

Guillaume Tell
(William Tell)

1997-1998

Sunday, November 2, 1997 1:00 PM
Friday, November 7, 1997 7:00 PM
Wednesday, November 12, 1997 7:00 PM
Saturday, November 15, 1997 7:00 PM
Tuesday, November 18, 1997 7:00 PM
Friday, November 21, 1997 7:00 PM
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75TH SEASON, 1997-98

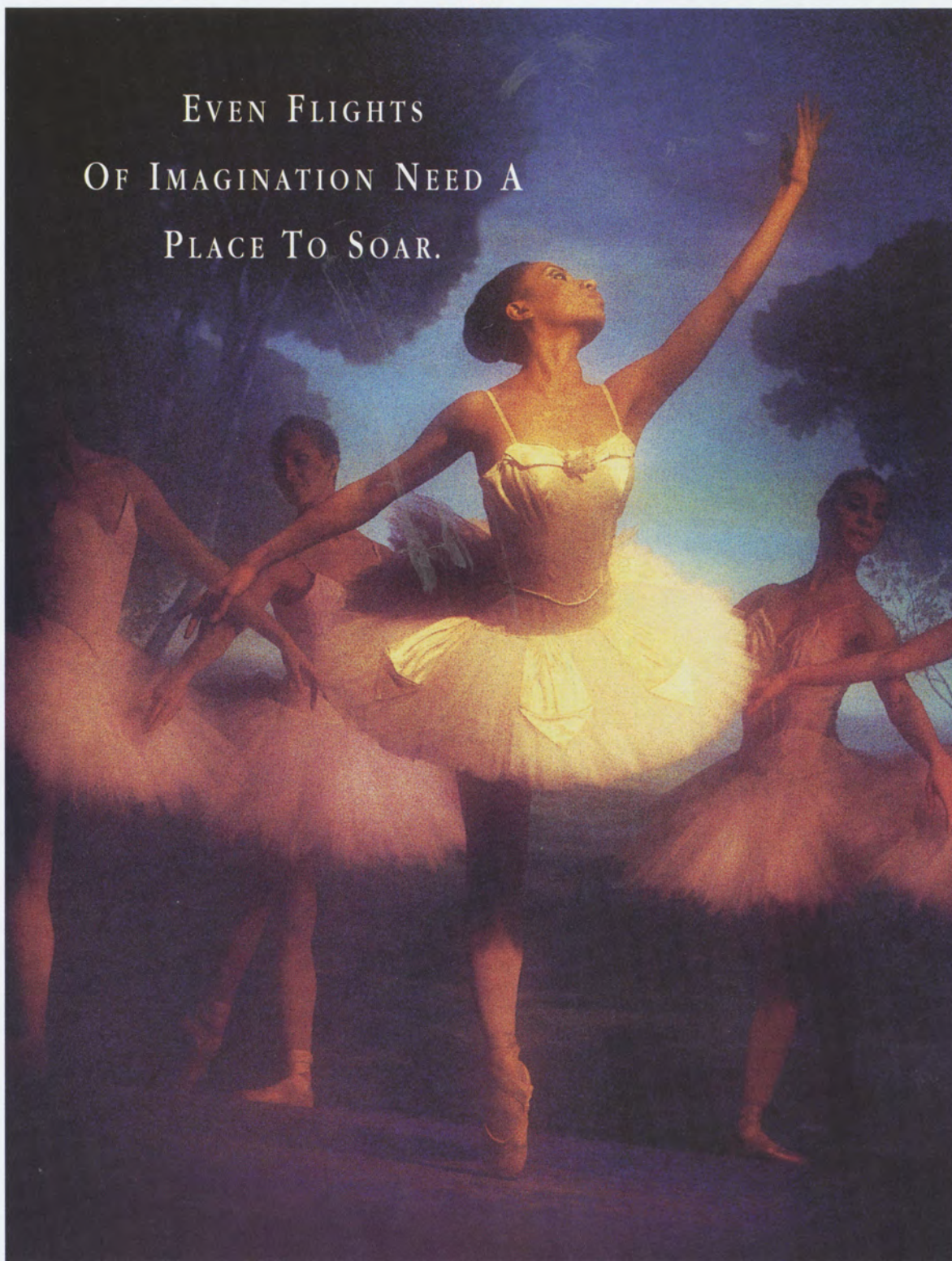
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A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND PRESIDENT, SAN FRANCISCO OPERA ASSOCIATION



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



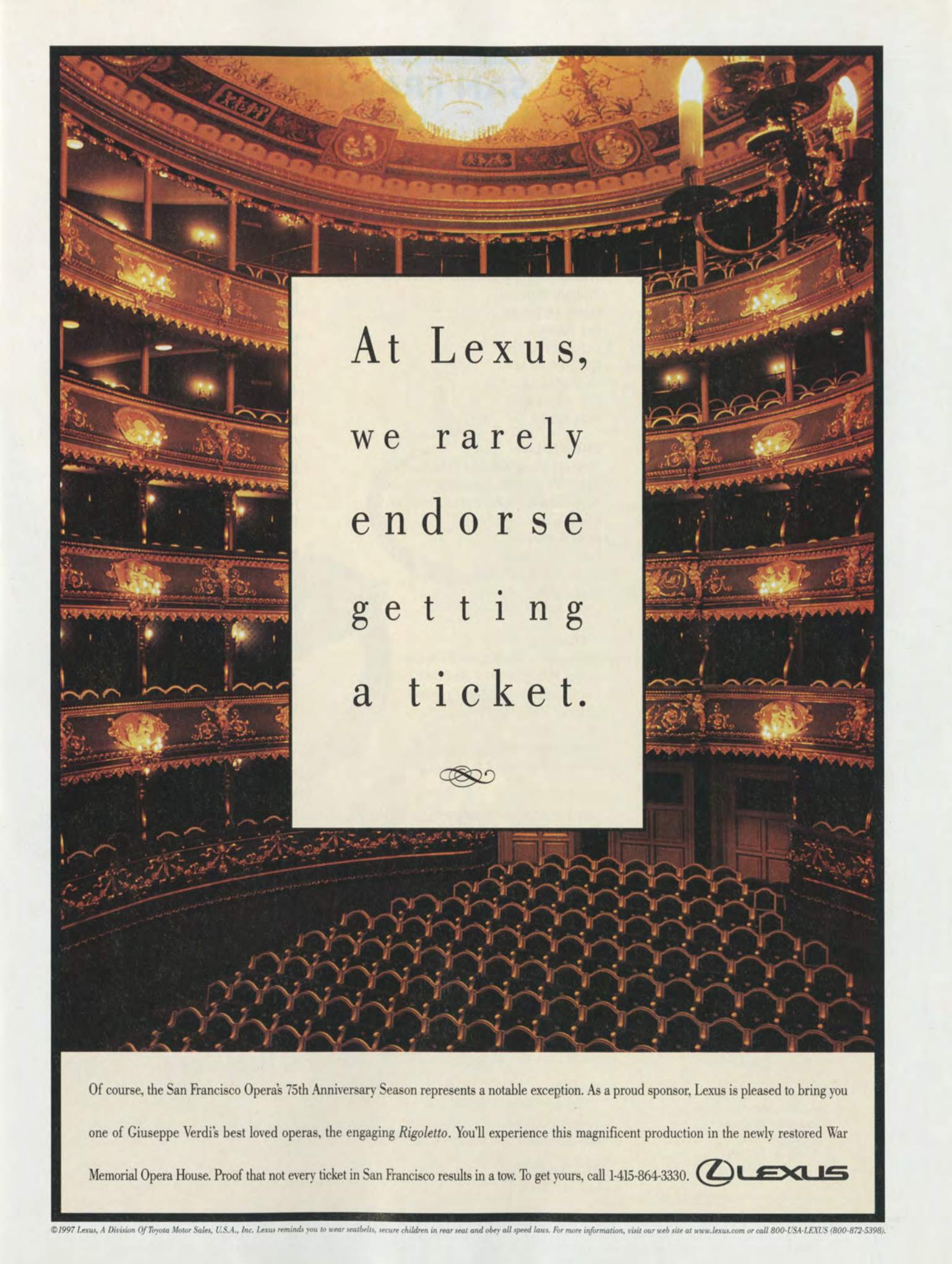
The *femme fatale* has been celebrated in opera for hundreds of years, and our *Femmes Fatales* Festival offers you a brilliant sampler of great opera. From the exquisite, 17th-century baroque lyricism of Monteverdi's *L'Incoronazione di Poppea*, to the beloved romanticism of Bizet's *Carmen* and the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

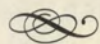
As for singers, we'll encounter a superb group of international artists, with some in exciting debuts: Frederica von Stade performing her first Countess Geschwitz in *Lulu*; countertenor David Daniels, mezzo Lorraine Hunt and tenor Barry Banks taking Company bows in *L'Incoronazione di Poppea*; and soprano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

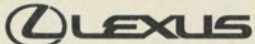
The power of the *femme fatale* is a force to behold—enjoy the excitement!

LOTFI MANSOURI
GENERAL DIRECTOR

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 seats. The lighting is warm and dramatic, highlighting the architectural details.

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SAN FRANCISCO OPERA MAGAZINE

Guillaume Tell

75th Season, 1997-98

Vol. 75, No. 8

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10 A Heroic Masterpiece by Julian Budden

The author provides an overview of the composition and performance of Rossini's Swiss opus, along with thoughts on its dramatic and historical sides.

32 Leontyne Price at 40 by Martin Bernheimer

Exactly forty years ago, a legend-to-be was heard for the first time on the San Francisco Opera stage. What happened later is history, as well as the subject of this tribute.

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Ford Madox Brown (English, 1821-93)
William Tell's Son

Oil on canvas; 16 x 14½ in.

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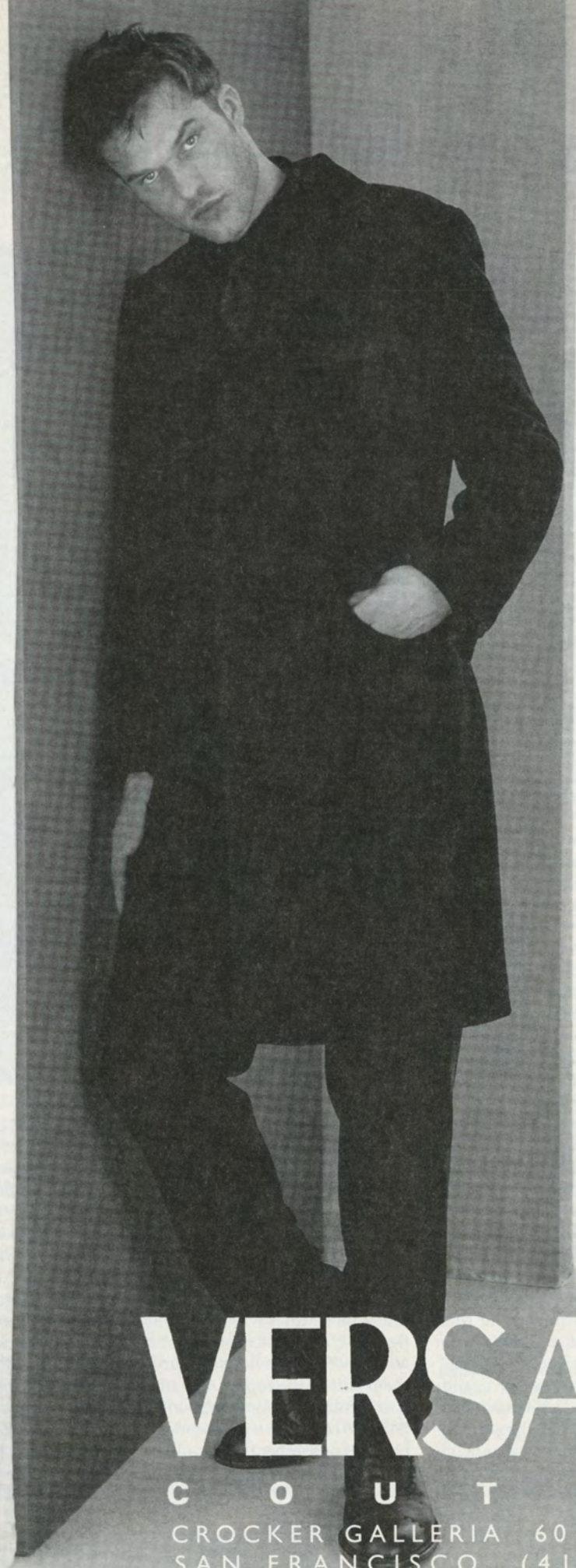
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A HEROIC MASTERPIECE

