# Nabucco (Nebuchadnezzar)

### 1987

Saturday, October 31, 1987 at 8:00 PM Tuesday, November 3, 1987 at 8:00 PM Saturday, November 7, 1987 at 8:00 PM Tuesday, November 10, 1987 at 8:00 PM Friday, November 13, 1987 at 8:00 PM Thursday, November 19, 1987 at 7:30 PM Sunday, November 22, 1987 at 2:00 PM

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# San Francisco Opera

Nabucco

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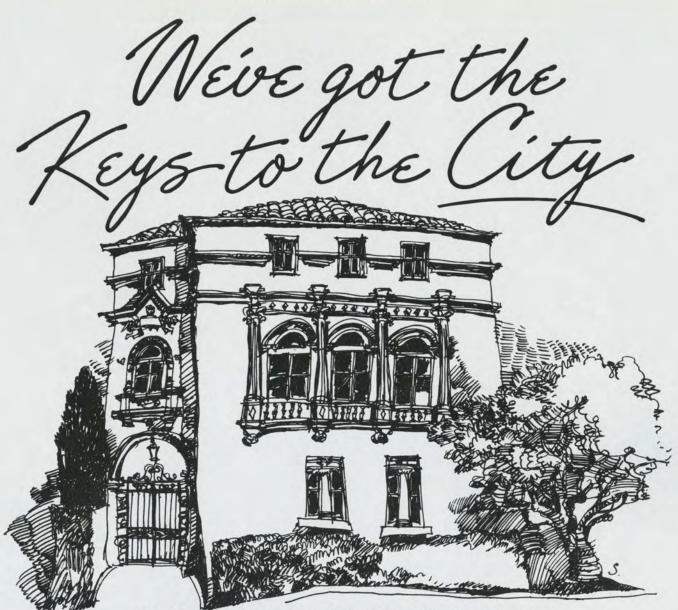
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# San Francisco Opera

Terence A. McEwen, General Director

Sir John Pritchard, Music Director

# Nabucco

#### **FEATURES**

- **26** Appreciating *Nabucco* by Richard Dyer Concise introduction to Verdi's first large-scale success and the work that produced Italy's unofficial national anthem: "Va, pensiero ..."
- **52** Thomas Munn, Illuminator by Timothy Pfaff San Francisco Opera's lighting director and design consultant talks about his work.
- 60 Back Talk by Molly Roth A glimpse at some of the reactions to a recent subscriber and donor survey.



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### 1987 SEASON

### DEPARTMENTS

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### COVER:

John Martin, 1789-1854 *The Destruction of Tyre*, 1840 Oil on canvas, 33 x 43<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in.

The Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo, Ohio Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey

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(The subject of the painting comes from the Old Testament: the destruction of Old Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar. John Martin, while depicting the event, wished to express the futility of humans when confronted by the forces of God and Nature.)



Tully M. Friedman and Reid W. Dennis

# From the Chairman of the Board and the President

We are pleased to welcome you to the 65th annual season of the San Francisco Opera and this year's selection of 10 masterworks from the international operatic repertoire. This fall, the curtain will rise on six productions totally new to our audiences, which will provide us with opportunities to experience familiar works through a new perspective.

The generosity of many donors has brought the 1987 operas to our stage, and members of the San Francisco Opera Board of Directors have contributed in a major way: *The Magic Flute* will be presented thanks to a gift from Bernard and Barbro Osher; *Fidelio*, through a muchappreciated grant from the L.J. Skaggs and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation as well as Mr. and Mrs. Reid W. Dennis; *La Traviata*, thanks to a generous gift from Louise M. Davies.

Several of the year's revivals are likewise brought to us by an illustrious group of sponsors: *Salome*, through a generous gift from Mrs. George Quist; *Nabucco* was made possible in part by a grant from the Koret Foundation; *The Queen of Spades* is being presented, in part, through a sponsorship from the people at Chevron. Our opening night opera, *The Barber of Seville*, is given in honor of Mary Rosenblatt Powell.

Special recognition is also due the Pacific Telesis Foundation for underwriting our Royal Family of Opera series, as well as Mr. and Mrs. William Rollnick for contributing the cost of Supertitles for six of our productions.

We are deeply grateful to all our donors, since their generosity furthers and enriches everyone's operatic experience.

It is always a special pleasure to recognize our governmental funding sources, and this year we again salute the National Endowment for the Arts and the California Arts Council for their unwavering support. We would also like to extend our long-standing appreciation to the Hotel Tax Fund, Mayor Dianne Feinstein and Chief Administrative Officer Rudy Nothenberg, whose support and encouragement have once again been demonstrated to an important extent.

As in previous years, we extend our deepest gratitude to the San Francisco Opera Guild, the Merola Opera Program, and the War Memorial Board of Trustees for their ongoing support.

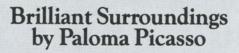
The Board of Directors of the San Francisco Opera Association is happy to announce the addition of nine new members to its roster: Mr. J. Dennis Bonney, Mr. David M. Chamberlain, Mr. James F. Crafts, Jr., Mrs. Mark Hornberger, Miss Sylvia R. Lindsey, Mr. John C. McGuire, Mr. Alfred S. Wilsey, Mrs. Alfred S. Wilsey, and Mr. Osamu Yamada. Our ranks have also been honored by the designation of two new Directors Emeriti: Mr. Cyril Magnin and Mrs. Nion R. Tucker.

This year's increased subscriber response is indeed a reason for rejoicing. However, as we always hasten to point out, ticket sales cover only slightly over half of our expenses. We appreciate the support all of you have given us in the past, and we encourage you to continue supporting us and increase your contributions whenever possible, thus enabling us to continue in bringing you this fascinating, enlightening, uplifting—but highly costly—art form that is opera.

> Reid W. Dennis, Chairman Tully M. Friedman, President

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# General Director's Message

At the beginning of the 65th annual season of the San Francisco Opera, I am pleased to note that so many of you have responded in such a positive way to our season announcement: by subscribing. In fact, the audience response has been far stronger than in many previous years. In welcoming new and renewing subscribers, I find it gratifying to know that our patrons have found the 1987 selection of operas, as well as the roster of artists, to their liking.

This year's repertoire includes six productions which will be seen for the first time on our stage. Of these, three are brand new additions to our production inventory: *The Magic Flute, Fidelio,* and *La Traviata*. These new productions represent further accomplishments in the quest I embarked on in 1982, that of rebuilding our operas from the standard repertoire. Three more operas will be seen in productions that are new to us: *Tosca*, from the Lyric Opera of Chicago; *The Tales of Hoffmann*, from the Greater Miami

Opera; and Romeo and Juliet, from the Metropolitan Opera. A group of some of today's most outstanding designers have created these productions, among them David Hockney, who will add his own special magic to that of Mozart's Magic Flute; John Conklin (1985 Ring) with a beautiful new Traviata; and John Gunter, one of Britain's most brilliant designers, with a dramatic new Fidelio. Two major figures from the international world of opera will be introduced to our audiences: Michael Hampe, of Salzburg Festival and Cologne Opera fame, who directs Fidelio; and Rossini authority Alberto Zedda, who conducts his own acclaimed critical edition of The Barber of Seville. I would also like to note in passing that two operas are returning to our fall schedule after a prolonged absence: Romeo and Juliet after 36 years, and The Tales of Hoffmann after 38.

During our 65th season, we will continue to present to our audiences new artists in exciting debuts, and will also bring back some of the most beloved personalities from seasons past. Our own young singers from the San Francisco Opera Center will again be significantly represented, several of them in key roles.

Our Company championed Supertitles ever since they were first conceived, so we are extremely pleased to note that they won such an overwhelming vote of confidence from our patrons, and are glad to be able to bring them back in all ten operas of the season.

Our "live" opera performances on the Opera House stage will be complemented this year by the Company's return to the airwaves, with a selection of 10 exciting broadcasts from recent years.

Welcome to our 1987 season!

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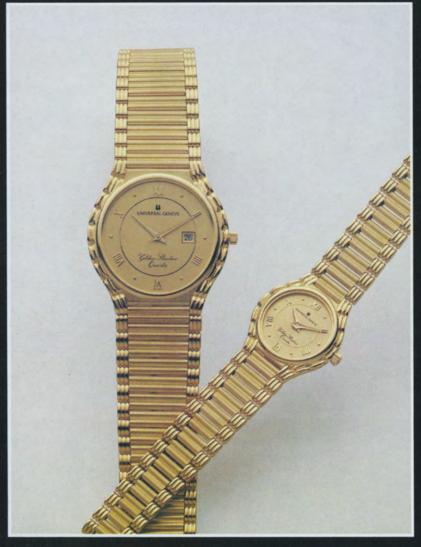
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The San Francisco Opera is a member of OPERA America and the Central Opera Service. Kawai is the official piano of the San Francisco Opera.

Pianos provided and serviced by R. Kassman.

The San Francisco Opera is supported by much-appreciated grants from the San Francisco Hotel Tax Fund, the California Arts Council and the National Endowment for the Arts.

(Staff listing continues on page 67)

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# San Francisco Opera

Terence A. McEwen, General Director

#### **Opening** Night

Friday, September 11, **7:00 The Barber of Seville** Rossini Mentzer\*, Neves; Power\*\*, Capecchi, Ghiaurov, Nucci, Anderson, Gudas, Delavan Zedda\*/de Tomasi/Siercke/Arhelger

This revival of The Barber of Seville is given in honor of Mary Rosenblatt Powell.

Saturday, September 12, 8:00 Salome Strauss Jones, Dernesch, Manhart\*; King, Devlin, Bender\*, Skinner, Potter, Pittsinger\*, Volpe\*, Pederson, Dennis Petersen, Harper, Anderson, De Haan, Coles Pritchard/Lehnhoff/Munn/Hoheisel/ Munn

The 1987 revival of Salome is sponsored by a generous gift from Mrs. George Quist.

Tuesday, September 15, 8:00 Salome Strauss

Wednesday, September 16, **7:30 The Barber of Seville** Rossini

Friday, September 18, 8:00 Salome Strauss

Saturday, September 19, 8:00 New Production

**The Magic Flute** Mozart Csavlek\*\*, Serra, Parrish, Voigt, Cowdrick, Christin; Araiza, Malis, Langan, Kelley, King (September 19, 22, 25), Harper (September 30; October 6, 8, 11), Pittsinger, Stewart, Wunsch\*

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San Francisco Opera gratefully acknowledges the generous gift from Bernard and Barbro Osher to underwrite this new production.

Sunday, September 20, 2:00 The Barber of Seville Rossini

Tuesday, September 22, 8:00 **The Magic Flute** Mozart

Wednesday, September 23, 7:30 Salome Strauss

Thursday, September 24, 8:00 The Barber of Seville Rossini

Friday, September 25, 8:00 The Magic Flute Mozart

Saturday, September 26, 8:00 The Barber of Seville Rossini

# 1987 Season

Sunday, September 27, 2:00 Salome Strauss

Tuesday, September 29, 8:00 The Barber of Seville Rossini

Wednesday, September 30, **7:30 The Magic Flute** Mozart

Friday, October 2, 8:00
The Barber of Seville Rossini

Saturday, October 3, 8:00 Salome Strauss

Sunday, October 4, 2:00 **Tosca** Puccini Stapp; Mauro, Fondary\*\* (October 4, 7, 10, 16, 22), Pons (October 25), Garrett, Pederson, Dennis Petersen, Delavan, Volpe Bradshaw/Farruggio/Pizzi/Schlumpf/ Arhelger This production is owned by the Lyric Opera of Chicago.

Tuesday, October 6, 8:00 The Magic Flute Mozart

Wednesday, October 7, 8:00 **Tosca** Puccini

Thursday, October 8, 8:00 The Magic Flute Mozart

Saturday, October 10, 8:00 Tosca Puccini

Sunday, October 11, 2:00 The Magic Flute Mozart

Tuesday, October 13, 8:00 New Production Fidelio Beethoven Connell\*, Parrish; McCracken, Bender, Nentwig, Plishka, Stewart, Davis\*, Pederson Pritchard/Hampe\*/Gunter\*/Arhelger

San Francisco Opera gratefully acknowledges the generous grants from the L.J. Skaggs and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation and Mr. and Mrs. Reid W. Dennis to underwrite this new production.

Friday, October 16, 8:00 Tosca Puccini

Saturday, October 17, 8:00 New Production La Traviata Verdi Miricioiu, Begg\*, Donna Petersen; Araiza, Pons, Skinner, Garrett, Pittsinger, Davis Sir John Pritchard, Music Director

Meltzer/Copley/Conklin/Walker\*/ Munn/Clara\*

This new production of La Traviata is a gift from Louise M. Davies.

