

Semele

2000

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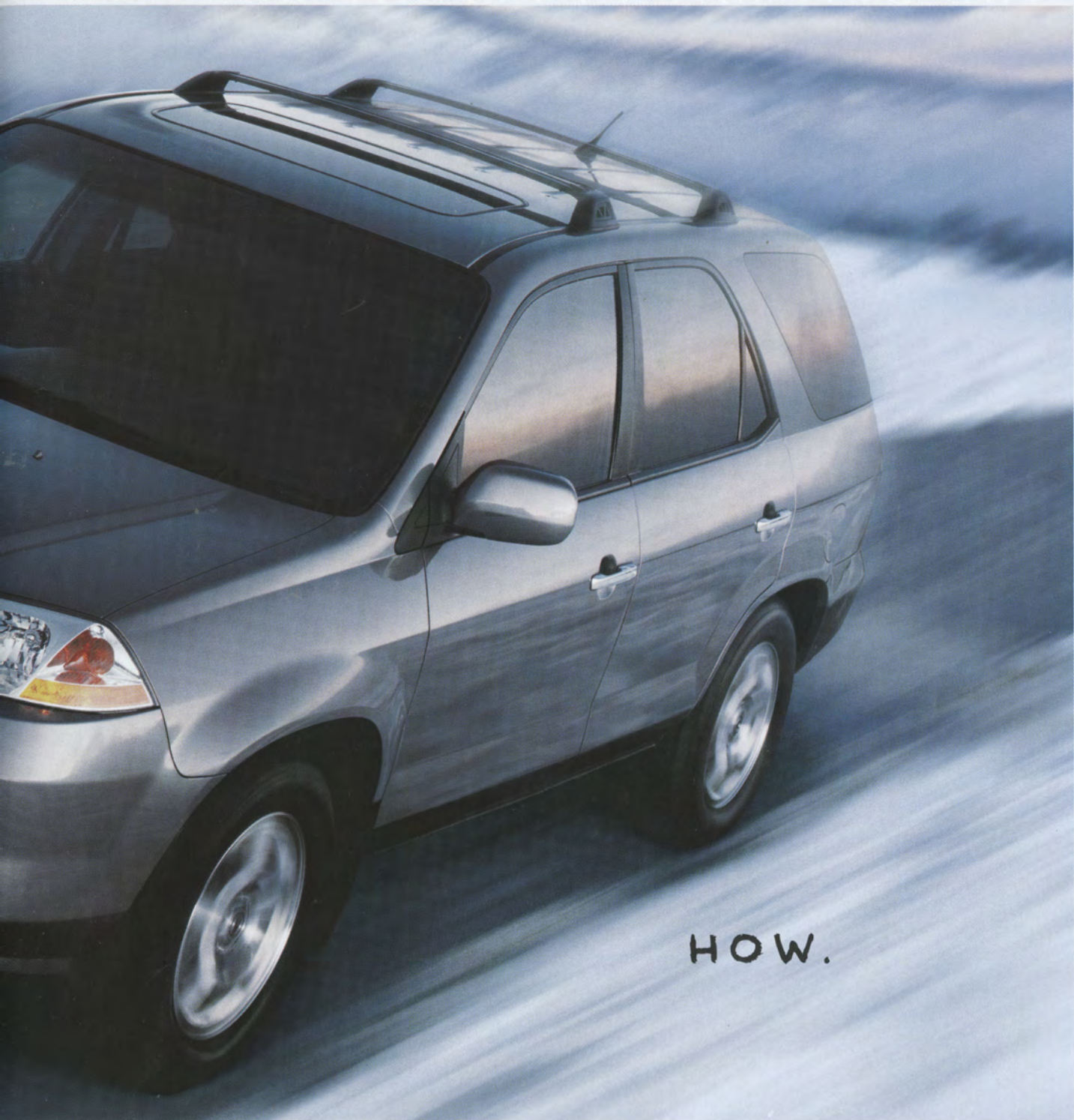
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SAN FRANCISCO OPERA MAGAZINE

Semele

2000–2001 Season
Vol. 78, No. 6

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Moreau, Gustave (French, 1826–1898)
Jupiter and Semele, 1896
Oil on canvas; 6.9 x 3.8 ft
Paris, Musée Gustave Moreau
AKG photo

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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.

Franklin P. Johnson, Jr.
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A woman with long brown hair, wearing a long cream-colored coat over a matching turtleneck, stands in front of a dark, ornate metal fence. The background is filled with numerous warm, glowing lights, creating a festive holiday atmosphere. A small, lit lantern is visible on the right side of the fence.

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ENDLESS PLEASURE

BY ANDREW PORTER



A scene from the 1996 Covent Garden production of *Semele*: (L. to r.) Ruth Ann Swenson (*Semele*), High Priest (a supernumerary), Peter Rose (*Cadmus*), and Michael Chance (*Athamas*).

Handel, aged 25, arrived in London late in 1710 (where, a British subject, he died almost fifty years later). He came before the London public on February 24, 1711, at the Queen's Theatre (later the King's Theatre, and then Her Majesty's), with the splendid *Rinaldo*. It ran for fifteen performances, was often revived, and has become newly prominent on the world's stages. The manager of the Queen's was Aaron Hill, also aged 25. He was a visionary. He had engaged a splendid Italian cast and commissioned spectacular decor. He had also, from Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata*, devised the libretto of *Rinaldo* and had it clad in Italian verse by Giacomo Rossi, a poet long resident in London, and translator of Milton's *Paradise Lost*. But Aaron Hill

Andrew Porter, for twenty years music critic of *The New Yorker*, is now music critic of the (London) *Times Literary Supplement*. His English translation of Handel's *Ottone* has been widely performed. In 1976 he directed the American premiere of *Tamerlano* (Bloomington, Indiana, with Susan Patterson and Mark Baker), and in 1985 directed the Carnegie Hall semi-staging of *Semele* with Kathleen Battle, Marilyn Horne, and Samuel Ramey.

had a larger vision. Dedicating the wordbook of *Rinaldo* — the first Italian opera to be composed in and for London — to Queen Anne, he wrote of his "Endeavor to see the *English* Opera more splendid than her Mother, the Italian."

One might wonder whether by "English Opera" Hill really meant "opera in English," rather than just opera in England, had he not, in a famous 1732 letter to Handel, made things plainer, expressing

the earnestness of my wishes, that, as you have made such considerable steps towards it, already, you would let us owe to your inimitable genius, the establishment of *musick*, upon a foundation of good poetry; where the excellence of the *sound* should no be longer dishonor'd, by the poorness of the *sense* it is chain'd to.

My meaning is that you would be resolute enough, to deliver us from our *Italian bondage*; and demonstrate, that *English* is soft enough for Opera, when compos'd by poets...

I am of opinion, that male and female voices may be found in this kingdom, capable of every thing

that is requisite; and, I am sure, a species of dramatic Opera might be invented, that, by reconciling reason and dignity, with musick and fine machinery, would charm the ear and hold fast the heart together.

Handel acted on the suggestion, though not quite in the form that Hill proposed, without "fine machinery." Between 1710 and 1732 he had composed a slew of Italian operas for London, and for ten years more he continued to write them. But in 1733 he also, with *Deborah*, embarked on the long series of great "music dramas in English" that were to include *Saul* (1739), *Samson* (1743), *Hercules* (1745), and finally *Jephtha* (1752). Hill's letter was not the only stimulus. In 1732 (and before Hill wrote his letter), the serenata *Acis and Galatea* and the oratorio *Esther*, both of 1718, and composed for private performance at Cannons (James Brydges's magnificent country house outside London), had been publicly revived with success, during Handel's season at the King's. They were performed in London theaters — without scenery, it's true, and "after the manner of an oratorio." Yet in the wordbooks provided for the occasions the scenic directions were set out. In *Belsazzar*, for example:

A banquet-room, adorned with the images of the Babylonian gods. Belshazzar, his wives, concubines, and lords, drinking out of the Jewish temple vessels...A hand appears writing upon the wall over against him; he sees it, turns pale with fear, drops the bowl of wine, falls back in his seat trembling from head to foot, and his knees knocking against each other.

Freed from the conventions of *opera seria* (including the need to give each principal singer a tally of arias reflecting her or his status), from the temperamental conflicts that flourished so readily behind the footlights, from greasepaint, fanciful costumes, stage machinery, and painted canvas, Handel the great musical dramatist could now effect scene-changes in the twinkling of a harpsichord cadence, or bring all Heaven before our eyes with one swift burst of harmony. This was a new kind of music drama,



Betrothal Scene from the Royal Opera at Covent Garden 1982 production of *Semele*.

played out in an ideal theater of the mind. The tragic grandeur he attained in *Saul* has led to that work being ranked beside Aeschylus's *Agamemnon* and Shakespeare's *King Lear*.

Messiah, which was first heard in Dublin in 1742 and at Covent Garden the following year, was an exception: its solo singers are not personalized individuals in a human drama. But at Covent Garden that year, before *Messiah*, there was *Samson*, in which they certainly are: Samson himself, his father, Delilah, blustering Harapha. And then, at Covent Garden in 1744, there was *Semele*, something new again. It opened the Lenten season with a "secular oratorio," its text drawn not from the Bible but from Greek mythology — and that text, moreover, an opera libretto that had been written nearly forty years earlier. Now we must go back a bit.

William Congreve, the great Restoration dramatist, wrote his last spoken play, *The Way of the World*, in 1700, and thereafter he wrote mainly for the lyric theater. In 1701, when "opera in English" was a hot issue, his *Judgment of Paris* was the libretto set in competition by four British composers. Daniel Purcell, great Henry's brother, came third. George Weldon won the prize. The runner-up to Weldon, John Eccles, went on to collaborate with Congreve in *Semele*, which might have opened the new Queen's Theatre in 1705 (Congreve and the architect-dramatist John Vanburgh were its managers) had it been ready in time. But it wasn't, and by the time it was, "Italian opera" — that "foreign-language fad" inimical to opera-as-drama — had taken hold. The Congreve-Eccles *Semele*

was announced but then dropped, after the Queen's had opened with *Gli amori d'Ergasto*. Eccles's *Semele* had its world premiere only in 1964. Five years later it played in Brooklyn.

For the subject matter of his English music dramas, Handel had hitherto drawn on the Old Testament (by way of Racine for *Esther* and *Deborah*, and of Milton for *Samson*). The secular *Semele* was something different from those. The very first operas had taken their subject matter from Ovid, until in 1619 Gagliano, with *Medoro*, and in 1642 Monteverdi, with *Poppea*, brought first romance characters and then "real historical people" onto the lyric stage. In 1705, Congreve returned to Ovid. From the third book of the *Metamorphoses* he devised, and Handel later set, an action that is at once a classical tragedy, a rapturous celebration of sensual delights, and a psychological play in which, not without touches of humor, two women are keenly and vividly portrayed, and the feelings of those around them are eloquently voiced.

Semele tells of a beautiful, pleasure-loving young woman who is installed in luxury as the mistress of a man of high social station. For this rich, exciting lover she has deserted the respectable but slightly dull young man she was supposed to marry. But in the gilded love-nest, she grows bored and ambitious. Her lover invents distractions for her, but in vain: she insists on being taken into the circles that he moves in, not treated as someone to be visited on the sly. The man's wife, jealous, vindictive, and clever, furthers that ambition, knowing that it can end only in disaster for her rival. (A modern-life version is Claude Autant-Lara's excel-

lent movie *En cas de malheur*, in which Brigitte Bardot, Edwige Fenech, and Jean Gabin play the Semele, Juno, and Jupiter roles.) But Congreve and Handel's version is set in the resonant world of Greek myth: in Thebes and on Mount Cithaeron, where Dionysus (Semele's son) was conceived, whither Dionysus returned to confront his cousin Pentheus, where Pentheus was killed by his mother, where later Oedipus and brave Antigone were born. Almost everything that troubles a modern man or woman seems to have had its Theban archetype long ago.

