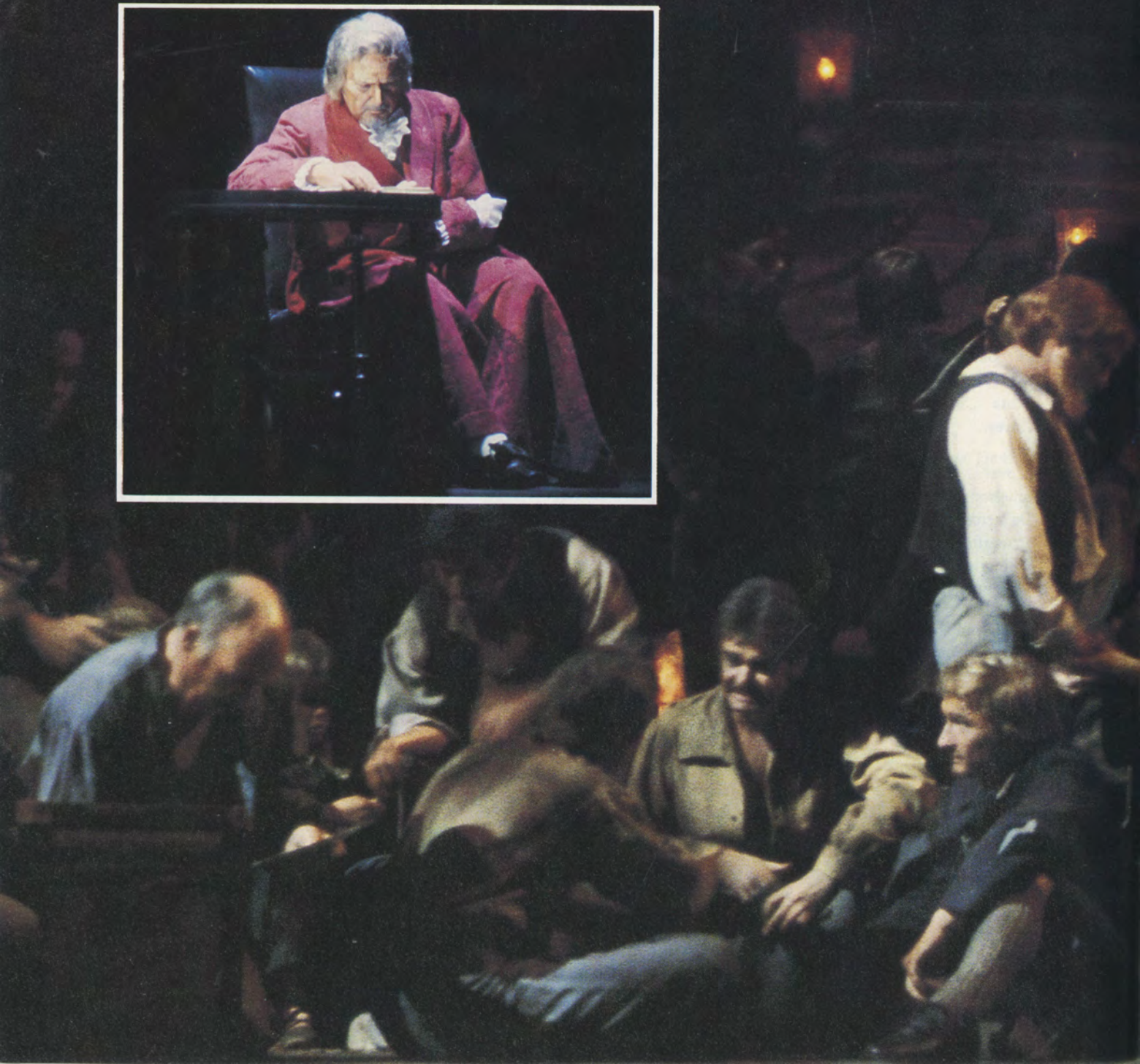
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# Forster, Britten, and *Billy Budd*

By PHILIP BRETT

The association between E.M. Forster and Benjamin Britten was fated from the first. It was Forster's radio talk on Crabbe in 1941 that both triggered the idea of *Peter Grimes* and prompted the composer to give up his attempt at emigration to the United States and return to



Britain. Moreover, the novelist was an older figurehead, an "anti-heroic hero" (to borrow Isherwood's phrase) for many in the group of writers and artists to which Britten attached himself in the thirties. A commission to write an opera for the Festival of Britain in 1951 must have seemed a suitable moment to ask him to collaborate, and according to Forster's biographer, P.N. Furbank, the two of them hit upon the subject of Herman Melville's novella, *Billy Budd*, almost simultaneously.

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*Philip Brett is Professor of Music at the University of California, Berkeley, the editor of the Cambridge Handbook on Peter Grimes, and the author of numerous articles on Britten and other English composers.*

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*Dale Duesing as Billy (center) and the crew of the Indomitable in a scene from San Francisco Opera's 1978 staging of Billy Budd. (Inset) Richard Lewis as Captain Vere.*

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Something of Forster's attitude to the task which he undertook (with the aid of Eric Crozier) can be gleaned from an article he wrote in 1951 for the magazine of the still-extant Reader's Subscription Service. Clearly, he looked at all other adaptations of the story, including the successful Broadway play by Louis Coxé and Robert Chapman, and the libretto for Ghedini's opera (in which he was delighted to find an apparition of Bristol Molly "che danza sul ponte" while the sailors lie dreaming). The problem for their own opera, he says, was how to make Billy, rather than Vere, the hero. Obviously, Melville's treatment of the captain disturbed him a good deal:

How odiously Vere comes out in the trial scene! At first he stays in the witness box, as he should, then he constitutes himself both counsel for the prosecution and judge, and never stops lecturing the court until the boy is sentenced to death . . . His unseemly harangue arises, I think, from Melville's wavering attitude towards an impeccable commander, a superior philosopher, and a British aristocrat. Every now and then he doused Billy's light and felt that Vere, being well-educated and just, must shine like a star.

Vere still has his starry moments in the opera, but his tight-lipped refusal to give his subordinates the advice they beg for during the trial lends him, if anything, greater dignity than Melville's oddly erratic commander.

If Vere is vocal enough in Melville to provide characteristic phrases for the libretto, Claggart is not. Forster followed Melville's hint of "natural depravity" as well as his reference to Claggart as "the Man of Sorrows": "Claggart gets no kick out of evil as Iago did. . . and if he utters a credo it must be on different lines from Iago's in 'Otello'." The aria he engineered for the dour master-at-arms towards the end of Act I he regarded as his most important piece of writing, and he must have irritated Britten by writing to him "and I did not, at my first hearing, feel it sufficiently important musically. . . I want *passion*—love constricted, perverted, poisoned, but never the less *flowing* down its agonizing channel; a sexual discharge gone evil. Not soggy depression or growling remorse."

Forster was of course merely follow-

ing Melville in discerning sexual passion among the other feelings engendered in both Claggart and Vere as a result of their apprehension of Billy's goodness and beauty. Vere's mentally stripping Billy the first time he sees him, and the "stream of greasy fluid" (Billy's spilled soup) which causes Claggart almost to "ejaculate something hasty at the sailor": these are unmistakable signs in so richly allusive a novella. But the matter went deeper than that, for Forster himself was among the large number of middle-class intellectuals attracted to working-class youths: "I want to love a strong young man of the lower classes and be loved by him and even hurt by him. That is my ticket, and then I have wanted to write respectable novels," he wrote in an honest personal memorandum. His portrait of Billy was done, as it were, from the heart. He rejects the suggestions of a priest-like savior or a blameless fool and writes,

R. WOOD



Peter Pears as Captain Vere in the 1951 world premiere of *Billy Budd*.

The hints of masculinity are stronger. "Belted Billy" belongs to adolescent roughness, to the watches of Queequeg and Jack Chase and John Marr:

Tattooings, ear-rings, love-locks curled;

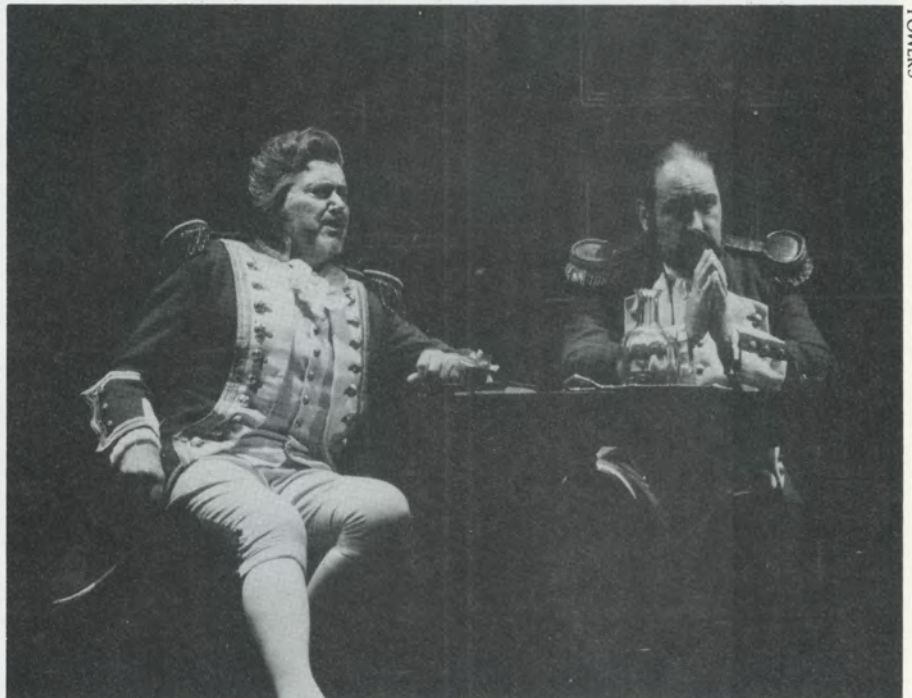
Barbarians of man's simpler nature, Unwordly servers of the world, whom the world can easily trap and destroy, but who are, in the precise meaning of the word, men.

Perhaps there is also in the libretto a hint of the wish-fulfillment that is evident in *Maurice* and some of the posthumously printed stories. At any rate, the wish to



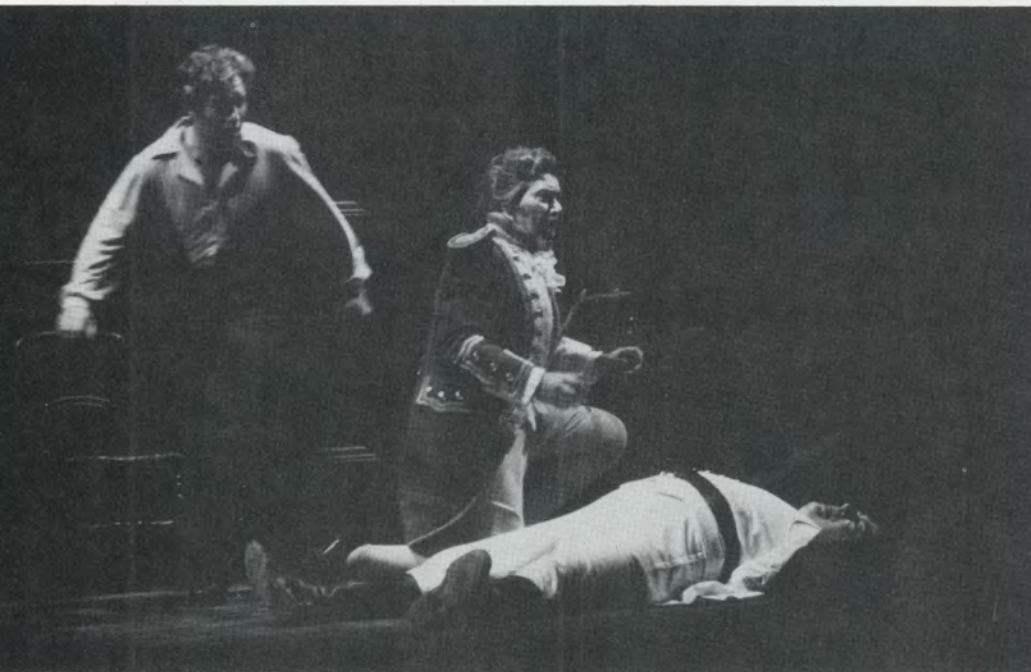
NOSTIM

Benjamin Britten (1913-1976) during a rehearsal, ca. 1967.



POWERS

Richard Lewis as Captain Vere and Raimund Herinx as Mr. Redburn in San Francisco Opera's *Billy Budd*, 1978.



POWERS

(L. to r.) Dale Duesing as Billy, Richard Lewis as Captain Vere, and Forbes Robinson as Claggart in San Francisco Opera's 1978 staging of *Billy Budd*.

