

Tristan und Isolde
(Tristan and Isolde)

1998-1999

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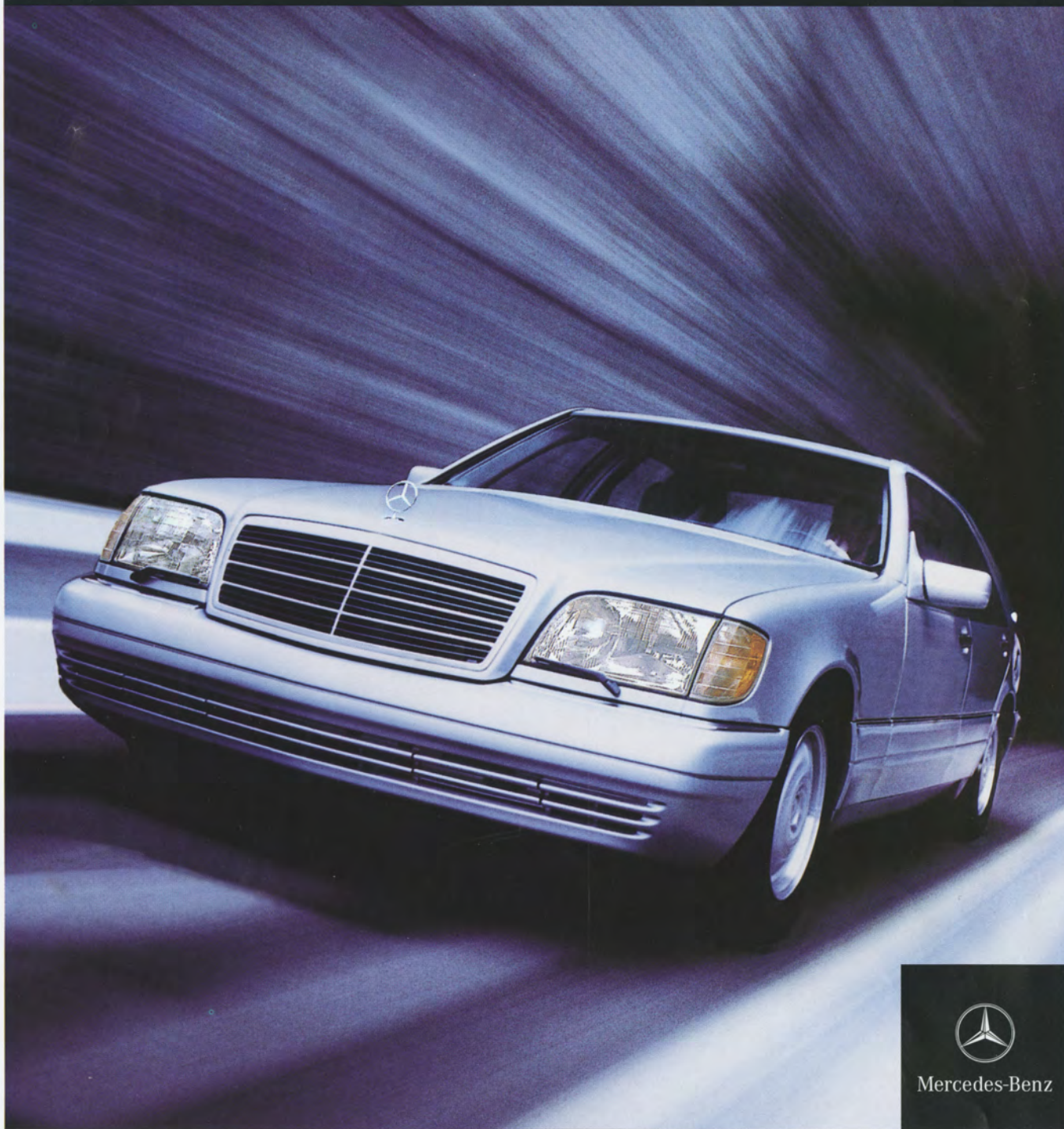
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Tristan und Isolde

76th Season, 1998-99

Vol. 76, No. 7

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Tristram and Isolde

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A MESSAGE FROM THE GENERAL DIRECTOR



McCARTHY

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

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

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

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

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

Lotfi Mansouri
General Director

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND PRESIDENT SAN FRANCISCO OPERA ASSOCIATION



SOHL

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

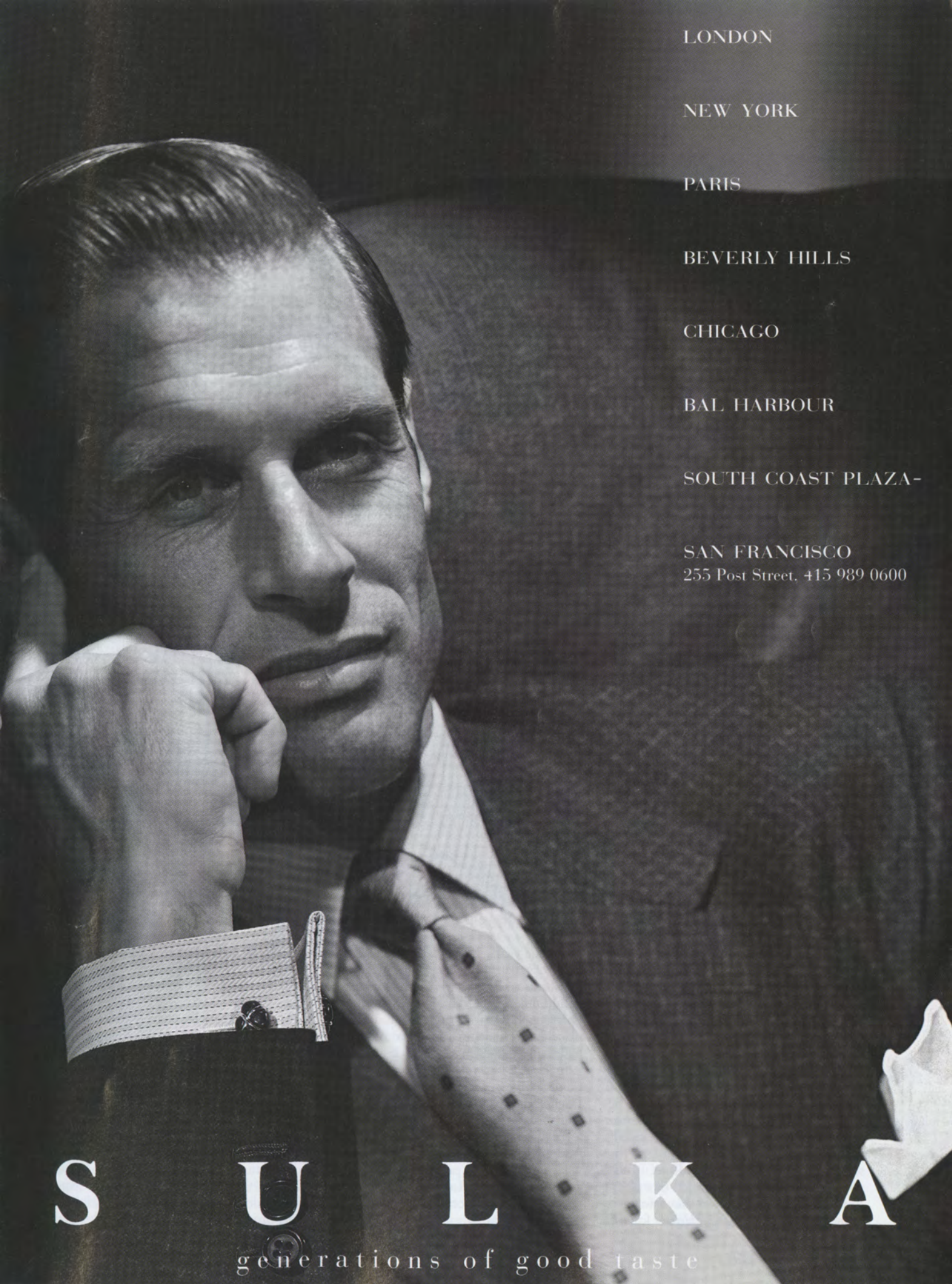
As we move closer towards the millennium, it is our mission to continue our broad programs: to present opera performances of the highest quality to the widest possible audiences, while being a leader in training, arts education, audience development and presentation of new works — new inventory for the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

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

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

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VISIONS OF *TRISTAN*: A “DRAMA OF THE SOUL”

BY ANDREW PORTER



End of Act I in San Francisco Opera's current production of *Tristan und Isolde*. The photo dates from 1991.

Wagner once said, “Having created the invisible orchestra, I now feel like inventing the invisible theater!” That was in 1878, as he reflected ruefully on what *Parsifal* might look like once his vision of the drama had to be given flesh-and-blood, painted canvas embodiment. “Oh, I hate the thought of all those costumes and greasepaint! When I think that characters like Kundry will now have to be dressed up, those dreadful artists’ balls come to mind.” But he did aim at “total theater.” He had expanded the *Ring* from a single opera, *Siegfried’s Death*, into a four-evening event because, he said, it was not enough for audiences to be told what had happened before; they needed to *see* it happen. He had built the Bayreuth Festspielhaus as a theatre in which his huge

Ring visions could be given appropriate visual imagery — but he had not been altogether pleased with the 1876 result: “Next time we’ll do it all quite differently.” For Wagner himself there was to be no next time; but when Cosima Wagner revived the *Ring* at Bayreuth, in 1896, thirteen years after her husband’s death, she had it completely redesigned.

The history of Wagner staging has been one of attempts to find stage imagery, actions and scenery, apt to the music. In 1856, when Wagner’s thoughts first turned in earnest to *Tristan und Isolde*, he hardly saw that as a “problem.” On the contrary. The *Ring*, yes, that *was* a problem: plainly the huge work was not going to be stageable by any existing theater company. So for twelve years Wagner abandoned work on the *Ring*, left Siegfried lying beneath the lime (or lin-

den) tree, listening the Woodbird, while he turned to *Tristan* (which ends with its hero lying beneath a lime tree), and then to *Die Meistersinger*. *Tristan*, Wagner wrote to Liszt in 1857, would be “on a moderate scale...a thoroughly practicable work, which will quickly bring me a good income and keep me afloat for a while.” Only three sets; a conventional five-principals cast (soprano, mezzo, tenor, baritone, bass, as in *Il Trovatore*, in *Tannhäuser* and *Lobengrin*); no big chorus work or crowd scenes; regular triple-wind orchestra. This *Tristan* would be able to make the rounds of all theatres, Wagner said, and in Italian translation also achieve international circulation.

Things didn’t quite work out that way, of course. *Tristan*, completed in 1859 and published the following year, turned out to be something rather more than a

modest, practicable little opera, and it wasn't easy to get a performance. Productions were mooted in Karlsruhe, Strasbourg, Weimar, Prague, Vienna, Paris, and elsewhere. None of them came off. Not until 1865, in Munich, under King Ludwig's patronage, did *Tristan* reach the stage at last. Initially, Wagner wanted the opera to be given in the little Residenztheater, that gem of an eighteenth-century opera house now called the Cuvilliétheater:

Music sounds wonderfully beautiful there...The tone is remarkably clear and luminous; the words are particularly easy to follow — and to this I attach infinite importance. As for the stage action, there are no masses of useless choristers to think about; it is simply a matter of the portrayal of the purely-human. The happenings are all of a delicate, intimate nature: every quiver of the face, every movement of the eyes must tell its tale.

