

La Traviata
(The Fallen Woman)

2000-2001

Friday, June 1, 2001 8:00 PM
Wednesday, June 6, 2001 8:00 PM
Sunday, June 10, 2001 1:00 PM
Sunday, June 10, 2001 7:30 PM
Wednesday, June 20, 2001 7:30 PM
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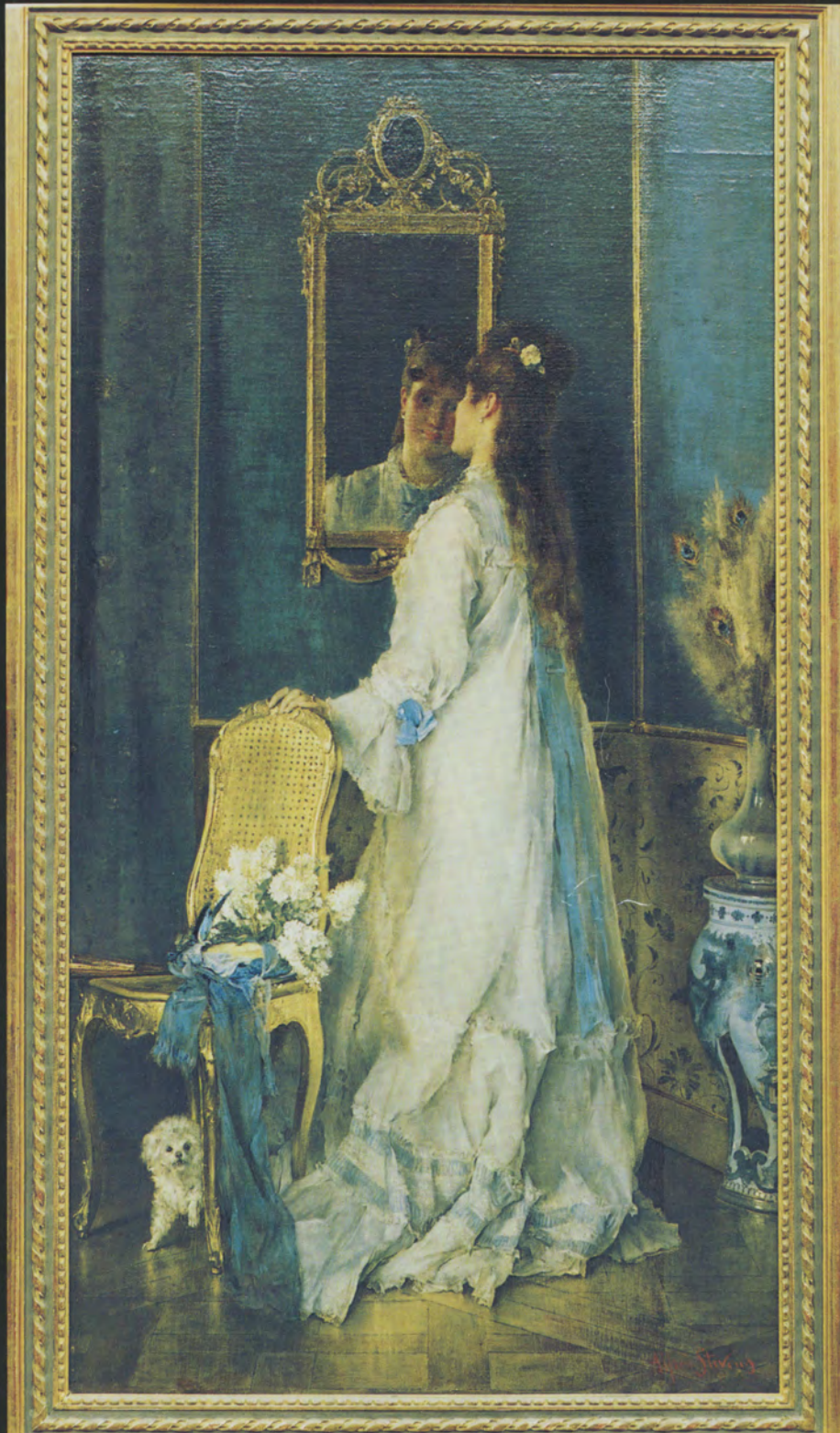
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2001 VERDI CELEBRATION

LA TRAVIATA



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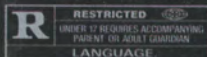
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SAN FRANCISCO OPERA MAGAZINE

La Traviata

2001 Verdi Celebration

Vol. 78, No. 9

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Oil on canvas, 49.6 x 26.3 in (126 x 67 cm)

Rijksmuseum Vincent van Gogh, Amsterdam

Photo: AKG, London

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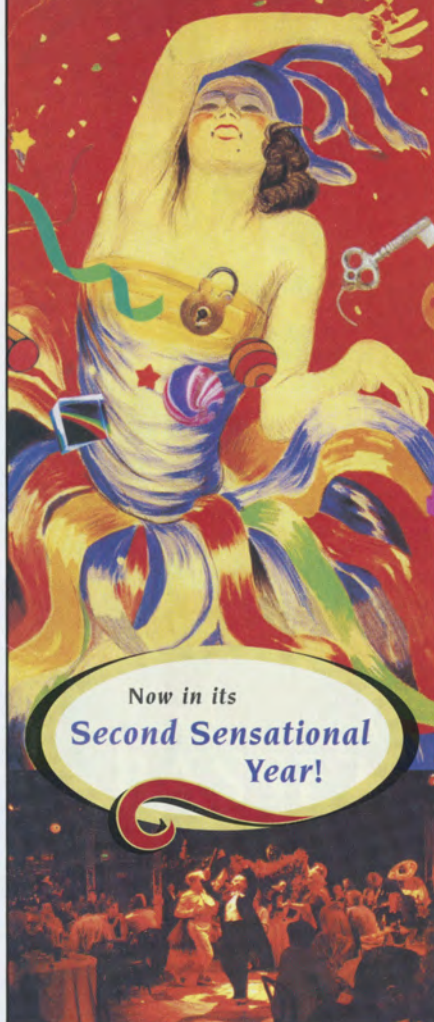
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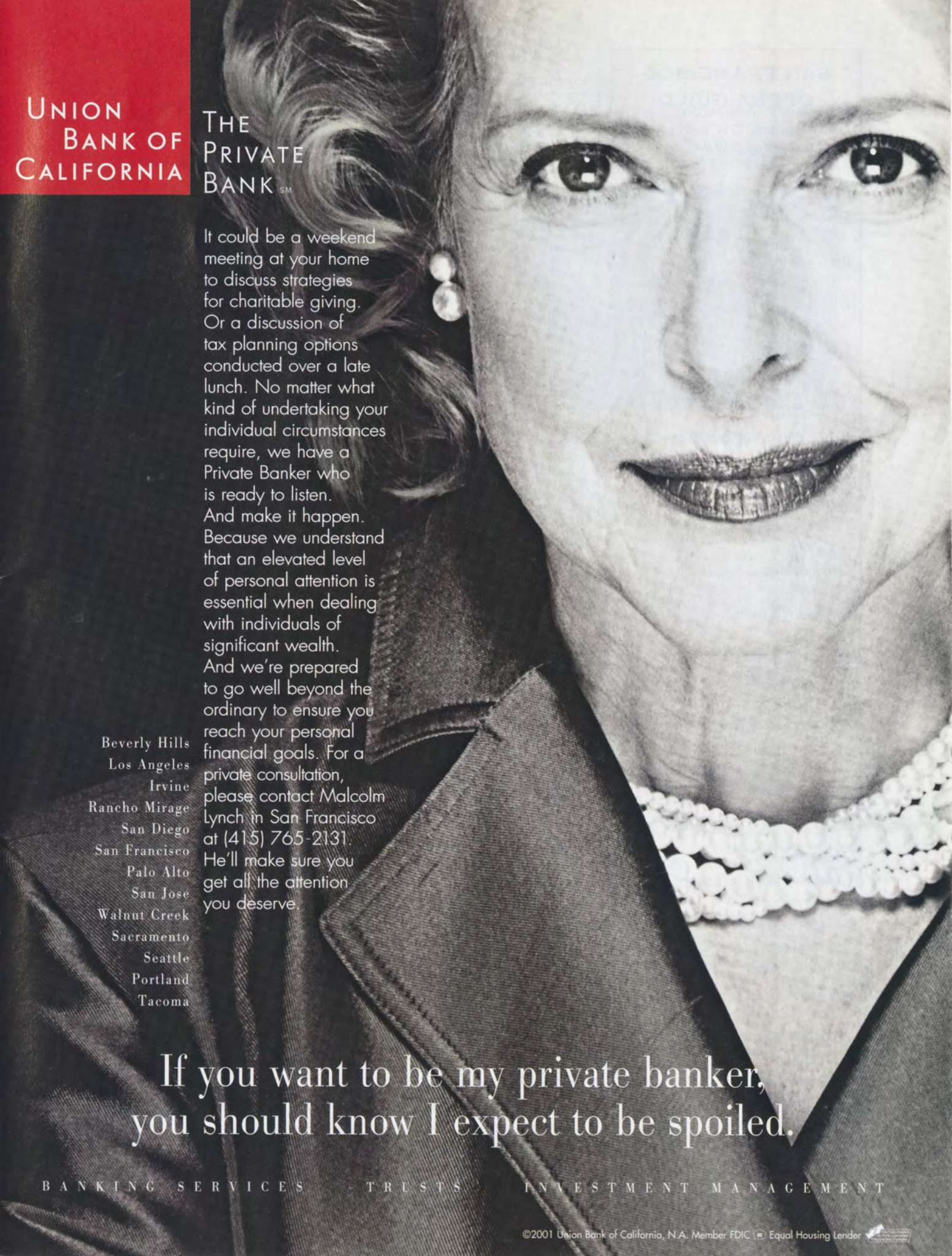
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A MESSAGE FROM THE GENERAL DIRECTOR



SOHL

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.

The year 2001 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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LA TRAVIATA: TIME WILL DECIDE

BY ANDREW PORTER

Operas are seldom set in “the present day,” or even the near-present. I say that, and of course several successful operas that *have* been thus set come at once to mind: among them are Menotti’s *Consul* and *Saint of Bleeker Street*; Michael Tippett’s *Ice Break* and *New Year*; John Adams’s *Nixon in China* and *Death of Klinghoffer* (at the premieres of which some of the real-life originals could have watched their adventures being played out on the stage); Stewart Wallace’s *Harvey Milk* (at the premiere of which some of them *were* present); Jake Heggie’s *Dead Man Walking*...and others. Those are works from the second half of the twentieth century. “Documentary” operas, dealing with contemporary matter and even with “real people” have been fashionable recently. Yet on the whole composers still seem to prefer to visit the past: myth, history, “costume drama.” The latest three new operas to appear in England have been: at the English National Opera, Mark-Anthony Turnage’s *The Silver Tassie*, set during and just after the 1914-18 War; Harrison Birtwistle’s “bimillennial evocation” of *The Last Supper*, at Glyndebourne and on tour through the country; and, also at the ENO, David Sawer’s *From Morning to Midnight*, based on Georg Kaiser’s 1912 Expressionist play.

Nineteenth-century “contemporary” operas are still rarer, though of course there are some. The epoch of Mascagni’s *Cavalleria Rusticana*, in 1890, was boldly identified as “the present,” but most of its *verismo* successors dipped back into history for their subject matter. The epochs of Verdi’s twenty-eight operas range through the centuries from 586 B.C., the Sack of the Temple in Jerusalem, onward, and only one, *La Traviata*, is set in “the present.” Otherwise, the nearest Verdi came to a contemporary setting was in *Stiffelio*, which appeared in 1850 and is set “at the beginning of the nineteenth century.” (But *Stiffelio* soon dropped from sight, and when Verdi revised it, as *Avoldo*, the epoch was shifted back to Crusader times, “about the thirteenth century.”) It was some time, moreover, before *La Traviata* was staged in the contemporary setting that the composer had in mind for it. The source play, Alexandre Dumas the



San Francisco Opera’s first Violetta was the legendary Claudia Muzio, who sang the role in 1924, her first season with us, returning to the part in 1932 and 1933. These two images, taken in 1932, show her backstage before the beginning of Act I (inset), and — flanked by the Alfredo of Dino Borgioli and Richard Bonelli’s elder Germont — just prior to Act IV.

