

Betrothal in a Monastery
(The Duenna)
(Obruchenie v monastyre)

1998-1999

Monday, November 23, 1998 8:00 PM
Wednesday, November 25, 1998 7:30 PM
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1998-99 SEASON

BETROTHAL IN A MONASTERY



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SAN FRANCISCO OPERA MAGAZINE

Betrothal in a Monastery

76th Season, 1998-99

Vol. 76, No. 12

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Murillo, Bartolomé Esteban (Spanish, 1617-1682)
A Girl and Her Duenna, c. 1655/1660
Oil on canvas, 49 1/4 x 41 1/8 in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
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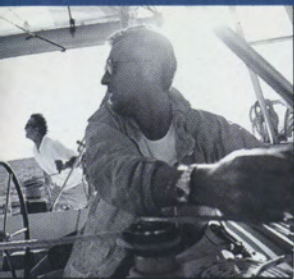
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A MESSAGE FROM THE GENERAL DIRECTOR



McCarthy

It is my great delight to welcome you to San Francisco Opera's 1998/99 Season in the War Memorial Opera House. This season is quite exceptional, particularly because it contains the world premiere of an opera that has been a dream of mine for nearly 20 years: *A Streetcar Named Desire*, based on the Pulitzer Prize-winning play by Tennessee Williams. *Streetcar* was composed by the internationally renowned composer-conductor-pianist André Previn (who conducts the first four performances), with a libretto by Philip Littell, who also wrote the libretto for the Company's commissioning of *The Dangerous Liaisons*. The production is staged by acclaimed director Colin Graham, who celebrates his 50th world premiere production with *Streetcar*; and designed by Michael Yeargan, whose wonderful sets and costumes we've enjoyed in the recent productions of *La Bohème*, *Carmen*, *Madama Butterfly* and *Rigoletto*.

We've assembled a dream cast of singers to create *Streetcar*'s iconic characters: the great soprano Renée Fleming, alternating with Susannah Glanville in her U.S. opera debut (Blanche), baritone Rodney Gilfry (Stanley), soprano Elizabeth Futral in her Company debut (Stella) and tenor Anthony Dean Griffey (Mitch). Alternate artists, as well as conductor Patrick Summers, will also be featured in *Streetcar*, which has been commissioned as part of San Francisco Opera's Pacific Visions program. This program is dedicated to creating new American operas, making the Company a fertile ground for new and lasting works while reinvigorating the existing operatic repertoire. Our 1998/99 Season not only illustrates this goal, but also includes a treasure-trove of beloved and bold operas, each brought to life in spectacular productions.

We begin the season with Puccini in legendary China, and finish with Puccini in turn-of-the-century Japan. In between, we will experience the great operas of Strauss, Wagner, Massenet, Verdi, Bellini, Britten and Prokofiev. In addition to *Streetcar*, we will present a new production of *Don Carlo*, and our dynamic collaboration with the Kirov Opera continues with the West Coast premiere of *Betrothal in a Monastery*.

The season, which contains 10 operas and will again extend through January, showcases the artistry of some of the finest singers, conductors, directors and designers in the world — some in auspicious debuts. Our distinguished music director, Donald Runnicles, will lead performances of *Arabella*, *Tristan and Isolde* and *Peter Grimes*, with the Grammy-nominated San Francisco Opera Orchestra and Chorus on hand all season long. Additionally, the San Francisco Opera Ballet will perform in two productions this year: *Manon* and *Betrothal in a Monastery*.

"I want magic!" sings Blanche DuBois in *A Streetcar Named Desire*. San Francisco Opera provides just that in each performance of our 1998/99 Season. Enjoy!

Lotfi Mansouri
General Director

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND PRESIDENT SAN FRANCISCO OPERA ASSOCIATION



SOHL

On behalf of the San Francisco Opera Association, we are pleased to welcome you to San Francisco Opera's 1998/99 Season. As our general director illustrates, a highlight of the 1998/99 Season is the world premiere of André Previn and Philip Littell's *A Streetcar Named Desire*. The commissioning of *Streetcar* could not have been made without a grant from Meet The Composer/Arts Endowment Commissioning Music/USA, with additional support from The Helen Whitaker Fund. We also acknowledge with great appreciation the sponsors of the world premiere production: Mrs. Paul L. Wattis, the Carol Franc Buck Foundation, Arthur Andersen and the National Endowment for the Arts. The much-anticipated unveiling of *Streetcar* has greater implications for San Francisco Opera, for it serves as a model of our vision to add new American works to the repertoire every year.

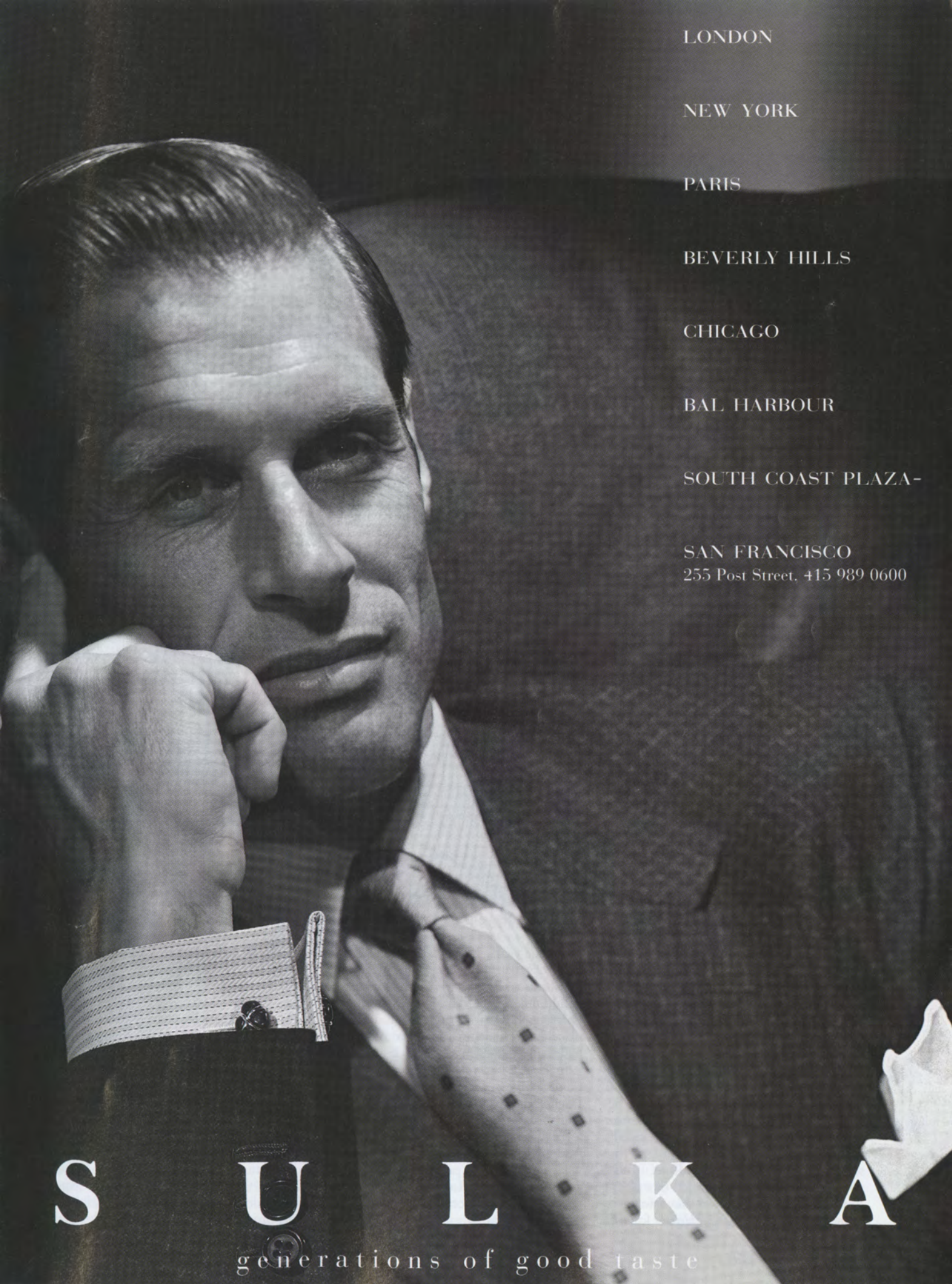
As we move closer towards the millennium, it is our mission to continue our broad programs: to present opera performances of the highest quality to the widest possible audiences, while being a leader in training, arts education, audience development and presentation of new works — new inventory for the opera world. We achieve these goals with significant support from our sponsors: Grants For The Arts/San Francisco Hotel Tax Fund, California Arts Council and the National Endowment for the Arts, as well as our season sponsors: American Airlines, Arthur Andersen, Bank of America and R. Kassman Pianos.

We also thank our production sponsors, who give so generously to San Francisco Opera: Madeleine Haas Russell and the Madeleine H. Russell Fund of the Columbia Foundation (*Turandot*); The L. J. and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation (*Tristan and Isolde*); Medallion Society Gold Circle members (*Manon*); and the Bernard Osher Endowment Fund and an anonymous donor (*Norma*).

Additionally, we extend our thanks to the San Francisco Opera Guild for its continued financial and volunteer support of the Opera, and for its efforts to cultivate a new generation of opera lovers by taking opera out into the schools. We also thank BRAVO! CLUB for its efforts in developing a younger audience, and the War Memorial Board of Trustees for its ongoing support and assistance.

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A MERRY PARABLE OF AWFUL TIMES

BY RICHARD TARUSKIN



Final scene of the Kirov Opera production of *Betrothal in a Monastery*. In the center is Nikolai Gassiev as Don Jerome; Anna Netrebko (left, holding a goblet) is Louisa; on the right is Marianna Tarasova (holding two goblets), who portrayed Clara.

There is a wonderful old essay by Robert Benchley (does anybody remember him?) called "Johnny-on-the-Spot." It begins like this:

If you want to get a good perspective on history in the making, just skim through a collection of news photographs which have been snapped at those very moments when cataclysmic events were taking place throughout the world. In almost every picture you can discover one guy in a derby hat who is looking in exactly the opposite

direction from the excitement, totally oblivious to the fact that the world is shaking beneath his feet. That would be me, or at any rate, my agent in that particular part of the world in which the event is taking place.

And that was Prokofiev — or it *would* have been him if he had had his way. But he didn't. The particular part of the world in which he began and ended his career was one in which nobody was allowed to look away from the events of the day. Prokofiev's existence eventually became a struggle for peace, privacy, creative sanctuary, even benign neglect. In seeking these perfectly ordinary conditions he made many compromises and suffered many failures. *Betrothal in a Monastery*, the opera being given its San Francisco Opera premiere this season, was one of his few blessed successes. Why it has remained so little known will

surely seem a mystery to anyone lucky enough to witness a performance.

Sergei Sergeyevich Prokofiev was born in 1891 in a little Ukrainian village where his father managed an estate. One of music's supreme prodigies, he was brought up by doting parents who were persuaded, and who persuaded him, that he was a second Mozart. He grew up a haughty narcissist who regarded all potential peers and rivals as inferiors, and thereby garnered a large measure of ill will that came to haunt him in adversity. And he also grew up fatally dependent on the approval of benevolent authority — a teacher's pet. He mismanaged his career and his private life miserably. But of his travails, his music, at its radiant best, discloses not a hint. This frustrated, disagreeable, misguided and unhappy man wrote what many regard as the happiest, prettiest, most delightful music that anyone ever managed to produce in the dimly

Richard Taruskin is Professor of Music at the University of California, Berkeley. He has contributed more than 160 articles to the *New Grove Dictionary of Opera* and is the author of three books: *Mussorgsky: Eight Essays and an Epilogue*; *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions*, and *Defining Russia Musically*.

brutal and violent twentieth century.

Was it merely escapist? An evasion? A lie? Or did it provide something that people living through a dismal and brutal time desperately needed? Did the art of high modernism, which provided what many believed to be a far more honest mirror of the times (and one at which Prokofiev also tried his hand) tell people anything they did not already know? Do we need reminders from art of what we can read in the newspaper, or do we need a chance, as Benchley might have said, to look the other way?

Need the question be posed so crudely? Of course not. But that is how it was usually posed (whatever the offered answer) by those whose tastes once ruled. The smugness and the heartlessness the “honest” modernist position masked is best exposed by issuing an in-your-face challenge to its premises. But having done so we can retreat a bit, poised as we are on the brink of a century that can only be a better one, and examine the nuances of modernist esthetics through the marvelously fitting lens that Prokofiev’s checkered operatic career affords us.

That career began when the composer was eight years old, with *Velikan* (“The Giant”), a twelve-page opera in three acts. Already Prokofiev saw himself first and foremost as a composer for the lyric stage. If this seems surprising, it is not only because of Prokofiev’s phenomenal success in the realm of instrumental music, with at least two symphonies, three concertos and several sonatas irrevocably a part of the standard concert repertory (some of them aided at first by the composer’s phenomenal virtuosity as a pianist). It is also because of the singularly unlucky fate of his operas. Of the seven mature ones he completed, he saw only four produced; of the four, only two survived their initial productions in his lifetime; and of the two, only one, *The Love for Three Oranges* (1921) really entered the repertory.

As usual in cases of failure, the victim has been blamed: “Through all his writings about opera there runs a streak of loose thinking and naivety,” Andrew Porter once complained, “and it runs through the works, too.” That — plus a revolution, a world war and a repressive totalitarian regime whose unfathomable vagaries Prokofiev could never second



Gennadi Bezubenkov as Mendoza; Nadezhda Vassileva as the Duenna as seen at the Kirov Opera in 1996.

guess — indeed made for a frustrating career. Yet time has begun to vindicate some of these long-suffering works (notably *The Fiery Angel* and *War and Peace*, both already staged in San Francisco), and we may be glad that despite everything (and unlike Shostakovich) Prokofiev persisted as an operatic composer practically to the end.

The charge of “naivety” derives from Prokofiev’s lifelong commitment to what might be called the traditions of Russian operatic radicalism. The ideal to which he always remained true, however circumstances may have mandated departure, was that of the through-composed dialogue (or recitative) opera, following a precedent set in Russia by the forgotten composer Dargomizhsky, and by some of Mussorgsky’s early works, notably an unfinished opera called *Marriage*, after Gogol. Like Debussy’s *Pelléas et Mélisande*, Strauss’s *Salome* and Berg’s *Wozzeck*, these were “sung plays” (as Joseph Kerman called the three “western” works in his influential handbook *Opera as Drama*). That meant that they were verbatim settings of pre-existing stage dramas without any mediating libretto, and consequently no provision for big lyric numbers. The idea was typical of the puritanical esthetics of “realism,” in which truth and beauty were set in radical opposition, which demanded the resolute sacrifice of the latter to the former. Needless to say, the idea never caught on with audiences much. To espouse such an operatic ideal was virtually to assure the kind of career that Prokofiev “enjoyed” — or so his critics seem to imply.

