La Bohème

1986

Friday, October 24, 1986 8:00 PM Tuesday, October 28, 1986 8:00 PM Friday, October 31, 1986 8:00 PM Tuesday, November 4, 1986 8:00 PM Thursday, November 6, 1986 8:00 PM Sunday, November 9, 1986 2:00 PM Wednesday, November 12, 1986 7:30 PM Saturday, November 15, 1986 8:00 PM

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La Bohème

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Sir John Pritchard, Music Director

La Bohème

FALL SEASON 1986

FEATURES

- 26 Notes on La Bohème by Julian Budden The renowned musicologist takes a fresh look at the familiar and beloved Puccini opus.
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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

At the beginning of San Francisco Opera's 1986 fall program, we have the pleasure of welcoming you once again to a season that combines repertory favorites with masterpieces less frequently encountered on the opera stages of the western world. During the course of the season, the curtain will go up on ten operas, three of which will be presented in totally new productions. The ten operas that make up our fall repertoire will be staged in both traditional and modern ways and will echo with the sounds of five different languages, all made accessible by a popular innovation, Supertitles.

The San Francisco Opera is fortunate in having a staunch group of supporters, whose generosity is vividly reflected in this fall's season. Our new productions will come to us through the courtesy of three generous donors: Mr. Evert B. Person underwrote our new Don Carlos, which will be given for the first time in its original French; a much-needed new production of a repertory favorite, La Bohème, will be presented in memory of George L. Quist; and Macbeth, in a strikingly new format, will come to us through the generous grant of the L.J. Skaggs and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation.

Four of our revival productions will be presented through the courtesy of AT&T (*Le Nozze di Figaro*), Bernard and Barbro Osher (*Jenůfa*), Friends of Richard K. Miller (*La Forza del Destino*), and Mr. and Mrs. J. Frederick Kohlenberg (*Manon*).

A generous grant from Chevron U.S.A. will enable us to enjoy Supertitles in Don Carlos, Le Nozze di Figaro, Jenufa, La Forza del Destino and Faust; a deeply appreciated gift from Frank Tack will make them available for Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg.

In acknowledging our governmental funding sources this year, we take particular pleasure in announcing that we have achieved the first-year goal of the National Endowment for the Arts' Challenge Grant, a feat that was accomplished through the concerted efforts and contributions of the Opera's Executive Committee, Board of Directors and close friends of the Opera. Funds from the grant and related matching gifts will be used to augment the Company's Endowment Fund. Special thanks are also due the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation for its generous three-year grant, earmarked for the development of the San Francisco Opera Center.

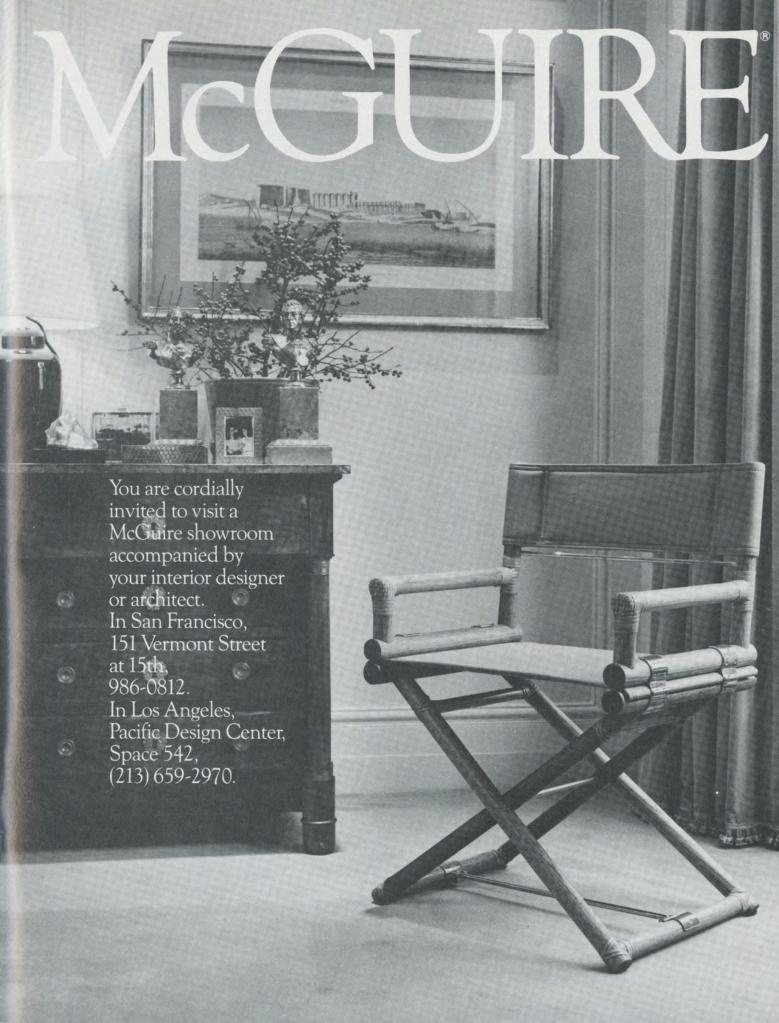
The Hotel Tax Fund, Mayor Dianne Feinstein, Chief Administrative Officer Roger Boas and the California Arts Council have all once again provided us with their much-appreciated support. The San Francisco Opera Guild, the Merola Opera Program and the War Memorial Board of Trustees also deserve our appreciation for their continued support.

The Board of Directors has this year been enriched by the addition of five new members. Internationally acclaimed mezzo-soprano Marilyn Horne heads the list, the first time a singer has joined our ranks; we are also proud to welcome prominent civic leader Charlotte Mailliard, as well as businessmen Evert B. Person, William Rollnick and F.J. Thomas Tilton. All five new members are active in numerous civic organizations and are significant additions to our Board.

In closing, we would again like to remind our loyal friends and supporters that, although our financial position is strong, and while slightly over half of our income is provided by ticket sales—an impressive statistic by any major opera company's standards—we are still left with a large amount that has to be raised in order to end the year in the black.

A very special opera season is about to begin. It continues a tradition of prominence that is sometimes taken for granted. Maintenance of this tradition, such an important part of what makes life in the Bay Area so special, requires dedication. We encourage and urge you to give us your continuing or new support.

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From our Back to Glamour Collection

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General Director's Message

As we begin San Francisco Opera's 64th annual Fall Season, I would like to share with our audiences several thoughts regarding the direction our Company is taking.

It is my belief that no opera company can achieve the steady progress necessary for vital artistic development without firm convictions-and dreams. With the emergence of superior-quality American artists from the ranks of our Opera Center, some of whose achievements you have witnessed recently on this stage, I really believe that we can develop into the kind of opera company Arturo Toscanini dreamed about in the 1920s: an ensemble company, with stars. This kind of company will consist of a solid, defined base of artists, grown and trained in our own environment, with the added number of world-traveling stars who are part of opera's special glamour. Our Opera Center graduates will thus not be restricted to supporting roles; they will share the stage with international stars, both as their support and as their equals. In the 1985 Fall Season, and in this year's Summer and Fall Seasons, we have taken steps in that direction.

I further believe that our Company, which is already respected world-wide, can also become one that will be *envied* world-wide, as a place where audiences are given the deep satisfaction of following brilliant new careers from their beginnings to their integration into the international opera scene.

This year's Fall Season also illustrates one of the challenges I faced when I first moved to San Francisco and saw the necessity of re-building the standard repertoire, since many of our productions for the great masterpieces of the 19th century had grown old. This season, we will unveil new stagings of one Puccini and two Verdi operas, and each has a very special point of interest.

The new *Don Carlos*, musically speaking, should be closer to what Verdi had in mind when he wrote the opera than any major production in recent years. It is performed in the original French, and our

production emphasizes the horrors of the Inquisition and the oppressive pall it must have thrown over Europe at the time. Our Bohème, in its turn, highlights Paris, the city that gave birth to the bohemian revolution in art and literature, a fact about the background to this beloved Italian opera that tends to be forgotten. The Macbeth production promises to

provide as direct an emotional wallop as the Shakespeare play does at first encounter.

Welcome to our 1986 Fall Season!

I AME

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1986 Fall Season

Opening Night
Friday, September 5, **7:00**New Production
Don Carlos Verdi

Lorengar, Toczyska, Voigt*, S. Patterson; Shicoff, Titus, Lloyd, Rouleau*, Skinner, De Haan, Anderson, Delavan* Pritchard (September 5, 10, 13, 17, 20), Johnson (September 28; October 1)/Cox/ Lazaridis*/Gardner**/Munn

San Francisco Opera expresses its deep appreciation to Mr. Evert B. Person for his generous gift to underwrite this new production.

Saturday, September 6, 7:30

Le Nozze di Figaro Mozart

Te Kanawa, Rolandi, Quittmeyer, Christin*,
Chen; Ramey, Devlin, Korn*, Dennis
Petersen, Harper, Pederson
Tate/Copley/Brown/Arhelger

The revival of this production is made possible, in part, by a grant from AT&T.

Tuesday, September 9, 7:30 Le Nozze di Figaro Mozart

Wednesday, September 10, 7:00

Don Carlos Verdi

Friday, September 12, **7:30 Le Nozze di Figaro** Mozart

Saturday, September 13, 7:00 Don Carlos Verdi

Sunday, September 14, 2:00

Jenufa · Janáček

Beňačková*, Rysanek, Young, Voigt,
Cowdrick, Chen, Hartliep, Shaghoian;
Ochman, Rosenshein, Pederson, Coles*
Mackerras/Weber/Bauer-Ecsy/Munn

The revival of this production is made possible by a generous gift from Bernard and Barbro Osher.

Tuesday, September 16, **7:30 Le Nozze di Figaro** Mozart

Wednesday, September 17, **7:00 Don Carlos**Verdi

Friday, September 19, 8:00 **Jenůfa** Janáček

Saturday, September 20, 7:00

Don Carlos Verdi

Sunday, September 21, **1:30 Le Nozze di Figaro** Mozart

Tuesday, September 23, 8:00 **Jenůfa** Janáček

Wednesday, September 24, **7:30 Le Nozze di Figaro** Mozart

Thursday, September 25, **7:30 La Forza del Destino** Verdi
Slatinaru, Forst, Bruno; Cossutta, Brendel,
Plishka, Fissore, Andreolli, J. Patterson,
Skinner, Coles
Arena/Calábria/Samaritani/Munn

This production was originally made possible by a gift from the estate of William H. Noble and friends of the San Francisco Opera.

The revival of this production is made possible by friends of Richard K. Miller and dedicated to his memory.

Friday, September 26, **7:30 Le Nozze di Figaro**Mozart

Saturday, September 27, 8:00 **Jenůfa** Janáček

Sunday, September 28, 1:00 Don Carlos Verdi

Tuesday, September 30, **7:30**La Forza del Destino
Verdi

Wednesday, October 1, 7:00

Don Carlos Verdi

Thursday, October 2, **7:30 Jenůfa** Janáček

Saturday, October 4, 7:30 **La Forza del Destino** Verdi

Sunday, October 5, 2:00 **Jenůfa** Janáček

Tuesday, October 7, 8:00

Faust Gounod

Johnson, Cowdrick, Christin; Kraus (October 7, 10, 16), TBA (October 22, 25, 30;

November 2), Lloyd, Titus, Delavan

Fournet/Zambello/Skalicki, Munn/Mahoney/

Munn

Thursday, October 9, **7:30**La Forza del Destino
Verdi

Friday, October 10, 8:00 Faust Gounod

Sunday, October 12, **1:30**La Forza del Destino Verdi

Tuesday, October 14, 7:00

Die Meistersinger von

Nürnberg Wagner

Studer*, Walker; Tschammer, King, Trempont, Rydl, Gordon, Del Carlo, Emde, J. Patterson, Dennis Petersen, Pederson, Duykers, Coles, Harper, Potter, MacAllister Adler/Brenner/Oswald/Munn

This production was originally made possible by the Robert Watt Miller Memorial Fund.

Wednesday, October 15, **7:30**La Forza del Destino Verdi

Thursday, October 16, 8:00 Faust Gounod

Saturday, October 18, **7:30**La Forza del Destino Verdi

Sunday, October 19, 1:00

Die Meistersinger Wagner

Wednesday, October 22, **7:30 Faust** Gounod

Thursday, October 23, **7:00 Die Meistersinger** Wagner

Friday, October 24, 8:00

New Production

La Bohème Puccini

Miricioiu, Izzo D'Amico* (October 24, 28, 31; November 4), Gustafson (November 6, 9, 12, 15); Cupido (October 24, 28, 31; November 4), Lima (November 6, 9, 12, 15), Krause, Pendergraph, Langan, Del Carlo, Gudas,

Arena/Freedman/Mitchell/Button*/Munn This production is dedicated to the memory of

Saturday, October 25, 8:00 Faust Gounod

Harper, Pederson, Coles

George L. Quist.

