

Werther

1985

Friday, October 4, 1985 8:00 PM
Thursday, October 10, 1985 8:00 PM
Sunday, October 13, 1985 2:00 PM
Wednesday, October 16, 1985 7:30 PM
Saturday, October 19, 1985 8:00 PM
Tuesday, October 22, 1985 8:00 PM
Friday, October 25, 1985 8:00 PM

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San Francisco Opera

FALL SEASON 1985

Werther


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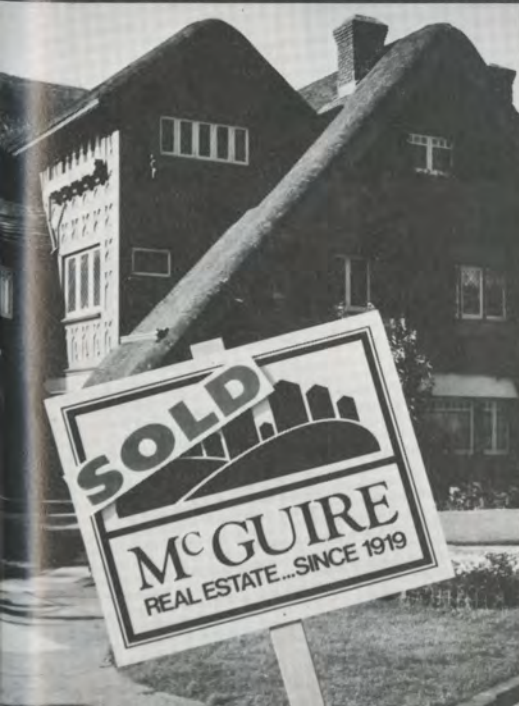
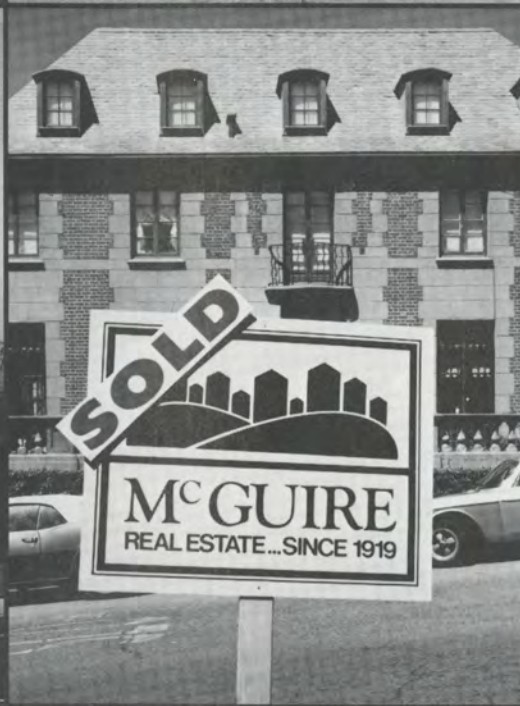
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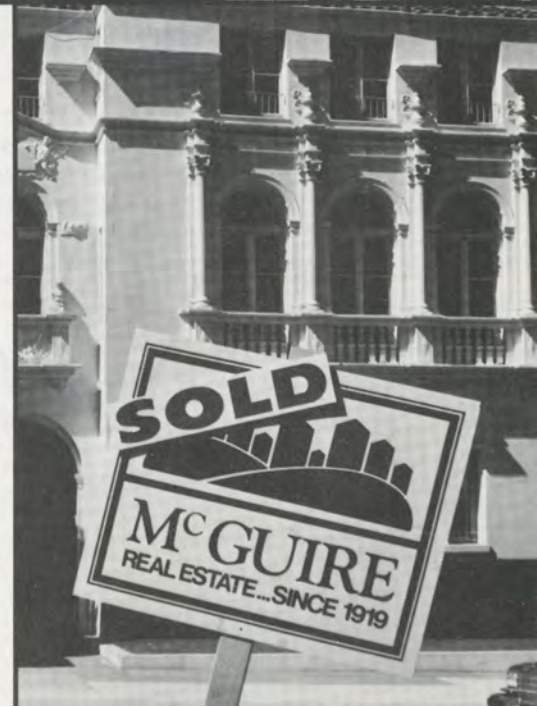
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Terence A. McEwen, *General Director*

Werther

FALL SEASON 1985

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COVER:

Carl Julius Leypold (1806-1874)
Trees in Moonlight
(Formerly attributed to Caspar David Friedrich)
Oil on canvas, 20 x 26 cm
Wallraf-Richartz Museum, Köln
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Proceeds from the sale of this magazine benefit the San Francisco Opera.

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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.

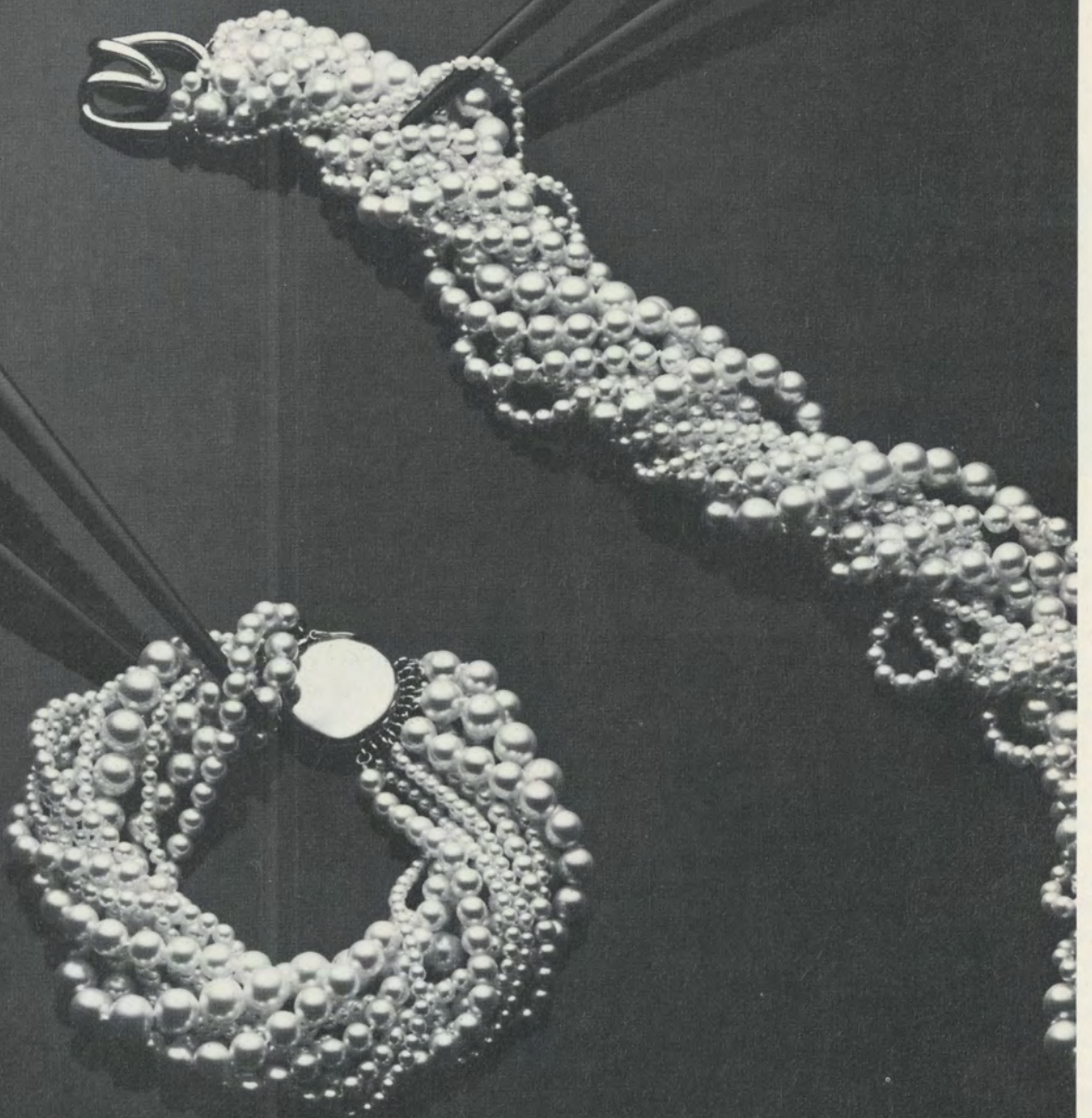
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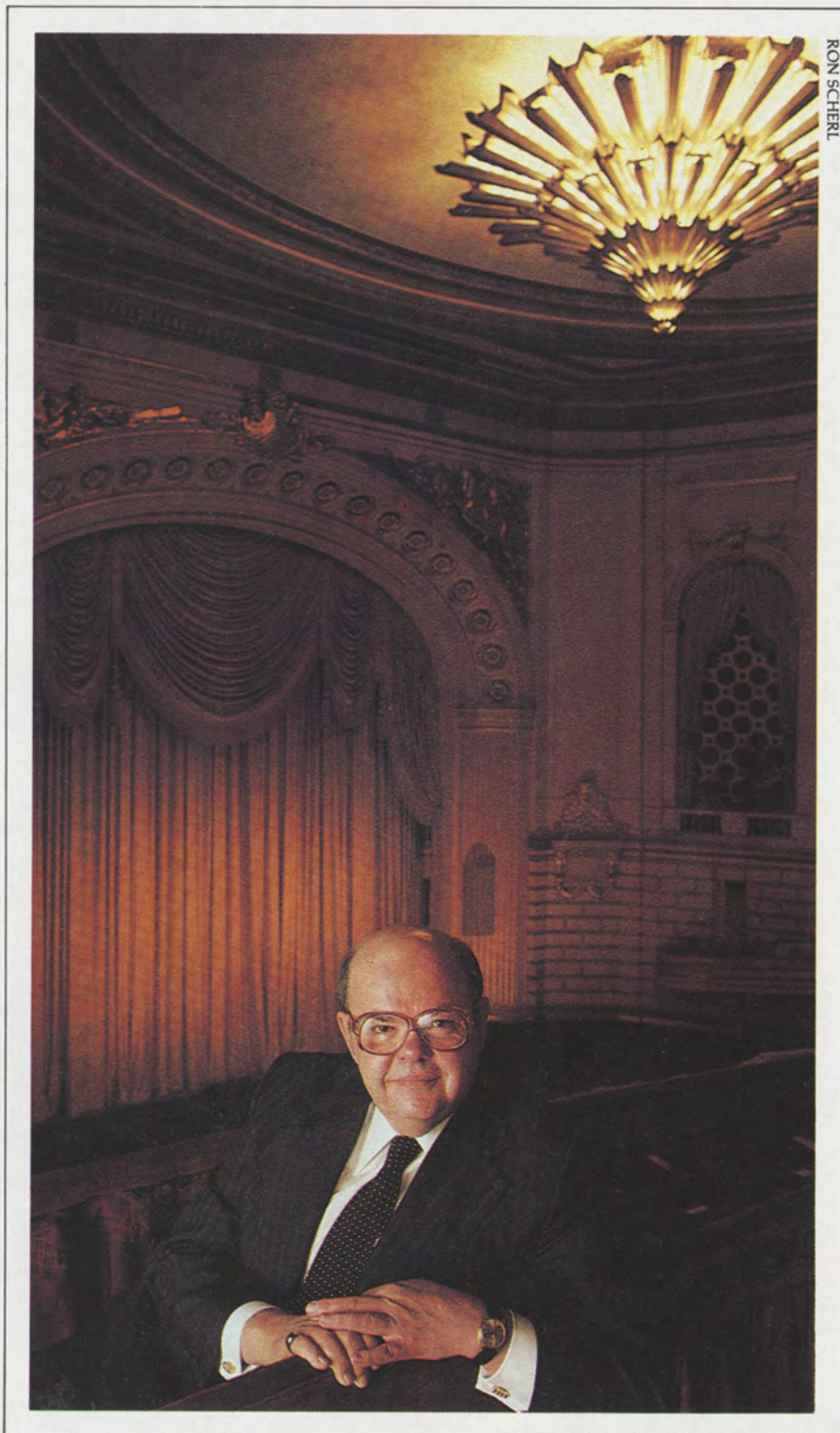
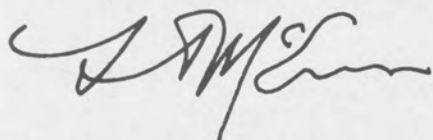
General Director's Message

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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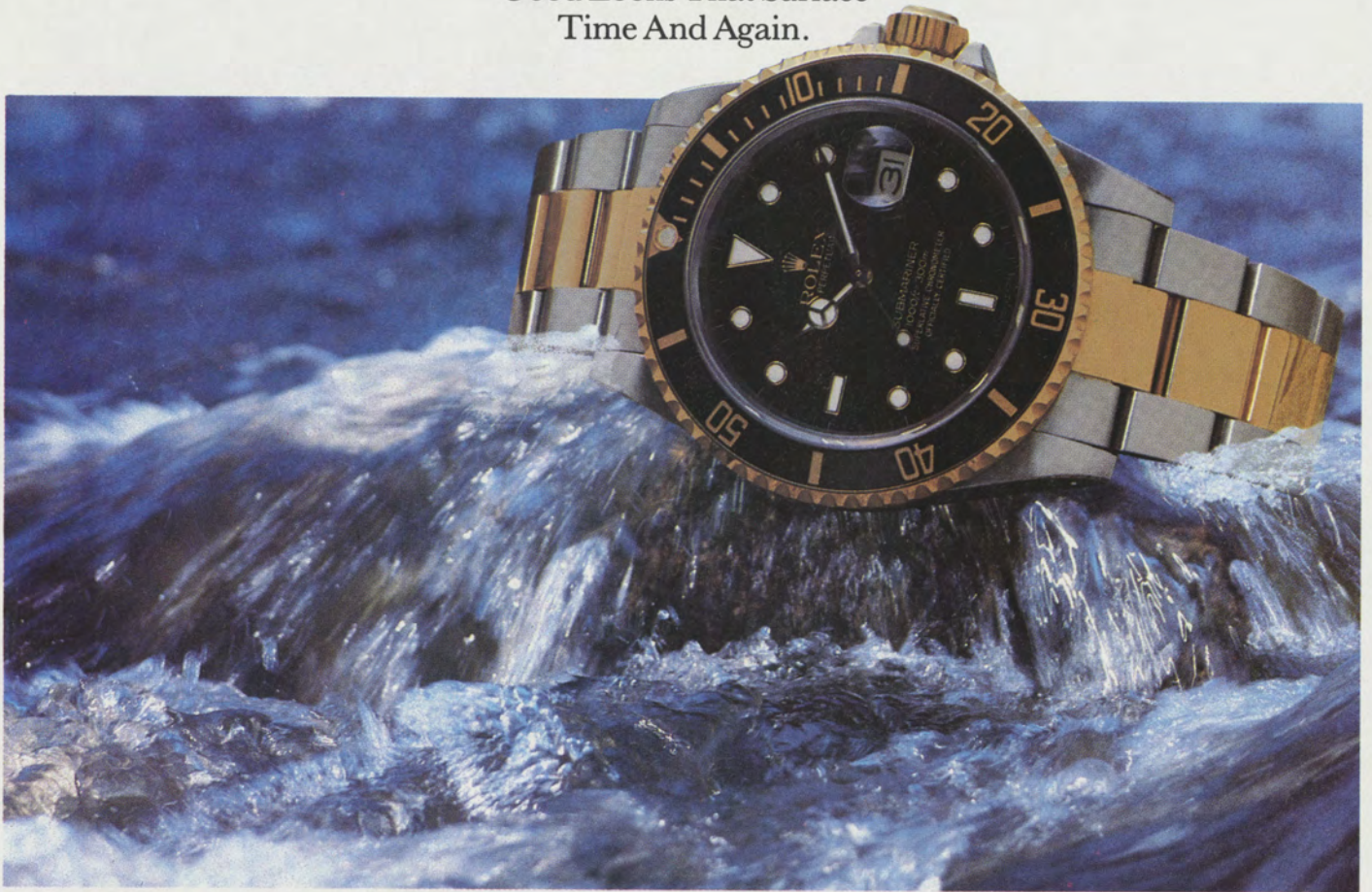


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San Francisco Opera

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, Dernes, 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.

Horne, Masterson, Swenson/Gall, Langan Mackerras/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 Klobočar/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

Scotto, Parrish/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.