What was even stranger was that it led Prokofiev to undervalue what was surely his greatest and most precious gift: a gift for writing great tunes that put him in the company of Gershwin and Puccini and Rachmaninoff. By the 1940s Prokofiev was (perhaps with Poulenc, but with no one else) supreme in his lonely mastery of this traditional skill, which modernism taught everyone to despise. Why would a melodist of his distinction want to write “dialogue operas”?

The answer is probably to be sought in an early formative experience. In 1915 Prokofiev, then twenty-four, went abroad for the first time and heard Diaghilev and Stravinsky, then ruling the artistic roost in Paris, disparage opera as an outmoded form, destined to be superseded by ballet. The effect of their prestigious pronouncements was to imbue the young composer with a mission to revitalize the doomed genre. He never actually wrote a “sung play.” All of his operas were based on librettos rather than pre-existing dramatic texts. But Prokofiev always sought librettos that looked like pre-existing dramatic texts, and his ideal was a kind of opera that would differ as little as possible in its dramaturgy from spoken theater. (So who needs it? comes the music-lover’s quick retort...)

Returning to St. Petersburg, he wangled a commission from Albert Coates, an English conductor then in charge of opera at the Maryinsky Theater, and went to work on *The Gambler*, composed to his own prose libretto after a novella by Dostoyevsky,

in which he applied Musorgsky's early principles of one-act anti-opera at full evening's length. Press interviews Prokofiev gave in 1916, shortly after completing the opera, fairly paraphrase the militant letters Musorgsky had written in 1868-70, around the time of *Marriage* and the first version of *Boris Godunov*. Like Musorgsky, he called for the abolition of set pieces in favor of freely flowing dialogue, and dismissed aria texts in verse as "an utterly absurd convention." The opera was never produced at the Maryinsky. The Russian



Above: Nadezhda Vassileva as the Duenna; Anna Netrebko as Louisa at the Kirov Opera in 1996.



Left: Kirov Opera, 1996: Nikolai Gassiev as Don Jerome (third from left) and Sergei Alexashkin as Mendoza (far right) with servants and a dancer.

revolution the next February, followed eight months later by the Bolshevik coup, made production impossible in any case; but there had already been trouble in rehearsals, the singers then finding the resolutely tuneless music almost impossible to memorize. During Prokofiev's lifetime *The Gambler* was produced only once, in Brussels in 1929. It is still a great rarity.

But Prokofiev was undeterred by its fate. Instead, he made sure that not one of his pre-Soviet operas sported so much as a single closed vocal number. The only "detachable" music in them, so to speak, was orchestral, for example the popular March and Scherzo from *The Love for Three Oranges*. In the case of *The Gambler* and *The Fiery Angel*, detaching the music for concert use required a great deal of recasting. In the case of *The Gambler*, Prokofiev only succeeded in extracting a suite (called "Four Portraits") by dealing the score pages like a deck of cards onto the floor, into four piles, each containing a single role, which he then consolidated and condensed into orchestral move-

ments. In the case of *The Fiery Angel*, the result of recasting was Prokofiev's Third Symphony. It was frankly a salvage operation, because try as he might, Prokofiev could not get the mammoth opera — on which he had labored for eight years, and which he regarded as his *chef d'oeuvre* and his bid for leadership in the world of modern music — produced anywhere. A Berlin production under Bruno Walter fell through. A performance of a single (truncated) act in Paris under Serge Koussevitzky was coolly received. The utter waste of this score, never to be staged until 1955, two years after the composer's death, was the greatest fiasco of his career. It was while he was still reeling from it that Prokofiev, who had been living abroad since 1918, moved back to Russia and became a Soviet composer. For many, this was (and remains) the most inexplicable move of all.

I asked him would I be permitted to write freely and would I be able to leave Russia if I did not like it there.

He said that I would be so busy liking it there that I would have no time to dream of going abroad again. I would, he said, be perfectly free to choose any of the many themes Soviet Russia bountifully allows a writer to use, such as farms, factories, forests in Fakistan [sic]. I said farms, etcetera, bored me, and my wretched seducer soon gave up. He had better luck with the composer Prokofiev.

The seducer was a hack novelist by the name of Alexander Tarasov-Rodionov, well known among the Russian émigrés in Eastern and Central Europe as a Soviet agent. The resistant prospect was Vladimir Nabokov, who gave the details just quoted to Herbert Gold, interviewing him for the *Paris Review* in 1966. Why did the wretched seducers have better luck with Prokofiev? Why, after a decade and a half as an émigré celebrity in New York and Paris, did he accept Soviet citizenship in 1932, take up permanent residence in Moscow in 1936, and spend the fifteen years from 1938 until his death in enforced estrangement from the West?

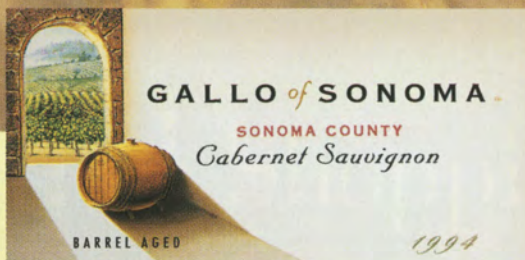
Looking back from our present post-Soviet perspective, it can only seem a tragic mistake. At the very least, the last five years of Prokofiev's life were a nightmare, one shared by all his countrymen in the final phase of Stalin's deranged despotism. Most of his music was banned, the mother of his children was arrested and sent into a gulag, his health

Continued on page 16

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94 PTS.-WINE ENTHUSIAST MAGAZINE
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A MERRY PARABLE OF AWFUL TIMES

continued from page 14

was shattered. Along with all the other most prominent Soviet composers, he was publicly denounced in 1948 by the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party in its infamous "Resolution on Music." As the most celebrated of them all, his name headed the list and he had to have lived in mortal terror. Unremitting anxiety prevented his full recovery from a concussion suffered in a fall. He existed as a semi-invalid and a shut-in, forced to limit his work time to a single pitiful hour each day. He died prematurely on 5 March 1953, aged sixty-one but looking twenty years older, completely broken by the dictator — who, in a stroke of fate no novelist would dare contrive, died on the very same day.

So why, oh why did he go back?

The usual answer is couched variously in terms of patriotic nostalgia, spiritual crisis, or venal opportunism, depending on the couch's point of view — plus, it goes without saying, the naive or megalomaniacal conviction that what was happening to others wherever he looked would never happen to him.

Prokofiev himself emphasized the first reason for his return, at least in public. Speaking to a French reporter in 1933, he let it be known that "the air of foreign lands does not inspire me because I am Russian, and there is nothing more harmful to a man than to live in exile, to be in a spiritual climate incompatible with his race."

Soviet writers unanimously favored spiritual crisis to explain Prokofiev's decision. They never failed to compare the composer with the hero of his 1929 ballet *The Prodigal Son*, his last work for Diaghilev. The ninth chapter, entitled "Efflorescence," in Israel Nestyev's quasi-official Soviet biography, is headed by an epigraph from the biblical parable itself: "For this thy brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost, and is found." Tikhon Khrennikov, the Stalin-appointed czar of Soviet music, who lasted in office as long as the Soviet Union did, made this typical (but in context, monumentally tactless) comment on Prokofiev's fate in an obituary for Stravinsky, a fellow exile who did not return: "It was Sergei Prokofiev's good fortune that he returned to his homeland in time. Having experienced a creative crisis in the late '20s and early '30s,...the great artist sensed that he needed new life impressions. And his Soviet homeland gave him these new impressions."

Stravinsky himself may serve as spokesman for the least flattering explanation for his colleague's return, calling it "a sacrifice to the bitch goddess and nothing else; he had had no success in the United States and Europe for several seasons, while his visit to Russia [in 1927] had been a triumph." These views may seem irreconcilable when expressed so one-sidedly. But we already know enough about Prokofiev to harmonize them within a broader historical context, and with due attention to matters of personality — "tragic flaws," if you will.

Prokofiev the Western European modernist was a fish out of water, a man who absolutely needed to dominate, but who found himself in Paris cast inexorably in the heavily populated second string behind Stravinsky. (As for America, the writer Nina Berberova overheard him saying, "There is no room for me there while Rachmaninoff is alive.") In bid after pathetic bid for recognition as a leader of the international modern movement, the émigré Prokofiev revealed the shallowness of his artistic aims and the superficiality of his gaudy modernistic techniques. He was seen through. His grandiose Second Symphony (1925), a score he fussed over endlessly in his determination to make its surface as complex as he possibly could, was a monumental flop. Next to Stravinsky's early neoclassical works, then *le dernier cri*, the piece looked both dowdy and (to compensate) overly made up. Then came the colossal fiasco of *The Fiery Angel* and the triumphant success of the 1927 Soviet tour. In an interview published shortly afterwards, Stravinsky unkindly, but not inaccurately, attributed Prokofiev's Soviet success to the "inconstancy" of his musical makeup. What he had in mind were the avowedly accessible pieces Prokofiev made a habit of turning out alongside his doggedly difficult ones: the "Classical" Symphony, the First Violin Concerto, and the Third Piano Concerto, the composer's own concert warhorse.

To a hardened modernist like Stravinsky, these pieces seemed like cynical career insurance. Prokofiev himself, though hard pressed at the time to admit it, knew better, as we all know now: his simple style, not his labored masterpieces, represented the real Prokofiev, inimitable and irreplaceable. What the Soviet Union represented for

this unlovable, ambitious man who wrote such lovable music was a pond — provincial, perhaps, but undeniably huge — in which he would be beyond dispute the biggest fish. It was a place where artistic and political authority were one, and where that authority promised to be (for him) benevolent. In the anti-modernist, dogmatically optimistic Soviet Union, the high-spirited, "life-affirming" music — attractive, astonishingly inventive and original but untroubling — that came effortlessly to him would be valued at a premium. There can be little doubt, moreover, that Prokofiev was given assurances — not only by the Tarasov-Rodionovs, but by real authorities like Anatoly Lunacharsky, the Commissar for Popular Enlightenment, or even, conceivably, by Stalin himself — that he would be exempt from overt political pressure, and that his lavish cosmopolitan lifestyle would continue.

He must have thought he had evidence that this would be true. In 1932, the year he accepted Soviet citizenship, the extreme-left Russian Association of Proletarian Musicians, the one Soviet organization that had opposed him in 1927 (and all but wrecked his next tour in 1929) was abolished by government decree. In 1936, the year he closed his Paris apartment, the notorious *Pravda* editorial, "Muddle Instead of Music," which ushered in the darkest, most draconian period of Soviet arts policy, made no mention of him, although he was far more likely a target than poor Shostakovich, whom it half scared to death. In 1939, the great stage director Vsevolod Meyerhold was arrested and disappeared into Lethe just as he and Prokofiev were getting started on the staging of the composer's first Soviet opera, *Semyon Kotko*. Yet the composer was untouched, and the production proceeded on schedule. A man as career-driven and self-absorbed as Prokofiev could only read good omens in all of these events, crazy as that may seem in hindsight.

And yet Prokofiev's Soviet years were indeed a period of efflorescence, just as his Soviet biographer called it, during which he produced most of the works by which he is remembered: *Lieutenant Kije*, *Alexander Nevsky*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Cinderella*, *War and Peace*, the Fifth Symphony, *Peter and the Wolf*, the violin

Continued on page 42



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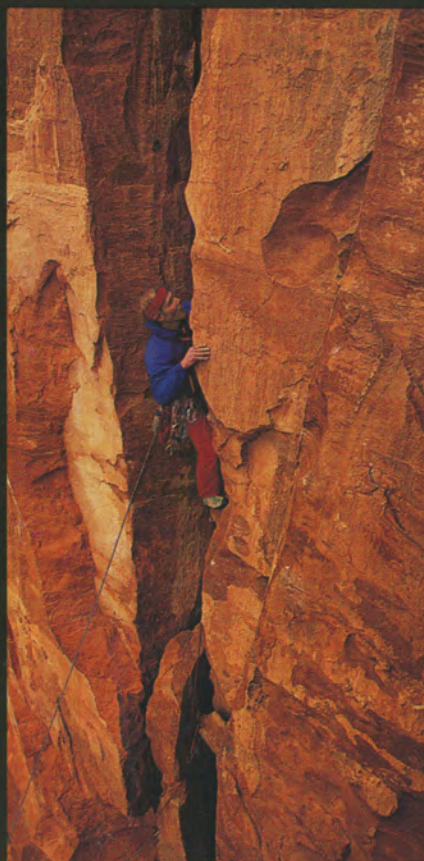
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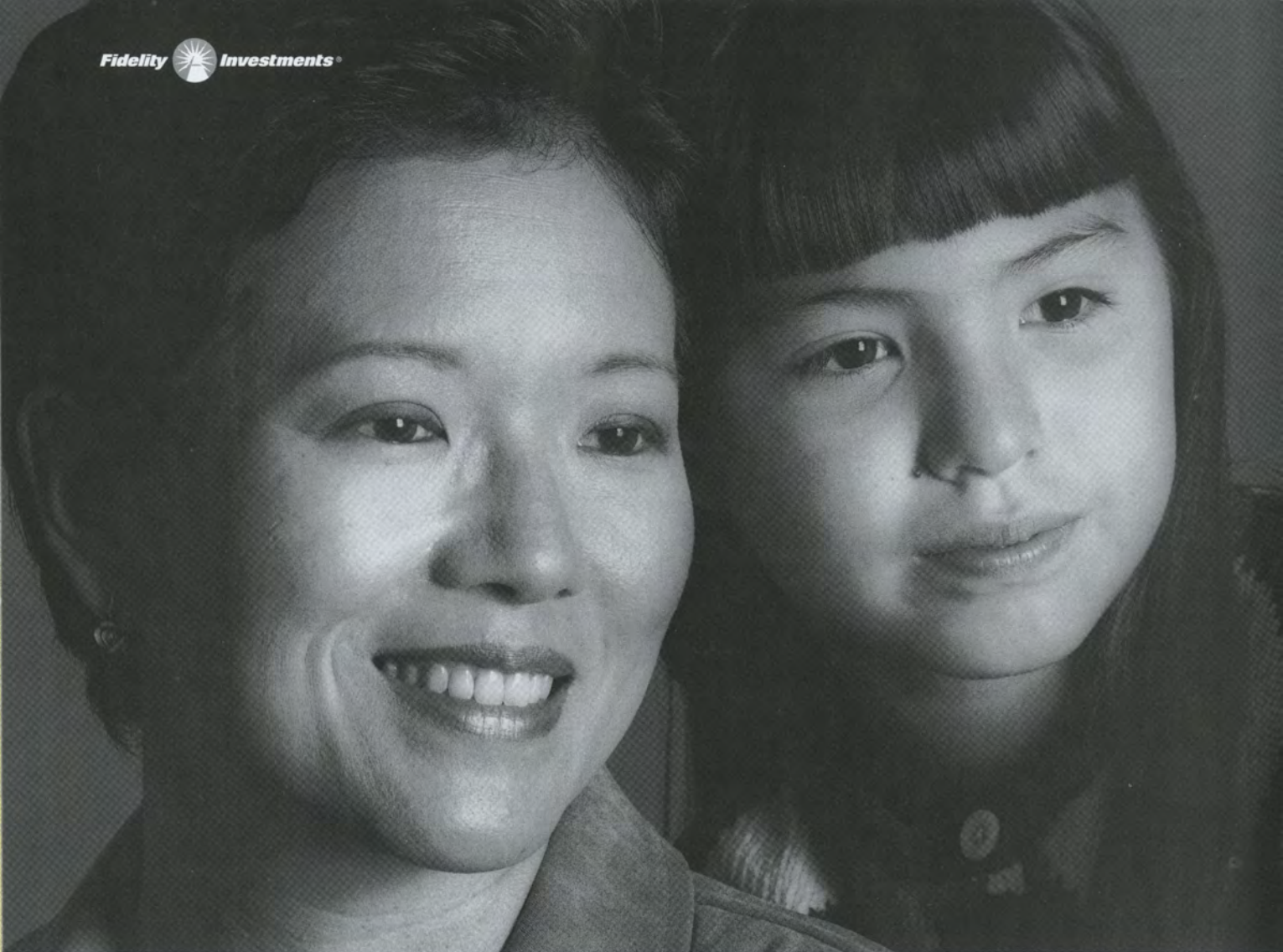