Sunday, October 18, 2:00 Fidelio Beethoven

Tuesday, October 20, 8:00 La Traviata Verdi

Wednesday, October 21, 8:00 Fidelio Beethoven

Thursday, October 22, **7:30** Tosca Puccini

Friday, October 23, 8:00 La Traviata Verdi

Saturday, October 24, 8:00 Fidelio Beethoven

Sunday, October 25, 2:00 Tosca Puccini

Tuesday, October 27, 8:00 Fidelio Beethoven

Wednesday, October 28, **7:30** La Traviata Verdi

Friday, October 30, 8:00 Fidelio Beethoven

Saturday, October 31, 8:00 Nabucco Verdi Zampieri\*\*, Richards, Voigt; Cappuccilli, Plishka, Winter, Volpe, Harper Arena/Freedman/Munn/Montresor/ Munn

The 1987 presentation of Nabucco is sponsored, in part, by a grant from the Koret Foundation.

Sunday, November 1, 2:00 La Traviata Verdi

Tuesday, November 3, 8:00 Nabucco Verdi

Wednesday, November 4, 8:00 La Tràviata Verdi

Thursday, November 5, 7:30 Fidelio Beethoven

Saturday, November 7, 1:00 La Traviata Verdi

Saturday, November 7, 8:00 Nabucco Verdi

Tuesday, November 10, 8:00 Nabucco Verdi

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This production is owned by Greater Miami Opera Association.

Friday, November 13, 8:00 Nabucco Verdi Bumbry, Richards, Voigt; Cappuccilli, Plishka, Winter, Volpe, Harper Arena/Freedman/Munn/Montresor/ Munn

Saturday, November 14, 8:00 **Roméo et Juliette** Gounod Swenson, Renée\*, Donna Petersen; Kraus, Dickson, Howell, Rouleau, Dennis Petersen, Munday, Anderson, Ledbetter\*, Volpe Plasson/Uzan/Deiber/Gérard\*/Munn

This production is owned by the Metropolitan Opera.

Sunday, November 15, 2:00 The Tales of Hoffmann Offenbach

Tuesday, November 17, 8:00 Roméo et Juliette Gounod

Wednesday, November 18, 8:00 The Tales of Hoffmann Offenbach

Thursday, November 19, **7:30** Nabucco Verdi

Friday, November 20, 8:00 Roméo et Juliette Gounod

Saturday, November 21, 8:00 The Tales of Hoffmann Offenbach

Sunday, November 22, 2:00 Nabucco Verdi

Monday, November 23, 8:00 **The Queen of Spades** Tchaikovsky Crespin, Evstatieva, Cowdrick, Donna Petersen, Patterson, Ganz; Ochman, Noble, Raftery, Dennis Petersen, Skinner, De Haan, Pederson, Wunsch, Delavan

Tchakarov\*/Coleman/O'Hearn/Munn-Arhelger/Sulich

The 1987 presentation of The Queen of Spades is sponsored, in part, by a grant from the people at Chevron.

Tuesday, November 24, 8:00 **Roméo et Juliette** Gounod Swenson, Renée, Donna Petersen; Shicoff, Dickson, Howell, Rouleau, Dennis Petersen, Munday, Anderson, Ledbetter, Volpe Plasson/Uzan/Deiber/Gérard/Munn

Wednesday, November 25, **7:30** The Tales of Hoffmann Offenbach

Friday, November 27, 8:00 The Queen of Spades Tchaikovsky

Saturday, November 28, 8:00 The Tales of Hoffmann Offenbach

Sunday, November 29, 2:00 Roméo et Juliette Gounod

Tuesday, December 1, 8:00 The Queen of Spades Tchaikovsky

Wednesday, December 2, 7:30 Roméo et Juliette Gounod

Friday, December 4, 8:00 Roméo et Juliette Gounod

Saturday, December 5, 8**The5Queen of** Spades Tchaikovsky

Tuesday, December 8, 8:00 The Tales of Hoffmann Offenbach

Wednesday, December 9, **7:30** The Queen of Spades Tchaikovsky

Thursday, December 10, 8:00 Family Performance La Traviata Verdi Renée, Cowdrick, Ganz; Wunsch, Potter, Ledbetter, Munday\*, Pittsinger, Davis Fiore/Copley/Conklin/Walker/Munn/ Clara Friday, December 11, 8:00 The Tales of Hoffmann Offenbach

Saturday, December 12, 2:00 Family Performance La Traviata Verdi

Sunday, December 13, 2:00 The Queen of Spades Tchaikovsky

\*\*American opera debut \*San Francisco Opera debut

All performances are in the original language with English Supertitles. Supertitles for *The Barber of Seville*, *The Magic Flute*, *La Traviata*, *Fidelio*, *The Tales of Hoffmann* and *Roméo et Juliette* provided by a generous and most appreciated gift from William and Eloise Rollnick.

Repertoire, casts and dates subject to change.

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Tuesday, October 20, 1:00 Wednesday, October 28, 1:00

## Jess Thomas: A Singer and His Roles

The Archives for the Performing Arts invites you to view its exhibition documenting the distinguished career of Bay Area tenor Jess Thomas—currently on display in the War Memorial Opera House Museum. Among the first winners of the San Francisco Opera Debut Auditions, Jess Thomas soon became one of the world's top-ranking singers—hailed as the outstanding Wagnerian tenor of his day. This exhibition, presented in celebration of Mr. Thomas's sixtieth birthday, traces the singer's career, from his early training here in the Bay Area, to his triumphs in the great opera houses and festivals around the world.

The War Memorial Opera House Museum is located on the south mezzanine (box) level, adjacent to the Opera Boutique.

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- Oct. 3 MANON LESCAUT (1983) Freni: Mauro, Sardinero, Capecchi, MacNeil; Arena
- Oct. 10 JENUFA (1986) Beňačková, Rysanek; Ochman, Rosenshein; Mackerras
- Oct. 17 DON CARLOS (1986) Lorengar, Toczyska; Shicoff, Titus, Llovd, Rouleau; Pritchard
- Oct. 24 LE NOZZE DI FIGARO (1986) Te Kanawa, Rolandi, Quittmeyer; Ramey, Devlin; Tate
- Oct. 31 EUGENE ONEGIN (1986) Freni, Walker; Allen, Gulyás, Ghiaurov; Bradshaw
- MACBETH (1986) Nov. 7 Verrett; Noble, Tomlinson, Popov; Kord
- Nov. 14 LA GIOCONDA (1983) Slatinaru, Paunova, Nadler: Bonisolli, Manuguerra, Kavrakos; Meltzer
- Nov. 21 FALSTAFF (1985) Lorengar, Quittmeyer, Horne, Swenson; Wixell, Titus, MacNeil; Arena

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# Appreciating Nabucco

#### By RICHARD DYER

Giuseppe Verdi, the voice of a nation, was a private man, and in his will he left directions for a simple funeral, without music.

Yet when his body was placed in its first, temporary grave in the city cemetery of Milan, thousands of people stood at a respectful distance. And at a certain moment, it is said, a spontaneous tribute

Richard Dyer is music critic of The Boston Globe and Briggs-Copeland associate professor of English at Harvard. swept through the crowd, as first a few voices, then a thousand, took up the sweeping, heartfelt melody of "Va, pensiero," a chorus that Verdi had composed 58 years earlier for the opera that confirmed him in his great career: *Nabucco*.

The chorus, based on Psalm 137, "By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept," had become a kind of unofficial anthem of a land that was not yet a nation; it voices a national aspiration that is also universal—the melody seemed to have been there always, just waiting for someone to set it down. Rossini called it not a chorus, but "a grand aria sung by sopranos, altos, tenors and basses."

A month later, on February 28, 1901, the bodies of Verdi and his wife, Giuseppina Strepponi, were conveyed to their final resting place in the crypt of the Casa Verdi, the retirement home the composer had founded for elderly and indigent musicians, and there again "Va, pensiero" was sung, and Toscanini conducted.

In fact, Temistocle Solera's verses for "Va, pensiero" may well have been the text that made the 27-year-old Verdi want to compose again after the deaths of his two children and his first wife had banished all the music from his life.

The story is one of the most famous in his biography, in part because it's one of the few anecdotes of his early life Verdi himself chose to repeat. The most familiar version comes from what the composer gave to his publisher Giulio Ricordi in



1879. After all his family tragedies and the failure of his opera *Un Giorno di Regno*, which was taken off after only one disastrous performance, Verdi had resolved to give up music forever; he had catalogued and packed up his furniture and sent it from Milan back to Busseto, the market town three miles away from his birthplace, where he had begun his studies in music.

Bartolomeo Merelli, the impresario at La Scala, was not inclined to release Verdi from a contract that called for him to compose two more operas. One day, in the snow, the two men met on the street. Merelli was in a pickle. Otto Nicolai, then at the apex of his Italian popularity, had rejected a libretto that had been prepared for him on the subject of the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar. Nicolai called it full of "interminable raging, blood-shedding, striking and murdering." Merelli knew that Verdi had no intention of composing to a libretto that had been commissioned for him, *Il Proscritto*. Verdi saw no difficulty in handing *Il Proscritto* over to Nicolai, and Merelli in turn pressed the thick roll of Solera's *Nabucco* libretto on Verdi crying "Stupendous..., magnificent!...extraordinary!...effective, grandiose, dramatic situations, fine verses!..."

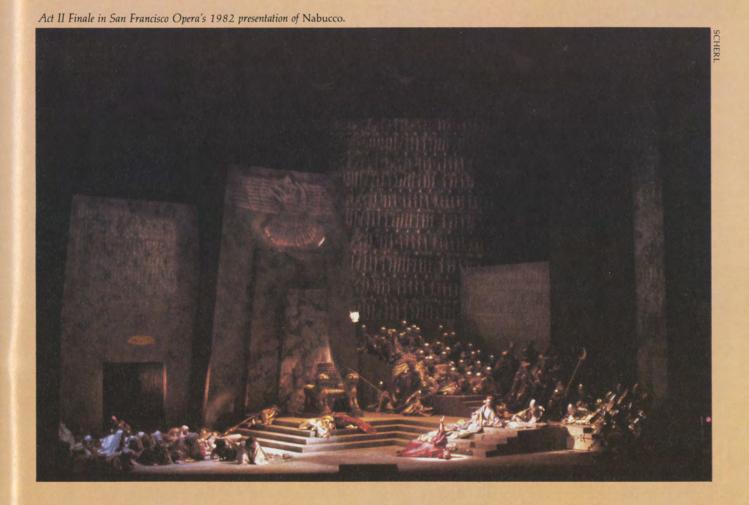
"Once I got home," Verdi's account continues, "I threw the manuscript on the table almost violently...The roll of paper opened out; and without my knowing quite how, I found myself staring at the page in front of me and my eyes fell on this line:

#### Va, pensiero, sull'ali dorate.

I ran over the lines that followed and I was profoundly struck by them, especially as they were almost a paraphrase from the Bible which I have always enjoyed reading.

"I read one passage, then two more; then, still firm in my resolve to compose no more, I forced myself to close the copy and went to bed. But...*Nabucco* kept running through my head...I could not sleep. I got up and read the libretto not once but two, three times, so that by morning you could say that I knew all of Solera's libretto by heart."

The next day Verdi, still reluctant to



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Giorgio Ronconi, 1810-1890, first interpreter of the title role in Nabucco (1842).

compose, returned the libretto to Merelli, who wasn't putting up with any such nonsense. He thrust the verses into Verdi's pocket, shoved him out of the office, and locked the door in his face. "I went home with *Nabucco* in my pocket; one day one line, another the next, a note here, a phrase there...little by little the opera was written."

This story made its way, unquestioned, into all the biographies of Verdi, though in 1973 Julian Budden, in the first of his three magisterial volumes on Verdi's operas, drew attention to another version, in which it was Abigaille's repentance and death, and not "Va, pensiero," that caught the composer's eye. This account adds the piquant detail that Verdi consoled himself in the long months of grief by reading trashy novels in his furnished room.

In either case, the point is the same: Verdi was struck by this story and these verses, and composed *Nabucco* out of an inner compulsion that anyone can hear in the white heat of the music. Few operas on serious subjects can be more precipitate in their motion, allegro in their tempos, martial in their rhythms, insistent in their dynamics, brazen in their color.

Nabucco called for things that Verdi didn't have to learn because he already knew how to do them. During his youth in Busseto, he composed "hundreds" of marches, and tradition has it that one of them made its way into the opera. During the first performance, the audience burst into applause when the brass band came marching onstage (even though it represented the forces of oppression!); there was a labored joke-in-verse about the brassiness of the opera that made the rounds at the time of the work's Paris premiere.

Even when it was new, *Nabucco* seemed bold and original, and novelty was an essential element of its appeal. In one nine-year span, nearly 500 operas reached the stage in Italy (Verdi composed 14 of them); only a few lasted. This was not simply a matter of quality: people were interested in the latest thing.

Nevertheless, a part of the pleasure for *Nabucco*'s first audience would also have been in encountering what was familiar about it; at the time, it was common practice to recompose even successful operatic stories, the way Hollywood periodically remakes successful movies. The public simply wanted to experience again what had proved successful in previous operas.