In Congreve and Handel's version, the basic tale is invested with the attractiveness of myth and marvel, and played out by participants some royal, some divine, and all recognizably "human." Juno is a profound and vivid study of proud woman driven by jealousy into vindictiveness, and Semele of a beautiful, sensual young woman flattered into frivolity, defiance of social convention, and fatal daring. Jupiter, Ino, Athamas, Cadmus are characterized, though less intently. Somnus brings the touch of comedy that marks more than one of Handel's bass roles.

Congreve's 1705 libretto was reworked for Handel, probably by Newburgh Hamilton, who had reworked Milton's *Samson Agonistes* for Handel's *Samson*. He worked well. For Congreve's tripping jingle

I love and am lov'd, yet the more I
desire;
Ah, how foolish a Thing is Fruition!
As one Passion cools, some other
takes Fire,
And I'm still in a loving Condition

he substituted:



Peter Rose (Somnus), Felicity Palmer (Juno) and Judith Howart (Iris) at Covent Garden in 1996.

My racking Thoughts by no kind
Slumber freed,
But painful Nights do joyful Days
succeed

which Handel set as a wonderful slow
aria. And Jupiter's jaunty ditty

Speak, speak your desire,
I'm all over fire.
Say what you require,
I'll grant it — now let us retire!

became the recitative measures "Speak,
speak your desire; say what you require:
I'll grant it."

Newburgh Hamilton (or whoever it was) added Jupiter's "Where'er you walk" from Alexander Pope's Second Pastoral, and combed other Congreve works (as for *Samson* Hamilton had combed Milton's other works) for apt lyrics, especially for choruses that Handel wanted. The number of hit numbers in Handel's *Semele* which don't appear in the *Eccles Semele* but are added, sometimes adapted from elsewhere in Congreve — is surprising. They include the heroine's "The Morning Lark" and "My racking Thoughts"; Ino's recitative "O'er many States" and her marvelous air "But hark! the heav'nly Sphere turns round," and the following duet "Prepare then, ye Immortal Choir"; the choruses "How engaging," "Now Love, that everlasting Boy," and "Bless the glad Earth."

Some of Congreve's scenic directions were reduced. (One wonders why, when in "a theatre of the mind" elaborate scenery and spectacular transformation scenes present no difficulty.) Congreve began Act II with: "The

Scene is a pleasant Country, the Prospect is terminated by a Beautiful Mountain adorn'd with Woods and Waterfalls. Juno and Iris descend in different Machines, Juno in a Chariot drawn by Peacocks; Iris on a Rainbow; they alight and meet." The 1744 libretto says merely: "The Scene is a pleasant Country." But Newburgh Hamilton (or whoever it was) compiled a dazzling libretto around the strong core of Congreve's play, and the composer responded with a masterpiece. In Winton Dean's words, "Handel's joy in the creation of *Semele* is manifest in the exuberance of the invention and the variety of technical and structural resource...All the richest layers of his imagination seem to have been simultaneously exposed." After the Biblical dramas, he seems to have felt a "dancing" delight in the release and return to the classical, non-moralistic world of *Acis and Galatea* — but now with deeper characterization, and with new feeling for suffering: Ino's, Athamas's. No longer the weighty moral pronouncements of the Biblical dramas. And no longer the twists and turns and tergiversations of *opera seria*. But a good play, written in good English, set by a great composer who knew his Purcell. *The Story of Semele* — that's how it was billed in the 1744 wordbook — was indeed an "English Opera" of the kind Aaron Hill hoped for.

Yet in its day it was not exactly a success. It ran for only four performances at Covent Garden, and then later in 1744 had two revivals at the King's (much altered, and with Italian intrusions). And it was the only one of Handel's oratorios never again performed again during his

lifetime. Hard to understand why. Was *Semele* too bold a drama to bring forward in Lent? Two erotic dreams propel the plot. *Semele* awakes from the first of them in the famous "O Sleep, why dost thou leave me?" In the past, many a soprano has recorded the air in almost *religioso* vein, apparently unaware of what the nocturnal "visionary joys" that *Semele* sings of really are. The second erotic dream is the one that Juno obtains from Somnus and "administers" to her husband so as to heat him to a state wherein "he may wake impetuous, furious in Desire, unable to refuse whatever Boon *Semele's* Coyness shall require."

Charles Jennens, the librettist of *Messiah*, called *Semele* "a bawdy opera." Handel's friend Mrs. Delaney, married to a Doctor of Divinity, admired it, found it "delightful" and "charming," but reported that "it being a profane story, D.D. does not think it proper for him to go; but when *Joseph* or *Samson* is performed I shall persuade him to go." Victorian editions bowdlerized the text, removing such words as "fruitful," "bed," and "desire."

I wrote above of "dancing" delight. *Semele's* "Endless Pleasure" is marked *alla gavotta*, and her "Thus let my Thanks be pay'd" *alla siciliana*; the buoyant chorus "Now Love, that everlasting Boy" is marked *alla hornpipe*. There are several minuet airs and other numbers in dance measures. *Semele* is also of all Handel's works the richest in accompanied recitatives (there are thirteen of them): straight-line dramatic declamation, without repetitions, orchestrally accompanied. Juno's magnificent "Awake, Saturnia, from thy Lethargy" is marked *allegro concitato, ma pomposo*. There is nothing else in Handel quite like *Semele*, though in *Hercules* (1745) he returned to a classical subject. The mixture of grace, playfulness, and passion makes it unique. It is a work, a friend of mine said recently, that every few years she feels a need to hear.

Fortunately, it is now quite often performed. The first "staged" *Semele* was at Cambridge, England, in 1925. The Handel Opera Society played it at Sadler's Wells several times in the 1950s and 1960s. In 1970 it joined the English National Opera repertory (and last year the ENO mounted a new production, with John Ainsley as Jupiter). *Semele* returned at last to Covent Garden in 1982, 238 years after its premiere there — sumptuously staged in a much larger theater, of course, than the one Handel knew. Ruth Ann Swenson was the heroine of a 1996 revival. This is the production that comes to San Francisco. □

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THE MAN BENEATH THE WIG

BY JOHN SCHAUER

You all know him. You've seen portraits of the corpulent man in the enormous wig. And his name has become a household word for anyone with even a passing knowledge of classical music: George Frideric Handel. (That's the Anglicized spelling he preferred for most of his life. Some folks try to give it a more patrician sound by pronouncing it "Hondel," but scholars assure us it rhymes with *candle*.)

Perhaps because the musical public's acquaintance with Handel has been longer and more continuous than with virtually any other composer, his image has undergone more transformations and adjustments at the hands of scholars and biographers. Over time, our perception of him and his music has been revised repeatedly, much as some of today's pop music icons are said to be continually "reinventing" themselves.

The cause of both Handel's three centuries of popularity as well as most of the distortions in our perception lies in the same source: the blessing and curse of his having composed an overwhelmingly popular work such as few composers ever achieve: *Messiah*. Having attained the status of a Christmas classic — the concert-hall equivalent of what Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker* is to ballet companies and Humperdinck's *Hänsel und Gretel* is to opera companies — it is now a work destined — or doomed — to be performed profusely on an annual basis, achieving far-reaching cultural saturation even as it condemns professional musicians to mind-numbing over-familiarity with its admittedly sublime music.

This phenomenal and grossly disproportionate emphasis on *Messiah* within Handel's staggeringly large output — Donald Francis Tovey estimated it to be the equivalent of all of Bach and all of Beethoven combined — began even during the composer's own lifetime. As he had with many of his compositions, Han-

George Frideric Handel (1685–1759) in a portrait made by Philippe Mercier and dating from the late 1720s. The painting was destroyed during World War II; this copy is taken from an old color illustration.

del revived the 1742 "sacred oratorio" in 1745 and 1749; what became unprecedented was that he performed it annually from 1750 until his death in 1759. (Interestingly, it was usually performed during Lent as an Easter work.) As Christopher Hogwood writes in his admirable 1984 biography of Handel, "Even in his own lifetime Handel passed from being an individual to an institution, and eventually a complete industry."

A series of commemorative performances loosely marking the 1785 centenary of Handel's birth launched the tradition of enormously bloated performances of *Messiah* (the vestiges of which remain with us in the form of all those "sing-along" performances that have become so popular) — 513 performers in 1784, 640 in 1786, 807 in 1787, and 1,068 in 1791. These were first presented in Westminster Abbey, where Handel's burial spot is marked by a monument by Roubiliac portraying him as an almost ghastly religious figure, gazing upward to heaven next to a score of *Messiah* opened to the aria "I know that my redeemer liveth." The concept of Handel as a deeply religious figure had been literally carved in stone.



PHOTO: AKG LONDON REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION

Charles Burney and John Hawkins, the writers of the two great 18th-century English histories of music — both began publication in 1776 — did little to alter that notion. Hawkins, who conversed in person with Handel, wrote, "He was a man of blameless morals, and throughout his life manifested a deep sense of religion. In conversation he would frequently declare the pleasure he felt in setting the Scriptures to music; and how much the contemplating of the many sublime passages in the Psalms had contributed to his edification." Burney, who performed in Handel's orchestra during the last decade of the composer's life, informs us that Handel "was truly pious during the last years of his life, and constantly attended public prayers twice a day, winter and summer."

That this docile and devout portrait of Handel is bogus is no longer doubted by most of his later biographers, many of whom express open frustration with the difficulty of correcting the situation. Hogwood deplores the fact that "a reputation founded on endless repetitions of a small core of compositions has held Handel firmly captive," while Paul Henry Lang, in a less well received 1966 biography (H.C. Robbins Landon calls it "prejudiced, choleric and undisciplined" but "nevertheless a highly important book"), states bluntly that "There is no more misunderstood and misrepresented composer in the history of music than Handel."

Ironically, there is no composer whose fame has been as enduring as Handel's. He enjoyed an international reputation matched by few if any previous composers, becoming a cultural phenomenon. He even gets a mention in one of the earliest English novels, Henry Fielding's 1749 *Tom Jones*, marking him as one of music's first multi-media stars.

Yet while virtually every aspect of Handel's public and creative life is abundantly documented — Otto Erich Deutsch in 1955 compiled an astounding "Documentary Biography," collecting some 900 pages of newspaper reports, correspondence, diary entries, banking transactions, box office receipts, poems,

A former staff writer for San Francisco Opera, John Schauer is currently Publications Editor for the Ravinia Festival in Chicago.

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Handel is the subject of an etching, made by I. Faber from a portrait by Hudson, and dating from 1749.

anything written during Handel's life that concerns him — his private persona has remained veiled, lending itself to easy makeovers by writers with a prejudicial view. Like the enigmatic smile of the Mona Lisa, you can read almost any personality into Handel with little evidence available to prove you wrong. The few portrayals in the modern media have usually aimed for a no-nonsense, middle-of-the-road approach, such as television productions starring the esteemed actors Walter Slezak and Peter Ustinov. One of the most recent, by Jeroen Krabbé in *Farinelli*, Gerard Corbiau's sumptuously filmed but utterly fictitious 1994 film biography of the great castrato singer, is a laugh-out-loud absurdity.

Much of what we know or think we know about Handel the man is anecdotal, and some of the most widely disseminated anecdotes originated in one book: John Mainwaring's *Memoirs of the Life of the late George Frederic Handel*, which appeared in 1760, only one year after Handel's death at the age of 74. The book, supposedly drawn largely from conversations with Handel's amanuensis John Christopher Smith, Jr., has the distinction of being the first biography devoted to a composer ever to be pub-

lished (just as the first attempt to publish all of Handel's works, begun in 1785, was the first "collected edition" of any composer). It includes, for example, the story incorporated into virtually every children's biography of Handel ever written, of how Handel's father opposed a musical career for his son, who was forced to practice surreptitiously during the wee hours at a clavichord with muffled strings up in the attic.

