

Le Nozze di Figaro
(The Marriage of Figaro) II

1997-1998

Friday, January 9, 1998 7:30 PM
Sunday, January 11, 1998 1:30 PM
Wednesday, January 14, 1998 7:30 PM
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75TH SEASON, 1997-98

LE NOZZE DI FIGARO

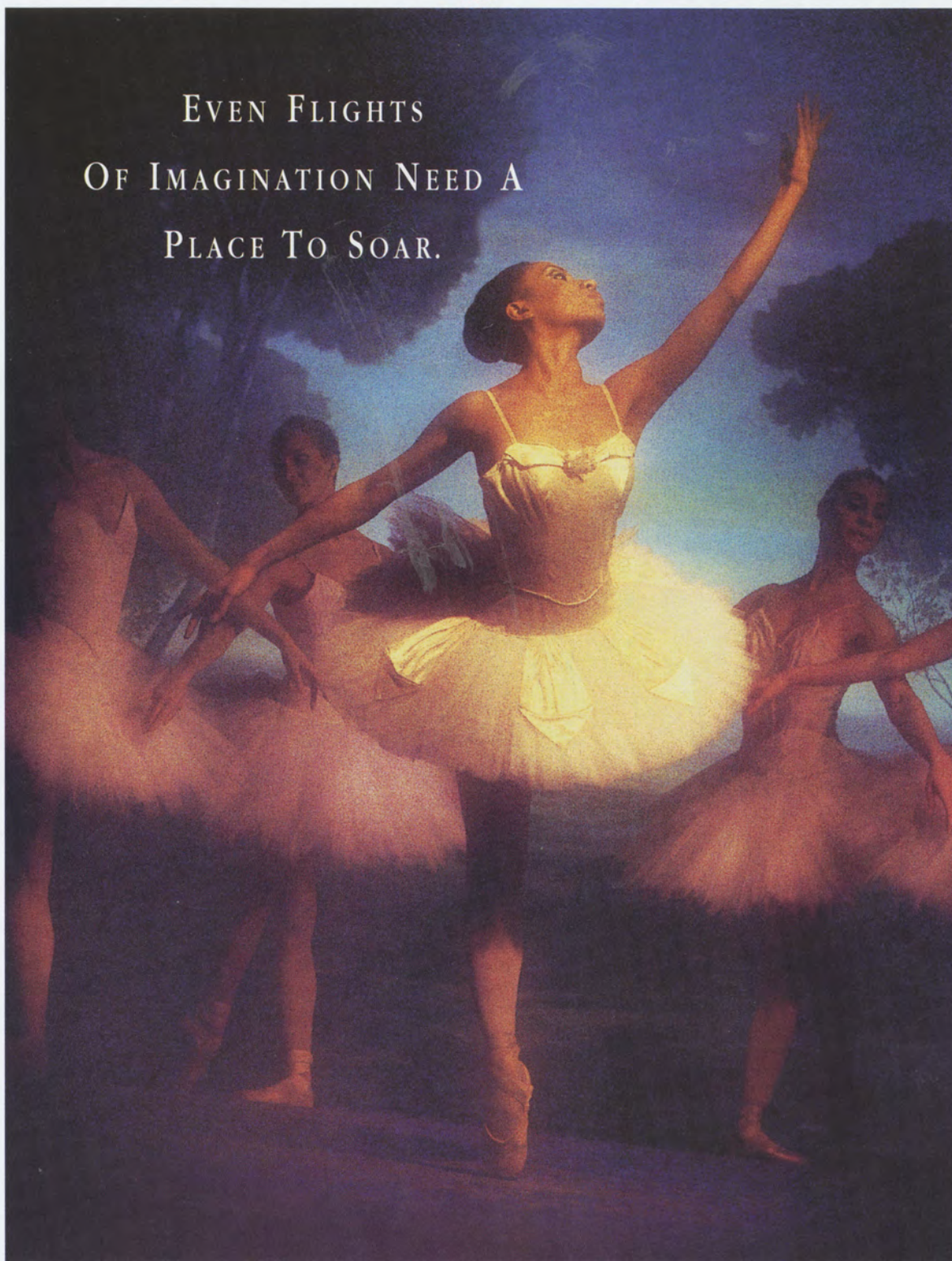


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A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND PRESIDENT, SAN FRANCISCO OPERA ASSOCIATION



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!

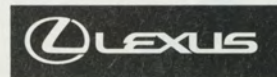
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SAN FRANCISCO OPERA MAGAZINE

Le Nozze di Figaro

75th Season, 1997-98

Vol. 75, No. 6

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Beaumarchais, *Le Mariage de Figaro* at the Comédie-Française

Colored sketch.

Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal

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ADVENTURE IN THE ARTS

Opera Tours

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

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

Spectacular Spring & Opera at the Metropolitan Opera in New York & the New York City Opera from March 30th to April 7th, 1998 with Sherwin Sloan

... you are invited to join Sherwin for another wonderful Spring in New York with walks through Central Park to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Our hotel is on Central Park West and only 3 blocks to Lincoln Center. We will see 5 operas at the Metropolitan Opera: *Stiffelio* with Placido Domingo, *Romeo & Juliette*, *Lohengrin*, *Madama Butterfly* and *Die Meistersinger*. At New York City Opera both *Le Nozze di Figaro* and *Emmeline*. And play to be announced.

Opera & Museums in Washington D.C. with the Metropolitan Opera in New York March 27th to April 4th, 1998 with Sherwin Sloan

... you are invited to join Sherwin for 3 nights in Washington D.C. seeing *Don Giovanni* and *Dangerous Liaisons*, full-day private tour of the National Gallery, private tour of the Smithsonian Institution, visits to memorials. Then to New York by the Metroliner for *Stiffelio* with Domingo, *Romeo & Juliette*, *Lohengrin* and *Madama Butterfly*.

Prague Spring & Ten Operas with Spectacular Sightseeing May 11th to 22nd, 1998 with Herb Rowan

... you are invited to join Herb for an opera vacation in one of the most spectacular, beautiful and majestic towns in all of Europe. Prague has captured the imagination of those who dearly love both Baroque and Renaissance architecture, and especially opera which offers three superb opera houses. The State Opera and National Opera are two of the loveliest in all of Europe. Prague offers a wealth of sightseeing in churches, palaces, museums and castles in stunning settings. The performances: *La Traviata*, *Rusalka*, *Nabucco*, *Don Carlos*, *Rigoletto*, *Boris Godunov*, *Die Schopfung* (Haydn), *L'Elisir d'Amore*, *The Two Widows* by Smetana.

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

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

The White Nights Festival in St. Petersburg, The Hermitage & The Savonlinna Summer Opera Festival on a Lake in Finland with Sherwin Sloan

June 22nd to July 9th, 1998 16 days

... you are invited to join Sherwin for the extraordinary Russian White Nights Festival in late June in St. Petersburg. The 1998 program has not been announced but will include 4 ballet programs including a full-evening Ballet Gala as only the Kirov Ballet can achieve. Two major operas and concerts ... and at the lake district of Savonlinna ... attending opera in the courtyard of this 13th century castle surrounded by the lake is quite a remarkable experience. *Tannhauser*, *Cavalleria Rusticana*, *Pagliacci*. Terrence McNally: Master Class. Opera in Mikelli to be announced.

Der Ring des Nibelungen in Adelaide, Australia November 15th to 30th, 1998 with Sherwin Sloan

... one of the great Ring events in the next several years, the demand & excitement for the Adelaide Ring is quite remarkable. You are invited to join Sherwin for this Ring to be performed in Adelaide, Australia. There will be visits to the wine region, Kangaroo Island and 4 full days in Sydney with two concerts at the Sydney Opera House, ballet and play by Shakespeare to be announced.

For a copy of the itineraries call

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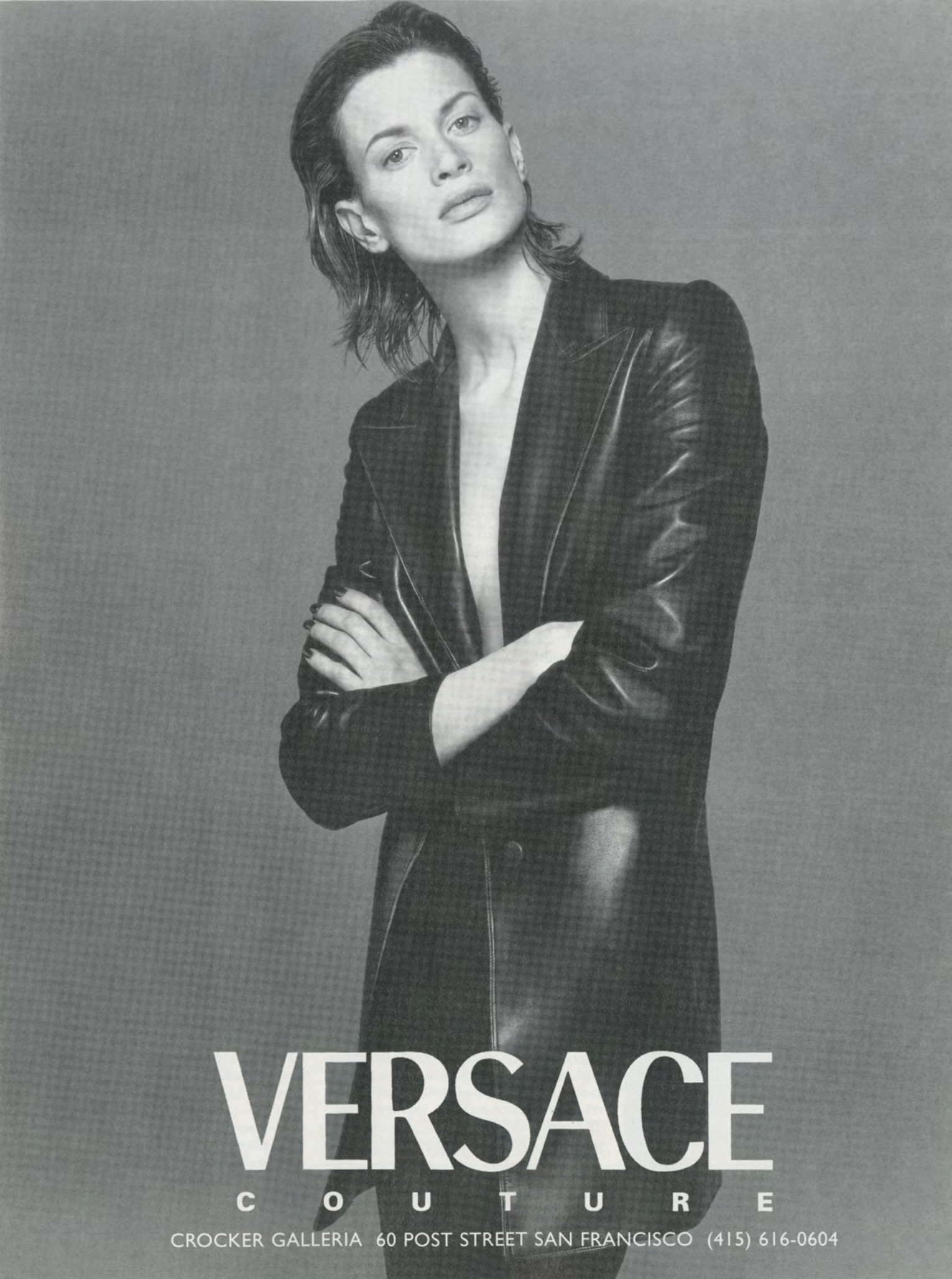
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By MAX LOPPERS

During his short life, in a manner that now seems incomprehensible to us, Mozart continually encountered obstacles to his progress as a composer of operas. In his *Memorie*, written more than three decades after Mozart's death, Lorenzo da Ponte, the librettist of *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *Don Giovanni* and *Così fan tutte*, summarized the situation thus: "Gifted with talents perhaps superior to any other composer in the world past, present or future, (Mozart) had, thanks to the cabals of his enemies, never been able to exercise his divine genius in Vienna, and there remained unknown and obscure, a priceless jewel buried in the depths of the earth, its brilliance and splendor hidden from view."

Outside Vienna, Mozart's operas tended to be more justly appreciated. One particularly gratifying opportunity to revel in success came in Prague, to which he and his wife traveled a month after the local first performance of *Le Nozze di Figaro*, about six months after its Vienna premiere, on May 1, 1786. "Here," he reported to his father in a letter, "they talk about nothing but *Figaro*. Nothing is played, sung or whistled but *Figaro*. No opera is drawing like *Figaro*. Nothing, nothing but *Figaro*." In Vienna, though the opera had found some degree of favor (the first run was a respectable nine performances), it was soon exceeded in popularity by Martin's *Una cosa rara* (also to a libretto by Da Ponte), first performed six months later. In Prague, though, no opera, according to a local German-language newspaper, had "ever caused such a sensation . . . Connoisseurs who have seen (*Figaro*) in Vienna are anxious to declare that it was much better done here."