During rehearsals it soon became evident that the Residenztheater was too small for the sound of Wagner's orchestra, and so *Tristan* was moved into the big Court Theatre, where the Munich premieres of *Tannhäuser*, *Lohengrin*, and *Der Fliegende Holländer* had been given,

and where *Die Meistersinger*, *Das Rheingold*, and *Die Walküre* later had their premieres. But

My temporary flight into the Residenztheater has not brought me into heaven. The sensuously strong sound of the orchestra, which I cannot contrive any apparatus to dampen, drives me with my dear singers out of this noisy little place back into the larger theater. But there I labor under two disadvantages: the too great distance, so far as the miming is concerned, of the actors from the spectator, and the disturbing effect of a large audience...Oh for my invisible, sunken, transfigured orchestra in the theater of the future!

Act II was designed by Heinrich Döll, Acts I and III by Angelo Quaglio (who also designed the six other Wagner operas mentioned above). Their scenery was large and colorful. When Brangäne drew back the curtain in Act I, a seascape was revealed, and the tableau of Tristan, his knights, and the sailors. (One critic of the time called this the only scenic effect of the whole evening.) When all the curtains around Isolde's "cabin" were thrown wide at the close of the act, there was a

new backcloth, showing, in accord with Wagner's stage direction, the Cornish shore and a castle on top of the cliffs.

To sing *Tristan* and *Isolde*, Wagner had engaged Ludwig Schnorr von Carolsfeld and his wife Malvina, who had been granted a long special leave from the Dresden Opera. Schnorr is tactfully described in *Opera Grove* as being "powerfully built"; Malvina was pretty hefty. By 1860, as several photographs attest, Schnorr was enormous. Yet Wagner declared that the tenor's generous poundage in no way detracted from the idealism of his performance, that one forgot everything in the light of the beauty of his singing and the intelligence of his acting. (And King Ludwig, who was hardly indifferent to male appearance, concurred.) Nowadays it's sometimes thought "incorrect" to comment on a singer's appearance — except, of course, when it can be done favorably, when someone "looks the part," has the *physique du rôle* so convincing that her or his appearance becomes a positive and communicative element of the interpretation. Earlier critics were not always so nice. When Marianna Barbieri-Nini, Verdi's first Lady Macbeth, appeared in London (as Lucrezia Borgia), Henry F. Chorley praised her singing without reserve but felt compelled to add: "There is an expressive ugliness which may be turned to a certain account on the stage...which Genius can light up and animate; but Madame Barbieri-Nini's uncomeliness was large and mean, a thing not to be escaped from." Two morals: that in theatrical performance a singer's appearance does matter, especially when it's a question of "deeds of music made visible" (*ersichtlich geworden Taten der Musik*); but that — witness Schnorr von Carolsfeld — expressive singing and intelligent acting can transfigure an unhappy physical appearance.

Tristan was the first opera that Cosima Wagner added to the Bayreuth repertory, in 1886, after her revivals of *Parsifal* in 1883 and 1884. She had hoped to present *Tannhäuser*, but since that opera involved crowd scenes, a large chorus, many costumes, she was persuaded to settle for the "less demanding" *Tristan*. As alternate Isolde, she engaged Theresa Malten, one of Wagner's first Kundrins (described by Shaw as "passably slim" and with "a certain air of *beauté de*



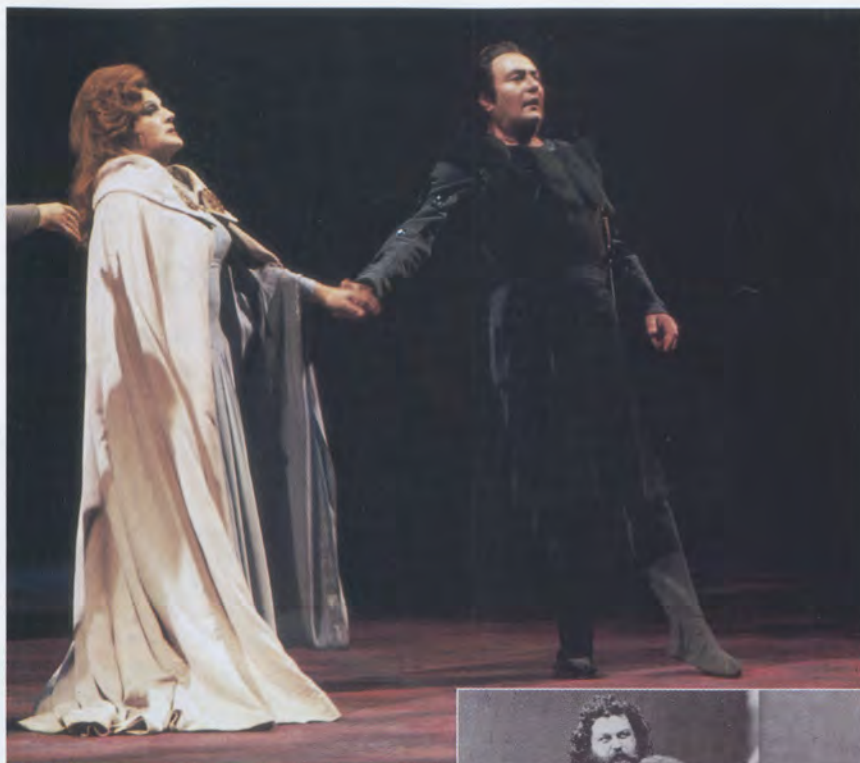
The same scene as it looked at the *Tristan und Isolde* Munich premiere in 1865.

diabole — only an air, it is true, but sufficient for a willing audience”) and Rosa Sucher, whose warm singing, intelligence, and beauty of appearance and demeanor made her the star of the festival. (Lilli Lehmann, offered the role of Brangäne, had indignantly turned it down.)

For her first “independent” presentation at Bayreuth, Cosima studied the two *Tristan* productions that Wagner himself had supervised: the Munich premiere and a Berlin presentation in 1876. She drew up a detailed production book, with stage plans and instructions for the actions, the lighting, the props, the colors. She wasn’t a realistic routiniere. Far from it. About the staging of *Tristan* she wrote:

Repetitions in the music intensify and deepen the experience; but the repetition of a gesture is a simply a repetition and consequently weakens the effect...Herein lie the tremendous difficulties in the staging of *Tristan*, in which the most intricate drama of the soul, revealed in the music, scarcely allows of a corresponding gesture without absurdity, and scarcely any facial expression can match the power of the music... I believe that realism is quite out of place, whereas a static pose, which may be regarded as the shell in which the emotion portrayed by the music lies hidden, is at least harmless, if by no means really adequate....We must banish everything that is merely conventional, everything realistic, and make room for a noble convention, for style.

Cosima’s sets were designed by the Brückner brothers, Max and Gotthold, very much along the lines of Quaglio’s for the Munich premiere. They had painted the velarium of the Festspielhaus and had worked with Wagner on the first *Ring* and *Parsifal*; and in 1896 Max Brückner redesigned the *Ring* for Cosima, who said, “Your sketches express the most beautiful naturalism; everything is organic and worthy of the great work of which it is part.” Not everyone agreed: Max Brückner had the reputation of being an able journeyman; Cosima’s son-in-law Stewart Houston Chamberlain called his work “familiar stuff, without a trace of invention or imagination.” But this Bayreuth *Tristan*



Above: Birgit Nilsson and Wolfgang Windgassen at the end of the first act in San Francisco Opera’s 1971 presentation of *Tristan und Isolde*.

Right: Ludwig and Malvina Schnorr von Carolsfeld as *Tristan and Isolde* in 1865.



was generally admired, and it became a model for productions the world over.

One person who did not admire it, however, was the Swiss theater-theorist and designer Adolphe Appia. In 1895, Appia published his influential *La Mise-en-scène du drame wagnerien*. He had this to say about Act III of *Tristan*:

Wagner tells us that the action takes place in the garden of a castle in Brittany... and carefully describes this garden as it must have appeared, so to speak, to the eyes of Kurwenal. But the complete drama is contained in the words and in the music; and if we want to reproduce that drama, that is to say, make it comprehensible to the eye, we must give it a visible shape that conforms to the music as closely as possible...

There is a huge discrepancy between Wagner’s wholly realistic stage picture and the poetical and musical shape of his drama as contained in the score. On the one hand, Wagner sees the third act, that immortal wonder, with the physical eyes of Kurwenal. On the other hand, he feels and experiences it with the soul of Tristan. What of us? Are we to leave this music-drama, the poetry and the music, to make its own effect, and present it only in the form seen by Kurwenal and by the Wagner who wrote the stage directions? That’s how it’s done on

our stages, and we suffer the painful discrepancy of orchestra and singers imparting the real drama truthfully against a background that contradicts and vulgarly denies the words and music that we are hearing.

But Cosima was scornful of Appia’s ideas. The Master himself, she said, had provided a full and sufficient guide to his intentions; maybe the book would prove useful in France! And Appia’s designs for *Tristan* did not take shape in the theater for a long time — not until Toscanini’s production of the opera at La Scala in 1923. The show was not a success. It’s hard now to decide just why, and apparently no photographs of the production survive. But it was commonly felt that Appia, though a visionary thinker, was an insufficiently practical theater man. There is certainly a disconcerting discrepancy between his published *Ring* designs, which look wonderful “on paper,” and the *Ring* sets that actually appeared onstage in Basel in 1924. The cycle was abandoned midway. At La Scala, two conventional *Tristan* productions followed Appia’s; and then in 1957 there was striking new

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scenery by Nicola Benois, in a manner rather grandly termed *pittura metafisica*. These lasted until 1964; a Wieland Wagner production followed.

Darkness and light, it hardly needs stressing, play an important part in the drama of *Tristan*; there's hardly a page from Act II onward without reference to them. And light played an important part in Appia's prescriptions. About Act III, he said:

Tristan on waking is aware only of a sense of light that disturbs him and causes him pain, and a sense of darkness that eludes him and for which he longs. And he connects Isolde with both senses: in blinding daylight he must "seek, seek and find her," and yet it is this daylight that, like the torch in Act II, keeps her from him. [And later] the burning sun and the bleeding wound are now only manifestations of joy; they should flood the castle. Isolde's voice is heard, radiant. Yet to reach her the torch must be extinguished... and Tristan falls lifeless into Isolde's arms. The lovely light of day, which had been its greatest illusion, sinks slowly into the sea and casts its last blood-red glimmer like a wreath about the united lovers.

Color and light also played an important part in the famous *Tristan* that Alfred Roller designed for Mahler, in Vienna in 1903. An orange sail dominated the first act. Act II was lit in turn by the flame-red torch, then a vast purple-blue night sky, and finally sulphur-yellow dawn rays. In Act III, the gray castle walls and the linden tree were bathed in a brilliant but flat light, creating, we're told, "an unforgettable atmosphere of desolation and solitude." Appiaesque spaces were here defined by realistic forms rendered in Secession colors. (Forty years later, when Furtwängler conducted *Tristan* in Vienna and at the same time made his debut as a stage director, he had the Roller scenery revived for him.) In Berlin the same year, 1903, Eugen Quaglio designed *Tristan* in very much the High Romantic realistic

manner that his father Angelo had employed for the 1865 premiere.

