### La Gioconda

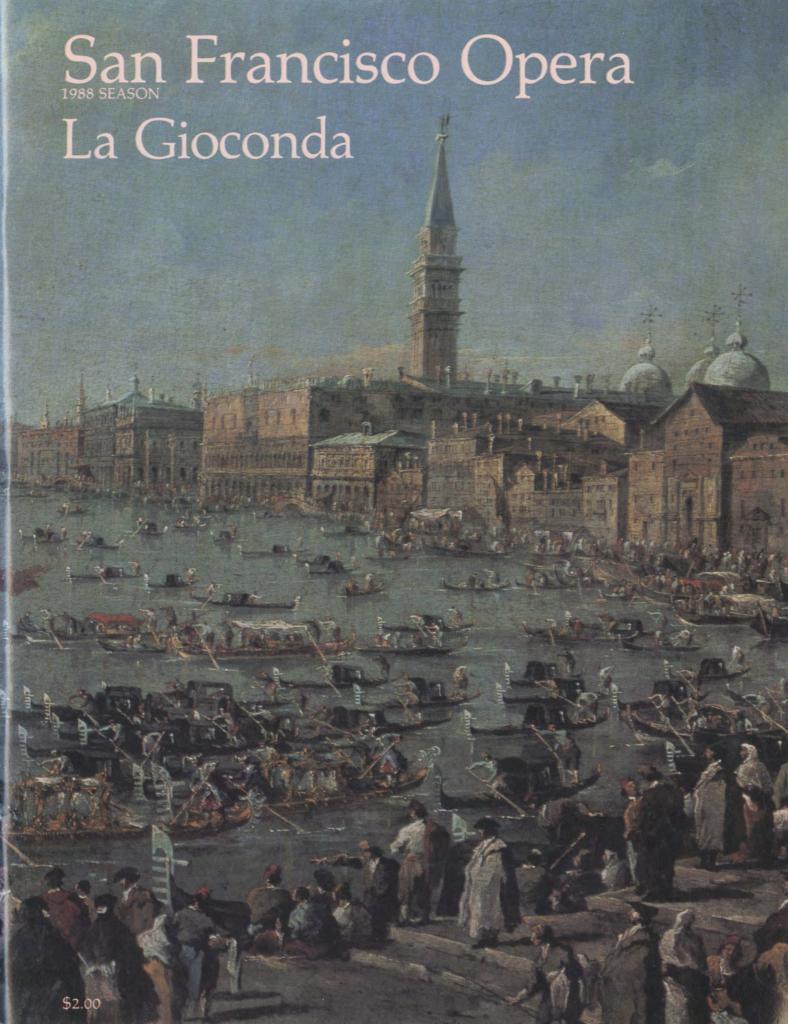
### 1988

Sunday, November 20, 1988 1:30 PM Wednesday, November 23, 1988 7:30 PM Sunday, November 27, 1988 1:30 PM Thursday, December 1, 1988 7:30 PM Saturday, December 3, 1988 7:30 PM Tuesday, December 6, 1988 7:30 PM Saturday, December 10, 1988 7:30 PM

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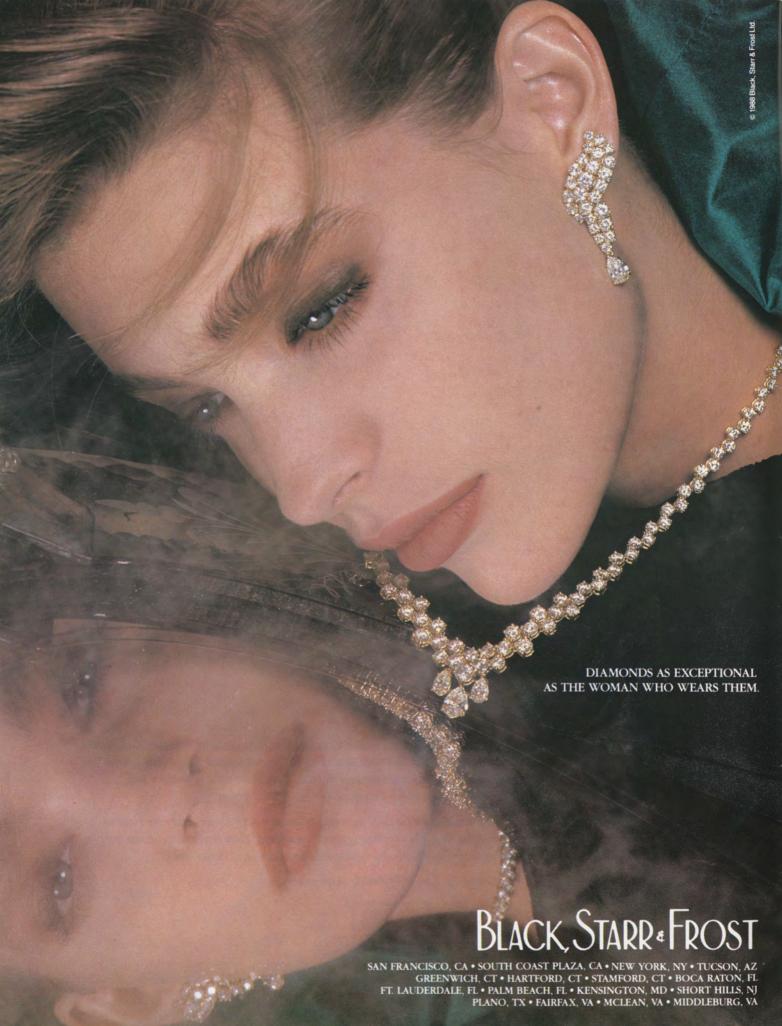
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# San Francisco Opera

Lotfi Mansouri, General Director

Sir John Pritchard, Music Director

# La Gioconda

1988 SEASON

### **FEATURES**

- 26 La Gioconda Lives On by Richard Dyer Some thoughts on why La Gioconda continues to thrive in opera house repertories around the world.
- 50 Boito and Friends by Barry Hyams Arrigo Boito, the librettist of La Gioconda, had more than opera on his mind.
- 60 Company Profiles: Tessa Bergen by Timothy Pfaff Getting acquainted with San Francisco Opera's Coordinator of Artist Services.

### **DEPARTMENTS**

- 10 Administration
- 13 Company Roster
- 14 1988 Season Repertoire
- 25 Box Holders
- 35 Artist Profiles
- 39 Cast and Credits
- 40 Synopsis
- 65 Extended Company Roster
- 69 Donor Benefits
- 70 Corporate Council
- 71 Medallion Society
- 76 Supporting San Francisco Opera
- 82 Services



### COVER

Francesco Guardi, 1712-1793 The Bucentaur Departs for the Lido on Ascension Day

Oil on canvas, 67 x 101 cm Renuion des Musées Nationaux, Paris

Musée du Louvre

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5

1988 Season



# From the Chairman of the Board and the President

We are pleased to welcome you to the 66th annual season of the San Francisco Opera, a season marked by many changes in the San Francisco Opera family. By now you are all aware of the arrival of Lotfi Mansouri, our new general director. He is no stranger to our audiences, having staged an astonishing 40 productions here in the last 25 years. So it is with great pleasure that we welcome him back as a permanent part of our Company and anticipate many fruitful years of collaboration under his artistic leadership.

Other changes over the last year have not been as happy, and it was with deep regret that we witnessed the passing of General Director Emeritus Kurt Herbert Adler and the resignation due to ill health of General Director Terence A. McEwen. Kurt Herbert Adler is universally acknowledged as the force that raised the San Francisco Opera to its remarkable status among the world's great opera houses during the 28 years that he led the Company. He was called the last of the old-time opera impresarios, and we shall not see his like again.

Terence McEwen had fewer years in which to give expression to his own personal vision for the Company, but his tenure was rich in outstanding new productions, including his worldacclaimed *Ring* cycle, which continued to uphold the tradition of excellence of the San Francisco Opera. Terry's encyclopedic knowledge of opera and his great sense of humor will be fondly remembered by all of us. We wish him well in the future.

Our Board of Directors also suffered the loss of two great champions of opera in San Francisco with the passing of our Directors Emeriti Cyril Magnin and Mrs. Nion R. Tucker. Their generosity and enthusiasm will serve as an inspiration to the entire Board, which this year includes eight new members.

In looking at our repertoire this season, we have many old friends to thank for their generosity in underwriting productions, as well as new donors, whom we welcome with deepest thanks. Funds for our new Parsifal have been provided through the generosity of an anonymous friend, and we have the L.J. Skaggs and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation to thank for our production of Maometto II. Four production revivals have been generously underwritten: that of L'Africaine by the Sells Foundation; The Rake's Progress by Mr. and Mrs. Marshall Naify; Così fan tutte by the San Francisco Opera Guild; and La Bohème by the Bernard Osher Foundation. We also would like to express our gratitude to Mr. and Mrs. William Rollnick, whose financial assistance has made possible most of this season's Supertitles.

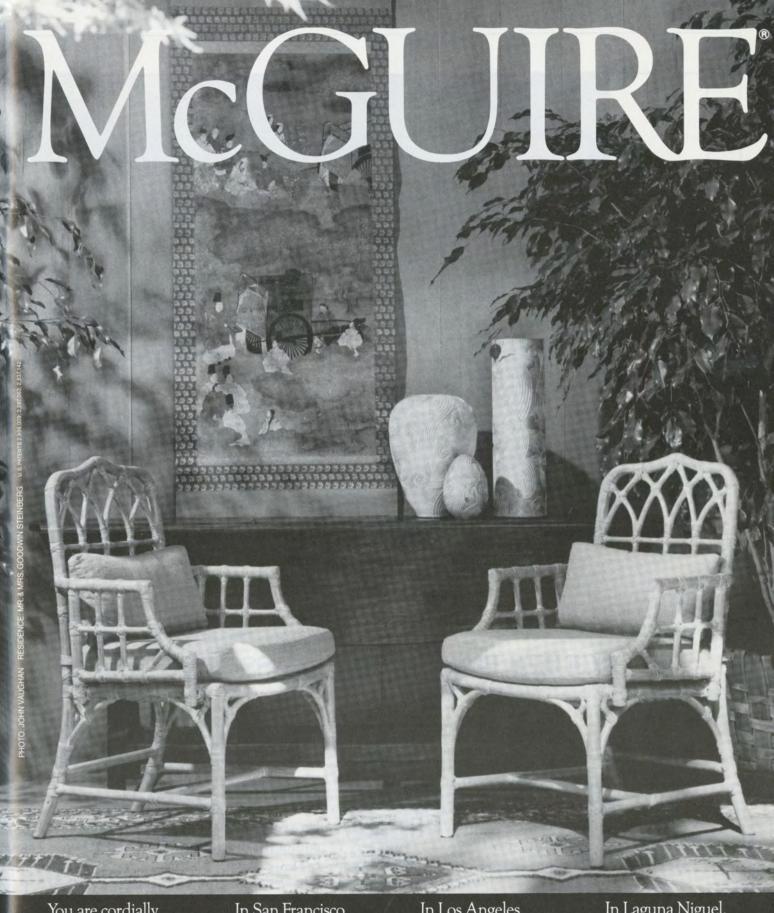
As always, it is a privilege to be able to acknowledge our governmental funding sources, including such stalwarts as the National Endowment for the Arts and the California Arts Council. We also extend our deep gratitude to Grants for the Arts, Mayor Art Agnos and Chief Administrative Officer Rudolf Nothenberg, whose support has been most encouraging.

As in previous years, we extend our appreciation to the San Francisco Opera Guild, the Merola Opera Program, and the War Memorial Board of Trustees for

their ongoing support.

We are further pleased to note this year's increase in our subscription base, but the reality of opera production is that ticket sales can cover only slightly more than half of our expenses. The interest of our audience in the magnificent art form of the opera has been amply demonstrated over the past years. With your continued support, and increased contributions wherever possible, we can together continue the glorious tradition of opera in San Francisco.

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



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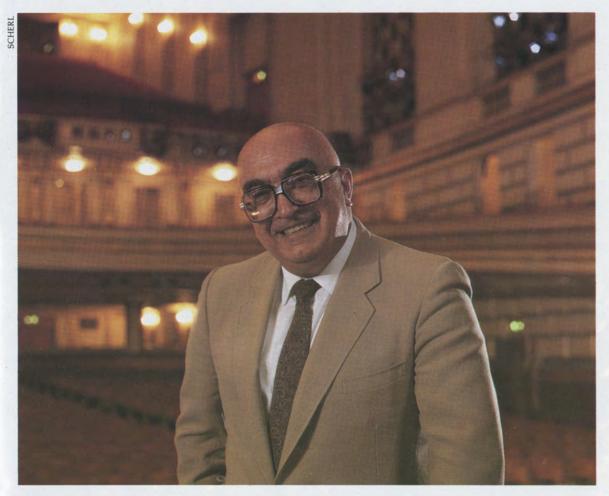
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# General Director's Message

Returning to San Francisco has always been a pleasure for me, but never more so than this year, as I embark upon my new position as general director of San Francisco Opera. Long before I received this appointment, I wrote in my autobiography that I regarded San Francisco Opera as my "home" company, and the important role it has played in my career and life cannot be overstressed. During my student years in Los Angeles, I came to know and love the operatic repertoire through San Francisco Opera performances, and my earliest participation was as a supernumerary with the Company during its tours to Los Angeles.

I've always been a great believer in the power of kismet, and I am convinced that way back when I first carried a spear in *Otello* I was already beginning to fulfill part of a grand design—a master plan of some sort that has now come full circle as I assume leadership of my "home" company.

In my work at other opera companies around the world, I have always used the excellence of San Francisco Opera productions as the standard against which all others must be measured. Now it is my fervent hope that I can contribute to the artistic growth and financial stability of this wonderful institution. To use whatever talents I may have been given, all of my energy, my fullest capabilities to maintain San Francisco Opera's status as one of the foremost performing arts organizations in the world-and to prepare the Company to enter the 21st century-that is my pledge to you, the San Francisco Opera family. I am delighted to join with all of you as together we embark upon the next stage in the continuing evolution of the most marvelous of art forms in this, the most marvelous of cities.

