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1991

Thursday, November 21, 1991 7:30 PM

Sunday, November 24, 1991 2:00 PM

Wednesday, November 27, 1991 7:30 PM

Saturday, November 30, 1991 8:00 PM

Tuesday, December 3, 1991 8:00 PM

Friday, December 6, 1991 8:00 PM

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# SAN FRANCISCO OPERA

1991 SEASON

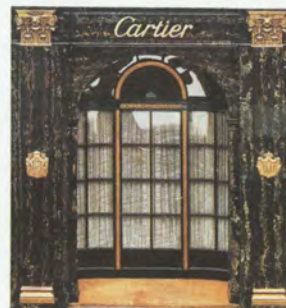
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# SAN FRANCISCO OPERA

Lotfi Mansouri, *General Director*

## Attila

1991 FALL SEASON

Vol. 69, No. 13

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Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863), *Attila Followed by Barbarian Hordes Tramples Italy and the Arts*, 1838-47.

Ceiling hemicycle, Oil and wax, 289 x 434"  
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## FROM THE PRESIDENT AND THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

Welcome to our 69th Fall Season! This is a wonderful season our general director has planned, and aside from the excitement of new repertoire and artists that distinguish our fall schedule, we have other reasons to celebrate as well.

This year we have seen our subscription base grow—it is up nearly five percent over last year's total. That this could happen in a year when a general recession has taken its toll in almost every sector of the economy, is genuinely heartening to us. Our loyal subscribers are the bedrock on which the Company is based, and we shall continue to do all we can to keep you enthusiastic and happy.

We are also delighted to see the new leadership role being taken by various corporations in helping us to cover the staggeringly enormous costs of producing grand opera in the style to which our audiences have become accustomed. Three organizations have earned special recognition: Lexus, a division of Toyota Motor Sales U.S.A., Inc., is the Official Automotive Sponsor of San Francisco Opera; Delta Air Lines, Inc., has become the Official Airline of San Francisco Opera; and R. Kassman Pianos has contin-

ued to provide us with high-quality Kawai pianos, the Official Piano of San Francisco Opera.

Lexus, which has had an on-going sponsor relationship with San Francisco Opera since they underwrote our 1989 presentation of the Kirov Ballet, is also sponsoring this year's Opening Night performance of *La Traviata*. Our new production of Prokofiev's monumental *War and Peace* has been underwritten by a major grant from the Columbia Foundation, the Paul L. and Phyllis C. Wattis Foundation and a generous gift from Cynthia Wood. We are all tremendously excited by this major Company premiere, and are deeply grateful to these generous benefactors.

Other individuals and private foundations have also given generously: our Company premiere production of Bellini's *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* was made possible by a major gift from Herman J. Miller and Edward J. Clark; our newly refurbished *Don Giovanni* has been underwritten by a gift from the Bernard Osher Foundation; we gratefully acknowledge the L.J. Skaggs and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation for underwriting our new mounting of *Tristan*

and *Isolde*; Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Tilton for our first presentation of *Attila*; and the American premiere of Henze's *Das Verratene Meer* is taking place here through the generosity of the Paul L. and Phyllis C. Wattis Foundation. It is thanks to individuals, foundations and corporations such as these that an adventurous season of opera can be realized, and we are all in their debt.

We would also like once again to acknowledge our governmental funding sources, including the National Endowment for the Arts, the California Arts Council and the Grants for the Arts program of the San Francisco Hotel Tax Fund. We also extend our appreciation to Mayor Art Agnos and Chief Administrative Officer Rudolf Nothenberg, whose continued support has been most gratifying. And of course, we wish to express our thanks for the ongoing support of the Opera Guild and the War Memorial Board of Trustees.

Reid W. Dennis  
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## GENERAL DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

I am always delighted to welcome you to a new season of San Francisco Opera, but this year I am particularly so. This is the first season for which I have planned all of the elements, and I feel justifiably proud of what we have to offer you.

First of all, an opera that is especially dear to my heart — our Company premiere of Prokofiev's epic *War and Peace*, a project that for me is a dream come true. When I first accepted the appointment as San Francisco Opera's fourth general director, I immediately expressed my desire to mount this important masterpiece, and this year happily coincides with the centennial of the composer's birth. It is also the first Prokofiev opera ever presented by San Francisco Opera.

Another milestone event is a major American premiere of Hans Werner Henze's gripping music drama, *Das Verratene Meer*, based on Yukio

Mishima's acclaimed novel *The Sailor Who Fell From Grace With the Sea*. We are honored to be the first American opera company to present this major musical event, and I am even more pleased to be able to announce that the composer will be here for this auspicious premiere.

For aficionados of bel canto, we are offering our Company premiere of Bellini's ravishing setting of the Romeo and Juliet story, *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*; and our first performances ever of Verdi's *Attila* will be heartily welcomed by fans of Giuseppe Verdi as well as those of Samuel Ramey — a very large group, indeed.

Several familiar operas will be seen in productions new to San Francisco Opera: the transcendent passion of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*, and the shattering drama of *Elektra* by Richard Strauss. Mozart's masterpiece *Don Giovanni* will

be seen in a reworking of our own production, and we will bring back two of our most lavish stage spectacles, our productions of Verdi's *La Traviata* and Bizet's *Carmen*.

With so much that is new happening this fall, I don't even have room to begin listing the spectacular artists who will be making their debuts, and the favorite stars who will be returning to our stage. Perhaps even more important are the numbers of you, our devoted audience, who are returning to the War Memorial. We have an exciting season of discovery ahead of us; it is your participation that makes it all complete.

Enjoy the season!



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# SAN FRANCISCO OPERA

Lotfi Mansouri, General Director

## 1991 SEASON

### Opening Night

Friday, September 6, 7:30

**La Traviata** Verdi  
Vaness, Keen, Petersen; Giordani\*,  
Coni\*, Skinner, Travis, Wood\*, McNeil,  
Swenson\*  
Arena/Copley/Conklin/Walker/  
Munn

*Production originally made possible by  
Louise M. Davies.*

Saturday, September 7, 7:00

*San Francisco Opera Premiere*

**War and Peace** Prokofiev  
Panagulias, Zarembo\*, Bogachova\*,  
Keen, Markova-Mikhailenko\*\*, Racette,  
Claycomb+, Guo+, Mills+, Jepson,  
Cook, Marsh, Mavrovitis; Kharitonov\*,  
McCauley, Plishka, Marusin\*,  
Alexeiev\*\*, Skinner, Travis  
Naoumenko\*\*, Hanedanyan\*\*,  
Ognovenko\*\*, Bezubenko\*\*, Storojev,  
Frank, Petersen, Estep, Ledbetter,  
Graber+, Harper, Milne\*, Gudas,  
Villanueva, Irmiter, Wilborn, Halper\*,  
Vasquez+\*  
Gergiev\*\*/Savary\*\*/Lebois\*\*/  
Schmidt\*\*/Peduzzi\*\*/Morgan/Munn

*Made possible by gifts from the Columbia  
Foundation, Cynthia Wood and the Paul L.  
and Phyllis C. Wattis Foundation.*

Tuesday, September 10, 7:00

**War and Peace** Prokofiev

Wednesday, September 11, 7:30

**La Traviata** Verdi

Thursday September 12, 7:00

**War and Peace** Prokofiev

Saturday, September 14, 8:00

**La Traviata** Verdi

Sunday, September 15, 1:00

**War and Peace** Prokofiev

Wednesday, September 18, 7:30

**La Traviata** Verdi

Thursday, September 19, 7:30

*San Francisco Opera Premiere*

**I Capuleti e i Montecchi** Bellini

Gasdia, Ziegler\*; La Scola\*\* (Sept. 19,  
21, 25), Li (Sept. 29; Oct. 5, 8, 10);  
Plishka, Skinner\*

Pappano\*/Chazalettes\*/Santicchi\*/  
Sund\*/Arhelger

*Underwritten in part, by a generous gift  
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Friday, September 20, 7:00

**War and Peace** Prokofiev

Saturday, September 21, 8:00

**I Capuleti e i Montecchi** Bellini

Sunday, September 22, 2:00

**La Traviata** Verdi

Wednesday, September 25, 7:30

**I Capuleti e i Montecchi** Bellini

Thursday, September 26, 7:00

**War and Peace** Prokofiev

Friday, September 27, 8:00

**La Traviata** Verdi



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Saturday, September 28, 8:00

**Don Giovanni** Mozart

Mims, Esperian\*, Blackwell\*;  
Ramey, Gallo\*\*, Lopardo\*, Villanueva,  
Rose\*\*

Hager\*/Hampe/Feldman/Businger/  
Munn

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Sunday, September 29, 1:00

**I Capuleti e i Montecchi** Bellini

Sunday, September 29, 8:00

**La Traviata** Verdi  
(Violetta: Nicolesco\*)

Tuesday, October 1, 8:00

**Don Giovanni** Mozart  
(Giovanni: Quilico)

Wednesday, October 2, 7:00

**War and Peace** Prokofiev  
(Conductor: Anisimov\*\*)

Thursday, October 3, 7:30

**Don Giovanni** Mozart

Saturday, October 5, 8:00

**I Capuleti e i Montecchi** Bellini

Sunday, October 6, 2:00

**Don Giovanni** Mozart

Tuesday, October 8, 8:00

**I Capuleti e i Montecchi** Bellini

Thursday, October 10, 8:00

**I Capuleti e i Montecchi** Bellini

Friday, October 11, 8:00

**Don Giovanni** Mozart

Saturday, October 12, 7:30

**Carmen** Bizet

Kuhlmann, Racette, Fortuna+, Guo+;  
McCauley, Kharitonov, Vasquez+,  
Delavan, Swenson, Wood, Oropeza\*  
Sutej\*/Ponnelle/Williams/Ponnelle/  
Juerke/Munn

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Sunday, October 13, 2:00

**Don Giovanni** Mozart

Tuesday, October 15, 8:00

**Don Giovanni** Mozart

Wednesday, October 16, 7:30

**Carmen** Bizet

Saturday, October 19, 8:00

**Don Giovanni** Mozart

Sunday, October 20, 1:30

**Carmen** Bizet

Monday, October 21, 7:00

**Tristan und Isolde** Wagner

Schnaut\*\*, Schwarz; Johns, Muff,  
Welker\*, De Haan, Schade\*, Li  
Schneider/Mansouri/Pagano/Munn

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Wednesday, October 23, 7:30 <b>Carmen</b>	Bizet	Wednesday, November 13, 8:00 <b>Das Verratene Meer</b>	Henze	Friday, November 29, 8:00 <b>La Traviata</b>	Verdi
Thursday, October 24, 7:00 <b>Tristan und Isolde</b>	Wagner	Saturday, November 16, 8:00 <b>Elektra</b>	Strauss	(Same cast as November 25)	
Friday, October 25, 7:30 <b>Carmen</b>	Bizet	Jones, Secunde*, Dernes, Carla Cook, Guo+, Jepson, Catherine Cook+, Randell, Racette, Fortuna+, Mavrovitis; Pederson, King, Wood, McNeil, Graber Thielemann**/Serban*/Kokkos*/Munn		Saturday, November 30, 8:00 <b>Attila</b>	Verdi
(Carmen: Graves*; Don José: Ordoñez*)				Sunday, December 1, 2:00 <b>Elektra</b>	Strauss
Saturday, October 26, 7:30 <b>Carmen</b>	Bizet	<i>Original production from Grand Théâtre de Genève.</i>		(Orest: Fox)	
Kuhlmann, Haymon*, Claycomb+, Guo+, McCauley, Hale, Vasquez+, Delavan, Swenson, Wood, Oropeza Sutej/Ponnelle/Williams/Ponnelle/Juerke/Munn		Sunday, November 17, 2:00 <b>Das Verratene Meer</b>	Henze	Tuesday, December 3, 8:00 <b>Attila</b>	Verdi
Sunday, October 27, 1:00 <b>Tristan und Isolde</b>	Wagner	Wednesday, November 20, 7:30 <b>Das Verratene Meer</b>	Henze	Wednesday, December 4, 7:30 <b>Elektra</b>	Strauss
Tuesday, October 29, 7:30 <b>Carmen</b>	Bizet	Thursday, November 21, 7:30 <i>San Francisco Opera Premiere</i>		(Orest: Fox)	
(Same cast as October 25)		<b>Attila</b>	Verdi	Thursday, December 5, 7:30 <b>La Traviata</b>	Verdi
Wednesday, October 30, 7:00 <b>Tristan und Isolde</b>	Wagner	Connell; Ramey, Chernov* (Nov. 21, 24), May* (Nov. 27, 30; Dec. 3, 6, 8), Ordoñez, Estep, Skinner		(Same cast as November 25)	
Friday, November 1, 7:30 <b>Carmen</b>	Bizet	Ferro*/Mansouri/Alley*/Lee/Peterson*/Arhelger		Friday, December 6, 8:00 <b>Attila</b>	Verdi
(Same cast as October 25)		<i>Production from New York City Opera. Sponsored, in part, by a generous gift from Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Tilton.</i>		Saturday, December 7, 7:30 <b>Elektra</b>	Strauss
Saturday, November 2, 7:00 <b>Tristan und Isolde</b>	Wagner	Friday, November 22, 8:00 <b>Elektra</b>	Strauss	(Orest: Fox)	
Tuesday, November 5, 7:00 <b>Tristan und Isolde</b>	Wagner	Saturday, November 23, 8:00 <b>Das Verratene Meer</b>	Henze	Sunday, December 8, 2:00 <b>Attila</b>	Verdi
Thursday, November 7, 7:30 <b>Carmen</b>	Bizet	Sunday, November 24, 2:00 <b>Attila</b>	Verdi		
(Same cast as October 26)		Monday, November 25, 7:30 <b>La Traviata</b>	Verdi	**United States opera debut *San Francisco Opera debut +1991 Adler Fellow	
Friday, November 8, 8:00 <i>United States Premiere</i>		Patterson, Guo+, Petersen; Lopez-Yañez, Laperrière, Skinner, Delavan, Wood, Swenson, McNeil Robertson/Copley/Conklin/Walker/Munn		All performances are in the original language with English Supertitles.	
<b>Das Verratene Meer</b>	Henze			Repertoire, casts and dates subject to change.	
Putnam; Fox, Estep, Villanueva, Asawa*, Sarris*, Graber+, McNeil Stenz**/Alden*/Steinberg*/Munn		Tuesday, November 26, 8:00 <b>Elektra</b>	Strauss	Box Office and telephone sales: (415) 864-3330.	
<i>Underwritten by a generous gift from the Paul L. and Phyllis C. Wattis Foundation.</i>		Wednesday, November 27, 7:30 <b>Attila</b>	Verdi		
Saturday, November 9, 7:00 <b>Tristan und Isolde</b>	Wagner				
Sunday, November 10, 1:30 <b>Carmen</b>	Bizet				
(Same cast as October 26)					



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# ATILA

By JEREMY COMMONS



Verdi, in his early career—in the period he himself later referred to as his “galley years”—was anything but a musician’s musician. Some of us, admittedly, will be familiar with Donizetti’s unauthorized remark, said to have been made after hearing *I Due Foscari*, to the effect that “Really, this man is a genius.” But few other composers and musicians would have agreed with him. A more typical remark was that of an older composer, Nicola Vaccai, made after hearing Verdi’s first opera, *Oberto, Conte di San Bonifacio*, at La Scala late in 1839. Writing to a lifelong friend, Girolamo Viezzoli, he said:

In this last autumn an opera called *Oberto*, by a certain *Verdi*, was much prized here: the most paltry (*meschinissima*) music, which boils down to two pieces which had some effect, a romanza and the adagio of a quartet. If one had to compare it with the current opera [Mercadante’s *Le Due Illustri Rivali*], one would call it a turnip set beside an [exotic] pineapple. Such is the taste of the public, which decides the fate of operas. Poor composers!

