

L'Elisir d'Amore II
(Elixir of Love)

2000-2001

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SAN FRANCISCO OPERA MAGAZINE

L'Elisir d'Amore

2000–2001 Season

Vol. 78, No. 5a

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(Italian, 1727–1804)
The Quack
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El Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya,
Barcelona
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A MESSAGE FROM THE GENERAL DIRECTOR



SOHEL

I am delighted to welcome you to San Francisco Opera's 2000/2001 Season, which runs from September 8, 2000 to July 1, 2001 in the War Memorial Opera House. We've planned a stunning array of masterworks ranging from baroque classics to contemporary works, including a world premiere of a new American opera, three Company premieres and the return of several beloved gems.

The Company's commitment to fostering the growth of the operatic repertoire continues with the world premiere of *Dead Man Walking* – a San Francisco commission from Chase Composer-in-Residence Jake Heggie, with renowned playwright Terrence McNally. First an award-winning book by Sister Helen Prejean then an Academy Award-winning motion picture, this eagerly anticipated production brings together an incomparable creative team and an impressive cast.

Next year also marks the centenary of the passing of one of the greatest of all musical geniuses – Giuseppe Verdi. To commemorate his life and work, San Francisco Opera will offer a sampling of his finest masterpieces with a new production of *Luisa Miller*, as well as exciting stagings of *La Traviata*, *Aida* and *Simon Boccanegra*. Our 78th Season is also highlighted by the Company premieres of Rimsky-Korsakov's *The Tsar's Bride*, Moore's poignant tale from the Old West, *The Ballad of Baby Doe*, which is presented in an all new production, and Handel's *Semele*, as well as revivals of our celebrated productions of Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier*, Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* and Donizetti's *L'Elisir d'Amore*.

A host of international conductors, including our own Music Director Donald Runnicles, will lead an illustrious roster of artists, who are joined by eminent directors and designers to create this yearlong celebration of opera. Enjoy!

Lotfi Mansouri
General Director

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



McCARTHY

On behalf of San Francisco Opera Association, we heartily congratulate Lotfi Mansouri in his final year as General Director. Our 2000/2001 Season marks 12 years under his inspired leadership, and it is because of his vision that we are celebrating yet another milestone with the world premiere of *Dead Man Walking*. This commission would not have been possible without the extraordinary and deeply appreciated leadership of Mrs. Paul L. Wattis, as well as funding for the Composer-in-Residence and additional production support provided by The Chase Global Private Bank, The Carlyle Fund, Susan and Dennis Carlyle, co-founders, The Howard Gilman Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Throughout Lotfi's tenure, it has been his mission to ensure that the vital art of opera is accessible to everyone in our community. Nowhere is this more evident than in his efforts to develop future audiences with massive outreach and to present productions of innovative works. We achieve this through significant support from 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 our season sponsors: Bank of America, American Airlines and Kawai Pianos, provided by San Francisco Pianoworks, Inc.

Additionally, we wish to thank this year's production sponsors The Edgar Foster Daniels Foundation (*Luisa Miller*), Fred and Peggy Furth (*The Tsar's Bride*), Jane Bernstein and Bob Ellis (*The Ballad of Baby Doe*), Koret Foundation (for educational activities related to *L'Elisir d'Amore*) and The Bernard Osher Endowment Fund (*Semele* and *Der Rosenkavalier*).

Our thanks also go to San Francisco Opera Guild for partnering with the Opera Center each year to bring opera into 160 schools in Northern California, reaching approximately 30,000 students, and to BRAVO! Club for continuing to cultivate future opera audiences. Indeed, our 78th Season is an exciting time in the Company's history and it is our sincere pleasure to welcome you to San Francisco Opera.

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DONIZETTI — TRIUMPH AND TRAGEDY

BY JOHN ARDOIN

Rossini was only five years older than Donizetti, but he had become a renowned figure throughout Europe by the time he was twenty-one. It took thirty operas and a decade longer for Donizetti to command a similar position in the theatrical life of his day. His fame peaked in 1835 with the writing of what would prove to be his most acclaimed opera, *Lucia di Lammermoor*. And with the death of Bellini the year before and with Rossini's abandoning of the operatic stage, Donizetti at last gained the preeminent place in the world of nineteenth-century Italian opera. But he would be king of the mountain for a comparatively short time. On the horizon were a series of personal disasters, as well as the presence of the young Verdi, whose rise in the operatic world of the time would be meteoric.

Donizetti had long been stalked by tragedy. His two children died young, and two years after the premiere of *Lucia di Lammermoor* his wife succumbed to cholera. Then, following a triumphant visit to Vienna in 1842, his own health began to give way, the result of advanced syphilis. In January of 1846, he had to be committed to an asylum near Paris and was kept secluded there for eighteen months. When he was finally released, he set out for his native city of Bergamo in northern Italy, but was stricken with paralysis en route. He lived only a few months after reaching Bergamo and died there, burned out and hallucinating. His life ended on the edge of madness at the age of fifty-one.

An unenviable life, certainly, but one whose pain and struggle yielded at least a half-dozen works that through the years have steadfastly held the stage and that still move and delight us today. As much as we admire the dark scores such as *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Anna Bolena* and *Maria Stuarda*, it may be that Donizetti's greatest achievements were in the realm of comedy, a field in which he is challenged only by Rossini. But for all the wonders of Rossini's *Barber*, *L'italiana* and *Cenerentola*, there are many of us who are more than willing to give Donizetti the comedic place of honor because of the delicious nuances of a score such as *L'Elisir d'Amore* or his other light-hearted masterpiece *Don Pasquale*.



San Francisco Opera's first *Elisir d'Amore* took place in 1929. Nina Morgana was Adina; Tito Schipa, Nemorino; Millo Picco, Belcore; and Pompilio Malatesta, Dr. Dulcamara. No photos survived from that staging, but a few anonymous backstage shots did from our next *Elisir* presentation, which occurred in 1948. (Above) Bidi Sayão as Adina and Salvatore Bacaloni as Dr. Dulcamara follow a supernumerary on their way to the stage for the little *Elisir* play. (Facing page, bottom) Tito Gobbi, who made his U.S. debut here earlier that season in the title role of *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, was the evening's Belcore, seen here awaiting the beginning of the act. (Facing page, top) Ferruccio Tagliavini, meanwhile, the evening's Nemorino, was in his dressing room, eating apples and getting ready for his entrance.

L'Elisir d'Amore, in particular, is not only an elixir of extraordinary musical potency, but it has sparkle, spontaneity and less of a sense of formula and fewer stock answers to persistent dramatic questions of its times. While it is undeniably a tasty operatic dish, it was one that had been quickly put together; one that was to be served and eaten while piping hot. Still, it is no less delicious for having been turned out with rapidity. After all, Donizetti was an old hand at fast food. There was more than just a little of McDonzetti about him.

And it was precisely his ability to whip up a dish quickly that had brought *Elisir* into being. When another composer had defaulted on his commission for the Teatro della Canobbiana, its impresario (undisturbed by the failure of Donizetti's most recent opera — *Ugo, Conte di Parigi* — at Milan's principal theater, La Scala)

asked the composer for a new comedy. Donizetti was all too happy to accept the Canobbiana commission. He was also indignant when the impresario suggested he simply redo one of his old scores.

"Who is trying to make fun of me?" Donizetti replied. "I'm not accustomed to patching up my own works, nor anybody else's, either. You'll soon see that I am quite energetic enough to make you a brand-new opera in fourteen days. I give you my word." His first step was to enlist the help of Felice Romani as his librettist for *Elisir*. Donizetti informed the poet: "I am obliged to set a poem to music in fourteen days. I give you one week to prepare it for me. We'll see which of us has the more guts."

Such haste was not unusual in the early nineteenth century. The operatic world into which Donizetti was born was a far cry from what we know today. The



demand back then was for new works, and filling this need involved hundreds of composers whose names are now found only in music encyclopedias, men such as Simone Mayr, Niccolò Zingarelli, Michele Carafa, Stefano Pavesi, Saverio Mercadante and Giovanni Pacini.

They were able craftsmen at the mercy of the impresarios who controlled Italy's opera houses, for it was the impresarios who chose new librettos, selected composers to set them and hired companies of singers for composers to write for. Bellini was among the first to rebel against being treated like a work horse. He saw himself more in the mode of a sensitive romantic hero, a stance that would be honed to perfection by Franz Liszt.

In contrast to Rossini and Donizetti, who accepted their status with only minor protests, Bellini thought of each of his operas as a special and unique creation, and, unlike Rossini, he did not recycle good music from a failed opera into his new opus. Donizetti, however, being a less glamorous and fashionable figure, and always in need of money, did little to fight the system. He was largely content to produce operas that were as much creatures of habit and formulae as was the old brand of *opera seria* practiced by Handel.

Nevertheless, the miracle of Donizetti is that he still managed to change the complexion of Italian opera by redirecting and loosening up its traditional forms and by bringing to opera greater dramatic veracity. He was influenced in this to a large degree by Mayr, his teacher, particularly in his "sentimental solemnity of melody and the fact that care taken to make orchestration an instrument of

drama might be amply repaid" (Herbert Weinstock, a major Donizetti biographer). And from Rossini, Donizetti learned several important trade secrets: how to use *crescendi* to heighten the drama and to create comedy. He also borrowed elements of Rossini's unparalleled gift for writing patter songs — bravura arias built around an enormous mouthful of words.

