

Eugene Onegin

1997-1998

Wednesday, November 19, 1997 7:30 PM

Saturday, November 22, 1997 8:00 PM

Tuesday, November 25, 1997 8:00 PM

Friday, November 28, 1997 8:00 PM

Saturday, November 29, 1997 12:00 PM

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75TH SEASON, 1997-98

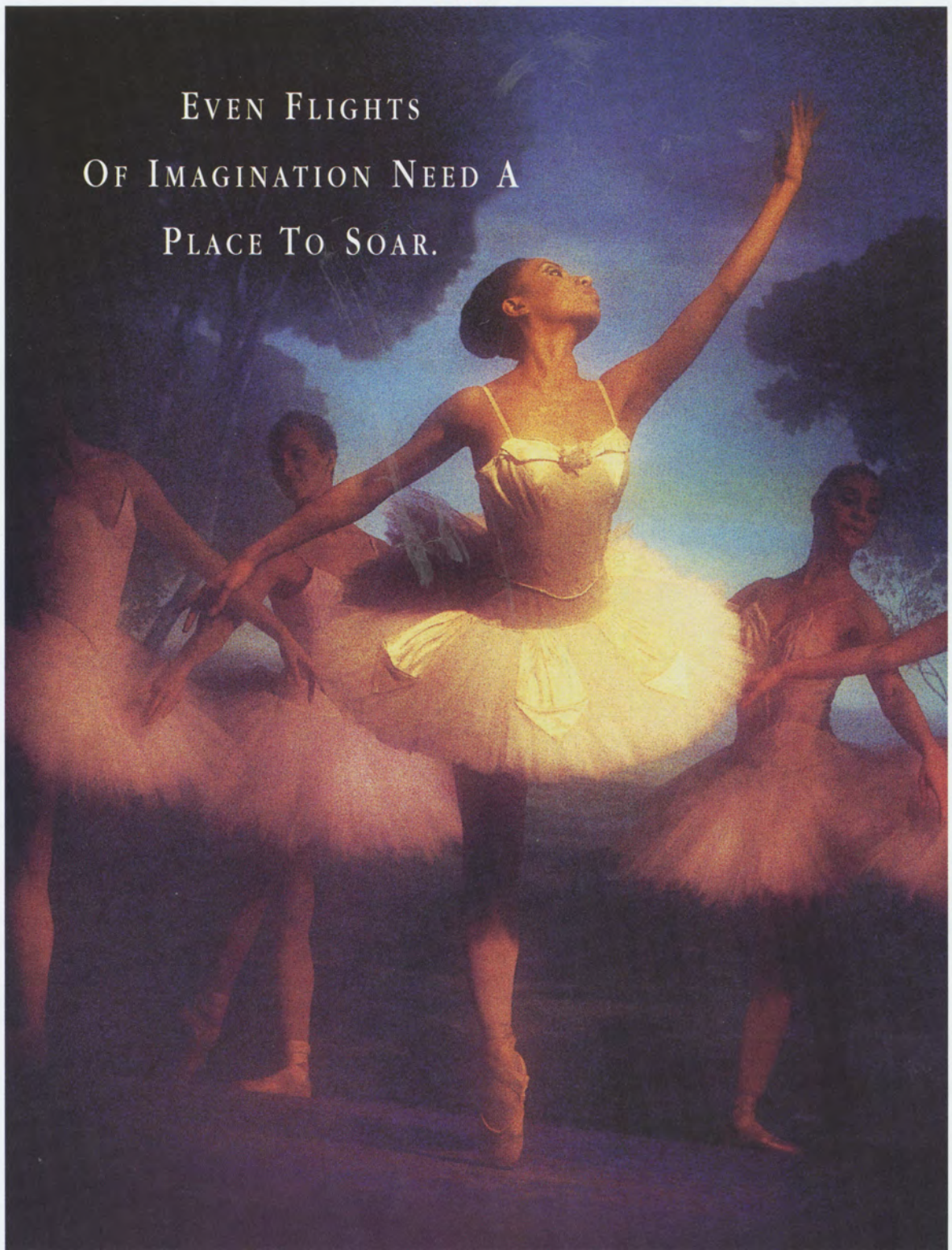
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A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND PRESIDENT, SAN FRANCISCO OPERA ASSOCIATION



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

WILLIAM W. GODWARD
PRESIDENT

A MESSAGE FROM THE GENERAL DIRECTOR



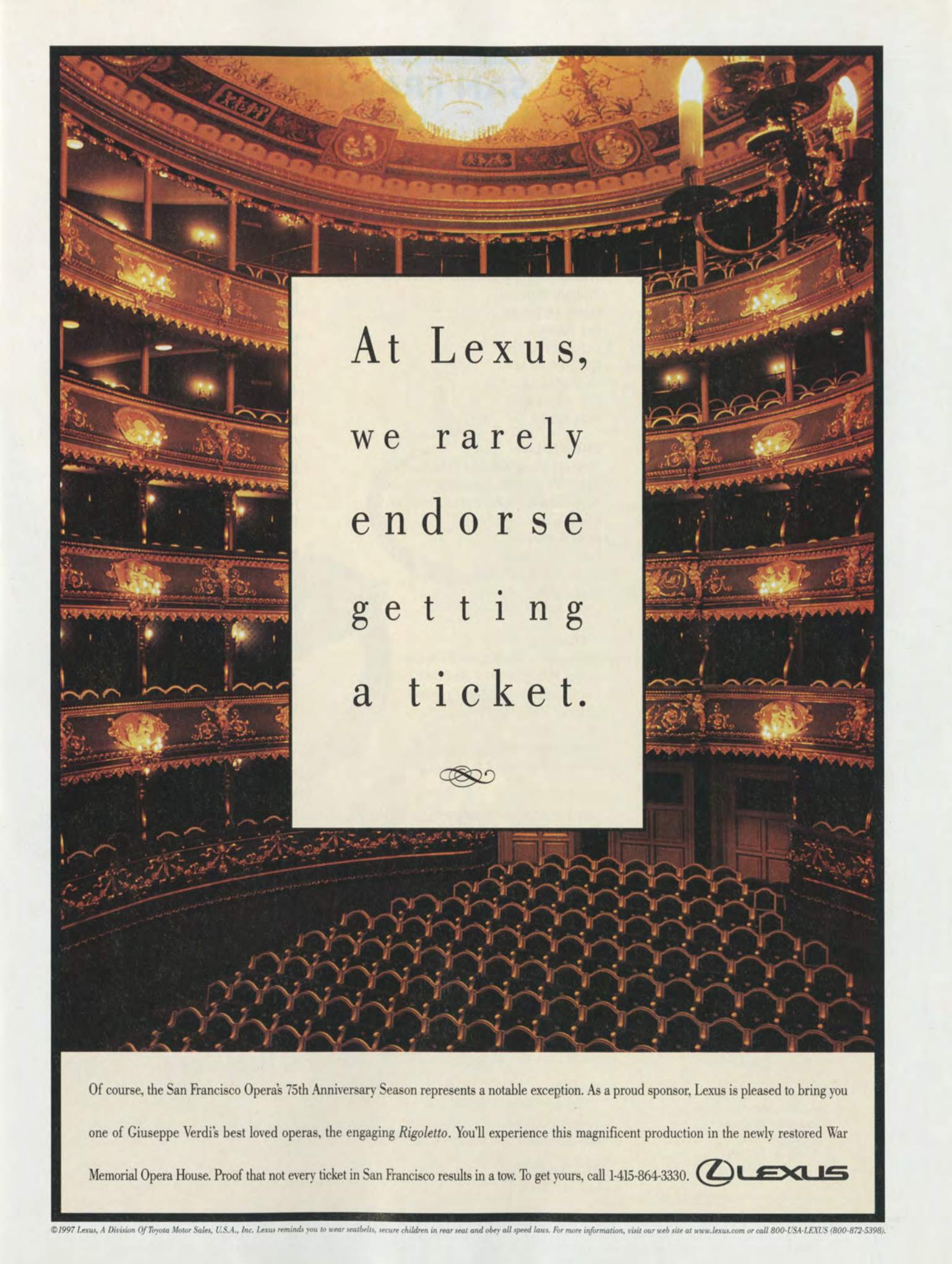
The *femme fatale* has been celebrated in opera for hundreds of years, and our *Femmes Fatales* Festival offers you a brilliant sampler of great opera. From the exquisite, 17th-century baroque lyricism of Monteverdi's *L'Incoronazione di Poppea*, to the beloved romanticism of Bizet's *Carmen* and the 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.

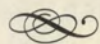
As for singers, we'll encounter a superb group of international artists, with some in exciting debuts: Frederica von Stade performing her first Countess Geschwitz in *Lulu*; countertenor David Daniels, mezzo Lorraine Hunt and tenor Barry Banks taking Company bows in *L'Incoronazione di Poppea*; and soprano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

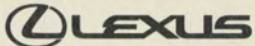
The power of the *femme fatale* is a force to behold—enjoy the excitement!

LOTFI MANSOURI
GENERAL DIRECTOR

The background of the advertisement is a photograph of the interior of the War Memorial Opera House in San Francisco. The view is from the audience, looking up at the ornate, multi-tiered balconies and the decorative ceiling. The theater is filled with rows of dark, upholstered seats. The lighting is warm and dramatic, highlighting the architectural details.

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SAN FRANCISCO OPERA MAGAZINE

Eugene Onegin

75th Season, 1997-98
Vol. 75, No. 10

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10 Tchaikovsky and the Literary Folk:

A Study in Misplaced Derision by Richard Taruskin

An exhaustive and thought-provoking examination of Tchaikovsky's most popular opera, along with comparisons to its Pushkin source.

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Maximilian Kurzweil (Austrian, 1867-1916)

The Letter II, ca. 1900

Pastel, black ink and other media

7½ x 8¾ in.

