

Death in Venice

1997-1998

Thursday, September 11, 1997 7:30 PM

Sunday, September 14, 1997 1:00 PM

Wednesday, September 17, 1997 7:30 PM

Friday, September 19, 1997 8:00 PM

Tuesday, September 23, 1997 8:00 PM

Saturday, September 27, 1997 8:00 PM

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75TH SEASON, 1997-98

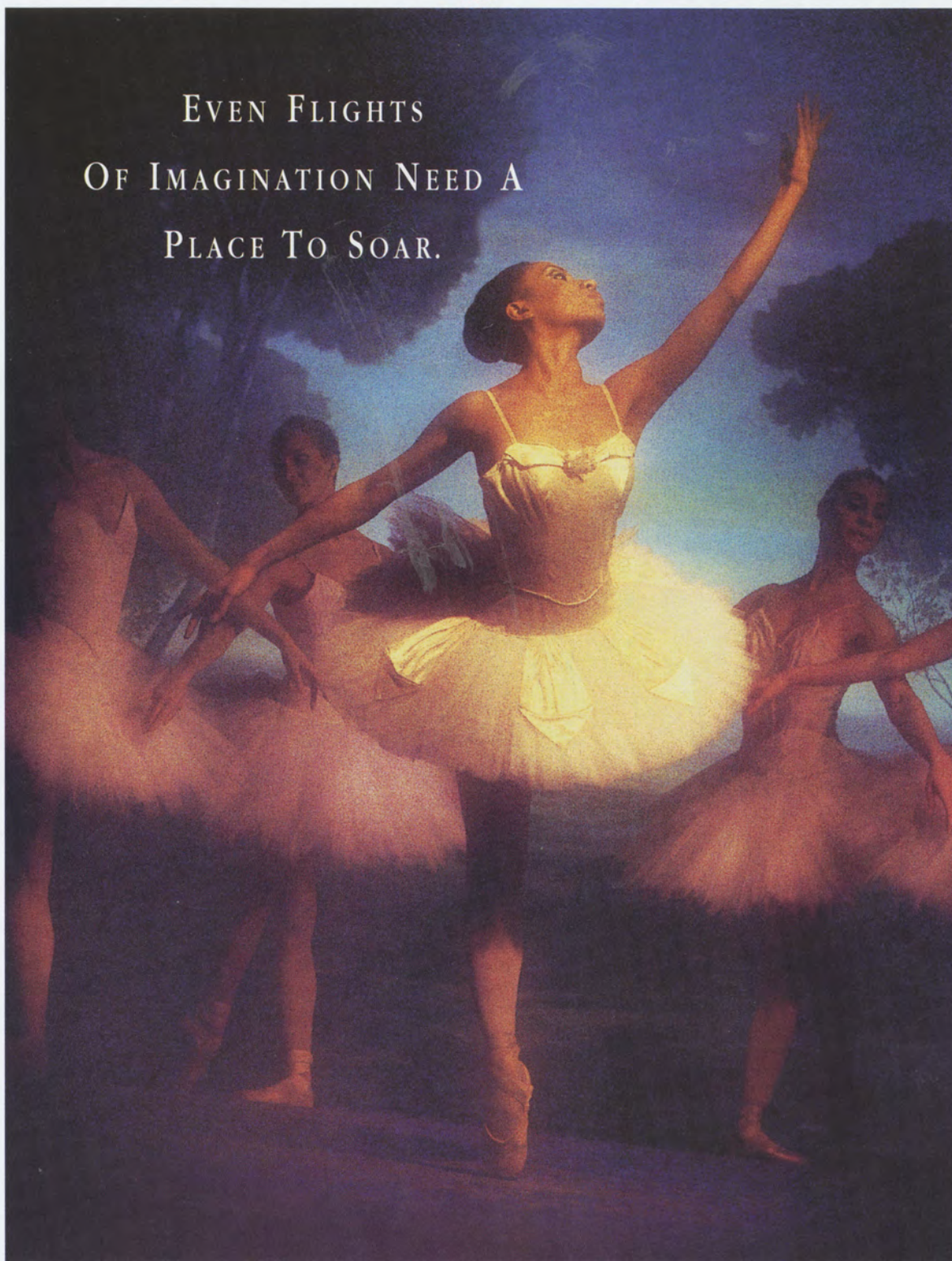
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A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND PRESIDENT, SAN FRANCISCO OPERA ASSOCIATION



On behalf of the San Francisco Opera Association, we are pleased to welcome you to our *Femmes Fatales* Festival. We spent the past two summers in different venues, presenting *La Bohème* at the Orpheum Theatre and *Madama Butterfly* at the Golden Gate Theatre. In doing so, we gained a significant number of new audience members, with approximately 25,000 first-time opera-goers at the *Bohème* run and more than 24,000 at *Butterfly*. Indeed, our opera family has grown, and we hope to continue the trend by offering you new and innovative approaches to opera while maintaining the high standards that you expect from San Francisco Opera. Right now, it is a delight to be able to welcome our summer audience to the War Memorial Opera House.

Although the Company's financial position continues to be strong, ticket prices cover only half of our production costs. Today, more than ever, support of individuals, foundations and corporations is vital to the existence of San Francisco Opera. We acknowledge with great appreciation the generosity of Mrs. Paul L. Wattis, Chevron and Madeleine Haas Russell for helping us to present our *Femmes Fatales* Festival.

Just around the corner is our 76th season, which has been expanded to 10 operas and includes the world premiere of *A Streetcar Named Desire*, a San Francisco Opera commission. An extraordinary season awaits us, and we look forward to seeing you there.

REID W. DENNIS
CHAIRMAN

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PRESIDENT

A MESSAGE FROM THE GENERAL DIRECTOR



The *femme fatale* has been celebrated in opera for hundreds of years, and our *Femmes Fatales* Festival offers you a brilliant sampler of great opera. From the exquisite, 17th-century baroque lyricism of Monteverdi's *L'Incoronazione di Poppea*, to the beloved romanticism of Bizet's *Carmen* and the provocative, 20th-century music of Berg's *Lulu*, you will embark on a musical adventure through time, led by the marvelous conductors Ralf Weikert, Patrick Summers and Alberto Maria Giuri.

Our *femmes fatales* live in vibrant worlds of drama and intrigue, each brought to life in our summer productions. A fascinating new virtual reality film sequence and new costumes by the celebrated fashion designer Bob Mackie enhance our acclaimed 1989 production of *Lulu*. The elegant grandeur of ancient Rome is re-created by Robert Perdziola in *L'Incoronazione di Poppea*. Our massive and very popular production of *Carmen*, created for our season at Bill Graham Civic Auditorium, has been refitted for the War Memorial Opera House stage.

As for singers, we'll encounter a superb group of international artists, with some in exciting debuts: Frederica von Stade performing her first Countess Geschwitz in *Lulu*; countertenor David Daniels, mezzo Lorraine Hunt and tenor Barry Banks taking Company bows in *L'Incoronazione di Poppea*; and soprano Andrea Dankova making her U.S. opera debut in *Carmen*.

The power of the *femme fatale* is a force to behold—enjoy the excitement!

LOTFI MANSOURI
GENERAL DIRECTOR



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SAN FRANCISCO OPERA MAGAZINE

Death in Venice

75th Season, 1997-98
Vol. 75, No. 3

FEATURES

10 The Worlds of *Death in Venice* by Michael Steinberg

The author provides fascinating insights into how Thomas Mann's *Der Tod in Venedig* became Benjamin Britten's *Death in Venice*.

32 Views of *Venice* by Timothy Pfaff

Death in Venice stage director Lotfi Mansouri and conductor Donald Runnicles share their thoughts on the Mann/Britten masterpiece.

DEPARTMENTS

- 6 Administration
- 14 Repertoire, 1997-98 Season
- 16 Artist Roster
- 18 San Francisco Opera Orchestra
- 21 Cast
- 22 Synopses
- 28 San Francisco Opera Association
- 28 Series A Boxholders
- 30 1997-98 Opera Previews
- 38 Medallion Society
- 43 Artist Profiles
- 54 Supporting San Francisco Opera
- 60 Bel Canto Society
- 63 Corporate Council
- 66 San Francisco Opera Center Supporters
- 68 Services

COVER

Mokuchu Urushibara (Japanese, 1888-1953)
Grand Canal, Venice

Color woodcut, 13¾ x 9½ in.

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(continued on page 8)

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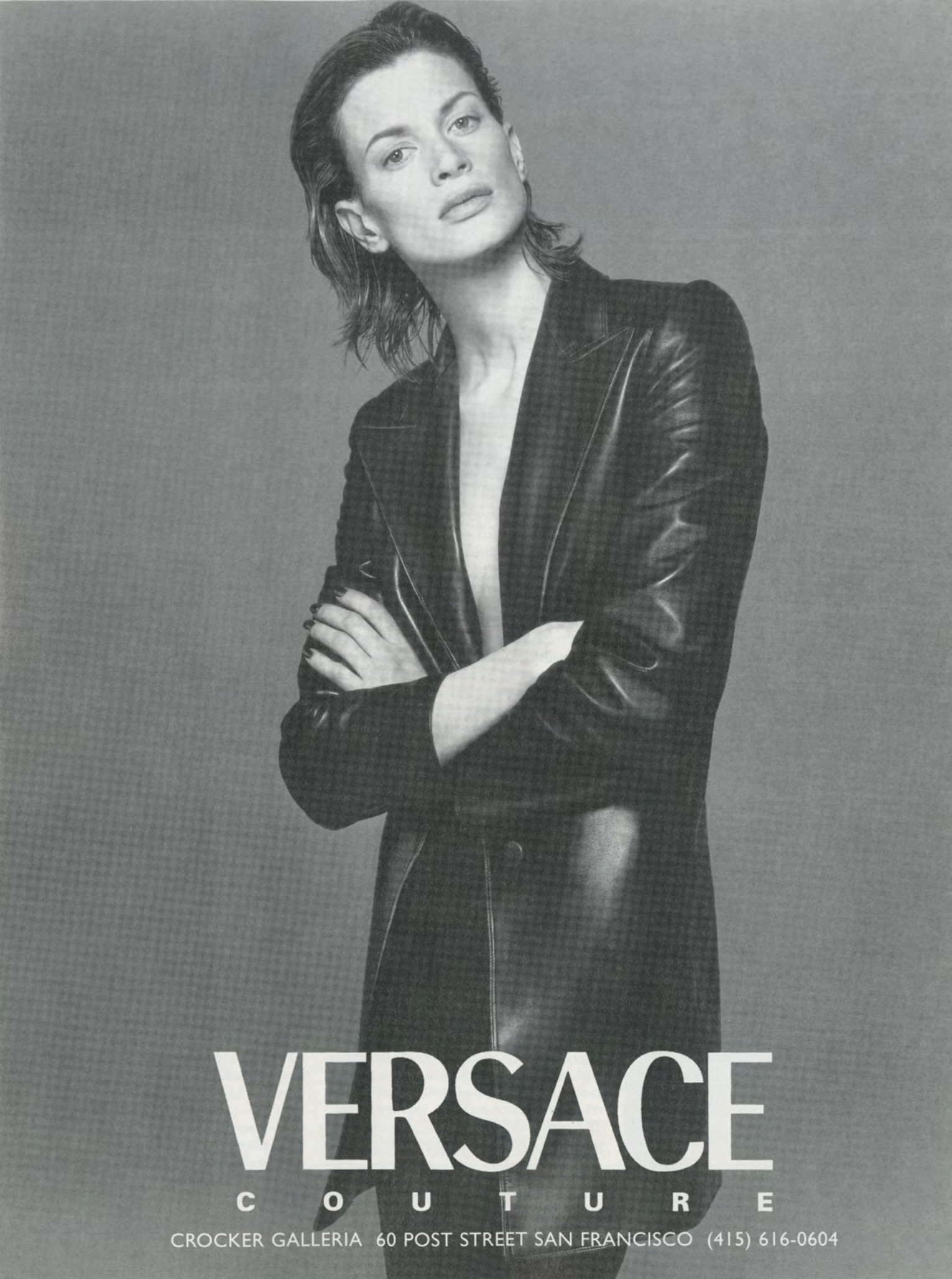
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A black and white photograph of a woman with dark, slightly damp hair, looking upwards and to the side. She is wearing a black leather jacket with a deep V-neckline and has her arms crossed. The background is a solid, dark gray.

VERSACE

C O U T U R E

CROCKER GALLERIA 60 POST STREET SAN FRANCISCO (415) 616-0604

The Worlds of *Death in Venice*

By MICHAEL STEINBERG

IT WAS MAY OF 1911, and Thomas Mann, almost thirty-six and the acclaimed author of *Buddenbrooks* and *Tonio Kröger*, was out of sorts—suffering, as he often did, from stomach troubles and headaches. He was both depressed by and angry about his sister Carla's suicide the previous summer; his current project, *The Confessions of Felix Krull, Confidence Man*, had ground to a halt because he felt unable to sustain the brilliance of the opening chapters (he would resume work on the novel in 1954); and he was frightened by having become the father of four children in six years. He was also caught up in the nervousness that consumed much of Europe that spring as a result of the Agadir crisis, the appearance of a German gunboat, the *Panther*, off the Moroccan coast "to protect German interests," an incident that threatened to plunge the Continent into war. Mann's young wife, Katia, was not feeling well either, and so the couple decided on a vacation at Brioni (now Brijuni, Croatia), an island just off the Dalmatian coast that had been highly recommended by friends. Thomas's brother Heinrich joined them.

Brioni disappointed, and after ten irritating days, the Manns took a ship from Pola (Pula) to Venice, a place they knew and loved well. They stayed, as always, at the Hotel des Bains on the Lido, where among the other guests was a Polish family that included a thirteen-year-old boy by whose uncommon beauty and grace Thomas was totally captivated. But both Mann brothers were oppressed by persistent headaches, which they attributed to the ill winds blowing from the mainland, and the party left for the Apennines. This, too, proved unsatisfactory, and they returned to Venice, where the wind had changed and where Thomas spent many happy hours on the beach, surveying the human parade—including the Polish boy—and writing letters as well as an essay

on Wagner. The Manns picked up rumors of a cholera epidemic, which they put together with their observation that their hotel was emptying suspiciously. A clerk at the Thomas Cook agency confirmed the rumor, explained that the city was suppressing news so as not to compromise tourist trade, and advised

accurately, a story—of how he came to write one of the landmarks of twentieth-century literature: "[All these components] were there. I had only to arrange them when they showed at once and in the oddest way their capacity as elements of composition."

In a strange postscript, in 1965, ten years after Mann's death, there surfaced a Count Wladislaw Moes. He had been given a copy of the Polish translation of *Der Tod in Venedig*, a book unfamiliar to him, but in which he had recognized the description of himself and his family. (Following the example of most writers, I shall refer to Mann's novella as *Der Tod in Venedig* and to Benjamin Britten's opera as *Death in Venice*.) Count Moes even had photos that attested to the accuracy of Mann's account of how he, his sisters, and his mother were dressed, and he went on to publish his recollection of their holiday in *Twen*, a German magazine for teenagers.

That is what we might call the external or material genesis of *Der Tod in Venedig*. Mann never had any intention of simply turning his experience of "lewd" and "dangerous" Venice, as he called *La Serenissima* in his working

notes for *Der Tod in Venedig*, into a picturesque travel *feuilleton*. As soon as he returned to his newly acquired country house at Bad Tölz in the foothills of the Bavarian Alps, Mann began to work out what his stay in Venice had meant and what, as a writer, he might make of it. He was astounded that it took him a year to write the 25,000 words or so of *Der Tod in Venedig*, but like Wagner, from whose music he said he learned the art of composition, Mann found again and again that his projects grew to dimensions enormously larger than he had anticipated (*The Magic Mountain* and the *Joseph* tetralogy were initially planned as modest novellas).

It is not that *Der Tod in Venedig* became extraordinarily long, but it did become ex-



JONES

them to return to Germany as soon as possible. This they did.