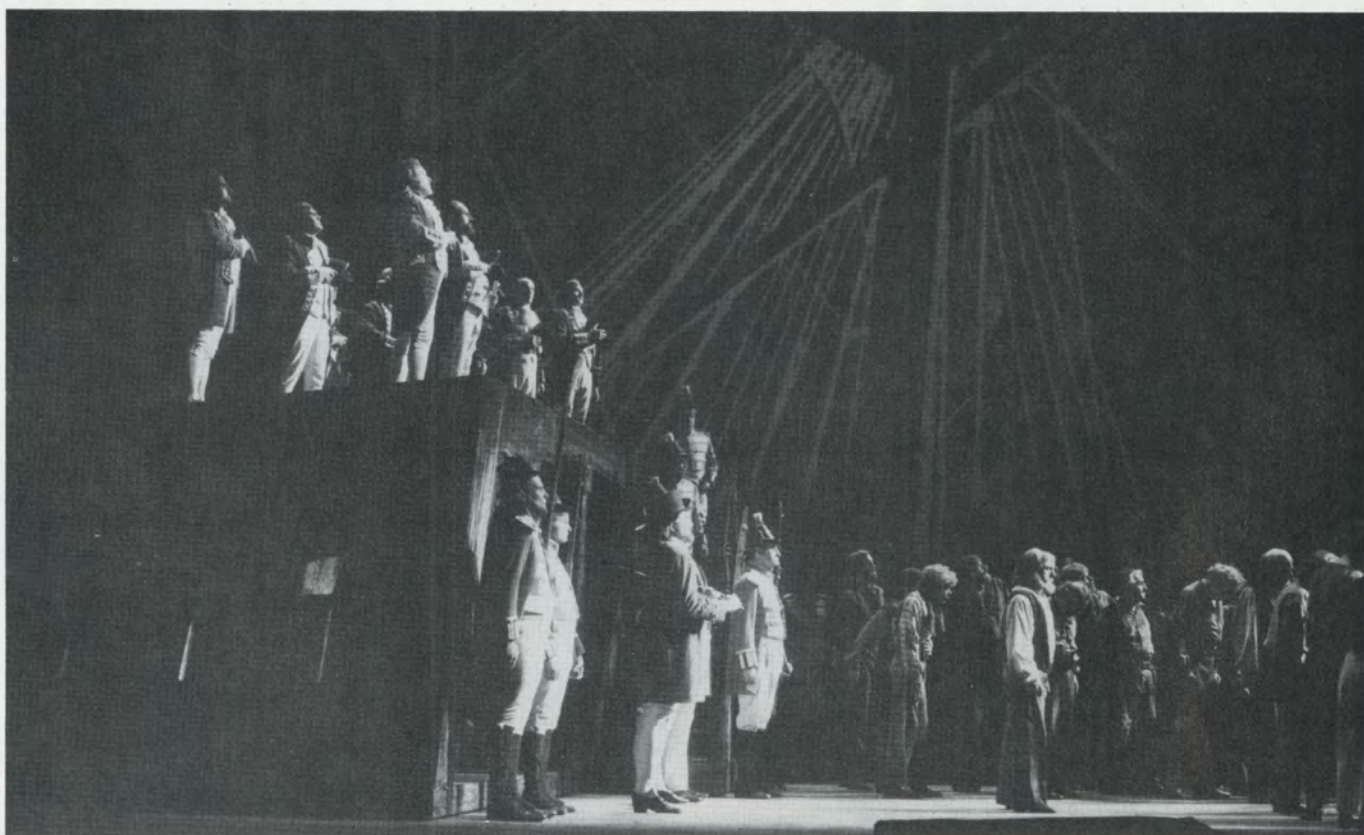
put Billy back into the limelight suffered from the decision to frame the action. Prolonging Vere's life (Melville kills him off shortly after the hanging) and having him look back in the Prologue and Epilogue effectively throws the emphasis on *his* predicament rather than Billy's, and suggests even more unfortunately that

the action is presented from his perspective—perhaps even colored by his memory.

Britten must have embraced the subject of *Billy Budd* as a further exploration of the predicament of the individual in relation—usually in opposition—to society that had occupied his attention in

the earlier operas. Grimes, Lucretia and Herring are all victims, innocent to one degree or another, and unjustly served by the *mores* of rigid or repressive social orders. Herring points the way, perhaps a bit too easily, towards escape: young Albert casts off his mother's apron strings and rejects, in music as well as words, the closed world of his upbringing. Grimes and Lucretia, however, both commit suicide. Grimes, who is too rough for his young charges, internalizes society's hatred and almost wills his own destruction. Lucretia, virtuous to a fault, is forced to turn her rape into her own crime, and dies of guilt.

In *Billy Budd* the setting is still an uncomfortable, hostile environment dominated by oppressive forces. In fact it is the most claustrophobic of these societies, bounded as it is by the narrow walls of the ship and focused on one purpose, that of destroying an enemy. The hero, blue-eyed and fair-skinned, scarcely comes into opposition with those forces. He is the unknowing victim of thwarted love, envy and fate. He is too innocent for his own good, for such good-heartedness is subversive: and his fatal flaw ("the stammer," as Auden said, "will not quite do, for this is only an aesthetic weakness") is scarcely



POWERS

*Billy Budd* at the San Francisco Opera in 1978: Final Scene.

more than the mark of original sin; one cannot imagine its being the sign of an unexplored darker nature. He does not die, however, without having almost inadvertently "saved" the man who sentences him to death. And in Britten's music there is the distinct feeling, as the great B-flat chord wells out of the orchestra in the Epilogue, that the vision of Christian redemption with which *Lucretia* ended is once again invoked to give added resonance.

Among the difficulties of setting such a story was the sheer technical problem of making an opera work without female voices. This was exactly the sort of practical challenge Britten rose to with virtuosity from his early days in the broadcasting and film studios of London, where he often showed his uncanny knack of conjuring the right sound from the most unexpected material. The musical language of *Budd* is on the whole less colorful than that of *Grimes*, the scoring less conventional. If the Storm Interlude in *Grimes* reflects the turmoil in the fisherman's mind in a rather obvious way, Vere's moral confusion is more subtly and brilliantly suggested by the musical portrayal of the ocean mist. In *Budd* there is also a characteristic association, first explored in *Lucretia*, of certain distinct sonorities with certain characters or events. The trombone chords that so often accompany Claggart are an instance, as are the high woodwinds and dotted rhythms that characterize the ship under sail, and the saxophone, beginning on D flat, which denotes the Novice's suffering. It is a delicate and always interesting score, which Britten could not have written without the earlier experience of the chamber operas.

Another challenge was how to give musical purpose and unity to the opera while suggesting the mist, fog and moral confusion (the Forsterian "muddle") that are so essential to the whole conception. The opera was originally cast in four acts, and had a symphonic character. Act I was Billy's introduction to the *Indomitable*, ending with a captain's muster in which Vere addressed the men. Act II was a "slow movement," depicting the vessel at night. The chase of the French ship served as a scherzo, and the last act began with the ballad "Billy in the Darbies," and concluded with the hanging and the Epilogue. Britten revised this scheme in 1960 by tightening up the sequence into

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two acts without cutting anything essential (though the loss of the captain's muster means that Billy now swears to die for a man he has never seen).

The atmosphere of uncertainty is suggested as soon as the curtain rises on the reminiscing Vere: an eerie string passage embodies a characteristic opposition between two identical scales, one based on G, the other on B flat. The clash of B natural and B flat that occurs here is crystallized in a subsequent chord against which Claggart's motive is heard in the trombones. Much of the material of the work reaches back to these opening bars in one way or another. (Ex. 1)

Thematic transformation, always an important element in Britten's dramatic and musical technique, reaches new levels of subtlety in *Budd*, giving it an almost Wagnerian sense of flux. But admirable though responsible craftsmanship of this kind might be, it would be nothing if the material itself were not of such extraordinary quality: and what is so striking about *Budd* is the richness of musical reference it engenders. In Melville, to take a down-to-earth instance, we learn of the love and harmony Billy spreads among his shipmates from a speech by Captain Graveling of the *Rights of Man*. In the opera this slightly aggressive side of Billy's goodness is expressed in a series of rising arpeggios on triads a tone apart, first heard when the boat containing him and the other impressed men nears the *Indomitable* in Act I, Scene 1. This motif subsequently forms the accompaniment to Billy's first aria ("Billy Budd, king of the birds!"), and when he is in chains in the last act, it punctuates the phrases of his ballad, played on the piccolo, still chirpy but a little forlorn, exactly mirroring his mood. At the opening of Act II, however, it is transformed into the melody sung by the whole crew in pursuit of the French ship ("This is our moment, the moment we've been waiting for"); and it suggests psychologically that this moment of unity is a product as much of Billy's influence as of the excitement of the chase.

(Ex. 2)

The unrest of the crew at other times, and the whole atmosphere of incipient mutiny in the aftermath of Spithead and the *Nore* is musically explored through a motif first heard in the Prologue, where it is set to Vere's "O what have I done?" (and shows his complicity in the state of affairs). It subsequently

(Ex. 1)

(Ex. 2)

(Ex. 3)

appears as the shanty, "O heave away, heave," that runs through the first scene.

(Ex. 3)

It is heard every time the subject of mutiny occurs, and a variant of it forms Claggart's official accusation. At the climax of the opera, after the hanging, it turns into the wordless fugue which brilliantly suggests Melville's famous passage describing the inarticulate but threatening murmur of the men.

A suggestive force rather than a specific symbol, a musical motif can, depending on its surroundings, reflect such subtle changes of mood and meaning (in this last case the "murmurous indistinctness" Melville describes); and Britten was able to achieve such nuance in his depiction of the main characters. Claggart's motif (X in Ex. 1), for instance, is first heard in the Prologue in conjunction with the tonal opposition that reflects Vere's moral dilemma, but it achieves its most powerful expression against a stark F-minor chord bereft of its fifth, when Claggart's diabolical nature is fully revealed, as in his concluding Act I aria. It is a pity that Forster's Victorian ears could not hear the brilliance of Britten's music here, for it suggests a quality he had attributed to Melville in his *Aspects of the Novel*: he "reaches straight back into the universal, to a blackness and sadness so transcending our own that they are

indistinguishable from glory."

It is not only by thematic, harmonic and textural means that Britten gains his effects, however. Perhaps his greatest asset as an operatic composer is his sense of pace; and throughout his career he worked hard to match it with coherent formal articulation. Britten belonged to those who, in reaction to the 19th century, found "number" opera more congenial than the Wagnerian model; yet in *Budd* he abandoned the discrete, separate numbers of *Grimes* for a more flexible plan (still far from Wagnerian, of course) in which the moral ambiguities of Melville are more accurately reflected, and character more subtly presented. Claggart's first aria, for instance, arises naturally from his response to the first lieutenant, "I heard, your honor!", sung to his inexorable motif, and evolving almost immediately from this introduction into a section, characteristically in F minor and accompanied by brass, in which he expressed contempt for his superior officers. A second contrasting section presents him in his sadistic relationship with the unfortunate Squeak. At this point the wailing saxophone motif announces the Novice and his friend, introduces the material for the next chorus and also clears the path for a return to F minor. Claggart's simple "Let him crawl" represents, if you will, a severely truncated *da capo* that "rounds

out" his character sufficiently, but holds up the action for no more than what seems like a dramatic aside, chilling and precise in its effect.

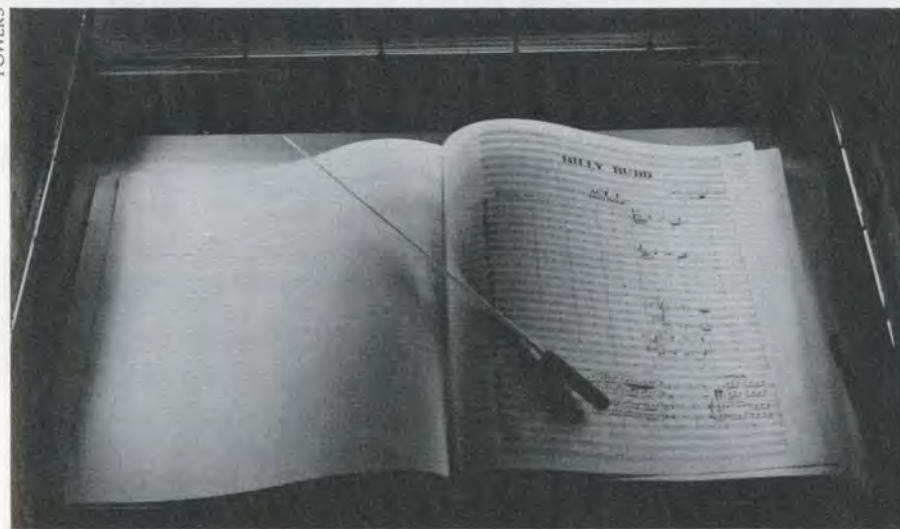
Pointing out that Melville, like Shakespeare, may have created at various levels, Forster went on to say in his "Letter to America" that "We, who want to quarry a play out of him, must settle which level is relevant." And, he continues, "we plumped for Billy as hero and for Claggart as naturally depraved," and "ventured to tidy up Vere." He wisely saw that Britten must be allowed to supply the richness of allusion and density of meaning that he and Crozier had perforce excised.

A measure of the composer's success is that the opera can be as variously interpreted as the story itself. On the one hand he was moved by Forster's vision (and that of William Plomer, his future librettist, whose edition of *Budd* they used) of a realistic Melville who believed in Fate but who, through having tasted the Milk of Paradise, was far from misanthropic. Perhaps more than any score of the twentieth century (before the arrival of minimalism, at least), *Billy Budd* celebrates the consonant major triad. Billy's goodness, the goodness of the simple and unaffected, the Milk of Paradise, the bonfire in the heart (another Forsterian metaphor): call it what you will, it is reflected with enormous musical courage in the penny-plain but weighty chords that make their most uncompromising appearance when Vere goes to acquaint young Billy with his fate, and to be absolved by him.

Such shockingly consonant harmony works as well as it does because there are other elements that undermine its sim-

plicity. When the chords recur in the Epilogue and lead to a seeming resolution, we are warned against taking Vere's ecstatic moment too literally. For beneath them and beneath that devastating chord of B flat that sounds so single-mindedly optimistic, there lies not only an incomplete reminiscence of Claggart's motif but also a thumping rhythm that is on the one hand notably missing from the Prologue and yet barely absent at all during the public moments of Act II. The rhythm is the sound that animates the chase of the French ship, it is the monotone of Vere's moral paralysis at the trial, the deathly drumbeat as Billy is lead to the yardarm, and the insistent command of the officers as they quell the incipient mutiny after the hanging.