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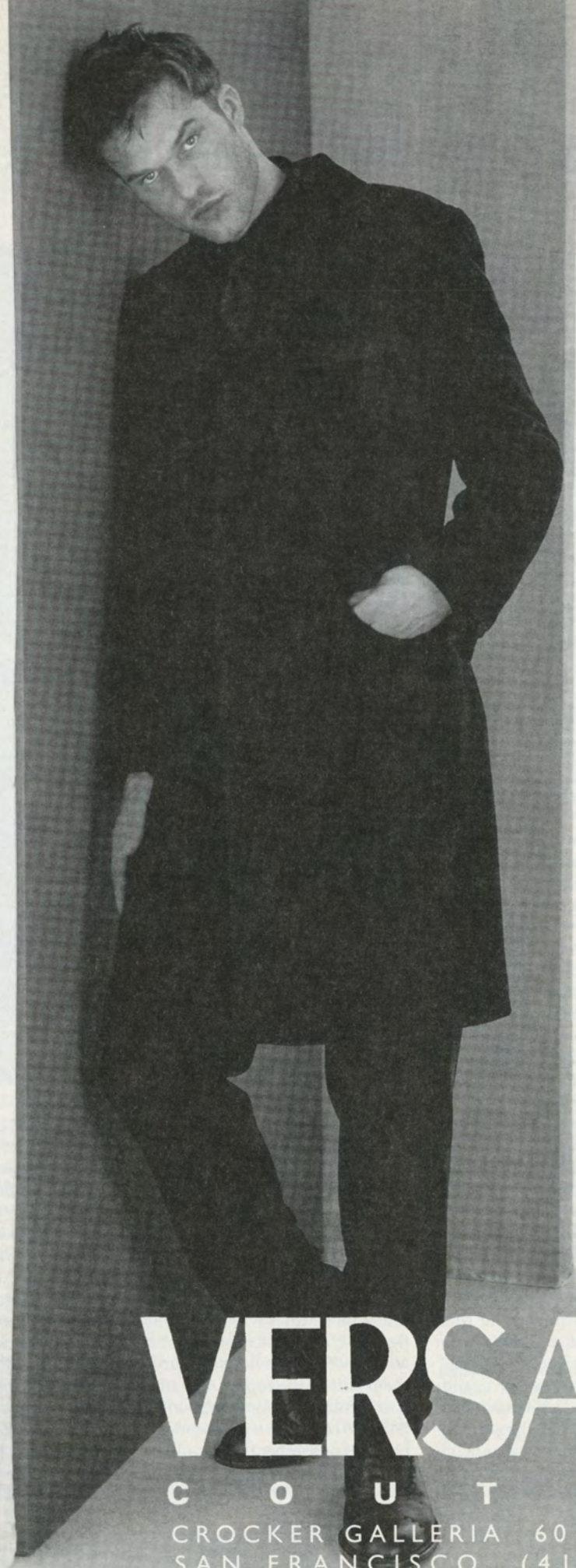
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Tchaikovsky

A Study in



By RICHARD TARUSKIN

[N.B.: Throughout this essay, the title *Eugene Onegin* will refer to the novel in verse by Pushkin, and *Yevgeny Onegin* will refer to the opera loosely based on it by Tchaikovsky.]

My desires are modest," said Vladimir Nabokov, in his famous Playboy pseudo-interview with Alvin Toffler, the future futurist. ("Pseudo-interview" because, like all Nabokov interviews, this one was conducted completely in writing, with considered and composed answers to submitted questions, and a few composed questions, too.) Asked to define his ideal state, he continued: "The social or economic structure is of little concern to me. Portraits of the head of government should not exceed a postage stamp in size. No torture and no executions." No surprises there.

But then he added, "No music, except coming through earphones, or played in theaters. At this the interlocutor (surely Nabokov himself this time) had to ask "Why no music?"

And this remarkable paragraph ensued: "I have no ear for music, a shortcoming I deplore bitterly. When I attend a concert—which happens about once in five years—I endeavor gamely to follow the sequence and relationship of sounds but cannot keep it up for more than a few minutes. Visual impressions, reflections of hands in lacquered wood, a diligent bald spot over a fiddle, these take over, and soon I am bored beyond measure by the motions of the musicians. My knowledge of music is very slight; and I have a special reason for finding my ignorance and inability so sad, so unjust: There is a wonderful singer in my family—my own son. His great gifts, the rare beauty of his bass, and the promise of a splendid career—all this affects me deeply, and I feel a fool during a technical conversation among musicians. I am perfectly aware of the many parallels between the art forms of music and those of literature, especially in matters of structure, but what can I do if ear and brain refuse to cooperate? I have found a queer substitute for music in chess—more exactly, in the composing of chess problems."

After Nabokov's declaration of militant tone-deafness, it will not overly surprise us that in another place, his four-volume translation and commentary of Alexander Pushkin's novel in verse, he railed mercilessly at the work we are to hear tonight, calling it "Tchaikovsky's silly opera" in one place, "Tchaikovsky's slapdash opera" in another, hissing in a third that "in the opera by the 'great' composer, everything insults Pushkin's masterpiece."

On this occasion, Nabokov's persiflage did not come up to his usual level of originality. Sniping at Tchaikovsky's opera had already been a favorite indoor sport among Russian literary intellectuals for almost a century (that is, for the whole life of the opera). Even before it had its first performance (by a student cast at the Moscow Conservatory in March of 1879), the novelist (and,

Richard Taruskin is Professor of Music at the University of California, Berkeley. He has contributed more than 160 articles on Russian subjects to the New Grove Dictionary of Opera and is the author of three books: *Mussorgsky: Eight Essays and an Epilogue*, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions*, and the just-published *Defining Russia Musically* (Princeton University Press, 1997).

y and the Literary Folk: Misplaced Derision

lately, playwright) Ivan Sergeyevich Turgenev bought a copy of the vocal score and was able to write to Count Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoy, another literary man who had got wind of the impending desecration, that "the music is doubtless remarkable, but what a libretto!" And the judgment has been parroted, first in deference to Turgenev, later to Nabokov, by generations of "Slavists," many of whom have probably never seen or heard the opera.

In a way the situation is perfectly understandable. Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*, which was just coming into its own as an object of canonical veneration around the time Tchaikovsky and his poet friend Shilovsky dared to adapt it, is beloved not for its plot or (with one exception) for its characters—the only parts of a literary work that most literary people think transferable to another medium. Rather, it is adored for what Nabokov called "the divine details"—the verbal dazzle (that is, the music that Pushkin had already put there), the wry social commentary, the perfectly exact descriptions, the endlessly subtle and nuanced characterizations, the interrelationship of literary and social conventions, all conveyed by a famously intrusive narrator's voice. It is a work of art that is loved for the telling, not the tale. It calls such delightful attention to itself as a work of art, as a specifically verbal construction, one containing so many verbal pleasures of an absolutely unparaphrasable kind, that it is small wonder it has been declared sacrosanct by the scholars who earn their livelihoods by dissecting those aspects of it that are beyond the reach of music (or so they think).

If anything, resistance to Tchaikovsky's *Yevgeny Onegin* in literary quarters increased in the twentieth century, as literary studies (and, alas, literary appreciation) became more academically cloistered, and as the academy submitted to the influence of what used to be called the New Criticism. New Criticism, now about as old-hat as an academic fashion can be, valued (to quote one of its founders) "a maximum of complexity under a maximum of control." There is no literary device that creates more complexity per unit of invested effort, and none that so increases the possibilities of interesting analysis, as *irony*—saying one thing and meaning another. Instantly you have *levels* of meaning. Instantly you need a critic to sort the levels out. And that is how *Eugene Onegin* became a cottage industry.

The novel's greatness is assumed to lie in its irony, vouchsafed by all those gloriously complicating narrator's intrusions, which provide "a kind of spiritual air conditioner," as one eminent commentator has colorfully put it. When that machine is turned off, as it is assumed to be in the opera, "the atmosphere becomes sticky, the underpinnings of the wonderfully delicate, intricate, balanced structure rot, and it collapses. You are left with a banal, trite, and sentimental bore—which may nevertheless be a vehicle for some delightful music."

Thank you very much, but that formulation shows magnificent incomprehension of what the music in an opera does—in any opera, but particularly in this opera, where the music, quite simply, is the narrator. Tchaikovsky, as alive to the special beauties of *Eugene Onegin* as any New Critic, contrived to do what no literary man, feeling a fool during a technical conversation among musicians, would have dreamed possible. Using a different medium, and of course adopting music-specific strategies, he managed to invest the opera with the same multileveled perspective—the same ironies and knowing asides—that Pushkin achieved through the more predictable use of words alone. And he also managed to adapt the novel's sensibility, without sacrificing the "air conditioner," to the age of Turgenev—and even, looking ahead, of Chekhov—as Turgenev later came to realize.

After actually seeing the opera performed, Turgenev reversed his judgment on the libretto and even conceded that Tchaikovsky had—in one specific way (to be described in due course)—improved on Pushkin. As for Chekhov, the best testimony of his esteem (and a poignant one it is) comes in the flyleaf of a copy of his second book of stories ("At Twilight," 1887), now in the library of the Tchaikovsky homestead-museum in Klin, a suburb of Moscow. It

Opposite: Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky in 1877, the time he began composing *Eugene Onegin*.

Right: Three Tatyanas: (top) M. Klimentova-Muromtseva at the opera's world premiere, given at the Moscow Conservatory in 1879; (middle) Evelyn Lear at the San Francisco Opera in 1971; (bottom) Mirella Freni, likewise at the San Francisco Opera, in 1986. Both San Francisco Opera Tatyanas are shown with the Filipyevna of Donna Petersen.



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bears the inscription, "To Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, from his devoted future librettist." It never happened, for within a few years of Chekhov's hopeful overture, Tchaikovsky met his premature and sudden death (don't ask how). But Chekhov was right to recognize in the composer of *Yevgeny Onegin* the only kindred dramaturgical spirit he ever had among Russian composers.

From San Francisco Opera's 1971 presentation of *Eugene Onegin*: (Above): Evelyn Lear and Thomas Stewart as Tatyana and Onegin; (below) Thomas Stewart's Onegin surveys the third-act ballroom scene. The physical production was on loan from the Mannheim Opera.

So how does the music do what the professionally tone-deaf have declared it can not? It does it the same way Pushkin's verses did it by virtue of what it adds by way of commentary to the bare frame of plot. For the plot of *Eugene Onegin* as such is slender and banal in the extreme, and deliberately so: a dreamy country girl falls in love with a young fop from the big city; she impulsively pours out her feelings to him in a letter; she is rebuffed and humiliated; five years later the two encounter one another again and fop is smitten; by now, country girl has become a society matron who will not abandon her husband for her old flame. There is also a subplot involving the fop's friend, a provincial poetaster, and the country girl's vacuous sister, over whom the two young men duel needlessly and the friend is meaninglessly slain. Nobody would ever pick *Eugene Onegin* as an opera subject on the strength of its plot alone. Them's slim pickings indeed.

But what Tchaikovsky shortly perceived, after his friend the contralto Yelizaveta Lavrovskaya surprised him with the suggestion, and what critics (not audiences) have failed to perceive for over a century now, was that music of a sort he was uniquely inclined and equipped to write could perform exactly those functions for which Pushkin's celebrated narrative voice was prized. The result was a chef d'oeuvre of stylized operatic realism: the Russian counterpart to *Traviata* or *Manon*, except that it stands higher in its national tradition than they do in theirs, and its realism more fundamentally determined its style.

From the very first sung notes, Olga's and Tatyana's offstage duet to the harp, the music acts as a very busy and detached mediator of situations and feelings. As the Soviet musicologist Boris Asafyev was the first to demonstrate in detail, Tchaikovsky "sings" his opera in an idiom intensely redolent of the domestic, theatrical, and ballroom music of its time and place—its, not his—and in so doing he situates it, just as Pushkin situates the literary prototype, in the years 1819-25 (adding maybe ten years in the case of Tchaikovsky, who, like Stravinsky after him, was particularly attracted to the song styles of the 1830s). And just as Pushkin's characters (like all "realistic" characters) achieve their "reality" through a multitude of precisely manipulated codes, so Tchaikovsky's express themselves through a finely calculated filter of musical genres and conventions.

To express the passions and spontaneous reactions of the characters by means of stereotyped melodic and harmonic figures, however freshly and virtuosically recombined, makes exactly the same point Pushkin makes in his novel: feelings are never truly spontaneous but always mediated by the conventions and constraints, as often learned from literature as from "life," to which we have adapted. Therein lie both the tragedy (the constraints) and the salvation (the adaptation) of human society.