Younger’s *Dame aux camélias*, may proclaim clearly at the start “Le scène se passe vers 1848,” but even fairly recent scores and librettos of the opera continued to declare that the setting is “Paris and its neighborhood around 1700.” Venetian mid-century censorship may have countenanced a drama with a courtesan as its heroine (Donizetti’s *La Favorite* offered precedent, after all) — but not a *contemporary* courtesan. Verdi protested, and endeavored to insist that his opera should be performed in modern dress — otherwise he’d have to recompose the music, he said — but he protested in vain.

Later in the century, prima donnas began to introduce anachronism in the opposite direction, *updating* the period at least so far as their own dresses were concerned. In 1896, Bernard Shaw wrote of “a sight familiar to every opera-goer...Violetta in the latest Parisian confections and Alfredo in full Louis XIV fig.” And Edward J. Dent in his brilliant little handbook *Opera* (1940) wrote:

It was customary for the heroine to wear gowns in the very latest fashion and as many diamonds as she possessed. Under such circumstances it is not surprising that serious musicians regarded the opera with utter contempt.

Gemma Bellincioni, who in Verdi’s own opinion was the ideal Traviata, began about 1904 to sing the opera in a crinoline dress — not till then was the crinoline considered as anything but ridiculous. Her interpretation of the part — she was a woman of striking beauty and a truly great actress — was unspeakably moving; and in recent years *La Traviata* has come to be regarded as a serious work, to be performed with care and dignity.

In the museum of La Scala there is a photograph of Bellincioni as Violetta inscribed by Verdi with admiration for the singer “who brought new life to my

Andrew Porter, formerly music critic of The New Yorker and now of The Times Literary Supplement (London), was Bloch Professor at Berkeley in 1980-81, lecturing on Verdi. He wrote “Verdi” for the 1980 New Grove, and has translated nine Verdi operas (but not *La Traviata*) for performance in English.

old sinner." Bellincioni's 1903 recording of "Ah fors'è lui" (with decoration of the line, and a perfect trill) adds aural testimony of her delicate and emotional art.

Puccini's Mimì and Verdi's Violetta are contemporaries — well, near-contemporaries — for *La Bohème* is set "about 1830." They live in the same Paris, but in different milieus, Mimì as a *grisette* (even though she does take up with a viscount), and Violetta as a courtesan, a rather grander kind of kept woman. Henry Mürger's novel *Scènes de la vie de bohème* appeared, in serial form, in *Le Corsaire* between 1845 and 1848, and the play based upon it at the Théâtre des Variétés in 1849. Dumas's novel *La Dame aux camélias* appeared in 1848, and the play based upon it at the Théâtre du Vaudeville in 1852. (It was written in 1849, but censorship had delayed its appearance.) Today — when it has become common enough to see Rodolfo tapping out his article for *The Beaver* on a laptop, Violetta learning of a visitor's imminent arrival over the house telephone, and Violetta, drip-feed attached, dying in a modern hospital ward — any concern for precise period may seem misplaced. But Verdi saw, heard, and composed *La Traviata* in a specific setting, the mid-century Paris that he knew, where he had been living with Giuseppina Strepponi.

He was always bold in choice of unconventional operatic subjects — and especially so, it seems, when he wrote for Venice. For his first Venice commission, the composer of the Biblical epic *Nabucco* and the Crusader-adventure *I Lombardi* settled on Victor Hugo's fiery *Hernani*. Six years later he insisted on Hugo's controversial *Le Roi s'amuse*, which in Paris had been banned after a single performance, in 1832, and was not seen there again until 1882. In 1853 he wrote:

I want subjects that are *new, big, beautiful, varied, impassioned*, extremely impassioned, with *new forms* that are at the same time musicable. When a librettist says to me: I did that because Romani, Cammarano & Co did it, I lose interest. Precisely because they *have* done it, I want something different.

For Venice I'm writing *La Dame aux camélias*, which will probably be called *Traviata*. A subject for our own time. Another composer wouldn't have tackled it because of the costumes, the period, and a thousand other silly scruples. But I'm writing it with the greatest of pleasure. Everyone cried out when I proposed putting a hunchback on the stage: well, I was very happy to write *Rigoletto*.

Why Verdi?

As a schoolboy, I was brought up in what might be called earnest "Wagnerian orthodoxy." Only *Otello* and *Falstaff* were respectable. Otherwise the "only" in Alfred Noyes's line "The music's only Verdi" set the tone. In 1930, Ernest Newman, Britain's leading critic, had written (of *Don Carlos*): "So much is feeble and clumsy. Verdi seems to me to have had little of the genuine dramatist in him. He was a good man of the theatre — but not even in the first rank of that category... He was incapable of growth in the understanding of human nature." Even Edward J. Dent, who loved Verdi, sounded pretty patronizing when he opened the Verdi chapter of his influential *Opera* (1940) with: "Wagner, though not born to affluence, belonged to the educated classes. Giuseppe Verdi, born in the same year, came of humblest peasant stock and had no chance of literary education." As a young critic, I discovered Verdi, attending and reviewing the postwar revivals in England and Italy, as all his operas returned to the stage. I followed — and even played a small part in — the "new scholarship" that has altered out of recognition that prewar portrait represented by the quotations above. Translating nine of the operas for English performance brought close, hands-on encounters with the works and with excited performers bringing them to life. As an elderly critic, I find myself marveling anew at the force and freshness of invention in work after work — though I'm still "orthodox" enough to admire *Otello* and *Falstaff* most of all! I thought I knew *Otello* well; but as I write this I'm still on a high from hearing as if for the first time (at Covent Garden, Daniele Gatti conducting) its subtle, beautiful, emotionally charged orchestral miracles.

—A.P.

In Francesco Maria Piave, the composer had found an able co-librettist whom he could bully and bend to his will. (Piave wrote words for ten of the twenty-eight operas, from *Ernani* in 1844 to *La Forza del Destino* in 1862 and the revised *Macbeth* three years later.) I say "co-librettist" because the words "and the composer" could be justly added to the by-line on the title page of every Verdi libretto. With Cammarano, with Scribe, with Boito he was scarcely less exigent, though he was more polite while couching his criticisms and demands in the form of "suggestions," and sending to the celebrated poets his own drafts of what he thought needs to be said. "It seems to me that..." and "Perhaps..." he would say. With Piave he was blunter. At *Macbeth* time, he wrote "If you don't get on with it, I'll cut your balls off and then you can sing the Lady."

La Traviata, besides being the only Verdi opera in a contemporary setting, is his only opera all of whose scenes are set indoors, and this was another break with hallowed tradition. And perhaps the only concession to scenic "convention" in *La Traviata* is the "Spanish divertimento" at Flora's party. At the first performance in Venice, *La Traviata* was followed by a five-act "grand ballet" based on the Aladdin story, *La lucerna meravigliosa* — *The Magic Lamp*. (The curtain rose at 8; heaven knows when the evening ended.) Audiences liked to see a bit of dancing in their opera as well. In any case, Flora's divertimento of *mattadori, piccadori e zingare* was also needed as a practical necessity — to allow time for the singers

of Violetta, Alfredo, and Germont to change into evening dress between the two scenes of Act Two: the country idyll and Flora's glittering party. And Verdi, of course, made a virtue of the necessity, and in music portrayed the frivolous, high-spirited milieu into which Violetta's heroic self-sacrifice has compelled her to return. All the same, one perhaps hardly misses the divertimento in the productions that omit it. Often enough it seems like something to get through, marking time until Alfredo and then Violetta, on the baron's arm, make their entrances and the drama begins again. When I came to live in Berkeley for a year, and visited Tilden Park one day, the carousel organ there was grinding out the music of Verdi's *Traviata* divertimento — tuneful, merry, and trumpery.

Verdi family tradition reported by Mary Jane Matz (but there is no hard, written evidence) says that he saw Dumas's play in Paris and there and then resolved to transform it for the lyric stage. He was certainly in Paris at the time of the premiere. He and Giuseppina Strepponi had moved there late in 1851, from Busseto, where tongues had been tattling about their famous local composer living, unwed, with "a woman gone astray," mother of abandoned children by various fathers. Dumas's *Dame aux camélias* opened on 2 February 1852. Twelve days earlier, Verdi had written a famous letter to Antonio Barezzi, his "second father," patron of his first youth, and the father of his first wife, Margherita, who had died young: "In my house there lives a lady, free, indepen-

dent, a lover of solitude, as I am...Neither she nor I owes to anyone any account of her actions...She must command equal or even greater respect than I myself." Any equation of Giuseppina with Violetta, Alfredo with Verdi (whom Giuseppina called her savior, her redeemer), and Germont père with Antonio Barezzi would be simplistic. But it is hardly going too far to suggest that in *La Dame aux camélias* Verdi encountered a timely subject. Living together for love, whether or not in wedlock, is one of its themes. Giuseppina Strepponi's adversities and her steady love gave the composer insight into and special feeling for the plight of women dependent for their advancement on becoming compliant victims of men in power.

The real-life story had a happy end. Verdi and Giuseppina (who were formally married in 1859) lived together until her death in 1897. "Signor Antonio" was reconciled, and took Giuseppina to his heart as his *quasi-figlia*. Elsewhere in this program, Christopher Hunt writes about the real-life original of Dumas's Marguerite and Verdi's Violetta, Marie or Alphonsine Duplessis. She came to London in 1846, with a faithful "Alfredo." At the Kensington Register Office, near where I live, I obtained a copy of her marriage certificate, dated 21 February 1846, to Eduard de Perregaux. In the Age column, he enters "29 years"; as his Condition, "Bachelor"; as Rank or Profession, "Count." Alphonsine Plessis (sic) enters "22 years," and "Spinster"; and leaves the Profession column blank. They give the same residential address, 37 Brompton Row. His father is named as Alphonse de Perregaux, Count, and hers as Jean Plessis, Gentleman. F. Ferry and H. Blackwell were the witnesses. It was too late. Marie, Comtesse de Perregaux, went from spa to spa, seeking health. There survives a tender letter to her husband, releasing him from any obligation to her. Within a year she was dead.

To create the role of Violetta, Verdi proposed Rosina Penco, the first Leonora in *Il Trovatore*: "She is attractive, spirited, and excellent on the stage — the best qualities for *La Traviata*." But the Fenice management had engaged Fanny Salvini-Donatelli, who ten years earlier had been the Fenena in the first Vienna *Nabucco*, directed by Verdi. She weighed, we are told "exactly 130 kilos" (286 pounds). Verdi protested. He threatened to withdraw his opera. But, as in the case of the



Contemporary sketch of Marie Duplessis at a theater.

costumes, he protested in vain. After the first night he wrote, "*La Traviata* last night, a fiasco. My fault or the singers? Time will decide." Accounts of the "fiasco" and speculations about the reasons for it vary (the *Gazzetta di Venezia* had warm praise for Salvini-Donatelli), but it was certainly no triumph. Verdi withdrew the opera. Time passed its judgment two years later when at another Venetian theater, the San Benedetto, and in a somewhat revised version, the young and attractive Maria Spezia sang Violetta. And then, world-wide, the public took the opera to its heart, even though, in early days, there were occasional protests about the subject matter. When the opera reached Her Majesty's in 1856, the critic of the London *Times* wrote of "foul and hideous horrors." And the fact that the Violetta, Marietta Piccolomini, was a Cardinal's niece only made things more shocking!

