

Idomeneo

1989

Saturday, October 7, 1989 8:00 PM

Wednesday, October 11, 1989 8:00 PM

Saturday, October 14, 1989 8:00 PM

Wednesday, October 25, 1989 7:30 PM

Friday, October 27, 1989 8:00 PM

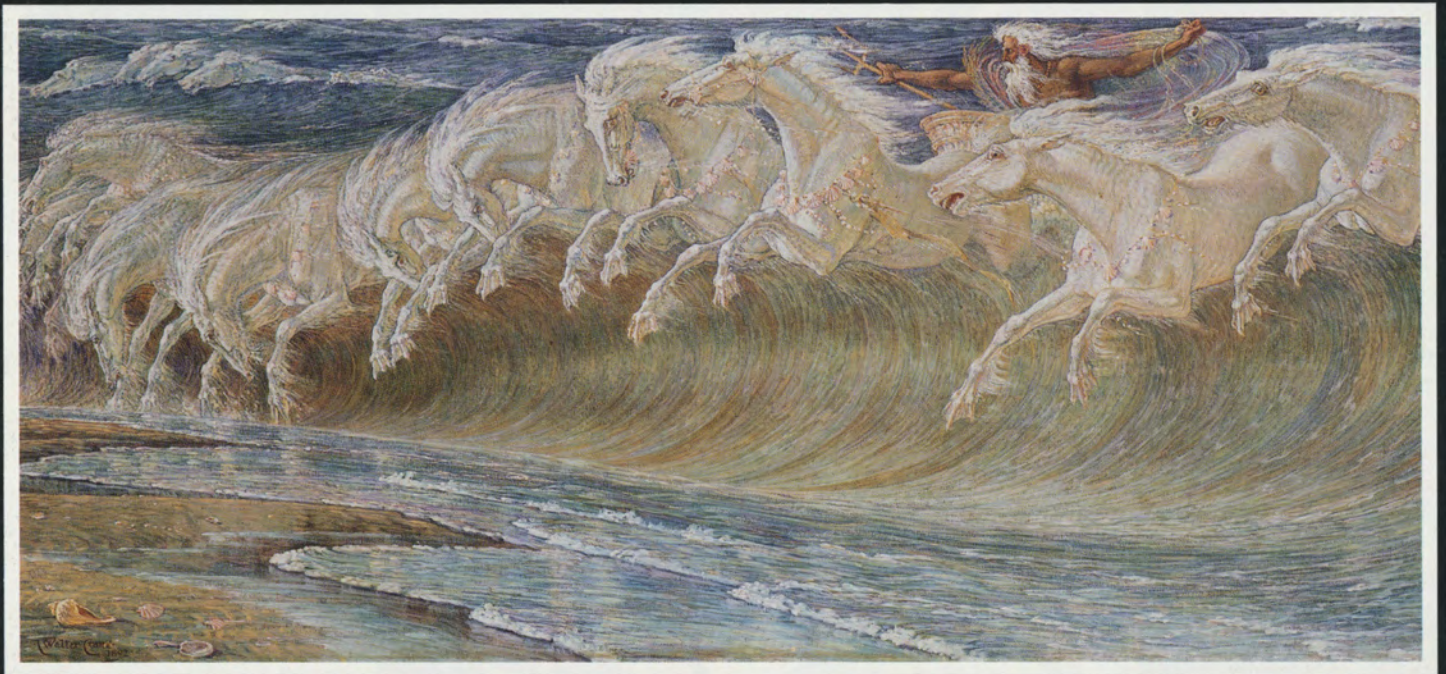
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# San Francisco Opera

1989 SEASON



# Idomeneo

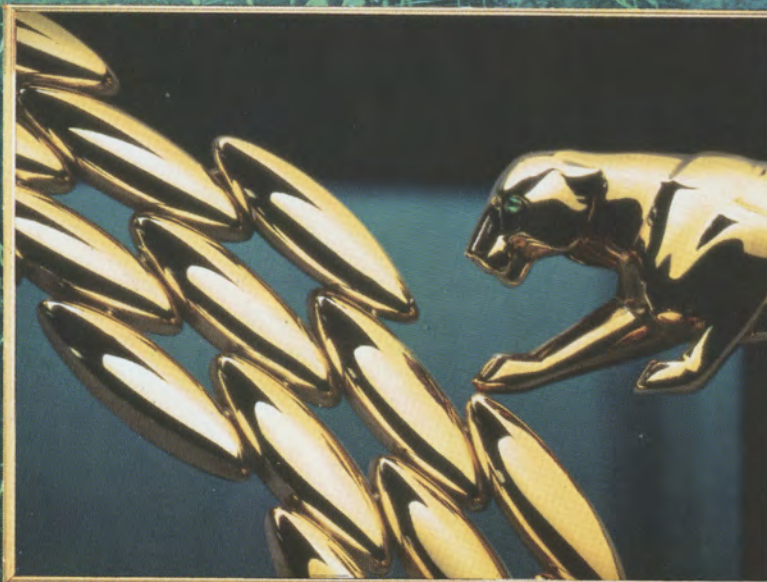
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# San Francisco Opera

Lotfi Mansouri, *General Director*

Sir John Pritchard, *Music Director*

## Idomeneo

1989 SEASON

### FEATURES

- 26 **Appreciating *Idomeneo*** by Max Loppert  
An affectionate look at Mozart's very special masterpiece.
- 50 **Lotfi Mansouri: Looking into the Future** by Timothy Pfaff  
San Francisco Opera General Director Lotfi Mansouri talks about his plans for the Company.
- 56 **Serious Opera** by David Littlejohn  
The author provides a fascinating look at the genre known as *opera seria*.

### DEPARTMENTS

- 10 Administration  
15 1989 Season Repertoire  
35 Artist Profiles  
39 Cast and Credits  
40 Synopsis  
62 Opera Previews  
63 Box Holders  
64 Donor Categories  
65 Corporate Council  
67 Medallion Society  
72 Supporting San Francisco Opera  
82 Services



### COVER

Walter Crane, 1845-1915, *The Horses of Neptune*, 1892; Oil on canvas, 33 $\frac{7}{8}$  x 84 $\frac{3}{8}$

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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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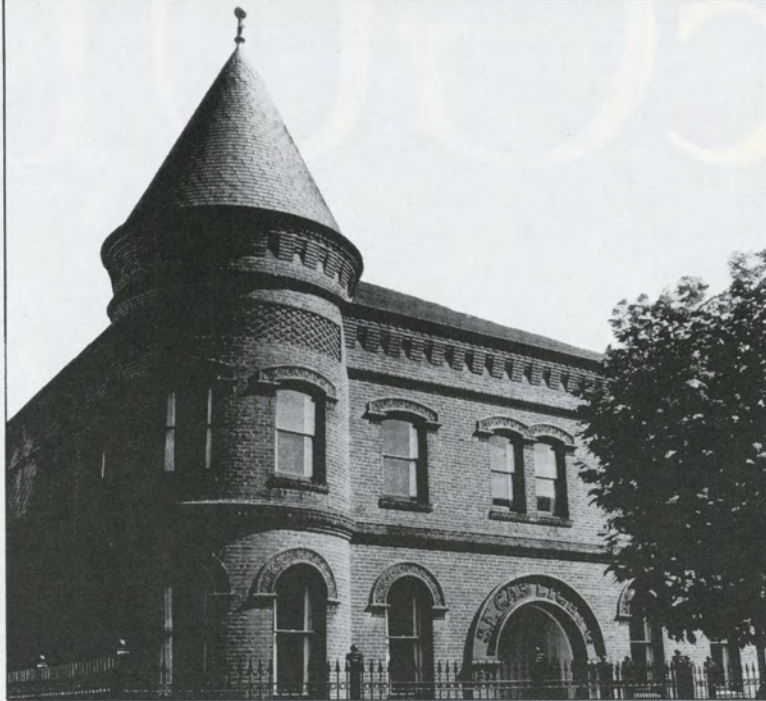
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## General Director's Message

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.



# San Francisco Opera

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Sir John Pritchard, *Music Director*

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Continued on page 13





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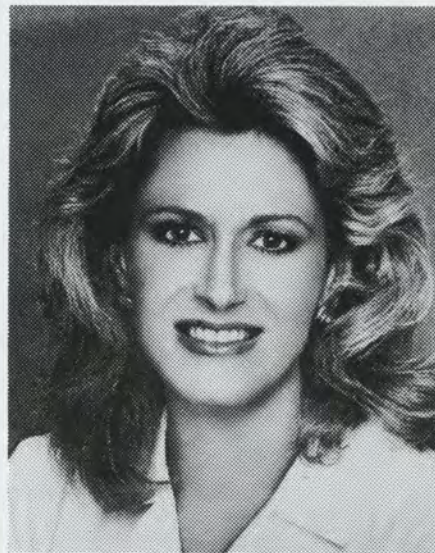
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# San Francisco Opera

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  
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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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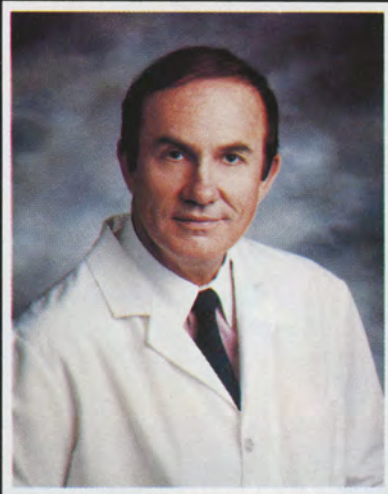
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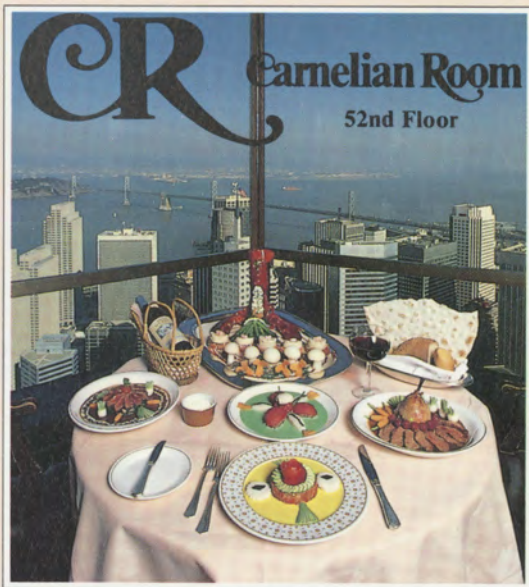
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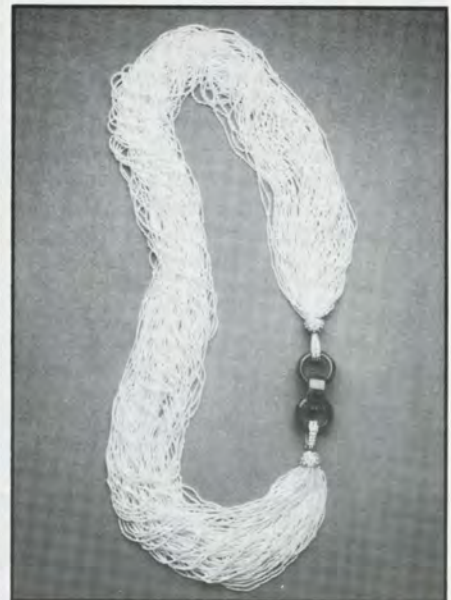
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# Appreciating *Idomeneo*

By MAX LOPPERT

On the Mozart work-list, and in the hearts of all Mozartians, *Idomeneo* occupies a special place. One of the greatest serious operas of the 18th century, musically perhaps the richest of all, it seems to sum up everything the 24-year-old Mozart was capable of, as musician and theatrical craftsman, when in 1780 he settled down to tackle its commission. Throughout his life it remained a work he specially prized (long into her widowhood and second marriage, Constanze Mozart was able to recall for her English visitors, the Novellos, that "the most happy time of his life was whilst at Munich during which he wrote *Idomeneo*, which may account for the affection he entertained towards the work"); and after his death it was a work neglected for 200 years. In the 19th century, it was condemned (like the bulk of 18th-century serious opera) as outmoded, while in the first half of the 20th, it was often heavily rearranged. The rediscovery of *Idomeneo* is very much a post-World War II phenomenon. Perhaps it is for these reasons that even now, when *opera seria* and its related operatic types are no longer regarded as extinct species, the richness and fullness of *Idomeneo* can still arouse a special missionary enthusiasm among its devotees.

"Special" is an adjective bound to be repeated in any discussion of its qualities and, indeed, of the circumstances, past and present, that brought it into being.

Max Loppert is chief music and opera critic of the London Financial Times, and Associate Editor of Opera. He was a sub-editor on (and contributor to) The New Grove Dictionary of Music, and is currently engaged on a study of Gluck.

Michael Stennett's design for Elettra's headdress and costume, featured in the new San Francisco Opera production of *Idomeneo*.







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M O N A C O .

Apresso Francesco Giuseppe Thuille.

