

Siegfried
(The Ring Cycle: Siegfried)

1998-1999

Sunday, June 13, 1999 1:00 PM
Tuesday, June 22, 1999 6:30 PM
Saturday, June 26, 1999 6:30 PM
Wednesday, June 30, 1999 6:30 PM

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Ring Festival 1999

Siegfried

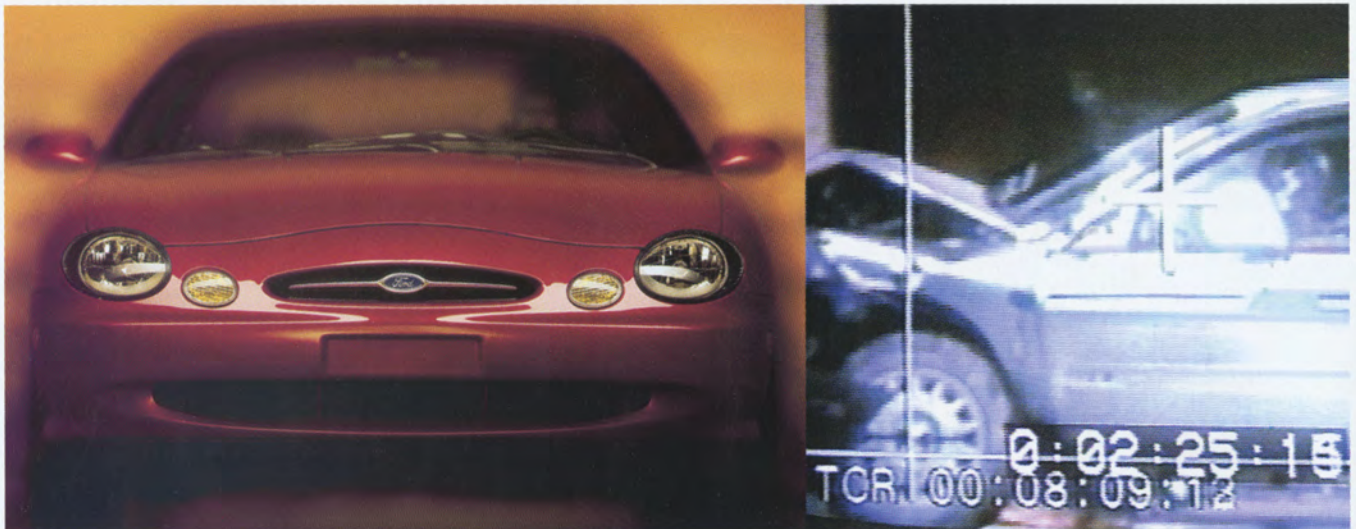


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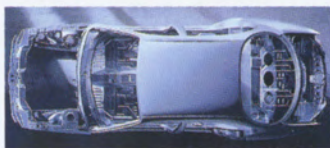
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5th Annual Los Angeles Opera Gala — September 16th to 20th, 1999

... join Sherwin for a fantastic few days in Los Angeles for opera, museums and fabulous food. Last September in addition to attending two wonderful opera productions we were able to arrange two cast parties, one with Placido Domingo, after the performances. Operatic entertainment highlighted the party at Sherwin's home beneath the Hollywood sign at which Ramon Vargas was one of our guest artists. This year Placido Domingo is with us again in *Samson et Dalila* along with Denyce Graves. We will also see *L'Elisir d'Amore* with Ruth Ann Swenson, Ramon Vargas, Thomas Allen and Rodney Gilfry. A special highlight will be an extended visit to the wonderful new Getty Museum and lunch in the beautiful gourmet restaurant overlooking the whole city.



Spectacular Autumn & the Metropolitan Opera in New York with the New York City Opera November 9th to 16th

... join Sherwin for another wonderful Autumn in New York. Our hotel is located at Central Park West, across the street from the park and 3 blocks to Lincoln Center. The operas at the Metropolitan are *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *Mefistofele*, *Aida* and *Tosca*. At New York City Opera we will see *Falstaff*, *Carmen* and *The Abduction from the Seraglio*. A total of 7 performances and a play to be announced. Two private lectures with Patrick Smith, Editor-at-Large of Opera News and backstage visit with the artists.

6th Annual Autumn Europe Extravaganza Autumn & 12 Performances in Prague, the Royal Town of Dresden & Berlin — September 28th to October 12th

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New Millennium in New York — New Year's Celebration 2000 in New York with the Metropolitan Opera December 27th, 1999 to January 3rd, 2000

... join Sherwin for this overwhelming experience and celebration of the New Millennium in New York. The operas are *Tosca*, *Rigoletto* and the World Premiere of *The Great Gatsby* culminating with the Gala New Year's evening at the Metropolitan Opera after which there will be a dinner and orchestra entertainment, a performance of the New York Philharmonic and a Broadway play. Additional enhancements will be announced as information becomes available.



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PERFORMING ARTS

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA MAGAZINE

Siegfried

1999 *Ring* Festival
Vol. 76, No. 16

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Michael Steinberg's fascinating impressions of Wagner's *Ring* continue with a thorough look at the third chapter: *Siegfried*.
- 16 **Richard Wagner – The Continuing Appeal** by Andrew Porter
The renowned author and ardent Wagnerite provides insights — in addition to answering several “frequently asked” questions on this inexhaustible subject.

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Fuseli, Henry (Swiss, 1741–1825), *Thor Fighting the Midgard Dragon*, 1788
Oil on canvas, 51 x 36 in.

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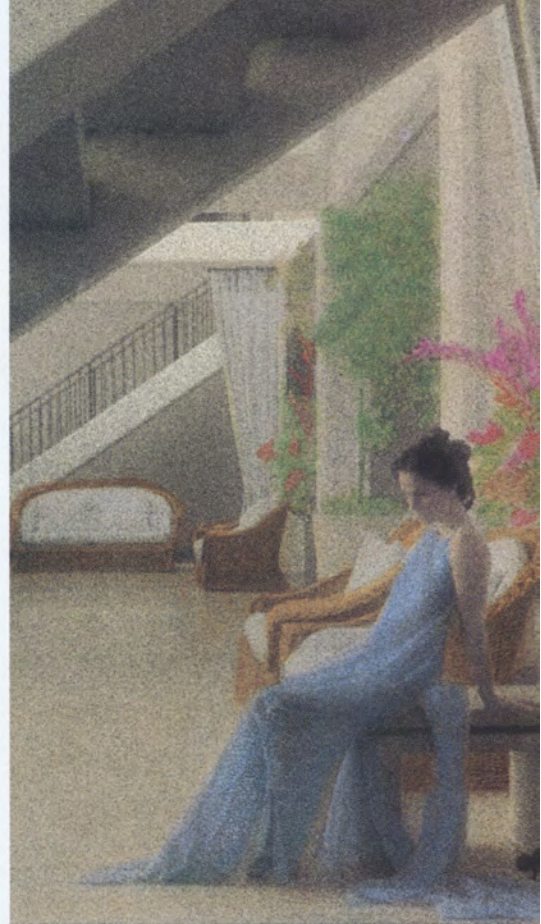
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A MESSAGE FROM THE GENERAL DIRECTOR



SOHL

It has been almost a decade since San Francisco Opera audiences have encountered Richard Wagner's majestic *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, and I am delighted to welcome you to the War Memorial Opera House today for this long-awaited occasion. San Francisco Opera has been preparing for this moment for years, fueled by the dedication of our many artists, musicians, technicians, administrative personnel and donors. These combined efforts have resulted in the presentation of this stunning artistic achievement, and my sincere gratitude goes to everyone involved with making our 1999 *Ring* a glorious reality.

Our 1999 *Ring* Festival is dedicated to the memory of my predecessor, Terence A. McEwen, who served as general director of San Francisco Opera from 1981 to 1988. The current production of *The Ring* was created during Terry's tenure, first performed as a complete cycle in 1985 and revived in 1990.

Presenting a *Ring* Festival is a community project, involving not only our audiences and donors but groups from all over the Bay Area who augment the production with an array of ancillary events designed to help you get the most out of your *Ring* experience. Organizations including San Francisco Opera Guild, University of California at Berkeley, San Francisco Conservatory of Music, the C. G. Jung Institute, San Francisco Performing Arts Library and Museum, the de Young Museum, San Francisco Public Library, the Wagner Society of Northern California and the Goethe Institut, have prepared numerous *Ring*-related events — lectures, films, courses, art and costume exhibits, panel discussions, receptions and much more — as engaging tributes to Wagner's genius.

Whether you have encountered *The Ring* with San Francisco Opera before or if you are exploring Wagner's momentous, four-opera saga for the first time, it is an honor to set you on the path of this infinitely fascinating journey — one which will captivate you for years to come.

Lotfi Mansouri
General Director

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND PRESIDENT SAN FRANCISCO OPERA ASSOCIATION



McCARTHY

It is with great pleasure and anticipation that we welcome you to San Francisco Opera's 1999 presentation of Richard Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. Mounting *The Ring* is a landmark occasion for the opera companies who brave such a formidable task, and San Francisco Opera is extremely proud to once again present one of the most important works of Western civilization.

Following the enormous success of our first four-cycle presentation in 1990, we again offer four complete cycles of Wagner's magnum opus, featuring two casts of the finest Wagnerian singers in the world. Indeed, *The Ring* is a global event, commanding the attention of the world's music critics while creating an international, ephemeral community of music lovers — veterans and neophytes alike — here in San Francisco. Adding to this community are many Bay Area organizations which join us to celebrate *The Ring* with a complete festival of lectures, tours, previews, courses, exhibitions, films, receptions, discussions and other exciting events.

Producing four cycles of *The Ring* is an endeavor of labyrinthine proportions, with staggering demands made upon singers, musicians, designers, artisans and technicians, as well as administrative staff. Funding such a colossal project is just as challenging, and revising an existing production, which San Francisco Opera has achieved for the 1999 *Ring*, places even greater responsibilities on those involved with its mounting. When these productions were first created, we expressed our indebtedness to the BankAmerica Foundation, the Carol Franc Buck Foundation, the Ann & Gordon Getty Foundation, The L.J. and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation, and an anonymous friend of San Francisco Opera for their generous financial assistance. This year we would like to extend our thanks as well to those who have joined us to make the 1999 revival possible: the Ann & Gordon Getty Foundation; the Chevron Corporation; Mr. and Mrs. Reid W. Dennis; Mr. and Mrs. Charlton H. Buckley; Mr. and Mrs. Reuben W. Hills III; Mrs. Paul L. Wat-tis; and two anonymous friends of San Francisco Opera. Our sincere thanks also goes to American Airlines; Kawai pianos, provided by San Francisco Pianoworks, Inc.; Audi of America; and Dresdner RCM Global Investors.

We would also like once again to express our gratitude to the National Endowment for the Arts, the California Arts Council, the Grants for the Arts/San Francisco Hotel Tax Fund and Mayor Willie L. Brown, Jr. for their constant support.

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BY MICHAEL STEINBERG



CADEN



MORTON

Richard Wagner made the first sketches for the text of *Siegfried* in May of 1851 and completed the final version of the verse libretto in 1856. He began the music in September of 1856 and arrived at the end of the orchestral sketch for Act 2 on August 9, 1857, then laid the score aside. He had actually stopped in the middle of a scene, writing to Liszt on June 28th that he had led his hero into the solitude of the woods (Waldeinsamkeit), leaving him "under a linden tree and parting from him with heartfelt tears," but then he changed his mind and decided at least to get to the end of the act. Eleven days later he began work on the text of *Tristan und Isolde*, completing that work two years later, on August 6, 1859. By the end of January 1862, he had written the book for *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, sketching some of the music and completing the Prelude that spring. Between December 1864 and December 1865, he returned to *Siegfried*, working on the full score of Act 2. In February of 1866, he returned to *Die Meistersinger* and finished



HOWARD

that work on October 24, 1867. Then it was back to *Siegfried*, whose Act 2 was ready in full score and fair copy on February 23, 1869. Wagner went right on to Act 3, and that was accomplished on February 5, 1871. The first music from *Siegfried* to be heard was the hero's Forging Song, the finale to Act 1; this was sung in Wagner's concert arrangement in Vienna on January 1, 1863. Again, as happened at the concert the week before when excerpts from *Das Rheingold*, *Die*

Above right: In San Francisco Opera's 1935 Ring, Lauritz Melchior's Siegfried poses for the camera after splitting the anvil during the forging scene. Above left: In the 1972 Ring, Jess Thomas as Siegfried admires the result of the forging; the sword Nothung. Left: Jess Thomas in 1972 emerges from Fafner's cave with the magic helmet Tarnhelm and the mighty Ring. The 1972 Ring was prepared over several years, and Jess Thomas was a most important part of it: Loge in *Das Rheingold* in 1967, Siegmund in *Die Walküre* in 1968, Siegfried in *Götterdämmerung* (1969) and *Siegfried* (1970). In the 1972 Ring, he portrayed Siegmund and Siegfried, and gave his last performance on the War Memorial stage as Siegmund in 1981, as a sudden (on a 2-hour notice) replacement for an ailing colleague.

Walküre, and *Die Meistersinger* were heard, the audience success was great and the deficit devastating. The first complete *Siegfried* was given on August 16, 1876 under the direction of Hans Richter as part of the first complete *Ring* at the first Bayreuth Festival with a cast that included Georg Unger in the title role, Franz Betz as the Wanderer, Amalie Materna as Brünnhilde, and a future great Brünnhilde, Lilly Lehmann, as the Forest Bird. Lehmann was in fact the Brünnhilde at the first American *Siegfried*, which was given under Anton Seidl's direction at the Metropolitan Opera, New York, on November 9, 1887. By this time, both the portion of Act 2 known as Forest Murmurs and a complete Act 3 had been given in concert in Boston and New York respec-

Michael Steinberg is program annotator for the San Francisco Symphony and the New York Philharmonic. His books *The Symphony: A Listener's Guide* and *The Concerto: A Listener's Guide* are published by Oxford University Press.



