

La Traviata
(The Fallen Woman)

1987

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Saturday, December 12, 1987 2:00 PM

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1987 SEASON



La Traviata

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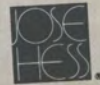
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Terence A. McEwen, *General Director*

Sir John Pritchard, *Music Director*

La Traviata

1987 SEASON

FEATURES

- 26 **Confessions of a Playwright** by John Ardoin
The author, assuming the role of Alexandre Dumas the younger, describes his infatuation with Marie Duplessis, the model for *La Dame aux Camélias*, and subsequently, Violetta Valery of *La Traviata*.
- 54 **Surprised by Joy** by Nina Beckwith
Western Opera Theater's spring tour to the People's Republic of China—in candid reminiscences by the tour participants.
- 62 **Company Profiles: Jerry Sherk** by Timothy Pfaff
San Francisco Opera's production stage manager explains his multiple duties.

DEPARTMENTS

- 16 1987 Season Repertoire
35 Artist Profiles
41 Cast and Credits
42 Synopsis
69 Services
71 Box Holders
73 NEA Challenge Grant
74 Donor Benefits
75 Corporate Council
76 Medallion Society
81 Supporting San Francisco Opera



COVER:

John Singer Sargent, 1856-1925,
Repose, 1911
Oil on canvas, 25 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 30 in.
National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
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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 much-appreciated 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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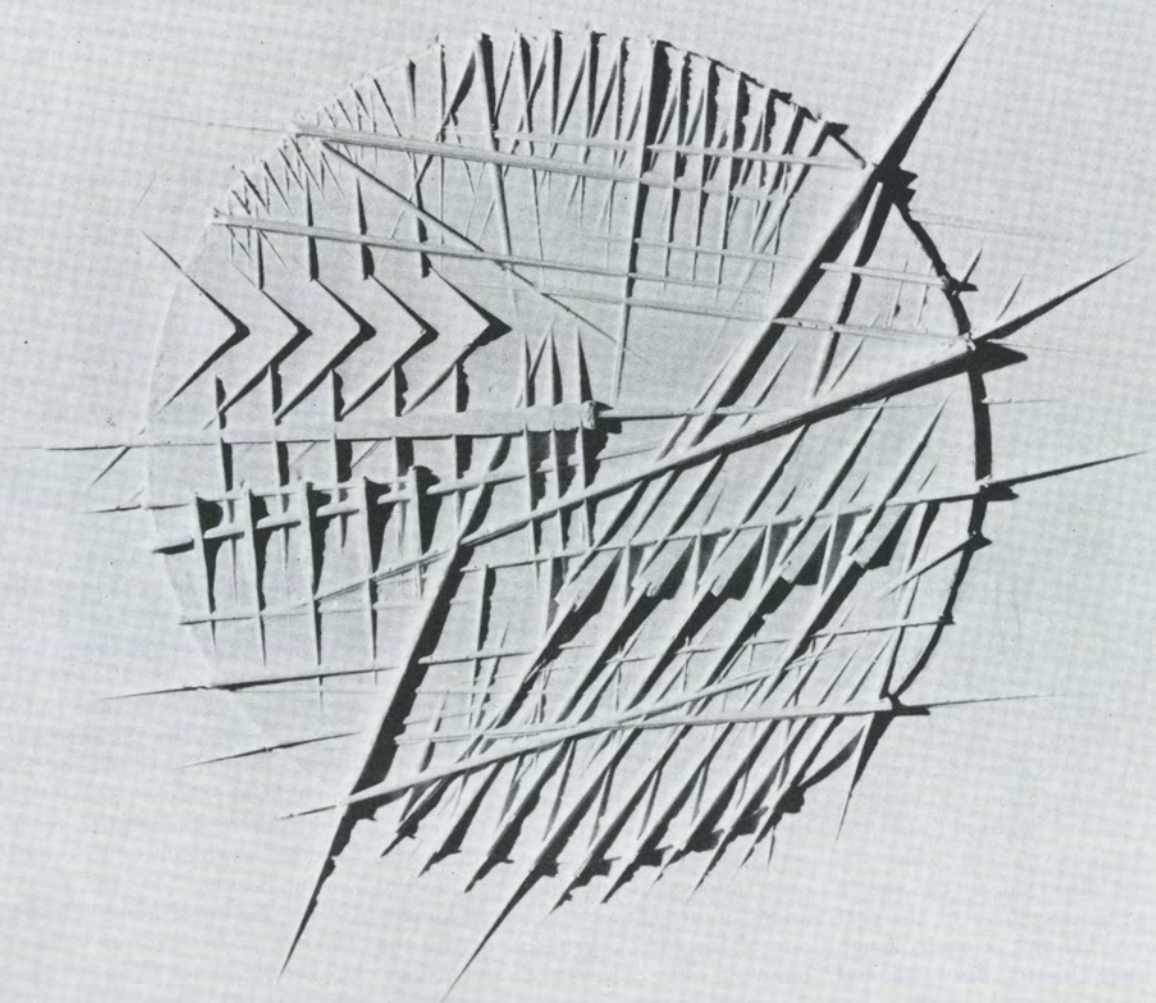
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General Director's Message

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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1987 Season

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/
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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, Christian; Araiza, Malis,
Langan, Kelley, King (September 19,
22, 25), Harper (September 30;
October 6, 8, 11), Pittsinger, Stewart,
Wunsch*
Layer/Cox/Hockney/Munn

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

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

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 Traviata 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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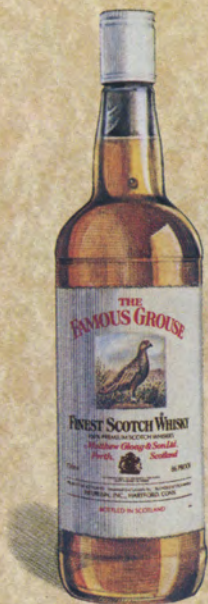
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Wednesday, November 11, 8:00
The Tales of Hoffmann Offenbach
 Dahl*, Gustafson, Johnson,
 Quittmeyer (November 11, 15, 18, 21,
 25, 28), Bruno (December 8, 11),
 Young; Domingo (November 11, 15,
 18, 21, 25, 28), TBA (December 8, 11),
 Morris (November 11, 15, 18, 21, 25,
 28), Krause (December 8, 11), Howell,
 Egerton, Harper, Skinner, Pittsinger,
 Delavan, Davis
 Plasson/Mansouri/Schneider-Siemssen/
 Munn

*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
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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
 Tchararov*/Coleman/O'Hearn/Munn-
 Arhelger/Sulich

*The 1987 presentation of The Queen of
 Spades is sponsored, in part, by a grant
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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, 8:00
The Queen 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

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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.

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- Sep. 19 OTELLO (1983)
M. Price; Domingo, Carroli; Janowski
- Sep. 26 KHOVANSCHINA (1984)
Dernesch; Noble, Bailey, Lewis, Howell, Salminen; Albrecht
- Oct. 3 MANON LESCAUT (1983)
Freni; Mauro, Sardinero, Capecchi, MacNeil; Arena
- Oct. 10 JENŮFA (1986)
Beňáčková, Rysanek; Ochman, Rosenshein; Mackerras
- Oct. 17 DON CARLOS (1986)
Lorengar, Toczyska; Shicoff, Titus, Lloyd, 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
- Nov. 7 MACBETH (1986)
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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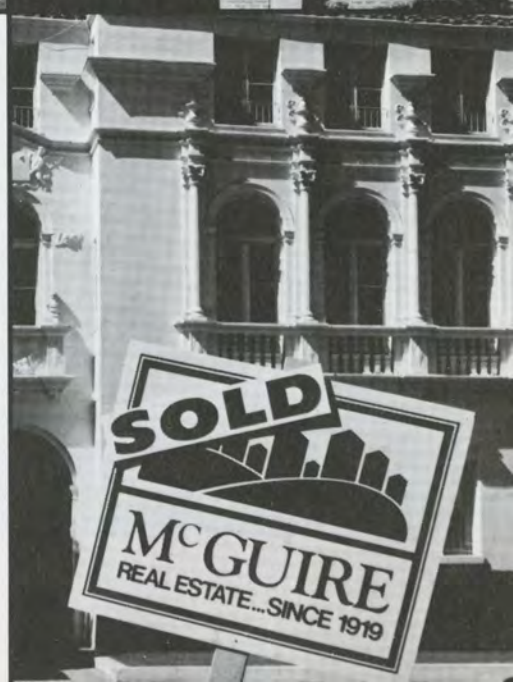
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Alexandre Dumas, fils, in a lithograph by Lemerrier.

Confessions of

By JOHN ARDOIN

I flatter myself that my name might still mean something to those of you reading this, nearly a century after my death. My name is Alexandre Dumas.

Pray, don't confuse me with my illustrious father, for we bear the same name. He was the author of the celebrated romances *The Three Musketeers* and *The Count of Monte Cristo*. It was my destiny to create the novel *The Lady of the Camellias*, which I later recast as a play and which, still later, was set to music by the remarkable Italian artist, Signor Giuseppe Verdi.

It is concerning *The Lady of the Camellias* that I have now taken up my pen, so that you who know only the legend can know something more of the real woman, for she did actually live, who remained vibrantly real to me to the end of my life. When I first began to write of her only eight months after her tragic death in 1847, I gave her the name Marguerite Gautier. As for myself, I kept my initials, appearing thinly disguised in the story as Armand Duval. Verdi and his admirable librettist Francesco Piave endowed us both with yet other names—her, Violetta Valery, and me, Alfredo Germont.

She was born as Rose Alphonsine Plessis in



Edouard Viénot's portrait of Marie Duplessis.

a Playwright

the small village of Nonant in the South of France, where my friend Georges Sand spent her childhood years, and softened her name to Marie Duplessis—it was more mellifluous and quasi-aristocratic—when she arrived in Paris at the age of fifteen, sometime in 1839. This is the name by which I knew her.

There has been a great deal said and written about our first meeting, but it was through my father that I was introduced to Marie; he was a member of her inner circle of friends. The meeting was like a shaft from the bow of Eros. I was only twenty-one years of age; she was nearly six months older. I was struck with awe by her appearance. Her pure and rarefied

John Ardoin is music critic of the Dallas Morning News and author of the new book Callas at Juilliard—The Master Classes, which will be published in November by Alfred Knopf. In constructing The Confessions of a Playwright, he drew on the writings of Alexandre Dumas as well as three articles: La Traviata by Allan C. Barnes, the Journal of the American Medical Association, April 7, 1969; The Three Traviatas, by Robert Rushmore, Opera News, January 13, 1973; and A Summer Villa in Passy, by Mark Steinbrink, the San Francisco Opera Magazine of 1980. To these, he added a bit of poetic license of his own.

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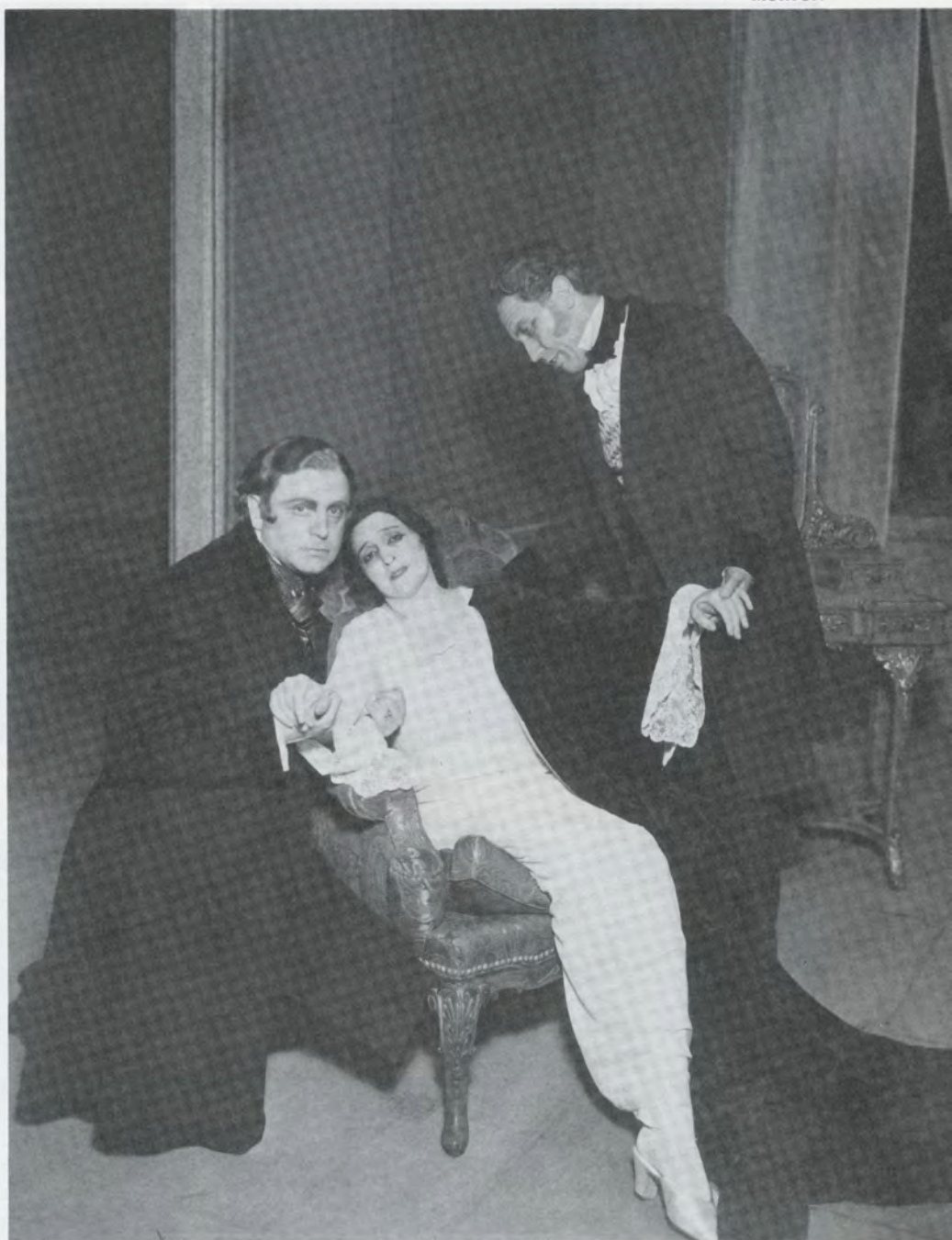
beauty reminded me of a Dresden figurine.

