

Falstaff

1989

Friday, September 8, 1989 7:30 PM  
Wednesday, September 13, 1989 7:30 PM  
Sunday, September 17, 1989 2:00 PM  
Thursday, September 21, 1989 8:00 PM  
Saturday, September 23, 1989 8:00 PM  
Tuesday, September 26, 1989 7:30 PM  
Friday, September 29, 1989 8:00 PM  
Sunday, September 17, 1989 7:30 PM (Family Performance)

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Publications Collection

San Francisco Opera Archives

# San Francisco Opera

1989 SEASON

## Falstaff

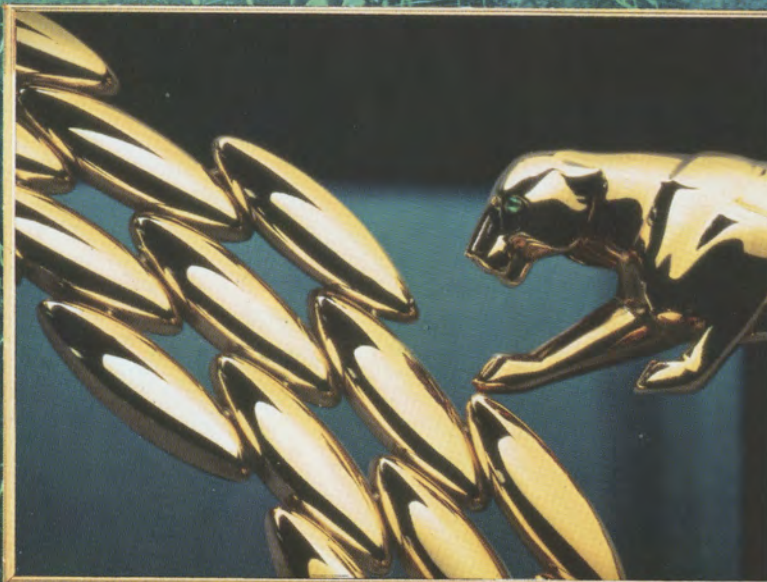


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# San Francisco Opera

Lotfi Mansouri, *General Director*

Sir John Pritchard, *Music Director*

## Falstaff

1989 SEASON

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### COVER

James Stephanoff, 1787-1874  
*Falstaff at Herne's Oak, from "The Merry Wives of Windsor," V, v; 1832*  
Oil on panel, 17½ x 14¾

Yale Center for British Art  
Paul Mellon Fund

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Photo: Richard Caspole

Editor: Koraljka Lockhart  
Art Director: Frank Benson  
Editorial Assistant: Robert M. Robb  
ISSN 0892-7189

Editorial offices: San Francisco Opera,  
War Memorial Opera House,  
San Francisco, CA 94102  
Telephone: (415) 861-4008

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA MAGAZINE is published by THEATER PUBLICATIONS, INC.

Michel Pisani, *President*  
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Account Executives: Helen Parnisi  
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## From the Chairman of the Board and the President

We are pleased to welcome you to the 67th annual season of the San Francisco Opera, a season distinguished by no fewer than four new productions as well as ventures into new repertoire. Our own General Director Lotfi Mansouri will lead us on the first of these journeys of discovery, when he directs the Company's first presentation of the complete three-act version of Berg's *Lulu*. Boito's *Mefistofele* has not been seen in the Opera House for 26 years; this year, it returns in a new production that is our first cooperative effort with the renowned Grand Théâtre de Genève. Mozart's *Idomeneo* returns to the Company in a new production created by the team of John Copley, director; Michael Stennett, costume designer (*Julius Caesar*, *Orlando*) and John Conklin, set designer (Wagner's *Ring* cycle). With *Orlando Furioso*, San Francisco Opera adds not only a new opera but also a new composer to its list, as we present our first work ever by Antonio Vivaldi. Pier Luigi Pizzi, responsible for the gripping 1986 *Macbeth*, returns to stage this baroque opera. Our gratitude goes to the Paul L. and Phyllis C. Wattis Foundation for underwriting our new *Lulu*; the L.J. and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation for *Idomeneo*; and Geoffrey Chambers Hughes who underwrote *Orlando Furioso* in memory of his grandfather, John William Hughes.

The return of productions seen in previous seasons is always a source of pleasure. Two of these, *Falstaff* and *Otello*, represent the heritage of Jean-Pierre Ponnelle, whose productions in the past contributed greatly to our Company's international stature. We are grateful to the L.J. and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation, the original underwriters of our *Falstaff*, and the San Francisco Opera Guild who made possible this season's revival. Two of our 1989 operas, *Aida* and *Lohengrin*, owe their existence to an anonymous friend of the San Francisco Opera, while *Die Frau ohne Schatten* was originally underwritten by Cynthia Wood, who is also making this year's staging possible. Last, but far from least, *Madama Butterfly* re-joins our repertoire in a production made possible some years ago by the San Francisco Opera Guild.

It is a privilege to be able to acknowledge our governmental funding sources, including the National Endowment for the Arts and the California Arts Council. We also extend our appreciation to the Grants for the Arts of the San Francisco Hotel Tax Fund, Mayor Art Agnos and Chief Administrative Officer Rudolf Nothenberg, whose support has always been gratifying.

As in previous years, we extend our appreciation to the San Francisco Opera

Guild and the War Memorial Board of Trustees for their ongoing support.

In the past, we have pointed out that ticket sales cover only slightly more than half of our expenses; this is no less true now than it has ever been. With the ongoing support of the individuals, foundations, corporations and government agencies already mentioned, and your own interest and financial support, we anticipate continued success and growth for our Company.

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

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PHOTO: JOHN VAUGHAN INTERIOR DESIGN: PAUL VINCENT WISEMAN



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## General Director's Message

The current San Francisco Opera season is special for many reasons. The repertoire spans the gamut of operatic creativity from Antonio Vivaldi to Alban Berg, with four of the works being given in exciting new productions. There is one aspect of our 67th season, however, that I find particularly heartening. One of my dreams for the Company is for the outstanding young talent of the San Francisco Opera Center to form an ensemble that will become our core company of singers, around whom we can build our repertoire and secure the highest possible artistic standards from production to production, season to season. A glance at this year's roster will show how quickly this ideal is already starting to become a reality. Two of the title roles in our fall operas belong to two brilliant young sopranos who have come through the Center's numerous training programs: Ann Panagulias as Lulu, and Nikki Li Hartlieb as Madama Butterfly. But they will not be carrying the Center's torch

alone on the Opera House stage; virtually every production is populated with alumni who have made our Opera Center the envy of every American opera company. These are the young artists we have watched together from their first appearances at Stern Grove or the Merola Opera Program Grand Finals, through their development into full-fledged artists who would be a credit to any major opera company. With such a firm artistic foundation, and with the added excitement of numerous international stars, our 1989 season should be a pleasure to follow, and a portent of wonderful developments as San Francisco Opera grows toward the 21st century. I am delighted that you will be with us as we open the next exciting chapter in the history of the San Francisco Opera.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Letzi Mann". The signature is fluid and extends to the right with a long horizontal stroke.

# San Francisco Opera

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Sir John Pritchard, *Music Director*

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Continued on page 13



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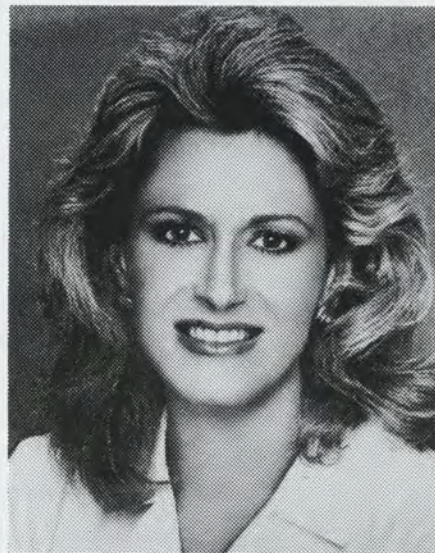
\*San Francisco Opera debut

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# San Francisco Opera

Lotfi Mansouri, *General Director*

Sir John Pritchard, *Music Director*

## 1989 Season

### Opening Night

Friday, September 8, 7:30  
**Falstaff** Verdi  
 Lorengar, Horne, Swenson, Cowdrick;  
 Stewart, De Haan, Raftery, Frank,  
 Pittsinger, Sénéchal\*  
 Kord/Calábria/Ponnelle/Ponnelle/Munn  
*Production originally made possible by a  
 grant from the L.J. & Mary C. Skaggs  
 Foundation; Revival made possible by a  
 generous gift from the San Francisco Opera  
 Guild.*

Saturday, September 9, 8:00  
*New Production*  
**Lulu** Berg  
 Panagulias, Lear, Harris\*, Cook, Swift\*,  
 Mills\*; Braun, McCauley, Hotter,  
 Myers\*, Cowan\*, Rideout\*, Travis,  
 Villanueva, Petersen, Irmiter, Reinhardt  
 Mauceri/Mansouri/Schneider-Siemssen/  
 Mackie\*/Whitfield\*  
*San Francisco Opera gratefully acknowledges  
 a generous grant from the Paul L. & Phyllis  
 C. Wattis Foundation to underwrite this  
 production.*

Tuesday, September 12, 8:00  
**Lulu** Berg

Wednesday, September 13, 7:30  
**Falstaff** Verdi

Friday, September 15, 8:00  
**Lulu** Berg

Saturday, September 16, 8:00  
 Co-production with the Grand Théâtre  
 de Genève  
**Mefistofele** Boito  
 Beňáčková, Christin, Manhart; O'Neill,  
 Ramey, Harper, Wunsch  
 Arena/Carsen\*/Levine\*/Poulin\*\*/Munn  
*Production made possible, in part, by Mr. &  
 Mrs. John C. McGuire and by Mr. &  
 Mrs. Thomas Tilton.*

Sunday, September 17, 2:00  
**Falstaff** Verdi

Sunday, September 17, 7:30  
*Family Performance*  
**Falstaff** Verdi  
 Racette\*, Williams, Keen, Spence; Noble,  
 Boutet\*, Ledbetter, Rideout, Travis,  
 Estep\*  
 Robertson/Calábria/Ponnelle/Ponnelle/  
 Munn

Tuesday, September 19, 8:00  
**Mefistofele** Boito

Wednesday, September 20, 7:30  
**Lulu** Berg

Thursday, September 21, 8:00  
**Falstaff** Verdi

Friday, September 22, 8:00  
**Mefistofele** Boito

Saturday, September 23, 1:00  
**Lulu** Berg

Saturday, September 23, 8:00  
**Falstaff** Verdi

Sunday, September 24, 2:00  
**Mefistofele** Boito

Tuesday, September 26, 7:30  
**Falstaff** Verdi

Thursday, September 28, 8:00  
**Mefistofele** Boito

Friday, September 29, 8:00  
**Falstaff** Verdi

Saturday, September 30, 8:00  
**Otello** Verdi  
 Ricciarelli, Keen; Mauro, Ellis, De Haan,  
 Pittsinger, Schwisow, Skinner,  
 Villanueva  
 Kord/Asagaroff/Ponnelle/Ponnelle/  
 Arhelger

Sunday, October 1, 2:00  
**Lulu** Berg

Tuesday, October 3, 8:00  
**Otello** Verdi

Wednesday, October 4, 7:30  
**Mefistofele** Boito

Friday, October 6, 8:00  
**Otello** Verdi

Saturday, October 7, 8:00  
*New Production*  
**Idomeneo** Mozart  
 Mattila\*, Gustafson, Racette, Spence;  
 Ochman, Blochwitz\*\*, Lewis, Outland\*,  
 Cox\*, Li\*, Ledbetter  
 Pritchard/Copley/Conklin/Stennett/  
 Munn

*San Francisco Opera gratefully acknowledges  
 a generous grant from the L.J. & Mary C.  
 Skaggs Foundation for partial underwriting  
 of this production.*

Sunday, October 8, 2:00  
**Mefistofele** Boito

Tuesday, October 10, 7:30  
**Mefistofele** Boito

Wednesday, October 11, 8:00  
**Idomeneo** Mozart

Thursday, October 12, 7:30  
**Otello** Verdi

Saturday, October 14, 2:00  
**Idomeneo** Mozart

Sunday, October 15, 2:00  
**Otello** Verdi

Tuesday, October 17, 8:00  
**Idomeneo** Mozart

Friday, October 20, 8:00  
**Otello** Verdi

Saturday, October 21, 8:00  
**Aida** Verdi  
 Sweet\*, Zajick, Racette; Popov, Noble,  
 Langan, Pittsinger, Li  
 Kellogg\*/Donnell/Schmidt/Casey/  
 Tippet\*/Munn  
*This production was originally made possible  
 by a gift from an anonymous donor.*

Sunday, October 22, 2:00  
**Idomeneo** Mozart

Tuesday, October 24, 7:30  
**Otello** Verdi

Wednesday, October 25, 7:30  
**Idomeneo** Mozart

Thursday, October 26, 8:00  
**Aida** Verdi

Friday, October 27, 8:00  
**Idomeneo** Mozart

Saturday, October 28, 8:00  
**Madama Butterfly** Puccini  
 Hartlieb, Redmon\*, Spence; Polozov,  
 Laperrière\*, Perry, Villanueva, Skinner,  
 Travis, Estep  
 Pritchard/Farruggio/Businger/Munn  
*This production was originally made possible  
 by a grant from the San Francisco Opera  
 Guild.*

Sunday, October 29, 2:00  
**Aida** Verdi



Tuesday, October 31, 8:00 <b>Madama Butterfly</b>	Puccini	Friday, November 24, 8:00 <b>Orlando Furioso</b>	Vivaldi	Thursday, December 7, 7:30 <b>Die Frau ohne Schatten</b>	Strauss
Wednesday, November 1, 7:30 <b>Aida</b>	Verdi	Saturday, November 25, 7:30 <b>Die Frau ohne Schatten</b>	Strauss	Friday, December 8, 7:30 <b>Lohengrin</b>	Wagner
Friday, November 3, 7:30 <b>Madama Butterfly</b>	Puccini	Johnson, Jones, Silja, Racette, Spence, Fortuna*, Parks*, Friedman, Mizell*; Muff**, Johns, Pederson, Duykers, Ledbetter, Skinner, Schwisow, Villanueva, Irmiter, Travis Dohnányi/Asagaroff/Zimmermann/ Skalicky*/Munn		Saturday, December 9, 1:00 <b>Madama Butterfly</b> (Same cast as December 3)	Puccini
Saturday, November 4, 8:00 <b>Aida</b>	Verdi	<i>This production was originally made possible by Cynthia Wood who has also underwritten the 1989 revival.</i>		Saturday, December 9, 8:00 <b>Orlando Furioso</b>	Vivaldi
Sunday, November 5, 2:00 <b>Madama Butterfly</b>	Puccini	Sunday, November 26, 1:30 <b>Lohengrin</b>	Wagner	Sunday, December 10, 1:30 <b>Die Frau ohne Schatten</b>	Strauss
Tuesday, November 7, 8:00 <b>Aida</b>	Verdi			**United States opera debut *San Francisco Opera debut	
Friday, November 10, 7:30 <b>Madama Butterfly</b>	Puccini	Tuesday, November 28, 7:30 <b>Die Frau ohne Schatten</b>	Strauss		
Saturday, November 11, 7:30 <b>Lohengrin</b> Häggander*, Randová; Frey*, Leiferkus**, Vogel*, Baerg*, Estep, Li, Ledbetter, Irmiter Mackerras/Robertson (December 8)/Weber/Montresor/Munn <i>This production was originally made possible by a gift from an anonymous donor.</i>	Wagner	Wednesday, November 29, 7:30 <b>Lohengrin</b>	Wagner	All performances are in the original language with English Supertitles. Supertitles for <i>Falstaff</i> , <i>Lulu</i> , <i>Mefistofele</i> , <i>Idomeneo</i> , <i>Aida</i> , <i>Madama Butterfly</i> and <i>Die Frau ohne Schatten</i> provided by a generous and most appreciated gift from William and Eloise Rollnick. <i>Otello</i> supertitles underwritten through a generous grant from Merrill Lynch & Co., Inc. Supertitles for <i>Lohengrin</i> and <i>Orlando Furioso</i> provided through a grant from The Stanley S. Langendorf Foundation.	
Sunday, November 12, 2:00 <b>Aida</b>	Verdi	Thursday, November 30, 7:30 <b>Orlando Furioso</b>	Vivaldi	Repertoire, casts and dates subject to change.	
Tuesday, November 14, 8:00 <b>Aida</b>	Verdi	Friday, December 1, 7:30 <b>Die Frau ohne Schatten</b>	Strauss	Box Office and telephone sales: (415) 864-3330.	
Wednesday, November 15, 8:00 <b>Madama Butterfly</b>	Puccini	Saturday, December 2, 7:30 <b>Lohengrin</b>	Wagner		
Friday, November 17, 7:30 <b>Lohengrin</b>	Wagner	Sunday, December 3, 1:00 <b>Madama Butterfly</b> Gauci*, Manhart, Spence; Aragall, Schexnayder*, Li, Villanueva, Skinner, Travis, Estep Pritchard/Farruggio/Businger/Munn	Puccini		
Saturday, November 18, 8:00 <b>Madama Butterfly</b> <i>This performance made possible by a generous grant from Shaklee Corporation.</i>	Puccini	Sunday, December 3, 8:00 <b>Orlando Furioso</b>	Vivaldi		
Sunday, November 19, 2:00 <i>New Production</i> <b>Orlando Furioso</b>	Vivaldi	Monday, December 4, 7:30 <b>Die Frau ohne Schatten</b>	Strauss		
Horne, Patterson, Kuhlmann, Walker; Matteuzzi*, Gall, Langan Pritchard/Pizzi/Pizzi/Munn <i>San Francisco Opera gratefully acknowledges a generous gift from Geoffrey Chambers Hughes to underwrite this production. His gift is made in memory of his grandfather, John William Hughes.</i>		Wednesday, December 6, 8:00 <b>Orlando Furioso</b>	Vivaldi		
Tuesday, November 21, 7:30 <b>Lohengrin</b>	Wagner				

