

Mefistofele
(Mephistopheles)

1989

Saturday, September 16, 1989 8:00 PM

Tuesday, September 19, 1989 8:00 PM (Broadcast)

Friday, September 22, 1989 8:00 PM (Broadcast)

Sunday, September 24, 1989 2:00 PM (Broadcast)

Thursday, September 28, 1989 8:00 PM

Wednesday, October 4, 1989 7:30 PM

Sunday, October 8, 1989 2:00 PM

Tuesday, October 10, 1989 7:30 PM

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1989 SEASON



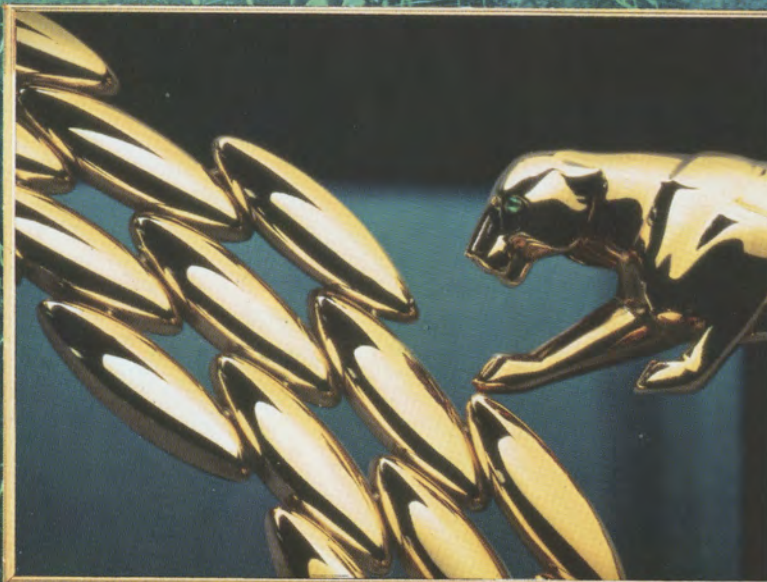
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San Francisco Opera

Lotfi Mansouri, *General Director*

Sir John Pritchard, *Music Director*

Lulu

1989 SEASON

FEATURES

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The multiple strands of Wedekind's and Berg's creation are tied together.
- 50 **Who is Lulu?** by Timothy Pfaff
Five characters (conductor, stage director and three singing actors) offer their views of the enigmatic woman who is the subject of Berg's opera.
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A brief profile of Phyllis Wattis, the woman behind this season's new production of Alban Berg's *Lulu*.

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COVER

Kees van Dongen, 1877-1968

The Black Chemise, 1905-9

Oil on canvas with wood attachment, 22¼ x 18¼

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art

Gift of Wilbur D. May

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Photo: Don Myer

Editor: Koraljka Lockhart
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Editorial Assistant: Robert M. Robb
ISSN 0892-7189

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

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

Michel Pisani, *President*
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Account Executives: Helen Parnisi
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SAN FRANCISCO OPERA MAGAZINE, 110 Gough Street, Suite 402, San Francisco, CA 94102
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From the Chairman of the Board and the President

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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PHOTO: JOHN VAUGHAN INTERIOR DESIGN: PAUL VINCENT WISEMAN



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General Director's Message

The current San Francisco Opera season is special for many reasons. The repertoire spans the gamut of operatic creativity from Antonio Vivaldi to Alban Berg, with four of the works being given in exciting new productions. There is one aspect of our 67th season, however, that I find particularly heartening. One of my dreams for the Company is for the outstanding young talent of the San Francisco Opera Center to form an ensemble that will become our core company of singers, around whom we can build our repertoire and secure the highest possible artistic standards from production to production, season to season. A glance at this year's roster will show how quickly this ideal is already starting to become a reality. Two of the title roles in our fall operas belong to two brilliant young sopranos who have come through the Center's numerous training programs: Ann Panagulias as Lulu, and Nikki Li Hartliep 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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Continued on page 13



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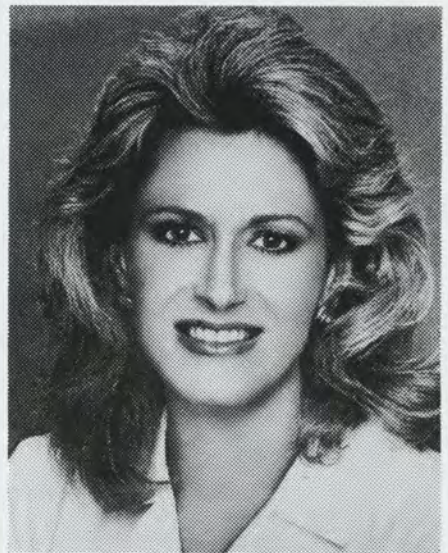
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San Francisco Opera

1989 Season

Lotfi Mansouri, *General Director*

Sir John Pritchard, *Music Director*

Opening Night	Wednesday, September 20, 7:30	Tuesday, October 10, 7:30
Friday, September 8, 7:30	Lulu Berg	Mefistofele Boito
Falstaff Verdi	Thursday, September 21, 8:00	Wednesday, October 11, 8:00
Lorengar, Horne, Swenson, Cowdrick; Stewart, De Haan, Raftery, Frank, Pittsinger, Sénéchal*	Falstaff Verdi	Idomeneo Mozart
Kord/Calábria/Ponnelle/Ponnelle/Munn	Friday, September 22, 8:00	Thursday, October 12, 7:30
<i>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.</i>	Mefistofele Boito	Otello Verdi
Saturday, September 9, 8:00	Saturday, September 23, 1:00	Saturday, October 14, 2:00
<i>New Production</i>	Lulu Berg	Idomeneo Mozart
Lulu Berg	Saturday, September 23, 8:00	Sunday, October 15, 2:00
Panagulias, Lear, Harris*, Cook, Swift*, Mills*; Braun, McCauley, Hotter, Myers*, Cowan*, Rideout*, Travis, Villanueva, Petersen, Irmiter, Reinhardt Mauceri/Mansouri/Schneider-Siemssen/ Mackie*/Whitfield*	Falstaff Verdi	Otello Verdi
<i>San Francisco Opera gratefully acknowledges a generous grant from the Paul L. & Phyllis C. Wattis Foundation to underwrite this production.</i>	Sunday, September 24, 2:00	Tuesday, October 17, 8:00
Tuesday, September 12, 8:00	Mefistofele Boito	Idomeneo Mozart
Lulu Berg	Tuesday, September 26, 7:30	Friday, October 20, 8:00
Wednesday, September 13, 7:30	Falstaff Verdi	Otello Verdi
Falstaff Verdi	Thursday, September 28, 8:00	Saturday, October 21, 8:00
Friday, September 15, 8:00	Mefistofele Boito	Aida Verdi
Lulu Berg	Friday, September 29, 8:00	Sweet*, Zajick, Racette; Popov, Noble, Langan, Pittsinger, Li Kellogg*/Donnell/Schmidt/Casey/ Tippet*/Munn
Saturday, September 16, 8:00	Falstaff Verdi	<i>This production was originally made possible by a gift from an anonymous donor.</i>
Co-production with the Grand Théâtre de Genève	Saturday, September 30, 8:00	Sunday, October 22, 2:00
Mefistofele Boito	Otello Verdi	Idomeneo Mozart
Beňáčková, Christin, Manhart; O'Neill, Ramey, Harper, Wunsch	Ricciarelli, Keen; Mauro, Ellis, De Haan, Pittsinger, Schwisow, Skinner, Villanueva	Tuesday, October 24, 7:30
Arena/Carsen*/Levine*/Poulin**/Munn	Kord/Asagaroff/Ponnelle/Ponnelle/ Arhelger	Otello Verdi
<i>Production made possible, in part, by Mr. & Mrs. John C. McGuire and by Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Tilton.</i>	Sunday, October 1, 2:00	Wednesday, October 25, 7:30
Sunday, September 17, 2:00	Lulu Berg	Idomeneo Mozart
Falstaff Verdi	Tuesday, October 3, 8:00	Thursday, October 26, 8:00
Sunday, September 17, 7:30	Otello Verdi	Aida Verdi
<i>Family Performance</i>	Wednesday, October 4, 7:30	Friday, October 27, 8:00
Falstaff Verdi	Mefistofele Boito	Idomeneo Mozart
Racette*, Williams, Keen, Spence; Noble, Boutet*, Ledbetter, Rideout, Travis, Estep*	Friday, October 6, 8:00	Saturday, October 28, 8:00
Robertson/Calábria/Ponnelle/Ponnelle/ Munn	Otello Verdi	Madama Butterfly Puccini
Tuesday, September 19, 8:00	Saturday, October 7, 8:00	Hartlieb, Redmon*, Spence; Polozov, Laperrière*, Perry, Villanueva, Skinner, Travis, Estep
Mefistofele Boito	<i>New Production</i>	Pritchard/Farruggio/Businger/Munn
	Idomeneo Mozart	<i>This production was originally made possible by a grant from the San Francisco Opera Guild.</i>
	Mattila*, Gustafson, Racette, Spence; Ochman, Blochwitz**, Lewis, Outland*, Cox*, Li*, Ledbetter	Sunday, October 29, 2:00
	Pritchard/Copley/Conklin/Stennett/ Munn	Aida Verdi
	<i>San Francisco Opera gratefully acknowledges a generous grant from the L.J. & Mary C. Skaggs Foundation for partial underwriting of this production.</i>	
	Sunday, October 8, 2:00	
	Mefistofele Boito	

Tuesday, October 31, 8:00 Madama Butterfly	Puccini	Friday, November 24, 8:00 Orlando Furioso	Vivaldi	Thursday, December 7, 7:30 Die Frau ohne Schatten	Strauss
Wednesday, November 1, 7:30 Aida	Verdi	Saturday, November 25, 7:30 Die Frau ohne Schatten	Strauss	Friday, December 8, 7:30 Lohengrin	Wagner
Friday, November 3, 7:30 Madama Butterfly	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 Madama Butterfly (Same cast as December 3)	Puccini
Saturday, November 4, 8:00 Aida	Verdi	<i>This production was originally made possible by Cynthia Wood who has also underwritten the 1989 revival.</i>		Saturday, December 9, 8:00 Orlando Furioso	Vivaldi
Sunday, November 5, 2:00 Madama Butterfly	Puccini	Sunday, November 26, 1:30 Lohengrin	Wagner	Sunday, December 10, 1:30 Die Frau ohne Schatten	Strauss
Tuesday, November 7, 8:00 Aida	Verdi			**United States opera debut *San Francisco Opera debut	
Friday, November 10, 7:30 Madama Butterfly	Puccini	Tuesday, November 28, 7:30 Die Frau ohne Schatten	Strauss		
Saturday, November 11, 7:30 Lohengrin 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 Lohengrin	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 Aida	Verdi	Thursday, November 30, 7:30 Orlando Furioso	Vivaldi	Repertoire, casts and dates subject to change.	
Tuesday, November 14, 8:00 Aida	Verdi	Friday, December 1, 7:30 Die Frau ohne Schatten	Strauss	Box Office and telephone sales: (415) 864-3330.	
Wednesday, November 15, 8:00 Madama Butterfly	Puccini	Saturday, December 2, 7:30 Lohengrin	Wagner		
Friday, November 17, 7:30 Lohengrin	Wagner	Sunday, December 3, 1:00 Madama Butterfly Gauci*, Manhart, Spence; Aragall, Schexnayder*, Li, Villanueva, Skinner, Travis, Estep Pritchard/Farruggio/Businger/Munn	Puccini		
Saturday, November 18, 8:00 Madama Butterfly <i>This performance made possible by a generous grant from Shaklee Corporation.</i>	Puccini	Sunday, December 3, 8:00 Orlando Furioso	Vivaldi		
Sunday, November 19, 2:00 <i>New Production</i> Orlando Furioso	Vivaldi	Monday, December 4, 7:30 Die Frau ohne Schatten	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 Orlando Furioso	Vivaldi		
Tuesday, November 21, 7:30 Lohengrin	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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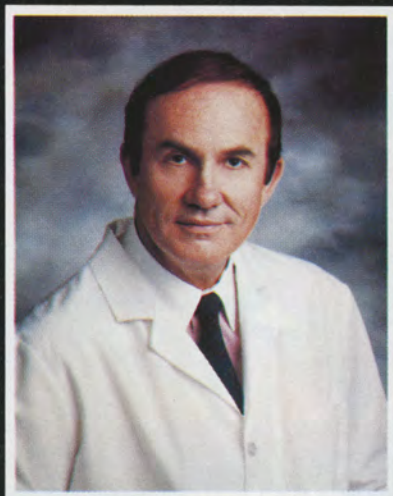
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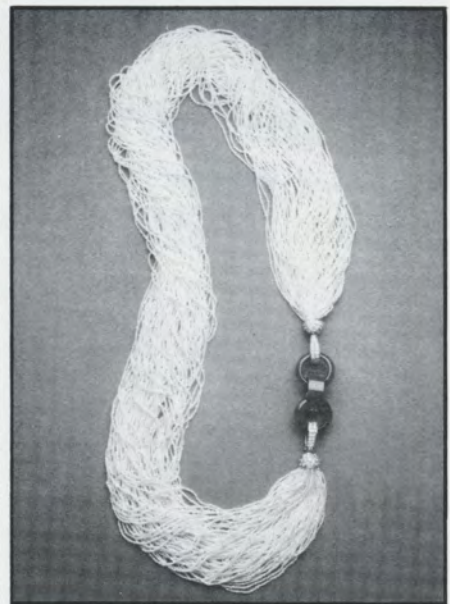
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Notes on *Mefistofele*

