

Nabucco
(Nebuchadnezzar)

1999-2000

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PERFORMING ARTS®

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA MAGAZINE

Nabucco

1999/2000 Season

Vol. 77, No. 7

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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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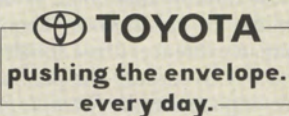


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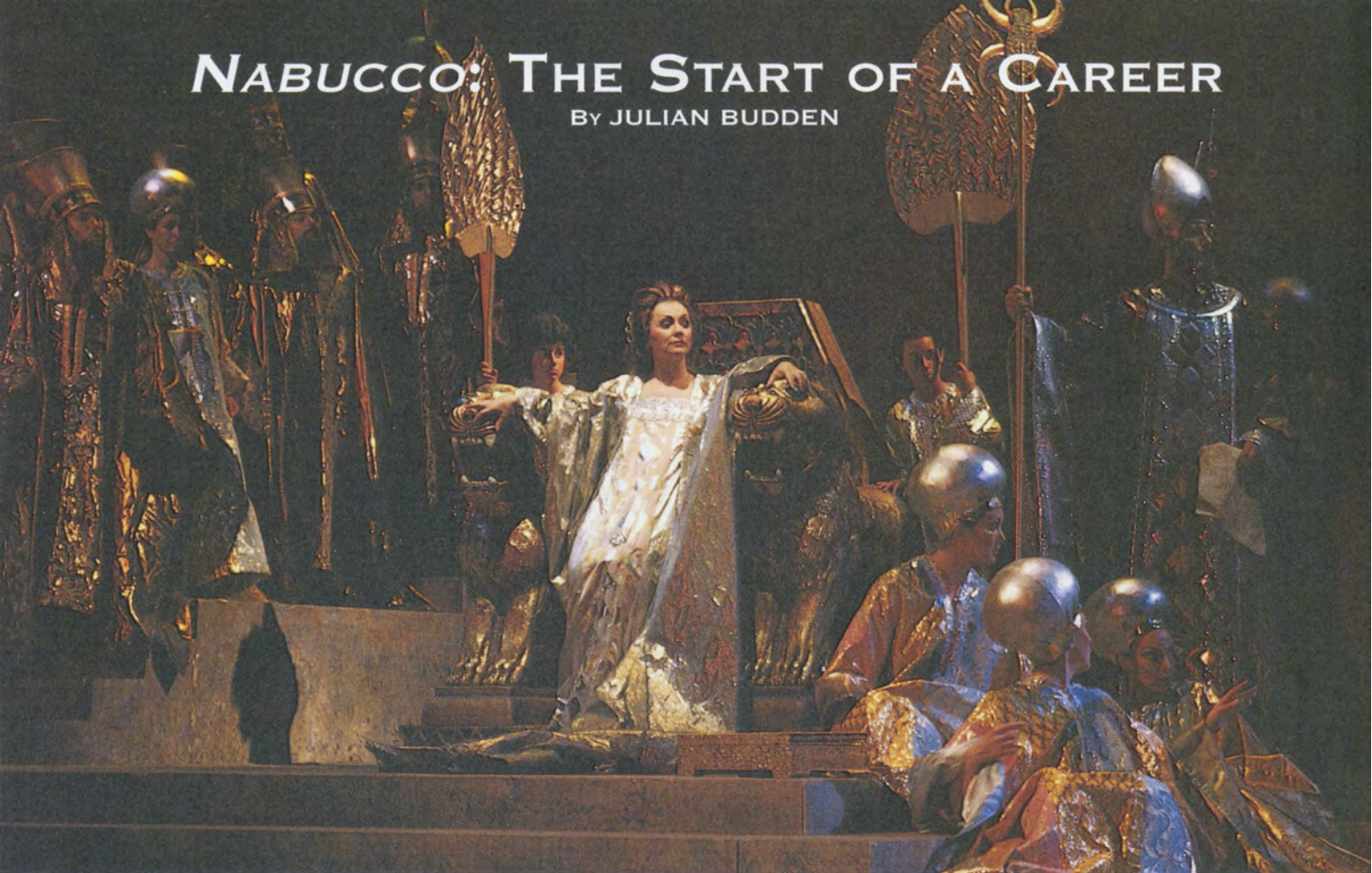
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NABUCCO: THE START OF A CAREER

BY JULIAN BUDDEN



SCHERL

The history of opera abounds in Ugly Ducklings: works which fail disastrously at their premiere but which survive to become cornerstones of the international repertoire. Obvious instances are Rossini's *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, Verdi's *La Traviata*, Bizet's *Carmen* and Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*. Bellini's *Norma*, too, had a frosty reception on its first night; and even Mozart's *Idomeneo*, now recognized as his supreme achievement in the *opera seria* vein, attracted little attention from the Munich press, intent at that time on the promotion of German musical drama. Not to be forgotten, however, are the operas which made their composers' names overnight, launching them immediately on the high road to immortality: Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana*, Puccini's *Manon Lescaut* and Britten's *Peter Grimes*. To their number belongs Verdi's *Nabucodonosor*, its title later shortened to *Nabucco*.

It is natural for such sensational events to be further dramatized in retrospect. We are told that Mascagni, scraping a precarious existence in the Adriatic town of Cerignola, had decided not to submit his one-act opera for the competition held in Rome, and that it was his wife

Julian Budden, internationally renowned musicologist, is the author of a landmark three-volume series, The Operas of Verdi.



SCHERL

San Francisco Opera's Nabucco Abigailles included Olivia Stapp in 1982 (top) and Mara Zampieri in 1987.

who, without her husband's knowledge, stole the manuscript and sent it to the adjudicators by the latest possible post. Verdi, too, allowed elements of legend to accrue around the genesis of his first national success. True, his situation was as unenviable as Mascagni's at the time of *Cavalleria Rusticana*. Having made a promising start at the age of 26 (by no means early in those days) with *Oberto*,

Conte di San Bonifacio at Milan's La Scala, he was then commissioned to write a comic opera for the same theater. During its composition his wife died, but the impresario refused to release him from his contract. *Un Giorno di Regno*, the setting of a libretto written more than twenty years earlier by Felice Romani for the Austrian composer Adalbert Gyrovetz, was a fiasco. The earliest



JEANETTE



JEANETTE



DE MONTE



SCHIERL

The title role of Nabucco has had some interesting interpreters at the San Francisco Opera in years past: (above, far left) Ettore Bastianini and (above, center) Cornell MacNeil in 1961; (above, right) Tito Gobbi in 1964; Piero Cappuccilli in 1987.

account of what followed was given by Verdi to the writer Michele Lessona, who included it in his book, *Volere è potere* (Where there's a will...), an edifying treatise along the lines of Samuel Smiles's *Self-Help*. It is quite untrue, Lessona tells us, that, as many of his biographers assert, Verdi spent the next few months in intensive study, so as to acquire the skill needed for his next opera. On the contrary, he did what he had never done before. He shut himself up in his room in Milan and devoted his time to the reading of bad novels, until on a cold winter's day a chance meeting with the impresario Bartolomeo Merelli resulted in his being handed Solera's libretto of *Nabucco*, which Otto Nicolai, also under contract to La Scala, had turned down.

"Having arrived home late" — the words are Lessona's — "and lit the lamp,

Verdi listlessly opened those pages, and his eye fell on the chorus of enslaved Hebrews in the third act:

"Va, pensiero, sull'ali dorate."

Straightaway he heard the biblical *Super flumina Babylonis*. He threw down the manuscript and went to bed; but he was unable to sleep for thinking all night about that chorus.

Next morning, he read through the whole drama; allowing his mind to range beyond the verses and the libretto, he perceived, ardent reader of the Bible that he was, all the grandeur that lay within the concept. He didn't know how to take up composition once more. He tried to force himself as a lover forces himself to put up with the difficult moods of his beloved. However, he returned the manuscript to Merelli the same day.

"And so?" Merelli asked him.

"Perfect for music," he replied, "a marvelous plot."

"Then take it and think about it."

Verdi hesitated and didn't want to do so, but the good impresario abruptly rose to his feet, thrust the manuscript into his pocket, placed his hands on his shoulders, pushed him gently from the room and closed the door behind him.

The young composer went home with his drama, but he threw it into a corner without a further glance and for five months went on reading bad novels.

Then, one fine day towards the end of May, he found that blessed drama once more in his hands; he read again a final scene, the death of Abigail (which was later removed), moved almost mechanically towards the piano, which had been silent for so long, and set that scene to music.

The ice was broken.

Like one who has come out of a dark, stuffy prison to breathe again the pure air of the fields, Verdi found himself once more in the atmosphere he loved. Three months later *Nabucco* was composed, finished and ready, just as we know it today.

"That is my story," Verdi declared to his friend, Count Arrivabene, "as true as true can be."

Well, not quite. The reference to "bad novels" is clearly no more than a rebuttal of the notion that after the failure of his opera buffa he *needed* to study. For during those apparently barren months, *Oberto* was enjoying a modest circulation and had to be adapted to new casts with

NABUCCO: THE START OF A CAREER



"Va, pensiero" at the San Francisco Opera in 1982 and 1987: Paul Plisbka and the San Francisco Opera Chorus.

SCHERL

the addition of extra and alternative numbers, none of which found their way into print (so much for the "silent piano"). Nor is it true that Abigail's death scene was "removed"; it remained in all the published scores, but for most of the century it was omitted in practice, possibly being thought irrelevant to the dramatic issue. Not until the Verdi renaissance of the 1920s was it regularly revived; and indeed, the opera is the poorer without it. But even if it was the first piece to be composed, there is no reason to doubt Verdi's statement — amplified in an account given ten years later to the publisher Giulio Ricordi and printed in Arthur Pougin's biography of the composer — that the Hebrew chorus was the seed from which the opera sprang. Its musical setting is so clearly the central trunk of the score, from which the various numbers extend like so many branches.

The elevation of the operatic chorus into primary dramatic status is a legacy

of French grand opera, particularly evident in the three works that Rossini composed for the Académie Royale de Musique (the Opéra's official title in those days): *Le Siège de Corinthe*, *Moïse et Pharaon* and *Guillaume Tell*. All three made their way into Italy translated and shorn of their ballets. *Nabucco* follows in their footsteps, if at a distance. The opening scene ("Gli arredi festivi") in which the despairing and terrified Hebrews are rallied by their leader Zaccaria runs parallel to that of Rossini's *Moïse*, though it is more forceful and richer in melodic ideas than its predecessor. The "prophecy" that forms the complement to "Va, pensiero," replacing a love duet devised by the poet, was entirely Verdi's idea, obviously modeled on a similar scene in *Le Siège de Corinthe*, in which the priest Heros rouses the Greek population to resist the Turkish invader with a prospect of future glory. Significantly, in the year of that opera's production (1826), the Greek War of Independence in which

Byron met his death was one of the great issues of the day. In 1842, when Austria dominated the Italian peninsula, the plight of the Hebrews under Assyrian rule had a certain political relevance, which would not have escaped the audience of Milan's La Scala.

Where Verdi departs from his Rossinian model is in his use of the *unison* chorus. Here, too, he had a precedent in the choral comment that greets Raimondo's horrifying tale of Arturo Bucklaw's murder on his wedding night ("O qual funesto avvenimento!") in *Lucia di Lammermoor*. But Donizetti's strain soon passes without special emphasis into full choral harmony. Verdi's "Va, pensiero" has to wait for a central episode ("Arpe d'or") to explode with electrifying effect into harmony. Nor is the unison chorus confined to a single number. It invades, as well as the "prophecy," both movements of Zaccaria's first aria ("D'Egitto là sui lidi") and, most unusually, the slow

Continued on page 56

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CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE

BY MALCOLM MOSHER, JR.



Nebuchadnezzar Carrying the Jews into Captivity — subject of an anonymous 19th-century etching. Nebuchadnezzar is shown in the background on a chariot; the prophet Jeremiah is in the foreground.