At Bayreuth, from 1908 on, Siegfried Wagner began gradually to replace the painted-canvas decor favored by his parents with more solid constructions, and to employ more imaginative lighting effects. He had been the stage manager for Cosima's first Bayreuth production of *Der Fliegende Holländer*, in 1903 (designed by Max Brückner), when his use of gauzes, steam, lights and colors was called "a miracle of beauty" and likened to Turner. The next big changes were brought about by Emil Preetorius, who came to Bayreuth in 1931 and in time redesigned all the operas there (except *Parsifal*, which was entrusted to Roller). Preetorius died only in 1973, and when I started going to opera he was still active. My first *Fliegende Holländer*, at Covent Garden in 1950, was played in the (pre-war) Preetorius scenery, and was directed by Heinz Tietjen, who had been Winifred Wagner's director at Bayreuth from 1933 to 1944. My first *Tristan*, on the other hand, was in "standard" scenery close to Quaglio's. Tristan's couch had the traditional draping to conceal the prompter lying beneath it.

Like almost everyone else, Preetorius was influenced by Appia's ideas, but he thought them insufficient for a dramatic enactment. He, too, sought to strip away "everything inessential," but he wrote: "On no account may one simplify or stylize at will, or be diverted into mere suggestiveness, or get involved in the abstract. One must always remain fixed on the firm ground of natural truth and concrete image." The difficulty, he said, was "to combine two demands that are a contradiction in terms: symbol and illusion, inner vision and outward nature — to make these things intermingle, to weld them together in one comprehensive scenic whole." He designed *Tristan* not only for Bayreuth but also for Paris, Berlin, Vienna, Florence, Rome, Munich, and Amsterdam. His scenery left its mark on most of what followed.

Tietjen and Preetorius, Winifred's director and designer during the Nazi years, were not Nazis (there's a puzzle

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¹ When Toscanini conducted *Tristan* at the Metropolitan Opera in 1909, the previous stock scenery was replaced by designs by Mario Fortuny, best remembered today for those pleated dresses that can be packed into a small space, but earlier a collaborator with Appia in presentations from Schumann's *Manfred* and *Carmen* (Paris, 1903). They used a special kind of lighting that Fortuny had devised.



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there not yet fully explained), but they were associated with the old regime, and they were banished from post-war Bayreuth. The name Preetorius, Frederic Spotts says in his excellent book about Bayreuth, hardly ever passed Wieland Wagner's lips; and yet Wieland's work was based on much the same basic premises. He used to cite his grandfather's remark in the *Communication to My Friends*, that "everything unnecessary should be omitted"; but his ideas and his grandfather's about what was necessary, what unnecessary, were evidently different. Wieland sometimes mentioned Appia as an inspiration. He went much further than Appia, and he had at his command technical means of lighting, and of creating "scenery" with light, that Appia could only dream of. Between 1952 and 1956, Wieland directed and designed *Tristan* in ten different cities — more than even Preetorius had done. Not all were independent shows; some were recreations. But on the other hand Wieland never repeated himself exactly: from year to year at Bayreuth one would see changes, refinements: perhaps in details of design, perhaps in changes of emphasis in the solo actions, responsive to the special qualities of particular singers. At Bayreuth, Wieland designed and directed *Tristan* twice, in 1952 and in 1962, both times memorably. The 1952 sets were bare, spare, empty, against huge projected skies. In 1962, each act was dominated by a monolith. That of Act I suggested the stern-post of the ship, looming up as it had in almost every *Tristan* set since Quaglio's; that of

Act III derived from the so-called Tristan Stone at Castle Dore, in Cornwall, whose faint Latin inscription has been deciphered as *Drustanus hic jacet*, or "Here lies Tristan."

Wieland's manner was widely copied, in productions that were bare, dark, and monochrome — but were not fired by his theatrical and emotional force, his genius. And so a reaction set in, against Wielandian economy and toward a richer, more decorative spectacle. At the Met in 1971, Günther Schneider-Siemssen at the close of the love duet sent the lovers soaring skyward amid a firework display of glittering galaxies. At Bayreuth in 1981, Jean-Pierre Ponnelle designed a glamorous, luxury *Tristan*: in the second act, fairy lights twinkled in the branches of a huge, glittering, stage-spanning tree beneath which Tristan and Isolde dabbled their fingers in a pool of real water; in Act III, Tristan died on a rocky islet set in a tinsel sea. In 1987, Los Angeles offered a very beautiful "picture-book" *Tristan*, designed by David Hockney with rich forms, clear bright colors, and glowing light: medieval high romance as a starting point (it was also Wagner's) for passionate psychological adventure.

In fact, Cosima Wagner, Appia, Preetorius, and Wieland Wagner all began from rather similar premises. It was the execution of them — their differing estimates of what was necessary, what not — that led to such differing results. But none of them "recomposed" Wagner's action, and they essentially respected Wagner's stage plans, his disposition in space of the drama. It has been left to

today's directors and designers to devise new actions, and new localities in which to perform them. At the English National Opera today, Tristan and Isolde do not meet in Act II but sing the love duet wandering about as two separate, self-rapt somnambulists. Nor do they meet in Act III: Isolde, self-absorbed, ignores the dying, then dead, Tristan, sings the Liebestod, and walks out. To Seattle's \$2-million *Tristan* show earlier this year Francesca Zambello added *inessentials*: a chorus line of slow-shimmying sailors, a mopping-the-decks dance routine, a frieze of muscle-boy stokers in the engine-room of her huge liner, a *Titanic* plying the Irish Channel.

When the Flagstad-Furtwängler recording of *Tristan* appeared, in 1952, Desmond Shawe-Taylor hailed a performance "freed from distracting theatrical limitations and playing itself out on the ideal stage beneath the skull, overwhelming the attentive listener anew with its tragic intensity, its musical logic, its pathos, and its sheer sensuous beauty." Each of us has, I suppose, a "vision of Tristan." But it's probably not a single vision.

Rather, it's a composite, ever shifting: a "visual enactment" of the music created in response to the varied imagery that particular singers, directors, and designers have found. Giving physical form to Wagner's "immortal wonder" is a challenge that remains.

Andrew Porter, music critic of The New Yorker for twenty years, is now writing for the Times Literary Supplement. His Wagner translations include The Nibelung's Ring, Tristan, and Parsifal.

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THE NEW GENERATION

TRACKING DOWN TRISTAN

WAS THERE A REAL PERSON ONCE, WHERE THE LEGEND BEGAN?

BY CHRISTOPHER HUNT



Above: View of a Cornwall plain near Land's End with what remains of an earthwork and several monuments.

Right: The so-called "Tristan Stone," located near Fowey in Cornwall.

Early in this century, a couple walking on the Cornish road from Fowey northwest towards the iron-age earthwork known as Castle Dore, noticed a large, roughly squared monolith lying among the roadside grass. There was nothing surprising about that for the local villagers: it had always been there. But for the strangers, fascinated by all contact with antiquity, the monolith was more than just another big chunk of stone, for they saw — as others had before them without thinking it worth their notice — that there were markings like crude lettering along one side of its seven-foot length. Before long their discovery was overtaken by others including historians and archeologists, although that word had not yet acquired its present precise meaning. These "antiquarians" saw that there was indeed a just-decipherable inscription on the stone: in debased Roman characters were the words DRUSTAUS [or DRUSTANUS] HIC IACIT FILIUS CUNOMORI. "Drustanus lies here, son of Cunomorus." The monolith was a fallen grave-marker: a memorial from Celtic Britain. The style of lettering suggested a date in the sixth century, in that mysterious era after the



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Roman legions left Britain to fend for itself in 410 as Barbarian invasions from beyond Europe's eastern boundaries tore the great Roman empire to shreds. In the Celtic south-west of Britain in that early and almost unlettered age such a memorial could only have been made for a chieftain or king, or the son of one.

It was clear to scholars that behind the latinized formulae were some un-Roman names, names which they soon saw were known in quite different sources: Cunomorus was almost certainly a Roman form of the Celtic Cynvawr; there had been a King Cynvawr in Cornwall in the sixth century, one of four kings of the former Roman administrative division of Dumnonia (from which the modern shire name Devon derives). The post-Roman kingdom of Dumnonia covered the whole of the south-western tip of Britain from Devon to Land's End and the Scilly Isles. The four kings are mentioned in the only roughly-contemporary written account of the time, the

De Excidio Britanniae ("The Destruction of Britain") by the fiery Celtic monk Gildas. They duly appear again in the later medieval royal genealogies which are clearly based on far earlier sources now lost. In one particularly fascinating instance the name is found again, in the *Life of St. Pol de Léon* written in Brittany around 880 by a monk named Wrmonoc (or Urmonek). He writes of a powerful Breton king with the second name of Quonomorius (*quem alio nomine Quonomorium vocant*). This king had usurped, according to Wrmonoc, the authority of the king of Dumnonia; and had then been won over to better ways by the entreaties of Saint Samson of Dol. Now St. Samson is a historical figure known from other sources as the founder of a monastery near Castle Dore at Golant in Cornwall, where the local church is dedicated to him. The name of this king, "also known as Cunomorus," was Mark.

And it is just possible, following a trail of obscure and oblique references, to think that Cunomorus, alias King Mark, is the distant historical reality of the king to whom Isolde is betrothed in Wagner's opera. So if Cunomorus on a stone in Cornwall might be King Mark, who is Drustanus? Take away the Latin "-us" ending and it needs no philological genius to see that the name-form we use for this Celtic prince of so long ago is Tristan.

Of course one cannot be sure that this is *the* Tristan. Almost no precise identification of individual figures in the fifth or sixth centuries is ever possible. There are practically no written records and none that can be called historically accurate. Making sense of the fragmentary remains of that fascinating age is a bit like reconstructing a vanished mosaic-pavement from which only a bucketful of loose tesserae have survived; the only help you're given is a picture from before the mosaic's destruction but it's a picture drawn by a child and you've only got part of it. The evidence (the bucket of tesserae, so to speak) includes simple, crudely-carved inscriptions like the DRUSTANUS memorial stele; scratches on tiles and potsherds; piecemeal evidence from excavations and unburied artifacts; indirect references in a handful

Continued on page 22

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TRACKING DOWN TRISTAN

continued from page 20



Title engraving for the 1823 Breslau edition of the works by Gottfried von Strassburg.

of writers on the Continent who were repeating hearsay news from the former Roman provinces; occasional asides in later *Lives of the Saints*, especially those which deal with the seventh and eighth century flow of monks like St. Samson who brought their Celtic form of Christianity to the continental invaders and built churches across all of Western Europe which still bear their names; and finally, most entertaining and elusive of all, the magical annals of Wales and Ireland. But to this sparsely scattered mass of original material from the four centuries after the Roman exodus, one adds a second source (the child's picture of the mosaic, so to speak), the literary narratives from centuries later, from the flowering of the rebirth of the 12th century. Some of these much later secondary sources incorporate folk-memories of fifty generations earlier deep in the obscure Celtic past. One of those narratives, the *Tristan* of Gottfried von Strassburg, was Wagner's main source for his opera. It is the earliest surviving complete account of the Tristan-Isolde story. It is a wonderfully told tale and a poetic masterpiece, but it dates from around 1200, more than six centuries after the events it describes.