By JULIAN BUDDEN

"Mephistopheles is as old as the Bible and Aeschylus. Mephistopheles is the serpent in the Garden of Eden; he is the vulture of Prometheus. Mephistopheles is the doubt that generates learning, the evil that generates good. Wherever the spirit of negation is to be found, there is Mephistopheles. Job has a Mephistopheles called Satan; Homer has one called Thersites, Shakespeare has another called Falstaff. Goethe's original inspiration lies in forming a single type from these three: one who is as hellish as Satan, as grotesque as Thersites, as epicurean as Falstaff. Mephistopheles is the embodiment of the eternal *No* addressed to the True, the Beautiful and the Good."

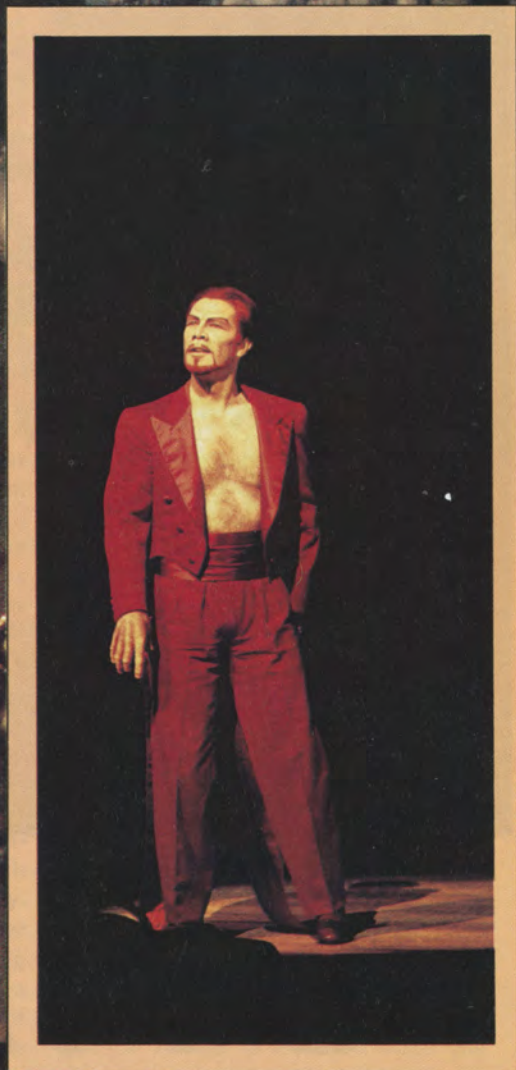
These words, taken from the printed preface to the first edition of *Mefistofele*, which the author had characteristically published in advance of the opera's premiere, tell us rather more about Boito himself than about Goethe's super-devil. Born in Padua in 1842, the son of a Polish Countess and a ne'er-do-well miniaturist from the Veneto, Boito remained to the end something of an outsider on the Italian scene. His father decamped after two years of marriage, leaving Arrigo's mother to bring up her two children in penury. Of his family Boito knew only his mother's relations, whom he would later occasionally visit in Poland. Nonetheless, he considered himself wholly Italian—indeed in 1866 he would join the army of patriotic volunteers who marched into the Trentino under the leadership of Garibaldi—but an Italian with a mission to enlarge his country's intellectual and

(Inset) Samuel Ramey as Mefistofele; (Background) A scene from the Grand Théâtre de Genève 1988/89 staging of Mefistofele; a co-production with the San Francisco Opera.

APPELGHEM

Julian Budden, internationally renowned musicologist, is the author of a landmark three-volume series, *The Operas of Verdi*.







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Fyodor Chaliapin in the title role of Mefistofele at the Bolshoi Opera in 1902.

gliatura e il 6 Febbraio; but its true founder and guide was the writer Giuseppe Rovani, author of the fictional chronicle *Cento anni*, an imposing figure who held forth at the Caffé Martini or Osteria della Noce at Milan to a host of young artists and littérateurs on aesthetic and moral principles. His disciples included the painter Tranquillo Cremona, the poet Emilio Praga, the sculptor Giuseppe Grandi. Their aims were above all iconoclastic. They defied the accepted canons of art and religion; and like all revolutionaries, they detested the cautious reformers; thus, the liberal catholicism of Alessandro Manzoni, the one surviving literary giant of the age, was anathema to them. "Now is the hour of the Antichrist," Praga proclaimed; "Christ has died again" ("Cristo è rimorto"—a verbal play on the prayer-book's "Cristo è risorto"). The gods of the "scapigliati" were Heine, Hugo, Gautier and above all Baudelaire, whose decadent lifestyle many of them imitated (indeed Praga was to die of drink and drugs). Among their ideals was the breaking down of conventional barriers between the sister-arts; Praga's poems frequently aspire to the quality of impressionist painting; Cremona's pictures were compared to musical compositions.

Returning to Milan in 1863 after two years abroad on a traveling scholarship awarded by the city's conservatoire, Boito threw himself heart and soul into the movement, becoming one of its leading propagandists, both in music and literature. As theatrical critic of the periodical *Figaro* he attacked the entire apparatus of the established church: "Our generation . . . cries aloud that every day Catholicism crumbles, that fetishism is in ruins, that a restless search for truth, perhaps the Messianism of Mickiewicz, is rearing its head. It cries continually that God has putrefied, that man has made himself divine, that the Man-God no longer exists, that Genius alone is the Son of God . . . that the Holy Spirit is no longer amongst us, that there is no Easter, no Virgin (as Raphael himself suspected) and no Resurrection . . ." and so on. He collaborated with Praga in a mildly scandalous play, *Le Madri Galanti*, which attacked the hypocritical values of society. His most characteristic product of those years was a bizarre poem, *Il Re Orso* (King Bear) about a monarch haunted by a mysterious voice that bids him beware of the "worm's bite"; and of course it is the



San Francisco Opera presented Mefistofele during its very first season, in 1923. Adamo Didur sang the title role, Bianca Saroya was Elena and Margherita, while Beniamino Gigli sang Faust. The photo shows Signor Gigli in the role in 1915.

worm who wins in the end, devouring the king's dead body. The general layout with its recurrent motifs and wealth of verbal assonance, at times foreshadowing the poetry of Edith Sitwell, give the sense of a symphonic poem in words, and not by chance. For Boito, music remained the supreme art—"the queen of all the arts; more than a queen: a goddess." From the columns of the recently founded *Giornale della Società del Quartetto* he preached the regeneration of the long-lost Italian instrumental tradition chiefly through the study of the great German classics, whose authors he discoursed upon in bursts of high-flown imagery, not always comprehensible. "Haydn proceeds from Bach like the flowering cytisus from the terrible rock." In Schumann's music it is not Schumann who sings; "it is a sybil, a grace, a 'zvango' (a word for which you

artistic horizons and to lead her into the vanguard of European culture.

The time was certainly ripe for such an ambition. Under the powers of the Holy Alliance, Italy's art and literature had tended toward stagnation, and never more palpably than in the decade which followed the collapse of the 1848 uprising. Even opera, the one musical sphere in which Italy had retained a certain hegemony, was languishing. The post-Rossinian tradition which had sustained the invention of Donizetti, Bellini and a number of lesser lights, had lost its vitality. Only Verdi remained capable of perpetual self-renewal. Beneath the surface, however, powerful forces were stirring, powers which would break out into the open the moment Italy attained freedom and independence.

The movement known as *Scapigliatura* (the word means literally "dishevelment") took its name from a novel by Clelio Arrighi (Carlo Righetti), *La Scapi-*



Following its first staging in 1923, San Francisco Opera presented *Mefistofele* a full 29 years later, in 1952. Nicola Rossi Lemeni sang the title role (shown above), while Bidú Sayão appeared in her farewell performance as Margherita. Rossi Lemeni returned as *Mefistofele* a year later, with Licia Albanese as Margherita and a newcomer named Beverly Sills in the role of Elena. DE ROTA

will search in vain in an Italian dictionary), a god." "Every time the critic's pen encounters the name of Beethoven it should pause before it, like a pilgrim before a cross." The comparison of a Mozart slow movement with one by Mendelssohn prompted him to a notorious blaze of rhetoric. "The Sublime is simpler than the beautiful. The Beautiful can become incarnate in every kind of form from the bizarre to the multiple and disparate: for the Sublime only one form will suffice: the grand form, the form that is divine, universal, eternal—the spherical form. The horizon is sublime, the sea is sublime, the sun is sublime. Shakespeare is spherical, Dante is spherical, Beethoven is spherical; the sun is simpler than a carna-



The 1963 San Francisco Opera production of *Mefistofele* featured Giorgio Tozzi in the name part, shown here during the *Witches' Sabbath*. The stage director was Lotfi Mansouri, then in his first season of Company assignments.

tion, the sea simpler than the brook, Mendelssohn's *Adagio* is spherical and simpler than Mozart's *Andante*." "Spherical music" caused much amusement to Verdi and his friends.

For Boito, however, the ultimate goal always had to be opera. "Let us practice the symphony and the quartet," he declared, "so as to be able to tackle the lyric drama." Not, it need hardly be said, the kind of opera to which Italians had long been accustomed. To the post-Rossinian tradition with its abundance of fixed patterns such as the aria, the duet, the *pezzo concertato*, he opposed a firm Mephistophelian "no!" These were mere formulae—a term which by its etymological derivation revealed its essentially trivializing nature. What was wanted was "form" in the grandest sense. But how was it to be achieved? Evidently not with the help of Wagnerian methods. "Wagner," Boito admitted, "destroyed the *operatic formula*,

Wagner promised to enlarge the bounds of rhythm and melody, Wagner in his triple role as poet, composer and aesthetic philosopher seemed to be the man born and predestined to accomplish the mission of renewal . . . It would be unkind of us not to recognize in his music a powerful instinct, a vigorous muscular frame, but his dramas are inept and ridiculous in the face of the task which they were called upon to undertake." And elsewhere: "Wagner was the artistic Bar-Jesus of his time."