In San Francisco Opera's 1990 presentation of the Ring, Gwyneth Jones as the Siegfried Brünnhilde wakes up after her long sleep.

tively. *Siegfried* first came to the San Francisco Opera on November 6, 1935, as part of the complete *Ring*, led by Artur Bodanzky. Kirsten Flagstad sang the part for the first time in her career (and consequently her first complete *Ring*), Lauritz Melchior was Siegfried, and Friedrich Schorr, the Wanderer.

* * *

Wagner was sure that *Siegfried* would be the most popular of the *Ring* operas, counting for that on the exuberance of the hero's Forging Song, the gentle lyricism of the scene in "Waldeinsamkeit," and the passion of the final love duet. It has turned out that *Siegfried* is the work that listeners have been most likely to find problematic. The complaint one hears most often has to do with the fact that until the last half-hour there is no female character. The forest bird, to be sure, briefly introduces a soprano voice, but that is not the same thing. On another level, some people find *Siegfried* an uncomfortable experience because it so lavishly displays human behavior at its worst. Like *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre*, *Siegfried* is a drama full of encounters, conversations, and confrontations, but the tone is different: many of them are frustrating, with people somehow talking past each other, and this is true even of the first part of the final scene for Siegfried and Brünnhilde. But let us look at some of what happens here.

Once again, Wagner gives us a Prelude that is a miracle of aural scene setting.

Over a long timpani roll, bassoons in pairs play slow descending figures. Here is music of brooding and depression, and that the brooding and depression are Mime's becomes clear when the violas begin to play the distinctive rhythm we remember from the descent into Nibelheim in *Das Rheingold*, the hammering rhythm of Nibelungs at work. We also hear music associated with the Ring, a figure in thirds that swings down and up again (it is not easy to depict a circle in sound), as well as, dark and low on the bass trumpet, the call about which we learned in *Die Walküre* that it belongs to Nothing, the sword. And it is Nothing — specifically Mime's inability to reforge the shattered sword or indeed to make any sword strong enough for Siegfried — that is the cause of Mime's brooding and depression.

When the curtain rises, Mime expresses his state of mind in words, and we soon become witness to the hideous relationship between the whining, scheming dwarf and the impatient, rude Siegfried. We get the horrid feeling that Mime and Siegfried are like a couple in a bad marriage, traveling along verbal paths that have been trodden too well, that Siegfried's complaints and his inquiries about his origins and Mime's recital of what a caring father he has been have been gone over many, many times, and fruitlessly. Siegfried is primitive and mean, but never having seen any human creature other than Mime, he has had no possibility of learning other ways. At the same time, he is not dumb, he is hungry for love and knowledge, he intu-

itively distrusts what the slimy Mime proffers as love, and he has learned that bullying is the only way he can get any information out of Mime.

Desperate to escape this oppressive atmosphere, Siegfried runs back into the woods, and this opens the way to one of *The Ring's* most compelling scenes, the visit of the mysterious Wanderer. A completely new kind of music suddenly cuts into Mime's querulous fretting about Nothing: slow-moving, solemn chords for horns and those tenor tubas that Wagner had especially designed and built for *The Ring*, chords that are continued by a quartet of trombones with trumpet and bass trumpet. This, clearly, is music from a world that is not the one of Mime's smithy, music that has about it something of the numinous, and rightly so, for the visitor is Wotan, restlessly roaming the earth as he slowly begins the surrender of his power. At a majestic pace and amid all the trappings of exquisite courtesy, the Wanderer and Mime play their game of questions. Wagner's harmonic mastery and sonorous magic are at their highest power, and the orchestra's commentary keeps us constantly informed as to what is passing through the terrified Mime's mind.¹

The Wanderer's and Mime's question game is another example of Wagner's narrative skill. The answers are interesting. For the most part, they tell us what we already know because we have seen *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre*, but we experience them as new because the perspective and the sense of distance are so different. It is, for example, one thing to have witnessed directly and with tremendous emotional immediacy, as we have, the meeting of Siegmund and Sieglinde, to have heard Wotan's negotiations, first with Fricka, then with Brünnhilde, concerning Siegmund's fate, to have seen Siegmund slain, and to have been there when Brünnhilde reveals to Sieglinde that she is to bear a son who will be called Siegfried; it is quite another to re-experience this at a distance when Mime recites all this as material that has already entered the history books.

And the Wanderer's answer to Mime's third question — what is the race that lives on cloudy heights? — is not only much longer than his answers to the previous questions about the Nibelungs and the giants, it is extraordinarily revealing. Here, for the first time, is a hint of what the Norns will recount more fully in the Prologue to *Götterdämmerung*, namely Wotan's destruction of the World Ash Tree when he cut the branch that became

¹ It does not conform with contemporary ideas of correctness, but the Wanderer, having first hailed Mime as "wise smith," later addresses him as "wise dwarf," "worthy dwarf," and finally, when Mime has muffed his opportunity, as "doomed dwarf [verfall'ner Zwerg]."

his spear. But there is something still more interesting. Answering Mime's question about the Nibelungs, the Wanderer referred to that race as "black elves [Schwarzalben]" and to their chief, Alberich, as "Schwarz-Alberich." Now, speaking of the gods on their cloudy heights, he calls them "light elves [Lichtalben]" and refers to their ruler, Wotan, as "Licht-Alberich." What a breath-taking moment of self-revelation this is, this forging of the link between the two rival rulers of the world. In that link lies the admission that, even if one is Schwarz-Alberich and the other Licht-Alberich, the two rulers, both of them thieves, are brothers, that Alberich is the open embodiment of Wotan's dark side. Near the end of Michael Tippett's oratorio *A Child of Our Time*, the central figure sings, "I would know my shadow and my light, so shall I at last be whole." As Wotan approaches "das Ende" for which he yearns, an end that will be not only his but that of the rule of all the gods, as he gradually sheds the attributes of godhood, he moves toward "at last [being] whole."

From the awe-inspiring *gravitas* of the Wanderer's visitation, Wagner takes us to the scene in which Siegfried returns, finds yet another of Mime's swords wanting, and decides finally to take the matter into his own hands. In passing, it is interesting that here Wagner uses the word "Kunst" — art — only in a derogatory sense: "Kunst" is what Mime, the virtuoso smith, has, and it does no good at all. Siegfried even jeers that being fearful, something Mime is eager to teach him, is yet another useless "Kunst" of Mime's. Siegfried's Forging Song is a tour de force of tenorial athleticism, and Wagner gives it three-dimensionality by setting against it the undercurrent of Mime's fretting and plotting.

The Prelude to Act 2 is another darkly brooding piece, one that comes to be dominated by the music of Alberich's curse. Both in the choice of key, F minor, and in the unusual tuning of the timpani to a diminished fifth, C and F-sharp, Wagner proclaims his love for the great Prelude to Act 2 of Beethoven's *Fidelio*. Alberich and Wotan find themselves face to face for the first time since *Das Rheingold*, since Wotan's theft of what Alberich had stolen from the Rhinemaidens. This scene echoes Wotan's humiliation by Fricka in *Die Walküre*, for Alberich reminds the god with dark glee how he is still bound by the contracts engraved on his spear. The Wanderer, seeing clearly into the future, tells Alberich that Fafner will die by the hand of the hero who is

on his way even now. Perhaps if Alberich warns him, he will surrender the Ring — the bauble, the Wanderer disingenuously calls it. Fafner, a perfect exemplar of what Proudhon hated about capitalists, has no time for visitors: "I lie here and I possess. Let me sleep."

Alberich and the Wanderer withdraw, and Mime brings Siegfried to Fafner's lair and leaves him there. With the forest's peaceful murmuring sounds as background, Siegfried again wonders about his mother. Away from Mime and in nature, where he feels at home, he is a different person, one capable of calm, reflection, and tenderness. Inspired by a bird's singing, he tries to make a reed pipe, fails, and turns to his trusty — and loud — horn. *The Ring* is not a rich repository of comedy, but here is at least a moment of it. The horn call, a famous virtuoso turn for the orchestra's principal hornist, wakes Fafner. Siegfried dispatches him skillfully and rapidly. The dying Fafner warns Siegfried about Alberich's curse and seeks to tell him how things will end, but expires before he is able to do so.

A taste of the dragon's blood allows Siegfried to understand not only the bird's message — the flute turns into a soprano — but, more crucially, what Mime is really thinking when he sweet-talks Siegfried in dulcet tones. It is a nice challenge for the tenor who sings Mime: to express vicious fantasies and plans to suavely seductive music. In a pre-emptive strike, Siegfried kills Mime. Alberich is a delighted witness to Siegfried's second murder within a few minutes and he lets out a raucous laugh to the Nibelungs' hammering theme. The act ends as Siegfried follows the helpful bird to Brünnhilde's mountaintop.

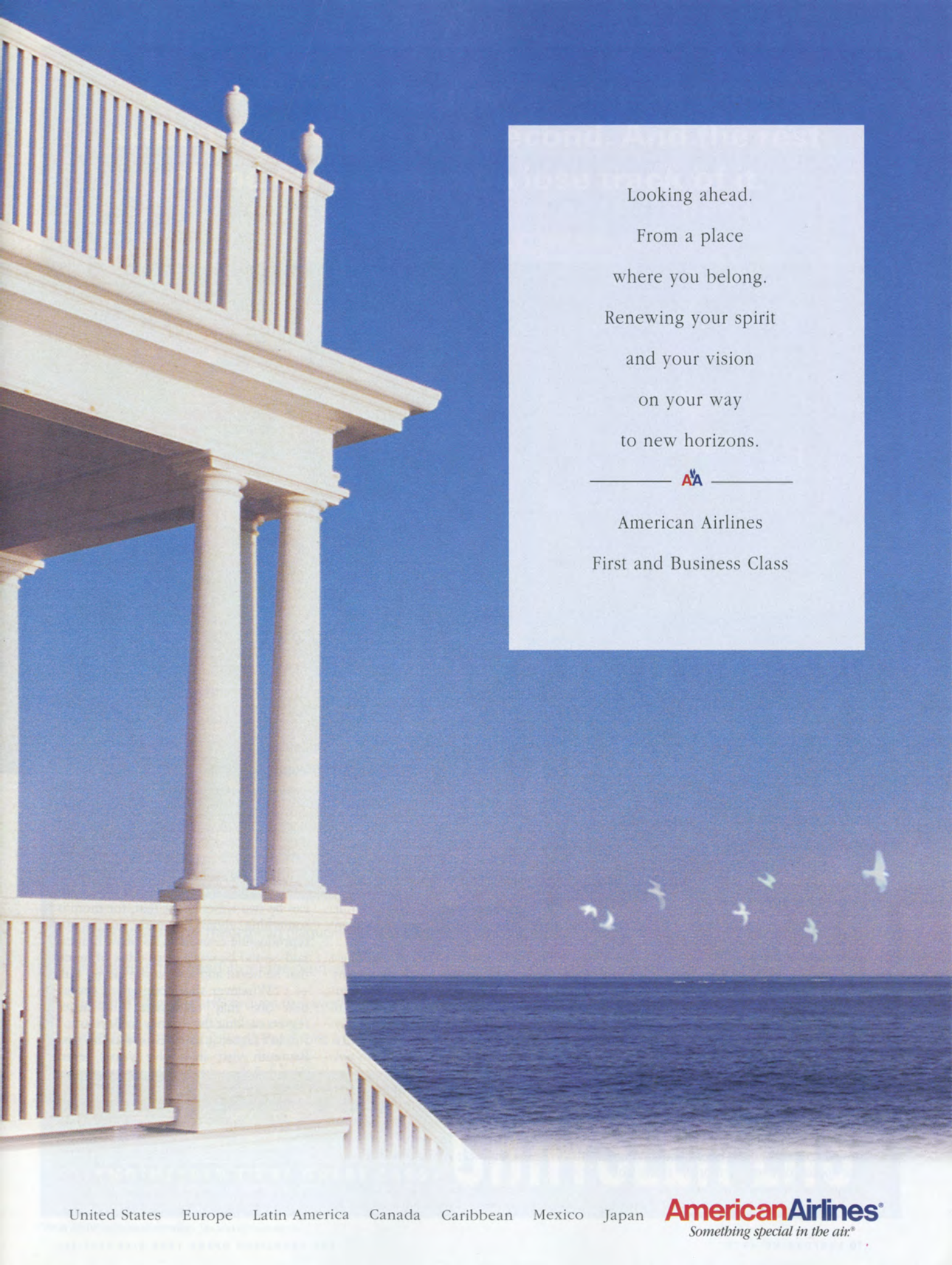
With the Prelude to Act 3, we are plunged into a new musical world. The music is impassioned and urgent. That is not new. What is new is the absolutely fierce forward motion of the harmonies and above all the density of the polyphony — the grinding of lines in contrary motion, with the Valkyries' galloping rhythm adding its own restless urgency — at the climax, when the curtain rises to reveal the Wanderer striding through the stormy night. Donner is the noisemaker, but Wotan, as we learned in the third act of *Die Walküre*, is the true Lord of Storms. It is music to leave one breathless. He has come to rouse Erda in the hope of enlightenment — "how to hold back a rolling wheel," a wheel he himself has set in motion — but the "omniscient, primevally wise" woman has lost her powers, her grasp on knowledge and wisdom. Yet, before he leaves

her and sends her back into everlasting sleep, the Wanderer must vent. His vehement music, so stunningly set off by Erda's confused somnolence, suggests a frighteningly elevated pulse rate. As he prepares to abandon this pilgrimage as a hopeless quest, the Wanderer tells Erda what he confessed to Brünnhilde in *Die Walküre*: "I want just one thing more, the end!" That was one of the most heart-seizing moments in the earlier opera: the tense arrival on an almost strident E-major chord, the long and ominous silence, and then the sinking into the distant darkness of C minor for the words, "das Ende!" And now, as the Wanderer sings "Weisst du, was Wotan will?" — Do you know what Wotan wants? — the music again lands on a *fortissimo* chord of E. The recollection of that agonizing moment in *Die Walküre* floods our memories. There is the silence. But there is no "das Ende!" The music — the silence and the plunge into dark, *pianissimo* C minor says it all.