She was not very tall, only five foot, four inches, and her head was small. It was her face, rather than her figure, which first engaged one's attention and locked the look of her in one's memory. Her eyes were long and lacquer-like, resembling those of a Japanese, but delicate and animated; her lips were cherry red, and she had the loveliest teeth in the world. Her hair was black, her complexion pink and white, and she used to laugh over the fact that an official had recorded on her passport that one of her eyes was black, the other brown.

Perhaps you have seen the one existing portrait painted of her during her lifetime by Edouard Viénot. Though it cannot conjure up for you the rippling



Fanny Salvini-Donatelli, who portrayed Violetta in the world premiere of La Traviata in Venice on March 6, 1853.



Claudia Muzio as Violetta, Dino Borgioli (left) as Alfredo, and Richard Bonelli as the elder Germont in San Francisco Opera's 1932 Traviata.

animation of her smile, it at least confirms the sylph-like aura and the disturbing beauty of her face, a face with an expression of melancholy and tender aspiration that many have attempted to describe with such words as "fragile, virginal, spiritual, vaporous."

But words are poor things when it comes to capturing the essence of so exquisite a creature. This is something I

know all too well. The only way I could bring myself to write about her was by transforming Marie into Marguerite Gautier and taking advantage of the poetic license allowed me by having her wear this mask. But even so, as you will see, as I unfold our story, I remained as close to truth as was humanly and emotionally possible.

Before that fateful evening in the



Licia Albanese in Act I of San Francisco Opera's 1945 *Traviata*.



Lucrezia Bori in Act IV of San Francisco Opera's 1934 *Traviata*.

spring of 1844 when I went with my father to her salon, which was frequented by France's leading men of the aristocracy, arts and letters, I had already had a glimpse of her at the theater, with her shining black hair and a bunch of white camellias—her favorite flower—carried in her gloved hands.

I had heard much of her history as well—how an impoverished, drunken and bad-tempered father had been the cause of her leaving home, about her early days in the city as a grisette working a dress shop, and the series of wealthy lovers she had taken in Paris, including Count de Stackelberg, Napoleon III's Minister of Foreign Affairs.

In fact, she was still being maintained by de Stackelberg, then in his seventies, in a sumptuous apartment at 11 Boulevard de la Madeleine at the time we met. Her address was a bit of irony that was not lost on me, as Madeleine in French means Magdalene. At twenty-one, she was no longer a rustic, untutored farm girl who six years earlier could not write her name, but a slim woman with a well-modulated voice, who dressed with fastidious good taste. She was cultivated, intelligent and

kind. She played the piano and was extremely well-read. Among the books catalogued for sale from her library were volumes by Byron, Scott, Rabelais, Chateaubriand, Goethe, Molière and Rousseau.

Her rare qualities had won nearly every male heart in the city. Mine, she pocketed at once. I could see that she was frail and not well, and I worried incessantly about her. Day after day, I returned to her apartment uninvited to ask for word of her health. She later told me that the reason she eventually asked me to a small supper party was that she had been so touched by my daily solicitude. That party altered my life, and even now, I can recall it in minute detail.

In the middle of supper, Marie was suddenly seized by a fit of coughing and excused herself to go to her bedroom. On an impulse, I followed. Seeing and pitying this angel, racked by convulsions, I blurted out my love for her. Obviously moved, she, with great simplicity, agreed to love me. So impetuous was I, and so anxious for her to be mine, I asked, no doubt with insensitiveness, when our liaison might be consummated.

With great subtlety and the tenderest of smiles, she handed me a camellia she was wearing; it was blood red. "For twenty-five days of the month," she said, "the camellia is white; for five days it is red. Return when the camellia has changed color. Remember, my dear one, it is not always possible to carry the terms of a treaty on the day it is signed."

For the next few months we were inseparable, but soon, I was becoming desperate for funds to maintain a relationship I could ill afford. I turned more and more to the baccarat table, where I would lose as much in a night as an honest family could have lived on for a year. I also found myself becoming increasingly and unreasonably jealous of the extravagant attentions paid Marie by other men. God only knows what might have happened next had fate not taken the upper hand.

Marie became seriously ill and was ordered by her doctor to give up her frantic life of parties and late hours. I waited on her and cared for her until spring arrived, when I rented a lovely villa in Passy for us. For a short but idyllic time, there was only Marie and myself, plus rides in the countryside, simple food at

charming inns, picnicking under the sun and quiet evenings alone together.

I was so completely infatuated with her, I was blind to the impossibility of our situation. Marie was good to me, but she was accustomed to so much more than my small income could provide. She felt it was essential to maintain her rich connections for both our sakes. But being young, and with a surfeit of pride, I was unable to accept her decision.

After only a week together in Passy, I penned a short note to her on August 30, 1844—I shall never forget the date—and rushed out into the summer night never to see her alive again. Disillusioned and miserable, my father took me in hand and helped me to mend my broken heart. For a time we toured Spain and then went on to Algiers. But the image of Marie was always before me, and I dedicated my first volume of poetry—*Sins of Youth*—to her.

It was only a few years later, when I returned to France, that I heard the remainder of Marie's story. After I left her, she had taken Franz Liszt as her lover. It did not last too long because of the demands of his career and her recurring illnesses. In 1846, she married a Viscount

and began a round of spa after spa in a pathetic attempt to regain her strength. Finally, in February of 1847, she died of tuberculosis when only twenty-three years of age. It is to Liszt's credit that he wrote to a friend following her death that, "I would have tried to save her at any price, for hers was a delightful nature in which practices commonly held to be corrupt, and rightly so, perhaps, never touched her soul."

My one solace was in knowing that her last years were comfortable. Unlike Marguerite Gautier, Marie was at least financially secure at the end, though, to my eternal regret, I was not at her side when the end came, consoling her as Armand Duval consoled Marguerite and made plans for them to leave Paris for the countryside where she might regain her health.

On my return to the capital, I paid a visit to her doctor, for I wanted to understand as completely as possible the nature of this special creature who had so affected my life. With him I raised the question of whether licentious behavior in a woman so virginal and high-bred in appearance might have had some glandu-

lar basis. He assured me that given a regular menses such as Marie experienced it was difficult to imagine any sort of glandular disturbance.

He gently suggested that I might well be a victim of the fairly common belief that a connection exists between a woman's physical appearance and her sexual behavior. He felt that having idealized Marie, I was attempting to find some medical reason for her way of life. He suggested that my difficulty rested in not being able to accept the fact that she looked like a saint but behaved like a sinner.

It is probably true that to me Marie was a virgin in whom changing but a jot had made a courtesan, a courtesan in whom changing but a jot could have made the purest virgin. Perhaps the realization of this fine line was what eventually caused me, in my writing, to be described as a social moralist, especially where women and the preservation of French family life were concerned.

But, after all, when I knew Marie, I was but young and inexperienced, a boy who had had an unhappy and lonely childhood. Because of my origins—the



Jarmila Novotná was San Francisco Opera's Violetta in 1939; Nino Martini was Alfredo.



Bidú Sayão and Jan Peerce, Violetta and Alfredo of San Francisco Opera's 1942 Traviata, pausing backstage between acts.

MORTON

MORTON



Beverly Sills and Wieslaw Ochman in Act II of San Francisco Opera's 1973 *Traviata*.

illegitimate son of a fallen woman and a father whose mother had been a prostitute—I had known nothing but mockery and vilification throughout my early years. I suppose for this reason I had woven a thread of romantic melancholy into the texture of an ardent temperament. It is no wonder, then, that later in life, having been so in love with a woman who was also a courtesan, I would be occupied with the border line between the saint and the sinner, between the mystic and the *demi-monde* and unable to see clearly that the mystic can be a *demi-mondaine*, that the evangelist can entertain

a series of men in her bedroom.

In later years, I wrote of Marie that "Sometimes she was taken for a lady of high society; mistakes of that kind are made every day now." I could not have been so wise at the time I lived with her and was baffled by the contradictions I found in her. Surely this confusion on my part helps to explain a passage from my novel *The Lady of the Camellias*: "If anyone would have said to me, 'you shall win this woman tonight and be killed tomorrow,' I should have accepted the offer. But had I been told 'Give her ten louis and you shall be her love,' I should have refused and

wept like a child."

There are those who have criticized me as having turned a story of a great love affair into a tale of self-sacrifice for the cause of family honor and bourgeois love. Maybe they have some justification, but I prefer the opinion of my old friend Théophile Gautier, who said of my play, that "At last Marie Duplessis has the statue which we asked for her. The poet has taken over the task of the sculptor, and instead of the body, has given us a soul!"

Whatever my sins, let no one doubt the honesty of my feelings. A few years ago I happened to run across that last letter I had written to her in a Paris autograph shop. I discovered Marie had left it to her sister, who later sold it when my signature began to be worth a few sous. I bought the letter on the spot, and later presented it to Sarah Bernhardt, whose moving portrayal of Marguerite Gautier on the stage had awakened in me such dear memories of that long-ago summer in Passy. I would like to share the letter with you so that you might perhaps better understand the tumult that consumed me at the time we parted.

"Dear Marie,

I am neither rich enough to love you as I would wish, nor poor enough to be loved by you as you would like. Let us both, therefore, forget—you, a name which cannot mean very much to you, and I, a happiness which is no longer possible for me. You have too much heart not to understand the reasons for this letter, and too much heart not to forgive.

A thousand memories,
A.D."

I pray I was forgiven. I know I shall never forget.

Twelve years after Marie's death, I was witness to a sad scene I must also share with you. I attended the reinterment of her body in the cemetery of Montmartre from a temporary to a permanent gravesite. Since the body had to be certified as hers, I once again gazed upon that face, so dear to me.

Of the eyes, there remained but two empty sockets; the lips had disappeared. The long black hair, quite dry, stuck to the temples and partly veiled the green cavities of the cheeks. Yet I recognized in this visage the lovely red and white countenance I had so often beheld, and I wept for her and for our love. ■

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ARTIST PROFILES



NELLY MIRICIOIU

Romanian-born soprano **Nelly Miricioiu** returns to San Francisco Opera as Violetta in *La Traviata*, the vehicle of her American debut during our 1983 Fall Season, and a role she has sung at the Paris Opéra-Comique, Dallas Opera, Scottish Opera, London's Covent Garden, for her debut at the Sydney Opera House, her German debut in Frankfurt, her Spanish debut in Oviedo, and for her debuts with the Hamburg State Opera, the Canadian Opera and her first appearance at the Arena di Verona. She was most recently seen here as Mimì in the 1986 production of *La Bohème*. Miss Miricioiu made her operatic debut in 1970 as the Queen of the Night in *Die Zauberflöte* and then became a leading soprano of the Brasov Opera, where her repertoire included Violetta, Mimì, Gilda in *Rigoletto* and Micaëla in *Carmen*. At the same time she won many awards in vocal competitions in numerous European capitals and, after completing her studies in Italy, emigrated to the west in 1981. Her first London engagement—as Violetta with the Scottish Opera—resulted in return engagements with the company in *Tosca* and *Manon Lescaut*, and it was in the latter role that she opened the 1982 Edinburgh Festival. Miss Miricioiu bowed with the Royal Opera at Covent Garden as Nedda in *Pagliacci* and made her first Paris Opera appearance as all three heroines in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*. She scored a personal triumph at her 1983 La Scala debut in the title role of *Lucia di Lammermoor*. Her 1986 Vienna State Opera debut as Manon Lescaut was followed by performances in Rome of *La Bohème* and *Lucia di Lammermoor*. She returned to Frankfurt for new productions of *La Bohème* and *Manon Lescaut* and a revival of *Tosca*, and sang in Madrid as Mimì opposite Plácido Domingo. Earlier this year, she added to her repertoire the roles of Lucrezia Borgia (in Montpellier) and Tancredi (in Amsterdam), made her debut at the Deutsche Oper Berlin as Tosca, and appeared as Lucia in Toronto.



MADELYN RENÉE

Later this season, she will sing Violetta, Mimì and Manon Lescaut in Vienna, Paris, Hamburg, Berlin, Munich and Washington, D.C.

American soprano **Madelyn Renée** makes her San Francisco Opera debut as Violetta in the family performances of *La Traviata* and as Stephano in *Roméo et Juliette*. A native of Boston and a student of the Juilliard School, she has made a number of important debuts in the past few seasons including her Metropolitan Opera debut as the Priestess in *Aida*; the Vienna State Opera as Musetta in *La Bohème* and as Siebel in Ken Russell's new production of *Faust*; the Paris Opera in *La Bohème*; Opéra-Comique in *La Belle Hélène*; the Berlin Opera in *Don Giovanni*, and Teatro La Fenice in Venice in the title role of Mozart's *Zaide*. She also bowed at the Budapest Opera as Musetta and at the Bilbao Opera as Micaëla in *Carmen*. Earlier this season Miss Renée added several new roles to her repertoire including the title role of *The Merry Widow*, which she performed in Palermo; Adina in *L'Elisir d'Amore* in Budapest, and Violetta in Bulgaria. Her recent British concert debut was with the Halle Orchestra singing "Les Chants d'Auvergne." She has appeared at the Salzburg Festival for the past three seasons and has recently undertaken her first recording assignments, performing *Aida* conducted by Lorin Maazel and *Lohengrin* conducted by Sir Georg Solti. She made her unexpected Bay Area debut last September when she stepped in for the ailing Joan Sutherland as part of a concert tour with Luciano Pavarotti, in a program which was later televised live from Madison Square Garden.

Mezzo-soprano **Heather Begg** makes her San Francisco Opera debut as Flora in *La Traviata*. Born in New Zealand of Scottish parentage, her professional singing career

LA TRAVIATA



HEATHER BEGG

began in 1954 when she became a principal singer with the National Opera of Australia. In 1960 Miss Begg joined Sadler's Wells Opera, and then the Royal Opera Covent Garden as a resident principal artist, until 1976, when she returned to Australia to take up her current full time contract with Australian Opera. She has appeared there in a wide variety of roles, including the title role in *Carmen*, Adalgisa in *Norma*, Amneris in *Aida*, Mistress Quickly in *Falstaff*, Marina in *Boris Godunov*, Mother Marie in *Dialogues of the Carmelites*, Emilia in *Otello*, Prince Orlofsky in *Die Fledermaus* and Gertrude in *Hamlet*. In 1986 she made her San Diego Opera debut as Marcellina in *Le Nozze di Figaro* and created the role of Mrs. Bonner in the world premiere of Meale's *Voss* in Adelaide. Later that year, she appeared in *The Consul*, *Peter Grimes*, *La Fille du Régiment* and *Boris Godunov*, and sang Klytemnestra in concert performances of *Elektra*. Her 1987 engagements have included *Patience*, *The Mikado*, *Voss*, *Peter Grimes*, *Suor Angelica* and *Gianni Schicchi*. Miss Begg has made many guest appearances at leading festivals and opera houses, including the Orange Festival, Salzburg and Edinburgh Festivals, Strasbourg Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, the Bordeaux and Vancouver Operas, and is a frequent soloist in New Zealand. Her recordings include *Les Troyens*, *I Puritani* and Boito's *Mefistofele*. Her extensive video recordings include *Die Fledermaus*, *Adriana Lecoureur*, *The Dialogues of the Carmelites* and *La Fille du Régiment*, with *Voss* about to be released. She has also filmed the role of Marcellina in the Jean-Pierre Ponnelle production of *Le Nozze di Figaro* with Karl Böhm and the Vienna Philharmonic. Miss Begg was awarded the Order of the British Empire in the 1978 Queen's Birthday Honors.