Even if in Vienna it would take a second production, in 1789, to win for *Le Nozze di Figaro* the acclaim it deserved, this was the opera which finally added Mozart to the list of leading opera composers of the day. Hind-sight, and the fitness and beauty of the *nozze* of music and drama that he and Da Ponte achieved, make one want to believe that it came into existence almost inevitably—"As fast as I wrote the words," the librettist relates, "he made music of them: in six weeks everything was in order" (it seems that his long-distance memory, generally suspected of inaccuracies or implausibilities, did not fail him here: according to recent scholarship it is entirely possible that the main composition of *Figaro* was undertaken in just this period of time).

The complete truth is rather different. Turning into an opera Beaumarchais's two-year-old play *La Folle Journée, ou Le Mariage*

de Figaro took a great deal of time and much tricky negotiation to get underway. It had been Mozart's idea. According to Da Ponte, it was the composer who at their first meeting had suggested making an opera of the Beaumarchais sequel to his *Barbier de Seville* (1772). (A copy of *Le Mariage de Figaro* in a 1785 German translation was among the possessions catalogued after Mozart's death for a valuation of his estate.) This was a bold proposition: in this play, Beaumarchais puts in his characters' mouths stinging criticism of libertine aristocracy, particularly in the long fifth-act diatribe given to Figaro, which is filled with such (for the time) shocking pronouncements as "No, Monsieur Count, you would not have her [Suzanne] . . . Because you're a great lord, you consider yourself a great genius! Noble birth, income, rank, offices of state, all this makes a person so haughty! What have you done to acquire such riches? You gave yourself the discomfort of being born, nothing more: for the rest, you're a rather ordinary man!" This, and much else, had led to the play's suppression when it was completed, in 1781; only three years later did it reach the stage of the Comédie-Française in Paris, where it swiftly became one of the greatest triumphs in company history.

In Vienna, the Emperor, Joseph II, banned *Le Mariage de Figaro* for performance while granting permission for its publication in both the original language and the vernacular. But Mozart was set on it, and in fact began composing before permission for production was ever granted. Given the extreme unlikelihood of a commission materializing for an opera made of such volatile material, a mutual friend of Mozart's and Da Ponte's—Baron Raimund von Wetzlar, in whose house the two first met—offered to pay for the libretto and, if Vienna should prove impossible, seek out performance opportunities for the work in London or France. Da Ponte refused Wetzlar's "bella generosità": "I proposed to have words and music written secretly and to await a favorable opportunity to show (the opera) to the court theater directors or to the Emperor himself—the responsibility for the whole undertaking I bravely offered to shoulder myself." Soon after the opera was completed, the *Memoirs* tell us (and the reader swiftly learns to take them with a large pinch of salt), he achieved notable success in persuading the reluctant Emperor to let it be performed. After this, various plots attempting to kill off or in some way mar its eventual staging failed, above all—it seems—because of Da Ponte's sage counsel and, when required, quick-witted action, which

Max Loppert, chief music critic of the London Financial Times from 1980 to 1996, is Associate Editor of Opera and writes for BBC Music Magazine, International Classical Record Collector, International Piano Quarterly, Gramophone, and the theater monthly Applause; he is also engaged on a life-and-works study of Gluck.

self-renewing . . .

finally succeeded in steering his and Mozart's vessel into port.

This was the Burgtheater, theater of the Austrian court, which shortly before Mozart and Da Ponte made each others' acquaintance had been re-established as a home for Italian comic opera. In 1776—four years before his mother, Maria Theresia, died—Joseph had taken over its direction himself and immediately disbanded the resident company, thus putting an end to the long-running Viennese tradition of performing Italian and French operas, full-length pantomime ballets, and German plays and *Singspiele*. In their place came a theater troupe performing in German, whose activities were extended two years later by the formation of a Singspiel company (for whom Mozart produced *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* in 1782). In 1783, however, apparently admitting that his desire to achieve German theatrical dominance at the Burgtheater had not been shared by the public, Joseph reinstated an Italian company alongside the German one. Salieri, already court composer, became its music director and Da Ponte, newly settled in the city, its resident poet.

All this Mozart brought to his father's notice in a 1783 letter: "The Italian opera buffa has started again here and is very popular... Our poet now is a certain Abbate Da Ponte," who promises that, after supplying *per obbligo* a libretto for Salieri, "he will write a new libretto for me. But who knows whether he will be able to keep his word — or will want to? . . . If he is in league with Salieri, I shall never get anything out of him. But indeed I should dearly love to show what I can do in an Italian opera." Thinking out loud that meanwhile he would like to ask Varesco—librettist of *Idomeneo*, Mozart's 1781 *opera seria* for Munich—to provide him with "a new libretto for seven characters," he goes on to specify what kind of Italian opera he wants to write: "The essential thing is that on the whole the story should be really comic; and, if possible, (the librettist) ought to introduce two equally good female parts, one of these to be *seria*, the other *mezzo carattere*, but both parts equal in importance and excellence. The third female character may be entirely *buffa*, and so may all the male ones, if necessary." He knows exactly what he wants: in the same letter he earlier states that "I have looked through at least a hundred libretti and more, but I have hardly found a single one with which I am satisfied," and that "so many alterations would have to be made here and there, that even if a poet were to undertake to make them, it would be easier for him to write a completely new text—which indeed it is always best to do."

With the same prescience that characterized his work in *Idomeneo*, Mozart here lays

down what was (with small variations) to be the ground plan for his three operas with Da Ponte. So it seems amazing that an interval of almost three years was to pass between the date of this letter—May 7, 1783—and that of the *Figaro* premiere. But first, there was the libretto problem: since nothing was forthcoming from Da Ponte, he tackled two others. The first, the same year, was *L'Oca del Cairo* (The Cairo Goose), a new libretto by Varesco; the second, *Lo Sposo Deluso* (The Deluded Bridegroom), on which he began work about two years later, had previously been set by Cimarosa. In both cases, after the completion of a few numbers, Mozart abandoned the librettos—not surprisingly, in view of their quality. After Da Ponte had agreed to Mozart's Beaumarchais project, the composer appears to have immediately given up *Lo Sposo Deluso* and taken up *Figaro*.

What this shows is that, as in the case of *Idomeneo*, not only the right librettist had to be found, but the right subject matter; and this was the second Beaumarchais *Figaro* play. Doubtless, one reason for its attractiveness to Mozart was that he could make his opera a direct sequel to Paisiello's operatic adaptation of *Le Barbier de Séville*—this, given its first performance in St. Petersburg in 1780, had been a huge hit in Vienna when given there in the summer of 1783. The characters were now favorites of the public, and so the new opera would afford Mozart—who liked Paisiello and admired his *Barbiere*—an opportunity of the kind he could never resist, to display the invincible superiority of his

musical and theatrical gifts. (As Daniel Heartz has shown in "Constructing *Le Nozze di Figaro* [in *Mozart's Operas*; Berkeley, 1990], Paisiello's opera was much in his thoughts while he composed *Figaro*: similarities in motivic material and parallels in the dramatic situations that call the musically similar material into existence are too close to be coincidental.)

Then, the Beaumarchais *Figaro* plays both involve music. In its original form, *Le Barbier de Séville* had been intended as an *opéra comique* (the technical term for a musical drama in which speech and song are mingled), and *Le Mariage de Figaro*, filled as it is with musical numbers, approached the *opéra comique* genre more closely than any previous French play. Considerations of this kind would immediately have been appreciated by so naturally theater-minded an opera composer as Mozart. Of his response to the play's notorious political content we have no specific knowledge—unlike in the case of *Idomeneo*, letters charting the birth-process, and -pangs, of *Figaro* are frustratingly few. But it seems unlikely that Beaumarchais's social satire and criticism held any intrinsic attraction for him. He would have been aware that these must need to be toned down for Vienna—and anyway, he was never in this sense a rebel. It was surely for reasons deeper than notoriety or the solving of technical problems posed by adaptation (for *Le Mariage de Figaro* was by far the lengthiest French stage comedy of the 18th century) that he was drawn to the challenge of a *Figaro* opera.

Three themes running through the play made a specially strong deep impression on Mozart: of this the music supplies plentiful evidence. One is the plight of women per-

Opposite: San Francisco Opera's first Mozart opera was *Le Nozze di Figaro* in 1936. Ezio Pinza (top, shown with Charlotte Boerner's Susanna in the last act) portrayed the title role; Elisabeth Rethberg (center) was the Countess, captured in performance from the wings; (bottom) Gina Vanna was Cherubino. The cast also included Perry Askam (Count), Louis D'Angelo (Bartolo), Hans Clemens (Basilio), and Olga Callahan (Marcellina). Richard Lert was the conductor. *Photos: Morton*

Below: San Francisco Opera's 1958 cast of *Le Nozze di Figaro* included: (Left to right) Elisabeth Schwarzkopf (Countess), Eugenia Ratti (Susanna), Rolando Panerai (Figaro), Giuseppe Modesti (Count), Richard Wentworth (Bartolo), Katherine Hilgenberg (Marcellina) and Howard Fried (Basilio). Kurt Herbert Adler conducted.



petually ill-treated by their menfolk. In the long trial examining the marriage claim against Figaro (which Da Ponte ingeniously reduced to a single short scene), the Beaumarchais Marcelline becomes magnificently vocal on the subject: "You men, worse than ingrates, who destroy through contempt the playthings of your passions—your victims!—it is you who ought to be punished for the mistakes of our youth! . . . Even in the highest ranks, women obtain from you no more than a derisory obeisance—lured by surface respectfulness into actual servitude, treated as minors in regard to our possessions, punished as adults for our faults!"

Such uncomfortable outbursts Da Ponte may have excised (and in the opera Dr. Bartolo submits far more quiescently to marriage than his counterpart in the play). But what remains carries the underlying message clearly enough: the mighty comic engines of *Le Nozze di Figaro* are constantly fueled by stratagems—many of them devised, admittedly, by Figaro—for gaining women their freedom, however temporary, from the unjust or improper actions of men. In the long finale of Act II, widely held to be the greatest single example of ensemble writing in all opera, Mozart's powers of dramatization are at full stretch: his immeasurably brilliant exploration for dramatic purposes of sonata-form principles, command of in-depth psychological analysis through melody, and comprehension of the human voice in all manner of combination and contrast—of this last the finale's graded expansion from three participants through four to seven, spatially divided (two groups of three on either side of the Count), provides perhaps the matchless demonstration. Everything fuses to develop this theme of stratagem and strategy to the point of comic combustion.

Another theme is female alliance—often, not always, as a direct response to men's unjust or improper actions. In the opera, Figaro and the Count are never alone together: Da Ponte, removing entirely the Beaumarchais Act III, Scene 5, an intricate *pas de deux* for the play's two leading opponents, left their battles of wills and wits to be exempli-

fied by confrontations during the ensemble scenes of Acts II and III. Indeed, until the fifth scene of the opera's fourth act, in which Figaro assembles a handful of men (Bartolo, Basilio, a few workmen) to witness Susanna's supposed forthcoming treachery, no scene displays any purely male grouping. Of women together, on the other hand, the treatment is wonderfully substantial and expressive. We see Susanna alone with Marcellina once, and—central to the opera's endlessly vital, full-hearted perception of women—Susanna alone with the Countess three times: first in Act II; then in Act III, while the latter dictates her *canzonetta sull'aria*, the letter by means of which the Count will be drawn to the assignation "under the pines" that the two have prepared for him; and finally in Act IV, just before their garden venture in exchanged costumes.

The simplest of musical devices—that of two voices echoing each other's melodic phrases—is employed to characterize two of these meetings, to a widely differing end. In the Act I duet for Susanna and Marcellina, "Via, resti servita," the notes sung are exactly the same much of the time, taken up each in turn with spitfire vivacity, but the words are different: Marcellina's every phrase of mock deference is trumped by Susanna's ripostes, and the result is a perfect comic essay-in-miniature on women at war in polite society. (This demonstration in purely vocal terms of apparently irreconcilable differences provides the backdrop, as Mozart the in-depth, long-range dramatic psychologist meant it to, for the sublimely concordant coda to the Act III Sextet, "Riconosci in questo amplesso," in which Susanna's voice with overflowing happiness rises atop, then sinks below Marcellina's to speak volumes about reconciliation achieved in the face of the Count and Don Curzio. From this moment Marcellina is one of Susanna's staunchest allies, as she shows in Act IV.) In the Act III Letter Scene, in contrast, echo-repetition is used to touch in the feelings of affectionate trust and, indeed, emotional equality that mistress and maidservant are capable of showing each other while developing their battle plan. The first time around the Countess states the melody and Susanna repeats it, the second Susanna states what has been dictated to her and the Countess varies her repetitions, then both vary and embellish, until at the close the two come together in a blissful chain of thirds and sixths.



