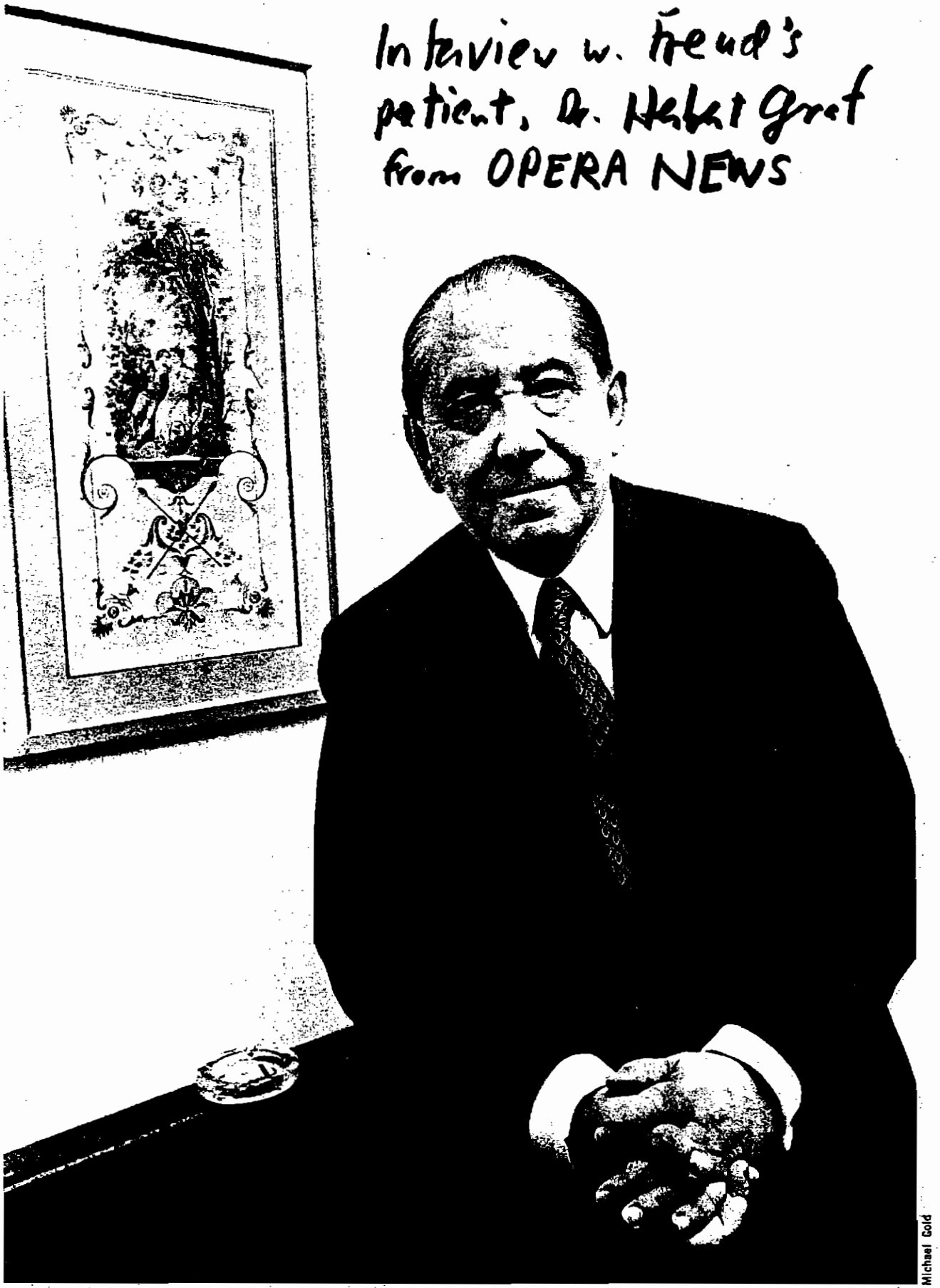
Interview w. Freud's patient, Dr. Hebert Graf from OPERA NEWS



Michael Gold

Dr. Graf, general manager of Geneva's Grand Théâtre and director for the Met's Rigoletto *and many other productions*

Memoirs of an Invisible Man—I

Herbert Graf recalls a half-century in the theater: a dialogue with Francis Rizzo

Throughout a career that spans nearly fifty years, you've written three books and many articles about opera production. They contain passing references to your own experience as a director, but you seem reticent about committing your professional memoirs to paper.

I've always felt that the stage director is opera's "invisible man," or should be. It's the very nature of his job to stay behind the scenes and leave the spotlight to the work itself.

That spotlight, you must admit, falls far less often on the creative genius of the composer than on star performers—conductors as well as singers.

And more and more these days on star directors, too. But when I started out on my career, the director was not a star. In fact, he hardly existed at all. The conductor ran the show, and even though there were very able men who supervised the visual side of things, they were more like acting coaches and stage managers than the czar producers of today. As luck would have it, my professional life runs parallel to the emergence of the director as prime mover of the production. So it may be that in telling my own story I can at the same time trace the changing course of modern operatic practice.

Certainly pretext enough for our conversation. Let's begin with the historical approach and see where it leads us. In 1903, the year you were born, Vienna was both a stronghold of archconservatism and a breeding ground for ideas that would soon revolutionize the arts and sciences. And at the very center of the progressive circle was your father, Max Graf.

He was, of course, an extraordinary man, the most extraordinary I've ever known. He's remembered chiefly as a musicologist and critic, but his interests and accomplishments ranged far and wide over many different fields. He was a disciple of Romain Rolland, whose works he translated into German, and his mentors and teachers included Hans Richter, Eduard Hanslick and Anton Bruckner.

Had he considered becoming a composer?