The setting for Verdi's *Nabucco* involves the fall of the kingdom of Judah, the sack of Jerusalem and its temple, and the Babylonian captivity of the Israelites. The libretto by Temistocle Solera, with some material taken from an earlier French play, is a combination of real historical references, biblical fiction (Book of Daniel), and 19th-century fantasy.

The lack of historical accuracy, of course, does not detract from this viable stage drama, and one cannot really fault the author of the libretto for muddling fact and fiction. The cuneiform script of Assyria and Babylonia had not yet been fully deciphered in 1841, and the study of the Egyptian hieroglyphic script was

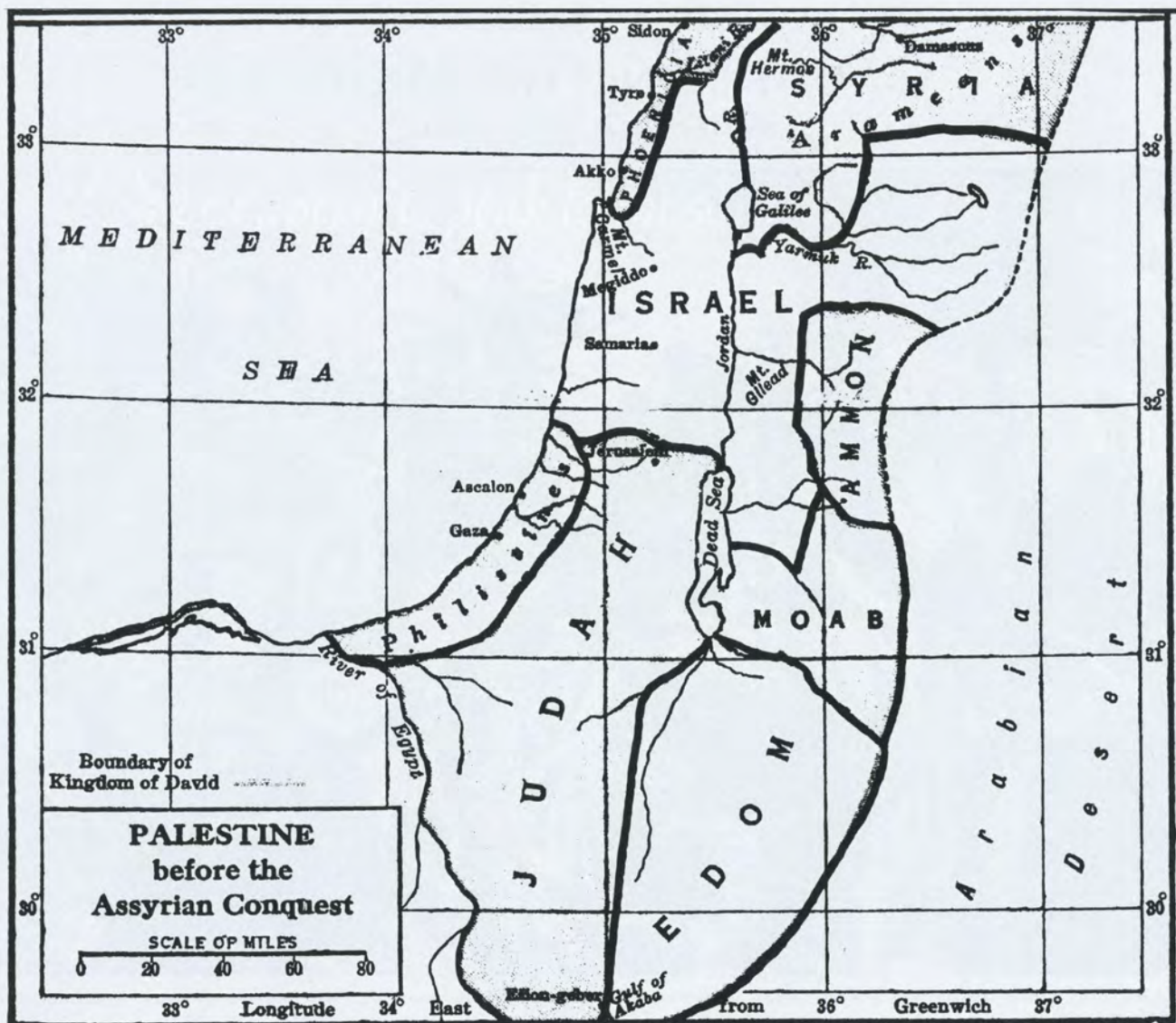
still in its relative infancy. Hence the Old Testament Books of 2 Kings, 2 Chronicles, and Jeremiah were the librettist's primary sources for the setting of the opera, with the first century AD *Antiquitates Judaicae* of Josephus as a secondary one. The actual historical era is fascinating and forms part of a vast canvas of political intrigue, shifting loyalties, religious zeal, and warfare that involved virtually the entire ancient Near East from 745–540 B.C., and those familiar only with the biblical account know only a fraction of the greater tale.

In the midst of this great struggle were the ancient kingdoms of Phoenicia, Philistia, Syria, Israel, Judah, Ammon, Moab, and Edom, which were located in the areas occupied by modern Lebanon, Syria, Israel, Jordan, and the Gaza strip (see maps on page 16, where the southern area is identified as Palestine). While this region was not wealthy during the ancient world in terms of natural

resources, it was nevertheless an area of tremendous importance and wealth because of its coastal seaports and its overland trade routes to the east. For this reason, the great powers of the ancient Near East coveted the area for nearly a thousand years.

The first of the great powers to conquer Palestine was Egypt during the late 16th century B.C., and Egypt dominated the area for much of the next three centuries. At its zenith, the Egyptian empire reached the Euphrates river to the east and southern Turkey to the north. Egypt, however, was not alone in recognizing the importance of Syria and Palestine. Soon other kingdoms tried to seize this territory for themselves, with the Hittites, based in Anatolia, being the most serious rival to the Egyptians. During the late 14th and early 13th centuries B.C., the Egyptians and Hittites engaged in continuous conflict over Syria and Palestine, and the petty kingdoms of the

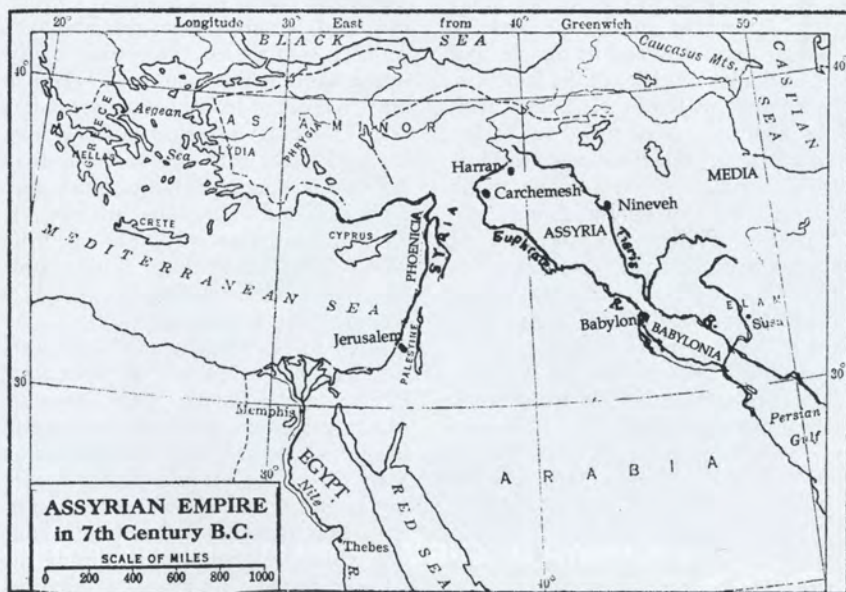
Malcolm Mosher, Jr. has been a frequent contributor of essays on history and opera for San Francisco Opera. He is also a lecturer on ancient Egyptian religion and is the author of 'The Papyrus of Hor' (NM EA 10479) with Papyrus MacGregor, to be published by the British Museum Press.



area were between the proverbial "rock and a hard place."

This was a "no win" situation for the local inhabitants of Syria and Palestine, who had little to gain and everything to lose. If a ruling political party installed by the Egyptians remained loyal to Egypt when the Hittites invaded, their leaders would be imprisoned or killed when the Hittites regained control by force of arms. The same result would happen when the Egyptians regained control. The Egyptian-Hittite conflict came to an end with the great battle of Qadesh in 1274 B.C., which ultimately led to a peace treaty whereby the Hittites ceded Palestine to the Egyptians, and the Egyptians ceded Syria to the Hittites. The treaty brought peace and stability to the area, although the inhabitants remained under foreign control.

By the 12th century, the Hittite kingdom had disappeared and Egypt entered a period of internal turmoil. This allowed



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Nebuchadnezzar's palace at Babylon as it looked after its recent excavation.

the local kingdoms in Palestine and Syria a respite from foreign control, and they flourished. Among the Israelites, this was the era of Saul, David, and Solomon. With the death of Solomon during the latter part of the 10th century, the Israelite kingdom split into two separate kingdoms — Israel and Judah. At that time, the Egyptians again flexed their military muscle in Palestine under the pharaoh Shoshenq (the biblical Shishak), but, not long after this, Egypt entered another period of internal turmoil, and the kingdoms in Palestine regained independence.

By 745, the mighty Assyrian empire began expanding westward from its capital at Nineveh, along the upper Tigris river in northern Iraq, thereby inaugurating the conflict that would engulf the ancient Near East for much of the next two centuries. The northern kingdoms of Syria and Israel were the first to be seized. Sennacherib became the Assyrian king in 705, and he immediately set about subduing the Phoenician coast. His ultimate goal was undoubtedly to seize Palestine, and his excuse for invad-

ing Palestine was provided by political intrigue involving Judah and Philistia. Hezekiah, the king of Judah, had apparently become allied with a political party in Philistia who deposed their king and then put their own man on the throne. The deposed king was sent to Judah in chains. The allies of the deposed king, however, appealed to Sennacherib, and the latter invaded under the pretense of restoring the king to power. Hezekiah appealed to Egypt, which was now under the rule of the Ethiopian 25th dynasty. The pharaoh responded by marching into Palestine to aid Hezekiah, but his army was defeated by the Assyrians, and Hezekiah was forced to sue for peace with Sennacherib.

Thus, Egypt was drawn into conflict with Assyria, and Sennacherib's two successors brought the conflict into Egypt itself, a country that had not been successfully invaded for nearly a millennium. In a series of campaigns, the Assyrian army penetrated deep into southern Egypt and even sacked the great temple of Karnak at Thebes (modern Luxor). Each time the Assyrian army withdrew,

however, the Egyptians regained control of their own territory. Eventually, a native Egyptian named Psamtik, whom the Assyrians had established as a puppet ruler in the Egyptian delta, threw out the Assyrian garrisons, united all of Egypt under his own rule, and proclaimed himself pharaoh (c. 650 B.C.).

It would appear that Ashurbanipal, the current Assyrian king, allowed Egypt to regain independence because he realized he could not maintain control over such a distant and powerful nation from Nineveh, and he also preferred to enter into a mutual alliance with Egypt. This brought another short period of peace and stability in Palestine, but in reality it was just the calm before the storm.