This conversation that is no conversation is followed by another one in which two people talk past one another. The Wanderer encounters Siegfried on his way to fulfilling his destiny and makes one last futile attempt to stop that rolling wheel. If ever there were two people fated not to understand one another, here they are, grandfather and grandson. Siegfried is ill-disposed to be stopped: as he says, all his life an old man has stood in his way. He also has no patience for any but the simplest language and he has no experience with irony. At the same time, the ever-ambivalent Wotan resents Siegfried even though he created him, and he seems deliberately to provoke his hot-blooded scion with his verbal sophistications and his laughter. Siegfried smashes the spear with which the Wanderer seeks to bar his way, and he does it with the sword that the Wanderer himself had made invincible. The Wanderer gathers up the shards of the weapon on which the world contracts were engraved and leaves. We shall hear nothing more from Wotan, though much will be said *about* him, and now the world order is changed.

I suppose everyone who loves *The Ring* treasures some moments with a particular warmth. One of mine comes now, and it is the one when Siegfried has ascended the mountain and passed through the ring of fire, and the sleeping Brünnhilde, clad in full armor, is revealed to his astonished eyes. The music we heard as the flames first surrounded her at the end of *Die Walküre* floods the theater. Then, all

Continued on page 41



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RICHARD WAGNER — THE CONTINUING APPEAL

BY ANDREW PORTER

SOHL

MORTON



Some of San Francisco Opera's Ring conductors: Top left: Artur Bodanzky, 1935, shown with the Siegfried of Lauritz Melchior; Left: Otmar Suitner in rehearsal in 1972, shown with then Company General Director Kurt Herbert Adler, and prompter Philip Eisenberg; Above: San Francisco Opera Music Director Donald Runnides, shown during one of this summer's early Ring rehearsals.



Portions of this article were part of the keynote address at the 1983 University of Illinois Wagner Centennial Conference.

My subject is "the continuing appeal," of Wagner in general, but more specifically of the *Ring*. According to an oft-cited statistic, more books have been written about Richard Wagner than about anyone else who ever lived except for Jesus Christ and Napoleon. I am not sure who made that computation or when it was made, but I am sure it is now out of date. New books about Wagner pour out each month from the presses of Europe and America, so fast that even the most assiduous student of

Wagner cannot hope to keep up with all of them. But not so many books about Napoleon appear nowadays. The order, it seems, is Christ, then Wagner. Napoleon is out of the running.

When I was invited to talk at the Wagner Centennial Conference, I began thinking not just how much Wagner meant to me, but also that attention to him had consumed more hours of my life than just about any other activity except sleeping and eating. And I am not a Wagner specialist. We all know how Wagner influenced all thinking men, not just musicians, in the 19th century. I think it is worth stressing that most of this influence continues unabated, without showing the slightest sign of waning.

George Bernard Shaw championed the idea that everyone should have an avail-

able *Ring* on, as it were, his or her doorstep, instead of having to make the pilgrimage to Bayreuth to hear it. There can be two views about that, for there is something about Bayreuth that is not reproducible elsewhere. As Shaw himself said — and he was a stern critic of much that he heard and saw on the Green Hill — : "Whatever shortcomings of execution one may encounter, one never regrets making the journey to Bayreuth." I didn't regret it in 1983 (it was my first Bayreuth visit in twelve years), even though I thought that the new *Ring* was a badly botched affair.

I'm not quite sure what that special Bayreuth quality is. Perhaps I can begin

Andrew Porter currently lives in London and writes for the Times Literary Supplement. His translation of Wagner's *Ring* was published by W.W. Norton.

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Rehearsing the Ring: Above: The Nebelungs gather around John Modenos's Alberich in 1967, while David Ward's Wotan (far right) observes. Top right: Jeannine Altmeyer as Brünnhilde and Leonie Rysanek as Sieglinde rehearse for Die Walküre in 1983. Bottom right: Walter Berry as Alberich enjoys interacting with a Rhinemaiden in 1985.



MESSICK



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to define it by drawing up a long, heterogeneous catalogue that would include several varied things: *historical associations*, which promote a receptive frame of mind; *acoustical considerations*; *sight lines*; *climate* (which varies from the delicious to the torrid); *digestion*, both mental and gastric. What else? The absence of other musical distractions (or the sharp focus that one achieves on a pilgrimage or at a retreat). And also geography and topography, or the fact that not far from Bayreuth one can visit rocky gorges, caverns in which Fafner might well dwell, Valkyrie rocks, and spreading pine trees such as the one that ought to shelter Brünnhilde's long, enchanted sleep. One year I made my approach to Bayreuth by way of the Rhine, and I think — I really do think — that I have heard the music differently, more fully, more broadly, ever

since experiencing with my own eyes the grandeur of the landscapes of river and sky provided by that Rhine-journey. No one should undertake to design the *Ring* who doesn't know the Rhine.

One night, after a Bayreuth *Walküre*, I drove on up the Green Hill, way beyond the Festspielhaus, into the pine forest. And there a thunderstorm broke out with a violence that I have never known before, or even imagined. It was terrifying in its ferocity. And ever since then it has given a new meaning to the thunderstorm that broke over Siegmund's defenseless head, as he tells in Act I of *Die Walküre*; and to the baleful thundercloud in which Wotan arrives toward the end of Act II; and to the approaching thunderstorm, with Wotan in its midst, that fills the Valkyries with terror at the start of Act III.

The point of these reminiscences is twofold. First, as a reminder that the *Ring* is set in the real world, in landscapes that Wagner knew — the world we still live in. Centuries later, we have changed some of its features. We've built factories on the banks of the river; we've bridged it; we've poured poison into its waters. But the river (as T. S. Eliot put it), although "almost forgotten by the dwellers in cities," although "unhonored, unpropitiated by worshippers of the machine," remains "untamed and intractable...implacable. Keeping his winter seasons and rages, destroyer, reminder / Of what men choose to forget." The Italians were reminded of that when the Arno, which normally trickles as a sluggish stream through Florence, suddenly rose some years ago to devastate the famous city. Productions of the *Ring* that neglect the strong flow of the Rhine — and most of the ten or so productions that I've seen have neglected it

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— neglect one of the things that give the *Ring* its continuing appeal: that sense of placing ephemeral man, whatever his all-consuming concerns of a particular moment may be, in a world that is older than he is, a world that will continue after man has ceased to be a part of it. The *Ring* is about individuals in society, about man among men. It is also about man in history, and man in nature.

It is very easy, all too easy, to say: the *Ring* is about this, the *Ring* is about that. One can hardly go wrong saying it. There seems to be very little in life that the *Ring* is not “about.” It is the most nearly all-embracing work of art that we have. So no wonder it proves inexhaustible for the public, for those who perform it, and for those who study it. In these days of, on one hand, specialist studies such as a whole dissertation on the uses and implications of a single leitmotif through the cycle and, on the other hand, productions that focus on one particular aspect of the *Ring* (whether it be political or psychological), it is worth stressing a point that should be obvious but often gets overlooked. How can I put it most clearly? The continuing appeal of the *Ring* to all kinds and conditions of men lies largely in its completeness, its comprehensiveness, its embracing of many differing and even opposing points of view.

I am also suggesting that the *Ring* is not a consistent, cut-and-dried allegory; that any single interpretation cannot be conclusive; that the work says different and sometimes apparently incompatible things, both on the literal, plot level and, more important, in some of its profoundest statements; and that any attempts to impose consistency on it can only diminish it. Bernard Shaw remarked in *The Perfect Wagnerite*: “Do not forget that an allegory is never quite consistent ... except when it is written by someone without dramatic faculty.” And no one has ever accused Wagner of lacking dramatic faculty. Carl Dahlhaus doesn’t go too far, I think, when in his little book on the music dramas he says: “Wagner himself was by no means certain what his own work meant.” So let us go on finding all the meanings we can in the *Ring*: from Shaw’s socialist explanation to Robert Donnington’s Jungian interpretation. Let us ponder the Aeschylean foundations on which the tragedy is undoubtedly built. Let us explore the Northern myths and then Wagner’s transformations of them. Let us analyze the musical structures, on both large and small scales. Let us write dissertations on

the character of Schwertleite and the significance of the note F-sharp throughout the *Ring*, let it be in the fullest and most faithful way, making use of all these insights we may have gained, but not replacing Wagner’s symbols with mere signs. I am using these terms in the Jungian sense: a symbol is “an indefinite expression with many meanings,” while a sign “always has a fixed meaning.” The Tarnhelm, Shaw remarked, is a familiar article in our London streets — he was writing in 1898 — where it takes the form of a top hat which can turn a businessman into an invisible shareholder or transform him into various shapes, such as a pious Christian, a benefactor of the poor, or a faithful husband. And Nibelheim, Shaw said, needn’t be a gold mine; it could be any modern factory where human life and welfare are sacrificed to the owner’s greed for money. Many years later, Wieland Wagner said “Valhalla is Wall Street.” But Shaw didn’t want Alberich, and later Siegfried, to wear a top hat, and Wieland didn’t put a representation of Wall Street onto the Bayreuth stage. It has been left to later directors to do that: to narrow the *Ring* down to a study of the effects of the Industrial Revolution and the evils of capitalism. The *Ring* is those things, of course, but it is far more besides.

Among other things, it is, as I said, a depiction of man in relation to the natural world, in which huge skies, fierce storms, the stillness of a sunny forest glade, and the flow of the great river are potent and necessary symbols. The four elements — water, earth, air, and fire — play an important part in it. (What is Siegfried’s forging song but a miniature presentation of man’s harnessing these four elements to his own use?) And yet I have seen *Rings* in recent years where there has been hardly any fire at all, hardly enough for Marcello to warm his hands by, let alone a conflagration to destroy all Paris. And one of the simplest — but not unimportant — points of appeal is the basic narrative level: the *Ring* is a rousing and splendid old tale of gods and dwarfs and men, giants and dragons, murder and magic and mystery. The simple narrative aspect should never be neglected or underrated. It gives the *Ring* some of its popular success: it is kin to what caused the boom a few years ago of Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings*, and it still leads bright children to play endless, complicated games of Dungeons and Dragons. Basic myths, basic fascination, fantasies of childhood!

By now, at first, or second, or maybe

only at tenth remove — the *Ring* has become an omnipresent, inescapable component of contemporary life, coloring the thinking of people who may never even have heard it. Its influence on musicians is amply documented. Recently, Raymond Furness’s *Wagner and Literature* provided a long, annotated checklist of the 19th- and 20th-century writers who knew and used Wagner: from d’Annunzio and Auden, Beardsley and Brooke and Brecht, Claudel and Conrad and Cocteau, through the alphabet to Virginia Woolf. The sounds of the *Ring* well up in E.M. Forster, *Ring* thoughts underlie much of D.H. Lawrence’s writing. Thomas Mann, James Joyce, Proust, Gide... I needn’t go on. The influence of the *Ring* remains inescapable.

I don’t know how much people read today. I don’t know, for example, whether today’s statesmen read and are inspired by the works that underlie the world of most thinking people in the West: I mean the obvious basic works — Homer, Aeschylus, Virgil, the Bible, Dante, Shakespeare, Goethe... and the *Ring*, which was written by a man for whom all those earlier authors were still living presences. I don’t know whether they listen to Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, and Wagner. But whatever they read and whatever they listen to, it is likely — if it was written or composed in the last hundred years — to bear to some degree the influence of that most influential drama ever written.

In 1933, the British critic W.J. Turner wrote: “We in the twentieth century are witnessing the gorgeous fabric of Wagner’s music gradually crumbling into dust.” And that was one of music criticism’s rasher prophecies. The stature of the *Ring* — and of *Tristan*, *Die Meistersinger*, *Parsifal* — continues only to grow. Our musical analysts, our literary and social historians, and our psychoanalytical, musical, or literary scholars and commentators continue to make new discoveries in these works.

