

La Bohème
(La Bohème) II

2000

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PERFORMING ARTS®

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA MAGAZINE

La Bohème

1999/2000 Season

Vol. 77, No. 8

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SAN FRANCISCO OPERA MAGAZINE
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A MESSAGE FROM THE GENERAL DIRECTOR



SOHL

Welcome to San Francisco Opera's newly expanded 1999/2000 Season in the War Memorial Opera House. Running from September 11, 1999 through July 2, 2000, our newly scheduled season offers you more performances to choose from over a longer period of time — allowing you to enjoy your San Francisco Opera experience with greater ease than ever before.

We have so much to look forward to this season — a repertoire of 11 brilliant masterworks, five of which are presented in spectacular new productions: Charpentier's *Louise*, Donizetti's *La Favorite*, Verdi's *Nabucco*, Mozart's *Don Giovanni* and Wagner's *Parsifal*. Our 77th Season also features revivals of celebrated San Francisco Opera productions: Verdi's *Un Ballo in Maschera*, Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Mozart's *Idomeneo* (co-owned with Lyric Opera of Chicago), Puccini's *La Bohème*, Berg's *Wozzeck* and Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress*. Additionally, some of the world's finest singers and conductors will join in music to pay tribute to a very special member of the San Francisco Opera family, mezzo-soprano Marilyn Horne.

Music Director Donald Runnicles and the San Francisco Opera Orchestra and Chorus will be on hand all season, joined by an illustrious group of international artists — singers, conductors, directors and designers — who will infuse each production with all the musical glory, vocal brilliance, dramatic fervor and visual splendor that grand opera has to offer.

Enjoy!

Lotfi Mansouri
General Director

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD AND FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE SAN FRANCISCO OPERA ASSOCIATION



MCCARTHY

Our 1999/2000 Season ushers in a new era for San Francisco Opera. Great opera is now being presented virtually all year round. This is an advantage for us all. Not only does it give our patrons more flexibility, but it also provides more opportunities to widen our audiences, develop artists, offer arts education, and enliven the operatic repertoire with new commissions and productions, thus helping to secure a vibrant future for the art form.

This season is made possible by our dedicated sponsors and contributors. We would like to acknowledge the contributions of our thousands of individuals whose support, large or small, is vital to our season. Equally important to us is the role of our year-round sponsors: Grants for the Arts/San Francisco Hotel Tax Fund, the California Arts Council and the National Endowment for the Arts, as well as the James Irvine Foundation and our 1999/2000 sponsors: Bank of America, American Airlines, and Kawai Pianos, provided by San Francisco Pianoworks, Inc. Our great thanks also goes to our production sponsors: Friends in memory of Gorham B. Knowles (*Un Ballo in Maschera*), Mr. and Mrs. Edmund Wattis Littlefield and Lorna Talbot (*Louise*), Mrs. Gorham B. Knowles (*La Favorite*), The Bernard Osher Endowment Fund (*Idomeneo*), Fred and Peggy Furth and Wells Fargo (*La Bohème*).

We also wish to acknowledge San Francisco Opera Guild on the occasion of its diamond jubilee year. For 60 years, the Opera Guild has introduced hundreds of thousands of people in the Northern California community to opera, and has helped to support San Francisco Opera both financially and through the efforts of its myriad volunteers.

On behalf of the San Francisco Opera Association, we are pleased to welcome you to San Francisco Opera's 77th Season, and we thank you for joining us.

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ABOUT *LA BOHÈME*

By MICHAEL STEINBERG



Marcello Giordani as Rodolfo and Patricia Racette as Mimì in San Francisco Opera's 1996 presentation of *La Bohème*.

SOHL

"*E al ritorno?*" "*Curioso!*" Many of you will recognize this piquant exchange, which occurs at the end of the first act of *La Bohème*. "And afterwards?" "You'll see." What will the young man who asked the question in fact see? What will happen? What, for that matter, has happened that leads to the question and to its slightly naughty answer. Undoubtedly, lots of you can remember or reconstruct what has happened before this repartee, and in any

Michael Steinberg is known as a long-time 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.

event you can find an efficient plot summary on page 24; just the same, for a fresh look, let us rehearse those events.

A young man, a not yet successful poet, sits alone in an under-funded, under-furnished, and definitely under-heated Paris garret he shares with three other hopeful indigents, a painter, a musician, and a philosopher. None of them nurtures the slightest illusion that there is anything charming or glamorous about their bohemian existence: it is a tough passage on the way to success, the publication of a cycle of poems in the *Revue de Paris*, the acceptance of a painting by the *Salon*, the performance of a symphony or a cantata at one of the *Concerts du Conservatoire*, or

marriage into a wealthy family, and we have already learned that the cold, brutal, bone-penetrating cold, is one of the chief characters in this story, with hunger not far behind in its insistent importance. But the four are young, resilient, and resourceful at finding sources of income — usually very slender income indeed, and at the last minute. This is happening about 1830, a year in which something like hope reigned in France, a revolution having rid the country of the reactionary Charles X, one of the last monarchs who truly believed in the Divine Right of Kings, and replaced him with Louis-Philippe, whose publicists dubbed him the Citizen King.



DE MONTE



DE MONTE

San Francisco Opera's 1965 cast of *La Bohème* included two remarkable women: (left) Renata Tebaldi as Mimì, and Marie Collier as Musetta. Both were captured by the photographer between acts while on tour to Los Angeles.

Our poet has found work with a trade magazine, and he needs to finish an editorial. But he is in no mood for that task: it is Christmas Eve, and his buddies — he has told them he would only be five minutes (these are Latin “*cinque minuti*,” mind you) — are waiting for him to join them on a walk across the river to the Café Momus in the Rue des Prêtres. A timid knock rouses him from his brooding. At the door he finds a young woman, out of breath and cold. She explains that her candle has gone out and asks him for a light. He invites her in and, seeing how faint she is and unwell, offers her a glass of wine. For all of us there is some physical characteristic or feature to which we respond erotically. Our poet has two such vulnerabilities: delicate, white hands and an appearance of fragility and ill health. His unexpected visitor offers both, and he is on fire.

At this point the future hangs by a thin thread. The young woman is about to leave when she realizes that she must have dropped her key when she fell faint into the chair. At the same time, the draft from the door extinguishes her candle again, and the young man, seizing the opportunity, makes sure to put his candle in the way of the draft as well. Now the two are on their hands and knees on the floor, in the dark, looking for the key. He finds it, but surreptitiously puts it into his pocket. Accidentally, their hands touch.

From her, a quick intake of breath; from him, an expression of concern at how terribly cold her hand is, followed by two male verbal maneuvers: “Let me warm it in mine” and “Forget the key, it’s no use looking for it in the dark.”

In tones of utmost tenderness, rising once to white-hot fervor, he goes on to present his credentials for the purpose of eventual seduction. It is very much a literary man’s self-portrait, full of irony and artifice. He is a poet, he grandly proclaims, but, thinking about the magazine he is writing for, he continues in a more self-deprecating vein — his unsophisticated guest perhaps doesn’t even catch the change of tone — “And what do I do? I write.” He goes on to spin out a charming metaphor about “two lovely eyes,” injects something flattering about hope, and concludes by inviting the owner of the two eyes to reciprocate and tell something about herself. His little address is so sweet and so seductive — and, let us not forget, so familiar — that all too easily we fail to pay attention to the details of what it says: we can perhaps hear it a hundred times and not notice the strangest thing about it, which is that the skilled seducer — and how obvious it is that he has been here before, many times —

does not divulge his name.

She, on the contrary, begins by saying that people call her Mimì, although her real name is Lucia. Artlessly, haltingly — this is not someone for whom autobiography is an accustomed genre — she gives out a few particulars about herself, that she lives alone, that she makes artificial flowers for a living, and that she has some unclear yearning “for the things people call poetry.” Her narrative, too, rises to one moment of fervor when she says that in spring, when she looks out of her high-up window, she has the feeling that April’s first kiss is for her. And then she cannot think of anything more to say.

Just then the poet’s friends call to jog him, and from their shouts Mimì can learn that his name is Rodolfo. He explains that he has acquired company and tells them not to wait. To Mimì he proposes that they remain behind, but she sensibly declares for joining the group at the Momus. He accedes, and it is then that he explores his prospects for later and that Mimì gives her one-word answer, non-committal but full of promise. The score directs that her “*Curioso!*” is to be sung “*maliziosamente*.” “*Malizioso*” is what those stellar English lexicographers, the Fowler brothers, called a “false friend;” that is, it does not

ABOUT LA BOHÈME

BY MICHAEL STEINBERG

SCHIERL



SCHIERL



SCHIERL



Three photos from our 1978 staging of *La Bohème*: (upper left) In Act I, the bohemians (Brent Ellis, Marcello; Dale Duesing, Schaunard; Samuel Ramey, Colline; and Giacomo Aragall, Rodolfo) are having fun at the expense of the landlord Benoit (Federico Davia, seated). (above) In Act II, Musetta (Julia Migenes), is about to get Marcello (Brent Ellis) back. (left) In Act IV, Giacomo Aragall as Rodolfo agonizes over Mimi (Ileana Cotrubas).

mean "malicious," but conveys qualities nicely encapsulated in my Italian dictionary, a volume so used and worn that the cover and all the front matter is missing, as "*spirito inventivo, falsità, e sotterfugio*." To the spirit of invention, fudged truth, and subterfuge, we can add archness. That one word, "*Curioso!*," understated though it must be, greatly stretches our view of Mimi. There is a bit more to the young woman who lives in her little white room and who doesn't go to Mass much but prays a lot (today she would

call herself "spiritual") than she was willing to let on earlier. When she ended her narration by declaring — in something nearer to speech than to song — that she wouldn't know what else to say about herself, there was an implied "not yet." And her flirtatious "*Obbedisco, signor!* (I obey, Monsieur)" when Rodolfo bids her to give him her arm confirms what we learned from her "*Curioso!*" and indeed from her "I'll be beside you" that she offers in response to Rodolfo's protestation that it is miserably cold outside and

wouldn't it be cozier just staying here.

So what does happen after the festivities at the Café Momus are over? We are safe in assuming that the rest of that night went the way Rodolfo had hoped. In Act 2, at the Momus itself, we also learn a bit more about Mimi, specifically that she has a bit of the gold-digger instinct: she has already talked Rodolfo into buying her a bonnet and she tries for a coral necklace as well.¹ But Puccini and his librettists don't really tell us much about the course of Rodolfo's and Mimi's relationship. Or rather, they tell us in two jolts. At the beginning of Act 3 we see that the connection has broken down completely, that Mimi is being driven crazy by Rodolfo's jealousy (ah, for the days when the sight of an ankle could drive a man mad), that Rodolfo is being driven crazy both by his jealousy, of which we already had a glimpse at the beginning of the party at the Momus, and by his anxiety over

Continued on page 56

¹ Warding off the hint about the coral necklace, Rodolfo says that he has a millionaire uncle and that when the good Lord gives a sign he will buy Mimi a far more splendid carcanet. I have always assumed Rodolfo was kidding, that the *zio milionario* was a product of that same "*anima milionaria*" he has already told Mimi about that enables him to generate dreams and chimeras and to build castles in the air, but some writers take Rodolfo at his literal word.



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LOOKING FORWARD

By JAKE HEGGIE

It was mid-day and between courses at a sunny San Francisco restaurant when Terrence McNally suggested *Dead Man Walking* as the subject for our first opera together. I had two instant reactions. The first was purely visceral: I got chills and every hair on my body stood on end. Now for me, that's a pretty good sign that something has clicked. The second reaction was even stronger, though more mysterious: I heard music. Immediately. I heard and felt the powerful music that could take this amazing story to the extraordinary level of art that is opera. I don't necessarily understand how it happens or where it comes from, but hearing music before a note has been written down is always my sign that a project is "right." I never know when it's going to happen, either. One of the most important melodies in the opera actually came to me during a New York taxi ride!

San Francisco Opera General Director Lotfi Mansouri embraced the idea right away and set the necessary wheels in motion to make it happen. His Pacific Visions program for the creation of new work and the production of unusual repertoire already includes *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *The Dangerous Liaisons*, *Harvey Milk* and *The Death of Klinghoffer*. *Dead Man Walking* will be the newest addition to that list.