By JULIAN BUDDEN

Did William Tell really exist? Or is he just a figure of legend like King Arthur and Robin Hood? History, alas, provides no answer. But the circumstances in which his story is placed were real enough. A Latin parchment of 1291 testifies to the famous "Oath of Rütli," in which three Swiss cantons bound themselves to protect their common liberties against foreign domination. Over the years that followed the agreement was extended to cover the entire country. Into this movement the historian Aegidius Tschudi, writing in 1570, wove the century-old legend of William Tell, giving the date 1307 for the shooting of the apple. Tschudi was the source for Friedrich Schiller's dramatic treatment of the subject—by no means the first, since during the eighteenth century, Tell had become a symbol of the perennial freedom fighter, and hence the protagonist of Grétry's last opéra comique, composed for post-Revolutionary Paris in 1791. That he had no proven basis in historical fact would not have bothered the German playwright. Though professor of history at the University of Jena, Schiller the dramatist showed scant regard for what had actually happened in the past. His Joan of Arc dies on the battlefield, not at the stake; his Mary Stuart engages in a furious quarrel with her cousin, Elizabeth I, though in reality the two never met; his Don Carlos, falsely credited with a passion for his stepmother, falls victim to the Inquisition, whereas in fact he died while under house arrest, probably from what we would nowadays call "bulimia." The author would doubtless have subscribed to a saying of the English novelist Frederick Raphael: "Truth may be stranger than fiction; but fiction is truer." It was Schil-



ler's drama that would form the basis of Rossini's heroic masterpiece.

When he took up residence in Paris in 1824, having sealed his Italian career with *Semiramide* the previous year, Rossini was already an international celebrity; a contract with the Paris Opéra was offered to him as a matter of course, and it was duly signed. The Académie Royale de Musique (to give it its official title) was Europe's most prestigious lyric theater, home to the *tragédies lyriques* of the previous century (several of them still in the repertoire) and the recent spectacular creations of Spontini. An invitation to compose a new work for it was the highest compliment that could be bestowed

upon a foreigner. Rossini, however, took his time before fulfilling his obligations to the letter. Setting a pattern to be followed later by Donizetti and Verdi, he began with a French adaptation of two operas previously written for Italy. For the Parisian theatergoer the great issue of the day was the Greek War of Independence, which had broken out in 1821. No matter that the French government had a treaty with the Ottoman Empire, to which the land of ancient glory was now subject. The death during the campaign of that archetype of Romantic Man, Lord Byron, who had joined the rebel army, would fuel public sympathy with the Greek cause and, by analogy, that of the oppressed peoples the world over. In transforming *Maometto II* (1820) into *Le Siège de Corinthe* (1826) Rossini not only expanded the choral element in accordance with the theater's traditions; he added a stirring movement in which the priest Hiéros (an early incarnation of Verdi's Zaccaria) pronounces a blessing on the Greek troops to a melody taken up with enthusiasm by his hearers. In *Moïse et Pharaon* (1827), adapted

from *Mosè in Egitto* (1819), he continued further in the direction of his successor's *Nabucco*, elevating the chorus to a leading participant in the action. So far, so successful. Yet, Rossini was still not quite ready for the supreme task ahead of him.

In 1828, the year which saw the triumph of Auber's *La Muette de Portici*, dealing with the revolt of Naples against its Spanish rulers, he came up with the lightly salacious comedy, *Le Comte Ory*, to a libretto by Eugène Scribe, soon to be the presiding deity of Parisian theater. But if the plot was new, much of the music was recycled from Rossini's own *Il Viaggio a Reims*, composed for the Théâtre des Italiens to celebrate the coro-

Julian Budden, internationally renowned musicologist, is the author of a landmark three-volume series, The Operas of Verdi.

nation of Charles X in 1825. In the meantime, Scribe had offered him two subjects for the Opéra: *Gustave III*, later set by Auber in 1833—(see also Mercadante's *Il Reggente* (1843) and Verdi's *Un Ballo in Maschera* (1859)—and *La Juive*, which in 1835 would furnish Halévy with the one enduring success of his career. For Rossini had turned them both down in favor of *Guillaume Tell*, proposed by Victor Étienne (pseud. de Jouy), official poet of the Opéra and author of Spontini's *La Vestale* and *Fernand Cortez*.

What led him to this choice? He was certainly not committed to the cause of popular insurrection; indeed, in later years he would profess a horror of "the spirit of the barricades." Surely the attraction lay in the theme of paternity that looms large in Schiller's play, and not only in the relationship of Tell to his son. It is the blinding of his father (in the opera it will be his murder) by one of Gessler's subordinates that motivates the hot-headed behavior of Arnold von Melthal. Among Italians, family feeling runs particularly high, and Rossini was no exception to the rule. "The sentiment that moved me most during my life," he told Wagner in 1861, "was the love that I bore my father and mother, and which they repaid with interest."

Nor was that all. In *La Donna del Lago* (Naples, 1819) Rossini had shown an ability to evoke in music—if intermittently—Walter Scott's "land of the mountain and the flood." Schiller's last drama keeps the grandeur of the Swiss landscape constantly before our eyes. Rossini would one day describe himself as "the last of the Classicists." His newly discovered gift for the pictorial, which *Guillaume Tell* allowed him to exploit to the fullest, was his nearest approach to the Romantic spirit of the age.

But it was not all plain sailing. De Jouy's text proved cumbersome and long-winded, and required the help of the younger poet Hippolyte Bis to trim it into a workable shape. Even so, Rossini was not satisfied. Further assistance was obtained from Armand Marrast, secretary to the banker Aguardo, who was Rossini's host at the time. As in all operatic adaptations of spoken plays, especially Schiller's, the tally of characters is drastically reduced, and certain roles are amalgamated. In the play, Tell is a simple farmer with no claim to leadership, whom force of circumstances turns into a hero. He takes no part in the "Rütli Oath." In the opera, he heads his canton from the start,

taking the place of Schiller's Stauffacher, prime mover in the plan to restore the country's freedom. The tenor lead, Arnold, likewise combines two characters: Melthal's son and the young nobleman Ulrich von Rudenz, lover of the wealthy heiress Berthe von Bruneck (here converted into Gessler's sister, Mathilde). This conflation, suggested, some say, by Rossini himself, results in one of the most powerful turning points of the opera. At first lukewarm in his country's cause, the news of his father's death plunges Arnold into an agony of remorse that finds moving expression in the slow movement of the trio, "Quand l'Helvétie est un champ de supplice." Beautiful as is the love duet that comes before, this piece surpasses it in intensity and feeling. The son has taken precedence over the lover. In both play and opera, Gessler meets the death he deserves. Schiller has him murdered offstage by a vengeful kinsman, Duke John of Austria, who seeks protection from Tell, only to be sternly told by him to go to Rome and implore the Pope for absolution. For the opera, this is a needless complication, so in Rossini's scheme the tyrant is dispatched by Tell himself with the arrow he had kept specially for that purpose.

The premiere took place on August 3, 1829, with Henri-Bernard Dabadie in the title role, Adolphe Nourrit as Arnold, Rossini's pupil Laure Cinti-Damoreau as Mathilde, and the great bass Nicholas Levasseur in the minor part of Walter Fürst. It was greeted with respect, if not rapture. The main problem was its length, the four acts exceeding the length of the five of Auber's *La Muette de Portici*. Cuts were therefore imposed for later performances, some of them observed to this day. The most ruthless of them—made apparently with no ob-



jection from Rossini—was the suppression of the final stretta of Act III and its replacement by a chorus based on the last movement of the overture, then as now the score's chief "hit." As with the Soldiers' Chorus from Gounod's *Faust*, tap out the rhythm with your fingers and the music immediately comes to mind. Strangely, both numbers were originally intended for other contexts: Gounod's for an unwritten *Ivan le Terrible*, Rossini's as "two-step" for military band composed during his stay in Vienna in 1822. The other piece which proved popular from the start was the "Tyrolean Chorus" in Act III. As recently as the 1960s the Scottish pop singer Andy Stewart adopted it as his signature tune (to different words, of course!). But even if Rossini had been alive at the time, he would have been unable to claim copyright, for the melody is in fact a folksong!

Opposite page: Dupré lithograph of Gioachino Rossini made in 1829, the year of the premiere of *Guillaume Tell*.

Above: Woodcut made in 1553 by Henry Petri for Sebastian Münster's *Cosmographia* shows one of the early representations of the central event in the William Tell story.



repeated year in and year out. Rossini's fellow-composers, however, were in no doubt as to its worth. Gounod declared it a dramatic masterpiece. Even Berlioz, who for years had detested the Italian master and all he stood for, was won around. "Rossini," he wrote in 1834, "tired of hearing constant criticisms of his works with regard to dramatic expression, and still more tired, perhaps, of the blind admiration of his fanatical partisans, has found a very simple means of silencing the one and ridding himself of the other—that is to write a score that is seriously thought out, reflected upon at leisure and conscientiously realized according to the everlasting rules of good sense and taste. He has written *Guillaume Tell*." Italian composers were no less impressed, even though mostly

satisfaction." Indeed, Act II, from Mathilde's beautifully poised "Sombre forêt" to the swearing of the oath, is among the finest in the operatic repertoire. So why has the opera been so slow to make its way? Partly, no doubt, because of its long, drawn-out action—for de Jouy lacked that flair for gauging the most suitable pace for a drama in whatever genre, from vaudeville to grand opera, that kept the output of Eugène Scribe alive throughout the century. Then, too, there was its situation in operatic history. Since Verdi's time there has been a tendency to view *Guillaume Tell* as a "Risorgimento" opera *manqué*. Certainly there is much in it that anticipates pages of *Ernani* and *Attila* and even reaches as far as *Rigoletto* (another drama of paternity). Compared to Verdi, however, it seems almost sedate. The classical element in Rossini was seen as an unfortunate throw-back to an earlier age.