And as Tchaikovsky knew, attentive student of Mozart that he was, a composer has certain narrational advantages over a writer,

(continued on page 32)

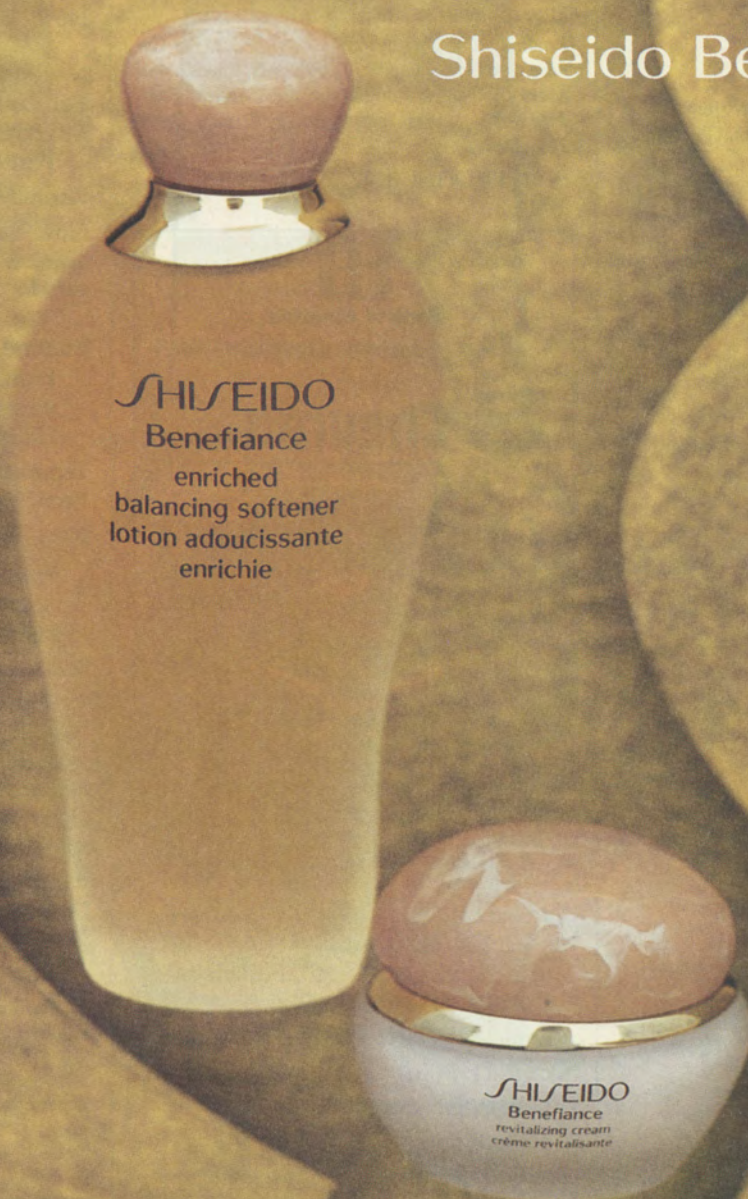
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Eugene Onegin

Tchaikovsky

Prokina*, Tarasova*, Rubtsova**,
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Halfvarson, Sénéchal

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

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

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

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Text by the composer and KONSTANTIN STEPANOVICH SHILOVSKY
After the poem by ALEXANDER SERGEYEVICH PUSHKIN

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(Eugene Onegin)

(in Russian)

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Moscow, March 29, 1879

First San Francisco Opera

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TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 25 AT 8:00

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 28 AT 8:00

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 29 AT 12 NOON

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 2 AT 8:00

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 5 AT 8:00

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 7 AT 2:00

CAST

(in order of appearance)

Tatyana Elena Prokina*
Nicolle Foland (11/29)

Olga Marianna Tarasova*
Madame Larina Irina Rubtsova**

Filipyevna Sofia Aksenova**

A peasant Daniel Harper
Lensky Raymond Very
Valery Serkin* (11/29)

Eugene Onegin Anthony Michaels-Moore*
David Okerlund (11/29)

A captain John Relyea†

Monsieur Triquet Michel Sénéchal

Zaretsky John Relyea

Guillot Marcus Cenicerros

Prince Gremin Eric Halfvarson

Peasants, guests, officers, nobles, servants

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**U.S. opera debut *San Francisco Opera debut †1997-98 Adler Fellow

TIME AND PLACE: Early 19th-century St. Petersburg and environs

ACT I	Scene 1	The garden of Madame Larina's country house
	Scene 2	Tatyana's bedroom
	Scene 3	Another part of the garden

INTERMISSION

ACT II	Scene 1	A ballroom in Madame Larina's house
	Scene 2	Early morning on the bank of a stream

INTERMISSION

ACT III	Scene 1	A fashionable house in St. Petersburg, four years later
	Scene 2	Gremin's mansion

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The performance will last approximately three and one-half hours.

SYNOPSIS

Eugene Onegin

ACT I

Scene 1—While Madame Larina and the old nurse Filipyevna reminisce, the Larin daughters, Tatyana and Olga, are singing an old romantic ballad. Peasants arrive with a decorated sheaf, and their singing of a folk tune sends Tatyana's thoughts far away, but Olga asserts it merely makes her want to dance. Ever the dreamer, Tatyana settles herself to read a romantic novel, and when her mother gently exhorts her to remember there are no heroes in real life, she attributes her sad looks to the events of the story. Olga's fiancé, Lensky, arrives with Onegin, a friend from St. Petersburg. Onegin is surprised that Lensky should have chosen the superficial Olga for a wife, but holds his peace and turns his attention to the more enigmatic Tatyana. Tatyana, for her part, sees Onegin as the man of her dreams. The merry Olga notices this, but moves off with Lensky. Onegin is condescending about country life, but has deeply impressed Tatyana, as her old nurse observes.

Scene 2—Filipyevna is helping her young mistress prepare for bed. The restless Tatyana begs for stories of Filipyevna's youth, but then confesses that she has fallen in love. When the nurse leaves, Tatyana pours out her feelings in a long, passionate letter to Onegin, declaring eternal love for him. Dawn is breaking as Tatyana finishes her letter, and Filipyevna is startled to find her awake. Tatyana gives her the letter to deliver to Onegin.

Scene 3—Servants gather fruit in the garden as Tatyana enters in some confusion at the prospect of a meeting arranged with Onegin. When he arrives, he acknowledges receiving her letter and explains kindly but rather patronizingly that he was touched by it and admired its candor. But he adds that he has no intention of marrying and can offer no more than brotherly affection.

ACT II

Scene 1—At Tatyana's birthday ball, Onegin dances with her but is bored, and then, to annoy Lensky, dances with Olga. Lensky, who had brought Onegin with him, feels betrayed by what he regards as Onegin's poaching on his, Lensky's territory. When Onegin laughingly and off-handedly persists in dancing again with Olga, Lensky's jealousy flares and soon the men are quarreling in earnest. Lensky challenges Onegin to a duel, and Onegin realizes that he has gone too far.

Scene 2—Lensky gloomily awaits his opponent and broods over the love he feels for Olga. Onegin arrives. Both regret their quarrel, but the conventions of the duel bind them to their commitment. They fire and Lensky is killed.

ACT III

Scene 1—Guests are dancing a polonaise. Onegin, just back from lengthy travels abroad, is bored, unhappy and remorseful. The death of Lensky lies heavy on his heart. He has no wife to cherish, and the glittering ball seems to symbolize the emptiness and aimlessness of his life. As Prince Gremin, a retired general, and Onegin begin to converse, Princess Gremina enters. Onegin, with shock and bewilderment, recognizes Tatyana, but a Tatyana transformed, matured, a vision of dignity and grace. The Prince, who in fact is related to Onegin, tells him he married Tatyana two years ago and that his life has been transformed and redeemed by the love of this beautiful woman, and by the revelation that virtue and goodness can illuminate the existence of even an unattractive fellow like himself. Tatyana and Onegin are formal with each other, but when Tatyana's defense weakens so far as to make her plead tiredness and ask to be taken home, Onegin is distressed to realize he has fallen inopportunely but deeply in love with her.

Scene 2—Tatyana, profoundly unsettled by Onegin's reappearance and his love note to her, is awaiting him. He arrives and falls at her feet. She reminds him that he once rejected her, and tells him that because of her marriage, and despite a love for him, she will not yield to him now. It is her clear duty to leave him immediately and forever. Onegin is left alone in misery and despair.

The performance of November 19th is sponsored by the Silicon Valley Group.