The initial meeting with McNally took place back in June of 1997 and we actually began our writing in March of last year. Now it is the fall of 1999 and the libretto and music have been written, the cast and creative team are in place, the opera has been rehearsed and heard in a workshop, there was a short orchestra reading, we've done some editing and rewriting, and I'm completing the orchestration for what is (so far) the largest musical landscape of my career. And there's still a year to go! It's been an amazing journey and this article will attempt to fill you in on some of what has happened in that time. Hang on.

First things first. For those of you not familiar with *Dead Man Walking*, it tells the true story of a young Louisiana nun named Sister Helen Prejean who becomes the spiritual adviser to a death row inmate. The story of her intensely emotional and personal journey explores

Jake Heggie is San Francisco Opera's first CHASE composer-in-residence and his opera, Dead Man Walking, will receive its world premiere here next season. Recently, a CD of Heggie's songs (titled "The Faces of Love") was released internationally by RCA Red Seal.



(L. to r.) Composer Jake Heggie, librettist Terrence McNally, conductor Patrick Summers and director Joe Mantello, captured after a *Dead Man Walking* workshop reading.

the timeless human conflict posed by society's demand for vengeance and justice on the one hand, and the Christian imperative for love and forgiveness on the other. Ultimately, it is a story about love and redemption. Seemingly ordinary people are thrown into extraordinary circumstances and forced to deal with issues of crime and punishment, love and hate, life and death. Sister Helen's award-winning book was made into a major motion picture in 1994, starring Susan Sarandon as Sister Helen and Sean Penn as the death-row inmate. (Sarandon won the Academy Award for best actress for her portrayal.)

Though the story deals with universal themes, *Dead Man Walking* is a distinctly American tale. That was important to Terrence and me. We wanted to create an opera that was meaningful, contemporary and American — something that mattered here and now with resonance for where we are as a people. It was important that the work be drawn from something familiar to the general public and that the lyricism and drama of my music would fit. Most successful operas — and musicals for that matter — have been based on a fairly well-known novel or play. Film and television have become the most influential and accessible sources of entertainment and drama in our time, so it made sense to choose something that had been a successful book and movie.

Terrence and I wanted to focus on the

emotional and spiritual journey that all of these people make together, and to offer a balanced perspective from all sides. We wanted the spirit of the book to shine through, even though we knew we'd have to change things to make the story work for the opera stage. It was not our wish to create a documentary opera, or to put the movie on the stage; our goal has been to create something new that works specifically as opera. We wanted to explore large ensembles, solo and duo moments, instrumental interludes, and how rock, pop, jazz, gospel and the sounds of the South would influence the score.

After my position as composer-in-residence was generously underwritten by CHASE Private Bank and San Francisco Opera was granted the rights to set the story, the first order of business was to find the right artistic team and cast. In a world premiere, where roles are being created and the drama of the piece is being conveyed for the first time, it is crucial that exactly the right team be involved. When you consider the forces involved in *Dead Man Walking*, you realize that this is no small task: there are ten important solo roles, numerous smaller parts, children's chorus, male chorus, women's voices and a full orchestra. That's a lot of people on stage and in the pit. Lotfi Mansouri and his team have worked diligently to assemble an astonishing gathering of American artists, all deeply committed to this project; a great

MCCARTHY



(Above) The remarkable Sister Helen Prejean alone, and (right) with Jake Heggie and Terrence McNally.



CRISCIONE

group of collaborators, since we are all creating this new work.

Maestro Patrick Summers was on board immediately as conductor of *Dead Man Walking*, which was crucial. He has been not only a great friend for many years, but a musician I admire and trust implicitly. He's certainly well known to San Francisco Opera audiences. He is currently Principal Guest Conductor here who has recently completed performances of the beautiful new production of *Louise*. In recent seasons, he has also conducted *Carmen*, *L'Incoronazione di Poppea*, *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *Norma*, among many others. Patrick is also Music Director at Houston Grand Opera where he led the premiere of Tod Machover's *Resurrection* and will conduct the premiere of Carlisle Floyd's *Cold Sassy Tree* in April. His commitment to music and to the music of our time is extraordinary. He has participated actively in the casting of *Dead Man Walking* and we've worked closely together on the score. This kind of collaboration is so important to me personally, since this is my first opera and Patrick has led dozens.

THE CAST

It didn't take long to think of Susan Graham as the ideal Sister Helen and, fortunately for us, she expressed immediate enthusiasm and interest in creating the role. This is no small commitment on her part, for in the course of the two-and-a-half hour opera, Sister Helen is on stage almost the entire time. The journey she must make in the piece requires not only a singer of extraordinary vocal gifts, but a great actress. Susan has all of that and something more: a tremendous sense of spirituality and a vulnerability that lets you care about her right away. Susan was in the Merola Opera Program

here in the 1980s and has gone on to sing leading roles at the world's great opera houses, including the Paris Opera, Covent Garden and the Metropolitan Opera. She also has recorded extensively (including two solo discs) and is committed to new work: she sings in the premiere of Harbison's *The Great Gatsby* at the Met this fall.

Susan and I first met in April of last year and I had the opportunity to talk her through the story line. A few months later, when I'd completed act one, I sat with Susan and Terrence in New York and played the music for them. As I played, Susan started singing along (from my rather hard-to-read hand-written manuscript, mind you). Right off the bat, she "got it" and recognized my style and what I was doing with the music. Amazing! Not only a wonderful singer, but an incredibly intuitive one.

The role of Sister Helen was very obviously to me a lyric mezzo-soprano. The more I thought about the depth of emotion and the strength of this character, the more I heard that wonderfully creamy, slightly dark quality of a lyric mezzo. My instinct was confirmed when I met the real Sister Helen. She is incredibly passionate and very funny, and you feel that there is a real fire burning in her and she knows what she is about. Later, after we'd become friends, she sent me a tape of herself singing some of her own tunes as she was driving (no, she wasn't auditioning) and there was no doubt: mezzo.

And speaking of mezzos: Frederica von Stade! What else need be said? She is not only one of the finest singers of our time, but one of the great human beings to grace our planet. She agreed enthusiastically to be part of the project right

away, and when we sat and talked in depth about what role she might like to do, she immediately went for the inmate's mother: a remarkable and deeply sensitive choice that speaks volumes about this wonderful artist. Being a mother herself, she told me she felt a strong empathy for this character: a woman whose son has done unspeakable acts, and yet she stands by him because she knows the human being and remembers the little boy he was. Von Stade has been a very familiar and much loved presence at San Francisco Opera over the past 27 years (she made her main-stage debut here in 1972). In recent seasons, she has performed the role of the Marquise de Merteuil in the 1994 world premiere of *The Dangerous Liaisons*, and Mélisande in *Pelléas et Mélisande* in 1997, the year she was awarded the San Francisco Opera Medal in celebration of her 25th anniversary with the Company.

One of the great moments in composing the opera was a day earlier this year when I was able to sit at the piano with the real Sister Helen on my left and Frederica ("Flicka") von Stade on my right and play the music they had both inspired. Like Susan Graham, Flicka immediately started to sing along. It was a terribly moving experience, especially because they both responded so powerfully to what they heard. Sister Helen looked at me with tears in her eyes and said: "How did you know? How did you know that's *exactly* how it feels?" Again, I got chills.

Finding the right singer for the inmate, whom we have named Joseph De Rocher, involved an international search and numerous auditions in New York and San Francisco. We wanted a lyric baritone who, in addition to the right voice, had the right look and pres-



At the press conference announcing the creation of the CHASE Composer-in-Residence position and the premiere of *Dead Man Walking*, Sister Helen Prejean is at the microphone; seated behind her are playwright Terrence McNally, San Francisco Opera general director Lotfi Mansouri and Chuse Manbattan's Bill Criss.

ence: charismatic with a certain sinister edge, a guarded vulnerability, and a disturbing sexiness. It is a character who has to make an incredible transition during the course of the opera and take the audience along with him. Happily, we found John Packard, a remarkable young baritone living in Philadelphia. This will mark his San Francisco Opera debut. John recently received accolades for his portrayal of Billy Budd at Lyric Opera of Kansas City: "Packard was ideal as Budd, communicating his youthful naïveté and final pain of realization" (*Kansas City Star*). He has also sung at New York City Opera, Dallas Opera, the Opera Company of Philadelphia, La Fenice in Venice, the Vienna Volksoper, and New Israeli Opera.

John and I first met officially at the August workshop of the opera. At that point, the entire second act was still in my handwritten manuscript. Not only had he learned all of his music, but he'd actually spent hours transcribing Act 2 into the music-writing program on his computer! At this point, he probably knows it better than I do.

The four parents of the murdered teenagers form a quartet of soprano, mezzo, tenor and baritone. During the opera, Owen (the father sung by a baritone) begins to doubt his feelings of vengeance and questions what is motivating his actions. Roberth Orth was our prime candidate for that role as we'd been completely knocked out by his portrayal of Harvey Milk in the opera by Stuart Wallace back in 1996. Ironically, he later told me, he'd been driving one day and had heard Frederica von Stade on the

radio. She was a guest on Garrison Keillor's popular program "A Prairie Home Companion," sang some of my music, and mentioned *Dead Man Walking*. (Keillor: "Are you playing Sean Penn?" Von Stade: "No. Sean Penn's mother.") Robert told me he called his manager right away and said: "I want to be part of this!"

For the three other parents, we are most fortunate to have soprano Nicolle Foland, mezzo Catherine Cook and tenor Gary Rideout. Very fine singers, actors and collaborators. Each certainly well known here in San Francisco.

Terrence created a new role, that of Sister Rose, to give Helen a friend and confidante — somebody she could trust and learn with, who would challenge her in the best sense. I knew it needed to be a lyric soprano with a great sense of gospel, jazz and the South in her voice. We found Theresa Hamm-Smith, a beautiful young singer from Atlanta, and this will be her Company debut. Tenor Jay Hunter Morris was so moving last year as Mitch in the final performances of *A Streetcar Named Desire*, and he was in the original Broadway and touring productions of Terrence McNally's *Master Class*. It had special meaning, therefore, to cast him in *Dead Man Walking* as the prison chaplain. Jay is an actual southerner, too, from Texas.

As Lotfi Mansouri got the cast in place, he and the Development Department were also at work finding the funding and underwriting for the opera. It was in January of this year that we learned that Phyllis Wattis had generously donated \$1 million toward the production of *Dead Man Walking*. Then, just

a few weeks later, she donated another \$1 million. This incredible woman has made it a priority to support new projects and new art. She also underwrote last year's new production of *A Streetcar Named Desire* and has generously supported new projects at San Francisco Opera over many years.

THE CREATIVE TEAM

When Lotfi first approached me about writing an opera (back in late 1996), I was completely taken by surprise, and completely overwhelmed. When he suggested Terrence McNally as my collaborator, I nearly fainted. He is unquestionably one of the great American playwrights, with an extraordinary list of important work to his credit, including: *Master Class*, *Love! Valour! Compassion!*, *Corpus Christi*, *Lips Together Teeth Apart*, *The Lisbon Traviata*, and the books for *Ragtime* and *Kiss of the Spiderwoman*. He has won four Tony Awards and has been honored innumerable times for his contributions to the theater. Over and above all that, however, he is an incredibly generous and kind man, and a real collaborator. Terrence has had a life-long love affair with opera and he is fan of singers like nobody else I know (you may have heard him as a frequent guest on the Metropolitan Opera broadcasts, as part of the quiz and offering special tributes to great singers). He had been approached about writing a major opera many times, but didn't say yes until this project came along. He liked my music and we found that we liked each other and the work has been pure pleasure.

Terrence had worked with the young director Joe Mantello many times. He directed the Broadway and film versions of McNally's popular play *Love! Valour! Compassion!* and the first production of *Corpus Christi* last year. He is one of the most innovative and exciting directors in the world of theater, recognized for the beautiful simplicity and directness of his productions. When he agreed to direct *Dead Man Walking* as his first opera, we were all thrilled.

Our set designer is Michael Yeargan, who has created numerous productions for San Francisco Opera, including *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *La Bohème*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Carmen* and *Rigoletto*. A faculty member at Yale, his work is also seen regularly at the Met, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Houston Grand Opera and many other companies internationally. Years ago, he and Terrence McNally worked together on the first production of Terrence's hit play *The Ritz*.