Babylon was located some 300 miles to the south of Nineveh and was occupied by a people known as the Chaldeans. The Assyrian empire included all of this territory, and for several decades a member of the royal Assyrian family was appointed as king of Babylonia in order to maintain tight Assyrian control over the area. After the death of Ashurbanipal, Assyria

Continued on page 60

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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/
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Opera in four acts by GIUSEPPE VERDI
Text by TEMISTOCLE SOLERA

Nabucco

(in Italian)

Conductor
Nello Santi

Production
Lotfi Mansouri

Set Designer
Ezio Frigerio*

Costume Designer
Maria-Luise Walek

Lighting Designer
Thomas J. Munn

Chorus Director
Ian Robertson

Musical Preparation
Susanna Lemberskaya
Adelle Eslinger
Bryndon Hassman
Ernest Fredric Knell
William Lacey
Philip Eisenberg

Prompter
Philip Eisenberg

Supertitles
Clifford Cranna

Assistant Stage Directors
Paula Williams
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Milan, March 9, 1842

First San Francisco Opera
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SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 27 AT 8:00
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 30 AT 8:00
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 3 AT 8:00
MONDAY, DECEMBER 6 AT 7:30
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 10 AT 8:00
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 12 AT 2:00

CAST

(in order of appearance)

<i>Zaccaria, High Priest of the Hebrews</i>	Roberto Scandiuzzi Giorgio Giuseppini (12/12)
<i>Ismaele, nephew of the Hebrew king</i>	Gwyn Hughes Jones*
<i>Fenena, Nabucco's actual daughter</i>	Elizabeth Bishop
<i>Abigaille, slave, Nabucco's adopted daughter</i>	Andrea Gruber*
<i>Anna, Zaccaria's sister</i>	Christina Lamberti†
<i>Nabucco, King of Babylon</i>	Paolo Gavanelli
<i>The High Priest of Baal</i>	John Ames†
<i>Abdallo, official of Nabucco's court</i>	Todd Geert†
<i>Soldiers, priests, citizens of Jerusalem and Babylon</i>	

*San Francisco Opera debut †1999–2000 Adler Fellow

TIME AND PLACE: 6th century B.C.; Jerusalem and Babylon

ACT I	The temple in Jerusalem
INTERMISSION	
ACT II	Scene 1 The royal apartments in Babylon
	Scene 2 A palace chamber
	Scene 3 A hall in the palace
INTERMISSION	
ACT III	Scene 1 The Royal Hall
	Scene 2 The banks of the Euphrates
ACT IV	Scene 1 The prison
	Scene 2 The Great Hall

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The performance will last approximately three hours.*

NABUCCO SYNOPSIS

ACT I

The people of Jerusalem lament their defeat at the hands of Nabucco (Nebuchadnezzar), the King of Babylon, but the Hebrew priest Zaccaria asks them to have faith. Ismaele, the nephew of the Hebrew king, brings the news of Nabucco's advance to the city, and is then left alone with Fenena, Nabucco's daughter, who is being held by the Hebrews as hostage. Ismaele has been in love with her ever since she rescued him from a Babylonian jail. They are interrupted by Abigaille, Fenena's adopted sister, who enters with an advance of Babylonian soldiers disguised as Hebrews. Abigaille also loves Ismaele, and she tells him that by returning her affection she can save his people. Ismaele rejects her and she leaves. Zaccaria returns, saying that the Babylonian troops are on their way to the temple; in a moment they arrive, led by Nabucco and Abigaille. Zaccaria threatens to kill Nabucco's daughter should her father desecrate the temple, but is prevented from doing so by Ismaele. Nabucco, enraged, orders the temple sacked and burned, and the Hebrews led into captivity.

ACT II

Fenena, appointed regent in Nabucco's absence, is envied by Abigaille who becomes even more resentful when she discovers a document proving that she is not the King's daughter, but a slave. She thinks of Ismaele, and then works herself into a rage, vowing to bring down her father, sister and herself before her true birth can be made known. The High Priest of Baal tells her that Fenena plans to liberate the captive Jews, and that Nabucco has been killed in battle, urging Abigaille to seize power herself.

Zaccaria goes to Fenena's chambers at her bidding and converts her to Judaism.

Nearby, the Hebrews are gathered in prayer. They demand punishment for Ismaele, who they feel betrayed them by setting Fenena free, but Zaccaria's sister Anna tells them of Fenena's conversion to Judaism. Nabucco's aide Abdallo brings the false

news of Nabucco's death and in a moment Abigaille enters to demand the crown from Fenena. Suddenly Nabucco comes in, seizes the crown and proclaims himself not only a king but a god. A bolt of lightning suddenly strikes him and renders him insane. Abigaille victoriously assumes the crown, announcing that the glory of Babylon is not yet dead.

ACT III

Abigaille is now regent, and she intends to have all the captive Jews put to death. The deranged Nabucco wanders in, confused at finding someone else on the throne. Taking advantage of Nabucco's mental state, she persuades him to sign a death warrant for the Hebrews, including Fenena. Upon signing, Nabucco realizes that Fenena will die. He tells Abigaille about her humble origin as a slave, but she destroys the only evidence of her birth. She then informs him that he is no longer King, but a prisoner.

On the banks of the Euphrates, the enslaved Hebrews lament their lost homeland. Zaccaria preaches to them, trying to lift their spirits, and predicts the downfall of Babylon. The aroused slaves raise their chains in defiance.

ACT IV

Nabucco wakes from a nightmare, his sanity restored, and sees Fenena being led to execution. A contrite man, he turns from Baal and prays for forgiveness from the God of the Hebrews. Abdallo, who has come to protect him, is overjoyed to find him recovered, and they leave to rescue Fenena.

The Hebrews prepare for death. Nabucco and some troops loyal to him arrive, the idol is destroyed, and Nabucco announces his conversion to Judaism. Abigaille, who in her remorse has taken poison, dies, calling for God's forgiveness. Zaccaria promises great glory to the follower of Jehovah, Nabucco, as all join in a prayer of thanksgiving.

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ARTIST PROFILES



While still a member of the Metropolitan Opera Studio in 1989, **ANDREA GRUBER** made her acclaimed professional debut in a performance of the Verdi Requiem with the Chicago Symphony led by James Levine at the Ravinia Festival. She made her European debut the following year as Leonora in Elijah Moshinsky's staging of *La Forza del Destino* with Scottish Opera. In the years since, the soprano has appeared in the title role of *Aida* at Covent Garden, Munich and the Berlin State Opera; as Amelia in *Un Ballo in Maschera* in Cologne and for the Deutsche Oper Berlin; and as a frequent guest at the Vienna State Opera where she has performed in *Forza, Ballo, Aida* and *Don Carlo*. Since her 1990 Metropolitan Opera debut in *Götterdämmerung*, her roles with that company have included *Aida*, the Amelias of both *Simon Boccanegra* and *Ballo*, and Elisabetta in *Don Carlo*. She sang her first performances of *Aida*, Elsa in *Lohengrin* and Chrysothemis in *Elektra* for Seattle Opera, and appeared as *Aida* with Houston Grand Opera. Engagements in the near future include *Attila* (Odabella) for her debut at the Lyric Opera of Chicago, a new staging of *La Forza del Destino* in Toulouse, and *Macbeth* (her first Lady Macbeth) under Bruno Bartoletti in Trieste. Orchestral appearances have included Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* and Mahler's Eighth Symphony under Levine, as well as the Verdi Requiem with Simon Rattle and the City of Birmingham Orchestra and with Herbert Blomstedt and the San Francisco Symphony. She has often performed Britten's *War Requiem*, which she has sung with Rattle as well as with Donald Runnicles in San Francisco and with André Previn for both the Royal Philharmonic and the Los Angeles Philharmonic. A native of New York City, Andrea Gruber is a graduate of the Manhattan School of Music.



ELIZABETH BISHOP, a 1994-95 Adler Fellow, was featured in four operas of San Francisco Opera's 1994 Fall Season, which included the role of Emilie in the world premiere production of *The Dangerous Liaisons*. (She sang the leading role of Marquise de Merteuil from the same opera for the Washington Opera last year.) In 1995, she was seen here as Flora in *La Traviata*, Tisbe in *La Cenerentola*, Siegrune in *Die Walküre*, and as Suzuki in *Madama Butterfly*. After appearing with the Company during the 1996-97 season in *Harvey Milk* and *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, she returned the following season for *Butterfly* and *Elektra*. The artist most recently appeared here as the Arts Patroness in *Lulu* and in several roles (Fricka, Wellgunde, Siegrune, Waltraute) during the 1999 Ring Festival. The mezzo has numerous credits for the Opera Center, among them the title role of Handel's *Ezio*, Helen in Tippett's *King Priam*, Meg Page in *Falstaff*, and Prince Orlofsky in *Die Fledermaus*. Elsewhere, she has appeared in *The Ghosts of Versailles* at the Metropolitan Opera after having made her Met debut in the 1993 production of *Death in Venice*. Among her most recent credits are her first Adalgisa in *Norma* and Suzuki for Opera Memphis, Ma Moss in Copland's *The Tender Land* with Virginia Opera, the Hostess in Wolf-Ferrari's *Sly* at Washington Opera, and Gertrude in *Hamlet* for Washington Concert Opera. In addition to being a featured soloist in the San Francisco Symphony Pops Concerts from 1992-95, Bishop has performed with other prominent orchestras singing

such diverse repertoire as the Bach *Magnificat*, Ligeti's Requiem, Handel's *Messiah*, Mahler's Eighth Symphony, Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*, and Mendelssohn's *Elijah*. A native of South Carolina, the mezzo earned a master of music degree from The Juilliard School and is the recipient of two grants from the Singers Development Foundation.



An Adler Fellow since 1997, **CHRISTINA LAMBERTI** recently won second prize in the Metropolitan Opera Regional Competition and was a top finalist of the 1998 MacAllister Awards. A native of Phillipsburg, New Jersey, she began her studies after winning a scholarship to the Westminster Choir College, where she appeared in productions of *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges*, *Dialogues of the Carmelites* and *Amahl and the Night Visitors*. The soprano joined the Aspen Opera Theater Center in 1989, singing the role of Mrs. Murrant in *Street Scene*. She then studied with Claudia Pinza at Duquesne University and attended Pinza's EPCASO (Ezio Pinza Council for American Singers of Opera) program held in Oderzo, Italy. She has also apprenticed at the Pittsburgh Opera Center and studied at Philadelphia's Academy of Vocal Arts where her roles included Mimì (*La Bohème*), Tatyana (*Eugene Onegin*), Donna Elvira (*Don Giovanni*), Fiordiligi (*Così fan tutte*) and Alice Ford (*Falstaff*). She made her Opera Company of Philadelphia debut in 1996 as the High Priestess in *Aida*. A 1996 Merola Opera Program participant, Lamberti appeared in *Death in Venice*, *Elektra* and *L'Incoronazione di Poppea* as part of San Francisco Opera's 1997-98 summer and fall seasons, and sang the title role of Opera Center's 1998 Showcase production of *Iphigénie en Tauride*. Last fall she was seen as Clotilde in the Company's presentation of *Norma*, while earlier this year she sang Fiordiligi in Opera Center's Showcase production of *Così fan tutte*.