La Traviata is probably the opera that I have heard, and written about, most often. Any seasoned opera-goer is likely to come to it with a well-stocked memory. On records alone, the "documentation" is immense, reaching back to

Bellincioni, to Nellie Melba, to Luisa Tetrazzini, to name just three. (Oh, I've not forgotten that there is also a tenor in the opera, and a baritone, and for that matter a conductor; but let's stick with Violetta.) People would travel hundreds of miles, we are told, just to hear Melba sing "Dite alla giovine." She would begin it facing upstage, then slowly turn during the crescendo; on a 1926 disc we can still hear her soft, pure cantabile line, and the poignant portamento through the falling seventh of "unico raggio di bene." When Tetrazzini made her sensational Covent Garden debut in 1907 (during an autumn season; Melba was away), and a patron complained to Henry Higgins, the manager, about her "impossible" hat, Higgins replied. "She may sing Violetta wearing a top hat if she pleases to do so, provided that she continues to sing it so well."

The list could go on and on: On a 1935 recording, Claudia Muzio reads Germont's letter, "Teneste la promessa," with a poignancy that has surely never been matched. The same year, the controversial, passionate Violetta of Rosa Ponselle (a great admirer of Muzio) was captured from a 1935 Met broadcast. To that treasury of performances before my time I

then add memories of live performances — by, above all, Maria Callas, and also Renata Tebaldi, the young Joan Sutherland, Beverly Sills, Catherine Malfitano, and perhaps a hundred others. And then it's time to hear *La Traviata* again in the theater! When the orchestra is suddenly reduced to a string octet, and the particular Violetta of the night advances to sing "Flora, amici, la notte che resta..." a new heroine is each time revealed. History becomes unimportant. "Connoisseurship" and "comparisons" may come to mind later, if one tries to define why some phrase was especially moving, or was perhaps disappointing. But while listening, I'm rapt anew in the drama. Familiarity with *La Traviata* brings increased affection. The finest performances continue to combine confirmation with new discoveries, to unite possibly expected emotions with a renewal and the spontaneous, first-encounter freshness.

When Verdi was asked which of his operas he liked best, he answered (according to the not always reliable Gino Monaldi), "As a professional, I'd say *Rigoletto*; but if I were an ordinary opera-lover, then *La Traviata* above all." □



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FLOWER GIRLS

BY CHRISTOPHER HUNT

“Paris is corrupt to the core,” Charles Dickens huffed when he visited the French capital in February of 1847. “For a number of days every question — political, artistic and commercial — has been neglected by the newspapers. Everything is wiped out by an event of the highest importance, the romantic death of one of those glories of the demi-monde, the celebrated Marie Duplessis. You would have thought it was a question of the death of a hero or a Joan of Arc.” Dickens’s familiar brand of English puritan morality momentarily blinded the writer in him to what might be worthy of serious literature in the preposterously premature death of an unusually magnetic society-woman, no doubt because he could dismiss Duplessis as a mere prostitute. That she had been among the elite of her world cut no moral ice for him.

One of her recent French lovers, however, had no such scruples. Alexandre Dumas *fils* was an aspiring young writer laboring in the shadow of the vastly famous writer-father whose name he shared, author of *The Three Musketeers* and *The Count of Monte Cristo*. Dumas *père*, moreover, may himself have been one of Marie Duplessis’s passing lovers. For some eleven months in 1844-45 Duplessis had favored the younger Dumas, who was neither rich nor famous, over (and sometimes as well as) the crowd of wealthy men-about-town for whom she was by common consent one of the most desirable prizes a top Parisian society-male could aim at. Four months after she died, the 23-year old Dumas — the same age as Marie — began his romanticized account of their affair. The book took him four weeks to write and was his first literary success. It was published in 1848 as *La Dame aux camélias*, the sobriquet by which staff at the Paris Opéra had supposedly referred to Marie, who had her own box at the opera house and habitually arrived carrying a great bunch of the flowers that eventually gave her her best-known literary name.

Christopher Hunt is a former Artistic Administrator of San Francisco Opera who for twenty years has contributed occasional essays to SFO performance magazines.



Alphonse Mucha's poster for Sarah Bernhardt's performances of *La Dame aux camélias* (above); Publicity photo of Greta Garbo in the title role of the George Cukor 1936 film of *Camille* (right).

The book's success was such that Dumas was quickly persuaded to produce a stage version, but three years had to pass before it could be shown publicly. Parisian, and indeed all European society was changing. Dickens had used (and perhaps coined) the right phrase for the curious phenomenon of the mid-19th

century Parisian courtesans: theirs was indeed a *demi-monde*, a half-world filled with life and glamour, but private, a world not to be mentioned in public, least of all in the popular theaters to which respectable families took their well-brought-up daughters. The luxury of the high-level courtesans' world, where young women like Marie Duplessis held court in grand town mansions, began to crumble as the revolutions of 1848 convulsed Europe. In 1847 that world was still very grand indeed: one of the most famous courtesan salons of the day — the Hôtel de la Païva — is now the Travellers' Club, its “disreputable” past doubtless unknown to many who slump in the armchairs of its palatial reception rooms. The hidden half-world had been short-lived, no more than a quarter of a century at its height. The women who, like Marie, rose to its level had invariably begun life in poverty, and were often barely if at all educated. Those whose beauty was allied with wit, however, could with a strong mixture of luck and talent lift themselves from the crowd of *grisettes*, *lorettes*, and lesser female strata that were the virtually inevitable destiny of young women who were unable to follow the acceptable route of marriage, the route which Dumas, for one, was already describing as no more than “legitimized prostitution.”

Marie's case was typical: the illiterate daughter of a Normandy peasant, whose family could not afford her, she may have been sold as a twelve-year-old to her father's clients and friends. At fifteen she



had a child, quickly given away for adoption. But her rare grace, darker, taller and slighter than convention expected, was linked to an unusually sharp intelligence. By the time she was eighteen she had been the mistress of first one then another Parisian aristocrat. Unlike the thousands of women whose lives were hidden and destroyed in the murky depths of the Paris sex-markets, Marie was already a celebrity. Born Alphonsine Plessis, she had renamed herself Marie and prefixed the pseudo-noble "du" to her surname. She must have been a truly unusual person: her lovers included the composer Franz Liszt, the dazzlingly sensitive, original, and successful darling of European culture: "She was the first woman I ever loved," Liszt wrote to Marie d'Agoult when Duplessis died. "...hers was truly an exquisite nature, and what is generally (perhaps accurately) described as corruption, never touched her heart."

The radical changes in Parisian society-life after 1848 fast eroded most of Marie's *demi-monde*. Ironically, the changes allowed her world to take on its later public role. Within three years, the sensational Dumas *roman* was on the Paris stage as his no less sensationally successful play. This was the form in which Verdi encountered it. He may even have been at the premiere on 2 February 1852 at the Paris Théâtre du Vaudeville. The first performance of the opera which he derived from the play — called *Love and Death (Amore e Morte)* at first and only as it neared completion *La Traviata*, "the one who went astray" — took place barely a year later on 6 March 1853 at the Gran Teatro la Fenice in Venice. It was one of the first operas to break with the iron tradition that only humorous works could deal with contemporary subjects.

According to family tradition Verdi began to sketch the music in his mind on the way home from the play. Like so many others then and since, he was shaken by the combination of the heroine's personal tragedy with the social

injustice that underlay it. There has never been any doubt that the story carried a crucial personal resonance for him, a man living with a woman who had borne several illegitimate children and who was on this account the subject of virulent social disapproval, most hurtfully of all in his small Italian hometown of Busseto. Verdi's famous letter, defending his companion Giuseppina Streponi and his relationship with her, was written just two weeks before his encounter with the Dumas play.

The power of Verdi's music is the most obvious cause of the *Lady of the Camellias*' endurance. But longevity of this kind is determined by more than its incarnation as a supreme operatic drama. The Dumas play and the book before it were already landmarks in a slow transformation of social attitudes and sympathies. The play, it is true, is rarely staged now, but for generations it was a vehicle for the most celebrated actresses of the time — Sarah Bernhardt, Eleonora Duse, and Edwige Feuillère are but three of the names made familiar across the world through their identification with the sad Dumas heroine. The original book is still read and well worth reading. Frederick Ashton created a ballet, *Marguerite and Armand*, in 1963 for Margot Fonteyn and Rudolf Nureyev, and the American choreographer John Neumeier made his own version in Hamburg for Marcia Haydée four years later. Verdi's opera has of course taken its place in the repertory of every opera company, one of less than twenty-five operas of which that can be said. There are something like 50 sound recordings in international CD-catalogues, and now almost as many video and DVD versions, from live performances as well as studio-productions. *La Traviata* is in one operatic respect unusual: unlike most of opera's hits, no significant alternative musical versions exist: from the start, Verdi's treatment had

the force to deter other composers. It is in film that the Dumas tragedy has had its most varied existence. There are innumerable cinematic and televisual treatments, from the earliest tentative shorts with live accompaniment at the very beginning of film history to full-blown versions of both Dumas and Verdi, re-made in each era to fit current movie tastes. The partial listing at the end of this article gives some idea of how indebted to Dumas-Verdi is cinema's own half-world.

Marie Duplessis, born Alphonsine Rose Plessis, under-



Alla Nazimova and Rudolph Valentino in the 1921 film of *Camille*.

went several name changes in her fictional existence: Dumas called her Marguerite, the French word for daisy; Verdi and his librettist Francesco Maria Piave italianized her to Violetta, echoing not only the name of another flower but also the image of violation; cinematically she is best known as Camille, from the title of the George Cukor film with Greta Garbo in 1936, though *Camille* was already the name of an American film by Albert Capellani in 1915 with Clara Kimball Young playing Marguerite, and it was under that title that an early American stage version triumphed in New York in the 1870s. Camille is itself of course another floral reference — to the camellias which Marie Duplessis carried when she went to the Opéra, though Dumas's claim that her flowers were always white except during menstruation when they were red, may be his own slightly over-the-edge embellishment. The floral sub-text is not accidental: where Violetta is specific, her friend Flora stands for all such women, flowers to be plucked and discarded once their beauty wilts.

Violetta-Marie-Marguerite-Camille's fate has not lost its power: it is still used to evoke sympathy in surroundings pretty far from Dumas and Verdi: remember Richard Gere testing Julia Roberts's sensitivity in Garry Marshall's 1990 film *Pretty Woman* by taking her to *Traviata* at (where else?) the War Memorial Opera House in San Francisco; or the delicious Australian movie *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* four years later, with a drag-queen miming "E strano..." to Joan Carden's voice? Emotionally evocative as these strains may be, the story nonetheless poses for many people a fundamental question of credibility, especially in Verdi's operatic version: the central motivating event is a sequence of actions so far distanced from present-day social convention as to seem

Continued on page 27



Gilbert Roland and Norma Talmadge in the 1927 *Camille*.