The irony of its juxtaposition with the motif of Billy's brash energy and goodwill during battle cannot have been lost on so convinced a pacifist as Britten. It is a commonplace to say that war brings out the best and the worst in people: Britten seems to be showing how futile is the best if it is grounded in this manner on the worst. What good is all of Vere's learning and knowledge of men if he is tied to a military code that prevents him from acting on his true perception of good and evil? And here, at the very end of the opera, it can be heard as indicating that Vere has confused his moment of decision with the excitement of the chase, his "redemption" with the power of life and death he wielded on that floating kingdom. At the very least it indicates the ambivalence in the story, and it leaves us, if we identify at all with Vere, as we are surely meant to, with a sense of inadequacy as well as of hope at the end of it all.



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*Eric Crozier's article, written specifically for these performances of Billy Budd, is accompanied by three photographs, taken during the writing of the opera in Britten's house at Aldeburgh. The photos, taken by Kurt Hutton ca. 1950, were provided through the kind courtesy of the Britten-Pears Library, Aldeburgh, Suffolk.*



*(L. to r.) E.M. Forster, Benjamin Britten and Eric Crozier in Crag House, Aldeburgh, during the writing of Billy Budd.*

# Writing *Billy Budd*

By ERIC CROZIER

Through the last twenty years of his working life Herman Melville was a deputy inspector of customs on the New

*Eric Crozier began his career by directing plays and operas (including the world premieres of Grimes and Lucretia) and writing libretti for Benjamin Britten. Now he lives in Suffolk, England, where he lectures and writes.*

York waterfront—"mast-hemmed Manhattan," as he called it—checking ships' cargoes and passengers' baggage at four dollars a day. He retired at sixty-six, and devoted his last years to *Billy Budd*. He began writing a primitive ballad which is spoken by a young seaman awaiting execution, *Billy in the Darbies* (a slang term for fetters or handcuffs). This subject haunted him, not least because his cousin,

First Lieutenant Guert Gansevoort, had been concerned in the notorious Mackenzie Case of 1842, serving on a court-martial which, in peacetime, had condemned a popular young sailor and two shipmates to execution for suspected mutiny.

Melville added a preface to his ballad, telling how Billy had fallen victim to the insane malice of the ship's master-at-

*continued on p.50*

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JAMES KING



JAMES MORRIS

American baritone **Dale Duesing** returns to San Francisco Opera in the title role of *Billy Budd*, a role he created in the Company's 1978 production and in which he was critically acclaimed at the Metropolitan Opera and the Glyndebourne Festival. His first major American appearance was his San Francisco Opera debut in the 1976 world premiere of Imbrie's *Angle of Repose*, and he returned for seven subsequent seasons in roles that included Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte* (1979), Papageno in *The Magic Flute* (1980), Lescaut in *Manon* (1981), Figaro in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* (1982 Summer Season), Belcore in *L'Elisir d'Amore* (1984), and the title roles of *Billy Budd* (1978) and *Pelléas et Mélisande* (1979). The Milwaukee native began his career in Germany after winning a Fulbright scholarship to study at the Munich Hochschule für Musik. He was a regular member of the Deutsche Oper am Rhein in Düsseldorf for several years, becoming a frequent guest artist at the Hamburg Staatsoper, where he made his debut as Guglielmo in 1973. In 1976 Duesing made his Glyndebourne debut as Olivier in Strauss' *Capriccio*, returning in subsequent years for such roles as Papageno, Wolfram in *Tannhäuser*, Rossini's Figaro, Pelléas and the title role of *Billy Budd*. He has appeared at the Salzburg Festival for six consecutive seasons, and bowed at the Metropolitan Opera in 1978 as Arlecchino in *Ariadne auf Naxos*. Subsequent Met assignments have included Dr. Malatesta in *Don Pasquale*, Silvio in *Pagliacci*, Pelléas, Rossini's Figaro, Papageno and Ned Keene in *Peter Grimes*. He bowed at the Lyric Opera of Chicago in 1981 as Belcore. During the 1981-82 season he made his Paris Opera debut as Guglielmo; additional European credits include performances at La Scala in Milan, and in Cologne, Brussels, Amsterdam, Geneva and at the Edinburgh Festival, among others. Widely praised as a concert artist, he has been soloist with the Boston Symphony, London Philharmonic, RAI Rome, the Chicago Symphony, Vienna Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Berlin Philharmonic and New York Philharmonic.

Tenor **James King** sings the role of Captain Vere in *Billy Budd* for the first time in his career. Last seen here in one of his signature roles, Siegmund in the 1981 *Die Walküre*, King made his professional debut with Spring Opera Theater in 1961 as Don José in *Carmen* opposite Marilyn Horne. He first appeared with San Francisco Opera as Bacchus in *Ariadne auf Naxos* (a role he has sung nearly 400 times) and as Florestan in *Fidelio* during the 1969 season. In 1971 he sang Walther in *Die Meistersinger* and Manrico in *Il Trovatore*, and in 1974 was heard in the title role of *Otello*. He brought another of his signature roles—the Emperor in *Die Frau ohne Schatten*—to the 1980 fall season, when he also sang Canio in *Pagliacci*. He bowed in Cincinnati as Bacchus in 1961 and the following year joined the Deutsche Oper Berlin, where his first assignment was Riccardo in *Un Ballo in Maschera*. Debuts at the world's major opera houses followed in quick succession, including the Vienna Staatsoper (Bacchus), the Bayreuth Festival (Siegmund), Covent Garden (Strauss' Emperor) and the Salzburg Festival (in *Iphigénie en Aulide*). Since his Metropolitan Opera debut as Florestan in 1966, he has been heard at that house in many roles including Siegmund, Lohengrin, Calaf in *Turandot*, Cavaradossi in *Tosca* and Don José in *Carmen*, the vehicle of his 1973 debut at Lyric Opera of Chicago. He has also scored triumphs at La Scala in Milan, Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires and at the Bolshoi Opera in Moscow, where he was invited to sing *Otello*. His extensive discography includes over 20 complete operas and numerous concert and recital discs. He has appeared in many television and film productions of operas, and has been honored with the title of Kammersänger by both the Vienna Staatsoper (where he has sung over 400 performances) and the Bavarian Staatsoper in Munich.

Bass **James Morris** returns to San Francisco Opera to sing the first *Tosca* Scarpia of his career and Claggart in *Billy Budd*. He made his 1981 Company debut as Assur in *Semiramide* and during the 1985 Ring Festival won international acclaim as Wotan in *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre*, the first time he had ever sung the *Rheingold* role. He recently sang Wotan in *Die Walküre* for his Vienna Staatsoper debut, following his first performance of that role with the Opera Company of Baltimore, his birthplace, in 1983. Morris became the youngest male singer on the Metropolitan Opera roster when he was 23. Four years later, a last-minute cancellation put him on the Met stage as Don Giovanni, a role he has sung to critical and public applause in numerous Met seasons, as well as those of the four villains in *The Tales of Hoffmann*, Claggart in *Billy Budd*, and leading roles in *Macbeth*, *La Forza del Destino*, *Don Carlo*, *Otello*, *Carmen*, *Peter Grimes* and *The Barber of Seville*, among others. In recent seasons Morris sang his first Dutchman in *Der Fliegende Holländer* at Houston Grand Opera and appeared as Silva in *Ernani* with Miami Opera. He has also performed with Lyric Opera of Chicago, as Henry VIII in *Anna Bolena* with the Canadian Opera and Michigan Opera Theatre, and was heard as Méphistophélès in Berlioz's *The Damnation of Faust* with the Philadelphia Opera. Morris has appeared at the Salzburg and Edinburgh Festivals and has sung the role of Banquo in *Macbeth* at the Glyndebourne Festival. Elsewhere in Europe, he has been heard at Strasbourg's Opéra du Rhin in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, at Florence's Teatro Comunale in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, in Madrid in *Norma* and in Barcelona in *La Favorita* and *Carmen*. In great demand as a concert singer, he was soloist last March in the Verdi Requiem with Edo de Waart and the San Francisco Symphony.



PETER GLOSSOP



JAMES BUSTERUD



ERIC GARRETT



STANLEY WEXLER

English baritone **Peter Glossop** returns to San Francisco Opera as Mr. Redburn in *Billy Budd*, a role he has sung at Covent Garden and at the Metropolitan Opera. His San Francisco Opera debut season in 1966 saw him as Rodrigo in *Don Carlo* and in the title role of *Rigoletto*. He subsequently returned as Don Carlos in *Ernani* both in San Francisco (1968) and on a Company tour to Los Angeles (1969). In 1976 he appeared here as Tonio in *Pagliacci*. A native of Sheffield, he sang the roles of Coppelius and Dr. Miracle in *The Tales of Hoffmann* at the age of 21 with the Sheffield Operatic Society. His first professional engagement was as a member of the chorus at Sadler's Wells (later the English National Opera) in 1952; within a year he was the company's principal baritone. A turning point in his career was the role of Count di Luna in *Il Trovatore* for that company, and the first prize he won in the 1961 International Operatic Competition in Bulgaria that resulted in a number of European debuts, including the title role of *Rigoletto* at La Scala, where he became a regular guest artist. A member of the Royal Opera at Covent Garden since the 1961-62 season, Glossop has since sung with the world's leading companies, including those of Paris, Buenos Aires, Munich, Chicago, and the Salzburg Festival. Since his 1971 Met debut as Scarpia in *Tosca*, he has performed numerous roles with that company, including the title roles of *Wozzeck* and *Simon Boccanegra*, Iago in *Otello* and, most recently, the title role of *Falstaff*. He has appeared in film versions of *Otello* and *Pagliacci*, and the numerous complete opera recordings in his discography include the title role of *Billy Budd*.

Baritone **James Busterud** is Donald in *Billy Budd*. A 1984 Adler Fellow with the San Francisco Opera Center, his numerous Center credits include the 1983 Merola Opera Program, and the roles of Amida in the 1983 Showcase production of *L'Ormino* and Sharpless for Western Opera Theater's 1983 national tour of *Madame Butterfly*. He made his San Francisco Opera debut during the 1982 Fall Season and has since appeared in six productions in the War Memorial. His American credits include performances with the Carmel Bach Festival, the Florentine Opera in Milwaukee, the Aspen Music Festival, the Pennsylvania Opera Company and Pamiro Opera in Wisconsin. He made his 1983 Fort Worth Opera debut in *Eugene Onegin* and bowed the following year in *Madama Butterfly* with the Opera Theatre of St. Louis. In April 1984 he made his Carnegie Hall debut singing in *Mignon* with Frederica von Stade. He recently appeared as Silvio in *Pagliacci* for the Fort Worth Opera, an assignment he will repeat in Baltimore. His numerous concert engagements have included the sing-it-yourself *Messiah* at Davies Symphony Hall as well as performances with the San Francisco Symphony and the Minnesota Orchestra. He made his local recital debut as part of the 1983-84 Schwabacher Debut Recitals series. Upcoming assignments include the title role of *The Barber of Seville* for Opera/Omaha.

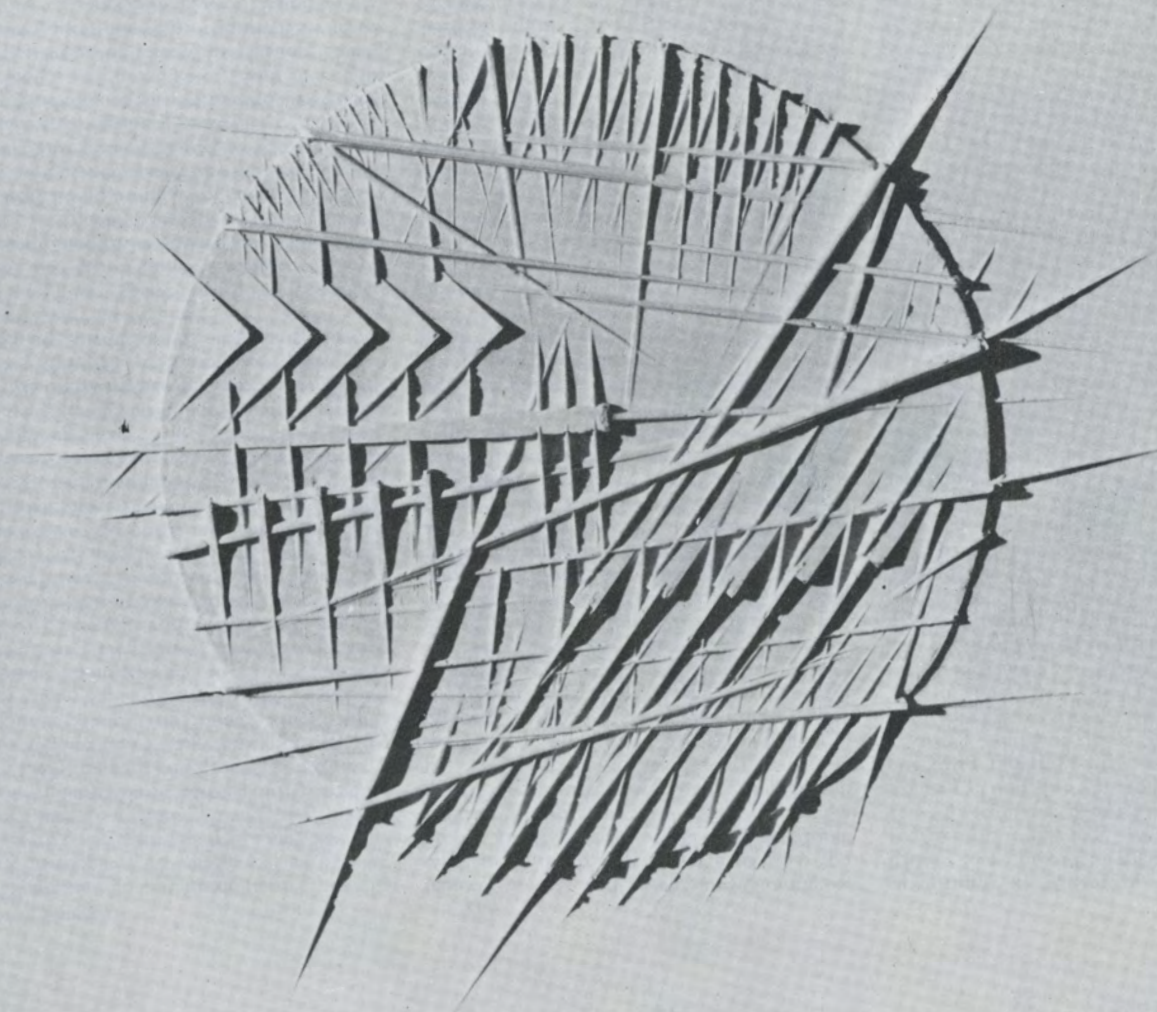
English bass **Eric Garrett** makes his San Francisco Opera debut as Dansker in *Billy Budd* and also appears as A Notary in *Der Rosenkavalier*. After completing his studies at London's Royal College of Music he made his Covent Garden debut in 1962, singing the roles of Benoit and Alcindoro in *La Bohème*. He continued his studies with Eva Turner and Tito Gobbi, and has appeared in over 50 roles with the Royal Opera, including the Sacristan in the historic Zeffirelli production of *Tosca* with Maria Callas, the title role of *Billy Budd*, and roles in *Hamlet*, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *Fidelio*, *Die Meistersinger*, *Jenůfa*, *Peter Grimes*, and *Die Fledermaus*. He has won acclaim with the leading opera companies of Great Britain, Belgium and France in such roles as Leporello in *Don Giovanni*, Don Magnifico in *La Cenerentola*, Scarpia in *Tosca*, Dulcamara in *L'Elisir d'Amore*, Fra Melitone in *La Forza del Destino*, and the title roles of *Don Pasquale* and *Falstaff*. Last year he made his American debut as Baron Ochs in the Los Angeles Opera Theater's production of *Der Rosenkavalier*.