In short, he became not only adept but facile in turning out operas to measure, and the short time he had to produce *Elisir* did not bother Donizetti nearly as much as the singers he had been assigned. He described them to his librettist like this: "We have a German prima donna, a tenor who stammers, a buffo with a voice of a goat and a French basso who isn't worth much. Dear Romani, courage and go ahead." Ironically, the Frenchman (a baritone, not a bass as Donizetti described him), Henri-Bernard Dabadie, had performed a year earlier in an opera by Daniel François-Esprit Auber entitled *Le Philtre* to a text by Eugène Scribe.

It was this very libretto that Romani would "borrow" to fashion his text for *Elisir*. Romani knew a good thing when he read it. Evidently *Le Philtre* had become a smash hit in the Paris of 1831 and received almost 250 performances during the next thirty years. Strangely enough, when *Elisir* reached the Paris Théâtre des Italiens in 1839, Auber's *Le Philtre* continued to play at the Opéra. No one in the capital, it seems, felt obliged to choose between the two. The same audiences flocked to both. In fact, someone suggested to Auber that the two operas be given as a double bill. "That's an idea,"

Auber responded, "though I think it might suit Donizetti better than me."

Romani kept Auber's plot line intact: a village boy is duped by a quack into buying a love potion that is supposed to make him irresistible to the most beautiful girl in town — but he renamed the characters. Térézine became Adina; Guillaume, Nemorino; Le docteur Fontanarose, Dr. Dulcamara; and Joli-Coeur and Jeannette became their exact Italian equivalents — Belcore and Giannetta. The amazing thing is that not only did Romani and Donizetti meet their deadline, but in the process, they presented the operatic world with one of its supreme delights.

Some idea of how *Elisir* came into being has been left us by a young friend of the composer's, Emilia Branca, who was later to marry Romani. She has recounted that during the period of composing *Elisir*, Donizetti arrived at her family's home one evening, very late for dinner. "Forgive me, forgive me, all my dear friends," he said breathlessly on entering. "I was on my way here half an hour ago, but when I passed Romani's house, I stopped in to see if he could give me something [words to be set]."

"In fact, my good friend handed me an entire duet. While I was reading the verses — beautiful, as only he could write them — I felt so inspired that, without realizing it I began to read them [as if] already set to music...I wanted to jot





JONES

In 1969, Lotfi Mansouri's production of *L'Elisir d'Amore* featured Luciano Pavarotti as Nemorino, seen here alone in one of his lovesick moments; also with the delectable Adina of Reri Grist.

down the sketch at once...Tonight before I go to bed, I'll orchestrate it, tomorrow I'll give it to the copyist who will copy out the parts and give them to the singers."

These indeed beautiful verses were for the "Chiedi all'aura lusinghiera," the first-act duet for Adina and Nemorino. After dinner, Donizetti sang excerpts from his opera-in-progress for his friends. "Without possessing a beautiful voice," Emilia writes, "Donizetti sang very pleasantly: buffo parts in a comic and exhilarating fashion, especially little songs and Neapolitan *ariette*, folk songs and some composed by himself...as he accompanied himself brilliantly at the piano."

Despite Donizetti's admiration for Romani, their collaboration was not always an easy, smooth one. Almost ten years older than Donizetti, Romani had an explosive disposition and did not take suggestions from composers gracefully. For example, when Donizetti asked for an aria for Nemorino in the second act of *Elisir*, Romani bristled. "What's the point of that rustic bumpkin coming in and whining pathetically, when everything must be festive and gay?" The composer's persistence won out, and thank heavens it did. What would *Elisir*,



JONES

or, for that matter, Italian opera be without "Una furtiva lagrima?"

Incidentally, I have always had a soft spot for Nemorino and never believed that he was merely the village idiot. Indeed, Donizetti's music seems to tell us the opposite. Like Nemorino, it is sweet, guileless and, in the case of "Una furtiva lagrima," infinitely touching. Nemorino is simply an uncomplicated, naive lad who is hopelessly in love. I am much less in sympathy with the spoiled, petulant Adina.

She is the worldly one, isolated by her money, beauty and ego. It is only when other girls in the town become interested in Nemorino that she realizes his true, loving character for the first time.

We in the audience have known from the first appearance of the strutting, arrogant Sgt. Belcore who the real person of quality is. It is precisely this knowledge, our empathy with Nemorino (not to mention the magic of Donizetti's music), that holds us rapt throughout a performance of *Elisir*. We spend the evening waiting for the same light to dawn on Adina.

The Canobbiana's new season opened on April 23, 1832, with an opera by Luigi Ricci — *L'Orfanella di Ginevra* — and Donizetti attended the first night to take a closer measure of the singers who would also be taking part in *Elisir*'s premiere. He somewhat revamped his initial feelings about his cast-to-be, and the next day wrote to his father, "Last night was the opening, and the tenor is fair, the prima donna has a beautiful voice but only she knows what she is saying. The buffo is a dog...Next week, I begin rehearsals, although I haven't finished; little is lacking, however. Romani was obliged to finish in a hurry and is now

revising certain details of the staging."

L'Elisir d'Amore was first heard on May 12, 1832. Evidently, despite Donizetti's misgivings about his cast, it seems to have acquitted itself well. The German who created Adina was Clara Sabina Heinefetter, one of six sisters, singers all; the tenor was Giambattista Genaro; Dabadie, who had earlier created the title role of Rossini's *Guillaume Tell*, was Belcore; and the "dog" buffo was Giuseppe Frezzolini, whose daughter

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MEKLE

In our 1992 *Elisir d'Amore*, Ruth Ann Swenson's Adina is wooed by the Belcore of Gino Quilico.

was to become an acclaimed singer and later create Verdi's *Giovanna d'Arco*.

A leading Milanese newspaper was full of praise for the singers and the new opera: "Arias, duets, trios, ensemble pieces...Everything is beautiful, very beautiful, and was well applauded. To say which number is better than another is not an easy task...The composer was applauded for every number, and when the curtain fell at the end of the acts, he was acclaimed more and more often on the stage with the singers, collecting his honorable and merited reward..."

Perhaps a more accurate description of those first performances comes from Berlioz, who happened to be in Milan at the time and writes in his "Memoires" that "Out of a sense of duty I made myself go to hear the latest opera. Donizetti's *L'Elisir d'Amore* was being given at the Canobbiana. I found the theater full of people talking in normal

voices, with their backs to the stage. The singers, undeterred, gesticulated and yelled their lungs out in the strictest spirit of rivalry.

"At least I presumed they did, from their wide-open mouths; but the noise of the audience was such that no sound penetrated except the bass drum. People were gambling, eating supper in their boxes, etcetera, etcetera. Consequently, perceiving it was useless to expect to hear anything of the score, which was then new to me, I left. It appears that Italians do sometimes listen. I have been assured by several people that it is so. The fact remains that music to the Milanese, as to the Neapolitans, the Romans, the Florentines and the Genoese, means arias, duets, trios, well sung; anything beyond that provokes only aversion or indifference."

At the time of these first performances, a contemporary of Donizetti's described

the composer as "handsome...tall, slender, his broad forehead crowned with black curls, his features regular. He was graceful rather than elegant; his aspect was good-natured, a frank and open manner...which was very likable. He was *simpatico* beyond words, and the fair sex was devoted to him."

He was able to return this devotion when the score was being readied for publication by the house of Ricordi. Asked to whom he wished to dedicate the opera, Donizetti's answer was "To the Fair Sex of Milan." Who knows better how to distill this elixir? □

John Ardoin is author of The Callas Legacy and The Furtwängler Record, both published by Amadeus Press. His newest book, Valery Gergiev and the Kirov, will be published by Amadeus in the fall of 2001. It is the first history of Russia's Maryinsky Theater in English.

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CONCOCTIONS, POTIONS, POISONS...

BY CHRISTOPHER HUNT

Michael Tippett once remarked, though he was not the first, that there is only one plot to comic opera: the obstacles to an eventually happy marriage. There are, however, numerous targets for operatic satire, which is not at all the same thing as comedy. Satire loses its bite with time. The few satirical operas that have kept the stage have done so not because of their satire. Offenbach's innumerable and wonderful little topical operettas, adored by his Parisian audiences in the 1870s, were forgotten once their social and political targets had fallen from power. But some forgotten comic masterpieces also owed much of their original success to topical satire that we no longer appreciate. Who recalls that the billeting-scene in Rossini's *Barber of Seville*, where Count Almaviva plays a drunken soldier billeted on the unfortunate Dr. Bartolo, was a triumph in the Rome of 1816 where it had its premiere, because in the north of Italy at that time the occupying Austrian army was enforcing its unwelcome presence on its citizens by just such procedures. The scene is still funny thanks to Rossini's comic genius, but its satire has no teeth. So it is also with Donizetti's *Elisir d'Amore*: its delicious musical wit works but we rarely think of the tyrannically present forces its satirical barb hit for Donizetti's contemporaries.