The trip provided the observant novelist not only with these central events, but with much colorful detail as well: a man, every aspect of whose appearance said "foreign" and "transalpine," seen at Munich's North Cemetery; the news, received at Brioni, of the death of Gustav Mahler; an elderly fop, rouged and dyed, on the dreary, filthy steamer from Pola to Venice; the unlicensed gondolier who rowed the Manns from Venice to the Lido and vanished before they could pay him; a disruption of plans caused by misdirected luggage; a scurrilous ballad singer who entertained the guests at the hotel; and more. As Mann wrote nearly twenty years later, telling the story—more

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

traordinarily rich. Its central character—hero is hardly the word—is Gustav von Aschenbach, a writer in his fifties (the “von” had been granted in honor of his fiftieth birthday). His first name and physical appearance are Mahler’s. He is a cultural eminence of the stature Mann hoped to become and indeed did become in his fifties when he had published *The Magic Mountain* and been awarded the Nobel Prize, and Mann put something of himself into Aschenbach. The list of Aschenbach’s works is a list of books Mann had begun and abandoned; like Mann in the spring of 1911, Aschenbach had hit a dry spell, though one much more alarming than Mann’s; he, too, loves Venice and goes there to be renewed; and most important, his psychological makeup, like Mann’s, includes a considerable homosexual component, altogether latent in Aschenbach, but less so in the author of *Tonio Kröger*. But it is important to remember that *Der Tod in Venedig* is a work of fiction, not a chapter of autobiography.

Aschenbach travels to Venice, his journey and stay including many of the Manns’ experiences. He is captivated by Tadzio, a beautiful Polish boy. At first, he sees him in an Apollonian way as the embodiment of ideal beauty. Next, he imagines himself as fatherly friend (the Polish family consists only of mother, governess, and three children—no father). Finally, obsessed, he follows Tadzio and his family all over Venice. Seeing himself now as lover, he allows the hotel barber to dye his hair and to apply rouge and lipstick: He has become as absurd, as ugly, as revolting, as pitiful as the shriveled and painted fop on the boat from Pola.

Aschenbach’s pursuit of Tadzio takes place in silence. Although he has resolved to speak to the boy, has “readied a friendly sentence in French,” he cannot get the words out. Widowed, his only daughter married

and gone, he has become shut off from human communication. Even in his recent books, he has turned away from the sympathy for the downtrodden that characterized his early works. His silence even becomes potentially murderous. From German newspapers and the clerk at the travel bureau he knows about the cholera epidemic. He knows, too, that he should inform the Polish family, who appear not to be aware, but it is more important to him that Tadzio not leave, just as he himself is reckless in staying in the infected city, and once again he cannot bring himself to speak. Ill, near delirium, he watches Tadzio walk into the water, seeing him now as a Hermes figure, a conductor of souls into the next world. “As so often before, he rose to follow him.” This time, he collapses in his chair, and “the same day, a respectfully shocked world received the news of his death.”

What has not shut down is Aschenbach’s intelligence. Even as he reels from folly to folly, he sees what he is doing, sees what is happening to him. He comes from a background of military men and jurists, one where discipline and endurance counted for everything, and he had always applied that attitude to his life as a writer: He has far to fall. His classical education, his reading of Plato, of the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*, help him to see. Beauty can lead to wisdom, but that path goes by way of the senses. The senses lead to passion, and passion leads to the abyss. Like Plato, Mann believed that art, especially music, is dangerous because it bypasses our rational, ethical defenses. Mann offered various interpretations of *Der Tod in Venedig*, but most centrally it was for him, “a story about the lasciviousness of ruin,” one about “passion as confusion and degradation.” In *Phaedrus*, Plato develops an allegory of a charioteer whose car is drawn by two horses, one noble and respon-

sible, the other unruly and, as we might say today, on the quest for instant gratification. *Der Tod in Venedig* is the story of a charioteer who allows the Dionysian horse to take control. Mann had already thought of using what he called the “cruel, beautiful, grotesque, deeply moving” story of the seventy-three-year-old Goethe’s love for the seventeen-year-old Ulrike von Levetzow; Venice and the sight of the lovely Wladislaw-Tadzio changed the coloration.

I wish I knew when Britten first read *Der Tod in Venedig* or, for that matter, anything else by Mann. The copious literature about him gives no clue. I imagine it to have been between 1939 and 1942 when he lived in the United States, where Mann was held in much higher esteem than in England. Britten was close to the family of a German refugee psychiatrist, exactly the sort of people who were Mann’s readers, and in the winter of 1940-41, he lived in that rather grubby and now legendary Brooklyn commune in which W. H. Auden played Mother and whose denizens, along with Carson McCullers, Paul and Jane Bowles, Oliver Smith, and Gypsy Rose Lee, included Mann’s son Golo, later a distinguished historian.

Whenever Britten’s encounter with Mann’s work occurred, it seems, in retrospect, to have been fated. Here is a haunting detail. Writing *Doctor Faustus*, and with no knowledge of Britten’s *Serenade* for Tenor, Horn, and Strings—both works were begun at about the same time in 1943—Mann had attributed to Adrian Leverkühn, his composer-hero, settings of several of the same texts Britten chose for his work. Michael Mann, the novelist’s musician son who was a violist in the San Francisco Symphony for a time, told me how “uncanny” his father had thought this coincidence. To Heidi Heilmann, the art historian who sent Thomas Mann records of Britten’s *Serenade* in 1948,



Opposite: Ken Remo was Aschenbach in two Spring Opera Theater presentations of *Death in Venice*. This photo was taken in 1975; Ronald Hedlund portrayed the baritone roles.

Left: Benjamin Britten, 1913-1976
Right: Thomas Mann, 1875-1955



Mann wrote that "Leverkühn could have been quite pleased to have written some of these pieces." And Britten, born the year after the completion of *Der Tod in Venedig*, shared some important traits of mind and soul with Mann. He was capable of deep unease about the morality of art; he was intensely susceptible to the appeal of boys and, like Mann, scrupulously sublimated his desire; he felt the same bond to the sea; and he, too, had come to love Venice passionately ever since his first visit, in January of 1949, had healed him from a near nervous collapse. Eventually, like Mann, like Aschenbach, Britten became a cultural eminence in his country, with his Companion of Honour, Order of Merit, and elevation to the peerage counterparts to Aschenbach's "von" and Mann's Nobel Prize.

If, for Mann, the writing of *Der Tod in Venedig* came about almost by chance, for Britten, the composition of *Death in Venice* was the realization of a well-matured plan, several years in the making. When he began to compose this work in October of 1971—in Venice—he was aware that it might be his last opera, the last of sixteen if you count the early operetta *Paul Bunyan*, his version of *The Beggar's Opera*, and the three parables for church performance, *Curlew River*, *The Burning Fiery Furnace*, and *The Prodigal Son*. He was only fifty-eight that year, but he was far from well. His physician had diagnosed heart trouble when he first examined the composer in 1960; indeed, as Britten once said to Rosamund Strode, his assistant, he had "always had a wonky heart." He had survived a bad spell of endocarditis in 1968, but recognized that his physical stamina was diminishing. Even in moments of optimism about his own prospects, Britten knew that Gustav von Aschenbach would be the last major operatic role for Peter Pears, his senior by three and a half years and his partner in music and in life since the spring of 1937, an artist whose musicianship, feeling for poetry, acting skill, sense of humor, and peculiarly ecstatic and instantly recognizable voice had inspired him to produce a repertory of operas, songs, and concerted works for which tenors will forever be grateful. *Death in Venice* is, among other things, the conscious summation of two musical lives, Britten's own and Pears's.

Britten planned to devote 1972 to *Death in Venice*, though he assigned himself a hard schedule for that year's edition of the Aldeburgh Festival he and Pears had founded in 1948: Along with considerable and unavoidable organizational and social obligations, he gave recitals with Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau and Mstislav Rostropovich, conducted *The Turn of the Screw* and Schumann's *Scenes*

from Goethe's *Faust*, and made a recording of the latter, difficult work.

A checkup in August of 1972 revealed serious "aortic incompetence." Britten faced a difficult choice: With medication he could stave off surgery for the replacement of his aortic valve until he had completed *Death in Venice*, with the risk that his heart might not stay the course, or he could undergo surgery immediately, with the alternative risk that the operation might leave him incapacitated and unable to compose. He chose the former way, promising to make himself available for surgery as soon as the opera was done. He finished the composition in December of 1972, completing the orchestral score the following March. In April of 1973, he entered the hospital, and in May he underwent what turned out to be an unexpectedly complicated operation. During its eight-hour course he suffered a stroke, after which he never regained full use of his right hand.

A month later, Britten was still too ill to attend the premiere of *Death in Venice* on June 16th, although he was able to see performances at Snape and Covent Garden later that year and in 1975. He could no longer conduct or play the piano, but by virtue of sheer bloody-mindedness he managed to recover some skill at getting notes down on paper. His wonderful *Spätlesse* included two of his most beautiful compositions—*Phaedra* (1975), a dramatic cantata written for Janet Baker and based on Robert Lowell's translation of Racine's *Phèdre*, and the String Quartet No. 3 (1976). With a cantata on an Edith Sitwell text unfinished on his desk, Benjamin Britten died on December 4th, 1976, twelve days after his sixty-third birthday.

The resolve to compose *Death in Venice* was fixed about 1965 when Britten abandoned a long-considered plan to make an opera of *King Lear*. (Fischer-Dieskau had mentioned the project to a reporter, and Britten hated the scrutiny that came when his plans were known in advance.) He composed two of his church parables, the ballet *The Prince of the Pagodas*, and the television opera *Owen Wingrave*. At last, in 1970, he was ready to think seriously about *Death in Venice*, and he asked Myfanwy Piper, who had written the libretti for *The Turn of the Screw* and *Owen Wingrave*, to begin her work of adapting Mann's novella. (Mrs. Piper's husband, John, had designed the sets for eight of Britten's stage works and would design *Death in Venice* as well.)

Mrs. Piper had no easy task. Mann tells a gripping story in *Der Tod in Venedig*, one full of atmosphere and color, but more than anything, his novella is a philosophical and contemplative work. Aschenbach speaks

fewer than two hundred words, though Mann tells us in great detail what is going through his mind. Tazio says nothing. Piper had had to deal with something like this in *The Turn of the Screw*, where Henry James had given Peter Quint and Miss Jessel no words at all, and she had met the challenge brilliantly. Here, perhaps, she stumbles in a few verbal details that are too, too British, at least to American ears, and certainly the reader who comes to *Death in Venice* with a memory full of the many-layered complexities of *Der Tod in Venedig* in his or her head will feel frustration at the drastic and necessary simplicities of *Death in Venice*—that was my unhappy experience when I first saw the opera twenty-three years ago—but if Myfanwy Piper's *Death in Venice* is, taken by itself, a feeble reduction of *Der Tod in Venedig*, it is a wonderful libretto, one that both allowed and stimulated Britten to compose a wonderful opera.

For this is where the music takes over. Mann understood this as, for example, Goethe, who resented music's natural sovereignty over the word, never did. In response to an inquiry about his "favorite poem," he asked: "And who wrote *Wann der silberne Mond* (When the silvery moon)? Höltz, one must firmly answer. But where would it be without Brahms?" In the same mini-essay, Mann mentions Daumer's poem *Nicht mehr zu dir zu gehen* (To go to you no more), and of this "expression of hopeless bondage to love" he says: "It is spoken, confessed, sighed with lips pressed shut. Brahms set it to music. He should not have done it." *Death in Venice* is set, riskily, on knife-edge balance. The music gives wings to the words, and there is, as I have finally come to understand, no question of "he should not have done it."

Death in Venice is in two acts: The division comes when Aschenbach, alone, allows himself to realize the truth and utters the words, "I love you." The two acts comprise seventeen scenes, many of them of cinematographic brevity and fluidity. Apropos cinema, it infuriated Britten when people suggested that he had been "inspired" to set *Der Tod in Venedig* by Luchino Visconti's pretty and foolish film (its subject seems mainly to be hats), which came out at the beginning of 1971. He never saw it, and no doubt the manhandling of Mahler's music would have enraged him even more.

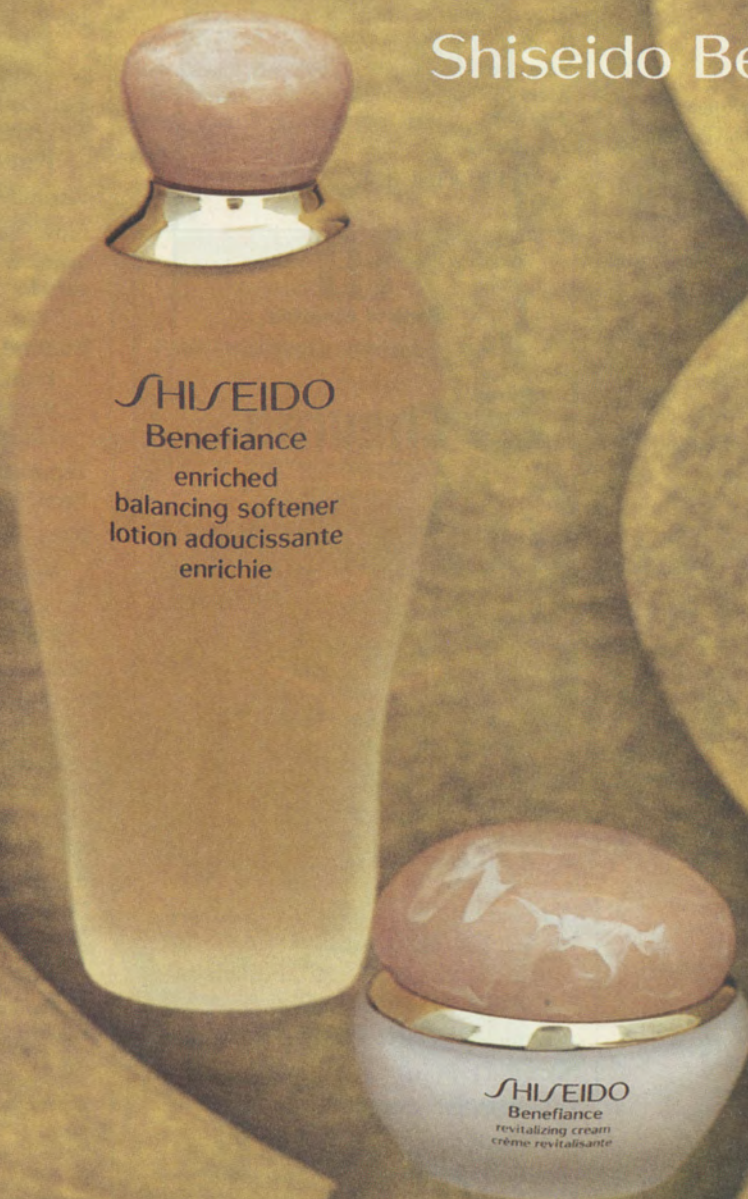
Aschenbach became Peter Pears's most demanding role. It does not call for the sheer physical force of Peter Grimes—after all, the second performance of *Death in Venice* took place on the tenor's sixty-third birthday—but the demand on concentration and endurance is immense: The singer is on stage virtually all the time, and only the boys'

(continued on page 37)

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Death in Venice

Britten

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Verdi

Swenson, Zaremba; Gavanelli,
Thompson*/Leech (10/1)/
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Hoffman*/Collins*

Sept. 13, 16, 20, 26, Oct. 1, 5, 7

Rost*, Keen; C. Robertson, Lopardo,
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Sept. 30, Oct. 4, 8, 12, 17, 21, 25

Guillaume Tell

Rossini

Racette, Keen; Lafont, Merritt, Lloyd,
Wells

Summers/Mansouri/McClintock/
Howland/Da Costa/Pech*/Munn
Nov. 2, 7, 12, 15, 18, 21, 24

New Production

Pelléas et Mélisande

Debussy

von Stade, Denize; Keenlyside,
White, Lloyd

Runnicles/Graham/Bosquet/Munn

Nov. 9, 11, 14, 20, 23, 29, Dec. 3

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Eugene Onegin

Tchaikovsky

Prokina*, Tarasova*, Rubtsova**,
Aksenova**; Michaels-Moore*, Very,
Halfvarson, Sénéchal

Temirkanov*/Temirkanov*/Ivanov**/
Pech/Munn

Nov. 19, 22, 25, 28, Dec. 2, 5, 7

Foland, Tarasova, Rubtsova,
Aksenova; Okerlund, Serkin*,
Halfvarson, Sénéchal

Temirkanov*/Temirkanov*/Ivanov/
Pech/Munn

Nov. 29 (noon)

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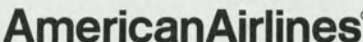
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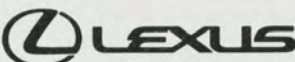
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Oct. 9, 11, 14, 19, 22, 24, 29, Nov. 1