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Libretto by FRANCESCO MARIA PIAVE
Based on the play *La Dame aux camélias* by ALEXANDRE DUMAS fils

La Traviata

(in Italian)

Conductor

Marco Armiliato

Production

John Copley

Set Designer

John Conklin

Costume Designer

David Walker

Lighting Designer

Thomas J. Munn

Chorus Director

Ian Robertson

Choreographer

Adela Clara

Musical Preparation

John Churchwell

William Hobbs

Carol Isaac

Jonathan Khuner

Adelle Eslinger

Philip Kuttner

Svetlana Gorzhevskaya

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SUNDAY, JUNE 10 AT 1:00

SUNDAY, JUNE 10 AT 7:30

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 20 AT 7:30

SATURDAY, JUNE 23 AT 2:00

SATURDAY, JUNE 23 AT 8:00

THURSDAY, JUNE 28 AT 7:30

SATURDAY, JUNE 30 AT 8:00

CAST

(in order of appearance)

Violetta Valéry

Patricia Racette

Mary Dunleavy (6/10e, 23m, 28)

Doctor Grenvil

Marco Spotti**

Baron Douphol

John Ames

Flora Bervoix

Catherine Keen

Marquis d'Obigny

Patrick Carfizzi*

Annina

Catherine Cook

Gastone

Todd Geer

Alfredo Germont

Stephen Mark Brown*

Carlo Ventre* (6/10e, 23m, 28)

Giuseppe

Richard Walker

Giorgio Germont

Christopher Robertson

James Westman (6/10e, 23m, 28)

A messenger

Frederick Matthews

A servant

William Pickersgill

Demimondaines, gentlemen, servants

Solo Dancers:

Carmen Granados, Suzanne Mendieta, Aldo Ruiz

**U.S. opera debut *San Francisco Opera debut

TIME AND PLACE: Mid-19th century Paris and environs

ACT I

Violetta's house

INTERMISSION

ACT II

A country house near Paris

INTERMISSION

ACT III

Flora's house

INTERMISSION

ACT IV

Violetta's house

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LA TRAVIATA SYNOPSIS

ACT I — A party is taking place at the home of Violetta Valéry, a beautiful Parisian demimondaine. Gastone arrives and presents his friend, Alfredo Germont, telling Violetta that Alfredo has long been a silent admirer and had even called daily during her illness to ask about her. Baron Douphol, one of Violetta's "protectors," is angered by the conversation and refuses to propose a toast when invited to by Gastone. Alfredo then accepts the invitation, and sings an impassioned tribute to beauty and love. Later, as the others go to another room to dance, Violetta is overcome by a fainting spell. Alfredo stays behind and confesses that he has been in love with her for a year. Violetta offers him friendship instead of love and gives him a flower, bidding him return when it has withered. Alfredo joyously accepts and bids her goodnight. When her guests have gone, Violetta thoughtfully muses on Alfredo's proffered love, but finally returns to her true character and declares that she must remain forever free to pass from pleasure to pleasure.

ACT II — Violetta is living with Alfredo in the country, having abandoned her life of ease and luxury in Paris. Annina, Violetta's maid and confidante, enters and tells Alfredo she has been sent to arrange the sale of Violetta's property, which must be sold to pay their debts. Alfredo suddenly understands the sacrifices which Violetta has made in order to live with him and leaves for Paris, determined not to be shamed by her sacrifice. Violetta enters. She receives an unexpected visitor, Giorgio Germont, Alfredo's father, who declares that Alfredo is ruining himself to keep her as his mistress. When Germont comments on the luxury of the country retreat, Violetta shows him the papers which have been prepared for the sale of all her possessions. He asks her to give up Alfredo, explaining that by continuing the liaison, Alfredo is endangering the impending marriage of his younger sister. Germont's insistence finally convinces Violetta, who agrees to leave Alfredo forever. She is preparing a letter as Alfredo returns. Germont has gone out into the garden. Alfredo, not realizing his father has already arrived, explains that Germont has written him a severe letter but that he feels sure he will approve of Violetta as soon as he sees her. Pretending to leave so as not to be present during the

meeting of father and son, Violetta goes out. A messenger returns with her letter of farewell. Alfredo is stricken with grief at the loss of Violetta, and when his father tries to persuade him to return to his family, Alfredo refuses. Finding on the table an invitation which Flora had sent Violetta, he resolves to go to Flora's in the hope of finding Violetta.

ACT III — Alfredo arrives at Flora's house as the guests are beginning to gamble. Then Violetta arrives, escorted by Baron Douphol. Alfredo is incredibly lucky at cards, and explains that he who is unlucky in love is lucky at cards. The Baron, incensed at Alfredo's insolence, challenges him to play. Alfredo accepts and beats the Baron repeatedly at high stakes. When all the others go to dinner, Violetta remains behind to entreat Alfredo to leave lest the Baron challenge him to a duel. Alfredo answers that he will leave, but only if she accompanies him. Unwilling to reveal that she must break off with him because of his father, Violetta declares that she is in love with the Baron. Alfredo, in a frenzy of jealousy, calls all the guests into the room and announces that without knowing it he has been living with Violetta at great sacrifice on her part. In a rage, he throws money at her feet and calls upon all to witness that he has paid her in full. Germont has entered just in time to witness Alfredo's caddish behavior and joins the others in reviling him for his conduct. Alfredo, realizing the lengths to which his jealousy has carried him, is contrite, but realizes that he is helpless to make amends. The Baron assures Alfredo that he must answer for the insult on the field of honor.

ACT IV — Violetta's illness has brought her to the point of death. Her physician, Dr. Grenvil, calls at her home, examines her and tells Annina that she has but a few hours to live. Violetta reads a letter from the elder Germont, in which she learns that Alfredo has gone abroad after wounding the Baron in a duel. He knows now of the great sacrifice which Violetta has made and is returning to beg her forgiveness. Alfredo returns and the two are reunited at last. But it is too late. Violetta, comforted by the presence of the man whom she has so tragically loved, dies in his arms.

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Todd Geer
Rodney Gilfry
Marcello Giordani
Franz Hawlata
Manfred Hemm*
Philip Horst
Dmitri Hvorostovsky
Kevin J. Langan
Matthew Lord
Richard Margison
James Morris
Jay Hunter Morris
Vladimir Ognovenko
David Okerlund
Robert Orth
John Packard*
Douglas Perry
Alfredo Portilla
Nikolai Putilin*
Stephan Pyatnychko*
Samuel Ramey
John Relyea
Teddy Tahu Rhodes**

Gary Rideout
Christopher Robertson
Roberto Saccà
Gidon Saks
Anton Scharinger*
Jochen Schmeckenbecher
Carlo Scibelli
Franz-Josef Selig*
Donald Sherrill*
Peter Sidhom
Marco Spotti**
Daniel Sumegi
Ragnar Ulfung
Carlo Ventre*
Raymond Very
James Westman
Scott Wilde

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Maurizio Barbacini
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Charles Mackerras
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Patrick Summers

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Colin Graham
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Michael Whitfield

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Adela Clara
Christian Holder
Lawrence Pech

***U.S. opera debut*

**San Francisco Opera debut*

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA CHORUS

REGULAR CHORUS

Kathleen Bayler
Julianne Booth
Roberta Bowman
Sara Colburn
Pamela Dale
Dvora Djoraev
Mary Finch
Joy Graham
Ann Hughes
Claire Kelm
Dallas Lane
Sally Mouzon
Sally Munro
Erin Neff
Alexandra Nehra
Rachel Perry*
Virginia Pluth
Elisabeth Rom
Shelley Seitz Saarni
Carole Schaffer
Claudia Siefert-Haider
Page Swift
Donna Turchi
Mitzie Kay Weiner

Richard Brown
Jim Croom
Frank Daniels
John Davey-Hatcher
Wayne J. Davis
Henryk De Rewenda
Robert Delany
Daniel Harper
Cameron Henley
Ken Johnson
David Kekuewa
Frederick Matthews*
Jim Meyer
William Pickersgill*
Daniel Pociernicki
Valery Portnov
Ken Rafanan
Tom Reed
Colby Roberts
Sigmund Seigel
Dan Stanley
Jere Torkelsen
Richard Walker*
Frederick Winthrop

EXTRA CHORUS

Terry Alvord
Jill Anderson
Deborah Benedict
Bonnie Brooks
Fran Burgess
Angela Cadelago-Zullinger
Melodi Dalton
Pat Graybill-Eckhoff
Anne Holmes
Alexandra Ivanoff
Sharon Kaye
Ann Magdalen
Nadja Matisoff
Katherine McKee
Eileen Meredith
Penelope Rains
Mimi Ruiz
Leslie Sandefur
Margaret Secour
Gina Silverman
Tanya Stum
Delia Voitoff-Bauman
Heidi L. Waterman

Darla Wigginton
Karen Winner-Huff
Susan Witt-Butler
Helene Zindarsian

Chris Corley
Dale Emde
Timothy Foster
Peter Girardot
George Hernandez
Dennis W. Jones
Gregory Kharik
Gregory Marks
Raymond Martinez
Tom McEachern
Michael P. Mendelsohn
James Monios
John Musselman
Bruce Nelson
John Owens
Scott C. Patton
Jess G. Perry
Robert V. Presley
Karl O. Saarni
Martyn Sharp

Peter Shypertt
Thomas Silveira
Kevin Simmons
Bradley Smith
Erich Stratmann
Lee Strawn
Piet Van Allen
Richard Whitley

CORPS DE BALLET

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Cynthia Drayer
Nora Heiber
Marina Hotchkiss
Laurie Miller
Chiharu Shibata

Ioannis Adoniou
David Bier
Gregory Dawson
Michael Kruzich
Carlo Sierras
James Strong

**also appearing in solo roles*

ARTIST PROFILES



Winner of the prestigious 1998 Richard Tucker Award, **PATRICIA RACETTE** has performed major roles with most of the world's prominent companies. A 1989-90 Adler Fellow with numerous Opera Center credits, the American soprano made her Company debut in 1989 as Mistress Ford in family performances of *Falstaff* and has subsequently sung many roles here, among them Mimì in *La Bohème*, Antonia in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, Micaëla in *Carmen*, Mathilde in *Guillaume Tell* and the title role of *Luisa Miller* earlier this season. Racette garnered international acclaim in the title role of Tobias Picker's *Emmeline* at the Santa Fe Opera in 1996, a production which was nationally televised on the PBS Great Performances series and subsequently performed by New York City Opera. This season she returned to the Met for a role in which she is rapidly becoming one of the world's leading interpreters, Violetta in *La Traviata* (also performed at the Paris Opera Bastille, Santa Fe Opera, Houston Grand Opera and Dallas Opera). Additional recent highlights include *Dialogues of the Carmelites* (Blanche de la Force) at the Paris Opera and Santa Fe Opera; the world premiere of Carlisle Floyd's *Cold Sassy Tree* (Love Simpson) with the Houston Grand Opera; *Peter Grimes* (Ellen Orford) for her debut at the Teatro alla Scala in Milan; the title role of *Jen'ufa* at Washington Concert Opera and the Lyric Opera of Chicago; as well as *Don Carlo* (Elisabetta) at Houston Grand Opera. Among her upcoming engagements are *Otello* (her first Desdemona) at the Aspen Music Festival. She can be heard as Gertraud in a recent recording of Zemlinsky's *Der Traumgöрге* led by James Conlon.



Soprano **MARY DUNLEAVY** recently made her San Francisco Opera debut as the Queen of the Night in the January performances of *Die Zauberflöte*. This role has played a major part in her career to date, having sung the part at the Metropolitan Opera, Berlin State Opera, Netherlands Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Washington Opera, New York City Opera, Montreal Opera and with many other companies. She has also been praised for a large variety of other roles. The American soprano returned to the Met last season for her first performances of Olympia and Antonia in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* and appeared at City Opera in two new stagings: as the Countess of Folleville in *Il Viaggio a Reims* (role debut) and as Constanze in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, a role she first sang at the Washington Opera and repeated in Philadelphia. She sang her first Pamina (*Die Zauberflöte*) in Boston, and has also been heard as Gilda (*Rigoletto*) at the Metropolitan Opera and in Hamburg; as Micaëla (*Carmen*) in Amsterdam and Pittsburgh; as Leïla (*Les Pêcheurs de Perles*) and Norina (*Don Pasquale*) at the Opera Theatre of St. Louis; as Susanna (*Le Nozze di Figaro*) in Portland and Knoxville; as well as in the title role of *The Ballad of Baby Doe* for the Connecticut Opera, where she was also acclaimed for her first Lucia di Lammermoor, Violetta (*La Traviata*) and Juliette (*Roméo et Juliette*). Dunleavy most recently performed in *Zauberflöte* at the Met, *Traviata* at City Opera, *Lucia di Lammermoor* (title role) with Montreal Opera and *Béatrice at Bénédicte* (Héro) at the Netherlands Opera. Forthcoming assignments include *Mitridate, re di Ponto* (Ismene) for her Santa Fe Opera debut and a new staging of *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* (her first Giulietta) at New York City Opera.