PAOLO GAVANELLI has been heard in most of the leading opera houses of the world and is internationally celebrated as one of the leading baritones of our time. The Italian artist has been especially praised in the title roles of *Rigoletto*, *Nabucco*, *Macbeth* and *Simon Boccanegra*. He made his professional debut in 1985 in Brescia as Leporello in *Don Giovanni*. Within five years, Gavanelli made debuts at the Metropolitan Opera (Count di Luna/*Il Trovatore*), the Teatro alla Scala in Milan (Giorgio Germont/*La Traviata*), Barcelona's Gran Teatre del Liceu (Valentin/*Faust*), Stuttgart Opera (Carlo Gérard/*Andrea Chénier*), the Bavarian State Opera in Munich (Renato/*Un Ballo in Maschera*), and at the Teatro La Fenice in Venice (Marcello/*La Bohème*). These were followed by appearances at San Francisco Opera (1991 debut in *Chénier*; 1994, *Trovatore*; 1997, title role of *Rigoletto*), the Lyric Opera of Chicago (*Trovatore*), Arena di Verona (*Amonasro/Aida*), Opéra National de Paris (*Rigoletto*) and at London's Royal Opera (*Iago/Otello*). Highlights of his most recent engagements include *La Gioconda* (his first Barnaba) in Genoa; *Aida* and *Il Trovatore* at the Met; *Madama Butterfly* (Sharpless) in Munich and Verona; in addition to *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Enrico) in Paris and Munich. During the current season he will appear at the Metropolitan Opera in *Rigoletto* and *Cavalleria Rusticana* (Alfio), at the Bavarian State Opera in *I Puritani* (Riccardo), *Don*

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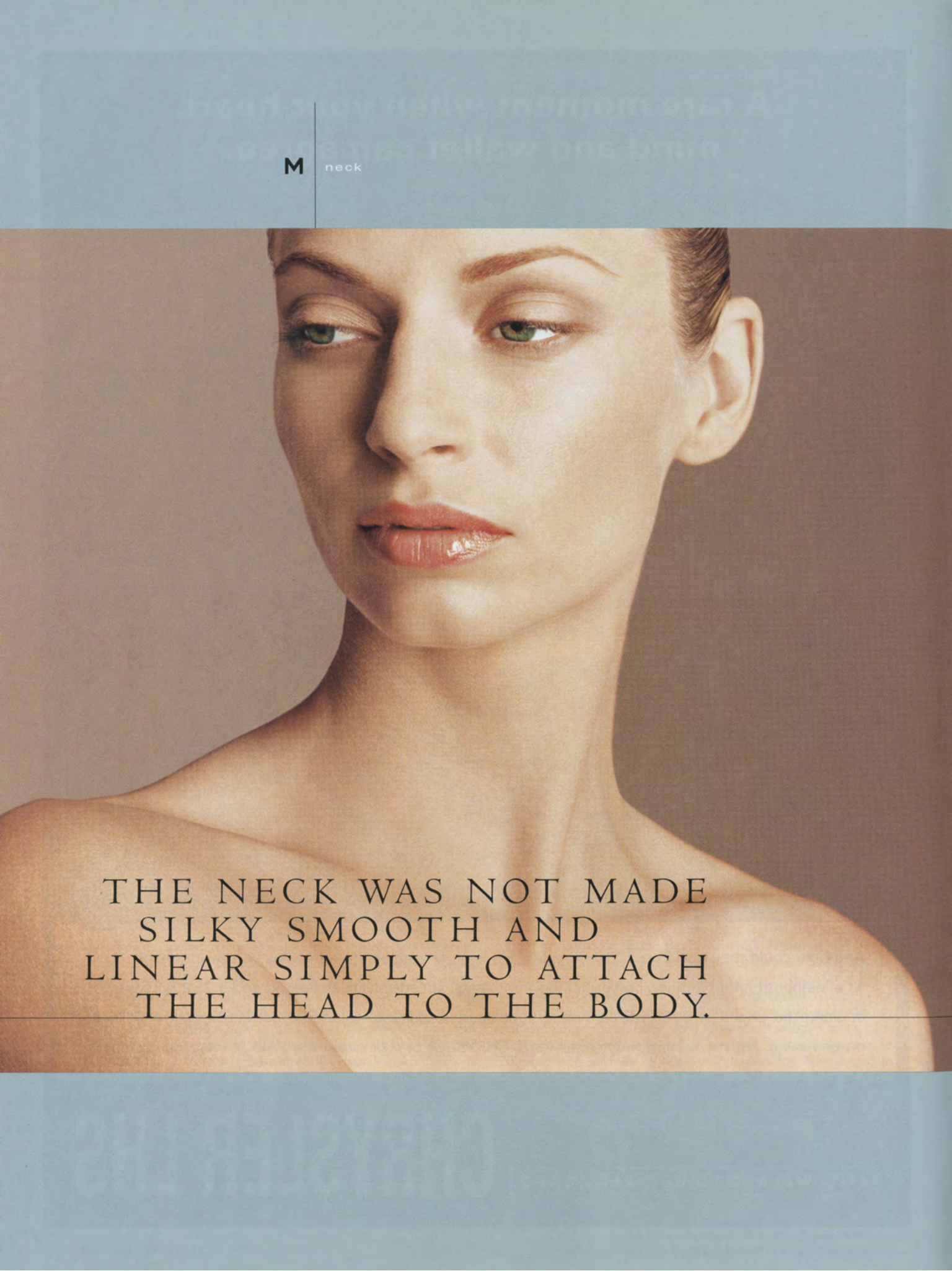


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Carlo (Rodrigo) and *La Traviata*, as well as at the Arena di Verona for *Aida* and *La Forza del Destino* (Don Carlo). Gavanelli can be heard on recordings of *Nabucco*, *La Bohème*, *Beatrice di Tenda*, *Poliuto* and *Alzira*.



Considered one of the finest basses of his generation, **ROBERTO SCANDIUZZI** is a frequent guest on the world's most important stages who also performs with many of the leading conductors of our day. Following his acclaimed Covent Garden debut in 1991 as Fiesco in *Simon Boccanegra* under the baton of Georg Solti, the Italian artist has appeared at San Francisco Opera (1992 U.S. debut as Padre Guardiano in *La Forza del*

Destino, Henry VIII in the 1994 staging of *Anna Bolena*), the Metropolitan Opera, Vienna State Opera, Paris Opera/Bastille and Milan's La Scala, among many others. In the 1998-99 season he was featured in *Anna Bolena*, *Nabucco* and *Simon Boccanegra* at the Munich State Opera; *Eugene Onegin* (Prince Gremin), *I Puritani* (Sir Giorgio) and *Ernani* (Silva) in Vienna; *Simon Boccanegra* and *Khovanshchina* (Dosifei) at the Met; *Aida* (Ramfis) in Rome; *Oedipus Rex* in Milan; *Norma* (Oroveso) at the Orange Festival; Rossini's *Stabat Mater* with the San Francisco Symphony; and was heard in recital in Bologna, Rome and Parma. Future projects include *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Raimondo) in Zurich, *Don Carlo* (Philip II) in Barcelona, *Robert Le Diable* (Bertram) in Berlin, as well as *Don Carlo* and *Simon Boccanegra* in Munich. ScandiuZZi has made several full-length opera recordings including *Don Carlo*, *Simon Boccanegra* (audio and video), *Turandot*, *Rigoletto*, *Macbeth*, *La Sonnambula* and Franchetti's *Cristoforo Colombo*, in addition to Verdi's Requiem and the Rossini *Stabat Mater*. Soon to be released are Verdi's *Jérusalem* and *Aroldo*.



After a ten-year career in civil service, **GIORGIO GIUSEPPINI** began vocal training in his native Italy with Carlo Badioni, Aldo Protti and Boris Christoff. Since his 1991 debut in Imperia as the Count in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, the bass has appeared with great success throughout Europe. Career highlights include performances at Milan's La Scala (Zaccaria in *Nabucco* under Riccardo Muti, Alvise in *La*

Gioconda), Rome Opera (Ramfis in *Aida*, Talbot in *Maria Stuarda*), London's Covent Garden (Timur in *Turandot*), Strasbourg's Opera du Rhin (role debut as Philip II in *Don Carlo*) and in Salzburg (*Don Carlo*). Among his most recent engagements are *Turandot* in Turin, Macerata, Bologna and Florence; *I Masnadieri* (Massimiliano) in Piacenza; *Semiramide* (Oroe) in Geneva; *La Battaglia di Legnano* (Federico Barbarossa) in Parma and Piacenza; as well as *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Raimondo) in Milan and Florence. Giuseppini can be heard on recordings of *Semiramide*, *Caterina Cornaro*, *Rigoletto* and Pacini's *Medea*.



A native of Wales, **GWYN HUGHES JONES** began training as a baritone at London's Guildhall School of Music and at the National Opera Studio. After winning the prestigious Kathleen Ferrier Scholarship in 1992, he switched to the tenor repertoire and currently studies with David Pollard. He was subsequently a top prize winner of more important competitions ("Jussi Björling," "Neue Stimmen," "Cardiff Singer of the World") and made his professional operatic debut with Welsh National Opera in 1995 as Ismaele in *Nabucco*. Additional perfor-

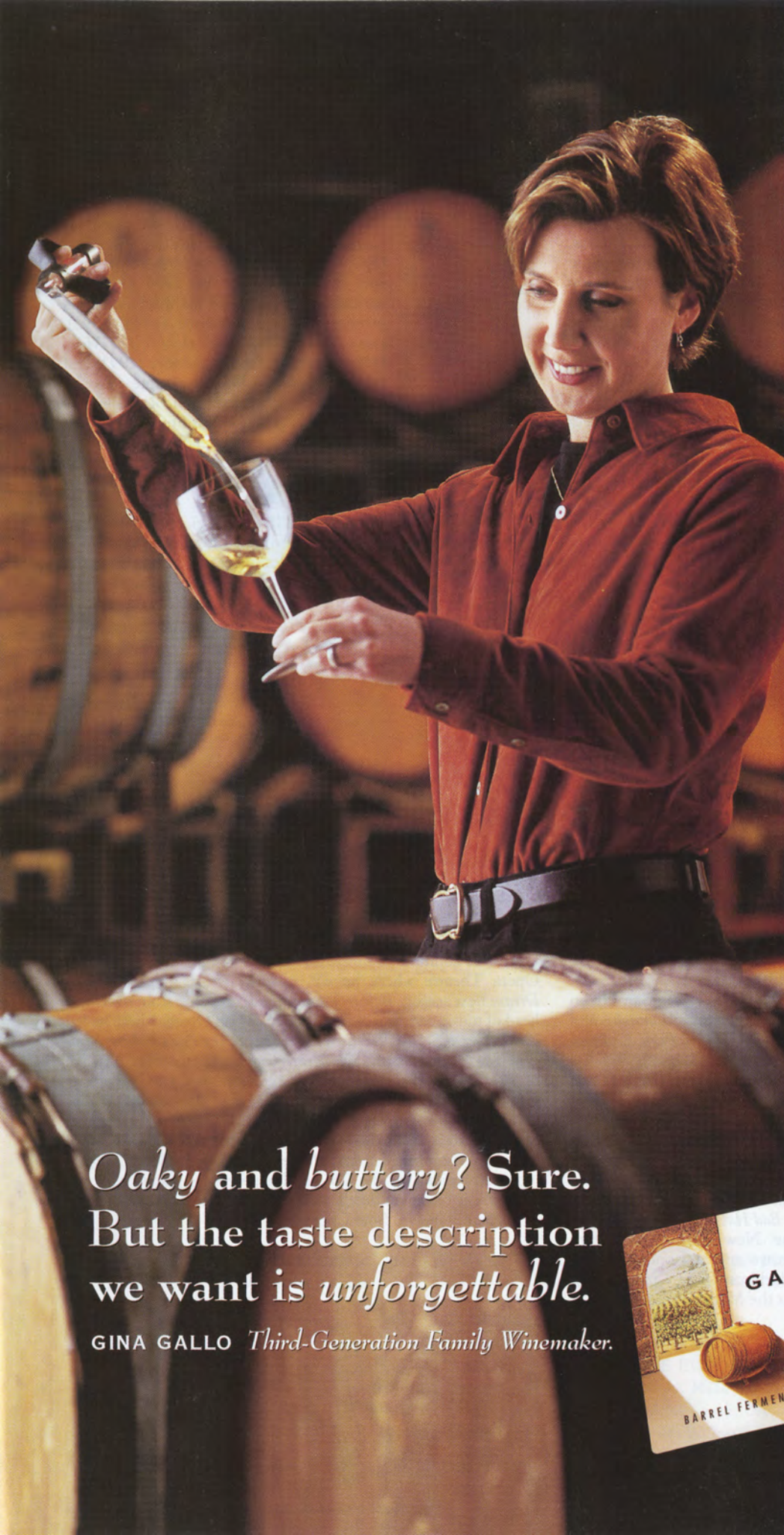
mances include the Duke/*Rigoletto*, Don Ottavio/*Don Giovanni*, title role/*Faust*, Beppe/*Pagliacci* and Rodolfo/*La Bohème* for WNO; *Nabucco* and Camille/*The Merry Widow* for Opéra National de Paris; The Herald/*Don Carlo* at the Salzburg Festival; Rinuccio/*Gianni Schicchi* with English National Opera; and, for his recent U.S. debut, Fenton/*Falstaff* for the Lyric Opera of Chicago. In concert, the tenor has sung Beethoven's Ninth Symphony under Seiji Ozawa, Mozart's Mass in C Minor led by Mikhail Pletnev, the Mozart Requiem and *Otello* (Cassio) with Antonio Pappano, Mendelssohn's *Elijah* conducted by Richard Hickox, and performed in a series of opera concerts in the U.S. earlier this year with the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House at Covent Garden. Hughes Jones has also made television appearances in Great Britain, given recitals in London and Paris, and can be heard on a recording of Britten's *Curlew River*.