Not for long. He once took a piece of his to Brahms for criticism. It was an ambitious work, scored for many voices. Brahms laid one huge paw across the manuscript, blocking out all but the top and bottom staves. "I'm only interested in how you treat the soprano and bass lines," he said. "And you've done it badly." My father later took his doctorate in law, but he was a formidable scholar of literature and aesthetics and taught both, first at the Vienna Academy and later in this country. He was also an astute political analyst and for years wrote leading articles on the subject for the *Neue Freie Presse.*

He was equally at home in philosophy and science and quite capable of talking mathematics with Einstein, which he did when they met in the United States. He was a universal man but at the same time a true Viennese, in every sense: he knew how to enjoy a glass (or more) of wine and the company of pretty women. One of my most vivid boyhood memories is seeing him on the crowded footboard of a trolley headed for the Sunday soccer match at the Hohe Warte, one hand on the railing, the other clutching his most cherished book, a well-worn, annotated copy of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason.*

He was also a member of Freud's inner circle and an early champion of his theories.

He was in fact the first to apply the psychoanalytic method to the study of the creative process, with his paper "Wagner im *Fliegenden Holländer.*" And he was one of the first Freudian therapists as well. When I was still very young, I developed a neurotic fear of horses. Freud gave me a preliminary examination and then directed treatment with my father acting as go-between, using a kind of question-and-answer game which later became standard practice in child psychiatry. Freud documented my cure in his 1909 paper "Analysis of the Phobia of a Five-year-old Boy," and as the first application of psychoanalytic

technique to childhood neurosis the "Little Hans" case, as it's popularly known, is still a classic study in the field.

I remembered nothing of all this until years later, when I came upon the article in my father's study and recognized some of the names and places Freud had left unchanged. In a state of high excitement I called on the great doctor in his Berggasse office and presented myself as "Little Hans." Behind his desk, Freud looked like those busts of the bearded Greek philosophers I'd seen at school. He rose and embraced me warmly, saying that he could wish for no better vindication of his theories than to see the happy, healthy nineteen-year-old I had become.

You must have memories of other famous men who were your parents' friends.

Gustav Mahler, my godfather, was a frequent guest at our house in Hietzing. I remember Oskar Kokoschka and the architect Adolf Loos, too. Then there was Richard Strauss, and Arnold Schoenberg, whose importance my father was among the first to recognize. One of my schoolmates was Raimund von Hofmannsthal. Another familiar though remote figure was a neighbor I saw almost daily on my way to school, a tall, aristocratically handsome man we called "Oscar Wilde." It was only later that we learned his real name, Alban Berg.

Sigmund Freud, who analyzed and wrote about Graf in 1909

What do you remember of musical life?

Symphony concerts led by such men as Nikisch, Weingartner, Mengelberg and the two Brucknerites, Franz Schalk and Ferdinand Loewe. I heard the Viennese debut of young Furtwängler. There was a good deal of chamber music as well—the Rosé Quartet, Fritz Kreisler and Adolf Busch, Rudolf Serkin at the start of his career, Franz Steiner's all-Strauss lieder recitals accompanied by the composer. But my chief love was opera. As critic for *Die Zeit* my father always had a single ticket for each performance at the Court Opera. Sometimes he'd have heard enough to put together his review by the last intermission, and so I'd inherit his parterre seat for the remainder of the evening. But my native habitat was in standing room, with all the other students and music-lovers of slender means. Getting a place in the topmost gallery, known as "the fourth" to the regular standees, meant lining up outside the theater for half a day or more.

Who were the artists that impressed you most?

First of all Strauss. The city of Vienna had given him lifetime use of a splendid villa overlooking the Belvedere, but with the strict proviso that he conduct a goodly number of performances per season. Strauss was not at all adverse to creature comforts, and to secure that house he showed up on the podium with pointed regularity, luckily for us. Besides his own operas—*Ariadne* was a high point—I heard him conduct *Tristan, Lohengrin, Fledermaus* (a New Year's Eve gala) and above all Mozart, in which he was supreme. Then there were so many unforgettable singers, and quite a few who had been brought to Vienna by Mahler. Even today I can recall details of interpretation by Slezak as Otello and Lohengrin, Erik Schmedes as the young Siegfried meltingly singing out his longing for his mother, Mayr's inimitable way with King Marke's lament, Bahr-Mildenburg and Gutheil-Schoder in the Elektra-Klytämnestra confrontation. Gradually the old-guard singers were joined by up-and-coming artists who became stars in their own right—Jeritza, Lehmann and Piccaver, just to name a few. When the Dresden Opera tried to borrow "our" Ochs, Richard Mayr, as substitute for their own indisposed bass, the theater (and most of Vienna) was shaken by the big question of whether Mayr's leave of absence should be granted. *Tempi passati!*

What were the productions like?

Well, despite the famous Mahler-Roller reforms and the best efforts of their successors, there was still a considerable gap between the opera-as-theater ideal and what actually went on onstage, a sad fact I noted more than once in my diary. Not that I could see much from my standee's perch; most of the time we were content to close our eyes and imagine ideal productions. Or else we would sit on the steps and follow the performance with our scores.

What about the Volksoper?

It was a seething cauldron of activity, and as a proving ground for promising young singers it was an invaluable supplement to the Court Opera, for both the performers and the public. The Volksoper director gave my father as many complimentary seats as he liked, so I was able to see the whole range of the repertory, from the frothiest operettas to *Götterdämmerung*. The staging of all these works was entrusted to one man, August Markowsky, whose approach was, let us say, extremely pragmatic. Confronted with the triumphal scene of *Aida*, he would

Graf during brief singing career, costumed as Spalanzani

make quick work of the chorus: "You enter from the right; you enter from the left; and you in the middle will haul the statue of the sacred bull downstage."

His staging techniques have been lovingly preserved to this day.

Yes, instant opera is nothing new, and the reasons behind it remain what they always were: lack of time and money. But even the most makeshift productions were enough to fire my imagination, and before long I began to try my hand at duplicating the wonders I'd seen in the opera house—first with a toy theater I built with my sister's help at home, and later in school productions.

Is that when you decided to become a director?

No, the idea came to me somewhat later. When the First World War came, living conditions in Vienna were quite bad and grew steadily worse. As an escape from this, my parents sent me to Berlin to spend the summer with my aunt, who had a lovely house in the suburbs of the city. During that period Max Reinhardt was director of no less than three Berlin theaters, which he filled with one brilliant production after another.