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The San Francisco Performing Arts Library and Museum (formerly the Archives for the Performing Arts) invites you to an exhibit of photographs taken over several years by noted Bay Area photographer Ira Nowinski. In addition to the primary subject, Maestro Kurt Herbert Adler, the exhibit will also salute San Francisco Opera Center's Adler Fellows, the young singers who are about to embark on careers on the world's opera stages. The exhibit is located in the War Memorial Opera House Museum (box level, south side) and is open to the public during Opera House performance hours, September 8 through December 10, 1989.



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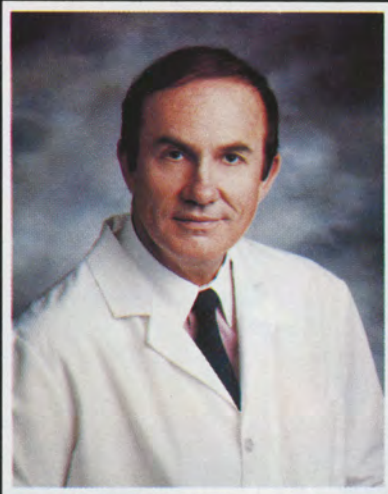
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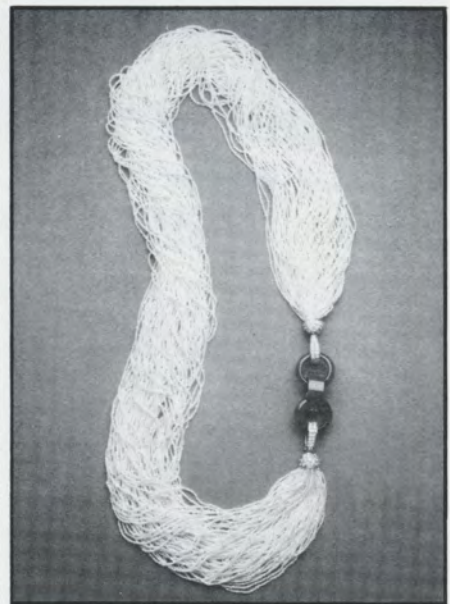
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Deborah Henry\* *Assistant Principal*  
Robin May

### ENGLISH HORN

Robin May

### CLARINET

Philip Fath *Principal*  
Joanne Burke Eisler\*  
Gregory Dufford

### BASS CLARINET

Gregory Dufford

### BASSOON

Rufus Olivier *Principal*  
Jerry Dagg  
Robin Elliott

### CONTRABASSOON

Robin Elliott

### HORN

William Klingelhoffer *Co-Principal*  
David Sprung *Co-Principal*  
Carlberg Jones  
Brian McCarty  
Lawrence Ragent

### TRUMPET

David Burkhart *Acting Principal*  
William Holmes  
Timothy Wilson\*

### TROMBONE

McDowell Kenley *Principal*  
Donald Kennelly  
Matthew Guilford

### TUBA/CIMBASSO

Zachariah Spellman

### TIMPANI

Elayne Jones

### PERCUSSION

Richard Kvistad *Principal/Associate Timpami*  
Raymond Froehlich

### HARP

Olga Rakitchenkov

### LIBRARIAN

Lauré Campbell  
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\*Principal for one or more operas of the season.

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# A Miracle of an Opera

By ANDREW PORTER

Some of the best—as well as some of the most biased—music criticism has been written by composers. One of the international visitors who gathered at La Scala in 1893 to hear the first performance of Verdi's *Falstaff* was the British composer Charles Villiers Stanford. He was 40, the Professor of Music at Cambridge University, and the Professor of Composition at the Royal College of Music. Operas of his had been heard in Hanover, Hamburg, and London; "Stanford in B-Flat" and "Stanford in A" were Anglican services already well known. For the *Daily Graphic*, Stanford wrote a long review of Verdi's new opera and its performance, and to the *Fortnightly Review* he contributed "more of a general consideration of the position and trend of the opera itself from an artistic standpoint." (Both essays are reprinted in his collection *Studies and Memories*.) Three years later, he conducted the first English-language performances of *Falstaff*, at the Lyceum Theatre, with Royal College students.

The advent of Verdi's first comic opera (well, his first after the unsuccessful *Giorno di Regno*, written more than half a century earlier) had of course aroused "speculations as to its possible style; whether it was to be a descendant of

Mozart or of Rossini, of his earlier or later self." But a glance at the score of *Falstaff*, Stanford said, was "sufficient to show that it is in comedy the sister of *Otello* in tragedy, written on the same 'advanced' lines, but if possible more uncompromising in its details than the tragedy which preceded it." Moreover, "it goes even further from the old grooves of conventional opera than the later works of Wagner. The parallels to *Otello* and *Falstaff* in Italy are *Tristan* and the *Meistersinger* in Germany. But after first principles the resemblance ceases."

In the reviews of the time there was, of course, much talk of Wagner. *I Maestri Cantori* had been done at La Scala three seasons before, and in the season before *Falstaff*, *Tannhäuser* and *Otello* were performed there with the same protagonist, Giovanni Battista De Negri, with Teresa Arkel as both Venus and Desdemona, and with the same principal bass. But Stanford brings up another, more interesting name:

"The hand of the composer of *Otello* is recognizable in the very first bars ... The monologue "L'Onore!" is a smiling

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*Andrew Porter, the music critic of The New Yorker, is the author of "Verdi" in New Grove. Among his many English translations is one of Falstaff that has been widely performed in America. A fifth volume of collected New Yorker reviews will be published by Summit Books this fall.*

*Casa Ford (Act I, Scene 2) in San Francisco Opera's 1985 Jean-Pierre Ponnelle production of Verdi's Falstaff.*

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sister of the Credo of *Iago*. This scene strikes the keynote of the opera, and decides at once the style and school to which it belongs. The paramount influence is unmistakable, and it is also the highest that the composer could have identified himself with, that of Beethoven. The close student of the quartets and the pianoforte sonatas is apparent everywhere. The composer of the *Waldstein* Sonata is the ancestor of this great creation. Other influences there are: occasionally that of Meyerbeer, but cleansed of his banalities and tricks; more often a twinkle of the *Meistersinger*. But over it all the unmistakable stamp of Verdi, master of vocal writing, of an orchestration all his own, and of a pure Italian method of expression. His very memories of Beethoven are tinged by his affection for Scarlatti."

So far as I know, Julian Budden has been the first to take up Stanford's Beethoven perception. He illustrates it with the strings' accompaniment to the merry wives' remarks after they have started to compare Falstaff's letters: "I gave him no cause . . . We're in a strange situation . . . Let's look at it calmly . . . The same lines . . . ink . . . handwriting." The use of classical figuration, Budden observes, begins "to predominate in *Falstaff*, giving to the score something of the character of a Beethoven quartet." (Pocket scores of the Beethoven quartets still stand on the top shelf of the bookcase beside Verdi's bed in Sant'Agata; Shakespeare is there, too.) The string accompaniment to the "Honor" monologue has the same quality: a similar texture of lyrical, voice-doubling lines, sixteenth-note figurations, and slower counterpoints. Beethovenian, too, in a different fashion, is the robust punctuation of the rhetorical questions that follow.

There are many different ways of approaching *Falstaff* and only one way, perhaps, of finding a single pattern within which to reconcile the varying approaches biographical, dramaturgical, formal, harmonic, instrumental, etc. This pattern is hard to define with any precision.

At its simplest and bluntest, it might be described along lines of something like this: *Falstaff* is at once the summit of Verdi's lifelong concern to compose operas new, personal, and individual, and a summation and continuation of the tech-



Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901) in an etching, made after a photograph taken around 1893.

niques mastered, the ideas suggested, and the ideals inspired by his previous experience—whether through work on his own earlier operas or by study of elements in the works of others which he could then refashion in his own way. In subject matter as in execution, *Falstaff* reconciles the old with the new. Verdi's bitterness, his pessimism, the recurrently expressed feeling that, for all his worldly success, his work has been misunderstood and unappreciated seems, for a while at least, to have been forgotten during the composition of *Falstaff*. (It recurred when the

Italian audiences proved slow to take the opera to their hearts.) In 1875, Verdi had written: "Hissed after the first act *La Forza* . . . after *Aida* endless chatter to the effect that I was no more the Verdi of *Un Ballo in Maschera* . . . that I was an imitator of Wagner!!! A fine result, after a career of thirty-five years, to end up as an imitator!!!" And three years later: "Why on earth should I write music? . . . I should be told over and over again that *I don't know how to write*, that I have become a follower of Wagner. A fine sort of glory!" But the following year—nine years after *Aida*—



San Francisco Opera's first Falstaff was Antonio Scotti, who sang the role in 1927. This photo was taken in 1925.

Verdi received the first part of Boito's *Otello* libretto. As if in preparation for composing again, he revised first *Simon Boccanegra*, then *Don Carlos*. Then he tackled *Otello*, which reached the stage in 1887. Two years later, he received Boito's ideas for *Falstaff*. Though he protested that "the enormous number of my years" might prevent him from finishing the work, he was delighted: "What joy to be able to say to the public, 'Here we are again! Roll up!' ..."

There is no reason to doubt his 1890 remark to Gino Monaldi: "I've wanted to write a comic opera for forty years, and I've known *The Merry Wives of Windsor* for fifty ... Boito has resolved all the 'buts' and has written for me a lyric comedy quite unlike any other. I'm enjoying myself." Before *Aida*, he had been looking at comic subjects. Passages of *Rigoletto*, of *Ballo*, and of *Forza* had pointed a way toward comedy. But there was perhaps a certain piquancy in the choice of this plot: the previous successful operatic version of *The Merry Wives*, Otto Nicolai's (1849), was by the composer whose *Il Templario* had triumphed at La Scala in the very season when Verdi's comedy *Un Giorno di*

*Regno* had been ignominiously withdrawn after a single performance.

Verdi was right to call Boito's libretto "a lyric comedy quite unlike any other." Nineteenth-century operatic comedies before *Falstaff* had departed little in their forms from those that Rossini had established early in the century. Rather too much has been made, it is true, of the extent to which *Falstaff* (or, for that matter, *Otello*) dispenses with "numbers." Stanford was not quite right in claiming that there is "scarcely a fragment which could be detached from its surroundings." Some years ago when I was translating *Falstaff* for Sarah Caldwell and was getting behind with things, I found I could send out "numbers" as they got done to their prospective interpreters: Falstaff's monologues, Ford's monologue, Quickly's narration, the Falstaff-Quickly and Falstaff-Ford duets, Fenton's and Nannetta's arias.

And there is a valuable legacy of 78 r.p.m. records—Mariano Stabile's in particular—that demonstrate the "detachable" quality of many episodes. James Hepokoski puts it well in his *Cambridge Opera Guide*: "Although *Falstaff* avoids the formalism of mid-century Italian opera, it is nevertheless a spatial arrangement of *ad hoc* solo pieces, duets, ensembles, introductions, transitions, interruptions, and the like, which flow into one another or, at least, are neatly juxtaposed." Another sentence in his chapter about form and structure ties its observations into what I called the pattern: "Paradoxically, *Falstaff* is both formally progressive and profoundly traditional."

One of the miracles Verdi achieves in *Falstaff* is the composition into a few bars of what might have occupied Rossini or Donizetti for pages. In Act I, Falstaff's eight bars that start "So che se andiam, la

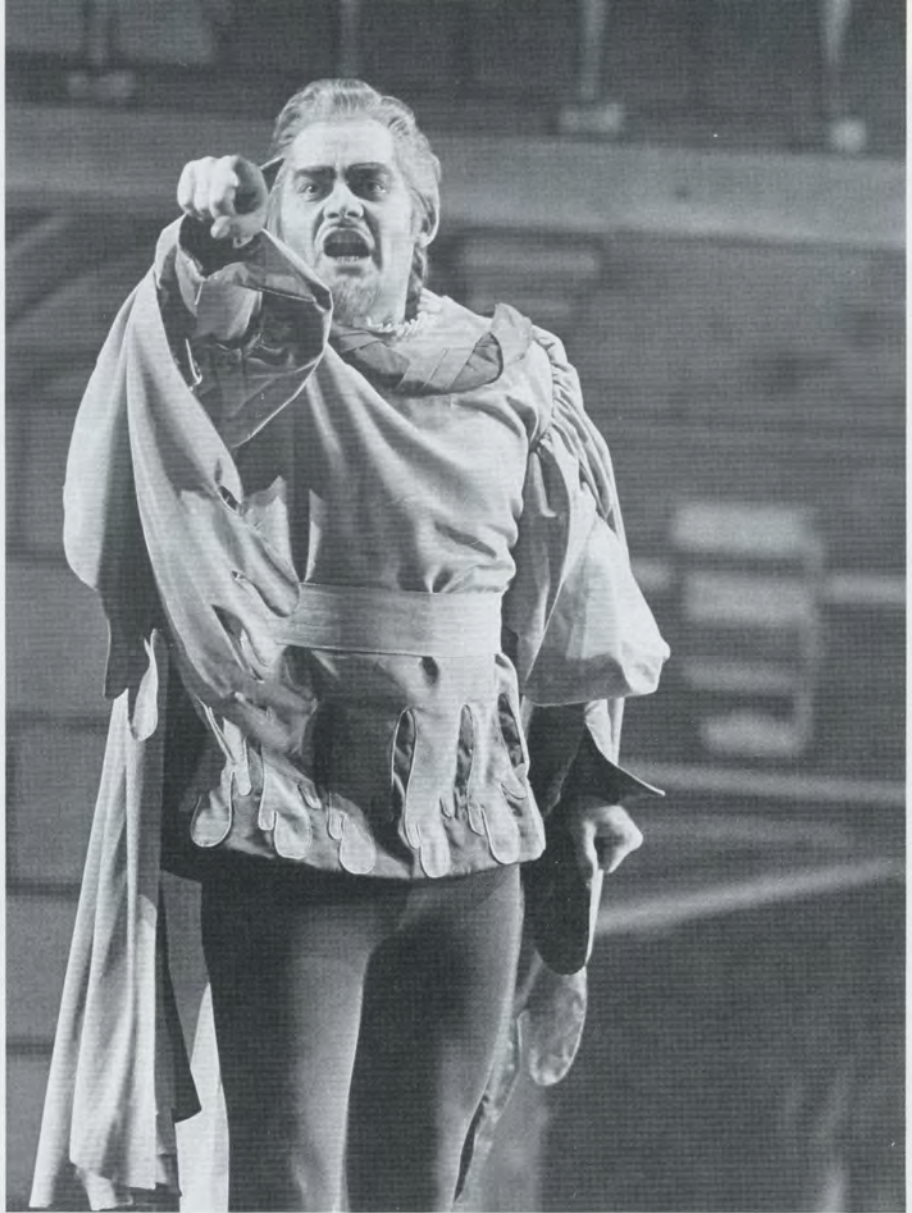


In 1956, San Francisco Opera's Falstaff was Leonard Warren, shown here with Oralia Dominguez, who was portraying Mistress Quickly.