Gottfried knew of course that he was by no means the first to tell the story: "I am well aware that there have been many who have told the tale of Tristan; yet there have not been many who have read his tale aright."

Scholars have only in this century begun to piece all this disparate material together to form anything like a full picture of the society of the dark-age



Above: Kirsten Flagstad as Isolde and Lauritz Melchior as Tristan at the San Francisco Opera in 1936 in a formal photo taken by our official photographer.

Below: The photo taken from the wings shows the pair in the same roles in 1937, at which time they were joined by the Brangäne of Kathryn Meisle.



Britain where any real Tristan lived, loved and died. But the growth of Celtic studies and the extraordinary advances in both medieval archeology and language studies of the past thirty years have transformed our knowledge. Together they have, as it were, found some thousands more lost pieces of the dark-age mosaic. Indeed the term "Dark Ages" is no longer used in scholarly circles. The picture that has emerged is still impenetrable enough. Like Leonardo's "Last Supper," most of the original content has long since vanished, and it will always need informed imagination to pick out the original from the impact of its history.

Continued on page 42

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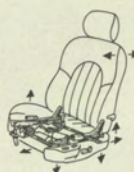




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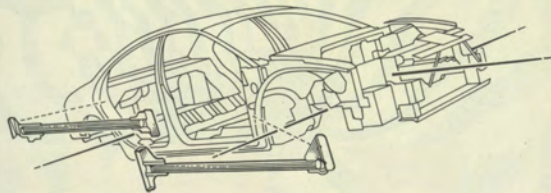
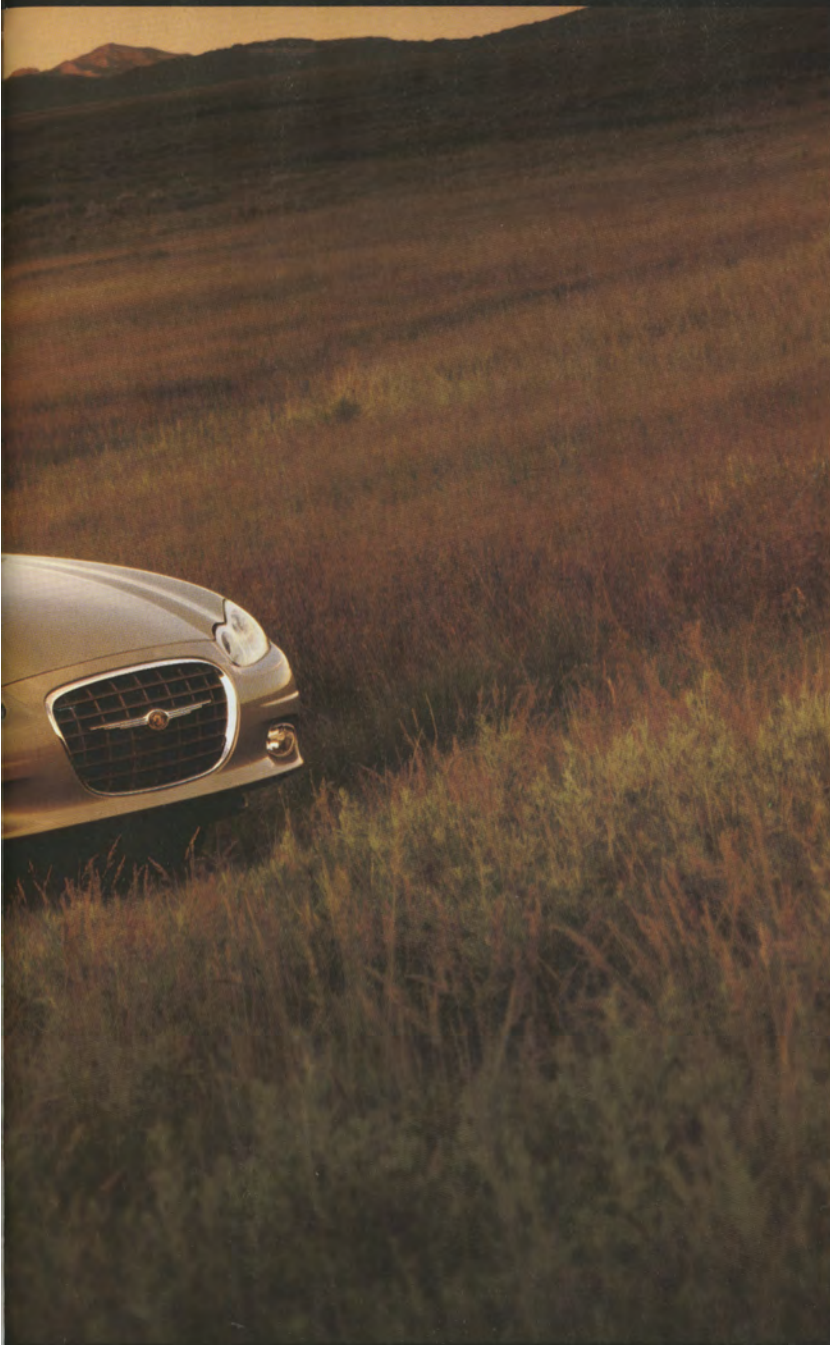


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Opera in three acts by RICHARD WAGNER

Text by the composer

Tristan und Isolde

(in German)

Conductor

Donald Runnicles

Stage Director

Michael Hampe

Designer

Mauro Pagano

Lighting Designer

Thomas J. Munn

Chorus Director

Ian Robertson

Musical Preparation

Marilyn Barnett

Peter Grunberg

Adelle Eslinger

Susan Webb

William Lacey

Prompter

Jonathan Khuner

Supertitles

Christopher Bergen

Assistant Stage Directors

Laurie Henley

Roy Rallo

Stage Manager

Theresa Ganley

CAST

(in order of appearance)

A sailor's voice Norman Shankle †

Isolde Elizabeth Connell

Brangäne Violeta Urmansky**

Kurwenal Tom Fox

Tristan Wolfgang Schmidt

Melot John Robert Autry

King Marke Victor von Halem

A shepherd Richard Walker

A steersman Jere Torkelsen

Courtiers, handmaidens, guards, voices of sailors

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Munich, June 10, 1865

First San Francisco Opera
performance: September 16, 1927

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10 AT 7:00
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 14 AT 7:00
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 18 AT 1:00
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 21 AT 7:00
MONDAY, OCTOBER 26 AT 7:00
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 30 AT 7:00
FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 6 AT 7:00

TIME AND PLACE: Medieval Cornwall and Brittany

ACT I A ship en route to Cornwall

INTERMISSION

ACT II The garden outside King Marke's castle in Cornwall

INTERMISSION

ACT III Outside of Tristan's castle in Brittany

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

SYNOPSIS – TRISTAN UND ISOLDE

The Cornish knight, Tristan, has slain Morold, an Irish warrior; but Tristan was wounded in the combat and cared for by the Irish princess, Isolde, skilled in the magic arts of healing. When she recognized him as the man who killed Morold, her cousin and fiancé, she tried to take revenge on Tristan with his own sword. However, she found herself unable to strike, overcome with love for her victim. Love also burned in Tristan's heart but, once cured, he returned to Cornwall and the court of his uncle, King Marke. When Tristan came again to Ireland it was not to proclaim his love for Isolde but to bring her to Cornwall to marry King Marke. At this point in the story, as Tristan's ship bearing Isolde nears the Cornish coast, the opera begins.

ACT I

The unhappy Isolde is angered by a sailor's song about an Irish maid. Soon we see the reason for her discontent: Tristan, stubbornly standing at the helm with his attendant Kurwenal. Isolde, her hidden love almost turned to hate, sends her servant Brangäne to ask Tristan to come to her. Tristan politely refuses — he must help bring the boat to shore — and Kurwenal, coming to his master's assistance, sings a jeering song about Morold.

Brangäne takes these replies to Isolde who angrily recalls the once feeble knight she cured and spared from rightful vengeance. Brangäne attempts to calm her and reconcile her to her glorious future as King Marke's queen. Isolde can only see an unbearable life, constantly in the presence of a man — the man she loves — who coldly denies her love. When Brangäne points to the love potion Isolde's mother has sent to ensure the happiness of the marriage, Isolde turns instead to a potion that brings death.

Land is sighted but Isolde refuses to leave until Tristan himself comes to ask for forgiveness "for an unnamed wrong." Kurwenal takes the message and Isolde, after a farewell embrace, tells Brangäne to prepare a "cup of peace," using the vial of poison. She and Tristan will drink it together and she will find peace from her tormenting desires.

Tristan arrives, guiltily hiding his love, and claims that honor and duty have kept him from her. Isolde reminds him of the past and how she spared him when honor demanded his death. Tristan offers her his sword to complete the act but she refuses, asking him instead to drink a cup of reconciliation with her.

Brangäne prepares the drink, and Tristan, sensing what is in it, eagerly swallows "oblivion's kindly cup." Isolde follows suit and the two suddenly discover not death but love they can no longer resist. Brangäne has used the love potion instead and now Tristan's honor and Isolde's shame are but troubled dreams as the lovers embrace. Brangäne frantically tries to separate them as the sailors hail King Marke who has come to meet his intended bride.

ACT II

On a summer night in the torch-lit garden before Isolde's chamber in King Marke's castle, Brangäne and Isolde listen as the horns of the King's hunting party recede in the distance. Isolde is waiting impatiently for Tristan to come to see her while the King is away. Brangäne warns her that she suspects this hunting party is a trick devised by Melot, one of Marke's

courtiers, to entrap them. But Isolde insists that the torch be extinguished, the prearranged signal to Tristan. When Brangäne again tries to dissuade her, Isolde throws the torch to the ground herself.

Soon Tristan appears in the darkness and the lovers embrace while Brangäne keeps a lookout. Throughout this love night's "love duet" they are so lost in each other that they do not hear Brangäne warning them of the approaching dawn. Only her scream of terror and Kurwenal's hurried warning can penetrate their rapture, but it is too late. The King and his men suddenly appear, and Marke bitterly reproaches Tristan, the man he trusted above all others, for this betrayal. Tristan has no reply. He turns to Isolde and asks her to accompany him to the "land of night" where he must go. Melot draws his sword at this insult to his King; Tristan leaps to the challenge only to deliberately let himself be run through. After he sinks to the ground, Kurwenal takes him away.

ACT III

At Tristan's castle in Brittany, the fatally wounded Tristan lies on a bank of earth overlooking the sea. Kurwenal is with him and bids a shepherd keep watch on the sea for ships and to pipe a merry tune should he see any. Tristan finally awakens and Kurwenal explains how he brought him home. Feverishly, Tristan calls for Isolde. Kurwenal explains that he has sent for her to work her magic cures. Tristan soon imagines that he can actually see her ship. Kurwenal doubts this but suddenly, as the shepherd's tune becomes merry, he runs to the watchtower where he sees and describes the approaching sails before going to the shore to welcome Isolde.