My father was an old friend of Arthur Kahane, Reinhardt's *Dramaturg*, and gave me an introductory calling card, on which after the engraved "Max Graf" he'd written "Would appreciate your giving his son Herbert a pass to one of your performances." But after my first taste of the Reinhardt magic I wanted to see much more than one performance, so armed with a stack of cards I repeated the request in my best approximation of my father's script. As Kahane never said no, I got to see nearly three months' worth of Reinhardt productions.

The actors were outstanding, but what impressed me most was the realistically detailed handling of the crowd scenes in such epic plays as *Julius Caesar* and Rolland's *Danton*. When the time came for my return to Vienna, I called on Kahane to thank him for his kindness. "Please give my best regards to your father," the old gentleman said, and then with a knowing smile, "By the way, you needn't have copied out his calling card—I would've given you the tickets anyway."

Ashamed as I was of my subterfuge, that Reinhardt summer was the turning point in my life. I felt it was my mission to do for opera what Reinhardt had done in the spoken theater. I was sixteen by then, preparing for my college degree, which I very nearly failed to get—I was so taken up with my dream of becoming a stage director that I couldn't keep my mind on my studies. As soon as I got back to Vienna I begged permission to stage the forum scene from *Julius Caesar* in the school gym, but since I paid a good deal less attention to the nuances of the big speeches than to the howling and whistling of the Roman mob, the dean soon called a halt to the whole venture: the noise was beginning to interfere with class work. Somehow or other I passed my *Matura* and graduated, but not without some wry comment from the faculty and my fellow students. In the 1921 school yearbook, under the heading "Stupidities of the Year," there was this entry: "Herbert Graf wants to become an opera stage director."

Why did your ambition seem a stupidity?

Well, as I said, the profession of opera stage director as we know it simply didn't exist in those days. Moreover, there was no school, no prescribed course of study. I had to invent it.

Did your father encourage you?

Typically, he neither pushed me nor held me back. Though his own finances were far from secure, he gave me the wherewithal to prepare for my chosen career. This was by no means easy, since it meant enrolling in three different schools at once. My first objective was to get my doctorate, which I prepared at the University of Vienna under the direction of Guido Adler, the head of the music department. He was a great scholar and a teacher of rare sensitivity, who believed in letting his pupils develop in accordance with their own capabilities and aspirations. Since I wanted to direct opera, he suggested that I do my thesis on Wagner as a stage director. He made me begin by compiling and summarizing an exhaustive bibliography of Wagneriana, and surprisingly enough I found that among the hundreds and hundreds of books and papers devoted to the composer, not one dealt with his approach to staging problems.

Who were your other teachers at the University?

Robert Lach was one. Another, whose class in Byzantine notation I attended with scrupulous regularity, was Egon Wellesz. There was only one other student enrolled in the course, so Professor Wellesz asked us to telephone in advance if unable to come to class. As neither of us

dared be responsible for calling off a lecture, we both appeared for every session.

Which other subjects did you study?

Alfred Roller's course in stage design at the School of Arts and Crafts. Having been brought to the State Opera during Mahler's regime, Roller doubled as chief scenic artist at the theater and director of the school. He was a precise, exacting teacher, and he never failed to explain the practical reasons that underlay his own designs. He insisted on his pupils' mastering the basics of their craft before setting out on wild flights of experimentation.

I remember the first design I submitted for his criticism —a set for the first act of *Der Fliegende Holländer* consisting of a massive, steep flight of steps topped by the huge red sail of the phantom ship. Roller took one look at it, then sternly requested that I remove my jacket, take a meter stick, kneel down and carefully measure out the height of the staircase I had so loftily conceived. Sure enough, in my blithe disregard of sightlines I had failed to notice that the singers would remain invisible until two-thirds of the way down the steps.

My third school was the Academy of Music, where, besides classes taught by my own father, I studied harmony with Joseph Marx. I actually wrote a few pieces of the *Kleine Phantasie für Grosses Orchester* variety, but I'm afraid I was no more cut out for composing than my father. I also studied singing under Joseph Geiringer. Poor Geiringer—he'd use plenty of pedal and elaborate ornamentation on the chords to drown me out as I worked my way through a *vocalise*. Rainer Simons, the Volksoper manager, was also on the Academy faculty, training singers in opera acting. We started in the chorus and worked our way up to solo parts—a progression I nearly failed to make.

I particularly remember an Academy production of *Der Freischütz*. In the first scene I had a choice bit of acting as the hunter who steps forward to arrest Max. I threw myself into the part with such gusto that as I clapped my hand on the tenor's shoulder, the top of my rifle bumped his putty nose, leaving it askew for the rest of the scene. In the Wolf's Glen, I returned as one of the specters. At the stroke of twelve we were all to disappear magically. Unfortunately, the skull I wore as part of my costume kept me from hearing the midnight bell, and so the audience, instead of seeing a deserted glen, enjoyed the moonlit vision of one lone ghost flitting desperately through the trees in search of an opening into the wings. When I finally made it, there stood Simons, greeting me with a string of oaths and imprecations worthy of Samiel himself.

Despite these inauspicious beginnings, I gradually began to do small solo roles, and it was then that I had the good fortune to study staging technique with Josef Turnau—the man who more than any other gave me the practical basis of the director's craft. He took me on as his assistant for the Academy production of *Figaro*, in which I also sang the part of Antonio. We worked on the opera for a full school year, alternating four different casts. As you can imagine, I soon knew *Figaro* backward and forward!

Were you able to complete your doctorate?

By 1925 I had written my dissertation, *Richard Wagner als Regisseur*, and since Adler felt that he alone was not competent to judge it he invited Roller and Joseph Gregor, head of the theatrical archive at the National Library, to read it with him. With their approval I was given my Ph.D. But the most exciting reward I received for my efforts was an invitation by Siegfried Wagner, to whom I'd dedicated the thesis, to attend the Bayreuth Festival as his guest. The first postwar productions were under way at Bayreuth under his direction, and I was able to see the complete *Ring* from the Wagner family box. He also received me at Villa Wahnfried, which was of course still decorated in the rather doubtful taste favored by the composer himself.