CATHERINE COOK has been featured in a wide range of roles with leading companies throughout the United States. Since her 1991 debut, the mezzo-soprano has appeared with San Francisco Opera in over 15 productions, most recently in 1999's *Ring* cycle (Rossweisse, Second Norn) and *Louise* (Gertrude), as well as in *Dead Man Walking* (Jade Boucher) and *Die Zauberflöte* (Third Lady) earlier in our current season. A 1990 Merola Opera Program participant and 1991-92 Adler Fellow, the mezzo's credits for the Opera Center include the title role of *Ariondante*, Meg Page in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and an acclaimed Schwabacher Debut Recital. She was also featured as Dorabella in the 1999 Showcase production of *Così fan tutte* and as Florence Pike in the recent Showcase presentation of *Albert Herring*. A native of Chicago, the artist made her 1994 Lyric Opera of Chicago debut as the Innkeeper in *Boris Godunov*, followed by Berta in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, a role which was the vehicle for her 1995 Portland Opera debut as well. Among her most recent engagements are *Faust* (Marthe) at Los Angeles Opera; *The Cunning Little Vixen* (Fox Goldenstripe) and *The Love for Three Oranges* (Fata Morgana) in Portland; a bow at the Metropolitan Opera in *Katya Kabanova*; a return to Chicago in *Peter Grimes* and *Le Nozze di Figaro*; her Lincoln Center debut in Poulenc's *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* with L'Opéra Français de New York; in addition to *The Marriage of Figaro* (Marcellina) at Hawaii Opera Theatre. Cook often appears in concert and can be heard on a recording of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with the Cincinnati Philharmonia.



CATHERINE KEEN appears regularly with many of the most prestigious opera companies of North America and Europe. A former Adler Fellow and Merola Opera Program participant, the mezzo has sung numerous roles here since her 1989 Company debut in *Satyagraha*. They include Fricka and Waltraute in *Die Walküre*, Maddalena in *Rigoletto*, Prince Orlofsky in *Die Fledermaus*, Zulma in *L'Italiana in Algeri*, Hermia in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Magdalene in *Die Meistersinger*, Venus in *Tannhäuser*, Suzuki in *Madama Butterfly*, Giulietta in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* and Hedwige in the 1997 staging of *Guillaume Tell*. She also appeared last year in the Plácido Domingo Gala as Emilia in the *Otello* (Act IV) portion of the evening. Her international career began with Dalila in *Samson et Dalila* at the Deutsche Oper Berlin, a role which she subsequently performed at the Netherlands Opera. In Amsterdam she has also appeared in *Luisa Miller* (Federica) and *Otello*. Recent engagements have included *Tannhäuser* at the Royal Danish Opera; *Luisa Miller* in Geneva; *Samson et Dalila* at Palm Beach Opera and Washington Opera; *Aida* (Amneris) and *Nabucco* (Fenena) at the Arena di Verona; in addition to *Giulio Cesare* (Cornelia) and *Parsifal* (Kundry) for the Washington Opera. In concert, the mezzo performs a wide range of repertoire which includes Falla's *El Amor Brujo*, Wagner's *Wesendonk Lieder*, Beethoven's Ninth and Mahler's Eighth Symphony and Schubert's *Rosamunde*. Future opera assignments include *Rigoletto* and *Die Meistersinger* with the Company, also *The Rape of Lucretia* (Lucretia) at Seville's Teatro de la Maestranza. Catherine Keen is the recipient of a George London/William Sullivan Study Grant, a Puccini Foundation Award and a grant from the Wagner Society of Northern California.



American tenor **STEPHEN MARK BROWN** is not only acclaimed in the French and Italian opera repertoire, but is also a successful concert and recital artist. After garnering national attention as a winner of the 1992 Opera Company of Philadelphia/Pavarotti Competition, he has since performed on many opera stages of the world.

Career highlights include his European debut with his first performances of the title role of *Don Carlos* with the opera companies of Nice and Lyons; *Werther* (title role) in Toulouse and Santiago, Chile; a bow at the Paris Opera as the Duke in *Rigoletto*; *Madama Butterfly* (Pinkerton), *La Bohème* (Rodolfo) and an Emmy Award-winning production of *La Traviata* (Alfredo) — which was televised on "Live from Lincoln Center" — at New York City Opera; *La Rondine* (Ruggiero) with the Opera Theatre of St. Louis; and *La Favorite* (Fernand) at the Teatro dell'Opera in Rome. Among his most recent engagements are *Faust* (title role) in Marseilles; concert presentations of *La Damnation de Faust* (title role) in Naples; *Attila* (Foresto) at the Teatro Verdi in Trieste; *Werther* for the Teatro Massimo in Palermo; *Rigoletto* in Belgium; *Luisa Miller* (Rodolfo) at Palm Beach Opera; *Butterfly* in Bilbao; and *Le Siège de Corinthe* (Cléomène) at Pesaro's Rossini Festival.



Born in Uruguay to an Italian family, **CARLO VENTRE** was the winner of the 1995 Pavarotti/Opera Company of Philadelphia International Voice Competition and of the 1990 Gino Bechi Prize awarded in Barcelona. The tenor made his debut at Milan's Teatro alla Scala as the Duke in *Rigoletto* under the baton of Riccardo Muti, with additional engagements at the Welsh

National Opera, Trieste, Genoa and Cologne (Rodolfo/*La Bohème*); Rome, Opera Pacific, Michigan Opera Theatre and Zurich (Duke/*Rigoletto*); Milan, Lecce, Seville (Ismale/*Nabucco*); Cardiff (Cavaradossi/*Tosca*); Cologne and Rome (Alfredo/*La Traviata*); Athens and Amsterdam (Pollione/*Norma*); as well as in Trieste and Detroit (Pinkerton/*Madama Butterfly*). During the past season Ventre appeared at the Welsh National Opera as Cavaradossi and as Don José in *Carmen*; in Catania as Pollione; with the Minnesota Opera as Macduff in *Macbeth*; at the Staatsoper Berlin as Macduff and Pollione; and with Opera Pacific as Macduff. Future plans include Luigi in *Il Tabarro* with the Semperoper Dresden; Verdi Centenary concerts with the Hallé Orchestra led by Mark Elder; and *Tosca* for the Dallas Opera.



CHRISTOPHER ROBERTSON has appeared with many leading companies in the United States and Europe including San Francisco Opera (1997 debut as Amonasro in *Aida*; role debut as Rigoletto during the 1997-98 Season, Enrico in *Lucia di Lammermoor*, 1999), the Metropolitan Opera, Seattle Opera, Rome Opera, Bavarian State Opera, Royal Opera at Covent Garden, English

National Opera, Flanders Opera, Frankfurt Opera, Deutsche Oper Berlin, as well as in Montreal, Madrid, Barcelona, Bordeaux, Antwerp and Montpellier. The artist's most recent engagements include *Tristan und Isolde* (Kurwenal) for Houston Grand Opera; *La Traviata* (Germont) at Pittsburgh Opera; *Falstaff* (Ford) led by Antonio Pappano at the Teatro Comunale di Firenze; the title role of *Rigoletto* in his hometown of Philadelphia; *Un Ballo in Maschera* (Renato) for Palm Beach Opera; his Boston Lyric Opera debut in *Salome* (Jokanaan); and *Traviata* for Michigan Opera Theatre. He also bowed with the BBC Symphony Orchestra as Top in concert performances of Copland's *The Tender Land* under the direction of Leonard

Slatkin. The baritone has also sung Sharpless (*Madama Butterfly*), the Count (*Le Nozze di Figaro*), and the title roles of *Don Giovanni* and *Guillaume Tell*. A graduate of the Oberlin Conservatory, Robertson participated in the 1987 Merola Opera Program and was the recipient of a Robert Jacobson Memorial Grant from the Richard Tucker Music Foundation.



Former Adler Fellow **JAMES WESTMAN** made his San Francisco Opera bow during the 1999-2000 Season, appearing in *Louise* (First Philosopher) and *La Bohème* (Marcello). The baritone is familiar to Opera Center audiences for his performances in the Merola Opera Program's productions of *Carmen* and *La Traviata*, as well as in the Showcase presentations of *Così fan tutte* and *Albert*

Herring. A former member of the Canadian Opera Company Ensemble, the Ontario native has performed with the group in *The Emperor of Atlantis* (title role) and appeared in the COC's mainstage productions of *Madama Butterfly* (Sharpless) and Verdi's *Giovanna d'Arco* (Giacomo). Following his success in last year's staging of *Falstaff* at Tanglewood (in which he sang his first Ford), Westman's other recent assignments have been *La Traviata* (Germont) and *Billy Budd* (Redburn) for his European debut at the Cologne Opera; *Le Nozze di Figaro* (Count) at Fort Worth Opera; and Bach's Mass in B Minor with the Vancouver Symphony. The baritone has studied at the Britten-Pears School in England, as well as with such renowned artists as Joan Sutherland, Richard Bonyngue, Renato Capecchi and Paul Esswood. He has won many prestigious vocal awards and was named a finalist in the 1999 Cardiff Singer of the World Competition.



1999-2001 Adler Fellow **JOHN AMES** made his first appearances with San Francisco Opera during the 1999-2000 season as Tom in *Un Ballo in Maschera* and as Colline in *La Bohème*. In the Company's current season, the bass sang roles in *Dead Man Walking* (Warden George Benton) *Semele* (High Priest of Juno), *Die Zauberflöte* (Second Armored Man) and the current *La Traviata* (Baron Douphol). He

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



A two-year Adler Fellow (1999-2000), **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). Earlier in our current season he was seen in *Semele* (Apollo), *Der Rosenkavalier* (Italian Tenor) and *Die Zauberflöte* (First Armored Man). 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.



Bass-baritone **PATRICK CARFIZZI** is a recent graduate of the Yale University School of Music where he received a Master of Music degree and an Artist's Diploma. While at Yale, the young American artist appeared as Don Magnifico in *La Cenerentola*, Death in *The Emperor of Atlantis* and in the title role of *Falstaff*. In his first professional season — 1999/2000 — he joined the rosters of both the New York City Opera and the Metropolitan Opera (his Met assignments included roles in *Rigoletto*, *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* and *Giulio Cesare*). With the Opera Orchestra of New York, he has performed in *La Sonnambula*, *Poliuto*, *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* (Lorenzo) and, most recently, *Maria Stuarda* (Talbot). Additional credits include *Les Pêcheurs de Perles* (Nourabad) for Washington Concert Opera and *Le Nozze di Figaro* (Antonio) at Santa Fe Opera. Among his future plans are debuts with Pittsburgh Opera (*Leporello/Don Giovanni*) and the Canadian Opera Company (Baron Trombonok/*Il Viaggio a Reims*). A recipient of a 1999 Study Grant from the Richard Tucker Foundation, Carfizzi's additional honors include a Sullivan Foundation Award and a Richard F. Gold Career Grant from The Shoshana Foundation.



Bass **MARCO SPOTTI** studied at the Arrigo Boito Conservatory in his native Parma, graduating with distinction in 1992. He received further training in Parma under the auspices of the Arturo Toscanini Foundation and in Busseto with Carlo Bergonzi. After various early assignments in Monte Carlo (*Macbeth*, *Roberto Devereux*), he made his official debut in *Un Ballo in Maschera* at his hometown's Teatro Regio. His career further led him to Piacenza (*La Battaglia di Legnano*), Venice (*Ballo in Maschera*), Naples (*La Traviata*) and Brescia (*La Bobème*). Among his most recent engagements have been *Manon* and *Eugene Onegin* (Klagenfurt); *Sadko* and *Le Nozze di Figaro* (La Fenice in Venice); *Dinorah* (Parma); in addition to *Aida* and *I Lombardi* (Marseilles). Upcoming are performances of *Don Carlo* in Klagenfurt.



CARMEN GRANADOS was one of the featured dancers in San Francisco Opera's 1987 production of *La Traviata*. She began her training at the Academy of Ballet in San Francisco where she studied with Carolyn Parks. Later she began studying Spanish dance with Adela Clara and joined the Theatre Flamenco of San Francisco at the age of 15. She has also studied in Spain with such renowned teachers as El Guito, Ciro, José Molina, Victoria Eugenia, Rosa Mercedes and José Galvan. Granados has danced

with Spring Opera Theater in *The Barber of Seville* and in the Opera Theatre of St. Louis production of *Carmen*. She has also been a guest teacher in residence at the University of Utah and has toured throughout California and the Pacific Northwest with Theatre Flamenco. She has been a featured artist with Rosa Montoya's Bailes Flamencos and was a soloist for three years at the San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival. In addition to her performing assignments, Granados continues to teach the art of Spanish dance throughout the U.S. and Europe.