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

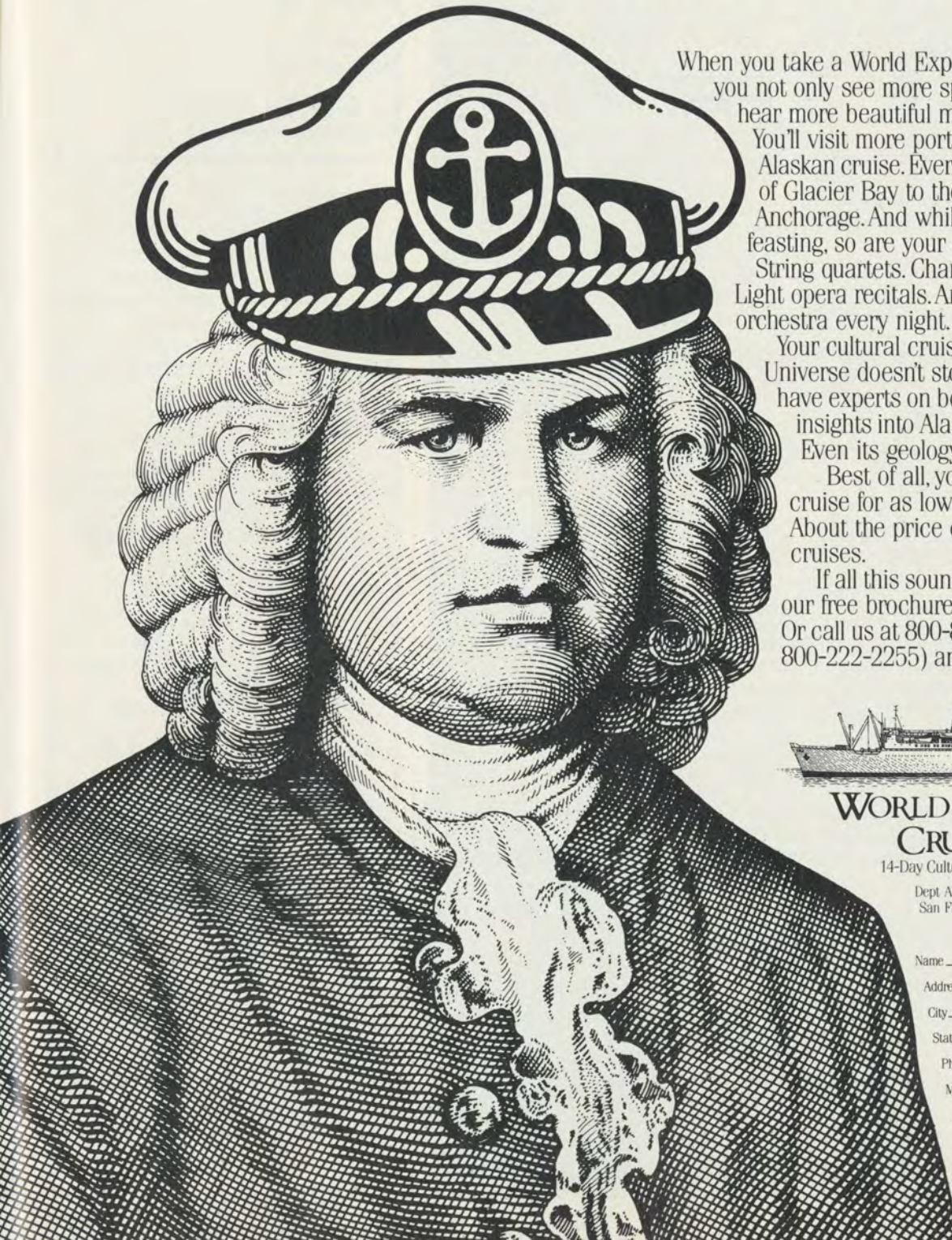
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Falstaff Verdi

Tuesday, October 29, 8:00

Tosca Puccini

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9-10

Wednesday, October 30, 7:30
Falstaff Verdi

Saturday, November 2, 8:00
Falstaff Verdi

Sunday, November 3, 2:00
Tosca Puccini

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/Domingo (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
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/Moll, Di Paolo, Capecchi, Andreolli*, Harper, Petersen, Gudas, Garrett, Patterson 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.

Box office and telephone sales:
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San Francisco Opera Guild Presents
Opera for Young Audiences
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.

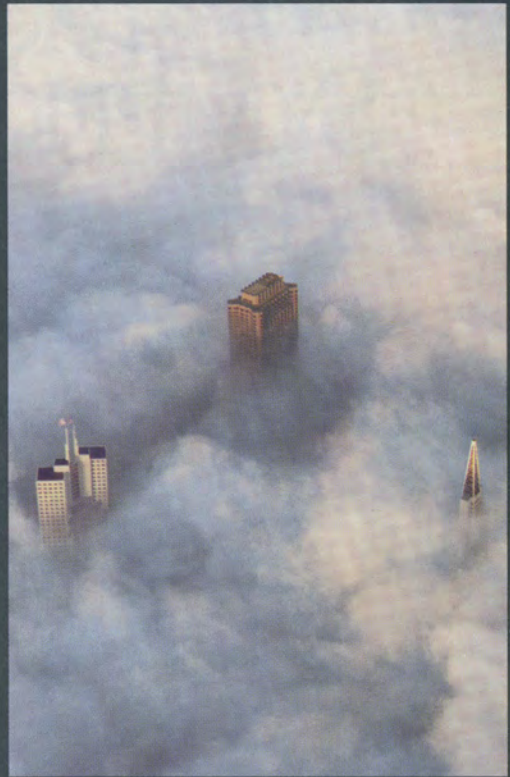
Sennheiser Listening Devices

In order to increase the enjoyment of opera for hearing-impaired members of the audience, the War Memorial Opera House has recently installed a new Sennheiser Listening System. Wireless headphones and induction devices (adaptable to hearing aids) are available at the north end of the main lobby. A rental fee of \$2.00 is requested, in addition to an ID deposit, such as a drivers license or major credit card. The devices can be used in any seat in the Opera House.



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. . . and park in the Performing Arts Garage, remember that you can avoid some of the traffic congestion by using the Gough Street entrance to the facility (between Fulton and Grove).



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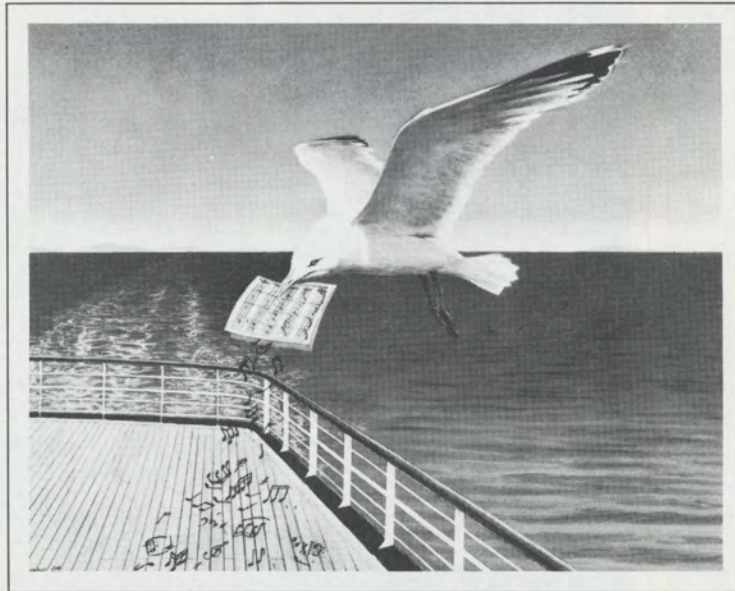
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Piano: Byron Janis, Tamas Vasary, Philippe Moll, Joseph Villa. **Violin:** Viktoria Mullova, Uto Ughi. **Cello:** Frans Helmerson. **Flute:** James Galway. **Trumpet:** Maurice Andre. **Viola:** Milton Katims. **Voice:** Wilhelmenia Fernandez, Kimball Wheeler. **Oboe:** Hans de Vries. **Ensemble:** Meliora String Quartet. **Orchestra:** Polish Chamber Orchestra. **Recorder:** Michala Petri. **Special Appearance:** Free Flight, Cy Coleman, Bobby Mac Ferrin. **Musical Host and Pianist:** Dr. Karl Haas.

Itinerary: Port Everglades, Cap Haitien, Willemstad, Cartagena, San Blas Islands, Cristobal, Gatun Lake (Panama Canal), Playa del Carmen, Port Everglades.

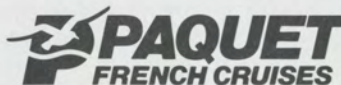
For more information on reservations, contact your travel agent or send the coupon to: Catherine Coste-Ferre, Paquet Cruises, 1007 North America Way, Miami, FL 33132.

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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

Opera Insights held in the Herbst Theatre, Veterans Building, Van Ness and McAllister, in San Francisco. All panel discussions begin at 6 p.m.; doors open at 5:30 p.m. Series subscription for Guild members is \$12; Non-Guild members \$20. Individual tickets may be purchased at the door for \$5. For further information, please call (415) 565-6432. Programs are subject to rehearsal changes.

Sir Charles Mackerras	9/16
Alfredo Kraus	10/7
Renata Scotto	10/14
Ingvar Wixell	10/21

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.

<i>Adriana Lecouvreur</i>	
Arthur Kaplan	9/5
<i>Orlando</i>	
Robert Jacobson	9/12
<i>Turandot</i>	
William Huck	9/19
<i>Falstaff</i>	
James Keolker	10/17
<i>Billy Budd</i>	
Michael Mitchell	11/7
<i>Der Rosenkavalier</i>	
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.

<i>Turandot</i>	
Eugene Marker	9/19
<i>Werther</i>	
James Keolker	10/3
<i>Falstaff</i>	
James Keolker	10/16
<i>Der Rosenkavalier</i>	
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.

<i>Orlando</i>	
Robert Jacobson	9/10
<i>Turandot</i>	
Arthur Kaplan	9/17
<i>Falstaff</i>	
James Keolker	10/15
<i>Billy Budd</i>	
Michael Mitchell	11/12
<i>Der Rosenkavalier</i>	
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.

<i>Adriana Lecouvreur</i>	
Arthur Kaplan	9/6
<i>Orlando</i>	
Robert Jacobson	9/13
<i>Werther</i>	
James Keolker	10/4

<i>Falstaff</i>	
James Keolker	10/11
<i>Billy Budd</i>	
Michael Mitchell	11/12
<i>Der Rosenkavalier</i>	
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.

<i>Orlando</i>	9/11, 6 p.m. reception;
Robert Jacobson	7 p.m. preview 1000 Buckeye Rd., Kenwood
<i>Werther</i>	10/1, 11 a.m. preview;
James Keolker	12:30 p.m. luncheon El Dorado Hotel 405 - 1st St. West, Sonoma
<i>Billy Budd</i>	11/7, 11 a.m. preview;
Michael Mitchell	12:30 p.m. luncheon 3735 Alta Vista, Santa Rosa
<i>Der Rosenkavalier</i>	11/12, 6 p.m. reception;
Speight Jenkins	7 p.m. preview Wild Oak Saddle Club 6600 Toney Dr., Santa Rosa

JUNIOR LEAGUE OPERA PREVIEWS

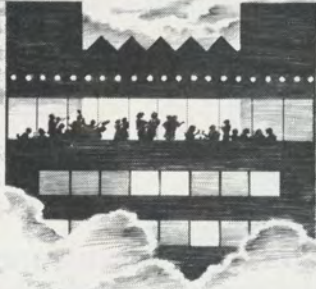
All Junior League opera previews will be held in Herbst Theatre in the Veterans Building, Van Ness at McAllister. Lectures begin at noon and there is no admission charge. For information, please call (415) 347-6920 or (415) 342-2463.

<i>Adriana Lecouvreur</i>	
Arthur Kaplan	9/3
<i>Orlando</i>	
Robert Jacobson	9/10
<i>Werther</i>	
Edmund Manwell	10/3

continued on p.62

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Massenet and Werther

By CHARLES OSBORNE

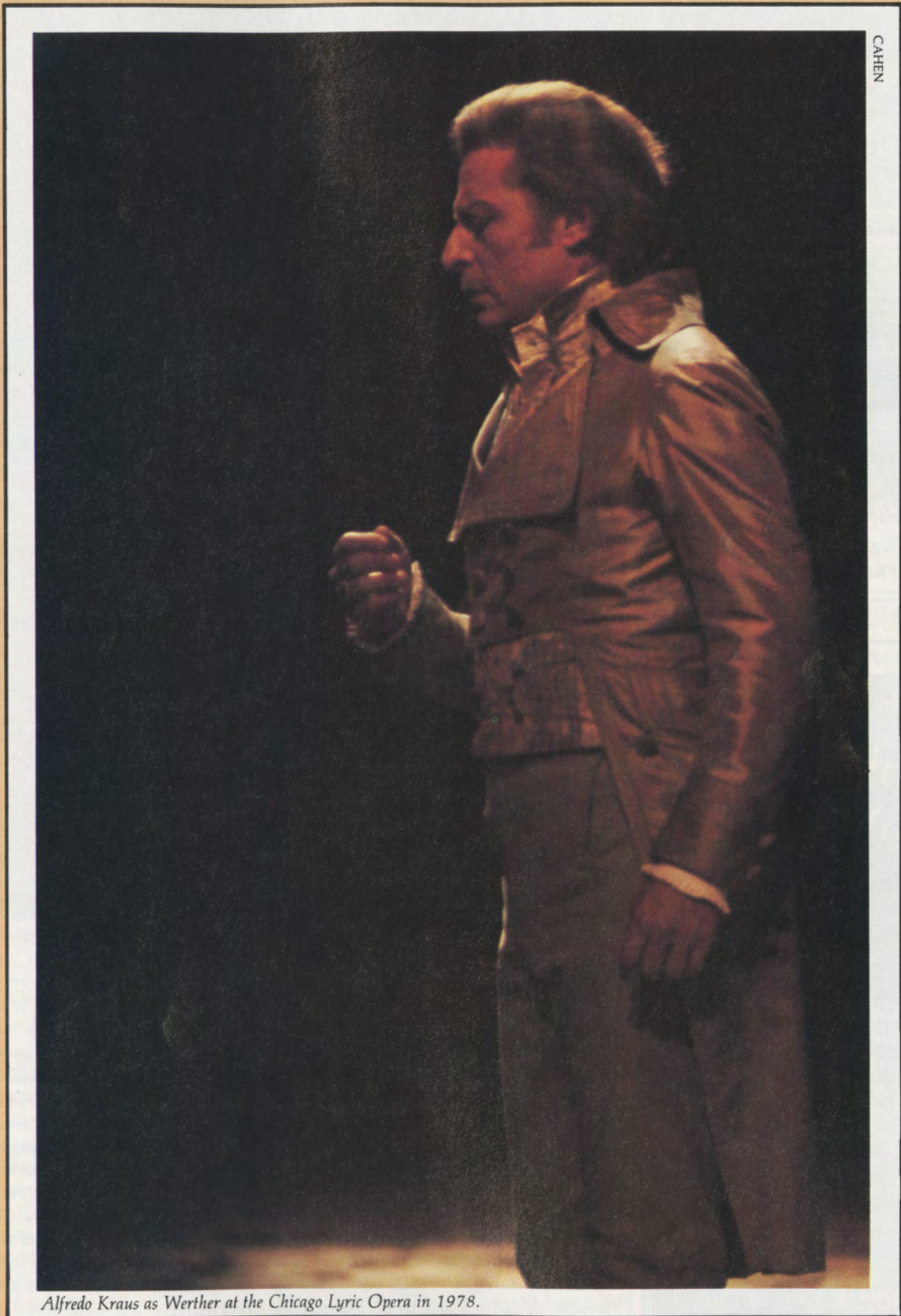
The operas of Jules Massenet have been in and out of fashion over the years, although he was the most prolific opera composer of his time in France and, for a considerable period, the most important. He wrote at least 36 operas of which six are lost or destroyed and three or four, left incomplete, have not been staged. Massenet achieved his earliest success in the theater in 1872 at the age of thirty, with his sixth opera (but the first to be staged), *Don César de Bazan*, a four-act *opéra comique* with a libretto drawn from Victor Hugo's *Ruy Blas*. Five years later, his serious opera, *Le Roi de Lahore*, based on an episode in the Hindu poem, "Mahabharata," brought him fame. Musically, it was not all that far removed from Gounod, and in its spectacular exoticism it was very much in the vein of Meyerbeer. Between *Don César de Bazan* and *Le Roi de Lahore*, Massenet had concentrated on a number of sacred subjects, and for a time it seemed as though his specialty was going to lie in injecting a certain eroticism into the treatment of such characters as Eve, Mary Magdalen, and even the Virgin Mary. "I don't believe in all that creeping-Jesus stuff," Massenet wrote to his younger colleague, Vincent D'Indy, "but the public likes it and we must always agree with the public."