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Connell, Ginzer*/Nielsen* (11/4,
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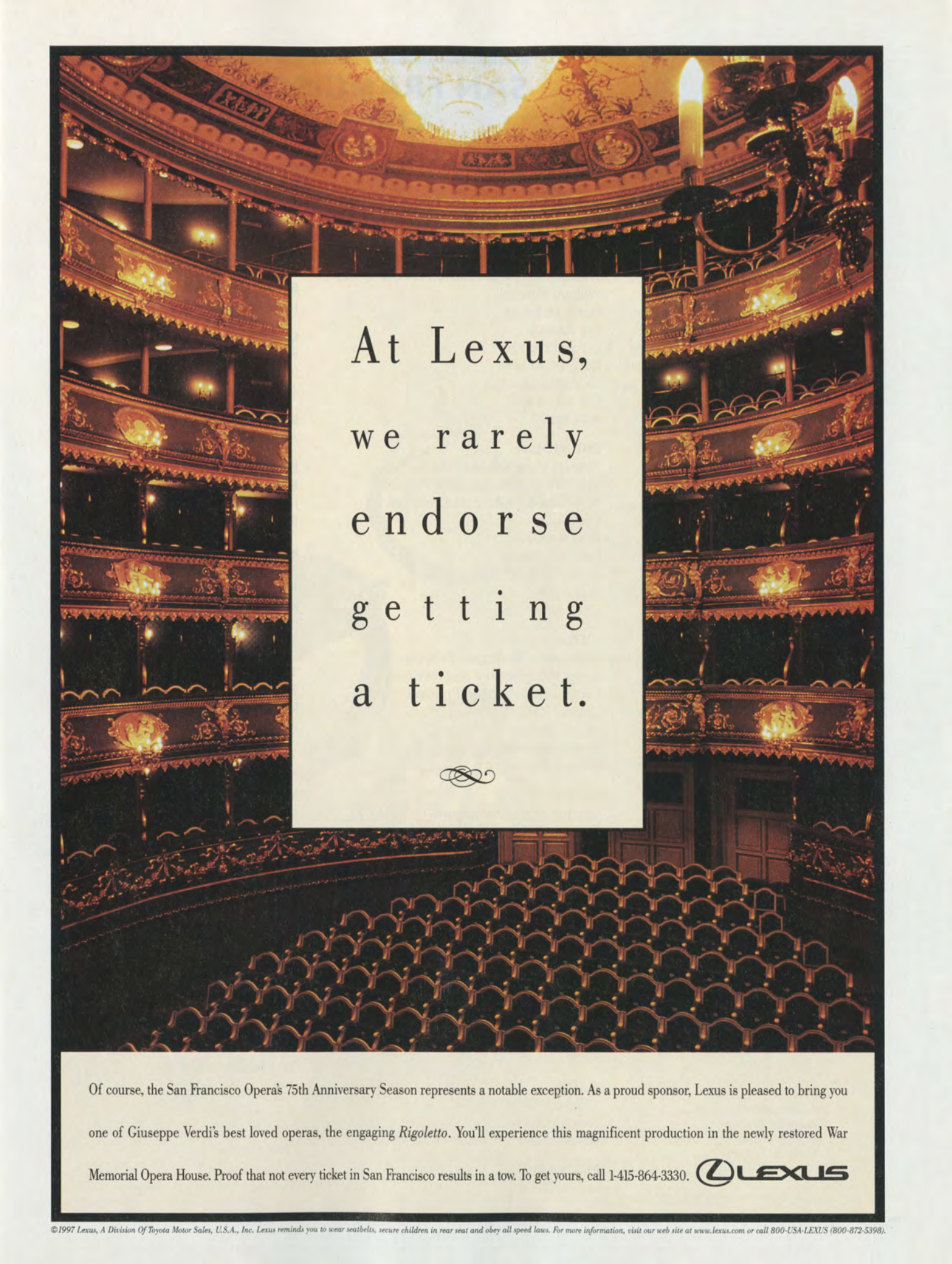
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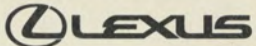
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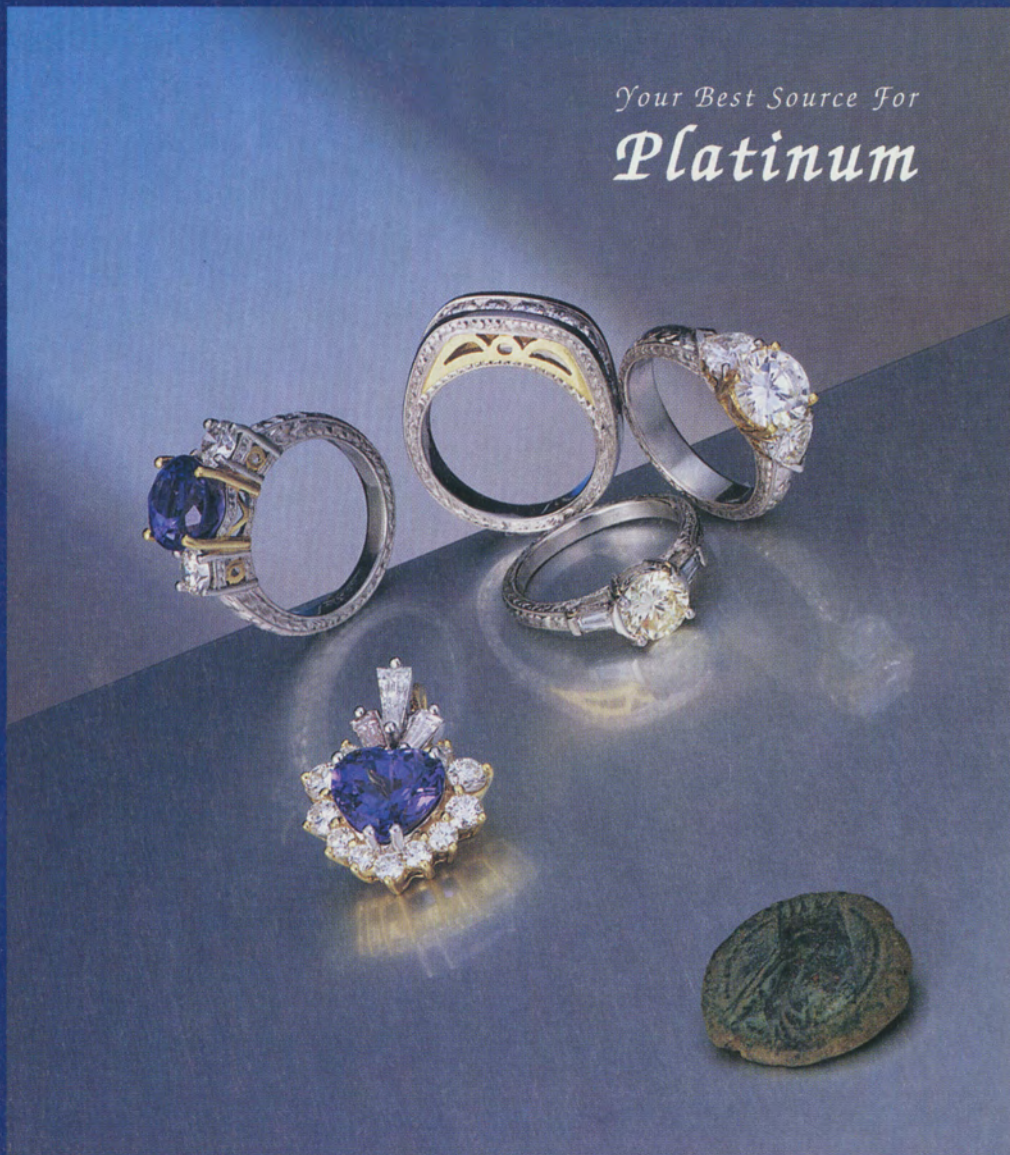
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Death in Venice

Photos taken in rehearsal
by Marty Sohl

*Christopher Newnam,
Kenneth Riegel*

(Photos continued on page 25)

This production, from the Canadian Opera Company, is sponsored in part by a generous gift from Madeleine Haas Russell.

Opera in two acts by BENJAMIN BRITTEN

Libretto by MYFANWY PIPER

Based on the novella by THOMAS MANN

By arrangement with Boosey & Hawkes, Inc., sole agent in the USA and Canada for Faber Music Ltd., London, publisher and copyright owner.

Death in Venice

(in English)

Conductor

Donald Runnicles

Production

Lotfi Mansouri

Set Designer

Wolfram Skalicki

Costume Designer

Susan Benson*

Lighting Designer

Michael Whitfield

Chorus Director

Ian Robertson

Choreographer

Michael Smuin

Assistant to Michael Smuin

Celia Fushille-Burke

Musical Preparation

Peter Grunberg

Joyce Fieldsend

Kathleen Kelly

Ernest Fredric Knell

Svetlana Gorzhevskaya

Prompter

Kathleen Kelly

Assistant Stage Directors

Gina Lapinski

Sandra Bernhard

Stage Manager

Theresa Ganley

First performance:

Snape, Aldeburgh Festival,

June 16, 1973

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 11 AT 7:30

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 14 AT 1:00

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17 AT 7:30

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 19 AT 8:00

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23 AT 8:00

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 27 AT 8:00

CAST

Gustav von Aschenbach

Kenneth Riegel

The traveler

Elderly fop

Old gondolier

The hotel manager

The hotel barber

The leader of the players

The voice of Dionysus

Alfonso Antoniozzi

Ship steward

Frederick Matthews

Lido boatman

Mel Ulrich†

Hotel porter

Harold Brock*

French girl

Aimée Puentes

French mother

Donna Turchi

Two Americans

Jim Croom

Richard Walker

German father and mother

William Pickersgill

Alexandra Nehra

Polish guest

Henryk De Rewenda

Danish lady

Dallas Lane

English lady

Kathleen Fuchs

Russian nanny

Claudia Siefer

Russian father and mother

Valery Portnov

Mitzi Weiner

Hotel waiter

Aram Barsamian*

Polish family's governess

Jane Murray

First daughter

Natalie Flores*

Second daughter

Stephanie Orza*

Tadzio

Christopher Newnam*

Tadzio's mother

Celia Fushille-Burke

Jaschui

John Hall*

Strawberry seller

Alison Buchanan†

First gondolier

Richard Walker

Guide

Jere Torkelsen

<i>Lace seller</i>	Virginia Pluth
<i>Glassmaker</i>	Jim Croom
<i>Beggar woman</i>	Sally Munro
<i>Restaurant waiter</i>	Aram Barsamian
<i>Second gondolier</i>	Frederick Matthews
<i>Third (offstage) gondolier</i>	Colby Roberts
<i>Voice of Apollo</i>	Michael Chance*
<i>Newspaper seller</i>	Christina Lamberti*†
<i>Cardinal at St. Mark's</i>	Scott Wilde
<i>Acrobats</i>	Jonathan Porretta* Matthew Powell*
<i>Strolling players</i>	Peggy Kriha Dye† Stuart Skelton†
<i>English clerk in travel bureau</i>	David Okerlund

Young men and women, gondoliers and boatmen, street vendors, beggars, citizens of Venice, choir at St. Mark's, tourists, followers of Dionysus, boys and girls, beach attendants

* San Francisco Opera debut

†1997-98 Adler Fellow

Supertitles are taken from the original libretto.

TIME AND PLACE: 1911; Munich and Venice

ACT I

Scene 1	Munich
Scene 2	On the boat to Venice
Scene 3	The journey to the Lido
Scene 4	The first evening at the hotel
Scene 5	On the beach
Scene 6	The foiled departure
Scene 7	The games of Apollo

INTERMISSION

ACT II

Scene 8	The hotel barber's shop
Scene 9	The pursuit
Scene 10	The strolling players
Scene 11	The travel bureau
Scene 12	The lady of the pearls
Scene 13	The dream
Scene 14	The empty beach
Scene 15	The hotel barber's shop
Scene 16	The last visit to Venice
Scene 17	The departure

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.

Death in Venice Additional Performers

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Aaron Orza
Seth Orza
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SYNOPSIS

Death in Venice

ACT I

Scene 1—*Munich.* The celebrated writer Aschenbach muses on his inability to work, but affirms his belief in order rather than passion. His attention is caught by a foreign-looking gentleman (The Traveler) who conjures up the vision of an alluringly exotic landscape. Aschenbach persuades himself that a journey to Venice may restore his “flagging inspiration.”

Scene 2—*On the boat to Venice.* Youths shout to their girlfriends on shore and are joined by an Elderly Fop. His inane chatter creates tension on the journey, causing Aschenbach to wonder why he ever decided to come to Venice. (The scene ends with a musical interlude that evokes the waters and bells of the city.)

Scene 3—*The journey to the Lido.* Aschenbach’s belief in the healing powers of Venice is restored, despite the sinister refusal of the Old Gondolier to obey orders, or wait to be paid. The writer recognizes the black gondola as a harbinger of death.

Scene 4—*The first evening at the hotel.* The obsequious Hotel Manager leads Aschenbach to his room and reveals its splendid view of the beach. He leaves the writer to reflect on his aims and ambitions as a creative artist. Drawn back to the view before him, he watches hotel guests from various countries assemble for dinner. Among them he notices a Polish family, including a boy of great physical beauty whose name, he learns, is Tadzio. Aschenbach reflects on the ambiguous relation between the artist’s sense of beauty and his desire to achieve a purely formal perfection.

Scene 5—*On the beach.* A languid Aschenbach finds the atmosphere oppressive and is unable to work, but nevertheless wishes to remain in Venice. As he watches, Tadzio arrives on the beach with his family and plays with other children, who accept him as their leader. The writer watches and listens, entranced by the boy’s grace and beauty.

Scene 6—*The foiled departure.* Crossing from the Lido to Venice proper, which is crowded and oppressive, the depressed Aschenbach resolves to leave. But his departure is prevented by a mistake over registration of his luggage at the station, and he soon returns to his hotel at the Lido. Both angry and delighted that his departure has been prevented, the writer once again sees Tadzio on the beach and makes a firm decision: “Here I will stay, here dedicate my days to the sun and Apollo himself.”

Scene 7—*The games of Apollo.* Aschenbach allows his imagination to play with thoughts of ancient Greece. He seems to hear the Voice of Apollo and in his imagination turns the children’s beach games into a sort of Olympiad with Tadzio crowned victor of the pentathlon. Forced to recognize the truth, Aschenbach realizes that through Tadzio he may find inspiration to write again. As Tadzio passes him on his way into the hotel and smiles at him, Aschenbach confesses—though the boy cannot hear him—“I love you!”

ACT II

Scene 8—*The hotel barber’s shop.* Aschenbach attempts to come to terms with his love, and regrets his inability even to speak to Tadzio. From the professional patter of the Hotel Barber, he hears the first rumors of a sickness that is causing people to leave Venice, but the barber becomes evasive when questioned.

Scene 9—*The pursuit.* Aschenbach crosses to Venice and learns that citizens are to take precautions against infection, but that “rumors of cholera” are being denied. Seeing the Polish family and anxious to keep the news from them lest they decide to leave Venice, he follows them about the city and, finally, back to the hotel, still without making any direct contact with Tadzio.

Scene 10—*The strolling players.* The hotel guests assemble to watch a company of strolling players. The troupe presents a parody of courtship, with the Leader of the Players adding a mock lament: “So I shall never be able to marry.” Aschenbach accosts the leader, seeking the truth about the possible plague, but receives an evasive answer.

Scene 11—*The travel bureau.* Aschenbach arrives at the bureau as a crowd of visitors seeks information and an early escape from Venice. After the crowd has left, the clerk admits to Aschenbach that Asiatic cholera has spread from India and was recently diagnosed in Venice. He advises the writer to leave before the city is blockaded.

Scene 12—*The lady of the pearls.* Aschenbach anxiously rehearses how he will break the news of the plague to Tadzio’s mother and so save the boy’s life, but at the crucial moment he remains silent. In despair and joy he realizes that all he cares about is his love for Tadzio.

Scene 13—*The dream.* In a feverish sleep, Aschenbach dreams of hearing a debate between Apollo and Dionysus which epitomizes the struggle in his mind: a pure Apollonian idyll gives way to a black Dionysian orgy. Waking, he recognizes that he can “fall no further . . . let the gods do what they will with me.”

Scene 14—*The empty beach.* Aschenbach watches as Tadzio and a few friends begin to play their games, only to abandon them and run off. The writer reaffirms his surrender: “Do what you will with me!”

