

Elektra

1991

Saturday, November 16, 1991 8:00 PM

Friday, November 22, 1991 8:00 PM

Tuesday, November 26, 1991 8:00 PM

Sunday, December 1, 1991 2:00 PM

Wednesday, December 4, 1991 7:30 PM

Saturday, December 7, 1991 7:30 PM

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SAN
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OPERA

1991 SEASON

ELEKTRA

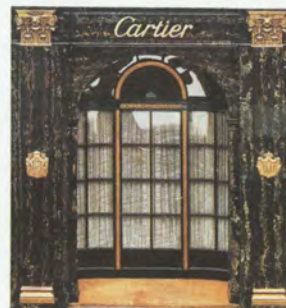


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Lotfi Mansouri, General Director

Elektra

1991 FALL SEASON

Vol. 69, No. 12

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Jay DeFeo (b. 1929), *Incision*, 1958/61
Oil and string on canvas mounted on board;
118 x 55 5/8 x 9 2/5"

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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.

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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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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**

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Munn

*Production originally made possible by
James D. Robertson. Revival underwritten
by a generous gift from The Bernard Osher
Foundation.*

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

*Production originally made possible by the
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Kurt Herbert Adler.*

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 Carmen	Bizet	Wednesday, November 13, 8:00 Das Verratene Meer	Henze	Friday, November 29, 8:00 La Traviata	Verdi
Thursday, October 24, 7:00 Tristan und Isolde	Wagner	Saturday, November 16, 8:00 Elektra	Strauss	(Same cast as November 25)	
Friday, October 25, 7:30 Carmen	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 Attila	Verdi
(Carmen: Graves*; Don José: Ordoñez*)				Sunday, December 1, 2:00 Elektra	Strauss
Saturday, October 26, 7:30 Carmen	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 Das Verratene Meer	Henze	Tuesday, December 3, 8:00 Attila	Verdi
Sunday, October 27, 1:00 Tristan und Isolde	Wagner	Wednesday, November 20, 7:30 Das Verratene Meer	Henze	Wednesday, December 4, 7:30 Elektra	Strauss
Tuesday, October 29, 7:30 Carmen	Bizet	Thursday, November 21, 7:30 <i>San Francisco Opera Premiere</i>		(Orest: Fox)	
(Same cast as October 25)		Attila	Verdi	Thursday, December 5, 7:30 La Traviata	Verdi
Wednesday, October 30, 7:00 Tristan und Isolde	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 Carmen	Bizet	Ferro*/Mansouri/Alley*/Lee/Peterson*/Arhelger		Friday, December 6, 8:00 Attila	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 Elektra	Strauss
Saturday, November 2, 7:00 Tristan und Isolde	Wagner	Friday, November 22, 8:00 Elektra	Strauss	(Orest: Fox)	
Tuesday, November 5, 7:00 Tristan und Isolde	Wagner	Saturday, November 23, 8:00 Das Verratene Meer	Henze	Sunday, December 8, 2:00 Attila	Verdi
Thursday, November 7, 7:30 Carmen	Bizet	Sunday, November 24, 2:00 Attila	Verdi		
(Same cast as October 26)		Monday, November 25, 7:30 La Traviata	Verdi		
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		**United States opera debut *San Francisco Opera debut +1991 Adler Fellow	
Das Verratene Meer	Henze			All performances are in the original language with English Supertitles.	
Putnam; Fox, Estep, Villanueva, Asawa*, Sarris*, Graber+, McNeil Stenz**/Alden*/Steinberg*/Munn		Tuesday, November 26, 8:00 Elektra	Strauss	Repertoire, casts and dates subject to change.	
<i>Underwritten by a generous gift from the Paul L. and Phyllis C. Wattis Foundation.</i>		Wednesday, November 27, 7:30 Attila	Verdi	Box Office and telephone sales: (415) 864-3330.	
Saturday, November 9, 7:00 Tristan und Isolde	Wagner				
Sunday, November 10, 1:30 Carmen	Bizet				
(Same cast as October 26)					



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ΕΛΕΚΤΡΑ

By ALAN JEFFERSON

Who was the Greek Elektra? What was she like?

It's no use asking her to come forward because the mists of time have concealed her in several different guises. Sophocles, Aeschylus and Euripides have given her their own special outlines which don't always coincide, but we are more concerned with the "Austrian" and *fin de siècle* Elektra, recreated in Hugo von Hofmannsthal's play and transformed by the music of Richard Strauss into an opera. Together, they use an amalgam of features from the Greek poets so that it becomes a far more "modern," psychologically-oriented representation of every character. Even though the opera was created at a time when Freud's experiments and writings were in vogue, it is

unlikely that they were known to Hofmannsthal.

The historical basis for Elektra's being is this: During the siege of Troy—in about 1194-1184 B.C.—she was a young girl. Elektra's father, King Agamemnon of Mycenae, had supported his brother, Menelaus, on a vengeful mission because Menelaus's wife, Helen, the most beautiful woman of all time, had been seduced and abducted by Prince Paris from under her husband's nose and taken to Troy. There, Paris's father Priam is King and he would not give Helen back.

After two years of preparation, the Greek army sailed to Troy under Agamemnon's command to avenge the family honor but, despite many skirmishes, captives,

Alan Jefferson is a prolific British author, whose published works include six books on Richard Strauss. He has also been active in legitimate theater and as a London orchestra manager.



parleys and deaths, was not successful in breaching the city walls until ten weary years had passed. By then, Paris was dead; the wronged Menelaus recovered Helen and they were reconciled; Agamemnon returned home to Argos, battle-stained and exhausted, bringing rich loot from Troy as presents for his wife Klytemnestra (sister of Helen) and his beloved children Elektra, Orestes and Chrysothemis.

When he reached home, like any returning soldier, Agamemnon badly needed a bath and while he was taking it, an unpleasant individual called Ægisthus crept behind the King and threw a net over him. In this helpless condition the great monarch, father, warrior and victor of Troy was hacked to death with an axe by his wife Klytemnestra. During Agamemnon's long absence abroad, she had been living adulterously with Ægisthus, hoping that her husband would never return. When he did, and rather suddenly, the murder was her appalling reaction.

With their father dead, Elektra realized the danger which her younger brother Orestes faced. Klytemnestra's lover had for some time been regarded as her consort on the Argive throne, one who would prevent Orestes from succeeding Agamemnon. In addition, Orestes was bound by sacred laws to avenge his father's death. So, Elektra secretly helped the boy to escape to safety.

Before Agamemnon came back, Klytemnestra was living in fear of the possibility; now she was in even greater dread of Orestes being alive and returning for vengeance after his mysterious disappearance. This caused her collapse into severe mental and physical degradation. She festooned herself with charms and amulets to guard against the misfortune that was of her own making, and she suffered from the most terrible nightmares. As material evidence of her condition, she allowed everything in the city to go to pieces during the next seven years. Ægisthus (son of his father and his own sister) did not believe he personally needed to fear the prospect of Orestes' return, enjoying a cruel power in the palace but offering little consolation to Klytemnestra.

Elektra suffered in a different way from her mother whom

she utterly detested. Although she and her sister Chrysothemis were royal princesses, they were held prisoners in the palace. Elektra was treated like the meanest serving-wench but upheld an inner, royal dignity by clinging to the single hope: that one day Orestes will return, kill Klytemnestra and avenge their father's death. As time passed and Orestes did not return, Elektra was so eaten up with her desire for retribution, as ordained by the gods, that she was prepared to perform the sacrifice (a man's job) herself.

Chrysothemis, a far simpler person, was uninvolved with her mother and sister and was far more humanly feminine than either of them. She was deeply frustrated because of her strong and unfulfilled desire to have children, prevented as she was from meeting anybody whom she might marry. Nevertheless, out of a weak will, she reluctantly accepted her unhappy situation, while being wary of both her sister and mother.

Elektra and Klytemnestra are the most important protagonists in the story. There is no Agamemnon *in person*; Ægisthus is a minor character: feeble and effeminate, though a bully, he has one short, telling appearance. The Serving Maids and their Overseer comment briefly at the beginning, by way of setting the scene, but they are scarcely comparable to a classi-

cal Greek Chorus. Orestes eventually arrives and reveals his identity to Elektra in the most beautiful scene of all, then performs the deeds. He is seen no more, since he had to run away from the pursuing Furies for his act of vengeance.

GENESIS OF THE OPERA

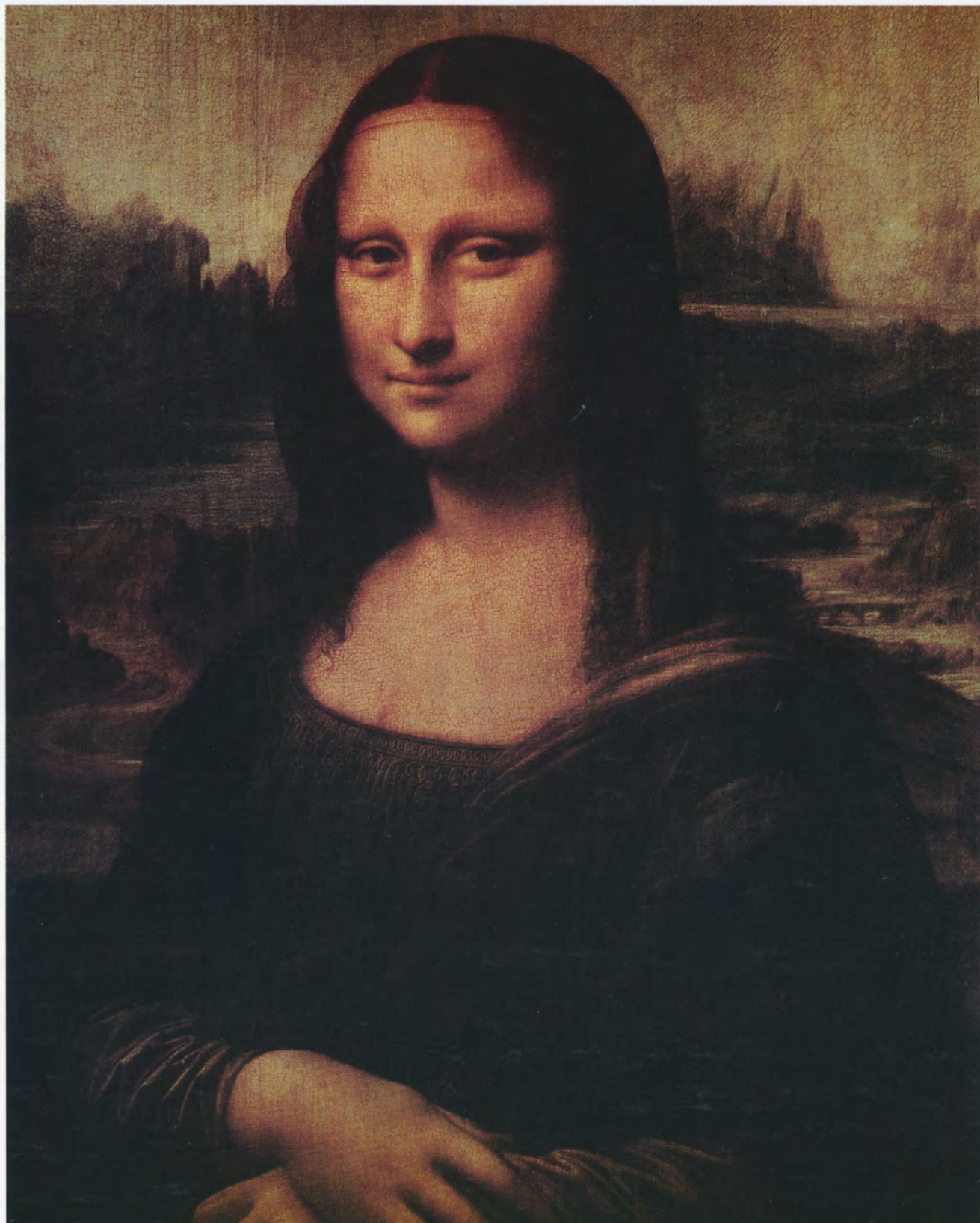
In 1905, Richard Strauss' third opera, *Salome*, set to a German version of Oscar Wilde's play, had been a *succès de scandale* in Dresden. Shortly thereafter, Strauss went to see an interesting reworking of *Elektra* by the distinguished Austrian poet, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, at Max Reinhardt's Theater in Berlin. The actress Gertrud Eysoldt played the part of Elektra, as she had also played Salome in an earlier production there of Wilde's play.

Thus, in 1906, after having persevered for six years,

[illegible]

(Previous page) Gwyneth Jones as Elektra at the Grand Théâtre de Genève.

(Above) Poster for the 1909 world premiere of *Elektra* at the Königliches Opernhaus in Dresden.



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Hofmannsthal managed to interest Strauss in the idea for an opera. It was to be based on his "revised" Elektra theme. The published correspondence between composer and librettist, so valuable in tracing their progress through later operas, yields very little information on *Elektra*, mainly because the two men met and discussed their problems face to face. In any case, the words were already well formed. An early letter (the fourth in their correspondence) from Hofmannsthal, dated March 3, 1906, begins with the direct question: "How goes it with you and *Elektra*?" Strauss' reply, four days later, was positive: "I am as keen as ever on *Elektra* and have already cut it down a good deal for my own private use."

At this point, Strauss hesitated. He was uncertain whether it would be sensible—or even possible for him—to create another highly-charged score with a crazed mythological female character at its center. Hofmannsthal assured him that he need not fear the least artistic conflict, which is to say a perceptible similarity, between the two works, whereupon Strauss seems to have been persuaded. After some business negotiations, Strauss wrote on June 16: "I am already busy on the first scene of *Elektra*, but I'm still making rather heavy weather of it."

Strauss had many conducting commitments which prevented him from devoting every minute of his time to the new work, so it was not until July of 1908 that he was able to write to his poet: "*Elektra* is progressing and is going to be good. The scene between Elektra and Orestes has, I think, come off very well ... I hope to enforce [*sic*] the premiere by the end of January at the latest." That, in fact, came to pass. The world premiere of *Elektra* took place at the Royal Opera House, Dresden, on January 25, 1909.

The opera was cast entirely from among Dresden's singers with Annie Krull as Elektra (whose performance Strauss always looked back on with affection and gratitude); with Margarethe Siems (the future creator of the Marschallin and Zerbinetta) as Chrysothemis; the formidable Ernestine Schumann-Heink as Klytemnestra; and Karl Perron as Orestes.



The single set was designed by Emil Rieck, and Ernst von Schuch conducted a score of such revolutionary complexity that the composer, highly proficient and respected as he was on the rostrum, delayed taking it on himself until the following October, in Berlin.

MUSIC AND ACTION

Strauss' opera *Salome* had projected the composer into the forefront of the *avant garde*. When *Elektra* appeared, many musicians were aghast at his audacity. This was taking their art to the extreme edge of tonality, a fact that the composer fully realized and over which he intended to step no further, for tonality—and its tunes—mattered very much to him. Nevertheless, when it came to interpreting this wonderful legend to a distant generation more than three thousand years later, the composer's sympathy and fondness for Greece, and all it has meant to civilization, came to his aid. Hofmannsthal retells the story in a readily comprehensible, poetic manner; Strauss assists him, with his extraordinary orchestral and vocal painting, by leading us back to those desperate hours in Mycenae, enabling us to understand, sympathize with and feel re-

vulsion for what happened.