A further stumbling block has been the role of Arnold. The 1830s saw a revolution in tenor technique brought about largely by Duprez. Previously, no tenor had been expected to proceed beyond A above the stave using full chest resonance. From there upward he would move through "mixed voice" to falsetto. The Romantic tenor, on the other hand, aiming at a more natural expression, carried chest resonance up to C, if for special effects only. Otherwise he would remain within a compass bounded by B flat. For a while, falsetto singing survived, but only as a "stunt." By the latter half of the century it had become obsolete. The "veristic" tenors of the 1890s and beyond, required to tear passion to tatters, had even less use for it. Arnold, however, with or without the "Ut de poitrine" in Act IV, is conceived

(continued on page 41)

Having received the "légion d'honneur" from Charles X, to whom the opera is dedicated, Rossini left for Bologna to enjoy the comforts of a splendid villa built from the proceeds of his earlier works. In the meantime, the revolution of 1830 had brought about a change of government in France, and he was obliged to return to the capital to fight in the law courts for the annuity promised to him by the previous regime. He arrived and found that the cuts in *Guillaume Tell* had proceeded apace, single acts being given as curtain-raisers to other operas. "I hope you will have no reason to complain of me," the intendant of the Opéra remarked to him one day; "we are giving Act II of *Guillaume Tell*." "What, all of it?" was Rossini's sarcastic reply. In 1837 the opera's fortunes took a turn for the better when Gilbert Duprez appeared in the role of Arnold, in whose Act IV cabaletta he displayed his famous "Ut de poitrine" (high C from the chest) with electrifying effect on the public, though Rossini himself disapproved of it. Yet not even the advocacy of a star tenor could secure the opera's entry into that charmed circle of favorites such as Auber's *La Muette*, Halévy's *La Juive* and the sensational works of Meyerbeer, which were

destined to hear the opera in distortions imposed by the censorship of the time—*Guglielmo Vallace* (Milan), *Rodolfo di Sterlinga* (Rome, Bologna), Scotland being regarded as a safe venue for subjects thought to be politically dangerous. Of a three-act version Donizetti remarked to a journalist, "The first and last acts were written by Rossini; the second by God!" The young Bizet was of the same opinion. In 1858, he wrote to a friend, "When I hear the second act of *Guillaume Tell*, I am completely happy. I experience a sense of perfect well-being and



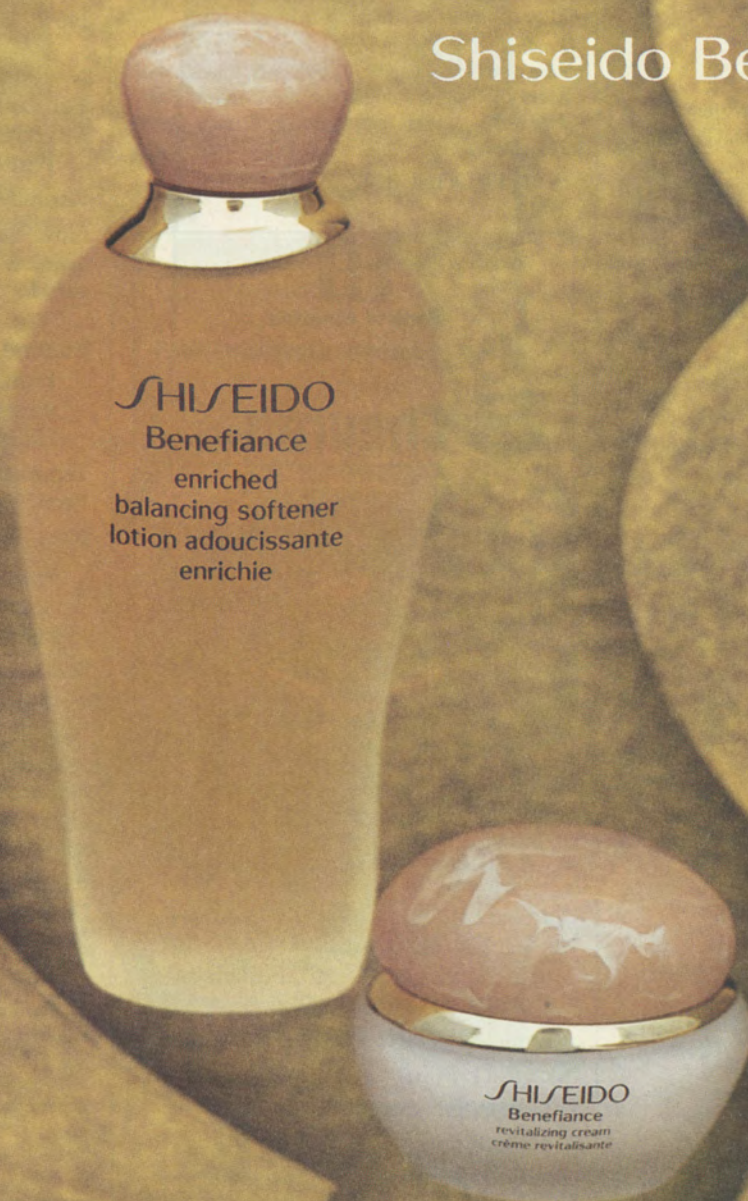
Above: Gilbert-Louis Duprez as *Guillaume Tell*'s Arnold at the Paris Opéra in 1837.

Right: Shooting of the apple as represented in an anonymous 19th-century lithograph.

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Guillaume Tell

Rossini

Racette, Keen; Lafont, Merritt, Lloyd,
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Nov. 2, 7, 12, 15, 18, 21, 24

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

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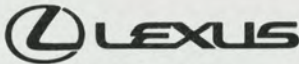
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<i>Jemmy</i>	Marie Devellereau*
<i>Hedwige</i>	Catherine Keen
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<i>Rodolphe</i>	Stuart Skelton†
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ACT I At Bürglen on Lake Lucerne in the canton of Uri

INTERMISSION

ACT II The heights of Rütli

INTERMISSION

ACT III
Scene 1 A ruined chapel near Gessler's palace
Scene 2 The main square at Altdorf
Scene 3 At the burned remains of Melcthal's house
Scene 4 On the edge of the lake

*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 four and one-half hours.

SYNOPSIS

Guillaume Tell

The opera is set in Switzerland in the fourteenth century, near Altdorf, a town in the canton of Uri. For the last one hundred years the Swiss cantons have enjoyed the benign protection of the Holy Roman Empire, but recent political changes have led to a more repressive regime administered by Austria. The three forest cantons of Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden lead the resistance.

ACT I A wedding celebration is being prepared and Ruodi, a fisherman, sings a love song. Guillaume (William) Tell, though, can only lament the loss of Switzerland's liberty. Among other measures, the Austrians have recently forbidden the observance of ancient Swiss customs, but, in spite of this, the revered elder Melcthal arrives to officiate at a traditional triple wedding ceremony. His son, Arnold, who has already seen service under the imperial banner, is in love with Mathilde, an Austrian princess. When Tell attempts to win Arnold over to the cause of Swiss independence, Arnold can only pretend support, realizing that otherwise he would lose all hope of being with Mathilde. He finds a suitable moment to slip away to seek her in the forest, where she is out hunting with the Austrians. Melcthal blesses the wedding couples and festivities resume, with dancing and an archery contest which is won by Jemmy, Tell's son. His triumph is interrupted by the arrival of Leuthold, a Swiss shepherd. He is being chased by the soldiers of the Austrian governor, Gessler, one of whom he has killed while protecting his daughter's honor. His only escape is across a dangerous stretch of water, and a storm is brewing. The frightened Ruodi refuses to take him but Tell ferries him to safety. Austrian soldiers, led by Rodolphe, arrive and demand to know who helped Leuthold escape. The Swiss fearlessly refuse to denounce Tell. Rodolphe takes Melcthal hostage, ordering his soldiers to take their revenge on the village.

ACT II A hunting party, which includes Mathilde and her companions, arrives on the heights of Rütli, overlooking the lake. When they depart, Mathilde sings of her love for Arnold to the evening star and the forest. When Arnold appears, the lovers passionately greet each other and curse the destiny that keeps them apart. He decides to rejoin the Austrian army so that he can win honor in battle and be worthy of her. Mathilde departs as Tell and another Swiss patriot, Walter Fürst, come to inform Arnold that his father has been killed at the hands of Gessler's men. The three patriots vow to overthrow Gessler and free Switzerland. A contingent of men from the cantons of Unterwalden, Schwyz and Uri emerge from the forest. The Swiss patriots, inspired by William Tell, swear to throw off the Austrian yoke.

ACT III

Scene 1—Arnold and Mathilde meet at a ruined chapel near Gessler's palace. He tells her he must avenge his father's death by fighting against her people. He has no alternative but to renounce her. Sadly, they both recognize that, for the time being, their love must be forgotten.

Scene 2—At the main square at Altdorf, Gessler has ordered celebrations to mark the centenary of Austrian protection. Sensing

the growing popular resistance, he humiliates the people by ordering them to pay homage to a monument, or "trophy," that bears his coat of arms. He then commands performances of their local songs and dances. Tell interrupts them and refuses to pay homage. Rodolphe recognizes Tell as the person who saved Leuthold. Tell is seized. He instructs Jemmy to go and give the signal for revolt, but Gessler arrests Jemmy too. Tell's obvious love for his son inspires Gessler to devise a cruel test. He orders that an apple be placed on Jemmy's head. Tell must remove it with one arrow from his crossbow or they will both die. Tell asks Jemmy to be brave and to keep still; he hits the apple and the Swiss rejoice. Tell drops a second arrow to the ground, admitting it was intended for Gessler himself had he missed the target. Father and son are again condemned to death. Mathilde arrives, defies Gessler, and takes charge of Jemmy. She privately vows to save Tell. Gessler condemns Tell to the dungeons of Küssnacht where he will be tortured and killed. He remains deaf to appeals for mercy as his men hail their governor and the people curse him.

Scene 3—Arnold has come to pay a final visit to his birthplace. As he recalls the happy days of his youth, he is interrupted by the arrival of his companions who inform him of Tell's arrest. He must be rescued, but they have no weapons. Arnold shows them a cache of arms hidden by his father and Tell for the day of insurrection. With Arnold at their head, to fervent cries of "Victory or death," they set upon their mission.

Scene 4—On the edge of Lake Lucerne, Tell's distraught wife, Hedwige, announces to her neighbors that she is off to find Gessler: what is life to her now that she no longer has a husband or son? Suddenly Jemmy arrives, accompanied by Mathilde. Hedwige and the village women see Mathilde's presence as a hopeful sign. Mathilde offers herself as a hostage to guarantee Tell's safe return and also brings news that Tell is at that moment being ferried across the water to his imprisonment. Jemmy, remembering his father's instruction to light the beacon as a signal for insurrection, rushes off to do so. As the storm breaks, Hedwige, joined by the others, offers a prayer for her husband's safety. Leuthold appears and tells the people to follow him. The boat carrying Tell and his captors is coming ashore with Tell at the helm. His hands have been freed since he is the only one capable of controlling the boat. Tell staggers ashore and is told by Jemmy that for lack of any other signal, he has set their own house on fire—but he has saved his father's crossbow. Tell, now ready for Gessler, shoots an arrow into the tyrant as he comes into view. Fürst and his followers arrive followed by Arnold, who has reclaimed Altdorf from the occupying forces. The people are triumphant and salute their newfound liberty.

The performance of November 2nd is designated in memory of Gertrude Baker to recognize her generous bequest to the Opera.

The performance of November 18th is designated in honor of Mr. and Mrs. Harry Wetzel's membership in the Triple Gold Circle.

The performance of November 18th is designated in honor of Mr. and Mrs. Angus A. MacNaughton's membership in the Triple Gold Circle.