His readiness to give the public what it wanted can be seen either as one of Massenet's strengths or as his

greatest weakness. There is no doubt that, when the composer's own conviction was in accord with current fashion, he produced his most personal and, as it has turned out, his most enduring work. When he pandered too obviously to the public taste, he was left, when that taste changed, with something anonymously passé.

Le Roi de Lahore was not composed out of conviction, and it is hardly surprising that, despite its immediate success at the Paris Opéra in 1877, it failed to hold the stage. The modern search for novelty, which is clearly not going to be satisfied by today's meager and mostly mediocre crop of opera composers, and indeed has been undertaken as a result of it, has led to a re-examination of the lesser works of the great composers. In this process, *Le Roi de Lahore* has been staged again in recent years, though not even the most fervent admirers of Massenet have been able to hail the work as a neglected masterpiece. The earliest of those of his operas to be composed out of an inner urge is, surely, the work which followed *Le Roi de Lahore*. This was *Hérodiade* (1881), an opera of much greater creative individuality than *Le Roi de Lahore*, and one in which Massenet's melodies began to assume a recognizable personality.

Charles Osborne, author of a number of books on opera, lives in London but is a frequent visitor to the United States. His latest book, *A Dictionary of Opera*, was published recently by Simon & Schuster.



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Alfredo Kraus as Werther at the Chicago Lyric Opera in 1978.

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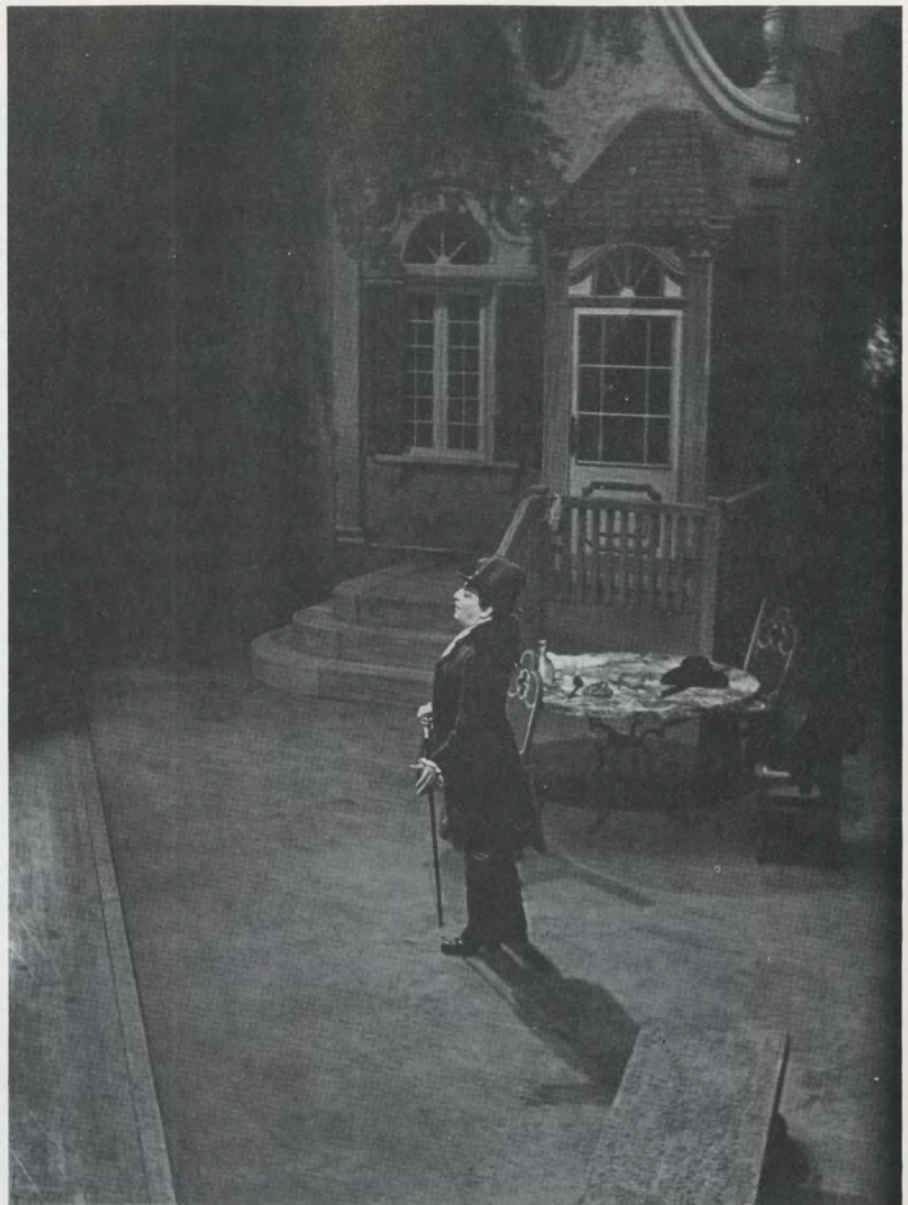
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Tito Schipa as Werther at the San Francisco Opera in 1935. The photo was taken from the wings, shortly after Werther's Act I entrance.

It is the next group of works, composed over a period of two decades and culminating in *Le Jongleur de Notre Dame* (1902), that contains Massenet's most completely successful operas (though also, disconcertingly enough, more than one of his failures). This group includes *Manon* (1884), *Le Cid* (1885), *Esclarmonde* (1889), *Werther* (1892), *Thais* (1894), *Sapho* (1898) and *Cendrillon* (1899). There is a school of thought which considers *Le Jongleur de Notre Dame* to be Massenet's supreme masterpiece; the more general view, however, is that, although it con-

tains much attractive music, the opera is essentially a sentimental piece of pastiche written without inner conviction. What is not seriously in dispute is that the stage works composed in the final decade of Massenet's life reveal a sad falling-off of his powers. *Don Quichotte* (1910), written for the great Russian bass Chaliapin, is still occasionally performed when a protagonist of suitable stature can be found, but it is not a work to stand on its own merits.

Towards the end of his life, Massenet began to fall out of favor. To younger

composers and their audiences, his music came to be regarded as scented and superficial, redolent of the bad old superficial days before the glorious dawn of the 20th century and its new art. His melodic charm and the unique coloring of his orchestration were overlooked, and he was unfairly dismissed as a composer for the salon. Public taste, however, never completely deserted his two most accomplished operas, *Manon* and *Werther*, which continued to be performed in the years between the two world wars, years in which, unlike today, one could never hope to see a performance in the theater of *Le Roi de Lahore*, *Esclarmonde*, *Le Cid*, *Sapho* or *Cendrillon*. Massenet's greatest success in his lifetime was undoubtedly *Manon*, but *Werther* was not far behind in popularity, for the composer had skillfully transformed Goethe's essentially Germanic hero into a character more sympathetic to French sensibilities, without turning him into a travesty of his original self (which is what German critics had, not surprisingly, accused Gounod of having done with *Faust*).

Die Leiden des jungen Werthers (Young Werther's Sorrows), an early novel by Germany's greatest poet, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, was published in 1774 when its author was only 25 years of age. Goethe himself, who usually referred to his novel simply as *Werther*, described it as the story of an artistically inclined young man "gifted with deep, pure sentiment and penetrating intelligence, who loses himself in fantastic dreams and undermines himself with speculative thought until finally, torn by hopeless passions, especially by infinite love, he shoots himself in the head."

It was generally assumed that *Werther* was a crypto-autobiographical work, for had not the poet himself, in the summer of 1772 when he was 23, fallen in love with Charlotte Buff, daughter of the Bailiff or Mayor of Wetzlar, a small town near Frankfurt? In the novel it is the young Werther who falls in love with a girl named Charlotte, daughter of the Bailiff of Wetzlar. The real Charlotte had been engaged for two years to one Johann Kestner, and was unable to offer Goethe more than friendship. The Charlotte of the novel confesses her love for Werther but honors her promise to marry her



San Francisco Opera's 1935 *Werther* family photo. Three principals among the children are (second from left) Coe Glade who portrayed Charlotte, Tito Schipa as Werther, and Anna Young as Sophie.

fiancé, Albert. In October 1772 Karl Wilhelm Jerusalem, a young diplomat, borrowed a pair of pistols from Kestner and shot himself: an unhappy love affair was one of the reasons. In the novel, Werther borrows Albert's pistols and shoots himself because he has lost Charlotte. Clearly, there is a strong autobiographical element in *Werther*. But Goethe, of course, did not commit suicide. Instead, he created art out of his unhappy emotional experience.

The publication of *Werther* in 1774 led to an immediate *Werther* epidemic in Germany. Young men began to dress like the hero of the novel, in blue tails and yellow waistcoats, and there was an immediate and huge increase in the number of suicides among the youth of Germany. Werther's memory was commemorated at the grave of Karl Wilhelm Jerusalem for several decades. This Werther fever was not confined to Germany, but spread throughout those countries into whose languages the novel had been translated. Goethe himself noted with great satisfaction that even the Chinese had painted Charlotte and Werther on porcelain. The author's greatest personal triumph, it is said, was when Napoleon told him that he had read the book seven times. There were *Werther* fans, *Eau de Werther* perfume, and of

course a host of novels and poems written in imitation of the original.

Goethe, inevitably, became known everywhere as "the author of *Werther*": it was not until much later in life that he became "the author of *Faust*." At first he was amused to be pursued by young girls who wanted to be Charlotte to his Werther, but eventually, in desperation, he wrote two parodies of *Werther*. One ends with a man relieving himself on the suicide's grave. In the other, the attempt at suicide is unsuccessful, and Charlotte and Werther marry.

Werther was dramatized not once, but several times. Within two years of the novel's publication, there had been seven stage versions. These, in turn, brought the novel to an even wider readership. As the Italian philosopher Benedetto Croce wrote, Goethe's contemporaries who welcomed it "with an approval so enthusiastic as to reach almost the point of fanaticism, who hailed in it the defense of passion and of nature, the protest against social rules, prejudices and conventions, and even the reasonings in favor of suicide, who 'wertherized' in practice and some of whom, as is well known, were incited by it to make away with themselves," made the book "conform to their own sentiments and needs and perplexities and despair."



Lorenzo Alvary as the Bailiff and Giuletta Simionato as Charlotte in San Francisco Opera's 1953 *Werther*.



John Lombardi as Albert (left) and Cesare Valletti in the title role of San Francisco Opera's 1953 *Werther*.

Massenet was not the first composer to involve himself with Goethe's *Werther*. The very first was probably John Percy (?1749-1797), an English tenor singer, organist and composer, whose song "The Sorrows of Charlotte at the Tomb of Werther," composed soon after the publication of the novel, was published after his death for the benefit of Percy's widow. In 1785, Venanzio Rauzzini (1746-1810), the celebrated castrato for whom Mozart composed his motet, "Exsultate, Jubilate,"

wrote incidental music for a stage version of *Werther* by the English dramatist Frederick Reynolds.

Before the end of the eighteenth century, there were at least two further musical versions of *Werther*. The Italian violinist and composer Gaetano Pugnani (1731-1798) conducted a performance of his *Werther*, "a novel set to music," at the Burgtheater in Vienna, on March 22, 1796. This has been described as a stage version but is, in fact, an orchestral suite

based on Goethe's novel. The first opera to derive from the novel was *Charlotte et Werther* by the French composer Rodolphe Kreutzer (1766-1831). Kreutzer's opera, which reached the stage at the Théâtre Favart in Paris on February 1, 1792, seems not to have been performed since the eighteenth century but can safely be assumed to consist, like Kreutzer's other operas, of what Grove's Dictionary describes condescendingly as "simple melody and accompaniment." While noting that

Schubert often worked miracles with "simple melody and accompaniment," one might accept that Goethe's ironic complexities, masquerading as pure sentiment, would have required in the late 18th century a composer of the stature of Mozart rather than of Kreutzer.

There are at least two 20th-century musical works based on Goethe's *Werther*: a tone-poem, "Werther," by the Belgian conductor-composer Victor Vreuls (1876-1944), which was first performed in 1932; and a score by the German Wolfgang Fortner (b. 1907), composed for a 1949 German film version of the novel.

It is surely, however, no accident that the first operatic version of *Werther* should have been by a French composer. The Germans have always fought shy of grappling with the difficulties of transferring their greatest poet to the opera stage, just as the English (*pace* Benjamin Britten) have avoided Shakespeare, leaving him to Italy. Goethe has been virtually monopolized by French composers. Whatever their shortcomings as adaptations of the original works by Goethe, in operatic terms *Faust* means Gounod and Berlioz, *Mignon* Thomas, and *Werther* Massenet.

In August of 1886, Massenet, accompanied by his publisher Georges Hartmann, traveled to Bayreuth where they attended a performance of *Parsifal*. They then undertook a short tour of Germany, visiting Wetzlar and the house in which Goethe had written *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*. At this time, Massenet was contemplating using his friend Henri Mürger's *Scènes de la vie de Bohème* as the subject of his next opera. (This was not the only time that he and Puccini were to express interest in the same subject!) However, he became enthusiastic about *Werther* after his visit to Wetzlar, and Hartmann encouraged him by giving him a copy of the French translation of *Werther*. Massenet quickly decided upon *Werther* for his next opera, Hartmann produced the outline of a libretto to the actual text of which was entrusted to Édouard Blau and Paul Milliet, and Massenet set himself up in a room at Versailles where he wrote the opera.

When it was completed, *Werther* was offered to the Opéra-Comique where several of Massenet's earlier operas, among them *Manon* and *Esclarmonde*, had first been performed. However, the direc-

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Giacomo Aragall as Werther at San Francisco Opera in 1975.

tor of the theater thought the new opera at best uninteresting and at worst depressing. Whether he would, nevertheless, have agreed to stage the work is uncertain. Matters were taken out of his hands in May of 1887, when the Opéra Comique was destroyed by fire. When, following the huge success of *Manon* at the Vienna Opera in 1890, the Viennese approached Massenet with the request that he provide a new opera for them, he responded by offering the world premiere of *Werther*. The opera was performed in a German translation of its French text at the Vienna Hofoper on February 16, 1892, with the famous Wagnerian tenor Ernest van Dyck as Werther and Marie Renard as Charlotte. In January of the following year, it was staged in Paris by the company of the Opéra-Comique who were occupying the Théâtre Sarah Bernhardt while their own theater was being rebuilt. In Paris, the leading roles were sung by Guillaume Ibos and Marie Delna.

Werther, like *Manon*, has survived many changes of fashion to become a staple of the international operatic repertoire. Two years after its Vienna premiere, it was first heard in Chicago, New York and London, on each occasion with Jean de Reszke and Emma Eames as Werther and Charlotte. When it was staged in St. Petersburg in 1902, Massenet recast the role of Werther for baritone so that it could be sung by Mattia Battistini. In the thirties, Tito Schipa was a distinguished exponent of the title role, not only in Italy but also in San Francisco, when, in 1935, the San Francisco Opera staged *Werther* for the first time with Coe Glade as Charlotte, Alfredo Gandolfi as Albert, and with Gaetano Merola conducting. San Francisco next heard *Werther* in 1953 when Tullio Serafin was the conductor, Giulietta Simionato sang Charlotte, Cesare Valletti was Werther and John Lombardi performed the role of Albert. In recent years, the most admired Werthers in the United States and Europe have included Alfredo Kraus, Nicolai Gedda, and José Carreras.

Not surprisingly, in view of its subject, *Werther* is much more Teutonic in outlook than any other opera of Massenet. The Gallic vivacity which permeates so much of his *oeuvre* is here replaced by a romantic melancholy which comes close to the *Weltschmerz* of Goethe's



José Carreras as Werther, Maria Ewing as Charlotte, in San Francisco Opera's 1978 staging of the Massenet opera.

young hero. Max Kalbeck, the Viennese music critic who was responsible for the German translation in which the opera was performed at its premiere, wrote perceptively of *Werther* that it "inclines more towards the new German school than Massenet's earlier operas without for a moment affecting the essentially French nature of its composer." He also understood that Massenet's opera was not so much a dramatization in music of Goethe's novel as a kind of musical illustration of it. The dramatic structure of the opera is loose in that the scenes follow each other not as though a plot were being unfolded but as though the pages of an album were being turned. The scenes themselves are described as "tableaux," each of which has its own title: "The Bailiff's House," "The Lime Trees," "Charlotte and Werther," "Christmas Night" and "The Death of Werther." The analogy with painting or with pictorial illustration survives when one comes to consider Massenet's orchestration. As Kalbeck wrote, "The musical colorist we may admire in the lucid, finely applied color of his orchestra."