Tristan struggles to his feet, tearing at his bandages — knowing that "she who can close his wounds forever" is coming. Frantic, he stumbles and falls into Isolde's arms and dies. She collapses beside him while Kurwenal watches in horror.

Suddenly the sound of weapons is heard. The shepherd tells Kurwenal that another ship has appeared. It brings Melot and King Marke. Kurwenal fiercely attacks, killing Melot, but is himself mortally wounded. He sinks to the earth near Tristan as Marke and Brangäne try to tell him that it is all a mistake, that they come in peace. Marke weeps over the body of Tristan while Brangäne revives Isolde and explains that she has told the King about the potion and he has come to forgive her and unite her with her lover. But Isolde can only see Tristan, and, in her song of farewell, she sees him transfigured, the two lovers united at last in the universe of death.

The performance of October 10th is designated in honor of
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ARTIST PROFILES



ELIZABETH CONNELL made her 1987 San Francisco Opera debut as Leonore in *Fidelio* and has since returned to the Company to sing her first Odabella in *Attila* (1991), Ortrud in *Lohengrin* (1996), and the title role of *Elektra* (1997). A leading interpreter of the dramatic soprano roles of Beethoven, Strauss and Wagner, she made her debut in 1972 at the Wexford Festival as Varvara in *Katya Kabanova*. She then sang

with the Australian and English National Operas before making her Covent Garden debut with *I Lombardi*. In 1980 she made her Bayreuth debut as Ortrud and has since taken part in a television recording of this production. Her performances have won her world-wide acclaim with a nomination for the Australian Drama Critics' Award for *Fidelio* and a similar success as Senta in *Der Fliegende Holländer* in Japan with Seiji Ozawa. Engagements from recent seasons have included a new production of *Tristan und Isolde* at the English National Opera; *Nabucco* in Melbourne, Sydney, Verona, and São Paulo; *Die Walküre* (Brünnhilde) in Santiago, Chile; and *Peter Grimes* (Ellen Orford) with Opera Australia. Among her most recent appearances are *Fidelio* at the Berlin State Opera, *Fidelio*, *Der Fliegende Holländer*, *Ariadne auf Naxos* and *Lohengrin* at the Vienna State Opera, *Lohengrin* at the Paris Opera/Bastille, Leonora in Verdi's *Oberto* for the Royal Opera at Covent Garden, Kostelnička in *Jenůfka* for Opera Australia, and Lady Macbeth in *Macbeth* in Hamburg. Recent concert performances have included Beethoven's Ninth Symphony led by Claudio Abbado in London, the *Missa Solemnis* under Carlo Maria Giulini in Florence, Mahler's Eighth Symphony (Maazel, Sinopoli, Boulez) and the Verdi Requiem at both the Vienna Musikverein and in London's St. Paul's Cathedral, and *Tristan und Isolde* under Eve Queler at Carnegie Hall. She has also given recitals in London, Milan, Geneva, Johannesburg and Sydney. Her recordings include *Guillaume Tell*, *Poliuto*, *Lohengrin*, *I Due Foscari*, Schreker's *Die Gezeichneten*, Verdi's Requiem, Mahler's Eighth Symphony, Mendelssohn's Second Symphony, Schoenberg's *Gurrelieder* and a disc of Schubert lieder.



Mezzo-soprano **VIOLETA URMANA** has won acclaim for her debuts in theaters which have included the Vienna State Opera, Milan's La Scala, the Paris Opera/Bastille, and the Deutsche Oper Berlin. Equally at home in both the Italian and German repertoire, her roles include Eboli in *Don Carlo*, Azucena in *Il Trovatore*, Fricka in *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre*, as well as the part that serves as the vehicle of

her U.S. opera debut here, Brangäne in *Tristan und Isolde*. The native of Lithuania first studied piano before beginning vocal training in Munich with Josef Loibl, who remains her vocal adviser. A member of Bavarian State Opera's studio for three years and prize winner of several vocal competitions, the young artist came to international attention during the 1993-94 season after performing her first Laura in *La Gioconda* and her first Eboli. In 1994, she made her debut at the Bayreuth Festival in the *Ring* cycle and bowed at La Scala as Fricka in *Die Walküre*. Additional past highlights include *Bluebeard's Castle* (Judith) in Turin, *Götterdämmerung* (Waltraute) in Strasbourg, a highly praised *Il Trovatore* for her Deutsche Oper Berlin debut, *Don Carlo* in Sofia, *Das Rheingold* in Milan, and *La Forza del Destino* (Preziosilla) at the Orange Festival.

Among Urmána's most recent engagements are her first Santuzza in *Cavalleria Rusticana* in Geneva; Gluck's *Armide* (La Haine) at La Scala; her first Kundry in *Parsifal* in Amsterdam; *Nabucco* (Fenena) in Munich and Paris; several roles at the Vienna State Opera including Adriano in a new staging of Wagner's *Rienzi*; *Parsifal* in Berlin; *Don Carlo* with London's Royal Opera at the Edinburgh Festival; and her debut at the Aix-en-Provence Festival in *Bluebeard's Castle*. In concert, the mezzo has performed the Verdi Requiem in Berlin (telecast worldwide), Paris and Amsterdam; Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* in Bologna; and Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* in Munich. She can be heard as Cuniza in a recording of Verdi's *Oberto* led by Neville Marriner.



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 sang one of them, the title part of *Tannhäuser*, for his 1994 San Francisco Opera debut. 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 Max in *Der Freischütz*, Hüon in *Oberon*, the title role of *Otello*, Florestan in *Fidelio*, Erik in *Der Fliegende Holländer*, the title role of *Lohengrin*, the Emperor in *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, Tristan in *Tristan und Isolde*, as well as Siegmund and Siegfried in the *Ring* cycle. Among the artist's most recent assignments are *Siegfried* at La Scala and at the Met; *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 this summer's Bayreuth Festival. Schmidt's future engagements include *Götterdämmerung* at La Scala and a new staging of the *Ring* cycle at Bayreuth in the year 2000.



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 Henze's *Das Verrätene Meer* and Orest in *Elektra* (1991), Jokanaan in *Salome* and Jaroslav Prus in *The Makropulos Case* (1993), in addition to Telramund in *Lohengrin* (1996) and Dr. Schön/Jack the Ripper in *Lulu* (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



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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*, Kurwenal in *Tristan und Isolde*, the title roles of *Eugene Onegin* and *Der Fliegende Holländer*, in addition to 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 portray Alberich in San Francisco Opera's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* Festival next summer.



Internationally acclaimed bass **VICTOR VON HALEM** made his 1994 San Francisco Opera debut as the Landgraf in *Tannhäuser* and returned the following season to sing Hunding in *Die Walküre* and the Commendatore in *Don Giovanni*. Born in Berlin and raised in Italy and Portugal, he began his career in 1966 when Herbert von Karajan engaged him for the Deutsche Oper in Berlin, chose him for many

recordings, and invited him to perform at the Salzburg Festival numerous times. He has since appeared in concert and opera throughout the world with other prominent conductors (Sinopoli, Mehta, Abbado, Ozawa, Maazel, Chung), and at important musical festivals (Salzburg, Edinburgh, Spoleto, Orange, Tanglewood, Athens, Barcelona). The versatile artist's repertoire includes more than 90 roles (from Sarastro to Philip II to Rocco to Gurnemanz, Hagen and many others), some of which are featured on a long list of recordings, the most recent of which are La Roche in *Capriccio* and Brander in *La Damnation de Faust*. He received a Grammy Award for his recording of *Parsifal* led by Herbert von Karajan and sings on the popular *Humor im Lied* CD. During the past several seasons, his performances of the role of Hans Sachs in *Die Meistersinger* and the title character of *Der Fliegende Holländer* have been praised at the Spoleto Festival, Dallas Opera and Michigan Opera Theatre, among others. Recent highlights include *Capriccio* at the Glyndebourne Festival; a performance and recording of *Fidelio* (Rocco) in Bonn; a successful debut at the Paris Opera/Bastille as Arkel in *Pelléas et Mélisande*; Jokanaan in *Salome* with Opera Colorado; and Gurnemanz in *Parsifal* with the Cologne Philharmonic. Among his future plans are Sarastro in *Die Zauberflöte* at Catania's Teatro Bellini, *Turandot* and *Zauberflöte* at Berlin's Deutsche Oper, and a return to Dallas Opera as Hunding in *Die Walküre*.

JOHN ROBERT AUTRY made his 1996 Company debut as Schaunard in *La Bohème*, returning for SFO's 1996-97 season to sing roles in *Hamlet*, *Lobengrin*, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, *Carmen*, *Harvey Milk* and *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*. After receiving critical acclaim for his portrayal of Sharpless in our 1997 production of *Madama Butterfly*, the baritone returned last season to



perform in *Tosca*, *Rigoletto*, and *Guillaume Tell* (Leuthold). The 1997-98 Adler Fellow portrayed Morales in *Carmen* during the *Femmes Fatales* Festival. Additional credits include the role of the Father in the Opera Guild holiday presentation of *Hansel and Gretel*, and Emperor Valentiniano in the West Coast premiere ('97 Showcase) of Handel's *Ezio*. In 1995, he made his New York City Opera debut as Figaro in that company's national touring production of *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*. Other engagements include Dr. Malatesta in *Don Pasquale* with Birmingham Opera Theater, Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly* with Shreveport Opera, Ping in *Turandot* with Palm Beach Opera, and debuts with Opera Pacific (Marcello in *La Bohème*) and Michigan Opera Theatre (Lescaut in *Manon*). A 1994 National Winner in the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, the native of Atlanta, Georgia, has also won awards at vocal competitions in Palm Beach, Birmingham and Mobile. Most recently, he was the recipient of career grants from the Shoshana Foundation, Opera Index and the Richard Tucker Foundation.



NORMAN SHANKLE, who made his San Francisco Opera debut during the *Femmes Fatales* Festival as Valletto in *L'Incoronazione di Poppea*, was recently honored as first prize winner of the prestigious 1998 MacAllister Awards. The tenor continues his association with S.F. Opera Center as a 1998-99 Adler Fellow after completing the Merola Opera Program in 1996 and 1997. He was seen earlier this year as Pylade in Opera Center's 1998 Showcase production of *Iphigénie en Tauride*. Merola credits include performances in the '96 productions of *The Elixir of Love* and *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, in addition to the 1997 stagings of *La Cenerentola* and *Carmen*. He is a veteran of two national tours with Western Opera Theater — the '96 *Barbiere* (Count Almaviva) and '97's *Carmen* (Remendado). A native of Winchester, Virginia, Shankle received his undergraduate degree in voice from Shenandoah University. Previous engagements include the lead role of The Dwarf in the world premiere of Russell Woollens's *The Birthday of the Infanta*, presented by Opera Americana at the Kennedy Center; *Luisa Miller* with Washington Opera; *Roméo et Juliette* (Benvolio) and *Samson et Dalila* with Washington Concert Opera; as well as *Messiah* with the Paul Hill Chorale. He has also performed as soloist with the Washington Oratorio Society and Choral Arts Society of Washington, among others.