Jennifer Tipton also teaches at Yale, and she will create the lighting for *Dead Man*

Continued on page 45

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Swenson (10/24, 29, 11/3)/Richardson*
(10/30); Vargas/Beltrán (10/23, 26,
30, 11/6), Michaels-Moore/
Robertson (10/23, 11/3, 6),
Hagen/Relyea (10/23, 11/6)/
Coliban (10/26, 30)

Bonynge/Bernhard/Howland/Toms/
Munn/Hill*

Oct. 12, 15, 17, 21, 23, 24, 26, 29, 30
Nov. 3, 6

WOZZECK Berg
Behrens; Held, Lundberg*, Riegel/
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Santi/Mansouri/Frigerio*/Walek/
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Nov. 24, 27, 30; Dec. 3, 6, 10, 12

LA BOHÈME Puccini
Bayo*, Arteta*; Lima, Patriarco, Daza,
Giuseppini**, Strummer
Joel/Feldman/Yeargan/Mahoney/
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Dec. 4, 7, 9, 11

LA BOHÈME Puccini
Gauci/Sutherland (1/9, 12, 14, 16),
Foland/Netrebko (1/9, 12, 14, 16);
Lima/Todorovich** (1/8, 11, 13, 15),
Okerlund/Westman (1/9, 12, 14, 16),
Relyea/Ames (1/15, 16), Daza/
Gama (1/9, 12, 14, 16), Trempont
Joel/Feldman/Yeargan/Mahoney/
Munn

Jan. 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16

Volkwiin, Jenkins; Geer, Westman,
Ames, Gama, Trempont
Lacey*/Feldman/Yeargan/Mahoney/
Munn

Jan. 15mat

New Production

DON GIOVANNI Mozart
Colonna**/Foland (6/17, 28), Vaness,
Netrebko/Kriha Dye (6/17, 28);
Hvorostovsky/Okerlund (6/17, 28),
Bros*/Shankle (6/28), Antoniozzi
Beckwith*/Mansouri/Sciutti/
Bosquet/Coyne/Whitfield

June 3, 7, 11, 13, 17, 22, 28; July 1

THE RAKE'S PROGRESS Stravinsky
Evans; Very, Terfel, Asawa, Travis
Stenz/Cox/Hockney/Munn

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the L.J. & Mary C. Skaggs Foundation*

June 10, 16, 20, 23, 25, 29

New Production

PARSIFAL Wagner
Malfitano; Ventris**, Grundheber,
Moll, Fox, Hagen
Runnicles/Lehnhoff/Bauer*/
Schmidt-Futterer*/Göbbel*

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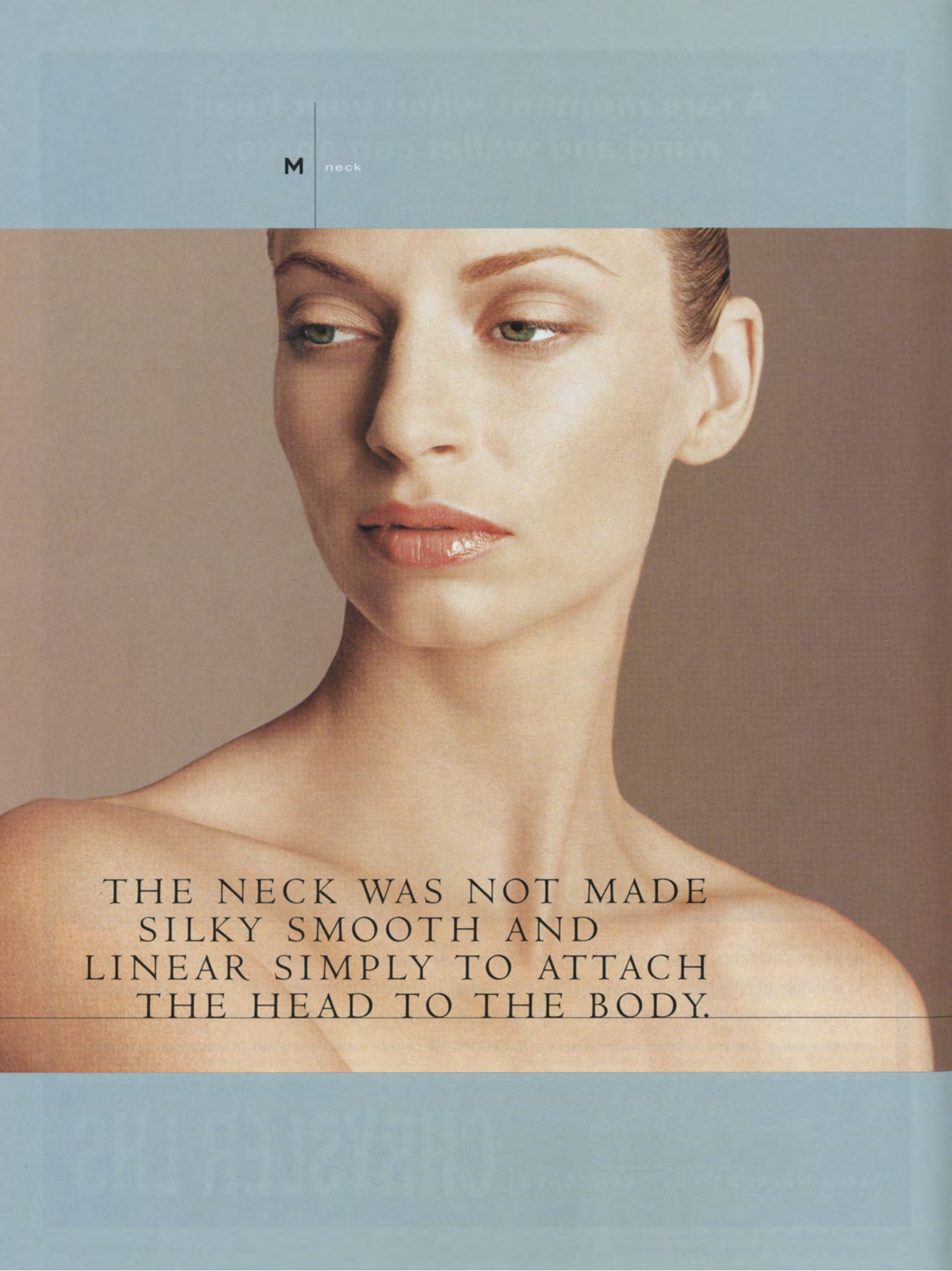
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Opera in four acts by GIACOMO PUCCINI
Text by GIUSEPPE GIACOSA and LUIGI ILLICA
Based on the novel *Scènes de la vie de bohème* by HENRI MÜRGER

La Bohème

(in Italian)

CAST

(in order of appearance)

Conductor
Emmanuel Joel
William Lacey* (1/15m)

Stage Director
Laurie Feldman

Set Designer
Michael Yeargan

Costume Designer
Walter Mahoney

Lighting Designer
Thomas J. Munn

Chorus Director
Ian Robertson

Musical Preparation
William Lacey
Bryndon Hassman
Adelle Eslinger
Monica Vanderveen
Ernest Fredric Knell

Supertitles
Clifford Cranna

Assistant Stage Directors
Roy Rallo
Paula Williams

Stage Manager
Jerry Sherk

Assistant Stage Managers
Tara Kovach
Kathleen Smith

Marcello David Okerlund
James Westmant† (1/9, 12, 14, 15m, 16)

Rodolfo Zoran Todorovich**
Luis Lima (1/9, 12, 14, 16)
Todd Geert† (1/15m)

Colline John Relyea
John Ames† (1/13, 15m, 16)

Schaunard Alfredo Daza†
Armando Gama† (1/9, 12, 14, 15m, 16)

Benoit Michel Trepont

Mimi Miriam Gauci*
Rosalind Sutherland (1/9, 12, 14, 16)
Donita Volkwijn† (1/15m)

A vendor Colby Roberts
Peter Büchi (1/9, 12, 14, 15)

Parpignol Daniel Harper
Jim Croom (1/9, 12, 14, 15)

A boy Mario Sawaya
Jeremy Ragent (1/9, 12, 14, 15m, 16)

Musetta Nicolle Foland
Anna Netrebko (1/9, 12, 14, 16)
Tammy Jenkins† (1/15m)

Alcindoro Michel Trepont

Customhouse sergeant Jere Torkelsen
Ken Johnson (1/9, 12, 14, 15)

Customhouse guard Frederick Matthews
Cameron Henley (1/9, 12, 14, 15)

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SUNDAY, JANUARY 9 AT 2:00
TUESDAY, JANUARY 11 AT 8:00
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 12 AT 7:30
THURSDAY, JANUARY 13 AT 7:30
FRIDAY, JANUARY 14 AT 8:00
SATURDAY, JANUARY 15 AT 2:00
SATURDAY, JANUARY 15 AT 8:00
SUNDAY, JANUARY 16 AT 2:00

**U.S. opera debut *San Francisco Opera debut †1999–2000 Adler Fellow

Supertitles provided by a generous grant from the
Stanley S. Langendorf Foundation

TIME AND PLACE: Mid-19th-century Paris

ACT I A garret

ACT II The Latin Quarter

INTERMISSION

ACT III A city gate, the Barrière d'Enfer

INTERMISSION

ACT IV The garret

*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 two hours and forty-five minutes.*

LA BOHÈME SYNOPSIS

ACT I — It is Christmas Eve. As Marcello paints, Rodolfo, unable to write, gazes through the windows at the smoking chimneys of the Parisian rooftops. The bohemians are suffering from the cold. Marcello is about to sacrifice one of the sparse furnishings to the empty stove when Rodolfo has an inspiration: pages of his drama will warm them. Colline returns from a fruitless visit to the pawnbrokers. As the fire dies, Schaunard saves the day by arriving with food, firewood and pockets full of money. The table is already laid before Schaunard can announce that for Christmas they will dine out. The friends are about to leave when Benoit, the landlord, comes for the rent. The bohemians trick him into talking about his amours; then, feigning moral indignation, they throw him out, unpaid. The friends leave, but Rodolfo stays behind to finish an article he is writing.

Presently, there is a knock on the door. A young woman enters. She asks if she may light her candle and Rodolfo invites her in. As soon as her candle is lighted, she departs only to return moments later in search of her key. Rodolfo secretly finds and pockets the lost key. As they continue to search, their hands touch. He tells her of his life as a penniless poet. She enchants Rodolfo with a description of her modest existence as a seamstress. As she ends her narrative, the voices of Rodolfo's friends rise from the street, urging him to hurry. Rodolfo goes to the window and tells them to meet him later at the Café Momus. He turns to Mimì and declares his love, which she timidly admits is returned.

ACT II — A holiday crowd mills about the small square in the Latin Quarter dominated by the Café Momus. Enjoying the Christmas spirit, the bohemians spend their money: Schaunard buys a horn, Colline an overcoat, and Rodolfo purchases a bonnet for Mimì. They meet at the café and order dinner, after Rodolfo has presented Mimì to his friends.

Musetta and Alcindoro, an elderly admirer whom she orders around like a pet poodle, take the table adjoining the friends. Marcello studiously avoids looking at Musetta, with whom he has recently broken up. Musetta tries to attract his attention by staging a temper tantrum. Raising her voice so that all may hear, Musetta delivers an oration on her beauty and its devastating effects. She decides it is time to rid herself of Alcindoro and feigns a terrible pain in her foot. Musetta sends Alcindoro off for a new pair of shoes. The merrymaking is dampened by the arrival of the bill. The bohemians search their pockets hope-

lessly until Musetta takes the bill from the waiter and deposits it together with her own. She announces that Alcindoro will pay both bills on his return. Alcindoro returns with Musetta's new shoes and is confronted with the bills.

ACT III — Amid the snow and mist of a February dawn, the city's early risers begin their daily routines, while the revelers in a tavern continue the night's festivities. Mimì asks directions of a sergeant who points out the tavern decorated with Marcello's paintings. She asks the innkeeper to send Marcello out to her. Tearfully, she appeals to him for help. She refuses to go into the tavern because Rodolfo, who has left her, is inside. Marcello promises to talk to him. Rodolfo attempts to justify his cruelty to Mimì on the grounds of her coquettishness, but Marcello sees through the pretext. Rodolfo admits that he still loves Mimì, but says he cannot endure watching her health fail because of his inability to provide for her. Coughing and violent sobs betray Mimì's presence. Rodolfo takes her into his arms, while Marcello charges into the tavern to investigate the cause of a burst of Musetta's brazen laughter. Mimì says goodbye to Rodolfo and tells him they must part without bitterness. They quickly realize they cannot go through with the separation. Their decision to stay together until spring is made against the background of violent quarreling between Musetta and Marcello.