The score of *Elektra* is far easier for us to grasp and assimilate today than it evidently was in 1908, for our ears and brains have meanwhile been fed on music that is considerably more cerebral (or not!); but 82 years ago, it evoked fierce clashes of opinion, particularly in England, between two leading music critics, George Bernard Shaw and Ernest Newman, whose serious arguments enlivened the press for months on end.

Because Agamemnon is always present in Elektra's mind and the single scene is set in the back courtyard of his palace, Strauss' huge orchestra begins with a violent theme that *cries* **Aga-memmm-non!** at curtain time. We are plunged straight into the action, with the four Maids and an Overseer talking disparagingly about Elektra. For a moment she appears, cringing and savage like a caged beast. A fifth Maid, who has remained silent, bursts out in Elektra's defense, is chided and, after the Overseer has obtained solidarity among the other four, they all go offstage, and beat their rebel companion for her impertinence. The whiplashes are clearly heard from the or-

Annie Krull as Elektra at the work's 1909 premiere in Dresden.



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chestra which is to underline all kinds of natural—and unnatural—sounds as the opera progresses.

Elektra returns and reminisces on the events of her beloved father's murder in such detail that it seems as though she had actually witnessed it. She implores him to reappear, with a theme of sudden great beauty and repose, so different from the orchestral savagery which has preceded it: "I want to see you let your child see you!" She reaffirms her belief that his murder will be avenged and promises to dance with joy around his grave. A grotesque and lumpy "waltz" theme grows in the orchestra, interleaved with the gentle one, but is broken off when Chrysothemis enters and the atmosphere changes.

At Elektra's first mention of Klytemnestra, we hear a sluggish, suspicious theme as Chrysothemis tells her sister that she is to be imprisoned in a tower on her mother's orders. Chrysothemis blames Elektra for their condition, saying that if she were less aggressive, things might be better for them both. A surging theme underlines the misery of Chrysothemis as she dwells upon the women she has seen pregnant, afterwards happily surrounded by the children that she so much wants herself. Strauss not only emphasizes this by means of his gentle

orchestration, but with silence as well. A passionate theme of frustrated motherhood, and the fear that her body will wither before she can bear children, reduces Chrysothemis to tears.

A busy, bustling, slashing theme tells us something is going on in the palace, and over it, Chrysothemis warns Elektra not to stand in Klytemnestra's way today because she has been having nightmares about Orestes. A procession of animals for ritual slaughter to the gods (which Strauss colorfully portrays going past behind the scene) is Klytemnestra's only expedient for trying to avert the inevitable. Elektra chides Chrysothemis so brutally that she runs away.

Klytemnestra arrives. Her most objectionable visual aspect, Hofmannsthal tells us, is the "livid, bloated face She is leaning on her Confidante and is laden with jewels and talismans, her eyelids look unnaturally large and she seems to be making a huge effort to keep them open."

(The libretto is divided neatly into sections with a clear division in the middle. Strauss has been able to follow them in what almost amounts to symphonic form:



San Francisco Opera's 1938 presentation of *Elektra*, the Company's first, featured Rose Pauly in the title role. Olive Ponitz (top left) was the Overseer of the Servants; the Five Maids were Doris Doe, Lina Kroph, Alice Avakian, Thelma Votipka and Dorothy Cornish. Fritz Reiner conducted.

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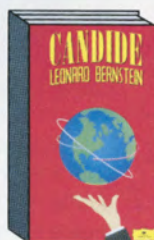
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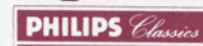
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Come Home to the Classics.



Rose Pauly (Elektra) and Kerstin Thorborg (Klytemnestra) at the San Francisco Opera in 1938.

Prologue: the Servants (Elektra in the background)

Elektra alone

Elektra and Chrysothemis I

Elektra and Klytemnestra

Elektra and Chrysothemis II

Elektra and Orestes

The Sacrifices: Elektra's Triumph and Death.)

The most emotional and critical scene in the opera is not so much the arrival of Orestes and what follows, but the impassioned dialogue between Elektra and Klytemnestra; two crazed women, connected by blood, but also separated by blood, the one lusting for revenge, the other a living corpse. Strauss is at his most convincing as he illustrates Elektra's domination of her mother—who has reluctantly come to seek her advice—by means of a trickling, hypnotic kind of theme. Once the unpleasant Confidante and Trainbearer have been dismissed, Elektra is prepared to listen to her mother's account of her ghastly



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dreams. Musically, it is a *tour de force* as the grisly worms that adorn Klytemnestra's body seem to be alive in the orchestra.

In her search for the true victim who can purge her of her living hell, Klytemnestra is momentarily trapped by Elektra who says she knows who the victim is, then suddenly switches to the forbidden name of Orestes. After a shouting match between them, Elektra assumes the dominant position by describing, in great detail, the human sacrifice that will be required. It is to be Klytemnestra and Elektra tells her that she will be there to gloat over the proceedings! At times there are two disparate musical keys being played together to point the confrontation, while cross-rhythms and cross-fertilization of previous themes makes the scene one of true genius.

In a necessary interlude, the Confidante returns and gleefully whispers in Klytemnestra's ear the false news that Orestes is dead. The Queen's joy is displayed by her mad shrieks of laughter and the sudden reversal of roles. This completely mystifies Elektra, for she doesn't yet know (nor does the audience) the reason for hectic movements on the stage and hitherto unseen lights flickering and dancing. It is left to Chrysothemis to explain.

Elektra refuses to believe her but as the message sinks in, musical portrayal of the sisters' profound despair is nearly as gruesome as that of the previous scene. "We must do it now—here," Elektra says, but Chrysothemis recoils at the idea of murder. Elektra attempts to gain her assistance by physical persuasion that has a strong lesbian tinge, but Chrysothemis escapes into the palace.

Cursing her sister, Elektra goes to a place beside the palace wall and begins to dig feverishly in the earth, like an animal, for her father's murder weapon that she had buried there seven years earlier. Soon, she becomes aware of a stranger in the courtyard, standing against the fading daylight. When she asks him what he wants, he replies as if to a servant: He and a companion have come to report the circumstances of Orestes' death to the Queen. Something in Elektra's despair makes him ask who she is, and when she tells him, he is appalled at her appearance and condition.

"Orestes is alive!" he says, and to con-



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firm the fact, four servants run out from the palace and fall down in obeisance. Elektra now seems to become a woman again in her relief at this reunion with her beloved brother. The romantic accompaniment to her long "aria" is one of the most beautiful passages in early Strauss. She blesses him in his task; Orestes' tutor arrives hastily and tells him to hurry—the Queen is alone in her room. The Confidante unwittingly shows the two men into the palace while Elektra fulminates on the fact that she did not give Orestes the axe.

We hear terrible screams as Klytemnestra is despatched, and Elektra exultantly calls out "Strike her again!" The serving women and Chrysothemis, running about, cannot understand why Elektra is implacably preventing them from going inside. But when one of them hears the tyrant Ægisthus approaching, they are terrified and disappear.

Ægisthus calls in vain for lights, until Elektra comes towards him with a torch. He is amazed that she, of all people, is

prepared to attend him and is further puzzled when she answers his questions about the strangers in riddles, while dancing round him in a disturbing fashion. Mystified, he goes into the palace and a moment later is seen reeling from one window to the next and yelling "Murder!" with triumphant musical support to the second ritual slaying.

Chrysothemis and the women reappear, at last knowing that Orestes is back, and there are sounds of fighting as the supporters of the dead Queen are overcome by Orestes' followers. Chrysothemis acts as a kind of commentator

on the general rejoicing but Elektra is scarcely listening, for she knows it already. She is transformed, radiant, but with nothing now to live for. So she dances, as she swore to her father's spirit that she would do when the time came, bidding them all follow her and dance too. But it is lugubrious, monstrous, and, while dancing, she dies. As Chrysothemis beats on the closed door of the palace, calling to Orestes, Strauss tells us plainly through the orchestra that King Agamemnon has been avenged. □



MORTON PHOTO

The final tableau at San Francisco Opera's 1938 staging of Elektra.

A CRY OF ANGUISH

By GEORGE R. MAREK

The late George Marek is the author of numerous books, including biographies of Giacomo Puccini, Ludwig van Beethoven, Felix Mendelssohn, Richard Strauss and Arturo Toscanini.

Is there a man or woman who has not sensed the curse of the house of Atreus in his own fate, even if he or she has never read the *Oresteia*? Who has not experienced the malignity of the gods, "who kill us for their sport"? Who has not felt the alternation between the calm, when we believe nothing terrible can happen, and the sudden accident that topples us and lifts to our lips the cup of despair?

The curse of the house of Atreus is a theme that embraces all humanity. It is rooted in man's original guilt and is not accidental. Therefore it has been treated in legend and literature, from Homer to Pindar to Aeschylus to Sophocles to Racine to Hofmannsthal to O'Neill. The chief people involved in this tragedy are Clytemnestra and her lover Aegisthus, opposed against Orestes and his two sisters, Chrysothemis and Electra. Each one, except Chrysothemis, is capable of murder. What the legend tells us is that murder is self-begetting, and that the possibility for it lies in many of us, however deeply stifled. Shakespeare dealt with it in *Macbeth*, *Richard III*, *Julius Caesar*. The Greeks dealt with it again and again, most powerfully as we know it in the tragedies. At the center stands Electra.

There are actually three Electras. Or rather, Electra is seen in a triple mirror by three visionaries of genius in three different lights. Edith Hamilton in her fine book *The Greek Way* explains this. The Electra created by Aeschylus is by nature gentle and forbearing but is driven by a duty that is all-important in the antique code—to seek vengeance for her father's death. She and Orestes invoke his shade:

ORESTES: Think of that bath, father, where you were stripped of life.

ELECTRA: Think of the casting net that they contrived for you.

ORESTES: They caught you like a beast in toils no bronzesmith made.

ELECTRA: Rather, hid you in shrouds that were thought out to shame.

ORESTES: Will you not waken, father, to these challenges?

ELECTRA: Will you not rear upright that best-beloved head?

Orestes kills Clytemnestra and Aegisthus, but Aeschylus keeps Electra away from the deed, having him appear alone:

The doors of the house open to show Orestes standing over the bodies of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus. His attendants display the robe in which Clytemnestra had entangled Agamemnon, and which she displayed after his murder.

ORESTES: Behold the twin tyrannies of our land, these two who killed my father and who sacked my house. For a time they sat upon their thrones and kept their pride of state, and they are lovers still. So you may judge by what befell them, for as they were pledged their oath abides. They swore together death for my unhappy sire and swore to die together. Now they keep their oath.

The chorus ends this part of the trilogy, *The Libation Bearers*. Last comes the sequel of *The Eumenides*, telling of the furies who pursue Orestes until the goddess Athena casts her vote for mercy. "Where is the end? Where shall the fury of fate be stilled to sleep, be done with?"

That is the view of Aeschylus. We are on a different level when we peruse Euripides. Electra seems a modern creation, a figure from a story of Somerset Maugham, a clubwoman much concerned with her status. She and Orestes think of their father's home, where they enjoyed good food, had money and walked on soft rugs. They are

materialists. Now Electra has only shabby garments, is forced to marry a peasant and pretends she is going to have a baby. She uses this lie to entrap her mother. Emily Townsend Vermeule writes, in her introduction to the play:

The characterization may be ugly, but it is brilliant and convincing. It is deliberately calculated to alienate us from the "right side"; Electra's initial suffering explains but does not excuse her subsequent viciousness. The victims have been alienated by their cruelty, vanity and sordid private lives, which their flickering kindness does not sufficiently relieve ...

The question is whether Euripides enjoyed the psychological exploration of suffering for its own sake, or had a moral purpose. In the first case, one tags the play with *pathei pathos*, or "suffering brutalizes," and shelves it as a work of uncomfortable insight. In the second case one is forced to consider the Euripides theme which alleges that good and evil bear no relation to human character, are beyond the reach of simple formula, possibly do not exist at all. In either case, *Electra* cannot be dismissed as willful or perverse. It is a planned demonstration that personal relationships, human or divine, are inescapably fraught with indecency, and that justice can be as ugly as crime.

Euripides creates a crescendo of dramatic suspense as he deals with the death of Aegisthus:

CHORUS: Listen, listen. Friends, did you hear a shout? or did anxiety trick me? a shout deep-rolling like the thunder of Zeus? Again it comes! The rising wind is charged with news. Mistress, come out! Electra, leave the house!

Electra appears at the door.

ELECTRA: Dear friends, what is it? How do we stand now in our trial?

CHORUS: I do not know yet—only a voice is crying death.

ELECTRA: I hear it too. It is still faint, far. But I hear it.

CHORUS: It comes from a great distance, yet it seems so close ...

Enter a Messenger in excitement.

MESSENGER: Hail, maidens of Mycenae, beautiful in triumph! Orestes is victor! I proclaim it to all who love him. The murderer of Agamemnon lies on earth crumpled in blood,

Orestes and Electra as represented in a sculpture by Giovanni Pozzuoli (1646-1734).



NATIONAL MUSEUM, NAPLES

Aegisthus. Let us thank the gods.

ELECTRA: Who are you? Why should I think your message is the truth?

MESSENGER: You do not know your brother's servant? You have seen me.

ELECTRA: Dearest of servants! Out of fear I held my eyes shaded from recognition. Now indeed I know you. What was your news? My father's hated murderer dead?

MESSENGER: Dead, dead. I will say it twice if that is pleasing.

ELECTRA: O gods! O Justice watching the world, you have come at last. How did he die? What style of death did Orestes choose to kill the son of Thyestes? Give me the details.

But there is still work to be done: Clytemnestra still lives. Electra lures her to her cottage so that she might "make the proper sacrifice." While Orestes and Pylades hide in the cottage, Clytemnestra arrives and tells Electra why she hated Agamemnon: he was willing to sacrifice his daughter—their daughter—Iphigenia. Euripides leaves no doubt as to why Clytemnestra killed her husband: he tells both sides of the story, as a modern playwright would. Mother and daughter confront each other in a scene that Hofmannsthal used, inspiring Strauss to some of the most scarifying music of the opera.

CLYTEMNESTRA: Get out of the carriage, Trojan maidens; hold my hand tight, so I can step down safely to the ground.

Looking around, somewhat embarrassed.

Mostly we gave to the houses of our gods the spoils from Phrygia, but these girls, the best in Troy, I chose to orna-

ment my own house and replace the child I lost, my loved daughter. The compensation is small.

ELECTRA: Then may not I, who am a slave and also tossed far from my father's house to live in misery, may I not, Mother, hold your most distinguished hand?

CLYTEMNESTRA: These slaves are here to help me. Do not trouble yourself.

ELECTRA: Why not? You rooted me up, a casualty of war, my home was overpowered. I am in your power, as they are too—left dark, lonely and fatherless.