Sunday, October 26, 1:00

Die Meistersinger Wagner

Tuesday, October 28, 8:00 La Bohème Puccini

Wednesday, October 29, **7:00 Die Meistersinger** Wagner

Thursday, October 30, 8:00 Faust Gounod

Friday, October 31, 8:00 La Bohème Puccini

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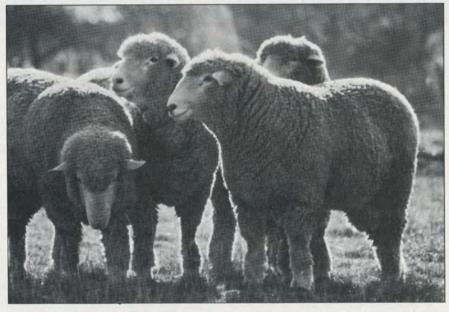
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Saturday, November 1, 7:00

Die Meistersinger Wagner

Sunday, November 2, 2:00 Faust Gounod

Tuesday, November 4, 8:00 La Bohème Puccini

Thursday, November 6, 8:00 **La Bohème** Puccini

Friday, November 7, 7:00

Die Meistersinger Wagner

Saturday, November 8, 8:00
Production new to San Francisco
Eugene Onegin Tchaikovsky
Freni, Walker, Cook, Donna Petersen; Allen*,
Gulyás, Ghiaurov, Tate, Skinner, Delavan
Bradshaw/Copley/Don/Stennett/Munn/
Sulich

This production is owned by the National Arts Centre of Canada and was originally produced for Festival Ottawa 1983.

Sunday, November 9, 2:00 La Bohème Puccini

Tuesday, November 11, 8:00 Eugene Onegin Tchaikovsky

Wednesday, November 12, **7:30**La Bohème Puccini

Friday, November 14, 8:00

Manon Massenet

Greenawald, Chen, S. Patterson, Cowdrick;
Araiza, G. Quilico*, Paul*, Corazza, Malis,
Pederson, Delavan, Maxham
Fournet/Mansouri/Mitchell/George/Munn

This production was originally made possible by the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company and the late James D. Robertson.

The revival of this production is made possible by a deeply appreciated gift from Mr. and Mrs. J. Frederick Kohlenberg.

Saturday, November 15, 8:00 **La Bohème** Puccini

Sunday, November 16, 2:00 Eugene Onegin Tchaikovsky

Wednesday, November 19, 8:00

New Production

Macbeth Verdi

Verrett, Voigt; Noble, Tomlinson, Popov*

Harper, Skinner, Potter, Coles Kord/Pizzi/Pizzi/Munn

The San Francisco Opera gratefully acknowledges the generous grant from the L.J. Skaggs and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation to underwrite this new production. Thursday, November 20, 7:30

Manon Massenet

Friday, November 21, 8:00 Eugene Onegin Tchaikovsky

Saturday, November 22, 8:00 Macbeth Verdi

Sunday, November 23, 2:00 Manon Massenet

Tuesday, November 25, 8:00 Macbeth Verdi

Wednesday, November 26, **7:30 Eugene Onegin** Tchaikovsky

Friday, November 28, 8:00 **Manon** Massenet

Saturday, November 29, 8:00 Macbeth Verdi

Sunday, November 30, 1:00

Eugene Onegin Tchaikovsky

Sunday, November 30, 8:00 Manon Massenet

Tuesday, December 2, 8:00 **Macbeth** Verdi

Wednesday, December 3, 8:00

Manon Massenet

Thursday, December 4, **7:30 Manon** Massenet

Friday, December 5, 8:00 Eugene Onegin Tchaikovsky Saturday, December 6, 8:00 **Manon** Massenet

Sunday, December 7, 2:00 **Macbeth** Verdi

**American opera debut *San Francisco Opera debut

All performances feature English Supertitles. Supertitles for *Don Carlos, Le Nozze di Figaro, Jenůfa, La Forza del Destino* and *Faust* underwritten by a generous grant from Chevron U.S.A. Supertitles for *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* underwritten by a deeply appreciated gift from Frank Tack.

Repertoire, casts and dates subject to change.

Box Office and telephone sales: (415) 864-3330.

San Francisco Opera Guild Presents Ópera for Young Audiences

FAUST

Gounod/in French with English Supertitles Thursday, October 16, 1:00 Thursday, October 30, 1:00

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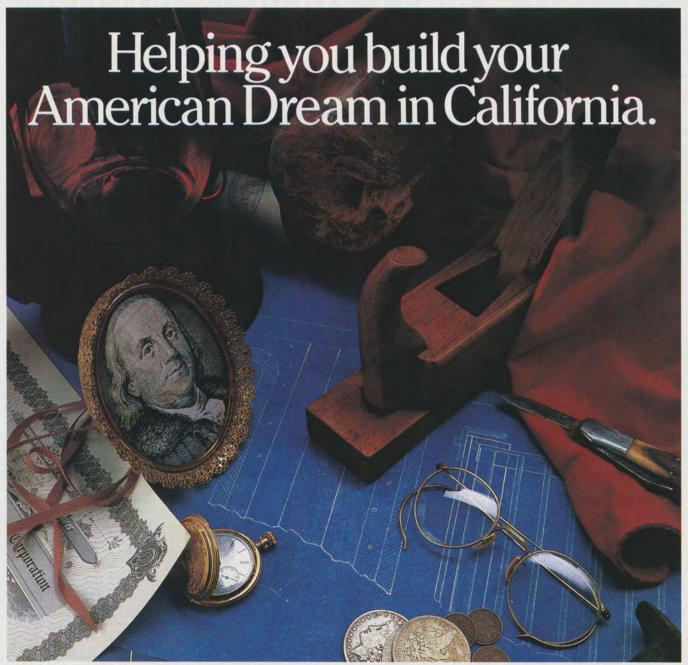
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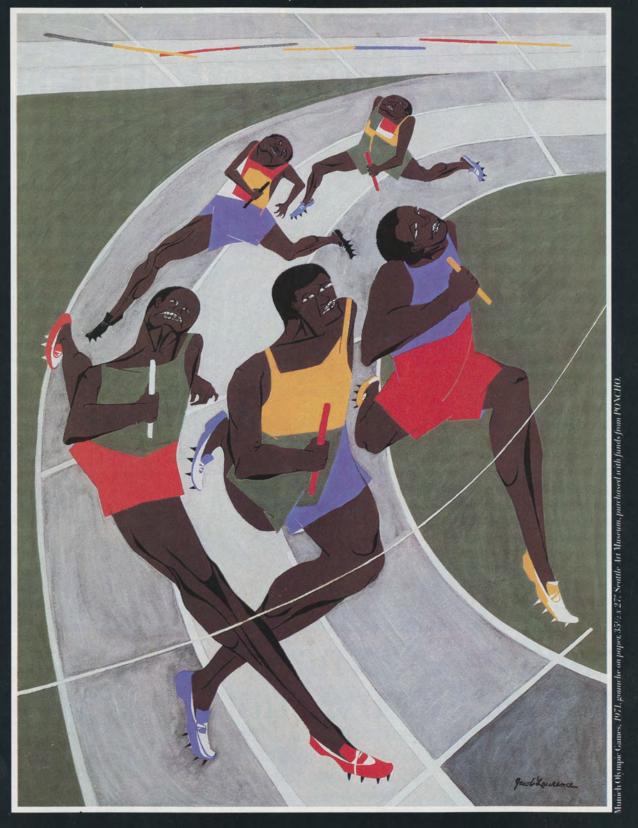
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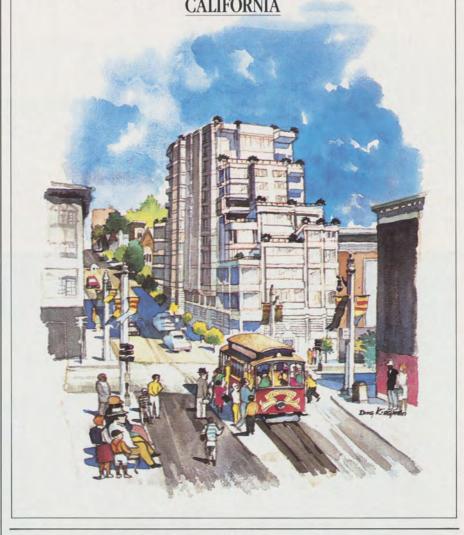
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Notes on La Bohème

By JULIAN BUDDEN

If asked the question "Which is Puccini's best opera?" the average music lover would probably pause for thought. He might reply that Tosca has the most varied and interesting heroine; that Madama Butterfly contains the finest love duet; that for massive architecture nothing can equal the first act of Turandot. But for melodic charm and freshness, formal economy and a perfect balance between comedy and pathos, the palm must surely go to La Bohème. No other opera of Pucci-

ni's fulfills so precisely his ideal of "great sorrows in little souls"; and at no final curtain do audience tears flow more freely.

Puccini was 35 and had just scored his first uncontested success with Manon Lescaut at Turin when the subject of La Bohème first began to interest him; but it was not an immediate priority. The current vogue, inaugurated by Mascagni's Cavalleria Rusticana of 1890, was for low-life contemporary plots, often of a rather shocking nature; and with the whole-

hearted approval of his publisher, Giulio Ricordi, he was disposed to quarry the same vein with a subject drawn from the author whose short story (subsequently converted into a play) had inspired Mascagni's famous one-acter, Giovanni Verga. His new opera was to be drawn from La Lupa, a brutal tale of Sicilian peasant life whose heroine is murdered during a Good Friday procession. Puccini traveled to Sicily to discuss it with Verga himself and while there took various photographs of the locale to aid his imag-



David Mitchell's set models for Acts II and III of San Francisco Opera's new production of La Bohème.

ination. The matter seemed to be settled to the satisfaction of both parties, when the composer began to have doubts. "My reasons," he wrote to Ricordi on his return, "are the many dialogues in the libretto, which are drawn out to excessive length and the unattractive characters without a single *luminous* and appealing figure to stand out from them." This last consideration remained of the greatest importance to Puccini throughout his career and was the occasion of his dropping more than one subject that he had

originally taken up with enthusiasm. His operas must always contain at least one character with whom the audience can identify, with whose sorrows it can weep unashamedly. Ricordi agreed with a bad grace to the change of plan and wished him "a ticket for the Bohème station by the speediest train."

By contrast, Henri Mürger's Scènes de la Vie de Bohème, later converted into a play with the collaboration of Théodore Barrière, was not even contemporary, having appeared as a serial between 1845 and

1848 in a Paris magazine; but it could easily be made to seem so, since life among the impoverished artists of the Latin Quarter changed little during the course of the century, as readers of George du Maurier's *Trilby* will know. The book is full of engaging eccentrics: Alexandre Schaunard, painter and musician, who has "raised the practice of borrowing to a fine

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



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San Francisco Opera's very first performance took place on September 26, 1923, in the Civic Auditorium: La Bohème. Through the years, the Puccini work has proved to be the Company's most frequently given opera, totaling 138 performances, including this year's. Our first Mimì was Queena Mario, who returned to the role locally again in 1924 and 1930.



A year after its world premiere, La Bohème was performed in Moscow, in Italian. Swedish soprano Sigrid Arnoldson was Mimi, seen in this rare daguerreotype made in Moscow in 1897.

art" and who evolves the most ingenious schemes for avoiding the need to pay back; Colline, the philosopher, his capacious overcoat pockets weighed down by books lifted from various public libraries; the painter Marcel whose vast canvas, "The Crossing of the Red Sea," was regularly submitted to the Louvre under a different title and as regularly turned down. The poet Rodolphe would seem to be a portrait of Mürger himself—"a young man whose face could hardly be seen for a huge, bushy, many-colored beard. To set off this prognathic hirsutism a premature baldness had stripped his temples as bare as a knee."

The grisettes are drawn no less unsentimentally: the brainless Phémie, the flighty, often shrewish Musette—even Mimì is hardly the angel of goodness that she becomes in the opera; and Rodolphe becomes used to the sight of her returning home in the morning, dark circles beneath her eyes after a night of debauchery with a generous protector. But the bohemians cannot afford to take a high moral line in such matters; for behind all the pranks and the high spirits

lurk the specters of poverty and mortal illness. "A charming life and a terrible one," wrote Mürger in his preface, "which has its victors and its martyrs, and which one must never enter without resigning oneself beforehand to the pitiless law, 'vae victis'." It was one to which he himself would succumb at the age of 39.

Unfortunately, Mürger's subject had already occurred to Puccini's contemporary Leoncavallo. Indeed, he claimed to have mentioned this to Puccini himself. The latter was not particularly concerned. There had been room for two Manons (his own and Massenet's); why not two Bohèmes? But to Leoncavallo it was a clear case of dishonesty; and relations between the two composers, previously cordialfor Leoncavallo had briefly collaborated on the libretto of Manon Lescaut-were abruptly severed. In the meantime, "Leonasino" or "Leonbestia," as Puccini mockingly called him, went on to write his own Bohème to his own text; it reached the stage in Venice just a year after Puccini's did in Turin and initially had the better reception of the two, before being driven into oblivion by its predecessor. How and when the quarrel was at last patched up has never been told; that it was so is proved by the fact that Puccini was a pall-bearer at Leoncavallo's funeral in 1919.

As was the case with all of Puccini's mature operas, the libretto had a tormented history. After the experience of Manon Lescaut in which the services of at least five collaborators were drawn upon, Ricordi decided on Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa as the ideal partnership for his protégé-the first an experienced librettist with a number of "verismo" texts to his credit, the second a poet and dramatist in his own right, some of whose plays are revived to this day. Illica's principal task was to work out the "treatment" and the dialogue, Giacosa's to turn the prose into verse. Neither found the work congenial, given so exacting a collaborator as Puccini; each in turn would offer his resignation only to be coaxed into withdrawing it by the diplomatic skill of Ricordi. As late as in June of 1895 Giacosa was writing to the publisher, "I must confess to you that I am sick to death of

this constant re-doing, retouching, adding, correcting, piecing together, enlarging here, reducing there. If it had not been for my friendship with you and because I am fond of Puccini I would at this hour free myself from my obligations." However, the partnership survived until Giacosa's death in 1906, having in the meantime produced the three most successful operas in the Puccini canon—La Bohème, Tosca and Madama Butterfly.