Mezzo-soprano **Kathryn Cowdrick** returns to San Francisco Opera as the Second Lady in *The Magic Flute*, as Paulina



KATHRYN COWDRICK

in *The Queen of Spades* and as Flora in the family performances of *La Traviata*. She made her 1985 Company debut as Mlle. Dangeville in *Adriana Lecouvreur* and has since been seen here as an Orphan in *Der Rosenkavalier*, Meg Page in the family performances of *Falstaff*, Lola in *Cavalleria Rusticana*, Mrs. Nolan in *The Medium*, Siebel in *Faust*, Karolka in *Jenůfa* and Rosette in *Manon*. As a participant in the 1984 Merola Opera Program, Miss Cowdrick received the Gropper Memorial Award at the program's Grand Finals and appeared as Meg Page at Stern Grove and as Tisbe in *La Cenerentola* at Villa Montalvo. She went on to perform the title role in Western Opera Theater's national touring production of *La Cenerentola*, and was named an Adler Fellow with the Opera Center for 1985-1986. Other Opera Center credits include Prince Orlofsky in *Die Fledermaus* on tour with the San Francisco Opera Center Singers, and two roles in the Center's 1986 Showcase: Zaida in Rossini's *The Turk in Italy* and Genevieve in *The Long Christmas Dinner*. A professional speech therapist, Cowdrick received much of her musical training at Juilliard's American Opera Center. In 1983 she appeared in Barber's *Antony and Cleopatra* at the Spoleto Festival in Charleston (a production that was recorded and received the 1985 Grammy Award), and in *Madama Butterfly* at the Spoleto Festivals in Charleston and Italy. Other engagements include Marcellina in *The Marriage of Figaro* with the Carmel Bach Festival and the Vancouver Opera, as well as a recent appearance as Rosina in *The Barber of Seville* for the Netherlands Opera. Future engagements include her Carnegie Hall debut with the Opera Orchestra of New York in a concert presentation of *Jenůfa*.

In her 21st season with San Francisco Opera, mezzo-soprano **Donna Petersen** sings three roles this fall: Annina in *La*



DONNA PETERSEN

Traviata, Gertrude in *Roméo et Juliette*, and the Governess in *The Queen of Spades*. She most recently appeared here as Filipyevna in *Eugene Onegin* last fall, a role she previously sang with the Company in 1971. Among her more than 30 roles with the Company are the Innkeeper in *Boris Godunov*, Sister Mathilde in *Dialogues of the Carmelites*, Mother Goose in *The Rake's Progress*, Marcellina in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Mrs. Ill in *The Visit of the Old Lady*, Mrs. Sedley in *Peter Grimes*, Grimgerde in *Die Walküre* (a role she has performed in seven different San Francisco Opera stagings), Mary in *Der Fliegende Holländer* and Ada Hawkes in the 1976 world premiere of Andrew Imbrie's *Angle of Repose*. Miss Petersen has toured extensively with Western Opera Theater, has sung numerous seasons with Spring Opera Theater and appeared with the San Diego Opera and the Guild Opera of Los Angeles. In 1974 she made her highly successful debut as Mrs. Sedley in *Peter Grimes* at the Lyric Opera of Chicago, a role she repeated there in 1977. She also appeared in Chicago as Mrs. Benson in *Lakmé* in 1983. Concert engagements include performances with the San Francisco Symphony, Oakland Symphony, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Honolulu Symphony and the National Symphony Orchestra of Mexico City, as well as 25 concerts in Australia, and additional concerts in England, Vienna, Venice, Winterthur and Ljubljana. Miss Petersen is a Knight of the Royal Order of Dannebrog, presented to her by Queen Margrethe II of Denmark in 1976.

Soprano **Sara Ganz** appears as Annina in the family performances of *La Traviata* and as Masha in *The Queen of Spades*. She was first heard with San Francisco Opera as Jano in *Jenůfa* during the 1980 season, and has since appeared here in *Rigoletto*, *Manon*, *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* and *The Merry Widow*. As a member of the 1980



SARA GANZ

Merola Opera Program, she performed the roles of Lisette in *La Rondine* at Stern Grove and Emmie in *Albert Herring* at the Paul Masson Winery, and received a Merola Fund Award in the Grand Finals of the San Francisco Opera Auditions. She has toured with Western Opera Theater as Adina in *The Elixir of Love*, Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet*, and made her Spring Opera debut as Wanda in *The Grand Duchess of Gerolstein*. Miss Ganz has appeared as Norina in *Don Pasquale* with the Pamiro Opera in Green Bay, Adina with California Coast Opera, Nella in *Gianni Schicchi* with San Antonio Opera, and Gretel in *Hansel and Gretel* with the Opera Guild of Southern California. With Donald Pippin's Pocket Opera, she has sung Susanna in *The Marriage of Figaro*, Zerline in *Fra Diavolo*, and has specialized in the operas of Handel and Offenbach operettas. During her first six seasons at the Carmel Bach Festival, she was heard as Marzelline in *Fidelio*, Zerlina in *Don Giovanni*, Despina in *Così fan tutte* and Papagena in *The Magic Flute*, as well as in oratorio and cantata assignments. A versatile concert artist, she has appeared with the Pasadena, Sacramento, Stockton and Marin symphony orchestras, the Pasadena Chamber Orchestra and the California Bach Society. She has been a winner in the Metropolitan Opera Auditions and the International Concours in Geneva, Switzerland. For the 1986-87 season, Miss Ganz served as Artist-in-Residence at the University of North Carolina.

Mexican tenor **Francisco Araiza** returns to San Francisco Opera as Tamino in *The Magic Flute* and as Alfredo in *La Traviata*. He made his American debut here as Don Ramiro in *La Cenerentola* in 1982, returning in 1984 as Ernesto in *Don Pasquale* and again last season as Des Grieux in *Manon*. Originally a student of music and business administration at the University of Mex-



FRANCISCO ARAIZA

ico City, he went on to study voice at the Conservatory there. His international career began in 1974 in Munich, where he was a winner of the Bavarian Radio Voice Competition. He has been a permanent member of the Zurich Opera since 1977 and has appeared at numerous festivals such as Edinburgh, Aix-en-Provence, Bayreuth, the Easter and Summer festivals in Salzburg (with Herbert von Karajan), Bregenz, and the Schubertiade in Hohenems. He is currently on the roster of the Munich and Paris Opera, Hamburg State Opera and, since 1978, the Vienna State Opera. Araiza performed with Milan's La Scala in Tokyo in 1981, and 1982 brought his debuts in Chicago (with the Chicago Symphony under Abbado) and in Milan as Don Ramiro in *La Cenerentola*. 1983 marked his debut in London as Ernesto in *Don Pasquale* and in Houston as Count Almaviva in *The Barber of Seville*. In March of 1984 he bowed at the Metropolitan and Chicago Lyric Opera as Belmonte in *The Abduction from the Seraglio* and made his debut with the Rossini Festival in Pesaro in *Viaggio a Reims* with Claudio Abbado. Araiza has recently added several roles to his repertory, which is now largely made up of the heavier lyric Italian and French roles. He had great success in 1985 in Vienna with Massenet's *Des Grieux* as well as *Faust*, in Zurich with *Maria Stuarda* and *Rigoletto*, and *La Traviata* in Houston. 1986 saw Araiza in *La Bohème* in Rome, *Anna Bolena* at the Bregenz Festival, and *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* in Munich. Engagements for 1987 include *Werther* in Munich and London, *Madama Butterfly* in Zurich and *I Puritani* in Hamburg. The tenor's solo recordings include *Fiesta Mexicana*, a collection of popular Mexican songs, a recording of arias, two Schubert recitals and an album of French, Spanish and Mexican Lieder. His opera recordings include *Die Zauberflöte* and *Falstaff* under Herbert von Karajan, *Così fan tutte* with Riccardo Muti, *Faust* under Colin Davis, *The Barber of Seville*



DOUGLAS WUNSCH

and *La Cenerentola* under Neville Marriner and a soon-to-be-released recording of *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*. In 1984 he received the Orphée d'Or for his recording of Rossini's Almaviva and the Deutsche Schallplattenpreis for his album of Schubert Lieder.

Tenor **Douglas Wunsch** makes his San Francisco Opera debut as a Priest in *The Magic Flute*, and also appears as the Master of Ceremonies in *The Queen of Spades* and as Alfredo in the family performances of *La Traviata*. Wunsch participated in the 1985 and '86 Merola Opera Programs and also toured both years with Western Opera Theater, singing Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni* in 1985 and Rodolfo in *La Bohème* in 1986. He also appeared in the 1986 Opera Center Showcase series as Robert in *There and Back*, and Charles in *The Long Christmas Dinner*, both by Hindemith, and as Albazar in Rossini's *The Turk in Italy*. A 1987 Adler Fellow with the San Francisco Opera Center, he has performed with the San Francisco Opera Center Singers as Alfredo in *La Traviata* in Palm Springs, Honolulu, and at Stern Grove under Kurt Herbert Adler. Wunsch is a graduate of Northwestern University where he sang several roles including Anatol in Barber's *Vanessa* and Shemeikka in Merikanto's *Juha*. He has also sung Luigi in *Il Tabarro* with the Chamber Opera of Chicago and performed with the Northwestern Symphony Orchestra, the Spokane Symphony and with the San Francisco Symphony Pops.

Spanish baritone **Juans Pons** returns to San Francisco Opera as Scarpia in *Tosca* and as the elder Germont in *La Traviata*. He made his Company debut as Nottingham in *Roberto Devereux* in 1979, and returned during the 1984 Summer Season to sing Amonasro in *Aida* opposite Leontyne Price. He made his operatic



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JUAN PONS

debut in Barcelona's Gran Teatro del Liceu, and in 1978 sang three Verdi roles in Mexico City: Count di Luna in *Il Trovatore*, Renato in *Un Ballo in Maschera* and Don Carlo in *Ernani*. He made his La Scala debut in the title role of *Falstaff* during the 1981-82 season and also bowed at Covent Garden and the Vienna State Opera in *Tosca*, *Cavalleria Rusticana*, *Aida* and *Don Carlo*. He performed the title role of *Macbeth* with the Washington Opera and toured Japan with the Scala company, appearing as Iago in *Otello*, opposite Plácido Domingo and Mirella Freni. The 1982-83 season marked his Metropolitan Opera debut as Count di Luna in *Il Trovatore*, including the national radio broadcast, and he opened the Vienna State Opera season with performances of *Aida*, *Tosca* and *Don Carlo*. Highlights from recent seasons include *Tosca* in Bonn, Milan, Barcelona and New York; *Un Ballo in Maschera* in Paris, New York and Milan; *Nabucco* in Zurich; *Simon Boccanegra* in Barcelona; *Cavalleria Rusticana* and *Pagliacci* in Vienna; a new production of *Macbeth* in Trieste; *I Due Foscari* in Madrid; *Salome* in Rome; and *La Traviata* in Dallas. An outstanding event for Pons was his performance opposite Teresa Stratas and Plácido Domingo in Franco Zeffirelli's production of *Pagliacci*, which was televised and released on records. He made his American debut at Carnegie Hall in Verdi's *Aroldo* with the Opera Orchestra of New York, a performance which was issued on a live recording.

Baritone **Thomas Potter** portrays the Second Nazarene in *Salome*, Gregorio in *Roméo et Juliette* and Germont in the Family Performances of *La Traviata*. He made his San Francisco Opera debut in 1985 in *Der Rosenkavalier*, and returned last season for *Die Meistersinger* and *Macbeth*. A participant in the Merola Opera Program in 1985 and 1986, he portrayed Valentin in the 1985 Stern



THOMAS POTTER

Grove production of *Faust* and Masetto in *Don Giovanni* at Villa Montalvo, where he also appeared as Marcello in *La Bohème* in the summer of 1986. He sang Germont in *La Traviata* with the San Francisco Opera Center Singers in Palm Springs and in a concert version conducted by Kurt Herbert Adler at Stern Grove. During Western Opera Theater's 1985-86 national tour, Potter performed Masetto, and sang Marcello in *La Bohème* for the 1986-87 WOT tour across the U.S. and to mainland China. He recently portrayed Silvano in the Lyric Opera of Philadelphia's production of *Un Ballo in Maschera* featuring Luciano Pavarotti. His professional experience includes performances with the Indiana Opera Theater, Michiana Opera, Central City Opera, Texas Opera Theater and the Inspiration Point Fine Arts Colony. A recipient of a master's degree in voice from Indiana University, Potter was a winner of the 1985 Pavarotti Vocal Competition held in Philadelphia and was the recipient of the 1986 Kent Family Award given at the Merola Opera Program's Grand Finals. In July of this year he portrayed Sylvester in the San Francisco Opera Center Showcase production of Rorem's *Three Sisters Who Are Not Sisters*. He is currently an Adler Fellow with the San Francisco Opera Center.

Bass-baritone **Philip Skinner** will portray four roles this season: the First Nazarene in *Salome*, Baron Douphol in *La Traviata*, Schlemil in *The Tales of Hoffmann* and Surin in *The Queen of Spades*. He made his San Francisco Opera debut as Quinault in the 1985 Fall Season production of *Adriana Lecouvreur*, appeared as Ferrando in *Il Trovatore* during the 1986 Summer Season and returned in the fall for *Don Carlos*, *La Forza del Destino*, *Faust*, *Eugene Onegin* and *Macbeth*. Currently an Adler Fellow with the San Francisco Opera Center, he appeared in the 1986 Showcase performances of Hindemith's *There and Back* and



PHILIP SKINNER

The Long Christmas Dinner. As a participant in the 1985 Merola Opera Program, he portrayed Mephistopheles in *Faust* and the title role in *Don Giovanni*, going on to tour with Western Opera Theater in the latter role. He has sung with Kentucky Opera, the Columbus Symphony, the Savannah Symphony, and at the San Antonio Festival in such roles as Timur and the Mandarin in *Turandot*, Escamillo in *Carmen*, Don Fernando in *Fidelio*, and the King of Egypt in *Aida*. A graduate of Northwestern University, Skinner received his master's degree from Indiana University, where he performed in several productions. His concert credits include Haydn's *The Seasons*, *The Creation* and *Lord Nelson Mass*. In July of this year Skinner appeared as the Colonel in the San Francisco Opera Center Showcase performances of *Le Plumet du Colonel*. His recent concert appearances include Mozart's Requiem at the Midsummer Mozart Festival, Verdi's Requiem with the Masterworks Chorale, and Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with the Vallejo Symphony. Future engagements include Basilio in *The Barber of Seville* with the New York City Opera National Company, and Ferrando in *Il Trovatore* with Kentucky Opera.