Numerous Handelian anecdotes are meant to illustrate his fiery temper, especially with singers. One of the most frequently repeated tells of Handel's first rehearsal with soprano Francesca Cuzzoni, who made her 1722 London debut in Handel's *Ottone*. When she refused to sing one aria, he is reported to have seized the woman by the waist and threatened to throw her out of the window.

One of Handel's countrymen and fellow composers, Johann Mattheson, included an account of Handel's early years in his 1740 book *Grundlage einer Ebre-Pforte* and in 1761 published a German translation of Mainwaring's biography. The two composers were in Hamburg in 1704, during which time Handel found himself playing harpsichord continuo in the orchestra for Mattheson's opera *Cleopatra*,

with the composer himself portraying Antony. After his character's demise well before the end of the opera, Mattheson went into the pit to finish continuo duties, but Handel refused to relinquish the keyboard, and the ensuing argument escalated into a full-blown duel. Tragedy was averted when Mattheson's sword broke on a large button on Handel's coat, and the two were reconciled.

The earliest writers also bear testimony to Handel's sense of humor. Burney recounts a time in Dublin when one of Handel's singers got lost in the course of his overly elaborate solo cadenza; when he finally found his way back to the proper key for the final cadence, "Handel, to the great delight of the audience, and augmentation of applause, cried out loud enough to be heard in the most remote parts of the theatre: 'You are welcome home, Mr. Dubourg!'"

The locale for the next great attempt at uncovering Handel moved from England to Germany in the late 1850s, when Friedrich Chrysander founded the Handel Gesellschaft and began his monumental three-volume biography and 95-volume collected edition — and launched what some scholars have dubbed "the war of the Umlaut." Stubbornly spelling his name Georg Friederich Händel, as it had been entered in the baptismal register in his native Halle in Saxony, a line of German scholars following Chrysander worked hard to prove that Handel really was a German composer, not an English one. According to this approach, Handel's German background was supposedly responsible for his mastery of counterpoint, and Handel was thought of as a sort of "Bach Lite" — Bach, after all, had remained in Germany all his life.

Naturally enough, their claims were refuted by English-speaking writers. In 1946 American biographer Herbert Weinstock fumed, "For good or bad, Handel was the greatest of English composers. In the Abbey and in the throats of Englishmen he has been best memorialized. Germany, where he was born, came late to the feast of Handel."

The question of Handel's true nationality is perhaps moot, since he was the first major cosmopolitan composer. Though he spent the last 50 years of his life in England, he had grown up German-speaking; and while he later became fluent in French and Italian — he spent three years studying and working in Italy during his youth — he apparently, from all contemporary accounts, retained throughout his life a German accent that became a target for ridicule. Newman Flower's 1923 biography includes a vignette of Handel's supposed response when the singer Carestini



William Hogarth immortalized the opening of the Theatre Royal at Covent Garden in 1732. For the first hundred years, the theater was mostly used as a playhouse, with some exceptions, one of them being the first presentation of Handel's *Semele* in 1744.

refused to sing one of the arias in *Alcina*: "You toc [dog]! Don't I know petter as yourself vat is good for you to sing? If you vill not sing all the songs vat I give you, I vill not pay you ein stiver!" In this story as elsewhere, Handel comes across as an 18th-century Katzenjammer Kid, somewhat uncouth and definitely foreign. Biographers as early as Chrysander have pointed out that the incident must be spurious, since Handel would never have spoken English to an Italian singer whose own English was almost non-existent. "Handel may have retained in speech guttural traces of German origin," Percy Young wrote in *Handel: A Symposium*, "he may have stimulated sluggish colleagues with fiery broadsides of intermingled Italian, French and German oaths, but no law of probability can be adduced to support the fiction that he spoke the pidgin English of common ascription."

In the early decades of the 20th century the Germans seemed to be making inroads in their quest to reclaim Handel, as they mounted a number of his operas — in German, and in badly cut arrangements, but mounted for the first time since Handel's day nonetheless. In this segment of Handel's output, England lagged behind. By 1946 Herbert Weinstock could still lament, "How long must we look sharply to find one small, hopeful sign that those who control the programs of public music will offer us the whole variegated and wonderful repertoire of vocal, instrumental, choral and operatic music that lies — some of it unheard for more than a century — in the volumes of the Gesellschaft and other editions of Handel?"

A turning point in attitudes toward

Handel occurred in 1959 with the appearance of Winton Dean's groundbreaking study of *Handel's Dramatic Oratorios and Masques*, in which he argued convincingly that other works in Handel's output besides *Messiah* and an occasional *Israel in Egypt* (both staples of amateur choral societies) deserved to be heard, that the many other English oratorios he produced, although frequently based upon Biblical stories, were actually highly effective dramas. Handel's primary inspiration, we were beginning to realize, was not religious but dramatic. Yet even in this landmark work, Dean dismissed the largest segment of Handel's output, his Italian operas, as unsatisfactory and unworthy of reviving.

By 1969, when Dean delivered his lecture series "Handel and the Opera Series" at Berkeley, he had become thoroughly converted to the cause of Handel's operas, but another event in the United States three years earlier was perhaps even more decisive: the 1966 opening of Lincoln Center, for which New York City Opera mounted a new production of Handel's *Julius Caesar*. Though the edition used was a musicological disaster — extensive cuts, other music introduced, the alto castrato title role transposed for bass — the production was persuasive, launching Beverly Sills into the superstar stratosphere and convincing critics and audiences alike that Handel's operas can be effective theater in addition to displaying a wealth of musical treasures.

Once the domain of workshops and university productions, Handel's operas began to appear at America's largest opera companies — San Francisco Opera mounted *Julius Caesar* in 1982 and *Orlando* in 1985;

the Met's first Handel outing was their 1984 *Rinaldo*, while Chicago's Lyric Opera weighed in with *Orlando* in 1986 (although they had staged a production of his oratorio *Samson* the year before).

In the record catalogue, the triumph of Handel's operas has been even more complete, primarily through the endeavors of the various "authentic instruments" ensembles. Never before have so many of Handel's operas been available as in the last ten years — more than two dozen of them have been recorded complete, many of them in two or three versions. To the record-buying public, Handel is morphing from an English dramatist to an Italian opera composer — and theatrical genius. It was the world of the theater that dominated Handel's career; as Robbins Landon writes, Handel was "used to coping with the necessities of box-offices, the whims of famous opera singers, and the fickleness of the public — dealings with which Bach hardly had any experience at all. For Bach it was the flicker of church tapers; for Handel the smell of grease-paint and that curiously dead air that enfolds one as the great curtain of the opera stage rises."

Let the English and the Germans fight over Handel; the devotion to Italian opera that dominated most of his creative career, his preference for Italian singers, his inexhaustible supply of melody and unerring understanding of the human voice — all of this marks Handel as Italian as much as anything. With his fluency in multiple languages and cosmopolitan outlook, Handel must have had difficulty understanding the provincial resistance exhibited by the London audience to works sung in Italian.

Continued on page 46

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Opera in three acts by GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL

(Edition by Anthony Lewis and Charles Mackerras,

by arrangement with Oxford University Press)

Libretto by WILLIAM CONGREVE after Ovid's *Metamorphoses*

Semele

(in English)

Conductor

Charles Mackerras

William Lacey (11/10, 15, 25)

Stage Director

John Copley

Set Designer

Henry Bardon

Costume Designer

David Walker

Lighting Designer

Thomas J. Munn

Chorus Director

Ian Robertson

Choreographer

Lawrence Pech

Musical Preparation

John Churchwell

Joyce Fieldsend

John Parr

Ernest Fredric Knell

William Lacey

Sara Jobin

Svetlana Gorzhevskaya

Prompter

Sara Jobin

Assistant Stage Directors

Roy Rallo

Kristine McIntyre

Stage Manager

Jerry Sherk

Produced in association
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Covent Garden

First performance (concert):
London, Covent Garden,
February 10, 1744

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SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 4 AT 8:00

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 7 AT 8:00

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 10 AT 8:00

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 15 AT 7:30

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 19 AT 2:00

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 22 AT 8:00

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 25 AT 2:00

CAST

(in order of appearance)

High priest of Juno

John Amest†

Cadmus, King of Thebes

John Relyea

Athamas, prince of Boeotia

Brian Asawa

Semele, daughter of Cadmus

Ruth Ann Swenson

Ino, daughter of Cadmus

Sarah Connolly*

Juno, Jupiter's queen

Sarah Connolly

Iris, Juno's attendant messenger

Christine Brandes*

Jupiter, king of the gods

John Mark Ainsley

Somnus, god of sleep

John Relyea

Apollo, god of the sun

Todd Geert†

Priests and augurs, zephyrs, nymphs and swains, attendants

Corps de ballet

*San Francisco Opera debut †2000 Adler Fellow

Supertitles are taken from the original libretto.

PLACE AND TIME: Thebes, in mythological times

ACT I

The temple of Juno

INTERMISSION

ACT II

Scene 1

A pleasant country

Scene 2

An apartment in Semele's palace

INTERMISSION

ACT III

The cave of Somnus

*Latecomers will not be seated during the performance after the lights have dimmed.
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The performance will last approximately three hours.*

SEMELE SYNOPSIS

ACT I

In the temple of Juno, Cadmus, King of Thebes, is preparing for the marriage of his daughter Semele to Athamas, Prince of Boeotia. However, the bride-to-be is hesitant because she is secretly in love with Jupiter. She calls on the god to help her in her predicament.

Semele's sister, Ino, is also distressed by the impending marriage but for different reasons: she herself is in love with Athamas. Jupiter has heard Semele's plea; his thunderbolts make it clear that in spite of Juno's approval, he violently opposes Semele's marriage. All flee in terror.

Ino attempts to comfort Athamas, but in so doing she reveals her love for him. Cadmus interrupts their confusion and describes the extraordinary event he has just witnessed: as they fled the temple, Semele was suddenly carried off by an eagle. Cadmus's courtiers bring the happy news that it was in fact Jupiter who abducted the young girl. As the act ends, Semele is seen enjoying her role as the god's new mistress.

ACT II

Iris reports to Juno the whereabouts of Semele's newly-built, dragon-guarded palace. Enraged, Juno swears to destroy her rival; but first she decides to set out and find Somnus, the god of sleep, in order to enlist his help in achieving her revenge.

Waking in her bedroom, Semele languidly awaits the return of her lover. Jupiter appears and reassures her of his love. Semele tells him that she is uneasy when she compares her mortality to his godliness, causing Jupiter to be alarmed by her ambition.

Rather than telling her that she can never attain immortality, he decides to divert her. His plans include bringing her sister Ino from Earth. Semele's fears are calmed for the moment and

when Ino appears the two sisters extol the music of the spheres.

ACT III

Somnus is sleeping peacefully in his cave when Juno and Iris arrive. It is only when Juno speaks the name of the nymph Pasithea that Somnus awakes. In exchange for the nymph, Somnus agrees to help Juno. He is even prepared to lend her his magic, sleep-inducing wand, which she will need to elude the dragons that guard Semele's palace.

Juno, now disguised as Ino, appears to Semele. She first presents her "sister" with a magic mirror, which causes Semele to instantly fall in love with her own image. Juno then craftily advises the young woman how to obtain the immortality she desires: Jupiter must be tricked into making love to her in his true god-like form, rather than in his mortal disguise. Semele is delighted and thanks her profusely.