When *Werther* was first staged, some critics discerned in it the influence of

Wagner. A hundred years later, Wagner does not appear to be a predominant influence, except perhaps in the general sense: by 1892 it was the fashion to give a greater prominence to the orchestra, and to attach musical phrases to individual characters. There are passages of *Werther* that sound not unlike Wagner, but there are also passages, in particular those relating to the neurotic hero himself, which are much more reminiscent of Tchaikovsky.

The opera has its own character, and that character is essentially an aspect of Massenet. *Werther*, *Manon* and *Sapho* are very different from one another, but all are recognizably Massenet, just as one recognizes the essential Verdi in operas of such disparate nature as *Nabucco*, *La Traviata* and *Falstaff*. Verdi was a master of dramatic gesture, Massenet a master of subtle nuance, but they shared a concern for the individual color of a work. In *Werther*, Massenet has shown French sensibility superimposing itself upon a more overwrought German romanticism, in a work whose characters are brought to life through melodic shape and orchestral tone-painting. In its own way, *Werther* is an opera which does full justice to Goethe.

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"Viva la morte" (Long live death) as expressed by Richard Tucker (Chénier) and Renata Tebaldi (Maddalena) in the last moments of Giordano's Andrea Chénier. The work opened San Francisco Opera's 1965 season.

By WILLIAM AGUIAR, JR.

In the film "Wagner" which was shown as part of the San Francisco Opera's Ring Festival last summer, there is a scene that shows Wagner and his friends taking the water cure treatment. As the men wander about the healing pool, Wagner is seen reading from Schopenhauer's "Parerga and Paralipomena" and gleefully quoting from the essay on suicide. His companions are shocked at Wagner's agreement with Schopenhauer that suicide may be an honorable act under the right circumstances. Like Wagner's companions, most of us find suicide an unpleasant subject and reject the notion that killing one's self is accepta-

ble behavior.

Yet we readily accept suicide in opera. We are willing to feel sympathy for the characters who decide to end their lives because they are unable to tolerate the forces about them. A trivia game could be invented about suicide in opera by matching characters to self-destruction by knives, poisons, guns and leaping from high places. Some of the suicides in opera are rather elaborate. Wally in Catalani's *La Wally*, after bravely defying the force of an avalanche, desperately crawls to the edge of a mountain seeking her lover in vain: "Death is there!" she sings before throwing herself over the precipice.

And what about Maddalena in

Andrea Chénier who ends her life by bribing a jailer so she can be allowed to take the place of a condemned woman. She and Chénier go to the guillotine happily singing "Long live death—together!" Gioconda's death is not greeted with such ecstasy, but it presents an accurate clinical description of what

continued on p.48

William Aguiar, Jr. is the music critic for the San Francisco Hokubei Mainichi. His reviews have also been published in Opera News, Opern Welt and Opera. A long-time student of Freudian psychology, he has written extensively about behavioral sciences.

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RENATA SCOTTO

Internationally renowned soprano **Renata Scotto** returns to San Francisco Opera to add a new role to her distinguished repertoire: Charlotte in *Werther*. She made her Company debut in one of her most celebrated roles, Cio-Cio-San in *Madama Butterfly*, and returned in 1975 as Leonora in *Il Trovatore* and opened the 1977 Fall Season in the title role of *Adriana Lecouvreur*. In 1979 she performed the title role in the production of *La Gioconda* that was televised internationally from San Francisco and earned Miss Scotto an Emmy Award. Born in Savona, Italy, she made her operatic debut there at the age of 18 as Violetta in *La Traviata*. Within a few years she was performing leading roles at La Scala in Milan, and today is heard regularly at the great opera houses of the world, including London's Covent Garden, Moscow's Bolshoi, the Vienna Staatsoper and the Paris Opera, as well as New York's Metropolitan Opera, the company with which she has become most closely identified. She inaugurated the "Live from the Met" series of broadcasts as Mimi in *La Bohème* in 1977 and has since appeared on that series every season, with eight telecasts—two of them in 1981—to her credit. Her repertoire encompasses more than 60 roles and exhibits extraordinary range and diversity, from the bel canto operas of Bellini and Donizetti to the verismo works of Giordano, Cilea, Mascagni and Puccini (including all three soprano leads in *Il Trittico*). Her Verdi repertoire includes Amelia in *Un Ballo in Maschera*, Leonora in *Il Trovatore*, Elisabetta in *Don Carlo*, Elena in *I Vespri Siciliani*, the title roles of *La Traviata* and *Luisa Miller*, and Lady Macbeth in *Macbeth*. Miss Scotto has also explored less well-known works such as Bellini's *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* and *Zaira*, Donizetti's *Maria di Rohan*, Verdi's *I Lombardi* and



CHERYL PARRISH

Refice's *Cecilia*. Last March she performed in a concert version of *Francesca da Rimini* with the Concert Opera Association in Davies Symphony Hall. Miss Scotto's extensive discography includes complete recordings of *Norma*, *Adriana Lecouvreur*, *Andrea Chénier*, *Pagliacci*, *Cavalleria Rusticana*, *Le Prophète*, *La Bohème*, *Edgar*, *Suor Angelica*, *Il Tabarro*, *Tosca*, *Turandot*, *Le Villi*, *Nabucco*, *Otello*, *Rigoletto*, *La Traviata*, the Verdi Requiem and two versions of *Madama Butterfly*. Her autobiography, *Renata Scotto: More Than a Diva*, has been published by Doubleday.

Soprano **Cheryl Parrish** appears as Sophie in *Werther* and the character of the same name in *Der Rosenkavalier*, a role she has sung to acclaim with Los Angeles Opera Theater. A participant in the 1981 and '82 Merola Opera Programs, she won the Schwabacher Memorial Award in the 1981 San Francisco Opera Center Auditions Grand Finals and was seen in numerous roles, including Papagena in *The Magic Flute*, Sally in *Die Fledermaus*, Alice Ford in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and Gilda in *Rigoletto*, a role she also performed on Western Opera Theater's 1982 national tour. She was chosen to inaugurate the Schwabacher Debut Recital series in 1983, the year in which she made her Company debut as Naiade in *Ariadne auf Naxos* and appeared in *La Grande Duchesse de Gérolstein* with Régine Crespin, with whom Miss Parrish has studied in France. She was awarded an Adler Fellowship for 1984, and won acclaim in the 1984 Opera Center Showcase as Blonde in *The Abduction from the Seraglio*, a role she will sing with the Dallas Opera and St. Louis Opera Theater next year. During 1983, the Texas native was soprano soloist in



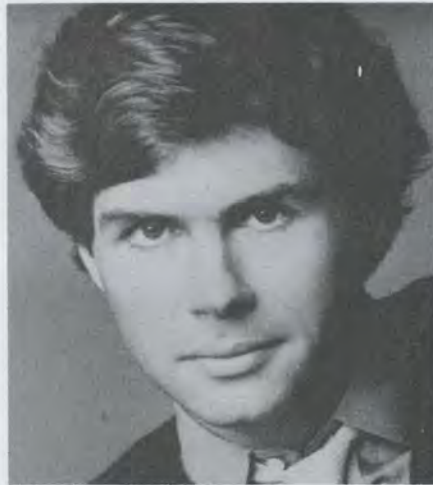
BARBARA KILDUFF

Mozart's *Coronation Mass* performed during a pontifical high mass celebrated by the Vatican Secretary of State to mark the opening of the Vatican art exhibit in San Francisco. She sang the Forest Bird in *Siegfried* in the summer of 1984, repeating the role for the complete *Ring* cycle performances in 1985. Operatic engagements outside of San Francisco have included *Fiametta* in *The Gondoliers* with the Fort Worth Opera Association; Eurilla in Haydn's *Orlando Paladino* for the Carmel Bach Festival, where she has also sung Mozart's C minor Mass and Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater*; Gretel in *Hansel and Gretel* for the Marin Opera; and Adele in *Die Fledermaus* with the Cleveland Opera. Miss Parrish has a special affinity for the light music of Vienna, and has sung concerts of Viennese music at the Ravinia and Chautauqua Festivals, a task she will undertake this December for the San Francisco Symphony conducted by Franz Allers. Last summer she also appeared at the Lake Tahoe Music Festival and the San Francisco Symphony Pops series. October 1985 finds her in recital at Cal Tech University in Pasadena, and she returns to her alma mater at Baylor University in Waco, Texas, for a recital next February. She will appear as Sophie in *Der Rosenkavalier* for Portland Opera next year.

Lyric-coloratura soprano **Barbara Kilduff** makes her San Francisco Opera debut as Käthchen in *Werther*, and also appears as a Milliner in *Der Rosenkavalier*. A participant in the 1984 Merola Opera Program, Miss Kilduff appeared in Western Opera Theater's 1984-85 touring production of Rossini's *La Cenerentola*. During the San Francisco Opera Center's 1985 Showcase season, she was seen as the Mother in



ALFREDO KRAUS



STEPHEN DICKSON

Conrad Susa's *The Love of Don Perlimplin*. For the Fredonia Opera Theatre she appeared as Marie in Smetana's *The Bartered Bride* and Pamina in *The Magic Flute*. She portrayed Yum-Yum for a production of *The Mikado* given by Western New York Opera Theatre at Art Park, and for Hartford's Nutmeg Theatre she won praise as Adele in Johann Strauss' *Die Fledermaus*. Miss Kilduff won the Florence Bruce Award at the 1984 San Francisco Opera Center Auditions Grand Finals, and as a result of winning the 1984 D'Angelo Young Artists Competition, she appeared in concert with the Erie Philharmonic and the Chautauqua Festival Orchestra. This last July she made a concert appearance with the Chautauqua Music School Festival Orchestra and attracted critical attention for her performances at Wolf Trap in Rossini's *Signor Bruschino*, Donizetti's *Le Convenienze Teatrali (Viva la Mamma)* and Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, in which she sang Papagena.

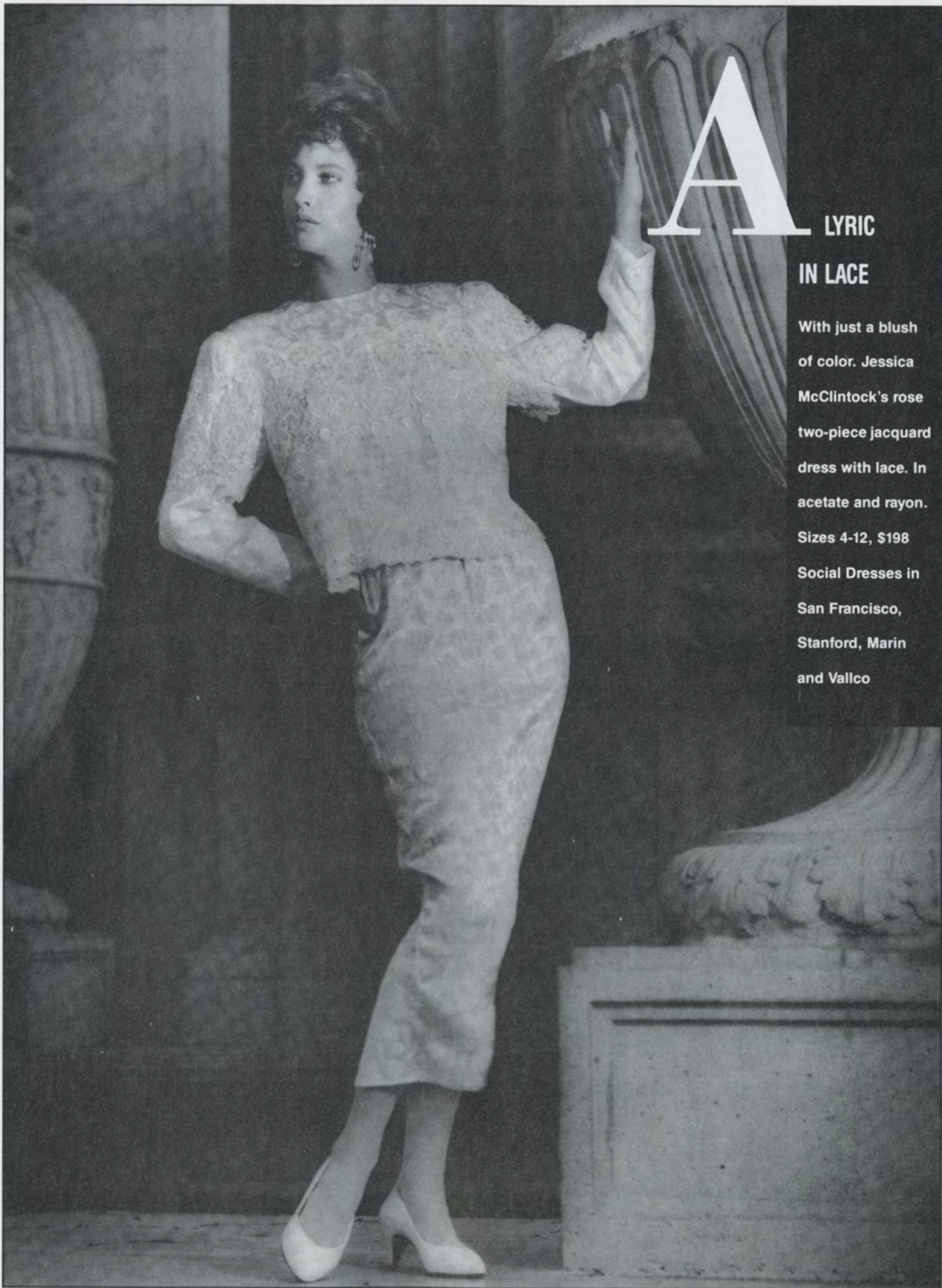
Widely hailed as the "aristocrat of tenors," **Alfredo Kraus** makes a long-awaited return to San Francisco Opera in one of his most celebrated signature roles, that of Werther. Born in Las Palmas, he made his 1956 professional debut in Cairo as the Duke in *Rigoletto*. Within the next three years, he had scored major successes in Venice, Turin, Barcelona and Lisbon (where he appeared in *La Traviata* opposite Maria Callas). He bowed at Covent Garden as Edgardo opposite Joan Sutherland's Lucia in 1959, and made a triumphant debut at La Scala as Elvino in *La Sonnambula* the following year. He made his American debut at the Lyric Opera of Chicago in 1962, singing Nemorino in

L'Elisir d'Amore, and bowed at the Metropolitan Opera as the Duke in *Rigoletto* during 1965. The 1966-67 season saw his San Francisco Opera debut as Arturo in *I Puritani* (again with Miss Sutherland); subsequent Company credits have included Verdi's Duke, the title role of *Faust* and Nemorino. Renowned as a supreme master of the bel canto style, Kraus has won accolades in *Don Pasquale*, *L'Elisir d'Amore*, *Lucrezia Borgia*, *La Favorita*, *La Fille du Régiment*, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* and *I Puritani*. He has become known as a specialist in the French romantic repertoire, and is identified with such roles as Faust, Hoffmann, Des Grieux in *Manon*, Nadir in *Les Pêcheurs de Perles*, Gerald in *Lakmé* and Gounod's Romeo. In 1983 he appeared at Lyric Opera of Chicago in Massenet's *Manon* with Renata Scotto and was seen on nationwide telecasts of the Met's centennial celebrations and in *Lucia di Lammermoor* with Miss Sutherland, who also appeared with him in critically acclaimed performances of *La Fille du Régiment*. His assignments last season included *La Traviata* in Dallas, *Lucia* at La Scala, *Werther* and *La Fille du Régiment* in Bilbao, *The Tales of Hoffmann* at the Met, *Roméo et Juliette* in Barcelona, *L'Elisir d'Amore* in Florence and *Don Pasquale* in Milan. Kraus has recently finished a series of *Lucias* in Bilbao and later this year will go to Paris as Gounod's Romeo. He has made complete recordings of *Werther*, *Les Pêcheurs de Perles*, *I Puritani*, *Don Pasquale*, *Manon*, *Così fan tutte*, *La Bohème*, *Falstaff*, Rossini's *Petite Messe Solennelle*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Jolie Fille de Perth*, two of *La Traviata* and three of *Rigoletto*.