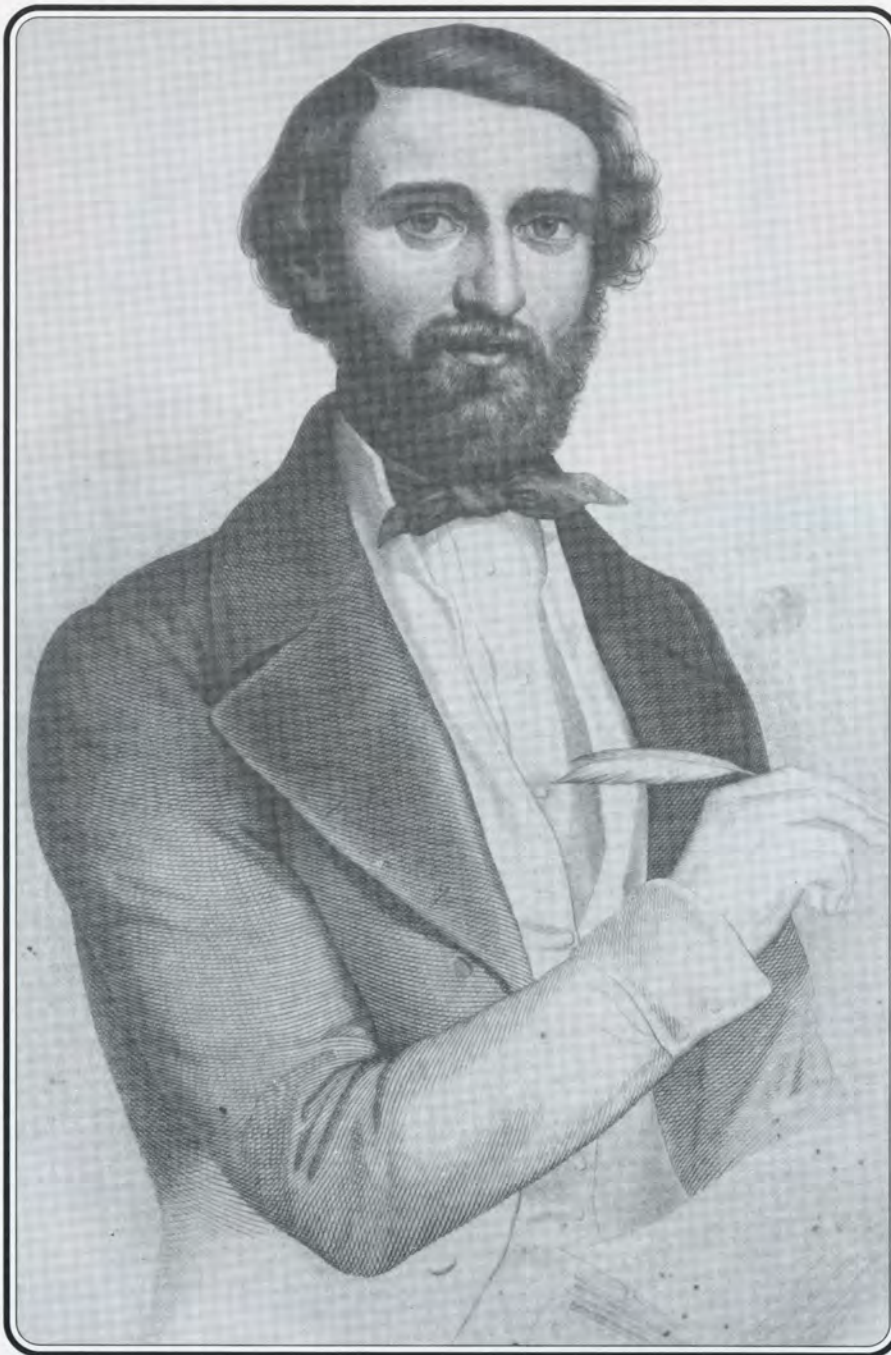
Felice Romani, famed both as a librettist and as an influential journalist, conducted a running battle against Verdi’s music in the *Gazzetta Piemontese* of Turin. As one example among many, we may cite the valediction he delivered upon *Giovanna d’Arco* at the end of its performances early in 1846:

Farewell, Giovanna of painful memory!  
Farewell, poor hoarse-throated Giovanna, the  
curtain descended upon you like a funeral  
shroud! Farewell, demon possessed, the gods

---

Jeremy Commons, a New Zealander, teaches English literature and music at Victoria University in Wellington. A lecturer and broadcaster on Italian and French opera, he is also involved with a number of N.Z. operatic organizations, in addition to his work for the London-based company, Opera Rara. He has written numerous recording notes for Joan Sutherland and Richard Bonyngne.





(Previous page) Ming Cho Lee's set design for the first scene of *Attila*.

(Above) Giuseppe Verdi as he looked in 1842. The etching is by L. de Begni, made after a drawing by G. Turchi.

struck you down in the midst of your nightly revels—out of pity for the trumpets, the horns and the drums, all of which would have burst had you lasted longer! Farewell, finally, O inglorious Giovanna, who 'ere you died saw yourself eclipsed by the splendor of a single jewel from *Beatrice di Tenda* [presumably an aria borrowed from Bellini's opera and introduced into Verdi's]. [Pacini's] *La Regina di Cipro* has taken your place, and will not be dislodged, let us hope—unless your

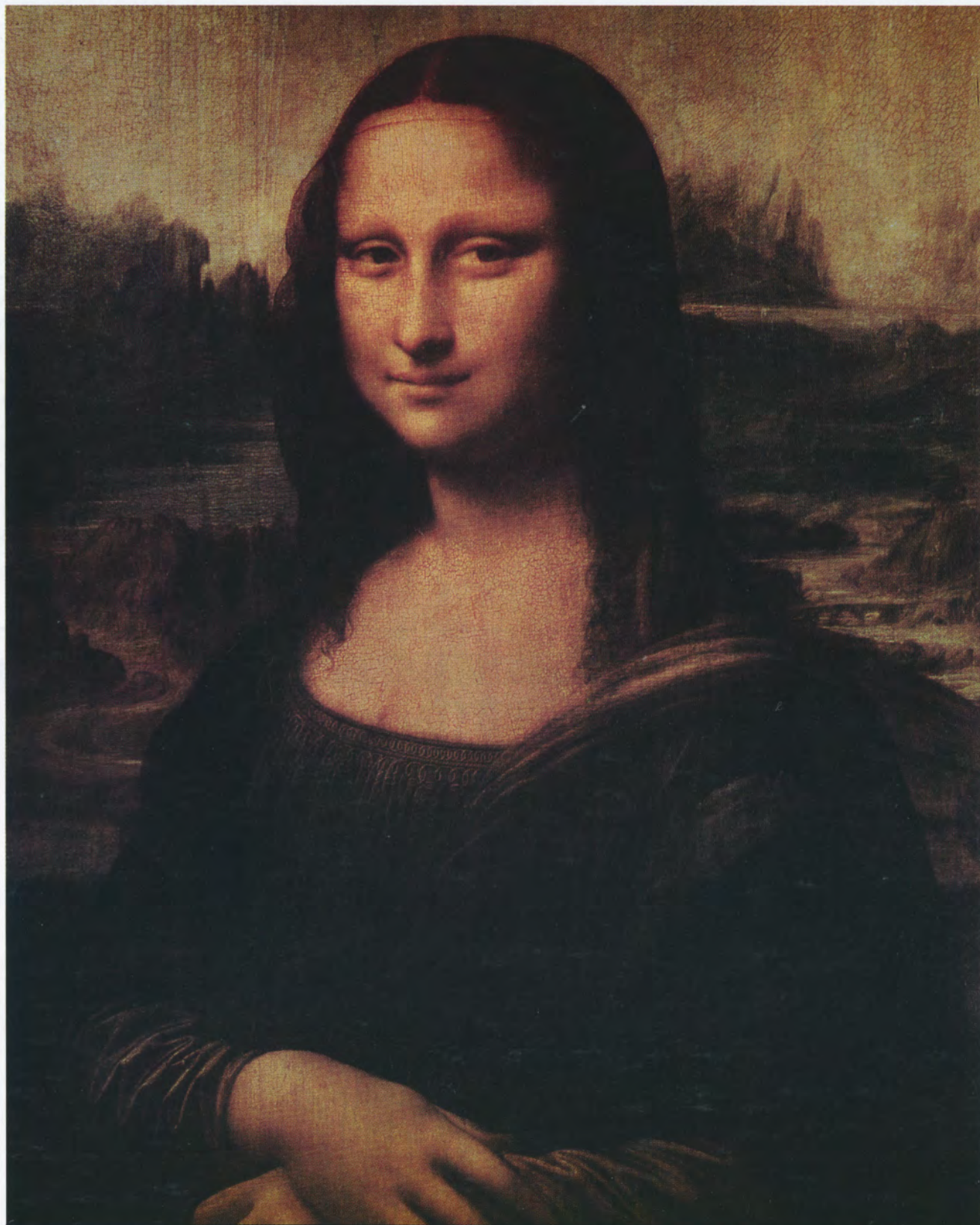
dolorous spirit should arise from time to time out of spite from the grave, like one of those ghosts which, they say, haunt uninhabited and decayed houses.

Nowadays, when we universally recognize Verdi's achievement, a vitriolic and rhetorical effusion such as this may seem merely funny. But at the time it seemed—indeed, the present writer is tempted to go even further and say it *was*—both reasonable and justified. To anyone accustomed to the expressive instrumentation and thoughtful harmonies of preceding composers—Donizetti's teacher Giovanni Simone Mayr, for instance, or Pietro Generali or Ferdinando Paer—Verdi's use of pounding cabaletta rhythms, his frequent writing of choruses in bare octaves and his habit of doubling the voices in the orchestra must have seemed insufferably brash and aggressive. In *Attila* there is even a final movement of a duet in which the tenor and soprano sing in unison throughout. A demagogue unleashed in the theater, Verdi stormed the gallery with an arsenal of urgent rhythms and stirring but "obvious" melodies. And it is demonstrably true that his music came to demand a new style of singing, a new strength and power, particularly in the upper registers, and that as singers aimed at this, so they began to lose much of their agility, their lightness and ability to execute the graceful divisions of older bel canto writing.

It would not be an exaggeration, therefore, to say that early Verdi was a composer whose primary appeal was to the *loggioni*: to the less educated and less sophisticated sections of his audience.

For attitudes to his music to change, there had to be concessions and developments on both sides: on the part of the audience, particularly its more intellectual members, and on the part of the composer. The 19th-century cognoscenti had to recognize that, in the midst of so much that seemed raw, noisy, violent and "popular," there was also a very real dramatic genius and a genuine creative imagination at work. And Verdi himself had to evolve—had to grind away the "spots of commonness" that so frequently disfigured his early scores, and concentrate upon moving his audience through writing music that is as thoughtful and as inventive in terms of harmony and figuration as it is appealing.





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That he was capable of writing such music he had already shown, albeit fitfully, right from the start of his career, in the inspired moments of such operas as *Nabucco* (1842) and *Ernani* (1844). Of all his earlier operas, however, the one that most clearly shows his advances is, by common consent, *Macbeth* (1847). And *Macbeth* was the work which immediately followed *Attila*. Indeed, the very real interest of *Attila*—for it, too, was an innovatory opera—has been overshadowed by the greater and undeniable importance of its successor.

The genesis of *Attila* dates back a full two years before its production at the Teatro la Fenice in Venice on March 17th, 1846, for it was in 1844, just after the first performance of *Ernani*, that Verdi first considered setting music to the German play, *Attila, König der Hunnen* (1808), by Zacharias Werner. The writing of the libretto was entrusted first to Francesco Maria Piave, then to Temistocle Solera, and the whole project was shelved and postponed several times. Piave, critics

generally agree, was too meek by nature to handle such a fiery subject satisfactorily; Solera was temperamentally more suited to it, but he was also unreliable. In the autumn of 1845 Solera went to Spain, leaving the libretto in an advanced but still unfinished state. In this emergency Verdi again had recourse to Piave, whose patching up of the last act, carried out under the composer's orders, jettisoned the choral ending Solera had planned, and substituted a finale for the principals. When Solera eventually saw the result, he was so taken aback that on January 12th, 1846, he wrote to Verdi:

Your letter was a shattering blow to me. How on earth could the solemnity of a final hymn fail to inspire you? ... The ending you've sent me seems nothing less than a parody ... It seems to me to make nonsense of the characters as I've portrayed them. Fiat voluntas tua ... you are the only person who has been able to convince me that the career of a librettist is not for me ...

Poster for the world premiere of *Attila*.

ARCHIVES, TEATRO LA FENICE, VENICE

# GRAN TEATRO LA FENICE

Questa sera di Martedì 17 Marzo 1846. Recita XLVII.

Si Rappresenta il Dramma Lirico Nuovissimo, in un Prologo e tre Atti

## ATTILA

Parole di Temistocle Solera.

### PERSONAGGI

ATTILA Re degli Unni  
EZIO Generale Romano  
ODASILLA, figlia del Signore di Aquileja

### ATTORI

MARINI IGNAZIO  
COSTANTINI NATALE  
LOEWE SOFIA

Musica del M. Giuseppe Verdi.

### PERSONAGGI

FORESTO Cavaliere Aquilejese  
ULDINO Giovane bretonne Schiavo  
d'Aquila  
LEONE Vecchio Romano

### ATTORI

GUASCO CARLO  
PROFILI ETTORE  
ROMANELLI GIUSEPPE

Duci, Re e Soldati Unni, Gepidi, Ostrogoti, Eruli, Turingi, Quadi, Druidi, Sacerdotesse, Popolo Uomini e Donne di Aquileja, Vergini di Aquileja in abito Guerriero, Ufficiali e Soldati Romani, Vergini e Fanciulli di Roma, Eremiti, Schiavi.  
La Scena nel Prologo è in Aquileja, e nelle Lagune Adriatiche, nei tre atti è presso Roma.

Dopo la Seconda Parte dell'Opera

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*Sophia Loewe (1816-1866), the first interpreter of Attila's Odabella.*

Not surprisingly, perhaps, Verdi and Solera were never to collaborate again.

Even when Verdi arrived in Venice for the rehearsals, things went badly. He himself was seriously ill with a gastric disorder, and was confined to bed for days at a time. Rumors began to circulate of his death. Week by week, the premiere was postponed, until the date originally fixed for the first performance had long since come and gone. In the interim, as the composer Vaccai was informed by his faithful Viezzoli in a letter of March 11th, opera at the Fenice had been seriously overshadowed by the ballet:

... The affairs of the Teatro della Fenice have limped this year where opera is concerned. *Ernani* ended up by being

a mortal bore. *La Sposa di Abido* of Poniatowski is one of his usual thefts that awakens reactions neither hot nor cold. Now they are anxiously awaiting Verdi's opera, which will be staged next Saturday and of which good hopes are held. As for the ballet, it is a marvel, since it is sustained by [Fanny] Elssler who is a real miracle. We saw her one evening, and were left amazed, transported with delight, beside ourselves ... The Theater every night is full, and the enthusiasm grows by leaps and bounds. Lanari [the impresario] rejoices and amasses fortunes; la Loewe [the prima donna who was to create the part of Odabella in Verdi's opera] is irritated by the

[nimble] legs of the ballerina and doesn't want to sing, and the other artists appear discouraged because the public scarcely listens to them. So for Verdi, too, this is not the most propitious moment. We shall see ...

Under such daunting circumstances, Verdi's success with *Attila* must be regarded as more than ever remarkable. Not, indeed, that the first evening was by any means an unqualified success. The performance began excellently, but ended on a discouragingly subdued note. As the Bolognese journal *I Teatri* reported, reproducing in part a review that had already appeared in the *Gazzetta Privilegiata di Venezia*:

Great expectation; the theater very crowded and overflowing with people; many demands and claims [for seats]. The opera began, then, under the most splendid omens. A most beautiful prologue, which set all minds afire with the liveliest enthusiasm, contains a cavatina sung by la Loewe and executed with great skill, a grandiose duet for Marini [Attila] and Costantini [Ezio], and a chorus of hermits followed by a piece truly magnificent for its orchestration [the passage depicting the dawn]. The prologue ends with the cavatina of the tenor, Guasco [Foresto], accompanied by a chorus of women and men, with a melody which is rather facile and light. At all these points the singers and the composer were called many times upon the stage.

During the rest of the opera the omens shone less propitiously. There was good applause for the very suave romanza of la Loewe, [and] for the first movement of a duet between her and Guasco. A concertato of beautiful and learned construction pleased in the first act, and the rich and varied work of the finale of the second act; but the music was less lively in its effect, even if the applause and the calls for the composer were no less eager, though perhaps less universal. Justice, however, requires that it be said that not all the pieces were enjoyed in their [full] perfection: it is to be hoped that the execution will be better in the few remaining performances ... As for the third act, it is as if it was not heard, and in truth it ended in perfect silence ...



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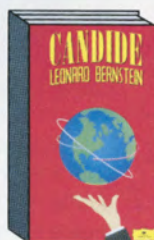
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## ATTILA

Apparently, too, the candles at Attila's feast in Act II stank most offensively when extinguished. The *Gazzetta Privilegiata di Venezia* wasted no words in declaring: "The scourge of God ought not to be the scourge of our nostrils ..."