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 20 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 is a CD of *Ring* excerpts with the Dresden Staatskapelle. During the Company's 1997-98 season, he led performances of *Death in Venice*, *Le Nozze di Figaro* and *Pelléas et Mélisande*, as well as the 75th Season Gala Celebration which was telecast on PBS. 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, 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, 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 next summer for three cycles of the Company's *Ring* Festival.



Noted German director, administrator and actor **MICHAEL HAMPE** made his San Francisco Opera debut in 1987 with *Fidelio* (revived here in 1992 and directed by him), and staged the Company premiere of *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria* in 1990. Born in Heidelberg, he studied cello at Syracuse University in the U.S., acting at the Falckenberg Academy in Munich, as well as philosophy, literature

and musicology at the universities of Munich and Vienna, where he received a doctorate in philosophy. He has worked as an actor and director in a large number of theaters, and from 1965 to 1970 was deputy-director of Zurich's Schauspielhaus. Additional positions have included general director of the National Theater of Mannheim (1972-75), general director of the Cologne Opera (1975-95), and a member of the directorate at the Salzburg Festival (1985-89). He is currently general director of the Dresden Music Festival. Hampe has directed nearly 200 productions for theater, television and opera houses around the world. His operatic credits include stagings at Milan's La Scala, London's Royal Opera, Paris Opera, the Maggio Musicale in Florence, the festivals of Salzburg and Edinburgh, as well as for the companies of Munich, Stockholm, Venice, Cologne, Geneva, Zurich, Los Angeles, Washington, D.C., Sydney and Tokyo. He has also directed dramatic productions for German and Swiss television, and for such prestigious theaters as the Bavarian State Theater in Munich, the Zurich Schauspielhaus, as well as for the festivals of Schwetzingen and Lucerne. As an actor, he has earned praise for leading roles in German television features. Honors he has received include the First Class Order of Merit of the Federal

Republic of Germany; Commendatore della Repubblica Italiana; Goldenes Ehrenzeichen, Land Salzburg; and a London West End (Olivier) Award. Recent directorial highlights include *La Forza del Destino* at the Savonlinna Festival, Paisiello's *Il Re Teodoro in Venezia* at the Dresden Music Festival, *Fidelio* for Opera Australia, and Handel's *Serse* for the Cologne Opera, and the world premiere of Siegfried Malthus's *Farinelli* at the Karlsruhe Handel Festival.



The late **MAURO PAGANO** created the sets and costumes for *Tristan und Isolde*, a production that was first presented by the Company in 1991. The internationally renowned designer's first assignment for San Francisco Opera was creating the 1986 production of *The Medium*. In 1990, his sets for *Capriccio* and the sets and costumes for *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria* were seen on the War Memorial stage. Elsewhere, Pagano designed the sets for the Teatro alla Scala's 1985 season-opening production of *Aida*, along with the sets for *Cendrillon* and *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* in Brussels; the set design for the world premiere of Hans Werner Henze's version of *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse* at the Salzburg Festival and, at the Paris Opera, costumes for Gluck's *Iphigénie en Tauride*. He has also created the sets for *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* at the Edinburgh Festival and at La Scala, and the designs for productions of *Un Ballo in Maschera*, *L'Incoronazione di Poppea* and *La Gazza Ladra* in Cologne. Additional projects included new stagings of *La Sonnambula* and *Alceste* at La Scala, *Don Giovanni* in Salzburg and *Der Fliegende Holländer* at the Bayreuth Festival.



THOMAS J. MUNN continues to serve as lighting director for San Francisco Opera, a position he has held since 1976. He most recently created the lighting for *L'Incoronazione di Poppea* and *Carmen* during our *Femmes Fatales* Festival, and this season adds new designs to productions of *A Streetcar Named Desire* (projection and lighting design), *Don Carlo*, *Peter Grimes* and *Betrothal in a Monastery*, as well as for revivals of *Turandot* and *Tristan und Isolde*. During his tenure with the Company, he has created the lighting and special effects for over 180 productions. Scenic design credits include productions of *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, *Roberto Devereux*, *Pelléas et Mélisande* (1979), *Billy Budd*, *Nabucco*, *Don Giovanni* and *Christophe Colomb*. Lighting design credits for our 1997-98 season included the 75th Anniversary Gala (stage and television), *Tosca*, *Pelléas et Mélisande* and *Eugene Onegin*. His television credits for the Company include *The Dangerous Liaisons*, *Turandot*, the Emmy-award-winning *La Gioconda*, *Aida*, *Samson et Dalila*, *La Bohème*, *Mefistofele*, *Orlando Furioso*, *L'Africaine* and *Capriccio*. Munn has also designed productions for the Netherlands Opera, Opéra de Nice, Sendai Opera, Houston Grand Opera and Dallas Opera. Recent assignments include work for the Washington Opera (*Dangerous Liaisons*), New York City's Mary Anthony Dance Theatre, the PBS television production of *Emmeline*, and Ballet Arizona (scenery and projections for a new staging of *Nutcracker*). Lighting system consulting projects include San Francisco's recently renovated War Memorial Opera House and the Het Muziektheater in Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

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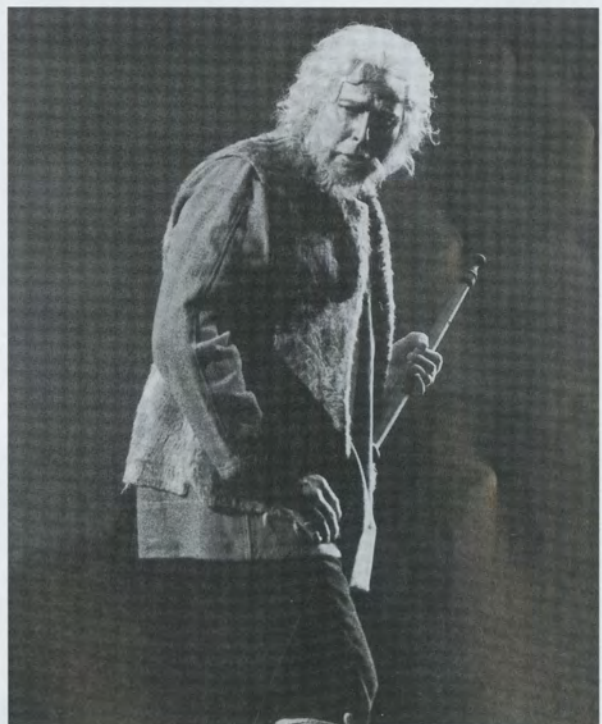
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Tristan und Isolde

Photos taken in rehearsal
by Marty Sohl

Victor von Halem, Violeta Urmana, Elizabeth Connell, Wolfgang Schmidt





Richard Walker

*Upper Left: Violeta Urmana
Left: Elizabeth Connell*

Wolfgang Schmidt, Victor von Halem

Tom Fox

Elizabeth Connell, Wolfgang Schmidt



John Autry





Victor von Halem

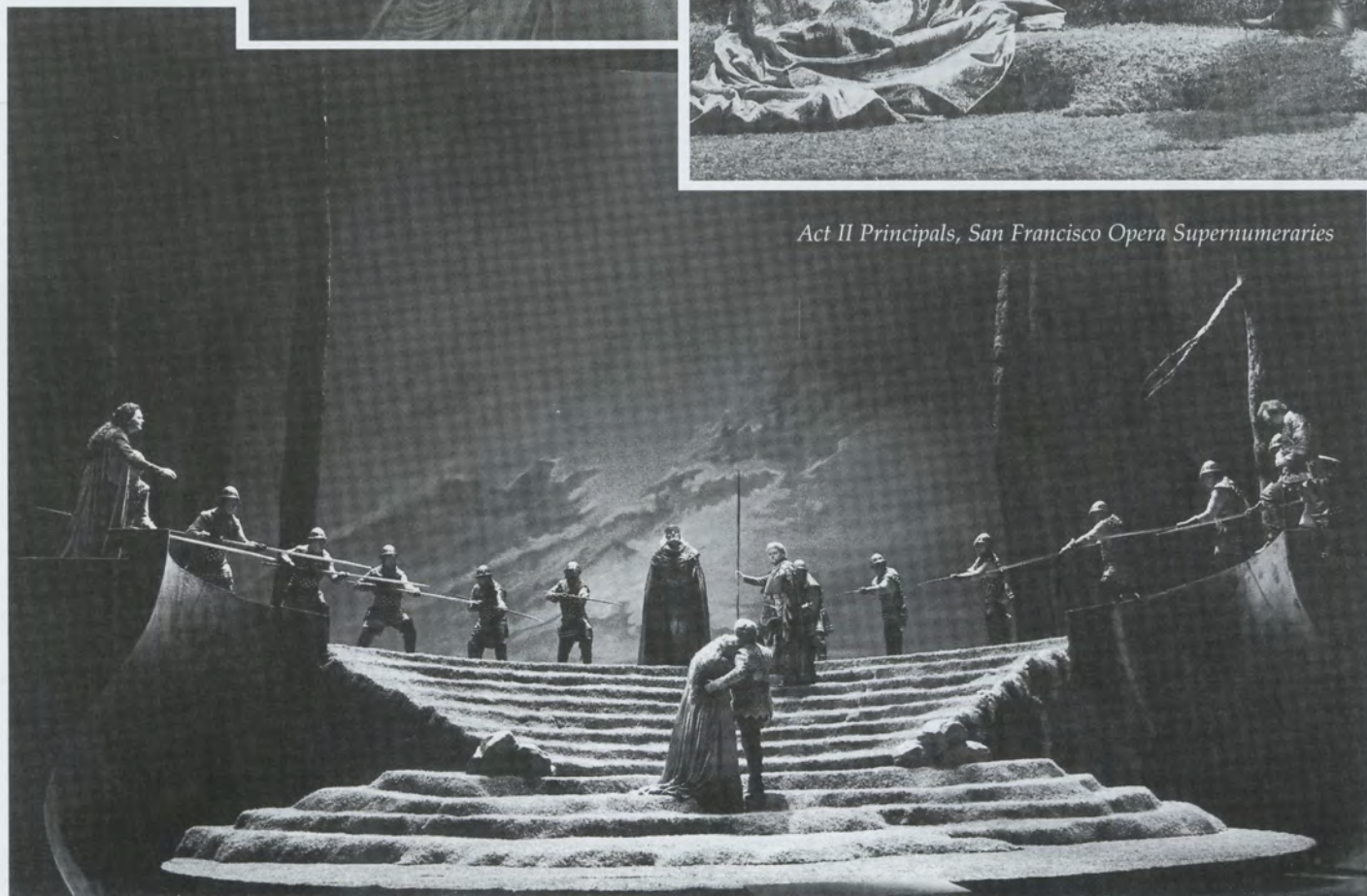


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KAWAI

TRACKING DOWN TRISTAN

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What has been clear for generations is that sixth-century reality has very little indeed to do with the imagery of *Camelot* or even of Wagner's *Tristan*. But we can now make some fair guesses about the births of two of western Europe's greatest legends, the love-and-death romance of Tristan and Isolde and the related though originally separate saga of a great British overlord called Arthur.