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SHERIDAN, THE SOURCE

By CHRISTOPHER HUNT

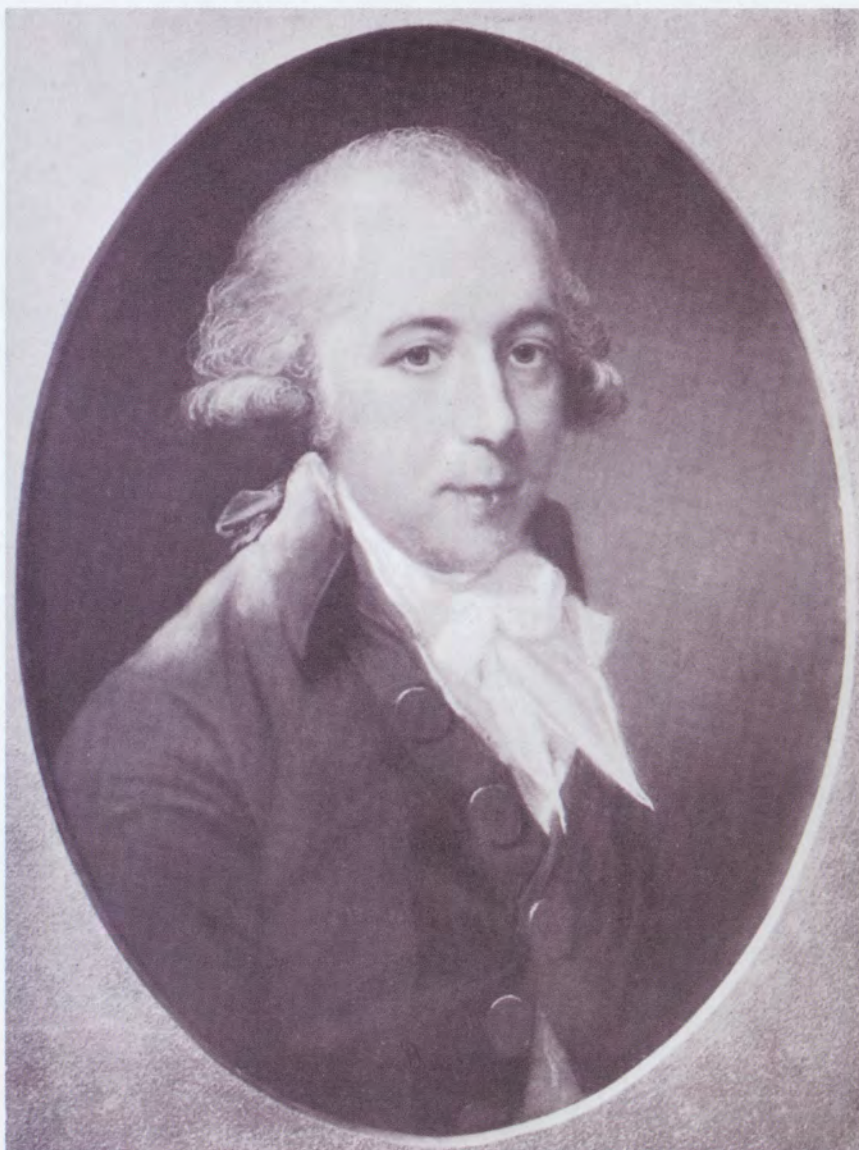
Prokofiev found the source for his fifth opera in one of 18th-century London's most popular theatrical entertainments, Sheridan's musical comedy, The Duenna. Like The Beggar's Opera 50 years before it, The Duenna was a satire on operatic custom and contemporary mores; like its famous predecessor it was a pasticcio, a play with popular songs, either newly composed or taken over from hits of the time, in this case by Thomas Linley, father and son. Sheridan's text is the basis of another opera, with unchanged title, by Roberto Gerhard. The Catalan composer wrote his Duenna in Britain in 1945, a year before the delayed premiere of Prokofiev's Betrothal. The BBC broadcast a studio performance of Gerhard's Duenna in 1949, but it was not staged until 1992. Where

Prokofiev stressed the story's romantic side, at the expense of the purely comic, Gerhard brought out another strand which Sheridan had carefully disguised, a sardonic sadness at human absurdity. Sheridan's musical comedy ran for an unprecedented 75 performances from November 1775, and held the London stage for the next 60 years; it has been more or less forgotten since. Roger Fiske published a scholarly edition of the score in 1961. There is no commercial recording, though the overture and some of the younger Linley's other music is available on a CD. Prokofiev's witty score can be heard on a splendid new set led by Valery Gergiev with forces of the Kirov Opera, and Gerhard's Duenna has been recorded by Britain's Opera North conducted by Antoni Ros Marba.

Richard Brinsley Sheridan

For the living, influence usually determines importance; for the dead, it's more likely to be works of art. Over three decades at the end of the 18th century, from age thirty until he was past sixty, Richard Sheridan — dead at 65 — was a celebrated statesman, one of the leading public figures of his age. But he is remembered as a playwright. During George III's madness he wielded more influence with the King's son, the future Prince Regent, than any other politician; as an orator his fame exceeded even that of Charles James Fox and Edmund Burke, the two great Whig politicians with whom he was invariably linked; he was William Pitt's deadliest opponent in the British parliament during both the American and the French Revolutions; when he died in 1816 his coffin was carried to the national shrine of Westminster Abbey by the Bishop of London and five Lords, in a giant procession that included two royal princes, the Mayor of London, and most members of both Houses of Parliament. In the Abbey, he was buried with stately pomp. Not, however, among the statesmen beside his friend Fox; but with the writers in Poets' Corner. The decades of crucial political and social influence, and the last days of too much drink and too little money — these could be ignored or forgotten; but not four works for the theater which he had written in as many years in his mid-twenties: *The Rivals* and *The Duenna* in 1775, *The School for Scandal* in 1777, and *The Critic* in 1779.

All four share a surface brilliance that conceals their depth. It has been often



NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

Richard Brinsley Sheridan, 1751-1816, in a contemporary portrait, made after a pastel by John Russell.

Christopher Hunt is living in Frankfurt-am-Main in Germany where he was until the end of 1997 Director of the Alte Oper.

Continued on page 22

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Elizabeth Linley and her brother Thomas in an engraving made after the original 1768 painting by Thomas Gainsborough.

SHERIDAN, THE SOURCE

continued from page 21

noted that good comedy is built on serious stuff, but it is comedy's problem that laughter easily drowns out the unwelcome truths it derides. In this, Sheridan's life and works are of a piece, for in his political and social life the brilliant surface has obscured the seriousness, passion, and integrity beneath.

Charm is the most elusive of personal qualities, for it so easily seems merely superficial. Sheridan's contemporaries report again and again on things we can no longer grasp or now think unimportant — the flash of his eye, the overwhelming delight of his conversation, his uncanny ability to charm the most ardent enemy. But his charisma, like the surface of his plays, should not blind us to the brilliance of the mind behind. His phenomenal memory let him organize great masses of detail and speak on exceptionally complex questions without notes. In debate, he could take point after point of a previous speaker and throw it back to its author transformed to his own viewpoint with a wit that would leave his opponents twisting in discomfort amid the laughter of their colleagues. He was an irresistibly amusing speaker, in the best Irish tradi-

tion. He seemed always totally confident, and his effrontery can still astonish.

When he was first elected to Parliament at age 28 as a member for Stafford, it was widely understood (in those days of corrupt patronage) that promises had been made to several electors of jobs at the famous Drury Lane Theatre in London, where Sheridan was by now proprietor. When the jobs failed to materialize, an angry delegation traveled to London and accosted Sheridan at his house in Mayfair. He had probably seen them twice at most, in days of hectic electioneering, but he remembered each, their children's names and their illnesses. A bystander wrote:

To each the great man had something to say which seemed calculated to soothe the irritation of the hearer, and to prevent him from uttering a word of blame. Each man saw before him the most fascinating individual in the kingdom fixing upon him his dark flashing eye, and addressing him in persuasive accents, with the blandest smile. Sheridan moved through the admiring circle with graceful step, no one venturing to stop him; and as he reached the door he turned round, made an enchanting bow, and having

Continued on page 46



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Summers/Graham/Yeargan/Munn

Oct. 2, 4, 8, 11

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Connell, Urmann*; Schmidt, Fox,
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Rudel/Copley/Mitchell/Walker/
Arhelger

Oct. 15, 17, 20, 23, 25, 29; Nov. 1

NORMA Bellini
Vaness, Antonacci; Sylvester,
Silvestrelli*
Summers/Sinclair*/Varona/Whitfield

Nov. 7, 10, 15, 18, 21, 24, 28

PETER GRIMES Britten
Riedel, Powell, Cook; Moser*, Held,
Baerg, Lord, Del Carlo
Runnicles/Copley/Toms/Moiseiwitsch/
Munn

Nov. 17, 22; Dec. 2, 5, 8, 11, 13

Company Premiere

BETROTHAL IN A MONASTERY

Prokofiev
Netrebko, Diadkova;
Pluzhnikov, Bezubenkov
Gergiev/Noseda* (12/3, 6, 10))
Pazi*/Kozhenkova*/Munn

Nov. 23, 25, 27, 28; Dec. 3, 6, 10

Production from the Kirov Opera,
St. Petersburg

TURANDOT Puccini
Stottler*, Amsellem*; Margison (11/29)/
Martinucci, Palatchi*
Armiliato/Bruce/Hockney/Falconer/
Munn
Nov. 29; Dec. 1, 4, 9, 12

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Valayre/Kabatu* (1/10, 13, 15, 17),
Cao/White* (1/10, 13, 15, 17);
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Okerlund/Youngblood* (1/10, 13, 15, 17)
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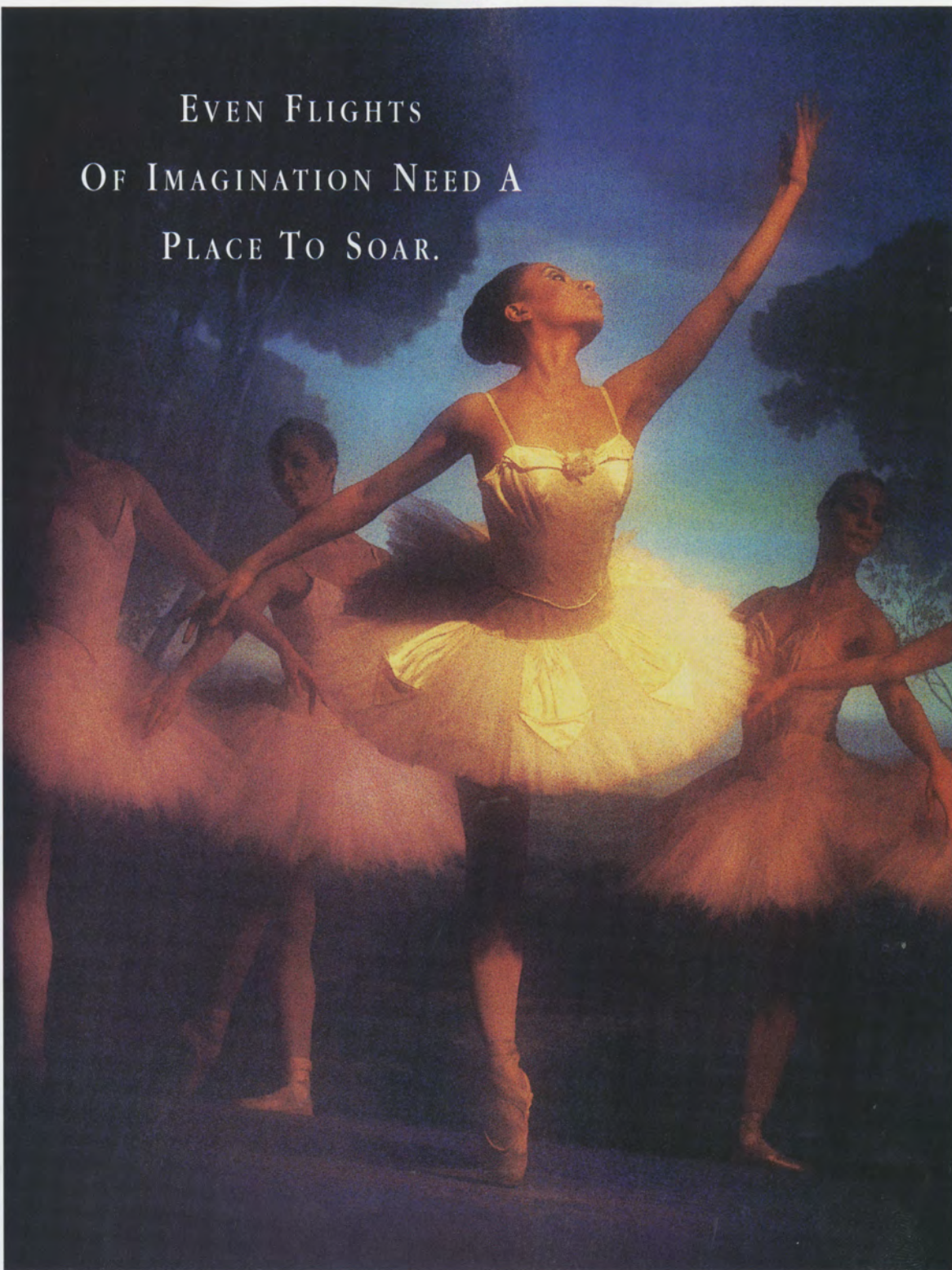
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San Francisco Opera Premiere