Repeatedly delayed, this premiere took place so late in the season that only six performances could be given. Nevertheless, at the end of the season *I Teatri* reported:

... As we hoped, maestro Verdi's opera not only sustained itself in its later performances, but gained in the public's favor. The applause and the acclamations were incessant, the theater every evening more delighted, every evening equally crowded, and after the third performance the composer, by way of triumph, was accompanied home with torches and music.

And indeed the prologue, upon which there was only one opinion right from the moment it was first heard, glows with strong and original beauties, including that sublime sunrise, where some wish to detect I don't know what strange imitation—but which, as the intelligentsia are saying, is something absolutely singular, both for the novelty of its thought and the very invention of its sounds ... It is one of Verdi's happiest inspirations. The duet for the two basses pleased more each time it was heard, as did Guasco's cabaletta, which has already become popular, and which [one could hear] more or less sweetly sung as the audience came out of the theater each evening ...

In the rest of the work the pieces already mentioned in our first notice were enjoyed even more; except that the adagio of the finale of Act II was never heard to perfection. The singers, left to themselves without the support of the orchestra, seemed to lose their way, and came together again only in the stretta ... A trio and a quartet in Act III are also beautiful. They went unnoticed the first evening, but were heard with growing delight thereafter ...

Already in these reviews a pattern is emerging: the prologue is admired as a whole, but the rest of the opera is praised rather for individual items than for any



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all-embracing conception or inspiration. It was a critical reaction that was to be echoed many times as the years passed.

But perhaps the most interesting aspect of these early reviews comes under the heading of "omissions," for there is a total absence of any reference to the patriotic, nationalistic appeal of the opera, even though *Attila*, as all the textbooks will tell us, has always been known as one of the most politically motivated of Verdi's operas.

The second scene of the prologue, for example, showing the survivors of the sack of Aquileia taking refuge in the swamps on the Adriatic shore, where they became the founders of Venice, was a nice compliment to the city in which the opera was first staged. But that was only the beginning. In the words of George Martin:

Within Italy almost the entire opera became a battle cry. When the Venetian audience saw the Huns appear on the Adriatic shore, it burst into cries of 'Italia! Italia!' Some of Solera's lines passed directly into the language, such as when the Roman [Ezio] says to Attila: 'Avrai tu l'universo, resti l'Italia a me' (You take the universe, leave Italy to me) ... Invariably the audience shouted back at the stage: 'A noi! L'Italia a noi!' (Italy for us!). It seems extraordinary that the censors allowed the line, or indeed any part of the libretto, to pass.

The clue as to why the reviews were so silent regarding this aspect of the opera lies, or course, in Martin's last sentence. Any operatic libretto, no matter in what Italian state it was presented, was examined by censors to ensure that it did not offend political, religious and moral sensibilities. In *Attila* it was certainly the censors who insisted, for example, that Pope Leo should appear simply as "Leone, an old Roman." Yet for the most part the libretto could pass scrutiny because its political allusions were just that: allusions which could escape detection as explicit political references, but which, the composer and librettist hoped, an alert audience might pick up when the opera was performed. Critics in their turn also had to be wary of the authorities: they might report the beauties of the music and the performance, but they could make no reference to po-

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litical implications and the reactions they provoked.

For the most part the political allusions lay, in any case, in dispersed lines such as that quoted by Martin, logically contradictory in itself, "Avrai tu l'universo, resti l'Italia a me." Any broader attempt to read the opera as a consistent parallel to the contemporary Italian situation, and the domination of the northern part of the country by Austria, ran into difficulties since the subject was, in this sense, stubbornly intractable. Of all the characters, the only one who excites our respect and sympathy is Attila, the foreign invader and ostensibly the barbarian, the "scourge of God." After his initial—and momentary—presentation as a bloodlusting tyrant, he acts, disconcertingly, as "nature's gentleman," an embodiment of nobility, generosity and humanity. It is the Italian characters who, by contrast, are treacherous and contemptible. Ezio, when first we see him, is ready to betray his boy Emperor for his own personal aggrandizement. Foresto tries to poison Attila, and Odabella actually succeeds in murdering him—notwithstanding all the generous treatment she has received at his hands. Though she likens herself to the biblical Judith, she and her companions seem more like jackals worrying a lion—and a very gentle lion at that, as the first critics were quick to note. As the second review published in *I Teatri* expressed it:

Poor Attila cuts the strangest figure ... A good-natured character, he is insulted, kept waiting, and betrayed by all: I don't know why the world calls him the scourge of God, when really he sustains the part of the scourged. When he sees himself in danger of his life, he doesn't even have the good sense to flee and save himself; and he dies, spitted like a goose...

We are, then, dealing with an opera which is less than satisfactory in dramatic terms, and which, musically, is more easily admired for its many fine moments than as a total entity. Yet even after qualifying our assessment in this way, there is just so much left to admire. Movements abound in which we can see Verdi reaching towards new heights of imaginative expression: the yearningly beautiful prelude; the orchestral depiction of dawn breaking over the Adriatic



MUSEO TEATRALE ALLA SCALA, MILAN

*Basso Ignazio Marini (1811-1873), the first portrayer of the title role of Verdi's Attila.*

marshes; Odabella's romanza, "Oh! nel fuggente nuvolo," with its sweeping melody set over exquisite ostinato figures for English horn, flute, cello and harp; Attila's account of his dream, one of Verdi's many remarkable depictions of psychological disturbance, terror and distress; and his encounter with Leone where, eschewing a customary final stretta, Verdi ends Act I with an adagio. Elsewhere, even if on occasion the music degenerates to the "intolerably crude" (to quote one of the most responsible of present-day English critics), we are more often likely to be struck by its strength, its sinewy vigor, and its dramatic urgency. More than any other Italian composer of the last century, Verdi had the power to gather up both stage and auditorium in an onrushing wave of melody, and then to sweep us forward on a surging tide of dramatic movement.

With its popularity certainly enhanced by its political relevance, *Attila* soon went the rounds of the Italian theaters. It was seen outside Italy, too: in

1846 in Corfu; in 1847 in Copenhagen, Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia, Cadiz and Lisbon; and in 1848 in London (where it failed to impress) and as far afield as Cuba. Its first American performance took place in New York in 1850, and its first performance in San Francisco on August 19th, 1859, when, according to the *Evening Bulletin*, it was "very heartily and loudly applauded." By 1860 it had been staged throughout South America (in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela), and had even been seen as far away as Australia (in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide). Yet, widely heard though it was, its popularity on the 19th century stage was not of long duration. In a theatrical world which was overstocked with viable operas, only the very greatest masterpieces could expect to remain long in the repertoire; and *Attila*, rivaled within a year by *Macbeth*, was inevitably eclipsed—as indeed *Macbeth* also was—by the three crowning achievements of Verdi's middle years: *Rigoletto*, *La Traviata* and *Il Trovatore*. □



# "The Scourge of God"

By MALCOLM MOSHER, JR.

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This is the epithet that has been commonly given to Attila, king of the Huns, a man and a group of people who inspired terror and dread for centuries after their appearance in history. The name Attila is still part of our modern vocabulary, typically synonymous with one invincible, one capable of great acts of savagery, and one, above all, to be feared. We continue to use the name in a variety of diverse contexts, such as describing monsters like Adolf Hitler and even running backs on a football field. In 1808, the German author Zacharias Werner, capitalizing on the general fascination with the name and what it evoked, wrote a drama loosely based on the events surrounding Attila's invasion of Italy in 452 AD, and it was this play of historical fiction that formed the basis of Verdi's ninth opera, *Attila*. Let us then distinguish fact from fancy in the opera, and, in a larger sense, examine the reasons why Attila and his Huns were so fearsome.

In the latter part of the fourth century, the Roman Empire maintained a tenuous hold over much of Europe. In the west, Roman territory included all lands west and south of the Rhine, as well as the territories of Spain and England. To the east, the empire governed all territory south of the Danube, all



the way to the Black Sea. The areas north of these rivers, from Germany to the Ukraine, were ruled by various independent Teutonic tribes, called barbarians by the Romans. Chief among these were the Visigoths in the west and the Ostrogoths in the east.

While numerous conflicts had arisen between the barbarians and the Romans, these borders were relatively stable until roughly the year 370. At that time, the Huns invaded the Ukraine from the east. The place of their origin remains uncertain, but their impact was major. In the space of a few short years, they completely engulfed the powerful kingdom of the Ostrogoths. The Visigoths, in panic, fled across the Danube into Roman territory, eventually settling

around Toulouse in southern France and thereby causing serious unrest in Roman Gaul.

In an age of extreme violence when massacres by Romans and barbarians alike were not uncommon, the universal dread inspired by the Huns from the very beginning was profound and can be attributed to a variety of factors. Foremost of these was their physical appearance. According to the Byzantine historian Priscus, who visited the camp of Attila,



(Opposite and below) Two etchings of Attila the Hun, presenting us with two somewhat contrasting views of what he might have looked like.

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"... they put to flight men who are their equals in war by the terror of their looks, inspiring no little horror by their awful aspect and horribly swarthy appearance. They have a sort of shapeless lump for a face, if I may say so, and pinholes rather than eyes. Their wild appearance gives evidence to the hardihood of their spirits, and they are cruel even to their children on the first day they are born. They cut the cheeks of the males with a sword so that before they can first receive the nourishment of milk, they are compelled to endure a wound. Their youths are without good looks, particularly as their faces are furrowed by the scar they receive as a babe ... The men are somewhat short in stature, have broad shoulders, thickset necks, and are always erect and proud ... These men, in short, live in the form of humans but with the savagery of beasts."

Whether Priscus was exaggerating or not, there is no question that the Roman legionnaires were terrified by the sheer sight of the Huns, a fact reported by a number of different contemporary historians. Also contributing to this wild appearance was their clothing, which typically consisted, by



design, of a motley collection of furs, the more tattered the better. Another factor that inspired dread was the simple fact that, for nearly 70 years, the Huns were practically invincible on the field of battle. Nomads who lived on horseback, their cavalry was unsurpassed in horsemanship and in its ability to maneuver. Their principal weapon was the compound bow, capable of accuracy at 100 yards and capable of penetrating whatever armor their opponents wore. As an indication of their ferocity in battle, the Romans once hired a band of 300 Huns to intercept several thousand Goths intent on raiding the Italian frontier. After a brief struggle, the Goths fled in disarray, leaving behind over 1,200 dead comrades to just 17 slain Huns. Finally, their

overall policy can be summarized by three key practices: pillage, destruction, and indiscriminate slaughter. Wild but unfounded rumors further enhanced their reputation, such as the practice of cannibalism and a beverage of blood from the slain. Is it any wonder then that they terrified their adversaries, barbarian and Roman alike?

While wreaking havoc among the Goths, they did not at first invade Roman territory. In fact, they maintained peace with the Empire and even served as mercenaries against the



*Detail from the ceiling hemicycle featured on our Attila magazine cover: "Attila Followed by Barbarian Hordes Tramples Italy and the Arts," painted by Eugène Delacroix between 1838 and 1847.*

COURTESY, LIBRARY OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, PALAIS BOURBON, PARIS

Goths and other barbarians. The great Roman general Aetius (Ezio in the opera) was raised in the Hun camp as a hostage for the peace, and the friendships he made would later benefit the empire.

What led to the eventual outbreak of hostilities was the hastening decline of the Roman Empire. With the death of the emperor Theodosius I in 395, the empire was divided up between his two sons, with the Western Empire centered at Rome and the Eastern at Constantinople. Both sons were weak rulers and were in turn succeeded by even more ineffectual

offspring—Valentinian III in the west and Theodosius II in the east. Each surrounded themselves by rapacious courtiers and eunuchs.

Aetius, after disposing of a personal rival, rose in stature to become the leading general of the Western Empire and certainly proved to be the bulwark of Roman Gaul, supported by the alliances he maintained with the Huns. Indeed, for his ongoing defense of Gaul against a variety of different Teutonic tribes, he has been called the "Last of the Romans,"

*Continued on page 56*





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# 1991 San Francisco Opera Company (Continued)

Although our program magazines regularly list members of the Administration and Company (please see pages 10 and 12), we know that those lists are by necessity incomplete. In order to give recognition to the many skilled professionals whose work has contributed so greatly to the quality of San Francisco Opera productions, we provide, once a year, a list of everyone involved with our season. In this issue, department heads are listed in front of the magazine, as usual; the many others, upon whom so much depends, are listed below.

## SAN FRANCISCO OPERA

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Guillermina Flores  
Hatsuno Kimura  
Lylliam Whitford

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Shuk Chi Chan  
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Anke Ockeloen  
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Rubenia Perez  
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Claudia Holaday  
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Nakish

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Mickey Frettoloso  
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Linda Magarian  
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Charles Mullen  
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William Repp, *Doorman*

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*Coordinator*

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Joe Savin, *Doorman*

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Saint Dizier,

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(Balcony/Balcony Circle)

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(Grand Tier/Dress Circle)

Trilby James, *Head Usher*

(Grand Tier/Dress Circle)

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Nathan Segal, *Nurse*

Elisabeth Dumont, *South Elevator*

*Attendant*

Jan Padover, *North Elevator*

*Attendant*

Susan Weiss, *Usher Coordinator*

Kathleen Burns, *Coatcheck*

*Attendant*

Wing Yee Yan, *Show Maid*

Al Dawson, *Show Man*





ELIZABETH CONNELL

Soprano **Elizabeth Connell**, who made her 1987 San Francisco Opera debut as Leonore in *Fidelio*, returns to sing her first Odabella in the Company premiere of *Attila*. Born in South Africa but an Irish citizen, she made her professional debut in 1972 as Varvara in *Katya Kabanova* at the Wexford Festival. In the early part of her career she sang mostly mezzo-soprano roles with the Australian Opera and the English National Opera from 1975 to 1980, and with the Royal Opera, Covent Garden, where she made her 1976 debut in *I Lombardi*. She made her Bayreuth Festival debut in 1980 as Ortrud and appeared in 1982 in a television film of the Festival's production of *Lohengrin*. Her roles at this time also included Lady Macbeth in *Macbeth* in Hamburg, Vitellia in *La Clemenza di Tito* at Covent Garden, Eboli in *Don Carlo*, Kundry in *Parsifal*, and Venus in *Tannhäuser* at the Netherlands Opera, and Ortrud in Munich and Zurich. Since 1983, Miss Connell has concentrated on soprano roles. During the 1983-84 season, she sang Elettra in *Idomeneo* at the Salzburg Festival, followed by the title role of *Norma* in Geneva and Lady Macbeth in Naples under Riccardo Muti. She made her highly acclaimed debut at the Metropolitan Opera in 1985 as Vitellia, followed by her Vienna debut as Elisabeth in *Tannhäuser*, and appearances at Covent Garden as Leonore in *Fidelio*. Highlights of recent seasons include *Macbeth* and *Fidelio* at the Met, *Idomeneo* and *Macbeth* at Covent Garden, *Oberon* at La Scala, *Elektra*, *Fidelio* and *Der Fliegende Holländer* at the Vienna Staatsoper, *Ariadne auf Naxos* for the Canadian Opera Company, *Macbeth* in Bonn, *Der Fliegende Holländer* at the Bayreuth Festival, *Don Carlos* at the Teatro Regio in Turin, and concert performances of *Elektra* at Carnegie Hall with the Vienna Philharmonic conducted by Lorin Maazel. In addition to her operatic activities, Miss Connell often appears in concert and recital. She can be heard on complete recordings of *Poliuto*, *Guillaume Tell* and *Lohengrin*, as well as in Schoenberg's *Gurrelieder* and a disc of



SAMUEL RAMEY

Schubert lieder. She also appears on video in the Covent Garden production of *Luisa Miller*.

One of today's most acclaimed opera stars, American basso cantante **Samuel Ramey** sings the title role of *Attila* in San Francisco Opera's first presentation of the work. He made his 1978 Company debut as Colline in *La Bohème*, and has since returned here as Count Rodolfo in *La Sonnambula* (1984), for the title roles of *Le Nozze di Figaro* (1986), *Mefistofele* (1989), a production that has been televised nationally and released on videocassette) and *Don Quichotte* (1990). He was last seen on the stage of the War Memorial earlier this season when he stepped in for an ailing colleague to portray one of his most famous parts, the title role of *Don Giovanni*. 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 Glyndebourne Festival (1976, his European debut); San Francisco Opera, Netherlands Opera and Hamburg State Opera (1978); the Lyric Opera of Chicago, Paris Opera and Aix-en-Provence Festival (1979); the Vienna State Opera and La Scala in Milan (1981); the Royal Opera at Covent Garden (1982); and the 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 bass in history, with recordings on eight major labels. Among his television credits are *The Barber of Seville* and *Manon* in the



VLADIMIR CHERNOV

"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*, *Bluebeard's Castle* and *Don Giovanni*, all led by James Levine, in the "Live from the Met" series. Earlier this year, he was seen in another Met telecast, performing the role of Assur in Rossini's *Semiramide*.