Guillaume Tell

Photos taken in rehearsal
by Marty Sohl



Jean-Philippe Lafont, Marie Devellereau



*Patricia
Racette*



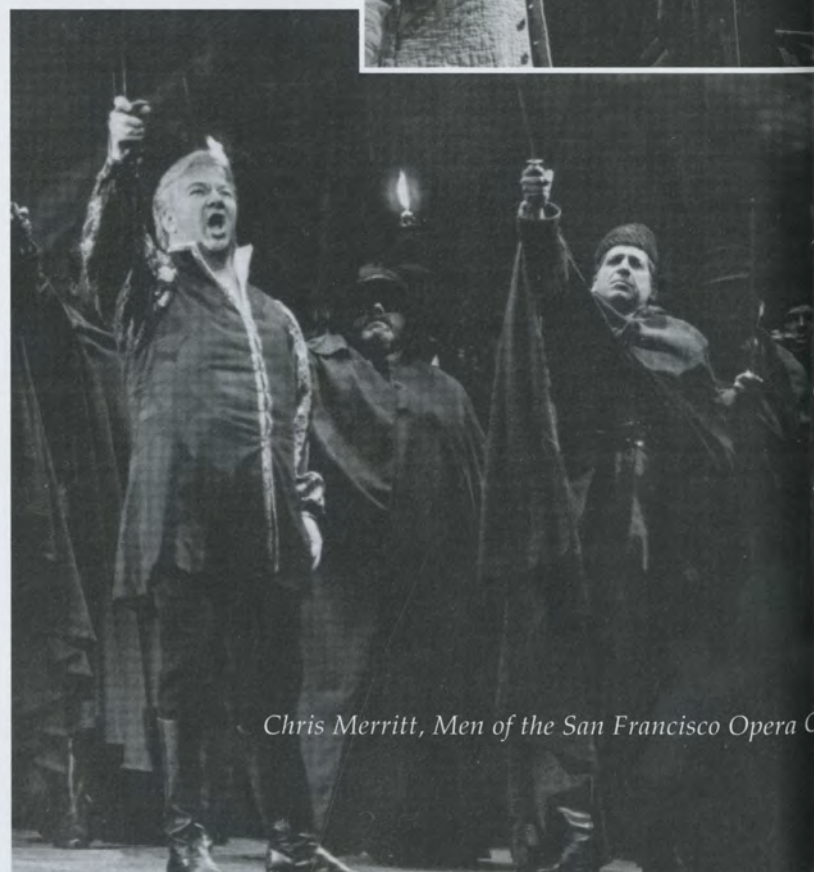
Catherine Keen



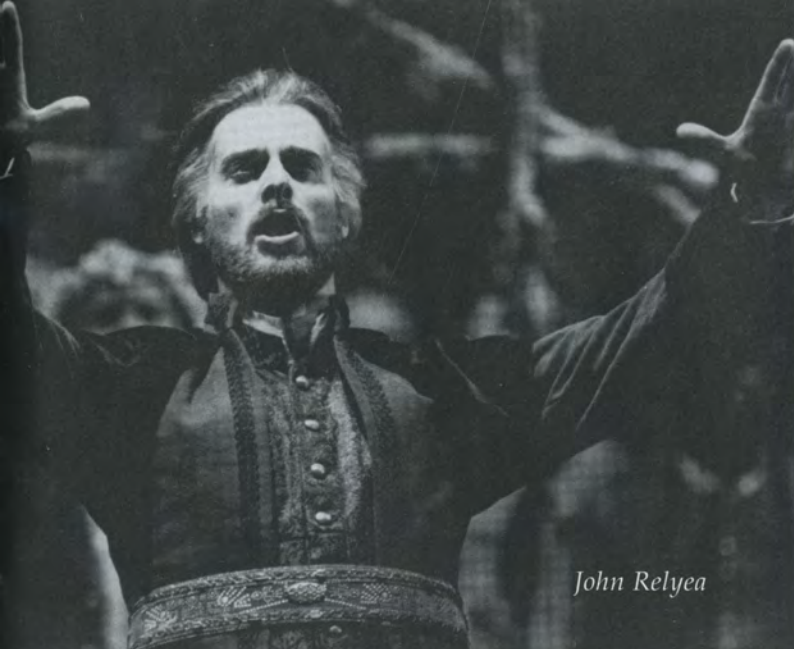
*Marie Devellereau,
Women of the
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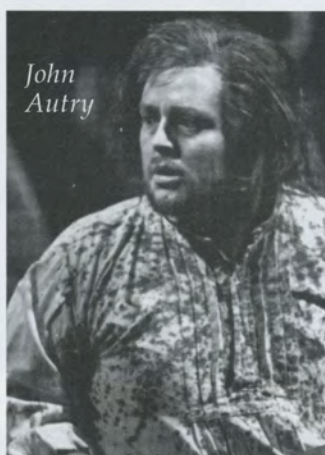
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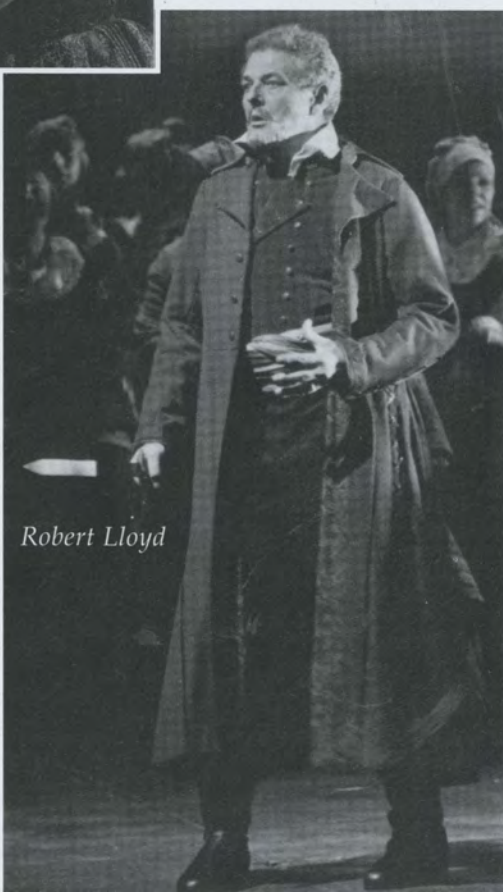
*Marie Devellereau,
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Autry*



orus



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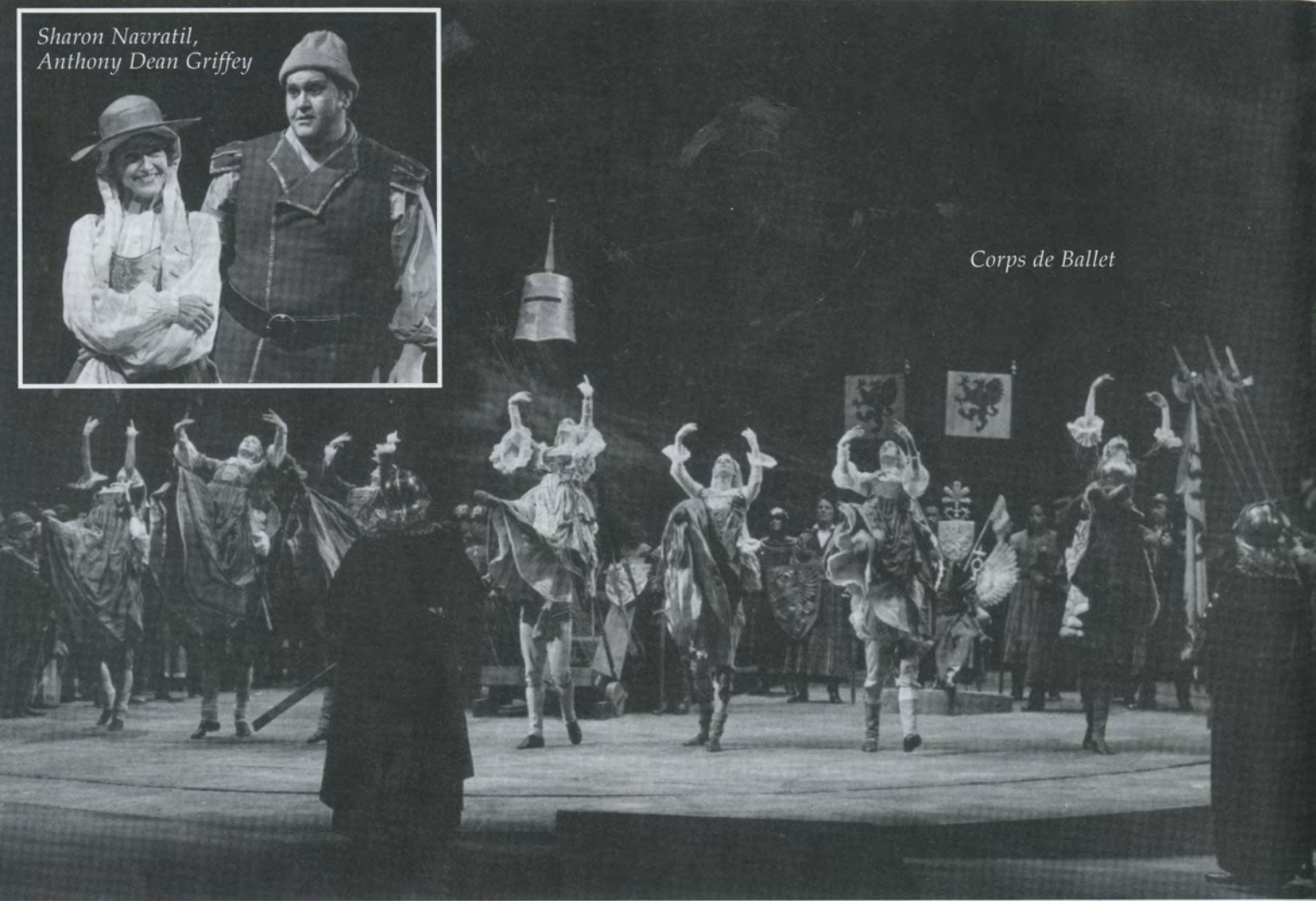