Baritone **Stephen Dickson** returns to San Francisco Opera as Albert in *Werther*. He

made his 1982 Company debut as Prince Yeletsky in *The Queen of Spades*. His professional debut took place in a 1976 production of *Albert Herring* with the Opera Theatre of St. Louis, where he has returned for numerous assignments, including the American premieres of Mahler's reconstruction of Weber's *Die Drei Pintos* in 1979 and Delius's *Fennimore and Gerda* in 1981. He bowed at Santa Fe Opera in 1977 as Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte*, and made his European debut as Papageno in *The Magic Flute* at the Grand Théâtre de Nancy during the 1979-80 season. He has since also appeared in Monte Carlo, Nice, Lyon, and the Théâtre Musical de Paris/Châtelet in Paris. He made his Glyndebourne debut in 1980 as Papageno, the vehicle of his 1981 Metropolitan Opera debut. The 1980-81 season saw his first performances with New York City Opera, where he appeared as Ford in a new production of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. The 1981-82 season saw his debuts with the Lyric Opera of Chicago as Dr. Falke in *Die Fledermaus* and with the Pittsburgh Opera as Silvio in *Pagliacci*. In December 1981 he was seen on a live telecast from the White House hosted by Beverly Sills. Dickson has also performed with the opera companies of Houston, Fort Worth, Washington, D.C., Baltimore, Omaha and Wolf Trap. In 1983 he appeared in a Jean-Pierre Ponnelle production of *Così fan tutte* with L'Orchestre de Paris conducted by Daniel Barenboim at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées. He appeared at the 1983 and '85 Aix-en-Provence Festivals, singing Papageno as well as Arlecchino in *Ariadne auf Naxos*. Last September he bowed at Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires, again as Guglielmo. Recent engagements include Silvio in *Pagliacci* and Papageno, as well as the title role in a new production of *Il Barbiere di*

continued on p.44



A

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Libretto by ÉDOUARD BLAU, PAUL MILLIET and GEORGES HARTMANN

Based on GOETHE's *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*

Werther

(in French)

Conductor

Michel Plasson*

Stage Director

Bernard Uzan*

Designer

Steven Rubin

Lighting Designer

Thomas J. Munn

Lighting Supervision

Joan Arhelger

Musical Preparation

James Johnson

Christopher Larkin

Joseph De Rugeris

Philip Eisenberg

Prompter

Philip Eisenberg

Assistant Stage Director

Sharon Woodriff

Stage Manager

Jerry Sherk

San Francisco Boys Chorus

Louis Magor, Director

Girls Chorus San Francisco

Elizabeth Appling, Director

Scenery constructed in

San Francisco Opera Scenic Studios

Costumes executed by

San Francisco Opera Costume Shop

Miss Scotto's costumes designed by

Walter Mahoney

First performance:

Vienna, February 16, 1892

First San Francisco Opera performance:

November 22, 1935

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 4 AT 8:00

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 10 AT 8:00

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 13 AT 2:00

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 16 AT 7:30

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 19 AT 8:00

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 22 AT 8:00

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 25 AT 8:00

CAST

(in order of appearance)

The bailiff Renato Capecchi

Children:

Hans David Greenbaum*

Gretel Maren Montalbano*

Karl Yoram Mehr*

Clara Mihoko Ito*

Max Jeffrey Rice*

Fritz Caen Thomason-Redus*

Johann James Patterson

Schmidt Dennis Petersen

Sophie Cheryl Parrish

Werther Alfredo Kraus

Charlotte Renata Scotto

Brühlmann John Maxham*

Käthchen Barbara Kilduff*

Albert Stephen Dickson

Villagers, guests, peasants

* San Francisco Opera debut

PLACE AND TIME: Wetzlar, Germany, in the 1780s

ACT I The house of the bailiff, July

INTERMISSION

ACT II The square in the village of
Wetzlar, September

INTERMISSION

ACT III *Scene 1:* Charlotte and Albert's house,
Christmas Eve
Scene 2: Werther'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 two hours and forty-five minutes.

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

All performances of *Werther* feature Supertitles
by Christopher Bergen, San Francisco Opera.

Werther/Synopsis

ACT I

In the garden of his home, the bailiff is teaching his younger children a Christmas carol. A widower and father of a large family, he reminds them that their elder sister Charlotte is within earshot and will not be pleased with their performance. His two friends, Johann and Schmidt, come to lure him away for an evening at the local inn, but he says he must first see Charlotte safely off to a ball given by friends in town. She is being escorted by Werther, an idealistic young man, in place of her fiancé Albert, who is away on business. The bailiff promises to meet his friends later and they leave as Werther comes to call for Charlotte. Overcome by the rustic charm of the surroundings, he extols the beauties of nature. On being introduced to Charlotte, he is immediately struck by her warmth and innocent beauty, and dreams of passing a life of happiness at her side. They leave for the ball. Charlotte's sister Sophie, remaining home to take care of the children, insists that her father go to meet his friends. When all have left and Sophie is alone, Albert returns unexpectedly, eager to see his betrothed and to know what has been happening during his six months' absence. Not finding Charlotte at home, he leaves, promising to return the next day.

Charlotte and Werther return from the ball lost in each other. She tells him of the shock of her beloved mother's death, and Werther declares his love. The bailiff's voice interrupts announcing Albert's return, and Charlotte tells a stunned Werther of her promise to her dying mother to marry Albert.

ACT II

Three months later Albert, Charlotte and Werther have become very good friends. It is Sunday before a service, which will be followed by the celebrations for the pastor's 50th wedding anniversary. Before entering the church with Charlotte, to whom he has been married for three months, Albert asks her if he has succeeded in making her happy and receives her assurances. Contemplating them from a distance, Werther is again dis-

traught at the idea that another man is her husband. Albert tells Werther that he feels almost guilty in his happiness, knowing that Werther himself must have been attracted to Charlotte. Werther assures him that he has forgotten that dream. They are interrupted by Sophie who arrives eager for the festivities, and Albert tries to make Werther aware of her obvious interest in him. Charlotte leaves the church, having found renewed strength in prayer, to be met by Werther's unhappy reminiscences and increasingly passionate declarations. Her resistance is at the breaking point, so she orders him to leave until Christmas. Alone, Werther contemplates suicide and rushes away, to Sophie's distress. As the celebrations begin, Charlotte and Albert discover Sophie crying, and Albert now realizes that Werther loves his wife.

ACT III

Alone on Christmas Eve, Charlotte is obsessed by the thought of Werther as she rereads his many letters. Sophie enters, but her attempts to cheer her sister only result in Charlotte breaking into tears. Alone again, Charlotte desperately prays to God for strength. Werther appears; after she assures him that nothing has changed in the house since he left, he laments, "nothing but the hearts." However, Charlotte's reaction as he recites one of their favorite poets betrays her, and Werther, overjoyed, passionately embraces her. Charlotte, horrified at her momentary weakness, banishes Werther forever, leaving him alone and determined on suicide. Albert enters after Werther's departure and is suspicious of Charlotte's behavior. They are interrupted by Werther's servant who comes asking for the loan of some pistols since his master is leaving on a journey. Albert orders Charlotte to give them to the man, but as soon as she is alone, she rushes after Werther hoping to prevent a tragedy. Charlotte arrives too late. She can do nothing except declare her love. Werther dies in her arms, while from the distance comes the sound of the children's Christmas carols.

Werther

Photos taken in rehearsal by Marty Sohl

Renata Scotto, Alfredo Kraus





(above) Renato Capecchi

(below) Stephen Dickson, Renata Scotto

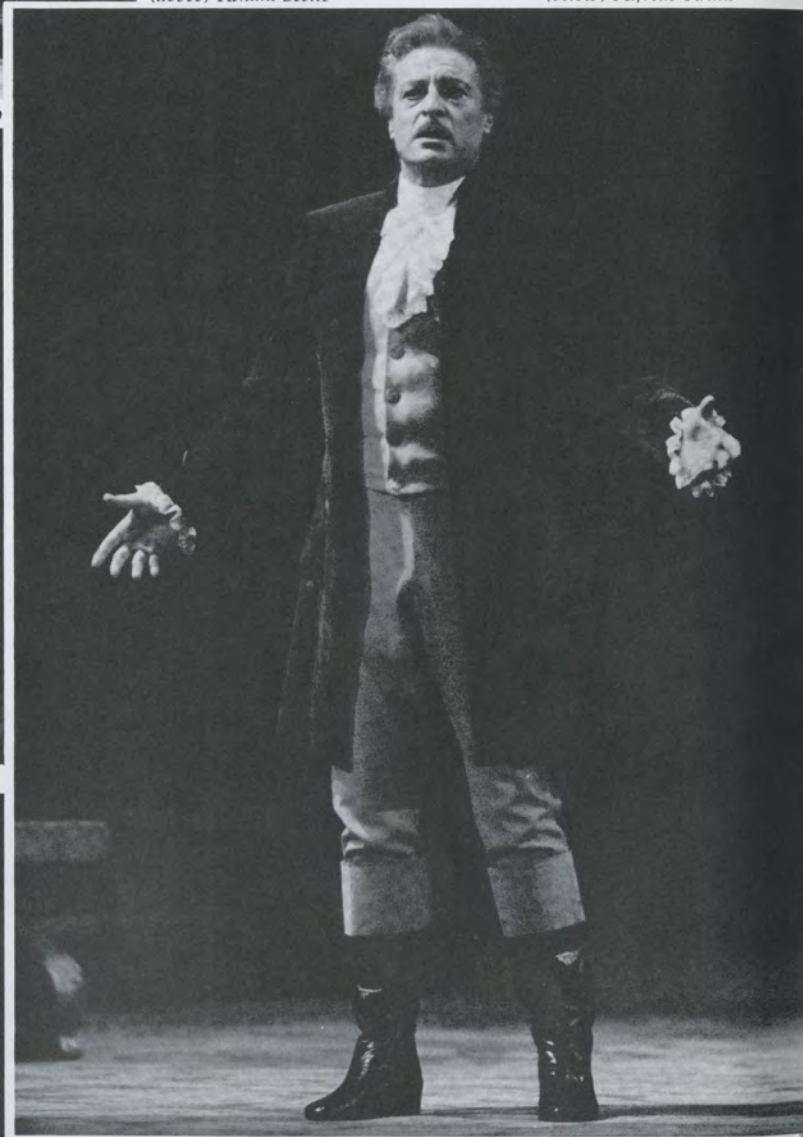


(above) Renata Scotto

(below) Alfredo Kraus



(below) Renata Scotto, Cheryl Parrish



(below) James Patterson, Dennis Petersen





(above) Renata Scotto, Alfredo Kraus

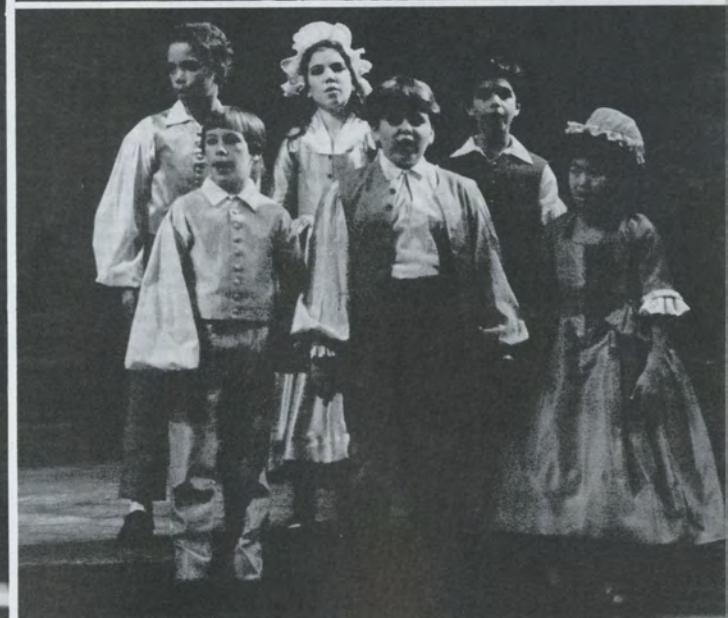


(above) Renata Scotto

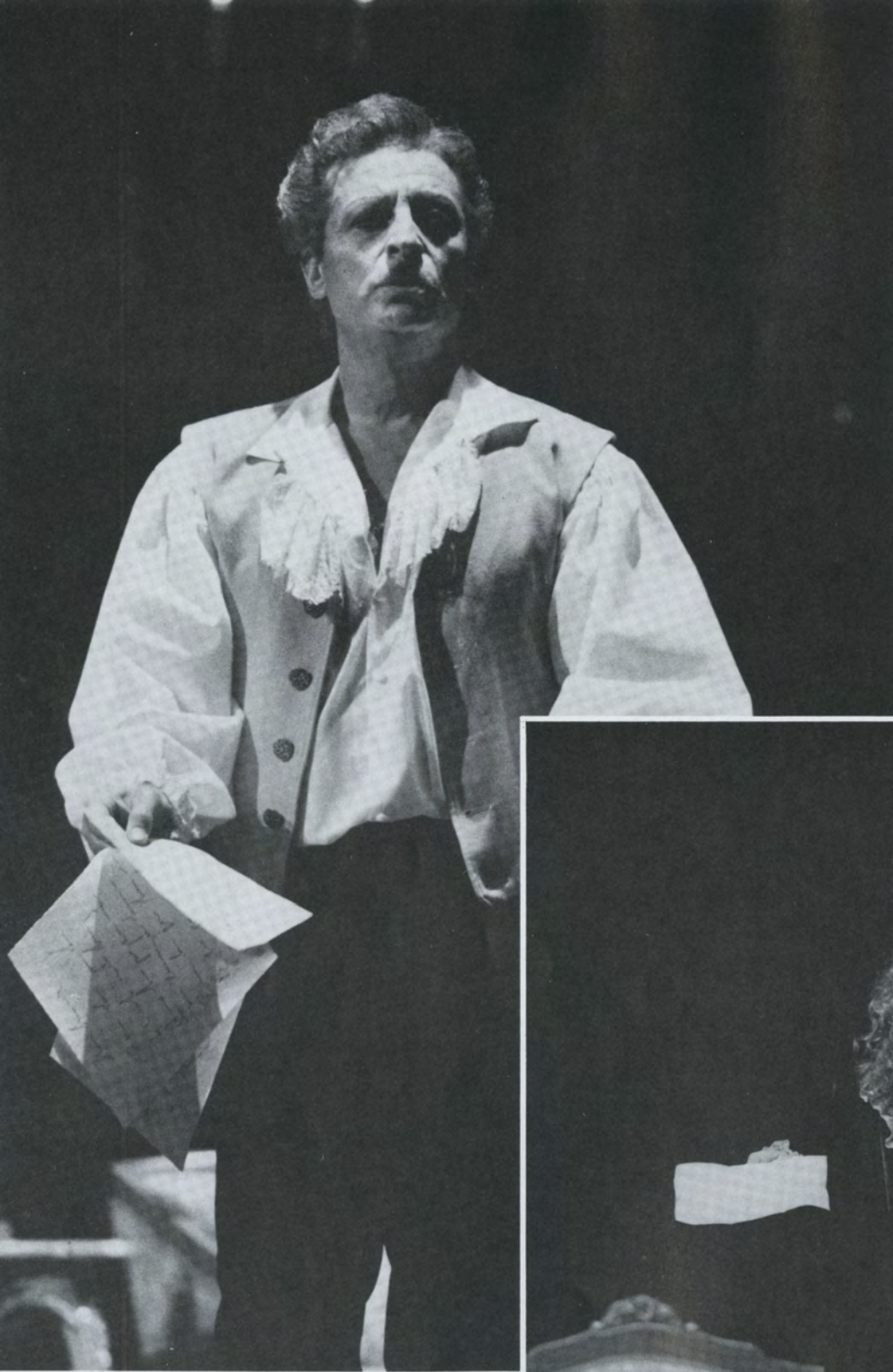
(below) Cheryl Parrish



(below) Stephen Dickson



(top, l. to r.) Caen Thomason-Redus, Maren Montalbano, Yoram Mehr
(bottom, l. to r.) Jeffrey Rice, David Greenbaum, Mihoko Ito