This minute concern with every detail of a libretto, the refusal to set a single line of which he was not convinced, was another trait that remained with the composer all his life. His tally of operas is not particularly large; but each is the product of the most scrupulous care. No composer, not even Wagner, was more concerned with integrating the word, note and gesture; with the result that not only are his works among the most easily stageable in the repertoire; they are virtually director-proof. You may alter their period and ambience, transferring Tosca to the Rome of Mussolini or La Bohème to the Greenwich Village of the 1930s; but tamper with the actions prescribed by the score and you are in trouble.

In their preface to the printed libretto, Illica and Giacosa claimed to have reproduced the essential spirit of the novel and to have remained faithful to Mürger's characters. True, the simplification required by the transference to the operatic medium is fairly drastic-much more so than in Leoncavallo's work. The principals are reduced to Rodolphe and Mimì, with Marcel, Musette, Schaunard and Colline becoming "comprimarii." Other no less colorful characters are omitted altogether: Schaunard's mistress, Phémie, Barbemuche, the rich hanger-on who is happy to foot the bohemians' large restaurant bill on condition of being admitted to their circle, and the Vicomte Paul who was Mimi's last protector. Originally, he was to have figured in a "courtyard scene" in which Musetta throws an open-air banquet for her friends, her landlord having impounded her furniture as security for her unpaid debts. But this too was eventually jettisoned (Leoncavallo retained it, however); and in the end the "moscardino di viscontino" was merely alluded to by a jealous Rodolfo. But the most radical change was reserved for Mimi herself. In the novel we read that "at certain moments of boredom or bad temper her appearance assumed an



Most popular operas in the repertoire were regularly subjects of various series of postcards, issued in Europe for decades since the turn of the century. In the 1930s, an Italian series featured La Bohème, with all roles entrusted to children.

almost savage brutality so that a physiognomist might have recognized the signs either of a profound selfishness or a complete lack of sensibility." The heroine of the opera is all purity and innocence. She thinks the best of everyone and everything. Before meeting Rodolfo she lived all alone ("sola, soletta"); and even if she seldom went to church, she often prayed. We may be sure that Rodolfo is her first lover; and if she eventually yields to the importunities of the Viscount it is with the poet's broken-hearted consent, merely so that her life may be prolonged. This, together with the episode of the muff, (borrowed from the pathetic tale of Jacques, the sculptor, and Francine), is the opera's principal point of contact with the play, on which neither Puccini nor Leoncavallo seem otherwise to have drawnand no wonder; for several of its situations bear an embarrassing resemblance to those of La Dame aux Camélias, including a scene in which Rodolphe's rich uncle, Durandin, persuades the heroine to give up Rodolphe for his own good and the family's honor.

The idealization of Mimì may appear sentimental and novelettish; but on the lyric stage it yields ample dividends, as a glance at the rival opera will show. Leoncavallo could justifiably claim to have remained far more faithful to Mürger; but his Musetta and Mimì are musically indistinguishable apart from their voice-

types (one being a soprano, the other a mezzo). Puccini, by contrasting the sub-missive Mimì with the high-spirited Musetta, not only adds a fresh color to his musical palette, but achieves a greater depth of expression as well.

One of the paradoxes of the "verismo" tradition, to which Puccini (broadly speaking) belonged, is that it combined realism with an unbridled romantic lyricism which the hitherto formal nature of Italian opera had held in check. In literature, such a combination would be unthinkable; and its existence in opera is sometimes held to demonstrate the fundamental artificiality of the genre. Note, however, that many of the protagonists of "veristic" opera are artists, in whom a lyrical effusiveness can be deemed plausible. Adriana Lecouvreur is an actress, Andrea Chénier a poet; both Tosca and Cio-Cio-San are singers by profession, even if the latter has retired since her marriage to Pinkerton. Four of the characters of Pagliacci belong to a traveling theatrical troupe; while in La Bohème everyone except for Alcindoro and the landlord Benoit is an artist-even Mimi with her embroidery of artificial flowers. Not only that. In the preface to his novel, Mürger describes how he coined for his bohemians a special language compounded for hyperbole and understatement, the perfect expression of the world of half-humorous make-believe in which

they live, and, as such, neatly attuned to a musical style that is conversational and lyrical by turns. When the curtain rises, Marcello is complaining in short bursts of fretful declamation that merely to look at his picture of the Red Sea makes him feel soaking wet and frozen; to get his own back he will drown a pharaoh. Rodolfo, more fanciful, looks out of the window and contrasts the smoking chimneys of Paris with their own stove which he likens to an idle lord living in luxury while others are working; and the thought prompts him to a flight of lyricism ("Nei cieli bigi"). There is nothing stilted or unreal about this: it is, one feels, exactly how such young men would talk. The same holds true for Schaunard's persiflage and Colline's pseudo-philosophical gravity. But under pressure of circumstances, all parties are ready enough to descend to plain speaking. "Rodolfo," says Marcello shortly afterwards, "I wish to tell you a profound thought of mine: I'm bloody cold!" ("Ho un freddo cane!"). Nor is there anything poetic about the insults exchanged by him and Musetta at the end of Act III. Throughout the opera Puccini holds naturalism and fantasy in perfect equilibrium; in no other opera of the period is the basic artificiality of the medium so little felt.

In his early days it used to be the fashion to describe Puccini's talent as essentially "symphonic." This may seem a strange estimate of one whose reputation today rests solely on his works for the stage. In one sense, however, it is apposite. Right from the start he showed a flair for extending and varying short thematic ideas and weaving them into a continuous texture; which may explain why alone

among the "veristi" of his generation he was able to organize his operas into whole acts without lapsing into that formless rhapsodizing that so often disfigures the works of Mascagni or Giordano. In the mature operas, beginning with La Bohème, this method approaches the Wagnerian system of Leitmotif but with two important differences. Puccini never renounced the finite, detachable number, though it will often be found to include ideas that have been heard before, as with Rodolfo's "Che gelida manina," or else be used as a line of thematic reminiscence later, like Mimi's "Mi chiamano Mimi" (there is, of course, a Wagnerian precedent here in Die Meistersinger). Then too, the motifs are far less strictly referential than in Wagner indeed the critic Ernest Newman used to complain that "Puccini rarely pauses to ask himself whether the circumstances in



The list of sopranos who sang Mimì at the San Francisco Opera is long and illustrious, and many of them have been previously featured in the pages of the San Francisco Opera magazine. Here's a view of the 1965 heroine, Renata Tebaldi, captured in her dressing room between acts in the act of addressing her pet poodle.



In 1962, Marilyn Horne sang Musetta in two performances at the Opera House, and two on tour in Los Angeles. This photo was taken backstage at the L.A. Shrine Auditorium.



Matthew Farruggio (right) was stage director for the 1967 performances of La Bohème, which featured a pair of remarkable debutants: Mirella Freni and Luciano Pavarotti.

which he now wants to revive an old tune are relevant to those in which it first appeared." But is there any reason why he should? Puccini uses motifs partly as elements of structure and partly for the emotional force which they generate and which may vary according to dynamics and scoring. The theme which-when played softly on the strings-beautifully portrays Mimi's pathetic tenderness ("Sono andati? Fingevo di dormire") may equally well serve as a passionate expression of grief when thundered out by full orchestra as Rodolfo collapses upon the girl's lifeless body. Nor is it inappropriate that the final cadential figure should be borrowed from Colline's mock-tragic farewell to his overcoat ("Vecchia zimarra"). What sounds whimsical in the first context sounds desperately sincere in the second. Indeed, not even Donizetti was more expert at adapting old music to new situations. The opening theme of the opera comes from Puccini's Capriccio Sinfonico, his passing piece from the Milan Conservatoire; the melody of "Nei cieli bigi" originates in sketches for the unwritten La Lupa. Musetta's waltz song ("Quando me'n vo") first saw the light as a piano piece. The lovers' duet at the end of Act III began life eight years earlier as a song with piano entitled "Sole e amore."

Finally, there is Puccini's remarkable gift (learned from his teacher Ponchielli?) for evoking an ambience, whether the festive gaiety of the Latin Quarter whose music seems to anticipate that of Stravinsky's Shrovetide Fair in *Petrushka*, or the chill dawn with falling snowflakes at the Barrière d'Enfer. Debussy, no friend to "verismo" either French or Italian, once remarked to Manuel de Falla, "I know of no one who has described the Paris of that time as well as Puccini in *La Bohème*."

The premiere took place at the Teatro Regio, Turin, on February 1st, 1896, three years to the day after that of Manon Lescaut at the same theater, without a

single star singer among the cast; the conductor was the twenty-eight year old Arturo Toscanini. The critics were less than enthusiastic. Several considered that the newest work represented a backsliding after Manon Lescaut, and urged the composer to return to "the great and difficult battles of art." In particular, the construction of Mimi's death scene on reminiscences from Act I seemed to them a soft option, a lazy way out (it should be remembered that their ears were still filled with the Italian premiere of Götterdämmerung given earlier in the season). It all makes very odd reading today. The public clearly thought otherwise. Within a few months, La Bohème had begun a triumphant progress around the world, since when it has resisted all efforts on the part of music's puritans (many of them from Italy herself) to dislodge it from the international repertoire.

Make no mistake; *La Bohème* is with us for a long time yet. ■

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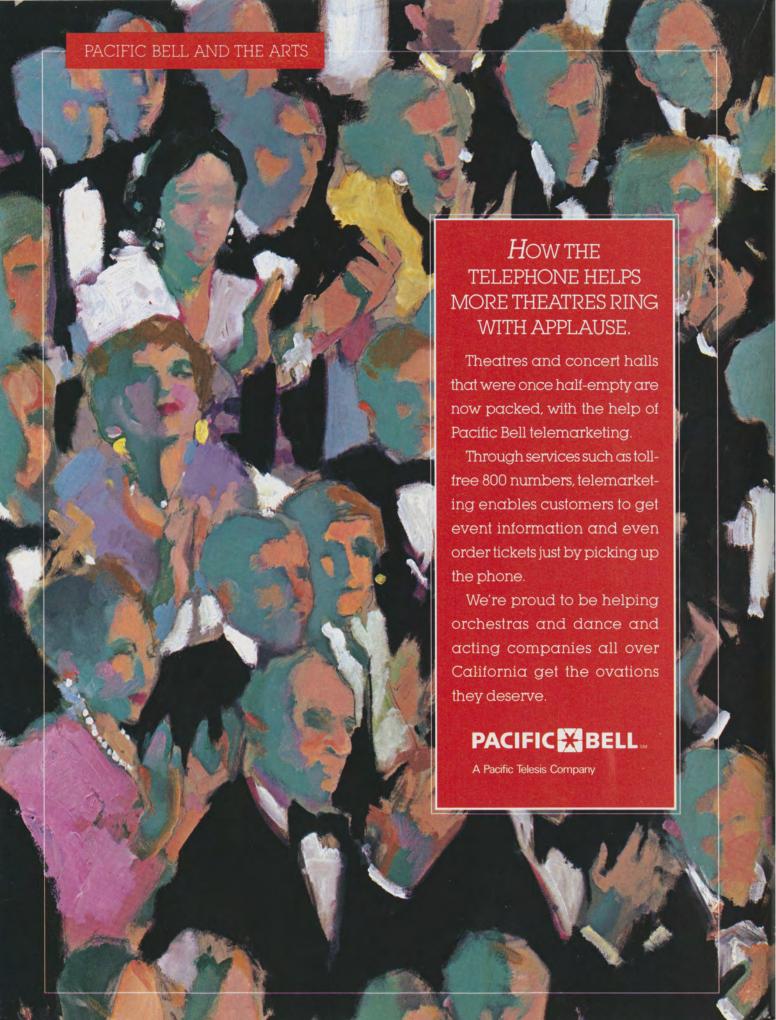
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ARTIST PROFILES

LABOHÈME



NELLY MIRICIOIU

Nelly Miricioiu returns to San Francisco Opera as Mimì in La Bohème. The soprano, who was born in Romania and currently lives in London, made her 1983 American debut here in the title role of La Traviata, a role which she has also performed at the Paris Opéra-Comique. She made her operatic debut in 1970 as the Queen of the Night in Die Zauberflöte and then became a leading soprano of the Brasov Opera, where her repertoire included Violetta, Mimì, Gilda in Rigoletto and Micaëla in Carmen. At the same time. Miss Miricioiu won many awards in vocal competitions in Athens, Paris, Geneva and Belgium, and in 1979 was awarded first prize in the s'Hertogenbosch Competition. She was then given a scholarship for special studies at La Scala in Milan and at the Teatro dell'Opera in Rome. In 1982 she made several important debuts: at Covent Garden as Nedda in Pagliacci, at the Paris Opera in Les Contes d'Hoffmann and La Traviata, and at the Frankfurt Opera as Violetta. In March of 1983 she made her La Scala debut in the title role of Lucia di Lammermoor to great acclaim. 1984 saw Miss Miricioiu's return to the United States as Violetta in Dallas with Alfredo Kraus and in Philadelphia as Puccini's Manon Lescaut, as well as her debut at the Sydney Opera house in La Traviata. She returned to Covent Garden in May 1985 as Musetta and later that year bowed in San Diego as all four heroines in Les Contes d'Hoffmann and as Marguerite in Faust at the Netherlands Opera. Her engagements for this season have included Faust and Les Contes d'Hoffmann at Covent Garden, La Bohème in Rome, La Traviata with the Canadian Opera Company and Manon Lescaut in Sydney and Vienna. Her future plans include her first portrayal of Madama Butterfly in a new production with the Netherlands Opera, debuts in



NANCY GUSTAFSON

Munich as Mimì and at the Vienna Staatsoper as Mimì and Violetta, a concert version of *Tancredi* in Amsterdam, her first assumption of the title role of *Lucrezia Borgia* in Montpellier, France, *Lucia di Lammermoor* with the Canadian Opera Company, and *La Traviata* in Miami and Verona.