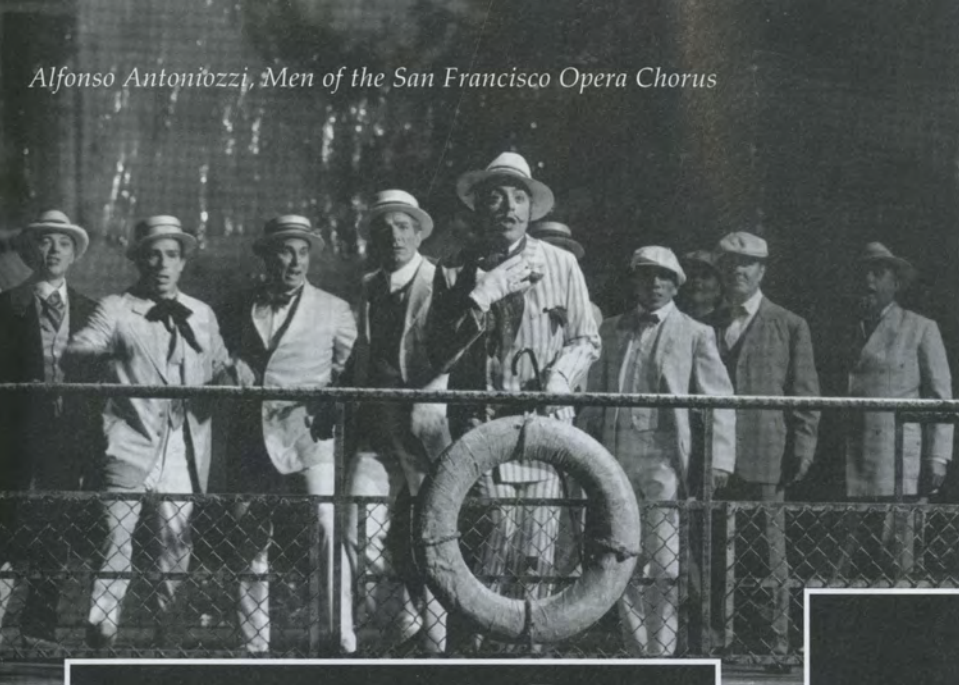
Scene 15—*The hotel barber’s shop.* In a frenzied search for youth, Aschenbach gets his grey hair tinted and his aging features made up, an ironic recalling of the Elderly Fop seen earlier.

Scene 16—*The last visit to Venice.* Almost hysterically exuberant in his new guise, Aschenbach once again follows the Polish family through the city, ever more strongly convinced that Tadzio understands his feelings and is encouraging him. He buys some strawberries, finds them musty and overripe to his taste, and starts to take stock of the situation by tracing his path from the sensual discovery of beauty to the abyss of passion.

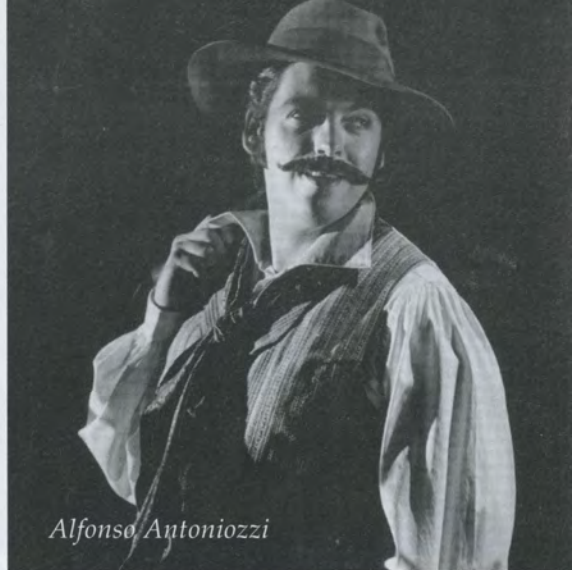
Scene 17—*The departure.* The Hotel Manager and a porter discuss the weather and the departing guests. Aschenbach learns that the Polish family is about to leave, and the manager assumes that Aschenbach himself will soon follow them. The writer goes out onto the deserted beach where Tadzio and a few other children are playing. As their game turns rougher, Tadzio is knocked down, his face pressed into the sand. Aschenbach starts to protest but the boy gets up, unharmed. Aschenbach calls Tadzio’s name, and, when the boy beckons him, collapses and dies in his chair. Tadzio continues to walk far down the beach towards the distant sea.

The performance of September 14th is designated in honor of
Annette Campbell-White and Dr. Ruediger Naumann-Etienne’s membership in the Triple Gold Circle.

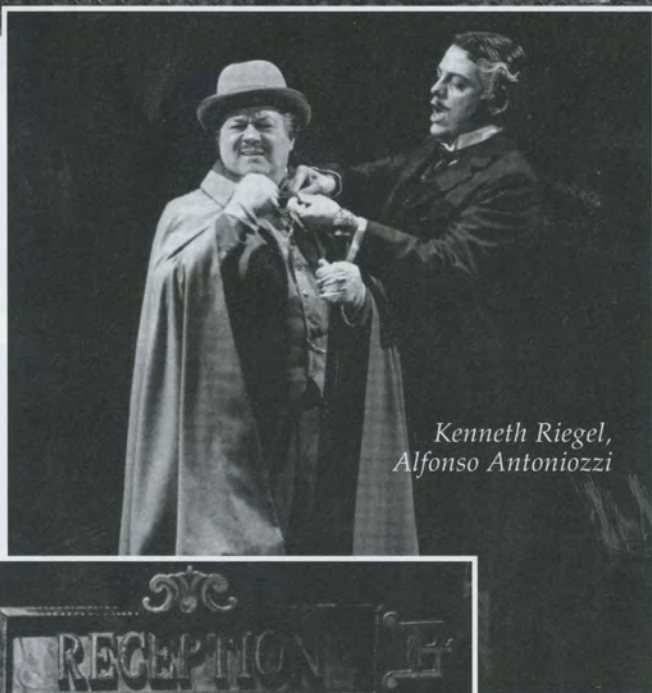
Alfonso Antoniozzi, Men of the San Francisco Opera Chorus



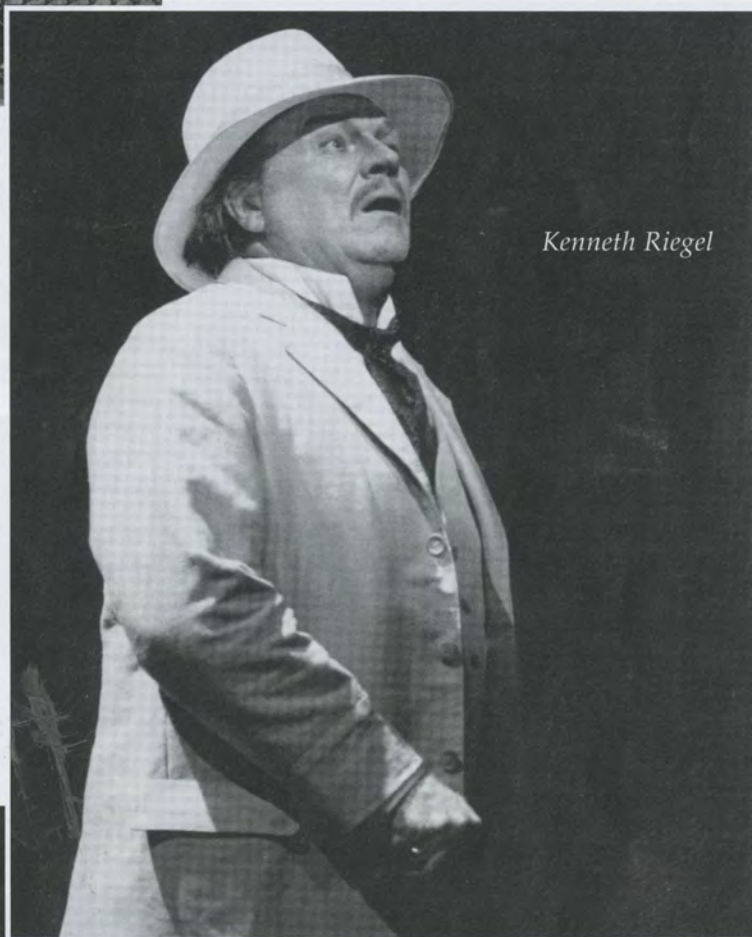
Alfonso Antoniozzi



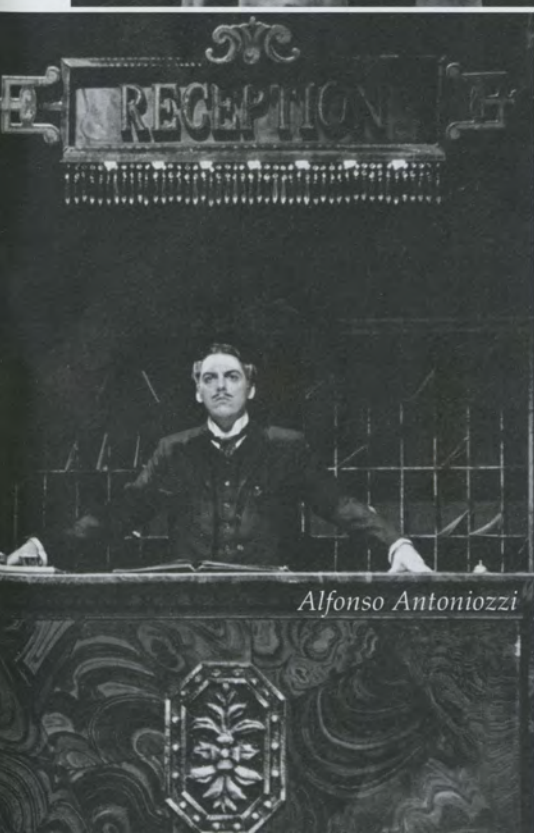
*Kenneth Riegel,
Alfonso Antoniozzi*



Kenneth Riegel



Alfonso Antoniozzi

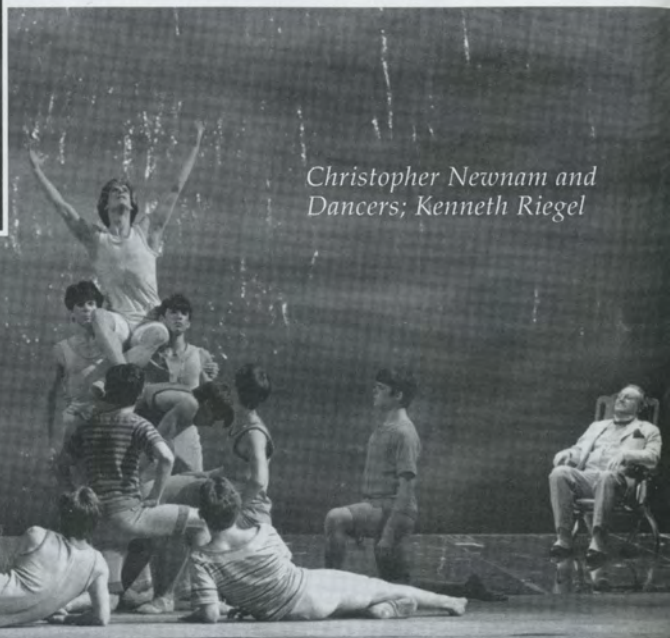


Matthew Powell, Alfonso Antoniozzi, Jonathan Porretta

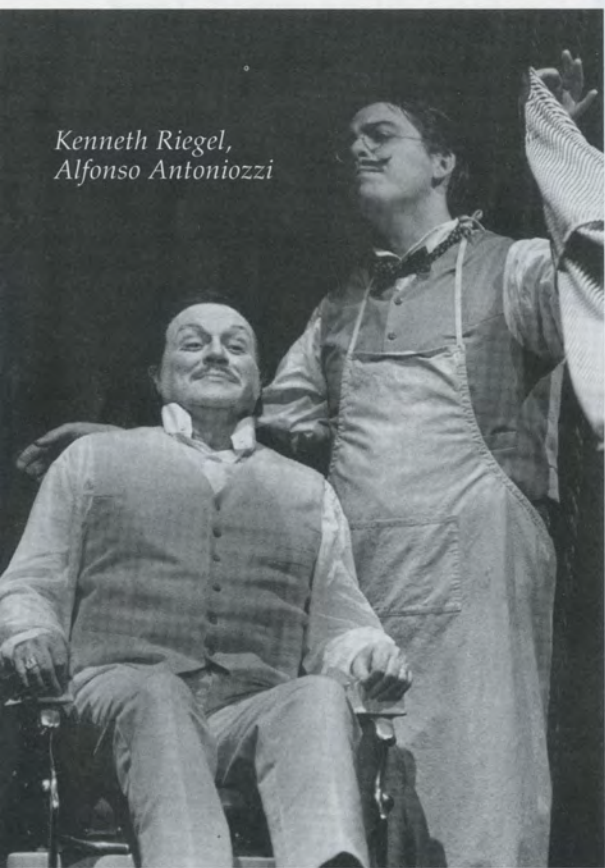




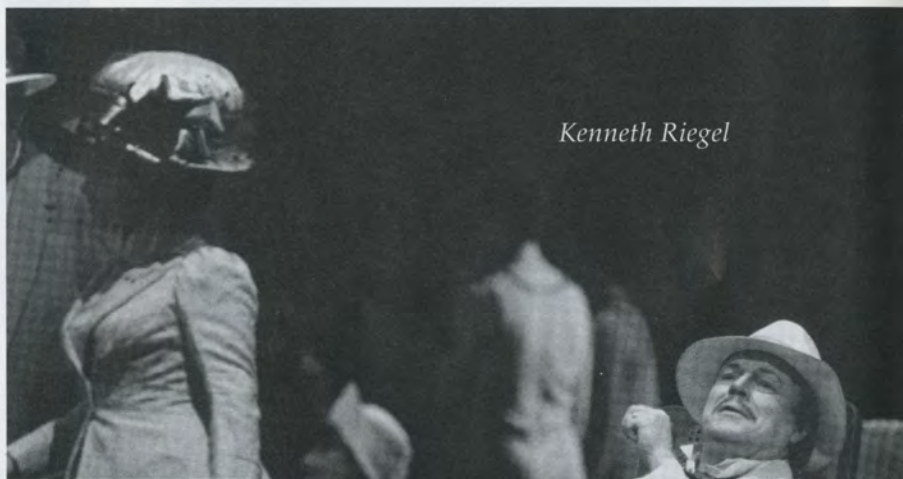
Kenneth Riegel, Alfonso Antoniozzi



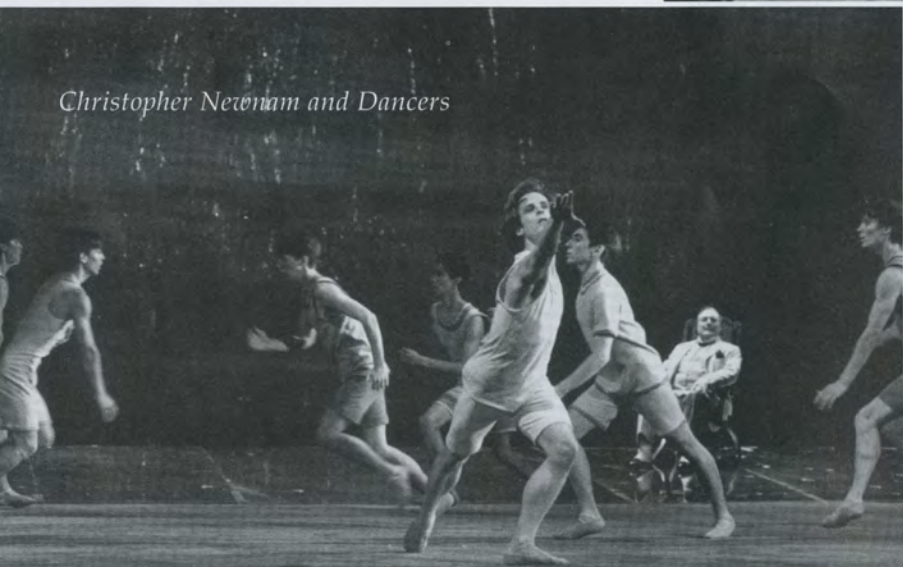
Christopher Newnam and Dancers; Kenneth Riegel



Kenneth Riegel, Alfonso Antoniozzi



Kenneth Riegel



Christopher Newnam and Dancers



ADVENTURE IN THE ARTS

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Cecilia Bartoli & Autumn & Opera In New York at the Metropolitan Opera and New York City Opera with Sherwin Sloan November 3rd to 10th

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The Fifth Annual Christmas and Nine Operas In Prague, Vienna and Bratislava with Sherwin Sloan December 14th to 26th, 1997

...there are no more charming and exquisite towns than these at the height of the Holiday Season. In Vienna the 60-foot Christmas tree is in a splendid setting at the hotel in the heart of activities....you are invited to join Sherwin for 4 operas in Prague. At the State Opera, Lohengrin, Faust and Eugene Onegin. And La Boheme at the National Opera. In Vienna, at the jewel-like Volksopera, Hansel and Gretel, and The Magic Flute Christmas afternoon. At the Staatsoper, Les Contes d'Hoffmann, Rienzi and Don Giovanni, for a total of 9 major opera performances at the most splendid time of the year. There is nothing to compare to Christmas Season which is one of the most beautiful times of the year-we have had snow the past two years-and with spectacular sightseeing and walking tours in Prague and Vienna based on the previous six opera programs. Day excursion to Baroque Bratislava with a performance at the lovely Slovak National Opera. Full day to the most stunning monastery in Austria with our private guide from previous years. Lunches, dinners and private tours of the art galleries.