SUZANNE MENDIETA made her San Francisco Opera bow as a dancer in the 1991 presentation of *La Traviata*. She is a classically trained dancer in both ballet and flamenco, and has appeared with such groups as Rosa Montoya's Bailes Flamencos, Theatre Flamenco, the Arabesque Dance Company and Smuin Ballets/SF. Her Spanish dancing skills have also been showcased in a flamenco adaptation of *Beauty and the Beast*, in which she performed the leading role. Additional appearances include soloist in Santa Clara Ballet's production of *The Sleeping Beauty*; Pacific Dance Theater's *The Nutcracker*; performances in St. Martin, Netherlands Antilles; and featured dancer at the "World Expo, 1992" in Seville. Mendieta can be seen in the motion picture *A Walk in the Clouds*.



ALDO RUIZ first appeared with San Francisco Opera as a dancer in the 1995 presentation of *La Traviata*. Born in Mexico and raised in Santa Cruz, California, he performed Mexican folk dances for five years with Janet Johns and her company, Esperanza del Valle. He began his flamenco training in 1992 with Patri Nader and danced with her troupe for two years, which included performances with the symphony orchestras of San Jose and Tulare. He has also toured the eastern United States with famed flamenco master Pablo Rodarte and his company. Ruiz has performed with, among others, San Francisco's Theatre Flamenco, at the S.F. Ethnic Dance Festival and in Hawaii with La Mónica and her all-star troupe.



MARCO ARMILIATO has been a much sought-after conductor since his 1996 San Francisco Opera debut with *La Bobème*, his concert work with Luciano Pavarotti, and an international tour with the "Three Sopranos." The maestro studied piano at the Paganini Conservatory in his native Genoa, and began his conducting career in 1989 with *L'Elisir d'Amore* in Lima, Peru, with subsequent engagements throughout Spain and Italy. In 1992, he was appointed principal conductor of Bilbao's Teatro Arriaga where he led, among others, *Bobème*, *Carmen*, *Tosca*, *Rigoletto* and *La Traviata*. There soon followed *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* in Venice, *Carmen* in Tokyo, *Andrea Chénier* in Mexico City and for his Vienna State Opera debut, as well as *Turandot* in Cincinnati and Toronto. Other highlights include a return to the Company for *Madama Butterfly* (1997), *Turandot* (1998) and *La Favorita* (1999); *Tosca* in Barcelona; *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* in Toulouse; and *La Traviata* in Santiago, Chile. Among his most recent engagements are *Turandot* and *Bobème* at the Metropolitan Opera; *Aida* for the Deutsche Oper Berlin; *Rigoletto* and *Le Comte Ory* in Toulouse; *Don Giovanni* with the Hamburg Staatsoper; and *Traviata* at the Teatro Regio in Turin. Maestro Armiliato's recordings include Boccherini's *Stabat Mater*, a concert with Luciano Pavarotti and the Orchestra Filarmonica of Turin, the premiere recording of Pergolesi's *Olimpiade*, and a CD of the "Three Sopranos" concert.



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 Tippet'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*, *Idomeneo* and *Semele*, which he staged earlier this season. 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 Dallas Opera (*Barbiere*), Lyric Opera of Chicago (*Tosca*, *Barbiere*) and in Athens, Greece (*Il Corsaro*).



Designer **JOHN CONKLIN**'s first Company assignment was the 1977 *Un Ballo in Maschera*, which was most recently produced here in 1999. He also created the original designs for the four operas of Wagner's *Ring of the Nibelung* (1983-85) which were presented as part of San Francisco Opera's 1999 *Ring Festival*. Additional SFO credits have been *Don Pasquale*, (1980, '84); *La Traviata* (1987,

'91, '95), *Idomeneo* (1989, '99); and *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* (1992). Spring Opera Theater audiences first saw his work in productions of *Orfeo* (1972), *Death in Venice* (1975 and '79), and *Julius Caesar* (1978). Elsewhere in the U.S., his designs have been seen at the Metropolitan Opera, New York City Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Dallas Opera, Seattle Opera, Opera Theatre of St. Louis, Santa Fe Opera and Glimmerglass Opera (where he is the assistant artistic director), among others. Conklin has also been responsible for production designs at English National Opera, Scottish Opera, Bavarian State Opera and Opera Australia. He has also designed for major theaters around the country, including the Goodman, the Guthrie, American Repertory Theater, Hartford Stage, Long Wharf, Arena Stage and the Mark Taper Forum. Conklin teaches at the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University and at Bard College. He serves on the board of Opera America.



DAVID WALKER made his 1987 San Francisco Opera debut with the costume designs for *La Traviata*, a production 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, was responsible for the costumes in our 1998 staging of *Manon*, and created the costumes for our presentation of *Semele* earlier this

season. 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. Recent design credits include *Der Rosenkavalier* for Minnesota Opera, a new production of

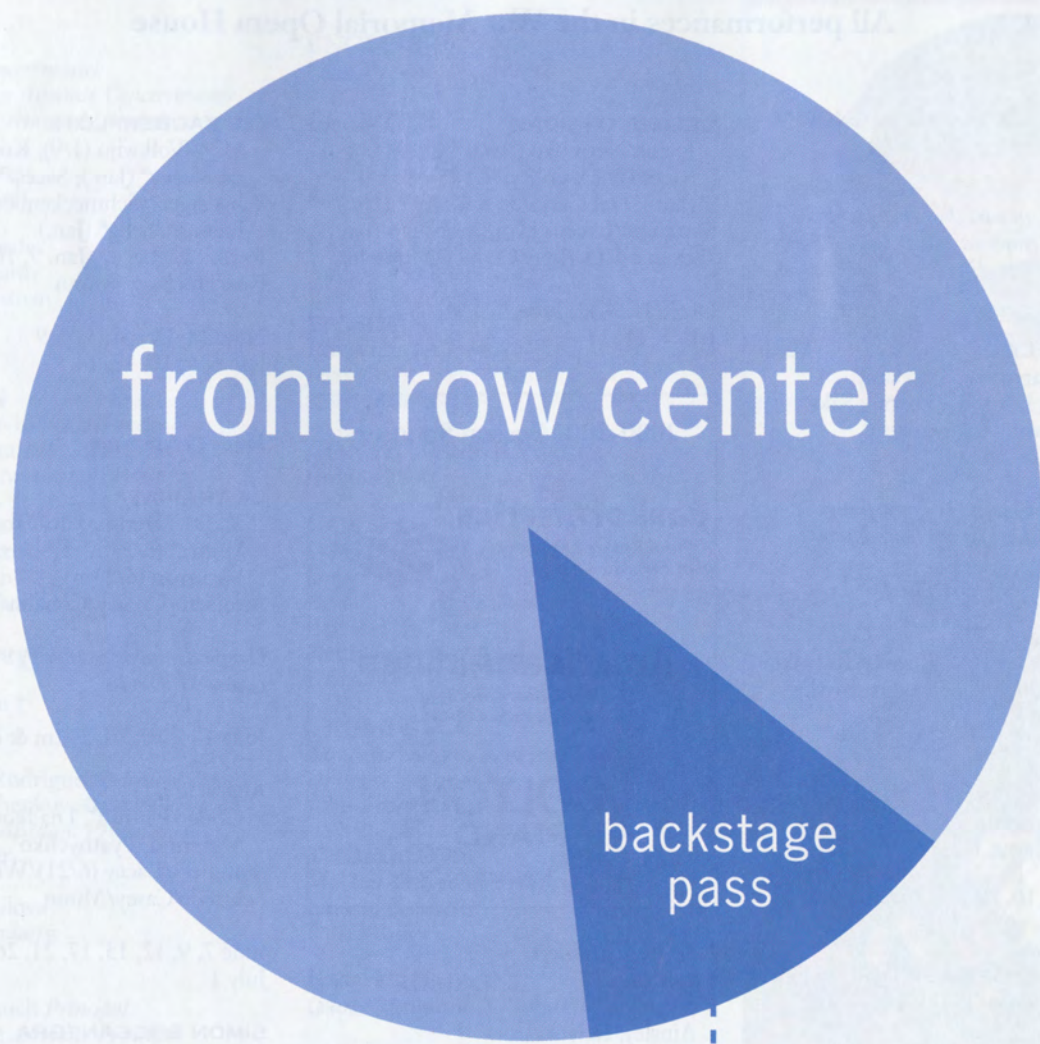
Donizetti's *Roberto Devereux* for the opera houses of Palermo and Genoa, *Semele* at London's Royal Opera, also *Manon Lescaut* in Tokyo and Palermo. Costume design credits for television include *Hamlet* (with Richard Chamberlain) and *The Corn is Green* (with Katharine Hepburn, directed by George 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 **ADELA CLARA** made her 1987 San Francisco Opera debut with the dances for *La Traviata*, which she also created for the Company in 1991 and 1995. She studied Spanish dance with some of the world's greatest masters, including Mariquita Flores, Roberto Ximenez and Manolo Vargas in this country, and Victoria Eugenia, Maria Rose Merced, Martin Vargas and José Galvan in Spain. Clara founded Theatre Flamenco, the San Francisco Spanish dance company, and served as its artistic director until 1983. She has received numerous awards and recognition from the National Endowment for the Arts and the California Arts Council, and has served as a panelist for the dance programs of both of those agencies. In 1985, she received the first choreographer's award given by the San Francisco Bay Area Dance Coalition Isadora Duncan Awards, and for several seasons acted as a judge for S.F.'s popular Ethnic Dance Festival. She created the dances for the Berkeley Repertory Theatre's production of *Fuente Ovejuna* and received the Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle outstanding achievement award for choreography in a drama. In addition to her work as a choreographer, she teaches the art of Spanish dance throughout the U.S. and has been a guest instructor at the Institute for Spanish Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico.



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*. Credits during our 1998-99 Season 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*. Among his scenic design credits are 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 the companies of Houston, Dallas, Washington, D.C., New Orleans, San Diego, Amsterdam, Nice and Sendai. His work in ballet has been seen at the Mary Anthony Dance Theatre, Hartford Ballet and Ballet Arizona.



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New Production

LUISA MILLER

Verdi

Racette, Zaremba; Giordani, Dmitriev*, Ellero d'Artegna, Saks Runnicles/Zambello/Yeargan/Ramicova/McCullough*

Made possible, in part, by a gift from The Edgar Foster Daniels Foundation

Sept. 9, 13, 17, 19, 22, 28; Oct. 1

S.F. Opera premiere

THE TSAR'S BRIDE Rimsky-Korsakov

Netrebko, Borodina; Hvorostovsky

J.H. Morris

Järvi*/Lacey (9/20)/Mansouri, Brown, Munn

Produced in association with Washington Opera, Washington, D.C.

Sept. 11, 14, 16, 20, 24, 26, 29

New Production

THE BALLAD OF BABY DOE Moore

Swenson/Ramo (10/11, 14), Forst;

Morris

Lano/Graham/Coyne/Benson/Munn

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Sept. 23, 27; Oct. 3, 6, 8, 11, 14

World premiere

DEAD MAN WALKING Heggie

Graham/Jepson (10/10, 17, 19, 28m),

von Stade, Foland, Cook,

Hamm-Smith*; Packard*,

Rhodes** (10/10, 19, 28m), Orth,

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Summers/Mantello*/Yeargan/

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

L'ELISIR D'AMORE

Donizetti

Evans/Netrebko (Jan.); Beltrán/

Saccà (Jan.), Gilfry/Ford*

(Jan.), Del Carlo/de Simone** (Jan.)

Summers/Lacey (11/8), Barbacini (Jan.)