*Title page of the first Idomeneo libretto.*

The immediate facts of the matter are that Mozart was commissioned by the newly-appointed Elector of Bavaria, Carl Theodor, to supply an opera for the Munich Carnival season of 1781. The subject was prescribed: a modern version of the *Idoménée* libretto by Antoine Danchet (this French *tragédie-lyrique* was originally set to music by Campra, and first performed in Paris in 1712). Though the contract (which has not survived) evidently went into precise detail about the form updating was expected to take, Mozart was permitted to find his own librettist: his choice fell on the chaplain Gianbattista Varesco, like the Mozart *père et fils* a servant of the Salzburg Prince Archbishop Colloredo.

But as the result makes clear, this was more than a commission fulfilled: in every sense this was the opera Mozart had bursting within him. The mid-1770s had brought a period of frustration—after the travels to Italy and Vienna, with their excitements and opportunities for showing off the teenage Mozart's extraordinary gifts, it was home to Salzburg, and to the employ of the disliked Prince Archbishop. Mozart and his father Leopold fretted continuously over his limited

chances for advancement; eventually, in 1777, he gained his release, and with his mother set off on the latest of his European tours. (His father stayed in Salzburg, from where, in a series of extraordinary letters, he attempted to mastermind the whole venture, pouring out advice, admonitions, reproaches; his son's replies are every bit as fascinating.) Via Munich, where he petitioned, unsuccessfully, for a commission from the then Bavarian Elector, Max Joseph, he headed for Mannheim.

The four-and-a-half months he spent there were of crucial importance to Mozart's development. For a young man chafing at the restrictions and provincial outlook of Salzburg, the artistic life of the Palatine capital proved a revelation. Under

the same Carl Theodor who was shortly, on Max Joseph's death, to inherit the Bavarian Electorate, all the arts, but especially music, had flourished in Mannheim. (Of Carl Theodor it was said: "It would be hard to find another great man who has woven music as tightly into his life as this one. Music wakes him, ... music lulls him in balmy slumber.") His court orchestra was of outstanding quality, and famous throughout Europe. Mozart made important friends among its musicians, notably the violinist and composer Cannabich, the oboist Ramm, the flautist Wendling, the first horn Stich, and the famous tenor, Anton Raaff, then in his 60s. These men, and others, attempted to obtain work for Mozart—and he, when he met the Elector, was not slow to drop



*Silhouette of Mozart,  
made in Prague in 1787.*



hints of his own. In this respect, however, the Mannheim visit appeared to lead only to disappointment. When Carl Theodor moved to Munich in 1778, however, he moved his orchestra and theater troupe with him, and Mozart's chance finally came in the form of the 1780 commission. This was to cause some happy reunions. Raaff was to be the first Idomeneo, Wendling's wife Dorothea the first Ilia, and Wendling's sister-in-law Elisabeth (married to his violinist brother) the first Elettra. Mozart would be writing for musicians whose powers he knew and admired, and in several cases had already tested during his Mannheim sojourn.

Above all, the commission was to bring Mozart back to the opera house. Since the first performance of *Il Re Pastore* (Salzburg, January 1775), a charming and graceful dramatic serenata, he had been denied the opportunity to write full-length operas. Such an opportunity he had craved: as he told his father (in a letter from Mannheim dated February 4, 1778), "I envy anyone who is composing (an opera). I could weep for vexation when I

hear or see an aria. But Italian, not German; *seriosa*, not *buffa*." Having produced *Mitridate* (1770) and *Lucio Silla* (1772) for Milan, he could justifiably point to past successes in the "seriosa" field, and, particularly in the case of the latter work, to striking stylistic advances already made. For opera, Salzburg was a place of small possibility; in Mannheim, by contrast, it flourished. Standards of execution at Carl Theodor's court theater were high: in addition to the celebrated orchestra, the Elector had in his employ distinguished singers, dancers, ballet masters, and stage designers. In the field of serious Italian opera, most of the significant composers of the day—Traetta, Jommelli, Piccinni, Salieri, J.C. Bach among them—gained at least a showing. Mozart breathed in the "progressive" atmosphere, and benefitted from it. He also, for the first time in his life, fell in love—with the soprano Aloysia Weber, older sister of his future wife, Constanze.

But there was no work in view. Leopold Mozart ordered his son on to Paris where, from late March to late September, the young man spent some of the unhappiest days of his life. It started well (his ballet *Les Petits Riens* shared a Paris Opéra program with Piccinni's *Le Finte Gemelle*). Then, toward the end of June, his mother became ill, and on July 3rd she died; for the first time ever, he was completely alone. After this, his ambitions for Paris appear to have withered—as Daniel Heartz, editor of the Neue Mozart-Ausgabe *Idomeneo* score and foremost *Idomeneo* scholar, has remarked (in a valuable 1978 *Musical Times* essay entitled "Mozart, his Father and *Idomeneo*"): "After burying his mother in foreign soil Mozart seems to have gone into a kind of creative shock." Letters from his father bewail his inability to control his finances prudently, his immaturity, his inertia; his replies are loving, as always, but evasive and irregular. Eventually, by means part-arm-twisting and part-carrot-dangling, Leopold persuades him back to Salzburg, which he reaches by way of Mannheim. There, he learns that Aloysia Weber doesn't love him any more.

The whole episode appears to have been cruelly barren; the future appears to hold little more than a return to Collredo's service, and to the same old discontent. In fact, Mozart profited immeasurably from his Paris sojourn. His letters do not mention the performances of French *tragédies-lyriques* he attended while there.

But in addition to the Piccinni Italian comedy with which his *Petits Riens* shared a double bill, it is highly likely that he saw Piccinni's *Roland* (which had had its premiere earlier that year); and it is certain that he attended performances or at least made a close study of three of Gluck's great Paris opera's—*Iphigénie en Aulide*, the French version of *Alceste*, and the most recent of the series, *Armide*. In these works Gluck succeeded in effecting a sublime accommodation between, on one hand, the "Reformist" pressures which he had earlier (in his three Vienna operas, *Orfeo ed Euridice*, the original version of *Alceste*, and *Paride ed Elena*) brought to bear on the Italian *opera seria*, and on the other, the elevated *tragédie-lyrique* tradition of dance and song which he had inherited from Rameau. Gluck sustains monumental forms but is always ready to undercut or re-shape them, in ways stark and sometimes strikingly bold, for increased dramatic voltage. It is possible to over-emphasize the revelatory impact of Gluck on Mozart; other composers, including Traetta and Jommelli (whose operatic scores he may have encountered in Mannheim), had already entered into similar processes of operatic "Reform" before Gluck's *Orfeo* was first performed, and the influence on Mozart of Piccinni's French *tragédies-lyriques* needs also to be taken into account. But in the first of his *Iphigénie* operas and then in *Alceste*, Gluck deals with themes—a father's power to dominate his children and, in so doing, bring harm upon them, the need to face up to one's own impending death or that of a beloved—that must have been of particular significance to Mozart during his Paris days. Gluck deals with them directly, in music of piercing strokes and eloquently simple outline; his characters step out beyond the proscenium arch to touch the hearts of the audience.

By the time he returned to Salzburg, Mozart was thoroughly equipped to demonstrate what life and art had recently taught him. Before he was permitted to do so, however, a period of undertaking court duties and suffering general frustration had to pass. Only a single ray relieves the non-operatic gloom of the half-decade between *Il Re Pastore* and *Idomeneo*—a *Singspiel* (the popular German-language operatic entertainment alternating passages of speech and song) optimistically planned for a theatrical troupe visiting Salzburg during 1779. This untitled work, which posterity called



Anton Raaff, who created the role of Idomeneo in 1781, in a portrait by Moritz Kellerhoven.



*Zaide*, was left unfinished, probably after prospects of its being staged had begun to diminish. It contains several gems full of pointers for the future, the most notable of which is a quartet of remarkable beauty in which four distinct characters are differentiated with a degree of inventiveness that suggests just how ripe all of Mozart's musico-dramatic gifts had become by the end of the 1770s.

When the proper occasion arrived for their full display and combination, it would have needed a much flimsier receptacle than Danchet's *Idomenée* libretto for Mozart not to pour them out in lavish profusion. It is generally assumed that the subject of the Carnival Opera commission was selected for Mozart by the Elector's court; in the already-mentioned *Musical Times* essay Hertz suggests, intriguingly, the opposite—that Mozart's own earlier reconnoitering of the French grand-operatic tradition may in fact have prompted the choice (his letters from Paris indicate a constant searching through librettos old and new for potential operatic material). Certainly, *Idomenée* offers a grand "seriosa" frame, within which it contains every dramatic situation to which Mozart might be expected to respond most keenly at the time. That is to say: a child's grief at the death of a parent (in the opera, wrongly presumed); an agonizing father-son conflict in which the father is forced by fate to demand the son's sacrifice (in the opera, his death); the passionate burgeoning of first love; the ferocious self-destructive emotions experienced by someone who loves but is not loved in return; and—because both 18th-century convention and (no doubt) Electoral taste required Danchet's tragic ending to be turned into a happy one—a son's triumph over the forces besieging his father, leading to both his forgiveness of his parent and his eventual assumption of his father's place.

No matter how it might have been brought into Mozart's hands, *Idomenée* as an operatic subject touched him to the core. In Hertz's words, "once he became involved in re-creating the drama through his art, it called forth some of the most personal and passionate music he ever wrote." The choice of Varesco as librettist, originally made to speed along the initial composition period in Salzburg, led to many problems later. Once settled in Munich, Mozart began to request various changes to the completed libretto, and these (directed via letters home to Leo-

pold) were not at all welcomed by the testy old chaplain. At least Varesco was, if not a very distinguished poet, a savant of the genre, who understood where to follow and where to modify Danchet. And, in the end, the success of his transformation of *Idomenée* can be measured by the response it called forth in Mozart.

A crudely oversimplified summary of *Idomeneo* might be "Mannheim meets Paris." The Mannheim orchestra and the expert Mannheim stage staff—the designer Lorenzo Quaglio, the ballet master Le Grand—had been reassembled in Munich. In having such operatic collaborators at last, Mozart's pleasure was great; in composing for the orchestra, evidently limitless. Though examples of the special radiance of his scoring can be found on every page, one might be forgiven for singling out Ilia's aria "Se il padre perdei" above all else. This long lyrical outpouring for the soprano voice (Mozart reported that Dorothea Wendling was "arcicontentissima" with her music) is set amid a no less loving celebration of the orchestra's flute, oboe, bassoon, and horn principals, and its lustrous, fine-grained strings. Ilia confessing new-found contentment in Crete after past "angoscie" and "affanni" might well be Mozart cherishing the company of the Mannheim orchestra.

Elisabeth Wendling, the Elettra, was equally delighted with her music; the men—the veteran Raaff, whose friendship Mozart had valued but whose singing and musicianship he had derided even back in Mannheim, and the young soprano castrato Vincenzo del Prato (*Idamante*)—gave Mozart more trouble. Raaff's failings were those of age and conservative outlook. Del Prato's were comprehensive: according to Mozart, he was like a choir boy at an audition, ever ready to go wrong vocally and dramatically. The second tenor Domenico de' Panzacchi was a Munich favorite, and so Arbace's music had to be boosted in length and weight in spite of his *comprimario* character. But, regardless of complaints, and a continual need to hold the awkward balance between dramatic truth and singers' whims, one never senses that Mozart resented his cast or the difficulties they caused him. In Munich his practical, commonsensical grasping of every new nettle comes over as that of an adult artist. And when, as the first night approached, Mozart realized that the opera, particularly the third act, was too long, he pruned



Elisabeth Wendling, Mozart's first Elettra, in a contemporary portrait.

it ruthlessly. Modern *Idomeneo*-lovers find at least two of those final cuts, the major part of the magnificent C minor chorus "O voto tremendo" and all of Elettra's exit aria, "D'Oreste, d'Aiace," one of the most graphic depictions of frenzied despair in all opera, unacceptable—yet there was always hard practical sense in Mozart's decisions. (It is interesting that both of Arbace's "old-fashioned" arias and the ballet finale, in which Mozart took great pride, escaped the knife—decisions usually reversed by modern *Idomeneo* conductors and producers.)

With all this concern for beauty of sound and "performer-friendliness" of content goes a loftiness of vision that





Dorothea Wendling, who created the role of Ilia in *Idomeneo* in 1781, is the subject of a contemporary miniature.

shows just how completely Mozart had learned the lessons of Paris. *Idomeneo* is one of the most cogently structured of 18th-century operatic scores. Repetitions of key signatures accrue long-range significance (in common with Gluck's *Alceste*, but far more rigorously, *Idomeneo* investigates the linked grandeur and gravity of D major and D minor); motto motives and rhythmic patterns are projected from the overture deep into the fabric of the opera. In huge, unbreakable sequences—in Elettra's first recitative and aria, the chorus of onstage and offstage shipwrecked voices, and finally *Idomeneo*'s entrance recitative and aria add up to an awesome example—the nuts and bolts of form and drama are buried, the joints dissolved. Likewise, because of this dramatic continuum and the specific lyrical style allotted each main participant in the drama, the "psychology" of the characterization gains a Romantic poignance. While Elettra, placed musically and in almost every situation as the turbulent outsider, and the titular king, at once weary, vacillating, and heroic, may stand out as the opera's most startlingly vivid creations, its young lovers are painted to glisten with exquisite fresh-

ness—especially Ilia, who develops from sad girlhood to proud womanhood during its course. From the already-mentioned Gluck models Mozart absorbed much of this, as he did those moments of oracular profundity or stripped simplicity in which a single note or chord can be made to resonate with utmost dramatic significance. But he elaborated his findings with musical gifts infinitely richer than Gluck's. Perhaps the quality that strikes the *Idomeneo* explorer first and most fully is the peculiar combination of musical refulgence and emotional immediacy that warms its monumental outlines: as it were, 18th-century Classicism wearing its most human face.