The Chaliapin Festival in St. Petersburg with Helsinki Opera January 28th to February 8th, 1998 with Sherwin Sloan

...join Sherwin for 3 days in Helsinki before going on to St. Petersburg and Don Carlo, a Concert of the Russian Imperial Andreiev Orchestra with Galina Gorchakova, The Rite of Spring by Stravinsky, Boris Godunov and other performances to be announced. Then back to Helsinki for 2 relaxing days. Performances in Helsinki to be announced. There will be a special Gala Reception and much more.

The Arizona Ring in the Mountainous Countryside of Northern Arizona at Flagstaff with Sherwin Sloan from May 31st to June 8th, 1998

The Arizona Opera is going to present a second consecutive Ring in the beautiful setting of Flagstaff. The scenic projections of Amy Shock which were so extraordinary last year, will again be used in this production. Includes best Orchestra Center seating. Welcome private dinner with Glynn Ross, General Director, a private coach trip to nearby Sedona with dinner and entertainment at a friend's home (a highlight from last year). Farewell Gala dinner. It will bring together many friends from previous Rings, and much more.

The Adelaide Ring in Australia November 15th to November 25th, 1998

(limited to 30 members)

... join Sherwin for this wonderful Ring conducted by Jeffrey Tate. This is the Chatelet production done in Paris in Autumn, 1994. The Ring Program includes a deluxe hotel, Orchestra Center Seating, full day to Kangaroo Island. Also, 3-day extensions to Melbourne and Sydney.

For a copy of the itineraries call

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1997-98 OPERA PREVIEWS

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

PRE-PERFORMANCE LECTURES

The popular pre-performance lectures will take place in the War Memorial Opera house one hour prior to curtain time and will last approximately one-half hour. Lectures feature noted scholars and artists and are presented free of charge to patrons with tickets to the corresponding performance. The lecture schedule is as follows:

Rigoletto—Oct. 1, 7; Dec. 4, 6

Der Fliegende Holländer—Oct. 8, 12, 17, 21, 25

Le Nozze di Figaro—Oct. 14, 22, 24; Nov. 1; Jan. 9, 11, 14, 17

Elektra—Oct. 23, 31; Nov. 4, 8, 13

Guillaume Tell—Nov. 7, 12, 15, 18, 21, 24

Pelléas et Mélisande—Nov. 14, 20, 23; Dec. 3

Eugene Onegin—Nov. 22, 25, 28; Dec. 2, 5

Tosca—Jan. 10, 13, 16

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA GUILD — INSIGHTS

Renowned artists and personalities from the world of opera share their insights and experiences during informal interviews. Complimentary to Guild members. \$5.00 to non-Guild members. All Opera Guild Insights will be held from 6 to 7 p.m. in Herbst Theatre, Veterans Building, 401 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco.

October 20	<i>Guillaume Tell</i>
November 7	<i>Pelléas et Mélisande</i>
November 17	<i>Eugene Onegin</i>

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA GUILD — PREVIEWS

Opera Guild Previews are scheduled in communities throughout the greater Bay Area by local Guild chapters (East Bay, Marin, San Francisco, Sonoma, South Peninsula and the San Jose Opera Guild). Previews are given by renowned musicologists who may feature recordings, slides and/or handouts to familiarize the audience with an opera from the current season.

TOPIC	SPEAKER
<i>Der Fliegende Holländer</i>	Simon Williams
<i>Elektra</i>	D.B. Greene
<i>Guillaume Tell</i>	Robert Glick
<i>Pelléas et Mélisande</i>	David A. Grayson
<i>Eugene Onegin</i>	Richard Taruskin

EAST BAY CHAPTER—SAN FRANCISCO OPERA GUILD

Lectures held at 8:00 p.m., preceded by complimentary refreshments. Orinda Community Church, 10 Irwin Way, Orinda. Admission: \$8.50; Series: \$28.00. Reservations required. For reservations or information call, Annette Clute (510) 527-1846 or Silvia Lin (510) 838-9255.

Oct 15	<i>Elektra</i>
Nov 5	<i>Pelléas et Mélisande</i>
Nov 19	<i>Eugene Onegin</i>

MARIN CHAPTER—SAN FRANCISCO OPERA GUILD

Lectures held at 8:00 p.m., preceded by complimentary refreshments. Mt. Tamalpais United Methodist Church, 410 Sycamore Avenue, Mill Valley. Admission: \$7.00 - adults, \$6.00 - students and seniors. Series: \$35.00 - adults, \$30.00 - students and seniors. For information call, Verna Parino (415) 388-6789.

Oct 13	<i>Elektra</i>
Oct 27	<i>Guillaume Tell</i>
Nov 3	<i>Pelléas et Mélisande</i>
Nov 17	<i>Eugene Onegin</i>

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA GUILD

Lectures held at 12:00 noon, Koret Auditorium, Lower Level, New Main Library, 100 Larkin Street, San Francisco. Admission: Free. For information call, David Clover (510) 652-3799.

Oct 15	<i>Elektra</i>
Oct 29	<i>Guillaume Tell</i>
Nov 5	<i>Pelléas et Mélisande</i>
Nov 19	<i>Eugene Onegin</i>

SAN JOSE OPERA GUILD

Lectures held at 10:00 a.m. (*) Followed by no-host luncheon (\$7.00). Los Gatos History Club, 123 Los Gatos Blvd., Los Gatos. Admission: \$7.00 (Free to San Jose Opera Guild members). For information call, Joy Hulme (408) 741-1331 or Margaret Boddy, (408) 354-7525.

Oct 16	<i>Elektra*</i>
Oct 30	<i>Guillaume Tell</i>
Nov 6	<i>Pelléas et Mélisande</i>
Nov 20	<i>Eugene Onegin*</i>

SONOMA CHAPTER—SAN FRANCISCO OPERA GUILD

Held at various locations and times. For information call, Lotte Klugman (707) 938-2432 or Marsha Vas Dupre (707) 528-7146. Admission: \$8.00; Series: \$40.00 - Sonoma Chapter members, \$48.00 - non-members.

Oct 13	<i>Elektra</i>
Oct 29	<i>Guillaume Tell</i>
Nov 3	<i>Pelléas et Mélisande</i>
Nov 21	<i>Eugene Onegin</i>

SOUTH PENINSULA CHAPTER—SAN FRANCISCO OPERA GUILD

Lectures held at 8:00 p.m., at Palo Alto Senior Center, 450 Bryant Street, Palo Alto. Admission: \$6.00 - adults, \$5.00 - students; Series: \$30.00 - adults, \$15.00 students. For information call, Ramona Rockway (415) 941-3890.

Oct 14	<i>Elektra</i>
Oct 28	<i>Guillaume Tell</i>
Nov 4	<i>Pelléas et Mélisande</i>
Nov 18	<i>Eugene Onegin</i>

The following is an additional list of lectures and previews that are available to the public.

MERRITT COLLEGE OPERA LECTURE SERIES

Held on Tuesday evenings in Room A-117, 7 to 10 p.m., Introduction to Opera (Music 13A) is based on the operas of the 1997-98 season. The College is at 12500 Campus Drive (off Redwood Road in the Oakland hills). Information: (510) 436-2430

ROBERT GOODHUE'S OPERA PREVIEWS

Held at the Holiday Inn, 480 Sutter St., San Francisco, mostly Monday evenings, 6:00-8:00 p.m. Information: (415) 956-1271

SAN FRANCISCO CITY COLLEGE PREVIEWS

A music course of opera previews will deal with all operas of the 1997-98 season. Taught by Marvin Tartak on Wednesday afternoons from 2 to 5 p.m., it takes place at the College, 50 Phelan Ave., Creative Arts Building, Room A-135 in San Francisco. Classes began August 20 and continue for 17 weeks. Information: (415) 239-3641

SAN FRANCISCO CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC EXTENSION DIVISION

Oct. 6 - Nov. 10, 7:30-9:30 p.m.
The Operas of Richard Strauss: Series of six Monday classes, held by Paul Thomason. San Francisco Conservatory of Music, 1201 Ortega St., San Francisco. Information: (415) 759-3429

OPERA EDUCATION INTERNATIONAL PREVIEW SERIES

Given by Michael Barclay, director of OEI. Lectures start at 7:30 p.m. at 400 Yale Ave (at Vassar) in the Kensington part of the Berkeley hills. Series began on Sept. 8; lectures are \$15 at the door. Information: (510) 526-5244

Oct. 6	<i>Pelléas et Mélisande</i>
Oct. 13	<i>Eugene Onegin</i>

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Views of Venice



By TIMOTHY PFAFF

OPERA LOVERS LUCKY ENOUGH to have been in San Francisco in 1975 have tales to tell about *Death in Venice*. Only two years after its Aldeburgh premiere, Benjamin Britten's valedictory opera had what San Francisco Opera historian Arthur Bloomfield called its "first made-in-America production" in the Company's Spring Opera Theater that year. Staged by Gerald Freedman, designed by John Conklin (subsequently to design, among many other San Francisco productions, Wagner's *Ring*), and conducted by John Mauceri (later

to lead an acclaimed *Lulu* and Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for the Company), the potent, haunting production starred a Los Angeles tenor named Ken Remo, who slipped into the role of Gustav von Aschenbach as though it had been written for him instead of for the composer's longtime companion, Peter Pears.

It was a production in which something big happened, and everyone knew it. Bloomfield rightly called it "Spring Opera's greatest achievement of the '70s." Against all odds, Britten's profound but austere and deeply disturbing final opera became the must-see offering of a spring season that otherwise featured comedies planned as the crowd pleasers. But that crowd responded to Britten with such enthusiasm the production was revived four years later.

It was only a matter of time before the piece reached the War Memorial stage, and General Director Lotfi Mansouri decided the time was now. A self-described "Britten nut," Mansouri says: "I wanted to return to the Opera House with an interesting modern piece, and I think *Death in Venice* is a

masterpiece. *Peter Grimes* is a far more accessible opera, I know, but for me *Death in Venice* is Britten's greatest. I knew that it had been a hit here before, and it seemed time to bring it to the main stage."

Although the production is derived from one Mansouri created for the Toronto Festival when he was director of the Canadian Opera Company, "We're doing it now as if it were the first time," he says. "All of the technical aspects will be fresh, and this time around, the production will be far more detailed, and in every respect better, than it was in Toronto. The production is built on a series of projections, and all of them will be new, to make the best use of the wonderful new projectors we got for the season in the Civic Auditorium. The designer, Wolfram Skalicki, has actually gone back to Venice—I just got a postcard from him today—to recapture the atmosphere. We feel Britten has caught beautifully Venice's unbelievable ability to draw people into forbidden experiences. People have long associated Venice with that promise of the forbidden—it's why Hoffmann goes there in

Timothy Pfaff is the West Coast correspondent to London's Financial Times, a music critic for the San Francisco Examiner, and a freelance critic and feature writer on the arts.

Offenbach's *Tales of Hoffmann*. Many creative individuals have gone there to uncork themselves. I think Britten did."

Mansouri points out that the production's reliance on projections is for artistic rather than budgetary reasons. "The way Britten has written the opera is incredibly cinematic," he explains. "The way the scenes flow, the transitions are sometimes very short, sometimes over just a few bars of music. There is no curtain, and all the scene changes take place directly in front of the audience. There is very little by way of a hard set; the few pieces of furniture and larger props are carried off and on stage by costumed extras. The screens that define the various locales—the hotel on the Lido, the Piazza San Marco—are flown in from above. Creating the set with projections keeps everything very fluid, so we can fade into and fade out of individual scenes."

"The projections allow us to do more than re-create internal and external spaces. They also make it possible to be very suggestive. One of the primary tensions in the opera's early scenes is between the cold of Munich and the warmth and sensuality of Venice. The traveler in Munich stimulates fantasies of the south in Aschenbach, and we realize those fantasies with projections in the style of the Rousseau jungle—so exotic and humid you can hear drums and see the eyes of wild animals."

A particular challenge for any designer of *Death in Venice* is finding pictorial cognates for the sea and sirocco that are omnipresent elements in Britten's scenario, and music. "The sirocco is done with layers of projections that combine an aura of mists with an overall sense of heaviness and oppression. It's prominent in a number of the scenes, but particularly when he makes his last trip into Venice and sees people burning things—and has that incredible, climactic monologue—and in that haunting final scene on the beach."

"We capture the sea in a couple of ways. Part of the stage floor is a mirror, so when we play watery projections on it, you feel it. The gondola he takes at several critical moments—like his initial approach to the Lido, when he feels he's being rowed across the Styx by Charon, and he has his first meditation on death—looks like it's actually moving across the lagoon. And Skalicki has evoked the waves on the Adriatic with one of the oldest devices in theater; you see it in baroque houses like the one in Drottningholm. The waves are on a drum that

keeps turning. In our production they're made out of styrofoam applied to a cylinder. The tips of the waves are aluminum, which catch the light to create the reflections of the sun—and the moon—on the water. I've entrusted Michael Whitfield, who lit my *Lulu*, with the all-important lighting in this production."

As a director, Mansouri says he is in awe of Britten's capacity to create character in music "in just a few strokes. The economy! There's incredible potential in every line, not just in those great, overwhelming monologues of Aschenbach's. In a matter of just a few notes, he creates a three-dimensional character of the fop, say, or the barber. It's uncanny."

He has, accordingly, selected his principal singers with care. "Kenneth [Riegel] did the production with me in Canada, and I didn't want to repeat it with anyone else. I've known him since he was an apprentice in Santa Fe, and I've watched him grow into one of the world's great singing actors. In this production we see Aschenbach come unraveled very, very slowly—little by little his true feelings come out. Kenneth works on that beautifully. He's simply staggering in the great monologues, of course. But he's equally brilliant in the little details, like the exhilaration Aschenbach feels when he commands the gondolier to take him back to the Lido—knowing his excitement is really about getting back to the hotel, and Tadzio. He's like a naughty schoolboy playing hooky, finally unwinding and letting down his pretenses."

"When we first encounter Aschenbach, he is very together: German, academic, precise. He's a great writer, but he's never achieved full satisfaction—even though he has reached for it. Suddenly he's arrived at a point where he can't write and feels he has to be opened up, emotionally, to be able to write again. But he's not ready for what he's about to experience. We watch him melt, little by little. First, it's just that his coat is not buttoned all the way. By the end there is a total transformation. He becomes the very image of the fop he so despised on the way to Venice—in the same white suit, white hat, black hair and facial rouge. He looks in the mirror, horrified to see what he has become, and ruefully repeats the fop's line, 'the pretty little darling—don't you know.' When Kenneth sings that line, it's a devastating moment."

Producers of *Death in Venice* also must contend with Britten's assignment of the seven other principal singing roles to a single baritone. "When we were rehearsing *Don Giovanni* a couple seasons back," Mansouri continues, "I suddenly had the idea that the young Italian baritone, Alfonso Antoniozzi, who was singing Leporello for

me, might be perfect. I asked him to take a look at the score, and he fell in love with it."

"This guy is so talented. He has the necessary chameleon aspect; he can shift character swiftly. And even his slight Italian accent is an asset, since six of those characters are Italian. I wanted someone fresh like him, and someone youngish. The character is really Aschenbach's nemesis: Mephisto in a variety of guises. There are many ways you could analyze it, from the voice of Aschenbach's conscience to a kind of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. Having these characters performed by one singer was a stroke of genius on Britten's part."