The third theme of the play to which Mozart appears particularly responsive—it is this, I believe, perhaps more than any other aspect of the opera, that places it among the central, "necessary," eternally self-renewing works of western art—is the depiction of various types of love relationships within the context of normal life. Like few other operas—Wagner's *Meistersinger von Nürnberg* and Verdi's *Falstaff* come to mind—*Le Nozze di Figaro* draws its dramatic incident out of a created "real world," an environment peopled with recognizable, three-dimensional types of different stations in close proximity. On the Count's estate at Aguas Frescas, work gets done (in the new living quarters for Mr. and Mrs. Figaro-to-be; in the Countess's bedchamber; in the garden) and, in spite of passing intrigue, misunderstanding, and friction, people carry on co-existing. For all the gloriously farcical improbabilities that occur during this particular "mad day"—the hide-and-seek around the armchair, the missing seal on the letter, the disguising of Cherubino, the leap from the window, the "impresso geroglifico" on Figaro's right arm telling Marcellina he is her son—it is not the comedy alone that makes *Le Nozze di Figaro* a never-ending source of pleasure, emotional nourishment, and instruction on how to live with one's fellow human beings. Vertical family relationships are few—while Figaro's previously unknown parents make themselves known during the opera, the revelation is a comic plot-hinge rather than a component of any dramatization of child-parent relationships, and the Countess's illegitimate child, fruit of a brief sexual relationship with Cherubino and subject of *L'Autre Tartuffe, ou La Mère Coupable* of 1792, the third Beaumarchais Figaro play, has yet to be conceived. (In an English National Opera *Figaro* production of the late 1970s, the director, Jonathan Miller, felt a need to show her with two children during the orchestral

(continued on page 37)



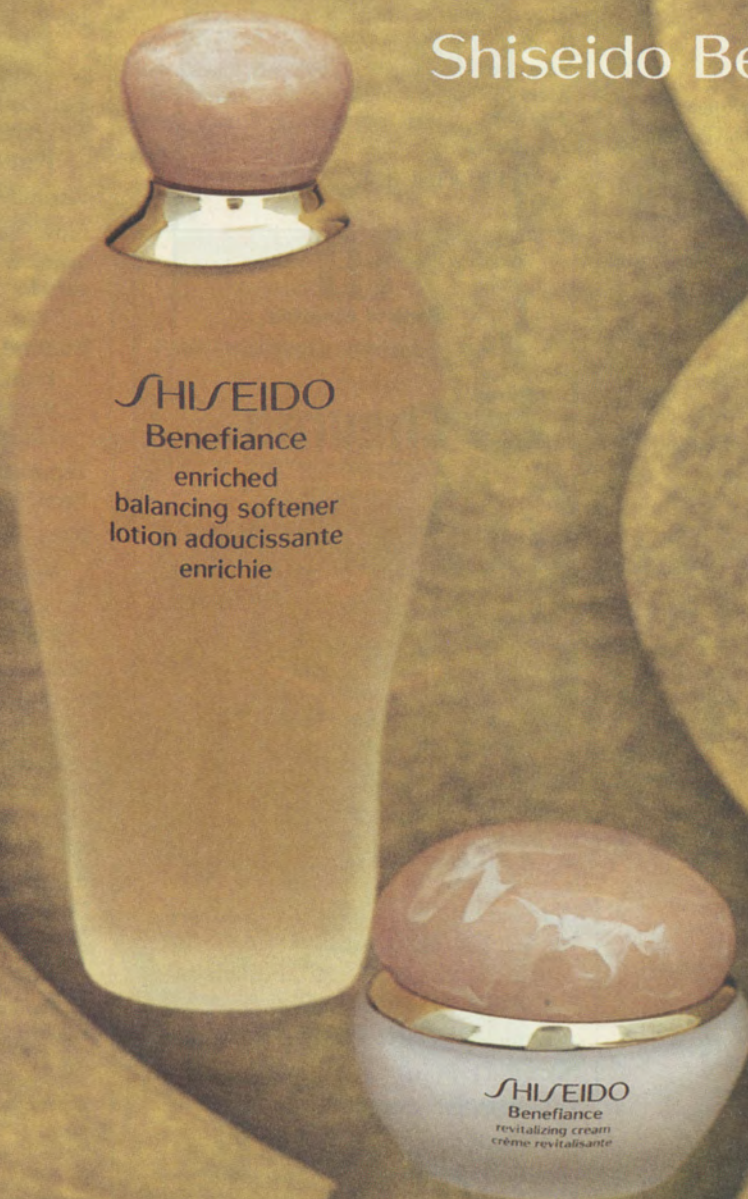
Left: Graziella Sciutti, this season's *Nozze di Figaro* director, made her U.S. debut with the San Francisco Opera in 1961 in the role of Susanna. The photo shows her in a lighthearted moment with the Countess of Lisa Della Casa and the Figaro of Geraint Evans.

Above: In 1964, Pilar Lorengar portrayed the *Nozze di Figaro* Countess; Eberhard Waechter was the Count, and Reri Grist, the delectable Susanna.

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Lukacs**, Malagnini, Leiferkus
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Britten

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New Production

Rigoletto

Verdi

Swenson, Zaremba; Gavanelli,
Thompson*/Leech (10/1)/
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D. Robertson/Lamos/Yeargan/
Hoffman*/Collins*

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

Rost*, Keen; C. Robertson, Lopardo,
Langan

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Nov. 26, 30, Dec. 4, 6

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Der Fliegende Holländer Wagner

Charbonnet, Gayer; Morris,
Winbergh, Very, Hawlata/
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Boder**/Strosser*/Taylor**/Cauchetier*/
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Sept. 30, Oct. 4, 8, 12, 17, 21, 25

Guillaume Tell

Rossini

Racette, Keen; Lafont, Merritt, Lloyd,
Wells

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

New Production

Pelléas et Mélisande

Debussy

von Stade, Denize; Keenlyside,
White, Lloyd

Runnicles/Graham/Bosquet/Munn

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

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Tchaikovsky

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

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

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

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

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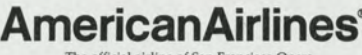
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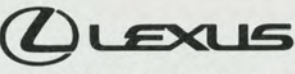
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Netrebko, Foland, Cao; Relyea*,
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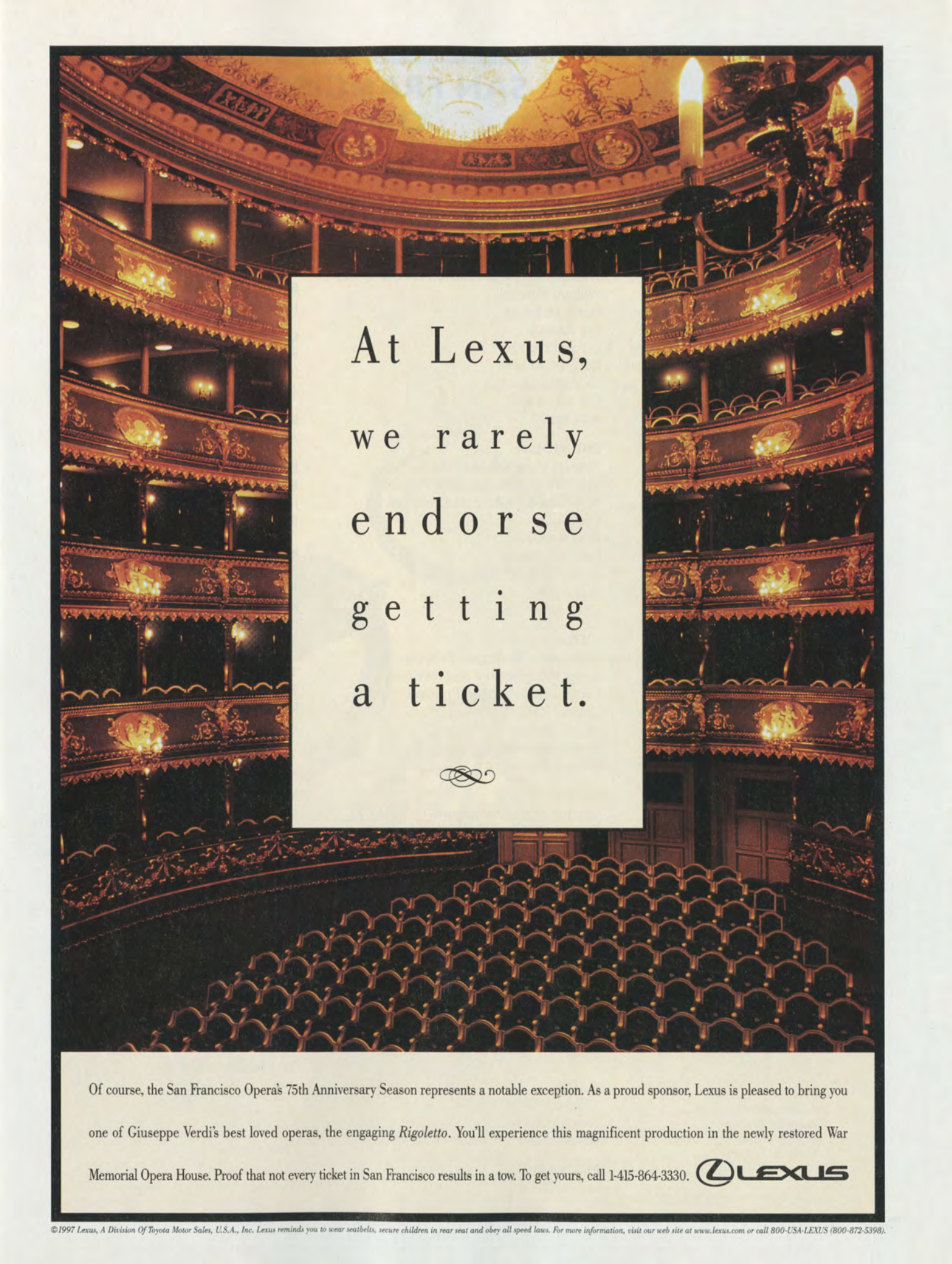
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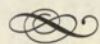
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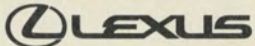
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A photograph of the interior of a grand, ornate theater. The view is from the audience, looking towards the stage. The theater has multiple tiers of balconies with intricate gold-colored carvings and decorative elements. The ceiling is also highly decorated with a central circular light fixture. The seats in the foreground are dark and arranged in a semi-circular pattern.

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Opera in four acts by WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART
Text by LORENZO DA PONTE
After the comedy by PIERRE AUGUSTIN CARON DE BEAUMARCHAIS

Le Nozze di Figaro

(in Italian)

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Ivor Bolton**

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FRIDAY, JANUARY 9 AT 7:30
SUNDAY, JANUARY 11 AT 1:30
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 14 AT 7:30
SATURDAY, JANUARY 17 AT 7:30

1997–98 Season

CAST
(in order of appearance)

<i>Figaro</i>	John Relyea†
<i>Susanna</i>	Anna Netrebko
<i>Dr. Bartolo</i>	Chester Patton
<i>Marcellina</i>	Catherine Cook
<i>Cherubino</i>	Zheng Cao
<i>Count Almaviva</i>	David Okerlund
<i>Don Basilio</i>	Joseph Frank
<i>Countess Almaviva</i>	Nicolle Foland
<i>Antonio</i>	Bojan Knežević
<i>Barbarina</i>	Peggy Kriha Dye†
<i>Don Curzio</i>	Marc Molomot
<i>First bridesmaid</i>	Virginia Pluth
<i>Second bridesmaid</i>	Sally Munro
<i>Peasants and servants</i>	

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

Supertitles provided by a generous gift from The Stanley S. Langendorf Foundation

TIME AND PLACE: 18th century; the villa of Count Almaviva outside Seville

ACT I A room in the villa

INTERMISSION

ACT II The Countess' apartment

INTERMISSION

ACT III A courtyard of the villa

INTERMISSION

ACT IV The garden of the villa

*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 hours.*

SYNOPSIS

Le Nozze di Figaro

ACT I

Count Almaviva's valet, Figaro, and Countess Almaviva's personal maid, Susanna, are to be married and have been given the room connecting their employers' personal apartments. Susanna warns Figaro that this will assist the Count in his attempts to seduce her. Figaro determines to outwit Almaviva. The housekeeper of the villa, Marcellina, has lent Figaro money against a promise of marriage, and plots with her ex-employer, Doctor Bartolo, how to prevent Figaro's wedding, since the sum is unpaid; Bartolo will urge the Count to order a breach of promise action and have the wedding postponed. Cherubino, a well-born page living in the villa, has roused Almaviva's indignation by his amorous conquests, and will be dismissed unless Susanna intercedes with the Countess. Cherubino hides when Almaviva enters to court Susanna. The arrival of Don Basilio, priest and music teacher, causes Almaviva to hide as well, but he emerges when Basilio gossips about Cherubino's passion for the Countess. By accident the Count discovers Cherubino's hiding place and angrily orders the boy to accept a commission in the Almaviva Regiment, stationed far away.