Verdi was still schooling himself in *Nabucco*, and he turned to the best models—melodic and ornamental figures from

Giuseppina Strepponi, 1815-1897, the first Abigaille in Nabucco and Verdi's future wife, in an engraving made around the time of the opera's premiere.





At San Francisco Opera's first presentation of Nabucco, in 1961, the principals included (l. to r.) Giuseppe Zampieri as Ismaele, Lucille Udovick as Abigaille, Cornell MacNeil as Nabucco, Margarethe Bence as Fenena, Giorgio Tozzi as Zaccaria, and Janis Martin as Anna.

Norma turn up in Abigaille's music, and the shape of Bellini's trio is the shape of Verdi's; other episodes suggest forms and formulae from Il Pirata, Maria Stuarda, Guillaume Tell, Lucia di Lammermoor, and no doubt a whole host of other operas unknown today. The overall model is obviously Rossini's Moïse, the French version of his Mose in Egitto, which shares important elements of plot and musical structure with Nabucco. Connoisseurs in the La Scala audience of Verdi's day would certainly have recognized these influences and delighted in the composer's fresh and personal adaptation of stock elements in the same way we applaud the "new" twists in a James Bond film.

Everyone would also have known the large outline of the story from its telling in the books of Kings, Chronicles, and Jeremiah in the Bible. The invented characters and dramatic details came from a successful French stage play that was Solera's source (*Nabuchodonosor* by Anicet-Bourgeois and Francis Cornu). That play may not have had much circulation in Italy, but it had served as the scenario for a successful ballet at La Scala in 1838. (In fact, *Nabucco* was first performed in the ballet's decor.) And of course the details were of a familiar operatic kind—madness, mistaken identity, jealousy, and love reaching across national and political barriers.

The public was expecting to hear some of its favorite stars—the baritone Giorgio Ronconi and the soprano Giuseppina Strepponi—exhibiting familiar skills and put through new challenges. And of course they expected spectacle; *Nabucco* is full of it. Nabucco makes his entrance on horseback, defiling the Temple; there is a whole unseemly scene of crownsnatching, climaxed by the thunderclap and the supernatural force that removes it

S.F. Opera's first Nabucco season featured two prominent baritones in the title role: Cornell MacNeil and (right) Ettore Bastianini, captured backstage before a 1961 Los Angeles performance.





Giorgio Tozzi sang Zaccaria in three San Francisco Opera stagings of Nabucco: 1961, 1964 and 1970. This photo dates from 1961.

from Nabucco's head; in the last act the idol in the Hanging Gardens of Babylon shatters and falls to the ground. This is the kind of thing Cecil B. DeMille reveled in.

Most productions of *Nabucco* are school-of-DeMille, and therefore settle for too little, for there's far more substance to the opera than that. Verdi was obviously drawn to the passions and the pathos of the characters and the variety of strong, simple, and extreme dramatic situations they find themselves in and create—the very elements that repelled Nicolai. *Nabucco* is crowded with striking incident—in what other opera does a character cry, "I am King no more...I am God!"?

The excessiveness of the situations may have been what generated Verdi's grand and strenuous style of vocal writing. The brassy orchestration meets its match in the demands for vocal feats that earned Verdi the nickname "the Attila of the larynx." The bass who sings the High Priest Zaccaria must command a ringing high F as well as rolling tones two octaves below; his manner must always be grandioso, never pomposo. The "Verdi baritone" makes his first appearance in this opera and in the title role: confined to the upper extremes of his range, he must nevertheless command a wide variety of color and spin a pliant line-tirelessly. And neither Verdi nor anyone else ever composed a

role much more demanding than that of the villainess Abigaille. The score repeatedly asks her to deliver phrases *tutta forza* or *con ferocia*. Looking at all those jagged lines, violent accents, tremendous leaps and swirls through two octaves, it's hard to imagine how she could do it any other way.

In the third part, the Verdi baritone and this unusual Verdi soprano meet in the first of the great confrontation duets that are such a prominent feature of the composer's later operas. This is not a great psychological confrontation, exactly, but it is powerfully theatrical. Nabucco must consent to the execution of his beloved daughter Fenena, and Abigaille gets to tear up the fatal scritto containing the shameful secret of her birth, throwing the pieces of parchment in Nabucco's humiliated face. The two vocal manners remain in strong contrast throughout, though Abigaille forces the hapless Nabucco to accept her key.

Yet in her aria "Anch'io dischiuso un giorno," the virago villainess must execute intricate *bel canto* figurations *con grazia*; at the end she must display her sweetest, most translucent tone and most eloquent legato. Casting the soprano role is today the largest obstacle to mounting a production of *Nabucco*, a situation not made easier by the existence of a recording of one of Maria Callas's three performances of this role in the full, insolent glory of her youthful prime, a performance that has indelibly made this a "soprano's opera" in the minds of many people.

But this was not the case on the first night. Giuseppina Strepponi was to become the most important woman in Verdi's life, but they were not yet close at the time of *Nabucco*. At the first performance she did not sing successfully; her later appearances in the role probably hastened her early departure from the stage. So, instead, it was "Va, pensiero" that swept the public away: the greatest role in *Nabucco* was composed for the chorus.

While his later letters to librettists show what an active hand he took in focusing imagery and shaping drama, in this opera he was working with a completed text; he imposed only one principal change. He insisted on deleting a duet for Ismaele and Fenena that would have "developed" those characters and created a more intense (and conventional) "love

Tito Gobbi as Nabucco at the San Francisco Opera in 1964.





PETERS



JONES

Gladys Kuchta was Abigaille to Tito Gobbi's Nabucco when San Francisco Opera performed Nabucco at the Greek Theater of the University of California, Berkeley (1964).

interest." Taking his cue from Merelli, he locked Solera into a room with a copy of the Bible until the librettist emerged with a text for Zaccaria's prophecy and its striding choral reinforcement.

Throughout the opera we can hear Verdi experimenting and searching for "effects," not always successfully. He comes close to breaking the curve of "Va, pensiero" by putting it into another rhythm in the overture, for example. But we can also hear him find his effects. The prelude to the fourth part (Solera's libretto divides the action into four parts, not acts, and precedes each with an apt paraphrase from Jeremiah) powerfully depicts Nabucco's madness by fragmenting reminiscences of earlier music (Act III, Scene 3). Zaccaria's prayer is supported by six solo cellos in an eloquent and even "antique" way. The solo flute almost becomes a character in the opera, and at the end it represents Abigaille's repentant soul in heavenward flight.

Verdi was not a particularly religious man, and there's not much to choose between the values of the opposing sides in Nabucco. But in every political dimension of the story, Verdi found a human Cornell MacNeil in the title role of San Francisco Opera's 1970 presentation of Nabucco.

one, and the expression of human losses, hopes, and ideals summoned his most powerful music, as it would so often do in the future. "With this opera it is fair to say my artistic career began," Verdi said in 1879, when he thought it was over (but Otello and Falstaff were yet to come). "And despite the difficulties I had to contend with, Nabucco was born under a lucky star." Now, with grateful hindsight, we can see how much of the luck Verdi himself created, and how this opera gave him his first great chance to reveal who he was.

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# ARTIST PROFILES

# NABUCCO



MARA ZAMPIERI

One of the leading Italian dramatic sopranos of our day, Mara Zampieri makes her U.S. opera stage debut during the 1987 season as Abigaille in Verdi's Nabucco. Born in Padova where she also attended the conservatory, she made her professional debut in Pavia. In 1977 she made her debut at La Scala, Milan as Amalia in Verdi's I Masnadieri. Other roles she has sung at La Scala include Leonora in Il Trovatore, Elisabetta in Don Carlo and Amelia in Un Ballo in Maschera, Her performance in Ballo with Luciano Pavarotti was telecast throughout Europe. Miss Zampieri made her debuts at both the Hamburg State Opera and the Bavarian State Opera in Don Carlos and in 1979 she made her Vienna State Opera debut in concert performances of Mercadante's Il Giuramento. She has since become a leading prima donna of that house and in 1980 starred as Odabella in a new production of Attila, and in 1982 sang her first Lady Macbeth in a new production of Macbeth. Both productions were conducted by Giuseppe Sinopoli, with whom she has also recorded Macbeth. Miss Zampieri also appeared under Sinopoli in a new production of Simon Boccanegra at the Deutsche Oper Berlin in 1984 and sang the same role in 1986 in Vienna under Claudio Abbado. 1984 was also the year of her debut at the Royal Opera, Covent Garden as Tosca, a role she has repeated at that house just recently along with her first performances of Minnie in La Fanciulla del West. Other recent performances include Lida in Verdi's La Battaglia di Legnano and the title role of Aida in Rome; Ballo, Tosca and Ernani in Bonn and Il Tabarro in Madrid. In Lisbon, she appeared in productions staged especially for her of the



GRACE BUMBRY

Donizetti trilogy comprising Anna Bolena, Maria Stuarda and Roberto Devereux. She appears regularly at the Vienna State Opera in such roles as Aida, Tosca, Manon Lescaut and Maddalena in Andrea Chénier. She made her debut at the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires in Donizetti's Belisario and made her American concert debut in Il Giuramento with the Opera Orchestra of New York. Future engagements include a new production of Macbeth in Los Angeles, Andrea Chénier at Covent Garden, Simon Boccanegra and La Fanciulla del West in Vienna, and Le Cid with Plácido Domingo in Madrid.

World-renowned soprano Grace Bumbry returns to San Francisco Opera as Abigaille in Nabucco, a role she has sung at the Paris Opera and with New York City Opera. Her first San Francisco Opera appearance was in the title role of Carmen in 1966, and she returned the following season as Laura in La Gioconda and Lady Macbeth in Verdi's Macbeth. Her most recent performance in the War Memorial Opera House was in a joint concert with Shirley Verrett. Miss Bumbry began her career as a mezzo-soprano, making her operatic debut as Amneris in Aida with the Paris Opera in 1960. Those performances prompted Wieland Wagner to invite her to sing Venus in Tannhäuser at Bayreuth, making her the first black artist to appear at the Wagner festival. Following her 1962 New York recital debut at Carnegie Hall, she went on the following year to bow at Covent Garden and the Vienna Staatsoper as Eboli in Don Carlo, the role of her 1964 Lyric Opera of Chicago debut as well as her 1965 debut at

the Metropolitan Opera. That same year she made her La Scala debut as Amneris in Aida. After 12 years as a celebrated mezzo-soprano, Miss Bumbry turned to the soprano repertoire in 1972, performing the title role of Tosca at the Met. Since then she has won acclaim as Norma, Gioconda, Cherubini's Medea, Aida, Abigaille, Elvira in *Ernani* and the Leonoras of *Il Trovatore* and *La Forza del Destino*. Recent additions to her repertoire include her first Bess in the Met premiere of Porgy and Bess and, earlier this year, the title role of Hérodiade in Nice. A native of St. Louis, Miss Bumbry became a protégée of Lotte Lehmann while studying at Northwestern University. A recent development in Miss Bumbry's career was her first foray into the pop repertoire at a gala New York benefit with Frank Sinatra, who subsequently invited her to appear in the Inaugural Gala for President Reagan that was televised nationally, as was the Ford's Theatre Gala in Washington at which she again performed for the President. She made headlines when she joined her colleague Shirley Verrett in two televised concerts from Carnegie Hall and London's Covent Garden. Her 1987-88 assignments include performances of Tosca at Covent Garden and at the Vienna State Opera, and return engagements in Barcelona in the title role of La Gioconda and in Hamburg as Eboli and Santuzza. At the Met, she will undertake the role of Giulietta in Les Contes d'Hoffmann for the first time. A noted recitalist and concert artist, Miss Bumbry has made numerous recordings for several leading labels.

Mezzo-soprano Leslie Richards returns to San Francisco Opera to sing the role of Fenena in Nabucco. As a member of the 1980 Merola Opera Program, she made her Company debut during the 1980 Fall Season in Die Frau ohne Schatten and Jenufa. In five seasons with SFO, she appeared in Lucia di Lammermoor, Il Trovatore, Die Walküre, The Dialogues of the Carmelites, L'Incoronazione di Poppea, La Cenerentola, Norma, Otello, and Rigoletto. Among her most memorable performances was the role of Dalila in the 1983 Samson et Dalila, at which time she stepped in on short notice for an ailing Marilyn Horne. As an Affiliate Artist and a 1982 Adler Fellow with the San Francisco Opera Center, she sang Leonora in Scarlatti's The Triumph of Honor for that year's Showcase series. She created the roles of Mme. Pernelle in the American Opera Project's world premiere



LESLIE RICHARDS

of Mechem's Tartuffe in 1980 and Marla in the world premiere of Mollicone's Emperor Norton with Brown Bag Opera the following year. Miss Richards, a Los Angeles native, made her professional debut with San Diego Opera in Verdi's I Lombardi in 1979. Other assignments have included the role of Maddalena in Rigoletto with Hawaii Opera Theater. In April 1984 she was featured with San Francisco Ballet in Songs of Mahler choreographed by Michael Smuin. She made her European debut in a recital at the Como Autumn Music Festival in Italy that same year. 1985 brought her first Amneris in Aida in her Fort Worth Opera debut. That fall she made her debut with Canadian Opera as Gertrude in Thomas's Hamlet opposite Joan Sutherland. She was reengaged there to sing Amneris in the spring of 1986. That year also brought her debuts with Anchorage Opera in Il Trovatore and at the Spoleto Festival USA as Desideria in Menotti's The Saint of Bleecker Street. In June of 1986 she made her Metropolitan Opera debut as Amneris in Aida and toured with the Peter Brook production of Carmen in France and Italy. Earlier this year, she made her New York City Opera debut as Santuzza in Cavalleria Rusticana.