Chris Merritt

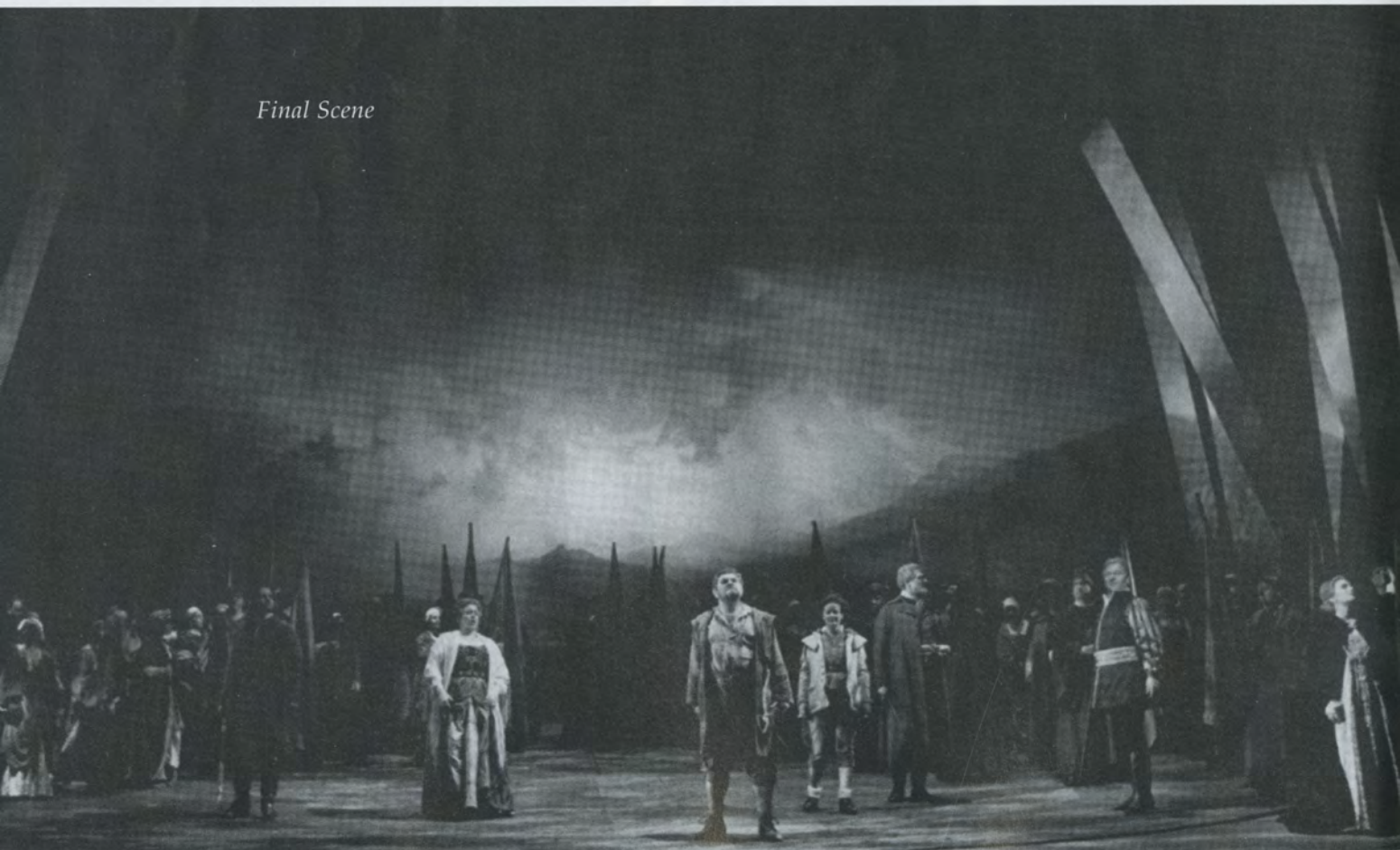
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Final Scene



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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.

For a copy of the itineraries call

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LACKENBACH

LEONTYNE PRICE AT 40

By MARTIN BERNHEIMER

Friday, Sept. 20, 1957. It was a big night for San Francisco Opera. In observance of the Lafayette Bicentenary, the Company was venturing a historic premiere—the first performance in this country of one of the few contemporary pieces that were to sustain a place in the so-called standard repertory.

The vehicle chosen by Kurt Herbert Adler, the far-sighted San Francisco impresario, was Francis Poulenc's *Les Dialogues des Carmélites*, then billed via Joseph Machlis's English translation merely as *The Carmelites*. Erich Leinsdorf conducted a production staged and designed by Harry Horner. The stellar cast enlisted some of the most prominent names among sopranos and mezzo-sopranos in the ensemble. Dorothy Kirsten was Blanche de la Force, Blanche Thebom impersonated Mother Marie and Claramae Turner appeared as Madame Croissy, the old prioress. The supporting cast included such stalwarts (in those days we had stalwarts) as Ralph Herbert, Jon Crain, Donna Petersen, Howard Fried and Cesare Curzi. Harve Presnell, later forced by destiny to become a musical-comedy hero, mustered the minimal utterances of the jailer.

Two unheralded sopranos happened to make their local debuts that momentous night, and, given the power of the work and the importance of the occasion, neither singer could have been expected to attract a great deal of personal attention. Sylvia Stahlman, a lovely lyric-coloratura who went on to a more-than-respectable career specializing in soubrette challenges, portrayed the ultra-innocent Sister Constance. An operatic

novice from Laurel, Mississippi, was called upon to play Madame Lidoine, the new prioress. That was Leontyne Price.

Leontyne Price!

One of the greatest, most beloved, most dauntlessly pioneering artists of our time made her first San Francisco Opera appearance, exactly 40 years ago, not as Gershwin's Bess—the exotic role that had introduced her to much of America and Europe—and not as Aida—the exotic role that she illuminated and virtually owned for three decades. Price didn't use one of the two contrasting donnas in *Don Giovanni* as a calling card, nor did she introduce herself as the prima Puccini donna who habitually proclaims her archetypal dedication to art and love. All that, and more—much more—would come later.

Price came in the front entrance. That was crucial, and that was her way. She came in quietly, however, assuming the modest habit of a nun whose idealism leads to sacrificial glory.

The critics were duly impressed. Given the socio-cultural context, they also were a bit distracted. That wasn't surprising.

In the *Chronicle*, Alfred Frankenstein praised the general casting of *The Carmelites* but lavished few words on individual participants. "The voices of the principals alone," he wrote, "are masterly." Under this positive umbrella, he described Price's sound as "richly crystalline." Almost enough said.

Returning for the second performance (in those days the critics returned), he concentrated on matters of diction. "One has little trouble understanding most of the male members of the cast, and two of the women—Dorothy Kirsten and Leontyne Price—sing quite as good English as any tenor or bass."

Alexander Fried, Frankenstein's vis-à-vis at the *Examiner*, waxed a bit more voluminous. Significantly, perhaps, he also deemed it appropriate to make a racial reference: "A newcomer—Leontyne Price, Negro soprano—made news by singing with such radiant tone and appeal that the audience gave her particular ovations."

When Fried covered the second performance, he seconded the critical motions. "It's hardly necessary, in a repeat review," he wrote, "to name once more all the excellent principals. . . . What does demand repetition is praise for the extremely beautiful singing of Leontyne Price as the new prioress. Her voice and warm personality gave an invaluable richness to every scene in which she appeared."

Such was the beginning. Later that first season, Price returned to win vast approval as a last-minute replacement for an indisposed Antonietta Stella as Aida. The role, of course, was perfect, and the die was cast.

Above: Leontyne Price, portraying Mme. Lidoine in the U.S. premiere of Poulenc's *Dialogues of the Carmelites*, prepares her sisters for their final exit. Below: The same moment is captured 25 years later, in 1982, when the soprano returned to the role at the War Memorial.

POWERS



Pulitzer Prize winner Martin Bernheimer was chief music critic of the Los Angeles Times from 1965 to 1996. He is now active as a writer, lecturer and broadcaster in New York.

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The all-American diva-to-be added another signature part, Leonora in *Il Trovatore*, to her War Memorial Opera House repertory in 1958, counterbalanced by a relatively unusual assignment, the protagonist in Carl Orff's *Die Kluge*, a.k.a. *The Wise Maiden* (one more installment in Adler's on-going scheme of repertory expansion).

Although she did not choose to appear in every San Francisco season from then until her local valedictory in 1984, she remained faithful to the house that had nurtured her career, and she often turned this way when she wanted to confront a new challenge.

San Francisco, like the rest of the operatic universe, knew her primarily as a Verdi soprano (in those days we had Verdi sopranos). In addition to the inevitable heroines of *Aida* (1957, 1959, 1963, 1981, 1984), *Trovatore* (1958, 1971, 1981), *La Forza del Destino* (1963, 1965, 1979), *Un Ballo in Maschera* (1965, 1967) and *Ernani* (1968), however, this city also enjoyed the pleasure of her unique company as a Puccini heroine: Liù in *Turandot* (1961), *Madama Butterfly* (1961), *Tosca* (1963), Giorgetta in *Il Tabarro* (1971) and *Manon Lescaut* (1974). Strauss's *Ariadne* followed (1977), regrettably her only standard-German excursion here. Virtually completing her repertory cycle, she made a sentimental return to the Carmelite nunnery in 1982. In all, she sang 125 performances with the Company, here and in Berkeley, Los Angeles and Sacramento (in those days we had tours).

Leontyne Price, who celebrated her 70th birthday on February 10th and whose glorious career still continues on the concert stage, was the sort of artist who broke rules and, perhaps more important, played by

her own. She pursued an operatic career at a time when members of her race found most international stages either unfriendly or off limits. She was not the first African-American to sing in some major houses. Mattiwilda Dobbs broke the barrier in San Francisco in 1955, the same year Marian Anderson made her preposterously overdue, largely ceremonial debut at the Metropolitan Opera in New York. The way was paved elsewhere by such excellent, sadly under-rated singers as Lawrence Winters, Camilla Williams, Ellabelle Davis and Dorothy Maynor, all of whom should have been welcome in the best companies everywhere.

When Price came along, the time at last was right. And she was ready.

She made her way as a singer of the top rank. She also made it as a symbol—"an American pioneer and a barrier breaker," as she puts it. It wasn't always easy.

"My career was simultaneous with the opening of civil rights," she recalled in 1973. "Whenever there was any copy about me, what I was as an artist, what I had as ability, got shoveled under because all the attention was on racial connotations. I didn't have time to fight back as an artist except to be prepared and do my work and take that space because I was the only person allowed the opportunity. That is what it meant being black then."

If Price wasn't invariably the person who opened doors, she emphatically was the one who kept them open. She did so under intense scrutiny, under cruel pressure, and she did so with uncommon dignity and flair. She also did so with the glamour, the allure, the magnetism, the dedication and the individuality that distinguish a competent performer from a bonafide stellar presence.

Yes. Price was a star.

The real hard-to-define-but-easy-to-savor thing. (In those days we had sopranos, not just tenors.)

She always made beautiful sounds. She never made them for their own superficial sake. She always cared about the text, about expressive definition, about dynamic variety and delineation of character. In the early stages of her career, her performances could be devastatingly feverish, spontaneous, impetuous, even reckless—and one sometimes worried about impending dangers of

vocal strain. With the passage of decades, she tended to become a bit more cautious, more studied, more prone, perhaps, to statuesque poses. Still, whether naturalistic in demeanor or stylized, whether full of abandon or restrained, she always conveyed a sense of urgency and an aura of warmth, not to mention an abiding degree of honesty. With Price, the quality of poignancy was as natural, as endearing and as enduring as her ravishing top C.

When Price finally made her debut at the Met—four years after first bowing in San Francisco—she could count past triumphs in Milan, Vienna, Salzburg, London, Chicago and Verona. She had enjoyed early successes outside opera houses in Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess* and Virgil Thomson's *Four Saints in Three Acts*, not to mention a breakthrough TV engagement as *Tosca*. The daughter of a midwife and mill-worker in the deep South already had come a long way, but her Met engagement—Rudolf Bing initially cast her as Leonora opposite the debutant Manrico of Franco Corelli—represented the ultimate seal of national approval. "Let's face it," Price says, "the Met is the pinnacle for an American. Singing there is a matter of pride." The quality of her initial achievement and the 42-minute ovation it engendered were acknowledged in the ultimate journalistic accolade, a *Time* magazine cover story.

Price cites three operatic autocrats as decisive forces in her career: Kurt Herbert Adler of San Francisco, Herbert von Karajan of Vienna, and Rudolf Bing of the Met. "They all ran tight ships," she says.

This should not imply that she blindly or blithely accepted every proposal made by each of the captains. She felt she knew her

(continued on page 36)

Two more images from San Francisco Opera's *Dialogues of the Carmelites* (above): Leontyne Price in the 1957 premiere of the opera, is shown with Dorothy Kirsten (top left) and Sylvia Stahlman. (Below): At the 1982 return engagement in the Poulenc opera, three mighty principals were caught backstage between acts: (L. to r.) Virginia Zeani, Régine Crespin, and Leontyne Price.