ACT II

Susanna and Figaro conspire with the Countess to embarrass Almaviva by rigging a double rendezvous; this involves disguising Cherubino (still lurking on the grounds) as a girl. Susanna gives the boy a costume fitting in the Countess' bedroom. The Count arrives and Cherubino quickly has to be hidden. The worst is suspected, but the conspirators get the better of Almaviva, notwithstanding the gardener, Antonio, who insists that he has seen Cherubino. At the moment of reconciliation Marcellina bursts in with Bartolo and Basilio. They easily persuade the Count to try Figaro for breach of promise.

ACT III

Don Curzio, the judge, receives instructions from the Count on how to conduct the case. When he leaves, Susanna, encouraged by the Countess, finds a pretext to visit the Count and arrange the false rendezvous with him for that evening. But the Count overhears her telling Figaro that the case is as good as won. The litigants assemble; the Count supports Curzio in the judgment that Figaro must either repay Marcellina, or marry her. Figaro explains that he is a foundling of respectable birth. Marcellina discovers that she is his mother and Bartolo his father. They decide to celebrate a double wedding. The Countess and Susanna concoct a letter of assignation for the Count. Now the village girls, led by the gardener's daughter, Barbarina, bring flowers to the Countess. One of the girls is recognized to be Cherubino in skirts, but Barbarina persuades the Count to let her marry the boy. The act ends with the civil wedding during which Susanna delivers her note.

ACT IV

In the garden, where the rendezvous are to be faked, Figaro suspects his wife of cuckolding him. But Susanna and the Countess exchange clothes. Cherubino and Almaviva are both found embracing the Countess, thinking her to be Susanna. Figaro comes upon Susanna (disguised as the Countess) and tells her where the Count and Susanna are. He suddenly realizes who it is, but decides to keep silent to pay her back for her trick. He then pretends to make passionate love to the Countess until Susanna jealously reveals herself. They put on an act for the Count who arrives, seizes Figaro, and calls his servants. Everyone appears except the Countess, and they all take Susanna to be their mistress. She implores forgiveness but the Count is adamant until the real Countess appears and he realizes what has been happening. Grasping the truth at last, the Count begs his wife's forgiveness, and all ends happily.

The performance of January 9th is sponsored by MCI.

The performance of January 11th is sponsored by Northern Trust.

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Le Nozze di Figaro

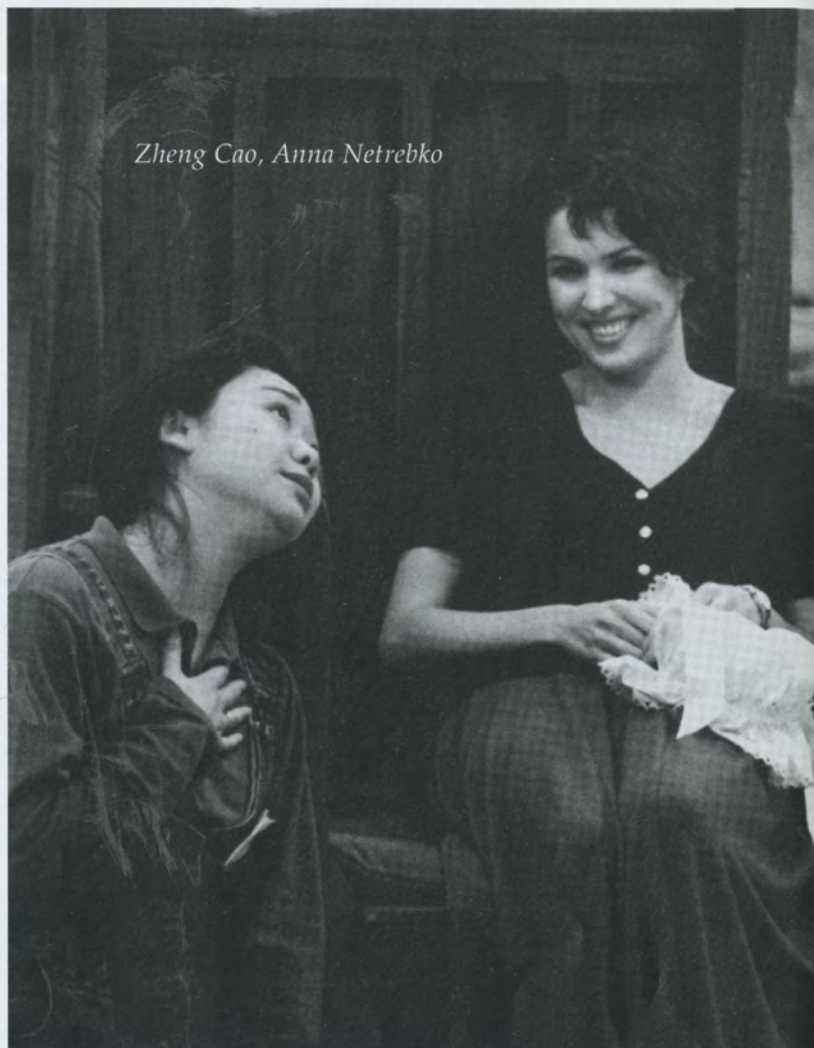
Photos taken in rehearsal
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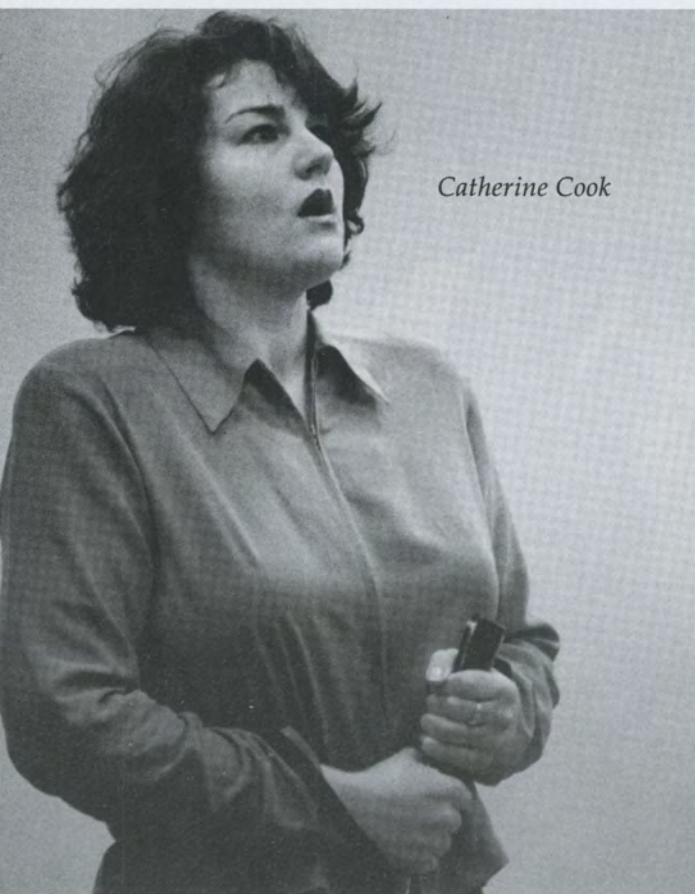
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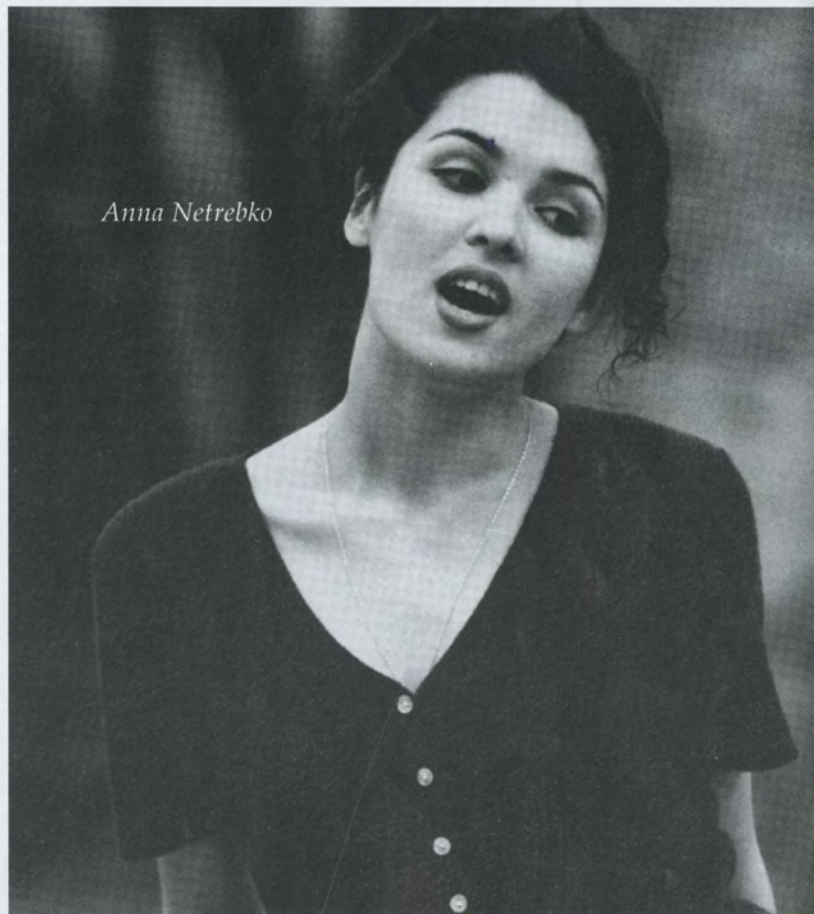
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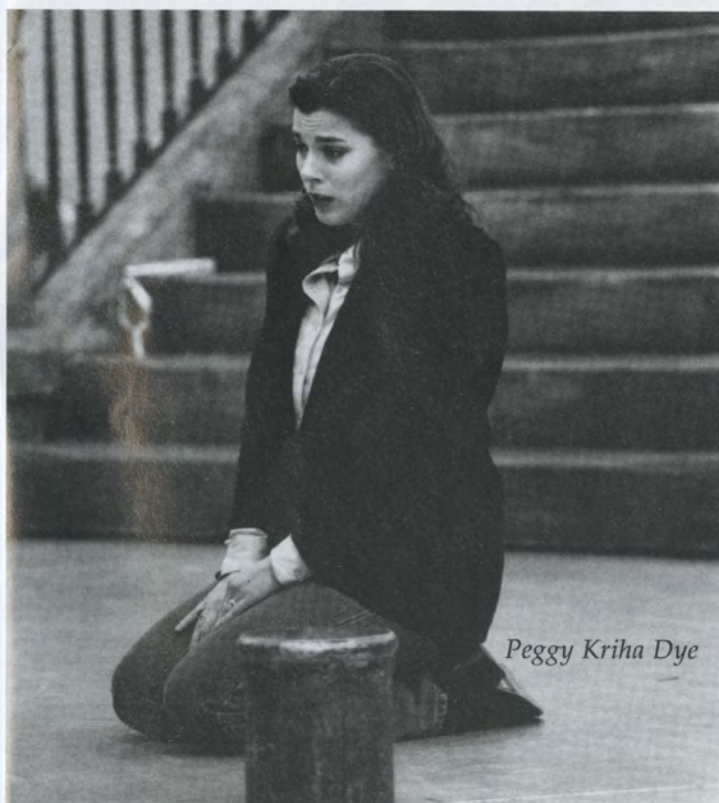
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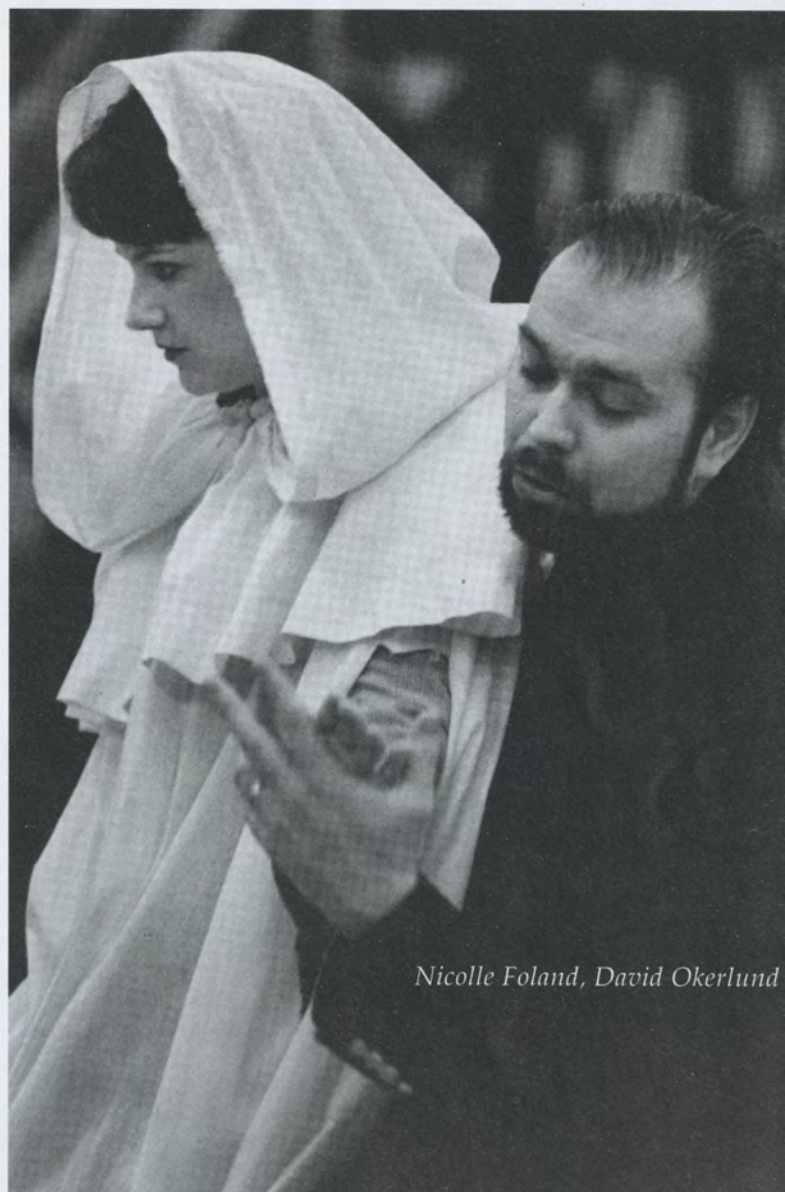
*Anna Netrebko, Nicolle Foland,
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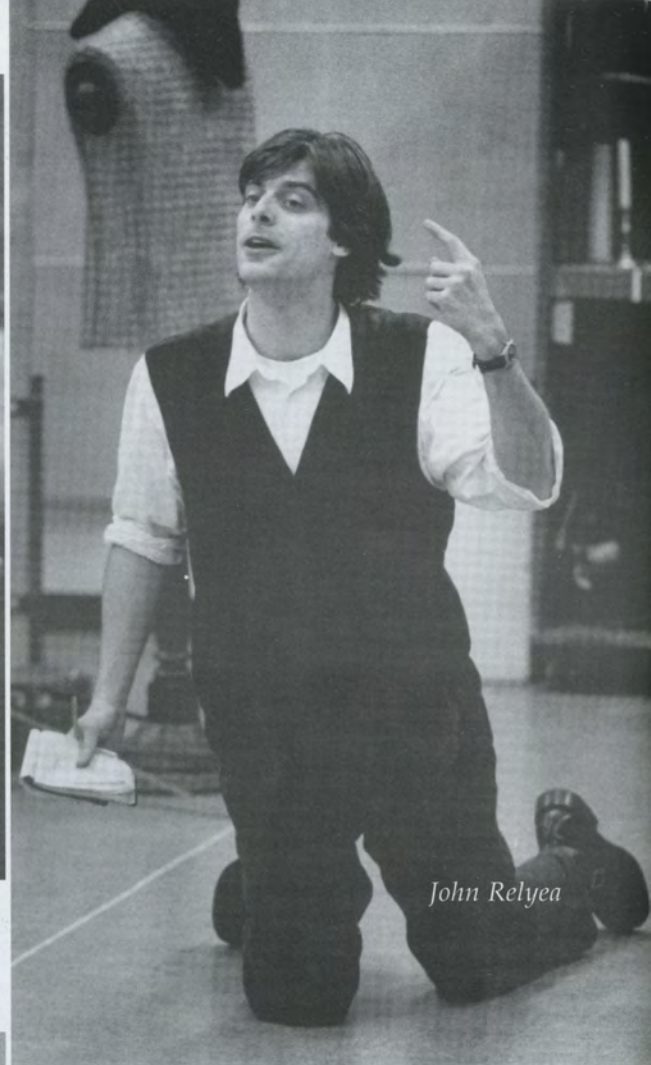
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Zheng Cao