Soprano **Deborah Voigt** sings the First Lady in *The Magic Flute* and Anna in *Nabucco.* She made her San Francisco Opera debut in the 1986 Fall Season in *Don Carlos* and also sang in *Jenůfa* and *Macbeth.* Miss Voigt was a participant in the 1985 Merola Opera Program and toured that year with Western Opera Theater as Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni.* An Adler Fellow in 1986 and 1987, she



DEBORAH VOIGT

appeared last year in the Opera Center Showcase production of Hindemith's The Long Christmas Dinner, singing the role of Leonora and in July of this year she sang Jenny in the Showcase production of Rorem's Three Sisters Who Are Not Sisters. A native of Southern California and an alumna of California State University at Fullerton, Miss Voigt is the winner of numerous vocal competitions, among them the First Prize Schwabacher Memorial Award at the SFO Center 1985 Grand Finals, the Metropolitan Opera Auditions and the National Association of Teachers of Singing competition. Most recently she was the recipient of a Richard Tucker Music Foundation Study Grant. A frequent concert soloist, Miss Voigt's performances include Bach's St. John Passion, the Glorias of Vivaldi and Poulenc, Handel's Messiah and the Requiems of Mozart, Brahms, and Verdi. She made her Bay Area concert debut with the Chamber Orchestra of San Francisco in the Shostakovich 14th Symphony, and recently sang in performances of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with the Honolulu and Vallejo Symphonies and the Los Angeles Philharmonic. Other recent appearances include the title role in Aida with the Stockton Symphony and Amelia in Un Ballo in Maschera with Riverside Opera. Miss Voigt will make both her Los Angeles and San Francisco recital debuts this fall at Occidental College and at the Schwabacher Debut Recital series, respectively.

Baritone **Piero Cappuccilli** returns to San Francisco Opera for the title role of Verdi's *Nabucco*. The native of Trieste made his long-awaited Company debut



PIERO CAPPUCCILLI

during the 1986 Summer Season as Alfio in Cavalleria Rusticana and Tonio in Pagliacci. Cappuccilli was also called upon that summer to fill in for an ailing colleague as the Count di Luna in Il Trovatore. He began his vocal studies at the Trieste Teatro Giuseppe Verdi, and in 1957 made his debut at the Teatro Nuovo in Milan as Tonio and was immediately engaged for performances of Tosca at the Teatro La Pergola in Florence. In 1959 he recorded Lucia di Lammermoor with Maria Callas and Ferruccio Tagliavini, made his debut at La Scala in 1964 in Lucia and Aida and has sung there regularly ever since. His American debut was in 1969 at the Lyric Opera of Chicago in Verdi's I Due Foscari, and he has since returned there for productions of Simon Boccanegra, La Favorita, La Traviata, Otello, Macbeth and Ernani. He made his Covent Garden debut in 1967 in Luchino Visconti's new production of La Traviata and returned there in 1974 to sing lago in Otello. In 1975 he took part in a highly successful production of Un Ballo in Maschera that was telecast by the BBC. In 1981 the baritone toured with the Royal Opera in Otello, a triumph which he repeated on the Covent Garden stage in 1983. Among his recent performances are Simon Boccanegra, La Traviata and Otello in Munich; William Tell, Macbeth, Otello and Il Trovatore in Hamburg; Macbeth in Salzburg and Vienna; Attila, Andrea Chénier and Rigoletto in Vienna; William Tell at New York's Carnegie Hall; 12 different Verdi operas, as well as La Wally, Andrea Chénier, Il Tabarro and La Boheme at La Scala; and Luisa Miller at the Paris Opera. Last season Cappuccilli appeared in Don Carlos at the Salzburg



### PAUL PLISHKA

Festival and at the Lyric Opera of Chicago in Un Ballo in Maschera. His many recordings include Don Giovanni, Le Nozze di Figaro, La Gioconda, Aida, La Forza del Destino, I Puritani, Un Ballo in Maschera, II Trovatore, Don Carlos, Simon Boccanegra, Nabucco, Rigoletto, Macbeth, I Masnadieri, I Due Foscari and Cavalleria Rusticana, among others.

American bass Paul Plishka sings Rocco in Fidelio and Zaccaria in Nabucco. A leading artist with the Metropolitan Opera, Plishka appeared as Padre Guardiano in La Forza del Destino here last season, the role of his 1976 Company debut, and he also sang the role of Méphistophélès in last season's Faust, stepping in for an ailing colleague. During the 1982 Summer Season, the Pennsylvania native returned here as Zaccaria in Nabucco and in 1984 sang Silva in Ernani. He began his operatic career by winning first place in the Baltimore Opera Auditions and soon after joined the National Company of the Metropolitan Opera, becoming a member of the parent company with his official debut in La Gioconda. Since that time he has performed over 40 leading roles with the Met and has appeared frequently with numerous North American opera companies, including those of Philadelphia, Houston, Pittsburgh, San Diego, New Orleans, Chicago, Toronto, Ottawa and Vancouver. In Europe he has been applauded at La Scala, Covent Garden, the Hamburg Staatsoper, the Paris Opera and Munich Staatsoper, as well as the companies of Berlin and Zurich and the festivals in Salzburg and Spoleto. His 1985-86 itinerary began with performan-





ces at the Lyric Opera of Chicago where he sang Otello and Handel's Samson and joined Joan Sutherland in Donizetti's Anna Bolena. He then appeared at the Metropolitan Opera in Don Carlo, Aida, Simon Boccanegra, and Roméo et Juliette and sang in Verdi's Requiem with the Rotterdam Philharmonic. He has also appeared with the orchestras of New York, Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Toronto and Cleveland. His engagements for this year have included a return to Chicago Lyric Opera for La Gioconda; and Boris Godunov and Turandot at the Met. Plishka's impressive discography includes recordings of Norma, Faust, Massenet's Le Cid, Turandot, Rossini's Stabat Mater, Verdi's Requiem and La Forza del Destino.

American tenor **Ouade Winter** returns to San Francisco Opera to sing Ismaele in Nabucco. After making his Company debut in the 1980 production of Tristan und Isolde, he also appeared in Die Meistersinger in 1981, and Nabucco in the summer of 1982. A participant in the Merola Opera Programs of 1979 and 1980, he portrayed Max in Der Freischütz under the baton of Kurt Herbert Adler at Stern Grove and sang in Britten's Albert Herring. A native of Oregon, he has appeared throughout California and the Pacific Northwest singing the Duke in Rigoletto for Eugene Opera, Canio in Pagliacci for the Anchorage Civic Opera, in the American premiere of Janáček's The Excursions of Mr. Brouček with the Berkeley Symphony, Don Ottavio in Don Giovanni with the Carmel Bach Festival and the tenor solos in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with the Stockton Symphony and Verdi's Requiem with the San Francisco Festival of Masses conducted by Robert Shaw. In 1982 he made his European debut singing Gherman in The Queen of Spades in Graz, Austria. In the same season he bowed at Milan's La Scala, in the title role of Cherubini's Anacreon and joined the Graz Opera on a tour through Yugoslavia in the title role of Wagner's Parsifal. Currently principal dramatic tenor with the Stadttheater Würzburg in West Germany, he has appeared there in the title role of Verdi's Don Carlos, as Lensky in Eugene Onegin, and Herod in Salome, a role he has also



QUADE WINTER

sung in Heidelberg and with the Seattle Opera. Recent projects include Rodolfo in *La Bohème* and Canio in *Pagliacci* at Würzburg. Upcoming engagements include the title role of *The Tales of Hoffmann* at Würzburg, and his Scottish Opera debut as Mark in Tippett's *The Midsummer Marriage*.

Tenor Daniel Harper sings the Second Jew in Salome, the First Armored Man in The Magic Flute, Abdallo in Nabucco and Spalanzani in The Tales of Hoffmann. 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 include Altoum in Turandot, Dr. Caius in family performances of Falstaff, Maintop in Billy Budd and the Innkeeper in Der Rosenkavalier. In the summer of 1986, he appeared in Lucia di Lammermoor and returned last fall for Le Nozze di Figaro, Die Meistersinger, La Bohème and Macbeth. 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 But*terfly*, a role he also performed on Western Opera Theater's 1983 nation-wide 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



DANIEL HARPER

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 Schoenberg's Moses und Aron with the Chicago Symphony under Sir Georg Solti. In May of this year he was the soloist in the Berlioz Requiem with the Marin Symphony and in May he portrayed Radames in Aida with the Stockton Symphony. Next year he will appear with the San Francisco Symphony as soloist in the Berlioz Requiem.

Bass Peter Volpe marks his first season with San Francisco Opera by appearing in four roles: the Second Soldier in Salome, the High Priest in Nabucco, the Duke of Verona in Roméo et Juliette, and the Jailer in Tosca. He received his operatic training under Nicola Rossi-Lemeni at Indiana University. A participant in the 1986 Merola Opera Program, he went on to perform three roles in Western Opera Theater's 1986-87 touring production of La Bohème throughout the United States and in China: Colline, Alcindoro and Benoit. During the 1985-86 season he appeared as Melchior in a touring production of Menotti's Amahl and the Night Visitors and made his debut with the New Jersey State Opera as Pimen in Boris Godunov. Other roles in his repertoire include Thomas Beckett in Murder in the continued on p.48





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Opera in three acts by GIUSEPPE VERDI

Text by TEMISTOCLE SOLERA



### **CAST** (in order of appearance)

Zaccaria, High Priest of Jerusalem Ismaele, nephew of the Hebrew king Fenena, Nabucco's daughter Abigaille, Nabucco's adopted daughter

Leslie Richards Mara Zampieri\*\* (Oct. 31; Nov. 3, 7, 10) Grace Bumbry (Nov. 13, 19, 22)

Paul Plishka

Quade Winter

Anna, Zaccaria's sister

King of Babylon

High Priest of Babylon

officer in Nabucco's army

Nabucco,

Abdallo,

Piero Cappuccilli

Deborah Voigt

Peter Volpe Daniel Harper

Soldiers, priests, citizens of Jerusalem and Babylon

### \*\*American stage debut

TIME AND PLACE: 6th century B.C.; Jerusalem and Babylon

ACT I		The temple in Jerusalem
INTERMISSION		
ACT II	Scene 1: Scene 2:	Babylon, in Nabucco's palace Near the palace
INTERMISSION		
ACT III	Scene 1: Scene 2: Scene 3: Scene 4:	

Supertitles by Clifford Cranna, San Francisco Opera.

Latecomers will not be seated during the performance after the lights have dimmed. The use of cameras and any kind of recording equipment is strictly forbidden. The performance will last approximately three hours and ten minutes.

Conductor Maurizio Arena

Production Gerald Freedman

Set, Lighting and Projection Designer Thomas J. Munn

Costume Designer Beni Montresor

Projection Design and Photography Ron Scherl

Sound Designer Roger Gans

Chorus Director Ian Robertson

Musical Preparation Susanna Lemberskaya Robert Morrison Kathryn Cathcart Philip Eisenberg

Prompter Philip Eisenberg

Assistant Stage Director Laurie Feldman

Stage Manager Jamie Call

Scenery constructed in San Francisco Opera Scenic Studios

Costumes originally created for the Paris Opera

Objects from the collections photographed for projections by courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum, London

First performance: Milan, March 9, 1842

First San Francisco Opera performance: October 6, 1961

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 31 AT 8:00 TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 3 AT 8:00 SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 7 AT 8:00 TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 10 AT 8:00 FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 13 AT 8:00 THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19 AT 7:30 SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 22 AT 2:00

### Nabucco/Synopsis

### ACT I

The people of Jerusalem lament their defeat at the hands of Nabucco (Nebuchadnezzar), the King of Babylon, but the Hebrew priest Zaccaria asks them to have faith ("Sperate, o figli"). Ismaele, the nephew of the Hebrew king, brings the news of Nabucco's advance to the city, and is then left alone with Fenena, Nabucco's daughter, who is being held by the Hebrews as hostage. Ismaele has been in love with Fenena ever since she rescued him from a Babylonian jail. They are interrupted by Abigaille, Fenena's supposed sister, who enters with an advance of Babylonian soldiers, disguised as Hebrews. Abigaille also loves Ismaele, and she tells him that by returning the affection she can save his people. Ismaele rejects her and she leaves. Zaccaria returns, saying that the Babylonian troops are on their way to the temple; in a moment they arrive, led by Nabucco and Abigaille. Zaccaria threatens to kill Nabucco's daughter Fenena, should her father desecrate the temple, but is prevented from doing so by Ismaele. Nabucco, enraged, orders the temple sacked and burned, and the Hebrews led into captivity.