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notte" form a little buffo aria in themselves; the music then goes on to other things (though related phrases, one in augmentation, one in diminution, form the two-part invention of "Se Falstaff s'assottiglia," later in the scene). "Quand' ero paggio" is a tiny ABA aria that lasts less than half a minute. (When Victor Maurel, the first Falstaff, recorded it, he sang it three times over, and then barely filled a side.) Alice's reading of Falstaff's letter, "Come una stella," is at once a parody of a high romantic aria and a beautiful melody in itself. Alice (if I may repeat what I wrote in *Grove*) is like one of Verdi's earlier grand heroines—an Elvira, Héléne, or Leonora—placed now in situations that call only for wit and laughter, not passion and despair. The "letter aria," like so much else in *Falstaff*, dissolves swiftly into a cascade of shared mercurial merriment. In Alice's solos in the first scene of Act III, I detect—though others have denied—a glint, no more, of the old cavatina-and-cabaletta form.

Stanford had a reservation about *Falstaff*. He felt "the want of some one broad melody, which, without being too obtrusive, would give a rest-point to the ear, and clamp and cement together the whole . . . The impression at the end of the evening is one of scurry and vivacity alone, without the wished-for balance of deeper feeling." He instanced, as the kind of thing he missed, the Prize Song in *Die Meistersinger* and, in the same opera, the "undercurrent of quiet repose . . . where the watchman walks up the lonely street in the moonlight." I don't agree. The melodic abundance of *Falstaff* is one of its special glories. The specific repetitions—as of the young lovers' "Bocca baciata" refrain—provide a kind of "broad melody" running through the quicksilver fabric in Verdi's special, new way. The half-sensed, not yet fully analyzed, motivic links between passage after passage lend continuity to the "scurry." I find that deeper feelings *are* constantly engaged, and come to the fore in the romance of the final scene. Long before I read Stanford's reviews, I had felt that the horn solo that steals out, onstage, through the moonlit forest (Verdi insisted on the timbre of a valveless *Waldhorn*) was as moving as the night watchman episodes of *Die Meistersinger*. It leads into the Keatsian romance of Fenton's sonnet and, later, Nannetta's fairy song. The situation there is realistic: Nannetta is pretending to be the Fairy Queen, and her attendant chorus is a



In 1962 and '63, Thomas Stewart, this season's protagonist of *Falstaff*, appeared with the San Francisco Opera in the role of Ford. The photo shows him during his Act II outburst.



Geraint Evans as Falstaff and Giulietta Simionato as Dame Quickly in San Francisco Opera's 1962 presentation of *Falstaff*.





Pilar Lorengar, the beloved Spanish soprano who this year celebrates the 25th anniversary of her San Francisco Opera debut, portrayed Falstaff's Mistress Ford here in 1985, at which time this photo was taken.

posse of Windsor lasses. But the delicacy of Verdi's instrumentation transports us to the supernatural world of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. That play, with its mingled strands of poetic enchantment, robust comedy, and lovers' tangles, seems to underlie much of the final scene.

In this final scene—it's another illustration of my "pattern"—the forms become firmer, more "closed": a tenor aria (to which, for separate use outside the opera, Verdi provided an alternate "concert close"), a soprano aria, a litany, a Mozartian minuet, and finally a fugue. "Torniamo all'antico: sarà un progresso" was a program Verdi had proposed in 1871. No previous comic opera had ended with a fullblown fugue. (And it was Verdi's idea, not Boito's, that *Falstaff* should end that way.) Returning to the old could also represent something new.

Boito had also "returned to the old." Brilliantly, he had refashioned for music a *Merry Wives* that incorporated the fuller Falstaff of *Henry IV*. He tidied Shakespeare's comedy, reduced the cast, eliminated Falstaff's second visit to Mistress Ford—the Mother Prat episode. And it

was his happy idea, not Shakespeare's, to station Nannetta and Falstaff behind the screen where Ford thinks Falstaff must be hiding. (Verdi, who knew his Mozart, refers to Falstaff's "trials by fire and water"—overheated in the basket, then dunked in the Thames.) At the same time, Boito consulted the pre-Shakespearean sources. To a Paris friend, he wrote that "Shakespeare's sparkling farce is led back by the miracle of sound to its clear Tuscan source." He had been looking at Boccaccio's *Decameron*. Nannetta and Fenton's "Bocca baciata" refrain ("A kissed mouth doesn't lose its freshness; rather, it renews itself as the moon does") is from the Seventh Story of the Seventh Day of the *Decameron*, where it clinches a tale about a woman who, despite the fact that 80 different men have made love to her on thousands of occasions, enters her husband's bed as a professed virgin and convinces him that she really is one. The full extent of Boito's debt to Boccaccio became clear to me when, working on *Falstaff* some years ago, I needed to consult the *Decameron* and found that the All Souls library copy had been published in Venice in 1552. At the end of the volume

was a glossary of words that even at that date were already "needful of explanation." And at least a dozen of those words appear in Boito's *Falstaff*.

It was Toscanini's championship that brought *Falstaff* into the modern repertory and made it an alternative—or complement—to *Die Meistersinger*. Verdi's opera, despite the praise that greeted it, did not really catch on at first. Then Toscanini opened his first Scala season, 1898-99, with *Die Meistersinger* and soon thereafter *Falstaff*, with the Eva, Angelica Pandolfini, as Alice and the Hans Sachs, Antonio Scotti, as Falstaff. In his first Met season, 1908-9, Toscanini conducted *Falstaff*, with Destinn and Scotti. In 1913, the Verdi centenary year, he conducted it at Busseto and then at La Scala, again with Scotti. Returning to La Scala as artistic director in 1921-22, he opened his regime with *Falstaff* and maintained it in the repertory there for the next seven years; the Falstaff was now his protégé Mariano Stabile, who after the war was still singing the role in London (where I heard him). In 1929, the Scala production visited Vienna and Berlin, and there drew the attention of Furtwängler, Bruno Walter, Klemperer, Erich Kleiber, Fritz Busch, and, it seems, Herbert von Karajan. In 1935, 1936, and 1937 Toscanini conducted *Falstaff* at the Salzburg Festival, with Stabile. And then in 1950, in New York, he made his famous RCA recording.

In Verdi's final opera, young love is triumphant but old age is triumphant too. The finale is an apotheosis of Falstaff. Many of the great things about Verdi—his lifelong devotion to Shakespeare; his mistrust of the fickle public; his generous love for humanity; his tenderness toward young love; his respect for craftsmanship, invention, and professionalism (evinced in the striking revisions of the score both in proof stage and after its first performances); his instinctive feeling for the theater; his response to individual performers (made manifest when for the remarkable Giuseppina Pasqua he added Quickly's narration); and, at the last, his acceptance, no longer resentful and bitter but now joyful, that new young creators will rise to take the center of the stage, perhaps appreciative but more likely scornful of what their predecessors achieved—all these and more find memorable expression in *Falstaff*. It is, indeed, a miracle of an opera. The older one grows, the more one loves it. ■



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PILAR LORENGAR

Spanish soprano **Pilar Lorengar**, a favorite of San Francisco Opera audiences since her American debut here in 1964, sings Mistress Ford in *Falstaff*, a role she sang here in 1985. Born in Saragossa, she started her career singing Spanish zarzuela, producing a large number of recordings which are still highly popular in her native country. One of the most highly-honored and beloved singers at the Deutsche Oper Berlin, she was awarded the title of Kammersängerin in 1963, while in 1984, that company bestowed on her the rare appellation of Honored Member. While appearing at Berlin on a regular basis, Miss Lorengar developed her international career, singing at the Salzburg Festival, at Vienna, London, Paris, Brussels, Milan's La Scala, Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires, Mexico City, Israel, Japan, Australia, etc. In her U.S. operatic debut season with the San Francisco Opera, she appeared as Desdemona in *Otello*, Liù in *Turandot*, the Countess in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, and Micaëla in *Carmen*. Since then, she has been applauded here as Eva in *Die Meistersinger*, Elsa in *Lohengrin*, Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni*, as Mélisande, Madama Butterfly, Manon Lescaut, Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte*, Elisabeth de Valois in *Don Carlos* and, in concert, Agathe in *Der Freischütz*. She appeared here recently in a recital with pianist Alicia de Larrocha. Following her Metropolitan Opera debut in *Don Giovanni*, she has returned there in many leading roles, including Pamina in the 1966 *Zauberflöte*. She was also heard with the companies of Chicago, Dallas, Miami, Denver, Cincinnati, and Washington, D.C. In 1984, she appeared at Salzburg and San Francisco in programs of zarzuela arias with Plácido Domingo, scoring a huge success, and resulting in a Grammy Award-winning recording. Renowned around the world as a concert artist, Miss Lorengar has made a large number of song albums and complete opera recordings, among which are *La Traviata*, *Don Giovanni*, *Die Zauberflöte*, *Madama But-*



PATRICIA RACETTE

*terfly*, *Così fan tutte*, *La Bohème*, *Medea*, *The Bartered Bride* and Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice* and *Iphigénie en Tauride*. Among her honors, two unusual Spanish ones stand out, the Saragossa gold medal "Lazo de Isabel la Católica" and a street that was named after her in her native city, bearing the name of "Calle de la Soprano Pilar Lorengar."

Soprano **Patricia Racette** makes her San Francisco Opera debut as Mistress Ford in the Family Performance of *Falstaff*, and performs the High Priestess in *Aida*, a Cretan Maiden in *Idomeneo* and the Voice of the Falcon in *Die Frau ohne Schatten*. A member of the Merola Opera Program in 1988 and currently an Adler Fellow with the San Francisco Opera Center, she sang the title role of *Madame Butterfly* on Western Opera Theater's 1988-89 national tour, and recently traveled to Japan with the Center's Pacific Rim Exchange program. A native of New Hampshire, she received a Bachelor of Music degree in Voice from North Texas State University, where she sang the title role of *Suor Angelica*, Diana in *Orpheus in the Underworld* and Laura in *Luisa Miller*. She also sang the title role of Carlisle Floyd's *Susannah* at the Metro Opera Works in Fort Worth, and appeared throughout Texas in oratorio. Miss Racette was a National Finalist in the 1988 Metropolitan Opera National Auditions, First Place winner in the New York region of the 1988 San Francisco Opera Center Auditions, and received the Mr. & Mrs. Bernhardt N. Poetz Memorial Award at the 1988 Grand Finals. She recently appeared as Anastasio in the 1989 Opera Center Showcase production of Handel's *Giustino*.

Internationally renowned mezzo-soprano **Marilyn Horne** returns to San Francisco Opera in two roles: as Mistress Quickly in *Falstaff*, a role she sang for the first time during San Francisco Opera's 1985 fall



MARILYN HORNE

season; and in the title role of *Orlando Furioso*, the part she portrayed at the work's first revival in 275 years at Verona (televised by the RAI) and subsequently in Paris and Dallas and for a complete recording. San Francisco Opera is the company with which she made her first major operatic appearance, singing Marie in *Wozzeck* (1960). Since then she has not only sung a wide variety of roles with the Company—including Marie in *Daughter of the Regiment*, Nedda in *Pagliacci*, Eboli in *Don Carlo*, Adalgisa in *Norma*, Dalila in *Samson et Dalila*, Arsace in *Semiramide* and the title roles of *Tancredi*, *La Cenerentola* and Handel's *Orlando*—but has won the highest accolades in performances with all the world's great opera companies. A native of Pennsylvania, she is also Spring Opera Theater's most illustrious alumna, having portrayed Carmen (1961), Rosina in *The Barber of Seville* (1962) and the title role of *L'Italiana in Algeri* (1964), three roles she has recorded complete and performed to critical plaudits at the Met and elsewhere. Miss Horne has also devoted a major portion of her career to concerts and recitals, having been featured in numerous concert performances of operas in Carnegie Hall and over 1,000 recitals around the world, as well as national telecasts of a recital and concerts with Joan Sutherland, Luciano Pavarotti and Leontyne Price. Her lengthy discography includes recordings for five major labels, and her autobiography, *My Life, Marilyn Horne*, has been published by Atheneum. Among her numerous awards are the Handel Medallion (New York City's highest cultural award); the "Commendatore al merito della Repubblica Italiana" awarded to her by President Pertini of Italy in 1983; and the first Golden Plaque awarded by the Rossini Foundation, honoring her as "the greatest singer in the world." This past July, she was awarded the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden Medal in honor of the 25th anniversary of her debut as Marie in *Wozzeck* in 1964.



CATHERINE KEEN

Mezzo-soprano **Catherine Keen** sings Mistress Quickly in the Family Performance of *Falstaff* and Emilia in *Otello*. Recipient of a 1989-90 Adler Fellowship with the San Francisco Opera Center, she made her Company debut last summer as Kasturbai in Glass' *Satyagraha*, and sang Leocasta in Opera Center's 1989 Showcase production of Handel's *Giustino*. As a member of the 1987 Merola Opera Program, she sang the roles of Zita in *Gianni Schicchi* and Dolcina in *Suor Angelica*. She returned to the Merola Program in 1988 as Suzuki in *Madama Butterfly* at Villa Montalvo before taking the role on tour with Western Opera Theater. A graduate of the Cincinnati Conservatory (where she is currently completing a Doctor of Musical Arts degree), she sang numerous leading roles there including Giulietta in *The Tales of Hoffmann* and Mrs. Ma in the American premiere of *The Chalk Circle*. From 1984 to 1986 she was a member of the Young American Artist Program at the Cincinnati Opera. Miss Keen's experience includes concerts with the Columbus Symphony, the Cincinnati Symphony, and the Indianapolis Symphony. Recent engagements include Verdi's Requiem with the Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music, and Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with the Cincinnati Symphony and the Los Angeles Philharmonic Institute Orchestra.

Mezzo-soprano **Kathryn Cowdrick** returns to San Francisco Opera as Meg Page in *Falstaff*. A Merola Opera Program graduate and a former Adler Fellow, she has performed a number of roles with the Company since her debut in 1985, most recently the Second Lady in *The Magic Flute*, Flora in the family performances of *La Traviata*, Stephano in *Roméo et Juliette* and Paulina in *The Queen of Spades*, all in 1987. Last year, she sang Rosina in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* in the New York City Opera's touring production, and the year before made her debut at the Netherlands Opera in the same role. She also appeared as Barbara in *Katya Kabanova* for Los Angeles Opera, Smeton in *Anna Bolena* for Virginia Opera, in the title role of *La*



KATHRYN COWDRICK

*Cenerentola* for Chautauqua Opera and made her Carnegie Hall debut with the Opera Orchestra of New York in a concert presentation of *Jenufa*. A professional speech therapist, Miss Cowdrick received much of her musical training at Juilliard's American Opera Center. In 1983, she appeared in *Madama Butterfly*, and in Barber's *Antony and Cleopatra* at the Spoleto Festivals in Charleston and Italy (a production that was recorded, winning a 1985 Grammy Award). Future engagements include Nicklausse in *The Tales of Hoffmann* for Virginia Opera, Frau Reich in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* for the Washington Opera, Hansel in *Hansel and Gretel* in Los Angeles, and Rosina in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* for Vancouver Opera.



