

Hamlet

1996-1997

Thursday, September 12, 1996 7:30 PM
Saturday, September 14, 1996 7:30 PM
Tuesday, September 17, 1996 7:30 PM
Thursday, September 19, 1996 7:30 PM
Sunday, September 22, 1996 1:30 PM
Tuesday, September 24, 1996 7:30 PM
Friday, September 27, 1996 7:30 PM
Sunday, September 29, 1996 1:30 PM

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SAN FRANCISCO OPERA

1996-97 SEASON

HAMLET



Stagebill

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FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD



ON BEHALF OF THE SAN FRANCISCO OPERA ASSOCIATION, we are delighted to welcome you to our 1996/97 Season at the Bill Graham Civic Auditorium and the Orpheum Theatre. This is a season that started with a bang seven years ago, when the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake rattled the War Memorial Opera House and the forecast for San Francisco Opera changed dramatically. The extensive Opera House renovation, which includes seismic and safety upgrades, improvements for your comfort in the audience as well as to backstage areas, is nearly a year under way—on time and on budget. Despite the May 2 fire in the Opera House, we are optimistic that the work will be completed, as scheduled, in June of 1997. More than anything, that blaze has served as a reminder of just how fragile and special the Opera House is to this community and the world.

In order to fulfill our commitment to the Opera House renovation and stay in the black operationally during this period, we launched a special three-year campaign in 1995 to raise \$20 million above and beyond our normal fundraising goals. The Company's financial position continues to be strong, with ticket sales and donations at record highs. We have just finished our third year operating in the black and we are also well along, but not finished, with our extra fund-raising programs. Our gratitude goes out to all patrons who have responded to the extra needs of this period by contributing to our three-year campaign and the Committee to Restore the Opera House. Currently, more than 15,000 households support San Francisco Opera. With your help, the restored Opera House will be ready in time for the 1997 Fall Season—and San Francisco Opera will sail into its 75th season maintaining a solid fiscal profile.

For our single season out of the Opera House, General Director Lotfi Mansouri and his fine team have worked diligently to provide you with an exceptional season of great opera, maintaining the high standards that you expect from San Francisco Opera. We have reconfigured the theaters and planned for new productions that will utilize these unique spaces to their fullest extent. Innovation has been the cornerstone of this Company throughout its history, and this year you will see it more visibly than at any other time. As we look to the future of San Francisco Opera, that spirit of innovation will continue to grow.

We extend a special thank you to the San Francisco Opera Guild for its support of the Opera, its outstanding success in taking opera out to the schools, and for coordinating hundreds of volunteers and the thousands of hours they contribute every year. We also thank the BRAVO! CLUB for its efforts in developing a younger audience for opera.

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 goes to San Francisco Mayor Willie Brown 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



WELCOME TO SAN FRANCISCO OPERA'S 1996/97 Season—the most adventurous and varied in our Company's rich 74-year history. During our one season in the Bill Graham Civic Auditorium and the Orpheum Theatre, we will present ten operas over a six-month period that runs from September through February—nearly three months longer than our traditional fall season. This is an exciting time filled with new artistic opportunities, a distinguished roster of great international singers, designers, directors and conductors, eight new productions, the Company premieres of *Prince Igor* and *Hamlet*, and the West Coast premiere of our commissioned work, *Harvey Milk*. Hundreds of people have planned and worked for countless hours over several years to create this special season—and we are delighted that you have joined us.

Music Director Donald Runnicles will be here to conduct four productions this season, leading our wonderful San Francisco Opera Orchestra and Chorus, both acclaimed as being among the world's finest opera ensembles.

During the extensive Opera House renovation, we wanted to offer you an exciting new opera experience. We couldn't begin to recreate the magnificent Opera House, so we went in an entirely new direction and created a bold festival environment for the Civic Auditorium, complete with thrust stage and audience seating in the round. Because it is an epic space, we chose six grand operas well suited to arena stagings which will fill the space with the glorious music and drama opera audiences adore. The Orpheum Theatre features three smaller-scale operas perfectly suited to a more intimate space. The overwhelming success of our three-week run of *La Bohème* at the Orpheum this past summer not only proved that it is a fine theater for opera, but also introduced thousands of new audience members to opera. We are hopeful that this will continue during this season, especially with the increased seating capacity at the Civic (1,001 more than at the Opera House) and a broad range of ticket prices.

The great Plácido Domingo will return to us this year for a special concert at the Civic on October 20. And in December, we will have the rare opportunity of performing during the holidays for the first time in our history: a glittering production of the classic Viennese operetta *Die Fledermaus*, sung in English for five performances, December 26-29. We have also planned a spectacular New Year's Eve party at the Civic: "Prince Orlofsky's Masked Ball," featuring Act 2 of *Die Fledermaus*, special cameo performances by singers and dancers, and a masquerade ball with dinner, dancing and a champagne toast to the new year.

Enjoy the season, and stay with us as we look forward to our 75th season and a sparkling return to the War Memorial Opera House.

LOTFI MANSOURI
GENERAL DIRECTOR

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SAN FRANCISCO OPERA MAGAZINE

Hamlet

1996-97 Season
Vol. 74, No. 3

FEATURES

10 The Opera's the Thing by Michael Steinberg
Or, how Shakespeare's *Hamlet* became, through the intervention of Barbier, Carré, and Thomas, a French grand opéra.

34 Divas at Work by Timothy Pfaff
The Merola Opera Program Class of 1996 was taught by a formidable group of teachers, including two celebrated singers, Graziella Sciutti and Régine Crespin.

DEPARTMENTS

- 4 Administration
- 8 Repertoire, 1996-97 Season
- 17 Cast
- 18 Synopsis
- 26 Artist Roster
- 28 San Francisco Opera Orchestra
- 30 San Francisco Opera Association
- 30 Series A Boxholders
- 40 1996-97 Opera Previews
- 41 Artist Profiles
- 47 Medallion Society
- 53 Supporting San Francisco Opera
- 57 Bel Canto Society
- 59 Corporate Council
- 62 San Francisco Opera Center Supporters
- 64 Services

COVER

Delacroix, Eugène, 1798-1863
Hamlet and Horatio at the Cemetery, 1839

Oil on canvas, 32 x 26 in.
Paris, Musée du Louvre

Photographie Giraudon
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*San Francisco Opera debut

(continued on page 6)

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REPERTOIRE • 1996-97 SEASON

Opening Night

San Francisco Opera premiere

PRINCE IGOR

Borodin

Flanigan*, Zarembo, Cook;
Leiferkus, Baker, Wells,
Burchuladze*, Ognovenko,
Pluzhnikov/Rideout, Petersen

Anissimov;
Zambello/Brown/Poulin/Munn
Civic Auditorium
Sept. 6, 10, 13, 15, 18, 21, 25

San Francisco Opera premiere

HAMLET

Thomas

Swenson, Forst; Hampson, Lloyd,
Boutet/Hendrick, Langan, Relyea†,
Autry†, Skelton*†, Knežević

Abel*;
Graham/Howland/Perdziola/ Kaczorowski*
Orpheum Theatre
Sept. 12, 14, 17, 19, 22, 24, 27, 29
Production made possible by a generous grant from the
Carol Franc Buck Foundation

New production

LOHENGRIN

Wagner

Mattila, Connell; Heppner/Sunnegårdh**
(10/6,12), Fox, Rootering, Okerlund†,
Boutet, Skelton†, Autry†, Relyea†

Runnicles;
Feldman/Brown/P.J.Hall/Munn
Civic Auditorium
Sept. 28; Oct. 1, 4, 6, 9, 12

IL BARBIERE DI SIVIGLIA

Rossini

Larmore, Cook; Hovorostovsky*, Ford,
Miles, Del Carlo, Autry†

Campanella;
Copley/Siercke/Walker/Arhelger
Orpheum Theatre
Oct. 10, 13, 18, 20, 23, 26, 28

Shigematsu, Cook; Patriarco,
Saccà**, Patton, Condly, Knežević

Summers;
Copley/Siercke/Walker/Arhelger
Orpheum Theatre
Oct. 11, 19, 24, 26 (m)

SPECIAL EVENT

PLÁCIDO DOMINGO IN CONCERT

With Adler Fellows of the San Francisco
Opera Center and the San Francisco
Opera Orchestra
Civic Auditorium
Oct. 20

New production

CARMEN

Bizet

Borodina, Mills, Dillard, Foland†;
Cura*, Fink*, Skinner, Okerlund†,
Autry†, Skelton†
Runnicles;
Mansouri/Yeargan/Bosquet/Morgan/Whitfield
Civic Auditorium
Oct. 22, 25, 27, 30; Nov. 2, 5, 8

Maultsby*, Racette, Dillard,
Foland†; Larin, Quilico, Skinner,
Okerlund†, Autry†, Skelton†

Joël**;
Mansouri/Yeargan/Bosquet/Morgan/Whitfield
Civic Auditorium
Feb. 12, 15, 19, 22

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HARVEY MILK **Wallace/Korie**

Gondek*, Bishop, Grove*,
Buchanan†, Foland†, Kriha
Dyet†; Orth, Williams*, Wong*,
Very*, Maddalena, Saks*, Autry†,
Chioldi, Okerlund†, Skelton†,
Bryant*, Yu*

Runnicles;
C. Alden/Steinberg/Berry*/Carson*
Orpheum Theatre
Nov. 9, 13, 16, 19, 21, 24, 27, 30

New production

LES CONTES D'HOFFMANN Offenbach

Dahl, Racette, Keen, Donose**
Bishop; Hadley, Ramey, Sénéchal,
Frank, Skinner, Autry†, Skelton†,
Knežević, Relyea†

Mercurio;
C. Alden/Howland/Björnson*/Munn
Civic Auditorium
Nov. 17, 20, 23, 26, 29; Dec. 1, 3

DIE FLEDERMAUS

Strauss, J. Jr.

Lappalainen*/Foland†, Dahl/Kriha
Dye†; Asawa, Baerg/Okerlund†,
Portilla/Scibelli*, Chioldi/Patriarco,
Strummer, Molomot*

Sander*;
Mansouri/Skalicki/Bosquet/Munn
Civic Auditorium
Dec. 26, 27, 28 (m & e), 29

PRINCE ORLOFSKY'S MASQUERADE BALL

Civic Auditorium
Dec. 31

New production

SALOME

Strauss, R.

Huffstodt*, Forst, Cao†; Cochran,
Weikl, Streit, Patton, Skelton†,
MacMaster*, Molomot, Okerlund†,
Relyea†, Sumegi, Knežević

Weikert*;
Mansouri/Skalicki/Walek/Morgan/Munn
Civic Auditorium
Jan. 18, 21, 23, 26, 29; Feb. 1

New production

AIDA

Verdi

Crider*, Terentiev, Buchanan†;
Armiliato, Noble/C. Robertson (2/20),
D'Artegna*, Patton/Sumegi (2/20, 23),
Skelton†

Runnicles;
Williams/Skalicki/Casey/Byrd*/Munn
Civic Auditorium
Feb. 8, 11, 14, 18, 20, 23

Lister, Grunewald*, Buchanan†;
Fraccaro*, C. Robertson* (2/13)/Noble,
D'Artegna,
Sumegi, Skelton†

Runnicles;
Williams/Skalicki/Casey/Byrd/Munn
Civic Auditorium
Feb. 13, 16, 21

** United States opera debut
* San Francisco Opera debut
†1996 Adler Fellow

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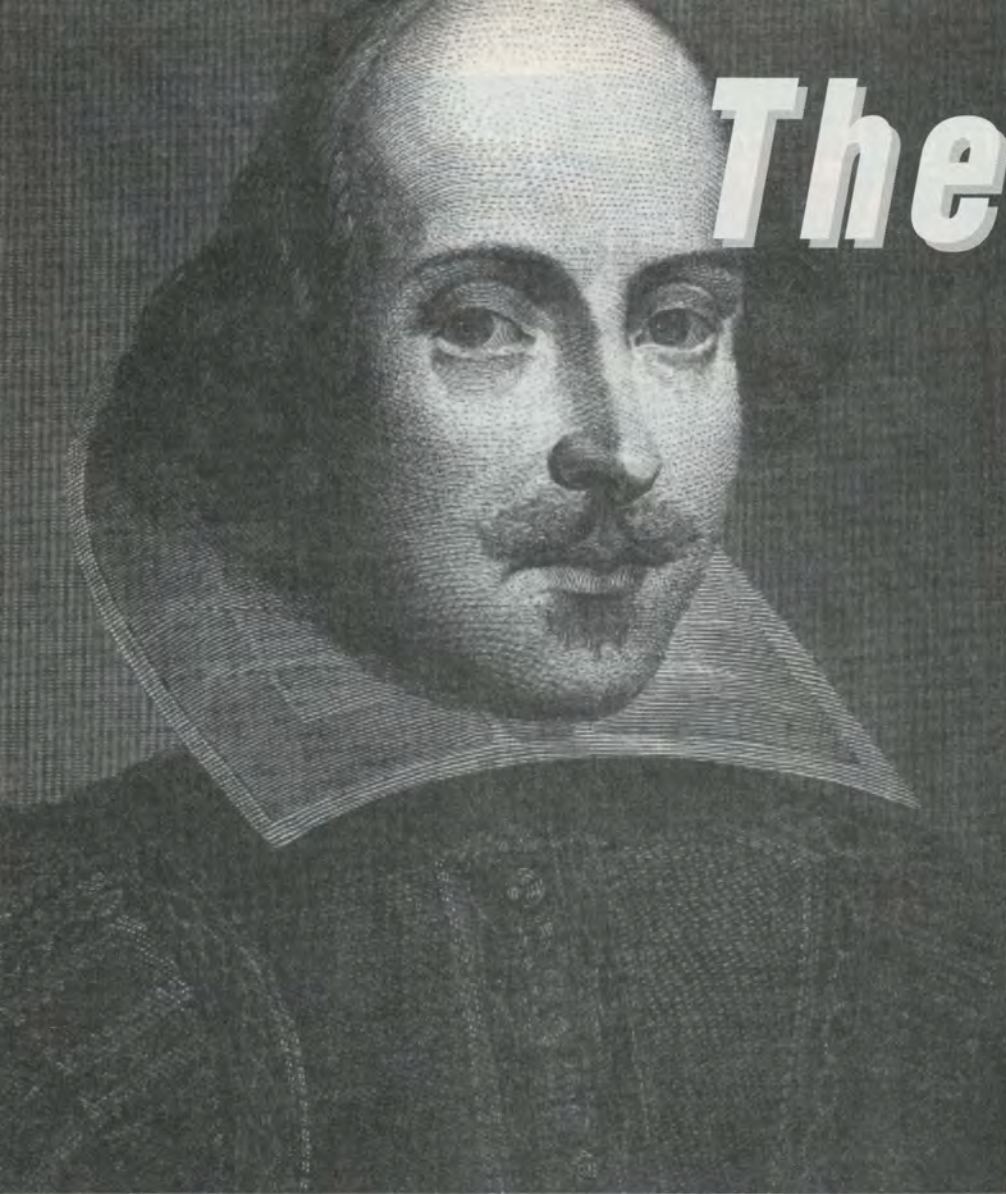
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The Opera

By MICHAEL STEINBERG

AS A BOY I LIVED FOR SOME YEARS in England with an unmusical though otherwise cultured English family. Once a bit of Verdi's *Otello* came over on the wireless, as we called it then; I remember only that it was passionate and emphatic, but I do recall, vividly, that there were dark mutterings which included the word "foreigners" and ended with "... our English Shakespeare."