CLYTEMNESTRA: And dark and lonely were your father's plots against those he should have loved and least conspired to kill. I can tell you—no. When a woman gets an evil reputation she finds a bitter twist to her words. This is my case now, not a pretty one. And yet, if you have something truly to hate, you ought to learn the facts first; then hate is more decent. But not in the dark.

She enters the cottage. A piercing scream rends the air.

CLYTEMNESTRA: O children—O my god—do not kill your mother—no!

CHORUS: Do you hear her cry trapped in the walls?

CLYTEMNESTRA: O, O, I am hurt—

CHORUS: I also am hurt to hear you in your children's hands. Justice is given down by god soon or late; you suffer terribly now, you acted terribly against god and love.

The deed is done. Electra and Orestes know they are doomed. They take leave from each other. Orestes: "I shall not see

you again." Electra: "I shall never more walk in the light of your eye." A hopeless farewell.

In the work of the third playwright, Sophocles, Electra becomes the true hub of the play. The protagonists around her are there chiefly to illuminate her figure—the nervous, frightened mother, the cautious, nondescript Orestes, the timid sister, the vulgar Aegisthus, the friend of Orestes called the Pedagogue—and all become minor characters, serving Electra's purpose. The Pedagogue tells how he brought up Orestes and relates the false story of how Orestes met his death in a chariot race.

In the main, Hofmannsthal's play and the opera follow Sophocles. Electra's first soliloquy is almost a direct translation from Sophocles. It is a study of monomania:

But my mother and the man who shared her bed, Aegisthus, split his [Agamemnon's] head with a murderous axe, like woodsmen with an oak tree. For all this no pity was given him by any but me—no pity for your death, father, so pitiful, so cruel. But, for my part, I will never cease my dirges and sorrowful laments, as long as I have eyes to see the twinkling light of the stars and this daylight. So long, like a nightingale robbed of her young, here before the doors of what was my father's house I shall cry out my sorrow for all the world to hear.

Presently she is told that Orestes, the loved brother on whom she counted to aid her vengeance, is dead. In a paroxysm of grief, she cries, "What should I do now?" She appeals to Chrysothemis:

Hear me tell you, then, the plans that I have laid. Friends to stand by and help us we have none—nowhere—you know that quite as well as I. Death has taken them and robbed us. We alone, the two of us, are left. While I still heard my brother flourished, alive, I had my hopes he would still come some day to avenge the murder of his father. But now that he's no more, I look to you, that you should not draw back from helping me, your true-born sister, kill our father's murderer that killed him with his own hand—Aegisthus. There is nothing I should now conceal from you. What are you waiting for, that you are hesitant? What hope do you look to, that is still standing?

This scene too is repeated in the opera. She must do the deed alone. A stranger enters, and there follows, in play and opera, the



Ruins of the Palace of Atreus at Mycenae.

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recognition scene. What a scene it is!

ORESTES: Is this the distinguished beauty Elektra?

ELECTRA: Yes. A miserable enough Elektra, truly.

ORESTES: Alas for this most lamentable event!

ELECTRA: Is it for me, sir, you are sorrowing?

ORESTES: Form cruelly and godlessly abused!

ELECTRA: None other than myself must be the subject of your ill-omened words, sir.

ORESTES: No words of ill omen! You have no right to mourn.

ELECTRA: Have I no right to mourn for my dead brother?

ORESTES: You have no right to call him by that name.

ELECTRA: Am I then so dishonored in his sight?

ORESTES: No one dishonors you. Mourning is not for you.

ELECTRA: It is—if I hold the body of Orestes here.

ORESTES: No body of Orestes—except in fiction.

ELECTRA: Where is the poor boy buried then?

ORESTES: Nowhere. There is no grave for living men.

ELECTRA: How, boy, what do you mean?

ORESTES: Nothing that is untrue.

ELECTRA: Is he alive then?

ORESTES: Yes, if I am living.

ELECTRA: And are you he?

ORESTES: Look at the signet ring that was our father's, and know I speak true.

ELECTRA: O happiest light!

ORESTES: Happiest I say, too.

ELECTRA: Voice, have you come?

ORESTES: Hear it from no other voice.

ELECTRA: Do my arms hold you?

ORESTES: Never again to part.

They kill Clytemnestra and Aegisthus.
Sadly the chorus ends the play:

O race of Atreus, how many sufferings
were yours before you came at last so
hardly to freedom ...

(Translations: University of Chicago)

The opera closes with Elektra's death dance and the orchestra's summary.

Strauss first saw Hofmannsthal's adaptation of the play in Berlin staged by Max Reinhardt. Of course Hofmannsthal shapes the antique tragedy in a modern mold. He screams where Sophocles speaks in measured tones; he dispenses with the chorus and its view of fate; he

adds clinical observation, as an author would who has read *Studies in Hysteria* by Breuer and Freud. All the same, the relationship is close, and the opera adaptation, in which Strauss took an active part, is much shorter than the play. It leaves room for the role most important to Strauss: the orchestra.

Elektra is a tone poem. Yet it is far removed from the romantic eloquence of *Don Juan* or *Till Eulenspiegel*. It is like the *Guernica* of Picasso, pitiless in its demands on the audience, immersed in pitch darkness, shrieking with dissonance, grim and graceless in its setting. In vain do we look for the love melodies we have come to expect from Strauss.

This opera is as atypical of Strauss as the play is atypical of Hofmannsthal. There is but one moment when bitterness melts, hate dissolves into love, and Strauss lets us hear an old-fashioned cantilena: in the recognition scene. Yet in the driving and punishing music of *Elektra*, Strauss reaches new heights. It pulsates with the blood of tragedy, setting before us with a

new force the old truth that hatred destroys not only the hated but those who hate.

The music of *Elektra* at first aroused plenty of criticism, curiously enough *not* the music of the recognition scene, the melody of which is commonplace enough, though its dramatic use—Elektra's cries of "Orest! Orest!" against the sweep of the orchestra—is superb. Nor were objections raised against the introductory bit with the servants, a scene that treads water. The negative judgments centered on such points as Elektra's apostrophe to the shade of her father, the extraordinary Elektra—Klytemnestra colloquy, Elektra's beginning madness—"I forgot to give him the axe!"—and her final dance. Some considered all the music "needlessly ugly." Strauss answered, "When a mother is slain on the stage, do they expect me to write a violin concerto?"

Soon, however, this "needlessly ugly" opera captured the imagination of a large audience. Elektra and Klytemnestra, that nightmare-ridden wreck of a woman, still have power to startle and frighten us. □

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Chrysothemis stands by while Orestes kills Aegisthus. Reproduction of a vase dating from approximately 500 B.C.



GWYNETH JONES

Highly acclaimed as an interpreter of the operas of Strauss and Wagner, Welsh soprano **Gwyneth Jones** sings the title role of *Elektra*. Here last summer as Brunnhilde in the *Ring* cycle, she has made numerous appearances with San Francisco Opera: the title roles of *Fidelio* (1969 and 1978), *Aida* (1969) and *Tosca* (1978 and 1982), as well as Elisabetta in *Don Carlo* (1973), the title role of *Salome* (1987), her first Isolde in *Tristan und Isolde* (1980), Brunnhilde in *Die Walküre* (1983 and 1985), and Barak's Wife in *Die Frau ohne Schatten* (1989). Hailed as a consummate performer of any role she undertakes, Gwyneth Jones regularly sings at all of the world's major opera houses, appearing with leading conductors and at most international opera festivals. Born in Pontnewynydd, Wales, she started her career as a mezzo-soprano and made her professional debut in Zurich as Octavian in *Der Rosenkavalier*. Shortly thereafter, at the urging of conductor Nello Santi, she sang the soprano role of Amelia in *Un Ballo in Maschera* to great success. She then joined the Royal Opera, Covent Garden, where her first major assignments were Lady Macbeth in *Macbeth* and Octavian. Her international career took off soon after she switched to the soprano range and returned to the Royal Opera in a new production of *Il Trovatore* directed by Luchino Visconti and conducted by Carlo Maria Giulini. A long list of important international debuts followed, mostly in roles from the Italian dramatic soprano repertory. Gradually, she moved towards the heaviest of roles in opera with her first *Götterdämmerung* Brunnhilde at Bayreuth in 1974, followed by all three Brunnhildes in 1975. Her first *Ariadne auf Naxos* occurred in Munich in 1977, Barak's Wife in Cologne in 1979, *Elektra*'s Chrysothemis in London in 1977, and the title role of *Elektra* in Cologne in 1983. Los Angeles was the site of her first *Turandot* in 1984, and she has since appeared in the role at the Metropolitan Opera, and in London, Vienna, Rome, Paris, Moscow, etc. She recently performed Schoenberg's *Erwartung* for the first time, sang her first staged Ortrud in *Lohengrin* at the Vienna Staatsoper, and sang her first Minnie in *La Fanciulla del West* for Opera Pacific and the Los Angeles Music Center Opera. A Kammersängerin and Honorary Member (a rare honor) of the Vienna State Opera, Dame Gwyneth is also a



HELGA DERNESCH

Kammersängerin with the Bavarian State Opera in Munich. She was awarded the prestigious Shakespeare Award in Hamburg in 1978, and was given the title of Dame of the British Empire in Queen Elizabeth II's 1986 honors. She was most recently granted the Commander's Cross of the Order of Merit by the Federal Republic of Germany. Her long list of recordings includes most of her celebrated Wagner and Richard Strauss roles, and also extends from the standard works such as Verdi's *Otello* to rarities such as the recent recording of Franz Schmidt's complete *Notre Dame*. The artist can be seen on a number of video recordings, notably the Bayreuth *Ring*, directed by Patrice Chéreau, as well as the recently issued videos of the Munich *Rosenkavalier* and *Tannhäuser* from Bayreuth.

The renowned Viennese mezzo-soprano **Helga Dernesch**, who this year celebrates 30 years on the operatic stage, sings one of her most acclaimed roles, Klytemnestra in *Elektra*. Since her Company debut in the summer of 1981 as Goneril in *Lear* (repeated during the 1985 Fall Season), she has been a favorite of San Francisco audiences and has returned frequently. Roles she has performed on the stage of the War Memorial are Herodias in *Salome* (1982, 1987), Fricka in *Die Walküre* (1983, 1985, 1990), Erda in *Siegfried* and Prince Orlofsky in *Die Fledermaus* (1984), Marfa in *Khovanshchina* (1984), the Second Norn and Waltraute in *Götterdämmerung* (1985 *Ring* Festival), and Fricka in *Das Rheingold* (1990 *Ring* Festival). Miss Dernesch made her debut at the Bayreuth Festival in 1965 as a soprano, singing such roles as Eva in *Die Meistersinger*, Freia in *Das Rheingold*, and Gutrune in *Götterdämmerung* for five seasons. Turning to heavier dramatic Wagner roles, she first sang at the Salzburg Easter Festival in 1969 as Brunnhilde in *Siegfried*, conducted by Herbert von Karajan, with whom she subsequently performed and recorded the *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung* Brunnhildes, Leonore in *Fidelio*, and Isolde in *Tristan und Isolde*. Under the baton of Georg Solti she appeared at Covent Garden as Chrysothemis in *Elektra* and the Dyer's Wife in *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, and recorded the role of Elisabeth in *Tannhäuser*. Since 1979, Miss Dernesch has been singing mezzo-soprano roles with great success in the major



NADINE SECUNDE

opera centers of the world, beginning with the Nurse in *Die Frau ohne Schatten*. She is now in great demand as Herodias, Fricka, Waltraute and Klytemnestra, as well as Marfa, Prince Orlofsky, Dame Quickly in *Falstaff*, and the Principessa in *Suor Angelica*. At the 1982 Salzburg Festival she performed and later recorded Othmar Schoeck's *Penthesilea*, and has also recorded Aribert Reimann's *Lear* and Requiem, as well as his opera, *The Trojan Women* (*Troades*). Since her 1985 Metropolitan Opera debut in *Khovanshchina*, she has returned to that company as Fricka, Waltraute, Herodias, the Nurse, and Prince Orlofsky. Recent appearances include Fricka in *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre*, as well as Klytemnestra and Herodias, all for the Royal Opera, Covent Garden; Dame Quickly and Klytemnestra for the Los Angeles Music Center Opera; and Herodias in Vienna and Amsterdam. Future assignments include Henze's *Der Prinz von Homburg* at the Munich Festival and in Cologne, and *Elektra* in Paris. The most recent additions to her extensive discography are complete recordings of Strauss' *Arabella* and Weill's *The Threepenny Opera*.

American soprano **Nadine Secunde** makes her San Francisco Opera debut as Chrysothemis in *Elektra*, the vehicle of her debuts at the Paris Opera and the Royal Opera at Covent Garden, and a role she has recorded under the baton of Seiji Ozawa with the Boston Symphony Orchestra. The young artist made an acclaimed debut as Elsa in the 1987 Werner Herzog production of *Lohengrin* at the Bayreuth Festival, returning the following summer as Sieglinde in Harry Kupfer's controversial production of *Die Walküre*. Prior to her Bayreuth debut, she had already appeared in many of Europe's important theaters: in Munich she has sung the title role of *Arabella* as well as Elisabeth in *Tannhäuser*; in Hamburg she has appeared in the title role of *Katya Kabanova* and as Elsa; her debut in Vienna was as Sieglinde, followed by appearances as Elisabeth; and her debut in Zurich was as Sieglinde. Currently a member of the ensemble at the Cologne Opera, Miss Secunde's first appearance with that company in the title role of a new Kupfer production of *Katya Kabanova* brought her immediate international attention. Other roles in Cologne have included Elsa,



YANYU GUO

Elisabeth, Chrysothemis, Lisa in *Pique Dame*, Agathe in *Der Freischütz*, and Eva in *Die Meistersinger*. She recently added the title roles of *Ariadne auf Naxos* and *Fidelio*, as well as Marie in *Wozzeck*, to her repertoire there. The soprano was hailed in her U.S. operatic debut at the Lyric Opera of Chicago as Elisabeth in the Peter Sellars production of *Tannhäuser*, prompting an immediate re-engagement for a new August Everding staging of *Elektra* in an upcoming season. Recent portrayals include Chrysothemis at Covent Garden, Elsa at La Fenice in Venice, Sieglinde in Cologne and at Bayreuth, her Los Angeles debut as Cassandre in a new production of *Les Troyens*, and the title roles of *Fidelio* and *Ariadne auf Naxos* for Seattle Opera. In addition to the role of Chrysothemis, she has also recorded the part of Renata in Prokofiev's *The Fiery Angel* with the Göteborg Symphony Orchestra led by Neeme Järvi. Important orchestral engagements have included Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with the L.A. Philharmonic; Zemlinsky's *Lyric Symphony* with the Minnesota Orchestra; Penderecki's *Dies Irae* with the Warsaw Philharmonic; concert performances of *Elektra* with both the Boston Symphony and the London Symphony Orchestra; and Marie in *Wozzeck* for Radio France.