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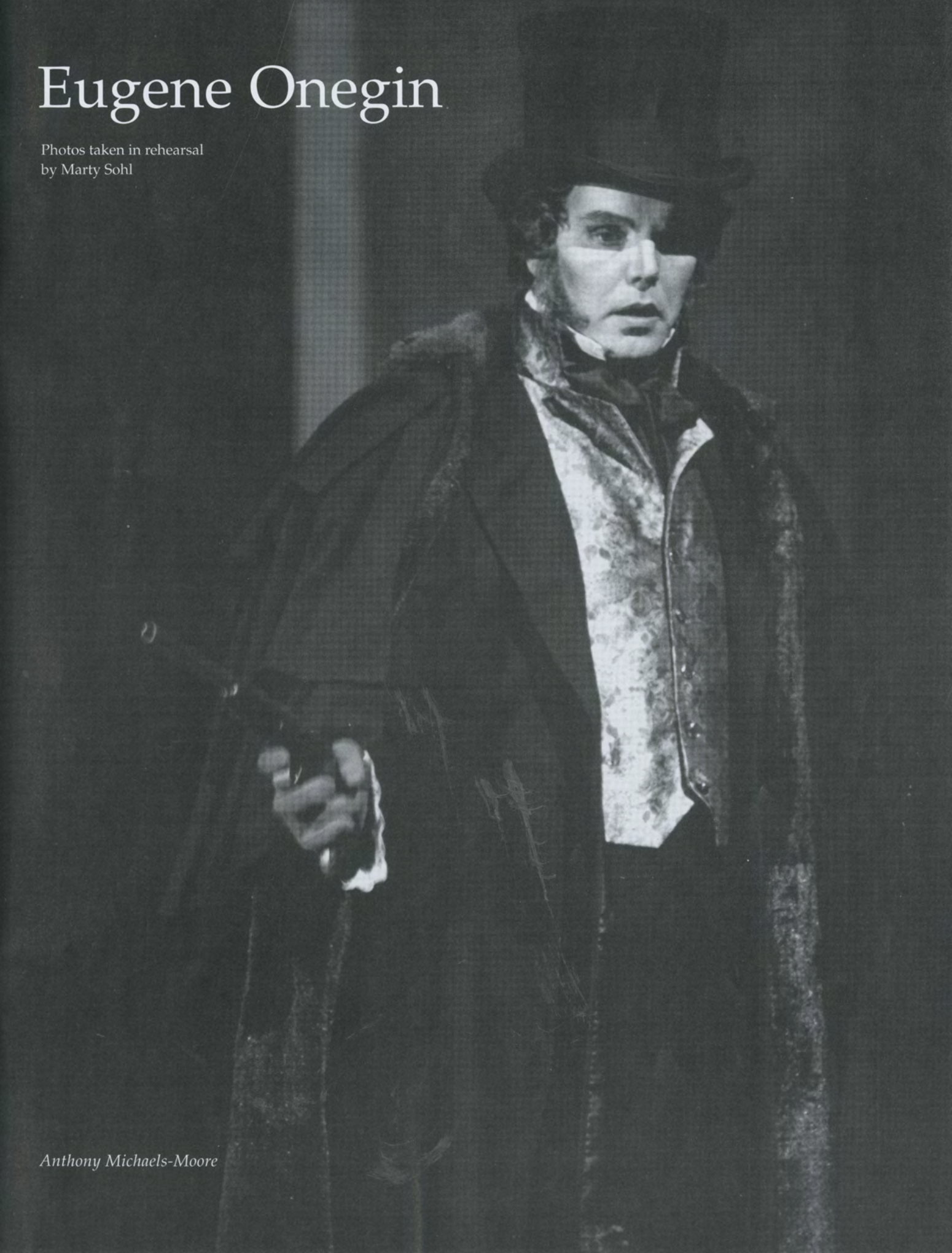
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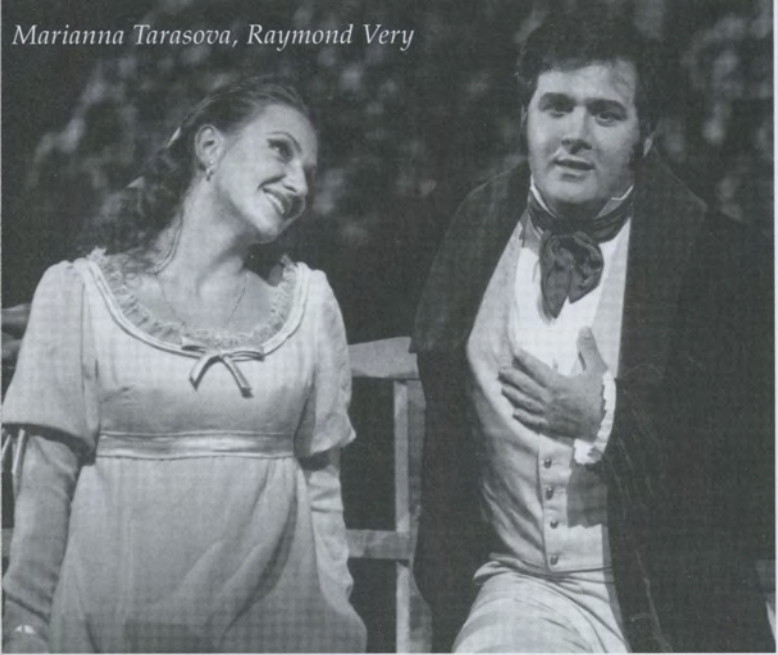
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Photos taken in rehearsal
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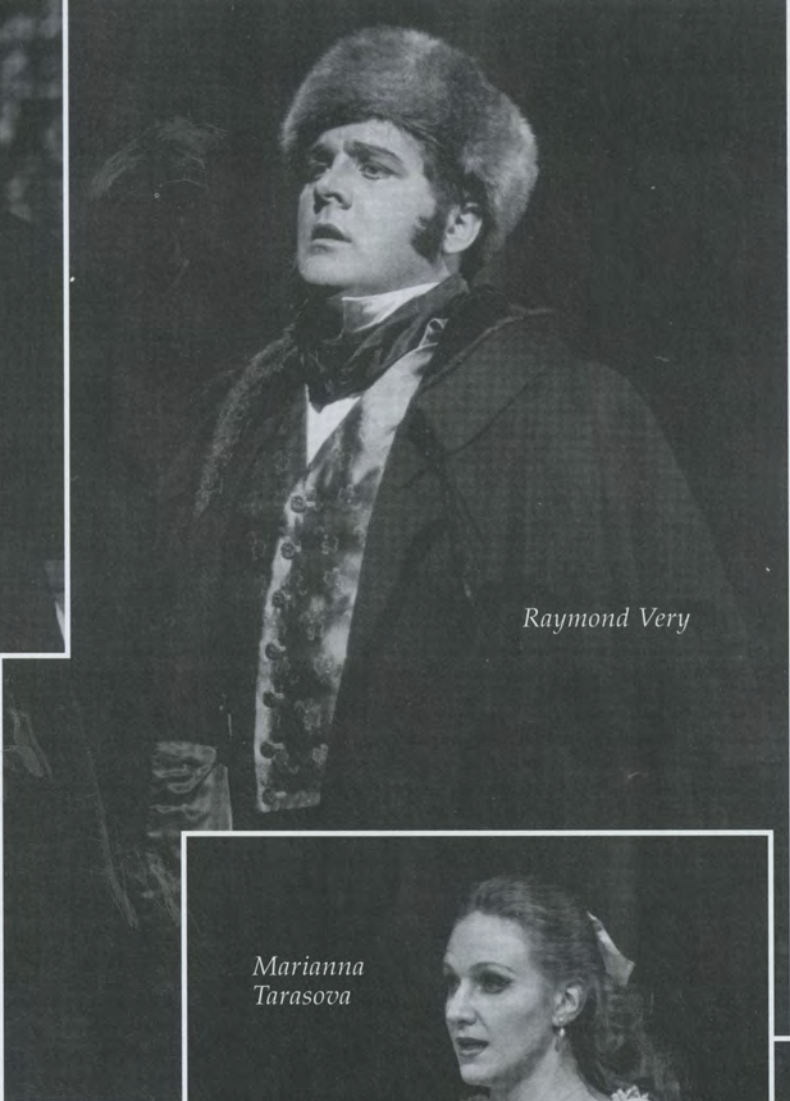
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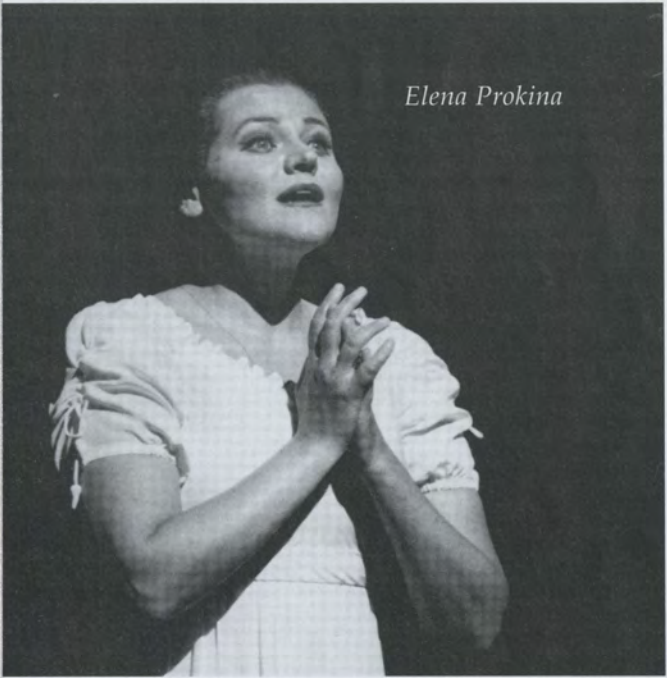
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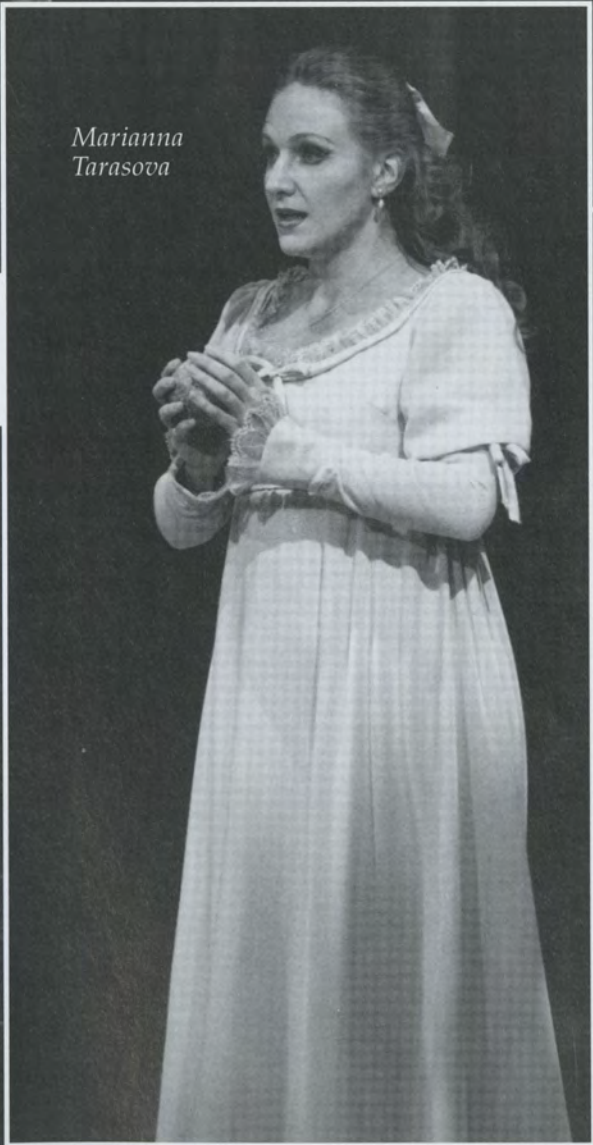
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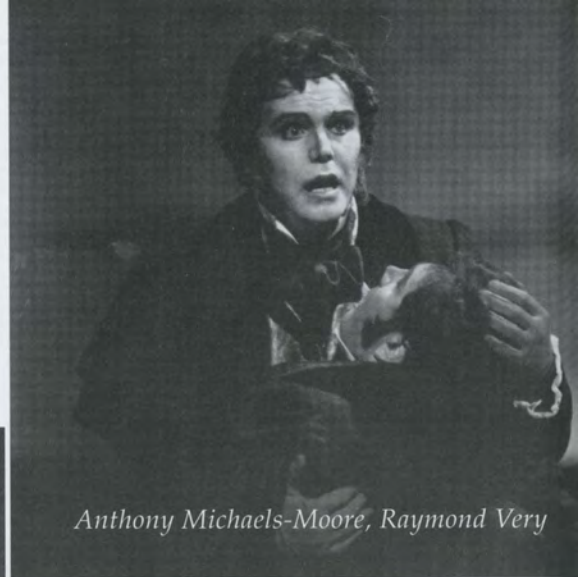
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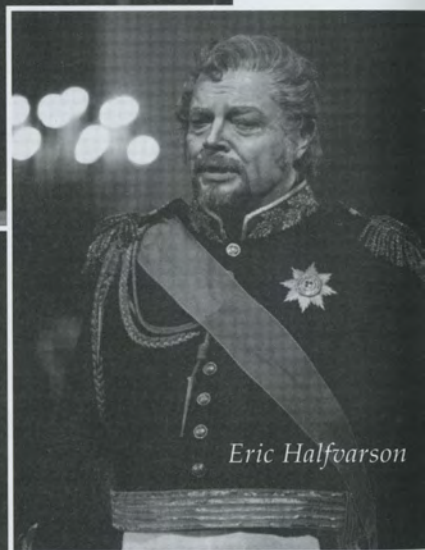
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The Budget Italy Opera Program to Six Cities: Milan, Florence, Bologna, Venice, Genoa & Turin June 10th to 23rd, 1998

... last year's program saw 5 operas. As of now the operas we know about are *Werther* in Venice and *Manon Lescaut* at La Scala. There will be spectacular sightseeing in Venice (Doge's Palace, Basilica San Marco, Scuola Grande di San Rocco), Florence (Uffizi, Church of San Lorenzo, Bargello Palace), full-day to Siena with San Gimignano, walking tours including Verona and Bologna and visits to selected museums, cathedrals and castles.