Yet another, he says, was making Tadzio and his family dancers rather than singers. "It puts them in another realm, which is also suggested by their music, and particularly its use of vibraphone. The minute Aschenbach sees them, he's swept in the ethereal, otherworldly realm of Tadzio. It also helps keep Tadzio, who is never aware of Aschenbach's feelings and emotional conflicts, in a world far apart from them. One of the most difficult casting problems in this piece is to find a dancer who truly seems young and innocent. Seems even a little too old can turn into a hustler, which is the opposite of what Thomas Mann and Britten had in mind. We had to do a lot of auditioning to find the right dancers for Tadzio and his friend, Jaschiu."

"This is not formal dance, it's a style of movement. The tricky thing is, you should never be aware of where the stage direction stops and the dancing starts. It's got to be seamless. It takes a very theatrical choreographer, which is why I selected Michael Smuin, with whom I work well. But I should also tell you that my choreographer in Canada, Graham Murphy, was so inspired by this piece, that he went back to his company and created a full-length, three-act ballet called *After Venice*, about what becomes of Tadzio 20 years later. This piece really gets under people's skin."

With a precise, experienced sense of how disturbing the story can be, Mansouri has sought an interpretation to make its difficult message accessible to a general audience. "My biggest challenge as a director is to draw the audience into the world of Aschenbach, and his emotional liberation and destruction."

"This is not a story about a pedophile," he reminds. "That's superficial nonsense. And it's not just a homosexual attraction Aschenbach has for Tadzio. It's an idealized love, which salutes a purity of beauty along with its erotic, sexual charge. The issue is not homosexuality. Britten's opera is about the way many people repress their emotions and inclinations, preferring to follow their assigned roles in life. What destroys

Opposite: The opera's ending, as presented by Spring Opera Theater in 1975. Ken Remo was Aschenbach; Glen Hasstedt, Tadzio. *Inset:* Susan Benson's costume design for Gustav von Aschenbach in the opera's final scene.



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VIEWS OF VENICE

Aschenbach is the transformation that occurs when those emotions are released, and he doesn't know how to deal with them.

"The arguments are so recognizably human. To some extent we all delude ourselves about our true feelings. We rationalize them and don't want to face them directly. There's something in this piece for all of us."

Music Director Donald Runnicles, who conducts this year's *Death in Venice*, sees the opera as "an intensely honest piece about Britten himself and the way he relates to the society in which he lives. It wasn't that he had lived a lie, but he had lived a life that had its shackles. For him that had to do not only with his own sexuality but also with the issue of the artist's place in society: to what extent do artists hide behind plots, behind other people's stories, to convey a message they couldn't otherwise confront an audience with directly?"

"There's none of that in *Death in Venice*. It concentrates on one character and what he goes through, and there are no other distractions. On a spiritual level, *Death in Venice* is Britten's most personal utterance. It is the most intensely private, and in that sense intensely honest, piece he wrote. This is the music of a man who knows he is dying. He really has to wear no more masks."

Runnicles, who has conducted three productions of *Peter Grimes*, two of *Billy Budd*, and also has led performances of the *War Requiem* and a number of Britten's orchestral works, feels the lateness of the work in purely musical terms. "It's like lots of late works of great composers, who become more and more economical. Part of that may have to do with the sheer physical hardship of writing down the notes, but on another level it reflects the degree to which such composers have refined and fine-tuned their art. They can make less speak more."

"I recently conducted a concert of Britten and Shostakovich, and it put me in mind of the parallels between those two men—beyond the deep friendship they developed at the ends of their lives. Both of them were, in their music, so much of their times and the spirit of their times. Both of their odysseys are reflected in their music. And at the ends of their lives, both sought ways to express as much as they could, but in bare, honest textures."

The conductor cites his deeper experience with both composers as a significant reason he now feels ready for *Death in Venice*, a high-profile production which he

once turned down because he was clear he was not ready at the time. "*Death in Venice* is unlike any music Britten had written before. Sure, the signature sonorities are there, but there's also a stronger sense of twelve-tone technique. By the late '60s and early '70s, Britten was becoming regarded as old-fashioned, particularly, and most hurtfully, by his British colleagues. Even the



Peter Pears as Aschenbach in the original 1973 production of *Death in Venice*, with Robert Huguenin as Tadzio.

War Requiem took a lot of stick about being too Verdian. *Death in Venice* may in part have been an attempt on Britten's part to prove he still was modern. In any case, the twelve-tone system is something he addressed—and clearly felt obliged to address—in it."

But Runnicles is equally impressed with the maturity of the gamelan-like music Britten wrote for the opera's Polish family. "Earlier, this Balinese thing was something of a novelty in his music," Runnicles explains. "By *Death in Venice* it is completely integrated into his musical style, and he uses it to create an entirely separate sound world—an almost unhuman sound world—for Tadzio. But there's fascinating orchestral writing throughout the piece, which is a masterpiece of instrumentation."

"What also fascinates me is his obsession with blurring those sound worlds—and indeed with blurring rhythms. With triplets against duplets, dotted-eighths and -sixteenths, you're never quite sure what the meter is. One of the major challenges in con-

ducting this piece is simply getting the ensemble tight. All the musicians are exerting a kind of gravitational pull on each other—you want to be playing what the others are playing—yet the score really does benefit from getting those complicated rhythms to work. It's like conducting Ives: if you get it right, even the strangest music makes a weird kind of sense—and the audience feels a part of it."

High on his list of other challenges is conducting for singers and dancers at the same time. Speaking as an experienced conductor of ballet, he is only too aware that "dancers don't have the same flexibility, rhythmically, as singers—who can just take another breath or find some other way to be spontaneous in a particular moment. There's only so much time you can stay up in the air before gravity takes over. And dancers can't watch you the same way singers can, or take their cues from the monitor. There's a real discipline in conducting dance."

He has no such worries with his principal singers, having recently witnessed Riegel's legendary European performance in Zemlinsky's *Der Zwerg* and himself having conducted Antoniazzi in *Don Giovanni*. "He's an amazingly intelligent singer with fascinating insights, a real thinker," Runnicles observes. "When we began work on *Don Giovanni*, I had this feeling we weren't catching each other's eyes, but I quickly became aware of precisely how with it—and with me—he was. He's the kind of actor who can make virtue of a stage mishap, and he has this joviality and sometimes even frivolity. This kind of two-sidedness of the guy is perfect for these roles, which are alternately engaging and sinister. As so often is the case with Lotfi Mansouri, it's an inspired bit of casting."

Yet the biggest challenge of all, Runnicles adds, is giving this daunting composition a sense of immediacy in the theater. "This is not a piece that exactly springs out at you. The hardest thing for me is to bring to the public the understanding it has taken me months of study and absorption to acquire to be at one with this unique musical world. This piece doesn't have the surface spontaneity and dramatic urgency of a *Peter Grimes*—which for me is, beneath that seeming spontaneity, a perfect opera. *Death in Venice* is not a piece that necessarily reveals itself on first hearing. It's a piece that challenges everyone—and that audiences, too, have to challenge themselves with. I hope there are people who will go a second and third time. It's a vastly rewarding experience." ♦

pentathlon on the beach gives him any vocal respite. It is also a role that calls for creative intervention in that the internal monologues are set as unmeasured recitative accompanied by piano, the singer needing to make all the decisions about pacing. Near the close, he is rewarded by one of Britten's most eloquent arias, "Does beauty lead to wisdom, Phaedrus?", the moment of inescapable revelation, the ultimate *lux facta est!*

The other big role goes to the baritone. He is the foreigner at the Munich cemetery, the fop on the boat, the mysterious gondolier, the hotel manager, the barber, the ballad singer—all of them allies, representatives, or messengers of death, engines that drive Aschenbach to his end. (John Shirley-Quirk was the unforgettably vivid and subtle originator of these roles.) The same singer is also the voice of Dionysus, a voice that duels with the voice of Apollo for possession of Aschenbach's soul. Apollo's voice is that of a countertenor, to my ears an unconvincing symbol of purity; that strange voice works better for the creepy Oberon in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Tadzio and his family are dancers. Tadzio himself has proved notoriously difficult to cast: Too many of his stage embodiments have been too old, too big, too healthy, too hairy, too knowing, and, as Pears complained on occasion, not beautiful enough.

Death in Venice is both colorful and spare, with everything gauged to create maximum transparency: Every word tells. Britten found sounds, textures, and contours for every need: Aschenbach's recitatives, so austere and so personal at the same time; the bright percussion, reminiscent of *The Prince of the Pagodas*, for Tadzio, so uncannily right both for his impersonal blankness and the sunny radiance of his body; the sharply profiled and so diverse modes of speech of the seven baritone roles; the neatly caught genre painting of the gondoliers' wordless cries, the street sellers, and the entertainers at the hotel. The music, both odd and completely right in rhythm, for the crossing of the lagoon by gondola is unforgettable; so is the luminous moment—"And look, Signore, the view!"—when the hotel manager raises the window shades to reveal the sea. The music associated with the plague takes the same musical intervals but draws the light out of them, poisons and clots them.

It is an intricate associative network that Britten has created. What Britten thinks most essential for us to hear and
(continued on page 41)

Masha Archer



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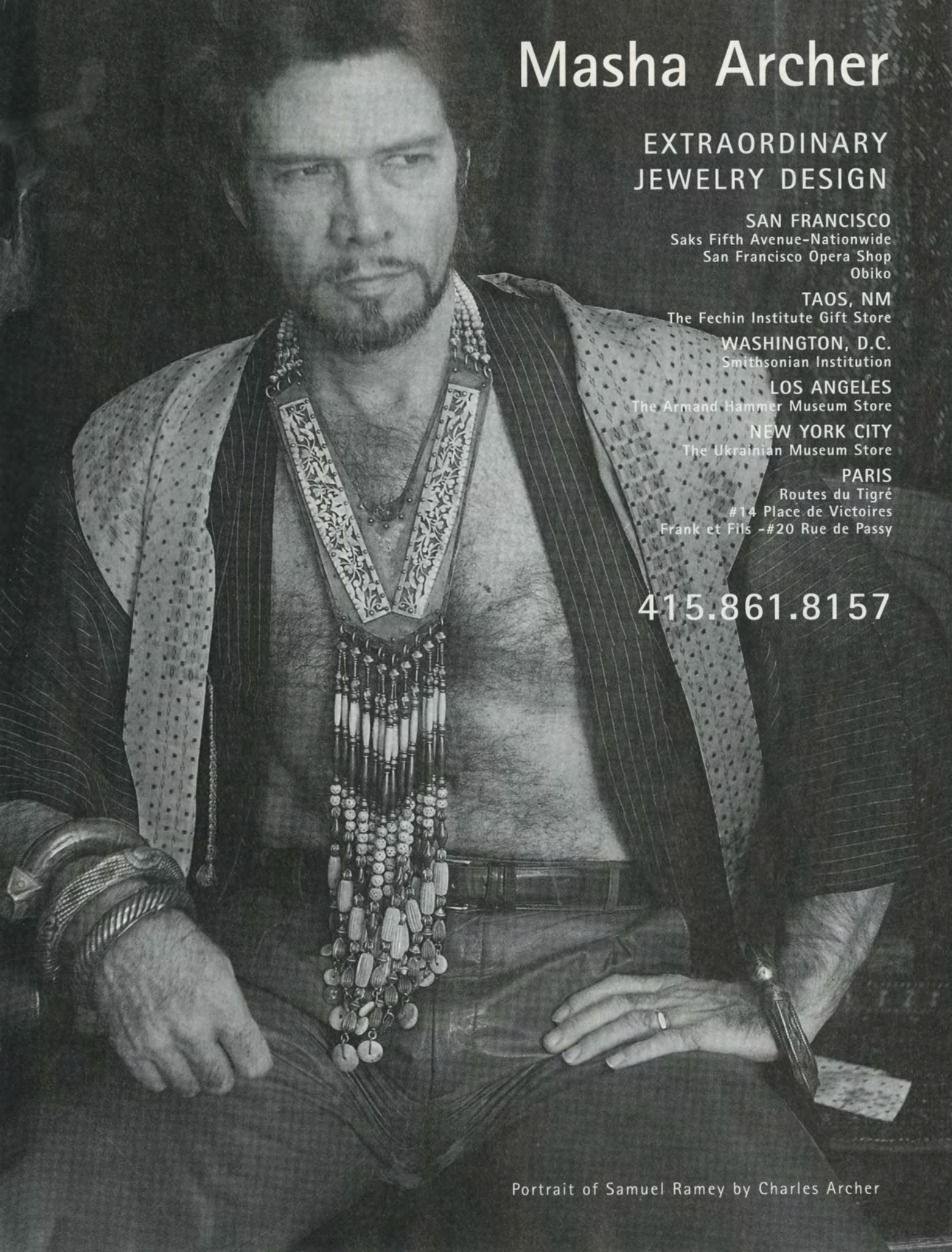
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retain he places prominently. Aschenbach's proud and fanfare-like "I, Aschenbach, famous as a master-writer" in the opening scene is so arresting that we cannot fail to remember and respond when he recalls it bitterly in the penultimate scene, "O Aschenbach, famous as a master . . .", music and words alike fall apart into pathetic fragments. Similarly, the timbres and shapes of Aschenbach's music and Tadzio's are so acutely presented that the effect is overwhelming when, at last, they become one music, the music for Aschenbach's *Liebestod* on the beach.

For the rest—and *Death in Venice* can be and has been analyzed deeply—acquaintance leads to knowledge and knowledge leads to love. *Death in Venice* is an opera worth living with, and both the "original cast" recording from 1974 and the 1990 Glyndebourne video, with remarkable performances by Robert Tear and Alan Opie, make this both possible and pleasurable.

A postscript: Britten's String Quartet No. 3, completed in November 1975—in Venice, on his last visit there—is a kind of codicil to Britten's last opera. Britten's vocal music maintains so imposing a presence that, unjustly, his instrumental music seems to recede into the background. Yet the best of it, from the *Frank Bridge Variations* and the Violin Concerto in the 1930s to the Quartet No. 3, is of a stature that would mark him as an outstanding composer even if he had never written a single opera, song cycle, or church parable. This final Quartet, the last work Britten completed, is a beautiful and apt summation of his endeavors. Hans Keller, Britten's most ardent champion among British critics, wrote that here the composer ventures "into the Mozartian realm of the instrumental purification of opera." Much of the first movement, with its fluid and unpredictable rhythms, is an extension or variant of the music in *Death in Venice* when Aschenbach walks nervously through the city in pursuit of information about the cholera epidemic. The Quartet's finale makes the link with Venice explicit through its title, *La Serenissima*, the name by which Venetians have lovingly called their city for centuries. The key is E major, Aschenbach's key in *Death in Venice*, and motifs from the opera ghost their way all through this movement. Its coda, as Britten's biographer Michael Kennedy has written, "hovers between this world and the next and seems to be drifting to a gentle finality, truly the still, sad music of humanity." ♦

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KENNETH RIEGEL, a native of Pennsylvania, first came to international attention with his performance in the New York premiere of Henze's *The Young Lord*. Since then, he has sung at the San Francisco Opera (1971 debut as the Italian Singer in *Der Rosenkavalier*), Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Vienna State Opera, Milan's La Scala, Royal Opera at Covent Garden, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Hamburg State Opera, Bavarian State Opera, Bonn Opera, Geneva Opera and the Brussels Opera, among others. A frequent guest at the Paris Opera, he

was the first American tenor to portray the title roles of *Faust* and *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* there. Also at the Paris Opera he created the role of Alwa in the world premiere of Berg's complete three-act version of *Lulu*, and originated the part of the Leper in the world premiere of Messiaen's *Saint François d'Assise*. Riegel has appeared as Don Ottavio in Joseph Losey's film of *Don Giovanni* and as Prince Shuisky in the movie version of *Boris Godunov*. In addition to the soundtracks from these films, the tenor can be heard on numerous other recordings, among them: the Grammy award-winning *Carmina Burana* under Michael Tilson Thomas; Liszt's *Faust Symphony* led by Leonard Bernstein (Grand Prix du Disque of 1978); the Paris *Lulu* under Pierre Boulez; three recordings of Mahler's Eighth Symphony; *La Damnation de Faust* under Georg Solti (Grammy award, Grand Prix du Disque of 1982); *Salome* led by Christoph von Dohnányi; and the recent *Gurrelieder* with Giuseppe Sinopoli. His engagements during the 1996-97 season include *Elektra* and *Il Prigioniero* at the Salzburg Festival; *Boris Godunov* at the Opéra de Nice; the Luc Bondy production of *Salome* at the Lyric Opera of Chicago, Royal Opera at Covent Garden (with telecast and video-production) and the Châtelet in Paris; as well as a new staging of *Elektra* at the Rome Opera.