ACT IV — Sadly reminiscing about their broken love affairs, Marcello and Rodolfo try to work. Both try unsuccessfully to appear pleased that their former companions are flourishing. Schaunard and Colline arrive with frugal provisions and a more cheerful outlook. They fall upon the food and stage a mock ball which is followed by a simulated duel. At the height of their clowning, Musetta appears. Mimì is waiting on the stairs; she is seriously ill. Rodolfo rushes to Mimì and brings her in. Musetta sends Marcello to pawn a pair of earrings and bring back a doctor. Colline bids a fond farewell to his overcoat which is destined for the same fate as Musetta's jewels. One by one the friends find discreet reasons to leave. The lovers are alone. Feeble attempts at their former banter are succeeded by reminiscences of their love. Musetta returns with a muff to warm Mimì's hands. Marcello announces that a doctor is on the way. Mimì falls asleep as Musetta murmurs a prayer. Rodolfo notices that a change has come over his friends, who already know what he only now realizes: Mimì is dead.

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CHILDREN'S CHORUSES

San Francisco Girls Chorus — Sharon Paul, *Artistic Director*

San Francisco Boys Chorus — Ian Robertson, *Artistic Director*

Ragazzi, The Peninsula Boys Chorus — Joyce Keil, *Artistic Director*

Arianne Abela	Derek Alaie	Joel Morey
Samantha Hennessey	Cole Armstrong	Jack Mosbacher
Christina Lee	Liam Bradshaw	Nicholas Moy
Barrie McClune	Thomas Buran	Jeremy Ragent
Sydney McClune	Timothy Duncheon	Alejandro Sanchez
Stephanie Moy	Chris Evans	Mario Sawaya
	David Faris	Joe St. Marie
	Arman Hirose-Afshari	Trent Walker
	Alexander MacQuitty	Aaron Yoffe

SUPERNUMERARIES

Traude Albert	Trey Alonso	Louis Schilling
Irene Bechtel	Tom Carlisle	Larry Severino
Nancy Huie	Roderick Chaw	Daniel Wilson
Andrea Kohlruess	John Giosso	
Susan Mead	Albert Goodwyn	PETS
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ARTIST PROFILES



Soprano **MIRIAM GAUCI**, a native of Malta, began her vocal studies at the Verdi Conservatory in Milan and later pursued her education at the Teatro alla Scala's Vocal Academy where she was awarded a special diploma. After winning several prestigious vocal competitions, she made her professional debut in 1984 in Bologna (Poulenc's *La Voix Humaine*) and has since enjoyed an international career. She has performed at, among others, La Scala, the State Operas of Munich,

Hamburg, Berlin, Dresden and Vienna, the Paris Opera/Bastille, Teatre del Liceu in Barcelona, as well as in Florence, Naples, Toulouse, Madrid, Geneva and Zurich. In North America, she has been applauded at Santa Fe Opera (1987 U.S. debut as Cio-Cio-San in *Madama Butterfly*) and during Los Angeles Opera's 1986-87 inaugural season (Mimi in *La Bobème* opposite Plácido Domingo). Gauci has also been acclaimed as Liù (*Turandot*), Elisabetta (*Don Carlo*), Desdemona (*Otello*), Margherita/Elena (*Mefistofele*), Amelia Grimaldi (*Simon Boccanegra*), as well as in the title roles of *Suor Angelica* and *Manon Lescaut*. Engagements during the 1998-99 season have included *Butterfly* in Berlin, Munich and Santa Fe; *Otello* in Hamburg and Bern; *Bobème* in Zurich and Munich; *Mefistofele*, *Don Carlo* and *Pagliacci* (Nedda) in Vienna; as well as *Simon Boccanegra* at the Munich Festival. In the future, the soprano will make numerous appearances at the opera houses of Vienna, Hamburg, Munich and Paris, and will make her Metropolitan Opera debut in *La Bobème*. Included in her discography are nine complete operas, a solo disc of Italian arias, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, the Requiem by Verdi, as well as Dvořák's *Stabat Mater* and *Tě Deum*.



Soprano **ROSALIND SUTHERLAND**, a native of Glasgow, began her musical training at the London College of Music and continued her studies at the Royal Northern College of Music. During this period she was awarded many prizes and scholarships which enabled her to study in Australia, Russia, and in Italy with Renata Scott. Roles performed include Cio-Cio-San in *Madama Butterfly* (Welsh National Opera, Opera Zuid, 1997 U.S. debut with San Francisco Opera), Mimi

in *La Bobème* (WNO, English National Opera, New Israeli Opera), Nedda in *Pagliacci* (New Israeli Opera, WNO), and Liù in *Turandot* (WNO). Additional roles include the title part of *Suor Angelica*, Adina in *L'Elisir d'Amore*, Tatiana in *Eugene Onegin* and Desdemona in *Otello*. Last season she sang Mimi, Nedda, and the title role in a new staging of *Jenifa* in Cardiff, as well as the Governess in *The Turn of the Screw* for Minnesota Opera. Future engagements include her first Micaëla in *Carmen* at WNO and *Butterfly* for Opera North. Sutherland performs regularly on the concert platform, having appeared with the Bournemouth Sinfonietta and the Bournemouth Symphony, the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, and is a regular guest on *Friday Night is Music* on BBC Radio 2. Past concert performances have included Haydn's *Lord Nelson Mass*, Rossini's *Petite Messe Solennelle*, and the role of Gretel in *Hansel and Gretel*.



Originally from Capetown, South Africa, 1999-2000 Adler Fellow **DONITA VOLK-WIJN** has performed with the Bronx Opera, where she sang Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni*, Mariane in *Tartuffe*, and Adina in *The Elixir of Love*, a role she repeated with Milwaukee's Skylight Opera. Additional credits include Anne Trulove in *The Rake's Progress* and Handel's *Messiah* with the Monmouth Civic Chorus of New Jersey. A national winner of the Leontyne Price Vocal Arts Competition

and a district winner of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, the soprano was an apprentice with the Ezio Pinza

Council for American Singers of Opera and with Lyric Opera Cleveland, where she appeared as Frasquita in *Carmen*. This season she made her European debut with concert performances at the International Opera Center of the Netherlands. The young artist was featured as Pamina in the 1998 Merola Opera Program staging of *The Magic Flute* and most recently appeared as Fiordiligi in Opera Center's Showcase production of *Così fan tutte*. Volkwin earned her bachelor's degree in vocal performance from the Oberlin Conservatory and her master's in music from the Cleveland Institute of Music.



A winner of the prestigious 1997 ARIA Foundation Award, **NICOLLE FOLAND** is establishing herself as a leading soprano in many prominent theaters. Associated with San Francisco Opera for many seasons, the former Adler Fellow has been seen here in over 10 productions, foremost among them *La Bobème* (Musetta), *Le Nozze di Figaro* (Countess), *Carmen* (Micaëla), *Die Fledermaus* (Rosalinda), *Eugene Onegin* (one performance as Tatyana), and this summer's *Ring* cycle staging of *Das*

Rheingold (Freia). In addition, she appeared as soloist in a concert with Plácido Domingo and made her San Francisco recital debut as part of the Opera Center's 1997 Schwabacher Debut Recital series. Other Opera Center credits include Adele and Rosalinda in *Die Fledermaus*; Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni*; and Tina in the 1996 Showcase production of Argento's *The Aspern Papers*. Last season she made debuts with Los Angeles Opera, Seattle Opera and Spain's Opera Bilbao as Musetta, and was also seen as Micaëla in Cincinnati, the First Lady (*Die Zauberflöte*) in Los Angeles, and in the title role of *La Traviata* at Festival Opera of Walnut Creek. So far this season she has made bows with Boston Lyric Opera and the Opera Company of Philadelphia (Mozart's Countess), Minnesota Opera (her first Desdemona in Verdi's *Otello*), as well as with Lyric Opera of Chicago and Houston Grand Opera (*Traviata*'s Violetta). Next June the soprano will be seen with the Company as Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni* and with Baltimore Opera as Musetta. The native of Des Moines received a master of music degree from the University of Northern Iowa and currently resides in San Francisco.



ANNA NETREBKO recently opened the current season at Washington Opera, receiving overwhelming critical and public acclaim for her portrayal of Gilda in *Rigoletto*. Born in Krasnodar, the soprano received her training at the St. Petersburg Conservatory, where she appeared as Susanna in *Le Nozze di Figaro* and Violetta in *La Traviata*. After winning first prize in Moscow's 1993 National Glinka Competition, she was invited by Irina Arkhipova to take part in a concert at the

Bolshoi Opera. Since making her 1994 Kirov Opera debut as Susanna, she has repeated this role on the Kirov tours to Finland, Germany and Israel, and was seen as the Queen of the Night in *Die Zauberflöte* at the Riga Opera Theater. In 1995, Netrebko made her U.S. opera debut as Lyudmila in San Francisco Opera's premiere production of *Ruslan and Lyudmila*. In 1998, San Francisco Opera audiences saw the former Merola Opera Program participant appear as Susanna in *Figaro* and as Louisa in the Company premiere of *Betrothal in a Monastery*. She was also featured last year in a critically acclaimed performance as part of the Schwabacher Debut Recital series. Netrebko has been heard in concert the world over, and in concert performances of *Betrothal* and *La Traviata* with the Kirov. Now a full-time member of the Kirov, her appearances with that company include *Ruslan* and *Betrothal* at New York's Metropolitan Opera; *Rigoletto* (role debut as Gilda) in St. Petersburg; *Carmen* (Micaëla) in Japan; *Boris Godunov* (Xenia) and *Parsifal* (Flower Maiden) both at Italy's Ravenna Festival and the Salzburg Festival; *The Love for Three Oranges* (Ninetta) and *Benvenuto Cellini* (Teresa) at Amsterdam's Concertgebouw; as well as *Boris* and *Betrothal*

throughout France. In addition to *Rigoletto* for Washington Opera, the soprano's most recent engagements include *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* (Rosina) in Latvia, *La Sonnambula* (her first Amina) with the Kirov, as well as concerts with the S.F. Symphony and the Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano. Her Kirov performances in *Ruslan and Lyndmila* and *Betrothal in a Monastery* are available on video and CD.



TAMMY JENKINS, currently in her second year as an Adler Fellow, made her bow with San Francisco Opera as Frasquita in *Carmen* during the 1998 *Femmes Fatales* Festival and performed here last season in *Manon*, *Don Carlo* and *Peter Grimes*. A native of Las Cruces, the soprano attended New Mexico State University and has performed in productions of *Tartuffe* (Mariane), *Amahl and the Night Visitors* (the Mother), and *Carmen* (Micaëla).

She has also appeared in concert presentations of Schubert's Mass in G and *Omnipotence* with Vos Vaqueros. Jenkins was a Metropolitan Opera Southwestern Regional Finalist in 1996 and received an Encouragement Award from the Met Auditions in 1997. A 1997 Merola Opera Program participant, she sang the role of Frasquita in the summer staging of *Carmen* and went on to repeat the role and also sing Micaëla in Western Opera Theater's national touring production. Additional credits include a Schwabacher Debut Recital as well as Showcase presentations of *Iphigénie en Tauride* (First Priestess, 1998) and *Così fan tutte* (Despina, 1999).



ZORAN TODOROVICH studied at the Music Conservatory in Belgrade and, after winning the 1985 National Singers Award, began his career with the National Theatre of Belgrade. With that company he appeared in many productions (among them *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*/Count Almaviva, *La Fille du Régiment*/Tonio, *Boris Godunov*/Prince Shuisky) and was awarded a scholarship which enabled him to further his musical studies in Germany.

He has been a member of the State Opera in Hanover, Germany, since 1994, also making guest appearances at several houses throughout Europe. These performances include the Duke in *Rigoletto* at the Teatro de la Maestranza in Seville; Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly* at the Vienna State Opera, Berlin State Opera and Deutsche Oper Berlin; Lensky in *Eugene Onegin* in Frankfurt; the title role of *Faust* for the Deutsche Oper; and his first Tito in *La Clemenza di Tito* at Madrid's Teatro Real. Among the tenor's most recent engagements are *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Edgardo) and *La Traviata* (Alfredo) in Hamburg, *La Bobème* (Rodolfo) in Munich, and *La Juive* (Léopold) in Vienna. Future projects include *Bobème* and *Faust* at the Hamburg State Opera, *La Clemenza di Tito* in Amsterdam, as well as *Eugene Onegin* in Nice, Brussels and Tokyo.