PATRICIA SPENCE

A 1988-89 Adler Fellow with the San Francisco Opera Center, mezzo-soprano **Patricia Spence** sings Meg Page in the Family Performance of *Falstaff*, Kate Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly*, and is heard as a servant and solo voice in *Die Frau ohne Schatten*. She made her Company debut last fall as Anna in *L'Africaine* and also appeared in *Parsifal*. A native of Oregon, Miss Spence was a participant in the 1987 Merola Opera Program, during which she sang the role of the Princess Bouillon in *Suor Angelica*. For the Opera Center's 1988 Showcase, she portrayed Pilar in the West Coast premiere of *Hiram*



RUTH ANN SWENSON

Titus's *Rosina*, and sang Isabella in the 1988 Merola Opera Program production of *The Italian Girl in Algiers* at Stern Grove. She made her professional operatic debut in 1984 with the Eugene Opera and has performed regularly with that company in such roles as Madame Flora in *The Medium*, the Marquise of Birkenfeld in *The Daughter of the Regiment*, and Elmire in *Tartuffe*. Recent engagements include Rosina on the Opera Center Singers winter tour of *The Barber of Seville* (a role she sang for her New York City Opera debut this summer), Mistress Quickly in *Falstaff* for Opera Colorado, and the title role in the Opera Center's 1989 Showcase production of Handel's *Giustino*. Miss Spence has also appeared with the Portland Opera, Fresno Philharmonic, Sacramento Symphony and Sinfonia San Francisco.

Soprano **Ruth Ann Swenson** returns to the San Francisco Opera as Nannetta in *Falstaff* following her 1988 performance as Inès in *L'Africaine*. A 1983 and '84 Adler Fellow with the Opera Center, she made her San Francisco Opera debut as Despina in the 1983 season production of *Così fan tutte*, a role she has also sung to great acclaim with the Geneva Opera. She has sung a variety of roles with San Francisco Opera including Dorinda in *Orlando*, Aennchen in *Der Freischütz*, Nannetta in *Falstaff*, and Juliette in *Roméo et Juliette*. Highlights of her 1986-87 season included debuts with Netherlands Opera as Nannetta, Canadian Opera as Ilia in *Idomeneo*, the title role of *The Ballad of Baby Doe* in Long Beach and her Salzburg Festival debut in *Moses und Aron* directed by Jean-Pierre Ponnelle. In 1988 she appeared as Norina in the Geneva production of *Don Pasquale* and made her Paris debut as Euridice opposite Marilyn Horne in Gluck's *Orfeo*. She recently made her Lyric Opera of Chicago debut as Nannetta, her Washington Opera debut as Rosina in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* and returned to Canadian Opera to sing her first Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte*. Miss Swenson made her Metropolitan Opera debut last year as Adina in *L'Elisir d'Amore*



JANET WILLIAMS

and returned there this summer to sing the title role of *Lucia di Lammermoor* opposite Alfredo Kraus. Future engagements include opening the Washington Opera season in the title role of *Lucia di Lammermoor*, and her Dallas Opera debut as Norina in *Don Pasquale*.

Soprano **Janet Williams** appears this season as Nannetta in the Family Performance of *Falstaff*. She made her San Francisco Opera debut last fall when she stepped in on short notice to replace an ailing colleague as Despina in *Così fan tutte*. She was also seen last fall in *Parsifal* and as Musetta in the student/family performances of *La Bohème*. A 1988-89 Adler Fellow with the San Francisco Opera Center, Miss Williams was a participant in the 1987 Merola Opera Program and sang the role of Lauretta in *Gianni Schicchi* at Stern Grove. She was awarded the Florence Bruce Award at that year's Grand Finals concert. For the Opera Center she has also performed as soloist in *Carmina Burana*, and sang Madame Silverpeal in *The Impresario*. A native of Detroit and a graduate of Indiana University, where she earned a Master of Music degree in Voice, she recently returned from Paris where she studied with Denise Duplex and Régine Crespin. She has appeared with the Budapest State Opera Orchestra, San Francisco Chamber Orchestra, the Greater Lansing and Sacramento Symphony Orchestras, the Oakland Chamber Orchestra, and the Indianapolis Symphony as soloist in Bach's B Minor Mass, Handel's *Messiah*, and Villa-Lobos's *Bachiana Brasileira No. 5*. Recent engagements include Susanna in *Le Nozze di Figaro* for Eugene Opera, Arianna in the Opera Center's 1989 Showcase presentation of Handel's *Giustino* and, in her European debut, Echo in *Ariadne auf Naxos* with the Lyons Opera, also appearing in Schoenberg's *Moses und Aron* in Paris and Lyons. Future appearances include her Michigan Opera Theatre debut as Gretel in *Hansel and Gretel*, and a return to France for Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte* and Zerlina in *Don Giovanni*.

continued on p.45

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This revival of *Falstaff* has been made possible by a generous gift from the San Francisco Opera Guild.

The production was originally made possible by a grant from the L.J. & Mary C. Skaggs Foundation.

Opera in three acts by GIUSEPPE VERDI

Libretto by ARRIGO BOITO

After *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and parts of *Henry IV* by William Shakespeare

# Falstaff

(in Italian)

## Conductor

Kazimierz Kord  
Ian Robertson (Sept. 17)

## Production

Jean-Pierre Ponnelle

## Stage Director

Vera Lúcia Calábria

## Designer

Jean-Pierre Ponnelle

## Lighting Designer

Thomas J. Munn

## Chorus Director

Ian Robertson

## Musical Preparation

Scott Gilmore  
Susanna Lemberskaya  
Patrick Summers  
Susan Miller Hult  
Daniel Lockert\*  
Philip Eisenberg

## Prompter

Philip Eisenberg

## Assistant Stage Directors

Paula Williams  
Peter McClintock

## Stage Manager

Jerry Sherk  
Barbara Donner (Sept. 17)

Scenery constructed in  
San Francisco Opera Scenic Studios

Costumes executed by  
San Francisco Opera Costume Shop

First performance:  
Milan, February 9, 1893

First San Francisco Opera performance:  
September 27, 1927

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 8 AT 7:30  
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 13 AT 7:30  
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 17 AT 2:00  
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 21 AT 8:00  
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 23 AT 8:00  
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26 AT 7:30  
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 29 AT 8:00

Family Performance:  
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 17 AT 7:30

## CAST

(in order of appearance)

September 17  
(Family Performance)

<i>Sir John Falstaff</i>	Thomas Stewart	Timothy Noble
<i>Bardolfo</i>	Joseph Frank	Gary Rideout
<i>Pistola</i>	David Pittsinger	Dale Travis
<i>Host of the Garter Inn</i>	Daniel Becker	Daniel Becker
<i>Robin, page to Falstaff</i>	Jonathan Kaplan	Jarrett Sullivan
<i>Mistress Quickly</i>	Marilyn Horne	Catherine Keen
<i>Dr. Caius</i>	Michel Sénéchal*	Craig Estep*
<i>Mistress Meg Page</i>	Kathryn Cowdrick	Patricia Spence
<i>Mistress Alice Ford</i>	Pilar Lorengar	Patricia Racette*
<i>Nannetta</i>	Ruth Ann Swenson	Janet Williams
<i>Fenton</i>	John David De Haan	Benoit Boutet*
<i>Ford</i>	J. Patrick Raftery	Victor Ledbetter
<i>Mr. Page</i>	David Burnakus	David Burnakus

*Townspeople, servants, masqueraders*

\*San Francisco Opera debut

TIME AND PLACE: Windsor, England, on the banks of the Thames,  
during the reign of Henry IV

*Act I* *Scene 1:* A taproom of the Garter Inn  
*Scene 2:* The garden of Ford's house

INTERMISSION

*ACT II* *Scene 1:* The taproom of the Garter Inn  
*Scene 2:* A room in Ford's house

INTERMISSION

*Act III* *Scene 1:* Outside the Garter Inn  
*Scene 2:* Herne's Oak in Windsor Forest

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

Supertitles by Paul Moor.

Opening night flowers by Kalman Belli Florist, courtesy of  
the San Francisco Opera Guild.

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

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

*The performance will last approximately three hours.*



# Falstaff/Synopsis

## ACT I

**Scene 1**—The dissolute knight, Sir John Falstaff, has been writing letters. Dr. Caius enters to complain of outrages committed by Falstaff and his henchmen Pistola and Bardolfo. He is summarily rejected and Falstaff is left considering how he may pay his bill at the Inn. He decides to send two letters he has just written to Mistress Ford and Mistress Page, wives of well-to-do merchants, and keepers of their purses. He thinks they will be easy prey to his charm and station. Pistola and Bardolfo refuse to deliver the letters for fear of staining their honor, an excuse which Falstaff will not accept, believing honor to be an illusion. He entrusts the letters to a page and dismisses Pistola and Bardolfo.

**Scene 2**—Mistress Page and Mistress Quickly have come to tell Mistress Ford of the letter Meg Page has received from Sir John. Alice Ford, accompanied by her daughter Nannetta, is as eager to tell Meg of an identical letter she has just received. Together they scheme to outwit him. Ford, Caius and Fenton enter with Pistola and Bardolfo and, not seeing the ladies, who have hastily hidden themselves, discuss the information which Pistola and Bardolfo have brought to Ford that Falstaff has designs on his wife. Alice is afraid of her husband's jealous nature, and when Ford leaves, followed by Caius and the two reprobates, the ladies also depart leaving Nannetta and Fenton, who are in love, a brief moment alone. The ladies return and Fenton hides. Alice decides to send Mistress Quickly with a note to Falstaff, setting a tryst at which they will punish him. Catching a glimpse of Fenton hiding, the ladies fear they are overheard and scatter, leaving Fenton and Nannetta alone together again. The men re-enter and Ford decides to visit Falstaff under an assumed name to try to discover his plan and outwit him. The ladies return and the two groups outline their separate intentions for thwarting the plans of the knight.

## ACT II

**Scene 1**—Pistola and Bardolfo return to Falstaff and seek his forgiveness, which is casually granted. Mistress Quickly comes to deliver her message, and Falstaff readily agrees to visit Alice between two and three o'clock. No sooner has Mistress Quickly gone than Ford is announced under the name of Master Fontana. He offers Falstaff a handsome reward to win the love of a certain Alice Ford, who has so far repulsed his advances. He says that if Sir John can succeed then he may also hope to do so. Falstaff agrees at once and confesses that he already has an assignation with the lady. Falstaff leaves to dress for the occasion and Ford is overcome with rage and jealousy.

**Scene 2**—Alice and Meg are waiting for Falstaff. Mistress Quickly returns from the Garter Inn and reports on her success. Nannetta enters and tearfully tells them that her father insists that she marry Dr. Caius. The ladies promise to help her escape this fate and Alice calls for the laundry basket, which is an important part of her plan to humble Falstaff. Final preparations are made and as Falstaff is seen approaching, all but Alice hide. Falstaff enters and immediately begins to court Alice, who teases him by telling him that she knows he is interested in Meg Page. Falstaff indignantly denies this, but Mistress Quickly enters to say that Mistress Page has arrived in a fluster. Meg arrives and tells them that Ford is approaching,

crying for vengeance. Mistress Quickly adds her voice to the panic, and Falstaff has barely time to hide behind the screen before Ford enters with his followers and searches the room, missing the screen but emptying the linen basket. As Ford rushes out to search the rest of the house, Falstaff emerges and is soon hidden in the basket. Nannetta and Fenton leave the search and in turn hide behind the screen. Ford and his followers return and search the room again, this time omitting the linen basket. Suddenly a kiss is heard from behind the screen and Ford immediately concludes that Falstaff is hidden there. With great care he makes his tactical plan to assault the screen and capture Falstaff, but when the screen is removed, showing Nannetta and Fenton, he is doubly enraged. Bardolfo and Pistola start the search again on a false scent, and as soon as Ford has rushed upstairs, Alice orders the servants to tip the contents of the basket out of the window into the Thames. She sends for her husband and by way of explanation leads him to the window.

## ACT III

**Scene 1**—Falstaff is sitting outside the Inn meditating on the ways of the world and seeking to wash the Thames out of his system with drafts of sack. Mistress Quickly comes to offer Mistress Ford's apologies. Meanwhile Alice, Meg, Ford, Caius and Fenton conceal themselves to see how he takes it. Intent on humbling Falstaff still further, Alice has given Mistress Quickly a letter inviting him to meet her at midnight by Herne's Oak in Windsor Forest disguised as Herne the Black Hunter, whose ghost is believed to haunt the spot. Falstaff, the eternal optimist, takes Quickly into the Inn to discuss this renewed hope of the conquest of Alice, who meanwhile describes her plan in full to the others. All are to assume disguises and frighten Sir John out of his wits. Ford sees a chance to further his plans for Nannetta to marry Dr. Caius. Mistress Quickly overhears their plotting.

**Scene 2**—Fenton enters seeking Nannetta, who answers him from the depths of the forest. Alice arrives, not yet disguised, but hands a monk's disguise to Fenton. Mistress Quickly is disguised as a witch and Nannetta as Titania. Together they plan to outwit Ford and Caius. Meg enters, also in disguise, and all vanish as Falstaff is heard approaching. He appears on the stroke of midnight wearing the antlered headdress of Herne. He calls on Alice and, now in disguise, she comes to him. Meg's voice is heard in alarm at the approach of witches, and Nannetta announces the arrival of goblins and fairies. Falstaff falls terrified to the ground. Nannetta and her followers beat and torment him cruelly to the amusement of all the others. He at last repents, but Bardolfo, growing bold and incautious, unmask and Falstaff soon realizes he has been tricked. Mistress Quickly takes Bardolfo aside, disguises him as Titania and presents him to Dr. Caius in place of Nannetta. Ford, believing the figure in white to be his daughter, prepares to announce the betrothal of the two. Alice leads forth another masked pair to make a double ceremony and Ford pronounces both couples united. All unmask and Ford realizes he has been out-manuevered. Falstaff takes courage from Ford's frustration, but Ford is satisfied with the revenge on Falstaff, and he agrees to let Nannetta marry Fenton. Falstaff leads the group in a final ensemble, and all ends merrily on the theme of "all the world's a jest."