Soprano Nancy Gustafson sings Musetta in La Bohème. She most recently appeared with the Company last fall as Mlle. Jouvenot in Adriana Lecouvreur, following her performances as Freia in Das Rheingold for San Francisco Opera's 1985 Ring Festival. The Illinois native made her local debut during the 1983 Summer Season as Woglinde in Das Rheingold, appearing also as Helmwige in Die Walküre (a role she repeated during the 1985 Summer Season), and returning during the 1983 Fall Season as Flora in La Traviata. She was seen during the 1984 Fall Season in Madama Butterfly, Elektra and Khovanshchina. As a participant in the 1982 Merola Opera Program, she sang in The Magic Flute and Rigoletto, receiving the Gropper Memorial Award in the 1982 Auditions Grand Finals. For the S.F. Opera Center's 1983 and '84 Showcase series she was heard as Sicle in Cavalli's L'Ormindo and in the '84 Seasons' Preview. As a 1984 Adler Fellow, she created the role of the Mother in the world premiere of Conrad Susa's The Love of Don Perlimplin. In 1984 she made her debut with the San Francisco Symphony in Mahler's Eighth Symphony, and that December made her European debut at the Théâtre Musical de Paris! Châtelet as Rosalinde in Die Fledermaus in a production that was also seen at Nancy. In 1983, she sang her first Fiordiligi in Così fan tutte for the Carmel Bach Festival, where she also appeared in Bach's St. John



ALBERTO CUPIDO

Passion, and took part in the special concert for Queen Elizabeth II during the royal visit to California. Miss Gustafson's recent appearances include Rosalinde with the Sacramento Opera, and in a new Charles Ludlam production of Fledermaus with Santa Fe Opera. She also sang her first Donna Elvira in Don Giovanni, appearing for the first time with the Glyndebourne Festival ensemble on tour to Hong Kong. Donna Elvira was also the role of her recent Opera Colorado debut, in addition to her Minnesota Opera debut as Leila in Bizet's The Pearl Fishers. Future engagements include her Seattle Opera debut as Marguerite in Faust, her Radio France debut as Frau Fluth in Nicolai's The Merry Wives of Windsor and her first solo recital tour of the U.S. She returns to the San Francisco Symphony next year with performances of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, conducted by Wolfgang Sawallisch.

Alberto Cupido returns to San Francisco Opera to sing Rodolfo in La Bohème. The Italian tenor made his American opera debut here in 1983 as Alfredo in La Traviata and has appeared extensively with the opera companies of Berlin, Munich, Hamburg, Vienna, Toulouse, Lyon, Paris, Zurich and Frankfurt, as well as having participated in numerous festival productions, including La Bohème at Glyndebourne and Falstaff at Bregenz. The 1982-83 season included two major debuts for Cupido: as Werther in a new production of the Massenet work at the Cologne Opera and in La Bohème at the Paris Opera. During that same season he appeared as Alfredo at the Vienna Staatsoper. Highlights from recent seasons have included performances of Lucia di Lammermoor in South Africa and at La Scala in



LUIS LIMA

Milan; La Traviata, La Bohème, Luisa Miller, Macbeth and Der Rosenkavalier with the Hamburg Opera; Macbeth with the Vienna Staatsoper; and Werther with the opera companies of Genoa and Palermo. Cupido's engagements for the 1985-86 season included a new production of Lucia di Lammermoor at the Cologne Opera, I Lombardi at La Scala, Manon in Munich, Faust, in Florence and Bologna, Roméo et Juliette in Montreal and La Bohème in Naples, Vienna, Berlin and Dallas. In 1987 Cupido plans to travel to Brussels for performances of Don Carlos and then bow with the Canadian Opera Company in Adriana Lecouvreur. In addition to his operatic performances, Cupido regularly appears with leading orchestras worldwide and his discography includes such recordings as Berlioz's Romeo and Juliet, Puccini's La Rondine, Verdi's Requiem and, most recently, Donizetti's Maria di Rudenz, as well as Adriana Lecouvreur conducted by Maurizio Arena.

Argentina-born Luis Lima returns to San Francisco Opera as Rodolfo in La Bohème, a role in which he won great acclaim at the Metropolitan Opera, in Buenos Aires and Vienna, and here during the 1983 Summer Season. The tenor made his highly praised San Francisco Opera debut as Pinkerton in the 1980 Fall Season production of Madama Butterfly, and was last seen here during the 1984 Fall Season, when he appeared as Don José in Carmen and Nemorino in L'Elisir d'Amore. His first operatic engagement was as Pinkerton in Lisbon, followed by apperances there as Turiddu in Cavalleria Rusticana, Lima's success in these roles led to engagements in Mainz, Stuttgart, Munich, Paris and Barcelona, where he sang the lead in Donizetti's Gemma di Vergy. It was in that role that he made his triumphant American debut at Carnegie Hall in 1976 opposite Montserrat Caballé in a performance



TOM KRAUSE

that was also recorded. That same season he bowed with New York City Opera in Madama Butterfly and La Traviata, and it was in the last-mentioned work that he made his Metropolitan Opera debut as Alfredo during the 1978-79 season, when he also appeared as Pinkerton at the Met and in La Bohème, Rigoletto and Faust at the New York City Opera. The next few seasons saw Lima in Montreal, Nancy, Mannheim, Buenos Aires, Monte Carlo, Frankfurt, Las Palmas, Toulouse, Australia, Geneva, Hamburg, Barcelona and at the Lyric Opera of Chicago. He is now recognized in the world's great opera houses, and his schedule for the 1985-86 season included appearances in La Traviata at the Met (including the national broadcast), Les Contes d'Hoffmann in San Diego, Faust at Covent Garden and in Vienna, Un Ballo in Maschera in Rome, Carmen in Cologne, L'Elisir d'Amore in Stuttgart and Simon Boccanegra in Vienna and Naples. His discography includes the world premiere recording of Massenet's Le Roi de Lahore with Joan Sutherland.

Distinguished Finnish baritone Tom Krause returns to San Francisco Opera as Marcello in La Bohème. He made his Company debut during the 1982 Fall Season, when he appeared as Count Almaviva in Le Nozze di Figaro and sang Count Tomsky in The Queen of Spades, returning during the 1983 Summer Season as Guglielmo in Così fan tutte. He was most recently seen here as Sharpless in the 1984 production of Madama Butterfly. Krause made his American debut in Britten's War Requiem with the Boston Symphony at Tanglewood in 1963, and has performed with the orchestras of New York, Chicago, Cleveland, Philadelphia, Boston, Los Angeles, Pittsburgh and San Francisco. As a member of the Hamburg Staatsoper for many years, he was heard in many leading roles there and he

made his U.S. opera debut with that company on a tour to the United States in 1967. He made his Metropolitan Opera debut that same year as Mozart's Count Almaviva. Since then, Krause has apppeared many times at the Met, as well as with the Chicago Lyric Opera and Houston Grand Opera. In Europe, he performs with the Vienna Staatsoper, the Paris Opera, La Scala in Milan and has also sung at the festivals of Salzburg, Bayreuth, Glyndebourne, Edinburgh and Prague. Krause's recent engagements have included Pelléas et Mélisande in Geneva and Hamburg, Le Nozze di Figaro in Vienna, Don Carlos with the Finnish National Opera, Faust with the Houston Grand Opera and The Rake's Progress with the Geneva Opera. An acclaimed concert artist, Krause has most recently been heard in performances of Mozart's Requiem with the Atlanta Symphony, and Haydn's Creation with the Orchestre Nationale de France conducted by Seiji Ozawa. He also participated in a special tri-centennial celebration performance of Handel's Messiah which was recorded at the National Cathedral in Washington. D.C. Krause's extensive discography includes recordings of Così fan tutte, Elektra, Le Nozze di Figaro, Tristan und Isolde, Tchaikovsky's Yolanta, the Berlioz Roméo et Juliette, Mozart's Requiem, Rossini's Stabat Mater, Rachmaninoff's The Bells, Mendelssohn's Elijah and Bach's St. Matthew Passion. His recording of the complete Sibelius songs was awarded four international prizes.

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



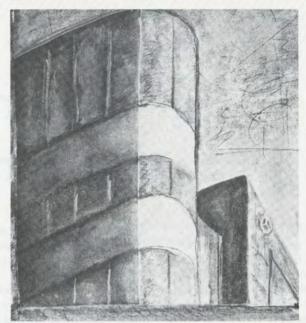
RICHARD PENDERGRAPH

Jersey State Opera and the Birmingham Civic Opera. After making his debut with the Dallas Opera last year as Junius in *The Rape of Lucretia*, Pendergraph recently sang the role of Ford in *Falstaff* for the Sarasota Opera and Zurga in Bizet's *The Pearl Fishers* with the Glimmerglass Opera.

Bass Kevin Langan returns for his seventh season with San Francisco Opera as Colline in La Bohème. He was a member of the 1979 and 1980 Merola Opera Programs and has appeared in 27 different productions here since his debut in the 1980 telecast production of Samson et Dalila. Other San Francisco Opera appearances have included Timur in Turandot in 1982, the King (1981) and Ramfis (1984 summer) in Aida, Henry VIII in Anna Bolena in 1984, and Zoroastro in Handel's Orlando last season. Since his professional debut in 1979 in his home state of New Jersey, he has established himself throughout North America as an accomplished singing actor in the basso repertoire. His Sarastro in The Magic Flute has been heard with the Houston Grand Opera, as well as in Santa Fe, Philadelphia, St. Louis, Winnipeg, Omaha, and Palm Beach, Florida. Langan recently sang Seneca in L'Incoronazione di Poppea at Santa Fe as well as Méphistophélès in Faust and Pimen in Boris Godunov with the Canadian Opera Company where he frequently appears. Other recent successes include Sparafucile in Rigoletto with New York City Opera, Gremin in Eugene Onegin at Houston, Padre Guardiano in La Forza del Destino in Winnipeg, and The Grand Inquisitor in Don Carlo in San Jose. His 1986-87 engagements include Ashby in Fanciulla del West for Dallas, Don Basilio in Il Barbiere di Siviglia and Daland in Der Fliegende Holländer for San Diego, and

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Gaetano Merola Remembered

By PHILIP HART

"The most perfect act in all of opera!"
Thus did Gaetano Merola describe
the Third Act of La Bohème.

We were sitting at a rehearsal in—of all places—the old Public Auditorium in Portland during a pre-season tour of the San Francisco Opera in September of 1946. Maestro Merola had first brought his company to the Northwest three months before Pearl Harbor in the hope of establishing a pre-season base there comparable to that of the post-season offerings at the Shrine Auditorium in Los

Angeles. The 1946 tour marked the postwar resumption of that project, which eventually fell victim to rising costs after 1947.

Although long-since remodelled into reasonably adequate opera houses, the auditoriums in both Seattle and Portland were then old multi-purpose facilities, very much like the San Francisco Civic Auditorium. Both were box-like with shallow balconies on three sides. In both cities there was a stage of sorts, unlike the San Francisco auditorium that had to be converted into a theater of sorts for the

San Francisco Opera's first indoor presentations. In Portland there were at least a shallow orchestra pit and a raked main floor with fixed upholstered seats, two rows of which had to be removed to

Philip Hart was concert orchestra manager in Portland, Seattle, Chicago and at the Juilliard School in New York. Author of Orpheus in the New World, an account of the symphony orchestra in America, and of Conductors, A New Generation, he now lives in Santa Fe where he is working on a biography of Fritz Reiner



Gaetano Merola in 1933, posing for the San Francisco Opera official photographer over a score of La Traviata.



Gaetano Merola in the late 1940s.

accommodate the full orchestra. But in Seattle the orchestra played on the same level as the audience, from which it was separated by velour drapes strung from moveable stanchions. The same sort of dividers across the middle of that flat main floor defined the "boxes" to accommodate the more affluent patrons; these "boxes" contained upholstered armchairs, but most of the audience sat on wooden folding chairs. Backstage amenities in both cities could best be described as minimally spartan to the point of dinginess.

These pre-season tours were a sort of warm-up for the opening weeks in the War Memorial Opera House with such standard repertory as Aida, Madama Butterfly, Faust, La Traviata, and Carmen, an exception being the 1946 Lohengrin with Set Svanholm making his U.S. debut and the young Astrid Varnay in her first appearance with the San Francisco company. Merola conducted one performance in each city, not always of the same opera; though he was at the podium for the 1946 La Bohème in Seattle, he yielded the baton in Portland to Pietro Cimara. There were other differences in casts between the two cities in the space of a week, probably scheduled in order to rehearse alternate singers and "covers" for later performances in San Francisco. In both cities there was a heavy schedule of dress rehearsals on stage, not only for the touring group, but also for local supers and, in the second act of La Bohème, the ragazzi recruited from a church school choir; the same source provided the children for the first act of Carmen the following year.