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

PRE-PERFORMANCE LECTURES

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

Rigoletto—Oct. 1, 7; Dec. 4, 6

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

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

Elektra—Oct. 23, 31; Nov. 4, 8, 13

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

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

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

Tosca—Jan. 10, 13, 16

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA GUILD — INSIGHTS

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

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

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA GUILD — PREVIEWS

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

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

EAST BAY CHAPTER—SAN FRANCISCO OPERA GUILD

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

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

MARIN CHAPTER—SAN FRANCISCO OPERA GUILD

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

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

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA GUILD

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

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

SAN JOSE OPERA GUILD

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

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

SONOMA CHAPTER—SAN FRANCISCO OPERA GUILD

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

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

SOUTH PENINSULA CHAPTER—SAN FRANCISCO OPERA GUILD

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

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

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

MERRITT COLLEGE OPERA LECTURE SERIES

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

ROBERT GOODHUE'S OPERA PREVIEWS

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

SAN FRANCISCO CITY COLLEGE PREVIEWS

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

SAN FRANCISCO CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC EXTENSION DIVISION

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

OPERA EDUCATION INTERNATIONAL PREVIEW SERIES

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Oct. 6	<i>Pelléas et Mélisande</i>
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Blanche Thebom at 50



first appearance with the San Francisco Opera Company. The grandly scaled dramatic effectiveness forecast in her Opera House recital of last season was amply fulfilled. She rejoices in a luscious, sultry contralto (sic) which is ideally suited to the character of Amneris. . . . Her singing was equally remarkable for its histrionic power, its respect for the best tradition of the vocal art, and its faithfulness to the composer's text. Furthermore, Miss Thebom's sarongs (sic), and the figure that goes under them, are something sensational."

Alexander Fried, who played musical Ebert at the *Examiner* in those days to Frankenstein's musical Siskel, seconded most of the emotions, both positive and negative:

"The news of the cast was the Amneris of Blanche Thebom, American mezzo-soprano. Miss Thebom is so young and good-looking—and she wore her scanty, tropical gowns so pleasantly—that she put the whole *Aida* story out of whack. Why would Radames object to marrying her—and a throne in the bargain?"

Unlike his journalistic competitor, Fried heard no traces of a contralto. He described "a big, full, dramatic voice that carries its impact way up to the soprano range." And he summed up Thebom's obvious theatrical impact this way: "She filled the role with such real and tigerish passion that she made it intensely interesting even in the penultimate *Aida* scene that so often gets dull."

Amneris remained Thebom's key assignment in San Francisco. She returned for revivals in 1949, 1952 and 1957, setting something of a gold standard in the role.

The celebrated mezzo-soprano, who can now celebrate the 50th anniversary of her memorable San Francisco Opera debut, received lots of notices in her long, diverse and remarkably productive career. The details changed, of course, as she made her illustrious way from Verdi to Wagner to Mozart to Bellini to Strauss (both Johann and Richard) to Stravinsky to Poulenc to Berg to Barber. But the essential tone remained the same.

Here was a thinking person's singer. Here was a rare artist blessed with a beautiful, wide-ranging, essentially lyrical voice, keen dramatic instincts that made their mark even in minimally-rehearsed repertory performances, a useful sense of glamour, good taste and physical attributes that blithely contradicted all those popular cartoon no-

By MARTIN BERNHEIMER

The headline over the review in the *San Francisco Chronicle* on September 27, 1947 wasn't very promising. "A poor *Aida*," it grumped, mincing no opinion. Alfred Frankenstein hadn't had a very good night at the opera. Nor, apparently, had Verdi.

The critic, ever-rueful, found the performance "the poorest of the opera season." He reported that it "had the look, sound and general spirit of something that had been run up in a hurry." The would-be romantic tenorissimo on duty, Kurt Baum, "ambled through the role of Radames with all the airs and graces of a genial bartender." Although Frankenstein mustered some praise for the literally stellar protagonist, Stella Roman, he said "her phrasing reminds one of noth-

ing so much as one of those corridors full of distorting mirrors which they have in amusement parks, (but) in amusement parks they are supposed to be funny." Paul Breisch conducted, one was told, "without too much fire or punch." The costumes and ballet invoked images of "circus-like vulgarity."

Frankenstein did admire the Amonasro of the evening, Leonard Warren. But—and it was a crucial but—he found redeeming virtue in a 29-year old mezzo-soprano from Monessen, Pa., who was making her debut as Amneris, the wily and tempestuous daughter of the king of Egypt.

Also sprach Frankenstein:

"The evening was significant mainly for the fact that it marked Blanche Thebom's

Martin Bernheimer, winner of the Pulitzer Prize for criticism, served as principal music critic for the Los Angeles Times from 1965 to 1996.

tions of prima (and seconda) donnas impersonating battleships.

Thebom wasn't exactly an unknown commodity when she first came to the San Francisco Opera. Having studied with a paragon predecessor, Edyth Walker, and, to a lesser degree, Margarete Matzenauer, she had made her debut with the Metropolitan in 1944 as Wagner's Fricka—three years before conquering San Francisco. By then, she had already accumulated valuable experience on recital stages and had appeared as soloist in orchestral concerts under such prestigious conductors as Eugene Ormandy and Dimitri Mitropoulos.

She was an archetypal American artist, Swedish parentage notwithstanding. War-time conditions precluded training and exposure in Europe. Like many a colleague in that era, she had made her Met debut without the advantage of previous stage experience. Under the circumstances, her San Francisco engagement represented a significant expansion of professional horizons.

Her relationship with the Company continued through 1963 when she sang a final performance of *The Dialogues of the Carmelites* during a Los Angeles tour, having participated in the U.S. premiere of Poulenc's masterpiece in San Francisco five seasons earlier. Her relationship with the city continues to this day. She lives and teaches here in what has turned out to be a remarkably unretiring retirement.

Thebom sang many of her most famous roles in the War Memorial Opera House. Her second assignment was Laura in *La Gioconda*, followed by her classic Brangäne in *Tristan und Isolde*—a specialty perpetuated on the possibly definitive recording with Kirsten Flagstad. The stern *Walküre* Fricka followed in 1949, counterbalanced by two

voluptuously wily figures in French opera: Giulietta in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* and, more important, Saint-Saëns's Dalila.

San Francisco also cast Thebom in a number of assignments that, in retrospect, might seem somewhat less characteristic. During her first season, she briefly tried on little Cherubino's trousers in *Le Nozze di Figaro*. In 1951 she undertook Marina in Musorgsky's *Boris Godunov* in Italian—in deference, no doubt, to the inveterate Italian tsar of Ezio Pinza. She also invaded territory dominated elsewhere by her putative rival, Risë Stevens, offering an impetuous Octavian in *Der Rosenkavalier* (a role Thebom sang nowhere else), Gluck's noble Orfeo and, yes, the ultimate sex-bomb *über Alles*, Carmen.

A mainstay at the mighty Met from 1944 to 1967, Thebom did not appear abroad a great deal—not, at any rate, by current standards. When she did travel, however, she made the trip eminently worthwhile. She brought her Dorabella to a Glyndebourne *Così fan tutte* back in 1950 (listen, if you can find the highlights recording, to the luscious blend of her voice with the exquisite Fiordiligi of Sena Jurinac). She sang Berlioz's Didon in the first complete *Troyens* at Covent Garden in 1957. She made the Russians sit up and take notice when she clicked Carmen's castanets at the isolated Bolshoi in deepest, darkest 1957.

In a sentimental salute to her forebears, she also made a vastly successful pilgrimage to Sweden, where she ventured a bonafide, full-scale soprano role for the first and last time: Elisabeth in *Tannhäuser*. "Remember," she now cautions, "the house in Stockholm seats only 1,800."