Some fifty years before that, in July of 1890, George Bernard Shaw, then music critic for *The World*, saw Thomas's *Hamlet* at Covent Garden. [I shall refer to the opera as *Hamlet* and the play as "Hamlet."]

He had no xenophobic knee-jerk response to foreigners who composed Shakespeare operas: he hailed *Otello* as "powerful and interesting" and told his readers not to miss it on any account. He was hardly less positive about *Falstaff*, he called Hermann Goetz's *The Taming of the Shrew* "one of the most shamefully neglected operas of the XIX century," and his one passing reference to *The Merry Wives of Windsor* is to "Nicolai's pretty opera."

But *Hamlet* exasperated him. "I really never saw such a foolish opera," he wrote, going on to recommend that at least "the title of the work ought to be changed . . .

Since Ambroise Thomas has honestly done his very best not to remind us of Shakespeare [GBS's preferred spelling], why should the subject be dragged in by calling the people in the libretto Ophelia, Hamlet, Laertes, and so on?" (I imagine Shaw was aware that the Germans, even more proprietary about Goethe than the British about Shakespeare, had long ago dealt with the problem of Gounod's *Faust* by calling it *Margarethe*, leaving them free to enjoy the seductive music without twinges of literary conscience.)

And so the first step toward the enjoyment of *Hamlet*, an opera in which there is much to enjoy, must be to forget about "Hamlet" much as, for example, readers who love Jane Austen do better to forget about her books if they are to take pleasure in *Sense and Sensibility* or *Persuasion* at the movies. "Hamlet" is a vast affair, not as vast as Goethe's *Faust*, but still, in its exploration of tragedy, pathos, politics, melodrama, difficult sexual relationships, wit, and raw humor, it is immense in range. Perhaps Arrigo Boito, who did such a brilliant job turning "Othello" into *Otello*, could have tamed "Hamlet"; perhaps the answer to the quest for a musical treatment that would do justice to Shakespeare is for a composer of genius to work along the lines of Berlioz's *Roméo et Juliette* Symphony or Schumann's *Scenes from Goethe's Faust*, that is, abandoning any ambition in the direction of dramatic continuity and concentrating on getting a few salient scenes exactly right.¹

At any rate, the *Hamlet* librettists—Michel Carré and Jules Barbier, experienced craftsmen who had prepared the books for Gounod's *Faust* and *Roméo et Juliette* as well as for Thomas's *Mignon* and Meyerbeer's *Dinorah*—had their work cut out for them.² Shakespeare's play, which runs to more than 2600 lines of verse and

¹ Tchaikovsky took a step in that direction when he tackled Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*, and, significantly, he called his work "lyric scenes" rather than an "opera." In the 1880s, Tchaikovsky also wrote about fifty minutes of incidental music for "Hamlet," none of it unworthy, some of it very lovely. Liszt's tone poem on the subject broods effectively and offers some sweet Ophelia music (not unlike the Gretchen music in his *Faust* Symphony) but rather too much formulaic agitation. Not surprisingly, the most sensitive, imaginative, and affecting "Hamlet" music is by Berlioz—*La Mort d'Ophélie*, which is a setting of his friend Ernest Legouvé's translation of Gertrude's "There is a willow grows askant a brook," and a grimly grand Funeral March for the final scene.

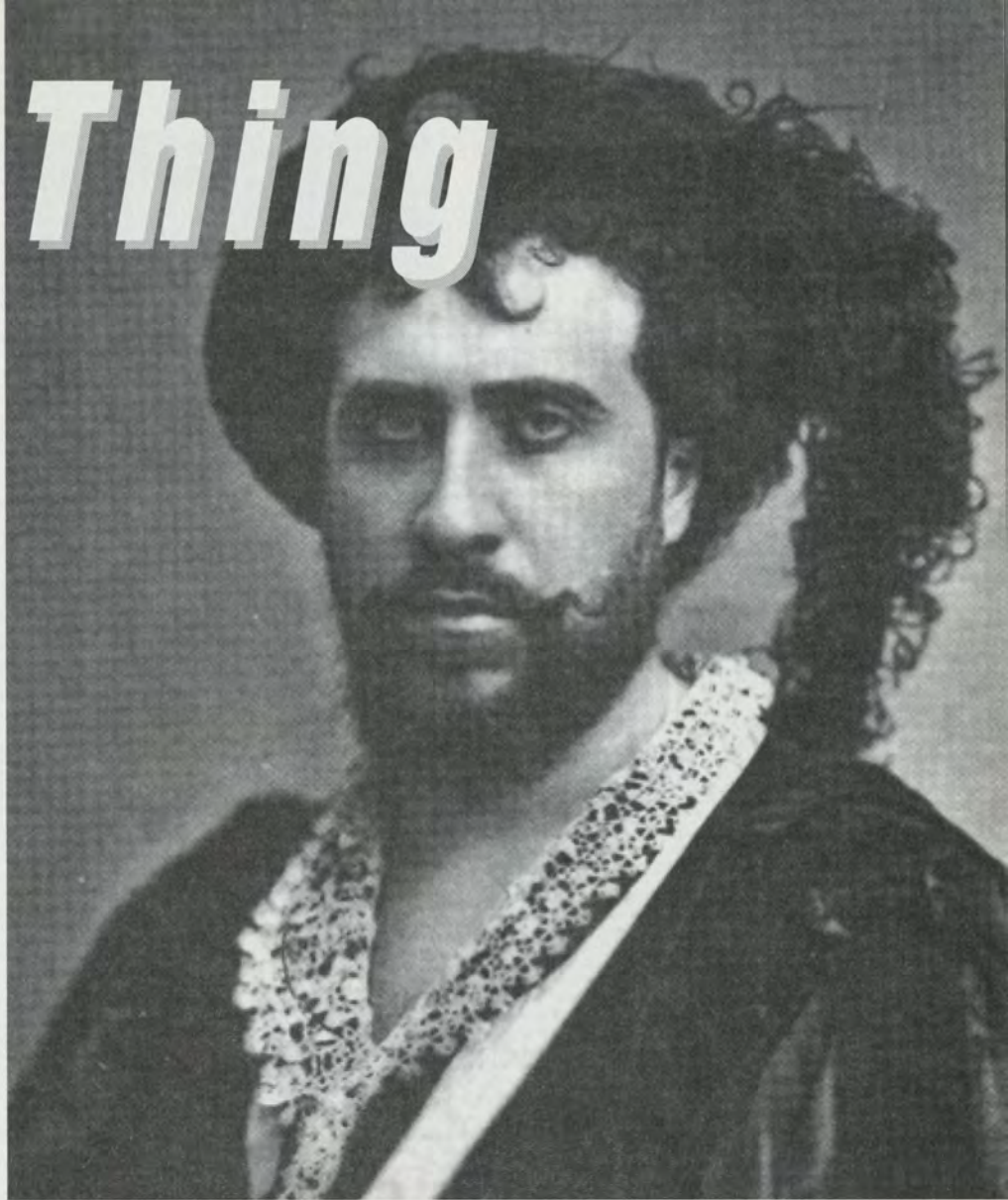
² On his own, Carré also wrote the libretto for Gounod's *Mireille* and with Eugène Cormon that for Bizet's *The Pearl Fishers*; the staggeringly prolific Barbier produced the text of Offenbach's *Tales of Hoffmann* (based on a play by himself and Carré).

's the Thing

well over 1,000 lines of prose, has eighteen named characters, not counting the players, gravediggers, and a few others; the opera libretto has some 800 lines of text and eleven characters. That is commendable efficiency, and necessary: speaking practically, librettist and composer have to assume that it takes about three times as long to sing a given number of lines as to speak them.

Among the casualties are dear Rosencrantz and gentle Guildenstern, the waterfly Osric, and, to all intents and purposes, Polonius, whose part—not counting a few exclamations in ensemble on the order of “Que dit-il?” and “Ô terreur!”—is reduced to sixteen words. Someone described Pfitzner’s *Palestrina* as *Parsifal* minus the jokes.³ The disappearance of the hero’s slippery college pals, the baroque expert on dueling protocol, and the muddle-headed Lord Chamberlain alerts us to the sad fact that *Hamlet* is “Hamlet” with the humor left out. Even the gravediggers are somber as can be (and alcoholic), and their Act V duet, “Dame ou prince, homme ou femme,” seems modeled on the sad song of the sons of Cymbeline, “Fear no more the heat o’ the sun.” Next to his poetry, Shakespeare’s humor—in the most encompassing sense of the word—is what the theater devotee and reader who loves “Hamlet” is most going to miss in *Hamlet*. That particular change is of course very French. Shakespeare was severely censured by French critics, most notably Voltaire, for his reckless mixture of genres and disturbing collisions of mood and tone. Even in the nineteenth century, when a considerable Shakespeare cult developed in France, audiences still tended to prefer their tragedy unleavened.⁴

What is added? *L’amour*. An overt Romantic or erotic engagement involving two or more characters is an all but essential ingredient for good opera. (The exceptions—I’ll let you make your own list—are



Opposite: William Shakespeare, 1564-1616

Above: Jean-Baptiste Faure, the French baritone who created the role of Hamlet in the first performance of Thomas’s opera, is shown in his costume for the melancholy Dane.

interesting but not numerous.) In Shakespeare, the relationship between Hamlet and Ophelia is involving and intense but for the most part negative, with Hamlet himself often insulting and hard for Ophelia to read. Laertes, a more intelligent version of his sententious father, sees at least part way through it, and takes pains to warn his sister not to mistake “the perfume and suppliance of a minute” for what it is not.

Shakespeare’s Ophelia would, like most of his female roles, have been played by a boy, a good-looking one, no doubt, and with an appealing singing voice, but still someone just emerging from childhood

and of limited interpretive and technical possibilities.⁵ It is in fact one of Shakespeare’s recurring miracles how, time after time, he creates richly portrayed, multi-dimensional female characters with amazingly few lines. Thomas, writing in 1868 for the Paris Opéra (or Académie Impériale, as it was officially called), had a female soprano, one, moreover, who was a star and an artist of the first order. No one bought tickets to “Hamlet” at the Globe Theatre for the sake of the boy who played Ophelia; well, no doubt there were some who did, but the boy was anonymous and certainly not a star. People by the hundreds did, however, buy tickets to hear

³ Actually, those who know the second act of *Palestrina* will rightly protest that Pfitzner’s masterpiece exhibits more (intentional) humor than Wagner’s “Bühnenweihfestspiel.”

⁴ There is a parallel in the resistance to Mahler in the first half of this century.

⁵ Bawdy parts like Juliet’s nurse and Doll Tearsheet were played, à la *Charley’s Aunt*, by men.

and see the twenty-four-year-old Christine Nilsson (increasingly admired in Paris since she had made her debut as Violetta at the Théâtre Lyrique in 1864), and because her name on an *affiche* meant a lot at the box office, she had to be given plenty to do.

It goes without saying that as Ophelia, Nilsson would get a rewarding Mad Scene, an occasion for the display of dramatic and vocal prowess that had been made popular in Bellini's *La Sonnambula* and *I Puritani*, then stunningly so in Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*; to make sure, however, that her admirers would get their money's worth, she also had to be given some good love music. The adored Nilsson's availability, it should be added, was crucial to Thomas's decision to go ahead with the *Hamlet* project that he had cherished for some years; so, for that matter, was that of the thirty-eight-year-old Jean-Baptiste Faure, then and for a couple of decades thereafter the most esteemed of French baritones. It was also because of Faure that the title role in *Hamlet* was not given to a tenor.

*

Ambroise Thomas was a mature and experienced musician of fifty-six when *Hamlet* was produced at the Opéra. He was born in 1811 in the fortress town of Metz, some thirty miles from the German border, and he studied at the Paris Conservatory. He was a good student, a Prix de Rome winner, and one of very few composers to score a success with his first opera, *La Double échelle*, given at the Opéra-Comique in 1837. It was twelve years, though, before he had another hit; this, a very palpable hit indeed, was the Rossinian *Le Caïd*, still in the Opéra-Comique's repertory at the turn of the century. It was in 1850 that Thomas tangled with Shakespeare for the first time. *Le Songe d'une nuit d'été* is not, as its title suggests, an operatic version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; rather, it is an odd, but from the looks of the score, engaging farrago whose cast of characters includes Queen Elizabeth, Sir John Falstaff, and William Shakespeare himself.

A major event in French operatic life was the premiere in 1859 of Gounod's *Faust*, an opera that is not in any sense a serious engagement with Goethe's larger-than-life play as Berlioz's *La Damnation de Faust* is,



ADAM-SALOMON

Ambroise Thomas, 1811-1896

but undeniably one in which eros is richly present and charm not wanting. Its success sent Thomas to Goethe's novel *Wilhelm Meister*, from which he drew *Mignon*, presented at the Opéra-Comique in 1866. This beguiling work racked up 100 performances at that theater in eight months; by 1894 it had been played there 1,000 times. It quickly traveled all over Europe and to America, and it is still the composition on which Thomas's reputation chiefly rests. In *Mignon*, Thomas was doubly indebted to Gounod, his junior by seven years: first of all for the idea of going to Goethe, but even more significantly for a change in his musical style.⁶ He pretty much abandoned his earlier models, Rossini and Donizetti, embracing instead the lavishly sensual language of *Faust* and *Mireille*, the latter a failure at first but now perhaps the Gounod opera musicians admire most.

After *Mignon* came *Hamlet*, the opera that saves Thomas from being a one-work composer. Three years later, Thomas became Director of the Paris Conservatory, succeeding Daniel-François-Esprit Auber, who had died at eighty-nine.⁷ After that, as Elizabeth Forbes writes in *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, "he no longer had time for composition, no pressing financial need to write operas, nor, one may presume, any artistic stimulus to continue doing so." The one work dating from those

years, *Françoise de Rimini* (1882), another collaboration with Carré and Barbier, was an instant and decisive failure. Thomas died in 1896, still in charge at his alma mater.