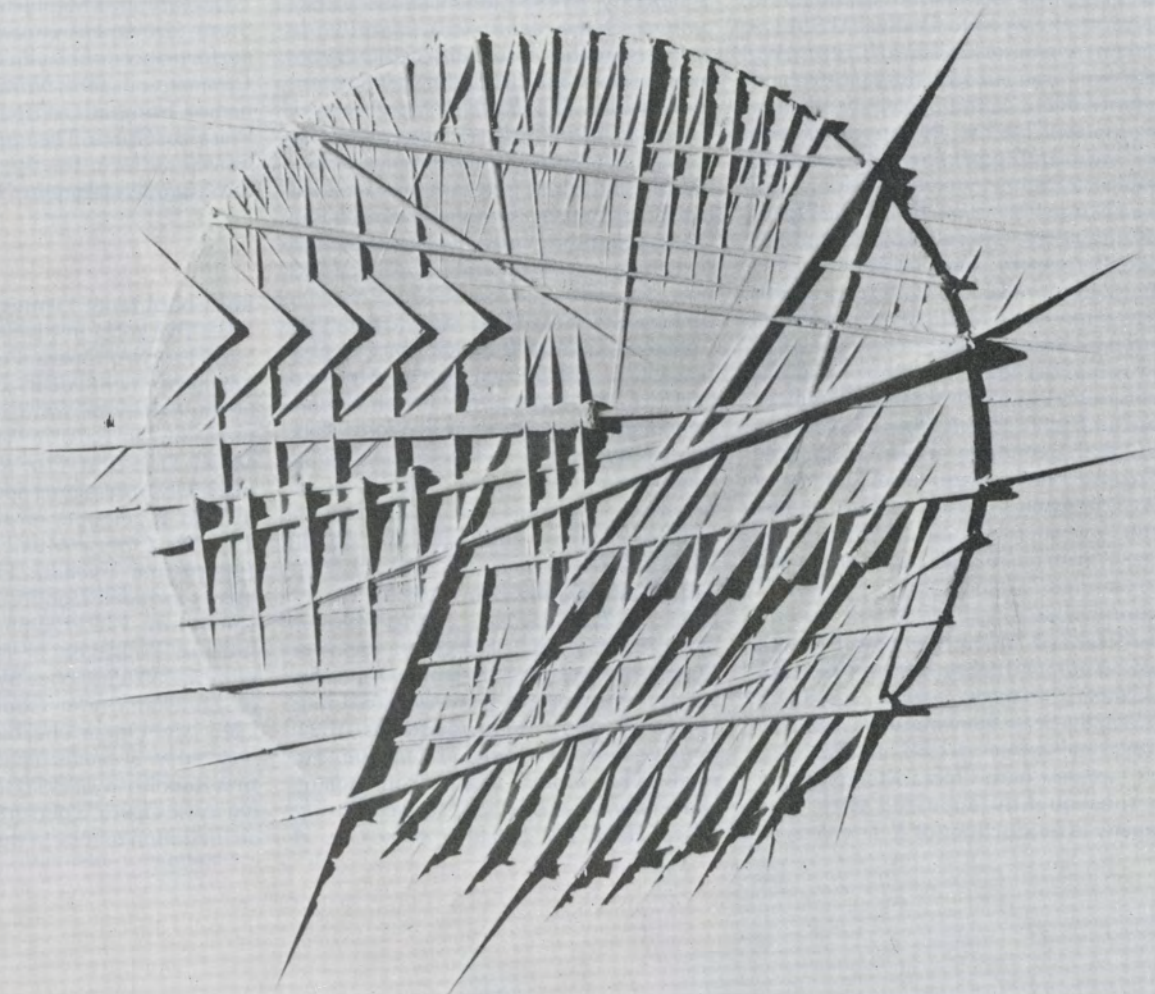
Alfredo Kraus



Renata Scottò

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RENATO CAPECCHI

continued from p.35

Siviglia for New York City Opera; Arlecchino at the Met; Valentin in *Faust* in Manitoba and Edmonton; and his Italian debut as Papageno in Torino.

Italian bass-baritone **Renato Capecchi** returns to San Francisco Opera in three roles: the Bailiff in *Werther*, the Sacristan in *Tosca* and Faninal in *Der Rosenkavalier*. He made his 1968 Company debut in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* and has since returned for nine additional productions, including *La Forza del Destino*, *La Cenerentola*, *Tosca*, *Così fan tutte* and *Manon Lescaut*. He made his professional debut with the Italian Radio in 1948, followed by his stage debut as Amonasro in *Aida* with the Teatro Comunale of Reggio Emilia in 1949. A familiar figure on the world's foremost operatic stages, Capecchi has a repertoire of over 300 roles and has recorded more than 30 operas complete, as well as several special programs of Italian music. For the 1976 Merola Opera Program, he directed the American stage premiere of Donizetti's *L'Ajo nell'Imbarazzo* and Gazzaniga's *Il Convitato di Pietra* at the Paul Masson Winery, and instructed the young singers in classic commedia dell'arte traditions. Other directorial credits include *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* with the Chautauqua and New Orleans Opera, *Il Matrimonio Segreto* in Santa Fe, *Così fan tutte* in Connecticut and *La Fille du Régiment* at New York City Opera. Among his many engagements last season were *La Bohème* at the Met, *The Marriage of Figaro* at Avignon, Alfonso in *Così fan tutte* for Dallas Opera, Geronimo in *Il Matrimonio Segreto* for Santa Fe Opera, and Bartolo in *The Barber of Seville* at the Vienna Staatsoper. On this year's Met tour he will be seen in *La Bohème* and *L'Italiana in Algeri*, and will make his



DENNIS PETERSEN

American recital debut at Carnegie Hall in March. Especially interested in working with young singers, Capecchi holds teaching positions with the American Opera Company at Juilliard, the University of Colorado at Boulder (where he has directed *The Barber of Seville*) and at the Music School in Detmold, West Germany, where he has staged Galuppi's *Il Filosofo di Campagna*.

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



JAMES PATTERSON

Lucia di Lammermoor and Edoardo in Verdi's *Un Giorno di Regno*. Recent engagements have included *La Traviata* and Beethoven's Ninth Symphony in Eugene, Oregon; a tour of *Rigoletto* with the New York City Opera National Company; Mendelssohn's *Die Erste Walpurgisnacht* with the New York Choral Society; and a major triumph as a last-minute replacement for the tenor soloist in Britten's *War Requiem* with the Philadelphia Orchestra.

Bass **James Patterson** sings four roles for San Francisco Opera's 1985 Fall Season: The King of France in *Lear*, Johann in *Werther*, Tommaso in *Un Ballo in Maschera*, and the Police Commissioner in *Der Rosenkavalier*. A graduate of the 1982 Merola Opera Program, he appeared in productions of *Rigoletto* and *The Magic Flute*, and went on to portray Sparafucile in Western Opera Theater's 1982 touring production of *Rigoletto*. He was heard in Opera Center Showcase productions of *L'Ormino* and *The Rape of Lucretia* in 1983, and for the 1984 Showcase was Osmin in *The Abduction from the Seraglio*. Since his Company debut as a Customhouse Guard in the 1983 Summer Season production of *La Bohème*, he has sung nearly a dozen roles here, including Dr. Grenvil in *La Traviata*, the King of Egypt in *Aida*, Zuniga in *Carmen*, Alessio in *La Sonnambula*, Sparafucile in *Rigoletto*, Orest's Guardian in *Elektra*, a Border Guard and Cherniakovskiy in *Boris Godunov*, and a Monk in *La Gioconda*. His most recent Company appearances were as Fafner in *Das Rheingold* and *Siegfried* during the 1985 Ring Festival. Last year, he sang both Fafners for the Pacific Northwest Wagner Festival in Seattle. During the summer of 1981, he was an apprentice artist with Santa Fe Opera, where he appeared as



JOHN MAXHAM

Simone in *Gianni Schicchi*. His concert credits include Herod in Berlioz's *L'Enfance du Christ* with the Marin Symphony, and for the 1983 Festival of Masses he was bass soloist in the *St. Matthew Passion* and the Verdi Requiem under the baton of Robert Shaw.

Baritone **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 Duruflé. 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.

Conductor **Michel Plasson** makes his San Francisco Opera debut leading *Werther*, a work he has recorded complete with



MICHEL PLASSON

Alfredo Kraus in the title role. Born in Paris, he was a piano pupil of Lazare Lévy, and studied percussion and conducting at the National Conservatory of Music in Paris. In 1962 he won first prize at the Besançon International Conducting Competition. At the advice of Charles Munch, he came to the United States and worked with Erich Leinsdorf, Pierre Monteux and Leopold Stokowski. Upon his return to France, he became musical director for the city of Metz and in 1968 assumed directorship of the orchestra and opera house of Toulouse. Plasson was instrumental in the 1974 conversion of the old wheat market building into the 3,000-seat concert hall that today is the home of L'Orchestre du Capitole de Toulouse. In 1977 he led performances of *Fidelio* that inaugurated the building, where he has also conducted *Salome*, *Aida*, *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, *Faust*, *Carmen*, and the 1985 world premiere of Marcel Landowski's *Montségur*. In 1983, Plasson relinquished his duties with the Toulouse Opera to concentrate on concert activity with the Toulouse Orchestra, whose programs were expanding under Plasson's leadership. A champion of French music, he has led the commissioning of numerous works which he has led in their premiere performances both in France and abroad. He has also made significant contributions to the preservation of French musical heritage through his numerous recordings for Pathé Marconi/EMI of works both famous and less well known, for which he has received various awards. In addition to his busy schedule in Toulouse, Plasson appears as a guest conductor for such ensembles as the Berlin Philharmonic, the London Philharmonic, L'Orchestre de la Suisse Romande and the Gewandhaus Orchestra of Leipzig. His operatic activities have taken him to the



BERNARD UZAN

podiums of opera companies in Paris, Geneva, Vienna, Munich, Hamburg and Zurich, in addition to Covent Garden, the Metropolitan Opera and Lyric Opera of Chicago. Recordings of his that are available in the United States include complete versions of Offenbach's *La Périchole* and *Orphée aux Enfers*, Massenet's *Manon* with Alfredo Kraus, the complete Saint-Saëns piano concertos with Philippe Entremont, the second and third piano concertos of Rachmaninoff with Jean-Philippe Collard, and Chausson's *Symphony in B-flat*.

French-born director **Bernard Uzan** makes his San Francisco Opera debut with *Werther*, a work he has staged for the Opera Company of Philadelphia. He began his career as both actor and stage director in France, where he worked closely with noted French director Jean-Louis Barrault for several seasons. His acting and directing credits include engagements in the major theaters of France and on tour throughout Europe, and he starred in a French television series dramatizing the lives of the great composers, including Beethoven, Berlioz and Mendelssohn. He graduated from the University of Paris with Ph.D. degrees in theatrical studies and literature and philosophy. He has been honored by twice receiving the French awards for best director and best actor. In 1982 he made his American operatic debut directing *Pagliacci* for the Lake George Opera Festival, and he opened the Opera Company of Philadelphia's 1982 season with *La Rondine*. Uzan has directed 42 productions in the United States, Canada and Italy, including *Madama Butterfly*, *La Bohème*, *La Traviata*, *The Pearl Fishers* and *Manon Lescaut* for the companies of New Orleans, Philadelphia, Tulsa and Fort Worth. His production of

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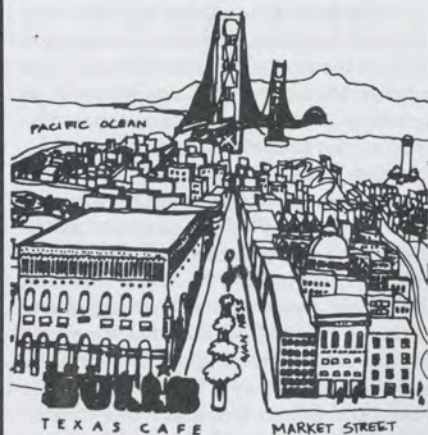
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STEVEN RUBIN

The *Damnation of Faust* for the Opera Company of Philadelphia is scheduled to be telecast nationally as part of the PBS Great Performances series. Upcoming assignments include *Faust* at Tulsa Opera, *Madama Butterfly* in New Orleans, a new production of *Roméo et Juliette* for the Montreal Opera, and Boito's *Mefistofele* for a production by the Opera Company of Philadelphia which is to be telecast by PBS.

American designer **Steven Rubin** created the designs for the production of *Werther* that introduced him to San Francisco Opera audiences in 1975 and returned in 1978. His work was also seen in Spring Opera Theater productions of Cavalli's *L'Ormindo* (1974) and Mozart's *The Abduction from the Seraglio* (1975), and he also designed Western Opera Theater's 1975 touring production of *The Tales of Hoffmann*. A former lecturer and resident designer at the Yale School of Drama, he designed sets, costumes and lighting for Yale productions of *The Empire Builders* and *Donner*, and sets and costumes for *Blue Boys*. His ballet design credits include costumes for American Ballet Theatre's *Polyandrian*, New York City Ballet's *Calcium Light Night* and San Francisco Ballet's *Divertissement d'Auber*. His long list of legitimate theater designs includes numerous productions for the Yale Repertory Theatre, the Williamstown Theatre, the Long Wharf Theatre in New Haven and the University of Utah. His designs have also been applauded in productions for the San Diego Shakespeare Festival, New York's Circle in the Square, and the Berkshire Theatre Festival in Stockbridge, Massachusetts. For the 1978 Spoleto Festival in Charleston, Rubin designed the world premiere production of Tennessee Williams's *Creve Coeur*.



THOMAS J. MUNN

In his tenth year with San Francisco Opera, **Thomas J. Munn** is responsible for lighting seven productions this fall: *Adriana Lecouvreur*, *Lear*, *Orlando*, *Turandot*, *Falstaff*, *Un Ballo in Maschera* and *Billy Budd*. In addition, he has designed the sets for *Billy Budd*. Since 1976, he has conceived the lighting and special effects for over 70 San Francisco Opera productions. He created the lighting for all four of the operas of last summer's Ring Festival, and last fall designed lighting for seven productions, including *Ernani*, *Carmen*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Elektra*, *Khovanshchina*, *Rigoletto* and *Don Giovanni*. He also designed the scenery as well as the lighting for *Nabucco* and *Salome* in 1982, *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* in 1981, *Roberto Devereux* and *Pelléas et Mélisande* in 1979 and *Billy Budd* in 1978. In addition to his numerous design credits for the War Memorial stage, Munn has designed for Broadway, Off-Broadway and regional theater companies throughout the United States and Europe. Recent projects include productions for the Hartford Ballet, Lyric Opera of Chicago and the Netherlands Opera. His television credits include San Francisco Opera productions of *La Gioconda* (for which he received a 1979 Emmy Award), *Samson et Dalila* in 1980, *Aida* in 1981 and the Pavarotti concert in 1983. Last spring, he served as TV lighting consultant to American Ballet Theatre for an upcoming television series and is at work on sets and lighting for a new multi-media production of *Coppélia* that will have its premiere with the Hartford Ballet next April.



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Viva la Morte! continued from p.32



FRANKLIN & ROGNON

Helen Gahagan in the title role of Puccini's Suor Angelica at the San Francisco Opera in 1935. Known some years later as Helen Gahagan Douglas of politics fame, the singer appeared with the Company only that one time.

motivates a person to end a life. The Venetian street singer bemoans her plight by dramatically declaring that "I have lost my mother, I have lost my love." With conviction she pleads to be allowed to "sleep at peace in the grave."

Sister Angelica in Puccini's *Suor Angelica* shows insight after taking poison she has brewed. Anxiously, she sings that she is damned, "I have killed myself! I have taken my own life! I am dying in mortal sin!" Leonora in Verdi's *Il Trovatore* finds that slow-acting poison allows her to resolve matters with enough time left to

sing with her last breath, "Rather than live as another's, I chose to die as your love!" Aida, Cio-Cio-San, Gilda, Tosca, Lakmé, Brünnhilde, Liù, Norma and Senta (to name just a few) find that death by their own hand is preferable to life under circumstances they cannot control.

Some years ago during a winter stay in Moscow, Igor Moiseyev confessed his love of opera to me with the startling statement that, "the deaths are so beautiful. Especially the suicidal ones. Only in opera can such irrational acts make dramatic sense. In any other theatrical pres-

Love Yosemite in summer? It sings in the winter.

entation such behavior would provoke laughter." The founder of the Moiseyev Dancers also had some other interesting comments on opera which allow for some thought as to why suicidal acts can be accepted as a traditional stage device. "Opera is the ultimate magnifying glass. It is not simply a mirror that reflects life. Opera is bigger than death! The basic emotions that we all know are magnified more than a thousand times so that even those sitting in the last rows of the opera house can easily recognize the drama taking place on stage.

"Love, hate, fear, revenge, lust and desire are emotions that we all know. But in opera, such feelings are exaggerated. When some character takes a knife and ends his or her life, the audience knows that it is only an exaggeration, and that instead of death, there will be beautiful singing. Opera allows for the suspension of reality and the music creates a mood that is vital for that fascinating phenomenon to take place. The most ridiculous and the most unreasonable acts and circumstances become totally accepted in opera because the audience by entering the opera house has mysteriously agreed to suspend its belief in logic and reason."