/Bernhard/Darling/Coyne/Whitfield

Oct. 21, 24, 31; Nov. 3, 5, 8

Jan. 7, 11, 13

DIE ZAUBERFLÖTE

Mozart

Mills/Volkwijn (1/9), Kodalli*/

Dunleavy* (Jan.); Saccà/Véry (Jan.),

Scharinger*/Schmeckenbecher (Jan.),

Hemm*/Selig* (Jan.)

Runnicles/Lacey (Jan. 9, 10, 12, 14)/

Cox/Hockey/Munn

Nov. 28; Dec. 1, 3, 6, 9

Jan. 6, 9, 10, 12, 14

Verdi Celebration

LA TRAVIATA

Verdi

Racette/Dunleavy (6/23m, 28); Brown*/

Ventre* (6/23m), Robertson/

Westman (6/23m)

Armiliato/Copley/Conklin/Walker/Munn

Originally made possible by a gift from Louise M. Davies

June 1, 6, 10, 20, 23 (m & e), 28, 30

AIDA

Verdi

Crider/Fantini*, Diadkova;

Margison, Pyatnychko*

Summers/Lacey (6/21)/Williams/

Schmidt/Casey/Munn

June 7, 9, 12, 15, 17, 21, 26, 29;

July 1

SIMON BOCCANEGRA

Verdi

Vaness; Gavanelli, Giordani, Ramey

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S.F. Opera premiere

SEMELE

Handel

Swenson, Brandes*, Connolly*; Asawa,

Ainsley, Relyea

Mackerras/Lacey (11/10, 15, 25)/

Copley/Bardon/Walker/Munn

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Made possible, in part, by the Bernard Osber Endowment Fund

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

DER ROSENKAVALIER

Strauss

Graham, Kenny*/Fleming (Dec.),

Evans/Blanck** (12/5, 7, 10);

Hawlata, Scibelli, Sidhom

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Nov. 17, 20, 24, 29

Dec. 2, 5, 7, 10

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quite ridiculous if indeed it doesn't appear utterly repellent: a pompous father persuades a beautiful, strong-willed, independent woman to give up her lover and her only hope of happiness because her reputation will compromise his virgin-daughter's engagement to some titled nonentity? Oh come.... surely such a tale is altogether too preposterous and its morality too hypocritical to move us in our age of democratic realism, when willing suspension of disbelief is constantly challenged by realism's own insistent medium, television (though that too is no more than another half-world in its relationship to life as it "really" is)? But both assumptions are themselves half-truths.

Violetta is part of a long line of fictionally "sinning" women redeemed or forgiven through their ultimate goodness or innocence. As long as there has been writing from male-dominated, pre-contraceptive history, there have been stories revolving for better or usually worse around "immoral" women, women who fail to conform to the sexual behavior that would preserve male possession and/or the certainty of paternity — Mary Magdalen, Thaïs, Manon, Mimì, Carmen, Lulu and innumerable others. It is tempting to see all such stories simply as early stages in the painfully slow evolution of equality for women, or even of the general freeing of sexual response from no-longer-valid taboos. That evolution — one hesitates yet to use the word progress — owes more than is usually credited to the sympathetic (even when sensationalized) portrayal of such women in opera, a conclusion forcefully, though unintentionally, reinforced by Cathérine Clément's extreme feminist book *Opera, The Undoing of Women*. Both the Dumas book/play and Verdi's opera have been engaged by different clans in the feminist wars, with striking appeals made to wonderfully opposed moral standpoints. Incidentally, it was Dumas *filis*, a decade after he wrote *La Dame aux camélias*, who coined the word "feminism."

By 1867, in his introduction to yet another edition of the original narrative, Dumas could claim that such a story "could not be written today." Its social and moral context was already outdated. Is then the force of Verdi's opera now no more than a sentimental historical curiosity, a kind of musical fairy-tale? Certainly Germont *père's* atrocious moralizing and Violetta's virtually instant submission to what must for most of us be a wildly unsympathetic social attitude, might be thought an insuperable obstacle to *La Traviata's* emotional impact. But it is not so, though we may wish it were: rejection of the partners chosen by one's children is certainly not out-of-date, even on the

level of old Germont's superficially absurd morality. Nor is the general transformation of attitudes to women by male-dominated society completed in any but the rarest "liberal" echelons, if there, least of all when it comes down to the private level of parents and their offspring's marital choices. And it has of course barely begun in far too many parts of the world.

Even the powerfully surviving echoes of that old, possibly primal, whore-virgin crux do not however adequately explain the power of Verdi's opera nor its source in Dumas *filis*. Cruelty and injustice to women in the name of moral standards barely different to those of Verdi's time are vile enough for sure, but they are too localized to explain *La Traviata's* thrall. Its source is even more universal. Not for mere amusement did Charles Ludlam create his own *Camille* for New York's Ridiculous Theatre with Everett Quinton as Marguerite: as Quinton remarked, "Marguerite is a universal character and it is a mistake interpreting her through the eyes of a man or a woman. Marguerite Gautier's problem is not gender specific. Maybe it was a hundred years ago but I doubt it.... That a woman sacrifices herself for a man is only one aspect of the role."

Art has a way of making us accept its invented world even when that world is entirely fantastic; as long as it continues we believe in it, warts and all. So any particular incredibility at the turning-point in Dumas-Verdi is in this sense irrelevant: Violetta, like any good artistic creation, lives in her own world, opera's own fantasy *demi-monde*: but she is more than a character in that make-believe republic of localized truths. Art on this level stands for greater issues than its immediate subject, and *La Traviata* appalls and delights because there remain in society groups and individuals who we can feel are unjustly alienated, scorned, or rejected: every one of us may belong at some point in our lives to one or more of those categories. Violetta stands for them all. No wonder the Camellia-Lady has recurred in so many guises. Small wonder too that so many of those transformations have been in another half-world, film, the most forceful artistic instrument for social change of the past 100 years just as literature and opera were for the preceding century.

As a postscript, here is a selective list of film treatments. It owes (as so often in the past), most if not quite all of its existence and none of its faults to Kori Lockhart, the admirable retiring editor of these printed programs, and instigator of everything I have had the pleasure of contributing to them for the last 20 years.

Continued overleaf

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FLOWER GIRLS

continued from page 27

1907 — *Kameliendame*. With Oda Alstrup as Marguerite. Danish. Directed by Viggo Larsen. Nordisk Films. 14 mins.

1908 — Oskar Messner "sound" film. Just one aria was screened "with the music played on a synchronized phonograph." Messner made lots of these, apparently, in Berlin. 4 mins.

1909 — *La Signora delle Camelie*. Ugo Falena, Italy, directed, for Film d'Arte Italiana, with Vittoria Lepanto as Marguerite. Screened with live music from the opera. 14 mins.

1911 — *La Dame aux camélias*. Sarah Bernhardt, directed by André Calmettes and Henry Pouctal. Often screened with Verdi's music. About 12 mins. One of the most famous of all early silent films.

1912 — American film version, directed by Herbert Brenon for the Champion Film Company. Gertrude Shipman was Marguerite. 15 mins.

1915 — *La Signora delle Camelie*, Italian, directed by Gustavo Serena for Caesar Film. Italian film diva Francesca Bertini was Marguerite. 65 mins.

1915 — *La Signora delle Camelie*, rival Italian film, directed by Baldassarre Negrone for Tiber Film. His wife Hesperia (one name only; actual name Olga Mabelli) was Marguerite. 70 mins.

1915 — *Camille*. American film, directed by Albert Capellani for World Film Corp. Clara Kimball Young as Marguerite. 70 mins.

1917 — *Camille*, directed by J. Gordon Edwards for Fox Film Corp. Theda Bara as Marguerite. 70 mins.

1917 — *Kameliendame*, German film directed by Paul Leni, who also designed the sets and costumes. Erna Morena was Marguerite. 70 mins.

1921 — *Camille*, American, directed by Ray C. Smallwood for Metro. Alla Nazimova and Rudolph Valentino. 75 mins.

1921 — *Arne Violetta*, German film, directed by Paul Ludwig Stein. Pola Negri as Marguerite. 80 mins.

1922 — British short, part of the *Tense Moments from Opera* series, directed by George Wynn. Thelma Murray was Violetta; Clive Brook, Alfredo. 12 mins.

1925 — *Damen med Kameliorna*, Swedish, directed by Olaf Molander, with Tora Teje as Marguerite. 75 mins.

1927 — *Camille*, American film, directed by Fred Niblo for First National. Norma Talmadge as Marguerite. 90 mins.

1927 — English film of scenes from the opera, directed by H.B. Parkinson for the *Cameo Opera* series. Violetta was Peggy Carlisle, Alfredo, Anthony Ireland. Screened with singers on stage performing the arias. 18 mins.

1934 — *La Dame aux camélias*, French, directed by Fernand Rivers, supervised by Abel Gance. Yvonne Printemps was Marguerite. 118 mins.



Margot Fonteyn and Rudolf Nureyev in Frederick Ashton's 1963 ballet, *Marguerite et Armand*.

1936 — *Camille*, directed by George Cukor for MGM. Herbert Stothart's score, based on Verdi. Greta Garbo, Robert Taylor. 108 mins.

1937 — *100 Men and a Girl*, Deanna Durbin sings "Libiamo." Leopold Stokowski etc. 83 mins.

1938 — *The Goldwyn Follies*, directed by George Marshall. Helen Jepson and Charles Kullman in "Libiamo" and "Sempre libera." 120 mins.

1940 — *Amami, Alfredo!* directed by Carmine Gallone. Maria Cebotari in a "parallel film" of *La Traviata*. 86 mins.

1943 — *Thousands Cheer* All-star variety film, directed by George Sidney. Kathryn Grayson sings "Sempre libera" as the love interest of private Gene Kelly. 126 mins.

1945 — *The Lost Weekend*, directed by Billy Wilder. Ray Milland flees his seat at the Metropolitan Opera during "Libiamo." 101 mins.

1947 — *The Lost One (La Signora delle Camelie)*, directed (his second attempt) by Carmine Gallone, "begins with Verdi and Dumas standing beside the grave of the Parisian courtesan, who..." The rest of the film is the opera. Nelli Corradi is Violetta (sung by Ornella Fineschi), Gino Matterna plays and sings Alfredo, and Manfredo Polverosi is Germont (sung by Tito Gobbi). B&W. 84 mins.

1952 — *La Dame aux camélias*, French, directed by Raymond Bernard. Micheline Presle as Marguerite. Color. 111 mins.

1953 — *Camelia, Passion Sauvage*, Mexican film, directed by Roberto Gavaldon, starring Maria Felix. B&W, 89 mins.

1953 — *Traviata 53*, Italian, directed by Vittorio Cottafavi, starring Barbara Laage. Modernized adaptation of the opera. B&W, 92 mins.

1962 — *La Bella Lola*, Spanish, directed by Alfonso Balcazar. Sarita Montiel is Marguerite, a.k.a. Lola. B&W, 88 mins.

1970 — *Camille 2000*, Italian, directed by Radley Metzger. The Dumas story in contemporary Rome. Danielle Gaubert and Nino Castelnuovo as the lovers. Color. 104 mins.

1980 — *La Dama delle Camelie*, Italian, directed by Mauro Bolognini. Isabelle Huppert in a film based on the life of Alphonsine Plessis. Color. 92 mins.

1984 — Puppet version from Australia, directed by William Fitzwater. Voices: Pilar Lorengar, Giacomo Aragall, Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau. Berlin Deutsche Oper Orchestra/Lorin Maazel. 30 mins. VAI Video.