As local manager involved in these two post-war tours, I had frequent opportunities to meet with Maestro Merola both at the War Memorial Opera House and during the crowded days of the tours themselves. Arrangements for returning to the Northwest began even before the end of hostilities in the Far East, requiring frequent trips to San Francisco, including being "guest of the house" during the season there. Although he was not directly involved in the business details of the tours, Merola took a keen interest in what he hoped would be a significant expansion of his company's activity, treating me with a personal courtesy and interest that went well beyond business necessities. The Maestro really seemed to enjoy explaining opera as an art and as

continued on p.53



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La Bohème

or

CAST (in order of appearance)

Marcello Tom Krause

Rodolfo Alberto Cupido

(October 24, 28, 31;

November 4)

Luis Lima

(November 6, 9, 12, 15)

Colline Kevin Langan

Schaunard Richard Pendergraph

Benoit John Del Carlo

Mimì Nelly Miricioiu

Parpignol Daniel Harper

Musetta Nancy Gustafson

Alcindoro Paul Gudas

Milmuoro Faul Gudas

Customhouse Sergeant Monte Pederson

Customhouse Guard Mark Coles

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* San Francisco Opera debut

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INTERMISSION

ACT II The Latin Quarter

INTERMISSION

ACT III A city gate, the Barrière d'Enfer

INTERMISSION

ACT IV A garret

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La Bohème/Synopsis

ACT I

As Marcello paints, Rodolfo, unable to write, gazes through the windows at the smoking chimneys of the Parisian rooftops. The bohemians are suffering from the cold. Marcello is about to sacrifice one of the sparse furnishings to stoke the empty stove when Rodolfo has an inspiration: his drama will warm them. Amid the crackling of witticisms and burning manuscript pages the young men enjoy the unaccustomed sight of a fire on the grate. Colline returns from a fruitless visit to the pawnbrokers; it is Christmas Eve and they are all closed. As the fire dies, Schaunard saves the day by arriving with food, firewood and pockets full of money. The table is already laid before Schaunard can announce that for Christmas they will dine out. The friends are about to leave when Benoit, the landlord, comes for the rent. The bohemians trick him into talking about his amours; then, feigning moral indignation, they throw him out, unpaid. The friends leave, but Rodolfo stays behind to finish an article he is writing.

Presently there is a knock on the door. A young woman enters. She asks if she may light her candle and Rodolfo invites her in. A fainting spell comes over her and she collapses. Rodolfo offers her wine to restore her. As soon as her candle is lighted, she departs only to return moments later in search of her key. A draft from the open door extinguishes her candle and the search is conducted in darkness. Rodolfo quickly finds and pockets the lost key without informing his companion. As they continue to search, their hands touch, Rodolfo exlaims that her hands are frozen and suggests they stop looking for a moment until the moon provides better light. He tells her that he is Rodolfo, a penniless poet who has already fallen in love with her. She replies with a description of her modest existence as a seamstress. Everyone calls her Mimi, although her name is Lucia. As she ends her narrative, the voices of Rodolfo's friends rise from the street, urging him to hurry. Rodolfo goes to the window and tells them to meet him later at the Café Momus.

He turns to Mimì and declares his love, which she timidly admits is returned. When Rodolfo hesitates to leave her, she suggests that she join him and his friends. They exchange loving phrases as they leave arm in arm.

ACT II

A holiday crowd mills about the small square in the Latin Quarter dominated by the Café Momus. (Momus was the Greek god of ridicule.) The bohemians meet at the café and order dinner, after Rodolfo has presented Mimì to his friends.

Musetta and Alcindoro, whom she orders around like a pet poodle, take the table adjoining the friends. Marcello studiously avoids looking at Musetta, with whom he has recently quarreled. Musetta tries to attract his attention by staging a temper tantrum. The crowd enjoys her performance, although Marcello continues to ignore her. Raising her voice so that all may hear, Musetta delivers an oration on her beauty and its devastating effects. Alcindoro futilely tries to subdue his companion, as everyone comments on her theatrics. She decides it is time to rid herself of Alcindoro and feigns a terrible pain in her foot. As her aged admirer fumbles with her shoe, Marcello capitulates. Musetta sends Alcindoro off for a new pair of shoes. The merry-making is dampened by the arrival of the bill. The bohemians search their pockets hopelessly until

Musetta takes the bill from the waiter and deposits it together with her own at Alcindoro's place. She announces that Alcindoro will pay both bills on his return. Musetta, minus one shoe, is borne away in triumph. Alcindoro returns with Musetta's new shoes and is confronted with the bills.

ACT III

Amid the snow and mist of a February dawn, the city's early risers begin their daily routines, while the revelers in a tavern continue the night's festivities. Mimì asks directions of a sergeant who points out the tavern decorated with Marcello's

paintings.

Mimì asks a servant to send Marcello out to her. She appeals to him to help her and bursts into tears. She refuses to go into the tavern, because Rodolfo is inside. He has left her. Through the window Marcello sees that Rodolfo is looking for him. He promises to talk to him and Mimi steps out of view. Rodolfo attempts to justify his cruelty to Mimì on grounds of her coquettishness, but Marcello sees through the pretext. Rodolfo admits that he still loves Mimì, but says he cannot endure watching her health fail because of his inability to provide for her. Coughing and violent sobs betray Mimi's presence. Rodolfo takes her into his arms, while Marcello charges into the tavern to investigate the cause of a burst of Musetta's brazen laughter. Mimi says goodbye to Rodolfo and tells him they must part without bitterness. She will send someone for her few possessions. They quickly realize they cannot go through with the separation. Their decision to stay together until spring is made against the background of violent quarreling between Musetta and Marcello.

ACT IV

Sadly reminiscing about their broken love affairs, Marcello and Rodolfo try to work. Rodolfo mentions having seen Musetta, sumptuously dressed, riding in a fine carriage. Marcello conveys the rumor that Mimì is living with a viscount. Both try unsuccessfully to appear pleased that their former companions are flourishing. Schaunard and Colline arrive with frugal provisions and a more cheerful outlook. They fall upon the food and stage a mock ball which is followed by a simulated duel. At the height of their clowning, Musetta appears. From her manner they guess that something is wrong. Mimì is waiting on the stairs. She is seriously ill, perhaps dying. Rodolfo rushes to Mimì and brings her in. Once Mimì has been made comfortable, Musetta draws the others to one side, leaving the lovers alone. Musetta confides to the friends that Mimì has left the viscount to return to Rodolfo.

Mimì complains of the cold. Musetta sends Marcello to pawn a pair of earrings and bring back a doctor. Colline bids a fond farewell to his overcoat which is destined for the same fate as Musetta's jewels. One by one the friends find discreet

reasons to leave. The lovers are alone.

Feeble attempts at their former banter are succeeded by reminiscences of their love, interrupted now and again by spasms of coughing. Rodolfo's cry of alarm brings Schaunard running. Musetta returns with a muff to warm Mimi's hands. Marcello arrives moments later and announces that a doctor is on the way. Mimi falls asleep as Musetta murmurs a prayer. Rodolfo notices that a change has come over his friends, who already know what he only now realizes: Mimi is dead.

La Bohème

Photos taken in rehearsal by David Powers

Nelly Miricioiu, Alberto Cupido



Luis Lima (taken in 1983)



Tom Krause, Alberto Cupido



(l. to r.) Richard Pendergraph, John Del Carlo, Alberto Cupido, Kevin Langan



(l. to r.) Tom Krause, Alberto Cupido, Richard Pendergi



(l. to r.) Nelly Miricioiu, Alberto Cupido, Tom Krause, Nancy Gustafson



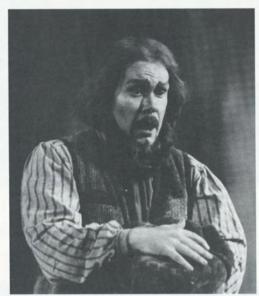
Nelly Miricioiu, Alberto Cupido





Alberto Cupido, Nelly Miricioiu





Kevin Langan





Nelly Miricioiu, Alberto Cupido



Act II



(l. to r.) Tom Krause, Alberto Cupido, Richard Pendergraph, Kevin Langan



Nancy Gustafson, Paul Gudas

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KEVIN LANGAN

continued from p.37

Leporello in Don Giovanni for Miami. Langan's orchestral appearances have included concert versions of Oedipus Rex with the National Symphony, and Pimen in Boris Godunov with the St. Louis Symphony. He has appeared in the Messiah with the Houston and Indianapolis Symphonies, Rossini's Stabat Mater with the Buffalo Philharmonic, and Beethoven's Ninth with the Oakland Symphony. Langan recently made his recital debut in New York at Carnegie Recital Hall to high critical acclaim, presenting a similar program that marked his professional recital debut in London at Wigmore Hall in 1979. Born in New York City, Langan received his training at Indiana University School of Music studying with soprano Margaret Harshaw. He is the recipient of a 1983 Richard Tucker Foundation Grant for Advanced Study and is a 1980 National Finalist of the Metropolitan Opera Auditions, the 1980 San Francisco Opera Auditions, and the 1981 OPERA America Auditions.

Bass-baritone John Del Carlo returns to San Francisco Opera as Fritz Kothner in Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg and Benoit in La Bohème. Since his 1978 Company debut he has appeared in over 20 productions here, most recently as Donner in the 1985 Summer Season production of Das Rheingold, a role which he also portrayed here in 1983. His other recent appearances here have been Dr. Dulcamara in L'Elisir d'Amore. Abimélech in Samson et Dalila and Rangoni in Boris Godunov. A native San Franciscan and a graduate of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, he was a member of the San Francisco Opera Chorus from 1973 to 1976 and participated in the 1977 Merola Opera Program, during which he was co-winner of first place in the San Francisco Opera Auditions. He bowed with Spring Opera



JOHN DEL CARLO

Theater in 1978 as Achillas in Julius Caesar, returning for SPOT productions of La Périchole (1979), Good Soldier Schweik (1980) and The Grand Duchess of Gerolstein (1981). During the 1982 Fall Season he scored a personal triumph as Alidoro in La Cenerentola, and that same year he was a winner in the Pavarotti International Voice Competition, subsequently appearing with Pavarotti in the Philadelphia Opera productions of L'Elisir d'Amore and La Bohème, the latter being televised nationally on PBS. Del Carlo made his European debut during the 1981-82 season, singing the role of Olivo in Donizetti's Olivo e Pasquale in Barga, Italy and the following fall bowed with Lyric Opera of Chicago in Fidelio and a new production of Madama Butterfly. Last season he appeared in Madama Butterfly and Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg with Lyric Opera of Chicago, The Merry Widow with Edmonton Opera and in Das Rheingold and Götterdämmerung with Seattle Opera. Del Carlo's future engagements include Die Fledermaus with the Canadian Opera Company, La Cenerentola at the Los Angeles Music Center and L'Elisir d'Amore with San Diego Opera.



PAUL GUDAS

Tenor Paul Gudas is Alcindoro in La Bohème. Last fall he portrayed Red Whiskers in Billy Budd and Faninal's Major-domo in Der Rosenkavalier. Born and raised in Chicago, he attended the Lyric Opera of Chicago School and made his 1971 debut with that company in Werther, with subsequent appearances in Wozzeck, Der Rosenkavalier, Peter Grimes, La Bohème, Don Quichotte and Manon. Other Chicago area credits include La Périchole and The Bartered Bride with Chicago Opera Theatre. He was also heard in Chicago Symphony performances of La Traviata, L'Enfant et les Sortilèges and excerpts from Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg. Gudas spent three years with the Zurich Opera, where he appeared in a variety of character roles. A member of the San Francisco Opera Chorus since 1983, he made his Company debut in that year's family performances of La Traviata, appearing the same season in Manon Lescaut and the following fall in Madama Butterfly. He also made his debut last year in concert performances of Salome with Linda Kelm and the St. Louis Symphony under Leonard Slatkin. Gudas returned to Chicago Opera Theatre last spring for performances of Floyd's Susannah, and will appear there next year in Floyd's Of Mice and Men.



DANIEL HARPER

Tenor Daniel Harper sings four roles this fall: Don Curzio in Le Nozze di Figaro, Ulrich Eisslinger in Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg, Parpignol in La Bohème, and Malcolm in Macbeth. He made his Company debut in Aida during the 1984 Summer Season and returned that fall as Don Riccardo in Ernani and Borsa in Rigoletto. His 1985 Company credits included Altoum in Turandot, Dr. Caius in the family performances of Falstaff, Maintop in Billy Budd and the Innkeeper in Der Rosenkavalier. This past summer he appeared as Normanno in Lucia di Lammermoor. A member of the 1983 Merola Opera Program, he sang the title role in the Stern Grove performance of The Tales of Hoffmann and Pinkerton in Madame Butterfly, a role he also performed on Western Opera Theater's 1983 nationwide tour. As an Adler Fellow with the San Francisco Opera Center for two years, Harper sang the role of Grimoaldo in Handel's Rodelinda for the 1985 Showcase series, and that same year made an unscheduled debut with the San Francisco Symphony when he was called upon to replace an ailing colleague as tenor soloist in the Verdi Requiem conducted by Edo de Waart. A graduate of North Park College in Illinois, he has extensive concert credits in the Chicago area, including performances of Mendelssohn's Elijah, Handel's Messiah, the Mozart Requiem, Rossini's Petite Messe Solennelle, and a recording of Schönberg's Moses und Aron with the Chicago Symphony under Sir Georg Solti. He recently sang his first Don José in Carmen with the Stockton Symphony.