After her final engagements as a singer, she served as manager of the all-too-short-lived Atlanta Opera in 1968, then taught at universities in Arkansas and California (San Francisco State). Today, at an astonishingly vibrant and youthful 79, she remains actively involved in numerous educational projects. This summer, for instance, she led a three-week course for girls with operatic aspirations, aged 12 to 17; true to her own experience, she declares herself opposed to "middle-aged debutantes." She's also working on her memoirs, which could be provocative.

Clock, calendar and personal inclinations permitting, she still keeps in touch with the ever-changing world of opera, though she isn't inevitably ecstatic about what she encounters. "I go rather seldom," she admits, "mostly if the work is something I have not seen before, or if a particularly interesting artist is in the cast—someone like Thomas Hampson in *Hamlet* last year."

True to her reputation for unvarnished candor, she voices skepticism about current operatic habits and standards. "I take very



Above: Aida's Amneris like no other, Blanche Thebom is photographed from the wings at the San Francisco Opera in 1949.

Opposite page: Blanche Thebom as Mother Marie in San Francisco Opera's 1957 U.S. premiere of Poulenc's *The Dialogues of the Carmelites*.

Center: In one of her most celebrated roles, Blanche Thebom prepares a fateful potion for Tristan and Isolde backstage at the San Francisco Opera in 1949.

little pleasure in what I see," she says sadly, "and a lot less in what I hear. So many of the young singers seem unable to make a properly founded, wonderfully focused sound."

She recalls her San Francisco career fondly. "I sang so many different roles," she says, "in so many styles. Versatility was the whole thing in my day. We were a company. There wasn't time to leave town between performances, and we appreciated ensemble values. It was a joy going from one thing to another that was totally different.

"I have great memories of that first season, 50 years ago. After Amneris came Laura in *La Gioconda*. I didn't exactly relish the assignment, but it is a lovely part—more of a soprano part, really. And it was the only role in which I got the tenor. Then there was my only Cherubino. It isn't a heavy-duty Mozart challenge like the others that came later, but it was great fun. And it was my first Mozart."

She chuckles when reminded that the *San Francisco Chronicle* originally labeled her a contralto. "I was a true mezzo," she insists. "I had great comfort in the entire range, but I think I had a mezzo-soprano personality. I always found the acting challenge as a mezzo more interesting. I suppose I could have done some of the soprano things—Isolde actually



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isn't that high. But, apart from that one careful fling with *Tannhäuser* in Stockholm, I never really strayed."

And what about Amneris's reported "sarong" on that fateful first night in 1947? What about the "scanty tropical gowns" replete with visions of Dorothy Lamour slinking with Bob and Bing down the road to ancient Egypt?

"Of course it wasn't a sarong," Thebom says, obviously amused at the thought. "We wore our own costumes in those days. Mine were open, with a bare midriff. They were quite spectacular."

Amneris did not flaunt Thebom's trademark long hair. But those flowing dark tresses were well displayed in other roles, and Milton Cross, the prim announcer on the Met broadcasts, often assured presumably curious listeners from coast to coast that no wigs were required when Thebom was on the stage. "My hair only comes down to my waist now," says the impeccably coiffed diva, "but during my career it was down to the floor."

Thebom is pleased to learn that she shares her anniversary year in San Francisco with Leontyne Price, who made her local debut exactly a decade later. [Miss Price will be the subject of a magazine tribute in a later issue. Ed.] When Price first appeared at the War Memorial Opera House, on September 20th, 1957, her assignment was Madame Lidoine in the U.S. premiere of *The Dialogues of the Carmelites*. Thebom portrayed Mother Marie. Five weeks later, in yet another *Aida*, Price served as a last-minute replacement for an indisposed Antonietta Stella, assuming the title role for the first time anywhere. Thebom, of course, was Amneris.

"I have very warm memories of Leontyne," Thebom says, "and of our work together. She was a wonderful colleague. We had a long, incredibly intense, personally involving period of rehearsals for *Carmelites*, and, to complicate matters, none of us happened to be Catholic. It was an enormous emotional puzzle. I think we helped each other. I found it a very rewarding experience. Under the circumstances, I was particularly glad we sang the opera in English."

Forty years ago, operatic casting was not exactly color blind. Marian Anderson had made her ridiculously belated debut at the Met only in 1955, razing racial barriers as the first African-American to take a major role in that monumental house. Significantly, perhaps, Thebom had to pause and reflect when asked if Price was the first black artist with whom she shared the stage. "Yes," she concludes. "I think she was."



San Francisco Opera Guild's Fol de Rol had many light-hearted moments through the years, one of the best being Blanche Thebom's appearance as Lady Godiva, wrapped in her own hair, and singing "I'm Gonna Wash That Man Right Out of My Hair."

If Thebom harbors anything but good feelings about any of her operatic partners, she tends to keep those feelings to herself. "You know," she insists (perhaps too much?), "I liked all of them." She illustrates the point with a sports metaphor. "If you work up to being in league with the first run of horses, you respect your colleagues."

Still, not all colleagues are created equal. Thebom speaks with special awe, tempered by fondness, of Kirsten Flagstad, the Norwegian Isolde in excelsis who brought her to London for the epochal *Tristan* under Wilhelm Furtwängler. She speaks with passing bemusement of Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, who turned up unheralded at a recording session for Act Two to interpolate a couple of high Cs for Flagstad, then a bit challenged in the top register. She promises to tell more about that "surprising" experience in her autobiography.

One of her greatest successes at the Met involved a role she never sang in San Francisco: Dorabella in *Così fan tutte*, and much of that success rests with the ebb and flow of her voice with the lustrous soprano of Eleanor Steber (a Fiordiligi quite unlike Sena Jurinac, Thebom's previous, equally formidable stage sister).

"Eleanor and I had a special thing going," Thebom remembers. We had absolutely no problem coordinating our voices. When it came to duets, she said, 'I feel like I'm singing with your voice,' and I felt the same way."

Opera is an irrational art, as Chorley duly noted. As such, it thrives, on some lev-

els at least, on gossip, oversize egos and rivalries, both real and imagined. In the 1950s, aficionados loved to dwell on the bond, or possible lack thereof, between the two leading American mezzo-sopranos—Thebom and Risè Stevens. Both were beautiful and glamorous. Both were excellent actresses. Both had carried on a flirtation with Hollywood (Thebom in *The Great Caruso*, Stevens in *Going My Way* and *The Chocolate Soldier*). Everyone assumed, or at least hoped, that the two loathed each other.

Thebom demurs. "We were extremely compatible. We had a good relationship."

Be that as it may, Stevens monopolized certain assignments in New York. "Yes," admits Thebom, "it is true that I never got two roles at the Met because of Risè: Orfeo and Octavian. But we shared a number of roles. She often would call me to ask if I happened to be available in case she wanted to cancel a Carmen. She didn't want to cancel if someone else would

have taken over. She trusted me. That's the sort of rivals we were."

Undeniably sensuous and magnetic, Stevens may have posed a threat to Thebom in some areas. She hardly ever invaded Thebom's Wagner territory, however, and she avoided Verdi altogether. There was plenty of room in the profession for both of them.

As a teacher, Thebom still relies on the lessons she learned from Edyth Walker (1867-1950). The great American mezzo-soprano, London's first Elektra and a much-admired Kundry in Bayreuth, had herself studied with Aglaia Orgeni (1841-1926), a pupil of Pauline Viardot (1821-1910). "I'm pretty well grounded," Thebom says, "in the García method." Given her pedagogical lineage, that's something of an understatement.

She says her studies with Margarete Matzenauer (1881-1963), another fabled predecessor, proved somewhat less conclusive. "I went to her to coach Dalila. After all, she had sung the role opposite Caruso. Her advice wasn't all that probing. 'You sing this here,' she would say. 'Then you sit down.'"

Thebom laughs. She likes to look back in good humor, and can afford to. "I know it sounds awful," she says, "but I have no regrets."

When the time finally came for her to leave the stage, she apparently bade farewell *senza rancore*. The sentiment recalls Puccini's Mimi. "I promised myself I would leave before anyone wanted me to," she adds. The sentiment recalls Strauss' Marschallin. All the world's an opera. ♦

CENTRAL, . . . (continued from p. 12)

introduction to "Porgi amor," in order to "explain" the background to the distresses, dissatisfactions, and *ennui* currently experienced by the Almaviva couple.) Yet, the impression one gains during the opera is of several generations and types of family cohabiting in or else visiting a particular household, with different levels of conflict, truce, and concord stratified throughout, and with traditional practices and ceremonies honored at crucial places. Pregnant though it may be with plot-advancement points, and regularly punctuated by the Count's fretful mutterings, the culmination of the third act is the operatic medium's most complete and rounded dramatization of weddings as ordinary people often experience them in ordinary life: smiles, tears, moments of discomfort and dissatisfaction, and at some point everyone merrily dancing.

All this attests to the feeling of rightness, "felt life" (in the Henry James phrase), psychologically pithy character-observation that the opera exudes: informed by all the vivacity and ingenuity of the Beaumarchais play (if not its "political" energy), and with the immeasurable enrichment of Mozart's music. At its heart are the four types of love-involvement, with sexual attraction an inevitable and fascinatingly variable ingredient, which gives this "felt life" its peculiar combination of good humor, depth, and poignancy. At one extreme of age (and libido) there is Cherubino, just past puberty and ecstatically in love with love. Mozart's and Da Ponte's adherence to theatrical tradition in having the young aristocrat played *en travesti*—a boy (impersonated by a woman) who is then required to dress up as a girl—releases in the character a pansexual allure that permits adolescents of any and every sexual persuasion (and age) to identify with him: no knowledge of *La Mère Coupable* is necessary to reach the end of the opera suspecting that Cherubino and Barbarina will not long remain an "item." At the other extreme are Bartolo and Marcellina, every flicker extinguished of the "antico amor," the "ancient romance" that long ago brought Figaro into being—no singing together here! Having begun the opera both determined, for entirely opposite reasons, that Marcellina should win her case, and Figaro, they end it in a state of marital truce.

Between these come the servant and master-mistress couples: and it is here that Mozart's comprehension of the human voice in combination and contrast, of which I wrote earlier, is revealed in fullest subtlety and delicacy. Not just in their arias do the four make this manifest: it is on their method and manner of singing together—when this occurs and in what context—that

(continued on page 41)

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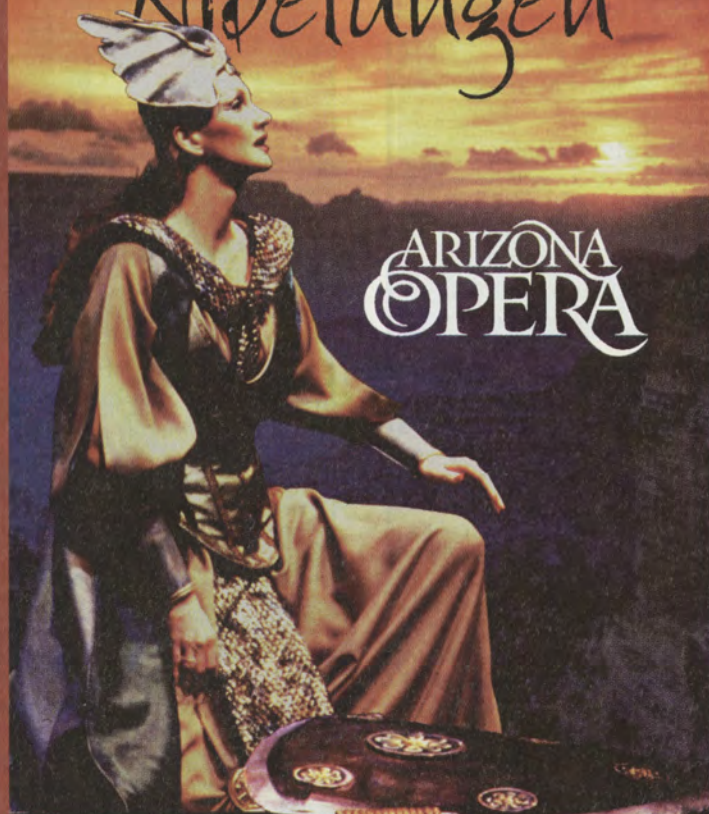


Mozart focuses his exploration and development of these two relationships. As Heartz points out in the previously-mentioned *Figaro* essay, the nub of the opera's opening number is Susanna's teaching Figaro—who at the start is busily measuring out room-lengths—to sing her tune, which at measure 49 he begins to do. This forms the psychological background to their second number together, at the other end of the opera, in the Act IV finale. Here Figaro, having finally seen through Susanna-in-Countess-disguise, pretends to make advances to the *finta* Contessa, upsetting Susanna thoroughly; then in "Pace, pace mio dolce tesoro" he reassures her that all along he recognized "the voice I adore," and at measure 11 she takes up *his* tune while his lower-line harmonization provides the thirds and sixths that, along with the lovingly rocking 6/8 rhythm, make us confident that their partnership is an equal one, sturdy and of long-lasting substance.