And, of course, new discoveries are constantly being made by our stage directors. A remark that is always being quoted is Wagner’s “Kinder! Macht Neues! Neues! Und abermal Neues!” (Do something new, guys: new, new, and once again, new!) Wagner’s grandson Wolfgang cited it again and again — or, rather, he miscited it as “Schafft Neues!” — to justify quirky and extravagant stagings. Well, I have pointed out more than once before (but I am going to do so again, because no one ever seems to notice) that in its context this remark,

Continued on page 38

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Music drama in three acts by RICHARD WAGNER

Text by the composer

Siegfried

(in German)

Der Ring des Nibelungen — Part II

Conductor

Donald Runnicles

Michael Boder (6/26)

Original Production by

Nikolaus Lehnhoff

Stage Director

Andrei Serban

Original Production

Designs by

John Conklin

Revised Set Designs by

John Coyne

Revised Costume Designs by

Bob Ringwood

Lighting Designer and

Special Effects

Thomas J. Munn

Projections

Ron Scherl, Tom Janus

Sound Designer

Roger Gans

Musical Preparation

Robert Morrison

Marilyn Barnett

David Syrus

Eric Weimer

Susan Webb

Peter Grunberg

William Lacey

Philip Eisenberg

Prompter

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SATURDAY, JUNE 26 AT 6:30

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 30 AT 6:30

CAST

(in order of appearance)

Mime Gary Rideout

Siegfried Wolfgang Schmidt
George Gray* (6/26)

The Wanderer (Wotan) James Morris
Alan Held (6/26)

Alberich Tom Fox
Peter Sidhom (6/26)

Fafner Eric Halfvarson

Forest Bird Suzanne Ramo

Erda Elena Zaremba

Brünnhilde Jane Eaglen
Frances Ginzer (6/26)

*San Francisco Opera debut

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ACT I Mime's dwelling

INTERMISSION

ACT II Outside Fafner's cave

INTERMISSION

ACT III Scene 1 A barren field

Scene 2 A remote mountaintop

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The performance will last approximately four hours and fifty minutes.*

SIEGFRIED SYNOPSIS

Earlier, Sieglinde gave birth to a child and died. The child was reared by Alberich's brother, Mime, who, in accordance with his mother's last wishes, named him "Siegfried." Mime, hoping to possess the Ring, has reared Siegfried in order to have him kill its present owner, Fafner.

ACT I

Act I takes place in the forge of the Nibelung dwarf, Mime. The young Siegfried asks about the broken sword that his father bore in his last fight. Mime, who has been unable to repair it, evades the subject. After Siegfried leaves in order to run in the forest, a Wanderer enters. It is Wotan, who no longer rules the world, but rather observes and reflects upon it. Uninvited, he sits down and offers to play a game with Mime in which each will exchange three riddles. If either player is unable to answer any riddle, he will lose his head. The Wanderer answers all three questions Mime asks. In the return match Mime is unable to answer the god's last question, "Who can forge the fragments of the sword Nothung?" After Siegfried returns, Mime gives him the fragments of Nothung, which Siegfried files down, melts and forges into a new sword. At the same time, Mime brews a poisonous potion. According to his plan, Siegfried, after slaying Fafner, will drink it and die. Then the treasure will belong to Mime, and make him master of the entire world. Siegfried tests the newly forged sword by striking it on the anvil. The anvil splits.

ACT II

Deep in the forest, Alberich waits outside the cave where Fafner, now in the shape of a dragon, dwells and guards his hoard. Alberich expresses his hope that his curse upon the Ring will take effect so that he can regain possession of it and its powers. The Wanderer joins him; they wake Fafner to warn him that Mime will shortly bring Siegfried to slay him. Alberich offers to protect Fafner if he will peacefully relinquish the Ring to him, but Fafner is not interested. The Wanderer departs laughing and Alberich disappears too, just before Mime arrives with Siegfried. Mime tries once more to instill fear into Siegfried's heart. He fails and leaves angrily, hoping that Siegfried and Fafner will slay each other. Siegfried relaxes near the cave and hears the song of a forest bird and the gentle rustling of the leaves — the passage that Wagner called "Forest Murmurs." Siegfried then tries to imitate the song of the forest bird, first with a reed-flute, then with a horn. The noise from the latter wakes Fafner, and after a short struggle, Siegfried drives Nothung into his heart. In his dying moments, Fafner is filled with admiration for the "heroic youth" who has slain him. He foretells Siegfried's future, warning him that Mime is plotting Siegfried's death in order to gain the hoard. As Siegfried pulls his sword from the dead Fafner, a drop of the dragon's blood falls on his hand. The taste of this blood gives him a new capacity:

understanding the words of the forest bird's song. The bird tells him to be sure to take the Ring and the magic helmet, which Siegfried does. While Siegfried is in the cave, Mime and Alberich return to claim the hoard, and fight with each other as they search Fafner's corpse. Siegfried returns with the Ring and Tarnhelm. Just as the dragon's blood has given Siegfried the ability to understand the forest bird, it also enables him to recognize the malicious intent behind Mime's words; as Mime hands him the poisoned drink, Siegfried kills him. The forest bird tells Siegfried of Brünnhilde, the most beautiful of all women, who lies on her rock surrounded by fire and awaits the one who has not learned to fear. The bird flies ahead, showing the way, and Siegfried follows.

ACT III

The Wanderer calls Erda, the Earth Mother, from the depths of the earth. She refuses to answer his question regarding the fate of the world; only after he declares that he no longer fears its downfall does she reveal the impending doom. Siegfried arrives, led by the forest bird. The Wanderer bars his way with his spear, feared by all except one man. Siegfried breaks Wotan's spear with Nothung. The Wanderer steps aside, and Siegfried rushes up the rocks until he stands before the sleeping Brünnhilde. Siegfried, who feared neither Fafner, fire nor Wotan's spear, learns fear with his first glimpse of a woman. He wakes her with a kiss; she greets the sun and light; then she sees Siegfried, and they gaze into each other's eyes. But their growing passion is interrupted by her fearful recognition that she has been divested of her godhood, and is now no more than a defenseless mortal woman. Soon, however, Siegfried and Brünnhilde sink into each other's arms in glowing, and ever-increasing love.

MIMES

Michael Kruzich

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ARTIST PROFILES



JANE EAGLEN is internationally recognized for her outstanding achievements on the opera stage and concert platform. The English soprano made her first San Francisco Opera appearance as Brünnhilde in *Die Walküre* during the 1995 season. One of her signature roles, she has performed Brünnhilde to great acclaim at Milan's La Scala, in Chicago (her first complete *Ring* cycle), Vienna and Costa

Mesa. Similarly, her performances in the title role of *Norma* have been praised at the Ravenna Festival, Seattle Opera, Los Angeles Opera, the Paris Opera/Bastille and Scottish Opera. Among her other recent operatic performances are Isolde in *Tristan und Isolde* in Seattle; the title role of *La Gioconda* in Chicago; Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni* in Los Angeles, Vienna and at the Metropolitan Opera; the title part of *Turandot* at the Met, in Seattle, Madrid, San Diego and Bologna; and Amelia in *Un Ballo in Maschera* at the Bastille. Equally at home in concert, her recent engagements include the Verdi Requiem with Simon Rattle; Mahler's Eighth Symphony under Klaus Tennstedt; the title role of *Tosca* with the Cleveland Symphony Orchestra; Act 3 of *Götterdämmerung* led by Bernard Haitink; *Nabucco* in Ravenna with Riccardo Muti; and *Norma* at Carnegie Hall. Her first solo album — arias by Wagner and Bellini — was released last year, and her second, arias by Strauss and Mozart, this spring. On records, she can also be heard as Tosca; as Norma under Muti; as Medea in *Medea in Corinto*; and in Mahler's Eighth led by Zubin Mehta. Future plans include complete *Ring* cycles for the Met, Seattle Opera and again in Chicago; *Tristan und Isolde* in Chicago and at the Met; *Turandot* at the Met, the Bastille and the Royal Opera, Covent Garden; *Norma* at the Met; as well as concerts and recitals in Chicago, Madrid, Barcelona, Minneapolis, New York, London and Berlin.



FRANCES GINZER is fast becoming one of opera's most sought-after sopranos in the dramatic repertoire since her first performance of the title role of *Turandot* in 1993. Since then the young artist has added the roles of Senta in *Der Fliegende Holländer*, the title roles of *Tosca* and *La Gioconda*, as well as Elisabeth in *Tannhäuser* to her expanding repertoire. A native of Calgary, Alberta, Ginzer achieved her

earliest success in the role of Antonia in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* with the Canadian Opera. She has been a guest soloist at such major European opera centers as Hamburg, Zurich, Cologne, Munich, Stuttgart, Bonn, Frankfurt and London. In the 1996-97 season she made her Metropolitan Opera debut in *Rusalka*, *Die Walküre* and *Götterdämmerung*, also singing Leonore in *Fidelio* (role debut) in Baltimore, Bern and Düsseldorf. Among her engagements during the 1997-98 season were Elsa in *Lobengrin* in Tokyo, her San Francisco Opera debut as Chrysothemis in *Elektra*, *Turandot* in Dallas, *Fidelio* in Düsseldorf, as well as her fifth season at the Bayreuth Festival as Helmwig in *Die Walküre* and the Third Norn in *Götterdämmerung*. This season she appeared in *Die Walküre* (Brünnhilde) in Trieste and Cincinnati, *Fidelio* in Düsseldorf, and *Tristan und Isolde* (Isolde) at the Washington Opera. In addition to her opera appearances, the soprano has performed as soloist with the Toronto Symphony, Ottawa's National Arts

Centre Orchestra, the Edmonton Symphony and the Calgary Philharmonic. She has also recorded for EMI and London/Decca Records. After receiving her bachelor of music degree from the University of Calgary, Ginzer earned her master of music degree from North Texas State University. She has studied with Evelyn Dalberg since 1991.



Since her 1991 San Francisco Opera debut as Hélène Bezukhova in *War and Peace*, **ELENA ZAREMBA** has appeared with the Company as Ratmir in *Ruslan and Lyudmila* (1995), Konchakovna in *Prince Igor* (1996), Maddalena in *Rigoletto* (1997), and in the title role of *Carmen* (1998 *Femmes Fatales* Festival). In the years since she came upon the international scene, the mezzo's command of the principal roles in

the Russian repertoire is supported by her interpretation of such Verdian and Wagnerian roles as Azucena in *Il Trovatore*, Ulrica in *Un Ballo in Maschera* (a part she will sing for the Company this fall) and Erda in the *Ring* cycle. Her appearances in San Francisco, at Milan's La Scala and with the Bolshoi Opera at the Metropolitan Opera have received critical acclaim and have led to engagements at such theaters as the Vienna State Opera, Paris Opera/Bastille, the Bregenz, Edinburgh and Salzburg Festivals, and with such ensembles as the Berlin Philharmonic, London Symphony Orchestra, and the Cleveland Orchestra. She has been particularly praised for her appearances in the title role of *Carmen*, which she has performed at major theaters worldwide. Zarembo's 1997-98 season has included *Alexander Nevsky* with the London Philharmonic; Verdi's Requiem with the Pittsburgh Symphony; *Carmen* in Hamburg and Bilbao; her staged debut in the role of Dalila for New Israeli Opera's *Samson et Dalila*; *Eugene Onegin* for the Bastille Opera; and a concert of works by Prokofiev and Shostakovich in Brussels. She made her Metropolitan Opera debut earlier this year as Azucena in *Il Trovatore*. Her artistry has been documented on videocassettes or audio recordings of *Prince Igor*, *A Life for the Tsar*, *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, *Boris Godunov*, *Das Rheingold*, *Un Ballo in Maschera*, Rimsky-Korsakov's *Christmas Eve*, Mussorgsky's cantata *Joshua*, and a Shostakovich song cycle. Born in Moscow, Elena Zarembo attended the Gnessin State Music Institute and, while still a student, was invited to be a soloist by the Bolshoi Theatre, where she sang roles in many of the prominent Russian operas.



A 1998 National Finalist in the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, soprano **SUZANNE RAMO** made her professional opera debut as Papagena in *Die Zauberflöte* and subsequently appeared as Sarah in *The Ballad of Baby Doe* while she was a Young Artist with the Austin Lyric Opera. A native of Cheney, Washington, she holds a bachelor's degree from Whitworth College and a master's degree in

music from the University of Texas at Austin. A participant in the 1998 and 1999 Merola Opera Programs, she also sang the role of Violetta in Western Opera Theater's 1998 staging of *La Traviata*. Her operatic roles include the Countess in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Despina in *Così fan tutte*, the Governess in *The Turn of the Screw*, Sister Constance in *Dialogues of the Carmelites* and Rosalinda in *Die Fledermaus*. On the concert stage, she has

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been heard as soloist in Handel's *Messiah*, Poulenc's *Gloria*, Mozart's Mass in C Minor and the Brahms *Ein Deutsches Requiem*. Later this season the young artist will sing Zerlina in *Don Giovanni* for Austin Lyric Opera.



WOLFGANG SCHMIDT is celebrated in many of the world's leading opera houses as one of today's leading exponents of heroic German tenor roles. He has performed two of them for San Francisco Opera: the title part of *Tannhäuser* for his 1994 San Francisco Opera debut and Tristan in *Tristan und Isolde* last fall. Born in Kassel, he studied in Frankfurt and, while still a student, started appearing in

opera and concert throughout Germany, as well as in Poland, Romania, Mexico and Venezuela. By now, his career has accumulated a number of high points, including the opening of the 1992 Bayreuth Festival in the title role of *Tannhäuser* (conducted by Donald Runnicles), his 1993 Metropolitan Opera debut as Siegfried in *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung* and the same two roles in the 1994 Bayreuth *Ring* production led by James Levine. A member of the Deutsche Oper am Rhein in Düsseldorf since 1988, he has also been regularly featured at the Vienna Staatsoper since 1991. Through his career, Schmidt has been heard as Tristan, Max in *Der Freischütz*, Hüon in *Oberon*, Florestan in *Fidelio*, Erik in *Der Fliegende Holländer*, the Emperor in *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, Siegmund and Siegfried in the *Ring* cycle, as well as in the title roles of *Otello* and *Lobengrin*. Among the artist's most recent assignments are *Siegfried* at Milan's La Scala and at the Met; *Götterdämmerung* at La Scala; *Die Walküre* (Act I) with the London Symphony Orchestra; *Tannhäuser* at the Met; *Tristan und Isolde* at the Paris Opera/Bastille and in Dresden; in addition to *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung* at the 1998 Bayreuth Festival. Schmidt's future engagements include a new staging of the *Ring* cycle at Bayreuth next year.



