

Madama Butterfly
(Madame Butterfly) I

1995-1996

Tuesday, October 3, 1995 7:30 PM
Friday, October 6, 1995 8:00 PM
Sunday, October 8, 1995 2:00 PM
Wednesday, October 11, 1995 7:30 PM
Saturday, October 14, 1995 8:00 PM
Tuesday, October 17, 1995 8:00 PM
Friday, October 20, 1995 8:00 PM
Sunday, October 22, 1995 1:00 PM

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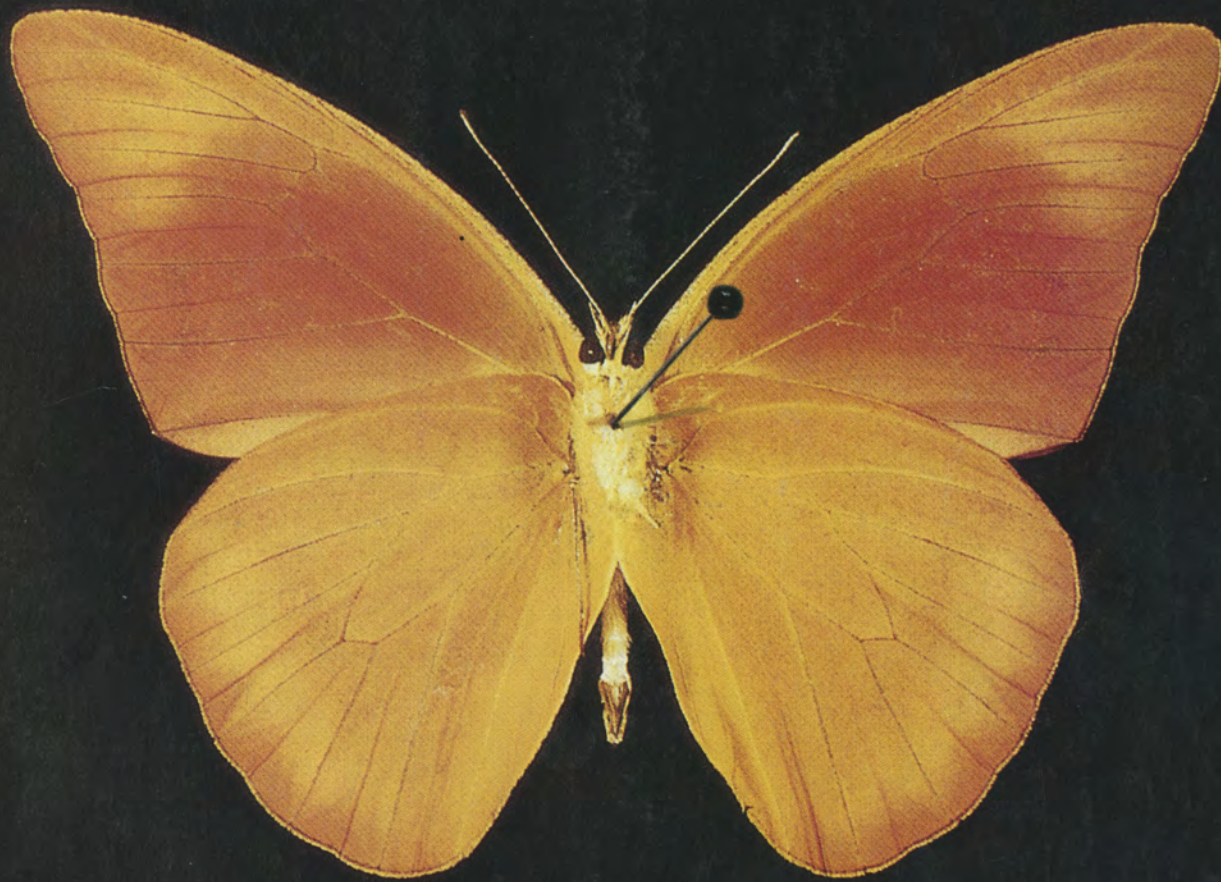
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1995 SEASON

MADAMA BUTTERFLY



Stagebill



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SAN FRANCISCO OPERA MAGAZINE

Madama Butterfly

1995 Season
Vol. 73, No. 6

FEATURES

14 Poor Butterfly? by Stephanie von Buchau

In addition to providing an introduction to Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*, the author tries to eliminate some of the stereotypical notions that attached themselves to the work in past decades.

40 Speaking of Opera by Caroline Crawford

Impressions of San Francisco Opera during the Adler years as recorded by several prominent artists.

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COVER

Appias Nero (Orange Albatross) butterfly, member of the Pieridae family.
Montage by Alex Stark.

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Performance HIGHLIGHTS

Fluff up your finery and don your party hats—on November 17 the **San Francisco Opera** puts *Die Walküre*, and *Don Giovanni* on the back burner for a night to cook up a special birthday bash. For the seventieth birthday of **Sir Charles Mackerras**, SFO's principal guest conductor, stars from the Opera's 1995 fall season join

the S.F. Opera Orchestra and Chorus in a menu degustation of works by Dvořák, Handel, Janáček, Purcell, Strauss, Verdi, Wagner, and others, led by Sir Charles himself. Afterwards, artists and guests join the knight for a birthday supper and tribute to the Maestro's career. Spicing up the festivities: sopranos Anne Evans, Renée Fleming, and Stephanie Sundine, mezzo-soprano Susan Quittmeyer, and the 1995 Opera Center Adler Fellows.

* * * * *

American Conservatory Theater's fall offering is a soulful serenade in blue—the West Coast premiere of August Wilson's *Seven Guitars*, November 9 through December 23. The Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright's latest segment in his multiplay saga of 20th-century African-American life is a righteous rhythm and blues riff, strumming the lives of seven characters to compose its commanding chords. *Newsweek's* Jack Kroll says Wilson "creates a gritty, lyrical polyphony of voices that evokes the character and destiny of these men and women who can't help singing the blues even when they're just talking." Wilson's longtime collaborator Lloyd Richards directs, getting the show ready for its Broadway premiere in March 1996.

* * * * *

When *West Side Story* opened in New York in 1957, it was a shocking shot in the arm for Broadway theater, integrating dance into musical theater in an original and electrifying way, and introducing some of the world's greatest theater music. Today, the show still rocks, its familiar themes (musical and sociological) as beautiful, pertinent, and troubling as ever. The show's dynamic revival, which re-creates Jerome Robbins' Tony Award-winning choreography, springs into Seattle's **Paramount Theatre** November 28–December 10, on its way around the world in a 30-city tour de force.

—Peter Cieply



Sir Charles Mackerras



RUSLAN & LYUDMILA — PHOTO: VALENTINE BARANOVSKY

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begins with great
inspiration.



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Vienna and Opera at Christmas

December 14th to 26th with Peter Bessol

... full day to Salzburg in the most beautiful Christmas town of Europe ... afternoon old town Bratislava with performance of Rigoletto at the historic Slovak Opera. In Vienna, special excursions to Vienna Woods and Danube Valley. At the Staatsoper: early Verdi Jerusalem, Wozzeck, Le Nozze di Figaro, Die Zauberflöte ... at the Volksoper: Pearl Fishers, Carmen, Hansel & Gretel.

Metropolitan Opera Debut of Cecilia Bartoli

February 25th to March 2nd

... lectures and private MMA tour with Dale Harris. The operas: La Forza del Destino (Domingo), Così fan Tutte (Carol Vaness, Susanne Mentzer, Cecilia Bartoli, Jerry Hadley), Madama Butterfly, Aida.

Spring and Opera Extravaganza in New York at the Metropolitan Opera with Levine Gala

April 21st to 28th with Sherwin Sloan

... the final spectacular week at the Met. The Operas: Die Walküre (Domingo), La Bohème (Gheorghiu, Mattila), Andrea Chenier (Pavarotti), Romeo & Juliette (Swenson, Araiza). NY Philharmonic: Mendelssohn Violin Concerto & Bruckner Symphony No. 6. Private Lectures & tour of MMA with Dale Harris. Met Opera Gala with James Levine.

The Arizona Ring in Flagstaff

June 2nd to 9th with Sherwin Sloan

... we went to Flagstaff to select the seating in orchestra center and the resort hotel. There will be private dinners and lunches and a wonderful atmosphere in this ponderosa pine covered mountainous setting. A wonderful vacation with the Ring and great optional sightseeing to the south Rim of the Grand Canyon and Sedona.

The Third Annual Grand Tour of Italian Opera Houses

May 2nd to 20th with Peter Bessol

... without a doubt the greatest program we have done with best seating at La Fenice in Venice, La Scala in Milan, Teatro Regio in Parma, La Comunale in Florence and Teatro dell' Opera in Rome.

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Spring in Renaissance & Baroque Prague

June 2nd to 14th with Herb Rowan

... join Herb for the magnificent old town of Prague with walking tours each day to the Loretto, the Hradcany Castle, the Sternberg Museum, the Wallenstein Palace, the Jewish quarter, the old town and guided tours of the museums. The operas: Rigoletto, Katya Kabanova, La Forza del Destino, Otello, Le Nozze di Figaro, Il Trovatore, Rusalka, Don Giovanni, Libuse (Smetana), Boris Godounov, Die Zauberflöte.

St. Petersburg, The Hermitage & the Savonlinna Summer Opera Festival on a Lake in a 14th Century Castle in Finland

July 15th to 29th with Sherwin Sloan

(May be combined with the Verona Festival & La Scala from July 4th to 16th)

... join Sherwin for 2 days touring the Hermitage, private tours and ballet and opera in St. Petersburg, then opera in a 14th century castle on a lake in Finland. The Operas at Olavinlinna Castle: Macbeth, Tannhäuser, The Palace (Sallinen). Also, Beethoven's Symphony No. 9. Carefully selected sightseeing. Private candlelight dinner in the great hall of the castle in a splendid lake setting.

A Private Walking Tour of Venice & Florence with Dale Harris May, 1996

... join a true Renaissance lecturer and art historian and focus on the museums, paintings, cathedrals, & architecture of these two Renaissance cities. Dale Harris, renowned lecturer of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Stops in Padua and Roman Verona. Some wonderful dining.

The Verona Festival and La Scala

July 4th to 16th, 1996 with Sherwin Sloan

(May be combined with St. Petersburg and Savonlinna Summer Opera Festival in Finland, July 16th to 29th). ...

two wonderful days at lovely Cernobbio on Lake Como, a performance at La Scala and at the famed Verona Arena: Nabucco, Il Barbiere di Siviglia & Carmen in best seating. Walking tours and carefully selected sightseeing. Of course, wonderful dining.

For a copy of the itineraries call:

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FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD



Welcome to the 1995 Fall Season and the beginning of a challenging three-year period. Following this season, the Company will need to vacate the War Memorial Opera House to clear the way for seismic work. Although we will miss our home while we are out for 18 months, we will be presented with an ideal opportunity to implement much needed improvements.

The Opera, Ballet and the War Memorial have formed the Committee to Restore the Opera House (CROH), with a goal of raising \$24 million for improvements not paid by the city. These will include: spot air conditioning and improved ventilation, upgraded electrical and lighting systems, and expanded storage and backstage facilities.

San Francisco Opera's own artistic plans include the use of two historic San Francisco venues: the Civic Auditorium and the Orpheum Theatre. Reconfiguring these theaters to make them suitable for opera, plus the new productions needed will result in extraordinary costs beyond our normal budget.

To do the job for 1995, 1996 and 1997—that is, to stay in the black operationally and fulfill our commitment to the Opera House renovation—San Francisco Opera has launched a single, three-year campaign to raise \$20 million above and beyond our annual fundraising goals. It is an ambitious program, but we feel optimistic because two years of successful Board fundraising efforts and cost reductions implemented by management have resulted in a greatly improved financial position for the Company. These goals and successes are made possible by you, the members of our generous family. And it is to you that we turn once again, to make it possible to carry forth the important legacy this Company has built over 73 years.

We want to extend a special thank you to Lexus for its ongoing support of San Francisco Opera. We also wish to acknowledge the invaluable contributions made by the San Francisco Opera Guild, as well as the efforts of the BRAVO! CLUB.