Clearly it was up to Boito himself to set an example for others to follow; and in due course the opportunity presented itself. Among the themes that were to occupy Boito throughout his life was the polarity of good and evil; and nowhere did he see this problem more subtly and comprehensively worked out than in the monumental poetic drama of the Protestant Goethe. The notion of *Faust* as the

subject for an opera seems to have occurred to him during his days at the Conservatory during the 1850s; by 1867 its realization seemed a possibility. The venue was to be La Scala, Milan, where the musical director was Boito's old teacher Alberto Mazzucato; and he could count on the support of Filippo Filippi, the leading critic of the time and himself a member of the *Scapigliatura*, and that of Giulio Ricordi, a close personal friend and the effective head of his ailing father's publishing firm.

It was not Boito's first venture into the operatic world. In 1865 he had already written a libretto for his friend Franco Faccio's *Amleto* which in no way revolutionary was far more inventive than most of its kind and also unusually true to Shakespeare. But *Mefistofele*, as it would be called, was to be very different: a large-scale music drama which would explore the German poet's thought in all its ramifications without any concessions to current practice. Its only conventional feature was to be Mefistofele's aria "Son lo spirito che nega," cast in the form of French couplets in the manner of Meyerbeer (a composer, incidentally, much admired by Boito); and even this would contain its own condemnation: a refrain consisting of loud whistles, the traditional [European] sign of audience disapproval.

In the event, alas, this turned out to be more than a metaphor. The first performance took place on March 5, 1868, with Marcello Junca in the title role, Spallazzi as Faust, Reboux as Margherita and Helen of Troy. Boito himself unwisely assumed the direction. Not everything was disliked; there was some applause for the Prologue in Heaven and for the quartet in the garden scene, while the Classical Sabbath was heard in respectful silence. For the rest of the score, whistles and boos were the order of the day. In view of the opera's immense length (the show ended at half-past one in the morning) it was decided to revive it in two parts, to be given on successive evenings. But in this form, the opera fared no better; the singers were hopelessly demoralized and amid shouts of "Basta!" the curtain fell on March 8 on the original *Mefistofele*, never to rise again.

The critics were no less hostile. Some accused Boito fatuously of having imitated Wagner, whose name was then on everyone's lips, though few had heard a note of his music. Typical of the general



Mary Costa goes through Margherita's Mefistofele agonies in San Francisco Opera's 1963 staging of the Boito opera.

consensus was a notice that appeared in *L'Emporio Pittoresco*: "The music of *Mefistofele* could not please, since it has no melody; every now and then it seems to want to start a phrase, only to break it off abruptly. There is no passion, and the monotony of the recitative ends by boring. Boito should realize that he has given a far more convincing proof of his talent for literature, and his failure may turn out to be a blessing if it induces him to cultivate that field and no other, since here he might become truly great." Nor was the verdict of Boito's friend Giulio Ricordi very different, though expressed in more diplomatic terms. "Boito has written an opera with many virtues and not a few defects. The question is: are these defects due to inexperience as regards the stage and matters theatrical? In that case, so much the better; we shall note a steady progress from one opera to the next, and in due course I shall hope to number Boito among the great compos-

ers. If, however, these faults are the result of a preconceived theory, of an unshakable artistic conviction, then I must say with all the frankness which informs my warm and deeply felt friendship for Boito: you may be a poet and a distinguished man of letters, but you will never be a composer for the musical stage."

Unfortunately, we cannot judge the matter for ourselves since no holograph of the 1868 version of *Mefistofele* exists, nor was it ever published in vocal score. When he came to revise it seven years later, Boito, like Verdi on similar occasions, tore out and destroyed the pages which he wished to replace. Of the discarded music only an "intermezzo sinfonico," intended to portray a battle, survives in an arrangement for piano duet. Of a dialogue between Faust and his disciple Wagner on the real and the ideal, an encounter with Lilith on the Brocken followed by a "black" Miserere, and an extended scene set in the throne room of



Janis Martin as Pantalis in San Francisco Opera's 1963 *Mefistofele*. DE MONTE

an emperor to whom Mephistopheles presents himself as a new jester, gives advice to the ruler about his state finances and finally organizes an entertainment representing the abduction of Helen by Paris, no trace remains. Two pieces were added: the duettino "Lontano, lontano, lontano," lifted from Boito's unfinished *Ero e Leandro*, whose libretto he had made over to Giovanni Bottesini to set, and Margherita's prison aria, "Spunta l'aurora pallida." The effect of the revision was to reduce the opera to manageable proportions and a somewhat more traditional layout. The five acts became four; and Faust was transformed from a baritone into a tenor.

The premiere of the new *Mefistofele* took place on August 5th, 1875, at the Teatro Comunale, Bologna, which prided itself on its forward-looking policy (in 1871 it had witnessed the first Italian performance of a Wagner opera, namely *Lohengrin*). The cast included Italo Campanini as Faust, Erminia Borghi-Mamo as Margherita and Helen of Troy and

Romano Nannetti as Mefistofele. The conductor was Emilio Usiglio. The result, if not an uncontested triumph, was enough of a success to permit a circulation among the major theaters of the peninsula. For a revival in Venice the following year, Boito made a further modification, after which the opera entered the international repertoire. Nowhere was it better received than in England, where it would feature in several Covent Garden seasons towards the end of the century. Reviewing the revival of 1889, Bernard Shaw wrote: "Boito's version of the Faust story seems almost as popular as Gounod's"—surely an overstatement, considering that the French work was given at Covent Garden every year from 1863 until 1911—"though Gounod's is a true musical creation whereas Boito has only adapted the existing resources of orchestration and harmony very ably to his libretto. In short, Gounod has set music to Faust, Boito has set Faust to Music . . . The whole work is a curious example of what can be done in opera by an accomplished literary man without original musical gifts, but with ten times the taste and culture of a musician of only ordinary extraordinariness."

A shrewd judgment, this, like so many of Shaw's on Italian opera. It is true that Boito never developed a musical style that is instantly recognizable as his own. That of *Mefistofele* is distinctly eclectic. More than one critic noted the debt of Faust's solo "Dai campi, dai prati" to the slow movement of Beethoven's *Kreutzer* Sonata; anyone familiar with the love duet in Franco Faccio's *I Profughi Fiamminghi* would have found a clear precedent for Margherita's "Cavalliere illustre a saggio"; while the main theme of the duet between Faust and Elena belongs to the family of Verdi's "Dunque l'onta di tutti sol una" in *Un Ballo in Maschera*. But the years that followed the fiasco of 1868 had taught the composer some valuable lessons. He had descended from the clouds of *Scapigliatura* theorizing to become a practical man of the theater. He wrote several libretti for other composers to use, among them *La Gioconda*, Ponchielli's most successful stage work and arguably the only Italian "grand opera" that can stand comparison with Verdi's *Aida*. He even came to terms with Wagner, making translations of *Rienzi*, *Das Liebesmahl der Apostolen* and eventually *Tristan und Isolde*. But his attitude to the Master of Bayreuth

remained ambivalent. He was stirred by the music, but repelled by the dramaturgy. *Die Walküre* he compared to a stopping train that takes ages to reach its destination.

By 1870 the *Scapigliatura* had begun to disintegrate. Many of Boito's former associates had espoused realism in art and the left wing in politics. He himself held proudly aloof from both. As a writer he inclined towards the subtly allusive metaphor, the pregnant phrase, drawing upon a vocabulary that ranged from medieval times to his own day ("Though I may claim to being a good Italian scholar," remarked the baritone Charles Santley of the English premiere of *Mefistofele*, "the chief part of the verses might have been in Chinese for any meaning I could find in them"), but always supremely adaptable to musical thought. The chief fruits of his literary labors were garnered by the aged Verdi in *Otello* and, more especially, *Falstaff*; and indeed Boito was later to claim as his chief glory the fact that he had "made the bronze colossus resound twice." Meanwhile, as a musician, he found himself increasingly isolated among his own countrymen. He had no sympathy with the "young school" headed by Puccini and Mascagni. He wrestled continually with his most ambitious project, a huge opera on the subject of Nero and his persecution of the Christians. Like Gustav Holst, he suffered bouts of nervous agraphia, during which he was unable to hold a pen. By the time he died in 1918, only four of the five acts had been set and not even they were fully scored; six years were to pass before Toscanini with the aid of the composer Vincenzo Tommasini was able to perform a presentable version of the torso. In Boito, the intellectual had for a long time stifled the creator.

Mefistofele remains his sole musical monument. It is, as Shaw observed, essentially the work of a literary man. But, if not a masterpiece of musical organization, several of its ideas are striking and imaginative. There are no lapses of taste; there is never a note or an instrument too many. The chorus "Ave Signor degli angeli" with its suggestion of perpetual ascent is unique in opera; nor will you find a more perfect miniature than the duet "Lontano, lontano, lontano." Nowhere is the attention allowed to wander. Lacking both forebears and descendants, *Mefistofele* is a work which we should be the poorer without. ■



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ARTIST PROFILES



GABRIELA BEŇÁČKOVÁ

Acclaimed Czechoslovak soprano **Gabriela Beňáčková** returns to San Francisco Opera as Margherita and Helen of Troy in *Mefistofele*, roles she has previously sung in Hamburg. She made her highly praised 1986 Company debut in the title role of *Jenůfa*. A native of Bratislava, Miss Beňáčková studied at that city's Academy of Musical Arts and made her professional debut as Natasha in Prokofiev's *War and Peace*, bowing shortly thereafter at Prague's National Theatre, where she sang principal roles from 1970 to 1982. She has since been applauded in the major opera houses of Europe, singing regularly in Vienna, Hamburg, Stuttgart, Munich, Bonn, Barcelona, Berlin, Madrid, Amsterdam, Cologne, Buenos Aires, at Covent Garden and in Osaka and Tokyo, Japan. She made an extraordinary debut with Los Angeles Opera immediately after her San Francisco Opera debut engagement, when she was invited by Plácido Domingo to step in as Desdemona opposite his Otello. Other roles in Miss Beňáčková's repertoire include the title roles of *Aida*, *Manon Lescaut* and *Ariadne auf Naxos*, Amelia in *Un Ballo in Maschera*, Elisabetta in *Don Carlo*, Leonora in *La Forza del Destino*, Elsa in *Lohengrin*, Tatiana in *Eugene Onegin*, Mimi in *La Bohème*, Leonore in *Fidelio*, Lisa in *The Queen of Spades*, Marguerite in *Faust*, Maddalena in *Andrea Chénier*, and all the principal Czech operatic heroines. She has had an extensive concert career, and in this country has sung with the Cleveland Orchestra and Chicago Symphony, as well as the Opera Orchestra of New York, with whom she has been featured in title roles of *Libuše*, *Katya Kabanova*, *Rusalka* and *Jenůfa*. She has numerous radio and television productions to her credit, and her impressive discography includes recordings of *Jenůfa*, *The Cunning Little Vixen*, *The Bartered Bride*, Dvořák's *Stabat Mater*, *Te Deum* and Requiem, two discs of Italian and Slavic opera arias, Janáček's *Glagolitic Mass*,



JUDITH CHRISTIN

Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and Mozart's Mass in C Minor with Claudio Abbado, and Mahler's Second and Eighth Symphonies with the Czech Philharmonic.