*Thomas Stewart, Jonathan Kaplan*

# Falstaff

Photos taken in rehearsal  
by Larry Merkle





(Bottom) David Pittsinger; (Top, l. to r.) David Burnakus, Joseph Frank, J. Patrick Rastery, John David De Haan, Michel Sénéchal



Pilar Lorengar, Kathryn Cowdrick, Ruth Ann Swenson, John David De Haan



Michel Sénéchal

John David De Haan, Ruth Ann Swenson



*Kathryn Cowdrick, Marilyn Horne, Pilar Lorengar, Ruth Ann Swenson*



*J. Patrick Raftery*



*Pilar Lorengar, Thomas Stewart*



Thomas Stewart



David Pittsinger, Thomas Stewart, Joseph Frank



Thomas Stewart



Thomas Stewart

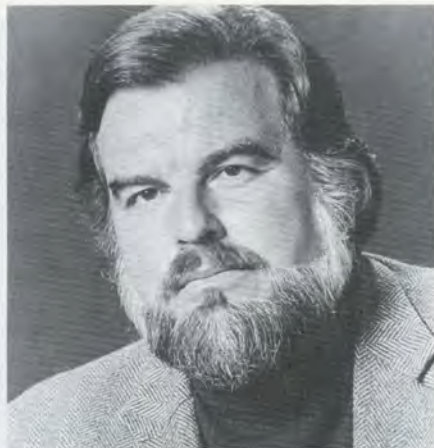


Kathryn Cowdrick, Pilar Lorengar, Marilyn Horne;  
(Bottom) Thomas Stewart



THOMAS STEWART

Internationally celebrated American baritone **Thomas Stewart** returns for his 17th season with San Francisco Opera in the title role of *Falstaff*. A graduate of Juilliard, he made his operatic debut there in the 1954 American premiere of *Capriccio*, and made his professional debut that same year in the inaugural season of the Lyric Opera of Chicago, where he sang in Giannini's *Taming of the Shrew* and *Lucia di Lammermoor*. After receiving a Fulbright Scholarship, he and his wife Evelyn Lear were engaged by the Deutsche Oper Berlin, where Stewart sang a wide variety of roles. In 1962 he made his San Francisco Opera debut in five roles including Ford in *Falstaff*, the vehicle of his 1966 Metropolitan Opera debut. Later Met assignments would include numerous Wagnerian roles, in which Stewart established himself as one of the world's great interpreters: Sachs, Wotan, the Wanderer, Wolfram, Holländer, Amfortas, Kurwenal and Gunther. The only American to sing major roles at Bayreuth for over a decade, Stewart has performed in *Der Ring des Nibelungen* to acclaim in Vienna, Berlin, Buenos Aires, Hamburg, Paris, at the Metropolitan, the Salzburg Festival and in San Francisco, where he appeared in all four Ring operas in 1972 and in the Company's acclaimed new production starting in 1983 (*Die Walküre*) through 1985 (*Siegfried*). In 1981 he sang the title role here in the American premiere of Reimann's *Lear*, an assignment he repeated in 1985, and he was most recently applauded in the War Memorial as the Speaker in *The Magic Flute* and Don Fernando in *Fidelio* in 1987, bringing his Company credits to a total of 32 productions. Stewart and his wife have been dubbed "the Lunts of Opera," and they have performed together in the world's great opera houses—they sang opposite each other in San Francisco Opera's 1971 *Eugene Onegin*—as well as in concert and recital. In 1985, Stewart was awarded the San Francisco Opera Medal, the Company's highest honor. His distinguished discography includes complete performances of *Parsifal* with Boulez, the Ring cycle under Karajan, *Lohengrin* with



TIMOTHY NOBLE

Kubelik and *Der Fliegende Holländer* with Böhm. In 1990 he will appear with his wife and Plácido Domingo in the Los Angeles Opera production of Tchaikovsky's *Queen of Spades*.

American baritone **Timothy Noble** returns to San Francisco Opera for two roles: the title role in the Family Performance of *Falstaff*, a role he has also sung at Houston Grand Opera, with the Netherlands Opera, and the opera companies of Memphis, Syracuse and Indianapolis; and Amonasro in *Aida*. He made his Spring Opera Theater debut in 1981 as Agamemnon in John Eaton's *The Cry of Clytaemnestra*, the role he created for the work's world premiere with the Brooklyn Philharmonia. He made his Company debut as the Duke of Albany in San Francisco Opera's 1981 American premiere production of Reimann's *Lear* (repeating the assignment in 1985) and has since sung ten roles with the Company, including Moralès in *Carmen*, Count Tomsky in *The Queen of Spades*, the title role of *Macbeth*, and Shaklovity in *Khovanshchina*, the vehicle of his 1988 Metropolitan Opera debut. The Indiana native created roles in the premieres of two additional Eaton operas: Robespierre in *Danton and Robespierre* and Prospero in *The Tempest* with Santa Fe Opera. He made his 1982 European debut as Miller in *Luisa Miller* at the Grand Théâtre de Nancy in France, and has returned to Europe for appearances with Frankfurt Opera, the Vienna Festival and the Opéra-Comique in Paris. He made his Glyndebourne Festival debut in the title role of *Simon Boccanegra* in 1986, a role he performed in concert in 1988 under Solti in Stuttgart, and made his Italian debut last year in *Stiffelio* at the Teatro La Fenice in Venice. He returned to Glyndebourne last season as the elder Germont in *La Traviata*. Noble has also sung in numerous oratorio performances and has appeared in concert with the orchestras of Los Angeles, Chicago, Cleveland, St. Louis, Cincinnati and Atlanta, among others. Future engagements include Michele in *Il Tabarro* and Schau-



J. PATRICK RAFTERY

nard in *La Bohème* at the Met, and Giorgio Germont in *La Traviata* with Opera Pacific. Next year, to celebrate the centennial of the Woodstock Opera House in Woodstock, Illinois, he will make his directorial debut and sing the role of Tonio in a new production of *Pagliacci*.

Baritone **J. Patrick Raftery** returns to San Francisco Opera to sing Ford in *Falstaff*. He appeared here in 1987 as Yeletsky in *The Queen of Spades* and made his Company debut during the 1983 Summer Season as Marcello in *La Bohème*. He made his professional debut with the San Diego Opera in Verdi's *I Lombardi* in 1979, then appeared as Figaro in *The Barber of Seville* at the Washington Opera in 1980. At the Chicago Lyric Opera, he bowed in *Boris Godunov* in 1980 and returned there for several productions through the 1986-87 season. The baritone's European debut took place in 1981 in Paris as Zurga in Bizet's *Les Pêcheurs de Perles*. His Glyndebourne debut as Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte* in 1984 was followed by a Covent Garden appearance in 1985 as Count Almaviva in *Le Nozze di Figaro*. Raftery made his Italian stage debut in 1986 at the Pesaro Rossini Festival in *Il Turco in Italia*, and appeared in Brussels in Mozart's *La Finta Giardiniera*, a production which was also seen in Salzburg and Vienna. In 1988, he sang his first Onegin in Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* at the Washington Opera, where he also essayed his first Escamillo in *Carmen*, and appeared as Dr. Malatesta in *Don Pasquale* in Bonn. During the 1989 season, the baritone sang his first Lescaut in *Manon Lescaut* for his debut at the Rome Opera and made his first appearances with the Metropolitan Opera during their Park season in performances of *Lucia di Lammermoor*. Future engagements include *Manon Lescaut* at the Met, *Così fan tutte* at the Washington Opera, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* for the Frankfurt Opera and Rossini's *L'Occasione fa il ladro* in Lausanne.



VICTOR LEDBETTER

A 1988-89 Adler Fellow with the San Francisco Opera Center, baritone **Victor Ledbetter** portrays Ford in the Family Performance of *Falstaff*, a Trojan Man in *Idomeneo*, a Noble of Brabant in *Lohengrin*, and the One-Eyed Man in *Die Frau ohne Schatten*. He made his Company debut in the 1987 season as Baron Douphol in the family performances of *La Traviata*, and as Paris in *Roméo et Juliette*, and returned last fall as an Esquire in *Parsifal* and as Marcello in the student/family performances of *La Bohème*. For the Opera Center's 1988 Showcase series, he sang Count Almaviva in the West Coast premiere of Hiram Titus's *Rosina*, and was most recently seen here as Mr. Kallenbach in Glass' *Satyagraha* and in the 1989 Showcase production of Handel's *Giustino*. A participant in the 1986 Merola Opera Program, he sang Marcello at Villa Montalvo, repeating the role on Western Opera Theater's 1986-87 tour which included performances in China. In April of 1988, Ledbetter returned to Shanghai as Scarpia in China's first *Tosca*, and for a joint concert with the Shanghai Opera and Conservatory. The native of Georgia is a graduate of Mercer University and has studied at Indiana University with Nicola Rossi Lemeni. He was a Schwabacher Debut recitalist last January, and recently performed with the Vancouver Opera in *The Cunning Little Vixen* and made his San Diego Opera debut in *Don Pasquale*.

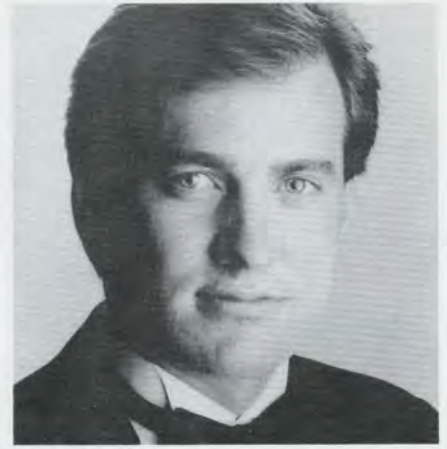
Tenor **John David De Haan** returns to San Francisco Opera as Fenton in *Falstaff* and Cassio in *Otello*. A native of Kansas, he participated in the 1985 Merola Opera Program and, after portraying Don Ottavio in Western Opera Theater's 1985-86 national tour of *Don Giovanni*, became a 1986 Adler Fellow, and was presented in the Schwabacher Debut Recital series. He made his first Company appearance in the summer of 1986 as Arturo in *Lucia di Lammermoor*, returning that fall in the title role of *Faust* for the family performances. In 1987, he stepped in on short notice to replace an ailing colleague as Roméo in Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette*. After receiving



JOHN DAVID DE HAAN

the newly established Eleanor Steber Music Foundation Mozart Award, he has made numerous appearances with American opera companies, including Don Ottavio with the Greater Miami Opera, the Webber Requiem with Abendmusik in Lincoln, Nebraska, Eisenstein in *Die Fledermaus* with the Lyric Opera of Kansas City, Anatol in *Vanessa* with Opera Theater of St. Louis, and Ferrando in *Così fan tutte* in Chautauqua. His credits during the 1988 season include Alfredo in *La Traviata* with the opera companies of Indianapolis, Memphis and Syracuse, and his debut with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra in Bach's *St. John Passion*. This year, he made his European debut as Tamino in *The Magic Flute* at the Mannheim State Theatre, and sang Roméo in *Roméo et Juliette* at the Connecticut Opera, Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly* for the Seattle Opera, the title role of *Werther* for the Opera Theatre of St. Louis and, for the Santa Fe Opera, Riccardo in Massenet's *Chérubin* and the Nightwatchman/Marco Polo in the American premiere of *A Night at the Chinese Opera*. Future engagements include Arbace in *Idomeneo* in Miami, Roméo for Opera Omaha, and Alfredo in Tulsa and New Orleans.

Tenor **Benoit Boutet** makes his San Francisco Opera debut as Fenton in the Family Performance of *Falstaff*. He earned his master's degree in music from Laval University in Quebec, before graduating with distinction from the Opera School of the University of Toronto. For two years he was a member of the Canadian Opera Company Ensemble, appearing in productions of Britten's *The Turn of the Screw* (as Peter Quint), Ramiro in *La Cenerentola* and the title role of *The Tales of Hoffmann*. Last year he earned praise for his interpretation of Don Ottavio in the Canadian Opera Company's production of *Don Giovanni*, and in January portrayed Janek in COC's *The Makropulos Case*. Concert credits have included Handel's *Messiah* with the Quebec Symphony, Berlioz's *L'Enfance du Christ* under Mario Bernardi, and appearances with the CBC Chamber



BENOIT BOUTET

Orchestra and the symphony orchestras of Montreal, Toronto, Cincinnati, Detroit and Chicago. Boutet's assignments this year include Chevalier de la Force in Montreal Opera's production of *Dialogues of the Carmelites* and the title role in Vancouver Opera's production of *The Rake's Progress* in October. Upcoming assignments include the Chevalier in *Dialogues of the Carmelites* with Edmonton Opera, Andres in *Wozzeck* for the Canadian Opera Company, Camille in *The Merry Widow* with Vancouver Opera, and Ferrando in *Così fan tutte* for the Bermuda Music Festival.



JOSEPH FRANK

Tenor **Joseph Frank**, who was mostly recently seen here as Triquet in *Eugene Onegin* in 1986, returns to San Francisco Opera to sing Bardolfo, a role which he also performed in the 1985 production of *Falstaff*. He made his Company debut in 1974 as the Dancing Master in *Manon Lescaut* and has subsequently appeared here in 20 lyric and character roles. These include Goro in *Madama Butterfly*, L'Incredible in *Andrea Chénier*, Beppe in *Pagliacci*, Valletto in *L'Incoronazione di Poppea*, Pong in *Turandot*, the Abbé in *Adriana Lecouvreur* and the Dancing Master in *Ariadne auf Naxos*. It was in this last role that he made his Metropolitan Opera debut in 1979, and has returned there for numerous assignments including *Manon*



GARY RIDEOUT

*Lescaut, Madama Butterfly, Parade, Der Rosenkavalier* (Live From the Met broadcast), and *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges*. He is a familiar figure on the stages of the leading opera companies, including those of Houston, San Diego, Tulsa, Miami, Dallas and many others. A frequent performer with Santa Fe Opera, his credits there include the American premiere of the three-act version of Berg's *Lulu*, Korngold's *Violanta*, the world premiere of George Rochberg's *The Confidence Man*, Offenbach's *Orpheus in the Underworld* and the world premiere of John Eaton's *The Tempest*. Frank's European credits include a concert performance and recording of *Boris Godunov* at the Sofia Festival, and performances of *Mazeppa* with the Paris Radio Orchestra. Recent appearances include *Elektra* in Pittsburgh, *Der Rosenkavalier* and *Madama Butterfly* in Houston, and *Ariadne auf Naxos* at the Met.

Canadian tenor **Gary Rideout** makes his San Francisco Opera debut as the Prince and Manservant in *Lulu*, and as Bardolfo in the Family Performance of *Falstaff*. He received a bachelor's degree from Michigan State University, and a master's degree from York University in Toronto. He continued his education at Toronto's Royal Conservatory of Music and was awarded an Opera Diploma from the Opera Division at the University of Toronto. He has since performed in musicals, cabaret, commercials, film, and legitimate theater. Formerly a Resident Artist of the Canadian Opera Company, Rideout has appeared with that company as Eurimaco in *The Return of Ulysses*, Count Hauk in *The Makropulos Case*, the Abbé in *Andrea Chénier*, Chekalinsky in *The Queen of Spades* and Count de Lerme in *Don Carlos*. Additional engagements with the COC include *Boris Godunov*, *La Bohème*, *La Forza del Destino*, *Tristan und Isolde*, and *The Turn of the Screw*. On the COC's tour of Western Canada, he sang the title role of *The Tales of Hoffmann*. His concert engagements throughout Canada include performances with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Kitchener-

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MICHEL SÉNÉCHAL

Waterloo Symphony, Ukrainian Millennium Choir (concert and recording), the COC's Insights presentations of *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Rigoletto*, *Macbeth* and *Boris Godunov*, in addition to "A Cabaret Evening of Brecht and Weill." Rideout recently sang Rodolfo in Opera East's production of *La Bohème*, and will make his Carnegie Hall debut this November as soloist in Haydn's *St. Nicholas Mass*.

French tenor **Michel Sénéchal** makes his San Francisco Opera debut as Dr. Caius in *Falstaff*. Celebrating nearly 40 years of professional operatic activity, he made his debut at the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie of Brussels in 1950. He has since performed in the major opera houses of the world, and has been a regular guest artist at the Paris Opera and the Paris Opéra-Comique since 1958. He has sung at all of the major festivals, including those at Aix-en-Provence, Salzburg, and at Glyndebourne. New York's Metropolitan Opera has engaged him in the French and Italian repertoire every year since 1978, and he has been one of the few French tenors to have sung principal Mozart roles at the Vienna Staatsoper. In France, he was the first French artist to sing the major tenor roles in operas written by Berg (*Lulu*), Henze (*Der Junge Lord*), and Landowski (*Montségur* and *La Vieille Maison*). A frequent recitalist and concert performer throughout North America, France, Italy, and the USSR, he has also performed in several operatic films. A prolific recording artist, Sénéchal's discography includes Ravel's *L'Heure Espagnole* and *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges*, Rameau's *Platée*, Berlioz's *L'Enfance du Christ*, and an anthology of songs by Francis Poulenc. He is currently Director of the School of Lyric Art at the Paris Opera, and regularly offers master classes at the Metropolitan Opera. Sénéchal's numerous awards include Officer of the National Order of Merit, Officer of the Order of Arts and Letters, and the coveted Chevalier of the Legion of Honor.