Baritone **Vladimir Chernov** makes his San Francisco Opera debut as Ezio in *Attila*. Trained at the Moscow State Conservatory and at the Accademia della Scala, he has been soloist with the Kirov Theater since 1981. He was the 1986 winner of the Tito Gobbi competition, as well as the winner of the famed Tchaikovsky competition in Moscow. With the Kirov Opera, he has performed Giorgio Germont in *La Traviata*, the title roles of *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* and *Eugene Onegin*, Malatesta in *Don Pasquale*, Valentin in *Faust*, Yeletsy in *Pique Dame*, and toured with the company in Germany and France with performances of *Boris Godunov* and *Khovanshchina*. In Sofia, he has sung Di Luna in *Il Trovatore* and Don Carlo in *Ernani*. Since his 1989 U.S. debut in Boston as Marcello in *La Bohème*, he has made debuts with the Los Angeles Music Center Opera as Posa in *Don Carlo*, with Seattle Opera as Prince Andrei in *War and Peace*, with the Scottish Opera as Don Carlo in *La Forza del Destino*, and with the Rome Opera as Miller in *Luisa Miller*. Chernov made two important debuts during the 1990-91 season: at the Royal Opera, Covent Garden, he sang the role of Figaro in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, and at the Metropolitan Opera he appeared as Verdi's Miller. He also participated in the Met's 25th anniversary celebration of the debuts of Mirella Freni, Nicolai Ghiaurov and Alfredo Kraus. His most recent assignments include the role of Nottingham in concert performances of *Roberto Devereux* at Carnegie Hall, Prince Andrei for Vara Radio in Amsterdam, and Ezio in *Attila* in Mexico City and at Covent Garden. Future dates include





LUIS GIRÓN MAY

Figaro in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* and Yeletsky in a new production of *Pique Dame* in Vienna, Giorgio Germont at the Met, and Marcello in Stuttgart. Next spring he is scheduled to return to the Met for performances and a recording of the role of Posa in *Don Carlo*. The young artist already has three complete opera recordings to his credit — *Luisa Miller* and *Il Trovatore* led by James Levine, and Puccini's *Edgar* conducted by Lorin Maazel — as well as a recently recorded disc of opera arias.

Baritone **Luis Girón May** makes his first appearance with San Francisco Opera as Ezio in *Attila*. The native of Guatemala has sung over 30 leading roles in such productions as *Il Trovatore* (in his North American debut at the Seattle Opera), *La Traviata* for the Canadian Opera Company, and *Simon Boccanegra* at the Vienna Staatsoper. He has also appeared in *Don Carlos*, *Adriana Lecouvreur*, *Aida*, *Un Ballo in Maschera*, *Carmen*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, and *La Bohème*. He has been seen with opera companies in Austria, Germany, Holland, Belgium, France, Italy, England, Ireland, Monte Carlo, Switzerland, Japan, Venezuela, Mexico, the U.S. and Guatemala. Last year he opened the Parma Verdi Festival as Count di Luna in the French version of Verdi's *Il Trovatore*. In concert, his credits include Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and *Choral Fantasy*, the Requiems of Mozart, Verdi and Fauré, and Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana*.

In his debut season with San Francisco Opera, Spanish tenor **Antonio Ordoñez** sings the roles of Don José in *Carmen* and Foresto in *Attila*. He began his career in zarzuela in Madrid and made his operatic debut as Macduff in *Macbeth* in Las Palmas, subsequently making a debut in Barcelona as Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly*, and appearing in new productions of *La Traviata* and *Simon Boccanegra* in Karlsruhe. The artist came to international attention after his debut in Berlin as Macduff, and important debuts followed in quick succession. In 1987 he made his debut in Paris in the title role of



ANTONIO ORDOÑEZ

*Don Carlos*, and has also been heard in this role in Berlin, Rome, Barcelona and Bologna. He was acclaimed in the title role of *Stiffelio* in Venice, and bowed at the Torre del Lago Festival as Calaf in *Turandot*, a role he has also sung in Catania and Ravenna. Ordoñez made his 1987 American debut in Dallas as Cavaradossi in *Tosca*, and has since returned to the U.S. for *La Forza del Destino* and *La Bohème* at the Washington Opera. Most recently, he appeared as Des Grieux in *Manon Lescaut* at the Bastille Opera in Paris, and in a new production of the work with the Flemish Opera. He has also been heard in Berlin as Manrico in *Il Trovatore*, Rodolfo in *La Bohème*, and Gabriele Adorno in *Simon Boccanegra*; in Basel as Manrico; in London as Cavaradossi; and in Tokyo as Don José. He has appeared in several productions at the Liceu in Barcelona including, in recent seasons, Pacini's *Saffo*, Respighi's *La Fiamma*, and Boito's *Mefistofele*.



CRAIG ESTEP

Tenor **Craig Estep** appears this fall as a French Abbé, Kutuzov's Aide-de-Camp and Gérard in *War and Peace*, Noboru in *Das Verratene Meer*, and Uldino in *Attila*. A 1990 Adler Fellow with the San Francisco Opera Center, he made his Company debut in 1989 as Dr. Caius in the family performance of *Falstaff*, and was also seen in *Madama Butterfly* and *Lohengrin*. Last fall he appeared here as



PHILIP SKINNER

Borsa in *Rigoletto*, the Italian Tenor in *Capriccio*, Alfred in the family performance of *Die Fledermaus*, and Anfimono in *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria*. During this summer's Mozart Festival he was seen as Don Curzio in *Le Nozze di Figaro* and as Il Contino Belfiore in *La Finta Giardiniera*. A 1987 and 1988 Merola Opera Program participant, Estep sang in *Madame Butterfly* on Western Opera Theater's national tour and in Japan with the Center's Pacific Rim Exchange Program. The tenor traveled to Shanghai in 1988 to sing Spoletta in the first production of *Tosca* ever seen in China. In 1989 he appeared in the Opera Center's Showcase production of Handel's *Giustino*, and was a soloist in the San Francisco Symphony Pops Series. Earlier this year he visited Japan and Guam with other Company and Opera Center personnel for a collaborative presentation of *Carmen*. The North Carolina native has a master's degree in vocal performance and has also sung with the North Carolina Opera, Connecticut Grand Opera, the Charleston Opera, Calgary Opera and Marin Opera.

In his seventh consecutive season with San Francisco Opera, bass-baritone **Philip Skinner** appears as Baron Douphol in *La Traviata*, Dolokhov in *War and Peace*, Lorenzo in *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*, and Leone in *Attila*. He made his Company debut as Quinault in the 1985 production of *Adriana Lecouvreur*, and has since appeared here in over 20 different operas in such roles as Ferrando in *Il Trovatore*, Méphistophélès in the student/family performances of *Faust*, Colline in the family performance of *La Bohème*, Don Diego in *L'Africaine* and, last fall, Monterone in *Rigoletto* and Count Horn (Sam) in *Un Ballo in Maschera*. As part of this summer's Mozart Festival, he was seen as the Second Armored Man in *The Magic Flute*. Skinner participated in the 1985 Merola Opera Program and went on to tour with Western Opera Theater in the title role of *Don Giovanni*. He was a 1986-87 Adler Fellow and appeared in several Opera Center Showcase productions. He has sung with Kentucky Opera, Edmonton

Continued on page 45

San Francisco Opera



# 1991 FALL SEASON

## ARTISTS

Harolyn Blackwell*	Maria Fortuna+	Olga Markova-Mikhailenko**	Ashley Putnam
Irina Bogachova*	Cecilia Gasdia	Jane Marsh	Patricia Racette
Jacalyn Bower	Denyce Graves*	Reveka Mavrovitis	Angela Randell
Laura Claycomb+	Yanyu Guo+	Mary Mills+	Gabriele Schnaut**
Elizabeth Connell	Cynthia Haymon*	Marilyn Mims	Hanna Schwarz
Carla Cook	Kristine Jepson	Mariana Nicolesco*	Nadine Secunde*
Catherine Cook*+	Gwyneth Jones	Ann Panagulias	Carol Vaness
Helga Dernes	Catherine Keen	Susan Patterson	Elena Zarembo*
Kallen Esperian*	Kathleen Kuhlmann	Donna Petersen	Delores Ziegler*
Valery Alexeiev**	Paul Gudas	Jorge Lopez-Yañez	Gino Quilico
Brian Asawa*	Robert Hale	Yuri Marusin**	Samuel Ramey
Gennadi Bezubenkov**	Ross Halper*	Luis Girón May*	Peter Rose**
Victor Braun	Grier Hanedanyan**	Barry McCauley	Timothy Sarris*
Vladimir Chernov*	Daniel Harper	Dennis McNeil	Michael Schade*
Paolo Coni*	Kristopher Irmiter	Robert Milne*	Philip Skinner
John David De Haan	William Johns	Alfred Muff	Nikita Storejev
Mark Delavan	Dimitri Kharitonov*	Alexandre Naoumenko**	John Swenson*
Craig Estep	James King	Vladimir Ognovenko**	Dale Travis
Tom Fox	Gaétan Laperrière	Antonio Ordoñez*	Hector Vasquez*+
Joseph Frank	Vincenzo La Scola**	Luis Oropeza*	LeRoy Villanueva
Lucio Gallo**	Victor Ledbetter	Monte Pederson	Hartmut Welker*
Marcello Giordani*	Hong-Shen Li	Dennis Petersen	Kip Wilborn
Micah Graber+	Frank Lopardo*	Paul Plishka	James Wood*

## CONDUCTORS

Alexander Anisimov**	Valery Gergiev**	Ian Robertson	Patrick Summers
Maurizio Arena	Leopold Hager*	Peter Schneider	Vjekoslav Šutej*
Gabriele Ferro*	Antonio Pappano*	Markus Stenz**	Christian Thielemann**

## STAGE DIRECTORS

Christopher Alden*	Giulio Chazalettes*	Laurie Feldman	Jérôme Savary**	Paula Williams
Laura Alley*	John Copley	Lotfi Mansouri	Andrei Serban*	

## PRODUCTIONS DESIGNED BY

Toni Businger	Yannis Kokkos*	Ming Cho Lee	Mauro Pagano	Ulisce Santicchi*
John Conklin	Michel Lebois**	Thomas J. Munn	Jean-Pierre Ponnelle	Paul Steinberg*

## COSTUME DESIGNERS

Werner Juerke	Walter Mahoney	Emmanuel Peduzzi**	Jacques Schmidt**	David Walker
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## CHOREOGRAPHERS

Adela Clara	Victoria Morgan	Kirk Peterson*	Robert Sund*
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\*\*U.S. opera debut \*San Francisco Opera debut +1991 Adler Fellow

## CHORUS

Deanna Barraza	Ann Hughes	Sharon Mueller	Shelly Seitz Saarni
Julianne Booth	Christina Jaqua	Sharon Navratil	Sue Ellen Schepke
Roberta Bowman	Joy Korst	Alexandra Nehra	Claudia Siefer
Pamela Dale	Dallas Lane	Rose Parker	Page Swift
Dotty Dean	Marcie Lawer	Virginia Pluth	Donna Turchi
Paula Goodman	Tamaki McCracken	Laurel Rice	Michelle Ziegelman
Daniel Becker-Nealeigh	Timothy Foster	Jim Meyer	Rogert Rutt
Richard Brown	Alex Guerrero, Jr.	Raymond Murcell	Sigmund Seigel
Ric Cascio	Cameron Henley	Daniel Pociernicki	Dan Stanley
Frank Daniels	Gerald Johnson	Valery Portnov	Jere Torkelsen
Henryk De Rewenda	Ken Johnson	Kenneth Rafanan	Don Tull
Robert Delany	Frederick Matthews	Tom Reed	Richard Walker



**EXTRA CHORUS**

Candida Arias-Duazo  
Joan Beal  
Marcia Gronewold

Lise Lindstrom  
Wendy Loder  
Ellyn Peabody

Christine Reimer  
Janine Bartalini Shafer  
Bonnie Shapiro-Haroutunian  
Diana Smith

Traci Tornquist  
Delia Voitoff  
Darla Wigginton  
Susan Witt

John Beauchamp  
William Berges  
Mario Dioneda  
Tim Enders

Dario Di Maria Fraticelli  
Peter Girardot  
Gregory Marks  
Walter Matthes

Donald Matthews  
Tom McEachern  
John Musselman  
William Pickersgill  
Robert V. Presley

Lawrence Rush  
Robert Steiner  
Erich Stratmann  
Grant Thompson  
James G. Weaver

**CHILDREN'S CHORUS****San Francisco Girls Chorus**

Carrie Burr  
Jean-Marie Fanvu  
Jessica Higgins  
Chesi Ho

Elizabeth Howard  
Erin Hughes  
Michele Kennedy  
Vanessa Langer

Joyce Lin  
Marguerite Mugge  
Valerie Paik  
Emma Price

Lora Price  
Elaine Robertson  
Elizabeth Wilson Rood  
Teresa Taylor

**DANCERS**

Carolyn Houser Carvajal  
Celia Fushille

Nora Heiber  
Marina Hotchkiss

Michele Nichols  
Summer Lee Rhatigan

Debra Rose  
Katherine Warner

**SUPERNUMERARIES**

Traude Albert  
Susan Anderson  
Elayne Ashman  
Phyllis Blair  
Katherine Brazaitis  
Dottie Brown

Regina Bustillos  
Annette Clark  
Huguette Combs  
Renée DeJarnatt  
Karen Goodwyn  
Joan Imbeau

Masai Jones  
Kerry King  
Andrea Kohlruess  
Carol Mauro  
Nancy Petrisko  
Stephanie Salter

Christine Seigel  
Stella Tatro  
Beverly Terry  
Kimberly Thompson  
Linda Unemori  
Carolyn Waugh  
Laurel Winzler

John Atkinson  
Steve Bauman  
Mark Burstein  
Roy Cairo  
Tom Carlisle  
Joe Castrovinci  
Bill Chiles  
Stewart Clark  
David Clover  
Brian Lee Cronk  
Brian Devine  
Joe Dial  
Gabe Diamond  
Dick Dobbins  
John Durocher  
Pedro Echeandia  
Milko Encinas

C.J. Figueroa  
Danny Furlong  
John Gilbert  
Gilbert Gonzalez  
Albert Goodwyn  
Eddy Gordillo  
Sean Greene  
Stephen Greengard  
Rick Gydesen  
Bill Higgins  
Mark Huelsmann  
Larry Hunnicutt  
Frank Jorgensen  
Keith Kamrath  
Bill Klaproth  
Andrew Korniej  
Ron Kos

Dan Kyte  
Greg Lawrance  
James Lesko  
John Mangum  
Matt Miller  
Ian Mishkin  
Robert Morgan-Wilde  
Bill Mulder  
Chris Noll  
Dick Pallowick  
Christopher Patnoe  
Leo Pereira  
Mike Pesavento  
Tom Purcell  
Dave Ransom  
Paul Ricks  
Bill Roehl  
Steven Rosen

Louis Schilling  
John Shea  
Geoff Skidmore  
Ray Souza  
Travis Springer  
Kevin Stich  
Don Stoddard  
Mike Strickland  
Bob Stroman  
Stan Strosser  
Raymond Sullivan  
Alvin Taylor  
Jim Warner  
Tony Welch  
Si Wheaton  
Robert Wicks  
Daniel Wilson  
Jerry Zall

WORLD AIDS DAY • DECEMBER FIRST



SAN FRANCISCO AIDS FOUNDATION



This production was originally funded by the Gramma Fisher Foundation of Marshalltown, Iowa, through a deeply appreciated joint gift to the New York City Opera, the Lyric Opera of Chicago, and the San Diego Opera.  
This presentation is sponsored, in part, by generous gifts from Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Tilton and Mr. and Mrs. John C. McGuire.