A 1990 Merola Opera Program participant and currently an Adler Fellow with the San Francisco Opera Center, mezzo-soprano **Yanyu Guo** appears as Flora in *La Traviata*, Murat's aide-de-camp in *War and Peace*, Mercédès in *Carmen*, and a Servant in *Elektra*. She made her Company debut last fall as the Second Alms Sister in *Suor Angelica*, a Turkish Woman in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, and received critical acclaim when she stepped in for an ailing colleague as Penelope in a performance of *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria*. For this summer's Mozart Festival she portrayed the Second Lady in *The Magic Flute* and Don Ramiro in *La Finta Giardiniera*. The native of Beijing, China, studied at the Beijing Central Conservatory and continued her studies in the U.S. at the Eastman School of Music and at the Juilliard School. The recipient of numerous prizes and awards, she has appeared with the Minnesota Orchestra, Columbus Symphony, New York Choral Society, the Opera Orchestra of New York, the Ashland Opera Festival, Chattanooga Opera, Virginia Opera, Opera Carolina, Augusta Opera, and at the Spoleto Festival.



KRISTINE JEPSON

tival. Roles she has performed include Dorabella in *Così fan tutte*, the title role of *La Cenerentola*, Cherubino in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, and Suzuki in *Madama Butterfly*. Later this season she will portray Nicklausse in *The Tales of Hoffmann* for the Washington Opera.

After making her San Francisco Opera debut last fall as the Nursing Sister in *Suor Angelica*, mezzo-soprano **Kristine Jepson** returns to sing the Shopkeeper in *War and Peace* and the Second Maidservant in *Elektra*. Opera Center credits include the title role of *Carmen* for Western Opera Theater's 1989-90 national tour, and the role of The Mummy in last year's production of Reimann's *The Ghost Sonata*. Recipient of a Master of Music degree from Indiana University, she performed for three seasons with the Opera Theatre of St. Louis, where she sang the roles of Modestina in the U.S. premiere of Rossini's *Il Viaggio a Reims*, and Matilda in Purcell's *King Arthur*. She has also appeared with Virginia Opera as the Third Lady in *Die Zauberflöte* and as Flora in *La Traviata*, and sang the role of Rosina in the Chicago Chamber Opera's production of *The Barber of Seville*. Her orchestral engagements include appearances with the Indianapolis Symphony and Kansas City Symphony.

Currently an Adler Fellow with the San Francisco Opera Center, mezzo-soprano **Catherine Cook** makes her first appearance with the Company as Mavra Kuzminichna in *War and Peace* and the Third Maidservant in *Elektra*. She was a 1990 Merola Opera Program participant, singing the role of Meg Page in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. The Chicago native's most recent engagements include the title role of *Rinaldo* with the Cincinnati Chamber Orchestra, Ottavia in *The Coronation of Poppea* at the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music, and alto soloist in the first recorded version of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony in the Mahler orchestration. She has appeared with the Ohio Light Opera, Music Theater of Wichita, Lyric Opera of Dallas, Shreveport Opera, San Francisco Symphony Pops Concerts, the Toledo Symphony, and also has extensive experience in



CATHERINE COOK

musical theater and the Gilbert and Sullivan repertoire. Miss Cook was a 1990 Metropolitan Opera National Council Winner, as well as the winner of the 1990-91 Norman Treigle Award in Opera from the Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, where she just completed an Artist Diploma in opera.



ANGELA RANDELL

Soprano **Angela Randell** sings the Fourth Maidservant in *Elektra*. As a participant of the 1987 Merola Opera Program, she performed the title role of *Suor Angelica*, and returned to the Program in 1989, appearing as Micaëla in *Carmen* for MOP as well as on Western Opera Theater's national tour. She made her San Francisco Opera debut last fall as Sister Dolcina in *Suor Angelica*. Other roles performed include Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni* at Wolf Trap, Marguerite in *Faust* at the Mercury Theatre in New Zealand, and Helena in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Lady Billows in *Albert Herring* at the Juilliard Opera Center. Miss Randell sang in Ned Rorem's *Women's Voices* for the composer's 65th birthday celebration at Alice Tully Hall, and performed in the world premiere of David Baker's *Le Chat qui pêche* for jazz quartet and orchestra, also at Alice Tully Hall. Recent engagements include Enrichetta in *I Puritani* for the Washington Concert Opera, her debut at the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. as a Flowermaiden in *Parsifal*, and a return to Wolf Trap as Corinna in *Il Viaggio a Reims*.

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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

This production was underwritten, in part, by a generous grant from British Airways.

Production new to San Francisco

Opera in one act by RICHARD STRAUSS

Text by HUGO VON HOFMANNSTHAL

Based on the play by SOPHOCLES

Elektra

(in German)

Conductor

Christian Thielemann**

Production

Andrei Serban*

Designer

Yannis Kokkos*

Lighting Designer

Thomas J. Munn

Musical Preparation

Robert Morrison

Christopher Larkin

Philip Eisenberg

Prompter

Philip Eisenberg

Assistant Stage Directors

Paula Williams

Peter McClintock

Assistant to Mr. Serban

Pascal Bau**

Stage Manager

Jerry Sherk

This production of *Elektra*,
originally created for the
Grand Théâtre de Genève,
is owned by San Francisco Opera.

First performance:

Dresden, January 25, 1909

First San Francisco Opera performance:

October 24, 1938

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 16 AT 8:00

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 22 AT 8:00

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 26 AT 8:00

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 1 AT 2:00

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 4 AT 7:30

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7 AT 7:30

CAST

(in order of appearance)

First maidservant Yanyu Guo+

Second maidservant Kristine Jepson

Third maidservant Catherine Cook+

Fourth maidservant Angela Randell

Fifth maidservant Patricia Racette

Overseer of the servants Carla Cook

Elektra Gwyneth Jones

Chrysothemis Nadine Secunde*

Klytemnestra Helga Dernesch

Her confidante Maria Fortuna+

Her trainbearer Reveka Mavrovitis

A young servant Dennis McNeil

An old servant Micah Graber+

Orest Monte Pederson
(Nov. 16, 22, 26)
Tom Fox
(Dec. 1, 4, 7)

His tutor James Wood

Aegisth James King

Slaves, guards

**United States opera debut

*San Francisco Opera debut

+1991 Adler Fellow

PLACE AND TIME: Mycenae after the Trojan War

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 one hour and fifty minutes
without intermission.*

Elektra / Synopsis

In the inner courtyard of the royal palace of Mycenae, at nightfall, the maidservants who have come to draw water at the well exchange anxious remarks about Elektra's strange behavior since the death of her father Agamemnon: wandering around in the palace like a soul possessed, she avoids people's looks, uttering threats and barking with the dogs. Only the youngest of the maidservants expresses some pity for the unhappy princess. But it is exactly the time when, every day, drunk with hate, Elektra relives the murder of her father. Her cries rise up and are gradually transformed into wild joy at the idea of revenge. Blood must flow, the blood of Klytemnestra and the blood of Aegisth, her lover and accomplice in the murder of Agamemnon, the blood of the treacherous slaves and of the dogs and horses. She is sure that her brother Orest, in exile, and her sister Chrysothemis will help her to strike and all three will dance triumphantly around their father's tomb.

Chrysothemis arrives to warn her sister: Klytemnestra and Aegisth are plotting against her and are preparing to throw her into a dark cell. Chrysothemis urges Elektra to flee while there is still time, for she herself refuses to live only in the past and in the hope of revenge. Chrysothemis cannot endure the grim and suffocating palace; she wants to live as a normal woman, to marry and have children. Elektra though, inflexible and haughty, scornfully rejects such prudence and weakness. But Klytemnestra approaches and Chrysothemis runs away.

Adorned with jewels and amulets, but deathly pale and disfigured by the anguish within her, Klytemnestra appears like a mournful sleepwalker, followed by her attendants. Terrifying nightmares have her in their grip and she turns to her daughter Elektra for magic remedies which could free her from them. Elektra at first answers her mother in a strange and enigmatic fashion: she explains that the gods demand a sacrificial victim. But most of all she frightens her mother by showing that she knows the cause of Klytemnestra's fears: she is afraid of Orest, who was banished from the court by his mother's command, and who is rumored to be still alive. Klytemnestra is dismayed. Elektra lets herself be carried away by a frenzy of hatred and revenge which lift her into a sort of trance in which she predicts and describes the death awaiting her mother, struck down by the same axe which had murdered Agamemnon. Petrified with horror, the queen watches this savage tide which seizes her

daughter. But suddenly an attendant runs up and murmurs a few words into Klytemnestra's ear. Immediately, her expression changes and a triumphant laugh replaces the anguish: erect and horrifying, she turns her back on Elektra and goes into the palace.

Chrysothemis runs in and reveals the dismal news: Orest is dead. Elektra refuses to believe it, but a young servant comes to ask for a horse to go and inform Aegisth as quickly as possible. In a flash, Elektra decides that it is now up to her sister and herself to wreak revenge. But Chrysothemis, appalled, refuses to take part in her sister's project, in spite of her threats and supplications, and she runs away. Elektra curses her and, seized by a savage resolve, decides to act alone.

Burrowing like an animal near the threshold of the palace where she had buried the axe with which her father was murdered, Elektra is interrupted by a stranger who asks to see Klytemnestra in order to confirm the death of Orest whom he had seen trampled to death by his own horses. In despair, Elektra tells her name to the stranger who then reveals to her that Orest is not really dead. Some old servants come and kiss the young man's hands and feet. Elektra looks at him in perplexity, until—finally recognizing him—she is possessed by joy. She then tells her brother, in a sort of ecstasy, the tale of her sufferings and her wait for vengeance. Orest tells her that he is ready to help her. The old man who acted as his adopted father approaches the young man and tells him that the moment is favorable to act. The two men enter the palace.

Left alone in the shadows, Elektra is like a wild beast in its cage, torn by anguish because she had not been able to give her brother the axe. But her frightful vigil is suddenly shattered by the cries of Klytemnestra. Elektra calls to her brother to strike again. The servants, terrified, flee the palace. Aegisth appears. Trembling with joy, Elektra, a torch in her hand, leads him to the palace. A few minutes later he, too, is stabbed to death while Elektra calls out the name of Agamemnon.

Chrysothemis appears with the palace servants to announce that vengeance has been done by Orest, who is then acclaimed by everyone. She gives thanks to the gods and turns to her sister. But Elektra, whose hate has driven her into a trance, starts to dance in an ecstatic state, and then collapses, dead. Chrysothemis rushes towards the palace calling loudly for her brother Orest.

The performance of November 26 is sponsored by the Pacific Gas and Electric Company.

The performance of December 7 is sponsored by Andersen Consulting.

Elektra

Photos taken in rehearsal by Marty Sohl



Gwyneth Jones



(Inset left) Carla Cook; (Inset right) Patricia Racette
L. to r.: Kristine Jepson, Yanyu Guo, Angela Randell, Catherine Cook

James King

Gwyneth Jones, Helga Dernesch





Reveka Mavrovitis, Helga Dernesch

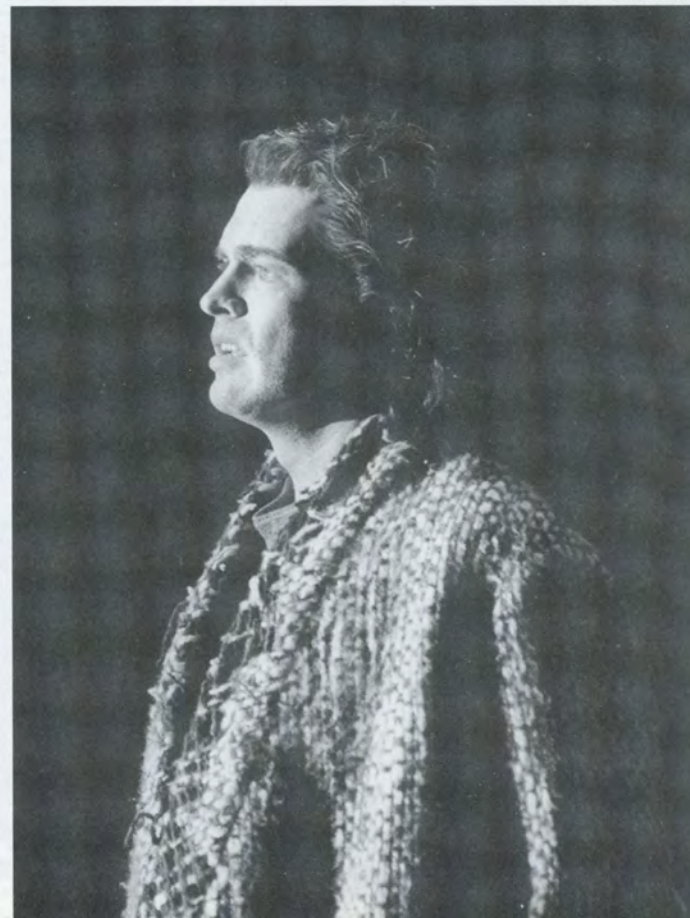


Gwyneth Jones, Nadine Secunde

Monte Pederson



Gwyneth Jones



Nadine Secunde



Gwyneth Jones



Helga Dernesch





PATRICIA RACETTE

and Papagena in *Die Zauberflöte*. A native of Cedar Falls, Iowa, she received her bachelor's degree in music from Northwestern University, and a Master of Music degree from the Juilliard School, where she was a member of the Juilliard Opera Center. She is the recipient of numerous awards including a Robert Jacobson Study Grant from the Richard Tucker Foundation, a Richard F. Gold Career Grant from the Shoshana Foundation, and three Metropolitan Opera Study Grants.

Soprano **Patricia Racette** appears this season as Dunyasha in *War and Peace*, Micaëla in *Carmen*, and the Fifth Maidservant in *Elektra*. A 1989-90 Adler Fellow with the San Francisco Opera Center, she made her Company debut in 1989 as Mistress Ford in the family performance of *Falstaff*, and also performed in *Aida*, *Idomeneo* and *Die Frau ohne Schatten*. She appeared as Anastasio in the Opera Center's 1989 production of Handel's *Giustino*, and was seen last summer as Freia in *Das Rheingold* and Helmwig in *Die Walküre* in SFO's Ring cycle. Last fall she appeared here as Rosalinda in the family performance of *Die Fledermaus*, and was heard this summer as the First Lady in *The Magic Flute*. A native of New Hampshire, she received a Bachelor of Music degree in Voice from North Texas State University, where she sang Diana in *Orpheus in the Underworld*, also appearing in the title role of Carlisle Floyd's *Susannah* at the Metro Opera Works in Fort Worth. Miss Racette was a National Finalist in the 1988 Metropolitan Opera National Auditions, first place winner in the New York region of the 1988 San Francisco Opera Auditions, and received the Poetz Memorial Award at the 1988 Grand Finals. She recently appeared as Mimì in *La Bohème* and as Micaëla with Marin Opera, and as Nedda in *Pagliacci* at Miami Opera. Next year, Miss Racette will portray the three heroines in *The Tales of Hoffmann* for Boston Lyric Opera.