It was a highly emotional experience for me, fervent Wagnerite that I was, and I remember Siegfried showing me the manuscript of *Die Meistersinger*, which was lying open on the piano. Siegfried had a striking resemblance to his father, and when he talked ("Papa used to say . . .," "Papa did such-and-such"), he used the same pungent Saxonian dialect that Wagner is said to have spoken. As it's a kind of German rather remote from *hochdeutsch*, listening to him, awesome though he was in appearance, helped bring me back to the realities of life.

With your thesis won and your three-way study plan completed, how did you go about getting a job?

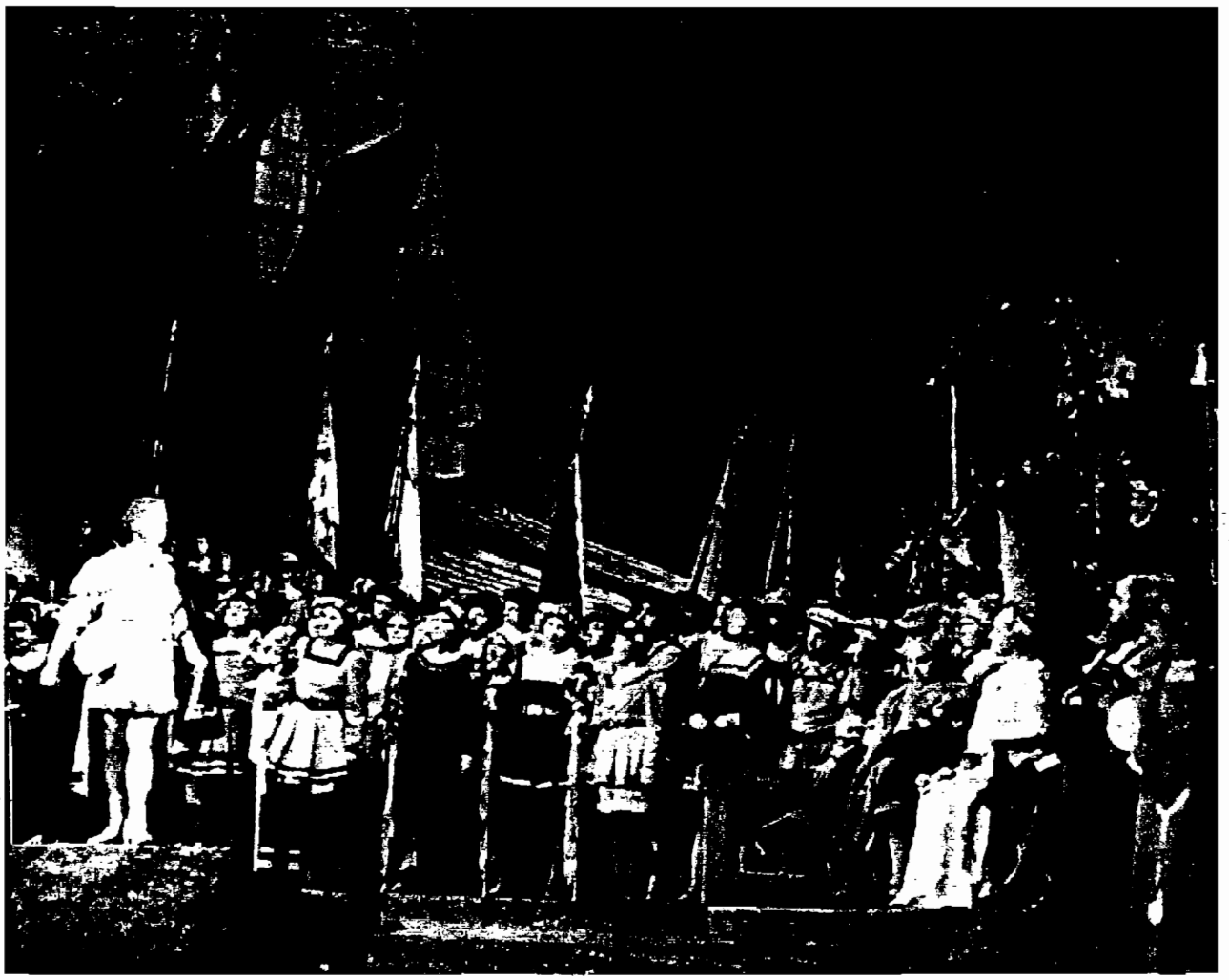
Finding work, as a singer anyway, was no problem. There were well over a hundred theaters throughout the German-speaking countries—Austria, Bohemia, Germany and Switzerland—and managers came regularly to Vienna in search of young talent. Early in 1925 the director of the Municipal Opera of Münster saw me as Spalanzani in an Academy production of *The Tales of Hoffmann* and talked to Turnau about engaging me as a singer. Turnau convinced him to take me as a director instead, and it was agreed that I be given a trial production prior to receiving a regular contract.

The opera in question turned out to be *Der Vampyr*, by Marschner, a work as neglected then as it is now. I accepted on the spot, and only after I'd begun to study the unfamiliar score did I realize, with mounting panic, that the challenge was much too great. With my departure (and, it seemed, my doom) just a few weeks off, a telegram from Münster advised Turnau that the *Vampyr* production had been shelved. Could I, *would* I, undertake the staging of another opera? *Figaro*, in fact! Turnau, always a bit of a fox, made a grumbling reply about "such short notice" but finally said yes, I would agree to tackle *Figaro* instead. You can imagine the impression I made, staging the whole production without so much as glancing at the score! With the unquestioned success of my debut behind me, I received a full-time contract and, at the age of twenty-two, found myself launched on a professional career.

(To be continued next week.)

Memoirs of an Invisible Man—II

Herbert Graf recalls fifty years of theater: a dialogue with Francis Rizzo



Finale of Wagner's Meistersinger *(above) at the Salzburg Festival in the mid-1930's, an opera that Herbert Graf persuaded Arturo Toscanini could be successfully mounted in the old Festspielhaus; the director (left) bows with the Maestro, Lotte Lehmann, Hans Hermann Nissen and Charles Kullman*

What was the state of opera production in Münster when you began your tenure as resident director?