Tenor **GEORGE GRAY** continues his international career performing with many of the world's leading ensembles and opera companies. A noted Wagnerian interpreter with many *Ring* productions to his credit, he has appeared as Siegfried (*Siegfried*, *Götterdämmerung*) in Wiesbaden, as well as at the Hamburg Opera, Zurich Opera and Arizona Opera. In past seasons he has also performed in *Lobengrin* (title role) in

Vienna and Leipzig; *Tristan und Isolde* (Tristan) in Amsterdam, Karlsruhe, Mainz and at the Berlin Staatsoper; *Die Walküre* (Siegmund) in Hamburg; *Fidelio* (Florestan) for the Deutsche Oper Berlin; *Les Troyens* (Enée) for the opening of the Paris Opéra Bastille; *Otello* (title role) in Palm Beach, Sacramento and Salt Lake City; in addition to *Pagliacci* (Canio) and *Cavalleria Rusticana* (Turiddu) in New Orleans. He has also performed in the opera houses of Brussels, Frankfurt, Dallas, Miami and Seattle. His most recent engagements include *Tristan und Isolde* for the English National Opera, the *Ring* in Arizona, *Fidelio* in Utah, *Otello* in Minnesota, as well as Busoni's *Doktor Faust* (Mephistopheles) and the world premiere of Mayako Kubo's *Rashomon* (Tajomaru the bandit) in Graz. In concert, Gray has been heard in such works as Schoenberg's *Gurrelieder*, Mahler's *Das Klagende Lied* and *Das Lied von der Erde*, Rimsky-Korsakov's *Mlada* and Kodály's *Psalmus Hungaricus*. Scheduled for the future are *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung* for Dallas Opera; a new production of the *Ring* in Graz; *Otello* in Austin; *Wozzeck* and *Götterdämmerung* at

the Aspen Festival; as well as a debut at the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires as Paul in Korngold's *Die Tote Stadt*.



Master of a remarkable repertoire that spans the opera stage, festivals, concert and recital halls, **JAMES MORRIS** made his 1981 San Francisco Opera debut as Assur in *Semiramide*. The renowned bass has since appeared here as Wotan in the 1985 *Ring* Festival (singing the *Rheingold* Wotan for the first time), Scarpia in *Tosca* (another career first) and Claggart in *Billy Budd* (1985), the four villains in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* (1987), the *Ring* cycle again in 1990, the title role of *Boris Godunov* in 1992 (singing the part in Russian for the first time), Procida in *I Vespri Siciliani* (1993), the title role of *Macbeth* (1994), Wotan in *Die Walküre* (1995), Scarpia and in the title role of *Der Fliegende Holländer* (1997), as well as Philip II in *Don Carlo* (1998). Born and educated in Baltimore, Morris became the youngest male singer on the Metropolitan Opera roster at the age of 23, and at 27 was on the Met stage as Don Giovanni, a role he has sung in numerous seasons there and in other opera centers of the world. His Metropolitan Opera record consists of over 50 roles, sung since his debut there in 1971 (he celebrated his 25th season at the Met in 1996 singing his first Iago in *Otello*). He most recently performed at the Met in *Tosca*, *Don Carlo* and *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*. The artist is in constant demand internationally for his opera roles, which range from Mozart to Wagner to Britten, as well as for concert appearances and recitals. His extensive discography includes two complete *Ring* cycles, *Der Fliegende Holländer*, *Maria Stuarda*, *Le Roi de Labore*, *I Vespri Siciliani*, *Così fan tutte*, *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, *Aida*, *Parsifal*, *Salome*, Berlioz's *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Beggar's Opera*, Haydn's *The Creation*, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, the Requiems of Mozart and Fauré, as well as a recording of arias by Wagner and Verdi.



ALAN HELD returned for his third season with San Francisco Opera last year to perform the role of Balstrode in *Peter Grimes*, a part he had previously sung at the Metropolitan Opera and for Vancouver Opera. The bass-baritone first appeared with the Company in 1992 (*Tosca*, *Boris Godunov*, *Fidelio*), and was praised here in 1997 as Orest in *Elektra*. Winner of the 1991 Birgit Nilsson Prize, Held has made

several important debuts and performed in many of the world's most prestigious opera houses. Since his 1989 debut at the Metropolitan Opera in *Billy Budd*, he has returned there to sing in numerous productions including *Die Zauberflöte*, *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, the *Ring*, *Fidelio*, *Die Meistersinger*, *Peter Grimes*, *Tannhäuser*, *Roméo et Juliette*, *Samson et Dalila* and *Boris Godunov*. A specialist in the German repertoire, he has been featured in *Ring* cycles in Munich, Chicago, London, Frankfurt and Brussels. He is also at home in the music of Mozart, having sung Leporello in *Don Giovanni* in Chicago, Frankfurt and Munich. Over the past few seasons the artist has been a regular with the Royal Opera/Covent Garden, appearing there as Orest, Gunther in *Götterdämmerung*, Colline in *La Bohème* and Cardinal Borromeo in a new staging of *Palestrina* which was also presented at the 1997 Lincoln Center Festival in New York. His repertoire encompasses over 50 roles, ranging from Rossini and Gounod to Argento and Berg. The native of Illinois, a graduate of Millikin University and Wichita State University, is the winner of numerous awards including two Richard Tucker Music Foundation Career Grants, a Richard Gold Award from

the Shoshana Foundation, an Opera Index Award and a prize from the Musicians Emergency Fund. Among his future engagements are *Don Giovanni* (Leporello, opposite Bryn Terfel) in London; *Tristan und Isolde* in Chicago and Amsterdam; *Der Ring des Nibelungen* in Munich; and the title role of *Wozzeck* for the Company this coming season.



Canadian tenor **GARY RIDEOUT** completed his sixth season with the Company during the 1998-99 season singing the roles of Flavio in *Norma*, Reverend Horace Adams in *Peter Grimes* and Pang in *Turandot*. Since his 1989 San Francisco Opera debut season in *Lulu* and *Falstaff*, he has appeared here in *Rigoletto* and *Die Fledermaus* (1990); as Count Hauk-Sendorf in *The Makropulos Case* and Balthasar Zorn in *Die Meistersinger* (1993); Heinrich in *Tannhäuser* (1994); as well as Yeroshka in *Prince Igor* (1996). Formerly a Resident Artist with the Canadian Opera Company of Toronto, he has been heard in that house in numerous productions. Among his most recent performances are Števa in *Jenůfa* with Montreal Opera; Avito in *L'Amore dei Tre Re* with Victoria's Pacific Opera; Cavaradossi in *Tosca* for Hawaii Opera Theatre and Pacific Opera; the Tempter/Abbot in Britten's *The Prodigal Son* with Festival Canada, Ottawa; his first Loge in *Das Rheingold* for Arizona Opera; and the Witch in *Hänsel und Gretel* with the Canadian Opera Company. Recent concert engagements include the Verdi Requiem with the Victoria (B.C.), Edmonton and Charlotte Symphonies; Beethoven's Ninth with the Baltimore, New Mexico and Milwaukee Symphonies; Mahler's Eighth at Carnegie Hall; and Handel's *Messiah* with the Montreal Symphony. The versatile artist, who received degrees from Michigan State University, York University in Toronto, and the University of Toronto, also performed the role of Ubaldo Piangi in *The Phantom of the Opera* on Broadway. Rideout is the recipient of study grants from the Wagner Societies of Southern California and Hawaii.



Baritone **TOM FOX** made his acclaimed 1990 Company debut as Alberich in *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, and has since appeared here as Ryuji Tsukazaki in the U.S. premiere of *Das Verrätene Meer* and Orest in *Elektra* (1991); Jokanaan in *Salome* and Jaroslav Prus in *The Makropulos Case* (1993); Telramund in *Lobengrin* (1996); in addition to Dr. Schön/Jack the Ripper in *Lulu* and Kurwenal in *Tristan und Isolde* (1998). The native of Cincinnati was a resident member of Cincinnati Opera from 1976 to 1980. He was engaged the following year as principal guest artist at the Frankfurt Opera where his roles included Amonasro in *Aida*, Pizarro in *Fidelio*, Klingsor in *Parsifal*, Nick Shadow in *The Rake's Progress*, Escamillo in *Carmen*, Orest in *Elektra*, and Alberich. Since leaving Frankfurt, he has sung in many of the world's leading opera houses. In addition to his San Francisco Opera engagements, he has appeared at the Metropolitan Opera and with the companies of Chicago, Washington, D.C., San Diego, Pittsburgh, Toronto, Munich, Berlin, Paris, Montpellier, Milan (La Scala), Rome, Bologna, Turin and Brussels, among others. Roles in these houses have included the four villains in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, Scarpia in *Tosca*, Iago in *Otello*, the title roles of *Eugene Onegin* and *Der Fliegende Holländer*, in addition to Kurwenal, Alberich, Telramund, Pizarro, Prus, Orest and Jokanaan. In South America, he has sung Iago at the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires, Escamillo in Caracas, and Wotan (role

debut) in the *Ring* cycle in Santiago, Chile. Fox made his Salzburg Festival debut in 1995 as the Animal Trainer/Acrobat in *Lulu* and returned to Salzburg the following year as Pizarro in a new staging of *Fidelio* led by Georg Solti. Among the baritone's most recent engagements are *Otello* in Brussels and Tel Aviv, a Los Angeles Opera debut in *Salome*, a return to the Met for *The Makropulos Case*, and *Tosca* with Cincinnati Opera. He will be seen with the Company next season as *Parsifal*'s Klingsor.



Baritone **PETER SIDHOM** was born in Egypt and has been living in England since the age of ten. After studying modern languages at London University and singing with Hervey Alan and Josephine Veasey, he made his 1987 debut with English National Opera as Jupiter in *Orpheus in the Underworld*. Additional roles at ENO include Tomsy in *The Queen of Spades*, the Count in *The Marriage of Figaro*, Pizarro in *Fidelio*, Scarpia in *Tosca*, Klingsor in *Parsifal*, Faninal in *Der Rosenkavalier*, as well as the title parts of *Rigoletto* and *Macbeth*. He has also appeared with Welsh National Opera (Scarpia, Rigoletto, Faninal, Don Alfonso in *Così fan tutte*, Alfio in *Cavalleria Rusticana*, Tonio in *Pagliacci*); the Royal Opera at Covent Garden (Schaunard in *La Bohème*, Capulet in *Roméo et Juliette*, Paolo in *Simon Boccanegra*); Opera North (Germont in *La Traviata*); and the Glyndebourne Festival (Paolo). Additional highlights include Michele in *Il Tabarro* and the title role of *Gianni Schicchi* in Brussels; Telramund in *Lobengrin* and Schaunard in Toulouse; his first Alberich in *Das Rheingold* with Australia's Sydney Symphony Orchestra; Estoban in Zemlinsky's *Der Zwerg* in Florence; and Faninal at the Paris Opera. In concert, Sidhom has performed in all of England's major music halls and regularly appears with the BBC Symphony Orchestra. He can be heard on recordings of *La Traviata* and *Rigoletto* under Carlo Rizzi and *Carmine Burana* with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. Among the artist's future engagements are *Lobengrin* in Basel, *Tosca* in Stuttgart, and *War and Peace* in Paris.



Illinois-born bass **ERIC HALFVARSON** sings regularly with the world's most prestigious opera companies and symphony orchestras. His interpretations of such varied roles as Baron Ochs in *Der Rosenkavalier*, Hagen in *Götterdämmerung*, Claggart in *Billy Budd*, Sarastro in *Die Zauberflöte*, King Philip and the Grand Inquisitor in *Don Carlo*, Heinrich in *Lobengrin*, Hunding in *Die Walküre* and Méphistophélès in *Faust* have been seen with such companies as the Metropolitan Opera, the Bastille in Paris, the Bayreuth Festival, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Canadian Opera Company, La Fenice in Venice, Bavarian State Opera in Munich, and at the opera houses of Dallas, Houston, Santa Fe, Washington, D.C. and San Francisco. Since his Company debut during the 1981 Summer Festival in *Die Meistersinger* and *Rigoletto*, he has appeared here in over 10 productions, including *Das Rheingold* (Fafner) and *Götterdämmerung* (Hagen) during the 1990 Ring Festival; *Der Rosenkavalier* (Baron Ochs) for the 1993 Celebration of Strauss Festival; as well as *Der Fliegende Holländer* (Daland) and *Eugene Onegin* (Prince Gremin) in 1997. He has performed with the symphony orchestras of San Francisco, New York, Chicago, St. Louis, Houston, Boston, Minnesota, the Hallé Orchestra, and at Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, among others. Halfvarson can be seen and heard on the newly released video and CD of *Don Carlos* and the CD of *Billy Budd*. His other recordings are of



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Shostakovich's *Rayok* and Barber's *Antony and Cleopatra*. Among his future plans are return engagements to the Metropolitan Opera and Montreal Opera, as well as debuts with the Royal Opera at Covent Garden, Los Angeles Music Center Opera and Barcelona's Gran Teatre del Liceu.