Supporting Moiseyev's ideas about surrendering logic and reason when attending the opera is a story about a routine performance of *Carmen* during the first years of the New York City Opera. During the last act duet, the Don José became annoyed at the Carmen for reasons that are unclear. Instead of stabbing Carmen to death, the furious tenor left the stage in a fit of rage, leaving the perplexed mezzo with the option of committing suicide instead of being murdered. A witness to that performance does not remember the audience laughing at the unconventional ending. "I thought it was an experiment by an imaginative stage director who was looking for a new way to end the opera."

Opera as a product of the romantic spirit deals with the human condition in terms of emotion against reason. It is emotion that prevails in the operas of the nineteenth century. That time period relegated reason and logic to the creative pursuits associated with such endeavors as science, philosophy and mathematics. Emotion was reserved for religion and art, and opera became the perfect form for expressing all the longings of the human heart, while venerating the irrationalities

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MORTON

Lily Pons contemplates suicide by deadly datura blossoms at the end of Delibes's *Lakmé* at the San Francisco Opera in 1937.

of the human spirit. Life and death struggles were perfectly suited to a theatrical form that utilized music and the human voice in song. For many reasons not clearly understood, singing about love and happiness, death and sorrow, makes direct contact to the emotional receptors of the unconscious mind. The spoken word alone cannot reach us with the same psychological intensity. Music is necessary; for it is the music that allows for the suspension of temporarily relinquished reason and reality necessary to appreciate the emotional world of opera.

Goethe's novel *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* created something of a sensation when it was first published in 1774. Condemned by the clergy and the establishment because of its theme of suicide,

the novel was blamed for inspiring a number of young men, dressed in blue tail coats and yellow vests to shoot themselves through the eye. Following what was described as an "epidemic of suicides," the public outcry was so intense that Goethe wrote a parody in which Werther did *not* die. The shot to the eye only resulted in blindness and singed eyebrows. Werther and Lotte are seen as a happily married couple. In Berlin, Nicolai wrote his opera *Werther's Joy* which had a happy ending, with Werther and Lotte in each other's arms singing a rapturous duet about the joys of blissful marriage.

By the time Massenet composed *Werther*, feelings about suicide on stage were far less intense than in Goethe's time. Massenet and his librettists were

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able to synthesize Goethe's novel with astonishing success. In comparing *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* with the opera it is easy to see that Massenet and his collaborators got directly to the point in maintaining the important psychological qualities of the characters. The beautiful German writing was transformed into a French libretto of surprising clarity and theatrical purpose.

Besides being an excellent poet, Goethe was also a good psychologist. His description of Werther is a classical case of a depressed young man who is a high suicide risk. In reviewing the professional literature on suicide, it is interesting to note that Goethe's portrayal of Werther's anxiety and frustration is exactly like many of the cases discussed by contemporary experts on suicide. Massenet's score enhances this accurate characterization and it represents some of the composer's most imaginative music. Its expressive orchestration is in perfect keeping with Werther's plight. From the first moment Werther enters the stage, the music tells us he is doomed. He will kill himself. The melancholia of Werther's narcissism demonstrates his emotional vulnerability with each phrase he sings, and the music supports his sense of hopelessness with amazing psychological nuance.

Werther sees Charlotte as a paragon of physical perfection. She is the unobtainable object. Thwarted by reality, Werther can only cry out "I am trembling, and everything in me cries out in torment." In his vain adoration of Charlotte, he tells her that she must keep her promise to marry another, and in a matter-of-fact manner states that he shall die. Even after shooting himself, Werther is somewhat grandiose and welcomes his impending death. "It is good this way. Now at last I am happy. I die telling you that I adore you!" Instructing Charlotte not to shed tears, Werther rhapsodizes his demise by singing, "Don't you see that at last my whole life has meaning! Don't you see, I live again."

Werther, however, is not completely disconnected from reality. Like many victims of suicide, he has a great need to be in control. He gives exact instructions to Charlotte as to where he is to be buried. If he cannot get into consecrated ground then he suggests an alternative place where Charlotte is to come and "Weep over my grave, and in my lonely tomb I

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THE MAJESTIC



Teresa Stratas as Cio-Cio-San in Madama Butterfly at the San Francisco Opera in 1966.

will feel those blessed tears."

Does this melodrama and suicide depress the passive observer who sits in the dark auditorium? In most cases, it does not. The experience of having witnessed life and death on the opera stage does not cause psychological trauma. Everything that took place on stage was expected and nothing came as a real surprise. After all, we freely gave up our belief in mundane reality once the theater became dark and the music started. We would gladly surrender ourselves to the exaggeration of emotion because somehow such exaggerations of the human spirit satisfy our own emotional needs. We are both excited and invigorated by the passions that take place on the stage.

What about the artists? What feelings do they have when they must play a victim of suicide? It is known that singing any major role requires enormous physical stamina. But what about the emotional effect upon the artist? What toll is taken of a singer's psychological resources? For

some artists, the toll is substantial, and they may require a recovery period of a few hours to perhaps a day or two. Others apparently suffer no ill effects from portraying desperate people. Over the last 30 years, I have kept a diary of interviews with singers and their response to my question of "How do you feel when the character you are singing must commit suicide?"

Maria Callas simply stated, "That I hate death, but it is all around us. When I am on stage and the character must die by her own hands, a part of me dies too. So what? We will all end up in the same place."

Zinka Milanov in her response injected humor when she said, "It is all in the music. It is all in the voice. Gioconda is of course a very sad person, but she has some wonderful notes. Those top notes are what count. Personally, I have never felt like committing suicide. My life has been a happy one. I sang Gioconda by following the music and not by acting

depressed. The only people who were depressed and wanted to commit suicide were the other sopranos who could not sing Gioconda as I did. They wanted to die because they did not have my pianissimo!"

Lily Pons felt that it was the role of the artist to make the character as sympathetic as possible. "All my favorite roles, Lucia, Lakmé and Gilda, show the characters expiring on stage. Before I went to India, I did not really understand how Lakmé could eat the lethal datura blossom. But then Lakmé is a Hindu and believes in reincarnation. After seeing so many Hindus in India, I discovered that they look forward to returning to life in other forms. Gilda also believes that there are better things waiting for her in another sphere. All these women die as a consequence of unselfish love. They did nothing wrong. They were victims because they had such pure hearts and were innocent. Fortunately, they were given much beautiful music to sing before they evaporated."

Renata Tebaldi's answers were introspective and indicated that the Italian diva had thought about her stage deaths. "The most difficult is Suor Angelica. The poor girl is a nun and her child has died. She kills herself in confusion. But she is saved by the intervention of the Blessed Mother. She will go directly to heaven and be with her child. Butterfly, too, dies for her child. She has been betrayed by her husband and realizes that all is lost. By sacrificing her own life, she knows that her child will return to America and be given a decent life. I have never been a mother, but Puccini's music is so emotional that when I sing Cio-Cio-San, I believe that I am a mother. When I must die, I know that it is for the child. I am naturally exhausted after singing Butterfly and many times the sadness of the character stays with me. Cio-Cio-San is most appealing. Tosca is a creature of emotion and is impulsive. She is very temperamental. Even while pretending to jump from the parapet, I never really believed Tosca was killing herself. I always knew that in a minute or two, I would be receiving the applause of the audience."

I have found it difficult to interview tenors, and so I am unable to report on how it feels to portray such roles as Ernani, Edgardo, Otello or Werther. However, I did briefly have an encounter with a Bolshoi Otello who after the performance was completely mad. Sitting in his dressing room (still in costume) and looking at himself in the mirror, he repeated over and over again. "It was not I who killed! I did not murder! I did not die by my own hands! It was Otello! He did it!" Being somewhat alarmed, I was reassured by the Bolshoi Opera's press representative, "He does this after every performance. He has studied the method of Stanislavsky. He is our Marlon Brando."

Suicide in opera has become so familiar to us that we frequently forget that it is totally unlike the tragedy of people who actually take their own lives. What is romantic and poetic on the opera stage is of course sad in everyday life. Few of the opera characters display the psychopathology of alcohol or substance abuse, psychotic depression or the effects of terminal illness. Statistics on suicide in the United States as published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reveal that it is a major health concern. Like in *Werther*, most suicides are committed by white males under 25 years of age,

and the instrument of death is usually a gun. Mental health workers feel that 60 percent of American teenagers who kill themselves suffered mental disorders. *The American Journal of Psychotherapy* (July 1984) features an article that discusses Goethe's romanticized story of suicide and how Werther's act affected the youth of that generation. Equally intriguing is the article in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (August 16, 1985) which suggests that there are seasonal patterns to suicide. That study reveals that May and November stood out with the highest number of suicides. The authors write that this is reminiscent of early European literature citing November as the "hanging month."

If we follow Moiseyev and his thesis that opera is the ultimate magnifying glass of emotion, we can only conclude that we, the audience, require and enjoy this exaggeration. We willingly suspend our belief in logic and reason so that we can vicariously experience a spectrum of emotion that is generally denied us in our daily lives.

Liù's statements to Turandot may be the Rosetta stone in deciphering our willingness to accept suicide in opera. When Liù claims to know Calaf's true name, and refuses to reveal it to Turandot by saying she would rather die, Turandot asks her "What gives you such courage?" In true Puccini fashion, Liù states, "Princess, it is love!" Then in her aria she unequivocally states the catechism that we have been waiting to hear. Those words and sentiments so important to the foundation of our belief in opera: "Blind me! Torture me! Let me suffer every torment as the supreme offering of my love . . . O Princess, hear me! You will love him, too! Before the break of day, I shall close my tired eyes never to see him more!" Liù then snatches a dagger from a soldier and stabs herself to death.

We have been provided with passion. Unfortunately, we live in a time where passion has been replaced by calculated reason, a kind of reason that restricts the spontaneous expression of emotion and one that camouflages all feeling with efficient politeness. Opera knows no such restrictions and satisfies our unconscious need for emotion. In Terrence McNally's play *The Lisbon Traviata*, one of the characters speaks for all of us when he says, "I hate chamber music. Nobody dies in chamber music." ■

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The Marseillaise and the Merolini

By NINA BECKWITH

"*Allons enfants!* OK, let's go."

The "enfants," average age 27, have been waiting, flopped together on a couch, over a big table, and on the floor in the upper reaches of the Opera House. Their joking and laughter are louder than usual, perhaps to cover a little trepidation. These 21 men and women in jeans and cords are the Merola Opera Program Class of 1985, a privileged group of young singers selected from some 800 aspirants in nationwide auditions. They are about to meet their first master class with La Grande Duchesse herself, the renowned Régine Crespin.

She has arrived, a woman of unmistakable presence and authority, even in a bright cotton dress and espadrilles, and as the Merolini file into the Chorus Room and find chairs, she perches on the edge of a table facing them, swinging one tanned and shapely bare leg.

"*Allons.* You are ready? Shall we begin?" Her speaking voice brings to mind Burgundy, Cognac and *Crème au Chocolat*.

Born in Marseilles, Régine Crespin studied at the Paris Conservatory where she now teaches. Her interpretations of such roles as Desdemona, Sieglinde, Kundry, Tosca, Elsa, and the Marschallin, as well as Carmen, Madame Lidoine and the Prioress in *Dialogues of the Carmelites*, and other roles in the French repertoire, established her as the foremost French opera singer of her generation. Since 1966 San Francisco audiences have heard her in roles ranging from the Marschallin to Didon and Cassandre in *Les Troyens*, and most recently as La Grande Duchesse de Gérolstein. She holds the Legion of Honor Medal, the highest award conferred on an artist by the French government.

During the next four hours of this first class in early July and every day for the next three weeks she is to prepare the cast of Gounod's *Faust* for their Stern

Grove performance at month's end, concentrating on French diction and musical and dramatic interpretation. She will also work with the whole group on a wide variety of arias—Italian, German and French—and selections for the French song recital they will give after *Faust*.

Since they arrived in June, the Merolini have been preparing *Don Giovanni* which they performed in English at Villa Montalvo in Saratoga. This fall 16 of them are touring the country in the Western Opera Theater production of Mozart's opera. During the Merola Program's intense ten weeks, they begin each 12-hour day with aerobics and dance classes, going on through classes in makeup, diction and audition techniques, and conversational Italian lessons. They also have three or four daily coaching sessions, plus stage deportment and staging rehearsals, and now Madame Crespin's master classes, and more music master classes to follow with Kurt Herbert Adler, James Schwabacher and Andrew Meltzer.

As Crespin's class begins, the first young artists step up to sing. All of them have had performing experience before Merola; many hold advanced music degrees; some are National Metropolitan Opera Auditions winners as well as successful entrants in the San Francisco Opera Center Auditions. Now they are understandably tense, anxious to make a good impression, not knowing quite what to expect.

Crespin's sherry-brown eyes are fixed unwaveringly on each singer in turn; her concentration is absolute. She knows exactly how they feel; disarmingly, she confesses to some shyness herself.

Tenor Robert Swensen begins with *Nina Beckwith is a free-lance writer specializing in arts. A former Time magazine overseas correspondent, she has been associated with the San Francisco Opera and the Spoleto Festival in Italy.*



Régine Crespin "enthroned" at the end of her 1985 Merola Opera Program Master Classes.

Faust's vision of the lovely Marguerite but when he utters her name, Crespin stops him. Mispronounce the word slightly and it has another and off-color meaning in French. Swensen and others burst into laughter—and never forget.

In the first act love scene, Crespin moves around the room with Swensen and soprano Susan Patterson as Marguerite, stopping them frequently. "Don't close on the consonants, sing on the vowels. We almost never have double consonants in French . . . The line, think of the meaning of what you are saying: 'ne brisez pas le coeur de Marguerite;' she is afraid to be hurt. You are trying to convince her. She is already half convinced but . . . sing it with more élan, *slancio*, how do you say élan? Oh, it's the same in English . . . Here you need a little liaison. No, I'm sorry but there is no rule about the liaison. I even asked the Comédie Française and they told me no rule . . . Breathe, darling, breathe! Use your back, your belly, your bottom, not your shoulders . . . Take your time. Hold the high C a moment. Make them wait for it."

Later soprano Tracy Dahl, singing "Du gai soleil" from *Werther*, is also



Régine Crespin and soprano Susan Patterson.



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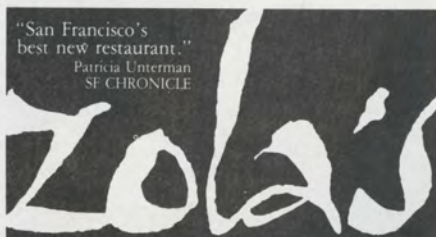


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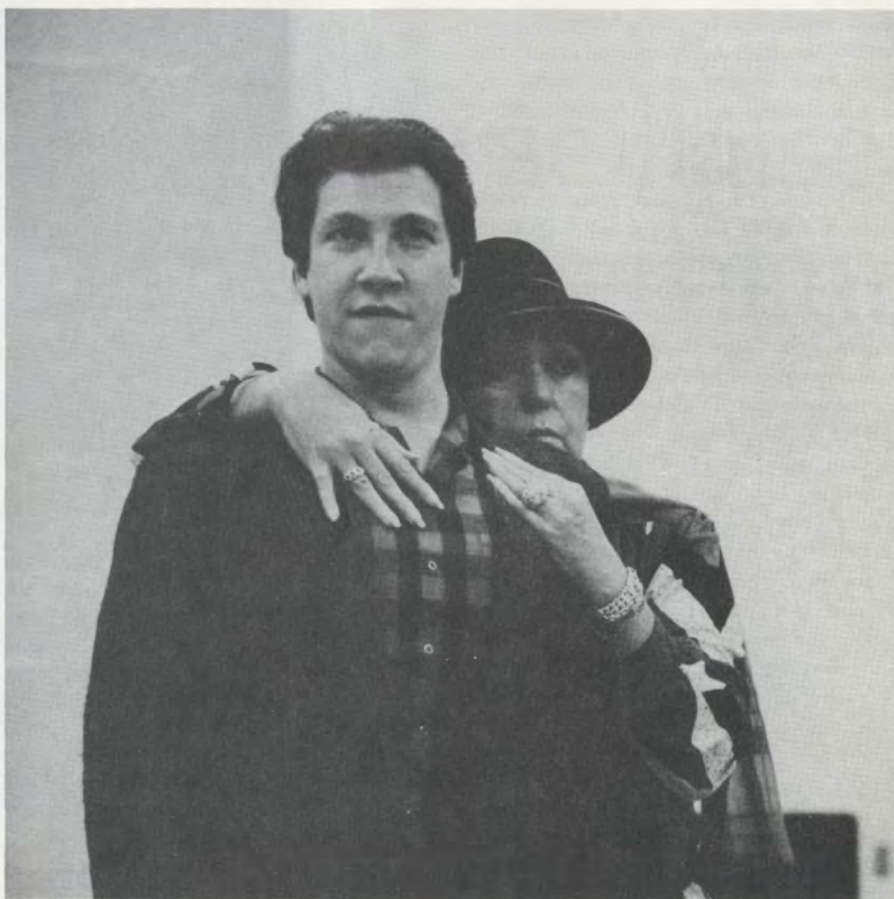


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Régine Crespin and baritone Richard Rebilas.

interrupted often. "No, darling, *so-leil*, not *sol-leil*. Only one L." Next time, or the time after that, *soleil* is right and shines in Tracy's face. But she is stopped on the next phrase. "*Les yeux fermés, fer-més*, more open on the second syllable." And again stop. "*Heu-reux*, for once both syllables are the same. Damn French! I know it's terrible but I didn't invent it."