Opera in four acts by SERGEI PROKOFIEV

Libretto by the composer and MIRA ALEXANDROVNA MENDELSON

After *The Duenna*, or *The Double Elopement* by RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN

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Обручение в монастыре

Betrothal in a Monastery (The Duenna)

(in Russian)

CAST (in order of appearance)

Conductor
Valery Gergiev
Gianandrea Noseda* (12/3, 6, 10)

Production
Vladislav Pazi*

Designer
Alla Kozhenkova*

Lighting Designer
Thomas J. Munn

Chorus Director
Ian Robertson

Musical Preparation
Susanna Lemberskaya
Peter Grunberg
Adelle Eslinger
Svetlana Gorzhevskaya

Assistant to Maestro Gergiev
Marina Mishuk*

Prompter
Jonathan Khuner

Supertitles
Christopher Bergen

Original choreography re-created by
Natalia Spitsyna*

Assistant Stage Directors
Yefim Maizel
Paula Williams

Stage Manager
Jerry Sherk

Fight Consultant
Larry Henderson

Production from the Kirov Opera

First performance:
Prague, May 5, 1946

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 23 AT 8:00
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 25 AT 7:30
FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 27 AT 7:00
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 28 AT 8:00
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 3 AT 7:30
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 6 AT 2:00
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10 AT 8:00

Don Jerome, a nobleman from Seville

Mendoza, a rich fish merchant

Mendoza's servants } *Pedro*
 Pablo
 Miguel

Don Ferdinand, Don Jerome's son

Lopez, Don Ferdinand's servant

Don Antonio, in love with Louisa

First masker

Second masker

Third masker

Louisa, Don Jerome's daughter

The Duenna, Louisa's chaperone

Lauretta, Louisa's maid

Clara d'Almanza, Louisa's friend

Rosina, Clara's maid

Don Carlos, an impoverished nobleman,
friend of Mendoza

Musicians

Father Augustine, prior of the monastery

Brother Elustaf

Brother Chartreuse

Brother Benedictine

Monks

Novices

Servants, monks, guests, maskers

Solo Dancers:

Spanish pas de deux

Oriental pas de deux

Columbine

Pierrot

Nikolai Gassiev* (11/23, 25, 27)

Konstantin Pluzhnikov

Gennady Bezubenkov (11/23, 25, 27)

Sergei Alexashkin*

Alfredo Daza†

Norman Shankle†

Bojan Knežević

Mel Ulrich†

Richard Walker

Evgeny Akimov*

Norman Shankle

Alfredo Daza

Bojan Knežević

Anna Netrebko

Larissa Diadkova

Peggy Kriha Dye

Tatiana Pavlovskaya* (11/23, 25, 27)

Lia Shevtsova*

Molly Claymon*†

Yuri Shklyar*

Anthony Striplen, clarinet

John Pearson, trumpet

Allen Biggs, drums

Fyodor Kuznetsov*

Norman Shankle

Alfredo Daza

Bojan Knežević

Norman Shankle, Alfredo Daza

Colby Roberts, Daniel Harper

Corps de ballet

*San Francisco Opera debut

†1998-99 Adler Fellow

TIME AND PLACE: Eighteenth-century Seville

ACT I The plaza in front of Don Jerome's house

ACT II Scene 1 Don Jerome's house

INTERMISSION

Scene 2 On the waterfront

Scene 3 Don Jerome's house

ACT III Scene 1 Mendoza's house

INTERMISSION

Scene 2 Don Jerome's house

Scene 3 A convent garden

ACT IV Scene 1 A monastery adjacent to the convent

Scene 2 The ballroom in Don Jerome's house

Latecomers will not be seated during the performance after the lights have dimmed.
The use of cameras, cellular phones and any kind of recording equipment is strictly forbidden.
The performance will last approximately three and one-half hours.

SYNOPSIS — *BETROTHAL IN A MONASTERY*

Don Jerome has a daughter and a son: Louisa and Ferdinand. We shall soon see that Louisa has been promised in marriage to Mendoza, a friend of Jerome's. Louisa, however, loves Antonio, while her duenna has her eye on Mendoza. Ferdinand, for his part, loves Clara, who returns his love. From these sentiments the plot unfolds.

ACT I

Outside his house, Don Jerome and the fish merchant Mendoza discuss a partnership to sell fish in Seville, and seal the bargain with an agreement for Mendoza to marry Louisa.

Ferdinand laments his problems with his sweetheart Clara, as Antonio enters to serenade Louisa beneath her window. Mocking carnival maskers arrive but are chased away by Antonio. Louisa appears on her balcony and joins in the singing.

Don Jerome, awakened by the noise, rushes in to see what's going on just as Antonio departs. Revelers dance around Don Jerome as he bemoans the difficulty of managing a teenage daughter. He expresses his hope to marry her off to Mendoza as soon as possible.

ACT II — SCENE 1

Louisa talks of her love for Antonio. The duenna, who has her own idea of marrying Mendoza for his money, happily helps Louisa plot to marry Antonio. As they formulate a plan, Don Jerome appears and berates his children for opposing him, threatening to lock Louisa up until she changes her mind. Louisa storms off.

After discovering a love letter which was planted for him to find, Don Jerome dismisses the duenna and she goes to Louisa's room to get her belongings. Louisa quickly disguises herself in the duenna's clothes. A weeping "duenna" (Louisa) emerges and is shown to the door.

SCENE 2

As fishwives sell their wares, Mendoza and his impoverished friend Don Carlos reflect on the resultant profits. Clara, in the company of her maid Rosina, meets Louisa who is searching for Antonio. Both girls discover that they have each run away from home: Louisa has decided to elope with Antonio, and Clara has fled from her wicked stepmother. Louisa assumes that Clara is now searching for her brother, Ferdinand, but Clara tells her that she has been offended by Ferdinand because he entered her room at night with a key he had duplicated. Mortified at this offense against her honor, she decides to flee to a convent where she has friends among the nuns. When Louisa catches sight of Mendoza, she asks Clara if she can temporarily borrow her identity. The real Clara agrees and departs.

Mendoza and his friend Don Carlos enter and Louisa (pretending to be Clara) asks Mendoza to carry a message to Antonio. Asking Don Carlos to escort "Clara" to his house, Mendoza says he will visit Don Jerome to see his beloved Louisa.

SCENE 3

Mendoza tells Don Jerome that Clara has run away from home. After Don Jerome leaves, the duenna enters dressed as Louisa. Surprised by her seductive charms, Mendoza plots to elope with "Louisa." The disguised duenna leaves and Don Jerome returns to a very happy Mendoza. They celebrate with a drinking song.

ACT III — SCENE 1

The disguised Louisa has been awaiting Antonio's arrival for several hours. Mendoza and Antonio enter but Antonio wonders why Clara, his friend's fiancée, has summoned him. Laughing, Mendoza pushes him into a room where "Clara" awaits and spies on the couple through the keyhole. When the couple emerges arm-in-arm, Mendoza tells them of his plan to elope with Louisa.

SCENE 2

Don Jerome's house is filled with merry music. He is amazed at his daughter's positive change toward the bridegroom chosen for her. Don Carlos arrives with a letter from Mendoza asking for forgiveness, which Don Jerome grants. Another letter is brought to Don Jerome, this one from Louisa. In it, she asks for Don Jerome's blessing on her marriage. Once again he gives his blessing, adding that he will plan a wedding banquet.

SCENE 3

Clara laments her fate, while Louisa pleads with her on behalf of Ferdinand. Antonio joins them, and to his delight reads the letter in recognition of their marriage. They leave poor Clara in misery. Ferdinand arrives and, seeing the woman he believes to be Clara leaving with Antonio, dashes out after them. Clara, overjoyed at seeing his jealousy, races after Ferdinand.

ACT IV — SCENE 1

Monks are singing and drinking wine, but then hide their mugs and begin to chant when visitors are announced. Antonio and Mendoza, who both wish to marry, have come to enlist the help of the Brothers. Louisa rushes in followed by Ferdinand, who challenges Antonio. As Louisa and Clara stop the fight, the duenna enters. All misunderstandings are resolved and the three couples are blessed.

SCENE 2

Preparations to celebrate Louisa's wedding are proceeding. Mendoza arrives looking for his new wife who turns out to be the duenna! Don Jerome is amazed; Antonio and Louisa ask for his blessing, followed by Ferdinand and Clara. As guests arrive, Don Jerome gives in to fate: his daughter may have married a pauper, but his son has married a fabulously rich woman. He gives his blessing to both of his children as the guests assemble for the wedding banquet.

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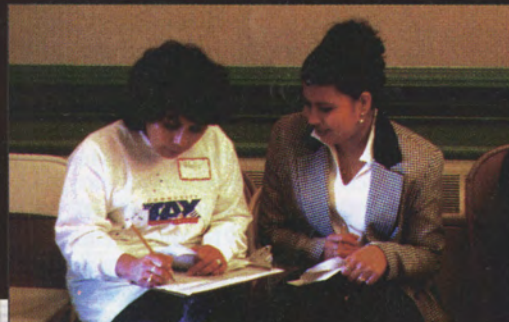
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ARTIST PROFILES



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 Arkhipova 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, 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*. (Her performance as Lyudmila has been recorded — on video and audio — in St. Petersburg with the Kirov Opera.) Most recently, the 1996 Merola Opera Program participant appeared as Susanna in our January presentation of *Figaro*. Netrebko has been featured in concert (Mussorgsky's *The Nursery*) in London, Rotterdam, Athens, Milan, 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 *Ruslan* and *Betrothal* at New York's Metropolitan Opera; *Rigoletto* (role debut as Gilda) in St. Petersburg; *Carmen* (Micaëla) in Japan; *Boris Godunov* (Xenia) and *Parsifal* (Flower Maiden) both at Italy's Ravenna Festival and this summer's Salzburg Festival; *The Love For Three Oranges* (Ninetta) at Amsterdam's Concertgebouw; as well as *Boris* and *Betrothal* throughout France. (Her performance as Louisa in the Kirov *Betrothal* is currently available on video and CD.) Among the soprano's future engagements are *Rigoletto* for her Washington Opera debut, a bow with the San Francisco Symphony in the *Messiah*, and several assignments for San Francisco Opera.



Mezzo-soprano **LARISSA DIADKOVA** made her 1994 San Francisco Opera debut portraying the Fortuneteller and Mother Superior in *The Fiery Angel*. Born in Zelenodolsk, she studied at the Leningrad Conservatory before joining the Maryinsky Theater (Kirov Opera) in 1984. Her repertoire at the Kirov includes Ratmir (*Ruslan and Lyudmila*), Konchakovna (*Prince Igor*), Olga (*Eugene Onegin*), Marfa (*Khovanshchina*), Nezhaty (*Sadko*), Paulina and the Countess (*The Queen of Spades*), Lyubov (*Mazeppa*), Kashcheyevna (*Kashchei the Immortal*) and the Duenna (*Betrothal in a Monastery*). As a member of the Kirov company, she has toured throughout the world and has appeared in many of the world's foremost concert halls and opera houses. Among her most recent engagements are *La Gioconda* (La Cieca) and *Khovanshchina* at the Teatro alla Scala in Milan; *Un Ballo in Maschera* (Ulrica) at the Monte Carlo Opera; in addition to *Betrothal*, *Ruslan* and *Mazeppa* at New York's Metropolitan Opera as part of the 1997 Kirov Opera Festival. Her recent recordings include *Betrothal*, *Iolanta*, *Ruslan*, *The Fiery Angel*, *Sadko*, Shostakovich's *Krivoi Fables* and Mahler's Third Symphony. Upcoming releases include *Kashchei*, *Mazeppa* and Shostakovich's *From Jewish Folk Poetry*. Diadkova also appears on videos of *Boris Godunov* under Yuri Temirkanov, *Boris Godunov* and *Sadko* led by Valery Gergiev, and on *Welcome Back to St. Petersburg*, a Kirov Opera

concert filmed in London. The mezzo will appear at the Met later this season as Azucena in *Il Trovatore*.



TATIANA PAVLOVSKAYA, a principal soloist with the Kirov Opera since 1995, is a graduate of the Rimsky-Korsakov Conservatory in St. Petersburg, and a 1994 first-prize winner of two prestigious international vocal competitions. The Russian soprano's repertoire includes Tatyana (*Eugene Onegin*), the Countess (*Le Nozze di Figaro*), Paulina (*The Gambler*), Maria (*Mazeppa*) and Clara (*Betrothal in a Monastery*). The young artist has toured with the Kirov to France, Italy, Slovenia, Finland, Portugal and the United States (1998, Kirov Opera Festival at the Metropolitan Opera). Pavlovskaya made her first appearance at the Salzburg Festival this summer singing the role of a Flowermaiden in concert performances of *Parsifal* led by Valery Gergiev.



LIA SHEVTSOVA, a native of St. Petersburg, graduated from the State St. Petersburg Conservatoire and has been a soloist at the Kirov Opera since 1994. Included in the mezzo-soprano's repertoire are Cherubino (*Le Nozze di Figaro*), Nicolette and Linette (*The Love for Three Oranges*), Curra (*La Forza del Destino*), Emma (*Khovanshchina*), Inez (*Il Trovatore*), Papagena (*Die Zauberflöte*) and Clara (*Betrothal in a Monastery*). She has toured with the Kirov Opera to Germany, Finland, Israel, Japan and the United States (Lincoln Center and the Metropolitan Opera). This summer, Shevtsova made her Salzburg Festival debut performing with the Vienna Philharmonic under the baton of Valery Gergiev. She took part in the Kirov production of *Prince Igor* (video) and can be heard on the Kirov CD of *La Forza del Destino*.



1996–97 Adler Fellow **PEGGY KRIHA DYE** made her San Francisco Opera debut in the summer of 1996 as Musetta in *La Bobème*, 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 portrayed Kate Pinkerton in San Francisco Opera's new staging of *Madama Butterfly* last summer, appeared with the Company during the 1997–98 season in *Death in Venice* and *Le Nozze di Figaro*, was seen as Damigella in our 1998 *Femmes Fatales* staging of *L'Incoronazione di Poppea*, and sang the role of Stella in the final performance of *A Streetcar Named Desire*. She was also recently praised for her performances as Musetta in *La Bobème* and Zerlina in *Don Giovanni* for the Festival Opera of Walnut Creek. Winner of a prestigious scholarship grant from The Liberace Foundation, 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, Kriha Dye received her undergraduate degree in music from St. Cloud University and spent two years as a member of the Juilliard Opera Center.