In sharp contrast, the only episode showing the Count and Countess vocally alone together, "Esci omai, garzon malnato" in Act II, pictures them seriously in conflict, revealing through the soprano's and baritone's varieties and contrasts of *vocalità* some of the character traits—his easily-provoked rage, puffed-up sense of honor, and baseless mistrust of his wife; her innate dignity and grace even *in extremis*—that have set them apart. In the opera's emotional climax, just before its closing stretch, their voices appear to make peace with each other: the Count's simple four-measure plea, "Contessa, perdono," followed by the Countess's six-measure reply. Yet in this passage of sublime simplicity there is also a profound pathos, which emanates as much from the character differences that these ten measures so painfully underline as from their calming sentiments. The way her voice "tops" his, the way her phrases prove at once more supplely rounded and (by two measures) more expansive than his—these small details speak, again, volumes about the course their marriage is likely to take. The termination of the "folle giornata" is a many-voiced bustle of D-major merriment, which is heard and felt to be, in both key and rhythmic pattern, a blood relative of the D-major overture (the opera's end is its beginning?). But just beneath this exhilarating surface, some poignant facts of "real life"—one marriage will surely last, the other probably not—remain for our contemplation: not, perhaps, while the mood of closing elation is still strong, but once it has begun to die down. ♦

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ARTIST PROFILES



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 major successes in the title role of *La Traviata* with the Festival Opera of Walnut Creek and as Tatyana in a performance of *Eugene Onegin* with San Francisco Opera. She was named the recipient of a 1997 ARIA Foundation Award, a prestigious prize given annually to only three promising singers selected by a 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 performances include Musetta in Seattle and Bilbao. Miss Foland, a native of Des Moines, received a master of music degree from the University of Northern Iowa.



Born in Krasnodar, **ANNA NETREBKO** received her vocal training at the St. Petersburg Conservatory, where she appeared as Susanna in *Le Nozze di Figaro* and Violetta in *La Traviata*. After winning first prize in Moscow's 1993 National Glinka Competition, the young soprano was invited by the famed mezzo Irina Arkipova to take part in a concert at the Bolshoi Opera. Since making her 1994 Kirov Opera debut as Susanna, she has repeated this role on the Kirov tours to Finland, Germany and Israel, and was seen as the Queen of the Night in *Die Zauberflöte* at the Riga Opera Theatre. In 1995, Miss Netrebko made her U.S. opera debut as Lyudmila in San Francisco Opera's premiere production (co-owned with the Kirov Opera) of *Ruslan and Lyudmila*. Earlier that year, her performance as Lyudmila was recorded (on video and audio) in St. Petersburg with the Kirov Opera. A 1996 Merola Opera Program participant, Miss Netrebko has been featured in concert (Mussorgsky's *The Nursery*) in London, Rotterdam, Athens, and as Louisa in a concert performance of *Betrothal in a Monastery* with the Kirov in Rome. Now a full-time member of the Kirov, her recent appearances with that company include *Carmen* (Micaëla) in Japan; *Boris Godunov* (Xenia) and *Parsifal* (Flower Maiden) at Italy's Ravenna Festival; *The Love For Three Oranges* (Ninetta) at Amsterdam's Concertgebouw; as well as *Boris* and *Betrothal* throughout France. (Her performance as Louisa in *Betrothal* was recorded on video earlier this year.) After her appearances here as Susanna, the soprano sings in concert with the Rotterdam Philharmonic at Milan's La Scala, and appears with the Kirov at New York's Metropolitan Opera in *Ruslan and Betrothal*.



ZHENG CAO recently completed a two-year Adler Fellowship with San Francisco Opera. The mezzo made her Company debut when she stepped in for an ailing colleague to sing two performances as Siebel in the 1995 production of *Faust*. She also performed in stagings of *Die Walküre* (Grimgerde), *Rusalka* (Kitchen Boy) and the student matinee performances of *La Cenerentola* (Tisbe) during the Company's 1995 Fall Season. Last year she was featured in *Salome* and received critical acclaim as Suzuki in the Company's new production of *Madama Butterfly*. Opera Center credits include Sonia in the Showcase '96 production of *The Aspern Papers*; Mahler's *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* as part of the Schwabacher Debut Recital series (a work she also performed with the San Francisco Ballet); and Dorabella in the 1994 Merola Opera Program's staging of *Così fan tutte*. Engagements elsewhere include *Butterfly*'s Suzuki for the Opéra de Lyon and New York City Opera, Cherubino in *Le Nozze di Figaro* at the European Opera Center in Ghent, and her recent debut with Los Angeles Opera as Penelope in *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria* and Dimitri in *Fedora*. On the concert stage she has performed as soloist in Bach's *Magnificat*, Duruflé's Requiem, Handel's *Messiah*, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, in addition to the Requiem and *Coronation Mass* by Mozart. The Shanghai native holds a bachelor's degree from the Shanghai Conservatory of Music and a master's degree from the Curtis Institute of Music. Among her future engagements are *Madama Butterfly* for San Diego Opera and the Grand Théâtre de Genève, *Don Giovanni* (Zerlina) in Los Angeles, in addition to participation as one of the soloists in the Opening Ceremony of the 1998 Winter Olympics in Japan.

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ARTIST PROFILES



In her sixth season with San Francisco Opera, **CATHERINE COOK** sings the role of Marcelina in *Le Nozze di Figaro*. The mezzo-soprano made her 1991 Company debut in *War and Peace* and *Elektra*, and subsequently performed here in *Boris Godunov* and *Christophe Colomb* (1992), as well as in *The Makropulos Case* and the student matinee presentation of *La Fille du Régiment* (1993). In 1995, she performed in San Francisco Opera productions of *Ruslan and Lyudmila* (Naina), *Faust* (Marthe), and *Die Walküre* (Rossweisse), and last season appeared here as the Nurse in *Prince Igor* and Berta in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*. A 1990 Merola Opera Program participant and 1991-92 Adler Fellow, her Opera Center credits include the title role of *Ariodante*, Meg Page in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and a highly acclaimed Schwabacher Debut Recital. A native of Chicago, the artist made her 1994 Lyric Opera of Chicago debut as the Innkeeper in *Boris Godunov*, followed by Berta in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, a role which was the vehicle for her 1995 Portland Opera debut as well. Most recently, Miss Cook returned to Chicago as Auntie in *Peter Grimes*, sang both the Countess and Madelon in *Andrea Chénier* for Florentine Opera, and made her Alice Tully Hall debut in Poulenc's *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* with L'Opéra Français de New York. Future engagements include *Le Nozze di Figaro* at Chicago Lyric Opera, *The Love For Three Oranges* (Fata Morgana) with Portland Opera, and a debut with Los Angeles Opera in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*. She has sung in concert (Toledo Symphony, San Francisco Symphony Pops, Cincinnati Chamber Orchestra), and can be heard on a recording of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with the Cincinnati Philharmonia.



Second year Adler Fellow **PEGGY KRIHA DYE** made her San Francisco Opera debut in the summer of 1996 as Musetta in *La Bohème*, subsequently appearing with the Company during the 1996-97 season in *Die Fledermaus* (Adele), the West Coast premiere of *Harvey Milk*, and *Salome*. The soprano most recently portrayed Kate Pinkerton in San Francisco Opera's new staging of *Madama Butterfly*. Winner of a prestigious scholarship grant from The Liberate Foundation, Miss Kriha Dye was a participant in the 1993 Merola Opera Program who sang the role of Nannetta in *Falstaff* and her first *Fledermaus* Adele. In 1995, she appeared as Barbarina in the Merola Program staging of *Le Nozze di Figaro*, repeating the part and singing the role of Susanna on the subsequent Western Opera Theater tour of the same production. Additional Opera Center credits include Olympia in the Showcase '96 production of *The Aspern Papers* and Fulvia in the '97 Showcase presentation of Handel's *Ezio*. A native of Brainerd, Minnesota, Miss Kriha Dye received her undergraduate degree in music from St. Cloud University and completed two years of graduate work at the Manhattan School of Music. While in Manhattan, she appeared in many new productions, performing the roles of Charlotte in Ronald Perera's *The Yellow Wallpaper* and Berenice in Rossini's *L'Occasione fa il ladro*. She also spent two years as a member of the Juilliard Opera Center.

ARTIST PROFILES



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. Later this season 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.



Recently recognized by *Opera News* as "one of America's up and coming singers," **DAVID OKERLUND** received critical acclaim last summer as Sharpless in the Company's new production of *Madama Butterfly*. He most recently appeared on the stage of the War Memorial in *Death In Venice* and *Eugene Onegin* (title role for one performance). 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, Schaunard in *La Bohème* at the Orpheum Theatre, and the role of The Lodger in Opera Center's '96 Showcase presentation of *The Aspern Papers*. The baritone sang in the 1993 Merola Opera Program and Western Opera Theater (WOT) tour as Falke in *Die Fledermaus*. He returned to Merola and WOT in 1994 to sing the title role of *Don Giovanni*. Additional credits include a concert performance of *Carmen* at the Hollywood Bowl, Donner in Arizona Opera's production of *Das Rheingold*, Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte* for Opera Carolina and Piedmont Opera Theater, as well as an assignment he performed as part of the 1995 United Nations 50th anniversary: the role of the Bonze in the Opéra de Lyon's production of *Madama Butterfly*. Next season he will portray 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.



An Adler Fellow with the S.F. Opera Center from 1993-95, bass **CHESTER D. PATTON** made his Company debut in *Salome* during the 1993 Strauss Festival, returning that fall for the Mandarin in *Turandot* (televised on PBS and issued on videocassette and laserdisc) and Lord Walton in *I Puritani*. During the 1994 season, he portrayed the Doctor in *Macbeth*, Raimondo in the student matinee performances of *Lucia di Lammermoor*, and in 1995 appeared as Alidoro in the student matinee presentation of *La Cenerentola*. He was most recently seen with the Company as Colline in the new staging of *La Bohème* (1996), as well as Don Basilio (*Il Barbiere di Siviglia*), the First Nazarene (*Salome*) and the King of Egypt (*Aida*) during the 1996-97 season. Opera Center credits include the title role in the North American premiere of Tippett's *King Priam*, Colline, and a 1995 Schwabacher Debut Recital. Elsewhere in the Bay Area, he has performed with West Bay Opera, Opera San José, Pocket Opera, and Berkeley Contemporary Opera. Recent engagements include debuts at Vancouver Opera as Timur in *Turandot*, Opera Pacific as Don Basilio, Opéra de Lyon as Pizarro in *Fidelio*, and the Paris Opera as the High Priest in *Nabucco*. He also appeared as Ferrando in *Il Trovatore*, Sparafucile in *Rigoletto* and Colline at Hawaii Opera Theater. Future engagements include his debut at Seattle Opera as Masetto in *Don Giovanni*, the Verdi Requiem in Toledo, Ohio, as well as his first King Philip in *Don Carlo* for Toledo Opera. A native of Columbia, Mississippi, Patton earned his master of music degree at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music.