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 Bohème*, 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 the 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.



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 Bohème*), 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 the 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.



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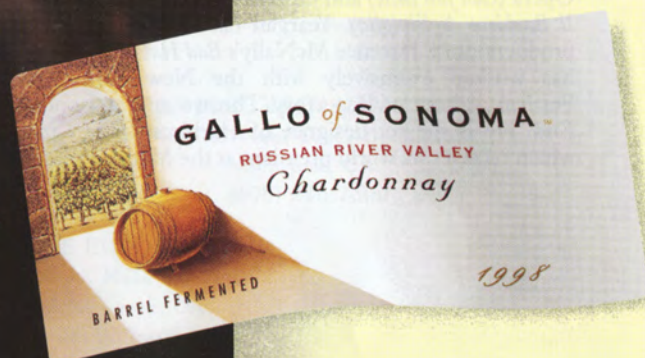
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With a career spanning nearly 50 years of musical activity, **NELLO SANTI** has conducted at virtually all of the world's major houses. The distinguished artist made his San Francisco Opera debut with 1990's double bill of *Suor Angelica* and *Pagliacci*, returning to our podium for *Andrea Chénier* (1992), *Lucia di Lammermoor* (1994) and *Tosca* (1997). After studies at the Pollini Conservatory in Padua, the

Italian-born maestro made his operatic conducting debut in 1951 at Padua's Teatro Verdi with *Rigoletto*. It was during the 1960s that he made his debut at such major opera houses as the Royal Opera at Covent Garden, the Vienna State Opera, Salzburg, and New York's Metropolitan Opera. (He celebrated his 35th anniversary at the Met in 1997 leading a repertory of 16 different operas.) Santi is also principal conductor of the Italian opera repertoire at the Zurich Opera, music director of the Swiss Radio Orchestra in Basel, and principal guest conductor of the Yomiuri Nippon Symphony in Tokyo. During recent seasons, Maestro Santi has led new stagings of *Rigoletto* and *Aida* at the Arena di Verona, *Turandot* at the Met, *Norma* at Oslo's Royal Opera, concerts with the Orquesta de la Radio-Televisión Española and Rome's Orchestra di Santa Cecilia, as well as a performance of the Verdi Requiem at the Vatican in the presence of Pope John Paul II on the 50th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima. Among his recent and forthcoming engagements are *Rigoletto* in Catania; *Tosca*, *Aida* and *Rigoletto* at the Met; his schedule in Zurich includes *Nabucco*, *Ernani*, *Simon Boccanegra* and a new staging of *Otello*. In addition to his many concert appearances, he has led several televised operas in over six countries. The maestro has also conducted numerous operatic videos and recorded a large number of complete operas and collections of arias.



With productions seen at opera houses throughout the world, **LOTFI MANSOURI** is at the forefront of international opera directors and administrators. San Francisco Opera's fourth general director (appointed in 1988) since its founding, his association with the Company dates back to 1963, when he directed six productions. Having already directed over 60 productions for the Company, he most recently staged the revival of his critically-acclaimed 1989 production of *Lulu* during our 1998 *Femmes Fatales* Festival. Born in Iran, he attended college at UCLA and received U.S. citizenship before serving as resident stage director at Zurich Opera from 1960 to 1966. In 1965, he started working simultaneously at the Geneva Opera, where he became head stage director in 1966 and stayed until 1976. During this period, he began fulfilling engagements as guest director at various houses throughout Italy and North America, including Chicago, Houston, Santa Fe, Philadelphia, San Diego, Dallas and both the Metropolitan and New York City Opera companies. In 1976, he was named general director of the Canadian Opera Company in Toronto, where he directed 30 new productions, 12 of them Canadian premieres. During his tenure at San Francisco Opera, numerous artists have made their U.S. operatic debuts, and six productions have been taped for telecast and videocassette (*Mefistofele*, *Orlando Furioso*, *Capriccio*, *Turandot*, *The Dangerous Liaisons* and *A Streetcar Named Desire*). Mansouri's 1979 production of *La Gioconda* was the Company's first to receive a live international telecast. Also during his tenure, the Company made its first commercial recordings: *Hérodiade*, *Orphée et Eurydice*, *Harvey Milk* and *Streetcar*. He established the historic exchange with the Kirov Opera that has resulted in productions of *War and Peace*, *Boris*

Godunov, *The Fiery Angel*, *Ruslan and Lyudmila*, *Eugene Onegin* and *Betrothal in a Monastery*. In January of 1999, Mansouri's 10 years as general director of San Francisco Opera were commemorated with the book *An Operatic Odyssey: Lotfi Mansouri and San Francisco Opera*, chronicling his 35-year association with the Company.



Scenic, costume and lighting designer **EZIO FRIGERIO** has numerous credits for opera, ballet, theater, film and television. The native of Italy began his long association with legendary director Giorgio Strehler in 1955 with the designs for Lorca's *The House of Bernarda Alba* at Milan's Piccolo Teatro. The following year he made his operatic debut with Cimarosa's *Il Matrimonio Segreto* to inaugurate the

Piccola Scala in Milan. Frigerio's work for the musical stage, often in collaboration with Strehler, has been seen at the Teatro alla Scala in Milan, Metropolitan Opera, Paris Opera, London's Covent Garden, the Monnaie in Brussels, Scottish Opera, Vienna State Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Salzburg Festival, and in Dallas, Zurich, Seville, Palermo, Toulouse and Catania, among others. Operas designed for these companies include *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *Fidelio*, *Francesca da Rimini*, *Carmen*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Il Trovatore*, *Nabucco*, *Un Ballo in Maschera*, Penderecki's *Paradise Lost* and Prokofiev's *The Fiery Angel* (1955 world premiere in Venice). Among his numerous designs for dance — working often with choreographer Roland Petit — are *Swan Lake* and *The Sleeping Beauty* for the Paris Opera Ballet, as well as *Romeo and Juliet* for American Ballet Theater. He has worked with leading cinema directors (among them Vittorio De Sica, Liliana Cavani, Bernardo Bertolucci) and served as art director for several notable films, among them Bertolucci's *1900* and Jean-Paul Rappeneau's *Cyrano de Bergerac*, for which he was nominated for a 1990 Academy Award. Frigerio was appointed an Officer of the Legion of Honor in 1995.



Costume designer **MARIA-LUISE WALEK** made her San Francisco Opera debut in 1977 with Janáček's *Katya Kabanova*, returning in 1994 for the Company premiere of Massenet's *Hérodiade* and in 1997 for the new staging of *Salome*. Born in Vienna, she studied there at the Academy of Arts, later becoming a frequent collaborator with set designer Günther Schneider-Siemssen. Her work with him

and other designers took her to Salzburg, Berlin, Munich, Karlsruhe, Düsseldorf, Vienna (Staatsoper, Volksoper and Burgtheater), Stuttgart, Stockholm, Barcelona, Nice, Nancy, Lyon, Strasbourg, Welsh National Opera and New York's Metropolitan Opera, where she made her U.S. debut with *Jenůfa* in Günther Rennert's 1975 production. Since 1985, Walek has designed regularly for the Opéra de Nice, where her work included costumes for *Fidelio*, *Die Zauberflöte*, *Carmen* and *Hérodiade*. Her most recent creations were seen at the Vienna State Opera (*Lulu*, among others), Bregenz Festival (*Maria Stuarda*), Deutsche Oper Berlin (*Samson et Dalila*), Zurich Opera (*Roberto Devereux*), as well as in Beijing (*Faust*) and Catania (*Nabucco*). Her designs will soon be seen in Zurich (*Anna Bolena*) and Saint-Étienne (*Nabucco*).

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Chorus director and conductor at the San Francisco Opera since 1987, **IAN ROBERTSON** made his Company conducting debut with the 1988 production of *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* and has since led performances of *Falstaff*, *Lobengrin*, *Rigoletto*, *La Traviata*, *Don Carlo*, *Turandot*, *Il Trovatore* and *La Bobème*. In addition to his highly praised work with the Opera Chorus, he has led the Opera Orchestra and Chorus in many concerts. Additional assignments include the Opera Center's productions of *The Italian Girl in Algiers*, *Così fan tutte*, *La Périochole* and *The Elixir of Love*, as well as the Merola Opera Program's Grand Finale Concerts. He has also led *Don Giovanni* for Sarasota Opera; *The Magic Flute* and *Rigoletto* for Edmonton Opera; in addition to numerous operas at Philadelphia's Curtis Opera Theatre where he will conduct *A Midsummer Night's Dream* next season. Before joining the Company, Robertson was head of music and chorus director of Scottish Opera, where he led *The Barber of Seville*, *The Secret of Susanna*, *The Pearl Fishers*, *Rigoletto*, *The Magic Flute* and *Die Meistersinger*, among others. A native of Scotland, the maestro trained as a concert pianist and accompanist at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music, subsequently graduating with honors from the University of Glasgow. His recital career led to appearances at the Edinburgh International Festival and the Wigmore Hall and Purcell Room in London. He has recorded recitals for the BBC and appeared as pianist with the New Music Group of Scotland. He was appointed artistic director of the San Francisco Boys Chorus in 1996.



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 Bobème*, *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*), New York City 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.

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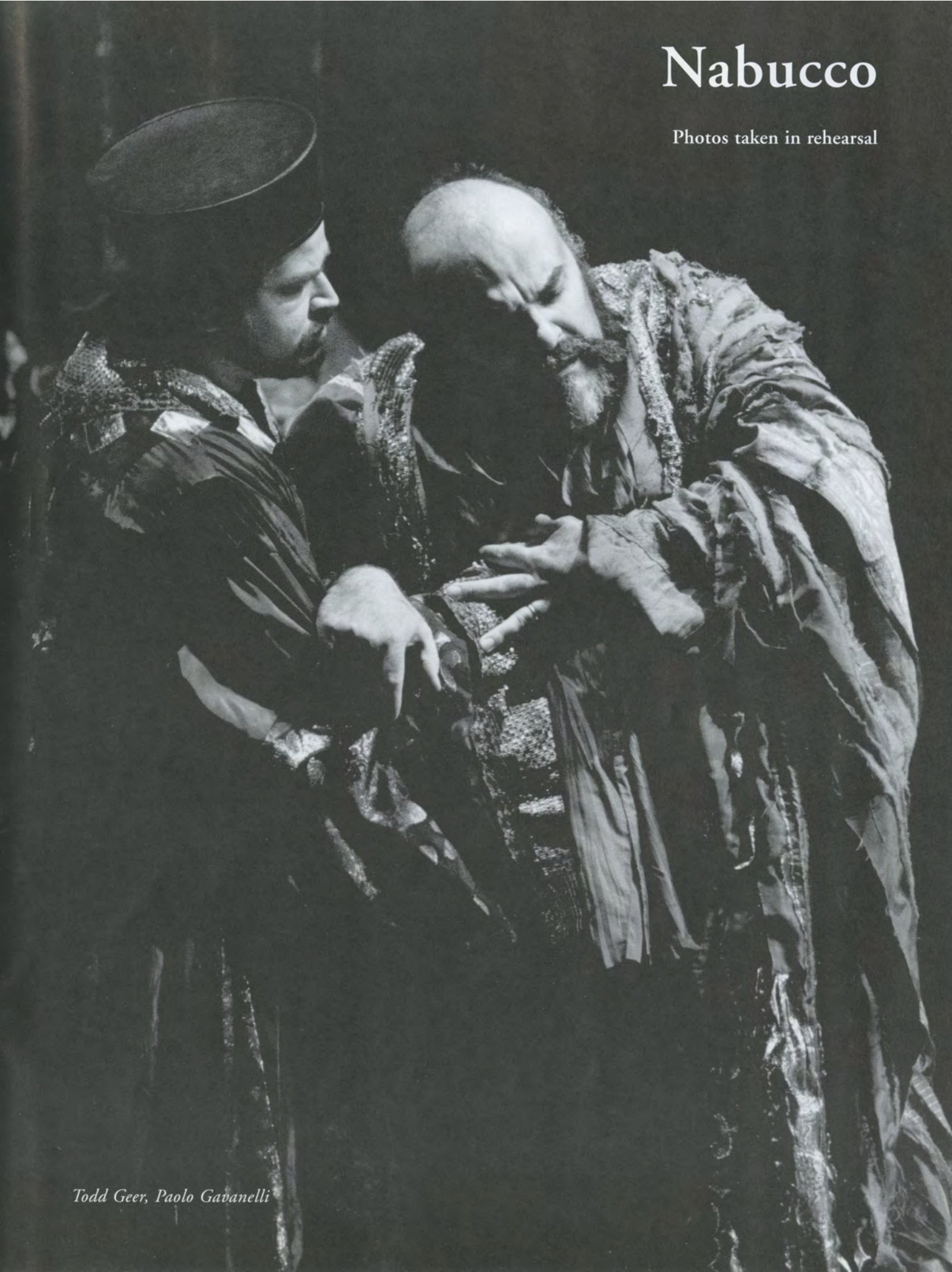
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Nabucco