The Budget Verona Opera Festival with La Scala, Florence & Venice July 8th to 22nd, 1998

... the Verona Arena, completed in 30 AD, is spectacular and provides an extraordinary backdrop for a wonderful opera program. This year the operas are *Aida*, *Un Ballo en Maschera* and *Nabucco*. At La Scala we see Donizetti's *Lucrezia Borgia* and in Venice *Elektra*. Same sightseeing as mentioned above including Bologna.

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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:

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

Elektra—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

Rigoletto—Dec. 4, 6

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.

November 7 *Pelléas et Mélisande*
November 17 *Eugene Onegin*

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA GUILD — PREVIEWES

Opera Guild Previewes 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). Previewes 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

Der Fliegende Holländer
Elektra
Guillaume Tell
Pelléas et Mélisande
Eugene Onegin

SPEAKER

Simon Williams
D.B. Greene
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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.

Nov 5 *Pelléas et Mélisande*
Nov 19 *Eugene Onegin*

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.

Nov 3 *Pelléas et Mélisande*
Nov 17 *Eugene Onegin*

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.

Nov 5 *Pelléas et Mélisande*
Nov 19 *Eugene Onegin*

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.

Nov 6 *Pelléas et Mélisande*
Nov 20 *Eugene Onegin**

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.

Nov 3 *Pelléas et Mélisande*
Nov 21 *Eugene Onegin*

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.

Nov 4 *Pelléas et Mélisande*
Nov 18 *Eugene Onegin*

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The beginning of the duel scene from San Francisco Opera's 1986 presentation of *Eugene Onegin*. Dénes Gulyás was Lensky (left), Thomas Allen, Onegin. The production was on loan from the National Arts Centre of Canada.

(cont. from p. 12)

advantages which a novelist with slight ear or knowledge of music could never imagine. Where the novelist must arrange things in a temporal sequence, the musician can simultaneously present and comment without recourse to digression. The best possible illustration comes at the very outset of *Yevgeny Onegin*, with the eccentric "quartet" for women's voices in which that very typical period duet-romance sung by the sisters offstage (to an early verse by Pushkin, Tchaikovsky's only Pushkin romance!), accompanies a speech-song conversation, truly conversational in its contours and rhythms, between their mother, Mme. Larina, and Filipyevna, their former wetnurse. The foreground conversation begins with an invocation to the books in Larina's life ("O Grandison! O Richardson!") and ends with a modest paean, paraphrased from Chateaubriand, to habit ("given to us from above as substitute for happiness").

The conversation is a comment on the song that accompanies it (or that it accompanies), the idiom-defining domestic romance that first introduces to the audience's ear the distinctive period style in which the opera is couched. It turns this quite unprecedented double duet for women's voices (a tour de force, incidentally, of art-concealing contrapuntal artistry) into a simultaneous text and gloss—an explicit meditation on one of the novel's paramount themes, the relationship between life and literature, between spontaneous feeling and mediating convention, between—if a bit of once-modish language may be excused—signifiers and signifieds. These are just the aspects of Pushkin that literary people fancy inaccessible to music, or at least to Tchaikovsky, of all the great nineteenth-century composers

the one that twentieth-century people still find it easiest to condescend to—in a conventional sort of way.

The little maxim from Chateaubriand about the virtues of habit—that is, of salubriously conventional behavior—will repay one last look for what it can tell us about Tchaikovsky's very sophisticated methods for achieving his famous simplicity and sincerity of utterance. He sets it off as a sudden little canon, a conventional set piece in miniature. The simple contrapuntal form represents its meaning—that is, becomes significant—according to a time-honored code: "Es ist der alte Bund," as J.S. Bach had put it, fugally, many years before. *It is the old constraint*: if feeling is to be significantly expressed in art, it must be mediated through significant forms—that is, forms that function as conventional signifying codes. And that presupposes their intelligibility, which in turn implies predefinition. An artist who wants to communicate significantly must accept limits to his freedom—constraints that have potentially liberating consequences. If, as has been claimed, and as one can only agree, Tchaikovsky is the great "poet of everyday life" and a "genius of emotion," it is not because he was a genius at having emotions. (We're all geniuses at that.) It is because he knew how to channel life and emotion with great power and precision through coded forms.

"It seems to me," Tchaikovsky later wrote to his friend Vladimir Pogozhev, a theater official, "that I am truly gifted with the ability *truthfully, sincerely, and simply* to express the feelings, moods, and images suggested by a text. In this sense I am a *realist* and fundamentally a Russian." All of the italics in this self-characterization were Tchaikovsky's own, and the opening quartet in *Yevgeny Onegin*, to say nothing of the whole opera

that follows it, wonderfully bears them out. The realism and the Russianness of this opera are equally profound and profoundly interrelated; and they are equally likely to be missed by those who equate realism with "formlessness" and can discern national character only in the sort of folklore that exists in *Yevgeny Onegin* (like the "folk" itself) only as an aspect of decor—in the field-hands' songs and dances of the first scene, for example, or the berry-pickers' chorus, taken directly from the novel, in the third.

Another choice sample of Tchaikovsky's "diegetical" skill—his ability at once to present and to comment, to show things as they are and at the same time to "distance" the portrayal ironically—comes at the moment when the title character together with his friend, the poetaster Lensky, make their first appearance. The comically exaggerated courtly flourishes in the orchestra that accompany their bows to the Larin ladies instantly sketch their foppish histories, accomplishing much of the work of Pushkin's chapter 1, the absence of which is so often (and so severely) held against the opera's libretto. In their startling anticipation of Stravinsky's *Pulcinella*, his "Pergolesi" pastiche ballet, these "eighteenth-century" curlicues also call attention to Tchaikovsky's underappreciated mastery of the grotesque.

These points of period style and representational technique apply not only to the characters' public behavior and to the obviously "generic" ballroom scenes but even, or especially, to their most private and personal utterances. Tatyana's "Letter Scene" (the latter part of scene 2), the most private and personal in the opera, is in effect a string of four drawing-room romances linked by recitatives. The resonances between the music of this scene and the duet-romance within the opening quartet are many, conspicuous and (oh yes, most consciously) calculated: they are the resonances between Tatyana's inner and outer worlds.

To cite the most obvious correspondence, both numbers incorporate what is generally known as Tatyana's leitmotif. (Like most leitmotifs, emphatically including Wagner's, they were actually named—and thus limited in their signifying power—not by their creators but by later commentators and commercial exploiters.) It is the very

(continued on page 36)



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(cont. from p. 32)

first melodic phrase presented to the audience in the opera's orchestral introduction; it is echoed in the last line of each stanza of the duet romance, and it is echoed again in the middle section of the last, climactic romance in the Letter Scene. But even before its specific, gradually-revealed association with Tatyana is made clear, the leitmotif bears a generic resonance, one that (with due apologies to Nabokov and others who may resent it) requires just a dab of "technical conversation" to identify it.

Beginning on the sixth degree of the minor scale, it descends ultimately to the first degree, the tonic or keynote, thus describing the interval that more than any other defines the idiom of the *bitovoy romans*, the Russian domestic or household romance of the early nineteenth century. Russian scholars have even coined a special term—*seksstoviy* ("sixthy") and its derivative *seksstovost* ("sixthiness")—to denote that defining quality, associated with many of the romances of Glinka, the founding father of Russian professional art music, but even more closely associated with the "three Alexanders"—Alyabyev, Varlamov, Gurilyov—who in the 1830s and 40s turned out romances by the bushel for the parlors of the increasingly music-hungry Russian *nouveaux riches*, the incipient *grand* (but by Tchaikovsky's time much pettier) *bourgeoisie*.

The role of Tatyana is saturated with melodic sixths. Along with the role of Lensky in the same opera, it is surely the "sixthiest" in all of opera. And at times the melodic sixths are nested within a harmonic idiom that shows a marked "sixthiness" of its own—the constant use of the minor submediant (the "flat sixth"), a chord that ever since the time of Schubert had been the chief passion-flower in the bouquet of romantic music, especially romantic domestic music, and that (especially when it is alternated with the tonic in the major) audiences—yes, you—have long since learned to react to with a throb of the heart.

Penetrating just a bit further into the refinements of musical technique, we might add that the alternation can take the form of an immediate local progression (like the one that accompanies the famous horn solo in the Letter Scene), or it can be projected in the form of a subsidiary key governing large spans within the harmonic structure. The orchestral introduction to Act I sets the precedent: its development section is all within the key of the submediant. Later, the whole vocal coda of the Letter Scene ("Finished! I dare not re-read!") is cast within the

flat-submediant key to portray poor Tatyana lost in a love trance.

The melodic-harmonic idiom is only one of many genre resonances that tie Tatyana's Letter Scene to the opening duet and thence to the whole world of the domestic romance.

The harp-heavy orchestration of the first two sections is another. But the harp does more than evoke the sounds of domestic music-making. The inspired chords (not arpeggiated!) that punctuate the woodwind phrases in the actual letter-writing music that introduces the second romance take their place within a marvelously detailed sound-portrait of the love-sick girl, in which Tchaikovsky shows himself an adept practitioner of Mozartean "body portraiture" as outlined in the famous letter of 1781 from Mozart to his father about *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (Tchaikovsky had read it in the famous Mozart biography by Otto Jahn). As in the case of Mozart's Belmonte or Osmin, we "see" and "feel" Tatyana—her movements, her breathing, her heartbeat—in her music. This "iconicity" shows off music's advantages especially well: what the novelist or poet must describe, the composer (unlike the dramatist, who must depend on the director and the cast) can actually present.

As to irony, did Pushkin ever make a more trenchant comment than Tchaikovsky, when he mocks Onegin's passionate confession to Tatyana in Act 3 with a fleeting reference to the music by which he had rejected her in Act 1? It is not simply a matter of showing that the boot is on the other foot: that much had already been accomplished by setting Onegin's arioso at the end of the sixth scene (Act 3, sc. 1) to the melody of the first romance in the Letter Scene (equally ironic in that Onegin, not having "heard" that music on its earlier appearance, cannot be "quoting" it now; the reference is entirely a narrator's aside). The allusion to the rejection music shows him fickle and erratic. It takes the place of the lengthy passage in Pushkin's novel in which Tatyana visits the absent Onegin's library and discovers, by peeking at the annotations in his books, how shallow he is.

The concluding confrontation between Onegin and Tatyana (the seventh and last scene in the opera) has been described as "a duet in the grand style," but even here the method of construction remains that of stringing romances (a technique Tchaikovsky evidently picked up from his teacher, Anton Rubinstein, as anyone knows who knows the last act of Rubinstein's most famous opera, *The Demon*). Tatyana's chief melody apes the one her husband, Prince Gremin, had sung in the preceding scene,

thus telegraphing her answer to Onegin. Only twice, fleetingly, do the two voices mingle. It is hardly a duet at all. Like Tatyana's total silence in response to rejection (Act I, sc. 3, and, except for her participation in ensembles, in the next scene as well) the scene flies in the face of operatic convention and frustrating the audience's conventional expectation (unless, like all Russians, they've read the book), thus underscoring by omission yet another ironic narrator's aside!—the futility of the dramatic situation. The very fact that *Yevgeny Onegin* contains no real love duets already testifies to its singular affinity with Pushkin's novel, air conditioner and all.