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(cont. from p. 32)

limitations better than any of them could. That meant singing little *Liù*, not big Turandot; that meant avoiding *Salome* and *Isolde* on the stage for vocal reasons; that meant refusing *Desdemona*, for sociological reasons; that meant rapidly abandoning the rigors of *Minnie* in *La Fanciulla del West*.

"San Francisco was my first operatic home," Price says. "I gave my best to her, and she did to me. I will always remember Maestro Adler for inviting me to join that distinguished, wonderful company. It marked the beginning of my grand-opera career. The company supported me, helped me develop my art, and offered me a great diversity of opportunities. I will always be grateful."

She voices fond memories of Adler's firm yet sympathetic directorial style, fond memories of life-time colleagues she first met on Van Ness Avenue, and, not least, fond memories of some "unsung heroes backstage." Among these, she makes special mention of the musical supervisor and coach Otto Guth. "He was so wise," she says.

The first season was the traumatic one. "It revealed what I could do in two distinct styles. First there was *Carmelites*, with Maestro Leinsdorf maintaining order and clarity. Then came *Aida*, my first *Aida* anywhere, and that whetted the management's and audience's appetite for what was to come."

She recalls the famous incident when the wardrobe mistress first showed her the *Aida* costume, admonishing her to be careful about smearing makeup on the fabric. "I had to remind her that I already had all the makeup on," she laughs.



ACHESON

Leontyne Price sang her first *Aida* anywhere at the San Francisco Opera in 1957 (left). She returned to the role at the War Memorial in 1959, 1963, 1981 (for one performance only) and 1984. The photo on the right was taken in 1984.

She sang *Aida* that first San Francisco season and, again, in her last, 27 years later. By that time she had appeared in the role here a total of 29 times. Verdi's Ethiopian princess also served as her farewell to the opera stage, at the Met in 1985. "*Aida* was so much me," Price says, "and still is. This opera allowed me to be me."

She assesses her San Francisco repertory with characteristic candor. "Once was enough for *Die Kluge*. . . Donna Elvira was stimulating but Donna Anna was more grand, more my part. . . The first *Forza* went fairly well. . . Some people thought *Il Tabarro* was a mistake, but that was my choice. No one understood. It wasn't a matter of oil not mixing with water. I wanted a verismo challenge. I was tired of all those parts in which I just stand around looking anguished and noble next to my lady-in-waiting."

Most serious artists invariably harbor some regrets when they reassess their careers. Price claims to be an exception to the rancorous rule. "No," she insists, perhaps too much, "I don't have a single regret."

She does admit to certain disappointments, most notably the failure of Samuel Barber's *Antony and Cleopatra* at the opening of the new Met at Lincoln Center in 1966. She defends the opera and her work in it, but points a finger of blame at the director, Franco Zeffirelli. "I'll be blunt," she says. "That's the way I am. For us it was a challenge of enormous national importance. For Zeffirelli, who isn't an American, it was just another event."

When gently prodded regarding any further professional peeves, she cites only generalities. "Stress can sometimes shade the joy," she says, "and the sheer noise of

success can get in the way because everyone wants part of the action. We live in a hectic, exhausting time." She declines to elaborate, and Leontyne Price isn't the sort of interviewee who relishes being pushed, much less bullied. She does advise, however, that she is working on her autobiography. The book, no doubt, will tell more, if not all.

She turns charmingly evasive on the subject of art competing with show business. "How has the profession changed in recent years?" She laughs as she repeats the question. "We have to have lunch," she replies. Subject closed.

She seems happier when asked to name some of her favorite—and/or unfavorable—partners. Diplomacy dominates. "I was lucky," she claims. "I really had no problems with my colleagues."

She speaks with reverence of Zinka Milanov, Renata Tebaldi and Maria Callas, whose careers peaked somewhat before hers. "I wasn't in the same vibration with the bravura of these great ladies." She registers awe at the mention of Birgit Nilsson: "I just call her Big B." On the potentially vexing subject of her tenors, she gushes—first if not necessarily foremost about Franco Corelli: "He was so handsome, so tall, so incredibly, overwhelmingly magnetic."

The others? "I sang with Pavarotti twice. One was the Verdi Requiem under Karajan at La Scala, the other, one *Aida* at San Francisco in 1981. A stunning voice. I especially enjoyed recording love duets with Domingo. He's so flexible, so versatile, so warm. I had the great pleasure of singing with Bergonzi, with Tucker. . . "

She sings duets these days only with students, not colleagues, and she says she likes that, too. "I rap with them, give them time. I tell them the responsibility for their future lies with them, no one else. If they have talent, I want them to take care of their precious gift."

Price, who has taken extraordinarily good care of her own precious gift, musters an easy explanation for her lingering mastery. "I never lost focus," she says.

She doesn't like the concept of retirement, and prefers not to use the word. "Even now, at my age," she says, "the range and tone are still there. I still have fun."

Under the circumstances, one has to wonder why she gave up opera a dozen years ago. The answer is pure, priceless Price. "My mother taught me a lesson when I was very young: When you get up from the table, always leave a little something on the plate. It's a matter of manners. It's a matter of class." ♦

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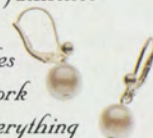
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Although it is the last of Rossini's operas, *Guillaume Tell* seems like a fresh beginning. So thought the great critic and encyclopedist Fétis after hearing the premiere. Not only is the overture quite new and original in its design; it establishes what Verdi would call the "tinta" (color) of the opera—that special quality of mood and atmosphere that sets it apart from all others: the sense of rural solitude conjured up by the opening andante; the tumult of the storm; the suggestion of a herdsman's pipe and the tinkle of cow-bells in the pastorella that follows. Nor is this the only point at which Rossini avails himself of a typical Swiss "ranz des vaches" [brief melody played on the alphorn to summon the cows]. An authentic specimen culled from Rousseau's *Dictionnaire de Musique* provided him with a variety of tiny motifs which recur as binding agents throughout the opera, while at the same time keeping us aware of the scenery against which the action unfolds. With *La Wally* (1892) the critic Carlo Gatti declared that Alfredo Catalani had for the first time "brought the high mountain into Italian opera." In French opera it had long existed—in the pages of *Guillaume Tell*.

No less important to the work's "tinta" is the strain of nobility and heroism that pervades the score. Here it is the classical Rossini that prevails. No matter how grave the situation, the characters remain in full control of their feelings. Arnold's grief at the news of his father's death is all the more moving for its restraint. Nowhere is this quality more striking than in Tell's arioso addressed to his son, bidding him to keep quite still while he himself takes aim. This is both the crux of the drama and the pinnacle of the score, and Rossini rises to the occasion magnificently. For Wagner, "Sois immobile" was a perfect example of the declaimed melody that moves freely, expanding and contracting according to the demands of the poetic text and the musical effect desired by the composer. "You mean that I wrote there 'the music of the future' without knowing it?," Rossini inquired with a sly reference to Molière's Monsieur Garden, but Wagner was equal to it. "What you wrote there, Maestro," he replied, "is the music of all time, and that is the best."

William Tell may not have existed in reality; but in Rossini's opera he remains alive and flourishing to this day. ♦



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PATRICIA RACETTE returns to her hometown company to sing her first Mathilde in *Guillaume Tell*. Winner of the prestigious 1994 Marian Anderson Award, the soprano has already performed major roles with the Metropolitan Opera, Vienna State Opera, Netherlands Opera, Grand Théâtre de Genève, Royal Opera at Covent Garden, Paris Opera/Bastille, Welsh National Opera, New York City Opera, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Santa Fe Opera, San Diego Opera, Boston Lyric Opera, Vancouver Opera and San Francisco Opera. A 1989-90 Adler Fellow with numerous Opera

Center credits, she made her Company debut in 1989 as Mistress Ford in family performances of *Falstaff*. Since then the young artist has sung many roles here, among them Mimi in *La Bohème* and, most recently, Antonia in the new production of *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* as well as Micaëla in *Carmen*. Miss Racette garnered international critical acclaim in the title role of Tobias Picker's *Emmeline* at the Santa Fe Opera last summer, a production which was nationally televised on the PBS Great Performances series. Additional recent engagements include her debut with the Royal Opera at Covent Garden and a return to the Met as Mimi, a bow at the Paris Opera/Bastille as Musetta in *La Bohème*, as well as Violetta in *La Traviata* in Santa Fe. On the concert stage, she has appeared with the Boston Symphony, Chicago Symphony, Minnesota Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, and was the soprano soloist in the West Coast premiere of Stephen Albert's *Flower of the Mountain*. Upcoming engagements include Blanche in *Dialogues des Carmélites* and Violetta at the Paris Opera/Bastille, Susanna in *Le Nozze di Figaro* at San Diego Opera, *Emmeline* for New York City Opera, in addition to *Peter Grimes* (Ellen Orford), and *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* (Antonia) at the Metropolitan Opera.



The young French soprano **MARIE DEVELLÉREAU**, a graduate of the Juilliard School of Music, recently completed her training at the Paris National Opera's Centre de Formation Lyrique. A winner of the 1996 Belvedere Competition and the winner of the 1997 "Voice Masters" Competition in Monte Carlo, she made her professional debut in *Werther*, followed by performances of the Vaughan Williams *Sinfonia Antartica* led by Raymond Leppard. Engagements during the 1996-97 season have included Mozart's Mass in C-Minor, Offenbach's *Un Mari à la Porte* at the Paris Musée d'Orsay, an

opera gala at the Bordeaux Opera, *Ariadne auf Naxos* (Naiade) in Rennes, *Thaïs* (La Charmeuse) in Nice (recorded for Decca), and a successful recital debut at the Paris Salle Gaveau. Miss Devellereau most recently appeared as one of the three "Divas of the Year 2000" with the Orchestre National de France conducted by Antonello Allemandi at the Versailles Palace, and made her U.S. opera debut at the Tanglewood Festival in performances of *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* led by Seiji Ozawa. Among her future plans are concerts with the Orchestre National des Pays de la Loire and the Orchestre National du Capitole de Toulouse, recitals in Paris and Aix-en-Provence, as well as a new production of *Dialogues des Carmélites* (Constance) led by Ozawa at Japan's Saito-Kinen Festival and the Paris National Opera.



CATHERINE KEEN has already established herself as one of America's most promising mezzo-sopranos. The young artist, a 1989-90 Adler Fellow and a 1987-88 Merola Opera Program participant, has sung numerous roles here since her 1989 Company debut in *Satyagraha*. They include Fricka and Waltraute in *Die Walküre*, Maddalena in *Rigoletto*, Prince Orlofsky in *Die Fledermaus*, Sonya in *War and Peace*, Zulma in *L'Italiana in Algeri*, Hermia in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Magdalene in *Die Meistersinger*, Venus in *Tannhäuser*, Suzuki in *Madama Butterfly*, and Giulietta in last season's new staging

of *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*. Among her many Opera Center credits are a Schwabacher Debut Recital and Leocasta in Handel's *Giustino*. Highlights from recent seasons elsewhere include her European debut with the Deutsche Oper Berlin as Dalila in *Samson et Dalila*, a debut with the Netherlands Opera as the Duchess in *Luisa Miller*, *La Traviata* at the Orange Festival, *Samson et Dalila* in Amsterdam, *Luisa Miller* in Geneva, Venus with Copenhagen's Royal Danish Opera, *Otello* with the Netherlands Opera (telecast throughout Europe), Falla's *The Three-Cornered Hat* with the Atlanta Symphony, a recording of *La Vida Breve* with the Cincinnati Symphony, Mahler's *Lied von der Erde* in Paris, and Mahler's Eighth Symphony both in Lyon and Edinburgh, the latter concert led by Donald Runnicles. Miss Keen has appeared in recital throughout North America, and as soloist with several prominent orchestras. Future plans include her Italian debut at the Arena di Verona in *Aida* (Amneris) and *Nabucco* (Fenena); *Aida* at Houston Grand Opera; *Samson et Dalila* for the Washington Opera; the *Ring* cycle in Amsterdam; and *Tristan und Isolde* (Brangäne) with the Cincinnati Symphony. She is the recipient of a George London/William Sullivan Study Grant, a Puccini Foundation Award, and a grant from the Wagner Society of Northern California.