Photos taken in rehearsal



Todd Geer, Paolo Gavanelli

Nabucco

Introduzione di Roberto Scandiuzzi

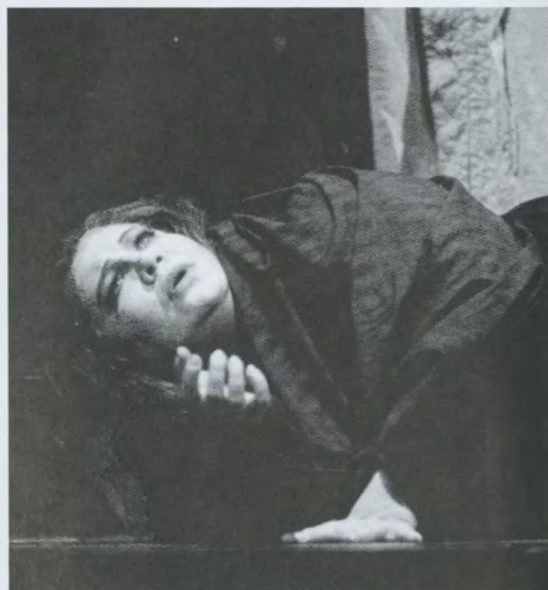
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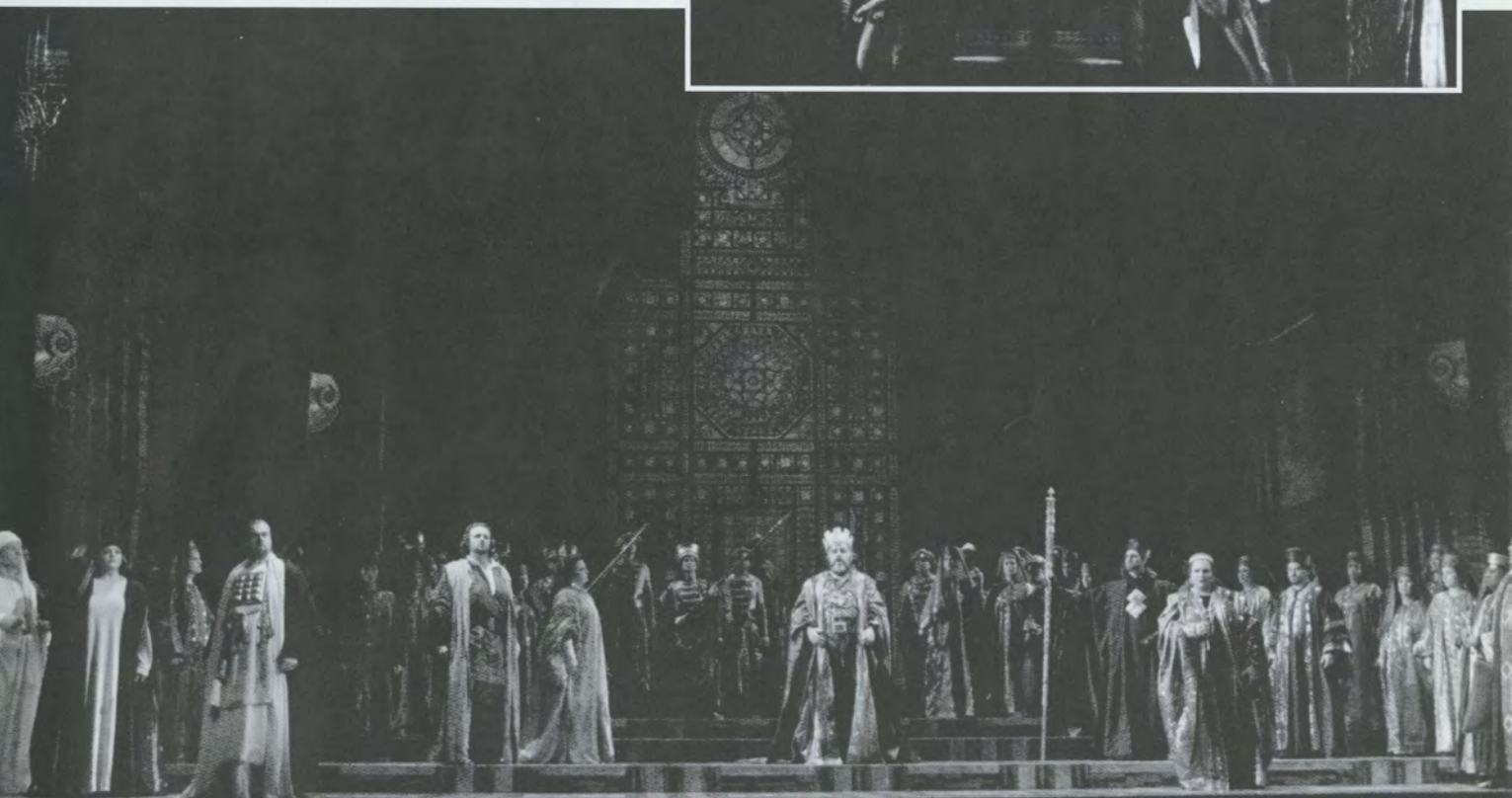
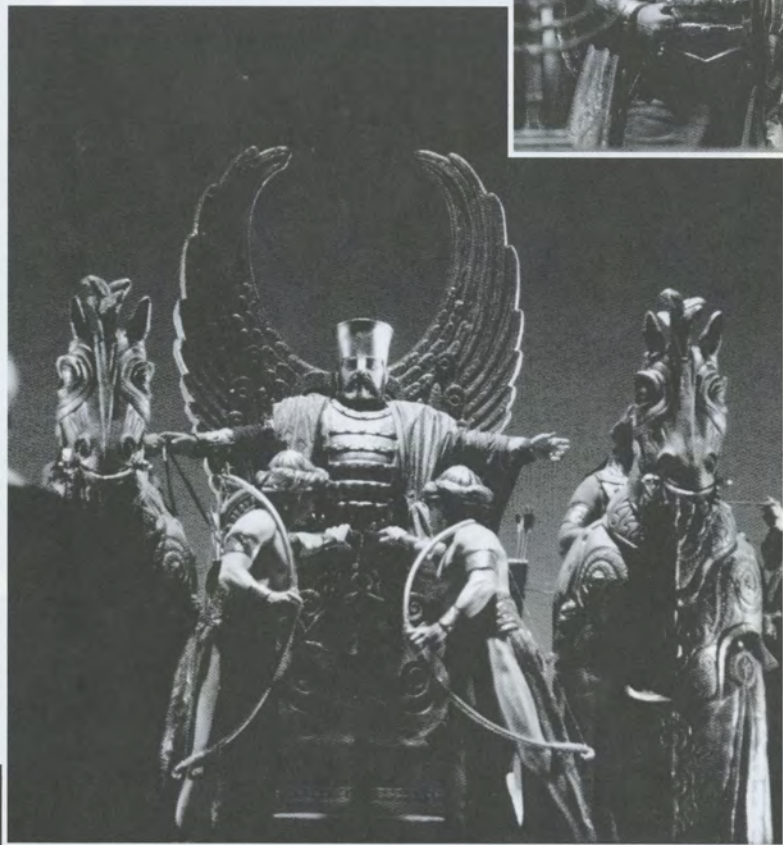
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Gwyn Hughes Jones



Paolo Gavanelli



(L. to R.) Christina Lamberti, Roberto Scandiuzzi, Gwyn Hughes Jones, Elizabeth Bishop, Paolo Gavanelli, John Ames, Andrea Gruber, San Francisco Opera Chorus



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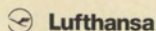
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NABUCCO: THE START OF A CAREER

continued from page 12

pezzo concertato of the second act finale ("S'appressan gli istanti"). This is cast in the form of a so-called "false canon" ("false" because it proceeds no further than the successive vocal entries of the opening melody). It is a common enough device for operatic ensembles — see Beethoven's "Mir ist so wunderbar" (*Fidelio*) or Rossini's "Fredda ed immobile" (*Il Barbiere di Siviglia*) — but it is normally limited to soloists. In this case, the last participant is the unison chorus, the voice of a whole people speaking with one mind. This was indeed a novelty. Not for nothing was the young Verdi known at La Scala as the "Papà dei cori" (Father of the choruses).

Much has been made in retrospect of Verdi's part in fomenting the spirit of the "Risorgimento," which culminated in the uprising of 1848. Certainly he sympathized with its ideals, but in his early operas he was careful to steer clear of the Austrian censorship (it was the Church that objected to the use of liturgical terms and the sight of a baptism on stage in *I Lombardi alla Prima Crociata* in 1843). In general, his heroes and villains are distributed fairly evenly on either side of his conflicting forces; and it is worth remembering that when the publisher Francesco Lucca charged an exorbitant price for the hire of *Attila* with its famous lines "Avrai tu l'universo; resti l'Italia a me" (You can have the universe; leave Italy to me), it was the Austrian police who compelled him to lower it. The fact is that nostalgic choruses such as "Va, pensiero" in *Nabucco* and "O Signore, dal tetto natio" in *I Lombardi* are no more inflammatory than the Jacobite songs that flooded the British market after 1745, and the rulers saw no reason to fear them. But that they contributed to a sense of national unity is undeniable. They allowed no room for the belief that, in Prince Metternich's words, Italy was merely a geographical expression. That "Va, pensiero" should have been sung by the massed crowds that attended Verdi's funeral in 1901 was entirely appropriate. Nor is there any reason to doubt the composer's assertion, as certain critics have done, that at the opera's dress rehearsal nearly sixty years earlier the theater technicians laid down their tools and listened in rapt silence to the

Hebrew chorus. Patriotic or not, it remains a marvelous tune; and many would like it for the country's national anthem in place of the jaunty "Fratelli d'Italia" which we hear nowadays.