And this, by the way, not reasons of censorship or literary censoriousness, is the reason why Tchaikovsky, after seeing the first student performance, modified his original ending, which had included a kiss and the sudden melodramatic entry of Tatyana's husband on the scene. No music needed to be altered, only one line of dialogue, Onegin's (and the opera's) last: from "O death, O death, I'm going out to seek thee!" to "Shame, grief, O how pitiful is my lot!" The former was "grand opera." The latter made a far more fitting conclusion to seven "lyrical scenes from Pushkin."

Not that there are no divergences between Tchaikovsky's treatment of the story or its characters and Pushkin's. Lensky in particular, whose sixthly Act 2 aria, the largest vocal set piece in the opera except for the Letter Scene, is a very serious moment, reflects a later, more sentimental age—the age of Turgenev, so to speak, rather than Pushkin's. And Turgenev knew it. One of Tchaikovsky's intimates, the critic Nikolai Kashkin, reported in his memoirs of the composer that the great writer admitted to him in conversation, early in the 1880s, that "for me, you know, Tchaikovsky's Lensky has grown somehow; he's gotten bigger somehow than he was in Pushkin."

Not only does he loom larger in the opera than in the novel, but he is taken far more seriously—by Turgenev, by Tchaikovsky, and by their contemporaries, for whom Lensky had become not just a figure of heartless fun (as he was for Pushkin) but the embodiment of a romantic temper that had, like the slain poet, been extinguished from Russian letters.

Pushkin's Lensky never does the equivalent of singing his operatic counterpart's aria. Instead, he writes a stilted poem on the eve of the impending duel at which he is to

(continued on page 41)

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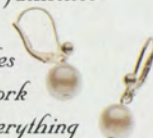
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lose his life that is all clichés and turgid imagery. Even in *extremis*, he is just a fop. Tchaikovsky redeemed him. (Not that Nabokov was grateful. For him Pushkin's original was sacrosanct, Tchaikovsky's just a wimp. Because he never adequately understands the impulsive rage that caused the duel between friends, and because he voices no genuine regret, the original Lensky was a "real man," an implicit baritone. By making him a tenor and replacing his foolishness with resignation, Tchaikovsky "makes a whining weakling of Pushkin's virile Lensky.")

And yet even in his big operatic moment, Tchaikovsky mediates his Lensky through a set of significant formal codes. Tchaikovsky's unswerving use of the modest romance form is more than just evocative; it sets distinct limits on Lensky's emotional scale. Like all the characters in the opera, he remains a denizen of a realistic novel (one of the very earliest to be given operatic treatment), not a historical spectacle or a well-made play.

And so there was more to Turgenev's appreciation of the new Lensky than meets the eye. What Tchaikovsky had created in *Yevgeny Onegin* was the one Russian opera that behaves like Turgenev's own famous and very innovative play, *A Month in the Country*—"lyrical scenes," so to speak, in which nothing seems to happen except on the inside of the characters. It is a thoroughly novelized drama, even as *Yevgeny Onegin* is novelized opera. Just as in Turgenev's novels, the mechanism of *A Month in the Country*, seemingly derived directly from *Eugene Onegin*, concerns the entry into the settled society of a gentry estate of an outsider (Belyayev in Turgenev's play; Onegin in the novel that bears his name) whose disturbance of its routines illuminates its nature.

Even closer in spirit to Tchaikovsky's lyrical scenes, of course, is the oblique and ruminative world of Chekhovian drama. A Tchaikovskian *Three Sisters*—if only he had lived to write it! To imagine it is to appreciate the final triumph of *Yevgeny Onegin* and offer the final refutation to all its distinguished literary detractors. Its best and most revealing context may not be the history of Russian opera after all (where it will always seem a misfit), or even the creative biography of its composer, and surely not the world of "Pushkinism," but rather the history of Russian drama, which it may through Chekhov have unwittingly helped to transform. ♦



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ARTIST PROFILES



Born in Odessa, **ELENA PROKINA** studied at the Leningrad Theater Institute and the Leningrad Conservatory. In 1988, she began to work at the Kirov Opera while finishing her post-graduate courses. At the Conservatory she took part in a number of opera productions and sang Laetitia in *Gianni Schicchi*, Mimì in *La Bohème*, Cherubino, Purcell's Dido and Gluck's Euridice in addition to winning a number of competitions in the U.S.S.R. and abroad. The soprano's roles at the Kirov (where she was a member until 1992) included Emma in *Khovanshchina*, Marguerite in *Faust*, Natasha in *War and Peace*, Iolanta, Desdemona in *Otello*, Paulina in Prokofiev's *The Gambler*, the title role of *La Traviata*, and Tatyana in *Eugene Onegin*. With the Kirov, Miss Prokina traveled extensively on tours to Italy, France, Germany and Great Britain. Highlights from recent seasons include Fevronia in Rimsky-Korsakov's *The Invisible City of Kitezh* at the Bregenz Festival, Lina in *Stiffelio* at the Los Angeles Opera, a debut at the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires as Lisa in *The Queen of Spades*, her first Amelia in *Simon Boccanegra* at the Zurich Opera, *La Bohème* with the Oslo Philharmonic, and a return to the Glyndebourne Festival where she reprised her critically acclaimed portrayal of Tatyana in the Graham Vick production of *Eugene Onegin*. Among her most recent performances are: a new production of *Faust* in Zurich, new stagings of *Eugene Onegin* at the Netherlands Opera and Opera Australia, as well as the title role of *Katya Kabanova* for the Royal Opera at Covent Garden. Upcoming engagements include *Mefistofele* with the Royal Opera, *Traviata* and *Faust* in Zurich, as well as *Simon Boccanegra* at Glyndebourne. In addition to her opera performances, the Russian artist is acclaimed as a recitalist and concert artist, having appeared with, among other conductors, Gennady Rozhdestvensky, Mstislav Rostropovich, Mikhail Pletnev and Rudolf Barshai. Recordings include *War and Peace* from the Kirov (on both audio and video), *Eugene Onegin* from Glyndebourne (video), a disc of songs by Glière, and *Moscow Cheryomushki*, an operetta by Shostakovich, under the baton of Maestro Rozhdestvensky.



NICOLLE FOLAND, who recently completed her second year as an Opera Center Adler Fellow, won international praise for her performance as Musetta in San Francisco Opera's 1996 production of *La Bohème* and was applauded last summer as Kate Pinkerton in the Company's new staging of *Madama Butterfly*. Most recently she scored a major success in the title role of *La Traviata* with the Festival Opera of Walnut Creek. She was named the recipient of a 1997 ARIA Foundation Award, a prestigious prize given annually to only three promising singers selected by silent jury. The young soprano made her Company debut in 1995 as Kate Pinkerton, also performing that season in stagings of *La Cenerentola* (Clorinda), *Die Walküre* (Gerhilde), and *Rusalka* (First Wood Nymph). During San Francisco Opera's 1996-97 season, she was seen in *Carmen* (Frasquita), *Die Fledermaus* (Rosalinda), *Aida* (High Priestess), and the West Coast premiere of *Harvey Milk* (First Arrival, Supervisor Silver). In addition, she appeared as soloist in a special concert with Plácido Domingo and recently made her San Francisco recital debut as part of the Opera Center's 1997 Schwabacher Debut Recital series. A veteran of two Merola Opera Programs and two Western Opera Theater national tours, Miss Foland's Opera Center credits include Adele and Rosalinda in the 1993 production of *Die Fledermaus*; Donna Anna in the 1994 staging of *Don Giovanni*; and Tina in the 1996 Showcase production of Argento's *The Aspern Papers*. Earlier this season the soprano made her Los Angeles Opera debut as Musetta and sang the role of Micaëla in *Carmen* for Cincinnati Opera. Upcoming engagements include Tatyana in *Eugene Onegin* and the Countess in *Le Nozze di Figaro* for the Company, as well as Musetta in Seattle and Bilbao. Miss Foland, a native of Des Moines, received a master of music degree from the University of Northern Iowa.



Mezzo-soprano **MARIANNA TARASOVA**, a member of the Kirov Opera since 1992 (and now a leading soloist), was born in St. Petersburg, Russia, and began her career as a pianist after graduating from the Leningrad Musical College. She later studied singing at the St. Petersburg Conservatory and with Galina Vishnevskaya at the Britten-Pears School in England. After numerous concerts and opera performances while still a student, she made her professional opera debut in *Così fan tutte* with Pittsburgh Opera. She now performs the title role of *Carmen*, Cherubino in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Paulina in *The Queen of Spades*, Marfa in *Khovanshchina*, Amneris in *Aida*, and Olga in *Eugene Onegin*, among other roles. (She made her Metropolitan Opera debut earlier this year singing the role of Olga.) During the recent (1995-96) Kirov tours to Europe, Japan, Great Britain and the U.S., Miss Tarasova added to her repertoire, performing in Berlioz's *La Damnation de Faust* and *Roméo et Juliette*, Rimsky-Korsakov's *The Legend of the Invisible City of Kitezh* and *Sadko*, Prokofiev's *The Gambler*, Mussorgsky's *Songs and Dances of Death*, Verdi's *Requiem*, in addition to a number of solo chamber pieces. Her recent collaboration with Claudio Abbado has led to a recording of works by Mussorgsky and a tour of Japan (both with the Berlin Philharmonic), as well as a number of new projects at festivals in Salzburg and Paris. Miss Tarasova is also an accomplished recitalist, acclaimed particularly for her interpretation of 20th century song. Her repertoire includes rarely performed cycles by Ravel, Milhaud, as well as works by Prokofiev, Shostakovich, Sviridov, Slonimsky and Tishchenko.



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ARTIST PROFILES



Soprano **IRINA RUBTSOVA** has been a soloist with Moscow's Bolshoi Opera since 1993. Her repertoire includes the title roles of *Aida* and *Tosca*, Yaroslavna in *Prince Igor*, Lisa in *The Queen of Spades*, Marcellina in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Zemfira in Rachmaninoff's *Aleko*, Emma in *Khovanshchina*, and Madame Larina in *Eugene Onegin*. Last season's highlights include the title role of *Tosca* at the Bolshoi (in honor of soprano Galina Vishnevskaya), and a concert with mezzo Irina Arkhipova at Moscow's Tchaikovsky Memorial Museum which was dedicated to the composer's anniversary. A native of Moscow, Miss Rubtsova is a graduate of the Tchaikovsky Conservatory where she studied with Miss Arkhipova.



SOFIA AKSEANOVA graduated from Moscow's Tchaikovsky Conservatory where her studies included working with the celebrated Bolshoi Opera mezzo-soprano Irina Arkhipova. The young artist then joined the Yekaterinburg Opera, appearing in *Don Carlo* (Eboli), *The Tsar's Bride* (Lyubasha), *Prince Igor* (Konchakovna), and *Eugene Onegin* (Olga). Miss Akseanova is now a soloist with the Bolshoi Opera, the company she joined in 1992. She has recently added several new roles to her repertoire: Paulina in *The Queen of Spades*, the Innkeeper and Fyodor in *Boris Godunov*, Siebel in *Faust*, Emilia in *Otello*, as well as Amelfa in *The Golden Cockerel*.