In his first season with San Francisco Opera, baritone **Victor Ledbetter** is Baron Douphol in the family performances of *La Traviata* and Paris in *Roméo et Juliette*. A native of Georgia, he was a member of the 1986 Merola Opera Program and portrayed Marcello in *La Bohème* in the Program's production at Villa Montalvo. During the 1986-87 season he sang Marcello with Western Opera Theater, including appearances on tour to China. Ledbetter is a graduate of Mercer University and has studied for two years at Indiana University with Nicola Rossi-Lemeni, teaching there as an Associate Instructor of Voice. His university credits include



VICTOR LEDBETTER

Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte*, Don Quixote in *Man of La Mancha*, Tonio in *Pagliacci* and the title role of *Don Giovanni*. He has appeared in several productions with the Phoenix Opera of Atlanta, including *Le Comte Ory* and *The Yeomen of the Guard*. Ledbetter has acted extensively in the theater as well, portraying Judge Brack in *Hedda Gabler*, *Tartuffe* in *Tartuffe*, Mr. Peachum in *The Threepenny Opera* and Polonius in *Hamlet*. A choir director for several years, he is also a frequent oratorio soloist, and is a recent prize-winner in the Baltimore Opera Competition.

After making his San Francisco Opera debut during the 1985 Fall Season as Dansker in *Billy Budd* and as a Notary in *Der Rosenkavalier*, English bass-baritone **Eric Garrett** returns as the Sacristan in *Tosca* and Marquis D'Obigny in *La Traviata*. He made his American opera debut to wide acclaim as Baron Ochs in the 1984 Los Angeles Opera Theater production of *Der Rosenkavalier*. After completing his studies at London's Royal College of Music, he made his Covent Garden debut in 1962, singing the roles of Benoit and Alcindoro in *La Bohème*. He continued his studies with Eva Turner and Tito Gobbi, and appeared in over 50 roles with the Royal Opera, including the Sacristan in the historic Zeffirelli production of *Tosca* with Maria Callas and Gobbi (and subsequently with Plácido Domingo, Luciano Pavarotti and José Carreras), the title role of *Gianni Schicchi*, the One-Armed Man in *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, Polonius in *Hamlet*, Antonio in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Don Fernando in *Fidelio*, Truffaldino in *Ariadne auf Naxos*, the Nightwatchman in *Die Meistersinger*, the Mayor in *Jenůfa*, Swallow in *Peter Grimes* and Frank in *Die Fledermaus*. He has won acclaim with the leading opera companies and television studios of Great Britain, Belgium and France as Leporello in *Don Giovanni*, Don Magnifico in *La Cenerentola*, Scarpia, Dulcamara in *continued on p.48*

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La Traviata

(in Italian)

Conductor

Andrew Meltzer
John Fiore (December 10, 12)

Production

John Copley

Set Designer

John Conklin

Costume Designer

David Walker*

Lighting Designer

Thomas J. Munn

Chorus Director

Ian Robertson

Choreographer

Adela Clara*

Musical Preparation

Robert Morrison
Christopher Larkin
Susanna Lemberskaya
Craig Rutenberg*

Prompter

Jonathan Khuner

Assistant Stage Director

Paula Williams

Stage Manager

Jerry Sherk

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First performance:

Venice, March 6, 1853

First San Francisco Opera performance:

October 4, 1924

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TUESDAY, OCTOBER 20 AT 8:00

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 23 AT 8:00

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 28 AT 7:30

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 1 AT 2:00

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 4 AT 8:00

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 7 AT 1:00

Family Performances:

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10 AT 8:00

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 12 AT 2:00

CAST

(in order of appearance)

		<i>December 10 and 12 (Family Performances)</i>
<i>Violetta Valery</i>	Nelly Miricioiu	Madelyn Renée
<i>Doctor Grenvil</i>	David Pittsinger	David Pittsinger
<i>Flora Bervoix</i>	Heather Begg*	Kathryn Cowdrick
<i>Marquis d'Obigny</i>	Eric Garrett	Lendon T. Munday*
<i>Baron Douphol</i>	Philip Skinner	Victor Ledbetter*
<i>Annina</i>	Donna Petersen	Sara Ganz
<i>Gastone</i>	Kevin Anderson	Kevin Anderson
<i>Alfredo Germont</i>	Francisco Araiza	Douglas Wunsch
<i>Giuseppe</i>	Michael Rees Davis	Michael Rees Davis
<i>Giorgio Germont</i>	Juan Pons	Thomas Potter
<i>Messenger</i>	Raymond Murcell	Raymond Murcell
<i>A servant</i>	David Burnakus	David Burnakus

Demimondaines, gentlemen, servants

Solo Dancers: Paula Reyes*, Carmen Granados*, Miguel Santos*

*San Francisco Opera debut

TIME AND PLACE: Mid-19th-century Paris and environs

ACT I Violetta's house

INTERMISSION

ACT II A country house near Paris

INTERMISSION

ACT III Flora's house

INTERMISSION

ACT IV Violetta's house

Supertitles for *La Traviata* provided by a generous and most appreciated gift from William and Eloise Rollnick.

Supertitles by Jerry Sherk, 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 fifteen minutes.

La Traviata/Synopsis

ACT I

A party is taking place at the home of Violetta Valery, a beautiful Parisian demimondaine. Gastone arrives and presents his friend, Alfredo Germont, telling Violetta that Alfredo has long been a silent admirer and had even called daily during her illness to ask about her. Baron Douphol, one of Violetta's "protectors," is angered by the conversation and refuses to propose a toast when invited to by Gastone. Alfredo then accepts the invitation, and sings an impassioned tribute to beauty and love. Later, as the others go to another room to dance, Violetta is overcome by a fainting spell. Alfredo stays behind and confesses that he has been in love with her for a year. Violetta offers him friendship instead of love and gives him a flower, bidding him return when it has withered. Alfredo joyously accepts and bids her goodnight. When her guests have gone, Violetta muses thoughtfully on Alfredo's proffered love, but finally returns to her true character and declares that she must remain forever free to pass from pleasure to pleasure.

ACT II

Violetta is living with Alfredo in the country, having abandoned her life of ease and luxury in town. Annina, Violetta's maid and confidante, enters and tells Alfredo she has been sent to arrange the sale of Violetta's property, which must be sold to pay her debts. Alfredo suddenly understands the sacrifices which Violetta has made in order to live with him and leaves for Paris, determined not to be shamed by her sacrifice. Violetta enters. She receives an unexpected visitor, Giorgio Germont, Alfredo's father, who declares that Alfredo is ruining himself to keep her as his mistress. When Germont comments on the luxury of the country retreat, Violetta shows him the papers which have been prepared for the sale of all her possessions. He asks her to give up Alfredo, explaining that by continuing the liaison, Alfredo is endangering the impending marriage of his younger sister. Germont's insistence finally convinces Violetta, who agrees to leave Alfredo forever. She is preparing a letter as Alfredo returns. Germont has gone out into the garden. Alfredo, not realizing his father has already arrived, explains that Germont has written him a severe letter but that he feels sure he will approve of Violetta as soon as he sees her. Pretending to leave

so as not to be present during the meeting of father and son, Violetta goes out. A messenger returns with her letter of farewell. Alfredo is stricken with grief at the loss of Violetta, and when his father tries to persuade him to return to his family, Alfredo refuses. Finding on the table an invitation which Flora had sent Violetta, he resolves to go to Flora's in the hope of finding Violetta.

ACT III

Alfredo arrives at Flora's house as the guests are beginning to gamble. Then Violetta arrives, escorted by Baron Douphol. Alfredo is incredibly lucky at cards, and explains that he who is unlucky in love is lucky at cards. The Baron, incensed at Alfredo's insolence, challenges him to play. Alfredo accepts and beats the baron repeatedly at high stakes. When all the others go in to dinner, Violetta remains behind to entreat Alfredo to leave lest the Baron challenge him to a duel. Alfredo answers that he will leave, but only if she accompanies him. Unwilling to reveal that she must break off with him because of his father, Violetta declares that she is in love with the Baron. Alfredo, in a frenzy of jealousy, calls all the guests into the room and announces that without knowing it he has been living with Violetta at great sacrifice on her part. In a rage, he throws money at her feet and calls upon all to witness that he has paid her in full. Germont has entered just in time to witness Alfredo's caddish behavior and joins the others in reviling him for his conduct. Alfredo, realizing the lengths to which his jealousy has carried him, is contrite, but realizes that he is helpless to make amends. The Baron assures Alfredo that he must answer for the insult on the field of honor.

ACT IV

Violetta's illness has brought her to the point of death. Her physician, Dr. Grenvil, calls at her home, examines her and tells Annina that she has but a few hours to live. Violetta reads a letter from the elder Germont, in which she learns that Alfredo has gone abroad after wounding the Baron in a duel. He knows now of the great sacrifice which Violetta has made and is returning to beg her forgiveness. Alfredo returns and the two are reunited at last. But it is too late. Violetta, comforted by the presence of the man whom she has so tragically loved, dies in his arms.