The opera, first performed on January 29, 1781, was a success, but it was not followed up elsewhere. Mozart longed for further performances. Later that same year, and now lodged in Vienna, he outlined in a letter to Leopold Mozart his ambitions for a new version of the opera, with the bass Ludwig Fischer (soon to be the first Osmin) in the title role and the soprano Antonia Bernasconi (Gluck's Vienna *Alceste*, and participant in the Milan premiere of *Mitridate*) and tenor

Valentin Adamberger (soon to be the first Belmonte) also in the cast. It would be in German, and "several other alterations" were contemplated—Mozart wanted to "(arrange) it more in the French style." But the plan came to nothing. Five years later, however, there was at last a Vienna *Idomeneo*, a single concert performance by amateurs in the Auersperg Palace; and for this Mozart did indeed make "several other alterations," though, given the "fringe" nature of the occasion, it would be a mistake to insist that this Vienna version represents the composer's last word on the subject. *Idomeneo* remained a tenor; foremost among his changes was the adaptation of *Idamante* also to tenor range (as he hoped to undertake for Adamberger), with consequent remodeling of the vocal line in ensembles, a big new aria with violin obbligato at the start of Act 2 (beautiful but notably undramatic), and a shorter and more intensely affecting love duet for Ilia and *Idamante* in Act 3. A tenor *Idamante* avoids the modern solution to the problem of castrato roles, the casting of a female mezzo-soprano; there are audience members who find themselves more comfortable with a "real man" as *Idamante*. (The present writer, who has been enthralled by the performances of the mezzos Janet Baker, Trudeliese Schmidt, Frederica von Stade, Ann Murray, and Diana Montague, and who feels that most of the music lies more effectively on the higher-pitched voice, is not among them.)

The full complexity of the *Idomeneo* editorial situation has only been touched on here. Each time the opera is performed, fresh decisions have to be made about whether to follow the 1781 Munich or 1786 Vienna scores, and which of Mozart's own cuts to accept, which to open. No two productions are ever exactly alike in the music they offer. Not for this reason alone, *Idomeneo* is unlikely ever to form part of the basic opera house repertory—as Mozart's *Da Ponte* works and his *Magic Flute* so centrally do. Nor, perhaps, should we want it to. For it belongs among what David Cairns has called those "special masterpieces whose qualities of courage, hope, compassion, and above all honesty of vision make them (humanity's) natural parables and sacred texts, from which it may learn to see the truth about itself"; and it demands, every time it is presented, to be played, sung, watched, and listened to in a special way. ■





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## ARTIST PROFILES



KARITA MATTILA

**Karita Mattila** makes her San Francisco Opera debut as Ilia in *Idomeneo*. The young Finnish soprano has performed widely in Europe and the United States and her 1989-90 season includes her Metropolitan Opera debut as Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni*, a role she will also sing this season at the Vienna State Opera and in Israel with Claudio Abbado. Also this season, she will sing Agathe in a new production of *Der Freischütz* at Covent Garden. Her other American credits include Donna Elvira for her U.S. debut at the Washington Opera in 1985, Donna Elvira at the Lyric Opera of Chicago in 1988, and Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte* at Houston Grand Opera last year. In Europe she has performed a number of roles including Fiordiligi, Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte* and the Countess in *Le Nozze di Figaro* at Covent Garden, the Countess, Rosalinde in *Die Fledermaus* and Eva in *Die Meistersinger* at the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie in Brussels, and Fiordiligi in the Ponnelle/Barenboim production of *Così fan tutte* at the Mozart Festival in Paris. In 1983 Mattila was the winner of the "Singer of the World" competition in Cardiff, Wales, and she made her professional debut with the Finnish National Opera as the Countess. She has made recital tours to Scandinavia, the Soviet Union, Venice, Vienna, London, Brussels and Geneva. Upcoming recordings include *Così fan tutte*, *Der Freischütz*, and Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. Engagements for the 1990-91 season include a return to Chicago as Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte*, Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte* and Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni* in Houston, and Amelia in *Simon Boccanegra* in Geneva.



NANCY GUSTAFSON

Soprano **Nancy Gustafson** sings Elettra in *Idomeneo*. She most recently appeared here as Antonia in *The Tales of Hoffmann* in 1987 following her performances as Musetta in *La Bohème* (1986) and as Freia in *Das Rheingold* during the 1985 Ring Festival. The Illinois native made her Company debut during the 1983 Summer Season as Woglinde in *Das Rheingold*, appearing also as Helmwig in *Die Walküre* (a role she repeated in 1985), returned during the 1983 season as Flora in *La Traviata*, and was seen during the 1984 season in *Madama Butterfly*, *Elektra* and *Khovanshchina*. A participant in the 1982 Merola Opera Program, she was heard in Cavalli's *L'Ormindo* in 1983, and as a 1984 Adler Fellow she created the role of the Mother in the world premiere of Conrad Susa's *The Love of Don Perlimplin*. In 1984, she made her European debut at the Théâtre Musical de Paris/Châtelet as Rosalinde in *Die Fledermaus*, and in 1987 also appeared in Paris with Radio France as Frau Fluth in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Antonia was the role of her debut in Brussels, and she portrayed Musetta for her Hamburg Opera debut. She sang her first Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni* with the Glyndebourne Festival ensemble on tour to Hong Kong, and recently returned to Glyndebourne in the title role of a new production of *Katya Kabanova*, directed by Nikolaus Lehnhoff. Her experience in North America includes Marguerite in *Faust* at Chicago and Seattle and Violetta in *La Traviata* for the Edmonton Opera. Summer festivals have included her Santa Fe Opera debut as Rosalinde in *Die Fledermaus*, and her first performances of Helena in Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for the Chautauqua Opera. Recent engagements include many important debuts: Freia in *Das Rheingold* at Covent Garden; Musetta with the English National Opera; and Violetta in *La Traviata* at the Scottish

## IDOMENEIO



PATRICIA RACETTE

Opera and Norwegian Opera. Miss Gustafson's future engagements include her Metropolitan Opera debut as Musetta in *La Bohème*, and her debut at Milan's La Scala as Eva in a production of *Die Meistersinger* directed by Nikolaus Lehnhoff and conducted by Wolfgang Sawallisch.

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. Bernhard 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*.





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 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.



WIESLAW OCHMAN

**Wieslaw Ochman**, one of the world's most versatile tenors who has sung at major opera houses in both Europe and the United States, sings the title role of *Idomeneo*, a part which he has recorded under the baton of Karl Böhm. He made his San Francisco Opera debut in 1972 as Cavaradossi in *Tosca*, and has since returned as Alfredo in *La Traviata* (1973), Dimitri in *Boris Godunov* (1983), Laca in *Jenufa*, (1986), Gherman in *The Queen of Spades* (1987), and, last fall, as the Steersman/Erik in *Der Fliegende Holländer*. Since his professional debut in 1965 as Edgardo in *Lucia di Lammermoor* in Poland, he has been applauded for his performances in Vienna, Paris, Salzburg, Hamburg, Berlin, Frankfurt, Munich, Moscow, Buenos Aires, Orange, Geneva and Milan. Ochman made his American opera debut in 1972 as Alfredo at the Lyric Opera of Chicago and his Metropolitan Opera debut as Arrigo in Verdi's *I Vespri Siciliani*, returning there in 1976 for Turiddu in *Cavalleria Rusticana* and Lensky in *Eugene Onegin*, and in 1985 in Mussorgsky's *Khovanshchina*, a production which was also broadcast. He recently appeared in Brussels as Fritz in Franz Schreker's rarely performed *Der Ferne Klang*, and was heard as guest soloist with the National Symphony in Penderecki's *Mass*, with Mstislav Rostropovich conducting. Other concert engagements include performances with the orchestras of Berlin, Vienna, Paris, Munich, Hamburg, Rome and Turin, and he appears regularly at the major European festivals. A distinguished recording artist, Ochman's discography includes *Jenufa*, Moniuszko's *The Haunted Castle* and *Halka*, Penderecki's *Dies Irae* and *Te Deum*, Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*, Orff's *Catulli Carmina*, Strauss' *Salome*, Dvořák's *Rusalka* and *Stabat Mater*, and Mozart's *Mass in C Minor* and *Requiem*, under such conductors as Herbert von



HANS PETER BLOCHWITZ

Karajan, Karl Böhm, Eugen Jochum, Claudio Abbado, and Václav Neumann. Ochman recently recorded the role of Count Bezukhov in Prokofiev's *War and Peace* and Gherman in *The Queen of Spades*, along with a disc of Slavic opera arias. He has also appeared in feature film productions of *Eugene Onegin*, *Don Giovanni* and *Salome*.

German tenor **Hans Peter Blochwitz** makes his United States opera stage debut with San Francisco Opera as Idamante in *Idomeneo*. He made his American debut in 1987 with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, singing the Evangelist in Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*. After his opera debut in 1984 as Lensky in Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*, his career developed quickly. He was immediately engaged to sing leading tenor roles throughout Europe, in such major international houses as Milan's La Scala, Vienna, Brussels, Paris, Geneva, Zurich, Hamburg and Frankfurt. When famed Mozart tenor Peter Schreier conducted his first *Don Giovanni* in Hamburg in 1987, he selected Blochwitz for the role of Don Ottavio. During his relatively short professional career, he already has made numerous recordings. They include Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*, Mendelssohn's *Paulus* and *Lobgesang*, Mozart's *Requiem* and *C Minor Mass*, Schubert's *Die Schöne Müllerin*, and complete recorded versions of Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* and *Così fan tutte*. Soon-to-be-released recordings include *Don Giovanni*, Beethoven's *Fidelio*, and Schumann's *Dichterliebe/Liederkreis*. Blochwitz recently made a recital tour to various major European cities and appeared at Covent Garden as Ferrando in *Così fan tutte*. He will soon make his Metropolitan Opera debut as Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni*.





WILLIAM LEWIS

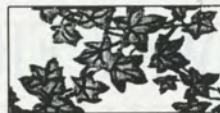
Tenor **William Lewis** sings the role of Arbace in *Idomeneo*. Since his Company debut as Erik and the Steersman in the 1975 Ponnelle production of *The Flying Dutchman*, the American singer has appeared here as Frank Sargent in the world premiere of Imbrie's *Angle of Repose* (1976), Matteo in *Arabella* (1980), Golitsin in *Khovanshchina* (1984), and three roles in 1981: Kent in the American premiere of Reimann's *Lear*, the title role of *Le Cid*, and Sergei in *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*. He was also heard here in three Janáček operas, portraying Albert Gregor in *The Makropulos Case* (1976), Boris in *Katya Kabanova* (1977), and Števa in *Jenufa* (1980). He sang the role of Loge in the 1985 Ring cycle production of *Das Rheingold*, and was seen here last fall as Zinovy in *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*. Lewis made his 1958 Metropolitan Opera debut as Narraboth in *Salome*, becoming the youngest tenor ever to appear in a leading role at the Met. Since that time, he has been a regular at the Metropolitan, where he has sung a wide variety of leading parts. He made his Covent Garden debut during the 1982-83 season in *Simon Boccanegra* and *Hoffmann*, and has appeared at the Vienna State Opera as Don José in *Carmen*; at the Paris Opera as Oedipus; in Hamburg as Alwa; at La Scala as Aron in *Moses und Aron* and as Oedipus; and in Cologne in *The Queen of Spades*, *Moses und Aron* and *Ariadne auf Naxos*. He sings regularly at the Salzburg Festival, where he recently appeared as Idomeneo and Hoffmann. In 1987, he sang the title role in the world premiere of *Riccardo III* at La Scala, an assignment he repeated last year in Turin. Future appearances include Loge in *Das Rheingold* and Siegmund in *Die Walküre* at the Teatro dell' Rome, and the world premiere of *Blimunda* at La Scala. Lewis has also branched out into stage directing, having directed (and singing the title role in) *Peter*

*continued on p.45*

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# Idomeneo

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

*New Production*

Opera in three acts by WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

Text by GIANBATTISTA VARESCO

After *Idoménée* by Antoine Danchet

# Idomeneo

(in Italian)

*Conductor and Harpsichord Continuo*

John Pritchard

*Production*

John Copley

*Set Designer*

John Conklin

*Costume Designer*

Michael Stennett

*Lighting Designer*

Thomas J. Munn

*Chorus Director*

Ian Robertson

*Musical Preparation*

Peter Gruenberg\*

Mark Haffner

Patrick Summers

Philip Eisenberg

*Prompter*

Philip Eisenberg

*Cello Continuo*

David Kadarrauch

*Assistant Stage Directors*

Paula Williams

Claudia Zahn

*Stage Manager*

Jerry Sherk

Scenery constructed in

San Francisco Opera Scenic Studios

Costumes executed by

San Francisco Opera Costume Shop

First performance:

Munich, January 29, 1781

First San Francisco Opera performance:

September 10, 1977

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 7 AT 8:00

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 11 AT 8:00

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 14 AT 8:00

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 17 AT 8:00

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 22 AT 2:00

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 25 AT 7:30

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 27 AT 8:00

## CAST

(in order of appearance)

*Ilia* Karita Mattila\*

*Idamante* Hans Peter Blochwitz\*\*

*Elettra* Nancy Gustafson

*Arbace* William Lewis

*Idomeneo* Wieslaw Ochman

*Two Cretan maidens* Patricia Racette

Patricia Spence

*Two Trojan men* Hong-Shen Li\*

Victor Ledbetter

*The High Priest of Neptune* Randall Outland\*

*The Voice of the oracle* Kenneth Cox\*

*People of Crete, Trojan prisoners, priests*

\*\*U.S. opera debut

\*San Francisco Opera debut

PLACE AND TIME: Crete, after the Trojan War

THERE WILL BE TWO INTERMISSIONS

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

Supertitles by Christopher Bergen, San Francisco Opera.