Bass-baritone **Stanley Wexler** returns to San Francisco Opera as Cesare Angelotti in *Tosca*. Last heard here as Kuno in concert performances of *Der Freischütz* during the 1985 Ring Festival, he made his Company debut in the fall of 1980, when he appeared in five operas. He was heard as Kromow in *The Merry Widow* in the 1981 Fall Season and returned the next year for roles in the Summer Season *Barber of Seville* and *Julius Caesar*, and in *Salome* that same fall. He portrayed both Benoit and Alcindoro in the 1983 Summer Season *La Bohème*, and in 1984 sang the first Alberich of his career in *Siegfried*. Acclaimed for his comic as well as serious portrayals, he was Mozart's Figaro in 1981 with Spring Opera Theater and has toured with Western Opera Theater as

continued on p.44

OPERA PLAZA AND GHIRARDELLI SQUARE - SAN FRANCISCO

# MODESTO LANZONE'S



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

Opera in two acts by BENJAMIN BRITTEN

Text by E.M. FORSTER and ERIC CROZIER

Based on the novella by HERMAN MELVILLE

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

# Billy Budd

(in English)

*Conductor*

Raymond Leppard

*Stage Director*

Basil Coleman

*Set and Lighting Designer*

Thomas J. Munn

(after sets by John Piper)

*Projections*

Ron Scherl

*Chorus Director*

Richard Bradshaw

*Musical Preparation*

Mark Haffner

James Johnson

Joseph De Rugeris

Philip Eisenberg

*Prompter*

Philip Eisenberg

*Assistant Stage Director*

Laurie Feldman

*Stage Manager*

Gretchen Mueller

San Francisco Boys Chorus

Louis Magor, Director

Scenery constructed in

San Francisco Opera Scenic Studios

Costumes from the Royal Opera,

Covent Garden

First performance of original

version in four acts:

London, December 1, 1951

First performance of revised

version in two acts:

London, BBC Radio broadcast,

November 13, 1960

First San Francisco Opera performance:

September 16, 1978

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 14 AT 8:00

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 19 AT 8:00

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 22 AT 8:00

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 27 AT 7:30

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 30 AT 8:00

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 3 AT 8:00

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8 AT 2:00

**CAST**

(in order of appearance)

<i>Edward Fairfax Vere,</i> <i>captain of H.M.S. Indomitable</i>	James King
<i>First mate</i>	Monte Pederson
<i>Second mate</i>	John Maxham
<i>Mr. Flint, sailing master</i>	Stanley Wexler
<i>A sailor</i>	Cameron Henley
<i>Bosun</i>	Richard Pendergraph
<i>Donald, a sailor</i>	James Busterud
<i>Maintop</i>	Daniel Harper
<i>The novice</i>	James Schwisow
<i>Squeak, a ship's corporal</i>	Frank Kelley
<i>Mr. Redburn, first lieutenant</i>	Peter Glossop
<i>Mr. Ratcliffe, second lieutenant</i>	John MacAllister
<i>John Claggart, master-at-arms</i>	James Morris
<i>Red Whiskers, an impressed man</i>	Paul Gudas*
<i>Arthur Jones, an impressed man</i>	Daniel Pociernicki*
<i>Billy Budd,</i> <i>an impressed man and able seaman</i>	Dale Duesing
<i>The novice's friend</i>	Erich Parce*
<i>Dansker, an old seaman</i>	Eric Garrett*
<i>Cabin boy</i>	Ian Reddoch*
<i>A sailor</i>	Daniel Becker
<i>Gunner's mate</i>	Frederick Matthews*
<i>Officers, sailors, powder monkeys, drummers, marines, midshipmen</i>	

\*San Francisco Opera debut

PLACE AND TIME: Aboard H.M.S. *Indomitable*, a British man-of-war, during the French wars of 1797

<i>ACT I</i>	<i>Prologue:</i>	Captain Vere's room
	<i>Scene 1:</i>	The main-deck and quarter-deck of H.M.S. <i>Indomitable</i>
	<i>Scene 2:</i>	The captain's cabin, a week later
	<i>Scene 3:</i>	The berth-deck, the same evening
	INTERMISSION	
<i>ACT II</i>	<i>Scene 1:</i>	The main-deck and quarter-deck, some days later
	<i>Scene 2:</i>	The captain's cabin, the same evening
	<i>Scene 3:</i>	A bay of the upper gun-deck, before dawn
	<i>Scene 4:</i>	The main-deck and quarter-deck at dawn
	<i>Epilogue:</i>	Captain Vere's room

*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.*

# Billy Budd/Synopsis

## ACT I

PROLOGUE—Captain Vere (“Starry” Vere) recalls the troubled summer of 1797, during the French wars, when, shortly after the mutiny at the Nore, he commanded H.M.S. *Indomitable*.

SCENE 1—The ship is approaching the coast of France. A boarding-party returns with three men it has impressed from a homeward-bound merchant ship. Among them is Billy Budd, a splendid recruit with only one defect—a stammer which strikes him at moments of stress. He enlists gladly, but his exuberant farewell to his old ship *The Rights of Man* raises doubts as to his loyalty. Claggart, the master-at-arms, orders Squeak to spy on him. A young novice, crippled by flogging, is helped along the deck by his friends. Billy is warned about Claggart by two seamen, Dansker and Donald. He questions them about other members of the ship’s company. They praise Captain Vere for his leadership and goodness, and Billy declares he will follow him forever.

SCENE 2—The senior officers accept Vere’s invitation to drink with him. All are eager to battle the French. Their conversation is interspersed by the distant sound of men singing below the decks. News is brought that Cape Finisterre has been sighted. The officers hurry off, leaving Vere alone.

SCENE 3—The seamen off duty are singing shanties. Billy discovers Squeak ferreting in his kit and attacks him. Claggart stops the fight and orders the men to turn in. Alone on the silent deck, Claggart expresses his hatred of Billy’s simple goodness and determines to destroy him. The novice, whose spirit has been broken by hardship, comes in. Claggart instructs him to tempt Billy to mutiny. Roused from sleep, Billy does not at first grasp the novice’s purpose. When he does, he gets angry and begins to stammer. Dansker comes to find out what has happened and solemnly warns Billy to beware of Claggart’s deadly enmity, but Billy does not heed him.

## ACT II

SCENE 1—Claggart seeks an interview with Captain Vere, but is interrupted by a wild cry from the maintop. The mist, which has been hampering the search for enemy vessels, has suddenly lifted and a French frigate is revealed. They alter their course to chase the ship, and the drums signal the crew to hurry to their battle stations. Cannons are loaded, all sail is set, and they eagerly wait for the wind to bring them within range. But the wind dies, the mist closes in once more, and the chase is abandoned as hopeless. Claggart again approaches Vere with a carefully planned accusation of Billy’s conspiring to mutiny. Vere disbelieves him and sends for Billy.

SCENE 2—A cheerful Billy arrives, having heard rumors of a promotion. His frank manner confirms Vere’s belief in his innocence. Vere calls Claggart and orders him to repeat his accusation. He does so. Speechless with rage, Billy is seized with his stammer. Finally, in frustration, he knocks Claggart to the floor. Vere tries to help the fallen master-at-arms and discovers that he is dead. He is torn between the conviction that he has seen goodness strike down evil and the knowledge that there can only be one punishment for Billy’s crime. A drumhead court-martial is summoned. It finds the prisoner guilty: he is sentenced to be hanged at dawn. Vere accepts the verdict and goes to inform Billy of his fate.

SCENE 3—Billy lies chained to a cannon. Dansker creeps in, unobserved by the marine sentry, to say goodbye. Alone, Billy says farewell to “this grand rough world,” and finds new strength in the vision of “a sail . . . the far-shining sail that’s not fate.”

SCENE 4—The entire ship’s company assembles to witness the execution. Billy’s last words are “Starry Vere—God bless you!” A mutiny threatens at his death, but it is checked by orders of “Down all hands!” Slowly, from force of habit, the men obey.

EPILOGUE—Vere is tormented by the memory of his failure to preserve innocence from destruction. He could have saved Billy, but earthly laws silenced him. He finds peace in recollecting the pardon Billy gave him, and he too catches sight of the “far-shining sail.”