CRAIG ESTEP

A 1989 Adler Fellow with the San Francisco Opera Center, tenor **Craig Estep** makes his Company debut as Dr. Caius in the Family Performance of *Falstaff* and will also sing the Official Registrar in *Madama Butterfly* and a Noble of Brabant in *Lohengrin*. A 1988 and 1987 Merola Opera Program participant, Estep sang in *Madame Butterfly* on Western Opera Theater's national tour and in Japan with the Center's Pacific Rim Exchange Program. He has also toured in Western Opera Theater's production of *Don Pasquale*. The tenor traveled to Shanghai in 1988 to sing Spoletta in the first production of *Tosca* ever seen in China. He recently appeared in the Opera Center's Showcase production of Handel's *Giustino* and was a soloist in the San Francisco Symphony Pops Series this past summer. The North Carolina native has a master's degree in vocal performance and has sung with the North Carolina Opera, Connecticut Grand Opera and the Charleston Opera.

American bass **David Pittsinger** returns to San Francisco Opera as Pistola in *Falstaff*, Lodovico in *Otello* and the King of Egypt in *Aida*. He made his Company debut in four roles during the 1987 season and, after making his European debut as the Count in *Der Ferne Klang* with the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie in Brussels, returned last season as a Monk and Street Singer in *La Gioconda*. He participated in the 1986 Merola Opera Program and portrayed Colline in *La Bohème* on Western Opera Theater's 1986-87 tour as well as in WOT's historic exchange with the People's Republic of China. In this country, he has appeared at Wolf Trap, with Pittsburgh Opera, Anchorage Opera and Dayton Opera, and recently sang his first Figaro in *Le Nozze di Figaro* in Long Beach. He also made his Canadian debut in Toronto as Colline. Last February, Pittsinger made his Paris debut in Berlioz's *L'Enfance du Christ* with the Radio France Orchestra, and was immediately re-engaged for upcoming seasons as Cecil in *Maria Stuarda* and Assur in *Semiramide*.



DAVID PITTSINGER

Other future engagements include Sarastro in *Die Zauberflöte* in Nantes (France), his first Timur in *Turandot* with Opera Pacific, Fiesco in *Simon Boccanegra* in Brussels and Mozart's Figaro with L'Opéra de Nice. In 1991, he will sing Gremin in *Eugene Onegin* in Pittsburgh, in addition to the title role of *Don Giovanni* for the Lyons Opera and L'Opéra de Nice.



DALE TRAVIS

In his second year as an Adler Fellow with the San Francisco Opera Center, bass **Dale Travis** sings Pistola in the Family Performance of *Falstaff*, The Theater Manager and The Banker in *Lulu*, the Imperial Commissioner in *Madama Butterfly*, and a Watchman in *Die Frau ohne Schatten*. He made his Company debut last fall as the Warden in *The Rake's Progress*, and also appeared in *Manon Lescaut*, *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, and in the Student/Family production of *La Bohème* as Benoit and Alcindoro. This summer, he sang Lord Krishna in Glass' *Satyagraha*. As a member of the 1986 and '87 Merola Opera Program, he sang Don Alfonso in *Così fan tutte* and the title role of *Don Pasquale* and toured with Western Opera Theater for two seasons, performing in *Don Pasquale* and *La Bohème*, a production which also traveled to China. A native of New Jersey, Travis received his bachelor's degree from Susquehanna University and both a master's degree and an Artist



KAZIMIERZ KORD

Diploma in Opera from the University of Cincinnati's College Conservatory of Music. His college credits include roles in *The Secret Marriage*, *Don Giovanni*, *Falstaff*, *Gianni Schicchi* and *The Love for Three Oranges*. The recipient of numerous awards and scholarships, he was heard locally in the title role of *Don Pasquale* and as Dr. Bartolo in *The Barber of Seville* with Opera San Jose, as Méphistophélès in *Faust* with Marin Opera, and as soloist in Mozart's Mass in C Minor with the San Francisco Symphony, Mozart's *Coronation Mass* with the Santa Rosa Symphony, and in Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* with the Sacramento Symphony.

Kazimierz Kord, conductor of *Falstaff* and *Otello*, has held the post of music director of the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra for 12 years. He made his San Francisco Opera debut in 1973, leading performances of *Boris Godunov* and *Rigoletto*, returning for *Macbeth* in the fall of 1986 and for *La Gioconda* last year. Since 1967, he has 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, Leningrad 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*. Previous positions he has held include that of music director of the Southwest German Radio Orchestra in 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 and Cleveland, among others. 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 next year. He is also a sought-after recording artist with over 20 major albums in his disco-

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IAN ROBERTSON

graphy, including Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique* Symphony with London's Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, and Massenet's *Don Quichotte* with the Suisse Romande Orchestra.

**Ian Robertson** conducts the September 17 Family Performance of *Falstaff*. He made his conducting debut with the Company last fall, leading a performance of *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*. Since coming to San Francisco in 1987, Robertson conducted the 1987 Fol-de-Rol program, the Kurt Herbert Adler Memorial Concert and the opening of the 1988 Stern Grove Festival in a performance of Mozart's *Coronation Mass* and Orff's *Carmina Burana*. He also conducted performances of San Francisco Opera Center's *The Italian Girl in Algiers* and *The Impresario* with the Santa Rosa Symphony. Before joining the Company, he was Head of Music and Chorus Director of Scottish Opera where he made his conducting debut with *The Barber of Seville* and led *The Secret of Susanna* for Scottish Television's award-winning film. He went on to conduct several productions for this company including *The Pearl Fishers*, *The Abduction from the Seraglio*, *Idomeneo*, *Die Meistersinger*, *My Fair Lady*, *The Magic Flute*, *L'Elisir d'Amore* and *Rigoletto*, as well as concerts with the Scottish Opera Orchestra. A native of Scotland, Robertson trained at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music where he won awards as a concert pianist and accompanist. He subsequently graduated Bachelor of Music with Honors from the University of Glasgow and completed a research course in 20th century piano music. His recital career led to appearances at the Edinburgh Festival and the Wigmore Hall and Purcell Room in London and he recorded many recitals for the BBC. Robertson is Chorus Director of the San Francisco Opera.



VERA LÚCIA CALÁBRIA

After directing *Der Fliegende Holländer* last fall, **Vera Lúcia Calábria** returns to San Francisco Opera to stage *Falstaff*. Her local directorial debut was in 1983 with *Carmen*, a production which was repeated under her direction during the 1984 Fall Season. She staged the twin bill of *Cavalleria Rusticana/Pagliacci* for San Francisco Opera during the 1986 Summer Season, and returned to direct *La Forza del Destino* that fall. The Brazilian-born director began her association with the Company in 1979 as assistant to the late Jean-Pierre Ponnelle, with whom she worked on his production of *Carmen* when it was first mounted here during the 1981 Fall Season. She has assisted the renowned director-designer in new productions in the major opera houses of the world, including *Carmen* in Zurich and Cologne, *Idomeneo* at the Metropolitan Opera, *Madama Butterfly* in Strasbourg, *Pagliacci* and *Arlecchino* in Houston, and *Parsifal* in Cologne. She was the assistant director to Ponnelle for the American premiere of Reimann's *Lear* for the San Francisco Opera 1981 Summer Season, repeating the same assignment and also assisting Ponnelle on *Falstaff* during the 1985 Fall Season. She has assisted such directors as Ruth Berghaus, Filippo Sanjust, Gian Carlo Menotti, and Götz Friedrich, and has worked on television productions of Puccini's *Il Trittico* and *Madama Butterfly*, *Idomeneo*, *Andrea Chénier* and San Francisco Opera's new production of *Aida* in 1981. Miss Calábria recently staged *Parsifal* in Barcelona and *Falstaff* for the Lyric Opera of Chicago.



THOMAS J. MUNN

**Thomas J. Munn** is lighting designer for *Falstaff*, *Mefistofele*, *Idomeneo*, *Aida*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Lohengrin*, *Orlando Furioso* and *Die Frau ohne Schatten*. Last fall, he was responsible for *L'Africaine*, *Parsifal*, *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, *La Bohème* and *La Gioconda*. In his 14th 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*, *Billy Budd* and *Nabucco*. 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*, *Aida*, *L'Africaine* and *La Bohème*. 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*. As a consultant on numerous lighting 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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# Man of the Month: Arrigo Boito

By TIMOTHY PFAFF

The simple fact that Arrigo Boito makes three prominent appearances in the first month of the 1989 San Francisco Opera season—as composer and librettist of *Mefistofele* and the librettist of Verdi's *Otello* and *Falstaff*, the crowning works of the latter's *oeuvre*—more than hints at his importance in the development of Italian opera between its *bel canto* and *verismo* periods. Indeed, the mark he left on Italian culture of the period, as a poet, translator, aesthetic philosopher, trenchant critic, and yet more exacting self-critic—and collaborator, inspiration, friend, and sometimes lover to many of the most important artistic personalities of his time—in addition to composer and librettist, is indelible.

Yet his was and remains a puzzling, frequently thwarted genius, and Boito, man and creator, appears to have been as much of an enigma in his own day as he is in ours. "You, Boito, take the steps of an ant and leave the footprints of a rhinoceros," the aged Verdi remarked. And William Ashbrook, one of the preeminent Boito scholars of our time, concluded his article on Boito for *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* with: "The mark he left on Italian music of his time is greater than the sum of his own accomplishments."

The Padua-born (in 1842), Venice-raised, and Milan-schooled Boito first encountered Verdi in Paris, where he and his fellow Milan Conservatory student Franco Faccio traveled after completing their studies, in 1862. There he wrote the text for Verdi's cantata *Inno delle Nazioni*,

which opened the International Exhibition in London that year. During a trip to Poland to visit relatives later that year, he completed the libretto of *Amleto* for Faccio, a composer as well as conductor. Notably faithful to its source, Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, it was the forerunner of a

series of Shakespeare adaptations that were to punctuate his entire career. Yet to come were not just the *Otello* and *Falstaff* libretti, but translations of *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Romeo and Juliet* (the latter apparently never performed) for his sometimes paramour Eleonora Duse, the



MUSEO TEATRALE ALLA SCALA

Arrigo Boito, (1842-1918) in a portrait by Salvatore Corvaya.

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



An artist's idea of what Boito (left) and Verdi looked like during preparations for *Otello*.

world-renowned Italian actress.

Upon his return to Milan at the end of 1862, Boito became closely associated with an artistic movement known as the *Scapigliatura*, a group of mostly literary personalities with a revolutionary bent

and a strong agenda for reform in the arts. Among his tracts and other writings of the time, which included a bizarre narrative poem called *Il Re Orso* (King Bear), was another poem in which, in Ashbrook's words, "Boito compared the defiled altars of Italian music to the splattered walls of a brothel." Among those singled by its inflammatory rhetoric was Verdi himself, who assumed he was included among the defilers. The offense nearly excluded Boito from what he later deemed the pinnacle of his creative life, namely, his collaboration with Verdi. The rift was gradually mended, first by Boito's masterly revision of Piave's original libretto for *Simon Boccanegra*, the basis of Verdi's own revision of his score for the opera's La Scala revival in 1881, and, subsequently, by Boito's promising first sketch for *Otello* and his painstaking reworking of it under the composer's characteristically insistent supervision.

When, in the *Libro dei Versi* of 1877, Boito published the collected poems he wrote between 1862 and 1865, he tellingly gave first place in the volume to a poem entitled "Dualismo." The poem ends with the image of a tightrope walker, balanced precariously on a line stretched tautly between dreams of virtue and of sin. That dualism provided the philosophical underpinnings of both of Boito's mature operas, *Mefistofele* and the unfinished *Nerone* (about, among other things, the conflict between paganism and Christianity). But beyond the age-old struggle between good and evil, the poem also reflects Boito's own lifelong struggle between the

often conflicting vocations of literature and music. For all the acclaim history has accorded him for his contributions to both, the path to each is, in Boito's case, littered with failed, unfinished, and abandoned projects.

Having written a libretto for *Ero e Leandro* (notable, Ashbrook writes, "for Boito's efforts to revivify classical metres and rhetoric"), he began composing its music, only to abandon the project to a succession of two other composers and, later, to insert his best number for it into *Mefistofele*. He wrote a libretto for Luigi San Germano's *Semira*, but the opera was withdrawn in rehearsal and never performed. A libretto of *Iram* (based on a portion of the *1001 Nights*) for Cesare Domenicetti was never set, and an attempt at a Venetian-style comedy, *Basi e Bote*, was set to music only after Boito's death. Oddly, he wrote the libretto for Ponchielli's *La Gioconda*, an opera that quickly entered the standard repertory, never to depart, under the pseudonym "Tobia Gorrio" (an anagram of his name), while freely acknowledging that he was its author.

In an insightful article in the program book for the Company's new production of *Mefistofele*, Julian Budden goes into the saga of Boito and *Mefistofele* in detail. Here, a quick summary of the well-known history of that project will suffice. Boito's first version of the opera, which had its premiere at La Scala in 1868 (under his own, reportedly inept, baton), included some five and one-half hours of music—and was no more successful when presented on two successive evenings than on its disastrous premiere March 5. Assiduous revisions and many deletions later (over years in which he supported himself by preparing, among other works, Italian versions of Wagner's *Rienzi*, Gluck's *Armide*, and Weber's *Der Freischütz*, as well as penning *La Gioconda*), the opera proved a promising success at Bologna in 1875. Further revised, it was a yet greater success at Venice (1876) and finally vindicated its creator with a triumph at La Scala on May 25, 1881, conducted by Faccio, his old friend and colleague.

But that ordeal was nothing compared to Boito's struggle over *Nerone*, the idea for which occurred to him about the same time the Faust idea did, in that seminal year 1862. Boito's five-act libretto for *Nerone*, first published in 1901, dwarfs even that of the first *Mefistofele*. Boito himself is said to have been so awed, both



Arrigo Boito and Giuseppe Verdi at Sant'Agata in 1892.  
ARCHIVIO STORICO RICORDI

by the work's ambitions and by his own words' beauty, that his apprehension over devising appropriate music for them consistently, and ultimately, stymied him. "With my own hands, I have forged the instrument of my torture," he lamented.

More than one commentator has suggested that Boito fiddled while *Nerone* burned in his imagination for more than a half-century. The profusion of other enterprises and other liaisons, artistic and otherwise, diverted him from his work. And even when he applied himself to the task, he found ways to sidetrack himself. Having completed the first two acts by 1877, Ashbrook writes, "he began to rework the score in the light of his study of Gevaert's treatises on ancient harmony. He even prepared notebooks as a special study of harmony, in which he explored the adaption of ancient practice to modern expression . . . They reveal his struggle to invent a new musical vocabulary. . . . *Nerone*, all in all, is a work of extraordinary originality, even perversity, setting in vivid contrast scenes of fraudulent magic, imperial corruption, and Christian *caritas*. The original libretto of *Nerone* stands as Boito's greatest artistic achievement."

In 1891, between work on *Otello* and *Falstaff*, Boito read the *Nerone* libretto to Verdi, who encouraged his friend to get on with its composition. Later, the publisher Ricordi tried to get Boito to suppress the fifth act, in the interest of bringing the work to completion, and performance. In a valiant last attempt to finish the piece, Boito consented to work with Arturo Toscanini. Impressed with its ideas but horrified by what he saw as Boito's utter incompetence at orchestration, the characteristically blunt Toscanini told the composer of his disappointment, yielding the response, "Nobody, now nobody can help me." After Boito's death in 1918, the score was heavily edited by Toscanini and the composer Tommasini and finally brought to performance, shorn of its fifth act, under Toscanini's baton at La Scala on May 1, 1924. It has been revived since, and recorded, but, like other visionary operas of the time (including, however ironically, Busoni's *Doktor Faustus*), never entered the active repertory.