*

Thomas's skill is powerfully in evidence from the first bars of the dark, melancholy Prelude. He writes effective party music for Gertrude's coronation, and is then at his best in the beautiful and brooding cello cantilena that accompanies Hamlet's entrance. Then, after Hamlet has observed that woman's name is "inconstance et fragilité," he and Ophelia sing a splendid duet, full of supple phrasing and overlaps, and based on the quatrain that causes such misgivings in "Hamlet" when Polonius reads it in a letter from the Prince to his daughter:

Doubt thou the stars are fire;
Doubt that the sun doth move;
Doubt truth to be a liar;
But never doubt my love.

In the chorus of officers and pages that concludes the scene, it is amusing to sense the presence of Offenbach, whose operettas were the rage of Paris in the 1860s. In Scene 2, we can take special pleasure from the interesting, multi-layered orchestral writing in the Prelude; the sense of atmosphere conjured in Hamlet's Invocation to his father's spirit; and his impassioned promise to that spirit, the verbally feeble but musically strong response to "thy commandment all alone shall live/Within the book and volume of my brain,/Unmixed with baser matter."

In Act 2, Ophelia takes on life, and her scene, beginning with the recitative "Sa main depuis hier m'a pas touché ma main," is a sensitive, imaginative piece, fascinatingly non-obvious in its prosody, and full of affecting pathos. We also begin to hear how vividly Thomas responds to Gertrude: his music for her is unfailingly strong and specific, and the role is a magnificent opportunity for a mezzo-soprano with a sense of text and a presence. Her gorgeous arioso, "Dans son regard plus sombre," was consistently singled out for praise in the early reviews of *Hamlet* and is indeed one of the finest moments in nineteenth-century French opera. Best known in the opera next to Ophelia's *scène de folie* is the ►

⁶ To forestall a misunderstanding—for French readers, Goethe was, after Shakespeare and Byron, the most important foreign writer, but Gounod's *Faust* was, so to speak, his first operatic hit.

⁷ Auber's forty-eight operas are forgotten. I cannot speak to the justice of that neglect; however, the half-dozen overtures I know are fiery and delightful. Visitors to Paris know Auber's name because the street named for him runs alongside the Palais Garnier (the former Opéra) and is the location of the American Express office. No other French composer has been as well treated by the officials who name Parisian streets; there is a Rue Ambroise Thomas, but it is a block-long bit of nothing in the 9th arrondissement, about half-way between the Folies Bergère and the Baccarat Museum.



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Two early interpreters of the role of Ophélie: (Above) French soprano Emma Calvé (1858-1942), who was also celebrated for her rendition of the title role in Bizet's *Carmen*, and (right) Australia's Nellie Melba (1861-1931).

Drinking Song (elegantly titled *Chanson Bachique*) with which Hamlet welcomes the Players. Verdi, a true Shakespearean, was horrified when he saw it in the libretto; it does, however, bring the scene to a rousing close. Like several other nineteenth-century French composers, Thomas was enchanted with the possibilities of the saxophone and he gives this instrument an extended and expressive solo turn as the company waits for the play within the play to begin.

Act 3 brings us "*Être ou ne pas être*," "To be or not to be" reduced to very few words and even fewer thoughts, but, thanks to Thomas's pacing and the brooding orchestral interjections, that most famous of soliloquies still comes across as an effective moment. Interestingly, for those interjections Thomas uses a form of the three-note figure that Beethoven associated in his last string quartet with the question "Muss es sein?" (Must it be?), which then recurs in Liszt's *Les Préludes* (there in conjunction with a more portentous question, "What is our life but a series of preludes to that unknown song whose first and solemn note is sounded by death?"), and which afterwards ghosts prominently through the music of Franck, Wagner, Mahler, and Strauss.

This act also gives us Claudius's prayer, "*Je t'implore*," a professional response to a familiar genre, and it concludes with a confident composing of the Closet Scene. En route, at Hamlet's "Get thee to a nunnery," it also provides the

pleasure of an excellent footnote in the score, an animadversion to Hamlet and the conductor that the passage requires "many tempo fluctuations that *feeling alone can indicate*" [emphasis added]. Hamlet's addresses to the Ghost are always moments Thomas can be counted on to provide a strong response, and the Closet Scene likewise provides one of these occasions ("A king of shreds and patches—/ Save me and hover o'er me with your wings").



Act 4 begins with a long ballet, *de rigueur* at the Opéra. I have a weakness for this genre, but about this particular eighteen-minute patch I can only say that it is inane beyond belief; it is omitted from this production for humanitarian reasons. But now comes what everyone has been waiting for, Ophelia's Mad Scene, an occasion, as it rockets from mood to mood, for the prima donna to move us with the pathos of her declamation and the purity of her voice and phrasing, to say nothing of dazzling us with the virtuosity of her coloratura. For Nilsson, the first Ophelia, it became a passport to success in London and New York as much as in Paris, and it did no less for sopranos as diverse as Melba, Albani, Calvé, and Garden. The classic recordings, also vastly different from one

another, of Eide Norena and Maria Callas, can open our ears to all the reasons nineteenth-century listeners could be stirred to their depths by music like this. The scene comes to a quiet and touching close in which Ophelia is accompanied by a humming chorus to which Puccini must have paid careful attention.

Initially, Thomas had designed *Hamlet* in four acts, but because the standard format at the Opéra called for five, he simply cut his last act in two. Act 5 consists of the Gravediggers' Scene; a lyric arioso for Hamlet, "*Comme une pâle fleur*;" Hamlet's encounter with Laertes, interrupted by the appearance of Ophelia's funeral cortège just as the two young men draw swords; and the close, which is far from Shakespeare's. Ophelia's funeral music, for women's chorus, is appropriately sweet and was recalled by Gustave Charpentier when he wrote Louise's "*Depuis le jour*."

*

Shakespeare's "*Hamlet*" is famous for the number of corpses on stage at the end—Gertrude, Claudius, Laertes, and Hamlet, Polonius and Ophelia having died previously. Carré and Barbier fixed this up. Hamlet, reminded once more by the Ghost, kills Claudius, but Gertrude is sent to a convent by the Ghost's decree and Hamlet, though he protests that his soul is in the grave with Ophelia, is proclaimed king. There also exists the so-called Covent Garden finale, in which Hamlet, having dispatched Claudius, exclaims "*Ophélie, je meurs avec toi!*" and falls beside her body. Finally, there is a finale devised by the conductor Richard Bonyngne, which is essentially Covent Garden with some small cuts and a few lines of the original finale restored, including the reappearance of the Ghost: this is the one used in this production. It seems plausible that for England, where *Hamlet* was produced in 1869 at Covent Garden (in Italian!), Thomas would have been prevailed upon to provide a close in which Hamlet is properly dead, but according to Elizabeth Forbes, writing this time in the booklet that accompanies the EMI recording of *Hamlet*, the Covent Garden finale "does not seem ever to have been performed either at Covent Garden or at the Metropolitan." And so we end with a small mystery. ♦

Michael Steinberg is program annotator and lecturer for the San Francisco Symphony and the New York Philharmonic.

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Opera in five acts by AMBROISE THOMAS
Libretto by MICHEL CARRÉ and JULES BARBIER, after Shakespeare's play

Hamlet

(In French)

Conductor
Yves Abel*

Production
Colin Graham

Set Designer
Gerard Howland

Costume Designer
Robert Perdziola

Lighting Designer
Peter Kaczorowski*

Chorus Director
Ian Robertson

Musical Preparation
Joyce Fieldsend
Philip Eisenberg
Adelle Eslinger
Peter Grunberg
Jonathan Khuner
Svetlana Gorzhetskaya

Supertitles
Colin Graham

Assistant Stage Director
Sandra Bernhard

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TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17 AT 7:30
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 19 AT 7:30
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 22 AT 1:30
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24 AT 7:30
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 27 AT 7:30
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 29 AT 1:30

CAST (in order of appearance)

Claudius, King of Denmark Robert Lloyd

Queen Gertrude Judith Forst

*Hamlet, son of the former King of Denmark
and Queen Gertrude* Thomas Hampson

Ophélie, daughter of Polonius Ruth Ann Swenson

Laërte, her brother Benoît Boutet
Daniel Hendrick (9/14, 19, 29)

Horatio John Autry†

Marcellus Stuart Skelton*†

The Ghost of Hamlet's father Kevin J. Langan

Polonius, Court Chamberlain John Relyeat

First Gravedigger Bojan Knežević

Second Gravedigger Daniel Harper

*Courtiers, pages, soldiers, Players, servants, peasants
Corps de ballet*

*San Francisco Opera debut
†1996 Adler Fellow

ACT I

Scene 1 The castle in Elsinore, Denmark

Scene 2 The castle ramparts

ACT II

Scene 1 The castle gardens

Scene 2 The great hall in the castle

INTERMISSION

ACT III

The royal apartments

ACT IV

The gardens; the edge of a lake

ACT V

The cemetery of Elsinore

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 three hours and twenty minutes.

SYNOPSIS

Hamlet

ACT I

Scene 1—In the hall of the castle in Elsinore, the court celebrates the wedding of Gertrude, the widow of the former King Hamlet, to the new King Claudius, the brother of her late husband. Her son Hamlet broods over his father's recent death and his mother's hasty remarriage, but reaffirms his love for Ophélie (Ophelia), the daughter of the Court Chamberlain Polonius. Her brother Laërte (Laertes), about to depart for Norway, entrusts his sister's care to Hamlet. The wedding banquet begins, but Hamlet declines to attend. His friends Marcellus and Horatio come seeking him with the news that they have seen his father's ghost.

Scene 2—Hamlet meets his friends on the castle ramparts. The dead king's ghost appears, reveals that he was murdered in his sleep by Claudius, and exhorts Hamlet to avenge him, but to spare his mother despite her complicity. Hamlet swears to obey.

ACT II

Scene 1—Hamlet is feigning madness and, distressed by his apparent indifference, Ophélie asks the Queen's permission to leave the court, but Gertrude urges her to remain and help cure the prince's strange melancholy. That night, Hamlet announces that a troupe of strolling players will entertain the court. He instructs the actors to give a play about the murder of King Gonzago.

Scene 2—Claudius betrays his guilt by his reaction to the performance. Hamlet's suspicions have been confirmed, and the court is thrown into turmoil.

ACT III

In gloomy indecision, Hamlet contemplates suicide. He eavesdrops on Claudius's guilt-ridden soul-searching but cannot bring himself to kill him while he is at prayer. He learns that Ophélie's father Polonius too was aware of the murder. In sorrow and anger Hamlet spurns Ophélie and her love. Reproached by his mother, he reveals his knowledge of her crime but, as he is about to strike her, the ghost appears to remind him that she must be spared.

ACT IV

The courtiers observe Ophélie's strange behavior; Hamlet's rejection has driven her to madness. Believing she must hide from him at the lake's edge, she slips into the water and drowns.

ACT V

Hamlet encounters two gravediggers, but they cannot tell him who is about to be buried. Unaware that Ophélie is dead, he longs for her forgiveness. Laërte, returned from abroad, is angered at Hamlet's treatment of his sister, and challenges him to a duel. Hamlet is mortally wounded, just as the sound of Ophélie's approaching funeral procession is heard. The ghost suddenly reappears to remind Hamlet of his oath. Denouncing the king as a murderer, Hamlet summons the strength to strike him down, then dies himself as he calls out the name of Ophélie.

ACROBAT—Kelly Toomey

SUPERNUMERARIES

Regina Bustillos
Andrea Kohlruess
Susan Mead
Kimberly Thompson
Mimi Timberlake

Mattia Cabitza
Eddy Gordillo
Larry Hunnicutt
Christopher Patnoe
Oliver Pollard
Louis Schilling
Jim Shields

The performance of September 17th is designated in honor of
Mr. and Mrs. Jeffery Meyer's and Jim Stafford's membership in the Triple Gold Circle.