Indeed, it sets the scale for the entire opera, whose principals are sculpted in granite and far more sharply distinguished from one another than in any of the Italian operas that preceded it. Nowhere is this more evident than in the grand duet between Nabucco and Abigaille from Act III. In similar numbers by Rossini and Bellini the singers tend to share the same melodic material even when in conflict. Donizetti appears to have been the first to set out his opening duet movements in dialogue, so permitting the cut and thrust of argument, before reverting to the traditional pattern. Here Verdi follows the same procedure for "Donna, chi sei?"; but in the movement that succeeds it (as usual, a joint soliloquy) the singers are kept far apart. Nabucco's line moves by narrow intervals, full of a restrained pathos; Abigaille's leaps and plunges over a wide compass, as she indulges in dreams of future power and glory. Even in the concluding cabaletta, where three-fold repetition was normally *de rigueur*, the steep contrast is maintained: he abject, she gloating. Also new for Italian opera is the prelude to Act IV, a medley of thematic reminiscences that reflects the images passing through the king's distorted brain. (A similar piece can be found in a reduced version of *La Forza del Destino* made for the French stage; but it is almost certainly the work of Verdi's former pupil, Emanuele Muzio.) Zaccaria, too, is a larger-than-life figure, one who carries the weight of an entire people on his shoulders. For his "prayer" in Act II ("Tu che sul labbro" with its rich texture of six solo cellos) Verdi finds for him accents of a noble authority that presage Fiesco in *Simon Boccanegra* and King Philip in *Don Carlos*. From the overture, written as so often at the last moment, to the final chord, the music of *Nabucco* is all of a piece.

Again it is Lessona who describes the triumph of the opening night on March 9th — how the opera gave its name to various dishes in local restaurants and how notables who had ignored the composer previously now addressed him with the familiar "tu" and walked with him arm-in-arm. If *Nabucco* was slow to circu-

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late, the reason was that its ownership was shared between the rival publishing firms, Lucca and Ricordi, who failed to reach an agreement until the end of the year. The first performance outside of Milan, where the opera had enjoyed a highly successful revival in the autumn, took place in Venice during the Carnival season of 1842-43. For this the singer of Fenena wanted a more substantial piece than the Act IV "prayer" that Verdi had written for the role's creator. Accordingly, he re-worked the same text to a broader, more extended melody very much in the style of "Va, pensiero," with the same marching triplets in the accompaniment. Intended only for the occasion, it was never included in the printed score, but it would serve as a model for the chorus "O Signore, dal tetto natio" in the forthcoming *I Lombardi alla Prima Crociata*.

One mystery remains. From two letters recently brought to light by the American scholar George Martin, it is clear that for a performance of the opera at the Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels on November 11, 1848, in a translation by Ferdinand Gravand and Jules Guillaume, Verdi provided a ballet, presumably to be inserted near the beginning of Act III. The first letter, addressed to his French publisher, Léon Escudier, runs: "If Sig. Gravand instead of leaving for Brussels this evening could wait until tomorrow I would be able to give you the ballet music, because tomorrow morning without fail before noon I will be in Paris with the orchestral score finished." In the second, Verdi regretfully declines an invitation to attend the opera's first night because of overwork, but he continues, "I am most obliged to the orchestral leader [in those days also the conductor] for his consideration in not wanting to change the order of the ballet movements; nevertheless, tell him from me that he can make this concession to the ballet master, provided that the numbers do not follow one another in the same key, and that there is no tonal jar between one number and the next... When you return the 'arie di ballo,' be so good as to address them to me and nobody else."

That last sentence is surely significant. And why should Gravand be expected to await the delivery of the full score before returning to Brussels, unless he was meant to take it with him? The obvious

inference is that Verdi did not intend the ballet music to pass through the hands of his publishers. This would explain why it has never appeared in print. Possibly it survives in the vaults of St. Agata, awaiting rediscovery. Or else, as Martin surmised, Verdi may have held it in reserve for the "Four Seasons" in *Les Vêpres Siciliennes*. Whatever the truth of the matter, *Nabucco* works perfectly well without it.

Meanwhile, the opera had quickly traveled abroad, usually in the wake of *Ernani*, Verdi's fifth opera and the first to put his name on the international map. It reached England in 1846, where, given the Lord Chamberlain's ban on the representation of biblical subjects on stage, it was given as *Nino, Re d'Assiria*, earning a fairly benevolent notice from the chief London critic H.F. Chorley, generally hostile to Verdi's music. [As *Nabucco*, it reached San Francisco in 1854.] After the unification of Italy in 1861, it passed into temporary eclipse. Even Verdi himself showed little retrospective affection for it, declaring that he no longer set subjects as monotonous as *Nabucco* and *I Due Foscari*. Nor does it figure among the seven operas published by Casa Ricordi in miniature full score in celebration of the composer's centenary in 1913. It was left to the Verdi renaissance mentioned above to restore the opera to its rightful place in the Verdian canon. In our own turbulent century, the chorus of Hebrew slaves has become the song of oppressed peoples the world over. During the second world war, the Jewish inmates of a German concentration camp mounted a performance of *Nabucco* as a declaration of faith. In 1952, the Welsh National Opera rose from six years of relative obscurity to a pinnacle of success with the same opera — not surprisingly, since alone among British choirs those of Wales can bring to it that quality of "hwyl" (an untranslatable word connoting spontaneous enthusiasm and religious fervor) that give the work its full impact.

Simple in conception, plain and functional in its scoring with no concession to mere beauty of sound, *Nabucco* packs a formidable dramatic punch. If Verdi had written nothing else, his place in the operatic repertoire would be assured.

"After *Nabucco*," Verdi told Count Arrivabene, "I always had as many commissions as I wanted." One can see why. □

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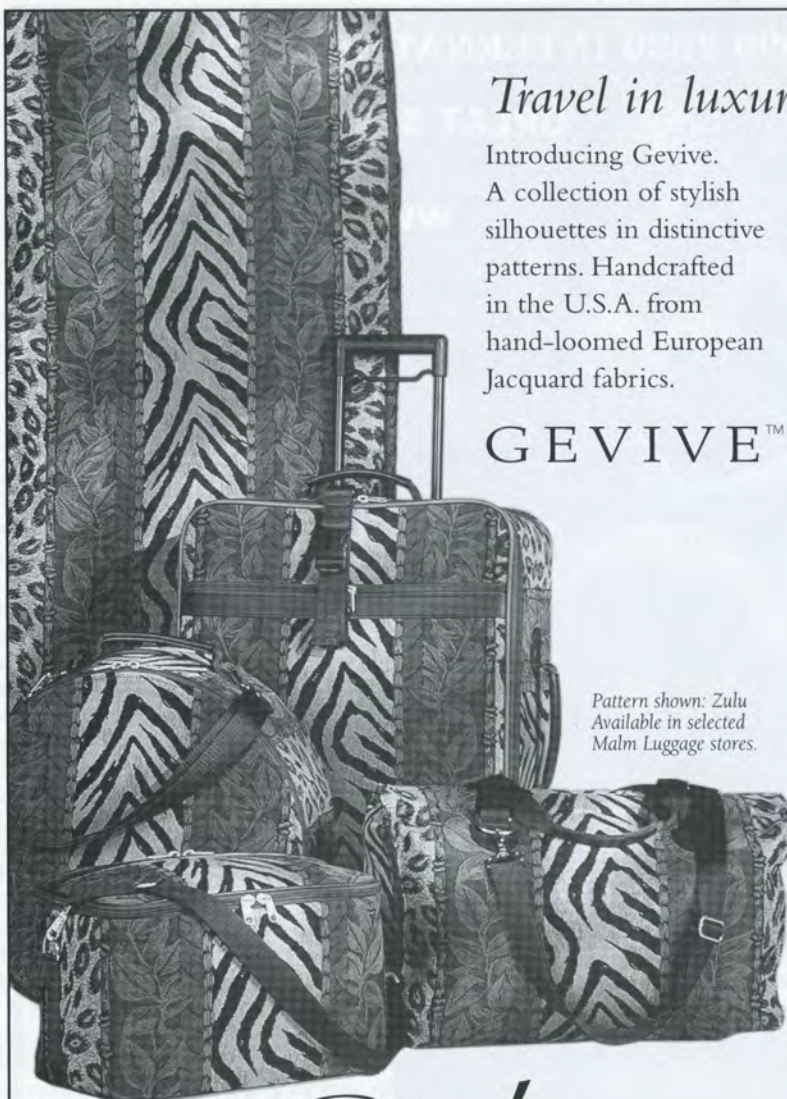
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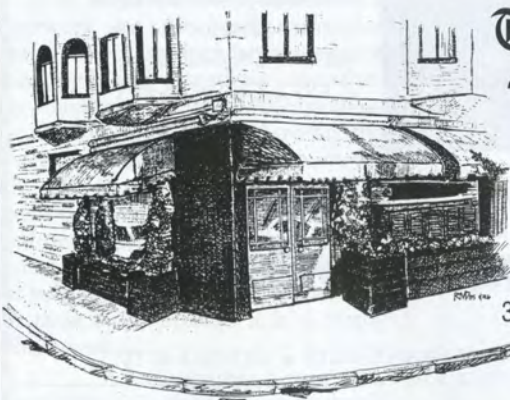
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CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE

continued from page 18

became embroiled in a civil war over who would succeed to the Assyrian throne, and heavy fighting amongst the army seriously weakened the overall strength of the Assyrian war machine. Rebellion among the conquered provinces was only a matter of time.

Nabopolassar was a Chaldean who had risen to the rank of general in the Assyrian army. Taking advantage of the Assyrian internal problems, he seized control of Babylon. Apparently a religious man, he allowed the priestly class in Babylon to rise to considerable power and influence, a fact that is accurately reflected in the opera where the priests of Bel (Baal) have the power to appoint Abigaille as ruler. Abigaille, however, is a fictional character, and the notion of a woman sitting on the throne of Assyria reflected the contemporary European society of Verdi and Solera, not that of Assyria. Indeed, the notion of a queen ruling any ancient near eastern kingdom was virtually unknown.

The Assyrians were now in serious danger; Nabopolassar and his Babylonian forces threatened from the south, and the emerging kingdom of the Medes threatened from the east. To strengthen their position, the Assyrians renewed alliances with the Egyptians and the Scythians (from the area near the Black Sea).

In 616, Nabopolassar marched against Assyria and achieved some victories, but at this hour of crisis, Egypt came to the aid of their allies, marching all the way from Egypt to southern Assyria and forcing Nabopolassar to retreat. The following year, Nabopolassar and the Medes signed an offensive alliance and resumed the attack. At this juncture, the Assyrians were depending on the Scythians to handle the Medes while they dealt with the Babylonians themselves, but the Scythians betrayed their allies and joined the Babylonian-Median alliance. Surrounded by enemies bent on their destruction, Assyria was doomed. Nineveh was sacked in 612 and the Assyrians as a people were virtually annihilated. Those who could escape made their way to the northwest city of Harran, which had been a provincial capital of the empire and which now represented their last stronghold. Again, Egypt came to the rescue, with the pharaoh Necho II leading his army into Syria. His was a practical strategy, for he undoubtedly realized that the Babylonian-Median alliance could ultimately



BY *Stickley*

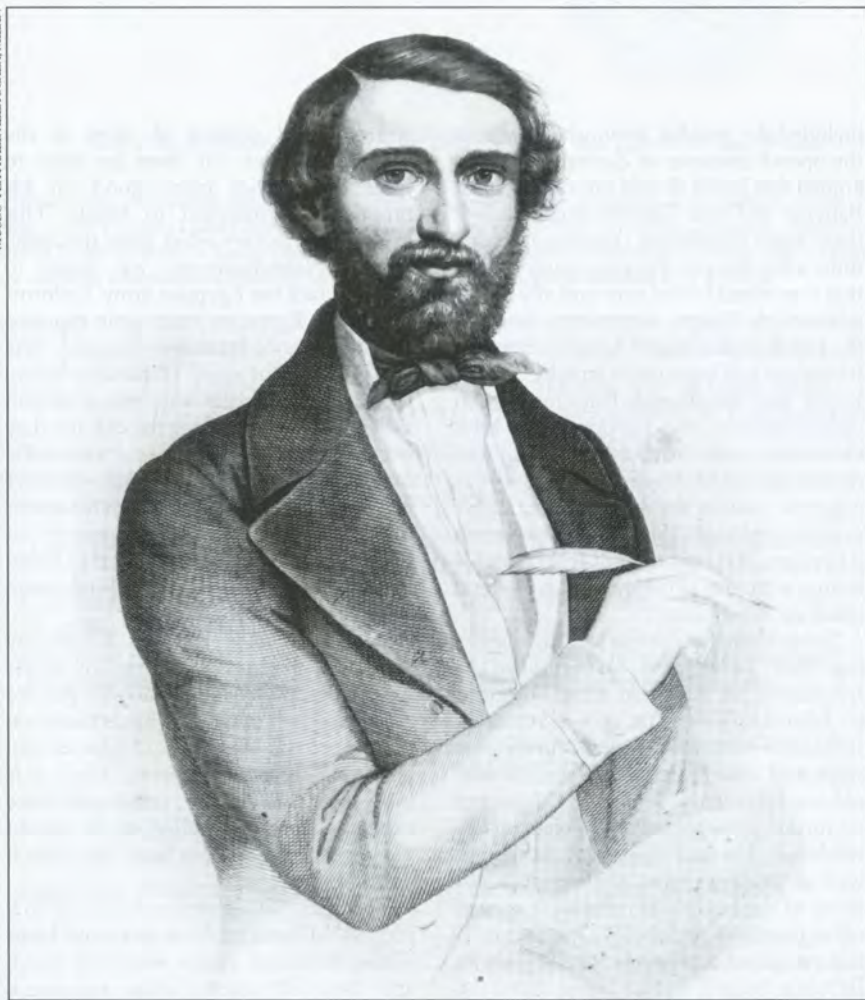
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Giuseppe Verdi the way he looked at the time of the composition of *Nabucco*. The contemporary etching is made after a painting by G. Turchi.

threaten Egypt.