Music Director of San Francisco Opera since 1992, **DONALD RUNNICLES** is highly regarded as one of the finest conductors active today, with a distinguished series of international triumphs to his credit. The native of Edinburgh has conducted over 25 operas for the Company, highlights of which include televised productions of *Capriccio*, *Turandot*, and the 1994 world premiere of Susa and Littell's

The Dangerous Liaisons; the North American premiere of Tippett's *King Priam* with the S.F. Opera Center; and the 1996 West Coast premiere of Wallace and Korie's *Harvey Milk*. He has led the San Francisco Opera Orchestra and Chorus for two recordings, the Grammy-nominated *Orphée et Eurydice* and *Harvey Milk*. His first commercial recording was Humperdinck's *Hänsel und Gretel*, and his most recent are a CD of *Ring* excerpts with the Dresden Staatskapelle and a disk of German Romantic opera arias with tenor Ben Heppner. During the Company's 1998-99 season, he led performances of *Arabella*, *Tristan und Isolde* and *Peter Grimes*. Elsewhere, he has conducted opera productions at the Bayreuth Festival, the Salzburg Festival, New York's Metropolitan Opera, Milan's La Scala, Bastille Opera, Berlin Opera, Vienna State Opera, Bavarian State Opera, Hamburg State Opera, Royal Opera Copenhagen, Zurich Opera, Netherlands Opera and the Vienna Volksoper. Symphonically, Maestro Runnicles has led the Orchestre de Paris, Israel Philharmonic, Danish Radio Orchestra, Bavarian Radio Symphony, Berlin State Opera Orchestra, Vienna Symphony, Rotterdam Philharmonic, London Symphony Orchestra and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra. In North America, he has conducted the symphony orchestras of San Francisco, Chicago, Atlanta, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, Seattle, Toronto, Miami and Cleveland. The maestro remains an active pianist, appearing regularly in a series of concerts with members of the San Francisco Opera Orchestra. In 1995, Runnicles was recognized for his achievements by the University of Edinburgh, from which he received an honorary doctorate of music. He will return to the War Memorial podium for the 1999-2000 season to conduct *Un Ballo in Maschera*, *Idomeneo* and a new staging of *Parsifal*.



MICHAEL BODER made his U.S. opera debut leading San Francisco Opera's new staging of *Der Fliegende Holländer* during the 1997-98 season. A native of Darmstadt, he began his conducting studies at the College of Music in Hamburg. After assisting Carlo Maria Giulini with his 1979 recording of *Rigoletto*, he continued his studies at the Teatro Comunale in Florence, where he worked as a coach/conductor and

was assistant to Riccardo Muti and Zubin Mehta. After conducting several productions at the Frankfurt Opera from 1984-1988, he was appointed music director of the Basel Opera where he led 15 new productions including *Tristan und Isolde*, *Wozzeck*, *Katya Kabanova*, *Don Giovanni*, and the Swiss premiere of Müller-Siemens's *Die Menschen*. He now conducts new stagings at leading European houses, including the Cologne Opera, Hamburg Staatsoper, Stuttgart Opera and the Royal Opera at Covent Garden. In addition to his operatic activities, Maestro

Boder is a frequent guest conductor with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, Oslo Philharmonic, Stuttgart Radio Orchestra, Frankfurt Radio Orchestra, Danish National Radio Orchestra, Hamburg Philharmonic, Bastille Opera Orchestra, and the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, among others. Recent opera highlights include *Wozzeck* for his debut at the Vienna State Opera; Henze's *Der Junge Lord* and the world premiere of Manfred Trojahn's *Was Ihr Wollt* at the Bavarian State Opera; as well as *Der Rosenkavalier* at the Berlin State Opera. In the future, Boder will conduct *Wozzeck* for the Company, *Elektra* in Stuttgart, in addition to *Wozzeck*, *Elektra* and a new production of *Lulu* at the Vienna State Opera.



ANDREI SERBAN made his 1991 San Francisco Opera debut with his production of *Elektra* and repeated the assignment here during the 1997-98 season. The director was born in Romania and studied at the Theater Institute in Bucharest. His earliest productions included several plays, culminating in an acclaimed staging of *Julius Caesar*, which led to a Ford Foundation grant to work with New York's

La Mama Experimental Theater Company. In New York he met Peter Brook, who invited him to work with him in Paris. Serban's productions in the U.S. have included the classical Greek trilogy, *The Trojan Women*, *Elektra* and *Medea*, as well as *The Good Woman of Szechuan*, *The Cherry Orchard*, *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* and *Agamemnon* in New York, and several plays at Yale University. Currently director of the Drama Department at Columbia University in New York, he has directed *Cymbeline* and *Hamlet* for the New York Shakespeare Festival, as well as *The Taming of the Shrew* and *The Merchant of Venice* for the American Repertory Theatre in Cambridge, MA. Since his first opera production, *Eugene Onegin* for the Welsh National Opera, he has returned to Cardiff for *I Puritani* (a production also staged here in 1993), *Rodelinda*, *The Merry Widow* and *Norma*. His acclaimed production of *Turandot* had its premiere at the 1984 Olympic Arts Festival in Los Angeles before opening the 1984-85 season at the Royal Opera, Covent Garden. Among the noted artist's most recent stagings are *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* and *The Merry Widow* at the Vienna State Opera, *Lucia di Lammermoor* in Chicago, Los Angeles and Paris (Bastille); *Elektra* and *Thais* in Nice; *Don Carlo* in Bologna; and *L'Italiana in Algeri* in Paris. Future projects include Rameau's *Les Indes Galantes* for the Paris Opera and Molière's *The Miser* for the Comédie-Française in Paris.



NIKOLAUS LEHNHOFF conceived the original production of Wagner's *Ring of the Nibelung* which was presented at San Francisco Opera in the summer of 1985. His most recent Company assignment was in 1987, when he recreated his acclaimed production of *Salome*, first seen here during the 1982 season. He began his career as an assistant director at the Deutsche Oper in Berlin and at the Bayreuth Festival under

Wieland Wagner. This led to a contract at the Metropolitan Opera where he served as assistant director from 1966-1971. He made his directorial debut at the Paris Opera with the 1972 production of *Die Frau ohne Schatten*. Lehnhoff first came to San Francisco Opera to direct *Salome* in 1974 and returned here two years later to stage *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, a work he recreated here again in 1980. Highlights of his distinguished career include a new staging of the complete *Ring* cycle in Munich, *Katya Kabanova* and *Jenůfa* at the Glyndebourne Festival, a new

Siegfried

Photos taken in rehearsal by Marty Sohl
except as noted

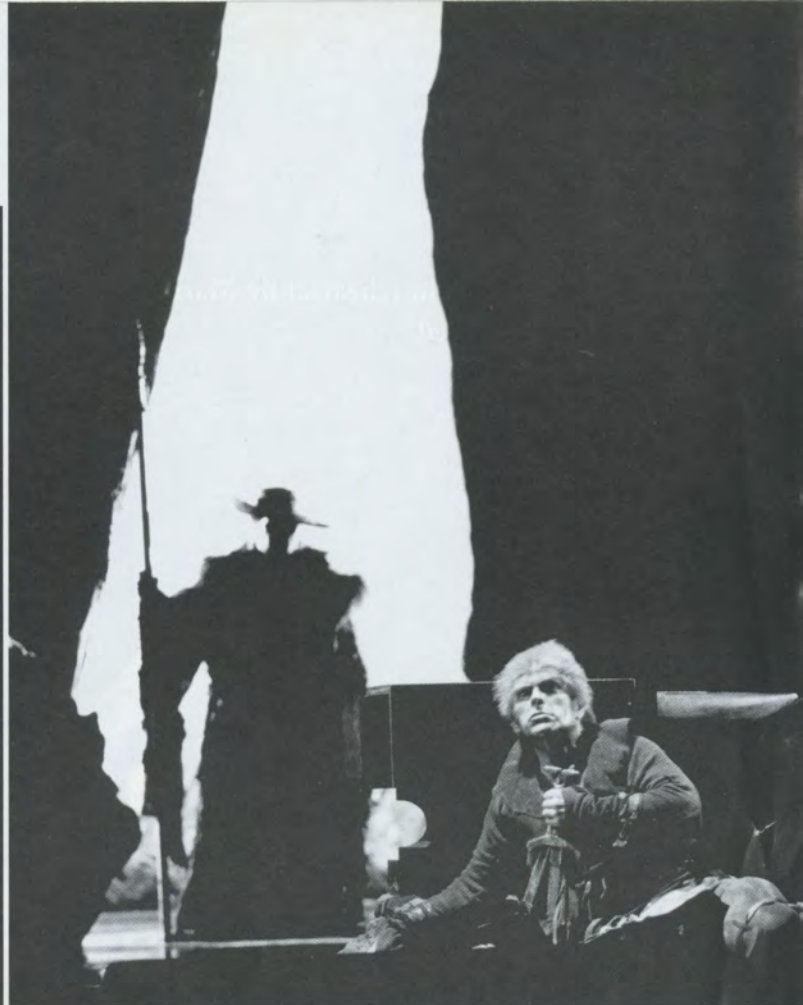
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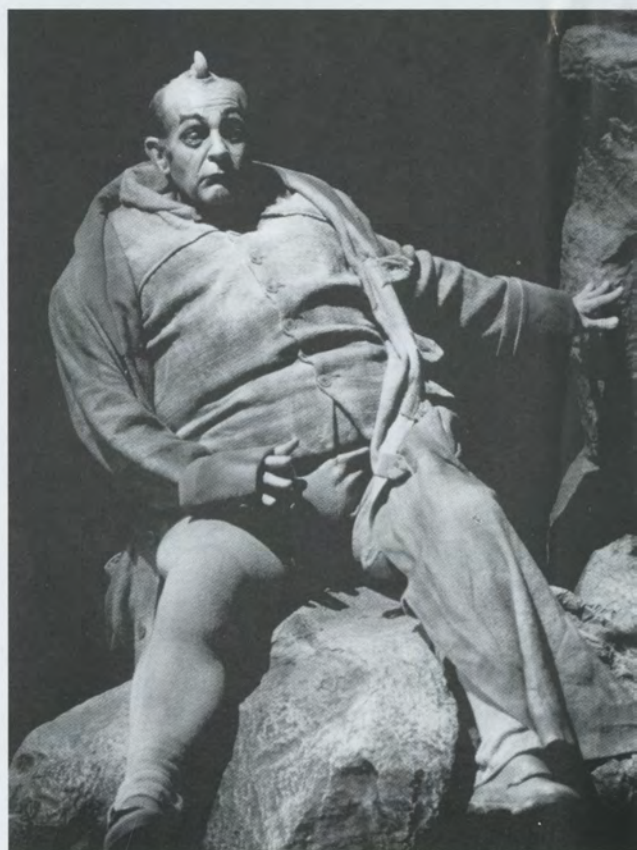
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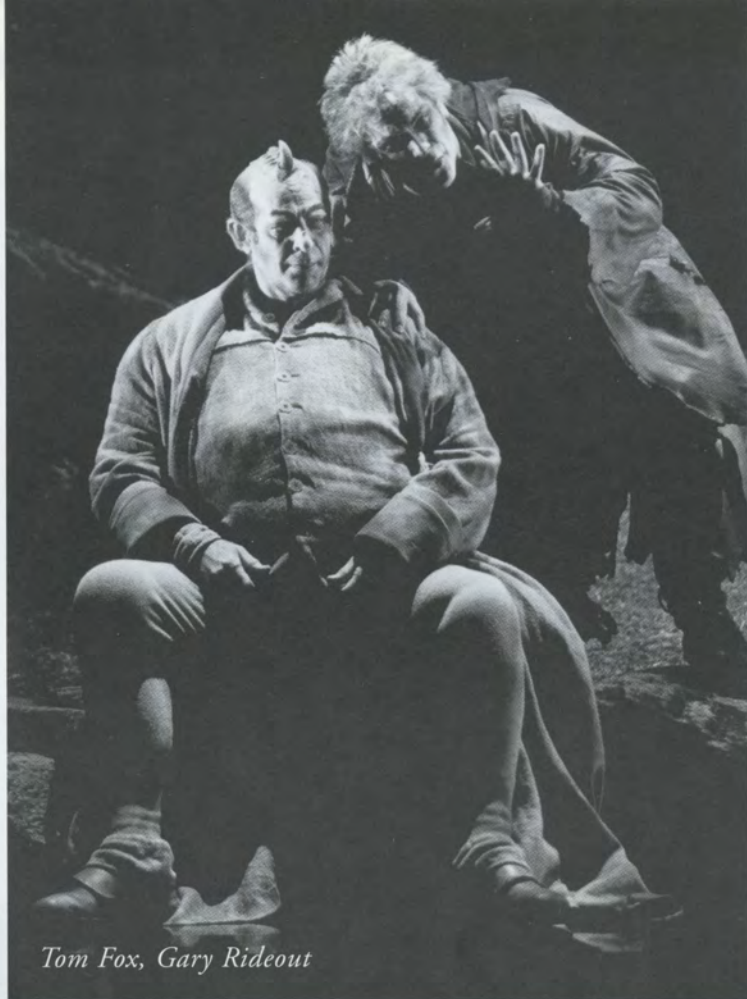
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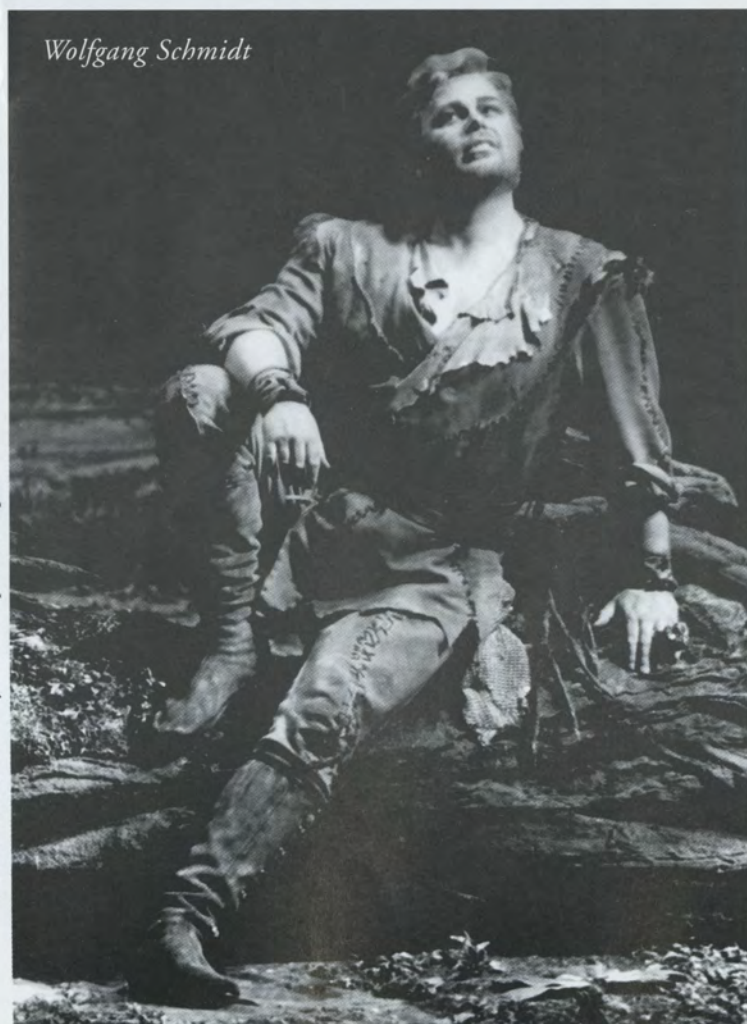
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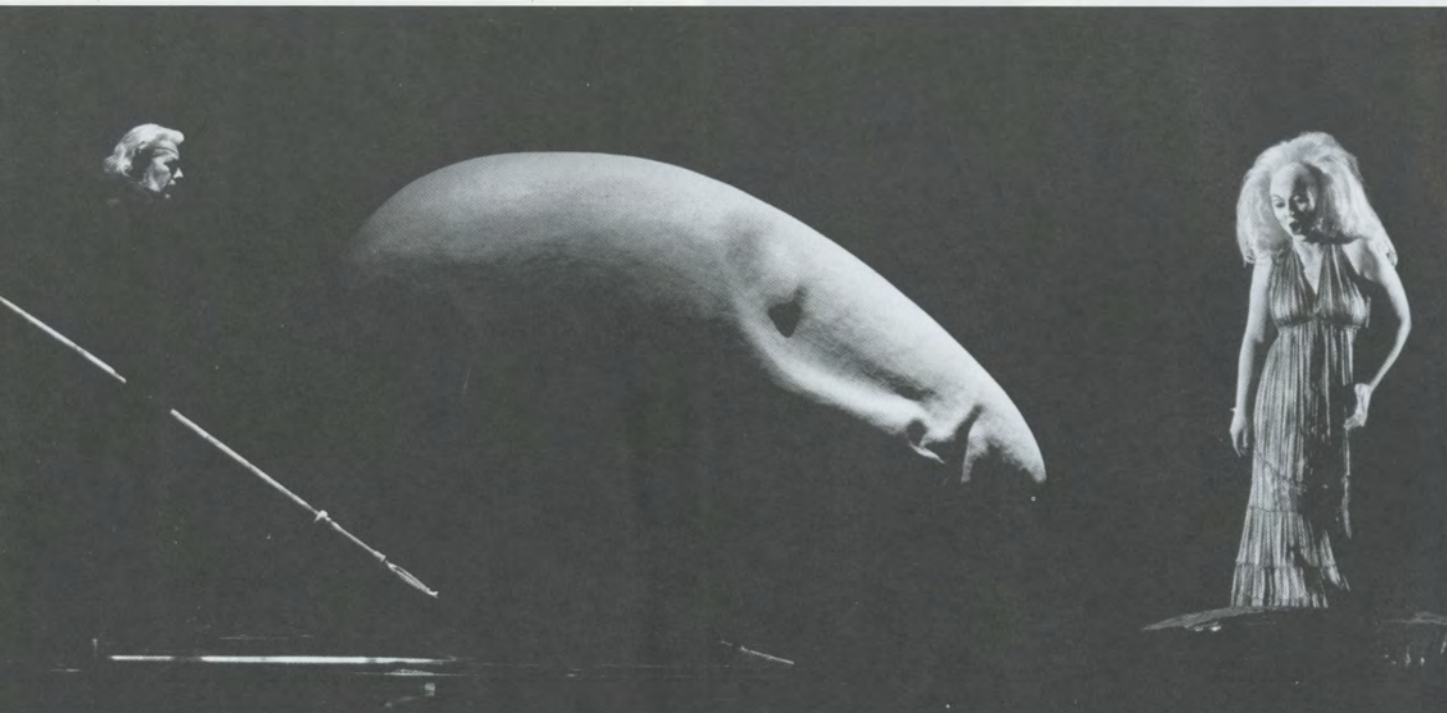
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staging of *Salome* at the Metropolitan Opera, Henze's *Der Prinz von Homburg* in Munich and Zurich, in addition to a highly praised new production of Pfitzner's *Palestrina* for the Royal Opera at Covent Garden. The German director's most recent engagements include a new staging of *Der Freischütz* for the Berlin State Opera; a repeat of *Palestrina* at New York's Lincoln Center Festival (marking the Royal Opera's first visit to the U.S.); the *Ring* cycle in Munich; *Tosca* for the Netherlands Opera; *Katya Kabanova* at Glyndebourne; *Eugene Onegin* in Baden-Baden (the inaugural production sponsored by the European Union Opera); as well as a new mounting of *Parsifal* for the English National Opera which he will restage for the Company this coming season.