Hamlet

Photos taken in rehearsal by Marty Sohl



Thomas Hampson



(L. to r.) Ruth Ann Swenson, Judith Forst, John Relyea, Robert Lloyd



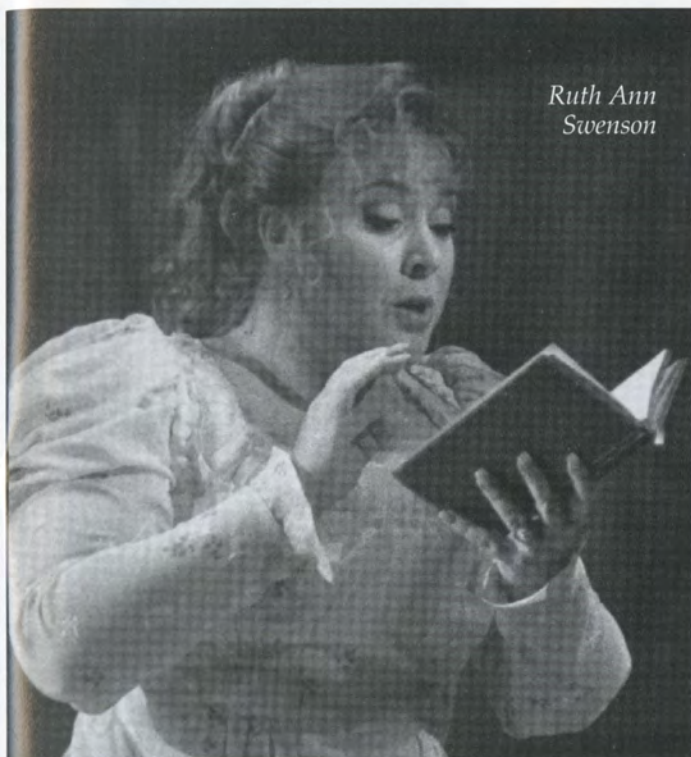
*Kevin
Langan*

Thomas Hampson, Judith Forst, Robert Lloyd

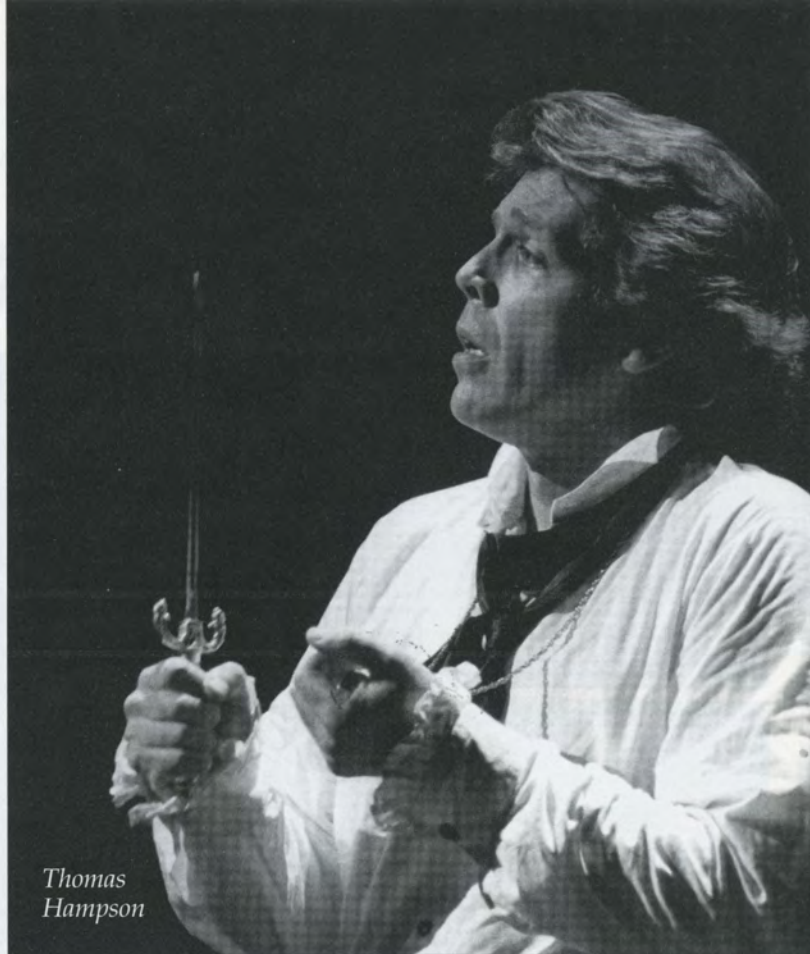


Stuart Skelton, John Autry

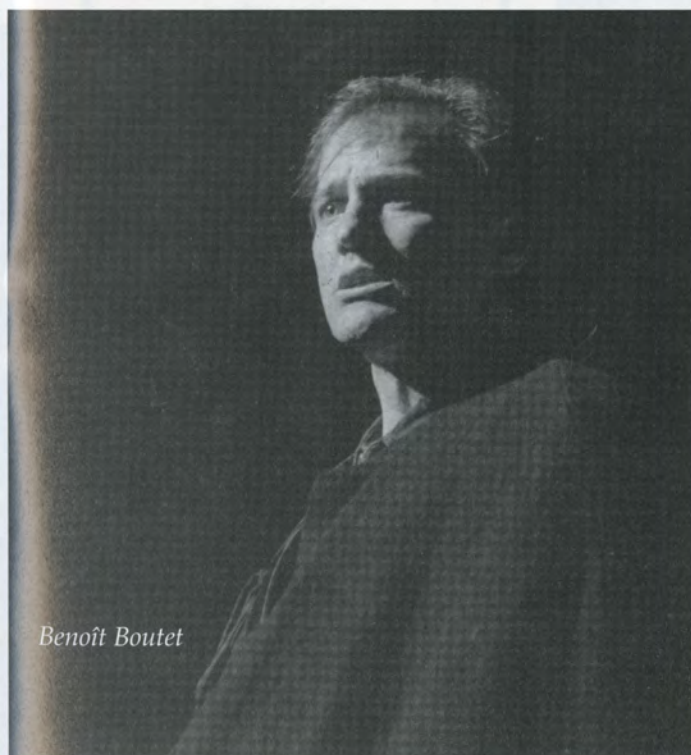




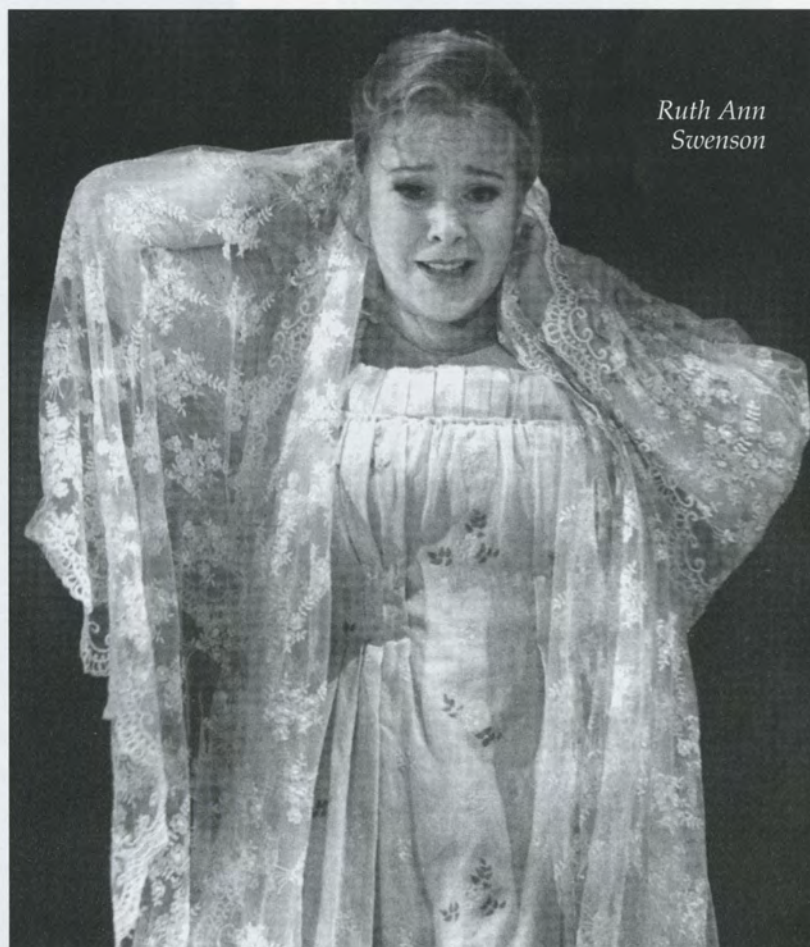
*Ruth Ann
Svenson*



*Thomas
Hampson*



Benoît Boutet

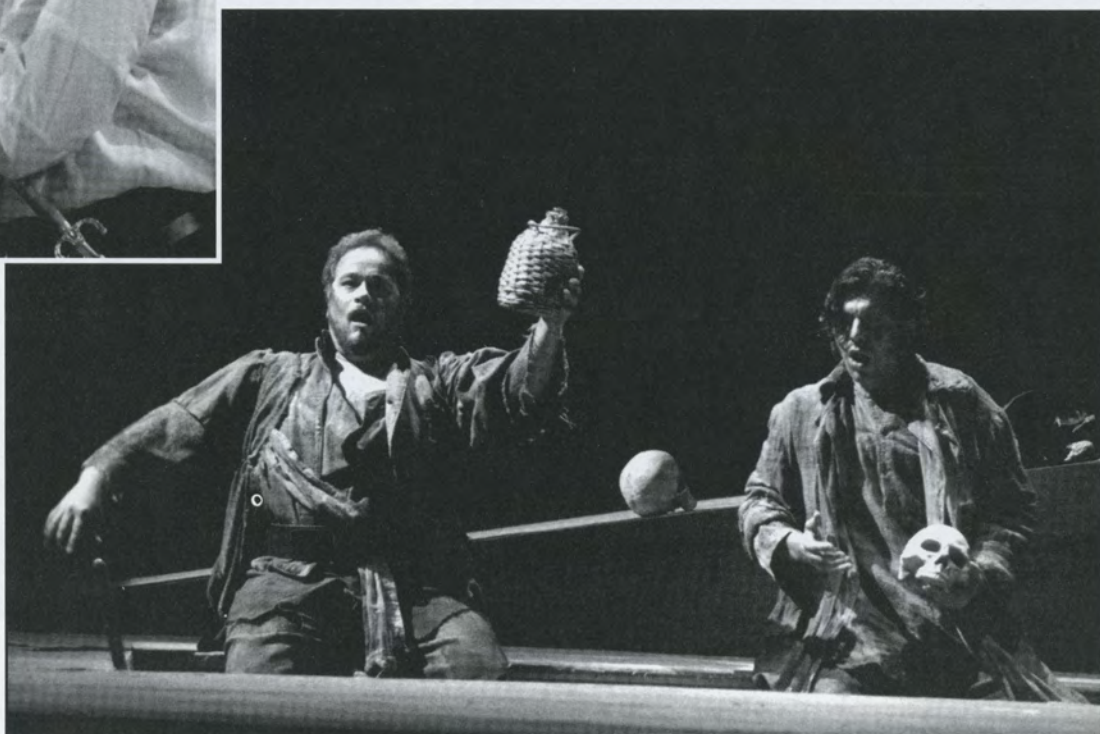


*Ruth Ann
Svenson*



Judith Forst, Thomas Hampson

Daniel Harper, Bojan Knežević



Act I Principals, Members of the San Francisco Opera Chorus



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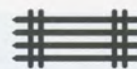
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Pilar Lorengar, 1928–96



On June 2, San Francisco Opera lost one of the Company's most beloved performers, the Spanish soprano Pilar Lorengar. Born in Saragossa, her career began in Barcelona in 1949, in zarzuelas, producing a large number of recordings which are still highly popular in her native country. Soon she was to become a regular at London's Covent Garden (since 1955), Glyndebourne between 1956 and 1960, Deutsche Oper Berlin from 1958 until her retirement from the operatic stage in 1990. She was awarded the title of Kammersängerin in 1963, while in 1984, the Berlin company bestowed on her the rare appellation of Honored Member. While appearing at Berlin on a regular basis, Miss Lorengar developed her international career, singing at the Salzburg Festival, at Vienna, Paris, Brussels, Milan's La Scala, Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires, Mexico City, Israel, Japan, Australia, etc. Her United States debut took place at the San Francisco Opera in 1964, and her first assignment here was the role of Desdemona in *Otello*. In 1966, she also made her debut with New York's Metropolitan Opera, returning to the Met many times since. Among her honors is a street named after her in her native city, bearing the name of "Calle de la Soprano Pilar Lorengar." Her popularity and personal warmth didn't stop at the footlights: Miss Lorengar was one of the most beloved artists in all backstage areas of the San Francisco Opera.

Pilar Lorengar's roles at San Francisco Opera:

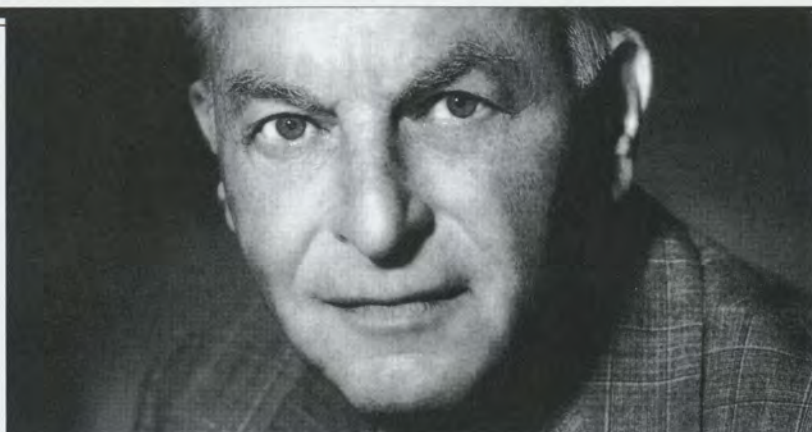
- | | |
|---|---|
| 1964 <i>Otello</i> - Desdemona
<i>Le Nozze di Figaro</i> - Countess Almaviva
<i>Carmen</i> - Micaëla
<i>Turandot</i> - Liù | 1983 <i>Così fan tutte</i> - Fiordiligi |
| 1965 <i>Die Meistersinger</i> - Eva
<i>Pelléas et Mélisande</i> - Mélisande
<i>Don Giovanni</i> - Donna Anna | 1984 Zarzuela Romances and Duets with Plácido Domingo
<i>Don Giovanni</i> - Donna Elvira |
| 1974 <i>Otello</i> - Desdemona
<i>Madama Butterfly</i> - Cio-Cio-San | 1985 <i>Freischütz</i> (concert performance) - Agathe
<i>Falstaff</i> - Mistress Ford |
| 1979 <i>Così fan tutte</i> - Fiordiligi | 1986 <i>Don Carlos</i> - Elisabeth de Valois |
| 1982 <i>Lohengrin</i> - Elsa | 1987 Recital, with pianist Alicia de Larrocha |
| | 1988 <i>Manon Lescaut</i> - Manon |
| | 1989 <i>Falstaff</i> - Mistress Ford |

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(At publication further details not available. The final itinerary will be mailed late October. Two Gala parties to re-unite the Seattle, Chicago and Arizona *Ring* Alumni). Space is limited.