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Jim Downey
Robert Dunn
Jack Felton
Robert Landry
Salvador Lopez
Alvin Taylor
Thane Thomas

ARTIST PROFILES



Baritone **ANTHONY MICHAELS-MOORE** studied at Newcastle University, at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, and currently with Neilson Taylor. After his Royal Opera at Covent Garden debut in 1987 as the Watchman in *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, his roles there have included Marcello in *La Bohème*, Scarpia in *Tosca*, Belcore in *L'Elisir d'Amore*, Lescaut in *Manon Lescaut*, Stankar in *Stiffelio*, in addition to the title roles of *Simon Boccanegra* and *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*. He has sung with all the major British companies in parts such as the title roles of *Hamlet* and *Eugene Onegin*, Germont in *La Traviata*, Escamillo in *Carmen*, and Posa in *Don Carlo*. The British artist has also performed at the Vienna Staatsoper (Rossini's Figaro, Belcore, Lescaut); the Opéra Bastille (Onegin, Orest in *Elektra*, Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly*; and Milan's La Scala (the Speaker in *Die Zauberflöte*, *Carmina Burana*). Additional engagements include *Andrea Chénier* (Gérard) in Buenos Aires, *Il Trovatore* (Count di Luna) in Toulouse, *La Bohème* and *Pagliacci* (Silvio) at the Metropolitan Opera, *Don Carlo* in Pittsburgh, and *Eugene Onegin* at the Deutsche Oper Berlin. The baritone's current and future plans include *La Traviata* and *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Enrico) at the Met, *Linda di Chamounix* (Antonio) at La Scala, in addition to the title role of *Rigoletto* in Pittsburgh and Brussels. Michaels-Moore, already with an impressive discography (his most recent release is *Lucia di Lammermoor* led by Charles Mackerras), will soon be in the studio to record *Falstaff* (Ford) and *Aroldo* (Egberto).



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*, Morales 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, Schaubard 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.



Tenor **RAYMOND VERY** created the role of Dan White in the world premiere of *Harvey Milk* with Houston Grand Opera, reprising the part for New York City Opera in 1995 and for his San Francisco Opera debut during the 1996-97 season. A finalist in the Jussi Bjoerling Tenor Competition, he made his European debut as the Duke of Mantua in a new staging of *Rigoletto* with Oslo's Norwegian National Opera. With Houston Grand Opera, he has also performed the roles of Tamino in *Die Zauberflöte*, Alfredo in *La Traviata*, and appeared in productions of *Turandot*, *Lucia di Lammermoor* and *Elektra*. Additional engagements include Count Elemer in *Arabella* and Alfredo in Santa Fe, Fenton in *Falstaff*, Karl Franz in *The Student Prince* and Alfredo with Washington Summer Opera, Rodolfo in *La Bohème* with New York City Opera, Tulsa Opera and Opera Omaha, as well as the Male Chorus in Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia* at Opera Theatre of St. Louis. Among his future plans are a debut with the San Francisco Symphony in the *Messiah*, Matteo in *Arabella* with Houston Grand Opera, and a return to Santa Fe Opera as Narraboth in *Salome* and Tamino. He has performed in concert with, among others, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Houston Symphony and Pittsburgh Symphony. A native of Pittsburgh, Very is the recipient of a 1996 Richard Tucker Career Grant and a 1994 Richard F. Gold Career Grant from the Shoshana Foundation.

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ARTIST PROFILES



Ukrainian tenor **VALERY SERKIN** was initially trained at the State Music Academy in Moscow. He later studied drama and music at Moscow's Stanislavsky Theater where he appeared in leading roles such as Lensky in *Eugene Onegin*, Count Almaviva in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, and the Young Gypsy in Rachmaninoff's *Aleko*. In 1993, the young artist made his debut at Italy's Spoleto Festival as Dorvil in Rossini's *La Scala di Seta*, subsequently appearing at the Vienna Kammeroper where he sang Lensky and the title role of Lehár's operetta *Der Zarewitsch*. Engagements soon followed with the Vienna Chamber Opera (Filipeto in Wolf-Ferrari's *I Quattro Rusteghi*), at the Wexford Festival (Prince Sinodal in Rubinstein's *The Demon*, issued on CD), as well as in Lausanne and at the Accademia di Santa Cecilia in Rome (Mozart in Rimsky-Korsakov's *Mozart and Salieri*). Serkin's schedule during the 1996-97 season has included the title role of *Werther* in Lausanne and at the Vienna Kammeroper; Chausson's *Le Roi Arthur* at the Bregenz Festival; *Eugene Onegin* for Palm Beach Opera; Rossini's *Stabat Mater* in Hamburg; Stravinsky's *Mavra* in Amsterdam, and Tamino in *Die Zauberflöte* for Vienna's Mozart Festival.



Illinois-born bass **ERIC HALFVARSON** sings regularly with the world's most prestigious opera companies and symphony orchestras. His interpretations of such varied roles as Baron Ochs in *Der Rosenkavalier*, Hagen in *Götterdämmerung*, Claggart in *Billy Budd*, Sarastro in *Die Zauberflöte*, King Philip and the Grand Inquisitor in *Don Carlo*, Heinrich in *Lohengrin*, Hundung in *Die Walküre* and Méphistophélès in *Faust* have been seen with such companies as the Metropolitan Opera, the Bastille in Paris, the Bayreuth Festival, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Canadian Opera Company, La Fenice in Venice, Bavarian State Opera in Munich, and at the opera houses of Dallas, Houston, Santa Fe, Washington, D.C. and San Francisco. Since his Company debut during the 1981 Summer Festival in *Die Meistersinger* and *Rigoletto*, he has appeared here in over 10 productions, including *Der Rosenkavalier* (Baron Ochs) during the 1993 Celebration of Strauss Festival and *Der Fliegende Holländer* (Daland) earlier this season. He has performed with the symphony orchestras of San Francisco, Chicago, St. Louis, Houston, Boston, Minnesota, the Hallé Orchestra, and at Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, among others. Halfvarson can be seen and heard on the newly released video and CD of *Don Carlos*. His other recordings are of Shostakovich's *Rayok*, Barber's *Antony and Cleopatra*, and the forthcoming *Billy Budd*. Among his future plans are return engagements to the Metropolitan Opera, Bayreuth Festival, and Lyric Opera of Chicago, as well as debuts with the Vienna State Opera and at the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires.

ARTIST PROFILES



Following his 1989 San Francisco Opera debut as Dr. Caius in *Falstaff*, **MICHEL SÉNÉCHAL** has appeared with the Company as Monsieur Taupe in *Capriccio* (1990, '93); Don Basilio in *Le Nozze di Figaro* (1991); the Abbé in *Andrea Chénier* as well as in several roles in *Christophe Colomb* (1992); Valzacchi in *Der Rosenkavalier* and Hortensius in *La Fille du Régiment* (1993); the Gamekeeper in *Rusalka* and Goro in *Madama Butterfly* (1995); in addition to Andrès, Cochenille, Piti-chinaccio and Frantz in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* (1996). Celebrating over 40 years of professional operatic activity, the venerable French tenor made his debut at the Monnaie in Brussels in 1950. He has since performed at the major opera houses of the world and has been a regular guest artist at the Paris Opera and at the Opéra-Comique since 1958. He has sung at all of the major festivals, including those at Aix-en-Provence, Salzburg, and Glyndebourne. He has been a regular guest artist at the Metropolitan Opera since 1982 (Incredible in *Andrea Chénier* last season), and has been one of the few French tenors to have sung principal Mozart roles at the Vienna State Opera. A prolific recording artist, Sénéchal's discography includes *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* (Spalanzani) and *Dialogues des Carmélites* led by Kent Nagano, Massenet's *Chérubin*, as well as Ravel's *L'Heure Espagnole* and *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges*, Rameau's *Platée*, Berlioz's *L'Enfance du Christ*, and an anthology of songs by Francis Poulenc. Formerly Director of the School of Lyric Art at the Paris Opera, he recently began teaching a series of master classes at Columbia University and Mannes College of Music in New York. His numerous awards include the coveted one of Officer of the Legion of Honor.



In his second year as an Adler Fellow, **JOHN RELYEA** recently received critical acclaim for his performance as part of S.F. Opera Center's Schwabacher Debut Recital series. He made his 1996 San Francisco Opera debut as Colline in *La Bohème* and went on to sing roles in *Hamlet*, *Lohengrin*, *Harvey Milk*, *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, and *Salome* during the Company's 1996-97 season. He also appeared as Barelli in Opera Center's Showcase '96 production of *The Aspern Papers* and returned to the '97 Showcase series to portray Varo in Handel's *Ezio*. The artist made his 1991 operatic debut in *Die Zauberflöte* with Opera Atelier of Toronto (the bass-baritone's native city), and subsequently appeared as the Police Sergeant in *The Pirates of Penzance* with Vancouver Opera. He recently received his bachelor of music degree from Philadelphia's Curtis Institute of Music where he performed roles in *Die Fledermaus*, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, and *L'Incoronazione di Poppea*. At the age of 25, he has already been a featured soloist with many of Canada's major symphony orchestras including the Toronto Symphony, Orchestre Symphonique de Québec, National Arts Centre Orchestra in Ottawa, and the Calgary Philharmonic. As a member of the 1995 Merola Opera Program, Relyea portrayed Dr. Bartolo in *Le Nozze di Figaro* (the role he also sang on Western Opera Theater's national tour) and was the recipient of the prestigious Schwabacher Family Award at the Grand Finals Concert. He most recently sang the role of Zuniga in a concert performance of *Carmen* with the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra led by John Mauceri. Next year, Relyea will sing the title role of Mendelssohn's *Elijah* with the San Francisco Symphony under Roger Norrington, and will appear as Colline at Vancouver Opera.



YURI TEMIRKANOV, currently music director and principal conductor of the St. Petersburg (formerly Leningrad) Philharmonic Orchestra, was recently named music director of the Baltimore Symphony, effective in 1999. Prior to his St. Petersburg position, he was artistic director and chief conductor of the Kirov Opera. He has appeared with all of the leading European orchestras including the Berlin Philharmonic, Vienna Philharmonic, Dresden Staatskapelle, Orchestre de Paris and the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra. In 1977 he made his London debut with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and during the 1979-80 season he became their principal guest conductor. After 11 years in that position, he succeeded André Previn as principal conductor in 1992. Maestro Temirkanov is a regular visitor to the United States where each season he conducts the major orchestras of San Francisco, New York, Philadelphia, Boston and Los Angeles, among others. His numerous recordings include the complete Stravinsky ballets with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and works by Shostakovich, Tchaikovsky, Prokofiev and Rachmaninov with the St. Petersburg Philharmonic. One of his recent recordings with the St. Petersburg orchestra is Prokofiev's *Alexander Nevsky* as the soundtrack to Eisenstein's film of the same name. The Kirov Opera's production of *The Queen of Spades*, which was conceived and staged by Temirkanov, is available on video. During the current season the maestro leads the Danish National Radio Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre National de France, Santa Cecilia in Rome, the orchestras of New York, Philadelphia, Chicago and San Francisco, and undertakes international tours with the St. Petersburg Philharmonic and Royal Philharmonic Orchestras, as well as many recording projects. These performances of *Eugene Onegin* represent the maestro's U.S. opera debut.