JOHN CONKLIN created the original designs for the four operas of Wagner's *Ring of the Nibelung*, which were unveiled in 1983 (*Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre*), 1984 (*Siegfried*), and 1985 (*Götterdämmerung*). He also served as production consultant for our 1990 *Ring* presentation. His first Company assignment was the 1977 *Un Ballo in Maschera* (also mounted here in '82, '85 and '90). Additional SFO credits have been *Don Pasquale*, (1980, '84); *La Traviata* (1987, '91, '95), *Idomeneo* (1989); and *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* (1992). Spring Opera Theater audiences first saw his work in productions of *Orfeo* (1972), *Death in Venice* (1975 and '79), and *Julius Caesar*. (1978). Elsewhere in the U.S., his designs have been seen at the Metropolitan Opera, New York City Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Dallas Opera, Seattle Opera, Opera Theatre of St. Louis and Santa Fe Opera, among others. On the other side of the Atlantic, Conklin has been responsible for production designs for the Holland Festival, Scottish Opera, and the Munich Opera. Among the highlights from his 1997-98 season were *Norma* and *Idomeneo* in Chicago; Antheil's *Transatlantic* for Minnesota Opera; *Falstaff*; *L'Italiana in Algeri*, *Of Mice and Men* and Handel's *Partenope* at Glimmerglass Opera; Susa's *Transformations* in St. Louis; *The Turn of the Screw*, *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* and *Macbeth* for City Opera; Gluck's *Orfeo* et *Euridice* for the English National Opera; as well as *Carmen* in Cincinnati and Colorado Springs. Conklin's designs have also been seen in numerous ballet and legitimate theater productions.



In his relatively short career in professional theater, **JOHN COYNE** has designed sets for over 40 productions including *A Little Night Music*, *First Lady*, *Tartuffe*, *'night Mother*, *Fallen Angels*, *Godspell*, *The House of Bernarda Alba*, *As You Like It*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet*. His designs have been seen at theaters across the country such as Dallas Theatre Center, Santa Fe Stages, Yale Repertory Theatre, Capital Rep, Syracuse Stage and the Juilliard School. A recent graduate of the Yale School of Drama and a recipient of the Donald M. Oenslager award for excellence in design, Coyne studied under Ming Cho Lee and Michael Yeargan and has assisted the latter on numerous opera designs including *Carmen* (San Francisco Opera), *Madama Butterfly* and *The Ballad of Baby Doe* (Dallas Opera), in addition to *Cavalleria Rusticana/Pagliacci* (Welsh National Opera). Prior to his work for the stage, he established himself as a licensed architect, designing buildings, residences, interiors and furniture on projects as diverse as the Milwaukee School of Architecture and the interior of a 125-ft. custom yacht. He has been honored with a number of awards for his architectural work including a prize from the American Academy in Rome.



British designer **BOB RINGWOOD**, currently residing in Los Angeles, studied under Ralph Koltai at London's Central School of Art and Design and after graduation began his career at the Citizens' Theater in Glasgow. He has since designed sets and costumes for numerous works seen around the world: over 150 opera, theater and ballet productions, as well as some 20 major feature films. He is perhaps best known in the United States for his work in film: He created the costumes for Steven Spielberg's *Empire of the Sun* (for which he was nominated for an Academy Award); the *Batman* movies directed by Tim Burton; *Excalibur* for John Boorman; the science fiction epic *Dune* for David Lynch; in addition to *Demolition Man*, *Alien 3* and *Alien Resurrection*. He served as production designer for Peter Greenaway's film *The Draughtsman's Contract*. Ringwood has also created designs for *Norma* at Covent Garden's Royal Opera; the world premiere of Tennessee Williams's *The Red Devil Battery Sign* in London's West End; Howard Barker's *Stripwell* at the Royal Court Theatre; *The Heikword* for the Hamburg Ballet; *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *The Way of the World* at the Théâtre Royal du Parc in Brussels; *The Duchess of Malfi* at the Théâtre de Poche in Brussels; as well as *Swan Lake* and *Raymonda* for the Asami Maki Ballet in Tokyo. *Supernova*, a space movie which will be released later this year, features the designer's latest Hollywood costume creations.



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 last season added 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*. Design credits for our 1997-98 season included the 75th Anniversary Gala (stage and television), *Tosca*, *Pelléas et Mélisande*, and *Eugene Onegin*. 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*. His television credits for the Company include *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *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 *The Nutcracker*). Lighting system consulting projects include San Francisco's renovated War Memorial Opera House and Het Muziektheater in Amsterdam, the Netherlands.



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**RICHARD WAGNER —
THE CONTINUING APPEAL**

continued from page 20

which Wagner made in a letter to Liszt, is no warrant at all for mere novelty. What Wagner is specifically deploring is an attempt to tinker with works that have failed, to attempt artificial respiration upon pieces that have never really lived. Better abandon them, he says, and start again. Create something new. And then, in the very same letter, he goes on to say that he has drawn up detailed and precise instructions for the staging of *Tannhäuser*; he has had them printed; he has had them distributed to all theaters that plan to perform *Tannhäuser*. And if these staging ideas are not exactly observed, he says, then the orchestra might just as well play a march from *Norma* or from Donizetti's *Belisario* as play his music. For if his music is going to be played, then his stagings must also be used exactly. Else his music won't make sense. So much for "Macht Neues!" as a sanction to rewrite scenic elements of a composition where words, music, action, and scenery are closely united.

The attempt to achieve freshness, to escape from traditional stage routine is an honorable one. Except, I think, when it means automatic, or near-automatic recourse to the latest fashionable cliché. The attempt has been going on for a long time. "In *Tristan* we must banish everything that is merely conventional, everything realistic." It was not Wieland Wagner who said that, but Cosima. It was Cosima also — though it could well have been Wieland — who said of *Die Meistersinger*: "...the so-called liveliness and naturalness of the chorus, the stereotyped exchanges of glances and gestures, I consider bad, a debased form of realism." And what of that controversial *Dutchman* — far more controversial than Mr. Ponnelle's — that Otto Klemperer put on at the Kroll Opera in 1929? The *Allgemeine Musikzeitung* said: "The Dutchman, naturally beardless, looks like a communist agitator, Senta like a fanatical communist harrikan, and Erik like a pimp. Daland's crew resemble port vagabonds of recent times; the wretched spinning chamber is a workshop in a women's prison... What Klemperer and his team offer amounts to a total destruction of Wagner's work, a basic falsification of his creative intentions." (I think I have written that last phrase more than once myself.) This 1929 *Dutchman* drew protests from the "Hochschulring deutscher Art," the "Richard Wagner-Verband deutscher Frauen," the

"Bayreuther Band deutscher Jugend," and the "Akademische Richard Wagner-Verband." Closer to our days is the "Aktionskreis für das Werk Richard Wagners" that published a quarterly magazine, edited by Uwe Färber, the author of an angry, but sensible and closely argued pamphlet detailing the sins committed in Patrice Chéreau's staging of his Bayreuth *Ring*.

I am not going to go into vexed political questions now, but Wagner has been claimed by both Communists and the Nazis as their own. Let me just say this: that performances of Wagner's operas which do not face the political and social issues that they raise are evasive; and that all performances that change the wide-ranging myths into narrow, didactic political statements, of whatever complexion, while they may be very interesting and impressive, are likely to be artistically restricted. Also, let me express a regret that — how shall I put it? — a regret that many people, especially in this country, seem to share Hitler's misconception about Wagner, and therefore get heated about things they perceive in the operas which are not really there, things that can hardly survive an unprejudiced, open-hearted, open-minded reading and hearing of the works themselves.