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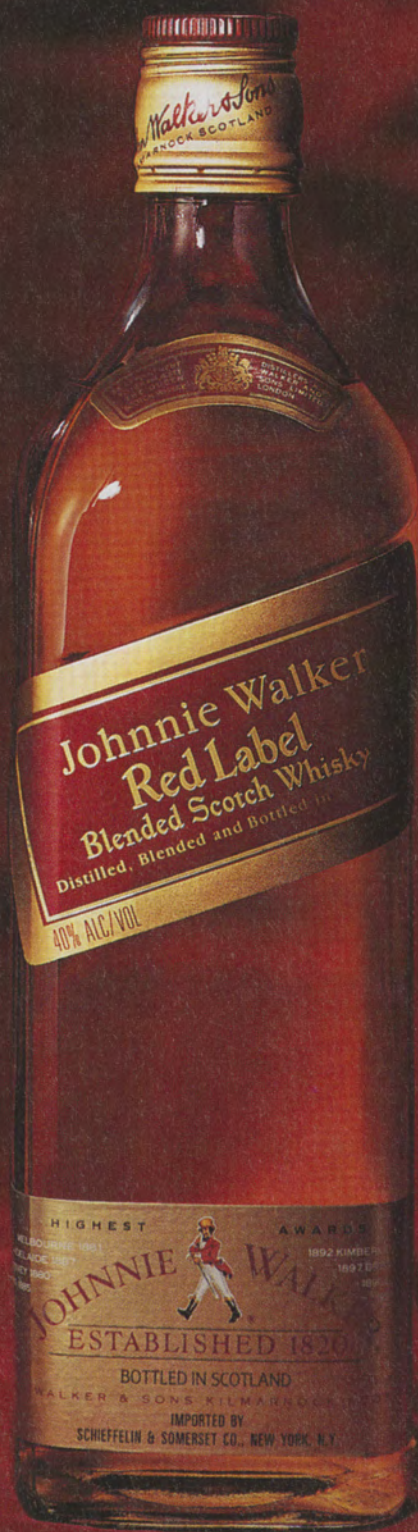
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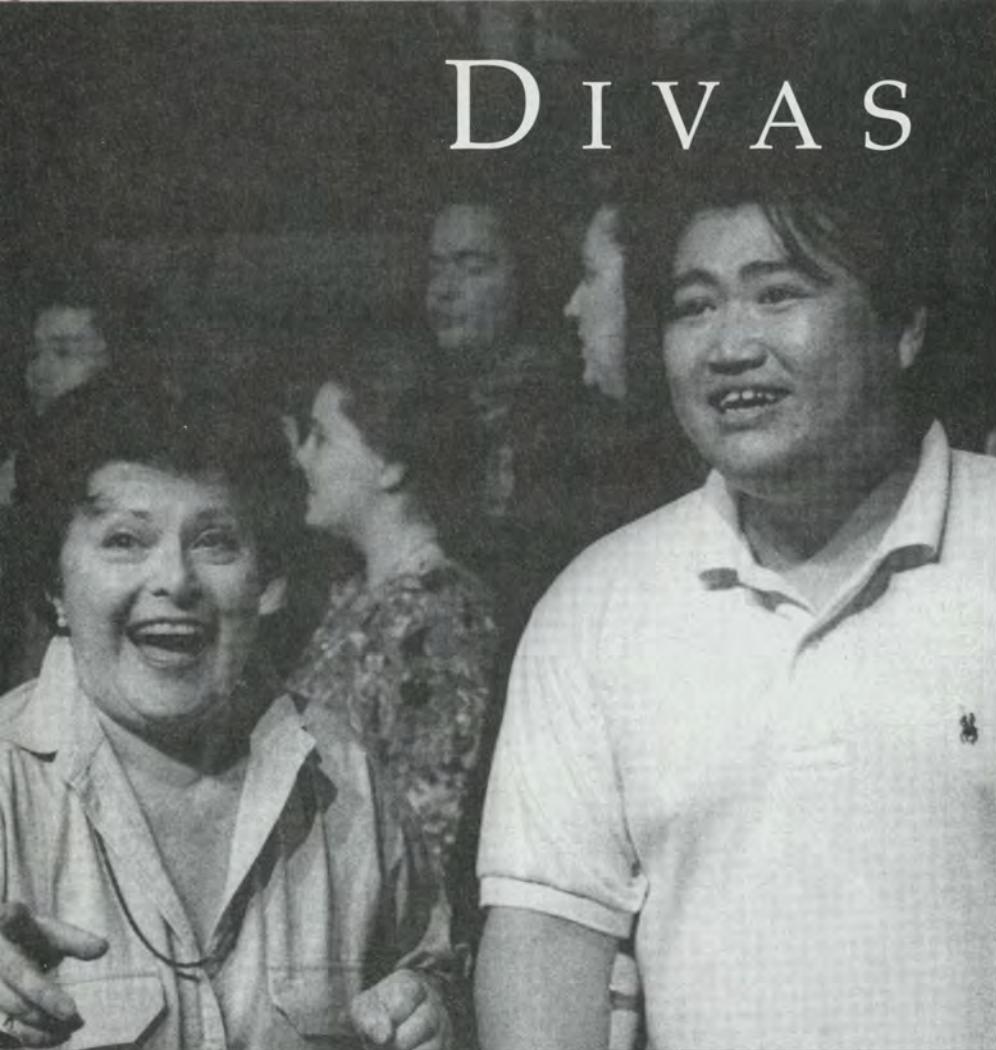
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DIVAS AT WORK



By TIMOTHY PFAFF

FRENZY IS IN THE AIR in Zellerbach Rehearsal Hall. It's the finale to Act I of Donizetti's *Elixir of Love*, and the principals and chorus—a prodigy of an opera chorus, since each of the singers is a Merola Opera Program participant, and therefore a soloist—whirl like dervishes in festivities that verge on chaos. The performers are a multinational lot, and the opera is being given in English, so at this early stage in the rehearsal process, things aren't seeming all that Italian yet—though the spectacle is appropriately dizzying.

A denim-clad arm, barely visible above the teeming masses, stabs the air, announcing the arrival of the diminutive woman to whom it is attached. Enter *italianità* in the person of director Graziella Sciutti, parting the waters like a latter-day Moses with a gesture that simultaneously gathers the company around her. "The line is getting out of control," come her crisp, heavily accented words.

"A few days ago it had elegance. It gave esthetic pleasure. Now it is a little brutal," Sciutti says, more in the spirit of cajoling

than reprimanding. "It has to give the feeling that it is improvised. At first we had to decide where you would go, but now that you know where you're going, it needs to be freer." And here's the Italian flavor: "If you bump into someone, that's just the way it is. This is a village, not a ballet stage."

Like the best of directors, Sciutti found the simplest way to remind her singers who they were. The results were immediate, and gratifying both on and off the stage. The busy scene seemed spontaneous and lively, its wildness transformed into an infectious jollity.

This summer the singers of the San Francisco Opera Center had a chance to refine their work through the wisdom and experience of two of the opera world's most beloved artists, veteran sopranos—now master teachers—Sciutti and Régine Crespin. Years of careful, arduous training on the part of these eager apprentice singers yielded to the influence of these passionate celebrities to forge, in the heat of the moment, the artistry and stage craft to which they had been called. Nothing finishes malleable clay so surely as refiners' fire.

Sciutti was making her Merola debut with the opera, *Elixir*, with which she made her debut as a director 21 years ago—and whose female protagonist, Adina, she had sung in numerous productions throughout her celebrated singing career. Co-producing the piece at Covent Garden with the internationally renowned John Copley the year of her directorial debut, she was working with the likes of a young José Carreras as Nemorino and no less a singing thespian than Sir Geraint Evans in a role debut as Dulcamara. Years of subsequent experience directing the piece on the international stage—including her San Francisco main-stage directing debut in 1984—not only prepared her but made her an ideal mentor for artists on the cusp of professional careers.

"Certainly I have directed operas I never sang," Sciutti reflected during a *Elixir* rehearsal break in July. "But mostly I am asked for repertoire I am known for. But the experience I bring is my knowledge of the whole opera—not the way I sang Adina or Susanna or whatever. The moment I stopped singing, I detached myself from the person I was."

She allowed that the era in which she sang, from the early '50s through the early '80s, was a time more disposed to giving a singer a sense of an opera as a whole. "When I was young," she said, "rehearsals were not planned the way they have to be now: tomorrow, Act II, scene 3. Everyone was there, and when we were assembled the director and the conductor decided what we would rehearse. I can still sing ➤

Above: Graziella Sciutti and tenor Shane Kim during a rehearsal for *The Elixir of Love*.

All photos by Lisa Kohler

Timothy Pfaff is a music critic for the San Francisco Examiner and the Contra Costa Times and a freelance writer on musical subjects.

the book

A large, ornate chair is the central focus, completely covered in a dense layer of numerous butterflies of various species and colors, including orange, yellow, blue, and white. The chair is set on a lush green lawn. Above the chair, a single butterfly is captured in flight against a soft, out-of-focus green background.

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Régine Crespin works with tenor Norman Shankle.



you the first three scenes of *Così*, where Despina does not appear at all. If you ever need a Don Alfonso, I know the part very well. I always wanted to know what the others were singing, and what was happening when I was not on stage."

In addition to her experience being directed by the likes of Giorgio Strehler and Luchino Visconti, Sciutti insists her work on the legitimate, nonoperatic stage prepared her for her burgeoning second career. "What helped me most in seeing the theater in opera was acting in a play about Mozart by Sacha Guitry, a great French actor and playwright. He loved music, and he had Reynaldo Hahn write some music for the play, because his second wife was a singing actress. Guitry knew how to combine words and phrasing and acting in the play which was extremely useful in learning how to be on the legitimate theater stage." Sciutti, who turned down a seven-year film contract with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer because it would be too restrictive of her singing career, has, since her retirement as a singer, done a considerable amount of television work.

"Working with apprentice singers is harder," she continued, "because you have to teach them everything. But I like it. Mainly you have to work with them on reacting—which is also true of more seasoned singers, by the way. Singers are very much fascinated by their own voices, and sometimes you have to make them aware that there is something else. Then there is the moving, the turning, the consciousness of the space of the stage—knowing how to manage without being planted at the front of the stage, which is the only technique many of them have. You have to teach them how to project their sound while moving around. At the early stage, most of them are still afraid to leave the front of the stage. They don't yet understand that it is actually much better to sing from farther downstage."

Sciutti is refreshingly without formula about how to elicit a telling performance from singers of any age. "That's the work," she said knowingly. "I cannot, for example, decide at the start that Nemorino is like this or like that. Each singer has a different personality, and you have to draw that out. This takes time; it's a long job. That's why I never accept an assignment with less than three or four weeks of rehearsals. What is great about directing at Merola is we have all the time we need. We're not fast food."

Directing the Merolini in *Elixir*—three of whose four principals were Korean—was a challenge made for Sciutti. "I have had to teach them gesture, particularly when I want them to be on the Italian side. Asian

singers, and many Western ones too, tend to be a little bit tight. We want them to expand like this," she said with an arms-out embrace that seems to reach all the way back to her native Torino. "I have to teach them how to use their arms for expression. Sometimes they want to use them to make a sound, but that is bad. The high note doesn't come because you lift your right arm. The arm goes up to express something you're feeling. Sometimes I have to demonstrate," she conceded with a knowing, generous smile.

"What we tried to bring out in this *Elixir* is a piece with a lot of humanity, joy, and fun. These characters are not puppets, they are real people. Sometimes I feel this type of Italian opera is treated—by non-Italians in particular—not just as opera buffa but as a kind of commedia dell'arte. But if you look at the history of Italian musical theater, you see that this genre was a kind of reaction to opera seria, which tended to be pompous and revolve around mythological figures. But beginning with Rossini and early Donizetti and going right up to *Falstaff*—which is the absolute—and even the Puccini of *Gianni Schicchi*, you find characters who are real people, who suffer but who also enjoy life.

"Directing is not just pushing people around on the stage," Sciutti concluded. "It requires a great deal of training, and the proof is always whether you're asked back." (She will be back as a director in San Francisco Opera's 1997 season.) "I am very lucky to be in such demand as a director." Lucky, too, were the merry Merolini who tasted her special elixir.

You might have thought Sciutti had been talking with Régine Crespin. Although the two former sopranos enjoyed notably different stage lives—it seems improbable that they would have shared a single role—their distinguished second careers have brought them insights about ways to work with their successors on stage that are remarkably similar in both content and attitude.

Crespin, who this year celebrated a 30-year association with San Francisco Opera, sang many of the greatest roles from both her soprano and her mezzo-soprano years from her debut here in 1966 to her local stage farewell in 1987. But even before her final Countess in *Pikovaya Dama*, she was an active and cherished member of the Merola/San Francisco Opera Center family. Indeed, thanks to the inimitable Crespin, the place may never be the same. When not teaching and coaching at opera companies and music institutions around the world, the legendary singer is updating her famous tell-all autobiography for its first English translation. She promises in ➤

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complete earnestness that her tale of the 14 years, since its first edition, will center on her life with the Merola Opera Program and the San Francisco Opera Center.

"When Terry McEwen was General Director, he invited me to teach and asked me to sign a ten-year contract," Crespin recalled in her trademark, slightly muffled bass-baritone. "I said, 'Are you crazy?' He said, 'Just sign it. We'll discuss later.' It was a good idea. I'm still coming, and I enjoy it tremendously. Many of the singers I have worked with are doing great careers, and some of them I have had in my hands two, three years. This makes me very happy."

Last summer Crespin devoted a month to master classes. Her one public appearance, an open master class presented as a benefit for the Center, brought her as close to performing as she comes these days, but even though she was teaching before a pub-

lic at least as interested in her celebrity as it was in the work of her charges, her core message got through—to the singers as well as to the diva's admiring fans.

She had words of praise—and encouragement—for American baritone Ted Christopher, who delivered a notably polished "O du mein holder Abendstern," from *Tannhäuser*. Her central message to him was, "Sell it. You have it; now be generous with it." Deftly guiding him deeper into the feeling of the piece—coaxing him away from its sadness and into its wonder—she reiterated her point with tension-breaking humor. "Sell your salad," she enjoined him. "Otherwise the feeling you give is: 'Well, you say you want a salad; maybe I have it.' Give them what they want."

For anyone who remembers the rigors (and occasional horrors) of the Elisabeth Schwarzkopf-Walter Legge master classes

of an earlier day—when an expert and well-prepared soprano essaying "Dove sono," for example, might not navigate past the recitative in 90 nerve-wracking minutes—the Crespin session seemed welcomingly down-to-earth and friendly. The hard work proceeded from relish, not intimidation (though there was no mistaking the fact that even the best of the singers were cowed by the presence of one of the greatest operatic artists of the second half of the century).

Santa Fe soprano Heather Dial's traversal of Juliette's first aria from Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette* found Crespin working in what at first seemed to be a contradictory direction: against young singers' tendency to push for a big sound. "Sing lightly," Crespin counseled again and again. "Enjoy the lightness of your voice. It will carry, trust me on this. And singing lightly some of the time will allow you to vary the colors and the expression. Do all this when you are young, as you are now. When you are 45, you do what the hell you can."

With tenor Norman Shankle, who sang an aria of *Roméo*, she began, lightly, some of her trademark "body work." While he was singing, Crespin manipulated his trunk and limbs to free the sound and maximize the expression. The effects of this masterful, intuitive, sensitive and entirely nonverbal work were as immediate as they were expressive. Similarly, her instinct for arriving at the telling vocal gesture helped St. Petersburg soprano Anna Netrebko—the "apprentice" who in 1995 sang *Lyudmila* in San Francisco Opera's premiere of *Ruslan and Lyudmila*—chip away at

(Continued on page 50)

Above: (Left to right) Shane Kim, Jung-Hack Seo, Mel Ulrich, Christina Lamberti, and Jorge Garza interact with Régine Crespin before the beginning of a 1996 Merola Opera Program Master Class. Below: At the start of the Master Class, Crespin works with soprano Irina Mozyleva (left) and baritone Jung-Hack Seo (right).