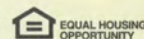
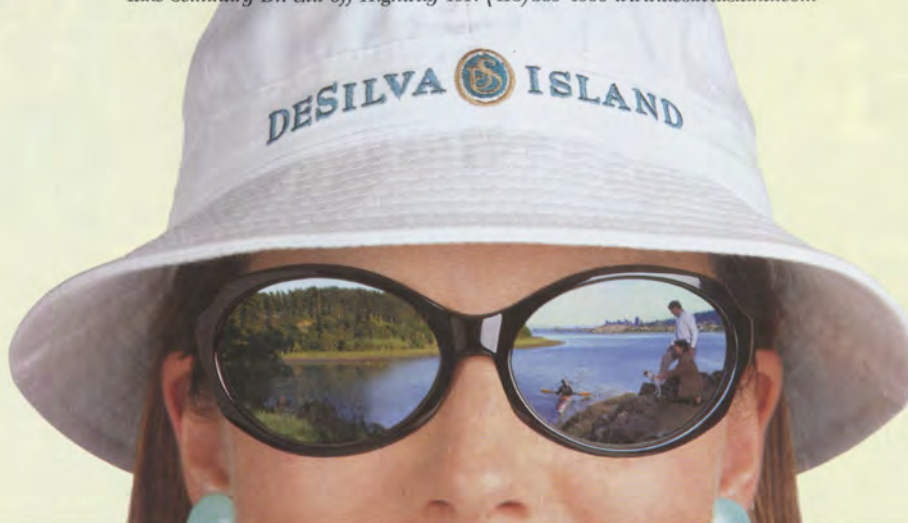
1984 — *Camille*, British television film, directed by Desmond David, with Greta Scacchi. 100 mins. □

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On November 12, 2000, friends and family of Paul Sherrill gathered at his Potrero Hill home, just days after attending the annual opera party (for which Paul was famous) to say goodbye. The night of the party had been filled with joy and camaraderie, accentuated by Paul's always-remarkable cooking and the splendors of his Mexican folk art collection. But the next morning, November 5, quietly and peacefully, Paul passed away.

Paul and his wife, Anne Hummel Sherrill (d.1990) were great lovers of and longtime subscribers to the San Francisco Opera. The pleasure of their work (Paul as noted Bay Area architect and community planner, Anne as author and Mills College professor of History) went hand-in-hand with their love of the arts, travel, cooking, and their many friends and colleagues.

It is with the warmest of memories that we remember Paul and Anne within the pages of this program, which celebrates the opera they loved so much.

Donations in memory of the Sherrills may be made to:

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Paul Sherrill by Ruth Asawa

Special Thanks to: Albert Lanier & Ruth Asawa



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*At the turn of the century, Annie Oakley was represented by the firm in a libel case against The Cleveland Press. Arter & Hadden was involved in the investigation of the wreck and representation of the owners and underwriters of the Great Lakes freighter The Edmund Fitzgerald. The firm currently does work for "Nine Inch Nails," a world-famous industrial music group.

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La Traviata

Photos taken in rehearsal
by Marty Sohl

Patricia Racette





Stephen Mark Brown



Patricia Racette, Stephen Mark Brown

Catherine Cook



Stephen Mark Brown, Patricia Racette

Patricia Racette



Todd Geer, Patricia Racette, Marco Spotti



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*(L. to r.) Suzanne Mendieta, Aldo Ruiz, Carmen Granados
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Spectacular Autumn and Opera in New York September 23 to 30, 2001

Join Sherwin Sloan for *A Verdi Celebration*, the Met's Season Opening Gala with Plácido Domingo, Neil Shicoff, Angela Gheorghiu, Roberto Alagna, and more. We'll also attend *Eugene Onegin*, *Wozzeck* and *Idomeneo* at the Met, and *The Flying Dutchman*, *The Capulets and the Montagues* and *The Magic Flute* at New York City Opera! All this and a tour of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, visits with artists, and tickets to Mel Brooks' *The Producers*.

"Breathtaking Occasions" in Chicago October 11 to 16, 2001

Share "breathtaking occasions" with Sherwin at the Chicago Lyric. Ben Heppner sings his first *Otello* opposite Renée Fleming; and Catherine Malfitano and Dean Peterson star in Kurt Weill's *Street Scene*. Soprano Elizabeth Connell performs excerpts from *Götterdämmerung* with the Chicago Symphony, and Waltraud Meier and Christian Franz perform a concert version of *Tristan und Isolde* led by Daniel Barenboim. And we'll visit the Chicago Art Institute and take an architectural tour of this amazing city. Sign up now!

Wexford Festival in Ireland October 17 to 28, 2001

The acclaimed Wexford Festival in the gorgeous Emerald Isle is "the opera lover's perfect treat." Enjoy private lectures and attend all three operas of the Festival: Dvořák's nationalistic Czech opera *The Jacobin*, Flotow's comedy *Alessandro Stradella* and Massenet's romantic *Sapho*. Besides the operas, there is much to see and enjoy in and around Dublin, Wexford and beautiful Killarney, and Irish-born Desirée Mays knows all the best places!

Last Chance for La Scala October 24 to November 8, 2001 Milan, Cernobbio, Parma, Bologna, Florence, Verona, Venice

Join Sherwin for Verdi's *Macbeth* and *Luisa Miller*, and Brahms' *A German Requiem* at La Scala before it closes for lengthy renovations. We'll also attend *Tancredi*, *The Marriage of Figaro* and *Attila*, visit renowned art museums and famous sites, and enjoy wonderful dining in Italy's exquisite Northern regions! Limited to 22 members.

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Several events in our ongoing Verdi Celebration have come and gone. At press time, the following events were available to the public:

Verdi Goes to the Movies

June 1-7

Landmark's Park Theater, Menlo Park
Details and schedule: sffs.org

Verdi Centenary Symposium

June 2, 10am - 3pm

University of California at Berkeley
Morrison Hall, Rom 125 (Elkus Room)
Free to the public

Verdi and the Art of the Italian Song

June 13, 7:30pm

Featured are S.F. Opera Adler Fellows and
Guests
Herbst Theater
Tickets: \$15-25

Verdi by the Bay

May 1 - August 18

Exhibit curated by the San Francisco Per-
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Verdi at San Francisco Opera

June 6 - July 1

Lobby, War Memorial Opera House
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Verdi web portal: sfopera.com

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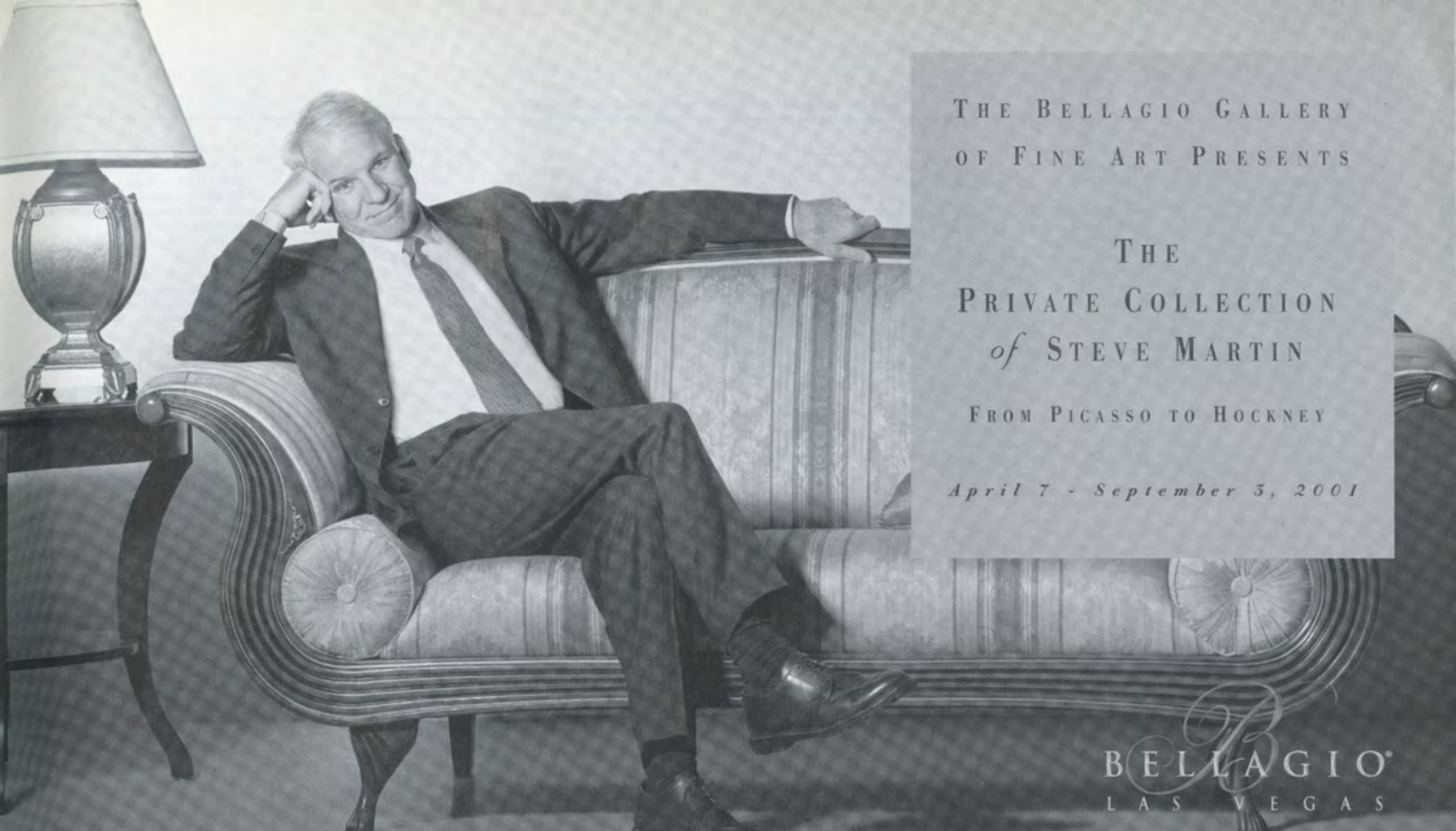
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The following list of lectures and previews includes those that are currently available to the public.

PRE-PERFORMANCE LECTURES

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

Aida — June 9, 17, 21, 26, 29; July 1

Simon Boccanegra — June 19, 22, 24, 27

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA GUILD — INSIGHTS

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

June 12 *Simon Boccanegra*

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA GUILD — PREVIEWS

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

EAST BAY CHAPTER—

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA GUILD

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

June 6 *Verdi's Golden Legacy*

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.

June 4 *Verdi's Golden Legacy*

Continued on page 58

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Corporate Council members receive invitations to exclusive special events throughout the year which offer a unique and prime opportunity for entertaining, networking, and gaining an insider's glance into opera production.

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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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PREVIEWS

continued from page 53

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June 6 Verdi's Golden Legacy

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History Club, 123 Los Gatos Blvd., Los
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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
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Series began on September 5; lectures
are \$15 at the door. Information: (510)
526-5244.

June 4 *Aida*
June 11 *Simon Boccanegra*

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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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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).

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For the safety and comfort of our audience, all large parcels, backpacks, luggage, etc., must be checked at the Opera House 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.

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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

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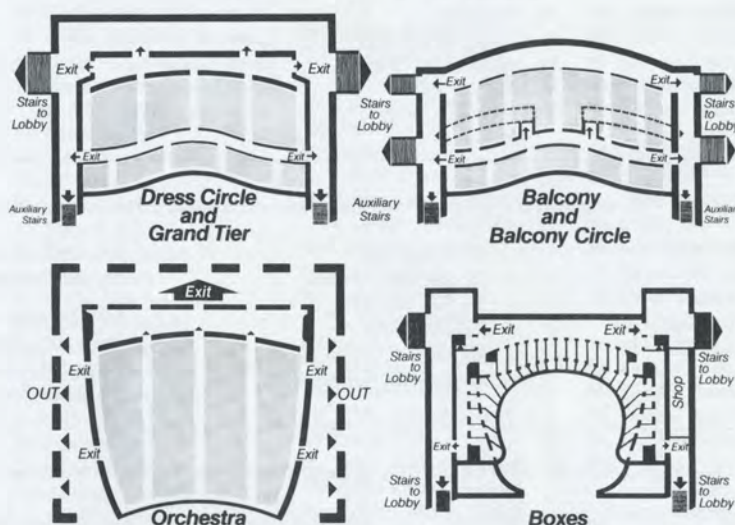
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