Baritone **ALFONSO ANTONIOZZI** made his U.S. opera debut with San Francisco Opera in the summer of 1992 as Dr. Bartolo in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* and Taddeo in *L'Italiana in Algeri*. He has since returned to the Company to sing Fra Melitone in *La Forza del Destino* (fall 1992) and Leporello in *Don Giovanni* (1995). Performing most frequently in comic opera roles, he has been internationally acclaimed for his interpretations of Dr. Bartolo, Taddeo, and Don Magnifico in *La Cenerentola*. Past seasons have been highlighted by *Le Nozze di Figaro* at the

Edinburgh Festival, *La Forza del Destino* and *Carmina Burana* at the Accademia di Santa Cecilia in Rome, and *La Bohème* at Milan's Teatro alla Scala. He most recently performed in Venice and the Verona Arena (*Il Barbiere*), Dallas (*Don Giovanni*, *L'Elisir d'Amore*), Parma (*Cenerentola*), Rome (*Le Comte Ory*), Madrid (title role of *Falstaff*), and Milan (*Il Turco in Italia*). Among his future engagements are *Don Giovanni* and *L'Italiana in Algeri* in Bilbao, Verdi's *Un Giorno di Regno* in Parma, *La Forza del Destino* in Marseilles and Toulouse, *L'Elisir*, *Il Barbiere*, *Linda di Chamounix* and Rota's *Il Cappello di Paglia di Firenze* at La Scala, *Il Turco in Italia* in Monte Carlo, and *L'Elisir* in Vienna. The artist's recording credits include *La Bohème*, *I Tre Amanti*, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *Il Matrimonio Segreto*, *Linda di Chamounix*, *Il Signor Bruschino*, *Don Procopio*, and Paisiello's *Nina, ossia La Pazza per Amore*. Born in Viterbo, Italy, Antoniozzi continues to study with Italian baritone Sesto Bruscantini.



MICHAEL CHANCE has established a worldwide reputation as one of the foremost exponents of the countertenor voice in all areas of the classical repertoire, and is in equal demand as an opera, concert and recording artist. After graduating from King's College, Cambridge, he made his operatic debut at the Buxton Festival in Cavalli's *Giasone* which was followed by appearances in Lyon, Cologne and three seasons with Kent Opera. Subsequently, he has performed in Sydney, Buenos Aires, Milan, New York, Lisbon, Paris and Amsterdam; at

the festivals of Glyndebourne, Edinburgh, Aix-en-Provence and Salzburg; and with the Covent Garden and English National Operas. His roles include Orfeo (Gluck), Oberon, Giustino, Ottone, Athamas, Andronico and Apollo. He has had roles specially written for him by Harrison Birtwistle (*The Second Mrs. Kong*) and Judith Weir (*A Night at the Chinese Opera*). The artist's performances in concert halls worldwide have presented him in repertoire ranging from oratorios, to Elizabethan lute songs, to new works commissioned for him. Chance has made over 50 recordings, including the Grammy Award-winning *Semele* led by John Nelson; and—all conducted by John Eliot Gardiner—the Bach Passions, Cantatas and B Minor Mass, Monteverdi's *Orfeo* and *L'Incoronazione di Poppea*, and Handel's *Jephtha*, *Tamerlano* and *Agrippina*. On his recently released CD he sings solo alto cantatas by Vivaldi with Trevor Pinnock and the English Concert. He appears regularly with the viol consort Fretwork and recently toured with them to Japan. Among his television appearances are *A Night at the Chinese Opera*, *The Fairy Queen*, *Death in Venice*, the three Monteverdi operas with the Netherlands Opera, and the *Messiah* in Dublin with Neville Marriner. Future engagements will take him to Athens, Florence and Strasbourg, and he will be appearing in concert throughout Europe. Chance is a Visiting Professor at the Royal College of Music.



In her second year as an Adler Fellow, **ALISON BUCHANAN** made her 1996 San Francisco Opera debut as Mimi in *La Bohème*, returning for the Company's 1996-97 season to appear in *Harvey Milk* and *Aida*. Originally from Bedford, England, she graduated from London's Guildhall School of Music where she won many prestigious awards. She was a winner of the Maggie Teyte Prize in 1991 and sang in recital at the Royal Opera House Crush Bar as a result of the award. Shortly thereafter, the young artist received a Wingate scholarship and a

Countess of Munster Award, enabling her to study at the Curtis Institute of Music where she completed her master of music degree. Miss Buchanan was also a prize winner of the Mario Lanza Competition, Luciano Pavarotti Competition, Ferrier Competition, and was a finalist in this year's International Belvedere Competition. Her roles include the Countess (*Le Nozze di Figaro*), Rosalinda (*Die Fledermaus*), Helena (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*), Madama Cortese (*Il Viaggio a Reims*), Fortuna (*L'Incoronazione di Poppea*) and Musetta (*La Bohème*). As a member of the 1995 Merola Opera Program, the soprano appeared in *La Périchole* and replaced an ailing colleague to sing the role of Mozart's Countess, subsequently repeating this part on Western Opera Theater's national tour of *Le Nozze di Figaro*. Opera Center credits also include a critically acclaimed Schwabacher Debut Recital, the role of Juliana in the '96 Showcase production of *The Aspern Papers*, and the part of the Mother in the Opera Guild's holiday presentation of *Hansel and Gretel*.

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CHRISTINA LAMBERTI, a native of Phillipsburg, New Jersey, began her studies after winning a scholarship to the Westminster Choir College, where she appeared in productions of *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges*, *Dialogues of the Carmelites* and *Amahl and the Night Visitors*.

The soprano joined the Aspen Opera Theater Center in 1989, singing the role of Mrs. Maurrant in *Street Scene*. She then studied with Claudia Pinza at Duquesne University and attended Miss Pinza's EPCASO (Ezio Pinza Council for American Singers of Opera) program held in Oderzo, Italy. She has also been an apprentice at the Pittsburgh Opera Center and a student at Philadelphia's Academy of Vocal Arts where her roles included Mimì (*La Bohème*), Tatyana (*Eugene Onegin*), Donna Elvira (*Don Giovanni*), Fiordiligi (*Così fan tutte*) and Alice Ford (*Falstaff*). A 1996 Merola Opera Program participant, Miss Lamberti made her Opera Company of Philadelphia debut last season as the High Priestess in *Aida*.



Second year Adler Fellow
PEGGY KRIHA DYE made her San Francisco Opera debut in the summer of 1996 as Musetta in *La Bohème*, subsequently appearing with the Company during the 1996-97 season in *Die Fledermaus* (Adele), the West Coast premiere of *Harvey Milk*, and *Salome*.

The soprano most recently portrayed Kate Pinkerton in San Francisco Opera's new staging of *Madama Butterfly*. Winner of a prestigious scholarship grant from The Liberace Foundation, Miss Kriha Dye was a participant in the 1993 Merola Opera Program who sang the role of Nannetta in *Falstaff* and her first *Fledermaus* Adele. In 1995, she appeared as Barbarina in the Merola Program staging of *Le Nozze di Figaro*, repeating the part and singing the role of Susanna on the subsequent Western Opera Theater tour of the same production. Additional Opera Center credits include Olympia in the Showcase '96 production of *The Aspern Papers* and Fulvia in the '97 Showcase presentation of Handel's *Ezio*. A native of Brainerd, Minnesota, Miss Kriha Dye received her undergraduate degree in music from St. Cloud University and completed two years of graduate work at the Manhattan School of Music. While in Manhattan, she appeared in many new productions, performing the roles of Charlotte in Ronald Perera's *The Yellow Wallpaper* and Berenice in Rossini's *L'Occasione fa il ladro*. She also spent two years as a member of the Juilliard Opera Center.

ARTIST PROFILES



1997 Adler Fellow **MEL ULRICH** recently made his first San Francisco Opera appearance, singing the roles of Sharpless and Prince Yamadori in the new staging of *Madama Butterfly*. The baritone, a native of Seattle, WA, received his bachelor of music and bachelor of arts degrees from the University of Washington, as well as an Artist Diploma from the Oberlin Conservatory. A finalist in this year's International Belvedere Competition, his additional competition victories are the Seattle Civic Opera Competition, the Brechemin Scholarship, and a two-year fel-

lowship with the Singers' Club of Cleveland. In addition, the young artist was a national finalist in the MacAllister Awards (1994) and a Sullivan Award Winner (1997). His appearances with Seattle Opera include Napoleon in *War and Peace*, Amantio di Nicolao in *Gianni Schicchi* and Brühlmann in *Werther*. Ulrich also performed with Wolf Trap Opera as Prosdócimo in *Il Turco in Italia*, Pantalone in Mozart/Griffith's *The Jewel Box*, and the Speaker in *Die Zauberflöte*. During the 1995-96 season he was a Principal Resident Artist with Opera San José where he performed the title roles of *Don Giovanni*, *Tartuffe* and *Eugene Onegin*, as well as Figaro (*Il Barbiere di Siviglia*), Guglielmo (*Così fan tutte*), Escamillo (*Carmen*), Germont (*La Traviata*), Zurga (*Les Pêcheurs de Perles*) and Dr. Falke (*Die Fledermaus*). A member of the 1996 Merola Opera Program, the young artist sang Figaro in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* and repeated the role on the subsequent Western Opera Theater 30th-anniversary tour of the same production.



1997 Merola Opera Program participant **HAROLD BROCK** was recently applauded as Don Ramiro in the Merola presentation of *La Cenerentola* at Stern Grove. A native of Charlotte, Tennessee, the tenor received his undergraduate degree in music education from Austin Peay State University, a graduate degree in opera and voice from Northwestern University, and a performance certificate from DePaul University. He has participated as an apprentice with the Chautauqua Opera Studio, Des Moines Metro Opera, and is currently a fellow

with the Chicago Chamber Musicians. The young artist's roles include Nemorino (*L'Elisir d'Amore*), Tamino (*Die Zauberflöte*), Remendado (*Carmen*) and Ramiro. In 1993 he appeared in the University of Chicago's world premiere of John Eaton's *Let's Get This Show on the Road—An Alternative View of Genesis*, and was invited back by the composer to perform in his 1996 premiere of *Golk*, based on a novel by Richard Stern. A frequent performer of oratorio and recital repertoire, Brock has been heard as a soloist in Rossini's *Stabat Mater*, Handel's *Messiah*, and Mozart's Requiem.



A native of Plovdiv, Bulgaria, **ARAM BARSAMIAN** completed his master of music degree from the University of Southern California where he received the Outstanding Music Graduate award. The baritone earned his undergraduate degree in voice from California State University at Fullerton where he appeared in numerous productions including *The Marriage of Figaro* (Count Almaviva), *Pagliacci* (Silvio), *La Bohème* (Schaunard), *Die Fledermaus* (Eisenstein), and *Don Pasquale* (Malatesta). He made his professional debut as Schaunard with

the Ventura County Symphony in 1995. Earlier this year he appeared as Marco in Sacramento Opera's production of *Gianni Schicchi* and as Belcore in *L'Elisir d'Amore* with the Pacific Repertory Opera. As a member of the 1997 Merola Opera Program, Barsamian recently sang the role of Dandini in *La Cenerentola* at Stern Grove. Next season the young artist will reprise the role of Malatesta with Santa Barbara Grand Opera.



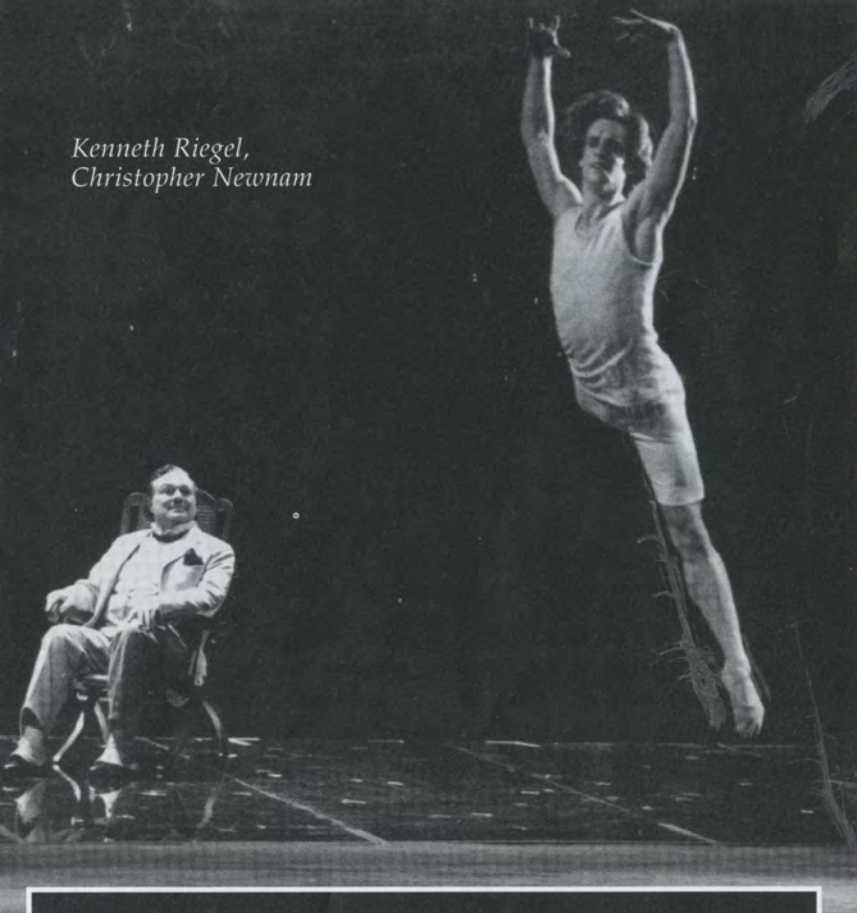
1996-97 Adler Fellow **STUART SKELTON** performed a number of roles for San Francisco Opera during his 1996-97 debut season, appearing in *Hamlet*, *Lohengrin*, *Carmen*, *Harvey Milk*, *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, *Die Fledermaus*, *Salome* and *Aida*. First-prize winner of this year's prestigious International Belvedere Competition, 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 important competitions, the Marianne Mathy Award and the McDonald's

Aria Award, he made his 1993 Australian Opera debut in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*. Skelton completed his master of music degree from the University of Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music where his credits included Sam Polk in *Susannah* and Quint in *The Turn of the Screw*. Concert engagements include Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with the Marin Symphony, the Coronation Mass with the S.F. Midsummer Mozart Festival, as well as Verdi's Requiem with the Lubbock Symphony Orchestra and the San Mateo Masterworks Choral. San Francisco Opera Center credits include Piquillo in *La Périchole* as well as Don Basilio and Don Curzio in *Le Nozze di Figaro* for the 1995 Merola Opera Program; the reprisal of his Figaro roles for Western Opera Theater's 1995 national tour; Aspern in the 1996 Showcase production of *The Aspern Papers*; and the role of Massimo in the '97 Showcase presentation of Handel's *Ezio*. Next season, Skelton will return to the Australian Opera to sing the role of Alfredo in *La Traviata*.



Recently recognized by *Opera News* as "one of America's up and coming singers," **DAVID OKERLUND** received critical acclaim this summer as Sharpless in the Company's new production of *Madama Butterfly*. The 1995-96 Adler Fellow was featured in several roles during our 1996-97 season, including the King's Herald in *Lohengrin*, Moralès in *Carmen*, and Eisenstein in *Die Fledermaus*. He also took part in a special concert with Plácido Domingo. Okerlund made his bow with San Francisco Opera in 1995, portraying Baron Douphol in *La Traviata*, Dandini in the student matinee presentation of *La Cenerentola*, and the Bonze in *Madama Butterfly*. Assignments during the 1995-96 season included a Schwabacher Debut Recital, Schaunard in *La Bohème* at the Orpheum Theatre, and the role of The Lodger in Opera Center's '96 Showcase presentation of *The Aspern Papers*. The baritone sang in the 1993 Merola Opera Program and Western Opera Theater (WOT) tour as Falke in *Die Fledermaus*. He returned to Merola and WOT in 1994 to sing the title role of *Don Giovanni*. Additional credits include a concert performance of *Carmen* at the Hollywood Bowl, Donner in Arizona Opera's production of *Das Rheingold*, Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte* for Opera Carolina and Piedmont Opera Theater, as well as an assignment he performed as part of the 1995 United Nations 50th anniversary: the role of the Bonze in the Opéra de Lyon production of *Madama Butterfly*. Next season he will sing the role of Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly* to inaugurate the New National Theatre of Tokyo. A native of Kearney, Nebraska, Okerlund earned his bachelor and master of music degrees from the University of Missouri—Kansas City Conservatory of Music.