We also wish to thank our generous production sponsors for the 1995 Fall Season. The production of *Anna Bolena*, originated by the Canadian Opera Company, is made possible by a gift from The Gramma Fisher Foundation, through the auspices of the Lyric Opera of Chicago; *Ruslan and Lyudmila* is made possible by Mr. and Mrs. Reid W. Dennis and Mr. and Mrs. John R. Hamilton; *Madama Butterfly* by The Franklin/Templeton Group of Funds; *La Cenerentola* by The Herman J. Miller and Edward J. Clarke Foundation; the new production of *Don Giovanni* by gifts from Mr. George M. Bowles and the estate of Edith Bentley Bailey Cook; and *Rusalka* by The L.J. and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation and the Carol Franc Buck Foundation.

Additionally, we gratefully acknowledge government funding from the National Endowment for the Arts, the California Arts Council, and the Grants for the Arts program of the San Francisco Hotel Tax Fund. Our sincere gratitude also goes out to Mayor Frank Jordan and Chief Administrative Officer William Lee for their invaluable support; and to the War Memorial Board of Trustees for their ongoing support and assistance.

Reid W. Dennis
Chairman

William W. Godward
President

A MESSAGE FROM THE GENERAL DIRECTOR



San Francisco Opera's 73rd season is a time to cherish for all opera lovers. Not only is our 1995 Fall Season overflowing with the artistic elements that make opera the most exciting of art forms, but at the conclusion of this season, we will vacate the War Memorial Opera House for 18 months. This is the kickoff for a tremendous adventure outside of our beautiful home until we return in time for a gala 1997 Fall Season—San Francisco Opera's 75th anniversary.

During the 18-month closure of the Opera House our home will undergo major seismic upgrading. This period also presents a golden opportunity to perform restorations and improvements that will add significantly to your comfort and enjoyment. Bear in mind that this will be the first opportunity for any significant work to be performed on the Opera House since the building was opened in 1932—more than 60 years ago! It's time to give this, one of the finest opera houses in the world, the loving attention that it deserves.

While we're out of the Opera House, we will present a season of opera in a dynamic and unique way at Civic Auditorium and the Orpheum Theatre. There will be new productions, exciting stars and a variety of repertoire, including *Carmen*, *Aida* and the West Coast premiere of *Harvey Milk* (co-commissioned by San Francisco Opera). From September 19 through October 1 this season, members of the Opera's staff will present a series of informative pre-performance lectures about our plans for the Opera House and for the new venues. We have also created a special video to illustrate our plans for Civic Auditorium.

During the 1995 Fall Season, from September 8 to December 10, you will see a marvelous array of operas at the War Memorial Opera House, including two Company premieres and two new productions. We are pleased to present an artistic roster that boasts some of the world's finest singers, with outstanding directors, beautiful productions and internationally acclaimed conductors leading the San Francisco Opera Orchestra and Chorus. Our fine music director, Donald Runnicles, will lead three operas this fall, and we welcome back our principal guest conductor, Sir Charles Mackerras, who will lead two productions. We are also proud to honor Sir Charles on his 70th birthday with a special concert on November 17.

It is an exciting time, like no other in our Company's history. Stay with us, it's going to be an incredible adventure!

Lotfi Mansouri
General Director

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STROHMEYER

POOR BUTTERFLY?

By STEPHANIE VON BUCHAU

Born in Lucca, Italy, in 1858, descended from four generations of church musicians who wrote 31 obscure operas among them, young Giacomo Antonio Domenico Michele Secondo Maria Puccini was a cheerful, irresponsible music student. It has been alleged that, to earn a few lire, he played piano in a bawdy house while still in his teens. We know for sure that, at age 17, Giacomo and a couple of pals hiked 20 miles round-trip to Pisa in order to hear Verdi's *Aida*—the 19th century equivalent of waiting overnight in line to get tickets for Pearl Jam.

This live encounter with the Maestro's newest masterpiece sealed Puccini's operatic fate. He said much later, when he was struggling with the unsatisfactory libretto to *Turandot*, "It's a good thing I had success as an opera composer; God didn't make me capable of anything else." Admitted to the Milan Conservatory, where his teachers were Antonio Bazzini (composer of *Turanda*, an unsuccessful version of the Gozzi play that was also to provide the basis for Puccini's last, unfin-

ished opera) and Amilcare Ponchielli (composer of *La Gioconda*), Puccini made the acquaintance of other members of the soon-to-be-anointed *nuova scuola*: Pietro Mascagni (*Cavalleria Rusticana*) and Alfredo Catalani (*La Wally*).

Thanks to Ponchielli and Arrigo Boito (composer of *Mefistofele* and librettist of Verdi's *Otello* and *Falstaff*), Puccini's first opera, the one-act *Le Villi*, was performed successfully on a triple bill in Milan in 1884. Giulio Ricordi, head of the celebrated Milanese publishing firm that counted Rossini, Bellini, Donizetti and Verdi among its clients, generously supplied free libretti to the audience and signed up the promising young composer. Puccini's first contract resulted in *Edgar* (1889), *Manon Lescaut* (1893) and *La Bohème* (1896).

With the royalties from *Bohème* and *Tosca* (1900), Puccini was able to build a villa at Torre del Lago on the marshy shore of Lake Massaciuccoli, where he adored hunting waterfowl. Sharing his life was Elvira Gemignani, a married woman who left her husband and son to move in with

Stephanie von Buchau is San Francisco correspondent of Opera News who contributes program notes to Lyric Opera of Chicago, Seattle Opera and the Los Angeles Music Center Opera.

the dashing young composer. Puccini was not faithful to her, but he did his philandering in private and treated her with respect. When her husband finally died, Elvira and Puccini were married, legitimizing their 18-year-old son. But the ring on her finger did not make Elvira any less fearful of abandonment and her jealousy caused repeated upsets in the composer's life. During the composition of *La Fanciulla del West* (1910), Elvira finally went too far, accusing the composer of adultery with their parlor maid. The charge was later proved untrue, but the mortified girl killed herself.

Such scandals and ill health plagued Puccini from *Madama Butterfly* to the end of his career, and certainly exacerbated his difficulties over the *Turandot* libretto. Yet the truth is that—ill or healthy, angel or devil in his private life—Puccini as an artist was a pathological perfectionist. When it came to the lyric theater—what we call opera, the Italians “call musica lirica”—Puccini knew exactly what he wanted and was prepared to fight to get it. *Manon Lescaut* had no fewer than six librettists, with the exasperated composer finally writing some verses himself when he couldn't get what he wanted otherwise. This is one reason why the currently fashionable argument that Puccini revised *Butterfly* “reluctantly” is hogwash: this is a composer who literally died—of a heart attack during radiation treatment for throat cancer in 1924—with his ultimate masterwork unfinished because he was not satisfied with its libretto.

Yet there is no doubt that *Madama Butterfly* got off on the wrong track; its problems are well documented. Puccini, his librettists—Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa, who had also collaborated on *La Bohème* and *Tosca*—and publisher Ricordi bombarded each other with letters in which they discuss the fact that the second act is too long (it was), the tenor is too unsympathetic (he was) and the first act had, in Illica's own opinion, “too many opportunities for music” (it did). One can't help wondering why, if they all knew

exactly what was wrong before the premiere, they didn't do something about it? Part of the answer lies in the way the subject matter was chosen and part of it in Puccini's personal travails.

Up to *Tosca*, Puccini had no trouble choosing subject matter. After his Roman opera, possibly because it was not initially a huge success in



Italy, he seemed to have a terrible time pulling the trigger on new projects. Though his operas after *Madama Butterfly* grow steadily in artistic vision and craftsmanship, they lack something of the white



heat that propels *Manon Lescaut*, *La Bohème* and the final version of *Madama Butterfly*; the struggle to put *Butterfly* into the correct shape may have knocked some of the eager, innocent edge off Puccini's work. A measure of his confusion can be seen in the subjects he considered before choosing *Butterfly*, almost all of them unsuited to his temperament and methods: Hugo's *Les Misérables*, Maeterlinck's *Pelléas et Mélisande*, Daudet's *Tartarin*, Zola's *L'Abbé Mouret*, even the real-life story of Marie Antoinette.

In the summer of 1900, in London to supervise the British premiere of *Tosca*, Puccini went to the theater one night and saw David Belasco's dramatization of John Luther Long's short story, *Madame*

Photos—Opposite: Soprano Licia Albanese made her San Francisco Opera debut in 1941 in the title role of *Madama Butterfly*. Her Cio-Cio-San was part of ten Company seasons, with some of the performances given on tour. Above: Two remarkable artists portrayed Cio-Cio-San during San Francisco Opera's 1934 season: Elisabeth Rethberg (left) and Lotte Lehmann.

SOHL



Butterfly. Fortunately, since the composer spoke little English, Belasco's unintentionally comic pidgin dialect was lost on him; it was the ten-minute pantomime during which Cho-Cho-San, her son and her maid wait through the night for Pinkerton's return that stirred the composer's creative embers. Belasco claimed later that Puccini came backstage, insisting that *Madame Butterfly* must be turned into an opera, and that he told the composer to go ahead without a contract because "it is impossible to discuss business arrangements with an impulsive Italian who has tears in his eyes and both arms around your neck."



SCHERL

Photos—*Madama Butterfly* and *Trouble*: Veronika Kincses and David Konigsmark in 1984 (above) and Renata Scotto and Lea Watkins in 1974.

Every time *Madama Butterfly* is performed, we read articles suggesting that Puccini's "racist opera" is the origin of the Asian-woman-as-victim-of-the-imperialist-West stereotype. Yet this stereotype, if that is what it is, existed long before Puccini, Belasco or John Luther Long. The prototypical East vs. West story is a quasi-autobiographical novel, *Madame Chrysanthème* (1888), by Pierre Loti, actually a French naval officer named Marie Julien Viaud. A consummate romantic who lived in the Far and Near East, performed with a circus, joined the Trappists for a time and conducted affairs with both men and women, Loti was a classic male chauvinist.

Loti's ugly view of Japan that contemporary critics are remembering when they mistakenly call Puccini's opera "racist."

Long claims not to have known Loti's novel when he published his short story in the January 1898 issue of *Century Magazine*. He insisted that the tale of Cho-Cho-San and her American lover had been related to him as a true story by his sister, wife of a missionary stationed in Nagasaki. In the short story, *Butterfly* is prevented from killing herself by Suzuki and the women disappear with the baby. When Mrs. Pinkerton comes to claim her husband's child, the little house is empty. It was Belasco who turned this bittersweet romance into a sentimental tragedy by having *Butterfly* kill herself on stage.

The San Francisco-born Belasco (1859-1931) was no Shakespearean talent, but his emotional naturalism suited Puccini's temperament so well that the composer also used Belasco's *Girl of the Golden West* for an opera in 1910. Still, a play does not automatically make a good opera and there was the usual wrangling among Puccini and his librettists (with asides from Ricordi) about how to structure the work. Belasco's middle act—which takes place at the American Consulate—was jettisoned early on. While the composer was waiting for the libretto to take shape, he eased his idleness by purchasing a motor car, a new toy, just introduced in Italy. On February 21, 1903, returning from dinner in Lucca, Puccini's chauffeur-driven car went over an embankment and crashed 15 feet into a ravine. Elvira wasn't hurt but the composer suffered a compound fracture of the right leg. During his painful recovery, doctors discovered that Puccini suffered from diabetes.

This physical turmoil may have clouded his judgment about the progress of *Butterfly*. He finished the orchestral score on December 27, 1903, and his correspondence around this period is filled with misery and forebodings, yet he apparently didn't anticipate a poor reaction from the Scala audience. Now the leading light of Italian music—Verdi had died in 1901—Puccini had plenty of enemies. Ricordi did not improve the atmosphere by suddenly banning critics from rehearsals and refusing to allow the score to circulate. In those days before recorded sound, critics took their work very seriously; to be denied access to rehearsals and scores of a new work sent a message that all was not well.