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

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

*The performance will last approximately three hours and fifteen minutes.*



## Idomeneo/Synopsis

The Trojan War is over and Idomeneo, the King of Crete, is on his way home to be reunited with his son Idamante, who has grown to manhood during his father's absence and who now rules as regent.

### ACT I

Ilia, a Trojan princess and King Priam's daughter, has been taken prisoner in Crete. Alone, surrounded by captured Trojan plunder, she struggles with her guilt at loving Idamante, son of the king who conquered her homeland. Idamante approaches and tells Ilia that his father's fleet has been sighted. In honor of this joyful day, and because of his love for Ilia, Idamante frees all the Trojan prisoners. As the Cretan people and liberated Trojans rejoice, Elettra, the daughter of Agamemnon, enters. She has been living in exile on Crete after the murder of her mother Clytemnestra. She objects to the liberation of the Trojan prisoners. As Idamante defends his action, Arbace, Idomeneo's chief counselor, arrives with the news that Idomeneo has drowned at sea. Idamante departs, overwhelmed with grief. Left alone, Elettra fears that if the king is dead, her hopes of wedding Idamante will die with him.

Idomeneo's fleet has been overcome by a storm and driven onto the rocks. Miraculously, Idomeneo and some of his men have survived. After coming ashore, the men leave Idomeneo alone to reflect on the vow he made to Neptune in exchange for his protection from the storm: to sacrifice to the god the first person he encounters on land. Idamante enters, having sought solitude to ease his grief. He fails to recognize the stranger and offers him shelter. When Idomeneo finally learns that the young man is his son, he reveals his own identity. Appalled by the situation, Idomeneo recoils from his son's embrace and departs, forbidding Idamante to follow him. Idamante is inconsolable at his father's rejection.

The storm has now abated and the Cretan populace gather to praise Neptune and celebrate the king's safe return.

### ACT II

Idomeneo tells Arbace of his vow to Neptune, and decides that for Idamante's safety, he will send him to Argos with Elettra. Ilia appears and tells Idomeneo of her happiness at finding a new

homeland in Crete and a new father in Idomeneo. After she is gone, he realizes that she loves his son, and he leaves, overcome by the pain and suffering his vow will cause. Elettra enters and expresses her pleasure in having Idamante to herself.

The boat which will take Elettra and Idamante to Argos is ready to set sail, and the people of Crete assemble. All look forward to a safe voyage. Idomeneo arrives to bid farewell to Elettra and Idamante. As the couple are about to embark, a storm suddenly arises. The frightened people realize that someone has offended the gods and they demand to know his name. Idomeneo tells them that he is the guilty one, and as the storm continues, the crowd flees in terror.

### ACT III

Ilia can only think of her unhappy love for Idamante. He tells her that he will fight the terrible monster Neptune has sent to plague the island and that he may never return. They reveal their love for each other. Idomeneo and Elettra interrupt the lovers. Idamante begs his father to reveal the reason for his harsh behavior, but when Idomeneo cannot answer, the prince sadly departs.

The High Priest of Neptune demands from Idomeneo the name of the one to be sacrificed to placate the god. Idomeneo at last names his son. The crowd is horrified and the priest asks for mercy for the innocent man.

Solemn prayers are offered to the god. A victory celebration is heard nearby, and Arbace enters with the news that Idamante has slain the monster. The young hero returns, knowing his father's vow and ready to sacrifice himself to the angry god. As the ceremony is about to begin, Ilia intervenes, offering herself in place of her lover. The entire situation is resolved by an oracular pronouncement: Idomeneo is to renounce the throne, which Idamante is to ascend and there be united with Ilia. At this unexpected announcement, Elettra is left with her worst fears realized and leaves in a rage. Idomeneo presents Idamante to the people as their new king, and is hailed by the populace.



# Idomeneo

Photos taken in rehearsal by Larry Merkle

*Wieslaw Ochman*







*Karita Mattila*



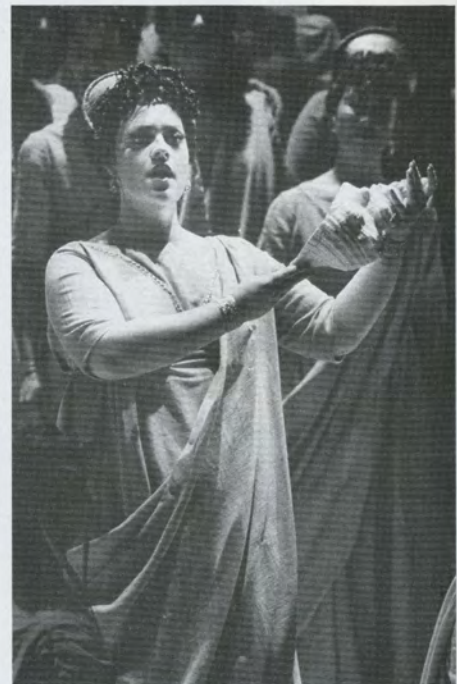
*William Lewis*



*Patricia Racette*



*Randall Outland*

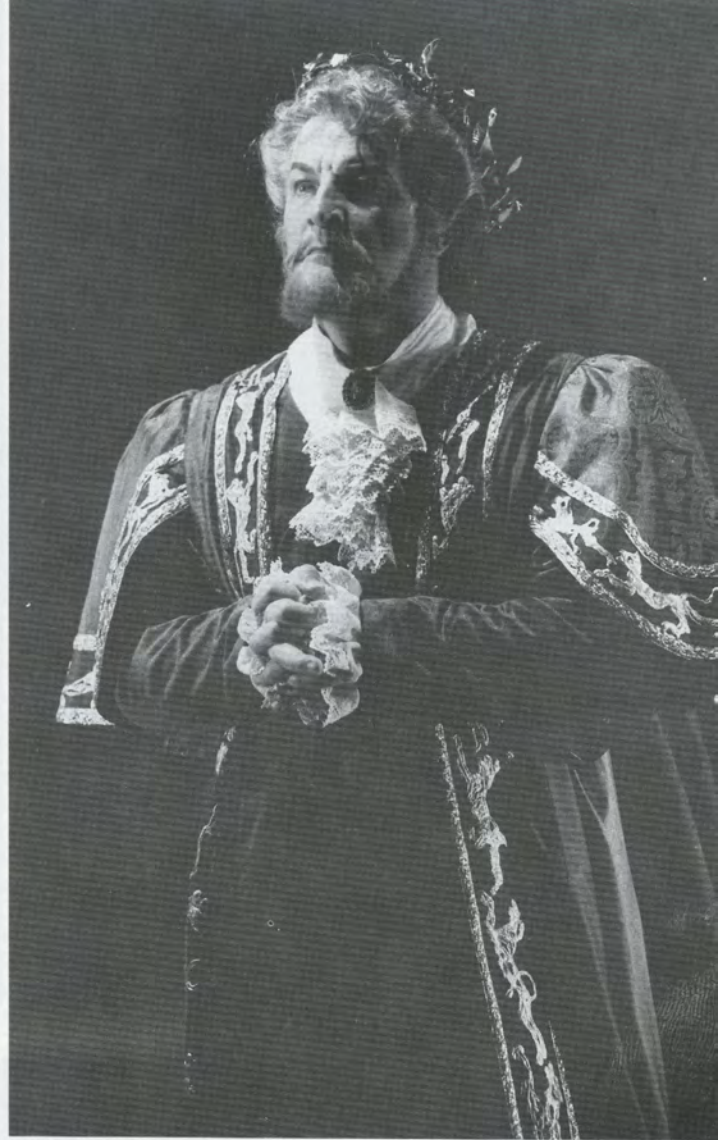


*Patricia Spence*





*Karita Mattila, Hans Peter Blochwitz*



*Wieslaw Ochman*



*Nancy Gustafson*



*Karita Mattila*





*Wieslaw Ochman, Members of the San Francisco Opera Chorus*



*Nancy Gustafson*



*Hans Peter Blochwitz, Karita Mattila*



continued from p.37



RANDALL OUTLAND

*Grimes* for the Opera Company of Philadelphia; *Carmen* and *Tosca* for Oakland Opera; and *The Ballad of Baby Doe*, *Plump Jack*, *Amelia Goes to the Ball* and Bernstein's *Mass* for the American Opera Festival at Lake Tahoe.

Tenor **Randall Outland** makes his San Francisco Opera debut as the High Priest in *Idomeneo*. A leading tenor with the Cologne Opera, he has performed Tamino in *The Magic Flute* there, also Ferrando in *Così fan tutte*, Nemorino in *L'Elisir d'Amore*, Arbace in *Idomeneo*, Narraboth in *Salome* and Alfred in *Die Fledermaus*. Recent international assignments have included Ferrando in Bogotá, Colombia; Tamino with the Israel Philharmonic and Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni* with the Canadian Opera Company. In the United States, Outland has been heard as Ferrando and as Lensky in *Eugene Onegin* with Seattle Opera, as Jaquino in *Fidelio* with San Diego Opera, as Tamino at the New York City Opera and as Tebaldo in *I Capuleti ed i Montecchi* with Boston Concert Opera. In 1980 he received an award for Excellence in the Interpretation of the German Lied, and was featured in a recital which was broadcast over Austrian National Radio. He has performed with the Oslo Philharmonic in the Mozart Requiem and in the New York City "Mostly Mozart Festival" in the Mozart C Minor Mass. Future engagements include the Chevalier in *Dialogues of the Carmelites* in San Diego.



KENNETH COX

American bass **Kenneth Cox** makes his San Francisco Opera debut as the Voice of the oracle in *Idomeneo*. He recently appeared as Orbazzano in the Lyric Opera of Chicago's staging of *Tancredi*, a role which he repeated at the Los Angeles Music Center Opera. Other recent engagements have included Colline in *La Bohème* and Sarastro in *Die Zauberflöte* with the Canadian Opera Company, as well as Méphistophélès in *Faust* with the Orlando Opera, Osmin in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* with the Washington Opera, and Alidoro in *La Cenerentola* with the Opera Theatre of St. Louis. Cox made his European debut as Osmin with the Scottish Opera in 1987, and performed that role as well as the Commendatore in *Don Giovanni* at the Netherlands Opera. A frequent concert artist, he has been heard in the Mozart Requiem with the Phoenix Symphony, Handel's *Messiah* with the Indianapolis Symphony, and has sung both the *Stabat Mater* by Rossini and the Verdi Requiem with the Master Chorale of Orange County. He has performed the role of Rocco in *Fidelio* with the Los Angeles Philharmonic and with the Minnesota Orchestra.



HONG-SHEN LI

Currently an Adler Fellow with the San Francisco Opera Center, tenor **Hong-Shen Li** makes his Company debut singing four roles: a Trojan Man in *Idomeneo*, a Messenger in *Aida*, Goro in *Madama Butterfly*, and a Noble of Brabant in *Lohengrin*. A native of Beijing, China, he received his initial musical training while studying under a five-year Highest Fellowship Scholarship at the Central Conservatory there and performing with the Art Ensemble of Beijing. He was a member of the American Opera Center at the Juilliard School of Music, where he appeared as Benedict in Berlioz's *Beatrice and Benedict*. As a member of the 1987 Merola Opera Program, he performed the role of Rinuccio in *Gianni Schicchi*, and returned to the Merola Program in 1988 to sing Lindoro in *The Italian Girl in Algiers*. During Western Opera Theater's 1988-89 tour he portrayed Goro in *Madame Butterfly* and, with the Opera Center Singers, sang Count Almaviva in the 1989 *Barber of Seville*.





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*.