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1996-97 SEASON

SEPT. 4, 7M, 11, 14, 17, 20, 22M, 1996

PAGLIACCI

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SEPT. 5, 8, 12, 15M, 18, 21, 1996

NORMA

Vincenzo Bellini

Domingo/Vendice, Muni, Conklin,
Burrett, Eaglen/Wolf, Mentzer, Cura, Cox
Co-production with Seattle Opera
and Houston Grand Opera

NOV. 9M, 12, 15, 17, 20, 23, 26, 1996

TOSCA

Giacomo Puccini

Litton, Judge, Harlan, Gunter, da Costa
Vaness, Leech, Diaz
Revival of L.A. Opera production

JAN. 29, FEB. 1M, 4, 7, 12, 15, 18, 1997

TRISTAN UND ISOLDE

Richard Wagner

Armstrong, Hockney, Schuler & Behle, Henschel,
Jerusalem, McIntyre, Hynninen, Mussard
Revival of L.A. Opera production

FEB. 21, 23, 26, MARCH 1M, 4, 8, 11, 1997

THE BARBER OF SEVILLE

Gioachino Rossini

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MAY 6, 8, 10M, 13, 16, 18, 1997

THE RETURN OF ULYSSES

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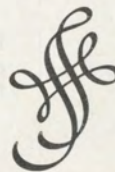
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PRE-PERFORMANCE LECTURES

The popular Pre-Performance Lectures are held at the Bill Graham Civic Auditorium (location to be announced) and in the orchestra section of the Orpheum Theatre. Guest speakers will provide insights and information about the opera and the composer. The half-hour talks are free with your ticket for the performance and take place one hour before curtain. The lecture schedule is as follows:

Prince Igor (Civic)

Sept. 10—7 p.m.
Sept. 15—1 p.m.
Sept. 21—7 p.m.

Hamlet (Orpheum)

Sept. 17—6:30 p.m.
Sept. 27—6:30 p.m.
Sept. 29—12:30 p.m.

Lohengrin (Civic)

Oct. 1—6 p.m.
Oct. 4—6 p.m.
Oct. 9—6 p.m.

Il Barbiere di Siviglia (Orpheum)

Oct. 11—7 p.m.
Oct. 19—7 p.m.
Oct. 24—7 p.m.

Carmen (Civic)

Oct. 22—6:30 p.m.
Oct. 25—6:30 p.m.
Nov. 5—6:30 p.m.

Harvey Milk (Orpheum)

Nov. 13—6:30 p.m.
Nov. 21—7 p.m.
Nov. 24—1 p.m.

Les Contes d'Hoffmann (Civic)

Nov. 17—1 p.m.
Nov. 20—6:30 p.m.
Nov. 23—7 p.m.

Salome (Civic)

Jan. 23—6:30 p.m.
Jan. 29—6:30 p.m.
Feb. 1—7 p.m.

Aida (Civic)

Feb. 8—7 p.m.
Feb. 11—7 p.m.
Feb. 21—6:30 p.m.

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Sept. 5	Prince Igor
Sept. 11	Hamlet
Nov. 4	Harvey Milk
Jan. 17	Salome

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA GUILD — PREVIEWES

Speakers: *Prince Igor*: Richard Taruskin; *Hamlet*: Hugh Macdonald; *Lohengrin*: Perry Lorenzo; *Carmen*: Robert Glick; *Harvey Milk*: Michael Korie; *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*: Marvin Tartak

MARIN

Held at 8 p.m. at Mt. Tamalpais United Methodist Church, 410 Sycamore Avenue, Mill Valley. Information: (415) 388-6789

Sept. 4	Prince Igor
Sept. 9	Hamlet
Sept. 23	Lohengrin
Oct. 14	Carmen
Nov. 4	Harvey Milk
Nov. 11	Les Contes d'Hoffmann

SAN FRANCISCO

Held at 12:00 noon, Koret Auditorium, Lower Level, New Main Library, 100 Larkin Street, San Francisco. Information: (510) 652-3799

Sept. 4	Prince Igor
Sept. 11	Hamlet
Sept. 25	Lohengrin
Oct. 16	Carmen
Nov. 6	Harvey Milk
Nov. 13	Les Contes d'Hoffmann

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

Sept. 3	Prince Igor
Sept. 10	Hamlet
Sept. 24	Lohengrin
Oct. 15	Carmen
Nov. 5	Harvey Milk
Nov. 12	Les Contes d'Hoffmann

SONOMA COUNTY

Held at various locations and times. Information: (707) 938-2432

Sept. 5	Prince Igor
Sept. 12	Hamlet
Sept. 26	Lohengrin
Oct. 17	Carmen
Nov. 4	Harvey Milk
Nov. 14	Les Contes d'Hoffmann

SOUTH PENINSULA

Held at 8:00 p.m. at the Palo Alto Senior Center, 450 Bryant St., Palo Alto. Information: (415) 941-3890

Sept. 3	Prince Igor
Sept. 10	Hamlet
Sept. 24	Lohengrin
Oct. 15	Carmen
Nov. 5	Harvey Milk
Nov. 12	Les Contes d'Hoffmann

EAST BAY

Held at 8:00 p.m. at Lafayette United Methodist Church, 955 Moraga Road, Lafayette. Information: (510) 527-1846 or (510) 838-9255

Sept. 5	Prince Igor
Sept. 11	Hamlet
Nov. 6	Harvey Milk

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A music course of opera previews will deal with all operas of the 1996-97 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 19 and continue for 17 weeks. Information: (415) 239-3641

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Sept. 9	Hamlet
Sept. 23	Lohengrin
Oct. 7	Il Barbiere di Siviglia
Oct. 14	Carmen
Nov. 4	Harvey Milk
Nov. 11	Les Contes d'Hoffmann
Dec. 2	Hansel and Gretel
Jan. 13	Salome
Feb. 3	Aida
Feb. 10	Season Review



RUTH ANN SWENSON

One of the most acclaimed young sopranos in the operatic world, **Ruth Ann Swenson** sings her first Ophélie in the San Francisco Opera premiere of *Hamlet*. A 1983 and '84 Adler Fellow, she made her Company debut as Despina in the 1983 season production of *Così fan tutte*, and has since been applauded here for a variety of roles including Dorinda in *Orlando*, Aennchen in *Der Freischütz*, Nannetta in *Falstaff*, Inès in *L'Africaine*, Juliette in *Roméo et Juliette*, Gilda in *Rigoletto*, Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte*, Adina in *L'Elisir d'Amore*, and in the title role of *Lucia di Lammermoor*. Miss Swenson made her Metropolitan Opera debut in 1989 as Zerlina in *Don Giovanni* and has returned there to sing the title role of *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Adina, Rosina in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, her first Zerbinetta in *Ariadne auf Naxos*, Susanna in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, as well as Gilda and Juliette. She has also performed with notable success at the Dallas Opera, Washington Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Hamburg State Opera, Opéra Bastille in Paris, Cologne Opera, Munich State Opera and Salzburg Festival, among many other venues. Recent highlights include three major debuts: with the Berlin State Opera as Gilda in a new staging of *Rigoletto*, with the Vienna State Opera as Constanze in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, and with the Royal Opera at Covent Garden in the title role of Handel's *Semele*. Additional recent performances have been *Rigoletto* in Hamburg and Vienna, Norina in *Don Pasquale* in Chicago, in addition to *Don Giovanni*, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* and *Roméo et Juliette* at the Met. Future plans include Elvira in *I Puritani* and Gilda at the Met, Cleopatra in *Giulio Cesare*, the title role of *Manon* and Gilda at the Bastille Opera, as well as Violetta in *La Traviata* at the Chicago Lyric Opera. The American artist already has two critically acclaimed (and best-selling) recordings, *Kismet* and *Positively Golden*, a disc of coloratura arias. Upcoming releases include a recording of *Roméo et Juliette* with Plácido Domingo, *La Bohème*, and a recital disc with Domingo and Thomas Hampson.



JUDITH FORST

Canadian mezzo-soprano **Judith Forst**, acclaimed for her operatic and concert performances throughout North America and Europe, portrays Gertrude in the Company premiere of *Hamlet* and Herodias in *Salome*. Her previous San Francisco Opera appearances have been in 1974 (Flowermaiden in *Parsifal*, Suzuki in *Madama Butterfly*), 1979, 1986 and 1992 (Preziosilla in *La Forza del Destino*), 1980 (Suzuki), 1981 (Valencienne in *The Merry Widow*), 1984 (Giovanna Seymour in *Anna Bolena*), 1990 (Marie in *Wozzeck*), 1991 (Dorabella in *Così fan tutte*) and 1994 (Madame de Volanges in the world premiere of *The Dangerous Liaisons*). Miss Forst's extensive repertoire also includes Octavian in *Der Rosenkavalier*, the title roles of *Carmen* and *La Cenerentola*, Charlotte in *Werther*, Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni*, the Composer in *Ariadne auf Naxos*, Giulietta in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, Adalgisa in *Norma*, and Kostelníčka in *Jenůfa*. She was offered a Metropolitan Opera contract following her audition in the national semifinals and she went on to perform at the Met for several seasons in a number of major roles. Her most recent portrayal there was the role of Mother Marie in *Les Dialogues des Carmélites*. Additional engagements during her 1994-95 season included a debut at the English National Opera as the Composer in *Ariadne auf Naxos* and a return to Dallas Opera as Alla Nazimova in Argento's *The Dream of Valentino*. A renowned concert artist and recitalist, Miss Forst is also one of Canada's most widely respected performers and as such was the subject of CBC television portraits in 1987 and 1990. As a result of her artistry, she was inducted into The Order of Canada. Her disc of operatic arias was released in 1988.

ARTIST PROFILES



THOMAS HAMPSON

Baritone **Thomas Hampson**, appearing in the title role of *Hamlet*, made his Company debut as Ulisse in the 1990 Fall Season staging of *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria* and created the role of Valmont in San Francisco Opera's 1994 world premiere production of *The Dangerous Liaisons*. He also performed at three of the Company's 1994 "Lexus Summer Concerts"—at Stanford, Berkeley and the War Memorial Opera House. In naming him 1994 "Male Singer of the Year," the Cannes Classical Awards recognized the American artist for leading his generation of singers in the versatility and breadth of achievement in opera, song, recording, research and pedagogy. He currently enjoys an international career that has taken him to all the world's most prestigious stages and concert halls in a wide range of repertoire that has made the baritone one of today's most respected and sought-after soloists. A native of Spokane, Hampson made his acclaimed Metropolitan Opera debut in 1986 as the Count in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, and followed that with debuts in Munich (1986) and Vienna (1987) as Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte*. Renowned for his portrayal of the title role of *Don Giovanni*, he first undertook the part in Zurich in a 1987 Jean-Pierre Ponnelle production, returning to sing the role at the Met in 1990-91. In addition to these signature parts which he has sung in such places as Salzburg, Vienna, Munich, Florence and New York, Hampson's repertoire on stage and disc includes Don Alfonso in *Così fan tutte*, Figaro in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, Marcello in *La Bohème*, Valentin in *Faust*, Posa in *Don Carlo*, and the title roles of *Der Prinz von Homburg*, *Billy Budd* and *Hamlet*. One of today's most prolific recording artists, the baritone's award-winning discography ranges from Bach to Mahler, Schubert to Stephen Foster, and Mozart to Cole Porter.

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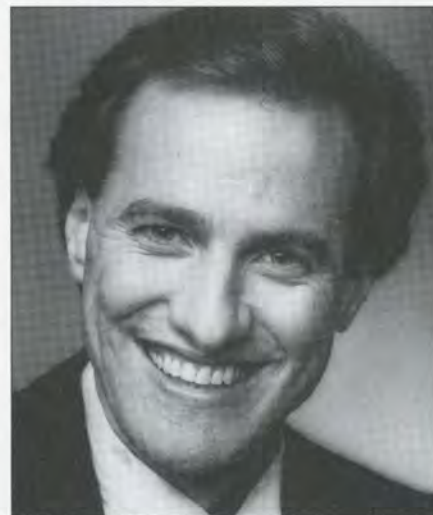
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ARTIST PROFILES



ROBERT LLOYD

Bass **Robert Lloyd** (Claudius in the Company premiere of *Hamlet*), born in Essex and educated at Oxford, began his life as an academic historian, turning to a singing career at the age of 28. In 1972, he was appointed principal bass at the Royal Opera at Covent Garden, where he proceeded to portray roles from an enormous range of repertoire, while developing a freelance operatic and concert career which has brought him to most major performing centers of the world. His U.S. debut took place in 1975 with the San Francisco Opera (Sarastro in *Die Zauberflöte*), and he has since returned as Méphistophélès in *Faust* (1986), King Philip in *Don Carlos* (1986) and *Don Carlo* (1992), and Banquo in *Macbeth* (1994). Lloyd was the first British bass to sing the title role of *Boris Godunov* at Covent Garden (1983), in the celebrated Tarkovsky production (seen at the War Memorial in 1992) which then traveled to the Kirov Opera in Leningrad (1990) with the same protagonist. Following the international telecast of the same, he returned to the production at the Vienna State Opera in 1991, under the direction of Claudio Abbado. Most recently, he has performed in *Simon Boccanegra*, *Parsifal* and *Pelléas et Mélisande* at the Metropolitan Opera, *Roméo et Juliette* and *Hériodade* at Covent Garden, and *Parsifal* in Amsterdam. The bass has made over 75 recordings, ranging from Monteverdi to Mozart and Wagner to Britten. A frequent guest on radio and television, he was the subject of a BBC special on the bass voice, titled *Six Foot Cinderella*. Lloyd is an Honorary Fellow of Keble College Oxford and a Visiting Professor at the London Royal College of Music. His awards include the title of Commander of the British Empire (CBE), bestowed upon him by Queen Elizabeth in 1991.



BENOÎT BOUTET

Tenor **Benoît Boutet**, who portrays Laërte in *Hamlet* and a Noble of Brabant in *Lohengrin*, made his 1989 San Francisco Opera debut as Fenton in the Family Performance of *Falstaff*. Equally at home in opera, oratorio or pops concerts, the former member of the Canadian Opera Company Ensemble frequently appears in mainstage productions with the company. Most recently, he has been seen in Toronto as Vanya Kudryash in *Katya Kabanova*, Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni*, Andres in *Wozzeck*, Vašek in *The Bartered Bride*, and in the title role of the world premiere of *Mario and the Magician*. Additional Canadian performances include the Chevalier in *Dialogues des Carmélites* with the Edmonton, Manitoba and Montreal Operas, Narraboth in *Salome* with Vancouver Opera, and Nadir in *Les Pêcheurs de Perles* at Manitoba Opera. His debut in France with L'Opéra de Normandie as Polynis in the world premiere of Charles Chaynes's *Jocaste* led to frequent appearances with many European opera companies. Recent engagements include Lysander in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with Opéra de Lyon, Tamino in *Die Zauberflöte* with Opéra-Comique and Opéra de Lyon, and the Chevalier in *Dialogues* with Opéra de Rennes. Concert performances have included Berlioz's *Roméo et Juliette* with the Calgary Philharmonic, *L'Enfance du Christ* with the Vancouver Symphony, Mozart's Requiem with the Quebec Symphony, Vancouver Chamber Choir, and Calgary Philharmonic, and *Salome* (Narraboth) with the Bournemouth Symphony. Boutet has also performed with many prominent U.S. orchestras including those of Chicago, Philadelphia, Houston and Cincinnati, as well as at several U.S. Festivals (Meadowbrook, Ravinia, Riverbend).