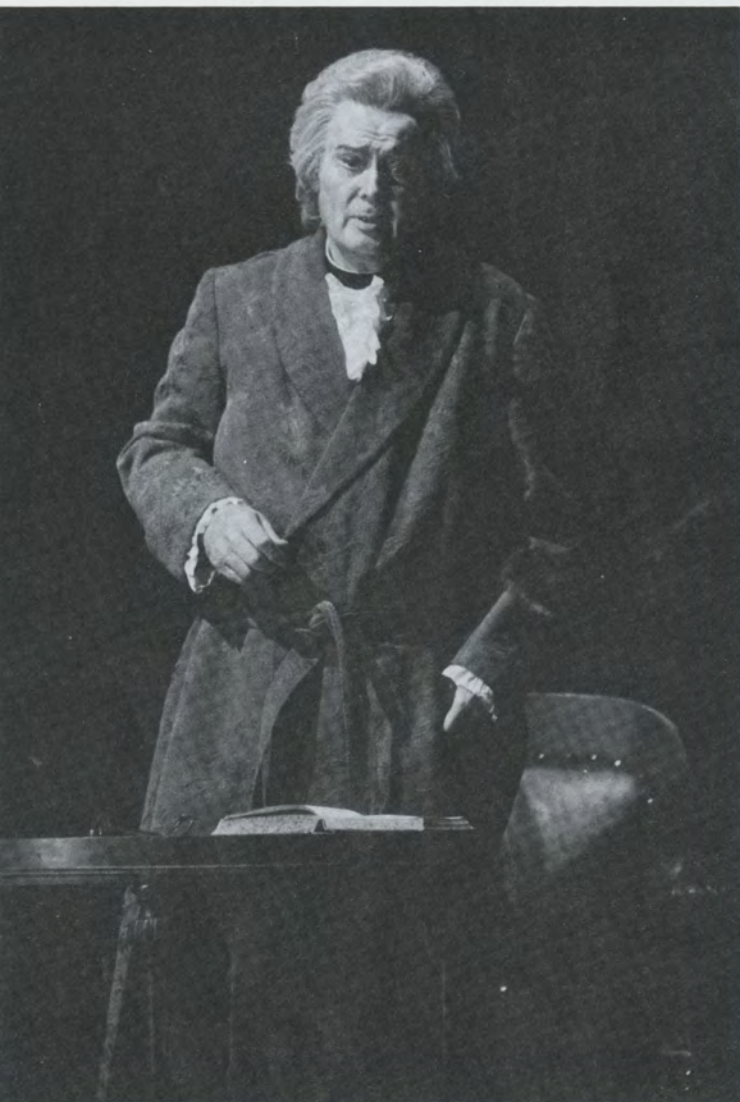
—E.M. Forster & E. Crozier

# Billy Budd

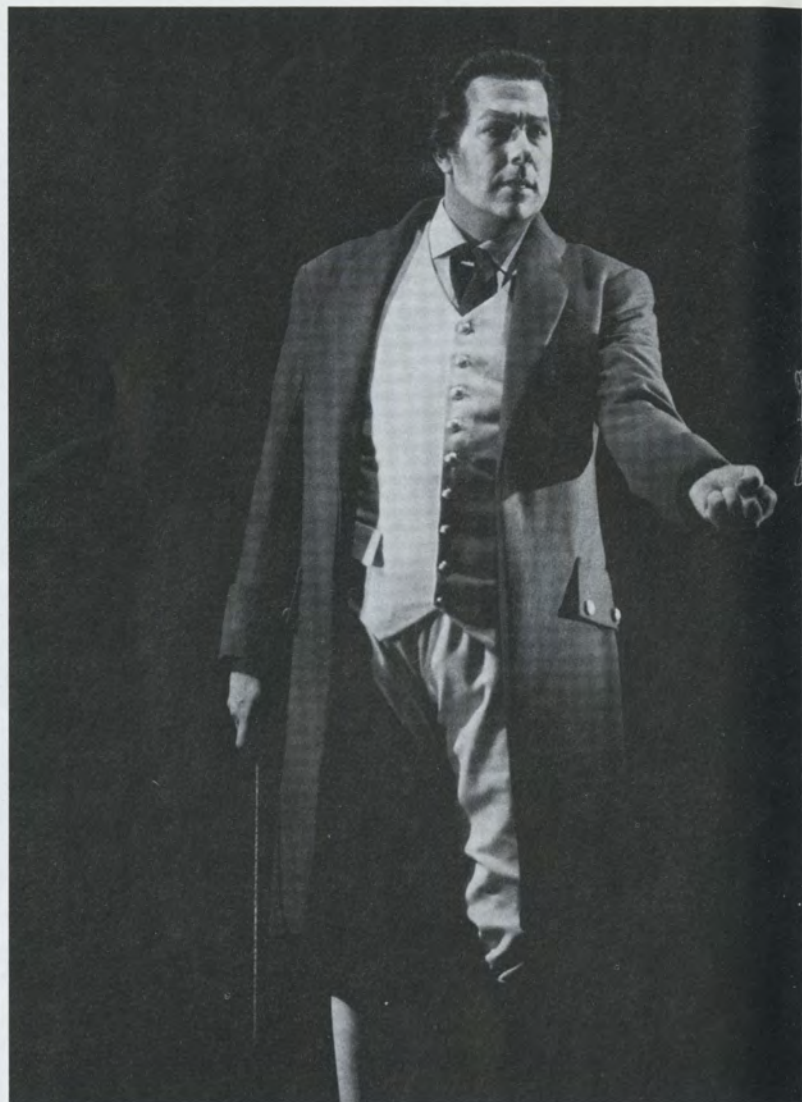
Photos taken in rehearsal by Marty Sohl







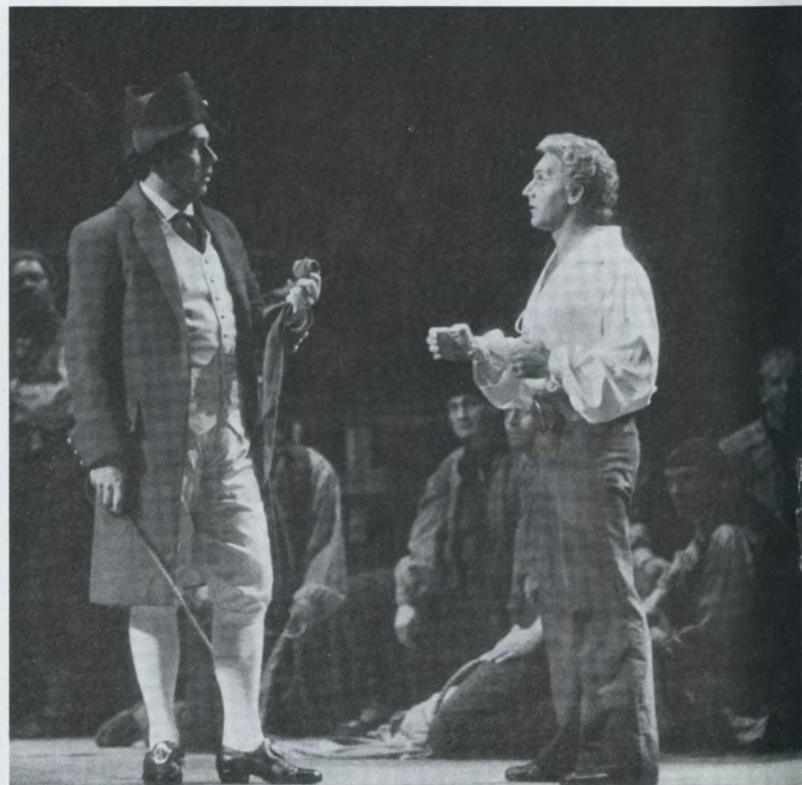
*James King*



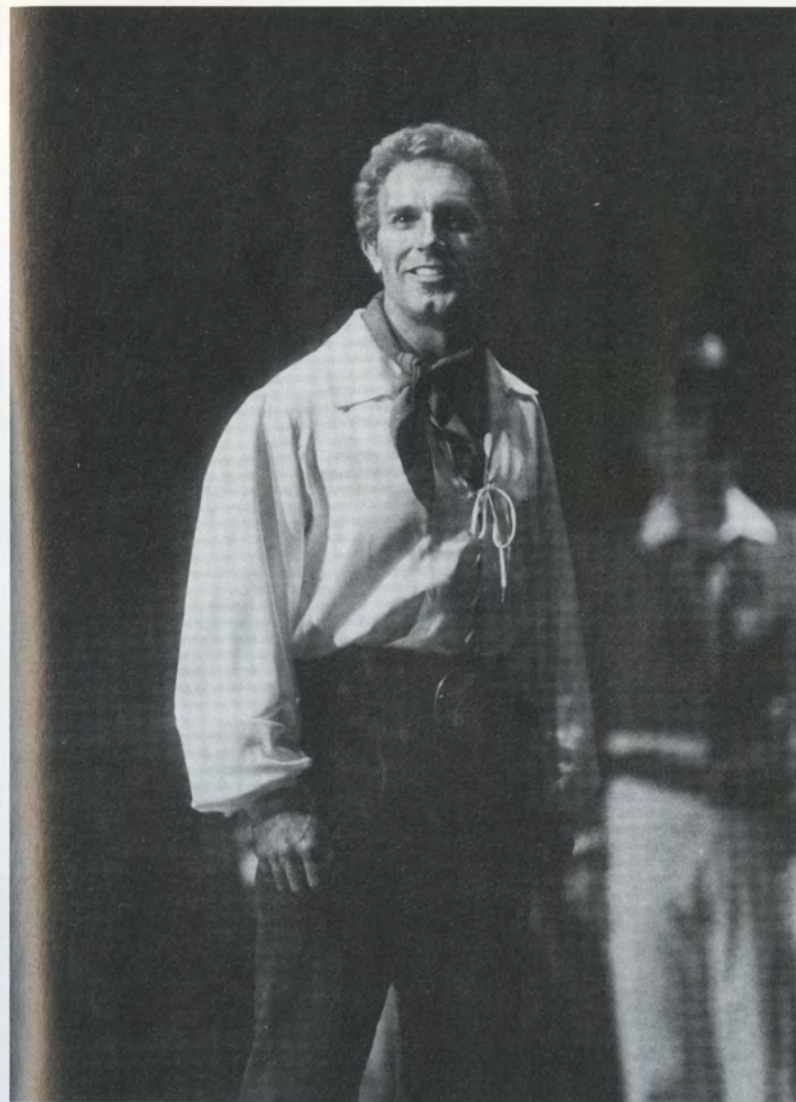
*James Morris*



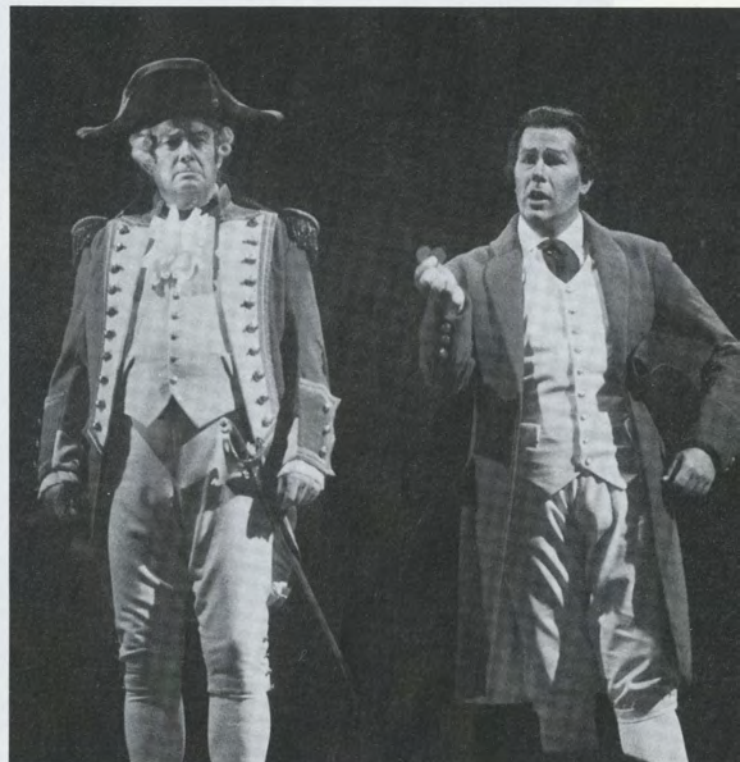
*Eric Garrett, Paul Gudas*



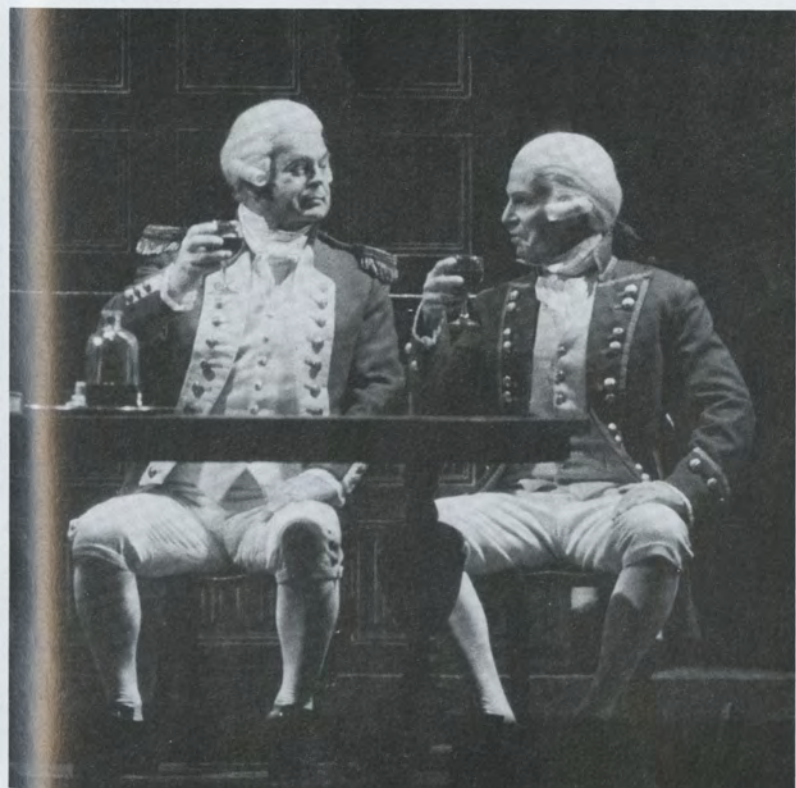
*James Morris, Dale Duesing*



*Dale Duesing*



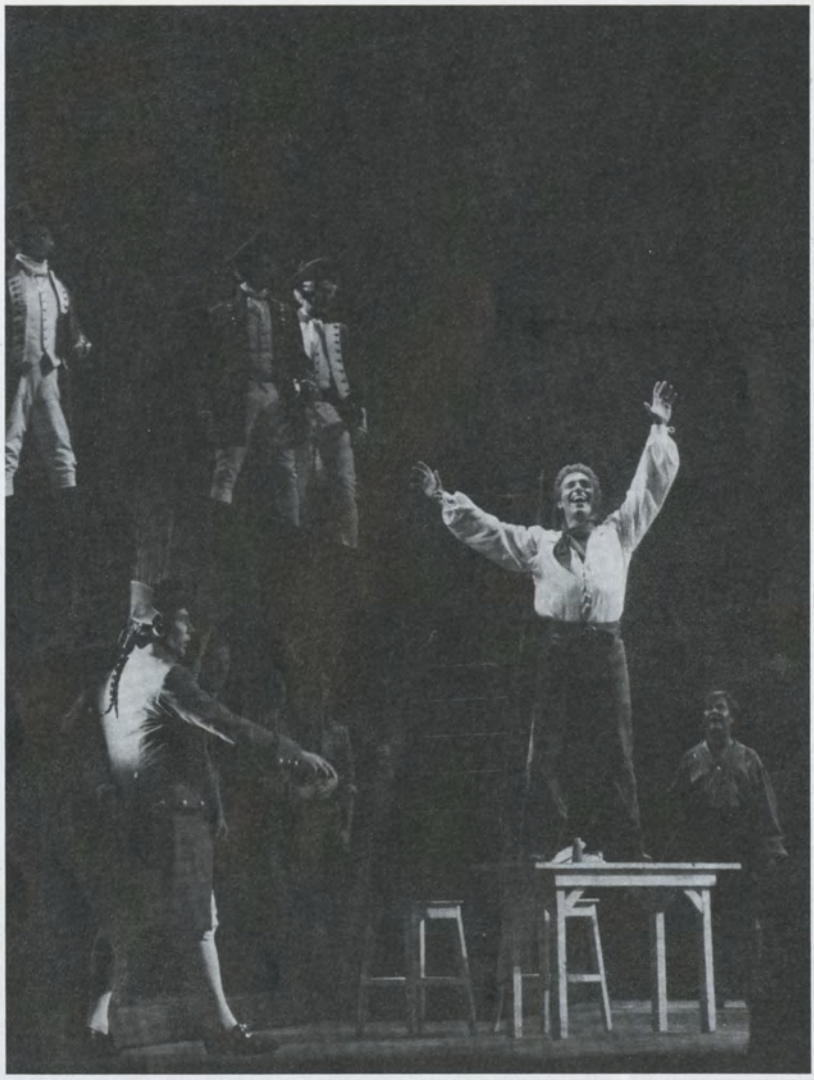
*James King, James Morris*



*Peter Glossop, Stanley Wexler*



*Erich Parce, James Schwisow, James Meyer*

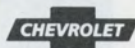


*On bridge: Peter Glossop, Stanley Wexler, John MacAllister  
Bottom: James Morris, Dale Duesing*

*Battle Scene, Act II*



# BLAZER



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JAMES SCHWISOW



PAUL GUDAS



FRANK KELLEY



DANIEL HARPER

continued from p.35

Figaro, Dr. Bartolo in *The Barber of Seville* and in the title role of *Don Pasquale*. Wexler made his 1981 Houston Grand Opera debut as Don Pedro in *La Périochole* and since 1979 has appeared in numerous roles with Kansas City Lyric Theatre, including the title role of *Don Giovanni*. Other American companies with which he has appeared include Santa Fe, New England Chamber Opera, the Wolf Trap Company, Boris Goldovsky's opera company, Minnesota Opera, Augusta Opera and San Francisco's Pocket Opera. Since his New York City Opera debut in *La Bohème* in 1982, he has returned for numerous assignments with that company, including Zuniga in *Carmen*, Danilo in *The Merry Widow*, Dr. Bartolo, Baron Douphol in *La Traviata*, Sparafucile in *Rigoletto*, Colline in *La Bohème*, and the title role of Harold Prince's production of *Sweeney Todd*. Most recently he won acclaim in New York as Leandre in *The Love for Three Oranges*.