La Traviata

Photos taken in rehearsal by Marty Sohl



Nelly Miricioiu, Francisco Araiza



Nelly Miricioiu, Francisco Araiza



Nelly Miricioiu



Carmen Granados, Miguel Santos, Paula Reyes



Nelly Miricioiu



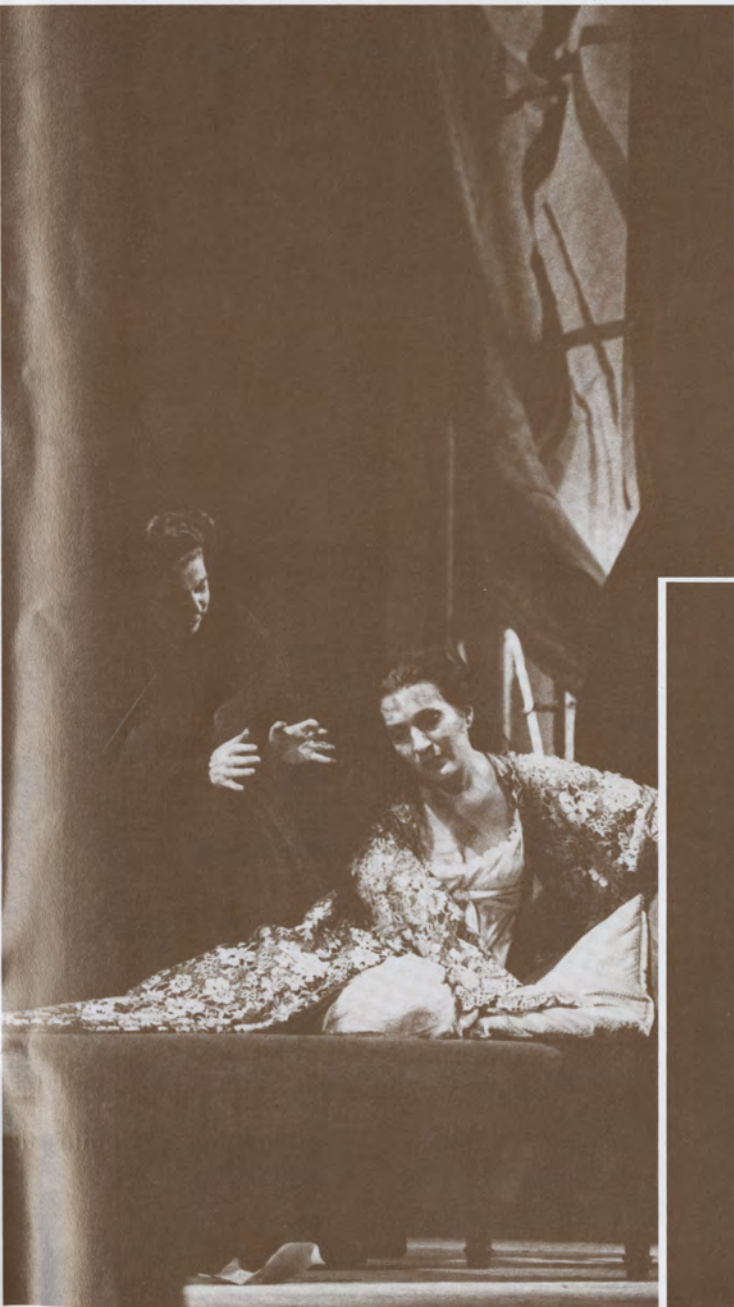
Juan Pons, Nelly Miricioiu



Heather Begg, Eric Garrett



Francisco Araiza



Donna Petersen, Nelly Miricioiu



Juan Pons



Francisco Araiza, Nelly Miricioiu



Nelly Miricioiu, Philip Skinner



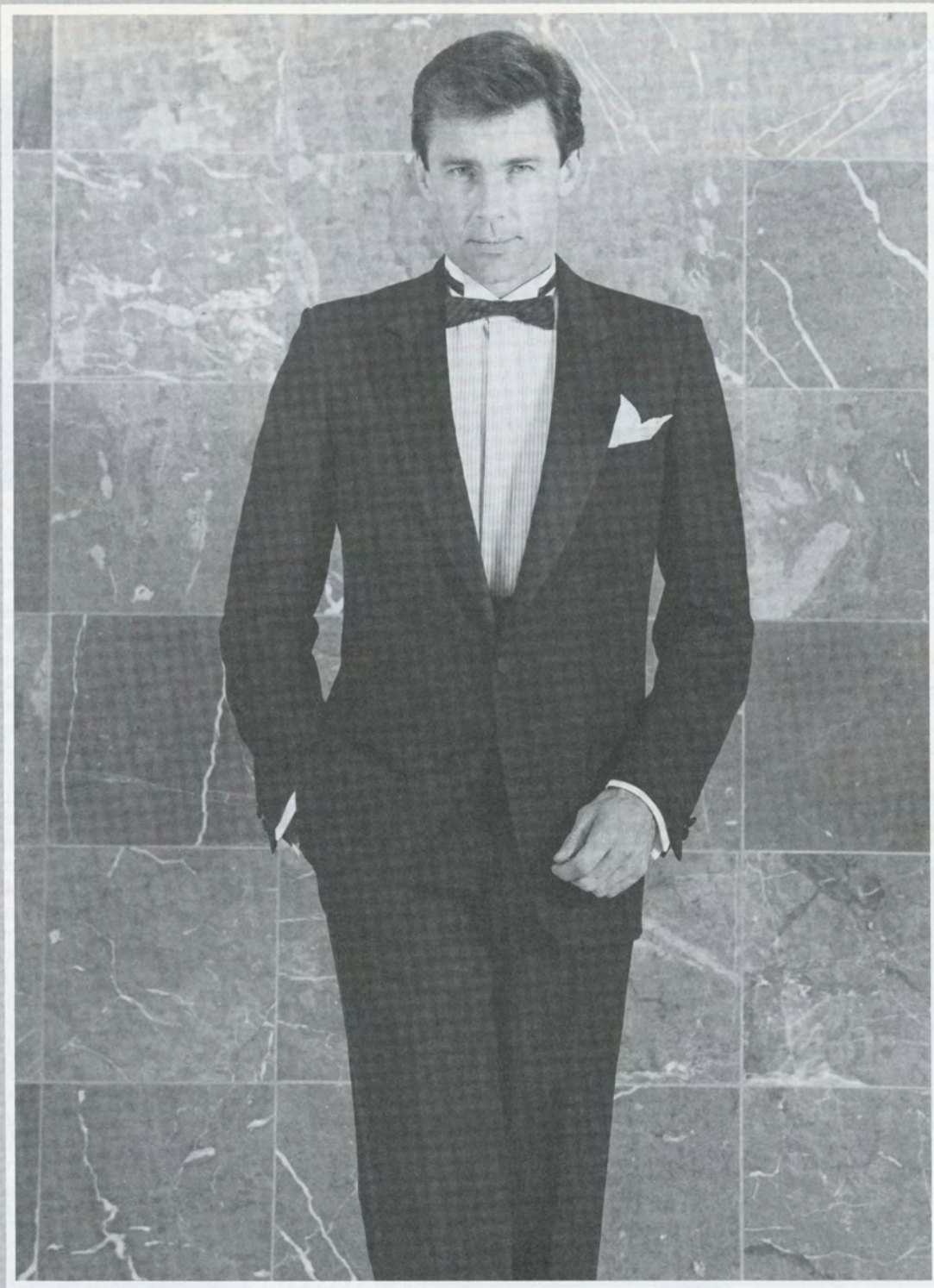
Nelly Miricioiu



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continued from p.39



ERIC GARRETT

L'Elisir d'Amore, Dr. Bartolo in both *Le Nozze di Figaro* and *The Barber of Seville*, Kecal in *The Bartered Bride*, Count Waldner in *Arabella*, Schigolch in *Lulu*, Fra Melitone in *La Forza del Destino*, and the title roles of *Don Pasquale* and *Falstaff*. Recordings and video performances include roles in *Billy Budd*, *La Fille du Régiment*, *The Tales of Hoffmann*, *A Christmas Carol* and *Andrea Chénier*. Future engagements include the Sacristan, the Mayor in *Jenůfa*, and Count Horn in *Un Ballo in Maschera* at the Royal Opera, Covent Garden, where he was recently awarded a medal for 25 years of association with the company.



LENDON T. MUNDAY

A member of the 1986 Merola Opera Program, baritone **Lendon T. Munday** portrays Marquis D'Obigny in the family performances of *La Traviata*. He made his operatic debut as Valentin in *Faust* at the Brevard Music Center in 1984, where he returned in 1985 to sing the title role in *The Barber of Seville* and Escamillo in *Carmen*. In 1986, his roles included Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte* with the Merola Opera Program, and Marcello in *La Bohème* with the South Carolina Opera and the Charlottetown Players. He recently returned from Western Opera



KEVIN ANDERSON

Theater's tour of the United States and the People's Republic of China, where he sang Marcello and Schaunard in *La Bohème*, and appeared in a joint concert with singers from Shanghai. A native of North Carolina, Munday received a bachelor of music degree from Winthrop College in South Carolina, and continued his training at the Academy of Vocal Arts in Philadelphia. He has been a regional finalist in the Metropolitan Opera Auditions in 1982, 1984 and 1985.

Tenor **Kevin Anderson** appears this season as an Officer in *The Barber of Seville*, The Third Jew in *Salome*, Gastone in *La Traviata* and Benvolio in *Roméo et Juliette*. The Illinois native made his San Francisco Opera debut during the 1985 Fall Season, appearing in *Lear* and *Turandot*, and returned in the summer of 1986 for *Il Trovatore*. A graduate of the University of Wyoming, he participated in the Merola Opera Programs of 1983 and '84, during which he appeared in productions of *The Tales of Hoffmann*, *Madama Butterfly* and *Falstaff*. He toured for two seasons with Western Opera Theater, portraying Goro in *Madame Butterfly* and Ramiro in *La Cenerentola*. He has also toured with the San Francisco Opera Center Singers as Nemorino in *The Elixir of Love*. Anderson was a member of the Santa Fe Opera Company Apprentice Program in 1982, and in 1984 he made his Michigan Opera Theater debut with the company's 1984 residency tour, during which he portrayed Martin in Copland's *The Tender Land*. He made his Carnegie Hall debut in a concert performance of the Strauss *Capriccio*, and his European debut at the Teatro Olimpico in Vicenza in Vivaldi's *Il Giustino*. He has recently performed twice with Marin Opera, as Roméo in Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette* and as Will Parker in *Oklahoma!*, also with the Philadelphia Opera as Tamino in *The Magic Flute*. His Pocket Opera credits include leading roles



DAVID PITTSINGER

in *Count Ory*, *Maria Stuarda* and *Orpheus in the Underworld*. In July of this year, Anderson appeared as the Lieutenant in the San Francisco Opera Showcase production of Henri Sauguet's *Le Plumet du Colonel*. In December he will appear as soloist in Handel's *Messiah* with the Honolulu Symphony.

American bass **David Pittsinger** makes his Company debut as the First Soldier in *Salome*, and will also appear as the Second Armored Man in *The Magic Flute*, Dr. Grenvil in *La Traviata* and Luther in *The Tales of Hoffmann*. He made his operatic debut as Tom in *Un Ballo in Maschera* with the Connecticut Opera, where he will return to sing Sparafucile in *Rigoletto*. He has also performed with the Pittsburgh Opera, most recently as the Ghost and Polonius in *Hamlet*. A graduate of the University of Connecticut, Pittsinger went on to receive his master of music degree from Yale University, where he was awarded the Jepson Prize for most promising young artist. He sang the role of Colline in *La Bohème* as a participant of the 1986 Merola Opera Program, and on the 1986-87 Western Opera Theater tour of the U.S. and China. He was presented with the Da Vinci Society Award at the Merola Opera Program Grand Finals last summer and is also a winner of the Riggio Award in the 1985 Metropolitan Opera Competition. Most recently Pittsinger portrayed Basilio in *The Barber of Seville* and Theseus in Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with the Wolf Trap Opera Company. Other credits include Handel's *Messiah*, Beethoven's *Mass in C*, Puccini's *Messa di Gloria*, public broadcast performances of Mozart's Requiem with Orchestra New England, and a concert version of *Aida* (as the King of Egypt) with the Stockton Symphony. Next spring he will be heard as Sparafucile in Connecticut Opera's *Rigoletto*, and will return to the Pittsburgh Opera as Zuniga in *Carmen*.

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MICHAEL REES DAVIS

Tenor **Michael Rees Davis** makes his San Francisco Opera debut as the First Prisoner in *Fidelio* and will also portray Giuseppe in both the regular season and family performances of *La Traviata*, and Nathanael in *The Tales of Hoffmann*. The Oklahoma native participated in the 1986 Merola Opera Program and went on to sing Rodolfo in *La Bohème* on the Western Opera Theater tour across the U.S. and China. Davis also participated in the 1985-86 Houston Opera Studio and Houston Grand Opera's productions of *Ariadne auf Naxos* and *The Count Ory*. Other engagements include Nanki-Poo in *The Mikado* and Sam Kaplan in *Street Scene* with the Chautauqua Opera, and Beppe in *Pagliacci* with Opera Omaha. This past summer Davis sang several roles with the New York City Opera including Alfredo in *La Traviata*, Detlef in *The Student Prince* and Anthony in *Sweeney Todd*. He has also recently appeared as Edgardo in *Lucia di Lammermoor* with the Anchorage Opera, where he plans to return next year to sing Tamino in *The Magic Flute*.



PAULA REYES

Paula Reyes makes her San Francisco Opera debut as dancer in *La Traviata*. She has performed internationally for Theatre Flamenco of San Francisco and the Ballet



CARMEN GRANADOS

Español and has appeared as guest artist in Honolulu and with the Milwaukee Fine Arts Association. She made her stage debut in 1973 at Berkeley's Zellerbach Hall with Montoya's Ballet Español. Miss Reyes has studied locally with Rosa Montoya, Adela Clara and Miguel Santos and with Carmen Mora and Pepe Rios in Spain. She is noted for her expressive style which incorporates some of the hand movements used in hula dancing. Raised in the Hawaiian Islands, she is currently a soloist with Theatre Flamenco of San Francisco.

Carmen Granados makes her San Francisco Opera debut dancing in *La Traviata*. She began dancing at the Academy of Ballet in San Francisco, where she studied with Carolyn Parks. Later she began studying Spanish dance with Adela Clara and joined the Theatre Flamenco of San Francisco. She has also studied in Madrid and has been a Guest Teacher in Residence at the University of Utah, teaching Spanish dance. Miss Granados performed with Spring Opera Theater and has toured throughout California and the Pacific Northwest with Theatre Flamenco. Most recently she was a featured performer with Rosa Montoya's Bailes Flamencos and was a soloist for the second year in the San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival. During May and June of this year she performed with the St. Louis Opera Theater in *Carmen*.

Miguel Santos makes his San Francisco Opera debut dancing in *La Traviata*. A California native of Mexican parentage, Santos has danced and choreographed for several distinguished companies. He first began studying classical ballet with Carmelita Maracci and then went on to study Spanish dance in Madrid, where he joined the Teatro La Zarzuela company. He appeared in the film "Around the World in



MIGUEL SANTOS

80 Days" while dancing with the José Greco Company and has also been a soloist for several seasons with the company of Lola Montez. For the past 18 years, Santos has danced with the Theatre Flamenco as principal male dancer and in 1972 was named that company's associate artistic director. Santos has received three NEA Choreography Awards. Major works commissioned by the NEA include *Missa Flamenca*, *Concierto No. 2* and *Regionalismos*, the last in collaboration with Adela Clara. His opera credits include *Carmen* at the Greek Theatre in Hollywood and at the Laguna Arts Festival, and *La Traviata* at the Seattle Opera.

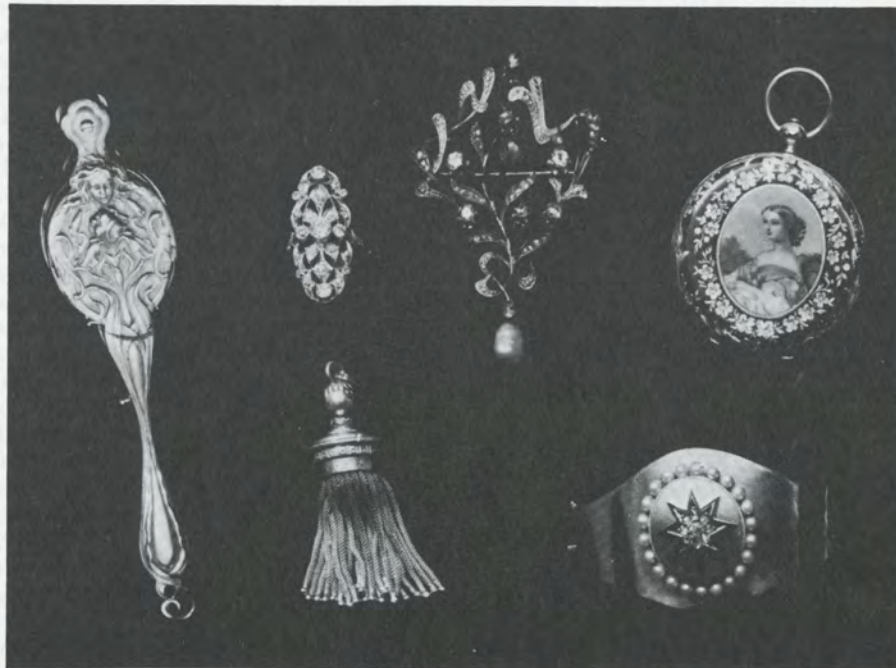
Musical adviser and resident conductor of the San Francisco Opera, **Andrew Meltzer** is on the podium for *La Traviata*. Having made his debut with San Francisco Opera in the 1982 Summer Season with *The Barber of Seville*, he returned for *Così fan tutte* in the summer of 1983 and *Die Fledermaus* in 1984. During the 1983 Fall Season, he led performances of *La Gioconda*. Meltzer made his West Coast conducting debut with the 1974 Spring Opera Theater production of Cavalli's *L'Ormino*, which he also conducted for the 1983 Opera Center Showcase. In 1974 and '75 he was music director of the Merola Opera Program, conducting *The Magic Flute*, *Carmen* and *The Barber of Seville*, and in 1975 he held the same position for Western Opera Theater, leading performances of *Trouble in Tahiti* and *The Tales of Hoffmann*. He served as music director of the San Francisco Opera Center since its inception in 1982. In 1984, he was on the podium for the world premiere of Conrad Susa's *The Love of Don Perlimplin* at the State University of New York at Purchase, and in 1985 for the Opera Center Showcase production of the revised version of that work. He also conducted the 1986 Showcase perfor-

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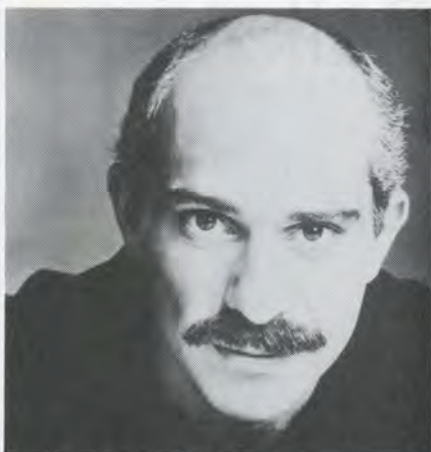
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ANDREW MELTZER

mances of Rossini's *The Turk in Italy*. Meltzer's credits also include productions for Michigan Opera Theatre, Edmonton Opera, New York City Opera, Vancouver Opera, the Minnesota Opera, Houston Grand Opera and Spoleto Festival USA. Additional credits include the European tour of the Houston Grand Opera production of *Porgy and Bess*, and guest engagements with the Orchestre Lamoureux of Paris. He has also conducted concert performances of *Trouble in Tahiti* and *The Medium* for Radio France, as well as a special Bach Tricentenary concert.