Letti Man

# San Francisco Opera

Lotfi Mansouri, General Director

Sir John Pritchard, Music Director

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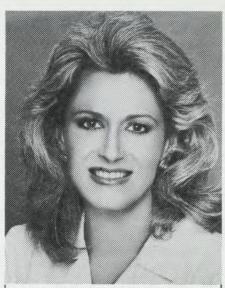
William Freeman

\*San Francisco Opera debut

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

Kawai is the official piano of the San Francisco Opera. Pianos provided and serviced by R. Kassman.

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



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# San Francisco Opera

Lotfi Mansouri, General Director

Sir John Pritchard, Music Director

### 1988 Season

Opening Night
Friday, September 9, 7:00
L'Africaine Meyerbeer
Verrett, Swenson, Spence\*; Domingo,
Díaz, Devlin, Anderson, Delavan,
Skinner, Rouleau
Arena/Mansouri/W. Skalicki/A. Skalicki/
Munn/Ray\*
1988 production underwritten through a
generous gift from the Sells Foundation.
Saturday, September 10, 8:00

The Rake's Progress Stravinsky
S. Patterson, Christin, Vergara; Hadley\*
Shimell\*\*, J. Patterson, Green, Travis\*
Mauceri/Cox/Hockney/Sullivan
Production originally made possible by a gift
from the L.J. and Mary C. Skaggs

Production originally made possible by a gift from the L.J. and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation; revival made possible by a generous gift from Mr. and Mrs. Marshall Naify.

Tuesday, September 13, 7:30 **L'Africaine** Meyerbeer

Thursday, September 15, **7:30**The Rake's Progress Stravinsky

Friday, September 16, 8:00

L'Africaine Meyerbeer

Saturday, September 17, 8:00

American Premiere

Maometto II Rossini

Horne, Anderson\*; Alaimo\*, Merritt\*,

Tate, Wunsch

Zedda/Frisell/Benois/Arhelger Production underwritten by the generous grant from the L.J. and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation.

Sunday, September 18, 2:00

L'Africaine Meyerbeer

Monday, September 19, 8:00 Maometto II

Wednesday, September 21, **7:30**L'Africaine Meyerbeer

Rossini

Friday, September 23, 8:00

The Rake's Progress Stravinsky

Saturday, September 24, 8:00 L'Africaine Meyerbeer

Sunday, September 25, 2:00

Maometto II Rossini

Tuesday, September 27, 8:00

L'Africaine Meyerbeer

Wednesday, September 28, 7:30
The Rake's Progress Stravinsky

Thursday, September 29, **7:30 Der Fliegende Holländer** Wagner Polaski\*\*, Young; Van Dam, Ochman, Koptchak\*

Kaltenbach/Calábria/Ponnelle/ Halmen/ Munn

Production originally made possible, in part, by the Gramma Fisher Foundation; revival made possible by a generous gift from Mr. and Mrs. Alfred S. Wilsey.

Friday, September 30, 8:00

Maometto II Rossini

Saturday, October 1, 8:00

Der Fliegende Holländer Wagner

Martin, Young; Van Dam, Ochman,

Koptchak

Kaltenbach/Calábria/Ponnelle/Halmen/

Munn

Sunday, October 2, 2:00

The Rake's Progress Stravinsky

Tuesday, October 4, 8:00

The Rake's Progress Stravinsky

Wednesday, October 5, 8:00

Der Fliegende Holländer Wagner

Martin, Young; Van Dam, Ochman,

Koptchak

Kaltenbach/Calábria/Ponnelle/Halmen/

Munn

Thursday, October 6, 7:30

Maometto II Rossini

Friday, October 7, 8:00

Der Fliegende Holländer Wagner

Martin, Young; Van Dam, Ochman,

Koptchak

Kaltenbach/Calábria/Ponnelle/Halmen/

Munn Saturday Outshard 2002

Saturday, October 8, 8:00

Così fan tutte

Mozart

Csavlek, Montague\*, Rolandi; Gulyás,
Dickson, Krause

Bradshaw/Gleue\*/Ponnelle/Munn

Production originally made possible by a

grant from Crocker National Bank; revival

made possible by a grant from the San

Francisco Opera Guild.

Sunday, October 9, 2:00 Maometto II

Rossini

Mozart

Tuesday, October 11, 8:00

Der Fliegende Holländer Wagner

Larson\*\*, Young; Pederson, Ochman,

Koptchak

Kaltenbach/Calábria/Ponnelle/Halmen/ Munn

Thursday, October 13, 8:00

Munn

Così fan tutte Mozart

Saturday, October 15, **7:30 Der Fliegende Holländer** Wagner

Larson, Young; Van Dam, Ochman,

Koptchak

Kaltenbach/Calábria/Ponnelle/Halmen/

Sunday, October 16, 2:00

Manon Lescaut Puccini
Lorengar, Manhart; Dvorský, Vanaud\*,
Capecchi, Wunsch, Travis, Petersen,
Skinner, Anderson, Potter
Pritchard/Asagaroff/Klein/Mahoney/
Arhelger

Tuesday, October 18, 8:00 Così fan tutte

Wednesay, October 19, 7:30

Manon Lescaut Puccini

Friday, October 21, 8:00

Così fan tutte Mozart

Csavlek, Montague, Rolandi; Gulyás,

Dickson, Capecchi

Bradshaw/Gleue/Ponnelle/Munn

Saturday, October 22, 7:00 New Production Parsifal

Parsifal Wagner W. Meier\*, S. Patterson, Panagulias\*, Williams\*, Manhart, Hoffman\*, Spence; Kollo, Moll, Hynninen\*, Berry, J. Patterson, Wunsch, Potter, Anderson, Ledbetter

Pritchard/Joël/Halmen/Munn Production made possible by a generous gift from a friend of San Francisco Opera.

Sunday, October 23, 2:00

Der Fliegende Holländer Wagner

Larson, Young; Van Dam, Ochman,

Koptchak

Kaltenbach/Calábria/Ponnelle/Halmen/

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La Girometta (Anon./Sibella)

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PERFORMANCE

Tuesday, October 25, 7:00 Parsifal	Wagner	Sunday, November 20, 1:30 La Gioconda	Ponchielli	Saturday, December 10, 1:00 Family Matinee	
1 di Sil di	v vagitei	Marton, Ciurca, Nadler; Poloz		La Bohème Puccini	
Wednesday, October 26, 8:00 Manon Lescaut	Puccini	Opthof, Giaiotti, Irmiter*, Petersen, Pittsinger		Hartliep, Williams; Wunsch, Ledbetter, Potter, Skinner, Travis, Harper, Coles	
Thursday, October 27, <b>7:30</b> Così fan tutte Mozart		Kord/Ewers*/Brown/Munn/Sulich Production originally made possible by a friend of the San Francisco Opera and the		Fiore/Zambello/Mitchell/Button/ Munn Saturday, December 10, 7:30	
Friday, October 28, 7:00 Parsifal	Wagner	San Francisco Opera Guild.		La Gioconda Ponchielli Sunday, December 11, 2:00	
Saturday, October 29, 8:00 Manon Lescaut	Puccini	Monday, November 21, 8:00 Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk Sh	nostakovich	La Bohème Puccini (Same cast as December 9)	
Sunday, October 30, 2:00	1 decim	Tuesday, November 22, 8:00 La Bohème	Puccini	** American opera debut * San Francisco Opera debut	
Così fan tutte	Mozart	Wednesday, November 23, 7:3 La Gioconda	80 Ponchielli	All performances are in the original language with English Supertitles. Supertitles for L'Africaine, The Rake's Progress,	
Tuesday, November 1, 8:00  Manon Lescaut	Puccini	Friday, November 25, 8:00			
Wednesday, November 2, 7:00 Parsifal			nostakovich	Maometto II, Manon Lescaut, Parsifal, Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk, La Bohème and La	
Thursday, November 3, 7:30 Così fan tutte	Mozart	Saturday, November 26, 8:00 La Bohème	Puccini	Gioconda provided by a generous and most appreciated gift from William and Eloise Rollnick. Così fan tutte supertitles underwritten through a generous grant from American Express. Supertitles for Der Fliegende Holländer are underwritten through a grant from Pacific Gas and	
Friday, November 4, 8:00	WIOZart	Sunday, November 27, 1:30 La Gioconda	Ponchielli		
Manon Lescaut	Puccini	Tuesday, November 29, 8:00 La Bohème	Puccini		
Sunday, November 6, 1:00 Parsifal	Wagner	Wednesday, November 30, 7:30 Electronic Elec		Electric Company.	
Tuesday, November 8, 7:00  Parsifal	Wagner	Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk Sl Thursday, December 1, 7:30	nostakovich	Repertoire, casts and dates subject to change.	
Wednesday, November 9, 7:30  Manon Lescaut  Puccini  Saturday, November 12, 8:00  Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk Shostakovich Barstow, Golden*, de la Rosa, Ganz; Trussel, Lewis, Devlin, J. Patterson, Travis, Petersen, Skinner, Gudas, Coles, Anderson, Delavan, Potter Pritchard/Robertson (December 4)/ Freedman/W. Skalicki/Munn		La Gioconda	Ponchielli	Box Office and telephone sales: (415) 864-3330.	
		Friday, December 2, 8:00 La Bohème	Puccini	(115) 661 6666.	
		Saturday, December 3, 7:30 La Gioconda	Ponchielli		
		Sunday, December 4, 2:00 Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk Shostakovich		San francisco	
		Tuesday, December 6, 7:30 La Gioconda	Ponchielli	OPEKA GUILD presents	
Wednesday, November 16, 7:30  La Bohème Puccini Freni, Pacetti; Pavarotti, G. Quilico, Dickson, Ghiaurov, Tajo, Harper, Coles Severini**/Zambello/Mitchell/Button/ Munn Production originally made possible by a gift in memory of George L. Quist; revival made		Thursday, December 8, 7:30 La Bohème	Puccini	Opera for Young Audiences  La Bohème	
		Friday, December 9, 8:00 La Bohème	Puccini	Puccini/in Italian with English Supertitles	
		Gasdia*, de la Rosa; Lima, Malis, Delavan, Langan, Tajo, Harper, Coles Fiore/Zambello/Mitchell/Button/Munn		Tuesday, November 22 at 1:00 Friday, December 2 at 1:00 Wednesday, December 7 at 1:00	

### ROBERT CAHEN AN EYE FOR OPERA

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Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk Shostakovich

Puccini

Saturday, November 19, 1:00

Saturday, November 19, 8:00

La Bohème

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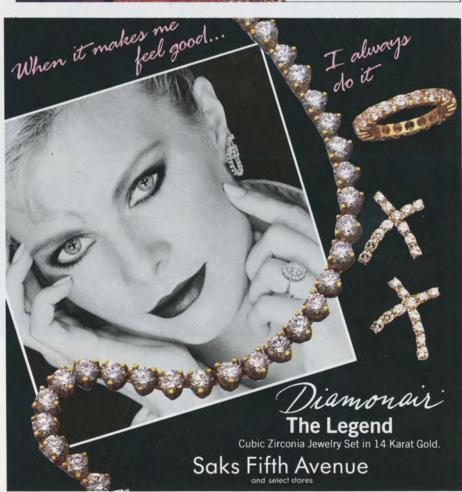
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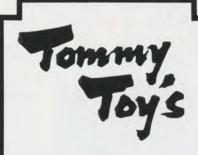
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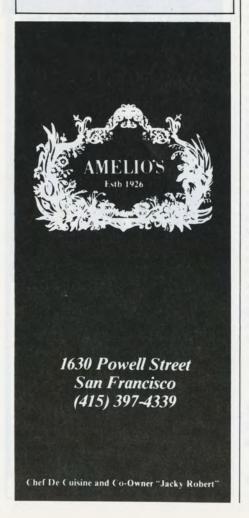
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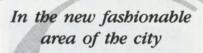
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# La Gioconda Lives On

By RICHARD DYER

Critics, musicologists, German composers and the compilers of operatic dictionaries condescend to Ponchielli's La Gioconda—when they deign to notice it at all. That is not a mistake that composers

(Below) Montserrat Caballé in the title role and Sheila Nadler as La Cieca at the San Francisco Opera in 1983. (Right) At San Francisco Opera's first performance of La Gioconda, in 1947, the role of Barnaba was sung by Leonard Warren. SCHERL/STROHMEYER likely to make.

The great composer of Lieder, Hugo Wolf, once reviewed a performance of La Gioconda which he hadn't bothered to attend. "One can talk about and write about [very very many things] without having seen them, heard them, felt them or understood them, especially a performance of La Gioconda. There is nothing in it to feel or understand ..." Corno di

of Italian opera, singers, or the public are Bassetto unleashed some Shavian invective after a performance of the opera in London in 1890: "[La Gioconda is] a mere instance of the mischief which great men bring upon the world when small men begin to worship them . . . Verdi is tempting many a born quadrille composer of the South to wrestle ineffectually and ridiculously with Shakespear and Victor Hugo ... It would have been kinder, even when Ponchielli was alive, to tell him frankly



that all his strainings at the bow of Ulysses were not bending it one inch." The first edition of *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Opera* says *La Gioconda* is "musically full of old-fashioned cliches and is crudely scored." The revised current edition isn't much kinder. "The work's musical and dramatic styles were already exhausted in opera." The *New Grove Dictionary* informs its readers that "Ponchielli lacked a striking personality," and although he "had a strong dramatic instinct, which could move in any direction," he lacked "the

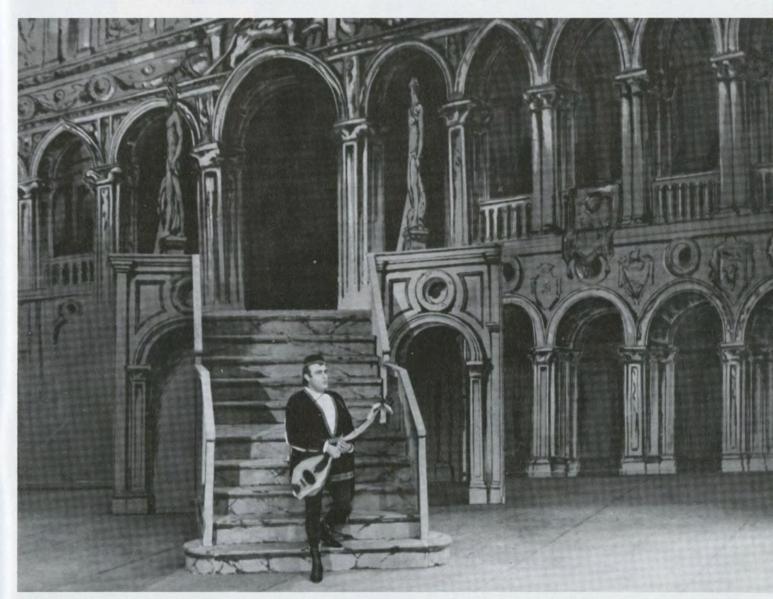
cultural or the spiritual power necessary to direct it."