MOLLY CLAYMON, first year Adler Fellow and a 1997 Merola Opera Program participant, received her bachelor's degree from Portland State University. The native of Montana's credits include Zita (*Gianni Schicchi*) and Cinderella (*The True Story of Cinderella*) at P.S.U.; Madame Larina (*Eugene Onegin*) with Portland Opera; Olga (*The Merry Widow*) with the Portland Music Company; and Ursula in *Beatrice and*

Benedict with the Bel Canto Northwest Vocal Institute. The mezzo has also appeared with Opera Southwest in Albuquerque as the Widow's Olga and as Tessa in *The Gondoliers*. Her numerous vocal awards include first prize in the 1994 National Association of Teachers and Singers Competition. Among her most recent engagements are Mercédès in Western Opera Theater's national tour of *Carmen* and the role of the Greek Woman in the Opera Center's 1998 Showcase presentation of Gluck's *Iphigénie en Tauride*.



NIKOLAI GASSIEV, an alumnus of the St. Petersburg Conservatory, was appointed principal soloist with the Kirov Opera in 1990. That company named him "Best Actor of the Year" in 1994 for his portrayals of Grishka Kuterna in *The Legend of the Invisible City of Kitezh*, the title role of *Kashchei the Immortal* and Finn in *Ruslan and Lyudmila*. In addition to his vast repertoire of chamber pieces by Russian and

Western composers, the tenor's operatic roles include Prince Andrei Khovansky and Golitsin (*Khovanshchina*), Herod (*Salome*), Prince Shuisky (*Boris Godunov*), Truffaldino (*The Love for Three Oranges*), the Marquis (*The Gambler*), Don Jerome (*Betrothal in a Monastery*), in addition to Agrippa and Mephistopheles (*The Fiery Angel*). The Russian artist has performed with the Kirov Opera in Great Britain (Edinburgh Festival in 1991 and 1995), the United States (Metropolitan Opera in 1992 and 1998), Japan (Tokyo in 1993 and 1996), as well as in Israel, France, Spain, Germany, Finland, Italy and the Netherlands. He has also appeared at, among others, Milan's La Scala and at La Fenice in Venice. Gassiev is a leading participant in the Kirov Opera's audio/video recordings of *Iolanta*, *Khovanshchina*, *Prince Igor*, *Sadko*, *The Queen of Spades*, *Boris Godunov*, *Mazeppa*, *The Maid of Pskov* and *Betrothal in a Monastery*.



KONSTANTIN PLUZHNIKOV studied at the Leningrad Conservatory and joined the roster of the Maly Opera in 1969. In 1971, the Russian tenor became a member of the Kirov Opera and has been a leading principal artist there ever since. Winner of the 1968 Glinka All-Russia vocal competition, he also excelled at the 1970 Bucharest International Competition and the 1972 Geneva International Competition. A native of the Georgian Republic, he has performed extensively abroad,

both in opera and concert, and has thus far been heard in France, Italy, Germany, Spain, Scotland (Edinburgh Festival), Finland, Israel, Austria, Holland, Japan and the United States. (He made his 1994 San Francisco Opera debut as Mephistopheles in *The Fiery Angel*, returning to the Company during the 1996-97 season to portray Yeroshka in *Prince Igor*.) Pluzhnikov's repertoire includes Finn (*Ruslan and Lyudmila*), Herod (*Salome*), Lensky (*Eugene Onegin*), Edgardo (*Lucia di Lammermoor*), Count Almaviva (*Il Barbiere di Siviglia*), the title roles of *Faust*, *Lobengrin*, *Sadko* and *Don Carlo*, Shuisky (*Boris Godunov*), Golitsin (*Khovanshchina*), Afanasy (*The Fair at Sorochinsk*), Grishka (*The Legend of the Invisible City of Kitezh*), and Don Jerome (*Betrothal in a Monastery*). The tenor has made over 30 recordings, and with the Kirov Opera alone he has performed Mephistopheles in *The Fiery Angel* (audio/video), Golitsin and the Scrivener in *Khovanshchina* (audio/video), Yeroshka in *Prince Igor* (audio), Finn in *Ruslan and Lyudmila* (audio/video) and Shuisky in *Boris Godunov* (audio). He also sings the role of Rothschild in a recording of Fleyshman's *Rothschild's Violin* under the baton of Gennady Rozhdestvensky.



1997-98 Adler Fellow **MEL ULRICH** made his first San Francisco Opera appearances in the roles of Sharpless and Prince Yamadori in the 1997 staging of *Madama Butterfly*. He performed in *Death in Venice* and *Pelléas et Mélisande* during the Company's 1997-98 season, Oreste in the Opera Center's '98 Showcase production of *Iphigénie en Tauride*, and most recently sang the role of Ottone in *L'Incoronazione di*

Poppea during our *Femmes Fatales* Festival. The baritone, originally from Puerto Rico, received his Bachelor of Music and Bachelor of Arts degrees from the University of Washington, as well as an Artist Diploma from the Oberlin Conservatory. A Sullivan Award winner in 1997, he won the Paris Opéra-Comique award in the 1998 International Belvedere Competition. He also recently made a critically acclaimed New York debut, singing the title role of *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* for New York City Opera. Additional appearances include *War and Peace*, *Gianni Schicchi* and *Werther* at Seattle Opera; *Il Turco in Italia*, *The Jewel Box* and *Die Zauberflöte* for Wolf Trap Opera; *Don Giovanni* (title role) for Festival Opera; and *The Rape of Lucretia* (Tarquinius) for his European debut at the Vienna Kammeroper. From 1994-96 he was a Principal Resident Artist with Opera San José where he performed the title roles of *Don Giovanni*, *Tartuffe* and *Eugene Onegin*, as well as Figaro (*Il Barbiere di Siviglia*), Guglielmo (*Così fan tutte*), Escamillo (*Carmen*), Germont (*La Traviata*), Zurga (*Les Pêcheurs de Perles*) and Dr. Falke (*Die Fledermaus*). A member of the 1996 Merola Opera Program, Ulrich sang Figaro in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* and repeated the role on the subsequent Western Opera Theater 30th-anniversary tour of the same production. Future engagements include debuts at the Vienna Volksoper, Orlando Opera, Opera Theatre of St. Louis and the Opéra-Comique in Paris.

A graduate of the Rimsky-Korsakov Conservatory in his native St. Petersburg, **EVGENY AKIMOV** won several prominent vocal awards before becoming a soloist at the Kirov Opera in 1996. Included in the tenor's repertoire are the Duke of Mantua (*Rigoletto*), Bayan (*Ruslan and Lyudmila*), Count Almaviva (*Il Barbiere di Siviglia*), Cassio (*Otello*), the Fool (*Boris Godunov*), Prince Vladimir (*Prince Igor*) and Don Antonio (*Betrothal in a*



in the audio recording of *Boris Godunov*.



Bass **GENNADY BEZUBENKOV** made his first U.S. appearance singing three roles in San Francisco Opera's 1991 presentation of *War and Peace* and returned to portray Farlaf in our 1995 production of *Ruslan and Lyudmila*. A member and subsequently soloist with the Leningrad Capella, the Russian artist graduated from the Leningrad Conservatory in 1979 and has been a soloist with the Kirov Opera since 1989.

His repertoire includes the roles of Dosifei and Ivan Khovansky in *Khovanshchina*, Pimen and Varlaam in *Boris Godunov*, Konchak in *Prince Igor*, Ivan Susanin in Glinka's *A Life for the Tsar*, King René in *Iolanta*, Daland in *Der Fliegende Holländer* and Gurnemanz in *Parsifal*. His performance of the last-named role earned him the prize of "Golden Mask" as best singer of the 1997 Kirov Opera season. He has also sung in a wide variety of oratorio and concert selections, including Haydn's *The Creation*, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, as well as the Requiem masses of Mozart and Verdi. He has performed with the Kirov on tour in the U.S., Japan, Spain, Germany, Great Britain, Austria, Finland, Italy and the Netherlands, and holds the titles "National Artist of Russia" (1979) and "Laureate of the All-Russian Theater" (1989). He can be heard with the Kirov Opera on recordings of *Iolanta*, *The Maid of Pskov*, *Sadko*, *War and Peace*, *Ruslan and Lyudmila*, and *The Queen of Spades*.



After graduating from the Saratov Conservatory, **SERGEI ALEXASHKIN** continued his studies at the Teatro alla Scala in Milan and joined the Kirov Opera in 1989. The bass has sung, among others, Don Giovanni/Leporello (*Don Giovanni*), Sarastro (*Die Zauberflöte*), Fiesco (*Simon Boccanegra*), Philip II/Grand Inquisitor (*Don Carlo*), Procida (*I Vespri Siciliani*), Ramfis (*Aida*), Don Magnifico (*La Cenerentola*), Méphistophélès (*Faust*), Ruslan/Farlaf (*Ruslan and Lyudmila*), Ivan the Terrible (*The Maid of Pskov*), Boris/Pimen/Varlaam (*Boris Godunov*), Khovansky/Dosifei (*Khovanshchina*), Gremin (*Eugene Onegin*), King René (*Iolanta*), Prince Galitsky/Konchak (*Prince Igor*), Lindorf/Coppelius/Dr. Miracle (*Les Contes d'Hoffmann*), as well as Mendoza/Don Carlos (*Betrothal in a Monastery*). On the concert stage, Alexashkin has performed Shostakovich's Thirteenth (also recorded under Solti) and Fourteenth (on CD as well) Symphonies; *La Damnation de Faust*; Berlioz's *Roméo et Juliette*; Mozart's Requiem; Beethoven's Ninth Symphony; the Verdi Requiem; in addition to Bach's *Magnificat* and Mass in B-Minor. The bass is also acclaimed for his recitals of songs and romances by Russian and Western composers. On tour with the Kirov Opera, he has appeared in

Spain, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Japan, Israel, France, Italy, the Netherlands and the United States (Metropolitan Opera). He can be heard on a CD recording of *Iolanta* with the Kirov, while his audio/video recordings with that company include *Sadko*, *Mazeppa* and *Betrothal in a Monastery*.



(*Tosca*) and Don Carlos (*Betrothal in a Monastery*).



FYODOR KUZNETSOV, a native of Sverdlovsk, graduated from the music conservatory in Gorky and joined St. Petersburg's Mussorgsky Opera in 1987. Roles performed in that house include Boris/Pimen (*Boris Godunov*), Dosifei (*Khovanshchina*), King René (*Iolanta*), Gremin (*Eugene Onegin*), Philip II/Grand Inquisitor (*Don Carlo*), Colline (*La Bohème*), as well as the title parts of Rimsky-Korsakov's *The Tale of Tsar Saltan* and Petrov's *Peter the Great*. (The bass won the 1994 St. Petersburg Laureate Prize for his performance of the last-named role.) As a member of the Mussorgsky company he was applauded in France, Italy, Japan, Greece, Germany and the United States. A principal singer of the Maryinsky Theatre's Kirov Opera since 1996, roles performed there have included Varlaam (*Boris Godunov*), Farlaf (*Ruslan and Lyudmila*), Don Basilio (*Il Barbiere di Siviglia*), Hunding (*Die Walküre*) and Mendoza (*Betrothal in a Monastery*). He has traveled with the Kirov to Germany (1997 Salzburg Festival debut as Varlaam), Italy, Argentina, England and the United States (Metropolitan Opera), among others. The Russian artist's concert repertoire includes Mozart's Requiem, Bruckner's *Missa Solemnis*, Rossini's *Stabat Mater*, Mahler's Eighth Symphony, Beethoven's Ninth and Shostakovich's Fourteenth. Kuznetsov can be heard on recordings of *Betrothal in a Monastery*, *Boris Godunov*, and two song cycles by Shostakovich.



NORMAN SHANKLE, who made his San Francisco Opera debut during the *Femmes Fatales* Festival as Valletto in *L'Incoronazione di Poppea*, was recently honored as first prize winner of the prestigious 1998 MacAllister Awards. The tenor continues his association with S.F. Opera Center as a 1998-99 Adler Fellow after completing the Merola Opera Program in 1996 and 1997. He was seen earlier this year as Pylade in Opera Center's 1998 Showcase production of *Iphigénie en Tauride*. Merola credits include performances in the '96 productions of *The Elixir of Love* and *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, in addition to the 1997 stagings of *La Cenerentola* and *Carmen*. He is a veteran of two national tours with Western Opera Theater — the '96 *Barbiere* (Count Almaviva) and '97's *Carmen* (Remendado). A native of Winchester, Virginia, Shankle

received his undergraduate degree in voice from Shenandoah University. Previous engagements include the lead role of The Dwarf in the world premiere of Russell Woollens's *The Birthday of the Infanta*, presented by Opera Americana at the Kennedy Center; *Luisa Miller* with Washington Opera; *Roméo et Juliette* (Benvolio) and *Samson et Dalila* with Washington Concert Opera; as well as *Messiah* with the Paul Hill Chorale. He has also performed as soloist with the Washington Oratorio Society and Choral Arts Society of Washington, among others.



1998-99 Adler Fellow **ALFREDO DAZA** made his San Francisco Opera debut as Liberto (*L'Incoronazione di Poppea*) during the 1998 *Femmes Fatales* Festival. The baritone participated in the 1997 Merola Opera Program, performing the role of Le Dancaire in *Carmen*. Originally from Puebla City, Mexico, he began his studies at the Puebla State Conservatory of Music and was a national winner in the Carlo

Morelli National Competition in Mexico at the age of 16. Soon after, he received an undergraduate degree in voice from the National Conservatory of Music. A scholarship from the National Foundation for Culture and Arts enabled him to represent Mexico in the 1996 Pacific Music Festival in Sapporo, where he sang Guglielmo in a touring production of *Così fan tutte* throughout Japan. Additional roles performed include the title part of *Don Giovanni*, Figaro in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, Marcello in *La Bohème*, Silvio in *Pagliacci*, and Zaretsky in *Eugene Onegin*. In concert, Daza has been heard in, among others, *Carmine Burana*, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, Mozart's Requiem and Rossini's *Petite Messe Solennelle*, as well as in numerous zarzuela performances in Mexico. Recent Opera Center credits include a Schwabacher Debut Recital and the role of the Scythian Commander in the 1998 Showcase presentation of *Iphigénie en Tauride*. The baritone sings the role of the Father in Opera Guild's upcoming holiday presentation of *Hansel and Gretel*.



Bass-baritone **BOJAN KNEŽEVIĆ** most recently performed with the Company during the 1997-98 season in *Tosca* (Sacristan), *Le Nozze di Figaro* (Antonio), *Elektra* (Old Servant), *Guillaume Tell* (Huntsman) and *Rigoletto* (Count Ceprano). 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*.

The following year he sang Benoit and Alcindoro in our new staging of *La Bohème* while his Company portrayals during the 1996-97 season were seen in *Hamlet*, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* and *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*. 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. Past highlights also include Marcello in *La Bohème* and Leporello with Virginia Opera, in addition to

Mozart's *Coronation Mass* and Great Mass in C Minor, as well as the U.S. premiere of Mascagni's *Silvano* (available on CD) at Carnegie Hall. Most recently, he has sung the roles of Leporello with the Minnesota Opera; Escamillo in *Carmen* and Colline in *La Bohème* in Fort Worth; Papageno in *Die Zauberflöte* for Minnesota Opera; and Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly* with the Bohème Opera of New Jersey. Among his future engagements are *Aida* (the King) in Fort Worth, as well as *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Enrico) and *Le Nozze di Figaro* (the Count) for Festival Opera of Walnut Creek.