### ACT II

Scene 1—Fenena, appointed regent in Nabucco's absence, is envied by Abigaille who becomes even more resentful when she discovers a document proving that she is not the King's daughter, but a slave ("Anch'io dischiuso un giorno"). She thinks of Ismaele, and then works herself into a rage, vowing to bring down her father, sister and herself before her true birth can be made known. The High Priest of Babylon tells her that Fenena plans to liberate the captive Jews, and that Nabucco has been killed in battle, urging Abigaille to seize power herself.

Scene 2—Zaccaria goes to Fenena's chambers at her bidding and converts her to Judaism. Nearby the Hebrews are gathered in prayer ("Tu sul labbro"). They demand punishment for Ismaele, who they feel betrayed them by setting Fenena free, but Zaccaria's sister Anna announces to them Fenena's conversion to Judaism. Nabucco's aide Abdallo brings the false news of Nabucco's death and in a moment Abigaille enters to demand the crown from Fenena. Suddenly Nabucco comes in, seizes the crown and proclaims himself god. A bolt of lightning strikes the crown from his head, leaving the King demented. Abigaille assumes the crown, announcing that the glory of Babylon is not yet dead.

### ACT III

Scene 1—Abigaille is now regent, and she intends to have all the captive Jews put to death. The mad Nabucco wanders in. He is confused at finding someone else on the throne and tells Abigaille about her humble origin, but she destroys the secret document ("Donna chi sei?"). Taking advantage of Nabucco's mental state, she persuades him to sign a death warrant for the Hebrews, including Fenena, then informs him that he is no longer King, but a prisoner.

Scene 2—On the banks of the Euphrates, the enslaved Hebrews sing a psalm ("Va, pensiero"). Zaccaria preaches to them, trying to lift their spirits, and predicts the downfall of Babylon ("Del futuro nel buio discerno"). The aroused slaves raise their chains in defiance.

Scene 3—In a prison cell, Nabucco wakes from a nightmare, his sanity restored. Through his window, he sees Fenena being led to execution. He prays for forgiveness ("Dio di Giuda") when Abdallo comes in. Seeing that the King has regained his sanity, he frees him and follows him out of the jail in order to rescue Fenena.

Scene 4—At the place of execution, the Hebrews prepare themselves for death ("Oh, dischiuso è il firmamento"). Nabucco and some troops loyal to him arrive, the idols are destroyed, and Nabucco announces his conversion to Judaism. Abigaille, who in her remorse has taken poison, dies, calling for God's forgiveness. Zaccaria promises great glory to the follower of Jehovah, Nabucco, as all join in a prayer of thanksgiving.

## Nabucco

Photos taken in rehearsal by David Powers

160.0





Piero Cappuccilli, Daniel Harper

(below) Paul Plishka, Members of the San Francisco Opera Chorus







(below) Piero Cappuccilli

Paul Plishka





Mara Zampieri

(below) Piero Cappuccilli

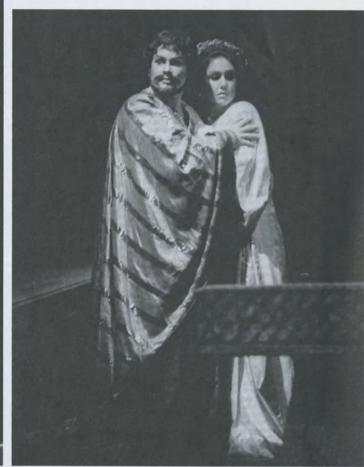








Leslie Richards, Deborah Voigt



Quade Winter, Leslie Richards



Grace Bumbry



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PETER VOLPE

Cathedral, Fasolt in Das Rheingold, Simone in Gianni Schicchi, Theseus in A Midsummer Night's Dream, and Bartolo in The Barber of Seville. His concert credits include Handel's Messiah, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and the Verdi Requiem. He was a recent winner of the Puccini Foundation Award from the West Palm Beach Opera Association.

Maestro Maurizio Arena is on the podium for Nabucco, returning to San Francisco Opera after leading performances of La Forza del Destino and La Bohème last season. He made his Company debut with Puccini's Manon Lescaut during the 1983 Fall Season and returned in 1985 to conduct acclaimed performances of Adriana Lecouvreur and Falstaff. 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, Rossi-



MAURIZIO ARENA

ni'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 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, La Fanciulla del West at the Verona Arena, and Canadian Opera's 1987-88 season opener, La Forza del Destino. Future engagements include Pizzetti's Fedra in Palermo in 1988, the first performance of this rarely-performed opera since 1940. His extensive list of recordings includes Adriana Lecouvreur and Francesca da Rimini.

With his second production of Nabucco, director Gerald Freedman continues his 15-year association with San Francisco Opera, where his credits include La Bohème (1986), 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 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



GERALD FREEDMAN

of Ginastera's Beatrix Cenci for the Opera Society of Washington, which opened the opera house at the Kennedy Center, and numerous productions for the 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, in 1985, he 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 with Julie Harris 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.

**Thomas J. Munn** is lighting designer for Salome, Die Zauberflöte, La Traviata, Nabucco, Les Contes d'Hoffmann, Roméo et Juliette and The Queen of Spades. He also designed sets for Nabucco and co-designed those for Salome, both seen for the first time in 1982. In his 12th year with the



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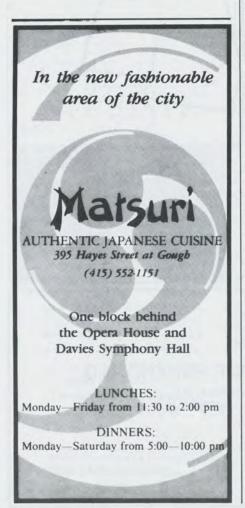
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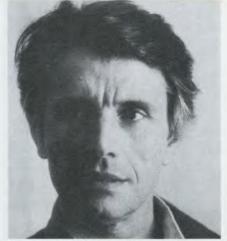




THOMAS J. MUNN

Company, he has been responsible for lighting over 100 productions for San Francisco Opera, including the lighting and special effects for all four operas of the 1985 Ring Festival. He has also designed the scenery as well as the lighting for 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. Recent projects include lighting and projection designs for Madama Butterfly for the Netherlands Opera; scenery and lighting for Hartford Ballet's productions of Coppélia and The Nutcracker; and lighting designs for Connecticut Opera's Hansel and Gretel. He also served as lighting director for last May's "Aid and Comfort" benefit and telecast. In 1986 Munn formed "Munn/Janus Associates," through which he handles his architectural lighting and consulting projects. He is currently on the board of directors for the Waterfront Theatre Project in San Francisco, and a consultant for the new Muziektheater opera house in the Netherlands.

Verona-born **Beni Montresor**'s costume designs for *Nabucco* were created for the Paris Opera and first seen here during the 1982 Summer Season. His previous San



**BENI MONTRESOR** 

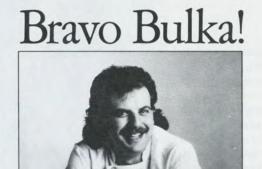
Francisco Opera credits include the sets and costumes for both Esclarmonde (later seen at Covent Garden) and The Daughter of the Regiment during the 1974 season, and the production of Lohengrin, first presented here in 1978 and again during the 1982 Fall Season. Montresor made his operatic debut in 1961 with Barber's Vanessa at the Spoleto Festival. This was followed by Pelléas et Mélisande at the 1962 Glyndebourne Festival, Menotti's The Last Savage at the Metropolitan Opera in 1964, La Cenerentola for the Metropolitan National Company in 1965 and La Gioconda in 1966. That same year he also designed Berlioz's Benvenuto Cellini for Covent Garden and The Magic Flute for New York City Opera, in which he also made his debut as a stage director. Other operatic credits include Turandot and L'Amore dei Tre Re at New York City Opera, L'Elisir d'Amore at Covent Garden and Rameau's Platée at the Opéra-Comigue in Paris. Later this season his designs for La Vestale will be seen in Toulouse. His Broadway credits include Paddy Chayefsky's Middle of the Night and the Rodgers/Sondheim musical Do I Hear A Waltz? Montresor has also designed productions for the New York City Ballet and England's Royal Ballet. A noted author and illustrator of children's books, he has won the prestigious Caldecott Award and the Society of Illustrators' Gold Medal. In the world of film, he has designed movie sets for Federico Fellini, Vittorio De Sica and Roberto Rossellini, and has written and directed several films himself, including Pilgrimage, which was shown at the 1971 Cannes Film Festival.



**RON SCHERL** 

Ron Scherl created the projections seen in Nabucco from photos taken on special assignment for the Company at the British Museum in London. He has photographed virtually every San Francisco Opera production since 1973 and has done projections for the Company's productions of Katya Kabanova in 1977, Billy Budd in 1978, The Midsummer Marriage in 1983 and for the Ring in the summer of 1985. Scherl has also done projections for the Hartford (Connecticut) Ballet's production of The Nutcracker in 1979 and for the Seattle Opera production of Tannhäuser in 1984. A native of New York City, Scherl has been in San Francisco since 1967, and has become nationally known from photo assignments for such publications as Time, Newsweek, Fortune and the Los Angeles Times. In the theatrical realm, he has photographed national touring productions of A Chorus Line, The Elephant Man, Sly Fox, Chapter Two, Whose Life Is It Anyway?, Agnes of God, 42nd Street and Me and My Girl, as well as productions at the American Conservatory Theatre. He has also worked for many of the Bay Area's other leading arts groups including the San Francisco Symphony. His photos of San Francisco Opera productions have appeared in most of the major music publications of the world.

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Katherine Lydon as Clara in Nutcracker

Sobl)

# Thomas Munn, Illuminator



Thomas J. Munn during a break.

### By TIMOTHY PFAFF

One of the most celebrated episodes in San Francisco Opera's 1985 presentation of the *Ring* was the death of Siegfried in *Götterdämmerung*. Wagner's haunting music, a visually arresting decor, and the singing of René Kollo, arguably the finest Siegfried of his day, conspired to work their collective magic under some of the most deliberately sickening lighting in San Francisco Opera history. Completely "kaput," to use one of the favorite words of the *Ring*'s director, Nikolaus Lehnhoff.

"Lehnhoff said he wanted the source of light for the scene to be a cold, ghostly sun," explains the company's lighting director and design consultant Thomas J. Munn. "So I chose a 5000-watt Fresnel instrument to achieve it. It was on for a long time during the technical rehearsal, and because of all the heat the color started to change, first fading to a steely grey and ending up in a yellow, sulphurous color. And there was a hot spot on the color filter that started to produce rings. What we ended up with was light that someone said resembled Pittsburgh at 5 p.m. on a bad day.

"It wasn't deliberate, but it immediately clicked with all of us. So we decided to keep it. To get the same effect at all three performances of *Götterdämmerung*, we pre-burned a piece of the color filter before each performance. Once preburned, it continued to burn at the same

Timothy Pfaff is Associate Editor of the U.C. Berkeley Alumni Magazine, California Monthly, a free-lance writer on the arts, and West Coast correspondent for London's Financial Times.



At the lighting/production desk, set up in the middle of the auditorium during technical and dress rehearsals, Thomas Munn keeps a wary eye on the proceedings while communicating with the backstage area via headset.

rate, producing the color sequence we wanted each time."

Alertness to the felicities of accident is one of the signs of a keen artistic intelligence like Munn's. It's the more to be appreciated in the fast-moving world of opera production, where chance is rarely so synonymous with opportunity and is generally something the technical staff seeks to avoid in "teching" a show and getting it "routined" for a smooth performance in front of an audience.

The happy accident (for all but poor Siegfried) was among the precious few things left to chance in that intricately planned *Ring*. Plotted so that the four operas would represent the changing seasons, from spring to winter, the lighting designs boasted a color curve that could be charted from scene to scene (and *was*, Munn adds emphatically).

Generally speaking, the colors were selected for increasing complexity and warmth from the beginning of *Rheingold* through the second act of *Siegfried*, which represented, Munn says, "the most color I used at one time; rich yellows, blues, and greens. After that, we planned for the color to deteriorate, as it did through Siegfried's death. After *that* there was no color in the lights at all, except for the flames at the finale."