On the other hand, Puccini and Mascagni venerated Ponchielli; he was their teacher. Verdi had no such obligation, but when he learned of his colleague's death, he wrote to a friend, "Poor Ponchielli! So good! And such a gifted musician!"

Singers rejoice in the opportunities presented by the opera's leading roles, even as they fear them. One of today's leading dramatic sopranos once told this writer that she had repeatedly been

offered Gioconda, and just as repeatedly turned it down. "That is an opera for when you can guarantee 100 per cent." As an example of what she meant, consider Gioconda's famous last-act aria "Suicidio!": it presents conflicting difficulties seldom encompassed within a single piece—it requires passionate dramatic declamation in the middle register; ease

Richard Dyer is music critic of The Boston Globe and Briggs-Copeland associate professor of English at Harvard.



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2100 Webster Street, Suite 502 San Francisco, CA 94115 (415) 923-3003 and lightness at the top, as well as sustained power; and it closes with tenebrous chest tones. It also comes after three demanding acts—and before powerful pages of dramatic recitative, which in turn precede tricky passages of coloratura.

Sometimes the public cuts the opera down to size by admiring it for the wrong reasons as a diva opera—it becomes simply a source of anecdotes, of tales of Zinka haplessly coiled in her trains, searching for a vital spot her little dagger could reach; of Maria, vocally rejuvenated for her second recording because she was newly happy in the embrace of Onassis; of Renata back at the Met with an old new voice; of another Renata snarling backstage at Luciano before going on to protest her unrequited passion for his Enzo.

But the public also loves La Gioconda for good reasons, for its spectacle, its variety, its generous outpouring of melody, particularly in the glorious tenor romanza, "Cielo e mar"; the public loves La Gioconda for the opportunity to see and hear favorite singers pour it on. The vearning cellos that rise up from the orchestra pit during the prelude, the immediate contrast between the serene melody of the rosary and the lopsided music associated with the evil Barnaba, promise a full evening of full-throated, passionate song. Finally, the public loves La Gioconda because it's a good operavirtually the only Italian opera not by Verdi composed during his four-decade dominating prime that repeatedly returns to the stage.

The composer of this work, like Verdi, came to the opera house by way of the organ loft and the bandmaster's baton—religious and civic responsibilities. Amilcare Ponchielli was born in Paderno Fasolaro, near Cremona, on August 31, 1834. His father kept a shop, and on Sundays played the organ in the village church; Ponchielli's first music teacher was his father. When he was only 11, he was admitted as a scholarship student to the Milan Conservatory, and he remained there for the following nine years. A series of minor positions followed as organist, as operatic conductor in secondary theaters, as bandmaster in Piacenza and in Cremona.

Ponchielli's first opera was based on the great national novel by Manzoni, I Promessi Sposi; he and his friends wrote the libretto and arranged for a few perfor-



San Francisco Opera's first Gioconda was Stella Roman, who performed the role in 1947, and is shown here in a studio portrait.

mances. The scouts who came from Milan were not impressed. A second opera did not reach the stage; a third had only one performance. Finally, in 1872, when Ponchielli was already 38, a revised version of *I Promessi Sposi* was successful in Milan, and the powerful publishing house of Ricordi took the composer under its wing. His next opera, *I Lituani*, was a success at La Scala in 1874, so Ricordi assigned the 32 year-old Arrigo Boito to fashion Ponchielli's next libretto, that of La Gioconda.

Boito was a colorful character—a composer of minor gifts and major aspirations and a vigorous writer of poems and polemics, criticism, translations and

libretti, which he published under the name of Tobia Gorrio, an anagram of his name. Like Donizetti's Lucrezia Borgia and Verdi's Ernani and Rigoletto, La Gioconda is based on a popular play of Victor Hugo, in this instance Angelo, Tyrant of Padua.

In 1835 Hugo wrote the play as a ringing denunciation of tyranny; it still held the stage 70 years later when Sarah Bernhardt appeared as La Tisbe, the Gioconda figure. Before Ponchielli, the play attracted the interest of such other operatic composers as Mercadante and Cui. Boito shifted the emphasis away from the consequences of tyranny, and Alvise, the tyrant, became a subsidiary character with an important aria and duet.

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outdoor patio seating Lunch: Monday thru Friday, 11-2 Dinner: 7 nights a week, 5:30 to 10. He contrived a way to make Hugo's villain Homodei survive to the end so that Gioconda doesn't have to die at the hands of the man she loves; he shifted the locale from Padua to the more theatrically picturesque Venice. And he organized and tightened the drama in operatically effective ways, while retaining all of Hugo's flamboyance.

His work was not dramatically flawless. Commentators have often noted how the prescient Gioconda happens to arrive in a private chamber in the House of Gold equipped with just what she needs for the forthcoming emergency—a vial of a potion that will simulate death. The original version of the text wasn't quite so far-fetched; Gioconda's presence at the House of Gold was explained by an invitation for her to sing at the festivities. Ponchielli decided against composing that aria, one that might have been interesting to hear—this, after all, is an opera about a street singer who never sings in the streets, though the delightful barcarolle rhythm of her first duet with her mother may give a hint of what her busking was

Despite some remaining awkwardness, Boito taught himself a lot by writing this libretto-and he remembered his lessons. He learned how to bring down the curtain-Act I ends with a conventional but nonetheless powerful contrast between public religious serenity and private inner turmoil; Act II ends with the burning and sinking of a ship; Act III with a curtain drawn to disclose a corpse: Act IV with Barnaba's final revelation shrieked into the unhearing ear of the lifeless Gioconda. But coups de théâtre aren't the whole story. The organization of Act I of Otello, the first libretto Boito wrote for Verdi, owes a lot to the organization of Act I of La Gioconda; it is only a step from Barnaba to Iago. (In fact, some lines Boito wrote for Alvise that Ponchielli did not set wound up in Iago's "Credo.")

Boito counterpoised the disciplines of structure with a prodigious outpouring of language. The libretto of *La Gioconda* must be the despair of the supertitler because the language is so empurpled, so furiously literary. It is built on contrasting imagery—on glitter, gold and festivity and floating corpses in the Orfano Canal, on dancing in the streets and torture chambers below, on Carnival and Ash Wednesday—and it is built on hyperbole—Gioconda claims she loves Enzo as a

lion loves blood, as eagles love the sun.

This literary quality of the text is something that worried Ponchielli. In 1874 he wrote to Ricordi, "I have read and reread the [first] two acts of Boito, which I find very beautiful, but I fear the music may correspond to the difficulty of the libretto and may thus prove difficult ... so then I ask myself, what about the audience?" On another occasion, he complained of "cerebral congestion" in the text

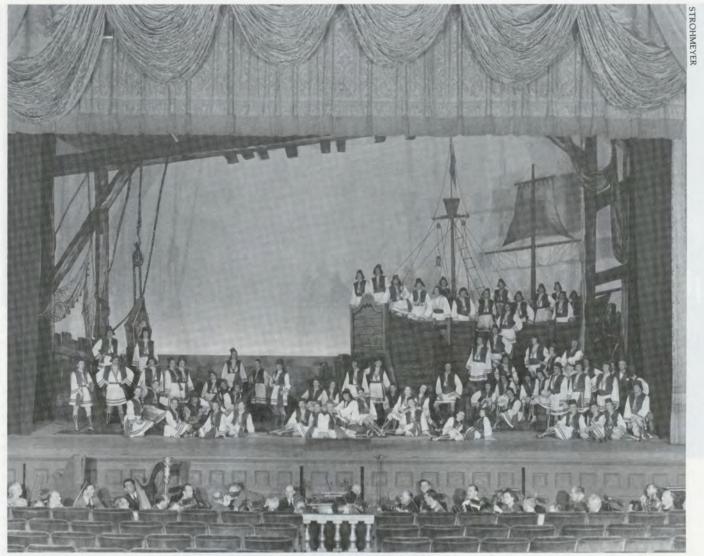


When La Gioconda returned to the San Francisco Opera for its second (1948) season, the title role was sung by Astrid Varnay, shown above in a backstage chat with Company General Director Gaetano Merola.

STROHMEYER

and confessed, "I proceed with fear.I compose more easily when the verse is more commonplace. The public wants smooth, clear things, melody, simplicity, and we are doing all we can to shroud ourselves in confusion and complexity. Boito is forcing me in that direction."

Still, Ponchielli persevered and La Gioconda reached the stage of La Scala on April 8, 1876. The composer continued to



At the time of San Francisco Opera's Gioconda premiere (1947), the chorus and orchestra pause between acts of a dress rehearsal for a "tableau" shot.

work on the opera for the next four years, adding the arias for Alvise and Laura, revising the first act finale and, most particularly, reworking the finale of the third act, one of the great glories of the work. La Gioconda has remained popular in Italy ever since, and it is never absent from the American scene for long; other countries have proved resistant, though prima donnas, who always have their eye on the opera, sometimes get their wayin comparatively recent years Régine Crespin and Leonie Rysanek have been unexpected Giocondas in unexpected places, in Marseilles and Berlin, respectively.

The opera is a great prima donna vehicle, and one measure of the dimensions of the title role is that radically

different singers have become identified with it by finding different places to make their most memorable impression. For more than two decades Zinka Milanov was the reigning Gioconda at the Met. She was famous for a moment in Act I, after La Cieca's aria, when Gioconda learns Laura's name and confesses her love for Enzo, soaring to a sustained pianissimo B flat as the theme of the rosary swells in the orchestra. But even Milanov didn't always make the effect she wanted here. Though 30 years have passed, this one-time teen-aged standee at the Met has never forgotten the sumptuously tragic sound of Milanov's voice at the end of the first scene of the third act, after she has given Laura the potion and Gioconda sings of her anguish and despair—she has honored her mother by saving her rival for the man she loves.

Maria Callas, who began her major career in this role and recorded it twice, wasn't at her best on sustained pianissimo high B flats. She, on the other hand, excelled in the blazing, taunting duet with Laura: you could believe her when she bore down into her smoldering chest voice to claim that she loved Enzo as the lion loves blood. Callas was also magnificent in the tormented passage in the last act between "Suicidio" and the awakening of Laura. This was a demonstration that Gioconda could be a role for a singing actress-who would have thought it?; Callas herself felt that the crowning achievement of her recording career was not her Norma or her Tosca, but Act IV of



Grace Bumbry drains the potion in San Francisco Opera's 1967 production of La Gioconda.

La Gioconda on her second recording.

But La Gioconda is more than a prima donna's vehicle. At least four of its roles are very interesting. Alvise doesn't have much to work with, and Ponchielli did not lavish his best music on the part of Laura, although shining-voiced mezzos have been able to make an effect with "Stella del marinar." (The preceding gentle duet with Enzo, incidentally, is a little like the "Lontano, lontano" duet in Mefistofele that Boito was adding to his revised score while Ponchielli was composing La Gioconda. Which came first?) Cieca's part is not large, but it is very rewarding from the vocal point of view: generations of contraltos have rejoiced in the opportunity "Voce di donna" presents to display sumptuous tone and evenness of legato. Enzo presents an interesting acting opportunity, for this hero loves Gioconda like a sister, although his passion is for Laura; most tenors torn between two women can't stand one of them. The role has heroics in it—his entrance is as brazen as



San Francisco Opera's third staging of La Gioconda took place in 1967 and featured the Enzo of Renato Cioni and Gioconda of Leyla Gencer.



Leyla Gencer and Grace Bumbry, wearing Gioconda's and Laura's respective costumes, pose in a dressing room for the photographer in 1967.



When La Gioconda opened San Francisco Opera's 1967 season, the opera was staged by Lotfi Mansouri (left) and conducted by Giuseppe Patanè (right), both of whom are shown in the dressing room of Leyla Gancer (center), who was featured in the title role.

Otello's, and his denunciations of Gioconda in the last act prefigure Otello turning on Desdemona—but what audiences remember is "Cielo e mar" and the mezza-voce melody that launches the Act III finale, "Gia ti vedo." Barnaba dominates the first act, using an individual to manipulate a crowd, just as Iago does in Otello. The text of his aria "O monumento"-Boito calls it a "soliloquy"—is stronger than its music, although Ponchielli was probably wise to conceive it in terms of dramatic recitative rather than cantilena. A great baritone with a command of declamation can make it riveting-and then he gets to sing in the rollicking "Barcarolle" which shows the demonspy's smiling public face. While it is commonplace to observe that the opera provides a role for every principal voice category, the vigorous and varied role Ponchielli provided for the chorus is less frequently praised.

Still, it's a mistake to confine discussion of *La Gioconda* to its vocal opportunities. For one thing, the third act ballet, the "Dance of the Hours," is the only major operatic ballet in 19th-century repertory opera apart from the one in *Aida* that can never be cut. Its rhythmic elan and charm of melody are unaltered all these years after the leaping hippopotami of *Fantasia* imposed unwelcome associations on it.

There's no denying that there is some weak music in La Gioconda and there's a

streak of vulgarity that is both a strength and a limitation. Most of all, one is struck, again and again, by the *poise* of this opera. It looks back to Meyerbeerian theatrical grandeur; some of its vehement vocal writing looks forward to the *verismo* of Ponchielli's pupils. So does the scenesetting music, a lesson Puccini learned well: there is much in *Tosca* that has its origin in Ponchielli's evocation of sea and sky in Act II of *La Gioconda* and the sinister opening of Act IV depicting the murderous waters of the Orfano Canal.

La Gioconda does not remain in the repertory because of what it stands between, however. People love it because of what it is.

The first cast of La Gioconda was headed by Maddalena Mariani-Masi and the legendary tenor Giuliano Gavarre. The first Metropolitan Opera cast was headed by the the company's openingnight diva, the Swedish soprano Christine Nilsson; later notable Met Giocondas included Rosa Ponselle, Zinka Milanov, Renata Tebaldi, Martina Arroyo, Renata Scotto and Eva Marton. Caruso, Martinelli, Corelli, Bergonzi, and Domingo sang Enzo; Richard Tucker made his Met debut as Enzo, and it remained one of his greatest roles. In San Francisco, performances of La Gioconda have featured Stella Roman, Regina Resnik, Astrid Varnay, Scotto, Leyla Gencer, Montserrat Caballé and Maria Slatinaru.