Jupiter returns, inflamed with desire. Semele rejects him until he swears to give her whatever she wants. Continuing to follow Juno's advice, she asks him to appear in all his godly splendor. The god is horrified and desperately warns her of the mortal danger she is in. Semele refuses to accept anything less than the fulfillment of her wish and leaves Jupiter to lament his part in her inevitable destruction.

Juno gloats over her triumph, while Semele realizes too late the consequences of her ambition. As she approaches the godhead, the flames of Jupiter's power burn her and she dies.

The people lament Semele's death. Ino describes a dream in which Hermes revealed Jupiter's wish for her and Athamas to wed. Jupiter himself now appears and announces that his union with Semele will result in the birth of Bacchus, the god of wine. The people are left to celebrate this unexpected piece of good news.

The production of *Semele* is designated in honor of
Mrs. Jaquelin H. Hume's generosity to San Francisco Opera.

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Ann Weiler

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Alex Ceffalo
Keith Clausen
Uwe Damerow
Gavin Davenport
Simon Ehrlich
David Grace

Todd Jones
Joseph Kennedy
Carl LaBante
Steve Lavezzoli
Frank Masson
Evan Pallervo
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ARTIST PROFILES



Soprano **RUTH ANN SWENSON** has won critical accolades in such theaters as the Metropolitan Opera, Chicago Lyric Opera, Opéra National de Paris, Cologne Opera, Munich State Opera, Royal Opera at Covent Garden, Berlin State Opera, Grand Théâtre de Genève, Hamburg State Opera, Vienna State Opera and San Francisco Opera. A 1983-84 Adler Fellow, she made her Company debut as Despina

in the 1983 production of *Così fan tutte*, and has since been applauded here for a variety of roles including Dorinda in *Orlando*, Nannetta in *Falstaff*, Juliette in *Roméo et Juliette*, Gilda in *Rigoletto*, Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte*, Adina in *L'Elisir d'Amore*, her first Ophélie in *Hamlet*, in addition to the title roles of *Manon*, *Lucia di Lammermoor* and *The Ballad of Baby Doe*. Since her 1989 Met debut as Zerlina in *Don Giovanni*, Swenson has been heard there each subsequent season in several roles which have included Lucia, Gilda, Adina, Juliette, Susanna in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Rosina in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, Zerbinetta in *Ariadne auf Naxos*, Elvira in *I Puritani*, Liù in *Turandot* and, earlier this year, the three heroines (a career first) in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*. Additional highlights include three major debuts: with the Berlin State Opera in *Rigoletto*, the Vienna State Opera as Constanze in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, and the Royal Opera at Covent Garden in the title role of Handel's *Semele*. She recently sang two roles new to her repertoire: Violetta in *La Traviata* at the Lyric Opera of Chicago, and Amina in *La Sonnambula* at Carnegie Hall and in Lisbon. Other recent engagements include *Le Siege de Corinthe* (Pamira) at Pesaro's Rossini Festival, *Rigoletto* at the Paris Opéra Bastille, *Traviata* at the Orange Festival, her Los Angeles Opera debut in *L'Elisir*, and *Lucia* at the Met. Upcoming are *Traviata* and *Manon* at the Met, as well as *Don Pasquale* (Norina) in Los Angeles. The American artist's discography includes *Roméo et Juliette* (Juliette), *La Bohème* (Musetta), a recital disc with Plácido Domingo and Thomas Hampson, as well as four solo albums: *Con Amore*, *I Carry Your Heart*, *Positively Golden* and *Endless Pleasure*.



Soprano **CHRISTINE BRANDES** enjoys a busy career in North America and abroad, performing at many of the most distinguished festivals and concert series, in programs ranging from recitals and chamber music to oratorio and opera. Operatic engagements for the American artist last season included a debut with Glimmerglass Opera as Galatea in *Acis and Galatea*; Susanna (role debut) in *Le Nozze di Figaro*

for the Opera Company of Philadelphia and Opera Pacific; in addition to Rameau's *Platée* (Thalie/Clarine) for her bow at New York City Opera. Among last season's concert engagements were Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater* with the Detroit Symphony, *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges* (Fire/Nightingale) with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, *Carmina Burana* with the Houston Symphony, *Messiah* both with the Minnesota Orchestra and Les Violons du Roy, and Handel's *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato* (Mark Morris production) in Berkeley. In the current season she appears on the opera stage in *Acis and Galatea* at New York City Opera and in

Die Zauberflöte (Pamina) with the Opera Company of Philadelphia. Her concert schedule includes engagements with the Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, the Handel & Haydn Society and Detroit Symphony; appearances with the Freiburger Barockorchester at the Montreux Festival in Mozart's *Il Sogno di Scipione*; as well as solo recitals. Christine Brandes has numerous recordings on six major labels, the most recent of which is *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato* with the Ensemble Orchestral de Paris under John Nelson.



Born in England's County Durham, **SARAH CONNOLLY** studied piano and voice at the Royal College of Music and continues her studies with Gerald Martin Moore. The mezzo made her 1994 operatic debut as Annina in *Der Rosenkavalier* with Welsh National Opera. Now a member of English National Opera, her roles with that company include the Fox (*Cunning Little Vixen*), the Messenger (Monteverdi's *Orfeo*),

the title part of Handel's *Xerxes*, Ino (*Semele*), Ruggiero (*Alcina*), Susie (*The Silver Tassie*), Nerone (*L'Incoronazione di Poppea*) and Dido (*Dido and Aeneas*). Earlier this season she made an acclaimed U.S. debut singing the title role of *Ariodante* for New York City Opera, and was applauded at the Maggio Musicale in Florence for her performances as Nerone. Her concert engagements have included Bach's Mass in B Minor in Berlin and *St. Matthew Passion* in Spain; Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius* in Sydney; Turnage's *Twice Through the Heart* in London, Amsterdam and Rome; Honegger's *Jeanne d'Arc au Bûcher* in London; Handel's *Solomon* in Florence; and Berlioz's *Damnation of Faust* in Perth. Among her recordings are the award-winning *Les Fêtes d'Hébé* by Rameau led by William Christie, Vivaldi's *Juditha Triumphans* with the King's Consort, and Bach Cantatas with Collegium Vocale under Philippe Herreweghe. Sarah Connolly has made numerous broadcasts for BBC Radio and made a British television appearance in "My Night with Handel" with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. Future operatic dates include *Poppea* (Nerone) for the Bavarian State Opera in Munich, as well as *The Rape of Lucretia* (Lucretia) and *Poppea* (Ottavia) for the ENO.



Tenor **JOHN MARK AINSLEY** was born in Cheshire, began his musical training in Oxford and continues to study with Diane Forlano. His early operatic engagements included Idamante (*Idomeneo*) with the Welsh National Opera, Fenton (*Falstaff*) with Scottish Opera and Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*) at the Aix-en-Provence and Glyndebourne Festivals. In 1995, he made his U.S. opera debut as Don Ottavio with San Francisco

Opera. Among his most recent assignments on the opera stage are Monteverdi's *Orfeo* at the Munich Festival (where he won the Munich Festival Prize for his performance as Orfeo) and at the English National Opera; *Idomeneo* (role debut as Idomeneo) at Opera Australia; *Eugene Onegin* (Lensky) in London and Cologne; also Carl Nielsen's *Saul and David* (Jonathan) at the Salzburg Festival. Scheduled for the future are *Orfeo* in Brussels, *Onegin* in Cologne and his debut at the Royal Opera House, Covent

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Garden, in *Don Giovanni*. In demand as concert soloist, he regularly appears with the leading orchestras of the world, most recently with the London Philharmonic, London Symphony, Les Musiciens du Louvre, Berlin Philharmonic, New York Philharmonic, Boston Symphony, San Francisco Symphony, Vienna Philharmonic, Academy of St. Martin in the Fields, Orchestra of the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino and the Orchestre de Paris. Ainsley's extensive discography includes *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Lysander), *Don Giovanni*, *Orfeo*, Mozart's Mass in C Minor and Requiem, Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*, Rameau's *Dardanus*, Ravel's *L'Heure Espagnole*, the Berlioz Requiem, Handel's *La Resurrezione*, *Acis and Galatea*, *Saul*, *Alexander's Feast* and *Joshua*, *Pulcinella*, *L'Enfance du Christ*, *Brigadoon* (Charlie), Britten's *Spring Symphony*, *Les Illuminations*, *Nocturne* and *Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings*, as well as a series of recital records (Schubert, Mozart, Purcell, Grainger, Warlock and Quilter).



BRIAN ASAWA is widely considered at the forefront of the new generation of operatic countertenors. At the age of 33, he has already been applauded internationally in opera and recital at the world's great music centers. A former member of the Merola Opera Program and a 1991-92 Adler Fellow, he made his 1991 Company debut as Number Two in Henze's *Das Verratene Meer*, returning the following season for Oberon

in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, in 1996 for Prince Orlofsky in *Die Fledermaus*, and earlier this year as Baba the Turk in *The Rake's Progress*. The Japanese-American artist's most recent operatic performances include *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria* (Anfinomo) in Amsterdam; *Ariodante* (Polinesso) for his debut at Dallas Opera; *Giulio Cesare* (Iolomeo) at the Met and in new stagings in Barcelona, Bordeaux, Brussels and Sydney; Mozart's *Mitridate* (Farnace) at the Paris Théâtre du Châtelet; *Semele* (Athamas) for the the Royal Opera/Covent Garden; and a new production of *Admeto* with Les Talens Lyriques at the Hallé Handel Festival. Future assignments on the opera stage include *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in Naples, *Boris Godunov* (Xenia) in Amsterdam, *Giulio Cesare* in Valencia and Madrid, also *Agrippina* (Nero) at New York City Opera. Additionally, Asawa has performed in concert and recital in London, Paris, Brussels, Geneva, Zurich, Tokyo, Lyon, Los Angeles, Houston and San Francisco, among many others. His discography includes *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Mitridate*, Handel's *Serse* and *Judas Maccabeus*, in addition to three solo recitals: *The Dark is My Delight*, *Vocalise* and *More Than a Day*. He made his 1995 film debut as Baba the Turk in *The Rake's Progress*, produced for Swedish Television. The San Francisco resident was a grand prize winner in Plácido Domingo's "Operalia" Competition (1994) and was the first countertenor to win the Metropolitan Opera Auditions (1991).

One of today's prominent young bass-baritones, **JOHN RELYEA** made his 1996 San Francisco Opera debut as Colline in *La Bohème*. The former Adler Fellow has since appeared on the stage of the War Memorial in, among others, *Tosca* (Angelotti), *Guillaume Tell* (Melchthal), *Le Nozze di Figaro* (title role), *Peter Grimes* (Hobson) and *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Raimondo). A member of the 1995 Merola Opera Program, his Opera Center credits include a Schwabacher Debut Recital, the Showcase '96 production of *The Aspern Papers* and Handel's *Ezio* for the '97 Showcase. Recent operatic assignments elsewhere include his European debut at the 1999 Edinburgh Festival as Collatinus in a concert performance of *The Rape of Lucretia* led



by Donald Runnicles; a bow at the Metropolitan Opera last season as Alidoro in *La Cenerentola*; his first Seattle Opera appearance as Don Basilio in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*; Mozart's Figaro for his debut at Santa Fe Opera; and a return to the Met as Masetto for their season-opening production *Don Giovanni* (a production taped for future telecast). Although not yet 30 years of age,

Relyea's extensive engagements with major symphony orchestras include performances with the San Francisco Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra, Philadelphia Orchestra, Atlanta Symphony, Houston Symphony and Pittsburgh Symphony. The current season marks his first performances with the Monnaie Orchestra of Brussels, the New York Philharmonic and his New York recital debut. The artist began studying voice with his father, Canadian bass-baritone Gary Relyea, and now continues his studies with Jerome Hines. In 1998 he was honored with the prestigious ARIA award.