Tenor **James Schwisow** makes his San Francisco Opera debut as Fenton in the family performances of *Falstaff* and also appears as the Novice in *Billy Budd*. While studying at Juilliard, he appeared in *Falstaff*, *The Magic Flute*, and the world premiere of Hugo Weisgall's *The Hundred Nights*. He was invited to join the Opera Center of the Lyric Opera of Chicago and appeared in Lyric productions of *Andrea Chénier*, *La Bohème*, and the world premiere of Penderecki's *Paradise Lost*. Additional debuts followed at the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. in the world premiere of Conrad Susa's *Transformations*, with Washington Opera as Paris in *La Belle Hélène* and as Romeo in Gounod's *Romeo and Juliet* with the Lake George Opera Festival. Other credits include performances with the Canadian Opera, Michigan Opera Theatre, Central City Opera, Kentucky Opera, Texas Opera Theatre, Lyric Opera of Kansas City,

Opera Theatre of St. Louis and the Dayton Opera. His highly praised concert debut was made with the Indianapolis Symphony in Verdi's Requiem. Last season he portrayed Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly* for Los Angeles Opera Theater and the Virginia Opera.

Tenor **Paul Gudas** is Red Whiskers in *Billy Budd* and Faninal's Major-Domo in *Der Rosenkavalier*. Born and raised in Chicago, he attended the Lyric Opera of Chicago School and made his 1971 debut with that company in *Werther*, with subsequent appearances in *Wozzeck*, *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Peter Grimes*, *La Bohème*, *Don Quichotte* and *Manon*. Other Chicago area credits include *La Périochole* and *The Bartered Bride* with Chicago Opera Theatre, where he will return next February in Floyd's *Susannah*; *The Bartered Bride*, *The Impresario* and Weill's *Kleine Mahagonny* for the Grant Park Concert Series, for which he also directed concert productions of *The Magic Flute* and *Fidelio*; and Chicago Symphony performances of *La Traviata*, *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges* and excerpts from *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*. A member of the San Francisco Opera Chorus since 1983, he made his Company debut in that year's family performances of *La Traviata*, appearing the same season in *Manon Lescaut* and the following fall in *Madama Butterfly*. His most recent debut was in concert performances of *Salome* with Linda Kelm and the St. Louis Symphony under Leonard Slatkin.

Tenor **Frank Kelley** returns to San Francisco Opera for three roles: Pang in *Turandot*, Spoletta in *Tosca* and Squeak in *Billy Budd*. He made his 1983 Company debut as the Dancing Master in the Fall Season production of *Ariadne auf Naxos* and returned the following summer as Dr. Blind in *Die Fledermaus*. A native of Florida, Kelley participated in the 1983 Merola Opera Program, during which he appeared as Frantz in *The Tales of Hoffmann* at Stern Grove and Goro in *Madama Butterfly* at Villa Montalvo. His engagements this year include appearances at the New England Bach Festival, the Boston Early Music Festival and the Marlboro Music Festival in Vermont, as well as programs of medieval music in Florence and Ravenna, Italy. In January he was the Evangelist in Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* with Joshua Rifkin's Bach Ensemble of New York, and was heard in Boston and Toronto in Handel's *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato*, a piece he has recorded for Arabesque records. Kelley made his Carnegie Hall debut in Handel's *Messiah* last year, an assignment he will repeat this year at Carnegie Hall and in Toronto. He has also appeared with the Glimmerglass Opera Company, the Cincinnati Opera Company, the Bronx Opera and the Opera Ensemble of New York.

Tenor **Daniel Harper** sings four roles during San Francisco Opera's 1985 Fall Season: Altoum in *Turandot*, Dr. Caius in the family performances of *Falstaff*, Maintop in *Billy Budd* and the Innkeeper in *Der Rosenkavalier*. As a member of the 1983 Merola Opera Program, he sang the title role in the Stern Grove performance of *The Tales of Hoffmann* and Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly*, a role he also performed on Western Opera Theater's 1983

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ERICH PARCE



MONTE PEDERSON



JOHN MacALLISTER

nationwide tour. He made his Company debut in *Aida* during the 1984 Summer Season, and was seen last fall as Don Riccardo in *Ernani* and as Borsa in *Rigoletto*. During the Opera Center's 1985 Showcase series he sang the role of Grimoaldo in Handel's *Rodelinda*. In April of 1984 he participated in concert performances and a recording of Schönberg's *Moses und Aron* with the Chicago Symphony under Sir Georg Solti, and returned to Chicago last April as Judge Danforth in Ward's *The Crucible* with Chicago Opera Theater. A graduate of North Park College in Illinois, Harper has extensive concert credits in the Chicago area, including performances of Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, Handel's *Messiah*, the Mozart Requiem and Rossini's *Petite Messe Solennelle*. Currently in his second year as an Adler Fellow with the San Francisco Opera Center, Harper made an unscheduled debut with the San Francisco Symphony when he was called upon to replace an ailing colleague as tenor soloist in the Verdi Requiem conducted by Edo de Waart.

Baritone **Erich Parce** makes his San Francisco Opera debut as the Novice's Friend in *Billy Budd*. A first-place winner of both the Metropolitan Opera and San Francisco Opera audi-

tions, he made his operatic debut in 1975 as Papageno in *The Magic Flute* with Arizona Opera, and has since performed with many of the major opera companies and symphonies in the United States. He appeared in the West Coast premiere of Thea Musgrave's *The Voice of Ariadne* and in the inaugural season of Opera Colorado in Denver as Marcello in *La Bohème*, returning later as Ping in *Turandot*. A resident artist for several seasons with the Seattle Opera, he has appeared there as Dr. Malatesta in *Don Pasquale*, Valentin in *Faust*, Silvio in *Pagliacci*, Ned Keene opposite Jon Vickers's Peter Grimes, the title role of *The Barber of Seville* and, most recently, Lescaut in *Manon*. Upcoming assignments include his debut with Sarasota Opera as Belcore in *L'Elisir d'Amore*, the title role in *Schwanda the Bagpiper* with Cincinnati Opera, and two new roles with Seattle Opera, Ford in *Falstaff* and Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte*.

Bass-baritone **Monte Pederson** marks his debut season with San Francisco Opera by performing four roles: a Mandarin in *Turandot*, Pistol in the family performances of *Falstaff*, the Jailer in *Tosca*, and First Mate in *Billy Budd*. Currently an Adler Fellow with the San Francisco Opera Center, Pederson participated in the Merola Opera Programs of 1983 and 1984, winning the Leona Gordon Lowin Memorial Award in the 1984 San Francisco Opera Center Auditions Grand Finals. Merola productions in which he appeared include Verdi's *Falstaff*, Rossini's *La Cenerentola*, and Offenbach's *Tales of Hoffmann*. He has toured with Western Opera Theater in *Madame*

*Butterfly* and *La Cenerentola*, and has also performed with the North Bay Opera Company, the Marin Opera Company, Pocket Opera and Midsummer Mozart Festival. Last year he appeared with the Concert Opera Association of San Francisco in Donizetti's *Lucrezia Borgia* at Davies Symphony Hall. This year he has been featured in Pocket Opera concert presentations of Handel's *Imeneo* (the title role), Donizetti's *Maria Stuarda* (Talbot) and *La Cenerentola* (Don Magnifico). Upcoming assignments include performances on the Royal Viking Line cruise to Australia next January and February, and the title role of Wagner's *Der Fliegende Holländer* with West Bay Opera in February.

In his seventh season with San Francisco Opera, bass **John MacAllister** is Lieutenant Ratcliff in *Billy Budd*, the role he sang in the Company's 1978 production of the work. A graduate of the 1971 Merola Opera Program, he made his Company debut during the 1973 fall season, and has since been seen in over 20 roles in the War Memorial Opera House. He also appeared in Spring Opera Theater productions of Cavalli's *L'Ormindo* and Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*, and participated in the American Opera Project's world premiere of Harbison's *Winter's Tale*. His many engagements with the San Jose Symphony include roles in *Madama Butterfly*, *La Traviata* and *Carmen*, and he has been heard at the Bear Valley Music Festival in *The Barber of Seville*.



RICHARD PENDERGRAPH



JOHN MAXHAM



RAYMOND LEPPARD

*Gianni Schicchi* and *The Marriage of Figaro*. Among his numerous concert credits are Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* and Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with the San Francisco Symphony; Mahler's Eighth Symphony and Handel's *Messiah* with the Oakland Symphony; and Mozart's *Solemn Vespers* with the Midsummer Mozart Festival.

Baritone **Richard Pendergraph** makes his San Francisco Opera debut in the title role of *Falstaff* for the family performances, and also appears as Sciarrone in *Tosca* and the Bosun in *Billy Budd*. A native of North Carolina, he has just completed a seventeen-week tour with Western Opera Theater, appearing as Alidoro in Rossini's *La Cenerentola*. Last summer he sang the title role in *Falstaff* at Stern Grove with the Merola Opera Program. During the winter of 1984, Pendergraph completed a six-week tour of Puccini's *La Bohème* with the New York City Opera National Company, performing the role of Marcello. In the summer of 1983 he sang Lescaut in Puccini's *Manon Lescaut* with the Chautauqua Opera. At the International Arts Festival in Corfu, Greece, he sang Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte*, the Music Master in *Ariadne auf Naxos* and Junius in Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia*. Other credits include performances with Charlotte Opera, North Carolina Opera, the Opera Company of Philadelphia, New Jersey State Opera and the Birmingham Civic Opera. He recently made his debut with the Dallas Opera as Junius in *The Rape of Lucretia*.

Baritone **John Maxham** makes his San Francisco Opera debut as Brühlmann in *Werther* and appears as the Second Mate in *Billy Budd*. He graduated from the Manhattan School of Music, where he studied with Marlena Malas and appeared as Marco in *Gianni Schicchi*. He has just returned from Santa Fe Opera, where he was a member of the Apprentice Artist Program for Singers and appeared in an Apprentice production of Stravinsky's *Renard*. Maxham sang the title role of Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* for the Henry Street Playhouse in New York in 1983, the same year he sang Maximilian in *Candide* and Malatesta in *Don Pasquale* for the Chautauqua Opera Studio. He returned to Chautauqua in 1984 to portray Count Almaviva in a Studio production of *The Marriage of Figaro*, and also sang the title role of Rossini's *The Barber of Seville*. His numerous credits include Haydn's *Lord Nelson Mass*, the *Magnificat* and selected cantatas by J.S. Bach, Schubert's Mass in G, Handel's *Messiah*, Purcell's *Ode to St. Cecilia*, and the Requiem masses of Fauré and Durufié. Honors Maxham has earned include finalist status for the New York City Merola Opera Program Auditions and a scholarship to the Manhattan School of Music.