Heureux comes out happily. "Good!" Crespin says and the others applaud as they do with equal heartiness after each one sings.

When baritone Tom Potter tackles Valentin's aria "*Avant de quitter ces lieux*," he hardly makes a sound before Crespin halts him. "Don't do that, vocally or musically. You did 'Hah-vant' with a slide up to it. Breathe in the form of the vowel before you sing. Then open the door and zap!"

She stops him on almost every measure. "Does it bother you to sing a little less here, a little more piano? No, it doesn't . . . You sing also with your eyes, don't forget that. The expression in your face can help the voice—and the French."

He is standing rigidly, shoulders stiff,

chest held too high, chin too far down, constricting the vocal cords. Crespin has a special way of solving these problems which are common to young singers, especially when they are trying hard to make big sounds. She walks behind them, places her graceful strong hands on the base of those stiff necks and gently massages, moves the shoulders and arms back and forth, gets the body in motion.

Again and again with Potter she puts one hand firmly on his chest. He untenses and his tone is immediately freer. "Think about your body," she tells him. "When I put my hand here you do it." She walks away. "Think that my hand is there every time you attack a note."

By the second week Crespin has become part of the Merolini's camaraderie. They relish her humor and *joie de vivre*, joy of singing and of hard work, even her toughness when necessary. She will often yank their shirts out into sails which they must fill with really deep breaths. One day she gives husky bass baritone Mark Delavan a rap on the back of the knees while he's singing. He almost falls, a sharp reminder to use his body in



Régine Crespin and soprano Karen Wicklund.

balance.

Soprano Deborah Voigt, reaching for a high C, feels her head being pushed forward. "At first I was feeling oohh! don't touch me," Voigt says later. "But that note came out like a dream and Crespin said 'I am pleased, you be pleased.' She is so warm and earthy and giving. She gave and gave to us, concentrating on each person's problem until she got to the root of it."

That can mean constant maddening interruptions. "I know you want to shoot me," Crespin says. "Until I sang the *Medium* I was afraid of using a gun but now I will shoot you back.

"More *diabolique*. Ah, now that's a nice devilish sound." Crespin encourages bass George Hogan who is trying to end Mephisto's aria in the Berlioz *Damnation of Faust* with an explosive triumphant "Hah!" He does it several times, producing a not very fiendish grunt. Once more, and Crespin punches him in the diaphragm. Pow! So much fire and brimstone that the class breaks into laughter along with applause. At other moments she uses a whole vocabulary of shushing sounds which seem to have the magical effect of

taking away strain in the singer's voice.

This may not be everyone's idea of a French diva's master class, but as she says, "You cannot put the *charrette* before the horse. You have to be sure the voice is in the right place, then you develop the character, the acting."

In another session with Faust and Marguerite, who are now much surer of themselves vocally, Crespin works on interpretation. "Enter into the music, into its mood. Go into it with the voice as smoothly as you can. Marguerite, listen, pick up his line and continue it. That's good!

"Faust, if you stand that way, with your arms crossed, you close yourself away from us all. It's really important. Even if you don't believe in it, it exists.

"And use the second part of your body. I don't mean you have to move all the time but we sing with all of us—feet, legs, hands, sex—all of you takes part. Think of it: this is the first time Marguerite is aroused. It is sensuality, very raffinée, but sensuality. I don't mean mud wrestling."

After two weeks' work, Crespin is

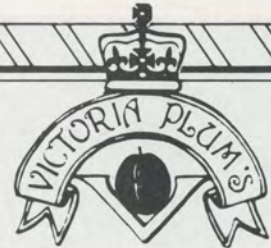
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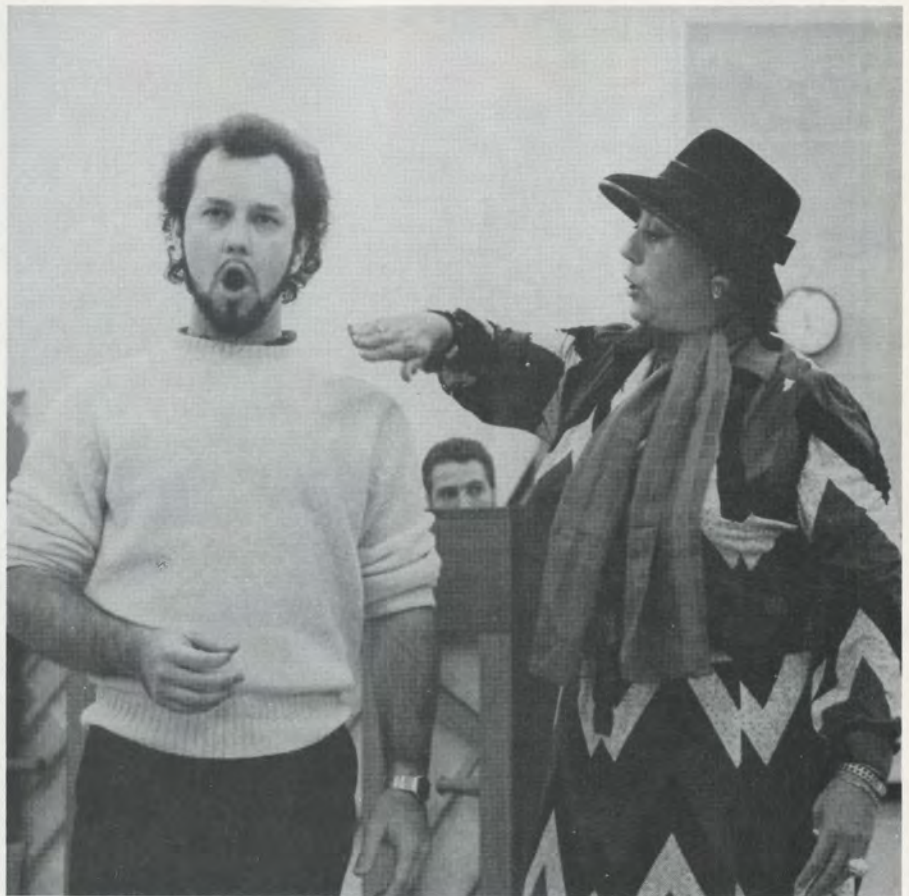
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Régine Crespin and bass-baritone George Hogan.

asked for her candid opinion of the Merolini. "First, they are all very professional," she replies. "They are organized in their minds and very flexible. They are ready to work and they work. Then I find a lot of good voices, well placed, with their qualities and their faults, but really good. And I am sure that six or seven or eight of the 21 are going to have really good careers. That is a very high proportion of outstanding voices."

Why is it that so few great singers are great teachers, and vice versa? Crespin believes that, "there are lots of singers but a few artists and that is a big difference. To have a fabulous voice, OK, but to become an artist is a degree above. The voice is only 30 percent; then 30 percent of work, application. Then 30 percent of heart, soul, thinking, intelligence. And ten percent for chance, good luck. But the combination of voice and personality and intelligence, that makes an artist."

"One cannot have a career at all and be a fabulous teacher. I remember when I started teaching ten or eleven years ago I told myself very honestly that I was going to try it for a couple of years and if I did not

do it correctly I would stop. But doing it I learned a lot myself. Like Flagstad, who said just before she retired at 58 that she wished she could have four or five years more because 'Now I know how to sing Isolde.'

"For me the first qualification for teachers is *la générosité*. They bring their experience of course, but they have to forget what they have done, who they are. The important thing is not the teacher, it is the student. You have to go in there and dig out what they are and find what you can bring to them. And it is a different approach for each one. Each time you have to adjust yourself to their personality, their needs. It's a game, a kind of *magie*. The whole singing business is a magical thing. We speak about something we never see, we never touch, and if you hear some vocal lessons you think we are speaking some incomprehensible language . . . the sound a little back, a little front, not in the nose, behind the nose, too dark, too white.

"When I hear a teacher say, 'I did it this way, you do it this way,' I reject that. Also teachers who sing all the time. We

are all like *perroquets*; we imitate what we hear and we should never imitate other people. You have to be yourself with your voice and your qualities, and that's it.

"You are not going to be a good teacher just because you sing. It's a combination with your student. You are the father, the mother, the teacher, the guru, the analyst, the friend, the enemy. When it works it's fascinating because singing is so deeply involving of the whole human being."

Unquestionably she has the gift of hands. "I found that out long ago," she agrees. "When I started teaching I knew I had some instinct. I knew, how shall I put it, I knew things in advance. My first students told me that when I touched them they calmed down. So I know that when I put my hand on the neck or the chest and feel the position they relax immediately."

On Crespin's last day with the Merolini they are rehearsing *Faust* with director Matthew Farruggio in the big bare basement of Zellerbach Hall. Their jeans are now covered by cloaks or long skirts; swords and props are in hand; the sets are marked on the floor. Crespin no longer needs to interrupt the singers so often; they are putting music and movement together and the opera is taking shape. "I'm just here for reminders," she says. Philip Skinner, the Méphistophélès, hears a few. "Don't begin too loud. Don't wait until the last moment to prepare the note

or you'll be caught without breath. Remember to move your fingers when you are supposed to be playing the lute."

Skinner says later he's glad he has worked so hard in Merola. "I've learned major roles in *Don Giovanni* and *Faust* and had the chance to perform them. You can't do that in any other apprentice program I know of. And Crespin! We were so lucky to have a lady of that magnitude."

"You don't feel you're on the spot with her," says soprano Katherine Harris. "You trust her—and that's a hard quality to achieve. For all her renown she's never condescending."

"She brought out everything we had in us," George Hogan adds. "She took away our inhibitions as singers, actors, aspiring artists, and allowed us freedom. She has a calming personality; she gave me the feeling I could do it."

After the rehearsal, Merola Program volunteers materialize in the hall with wine, patés, cheeses and fruit. The Merolini are chosen for their personalities as well as their voices, and along with hard work they are given lots of parties where they meet their sponsors and have the chance to talk with many people in the Bay Area who care about opera and its future. But this is their own farewell party for Crespin. She is escorted to the throne chair of the *Faust* set.

"I'll never forget what I've learned, what it means to work with a superstar and a beautiful human being," says bass



Susan Patterson and Régine Crespin at the end of what must have been a delicious joke.

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baritone Mark Delavan, presenting her with a Merolini Legion of Honor crown and a bouquet. "You have given us a greater sense of line in music," bass José García chimes in. "We're closer to becoming artists."

Crespin is moved and delighted. "It has been a tremendous joy to work with all of you. You are so professional, so flexible. You accept new things from me, even in my funny way. I love you all and wish you the best success—not so much as stars, but to be good singers, good interpreters."

The *Faust* performance at Stern Grove goes well, fog and wind notwithstanding. Swathed in scarves and sweaters, the other Merolini watch attentively and in the intermission reflect on what the program has meant to them. Deborah Voigt, who is 24 and will later win first prize at the Grand Finals, thinks that "from all points of view, Merola was the best possible thing I could have done." Soprano Brenda Wimberly is sure that "getting up and singing in front of colleagues who are severe judges as well as friends has made me a better auditioner. All of it, the Italian, the movement and dance, the coaching, and working with an artist like Crespin, it's all totally concentrated on music. To be able to do nothing but think about music and work on it is a luxury not afforded to very many."

Though Crespin could not stay for Stern Grove, "I thought of her every minute of the performance," says Susan Patterson, the Marguerite. Gathered again outside the Chorus Room two days later, all the Merolini are elated by the *Faust* reviews, whether they performed or not. "The distinguished Régine Crespin, listed on the program for 'dramatic coaching,' did far more than that," one critic writes. "The French diction, normally poor from American singers at any level, was good, resulting in comprehensible text and, equally important, the right musical sound. And the singers interpreted their roles and acted convincingly in this treacherously transparent opera. The thing had style."

Still ahead of the Class of 1985 are their French song recital, Merola Day at the Opera House, when they go through an entire day of classes and coaching in front of the Program's members and supporters, and the Auditions Grand Finals on the War Memorial stage with the house filled to capacity.

And life after Merola? For baritone

David Malis, a 1982-83 Merola alumnus who went on to become an Adler Fellow of the Opera Center and appears in three of this Fall's productions, "it was a major stepping stone in my career. It gave me the chance to be heard in an important house and in a place where opera permeates the lifestyle. The support you get from the staff here doesn't stop. People come to Merola with a dream of going on to bigger things and it happens to a lot of us, which you can't say of most other places where there is no opportunity for advancement. In Merola the opportunity is there for you if you have what it takes and if you give of yourself."

Another Merola and Adler Fellowship graduate is soprano Cheryl Parrish who sings two major roles this Fall. She went to Paris to study with Régine Crespin in 1984 and returned to her there on an Opera Guild scholarship last spring for more coaching. In between she appeared in one of the Schwabacher Debut Recitals, recent adjuncts to the Opera Center program. "You have to be so together to stand up and sing a recital," Parrish says. "It's an entirely different kind of contact with an audience from opera stage performance. Before my recital I thought maybe I'm not enough of a person to do this. Will they see right through me?"

"And Madame Crespin gave me the best advice I ever had. She said 'you must remember that you're very lucky. You have your music and your training and you have a beautiful voice and you have a lot to give. So give it away.'" ■



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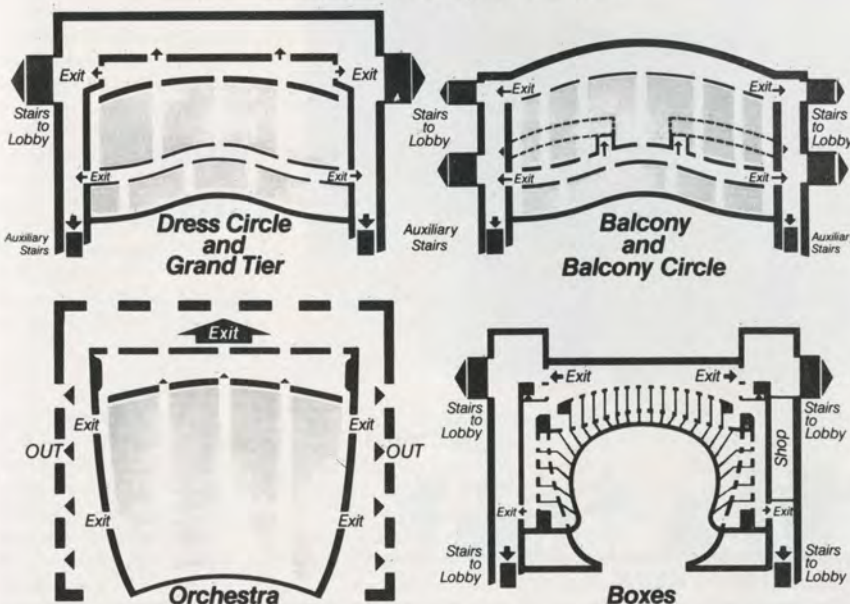
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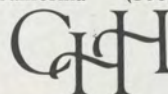
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reigning prima donna at the Metropolitan Opera will take part in the San Francisco Opera Guild's Insight Monday, October 14th from 6:00 to 7:00 p.m. in the Herbst Theatre, 401 Van Ness Avenue. Miss Scotto will be interviewed by Dr. James Keolker, editor and publisher of The Opera Companion, in an informal discussion of WERTHER, her life and music.

Tickets are \$5.00, available at the Herbst Theatre Box Office. Doors open at 5:30 p.m.