Underlying all I have said is this thought: Wagner's work finds its fulfillment in the theater, in actual performances. All our work, all our study, all our discoveries and insights are brought to life there. In 1872, Wagner wrote: "After due consideration we have to recognize that it is the performers who play the essential part in the theater; the author's relationship to the essential 'art' is determined by the extent to which he has above all made use of the effects he expects the mimetic presentation to have." And two years earlier — this came in a discussion of Beethoven, Goethe, and Schiller — he wrote: "By drama I mean not the dramatic poem or text, but the drama we see taking place before our eyes, the visible counterpart of the music." Please don't think that I am advocating a return to prima-donna opera; though I think Wagner probably would go along with the proposition: "What matters most when it comes to the show — the show which is what all my work has been leading up to — is the singers." I am hoping for less emphasis on "conductor's opera." Wagner, after all, said that a conductor's task was complete only when the audience was unaware of his presence. And I am hoping for much less emphasis on *Regie-Oper* (or the com-

poser's work as fodder for a stage director to refashion as he pleases). Opera has always lived in the ever-varying tensions between words and music, acting and singing, voices and orchestra, decorative spectacle and dramatic sense. When one of these elements becomes over-dominant, a new reformer has to come along.

In a myriad different ways, Wagner does continue to fascinate us. Recent publications concerning him range from the wonderful revelations of Cosima's diaries to a careful monograph about the dogs in Wagner's life. (Don't smile: Wagner's relationship to the animal kingdom certainly does play a part in his works, and a correct — or, at least, a convincing — representation of the *Ring* menagerie is something a director does have to think about. After all, the closing speech of the *Ring* is addressed to a horse, and the long speech before that is addressed to a pair of ravens.) What it all leads to, I hope — all our study, our analyses, our thinking — is public performances of Wagner's operas that are ever more sensitive, perceptive, accurate, and inspiring. □

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Thomas Sunnegårdh
Jeffrey Wells

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Donald Runnicles

STAGE DIRECTORS

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(original production)
Andrei Serban

DESIGNERS

John Conklin
(original production designs)
John Coyne* (revised set designs)
Bob Ringwood**
(revised costume designs)

LIGHTING DESIGNER

Thomas J. Munn

FIGHT CONSULTANT

Larry Henderson

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* San Francisco Opera debut

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MEROLA AT MEADOWOOD

July 14 at 7 pm
Mozart's *Don Giovanni*
Concert performance sung in Italian

Scott Bergeson Conductor
Presented at Meadowood Napa
Valley in St. Helena
For tickets and information, please
call (707) 963-3646, ext. 316.

MEROLA AT COLLEGE OF MARIN

July 31 at 8 pm
Rossini's *The Italian Girl in Algiers*
Sung in English

William Lacey, Conductor
David Edwards, Director
Presented at the College of Marin
Theatre in Kentfield
For tickets, please call the San
Francisco Opera Box Office at
(415) 864-3330.

MEROLA AT STERN GROVE FESTIVAL

August 8 at 2 pm
Rossini's *The Italian Girl in Algiers*
Sung in English

William Lacey, Conductor
David Edwards, Director
Presented at Sigmund Stern Grove
as part of the Stern Grove Festival
Free to the public

MEROLA GRAND FINALE

August 15 at 5 pm
War Memorial Opera House

Featuring the 1999 Merola
participants
and members of the San Francisco
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Ian Robertson, Conductor

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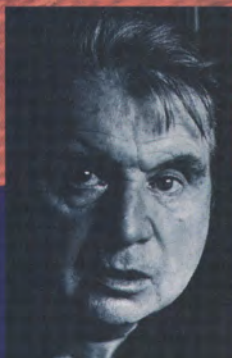
continued from page 14

the instruments recede save the first violins which, all by themselves and starting from their lowest note, the open G-string, begin a slow, quiet, confident ascent across three and a half octaves. As they reach their mountaintop, they are joined by the trombones who play, *pianissimo*, the tragic chord sequence we first heard in the great scene when Brünnhilde tells Siegmund that he must die. Then the violins, remembering the music of Brünnhilde's sleep, make their descent, and at last the awestruck Siegfried speaks. I love it for the beauty of the violins, for the poignancy of those trombone chords that suddenly darken this idyll, and for Wagner's faith in the orchestra, his faith in music to say it all.

Now, when he has parted the sleeping warrior's armor, comes the most wondrous moment in Siegfried's young life — his first sight of a woman. (This too is a great moment for the violins, which express his breath-stopping shock in a wild virtuoso flight.) As is proper in a fairy tale, Siegfried wakes Brünnhilde with a kiss. The music of her waking is another of *The Ring's* most inspired gestures — three chords of E minor, each more magically scored than the one before, and each opening a door into a different harmonic world. Mark it well: nothing is more poignant in *Götterdämmerung* than the return of this music.

There is much for Siegfried and Brünnhilde to overcome in this scene, which moves between ecstasy, tenderness, and angst. (Two of its sweetest moments are appearances of music we know well because Wagner took them over in 1870 — Wagner was then orchestrating Act 3 of *Siegfried* — for the *Siegfried Idyll*, the serenade with which he surprised his wife, Cosima, on the day after her thirty-third birthday.) But overcome they do, and *Siegfried* ends with a jubilation we have not heard since the end of *Die Walküre's* first act.

With the *Siegfried* finale, we have entered the last large chapter of *The Ring*, even though we have not yet arrived at the last of the four operas. The first of these chapters consists of the rape of the gold and the building and payment of Valhalla. The second is the union of Siegmund and Sieglinde, and Siegmund's fate. The third is the story of the young Siegfried. Now we learn of the tragic union of Siegfried and Brünnhilde. And across it all rides the over-arching theme of *Götterdämmerung*, the twilight of the gods. □



Francis Bacon

A Retrospective Exhibition

12 June - 2 August
1999

Provocative and complex, his art was influenced by Picasso and surrealism. Talented and tormented, his life (1909-1992) was the recent subject of the film "Love is the Devil." He was British painter Francis Bacon—one of the most important figurative artists of the 20th century. Explore his art in the first U.S. retrospective in more than a decade. Fifty-eight paintings from museums and private collections around the world—many on public view for the first time—are featured.

Francis Bacon was organized by The Trust for Museum Exhibitions. The exhibition is supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities. Funding from ArtPoint has made the exhibition possible in San Francisco. Photo by Jane Bowen, courtesy of Marlborough Gallery, London. Above painting: *Portrait of George Dyer Talking*.



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SAN FRANCISCO OPERA GUILD — INSIGHTS

Featured artists and personalities from San Francisco Opera's production of *Der Ring des Nibelungen* share their insights and experiences during two informal panel discussions. Complimentary to Guild members; \$10 for general admission. Insights will be held from 6 to 7 p.m. in Herbst Theatre, Veterans Building, 401 Van Ness Ave., San Francisco.

Monday, June 14 *An Insider's View from the Production Team*

Monday, June 21 *A Singer's Perspective*

PRE-PERFORMANCE LECTURES

Pre-performance lectures take place one hour prior to curtain time in the orchestra section of the War Memorial Opera House. Free of charge to patrons with tickets to the corresponding performance.

Cycle one performances *Speaker: Simon Williams*

Cycle two performances *Speaker: Thomas Grey*

Cycle three performances *Speaker: William Wellborn*

Cycle four performances *Speaker: Herbert Lindenberger*

EXHIBITIONS

San Francisco Performing Arts Library and Museum

Retrospective exhibit June 9 through July 3, recalling the history of *Ring* performances given in San Francisco and highlighting the legendary artists who performed here. PALM Gallery, 401 Van Ness Ave., 4th floor. For more information, call (415) 255-4800.

War Memorial Opera House

Historic photo exhibition in the foyer of the Opera House, curated by San Francisco Opera.

De Young Museum Costume Exhibit

Exhibit of costumes from San Francisco Opera's 1990 production of *Der Ring des Nibelungen* at the de Young Museum in Golden Gate Park ends June 27.

San Francisco Public Library

Historical photos from past productions of *Der Ring des Nibelungen* are on display through July 1 in the Steve Silver Music Center on the fourth floor of the Public Library.



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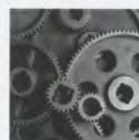
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Arthur Andersen

Celebrates Bravo Award

On May 8, Arthur Andersen was awarded the prestigious BRAVO Award for support of the San Francisco Opera, particularly its World Premiere production of André Previn and Philip Littell's *A Streetcar Named Desire*. The award is presented annually by OPERA America to outstanding corporations that support opera and opera companies.

"Arthur Andersen has shown tremendous commitment to the arts and to the cultural life of this community," said San Francisco Opera General Director Lotfi Mansouri.

In addition to the grant for *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Arthur Andersen has been involved in other aspects of the San Francisco Opera including young audience development and strategic consultation.

Founded in 1913, Arthur Andersen is a multidisciplinary professional services firm, providing information and applying knowledge to help its clients improve business performance and achieve a competitive advantage. The company offers clients insights and innovative problem-solving capabilities to improve decision-making, increase profitability and productivity, lower cost of capital and decrease business risk. The Northern California practice of Arthur Andersen has been in operation for almost 70 years and employs more than 1,200 people in San Francisco, San Jose and Sacramento.

"We are honored to receive this award and pleased to have been part of this unique part of American culture," commented Larry J. Gorrell, managing partner for the Pacific Northwest region of Arthur Andersen. "We are confident our collaboration with truly creative artists such as André Previn and Lotfi Mansouri will stand the test of time, so that this production will enjoy the long and prosperous life it so deserves."

A Streetcar Named Desire is scheduled to be performed at the New Orleans Opera in March 2000 and at the San Diego Opera in April 2000.



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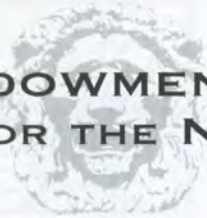
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If your company has a matching gift program, simply complete the matching gift form available through your personnel office and send it to us at:

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San Francisco Opera has a wide variety of corporate partnership opportunities which include a unique combination of services and benefits. Sponsorships are available for: Opera Performances, Opera Productions, Season Opening Night, Production Opening Night, Supertitles, Special Events and Cast Parties, Education/Outreach Programs, Young Artist Development Programs, National Tour, Telecasts, Radio Broadcasts, Recordings, Website and more!

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- * *Complimentary tickets in a priority seating area.*
- * *Intermission reception for your guests, hosted and sponsored by San Francisco Opera.*
- * *Your corporate name and logo on recognition signs displayed in the theater lobby during your sponsored performance (signage provided by your firm).*
- * *Your corporate name featured on synopsis page of the program magazine during a performance or the entire run of an opera.*
- * *Recognition in publicity and advertising.*
- * *Exclusive invitation to attend the post-performance cast party with opera artists.*

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Corporate Council members receive invitations to exclusive special events throughout the year which offer a unique and prime opportunity for entertaining, networking and gaining an insider's glance into opera production.

- * *Annual receptions and dinners followed by working rehearsals.*
- * *VIP tours for your corporate employees and special guests.*
- * *Invitations to Opera Insight programs and the Opera's annual meeting.*

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All employees of Corporate Council members are invited to participate in an exclusive Corporate Employee Discount Subscription Ticket program.

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- * *Copy of the Season Book, previewing the main season productions.*

For more information, contact our Corporate Council Hotline at (415) 565-3264.

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We are grateful to all donors who have made memorial and honorary contributions between October 1, 1998 and April 5, 1999. If you are interested in making a tributary gift to Merola, please call (415) 565-3235.

IN MEMORY OF

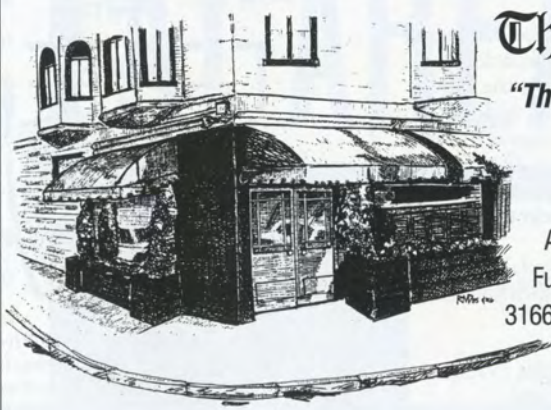
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SERVICES

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 cloakrooms (north and south ends 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.

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

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.

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 south end of the main lobby.

OPERA HOUSE TOURS

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

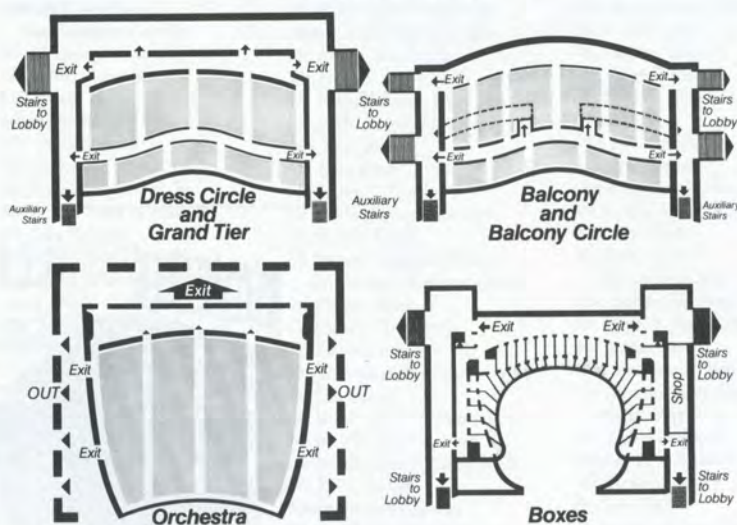
Tickets for Guild members, \$2; non-members \$5. Reservations required. Information: (510) 524-5220.

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.

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).

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



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.

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