MARIA FORTUNA

A member of the 1989 Merola Opera Program and a 1990-91 Adler Fellow with the San Francisco Opera Center, soprano **Maria Fortuna** sings Violetta in the student matinee performances of *La Traviata*, Frasquita in *Carmen*, and The Confidante in *Elektra*. She made her Company debut in 1989 in *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, and was seen here last fall as the First Alms Sister in *Suor Angelica*, Countess Ceprano in *Rigoletto*, a Turkish Woman in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, and Emma in *Khovanshchina*. She received her Bachelor of Music degree from the Eastman School of Music, where she studied with Marcia Baldwin and Jan DeGaetani. The Niagara Falls native received her Master of Music degree from the Curtis Institute of Music, where she began her studies with her present teacher, Marlena Malas. Roles she has performed include Pamina in *The Magic Flute*, Anne Trulove in *The Rake's Progress*, Amelia in *Amelia Goes to the Ball*, Susanna in *Il Segreto di Susanna*, Lauretta in *Gianni Schicchi*, and the Countess in *Le Nozze di Figaro*. She made her debut with the Opera Theatre of St. Louis as the Mermaid in Weber's *Oberon*, and sang with Arkansas Opera Theatre in Argento's *Postcard from Morocco*. Miss Fortuna has been a soloist with Riccardo Muti and the Philadelphia Orchestra in Bruckner's *Te Deum* and Verdi's *Quattro Pezzi Sacri*, as well as with the Berkeley Symphony in Benjamin's *A Mind of Winter*. Recent appearances include Anna in *Nabucco* and the Countess in *Le Nozze di Figaro* with Long Beach Opera, Musetta in *La Bohème* for Marin Opera, as well as The Young Lady in Reimann's *The Ghost Sonata* and Sandrina in *La Finta Giardiniera* for the Opera Center. Future plans include performances with the Sacramento Symphony, Oakland East Bay Symphony, Van Cliburn Foundation and Marin Opera.

Mezzo-soprano **Reveka Mavrovitis** appears this season as Trishka in *War and Peace* and the Trainbearer in *Elektra*. A native of the Bay Area, she participated in the 1988 and '89 Merola Opera Programs and portrayed Suzuki in Western Opera Theater's touring production of *Madame Butterfly*. In 1989 she appeared as Amanzio in the U.S. stage pre-



REVEKA MAVROVITIS

miere of Handel's *Giustino* for the Opera Center's Showcase series, and won acclaim for her portrayal of the title role of *Carmen* at Villa Montalvo. Engagements last season included a Schwabacher Debut Recital, a solo recital at Montalvo, a *Carmen* "Pops Series" evening with Victor Borge and the San Francisco Symphony, the role of Elmira in Jommelli's *La Schiava Liberata* at Berkeley's Early Music Festival, and her San Francisco Opera debut last fall as the Second Lay Sister in *Suor Angelica*. Earlier this year she traveled to Japan and Guam with other SFO and Opera Center personnel for a presentation of *Carmen*. Future engagements include the title role of *Carmen* for Boise Opera Theater, and Valencienne in *The Merry Widow* for Marin Opera. Miss Mavrovitis completed her master's degree at the University of California at Santa Barbara, and is the recipient of numerous awards.



CARLA COOK

Mezzo-soprano **Carla Cook** appears as the Overseer in *Elektra*. A member of the 1982 Merola Opera Program, she was heard in Merola productions of *The Magic Flute* and *Rigoletto* and won the Jean Donnell Memorial Award in that year's Audition Finals. The following year she was a winner of the Metropolitan Opera National Auditions and the Munich International Vocal Competition, and sang in the Opera Center's Showcase productions of *L'Ormino* and *The Rape of Lucretia*. She made her San Francisco Opera debut during the 1982 Fall Season, when she appeared in *Katya Kabanova*, *La Grande Duchesse de Gérolstein* and *La Traviata*. Addi-



MONTE PEDERSON

tional assignments with the Company have been Rossweisse in *Die Walküre* (1985 and 1990 Ring Festivals), Annina in *Der Rosenkavalier* (fall 1985), Madame Larina in *Eugene Onegin* (fall 1986), and the Arts Patroness in *Lulu* and a Voice in *Die Frau ohne Schatten* (1989). She made her Metropolitan Opera debut in 1984 in *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* and as Waltraute in *Die Walküre*, and that same year made her Seattle Opera debut as Waltraute, and sang her first Venus in a new production of *Tannhäuser*. It was under the auspices of the Metropolitan Opera that she made her Carnegie Hall debut with the National Orchestra of New York. More recently, she was critically acclaimed as Venus in a new production of *Tannhäuser* in Bremen, and appeared as soloist in the Verdi Requiem with the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, a performance that was broadcast internationally on radio and television.

Bass-baritone **Monte Pederson** portrays Orest in *Elektra*. The young artist has been seen in over 17 roles with San Francisco Opera since his 1985 debut, most recently in 1988 when he stepped in for an ailing colleague in the title role of *Der Fliegende Holländer*, in 1989 as the Spirit Messenger in *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, and last summer as Donner in *Das Rheingold*. In the space of only a few seasons he has made debuts at major opera houses in Europe and the U.S. Wagner's Dutchman was the vehicle of his 1988 European debut at Montpellier, in Stuttgart, and for his first appearance at the Deutsche Oper Berlin. Pederson made his debut at the Cologne Opera last year as Jokanaan in *Salome*, and returned to Cologne earlier this year for Harry Kupfer's new production of Janáček's *From the House of the Dead*. In 1990 he also made debuts at the Chicago Lyric Opera as Claudius in Thomas's *Hamlet*, at the Royal Opera, Covent Garden as Pizarro in a new production of *Fidelio* led by Christoph von Dohnányi, and at the Châtelet in Paris as Méphistophélès in *La Damnation de Faust*. He has also been heard as Kurwenal in *Tristan und Isolde* in Avignon, as Klingsor in *Parsifal* in Lyon, as Jokanaan at the Festival de Radio France in Montpellier when he appeared in the French version of *Salome*, as well as in Basel, and at the Bregenz Festival for two seasons in the title role of *Holländer*. Pederson made both his Seattle and Miami Opera debuts as the four villains in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, and made his first appearance in Zurich in the



TOM FOX

title role of *Eugene Onegin*. This September, Pederson joined the ensemble of the Vienna State Opera as principal bass-baritone, and has appeared with that company as Klingsor, Jokanaan, Biterolf in *Tannhäuser* and Rangoni in *Boris Godunov*. Future assignments include his debut at Milan's La Scala as Amfortas in *Parsifal* (and as Klingsor in subsequent performances), his debut at the Houston Grand Opera as Amfortas, and a debut at the Salzburg Festival in *From the House of the Dead*. Additional future plans include his first Claggart in a new production of *Billy Budd* as well as a revival of *Holländer* in Cologne, his first performances of *Scarpia* in *Tosca* in Seattle, and his first Wotan in *Die Walküre* in Toulouse. The native of Sunnyside, Washington, began his professional career with San Francisco Opera, where he was a member of the chorus from 1979-'82, a Merola Opera Program participant in 1983 and '84, and an Adler Fellow in 1985-86.

Baritone **Tom Fox**, who made his acclaimed San Francisco Opera debut last summer as Alberich in *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, is seen this fall as Ryuji Tsukazaki in the U.S. premiere of *Das Verratene Meer* and as Orest in *Elektra*. After early musical training at the Cincinnati Opera's College Conservatory of Music, he became a resident member of the parent company, singing such roles as Doctor Dulcamara in *The Elixir of Love*, Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly*, and Escamillo in *Carmen*. In 1981, he was engaged as principal guest artist at the Frankfurt Opera, where his roles included Amonasro in *Aida*, Pizarro in *Fidelio*, Klingsor in *Parsifal*, Nick Shadow in *The Rake's Progress*, as well as Alberich, Escamillo and Orest. His first appearance with the Canadian Opera Company was in 1983 as Orest, and he has since returned to Toronto as Jokanaan in *Salome*, the four villains in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, *Scarpia* in *Tosca*, and Escamillo. The role of Escamillo also served as his debut with the Vancouver Opera and the Welsh National Opera. During the 1986-87 season, Fox made his debut with Pittsburgh Opera as Claudius in Thomas's *Hamlet*, and sang his first Iago in *Otello* at the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires. He returned to Frankfurt for the 1987-88 season as Amonasro and as Ford in *Falstaff*, and made his debut with L'Opéra de Nice at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris as Alberich in their joint production of the *Ring*



JAMES KING

cycle. His most recent successes include Gessler in *William Tell* and Pizarro in Nice, Pizarro in San Diego, Escamillo in Toronto and, in Pittsburgh, Orest, *Scarpia*, and the title roles of *Eugene Onegin* and *Der Fliegende Holländer*. Fox made his Italian debut last season in Bari as *Scarpia*, followed by performances as Giovanni lo Sciancato in *Francesca da Rimini* in Turin and, earlier this year, appeared as Iago in Munich. Future engagements include Barnaba in *La Gioconda* in Rome, Gérard in *Andrea Chénier* and Amonasro in Palermo, as well as *Scarpia* in Munich and at Spain's Oviedo Festival.

The only American to hold the title of Kammersänger with three leading opera houses — Berlin's Deutsche Oper, and the Vienna and Bavarian State Operas — tenor **James King** appears as Aegisth in *Elektra*. The Kansas native made his professional debut with Spring Opera Theater in 1961 as Don José in *Carmen* opposite Marilyn Horne. He first appeared with San Francisco Opera as Bacchus in *Ariadne auf Naxos* (a role he has sung nearly 400 times) and as Florestan in *Fidelio* during the 1969 season. He has also performed here as Walther in *Die Meistersinger* (1971 and '85) and Manrico in *Il Trovatore* (1971); in the title role of *Otello* (1974); as the Emperor in *Die Frau ohne Schatten* and Canio in *Pagliacci* (1980); Siegmund in *Die Walküre* (1981); Captain Vere in *Billy Budd* (1985); and as Herod in *Salome* and the First Armored Man in *Die Zauberflöte* (1987). Since his first appearance at the Deutsche Oper Berlin in 1962, he has made debuts at the world's major opera houses, including the Vienna State Opera (where he has sung over 500 performances), the Bayreuth Festival (10 seasons), the Royal Opera, Covent Garden and the Salzburg Festival (17 seasons). Since his Metropolitan Opera debut as Florestan in 1966, King has been heard at that house in many roles including Siegmund, Lohengrin, Calaf in *Turandot*, Captain Vere, Walther, Bacchus, Cavaradossi in *Tosca*, and Don José, the vehicle of his 1973 debut at the Lyric Opera of Chicago. He has also scored triumphs at La Scala in Milan, Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires and at the Bolshoi Opera in Moscow, where he was invited to sing *Otello*. In addition to roles in the standard Italian and German repertoire, King also sings Jupiter in *Il Ritorno*



JAMES WOOD

d'Ulisse in Patria, Apollo in Strauss' *Daphne*, Paul in Korngold's *Die Tote Stadt*, Samson in *Samson et Dalila*, and the title roles of Pfitzner's *Palestrina* and Cherubini's *Anacreon*. Recent successes include the Drum Major in *Wozzeck* at the Met, the title role of *Lohengrin* in Nice, the Emperor in *Frau* at the Holland Festival, and Aegisth in a new production of *Elektra* at the Vienna State Opera and the Salzburg Festival. His discography includes over 20 complete operas -- the most recent is Schmidt's *Notre Dame* -- as well as numerous concert and recital discs.

Bass **James Wood** makes his San Francisco Opera debut with three roles: Doctor Grenvil in *La Traviata*, Zuniga in *Carmen*, and Orest's Tutor in *Elektra*. A Merola Opera Program participant last year, he appeared as Raimondo in *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Dr. Caius in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and was heard in concert at the Martin Brothers Winery. He made his debut with the Berkeley Symphony last season, singing the title role of Messiaen's *St. Francis of Assisi* in a concert version conducted by Kent Nagano. A graduate of SUNY College at Oneonta, Wood has performed Masetto in *Don Giovanni* with Pennsylvania Opera Theater, Baron Douphol in *La Traviata* with the New York City Opera on tour and with National Grand Opera, Don Prudenzio in *Il Viaggio a Reims* with the Concert Opera of Manhattan and the Newport Music Festival, and made his Carnegie Hall debut in Richard Strauss' *Friedenstag* in 1989.

Tenor **Dennis McNeil** performs the roles of Gastone in *La Traviata*, a Ship's Mate in *Das Verrätene Meer*, and a Young Servant in *Elektra*. He made his San Francisco Opera debut last fall as a Servant in *Capriccio*, Amelia's Servant in *Un Ballo in Maschera*, and Eisenstein in the family performance of *Die Fledermaus*. A member of the 1989 Merola Opera Program, he sang Don José in *Carmen* both at Villa Montalvo and on Western Opera Theater's 1989-90 national tour. In 1989, he made his debut with the Los Angeles Music Center Opera as Ferrando in their student outreach production of *Così fan tutte*, followed by performances with the main company as the Second Jew in *Salome*. Additional roles performed include Jeník in *The Bartered Bride* for Desert Opera Theater and Los Angeles Concert Opera, Camille in *The Merry Widow* for Nevada Opera Theater, and Sandor Barinkay in *The Gypsy Baron*.



DENNIS McNEIL

Equally comfortable on the musical theater stage, he has performed the role of Mr. Snow in *Carousel* over 140 times. In Los Angeles recently, he appeared as Niko in *Zorba*, with John Raitt in the title role. In 1988, McNeil toured with Sammy Cahn in the lyricist's hit musical review *Words with Music*, which completed its run at San Francisco's Marines' Memorial Theater. First place winner of the Metropolitan Opera's 1991 Eastern Region National Council Auditions, McNeil is a graduate of the American Center for Musical Theater where he was trained in both opera and musical comedy.



MICAH GRABER

Bass **Micah Graber** sings several roles for the Company this season: Bolkonsky's Valet and a French Officer in *War and Peace*, Dr. Grenvil in the student matinee performances of *La Traviata*, Number Five in *Das Verrätene Meer*, and an Old Servant in *Elektra*. A 1990-91 Adler Fellow with the San Francisco Opera Center, he made his Company debut last fall, appearing in *Rigoletto*, *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, *Capriccio* and *Khovanshchina*. As a 1989 Merola Opera Program participant, he portrayed Sparafucile in *Rigoletto* and Zuniga in *Carmen*, the latter a role he repeated during the 1989-90 Western Opera Theater national tour and most recently in the Opera Center's production of *Carmen* which traveled to Japan and Guam. He also appeared as Falstaff in the Merola Opera Program's 1990 production of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and was a soloist in the San Francisco Symphony Pops Series under the baton of Victor Borge. A former apprentice with Des Moines Metro Opera and Santa Fe



CHRISTIAN THIELEMANN

Opera, he has appeared with the Ohio Light Opera, the Toledo Opera, and earlier this year made his Skylight Opera debut as Osmin in *The Abduction from the Seraglio*. Graber holds a bachelor's degree in vocal performance/opera from Bowling Green State University, where he performed several operatic roles and was named Outstanding Vocalist in 1988.