JOHN PRITCHARD

San Francisco Opera Music Director **Sir John Pritchard** conducts two operas this season: *Idomeneo* and *Orlando Furioso*. He made his 1970 Company debut with *Così fan tutte* (repeated in 1973 and 1979) and returned for *Peter Grimes* (1973 and '76), *Don Giovanni* and *La Cenerentola* (1974), *Thaïs* (1976), *Idomeneo* (1977), *Un Ballo in Maschera* and *Der Rosenkavalier* (1985), *Don Carlos* (1986), *Salome* and *Fidelio* (1987) and, last fall, *Manon Lescaut*, *Parsifal* and *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*. A protégé of Fritz Busch, Pritchard made his operatic conducting debut at Glyndebourne in 1951 with three Mozart operas: *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *Così fan tutte* and *Don Giovanni*. That same year he made his Vienna Staatsoper debut leading *La Forza del Destino*. He opened the 1952-53 season at Covent Garden with *Un Ballo in Maschera* for his first assignment with the Royal Opera and conducted more than 80 performances of 11 operas in his first two seasons there. He has returned virtually every season since; among the historic performances he led there are the world premieres of Britten's *Gloriana*, Tippett's *King Priam* and *The Midsummer Marriage*, and the famous Visconti production of *Don Carlos*. From 1956 to 1962 he was musical director of the Liverpool Philharmonic, which earned a royal charter during his tenure. He was musical director of the London Philharmonic from 1962 to 1966, and in 1963 was appointed principal conductor and artistic counselor of the Glyndebourne Festival, of which he became music director in 1969. In 1978 he relinquished his Glyndebourne post to become chief conductor at the Cologne Opera, a position he will leave at the end of this year, becoming Cologne's chief guest conductor. In 1980 he became principal guest conductor with the BBC Symphony and since 1982 has been chief conductor of that organization. At the beginning of the 1981-82 season he was named music director of the National

Opera in Belgium. Maestro Pritchard is one of the most well-traveled of international conductors, and has taken the BBC Symphony on tours to Germany, Spain, Switzerland and the United States. Recent assignments have included *Così fan tutte* at the Lyric Opera of Chicago; *The Magic Flute* in Geneva; *Aida* and *Wozzeck* at Cologne; *Lucia di Lammermoor* at Covent Garden; Rossini's *Otello* at the Rossini Festival in Pesaro; plus assorted concerts in London, Brussels and Paris. The most recent addition to Maestro Pritchard's sizeable discography is a new recording of *Idomeneo*, his second, which was nominated for a Grammy award.

Stage director **John Copley** returns for his seventh season with San Francisco Opera to direct the new production of *Idomeneo*. He made his Company debut during the 1982 Summer Season with Handel's *Julius Caesar* and returned in the fall of 1983 for the American premiere production of Tippett's *The Midsummer Marriage*. Subsequent San Francisco Opera assignments have been *Don Giovanni* (1984 fall), Handel's *Orlando* (1985 fall), *Le Nozze di Figaro* and *Eugene Onegin* (1986 fall) and *La Traviata* (1987). Copley spent several years early in his career as a stage manager for musicals in London's West End before becoming assistant and then prin-





JOHN COPLEY

Principal resident producer (director) at Covent Garden. Included among his many productions there are *La Bohème*, *Werther*, *Così fan tutte*, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *L'Elisir d'Amore* and Handel's *Semele*, as well as the three largest royal galas mounted at Covent Garden, marking the occasions of England's entry into the Common Market, and Queen Elizabeth's Silver Jubilee and 60th birthday celebration. He also staged Dame Janet Baker's farewell performances in *Alceste* at Covent Garden and in *Mary Stuart* with the English National Opera. Other ENO credits include *Julius Caesar*, *Der Rosenkavalier*, *La Belle Hélène*, *Il Trovatore*, *Werther* and *Aida*. Copley's work has also been seen at the Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels, the Geneva Opera, the Munich Staatsoper, La Scala in Milan, the Welsh National Opera, Scottish Opera, Netherlands Opera, the Greek National Opera and festivals at Drottningholm, Aix-en-Provence, Ottawa, Munich, Athens, Wexford and Wiesbaden. He has directed over 25 productions in Australia, including *Jenůfa*, *Macbeth*, *Manon*, *Manon Lescaut*, *Così fan tutte*, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *The Magic Flute*, *Don Carlos*, *Carmen* and *Peter Grimes*. In North America, his directing credits include productions for the Lyric Opera of Chicago, Dallas Opera, Washington Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Santa Fe Opera, Canadian Opera Company, Vancouver Opera, and the New York City Opera. Recent engagements include his debut at the Deutsche Oper Berlin (*L'Elisir d'Amore*), the Metropolitan Opera (*Julius Caesar*), and the Los Angeles Music Center Opera (*Tancredi*). Future engagements include new productions of *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* at the Lyric Opera of Chicago, *Tancredi* at Geneva, *Semiramide* at the Met, and *La Bohème* in Santa Fe and San Diego.

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JOHN CONKLIN

**John Conklin** created the sets for the new production of *Idomeneo*. His set designs were most recently seen here in a new production of *La Traviata* in 1987. Local audiences first saw his work in Spring Opera Theater productions of *Orfeo* (1972), *Death in Venice* (1975 and '79) and *Julius Caesar* (1978). He made his Company debut in 1977 with the sets for *Un Ballo in Maschera* (repeated in 1982 and '85), and returned for *Don Pasquale* (fall 1980, summer 1984). During the summer of 1985 he created designs for the four operas of Wagner's *Ring of the Nibelung*, which had been unveiled in 1983 (*Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre*), 1984 (*Siegfried*) and 1985 (*Götterdämmerung*). Conklin's designs have been seen in numerous opera, ballet and legitimate theater productions. He has created designs for such companies as the New York Shakespeare Festival, the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis, the Goodman Theatre in Chicago, the Long Wharf Theater in New Haven and the Hartford Stage Company. His long association with Santa Fe Opera has resulted in American premieres of Henze's *We Come to the River*, the three-act version of *Lulu*, Aulis Sallinen's *The King Goes Forth to France*, and Penderecki's *The Black Mask*. For New York City Opera his production credits include *Il Turco in Italia*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and the world premieres of Argento's *Miss Havisham's Fire* and Anthony Davis's *X*. Other American opera projects have been for the Lyric Opera of Chicago (*Tancredi* and an upcoming production of *The Barber of Seville*); Dallas Opera (the world premiere of Argento's *Aspern Papers*); Seattle Opera (*Il Trovatore* and a forthcoming production of *War and Peace*); and the Opera Theatre of St. Louis, among others. For the Metro-



MICHAEL STENNETT

politan Opera, he has designed the costumes for *Khovanshchina*, and is currently working on the set designs for a new production of *Semiramide* directed by John Copley. On the other side of the Atlantic, he has been responsible for production designs for the Holland Festival, Scottish Opera, and the Bayerische Staatsoper in Munich. He teaches at the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University.

**Michael Stennett** designed the costumes for the new production of *Idomeneo*. His work was first seen by San Francisco Opera audiences in the 1982 Summer Season staging of Handel's *Julius Caesar*, a production originally created for the English National Opera. In 1985 he scored a triumph in another Handel production here, *Orlando*, and during the 1984 Fall Season we saw his costumes for the production of *Anna Bolena* first produced for the Canadian Opera Company and also seen at the Lyric Opera of Chicago. Most recently, he designed the costumes for the Company's 1986 mounting of *Eugene Onegin*, originally seen in 1983 at Festival Ottawa. Since his first production in 1968, *Anne of Green Gables* in London's West End, the English designer has worked for various leading opera, ballet and theatrical companies. His credits for the Australian Opera include costumes for *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *Rigoletto*, *Così fan tutte*, *Madama Butterfly*, *La Traviata*, *Un Ballo in Maschera*, *Tosca*, *Les Huguenots* and *Lucia di Lammermoor*. The costumes for *Lucia* were selected by Joan Sutherland for her subsequent performances of the role at the Metropolitan Opera and Covent Garden. In Britain, his costumes have

been seen in productions of *Werther* for the ENO; *La Bohème*, *Peter Grimes* and *Tosca* for the Welsh National Opera; and, for the Royal Opera, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *Werther*, *Alceste* and *Lucrezia Borgia*. Other credits include *Kismet* for the Canadian Opera Company, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for the Ottawa Festival, *Platée* for the Stockholm Opera, *I Capuleti ed i Montecchi* for Palermo, and *Adriana Lecouvreur* in Munich. In this country, his work was also seen in the 1982 Los Angeles Philharmonic production of *Falstaff*. Recent costume design credits include Handel's *Ariodante* for Santa Fe Opera, *Tancredi* for the Lyric Opera of Chicago and Los Angeles Opera, *Julius Caesar* at the Metropolitan Opera, and *The Makropulos Case* for the COC (Lotfi Mansouri's "farewell performance" as general director of the Toronto-based company). He will design the costumes for the Lyric Opera of Chicago's new production of *The Barber of Seville* later this season, and his costume creations for *Semiramide* will be seen at the Met next year. Stennett's costumes are featured on two videocassettes: those of *Julius Caesar* and *Falstaff*. His graphic work has been featured on numerous record jackets, and a large number of his designs appear in the book *Joan Sutherland: Designs for a Prima Donna*.





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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V.T. HAUSER

# Lotfi Mansouri: Looking into the Future

By TIMOTHY PFAFF

"The San Francisco Opera company is one of the most important companies in the world," says the man who should know, the Company's new General Director, Lotfi Mansouri. A practical man of the theater with decades of experience producing operas throughout the world who, prior to coming to San Francisco, also was General Director of the Canadian Opera Company, Mansouri turns out to be a visionary as well. "I have a dream," he says with a confident smile in the relative calm of his fourth-floor Opera House office. "It is to make the San Francisco Opera a presence in the community—locally, nationally, and internationally—all year long.

"It's not a completely new idea," he continues. "Kurt Herbert Adler had it too, which is why he created Spring Opera and instituted a Summer Season." But Mansouri's vision of "new directions for this company" surpasses all previous attempts to extend the Company's offerings beyond the highly concentrated fall season productions. It entails spreading the major international productions throughout the calendar year, interspersed with the productions San Francisco Ballet also

presents in the War Memorial Opera House. And, beyond that, it entails the creation of new kinds of operatic experiences and venues—productions of varying proportions and with a broad range of artistic goals—both to augment the format with which San Franciscans have become familiar and to implement the new plan throughout the calendar year.

"The format of our season has been locked into the fall," he says. "The frame of a season spread throughout the year, however, provides an impetus for new directions.

"Times have changed, and with them, the whole field of opera has changed. Television, film, and the other media, along with the increasing importance of directors and conductors and the new style of European opera production, have sent opera in a new direction. Audiences now are much more interested in a theatrical musical experience. It's simply no longer satisfactory to have four portly singers lining up at the footlights, belting out arias in front of sets that billow in the wind. Sure, there are still some canary fanciers, but their standards are no longer the norm. Audiences have become much more sophisticated.

"When I directed my first *Gioconda* here in the 1960s," he recalls with a smile, "and the chorus ran in to make its entrance, the entire Palazzo Ducale shook, because it was all painted scenery. Audiences wouldn't tolerate that today. And the last time I directed *Mefistofele* here, I had only one piano rehearsal and one dress rehearsal on the stage—lasting only as long as the opera itself, so there was little time to make corrections. In those days, the Company put on 14 or 15 productions in an even shorter season than we have now. It was a kind of 'instant opera.' Today the theatrical aspects of opera production have come very much to the fore, and people want a total music-theater experience."

Mansouri means to provide it.

"When I hire a major conductor, like Christoph von Dohnányi, he has particular rehearsal demands. Conductors of his caliber are great precisely because they're not routine. They have an artistic vision; they take care; they want to work out the

---

*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.*



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In his Opera House office, Lotfi Mansouri discusses his appointments with assistant Marian Lever.

details of a production. The same is true of stage directors. The best European directors now ask for a *minimum* rehearsal period of eight weeks. Because of our concentrated schedule, sometimes the most I can offer is two to two-and-a-half weeks. As things stand, we have to prepare five or six productions at a time. With a spread season, we would have the chance to work on one, or at the most two, productions at once. So there are artistic reasons for wanting to spread the season out."

Mansouri conjectures that San Francisco Opera audiences, too, would appreciate a spread season. "Going to the opera is an occasion," he remarks. "And to really enjoy it, you have to prepare yourself for it. People here clearly love opera, but if you go to 10 operas in nine weeks, it can start to seem like a chore. It's like a feast. No matter how wonderful feasts are, if you go to too many too close together, you become sated. But if you have only one premiere a month, you have much more opportunity to see it as a special occasion."

Mansouri is interested in opera productions that are special occasions in the truest sense, and not what he is inclined to call "vocal circuses" or "concerts in costume." Recent headlines have pointed up a serious problem in today's opera world: the sometimes capricious behavior of the international star singers who for years have been synonymous with "box office."

"We all now know the dangers of putting all your eggs in the basket of a single superstar," Mansouri says. "Artistically speaking, that system is based on a false premise. It's wonderful when a superstar fits into a total project. But, if

not, I think the answer is to bring them here to give concerts. That way audiences can hear them while I go about the serious business of making musical theater. I'm aware of the fact that it's one of my duties to present my audiences with the best voices in the business. But if stars are not willing to go through the rehearsal process, and develop a cohesive production, then why not present them in concerts?"

Lest anyone be alarmed that Mansouri is uninterested in courting the top names for San Francisco casts, he is the first to counter that a spread season would increase his access to the world's best singers. "If a singer like Mr. Domingo says he's unavailable in the fall, it increases my chances of obtaining his

services if I can counter, 'How about February?' A spread season would increase my access to the best singers, conductors, and directors.