In his second year as an Adler Fellow, **TODD GEER** made his San Francisco Opera debut last season, appearing in *La Favorite* (Don Gaspar), *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Normanno), *Nabucco* (Abdallo), *Idomeneo* (High Priest), *La Bohème* (one performance as Rodolfo) and *Parsifal* (Third Esquire). The tenor has also performed in Opera Center's Showcase productions of *Così fan tutte* (1999, Ferrando) and *Albert Herring* (2000, title

role). He 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, the tenor was named a resident artist with Tri-Cities (Binghamton, N.Y.) Opera where he was heard as Rodolfo, Nemorino in *L'Elisir d'Amore*, Almaviva in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, the Duke of Mantua in *Rigoletto* and in the title role of *Faust*. He recently made his debut with the Lyric Opera of Chicago in *Salome* and his European debut in Paris and Geneva as Tamino in *Die Zauberflöte*. In concert, the young artist has been heard in *Carmina Burana*, *Messiah*, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, Haydn's *Lord Nelson Mass*, Schubert's Mass in F and Bruckner's *Te Deum*. Geer holds degrees from the Eastman School of Music and Binghamton University and is a former voice instructor at Cornell University.



Second year Adler Fellow **JOHN AMES** made his first appearances with San Francisco Opera last season as Tom in *Un Ballo in Maschera* and as Colline in *La Bohème*. The bass was seen as Superintendent Budd in S.F. Opera Center's 2000 Showcase presentation of *Albert Herring* and appeared as Don Alfonso in the 1999 Showcase production of *Così fan tutte*. The native of Reno was a participant in the 1998 Merola

Opera Program, in which he sang the role of Sarastro in *The Magic Flute*. A recipient of the Anna Ross Foundation Scholarship for Apprentice Artists, Ames studied voice while performing nearly a dozen roles at Nevada Opera including Colline, 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

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in *Don Giovanni*. After leaving I.U., he made debuts with Indianapolis Opera and Kentucky Opera, and toured with the Nevada Opera Studio as Sulpice in *The Daughter of the Regiment*. In concert, he has performed Mozart's *Coronation Mass* and *Requiem* with the Reno Philharmonic.



SIR CHARLES MACKERRAS, San Francisco Opera's Principal Guest Conductor Emeritus, was born in the U.S. to Australian parents. He was raised in Australia, studied in Sydney and Prague, and made his debut as an opera conductor at Sadler's Wells. He was Principal Conductor of the Hamburg State Opera (1966-'69) and Musical Director of both Sadler's Wells (later English National)

Opera (1970-'77) and of Welsh National Opera (1987-'92), where his notable Janáček productions — among others — won great acclaim. Sir Charles is Conductor Laureate of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Conductor Emeritus of the Welsh National Opera, Music Director of the Orchestra of St. Luke's in New York and Principal Guest Conductor of the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra. In 1969, he undertook his first assignment for a U.S. opera company, leading performances of *The Magic Flute* and *La Cenerentola* at San Francisco Opera. Appointed the Company's Principal Guest Conductor in 1993, he has since returned to the War Memorial podium for numerous engagements, the most recent of which were the 1995 stagings of *Madama Butterfly* and the SFO premiere of Dvořák's *Rusalka*. Long associated with London's Royal Opera, he returned to Covent Garden earlier this season to lead *Roméo et Juliette* and Martinů's *The Greek Passion*. He also regularly conducts at the Metropolitan Opera where his most recent engagements included *The Makropulos Case*, *Katya Kabanova*, *Die Zauberflöte* and *Lucia di Lammermoor*. The maestro has produced a lengthy discography, including award-winning recordings of *Rusalka*, Britten's *Gloriana* and a cycle of Janáček operas. His recordings of Beethoven and Mahler symphonies with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic and his recent recording of the four Brahms symphonies with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra continue to attract critical interest and acclaim. He was honored with the title Commander of the British Empire in 1974 and was knighted for his services to music in 1979. In 1996 he received The Medal of Merit from the Czech Republic and in 1997 was made a Companion of the Order of Australia.



Appointed Staff Conductor at San Francisco Opera in 1998, **WILLIAM LACEY's** activities for the Company have included assisting Music Director Donald Runnicles (*Tristan und Isolde*, *Peter Grimes*, *Idomeneo*, *Un Ballo in Maschera*, the *Ring* cycle), Valery Gergiev (*Betrothal in a Monastery*), Marco Armiliato (*Turandot*), Richard Bonyne (*Lucia di Lammermoor*), Nello Santi (*Nabucco*) and Michael Boder (*Wozzeck*). Last season,

he conducted the Opera Center's Showcase production of *Così fan tutte* and the Merola Opera Program's presentation of *The Italian Girl in Algiers*. Earlier this year Lacey made his mainstage San Francisco Opera conducting debut with a January performance of *La Bohème* and led the Opera Center Showcase production of *Albert Herring* staged by Lotfi Mansouri. Even more recently, he conducted a performance of *The Tsar's Bride*. The

native of London studied at Winchester College and at King's College, Cambridge, where he made his conducting debut in 1993 with the Cambridge University Opera Society's staging of *The Rape of Lucretia*. After leading additional operas and concerts throughout Great Britain, he began a freelance career in 1995, conducting *Carmen* in London, two contemporary operas at the Almeida Festival, and numerous concerts with such ensembles as the Orchestra della Toscana, London Sinfonietta and the Composers Ensemble. In 1996 he conducted a new staging of Alexander Goehr's *Arianna*, which was recorded and released to great critical acclaim, and in 1998 made his debut at English National Opera, where he conducted Graham Vick's production of *The Tales of Hoffmann*.



Internationally celebrated director **JOHN COPLEY** made his Company debut in 1982 with Handel's *Julius Caesar* and the following year staged the U.S. premiere of Tippett's *The Midsummer Marriage*. Subsequent SFO assignments have been *Don Giovanni*, Handel's *Orlando*, *Eugene Onegin*, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *La Traviata*, *Suor Angelica*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Queen of Spades*, *Il Trovatore*, *Anna Bolena*, *Il*

Barbiere di Siviglia, *Peter Grimes*, *Manon* and *Idomeneo*. In addition, he directed the young artists of the Merola Opera Program in productions of *Die Fledermaus* (1993), *Don Giovanni* (1994) and *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* (1996). Copley began his career as stage manager for musicals in London's West End before becoming assistant and then principal resident director of the Royal Opera at Covent Garden. His work has been acclaimed at the major opera houses and festivals in Europe, and he has also directed over 30 productions at Opera Australia. In North America, his credits include stagings for the Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Dallas Opera, Los Angeles Opera, Washington Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Santa Fe Opera, San Diego Opera, Canadian Opera Company and the New York City Opera. His most recent work has been seen at the New York Met (*Giulio Cesare*) and City Opera (*Le Nozze di Figaro*), Opera Australia (*Le Nozze di Figaro*, *Tosca*), as well as in Dallas (*La Traviata*), Washington, D.C. (*Giulio Cesare*), Chicago (*Carmen*), London's Royal Opera (*La Bohème*), and Santa Fe (*Semele*, *Elektra*). Among his future assignments are *Norma* at the Met, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* in Dallas, *Tosca* and *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* in Chicago, as well as *La Traviata* for San Francisco Opera.



Born in Moravia, **HENRY BARDON's** first set designs for the Royal Opera at Covent Garden were for John Copley's production of *Suor Angelica* in 1965. He later worked with Copley on the sets for the Royal Opera's first production of *Così fan tutte*. While he maintained his association with Covent Garden (*Semele* was first seen there in 1982), his work extended to Glyndebourne (*Werther*, *Elegy for Young Lovers*, *La Bohème*) and abroad: San Francisco Opera (1982 *Cendrillon*; 1992 *A Midsummer Night's Dream*), Stockholm (*Guillaume Tell*, *Der Rosenkavalier*) and Dallas (*Lucia di Lammermoor*), among others. The late designer also created sets for Opera Australia (*Le Nozze di Figaro*), Welsh National Opera (*Peter Grimes*), English National Opera (*Manon*) and The Royal Ballet (*Cinderella*, *The Dream*).

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DAVID WALKER made his 1987 San Francisco Opera debut with the costume designs for *La Traviata*, a production also seen here in 1991 and 1995. The British artist also designed new costumes for the Company's presentation of *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* in 1996 and was responsible for the costumes in our 1998 staging of *Manon*. Born in Calcutta, he studied at the Central School of Arts and Crafts, and

made his operatic design debut with *Così fan tutte* at the Dublin Festival. His designs have been seen at opera houses in Venice, Lisbon, Stockholm, and at the English National Opera, Welsh National Opera, Edinburgh Festival, Glyndebourne Festival, Royal Opera at Covent Garden, and the Metropolitan Opera. Operas designed for these companies include *Carmen*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Werther*, *Don Giovanni*, *La Bohème*, *Guillaume Tell*, *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Semele* and *Die Meistersinger*. Recent design credits include *Der Rosenkavalier* for Minnesota Opera, a new production of Donizetti's *Roberto Devereux* for the opera houses of Palermo and Genoa, a revival of *Semele* at London's Royal Opera, also *Manon Lescaut* in Tokyo and Palermo. Costume design credits for television include *Hamlet* (with Richard Chamberlain) and *The Corn is Green* (with Katharine Hepburn, directed by George Cukor). Among his film credits are *The Charge of the Light Brigade* for Tony Richardson, and *Lady Caroline Lamb* for Robert Bolt. The ballet companies of Boston, Houston and Atlanta have also featured his designs in productions of *The Nutcracker*, *Swan Lake* and *Cinderella*.



Choreographer/dancer **LAWRENCE PECH**, in his fourth year as San Francisco Opera's Ballet Master, first staged the dances in the 1997 production of *Guillaume Tell*. He has subsequently been featured as the solo dancer in *Carmen* and served as ballet master for the 1998-99 stagings of *Turandot*, *Don Carlo* and *Das Rheingold*. Last season, he served as choreographer for our new productions of *Louise* and *La*

Favorite. Pech received his formal training from American Ballet Theatre and was subsequently invited by Mikhail Baryshnikov to join the company in 1980. During his seven-year association with ABT, he worked with such choreographers as George Balanchine, Martha Graham, Antony Tudor, Agnes de Mille, Jerome Robbins, Twyla Tharp and others; and danced with such colleagues as Baryshnikov, Natalia Makarova, Ivan Nagy, Cynthia Gregory, Fernando Bujones and many more. In 1986, Pech left American Ballet Theatre to join San Francisco Ballet, where he was promoted to principal dancer in 1989. Two years later, he was the subject of a KQED special entitled *Blue Lair*, a ballet about his successful struggle with cancer. He co-founded Diablo Ballet in 1993, also serving as the artistic director of the Diablo Valley's first year-round professional ballet company. The artist soon established his own troupe, the Lawrence Pech Dance Company, which has received popular and critical praise since its inception. In addition, he has taught at St. Mary's College, Pacific Ballet Academy, Marin Ballet, Marin Dance Theater, California Academy of the Performing Arts and Brady Street Dance Center. He is also an accomplished composer, having created works for arrangements as varied as chamber ensembles, piano solos and a cappella groups.