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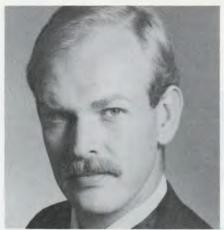
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MONTE PEDERSON

Currently an Adler Fellow with the San Francisco Opera Center, bass-baritone Monte Pederson sings five roles this fall: Antonio in Le Nozze di Figaro, the Mayor in Jenufa, a Night Watchman in Die Meistersinger, a Sergeant in La Bohème and the Hotelier in Manon. He made his Company debut during the 1985 Fall Season, when he sang four roles: A Mandarin in Turandot, the Jailer in Tosca, the First Mate in Billy Budd, and Pistola in the family performances of Falstaff. A participant in the 1983 and '84 Merola Opera Programs, he appeared in productions of Falstaff, La Cenerentola and The Tales of Hoffmann, and also toured with Western Opera Theater in Madame Butterfly and Cenerentola. For the Opera Center's 1986 Showcase series he portrayed Don Geronio in Rossini's The Turk in Italy, and this past summer sang the roles of a Gypsy in Il Trovatore and Mr. Gobineau in The Medium. He has performed with the North Bay Opera, the Marin Opera and Midsummer Mozart Festival. His Pocket Opera credits include the title role of Handel's Imeneo, Talbot in Donizetti's Maria Stuarda and Don Magnifico in La Cenerentola. With the Concert Opera Association of San Francisco, Pederson was heard in Donizetti's Lucrezia Borgia at Davies Symphony Hall and Spontini's La Vestale in Herbst Theatre. He undertook the title role of Wagner's Der Fliegende Holländer for the first time for West Bay Opera and was bass soloist in Shostakovich's Fourteenth Symphony with the Chamber Symphony of San Francisco. Most recently he appeared as Dr. Bartolo in Le Nozze di Figaro at the 1986 Carmel Bach Festival.



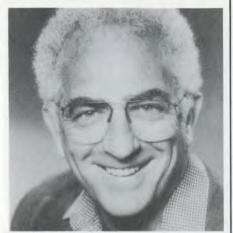
MARK COLES

Bass-baritone Mark Coles makes his San Francisco Opera debut this season, during which he appears in five roles: the Foreman in Jenufa, a Surgeon in La Forza del Destino, Hans Foltz in Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg, the Guard in La Bohème and the Herald in Macbeth. A national finalist in the 1985 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, he joined the 1985 Merola Opera Program after two seasons with the San Francisco Opera Chorus and appeared as Leporello in Western Opera Theater's 1985-86 national touring production of Don Giovanni. During the San Francisco Opera Center's 1986 Showcase series, Coles portrayed the Doctor in Hindemith's There and Back. He has also appeared as soloist with the Midsummer Mozart Festival Orchestra and in Berlioz's L'Enfance du Christ with the Master Sinfonia Chamber Orchestra. A graduate of Kent State University, Coles received first-place awards from the Ohio chapter of the National Association of Teachers of Singing, and the Tuesday Music Club of Akron. He also appeared as soloist with the Kent State Chorale at the 1981 Spoleto Festival.



MAURIZIO ARENA

Maestro Maurizio Arena is on the podium for La Forza del Destino and La Bohème, returning to San Francisco after leading acclaimed performances of Adriana Lecouvreur and Falstaff here last fall. He made his triumphant Company debut with Puccini's Manon Lescaut during the 1983 Fall Season. Born in Messina, Italy, he studied music in Palermo and Perugia, where he was trained in conducting by Franco Ferrara. After many years of collaboration with Tullio Serafin and Antonino Votto, he began his operatic training as repetiteur and assistant conductor at the Teatro Massimo in Palermo from 1960 to 1963. From 1963 to 1969, he was permanent conductor at that theater, where he led performances from the Italian operatic repertoire in addition to many modern and contemporary operas, including Wozzeck, Bluebeard's Castle and Carmina Burana. Since 1969, he has been a guest conductor at most of the important operatic capitals in Europe, including Milan's La Scala, Rome, Trieste, Brussels, Lyons, Paris and Venice. In 1980 he conducted Der Freischütz in Lyons, Rossini's Matilde di Shabran with the French National Radio Orchestra, and led performances of Nabucco in Verona and at the Verdi Festival in San Diego. Since then, he has conducted Caterina Cornaro at the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires, Le Nozze di Figaro in Lyons, concerts in Paris and Italy, Francesca da Rimini in Geneva, Manon Lescaut and Francesca da Rimini in Genoa and, at the Teatro Regio in Turin, Verdi's I Due Foscari and Ghedini's Maria d'Alessandria. Recent engagements include L'Elisir d'Amore and Tosca at the Vienna Staatsoper, Rossini's La Donna del Lago at the Verdi Theater in Trieste, and La Fanciulla del West at the Verona Arena.



GERALD FREEDMAN

With the new production of La Bohème, Gerald Freedman continues his 14-year association with San Francisco Opera, where his credits include Katya Kabanova (1983), Nabucco (Summer 1982), the highly acclaimed Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk (1981) and, for his Company debut, the world premiere of Andrew Imbrie's Angle of Repose (1976). He received wide-spread recognition for a series of productions for Spring Opera Theater, including Monteverdi's L'Orfeo (1972), Bach's St. Matthew Passion (1973 and '76), Death in Venice (1975) and The Cry of Clytaemnestra (1981). Additional opera credits include the world premiere of Ginastera's Beatrix Cenci for the Opera Society of Washington, which opened the opera house of the Kennedy Center, and numerous productions for New York City Opera, including the recent revival of Brigadoon. Freedman has served as a leading director of Joseph Papp's New York Shakespeare Festival from 1960 to 1971 (the last four years as artistic director); co-artistic director of John Houseman's The Acting Company (1975-77); artistic director of the American Shakespeare Theatre (1978-79); and, last year, assumed artistic directorship of Cleveland's Great Lakes Theater Festival. His numerous musical stage credits include the landmark rock musical, Hair, which opened Papp's Public Theatre in mid-1967; The Grand Tour with Joel Grey; the Broadway revival of West Side Story, which he co-directed with Jerome Robbins; The Au Pair Man during the inaugural season of the New York Shakespeare Festival at Lincoln Center; the premiere of Arthur Miller's The Creation of the World and Other Business on Broadway; and the controversial Off-Broadway satire Macbird!. A native of Lorain, Ohio, Freedman currently serves on the theater panel of the National Endowment for the Arts.



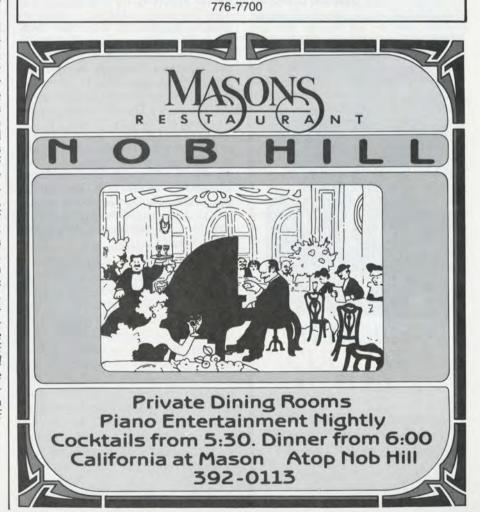
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DAVID MITCHELL

David Mitchell designed the sets for San Francisco Opera's new production of La Bohème as well as those for Manon, first seen in 1971 and again in 1981. His first opera designs were for a 1966 production of Madama Butterfly at the Juilliard School. Since then he has worked for the opera companies of Toronto, Paris, Cincinnati, Houston, Philadelphia and Washington, D.C., as well as for New York City Opera and the Deutsche Oper, Berlin. Operas he has designed include Boito's Mefistofele, Mussorgsky's Boris Godunov, and Verdi's Aida, Macbeth and Il Trovatore. A set and costume designer for theater, film and television as well as opera, Mitchell has served as resident designer for the New York Shakespeare Festival, for which he designed his first show, Medea, in 1965. He has also created set designs for the Eastside Playhouse, Vivien Beaumont Theater and St. Clement's Church in New York, as well as for the Goodman Theater in Chicago. He has been particularly successful on Broadway, where audiences have seen his settings for I Love My Wife, The Gin Game and Annie (all three in 1977), I Remember Mama (1979), Barnum (1980) and, most recently, the highly acclaimed La Cage aux Folles. Additional theater design credits include In the Boom Boom Room (1974), Little Black Sheep (1975), Apple Pie (1976) and The Price (1979).



JEANNE BUTTON

Jeanne Button makes her San Francisco Opera debut as costume designer for La Bohème. Her extensive design career has included work in the theater, as well as for television and film. She received the 1967 Maharam Award for Best Costumes for Macbird! and has been the recipient of the Rockefeller Individual Grant from 1976-1977. For her many achievements, Miss Button is recognized in Who's Who of American Women and Who's Who in Theatre. She was the American design supervisor on Broadway for The Dresser with Tom Courtenay, and Home, as well as the costume designer for The Robber Bride-groom, Wings, Henry V and The Watering Place. Her repertory experience includes the American Shakespeare Festival's Twelfth Night, in addition to Arsenic and Old Lace and several other productions for the Great Lakes Theater Festival. She has also created costume designs for The Acting Company, Yale Repertory Theatre and Mabou Mines. Her designs for opera have been seen at the Washington Opera Society (The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny), Artpark (Die Walküre) and the Nederlandse Operastichting, in addition to the Juilliard School of Music, the New York Pro Musica and Tanglewood Music Theatre.



THOMAS J. MUNN

Thomas J. Munn is the lighting designer for San Francisco Opera's 1986 Fall Season productions of Don Carlos, Jenufa, La Forza del Destino, Faust, Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg, La Bohème, Eugene Onegin, Manon and Macbeth. This past summer he was responsible for lighting Lucia di Lammermoor, Cavalleria Rusticana/Pagliacci and La Voix humaine. In his eleventh year with the Company, he has been responsible for lighting over 80 productions for San Francisco Opera, including the lighting and special effects for all four of the operas of the 1985 Ring Festival. He has also designed the scenery as well as the lighting for Nabucco and Salome in 1982, Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk in 1981, Roberto Devereux and Pelléas et Mélisande in 1979, and Billy Budd in 1978. In addition to his numerous design credits for the War Memorial stage, Munn has designed scenery and lighting for Broadway, Off-Broadway, regional theater, ballet and film. 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 of 1983, in addition to Copland's The Tender Land for Michigan Opera Theatre, and the world premiere of Robert Ward's Abelard and Heloise for the Charlotte Opera. Recent projects include productions for the Lyric Opera of Chicago, Houston Grand Opera and the Netherlands Opera, in addition to the scenery and lighting designs of Coppélia for the Hartford Ballet. Munn is consultant for the Muziektheater in the Netherlands, a new opera house scheduled to open at the end of September this vear.



Backstage between the acts of La Bohème, in 1944, the cast toasts Maestro Merola (seated). Left to right: Francesco Valentino (Marcello), Ezio Pinza (Colline), George Cehanovsky (Schaunard), Licia Albanese (Mimì), Charles Kullman (Rodolfo) and Virginia MacWatters (Musetta). Maestro Merola was the evening's conductor.

production to a young manager from the "provinces" to the north.

I still have fond memories of his courtly grace and, more characteristic, of a certain wry humor with which he approached some of the non-musical business with which he was charged, referring sarcastically on one occasion to a visit from a leading artist manager from New York, "Today I have agents." One of Maestro Merola's problems was to fit his season in between Labor Day and the opening of the Metropolitan Opera in New York. At that time largely cut off from new European talent, the San Francisco Opera virtually shared with the Metropolitan its leading singers, many of whom sang in South America during the summer, stopping off in San Francisco on their way back to New York.

Sometimes we talked in his office upstairs backstage at the War Memorial Opera House, and sometimes I was his guest for lunch at the Fior d'Italia, where the staff knew exactly how the Maestro wanted his simply-cooked food to be prepared and served. During the season, Merola monitored activity on the stage from his office with an indescribably bad paper-cone loudspeaker attached to a primitive intercom system. He seemed

quite oblivious of the squawky sound, although I learned one day how closely he was listening to it, when he stopped our conversation abruptly: "We will go to lunch now." Down at stage level he strolled out into the midst of rehearsal which immediately ceased, and conferred quietly but with firm gestures with a couple of the singers, the conductor, and the stage director; his way of slightly leaning forward as he talked gave extra urgency to what he had to say. Over the loudspeaker during our conversation he had heard a dispute onstage requiring his immediate attention. Satisfied that the situation was now under control, he led me out of the backstage entry to a waiting cab without further comment, but I had seen a brief moment of the Maestro's firm hand in running the San Francisco Opera.

Several of Merola's most vivid anecdotes concerned two of the more distinguished conductors who had appeared with the company—Fritz Reiner from 1936 to 1938 and Sir Thomas Beecham in 1943. Beecham he remembered with considerable amusement both for his friction with Ezio Pinza—Beecham had publicly proclaimed Victor Maurel to have been the greatest Don Giovanni of all time—and for the apparently casual way

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he managed to extract good performances, but I sensed that Merola regarded the baronet as something of a dilettante.

His recollection of Reiner was less amiable. The Hungarian-American had come to San Francisco to take over German opera after the 1935 Ring under Artur Bodanzky, but when the irascible Wagnerian had demanded a fee higher than Merola wanted to pay, he also soon proved to be "difficult." In the famous Die Walküre of 1936, about which Merola boasted of being the only impresario who could afford the combined fees of Kirsten Flagstad, Lotte Lehmann, Lauritz Melchior, and Friedrich Schorr, Reiner not only demanded and got extra rehearsals and an expanded orchestra, but clashed with stage director Armando Agnini over a steam machine that was so noisy in the Magic Fire Music that he refused to conduct with it in operation. In Reiner's last year, Merola cleverly kept him in hand by engaging the young Erich Leinsdorf to conduct Pelléas et Mélisande, simply to have another Wagnerian conductor in the house in case Reiner threatened once too often to walk out.