Renowned British conductor **Raymond Leppard** is on the podium for *Billy Budd*, the vehicle of his acclaimed Metropolitan Opera debut during the 1978-79 season. His last assignment in the War Memorial was in 1975, when he led his own edition of *L'Incoronazione di Poppea*, a work he is personally responsible for bringing back into the international repertoire. His predilection for baroque and Renaissance music was first manifested during his studies at Cambridge University, where he got his first conducting experience with the local philharmonic society. After graduation he appeared at the Edinburgh Festival and made recordings with such artists as Yehudi Menuhin, before joining the New Philharmonia Orchestra as keyboard player and serving as music director of several theater groups. In 1958 he became musical director of the English Chamber Orchestra, with which he has enjoyed a long and fruitful collaboration. During his tenure as lecturer at Cambridge University he devised the realizations of early operas that have since been heard in opera houses around the world, including Monteverdi's *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria*, Cavalli's *L'Orione*, *L'Ormino*, *La Calisto* and *L'Egisto*. In 1973 the Republic of Italy conferred upon him the title of Commendatore for his services to Italian music. Since he gave up teaching to concentrate on conducting, his incredibly busy schedule has included extensive European and American engagements. Among his European opera credits are performances with the Royal Opera at Covent Garden as well as the companies of Paris, Hamburg, Stockholm and Geneva. In this country he has led opera performances in Santa Fe (*Don Pasquale* and *L'Orione*), New York City Opera (*Alceste*, *Alcina*), as well as San Francisco Opera and the Met. His concert schedule has found him at the helm of the New York Philharmonic, the Chicago Symphony,

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THOMAS J. MUNN

the American Symphony Orchestra, and the orchestras of Boston, Baltimore, Houston, New Mexico, Rochester, Pittsburgh, Indianapolis, Atlanta and New Orleans, among others. Currently an American citizen, Leppard assumed his first American post at the start of the 1984-85 season as principal guest conductor of the St. Louis Symphony. His festival credits include, in this country, the Mostly Mozart Festival and those at Wolf Trap, Tanglewood and the Hollywood Bowl, as well as the European festivals at Edinburgh, Glyndebourne, Vienna and Aix-en-Provence. His staggering list of recordings has earned him virtually every award given to recording artists. Recently, Maestro Leppard was honored with the title of Commander of the British Empire.

British director **Basil Coleman** stages *Billy Budd*, a work he directed in its 1951 world premiere at Covent Garden and subsequent revivals there and in Paris. Originally an actor, Coleman trained at London's Central School of Speech and Drama and the Old Vic Theatre School. His first directing assignment was to assist Tyrone Guthrie on his production of Benjamin Britten's realization of *The Beggar's Opera* at Cambridge in 1948. He has since directed the premieres of four Britten works: *Let's Make an Opera* for the Aldeburgh Festival (1949), *Gloriana* for the Queen's Coronation Gala Performance at Covent Garden (1953) and *The Turn of the Screw* for the English Opera Group at the Teatro La Fenice in Venice (1954), in addition to *Billy Budd*. In 1952 he began a series of productions for Sadler's Wells Opera (later the English National Opera) including

*Samson et Dalila*, *Luisa Miller*, *Don Pasquale*, *The Pearl Fishers*, *Fidelio*, *Peter Grimes* and *A Village Romeo and Juliet*. He marked his San Francisco Opera debut with the 1961 North American premiere of Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and also staged the first South American production of that work at the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires. Since 1966 he has directed numerous television productions of operas, mostly for the BBC, including *Eugene Onegin*, *La Vida Breve*, *Otello*, *Falstaff*, *Don Pasquale*, *Billy Budd*, *Rigoletto*, *Faust*, *La Bohème* and *The Marriage of Figaro*. He has directed many legitimate theater productions around the world and has numerous television drama credits to his name, including one in a series of Shakespeare plays and a 10-part adaptation of *Anna Karenina* that was televised in this country. Recent operatic projects include *Owen Wingrave* and Handel's *Rodelinda* for the Aldeburgh Festival.

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,

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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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## Writing Billy Budd continued from p.32

arms. He expanded the preface to a 12,000 word story, *Baby Budd*, *Sailor*. Finally he rewrote the story at three times that length, *Billy Budd*, *Foretopman*. When he died in 1891, his desk contained 362 small sheets of yellow paper, some in pencil, some in ink, covered with crossings-out, rewritings and insertions, and with one chapter marked "To be inserted." There had never been time to make a fair copy—and who, anyway, would have wanted to read it?

His widow parceled the sheets up and they lay forgotten for over thirty years. Then in 1914 a magazine article hailed *Moby Dick*, published as long ago as 1851, as "the greatest sea-story ever written"—"the one masterpiece of a tremendous genius." Melville's whaling classic was thus rescued from oblivion. Ten years later, when a collected edition of his novels and tales appeared, the still unknown *Billy Budd* was among them.

In 1927 E.M. Forster gave a series of lectures at Cambridge on *Aspects of the Novel*, in which he discussed *Moby Dick* and *Billy Budd* as two "difficult and immensely important examples" of what he called "prophecy" in fiction. It was Forster, in 1941, who first aroused Benjamin Britten's interest in the Suffolk poet, George Crabbe (then almost unknown) and his *Peter Grimes*. Forster's Cambridge lectures, issued in book form in 1927, directed the composer's attention to Melville—but *Billy Budd* did not become easily available for another twenty years, when it first appeared as a separate publication. It was edited by the poet William Plomer, a friend of Forster's, who in future years was to provide Britten with texts for four of his operas.

Melville had begun writing and re-writing his final tale when he was almost seventy. In autumn of 1948, Forster, also approaching seventy, fell into acute depression: he felt useless and unwanted, afraid (according to his biographer P.N. Furbank) lest "he should lose the power to feel about people or take an interest in them." Around that time Britten was commissioned to write an opera for the forthcoming 1951 Festival. He asked Forster to write the text: the latter felt himself insufficiently experienced in dramatic writing, so it was suggested that I should work with him. He had never collaborated with anyone: I was fortunate to have collaborated on most of Britten's

operatic projects, as stage director for *Grimes* and *Lucretia*, then as librettist for *Albert Herring* and other works.

We had several meetings to discuss the project. Forster was enthusiastic, but hampered—as I was—by lack of a subject. He wanted, he said, a *Grand Opera* (he was an ardent Wagnerian), not a small chamber opera like those that Britten and I (largely for economic reasons) had been producing in recent years.

One evening in January of 1949 my telephone rang and Britten asked me to travel to Aldeburgh in Suffolk as quickly as possible. Forster was there with him: they thought they had found the subject. I set off by bus and train next morning as soon as it was light and arrived when they were still at breakfast. They gave me some food and hot coffee, then they handed me a small black-jacketed volume—Plomer's 1947 edition—and left me alone with it.

The moment I emerged, they began to question me. That went on the rest of the morning, through lunch, all afternoon. Obviously they wanted me to like the story as much as they did, but as a practical man of the theater I felt bound to stress the enormous difficulties facing them. In his biography of Forster, P.N. Furbank says "they were too impatient to listen, and Crozier overcame his doubts." A letter of mine, written two months after this date to my future wife, Nancy Evans, shows that I was not the only one to have doubts.

"Poor Ben is in a wretched state these days. Something is worrying him, spoiling his temper, jamming his work, and throwing his tummy out of gear . . . It may be the *Spring Symphony* and its great problems: but I suspect he does not really want to do *Billy Budd* as an opera, but feels he can't withdraw. It is not pleasant to see him so harassed and miserable."

Then, a few days later:

"I was right in my guess . . . Ben has been going through a period of revulsion against *Billy Budd* and wanted to give the whole thing up. But now he sees that his feeling was muddled, and with that change everything has improved—health, temper, outlook, work on the *Spring Symphony*, and spirits."

On the day of our first meeting back in January, we had talked eagerly until late

afternoon, when Britten produced a small writing pad and we began to go through the story methodically, chapter by chapter. I still treasure three bits of paper, the sole written record of that first day's work. There are two lists in Britten's writing, one of all the characters in Melville's story, the other of all the dramatic incidents in his book. The third is a sketchy side-view of a sailing ship, drawn by Britten, amplified by me, and annotated by Forster with place-names—Main Deck, Quarter Deck, Captain's Cabin, and so on—to help us in finding our way around. We spent a long time discussing the characters and their motivation, and one unexpected fact soon emerged. Whereas most composers would have thought of the innocent young hero as the tenor role, Britten took it for granted that the tenor would be Melville's wise and thoughtful naval commander, Vere, who would be sung by Peter Pears. It seemed a natural development from then on that the action on board ship should be "framed" by a prologue and epilogue of Vere as an elderly man looking back on the troubled days of his wartime command.

Forster liked this idea, and a few days later, eager to try his hand and to prove his skills as a librettist, he wrote from Cambridge enclosing a first draft of Vere's opening speech. It begins almost in his own precise, distinctive voice: "I am an old man who has experienced much . . . Much good has been shown to me and much evil. The evil has sometimes been absolute. And the good has never been perfect . . ." At the foot of the handwritten foolscap sheet, he has scribbled a postscript: "N.B. In the story Vere dies soon after, but had better live on." He was "much pleased and relieved," he wrote, to have my approval, and anxious to get on with the libretto as quickly as possible. "That opera is the most important bit of work which I see before me, and I would sacrifice much to it." Britten was in Italy recovering from an illness: so we had a clear month to investigate the background to Melville's story, collect books, and visit museums: we also promised ourselves a visit to the *Victory* at Portsmouth in the near future.

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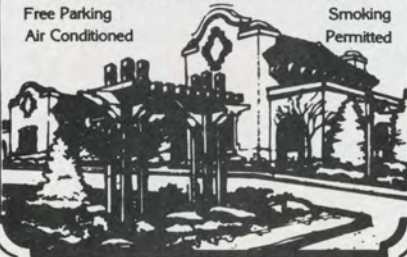
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appalling, for during the ten years of war with France the number of seamen had multiplied eightfold, from 16,000 men in 1792 to 135,000 a decade later. This vast expansion was secured by impressment, by dragging men away from homes and families or by seizing them from merchant ships. No one was safe from the armed gangs that roved the country. When forcible recruitment proved too slow, convicts were drafted straight from His Majesty's prisons to His Majesty's ships.

was only one cooking-stove for 850 men. The ship's surgeon of an ancient hulk at the Nore reported that 1500 men had been crammed into a vessel built for half that number—"I never was in a situation more replete with anxiety than the present, as Surgeon of the *Sandwich*."

Bad food, meager pay (paid six months in arrears to prevent desertions), savage discipline—all these were endured: but the tyranny of the officers and the total indifference of the Admiralty to petitions or complaints finally became



Benjamin Britten and Eric Crozier during a stroll on Aldeburgh beach at the time of writing *Billy Budd*, ca. 1950.

Seamen were herded together like cattle in the semi-darkness and foul air of the lower decks. Fourteen inches was the space allowed for each man's hammock. Pay was increased in 1795 in the Army and the Militia: in the Navy it remained at the same rate as 150 years earlier. Shore leave was unknown: there would have been wholesale desertions. The food—salt beef, salt horse, salt pork, often years old—was monotonous and disgusting, and the total lack of fresh vegetables even in harbor made scurvy a commonplace. On the *Victory*, Nelson's flagship, there

intolerable. "It is almost impossible for us to put it down as cruel as it really is, with flogging and abusing above humanity," one crew declared. "Our usage is more like Turks than British seamen," wrote another. As the Navy expanded and its crews were filled up with landsmen and a small leaven of educated men, discontent became more general and more articulate. The men's grievances had gone unanswered year after year. Now it was time to act.

The crisis was reached in 1797, when Lord Bridport ordered the Channel Fleet

to put to sea. Sixteen lines of battleships at Spithead and the Nore refused to obey. Their crews manned the shrouds and gave three cheers as the signal for mutiny. The revolt spread to Plymouth, the South of Ireland, the Cape of Good Hope. All England trembled to think that, in the midst of war with France, its Navy was in open rebellion.

"To the Empire," Melville wrote, "the Mutiny was what a strike in the fire-brigade would be to London threatened by general arson." His account of naval life in 1797, though sometimes bookish, is vivid and exact: he based himself on William James's *Naval History of Great Britain* and Robert Southey's *Life of Nelson* and on the reminiscences of several Trafalgar veterans he had come across during his early days at sea. *Billy Budd* (his only story with a historical setting) takes place a month or two after the uprising at Spithead and the Nore, when the Indomitable, a ship of 74 guns, is cruising down the English Channel with orders to join the Mediterranean Fleet.

On March 2nd, 1949, Forster and I met at Liverpool Street Station. We were both excited, because at last we were on our way to Aldeburgh to begin work in earnest. Each morning during the next two weeks, as soon as breakfast was over, Britten went upstairs to his study to continue work on his *Spring Symphony* for first performance at Amsterdam in July, while Forster and I went to *our* study and settled down at each side of a coal-fire. During our meeting two months earlier, I had drawn up a dry working synopsis of an opera in five scenes, each one subdivided into brief episodes. With this to guide us, we would begin our morning's work by reading the relevant passages of Melville's text very carefully. Then we talked about it: we considered the motives of the characters: we checked any points of life on board ship or nautical procedure that we did not understand (there were many of these, and our reference books proved invaluable): then, when we were satisfied, we drafted our own version of the episode. Sometimes one of us did this, sometimes both. I was mostly responsible for the technical scenes and the dialogues: Forster did "the big slabs of narrative." Then we would read our versions aloud, comparing and criticizing them.

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*Benjamin Britten and Eric Crozier in Crag House, Aldeburgh (Britten's home), going over the prepared Billy Budd libretto material.*

was a coffee-break, when Britten came along to read what we had done. At lunch the three of us discussed the problems we were encountering. After lunch we walked and talked for an hour or so, then back we went to our studies until dinner-time. Melville's short novel contains 26 chapters, some little more than a page, one (the crucial trial scene) twelve times that length. By regular and concentrated work, we managed in the course of what Forster called "sixteen remarkable *Billy Budd* days at Aldeburgh" (by my reckoning it was thirteen, March 3rd to 15th), to draft the greater part of the libretto, although we left blanks for scenes needing special enquiries or further research. I typed a copy for each of us, and we separated for a time. Our collaboration so far had been (as Forster declared) "nothing but pleasure." Generously he told Britten that I could have written the libretto on my own, but he could not possibly have done it without me; and he insisted that we should be announced as joint authors, with my name before his because C comes before F—but later, on the advice of friends, he agreed to our wish that he should come first.