Like most German opera houses in the mid-twenties, Münster had a distinctly avant-garde policy. After the conservative atmosphere of Vienna, this was my first chance to experiment, and I quickly got the reputation of being an *enfant terrible*. Press comment wasn't always favorable, but my work in Münster led to my engagement as *Dramaturg* and chief director at the Breslau and later the Frankfurt opera, where William Steinberg was general musical director.

What sort of production did you do?

There was a *Lohengrin* without a swan, *Don Giovanni* in tuxedo, a *Freischütz* in which Samiel was a disembodied voice over a loudspeaker, semi-ballet stagings of Handel oratorios, *La Belle Hélène* with the dancers turned out like Rockettes.

While modernizing the standard repertory, did you make room for contemporary works?

Yes indeed. I remember the world premiere of Schoenberg's *Von Heute auf Morgen*, when the orchestra nearly mutinied over the composer's insistence on extra rehearsal. Berg came too, to supervise the local premiere of *Wozzeck*. He was as modest and good-natured as his teacher had been stern and demanding, and he had a charmingly understated sense of humor. During our rehearsals, the program of the American premiere—in Philadelphia—was sent to him. There was a big photograph of Stokowski, pictures of the cast, several reproductions of the stage designs, and finally a tiny photo of Berg himself. "Isn't that nice?" he said. "They didn't forget me after all."

It was around this time that you made your first visit to the United States.

That came about thanks to George Antheil. I'd done a very successful production of his *Transatlantic*, and in gratitude Antheil arranged for me to get a fellowship from John Erskine, then president of the Juilliard School. I made the trip in 1930, during my summer vacation from Frankfurt.

What did you think of American opera productions?

I didn't see any. The Met was closed. But I remember being impressed by the charming production of *Green Pastures* on Broadway, particularly Robert Edmond Jones's sets. I went back to Europe still imagining that opera in America would be as modern and up-to-date as the New York City skyline.

Hadn't the political climate of Europe become uncomfortable by this time?

Not quite yet. But the clouds were definitely gathering, and when Steinberg's appearance to conduct *Mahagonny* was greeted by stink bombs, it seemed as if the time had come to leave Germany.

As an Austrian citizen, did you find this especially difficult?

Not yet. But though Furtwängler had kindly arranged for me to be "certified" as acceptable in German artistic circles, I left anyway. My first stop across the border was Basel, where the director of the municipal opera, Egon Neudegg, promptly offered me an engagement.

Had the avant-garde look spread to Switzerland?

Not quite. Weingartner, the chief conductor, was rather conservative. Neudegg himself liked to stage from time to time, and while he had a certain flair for the theatrical, he wasn't altogether familiar with the repertory. Once, during a rehearsal of *Carmen*, he got exasperated with the listless behavior of the chorus: "Brio! Brio! Ladies and gentlemen, let's not forget this opera takes place in Italy!"

What were your own assignments?

Most memorably, *Arabella* with Strauss as guest conductor. As usual, he drove a hard bargain over the fee, and I remember that the first thing he did on arrival was to ask for a substantial cash advance. But once money matters were settled to his satisfaction, he threw himself into rehearsal with an energy and zeal that were a lesson in professionalism.

Did you settle in Basel?

No, I divided my time between there and Prague. Many of the musicians in Prague were soon to relocate in the United States—George Szell, Kurt Adler, Franz Allers, Max Rudolf, Jan Popper and George Schick. And it was during this period that I returned to America for my first professional engagement. Arthur Judson, the manager of the Philadelphia Orchestra, had a bold plan for the 1934-35 season, during which every third week was to be given over to three performances of staged opera in place of the regular concerts.

Didn't this conflict with the Met's own guest appearances in Philadelphia?

Exactly. It was meant to replace the Met visits with local productions, which were to be superior in every way to the Met's standard fare. This meant modern staging techniques, Broadway designers, singers who looked their parts and, of course, the Philadelphia Orchestra, conducted by Fritz Reiner and Alexander Smallens. It was decided to look for a young European director to do the staging. Judson had been favorably impressed by photos of my Handel productions I'd shown him during my 1930 visit, and I got a boost from Hans Heinsheimer, then still head of opera activities at Universal Edition in Vienna. So when the invitation came, I didn't waste much time in cabling my acceptance.

How did working conditions compare with those you'd known in Europe?

Well, there *weren't* any working conditions when I arrived in August. It seemed unbelievable to me, but nothing, *nothing* had been arranged in advance. Judson, Reiner and Smallens were nowhere to be found, and when

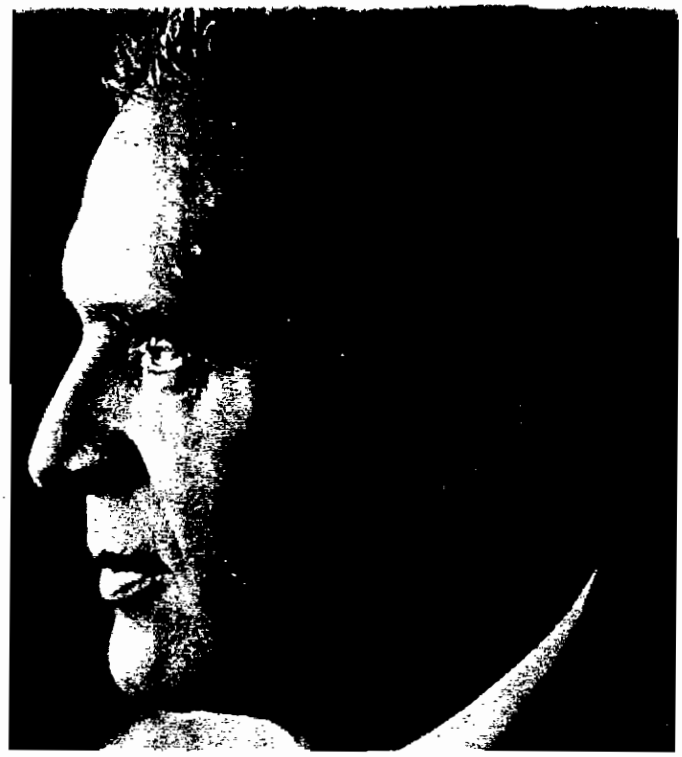
I went to Philadelphia to make some preliminary arrangements, I found I couldn't even get a good look at the stage until a week before the start of the concert season in September. Moreover, no crew or technical staff had been engaged, and Judson fully expected me, with my rudimentary English, to negotiate such contracts while he was still vacationing in Canada! He eventually saw to this himself, but the terms proved financially disastrous. The crew was signed for the full thirty weeks of the concert season on a daily nine-to-five basis. But as our chorus was made up of amateurs who held regular daytime jobs, most of our onstage rehearsals were held in the evening and on weekends, which meant overtime pay for the technical staff.