*San Francisco Opera Premiere*

Opera in two acts by GIUSEPPE VERDI

Libretto by TEMISTOCLE SOLERA

Based on the play *Attila, König der Hunnen*, by Zacharias Werner

# Attila

(in Italian)

*Conductor*  
Gabriele Ferro\*

*Production*  
Lotfi Mansouri

*Stage Director*  
Laura Alley\*

*Set Designer*  
Ming Cho Lee

*Costume Designer*  
Hal George

*Lighting Designer*  
Joan Arhelger

*Choreographer*  
Kirk Peterson\*

*Chorus Director*  
Ian Robertson

*Musical Preparation*  
Susanna Lemberskaya  
Kathryn Cathcart  
Susan Miller Hult  
Philip Eisenberg

*Prompter*  
Philip Eisenberg

*Assistant Stage Directors*  
Paula Suozzi  
Sandra Bernhard

*Stage Manager*  
Gretchen Mueller

San Francisco Girls Chorus  
Elizabeth Appling, Director

First performance:  
Venice, March 17, 1846

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 21 AT 7:30  
SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 24 AT 2:00  
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 27 AT 7:30  
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 30 AT 8:00  
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 3 AT 8:00  
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 6 AT 8:00  
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8 AT 2:00

## CAST

(in order of appearance)

*Attila, King of the Huns* Samuel Ramey

*Uldino, Attila's Breton slave* Craig Estep

*Odabella, daughter of the Lord of Aquileia* Elizabeth Connell

*Ezio, a Roman general* Vladimir Chernov\*  
(Nov. 21, 24)  
Luis Girón May\*  
(Nov. 27, 30; Dec. 3, 6, 8)

*Foresto, a knight of Aquileia* Antonio Ordoñez

*Leone (Pope Leo I)* Philip Skinner

*Huns, Romans, Aquileians, hermits, Druids, priestesses*

*Corps de ballet*

\*San Francisco Opera debut

TIME AND PLACE: Fifth century A.D.; Italy

ACT I *Scene 1:* At the gates of Aquileia

*Scene 2:* On the banks of the Adriatic lagoons

*Scene 3:* A ruin near Attila's camp

*Scene 4:* Attila's camp outside Rome

## INTERMISSION

ACT II *Scene 1:* Ezio's headquarters near Rome

*Scene 2:* Attila's camp outside Rome

*Scene 3:* A ruin near Attila's camp

Supertitles by Christopher Bergen, San Francisco Opera.

Supertitles for this production have been made possible by  
the Stanley S. Langendorf Foundation.

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

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

*The performance will last approximately two and one-half hours.*



# Attila / Synopsis

## ACT I

**Scene 1**—The Huns await the arrival of their chief amid the smoldering ruins of Aquileia. They prostrate themselves and hail him as the god of war when he, Attila, enters. Uldino, Attila's Breton slave, ushers in a group of Aquileian women. Attila is angry that his orders to spare none of the enemy have been disobeyed. Uldino replies that the women are a worthy tribute because of the valor with which they defended their brothers. Amazed, Attila wonders aloud at the source of this courage. Odabella, the daughter of the slain Lord of Aquileia, steps out of the group of captives and answers his question: "The infinite holy love of our country." She continues to speak, contrasting the heroism of the Italian women who fought beside their men with the weeping of the barbarian women who sat out the battle in their carriages. Attila, impressed by her bravery, offers to grant her any favor she desires. Odabella asks him to give her back her sword. He gives her his own. Odabella resolves to use her oppressor's own sword to avenge her father and her country. Unfamiliar feelings of tenderness arise in Attila for this courageous woman. The women leave. Attila receives the Roman envoy, Ezio, who asks to speak to him in private. Attila orders the others to leave. Ezio proposes an alliance: Attila may have the world, but let Italy be Ezio's. Attila denounces him as a traitor and promises to destroy all Roman cities. Ezio defiantly pledges to pit the seasoned soldiers of Rome against the undisciplined rabble of Attila's army.

**Scene 2**—The religious hermits gather to give thanks to God for preserving them from the storm which had raged the night before. Foresto, Odabella's betrothed, has led the Aquileians who have escaped Attila's fury to this spot. He sees in the hermits' altar with its cross a propitious omen. He orders his followers to build their huts here and establish a city which will rise to equal the one they have left. (An apocryphal account of the founding of Venice.) The people acclaim him as their leader, but Foresto is tortured by the loss of his Odabella and the uncertainty of her fate.

**Scene 3**—Odabella walks alone in a secluded ruin near Attila's camp. She grieves for her father and for Foresto, whom the fortunes of war have taken from her. She hears footsteps and suddenly Foresto stands before her. Her joy at seeing him again quickly turns to bewilderment when she perceives his anger. He reproaches her for abandoning her people and accepting the favors of their oppressor. She shows him Attila's sword and tells him of her intent to exact personal vengeance from Attila, like a biblical Judith. The reconciled lovers embrace.

**Scene 4**—In his camp, Attila awakens from a nightmare, which he recounts to Uldino. In the dream he had brought his armies before Rome, where an immense old man suddenly seized him by the hair and told him to turn back. His role as the scourge of mankind ended at Rome, the realm of the gods. Shamed by his momentary fear, Attila orders Uldino to summon his commanders to prepare for an immediate assault upon Rome. As he addresses his officers, a religious hymn sung by distant voices is heard. A procession of women and children dressed in white approaches Attila's camp, led by Pope Leo I. Amid the crowd of Attila's troops are Foresto and Odabella. Attila, gradually becoming filled with superstitious dread, recognizes in the Pope the old man of his dream. Leo then pronounces the same words Attila heard in his dream. Attila raises his eyes to

heaven and cries out that he sees two giants menacing him with flaming swords. He prostrates himself before Leo.

## ACT II

**Scene 1**—In his headquarters near Rome, Ezio reads his orders from Emperor Valentinian: There is a truce with the Huns. As a soldier, he resents being prevented from destroying his enemy; as a Roman, he laments the lost grandeur of Rome's military strength. Roman soldiers accompany a party of Attila's slaves into Ezio's presence. They convey to him Attila's greetings and invite Ezio and his captains to a feast at Attila's camp. Ezio replies that he will come. The slaves leave except for one who remains behind. It is Foresto. Refusing to divulge his name, Foresto asks Ezio to aid their common cause. That night Foresto will kill Attila and light a fire as a signal to Ezio to attack the leaderless Huns. Ezio promises to watch for the signal and to act. Foresto hurries away, leaving Ezio to meditate on his fate.

**Scene 2**—The feast is in progress in Attila's camp. The King of the Huns takes his place, surrounded by his followers. Odabella stands near him. A fanfare announces the arrival of Ezio and his men. Attila welcomes his guests and invites them to seal their truce. Some Druids whisper to Attila that it will be fatal to dine with the foreigner. Attila dismisses their prophecies of doom. As the women are singing a sudden gust of wind extinguishes most of the fires that illuminate the feast. During the ensuing confusion, Ezio reminds Attila of his offer of an alliance, which Attila again refuses. Foresto informs Odabella that Uldino will soon offer Attila a poisoned cup. Odabella is reluctant to accept vengeance from any hand but her own. Uldino strengthens his resolve to end the servitude of his people. Suddenly the sky clears and Attila orders the fires relit and calls for his cup. As Uldino offers it, Odabella rushes forward and warns Attila that it has been poisoned. Attila furiously demands to know who is responsible and Foresto admits his guilt. Odabella again intervenes, asking Attila to place Foresto's fate in her hands. Attila is pleased by her action and grants her request. For her loyalty he announces yet a greater reward: The next day he will marry her and make her his queen. He tells Ezio to return to Rome and announce that the truce is ended. The crowd roars its approval of renewed warfare as Odabella urges Foresto to flee, Foresto curses Odabella for her treachery, Ezio swears to destroy his enemy and Uldino promises Foresto eternal loyalty for saving his life.

**Scene 3**—Early the next morning, at the ruin which separates the camps of Ezio and Attila, Foresto waits for Uldino to learn the hour of the hated wedding. Uldino arrives with the news that the ceremonies have begun. Foresto orders him to deliver the signal to attack to Ezio and his troops. Alone, Foresto tries to understand Odabella's inexplicable behavior. Ezio rushes in, eager for the signal to launch the attack. As he expresses his impatience to Foresto, they hear the wedding hymn beginning in Attila's camp. Odabella, in flight from the wedding ceremonies, runs up to them. Moments later Attila arrives and confronts her. As reproaches and threats are exchanged, the sounds of the Roman attack on Attila's camp reach them. Foresto is about to kill Attila, but Odabella intervenes and stabs Attila with her own hand. Roman soldiers burst in from all sides proclaiming that God, the people and the emperor are avenged.

The performance of November 27 is sponsored by Andersen Consulting.

The performance of November 30 is sponsored by Deloitte & Touche.

The performance of December 3 is sponsored by Lexus, a division of Toyota Motor Sales U.S.A., Inc.

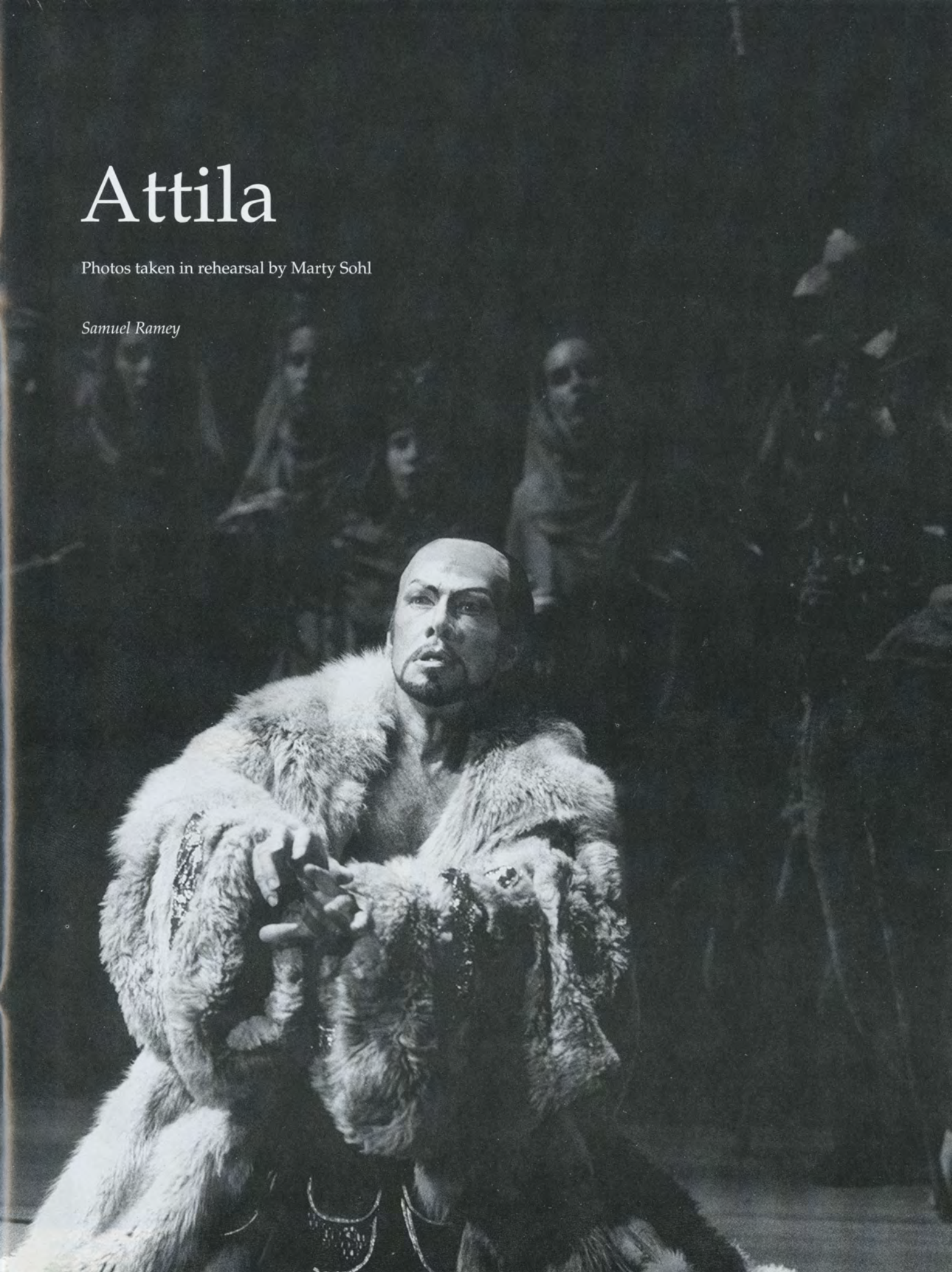
The performance of December 6 is sponsored by Delta Air Lines.