The growth of myths is never static. Each generation slants them in the retelling. And in recent times the Arthurian package has been beaten into barely recognizable submission by writers, artists, composers and impresarios. But through the blinding glare of that multifaceted glass one can still get a surprisingly vivid sense of real people, including the chieftain's son remembered in that gaunt piece of stone beside the Cornish road to Golant. To those who cannot give up Tennysonian romance, the Spartan simplicity of sixth-century society is a drab disappointment; but knowledge brings a different reward, like integrating the undignified and gracelessly lavatorial Mozart into the composer of celestial operas. The wonder of *Figaro* is enlarged by that knowledge; that of *Tristan* by awareness of Drustanus.

As we've seen, the romantic 19th-century interpretation of the Arthurian cycle, into which the once-unrelated Tristan had been grafted, was a literary invention with no real historical foundation. Its ethic is the ethic of its time, pretty far removed from the misty age when life, even for the privileged nobility, would not have been elegant, noble and romantic but more likely nasty, brutish and short. The romantic rebirth of Arthurian legend, rather like the authentic-instrument movement today, created a new past, right for its present and true to a popular estimate of historical truth. It was its own thing, and there is no point in complaining that Victorian imagery of the Arthurian court is borrowed from the very end of the middle-ages, not from the beginning, from the illuminated manuscripts of the Duc de Berry rather than from the dirtied fragments of archaeology. Of course it is artistically irrelevant whether a masterpiece such as *Tristan* is historically accurate, whatever that phrase may indeed mean. But it's not exactly pedantry to note in passing that in lesser hands the unhistoricism is droll, and its ineptitude sometimes distressing. Ten-

nyson's knights on prancing chargers surrounded by elegant ladies in *The Idylls of the King*, apogee of 19th-century Arthurianism, have no link to sixth-century Dumnonia: they are however rather a lot like titled Victorian polo-players with corseted English wives.

But one should not be too hastily dismissive even of such absurdities. The romantic view at its best, whether Lord Tennyson's or Sir Walter Scott's, or indeed Wagner's, was an original vision of some splendor. Grounded in emotive tradition, it re-used old stories, just as Shakespeare had, and reworked them as a composer might rework the ancient text of the Mass in his own new language. What is true is that Wagner and his many lesser contemporaries were more drastic in their remolding than anyone since the twelfth century. And what they so substantially re-cast into their own new shapes was a stream of legendary story-telling that had flowed in unbroken waves from the grand late-medieval epics of courtly love.

Those marvelously elaborate poetic proto-novellas, the work of poets, troubadours and *Minnesänger*, each many evenings' worth of evolving story-telling, fulfilled for noble 12th-century society something of the function of a modern soap-opera. And they were based on about the same amount of historical truth. But a real marital drama and tragedy had once no doubt involved a historical Tristan, a real Isolde, and a real King Mark, though probably none of them used names we would recognize and the society in which their personal dramas were played out bore no resemblance to anything with which we have daily contact today. We cannot be sure what were the ages or true relationships of such shadowy figures: was "Tristan" the son or the nephew of "Mark"? But their triangle was surely once elemental enough. Onto its telling were probably grafted several unrelated stories or at least patterns from other stories, so that each came to resemble the others, as Arthur with his young wife Guinevere and her lover Lancelot resemble Mark, Isolde and Tristan.

In centuries when story-telling and music were the distractions of long evenings with only firelight to illumine the tellers, thousands of such tales were no doubt tried out. And when a new version won out over all the others, those

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TRACKING DOWN TRISTAN

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others disappeared before the time had come when it was again important or indeed possible to write them down. We know that Gottfried of Strassburg based his *Tristan* on an earlier *Tristan* (sic) by Thomas (only his first name is known), of which not more than a sixth survives; none of Thomas's source, and before that there was nothing but guesswork from a purely spoken tradition.

It is not really surprising that the Arthurian group of legends, to which by the tenth century the *Tristan* theme belonged, should hold a unique place in our society. Its origins were unique: alone among all the former Roman colonies, fifth-century Britain was able to establish some sort of organized society strong enough and with sure enough identity to resist and negotiate with the immigrant hordes from the East.

It was long assumed that invasion dominated the settlement of England as it had the other parts of the Roman Empire; that may be untrue. Recent research implies a different pattern, with the lowland areas of Britain accommodating most of the Saxon settlements in the fifth century peacefully, an extension of immi-

gration already begun under Rome. But as new waves of invaders arrived and pressure mounted on the Celtic lands to the west of the Fosse, so the scene changed to one of armed resistance. Such British resistance almost certainly still had vestiges of Roman military and administrative structure to it, and it may have been really successful, even for a considerable period. Several Romanized Celtic leaders may have organized anti-Saxon resistance on a considerable scale across much of Britain, even perhaps with Roman-style cavalry, moving through the land along Roman roads as Roman troops had moved, to fight invaders wherever they appeared.

As things got worse, there may have been one such leader whose success exceeded all the rest. His name was possibly Arthur or a Celtic variant of it. His victories over the encroaching Saxons were not forgotten and in time his name was attached to the sites of his triumphs or to features near them. Such sites are scattered over western Britain from Edinburgh to Penzance. Perhaps he led a group whose prowess was scarcely less than his. He and his fellows (we can

hardly call them "knights") may have been no more than a troupe of mercenaries helping Celtic kings against invasion, a group of heroic companions who outdid each other in fighting just as their Saxon counterparts did. In the Saxon case we have the Old English heroic poetry to recall their warrior's code; if anything was written on the Celtic side it has not survived, though some of the companions' names may have come down to us in later form as the knights of Arthur's court. But that does not allow us to believe in a sixth century all-equals seating plan for meals and it hardly needs saying that the so-called Round Table hanging in Winchester was made at least 600 years later.

But it could also all have been on a higher plane, with aides more like generals able to lead their own troops to independent victories, and with their exploits commemorated just like Arthur's. Some of their names are certainly remembered in myth, in Welsh and Irish annals, and in place-names. There is a Trusty's Hill in south-west Scotland not far from the Mote of Mark. Might King Mark "also known as Cynvawr" have taken his

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nephew (or son?) Drustan/Tristan on a Roman-style march so far north, perhaps even in company with Arthur? Shall we be fanciful? Did Mark and Drustanus-Drustan-Drusty-Trusty veer off to meet a westward attack while Arthur fought invaders to the east near Edinburgh where Arthur's Seat still bears his name? But sadly such speculation is not warranted: what little we know suggests that Tristan and Arthur were as separated as real people as for centuries their stories were.

West of the Fosse Way, then, west of Romanized and now Saxonized Britain, was Celtic land. It falls naturally into four parts, each peopled with separate though related nations: far off, safely across the water, and always distinctive, lay Ireland which would maintain right up to our time its Celtic independence; northward, after the hills of Northumbria, unfolded what would later be known as Scotland; it too kept its Celtic freedom for another 1000 years; to the west between Ireland and midland England was mountainous Wales. And right down in the southwest, as we've seen, the post-Roman kingdom of Dumnonia. As the least mountainous of the Celtic-

British lands, Dumnonia was the first to be overrun, though never quite as far as its tip. The westward push of the West Saxons (from territories already called Wessex after them) brought constant fighting on Dumnonia's eastern front in what is now Devon and Somerset. Most of the names associated with the Arthurian legends — Cadbury, Glastonbury — are in this area when they are not in furthest Cornwall.

As the invasions intensified, a mass emigration-movement began. Britons fled southwards across the sea to the also-still-Celtic lands of Armorica. So many that it was soon known as Lesser Britain. Today it is Brittany. So many fled across the sea that a second administrative area grew up in Brittany with the name of the land they had come from, Dumnonia, just as in the settlement of America many areas were called after the lands the settlers had left. It was therefore only a matter of time before some powerful chieftain or other claimed rule of both Dumnonias, both sides of the channel, as King Mark "also known as Quonomorius" did in the *Life of St. Pol*; and it is hardly surprising that a certain St. Sam-

son founded monasteries in both areas.

Links between the four (or now with the settlement in France, five) Celtic regions were close if not always harmonious; it is natural that traces of the Tristan story occur in the Irish annals; in Welsh folk-law and that wondrous mine of Welsh-Celtic imagery the *Mabinogion*; and in France, where in due course so many once-simple Celtic stories were transformed into mythic poetic epics in the era of courtly love. It is thus no surprise that parts of the Tristan puzzle must be pieced together from these other territories. From one of them almost certainly came the chieftain's daughter Iseult/Isolde as bride for an aging chieftain possibly with a grown son by his dead first wife. But so complex is the track through all the tiny pieces of our mosaic-puzzle, that I will cut through them all, leaving the ends dangling, to just two very different last contacts with the age in which a Cornish or Pictish Tristan eloped with the new young Breton or Irish wife of a King who may have been his father.

Our penultimate contact-point intro-

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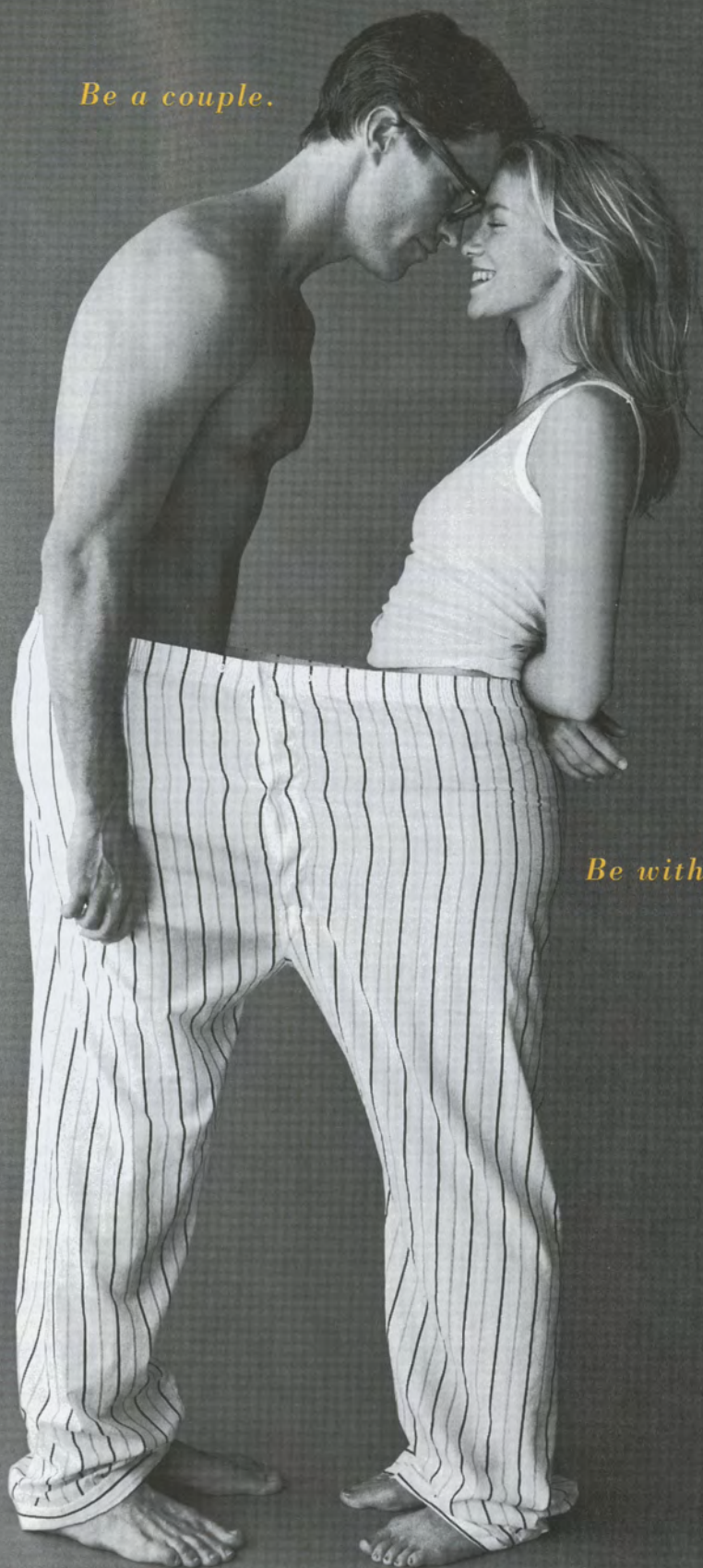
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1998-99 OPERA PREVIEWS