To reach Syria, however, he had to pass through Palestine, and the Babylonians were not alone in seeking to overthrow their former Assyrian overlords. Josiah, the king of Judah, saw the demise of Assyria as an opportunity for Judah and decided to support the Babylonians. Seeking to prevent the Egyptians from reaching the Assyrians, his army intercepted the Egyptians at Meggido. Necho tried to reason with him, but Josiah rejected Necho's proposals. In the ensuing battle, Josiah was killed and Judah defeated.

Necho appointed Jehoiakim as the new king of Judah, and then he hurried up to Syria, where he seized the city of Carchemish. Using it as his base, he attacked the Babylonians over the next four years and achieved some success, but he failed to force a decisive battle.

At this point, Nabopolassar put his son in charge of the army — Nebuchadnezzar, whose name is also variously known as the

more familiar Nebuchadnezzar and Nabucodonosor (the name used in its abbreviated form in the opera). The year was 605 B.C., and Nebuchadnezzar immediately led his army against Necho in Carchemish. Historical records of the climactic battle are lost, but the outcome was a complete victory for Babylonians. The Egyptian and Assyrian forces had fought valiantly, however, for the archaeological record indicates that the battle raged from house to house in the blazing city. Nebuchadnezzar pursued Necho to the very border of Egypt and seized control of Palestine as he went. He might have invaded Egypt, but news of Nabopolassar's death demanded that he return to Babylon as quickly as possible in order to secure the Babylonian throne for himself.

Those in Judah soon found that domination by Babylon was no better than domination by Assyria, and Jehoiakim was caught in the middle of two rival political parties. The pro-Babylonian party, which

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included the prophet Jeremiah (on whom the opera's character of Zaccaria is based), argued that Judah should not rebel against Babylon and that Yahweh would deliver them from Babylonian oppression in due time, while the pro-Egyptian party argued that they should rebel now and ally themselves with Egypt. Arguments favoring the pro-Egyptian party were convincing: Jehoiakim had been made king by Necho, Egypt had dominated Palestine for so many centuries, the Egyptians had been victorious over the Babylonians in the recent past, and Necho's successor was eager to resume the war. In fact, Egypt even employed Jewish mercenaries. Therefore, it is hard to fault Jehoiakim for siding with the pro-Egyptian party and rising up in rebellion.

Nebuchadnezzar responded by marching into Judah and laying siege to Jerusalem. An Egyptian army advanced to Jehoiakim's aid, but it was repulsed. Jehoiakim eventually died during the siege and was succeeded by his 18-year old son Jehoiachin. Seeing that there was no further hope for relief, Jehoiachin surrendered. He and the royal family (as well as treasures from the temple), and many of the leading citizens were carried off as prisoners to Babylon. Jehoiachin in fact remained a prisoner for 40 years in Babylon before finally being freed by Nabonidus's son during the latter's short reign. It was now Nebuchadnezzar's turn to appoint a new king over Judah, and he chose Zedekiah, a son of Josiah.

The energetic new Egyptian pharaoh Apries, the biblical Hophra, renewed hostilities by invading Palestine and driving out the Babylonian garrisons. Once again Judah was caught in the middle, with pro-Babylonian and pro-Egyptian parties arguing over the correct course of action. The Book of Jeremiah illustrates the predicament in which Zedekiah found himself, for pro-Babylonian prophets (Jeremiah included) claimed divine guidance in arguing that Judah should remain loyal to Babylon, and pro-Egyptian prophets (Hananiah among others) claimed divine guidance in predicting victory and liberation if they joined the revolt. With Egypt having already liberated much of Palestine and the Phoenician coast, and with nearly all kingdoms in Palestine participating in the revolt, Zedekiah not surprisingly joined the revolt.

Nebuchadnezzar marched again in 587

and regained control of most of the Phoenician coast. He then lay siege to Jerusalem. Apries made good on his promise and marched to Judah. This brought temporary relief from the siege, because Nebuchadnezzar was forced to turn and face the Egyptian army. Unfortunately, the Egyptians were again repulsed and the siege of Jerusalem resumed. The city held out for some 18 months before the walls were finally breached. Zedekiah and others tried to escape the city, but they were observed, pursued, and eventually captured. Brought before Nebuchadnezzar, Zedekiah was forced to watch his sons executed and then his own eyes were put out. All survivors were carried off to Babylon, and in 586 the city and temple were looted and destroyed.

In the opera, Nabucco's blasphemy results in madness, followed by eventual release when he acknowledges the supremacy of Yahweh. This is based on passages from the Book of Daniel and have no historical basis. Had this indeed have happened, one would have expected that Nebuchadnezzar would have freed the captive Israelites, which was not the case.

Epilogue: Nebuchadnezzar died in 562. He was followed by three successive kings whose respective reigns were very short, and two of whom were murdered. Nabonidus was then elected king in 556 B.C. A man of antiquarian interests, Nabonidus eventually resided in Arabia, leaving his son Belshazzar in charge of Babylon. In the famous passage from the Book of Daniel, Belshazzar held a banquet one evening and requested that the vessels looted from the temple in Jerusalem be used. While feasting with these vessels, a hand is said to have appeared on the wall, writing words which predicted the downfall of Babylonia to the Persians. Babylonia indeed fell to the Persians in 539 without a fight. Cyrus, the Persian king who now controlled the former Babylonian empire, made concessions to his various subject peoples to keep them content. Knowing that the Babylonians had carted off religious icons from the various peoples they had conquered, Cyrus restored these icons to their owners. Thus, the vessels taken from the temple in Jerusalem were returned to the Israelites. He also allowed the Jews to return to their homeland, thereby ending the Babylonian captivity, and in 515 B.C. the temple was rebuilt. □

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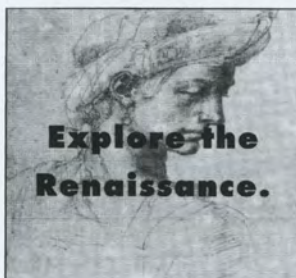
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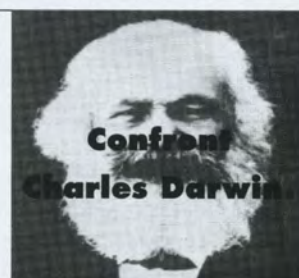
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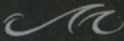
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For more information, contact our Corporate Council Hotline at (415) 565-3264.

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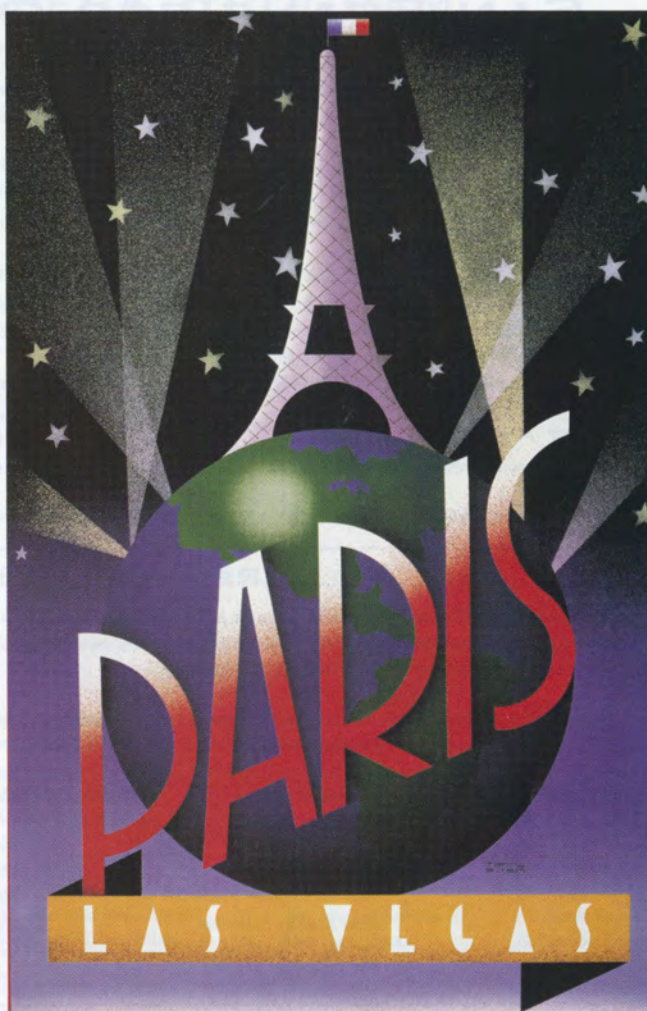
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The Merola Opera Program is dedicated to the continuing education and professional training of the finest young operatic talent and the development of this talent into professional opera singers, coaches and stage directors of the highest artistic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

PERFORMING ARTS CENTER TOURS

Tours of the San Francisco Performing Arts Center include the War Memorial Opera House, Davies Symphony Hall and Herbst Theatre and take place as follows: Mondays, on the hour between 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. Special group tours of Davies Hall only may be scheduled on Wednesdays and Saturdays by request two weeks in advance. All tours leave

from the Grove Street entrance of Davies Symphony Hall. There are no tours on holidays. General \$5; seniors/students \$3. Information: (415) 552-8338.

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

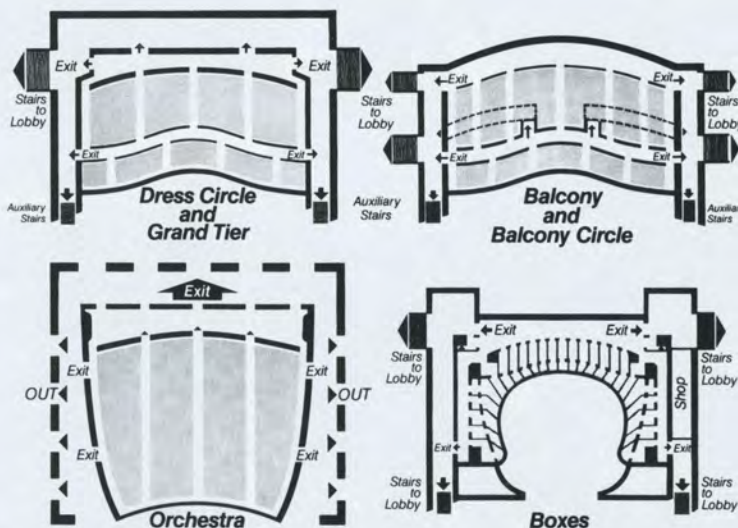
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Sponsored by the San Francisco Opera Guild, house and backstage tours of the War Memorial Opera House will be conducted every half hour from 10 a.m. to 12 noon on weekdays and Saturdays; and every half hour from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. on Sundays.

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

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

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



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