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### ARTIST PROFILES

### LA GIOCONDA



**EVA MARTON** Renowned soprano Eva Marton returns to San Francisco Opera to appear in the title role of La Gioconda. She was last seen here in 1985 in the title role of Turandot. one of her most famous portrayals (which she has sung around the world as well as recorded), following her appearance in 1984 and the 1985 Ring Festival as Brünnhilde in Siegfried and Götterdämmerung. Her interpretations of Brünnhilde in the 1984 Siegfried and the 1985 Götterdämmerung were both taking place for the first time in her career. Born in Hungary but now living in Germany, she made her Company debut in 1977 in the title role of Aida, returning in 1979 to sing Tosca on the Company's tour to the Philippines and in the 1980 Fall Season as the Empress in Die Frau ohne Schatten. Miss Marton appears regularly in all of the world's major opera houses and is acclaimed for her interpretations of roles such as the Empress in Die Frau ohne Schatten, Amelia in Un Ballo in Maschera, the title roles of Ariadne auf Naxos, Turandot, La Gioconda, Manon Lescaut, Aida and Leonore in Fidelio. She has made numerous television appearances, most recently in Metropolitan Opera productions of Il Trovatore and Turandot on "Live from Lincoln Center" telecasts. She can be heard on a steadily increasing list of opera recordings. Some of her most recent engagements have included Tosca at the Met and at Covent Garden, and Turandot in Buenos Aires and Milan's La Scala. Future engagements include the title role of Salome (a career first) in a new production at the Metropolitan Opera and, at the Vienna Staatsoper, Leonora in La Forza del Destino and the title role of Elektra. As a concert soloist, she has

appeared with major symphony orches-

tras throughout the world.



CLEOPATRA CIURCA

Mezzo-soprano Cleopatra Ciurca returns to San Francisco Opera as Laura in La Gioconda, a role she has sung at the Orange Festival and, last year, for Radio France. She was last seen here in her 1985 Company debut as the Princess of Bouillon in Adriana Lecouvreur. Born in Romania and trained at the Conservatory of Music in Bucharest, Miss Ciurca won numerous prestigious international vocal competitions and appeared in opera and concert performances in numerous Romanian theaters. She made her operatic debut as Azucena in Il Trovatore at the Bucharest Opera and in 1982 made her French debut at Valence and her Frankfurt debut in the same role. In 1983 she made her American debut as Paulina in a nationally telecast production of The Queen of Spades from the Opera Company of Philadelphia; made her Austrian debut at Graz in Donizetti's La Favorita: and portrayed Amneris in Aida at Strasbourg. The following year saw her Swiss debut in Zurich as Marina in Boris Godunov, and her Metropolitan Opera debut as Olga in Eugene Onegin, as well as assignments in Paris, Nancy, Lyons and Naples. She made a triumphant appearance with the Washington Opera during the 1986-87 season in the first American performances of Rimsky-Korsakov's The Tsar's Bride in 50 years. In 1986 she also bowed at Milan's La Scala as Amneris under the baton of Giuseppe Patanè. Last year she won praise in her first performances of Samson et Dalila at Rouen, as Marina at the Metropolitan Opera, and as Fenena in Nabucco at the Paris Opera. Since 1982, Miss Ciurca has lived in Paris.

Russian mezzo-soprano Nina Terentieva, one of the leading soloists of the Bolshoi Opera Theater in Moscow, makes her United States debut during the 1988



NINA TERENTIEVA

season as Laura in Ponchielli's La Gioconda. After receiving her early vocal training at the Leningrad State Conservatory, she became an apprentice at the Leningrad Opera, where she soon became a major soloist. Leading roles in Leningrad included Olga in Tchaikovsky's Eugene Onegin, Marina in Mussorgsky's Boris Godunov, Siebel in Gounod's Faust, and Aksinya in Dzerzhinsky's And Quietly Flows the Don. After winning several major vocal competitions and prizes in 1975, she was soon invited to join the Bolshoi Theater. Her appearances with that company include Amneris in Aida, Paulina in The Queen of Spades, Marfa in Mussorgsky's Khovanshchina, and the title role of Carmen. In addition to her operatic appearances, Miss Terentieva has sung in many concerts in the Soviet Union, and has also performed outside of the USSR in East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Yugoslavia, Holland, Sweden, Austria, and Australia. She recently made her North American debut with the Canadian Opera Company as Eboli in Verdi's Don Carlos.

Contralto Sheila Nadler returns to San Francisco Opera to recreate the role of La Cieca in La Gioconda. Since her Company debut, she has been heard in over 20 roles here, ranging from Erda in Siegfried to Auntie in Peter Grimes, and most recently appeared in the fall of 1983 as Sosostris in the American premiere of Tippett's The Midsummer Marriage and as La Cieca. Miss Nadler made her operatic debut with the Lyric Opera of Chicago, going on to make her Metropolitan Opera debut in 1976. She returned to the Met in 1983 as the Witch in Hansel and Gretel, an assignment she repeated there in 1984 and 1985, and which she will reprise this winter. She has sung with the Santa Fe Opera, Van-



SHEILA NADLER

couver Opera, and the opera companies of Baltimore, New Orleans, Pittsburgh, Dayton, Columbus and Houston. She has sung frequently in Europe, making her debut in 1982 at Milan's La Scala as Anna in Les Trovens and returned there in 1984 as Mrs. Doc in Leonard Bernstein's A Quiet Place. She has appeared as Fricka in Die Walküre in Marseilles, Waltraute in Götterdämmerung in Brussels, Klytemnestra in Elektra in Santiago, Chile, Widow Begbick in the New Israeli Opera production of The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny, and La Cieca in Montpellier. Her concert appearances have included the title roles of Rinaldo and Orlando, and Bertarido in Rodelinda with the Handel Society of Washington, the Verdi Requiem at the Casals Festival, and Mahler's Eighth Symphony and Handel's Messiah with the San Francisco Symphony. She recently sang Cornelia in Handel's Giulio Cesare (directed by Peter Sellars) in Brussels, and was invited to return there next year as Arnalta in Monteverdi's L'Incoronazione di Poppea.

Tenor Vyacheslav Polozov makes his San Francisco Opera debut as Enzo in La Gioconda. Born in the Ukrainian city of Zhdanov, he studied voice at the Kiev Conservatory and made his operatic debut in 1977 as Alfredo in La Traviata at the Kiev Opera House, becoming the leading tenor of the Minsk Opera in 1980. In 1981 he was the only tenor to receive the Gold Medal at the All-Russia Glinka Competition. The following year saw his debut with the Bolshoi Opera in Moscow as Alfredo and as Turiddu in Cavalleria Rusticana. Other competitions he won include the Sofia Competition in 1984 for his portrayal of the Duke in Rigoletto, and the Fifth Worldwide Madama Butterfly Competition in Tokyo in 1986, immediately after which he announced his



VYACHESLAV POLOZOV

intention to live in the United States. He made his American debut as Rodolfo in La Bohème at the Lyric Opera of Chicago in 1986, and bowed at the Metropolitan Opera opposite Renata Scotto in 1987 as Pinkerton in Madama Butterfly, the vehicle of his 1986 debut at La Scala. He also participated in the Metropolitan Opera's park concert performances of La Bohème in 1987, returning to the Met's stage earlier this year as Macduff in Macbeth. He has recorded the role of Dimitri in Boris Godunov under Mstislav Rostropovich, with whom he has recently performed in The Tsar's Bride at the Rome Opera and at the Kennedy Center. Earlier this year he made his Carnegie Hall debut in the title role of Andrea Chénier with the Opera Orchestra of New York. Future engagements include a concert tour of Japan, Alvaro in La Forza del Destino in Miami, Lensky in Eugene Onegin in Buenos Aires and Chile, and Andrea Chénier in Lyons.

Baritone Cornelis Opthof returns to San Francisco Opera as Barnaba in Ponchielli's La Gioconda. He made his Company debut in 1971 as Talbot in Donizetti's Maria Stuarda and as Count di Luna in Verdi's Il Trovatore. Originally from Holland, Opthof has sung in over 45 productions with the Canadian Opera Company since his debut there in 1959. He has also had major successes at the Metropolitan Opera, and with the opera companies of Seattle, New Orleans, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Portland, and Washington, D.C. His career has also led him to Europe, particularly the opera houses of Holland, Germany and England, as well as Australia. His repertoire includes Ashton in Lucia di Lammermoor, Germont in La Traviata, Marcello in La Bohème, Sharpless in Madama Butterfly, Renato in Un Ballo in Maschera, Iago in Otello, Figaro in The Barber of Seville, and the title roles of Don



CORNELIS OPTHOF

Giovanni and Rigoletto. Recent engagements include Eisenstein in Die Fledermaus in Calgary and Winnipeg, Sharpless in Madama Butterfly in Portland and New Orleans, Amonasro in Aida in Vancouver, and Boris in Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk in Toronto. Future appearances include the title role of The Flying Dutchman with Pacific Opera, lago in Hawaii, and Baron Prus in The Makropulos Case with the Canadian Opera Company. He has recorded Filippo in the complete recordings of Bellini's Beatrice di Tenda with Joan Sutherland and Luciano Pavarotti.

Italian bass Bonaldo Giaiotti returns to San Francisco Opera to portray Alvise in La Gioconda. He made his Company debut in 1973 as Baldassarre in La Favorita and returned in 1977 to sing Giorgio in I Puritani and Ramfis in Aida. Since that time, he has performed in Munich, Rome, Verona, Avignon, Bordeaux, Turin, Venezuela, Zurich, Chicago, New York and Philadelphia. Highlights of his 1985-86 season included Attila in Verona, Macbeth in Zurich, Nabucco at the Teatro Margherita in Genoa and at the Zurich Opera's Summer Festival, Simon Boccanegra in Trieste, La Sonnambula at Milan's La Scala, and I Vespri Siciliani at the Teatro Comunale in Bologna. In the fall of 1986 he returned to the United States for Aida at the Metropolitan Opera and then went to Chicago for Lucia di Lammermoor and performances of the Verdi Requiem with the Chicago Symphony, under Claudio Abbado. In May of 1987, Giaiotti toured to Egypt to sing Ramfis in the historic production of Aida at Luxor. His most recent engagements were at the Teatro Comunale in Florence in Simon Boccanegra and at Barcelona in Mefistofele. Giaiotti is also a popular concert artist and has sung with the symphony orchestras of Cleveland, Pittsburgh and Cincinnati, as well as



**BONALDO GIAIOTTI** 

with the Israel Philharmonic and the St. Cecilia Orchestra in Rome.



KRISTOPHER IRMITER

Bass-baritone Kristopher Irmiter, a member of San Francisco Opera Center's Merola Opera Program in 1987 and 1988, makes his Company debut as Zuàne in La Gioconda. He sang the title role of Don Pasquale on Western Opera Theater's 1987-88 tour, and appears as Sharpless, the Bonze and Yamadori on WOT's current tour of Madame Butterfly. Recent appearances include Colline in La Bohème with South Carolina Opera, Simone in Gianni Schicchi with Charlotte Opera, and Leporello in Don Giovanni with Florida State Opera. Additional performance credits include L'Heure Espagnole, Il Campanello and The Old Maid and the Thief. He has also appeared as soloist in Handel's Messiah and Haydn's The Creation. A native of South Carolina, Irmiter was a Regional Finalist in the Metropolitan Opera Auditions and was named the Leonardo da Vinci Society Award winner continued on p.45

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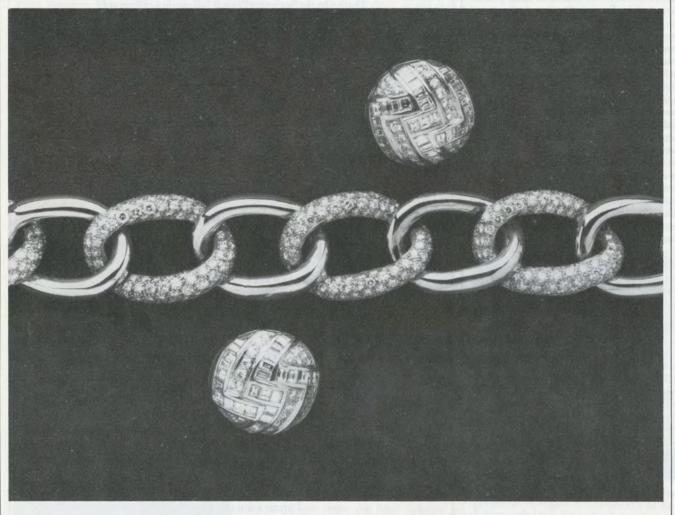
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# La Gioconda

**CAST** 

(in order of appearance)

Barnaba Cornelis Opthof
La Gioconda Eva Marton
La Cieca Sheila Nadler
Zuàne Kristopher Irmiter\*
Isèpo Dennis Petersen
Enzo Grimaldo Vyacheslav Polozov\*

Laura Adorno Cleopatra Ciurca

(Nov. 20, 23, 27; Dec. 1, 3)

Nina Terentieva\*\* (Dec. 6, 10)

Alvise Badoero Bonaldo Giaiotti
A monk David Pittsinger
A steersman Frederick Matthews

A street singer David Pittsinger

Two voices Sigmund Seigel, Valery Portnov

Monks, senators, sailors, shipwrights, ladies and gentlemen, maskers, citizens

Prima Ballerina Tracy-Kai Maier +
Cavalier Horacio Cifuentes\*
Court Jester Julian Montaner\*+

Corps de ballet

\*\*U.S. opera debut

\*San Francisco Opera debut

+Courtesy of the San Francisco Ballet

TIME AND PLACE: 17th-century Venice

ACT I Piazzetta of San Marco

**INTERMISSION** 

ACT II Aboard the Dalmatian ship Hecate

**INTERMISSION** 

ACT III Scene 1: A room in Alvise's palace

Scene 2: A great hall in the Cà d'Oro

INTERMISSION

ACT IV A ruined palace on the island of Giudecca

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

Supertitles by Clifford Cranna, San Francisco Opera.

Latecomers will not be seated during the performance after the lights have dimmed.

The use of cameras and any kind of recording equipment is strictly forbidden.