Perhaps predictably, Munn's favorite lighting in the Ring, the aging of the gods during the absence of Freia in Das Rheingold, worked not only well but as planned. "We first illuminated the gods with full light coming from a variety of angles," he says, "which had the particular advantage of allowing the audience to see the singers' eyes—something increasingly rare in opera productions these days. To indicate the aging of the gods, we used hard white lights from directly above, to give a deathly impression. Even after Freia was returned to Valhalla, the colors remained somewhat distorted. And, as a matter of fact, we never used pure colors thereafter."

In his 12 years with the company,

Munn has drawn consistently high praise from both the press and the public. It's a level of recognition unusual in any creative post in any opera company anywhere—and the more remarkable in that Munn had only a limited operatic background when he was hired in 1976.

Up to that point, Munn had been working as a scenic and lighting designer and set painter, primarily in New York and Amsterdam. In Holland he had codesigned a Verdi *Macbeth* with Robert Israel, "my first major success in opera" and a production of *The Angel from Amsterdam*, an opera written for the 700th anniversary of the city. In New York he had been involved in a half-dozen opera productions, a considerable number of ballet productions, and some Broadway and Off-Broadway shows.

He was at work in New York in the spring of 1976 when he got his first summons from then-General Director Kurt Herbert Adler to come and interview for the position of lighting designer.



Götterdämmerung scene leading up to Siegfried's death, whose peculiar lighting scheme is described in this article. From left: Alexandra Hughes, Deborah Sasson, Jean Herzberg and René Kollo (1985).

"I have to confess that I had never heard of the company at the point. But my wife was company manager of Lake George Opera, so she knew perfectly well who Mr. Adler was."

Although Munn did come, Adler was unable to meet him for a sequence of prearranged interviews, and, Munn recalls, "being deep into the show in New York, I decided simply to go back. I was literally getting ready to leave for the airport when I was finally summoned for the interview. I left after agreeing to take the job—although to this day I don't know why Adler hired me. My opera background was not that strong. At that point I wasn't even a particular lover of opera."

He arrived to light all the productions in a season he sums up with the word "hell." "My music background was ten years of piano study, so at least I could read a score. So, after I arrived, I spent half of my time studying the music and indoctrinating myself in the tradition." Much of the rest of the time went to the establishing of what he calls "a very stormy relationship with Mr. Adler. We had some very different ideas about how a show should look."

Characteristically down-to-earth about his work, and manifestly patient in explaining its mysteries to the uninitiated, the 43-year-old Munn today does not seem a candidate for prizes in the area of artistic temperament. But arriving at the San Francisco Opera autocracy in the full maelstrom of pre-production took his nerves, stamina, and, often, his patience with the general director to the limitsand beyond. "Our first battle was over Die Walküre," Munn remembers, "which he kept calling 'much too bright.' But I got some nice reviews for that lighting and one of the critics even wrote that it was the first time people had seen Wagner in San Francisco in years. When that review came out, Adler came up to me and, in his inimitable manner, said, 'See, I told you so.' Our battles apart, Adler was terrific to me, and I learned an incredible amount from him. He was like a tutor to me that year. And once I got used to his difficult style, I learned how to turn him off, as we all had to at one time or another."

But there were seemingly endless other adjustments to make as well. "Scheduling was a nightmare," Munn recalls. That was long before the rehearsal facilities at the Zellerbach Wing were built, and, Munn says, "There were times when we had to do lighting rehearsals literally over the orchestra rehearsing another opera. And I had to get used to the rhythm of a repertory company—which was completely new to me, and to working with overlapping directors and designers."

Munn credits two people with his being able to survive that first season at all. "The master electrician was George Pantages, who had been with the company for 25 years and was incredibly knowledgable. He set up the new computer-based lighting system that was in place when I arrived. He had seen the value of a computer for both rehearsing and running a show and knew that it would allow for greater artistic freedom and a better product. And Bob Brand had worked as lighting designer here for three seasons, so the hurdle of having a lighting designer here at all had been overcome. Their help and the computer system itself made me look good that first season. People were wowed by the lighting."

Even so, the situation—and the new computer board itself, from Kliegl Brothers in New York—was safely this side of perfect. "Within the six months it took to install the new system, two newer systems came out, so, by the time ours was installed, it was already out of date. But even so, the new board was very reliable and allowed us to do many things that simply would not have been possible before. We finally had the opportunity to do lighting embellishments, since we could then do 30 to 40 light cues in the time it took to do ten in the past."

But over the next four years, Munn increasingly began to feel the limitations of the system. "The more we could do and the faster we could do it, the more they pressed the time. Besides the demands that made on us, it really taxed the hardware. Though reliable, that board was limited in what it could do. Opera is always the last to catch on to new trends in theater, and the main problem was how slow that board was in handling the special effects."

Munn's push for an improved system first bore fruit in 1981, by means of a special arrangement with San Francisco Ballet. The ballet had been renting the opera company's computer light board, and Munn came up with a way that those monies could be combined with others to make a system upgrade from which both companies would profit. What materialized was a new computer board, appropriately named Viking, from the Swedish firm AVAB. "Besides being large enough for now, it's expandable," Munn says with evident pleasure. "It's not already outdated, and it has proved very reliable. It has allowed us to operate the regular lighting and the special effects under one system, from one set of controls. And the fact that it's more sophisticated to run



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"Because of the way it is programmed, we now can insert, delete, and change light cues easily, and stay right on top of the changes. It holds lots of information, and, because it allows us to do several things at the same time, we can really work more efficiently during piano dress rehearsals. We can actually work on a cue while it is running, so we cause minimal disturbances during the rehearsal. It addresses other problems as well. Every time we do [Verdi's La] Forza [del Destino] here, there's a big debate about the order of the scenes, usually with a number of changes of mind. The old system didn't like that at all, but this new board can take it in stride."

Munn now has at his disposal some 900 individual light sources of various kinds. About 350 of them comprise the "repertory light plot," that is, the basic system permanently installed for use in all the productions in the company repertory. Those lights occupy nine basic overhead hanging positions backstage, as well as side-lighting positions. One of these, the first bridge, (directly behind the supertitles, from the audience's vantage point) is the most important, in part because it's where the follow spots are located. "We've come close to using everything we've got," Munn confides. "That's partly because I like to think that there's no place you can't put a light-to the consternation of almost everybody else."

Munn says that opera lighting is difficult to explain to the layman for a variety of reasons. "What makes it so complicated in opera," he says, "is that you're working with directors, designers, and other artists from all over the world and they're all used to working in different ways." Because their approaches to some degree determine the nature of his participation in a production, Munn has taken to differentiating between roles he calls "lighting supervisor," "lighting director," and "lighting designer."

As lighting supervisor, he is in charge of recreating the lighting for the revival of an existing production. "Since the look of the production has been previously established, my job, basically, is simply to make the necessary adjustments to the new lighting system."

When he works in collaboration with a director like Jean-Pierre Ponnelle, he generally functions as lighting director.



While striking a pose typical of lighting designers the world over, Thomas Munn interacts with colleagues.

"Ponnelle is a lighting designer in his own right," Munn explains, "so he tends to arrive with the lighting all worked out. In his cases, I'm basically supporting his concept, giving creative input from a crafts standpoint. His *Carmen* in 1981 was a departure from that, since Jean-Pierre was very ill at the time. Over the years I had come to know his style and had a very good idea about what he did and didn't like. Because of his indisposition, I did all

the preliminary lighting and cuing. When he arrived for rehearsals, we changed some things, of course. We always do. But basically he liked what I had done.

"When I'm working as a lighting designer," he continues, "I'm part of the creative team from the beginning. I meet early on with the director and the designer so we can get on the same wavelength about how we want the production to look. For this season's *Traviata*, for example, I was working early on with designer John Conklin and director John Copley, to decide on how the sets would be positioned and to determine the kind of visual impact we wanted a scene to have. Do we want it to look like a painting and, if so, by what artist? Copley decided that he wanted the final scene to be of a ghostly, ethereal, almost clinical quality. That obviously was an important thing for me to know in making the lighting plot and choosing colors."

Beyond those crucial early meetings, Munn's own work as lighting designer begins with a close study of the score. Besides presenting him with the whole compass of the work, the score is a roadmark to the many details of importance to lighting designers, one of whose main responsibilities it is to coordinate the lighting with the music to the fullest extent possible.

"Then," Munn continues, "if it's a period piece, you need to research the period. For example, I have to ask myself, 'Should it look like it is lit from footlights?' Once you establish the overall quality of a show's look, then you can turn to the mechanisms. Should the light look like limelight? Should it flicker?"

Then, working scene by scene from the ground-plan, in sections, Munn creates a light-plot, the long list of cues that indicate every change of lighting from curtain to curtain. "When I've finished that," he says, "I discuss it with the master electrician, so he can arrange for the equipment, color circuiting, etc. That could involve building and operating specialized pieces of equipment, like the motorized striplights we used to light the mist scrim in *Rheingold*.

"If you remember, there was a small model of Valhalla, as seen in the distance, and a much larger Valhalla into which the gods were to progress at the end. As you may also remember, we had to get from 'Little Val' to 'Big Val' in no time flat, and the way we did that was basically with lights. We lighted a scrim with strips of light to opaque it. Putting the light source on a motorized piece of equipment that slowly moved downstage allowed us to make the scrim become gradually transparent—without actually changing the lighting at all.

"I can come up with ideas like that, but I depend a great deal on the electrical shop here to help create those special effects. I spend a lot of time with our

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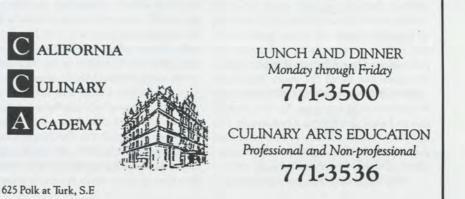
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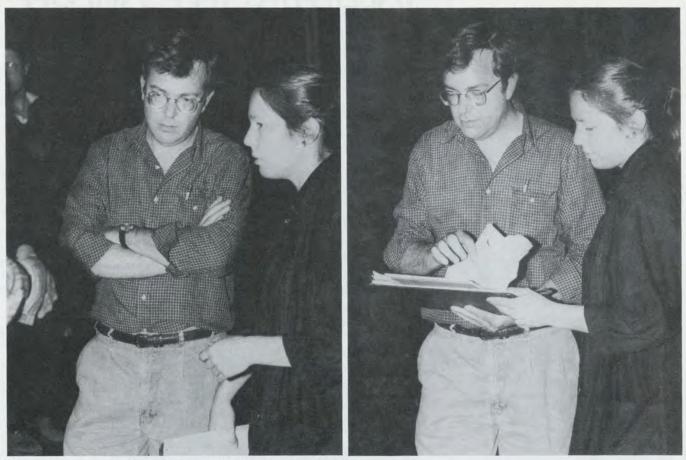
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Thomas Munn ponders problems with Associate Lighting Designer Joan Arhelger.

master electrician, David Tyndall. Besides working out the special problems, it's a monumental job to train all the stage electricians to run the shows. Everything has to be changed from show to show."

Munn stands in a distinguished line of opera artists in noting that the main difficulty in lighting a show is the extremely limited rehearsal period. "To do as much as we can in advance, we work with models of the sets and try colors on those models with all kinds of light sources, including flashlights. We also try to learn as much as we can about wigs and makeup, because we don't want to put on a show that's about white wigs. And if at all possible, I even try to get swatches of the fabrics that will be used for the costumes. The color of the principals' costumes can be all the more important when you have to distinguish them from 40 choristers in costume. By the time of the technical and lighting rehearsals, the lights and colors all have to be chosen and even the individual light sources focused. We need to have everything ready to try."

The necessary changes detected dur-

ing technical rehearsals can positively pale next to the ones that become apparent when the cast arrives on the rehearsal stage. "You always have to take the performers into account. For one thing, they're the ones who are onstage when the audience is in the house. For another, they're unpredictable. It's not unusual for a principal to arrive announcing, 'I won't wear blue,' when you've built an entire scene around that color. And experience has taught me always to keep a 'hot center' available. There's a certain kind of singer who, no matter what has been worked out in rehearsal, is going to gravitate toward the prompter's box during the performance. You have to be able to light them where they are-and, basically, I hate follow spots, and try to avoid using them as much as possible.

"Time after time I'm amazed and thrilled that we get through piano rehearsals at all. Up to that time we've all been working separately, and suddenly everybody's together and it's all happening at once. Beyond the continual refinements, you have to make an incredible number of on-the-spot decisions, about problems no one could have anticipated. And then, after lengthy and exhausting rehearsals, you sometimes have only 12 hours to make the necessary changes and corrections. I try to 'freeze' a show by the time it opens, but sometimes opening night is the first chance I have to stand back and look at the show without a headset on. If I see that it's necessary, I sometimes make changes while a performance is going on."

Beyond the fact that the technical aspects of his profession are hard to explain, Munn as professional illusionist is understandably reluctant to reveal all his tricks. "Giving away how things are done is like a magician explaining a trick. Then it's not magic anymore. Audiences should be surprised; that's part of the fun of live theater. We have ways of doing things I don't think audiences should know about. What's important is not how it's achieved but whether it works theatrically, whether the right mood was created. No one's going to be susceptible to that mood if they're busy figuring out how we made a particular effect."