After appearing here last fall as Mother Goose in *The Rake's Progress*, mezzo-soprano **Judith Christin** returns to sing Marta in *Mefistofele*. She made her San Francisco Opera debut in the fall of 1986 as Marcellina in *Le Nozze di Figaro* and as Marthe in *Faust*, and returned the following year to portray the Third Lady in *The Magic Flute*. A native of Rhode Island, Miss Christin performs frequently at the New York City Opera and has been seen there in *Cendrillon*, *Carmen*, *The Cunning Little Vixen*, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *Candide* and *Madama Butterfly*, in which her interpretation of Suzuki was seen on a "Live from Lincoln Center" telecast. Her performance in *Albert Herring* with Opera Theatre of St. Louis was also televised nationwide and in Europe. She has appeared often with the opera companies of Santa Fe, Washington, Dallas, San Diego, Tulsa, Philadelphia and Ft. Worth, among others. Miss Christin has sung in several American premieres, including Iain Hamilton's *Anna Karenina* with Los Angeles Opera Theater, Massenet's *Chérubin* at Carnegie Hall, and Penderecki's *The Black Mask* with Santa Fe Opera. Recent engagements include her European debut in Amsterdam with the Netherlands Opera as Suzuki in *Madama Butterfly*, debuts at the Metropolitan Opera in *Eugene Onegin* and with Houston Grand Opera in *The Marriage of Figaro*, and *A Night at the Chinese Opera* in Santa Fe. Future performances include her Seattle Opera debut as Marcellina, Mary in *The Flying Dutchman* and Berta in *The Barber of Seville* at the Met, Despina in *Così fan tutte* at Santa Fe, and a return to Houston for *The Magic Flute* and *The Marriage of Figaro*.

MEFISTOFELE



EMILY MANHART

Following her portrayal of Mrs. Alexander in Glass' *Satyagraha* this summer, mezzo-soprano **Emily Manhart** returns to San Francisco Opera to sing Pantomime in *Mefistofele* and Suzuki in *Madama Butterfly*. She made her Company debut in 1987 as the Page in *Salome*, and was seen here last fall as the Madrigal Singer in *Manon Lescaut* and a Flower Maiden in *Parsifal*. After earning her master of music degree from Ohio State University, she participated in San Francisco Opera Center's Merola Opera Program in 1984 and performed Tisbe and the title role in Western Opera Theater's 1984 tour of *La Cenerentola*. She returned to the Merola Program in 1986, appearing that summer as Dorabella in the Merola production of *Così fan tutte*. During the 1986-87 season she was a member of the Houston Opera Studio, appearing as Clotilde in *Norma* and Meg Page in *Falstaff*. She was a member of the Wolfltrap Opera Company during the 1987-88 season, singing Rosina in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, Hermia in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Melide in *L'Ormino*, and Lucretia in *The Rape of Lucretia*. In June of 1988 she made her debut at the Spoleto, USA festival as Tezeuco in Graun's *Montezuma*. Her engagements next year include Suzuki in *Madama Butterfly* for Miami Opera, and Flora in *La Traviata* for the Pittsburgh Opera. Miss Manhart was a national winner of the 1984 Metropolitan National Council Auditions. In the San Francisco Opera Center Auditions Grand Finals, she received the Jean Donnell Memorial Award in 1984 and the Cenacolo Award in 1986.



SAMUEL RAMEY

American basso cantante **Samuel Ramey** returns to San Francisco Opera in the title role of *Mefistofele*, one of his signature roles that he has sung with New York City Opera, the Hamburg Staatsoper and the Geneva Opera. He made his 1978 San Francisco Opera debut as Colline in *La Bohème* and returned as Count Rodolfo in *La Sonnambula* in 1984 and for the title role of *Le Nozze di Figaro* in 1986. Born and raised in Kansas, Ramey made his New York City Opera debut in 1973 as Zuniga in *Carmen* and went on to become a leading bass with that company, singing nearly 40 roles there, many of them in productions mounted or revived by City Opera especially for him. His rare vocal gifts and unusually varied repertoire soon resulted in an impressive string of major debuts: the Canadian Opera (1975), Glyndebourne Festival (1976, his European debut), San Francisco Opera, Netherlands Opera and Hamburg Staatsoper (1978), the Lyric Opera of Chicago, Paris Opera and Aix-en-Provence Festival (1979), Vienna State Opera and La Scala in Milan (1981), Covent Garden (1982) and Metropolitan Opera (1984). Ramey's specialties include the baroque repertoire, Mozart, bel canto, and the three famous operatic devils of *Mefistofele*, Gounod's *Faust* and Berlioz's *La Damnation de Faust*. His busy schedule, stretching into the next five years, includes new productions with practically every major opera company in the world, and he has been described as the most recorded American-born bass in history, with recordings on several major labels. Among his television credits are *The Barber of Seville* and *Manon* in the "Live from Lincoln Center" series, a special on Rossini with Marilyn Horne, the title role in the Salzburg Festival production of *Don Giovanni* under Karajan, and *Carmen* and *Bluebeard's Castle*, both led by James Levine, in the "Live from the Met" series.



DENNIS O'NEILL

After making his San Francisco Opera debut during the 1984 Fall Season as Elvino in *La Sonnambula*, Welsh tenor **Dennis O'Neill** returns to sing Faust in *Mefistofele*, a role he recently sang with great success in Zurich. He spent two seasons as principal tenor for the State Opera of Australia before returning to Great Britain in 1977 to make his British debut with Scottish Opera, where he distinguished himself in numerous roles including Rodolfo in *La Bohème*, Alfredo in *La Traviata*, the Duke of Mantua in *Rigoletto* and the title role of *Werther*. He has long been associated with the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, where he has sung Rodolfo, the Duke of Mantua, Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly*, Edgardo in *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Gustavo in *Un Ballo in Maschera* and, most recently, the title role of *Don Carlos*. He has also sung many leading roles for the Welsh National Opera, English National Opera, Opera North and at Glyndebourne. O'Neill made his Metropolitan Opera debut in 1987 as Rodolfo in *La Bohème*, and other North American engagements have taken him to Chicago, Dallas, San Diego, Long Beach and Vancouver. European engagements have included *La Traviata*, *La Bohème* and *Madama Butterfly* for the Vienna State Opera, *Macbeth* in Berlin and Brussels, *La Traviata* in Paris, Hamburg and Barcelona, and *Faust* in Copenhagen. His concert work includes numerous appearances with the London Symphony Orchestra, in addition to the Verdi Requiem for BBC-TV and in Berlin and Paris, and Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius* in London and Düsseldorf. He appeared in Berlioz's *Damnation of Faust* in Paris and Philadelphia, and was recently featured on British television with a series of 12 programs entitled "Dennis O'Neill." Future performances include new productions of *Rigoletto* at the Met and in Bonn, *Anna Bolena* in Madrid, *Attila* at Covent Garden, *Simon Boccanegra* in Cologne, and *Un Ballo in Maschera* in Nice.



DANIEL HARPER

Tenor **Daniel Harper** returns to San Francisco Opera as Wagner in *Mefistofele*. He made his Company debut in *Aida* during the 1984 Summer Season and has since returned to perform over 15 roles here, most recently as Parpignol in last year's production of *La Bohème*. A member of the 1983 Merola Opera Program, he sang the title role in the Stern Grove performances of *The Tales of Hoffmann* and Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly*, a role he also performed on Western Opera Theater's 1983 nationwide tour. As an Adler Fellow with the San Francisco Opera Center for two years, Harper sang the role of Grimaldo in Handel's *Rodelinda* for the 1985 Showcase series, and that same year made an unscheduled debut with the San Francisco Symphony as tenor soloist in the Verdi Requiem. A graduate of North Park College in Illinois, he has extensive concert credits in the Chicago area, including performances of Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, Handel's *Messiah*, the Mozart Requiem, Rossini's *Petite Messe Solennelle*, and a recording of Schoenberg's *Moses und Aron* with the Chicago Symphony under Sir Georg Solti. Last year, he appeared with the San Francisco Symphony as soloist in the Berlioz Requiem.



DOUGLAS WUNSCH

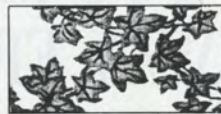
Tenor **Douglas Wunsch** sings Nereo in *Mefistofele*. He made his San Francisco Opera debut in 1987, appearing in *The Magic Flute*, *The Queen of Spades* and as Alfredo in the Student/Family performances of *La Traviata*. During the Spring of 1988 he was Mendoza in the Opera Center Showcase production of *Rosina*, and sang four roles for the Company last fall: Selimo in *Maometto II*, Edmondo in *Manon Lescaut*, the First Knight of the Holy Grail in *Parsifal* and Rodolfo in the Student/Family matinee performances of *La Bohème*. As an Adler Fellow with the Opera Center for two years, Wunsch sang Robert in Hindemith's *There and Back*, Charles in Hindemith's *The Long Christmas Dinner*, Albaroz in Rossini's *The Turk in Italy*, Jean in Sauguet's *Le Plumet du Colonel* and Samuel in Rorem's *Three Sisters Who Are Not Sisters*. His local credits include Alfred in *Die Fledermaus* with the Marin Opera Company, a role he repeated recently with the Spokane Symphony. The native of Washington state has also performed with the Northwestern Symphony Orchestra, the San Francisco Symphony Pops and the San Francisco Ballet. He appeared last year with Luciano Pavarotti in the Italian tenor's San Francisco Civic Auditorium concert.

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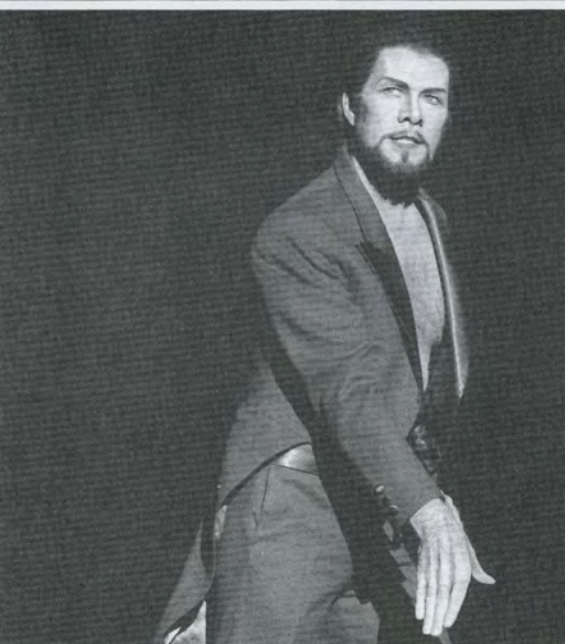
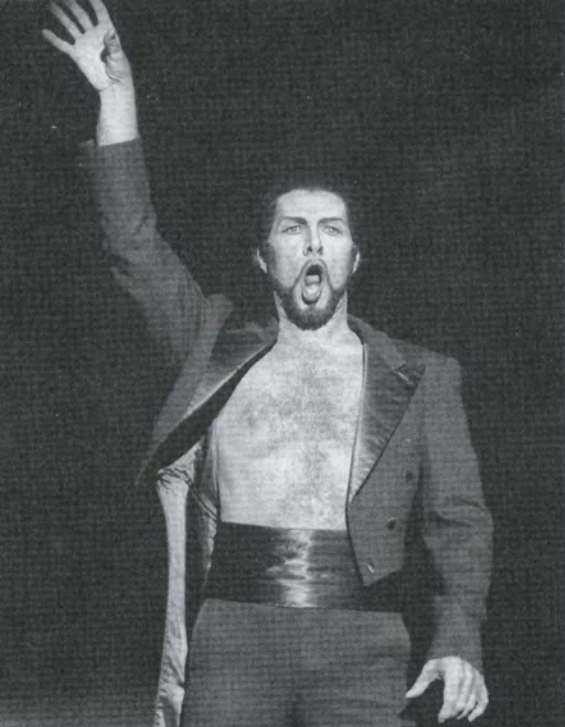


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(left) Samuel Ramey



Daniel Harper, Dennis O'Neill



Dennis O'Neill, Gabriela Beňáčková



Emily Manhart

Due to ill health, Mme. Bidú Sayão was forced to cancel her trip to San Francisco, a circumstance that occurred after the article honoring the artist in this magazine had already been printed.