"Nowadays," he continues, "our business is moving in a direction I find extremely positive. All of a sudden, the issue of the development of young singers has become a vital one. San Francisco Opera has the claim of having the best singer training program in the world. In order to attain the highest artistic standards, what I want to create is a resident ensemble.

"We already have the basis of that in our program of Adler Fellows. But I want to formalize it more. My interest is in having the young artists who go through our apprenticeship programs—the Merola Opera Program, Western Opera Theater, and the Adler Fellows—become a resident ensemble for two or three years. I want to make these wonderful young artists the core of the Company, and to build productions around their talents. That would lend continuity to our artistic standards and guarantee the quality of our major productions. Then, when you fit the big stars into those productions, it would be like what the French call the *garniture*, the trimmings, the frosting on the cake. The system I envision would give the Company a strong, individual artistic profile."

The positive audience response to Company-trained singers encourages him in his thinking. "Audiences love our young singers," Mansouri beams. "For me, the triumph of this season's *Lulu* is the performance of Ann Panagulias. I auditioned singers all over the world for the part, but, excuse me, go find me a better



Evelyn Lear and her husband Thomas Stewart visiting Lotfi Mansouri in his office. Miss Lear was midway through performances of Berg's *Lulu*, in which she was portraying Countess Geschwitz; Thomas Stewart was likewise in the middle of the Falstaff run, in which he was featured in the title role.





Another view of Lotfi Mansouri in his office, surrounded by photos of interpreters from his past productions.

Lulu if you can. Then there's our matinee cast for *Falstaff*. They're wonderful singers and actors. I could put them on in the evening with pride."

Mansouri's imaginative revitalization of the Company's summer season a few months ago, with a shared production of Philip Glass' *Satyagraha* and the American premiere of Handel's *Giustino* in Herbst Theatre, provides a strong hint at the directions in which he'd like to lead his Company. The forthcoming revival of the celebrated 1985 *Ring* in June of 1990 confirms his commitment to the continued expansion of the season, and he is delighted to point to a 1991 summer Mozart festival (for the Mozart bicentennial) and, "we hope, a bicentennial Rossini festival in 1992 and, with good fortune, a Richard Strauss festival the following summer. By that time," he says, "I hope to have things in order so that we can use these two performing periods as the basis of our spread season."

The prospect of a year-round season in the full sense Mansouri contemplates is unlikely prior to 1993-94, primarily, he says, because the Company is not the only occupant of the Opera House. "We have to negotiate with the San Francisco Ballet. The ideal thing, down the line, would be for the Opera and the Ballet to flip-flop, rather like the current formula at Covent Garden. The ballet public would probably also appreciate having their season more spread out, but planning at this level takes time."

Even farther off, but a distinct part of Mansouri's dream, is the creation of yet another performing venue, ideally, but not necessarily, in Civic Center. "Down the line I envision a new opera center, a

new facility for our training and coaching programs that would also include a 900- to 1,000-seat theater. I see it as a truly new center—a performing community, really, with audio-visual facilities, an exhibit space, and boutiques and maybe a cafe. It would be the kind of place that would be open all day, to bring everyone in. But I know that won't happen overnight."

The other main advantage of a spread season, Mansouri explains, is the potential for a significant expansion of the repertoire. "With gaps between the major productions come opportunities to do more experimental things, chamber operas and new and less-well-known works. One of the greatest things a cultural organization can do is to attract as wide a range of the community as possible, not just the audience that wants nothing but the big grand operas of the 19th century. There is, of course, a long list of operas which, for a variety of reasons, have never been done here—Russian operas, French operas, even some Italian operas. Verdi's *Stiffelio* is an example of a work I've wanted to do for a long time."

Mansouri is keenly aware of Bay Area audiences' interest in early music, as recently manifested in the strong response to last summer's *Giustino*, featuring the Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra under its director, Nicholas McGegan. "I was delighted to invite Nick back to conduct our French Bicentennial concert in Stern Grove last summer, and we're already talking about other projects. In the end, I'd like to present operas from the earliest days of the form, like the great works of Monteverdi, to those of our day."

"The premiere of Hugo Weisgall's *Esther* is scheduled for 1991, and we're

currently planning another world premiere in 1992 as part of the main season. When it comes to new works, it has been the tendency to present small new operas, because the potential financial losses are also smaller. But you can't always go that route. If Mozart were alive, I'd approach him about composing *Dangerous Liaisons*. But I'd like to have a composer come to me with an idea. I'm not in a position to dictate to a creative artist. I'm a facilitator, an impresario, a guide, a stimulator. I'm here to provide opportunities."

Mansouri is also willing to consider musical-theater works that fall outside the usual definition of "opera," but at this point only as "add-ons" and not part of regular subscriptions. "I don't want to play around with my public," he explains. "That's misusing their trust."

Building, and building on precisely that trust is at the core of Mansouri's thinking about an innovative, year-round opera season. "My dream is that the public buys the San Francisco Opera company in its totality," he says. "I want to cultivate a public that will buy subscriptions knowing that whatever the Company produces will be interesting—that individuals may like some of the offerings more than others, but that they know they can be assured of an artistically viable experience."

"Like other operagoers, I love *Bohème* and *Butterfly* and *Carmen*. And San Francisco audiences will continue to see those works in the best productions we can mount. But if we open other doors as well, audiences may find experiences every bit as exciting and gratifying. I believe the opera public is intelligent and doesn't want its experience limited. This year's *Lulu* production has convinced me of that. When a performance ends, people are staying and applauding, not just running for their cars. Yes, it's a disturbing experience, but it's also an enriching one. Having been through *Lulu*, your mind has been stimulated and your heart has been touched. A full experience of that sort is rewarding in itself, and something to be valued."

This fall the Company will be conducting marketing research to find out its audience's attitudes on all these matters. "We're here to serve our public," Mansouri assures, "and it's up to us to provide our audience with the experiences they want and at their convenience. We can't force-feed our audience, but that doesn't mean that we can't at the same time excite and stimulate it."

"Opera is a year-round phenomenon in many of the world's famous opera cities and centers. San Francisco is just such a place, so I don't see why we should have to be a part-time endeavor." ■





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# Serious Opera

By DAVID LITTLEJOHN

"Opera seria" is something one is more likely to read about than to hear or see. The exceptions to this rule—all of which have benefited from recent revivals—are the operas of Handel; Mozart's *Idomeneo* and *La Clemenza di Tito*; and—insofar as the term can be legitimately extended into the 19th century—Rossini operas like *Tancredi*, *Maometto II* (later rewritten as *The Siege of Corinth*), and *Semiramide*. Since 1971, San Francisco Opera audiences have had the opportunity to see all of these works, including Handel's *Giulio Cesare*, *Orlando*, and *Giustino*. This year we can add Vivaldi's rarely-performed *Orlando Furioso*. So we may have a better sense than operagoers elsewhere of the peculiar nature and mixed attractions of this decidedly old-fashioned genre.

For the better part of the 18th century, opera seria was opera, for all the world (except France) that knew opera existed. Thousands of ad hoc recitative-and-aria constructions were hammered together for court and commercial theaters all over Europe, most of them named after and dealing with kings, queens, princes, or princesses of ancient or legendary realms, their dynastic rivalries and their tangled loves.

All of these were performed in Italian, no matter what the local language. They were built around action-stopping, stand-and-deliver solo vocal showpieces of the sort we now call "da capo" arias—arias in which the first of two short stanzas, usually made up of four lines sung several times each and repeated, is then repeated all over again "from the top," or *da capo*, at the end of the song, in a frequently spectacular display of whatever grace notes, trills, scale-runs, shakes, and unbelievably long-held breaths the singer could manage.

Why, for the better part of a hundred years, did people in London, Vienna, and Prague, let alone every city in Italy, apparently so crave this form of entertainment that they often went to see it two or three times a week? Why did they expect new opere serie every year, but then sat through the same ones, night after night? And why, with the few exceptions noted above, have virtually all of them disappeared?

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It's easier to talk about opera seria than it is to define it. In *Handel and the*

*Opera Seria*, Winton Dean decided to use the term to mean "all Italian opera other than opera buffa during Handel's lifetime" [1685-1759]. But you can only get by with that if you're writing about Handel. The poets and composers who wrote "opere serie" didn't even start calling them that until sometime around 1785. I'm using the term to mean all totally non-comic operas with Italian texts between the first by Alessandro Scarlatti and Handel (1705-7), and the late-blooming "heroic" operas of Rossini (1813-23).

One man's name so dominates every discussion of opera seria that one is tempted to use him as a guide, and build a definition around his life and work. Pietro Metastasio, né Trapassi, was a clever



Pietro Metastasio, 1698-1782, in a contemporary engraving.

grocer's son born in Rome in 1698. From the age of 11, he was adopted and carefully educated by a learned humanist who (correctly) saw in him the promise of a major poet. After writing for Italian theaters seven immensely successful *melodramme*, or *dramme per musica*—i.e., plays in verse intended to be set to music—Metastasio was, in 1730, appointed Court Poet to the Emperor Charles VI at Vienna. There, he wrote 20 more plays-for-opera, as well as poems, texts for cantatas, oratorios or "azioni teatrali," 2,500-plus letters, and essays on Aristotle and the Italian epic poets.

Alfred Loewenberg, in *Annals of Opera*, cites 107 surviving operas written to Metastasio's texts. But he estimates that his 27 plays (it is demeaning and imprecise to refer to them simply as

librettos) were set to music "far more than a thousand times." Between 70 and 100 operas (authorities differ) made use of his best play, *Artaserse*, as a text; perhaps 80 more of his *Alessandro in India*; 60-plus of his first original play, *Didone Abbandonata*, of 1724; and at least 50 of his *L'Olimpiade* (*The Olympic Games*).

The odds are that you've never heard, perhaps never even heard of, any of these operas—although a decent Hungarian recording of Antonio Vivaldi's setting of *L'Olimpiade* (Venice, 1734) was made for the tricentennial of the composer's birth in 1978, when the opera was also performed in Turin. The one Metastasio title you may know is *La Clemenza di Tito*, which was first set to music by Antonio Caldara for Vienna in 1734, and later by 40 to 60 others—including W.A. Mozart, whose version was first performed in Prague in 1791, just three months before he died.

Vivaldi wrote music for three of Metastasio's plays. Handel also wrote music for three, and new arrangements for the scores of four others. Gluck, who is supposed to have led a rebellion against him, set a total of 15. His plays have been "musicked" into operas by Haydn, Cherubini, Cimarosa, J.C. Bach (who used eight of them), Pergolesi, Nicola Piccinni, Baldassare Galuppi, and Thomas Alexander Arne.

These are the better known. Most of the Italian and German opera composers who spread Metastasio's characters, plots, and poetry all over Europe have passed into the quiet possession of music historians: Antonio Caldara, Leonardo Vinci, Leonardo Leo, Johann Adolf Hasse, Niccolò Jommelli, Tommaso Traetta.

You can learn what the plots of most opere serie were like by reading the collected works of Pietro Metastasio; I stopped, I confess, after 15 plays. In each of these, five or six characters are royal, noble, or at least heroic. The sixth or seventh—there are never more than seven named parts—may be a "confidante," who is there to permit his/her master or mistress to express intimate emotions, as Desdemona does to Emilia. Occasionally one has need of a messenger, to report offstage horrors ("È morto?" "È morto!").

David Littlejohn is a writer, critic, and professor of journalism at U.C. Berkeley, who also reviews the San Francisco Opera for the *London Times*.



The lead singers—who usually numbered, in those days, two male (i.e., castrato) sopranos and two females—had to include at least four royal-type lovers (High vocal ranges = love). These characters are either *not* in love with the people who love them, or prevented from consummating their love by affairs of state, disguises, promises previously made, or the edicts of unfeeling royal fathers. This permits plots of sustained tension and complication, and numerous occasions for “broken-heart” arias—arias of sensual torment and self-pity, which display soprano voices so well.