ARTIST PROFILES



DANIEL HENDRICK

Returning to sing the role of Laërte in *Hamlet* is tenor **Daniel Hendrick**, who made his 1994 San Francisco Opera debut as Arturo in the final performance of *Lucia di Lammermoor*. The young artist is a versatile performer in opera, concert, operetta and musical theater, whose reputation is rapidly expanding. During the current season he made his European debut as Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni* in Bonn, and portrayed Edgardo in *Lucia di Lammermoor* in Regina, Canada. He made a successful debut in 1994 with New York City Opera as Faust in *Mefistofele*, returning the following year as Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly*. In recent seasons, he was featured as Rodolfo in *La Bohème* at Vancouver Opera and Opera Colorado, Don José in *Carmen* in Mexico and at Virginia Opera, and Macduff in *Macbeth* for Baltimore Opera. In operetta, he has sung Dick in *Naughty Marietta*, Barinkay in *Der Zigeunerbaron*, and Danilo in *The Merry Widow* for the San Diego Pacific Chamber Opera. He has also appeared as soloist with the San Diego Chamber Orchestra, the Redlands Bowl Symphony Orchestra and the Palm Springs Opera Guild. A native of Fontana, California, Hendrick studied at the University of Southern California. Future engagements include Gérald in *Lakmé* for the Arizona and New Orleans Opera, and Tamino in *The Magic Flute* at Minnesota Opera.

In his 16th season with San Francisco Opera, **Kevin J. Langan** sings the role of The Ghost in the Company premiere of *Hamlet*. The American bass (a member of the Merola Opera Program in 1979 and '80) has appeared in more than 30 different productions here, beginning with the telecast presentation of *Samson et Dalila* in 1980, through performances as Timur in *Turandot* ('82, '93), Colline in *La Bohème* ('83, '86, '88), Ramfis in *Aida* ('84, '89), Henry VIII in *Anna Bolena* ('84), Zoroastro in Handel's *Orlando* ('85), Sarastro in *Die Zauberflöte* ('87, '91), Asolfo in *Orlando Furioso* ('89), Sparafucile in *Rigoletto* ('90), Padre Guardiano in *La Forza del Destino* ('92), and Elmiro in Rossini's *Otello* (he celebrated his 250th performance with the Company during the 1994 *Otello* presentation). A favorite at many other major opera companies, past successes include his Metropolitan Opera debut as Colline, Leporello in *Don Gio-*



KEVIN J. LANGAN

vanni with the Los Angeles Music Center Opera, Méphistophélès in *Faust* at Houston Grand Opera, King Philip II in *Don Carlos* with the Canadian Opera Company, Don Basilio in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* with Seattle and San Diego Operas, Osmin in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* and Seneca in *The Coronation of Poppea* with Santa Fe Opera, and Dr. Bartolo in *Le Nozze di Figaro* for Florida Grand Opera, Ariodate in Handel's *Serse* at the Lyric Opera of Chicago, Alidoro in *La Cenerentola* for San Diego Opera, Friar Laurence in *Roméo et Juliette* at Dallas Opera, and Leporello in Santa Fe. Also a noted recitalist, Langan has presented solo programs at London's Wigmore Hall and the Carnegie Recital Hall in New York. In 1987, he also took part in San Francisco Opera Center's Schwabacher Recital Series.



JOHN RELYEA

John Relyea performs roles in *Hamlet*, *Lohengrin*, *Harvey Milk*, *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* and *Salome*. A 1996 Adler Fellow, he recently made his San Francisco Opera debut as Colline in *La Bohème* and appeared as Barelli in the Opera



JOHN AUTRY

Center's Showcase '96 production of *The Aspern Papers*. The artist made his 1991 operatic debut in *Die Zauberflöte* with Opera Atelier of Toronto (the bass-baritone's native city), and subsequently appeared as the Police Sergeant in *The Pirates of Penzance* with Vancouver Opera. At the age of 24, he has already been a featured soloist with many of Canada's major symphony orchestras including the Toronto Symphony, Orchestre Symphonique de Québec, National Arts Centre Orchestra in Ottawa, and the Calgary Philharmonic. As a member of the 1995 Merola Opera Program, Relyea portrayed Bartolo in *Le Nozze di Figaro* (the role he also sang on Western Opera Theater's national tour) and was the recipient of the prestigious Schwabacher Family Award at the Grand Finals Concert. He recently completed his bachelor of music degree at Philadelphia's Curtis Institute of Music, where he performed roles in *Die Fledermaus*, *Le Nozze di Figaro* and *L'Incoronazione di Poppea*.

1996 Adler Fellow **John Autry**, who made his Company debut this summer as Schaunard in *La Bohème* and portrayed Pasquale in the Opera Center's '96 Showcase production of *The Aspern Papers*, performs during the 1996-97 season in *Hamlet*, *Lohengrin*, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, *Carmen* and *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*. In 1994, he made his New York City Opera debut as Figaro in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, a role he repeated on that company's 1995 national tour of the same production. Additional recent engagements include Dr. Malatesta in *Don Pasquale* with Birmingham Opera Theater, Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly* with Shreveport Opera, as well as Ping in *Turandot* and Benoit in *La Bohème* with Palm Beach Opera. As a member of the 1995 Merola Opera Program he sang the roles of the Viceroy in *La Pêricole* and Antonio in *Le Nozze di Figaro*. A native of Birmingham, Alabama, the baritone received his bachelor of music degree from Samford University and continues his studies at Boston University and Philadelphia's Academy of Vocal Arts. A 1994 National Winner in the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, Autry had also won awards at vocal competitions in Palm Beach, Birmingham and Mobile. Most recently, the young artist was the recipient of a career grant from Opera Index.

ARTIST PROFILES



STUART SKELTON

In his debut season with San Francisco Opera, 1996 Adler Fellow **Stuart Skelton** performs a number of roles, appearing in *Hamlet*, *Lohengrin*, *Carmen*, *Harvey Milk*, *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, *Salome* and *Aida*. The tenor made his operatic debut in his native Australia as Alfredo in *La Traviata* with Rockdale Opera Company. The winner of two of Australia's most prestigious competitions, the Marianne Mathy Award and the McDonald's Aria Award, he made his 1993 Australian Opera debut in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*. Skelton recently received his master's degree from the University of Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music where his credits included Sam Polk in *Susannah*, Don José in scenes from *Carmen*, and Peter Quint in *The Turn of the Screw*. Concert engagements include highlights from *Madama Butterfly* and *La Traviata* with the Louisville Symphony Orchestra, and the Verdi Requiem with Lubbock Symphony Orchestra. A 1995 Merola Opera Program participant, he appeared as Piquillo in *La Périhole* as well as Don Basilio and Don Curzio in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, repeating his *Figaro* roles for Western Opera Theater's 1995 national tour. Skelton most recently portrayed the composer Aspern in San Francisco Opera Center's Showcase production of Dominick Argento's *The Aspern Papers*, a West Coast premiere.

Bass-baritone **Bojan Knežević** appears with the Company during the 1996-97 season in *Hamlet*, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* and *Salome*. He recently portrayed Benoit and Alcindoro in San Francisco Opera's production of *La Bohème* and sang the role of the Painter in San Francisco Opera Center's Showcase '96 presentation of *The Aspern Papers*. A 1995 Adler Fellow with the Opera Center, he appeared in his first season with the Company last fall as Marquis d'Obigny in *La Traviata*, Don Magnifico in the student matinee production of *La Cenerentola*, and as the Hunter in *Rusalka*. A native of Belgrade, he received his bachelor's and master's degrees from the Academy of Music in Novi Sad, and has performed with the National Theatre in Novi Sad, as well as in Zagreb and Belgrade. As a three-year mem-



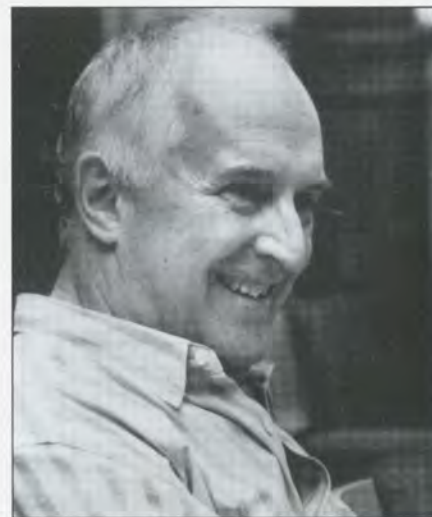
BOJAN KNEŽEVIĆ

ber of the Merola Opera Program (1992-94), he performed in Merola stagings of *La Bohème* (Schaunard), *Falstaff* (Pistola), *Die Fledermaus* (Frosch), and *Don Giovanni* (Leporello). He repeated the roles of Schaunard, Frosch and Leporello for Western Opera Theater's national tours. The young artist's credits also include Marcello in *La Bohème* and Leporello with Virginia Opera; Carnegie Hall performances of Mozart's *Coronation Mass* and *Great Mass in C Minor* as well as the U.S. premiere of Mascagni's *Silvano* (available on CD); and being a soloist in the Company's 1995 United Nations 50th Anniversary Concert. Earlier this year he appeared as Leporello with the Minnesota Opera and as Escamillo in *Carmen* to inaugurate the new opera house in Fort Worth. Future plans include Papageno in *Die Zauberflöte* for Minnesota Opera and Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly* with New Jersey Opera.



YVES ABEL

Yves Abel makes his San Francisco Opera debut leading the Company premiere of *Hamlet*. Quickly establishing a reputation as one of the most important conductors of his generation in



COLIN GRAHAM

both the operatic and symphonic repertoires, he has received offers to conduct worldwide following debuts at the Metropolitan Opera with *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* and at Pesaro's Rossini Festival with *La Cambiale di Matrimonio*, *Edipo a Colono* and the *Messa di Gloria*. Last season, Abel made his debut at the Paris Opera leading performances of *Faust*, appeared at the Festival of Two Worlds in Spoleto for performances and a film of *Amahl and the Night Visitors* in honor of Gian Carlo Menotti's 85th birthday, and returned to Pesaro for a new staging of *Matilde di Shabran*. Additional recent highlights include a debut at the New York City Opera with a new production of *La Traviata* (televised on the "Live from Lincoln Center" series); *La Cenerentola* at Seattle Opera; *La Belle Hélène* with Opera Theatre of Saint Louis; *Roméo et Juliette* with the Florida Grand Opera; *Hérold's Zampa* and Wagner's *Das Liebesverbot* at the Wexford Festival; as well as Poulenc's *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* and *Les Biches* in Spoleto. Maestro Abel has won considerable critical attention for his achievements as Music Director of L'Opéra Français de New York. Since the group's inception in 1990, he has led, among others, such rarities as Cherubini's *Médée*, Chabrier's *L'Étoile*, Milhaud's *Le Pauvre Matelot* and *Esther de Carpentras*, Bizet's *Docteur Miracle*, and Grétry's *Les Deux Azares*. Future projects include *Faust* at the Paris Opera, a debut at the Opéra de Nice with a new staging and recording of *Thaïs*, as well as debuts with the Glyndebourne Festival, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Netherlands Opera and the Opéra de Monte-Carlo. Abel studied at the University of Toronto, the Royal Conservatory, the Mannes College of Music and the Tanglewood Music Center.

After making his 1994 San Francisco Opera debut staging the world premiere of *The Dangerous Liaisons*, **Colin Graham** returns to direct the Company premiere of *Hamlet*. The internationally renowned stage director, now a U.S. citizen, was born in Sussex, England, where he extensively worked in all branches of legitimate and music theater. During his long association with the operas of Benjamin Britten, he directed all but two of the composer's stage

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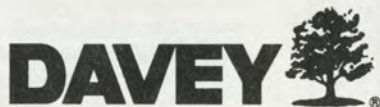


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ARTIST PROFILES



GERARD HOWLAND

works and, since 1957, staged all Britten world premieres except *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. His own production of that opera, however, was the one that introduced him to S.F. Opera audiences in 1971, at which time he toured the United States with The English Opera Group, Britten's own company, of which he was artistic director. By now, Graham has staged over 350 productions worldwide, including 50 world premieres, one of the highlights being the acclaimed production of John Corigliano's *The Ghosts of Versailles*, presented by the Metropolitan Opera in 1991. He served as Artistic Director of the Aldeburgh Festival for many years, as well as Director of Productions for the English National Opera, for whom he staged numerous landmark productions. Involved with the Opera Theatre of Saint Louis since 1978, he has created many innovative productions there and became that company's Artistic Director in 1985. The artist has a deep love and knowledge of the Japanese classical theater, and he commissioned Minoru Miki's kabuki operas, *An Actor's Revenge* and *Joruri*, both of which he also directed. His several libretti include the latter. Graham will direct the world premiere of André Previn and Philip Littell's opera based on Tennessee Williams's play *A Streetcar Named Desire* for San Francisco Opera during the 1998 season.

Gerard Howland designed the sets for the new productions of *Hamlet* and *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*. His work was introduced to San Francisco Opera audiences with sets for the 1992 production of *Guillaume Tell* (U.S. opera debut), and he served as set designer for the world premiere of *Dangerous Liaisons* and the new stagings of *Macbeth*, *Il Trovatore*, Rossini's *Otello*, *Tannhäuser*, *Hérodiade*, and *Lucia di Lammermoor* during the 1994 season. Last year, he designed the sets for the Company's new productions of *Faust* and *Don Giovanni*. The artist studied at the English National Opera Design School and then served as Associate Designer for the Royal Academy and the Royal Shakespeare Company. Among his theater designs are *Tom Jones* and *The Way of the World* for the Royal Academy, *Henry IV* (Parts I and II), *The Winter's Tale*,



ROBERT PERDZIOLA

Hyde Park, *Divine Gossip* and *Scenes from a Marriage* for the Royal Shakespeare Company, and *Major Barbara* for the Chichester Festival. He has also designed several plays and musicals for London's West End, as well as for television and film throughout Europe. In Germany, Howland created sets for *L'Elisir d'Amore*, *Madama Butterfly*, *La Bohème*, *Jenůfa*, *The Makropulos Case*, *Die Zauberflöte*, *Gianni Schicchi*, *La Traviata*, *Cardillac* and *Mahagonny*; also *Uncle Vanya*, *The Father*, *Andorra* and *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*. His operatic assignments in England include *Cavalleria Rusticana* and *Pagliacci* for the English National Opera, *Ruddigore* and *The Gondoliers* for Sadler's Wells Opera, *Tosca* for Opera North, and *Ariodante* for the Buxton Festival. Since moving to the Bay Area, the native of England has designed several productions for the American Conservatory Theater, the South Coast Repertory Theatre, Disney Studios, *La Bohème* for the Dallas and Los Angeles Opera, and *Tosca* for Opera Theatre of Saint Louis. He has won five major awards, including two Drama-Logue Awards and the Los Angeles Drama Critics Award. Howland is responsible for the design of the new stage and theatrical environment at the Civic Auditorium.