Bertolt Brecht once said of the great political tyrants that "they should by all means be held up before the public, and preferably to ridicule." He was certainly thinking of individual humans, but he knew his remark applies equally well to more generalized but no less tyrannical traits of life: love, health, cupidity, indeed any of the seven deadly — and a number of other — sins. It was Brecht of course who revived one of the most successful of all operatic satires — Gay and Pepusch's *Beggar's Opera* of 1728 — by updating its



Gaetano Donizetti (1797–1848) in an 1835 portrait by G.B. Carnevali

generalized satire on human foibles some 200 years later in *The Threepenny Opera*. Gay and Pepusch had set out to ridicule early eighteenth-century London's vogue for Italian *opera seria*, then led by Handel and Bononcini. That had lost all meaning by the twentieth century. But Brecht saw that the strength of John Gay's book came just as much from its ridiculous portrayal of more general human weakness — desire, sin, the flouting of law and morality by the rich, the clever and the unscrupulous. They were not well enough presented to work without Brecht's re-writing. But we don't need to update Donizetti's *Elisir*, which had its premiere in Milan in 1832, just over a century after Gay's and Pepusch's satire. *Elisir*'s portrayal of the gullibility of love is so affectionate and charming, and so fundamentally timeless, that it retains its splendid comic force to our day. But it was not that alone which made for its original triumph. Donizetti's strongest satirical target in *Elisir* was not the absurdity of humans in love. It was something

much more immediate, and serious: the traveling quack-doctor, and in a more general sense the whole state of human health and medicine.

Modern medical science is so skilled and so widely available that outside the Third World we have largely lost sight of how the precariousness of life preyed on people before our own time. It takes a new and formidable scare, like the arrival of AIDS, to restore to everyday existence what was its most tyrannical element until this century: the fear of ill-health. There was no effective anesthetic until long after Donizetti's time; a routine medical procedure like appendectomy was still a risky rarity in the 1930s; before the general availability of antibiotics in the 1950s, casual infections that we now barely notice still carried the risk of death. In Europe or America, dominating consciousness for many people as the risk of AIDS has for two decades dominated the lives of too many throughout the world, the great-

est and perhaps commonest fear was of venereal disease, especially syphilis.

There was no cure for syphilis until our own time. But there were endless remedies available. Most of them were useless, some were dangerous, a few were fatal. The most frequent recipe for any venereal disease — and many lesser infections — involved the taking of mercury, or quicksilver, which the body cannot excrete and which can be fatal in accumulated doses. It was dispensed in infinitely varied mixtures, by registered apothecaries, and by itinerant quacks like Dr. Dulcamara. So were a thousand varied placebos with neither mercury nor any other powerful ingredient. Nemorino's bashful approach to the Great Quack, begging for a potion to make him irresistible to the village beauty, will have had a tart edge for those who had themselves slyly begged such a potion to help them with the consequence of their love-making to town and village beauties.

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Paolo Montarsolo, our Dr. Dulcamara in 1975, prepares to tell of the benefits of his "elixir" to the assembled villagers.

clients. His was the only "scientific" solution for ill-health, psychological no less than physical. The alternatives were time, luck, or magic, the last dispensed perhaps by some old village woman, still likely to be called a witch in Donizetti's era. The quack (whose unabbreviated description is so nearly a homophone for the quicksilver he so often incorporated in his stronger potions, though there seems to be no etymological link) was himself rarely free from the use of magical traditions. At the least, like all good doctors, he needed a keen understanding of human susceptibility. It was his most effective tool in "curing" his patients.

All of these aspects are in Donizetti's opera. Medicine and quackery were not his

only concern but they are the foreground, or focus, for the eternal comedy of human relationships, individual and societal, that make *Elisir d'Amore* still enchant us. It is perhaps the right word, for enchantment was mainly what potions were (are still?) about, in and out of opera. There are a good many of them in operatic history, few of them as benign as Nemorino's wine. Their high-point as an operatic ingredient is also the operatic repertory's strongest period, roughly from Donizetti to Puccini. Clearly they often replace the *deus ex machina* of baroque theater: where for Monteverdi or Handel a god might appear to deflect the course of human lives, for the less religious post-Enlightenment a different kind of supernatural agency was per-

haps easier to accept, as if somehow its magicality was more believable.

The two most familiar examples of the working of some sort of magic potion in opera come one from the comic zone, the other from the tragic: in the standard repertory Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* is certainly the supreme instance in serious opera. *Elisir* is the other. It is no accident of course that Wagner took his plot from one of the oldest and most powerful of legends, the story of Tristram and Iseult who fall irrevocably for each other after mistakenly taking a love potion. Nor is it really a surprise to find Adina in the opening scene of *Elisir* reading "la storia di Tristano" to the group of villagers around her, still less that they sing in chorus:

Elisir di sì perfetta,
di sì rara qualità
ne sapessi la ricetta,
conoscessi chi ti fa!
(Such a perfect elixir/
of such rare quality/
you needn't know the recipe/
just as long as it works!)

How right they are, as the succeeding two hours will wittily prove.

In keeping with a more cynical age: when the Swiss composer Frank Martin came to re-tell the Tristan story, in *Le vin herbé*, he had the spell of true love lose its power after three years. Donizetti in his way was hardly less of a cynic: Nemorino is indeed transformed but not by the force of magic. The deceitful effects of wine — to which chance (in the form of his inheritance) adds a powerful and satirical fillip — do the trick just as well, and we know the results will not last. In a rare 20th century parallel Eric Crozier had certainly not forgotten Nemorino's experience when he re-cast the village hero of a Maupassant short story in the libretto of *Albert Herring* for Benjamin Britten. Albert's adventure with spiked lemonade has different consequences but good alcohol is no less a potion of transformation for him than it is for Nemorino.

Alcohol is hardly rare in opera, as in life, on and off the stage, but it is more usually the excuse for a drinking song than it is intrinsic to the opera's plot. It is rarely a means of advancing it. The wine toasted in the "libiamo" in *La Traviata*, the "herrlich, göttlich" wine tasted by Papageno in *The Magic Flute*, the "champagne" in *Don Giovanni* (which the text does not refer to as such), Falstaff's sack or sherry, are among the better examples, integral to their operas' plots. But they

are hardly to be called potions despite being greeted as if they were. Even when actually described as a potion, operatic alcohol can be hopelessly ineffective, like the green and red chartreuse whose praises are sung with such delight in Chabrier's *L'Etoile*. Somewhat more rarefied in the (presumably) alcoholic stakes but not praised at all is the nectar with which the gods in *Orpheus in the Underworld* are so sated that they would do anything to get out of heaven altogether.

If these regularly inebriating indulgences cannot quite qualify as potions, a few yet-simpler drinks acquire almost potion-status even when their content is most ordinary: Arabella's symbolic glass of plain water brings Richard Strauss to a positive orgy of sweetness, quite magical for his admirers; more genuinely magical water is found in *Die Frau ohne Schatten* but at least it is "the water of life" and is the elixir that will cure childlessness. And there is the sacred spring from which Gerald and Lakmé drink before Gerald leaves and before Lakmé eats the poisonous datura leaf in Delibes's opera. Slightly stronger stuff is to be found in regular coffee, the source of all the trouble in Bach's eponymous cantata, the nearest the Leipzig cantor came to writing an opera; and there is hot chocolate in Pergolesi's *Serva padrona*, and in Mozart's *Così fan tutte*, though in that case only the servant Despina seems to find it at all magical. (Mozart's opera does however contain another famous satire on current medical practices, with Despina's ludicrous use of a magnet to cure the effects of the "poison" taken by the two "Albanians." As a child Mozart had himself played at the villa of the celebrated Dr. Mesmer in Vienna whose electro-magnetism was for a short while a near-hysterical medical fashion over much of Europe.)

None of these, however, is a "real" potion. In *Tristan* the potion is real enough but it is taken in the belief that it is something else; in *Elisir* the "stupendo elisir che desta amore" is fake, though it is taken in the belief that it is real. Real and fake are of the essence in operatic potionery, which is appropriate enough since the very notion of potions is bound up with magic and the supernatural. Whether an unbrewed herb qualifies as a potion is (I hope) merely academic: the effect is certainly magically potional in Britten's Shakespearean opera *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Its capricious qualities (and unintended consequences) are of course the fulcrum of the opera's, and the



2000-2001 SEASON

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Artistic Director
Ian White-Thomson
Executive Director

September 10, 13, 15, 2000

Plácido Domingo in concert with The Kirov Orchestra conducted by Valery Gergiev

Sept. 6, 9, 11, 14, 17, 20, 23m, 26, 28, 2000

AIDA

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Sept. 8, 10m, 12, 16, 19, 22, 24, 2000

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LA BOHÈME

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Jan. 16, 18, 21, 24, 26, 30, Feb. 1, 3m, 2001

LE NOZZE DI FIGARO

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Bernstein, Bayo, Henschel/Atkins, Lerner

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Daniels, Futral, Rasmussen, Mehta, Guzmán, Walker

April 11, 14m, 18, 21m, 24, 27, 29, 2001

DON PASQUALE

DONIZETTI • Joel: Ponnelle, Lawless, Jonathon
Alaimo, Swenson, Allen, Fedderly, Mack

June 6, 9, 12, 15, 17m, 19, 22, 24, 27, 2001

TOSCA

PUCCINI • Buckley/Vendice: Judge, Harlan, Gunter, da Costa
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play's, action. First used by Oberon to drop in his consort Tytania's eyes, the dangerous effect of the "little western flower, before milk-white, now purple with loves wound" is to make the recipient love whatever living thing is seen next. Oberon naturally requires his minion Puck to make sure that his queen will only "wake when some vile thing is near."