The performance will last approximately four hours.

1988 Season 39

## La Gioconda/Synopsis

#### ACTI

A crowd, on its way to the regatta, fills the piazzetta of San Marco in Venice. Barnaba, a spy for the Council of Ten (tribunal of the Inquisition), sees the street singer Gioconda leading her blind mother (La Cieca) to church. Gioconda leaves her mother in order to search for her lover, Enzo Grimaldo, a Genoese nobleman who has been banished from Venice and is traveling disguised as a Dalmatian sailor. Barnaba abruptly bars Gioconda's exit and declares his own love for her. A struggle ensues but Gioconda escapes, leaving Barnaba pondering how to use the blind woman in

his plot to win Gioconda's love.

The winner of the regatta is carried in by the crowd. With the help of his scribe and co-conspirator Isèpo, Barnaba singles out the loser, Zuane, and convinces him that his defeat was caused by an evil spell cast by La Cieca. The superstitious crowd is about to kill the old woman for witchcraft, when Gioconda reappears with Enzo, who berates the crowd for attacking the defenseless La Cieca. Alvise, head of the all-powerful Council of Ten, suddenly arrives to quell the riot. With him is his new wife, Laura, who recognizes in the "Dalmatian sailor" her former lover, Enzo, who was hoping to locate Laura and elope with her. He hides his joy at recognizing his beloved from all but the spy Barnaba, who immediately plans to use this new twist for his own ends. The crowd demands La Cieca's death. Laura intercedes and Alvise spares the old woman. In gratitude, La Cieca gives her rosary to Laura, calling it a powerful charm that will bring good fortune. Cieca's action deeply moves the crowd as they follow Alvise and Laura into St. Mark's Basilica. Left alone, Enzo is torn between his passion for Laura and his affection for Gioconda. The omnipresent Barnaba interrupts him with the promise to bring Laura secretly aboard Enzo's ship that evening. Enzo curses the spy as he knows this will cause Gioconda pain, but relents at the thought of seeing his beloved Laura, and runs away. Barnaba then dictates an anonymous note to the Council of Ten, telling of Laura's elopement. After musing on the base nature of man's soul and the power of the spy, he drops the note into the "Lion's Mouth," where Venetians were encouraged to insert anonymous denunciations. Gioconda, who has overheard Barnaba dictating the letter, is overcome by the news of Enzo's love for Laura. The act closes with her lamentations blending with vespers sung by the crowd.

## ACT II

Enzo's ship, the *Hecate*, lies at anchor near an island in the lagoon of Fusina. The crew enjoys a moment of relaxation with the Venetian girls who have come on board under the cover of darkness. Barnaba appears with Isèpo, both disguised as fishermen, and begins to set in motion his plan to trap Laura in her flight: he dispatches Isèpo to summon Alvise's men. He approaches the Dalmatians with a happy song, but uses it as a cover for his spying. After Enzo announces the ship's immediate departure, Barnaba escapes in order to bring

Laura on board Enzo's ship himself. Enzo sings a rapturous love song, and the reunited lovers dream of their blissful future. While Enzo goes below deck, Laura prays, but is interrupted by Gioconda who has arrived seeking vengeance. Gioconda threatens to kill her rival, but then sees that Laura wears La Cieca's rosary and remembers her debt of gratitude. Calling two of her boatmen, she sends Laura safely away before Barnaba arrives with the Venetians. The *Hecate* is attacked and Enzo, refusing to surrender, sets his ship on fire and escapes.

## **ACT III**

Scene 1—In order to regain his honor, Alvise has resolved to kill his faithless wife. When Laura answers his summons, he confronts her with the truth and tells her she must pay with her life. She begs forgiveness. A crowd is heard singing in the distance and Alvise decrees that by their song's end Laura must drink a deadly poison he has prepared. As he leaves, Gioconda, who overheard everything, rushes in and persuades Laura to drink a powerful sleeping potion instead. Alvise returns and, seeing Laura motionless, believes his revenge is complete.

Scene 2—A sumptuous party, given by Alvise, begins with the Dance of the Hours as entertainment. In the midst of the gaiety, Barnaba drags in La Cieca whom he claims he found practicing witchcraft. She answers that she was only praying for the dead. Enzo, still disguised and searching for Laura, learns from Barnaba that it is Laura who has died; he rushes forward, throws off his disguise and denounces Alvise. Knowing that this means Enzo's death, Gioconda promises to surrender to Barnaba if he will free Enzo. The act is brought to a close by Alvise, who draws aside a curtain revealing to his horrified guests the "corpse" of his guilty wife. In the ensuing confusion, Enzo is dragged away by guards and Barnaba seizes La Cieca as hostage.

## **ACT IV**

The still sleeping Laura is brought by two street singers to Gioconda's dwelling. Gioconda contemplates suicide, then thinks of killing Laura, but her anguish is interrupted by the arrival of Enzo. He also wants to destroy himself, but Gioconda stops him by revealing that she has spirited away Laura's body. The enraged Enzo is about to kill her when Laura wakes from her sleep and tells him it was the ballad singer who saved her. The two lovers express their warm gratitude, then escape in a boat provided by Gioconda. Now alone, she prays for deliverance from Barnaba, who overhears her prayer. Realizing that she is hopelessly trapped, she pretends to keep her pact. As Barnaba rushes forward to embrace her, she stabs herself. As a final revenge, Barnaba shouts that he has killed her mother, but Gioconda can no longer hear him.

# La Gioconda

Photos taken in rehearsal by Marty Sohl







Vyacheslav Polozov

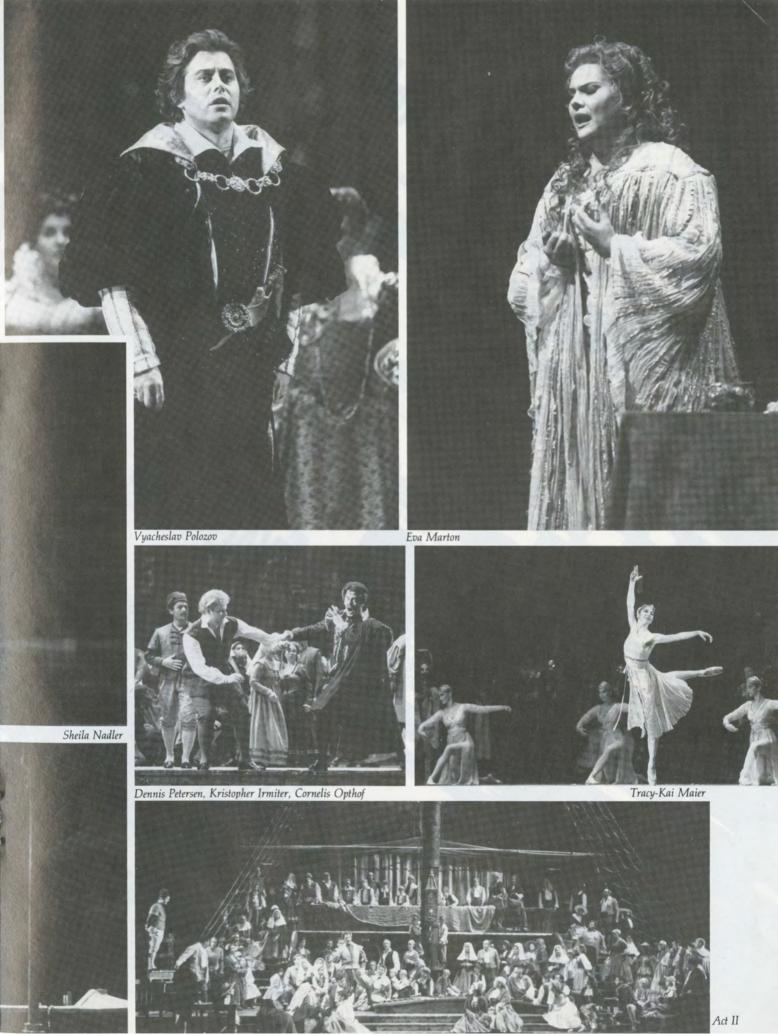


Bonaldo Giaiotti



(below) David Pittsinger, Eva Marton





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**DENNIS PETERSEN** 

continued from p.37 at the 1988 Merola Opera Program Grand Finals.

American tenor Dennis Petersen is a Dancing Master in Manon Lescaut, the Village Drunk in Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk, and Isèpo in La Gioconda. He made his Company debut during the 1985 Season, appearing in five productions-Adriana Lecouvreur, Werther, Falstaff, Un Ballo in Maschera and Der Rosenkavalier-and returned in the summer of 1986 for Il Trovatore. During the 1986 season, he was heard in Le Nozze di Figaro and Die Meistersinger; last year he sang in Salome, Tosca, Roméo et Juliette and The Queen of Spades. In January of 1987, Petersen made his debut with the Vancouver Opera in Le Nozze di Figaro. The spring of last year saw several debuts including Petersen's first Tamino in Die Zauberflöte with the Cedar Rapids Symphony in April; Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with the Fort Wayne Symphony; and Jacquino in Fidelio with the New Jersey Symphony and the Baltimore Symphony. Petersen has been an artistin-residence at the University of Iowa, where he performed Alfredo in La Traviata. Earlier this year, he sang the Fox in Janáček's The Cunning Little Vixen in Vancouver, Jacquino in Fidelio with the New Jersey Symphony, Tamino in Cedar Rapids Symphony's Magic Flute, and the title role of Offenbach's Christopher Columbus with the Opera Ensemble of New York. Last February he was featured in the S.F. Opera Center's Schwabacher debut recital series in the Vorpal Gallery.

Fresh from a highly successful European debut with the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie in Brussels, American bass **David Pittsinger** returns to San Francisco Opera



DAVID PITTSINGER

as a Monk and Street Singer in La Gioconda. He made his Company debut last season, appearing in Salome, The Magic Flute, La Traviata and The Tales of Hoffmann. A graduate of the University of Connecticut, Pittsinger received his master of music degree from Yale University, and made his principal operatic debut as Tom in Connecticut Opera's 1985 production of Un Ballo in Maschera. He sang the role of Colline in La Bohème as a participant in the 1986 Merola Opera Program, winning the Da Vinci Society Award at the program's Grand Finals, and went on to portray Colline on Western Opera Theater's 1986-87 national tour and the historic exchange with the People's Republic of China in Shanghai. Pittsinger has also appeared with companies of Wolf Trap, Chautauqua, Anchorage and Pittsburgh. He is scheduled to participate in concert performances of Berlioz's L'Enfance du Christ with the orchestra of Radio France in Paris. Other upcoming engagements include Ramfis in Aida with Michigan Opera, his Canadian Opera Company debut as Colline, Crespel in Les Contes d'Hoffmann for Pittsburgh Opera and a return to Brussels as Sarastro in The Magic Flute.

After making her San Francisco Opera debut during the summer of 1984 as a solo dancer in *Die Fledermaus*, Sacramento native **Tracy-Kai Maier** returns as the Prima Ballerina in *La Gioconda*. A member of the San Francisco Ballet since 1980, she has a wide-ranging repertoire of both classical and contemporary works, ranging from Lew Christensen's *Nutcracker* to William Forsythe's *New Sleep*. She received her initial training at the schools of the American Ballet, American Ballet Theatre, Joffrey Ballet and the San Francisco Ballet. Six months after joining the S.F.



TRACY-KAI MAIER

Ballet School, she was promoted to Company Apprentice, and one year later became a Company Member. At the end of the 1986-87 season she was named Principal Dancer. Miss Maier has performed roles in Balanchine's Symphony in C and Prodigal Son, Christensen's Scarlatti Portfolio and Airs de Ballet, and Elisa Monte's Pigs and Fishes. Highlights from recent seasons with the S.F. Ballet include Balanchine's Rubies and Agon, Jerome Robbins's The Concert, Christensen's Filling Station, Val Caniparoli's Narcisse, Sir Frederick Ashton's The Dream: Pas de Deux, Helgi Tomasson's Swan Lake, and Peter Martins's Calcium Light Night. She was recently awarded the 1988 Isadora Duncan Outstanding Performer's Award by the Bay Area Dance Coalition for her achievements during the 1987 season.

Dancer Horacio Cifuentes makes his San Francisco Opera debut this season as the Cavalier in La Gioconda. San Francisco Ballet has featured Cifuentes in over 40 classical ballet and contemporary dance roles from 1979 to 1985. His repertoire includes: Lord Capulet in Romeo and Juliet, Caliban in The Tempest, the Cavalier in The Nutcracker, a soloist in La Fille Mal Gardée. the Snake in Manifestations and the title role in Othello. During the past two years, Cifuentes has performed leading roles in productions by regional companies such as Martine Van Hamel's Elusive Encounters with Dancer's Stage; Victoria Morgan's Patterns with Dancer's Stage; Petipa's Swan Lake and Fokine's Petrouchka with the Peninsula Ballet; and Petipa's Nutcracker with the Santa Clara Ballet. In 1984, he collaborated with Michael Smuin to choreograph the San Francisco Ballet's premiere of To the Beatles. More recently, he has choreographed Cinderella for the San



HORACIO CIFUENTES

Jose Center for the Performing Arts premiere, and the Contemporary Oriental Dance Video produced by Invision Productions. His film and television credits include the KQED national telecast production of *Jinx*, and the live broadcast of *The Tempest*. Cifuentes has studied classical ballet with American Ballet Theatre, the Poland Opera Ballet, and the San Francisco Ballet, and trained in many styles of dance including jazz, flamenco, and folk ballet.



JULIAN MONTANER

Currently in his fifth season with the San Francisco Ballet, Julian Montaner makes his Company debut as the Court Jester in La Gioconda. The native of San Francisco, a Silver Medalist in Jackson, Mississippi's 1979 International Competition, was featured in the original 1980 film Fame, and danced with the Joffrey Ballet from 1980 to 1983. During the S.F. Ballet's 1986-87 season he performed in a wide variety of works including George Balanchine's A Midsummer Night's Dream and Tarantella, Helgi Tomasson's Contredanses



KAZIMIERZ KORD

and Menuetto, in addition to William Forsythe's New Sleep and James Kudelka's Dreams of Harmony. Montaner was highly praised for his performance of Chinese Tea in the Lew Christensen/Tomasson production of Nutcracker, led the Third Regiment in Balanchine's Stars and Stripes, and danced in Val Caniparoli's Narcisse and Michael Smuin's Romeo and Juliet. At the conclusion of that season he was named Soloist with the Ballet. This past season he performed in Tomasson's Ballet d'Isoline and danced the Neapolitan in Tomasson's new full-length production of Swan Lake. He has also appeared in S.F. Ballet productions of Christensen's Con Amore and Scarlatti Portfolio.