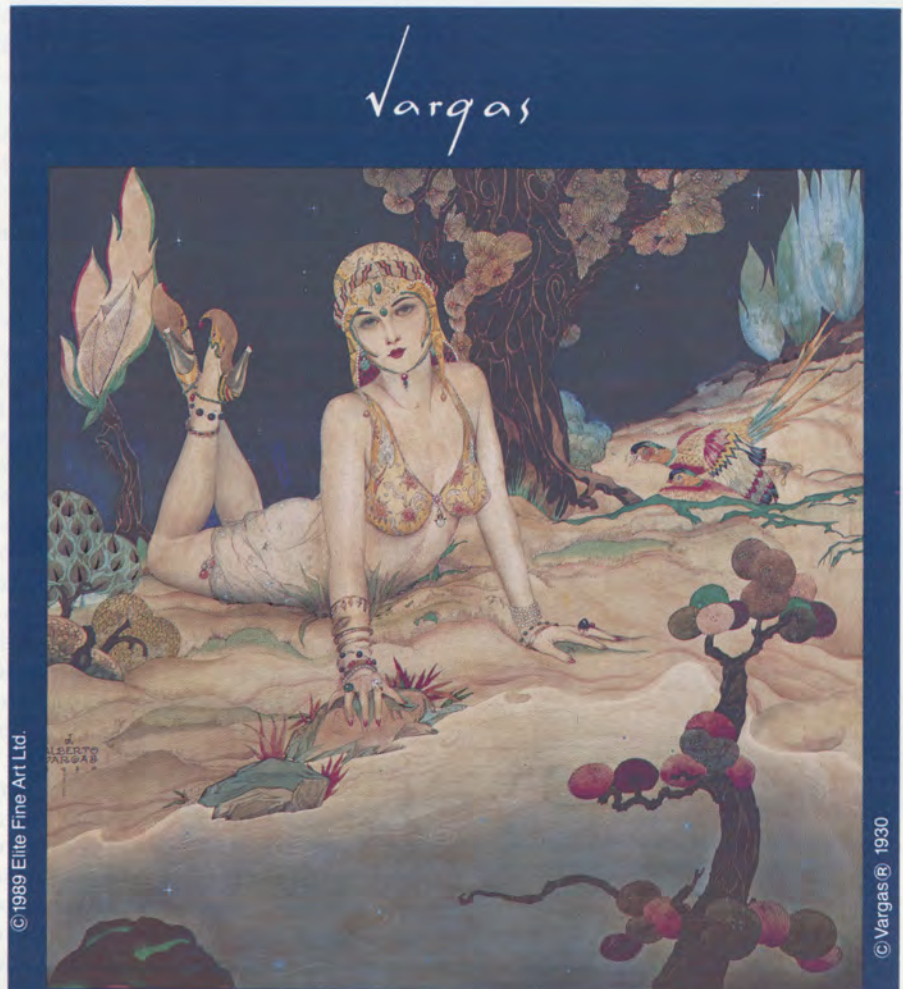
Lower vocal ranges are reserved for royal fathers, secondary generals, and villains. Their job is to stir up the non-amatory portions of the plot (palace coups, wars with rival kingdoms, threats of tyrannicide—no major character should actually *die* in an opera seria, since we want them all onstage for the finale); and to do all they can to keep the proper lovers from pairing off before the *ultima scena*, when (as a rule) everything comes out all right.

In three of Metastasio’s 27 *melodramme*, good people *do* die before the end, although for noble and heroic reasons. Far more often, some sudden revelation (“*Ecco tuo figlio!*” “*Ecco mio padre!*”) dissolves the barriers which have separated the two sets of lovers for three stressful, music-filled acts. The villain, smitten by the sublime goodness of everyone onstage, instantly reforms. The tyrant-king or emperor now finds himself obliged by his own laws to order the malefactors put to death—frequently including his best-loved friend, even his own son. Instead, he has a last-moment inspiration of *superlative* goodness (hence, “The Clemency of Titus”—or of Hadrian, or Caesar, or Cyrus, or Alexander, or Artaxerxes), forgives everybody, and is praised in a quick closing chorus.

Metastasio did not, however, just write the same plot over 27 times, as his detractors have claimed. In each of his best plays, he rethinks the conventions, comes up with a new provocative set of circumstances, and works hard to make us *care* about his high-minded, over-emotional, melodrama-trapped characters.

Since the mid-19th century, it has been *de rigueur* to sneer at the simplistic, plot-complicating recitatives of opera seria. But I found many of these sequences (some of which are set in elaborate verse forms, for composers to make the most of) to be impressively dramatic. In *Alessandro nell’Indie*, for example, Metastasio’s second most popular text, a king and a queen of rival Indian kingdoms—both under heavy pressure from Alex-

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ander the Great—share scenes of tender, then bitter love/hate exchanges, which cry out for the melodies and orchestral commentaries of a master musical dramatist. Caesar's confrontation with Cato, in *Catone in Utica*, is great theater by any standard, musical or not.

The most challenging set of rules for the poet of an opera seria dealt with the arias. Every lead singer had to have at least four of these, properly spaced throughout the opera; secondary singers got one to three. (There were few duets or ensembles; star singers of the time did not like sharing.) Each aria—though this was frequently not the case—was supposed to convey a different, set, single emotion (rage, jealousy, grief, etc.), which exploded out of the foregoing recitative. No two arias in a row were to express similar emotions. Each aria was to be followed at once by the *exit* of its singer, to avoid breaking up the recitative, and to encourage maximum applause. Before the end of the century, frustrated composers were breaking many of these rules.

You can understand why. Try to write a serious, rational, didactic (and entertaining) neo-classical happy-ending verse drama, containing between 20 and 25 passionate exit speeches (each of these speeches running to 8 rhyming lines of 7 to 10 syllables each); make those lines dramatically meaningful; and somehow keep the action surrounding them continuous and gripping. "*Quel labirinto!*", as one character in *L'Olimpiade* remarks on the plot he finds himself in.

One further bend to the labyrinth. Just after being condemned to death, or rejected by your lover, or betrayed by your best friend—all good motives for a passionate exit-aria explosion—you must sing four lines (sometimes five or three; even two, in Handel) expressing your plight; sing them again, modulating to the dominant or the relative minor; then sing them a third time, back to the tonic. Then sing a second stanza, in a related rhythm or key, perhaps taking back or qualifying or reflecting on your original four lines. And then assert (*da capo*) your original outburst more passionately than ever, over, and over, and (singing your poor heart out) over again! In this way, eight short lines can be made to fill up five to ten minutes of vocalizing onstage—which is what people came to hear.

In one of Cleopatra's best-known arias in Handel's *Giulio Cesare*, what she is saying in her first two-line stanza is, "Unless you show me pity, just heaven, I will die." What she *sings* is "Se pietà di me non senta, giusto ciel, io morirò, giusto ciel io morirò, io morirò giusto ciel, giusto ciel io morirò, se pietà di me non senta, giusto

ciel io morirò, giusto ciel io morirò, giusto ciel io morirò, giusto ciel io morirò, se pietà di me non senta, giusto ciel, giusto ciel io morirò, giusto ciel, giusto ciel io morirò, giusto ciel io morirò." After a short break for ritornellos and two other lines, she sings these same words all over again.

Some aria texts are purposely broken up into stuttering, schizophrenic fragments. Others take the form of a "simile" aria, or *aria di paragone*, in which a confused, tormented, or ecstatic actor compares his emotional state to that of a river, or a raging sea, or a mother tiger, or a serpent, or a drifting, abandoned ship. Other verses for arias were written to encourage picturesque or coloristic musical effects, by including words for nightingales, zephyrs, trumpets, or death. Clever analysts have studied closely the musical settings of these supposedly formula-bound arias, to demonstrate how well their mellifluous syllables and translatable images lent themselves to musical composition—and how well certain composers rose to the challenge.

Even though most of them have been lost, there are still far too many opera seria scores around for one to generalize safely about their music. Some of their basic features (the number and length of arias, the *da capo* form itself, the nature and degree of orchestral participation, the use of ensembles, the role of chorus and ballet) changed considerably as the 18th century drew to a close. *Idomeneo* (1781) has only 12 arias; but nine choral numbers, three marches, a ballet, and three ensembles. By *La Clemenza di Tito* (1791), Mozart had cut the arias down to 10, half of them *senza da capo*, all with minimal word-repeats or superfluous decorations. He added three duets, three trios, five choral numbers, and a march. Both operas include subtly scored and richly accompanied recitatives; in both, the orchestra plays a major dramatic role.

Before Mozart, few opera seria composers attempted to organize their chains of jewel-like arias and linking recitatives into musically unified wholes—or even to tie together series of numbers or scenes. Their operas were, as one critic put it, the sum of their parts: nothing more and nothing less.

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At the time they were written, no one regarded these particular combinations of words and music as holy works of art. The words inevitably came first, and were regarded as more important and lasting than the scores, which might vary for every new production. Almost every opera composer of the century recycled old tunes (his own or others) into new

operas. Handel's 1732 "pasticcio" arrangement of Leonardo Leo's *Catone in Utica* includes a few arias by the composer of record, but even more by Hasse, Porpora, Vivaldi, and Vinci, borrowed from a dozen different operas.

The texts would be altered as well, to suit the special conditions of any new performance. Even the great Metastasio agreed—under protest—to rewrite four of his early hits, in order to satisfy the demands of a celebrated castrato who insisted on fewer but longer arias. Our painstaking researches in quest of "definitive" scores would have made no sense to 18th-century opera composers, whose work was often seen as no more important than that of the set designers', and considerably less important than the singers'. Their music was regarded by its audiences as people today might regard the music at a circus or a film—which is one reason why so little of it has survived.

Audiences, in fact, and their expectations and behavior, explain some of the stranger features of opera seria. In Italy, during the 18th century, and probably in most other countries as well, going to the opera was regarded as a social rather than an aesthetic experience. (What's that? You say the same is true today?)

Well-to-do folk could rent boxes for a whole season, decorate them to their own taste, and turn them into small private living rooms where they could receive friends, chat, play cards, eat and drink—all during the performance. Since they knew the plots, and weren't there for the story in any case, they tended to talk through the recitatives (which grew shorter and shorter as the century progressed), and might turn toward the stage only to hear one of their favorite singers performing a big number. The whole experience was probably closer to an evening at Vauxhall Gardens, or a café-concert in Paris (with occasional turns by a visiting celebrity-singer) than to an evening at most opera houses today.

Under these circumstances, it was ultimately the celebrity-singers, the *primi uomini* and *prime donne*, who called the shots. Paid ten times as much as the poet or composer, it was *they* people came to see and hear. They were expected to add their own vocal ornaments to the written score, pull out all stops for the *da capo* repeats, and improvise display pieces for the breaks, or "cadenzas"—which might include intricate note-for-note "duels" with a virtuoso trumpeter.

Throughout the century, angry poets, composers, and critics complained about the cavalier ways in which singers treated would-be serious operas. During the orchestral ritornellos between stanzas



of their arias, they might walk about, chat, adjust their costumes, or take snuff. They might bow to or joke with their friends in the audience. They sometimes interjected favorite arias of their own, totally irrelevant to the plot. It was they, the star singers, who set the pace of an aria; not the composer-conductor. It was for them that new music had to be written each season, for them that composers had to come up with music carefully adapted to their individual vocal ranges, skills, and idiosyncrasies. It was they, the singers, who insisted on shorter and shorter recitatives, longer and longer da capo sections, and the extravagant multiplication of repeats, in order to have maximum opportunity to display their vocal prowess.

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This short summary of what opera seria was, on the page and on the stage, may begin to suggest some of the reasons why its silvery bubble burst. Not surprisingly, the aesthetically detached, primarily social, "canary-fancier" or café-concert relationship of upper-class audiences to opera seria gradually diminished: spectators tired of its growing extravagance, the old-fashioned sameness of it all, and turned to other amusements. Even the better late-Metastasian composers, like Jommelli and Traetta, began to protest against the everlasting obligation to set the same old texts, over and over—texts that seemed less and less suitable for the kind of music they wanted to write.

Although they were back by Rossini's time, castrati were banned after Napoleon invaded Italy in 1796. But it was generally agreed by those in a position to compare that none of their successors had measured up to the incredibly gifted male sopranos of 1720-1760, such as Senesino and Farinelli. Without virtuosi castrati (who made the works seem freakish to the 19th century in any case), most opere serie were long regarded as unperformable.

Other changes, external and internal, helped bring about the end of opera seria, or at least its transformation into something else. Italian opera buffa kept increasing in quality and popularity through the century, cresting with works by Paisiello, Haydn, Cimarosa, and of course Mozart and Rossini. Spared the need for classical, moralizing plots and sheer vocal display, comic operas grew to be more recognizably "human" and audience-involving than opera seria, and led to a serious split in the Italian theater-going public.

The rise of the symphony and the oratorio, and a growing preference for works in their own language, began to

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alienate German and English audiences from the long-dominant "Italian opera" mode. Paris, and French taste generally (which involved, among other things, greater use of chorus and ballet, and less dependence on vocal virtuosity), gradually took over the cultural center stage. After the French Revolution, the court theaters and aristocratic patronage that had supported opera seria began to wane. And the radically new works of Gluck and Mozart let people know that something better was possible.

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After almost a century of neglect, the revival of opera seria began in Germany with seven performances of Handel operas at the Göttingen Festival in the 1920s, and the efforts of the Halle Festival, another Handel shrine. Winton Dean traces the British rediscovery of Handel's operas to an "almost accidental" production in 1955, which led to the creation of the Handel Opera Society in London. Both Halle and the H.O.S. are now apparently committed to mounting all of Handel's 39 surviving operas, and to "operatizing" as many of his oratorios as they can.

For the 200 years before 1955, Dean noted, there had been only three English stage revivals of Handel's operas. Thirty years later, during the Handel bicentennial year of 1985, one could (with a little traveling) have seen at least 67 fully-staged productions of 22 Handel operas—including nine different versions of *Giulio Cesare*—as well as operatic stagings of 12 of his odes and oratorios. Companies around the world now perform Handel's operas every year, which has done more than anything else to accustom modern audiences to the conventions of opera seria. Though no threat yet to *Aida*, *Bohème*, or *Carmen*, Handel's *Giulio Cesare* and *Orlando* are inching up to the status of "repertory staples."