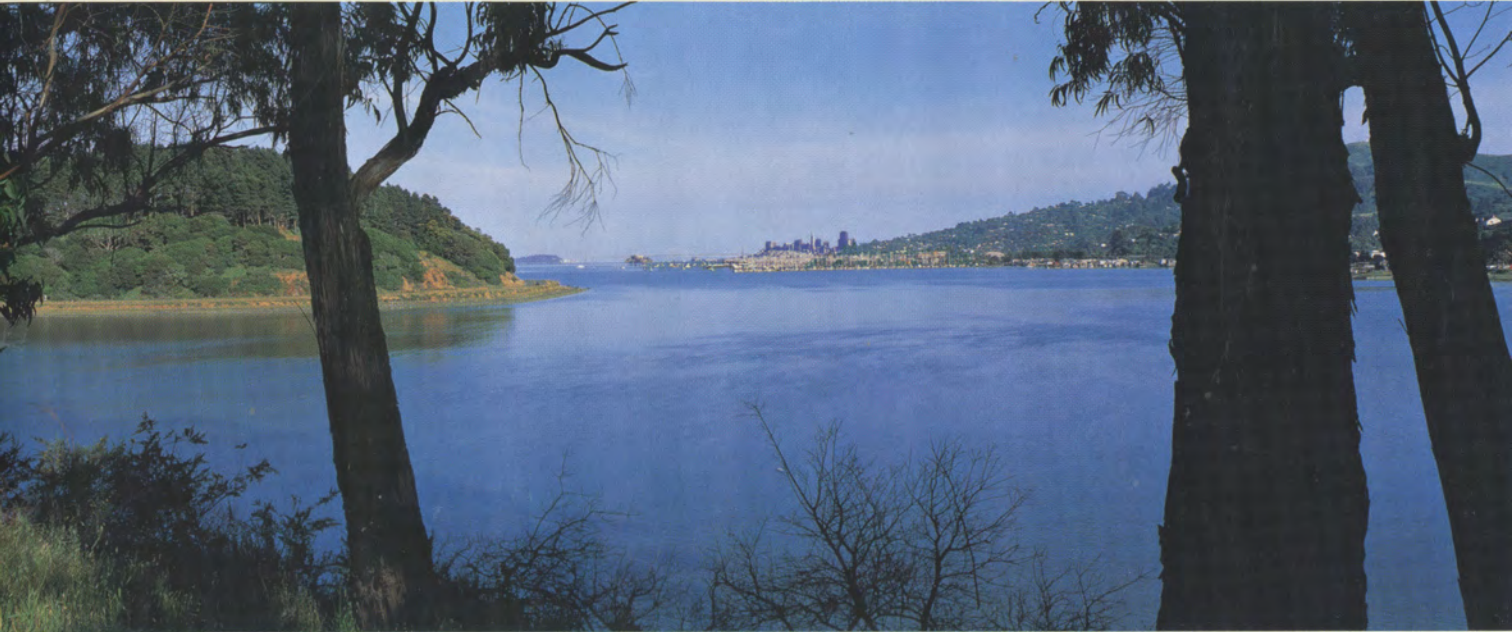


Chorus director and conductor at the San Francisco Opera since 1987, **IAN ROBERTSON** made his Company conducting debut with the 1988 production of *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* and has since led performances of *Falstaff*, *Lobengrin*, *Rigoletto*, *La Traviata*, *Don Carlo*, *Turandot*, *Il Trovatore* and *La Bohème*. 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 Opera Center's productions of *The Italian Girl in Algiers*, *Così fan tutte*, *La Pêricole* and *The Elixir of Love*, as well as Merola Opera Program's Grand Finale Concerts. He has also led *Don Giovanni* for Sarasota Opera; *The Magic Flute* and *Rigoletto* for Edmonton Opera; also numerous operas at Philadelphia's Curtis Opera Theatre where he most recently led *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. 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. 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's lighting designs this season include the Company premieres of *The Tsar's Bride*, *The Ballad of Baby Doe* and *Semele*. He is also re-creating his designs for *Die Zauberflöte*, *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Aida* and *La Traviata*. During his tenure with the Company he has created the lighting and special effects for over 190 productions. Last season, he designed the lighting for the Ring Festival as well as for new productions of *La Favorite* and *Nabucco*. Past productions include designs for *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 the 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*. Scenic design credits include productions of *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, *Roberto Devereux*, *Pelléas et Mélisande* (1979), *Billy Budd*, *Nabucco*, *Don Giovanni* and *Christophe Colomb*. Television credits for the Company include *Streetcar* (nominated for an Emmy Award), *The Dangerous Liaisons*, *Turandot*, the Emmy Award-winning *La Gioconda*, *Aida*, *Samson et Dalila*, *La Bohème*, *Mefistofele*, *Orlando Furioso*, *L'Africaine* and *Capriccio*. Munn has also designed productions for Houston Grand Opera and Dallas Opera (*Elektra*, *Il Trovatore*, *La Traviata*); Washington Opera (*Dangerous Liaisons*); the companies of New Orleans and San Diego (*Streetcar*); as well as for the Netherlands Opera, Opéra de Nice and Sendai Opera. His work in ballet has been seen at the Mary Anthony Dance Theatre, Hartford Ballet 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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Itineraries, performances and casts are subject to change.

NEW YEAR'S EVE GALA AT THE METROPOLITAN OPERA IN NEW YORK

**December 26th, 2000 to
January 2nd, 2001**

Join the festivities at the Metropolitan Opera's New Year's Eve Gala with *The Merry Widow* featuring Frederica von Stade and followed by a black-tie dinner-dance on the tiers of the Opera House! We'll also see Zeffirelli's *La Traviata*, *Fidelio*, *Il Trovatore*, a New York Philharmonic concert and a Broadway play. Ring in the New Year in style!

DRESDEN AND MEISSEN AND DER RING DES NIBELUNGEN IN BERLIN

February 12th to 26th, 2001

Experience Harry Kupfer's acclaimed *Ring Cycle* in Berlin as well as *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *La Traviata*, *Zar und Zimmermann* and *Faust* in Berlin, and *Die Frau ohne Schatten* and a symphony concert at Dresden's Semper Oper. Truly rich fare for the opera lover!

SARASOTA OPERA ADVENTURE **March 19th to 26th, 2001**

Join us for a delightful week at Florida's Sarasota Opera Festival and see the great collections at the Ringling Museum of Art! The adventure includes Verdi's rarely performed *Oberto*, his beloved *Falstaff*, a Verdi concert, *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, and *Hansel and Gretel*.

SPRING & OPERA IN NEW YORK **April 1 to 8, 2001**

The spring repertoire is thrilling! At the Met: Verdi's *Nabucco* and *Il Trovatore*, *Parsifal* with Plácido Domingo,

Prokofiev's *The Gambler* conducted by Valery Gergiev; and at New York City Opera: *Don Giovanni*, *La Bohème* and *Tosca*! And we'll see a Broadway play and enjoy a guided tour of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Call for details!

VERDI & ITALY **May 13 to 31, 2001**

Visit Verdi's home near Parma, experience *Un Ballo in Maschera* at La Scala, and see *La Traviata* and *Giovanna D'Arco*! We also tour to Cernobbio on Lake Como, Genoa, Turin, Venice, Milan, attend Rimsky-Korsakov's *Notte di Maggio* in Bologna and the Maggio Musicale festival in Florence. Space limited - sign up now!

WHITE NIGHTS' FESTIVAL IN ST. PETERSBURG, HELSINKI & THE SAVONLINNA FESTIVAL IN FINLAND

June 23 to July 10, 2001

Explore the treasures of the Hermitage Museum, the grandeur of czarist palaces and savor the excellence of opera, ballet and symphony in St. Petersburg at the White Nights Festival, Valery Gergiev, Artistic Director. Our tour continues to Helsinki and the Savonlinna Summer Opera Festival in Finland's pristine lake district. Join us for a sublime artistic experience!

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Semele

Photos taken in rehearsal
by Marty Sohl

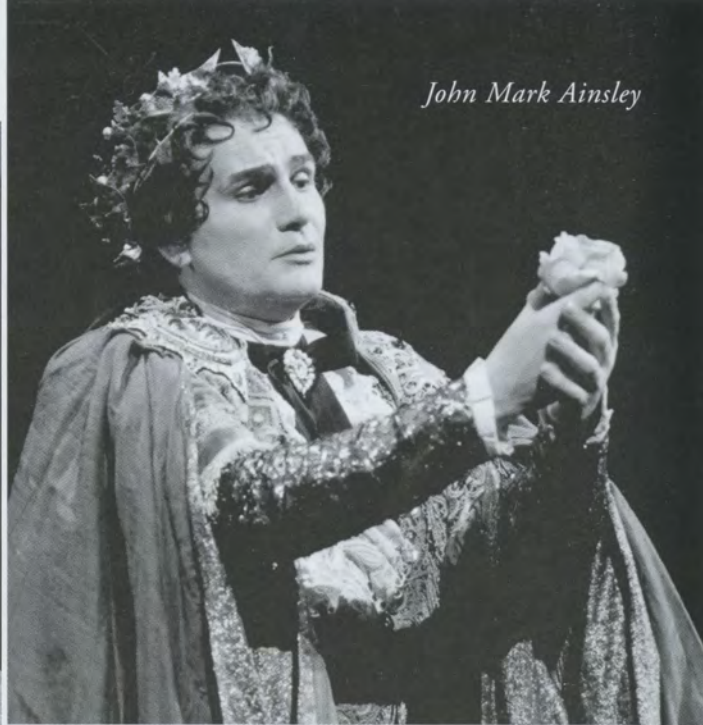


John Mark Ainsley, Ruth Ann Swenson

Ruth Ann Swenson, Sarah Connolly



John Mark Ainsley



Brian Asawa



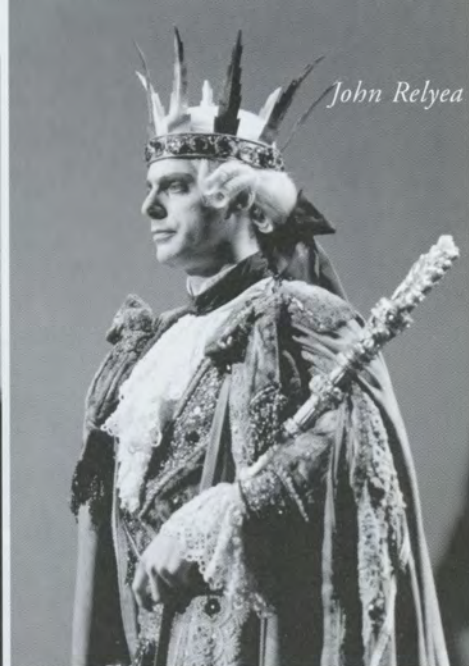
Sarah Connolly

Sarah Connolly, Christine Brandes

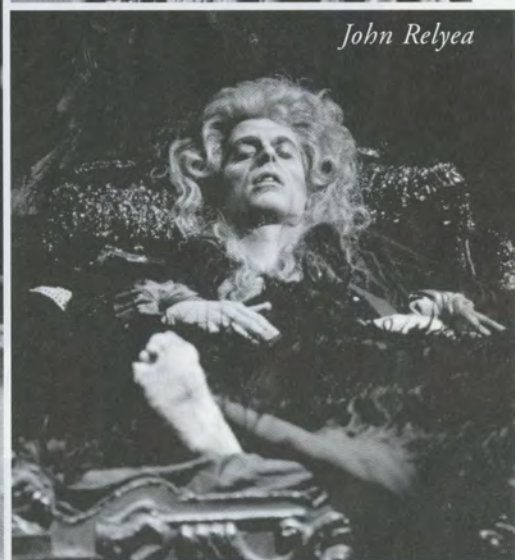




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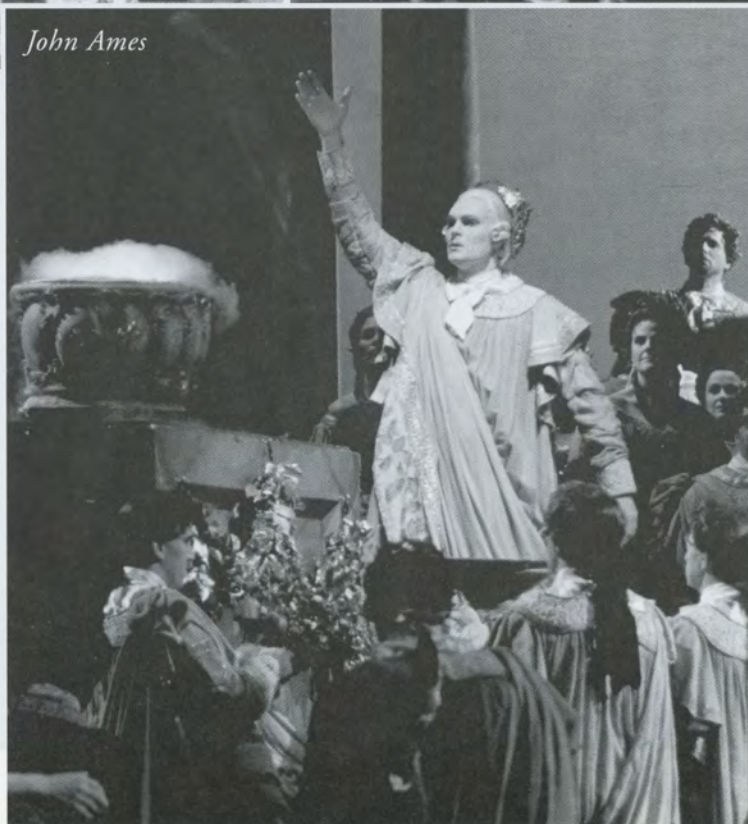
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John Relyea