But potions are not always magical. Some are very unmagical indeed like that which puts Juliet to sleep which makes her appear dead in Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette*, or the similar dose which deceives La Gioconda's vengeful husband into thinking she is dead. There is nothing supernatural about either. Both are plain narcotics. Still, there is deception involved, for neither is what it appears and only in Ponchielli's opera is the result what its deceiver meant. Straight sleeping draughts that are intended only to be just that are perhaps hardly potions either, but they too have operatic status: Jenůfa is given one by her stepmother, the Kostelníčka, while the old woman interviews her daughter's faithless lover, and "Harlequin" gives "Columbine" a sleeping potion for her husband so they can deceive

him together, before theater turns into tragic reality on the stage-within-a-stage of *Pagliacci*. And then there is Donizetti's delicious one-acter, *Il Campanello di Notte*, where one older English translation included the immortal couplet: "I'll administer a posset/To keep him in the closet."

The list of genuine operatic potions in the good old supernatural-effect sense is actually quite small: apart from the potion in *Tristan und Isolde*, there is another Wagner instance in the drink Siegfried takes from Hagen in *Götterdämmerung*. It has the opposite of the Tristan-effect: it makes him forget his undying love for Brünnhilde. Richard Strauss's late *Die Ägyptische Helena* twists the scheme further: in it, Menelaus orders the sorceress Aithra to provide a deadly poison for his unfaithful wife Helen, but the concoction makes him forgive her instead. The reverse was Rimsky-Korsakov's choice in *The Tsar's Bride*. There the love potion ordered turns out in fact to be deadly poison.

Which brings us to poisons, of which opera has perhaps more than its fair share.

In *Luisa Miller* the mischanced lovers take poison together to end it all; there is poisoned wine in Donizetti's *Lucrezia Borgia*; in *Il Trovatore*, Leonora escapes a fate worse than death by finding death itself through the poison secreted in her ring; Adolar in Weber's *Euryanthe* has died by a similar means before the opera starts; Simon Boccanegra takes poison in a glass of water; Abigail dies from poison, off-stage it is true, at the end of *Nabucco*; and Medée in Charpentier's opera uses poison, though Cherubini in his version preferred to keep to the classical poisoned garment. There is a poisoned chalice in Verdi's *Attila* but it never gets drunk. I've no doubt there are many more but I can't think of them at the moment and that's enough anyway.

Poison aside, some other operatic brews turn out completely ineffective. For Treemonisha, simple truth confounds the spurious potion brewed by Zdzetrick. The witches' cauldron in Verdi's *Macbeth* contains the familiar horrid ingredients but nobody drinks from it. In *The Tales of Hoffmann* Dr. Miracle's potions, devised to bring an end to Antonia, are not what kills her: with good operatic satire it is singing, too much singing, that claims her spirit. We allowed Oberon's magic herb a place in the potion-canon so one should at least mention the herbs in *Ballo in Maschera* which Amelia hopes to collect from under the gallows. Their magic powers are never given a chance: she is interrupted before she can pick them. But her purpose is the opposite of Nemorino's: the herbs would cure her of a disastrous love. Another curing mixture, rarely this time from the baroque era, appears in Handel's *Orlando* in a potion brought back from the moon to set aside Orlando's madness.

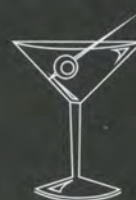
True elixirs are surely potions but not all potions, as we have seen, are elixirs. One that certainly is, surely the ultimate operatic elixir of life, has been taken long before the opera it stars in begins: Janáček's *Makropulos Case*, where EM must reinvent herself after each normal lifespan, though always with the same initials. True to our century's post-Freudian disillusionment she finds no comfort in her longevity. An even less inspiring potion, would-be source of immortality, is to be found in Ginastera's *Bomarzo*, one of the few successful serial operas. It combines, among other intrepid elements, aloes, gentian, cinchona, calumba, saffron, rhubarb, angelica, myrrh, camomile and peppermint oil, and has quite the undesired if unsurprising effect: it gives the hunchback Duke a bad stom-

ach ache and a not very quick death.

Bomarzo's indigestible mixture is much less scary than some other operatic recipes, and less frightful still than historical truth. Paisiello, the composer of the immensely successful *Barbiere di Siviglia* which held the stage for 35 years until impertinent young Rossini dared to challenge it, included a love potion in one of his works made up of ground eel, bitter almonds, goat's urine and ale. The reality from history is worse: the doctors of eighteenth-century London, provided nostrums (especially "confects for impotency" and "liquors for the pox") combining crushed toads, salt of vipers, ground garden snails "bruised to a perfect paste," *pulvis humani cranum* (powdered human skull), "volatile salt of millipedes," *sal vitrioli* (hydrochloric acid), and copious amount of alcohol (Madeira was favored), rhubarb, and that luckily easily available substance *acqua pluvialis* (rain water). This doesn't differ so much from the recommendations of the younger Pliny in the first century of our era whose recipes included the right lobe of a vulture's lung, and a lizard drowned in urine. Powdered roast mouse was good for incontinence, cow dung fried in butter for a sore breast, peacock droppings with black snails for consumption, and these were by far not the worst. There were patent elixirs everywhere. And above all for venereal disease. Most included calomel, antimony, steel or mercury. There was nothing to choose between the medications for scrofula or syphilis and those sold as aphrodisiacs. The quacks of the time, whether the time was Pliny's or Donizetti's, knew almost nothing of scientific medicine as we think of it (though Viagra bids fair to mythic status). Nor did their customers. So Dr. Dulcamara, if he seems comic to us now, was a threatening figure as well as a comic caricature. Donizetti knew it was better to make people laugh at the fears and miseries they could do nothing about, as great comedians have always known. And there is sadness behind his elegance, the seriousness that lies at the root of all great comedy. It is the more sad to recall that a decade after composing *Elisir* he died of the crazed effects of cranio-spinal syphilis, for which no potion from any doctor or itinerant quack could do a thing. □

Christopher Hunt, who is now living in London, was until recently General Director of the Alte Oper in Frankfurt am Main, Germany.

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Oct. 7, 10, 13, 17, 19, 22, 25, 28 (m & e)

L'ELISIR D'AMORE

Donizetti

Evans/Netrebko (Jan.); Beltrán/
Saccà (Jan.), Gilfry/Ford*
(Jan.), Del Carlo/de Simone** (Jan.)
Summers/Lacey (11/8), Barbacini (Jan.)
/Bernhard/Darling/Coyne/Whitfield

Oct. 21, 24, 31; Nov. 3, 5, 8
Jan. 7, 11, 13

DIE ZAUBERFLÖTE

Mozart

Mills/Volkwijn (1/9), Kodalli*/
Dunleavy* (Jan.); Saccà/Very (Jan.),
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Hemm*/Selig* (Jan.)
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Jan. 6, 9, 10, 12, 14

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Nov. 1, 4, 7, 10, 15, 19, 22, 25

DER ROSENKAVALIER

Strauss

Graham, Kenny*/Fleming (Dec.),
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Dec. 2, 5, 7, 10

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AIDA

Verdi

Crider/Fantini*, Diadkova;
Margison, Pyatnychko*
Summers/Lacey (6/21)/Williams/
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June 7, 9, 12, 15, 17, 21, 26, 29;
July 1

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Verdi

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Text by FELICE ROMANI

Based on *Le Philtre* by EUGÈNE SCRIBE

L'Elisir d'Amore

(in Italian)

Conductor

Maurizio Barbacini

Production

Lotfi Mansouri

Stage Director

Sandra Bernhard

Original Set Designer

Robert Darling

Revised Set Design

John Coyne

Costume Design

John Coyne

Lighting Designer

Michael Whitfield

Chorus Director

Ian Robertson

Musical Preparation

Joyce Fieldsend

Monica Vanderveen

William Lacey

Jonathan Khuner

Recitative Accompaniment

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Supertitles

Jerry Sherk

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SATURDAY, JANUARY 13 AT 8:00

CAST

(in order of appearance)

Giannetta, a peasant girl

Donita Volkwijnt†

Nemorino, a young peasant

Roberto Saccà

Adina, a wealthy young woman

Anna Netrebko

Belcore, sergeant of the village garrison

Nmon Ford*

Dulcamara, a charlatan

Bruno de Simone**

Peasants, soldiers, villagers, a notary

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

TIME AND PLACE: 19th century; an Italian village

ACT I

Scene 1	Adina's farm
Scene 2	A small garden
Scene 3	The village square
Scene 4	The Inn of Pernice
Scene 5	The village square

INTERMISSION

ACT II

Scene 1	Adina's farm
Scene 2	A village street
Scene 3	Adina's farm

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The performance will last approximately two and one-half hours.*

L'ELISIR D'AMORE SYNOPSIS

ACT I

Giannetta and a group of peasants are finishing their morning harvesting before resting for lunch under the shade of a group of trees. Nemorino watches Adina timidly from a distance, sad about being too poor to offer her anything but his love and thus too shy to approach her. Adina reads the story of Tristan and Isolde and how Tristan won Isolde's affection with a love potion. The swaggering Sergeant Belcore arrives with a regiment of soldiers. He flirts with the girls and then declares his passion for Adina, asking her to marry him. She is flattered by his handsome bearing and the declaration of his love, but refuses the offer. The peasants return to work, and Nemorino finds the courage to declare his love for Adina. She laughs at him, telling him she is too capricious to settle down. The scene shifts to the square of the neighboring village. Dr. Dulcamara arrives with a supply of patent medicine for sale. Nemorino asks him if he knows of the magic elixir of love with which Tristan won Isolde. Dulcamara replies that it was he who created it. The quack sells his elixir, which is actually a bottle filled with Bordeaux wine, to Nemorino as a love potion. The effect of the alcohol is immediate. Certain that he will win Adina's love, Nemorino begins to treat her indifferently. To get even, Adina begins to flirt with Belcore and finally agrees to marry him. When orders arrive calling for Belcore to report to duty at once, it is decided that Adina and Belcore will wed that very evening.