On the night of February 17, 1904, La Scala suffered a black eye equal to that of the Parisian riot that attended the 1913

The "love affair" between the young naval officer and Okiku-San ("Chrysanthemum") in Loti's novel is a coldly commercial liaison. Loti's sexist, racist superiority is evident in his descriptions of Japanese men as "monkeys" and their women as "nothing but diminutive yellow beings, with crooked legs and flat, unshapely breasts." Some of this harsh language found its way into Belasco's play and into the original libretto of *Madama Butterfly*, and it is to Puccini's credit that he later removed it. It may be

(continued on page 38)

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Opera in two acts by GIACOMO PUCCINI

Text by LUIGI ILLICA and GIUSEPPE GIACOSA

Based on the works of John Luther Long and David Belasco

Madama Butterfly

(in Italian)

Conductor

Donald Runnicles

Stage Director

Sandra Bernhard

Designer

Toni Businger

Lighting Designer

Thomas J. Munn

Chorus Director

Ian Robertson

Musical Preparation

Susanna Lemberskaya

Joyce Fieldsend

Kathleen Kelly

Ernest Fredric Knell

Philip Eisenberg

Prompter

Philip Eisenberg

Assistant Stage Director

Yefim Maizel

Stage Manager

Theresa Ganley

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First performance:

Milan, February 17, 1904

First San Francisco Opera

performance: September 26, 1924

CAST

(in order of appearance)

Lt. B.F. Pinkerton

Richard Leech

Alfredo Portilla+ (10/20, 22)

Goro

Dennis Petersen

Suzuki

Catherine Keen

Sharpless

Victor Ledbetter

Cio-Cio-San, Madama Butterfly

Catherine Malfitano*

The Imperial Commissioner

Jere Torkelsen

The Official Registrar

William Pickersgill

The Bonze

Philip Skinner

Prince Yamadori

Thomas Barrett*

Cio-Cio-San's child

Cecily Khuner

Kate Pinkerton

Nicolle Foland*+

Cio-Cio-San's relatives and friends

*San Francisco Opera debut

+1995 Adler Fellow

TIME AND PLACE: Early 20th century; Nagasaki

ACT I A house and garden overlooking the Bay of Nagasaki

INTERMISSION

ACT II Butterfly's house, three years later

Supertitles for *Madama Butterfly* provided by a generous gift from Pacific Gas & Electric Company.

Supertitles by Jerry Sherk and Francesca Zambello for San Francisco Opera.

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

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

The performance will last approximately two hours and forty-five minutes.

Madama Butterfly will have four additional performances on December 2, 4, 9 (mat. and eve.), with different casts.

SYNOPSIS

Madama Butterfly

ACT I—The marriage broker Goro shows Lt. Pinkerton, USN, the house that Pinkerton has rented to occupy with his bride-to-be, the geisha Cio-Cio-San. They discuss the forthcoming ceremony. Soon they are joined by the US Consul at Nagasaki, Sharpless, who tries to make the jaunty lieutenant seriously consider the step he is about to take. Pinkerton asks Sharpless to join him in a series of toasts, among them one to the real wedding and the real American girl he will marry one day. Just then, the voice of Butterfly is heard as she and her geisha friends ascend the hill. She is the happiest girl in Japan, she sings, coming to answer the summons of love. The innocent Butterfly talks of her family and tells Sharpless that she is fifteen, already an old woman. She shows Pinkerton some of her possessions, among them the dagger with which her father had committed hara-kiri at the Mikado's orders. Butterfly tells Pinkerton that she is willing to give up anything for him and that she has gone to the mission to adopt his religion. The Imperial Commissioner and Official Registrar then perform the civil wedding ceremony. Sharpless leaves with a word of caution that he believes Butterfly is seriously in love, but Pinkerton has already turned to his new relatives, urging them to celebrate his happiness. Butterfly's uncle, the Bonze, arrives. He has heard that Butterfly has renounced her religion, and he calls all her relatives to renounce her. Angrily, Pinkerton orders them away and then tries to comfort the weeping Butterfly. Smiling through her tears, she tells him that although everyone else has rejected her, she is happy only with Pinkerton. Impatient, Pinkerton tells her that night is falling and he leads her into the house.

ACT II—Pinkerton has sailed away and three years have passed. Butterfly and her maid Suzuki are still living in the house on the hill. Butterfly still believes that Pinkerton will return to her, as he promised, but Suzuki doubts it. Goro brings Sharpless to Butterfly to read her a letter he has received from Pinkerton, but she insists on receiving him as an honored guest. Her hospitality interferes with his efforts to attend to the letter. They are joined by Goro's client, Prince Yamadori, who hopes to marry Butterfly. She brushes aside his offer, insisting that she is already married. Yamadori leaves, and Sharpless at last produces his letter, but Butterfly is so carried away by the thought Pinkerton has written that she fails to grasp the meaning of the letter. Sharpless asks her what she would do if Pinkerton never came back. Become a geisha again, she answers, or better, die. Sharpless suggests she reconsider Yamadori's proposal, at which Butterfly goes out and returns with Pinkerton's child. Moved, Sharpless promises to inform Pinkerton of his son, and leaves. Suzuki is heard shouting at Goro, who has been saying that nobody knows who the child's real father is. Butterfly threatens him with a dagger and then drives him away. A cannon-shot is heard and Butterfly takes up the spyglass and recognizes Pinkerton's ship. Sure that her faith will be rewarded, she and Suzuki proceed to decorate the house with flowers. Butterfly prepares for Pinkerton's arrival. She, Suzuki and the child wait and watch for Pinkerton's return.

Morning comes and still Pinkerton has not returned. When Butterfly carries the sleeping child off, Suzuki sees Sharpless, Pinkerton and a strange American woman in the garden. Sharpless tells Suzuki that this is Pinkerton's wife. Realizing too late Butterfly's real love for him, Pinkerton bids farewell to the Japanese house. He hurries off leaving Sharpless and Kate to confront Butterfly. When she enters, she soon realizes the truth: that this is Pinkerton's new wife and that they want to take the child. Butterfly sends them away, telling them that Pinkerton should come for the child in half an hour. She takes her father's dagger and is about to stab herself when Suzuki pushes the child into the room. Butterfly bids him farewell, sends him out to play, and commits suicide. Pinkerton's voice is heard calling in the distance as Butterfly dies.

Supernumeraries

Alex Boatwright
Peter Cannon
David Cipolla
Diana Kissil

Robert Lee
Oliver Pollard
Kimberly Thompson
Carolyn Waugh

The performance of October 11th is sponsored by American Airlines.

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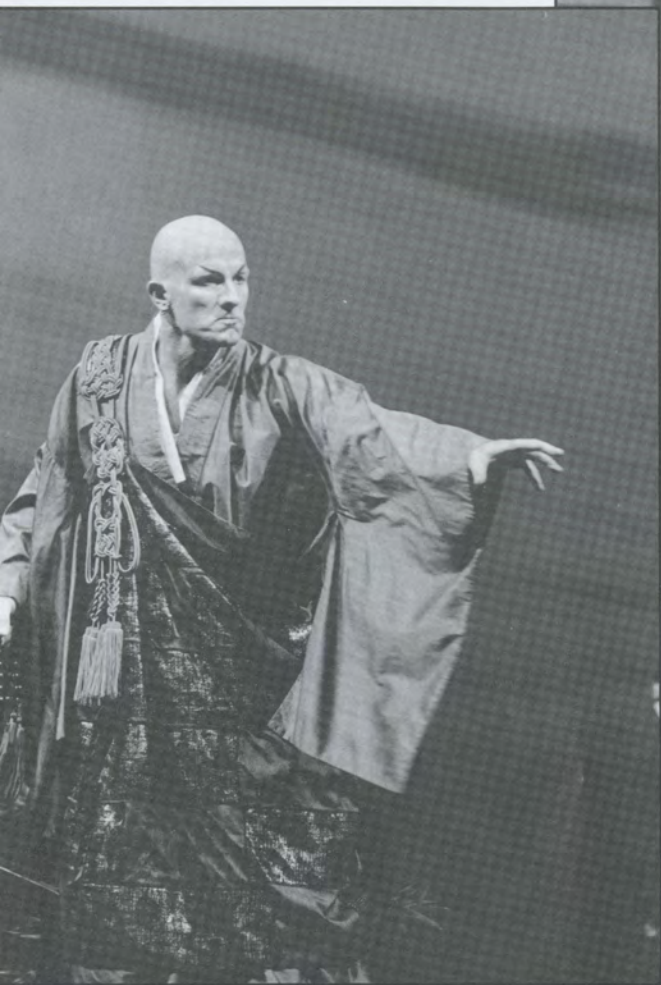
The performance of October 22nd is sponsored by The Wilson, Sonsini, Goodrich & Rosati Foundation.



Madama Butterfly

Photos taken in rehearsal
by Marty Sohl

*Catherine Malfitano,
Women of the San Francisco Opera Chorus*



Catherine Malfitano, Richard Leech

Richard Leech, Catherine Malfitano, Catherine Keen





Catherine Malfitano, Richard Leech



Dennis Petersen



Catherine Keen

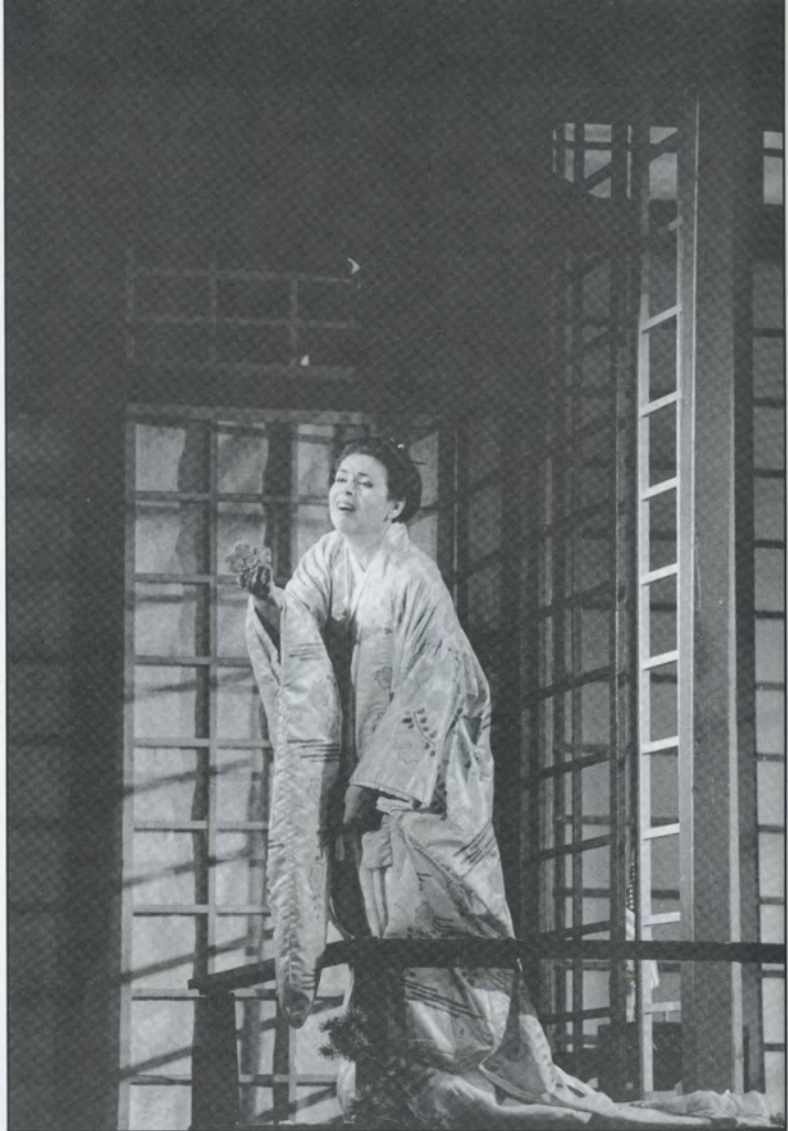


*Catherine Malfitano,
Victor Ledbetter*



Catherine Malfitano, Cecily Khuner

Catherine Malfitano, Catherine Keen



Catherine Malfitano

Catherine Malfitano, Thomas Barrett





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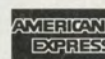
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On November 4, at the San Francisco Ballet Building, *Wall Street Journal* music critic and lecturer Dale Harris will talk about Flagstad's life and career. The lecture, sponsored by PALM and the Wagner Society of Northern California, starts at 11 a.m.