Robert Perdziola designed the costumes for the Company premiere of *Hamlet*. Previous designs seen in San Francisco include sets and costumes for San Francisco Opera's 1990 production of *Suor Angelica* (debut) and the San Francisco Ballet's *Reflections of Saint Joan*. He made his German opera debut this season with sets and costumes for *Faust* at the Hannover Staatsoper. In addition to designing numerous productions for Santa Fe Opera, Perdziola has worked at the Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Skylight Opera Theatre, Glimmerglass Opera, Manhattan School of Music, McCarter Theatre and American Place Theatre. In film, he has worked on the design teams of Woody Allen's *Shadows and Fog* and Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire*. He created the opera and theater settings, and a series of societal portraits for Martin Scorsese's *The Age of Innocence*. For the Juilliard School, he recently designed costumes for the revival of Christopher Durang's musi-



PETER KACZOROWSKI

cal *A History of the American Film*. Next season's opera assignments include *Così fan tutte* for Skylight Opera Theatre in addition to *La Traviata* and *Arabella* at Santa Fe Opera.

In his first San Francisco Opera assignment, **Peter Kaczorowski** designed the lighting for *Hamlet*. He has created the lighting schemes for six Seattle Opera productions: *Lohengrin*, *Der Fliegende Holländer*, *Orpheus and Eurydice*, *Roméo et Juliette*, *Le Nozze di Figaro* and *Ariadne auf Naxos*. He has designed extensively for many of America's leading opera companies including Houston Grand Opera (*La Clemenza di Tito*); Los Angeles Music Center Opera (*Where the Wild Things Are*, *Xerxes*, *Idomeneo*); Santa Fe Opera (*The Barber of Seville*, *Mignon*, *Eugene Onegin*); and the Washington Opera (*The Rake's Progress*, *L'Elisir d'Amore*). As resident designer at Opera Theatre of St. Louis from 1982-89, Kaczorowski designed over 30 operas including *Così fan tutte*, *The Abduction from the Seraglio*, and *Alcina*. Abroad, his work has been seen at the Royal Opera Covent Garden, Opera North, Scottish Opera, Canadian Opera Company, Edinburgh Festival, Bonn Opera and Tokyo's Nissei Theatre. He designs regularly on Broadway and off, and for such resident New York companies as Lincoln Center, the Roundabout, Manhattan Theatre Club, New York Shakespeare Festival, Circle Rep and Second Stage. He has also worked for the Seattle Repertory Theatre, La Jolla Playhouse, Centerstage, Dallas Theater Center, Long Wharf, the McCarter, and Hartford Stage.

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continued on page 52

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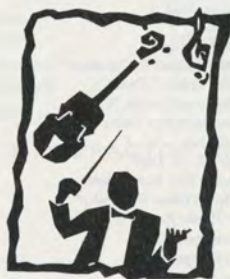
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DIVAS AT WORK

(cont. from p. 38)

the sorrow implied in "Adieu, notre petite table," from Massenet's *Manon*, to arrive at Manon's simplicity. "You are very talented," Crespin said by way of encouraging the singer to do less, "and you have a very beautiful voice. Trust those things to carry you here."

Crespin's teaching career began in the mid-'70s, when Renée Jilly, with whom she once sang, announced that she would be retiring from the teaching faculty at the Paris Conservatoire and invited Crespin to replace her. "I said, 'No,'" Crespin recalled in an interview between private coachings, "'Never, never, never. I don't know how.' She said, 'I will be patient.' Then one day I was working in my room, facing the mirror and talking to myself: 'Don't you see, stupid, if you sing that note big, you will not go up so easily. Close this; do that.' I thought, 'Oh my god, what am I doing? I am teaching.' So I called Jilly and said, 'Do you have a bottle of champagne in the fridge?'" Crespin taught, legendarily, at the Conservatoire until 1992.

Although her method is based on deep personal experience, it is, in practice, spontaneous and highly intuitive. "I have an instinct to see what singers are lacking," she explained, in a triumph of understatement, "what they need to learn, what they should think to help themselves. I never think beforehand that I am going to teach this or that. It is just in the moment. I think I myself was an instinctive one, and it worked." Understatements numbers two and three. "At the last minute sometimes I just did something or other. You don't always know what is coming through you in the moment. We are channels, really. We receive a lot of things from—call it what you will: God, heaven—that come through our personalities, our souls, and we give that to the public. This is our duty.

"The secret of being a good teacher," Crespin reflected, "is really to forget yourself, just be attentive to the one who is singing. I have heard teachers say, 'I did this, ' and 'I did that.' But there are many ways to approach music, and I never, never impose an interpretation."

There could be no better example than her coaching of soprano Christina Lamberti in an aria from Massenet's *Hérodiade* that Crespin not only sang but recorded memorably. Crespin offered vocal tips that could apply to any aria: "Your diction is very good; we get them clearly. Don't masticate them." And: "You don't need to open your jaw so much. It has to be free and easy, not blocked." The deeper, more involving work was with expression, where Crespin worked solely with the material in

DIVAS AT WORK

front of her. At a critical point, freeing the singer meant being open and expressive, rather than clandestine, about the simple matter of taking a needed breath. "Take your time," counseled Crespin, who had given comparable advice to a number of students. "Take the breath and the audience will breathe with you. Look in the score; there is a rest there. Massenet is very clear about what he wants; when there is no other indication in the music, do whatever you want." The passage soared.

Working with Heather Dials on Ophélie in Thomas's *Hamlet*, Crespin uncovered in half an hour an interpretation in the singer who thought she had just reached the point of getting the notes in her voice. "You work well," Crespin assured the wide-eyed soprano. "I feel it is there." The secret to unlocking Dial's Ophelia was the creation of an expression that was, however surprising to the young singer, *not* dramatic. "Not so sad," Crespin called out, as Dials floated the cantilena—"Not so dramatic," as she was negotiating the runs. "Remember, Ophélie is distracted," Crespin prompted. "Let each kind of writing be a distinct state of mind, and don't try too hard to connect them."

Out of the studio, Crespin reflected, "For me the most interesting part of the business is to reach these singers in a way that helps them find the ways to express themselves better, to sing better, to act better, to communicate better. It is often about making them more relaxed, and more simple. I tell them, 'This is what I think, but if you do something that convinces me, I'll buy it.'"

For Crespin, it is about "releasing" the young artists. "I often find they are free to here," she comments, pointing to her navel. "But below the center there is resistance, or at least inhibition. What I tell them is that we are like circus artists. If you are asked to drop your pants, you do it. It is part of the game. We have to show what is in our hearts and our minds and even in our sex. Sex is part of it, is part of the voice. Some voices give you goose pimples, and it is often because the timbre is a sexual thing. It's a skin thing. We have to use that."

Strikingly, what Crespin most wants to impart to her charges is a deep sense of gratitude. "We are gifted, with a voice, an instinct, a way with language, and so on, and we must respect our job greatly—and be grateful. It's an amazing gift to approach 4,000 people with the idea, 'Sit there for three hours, and I will sing something for you.' It's crazy. In the face of that, some humility is a good thing. Every morning we need to be grateful for what we have and ask humbly, 'What can I do to do my work better?' " ♦

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continued from page 49

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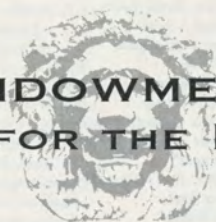
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Although space limitations do not allow us to list all our generous supporters, we wish to acknowledge and pay tribute to the many individuals who helped meet our annual budget needs through gifts under \$1,500.

For information on becoming a Merola member, please call 415/565-3235.

SERVICES

Shuttle Bus Service. The Opera and Municipal Railway have arranged for buses to take patrons from many Civic Center restaurants directly to the theater. Two MUNI buses operate along a route that includes stops at the Performing Arts Garage (360 Grove St.) and (depending on the performance) either the Civic Auditorium or the Orpheum Theatre. Stops are made in 15-minute intervals at the following restaurants: Hayes Street Grill (324 Hayes), Ivy's (398 Hayes), Backstage Restaurant (687 McAllister), Act IV (at Inn at the Opera, 33 Fulton), Vivande (670 Golden Gate Ave.), Max's Opera Cafe (601 Van Ness Ave.), and Stars (555 Golden Gate Ave.). Service begins 90 minutes before a performance

and resumes at curtain time, with shuttle buses retracing the same route (for up to one hour) to the restaurants and the Performing Arts Garage. The shuttle system is scheduled throughout September and will be reviewed each month according to public response.

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. Phone charge: (415) 864-3330, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Saturday (VISA, American Express, MasterCard). Orpheum Theatre and Civic Auditorium Box Offices: Open two hours before each performance through the first intermission.

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 Ticket and Patron Services Center 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 Ticket and Patron Services Center 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 before the end of the last intermission.

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, please inquire at the theater's check-room.

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

Wheelchair accessible restrooms, public telephones and drinking fountains are located on all floors of the Civic Auditorium except the third floor, which is not for public use.

The Orpheum Theatre is equipped with a **Sennheiser Infrared Listening System** by Sound Associates, Inc. Patrons may obtain personal headsets with individual volume controls in the main lobby.

For the safety and comfort of our audience, all large **parcels, backpacks, luggage, etc., must be checked** at the Civic Auditorium and Orpheum Theatre cloak-rooms.

Opera glasses are available in the lobby.

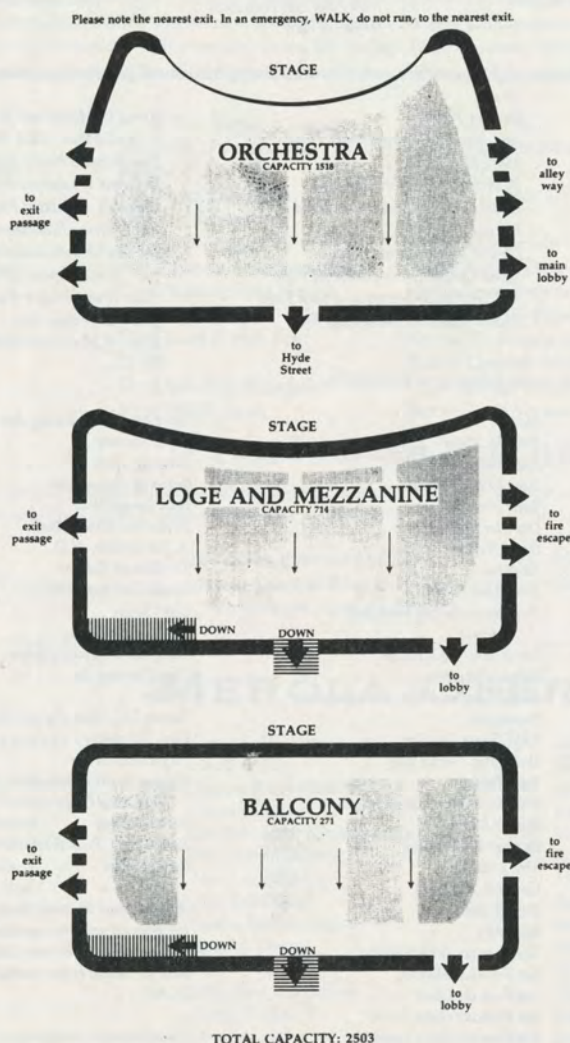
No cameras, tape recorders or cellular phones are permitted in the Orpheum Theatre and the Civic Auditorium.

Children of any age attending a performance must have a ticket.

Patrons, Attention Please! **Fire Notice:** There are sufficient **exits** in these buildings 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.

Orpheum Theatre

Under the direction of Carole Shorenstein Hays and The Messrs. Nederlander



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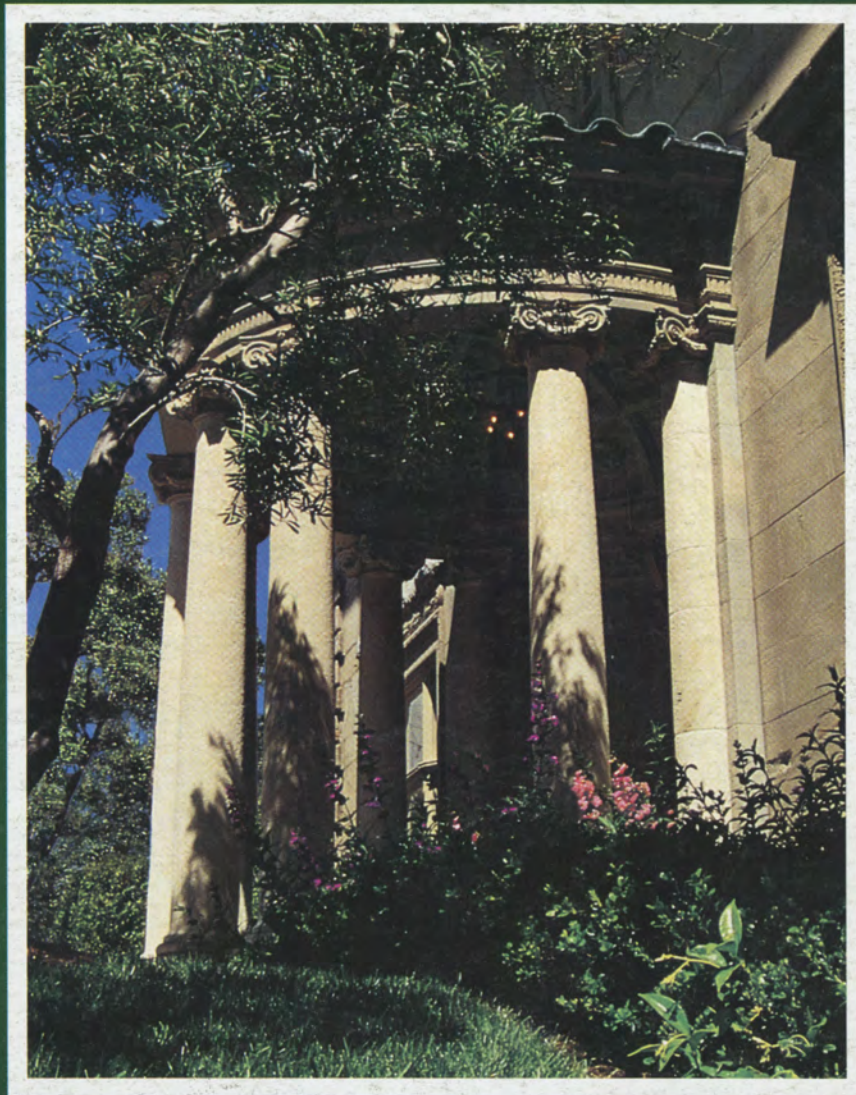
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