ACT II

Distracted that Nemorino has not attended the party preceding her marriage, Adina puts off signing the marriage contract. All depart leaving Dulcamara alone. Soon, Nemorino enters and asks the doctor's help. He says Nemorino must double the amount of potion and gives him another bottle of wine. In order to gain the money to pay for the elixir, Nemorino joins Belcore's regiment and receives an enlistment bonus. The scene shifts back to the village square. Nemorino reels in, tipsy from the new bottle of wine. The village girls, having just learned that a rich uncle of Nemorino's has died and made him wealthy, crowd around him. Unaware of his new wealth, Nemorino thinks that at last Dulcamara's potion is working. Adina sees Nemorino with the girls and becomes jealous. She is now determined to win him for herself. Nemorino returns, sad at the thought of leaving his village and Adina for the army. Adina joins him and tells him that she has bought back his enlistment papers so that they can be married. All join in praising Dulcamara and his magic elixir.

The production of *L'Elisir d'Amore* is designated in honor of
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L'Elisir d'Amore



*Bojan Knežević,
Members of the San Francisco Opera Chorus*
Photos taken in rehearsal by Marty Sohl



Roberto Saccà, Women of the San Francisco Opera Chorus



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*Nmon Ford,
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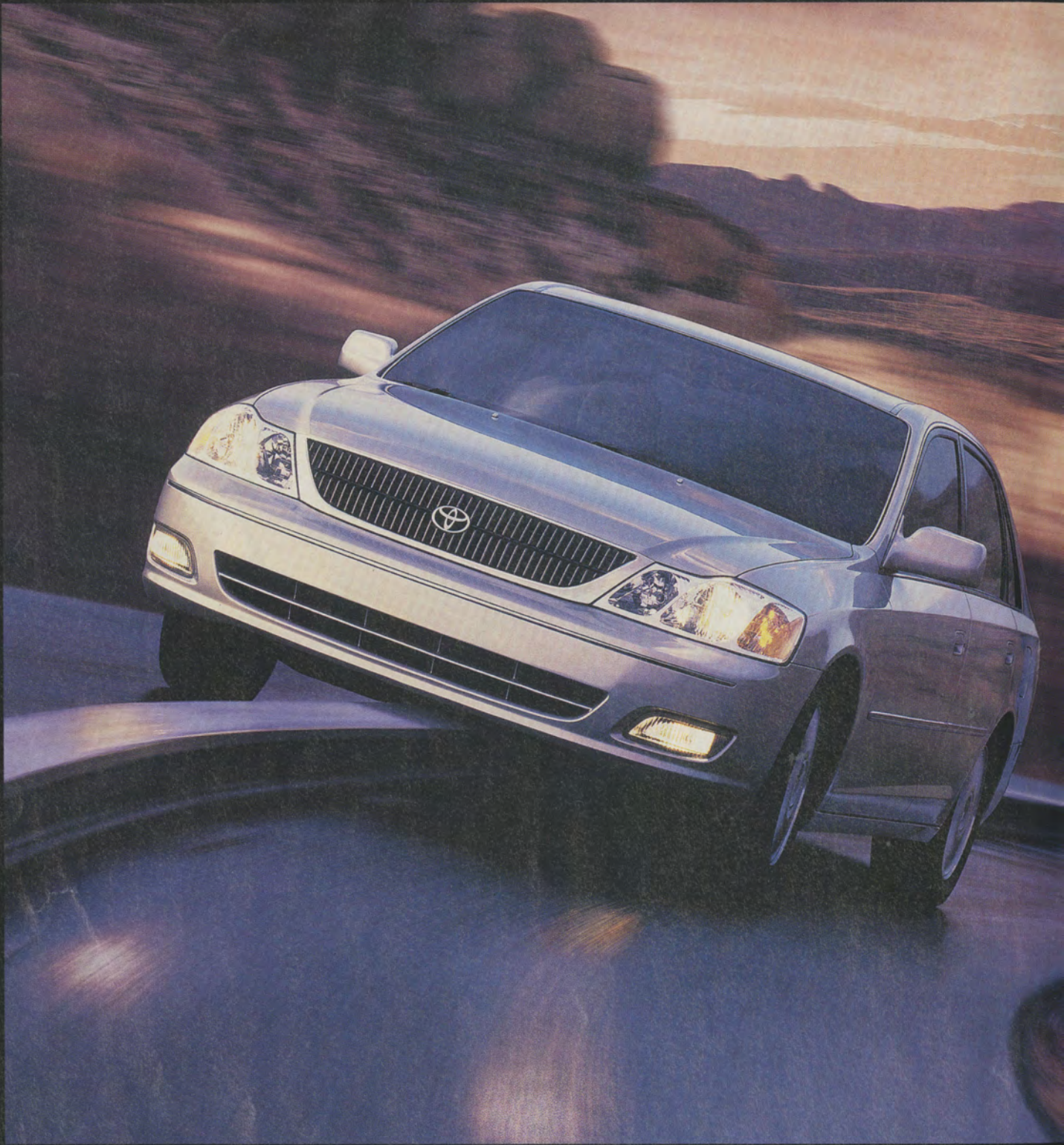
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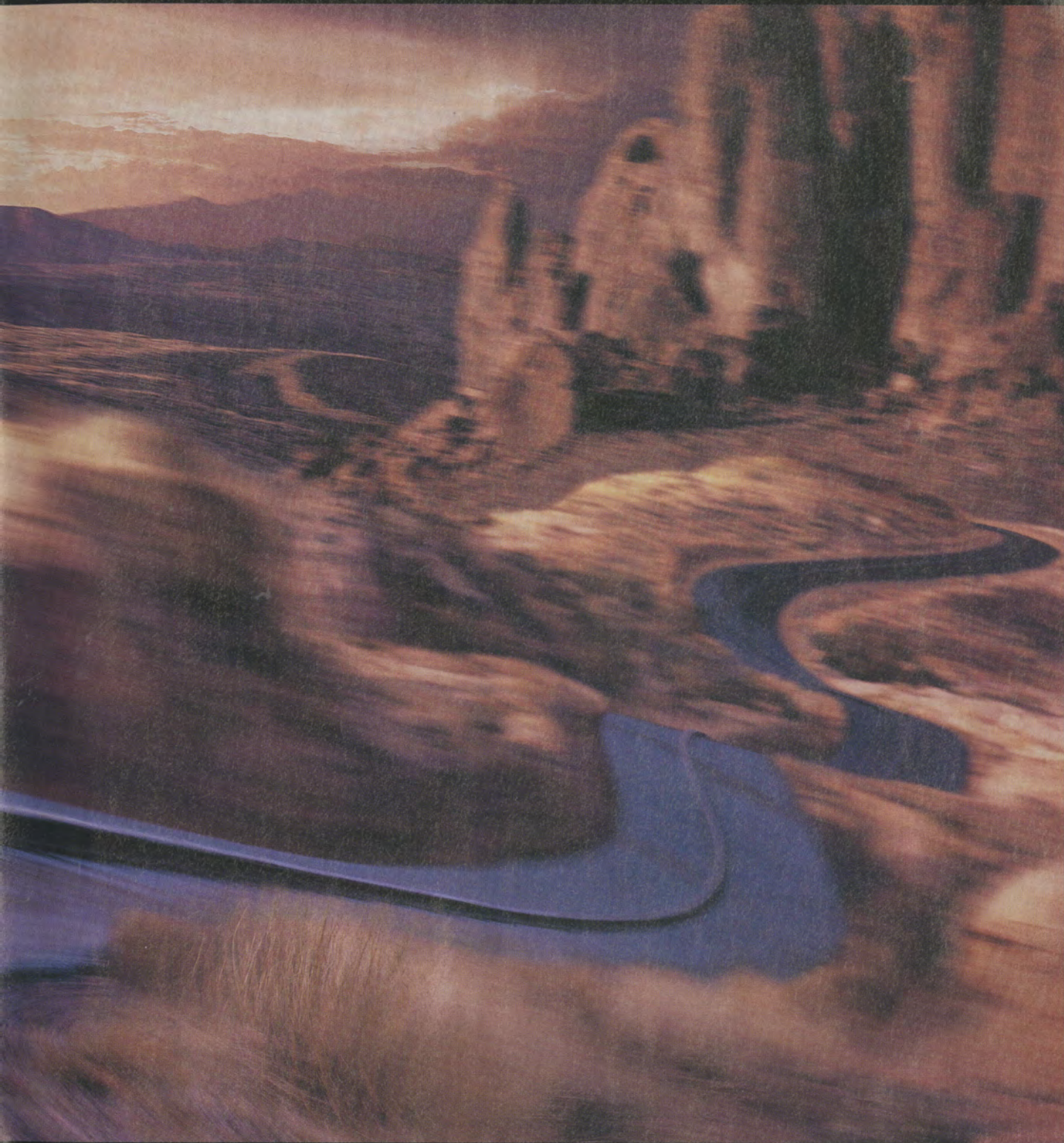
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Nmon Ford, Anna Netrebko