Music Director of the Nuremberg Opera since 1988, **Christian Thielemann** makes his United States debut leading *Elektra*. Born in Berlin, he studied piano at the Hochschule für Musik with Professor Helmut Roloff. In addition to private studies in composition and conducting, he studied viola at the Karajan Foundation's Orchestra Academy of the Berlin Philharmonic, and won numerous competitions for both piano and viola. Beginning in 1979, he was assistant to Herbert von Karajan in Berlin and at the Salzburg Festival. He has also assisted Daniel Barenboim in Berlin and at the Bayreuth Festival. After several years as coach and conductor at various German theaters, he won the Conductors Award at the National Competition of German Artists in 1984 and, in 1985, was appointed Principal Conductor at the Deutsche Oper am Rhein in Düsseldorf. Since 1982, he has made regular conducting appearances in Italy, notably at Milan's La Scala, La Fenice in Venice, as well as in Florence, Rome, Turin and Bologna. In Germany, he has conducted the Munich Philharmonic, Essen Philharmonic, and the NDR in Hamburg and Hannover. In France, he led Haydn's *The Creation* at the Aix-en-Provence Festival. Opera engagements have included *Così fan tutte*, *Le Nozze di Figaro* and *La Traviata* at the Vienna Staatsoper, *Die Walküre* and *Elektra* in Genoa, *Katya Kabanova* in Florence, *Rigoletto* and *Jenůfa* in Zurich, *Tristan und Isolde* and *Der Rosenkavalier* in Hamburg, *Katya Kabanova* and *Daphne* in Geneva, *Wozzeck* in Turin, *Lohengrin* in Venice, *Capriccio* in Bologna, and *Jenůfa* at the Royal Opera, Covent Garden. Maestro Thielemann has also conducted a series of concert performances every year in Germany, France, and Italy, as well as in Nuremberg. Opera assignments in Nuremberg include *Die Meistersinger*, *Lohengrin*, *Tannhäuser*, *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Salome*, *Così fan tutte*, *Il Trovatore* and *Suor Angelica*. His future schedule includes *Der Fliegende Holländer* in Geneva, *Lohengrin* in Berlin, *Tristan und Isolde* in Venice, and concerts in Rome with the Santa Cecilia Orchestra.



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ANDREI SERBAN

In his first San Francisco Opera assignment, **Andrei Serban** stages his production of *Elektra* which was originally created for the Grand Théâtre de Genève. The innovative, sometimes controversial, director was born in Romania and studied at the Theater Institute in Bucharest. His earliest productions included several plays, culminating in an acclaimed staging of *Julius Caesar*, which led to a Ford Foundation grant to work with New York's La Mama Experimental Theater Company. In New York he met Peter Brook, who invited him to work with him in Paris. Serban's productions in the U.S. have included the classical Greek trilogy, *The Trojan Women*, *Electra* and *Medea*, as well as *The Good Woman of Szechuan*, *The Cherry Orchard*, *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*, and *Agamemnon* in New York, and several plays at Yale University and at the Boston Repertory Theater. He directed his first opera, *Eugene Onegin*, at the Welsh National Opera, and has returned to that company for *I Puritani*, *Rodelinda*, *The Merry Widow* and *Norma*. He has also staged productions for Opera North in Leeds, the Netherlands Opera, Paris Opera, Geneva Opera, New York City Opera (*Alcina*), and in Boston (the world premiere of Philip Glass' *The Juniper Tree*). His production of *Turandot* received its premiere at the 1984 Olympic Arts Festival in Los Angeles before opening the 1984-85 season at the Royal Opera, Covent Garden. Recent productions include *Fidelio* and *Prince Igor* at Covent Garden, *Elektra*, *Don Carlos* and Prokofiev's *The Fiery Angel* in Geneva, Amsterdam, Los Angeles and Paris, *I Puritani* at the Paris Opera, *Don Carlos* in Bologna, *Eugene Onegin* at La Fenice in Venice, and *Lucia di Lammermoor* for the Lyric Opera of Chicago. Serban was recently



YANNIS KOKKOS

appointed Artistic Director of the National Theatre of Romania, where he spends 3-4 months each year.

Greek-born designer **Yannis Kokkos** created the sets and costumes for *Elektra*, a production originally commissioned by the Grand Théâtre de Genève. After his first (at the age of 13) exhibition of models of scenery and costumes at the Kouros Gallery in his native Athens, he later traveled to France where he studied scenic design at the Ecole Supérieure d'Art Dramatique de Strasbourg. His first professional designs were created in 1965 for Goldoni's *La Locandiera* presented at the Comédie de l'Est. A year later he designed the scenery for Marivaux's *Les Sincères* and for Corneille's *Le Menteur*, both of which were staged at the Théâtre d'Est in Paris. Since then, he has created designs for over 65 plays and operas, among them several world premieres. His first opera designs were for the Strasbourg Opera's 1970 production of *Così fan tutte*. He has since designed, among others, *L'Incoronazione di Poppea* and *Così* for the Opéra de Lyon, *Lohengrin* and *Macbeth* for the Paris Opera, *Pelléas et Mélisande* for Milan's La Scala, *Die Zauberflöte* at the Vienna Staatsoper, *Don Carlo* for Bologna's Teatro Comunale and the Geneva Opera, as well as *La Voix humaine* for the Théâtre Musical du Châtelet in Paris. Kokkos directed his first opera production in 1989: *Boris Godunov* in Bologna (which he recreated for the Opéra de Bastille in Paris earlier this year). Additional productions as director/designer include Dukas's *Ariane et Barbe-bleue* in Geneva, *La Damnation de Faust* at the Châtelet, and Britten's *Death in Venice* for the Opéra de Nancy. Plays he has re-

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THOMAS J. MUNN

cently designed and directed include Rilke's *La Princesse Blanche*, and Racine's *Iphigénie* at the Comédie Française. The recipient of numerous awards, he won the Prix du Syndicat de la Critique for his designs for *Elektra* (1986); garnered two Molière awards in 1987, one for the set designs for Paul Claudel's play, *L'Echange*, the other for the costumes for Yukio Mishima's drama, *Madame de Sade*; and in 1988 the Gold Medal from Prague's Quadriennale of scenic designers for his lifetime achievements. Kokkos has also taught at the National Theater School of Chaillot and directed the scenic studio at the National School of Montreal. His designs have been exhibited at the National Conservatory of Dramatic Art in Paris and at the Vienna Staatsoper.

Thomas J. Munn, Lighting Director and Design Consultant for San Francisco Opera since 1976, designed the lighting for the new productions of *War and Peace*, *Tristan und Isolde*, *Elektra* and *Das Verratene Meer*, and for the revivals of *La Traviata* and *Carmen*. He has created the lighting and special effects for over 140 productions for the Company, including the highly acclaimed *Ring* cycle last year, as well as this past summer's presentations of *The Magic Flute* and *Così fan tutte*. As scenic adviser, he has designed scenery for SFO productions of *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, *Roberto Devereux*, *Pelléas et Mélisande*, *Billy Budd* and *Nabucco*, as well as for this fall's revival of *Don Giovanni*. Munn has designed scenery and lighting for Broadway, Off-Broadway, regional theater, ballet, and films. His television credits include San Francisco Opera productions of *La Gioconda* (for which he received a 1979 Emmy Award), *Samson et Dalila*, *Aida*, *L'Africaine*, *La Bohème*, *Orlando Furioso* and *Mefistofele*. This past April, he toured Japan with the Opera Center production of *Carmen* as scenic supervisor and lighting director. Credits for other companies include *Madama Butterfly* for the Netherlands Opera, and scenery and lighting for Hartford Ballet's productions of *Coppélia* and *The Nutcracker*. Next year he will light productions of *Andrea Chénier* and *Mefistofele* for the Houston Grand Opera. In addition to his many theatrical endeavors, Munn is often engaged as consultant for architectural projects, the Muziektheater in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, being one of his most notable achievements.

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COMPANY PROFILE: CLIFFORD CRANNA

By JOHN SCHAUER

The title of "musical administrator" is a flexible thing; here at San Francisco Opera, its meaning has been largely defined by the unique background and talents of Dr. Clifford Cranna, Ph.D., who has held the position since 1982.

Many of you have seen and heard Dr. Cranna, who is universally known to his friends and colleagues as "Kip": "I do an awful lot of public speaking for the Company," Kip explains. "This is an aspect of my job that has evolved over the years, everything from curtain speeches to Guild Insights to donor dinners—I'm sort of a 'public spokesperson.'" As effective a speaker as Kip is, his public speaking is merely a sideline to his main duties, which are a direct reflection of his own personal history.

"I'm a North Dakota boy," Kip explains, having been born and raised in Devils Lake in the northeastern part of the state, about 100 miles from the Canadian border. "I played hockey like everybody else—you know it's a great winter-oriented place. When I was in junior high, I had more or less decided by the time I was 13 that music was what I wanted to be involved in.

"I went to the University of North Dakota, which is in Grand Forks, and majored in music. I was originally thinking of being a high school teacher but by the time I'd finished—I was majoring in choral conducting—I had more or less moved toward musicology, and actually finished up doing an honors thesis in musicology.

"I ended up with a B.A., expecting to go on to grad school right away, but there was a war on—this was 1969—and so in order to go into the service as an officer rather than as an enlisted man, I joined the Navy. I went to officers' candidate school in Newport, Rhode Island, where I was regimental choir master; then I went to communications school in San Diego; and then I was stationed off the coast of Vietnam for a year on aircraft carriers working as a communications officer.

"Even though I only set foot on the land of Vietnam one day, we were just a short distance off the shoreline on the aircraft carrier, and that was combat duty. My reward for that was to have my choice of my next duty destination, within a certain amount of latitude. I specified Europe, and I got two years in Naples, working in a command station



SOHL

Dr. Clifford ("Kip") Cranna

tracking submarines. That's when I really learned my Italian—I had studied lots of Spanish and French and German, but never Italian.

"I found there was very little to do in Naples in the evening except go to the opera and eat, so I did both. At that point I was still thinking of myself as a future college professor; I had no idea whatsoever about working for an opera company, but I did realize at that point that I very much enjoyed going to the opera. That was my first regular exposure to opera—prior to that I had seen a performance of *Barber of Seville* as a kid and I had gone to the Met on tour in Minneapolis during my college days, but I think I got a pretty good exposure to the general standard rep[ertoire] in Naples. The orchestra was execrable in those days and the staging was very old-fashioned, but the singers were almost always good.

"After this three-year tour of duty with the Navy was over, I resumed my original plan to go to Stanford to graduate school, which I did. I arrived in '72 and studied musicology, and immediately started coming to the opera here in San Francisco. The very first opera I went to was *L'Africaine* with Plácido Domingo and Shirley Verrett the first time that we did it, which was in '72. I remember it well. This was in standing room, and it quickly became a ritual for me to come up along with Bruce [Lamott, Cranna's longtime associate and noted Bay Area harpsichordist, lecturer and choral director for the Carmel Bach Festi-

val]. I remember being impressed with the sound of the orchestra especially.

"I proceeded with my course work and did church music jobs during my Stanford days, but I was never thinking of opera as a career. Then I went into that never-never land of working on a dissertation, and I realized several things: one was that I was less and less interested in musicology as an actual profession because I began to realize that, for me, it wasn't really where the action is—while I found it interesting, I didn't really find it directly involved enough in the actual music-making process. Also, I really wanted to stay in the Bay Area, and knew that the chances of finding a decent job in college teaching were almost nil—there were no jobs and so much competition, because of the way the bottom had sort of dropped out of college teaching in the '70s, so I began to look at other career possibilities.

"Meanwhile I had become involved with the Carmel Bach Festival doing lectures, program notes, consulting about programming ideas, casting, that sort of thing.

"Through the Festival I met Jimmy Schwabacher, who was still singing—performing the Evangelist [in the Bach Passions] and doing recitals; he was just about to retire from singing. It was through Jimmy that I heard about a job opening at San Francisco Opera, a newly created position called 'assistant to the business manager' [who at that time was Robert Walker]. Jimmy called Bob and got me in the door, so I interviewed with Bob and he offered me the job. I started in June of '79.

"Bob had started to take on more responsibility and we were getting involved in telecasts; in fact, one of my first major assignments was some of the background work organizing the *Gioconda* telecast and also the tour to Manila. It was mostly things that were not too closely related to music. I think the reason I was hired was that I had a musical background, but I also had some business experience, not only from the Navy, but also from having worked at Sequoia Hospital's emergency room—this was one of the things I did besides church music to get through graduate school. I was one of the people who runs around with a clipboard on weekends in the emergency room and asks for your blood

Continued on page 56

THE SAN FRANCISCO HOLIDAY STYLE

By

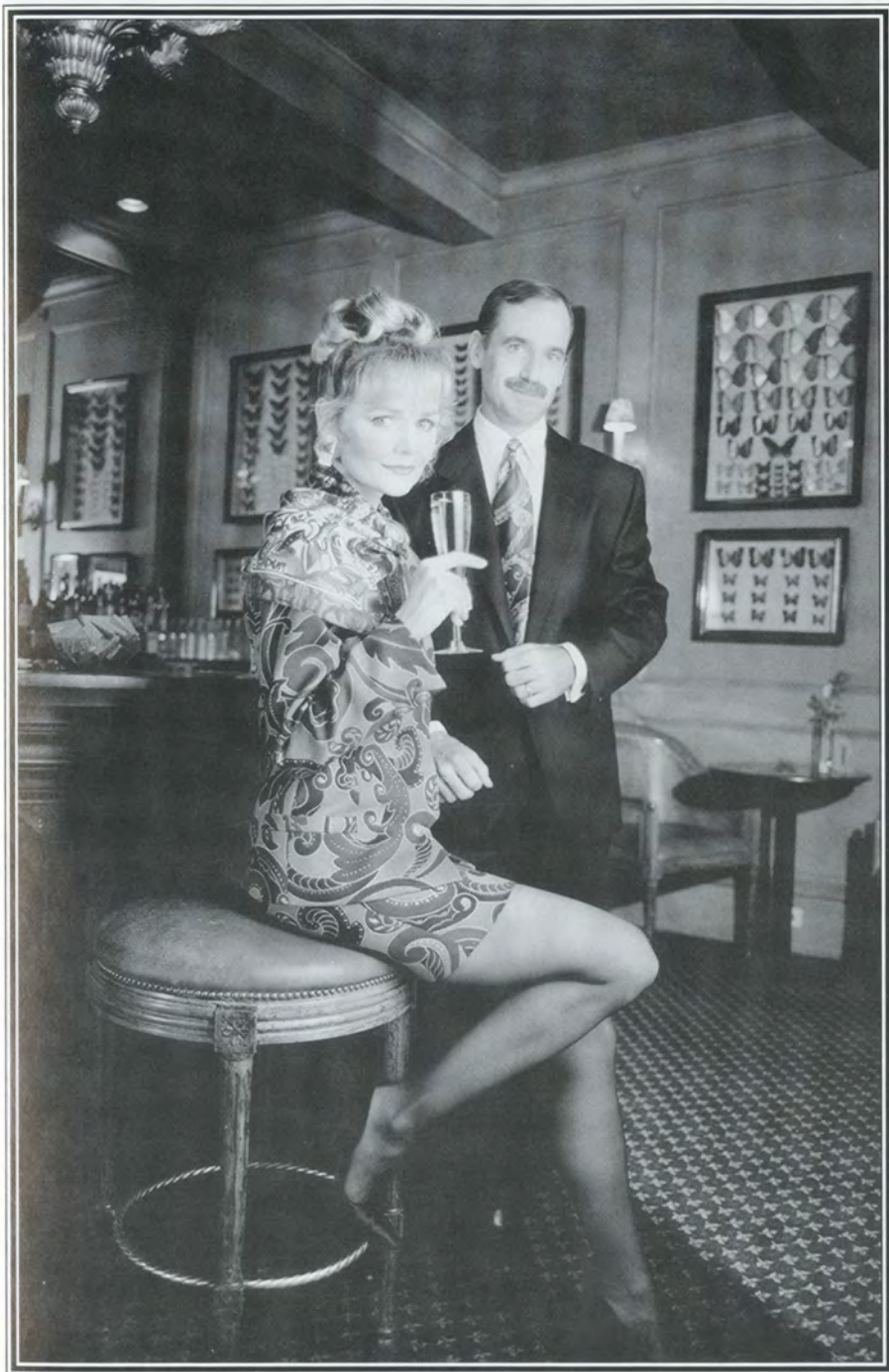
SANDRA MACLEOD WHITE

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.