Over the years Munn has balanced his responsibilities at the opera with other stage and lighting design enterprises, both as an additional creative outlet and as a means of staying in touch with developments outside the world of opera. His ongoing love of ballet ("It's where I started") results in at least one new dance production a year (most recently, a new *Coppélia* for Hartford Ballet). And Munn adds that he likes to do one industrial or commercial lighting show a year, "just to keep my hand in, and because it's the best way to keep in touch with what's going on in the field."

His largest venture to date in scenic design for the San Francisco Opera is the *Nabucco* production being revived this year, first seen in the summer season of 1982. Characteristically, Munn's designs draw heavily on lighting to achieve many of the visual effects.

"There were budget constraints," Munn allows, "but I don't think I'd do things much differently if I had more money to play with. One of the problems with *Nabucco* is that it has a lot of scenes and it's a heavily choral opera—which means that you have to get a lot of people on and off the stage quickly if you don't want it to break up the music or have it look silly in performance. So what you don't want are lots of monumental set pieces.

"Also, I was going for a contemporary look rather than a historical one. I'm fascinated by architecture, and one of the strongest influences on this production was the work of the architect Luis Berrigan, who does a lot of work in the southwest and has a real feel for the desert. His work shows a strong sense of shape and a sensitivity to light and shadow-and his colors are really quite close to those of Babylonian bas-reliefs. What fascinated me was the prospect of combining the ideas of planes intersecting one another in interesting ways and the use of ornament to create the mood of a hot climate. As it turns out, the Babylonian keystone shape is a main visual motif in this production."

The planes were easily enough achieved in the scene shop. The ornament was a rather different matter. "When we realized it would be difficult to imitate the kind of ornament we were after, we decided we had to go to the British Museum to photograph some of the original Babylonian bas-reliefs. We sent photographer Ron Scherl, who is responsible for many

1987 Season

of the wonderful projections we've used scenically, to London, where he had permission to photograph the pieces at night, after the museum was closed.

"If that weren't already difficult enough, he also had to keep in mind our particular needs scene by scene for the production. The angles from which he photographed the originals had to correspond to our production, and even the lighting he used for them had to reflect the light sources onstage-torches, for example. What that meant was that he had to take a lot of photographs, make many on-the-spot decisions, and make verv deliberate choices about composition. And even at that, we had to do a lot of editing and work with multiple images to get the effects we wanted when we actually made the projections on our set.

"But in the end, it seemed to work. Many colleagues told us that the sets looked sculpted, three-dimensional—real. Using projections certainly made the scene changes quicker than they ever would have been if we'd had to move big set pieces around."

For this season's revival, Munn has made additional, subtle changes that he feels will make the production even more convincing. For one thing, the special effects have been upgraded ("We have better lighting to work with than we did a few years ago"). And, Munn adds, "This year I think we've come much closer to achieving the effects I want for the destruction of the temple. What I very much wanted this time was for the actual shapes to change. I'm not going to say how, but I think we've got that worked out this time. What I will say is that this time, when Nabucco comes out to denounce the false idols, the images of Baal will disappear."

Although Munn clearly enjoys the opportunity of doing scenic design as well as lighting design, he says that the "occasional" production is sufficient, at least for now. "When Mr. Adler asked me back for a second season, I decided to give it another year. It's been like that ever since. But what's kept me here is the sense of family, of caring, not only about each other but also about what goes on on the stage. I will say that if I ever leave this company, it will not be to do repertory opera elsewhere. The reason is perfectly simple: San Francisco is a special place to do it."





"For me, opera and music is essential; it feeds my soul ..." Illustration: Scene from Act I of San Francisco Opera's 1987 Fidelio.

## Back Talk

### By MOLLY ROTH

Can you imagine sitting a group of your friends down in cozy chairs, asking them to kick back and relax—and to tell you honestly how they feel about you?! The scenario is almost too awful to contemplate. Yet that's exactly what the Opera did recently.

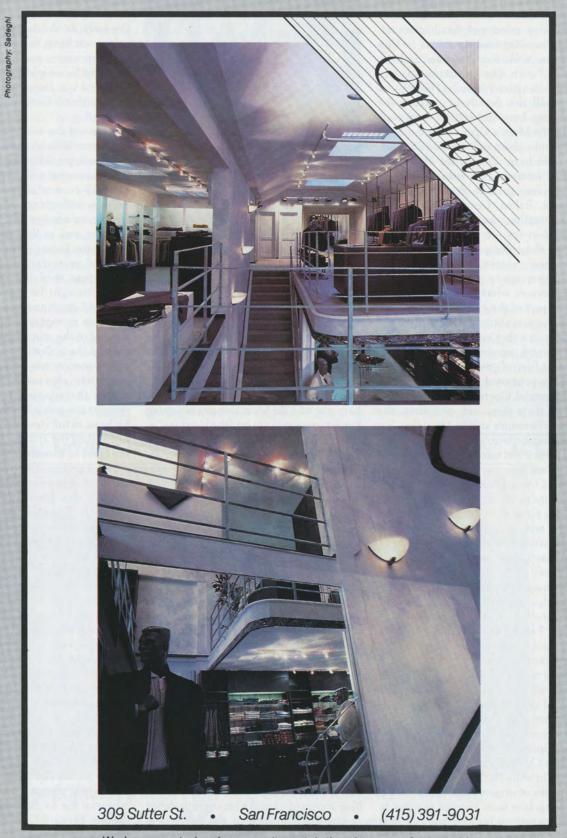
Almost 100 subscribers and other patrons were asked to take part in 10 "focus" groups. Following this, nearly 4,000 others were asked to complete a written questionnaire. Since we at the Opera have a different relationship with our friends than most individuals, we *have* to know what they really think because they are our raison d'être. We have an obligation to be responsive to their concerns.

Remarkably enough, every single person asked to participate in the focus groups accepted with relish! Some, who hadn't received a phone call soon enough after the initial invitation letter, called *us* to tell us how much they wanted this opportunity to talk back. They polled their friends, they came to the sessions armed with notes, and one devotee came with a list of questions from her son in Seattle who couldn't make it to the focus group but who comes down every year for the opera.

The enthusiasm of the participants was one of the study's most gratifying findings. In general, our patrons are committed supporters. They give the lion's share of their individual philanthropic contributions to the Opera, they feel very positive about the quality of our productions, and they feel that we make an important contribution to the civic and cultural life of the Bay Area. Our friends felt that the Opera was "something [they] should be proud of and do as much as [they] can to support" and even that "it's the lifeblood of the city—an asset for all who live here."

Our focus-group experiment was a resounding success. However, it is a delicate operation and we would not recommend that any of you try this at home without a marketing professional in attendance. For all its seeming casualness and familiarity, the focus group is one of the marketing industry's most advanced techniques. The dynamic interaction of a group yields a great deal more information than a one-on-one, I'll-ask-thequestions-and-you-answer-them kind of interview. Facilitated by a specialist who is trained to interpret these proceedings, such as Malcolm Baker of Baker Restaino Schumann and Company who conducted them, these sessions can highlight the real concerns of the group and profile those taking part in it.

We were fortunate to have the contributed services of Roger Lavery, then executive vice president of the San Francisco office of DDB Needham Worldwide Inc., the advertising agency who assisted



We have created a showcase to match the elegance of our clothing. You are invite you to come and celebrate the occasion with us.



"I like the choruses and the feathers and the jewels ... If they cut down I would be disappointed." Illustration: Act III, San Francisco Opera's 1987 Traviata.

the Opera in managing the project. Their services were coordinated through the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce Business Volunteers for the Arts program. DDB Needham designed the threephase study and delivered a clear-sighted, thorough report on the findings.

Fleishman Research was retained to recruit participants and provide the focus group facilities. The sessions were held in a conference room with a one-way mirror along one wall. While eight or ten subscribers gathered for about an hour and a half to discuss issues raised by the facilitator, Opera administrators, staff, and consultants observed from behind the mirror. Participants were told that they were being observed but quickly appeared to lose any self-consciousness in the heat of the discussion of what, it became very clear, was a subject dear to their hearts.

"It was absolutely fascinating," says Assistant Director of Development Nancy Stryble. Stryble has been on the Opera staff for over 10 years and so was prepared for both the sophistication and the abiding commitment of our patrons. "Those who were newer to the Company," she continues, "could not believe how knowledgeable and involved these people are."

After the sessions had been transcribed, the information was carefully analyzed by Jesse Bedi of Jesse Bedi Associates who then developed a 16-page questionnaire for mailing to additional friends of the Opera. If the enthusiasm of the focus group participants hadn't convinced us of the success of the study, then the extraordinary rate of response to the questionnaires erased any doubts. In fact, the marketing professionals were astounded when more than 53% of the questionnaires were completed and returned by their deadline—better than five times the industry average!

What did our friends have to say? In the first place, they overwhelmingly reaffirmed their commitment to international grand opera. The people who buy our tickets and make charitable gifts love the sumptuous casts, sets, and costumes that they have come to expect from the San Francisco Opera. Says one subscriber in support of spectacle, "I like the choruses and the feathers and the jewels ... If they cut down I would be disappointed." They also believe in our artistic vision and they feel that the prices they pay for their tickets are more than justified by the quality of our productions.

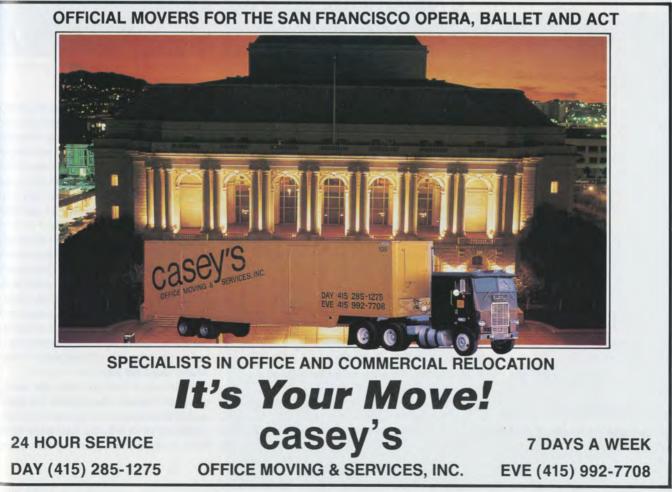
There is a profound interest among our patrons and supporters in the future of the operatic art form in general. The Opera's role in educating and training young singers through our Opera Center got rave reviews as a vehicle for ensuring the art form's continued vitality. In the words of one fan, "One thing I think they really do well is develop young singers ... We see young singers on the stage with magnificent voices whom we couldn't have heard anywhere else." Our audiences love the idea that they are witnesses to early moments in the operatic careers of future greats and that we are providing a formal apprenticeship in the world of grand opera for gifted young singers from around the country and the world.

But of course, as this study makes clear, all that goes on behind and on the stage is perhaps only a part of what opera is and what will see it through at least another couple of centuries. The audience is the other ingredient; and our friends not only want to become a more informed, involved audience; they want to see Opera audiences broadened and extended.

Here are some of the responses which typify our patrons' interests: "I would like to hear opera singers discuss their training and talk about the receptions they've gotten, the difficulties they've had, and how they feel about their careers"; "I would be interested to know why a soprano approached an aria a certain way, or why a director included an extra scene"; and even "I want to hear conductors and producers telling me why they think something worked or did not work—and explaining where they goofed." We heard many subscribers express their desire for formal opportunities to learn more about opera, as a historical art form and as a vital international endeavor, and to learn more about what it takes behind the scenes to mount those magical productions. They would also like to introduce their own friends and family members to the delights they've found behind the golden curtain. "I want my family to be exposed to good music." "My main concern is that young people I know don't even know whether they're opera aficionados or not because they don't start going to the opera as young people."

This is, of course, music to our ears. But we didn't just learn how devoted our friends are; we got wonderful, thoughtful suggestions as to how the Opera can go about involving patrons more fully and reaching out farther and more widely. What do we plan to do about it? This season alone we are offering supporters and their guests opportunities to attend opera salons, where artists, designers, directors, and producers talk about their art; technical demonstrations; tours of the backstage area and the wig, costume, and scene shops; working dress rehearsals; and cast parties. We have also instituted a program of pre-performance no-host dinners for series ticket holders, board members and staff, as a way of getting to know members of the Opera family better and drawing closer together.

It came as a surprise to us to realize that many loyal donors weren't aware of how large a part of the Opera's contributed income is accounted for by modest individual gifts. While many of our supporters give to their limits each year, they seem to think that the Opera is largely supported by corporations, foundations, and government agencies and that very large individual gifts made up most of the difference. When our individual support accounts for 90% of our total contributed income, and donors of \$500 or less account for 88% of the total group, and those donors aren't aware of how vital their support is to our operations-we figure it's time to start improving our communications. We are taking to heart the following thought: If the modest contributors are critical to the survival of the Opera, then they have to have a sense







"I just think that the arts are the only thing that preserves our sanity in this world ..." Illustration: Final Scene from San Francisco Opera's 1987 production of The Magic Flute.

of what their contributions really mean and that they are needed and appreciated.