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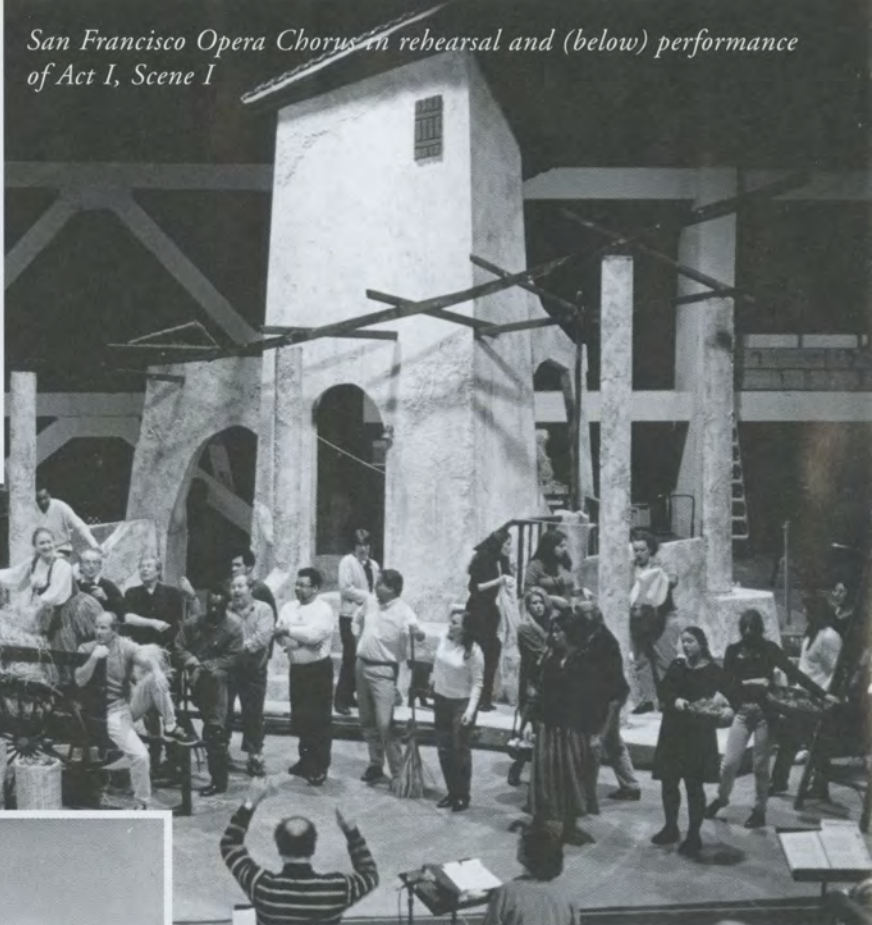
Anna Netrebko, Bojan Knežević



Bojan Knežević, Anna Netrebko



San Francisco Opera Chorus in rehearsal and (below) performance of Act I, Scene I



Bojan Knežević, Roberto Saccà



ARTIST PROFILES



Russian soprano **ANNA NETREBKO** was trained at the St. Petersburg Conservatory, appearing there 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, making her Kirov Opera debut a year later as Susanna. 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 that year in a critically acclaimed performance as part of the Schwabacher Debut Recital series. During the Company's 1999-2000 Season, she portrayed Ilia in *Idomeneo*, Musetta in *La Bohème* and Zerlina in *Don Giovanni*, while earlier in our current season she appeared as Marfa in the Company premiere of *The Tsar's Bride*. 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; and *Carmen* (Micaëla) in Japan. Now commanding over 20 leading roles, the soprano's most recent engagements include Natasha in *War and Peace* (performed at Covent Garden), *La Sonnambula* (her first Amina), *Don Giovanni* and *Le Nozze di Figaro* with the Kirov, as well as highly acclaimed performances of *Rigoletto* for the Washington Opera. Among the artist's future engagements are *Rigoletto* under Riccardo Muti at La Scala in Milan, *War and Peace* under Valery Gergiev for the Met, and *Le Nozze di Figaro* with the Washington Opera. Her Kirov performances in *Ruslan and Lyudmila* and *Betrothal in a Monastery* are available on video and CD.



Originally from Cape Town, South Africa, second-year Adler Fellow **DONITA VOLKWIJN** made her first San Francisco Opera appearances last season, performing in *Louise* (Irma), *Nabucco* (Anna), *La Bohème* (Mimi) and *Parsifal* (Flower Maiden). The soprano was seen as Mrs. Charlton in *Dead Man Walking* earlier this season, and is also currently singing Giannetta in our revival of *L'Elisir d'Amore*. She recently made her

professional U.S. recital debut as part of San Francisco Opera Center's Schwabacher Debut Recital series. Other Opera Center credits include Fiordiligi in the 1999 Showcase production of *Così fan tutte* and Pamina in the 1998 Merola Opera Program staging of *The Magic Flute*. She has also 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. The young artist made her European debut last season with concert performances at the International Opera Center of the Netherlands. A national winner of the Leontyne Price Vocal Arts Competition and a district winner of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, she 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*. Volkwiijn earned her bachelor's degree in vocal performance from the Oberlin Conservatory and her Master of Music degree from the Cleveland Institute of Music.



Tenor **ROBERTO SACCÀ** made his U.S. opera debut as Count Almaviva in San Francisco Opera's 1996 staging of *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* and was seen earlier this season as Tamino in *Die Zauberflöte*. Of Italian parentage, he was born and raised in Germany where he studied at the music academies of Stuttgart and Karlsruhe. After engagements at the opera houses of Würzburg and Wiesbaden, he became a

member of the Zurich Opera where he has performed extensively since 1993. Roles with this company include Don Ramiro in *La Cenerentola*, Lindoro in *L'Italiana in Algeri*, Tamino in *Die Zauberflöte*, Ferrando in *Così fan tutte*, Oronte in Handel's *Alcina*, Orfeo in Haydn's *L'Anima del Filosofo*, Belmonte in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, Elias in the world premiere of *Schlafes Bruder*, the title role of Weber's *Oberon* and *Barbiere's* Almaviva. Career highlights include concert performances of *Die Meistersinger* with the Chicago Symphony under Solti; Henze's *Das Verratene Meer* at Milan's La Scala; *Die Meistersinger* and *Gianni Schicchi* at the Monnaie in Brussels; *Die Zauberflöte* in Berlin, Munich and Cologne; *L'Elisir d'Amore* (Nemorino) in Geneva and Frankfurt; *Così fan tutte* in Dresden and at the Glyndebourne Festival; *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* in Munich and Rio de Janeiro; also *Don Giovanni* (Don Ottavio) in Zurich. Foremost among his most recent engagements are *Daphne* (Leukippos) in Berlin, *Don Giovanni* in Baltimore and at the Aix-en-Provence Festival, *La Traviata* (Alfredo) in Cologne, *Così* and *L'Anima del Filosofo* in Zurich, *Barbiere* in Munich, *Zauberflöte* in Berlin, Zurich and Shanghai, in addition to *Entführung* in Geneva. Also in demand on the concert stage and in recital, the tenor's recordings include *Die Meistersinger*, *Capriccio*, *Il Re Pastore*, Boesman's *Der Reigen*, Rimsky-Korsakov's *Mozart und Salieri*, as well as several recital discs. He can be seen on videos of *Gianni Schicchi*, *Così fan tutte*, *Don Giovanni* and *Orfeo*, among others.



American baritone **NMON FORD** has performed in opera and concert throughout the U.S., Europe and Japan. He has performed with, among others, Madison Opera (*Escamillo/Carmen*); Opera Memphis (*Amonasro/Aida*, High Priest/*Samson et Dalila*); Virginia Opera (*Iago/Otello*); Syracuse Opera (*Aida*, *Carmen*); Opera San José (title role/*Don Giovanni*, Valentin/*Faust*); Lyric Opera of Kansas City (*Falke/Die Fledermaus*); Portland Opera (*Pantaloone/The Love for Three Oranges*); and at the Opera de San Feliu de Guixols in Spain. A featured performer and former program host on National Public Radio, Ford has been acclaimed in concert in Moscow, Paris, Montreal, Nájera (Spain), Panama City, Carmel, Rockport (MA), Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, Santa Cruz and San Jose, under conductors such as Stewart Robertson, John DeMain, Gisèle Ben-Dor and Marin Alsop. He can be heard as soloist in the recent recording of Villa-Lobos's Tenth Symphony led by Ben-Dor. Upcoming engagements include *Carmen* for Opera Memphis and Utah Opera, *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* (four villains) at Syracuse Opera, and Mahler's *Kindertotenlieder* with the Burbank Chamber Orchestra.