The summer festivals at Salzburg in Austria and Glyndebourne in England helped open the floodgates, before and during the bicentennial celebrations of his birth in 1956, to a worldwide deluge of Mozart that has not yet diminished. His two late opere serie, *Idomeneo* (which tends to be called either "the best opera seria ever written," or a work so innovative it falls outside the genre altogether) and *La Clemenza di Tito*, only returned to the regular repertory lists after revivals at these two festivals in 1949-52. Since then, each of these operas has been recorded several times. Each is now produced by from three to six companies or festivals a year—since 1970, in more or less accurate versions. (The United States tends to catch on to these rediscoveries a decade or





Set design for a 1725 Hamburg production of Handel's *Giulio Cesare*.

so late.) The teenaged Mozart's lesser opere serie also get an occasional hearing nowadays—but then, so does almost anything he wrote.

Gluck, whose most commonly performed works *do* fall outside the opera seria tradition, has been a persistent if minor repertory regular in France and Germany, and (to a lesser degree) in other countries as well. Rossini's "historical romantic" operas, like *William Tell*, have never quite fallen out of the repertory; but his early 19th-century "heroic" operas, like *Semiramide* and *Tancredi*, only began to reappear in the mid-1960s, when people like Joan Sutherland and Marilyn Horne—prime movers in the Handel opera revival as well—decided to risk singing them.

So far, the opera seria revival hasn't moved very far beyond these four names. Other 18th-century composers—Piccinni, Galuppi, Pergolesi, Cimarosa, and Paisiello—are well represented on the production lists, but almost exclusively by their comic operas. Since 1950, the opere serie of Vivaldi (10 productions of eight operas, according to *Opera* magazine) and of Haydn (17 productions of four operas) have attracted the most revivalist attention. Four of Alessandro Scarlatti's opere serie have been produced a total of nine times. In all three of these cases, I suspect that the popularity of the composer's non-dramatic work had something to do with the choice.

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The "conventions" of any art form grow out of or in response to the ruling ideas and social conditions of its time and place. Depending on our distance from that time and place, these conventions may seem to us puzzling, alien, freakish, even disgusting. Piled one on another, they can create a wall between us and the

work we find impossible to scale.

The chief conventions that still block access for many people to 18th-century opera seria are (1) the use of female-quality voices (whether women's or countertenors', castrati being no longer with us) for mature and manly heroes like Caesar and Titus, Achilles and Alexander; (2) the action-halting effect of so many long set-piece arias, which tend to kill the pace and continuity of a drama, and turn operas into concerts; (3) the vapidity of many of the aria texts, which become all the more threadbare as the same words are repeated eight, ten, or twelve times, and their vowels are stretched out for dramatically meaningless melismas; and (4) the foreign-language recitatives, which are often of minimal musical or dramatic interest.

The plots, I think, for all their high-mindedness and complexity, are rarely a problem. Any operagoer who can tolerate the plots of most works in the current repertory—*Turandot*, let us say, or *Parsifal*, or *Die Frau ohne Schatten*—should have no trouble with Metastasio's.

The walls of convention that surround opera seria can be surmounted, with the right kind of support from the people who produce it. Correct orchestration, performance style, and vocal ranges, I think, are the right way to start—within the limits of the possible, and the freedoms the 18th century granted itself. There's no point in trying to sell 18th-century opera by trying to make it sound "19th century." When the acting, singing, and staging are coherent, strong, and full of conviction—whatever the chosen imagery or theatrical style—I find I can quite easily accept a Janet Baker or Marilyn Horne impersonating a Roman emperor or a medieval general. A few countertenors (Jeffrey Gall leaps to mind) have managed to overcome my resistance to

that unearthly vocal range. The Italian language, I believe, is essential. The music was written to slip onto already lyrical vowel sounds like a fine glove onto flawless fingers, and can be made to fit no other language so suavely.

Much of the recitative of opera seria *can* be acted, or at least musically declaimed, with something resembling the passion and conviction of a good Comédie Française production of Racine. Lines that are genuinely, clinically dead can always be cut; but one must be very sure they're dead, and not carrying forward some essential current of action or music.

As for the five- to ten-minute tralalalalalal arias—I don't know what to say. I have serious problems with emotionally empty, musically dull, dramatically meaningless *da capo* arias, which the opera seria tradition (including Handel) includes more of than one might wish. When florid singing is devoid of drama, I find myself counting the repeats, not rising on wings of song. In neither ballet nor opera am I a fan of "circus turn" acrobatics, the kind of spectator who can admire and applaud mere physical feats—super-rapid scales, trills, and shakes, a dozen bars sung without a breath, the single astonishing High Note.

But accuracy, precision, notes hit dead center from distant leaps, tonal nuance and shading, expression through the voice—these are something else; especially if the voice is beautiful to begin with, and under total and artful control.

A few *da capo* arias *do* work dramatically—when a character like Orlando in his *furioso* phase, has clearly gone out of his mind; or when the words of the ABA sections have been musically converted into a credible sequence of evolving and contradictory emotions. But there is no way, logically, or even dramatico-irrationally, to "act" lines like "I have a hundred zombies [serpents, worms: *larve*] inside me, I have a thousand furies in my breast" (from *L'Olimpiade*)—eleven times over.

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The fundamental weakness of opera seria was the near-total separation of the dramatist (with his own literary pretensions, his non-musical ideals) from the composer. Only when the two work together as one, or at least as a working partnership—with the composer clearly in charge—do we have any chance of achieving operas of genuine and lasting dramatic force. Monteverdi understood this perfectly; so did Gluck; so did Mozart and every important composer since 1800. ■



# 1989 Opera Previews

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.

- 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.

- Idomeneo* 10/5  
Sandor Salgo
- Lohengrin* 11/9  
Michael Mitchell
- Orlando Furioso* 11/16  
Eleanor Selfridge-Field
- 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.

- 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.

- Idomeneo* 10/3  
Sandor Salgo
- Lohengrin* 11/7  
Michael Mitchell
- Orlando Furioso* 11/14  
Eleanor Selfridge-Field
- Die Frau ohne Schatten* 11/21  
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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.

- 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.

- 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.

- Aida* 10/16
- Madama Butterfly* 10/23
- Lohengrin* 11/6
- Orlando Furioso* 11/13
- Die Frau ohne Schatten* 11/20

SOHL





## FRIENDS OF THE KENSINGTON LIBRARY

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.

## ROBERT GOODHUE'S FALL OPERA COURSE

Ten classes on San Francisco Opera's season are offered, and there is a choice of three series: Mondays from August 21 to November 20 at 6:30 p.m.; Thursdays from August 31 to November 16 at 6:30 p.m.; and Saturdays from September 9 to November 18 from 10 a.m. to noon or from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. Sessions are held at the Galleria Park Hotel, 191 Sutter, S.F. Cost for the series of 10 two-hour classes is \$80; individual previews are \$10. For further information, please call (415) 956-1271.

## 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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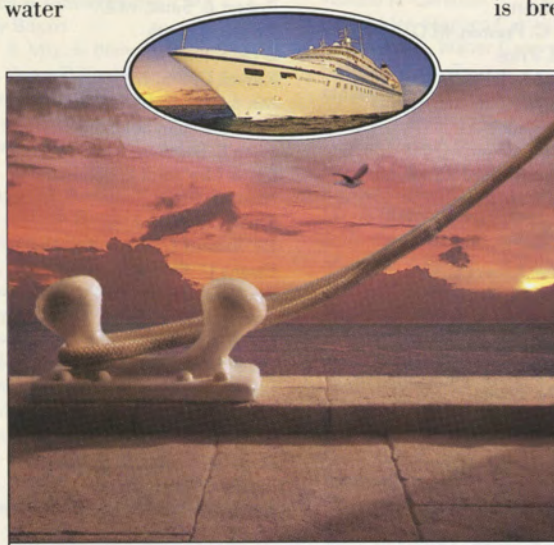
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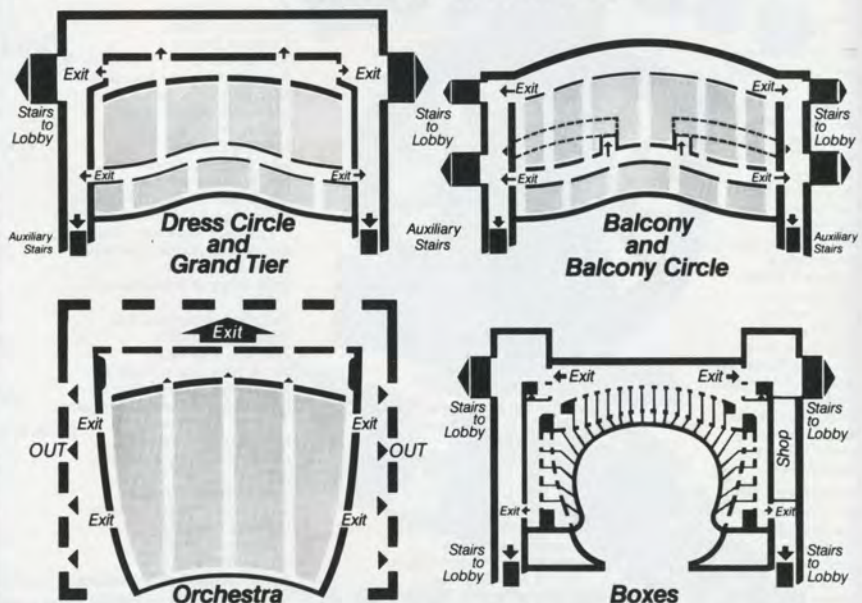
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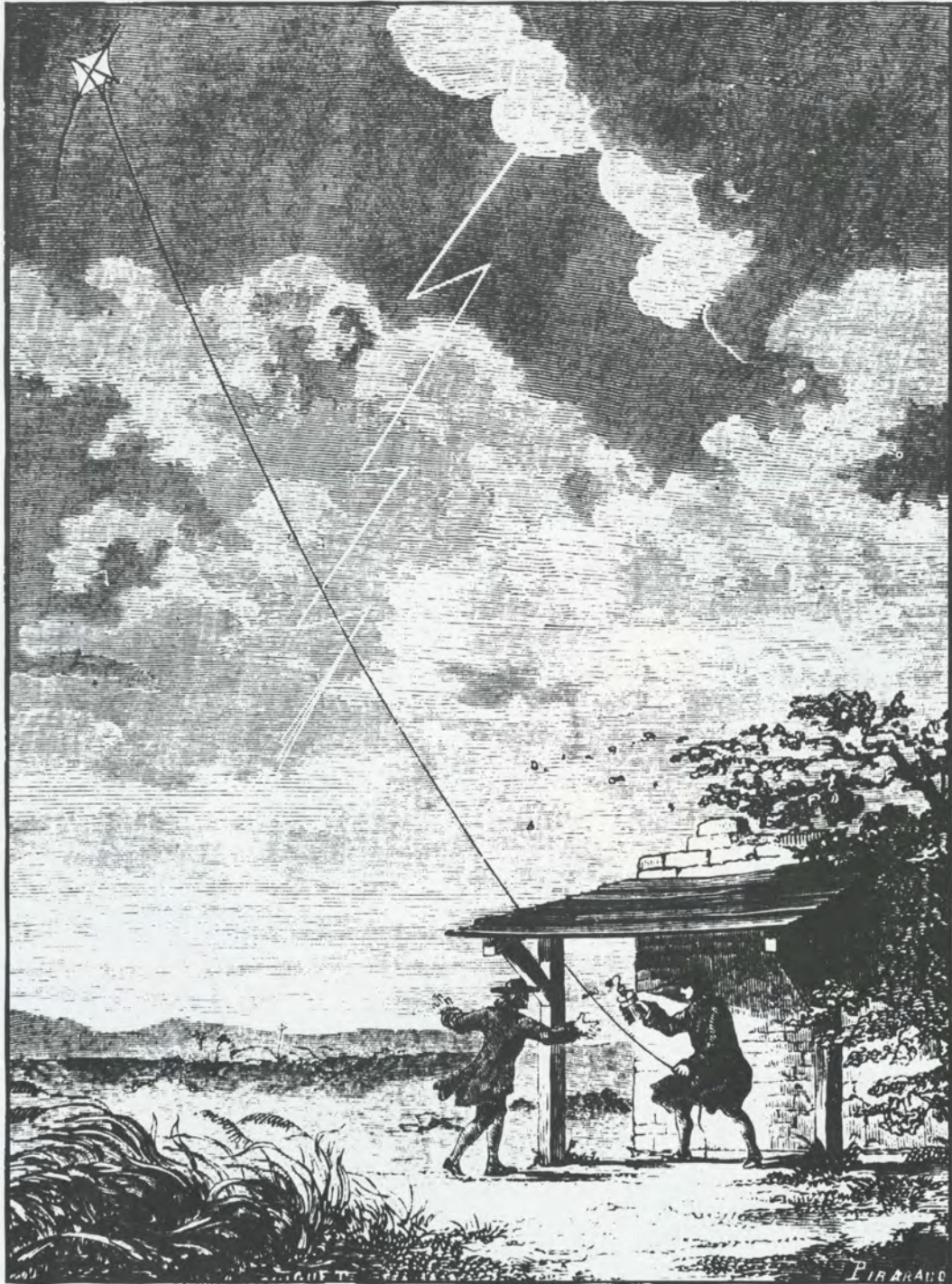
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