Since making his debut at age 24 at the Teatro São Carlos in Lisbon, **LUIS LIMA** has become one of opera's most sought-after tenors. The native of Argentina has appeared at most of the world's major houses such as San Francisco Opera (1980 debut as Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly*, reprises of the role in '97 and '99), also Rodolfo in *La Bobème*, Nemorino in *L'Elisir d'Amore*, Don José in *Carmen*, title role of *Faust*, Milan's La Scala, Covent Garden, Metropolitan Opera, Vienna

Staatsoper, and the theaters of Munich, Buenos Aires, Berlin, Tokyo, and many others. Outstanding performances from recent seasons have included the title role of *Don Carlo* at the Vienna Staatsoper, the title part of *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* for the Royal Opera at Covent Garden, *La Bobème* at the Metropolitan Opera, *Faust* in Buenos Aires, as well as six different productions of *Carmen* during the 1992 season — in Vienna, London, Hamburg, Santiago, Caracas and Madrid. Among the tenor's most recent performances are *Stiffelio*, *Fedora*, *Le Prophète*, *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, *Tosca*, *Cavalleria Rusticana* and *Don Carlo* in Vienna; *Don Carlo* at the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires; *La Bobème* in Buenos Aires and at Covent Garden; *Carmen* in Zurich; as well as *Don Carlo* and *Carmen* (performed in New York

and Japan) for the Met. Well known in Spain, the artist has taken part in several major Spanish festivals, including Expo '92 and the Madrid Cultural Festival. Lima's discography includes *Così fan tutte*, *Carmen*, *Don Carlo*, *Le Roi de Lahore* and *Gemma di Vergy*.



TODD GEER, a 1999–2000 Adler Fellow, participated in the 1998 Western Opera Theater national tour of *La Traviata*, in which he sang the role of Alfredo. Prior to that he appeared as Don José in the 1997 WOT tour of *Carmen*. After his professional opera debut with Syracuse Opera as Ralph Rackstraw in *H.M.S. Pinafore* and Ferrando in *Così fan tutte*, the tenor was named a resident artist with Tri-Cities (Binghamton, N.Y.) Opera where he appeared as Nemorino in *L'Elisir d'Amore*,

Rodolfo in *La Bobème*, Almaviva in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, the Duke of Mantua in *Rigoletto* and in the title role of *Faust*. Additional credits include Tom Rakewell in *The Rake's Progress*, Ernesto in *Don Pasquale*, Pollione in *Norma* and the title role of *Albert Herring*. In concert, the young artist has been heard in *Carmina Burana*, *Messiah*, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, Haydn's *Lord Nelson Mass* and Bruckner's *Te Deum*. Among his most recent engagements are a debut with the Lyric Opera of Chicago in *Salome*, his European debut in Paris and Geneva as Tamino in *Die Zauberflöte*, and S. F. Opera Center's Showcase production of *Così fan tutte* in which he sang the role of Ferrando. Geer holds degrees from the Eastman School of Music and Binghamton University and is a former voice instructor at Cornell University.



DAVID OKERLUND was most recently seen during our *Ring* cycle as Donner in *Das Rheingold* and Gunther in *Götterdämmerung*. Last season he appeared here as Stanley in the final performance of *A Streetcar Named Desire* and as Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly*. Since his 1995 bow with San Francisco Opera, the baritone has performed in numerous Company productions including *Eugene Onegin* (title role), *Lobengrin* (King's Herald), *Die Fledermaus* (Eisenstein), *Le Nozze di Figaro* (Count

Almaviva) and *La Bobème* (Schaunard). He also participated in a special concert with Plácido Domingo. The former Adler Fellow's credits for the Opera Center include participation in the Merola Opera Program (1993–94), tours with Western Opera Theater (Falke in *Fledermaus*, title role of *Don Giovanni*), the Showcase presentation of *The Aspern Papers* (The Lodger) and a Schwabacher Debut Recital. Additional credits include Germont in *La Traviata* for Vancouver Opera, the title role of *Don Giovanni* at Mississippi Opera, Donner in Arizona Opera's production of *Das Rheingold*, Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte* for Opera Carolina and Piedmont Opera Theater, as well as *Madama Butterfly* (the Bonze) for the Opéra de Lyon and Sharpless for the inauguration of Tokyo's New National Theatre. This year the baritone appears with the Company in the title role of *Don Giovanni* and travels to Honolulu for *Butterfly* and to San Diego for *Streetcar*. A native of Kearney, Nebraska, Okerlund earned his bachelor and master of music degrees from the University of Missouri — Kansas City Conservatory of Music.



Recently named a 1999–2000 Adler Fellow, **JAMES WESTMAN** participated in this year's prestigious Marilyn Horne Foundation recital series and is familiar to Opera Center audiences for his performances in the Merola Opera Program's productions of *Carmen* and *La Traviata*. A former member of the Canadian Opera Company Ensemble, the Ontario native has performed with the group in *The Emperor of Atlantis* (title role) and appeared in the COC's mainstage productions of *Madama*

Butterfly (Sharpless) and Stravinsky's *Pulcinella*. The baritone has studied at the Britten-Pears School in England, as well as with such renowned artists as Joan Sutherland, Richard Bonynge, Renato Capecchi and Paul Esswood. He has won awards from the George London Foundation, the d'Angelo International Competition, Les

Jeunes Ambassadeurs Lyriques and the Licia Albanese Foundation. Westman recently appeared as Guglielmo in Opera Center's Showcase presentation of *Così fan tutte* and was named a finalist in the 1999 Cardiff Singer of the World Competition.



ALFREDO DAZA made his San Francisco Opera debut as Liberto (*L'Incoronazione di Poppea*) during the 1998 *Femmes Fatales* Festival and was seen in the Company's 1998-99 productions of *Betrothal in a Monastery* and *Madama Butterfly*. In his second year as an Adler Fellow, the baritone participated in the 1997 Merola Opera Program, performing the role of Le Dancaïre in *Carmen*. Originally from Puebla City, Mexico, he began his studies at the Puebla State

Conservatory of Music and was a national winner in the Carlo Morelli National Competition in Mexico at the age of 16. Soon after, he received an undergraduate degree in voice from the National Conservatory of Music. A scholarship from the National Foundation for Culture and Arts enabled him to represent Mexico in the 1996 Pacific Music Festival in Sapporo, where he sang Guglielmo in a touring production of *Così fan tutte* throughout Japan. Additional roles performed include the title part of *Don Giovanni*, Figaro in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, Marcello in *La Bobème*, Silvio in *Pagliacci*, and Zaretsky in *Eugene Onegin*. In concert, Daza has been heard in, among others, *Carmina Burana*, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, Mozart's Requiem and Rossini's *Petite Messe Solennelle*, as well as in numerous zarzuela performances in Mexico. Opera Center credits include a Schwabacher Debut Recital, the 1998 Showcase presentation of *Iphigénie en Tauride*, and Guglielmo in last year's Showcase production of *Così fan tutte*. He was a finalist in the 1999 Belvedere Competition and is the recipient of a grant from the SIVAM Foundation.



Second year Adler Fellow **ARMANDO GAMA** received his graduate degree from the Academy of Vocal Arts in Philadelphia where his credits included Marcello in *La Bobème*. After graduating with a degree in physics from the Universidad Autonoma de Mexico, the baritone began his vocal studies in his hometown of Mexico City at the Universidad de Mexico City where he appeared in *Cambiale di Matrimonio* and *Faust*. He went on to sing Moralès in *Carmen*, Belcore in *L'Elisir*

d'Amore, Julian in *La Verbena de la Paloma* and, most recently, the Commendatore in *Don Juan Tenorio*. A 1997 Merola Opera Program participant, Gama sang the role of Alidoro in *La Cenerentola* and toured with Western Opera Theater in its production of *Carmen*, singing the parts of Escamillo, Le Dancaïre and Moralès. Last season's appearances include a joint performance (with Adler Fellow colleagues) as part of the Schwabacher Debut Recital series, Thoas in Opera Center's 1998 Showcase production of *Iphigénie en Tauride*, and his San Francisco Opera debut as Le Dancaïre in *Carmen* during the *Femmes Fatales* Festival. Most recently, he portrayed the Innkeeper in *Manon* and Prince Yamadori in *Madama Butterfly* during the Company's 1998-99 Season, also appearing as Don Alfonso in the Showcase presentation of *Così fan tutte*.



One of today's foremost young bass-baritones, **JOHN RELYEA** made his 1996 San Francisco Opera debut as Colline in *La Bobème* and went on to sing roles in *Hamlet*, *Lobengrin*, *Harvey Milk*, *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* and *Salome* during the Company's 1996-97 season. The former Adler Fellow has since appeared on the stage of the War Memorial in, among others, *Tosca* (Angelotti), *Guillaume Tell* (Melthal), *Le Nozze di Figaro* (title role), *L'Incoronazione di Poppea* (Mercurio, Littore) and *Carmen*

(Zuniga). Last season he appeared here as a mandarin in *Turandot* and as Hobson in *Peter Grimes*. A member of the 1995 Merola Opera Program, his Opera Center credits include a Schwabacher Debut Recital, the Showcase '96 production of *The Aspern Papers*

and Handel's *Ezio* for the '97 Showcase. During the 1997-98 season he made debuts with the San Francisco Symphony (title role of *Elijah*), Cleveland Orchestra (Bach's Mass in B-Minor), Philadelphia Orchestra (the Bach *Magnificat*), and Minnesota Orchestra (*Messiah*). Concert engagements in the 1998-99 season included debuts with the Houston Symphony, Pittsburgh and Florida orchestras. Recent highlights include his European debut at the 1999 Edinburgh Festival as Collatinus in a concert performance of *The Rape of Lucretia* led by Donald Runnicles; his Carnegie Hall debut as Rodolfo in *La Sonnambula* with the Opera Orchestra of New York; and Basilio in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* with the Opera Company of Philadelphia. Upcoming are three debuts: at the Metropolitan Opera (Alidoro/*La Cenerentola*), Santa Fe Opera (title role/*Le Nozze di Figaro*), and at the Seattle Opera (Basilio/*Barbiere*). The young artist began studying voice with his father, Canadian bass-baritone Gary Relyea, and now continues his studies with legendary bass Jerome Hines. In 1998 he was honored with a prestigious ARIA award.



1999-2000 Adler Fellow **JOHN AMES** was a participant in the 1998 Merola Opera Program, in which he sang the role of Sarastro in *The Magic Flute*. While studying music at the University of Nevada, the Reno native began his appreciation of opera when his university chorus joined the Nevada Opera's choristers for a production of Verdi's *Otello*. A recipient of the Anna Ross Foundation Scholarship for Apprentice Artists, the bass studied voice while performing nearly a dozen roles at

Nevada Opera including Colline (*La Bobème*), the Speaker (*The Magic Flute*) and the Old Hebrew (*Samson et Dalila*). A winner of the Elsie Sweeney Scholarship, he studied with Giorgio Tozzi at Indiana University where his credits included Sparafucile in *Rigoletto* and the Commendatore in *Don Giovanni*. After leaving I.U., Ames made debuts with Indianapolis Opera and Kentucky Opera, toured with the Nevada Opera Studio as Sulpice in *The Daughter of the Regiment*, and participated in the Nevada Opera Young Artist Program. In concert he has performed Mozart's *Coronation Mass* and Requiem with the Reno Philharmonic. The young artist most recently sang Don Alfonso in Opera Center's Showcase presentation of *Così fan tutte*, the Duke in *Roméo et Juliette* with Kentucky Opera, as well as Tom in *Un Ballo in Maschera* and Ferrando in *Il Trovatore* at Nevada Opera.