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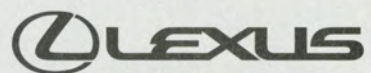
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Opening Night

ANNA BOLENA Donizetti

Vaness, Mentzer; Bardon**;
Scandiuizzi, Sabbatini*, Wilde,
Petersen

R. Abbado; Copley/Pascoe/
Stennett/Whitfield

Sept. 8, 12, 15, 21, 24, 27, 30

Production, originated by the Canadian Opera Company, is made possible by a gift from the Gramma Fisher Foundation through the auspices of the Lyric Opera of Chicago.

San Francisco Opera Premiere

RUSLAN AND LYUDMILA Glinka

Netrebko*, Tsidipova*/Vassileva
(9/26, 29), Zarembo, Cook; Atlantov,
Wells/Ognovenko, Marusin,
Bezubenkov, Andrasy*, Gogin

Gergiev/Titov**; Mansouri/Golovin/
Korovin/Bosquet/Fokine/Shavrov**/
Munn

Sept. 9, 14, 17, 19, 22, 26, 29

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LA TRAVIATA

Verdi

Villarroel, Bishop†, Petersen;
Aronica, Yurisich*, Portillat,
Okerlund†, Knežević†, Wilde

Mercurio*; Copley/Conklin/
Walker/Clara/Munn

Sept. 16, 20, 23, 28

Oct. 1, 4, 7, 10, 12

MADAMA BUTTERFLY

Puccini

Malfitano*/Watanabe*,
Keen/Bishop, Foland††;
Leech/Margison/Portillat,
Ledbetter/Baerg, Petersen/
Sénéchal, Barrett*, Skinner

Runnicles/Mackerras (Dec.);

Bernhard/Büsinger

Oct. 3, 6, 8, 11, 14, 17, 20, 22

Dec. 2, 4, 9 (mat. & eve.)

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Gioachino Rossini/in Italian
Wednesday, October 25 at 1:00
Thursday, November 2 at 1:00

LA CENERENTOLA

Rossini

Borodina*, Claytont, Bishop†, Streit,
Alaimo, Gallo, Travis

Rizzi*; Ponnelle/Alden/
Ponnelle/Munn

Oct. 13, 15, 18, 21, 25, 28

Nov. 2

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New Production

FAUST

Gounod

Gustafson, Quittmeyer, Cook; Leech,
Ramey, Gilfry*, Skinner

Summers; Joël/Howland/Munn

Oct. 26, 29, 31

Nov. 3, 5, 8, 11, 16

DIE WALKÜRE

Wagner

Schnaut, A. Evans, Lipovšek*,
Foland†, Waitet, Claytont, Keen,
Cook, Bishop†, Cao†, Bean; Elming*,
Morris/White, Von Halem

Runnicles; Lehnhoff/Feldman/
Conklin/Munn

Nov. 4, 7, 12, 15, 21, 25, 29

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November 17, 8 p.m.

New Production

DON GIOVANNI

Mozart

Riedel*, Dessi*, R. Evans*; Ramey
(11/14, 18, 20)/ Shimell,
Ainsley*/Olsen*, Antoniozzi,
Patriarco, Von Halem

Runnicles; Mansouri/Howland/
Bosquet/Whitfield

Nov. 14, 18, 20, 24, 28

Dec. 1, 3, 7

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San Francisco Opera Premiere

RUSALKA

Dvořák

Fleming, Sundine, Palmer, Claytont†,
Foland†, Dillard, Cao†; Larin,
Skinner, Sénéchal, Knežević†

Mackerras; Feldman/
Schneider-Siemssen/Solt*/Arhelger
Nov. 26, 30, Dec. 2, 6, 8, 10

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**U.S. opera debut

*San Francisco Opera debut

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Dallas Lane
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Alexandra Nehra
Rose Parker
Virginia Pluth
Laurel Rice
Shelley Seitz Saarni
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Claudia Siefer
Page Swift
Donna Maria Turchi

Daniel Becker
Richard Brown
Jim Croom
Frank Daniels
Henryk De Rewenda
Robert Delany
Daniel Harper
Cameron Henley
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Frederick Matthews
Jim Meyer
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Daniel Pociernicki
Valery Portnov
Ken Rafanan
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Colby Roberts
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Jere Torkelsen
Richard Walker
Frederick Winthrop

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Deborah Benedict
Theresa Cardinale
Melodi Dalton
Joy Davis
Marcelle A. Dronkers
Candida Arias Duazo
Ana Duma
Christina Jaqua
Gemma Kavanagh
Victoria Kelp
Christine Lloyd
Sara MacBride
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Nadja Matisoff
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Aimée Puentes
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Elisabeth Rom
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1995 OPERA PREVIEWS

The following list of lectures and previews includes those that are currently available to the public

PRE-OPERA TALKS

Our popular Pre-Opera Talks, which are held in the Orchestra section one hour prior to curtain, will include a special lecture describing SF Opera's plans for the 1996 performances out of the Opera House. These 1996 previews will run between Sept. 19 and Oct. 1. After Oct. 1, the traditional Pre-Opera Talks will continue throughout the 1995 Fall Season. Lectures are free with your ticket for the performance and are held on most performance dates. Watch for talk dates in S.F. Opera newspaper advertisements.

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA GUILD — INSIGHTS

Renowned artists and personalities from the world of opera in informal interviews. Held from 6 to 7 p.m. in Herbst Theatre, 401 Van Ness, in San Francisco. Complimentary to Guild members, \$5 at the door.

Information: (415) 565-6432

Oct. 11 *La Cenerentola*
Nov. 20 *Rusalka*

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA GUILD — PREVIEWS

Speakers: *Ruslan and Lyudmila*: Richard Taruskin; *Anna Bolena*: William Ashbrook; *Madama Butterfly*: James Keolker; *Faust*: Perry Lorenzo; *Don Giovanni*: Robert Glick; *Rusalka*: Michael Beckerman

MARIN

Held at 8 p.m. at Mt. Tamalpais United Methodist Church, 410 Sycamore Avenue, Mill Valley.

Information: (415) 388-6789

Oct. 23 *Faust*
Oct. 30 *Don Giovanni*
Nov. 13 *Rusalka*

SAN FRANCISCO

Held at 12:00 noon, The Unitarian Center, 1187 Franklin St., San Francisco.

Information: (415) 565-6432

Oct. 23 *Faust*
Nov. 1 *Don Giovanni*
Nov. 15 *Rusalka*

SAN JOSE

Held at 10:00 a.m. at the Los Gatos History Club, 123 Los Gatos Blvd., Los Gatos.

Information: (408) 741-1331, or (408) 354-7525

Oct. 24 *Faust*
Oct. 31 *Don Giovanni*
Nov. 14 *Rusalka*

SONOMA COUNTY

Held at various locations and times.

Information: (707) 938-2432

Oct. 25 *Faust*
Oct. 30 *Don Giovanni*
Nov. 13 *Rusalka*

SOUTH PENINSULA

Held at 8:00 p.m. at the Palo Alto Senior Center, 450 Bryant St., Palo Alto.

Information: (415) 941-3890

Oct. 24 *Faust*
Oct. 31 *Don Giovanni*
Nov. 14 *Rusalka*

EAST BAY

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Nov. 15 *Rusalka*

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Puccini: *Heir to the Verdian Tradition*

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MERRITT COLLEGE OPERA LECTURE SERIES

Held on Tuesday evenings in Building R, Room 130, 7 to 10 p.m., *Introduction to Opera* (Music 13A) is based on the operas of the 1995 fall season. The College is at 12500 Campus Drive (off Redwood Road in the Oakland Hills).

Information: (510) 436-2430

OPERA EDUCATION INTERNATIONAL PREVIEW SERIES

Given by Michael Barclay, director of OEI. Lectures start at 7:15 p.m. at 400 Yale Ave. (at Vassar) in the Kensington part of the Berkeley hills. Series began on September 5; lectures are \$15 at the door.

Information: (510) 526-5244

Nov. 6 *Faust*
Nov. 13 *Don Giovanni*
Nov. 22 *Rusalka*
Dec. 11 *Season Review*

SAN FRANCISCO CITY COLLEGE PREVIEWS

A music course of opera previews will deal with all operas of the 1995 fall season. Taught by Marvin Tartak on Wednesday afternoons from 3 to 6 p.m., it takes place at the College, 50 Phelan Ave., Creative Arts Building, Room A-135 in San Francisco. Classes began August 23 and continue for 17 weeks.

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ROBERT GOODHUE'S FALL OPERA COURSE

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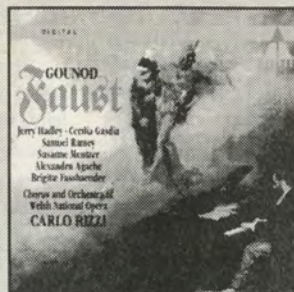
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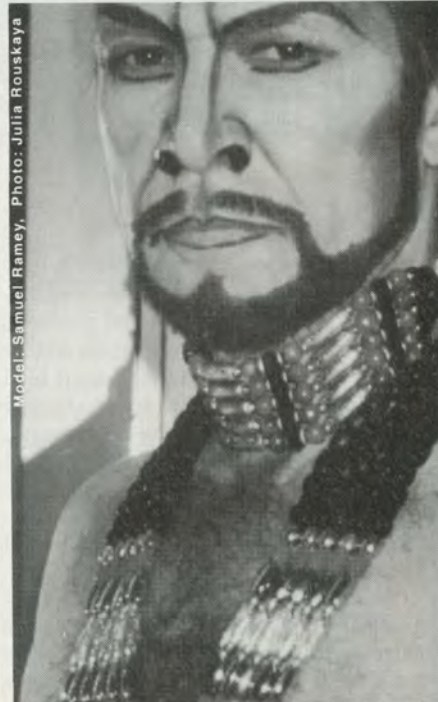
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In 1934, Dino Borgioli (*Pinkerton*, left) and Alfredo Gandolfi (*Sharpless*, right) are joined by Company founder Gaetano Merola in posing for the photographer.

score. It is from this sustained rewriting that we have the standard *Butterfly* score used today, but it is also from this unusual activity—Puccini seldom revised his operas—that a peculiar mythology has grown up about what *Madama Butterfly* really means and how seriously we should take the composer's second thoughts. Spurred by the global anti-Americanism engendered by our involvement in Vietnam, high-minded musicologists have decided that Puccini was wrong to revise his opera and have called for a return to its original form.

Thus, in the 1984 English National Opera handbook, Julian Smith could write: "The original *Butterfly* was a daring opera, unconventional in its structure, and unsparing in its delivery of what, for the time, was an unusually pointed moral and social message. The Milan audience of 1904 rejected the former and Albert Carré [director of the Opéra-Comique, where *Butterfly* had its French premiere in 1906], on behalf of the bourgeois Parisians, diluted the latter."

premiere of Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps*, another occasion where the audience was 100 percent wrong about a new work. Rude listeners in the galleria, claiming to recognize *Bohème* in some passages of the love duet, shrieked the name of that earlier opera. Ricordi had stationed bird whistles through the auditorium to twitter atmospherically during the intermezzo between the two halves of the long second act; pandemonium broke loose after the first twitter and the rest of the performance was accompanied by cat-calls and animal sounds from the out-of-control listeners. Giuseppe de Luca, the first Sharpless, reported that the cast couldn't hear the orchestra because of the audience noise. Yet the final curtain fell to deathly silence, in Italy even worse opprobrium than booing. The next day Puccini—so often criticized for being a money-grubbing tightwad—returned his 20,000 lire fee and withdrew the opera.

For the next 36 months, the composer revised, cut, added to and rearranged the

Self-righteous conclusions would be easier to take *musically* if one hadn't actually heard the 1904 original, with its endless wedding festivities, its garrulous love duet and its rude, racist Pinkerton, obnoxious to the point of lunacy, calling Cio-Cio-San's relatives "pig snouts" and trying to get her mother drunk. Far from delivering a "pointed moral and social message," this ugly American's behavior diminishes *Butterfly*'s character, making her look either as commercial as Okiku-San or half-witted in her adoration of the extra-crude American officer.