# Attila

Photos taken in rehearsal by Marty Sohl

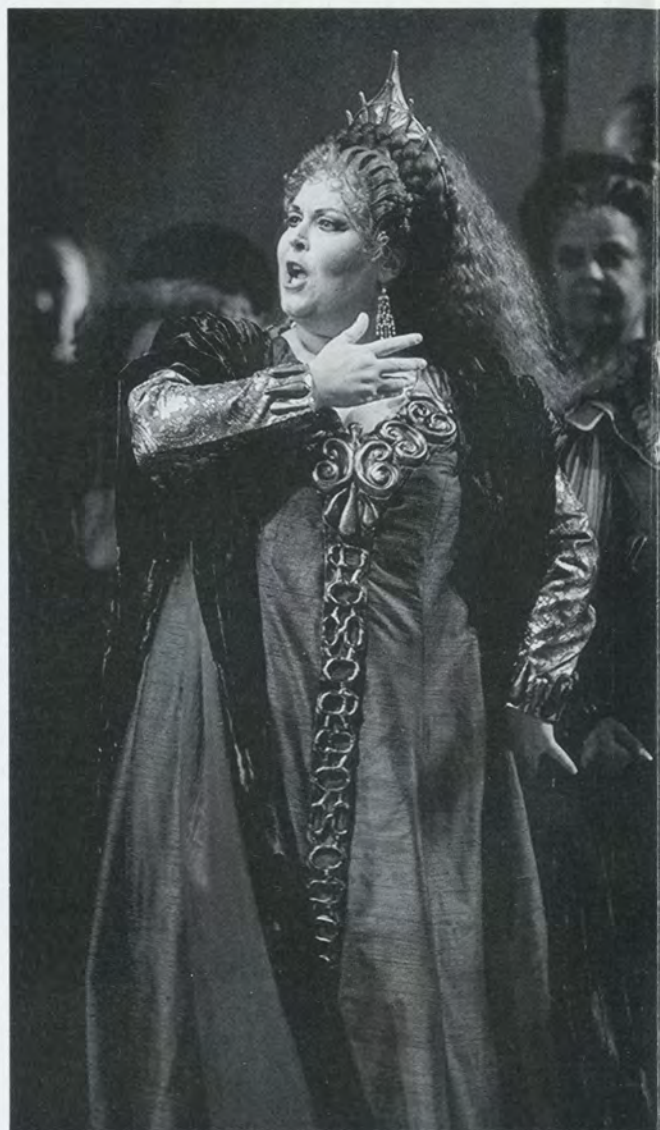
*Samuel Ramey*



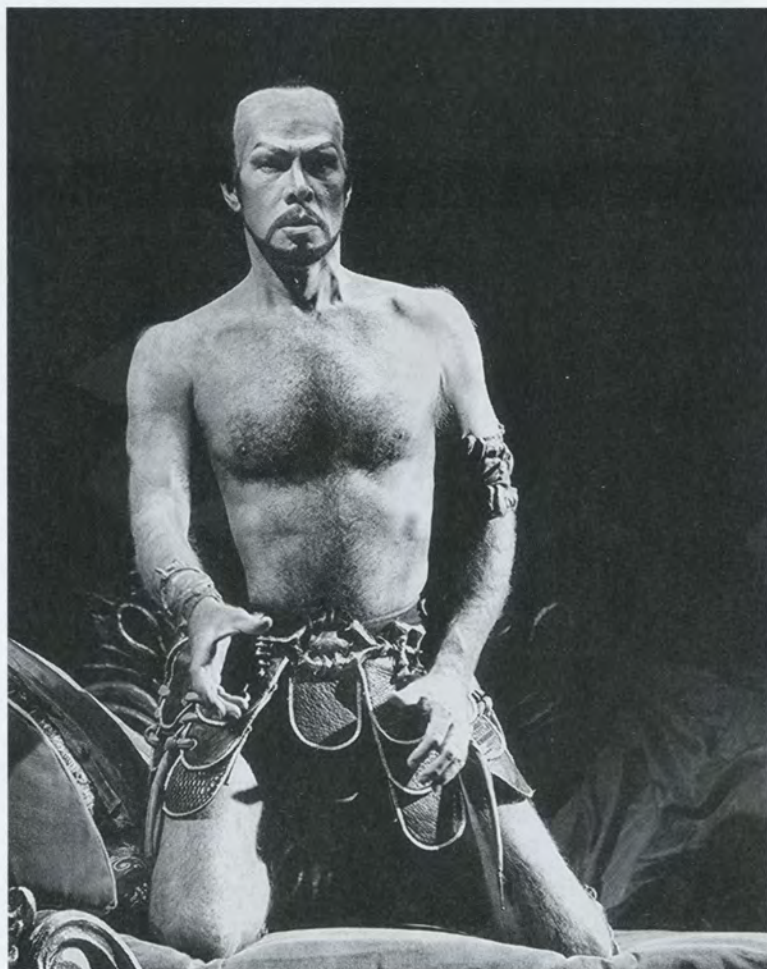




*Samuel Ramey, Craig Estep, Men of the San Francisco Opera Chorus.*



*Elizabeth Connell*



*Samuel Ramey*

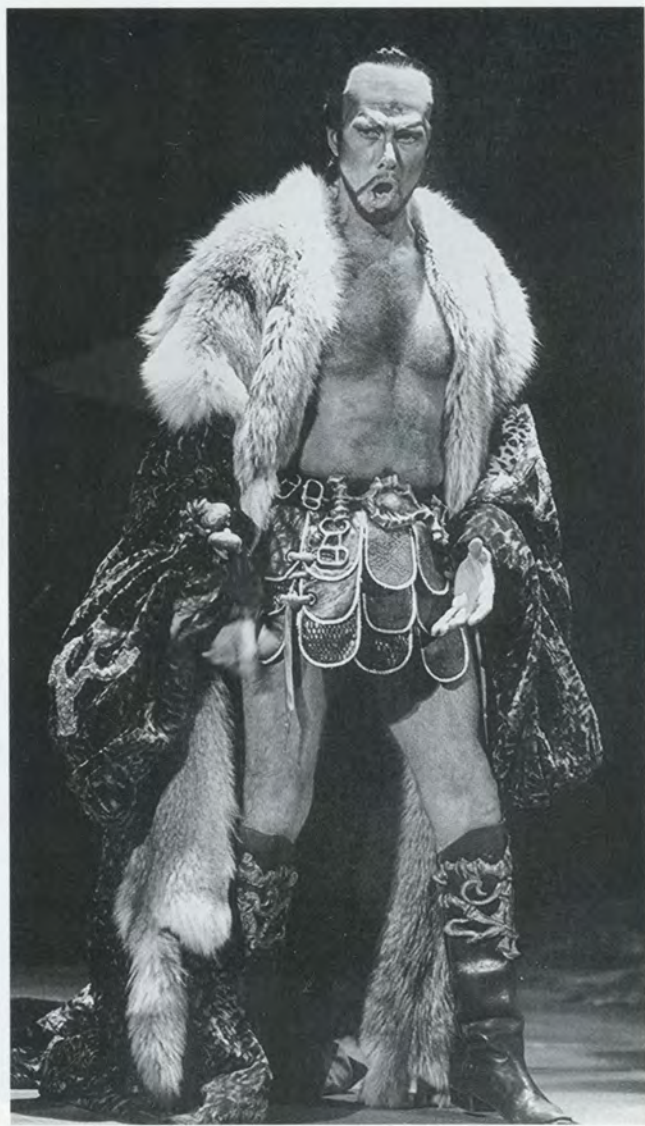


*Luis Girón May*





*Antonio Ordoñez*



*Samuel Ramey*

*Vladimir Chernov*



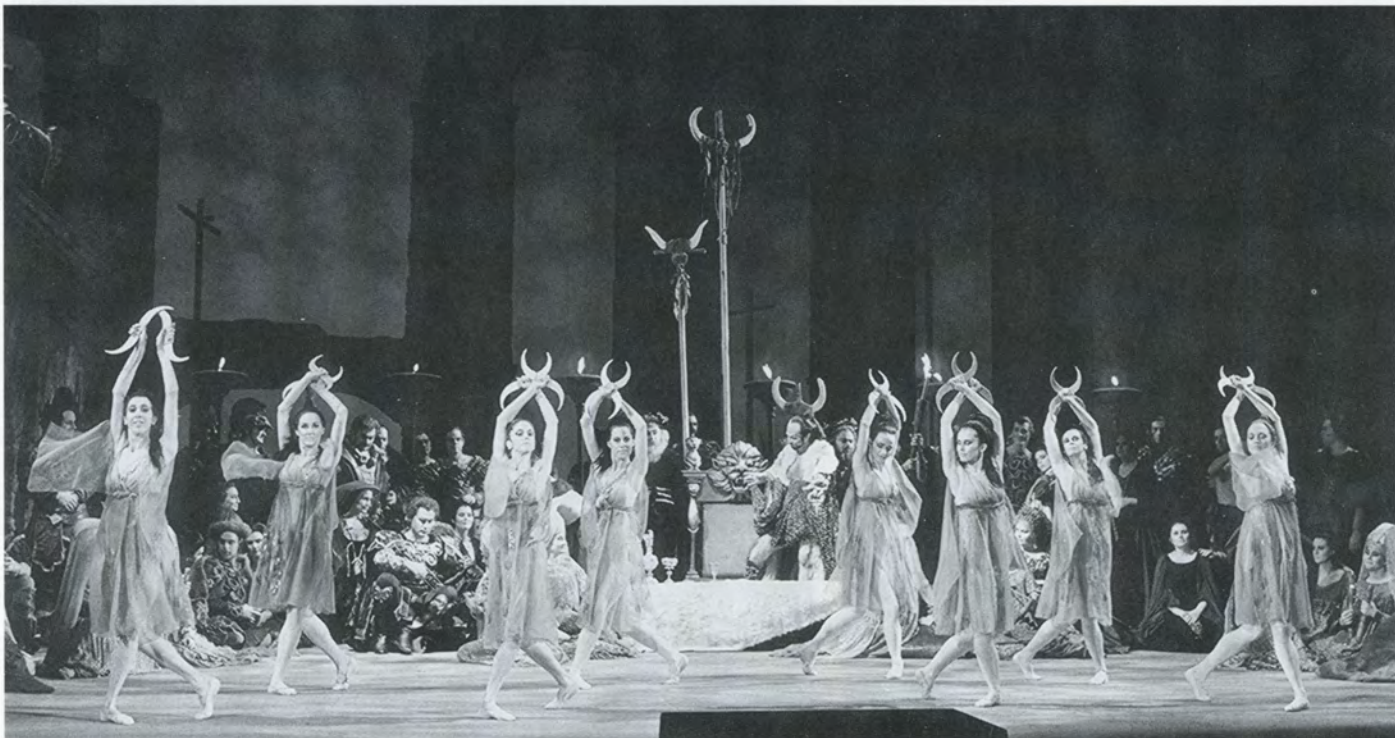
*Philip Skinner*







*Samuel Ramey, Members of the San Francisco Opera Chorus and San Francisco Girls Chorus*



*Corps de ballet*





GABRIELE FERRO

Opera, Seattle Opera, Canadian Opera Company, the Minnesota Orchestra, the Columbus Symphony, San Jose Symphony, San Francisco Symphony, Atlanta Opera, the New York City Opera National Company, Baton Rouge Opera, Sacramento Symphony, Honolulu Symphony, at the Spoleto and San Antonio festivals, and made an acclaimed debut earlier this year with Houston Grand Opera in the title role of *Le Nozze di Figaro*. A Schwabacher Debut Recitalist last season, Skinner is the recipient of a London/Sullivan grant from OPERA America.

Acclaimed Italian conductor **Gabriele Ferro**, Music Director of the Stuttgart Opera, makes his first San Francisco Opera appearance with the Company premiere of *Attila*. Winner of the RAI (Italian National Radio and Television) competition for young conductors, he dedicated himself for several years entirely to the symphonic repertoire, leading the orchestras of RAI, Santa Cecilia, La Scala, WDR of Cologne, the National Orchestra of Radio France, Vienna Symphony Orchestra, and the Cleveland Symphony. He now also conducts at many of the world's leading opera houses, including the Bavarian State Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, the Grand Théâtre de Genève, and the Royal Opera at Covent Garden, with which company he toured Japan in 1986 with *Così fan tutte*. He participated in Berlin's Festwochen, the Venice Biennale, and the Rossini Festival in Pesaro. At the Munich Festival last year he won the Critics' Prize for his conducting of *Semiramide*. Maestro Ferro was chief permanent conductor of the RAI Symphony Orchestra from 1987 to 1990, and is currently the permanent conductor of the Sicilian Symphony Orchestra. He has made several complete opera recordings, one of which, *L'Italiana in Algeri*, won the Grand Prix du Disque.



LOTFI MANSOURI

San Francisco Opera General Director **Lotfi Mansouri** directs *Tristan und Isolde* and is responsible for conceiving this fall's production of *Attila*, a Company premiere. Born in Iran, he attended college at UCLA and received American citizenship before serving as resident stage director at the Zurich Opera from 1960 to 1966. In 1965 he started working simultaneously at the Geneva Opera, where he became head stage director in 1966 and stayed until 1976. During his years in Switzerland, Mansouri began fulfilling engagements as guest director at various houses throughout Italy (including Milan's La Scala and the companies of Naples, Palermo, Genoa, Turin and Perugia) and North America: Chicago, Houston, Santa Fe, Philadelphia, Tulsa, San Diego, Dallas, and both the Metropolitan and New York City Opera companies in New York. From 1971 to 1975, he served as artistic adviser and staged productions for the Tehran Opera in Iran. In 1976 he was named general director of the Canadian Opera Company in Toronto, a position he held until his resignation in 1988 to accept the general directorship of San Francisco Opera. His Toronto credits include 30 new productions, 12 of them Canadian premieres, among them *Wozzeck*, *Lulu*, *Death in Venice*, *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, and Thomas's *Hamlet*, featuring Dame Joan Sutherland. He has had a long working association with Dame Joan, and directed her in no fewer than seven operas in San Francisco: *La Sonnambula* (1963), *La Traviata* (1964), *Die Fledermaus* (1974), *The Merry Widow* (1981), *Norma* (1982), and *Anna Bolena* (1984). His many other Company credits include the 1979 production of *La Gioconda* with Renata Scottò and Luciano Pavarotti, telecast live throughout the U.S. and to Europe via satellite; 1988's opening night production of *L'Africaine*; 1989's highly acclaimed new production of *Lulu*; and last fall's presentations of *Wozzeck* and *Die Fledermaus*. His film credits include opera sequences in *Yes*, *Giorgio* and the critically praised 1987 film *Moonstruck*.



LAURA ALLEY

**Laura Alley** makes her San Francisco Opera debut as stage director of the Company premiere of *Attila*. Associated with the New York City Opera since 1981, she has served as Assistant Director on over 20 productions for that company. Since her 1983 directorial debut with the NYCO's production of *La Bohème*, she has staged, among others, *The Magic Flute*, *Pagliacci* and *Gianni Schicchi* for Baton Rouge Opera, *La Cenerentola* and *Le Nozze di Figaro* for Whitewater Opera, *Rigoletto* for Chautauqua Opera, as well as *Attila* and *Die Zauberflöte* for New York City Opera. Her most recent assignments include *Madama Butterfly* for Cleveland Opera, *The Old Maid and the Thief*, *The Medium* and *Hin und zurück* for Baton Rouge Opera, *Faust* for Sarasota Opera, *Don Giovanni* for Syracuse Opera, *The Barber of Seville* for Kansas City Lyric Opera, and a revival of *La Bohème* for the NYCO. Miss Alley, a native of South Carolina, earned two master's degrees from the University of Mississippi (one in Opera Production/Directing, the other in Theater/Music/Directing), and is the recipient of a directing grant from the National Opera Institute. She has also taught at Louisiana State University and at the University of Mississippi.



MING CHO LEE

Eminent stage designer **Ming Cho Lee** is the creator of the settings for the San Francisco Opera premiere of *Attila*. He also designed the sets for the Company's 1986 production of *Boris Godunov*, as well





HAL GEORGE

as for Spring Opera Theater's mountings of *The Passion According to St. Matthew* in 1973 and '76. A native of Shanghai, he has designed for virtually all of the theatrical media, and has been the principal designer of the New York Shakespeare Festival since 1962. His numerous Broadway credits include *Little Murders*, *La Strada* and *Much Ado About Nothing*, while his ballet credits include designs for the American Ballet Theatre, the Eliot Feld Ballet, and the Joffrey Ballet. He has also created designs for the major opera houses of the world, including the Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Hamburg Staatsoper, New York City Opera, Houston Grand Opera and the San Diego Opera. His designs for *I Puritani* recently received plaudits at the Met and in Chicago. Lee is resident instructor in set design at the Yale School of Drama, and is on the panels of the New York State Council of the Arts and the National Opera Institute. He is the recipient of an award from the latter organization in gratitude for exceptional service to U.S. opera.

**Hal George** designed the costumes for the Company premiere of *Attila*. He made his San Francisco Opera debut as costume designer for the 1971 *Manon*, a production which was repeated here in 1981 and 1986. Previously a painter and stage director, he turned to scenic and costume design and made his theater debut with the American Shakespeare Festival at Stratford, Connecticut, in 1964. He designed his first opera costumes for a 1965 production of Henze's *Elegy for Young Lovers* at the Juilliard School, and his first opera sets appeared in Amsterdam for *Così fan tutte* in 1969. Since then, he has created costumes for major theaters and opera houses across the country, including the Guthrie Theatre, the San Diego Shakespeare Festival, the Pennsylvania Ballet, the Caramoor Festival, the Kansas City Opera, Washington Opera and Santa Fe Opera. His opera assignments have included productions of Henze's *The Bassarids* (U.S. premiere), Cavalli's *L'Ormino*, Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *La Clemenza di Tito* and



KIRK PETERSON

*Die Zauberflöte*, Orff's *Antigone* and *Die Kluge*, Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, and Weill's *The Threepenny Opera*. His costume designs for *Attila* have been seen at the New York City Opera, Tulsa Opera, and the Lyric Opera of Chicago. On Broadway, George designed the costumes for Arthur Miller's *The Creation of the World and Other Business*, and Joseph Papp's production of *Hamlet* at the Vivian Beaumont Theater.

In his first San Francisco Opera assignment, noted dancer, teacher and choreographer **Kirk Peterson** creates the dances for *Attila*. The native of New Orleans was principal dancer with the Harkness Ballet, American Ballet Theatre, London Festival Ballet and San Francisco Ballet. His performing repertoire included all the full-length classics as well as a wide range of works choreographed by George Balanchine, Glen Tetley, Jerome Robbins, Frederick Ashton and Twyla Tharp. Television credits as a dancer include Baryshnikov's production of *The Nutcracker*, *Billy the Kid*, *Giselle* and *The Sleeping Beauty*, all for ABT, as well as *Cinderella* and "In Performance at the White House" with San Francisco Ballet. As choreographer, he created *Cloudless Sulphur* for San Francisco Ballet in 1984. Its success resulted in a Best Choreography of the Year award, as well as an appointment as the company's resident choreographer. Additional works choreographed include a one-act version of *Othello* for the S.F. Ballet, *Belling the Slayer* for Ballet Metropolitan, and *La Danse Neva* commissioned by the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. A founding member of the San Francisco-based OMO dancers, his work with this ensemble was the subject of a PBS documentary, "The Creation of OMO." On Broadway, he was the assistant choreographer for the Lincoln Center presentation of *Anything Goes*, which he later re-created for the Australian production and the U.S. touring and London stagings. He was also co-choreographer of the Broadway musical, *Shogun*, which opened in November of 1990. As a teacher, Peterson has extensive experi-



JOAN ARHELGER

ence with American Ballet Theatre, Washington Ballet, San Francisco Ballet and at the David Howard Dance Center in New York. Future projects include works for the Pennsylvania Ballet and Pacific Northwest Ballet, and a teaching assignment next year with Oslo's Norwegian National Ballet.

San Francisco Opera Associate Lighting Designer **Joan Arhelger** created the lighting schemes for *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* and *Attila*, and serves as Lighting Supervisor for the revival of *Carmen*. Since joining the Company in 1983, she has been responsible for the lighting of *La Traviata*, *La Sonnambula*, *L'Elisir d'Amore*, *Anna Bolena*, *Werther*, *Der Rosenkavalier*, *The Medium*, *Tosca*, *Fidelio*, *Maometto II*, *Manon Lescaut*, the SFO premieres of *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* and *Don Quichotte* last fall, and *Le Nozze di Figaro* this summer. She also served as lighting supervisor for the entire 1986 Summer Season. Her opera credits in lighting design include productions for the Spoleto Festival U.S.A., Wolf Trap, and the opera companies of Louisville, Fort Worth, New Orleans, Pittsburgh, Omaha, Seattle, Costa Mesa, Anchorage, and repertory seasons with the Kansas City Lyric Opera and the Central City Opera. Her work has been seen locally in Bill Irwin's *In Regard of Flight* (featured on the PBS Great Performances series), and with numerous dance companies, including the Bay Area Dance Coalition's "Dancemakers '82" Festival in Herbst Theatre. A student of Gilbert Hemsley, Miss Arhelger served as assistant lighting designer for American presentations by the Ballet Nacional de Cuba, the Stuttgart Ballet, the Bolshoi Opera and the Berlin Opera. For five seasons she was the resident lighting assistant for Washington Opera at the Kennedy Center.