The San Francisco "look" is not the high fashion of New York nor the casualness of Los Angeles, but something in between—i.e. conservative in taste, with an emphasis on comfort and practicality.

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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Marilyn Horne in her dressing room backstage at San Francisco Opera.

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type and mother's maiden name and your insurance card and, you know, please don't bleed on the form and sign here—I did that sort of thing. Later on I started working full-time in the business office for about a year, doing insurance work and billing.

"So I had a little business experience and a musical background, and that seemed to be what was needed, so I worked for Bob for two years. Right after I started, Mr. Adler [Kurt Herbert Adler, the Company's second general director] announced he would retire at the end of the '81 season, and Terry McEwen came on board. I got to know Terry quite well because his office was across the hall from mine. Terry took me to lunch one day and said, 'I don't think we're using you effectively, and when I take over, I'd like you to be my musical administrator.' I was thrilled and somewhat terrified as well, but I said yes.

"As it turned out, things happened a little faster than that because by 1981, John Miner, who had been doing this job, had persuaded Mr. Adler that he needed an assistant, so in June of '81 I became assistant musical administrator—another new position—and I assisted John through the fall until John abruptly left right in the middle of the season. He got an offer to conduct on Broadway, and Mr. Adler, despite the rough way he treated people, was kind about career advancement, and he let John go on about a week's notice to take this job conducting on Broadway. So I was suddenly faced with the prospect of stepping into the main job right in the middle of Mr. Adler's grand, final season, and I was very much daunted by the prospect. I think Mr. Adler was also quite unnerved by the idea of someone with so little experience having to take over and keep the musical operation running. As it happened, Richard Rodzinski was in town visiting. Richard had been on the staff in previous years, and had held this job, although it wasn't called musical administrator then, and he agreed to step in and finish out the season. I would continue assisting him, which was a great benefit to me because I was able to assist two people who did the job very differently—both very well qualified but with very different styles of working. It was a good illustration to me that if there were two ways of doing this, there was probably a third way that would be something I could adjust to. So at the end of the '81 season, I took over as musical administrator and have been ever since.

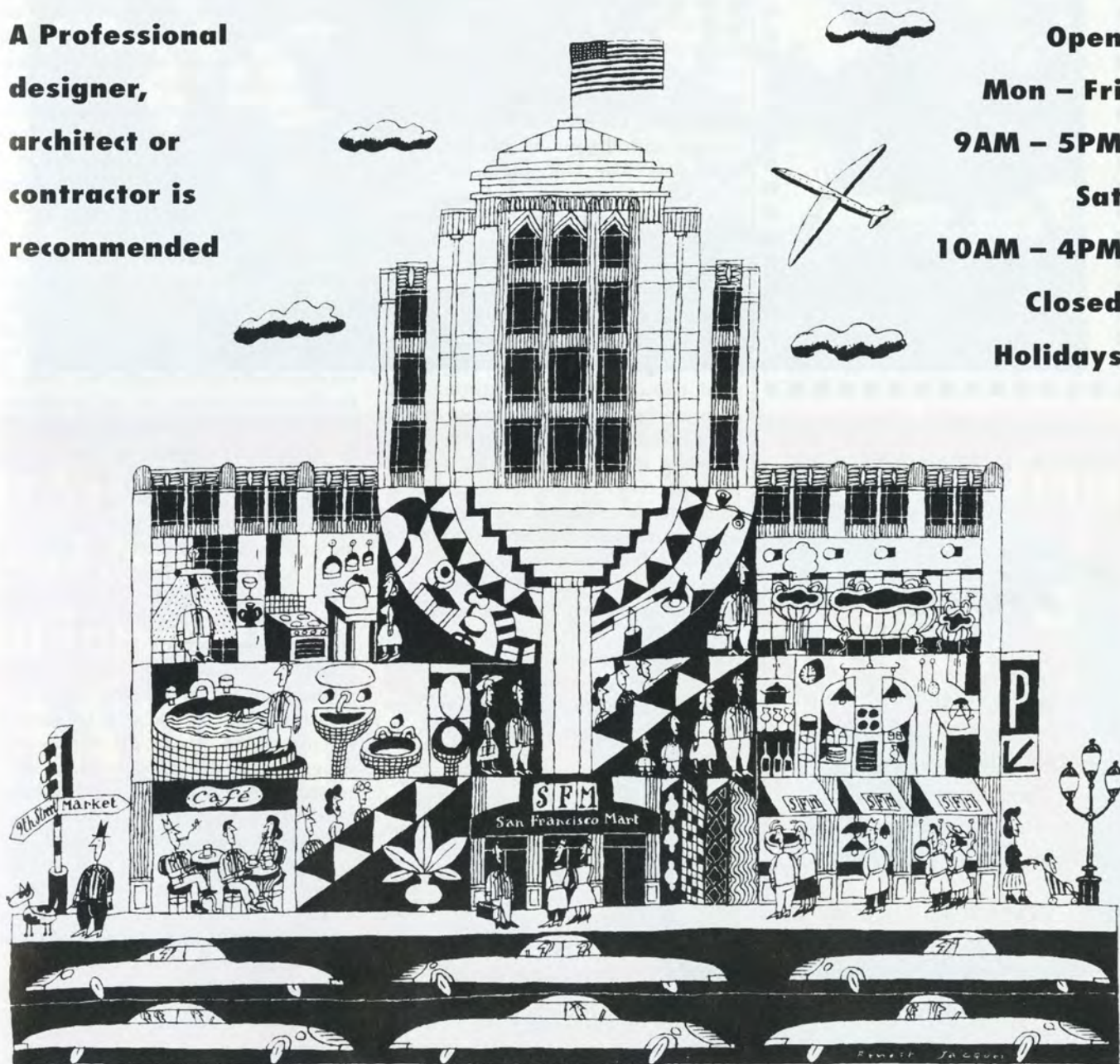
"When I give little speeches," Kip explains, "I describe myself as the 'how' and 'when' person. Lotfi [Mansouri, San

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Kip Cranna at his desk in the Opera House.

Francisco Opera's current general director] of course determines what we present and, with Sally's assistance [Sarah Billingham, artistic administrator], determines who's going to be involved. It's my job to take that basic information and figure out the how and when: When will we do the performances? How many? How much rehearsal will be required? How can we fit it all together, keeping track of all the various requirements and constraints, the union rules, employment obligations, budgetary factors, orchestration factors—how hard is something, can it be done in the time available?"

The issue of rehearsal time also involves countless considerations. "For repertory operas, we have fairly meticulous records—that's one of the things I innovated here, to consolidate and clarify various files about what we do. I have a little form I've devised, so for a rep opera like *Trovatore*, I would get it out to see how many hours we used the last time we did *Trovatore*. Who was conducting is always significant: was it somebody conducting it for the first time? Was it someone who is an efficient 'rehearser' or someone who is not? How long ago was it? Was it recent enough so that there are a lot of people in the orchestra for whom this will be familiar, or was it 15 years ago, in which case we're basically starting over? For an opera that we've not done before but that is similar [to one we have done], for example *Attila*, one could make a logical comparison—I would look and see how many hours we used for *Nabucco*, for example. Then I sit down and study the score; I get out a recording and go through it to see if there are any specific problems that we need to plan for. One of the things I specifically pay attention to is how difficult I think stage-pit coordination is go-

ing to be; that will affect how many hours I think we should schedule for what we call an 'OCA' (orchestra/chorus/artists) and you sort of have to use your sixth sense in terms of how difficult you think a score will be.

"You can sometimes get into a trap by making comparisons; when we were budgeting for next year's *The Death of Klinghoffer*, for example, our initial budgeting and scheduling was based on our experience with *Satyagraha*—not the same composer, but it was as close as we could come in our own experience. As it turned out, *Satyagraha* was far easier both technically and musically than *Klinghoffer's* going to be, because so much of it is amplified and there are microphones and speakers everywhere—on the singers, in the orchestra pit, speakers on stage and all over the place, and they all have to be very carefully balanced. The scenery [for *Klinghoffer*] is much harder to set up and take down than *Satyagraha*, so we've had to totally revise our thinking about next year's schedule, and we've done quite a lot of juggling.

"I get calls all the time from other companies asking me questions; in fact, I got a call just today from another company asking how much time would we allot for a *Sitzprobe* [a "front-of-curtain" musical rehearsal with soloists and orchestra] of *Traviata*—I get a lot of questions like that, asking about orchestration, what kind of cuts we did in a given opera, lots of basic questions like that." These questions are usually from smaller companies, but the big American companies also communicate a lot—"Especially because we tend to share productions so often. For example, the *Capuleti* production we did this season is from Chicago, and I was on the phone with them, asking how they handled the

prompting situation, because there was no prompt box in that set, and we did roughly the same thing with a few modifications.

"I guess you could say the basic number one function [of my job] is figuring out the overall master schedule, which I do about four years in advance—we have drafts going up to '94 at this point; we haven't really started putting '95 on paper in terms of scheduling."

The scheduling process goes through various stages. "We start with a very basic schedule, often without specific names—I'll do a schedule that will have names on it like 'Domingo' or 'French' or 'Handel,' just depending on the sort of slots we're thinking of filling. If we've got Plácido for a given period and we have no idea yet what he's going to want to do, or if we've just decided that we need a Verdi opera in a given slot and haven't decided which one it's going to be, that schedule gives us basic information. The essential thing is the time periods—what period will we need people for—so that Sally can make her inquiries. Is so-and-so interested in being in a Verdi opera in this period? As this gets into focus, Sally might come back and say, 'Well, I've got this exciting artist available, but she can't stay until November 12; we're going to have to make the last performance on November 10.' So I go

back to the drawing board with my little yellow stickers and juggle things around, and then I'll go back to Sally and say, 'Well, that will work if she'll agree to do the third and fourth performances with only a day in between.' Then she'll go to the agent and we'll juggle things around. Or I'll say that will work if she can come two days earlier; perhaps opera B can have its last performance on November 12 instead—can that whole bunch stay two more days? There's quite a lot of that going on. And we do preliminary budgeting at that stage.

"Then it'll enter another stage where I begin to plug in specific things like the orchestra rehearsals and other details. We look at the subscription series and the way they line up.

"For the '92 schedule we are now in the next-to-last stage, where the performance dates are almost set in concrete. We're at that stage for the Rossini festival, where it's almost too late now to change a performance date, although there's still quite a bit of flexibility with regard to rehearsals. So I'd say there are about three stages in the life of a rehearsal schedule. Of course, once it emerges out of the computer as drafts Christopher [Hahn, rehearsal administrator] does on these final versions, we still make changes as we go along, some major, some fairly minor.

"Then it's my job to see to it that that schedule actually gets put into effect, especially with regard to the musical end of things, so that when we get into an actual rehearsal and performing season, I'm sort of in charge of the overall coordination.

"My role now tends to be much more that of a referee; if there is some conflict over the use of a given person's time or of a block of time—should this orchestra rehearsal be moved in order to make room for something that needs to be done on stage—that kind of big-picture thing, then I get involved and try to work out a compromise.

"I'm also in charge of the day-to-day operation of the music staff—the prompters, the pianists, vocal coaches, assistant conductors—in terms of what assignments they're going to have, which operas they're going to work on, coordinating their work on the shows, especially with regard to backstage music. I also supervise the librarians, which actually turns out to be the direct connection with my musicological background, because I get involved a lot with the version of an opera that we're going to do, and I act as a sort of diplomat between the conductor and the director, who often have different ideas about versions of an opera." Kip gave a vivid example of this with the preparation for

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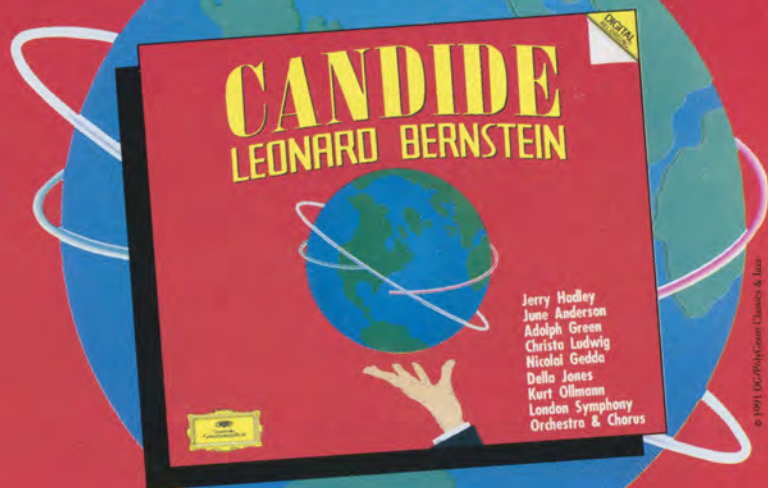
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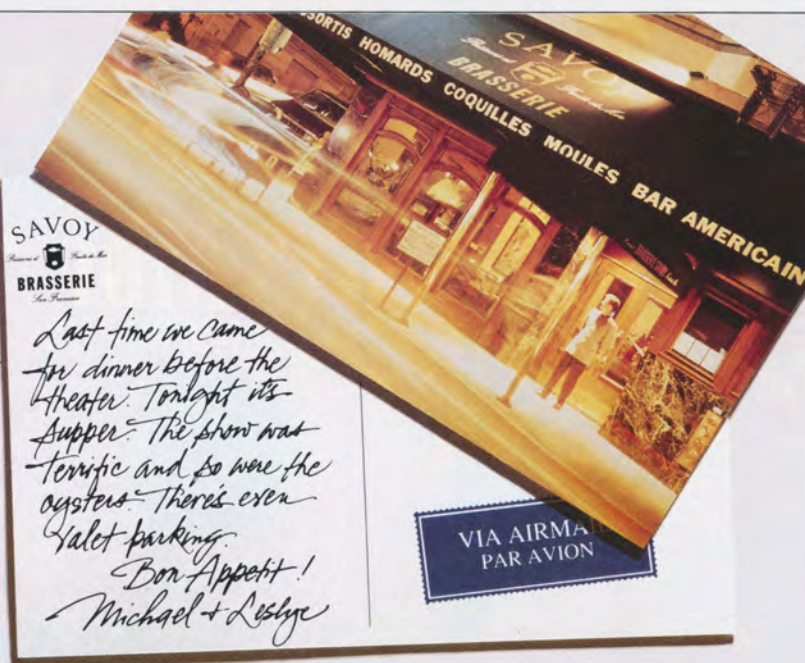
Orlando Furioso, a highly problematic production from a musical standpoint. "I ended up having to fly to Europe to do shuttle diplomacy between Sir John [Pritchard], who was to conduct it, and Pier Luigi Pizzi, who was directing—Sir John was in Cologne and Pizzi was in Venice, and I was trying to hammer out a compromise about the actual version, cuts and so forth. Then it's my job to see that that information is disseminated, that the librarians have the information they need and so forth."