Kazimierz Kord, conductor of La Gioconda, has held the post of music director of the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra for 11 years. He made his San Francisco Opera debut in 1973, leading performances of Boris Godunov and Rigoletto, and most recently conducted Macbeth here in the fall of 1986. His international career began in 1967, at which time he conducted the symphony orchestras of Leningrad and Moscow. He has since been engaged as guest conductor in the major music centers throughout the world, with repeated appearances in Paris, London, Rome, Berlin, Amsterdam, Stockholm, Munich, Düsseldorf, Copenhagen, Tokyo and Moscow. In 1972, he made his American debut at the Metropolitan Opera, conducting The Queen of Spades, and has since returned to the Met for productions of Così fan tutte, Aida, Boris Godunov and Macbeth. He made his Canadian debut with the Toronto Symphony in 1974, and led the orchestra on a highly successful European tour. Previous positions he has held include that of music director of the Southwest German Radio Orchestra in



**ANNE EWERS** 

Baden-Baden, and principal conductor of the Cincinnati Symphony from 1980 to 1982. In the U.S., he has conducted the symphony orchestras of San Francisco, Chicago, Cleveland, Milwaukee, Atlanta, Detroit, Indianapolis, and New Orleans. His career also included a five-year music directorship of the Polish National Radio and Television Orchestra. Maestro Kord and the Warsaw Philharmonic made highly successful tours of the United States in 1982 and 1987, and currently plan to return to this country in 1990. He is also a sought-after recording artist, with about 20 major albums recorded in Poland (Orfeo ed Euridice, The Damnation of Faust, Israel in Egypt, Messiah, the Verdi and Mozart Requiems, etc.), as well as the Tchaikovsky Pathétique Symphony with the Royal Philharmonic and the First Piano Concerto with Ilana Vered and the London Symphony, and Massenet's Don Quichotte with the Suisse Romande Orchestra.

Anne Ewers makes her San Francisco Opera directing debut with La Gioconda. She began her professional operatic career with the Company in 1979, worked here for three years as assistant stage director/ staging coordinator during the main season, and also staged scenes and productions for the Merola Opera Program and Brown Bag Opera. 1980 marked the beginning of her continuing association with the Canadian Opera Company, where she has directed her own productions of Tosca and Lucia di Lammermoor. She has also directed Aida and Turandot for Michigan Opera Theatre, The Elixir of Love and Rigoletto for the Minnesota Opera, Madama Butterfly and Tosca for Madison Opera, and The Turn of the Screw and the complete Ring cycle for the Boston Lyric Opera Company. Additional directing assignments include engagements with Edmonton Opera, Shreveport Opera, the Florentine Opera of Milwaukee and at Wolf Trap. Recent productions include Beatrice and Benedict for the Glimmerglass Opera, La Rondine for Houston Grand Opera and New York City Opera, Salome and Manon Lescaut for the Edmonton Opera, Madama Butterfly for the New York City Opera National Company, and her debut with Calgary Opera directing Carmen. Upcoming engagements include La Wally for the Sarasota Opera, Manon Lescaut for the Florentine Opera, Carmen in Edmonton and Calgary, and Dialogues of the Carmelites for the Boston Lyric Opera. Miss Ewers is currently the general director of Boston Lyric Opera, a position she has held since 1984.

Designer Zack Brown made his debut with San Francisco Opera in 1979 with the sets and costumes for La Gioconda. That production, which was telecast nationally and which earned him two Emmy awards, was last seen here in 1983. In 1982 he designed the Company's new production of Le Nozze di Figaro, which was repeated on the stage of the War Memorial in 1986. As resident designer for Washington Opera since 1979, Brown has designed sets and costumes for over 20 productions including A Postcard from Morocco, Il Barbiere di Siviglia, Semele, The Rake's Progress and The Medium in the Terrace Theater, and La Bohème, Un Ballo in Maschera, The Merry Widow and Rigoletto in the opera house at Kennedy Center. Other opera credits include both sets and costumes for Busoni's Doktor Faust and sets for Gilbert and Sullivan's The Gondoliers at Wolf Trap; set designs for La Traviata at New York City Opera and Verdi's Stiffelio for the Boston Opera Company. He created the sets for the 1982 production of *Die Fledermaus* at Santa Fe Opera and his designs for *La* Cenerentola and The Abduction from the Seraglio were seen at the Washington Opera later that season. For Broadway, Brown designed scenery and costumes for the Tony-award-winning revival of On Your Toes. Among many productions for New York's Circle in the Square Theater,

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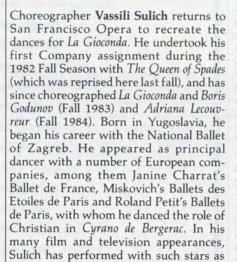
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ZACK BROWN

his scenery for Wilde's The Importance of Being Earnest and his costumes for Saint Joan won nominations for Tony and Drama Desk awards, respectively. Brown has designed La Sonnambula for the American Ballet Theatre and Swan Lake for Atlanta Ballet. His costume designs were seen in a five-part television mini-series of O'Neill's Mourning Becomes Elektra. His work has been seen at the Williamstown Theatre Festival, the Guthrie Theatre and Arena Stage in Washington.





VASSILI SULICH

Rosalind Russell and Geraldine Chaplin. He was selected to choreograph the music of French composer Maurice Thiriet in Jean Cocteau's Oedipus Rex at the Lyons Opera. For the Geneva Opera, he has devised dances for Mozart's Idomeneo, Gounod's Faust and Saint-Saëns's Samson et Dalila, and choreographed the latter for the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires as well. Currently principal choreographer and artistic director of the Nevada Dance Theatre, which he founded in 1972, Sulich has created more than 50 new ballets for that company. In 1981, he received the Governor's Award for outstanding individual artistic achievement in the state of Nevada, and last year the Board of Regents of the University of Nevada bestowed him with the Distinguished Nevadan Award. In 1984 he staged the dramatic ballet Mantodea for the Royal New Zealand Ballet, Ballet Eddy Toussaint in Montreal, for Contemporary City Ballet in Hong Kong and for several companies in the U.S. In 1986, his Nevada Dance Theatre gave the premiere of his new ballet, Walls in the Horizons, set to Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra, and last year Sulich created a new, full-length Cinderella, set to the music of Glazunov. Next year, for Nevada Dance Theater, he will stage Oedipus the King, a new theater piece combining drama and dance, with music composed by Philip Glass.

When the curtain comes down on the last performance of our 1988 season, it will mark the retirement of a long-standing member of the San Francisco Opera Chorus: Eugene Lawrence. For 30 years, he not only appeared in all operas the Chorus was featured in, but also acted as the AGMA (American Guild of Musical Artists) Committee member since 1964, and Chairman of its Executive Committee since 1981. He will be warmly remembered by his colleagues and all members of the San Francisco Opera family, who wish him all the best in his retirement years.



THOMAS J. MUNN

Thomas J. Munn is lighting designer for L'Africaine, Parsifal, Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk, La Bohème and La Gioconda. Last fall, he was responsible for Salome, Die Zauberflöte, La Traviata, Nabucco, Les Contes d'Hoffmann, Roméo et Iuliette and The Oueen of Spades, in addition to designing the sets for Nabucco and co-designing those for Salome. In his 13th year with the Company, he has lighted over 100 productions for San Francisco Opera, including the lighting and special effects for all four operas of the 1985 Ring Festival. He serves as scenic adviser for the Company, and has designed scenery for Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk, Roberto Devereux, Pelléas et Mélisande and Billy Budd. 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, industrials 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, the Pavarotti concert of 1983, and the Aid and Comfort broadcast in May of 1987. Recent projects include lighting and projection designs for Madama Butterfly for the Netherlands Opera; scenery and lighting for Hartford Ballet's production of Coppélia and The Nutcracker; and lighting designs for the Hartford Opera and Pittsburgh Opera productions of Hansel and Gretel. In 1986, Munn entered a partnership with Tom Janus in New York to form "Munn/Janus Associates," through which he handles his architectural lighting and consulting projects. His most notable achievement in this area is the new Muziektheater in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, for which he was the American lighting consultant.



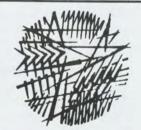
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# Arrigo Boito and Friends

By BARRY HYAMS

Arrigo Boito: poet, librettist, composer, critic, historian, novelist, dramatist, senator and consultant to his nation's education system; of him William Ashbrook wrote, "The mark he left on Italian music of his time [was] greater than the sum of his accomplishments." To the list of his exceptional talents, however, must be added that of lover to Eleonora Duse, Italy's most celebrated actress. In each of their lives, La Gioconda was to play a significant role: for him a bird of good fortune, for her a petrel.

Boito began writing the libretto for La Gioconda in 1874. He was 32, and as Milan's leading avant-garde poet had already achieved much. Twelve years earlier, he had provided the words for Giuseppe Verdi's cantata, The Hymn of Nations, which the composer then conducted at the International Exhibition in London. A year later, Boito had managed, albeit unintentionally, to alienate the venerable Verdi with an ode, To Italian Art, bewailing its low state in which three lines expressed a melancholy hope.

Perhaps the man already is born Who, modest and pure, will restore art To its altar now stained like a brothel wall.

Verdi chose to regard the lines as referring to himself, and his vexation was not assuaged by Boito, as critic, having reviewed *I Vespri Siciliani* and reporting that "it would take a long time to enumerate all the graces and strengths of this solemn opera, for one would have to stop and admire every piece." The imagined insult rankled for 17 years.

Before La Gioconda, Boito had already begun the libretto of Nerone, the opera that would be his incubus, never to be finished; and in 1868, he had composed Mefistofele which would undergo several changes before emerging as one of the most beautiful scores to come out of Italy. La Gioconda, too, enjoyed but a modicum of success at its La Scala premiere in 1876 before revisions established it as a lasting favorite, the only one of Ponchielli's 10 or more operas to be so regarded abroad.

The progressive enthusiasm generated by each new version of La Gioconda attracted the notice of Giulio Ricordi, publisher of Aida, who was panting to break Verdi's eight-year silence. He invited the composer to lunch at Milan's Grand Hotel, bringing along Franco Faccio, a bosom friend of Boito's. During the meal the subject of Otello "happened to arise" at which Verdi, who adored Shakespeare, lit up. Ah! but the libretto! Who could do justice to the Bard?

Faccio spoke warmly of the libretto Boito had done for him of *Amleto* (*Hamlet*)



Arrigo Boito (1842-1918) in a photo taken in 1893. MUSEO TEATRALE ALLA SCALA

though Faccio had to confess sadly that his music had not done justice to it. Ricordi, citing Boito's success in compressing Victor Hugo's massive drama into La Gioconda, prevailed on Verdi to set aside the bitterness he had long been harboring and at least meet the poet. Three days later Boito showed up with a scenario which impressed Verdi though he remained distant and noncommittal.

"Do a libretto," was all he would say.
"It will come in handy for yourself—for me or for someone else."

But La Gioconda tipped the scale in Boito's favor. In 1880 the final, revised libretto confirmed the poet's craft in his treatment of Hugo's Angelo, Tyrant of Padua, and was acclaimed by the Scala audience. Meanwhile, Boito had delivered the initial draft of the Otello libretto to

Verdi who liked it but postponed making a decision. That project almost foundered when, after reading an interview in which Boito was reported saying he regretted the delay of *Otello* and his inability to compose it himself, the angered Verdi wanted to return the manuscript; but Boito protested that the newspaper had misquoted him.

"This theme and libretto," he declared, "are yours by right of conquest. You alone can set *Otello.*"

To distract the old man for the moment, wily Ricordi, knowing Verdi still chafed over *Simon Boccanegra*, whose failure 20 years earlier he blamed on the Piave libretto which had made the opera "monotonous and cold," the publisher proposed that Boito try his hand at revising it, again noting *La Gioconda*'s success. Reluctantly, Verdi agreed; but when he received Boito's work, he could not restrain his admiration.

"Most beautiful!" he exclaimed. "With your usual very elegant forceful verse!"

In 1881, Simon Boccanegra attained celebrity at La Scala, almost simultaneously with the accolade bestowed upon Mefistofele as conducted by Franco Faccio in its final form. By then, Verdi and Boito had developed a close and lasting friendship and work had begun in earnest on Otello, its production destined to link up with the Boito/Duse liaison which had had its inception in a previous brief encounter.

It had happened at Cova's, the fashionable restaurant near La Scala favored by the artistic crowd. Duse, at 26, had brought Milan under her queenly reign as she had Rome and Turin and, after her performance of La Dame au Camélias, a banquet in her honor was given, aglitter with the city's patrons, literati and press. At the center table with Duse sat Mayor Gaetano Negri at her left, and at her right, Arrigo Boito. Though

Barry Hyams is the author of Hirschhorn: Medici from Brooklyn, E.P. Dutton's biography of the late Joseph Hirschhorn.

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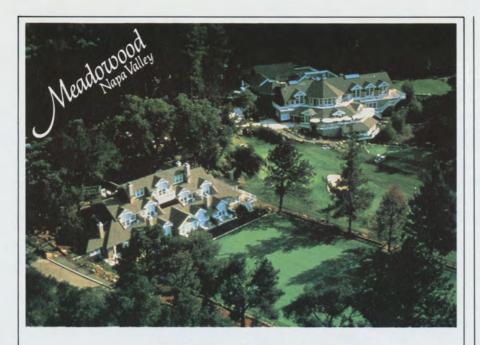
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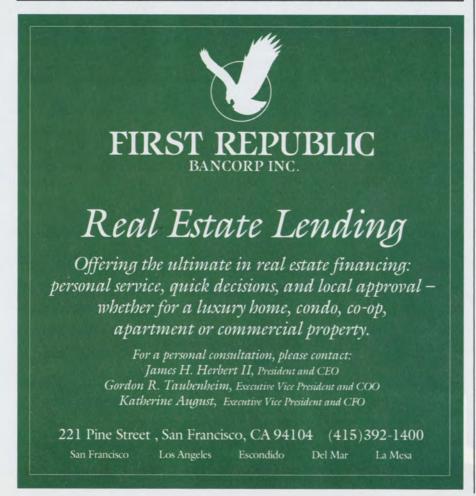




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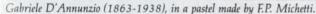
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Eleonora Duse (1859-1924), as she looked in 1891.

they had a mutual friend in playwright Giuseppe Giacosa, they hadn't met before and Boito paid homage by asking for her autographed photo. She sent it to him and later that month Boito thanked her in a note which arrived in Turin where she was on tour, the night she opened in Sardou's *Magda*. He addressed it to Signora Eleonora Duse Checchi.