VALERY GERGIEV is Director of the Maryinsky Theater in St. Petersburg, home to the Kirov Opera and Ballet. Under his leadership, the Kirov Opera has become recognized as one of the great opera companies of today through its tours, telecasts, recordings and festivals at the Maryinsky Theatre and abroad. The distinguished artist is also Principal Conductor of the Rotterdam Philharmonic and Principal Guest Conductor of the Metropolitan Opera.

The maestro made his San Francisco Opera debut with *War and Peace* (1991) and has since led the Company's productions of *The Fiery Angel* and *Hérodiade* (1994), in addition to *Ruslan and Lyudmila* (1995). Born in Moscow, he studied conducting at the Leningrad Conservatory with the noted teacher Ilya Musin. Now, as one of music's busiest and most sought-after conductors, he is regularly applauded at the podiums of the major opera houses and orchestras of the world. Maestro Gergiev is the organizer of St. Petersburg's annual "White Nights Festival," the "Rotterdam Philharmonic/Gergiev Festival," and is director and founder of the Mikkeli International Festival in Finland, the Peace to the Caucasus Festival, and the Red Sea International Music Festival in Eilat, Israel. All of these activities feature the Kirov Opera and Orchestra. He is also instrumental in initiating cooperative performances with his company and many of the world's major opera houses and symphony orchestras. His recordings (on CD and/or video) include *The Maid of Pskov*, *Khovanshchina*, *Sadko*, *War and Peace*, *The Queen of Spades*, *Iolanta*, *Ruslan and Lyudmila*, *The Fiery Angel*, *Prince Igor*, *La Forza del Destino*, several orchestral albums and recitals, and the complete ballets *Romeo and Juliet* and *Sleeping Beauty*. His most recent releases include *The Gambler*, *Mazeppa*, *Kashchei the Immortal*, *Betrothal in a Monastery* and *Ivan the Terrible*. Among Gergiev's numerous international honors are *Musical America's* "Conductor of the Year" award, as well as Russia's Dmitri Shostakovich Award, Golden Mask Award, and "People's Artist of Russia," the country's highest cultural award.



GIANANDREA NOSEDA was appointed Principal Guest Conductor of the Maryinsky Theater's Kirov Opera in 1997. A native of Milan, Noseda completed his musical studies at the Verdi Conservatory and subsequently studied in Vienna and at Siena's Accademia Musicale Chigiana. After winning two prestigious international competitions in 1995, he began his collaboration with the Kirov Orchestra the following year, both on tour (Milan/"White Nights Festival"; Paris/*Boris Godunov*; Lisbon/*Der Fliegende Holländer*) and in St. Petersburg (*Le Nozze di Figaro*, *Rigoletto*, *Don Carlo*, *Tosca*, *La*

Traviata). Recently appointed Principal Guest Conductor of Barcelona's Orquestra de Cadaqués, the maestro has also led the Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano, the orchestra of the Teatro Comunale in Florence, the Rotterdam Philharmonic and the BBC Symphony Orchestra, among others. Having made his debut at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam earlier this year with *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Nosedá will soon lead performances with the Orquesta Nacional de España of Madrid, the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, and the first presentation of *La Sonnambula* at St. Petersburg's Maryinsky Theatre. His discography includes the popular *Aria* with tenor Andrea Bocelli and the Orchestra del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, as well as recordings with the Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano and the Orquestra de Cadaqués.



Stage director **VLADISLAV PAZI** graduated from the College of Theater, Music and Cinema in his native St. Petersburg. After further study, he began working in theaters in Kiev, Tallinn, Omsk, Petrozavodsk, Murmansk and St. Petersburg. From 1986 to 1994 he was the artistic director of the Academic Theatre of Russian Drama in Kirghisia and in 1996 was named artistic director of the Lensovet Theatre in St. Petersburg.

In this city he directed a number of productions including *La Dame aux Camélias*, *The Gambler*, *The Lover* and *Suicide of Lovers on the Island of Celestial Nets*. For this last-named staging, he was awarded the prestigious "Gold Footlights" prize. In addition to receiving the "Kiev Medal" for his production of *The Castle*, the director has won several theatrical prizes in Kirghisia. Pazi first staged *Betrothal in a Monastery* for the Kirov Opera in 1996, repeating the assignment at the Metropolitan Opera last year as part of the Kirov Opera Festival.



Set and costume designer **ALLA KOZHENKOVA** initially studied painting in Moscow, later graduating from St. Petersburg's College of Theater, Music and Cinematography. The famed artist has created the designs for over 300 operas, ballets and dramatic productions in Russia and throughout Europe, as well as in Latin America and Japan. Her recent design credits include *Amadeus*, *Roméo and Juliette*,

Swan Lake, *Maria Stuarda* (at Moscow's New Opera Theatre and on a tour of Paris) and *La Dame aux Camélias* (at the Komissarzhevsky Theater of St. Petersburg). Her designs for this production of *Betrothal in a Monastery*, first presented at the Maryinsky Theater in 1995, have also been seen throughout Europe as well as at the Metropolitan Opera last year as part of the Kirov Opera Festival.



THOMAS J. MUNN continues to serve as lighting director for San Francisco Opera, a position he has held since 1976. He most recently created the lighting for *L'Incoronazione di Poppea* and *Carmen* during our *Femmes Fatales* Festival, and this season adds new designs to productions of *A Streetcar Named Desire* (projection and lighting design), *Don Carlo*, *Peter Grimes* and *Betrothal in a Monastery*, as well

as for revivals of *Turandot* and *Tristan und Isolde*. During his tenure with the Company, he has created the lighting and special effects for over 180 productions. Scenic design credits include productions of *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, *Roberto Devereux*, *Pelléas et Mélisande* (1979), *Billy Budd*, *Nabucco*, *Don Giovanni* and *Christophe Colomb*. Lighting design credits for our 1997-98 season included the 75th Anniversary Gala (stage and television), *Tosca*, *Pelléas et Mélisande* and *Eugene Onegin*. His television credits for the Company include *The Dangerous Liaisons*, *Turandot*, the Emmy-award-winning *La Gioconda*, *Aida*, *Samson et Dalila*, *La Bohème*, *Mefistofele*, *Orlando Furioso*, *L'Africaine* and *Capriccio*. Munn has also designed productions for the Netherlands Opera, Opéra de Nice, Sendai Opera, Houston Grand Opera and Dallas Opera. Recent assignments include work for the Washington Opera (*Dangerous Liaisons*), New York City's Mary Anthony Dance Theatre, the PBS television production of *Emmeline*, and Ballet Arizona (scenery and projections for a new staging of *Nutcracker*). Lighting system consulting projects include San Francisco's recently renovated War Memorial Opera House and the Het Muziektheater in Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

ADDITIONAL PERFORMERS

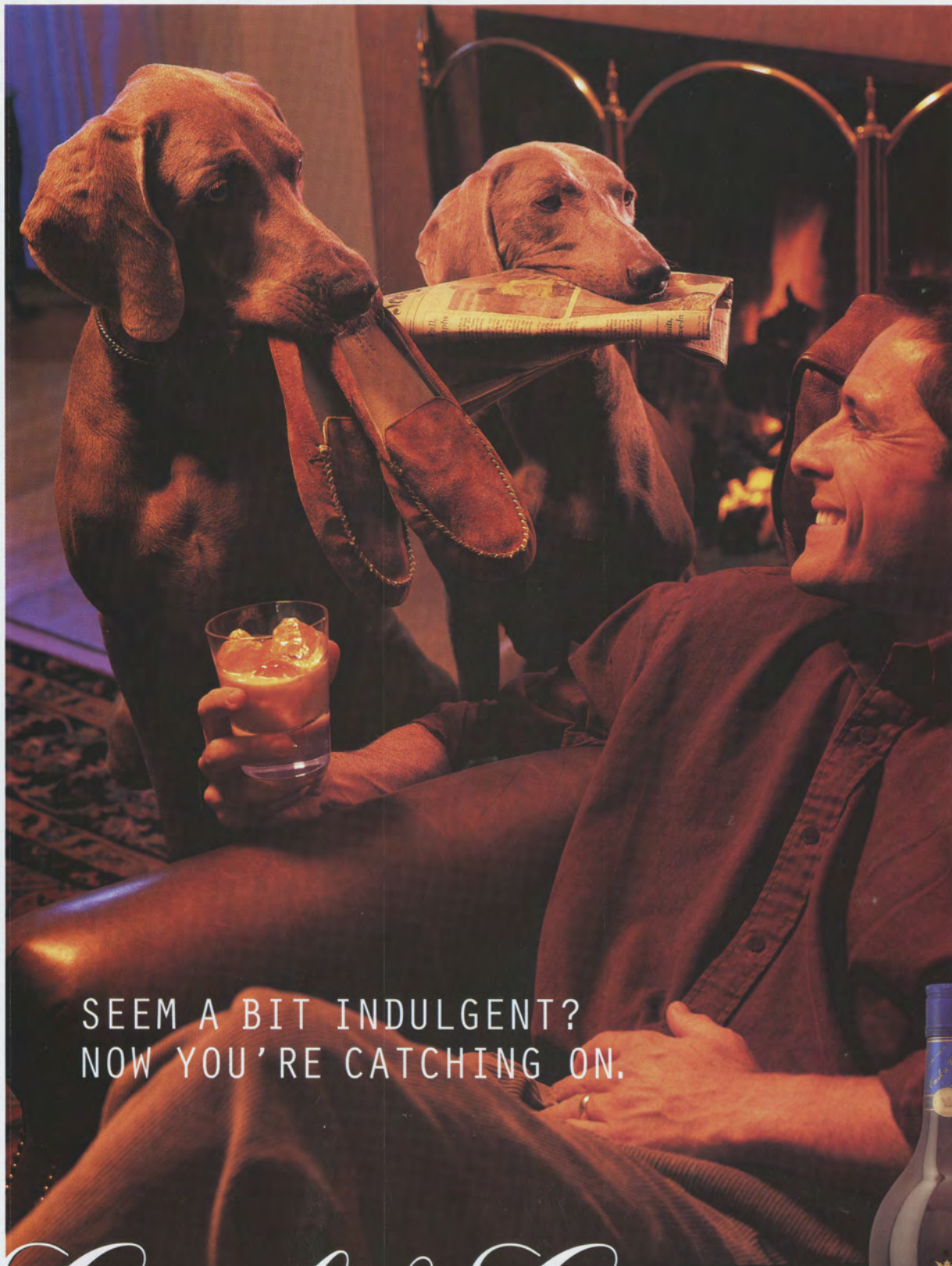
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Gregory Dawson
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Bob Acker
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Mark Burstein
Marcus Cenicerós
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Betrothal in a Monastery

Photos taken in rehearsal
by Marty Sohl

Gennady Bezubenko, Larissa Diadkova





Anna Netrebko, Evgeny Akimov



Gennady Bezubekov, Anna Netrebko



Larissa Diadkova, Anna Netrebko



Nikolai Gassiev, Anna Netrebko



Gennady Bezubenkov



Upper Left: Yuri Shklyar

Left: Fyodor Kuznetsov

Lower Left: Commedia dell' arte group

Mel Ulrich, Tatiana Pavlovskaya





Tatiana Pavlovskaya

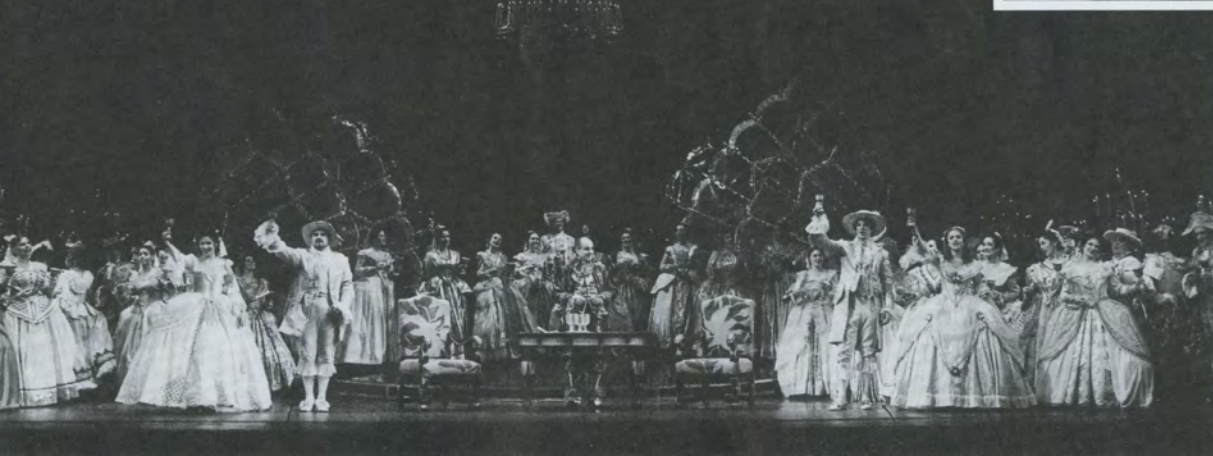


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P15A

A MERRY PARABLE OF AWFUL TIMES

continued from page 16

sonatas, the Seventh Piano Sonata — and the list goes on and on. It was also, to be sure, the period of the *Cantata for the Twentieth Anniversary of October*, the *Zdravitsa* ("Toast to Stalin"), and the oratorio *On Guard for Peace*, works that cannot be listened to today without embarrassment, no matter how stirring or lovely the music, and no matter how committed the performance. But a few potboilers seemed a fair exchange for a relative freedom (until 1948) from interference, and for a material security composers in the West could only envy, which finally allowed Prokofiev to give up concertizing and devote all his time, as he had long dreamed of doing, to composition. In any case, currying favor with those above came easily to Prokofiev, who avidly sought and cherished his Stalin Prizes, and shamelessly flaunted the car, the foreign clothes, and the gadgets he was privileged to own.

It was thanks to his decision to return to Russia that Prokofiev found himself artistically, and earned his place in music history, as the very last composer to make a permanent and many-sided contribution to the standard repertory. With Francis Poulenc, a close friend from his Paris days who outlived him by a decade, Prokofiev was just about the last major composer able to use the tonal language of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries — both its vocabulary and its syntax — without affectation, epigonism, parody or pastiche.