MAURIZIO ARENA

Maestro **Maurizio Arena** is on the podium for *Mefistofele*, returning to San Francisco Opera after leading performances of the opening night production of *L'Africaine* last fall, *Nabucco* in 1987, and *La Forza del Destino* and *La Bohème* during the 1986 Fall Season. He made his Company debut with *Manon Lescaut* during the 1983 Fall Season and returned in 1985 to conduct acclaimed performances of *Adriana Lecouvreur* and *Falstaff*. Born in Messina, Italy, he studied music in Palermo and Perugia, where he was trained in conducting by Franco Ferrara. After many years of collaboration with Tullio Serafin and Antonino Votto, he began his operatic training as répétiteur and assistant conductor at the Teatro Massimo in Palermo from 1960 to 1963. From 1963 to 1969, he was permanent conductor at that theater, where he led performances from the Italian operatic repertoire in addition to many modern and contemporary operas, including *Wozzeck*, *Bluebeard's Castle* and *Carmina Burana*. Since 1969, he has been a guest conductor at the important operatic capitals in Europe, including Milan's La Scala, Rome, Trieste, Brussels, Lyons, Paris and Venice, in addition to the Chorégies d'Orange, the Dubrovnik Festival and the Aix-en-Provence Festival. Recent engagements include *L'Elisir d'Amore* and *Tosca* at the Vienna Staatsoper, Rossini's *La Donna del Lago* and Respighi's *La Fiamma* at the Verdi Theater in Trieste, *La Fanciulla del West* at the Verona Arena, and the Canadian Opera Company's 1987-88 season opener, *La Forza del Destino*. He also recently conducted Pizzetti's *Fedra* in Palermo, the first performance of this rarely-performed opera since 1940, in addition to *Il Tabarro* at the Puccini Festival in Torre del Lago and concerts in Japan. Arena's extensive list of recordings includes *Adriana Lecouvreur* and *Francesca da Rimini*.



ROBERT CARSEN

Canadian-born **Robert Carsen** makes his San Francisco Opera debut directing *Mefistofele* in the production he staged last fall for the Geneva Opera. Between 1980 and 1985, Carsen was associate and revival director at Glyndebourne Festival Opera, earning the Carl Ebert Award for directing in 1982. He has since gone on to direct productions for numerous opera companies in North America and Europe. His credits include: *A Village Romeo and Juliet* for Opera North, *L'Italiana in Algeri* for Opera 80, *La Traviata* for Texas Opera Theatre, *The Prodigal Son* for the Guelph Spring Festival, *Idomeneo* for Opera Theatre of St. Louis, and three British stage premieres for the Camden Festival in London—a double bill of Lecocq's *Dr. Miracle* and Delius's *Margot la Rouge*, Mozart's *La Finta Semplice* and *La Finta Giardiniera*. Other projects include the Canadian premiere of Peter Maxwell Davies's *The Lighthouse*, which toured to Expo '86 in Vancouver; *Il Trovatore* and *Fidelio* for Pacific Opera Victoria; and *Rigoletto* for the Edmonton Opera. More recently he directed *La Bohème* and *Hänsel und Gretel* in Geneva, *Ariadne auf Naxos* in Lausanne, Bellini's *La Straniera* in Wexford and London, and Tom Stoppard's play *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* in New York. He has also directed a new recording of Stravinsky's *A Soldier's Tale* (with Sting, Vanessa Redgrave and Ian McKellen). So far this year, Carsen has directed *La Finta Giardiniera* in Lausanne, *The Marriage of Figaro* for Long Beach Opera, and the American premiere of Judith Weir's *A Night at the Chinese Opera* at the Santa Fe Opera. Future assignments include new productions of *La Finta Giardiniera* for the Frankfurt Opera; *Lucia di Lammermoor* for the Munich Opera; *Salome* for the Opéra de Lyon; and *Ariadne auf Naxos* for Santa Fe Opera.



MICHAEL LEVINE

Michael Levine is the designer of *Mefistofele*, a production that received its premiere at the Grand Théâtre de Genève last year. Born in Toronto, he was initially trained in design at the Ontario College of Art, later earning a bachelor of arts degree from the Central School of Art and Design in London, England. He became an apprentice at the famed Glasgow Citizens Theatre, where he designed the sets and costumes for *Custom of the Country*, *Torquato Tasso* and *Impresario from Smyrna*. He returned to London to co-design (with the Polish artist Voytek) Eugene O'Neill's *Strange Interlude* at the Duke of York Theatre. The production, which was also presented in New York, garnered Levine nominations for England's prestigious Olivier award and a Tony award. He also designed *Light Up the Sky* for the Old Vic Theatre and *Revenger's Tragedy* for the Royal Shakespeare Company. His first opera designs were for the Belfast Opera's 1984 production of *Don Giovanni*, followed by *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* for the English National Opera. In Canada, he created the designs for Wedekind's *Spring's Awakening* at the Centre Stage, *Hot House* for the National Ballet of Canada, and Mozart's *Idomeneo* for the Canadian Opera Company. The Shaw Festival at Niagara-on-the-Lake has seen his designs for *Heartbreak House*, *Arms and the Man*, *The Skin of our Teeth*, *The Women*, and June Havoc's *Marathon 33*. In 1986, he collaborated with Robert Lepage on the world premiere of *Tectonic Plates* at the Du Maurier Theatre Festival in Toronto. He recently designed the sets and costumes for the world premiere of *A Night at the Chinese Opera* for Santa Fe Opera.



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This presentation of *Mefistofele* is made possible by Mr. and Mrs. John C. McGuire and Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Tilton.

Opera in four acts with prologue and epilogue by ARRIGO BOITO

Text by the composer, after the epic drama *Faust* by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Conductor
Maurizio Arena

Production
Robert Carsen*

Designer
Michael Levine*

Lighting Designer
Thomas J. Munn

Chorus Director
Ian Robertson

Choreographer
Alphonse Poulin**

Musical Preparation
Susanna Lemberskaya
Robert Morrison
Patrick Summers
Christopher Larkin
Svetlana Gorzhevskaya
Philip Eisenberg

Prompter
Philip Eisenberg

Assistant Stage Directors
Peter McClintock
Claudia Zahn

Stage Manager
Jerry Sherk

San Francisco Girls Chorus
Elizabeth Appling, Director

San Francisco Boys Chorus
Philip Hahn, Director

This presentation of *Mefistofele* is a co-production with the Grand Théâtre de Genève and is co-owned by the San Francisco Opera and the Lyric Opera of Chicago.

Scenery constructed by the Grand Théâtre de Genève and the San Francisco Opera Scenic Studios

Costumes executed by the Grand Théâtre de Genève and the San Francisco Opera Costume Shop

Organ provided courtesy of Baldwin Piano & Organ Center, Santa Clara

First performance:
Milan, March 5, 1868 (revised 1875)

First San Francisco Opera performance:
October 1, 1923

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 16 AT 8:00
†TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 19 AT 8:00
†FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 22 AT 8:00
†SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 24 AT 2:00
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 28 AT 8:00
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 4 AT 7:30
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 8 AT 2:00
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 10 AT 7:30

Mefistofele

(in Italian)

CAST

(in order of appearance)

<i>Mefistofele</i>	Samuel Ramey
<i>Faust</i>	Dennis O'Neill
<i>Wagner</i>	Daniel Harper
<i>Margherita</i>	Gabriela Beňačková
<i>Marta</i>	Judith Christin
<i>Elena</i>	Gabriela Beňačková
<i>Pantalis</i>	Emily Manhart
<i>Nereo</i>	Douglas Wunsch
<i>Celestial choir, cherubim; townspeople; witches, warlocks; people of Greece</i>	
<i>Corps de ballet</i>	

**U.S. opera debut

*San Francisco Opera debut

<i>PROLOGUE</i>	In Heaven
<i>ACT I</i>	<i>Scene 1:</i> Easter Sunday
	<i>Scene 2:</i> The Pact
INTERMISSION	
<i>ACT II</i>	<i>Scene 1:</i> The Garden
	<i>Scene 2:</i> Walpurgis Night
<i>ACT III</i>	The Death of Margherita
INTERMISSION	
<i>ACT IV</i>	Classical Walpurgis Night
<i>EPILOGUE</i>	The Death of Faust

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

Supertitles by Christopher Bergen, San Francisco Opera.

†These performances are being taped for a future telecast.
Lighting will be augmented accordingly.

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.

Mefistofele/Synopsis

PROLOGUE

IN HEAVEN. A heavenly choir praises the Lord; Mefistofele appears and mockingly addresses God, apologizing for his lack of a halo. He complains that God's worldly creation, Man, has become so degenerate that he is not worth tempting any more. A mystical choir asks him if he knows Faust. Mefistofele does indeed, and wagers to trap the aging, fanatical scholar. Mefistofele boasts to the Creator that by ensnaring Faust he will finally triumph over God. The scene ends with a hymn of praise to the Master of the Heavens.

ACT I

Scene 1—EASTER SUNDAY. Faust and his student Wagner join the holiday crowd. The old scholar notices the first signs of spring; a group of townspeople begins a country dance. After the crowds leave, Wagner and Faust notice a monk, the sight of whom greatly disturbs the old man; he imagines seeing traces of burning footprints on the ground.

Scene 2—THE PACT. In his study, Faust prepares to meditate on the Bible when a piercing cry is heard and the mysterious monk appears. Faust makes the powerful sign of Solomon which forces Mefistofele to abandon his monk's disguise. He introduces himself as the spirit that negates and destroys everything. Mefistofele offers his services to Faust on Earth, on condition that their positions be reversed after Faust's death. Faust accepts, provided that he find just one moment of true happiness which he could greet with the words, "Stay, for you are beautiful!" The contract is signed and Mefistofele transports Faust away.

Intermission

ACT II

Scene 1—THE GARDEN. The rejuvenated Faust (now calling himself Enrico), courts Margherita, while Mefistofele distracts her neighbor Marta. Margherita asks Faust about his religious beliefs, but he says he seeks an even deeper truth: the mystery of love. He persuades Margherita to let him visit her at her home, and gives her a sleeping potion (provided by Mefistofele) for her mother. Faust reassures Margherita that her mother will come to no harm as both couples declare their love.

Scene 2—WALPURGIS NIGHT. Mefistofele urges Faust up the mountains to witness the Witches' Sabbath. Witches and warlocks appear; Mefistofele demands obeisance as their king. They present him with the attributes of his power and a symbol of the world, which he derides and then destroys. Faust suddenly sees in the sky a vision of a young girl in chains who resembles Margherita.

Mefistofele tries to dismiss it as a trick of imagination, but Faust realizes that the woman with a ring of blood around her neck is indeed the girl he abandoned. The revels continue.

ACT III

THE DEATH OF MARGHERITA. The imprisoned Margherita, condemned to death for poisoning her mother and drowning the child she bore Faust, has lost her reason. Faust begs Mefistofele to save her; the devil denies responsibility, but promises to do what he can. He produces a key and Faust enters the prison. At first, Margherita thinks she is being led to execution, but then recognizes Faust and starts to relive their past, recalling their meeting in the garden. Faust wants her to escape with him, but she cannot face a life of remorse. They imagine the happiness they might have had. When Mefistofele orders Faust to leave with him, Margherita prays for forgiveness and renounces Faust: a celestial choir proclaims Margherita's salvation.