In his book on the Puccini operas, William Ashbrook insists that Puccini's revisions were consonant with shifting the entire score towards a more dramatic, tragic view of *Butterfly*. Between Milan 1904 and the 1907 Ricordi vocal score, the doll-like fantasy victim of Belasco's play makes the transition to a woman able to stand up for herself, making courageous decisions (i.e. suicide) with which we today may not agree but which are consistent with her rank and nationality. To insure that Cio-Cio-San would be a fully-dimensional character, Puccini made the following changes.

The problem of the endless second act was solved by simply breaking it in two between the humming chorus and the intermezzo; he composed a four-bar coda to the chorus and eliminated a D-flat major transition between the two pieces. He gave Pinkerton an aria in the last act ("Addio, fiorito asil") and added *Butterfly*'s great outburst after the ship has been spotted entering the harbor ("Trionfa il mio amor!"). At that point the orchestra plays a sweeping melody from the love duet. In the Scala original, it played the opening of the "Star Spangled Banner." Political revisionists cite this musical reference as "daringly ironic," but the truth is that Puccini seldom worked that way and his attitude towards found melodies was as casual as his ideas of continuity (e.g. the "Sakura" quote in Act I; or the ending of *Tosca* where the reprise of "E lucevan le stelle" has nothing to do with the dramatic situation).

Most of the other changes made for the Brescia revival three months after the Scala fiasco were cuts in the first act wedding party and much of Kate Pinkerton's role. For Carré's Parisian production, the composer lost still more of the wedding scene, 27 bars from the flower duet and 40 measures from the vigil. For the 1907 score, drunken Uncle Yakusidé is finally 86-ed, the love duet is tightened again, and *Butterfly*'s fine aria, "Che tua madre dovrà," has been reworked, stressing Cio-Cio-San's determination to die rather than to return to the geisha's life. A fantasy sequence in this aria about how the Japanese emperor would one day recognize little Trouble has been decisively eliminated and, with it, any last vestige of *Butterfly* as the stereotypical "pretty little plaything" that Kate Pinkerton calls her in Belasco's play.

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JONES

By CAROLINE CRAWFORD

In 1954, a remarkable project was initiated at the University of California, Berkeley: Bancroft Library's Regional Oral History Office. Its purpose: to preserve recollections of historically important personalities for future research. To date, over one thousand "histories" have been taped, and several of them have been published. Subjects include such prominent Californians as Dorothea Lange, Ansel Adams, Governors Brown and Reagan, Ruth Asawa, Richard Gump, Ludwig Altman, Madi Bacon and Margaret Rowell, to name but a few.

The *Kurt Herbert Adler and the San Francisco Opera Oral History Series*, published in 1994, documents the Company history through extensive interviews with Maestro Adler, conducted between 1985 and 1988 (Volume I). Additional material relevant to the history of San Francisco Opera is provided by prominent artists who had special connections with the Company. Dorothy Kirsten focuses on the Company founder Gaetano Merola; Jean-Pierre Ponnelle, Wolf-

ram Skalicki and Gerald Freedman discuss developments in design and staging; Jess Thomas and Carol Vanness deal with growing up as young singers-in-training; Luciano Pavarotti, Leontyne Price, Sir Geraint Evans, Leonie Rysanek and Birgit Nilsson remember the Company as their

home base (Volume II). The third volume documents the history of San Francisco Opera through interviews with community and union leaders, as well as Maestro Adler's family and friends. Each volume is introduced by three operatically prominent Americans: Beverly Sills, Roger Stevens and Lotfi Mansouri.

What follows is a handful of excerpts from Volume II, "Artists and Staff of the San Francisco Opera."

Jean-Pierre Ponnelle, the late, great designer-director whose work on the grand opera stages of the world stimulated and provoked critics and audiences alike, was one of the first interviewees for the history; the session took place not long before his death in 1988 at the age of 56. Of his work in San Francisco, where he was given his first U.S. assignment in 1958, Ponnelle said: "I never tried to do something that was controversial because I think that is a lot of fun—absolutely not. But I think convention is something suspicious. I hate it. Especially in the opera world, convention is comfort-

able, like a deep sleep."

Ponnelle was rare in the opera world, not only as a director who could design, but as a director-designer with a formal music education at the Paris Conservatory. Music was always paramount: "The dramatic interpretation onstage is not only what is printed in the score. The main thing is to follow the music and to respect the music and not to disturb the music. In a *piano* moment you cannot open the big doors and have three hundred horses coming onstage. If you respect the music, then you can be quite free with the libretto, because [some of the] librettos are masterpieces, but a lot of librettos are not such great works of literature.

"What you can do is try to give different spots to the story or different figures in the story like in the old movie *Rashomon*. So that everything is relative onstage. Nobody tells the truth in life. Everybody is lying. When you turn on the TV, they lie. When you turn on the radio, they lie. When you read the newspaper, they lie. Not only lies, but there are a lot of lies. Only onstage do you have to believe what people sing to you. Why?

"So I always try to figure out—if the soprano says this to me or to him—if it is the truth. And if it is the truth, why? And if it is not, also why? The ability to be skeptical gives you the opportunity to analyze the relationship between the different figures. Does the composer believe in the character, or not? And [what is] the relationship between the composer and the characters. For composers like Mozart, this is absolutely important."

Having designed *Carmina Burana* and *Die Kluge* for San Francisco Opera in 1958,

Caroline Crawford is the music editor in the Regional Oral History Office at the University of California, Berkeley.

Ponnelle submitted his sketches for the company's first *Frau ohne Schatten* (U.S. premiere) the following season. The designs were sent from Paris the day before Ponnelle left for what he called a "repression camp" in the Sahara—where he served time for refusing to take part in the Algerian War. They never arrived, and the production was shaped by means of lengthy telephone conversations between San Francisco and the desert. Ponnelle went on to design and direct more than a dozen signature productions for the Company before his death in 1988.

Through the 1960s and 1970s, Ponnelle, then in demand all over the world, considered San Francisco Opera his professional home. The primary draw was Adler, whom he called "curious—very simply, curious. And he was also very intelligent—that is a gift from God. So his curiosity plus this gift from God was the reason I think he was so knowledgeable about everything.

"The word 'democracy' in the theater is very relative. I don't believe in too much democracy. I think theater has to be the contrary of the country—dictatorship in the theater is necessary, so that this company was always like a pyramid, and on the top was Mr. Adler, and he was the only person in charge of everything. And this is good when you have only one partner."

The two fought, particularly over Ponnelle's *Rigoletto*, which he conceived as the jester's torrid flashback nightmare. "He was trying to veto me with the *Rigoletto*. That was a big clash. I refused [to back down], and after the opening night he called me and apologized." Over the years they became close friends, communicating weekly by telephone. "San Francisco helped me a lot...we had this kind of regular relationship that every season I did something with [Adler]. We were discussing comedy and doing more serious opera, a tragedy, then a Verdi, then a Mozart, then a modern opera. These kinds of things were much more important for me than the career itself—to know that for the next decade I had the possibility every year of doing something in one city, one theater, with Kurt Adler, with whom I could discuss in the dialectic of the culture what would be my occupation for the next eight, ten years. That was very important."

San Francisco's production team was important to Ponnelle, too—particularly technical director John Priest and scene shop head Pierre Cayard—who were in place for several decades. He also emphasized the value of a good audience, and he greatly preferred that of San Francisco to the "reactionary" audiences in New York. He was candid in describing the San Francisco audience: First, "...the elegant audience...

their duty for the opera is only to give money and have to be thankful to have the opportunity to give their money to a beautiful art like opera.

"Then you have the Saturday or Sunday afternoon audience that is just the contrary. They don't know much about opera, but they are very enthusiastic—like kids—and they are fantastic. In this sense you have the same kind of audience in, say, Timbuktu, in Africa, because this kind of naiveté gives you this kind of power and sincerity of enthusiasm. Exactly what the rich people have lost.

"And then you have the normal audience in San Francisco, and I think that is a fantastic audience, because there you feel that around the Bay you have a lot of universities and colleges, all the radio stations and also Channel 9, and so you have a fascinated, intellectual audience—I would say a professional audience. When they come to the opera, they are not coming to the second act of *Rigoletto* to find out who will kill whom. They don't care about the story—they know the piece; they really care about the interpretation. And that is fantastic for everybody—for the singers, for the musicians, also the director."

Above all else, Ponnelle valued what he described as Adler's courage: "His first award should be for the list of first American performances. This is a great distinction for Adler, because it reflects his courage. I think he was the last product and the last representative of a really great era...probably a kind of anachronistic monster."

San Francisco Opera was a home base for Leontyne Price, too, after she made her professional opera debut on the American stage as Madame Lidoine in the first U.S. performances of Poulenc's *Dialogues of the Carmelites*, which took place in 1957, several months after the Milan world premiere of the work.

"San Francisco is so close to my heart, it's difficult to talk about. It was really my home opera house in that it nurtured my operatic career. Under Kurt's [Adler] administration I received what I would call 'career tender loving care.' It's very emotional for me to talk about because it was, for young American artists particularly, sort of the cart-



before-the-horse syndrome.

"I was so very much accepted in my home opera house that I was prepared for what came afterwards in a way that few young artists are prepared. And every single role that I sang seemed to have a particular poignancy in the maturity of my career. I would say without hesitation that San Francisco is responsible for my operatic roots. It was my professional launching pad, shall we say..."

"There are two different elements that are vital for a career," Price continues. "First, talent is very, very important. God-given talent which you develop and technically give as much finesse as possible. Second is the element that I think is equally important: a sort of timing. That is, being in the right place at the right time. As far as I was concerned, San Francisco was definitely that."

Adler first heard Price sing on the NBC television broadcast of *Tosca* in 1955. "It was for me a type of a barrier breaker," she remembered, "because I was the first black to perform in this particular medium at this level...across the United States and Canada, I believe." She credits Adler for being the first U.S. impresario to engage her two years later, so launching a close relationship that continued for over two decades.

A great believer in "the force of destiny," Price says: "It's another example of fate stepping in, and also the *savoir faire* and

Photos—Opposite, above: Sherill Milnes in Act IV of Jean-Pierre Ponnelle's production of Verdi's *Rigoletto*. **Opposite, below:** Jean-Pierre Ponnelle and Kurt Herbert Adler during a 1979 rehearsal.

This page: Backstage before a performance of *La Forza del Destino* in 1979, Kurt Herbert Adler chats with the evening's Leonora, Leontyne Price.

expertise of Kurt Adler as a great impresario. He actually asked me to do each of the Verdi roles in the order that I would have done them and the order that had been suggested that I do them by my teacher. Each season he asked me to do a Verdi role, and it was the role that I would have chosen anyway to do. So it worked out that it was the same as I had planned to do.

"Thus there was no reason not to accept the invitations. The roles vocally came in the right order; that is, *Aida*, *Trovatore*—I might have done *Ballo* before *Forza*—but as it turned out I did *Forza* before *Ballo*. But they are the same for me

vocally. As a matter of fact, this would be the order that I think would be intelligent vocally for any lyric soprano to try to do."

Two San Francisco appearances as *Aida* stand out for Price. The first was in 1957, when she stepped in for Antonietta Stella, who had to have an emergency appendectomy. "I went on at the last minute with very brief rehearsals. Not a single nerve in my body was not alert. Youth is everything, of course, as you know! I was being shown by [director] Carlo Piccinato where to go—stage left, stage right—etcetera. The conductor was Maestro Molinari-Pradelli, who did some wonderful recordings with me later in my recording career. It was a great success. It was the first time that I knew that *Aida* would be one of my dearest, if not my most poignant friend, as far as Verdi heroines are concerned."

Aida connected with "forza del destino" again in 1981, when Adler, then in his last season, called her repeatedly during rehearsals for *Il Trovatore* to ask about her health. "May I be so bold as to ask you what in the world you are getting at, Kurt?" she asked him. "This is me, you know, just be blunt. If I didn't feel well, why would I be here for my *Trovatore*?"

"He said, 'Okay, this is it. I would like to know if you would stand by right now for about an hour in case you have to come to the theater to replace Margaret Price, who is not feeling very well and will not know for an hour if she will be able to do the performance of *Aida* tonight.'"