All of these virtues are epitomized in *Betrothal in a Monastery*. Composed in 1940, it was Prokofiev's second Soviet opera. His experience with the first one, *Semyon Kotko*, which was based on an orthodox Soviet novel by Valentin Katayev called *I Am the Son of the Laboring Masses*, taught him to steer away from political themes, no matter how apparently safe. (His return to safe Soviet politics for his last opera, *The Story of a Real Man*, was his coerced response to the 1948 denunciation, and it was another fiasco.) *Semyon Kotko* was set in the aftermath of World War I, during the brief German occupation of Ukraine, and concerned a young man's decision to join the pro-Bolshevik partisans. Prokofiev worked hard to make the opera both politically and musically palatable to its Soviet consumers, including an inspiring oratorio-like interlude based on a poem by the Ukrainian national poet Taras Shevchenko, and an infusion of local

folklore (something he had never done before and, until 1948, wouldn't do again). But then the Nazi-Soviet pact made the Russians and the Germans "sworn friends" (in Katayev's cutting phrase), and the opera was almost doctored to death. (The Germans had to become Austrians, for one thing, which took the opera out of history and set it down in fantasyland.) It had a poor reception and was never restaged within Prokofiev's lifetime. To recall Benchley, its fate sent Prokofiev an urgent message: "Look away! Look away!"

The *Betrothal* was the happy result. The opera owes its existence to Mira Alexandrovna Mendelson (1915-68), the composer's second (common-law) wife, a professional translator whom in 1940 he had just met, and who was then working, together with a friend, on Richard Brinsley Sheridan's comic opera libretto *The Duenna; or, The Double Elopement*. She described the piece to Prokofiev, who, eager to retreat into politically innocuous terrain after the frustrations that had attended *Semyon Kotko*, immediately sensed its possibilities for innocent musical "champagne à la Mozart or Rossini."

The names did not occur to him by chance. Sheridan's play is an extravagant parody of the venerable comic-opera tradition that produced both *The Barber of Seville* and *The Marriage of Figaro*, in which a ward or daughter or servant girl outsmarts her parent or guardian or master to marry the suitor of her choice. Its farrago of disguises, subterfuges and mistaken identities ends with no fewer than three couples finally matched correctly in defiance of the wishes of Don Jerome, a grandee of Seville, who had hoped to marry off his headstrong daughter Louisa to Isaac Mendoza, a rich old Portuguese Jew, who is accompanied on stage at all times by his friend Don Carlos. Mendoza ends up with the contralto, Louisa's *duenna* or chaperone; Louisa with the tenor, Don Antonio, her impoverished true love; and Don Jerome's son Ferdinand, assisted by his sister, succeeds in eloping with Donna Clara, whose father had intended her for a convent. All of the weddings take place in a priory attached to a convent, the young lovers (and the duped Mendoza) having bribed an old toper of a friar to perform the ceremonies.

When Sheridan's play was first

performed at Covent Garden, its 27 musical numbers (mainly ballad-songs like those in *The Beggar's Opera*, plus an occasional ensemble) were set by the author's father-in-law and son-in-law, both named Thomas Linley, in collaboration. Six of Sheridan's little songs, translated into Russian verse by Mendelson, were retained for Prokofiev's opera, both to give the main characters some tuneful solo music in what was otherwise a typically Prokofievesque "through-composed" libretto, and to function thereafter as leitmotives. In the order of their presentation they are

1. Don Antonio's song to the guitar in Act I (after Sheridan's "The breath of morn bids hence the night")
2. Don Jerome's song in Act II, Scene I (after Sheridan, "If a Daughter You Have It's the Plague of Your Life.")
3. Donna Clara's song in Act II, Scene II (after Sheridan, "When Sable Night")
4. Don Carlos's song in the same scene (after Sheridan, "Gentle maid, ah! why suspect me?")
5. The Duenna's song in Act II, Scene III (after Sheridan, "When a tender maid is first essay'd")
6. The friars' glee in Act IV, Scene I (after Sheridan, "This bottle's the sun of our table")

For the rest, Prokofiev himself adapted Sheridan's prose quite elegantly into a very fast and pliant vehicle for continuous music.

Yet compared with his previous operas, *Betrothal in a Monastery* is anything but prosy. As the *ad hoc* genre designation he concocted for his "lyrico-comic opera in four acts" suggests, Prokofiev sought every opportunity for lyricism, giving primary emphasis to the romantic intrigue at the expense of the more grotesque elements he would surely have underscored earlier in his career, as the example of *The Love for Three Oranges* attests. In particular, the character of Mendoza is considerably softened in Prokofiev's treatment, and Sheridan's blatant anti-Semitism is as far as possible erased (though it had a way of coming back in Soviet times by way of costumery and make-up). On the other hand, the play's peripheral anti-clerical and anti-mercantile satire is much exaggerated for the benefit of the Soviet audience. A

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A MERRY PARABLE OF AWFUL TIMES *continued from page 42*

particularly happy idea for getting more music into the score without resorting to "numbers" was the casting of Act III, Scene II (the Letter Scene) against a background of domestic music-making: Don Jerome (faking clarinet) rehearsing a jaunty minuet with two onstage musicians (trumpet and bass drum).

So insistent was Prokofiev on making room now for the lyrical gifts he had formerly affected to despise, that he revised the opera in 1943 before there was any prospect of staging it to add more melodic juice to the "dialogue" parts. The resulting tumble of racy minuscule numbers sooner recalls the manner of Verdi's *Falstaff* or (especially) Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi* rather than the Mozartean or Rossinian models the composer advertised. Although there is nothing about the score, with its lovely Spanish aromas, to suggest that its composer was a Russian, and nothing about the subject or its treatment to suggest that the composer was a Soviet citizen, the fact remains that nothing like this wonderful opera could have been written at the time, except in the "backward" or "artistically reactionary" Soviet Union, so great was the pressure on composers in the "free world" to conform to "history's demands" and spurn their audience. Britten's *Peter Grimes*, *Betrothal's* near contemporary, was as tuneful as an opera dared be outside the Soviet orbit. Was Prokofiev under greater constraints? Or had he been smart enough to pick a place where the prevailing constraints matched his gifts and predilections to near perfection?

It is against this undeniable artistic success that Prokofiev's post-1948 nightmare must be measured. His return to Soviet Russia did unquestionably end in personal tragedy. But — and here one must willy-nilly agree with the unsavory Khrennikov — it was a musical salvation. That the salvation was purchased at the price of personal tragedy is the central fact of Prokofiev's biography, through which his life not only takes on its poignant human interest but is raised to the level of a parable of our appalling twentieth century, the most horrible in human history. There is no saying, however, that if faced, like Faust, with the choice between artistic and personal salvation in advance, Prokofiev would — or should — have chosen differently. □

FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

During the month of December, San Francisco Opera joins the United Nations, peoples and governments from around the world, to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Recognizing that the inherent dignity of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world, the Universal Declaration includes the principles of non-discrimination, civil and political rights, and social and economic rights. The theme of the fiftieth anniversary — "All Human Rights for All" — highlights the universality, the indivisibility and the inter-connectedness of all human rights. It reinforces the idea that human rights — civil, cultural, economic, political and social — should be taken in their totality and not disassociated from one another. The fiftieth anniversary is an opportunity to mobilize the cultural and artistic community in a reinvigorated and broad-based human rights movement around the world. In the words of Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations, "through the universal language of the arts, barriers are transcended and we are reminded of the basic rights which unite all citizens of the world."

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SHERIDAN, THE SOURCE

continued from page 22

entered the carriage, kissed his hand gracefully to his surrounding friends, and loudly told the coachman to drive to [the Prince of Wales's residence].

With a different skill he disarmed incipient revolt in his theater. When the famous actor John Phillip Kemble was Sheridan's manager at Drury Lane, matters reached a point where Kemble was set on resigning. He paced fuming up and down in the theater waiting for Sheridan.

The great actor now looked unutterable things, and occasionally emitted a *humming* sound, like that of a bee, and groaned in the spirit inwardly... A considerable time elapsed and frequent repetitions of the sound before mentioned occurred.

When Sheridan arrived, Kemble delivered a passionate complaint, comparing himself to a shackled eagle. Sheridan paused, drew up a chair beside his own, and talked softly to the furious actor for two or three minutes. By then "he had resumed his old ascendancy." Sheridan managed Drury Lane Theatre for almost thirty years. There were innumerable criticisms of his management but since there has never been a successful major theater where the management was not constantly under critical attack the achievement is astonishing. His successor committed suicide within three years.

The temptation for such talents is procrastination. It was a temptation Sheridan rarely resisted. Reminiscent of his contemporary Mozart, he had been known to write the last act of his plays the day before their premieres. He could talk his way into or out of almost anything. But brilliance alone does not account for it. Behind the easy facade lay an exceptional capacity for concentration. He worked best in bed. His first biographer, Thomas Moore, wrote that "he worked very hard when he had to prepare himself for any great occasion. His habit was, on these emergencies, to rise at four in the morning, to light up a prodigious quantity of candles around him, and eat toasted muffins while he worked." Nor were the "spontaneous" speeches exactly uncalculated. Moore wrote: "To such minutiae of effect did he attend, that I have found in more than one instance, a memorandum made of the precise place in which the words 'Good God, Mr. Speaker,' were to be introduced."

He was born in Dublin, in 1751, second son of Thomas Sheridan,

director of Dublin's main theater. His mother Frances wrote novels, and two of her plays were staged in London by Garrick. In 1760 the family moved to London, but fled from financial trouble to France in 1764. Richard was left feeling deserted at Harrow School where he was scorned as a mere actor's son, which was to say "no gentleman." The loneliness increased in 1766 with his mother's death, while he was still in France. He told a friend later that at Harrow he was "a very low-spirited boy, much given to crying when alone, and he attributed this very much to being neglected by his father, to his being left without money, and often not taken home at regular holidays."

When he was nineteen his father, by now back in England, opened an Academy in Bath, the center of fashionable English life, which was to help young gentlemen acquire skills in oratory and elocution. The idea of an Irish actor teaching English gentlemen to speak met with ridicule, but the nineteen-year-old Richard saw his chance. Like a butterfly emerging from the dark of the chrysalis, the "low-spirited boy" was transformed. To the wit and charm that would make him famous were added the energy and passion of youth. According to a contem-

porary, he "danced with all the women at Bath, wrote sonnets and verses in praise of some, satires and lampoons upon others, and in a very short time became the established wit and fashion of the place."

Within a year he was the center of Bath's most sensational scandal. It was the first but not the last time that life behaved for him like theater, a fact he found useful later when the solution to a pressing need for money seemed to be simple: writing a play. He had got to know Thomas Linley, a Bath musician and composer with five remarkably gifted children. Linley's son, Tom, was an exact contemporary and friend of Mozart's whom he'd got to know in Italy when they overlapped as children on parallel display-tours. With his father, Tom would later provide the music for *The Duenna*. Tom's four sisters were all beautiful, and all were talented singers. The eldest, Elizabeth Ann (Eliza), was seventeen, already one of the most celebrated sopranos in England, and a noted beauty. Among her admirers in 1772 was a certain Major Matthews, whom she found unbearable, although her father favored him. Young Tom and his sisters approached Sheridan. He was already someone to help in a scrape. His solution

Continued on page 49

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SHERIDAN, THE SOURCE

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was to carry Eliza off to France (of course with a chaperone, or duenna), lodge her in a convent, and return to Bath to fight a duel with Matthews. To make travel with the delectable Eliza practicable, the under-age pair went through a secret and unconsummated marriage on arrival in France. Eliza's father, unaware of the technically-illegal marriage, promptly fetched her back to Bath. Sheridan fought not one but two duels with Matthews, and was packed off by his father to study law in London. As Lord Eldon was to remark years later: "Every man has his element: Sheridan's is hot water."

Eliza and Sheridan had, however, fallen genuinely in love. Both fathers were opposed, but as in all good comedy, their resistance was overcome and in 1773 the couple were married in Marylebone Church in London.

Eliza had never liked her public appearances as a singer, despite the fame they brought, and despite fees high enough to have kept the young couple in comfort. Now there could be no question of her continuing. Sheridan had talent, and he had ambition. To exploit either, one had to belong to the classes of power, one must be a "gentleman." And as Dr. Johnson put it "Would not a gentleman be disgraced by having his wife sing publicly for hire? No, Sir, there can be no doubt here." So Eliza never sang in public again. And Sheridan set out to make money by writing a play. Withdrawn after a disastrous first night, *The Rivals* was rewritten in ten days and triumphed on January 28, 1775 at its second performance. Having scored a hit with a comedy, Sheridan addressed himself to the genre of comic opera, and carried the day again in November with *The Duenna*.

On the surface, it seemed an idyll of success, capped by the birth, four days before *The Duenna's* first night, of a son, christened Thomas after his grandfather. Dr. Johnson proposed him for the exclusive and influential Literary Club. More advance came when he took over Drury Lane Theatre on Garrick's retirement in 1776. There were only two theaters in London licensed to perform plays: Covent Garden and Drury Lane, and only one, the Haymarket, to perform opera. Within the year he was in all three, having bid successfully for the Haymarket in tandem with the proprietor of Covent Garden. Then, in May of 1777, *The School for Scandal* brought him his greatest triumph yet. *The Critic*, again a success, followed in 1779, in which year his eulogy

on Garrick's death was acclaimed as the greatest such paean ever written.

But, similar to his plays, this carefree surface concealed other matters. Pregnancy had revived the tuberculosis which would kill Eliza and her favorite sister within fifteen years. Their son was exceedingly fragile. Sheridan was drinking too much, and he was out too much. Running the theatrical triple-alliance was a nightmare. And in the world at large, the surface barely concealed the unrest which would so transform society that Sheridan himself would seem an anachronism at the age of sixty. The signs were there. Unrest in Ireland was being savagely put down; the British colonies in America were rushing towards independence; translations of German *Sturm und Drang* literature stirred anti-authoritarian emotions; new machinery in English factories hinted at ruin for old-style workers. In London *The Duenna* flourished, but in Paris another popular "play with music," also set in Seville, introduced a character pointing to revolution in life and in musical theater: the Beaumarchais Figaro.

Sheridan's energy now went into politics. For twenty years he wrote no more for the theater. The 1780s brought government office, the close friendship of the Prince of Wales, and — with his speeches in the trial of Warren Hastings, governor-general of India — lasting fame as an orator. In 1804 the young Lord Byron, preparing himself for Cambridge, made reading-lists under the headings Literature, History, Science, Geography, and Eloquence. The last read "Demosthenes, Cicero, Quintilian, Sheridan."

From the early 1780s Eliza stayed mostly in their country home, Sheridan living it up in London. He was loyal, even loving, to her in his way but politics was a demanding mistress and there were other attractions too. Affairs were expected, though they were high-risk: one of Sheridan's brought him perilously near to public ridicule in court. And Eliza fell in love with her husband's revolutionary Irish friend Lord Edward Fitzgerald. In 1792 she bore his child. Sheridan, despite absence and affairs, was still devoted to her, and accepted the child as his. But Eliza's second pregnancy was too much for her fragile health; she died in Sheridan's arms three months after the birth. Her little daughter, whom Sheridan loved, followed eighteen months later.