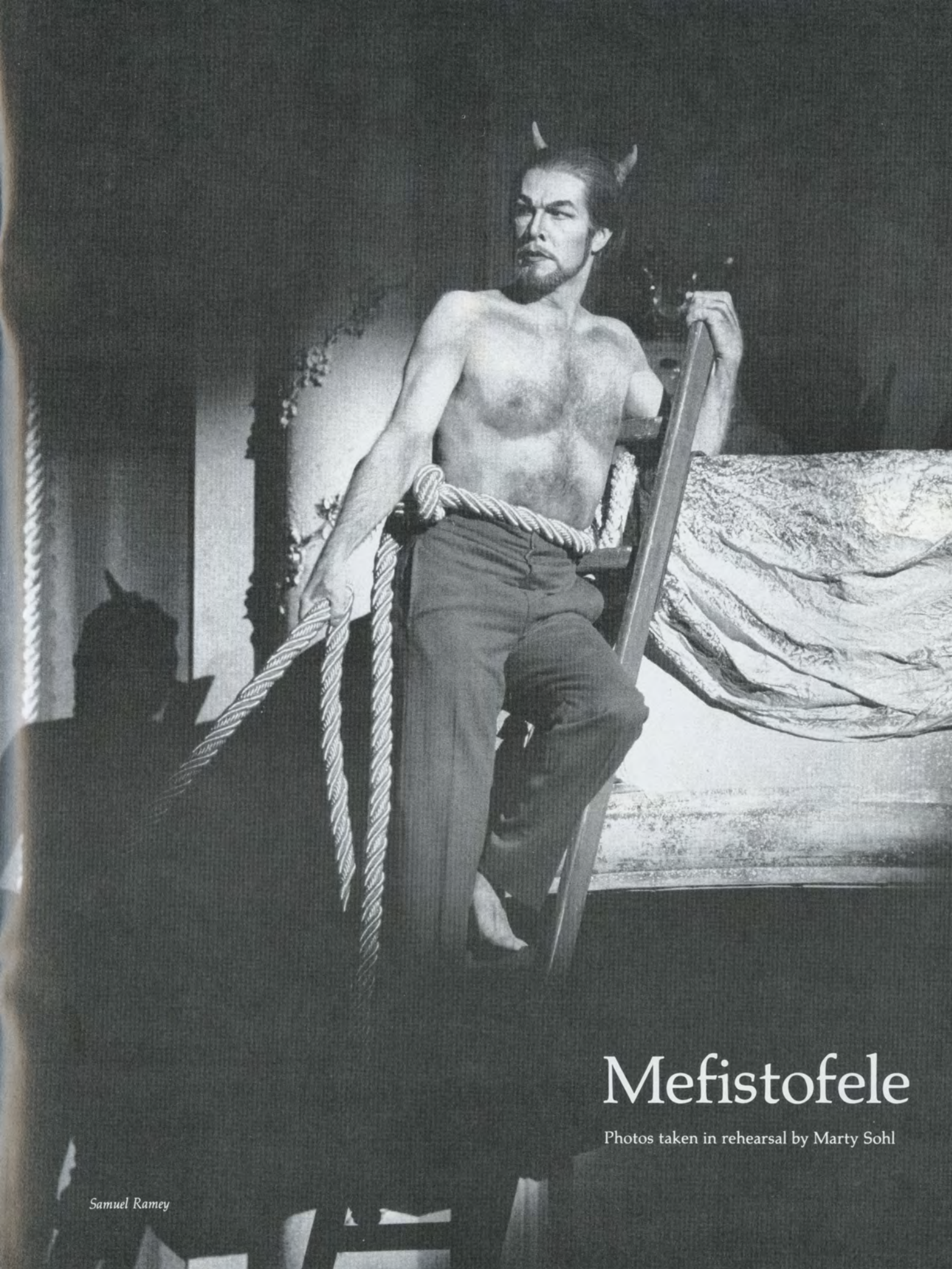
Intermission

ACT IV

CLASSICAL WALPURGIS NIGHT. In his quest for the perfection of art and beauty, Faust has been transported by Mefistofele to ancient Greece. Elena (Helen of Troy) and her companion Pantis serenade the full moon. In the distance, Faust is heard calling for Elena. As the two women leave, Faust enters, enchanted with his surroundings. Mefistofele, however, feels uncomfortably out of place. Elena now reappears, praised by a chorus who pay homage to her, but she is obsessed by a nightmare vision of the destruction of Troy. She receives Faust, who declares his love for her, the embodiment of pure and ideal beauty. They pledge their love and contemplate life together in peaceful Arcadia.

EPILOGUE

THE DEATH OF FAUST. In his study, Faust reflects on his past: the love of the real woman brought only suffering, while that of the goddess was only an illusion. Mefistofele despairs that Faust is still not experienced the supreme moment. Realizing that death is near, Faust invokes another dream, one in which he would rule wisely over prosperous people in a peaceful world. Mefistofele, fearing that his victim will escape him, urges Faust to accompany him once again. But Faust, now enraptured in his heavenly vision, speaks the fatal words, "Stay, for you are beautiful!", and dies redeemed. Mefistofele, although defeated, whistles in defiance.



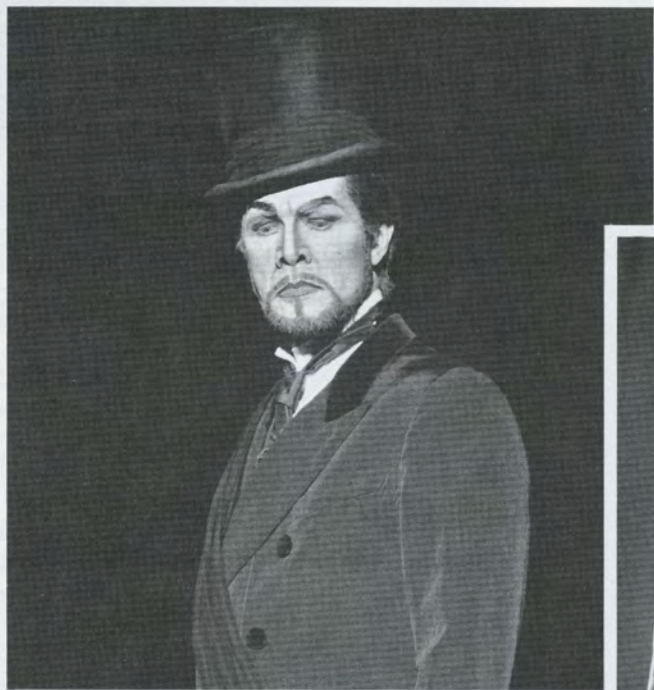
Mefistofele

Photos taken in rehearsal by Marty Sohl

Samuel Ramey

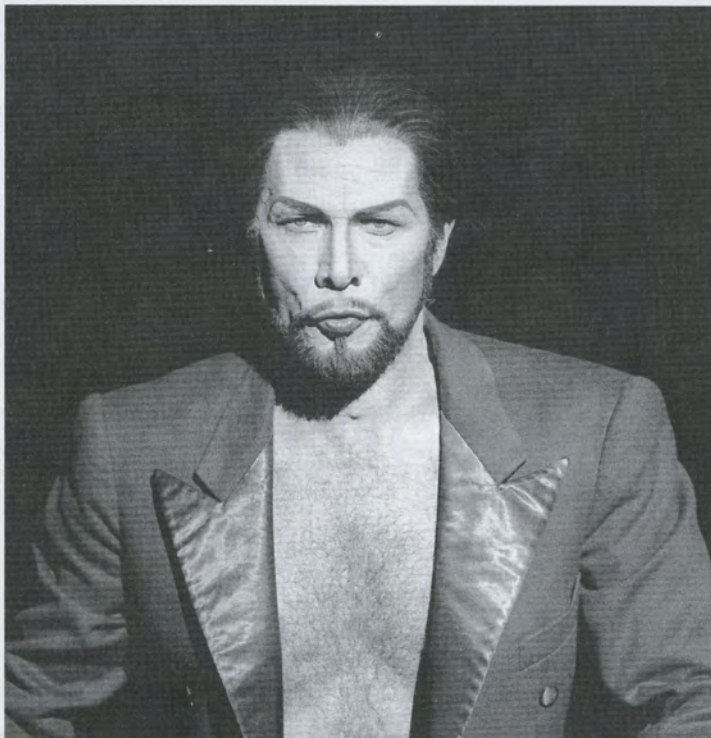


Samuel Ramey, Dennis O'Neill



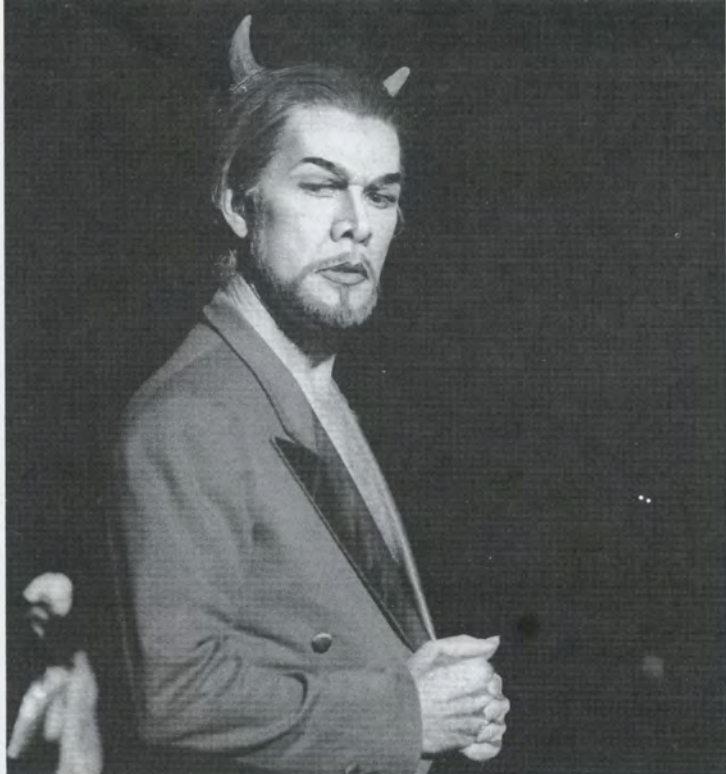
Samuel Ramey

(below) Dennis O'Neill, Gabriela Beňáčková





Gabriela Beňačková



Samuel Ramey

(below) Samuel Ramey, Judith Christin

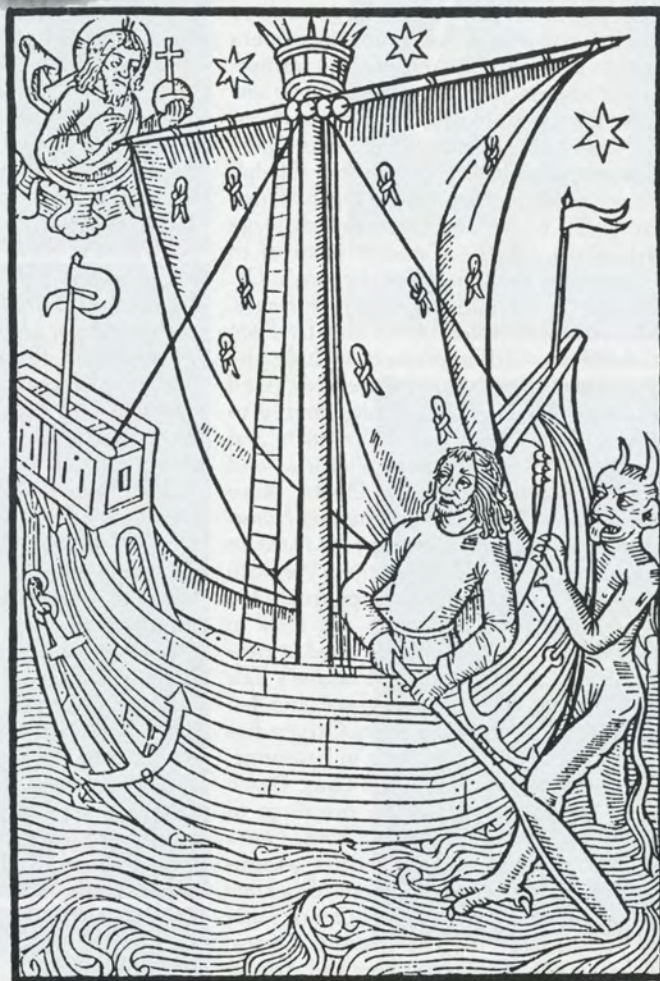


Gabriela Beňačková





Arrigo Boito, the composer of *Mefistofele*, in a photo taken in 1881.