Merola liked to think that the singers whom he engaged had a special affection for the San Francisco Opera, but from

them I soon learned that much of that affection was a personal and artistic bond with the Maestro himself. Ezio Pinza, for instance, never forgot Merola's spontaneous show of lovalty when he was detained for two months on Ellis Island early in 1942, just in time to miss a Saturday Metropolitan matinee broadcast, in one of the more outrageous displays of war hysteria. There was nothing, he said, that he wouldn't do for the Maestro, who in turn relished telling vividly admiring accounts of the basso's amatory adventures in San Francisco. The bond between the two was an old and strong one: in 1933, for instance, Pinza sang the role of König Marke in Tristan und Isolde, a rare if not solitary effort on his part to sing in German. Merola's account of a 1940 Don Giovanni, after the break-up of the longstanding liaison between Elisabeth Rethberg and Pinza, included a vivid description of the soprano's singing the role of Donna Elvira "from life."

Pinza was a major attraction on both of the Northwest tours—as Colline in the 1946 La Bohème and as Méphistophélès in Faust the following year. From my vantage point as manager and ticket-seller, I could testify to his pre-South Pacific boxoffice draw even as a comprimario in La



Maestro Merola at a Los Angeles dinner party in the early 1950s, seated next to soprano Dorothy Kirsten.



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Gaetano Merola during a 1947 coaching session with soprano Florence Quartararo.

Bohème, where his "Vecchia zimarra" literally stopped the show.

In Portland, Pinza shared a dressing room up several flights of stairs with Salvatore Baccaloni and George Cehanovsky, the three of them improvising constant backstage comedy. At one point, out of mock sympathy for Baccaloni's shortness of breath from negotiating the narrow stairway, Pinza approached the house stage manager to accommodate his fat friend in the hand-operated lift used to carry trunks to the upper reaches of the dressing rooms. Their quarters were the site of an on-going card game marked by intense fervor and low stakes. (Merola was also an avid card-player and liked to tell of visits to the Toscanini home in

Riverdale where he played cards with Signora Carla while Maestro Arturo picked at the piano and sang tunes from Italian opera, one of their special favorites being "Ah! non credea mirarti" from La Sonnambula, which both agreed was the most beautiful melody in all of opera.)

Whenever I could, I dropped in to catch what I could of rehearsals in both cities, and recall that in Portland the first and fourth acts of La Bohème were done in succession to save changes of scenery, but that neither act was done complete. The cast included, in addition to the three afore-mentioned comprimarii, Dorothy Kirsten as Mimì, Maria Sa Earp as Musetta, Charles Kullman as Rodolfo, and Francisco Valentino as Marcello. Act

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FREE VALIDATED PARKING OPEN TILL MIDNIGHT II, with its locally recruited participants took longer, especially for Agnini and his assistants to direct crowd movements. By good fortune, as Act III began, I had the time to spare to join the solitary Merola in the darkness halfway back in the house.

As the action of Act III of La Bohème unfolded, Maestro commented sotto voce on the mastery of Puccini, a composer I sensed he loved above all others. The bleak chill of the harmonies and gray orchestral color with which Puccini opened the act aroused the Maestro's outspoken admiration as he described in technical terms just how these effects had been achieved. From time to time he pointed out how the composer intensified the action in tempo and expressivity progressively from the subdued opening of the act to the emotional climax of the Mimì/Rodolfo Duet followed by the dramatic relaxation of the Quartet only to subside in a "coda," with the fortissimo chords bringing down the curtain. He

pointed out, again and again, Puccini's sensitive instrumental support of the vocal line and the expressive enhancement of the voices with touches of orchestral color and harmony. He grunted disapprovingly at a too-bright spotlight on Mimì hiding in the shadows, muttering "Too much! I must speak about this." Again and again he would call attention to some Puccinian felicity with the admiring admonition, "You see! You see!" Sometimes he indicated his pleasure only with a sharp intake of breath, all the more audible in the empty house. He was both totally involved and communicating that involvement to his neighbor, and at the same time alert to every detail of the production. Most of all, he made me hear and understand that special combination of drama, character, sentiment and music with which Puccini had wrought this superbly organic operatic sequence.

I last saw Maestro Merola early in the 1950 season at the Sunday matinee repe-



A backstage view of San Francisco Opera's management in the mid-1940s: (l. to r.) Paul Posz, business manager; Gaetano Merola, general director; L.E. Behymer, San Francisco Opera Los Angeles manager; Kenneth Monteagle, president of the San Francisco Opera Association.



Backstage pre-curtain portrait features the 1947 Traviata principals Jan Peerce and Licia Albanese, with Maestro Gaetano Merola.

tition of the Aida in which Renata Tebaldi and Mario del Monaco had made their American debuts a few nights earlier. Rudolf Bing was there and Merola introduced me to him. In the subsequent conversation, Bing seemed more interested in the tenor than in the soprano, while Merola expressed despair over the outrageous costumes that Tebaldi had brought from Italy and insisted on wearing in this Aida.

From my very special experience of the San Francisco Opera in those tour years I came away with many lasting memories. The majesty of William Steinberg's Lohengrin and the excitement generated by Varnay, Svanholm, and Margaret Harshaw's Ortrud. The emotional impact of Licia Albanese's Cio-Cio-San in 1946 and her Violetta in 1947. The towering—physically, dramatically, and vocally—figure of Pinza both years. But to this day, forty years later, I cannot hear *La Bohème* from recordings or broadcasts or attend a performance of it in the theater, without sensing the presence of Maestro Gaetano Merola at my side. ■

(NOTE: In checking my forty-year-old memories and verifying data, I am indebted to Koraljka Lockhart, Publications Editor of the San Francisco Opera, and to Arthur Bloomfield's Fifty Years of the San Francisco Opera.)





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Company Profiles: Mafalda Guaraldi

This on-going series of interviews introduces our readers to a cross-section of San Francisco Opera Company members who never get to take a curtain call, but whose activities are very important in the process of making opera happen.

One of the brightest memories of San Francisco Opera violinist Mafalda Guaraldi is the retirement reception given for her and several other San Francisco Symphony musicians when the orchestra was touring Japan in 1975. Even better than the gala event itself, with its distinguished guests and exquisite Japanese food, was the fact that it did not mean the end of her career with the orchestra. Its then-conductor, Seiji Ozawa, deplored the fact that he had to release top musicians from their contracts at age 65, and chose instead to retain her on a concertto-concert basis. She continued full-time under that arrangement until Louise M. Davies Symphony Hall opened in 1980, and players were asked to choose between

symphony and opera. Guaraldi happily stayed with the opera company.

Born to Italian parents in San Francisco, Guaraldi was raised in a community in which opera was considered popular music and in a home in which early opera recordings played almost continually. Both of her parents knew Italian opera well, and her father regularly invited the Italian opera stars who appeared in San Francisco to their home. A waiter and caterer who was sought out by singers wherever he worked, he delighted in having them to Sunday open houses at the family home.

Guaraldi's musically-minded mother enrolled her in violin lessons at the age of ten. Advancing quickly, she gave her first public recitals at ages 13 and 17, under teachers Giuseppe Jollain and Giulio Minetti, respectively. Her musical reputation spread quickly, and a combination of her own initiative, public demand and the fact that she had become "a favorite of the Italian colony" assured her of seemingly limitless opportunities to play. In startlingly rapid succession she became a member of a series of small ensembles, the music staff of radio station KYA, a vaudeville orchestra at the Warfield, and the Federal Symphony, an orchestra to which she was appointed concertmaster by the noted conductor Alfred Hertz.

She recalls that it took a great deal of circumspection and discretion for a woman to occupy such a position in an orchestra in those days. "Women were constantly reminded that it was essential to blend in,' she says. "And I had to take great care with my appearance. My dress went from my chin to my shoes, and I had to be very sparing with makeup." Antonia Brico, one of the first women to become an important conductor and a regular conductor of the Federal, was naturally sympathetic. But it pleases Guaraldi that she was as well accepted by the many male conductors as well. A treasured memory is playing under Arnold Schoenberg, who conducted his tone poem *Pelleas und Melisande* with the orchestra.

Tantalizing opera assignments came early, too. In Guaraldi's younger days, it was fashionable for opera singers to give concerts with violin obbligato, and Guaraldi thus "accompanied," among others, Tito Schipa. When the celebrated tenor Giovanni Martinelli agreed to do a fundraising tour for SS. Peter and Paul Church in North Beach, concertizing both in and out of the city, he invited Guaraldi to share the program with him. In addition to playing the obbligati, she played works from her own repertory. The pianist was Arturo Casiglia.

Casiglia was also the director—and virtually the entire "staff"—of Pacific Opera, a small company he formed to rival the then-fledgling San Francisco Opera,

Mafalda Guaraldi, in a photo taken during the 1986 opera season, makes her way to the orchestra pit.



continued on p.65



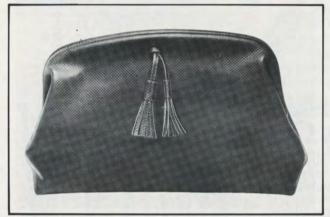
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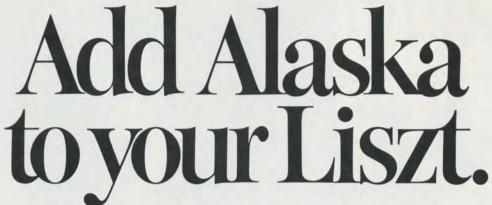


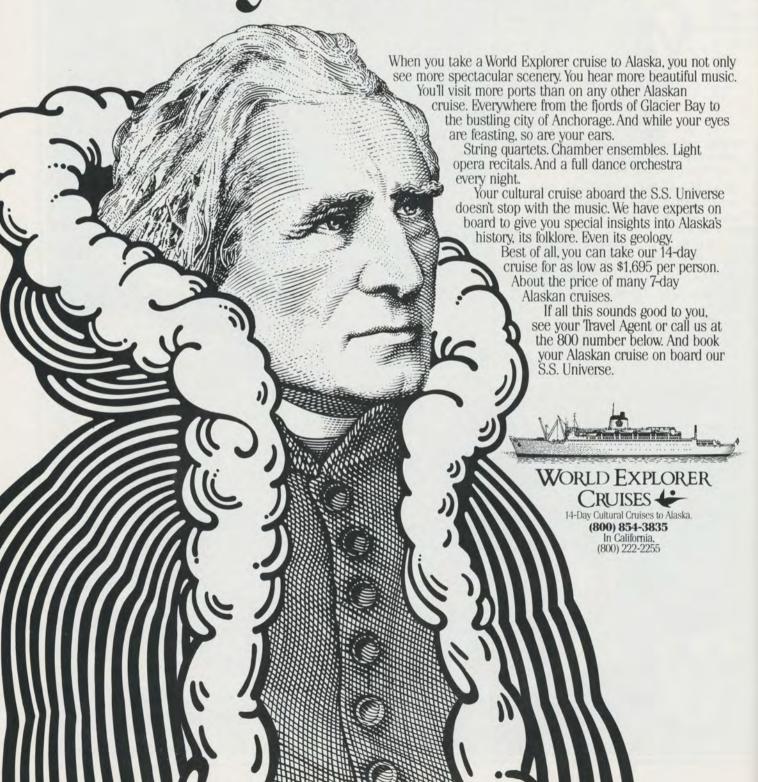


(left) The Signet Entrepreneur—a distinguished attaché in russet calfskin and brown pigskin by Mark Cross. It's well conceived design has a place for everything, \$455.

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An early portrait of Mafalda Guaraldi, wearing an opera-related blouse. In the 1940s, Maestro Merola thought women in the orchestra looked like "a group of black widows," so he asked them to wear white blouses during performances. The photo shows one of the results. (Later, he had to ask them to revert to the "black widows" again, because some upstairs patrons found the "white spots in the pit" distracting ...)

by offering big-name stars in admittedly makeshift productions, but at popular prices. Guaraldi was invited to join the Pacific's orchestra, in which she also frequently served as concertmaster. (She held the same positon in yet another rival company, Cosmopolitan Opera, directed by Campbell McGregor.) She has zesty memories of Casiglia's crisis-beset enterprise. "Of course he also conducted," she recalls with a smile. "We used to rehearse three-hour operas in two hours. When someone made a mistake, Casiglia would just look at the offending player and say, sternly, 'Tonight.'"

Early sponsorship by the Italian community's Vittoria Colonna Club allowed Guaraldi to become a student of Naoum Blinder, then the concertmaster of the San Francisco Symphony and, soon, her

"mentor." That particular association brought her into a larger circle of San Francisco culture. Isaac Stern, for example, was a student of Blinder's as well, and it was not long before Guaraldi was playing chamber music, both professionally and for pleasure, with Stern and others. Musicians have long enjoyed playing chamber music just among themselves, as well as in concert. An important center of such activity in San Francisco was the home of Dr. Leo Eloesser, a noted surgeon and avid patron of the arts. There, some of the most celebrated musicians of the city and, indeed, the world, met to play chamber music for the sheer pleasure of the art and each other's company. Guaraldi has particularly strong memories of playing in quartets with Isaac Stern and Pierre Monteux (who played viola), as well as with Misha Elman, Zara Nelsova, and others. When Erich Leinsdorf came to town, he regularly invited Guaraldi to join him in what his wife called "musical binges." When Dr. Eloesser learned of Guaraldi's deep admiration for the playing of violinist Joseph Szigeti, he, as a close friend of Szigeti's, quietly arranged an introduction to him. The happy result was a Szigeti invitation for a series of coaching sessions with him, both here and in his Los Angeles home.

Soon, Guaraldi was so thoroughly assimilated into the city's musical life that, she says altogether matter-of-factly, "I assumed that I would be engaged for everything that came to San Francisco. When I read notices of things in the newspaper, I automatically wrote them into my date book." Among the touring groups in whose orchestras she played were ballet companies including the Kirov and the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo. Those engagements afforded her the opportunities to see, sometimes from the wings and, discreetly, from the pit, the likes of Massine, Lichine and Danilova, and the great Nijinsky, dancing "Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun" ("which made me understand the sexual significance embodied in that beautiful music," Guaraldi confides).