John Fiore conducts the family performances of *La Traviata*. A member of the San Francisco Opera music staff since 1983, he made his Company conducting debut last fall with the student matinee performances of *Faust*. Although born in New York, he was raised in Seattle, where at the age of 14 he had the opportunity of becoming a coach and rehearsal pianist for Seattle Opera's annual *Ring* cycle, an engagement that continued for six years. While studying at the Eastman School of Music, he was invited by John Crosby to join the music staff of the Santa Fe Opera, where during the summers from 1981 through 1984 he specialized in the preparation of the operas of Richard Strauss. After hearing Fiore in Santa Fe, Edo de Waart brought him to San Francisco to assist him on the *Ring* (1983-85). He also became an assistant conductor at the Lyric Opera of Chicago (Fall 1983) and the Metropolitan Opera (Spring 1984), where he continues to work. He has assisted a variety of conductors such as Leonard Bernstein, James Levine, Zubin Mehta, Andrew Davis, James Conlon and Marek Janowski, and since 1986 has been assistant to Daniel Barenboim at the Bayreuth Festival. Later this season he will conduct the student matinee performances of *Così fan tutte* at the Lyric Opera of Chicago.



JOHN FIORE

Stage director **John Copley** returns for his sixth season with San Francisco Opera to direct the new production of *La Traviata*. He made his San Francisco Opera debut during the 1982 Summer Season with a production of Handel's *Julius Caesar* and returned in the fall of 1983 for the American premiere production of Tippett's *The Midsummer Marriage*. Subsequent Company assignments include *Don Giovanni* (1984 fall), Handel's *Orlando* (1985 fall) and, last year, *Le Nozze di Figaro* and *Eugene Onegin*. Copley spent several years early in his career as a stage manager for musicals in London's West End before becoming assistant and then principal resident producer (director) at Covent Garden, a position he still holds. Included among his 12 productions there are *La Bohème*, *Werther*, *Così fan tutte*, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *L'Elisir d'Amore* and Handel's *Semele*, as well as the three largest royal galas mounted at Covent Garden, marking the occasions of England's entry into the Common Market, and Queen Elizabeth's Silver Jubilee and 60th birthday celebration. He also staged Dame Janet Baker's farewell performances in *Alceste* at Covent Garden and in *Mary Stuart* with the English National Opera at the London Coliseum. Other ENO credits include *Julius Caesar*, *Der Rosenkavalier*, *La Belle Hélène*, *Il Trovatore*, *Werther* and *Aida*. Copley's work has also been seen at La Scala in Milan, the Welsh National Opera, Scottish Opera, Netherlands Opera, the Greek National Opera and festivals at Drottningholm, Aix-en-Provence, Ottawa, Munich, Athens, Wexford and Wiesbaden. Among the 20 productions he has directed in Australia are *Jenůfa*, *Macbeth*, *Manon*, *Manon Lescaut*, *Così fan tutte*, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *The Magic Flute*, *Don Carlos*, *Carmen* and *Peter Grimes*. In North America, his directing credits include productions for the Lyric Opera of Chicago, Dallas Opera, Washington Opera at Kennedy Center, Houston Grand Opera, Santa Fe Opera, Canadian Opera Com-



JOHN COPLEY

pany, Vancouver Opera, and the New York City Opera. Future plans include his debut at the Deutsche Oper Berlin (*L'Elisir d'Amore*), the Metropolitan Opera (*Julius Caesar*), and at the Los Angeles Music Center (*Tancredi*).

John Conklin returns to the San Francisco Opera to create the set designs for *La Traviata*. His sets were most recently seen here in the production of *Un Ballo in Maschera* during the 1985 Fall Season. He first created these sets for the Fall 1977 Season and they were again used to open the Fall Season in 1982. During the summer of 1985 he created designs for the four operas of Wagner's *Ring of the Nibelung*, which had been unveiled in 1983 (*Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre*), 1984 (*Siegfried*) and 1985 (*Götterdämmerung*). Local audiences first saw his work in Spring Opera Theater productions of *Orfeo* (1972), *Death in Venice* (1975 and '79) and *Julius Caesar* (1978). In 1980 he designed the Fall Season production of *Don Pasquale* that was seen again during the 1984 Summer Season. Conklin's designs have been seen in numerous opera, ballet and legitimate theater productions. He has created designs for such companies as the New York Shakespeare Festival, the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis, the Arena Theater in Washington D.C., the Long Wharf Theater in New Haven and the Hartford Stage Company. He has also designed productions for the Joffrey Ballet and London's Royal Ballet. His long association with Santa Fe Opera has resulted in productions of *Così fan tutte*, *Salome*, *Fedora*, *Eugene Onegin*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, and the American premieres of Henze's *We Come to the River*, the three act version of *Lulu*, and Aulis Sallinen's *The King Goes Forth to France*. For New York City Opera his production credits include *Il Turco in Italia*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and the world premiere of Argento's *Miss Havisham's Fire*. Other



JOHN CONKLIN

American opera projects have been for St. Louis Opera, the Opera Society of Washington, the Philadelphia Opera, the American Music Theatre Festival, and the Pittsburgh Opera, while on the other side of the Atlantic he has been responsible for production designs for the the Holland Festival and Scottish Opera. Last year he undertook his first Metropolitan Opera assignment: designing costumes for a new production of Mussorgsky's *Khovanshchina*.

DAVID WALKER

British designer **David Walker** makes his San Francisco Opera debut with the costume designs for the new production of *La Traviata*. In addition to his work for opera, theater, film and television, Walker is also an illustrator who has had his designs exhibited at the Victoria and Albert Museum and other London sites. Born in Calcutta, he studied at the Central School of Arts and Crafts, and made his operatic design debut with Mozart's *Così fan tutte* at the Dublin Festival in 1962. His designs have subsequently been seen at opera houses in Palermo, Venice, Lisbon, Stockholm, and at the English National Opera, Welsh National Opera, Edinburgh Festival, Glyndebourne Festival, Royal Opera at Covent Garden, and at the Metropolitan Opera. Operas designed for these companies include *Carmen*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Werther*, *Don Giovanni*, *La Bohème*, *William Tell*, *Der Rosenkavalier*, *La Traviata* and *Die Meistersinger*. Walker's recent creations include *Manon Lescaut* for the Teatro Massimo in Palermo, Italy, and Handel's *Semele* and Mozart's *Don Giovanni* for the Royal Opera, Covent Garden. Costume design credits for television include *Hamlet* (with Richard Chamberlain), and *The Corn is Green* (with Katharine Hepburn, directed by George Cukor). His film credits include *The Charge of the Light Brigade* for Tony Richardson, and *Lady Caroline Lamb* for Robert Bolt.



ADELA CLARA

Choreographer **Adela Clara** makes her San Francisco Opera debut with *La Traviata*. She studied Spanish dance with some of the world's greatest masters, including Maraquita Flores, Roberto Ximinez and Manolo Vargas in this country, and Victoria Eugenia, Maria Rosa Merced and Martín Vargas in Spain. She founded Theatre Flamenco, the San Francisco Spanish dance company, and served as its artistic director until 1983. She has received numerous awards and recognition from the National Endowment for the Arts and the California Arts Council, and has served as a panelist for the dance programs of both of those agencies. In 1985 she received the first choreographer's award given by the San Francisco Bay Area Dance Coalition Isadora Duncan Awards, and for several seasons acted as a judge for San Francisco's popular Ethnic Dance Festival. In addition to her work as a choreographer, Miss Clara coaches Spanish dancers throughout the United States. Previous opera credits include productions with New York City Opera and the Seattle Opera.



THOMAS J. MUNN

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 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.

Surprised By Joy

By NINA BECKWITH

Thirty-nine travelers to an antique land left San Francisco on March 17, 1987, carrying more than the customary quota of luggage. They had boxes of nails and hinges, pieces of plywood and sugar pine, cans of spray paint, sheaves of scenery designs and photographs. They had costumes and wigs, not worn but carefully stowed in cartons and trunks. Ahead of them had gone air-freight shipments of music scores, orchestra parts, and, packed on ten-foot pallets, the sets for an entire opera.

For these were no ordinary tourists. This was San Francisco Opera's Western Opera Theater enroute to China to become the first professional American opera company to perform in the People's Republic.

The invitation to Shanghai had come through San Francisco Mayor Dianne Feinstein, who has actively promoted cultural exchanges between San Francisco and Shanghai since they became sister cities in 1980, and through Sister Cities

International, Inc. United Airlines had backed the choice of Western Opera Theater as a feature of its Royal Pacific Cultural Exchange, marking the opening of its routes to Asia and the Pacific, and generously provided transportation and

hotel accommodation in China.

The months of preliminary planning via a stream of letters and telexes across 6,000 miles had taught the American opera troupe and the Chinese a good deal about each other. Recognizing the com-



KOHLER

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

Western Opera Theater tenor Robert Swensen in a lively Shanghai discussion with two tenors and a soprano, all three students of the Shanghai Conservatory.



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plex problems of taking an opera company to such unfamiliar territory, United Airlines had arranged an advance scouting trip in July of 1986 for Christine Bullin, Manager of the San Francisco Opera Center, so that she could learn something of how things were done in China, meet the Shanghai hosts, and brief her troupe on the behavior that would be expected of them as honored guest artists.

As the leading opera touring company in the U.S., Western Opera Theater (WOT) expects its singers, nearly all of them fresh out of the Merola Opera Program, and its stage technicians to learn resourcefulness in adapting to different theaters and audiences, and coping with weather and other unforeseeable hiccups on the road. The China tour was the culmination of WOT's 20th anniversary season, during which the company had performed *La Bohème* in English in 55 communities coast to coast.

Since 1982 WOT has been part of the San Francisco Opera Center, along with the Merola Opera Program, Brown Bag Opera, the Adler Fellowships, the Showcase productions, and other programs comprising the country's most complete institution for the training and professional development of outstandingly gifted young opera artists.

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During an orchestra rehearsal for the upcoming performance of *La Bohème*, interested Shanghai residents gather to see and hear what's going on.

tic tour, the WOT China visit was conceived as an opera people-to-people exchange. In addition to WOT's 15 young singers, the alternating casts for three performances of *La Bohème* given in Italian at Shanghai's 1700-seat City Hall Theater, its nine-person production staff and its managers, the company included veteran conductor and WOT music director Evan Whallon; coach and assistant conductor Patrick Summers; San Francisco Opera's Master Carpenter Michael Kane and its Master of Properties Ivan Van Perre, and Dan Balestrero, director of the American Opera Workcenter Division of the Sundance Institute in Salt Lake City, who has taught acting and stage movement at the Opera Center.

During ten days in Shanghai they held master classes in music and stage technique at the Conservatory of Music and took part in technical theater exchanges at the Drama Institute. Besides their *Bohème* performances, WOT's singers and conductors had those same few days to prepare a full-length gala concert with Chinese singers for the Conservatory of opera solos, duets and ensembles, and selections from Broadway musicals. By now a number of western musical and theatrical performers have toured China, but this joint concert was the first time an audience in China saw Chinese singers performing western music—some of it never before heard there—together with western singers.

For all the advance planning, the entire Shanghai enterprise was a revelation to both Chinese and Americans. The encounters in all areas produced one joyful surprise after another.

You have to get the scene—a huge metropolis of twelve million in a land of one billion, China's largest commercial and industrial city, the one that suffered the most from foreign domination but is now proud of its international districts; streets swarming with bicycles, everyman's mode of transport, as well as cars

and buses; coal smoke in the cold air outside, cold studios and rehearsal halls, people never taking off their coats and mufflers if they are Americans, people in quilted jackets if they are Chinese; people who have few material goods or comforts but enormous openhearted generosity, who are proud of their ancient culture and intensely eager to learn, and who, as revealed in this encounter, are learning to perform western music and opera with astonishing talent and skill.

A video documentary team, under Dan Balestrero's direction, accompanied the WOT tour and captured moments as they happened, in the charmingly stilted translations of the Chinese interpreters or in the unimpeded words of the English-speaking Chinese and the Americans, some of whom shared their vivid recollections for this story after they returned home.

Teachers

Evan Whallon (second day of *Bohème* rehearsal with Shanghai Opera Orchestra):

They had done the opera last fall and I had done it a great many times. We started with somewhat different concepts so they had to look at their parts with new eyes and I had to teach them how I felt it should be played. Words aren't needed for the basics—music is really a universal language—but it's harder to convey nuances through translation. They work very hard to get it. They asked me 'please tell us



A costume from San Francisco Opera's production of Reimann's *Lear* is being shown by Clifford Hestdalen to Shanghai Drama Institute faculty members.



Judy Disbrow, WOT makeup supervisor, demonstrates western makeup techniques on the face of Laurinda Nikkel.

the order of rehearsal so if we're not playing we can go off somewhere and practice our parts.' These people don't want to waste a minute. Whenever they have a chance to learn they want to do it.

(Near the end of stay): My biggest pleasure has been in getting around communication with language and really getting response from these players. I've discovered that the people here in music are very great colleagues, warm, talented and genuine people. They want to succeed and they want you to help them succeed. They want to have life in China that does include music and things their talent would help them to get.

They have very fine singers whose chief lack is the opportunity to hear and see opera. Nor do they have the scores and recordings, the language and diction classes American conservatory students would have. That's why we're here; to help close this gap a little, work critically with them, bring opera staged in a realistic way with young singers, and give impetus to their young singers.

Dan Balestrero (after his acting class for Conservatory singers):

I'm overwhelmed. It's stunning to find the depth to which they understand music, their greatness of heart and soul. These are people of tremendous discipline, tremendous resources: it's just a matter of helping them find their own abilities, tap into the access code. Yes, they lack familiarity with performing practice because they haven't been exposed to it.

But the emotion is there. You can teach people how to sing, teach them how to move, the elements of acting, but you can't teach them how to feel.

It's astounding to hear the fruits of their hard work and to feel such intensity when you're supposedly coming to show them and you somehow assume it's going to be at an elementary level. What I feel is C.S. Lewis's and Wordsworth's 'Surprised by Joy.'