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# BEL CANTO SOCIETY MEMBERS CELEBRATE AT INAUGURAL LUNCHEON

Photos by Larry Merkle



Over 60 Founding Members of the Bel Canto Society and their guests joined San Francisco Opera General Director Lotfi Mansouri on September 29 in officially launching the Opera's newest donor recognition group. The Bel Canto Society honors those generous members of the Opera family who have remembered the Company in their estate plans—through bequests, charitable re-

mainder trusts and other "planned gifts."

Members and their guests enjoyed a champagne reception and luncheon and relaxed in front of a crackling fire in the intimate wood-panelled dining room at Inn At The Opera. Immediately following the luncheon, members walked the few short steps across Franklin Street to the War Memorial Opera House, where

*The Honorable and Mrs. William D. Stein share a laugh with General Director Lotfi Mansouri at the Bel Canto Society Luncheon.*







they attended the Sunday matinee performance of Bellini's *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*. As Mr. Mansouri pointed out earlier in his remarks to the members, it was eminently fitting that an opera from the bel canto repertoire was being featured as part of the new Society's inaugural celebration!

Along with General Director Lotfi Mansouri, the luncheon group included Opera President Thomas Tilton and Mrs. Tilton, Director of Development William J. Conner, Planned Giving Director Barbara J. Dukas and Individual Gifts Director Rosemarie Hardy. In ad-

*(Opposite page, top) Donald Hermann, Maurice Loomis and Peter Bessol enjoy a celebratory glass of champagne before the luncheon.*

*(Below, left) Lotfi Mansouri and Director of Development Bill Conner welcome Nancy Bridgwater and John Franger.*

*(Below, right) Our enthusiastic General Director relates an amusing anecdote to an appreciative audience.*



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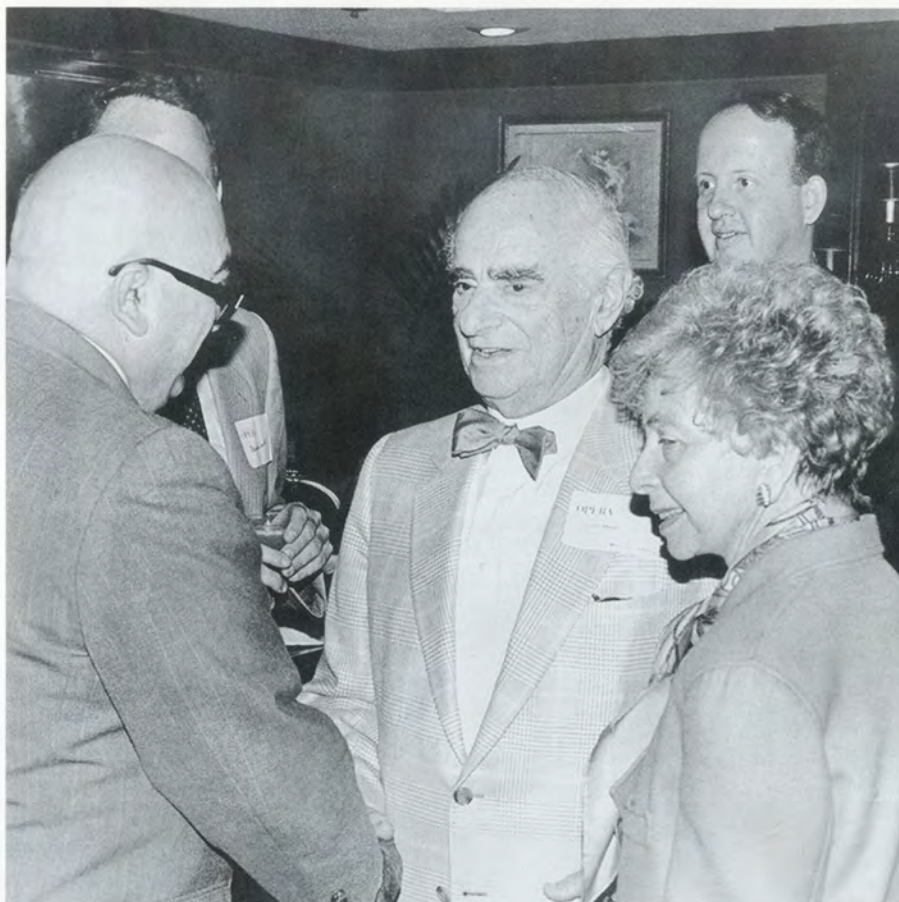


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dition, Mr. Mansouri was pleased to introduce members to Mr. Edward ("Jerry") Clarke, the generous sponsor of *Capuleti*, and himself a member of the Bel Canto Society.

Many of those who attended the luncheon are long-time subscribers to the Opera including at least one lady who (as she confided to Mr. Tilton) attended the Company's very first performance in the War Memorial Opera House in 1932 as a young girl! Needless to say, Bel Canto Society members enjoyed sharing and comparing their reminiscences of memorable past San Francisco Opera productions with their fellow members and new friends.

Mr. Mansouri announced that the Bel Canto Society Luncheon would be an annual event in the future to honor these very special members of the Opera family—those with the commitment and foresight to establish a lasting legacy to the Company.

—Barbara J. Dukas

*Bel Canto Society members Mr. and Mrs. Victor Marcus chat with the General Director.*



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# THE SAN FRANCISCO HOLIDAY STYLE

By

SANDRA MACLEOD WHITE

PHOTOGRAPHS BY

FRED LYON



*In the spirit of holiday fun, and stepping out in her new BMW 735i, Sara Noyes of Tiburon, a recent Political Science graduate of Colorado College, has for her evening look a fuchsia silk/satin trench coat with matching purple satin shorts by Ikraam at Macy's New Signatures Show on Union Square, San Francisco.*





*Jim and Susan Kirk of San Francisco are enjoying a holiday glass of champagne at the Café Majestic Bar in their Gianni Versace suits. Mrs. Kirk's two-piece suit is wool ottoman of abstract paisley print in fuchsia, purple and gold, worn with a Harlequin print silk scarf and gold amethyst earrings. Mr. Kirk wears a one-button, single-breasted black gabardine suit. At Gianni Versace, San Francisco.*

Every city of the world has its own beat, sounds, and fashions, and San Francisco ranks among the best in all categories. However, with a reputation for marching to their own drummer, San Franciscans certainly have their own style when it comes to the way they dress.

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This winter's fashions are giving today's clothes-conscious consumer not only a multitude of choices in the selection of colorful separates, but they also offer flexibility. Styles have the look-of-success for the ambitious in the hectic pace of the business world, and are easily and quickly adaptable to one's social life as well.

The San Francisco holiday style is portrayed here, in Theatre Publications' fashion segment, with local personalities modeling the classic look of this season, as photographed by Fred Lyon, a fourth-generation San Franciscan and internationally known photographer.



(Right) Anne Lawrence of San Francisco is shown here in a magnificent ball gown by San Francisco designer Michael Casey, of teal taupe silk taffeta, with beaded neckline and crushed melon sleeves. Miss Lawrence's necklace is of carved crystal and diamonds, with diamond loop earrings with amber drop. Her cuff bracelet is 18K gold and diamonds, and her ring is a pink tourmaline cabochon and diamonds, from Klaus Murer, San Francisco.

(Below) Mrs. Claxton Long and her daughter, Lydia, are heralding the season with the classic styles of Laura Ashley in lush black velvet and romantic lace combination "Mother & Child" dresses. Lydia is wearing over her dress a double-breasted navy wool coat with matching hat and muff. At Laura Ashley, San Francisco.







*San Francisco twins, Francesca and Christopher Vietor, are enjoying a holiday luncheon at the Café Majestic. Mr. Vietor is wearing a Giorgio Armani La Collezione grey crepe pinstripe suit, striped shirt and burgundy tie. Miss Vietor's stone-tweed suit and creme silk blouse are also by Giorgio Armani Collezione. Her pearl choker and drop earrings are by Carolina Herrera. All at Saks Fifth Avenue, San Francisco.*

*Mr. Vietor has recently produced his first feature film, "Rex Justice," which was filmed completely in San Francisco.*

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## THE SCOURGE OF GOD

*Continued from page 32*

an epithet he also has in the opera. As stated above, the friendships he made as a hostage in the Hun camp led to treaties between the Western Empire and the Huns, and his defense of Gaul was primarily achieved by the use of Hunnic mercenaries.

The Eastern Empire, however, had no such favorable connection with the Huns, and the weak Theodosius was more concerned with revels and debauchery than with maintaining of firm military control of his borders. To maintain peace, he consented to send 350 pounds of gold as a yearly tribute to Rua, the *de facto* king of the Huns. In 434, Rua died and was succeeded by Attila and his brother Bleda, whom Attila would eventually murder in order to consolidate rulership of the Huns in his own person.

Edward Gibbon, the renowned 18th-century historian and author of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, has provided the most famous description of Attila, paraphrasing several Roman and Gothic sources.

"[He] exhibits the genuine deformity of a modern Calmuck; a large head, a swarthy complexion, small deep-seated eyes, a flat nose, a few hairs in the place of a beard, broad shoulders, and a short square body, of nervous strength, though of a disproportionate form. The haughty step and demeanor of the king of the Huns expressed the consciousness of his superiority above the rest of mankind; and he had a custom of fiercely rolling his eyes, as if he wished to enjoy the terror which he inspired. Yet this savage hero was not inaccessible to pity; his suppliant enemies might confide in the assurance of peace or pardon; and Attila was considered by his subjects as a just and indulgent master. He delighted in war; but after he had ascended the throne in a mature age, his head, rather than his hand, achieved the conquest of the north; and the fame of an adventurous soldier was usefully exchanged for that of a prudent and successful general."

His first action in the year 434 was to double the annual tribute paid by the Eastern Empire. With peace in the quarter, he then focused his attention on subjugating all territory from the Caucasus to the Danube, a feat fully

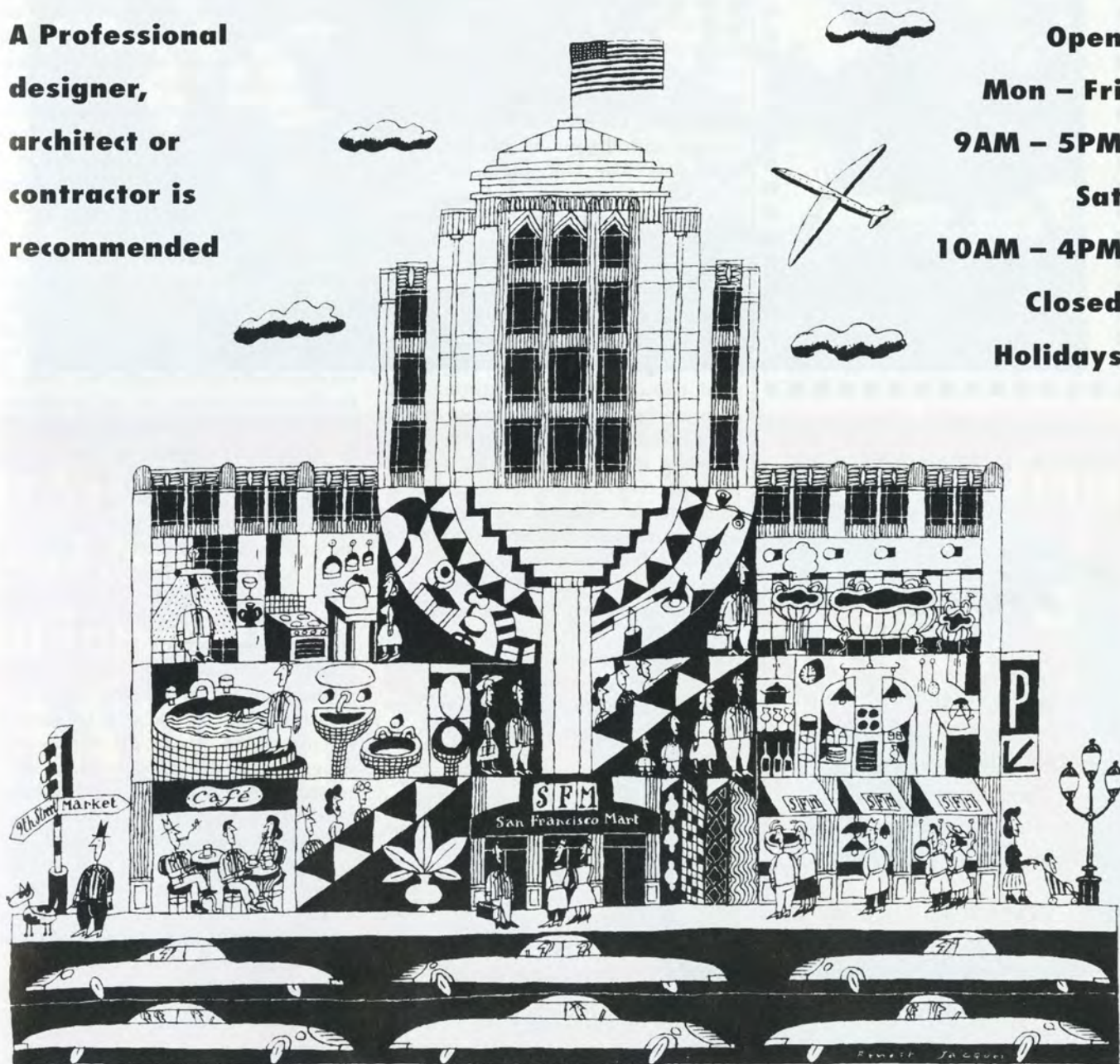


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achieved by 439. In this same year, hostilities against the Eastern Empire arose, because Theodosius had refused to send the required tribute. Attila led his army on a massive invasion of the Eastern Empire in 441, in which numerous cities were sacked and razed to the ground, with the populace either slain in a frenzy of blood-letting, or led off into captivity.<sup>1</sup> Two further invasions took place in 443 and 447. The historian Priscus provides us with a glimpse of the kind of destruction that took place with his description of the ruins of the great city of Naissus (known today as Yugoslavia's Niš). Upon passing through the site of this former city six years after its fall, he reported only desolation and rubble. The banks along the Morava river were still covered with the sun-bleached bones of those slain there. Only the massive city walls saved Constantinople from a similar fate. In the words of a later Byzantine writer, "Attila ground almost the whole of Europe into the dust." After 447, Theodosius had no choice but to agree to the terms set by Attila, which included an increased annual tribute of 2,100 lbs of gold and payment of all previously unpaid tribute. Why Valentinian and Aetius in the west did not come to the aid of the Eastern Empire remains a mystery.

While peace followed for several years, renewed hostility was inevitable, not just in the east, but in the west as well. Attila's dilemma was where to strike first. In 450, Theodosius died and was succeeded by a man of more martial spirit, who promptly terminated the yearly tribute. Without any army, however, such a move was thoughtless and would certainly have resulted in the complete destruction of the Eastern Empire, had Attila not already decided to march west.

Undoubtedly, the wealth of the Western Empire appealed to Attila. He knew the west would be more difficult to master than the Eastern Empire, but he knew he would be aided by several Teutonic tribes in Gaul who had invited him to come. The pretext for the invasion was furnished by Valentinian's sister Honoria. The latter had apparently been amorously involved with her steward and had become pregnant by him. Valentinian, suspecting that she and her lover aimed for the throne, had the steward immediately killed and married his sister off to an elderly senator. She, chaf-

*"Battle with Huns near Mersburg," an etching depicting an imaginary battle between Huns and Goths.*

ing at this arrangement, sent a message to Attila, offering her hand in marriage. Attila informed Valentinian of his acceptance of Honoria's offer and demanded half of the empire as dowry. Valentinian refused and the stage was set for war in the west.

In 451, Attila crossed the Rhine by the modern city of Metz and proceeded to ravage France. While laying siege to Orléans, Aetius suddenly appeared on the horizon with a combined force of Italians and Visigoths. Attila withdrew to the northeast, where a vast plain provided his cavalry with suitable room to maneuver. The ensuing battle of Chalons is said to have started at 9:00 AM and lasted all day, with the resulting carnage totalling some 165,000 killed on each side. Whatever the actual losses were, it was a stinging defeat for Attila, but not a victory for Aetius. The king of his Visigoth allies had been slain and the surviving Visigoths quit the battlefield the following day. Aetius was urged by his own men to attack again and destroy the Huns once and for all, but he allowed them to escape unmolested, perhaps in the hope that he could negotiate a new treaty with his former friends.