JEAN-PHILIPPE LAFONT is acknowledged as one of the foremost French baritones of our day and has been acclaimed for his performances in leading theaters throughout the world including the Paris Opera, Teatro alla Scala, the Monnaie in Brussels, Rome Opera, Teatro San Carlo in Naples, the Liceu in Barcelona, Netherlands Opera, Metropolitan Opera, and San Francisco Opera (1992 debut, title role of *Christophe Colomb*), among others. Lafont completed his musical studies in his native Toulouse and in Paris, where he joined the studio of the Paris Opera in 1973. His acclaimed performance as

Papageno in *Die Zauberflöte* led to bows at major opera houses throughout France. Highlights from past seasons include several debuts: in Brussels as Golaud in *Pelléas et Mélisande*; at the Arena di Verona, Metropolitan Opera and in Zurich as Escamillo in *Carmen*; in Barcelona as the Count in *Le Nozze di Figaro*; at La Scala as Jack Rance in *La Fanciulla del West*; and at the Vienna State Opera as Scarpia in *Tosca*. Engagements during the 1996-97 season have included *Il Tabarro* and Berio's *Un Re in Ascolto* at the Chicago Lyric Opera, Jokanaan in *Salome* at the Paris Opera (where he has appeared for many seasons in several new productions); his first Telramund in *Lohengrin* at the Bastille; *Tosca* at the Met; the title role of *Rigoletto* in Hamburg and Tel Aviv; as well as *Elektra* (Orest) in Lyon. Current and future projects include *Falstaff*, *Tosca*, *Macbeth* and *Wozzeck* in Paris, the title role of *Der Fliegende Holländer* in Bordeaux, a debut at the Bayreuth Festival, as well as a new production (and recording led by Gardiner) of *Falstaff* in Florence and *Parsifal* in Brussels. Lafont has participated in numerous complete operatic recordings (forthcoming is *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* with Ozawa) and has appeared in the movies *Parole de Flic*, the Gaumont film version of *Carmen*, and the highly acclaimed *Babette's Feast*. He continues to study with Denise Dupleix.

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World-renowned tenor **CHRIS MERRITT** made his debut with San Francisco Opera in 1988 as Erisso in the U.S. premiere of *Maometto II*, and has since returned to portray Arnold in *Guillaume Tell* (1992), Arrigo in the 1993 season-opening *I Vespri Siciliani*, and the title role of Rossini's *Otello* in 1994. A native of

Oklahoma City, he has become one of the most versatile and in-demand artists in the world of opera, performing with the Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Los Angeles Opera, Milan's La Scala, Vienna State Opera, Paris Opera, Royal Opera at Covent Garden, the Liceu in Barcelona, Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires, and many others. He is also a prolific recitalist, in addition to appearing in concert with the world's great orchestras. His television appearances include the 1990 Richard Tucker Gala and the 1992 Rossini Bicentennial Gala, both held in New York's Avery Fisher Hall and presented as part of the "Live from Lincoln Center" and "Great Performances" series, and he was featured in conversation and performance on CBS's "Nightwatch." The tenor has also produced a variety of recordings and videos for over 10 labels. Recent operatic highlights include the title role of Dvořák's *Dimitrij* and Adonis in the world premiere of Henze's *Venus und Adonis* for Munich's Bavarian State Opera; Bacchus in *Ariadne auf Naxos* and Enée in *Les Troyens* at Lisbon's Teatro São Carlos; the Prince in *Rusalka* at the Met; Loge in a new staging of *Das Rheingold* in Amsterdam; as well as two new productions at the Salzburg Festival—Schoenberg's *Moses und Aron* under the baton of Pierre Boulez, and Weber's *Oberon* (Sir Huon).

ARTIST PROFILES



Bass-baritone **JEFFREY WELLS's** debut season with San Francisco Opera took place during the 1992 Rossini Festival when he sang the roles of Walter Fürst in *Guillaume Tell* and Fenicio in *Ermione*. He was seen with the Company in 1994 as Ferrando in *Il Trovatore* (the role which served as his 1988 Metropolitan Opera debut), appeared here in 1995 as Ruslan in *Ruslan and Lyudmila*, and portrayed Prince Galitsky in last season's Company premiere of *Prince Igor*. The American artist has sung virtually all of the major bel canto roles of Bellini, Donizetti and Rossini throughout Europe and North

America. His recordings include Mendelssohn's *Die Erste Walpurgisnacht*, the role of Antony in the award-winning *Antony and Cleopatra*, and Bal-dassare in the original French version of *La Favorite*. He recently scored successes with roles new to his repertoire: Claggart in *Billy Budd* at the Opera Theatre of St. Louis, Méphistophélès in *Faust* at Opera Pacific, and Escamillo in *Carmen* at the Bonn Opera. Additional recent highlights include debuts with the Opéra de Paris/Bastille and with Opéra de Genève as Lorenzo in *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*, the title role of *Don Giovanni* in Detroit, *Faust* in Washington, D.C., Timur in concert performances of *Turandot* with the Cleveland Orchestra, Colline in *La Bohème* at Houston Grand Opera, as well as a return to the Met for his seventh season to portray Theseus in a new staging of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Escamillo in a new production of *Carmen*. Among his future plans are *Carmen*, *Aida* (the King), and *Rigoletto* (Sparafucile) for the Met, in addition to Capulet in *Roméo et Juliette* at the Lyric Opera of Chicago.



Bass **ROBERT LLOYD**, born in Essex and educated at Oxford, began his life as an academic historian, turning to a singing career at the age of 28. In 1972, he was appointed principal bass at the Royal Opera at Covent Garden, where he proceeded to portray roles from an enormous range of repertoire, while developing a free-lance operatic and concert career which has brought him to most major performing centers of the world. His U.S. debut took place in 1975 with the San Francisco Opera (Sarastro in *Die Zauberflöte*), and he has since returned here to portray Méphistophélès in *Faust* (1986), King

Philip in *Don Carlos* (1986) and *Don Carlo* (1992), Banquo in *Macbeth* (1994), and Claudius in *Hamlet* (1996). Lloyd was the first British bass to sing the title role of *Boris Godunov* at Covent Garden (1983), in the celebrated Tarkovsky production (seen at the War Memorial in 1992) which then traveled to the Kirov Opera in Leningrad (1990) with the same protagonist. Following the international telecast of the same, he returned to the production at the Vienna State Opera in 1991, under the direction of Claudio Abbado. Recent and current engagements include performances and a recording of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Bottom) with the London Symphony Orchestra, *Aida*, *Parsifal*, *Simon Boccanegra* and *Pelléas et Mélisande* at the Metropolitan Opera, *Roméo et Juliette*, *Samson et Dalila*, and *Die Zauberflöte* at Covent Garden, as well as *Pelléas* and *Parsifal* in Amsterdam. The bass has made over 75 recordings, ranging from Monteverdi to Mozart to Elgar and Wagner. A frequent guest on radio and television, he was the subject of a BBC special on the bass voice, titled *Six Foot Cinderella*. Lloyd is President of British Youth Opera and member of the Executive Committee of the Musicians' Benevolent Fund. His awards include the title of Commander of the British Empire (CBE), bestowed upon him by Queen Elizabeth in 1991.



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.



ANTHONY DEAN GRIFFEY joined the Metropolitan Opera Young Artist Development Program at the beginning of the 1994-95 season and made his Met debut as the First Knight in *Parsifal*. During the 1995-96 season the tenor appeared at the Met as the Master of Ceremonies in *The Queen of Spades* and the Slave in *Salome*, and sang the role of Tom in Amy Beach's *Cabildo* with Great Performers at Lincoln Center, which he also recorded. Opera performances during the 1996-97 season have included the title role of *Peter Grimes* led by Seiji Ozawa at the Tanglewood Music Center, Les Fils in *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* at Japan's Saito Kinen Festival, Sam in *Susannah* with Vancouver Opera, Tamino in concert performances of *Die Zauberflöte* in Japan, Lenny in *Of Mice and Men* at the Glimmerglass Opera, as well as a return to the Met for *Aida* and *Billy Budd*. His concert and recital appearances this season include a performance with Warren Jones in North Carolina (Griffey's home state) and a recital in New York, Handel's *Messiah* with the Baltimore Symphony, Virginia Symphony and Minnesota Orchestra, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony in Florida and New Jersey, in addition to *Elijah* with the Canterbury Choral Society. He may also be heard on the soon-to-be-released recordings of *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* under Ozawa, and *I Lombardi* led by James Levine. The young artist has been the recipient of many awards and honors, including First Place winner of the National Association of Teachers of Singing, as well as a recent grant from Opera Index. He holds degrees from Wingate University, the Eastman School of Music, and the Juilliard School.

ARTIST PROFILES



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 Périochole* as well as Don Basilio and Don Curzio in *Le Nozze di Figaro* for the 1995 Merola Opera Program; the reprise 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*.



JOHN ROBERT AUTRY recently received critical acclaim for his portrayal of Sharpless in San Francisco Opera's 1997 production of *Madama Butterfly*. In his second year as an Adler Fellow, the baritone made his 1996 Company debut as Schaunard in *La Bohème*, returning for SFO's 1996-97 season to sing roles in *Hamlet*, *Lohengrin*, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, *Carmen*, *Harvey Milk* and *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*. Additional recent credits include the role of the Father in the Opera Guild's holiday presentation of *Hansel and Gretel*, and Emperor Valentiniano in the

West Coast premiere ('97 Showcase) of Handel's *Ezio*. In 1995, he made his New York City Opera debut as Figaro in that company's national touring production of *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*. Other engagements include Dr. Malatesta in *Don Pasquale* with Birmingham Opera Theater, Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly* with Shreveport Opera, and Ping in *Turandot* with Palm Beach Opera. A 1994 National Winner in the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, Autry has also won awards at vocal competitions in Palm Beach, Birmingham and Mobile. Most recently, he was the recipient of career grants from the Shoshana Foundation, Opera Index and the Richard Tucker Foundation. Next season, the native of Atlanta, Georgia, will make debuts at Opera Pacific as Marcello in *La Bohème* and at Michigan Opera Theatre as Lescaut in Massenet's *Manon*.