Generations of operagoers have been more than content to overlook Boito's magnificent failures—and his attempts to dissuade Puccini from composing *La Bohème*, which he considered too "banal a subject"—out of gratitude for the two

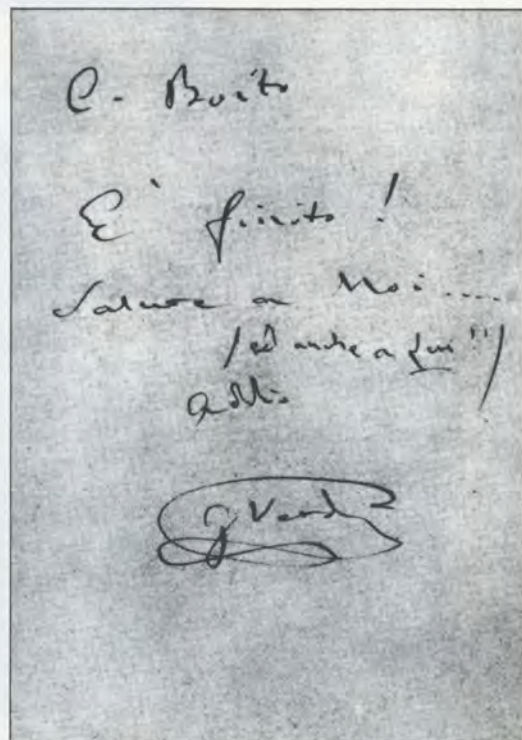
great operas he helped draw out of the aging Verdi. Clearly, neither opera would exist today, had it not been for Boito's skill as a poet and translator (working mainly from French translations of Shakespeare, even though he could read English), his punctilious compliance with Verdi's suggestions and demands, and the ever-deepening friendship that developed between the two men.

Boito's own long-established thoughts about the means of true reform in opera were ones with which Verdi was in sympathetic resonance. In a January 1864 article in the journal *Figaro*, Boito had written, on one of his favorite subjects, the future of opera, that opera could reach its destiny only by "the complete obliteration of *formula*; the creation of *form*; the realization of the vastest tonal and rhythmic development possible today; the supreme incarnation of drama."

Together the two realized that destiny, first with *Otello*. The composer's interest in Shakespeare's subject found an ideal ally in a librettist with a lifelong preoccupation with the subject of good and evil. When Faccio brought the two men together, and Verdi heard Boito read his sketch for *Otello* (which they then still called *Iago*) and was impressed by it, Verdi's initial resistance to the very idea of composing another opera began, steadily, to erode.

Boito's final libretto for *Otello* has been deemed by some an improvement on Shakespeare, by way of concision without significant sacrifice, either of the Bard's dramatic thrust, or, for the most part, of his language. While critics are sure to argue the matter in perpetuity, there is less doubt that *Falstaff* marks a clear improvement, if not on Shakespeare's keen comic imagination in creating his jolly (and complex) knight, then on the hastily written *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, the basis of *Falstaff's* plot. Boito masterfully drew on the character as depicted in the *Henry IV* plays, bringing the traits of that knight into the situations of *Merry Wives*. Further, Ashbrook claims: "[Boito's] fondness for word-play, his knack for hitting on an epigrammatic phrase and his mordant irony all found full scope in this libretto. He seems more at ease than in *Otello*, and the result has an exhilaration, a polish and a sense of proportion that are masterly."

The only significant complication in the *Falstaff* collaboration was Boito's departure to take the directorship of the



Note from Verdi to Boito after the completion of *Otello*: "It is finished! Good health to us . . . (and also to Him!!) Goodbye." MUSEO TEATRALE ALLA SCALA

Parma Conservatory for Faccio, who had gone mad with syphilis, so that his old friend could continue to draw his salary until he died, in 1891. After *Falstaff*, Verdi and Boito considered further collaboration. Boito suggested an *Antony and Cleopatra*, and the two conferred on a project that represented one of Verdi's lifelong dreams, an opera on Shakespeare's *King Lear*. Boito went so far as to prepare a sketch, and even wrote part of the opening scene. But Verdi, sensing that he was no longer up to the rigors of composition (and strongly encouraged in that thinking by his wife, Giuseppina), declined.

Boito's continued friendship—a central aspect of his genius, it increasingly seems—remained a comfort to Verdi for the remainder of his life, and Boito was with him in Milan when he died, on January 27, 1901. But there is a far more significant measure of their friendship—and of Verdi's estimation of Boito as a collaborator, and as an artist in his own right. When an adoring La Scala crowd demonstrated its love for the composer after the premiere of *Falstaff*, Verdi insisted on Boito's appearing with him to receive the ovation on stage. ■



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# Ponnelle on *Falstaff*

In 1985, during preparations for the revival of Reimann's *Lear* and the first U.S. staging of his production of Verdi's *Falstaff*, the late Jean-Pierre Ponnelle shared some of his views on the latter with our readers. He was scheduled to be in San Francisco for this season's revival of *Falstaff*, but his untimely death intervened. A reprint of most of that 1985 article/interview will serve to remind us of the genius that was Ponnelle.

By ALLAN ULRICH

Jean-Pierre Ponnelle's celebrated Glyndebourne Festival production of Verdi's last opera, *Falstaff*, planned for an 800-seat house, in which wood serves as a prominent feature of the decor, would not adapt to the marbled environment of this 3,200-seat opera house without radical rethinking. Caught between rehearsals, Ponnelle surveyed the photographs of the Glyndebourne staging and cautioned his interrogator that the present adaptation is much more than a matter of mere carpentry.

"Sure, there will be an enormous difference in size," he said. "But an enormous difference in size is not just a matter of mere size difference. It means that there must be a difference in the actors and their relationships. The dynamic of human personalities must be different."

Two scenic devices will remain constant. The outdoors will everywhere assert itself amid Ponnelle's recreations of Tudor architecture.

"I love the beauty of the Sussex landscape around Glyndebourne," he noted. "The real Windsor is much more flat than what I designed here, but I couldn't resist a little joke. You could see the landscape on the stage, then you could go outside the theater and see it all again. It's a device that really derives from the Shakespearean theater. In the same way, I have kept the Thames as an important feature of the scenery, just as it is an important feature in the life of Southern England.

"The landscape in *Falstaff* is a happy place, sometimes sunny, sometimes rainy, a healthy, natural landscape, full of leaves

*Allan Ulrich reviews music and dance for the San Francisco Examiner, contributes frequently to the Los Angeles Times, and is music and dance editor for the San Francisco Focus. He is a contributor to the New Grove Dictionary of Music in the United States.*



Jean-Pierre Ponnelle in front of the *Rigoletto* set in 1981.

and green vegetation. That may be why, in the last scene, Herne's Oak almost completely dominates the stage, with plants overflowing the border of the stage." Then, too, visitors to this *Falstaff* will find their attention directed to the nest of antlers protruding from the top of the proscenium, a nod to both Shakespeare and Verdi.

"Both in English and Italian, they are the horns that symbolize the man who is losing his honor. Masculine vanity (perhaps the French concept of *l'orgueil* expresses the meaning better) is one of the recurring motifs of the opera. Ford fantasizes about 'Le corna, le corna' in his second act monologue, and Falstaff constantly talks about them. And Verdi

supplies prominent French horn accompaniment to reinforce the message."

Ponnelle can't resist an afterthought about a society which devised and popularized such a powerfully unambiguous visual image for cuckoldry.

"It's a pity. These symbols were part of English life until Mr. Cromwell and his Puritans came along and destroyed them. With that, the old Latin tradition was broken in England." Perhaps more essential to a *Falstaff* production than the illumination of symbolism is deciding what kind of opera it really is. Ponnelle finds his initial solution in classical literary form:

"I'm sure it is not tragedy. In my language, tragedy is in verse, comedy is in



Jean-Pierre Ponnelle and Kurt Herbert Adler in 1979, observing the newly built sets for the Ponnelle production of Gianni Schicchi. Ponnelle and Maestro Adler enjoyed a highly rewarding professional relationship which began in 1958 with Carmina Burana; also a warm friendship which lasted until 1988, the year both men passed away.



(L. to r.) Vera Lúcia Calábria (who directs this year's revival of Falstaff), David Knutson and Jean-Pierre Ponnelle during a 1981 rehearsal for the American premiere of Reimann's Lear.



Jean-Pierre Ponnelle during a Lear rehearsal.

prose. You see some sadness in a man, who, in his youth, was probably handsome and elegant. Now, he is fat and foolish. It happens to millions of people. That's the usual human destiny. To play it and stage it as deep, dark tragedy would be pure, nasty sentimentality, just ridiculous."

If the material dictates that the director maintain that delicate balance, Ponnelle was alert to the episodes in the opera that call for special care.

"In the second scene of Act 2, when Falstaff appears in Ford's house and sings 'Quand'ero paggio,' it's usually played as very funny. But it's not funny at all. It's one of those moments filled with genuine nostalgia, almost a lament. It's one of those moments when Falstaff stops being the fat guy of the opening scene, and it's one of those moments when, as a director, I can add to him almost geological levels of stratification."

Falstaff's charming *arietta* is surely not born of fantasy:

"We must believe that he was the page to the Duke of Norfolk, and, to remind us, I will supply him with a little page of his own. Doesn't he call out in the first scene, 'Ehi! Paggio!?' Irr the boy, who should be around 12 years old, Falstaff should see himself as he was maybe 50 years earlier.

"Look also at Act 2, Scene 1, the 'Reverenza' episode with Dame Quickly. We know she is setting a trap for Falstaff. But the lines assigned her are among the most beautiful, longest melodic lines that Verdi ever wrote. When Quickly is singing, Falstaff comes back with the same language, an antiquated kind of language ('La bella Alice,' 'La bella Meg'). All that is born of super-sophisticated, old-fashioned politesse, and that is the world of Falstaff."

Ponnelle's research into Sir John Falstaff and the characters who touch his life took him first to Shakespeare, to *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, to *Henry IV, Part i*, to *Henry IV, Part ii*, in all of which the knight serves as a bright thread in the tapestry of the drama; thence he turned to *Henry V*, where Sir John remains a vividly felt, rather than an actual presence.

"There," Ponnelle recalls, "I discovered interesting details, of which I was not aware before. For example, Quickly was first a servant of Dr. Caius, who is, first of all, a French scientist. That's very funny. I use it in the opera, and why not?"

"Also, I decided to introduce Mr. Page, who is in Shakespeare, but not in

Verdi's score. I take a guy, probably a very slow-witted guy, who starts to come in late in every exchange, and, when he does, everybody else motions to him to shut up, shut up. It's a mime part. He never sings one note, but he exists nevertheless in this production, an in-joke for those who know their Shakespeare."

The key to Falstaff himself, Ponnelle believes, lies in his noble lineage.

"We must remember that he is the Earl of Falstaff, a true aristocrat. He is a man of war. His duty in this society is to hang around Windsor and round up troops from the other nobles for battle in France. In times of war, he travels abroad with the king's army and collects whatever spoils he can. But, at the time of Verdi's opera, England is at peace. The king has no need of Falstaff, so he's completely out of money. His men, Bardolfo and Pistola, have nothing to do either, yet he has an obligation to pay them. He must never appear to inhabit their social level.

"Falstaff loves his wine and loves his women, but there's no vulgarity about him. He is a knight. When he pays Alice Ford a visit, he goes as a member of the court to visit a family that belongs to the *petite bourgeoisie*. He has behaved in this manner for 50 years, and he cannot change his way for commoners. The humor comes from the fact that his behavior doesn't apply in these circumstances. He always keeps his dignity, and we find that funny. He is like one of those old British colonels playing golf."

Nor, Ponnelle warns us, should we doubt the purpose of Falstaff's expedition.

"If Alice invited him into her private chamber, I don't think he would resist the invitation. He may be penniless, but there's probably a legend around this small town that no girl is safe. Everything about him may be old and not so clean, but all the instruments are in very good working order."

The merry wives do not win Ponnelle's approbation quite so easily. He applies contemporary psychology to them, and he deems them less than innocent pranksters:

"Except for Nannetta, and her nice, conventional love, none of them is really pure. They are all cruel, they all have their complexes, and the best way for women to have an alibi for their complexes is to be aggressive. If you think about it, Alice Ford goes quite far with Falstaff. In some way, she is fascinated by the fact that he is

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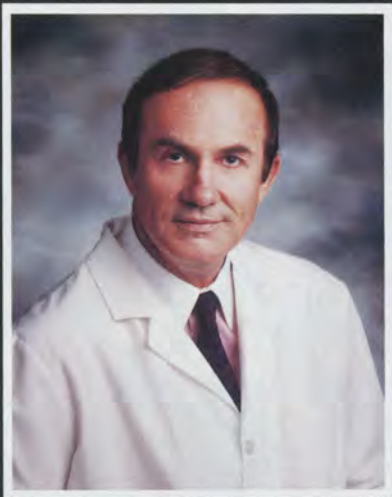
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from the nobility, and here he is, kneeling in front of her, insisting, 'I love you.' Her obsession goes beyond Falstaff. The men have all the privileges in this society and the women plot their revenge on them. The revenge of the female mafia!

"Falstaff is a very subtle comedy, and may be difficult for listeners to follow. For normal audiences, it is hard to identify with Alice and Ford. They are, more or less, para-heroes. Ford is sick; he is, in my view, a kind of grotesque Iago. His 'E sogno' is a very strong jealousy aria. Do we admire Quickly, or Caius? Only Falstaff and the young lovers are sympathetic. In a profound way, this opera is Verdi's testament. The only sympathetic characters are the old man, which he was by the time of composition, and the young innocents."

To keep those shifting sympathies in perspective required all the decades of Ponnelle's experience on the international opera stage. He remained philosophical:

"The challenge, the risk is always in our job. That's normal. The curtain rises and 3,000 pairs of eyes are staring at you. As a director, you must make your choices from the music. Thank God, it is not possible to change the score; from *piano* to *forte*, from G Minor to F Minor. You have to respect this kind of codification.

"But within this conventional corset, as a director, you are completely free. You see *piano*, and it can be somebody crying, or somebody so choked up with laughter, he can't manage to make any more sound. It can be *piano* because he is so close to another character that he is whispering, or it can be *piano* because he is so far backstage that he would not sound any louder from that distance."

We approach the end of our conversation and the finale, too, of our Falstaff discussion. Verdi and librettist Arrigo Boito may have given the world a gloriously intricate summation, but they did not provide a resolution. That, perhaps, is the nature of comedy.

"At last, you see this provincial little community complete during the 11-part fugue. It tells us that life is a joke, and you'd best accept that fact. A stoical philosophy, to be sure. Neither the women nor Ford will change. Falstaff will not change either. But he possesses self-irony. It's one of the greatest qualities in the world, and he is the only one of the characters who has it. And that quality alone makes him the hero of the opera. ■

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

## SAN FRANCISCO OPERA GUILD INSIGHTS

Held in Herbst Theatre, Veterans Building, 401 Van Ness Ave., in San Francisco. All informal discussions begin at 6 p.m.; doors open at 5:30 p.m. There is no charge for Guild members. Individual tickets may be purchased at the door for \$5. For further information, please call (415) 565-6432. Programs are subject to change.

*Life, Love and Lulu* 9/11  
John Mauceri, conductor of *Lulu*, talks about his interpretation of the opera.

*Evelyn Lear and Thomas Stewart* 9/25  
Reflections on their lives and careers.

*Orlando Furioso* 10/9  
With Sir John Pritchard, Music Director, and Clifford Cranna, Musical Administrator, San Francisco Opera.

*Emerging American Singers* 10/23  
Sarah Billingham, Artistic Administrator, San Francisco Opera, interviews singers from the cast of *Aida*: Sharon Sweet, Dolora Zajick, and Timothy Noble.

## SAN FRANCISCO OPERA GUILD PREVIEW MARIN

Previews held at United Methodist Church, 410 Sycamore Ave., Mill Valley; refreshments served at 7:30 p.m., previews at 8 p.m. Series registration is \$25 for 6 previews (\$20 for students and seniors). Single tickets are \$5 (\$4 for students and seniors). For further information, please call (415) 435-1141.

*Lulu* 9/7  
Christopher Hailey

*Mefistofele* 9/14  
James Keolker

*Idomeneo* 10/5  
Sandor Salgo

*Lohengrin* 11/9  
Michael Mitchell

*Orlando Furioso* 11/16  
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*Die Frau ohne Schatten* 11/20  
George Martin

## SOUTH PENINSULA

Previews held at the Palo Alto Senior Center, 450 Bryant, at 8 p.m. Series registration is \$22 (students \$11); single tickets are \$5 (students \$3). For further information, please call (415) 941-3890 or (415) 326-1971.