It hasn't been difficult to get them to act out what's in the music. They're very conservative by custom, not used to displaying emotion, but the tenor in the *Faust* love duet, for example, began to feel it was right to take the hand of the soprano and look into her eyes. Once having got the idea they've done some amazing things. Their capacity to take new information and make immediate use of it is really remarkable. And the extreme gentleness and kindness of these people . . . We as Americans will be taking much more home with us than we're leaving with them.

Patrick Summers (while rehearsing for the concert):

Their vocalism is extraordinary. They all have incredible control of the *passaggio* area of their voices, especially the tenors. That area around D and F above middle C is often a problem for tenors but these just sailed right through it.

I'm 23 and I learned to read music before I could read words. Here they are working against such odds and they get so

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much done. My generation in China had no chance to learn western music as children during the Cultural Revolution. These orchestra musicians are playing beat-up brass instruments that were hidden under floorboards for years; their French horns have valves strung together with shoestrings. It's very hard for them to keep things in tune.

For the concert we're doing a lot of difficult music—Mozart, *Faust*, *Pagliacci*, the Fugue from *Falstaff*, the 'Tonight' quintet from Bernstein's *West Side Story*—they'd never even heard that before. The first time they played the lovely poignant 'Tonight' theme the cellists had tears running down their faces.

(After the concert): We did it! It worked and we all feel such tremendous buoyant uplift. This orchestra is used to rehearsing something like the *Figaro* overture every day for three months. In ten days they not only reworked *Bohème* but learned the whole concert. The singers and musicians here have such passionate desire to possess this music, this culture. I don't know how we can leave right at this moment when things are starting to happen.

These last two weeks—it's like being hit by a train. We stopped over in Peking and saw the Forbidden City and the Great Wall . . . the vastness of this country, the spiritual link of 5,000 years. When they show you something and say modestly that it's only 400 or 500 years old, you realize that's twice the age of our country. What adventure and discovery for a boy from a small town in Indiana!

It may sound cliché-ish or highflown but I've had a real sense of the world while we were doing this, not only of Shanghai and San Francisco, of the importance of exchanging cultures and making friends in other countries. Now when I read about China I'll think of the people I know in China and that means a lot to me. I'm going to become music director of WOT and take the tour out next fall. That's a very great break for me for which I'm extremely grateful to San Francisco Opera. We're talking about coming back here, too, and I'm hoping that this connection with Shanghai can become really solid.

Stage Production People (Recollections of trip)

Michael Kane: For our workshops with the teachers and department heads at the Shanghai Drama Institute, I took the



Evan Whallon conducts "Libiamo" from Verdi's *La Traviata*, with two students of the Shanghai Conservatory as soloists, and members of Western Opera Theater as chorus.

ground plans and construction blueprints and some photos of Act Three of our San Francisco Opera *Bohème*. I also had a large boxful of samples so I could show how this flat from the blueprint was made of this material, what scrim we use, and aluminum, and types of lumber, sugar pine and Douglas fir plywood. They loved the prints and photos, which I gave them, and they were extremely interested in seeing how we develop the designer's concept from rough sketch to the way it finally works on our stage.

They asked a lot of intelligent questions which weren't always complicated to answer because we have so much more experience in our kind of stagecraft.

Every day I walked through the streets for miles and while the singers and orchestra were rehearsing I went on tours outside the city to farms and villages and saw how every inch of space in that country is used. Everything about China was awe-inspiring.

Ivan Van Perre: The Drama Institute has 400 students selected from all over China. After a four-year course, its graduates go into movies, television, the technical side of radio, and into Chinese opera and theater. They're not as divided into separate professions as we are. From what I saw, their lighting students must be electrical engineers by the time they graduate: they not only make their own lighting instruments, they make their own light bulbs.

We had photos of our scene shop facilities, and several of our major productions, our *Aida*, our *Carmen*, so we could explain how things like the back wall move. In one respect they put us to shame when they showed us props they use in a Chinese opera. Those were heirlooms, craft works that just blow your mind.

We took 24 boxes of the different types of hardware we use and we left it all with them. We had samples of plastic, which they have too, and cans of spray paint, which they'd never seen. I remember one fellow who sprayed gold paint on a piece of plywood and tried to figure out why it wouldn't scrape off. They have the same desire to learn our theater crafts as they have for music. The door is just opening . . . can you imagine what an exciting thing that is from their standpoint?

They were interested in our labor structure, too, and our taxes and economic problems. Those problems are the same whether you have to beg the money from the state or from private supporters. You can never accomplish quite what you want because there's never enough money. All over the world we build scenery whatever way is cheapest and fastest; in China they'll use the same board until it disintegrates because they don't have lumber, which we take for granted in this country.

I spent eleven years touring with WOT and I don't think I ever experienced

anything as exciting as that opening night in Shanghai. I must have heard thousands of *Bohèmes* over all my years in opera but that was one of the most moving and dramatic I can remember. The concert was great, too, and I'd like to see our Merola Program bring some of those Chinese singers over here. You can really feel their search for knowledge in opera and theater crafts. I'd like to help give them a little more.

Jack Gwinn, WOT Assistant Production Manager: The smell of sulphur was constantly in the air in Shanghai because they burn coal. It reminded me of visits to my grandparents in West Virginia.

When I got to the City Hall Theater all the sets for *Bohème* had arrived. They had come 6,000 miles and were transhipped in Beijing but we lost only one table leg, easily replaced. Then I met the six local theater crew members assigned to us. Normally on our U.S. tours we request twelve people, so we were a little skeptical at first. But we soon found that those six professional stage people could do the work of twelve, which was a very delightful surprise. Two of them acted as our interpreters. We got along very happily with all of them: they were very enjoyable people. After the first 20 minutes when they saw what we were doing, they started moving a lot faster than we did.

They had never seen anything quite like our set. For traditional Chinese opera they use one basic simple set and very few props. When they did *Bohème* at the

Shanghai Opera they built a very massive set on wagons and they had only two people backstage to roll it on and off. We explained the sequence of moves for our scene changes, thinking we'd have to go through it several times, but once was enough. They knew exactly what to do and when, and they were always there ahead of time for the cues.

I'd like to go back to China; it was a mind-expanding experience that makes you examine your own attitudes and values. Perhaps I could teach English; my sister is doing that in Japan and a friend of mine has done it for two years in Taiwan. I'd like to learn Chinese and live in that country.

Singers

Conservatory singers after Dan Balestrero's class (through interpreter):

— I learned a lot about conveying emotion. This is a different way for me to do that.

— He gave us a very accurate idea of the story in the music and very detailed description of what he wanted.

— I feel great charm in this director and learned a lot from his class.

— I really want to do all I can to meet the director's demands because I am not very experienced in acting. I hope I do a good job.

— One night I was listening to the Voice of America and I heard them announce a piece from *Porgy and Bess*, 'A Woman Is A Sometime Thing,' so I recorded it and imitated from it. I tried to get the feeling. Today he made me relax



Michael Kane, San Francisco Opera's master carpenter, poses with a Chinese colleague in the set of WOT's La Bohème.

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Shanghai Opera House technical crew poses on stage with Steve Mitchell and Tom Kline of the Western Opera Theater crew.

and understand that the song is laughing.

Mme. Zhou Xiao-Yen, Conservatory teacher: It was very exciting. We thought our young artists were more or less timid but today Dan just pulled their feelings out. We were quite surprised and thrilled, so everybody applauded. I didn't expect that they would respond so quickly; usually it's difficult to get them to see in their minds what is happening in the music and then let their temperament come forth.

Mei Ling Lu, herself an opera singer and translator, watched Balestrero's class and wrote this account for a Shanghai paper: "Yu Hai Long was uncertain of how to act when he was singing. Not enough time for Dan to demonstrate stagecrafts then. 'Come on, look at me, look at my eyes,' stood in front of the platform, Dan began to 'conduct' his singer. Yu followed Dan's hands. The more Yu looked at Dan, the less nervous he became. His emotion awakened, his creative power was growing and his top notes were noticeably improved. Within a few minutes Yu transformed into completely another singer, a skillful opera-actor singer. Gershwin's music was presented ideally. Next was soprano Wang Hong, a prizewinner student but an inward girl too shy to act. When she began to follow Dan's 'conducting,' there was a seemingly improvement in both her voice and her stage-appearance. Dan's eyes and hands guided her voice. The love duet in Act II of *The Pearl Fishers* was not an easy one to handle.

Now, so beautifully she sustained the dreamy melody as Dan quietly gazed at her and sat at her feet, though the words sung in Chinese, tears down Dan's cheeks drop by drop. Bizet's music won!"

Michael Davis, WOT singer (After Bohème performance): It was one of the biggest highs I've ever had, the reception we got from that audience. We weren't expecting half of what we got. Doing this in China was far more special than any of us thought it was going to be.

I had a teacher who called opera the Olympics of the arts. If you're going to bring music into your culture, I guess we think opera's it and we're happy to have the chance to be a part of their growth as a culture center.

Laurinda Nikkel, WOT singer: I felt terribly excited last night, more than for any show I've done on the whole tour, mostly because I knew I was working to an audience that had never seen our kind of *Bohème* performance before. If we're in a place where it's cold, I always go outside before the third act and walk around so when I do Mimi's entrance I'm still feeling cold. It was totally unnecessary last night because I was chilled to the bone, even with the heat on. A lot of this city looks like Paris; it was real 'verismo.'

The most important thing I learned from China was humility. The people in *Bohème* live on very little but love and poetry and philosophy and I think the people in China do the same thing.

I got to know a couple of people in the orchestra as good friends. Last night one of the girls who is a violin player came up to me and started to embrace me, after I had sung Mimi. She couldn't quite go that far; it was a bit too much for the Chinese reserve, but even that she wanted to was a phenomenal thing for me.

Tom Potter, WOT singer: The gain from this trip for me was not so much musical as personal. But there were some musical benefits: if you can sing and see your breath freezing in front of your face I guess you can sing anywhere. We learned something about ourselves, about endurance and pacing.

The people here are simple in the best way, sincere, warm, very curious about our world. We found we could communicate with them without knowing any words. I had a good rapport with the principal cellist in the orchestra and he did teach me one word that means the best, the greatest, in Shanghai dialect. I said it to the local children who were in the café scene in *Bohème* and to the people in the market. They loved it. The way those voice students work here makes most American students seem like goofballs. Just because you've been given talent doesn't mean sit back and coast. You have to keep reaching for your own maximum: for the Chinese that's reaching into another culture via music.

Ann Panagulias, WOT singer: Singing with a Chinese partner in the concert is very important to me. During rehearsals we began to look at each other more and interact more. I think she feels more at ease with me; we know each other's voices now and can feel when to stretch or pull back. I feel I've made a friend; I have her address, her boyfriend speaks English and I have someone at home who can write Chinese. I want to send her scores, especially of *Così fan tutte*, her favorite opera. It's so difficult for them to want to learn western opera, so much about it that we just take for granted. I think about that a lot, how much we have in America.

After that last *Bohème* it was wonderful just seeing the appreciation that audience gave us. It wasn't like 'Wow! they were really good and let's give them a big hand.' It was appreciation that we came and gave that to them, because it was a gift we shared with them. I'm thankful that my art form could bring joy to them. ■



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Company Profiles: Jerry Sherk

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

When the conductor gives the down-beat for the opera to begin, the second show of the day gets underway at the Opera House. The first one begins about 30 minutes earlier, backstage. That's when stage manager Jerry Sherk begins the call of the wild, summoning the dramatis personae of the day's main event to their places in the wings and in the pit.

It would be difficult to determine which is the greater tonic to the collective nerves, the mellifluousness of Sherk's voice as he calmly calls the "ladies and gentlemen of the orchestra to the pit, please," or his general air of security, suggesting that not only he but everything else is completely under control. In any case, the combination of the two works nothing short of miracles. Whatever the elixir, if they could bottle it, they could close down the country's psychiatric wards the same day.

On opening night, when the only thing higher than ticket prices and high-fashion hemlines are the anxiety levels backstage, Sherk, 30 seconds into the overture to *The Barber of Seville* (a point unambiguously marked 0:30 on his piano-vocal score), turns to a colleague and remarks with a breathtaking mixture of sincerity and irony, "It's going pretty well

so far." His comment redefines the power of positive thinking. The more so when one considers what was happening at — 5:00. Backstage personnel of every stripe have "just one question for Jerry."

It goes something like this: "Jerry do I have time to get this prop across the stage Jerry can you hear us we can't hear you over the speaker Jerry have you seen Maestro Zedda Jerry how late are we starting tonight?"

"Yes. I'm having some problems with my headset too, but it'll be OK. He's with Mr. McEwen. Seven minutes." There's no peace to be had until he gives the magic words: "House curtain—Go." and then "peace" is relative to say the least. For the duration of the show, Sherk calls every cue: every curtain (up or down), lighting change, follow-spotlight move, stage carpenter maneuver, rail cue (for scenery that is "flown" in from over the stage or moved on from the wings mechanically), prop cue, trap door cue, and sound cue. The thrill of being able to cause a thunderstorm on stage merely by saying, "Lightning—Go" is qualified by having to make sure that it happens in time to the music.

"It looks like more than it is," Sherk says, once again trying to reassure others. "It's ultimately my responsibility to be

sure that everybody is there. Beyond that, just about every one of my responsibilities is shared with someone else." For that matter, serving as stage manager is a responsibility he shares. He "calls" five of the productions each season; the other five are called by—stage manager Jamie Call!

Sherk estimates that three-quarters of his time is spent rehearsing or calling shows. The other quarter goes to the administrative tasks that have added one word to his job title: production stage manager. In addition to doing his own work, he supervises that of the company's three assistant stage directors, five production assistants, and the administrator of the "supers"—both supernumeraries and supertitles. "I try to take care of as much of the administrative work as possible off season," he says. "Once the season starts, the production schedule turns this into a seven-day-a-week job, and a 10-hour day is a short one."

In a striking number of ways—distinctly not including temperament—the stage manager is to the backstage world what the conductor is to the pit and the stage. Working from heavily marked scores, both shape and guide performances without, in the strictest sense, themselves performing. "Although it may seem otherwise, I'm not really telling people what to do backstage," Sherk says. "Everybody I cue knows perfectly well what to do and what the cues mean. I'm just helping them, facilitating the process by seeing to the timing of it all."

Although hardly unusual in the opera world, Sherk's route to his job has been somewhat circuitous. His first involvement in backstage work came while he was a student of music theory and French horn at the Manhattan School of Music (located in East Harlem then). "The school had a good opera department but very little space, so we had to build scenery right on stage. I had done some amateur cabinet making and had done various kinds of woodworking, so I had the basic skills—and I was available nights.