Neapolitan bass-baritone **BRUNO DE SIMONE** began his vocal studies with Sesto Bruscantini while pursuing his undergraduate degree. He made his professional debut in 1980 as Valentin in *Faust*, followed that same season with Figaro in both *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* and *Le Nozze di Figaro*. He has distinguished himself in both the standard baritone and buffo repertory, with a particular emphasis on the works of

Cimarosa, Paisiello, Mozart, Rossini and Donizetti. He has sung many prominent roles from these composers' operas at Milan's La Scala, and the houses of Florence, Rome, Turin, Naples, Verona, Venice, London, Zurich, Lyon, Madrid, Munich, Strasbourg, Brussels and Amsterdam, among others. He has been particularly noted for his performances of Dulcamara (*L'Elisir d'Amore*) at La Scala; Bartolo in both the Paisiello and Rossini versions of *Barbiere* in Florence and Zurich; Don Magnifico (*La Cenerentola*) in Zurich; and especially of Geronimo (Cimarosa's *Il Matrimonio Segreto*) in Bilbao, Naples, Rome and at the Ravenna Festival. Highlights of his most recent performances include *Le Comte Ory* (Raimbaud) at the Florence May Festival; *Gianni Schicchi* (title role) at Torre del Lago; *Barbiere* (Bartolo) at La Scala; *Il Turco in Italia* (Proscodimo) in Naples; *L'Italiana in Algeri* (Taddeo) in Seville; *Cenerentola* in Rome; and *Falstaff* (title role) in Cosenza. Among his upcoming projects are *Gianni Schicchi* in Amsterdam, *Cenerentola* in Tel Aviv, and *Barbiere* in Florence.



Principal Conductor of the Opera Company of Philadelphia, **MAURIZIO BARBACINI** graduated from the Verona Conservatory in piano studies and from Milan's Verdi Conservatory in composition. The native of Reggio Emilia studied conducting both privately and at the Siena Institute with Franco Ferrara and in Zurich with Nello Santi. He was formerly principal conductor of the Finnish National

Opera, principal conductor of the Italian repertory at Oslo's Royal Opera, and principal guest conductor of the Stockholm Opera. The maestro has conducted at most of the leading opera companies of Europe including the Paris Opera/Bastille (*Manon Lescaut*), Hamburg Opera (*Il Trovatore*), Zurich Opera, Grand Théâtre de Genève, Opéra Comique, Opéra de Liège, Royal Opera Brussels (*La Donna del Lago*) and the Arena di Verona. He has also led productions at the Vienna State Opera (*Tosca*), Munich's Bavarian State Opera (*Madama Butterfly*, *Don Pasquale*), Finnish National Opera, and in Savonlinna, Reykjavík, Copenhagen and Stockholm, among others. In the U.S., he has conducted *Tosca* for his 1998 San Francisco Opera debut; *La Traviata* at the Metropolitan Opera; *Manon Lescaut* and *Falstaff* with the Cincinnati Opera; as well as *Tosca*, *I Puritani*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Norma*, *Falstaff*, *La Bobème*, *La Cenerentola* and *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* in Philadelphia. Most recently, he was on the podium for *Norma* (Stockholm, Philadelphia), *L'Elisir d'Amore* (Toronto), *Cavalleria Rusticana/Suor Angelica* (Verona), *Tosca* and *Rigoletto* (Philadelphia), also *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* (Catania). Future projects include *Falstaff* in Turin and Detroit, as well as *Traviata* at the Met. Maestro Barbacini has recorded for BMG, CBS and Nuova Era.



SANDRA BERNHARD, who most recently directed *Lucia di Lammermoor* during the Company's 1999-2000 Season, has previously created San Francisco Opera's staged concert presentations of *Lucio Silla*, *Ermione* and *Daphne*, the student matinee performances of *L'Elisir d'Amore*, as well as *La Bobème* in 1993, her new production of *Lucia* in 1994, *Madama Butterfly* in 1995, and *Carmen* in 1998.

Associated with the Company since 1990, she has served as assistant director for over 30 productions here, and as Education Consultant for the San Francisco Opera Guild and Center. She was also director of the Merola Opera Program's Grand Finals for four years. In addition to her San Francisco Opera credits, Bernhard has mounted productions for Minnesota Opera (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Austin Lyric Opera (*Aida*), Cincinnati Opera (*La Bobème*), Opera Omaha (*Aida*), Utah Opera (*The Barber of Seville*, *La Traviata*), Baltimore Opera (*The Mother of Us All*), Opera Pacific (*La Bobème*), Portland Opera (*Don Giovanni*), Florida Grand Opera (*Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, *Rigoletto*), Virginia Opera (*The Medium*), and Opera Memphis (*Roméo et Juliette*), as well as her own works (*A Point of Departure*, *A Night in Berlin*, *Postage Due* and *Buffa Bus Stop*) in Chautauqua, Norfolk and Miami. Next season she will stage *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* at Fort Worth Opera, *La Bobème* with Portland Opera and *Postcard from Morocco* for Pittsburgh Opera's Young Artists Program. A graduate of the University of Illinois, she has had teaching assignments at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, Cincinnati Conservatory of Music, Utah Opera, Greater Miami Opera, Virginia Opera, Chautauqua Opera, Sarasota Opera and Louisiana State University.



JOHN COYNE made his San Francisco Opera debut with the revised sets for the *Ring* Festival in the summer of 1999. During the Company's 1999 - 2000 Season he was the set designer for *La Favorite* and served as associate set designer for the new stagings of *Louise* and *Don Giovanni*. He also created the settings for Opera Center's Showcase production of *Albert Herring* earlier this year. A graduate of the Yale

School of Drama, his work has been seen in theaters across the country including The Public Theater, Dallas Theatre Center, Santa Fe Stages, Yale Repertory Theatre, Capital Rep, Barrington Stage and The Juilliard School. His theater credits represent a diverse range of projects including *A Little Night Music*, *Company*, *First Lady*, *Tartuffe*, *Fallen Angels*, *Fuddy Meers*, *The House of Bernarda Alba*, *As You Like It*, *The Tempest*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet*. Prior to his work in theater and opera, Coyne established himself as a licensed architect, designing buildings, residences, interiors and furniture on a variety of projects. He has been honored with a number of awards for his design work including a prize from the American Academy in Rome.



Designer/director **ROBERT DARLING** created the sets for *L'Elisir d'Amore*, a production which was the vehicle of his San Francisco Opera debut in 1967. Subsequent productions he designed for the Company include *Fra Diavolo* in 1968, and the U.S. premiere presentation of von Einem's *The Visit of the Old Lady* in 1972. He was also responsible for realizing the designs of the late Wieland Wagner for *Salome* in 1968. In addition, he designed over 10 productions for Spring Opera Theater and Western Opera Theater. After receiving a Master of Fine arts degree from Yale University, the Oakland native began his work in opera as an assistant at New York City Opera and worked with Ming Cho Lee on *Le Nozze di Figaro* for the Met National Company. With a career encompassing theater, opera and dance, Darling's work has been seen at the opera companies of Chicago, New York City, Seattle, Santa Fe, Denver, Washington, D.C., San Diego and throughout Canada; the San Francisco, Pennsylvania, Miami City, Winnipeg and Pacific Northwest Ballets; at the American Conservatory Theater, as well as at numerous Broadway and Off-Broadway theaters.



Lighting designer **MICHAEL WHITFIELD's** San Francisco Opera assignments have been the presentations of *Lulu* (1989, 1998); *Wozzeck* (1990, 1999); *Macbeth* (1994); *Anna Bolena* (1995) and *Don Giovanni* (1995, 2000); *Carmen* (1996-97 season); the Company premiere of *Death in Venice* (1997); as well as *Arabella* and *Norma* (1998-99). The Canadian-born artist received his training at the University of Victoria in British Columbia, and continued at Pennsylvania's Villanova University and the University of Illinois at Urbana. Associated with the Stratford Festival since 1974, he has been resident lighting designer there since 1978 and has worked on over 100 Stratford productions. At the Canadian Opera Company in Toronto, he has designed lighting for over 60 productions, including several Canadian premieres, world premieres (the most recent was Randolph Peters's *The Golden Ass*), working with an impressive list of stage directors such as Colin Graham, John Copley, Nikolaus Lehnhoff, Brian Macdonald, Lotfi Mansouri and Elijah Moshinsky, among others. Additional engagements include those at the Shaw Festival (the musical *She Loves Me* earlier this year), Royal Winnipeg Ballet, Netherlands Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Los Angeles Opera, Minnesota Opera, New Orleans Opera, Vancouver Opera and Welsh National Opera. Whitfield is also active in the areas of Canadian regional theater, ballet, television production and teaching.

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

PRE-PERFORMANCE LECTURES

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

L'Elisir d'Amore — Jan. 7, 11, 13
Die Zauberflöte — Jan. 10, 12, 14
La Traviata — June 6, 10, 20, 23, 28
Aida — June 9, 17, 21, 26, 29; July 1
Simon Boccanegra — June 19, 22, 24, 27

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA GUILD— INSIGHTS

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

June 12 *Simon Boccanegra*

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA GUILD—PREVIEWS

Opera Guild previews are scheduled in communities throughout the greater Bay Area by local Guild chapters (East Bay, Marin, San Francisco, Sonoma, South Peninsula and the San Jose Opera Guild). The format features a renowned musicologist who may feature recordings, slides and/or handouts to familiarize the audience with an opera from the current season.