*Lulu* 9/5  
Christopher Hailey

*Mefistofele* 9/12  
James Keolker

*Idomeneo* 10/3  
Sandor Salgo

*Lohengrin* 11/7  
Michael Mitchell

*Orlando Furioso* 11/14  
Eleanor Selfridge-Field

*Die Frau ohne Schatten* 11/21  
George Martin

## SAN JOSE OPERA GUILD

Previews held at the Los Gatos History Club, 123 Los Gatos Blvd., at 10 a.m. Series is open to the public at a cost of \$5 per lecture (free of charge to San Jose Opera Guild members). For further information, please call (408) 354-7525.

*Lulu* 9/5  
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## SONOMA COUNTY CHAPTER

Previews held at various times and locations (see below). Series registration is \$22 for 6 previews (chapter member); \$25 non-member. Single tickets (member) \$5, non-member \$6, students \$3. For further information and reservations for luncheons and dinner, please call (707) 938-2432 or (707) 996-2590.

*Lulu* 9/7, 10:30 a.m.  
Christopher Hailey Marshall House  
835-2nd St., Santa Rosa

*Mefistofele* 9/11, 2:30 p.m.  
James Keolker 585 Denmark St.,  
Sonoma

*Idomeneo* 10/2, 7:30 p.m.  
Sandor Salgo 2652 Nob Hill Dr.,  
Santa Rosa

*Lohengrin* 11/6, 7:30 p.m.  
Michael Mitchell 1000 Buckeye Rd.,  
Kenwood

*Orlando Furioso* 11/13, 6:00 p.m. (dinner)  
Eleanor Selfridge-Field 7:30 p.m.  
(lecture)  
Oakmont Chalet, 7025 Oakmont Dr.,  
Santa Rosa

*Die Frau ohne Schatten* 11/20, 10:30 a.m.  
George Martin 1229 Los Robles Dr.,  
Sonoma

## JUNIOR LEAGUE OPERA PREVIEW

Previews held in the Green Room (GR) or the Herbst Theatre (HT), Veterans Building, 401 Van Ness Ave., San Francisco. Lectures begin at noon and there is no admission charge. For further information, please call (415) 852-2220.

*Lulu* 9/6 (GR)  
Christopher Hailey

*Mefistofele* 9/13 (GR)  
James Keolker

*Idomeneo* 10/4 (GR)  
Sandor Salgo

*Lohengrin* 11/8 (GR)  
Michael Mitchell

*Orlando Furioso* 11/15 (HT)  
Eleanor Selfridge-Field

*Die Frau ohne Schatten* 11/22 (HT)  
George Martin

## EAST BAY CHAPTER

The Chapter will present a preview of *Lohengrin*, with famed tenor Jess Thomas, on Wednesday, Nov. 8 at 7:30 p.m. at the Faculty Club, University of California, Berkeley. Dinner is at 6 p.m. For further information and dinner reservations, please call (415) 465-7646.

## OPERA EDUCATION

### INTERNATIONAL PREVIEW SERIES

Previews of the operas of the 1989 season will be given by Michael Barclay, director of Opera Education International. Lectures will be presented in the auditorium of the Cetus Corp., 1400—53rd St., in Emeryville, at 7:30 p.m. Admission to the series of 10 previews is \$65; individual admission at the door is \$8. For further information, please call (415) 526-5244.

*Falstaff* 9/4

*Lulu* 9/7

*Mefistofele* 9/11

*Otello* 9/18

*Idomeneo* 9/25

*Aida* 10/16

*Madama Butterfly* 10/23

*Lohengrin* 11/6

*Orlando Furioso* 11/13

*Die Frau ohne Schatten* 11/20

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A free lecture entitled "Die Frau ohne Schatten: Richard Strauss' New Age Opera" will be given by Michael Barclay on November 9 at 7:30 p.m. at the Kensington Library, 61 Arlington Ave., Kensington. For further information, please call (415) 524-3043.

**MERRITT COLLEGE OPERA LECTURE SERIES**

Merritt College is offering an opera preview class, Introduction to Opera (Music 13A), with emphasis on the operas of the 1989 season, on Tuesday evenings at 6:30 p.m., beginning August 29 and ending December 19. The enrollment fee is \$15. Classes will be held at the College, 12500 Campus Drive, Building R, Room 125, in Oakland. For further information, please call (415) 436-2430.

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**Lulu AT THE BERKELEY REP**

Running concurrently with San Francisco Opera's new production of *Lulu* is the Berkeley Repertory Theatre's adaptation of Frank Wedekind's drama. Directed by Berkeley Rep's Artistic Director, Sharon Ott, this rarely-staged play is scheduled to run at the Theatre, 2025 Addison St., through October 14. Performances are Tuesday through Saturday at 8 p.m. and Sundays at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m., with additional matinees on three Thursdays and three Saturdays. Tickets are priced between \$18 and \$24. Student, senior and group discounts are available, and each Tuesday and Friday at noon a limited number of half-price tickets will be sold at the Box Office for cash-only purchase. For further information and reservations, please call (415) 845-4700.



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- Invitation to a third working rehearsal
  - Invitation to a production preview and working rehearsal with box supper



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

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- All of the above, plus
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  - Invitation to the Medallion Society Members' Working Rehearsal and Reception
  - Personalized backstage tours upon request
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## **SPONSOR \$3,000-\$4,999**

- All of the above, plus
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  - Opportunity to attend orchestra rehearsal in stage set (upon request)

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- All of the above, plus
- Private reception with artists
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## **SILVER CIRCLE \$10,000-\$24,999**

- All of the above, plus
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- All of the above, plus
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*All rehearsals are subject to space availability, change of scheduling, and management decisions.*

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The San Francisco Opera Corporate Council includes Bay Area businesses and corporations that play an active role in the Opera. The San Francisco Opera seeks to add new members to the Council so that it reflects the varied Bay Area business community. Council activities include participation in members-only dress rehearsals, numerous Council evenings at the Opera, and special behind-the-scenes glimpses into the world of opera. These benefits can be enjoyed by your business clients and employees.

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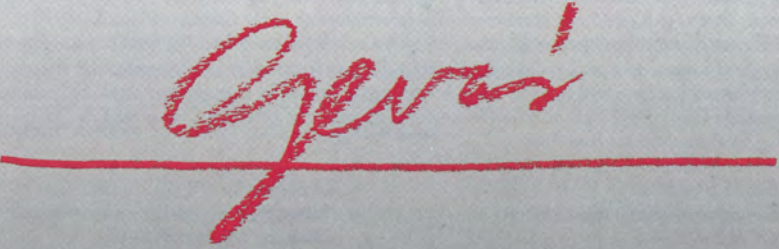
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In order to increase the enjoyment of opera for hearing-impaired members of the audience, the War Memorial Opera House has recently installed a new Sennheiser Listening System. Wireless headphones and induction devices (adaptable to hearing aids) are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



## Opera House Tours

Sponsored by the San Francisco Opera Guild, tours of the War Memorial Opera House will be conducted every half hour from 10 a.m. to 12 noon weekdays/Saturdays, and from 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Sundays on the following dates:

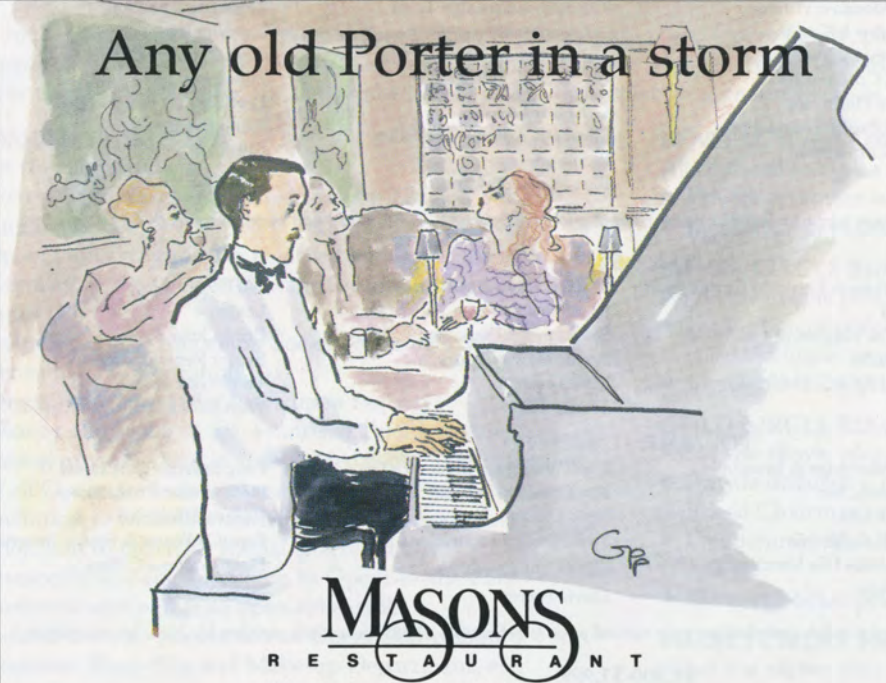
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 Saturday, November 25  
 Thursday, November 30  
 Thursday, December 7

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



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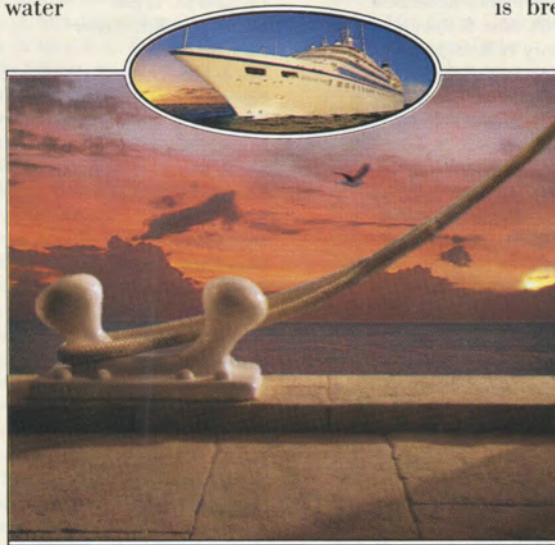
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This bus is added to Muni's north-bound 47 line following all evening performances of the Opera. The service is also provided for all Sunday matinees.

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 open one and one-half 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.

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**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.

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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.

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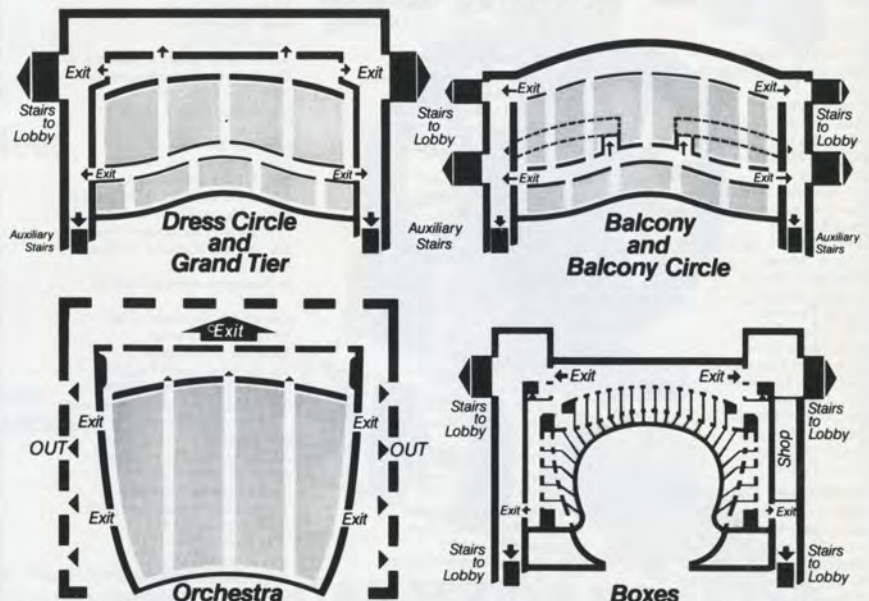
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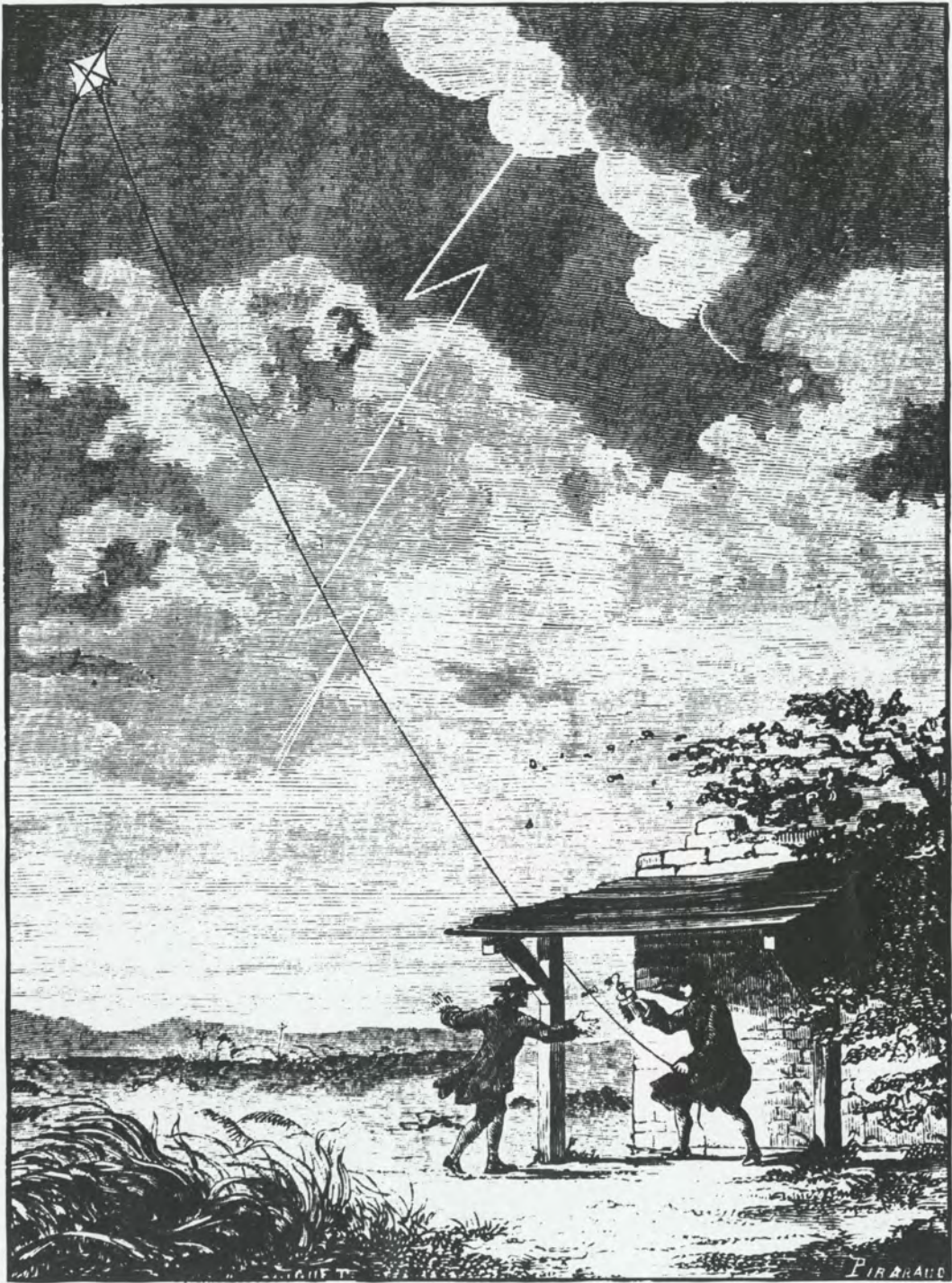
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