Aida was no longer in Price's repertoire, but she gallantly agreed. "Let's face it, I don't have a makeup problem here. That's why this part has always been a ball to do. Call me back in an hour. You know San Francisco is my great love, and I would never say no to doing *Aida* in San Francisco,



After a 1976 performance of *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, Maestro Adler presented Leonie Rysanek with the Company's highest honor, the San Francisco Opera Medal.

and I'll hum along in the shower and find out if I remember the words."

Within the hour Adler had called back, and two nights later Price sang *Aida*, with Luciano Pavarotti as Radames. "I'm happy to say I sang very well indeed. I believe this performance was a bit of a feather in Kurt's cap, because he produced a chocolate and a vanilla Price as sopranos. The two Prices who were on the operatic stage and Luciano Pavarotti in the same season. I don't know any other opera administrator who could have been that lucky in one season." The anecdote reveals not only Price's loyalty to the Company, but also Adler's remarkably successful, if informal, cover system.

Price was loyal to all her principal mentors—it was said that there were always framed photographs of Sir Rudolf Bing, Herbert von Karajan, and Adler in her dressing room—but for Adler she reserved special praise: "Let me establish that totally without any decoration, I love the man. And it ain't easy! You know what I mean? I will tell you candidly some of the things positive and negative with great affection and subjectivity—here it comes. I think that Kurt brought to San Francisco a cultural vibration that will never, ever die...his approach to being an opera director and administrator is very much the way I approach my own life and career. I admire the strength of his priorities, always constant. To love him...is most difficult, because he is in a word at once strong, opinionated, devious, affectionate, elegant, caring, vindictive, argumentative, ruthless, determined, ego-maniacal, charming, loving, sentimental, and extremely successful.

"All of these qualities in the long run I believe make the greatest artistic administrators. I think his record for sold-out houses, particularly for his farewell year—

no opera house in the entire world had every single performance with people standing in the streets to find a place to stand, even, to hear some of the greatest casts, and evenness of casting in one season, that has been recorded in operatic history. I think he's his own kind of personal genius. He will forever hold a special place in my heart. And I will be eternally grateful to him for the early nurturing of my operatic career. There's nobody like him in my book, period."

Leonie Rysanek made her American debut as Senta in the 1956 San Francisco Opera production of *Der Fliegende Holländer*.

Kurt Herbert Adler had heard her in Vienna and, as she says, "at a time when no one would engage me in the United States, he did." Adler, in his third season in charge of the Company, hired another soprano that year: Birgit Nilsson, who made her American debut as Brünnhilde in *Die Walküre*, with Leonie Rysanek as Sieglinde and Hans Hotter as Wotan. By the end of that season the two sopranos had just about decided never to return to San Francisco.

"I thought, 'America, hah!' " remembers Rysanek. "I was very much disappointed. The chorus! The thin orchestra! Those few men on the stage! Great singers, I must admit. But all the other things—stage, chorus, orchestra, were so-so. I [was] spoiled from Europe—Vienna, Bayreuth, all the big houses, the sound of everything. I was deeply, deeply disappointed in America. There was almost no staging...so old-fashioned, and not very good-looking scenery and costumes. It was almost third-class. There were great artists, great singers, great names. But this alone is not opera...It is the orchestra, the chorus, the direction, the conductors."

Nilsson's first impressions weren't much brighter. Drastic cuts in her role were just the beginning. "At the premiere I got the stomach flu, I remember. I was so sick, but I didn't even dare to tell... All of a sudden I hear a big announcement that Mme. Rysanek excuses herself for being indisposed, and I thought, 'My God, here I can hardly stand upright and nobody knows it.' The costume was impossible—I looked terrible in it. It wasn't my type. I should look like a fifteen-year-old-girl. And there was this little calotte up here, which the hair should go through like a ponytail...the whole thing was wrong!"

(continued on page 48)



Acclaimed soprano **CATHERINE MALFITANO** makes her San Francisco Opera debut as Cio-Cio-San in *Madama Butterfly*. The versatile artist's repertoire includes over 60 roles performed at the world's major opera houses. Recent appearances, often in new productions, have included *Butterfly* at the Metropolitan Opera, Chicago Lyric Opera, Milan's La Scala, and in Berlin, London, Vienna, Marseilles, Florence, Hamburg and Barcelona. Also in a number of new stagings, she has performed the title role of *Salome* in Tokyo, Brussels, Berlin, Florence, Vienna, at the

Salzburg Festival and at London's Covent Garden (and will sing the role at the Met in March of 1996); *Thaïs* in Paris; *Stiffelio* in London; as well as *L'Incoronazione di Poppea* in Brussels, Florence, Paris and Geneva. She was featured in the world premiere of Bolcom's *McTeague* in Chicago, where she also sang the role of Cleopatra in Barber's *Antony and Cleopatra*. Additional highlights include Tatyana in *Eugene Onegin*, the title roles of *Tosca* and *Daphne*, Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni* in Salzburg; Marie in *Wozzeck* in Berlin; and Leonore in *Fidelio* in Geneva, Berlin, Paris and Israel. Among her videos is the live telecast of *Tosca* shot on location in Rome, for which she won an Emmy, and her latest recording is *Salome* under the baton of Christoph von Dohnányi. Her performance as Cio-Cio-San, taped last year at the Met, will be telecast later this season. Her expanding repertoire will soon include all three operas in Puccini's *Il Trittico*, Lady Macbeth in *Macbeth*, and Emilia Marty in *The Makropulos Case*, a role she will sing in Chicago later this year.



Mezzo-soprano **CATHERINE KEEN**, Suzuki in *Madama Butterfly* and Waltraute in *Die Walküre*, was a 1989-90 Adler Fellow and a 1987-88 Merola Opera Program participant who has sung numerous roles here since her 1989 Company debut in *Satyagraha*. They include Schwertleite in *Die Walküre*, Maddalena in *Rigoletto*, Prince Orlofsky in *Die Fledermaus*, Sonya in *War and Peace*, Zulma in *L'Italiana in Algeri*, Hermia in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Magdalene in *Die Meistersinger*, and Venus in *Tannhäuser*. Opera Center credits include a Schwabacher Debut Recital and Leocasta in

Handel's *Giustino*. Highlights from recent seasons elsewhere include her European debut with the Deutsche Oper Berlin as Dalila in *Samson et Dalila*, a debut with the Netherlands Opera as the Duchess in *Luisa Miller*, *La Traviata* at the Orange Festival, *Samson et Dalila* in Amsterdam, *Luisa Miller* in Geneva, Falla's *The Three-Cornered Hat* with the Atlanta Symphony, a recording of *La Vida Breve* with the Cincinnati Symphony, Mahler's *Lied von der Erde* in Paris, and Mahler's Eighth Symphony both in Lyons and Edinburgh, the latter led by Donald Runnicles. Miss Keen has appeared in recital throughout North America, and as soloist with several prominent orchestras. She is the recipient of a George London/William Sullivan Study Grant, a Puccini Foundation Award, Mac Allister Award and a grant from the Wagner Society of Northern California. Future plans include Venus at the Royal Danish Opera, and a European telecast of *Otello* with the Netherlands Opera.



NICOLLE FOLAND sings four roles in her first season with San Francisco Opera: Kate Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly*, Clorinda in the student matinee production of *La Cenerentola*, Gerhilde in *Die Walküre*, and a Wood Nymph in *Rusalka*. A 1995 Adler Fellow, the soprano appeared as Adele in the 1993 Merola Opera Program production of *Die Fledermaus* and sang both Adele and Rosalinda in Western Opera Theater's national tour of the same production. The following year, she was applauded as Donna Anna in the Merola Program's mounting of *Don Giovanni* and again on WOT's national

tour. Miss Foland received a master of music degree from the University of Northern Iowa, where she appeared as Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte* and Lauretta in *Gianni Schicchi*. The winner of numerous awards and competitions, she was a studio artist with Central City Opera and has appeared with Peoria Civic Opera as Mabel in *The Pirates of Penzance*. The young artist most recently portrayed Adina in *L'Elisir d'Amore* with Indianapolis Opera.



In his third season with San Francisco Opera, **RICHARD LEECH** sings the roles of Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly* and the title role of *Faust*. The acclaimed young tenor made his 1990 Company debut as the Duke of Mantua in *Rigoletto* and returned in 1993 to portray Rodolfo in *La Bohème*. He first came to international attention in 1987, when he made his European debut at the Berlin Opera as Raoul in Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots*. He has since been applauded at the world's major opera houses and with many of America's finest orchestras. He has made successful debuts at

the Metropolitan Opera (*La Bohème*), Milan's La Scala (*Madama Butterfly*), the Royal Opera at Covent Garden (*Les Huguenots*), and the Vienna State Opera (*Rigoletto*). Engagements during the 1993-94 season included a role debut as Cavaradossi in *Tosca* for the Cincinnati Opera, *Roméo et Juliette* in Philadelphia and Cincinnati, *Tosca* for the Lyric Opera of Chicago, as well as *La Bohème* and *Madama Butterfly* at the Met. Among his most recent appearances are *Tosca* in Pittsburgh and at Chicago's Ravinia Festival, *La Bohème* at San Diego Opera, plus additional performances of *Bohème* and *Butterfly* at the Met. His most recent concert appearances have included Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* and Ninth Symphony with Lorin Maazel and the Pittsburgh Symphony, Berlioz's *The Damnation of Faust* with the Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal, and performances in New York of the Verdi Requiem with the Scala Orchestra under Riccardo Muti. Leech has made complete recordings of *Faust*, *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Les Huguenots*, *Salome*, *Die Fledermaus*, *Rigoletto*, *La Bohème*, in addition to the forthcoming *Un Ballo in Maschera* and *The Damnation of Faust*. He can be seen later this season as Pinkerton in the Met telecast of *Madama Butterfly*.

Catherine Malfitano



ARTIST PROFILES



In his second year as an Adler Fellow, **ALFREDO PORTILLA** appears as Gastone in *La Traviata* and Pinkerton in the final two October performances of *Madama Butterfly*. He made his San Francisco Opera debut last season in the world premiere of *The Dangerous Liaisons*, followed by appearances in *Il Trovatore*, *Otello*, *Hérodiade* and *Lucia di Lammermoor*. The tenor hails from Mexico City and since 1990 has been a member of the Bellas Artes company, where his roles included the Duke in *Rigoletto*, Edgardo in *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Nemorino in *L'Elisir d'Amore*, and

Alfredo in *La Traviata*. He has also appeared with numerous Mexican symphony orchestras, and at the most important festivals in his native country. In 1992, Portilla was selected by the S.F. Opera Center from auditions around the Asia/Pacific region to participate in the first-ever Pacific Voices program. Opera Center credits include Paris in the Showcase production of Tippet's *King Priam*, and Alfred in *Die Fledermaus* for the Merola Opera Program and Western Opera Theater. Recent highlights include Edgardo with New Jersey Opera, Ismaele in *Nabucco* with New Israeli Opera, Rodolfo in *La Bohème* with New York City Opera, Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly* with the Opéra de Lyon (in that company's first U.S. performances as part of the United Nations 50th Anniversary celebration), and soloist in the Company's U.N. Concert. Next year he is scheduled to make his Paris Opera (Bastille) debut as Cavaradossi in *Tosca*, and reprise the role of Pinkerton for the Opéra de Lyon.