In August, five months later, we went to Aldeburgh again. Britten had been studying our first version, his musical ideas had begun to develop, and he wanted us to spend several weeks reconsidering, revising and simplifying our text. At this stage he assumed the dominance in our partnership and led our discussions. He asked for a new big chorus scene to end the first act—one of the few occasions when we added anything not directly suggested by Melville. (When the opera was later reduced to its final two-act form, for a broadcast in 1960, this scene was dropped.) Melville's *Afterguardsman*, who tempts Billy with the guineas, was replaced by the terrified *Novice*. Apart from such structural changes, we went through each scene word by word, line by line, testing, strengthening and compressing. Since the greater part of our libretto was in prose, an important task was to provide the composer with lyrical episodes that would enable his music to "flower." At the end of August our major revisions were done. We parted once more, taking with us copies of our second draft-libretto in 57 pages, from which Britten would begin composition some months later.

My feelings about the opera then are clear from a letter I wrote on August 22nd, 1949:

"I do not think there ever was a happier collaboration than this one between Ben, Morgan and me . . . I feel confident that *Billy* will make all Ben's operas until now look like experiments for the first of his great *mature* works. It will be disastrous if Morgan does not live long enough to write other works for him."

Forster was in fact to live another twenty-two years, and the pride he felt in the results of our work together is clear from a letter received in 1964, a day or two after the staging of our revised two-act version at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden:

"*What* a marvellous evening! I can't get over it, in the happy sense of that phrase. To be in that box with you and Ben, and Nancy not far away! The food together beforehand, and the residence with you on the stage afterwards. [ We had taken a curtain-call. ] It has been like the best of dreams . . . With love and remembrance of all the agreeable—and it would now seem successful!—times that we have spent together.

Morgan."

On the occasion of the last production at the San Francisco Opera, Andrew Porter wrote about "a view long held by several of my friends but only recently mine, that this, the sixth of Britten's fifteen operas, is musically the richest and most arresting of them all." What was it, I wonder, that made Britten choose Melville's story? Perhaps one should ask, what made *Billy Budd* choose Britten, for Melville's final tale exerts a powerful compulsion, an almost Shakespearean intensity. "He can neither believe, nor be comfortable in his unbelief (Hawthorne wrote about his friend), and he is too honest and courageous not to try to do one or the other." It was that fundamental, unresting inner conflict that made Melville one of the world's great storytellers. If only this solitary genius could have experienced a collaboration just once in his life such as we three—thanks to him—were able to share and enjoy! ■

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# Billy Budd's American Debut

By QUAINANCE EATON

Benjamin Britten's *Billy Budd* was first seen in the United States by some 16,000,000 people, instead of 1,600-2,000, as might have been expected. It was television that performed this miracle, of course. TV opera is a fairly old story to us now, what with opera performances being broadcast from the stages where they originate or in elaborate special settings at a fairly consistent clip. But in 1952, *Billy Budd* was a milestone.

It was thought for a time that Indiana University's stage performance was the opera's American premiere, for that came on December 7, 1952. But NBC-TV beat them to it by almost two months, hitting the air on October 18, 1952, less than a year after the world premiere at Covent Garden. The circumstances provided the spark to my long career as an observer at first hand of TV opera—the studio brand in particular, as opposed to the opera-house-stage variety.

*Buddopera*, as it came to be known around NBC, was the first really ambitious venture of a television unit that had been formed within the broadcasting company four years earlier, which had presented the original *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, Gian-Carlo Menotti's charming little Christmas fable (the first opera to be commissioned for television), thereafter a holiday staple. It was sponsored, of course, for then as now, TV opera is one of the costliest birds on the mass entertainment roost.

The TV-opera team had been brought together by Samuel Chotzinoff, former accompanist of Zimbalist and Heifetz and later music critic for two New York newspapers. He had been appointed music director at NBC, and had the ear of the formidable David Sarnoff, so he could practically write his own ticket. His motives were of the highest order—he

*Quaintance Eaton is the author of several books, including two well-known volumes on Opera Production. Her biography of Joan Sutherland and Richard Bonynge is currently awaiting publication.*

wanted top quality, and above all, sought for easy communication with the millions who were certain to turn on their television sets. This meant opera in English, of course, a practice from which they never varied in fifteen years of honorable achievement—even including such mammoths and "outlanders" as *Boris Godunov* and *War and Peace* and such exotica as *Salome*. Already scheduled to follow *Buddopera* was a two-part version of *Der Rosenkavalier*.

Chotzie, as everybody called him, had initially enlisted a special team that worked with precision, mutual trust and virtuosity. Peter Herman Adler was the music man, a native Czech who had both opera and concerts under his belt, on the continent and in the U.S.A. Kirk Browning, who had lived near Chotzie in Connecticut and used to deliver eggs from his farm, was hauled in as a stage director

from the first—his renown has carried to this day with directorial assignments from the Metropolitan Opera and other companies as well as many prestigious TV shows. Charles Polacheck completed the team, wise in advertising ways, and invaluable, right from the beginning, for his business sense and ability to get along with many and diverse persons. The quartet welcomed me as onlooker from the first, my way paved by assignments to do a half-dozen articles on this precocious new art form. This turned out to be similar to the "investigative" pieces I had done earlier for *Musical America*—a month-long rehearsal-performance at the Metropolitan Opera debut of Ljuba Welitsch in *Salome* with Fritz Reiner conducting, and the zany *Love for Three Oranges* at the New York City Opera. All these were preludes to the Met's *Contes d'Hoffmann* which led to the (now) forth-

*Theodor Uppman, who portrayed the title role of Billy Budd both at the work's world premiere and in its TV version, faces the cameras in 1952 on the NBC-TV set.*



coming book on Dame Joan Sutherland and Richard Bonyngé.

It's fun backstage. I became known as the mascot of the troupe, and Chotzie always asked for me at rehearsals and performances—bad luck if I didn't show up. The only two operas I missed in that fifteen-year span were considered not quite flops, but not first class. One was a *Madame Butterfly*, I remember. I saw it in Chicago, and was slightly depressed. All others were at least honorable, and some were triumphs. One could put *Buddopera* in the latter class. It was a real pathfinder, revealing the splendid results of the incredible amount of work it entailed, and the troupe's deep reservoirs of talent.

First of all, it was allotted 90 minutes, a vital concession in the behemoth commercial network. Then its budget soared to a fantastic \$40,000—one can smile today at that figure, which has increased astronomically for any TV production. But in 1952 it was *money*. Of course, by the time color came in (Vittorio Giannini's *Taming of the Shrew* was the first to reveal its heroine's blushes), acceptance of the form was complete, and the big bucks were (almost) unstintingly forthcoming.

I was initiated at the first production

meeting where costs and other bothersome details were discussed. Weeks of work had preceded this, during which what was perhaps the most bothersome problem had been tackled—getting Britten's consent. After all, those precious 90 minutes meant cutting the work vitally—by almost half.

Adler reminisced about this agonizing period one day not too long ago. He and Chotzie went to London, taking along kinescopes of their two most successful ventures so far: *Amahl* and *Gianni Schicchi*.

"Britten wouldn't give in," he recalled. "No cuts. But our luck held. Victor de Sabata, the conductor, was in London and saw the *Schicchi*. His recommendation turned the tide."

But it was murder to cut, the conductor confessed. Out went the scene with the officers in Captain Vere's cabin, and the battle scene—without too many tears. But it was heart-breaking to omit Claggart's long aria, which is so revealing of the master-at-arms's character.

Still, Chotzie realized that in one visual minute they could show Claggart with his deep unwavering cruelty, the hatred of beauty and sweetness that

would result in his persecution of Billy, and the eventual tragedy.

Slashing half of Billy's tender ballad at the last minute also caused deep tremors. The final result was called "Scenes from *Billy Budd*" and guaranteed success, according to one New York newspaper.

Before this smashing triumph, weeks of gruelling work had absorbed the staff and the large cast—all men, be it noted. It tickled my ego to be the only female in the rehearsal room on 48th Street—except for an occasional script girl. They were fine fellows indeed—first of all, Theodor Uppman, the original Billy in London, and the perfect embodiment of Melville's sunny-natured sailor.

Then Leon Lishner, formidable as the evil Claggart. Andrew McKinley who had been one of the three kings in *Amahl*, was a fine Captain Vere, and another I remember particularly was Kenneth Smith as "Dansker-ole friend," a sobriquet that clung to him for quite a while afterward. I append the entire cast to this account.

Their diction was, of course, practically perfect. It was Chotzie's shibboleth—opera's meaning had to get across. And while there was no problem with



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*Budd* or the several American operas in NBC's honor list, all the foreign librettos had to be translated. "Language of the people" was our motto.

The floor in the shabby 48th Street studio was taped off to indicate the dimensions of the eventual set, and all activity was confined within. Chairs served as major props. Browning began to visualize basic camera shots from his first reading of the score. An accomplished musician, he is also a painstaking stage director and a genius in camera work. He "played camera" constantly, moving from place to place and "cropping" the scene between upraised, boxed hands. He literally talked his way through every run-through and performance.

At Adler's rehearsals, from the first gathering of the soloists on September 30, heavy emphasis was laid on diction. Then voices had to be restrained, brought down in decibel content and expressiveness. "They all give too much at first," the conductor commented. This was particularly hard on Uppman, who had to restrain the exuberance that had been a must in stage performances. He succeeded marvelously, and gave a performance that was both tender and manly, genuinely beautiful in the restricted medium.

McKinley and Lishner were drilled again and again until they could have gone through their parts in their sleep—and probably did. All the others endured the same rigid discipline. There are no prompters in TV—you have to get it right the first time with no help.

The slogging routine went on day after day through successive stages; the orchestra joined in, then the technical crew sat and made mysterious motions and notes.

At last, on October 15, *Buddopera* moved to the stage of the Center Theater (long since demolished) in Rockefeller Plaza and the pace began to quicken. Wednesday and Thursday were taken up with "blocking for shots," a process that seemed utterly tedious to a lay onlooker, but which is the heart of such a proceeding. Each picture was set up in succession for three cameras and firmly established. There was a run-through amounting to a dress rehearsal. Then unfortunately the whole shebang had to be moved out to accommodate previously arranged shows in the theater. It seemed that the mess could never be brought together again.



Backstage at NBC-TV: Arturo Toscanini, a visitor during the TV performance of *Madame Butterfly*, seems to be protesting to conductor Peter Herman Adler, while Samuel Chotzinoff looks on unhappily. According to Quaintance Eaton, however, the Maestro was deeply impressed with the TV-opera process.

But on Saturday night *Buddopera* again found a home, and the call went out to the cast for Sunday morning at 8:30. William Molyneaux, the scene designer, and a battalion of technical directors and stage hands showed up at 6 a.m.

In the two-day absence from the theater, one run-through on 48th St. had been so smooth that everybody was scared witless. Dress rehearsal at 11:40 Sunday morning put that to rights. It was sheer disaster—as dress rehearsals are traditionally supposed to be. Tunes up the nerves. Gets everybody ready at the starting gate, so to speak.

Then, as the second hand jerked heart-stoppingly from 2:29:59, Kirk gave the signal with upraised hand. "Take 2," he said softly with the downbeat. "O.K. Peter." Camera 2 flashed the titles and credits on millions of America's TV screens, then Captain Vere's figure appeared as the orchestra's first bars came through the loudspeaker.

Seated in the clients' booth back of the control room, I watched in growing excitement and wonder as one good shot succeeded another. "The team" had brought it off. Television opera had come of age.

I still have many of the working scripts of those fruitful ventures, and have just looked nostalgically over *Buddopera*. I don't know how many people remember that introduction and the fifteen years of inspired teamwork that followed. I shall never forget them. ■

# 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;

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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

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### 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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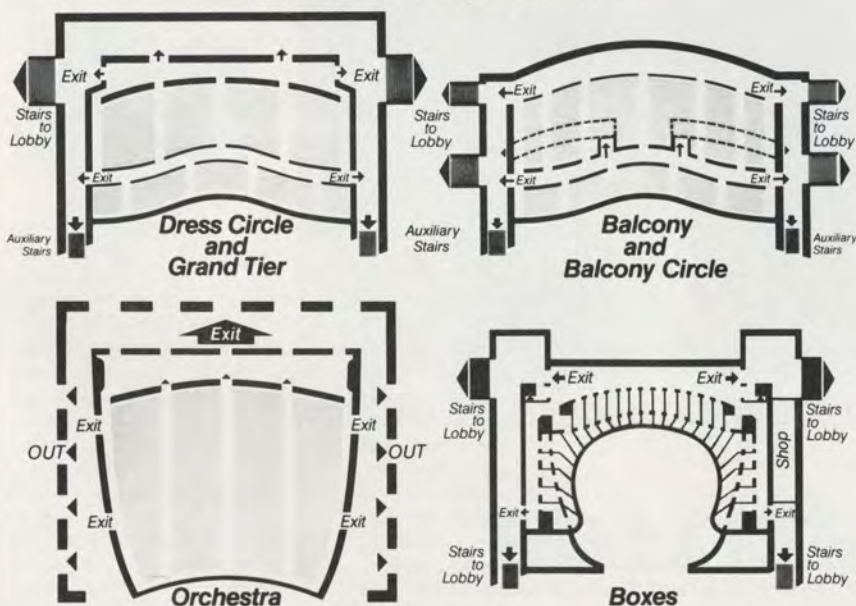
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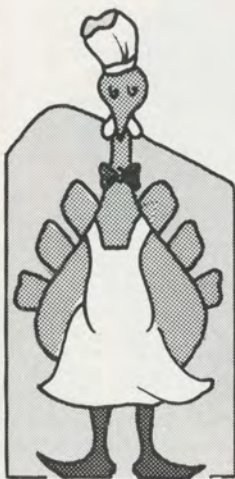
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