What was the repertory?

An ambitious one: *Tristan*, *Carmen*, *Rosenkavalier*, *Hänsel und Gretel*, *Mavra*, *Iphigenia in Aulis*, *Boris*, *Falstaff*, *Figaro* and *Meistersinger*. Remember, each was to be given three full weeks of rehearsal, and no expense was to be spared in providing the finest possible productions. For instance, the great Archipenko had been commissioned to do the *Tristan* sets. His designs turned out to be fascinating but hardly practical: the first act, instead of being the usual cross section of the ship, was laid out in longitudinal section, allowing only fractional (and mostly invisible) deck space for Isolde's quarters. In the end we engaged Donald Oenslager to execute the project for a *Tristan* production he had recently published in book form, and the results were very beautiful. Another memorable set was Norman Bel Geddes' Appia-like design for *Iphigenia*. And I was allowed to have a revolving stage installed in the Academy for *Carmen* and *Der Rosenkavalier*.

All these innovations got a lot of advance publicity, and Pitts Sanborn headlined his piece in the *World Telegram* "Graf Plans New Deal for Opera." Audience reaction was favorable right from the start, though Reiner's uncut *Tristan* caused one operagoer after the performance to wonder, "Is Roosevelt still president?" Most of the critics were behind us, too. W. J. Henderson of the *Sun* praised our efforts, and Lawrence Gilman in the *Tribune* hailed the season as the "beginning of a new era in opera." Olin Downes, however, forsaw it as the *end* of opera, and by the time we'd got to *Iphigenia*—which was the American stage premiere of the work—he didn't even bother to make the trip to Philadelphia. We'd gone hopelessly "off the track," he explained.

The novelty of the turntable stage met with a certain amount of disapproval. When Carmen was arrested, the scene shifted to inside the guardhouse, which seemed a more logical place for her seduction of José than an unnaturally deserted square. In the last act of *Rosenkavalier*, the closing moments were played in a moonlit garden adjoining the inn. Strauss sent his wholehearted approval, but unfortunately his letter didn't arrive until after some of the critics had already denounced us for our disrespectful handling of the opera.



Bruno Walter, a Graf colleague in both Europe and the U.S.

Then again, not everyone liked hearing *Nozze di Figaro* and *Falstaff* sung in English. The fact that I had encouraged the plan raised a few eyebrows, and it was pointed out that my campaign for opera in English was rather like sending George Gershwin to Austria to write a Viennese operetta! Eventually funds became so scarce that we were obliged to borrow the Met's *Meistersinger* production, and despite our best efforts to camouflage the fact, our "experiment" ended on a decidedly traditional note.

It was during the Philadelphia season that you met both Arturo Toscanini and Bruno Walter.

Toscanini was in New York at the time and, hearing good things about the *Falstaff*, asked to see the models and drawings. He told me it was his growing disenchantment with current standards of production that kept him away from conducting opera, so you can imagine how pleased I was when he gave his enthusiastic approval to my *Falstaff* scheme. My meeting with Walter led directly to an engagement. Referring to my *enfant terrible* reputation, he said, "Young man, I've heard such awful things about you, I thought there might be some talent there as well." So he offered me the staging of the *Abduction* he was about to do at the Maggio Musicale in Florence.

At first I despaired of a true collaboration with this great maestro. He sat down at the piano and played through the entire score, indicating at every step of the way precisely how the stage action should go. I thought it would be impossible to reconcile my own ideas with his very fixed notions, but when we finally began rehearsals in Florence, things got better. During Osmin's aria, I wanted the singer to cast huge shadows over the set. When Walter started to object, a female voice called out from the darkness of the auditorium, "Bruno, don't say no until you've tried it." It was his wife. Sure enough, he let me experiment with the shadows, and in the end he embraced the

idea. I learned that he was always very subjective in his initial approach to a score, especially with Mozart. But for me he was *the* theatrical conductor, and I learned a great deal from working with him.

That opportunity arose again right after our *Abduction*. Max Reinhardt was scheduled to do *Alceste* in the Boboli Gardens as part of the same festival, but because he was still not finished with the filming of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in Hollywood, he canceled and I was given the production. A further stroke of luck brought the *Abduction* to Salzburg that same summer, as a substitute for a canceled *Iphigenia* which Toscanini was to have done with Lotte Lehmann.

This second meeting with Toscanini led to your first collaboration.

Yes, he saw the *Abduction* and was pleased with it. When the Salzburg management was looking about for an opera for Toscanini to do the following year, I approached the Maestro with the suggestion that he do *Meistersinger*. He was reluctant at first: would the stage be large enough to accommodate the final scene? But I insisted that four-fifths of the opera would benefit from a more intimate approach, and that we would find a way to make the song contest work in reduced space without reducing its visual impact. "Si, si, tutto è relativo," he said finally, suggesting that I draw up a production scheme to show him when he came to Vienna for some concerts later in the year.

Since I was without a fixed engagement during the months that followed Salzburg, I devoted all my time to this project, visiting Nuremberg and working in close collaboration with a designer. In December, Toscanini summoned me to his hotel and looked over what I'd done. For nearly an hour he cross-examined me on every detail of the production ("Where will Stolzing stand?" "How will the masters be seated?") without ever giving the slightest hint whether my answers met with his approval. Finally he said, "You want what the composer wants. I want what the composer wants. It will be a good production."