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

PRE-PERFORMANCE LECTURES

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

Tristan und Isolde — Oct. 14, 21, 26, 30; Nov. 6

Manon — Oct. 17, 23, 25, 29; Nov. 1

Don Carlo — Oct. 27, 31; Nov. 5, 11

Norma — Nov. 10, 15, 18, 21, 24

Peter Grimes — Nov. 22; Dec. 2, 5, 11, 13

Betrothal in a Monastery — Nov. 27; Dec. 3, 6, 10

Turandot — Nov. 29; Dec. 1, 4, 9

Madama Butterfly — Jan. 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA GUILD — INSIGHTS

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

November 16

November 18

Peter Grimes

Betrothal in a Monastery

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA GUILD — PREVIEWS

Opera Guild previews are scheduled in communities throughout the greater Bay Area by local Guild chapters (East Bay, Marin, San Francisco, Sonoma, South Peninsula and the San Jose Opera Guild). The format features a renowned musicologist who may feature

Topic

Don Carlo

Peter Grimes

Betrothal in a Monastery

Speaker

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East Bay Chapter —

San Francisco Opera Guild

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

Oct 21 *Don Carlo*

Nov 4 *Peter Grimes*

Nov 18 *Betrothal in a Monastery*

Marin Chapter —

San Francisco Opera Guild

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

Oct 19 *Don Carlo*

Nov 2 *Peter Grimes*

Nov 16 *Betrothal in a Monastery*

San Francisco Opera Guild

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

Oct 21 *Don Carlo*

Nov 4 *Peter Grimes*

Nov 18 *Betrothal in a Monastery*

San Jose Opera Guild

Lectures held at 10:00 a.m. (*) Followed by no-host luncheon (\$7.00). Los Gatos History Club, 123 Los Gatos Blvd., Los Gatos. Admission: \$7.00 (free to San Jose Opera Guild members). For information call Joy

Hulme (408) 741-1331 or Margaret Boddy (408) 354-7525.

Oct 20 *Don Carlo**

Nov 5 *Peter Grimes*

Nov 19 *Betrothal in a Monastery**

Sonoma Chapter —

San Francisco Opera Guild

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Oct 22 *Don Carlo*

Nov 2 *Peter Grimes*

Nov 20 *Betrothal in a Monastery*

South Peninsula Chapter —

San Francisco Opera Guild

Lectures held at 8:00 p.m. at Palo Alto Senior Center, 450 Bryant Street, Palo Alto. Admission \$6.00 – adults, \$5.00 – students; Series: \$30.00 – adults, \$15.00 students. For information call Ramona Rockway (650) 941-3890.

Oct 20 *Don Carlo*

Nov 3 *Peter Grimes*

Nov 17 *Betrothal in a Monastery*

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

MERRITT COLLEGE OPERA LECTURE SERIES

Held on Tuesday evenings in Room A-117, 7 to 10 p.m., *Introduction to Opera* (Music 13A) emphasizes the operas of the 1998–99 season. The College is at 12500 Campus Drive (off Redwood Road in the Oakland hills). Information: (510) 436-2430

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Given by Michael Barclay, director of OEL. Lectures are held from 7:15 to 9:30 p.m. at 400 Yale Ave. (at Vassar) in the Kensington section of the Berkeley hills. Series began on September 7; lectures are \$15 at the door. Information: (510) 526-5244

Oct 19 *Don Carlo*

Nov 2 *Norma*

Nov 9 *Peter Grimes*

Nov 23 *Betrothal in a Monastery*

Dec 14 *Season Review*

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

SAN FRANCISCO CITY COLLEGE PREVIEWS

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

ROBERT GOODHUE'S OPERA PREVIEWS

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

Oct 13 *Don Carlo*

Oct 26 *Norma*

Nov 2 *Peter Grimes*

Nov 9 *Betrothal in a Monastery*

Jan 4 *Madama Butterfly*

TRACKING DOWN TRISTAN
continued from page 45

duces a complete change of tone, to something hardly more elevated than a farming squabble; it comes from one of the Welsh *Triads*, those enigmatic three-part summaries of longer stories, possibly used as mnemonic indexes by Celtic bards. The division into threes is normal: Celtic lore is full of triple gods, triple stories, and triple meanings. The *Triads* were not written down until as late as the fifteenth century but from internal evidence some have been shown to incorporate elements that go back perhaps a thousand years, maybe more. One of the most elusive and confused of all the *Triads* is known as *The Three Powerful Swineherds*. The third Swineherd is "Trystan son of Tallwch who guarded the swine of March son of Meirchion while the swineherd had gone on a message to Essyllt to bid her appoint a meeting with Trystan. Now Arthur and Marchell and Cai and Bedwyr undertook to go and make an attempt on him, but they proved unable to get possession of as much as one porker either as a gift or as a purchase, whether by fraud, by force or by theft." Just as we found behind the carved Drustanus the probably Pictish name of Tristan so here we have in undignified conjunction some of the most glorious names of chivalric romance: Tristan, Mark, Isolde (Iseult or Essyllt), Arthur, Kay, and Bedevere. Are we ready for the possibility that one of the most elevated treatments of human emotion ever made began in a pig pen?

For a last and less problematic contact with the world of Tristan/Drustan, let us return to Cornwall where we began, to the Parish of St. Samson at Golant. The Drustanus stone was found a mile or two from Castle Dore, a circular earthwork originally from the iron age and left empty throughout the Roman occupation of Britain. Excavation showed that it was reoccupied after the Romans left. Its slumped earth rampart and largely filled-in ditches were partially sharpened up and even given a stone facing in parts near the gateway where a rough causeway through the encircling double-ditch provided the earthwork's only way in. Wooden palisades completed the defenses, along with a simple wooden lookout tower by the entrance for a watchman with a horn. Traces were found of three aisled wooden one-story halls, the largest of which, close by the entrance, was nearly 100 feet long. It was of a type familiar from descriptions

Continued on page 59

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TRACKING DOWN TRISTAN

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of the main hall at Tara, seat of the high kings of Ireland, and from Cadbury (the most likely contender for the original Camelot) and several other key Celtic sites. There can be no doubt that Castle Dore, this circular earth construction a few hundred feet across, with its few quite simple wooden buildings, is just such a Celtic "city" as the earliest documents refer to, as near to a palace as a Celtic chieftain in sixth century Britain could come. In one of the early versions of the Tristan story, a fragment from around 1200 by the Anglo-Norman Béroul, there seem to be embedded traces of a very early previous version with knowledge of a real place. In Béroul's account Mark is King of Cornwall, his palace is at Lantien, and the palace church is the monastery of St. Samson. Beside the Castle Dore earthwork, in the parish of St. Samson, is a farm called Lantian. Tristram and his group, says Béroul, came "to Lantien, to the city.... They dismount and enter the city. The watchmen loudly sound the horn. They pass through the ditch and come straightway to the hall." Later Tristram visits St. Samson's monastery where "Queen Iseut" lays a garment of unequalled splendor on the altar. "It is still kept in the church... as those who have seen it bear witness," says Béroul. There is no such garment there now but we seem to be close to something more than legend.

We can imagine the structured, hierarchic society, with needlework, jewelry, and ornaments of high sophistication as surviving examples show; but it is a living style we can only regard as primitive. An almost wholly illiterate society, yet one with a rich and subtle oral tradition, traces of which survive in the Welsh and Irish collections. In more primitive societies than this, human emotions remain as we know them: and somewhere round the fount of this mishmash of contradictory clues from long ago a love affair occurred powerful enough in fact and effect to set in train fourteen hundred years of growth as an archetype. Until Richard Wagner put what seems to be a stop to it, by uniting subconsciously all he could not know of the story with what he did, by sublimating all earlier versions into one supreme masterpiece. □

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

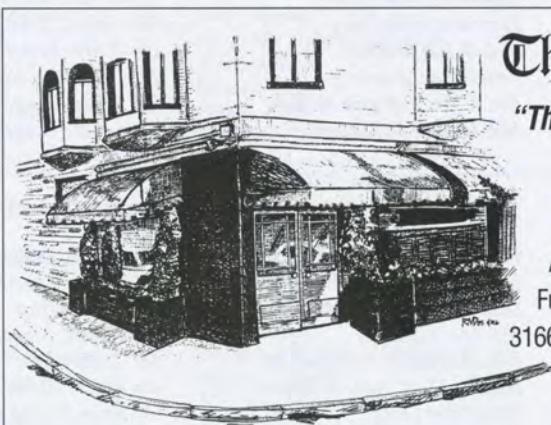
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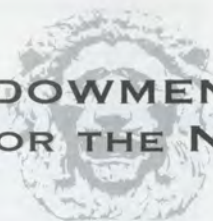
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For more information, contact Bethany Dickinson, Assistant Director of Corporate & Foundation Relations, at (415) 565-3206.

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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.

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

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

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

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

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Great artists at San Francisco Opera, 1962-1997

Stage photography by Robert Cahen

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

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

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

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

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

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

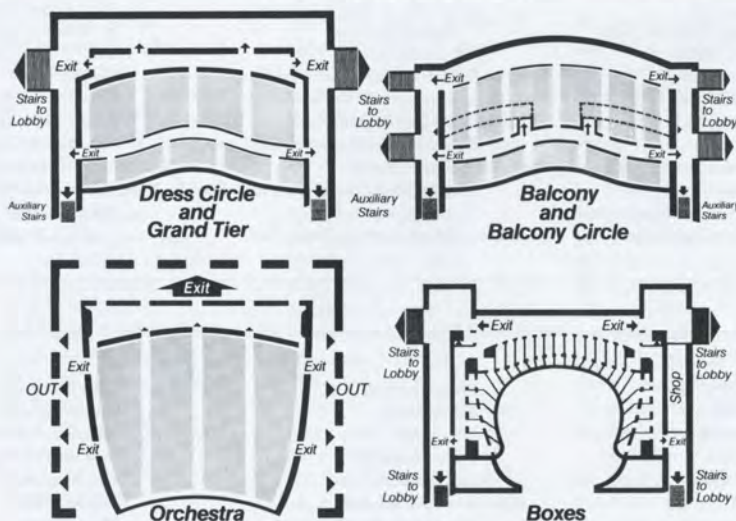
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Saturday, January 16

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