**EAST BAY CHAPTER—
SAN FRANCISCO OPERA GUILD**
Lectures held at 8:00 p.m., preceded by complimentary refreshments. St. Mark's Methodist Church, 451 Moraga Way, Orinda. Admission: \$7 (except Verdi Lecture, \$10). Series: \$35. Reservations required. For reservations or information call Annette Clute (510) 527-1846 or Silvia Lin (925) 838-9255.

June 6 *Verdi's Golden Legacy*

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June 4 Verdi's Golden Legacy

**SAN FRANCISCO CHAPTER—
SAN FRANCISCO OPERA GUILD**
Lectures held at 12:00 noon, Koret Auditorium, Lower Level, New Main Library, 100 Larkin Street, San Francisco. Admission: Free. For information call Marni Cook, (415) 565-3289.

June 6 Verdi's Golden Legacy

SAN JOSE OPERA GUILD
Lectures held at 10:00 a.m., followed by a no-host luncheon (\$10). Los Gatos History Club, 123 Los Gatos Blvd., Los Gatos. Admission: \$10 (free to San Jose Opera Guild members). For information call Joy Hulme (408) 741-1331 or Margaret Boddy (408) 354-7525.

June 7 Verdi's Golden Legacy

**SONOMA CHAPTER—
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Held at various locations and times. For information call Lotte Klugman (707) 938-2432 or Neva Turner (707) 539-1220. Admission: \$8 (except Verdi Lecture, #10); Series: \$40 - Sonoma Chapter members; \$48- non-members.

June 8 Verdi's Golden Legacy

**SOUTH PENINSULA CHAPTER—
SAN FRANCISCO OPERA GUILD**
Lectures held at 8:00 p.m. at the Palo Alto Senior Center, 450 Bryant Street, Palo Alto. Admission \$7.00 (except Verdi Lecture, \$10). For information call Ramona Rockway (650) 941-3890.

June 5 Verdi's Golden Legacy

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

**OPERA EDUCATION
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Given by Michael Barclay, director of OEL. Lectures are held from 7:30 to 10 p.m. at 400 Yale Ave. (at Vassar) in the Kensington section of the Berkeley hills. Series began on September 5; lectures are \$15 at the door. Information: (510) 526-5244.

May 28	<i>La Traviata</i>
June 4	<i>Aida</i>
June 11	<i>Simon Boccanegra</i>

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For more information contact Judson Gregory, Director of Corporate Partnerships, at (415) 565-3206 or jgregory@sfoera.com.

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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.

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The Merola Opera Program trains the stars of the future. We congratulate the following former Merola participants who are a part of the San Francisco Opera's 2000-2001 international season.

John Ames
Brian Asawa
Elizabeth Bishop
Elena Bocharova
John Churchwell
Catherine Cook

John Del Carlo
Tracy Dabl
Katia Escalera
Adelle Eslinger
Nicolle Foland
Todd Geer

Susan Grabam
Kyu Won Han
Daniel Harper
Bryndon Hassman
Philip Horst
Kevin Langan

Mathew Lord
Anna Netrebko
David Okerlund
Patricia Racette
Suzanne Ramo
John Relyea

Twyla Robinson
Norman Shankle
Patrick Summers
Ruth Ann Swenson
Carol Vanness
Donita Volkswijn

SERVICES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

the S.F. Opera Box Office — (415) 864-3330 — for more information.

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

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

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

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

WAR MEMORIAL OPERA HOUSE TOURS, 2000-2001 Season

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.

Sunday, January 7 • Wednesday, January 10
Saturday, January 13 • Sunday, June 3
Saturday, June 16 • Tuesday, June 26

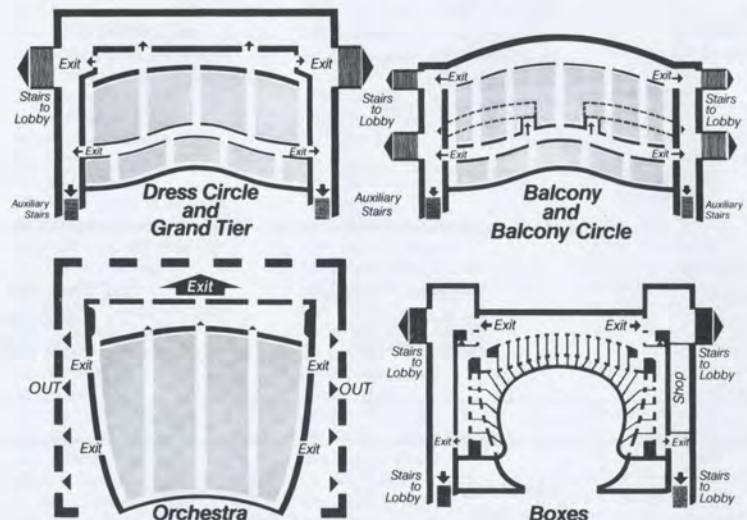
Tickets for Guild members, \$2; non-members \$5. Reservations required. Information: (510) 524-5220.

PERFORMING ARTS CENTER TOURS

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

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

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



PATRONS, ATTENTION PLEASE! FIRE NOTICE: Please note the nearest exit. In an emergency, WALK, do not run, to the nearest exit. Disabled patrons proceed to nearest elevator lobby and await assistance.



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San Francisco Opera
January 7, 11, 13, 2001.

The role of Dulcamara in these performances of *L'Elisir d'Amore* will be sung by Bojan Knežević who is replacing the ailing Bruno de Simone.



Associated with San Francisco Opera for several seasons, former Adler Fellow **BOJAN KNEŽEVIĆ** has performed in over 12 Company productions. They include *La Traviata* (1995 debut), *La Cenerentola*, *Rusalka*, *Hamlet*, *La Bohème*, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *Elektra*, *Rigoletto*, *Tosca* and *Betrothal in a Monastery*. As a three-year member of the Merola Opera Program, he performed in Merola stagings of *La Bohème* (Schaunard), *Falstaff* (Pistola), *Die Fledermaus* (Frosch), and *Don Giovanni* (Leporello), repeating the roles of Schaunard, Frosch and Leporello for Western Opera Theater's national tours. Past highlights include Marcello in *La Bohème* and Leporello with Virginia Opera; Mozart's *Coronation Mass*, Great Mass in C Minor, and the U.S. premiere of Mascagni's *Silvano* (available on CD) at Carnegie Hall; Leporello with the Minnesota Opera; Escamillo in *Carmen* and Colline in *La Bohème* in Fort Worth; Papageno in *Die Zauberflöte* for Minnesota Opera; and Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly* with the Bohème Opera of New Jersey. Among his most recent engagements: *Le Nozze di Figaro* (Figaro) for Festival Opera of Walnut Creek and Fort Worth Opera; *Die Fledermaus* (Frosch) at the Lyric Opera of Chicago; *Aida* (King of Egypt) in Fort Worth; as well as *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Enrico), *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* (Bartolo) and *L'Elisir d'Amore* (Dulcamara) at Festival Opera. A native of Belgrade, Knežević received his bachelor's and master's degrees from the Academy of Music in Novi Sad, and has performed with the National Theatre in Novi Sad, as well as in Zagreb and Belgrade.

The role of Dukasara in these performances of
L'Elisir d'Amore will be sung by Bojan Knežević
who is replacing the ailing Bruno de Simone.



Associated with San Francisco Opera for several seasons, former Admet fellow BOJAN KNEŽEVIĆ has performed in over 12 Company productions. They include La Traviata (1995 debut), La Cenerentola, Rusalka, Hamlet, La Bohème, Le Nozze di Figaro, Elektra, Rigoletto, Tosca and Betoven in a Minuteman. As a three-year member of the Metrol Opera Program, he performed in Metrol stagings of La Bohème (Schwanhede), Falstaff (Pistola), Die Fledermaus (Frosch), and Don Giovanni (Leporello), repeating the role of Schwanhede. Frosch and Leporello for Western Opera Theater's national tour. Past highlights include Marcello in La Bohème and Leporello with Virginia Opera, Mozart's Coronation Mass, Great Mass in C Minor, and the U.S. premiere of Massimiliano (available on CD) at Carnegie Hall. Leporello with the Minnesota Opera; Escamillo in Carmen and Colline in La Bohème in Fort Worth; Papageno in Die Zauberflöte for Minnesota Opera; and Shapioles in Madame Butterfly with the Bohème Opera of New Jersey. Among his most recent engagements: Le Nozze di Figaro (Figaro) for Festival Opera of Walnut Creek and Fort Worth Opera; Die Fledermaus (Frosch) at the Lyric Opera of Chicago; Aida (King of Egypt) in Fort Worth, as well as Lucia di Lammermoor (Enrico), Barberis di Sordani (Barolo) and L'Elisir d'Amore (Dukasara) at Festival Opera. A native of Belgrade, Knežević received his bachelor's and master's degrees from the Academy of Music in Novi Sad, and has performed with the National Theatre in Novi Sad, as well as in Zagreb and Belgrade.