*Kenneth Riegel,
Christopher Newnam*



*David Okerlund,
Kenneth Riegel*



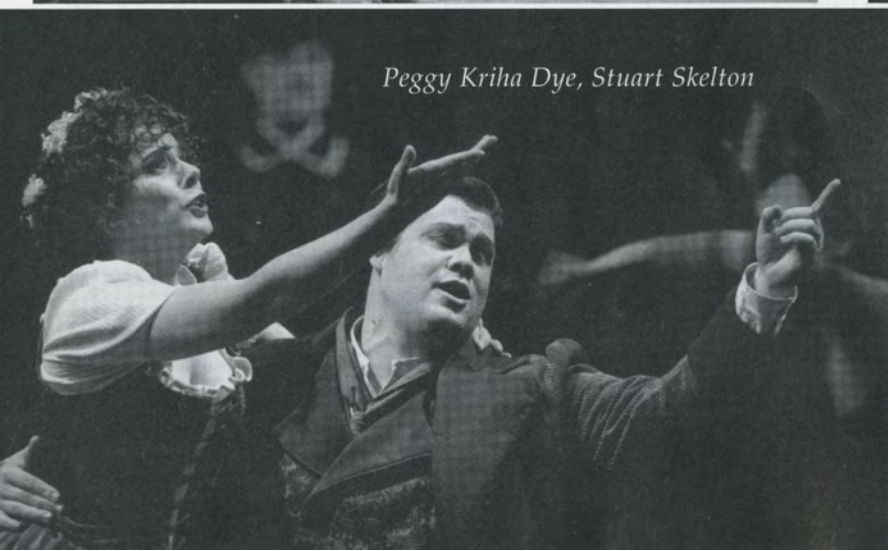
Jane Murray, Natalie Flores, Stephanie Orza



*Celia Fushille-Burke,
Christopher Newnam*



Peggy Kriha Dye, Stuart Skelton



DANCERS



CHRISTOPHER NEWNAM, a native of Philadelphia, received his ballet training at the Pennsylvania Ballet School and the School of American Ballet in New York. In past seasons, he has been dancing in Europe, first with the Vienna State Opera Ballet and more recently with the Dutch National Ballet. These performances mark Newnam's professional debut in opera in the United States.



CELIA FUSHILLE-BURKE received her training at the San Francisco Ballet School on a full scholarship. With S.F. Ballet she performed in, among others, Michael Smuin's *The Tempest* and *Romeo and Juliet*, as well as Balanchine's *Symphony in C* and *Stars and Stripes*. She danced in the national telecast of *Ira Gershwin at 100* from Carnegie Hall and has appeared in the films *Walk in the Clouds* and *Return of the Jedi, Special Edition*. She has also appeared with the San Francisco Opera Ballet, Ballet El Paso, and S.F. Dance Theater. A member of Smuin Ballets/San Francisco since its 1994 inception, Miss Fushille-Burke created the roles of Frankie in *Frankie & Johnny*, Roxanne in the new ballet *Cyranos*, and Santa Baby in *The Christmas Ballet*.



Currently a member of Boston Ballet, **JOHN HALL** received his principal training at the Nutmeg Conservatory for the Arts. Professionally, he has performed with the Hartford Ballet, American Ballet Theatre Studio, and the contemporary dance troupe Cortez & Company. The Connecticut native, with over 20 classical ballet roles in his repertoire, won a major award for artistic achievement at last year's New York International Ballet Competition.



Music Director of San Francisco Opera since 1992, **DONALD RUNNICLES** is highly regarded as one of the finest conductors active today, with a distinguished series of international triumphs to his credit. The native of Edinburgh has conducted 20 operas for the Company, highlights of which include televised productions of *Capriccio*, *Turandot*, and the 1994 world premiere of Susa/Littell's *The Dangerous Liaisons*; the North American premiere of Tippet's *King Priam* with the S.F. Opera Center; and the 1996 West Coast premiere of Wallace/Korie's *Harvey Milk*. He has led the San Francisco Opera and Chorus for two recordings, the Grammy-nominated *Orphée et Eurydice* and *Harvey Milk* (scheduled for release later this year); his first commercial recording was Humperdinck's *Hänsel und Gretel* on Teldec. During the Company's 1996-97 season, he also led performances of *Lohengrin*, *Carmen* and *Aida*. Elsewhere, he has conducted opera productions at the Bayreuth Festival, the Salzburg Festival, New York's Metropolitan Opera, Bastille Opera, Berlin Opera, Vienna State Opera, Bavarian State Opera, Hamburg State Opera, Royal Opera Copenhagen, Zurich Opera, Netherlands Opera and the Vienna Volksoper. Symphonically, Maestro Runnicles has led the Vienna Philharmonic, Orchestre de Paris, Israel Philharmonic, Bavarian Radio Symphony, Berlin State Opera Orchestra, Vienna Symphony, Rotterdam Philharmonic, London Symphony Orchestra and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra. In North America, he has conducted the symphony orchestras of San Francisco, Chicago, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, Seattle, Toronto, Miami and Cleveland. The maestro remains an active pianist, appearing regularly in a series of concerts with members of the San Francisco Opera Orchestra. In 1995, he was recognized for his achievements by the University of Edinburgh, from which he received an honorary doctorate of music.



With productions seen at opera houses throughout the world, **LOTFI MANSOURI** is at the forefront of international opera directors and administrators. San Francisco Opera's fourth general director (appointed in 1988) since its founding, his association with the Company dates back to 1963, when he directed six productions. During the 1997-98 Season, Mansouri directs his 60th production for the Company—a new staging of *Tosca*—as well as the SFO premiere of *Death in Venice*. Born in Iran, he attended college at UCLA and received U.S. citizenship before serving as resident stage director at Zurich Opera from 1960 to 1966. In 1965, he started working simultaneously at the Geneva Opera, where he became head stage director in 1966 and stayed until 1976. During this period, he began fulfilling engagements as guest director at various houses throughout Italy and North America, including Chicago, Houston, Santa Fe, Philadelphia, San Diego, Dallas and both the Metropolitan and New York City Opera companies. In 1976, he was named general director of the Canadian Opera Company in Toronto, where he directed 30 new productions, 12 of them Canadian premieres. During his tenure at San Francisco Opera, numerous artists have made their U.S. operatic debuts, and five productions have been taped for telecast and videocassette (*Mefistofele*, *Orlando Furioso*, *Capriccio*, *Turandot* and *The Dangerous Liaisons*). Mansouri's 1979 production of *La Gioconda* was the Company's first to receive a live international telecast. Also during his tenure, the Company made its first commercial recordings: *Hérodiade*, *Orphée et Eurydice*, and *Harvey Milk*. He established the historic exchange with the Kirov Opera that has resulted in productions of *War and Peace*, *Boris Godunov*, *The Fiery Angel* and *Ruslan and Lyudmila*. The exchange continues this season with *Eugene Onegin*. In addition to staging three Company productions at Bill Graham Civic Auditorium (in a newly-constructed

ARTIST PROFILES

opera environment conceived by Mansouri) during the 1996-97 Season, his recent directing schedule included *Rigoletto* for the opening of Italy's Verona Arena Festival, *The Makropulos Case* at Vancouver Opera, and *Turandot* for San Diego Opera.



Internationally acclaimed designer **WOLFRAM SKALICKI**'s long association with San Francisco Opera began in 1962 with his sets for the Company premiere of *The Rake's Progress*. Additional Skalicki designs seen here have been the complete 1967-1972 *Ring* cycle, *Aida*, *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* (Katerina Ismailova), *L'Africaine*, *Andrea Chénier*, and the 1990 presentation of *Die Fledermaus*. During the Company's 1996-97 season, his settings were seen in the new productions of *Aida* and *Salome*, as well as in the newly revised staging of *Fledermaus*. A native of Vienna, he is a professor at the University for Music and the Performing Arts in Graz, and is associated with the Staatsoper, Burgtheater and Volksoper in Vienna. With his wife, costume designer Amrei Skalicki, he has collaborated on productions in Vienna, Lyon, Marseilles, Toronto, Munich, Geneva, Buenos Aires, Hamburg, Miami, Athens and Bogotá. They include designs for *Lulu*, *Giovanna d'Arco*, *Boris Godunov*, *Tristan und Isolde*, *Dialogues of the Carmelites*, *Death in Venice*, and *Hérodiade*. Recent set designs have been seen at the Metropolitan Opera and Lyric Opera of Chicago (*Andrea Chénier*), Pittsburgh Opera (*Boris Godunov*), Canadian Opera Company (*Falstaff*), Los Angeles Music Center Opera (*Ariadne auf Naxos*), the Teatro Municipal in Santiago, Chile (*The Queen of Spades*), Seattle Opera (*Elektra*), and Opera Queensland (*Otello*). Additionally, his work has been exhibited in Vienna, Zurich, Bayreuth, New York and San Francisco.



SUSAN BENSON has created set and costume designs in Europe, Canada, Australia and the United States. This season she has designed the sets and costumes for *Die Zauberflöte* for the Minnesota Opera and Dallas Opera, the sets and costumes for John Cranko's *Romeo and Juliet* for the Finnish National Ballet, and the costumes for *A Doll's House* at the Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis. Last season, Miss Benson created designs for *Twelfth Night* at the Atlantic Theatre Festival and *A Little Night Music* for the Canadian Stage Company/Grand Theatre (London), a production for which she won her seventh Dora Mayor Moore Award. The artist has designed for Canada's Stratford Shakespeare Festival for the past 21 years. Productions include *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with Maggie Smith, *A Long Day's Journey Into Night* with Jessica Tandy, *Cabaret*, and *The Mikado* for which she received a Cable ACE Award. Additional credits include *The Taming of the Shrew* for the National Ballet of Canada and the Boston Ballet; *Death in Venice* and *La Forza del Destino* for the Canadian Opera Company; *Madama Butterfly* for Seattle Opera, Vancouver Opera and COC; *La Finta Giardiniera* for the Opera Theatre of Saint Louis; *Don Quichotte* for the New York City Opera; *Marriage of Figaro* and *Così fan tutte* at the Banff Centre and Vancouver Opera; as well as *The Gondoliers* for the Australian Opera Company. Miss Benson received her training at Bristol's West of England College of Art and was elected a member of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts in 1986.



MICHAEL SMUIN is an Emmy and Tony Award-winning choreographer and director for stage, screen and television. Early in his career he was principal dancer and resident choreographer for both the American Ballet Theatre and San Francisco Ballet, and subsequently served as artistic director of S.F. Ballet from 1973-1985. In this capacity, he was instrumental in raising that company's profile in the international arts community, staging a performance at the White House and many "Dance in America" programs on PBS. Smuin directed ABT's 50th Anniversary Gala and choreographed *Ira Gershwin at 100* from Carnegie Hall, filmed for television in 1996. He was co-chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts dance panel, 1979-1981. Broadway credits include *Sophisticated Ladies* (director/choreographer: two Tony nominations); *Anything Goes* (choreographer: Tony, Drama Desk and Fred Astaire Awards); *Shogun* (director/choreographer); and *Canciones de mi Padre* (director/choreographer). Feature film credits include *Rumble Fish*, *The Cotton Club*, *Dracula*, *Fletch*, *Wolf*, *Angie*, *The Joy Luck Club*, *Walk in the Clouds* and the recent *Return of the Jedi, Special Edition*. His work has been seen extensively on television, and he has won Emmy Awards for such pieces as *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Tempest* and *A Song for Dead Warriors*, as well as for Bobby McFerrin's first TV show. Smuin made his San Francisco Opera debut in 1972 with the dances for *Aida*, and was the choreographer for the Company's 1994 staging of *Tannhäuser*.



Lighting designer **MICHAEL WHITFIELD**'s San Francisco Opera assignments have been the 1989 presentation of *Lulu*, *Wozzeck* (1990), the new staging of *Macbeth* (1994), *Anna Bolena* and *Don Giovanni* (1995), as well as the new staging of *Carmen* during the 1996-97 season. The Canadian-born artist received his training at the University of Victoria in British Columbia, and continued at Pennsylvania's Villanova University and the University of Illinois at Urbana. Associated with the Stratford Shakespearean Festival since 1974, he has been resident lighting designer there since 1978. At the Canadian Opera Company in Toronto, he has designed lighting for over 50 productions, including several Canadian premieres, working with an impressive list of stage directors such as John Copley, Jonathan Eaton, Nikolaus Lehnhoff, Brian Macdonald, Lotfi Mansouri and Elijah Moshinsky, among others. Additional opera engagements include those at the Netherlands Opera in Amsterdam (*La Belle Hélène*), Houston Grand Opera (*Boris Godunov*), Los Angeles Music Center Opera (*Macbeth*), Welsh National Opera (*Tornrak*), and New Orleans Opera (*Don Carlo*). Whitfield is also active in the areas of Canadian regional theater, ballet, television production and teaching.

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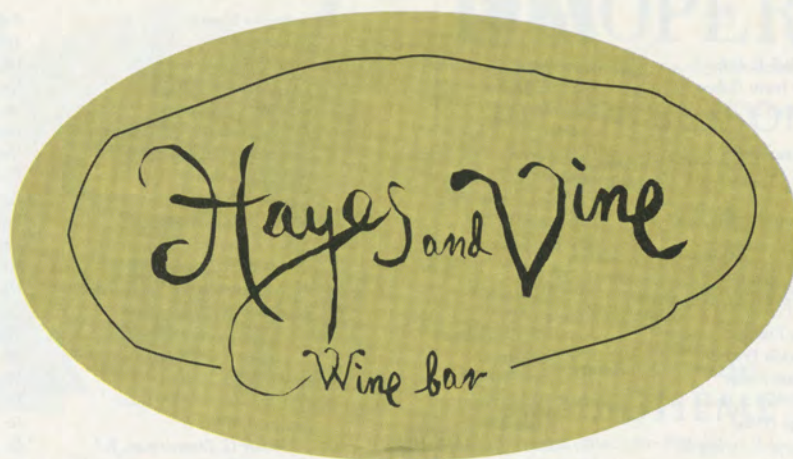
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For more information, contact James K. Sokol, Assistant Director of Corporate & Foundation Relations, at (415) 565-3275.

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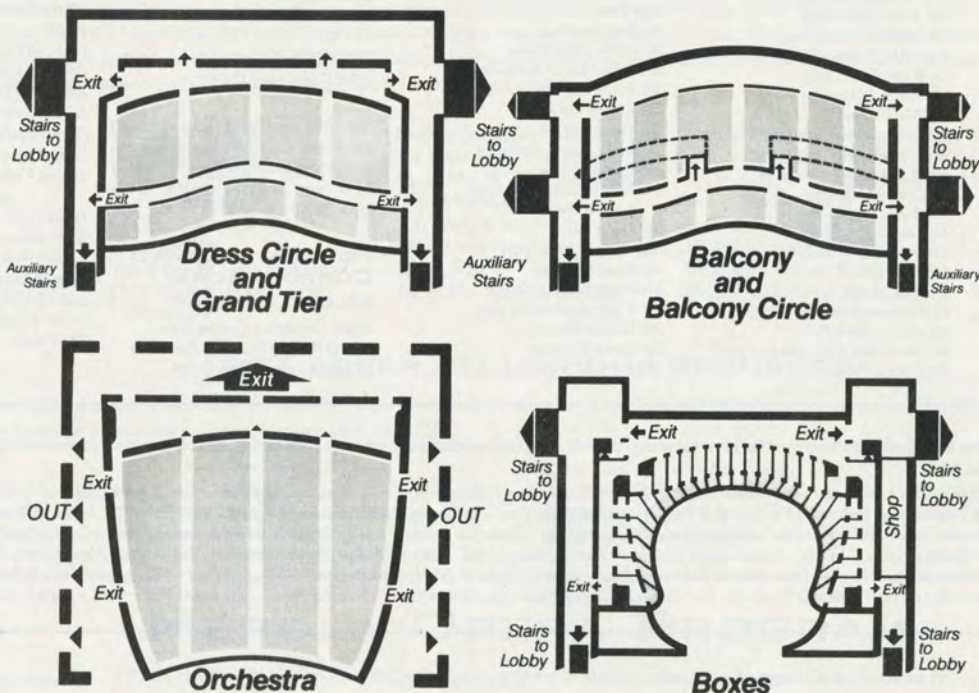
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