Christine Brandes

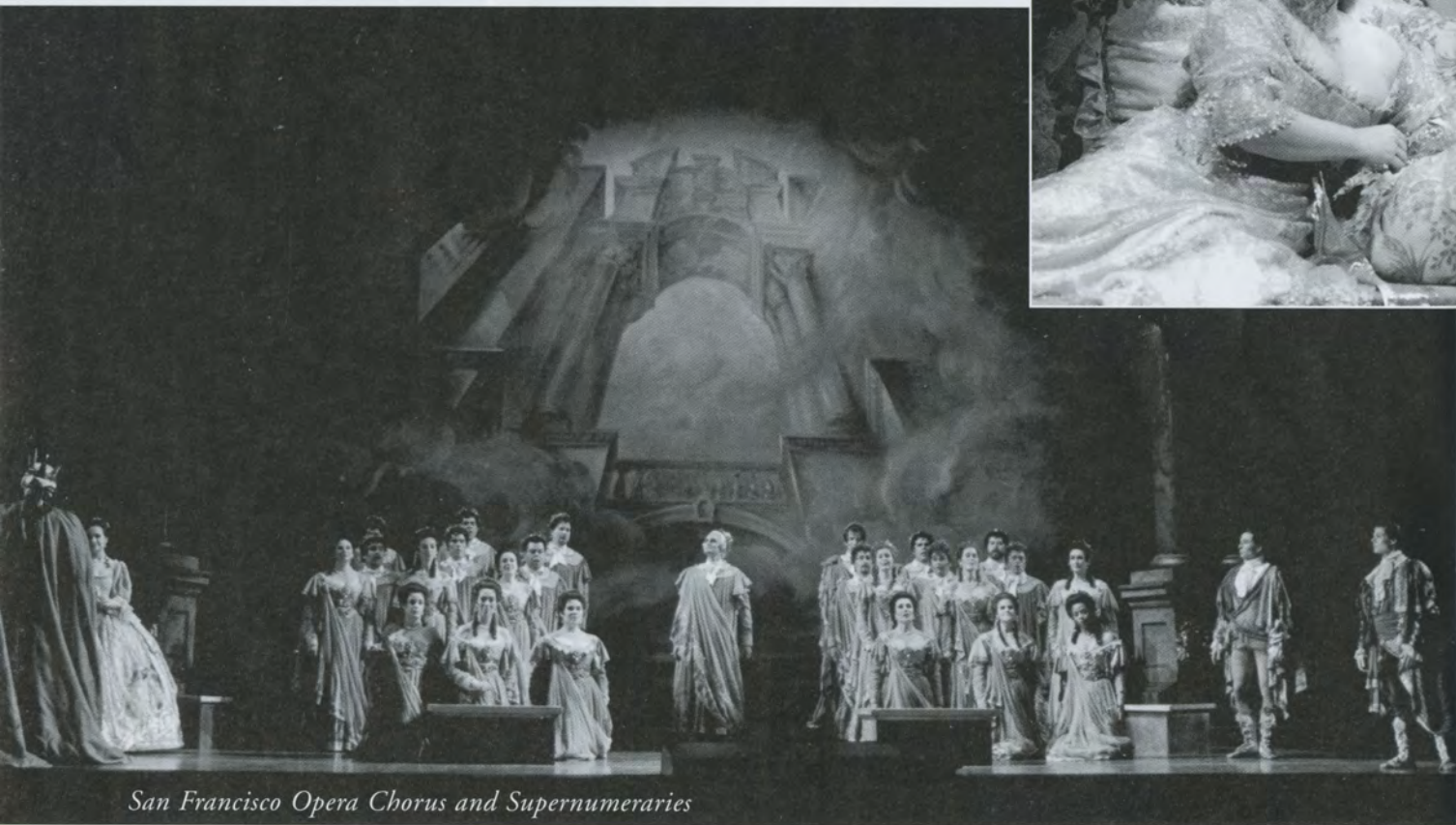


John Ames



(Top) *Todd Geer*; (Bottom, l. to r.) *John Relyea, Sarah Connolly, Brian Asawa, John Ames*

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Martha Simonds *Associate Principal*
Beni Shinohara *Assistant Principal* *
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Leslie Ludena
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Craig Reiss
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Sergei Rakitchenkov *Associate Principal* *
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Julie McKenzie *Principal*
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Anthony Striplen

BASSOON

Rufus Olivier *Principal*
Jerry Dagg
Robin Elliott

CONTRABASSOON

Robin Elliott

HORN

William Klingelhoffer
Co-Principal
Brian McCarty *Co-Principal*
Eric Achen
Keith Green
Lawrence Ragent

TRUMPET

Timothy Wilson *Principal*
William Holmes
John Pearson *

TROMBONE

McDowell Kenley *Principal*
Donald Kennelly *
David Ridge

BASS TROMBONE

David Ridge

TUBA/CIMBASSO

Zachariah Spellman

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John Burgardt

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Plácido Domingo

in concert with

The Kirov Orchestra

conducted by

Valery Gergiev

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

AIDA

VERDI · Domingo/Vendice: Pickover, Pizzi, Burrett, Pelzig
Voigt, Botha, Terentjeva, Estes, Ryhänen, Lebherz, Sledge, Jansen

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

LA CENERENTOLA

ROSSINI · Ferro: Steingraber, Hernandez, Berlin, Burrett
Larmore, Streit, Aliamo, Gilfry, Bernstein, Hill, Jansen

Oct. 18, 21m, 24, 27, 29, Nov. 1, 4m, 2000

PETER GRIMES

BRITTEN · Armstrong: Schlesinger, Arrighi, Jonathan, Fazan
Langridge, Gustafson, Stilwell, Guzmán, Christin, Fedderly

Nov. 29, Dec. 2m, 5, 8, 10, 13, 16m, 19, 21, 2000

LA BOHÈME

PUCCINI · Vendice/Domingo: Ross, Harlan, Howland, Hall, Rosengarden
Vaduva, Machado/Gonzalez, Patriarco, Mula, Owens

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

LE NOZZE DI FIGARO

MOZART · Guidarini: Hall, Steingraber, Bury, Sale
Bernstein, Bayo, Henschel/Atkins, Lerner

February 23, 25, 27, March 2, 4, 7, 10m, 2001

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HANDEL · Bicket: Negrin, Baker, Cunningham, Sewell, Barclay
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
Malfitano, Leech, Fox, Travis, Lebherz, Sledge

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2000-2001 OPERA PREVIEWS

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

PRE-PERFORMANCE LECTURES

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

Dead Man Walking — Oct. 22, 25, 28
L'Elisir d'Amore — Oct. 31; Nov. 3, 5; Jan. 7, 11, 13
Semele — Nov. 4, 7, 10, 15, 19, 22
Der Rosenkavalier — Nov. 24, 29; Dec. 2, 5, 7, 10
Die Zauberflöte — Dec. 1, 3, 6, 9; Jan. 6, 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.

October 24	<i>Semele</i>
June 12	<i>Simon Boccanegra</i>

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.

Nov. 1	<i>Semele</i>
Nov. 15	<i>Der Rosenkavalier</i>
June 6	Verdi's Golden Legacy

MARIN CHAPTER—

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA GUILD

Lectures held at 8:00 p.m., preceded by complimentary refreshments. Mt. Tamalpais United Methodist Church, 410 Sycamore Avenue, Mill Valley. Admission: \$7-adults, \$6-students and seniors (except Verdi Lecture, \$10). Series: \$35-adults, \$30-students and seniors. For information call Verna Parino (415) 388-6789.

Oct. 30	<i>Semele</i>
Nov. 13	<i>Der Rosenkavalier</i>
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.

Nov. 1	<i>Semele</i>
Nov. 15	<i>Der Rosenkavalier</i>
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.

Nov. 2	<i>Semele</i>
Nov. 16	<i>Der Rosenkavalier</i>
June 7	Verdi's Golden Legacy

SONOMA CHAPTER—

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA GUILD

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.

Nov. 2	<i>Semele</i>
Nov. 13	<i>Der Rosenkavalier</i>
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.

Oct. 31	<i>Semele</i>
Nov. 14	<i>Der Rosenkavalier</i>
June 5	Verdi's Golden Legacy

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

MERRITT COLLEGE OPERA LECTURE SERIES

Held on Tuesday evenings in Room A-117, 7 to 10 p.m., *Introduction to Opera* (Music 13A) is based on the operas of the 2000-2001 season. The College is at 12500 Campus Drive (off Redwood Road in the Oakland hills). Information: (510) 436-2430.

OPERA EDUCATION INTERNATIONAL PREVIEW SERIES

Given by Michael Barclay, director of OEI. 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.

Oct. 23	<i>Semele</i>
Nov. 13	<i>Der Rosenkavalier</i>
Nov. 27	<i>Die Zauberflöte</i>
May 28	<i>La Traviata</i>
June 4	<i>Aida</i>
June 11	<i>Simon Boccanegra</i>

FRIENDS OF THE KENSINGTON LIBRARY

A free lecture on *Semele* will be given by Michael Barclay on October 26 at 7:00 p.m. at the Kensington Library, 61 Arlington Avenue, Kensington. Information: (510) 524-3043.

CITY COLLEGE OF SAN FRANCISCO PRELIMINARIES

A music course will deal with all operas of the 2000-2001 season. Taught by Marvin Tartak on Thursday evenings from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m., classes are held at the College's Noe Valley Campus, 1220 Noe Street, in San Francisco. Course began August 24th and continues until December 21st. Cost is \$33. Information: (415) 239-3641.

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Friday, Oct 20, 7pm

The Manchus in Global Context

Lecture by Dartmouth professor and Manchu history expert Pamela Crossley on the golden age of the Qing dynasty. On Saturday at 2 pm, a second lecture by Crossley focuses on the glamorous life of Emperor Qianlong.

Saturday, Nov 4, 1 to 4 pm

Chinese Medicine in the World

Experience Chinese healing arts at the Museum—see demonstrations of acupuncture, herbalist diagnosis, Qigong exercises and more. Panel discussion on the future of Chinese medicine.