When conductorial push comes to directorial shove on the subject of cuts, it is usually the conductor who prevails, according to Cranna, "because it boils down to a musical decision. It often tends to be a kind of joint consensus, sometimes consulting with the singers—if you have major stars who have very strong ideas about music they want cut or music they definitely *don't* want cut, obviously that has to be considered."

"I also deal very directly with conductors and directors regarding rehearsal plans, because I'm the one who comes up with the proposed budgeted hours, especially for orchestra rehearsal. Of course, the conductors often feel there should be more rehearsal than we're offering, and sometimes I'm able to juggle things around to help them get a schedule they like better. Sometimes they don't like the distribution of rehearsals; they think they're clumped together too much or spread out too much or not in the right sequence. I can sometimes help, but we have a very complicated and compact season, so it isn't always possible to satisfy their wishes."

"I deal very closely with [Orchestra Manager] Kevin Willmering on a daily basis, working on orchestra-related matters—everything having to do with assignments, which musicians are going to play in what opera, how many musicians are going to be in a specific opera based on the orchestration, and then all of the day-to-day questions about someone wanting a leave of absence, the way the orchestra's going to be seated in the pit, all sorts of stuff like that."

"I work very closely with [Sound Designer and Consultant] Roger Gans because of my responsibility for backstage music." Kip explains that although the backstage *bandas* are usually not amplified, many sound effects are. "More things are done with electronic enhancement than used to be. For example, in *War and Peace*, all the cannon shots were done on a so-called 'sampler,' which plays back a recorded version of the original sound; it's not synthesized. Those things used to be done either mechanically, like by beating a bass drum, or with an actual tape that was played on a tape recorder with a sound cue that had



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SF Chronicle

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to be called by the stage manager. Now with the advent of digital sound and digital sampling, a lot of these sounds are played on a keyboard by an actual musician—that's true of thunder, bells, wind, effects like that. In *Das Verratene Meer* we're going to have a huge range of sounds that will be played on a keyboard, everything from jackhammers to helicopter noises, the sound of traffic and ships' whistles.

"Of course now that we have a music director, which we didn't have when I was first in this job, I deal very directly with him. In fact, I talk to him almost every day. I sit in on orchestra auditions. I'm editor-in-chief more or less of Supertitles. I don't write many scripts, one or two a year at the most, but I act as a go-between for [Supertitle Administrator] Christopher Bergen and Lotfi. I read the scripts and make suggestions for change, and I work with Chris on a continuing basis throughout the rehearsals and even into the performances, making changes.

"I'm very directly involved in union negotiations, primarily things that have to do with working conditions and artistic matters, rehearsal policy, that sort of thing. I'm at all the in-house rehearsals, piano dresses, orchestra run-throughs, dress rehearsals, advising the conductor on balance and the backstage music. I do any musical odd jobs, helping to plan the Fol de Rol program, or the park concert, or special programs or recitals. If we need special instruments, I arrange for them—for example, the fortepiano we rented for *Don Giovanni*, or the heckelphone for *Elektra*.

"I'm one of the 'duty people' for performances—one of us, either Sally or myself or Christopher or Vivien [Baldwin, assistant to the artistic administrator] is assigned to be here officially for every performance. We make sure the artists are well; we pay the artists—many of the major roles are paid on a performance basis, and they actually get a check at the end of each show. That's an old theatrical tradition; it probably dates back to the days when impresarios were sometimes fly-by-nights who would leave town during the last act and the singers wouldn't get paid. It used to be that a lot of the Italian singers would ask to be paid in cash! That doesn't happen very often any more, but when I was first working here, you'd often go to a singer's dressing room with a wad of cash, and they'd endorse the check back to the Company, and you'd hand them this wad of cash!

"Another function that I'm very much involved with is our new music initiatives. All this stuff that's piled in the corner," he says, indicating a huge stack of material, "is new scores and tapes of

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new operas. A lot of them are unsolicited—I get about one a week actually, and it's my job either to review them or get someone else to review them and report to Lotfi anything that I think is promising. I'm also involved in coordinating the commissions that we're working on now, specifically one that I guess we're not ready to announce yet." When asked if he would prefer that this article not mention the unsolicited opera scores he reviews, lest he be inundated with a flood of new material, Kip responds, "I would prefer that you *do* mention it, because I'd like it to be known that San Francisco Opera, contrary to what we've

sometimes been accused of, is interested in looking at new scores. The problem of course is that we have very few opportunities to present new pieces. In the Opera Center, we do one every other year or so, and in the main house we have limited opportunity, so we really have to pick and choose very carefully, but it's good for us to know what's out there, and we can sometimes recommend a score to a smaller company. I've also found that even though we have no chance to produce a piece, composers benefit from the feedback—I've written composers and said, 'I liked your piece, except I thought the vocal writing here wasn't so great, or

Act II is way too long, or whatever comment I have. I think they find it useful; I've never had any complaints from any composers about getting comments like that. They may not agree with me, but they at least like to have some feedback."

Space restrictions keep us from examining all of the myriad duties Kip discharges for the Company—yes, there really is even more to his job—so in summary we asked him what he liked most and least about his job. "We had to re-draft our job descriptions," he says, "and one question was what is the hardest aspect of your job. I said it was having to say no to conductors and directors—especially conductors who sometimes have fairly reasonable requests for more rehearsal time and more musicians, a bigger orchestra, bigger stage band, and just for financial reasons or sheer logistical reasons, the compactness of the season, we've had to say no. That's tough, but somebody's got to do it."

As to the most rewarding aspect of his job, Kip doesn't hesitate at all before responding, "Just seeing the curtain go up on a good show and seeing the audience enjoy a good performance. That's got to be the ultimate reward; that's why we do it." □

John Schauer is staff writer for San Fran-



Kip Cranna, on the right, pauses backstage during a 1987 opera concert in Golden Gate Park, with San Francisco Opera's late General Director Kurt Herbert Adler and Mary Burns of the Recreation and Parks Department.

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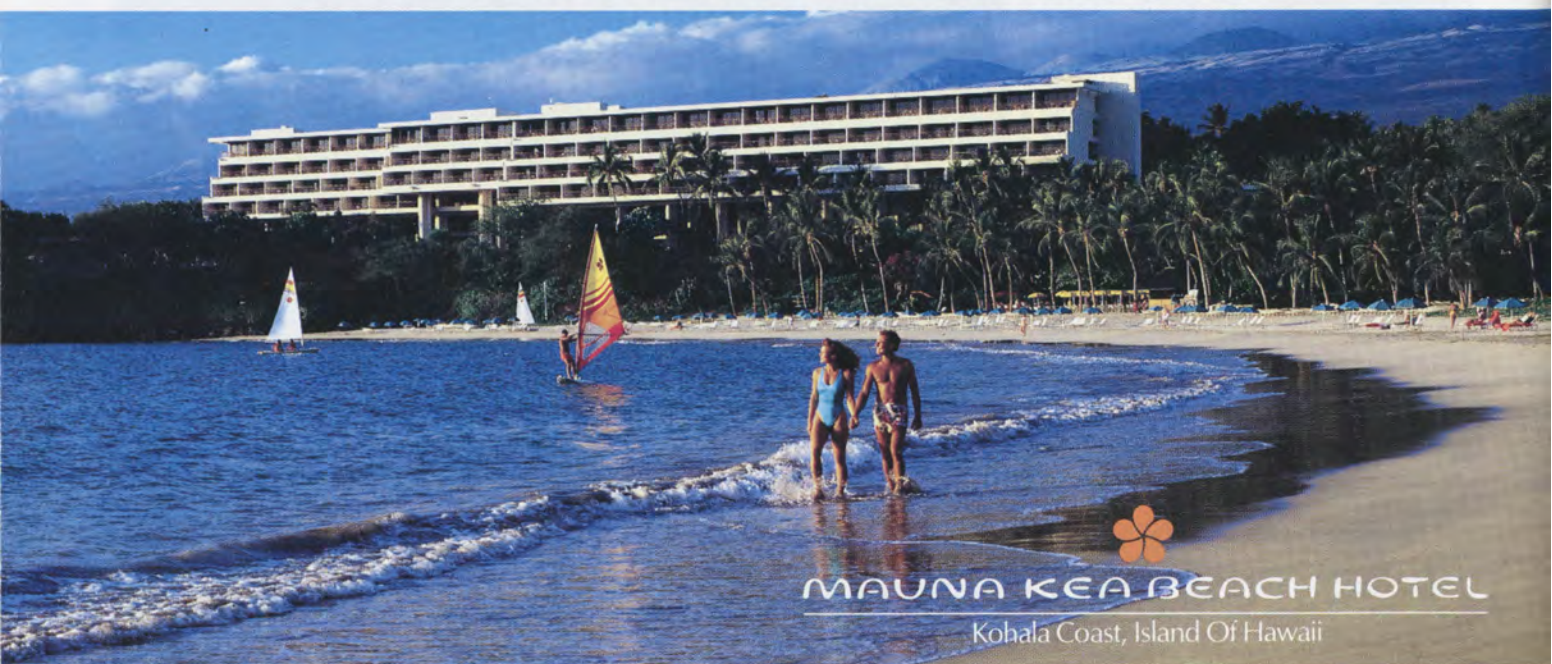
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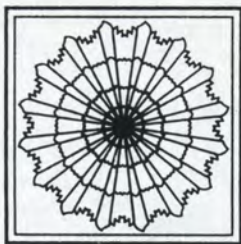
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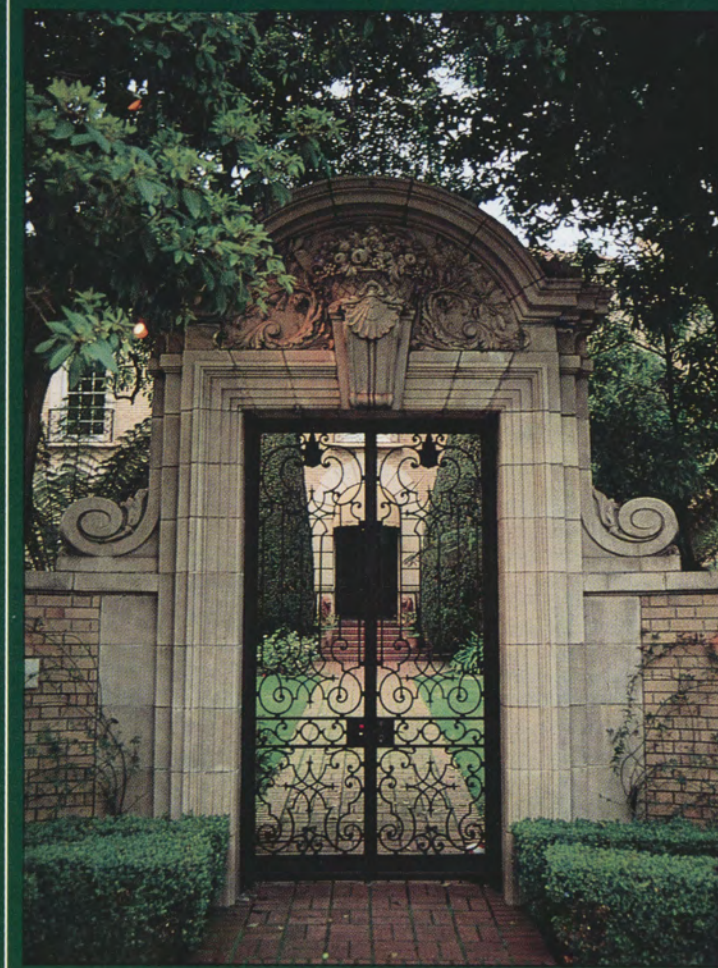
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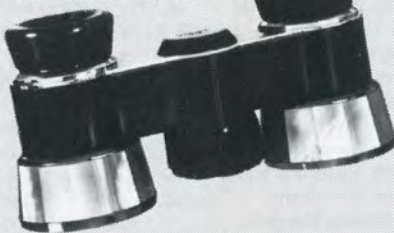
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Food Service The lower lounge in the Opera House is open one and one-half hours prior to curtain time for hot buffet service. Patrons arriving before the front doors open will be admitted at the carriage entrance.

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.

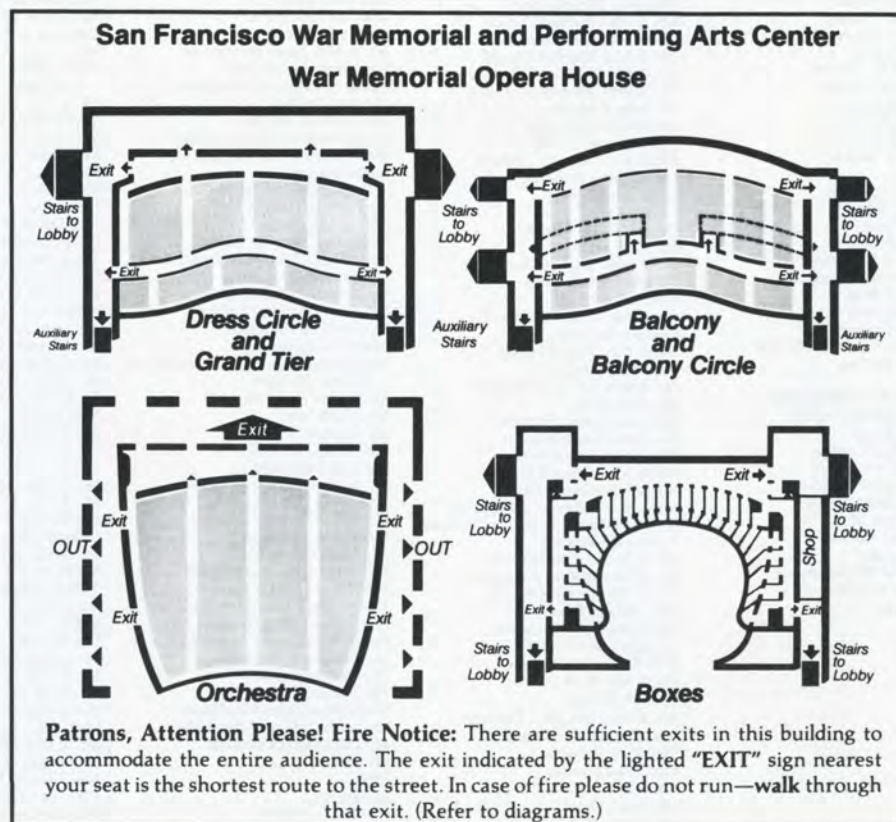
For **Lost and Found** information, inquire at check room No. 3 or call (415) 621-6600, 8:30 to 11:30 Monday through Friday.

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.



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