Since making his U.S. opera debut as General Boum in San Francisco Opera's 1983 production of *La Grande Duchesse de Gérolstein*, **MICHEL TREMPONT** has appeared on the stage of the War Memorial as Sixtus Beckmesser in *Die Meistersinger* (1986), Sancho Pança in *Don Quichotte* (1990), and as Sulpice in *La Fille du Régiment* (1993). The baritone began his musical studies in his native Belgium and made his operatic debut as Valentin in *Faust* at the Liège Opera. He has

since performed at most of the world's leading houses including Milan's La Scala, London's Royal Opera, the Metropolitan Opera, Paris Opera, and with the companies of Geneva, Venice, Munich, Barcelona and Brussels, among others. Foremost among his recent performances are Massenet's *Cendrillon* (Pandolphe) in Turin, Antwerp and Geneva; *Gianni Schicchi* (title role) in Palermo and Brescia; *La Fille du Régiment* in Madrid, Palermo and New York (Met); Bernstein's *Candide* (Pangloss) in Liège; *Grande Duchesse* in Toulouse; *Werther* (Bailiff) at the Met; as well as *La Bobème* (Benoit/Alcindoro) at the Paris Opera/Bastille. Trempont's numerous recordings include *Carmen*, *Manon*, *La Pêricole*, *La Fille du Régiment*, Grétry's *Richard Coeur-de-Lion*, and the award-winning *Fortunio* by Messager.

EMMANUEL JOEL made his U.S. opera debut leading San Francisco Opera's production of *Carmen* during the 1996-97 season and was here last year to lead the new staging of *Don Carlo*. After studies at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique in Paris, he conducted extensively with the opera companies of Lyon, Nantes,

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Montpellier, Toulouse, Strasbourg, Nancy and at the Aix-en-Provence Festival, specializing in the French, Italian and Slavic repertoire. After his acclaimed 1993 debut at the Paris Opera/Bastille with Offenbach's *Les Brigands*, there soon followed engagements at the Wexford Festival (Boieldieu's *La Dame Blanche*), in Utrecht with Opera Zuid (Chabrier's *L'Étoile*), and in Dublin (Delibes's *Lakmé*). Significant past highlights include a debut at London's English National Opera

with a critically acclaimed new production of *Don Quixote* and a return to the ENO for *Les Pêcheurs de Perles* and *La Bohème*; *Carmen* at the Jerusalem Festival; *Semele* and *Pêcheurs de Perles* with Melbourne's Victoria State Opera; as well as a new staging of Offenbach's *La Belle Hélène* with Scottish Opera. Among Maestro Joel's most recent engagements are *Faust* in Cincinnati and Marseilles, *Werther* in Los Angeles, Tel Aviv and Toulouse, *Eugene Onegin* in Toulouse, *La Traviata* for his New York City Opera debut, *Samson et Dalila* with Opera Australia, *Samson et Dalila* and Chausson's *Le Roi Arthus* with the Montpellier Opera, as well as *Aida* for Scottish Opera. Future engagements include *Samson et Dalila* in Marseilles, *La Fanciulla del West* in Montpellier, and *Roméo et Juliette* in Strasbourg. In concert, the maestro has led the Orchestre de Chambre de Lausanne at the Montreux Festival, Orchestre National du Capitole de Toulouse, the Orchestre Symphonique de la Monnaie in Brussels, and the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France in Paris.



Appointed Staff Conductor at San Francisco Opera in 1998, **WILLIAM LACEY**'s activities for the Company have included assisting Music Director Donald Runnicles (*Tristan und Isolde*, *Peter Grimes*), Valery Gergiev (*Betrothal in a Monastery*) and Marco Armiliato (*Turandot*). This season, he conducted the Opera Center Showcase production of *Così fan tutte* and Merola Opera Program's presentation of *The Italian Girl in Algiers*. The native of London made his conducting debut in 1993 with the

Cambridge University Opera Society's staging of *The Rape of Lucretia*. After leaving Cambridge with a music degree in 1995, he began a freelance career, conducting *Carmen* in London, two contemporary operas at the Almeida Festival, and numerous concerts with such ensembles as the Orchestra della Toscana, London Sinfonietta and the Composers Ensemble. In 1996 he conducted a new staging of Alexander Goehr's *Arianna*, which was recorded and released to great critical acclaim, and in 1998 made his debut at English National Opera, where he conducted *The Tales of Hoffmann*.



Laurie Feldman returns to her native San Francisco to stage *La Bohème*, following two years at the Metropolitan Opera where she directed *Ariadne auf Naxos* and *Rusalka*. Associated with the Company since 1981, her San Francisco Opera directing credits include *Lobengrin*, *Die Walküre*, *Das Rheingold*, *Götterdämmerung*, *Rusalka*, *La Fille du Régiment* (student matinee presentation), the SFO premiere of Rossini's *Otello*, and the 1993 Merola Opera Program production of *Falstaff*.

Feldman has also staged productions at Wolf Trap (*Falstaff*), Houston Grand Opera (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*), Florida Grand Opera (*Un Ballo in Maschera*), Santa Fe Opera (*La Traviata*), Calgary Opera (*Der Fliegende Holländer*) and Washington Opera (*Fidelio*). She has worked as co-director with John Copley on productions of *Eugene Onegin* for the Icelandic Opera and *Hänsel und Gretel* for Los Angeles Opera. In Europe, she has been on the production staff at the Oper der Stadt Köln and at Munich's Bavarian State Opera. Later this season she will return to the Met to direct *La Traviata*.

MICHAEL YEARGAN is a professor of stage design at the Yale School of Drama and the resident designer for the Yale Repertory Theatre, where he has designed more than 50 productions. Since his San Francisco Opera debut with the 1993 staging of *I Puritani*, his designs have been seen here in new productions of *La Bohème*



(summer 1996), *Carmen* (1996-97, 1998 *Femmes Fatales* Festival), *Madama Butterfly* (summer 1997, 1998-99), *Rigoletto* (1997-98) and the world premiere staging of *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1998-99). Yeargan's North American opera credits include designs for the Metropolitan Opera (*Ariadne auf Naxos*, *Otello*, *Così fan tutte*, *Susannah*); Los Angeles Opera (*Stiffelio*, *Hänsel und Gretel*); Lyric Opera of Chicago (*Antony and Cleopatra*, *Susannah*, *Nabucco*); Dallas Opera (*Vanessa*, *Rigoletto*, *Bohème*); San Diego Opera (*Aida*); Houston Grand Opera (*Carousel*, *Susannah*); and Glimmerglass Opera (world premiere of *Central Park*, *La Finta Giardiniera*, *Butterfly*), among others. Internationally, he has designed productions for Welsh National Opera (*Beatrice and Benedict*, *Eugene Onegin*, *Norma*, *Bohème*, *The Merry Widow*, *Cavalleria Rusticana*, *Pagliacci*); Covent Garden (*Stiffelio*, *Simon Boccanegra*, *Aida*, *Attila*); Scottish Opera (*La Forza del Destino*, *Bohème*); Théâtre Musical de Paris (*Die Zauberflöte*); Frankfurt Opera (*Così fan tutte*) and Opera Australia (*Werther*, *La Traviata*, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*). Yeargan has also designed New York productions of Terrence McNally's *Bad Habits* and *The Ritz*, and has worked extensively with the New York Shakespeare Festival, American Repertory Theatre and at London's West End. He is the set designer of Harbison's *The Great Gatsby*, which receives its world premiere at the Met this season.



WALTER MAHONEY is the Costume Shop Manager for San Francisco Opera who celebrated his 50th anniversary with the Company in 1994. He has designed new costumes for the Company's productions of *La Bohème* (1996, 1993), *Faust* (1995), *Tannhäuser* (1994), *Die Meistersinger* (1993), *L'Elisir d'Amore* (1992) and *Manon Lescaut* (1988), the same year he interpreted the late Nicola Benois's costume designs for *Maometto II*. Also for San Francisco Opera productions, he has designed costumes especially for Ruth Ann Swenson (*Roméo et Juliette*), Mirella Freni (*Manon Lescaut*), Frederica von Stade (*La Sonnambula*), Marilyn Horne (*Samson et Dalila*), Katia Ricciarelli (*La Traviata*), Renata Scotto (*Werther*) and Ghena Dimitrova (*Il Trovatore*). The native San Franciscan began his local association in 1943 in the Wardrobe Department, and worked with Goldstein & Company, the then-supplier of costumes for San Francisco Opera, until 1971. Since then, he has concentrated most of his efforts on the San Francisco Opera Costume Shop.



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 our 1999 Ring 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*, in addition to the *Femmes Fatales* Festival's *L'Incoronazione di Poppea* and *Carmen*. 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* (nominated for an Emmy Award), *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, Dallas Opera, Washington Opera (*Dangerous Liaisons*), Santa Fe Opera (*Emmeline*, also televised on PBS), New York's Mary Anthony Dance Theatre and Ballet Arizona. Lighting system consulting projects include San Francisco's renovated War Memorial Opera House and Het Muziektheater in Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

La Bohème

Photos taken in rehearsal
by Marty Sohl

Because of the tight printing schedule,
we are unable to feature performers
from all casts of this year's *La Bohème*.

(L. to r.) Luis Lima, James Westman, John Ames, Armando Gama





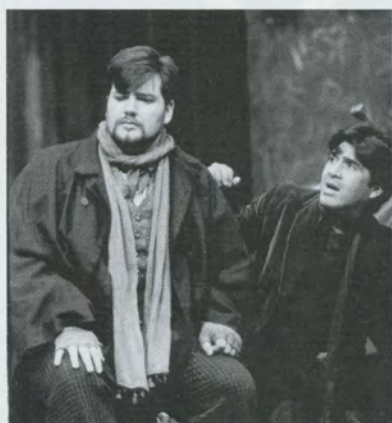
Rosalind Sutherland



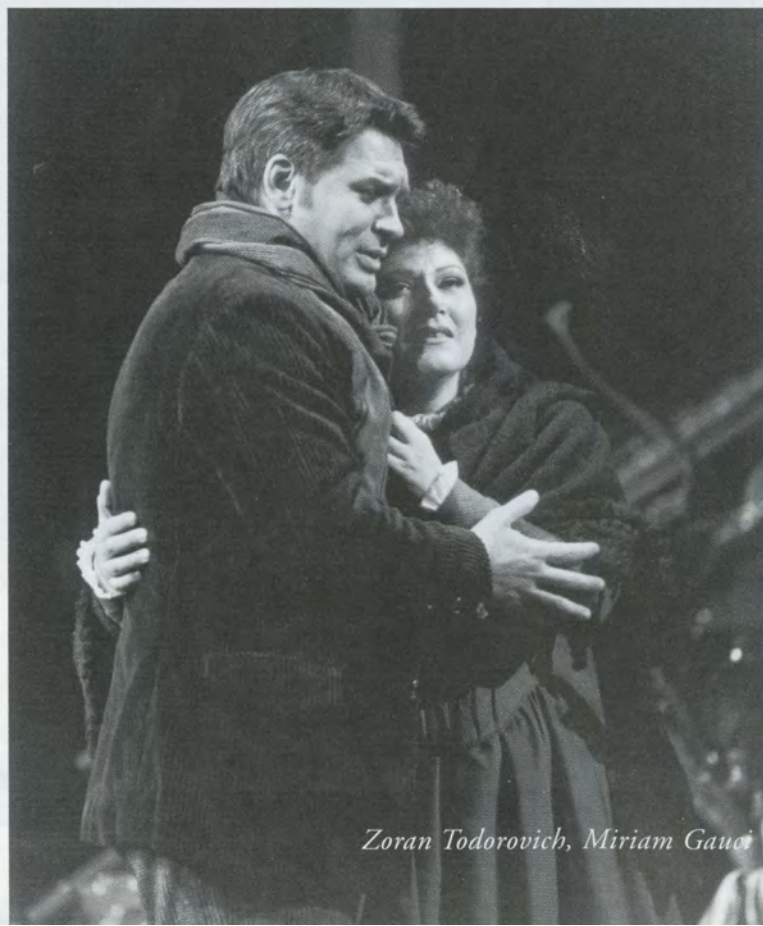
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James Westman, Luis Lima



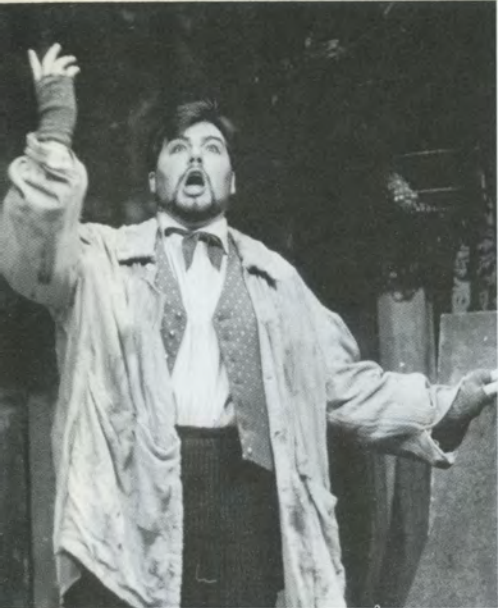
Rosalind Sutherland, Luis Lima



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Act II: San Francisco Opera Chorus and Supernumeraries



John Relyea, David Okerlund, Alfredo Daza, Zoran Todorovich



John Relyea



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ABOUT *LA BOHÈME*

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Mimi's failing health (no longer just an erotic turn-on for him). They have in fact run away from each other. At the end of the act they concede that they must part but put off the decision because winter spent alone — that terrible cold that penetrates the spirit as well as the bones — is an unbearable thought. Then, at the beginning of Act 4 we learn that Mimi has been kept in style by a rich viscount, but we soon find out that he has thrown her out — ravaged by illness she has lost her sexual allure — and she comes back to Rodolfo's garret to die.² In sum, in Act 1 Mimi is alive and at the end of Act 4 she is dead, and that is really all the story there is. *La Bohème* is a curiously plotless opera.