Such would not be the case, however, for Attila decided to try again the following year, 452, this time by crossing the Alps and marching directly upon Rome itself. Having crossed the Alps, the Huns descended on the plain of Venetia, whose chief city was Aquileia. Fortified by impressive walls, Aquileia had never been stormed nor forced to surrender. It was the key bastion that anchored the eastern defense of the empire. In the ensuing struggle about the walls, the Huns were beaten back and Attila is said to have intended to withdraw. Inspecting the walls one last time, however, he saw a family of storks take flight from the city with their young. Interpreting this as an omen portending the doom of the city, he resumed the assault with renewed vigor and succeeded in breaching the walls. Some people from the city escaped into

<sup>1</sup> Priscus encountered one former captive in the Hun camp who had earned his freedom on the battlefield and preferred the society of the Huns to that of the Romans.





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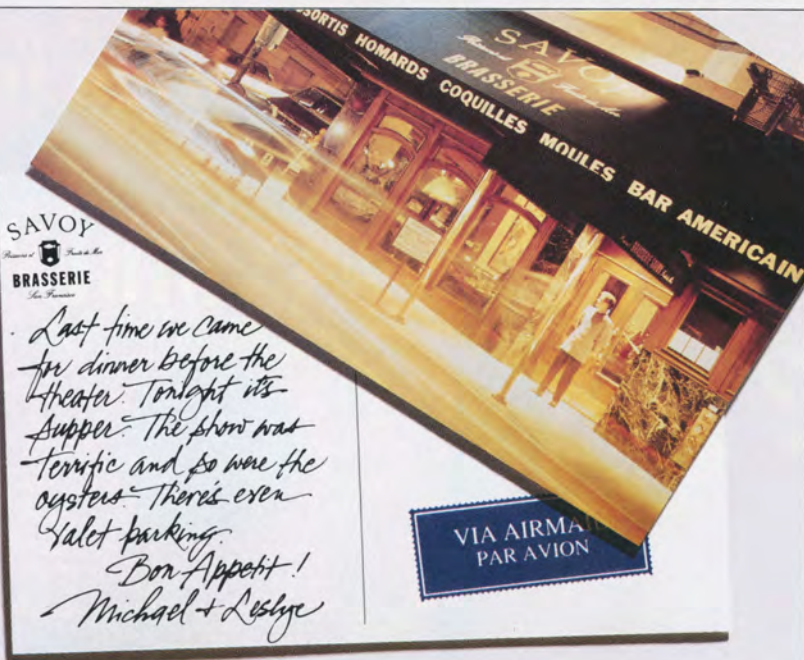
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the lagoons and islands toward the coast, but the greater part were either massacred or led off in captivity. The great city itself was so thoroughly razed to the ground that, less than 100 years later, no one knew where it formerly stood. This is where our opera begins, although various passages in it do refer to some of the preceding historical events.

Destruction, fire, and death befell city after city as the Huns continued westward. Eventually Milan was taken, but for some reason the city was spared destruction. A colorful story has survived in which Attila, surveying a mural depicting the emperors of the East and West seated on golden thrones before whom figures of Huns lay prostrate, forced a local artist to re-paint the scene, with himself seated on a golden throne and the two emperors lying prostrate.

Aetius, in Gaul and without sufficient troops, chose not to contest Attila, leaving the latter with an open route to Rome. Valentinian, in turn, accused Aetius of abandoning Italy in order to establish a personal kingdom of his own in Gaul. Certainly, the pact in the opera, whereby Ezio offers Attila the universe if he himself can rule Italy, is pure fabrication. While the rest of Italy trembled at the anticipated attack, Attila did not march south. Popular legend attributes Attila's decision to turn back as the result of an encounter with Pope Leo, a fanciful tale also portrayed in the opera. Leo did indeed travel north in an attempt to arrange a truce, but he was accompanied by two other secular officials, a former prefect, who had already negotiated with Attila on a previous occasion, and the ex-consul of 450, a man of great wealth. Unfortunately, the actual meeting between Attila and this embassy was not recorded. Legend has it that Attila, in complete awe of Leo and the God of the Romans, chose to withdraw rather than march on Rome. Modern historians find it unreasonable to consider that religion or superstition had anything to do with his withdrawal, for the Huns had razed numerous churches, raped nuns, and killed untold numbers of clergy in the past. The religion of the Empire had meant nothing to the Huns before and it is unlikely that it did on this occasion either. There is a sound military reason to explain the cessation of hostilities by Attila. Famine and pestilence had devastated Italy in the spring and summer of



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451 and conditions had not improved. The land was exhausted and incapable of sustaining an enormous army with an even larger number of horses. His army had been seriously weakened the preceding year at Chalons; to continue further south would have invited disaster. Attila was shrewd and had frequently demonstrated a thorough knowledge of warfare. Surely he recognized the danger in continuing south. Quite likely the promise of tribute also influenced his decision.

At any rate, the Huns returned back to their capital across the Danube and Attila made it perfectly clear that the Eastern Empire would be his next target. A man with several hundred wives already, he was taken with yet another woman named Ildico, who might have been of German origin. A great celebration was held on the wedding night and he drank heavily before retiring to the nuptial chamber. Known to have been prone to nose bleeds, he apparently suffered a major bleed while asleep and suffocated. By the following afternoon, when no noise had been heard from within, the door was broken down and his body discovered beside his trembling bride. A careful examination of the corpse revealed no wounds or obvious signs of poison, and the Huns therefore concluded that he had not died from foul play. The fate of Ildico is uncertain, but she does not seem to have been harmed, although in later months rumors would circulate that she had murdered Attila. These rumors would also eventually work their way into the Nordic sagas, where the character Etzel (Attila) was said to have been slain by Kriemhild, his Burgundian bride, on their wedding night, in revenge for the murder of her brothers.

Regarding the opera, *Foresto*, *Uldino*, and *Odabella* are fictitious, as is the plot of the latter part of the opera; the Huns were not defeated by the Romans in Italy, nor was Attila slain by Italian conspirators. *Ezio* is a distortion of the historical *Aetius*. The encounter between Attila and Leo is drawn from popular legend. This fiction, however, served Verdi's purpose well. *Foresto* and the survivors of *Aquileia* represent the future founders of Venice, where the opera would receive its premiere. More importantly, the overall theme deals with Italian patriotism and the crushing defeat of northern in-

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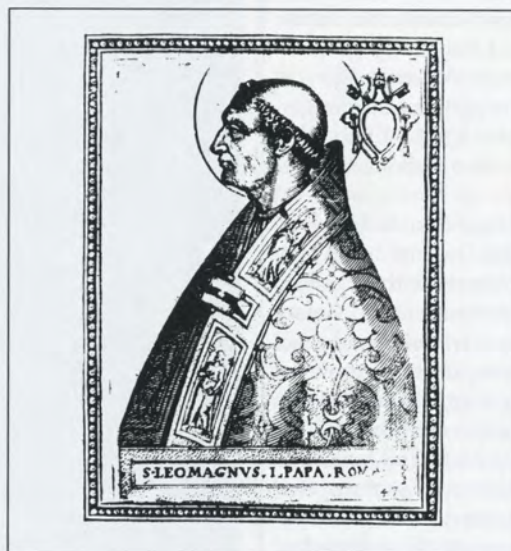


vaders from the Danube, a thinly disguised call to arms for Italians to drive out their contemporary Austro-Hungarian overlords from Italy.

As an epilogue, the Hun Empire, which, at its zenith under Attila, extended from the Ukraine to eastern France, collapsed shortly after his death. The dominions of the Hun were divided up among his sons, who then feuded with each other. The long oppressed Teutonic tribes, taking advantage of the lack of unity among their oppressors, soon rose up in revolt and destroyed their antagonists. Those Huns who escaped fled back to the east, although one tribe found service under the new emperor of the Eastern Empire. Aetius, who for several decades was the sole person responsible for preserving the Western Empire for his emperor, met an end in 455 not unlike that of Julius Caesar. While engaged in a discussion with Valentinian, the emperor drew forth a sword and plunged it into the chest of his general, an act that was imitated by some

100 of his courtiers and eunuchs. Valentinian, in turn, was murdered a short time later by two barbarians who had been devoted to Aetius. The Western Empire would come to an end 21 years

later, in 476. Conversely, the Eastern Empire would eventually be revived under Justinian and survive for centuries to come. □



*Pope Leo I in a 1588 etching.*

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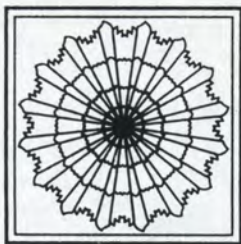
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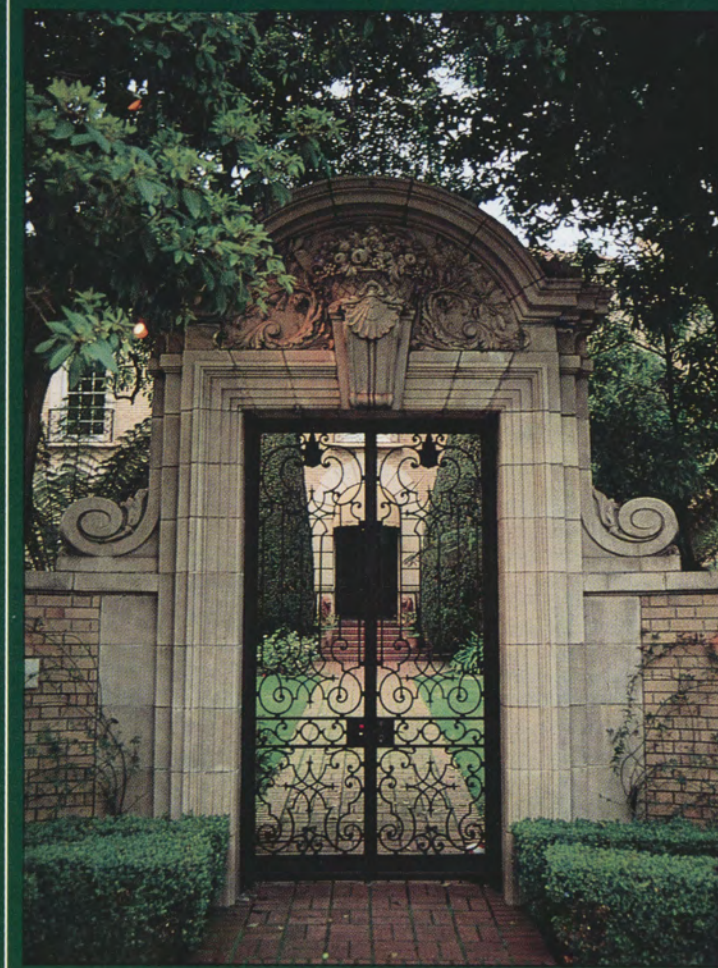
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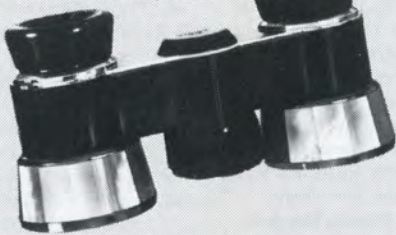
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Sunday, December 1

Tickets for Guild members \$2; non-Guild members \$5. Advance reservations required. For further information, please call (415) 565-6433.

## If You Drive To The Opera . . .

. . . and park in the Performing Arts Garage, remember that you can avoid some of the traffic congestion by using the Gough Street entrance to the facility (between Fulton and Grove).

## SERVICES

**Special service for SFO patrons!** Many operagoers who live in the northern section of San Francisco are regular patrons of the Municipal Railway special "Opera Bus." This bus is added to Muni's north-bound 47 line following all evening performances of the Opera and all Sunday matinees. Look for the "47 Special," after each performance in the bus zone at Van Ness Avenue and Grove Street--across Van Ness from the Opera House. Its route is: North on Van Ness to Chestnut, left to Divisadero and left to Union. It continues on Union over Russian Hill to Columbus, then left to Powell--then right to the end of the line at North Point.

**Food Service** The lower lounge in the Opera House is open one and one-half hours prior to curtain time for hot buffet service. Patrons arriving before the front doors open will be admitted at the carriage entrance.

Refreshments are served in the box tier on the mezzanine floor, the grand tier and dress circle levels during all performances.

**Emergency Telephone** The telephone number 431-4370 may be used by patrons for emergencies only during performances. Before the performance, patrons anticipating possible emergencies should leave their seat number at the nurse's station in the lower lounge, where the emergency telephone is located.

**Digital Watches** Patrons are reminded to please check that their digital watch alarms are switched to OFF before the performance begins.

**Ticket Information** San Francisco Opera Box Office, Lobby, War Memorial Opera House, Van Ness at Grove; open 10 A.M. to 6 P.M. Monday through Saturday. 10 A.M. through first intermission on all performance days. Phone charge (415) 864-3330 10 A.M. to 6 P.M. Monday through Saturday (VISA, American Express and MasterCard). Tickets are also available on a limited basis through BASS and STBS outlets.

**Unused Tickets** Subscribers who find they cannot use their tickets may make a worthwhile contribution to the San Francisco Opera by returning the tickets they will be unable to use to the Opera Box Office or by telephoning (415) 864-3330, 10 A.M. to 6 P.M. or (415) 565-6485, 6 P.M. to ten minutes before curtain. The value of the returned tickets is tax deductible for the subscriber. If the tickets are re-sold by the Box Office, the proceeds will be used to benefit the San Francisco Opera. However, donated tickets are not considered a fund drive contribution and are not applied toward member benefits.

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

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

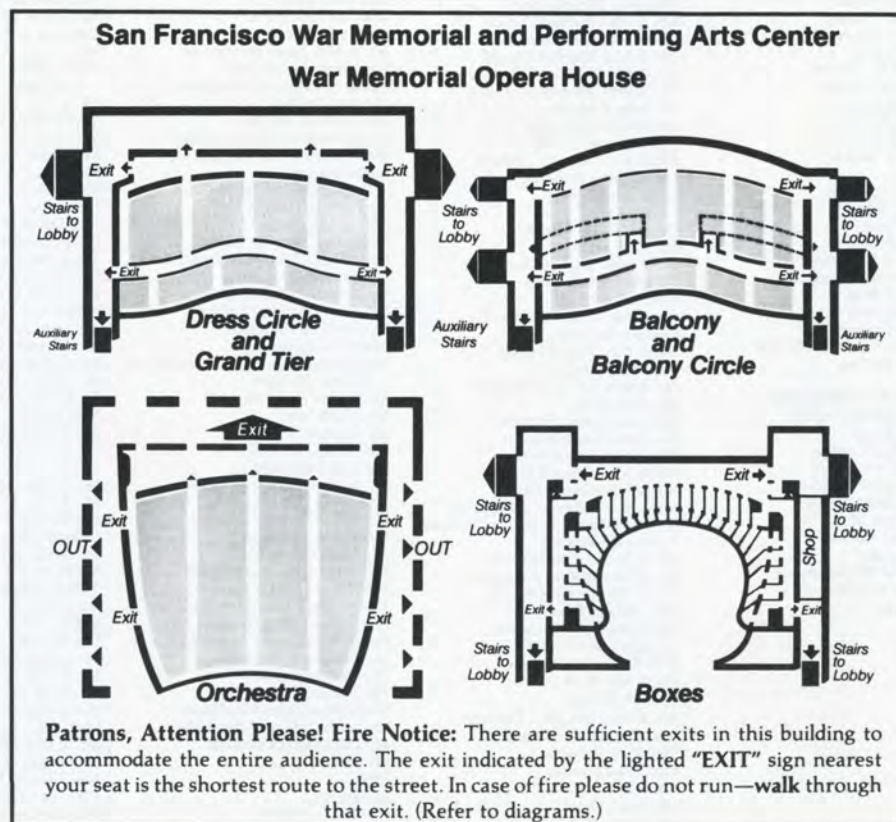
For **Lost and Found** information, inquire at check room No. 3 or call (415) 621-6600, 8:30 to 11:30 Monday through Friday.

For the safety and comfort of our audience all large parcels, backpacks, luggage, etc., must be checked at the Opera House cloakrooms.

Opera glasses and Sennheiser listening devices are available in the lobby.

No cameras or tape recorders are permitted in the Opera House. Children of any age attending a performance must have a ticket.

Management reserves the right to remove any patron creating a disturbance.





# HOW GOOD IS YOUR AGENT WITH NUMBERS?

When choosing a real estate company, the only number most sellers seem interested in hearing, naturally enough, is the highest one.

But before you list your property with the agent who recommends the highest asking price, consider this: A price too far above the real value often scares away qualified buyers. The property could take longer to sell. Worse yet, it could wind up selling for less than it might have, had it been listed correctly to begin with.

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