So who are these friends of ours? In the course of this study designed to assess how we are perceived, we managed to get to know you a little better as well. Some of our subscriber families have lived in this area for generations—and some have just moved here. Some saw their first opera before they hit kindergarten (such as one "native San Franciscan" who has "been going to the the opera since [she] was old enough to sit in a chair")-and some have come to it at different stages of their lives. Some are in the first throes of the infatuation, where everything is new and delightful—and some have the knowledge, experience, and abiding love that makes them critical forces in operatic discourse.

For some, the San Francisco Opera was the introduction to the art form and they've remained loving and faithful. Others were bitten by the opera bug in a little repertory house in small-town America—a local production maybe, or maybe a larger company on tour—and their love affair with the San Francisco Opera is more like mature love. For still others, opera was a cultural staple in their cosmopolitan American or European home towns and finding the San Francisco Opera was like finding an old friend on moving to the Bay Area.

While they may not be in the majority, we encountered a surprising number of subscribers for whom the Opera was a factor in the decision to locate in the Bay Area. For one carpenter who has "gone to the opera regularly since moving to the city," "It's probably one of the things that made me move here ... it's probably the primary thing ... it's the most 'feeling' thing about the city."

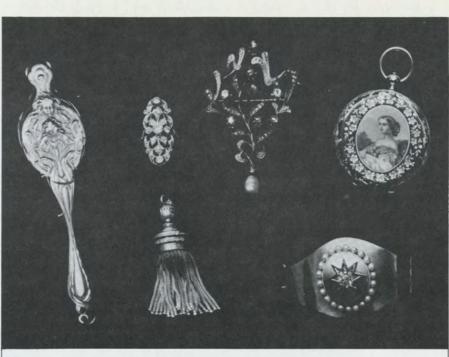
So what has our exercise accomplished? First of all, we think it's been a good first step in showing our friends that we want to hear what they have to say. The study delivered an important mes-



sage to the participants about how valuable their feedback is to the Opera, and it is clear that they appreciate being asked for the input.

True to the inspiration of the project, we are putting what we've heard to good use. The findings of this study are playing a principal role in the long-range planning process that the Opera's Board of Directors is currently carrying out, and your concerns hold a central place among the objectives for the near future of the Company. The administration will be given the charter to develop the best possible strategies for involving the audiences more fully, creating more extensive outreach programs, and, not least, for keeping the dialogue alive.

The next step? We want to do it all again. We want to create an on-going dialogue and we know that showing you how we act on your concerns will be a great incentive for you to keep talking back.



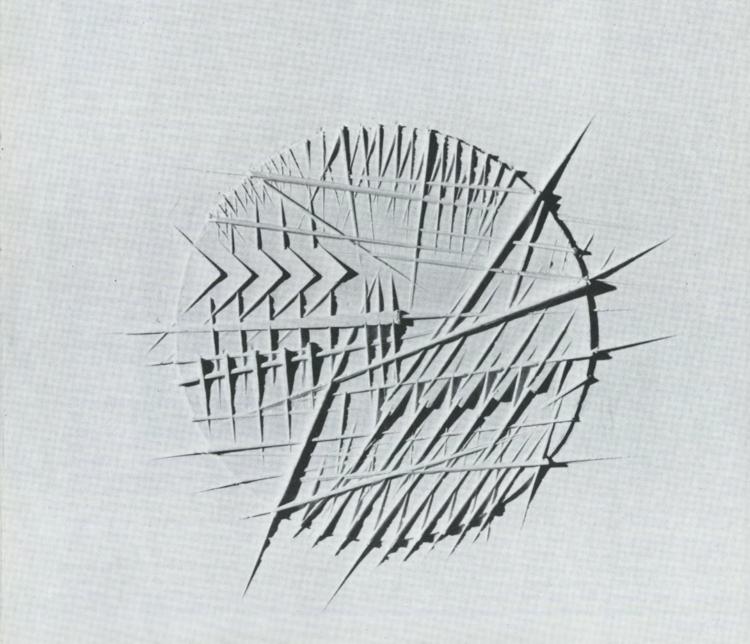
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# MODESTO LANZONE'S



### 1987 San Francisco Opera Company (Continued)

Although our program magazines regularly list members of the Administration and Company (please see pages 10 and 17), we know that those lists are by necessity incomplete. In order to give recognition to the many skilled professionals whose work has contributed so greatly to the quality of San Francisco Opera productions, we provide, once a year, a list of everyone involved in our season. In this issue, department heads are listed in front of the magazine, as usual; the many others, upon whom so much depends, are listed below.

Dennis DeVost

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Hmmm. Did Mrs. Higgins say Golden Wedding or Baby Birth?

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### Sennheiser Listening Devices

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



### **Opera House Tours**

Sponsored by the San Francisco Opera Guild, tours of the War Memorial Opera House will be conducted every half hour from 10 a.m. to 12 noon on the following dates:

Sunday, October 11 Sunday, October 18 Sunday, November 1 Thursday, November 19 Sunday, November 22 Tuesday, December 1 Saturday, December 5

The cost is \$2 for Guild members (limit 4 tickets per member); nonmembers \$5. Advance reservations required. For further information, please call (415) 565-6432.



### If You Drive To The Opera . . .

... and park in the Performing Arts Garage, remember that you can avoid some of the traffic congestion by using the Gough Street entrance to the facility (between Fulton and Grove). **Bus Service** Many operagoers who live in the northern section of San Francisco are regular patrons of the Municipal Railway special "Opera Bus."

This bus is added to Muni's north-bound 47 line following all evening performances of the Opera, Symphony, Ballet and other major events. The service is also provided for all Saturday and Sunday matinees.

Look for this bus, marked "47 Special," after each performance in the bus zone at Van Ness Avenue and Grove Street—across Van Ness from the Opera House. Its route is: North on Van Ness to Chestnut, then left to Divisadero where it turns left to Union. It continues on Union over Russian Hill to Columbus, then left to Powell then right to the end of the line at North Point.

**Food Service** The lower lounge in the Opera House is now open two hours prior to curtain time for hot buffet service. Patrons arriving before the front doors open will be admitted at the Carriage Entrance.

Refreshments are served in the box tier on the mezzanine floor, the grand tier and dress circle levels during all performances.

**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.

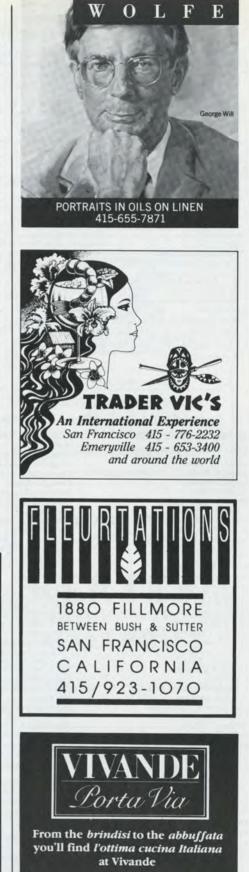
Children of any age attending a performance must have a ticket.

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.

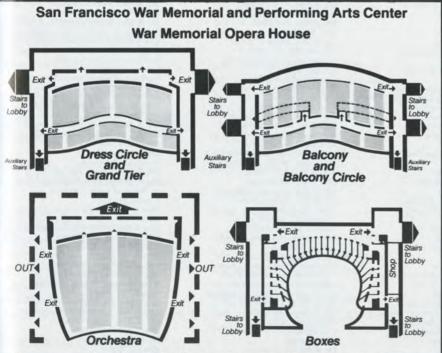
**Taxi Service** Patrons needing a cab at the end of the performance should reserve one with the doorman at the Taxi Entrance before the end of the final intermission.

**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.



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FIOR D'ITALIA-San Francisco's oldest Italian restaurant presents the newest Italian cuisine. Monday-Friday 11:30 AM- 11:00 PM. Saturday/Sunday 5:00-11:00 PM. (415) 986-1886. 601 Union Street on Washington Square in North Beach. Reservations recommended.

GAYLORD INDIA RESTAURANT– Quite simply, the ultimate in Indian tandoori cuisine. Meat, seafood, vegetarian entrees. Lunch/Dinner/Sunday Brunch. One Embarcadero Center (415) 397-7775 and Ghirardelli Square (415) 771-8822 San Francisco; Stanford Shopping Center, Palo Alto (415) 326-8761.

LA BAMBA-This *newer* Mexican Restaurant features a unique wood-fired display grill and rotisserie to create a number of Puerto Vallarta style dishes with chicken, duck, squab and goat. The relaxed Mexican seacoast atmosphere features a large, fun festive bar with live Mariachi music every night. 200 Shoreline Highway at Tam Junction in Mill Valley. (415) 383-8000.

LA MERE DUQUESNE-In the heart of the theatre district you'll dine in the atmosphere of an elegant French country home. Veal, chicken, squab, trout, tripe and rabbit highlight an affordable French menu. Geary between Taylor and Jones in the El Cortez Hotel. (415) 776-7600.

LEHR'S GREENHOUSE-Dine in a truly unique garden setting for breakfast, lunch, dinner, Sunday Brunch, Garden Wedding receptions and Banquets. Chef Randal Lehr specializes in New American cuisine with fresh local seafood, pastas, salads and steaks as Lehr's celebrates its 15th Anniversary. 740 Sutter (Street) near Taylor. Validated parking (415) 474-6478.

NORTH BEACH RESTAURANT-Lorenzo Petroni and his partner/chef Bruno Orsi welcome you to a real Italian dining experience featuring homemade pastas, veal dishes, and fresh Pacific seafood. Located in the heart of North Beach at 1512 Stockton at Columbus, the restaurant serves daily from 11:30 AM-11:45 PM. Valet parking, major credit cards. (415) 392-1700.

**RYUMON**–Peking cuisine served in a traditional setting. Special rooms are available for private parties. Lunch, Monday-Saturday 11:30 AM-2:00 PM; Dinner, Monday-Sunday 5:30-9:30 PM. 646 Washington Street between Kearny and Montgomery. (415) 421-3868.

**UMBERTO**–Step into an Old World Mediterranean villa with terra cotta tile and sunbleached walls, then feast on seafood, beef, veal and poultry prepared with Umberto's light sauces. Pastas, fresh from scratch, are a specialty. 141 Steuart Street, one block from the Ferry Building. Lunch Monday-Friday 11:30 AM-2:30 PM. Dinner daily 5:30 PM-11:15 PM. Piano, free hors d'oeuvres during cocktail hour. (415) 543-8021.

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The San Francisco Opera expresses its gratitude to the National Endowment for the Arts for the \$1,000,000 Challenge Grant awarded in 1985 to the Company's Endowment Fund. We are extremely grateful for the generosity of the following who have made contributions and pledges to fulfill the first phase of the three year campaign.

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For information on becoming involved in these interesting and exciting donor benefits and services contact the Development Department (415) 861-4008, x416.

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The Medallion Society, the premier group of the San Francisco Opera family, plays a vital role in maintaining the company's stature as one of the world's leading opera companies. The generosity of Medallion Society members helps to ensure the fiscal stability necessary for the production of world-class opera, season after season.

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- Priority for requested seating improvements
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- Invitation to first orchestra rehearsal in stage set

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Further privileges:

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- Further privileges:
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- Private discussion with General Director, Board Chairman and President
- Follow the stages of the production of an opera

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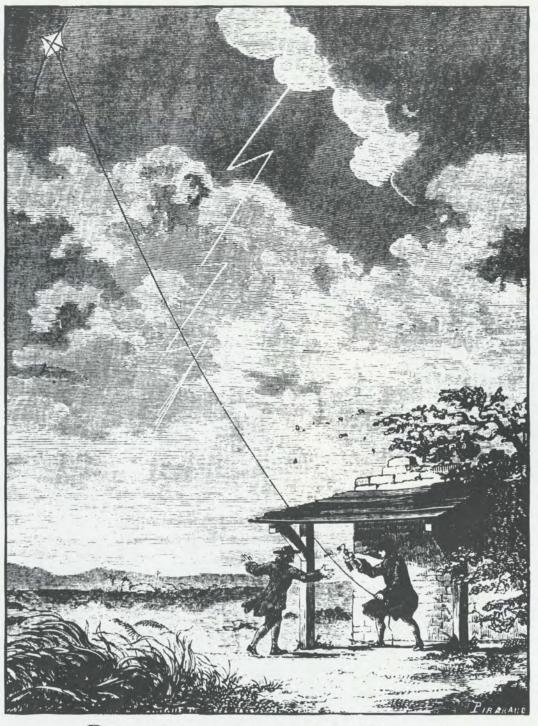
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