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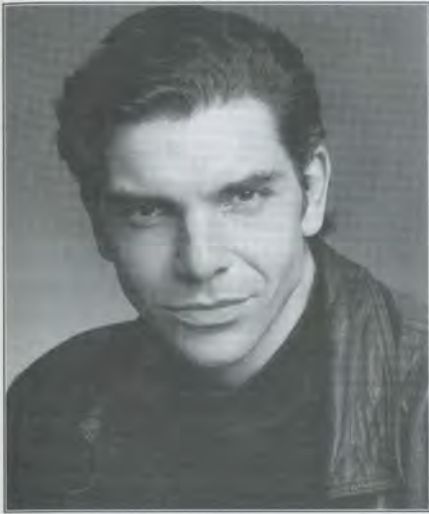


Since his 1974 San Francisco Opera debut as the Dancing Master in *Manon Lescaut*, **JOSEPH FRANK** has appeared with the Company in over 25 lyric and character roles which include Goro in *Madama Butterfly*, Beppe in *Pagliacci*, Pong and Emperor Altoum in *Turandot*, Triquet in *Eugene Onegin*, Bardolfo in *Falstaff*, the Fool in *Wozzeck*, Snout in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Wagner in *Mefistofele*, Spalanzani in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, and the Dancing Master in *Ariadne auf Naxos*. It was in this last role that he made his 1979 Metropolitan Opera debut, returning there for numerous assignments including *Manon Lescaut*, *Der Rosenkavalier* and *Madama Butterfly*. The tenor is a familiar figure on the stages of leading opera companies including those of Seattle, Los Angeles, Houston, Washington, D.C., San Diego, Dallas, St. Louis, Miami, Chautauqua, Denver and Santa Fe. As a recitalist and oratorio singer, he has performed with such conductors as Günther Herbig, Christoph Eschenbach, Jean-Pierre Marty, Edoardo Müller and Emil Tchakarov. Recent highlights include his debut with the Opéra de Montréal as Dr. Caius in *Falstaff*, a bow with Los Angeles Music Center Opera in *The Makropulos Case*, a return to the Met for *Der Rosenkavalier* and *La Fanciulla del West*, *Madama Butterfly* for Palm Beach Opera, *Fidelio* with the Hartford Symphony, as well as *Die Zauberflöte* with Pittsburgh Opera and in Japan with the Japan Philharmonic led by Seiji Ozawa. The artist appears in the video and laserdisc releases of the Met's *Ariadne auf Naxos* and the Company's 1993 production of *Turandot*, and can be heard as Prince Shuisky on a critically acclaimed recording of *Boris Godunov* with Nicolai Ghiaurov. Frank has been a faculty member at the San Jose University School of Music since 1991.



MARC MOLOMOT was applauded last summer as Goro in the Company's new staging of *Madama Butterfly* at the Golden Gate Theatre. In his 1996-97 debut season with San Francisco Opera, the tenor sang multiple roles in *Harvey Milk*, Dr. Blind in *Die Fledermaus*, and the Fourth Jew in *Salome*. He recently made his first New York City Opera appearance in *Der Rosenkavalier* and made his bow with L'Opéra Français de New York as Ménélas in *La Belle Hélène*. Molomot was also heard last season as soloist in the Mozart Requiem with the Westchester Choral Society and in Purcell's *The Fairy Queen* with Ithaca Opera. Past engagements have included Nemorino in *L'Elisir d'Amore* with the National Symphony Orchestra of Bolivia, as well as the role of Monostatos in *Die Zauberflöte* and the title part of *Albert Herring* with Orlando Opera. As a 1995 member of the Merola Opera Program, he was seen as Don Pedro in *La Périochole* at Stern Grove, and as Don Basilio/Don Curzio in Western Opera Theater's national tour of *Le Nozze di Figaro*. The young artist was also a member of the Santa Fe Opera Apprentice Program in 1994 and 1996. The native of Poughkeepsie earned a bachelor of music degree from the Eastman School of Music and a master of music degree from the Manhattan School of Music.

ARTIST PROFILES



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.



IVOR BOLTON is established as one of Britain's most versatile conductors, both in opera and concert, in repertoire ranging from baroque to contemporary. Music director of Glyndebourne Touring Opera from 1992-'97, he also serves as music director of the Lufthansa Festival of Baroque Music at St. James's Piccadilly in London. From 1994 to '96 he was chief conductor of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra; in 1991 and '92, music director of the English Touring Opera. In recent seasons, his career has been closely linked to Munich's Bayerische Staatsoper where he has been acclaimed for new stagings of *Xerxes* and *Giulio Cesare* and for whom he has many future opera and concert commitments. Additional recent successes include *L'Incoronazione di Poppea* and Paisiello's *La Molinara* for Bologna's Teatro Comunale, *Die Zauberflöte* and *Iphigénie en Tauride* at the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* for Opera Australia, *Ariadne auf Naxos* for Opera Zuid in the Netherlands, and *Giulio Cesare* for the Paris Opera. He has also led productions for the Glyndebourne Festival (most recently *Owen Wingrave*), and at the Royal Opera at Covent Garden, English National Opera, Welsh National Opera and Opera North. Apart from his projects in Munich, current and future engagements include *Giulio Cesare* for London's Royal Opera, *Iphigénie en Tauride* at the Salzburg Festival, *Così fan tutte* in Amsterdam, *La Clemenza di Tito* for the Paris Opera, and *Count Ory* for Glyndebourne Touring Opera. In concert, the maestro has worked with many prominent orchestras around the world. He has made numerous recordings including multiple discs with St. James's Baroque Players—which he founded in 1984—and the London Philharmonic. Bolton was educated at Cambridge University and the Royal College of Music, followed by further studies at London's National Opera Studio. This production of *Le Nozze di Figaro* serves as his U.S. opera debut.



An internationally acclaimed soprano and interpreter of Mozart, **GRAZIELLA SCIUTTI** began her career when she sang Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* in Rome under the baton of Herbert von Karajan and made her operatic debut in 1951 at the Aix-en-Provence Festival, where she appeared in Menotti's *The Telephone* and Cimarosa's *Il Matrimonio Segreto*. Her first British appearance was as Rosina in *The Barber of Seville* at Glyndebourne, and during the 1954-55 season she joined the ensemble of Milan's La Scala, where she returned repeatedly for performances under Karajan. Miss Sciutti was the leading soprano of La Piccola Scala from its inception in 1955, and for eight years brought international renown to that company in Milan and on its tours to Edinburgh, Vienna, Brussels, and other music centers. She began a long and critically acclaimed association with the Salzburg Festival in 1958, and in 1960 became a member of the Vienna State Opera, where she performed with such illustrious conductors as Karajan and Bernstein. The following year marked her U.S. debut at San Francisco Opera with one of her most famous portrayals, Susanna in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, as well as Oscar in *Un Ballo in Maschera*. Having scaled the heights of the operatic world, the beloved artist was invited to join John Copley in staging *L'Elisir d'Amore* at Covent Garden, and soon after was asked to direct and sing in *La Voix Humaine* at Glyndebourne in 1977. That production prompted Lotfi Mansouri to engage her as director of Canadian Opera's *Le Nozze di Figaro* in 1978 and *L'Elisir* in 1979. She has since staged productions at San Francisco Opera (*L'Elisir*, 1984) and the S.F. Opera Center (*L'Elisir*, '96), the Lyric Opera of Chicago, Metropolitan Opera, Dallas Opera, Miami Opera, Covent Garden, as well as in Germany and Italy. She also dedicates herself to teaching. The Royal College of Music in London, where Miss Sciutti is on the faculty, has awarded her the Fellowship of the College.

ARTIST PROFILES



ZACK BROWN's designs for the Company during the 1996-97 season were the sets and costumes for *Prince Igor*, the settings for *Lohengrin*, and selected principal costumes for *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*. He made his 1979 San Francisco Opera debut with the sets and costumes for *La Gioconda*. That nationally telecast, Emmy Award-winning production was repeated on the stage of the War Memorial in 1983 and '88. Additional Company credits have been *Le Nozze di Figaro* ('82, '86, '91), *La Forza del Destino* ('92), and Rossini's *Otello* ('94). As resident designer for the Washington Opera, Brown has created the sets and costumes for over 40 productions, including *Otello*, *La Bohème*, *Un Ballo in Maschera*, *The Merry Widow*, *Werther* and D'Albert's *Tiefland*. He has also created designs for, among other companies, the Metropolitan Opera (*Rigoletto*), Houston Grand Opera, Santa Fe Opera, New York City Opera, Wolf Trap, and the Hamburg Staatsoper. On Broadway, Brown designed scenery and costumes for the Tony Award-winning revival of *On Your Toes*. Among his 14 productions for New York's Circle in the Square Theater, his scenery for Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* and his costumes for *Saint Joan* won nominations for Tony and Drama Desk awards, respectively. Classical dance designs include *Gaîté Parisienne* and *Jardin aux Lilas* for the American Ballet Theatre and a full evening of Ravel, *Trilogy*, for the Hamburg Ballet. In addition, his costume designs were seen in a five-part television mini-series of O'Neill's *Mourning Becomes Electra*. Much of his work is seen regularly at the Arena Stage in Washington, D.C., including *Of Thee I Sing*, *Candide*, *Twelfth Night* and *On the Town*.



Since joining San Francisco Opera in 1983, Associate Lighting Designer **JOAN ARHELGER** has created the lighting for over 20 productions here, many of them SFO premieres — *Rusalka*, *Daphne*, *La Clemenza di Tito*, *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*, *Attila* and *Don Quichotte*, among them. Last season she designed the lighting for the Company's production of *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* which was presented at the Orpheum Theatre. Her opera credits in lighting design include productions for the San Diego Opera, Spoleto Festival U.S.A., Wolf Trap, and the opera companies of Louisville, Fort Worth, New Orleans, Pittsburgh, Omaha, Seattle, Costa Mesa, Anchorage, and repertory seasons with the Kansas City Lyric Opera and the Central City Opera. Her work has been seen locally in Bill Irwin's *In Regard of Flight* (featured on the PBS Great Performances series), and with numerous dance companies.

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March 22

Tammy Jenkins, soprano
Alfredo Daza, Armando Gama, baritones
Steven Eldredge, piano

Music by Granados, Obradors, Mompou, Turina; other works in the Spanish tradition

April 26

Zheng Cao, mezzo-soprano
Jake Heggie, piano
Emil Miland, cello

Music by Berlioz, R. Strauss, Debussy, Brahms, and Heggie

May 17

Joyce DiDonato, mezzo-soprano
Leticia Austria, piano

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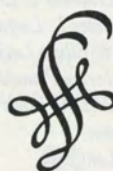


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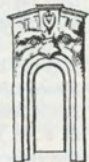
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Umberto Giordano

Conducted by Edward Downes.
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Production from La Scala.

September 6 - 24, 1997

LA BOHÈME

Giacomo Puccini

Conducted by Plácido Domingo/
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Revival of L.A. Opera production.

October 5 - 18m, 1997

FLORENCIA EN EL AMAZONAS

Daniel Catán

Conducted by Roderick Brydon.
Greenawald, Gonzales, Guzmán, Fedderly,
Gilfry, Vasquez, Andras. Co-production with Houston
Grand Opera, Seattle Opera, Opera de Colombia & Opera
de Bellas Artes & Festival Internacional Cervantino

November 22 - December 7, 1997

COUNTESS MARITZA

Emmerich Kálmán

Conducted by John Crosby.
Putnam, Hauman, Anderson, Henning-Jensen.
Production from Santa Fe Opera.

January 15 - 31m, 1998

SALOME

Richard Strauss

Conducted by Richard Hickox.
Behrens/Field, Dernes, Fox, Mussard.
Revival of L.A. Opera production.

February 13 - March 1, 1998

THE MAGIC FLUTE

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Conducted by Julius Rudel.
Bradley, Wolf, Fedderly, Goldstein, Holzmair.
Revival of L.A. Opera production.

April 25 - May 13, 1998

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Giuseppe Verdi

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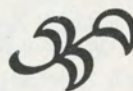
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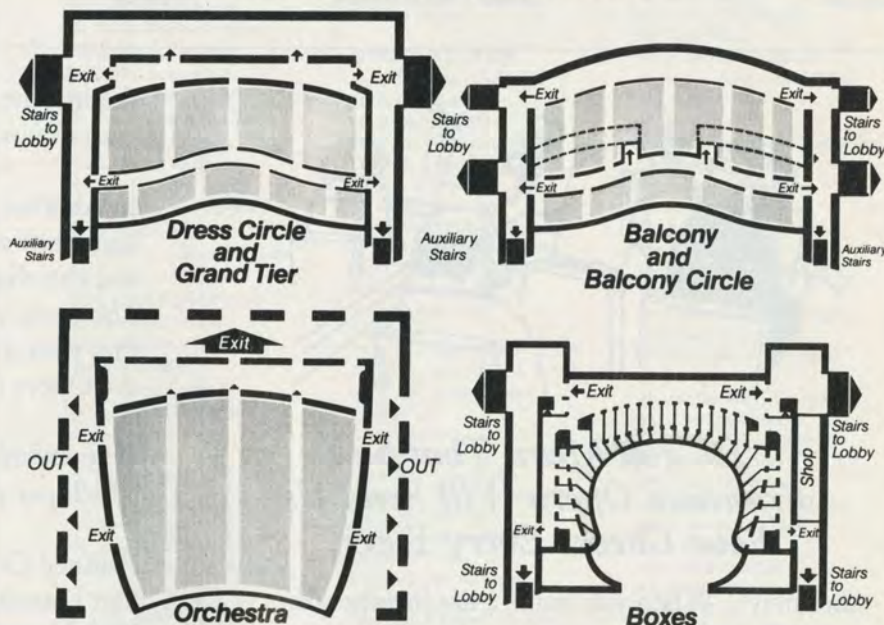
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