That's the very portrait I wanted. I thank you for having guessed and for remembering to send it. You have left and—now after thirty-six hours of catalepsy, the arm resumes its movements and my hand turns over this card which is dedicated to you, and here I am forced to write that you are good and kind.

—Arrigo Boito

PS: You are not obliged to answer. Be well and happy. Cordial greetings to Cav. Checchi.

In reply to his cautious gambit Duse characteristically wrote back.

Politely—very politely—you have closed the door on me, saying: there's no need to reply—don't come back. This is reasonable—but it is more kind

to allow me to think and to write—that today is the last day of May—And I wish to greet it—and also to greet you. Besides—in addition I have a little present to ask of you . . . I'm not asking for a precious object . . . one of those dates one is fond of—that are written in the corner of the desk—on the sand of a favorite path—something of the sort.

Boito responded to her flirtatious ploy with a playful quatrain written on the page torn from a French calendar's "defunct month of May," punning on the word "Mai," French for May and "never" in Italian. At the time, he was 42, a charming companion, courtly, thoughtful and an absent-minded bachelor, while she was a woman of fiery moods with an artist's restless spirit, who could write to a friend "that it was never success I sought but refuge in art." She was married to an actor, Tebaldo Checchi, from whom she intended to separate and retain custody of their two-year-old daughter, Enrichetta.

That July, her recurring tuberculosis forced her to retire to "a discreet little house" which Giacosa located for her in the Piedmont mountains, three hours from his own home. There, he and Boito visited her, and later the poet wrote her amusing little verses, witty plays on words.

The next three years, during which Boito did not meet Duse again, saw his distillation of Shakespeare's 3200 words into 800 which inspired Verdi's incomparable score for Otello, and in 1886 came the death of La Gioconda's composer, teacher of Puccini and Mascagni, which elicited from Verdi the elegiac cry: "Poor Ponchielli! So good! Such a good musician! A very great sorrow!" Also, the Otello collaboration was heating Milan's anticipation of its premiere for which tickets were at a premium long in advance of the opening, scheduled for February 5th, 1887, with Faccio conducting. A day earlier, Giacosa informed Boito that Duse, too shy to ask for tickets, desired to attend. As far as is known, she was not present, but a week later, on the 11th, Boito sat in a box with Verdi and his wife at the Teatro Manzoni and watched her perform in Goldoni's Pamela. Years later, Duse recollected this night for him.



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Eleonora Duse in 1913.

Do you remember, one of the first evenings—You came to see me in the interval. We smiled, no more, and as you left, ten fingers entwined one with the other.

On February 20th 1888, Boito recalled their beginning, poetic license, no doubt, accounting for the lapse of nine days.

For a year we have lived in a dream. Exactly one year: not an hour more, not an hour less.

Nevertheless, those words dated the start of their passionate and clandestine affair of 10 years as recorded in a correspondence which filled a volume of almost a thousand pages. The secrecy imposed on their love was due to Checchi who was challenging Duse's separation suit and threatening to demand custody of Enrichetta; but the covertness did not quench the blaze in the messages by which Duse

summoned Boito to their trysts.

Arrigo—Come—Come at once. The blessed room where you live I have already blessed yesterday. If I came to you I would be late and I have only minutes. Come. At once.

At other times it might be:

At one—to the study. I will come— Tonight at my place it is impossible because I have a dinner. At one—to the study. See the door is unlocked. I will come.

Boito's study and bedroom were on the ground floor, off the courtyard, of #1 Via Principe Amedeo, the same building in which his elder brother, Camillo, and his wife occupied a separate apartment.

Because of Duse's tours and Boito's work translating *Otello* into French and English, they met often but fleetingly, Boito, master of logistics and detail, making the arrangements. He would tell

Now pay attention. You, on a day of your choice (you will advise me by letter three days in advance) go to the station. Give a porter enough money to buy you a ticket. You leave at eight in the morning. You arrive at Chiavari at fifty-eight minutes after midday. I am already there . . . If my train is late, you will wait, without moving, a few minutes. Then we go to the hotel to eat. Then we take a carriage and off! into the spring sun. (You must provide yourself with a laprobe and cover vourself well.) Then we return to the hotel and stay there, dine alone, evening comes, night comes ... then dawn comes. Our eighteen hours will be ended but we will have lived them with our life ... At six in the morning we will leave ... you would be back in Florence at 2:15 in the afternoon.

And so it went. When they were together, they read Dante and Shakespeare. He had great contempt for the claptrap dramas she performed which he felt were unworthy of her, and he translated Antony and Cleopatra for her. In November she unveiled it in Milan's Teatro Manzoni, a dismal failure; "only a pale reflection of the Shakespeare tragedy" was the critical consensus. Duse was treated cruelly and Boito, crushed, apologized.

I felt the guilt of the failure was mine, and you, poor creature, tired, ill, in anguish, had to bear alone this brutal blow which came to you from me. Forgive me! Don't hate me!

She didn't, so he provided a version of Romeo and Juliet which, however, was never staged. They spent three exquisite weeks together in San Giuseppe where Boito suspended work on Nerone to work on Falstaff, two acts of which he had promised to deliver to Verdi at Villa Sant'Agata. Came a letter from Verdi.

Dear Boito, When you were sketching Falstaff did you ever think of my huge accumulation of years? Suppose I could not finish the music? Then you would have your time and pains for nothing! The thought is intolerable to me. The more so if by writing Falstaff you should, I will not say abandon, but even neglect Nerone's production. I should be blamed and the thunderbolts of public ill-will would descend upon my head.

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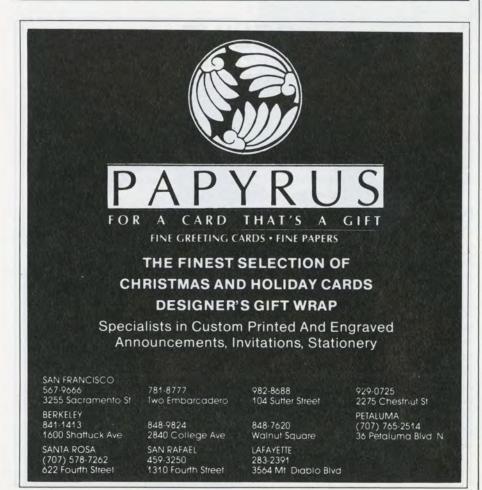


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Verdi could have put his misgivings to rest. In that period, Boito had more than *Nerone* and Duse to cope with. His lifelong friend, Franco Faccio, was suffering a mental illness which developed into insanity and Boito had assumed his friend's conservatory duties to insure the continuation of Faccio's salary. In 1891, Faccio died in the Monza Asylum and Boito wrote to Verdi:

I promise you that I will bend every effort to finish *Nerone* in time to be staged the year after *Falstaff*. If I succeed, I shall owe you this immense benefaction. Your letter was a strong handclasp that has pulled me to my feet again. It reached me at a very sad moment of my existence.

The promise never materialized even as the decade with Duse was drawing to a close. In 1893, Falstaff made its riotous appearance and in 1894 Duse met the rising young poet/playwright, Gabriele D'Annunzio, to whom she began her correspondence with: "I see the sun! and I thank al Ithe good forces of the earth for having met you." It tolled the knell for Boito. The first break came with her letter to him on January 7th, 1895.

Alas! I don't know if you know me ... Nothing, not even the truth will help the two of us understand each other ... You remain for me (except for the San Giuseppe days—and even then) you remain for me the ambiguous creature who has understood nothing, who has allowed nothing to be understood ... All that is left for me is to pick myself up once more, hoist myself on my back and pursue my way. And I will do it. And so be it. Addio.

A strange letter, indeed, from her who earlier had taken to calling him "il Santo." There's more than a tinge of the operatic about her subsequent missives, for the very next year she wrote:

Thank you for everything, for so much compassion and goodness that I feel in you toward me. Arrigo Santo!

And at the start of 1897:

Arrigo, beautiful soul—my soul— Arrigo! What good have I ever done in this world to deserve you again.

But the final curtain descended on their affair at the end of that year when she wrote: "It is like death—exactly like—" to which he answered: "It is more than death because it was more than life." One



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Eleonora Duse in the role of Silvia in Gabriele D'Annunzio's La Gioconda, written for the actress in 1899.

almost heard the duet at the closing of the act. They maintained exchanges and met only rarely after that for her life was dominated by D'Annunzio and the passion and violence he injected into the several plays he wrote for her, notably *La Gioconda*, which opened in 1899.

This La Gioconda, a tale quite different from that of the opera, told of a sculptor and his mistress who inspired him, and of his wife, Sylvia, played by Duse, whose loyalty and blind love led her to sacrifice her hands to save his masterpiece sculpture. In the last act, Duse's expressive hands, concealed in capacious

sleeves, cheated the audience and muted applause. Nevertheless, she retained the play in her repertory for years while D'Annunzio pressed her to increase the number of its performances in order to receive more of the generous royalties she allotted him. She bore *La Gioconda* without complaint as her financial albatross; but when D'Annunzio openly pursued the ladies of Rome, Duse cried out in anguish: "Amo is the word neither you nor I dare say!—So it is! Near, a sweetness bans the word ... and far, the erosion of art exasperates." Their relationship terminated in 1904.

Boito led a solitary life after Duse. There was Velleda Ferretti whom he knew from her childhood and who remained close until his death, but he kept her at a "comfortable, faithful distance." Upon the demise of Verdi in 1901, loneliness closed in on Boito, intensified in 1914 with the passing of his brother, Camillo.

Nerone continued to haunt him. However, obsessive historical research and tinkering with the score contributed to his procrastination which took many forms: accepting positions of Inspector-General of Italy's conservatories, a senatorship, or a membership on commissions for the Ministry of Education. Duse, visiting Boito in Milan in 1916, found on his desk her portrait on the right, and on the left Verdi's. Nothing else.

In May of 1917, Boito visited the war front as luncheon guest of the commanding general. He played a few pages of *Mefistofele* on the piano in the officers' mess and, on the way home on a slow troop train, he shared a stuffy compartment with two young convalescing soldiers. For their comfort, he opened the window and the cold air chilled him but, being too polite to shut it, by the time the train reached Milan, he was feverish. His illness hung on and in March of 1918 he was hospitalized. From there he was moved to a nursing home where he died in June, aged 76.

Nerone on which he had worked for more than half a century was left unfinished. The libretto had been published in 1901 and had been hailed as a masterpiece of poetry and scholarship. Toscanini revised the score of Nerone and on May 24th, 1924, conducted its memorial performance at La Scala.

Shortly before Boito died, Duse had seen him for the last time and, as she subsequently informed Enrichetta who was living in London, the visit was a sad one but at the same time it was good. Boito was of the past.

The Santo? He is so great, my child, and therefore so far from us. He has taken as his motto . . . . that he must be the most impassive among men. And so, shut up in his beautiful study, with his little lamps, always bent over his sheets of music paper, to him our poor earthly life seems a game of ants. Yes; I know he is right. The Santo is the Santo and he is right. "Courage," says the Santo, and one might say, "Very well, and now let's get on with it."

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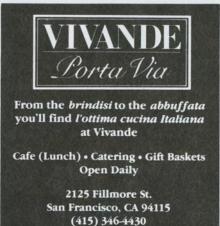
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# Company Profiles: Tessa Bergen

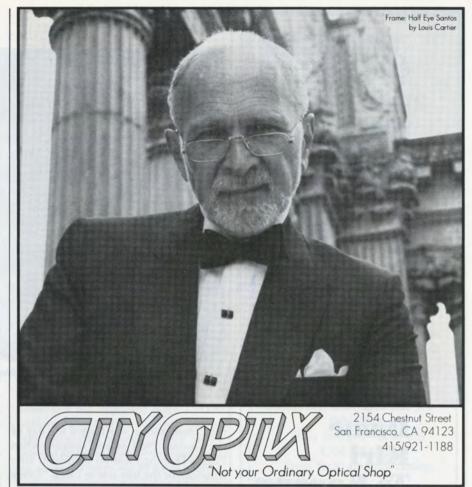
This on-going series of interviews introduces our readers to a cross-section of San Francisco Opera Company members who never get to take a curtain call, but whose activities are very important in the process of making opera happen.

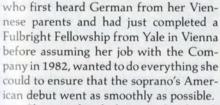
The night Sophia Larson became the 1988 season's third Senta in *Der Fliegende* Holländer, fast-talking Tessa Bergen was talking faster than usual. San Francisco Opera's Coordinator of Artists Services had to finish the interview for this article in time to get to Larson's backstage dressing room to perform as translator and hand-holder. The Viennese Larson speaks little English, and Tessa Bergen,

Tessa Bergen at her desk.

MESSICK







She was the ideal person for the job for reasons beyond her fluent German. Having already performed the "routine" part of her job, arranging travel and accommodations for San Francisco Opera artists, it was she who had negotiated all the details of getting Larson from Nice, where she was singing Senta in another production, to the Company's rehearsal room door.

"These are my least favorite crises," she confides. "I don't know if people in the audience realize what's involved in getting a foreign artist here on such short notice. We have to get a working visa and arrange flights, connections from the airport, and an apartment or a hotel—all under heavy time pressures. And that's just my part of it. There also are contracts to be drawn up, biographies to be written, wigs and costumes to be fitted—to say nothing of the preparations to get the artist onto the stage. The whole Opera House swings into action."

Her confidence in dealing with ope-



Placido Domingo appeared in which SF operas? In which roles? What was the first SF opera? Who were the performers? A computer-conducted\* tour of SFO for opera connoisseurs listing performers, conductors, choreographers, etc.