And that is no wonder when we consider the source, Henry Murger's oft-mentioned but rarely read — and delightful — *Scènes de la vie de bohème*.³ These *Scènes* are just that, twenty-two sketches or episodes that appeared in 1848 as a serial in *Le Corsaire-Satan*, were adapted for the stage in 1849 by Murger and Théodore Barrière, and published as a book in 1851. They describe the life of the Bohemian artists and writers, of whom Murger, who was born in 1822, was one. Several of the characters occur in more than one chapter, and the opera-lover leafing through the pages of the *Scènes* will recognize the names of Rodolphe, Marcel, Schaunard, Colline, Mimi, Musette and even M. Benoît. Murger drew from life, and virtually all the originals of his characters have been identified: Rodolphe is a self-portrait, down to the detail of describing his head as being "as bald as a knee," but for the rest, he availed himself of an artist's freedom to alter, mix, and compound.

The *Scènes* were translated into Italian in 1859, badly cut, and again, this time complete, in 1872. This later translation was reprinted in 1890, and that is the version through which Puccini, whose French was never better than approxi-

mate, got to know the book, though probably not until the winter of 1892-93. At the beginning of that winter he had completed *Manon Lescaut*, which would bring him his first big success, a success that was the sweeter for his having dared to compete with Jules Massenet's *Manon* of 1884, and he was looking for new material. (It has been accurately observed that Puccini spent more time looking for librettos than setting them.) At one point he was working on two operas simultaneously, *La Bohème* and *La Lupa* (*The She-Wolf*), the latter based on a novel by Giovanni Verga, with whose *Cavalleria Rusticana* Puccini's younger rival Pietro Mascagni had scored a stunning success in 1890. And not to forget *Buddha*, a project that also occupied Puccini briefly but intensely about this time.

The *Bohème* librettists, enlisted partly by Puccini himself, partly by his publisher, Giulio Ricordi, were Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa, both of whom had been part of the *Manon Lescaut* work force. Illica's task was to work out the scenario in broad outlines while Giacosa, an older man and a playwright and *littérateur* of some distinction in his own right, was responsible for the detail work and the versification. The two writers and the composers regularly maddened each other, but they got the job done — superbly — and not least because all three were able to give in at certain crucial moments. Some thanks are also due to Ricordi for his diplomatic skill and a few specific contributions. They worked together again on *Tosca* (1900) and *Madama Butterfly* (1904), and had Giacosa not died in 1906, this formidable team would undoubtedly have continued their work together.

To draw a coherent and shapely libretto from the vivid but non-linear *Scènes* was hard, but the Murger-Barrière dramatization at least showed it could be done, even though the play itself was

² The garret is of course not just Rodolfo's but the communal pad as well of the painter Marcello, the musician Schaunard, and the philosopher Colline. Marcello and his long-time off-and-on love Musetta maintained their stormy household in a tavern at the edge of town in Act 3, but that relationship has suffered one of its periodic collapses, and Marcello has returned to the garret. Details of living arrangements are not altogether clear in *La Bohème*. When Rodolfo and Mimi were living together, did she join him and the boys in their commune or did Rodolfo move into Mimi's *bianca cameretta*?

³ Murger's name appears in variant spelling in different sources: I have seen Henri as well as Henry, Mürger as well as Murger. His tombstone at the Montmartre Cemetery says Henry Murger, and I take that as authoritative, even though he would not have had the opportunity to proofread it himself.

never considered as the basis for a text. One reason was financial: Barrière's heirs were still around, and an adaptation of *La Vie de bohème* would have entailed hefty fees. Puccini's central concern was Mimi's illness and death: like Murger-Rodolphe-Rodolfo, he had a certain *faible* for the vulnerable *femme fragile*. And it was in creating the character of Mimi that Illica was at his most boldly interventionist with respect to his literary source. Though she does die at the end, Murger's Mimi is a pretty tough number, and distinctly promiscuous all along; the delicate Mimi who touches our hearts in the opera is based more on a character called Francine, who appears in just one chapter of the *Scènes*. (Someone had a good ear: Mimi is a better name for singing.)

The outcome was a wonderfully original opera, something the extreme familiarity of *La Bohème* can keep us from noticing and appreciating. Puccini could have called it a Conversation Piece, the designation Richard Strauss would use for *Capriccio* nearly half a century later. Its essence is rapid exchanges, even telescoped and superimposed exchanges, occasionally halted in a freeze-frame, and early audiences found the speed of exchange in the scene at the Café Momus bewildering. One doesn't immediately think of *La Bohème* as resembling Verdi's *Falstaff*, whose premiere took place just eight days after that of Puccini's *Manon Lescaut*; nonetheless, *Falstaff*, about which people complained that it lacked arias, was a model Puccini studied carefully and used to his profit and unobtrusively.

Which brings me for a moment to the difficult subject of *La Bohème* by Puccini's slightly older rival Ruggero Leoncavallo, who had hit the jackpot in a big way with *Pagliacci* in 1890 and who had been one of the *Manon Lescaut* librettists. The story of how both men simultaneously came to compose a *Bohème* is interesting and it does not show either man in an entirely good light, but this is not the moment to tell it. Leoncavallo's *La Bohème* scored a respectable success

when it was introduced in Venice fifteen months after the premiere of Puccini's work in Turin; in fact it got rather the better press of the two, but it soon dropped out of sight.⁴ Leoncavallo was a clever and a learned composer, and his *La Bohème* has some moments of beguiling lyric melody. Over all, though, he got it wrong when he decided to write it as an opera of more or less lyric set pieces with a lot of rather conventional connective tissue. The material, which Leoncavallo himself cast into a libretto, resists it; the effect is stiff and clumsy. To listen to Leoncavallo's *Bohème* — and that does have its rewards — is to appreciate anew Puccini's genius, which is not just a matter of his more inspired melodies and more inventive orchestration, but of his more acute sense of the content as a whole.⁵

But back to Puccini. Even the three famous arias — Rodolfo's and Mimi's self-portraits in Act 1 and Mimi's attempt at a farewell in Act 3, "*Donde lieta uscì*," — are intimate conversation pieces, the latter rising to *forte* for just two single measures, and all three end softly. Apropos the conversational style in *La Bohème*, it is interesting to hear how great a role *parlando* (speaking) plays and for the score-reader to observe how meticulous Puccini's notation is for the many nuanced degrees between real singing and real speech. (Most of these subtleties are lost in performance.) A historic vignette I wish I could have witnessed was the meeting at the Pitti Palace in Florence in 1924 between Puccini and Arnold Schönberg, an event recounted to me by Luigi Dallapiccola, who did witness it as a twenty-year-old student, watching in awe but too shy to approach either of the great musicians. Schönberg was on tour with an ensemble that performed his magical *Pierrot lunaire*, that early *locus classicus* of "Sprechgesang," that strangely expressive half-way house between speech and song that he made so much his own. All his life, Puccini was alert both to whatever

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⁴ Massenet's *Manon* and Puccini's *Manon Lescaut* are the only instance of two successful standard-repertoire operas on the same subject.

⁵ Leoncavallo, too, had studied *Falstaff*, and one of his ensembles, "*Ed ora vengano*" in Act 2, is virtually a page torn out of Verdi's comedy.

⁶ Was Puccini teasing Leoncavallo here? Benoit's "*Si può? (May I?)*" echoes the words, already famous, with which Tonio, sticking his head through the curtain, begins *Pagliacci*.

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ABOUT LA BOHÈME

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was new in music, ready to absorb what he might be able to use, and he was interested in all ways of articulating words in music, and he knew about *Pierrot*, which Schönberg had composed before the war. Even so, it is amazing that ill as he was — he succumbed to throat cancer eight months later — and beginning to despair over finishing *Turandot*, Puccini would have undertaken the slow journey from his home in Torre del Lago to Florence to hear the music of his controversial younger Austrian colleague. Dallapiccola described how the two men had stood in a corner and spoken quietly for a very long time, presumably in halting French. For Schönberg, it was an honor he never forgot.

Except of course for the Rodolfo-Mimi duets that bring down the curtain at the ends of the first and third acts, the other solos and ensembles don't have formal closes but are folded into whatever comes next. In some ways, Musetta's waltz-aria in the Momus scene is in this respect the most interesting of all. Puccini recycled several pre-*Bohème* musical ideas of his own for this opera — San Francisco Symphony audiences were quite startled six years ago to hear passages familiar from *La Bohème* when the Orchestra played an early *Capriccio sinfonico* — and this aria is one of them. Isolated as a concert piece or on recording, it turns out not to be a terribly interesting piece, not even when sung by artists as captivating as Gueden, Muzio, Schöne, or Welitsch, but in context — and I mean not only the dramatic but also the aural context — it is wonderful. It is the comments of Alcindoro, Musetta's embarrassed escort, and of Marcello, her once and future lover whom she is trying to tease and torment and recapture (he is the only man of the dozens she has been with that she ever loved) that turn her song into a vivid, three-dimensional object and into another self-portrait. It is possible to stop for applause after Musetta's flourish with the high B, but the music really wants to rush right on.

An aspect of Puccini's compositional planning that has both puzzled and moved me concerns something he would not have expected ever to hear nor, on one level, ever have wanted to hear. I mean what happens after Rodolfo's and Mimi's arias in Act 1. We who know *La Bohème* from recordings as well as from live per-

formance know the breath-stopping effect of the violins' *pianissimo* E-natural that follows so mysteriously upon the last A-flat chord of "*Che gelida manina*," preparing us for our glimpse of Mimi's so different world. And when Mimi finishes her song with her bit of blushing and self-conscious patter, Marcello's impatient call from downstairs, "*Ehi! Rodolfo!*," all but cuts into her last words. But in the opera house there is — and should be — applause, and those details go for nothing. Yet it fascinates me that Puccini took pains over them, as though anticipating a time of tapes, LPs, and CDs.

Something else we can experience in the scene I described at the beginning is Puccini's way of presenting characters first as disembodied voices. Our first sense of Mimi is her timid "*Scusi*," sung through the closed door of Rodolfo's garret. Earlier, Benoit, the landlord, sang his first words from the other side of the same door.⁶ In Act 2, the toy-vendor Parpignol is first heard off-stage in Act 2, and Musetta makes her presence known in Act 3 by singing a phrase from her waltz from inside the tavern (Ricordi's ingenious idea). Later, Tosca and Cio-Cio-San will present themselves as voices before we see them. Altogether, Puccini delights in the fact that a theater is a big three-dimensional space, something he shares with Wagner, whose music he knew well, and it gave him enormous pleasure to work not only on the off-stage singing in *La Bohème* but also the off- and on-stage band music and the sounds of the awakening city in Act 3.