An instance of his well-known fidelity to the composer's own intentions?

That's a part of the Toscanini legend which, I think, is somewhat misunderstood. You see, his liberalism in dealing with a work wasn't just a rigid, authoritarian stance. He had a direct, I might almost say primitive, grasp of what was artistically valid, rather like a peasant's shrewd awareness of what will and what won't work. With men like Walter and Furtwängler you could argue about things on an intellectual level and either convince or be convinced, but when Toscanini made a point, more often than not you'd end up thinking, "Idiot, why didn't I see that for myself!" His insights were much closer to common sense than genius, and irresistible for that very reason. And he wasn't always all that "faithful" to the letter of the score. Once he planned to do *Falstaff* with me in the tiny opera house at Busseto. When I saw the pit, I worried aloud about finding room for all the players. "Never mind," he said. "I've made a reduction of the score." Then he explained that Verdi himself had never been happy about the size of the orchestra used at the Scala premiere.

You collaborated with Toscanini at two successive Salzburg Festivals.

Yes, after *Meistersinger* came *Die Zauberflöte*. But even before *Meistersinger* there were two other important assignments, and an offer that brought me rather unexpectedly back to the United States. When I left for Europe after that first Philadelphia season, I fully imagined that I'd return in the fall to start again, but by midsummer I'd received a wire explaining that the "experiment" was at an end, that due to financial problems and the departure of Judson all plans for a 1935-36 season had been dropped. That left me without a regular engagement for the coming year—a gap luckily filled by Walter's invitation to stage *Fidelio* in Paris and my debut in my home city of Vienna to do *Tannhäuser* with Furtwängler. Although I was eager to work again in America, there seemed little prospect of it, especially as I'd been made to understand that my innovative doings in Philadelphia were unlikely to lead to a Met engagement.

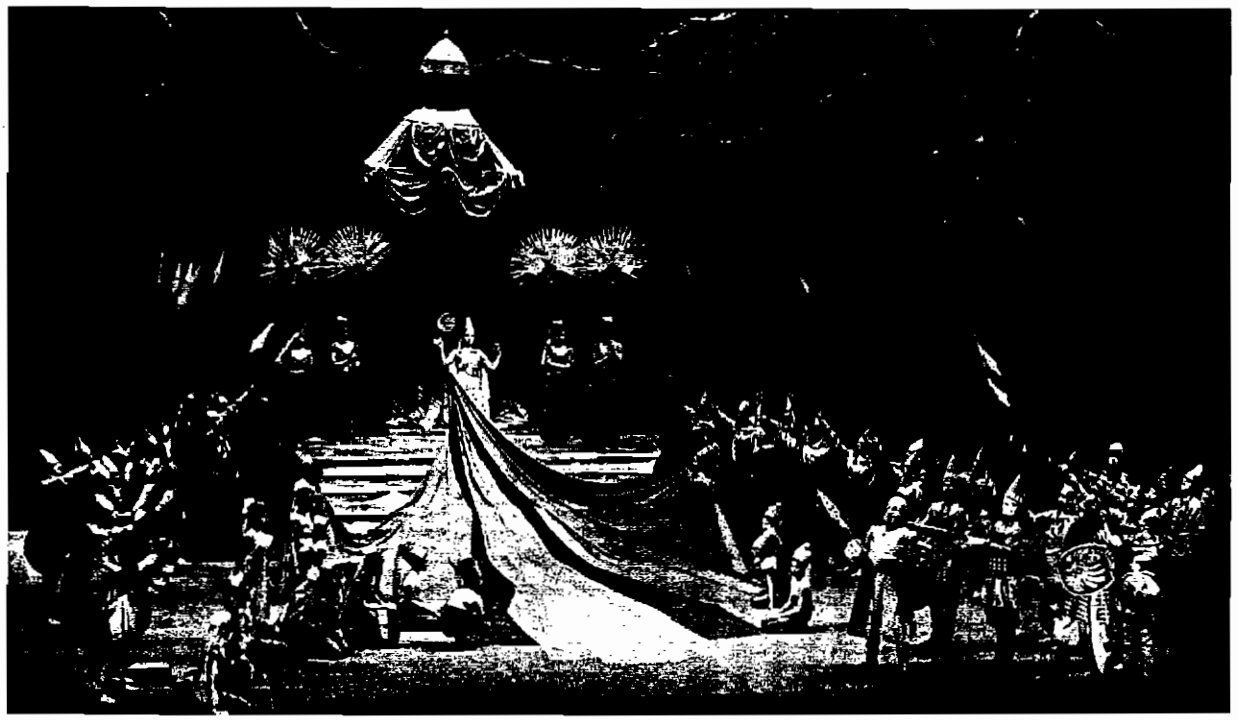
But there had been a change in the Met administration, with Edward Johnson's appointment as manager following Gatti's retirement. As luck would have it, Johnson's spring trip to Europe coincided with my own directorial wanderings. Wherever he went—to visit with his old friend Lotte Lehmann during her Paris *Fidelio*'s, to sign Kerstin Thorborg in Vienna (where she was the Venus in my *Tannhäuser*), to see the Toscanini *Meistersinger* in Salzburg—there it was on the theater posters: "Stage Director: Herbert Graf." Poor Johnson, he must have thought it was a conspiracy! Finally he offered me a Met contract for the 1936-37 season.

My debut came in December, with *Samson et Dalila*. I started with the chorus, which in those days was a group of mature, substantial-looking ladies and gentlemen whose long experience didn't include much in the way of acting. After two days' work on the first act, just when I felt I'd made some progress in injecting a few dramatic values into the proceedings, I was informed that I'd already used up all my rehearsal time with the chorus. The orchestra rehearsals were to begin the next day, and the chorus wouldn't be called upon to "act" again until the performance. I wanted to quit then and there, but friendly voices persuaded me to calm down and make the best of it.