It was a strenuous life, with parallel careers of politician, theater owner, social

Continued on page 56



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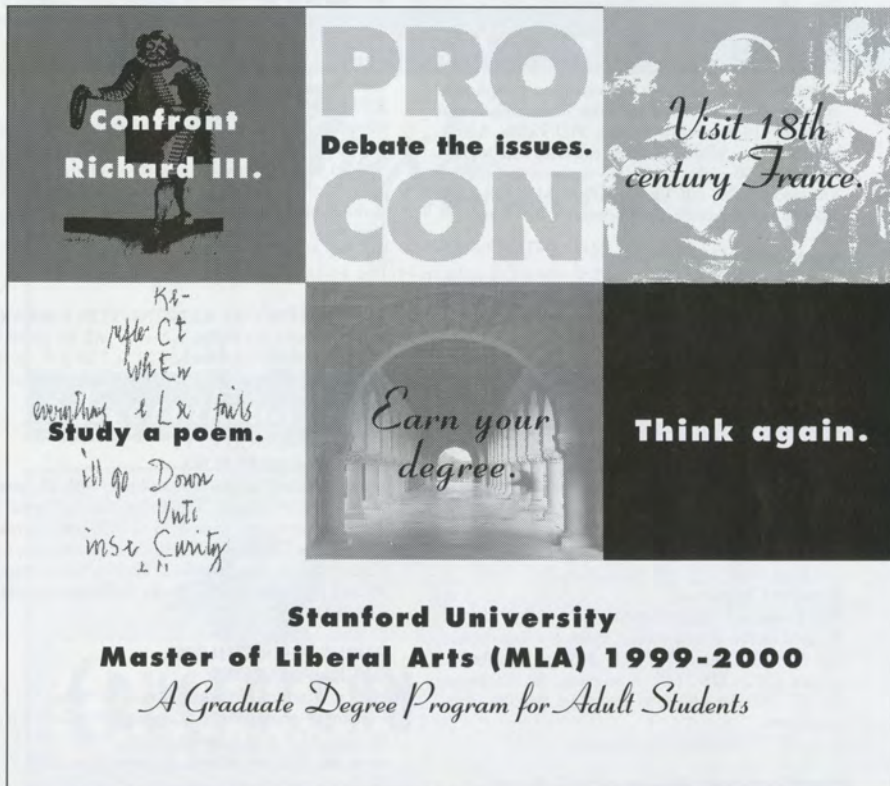


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The following list of lectures and previews includes those that are currently available to the public.

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 authorities and are presented free of charge to patrons with tickets to the corresponding performance. The lecture schedule for the rest of the season is as follows:

<i>Don Carlo</i> — Oct. 27, 31; Nov. 5, 11	<i>Betrothal in a Monastery</i> — Nov. 27; Dec. 3, 6, 10
<i>Norma</i> — Nov. 10, 15, 18, 21, 24	<i>Turandot</i> — Nov. 29; Dec. 1, 4, 9
<i>Peter Grimes</i> — Nov. 22; Dec. 2, 5, 11, 13	<i>Madama Butterfly</i> — Jan. 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17

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November 16
November 18

Peter Grimes
Betrothal in a Monastery

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

Topic
Peter Grimes
Betrothal in a Monastery

Speaker
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Richard Taruskin

East Bay Chapter — San Francisco Opera Guild

Lectures held at 8:00 p.m., preceded by complimentary refreshments. St. Mark's Methodist Church, 451 Moraga Way, Orinda. Admission: \$8.00. Series: \$24.00. Reservations required. For reservations or information call Annette Clute (510) 527-1846 or Silvia Lin (925) 838-9255.
Nov 18 *Betrothal in a Monastery*

Marin Chapter — San Francisco Opera Guild

Lectures held at 8:00 p.m., preceded by complimentary refreshments. Mt. Tamalpais United Methodist Church, 410 Sycamore Avenue, Mill Valley. Admission: \$7.00 — adults, \$6.00 — students and seniors. Series: \$35.00 — adults, \$30.00 — students and seniors. For information call Verna Parino (415) 388-6789.
Nov 16 *Betrothal in a Monastery*

San Francisco Opera Guild

Lectures held at 12:00 noon, Koret Auditorium, Lower Level, New Main Library, 100 Larkin Street, San Francisco. Admission: Free. For information call David Clover (510) 652-3799.
Nov 18 *Betrothal in a Monastery*

San Jose Opera Guild

Lectures held at 10:00 a.m. (*) Followed by no-host luncheon (\$7.00). Los Gatos History Club, 123 Los Gatos Blvd., Los Gatos. Admission: \$7.00 (free to San Jose Opera Guild members). For information call Joy Hulme (408) 741-1331 or Margaret Boddy (408) 354-7525.
Nov 19 *Betrothal in a Monastery**

Sonoma Chapter — San Francisco Opera Guild

Held at various locations and times. For information call Lotte Klugman (707) 938-2432 or Marsha Vas Dupre (707) 528-7146. Admission: \$8.00; Series: \$40.00 — Sonoma Chapter members, \$48.00 — non-members.
Nov 20 *Betrothal in a Monastery*

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 (650) 941-3890.
Nov 17 *Betrothal in a Monastery*

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) emphasizes the operas of the 1998-99 season. The College is at 12500 Campus Drive (off Redwood Road in the Oakland hills). Information: (510) 436-2430

OPERA EDUCATION INTERNATIONAL PREVIEW SERIES

Given by Michael Barclay, director of OEI. Lectures are held from 7:15 to 9:30 p.m. at 400 Yale Ave. (at Vassar) in the Kensington section of the Berkeley hills. Series began on September 7; lectures are \$15 at the door. Information: (510) 526-5244
Nov 9 *Peter Grimes*
Nov 23 *Betrothal in a Monastery*
Dec 14 *Season Review*

FRIENDS OF THE KENSINGTON LIBRARY

A free lecture on Bellini's *Norma* will be given by Michael Barclay on October 22 at 7:00 p.m. at the Kensington Library, 61 Arlington Avenue, Kensington. Information: (510) 524-3043

SAN FRANCISCO CITY COLLEGE PREVIEWS

A music course of previews will deal with all operas of the 1998-99 season. Taught by Marvin Tartak on Thursday evenings from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m., it takes place at the College's Castro/Valencia campus, 450 Church St., in San Francisco. Classes began August 20 and continue for 17 weeks. Information: (415) 239-3641

ROBERT GOODHUE'S OPERA PREVIEWS

Held at Marines Memorial Club, 609 Sutter St., San Francisco, mostly Monday evenings, 6:00-8:30 p.m. (9/28, 5:45-9 p.m.) Series began August 31. Lectures are \$15 per session. Information: (415) 956-1271
Nov 9 *Betrothal in a Monastery*
Jan 4 *Madama Butterfly*

SHERIDAN, THE SOURCE

continued from page 49

lion, and heavy drinker. When not obliged to undertake one of his early morning efforts, Sheridan usually drank late with his friends at Brooks's, the fashionable Whig club in St. James's. Samuel Rogers reported that "Fox (in his earlier days I mean), Sheridan, Fitzpatrick, &c led such a life! Lord Tankerville assured me that he has played cards at Brooks's from ten o'clock at night till near six o'clock the next afternoon, a waiter standing by to tell them 'whose deal it was,' they being too sleepy to know." The pace told eventually, of course, but Sheridan kept it up longer than anyone else.

In 1809, when it seemed at last that Sheridan might secure even the highest office, the hopelessly under-insured Drury Lane Theatre burned down. Theaters could be lighted only by candles, and no measures made them safe from fire. The catastrophe brought Sheridan mountainous debts and an end to his reign as a theater manager. It also produced the best-known anecdote of his elegant sang-froid. That evening at the House of Commons he was listening to Canning talk about the war in Spain. The theater, a mile away, stood high over Georgian London like a second St. Paul's Cathedral, and the light of the burning building "shone in at the windows of the House, as strongly as if it had been in the Speaker's garden." Sheridan refused a proposal to adjourn: "Whatever might be the extent of the individual calamity, I do not consider it of a nature worthy to interrupt our proceedings." Afterwards he watched the end of the blaze from a tavern in the piazza at Covent Garden with a bottle of claret, writing a letter to his (second) wife. A passer-by expressed surprise. "A man may surely," said Sheridan, "take a glass of wine by his own fireside."

In retrospect, it was the beginning of his end. And the end was not glorious, even if his funeral was. For his last four years he was ousted from the centers of power, rejected by the Prince of Wales in actions reminiscent of Falstaff's rejection by Prince Hal. In 1811 the Prince had finally been appointed Regent when George III's madness returned for good. With real power at last, the once-liberal Prince swung round to a conservatism little different from his father's, and Sheridan could not follow. He had always been dangerously close to a treasonable stand over a people's rights to self-governance. He had supported the first anti-monarchical revolutionaries in France; he had fought against sending troops to fight in the American colonies;

he had argued strongest of all for an Ireland, the land of his birth, with its own government. He would not now compromise.

He was barely 60, but his health was weakened by too much booze. Fox, Burke, and Pitt, his contemporaries, were all dead. He lost his parliamentary seat and with the loss came an end of immunity from arrest for debt: a lifetime of financial risk homed in on him. Though owed considerable sums by the theater, he was soon in serious need. Despite the sale of most of his effects — even, heartbreakingly, Joshua Reynolds's great portrait of Eliza as Saint Cecilia, patron-saint of music — and with virtually no income (no copyright laws yet to ensure royalties from his still-triumphant plays), he twice had to be extracted from London's terrible debtors' prison. In one grotesque scene he was visited there by one of his own tenants, a man struck by calamities. What would it take, he asked, to relieve the man's afflictions? "300 Pounds." Sheridan had that morning received 500 pounds to buy his own release. 300 of them went to the tenant.

"I have never" he wrote to a friend, "done a dishonest or a base act. I never have omitted to do a generous or a benevolent one where I had the Power — but sins of omission — Oh me — senseless credulity, destructive procrastination, unworthy indolence, all abetted by one vile habit."

It is the voice of an honest man. And as an honest man and a playwright whose works have never been out of the repertory, he lies honored in Westminster Abbey. Next to him is the tomb of a now forgotten tragic-playwright Richard Cumberland. Cumberland's fame rivaled Sheridan's, but he was furiously jealous, especially of *School for Scandal*. His children, however, had once prevailed on him to take them to the play all fashionable London was laughing over. Michael Kelly goes on:

...every time the children laughed ...[Cumberland] pinched them and said, "What are you laughing at, my dear little folks? You should not laugh, my angels; there is nothing to laugh at." — and then in an undertone, "keep still, you little dunces." Sheridan having been told of this, said, "It was very ungrateful in Cumberland to have been displeased with his poor children for laughing at *my comedy*; for I went the other night to see *his tragedy*, and laughed at it from beginning to end."

But in the last act, they got adjoining tombs. □

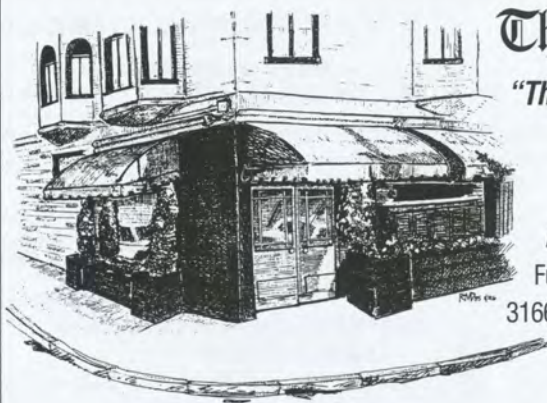


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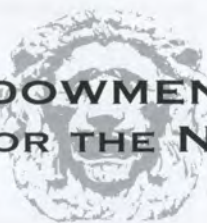
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Milab Wermer
Harriet Wertsch

IN HONOR OF

Anne C. Britton
Jayne C. Davis
Reid & Peggy Dennis

Bob Dunn
Bettye Ferguson
Gordon Getty
Ione Gille
Samuel Lowry
J. Patterson & Susie McBaine
Stephanie Rogers
Jerry Rosenstein
James H. Schwabacher
Dr. A. Jess Shenson
Blanche Germain Streeter
Grace Summers
Fran Yedidia

SERVICES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ACCESS FOR DISABLED PATRONS Wheelchair seating positions are located in the orchestra, mezzanine and dress circle levels. Aisle seats with swing-up armrests are located in the orchestra, dress circle, balcony circle and balcony levels. Contact the S.F. Opera Box Office — (415) 864-3330 — for more information.

On permanent display in the Opera House lower bar:

A CELEBRATION OF SINGERS

Great artists at San Francisco Opera, 1962-1997

Stage photography by Robert Cahen

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

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

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

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

Patrons, Attention Please! Fire Notice: Please note the nearest exit. In an emergency, WALK, do not run, to the nearest exit. Disabled patrons proceed to nearest elevator lobby and await assistance.

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

OPERA HOUSE TOURS

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

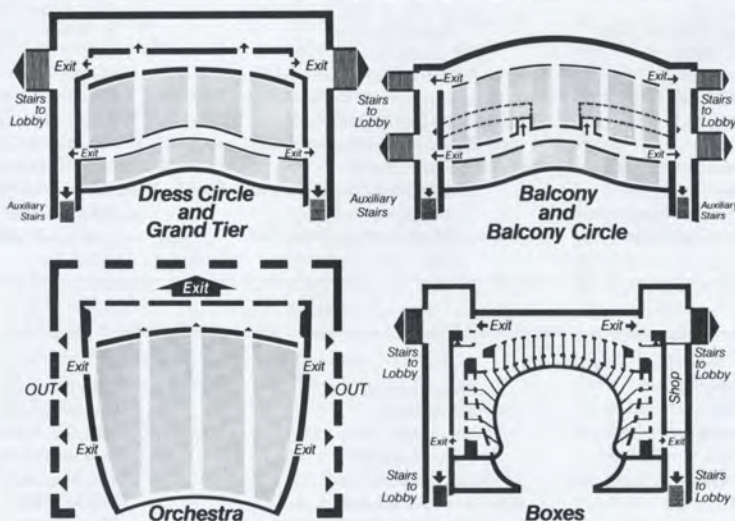
Tuesday, September 22
Tuesday, October 13
Saturday, October 24
Thursday, October 29
Sunday, November 1
Thursday, November 12
Sunday, November 15
Thursday, November 19
Friday, November 27
Sunday, November 29
Saturday, December 5
Saturday, January 9
Saturday, January 16

Tickets for Guild members, \$2; non-members \$5. Reservations required. Information: (510) 524-5220.

PERFORMING ARTS CENTER TOURS.

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

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



Patrons, Attention Please! Fire Notice: There are sufficient exits in this building to accommodate the entire audience. The exit indicated by the lighted "EXIT" sign nearest your seat is the shortest route to the street. (Refer to Diagrams.) In case of fire please do not run—walk through that exit.



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