Quickly gaining a reputation as a baritone of great range and versatility, **VICTOR LEDBETTER** portrays Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly*. In his eighth season with San Francisco Opera, he has sung over 15 roles with the Company, appearing in such parts as Silvano in *Un Ballo in Maschera*, Shchekalov in *Boris Godunov*, Roucher in *Andrea Chénier* and, most recently in 1993, Marcello in *La Bohème* and the Night Watchman in *Die Meistersinger*. A participant in the 1986 Merola Opera Program and a 1988-89 Adler Fellow, his Opera Center credits include Count Alma-

viva in Hiram Titus's *Rosina*, Marcello for Western Opera Theater's tour which included performances in China, Scarpia in China's first presentation of *Tosca*, and a 1989 Schwabacher Debut Recital. Among highlights from recent seasons are Gérard in *Andrea Chénier* in Cincinnati; Germont in *La Traviata* at the Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels and for New York City Opera; Dr. Falke in *Die Fledermaus* at San Diego Opera; Sharpless at Dublin Grand Opera and the Cincinnati Opera; Valentin in *Faust* and Alfio in *Cavalleria Rusticana* for Washington Opera; and John Sorel in *The Consul* at the Montreal Opera. He continues to be in demand as a concert artist, having performed with, among others, the symphony orchestras of San Francisco, Minneapolis, Boston, Cleveland, Houston, Atlanta, Saint Louis and Washington, D.C. The Georgia native is a graduate of Mercer University who also studied at Indiana University with the late Nicola Rossi Lemeni.



Tenor **DENNIS PETERSEN**, who portrays Harvey in *Anna Bolena* and Goro in *Madama Butterfly*, has been applauded in a variety of operatic roles, as well as for his appearances in concert, recital and oratorio performances. Since his 1985 San Francisco Opera debut, the 1984 Merola Opera Program graduate has appeared here for eight seasons in over 18 productions. Roles sung for the Company include Pang in *Turandot*, Vogelgesang in *Die Meistersinger*, Chekalinsky in *The Queen of Spades*, Don Basilio in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, the Marquis in *Lulu*, Pisandro in *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria*, and Spoletta in *Tosca*. Elsewhere, his recent operatic appearances included his first season with the Metropolitan Opera in *Peter*

Grimes and *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, a debut at the Lyric Opera of Chicago as Mime in *Das Rheingold* with a return to Chicago last season as Missail in *Boris Godunov*, *Der Fliegende Holländer* with Minnesota Opera, *The Queen of Spades* with the Boston Symphony, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *Tannhäuser* and *Fidelio* with New Orleans Opera, in addition to *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* and Donizetti's *Il Duca d'Alba* at the Spoleto Festivals in the U.S. and Italy. Petersen has also recently been featured in concert with the Phoenix Symphony Orchestra, Calgary Philharmonic, New York Choral Society, St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, and New Jersey Symphony. Later this season he appears as Incredible in *Andrea Chénier* and as *Rheingold's* Mime at the Chicago Lyric Opera.



THOMAS BARRETT makes his first San Francisco Opera appearance as Prince Yamadori in *Madama Butterfly*. Highly regarded on the opera and concert stage, the American baritone in recent seasons has appeared in *La Bohème*, *La Cenerentola* and *The Tales of Hoffmann* with the Boston Lyric Opera; *Il Viaggio a Rheims* and *The Coronation of Poppea* at the Juilliard Opera Center; and portrayed Leporello in *Don Giovanni* and Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Opera Theatre of Saint Louis. Performances during the 1994-95 season included concert presentations of *La*

Bohème with the Minnesota Orchestra and Papageno in *The Magic Flute* for Opera Pacific. In concert, he has appeared as soloist in Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* and Mendelssohn's *Elijah* with the Louisville Bach Society; Handel's *Messiah* with the Virginia Symphony and Rochester Philharmonic; as well as the Brahms *German Requiem* and the *Messiah* with the Columbus Pro Musica. He has also performed with the symphonies of Detroit, St. Louis, Milwaukee and Charleston. The young artist will be seen later this season as Masetto in *Don Giovanni* at the Dallas Opera and as Papageno in *The Magic Flute* at Chautauqua Opera.



PHILIP SKINNER portrays the Bonze in *Madama Butterfly*, Wagner in *Faust*, and the Water Sprite in *Rusalka*. In his eleventh consecutive season with San Francisco Opera, the bass-baritone has appeared here in over 20 different operas since his 1985 debut in *Adriana Lecouvreur*. Among the numerous roles he has sung with the Company are Ferrando in *Il Trovatore*, Méphistophélès in the student/family performances of *Faust*, Monterone in *Rigoletto*, Count Horn (Sam) in *Un Ballo in Maschera*, Colline in *La Bohème*, and, last fall, Ferrando in *Il Trovatore*. Skinner was a 1985

Merola Opera Program participant who also toured with Western Opera Theater in the title role of *Don Giovanni*. A 1986-87 Adler Fellow, he appeared in several of the Center's Showcase productions and was a 1990 Schwabacher Debut Recitalist. This past season, Skinner sang King Philip in *Don Carlo* with Portland Opera, Timur in *Turandot* with Atlanta Opera, Monterone with the Israel Philharmonic, and Colline with Dallas Opera. He also appeared with the Chicago Lyric Opera in *Boris Godunov* and made his Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie debut in *Salome*. Additional engagements were with the opera companies of Houston (title role of *Le Nozze di Figaro*) and the four villains of *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*), Seattle, Vancouver, Toronto, Edmonton, and Melbourne, Australia, among others, as well as with several prominent U.S. orchestras. The American artist, currently a resident of the Bay Area, graduated from Northwestern University and received his master's degree from Indiana University.

ARTIST PROFILES



Music Director of San Francisco Opera since 1992, **DONALD RUNNICLES** is highly regarded as one of the finest conductors active today, with a distinguished series of international triumphs to his credit. Born in Edinburgh, the Scottish artist began his career in Germany, where he rose from répétiteur in Mannheim in 1980 to General Music Director of Städtische Bühnen in Freiburg in 1989. During this period, he assisted at the Bayreuth Wagner Festival and began conducting in guest appearances throughout Europe.

His credits include highly praised engagements with the Vienna State Opera, where he has led productions of Wagner's *Ring*, *Manon Lescaut* and *Tosca*, Zurich Opera, Royal Opera at Copenhagen, Netherlands Opera and the Vienna Volksoper. In Great Britain, his opera debut took place at the Glyndebourne Festival in 1991 (*Don Giovanni*), while in 1992 he made his native city debut with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra at the prestigious Edinburgh Festival, where he returned to lead Mahler's Eighth Symphony at the opening concert last summer. His North American debut was in 1988, when he led the Metropolitan Opera's *Lulu* on five hours' notice, while his San Francisco Opera debut occurred in 1990 with highly acclaimed performances of two cycles of Wagner's *Ring*. Additional SFO credits include *Guillaume Tell*, *Boris Godunov*, *Fidelio*, *Don Carlo*, *Salome*, televised productions of *Capriccio* and *Turandot*, *Die Meistersinger*, *La Clemenza di Tito*, *Macbeth*, *Tannhäuser*, the world premiere of Conrad Susa/Philip Littell's *The Dangerous Liaisons* (telecast nationally on "Great Performances"), the North American premiere of Tippett's *King Priam*, and this summer's concert presentation of Gluck's *Orphée et Eurydice*. (A studio recording of Gluck's opera was made earlier this year, with Runnicles conducting the SFO Orchestra and Chorus, and is scheduled for release during the fall of 1996.) Highlights elsewhere include the opening performance of the 1993 Bayreuth Festival (a new production of *Tannhäuser*, the opera he conducted once again this summer for the Festival's first performance), a debut with the Munich National Opera (*Don Giovanni*), Prokofiev's *The Fiery Angel* in Vienna, and symphonic debuts with the San Francisco Symphony (highly successful performances earlier this year of Britten's *War Requiem*), London Symphony, Orchestre de Paris, Israel Philharmonic, Rotterdam Philharmonic, Seattle Symphony, Pittsburgh Symphony and Chicago Symphony. This summer, he received an Honorary Doctorate of Music from the University of Edinburgh. The maestro's first commercial recording, Humperdinck's *Hänsel und Gretel*, was recently released to critical acclaim. Runnicles is on the podium for the Company this season to conduct *Madama Butterfly*, *Die Walküre*, and a new staging of *Don Giovanni*.



SANDRA BERNHARD, the director of *Madama Butterfly*, has previously directed San Francisco Opera's staged concert presentations of *Lucio Silla*, *Ermione* and *Daphne*, the student matinee performances of *L'Elisir d'Amore*, as well as *La Bohème* in 1993 and last fall's new production of *Lucia di Lammermoor*. A member of the Company since 1990, she has served as assistant director for over 15 productions here, and was recently appointed Education Director of the San Francisco Opera Center. She has also served as director of the Merola Opera Program's Grand Finals from

1991-1994. In addition to her San Francisco Opera credits, she has mounted productions for Greater Miami Opera (*Il Barbiere di Siviglia* and *Rigoletto*), Virginia Opera (*The Medium* and *Cue 67*), and Opera Memphis (*Roméo et Juliette*), as well as her own works (*A Point of Departure*, *A Night in Berlin*, *Postage Due* and *Buffa Bus Stop*) in Chautauqua, Norfolk and Miami. A graduate of the University of Illinois, she is currently a guest instructor at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, and has had previous teaching assignments at Utah Opera, Greater Miami Opera, Virginia Opera, Chautauqua Opera and Louisiana State University. Last year, Miss Bernhard was Stage Director of Sarasota Opera's Apprentice Program.



Designer **TONY BUSINGER** made his San Francisco Opera debut in 1966 with the production of *Madama Butterfly* seen this season and previously revived in 1968, '69, '71, '74, '80, '84 and '89. He also created the original design for *Don Giovanni* as seen here in 1974, '78, '81 summer and '84. Other projects for the Company have been *La Traviata* (first mounted in 1969 and revived in 1973, '80 and '83), and *The Magic Flute* (1969 and '75). A designer for theater and television as well as opera, Businger made his theatrical debut at the Zurich Schauspielhaus in 1957. From 1973

to 1975, he was chief scenic designer of the Hamburg Staatsoper, and his designs have been seen in Austria, Finland, France, Holland, South Africa, Switzerland, Germany and the U.S. In recent seasons his sets and costumes have been mounted in Lisbon (*Tannhäuser*), Savonlinna and Frankfurt (*The Magic Flute*), Toronto (*Le Nozze di Figaro*), and Berne (*Der Rosenkavalier* and *Il Trovatore*).



Lighting Director and Design Consultant for San Francisco Opera since 1976, **THOMAS J. MUNN** created the lighting and special effects for *Ruslan and Lyudmila*, in addition to the lighting for *La Traviata*, *Madama Butterfly*, *La Cenerentola*, *Faust* and *Die Walküre*. He has designed the lighting and special effects for over 155 productions for the Company, including the highly acclaimed presentations of Wagner's *Ring* cycle. As scenic adviser, he has designed scenery for SFO productions of *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, *Roberto Devereux*, *Pelléas et Mélisande*, *Billy Budd*, *Nabucco*, *Don Giovanni*,

and *Christophe Colomb*. In addition to his work for the San Francisco Opera, Munn has designed scenery and lighting for Broadway, Off-Broadway, regional theater, ballet, industrials and films. His television and video credits include San Francisco Opera's Emmy-winning telecast of *La Gioconda*, also *Samson et Dalila*, *Aida*, *L'Africaine*, *La Bohème*, *Orlando Furioso*, *Mefistofele*, *Capriccio*, *Turandot* and *The Dangerous Liaisons*. Credits for other companies include work for the Dallas Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Washington Opera, Chicago Lyric Opera and the Netherlands Opera, as well as scenery and lighting for Hartford Ballet's *Nutcracker*. Recent credits include lighting for the Dallas Opera's production of *La Cenerentola*, scenery and lighting for Ballet Arizona's staging of *Coppélia*, as well as art direction and lighting for the video "The Universe Story." In the future, Munn will design the lighting for Dallas Opera's production of *Il Trovatore*, and will also serve as consultant/designer of the War Memorial's new renovated and computerized lighting system.

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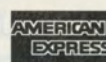
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SPEAKING OF OPERA

(continued from p. 42)

Both sopranos recovered from the flu, had notable successes, and General Director Adler asked each to return. Nilsson was pleased to refuse. She had in the meantime been discovered by Sir Rudolf Bing and the Met and didn't return to San Francisco until 1964, for *Fidelio* and *Turandot*. But, she remembers, "Adler never gave up. He came to Europe; he came to me wherever I was, and he tried to nail me down. He was very hard to deal with, because he wanted if he could to split a penny in two pieces. He lost me one year because he did not want to pay my normal fee. It took such a long time before he made up his mind and sent me a telegram saying, 'You win, I'll pay.' I cabled back and said: 'You lose, La Scala is paying my fee this year.'"