The Lord and Satan in contest for the soul of a man, who is navigating the ocean of vice and sin. From *Le grant kalendrier et compost des Bergiers*, printed at Troyes in 1496.



ALPHONSE POULIN

Choreographer **Alphonse Poulin** makes his United States opera debut with the dances for *Mefistofele*, an assignment he undertook last year for the Grand Théâtre de Genève. The native of Maine started his professional dance career with the Boston Ballet, where he danced for nine years. He then traveled to São Paulo, Brazil, where he was engaged as Principal Dancer and ballet master at the Municipal Theater Ballet. After being appointed as dancer, ballet master and choreographer for the Lisbon National Ballet, he appeared as a dancer in the Munich Opera Ballet and at the Theater des Westens where he performed in *A Chorus Line*. In 1980, at the request of Oscar Araiz, he was engaged as ballet master and teacher at the Ballet of the Grand Théâtre in Geneva, Switzerland, a position he currently holds. He served for three years as head of the School of Dance at Geneva's Conservatory of Music. Operas he has choreographed at the Grand Théâtre include *The Merry Widow*, *La Périchole*, *Lulu*, *Eugene Onegin*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *The Love for Three Oranges*, Dukas's *Ariane et Barbe-Bleue*, and Ken Russell's production of *The Italian Girl in Algiers*. In 1985, he created the dances for Russell's staging of *Faust* at the Vienna State Opera. Poulin has also been guest choreographer for works at the Turin Opera Ballet and the Ulm Ballet Company in Germany.



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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Tito Schipa as Des Grieux and Bidú Sayão as Manon, just before Act IV curtain time at San Francisco Opera's 1939 Opening Night production of *Manon*.

generation. Among those one could hear in those days were Schipa, Beniamino Gigli, Jussi Bjoerling, Lawrence Tibbett, Ezio Pinza, Richard Bonelli, Leonard Warren, John Brownlee, Giovanni Martinelli, Lily Pons, Elisabeth Rethberg, Kipnis, Robert Weede.

Kirsten Flagstad and Lauritz Melchior were the great Wagnerians; Licia Albanese and Jan Peerce sang the heart-breaking duets of *La Traviata*. A *Marriage of Figaro* cast, for example, had Bidú Sayão as Susanna, Pinza as Figaro, Florence Quartararo as the Countess, Blanche Thebom as Cherubino and Salvatore Baccaloni as the very fat, very funny Dr. Bartolo.

The Mefistofele of Mme. Sayão's 1952 performance was Nicola Rossi-Lemeni, the great basso whose blockbuster performance in the title role is not forgotten here. (Mme. Sayão is "very anxious" to hear the current San Francisco Mefistofele, Samuel Ramey. "I think he's marvelous," she said. "It's going to be a gorgeous performance.")

She sang with the day's great tenors—"Oh my God so many tenors . . . I like very much, the most, to sing with Schipa and Bjoerling. Our voices melt together much better, I don't know why. The voices go together very well.

"Schipa was wonderful . . . How much I learn with him. He was a great, great singer—small voice, but great singer. I had a small voice too, so our voices blend together. He was very handsome on the stage . . .

"I am five three or five two . . . he was more or less my size, a little bit taller. I have pictures of me and him together.

" . . . We were a handsome pair."

One of her favorite pictures shows herself and Schipa as the lovers in the 1939 opening-night *Manon*. To her, this is "a big souvenir of my debut in San Francisco."

Ezio Pinza was "unique . . . he was marvelous," she said. "Vocally, physically, he is gorgeous." She sang often with the dashing basso, in *The Barber of Seville*, *La Bohème* and *Don Giovanni* among others.

She had many roles: in San Francisco



Bidú Sayão in a studio portrait, taken at the very beginning of her career.



Seoul man.

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alone, she was Manon, Mimì, Violetta, Juliette, Norina, Rosina, Susanna, Mélisande, Adina, Zerlina, Nedda, and finally the Margherita in *Mefistofele*. Manon was perhaps her most popular part, and one of her own favorites. "I like *Manon*, I like very much *Bohème* and *Traviata*," she said. "These roles I sang with more pleasure than the others. I didn't like too much *L'Elisir* or *Don Pasquale*, but I tried very hard to do them the best I could."

Most observers agree that her voice was small—a judgment in which she readily concurs—but that her technique was impeccable. For Terence McEwen, the former General Director of the San Francisco Opera, her roles had "an adorable, helpless quality" that was at the same time "minx-like." "Her Mimì wasn't just a sweet little thing," he said. "Her Juliette was a little devil who twisted everybody around her little finger."

The San Francisco-born soprano Florence Quartararo, who sang with her here and at the Metropolitan, called her "An exquisite artist . . . she made the most of what for somebody else would have been an average voice. With her placement, finesse, clarity of tone, you could hear the tiny voice over the orchestra, into the balcony. She never pushed that voice, never overdid, so her voice remained fresh. She knew how to save it for the big moments . . . The audience couldn't tell, but when we sang with her we could see how she paced herself until the time for the big moments. She was the consummate and complete artist."

Mme. Quartararo remembers another side of Mme. Sayão—her kindness. "When we sang together I was just beginning my career and she was a famous person," she said. "She was a lovely colleague . . . a very classy lady. We worked together on our duets . . . I would ask 'How do you think this went?' and she was always very helpful."

A similar memory is that of Dr. Jess Shenson, a member of the board of the Performing Arts Library and Museum, a friend of long standing. He recalls with affection how Mme. Sayão would send a taped birthday message each year to his mother, the late Rose Shenson. Each one wished "Happy Birthday, dear Ro-ose" in the sweet small voice that had sung so many show-stopping arias in the years past.

For many years, Mme. Sayão was an international opera star, the chic and



MORTON

Lawrence Tibbett (*Figaro*), Bidú Sayão (*Rosina*), and Salvatore Baccaloni (*Dr. Bartolo*) in San Francisco Opera's 1941 *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*.



ABRESCH

Mme. Sayão sang *Juliet* in Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette* three times at the San Francisco Opera: in 1946, 1947 and 1951. This studio portrait was made in the 1930s.



Looking out of her hotel window, Bidú Sayão is captured during a stay in San Francisco in the early 1940s.



Jan Peerce and Bidú Sayão before Act I of San Francisco Opera's 1942 *La Traviata*. MORTON

bejeweled darling of audiences on three continents, hardly recognizable as the stagestruck Rio de Janeiro schoolgirl she once had been.

There were two main elements in this transformation. One was her own staunch determination; the other, her remarkably gifted set of teachers.

She was barely into her teens in Rio when her career began to take shape. She was determined to become an actress, but this was out of the question for the daughter of a respectable Brazilian family—so, finally, she settled for music.

Elena Teodorini, the Romanian soprano, was in Rio giving lessons at the time, but had no intention of taking on as a pupil a girl who was too young and whose voice was too small. However, the youthful Bidú persevered, the teacher relented, and the work began.

Too soon, it was time for Teodorini to return to Romania. Her pupil, as stubborn as ever, would not consider changing teachers but instead, after a good deal of arranging, followed the diva to Bucharest. That was when her dreams began to come true.

The first sign that she was on her way came when Queen Marie of Romania heard her sing and engaged her as the soloist at a concert in honor of a state

visitor, the then Crown Prince Hirohito of Japan, later the Emperor. It "went very well," Mme. Sayão said.

The next important step came when Jean de Reszke, the great French tenor, accepted her as a pupil in Nice. She spent two years working with him there and, as Lanfranco Rasponi quotes her in his book, *The Last Prima Donnas*:

"With what skill he put me through the cadenzas that developed and steadied the highest notes in the upper range! I shall never forget some of the exercises."

Throughout her career, Mme. Sayão continued to learn, from such conductors as Bruno Walter and Gaetano Merola and from her coach, Giuseppe Danise, long a leading Metropolitan Opera baritone and the sternest of musical taskmasters, whom she married after her divorce from Mocchi.

Her debut was in 1926 in Rome as Rosina in *The Barber of Seville*, and Rome was her base for several years. She sang Gilda and later Carolina in *Il Matrimonio Segreto*; she was Norina in *Don Pasquale* at a gala when Crown Prince Umberto of Italy married Princess Marie of Belgium, and her international stardom was not long in coming.

As the toast of opera houses over the European continent and South America,

Mme. Sayão sang some roles of considerable difficulty: Lucia, Lakmé, Amina in *La Sonnambula*, Elvira in *I Puritani*, Zerbinetta ("the most harrowing role I ever undertook") in *Ariadne auf Naxos*, among others. And now, she was ready for the United States.

Her coach, Danise, arranged for her North American debut in 1936, as soloist in Debussy's *La Damoiselle Elue* at Carnegie Hall under Arturo Toscanini. It was a fortuitous occasion; her performance was received with considerable acclaim, just at the time when the Metropolitan Opera was looking for someone to take on the roles of the celebrated soprano Lucrezia Bori, who had just retired.

Mme. Sayão was the logical successor. She sang Manon for her Metropolitan debut in 1937, and remained a New York favorite until her retirement there, as in San Francisco, in 1952.

Danise is generally credited with helping her preserve her voice, keeping it in pristine shape and no doubt extending her career beyond what might have been its limits otherwise. He has been described as of the Toscanini school, capable of sending students away in tears but never giving up until they did it right. Without him, the strong-willed Bidú, most likely, would have continued to accept such roles

as Desdemona, Gounod's Marguerite, Butterfly, Lucia, Lakmé and Amina.

"Desdemona, I like so much to sing," she said. "But it was too heavy for the small voice. Butterfly, too ... Fiora in *L'Amore dei Tre Re* ... I would lose the high notes. I could only do what I could afford with my voice ... Danise watched me like a hawk."

Thus they concentrated on the roles she did best and were the least demanding, although no less captivating. They turned down the heavy roles; certainly, there were no more Zerbinettas, but there were plenty of Mimi's, Manons, Juliettes and Violettas.

Conductors, too, played important roles in her career—"hundreds of conductors, not only here but in South America, in Europe ... I had the great, great fortune to meet them.

"One of my favorites was Bruno Walter, a wonderful person," she said. "He took in me very much interest. He teaches me note by note the little notes of Zerlina in *Don Giovanni*. We wanted to do *Pelléas et Mélisande* together, but when I was free, he was busy. When he was free, I was busy.

"Before him, I sang with Maestro Toscanini; I was very lucky in all those conductors. In that time the conductor teaches the singer, hours and hours and days and days ... We are so well prepared, it is so beautiful. When you work like that, the conductor knows everything about what the singer does ... it is so much better."

There were "many, many great ones" she said, "Leinsdorf, Maestro Papi, Maestro Merola. Most of all my operas I sang in San Francisco were with Maestro Merola. I adore him, I adore him. He was such a wonderful person, wonderful conductor."

In her San Francisco years, Mme. Sayão and Merola confined their work within the limits set by Danise—Mimi, Manon, Juliette, for example—although she continued to think somewhat wistfully of Desdemona and Butterfly. But in the end, she got her own way.