Friday, Nov 10, 7 pm

Dragon and Phoenix Banquet

An exciting cooking contest for students from Bay Area cooking academies. Talented young chefs present original dishes based on the "Dragon and Phoenix" theme to a panel of celebrity judges. Fee. Reservations recommended. (510) 238-2022



Oakland Museum of California, Oak & 10th Streets, Oakland, CA 94607
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Secret World of the Forbidden City: Splendors from China's Imperial Palace from the Palace Museum and organized by The Bowers Museum of Cultural Art was made possible, in part, through a generous grant from Gateway. The Oakland presentation is made possible by the City of Oakland and generously sponsored by the Oakland Museum Women's Board. Major corporate sponsors: Chevron and Metropolitan Life Foundation. Participating sponsors: Aloha Airlines and Marine Terminals Corporation. Media sponsors: BART, KRON-TV 4, San Francisco Chronicle and Port of Oakland.



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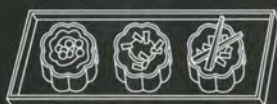
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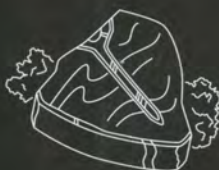
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THE MAN BENEATH THE WIG

continued from page 18

Handel seemed devoted through much of his life to the idea that Italian was the best language for singing, and Italian singers were the best for singing it. His earliest extant opera, *Almira*, composed while he was still in his teens, was in a mixture of German and Italian; and he continued to compose Italian operas even after he had achieved success setting the English texts of *Esther*, *Acis and Galatea*, *Saul* and *Israel in Egypt*. He even added Italian arias when he conducted revivals of *Esther* and *Acis and Galatea* in 1732. Some scholars have come up with rather tortuous explanations of why Handel did this, but the simplest and most obvious interpretation of the facts is that he preferred having an Italian singer perform a part in Italian in a predominantly English work over taking alternate steps to keep the entire performance in English. As late as 1742, when Handel went to Dublin for the world premiere of *Messiah*, he also took along his Italian opera *Imeneo*, which was performed in concert and billed as a "serenata."

Of all the veils concealing the real Handel, the one that has yet to fall is the dense curtain that surrounds the issue of his most personal life. Past generations were willing for the most part to steer clear of that topic, but we are living in a tell-all society in a bold, new century, and inquiring minds want to know. "His amours were rather of short duration, always within the pale of his own profession," wrote Mainwaring. There was a rumor, frequently cited, of an association during his youthful years in Italy with the actress and singer Vittoria Tarquini; specifically, Mainwaring tells us that "Handel's youth and comeliness, joined with his fame and abilities in Music, had made impressions on her heart," but he doesn't actually say that Handel reciprocated the feelings. In face of the lack of any conclusive evidence concerning Handel's sexuality, it would be reckless to make any assumptions at all. We should remember that similar tales used to be told about Tchaikovsky and Schubert as well, composers who are now generally conceded to have had a different "affectional preference."

The fact is that we have virtually no evidence concerning Handel's love-life at all. While dishing dirt on most of the subjects of his humorous but fact-based *Love Lives of the Great Composers*, Basil Howitt basically gives Handel a pass, claiming "His sensual pleasures seem to have extended no lower than his stomach." While supposedly a handsome youth, Handel in his maturity became quite bulky, an image cruelly exaggerated

in contemporary cartoons. Hawkins tells us, "He was in his person a large-made and very portly man. His gait, which was ever sauntering, was rather ungraceful, as it had in it somewhat of that rocking motion, which distinguishes those whose legs are bowed." Burney commented that "Handel, with many virtues, was addicted to no vice that was injurious to society. Nature, indeed, required a great supply of sustenance to support so huge a mass, and he was rather epicurean in the choice of it, but this seems to have been the only appetite he allowed himself to gratify."

The absence of more detailed information has made some scholars uncomfortable, none more so than Paul Henry Lang, who devotes pages to the subject. "The problem of Handel's relationship with women has puzzled his biographers for the last two hundred years," he writes. "... One might say that he simply did not have time for serious engagement with women ... He saw no place for a woman in his scheme of things. What woman would have been willing to keep pace with this driving personality? ... Gossip is always eager to discuss the loves of artists, but in truth a poet or composer is not always created for love."

Yet Lang is unable to leave the topic alone. "Considering the extremely wide range of the characters of Handel's heroines, and the infinite nuances in their femininity, it seems incontrovertible that he must have been a man not only of normal masculine constitution but one attracted by and sensitive to feminine charms, as is borne out by his marked predilection for the women among his friends ... That voluptuous votary of love, Semele, was portrayed in music by an Englishman with a German intonation who in staid Halle could never have heard such accents. Such a woman could never have risen from the imagination of a misogynist."

That Handel was no misogynist is clear; the details of his private life, however, are unknown, undoubtedly as Handel would want them to remain. Our most direct contact with his personality must be, as it is with any composer, through his music, and in this our age is one of the more blessed. The fact that Bay Area audiences this year have been able to hear two different productions of *Semele* — one "authentic" performance on "original instruments," the other taking full advantage of modern technology — speaks well for Handel's recognition today. Like a character in one of his own operas singing a succession of da capo arias, he has, through the centuries, shown himself to us one facet at a time, resulting in an ever more rounded portrait of the man beneath the wig. □

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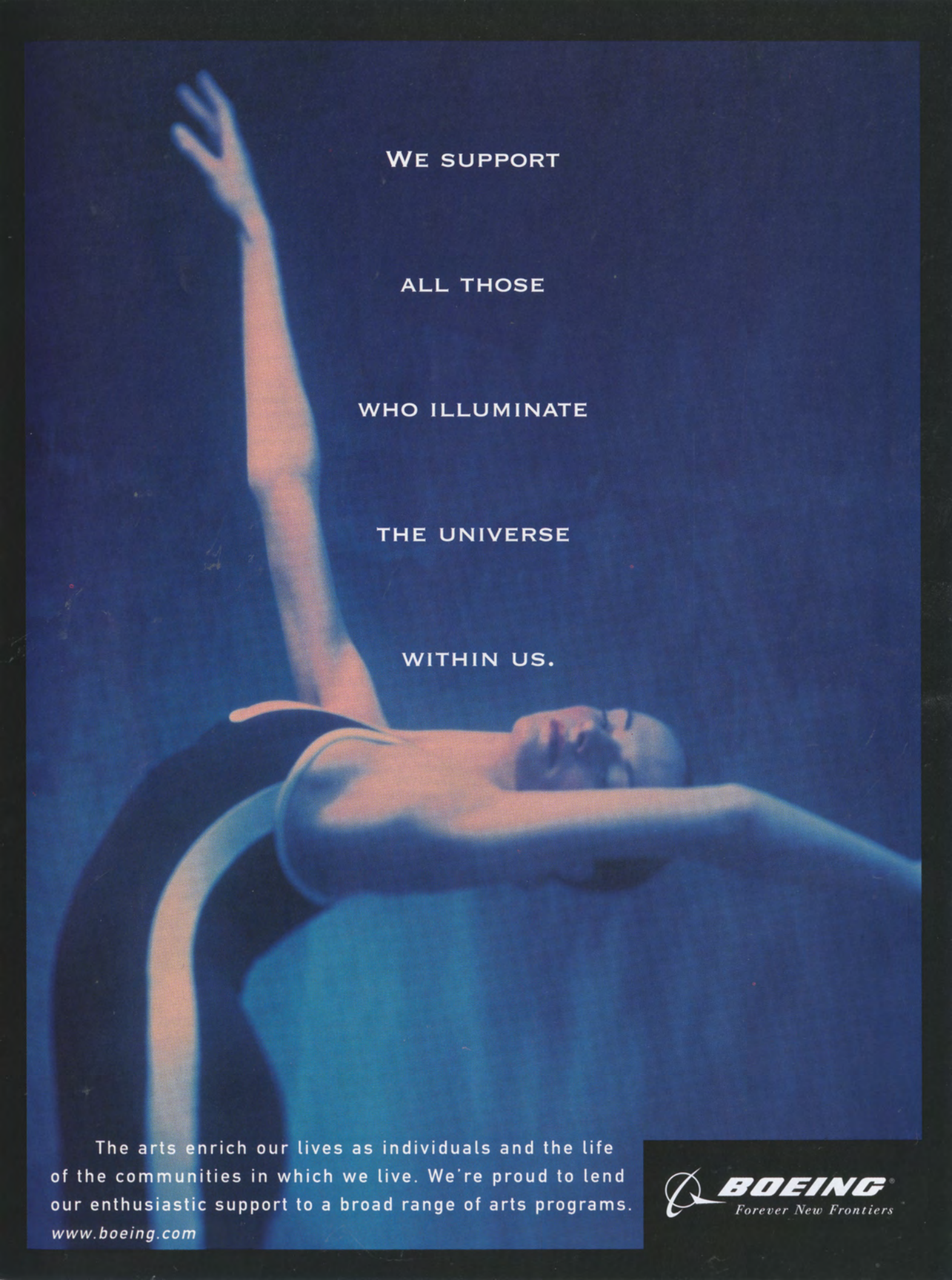
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For more information contact Judson Gregory, Director of Corporate Partnerships, at (415) 565-3206 or jgregory@sfoopera.com.

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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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We are grateful to all donors who have made memorial and honorary contributions to Merola between October 1, 1999 and September 15, 2000.

IN MEMORY OF

Mr. Richard Barulich
Mr. Richard Dobbins
Mrs. Sammie Dunn

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Mr. Bob Hawes
Thelma Lindstrom

Ms. Helen Loeb
Dr. Alan Rosenberg
Mr. Walter Skees

IN HONOR OF

Mr. James H. Schwabacher
Dr. A. Jess Shenson
Ms. Betty Toy

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

Katia Escalera
Adelle Eslinger
Nicolle Foland
Todd Geer
Susan Graham
Kyu Won Han
Daniel Harper

Bryndon Hassman
Philip Horst
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Mathew Lord
Mary Mills
Anna Netrebko
David Okerlund

Patricia Racette
Suzanne Ramo
John Relyea
Christopher Robertson
Twyla Robinson
Norman Shankle
Patrick Summers

Ruth Ann Swenson
Carol Vaness
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.

Wednesday, October 4 • Saturday, October 7
Sunday, October 15 • Sunday, November 5
Tuesday, November 14
Saturday, November 25
Saturday, December 2
Thursday, December 7
Sunday, January 7 • Wednesday, January 10
Saturday, January 16 • Sunday, June 3
Saturday, June 11 • Sunday, June 26

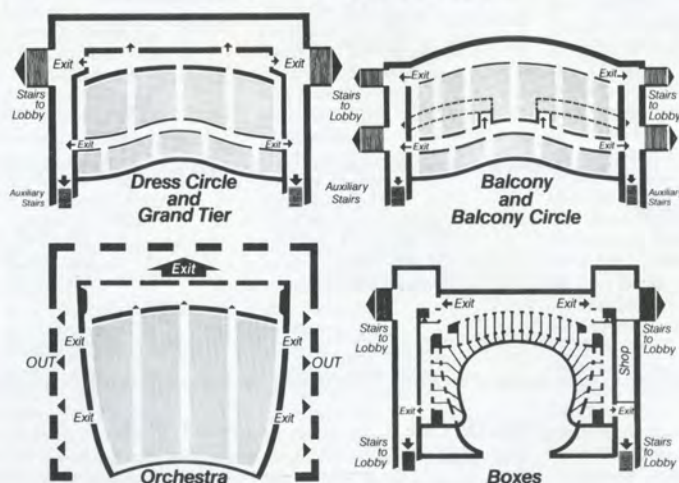
Tickets for Guild members, \$2; non-members \$5. Reservations required. Information: (510) 524-5220.

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 and Grove).

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



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



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