Bass-baritone **BOJAN KNEŽEVIĆ** most recently performed with the Company during the 1996-97 season in *Hamlet*, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, and *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*. He also portrayed Benoit and Alcindoro in San Francisco Opera's production of *La Bohème* and sang the role of the Painter in San Francisco Opera Center's Showcase '96 presentation of *The Aspern Papers*. A 1995 Adler Fellow, his debut season with the Company was in 1995 when he sang the parts of Marquis d'Obigny in *La Traviata*, Don Magnifico in the student matinee production of *La Cenerentola*, and the Hunter in *Rusalka*. A native of Belgrade,

he received his bachelor's and master's degrees from the Academy of Music in Novi Sad, and has performed with the National Theatre in Novi Sad, as well as in Zagreb and Belgrade. As a three-year member of the Merola Opera Program (1992-94), he performed in Merola stagings of *La Bohème* (Schaunard), *Falstaff* (Pistola), *Die Fledermaus* (Frosch), and *Don Giovanni* (Leporello). He repeated the roles of Schaunard, Frosch, and Leporello for Western Opera Theater's national tours. The young artist's credits also include Marcello in *La Bohème* and Leporello with Virginia Opera; Carnegie Hall performances of Mozart's *Coronation Mass* and Great Mass in C Minor, as well as the U.S. premiere of Mascagni's *Silvano* (available on CD). Last season he appeared as Leporello with the Minnesota Opera and as Escamillo in *Carmen* to inaugurate the new opera house in Fort Worth. Future plans include Papageno in *Die Zauberflöte* for Minnesota Opera, Colline in *La Bohème* in Fort Worth, and Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly* with the Bohème Opera of New Jersey.



PATRICK SUMMERS was recently appointed Music Adviser and Music Director Designate of the Houston Grand Opera. Long associated with San Francisco Opera, he served as Music Director of the Opera Center from 1990-1994 and made his Company conducting debut in 1990 with performances of *Die Fledermaus*. He has since led SFO productions of *Così fan tutte*, *La Traviata*, Rossini's *Ermione* (U.S. premiere) and *Otello*, L'Elisir d'Amore, *Tosca*, *La Bohème*, *La Fille du Régiment*, *La Cenerentola*, *Faust* and last season's new staging of *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*. He

also led the Company's 1994 and '95 Opera in the Park concerts. Maestro Summers has numerous credits for the various programs of the Opera Center — Showcase presentations, Merola Opera Program productions, and Western Opera Theater tours. He has traveled extensively for the Center, leading performances of *Carmen* in Guam and Japan, *Tosca* in Shanghai, and *La Bohème* in Japan. Elsewhere, he has been applauded at Lisbon's Teatro Nacional São Carlos (*Tosca*, *Ariadne auf Naxos*), Wolf Trap Opera (*Giulio Cesare*), Rome Opera (*Manon Lescaut*), Calgary Opera (*Lucia di Lammermoor*, *La Cenerentola*), Opera Australia (*La Cenerentola*, *La Bohème*, *Lucrezia Borgia*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Werther*), Washington Opera (*La Finta Giardiniera*) and the Dallas Opera (*L'Incoronazione di Poppea*, *The Tempest*), among others. He also recently led concerts at London's Royal Festival Hall, Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, the Théâtre des Champs Elysées in Paris, the Deutsche Oper Berlin, and with the National Orchestre de l'Aquitaine in Bordeaux. Next season, the maestro is scheduled to make his Metropolitan Opera debut. A native of Indiana, Summers graduated from the Indiana University School of Music.

ARTIST PROFILES



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 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.



PETER McCLINTOCK made his 1990 San Francisco Opera directorial debut staging *Die Walküre* and *Siegfried* for the Wagner Ring Festival. Subsequent Company assignments have been *Don Carlo* (1991), *Turandot* (1993) and *Mefistofele* (1994). He began his association with San Francisco Opera in 1985 and was an Assistant Director here from 1987 to 1993, during which time he worked on over 25 productions, including *Mefistofele*, *War and Peace*, *Parsifal*, *Der Fliegende Holländer*, *Otello*, *Falstaff*, *The Rake's Progress*, *Capriccio*, *Così fan tutte* and *Guillaume Tell*. McClintock is currently a Staff Stage Director at the Metropolitan Opera, where he most recently staged *Manon* and *Die Meistersinger*. Additional Met productions he has worked on over the past nine seasons include the Ring cycle, *Die Fledermaus*, *Faust*, *Salome*, *Rigoletto*, *I Lombardi*, *Le Nozze di Figaro* and *Idomeneo*. Other production credits include engagements with Houston Grand Opera and the Lyric Opera of Chicago (*Turandot*), San Diego Opera, Portland Opera, Long Beach Opera, in addition to the Opera Theatre of St. Louis. The director received his bachelor's degree in theater arts from UCLA and was awarded a scholarship from the San Francisco Opera to further his studies in Italy.



GERARD HOWLAND's work was introduced to San Francisco Opera audiences in 1992 with the sets for this production of *Guillaume Tell* (U.S. opera debut). In 1994 he served as set designer for the world premiere of *Dangerous Liaisons* and the new stagings of *Macbeth*, *Il Trovatore*, Rossini's *Otello*, *Tannhäuser*, *Hérodiade*, and *Lucia di Lammermoor*. Additional Company assignments have been the sets for new productions of *Faust* and *Don Giovanni* (1995), as well as the set designs for last season's new stagings of *Hamlet* and *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*. (He was also responsible for the design of the new stage and theatrical environment at the Civic Auditorium.) The artist studied at the English National Opera Design School and then served as Associate Designer for the Royal Academy and the Royal Shakespeare Company. Among his theater designs are *Tom Jones* and *The Way of the World* for the Royal Academy, *Henry IV* (Parts I and II), *The Winter's Tale* and *Scenes from a Marriage* for the Royal Shakespeare Company, and *Major Barbara* for the Chichester Festival. He has also designed several plays and musicals for London's West End, as well as for television and film throughout Europe. In Germany, Howland created sets for *L'Elisir d'Amore*, *Madama Butterfly*, *La Bohème*, *Jenůfa*, *The Makropulos Case*, *Die Zauberflöte*, *Gianni Schicchi*, *La Traviata*, *Cardillac* and *Mahagonny*; also *Uncle Vanya*, *The Father*, *Andorra* and *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*. His operatic assignments in England include *Cavalleria Rusticana* and *Pagliacci* for the English National Opera, *Ruddigore* and *The Gondoliers* for Sadler's Wells Opera, *Tosca* for Opera North, and *Ariadante* for the Buxton Festival. Since moving to the Bay Area, the native of England has designed several productions for the American Conservatory Theater, the South Coast Repertory Theatre, Disney Studios, *La Bohème* for the Dallas and Los Angeles Opera, and *Tosca* for Opera Theatre of Saint Louis. He has won five major awards, including two DramaLogue Awards and the Los Angeles Drama Critics Award.



LIZ DA COSTA trained at London's Central School of Art and Design, was awarded the Arts Council Designer's scholarship and worked with the Royal Exchange Theatre in Manchester. Productions she has designed for the Royal Shakespeare Company and the National Theatre include *The Great White Hope*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Kiss Me Kate*, *Hamlet*, and *The Shaughraun*. She has designed for the West End, Broadway, and for dance. Miss da Costa also participated in the Victoria and Albert Museum's exhibition *Spotlight*. Her designs for opera include *Guillaume Tell* for the Royal Opera at Covent Garden, *Armide* for the Buxton Festival, as well as *Tosca* and *Madama Butterfly* for Los Angeles.

ARTIST PROFILES



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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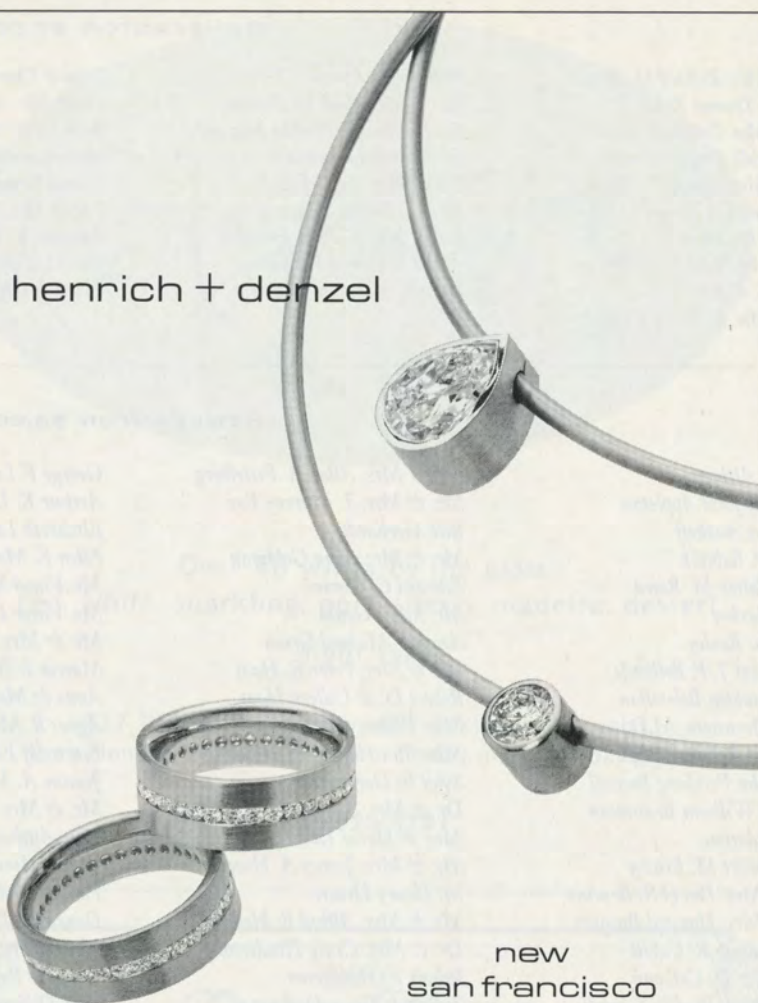
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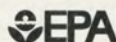
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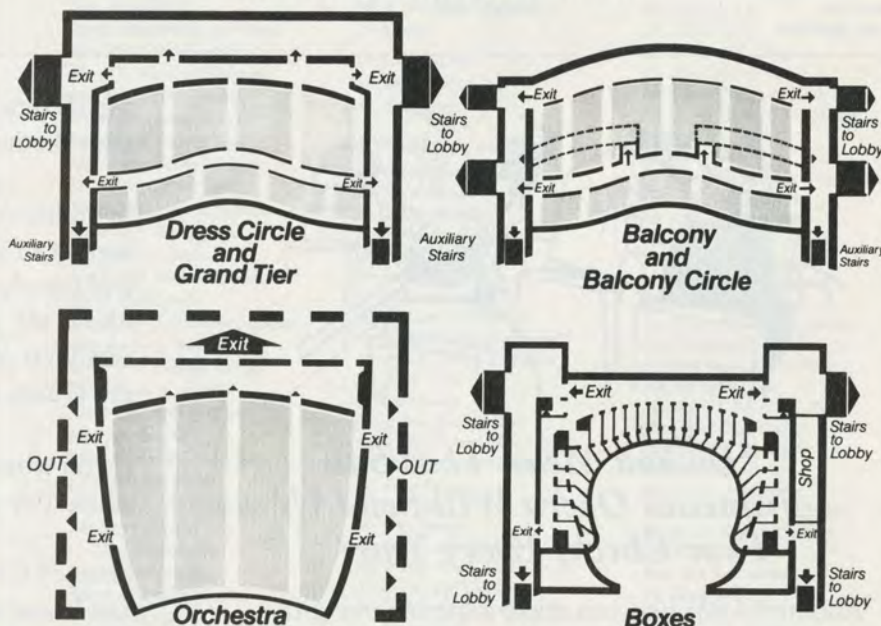
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