Nilsson claims with admiration that Adler could niggle over fees through an entire afternoon. "He tried as hard as he could to pay as little as possible. He was always on the Opera's side."

Leonie Rysanek did return the next year—1957—the year of the Callas flap. She was engaged to sing *Ariadne* and *Turandot* that season, and when Callas canceled her appearances in *Macbeth* and *Lucia* just four days before opening night, presumably due to illness, Rysanek gamely jumped in, learned the role of Lady Macbeth in ten days, and gave what was considered a brilliant performance. "I sang every other night or so, I think," she reminisces. "It's a wonder I still have a voice left!" She also stood in for Antonietta Stella in *Un Ballo in Maschera* that season, and at year's end, Adler, always operating on a tight budget, could offer only profuse thanks for the extra labor.

Rysanek came back to San Francisco in 1958 and 1960, and then stayed away until 1973. She was busy in Vienna and by that time Bing had discovered her as well, but in years to come—she celebrated thirty years since her debut with the company in 1986—she sang many of her signature roles here. Invited for the Empress in *Frau ohne Schatten* in 1976, she persuaded Karl Böhm to conduct in San Francisco. Adler extended the pit for the production, something he had long wanted to do, but Böhm wasn't happy with the situation. "He was another dictator," Rysanek remembers, "and it is no secret he was not so happy with the orchestra. He said, 'The city is beautiful, yes. My cast is good. But altogether [it] is not good.'" Adler, the "other dictator," stepped in and



Birgit Nilsson and Kurt Herbert Adler after a 1970 performance of *Tristan und Isolde*.

dealt with the problem, and if Rysanek was responsible for bringing Böhm to San Francisco, Adler got him to stay: "This was absolute Adler. I don't know what he did, but Adler did wonders with him."

Over the years, Leonie Rysanek and Birgit Nilsson became close friends, and after their return to the Company they came to champion Adler as the best of impresarios. "He knew music so well, he knew voices so well...he gave the most fantastic performances," Nilsson commented. "Always somehow the greatest singers; not only one or two, but the whole ensemble." Both sopranos were on hand for the *Walküre* of Adler's 1981 farewell season.

Rysanek remembered the Adler humor: "Once when I came offstage in *Tannhäuser* after the famous aria, he gave me 25 cents, saying, 'That's because you sang so beautifully, but musically it was not very good.' So I said to him, 'But if my voice was so gorgeous, who cares how good it was musically?' This was typical Adler. He understood a lot about voices, and what he made out of the house, from when I came in 1956 until he left! That house is now one of the great opera houses in the world. It has to go down in the books of the history of America. He deserves that place." ■



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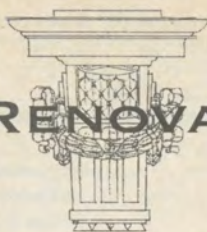
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Thursday, October 5
Sunday, October 8
Saturday, October 14
Tuesday, October 24
Saturday, November 4
Saturday, November 25
Sunday, December 3
Wednesday, December 6

Tickets for Guild members, \$2; non-members, \$5. Reservations required. Information: (415) 565-6433.

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Information: (415) 552-8338.

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During all 1995 San Francisco Opera performances, patron entry and exit will be via Van Ness and Grove Street doors ONLY. The door that opens one and one-half hours prior to curtain time will be on Grove Street. Three doors on the north (carriage) side of the Opera House will be available during performances for EMERGENCY EXIT ONLY via ramps over the basement excavation.

SPECIAL SERVICE FOR SAN FRANCISCO OPERA PATRONS:

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

FOOD SERVICE. The Opera House lower lounge 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 taxi entrance on Grove Street. 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 (415) 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.

For **LOST AND FOUND** information, inquire at checkroom #3 or call (415) 621-6600, 8:30 to 11:30 a.m., Monday through Friday.

TICKET INFORMATION. San Francisco Opera's Ticket and Patron Services Center, 199 Grove at Van Ness, open 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Saturday. Opera House Box Office: open 2 hours before each performance through the first intermission on performance days only. Phone charge: (415) 864-3330, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Saturday (VISA, American Express, MasterCard). Tickets are also available on a limited basis through BASS and STBS outlets.

MAKE A VALUED CONTRIBUTION TO SAN FRANCISCO OPERA. You can make an important contribution to San Francisco Opera by returning any tickets you cannot use to the Box Office for resale. These ticket returns are of great value to S.F. Opera and to other patrons who may be unable to obtain tickets to sold-out performances. If you are unable to use your tickets or exchange them for another performance of the same opera, you may make a full-value, tax-deductible contribution of your tickets. To make a donation, simply return your tickets to the Box Office or call (415) 864-3330, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. You may also call (415) 565-6485 from 6 p.m. to 10 minutes before curtain. Unfortunately, we are unable to apply the donations towards membership 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 last intermission.

WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE RESTROOMS are located in the lower lounge and on the dress circle level (north). Wheelchair accessible public telephones including "TDD" are located in the northeast corner of the lobby. Accessible drinking fountains are on orchestra and dress circle levels.

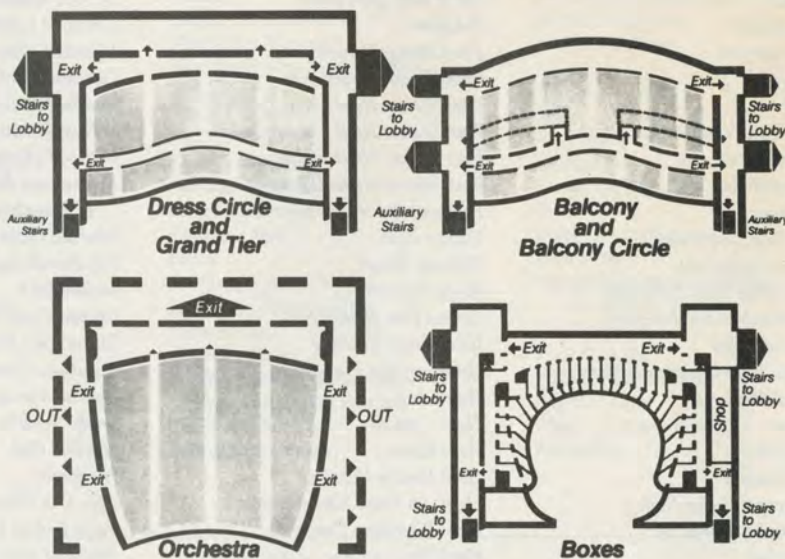
For the safety and comfort of our audience, all large parcels, backpacks, luggage, etc., must be checked at Opera House cloak-rooms.

Opera glasses are available in the lobby.

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

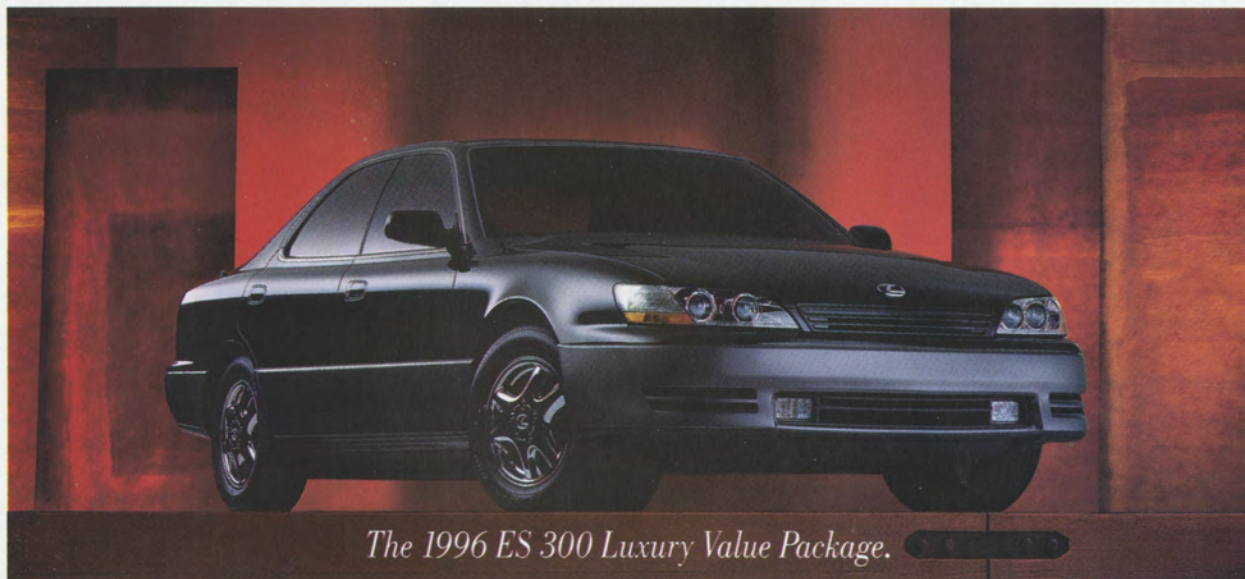
Management reserves the right to remove any patron creating a disturbance.

San Francisco War Memorial and Performing Arts Center War Memorial Opera House



Patrons, Attention Please! Fire Notice: There are sufficient exits in this building to accommodate the entire audience. The exit indicated by the lighted "EXIT" sign nearest your seat is the shortest route to the street. (Refer to Diagrams.) In case of fire please do not run—walk through that exit.

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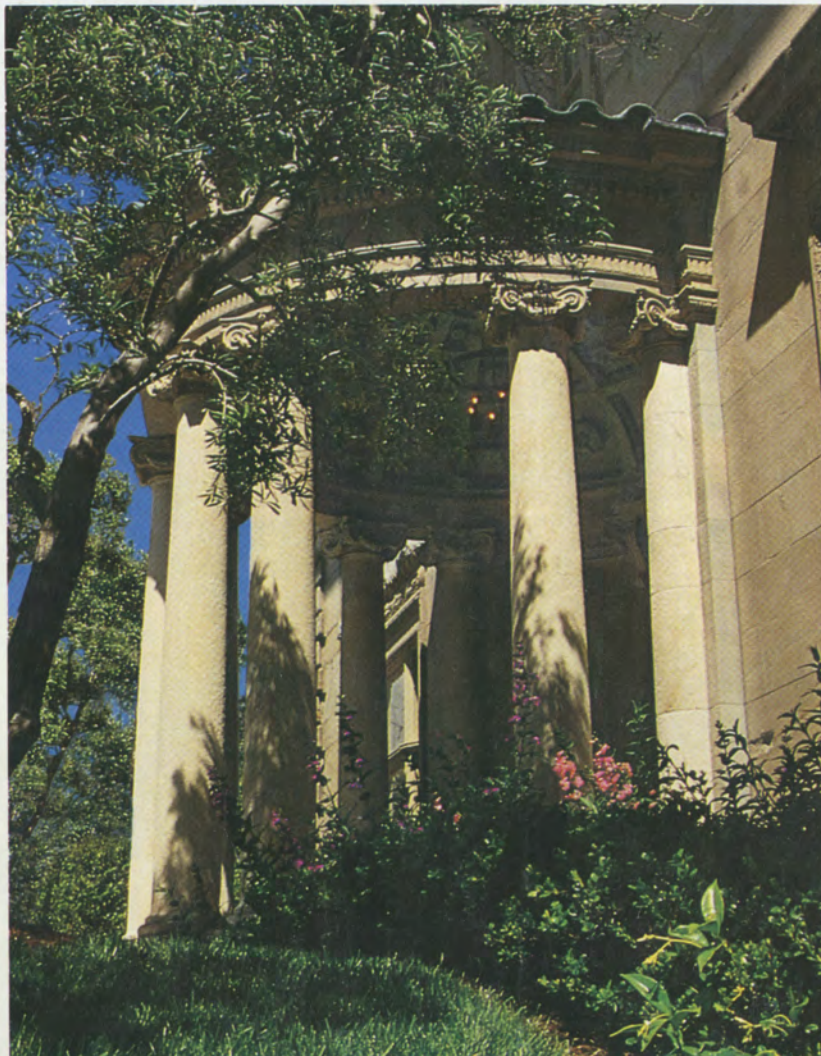
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