Puccini was especially proud of Act 4. He liked to boast that he had been the first to begin the opening and final acts with the same music, responding to the parallel situations his librettists had presented to him: Rodolfo and Marcello disheartened, about the cold in Act 1, about the defection of their girl friends in Act 4 (to which they briefly and unconvincingly pretend to be indifferent); the arrival of food, a feast in Act 1 because Schanard has earned some unexpected francs, a single herring in Act 4; high-jinks, interrupted by Benoit with his demands for the rent in Act 1, by the arrival of Musetta and the dying Mimi in Act 4; in both, a tender scene between Rodolfo and Mimi, but with vastly different outcomes. That difference is symbolized by the play of light in the two

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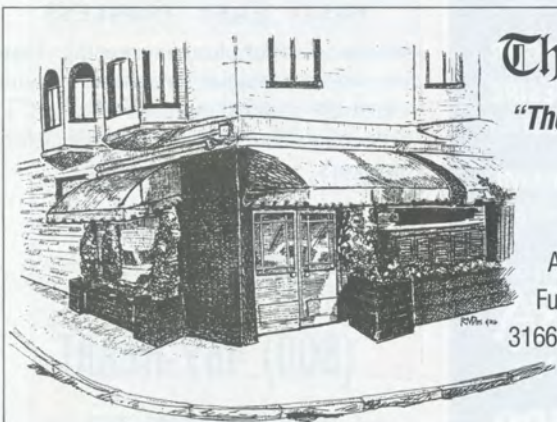
ABOUT LA BOHÈME

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scenes: in the one, the moonlight that suddenly floods the room and surrounds her face like a nimbus, celebrated in the orchestra by a hushed and shimmering A-major chord, set in its most vulnerable distribution, with E in the bass; in the other, the glare of spring sunlight from which Rodolfo has to shield Mimi's eyes by improvising a curtain. But that "same" opening music is made subtly different by its orchestral coloring, as grey as the Parisian sky at the beginning, feverishly bright when it returns.

And having seen what Wagner had done in *Götterdämmerung*, Puccini, operating of course on a much less ambitious scale, makes virtually his entire last act a recapitulation of earlier music. As lovers will, Rodolfo and Mimi revisit their first encounter, and Mimi reveals that she knew Rodolfo had pocketed her key. ("I was helping destiny along," he explains.) The strains of "*Che gelida manina*" and "*Mi chiamano Mimi*" are reduced now to the most fragile, translucent, incorporeal of specters. (That is when the last die-hards in the audience go to pieces.) And always, as throughout the opera, the story of the contrast of cold and warmth.

The story goes that Puccini wept when he came to compose Mimi's death. In all that company, she dies alone, the moment itself unnoticed by anyone on stage, remarked only by the orchestra in a B-minor chord for a few woodwinds and horns, with a *pppp* cymbal stroke. Perhaps he did weep, but the sources are not impeccably reliable. But we know for sure that when she dies, he drew a little skull and crossbones on her now empty stave in the score: as well as being an intensely emotional and erotically susceptible man, Puccini was always the superb and knowing craftsman, and as such by necessity a bit distanced. *La Bohème*, in which Puccini came truly of age as an artist (at thirty-seven!), is a masterwork we too easily take for granted, a work in which he created four fascinatingly and sometimes exasperatingly complex characters — the two couples, Rodolfo and Mimi, Marcello and Musetta — and it is a song about the frailty of love and happiness, about the ephemerality of what Jorge Luis Borges called our "wondrous, fragile life." And for more than a hundred years now, we have brought our love to *La Bohème* perhaps most of all because it is a deeply truthful work. □



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LOOKING FORWARD

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THE WORKSHOP

In early August of this year, an enthusiastic group of singers (including several of the actual cast members), Patrick Summers, Terrence McNally, Joe Mantello, Sam Flemming and I got together at the Opera House for a full week of workshops and a complete read-through of the opera. It was one of the greatest learning experiences of my life and one of the special privileges of being the Company's composer-in-residence: the San Francisco Opera made it possible for us to try all of this out over a year in advance of the premiere.

Hearing the music jump off of the page and into our ears just made it all come alive. Ideas were flying, and with the singers there, we were able to try different things: change words, play with tempo, adjust vocal registers, check dramatic impact and flow, and so on. The final read-through went amazingly well and turned out to be a deeply moving event with several of the guests listening in tears throughout the afternoon. Very exciting. If it had that impact after one week of rehearsal with piano accompaniment and with no staging at all — well, what will it be like with a full orchestra and complete staging?

At the time of the workshop, I hadn't finished the final ten minutes of music. After hearing the full read-through, I had the piece completed in another week: it all just came at me so clearly. The following week, I was given a full hour of orchestra time, with Patrick Summers conducting, to read through as much of the score as was completed. Yet another great experience and the members of the San Francisco Opera Orchestra were so helpful and enthusiastic about the project, too.

Now, every day, I'm orchestrating and constantly rethinking and double checking my work so that by the time October 2000 rolls around, the piece will be the best it can be. It feels like a long time, and yet like no time at all! As I complete this article, it is October 7, exactly one year before the opening.

It has been possible for all of this to happen because Lotfi Mansouri believed in my work enough to create the CHASE Composer-in-Residence position and put all the necessary tools and time at my disposal. All of this is part of his greater vision of constantly adding to

the repertoire, investing in young talent, exploring new horizons and being a trailblazer as opera evolves. It has been the most incredible journey of my life with more and more people joining in every day. What a thrill to think that it will continue right up through opening night next year.

What lies between now and then? That's up to the fates. There's a lot of work to be done and music to be learned. Personally, I'll be home at my desk. But, I've got my tux all ready for next October. See you there. □

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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! Valuable corporate recognition and benefits are available at all levels of sponsorship and can be customized to meet your partnership goals. Benefits may include:

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San Francisco Opera will host a special evening of opera for your valued clients, key employees or special guests with elegant amenities including:

- * 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.
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SPECIAL HOSPITALITY EVENTS

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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All partners receive recognition in the Corporate Council section of every program magazine, reaching more than 284,000 patrons. Some partnerships offer special publicity opportunities which may include acknowledgment (or logo placement) in press releases or on ticket brochures, ticket envelopes, lobby signs, special event invitations, program inserts, radio spots, newspaper ads, and more.

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Partnerships can be designed to offer prime placement for your company's product or information about its services.

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According to level of sponsorship, partners receive a host of special services including:

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- * Opportunity to purchase reserved parking for any opera performance.
- * Copy of the Season Book, previewing the main season productions.

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

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA CENTER

The Opera Center is the Research & Development wing of San Francisco Opera, a training ground for the world's most promising opera artists. One of ten such professional artist development programs in the world, the Opera Center serves over 100,000 people annually through a progression of artist development programs, performance opportunities, and outreach and education programs. Following training through the Center, artists perform not only at San Francisco Opera, but also with major opera companies throughout the world.

MEROLA OPERA PROGRAM

An eleven-week summer apprentice program for 25 to 30 singers, stage directors and coach-accompanists designed to discover, nurture and train the very best talent in the world of opera.

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One of two professional national touring companies in America, Western Opera Theater brings live performances to rural communities and major metropolitan areas across the United States, serving some 45,000 individuals annually.

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A performance-oriented, year-round residency program for advanced singers.

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Four Opera Center singers are presented annually in recital debuts drawing on literature from Baroque masterpieces to newly commissioned works.

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The Adler Resident Artists stage a chamber or unusual work each year in intimate venues.

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH PROGRAMS

Through interactive education and outreach programs, San Francisco Opera cultivates knowledge and appreciation of opera and its component arts among students of all ages, educators and the general public, reaching nearly 50,000 people each year.

ADLER RESIDENT ARTISTS PROGRAM

Founded in 1977 as the San Francisco/Affiliate Artists-Opera program, the Adler Resident Artists program is a performance-oriented residency for advanced singers that offers individual training as well as roles in San Francisco Opera's international season. Under the guidance of the San Francisco Opera Center staff, the Adler Resident Artists are directed towards roles of increasing importance throughout their residency period and in future San Francisco Opera productions.

San Francisco Opera gratefully acknowledges the individuals listed below, each of whom has made a generous commitment to sponsor an Adler Resident Artist for performance year 1999. For information regarding sponsorship opportunities, please telephone (415) 565-3215.

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The Merola Opera Program is dedicated to the continuing education and professional training of the finest young operatic talent and the development of this talent into professional opera singers, coaches and stage directors of the highest artistic caliber.

The Merola Opera Program is an integral part of the San Francisco Opera Center, but operates under a separate board of directors and receives no financial support from San Francisco Opera or the Opera Center.

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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.

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

On permanent display in the Opera House lower bar:

A CELEBRATION OF SINGERS

Great artists at San Francisco Opera, 1962-1997

Stage photography by Robert Cahen

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

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

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

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

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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.

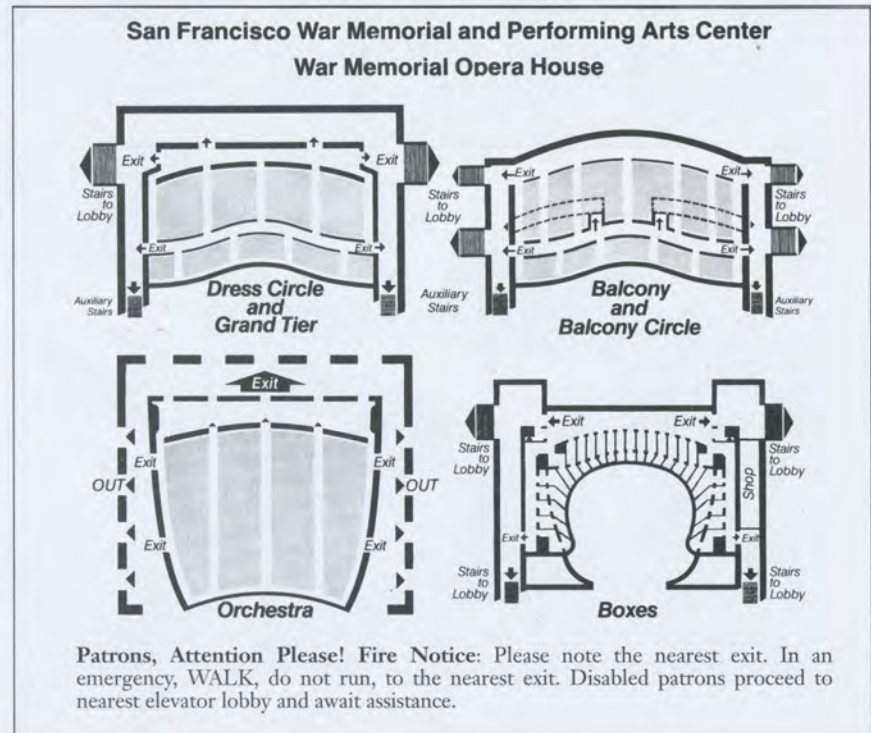
IF YOU DRIVE TO THE OPERA and park in the Performing Arts Garage, remember that you can avoid some of the congestion by using the Gough Street entrance to the facility (between Fulton and Grove).

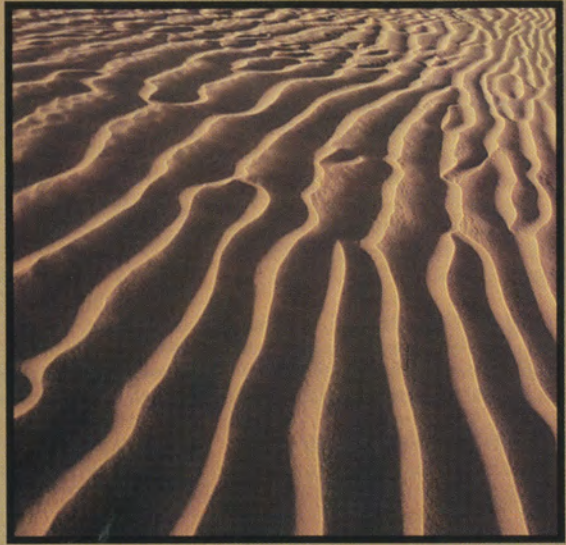
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Sponsored by the San Francisco Opera Guild, house and backstage tours of the War Memorial Opera House will be conducted every half hour from 10 a.m. to 12 noon on weekdays and Saturdays; and every half hour from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. on Sundays.

Saturday, September 18
Saturday, October 2
Sunday, October 10
Tuesday, October 19
Thursday, October 28
Tuesday, November 2
Sunday, November 7
Saturday, November 20
Friday, November 26
Saturday, December 4
Wednesday, December 8
Sunday, January 9
Wednesday, January 12
Saturday, January 15
Saturday, June 3
Wednesday, June 7
Saturday, June 24

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San Francisco Opera

January 12, 2000

The role of Marcello in tonight's performance of
La Bobème will be sung by David Okerlund,
who is replacing the ailing James Westman.