"I decided to retire from opera," she said. "I wanted to retire in full voice, not to wait too long. I was talking about the 1952 season with Maestro Merola and I told him, 'Well, I want to retire.' I suggested to him that I would like to sing a certain opera for my farewell. He said 'What opera?' I said 'Something I never sang before—the Margherita in *Mefistofele*.'

"The maestro didn't agree with that. He asked if I didn't think that role would harm my voice.

"I said 'So if I hurt my voice it doesn't matter. I don't care. I'm going to retire.'

"The maestro said 'Well, you want to sing *Mefistofele* ... I need a Nedda.' If you want to sing *Mefistofele*, you sing Nedda.' I had sung *Pagliacci*, but I didn't care for that role, Nedda. But I never could say no."

She sang both parts in her farewell 1952 season, along with another Mimi and a Zerlina. After that, she sang no more opera, although for several years she continued her recitals.

It had never been difficult for Mme. Sayão to make up her mind. Thus, when her career ended, it ended. What was done was done. There was no more opera for Bidú the singer, and very little of it for Bidú the spectator. The days of the gorgeous costumes, the packed houses, the waves of applause, the beautiful clothes and the jewels, were finished.

"Opera was all my life for 30 years," Mme. Sayão said. "Now I'm tired, really. If there is a new singer, or something I especially want to hear, I go, otherwise I never go."

Her life is quite different now. Her only close relatives are a niece and nephew in Brazil; Danise died in 1963 and her mother, to whom she had been close all of her life, a few years later.

New York had been her home during much of her career, but:

"After they died, I couldn't stay in New York, in a big apartment, alone. Now I am in Lincolnville, a little place for swimming. I am just on the water; I have a private beach. The house is on six and a half acres; we bought it for my career, when I worked very hard and needed to rest in the summer. This house was for the summer, but now it is my home. Maine is my home.

"It's very pleasant. I have a group of friends here; I'm not alone because I have so much to do here. We have the flowers and birds, a nice kitchen in front of the house, a beautiful view."

Bidina, the cat, came from the Humane Society: "When I need a cat I go there ... Oh, she's pretty; she's a shaggy cat, she's not any breed. Her tail is very shaggy, like a raccoon. She's very intelligent, very sweet. She understands Portuguese, Italian, English ... I talk with her in different languages and she understands."

Mme. Sayão is looked after by



Three remarkable ladies assembled at the San Francisco Opera in 1978 as part of the Kurt Herbert Adler Anniversary Gala: (L. to r.) Stella Roman, Licia Albanese, and Bidú Sayão.

George Porter, a downeasterner of whom she says: "Since my husband was alive we have him—40 years. He is very, very faithful. When I leave and then come back, the house sparkles. He takes care of everything for me, inside, outside, shopping for me; he's my chauffeur. Unfortunately for me I don't drive; women in Brazil, they never drive, never. I have a Ford, an Escort, a very good little car, very economical, very good."

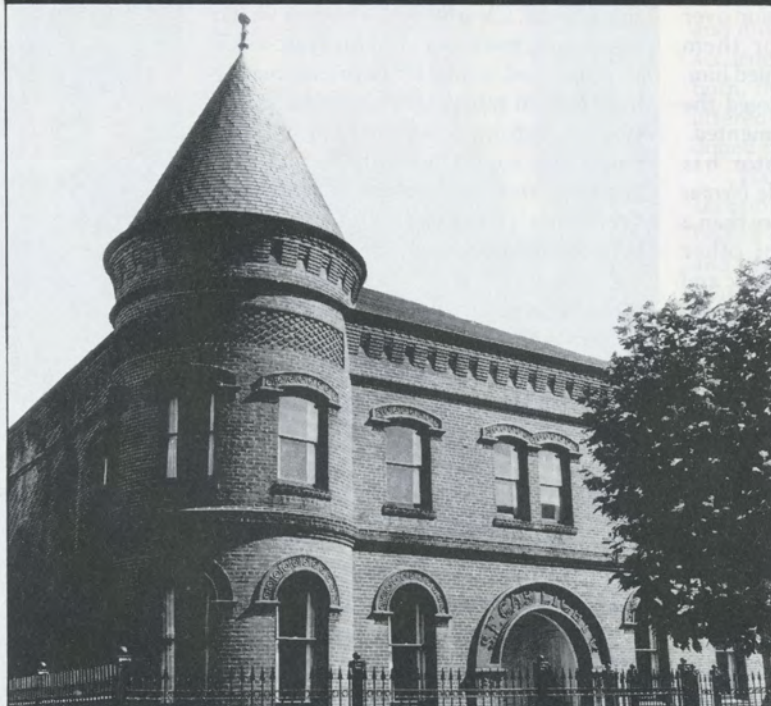
She cooks for herself: "I make Italian recipes because my husband was a wonderful cook and I learned from him. All Italians are wonderful cooks. I cook very simple; I don't like meat, I am almost a vegetarian. I like very much the vegetables and fruit, fresh fruit, and fish. Sometimes I have chicken. But meat, very rarely.

"My house is not big, but it's enough for me. In the summer I can have five or six friends to come to visit me. I like to read, to watch television, I like very much the sports, very, very much. I am in New England, so I like the team they call the Red Sox."

She paused, and added:

"I used to live in New York, so I like the Yankees very much, too." ■

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Opera Shop Encounters

By STEPHANIE SALTER

It is a typical San Francisco summer afternoon, which is to say, foggy and gray with a chill wind whipping about the Civic Center. Near the intersection of Grove Street and Van Ness Avenue, the seductive scent of Italian coffee wafts through the air. Following it, one pushes open the sparkling glass door of 199 Grove and, suddenly, is spang in the middle of a warm, comfortable cocoon known as the San Francisco Opera Shop.

Begun in the Opera House in 1978 as a minor fund-raising project for the Merola Opera Program, and expanded in 1981 to include the 2,200-square-foot store at 199 Grove, the Opera Shop last year alone grossed \$670,000 in sales.

"It kind of exploded in 1982 and, since then, we've all had our heads buried just trying to keep up with the work," said Meigs Ingham, the affable director of the Opera Shop on Grove Street, and the Opera Shop Boutique on the South Mezzanine Level of the War Memorial Opera House. "A representative from the Rockefeller Foundation called us looking for information about a funding project they were considering for small, in-house retail operations. She said she'd been told by at least five other people around the country that we were the place to call to learn how it was done."

As are most activities associated with the San Francisco Opera, the Opera Shop is primarily a labor of love, guided by a few highly-talented paid staff members like

Stephanie Salter is a San Francisco Examiner opinion columnist, opera lover and sometime supernumerary.



Meigs Ingham in a corner of the San Francisco Opera Shop.

Ingham and retail sales manager Betsy Wilson, and supported by a loyal corps of volunteers, coordinated by Marylee Thomson.

them the same people who started with the Opera Shop in 1978," said Ingham, who succeeded Irma Zigas, now with the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. "When new people do come it's because the older ones have gotten them interested. We just don't have much turnover, so we must be doing something right."

"Right" is exactly the feeling one gets in the Grove Street shop, sitting at the espresso bar with a *caff  latte* and listening to the unmistakable voice of Luciano Pavarotti on the store's sound system. That this little slice of opera heaven also

boasts one of the most extensive offerings of opera and ballet videos in the world, just puts thick creamy icing on the cake.

"Even though we don't have a general gift catalogue, we have a huge mail order business, and that is because of our video selection," said Ingham, who anticipated the rapid market for opera videos a few years before it became a reality.

"We now have more than 250 titles, and, last year, sent out our list in a nationwide mailing. We have customers from all over. One man in Southern California is systematically buying our entire catalogue."

Another, film actor and opera buff Danny DeVito, heard about the Opera



Betsy Wilson in the act of re-stocking the shelves.



Andrew Bouchard and Mahboub Ahmadi manning (and womanning) the Opera Shop check-out counter.



Paul Dana at the compact disc shelves.

Shop's impressive video selection and phoned in an \$800 order.

In the meantime, the Opera Shop also sells videos as well as other items to opera companies across the country, including Santa Fe, Chicago, Dallas and the Met in New York. Besides the Met, the San Francisco Opera Shop is the only year-round, full-service opera store in the United States.

"People from other cities in this country come in here and they're just in heaven," said Wilson, who was a buyer for Joseph Magnin before she accidentally stumbled into the world of opera. "We're like their lifeline to opera. I think the most touching people of all are the ones who used to live in San Francisco but had to move someplace else where there isn't as much in the way of culture. They call to order something or come in for a visit and tell us how much they miss the city and the opera."

Said Ingham, a lifelong opera lover and former interior designer who came to the Opera Shop through the volunteer ranks, "In many ways, it was the *Ring* in 1985 that really brought us a world-wide audience. People from everywhere came into the shop and remembered what they saw. When they got back home, they called or wrote and ordered what they wanted. And they're still with us."

"The *Ring* was incredible," agreed Wilson. "We started off with about 30 posters for it and they were gone in a second. The T-shirts became collector's items—just the way the Grateful Dead's do after a concert. People would be in line with all kinds of things—\$85 pewter mugs—and the person behind them would look and say, 'Oh, I want one of those, too.' It was amazing."

Which is a major reason why the Opera Shop is gearing up way ahead of time for next summer's *Ring*. *Ring* fans are like no others, and they love to have mementos of their Wagner experience long after the last notes have faded. Among other special items that the shop and boutique will offer next summer is a 16-month *Ring* calendar (September 1990 through December 1991) with stunning color photographs by Ron Scherl of each *Ring* opera.

The responsibility for preparing for the *Ring* and for choosing the rest of the store's inventory falls to Ingham, Wilson, Gabrielle Harmer, the shop's book buyer; Alba Surles, the record buyer; and her assistant, Paul Dana. For Ingham this

process means constant perusal of scores of gift catalogues and includes a once-a-year pilgrimage to the New York Gift Show.

"It is always held in the Jacob Javits Center, which is five square miles of floor space. You take your running shoes and your small backpack and you wade in for days," says Ingham. "Even then, you're lucky if you find six items you want to order for your shop."

Not unlike its healthy mix of staff and volunteers, the Opera Shop also maintains a diverse inventory. Besides its predominant stock of books, video tapes and compact discs—"Educational materials make up 60 percent of our sales," according to Ingham—there is all manner of what the shop staffers affectionately refer to as "chatchke."

A talking book of Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., reading *The Prisoner of Zenda*, shares space with Garrison Keillor's *News from Lake Wobegon*. Exquisite hand-painted porcelain plates, depicting the *Ring* operas, are displayed next to sporty, everyday coffee mugs decorated with *La Bohème*, *Madama Butterfly* and *Otello* logos.

Greeting cards and stationery with operatic, balletic or symphonic themes are plentiful, as are opera libretti—and the handsome cases in which to store them—along with piano, vocal and orchestral scores. Wine glasses abound. So do refrigerator magnets, cookbooks, suspenders, tote bags, scarves, playing cards, games, paper dolls, bookmarks, key chains, stuffed bears and soapstone busts of the great composers.

Then there are the T-shirts, from baby size to extra large, featuring everything from the distinctive blue-and-gold fence outside the Opera House to Pavarotti's autograph.

"Between the CDs and everything else, we volunteers wind up spending a bundle in there ourselves," laughed Tom Smith, a six-year veteran of Sunday afternoons in the Opera Shop.

A confessed Wagner freak, Smith is happily assigned each opera season Sunday to the gleaming horseshoe-shaped espresso bar in the rear of the shop. There he draws strong black Italian coffee, steams milk and schmoozes with opera-goers about what they are preparing to see across the street. (During the professional football season, Betsy Wilson adds a portable radio to the scene so that she and other San Francisco 49er loyalists can stay abreast of the home team.)

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