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(L. to r.) Tessa Bergen, Pilar Lorengar and Christopher Bergen at a post-performance dinner.

ratic emergencies was forged the day of the famous 1983 season opener, when Plácido Domingo was an 11th-hour substitution for the title role in Otello. "Every time I hear that story now, there's mention of a 'private jet,'" she notes. "It wasn't a private jet; it was a rented jet. It had never really occurred to me that you could rent a jet until I had to do it-that morning. I had contacted helicopter people here, who told me about helicopter people in New Jersey—and they're the ones who told me about jets and how to rent them. So I got a helicopter to pick up Mr. Domingo on New York's East Side and take him to Totowa, New Jersey, which is where he got on the rented jet. After that I was convinced that I could handle anything, and I've been relatively undaunted by the crises that have come up since then."

When not in a crisis mode, Tessa Bergen's professional life revolves around lists. Around the beginning of the year she is presented with a list of the artists with whom the Company has contracts for the forthcoming season, and abstracts on each of them. The rest of the lists are her own, detailing all the steps involved in getting those artists from wherever they are to the door of the Rehearsal Department—the day before they are to begin rehearsing, at the very latest. "That sometimes means overcoming their arguments about why they think they should

come later," she reports.

Making artists' travel arrangements, another aspect of her job, is complicated for similar reasons. "I sometimes know as much as three years ahead of time exactly when an artist is expected to arrive," she explains. "Some of them want the arrangements made far ahead of time as wellbut others consider this something that's negotiable—so sometimes I'm confronted with ticket deadlines a month in advance of their flights. I've developed a kind of sixth sense when artists start behaving as though they're not really going to come. A certain alarm goes off inside, and I immediately contact Sally [Artistic Administrator Sarah Billinghurst]."

Although, as a rule, the Company pays travel expenses as part of an artist's fee, the job occasionally entails also overcoming artists' ideas of "why they should be traveling in a class of service other than the one in their contract." A mitigating factor, she reports, is that the Company sees to it that someone—a member of the Opera Guild if not a Company administrator—meets every arrival at the airport.

The part of her job she finds most agonizing is obtaining working visas—"because you're working with a large bureaucracy," she explains. "Sometimes it turns out that a lesser artist gets one—and Mirella Freni is turned down. It's hard for me to bear with that, and I really have to sweat it out at times. But, on the whole,

we have a good relationship with the visa office here. I think it's because we're so law-abiding. We make sure that everyone who needs one has a working visa—which not all opera companies do. Because we're so conscientious about it, the visa office tends to respond promptly when we have our emergencies."

Some of Tessa Bergen's most painstaking efforts go into finding artists their living accommodations—for which they themselves pay. "Essentially, my job is to see that they're happy here, and no other single aspect of that is more important than where they live. The easiest things for me to arrange, of course, are hotels, but usually only five or six artists a season want hotel rooms. The rest want apartments.

"We encourage that. By European standards, people are here for long periods of time—usually at least six weeks. If they can bring their families—or at least if they can stay in a place where they feel comfortable, rooted, they tend to be happier. Some even bring their children and pets—which some apartment owners don't like. But any trouble I take to find an apartment an artist likes is time well spent."

She keeps listings and works with several local agencies, personally checking out each apartment before she rents it for an artist. "There are particular apartments we use over and over again," she explains. "Apartments with views, for example, are sure-fire." And in each case she attends to all the details of deposits, phones, and the like. "My desk is covered with lists of things I want to cross off."

As she has expanded it, the job no longer ends when an artist is in town and settled. "Often having been the first to deal with them in person, I tend to be most artists' main conduit to real life," she says. "I take care of things like getting them money, helping them deal with the telephones and post office, and making doctor's appointments if they need them. Sometimes I even go along if I can serve as a translator, or just help an artist feel more comfortable in the process."

She surmises that a reason she was hired is the fact that she speaks German, French, and Italian. "Even though I don't speak them flawlessly," she says, "I just do it. My Italian is by far the weakest of the three, but it's improved since I started working here. And the Italians seem to be very forgiving about it. For years I thought the word battimento meant building—when it turns out to mean beating. I guess all the times I told Italian artists that it was the third beating on the left, they knew what I meant. In any case, they were



Tessa Bergen with tenor Peter Hofmann backstage after a 1983 performance of Die Walküre. The popular tenor had just been given a surprise birthday party.





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all too polite to correct me. Somehow this job has helped me cross the threshold of fear with languages.

"When I first started working here, I was much more shy. Somehow that all started to change during the *Lohengrin* production my first year. Maestro Hollreiser, who was older, spoke practically no English, and I started taking care of him during intermissions—bringing him chocolate at the first intermission, coffee at the second, and an unchilled beer after the performance. That got me started doing special favors for artists, which I still do and enjoy doing."

Tessa Bergen often attends wig and costume fittings, especially if the artist needs a translator, and sometimes translates interviews with the press. "I also help them locate things they want to buy, like special American clothing they want to bring back to their families and children. I'm sure I know every yarn store in San Francisco, and I've even learned about ranches; Peter Hofmann always wants to go to a rentsch. Whenever I do their visas, I always make note of artists' birthdays. If they're going to have a birthday while the run is on, we don't fail to embarrass and delight them with cake, singing, and the works.

"It's the kind of thing many people in the Company do. Because American opera companies generally don't pay as well as European companies, it makes a big difference that we're able to do the extra things that make being here a friendly experience. And luckily, San Francisco is such a wonderful city that people tend to like it here. This is a city that comes up to any place they've come from abroad."

Once the rehearsal period is over and the performance run begins, artists often have little to do between performances. "Sometimes I feel like a nursery school teacher on a rainy day," she allows. "Some of our artists are busy learning new roles, but others have little to do between performances. I help arrange trips to

Yosemite and Disneyland—and definitely to places like Carmel and the Napa Valley wine country. We encourage our artists to rent cars and get around. We don't want them to get bored and disconsolate; that's when they start becoming prone to illness."

There could hardly be a better testimony to the value of staying active than Tessa Bergen herself. She attributes her energy throughout long days at the War Memorial to the fact that she swims every morning-in San Francisco Bay. "I'm a member of the Dolphin Club, and I live close enough to the Bay to walk. On a typical morning I'm up at 8 and in the water by 8:35. I usually swim for about 45 minutes, sometimes in the company of seals. I come in every morning relaxed and full of energy-and with wet hair, which horrifies the singers, who are convinced I'm going to get sick. I pooh-pooh it. One of our artists, John Tomlinson, actually came swimming with me once-but only after he'd finished his performances in the Ring. Sally would have killed me if he had become sick."

She also counts herself fortunate that Christopher Bergen, her husband of 17 years, also works for the Company, writing and overseeing the Supertitles. She says she wouldn't expect anyone who didn't work for the Company to understand the exotic schedule.

The bulletin board behind Tessa Bergen's desk is covered with postcards written by artists from places all over the world. "I stay in touch with a lot of our artists, many of whom are regulars here now. I get birth announcements, the gossip, you name it. I've made many friendships that I know I'll maintain over the years.

"It's a gratifying aspect of the job," she concludes, "although I know that in part I'm a recipient of affection these artists feel for this Company in general. I know that they genuinely appreciate many of the things I do. But the thing is, I really do want them to be happy. I don't do it just because it's my job."

—Timothy Pfaff



## 1988 San Francisco Opera Company (Continued)

Although our program magazines regularly list members of the Administration and Company (please see pages 10 and 13), we know that those lists are by necessity incomplete. In order to give recognition to the many skilled professionals whose work has contributed so greatly to the quality of San Francisco Opera productions, we provide, once a year, a list of everyone involved in our season. In this issue, department heads are listed in front of the magazine, as usual; the many others, upon whom so much depends, are listed below.

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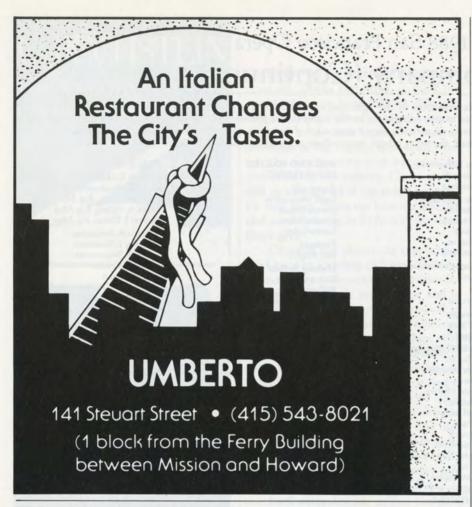
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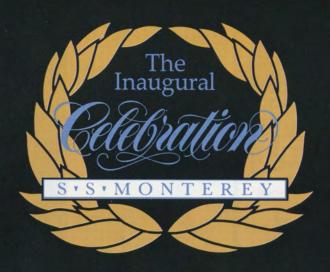
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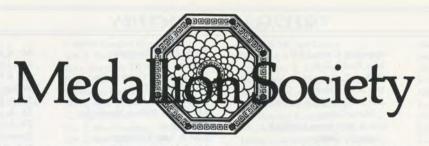
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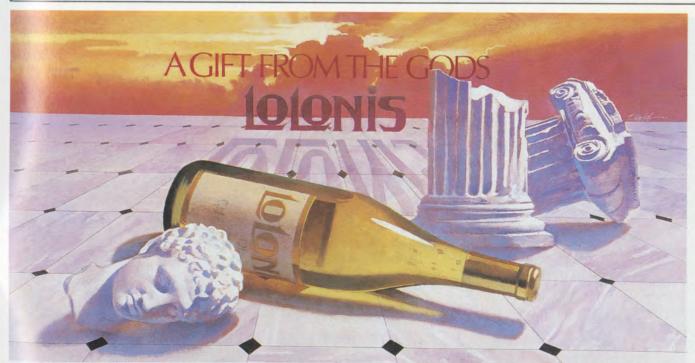
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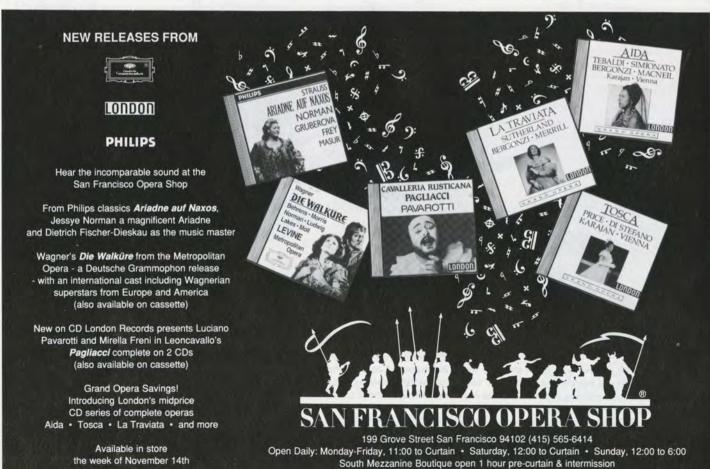


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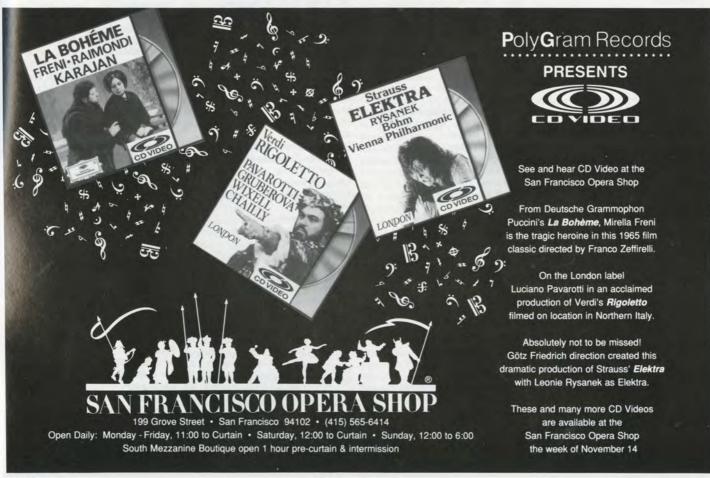
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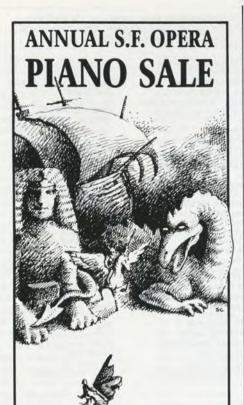
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This bus is added to Muni's north-bound 47 line following all evening performances of the Opera. The service is also provided for all

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 to 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.

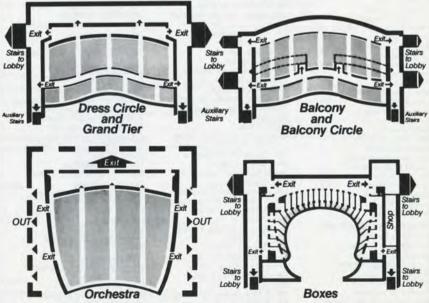
Management reserves the right to remove any

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For lost and found information, inquire at check room No. 3 or call (415) 621-6600, 8:30
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For the safety and comfort of our audience all large parcels, backpacks, luggage, etc., must be checked at the Opera House cloakrooms.

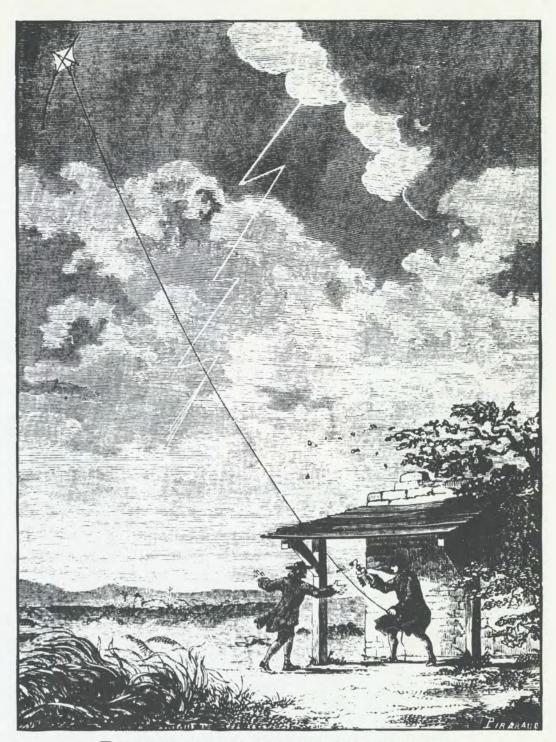
**Taxi Service** Patrons needing a cab at the end of the performance should reserve one with the doorman at the taxi entrance before the end of the final intermission.

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

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



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



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