In 1937, Monteux, then in his second year as conductor of the San Francisco Symphony, invited Guaraldi to audition for the orchestra, an event she recalls as utterly nerve-wracking until Monteux finally assured her, "I'm not going to kill you." Only then did she regain her composure. When the personnel manager called





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her the next morning, apologetic that the tano Merola and Kurt Herbert Adler, as his baton technique.

thought learning how to use a foil would orchestra." help me read a baton better; perhaps it

holding occasional matches with teams experience. "I find it too perfect from a from other performing groups, the Sym- distance, from the audience's perspective. phony team often converged at the I want to see the makeup; I want to hear Fencing Academy after concerts, for even the little mistakes in the orchestrarelaxation. During her years with it, the I want to be in the middle of it all. And that

orchestra also made several major tours, goes back as long as I can remember. In not only to Japan but also to Europe and Russia. High among her tour memories is playing in Vienna, "where I really did have the sense of Mozart and Beethoven look-

ing right over my shoulder—exhilarating, and most inspirational."

In 1939 Guaraldi also became a member of the San Francisco Opera Orchestra (a not uncommon practice then, since the two orchestras did not have overlapping schedules), first as an extra for the Wagner operas and, soon, as a regular, contracted player. "It was the perfect complement to my symphony work," she says, "bringing me back to my beloved opera and allowing me to fulfill myself as a creative artist. When, at a much earlier age, I had to make my peace with the fact that I was not going to have a solo career. I realized that as a member of these two excellent orchestras, I was afforded the experience of the whole becoming a solo performance. I came to feel that that experience allowed me to express myself fully."

Although she has treasured memories of playing under the batons of both of the company's previous directors, Gae-

only opening he could offer her was in the well as under its new music director, Sir second violin section, she recalls being John Pritchard, she adds that it was Fausto relieved that he could not see her "dancing Cleva who taught her "most of what I all over the room with my violin." She know about playing opera. His command became the fourth woman to be invited to of the repertory, at least the Italian join the Symphony. As it happened, she operas, was vast, and everyone who played with the second violins for only worked with him found the experience two weeks before she was advanced to the illuminating." Her other great learning firsts; during Monteux's tenure she experience over the years has been her reached the third stand of that section. ever-deepening appreciation of Wagner. She has particularly fond memories of the "I never disliked his music," she explains, 17 years during which she played under "but I'll admit I once was grateful for the Monteux, whom she found outstanding cuts we used to make. But I became a both for his superbinterpretations and for believer when our present director, Terence McEwen, presented the Ring, Her years with the Symphony also complete. The work meant so much more afforded Guaraldi the opportunity to played in its entirety. And the orchestra indulge in two of her favorite pastimes, played so well that I agree with Mr. fencing and travel. An avid fencer since McEwen and Sir John in their feelings that the early years when she studied chamber our orchestra should be seen as well as music and harmony at Mills College ("I heard, as a concert as well as opera

Playing in the opera orchestra has did"), she became a valued member of the made her feel closer, rather than more cut symphony's fencing team. In addition to off, from the totality of the musical



Mafalda Guaraldi and her fencing colleagues, ready with their epées: on the left is violinist Frank Houser, later concertmaster of the San Francisco Symphony; on the right, cellist Winston Perry. The photo was taken in 1941.



Mafalda Guaraldi practicing in the orchestra pit prior to a performance of the 1986 San Francisco Opera season.

the Merola days, some of us young musicians used to be invited into the Opera House, just to hear and learn. I remember hearing Claudia Muzio sing *Traviata*—from the prompter's box. There, or in the wings, is where I preferred to be. Part of the reason I've worked so hard over the years, preparing my parts, is that when I get in the pit I want to be able to enjoy the music, and the musicians, around me."

It was Guaraldi's choice to retire at the end of this season—not that that means the end of playing the violin, which she can't seem to escape even when traveling with her husband, Rowland Hooper, pursuing their favored activity of "collecting islands." Still, she adds, a bit wistfully, "When I dropped my letter of resignation into the mailbox, my heart fell much farther, and much harder. Having played under some 200 conductors in my years with the symphony and opera, I sometimes wonder whether I'll be able to think for myself. But I'm glad to be leaving it enjoying the memories.

"People keep telling me that now I'll finally have time to do all the things I've been wanting to do but haven't had time for. That puzzles me, because all these years I've been doing exactly what I wanted to be doing."

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1986 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 INSIGHTS

Opera Insights held in the Herbst Theatre, Veterans Building, 401 Van Ness Ave., in San Francisco. All informal discussions begin at 6 p.m.; doors open at 5:30 p.m. Individual tickets may be purchased at the door for \$5. For further information, please call (415) 565-6432. Programs are subject to change.

Mirella Freni and Thomas Allen 11/14

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. Single tickets are \$5 (\$4 for students and seniors). For further information, please call (415) 388-6982.

Faust

Francesca Zambello	10/9
Eugene Onegin	
James Keolker	10/30
Manon	
Michael Mitchell	11/6
Macbeth	
James Keolker	11/13

NORTH PENINSULA

Previews held at St. Andrews Church, S. El Camino Real at 15th Ave., San Mateo, at 7:30 p.m. Single tickets are \$6. For further information, please call (408) 735-3757 or (415) 343-7251.

Die Meistersinger

William Huck	10/16
Eugene Onegin	10/10
James Keolker	11/6
Macbeth	
James Keolker	11/20

SOUTH PENINSULA

Previews held at the Palo Alto Senior Center, 450 Bryant, at 8 p.m. Single tickets are \$5 (students \$3). For further information, please call (415) 941-3890.

Eugene Onegin	
James Keolker	11/4
Manon	
Michael Mitchell	11/11
Macbeth	
James Keolker	11/18

SAN JOSE OPERA GUILD

Previews held at the Villa Montalvo Center for the Arts, 15400 Montalvo Rd., in Saratoga, at 10 a.m. Series is open to the public at a cost of \$4 per lecture; \$2 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.

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Die Meistersinger	
William Huck	10/10
Eugene Onegin	
James Keolker	10/31
Manon	
Michael Mitchell	11/7
Macbeth	
James Keolker	11/14

SONOMA COUNTY CHAPTER

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

Die Meistersinger	10/8,
William Huck	5:30 p.m. reception;
	7 p.m. preview
1000 I	Buckeye Rd Kenwood

10/29,
5:30 p.m. reception;
7 p.m. preview
Wild Oak Saddle Club
White Oak, Santa Rosa

Manon 11/6, 10:30 a.m. preview; Michael Mitchell 12:30 p.m. luncheon Depot Hotel

241 First Street West, Santa Rosa Macbeth 11/13, 10:30 a.m. preview; James Keolker 12:30 p.m. luncheon St. Francis Vineyards

8450 Sonoma Hwy, Kenwood

JUNIOR LEAGUE OPERA PREVIEWS

All Junior League opera previews held in Herbst Theatre in the Veterans Building, 401 Van Ness Ave., San Francisco. Lectures begin at noon and there is no admission charge. For further information, please call (415) 342-2463.

Die Meistersinger	
William Huck	10/8
Eugene Onegin	
James Keolker	10/29
Manon	
Michael Mitchell	11/5
Macbeth	
James Keolker	11/12
	Name and the second

NAPA OPERA LECTURE SERIES

"Adventures in Opera", now in its 14th year, is a course which accompanies the Saturday and Sunday series at the San Francisco Opera. The lectures will be held at 7:30 p.m. in the Napa First Methodist Church, Centennial Hall, 4th and Randolph, in Napa. Ernest Fly will again teach the course. Individual lectures are \$3. For further information, please call (707) 224-6162.

0104.	
Faust	10/16
Eugene Onegin	10/23
La Bohème	10/30
Manon	11/6
Macbeth	11/13

OPERA EDUCATION INTERNATIONAL PREVIEW SERIES

Previews of the operas of the 1986 Fall Season will be given by Michael Barclay, director of Opera Education International. Lectures are given in the auditorium of the Dr. William Cobb School, 2725 California St., between Scott and Divisadero, at 7:30 p.m. Admission at the door is \$6. For further information, please call (415) 526-5244.

SAN FRANCISCO COMMUNITY

11/13

Macheth

COLLEGE LECTURE SERIES
Under the sponsorship of the S.F. Community College District, Robert Finch will give eight free lectures. They will be held at 10 a.m. in the Downtown Community College Center, 800 Mission (at Fourth), Room 325. For further information, please call (415) 431-3437.

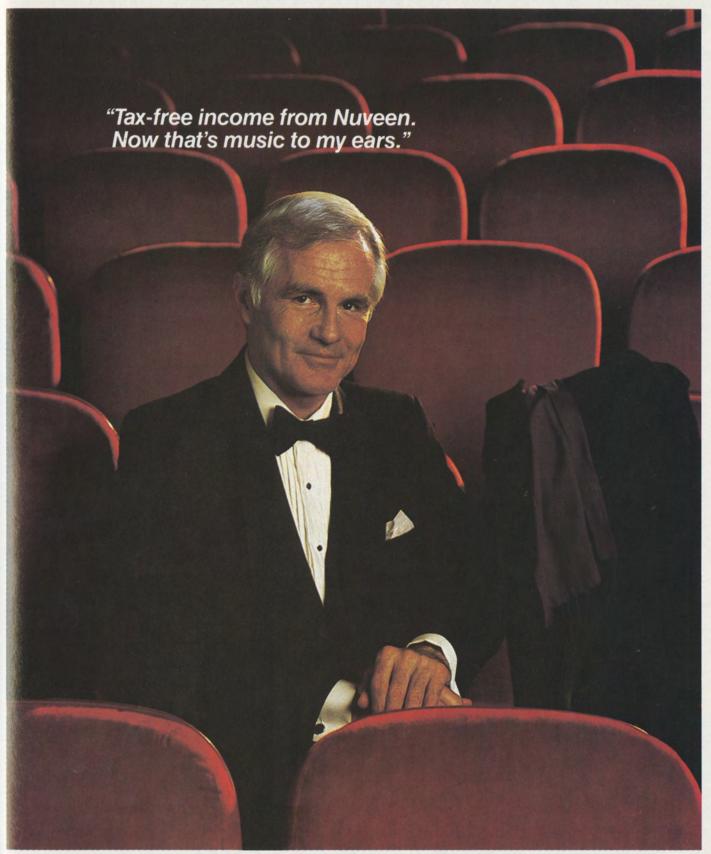
Eugene Onegin	10/10
Manon	10/17
Macbeth	10/24

MERRITT COLLEGE OPERA LECTURE SERIES

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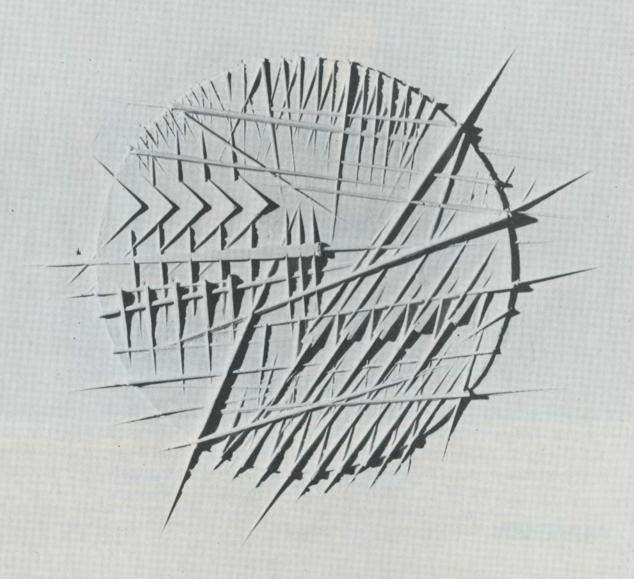
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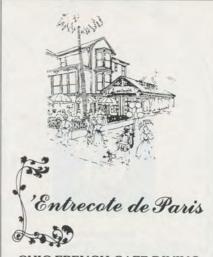
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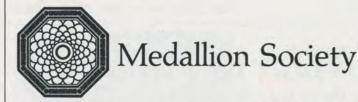
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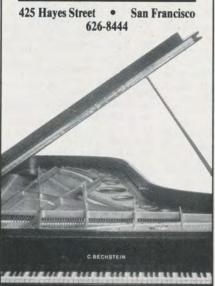
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Emergency Telephone The telephone number 431-4370 may be used by patrons for emergencies only during performances. Before the performance, patrons anticipating possible emergencies should leave their seat number at the Nurse's station in the lower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

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

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

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

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

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

Children of any age attending a performance must have a ticket.

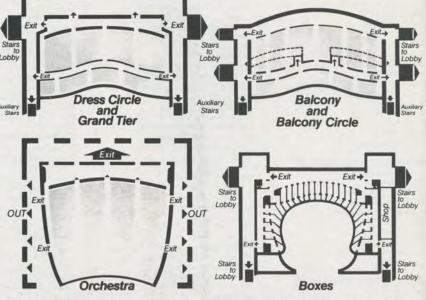
Management reserves the right to remove any patron creating a disturbance.

For lost and found information, inquire at check room No. 3 or call (415) 621-6600, 9 A.M. to 4 P.M. For the safety and comfort of our audience all large parcels, backpacks, luggage, etc., must be checked at the Opera House cloakrooms.

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

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

San Francisco War Memorial and Performing Arts Center War Memorial Opera House



Patrons, Attention Please! Fire Notice: There are sufficient exits in this building to accommodate the entire audience. The exit indicated by the lighted "EXIT" sign nearest your seat is the shortest route to the street. In case of fire please do not run—walk through that exit. (Refer to diagrams.)

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