"One thing led to another, and soon I



MESSICK

Jerry Sherk at the stage manager's desk.

was involved with the New York theater underground, a fascinating group of people. I liked them, and I was turning into a fair theater carpenter—to the point where soon I was doing a lot of it, not just for opera but for some Off-Broadway productions. Gradually, I realized that I was having a lot more fun doing that than what I was being trained for.”

Sherk then worked for five years as a stage manager and technical director for Washington Opera, at the Kennedy Center. “At that time, the Washington company did only four productions a year with just four performances of each. And the company didn’t do its own new productions. When the administration decided to do a particular opera, it looked around for the company with the best production to rent.”

He came to San Francisco in 1980, hired on a seasonal basis because the company did not yet have a summer season. In 1982, Sherk went fulltime. “Needless to say, this is a cut above my experience in Washington. The major difference—and the wonderful thing about San Francisco—is that here we have all our own shops, from scenery to props

to crafts to costumes to wigs, so that when we undertake to do a new production, we can do it all. What that means is that everything can be done to our own high standards.

“The first two productions I worked on here were *Samson et Dalila* and *Die Frau ohne Schatten*. In their own ways they’re both difficult shows—but when I saw that

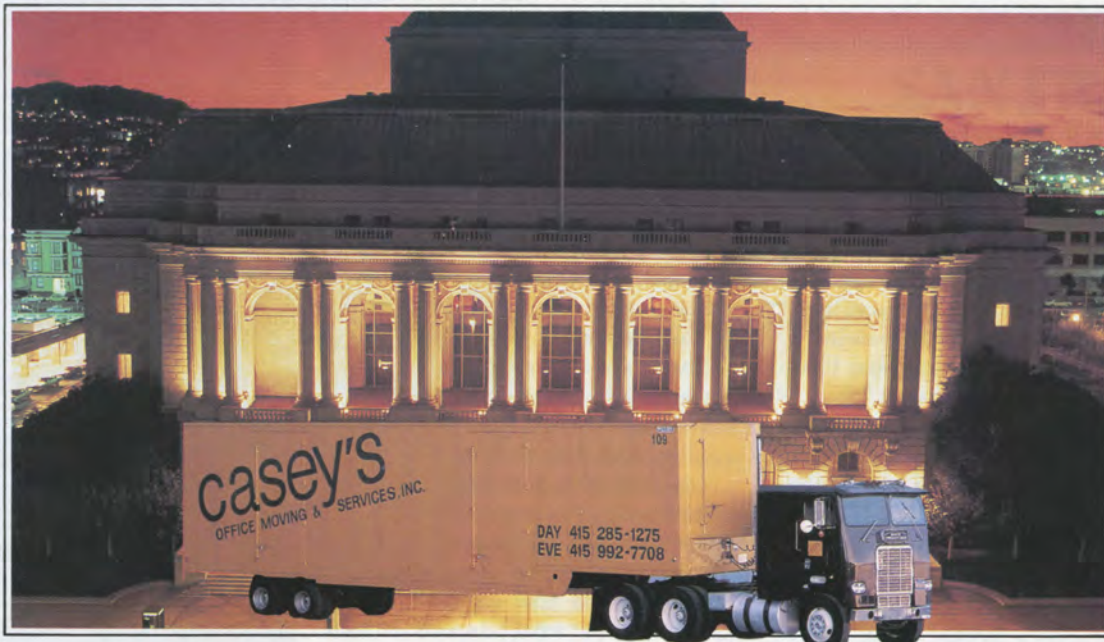


Jerry Sherk, San Francisco Opera’s production stage manager. MESSICK

my first production was with Plácido Domingo and Shirley Verrett and my second was with Birgit Nilsson and Leonie Rysanek, I knew I had done the right thing. And both of the shows were strong technical challenges as well. There are some really difficult scene changes in *Frau*, and not only do they have to be timed with the music, they have to be done while there’s music playing. The difficult technical things in *Samson* all happen in the last ten seconds—but knowing all night that those ten seconds are coming has a way of wearing on you.”

When he’s calling a show, Sherk can be found at the stage manager’s desk, perched on a stool in the wings just off downstage right, at a desk that is archaic, small, cluttered, completely exposed—and, Sherk says, just the way it ought to be and just the way it is in opera houses around the world. The tools of his trade, in addition to his score, are a running sheet, or printed table of entrances, exits, and other cues, all carefully timed; a television monitor, with two screens, showing both stage and conductor; a digital clock calibrated to seconds; a stopwatch to time everything from scene

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Jerry Sherk on his way to solve a problem during a 1982 dress rehearsal of *The Rake's Progress*.

changes to intermissions (“timing is everything”); and a sophisticated eight-channel communication system that allows him, with a phone operator-type headset with mouthpiece, to communicate with people in dressing rooms, prop rooms, chorus and orchestra rooms—you name it—and to tune them in and out in such a way as to cause the least amount of auditory confusion both to them and to himself. He flicks switches with the speed of a short-order cook.

“Whenever I give a cue, I also try to watch to see that what I’m cuing is actually happening—and at the right moment,” he explains. “There are lots of individual moves that can be controlled and fine-tuned as we go along. And the closer attention I pay, the more I can help make things even smoother the next time. It’s one of the pleasures of reviving a production that we’ve done before; I like having the chance to do it better.”

Critical as vigilance is at every moment, calling a show is in many ways less stressful than rehearsing one. At the rehearsal stage there are infinitely more problems to resolve, more things to find out, and more questions to answer that begin with the word “Jerry” and are often delivered in sharp tones. “This year’s production of *The Magic Flute* is a good example,” Sherk says. “It’s a difficult show because there are lots of scenes, lots of scene changes, and there’s a tremendous amount going on in each one. And never mind that none of us has ever done this show before—and that Mr. Hockney is

out in the house—but we’re expected to do it perfectly the first time, in the dark, and silently.

“The thing is, I’ve been around long enough that when people yell, I know they’re not yelling at *me* because I’m the stage manager, they’re yelling at me because I’m the *stage manager*. And I can understand their frustration too. They’ve worked, sometimes for years, on a production, and it all has to come together in just a few days of technical rehearsals. The pressure on them is in many ways greater than it could possibly be on me. It’s their vision, after all, and their names on the product. And when they need to ventilate, I’d far rather it be at me than at the artists or at the stage crew. Those are the people who really have to perform, and being yelled at is only going to make their jobs harder.”

Sherk also thinks that directors and designers are, by and large, far less temperamental than they are reputed to be. “John Conklin, who has designed our new *Traviata* is a perfect example. Working with him is always a breath of fresh air. In the first place, he’s solution-oriented, and, in the second place, he knows first-hand what we do and how we do it. So he knows how to get what he wants without making a fuss. He’s so friendly and understanding that you just want to do things well for him. And then there’s the gratification of the product. This *Traviata* is just breathtakingly beautiful—in a sculptural way, almost like a movie set.”

Defending both artists and stage

hands comes absolutely naturally to Sherk. He makes no bones about the fact that one of the pay-offs of the job is the opportunity to work with the top operatic artists in the world. And without missing a beat he adds, “San Francisco’s stage hands are the best in the world. Not only are they skillful, but they’re proud of what they do, which makes a tremendous difference.

“Very few major companies anywhere in the world could put together new productions with as few rehearsals on stage as we have. We can do it because our people are so resourceful. Just the other day, we needed to have a piece move faster than it was possible to move it with the piece of machinery we were using. What we soon figured out was that the way to make it move as fast as it needed to was to move it by hand instead. That’s the kind of crew we have here, not just able but willing.

“Working with these people is the reason I’m here in the first place,” he concludes. “There’s no other stage manager’s job I’d rather have. This is the best job in the country—doing what I do.” ■

—Timothy Pfaff



Jerry Sherk ponders a reluctant piece of scenery during an early rehearsal for this season’s *The Magic Flute*.

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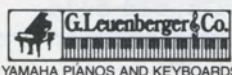
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Opera House Tours

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); non-members \$5. Advance reservations required. For further information, please call (415) 565-6432.



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1987 Opera Previews

Information on opera previews and lectures is carried in *San Francisco Opera Magazine* in order to enable patrons to make advance plans. The following is a list of previews and lectures that are open to the public.

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA GUILD INSIGHTS

Held in Herbst Theatre, Veterans Building, 401 Van Ness Ave., in San Francisco. All informal discussions begin at 6 p.m.; doors open at 5:30 p.m. Series subscription for Guild members is \$16; non-members \$20. Individual tickets may be purchased at the door for \$8. For further information, please call (415) 565-6432. Programs are subject to change.

James McCracken, Paul Plishka 10/19
and Thomas Stewart
Tracy Dahl, Nancy Gustafson, 11/4
Mary Jane Johnson and Lotfi Mansouri

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA GUILD PREVIEWS

MARIN

Previews held at Park School Auditorium, 360 E. Blithedale, Mill Valley; refreshments served at 7:30 p.m., previews at 8 p.m. Series registration is \$25 for 6 previews (\$20 for students and seniors). Single tickets are \$5 (\$4 for students and seniors). For further information, please call (415) 453-4483 or (415) 388-6789.

Fidelio 10/8
James Keolker
Nabucco 10/29
George Martin
The Tales of Hoffmann 11/5
Michael Mitchell
Roméo et Juliette 11/12
George Jellinek

SOUTH PENINSULA

Previews held at the Palo Alto Senior Center, 450 Bryant, at 8 p.m. Gala held at the Palo Alto Cultural Center, 1313 Newell Rd. Series registration is \$22 (students \$11); single tickets are \$5 (students \$3). Gala tickets \$12.50. For

further information, please call (415) 941-3890.

Fidelio 10/6
James Keolker
Nabucco 10/27
George Martin
The Tales of Hoffmann 11/3
Michael Mitchell
Roméo et Juliette 11/10
George Jellinek

SAN JOSE OPERA GUILD

Previews held at the Villa Montalvo Center for the Arts, 15400 Montalvo Rd., in Saratoga, at 10 a.m. Series is open to the public at a cost of \$5 per lecture; \$2 for students and senior citizens (free of charge to San Jose Opera Guild members and members of Montalvo). For further information, please call (408) 741-1331.

Fidelio 10/9
James Keolker
Nabucco 10/30
George Martin
The Tales of Hoffmann 11/6
Michael Mitchell
Roméo et Juliette 11/13
George Jellinek

SONOMA COUNTY CHAPTER

Previews held at various times and locations (see below). Series registration is \$22 for 6 previews (chapter member); \$25 non-member. Single tickets (member) \$5, non-member \$6, students \$3. For further information, reservations and the charge for receptions and luncheons, please call (707) 938-2432 or (707) 539-2730.

Fidelio 10/5, 2 p.m.; (Wine and cheese following preview)
James Keolker
Piper Sonoma Winery
11447 Redwood Hwy, Windsor

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Nabucco 10/26, 10:30 a.m.; (Luncheon
 George Martin following preview)
 Sonoma Hotel
 W. Spain & 1st St. West, Sonoma

The Tales of Hoffmann 11/2, 7:30 p.m.
 Michael Mitchell (Refreshments served
 following preview)
 1000 Buckeye Rd., Kenwood

Roméo et Juliette 11/9, 10:30 a.m.;
 George Jellinek (Buffet luncheon
 following preview)
 510—2nd St. East, Sonoma

JUNIOR LEAGUE OPERA PREVIEWS
 All Junior League opera previews held in
 Herbst Theatre, Veterans Building, 401
 Van Ness Ave., San Francisco. Lectures
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 call (415) 621-1674, or (415) 331-1036.

Fidelio 10/7
 James Keolker

Nabucco 10/28
 George Martin

The Tales of Hoffmann 11/4
 Michael Mitchell

Roméo et Juliette 11/11
 George Jellinek

The Making of an Opera/*Fidelio* 11/16
 John Priest

**OPERA EDUCATION
 INTERNATIONAL PREVIEW SERIES**
 Previews of the operas of the 1987 Fall
 Season will be given by Michael Barclay,
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 tional. Lectures will be presented in the
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nut St. (at Rose) in Berkeley, at 7:45 p.m.
 Admission to the series of 7 opera
 previews is \$36; individual admission at
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 please call (415) 526-5244.

The Tales of Hoffmann 10/5
Roméo et Juliette 10/12
The Queen of Spades 11/16

**FRIENDS OF THE
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 A free lecture entitled "The World of
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 fmann" will be given by Michael Barclay
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 Kensington Library, 61 Arlington Ave.,
 Kensington. For further information,
 please call (415) 524-3043.

**MERRITT COLLEGE
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 Merritt College is offering an opera
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 (Music 16), with emphasis on the operas
 of the Fall Season, on Tuesday evenings
 at 6:30, beginning September 8. The
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 held at the College, 12500 Campus
 Drive, Building R, Room 125, in Oak-
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**ROBERT GOODHUE'S
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 Ten classes on all of the fall operas are
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Services

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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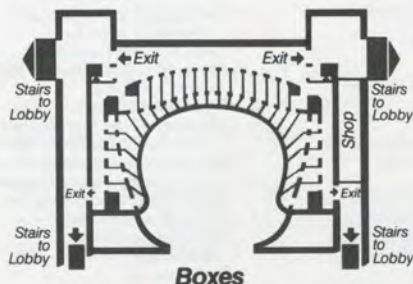
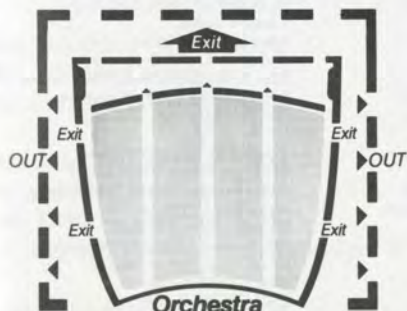
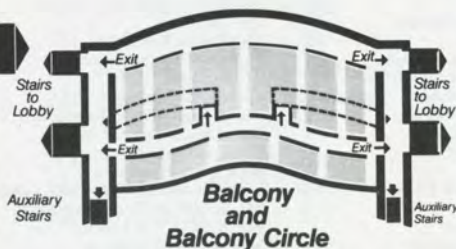
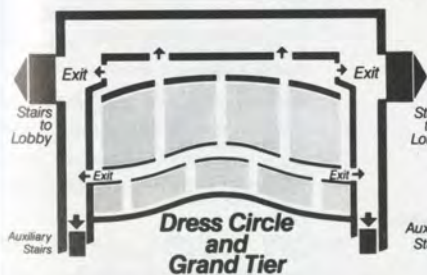
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