ARTIST PROFILES



Designer **IGOR IVANOV**, a native of St. Petersburg, Russia, studied at the Repin Institute and began his career at several Lithuanian theaters. In 1970, he was invited to become a principal designer of the Leningrad Theater of Comedy, and subsequently created several designs for the Komissaryevskoi Drama Theater. In 1982, he was appointed a principal designer for St. Petersburg's Mariinsky Theater, where he designed for both the Kirov Opera and the Kirov Ballet. His creations include sets and costumes for *The Queen of Spades*, *Eugene Onegin*, *Boris Godunov*, *Don Pasquale*, *Swan Lake* and *Giselle*. Ivanov continued to design at the Mariinsky Theater until the late 1980s, after which he devoted his talents to the art of pure painting. He was awarded the State Prize and the title of Honored Artist of the USSR.



Choreographer/dancer **LAWRENCE PECH** was recently appointed San Francisco Opera's Ballet Master. A long-time favorite of dance critics nationwide, he received his formal training from American Ballet Theatre and was subsequently invited by Mikhail Baryshnikov to join the company in 1980. During his seven-year association with ABT, Pech worked with such choreographers as George Balanchine, Martha Graham, Antony Tudor, Agnes de Mille, Jerome Robbins, Twyla Tharp and others; and danced with such luminaries as Baryshnikov, Natalia Makarova, Ivan Nagy, Cynthia Gregory, Fernando Bujones and many more. In 1986, Pech left American Ballet Theatre to join San Francisco Ballet, where he was promoted to principal dancer in 1989. Two years later, he was the subject of a KQED special entitled *Blue Lair*, a ballet about his battle with cancer which received an Emmy Award for Best Choreography. He co-founded Diablo Ballet in 1993, also serving as the artistic director of the Diablo Valley's first year-round professional ballet company. The artist soon established his own company, the Lawrence Pech Dance Company, which has received praise from critics and audiences since its inception. In addition to his high-profile dance and choreography credits, Pech has taught at St. Mary's College, Pacific Ballet Academy, Marin Ballet, Marin Dance Theater, California Academy of the Performing Arts and Brady Street Dance Center. He is also an accomplished composer, having created compositions for chamber ensemble, piano solo, and a 16-voice *a cappella* group.



Lighting Director for San Francisco Opera since 1976, **THOMAS J. MUNN** has created the lighting and special effects for more than 160 productions for the Company. During our 1996-97 season he designed the lighting for *La Bohème* at the Orpheum Theatre, as well as *Prince Igor*, *Lohengrin*, *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, *Die Fledermaus*, and *Aida* at the Civic Auditorium. As scenic adviser, he has designed scenery for SFO productions of *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, *Roberto Devereux*, *Pelléas et Mélisande* (1979), *Billy Budd*, *Nabucco*, *Don Giovanni*, and *Christophe Colomb*. In addition to his work for the San Francisco Opera, Munn has designed scenery and lighting for Broadway, Off-Broadway, regional theater, ballet, industrials, and films. His television and video credits include San Francisco Opera productions of *La Gioconda*, *Samson et Dalila*, *Aida*, *L'Africaine*, *La Bohème*, *Orlando Furioso*, *Mefistofele*, *Capriccio*, *Turandot*, and *The Dangerous Liaisons*. Credits for other companies include work for the Dallas Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Washington Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Netherlands Opera, and Hartford Ballet. Recent credits include lighting for Dallas Opera's productions of *Elektra* and *La Cenerentola*, scenery and lighting for Ballet Arizona's staging of *Coppélia*, as well as art direction and lighting for the video "The Universe Story." He is the consultant/designer of the War Memorial's newly renovated and computerized lighting system.

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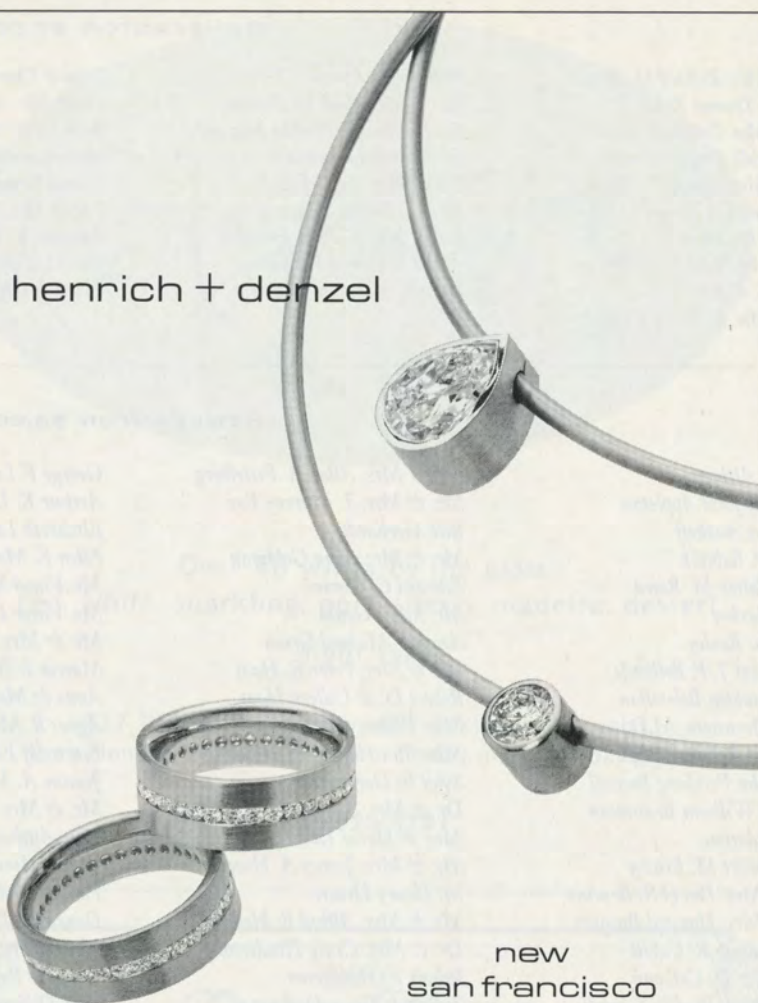
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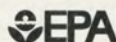
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For more information, contact James K. Sokol, Assistant Director of Corporate & Foundation Relations, at (415) 565-3275.

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OPERA

SERVICES

FOOD SERVICE. The Opera House lower lounge is open one and one-half hours prior to curtain time for hot buffet service. Patrons arriving before the front doors open will be admitted at the carriage entrance. Refreshments are served in the box, grand tier, dress circle, and balcony circle levels.

DIGITAL WATCHES, PAGERS, CELL PHONES. Please switch them OFF before the performance begins.

For **LOST AND FOUND** information, inquire at the cloakroom at the south end of the main lobby or call (415) 621-6600, 8:30 to 11:30 a.m., Monday through Friday.

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

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

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

TAXI SERVICE. Patrons needing a cab at the end of the performance should reserve one with the doorman at the taxi entrance on Grove Street before the end of the last intermission.

OPERA GLASSES are available in the cloakroom at the north end of the main lobby.

For the safety and comfort of our audience, all large parcels, backpacks, luggage, etc., must be checked at the Opera House cloakroom (south end of main lobby). No cameras or tape recorders are permitted in the Opera House. Children of any age attending a performance must have a ticket.

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

PERFORMING ARTS CENTER TOURS

Tours of the San Francisco Performing Arts Center include the War Memorial Opera House, Davies Symphony Hall, and Herbst Theatre and take place as follows: Mondays, on the hour between 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. Special tours of Davies Hall only may be scheduled on Wednesdays and Saturdays by request. All tours leave from the Grove Street entrance of Davies Symphony Hall. There are no tours on holidays. General Admission \$5; seniors/students \$3. Information: (415) 552-8338

OPERA HOUSE TOURS Sponsored by the San Francisco Opera Guild, house and backstage tours of the War Memorial Opera House will be conducted every half hour from 10 a.m. to 12 noon on weekdays and Saturdays; from 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Sundays on the following dates:

Wednesday, November 12
Saturday, November 15
Tuesday, November 18
Thursday, November 20
Saturday, November 22
Friday, November 28
Sunday, November 30
Tuesday, December 2
Thursday, December 4
Monday, December 8

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

ACCESS FOR DISABLED PATRONS

Wheelchair seating positions are located in the orchestra, mezzanine, and dress circle levels. Aisle seats with swing-up armrests are located in the orchestra, dress circle, balcony circle, and balcony levels. Contact the S.F. Opera Ticket and Patron Services Center (415) 864-3330—for more information.

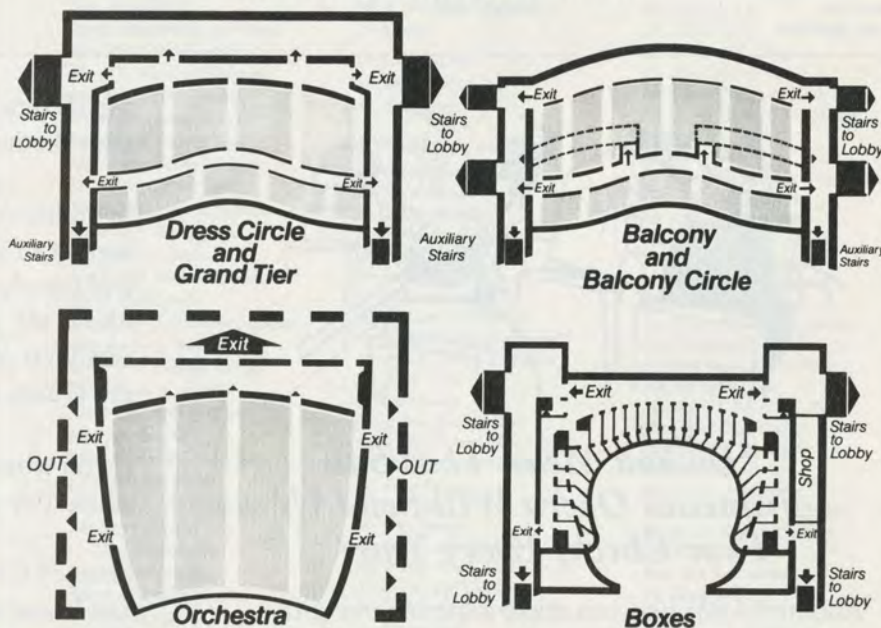
Accessible restrooms are located on all floors except the orchestra (1st floor) and balcony (5th floor) levels.

Accessible public telephones are located on the orchestra, mezzanine, grand tier (2nd floor), and dress circle (3rd floor) levels. Public telephone with "TDD" is located on the orchestra level in the northeast corner of the lobby.

Accessible drinking fountains are located on all floors except the balcony level.

The Opera House is equipped with a Sennheiser Infrared Listening System. Patrons may obtain wireless headphones or induction devices in the cloakroom at the north end of the main lobby.

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



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