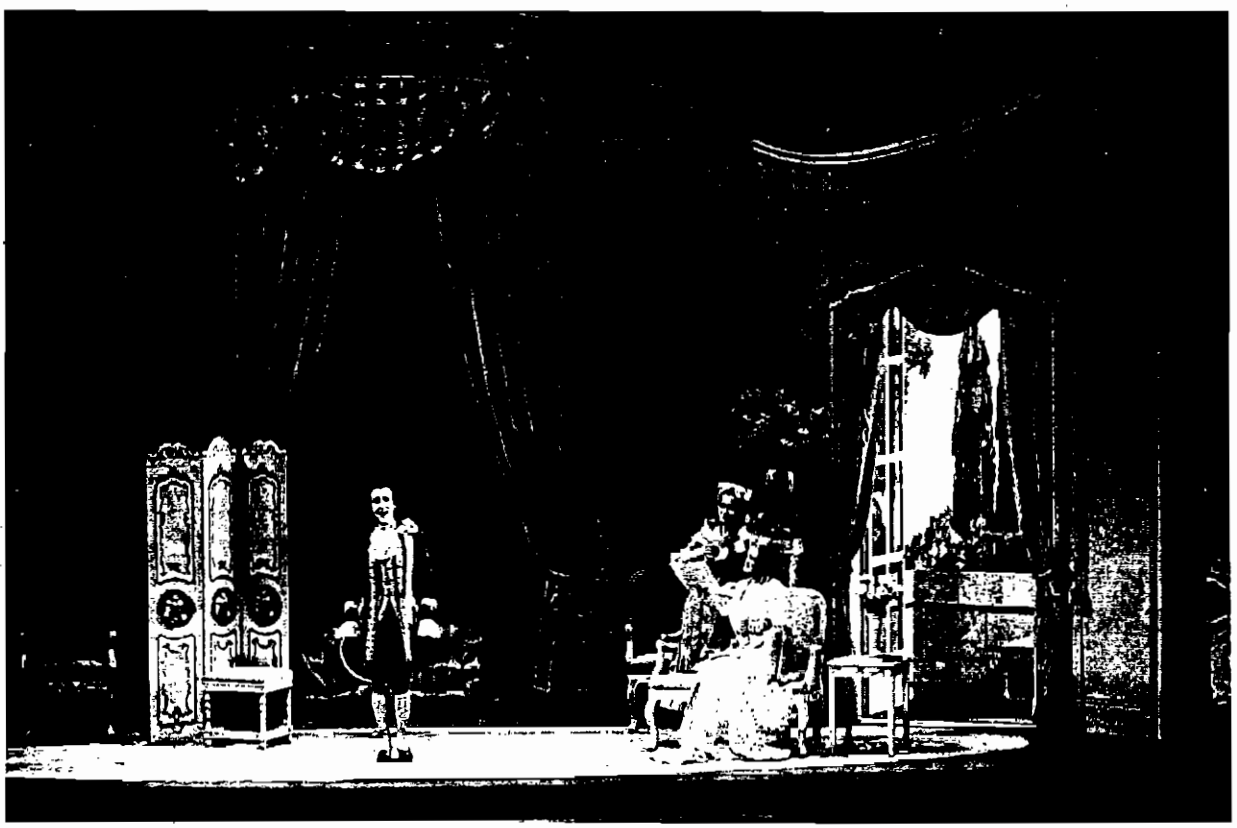
Toscanini, who was in New York for concerts with the Philharmonic, took a philosophic tone. "*Pazienza*," he said. "You'll learn to live with it." Miraculously, it seemed to me, the opening came off without a major mishap. Everyone involved—the wonderful principals, Wettergren, Maison, Pinza, as well as the chorus—moved easily within what seemed to be a well-established routine. Even the notices were favorable, and everything about the production was duly praised—with the exception of my handling of the crowds in Act I! So began my first decade as a stage director at the Met. *(To be continued next week)*

Memoirs of an Invisible Man—III

Herbert Graf recalls fifty years of theater: a dialogue with Francis Rizzo



Le Coq d'Or *in 1937 Met revival staged by Graf, for which Lily Pons provided both the Queen and her pavilion*



Le Nozze di Figaro *in 1940 had Risë Stevens, Bidù Sayão and Elisabeth Rethberg, plus three of the four sets new*

Who were the other directors at the Met when you joined the staff?

Désiré Defrère, who as you know had been a singer, was active in the French wing, and Leopold Sachse handled the German operas. Until Sachse left, I wasn't given much chance to do what I considered "my" repertory.

Who staged the Italian operas?

The singers, to tell the truth. But I soon became involved in this repertory, working with conductors like Gennaro Papi and Ettore Panizza. Panizza was never given his due, I think: the Italians called him a *farmacista* because he was more inclined to precision than to showmanship, but he was much more than a routine conductor, and I learned a good deal about Italian style from him. Wilfrid Pelletier gave me a solid grounding in the French repertory, and since I was assigned quite a few French operas during the first few years, it was valuable experience. It was a real departure for me, doing idiomatic productions of the French and Italian operas. *Faust* and *Rigoletto* in German in Frankfurt had hardly prepared me for the real thing.

How would you characterize production standards at the Met during the Johnson era?

The first thing to remember is that there was a terrible scarcity of money. New productions, in the sense of new costumes and scenery, were very rare indeed. And rehearsal time onstage was strictly limited. Most of the staging was done on the roof stage, where scheduling was no great problem, but the net result was that the singers didn't get to work in the set until the last moment; and given the general shabbiness of the physical production, the total effect was a good deal less than theatrical. Then the lightning was a great problem. Not that the equipment wasn't there, but we were defeated by the repertory system. With seven performances of as many operas in any given week, it was impossible to hang and light each production except in the most generalized way.

When I took over the old production of *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* in my first season, I wanted to play the three acts of Hoffmann's loves behind a scrim. But without lighting rehearsals we ended up with all the light on the scrim and little behind it—Venice looked as if shrouded in a London fog—so the scrim had to go. When we did *Le Coq d'Or* during that same season, no funds were available to buy the Queen's elaborate pavilion, and I remember that Lily Pons paid for this herself. Yet for all this, the inner workings of the Met were better than you'd think. There were marvelous singers in the company, many of them capable of splendid acting as individual performers. It was the dismal look of their surroundings, plus lack of onstage rehearsal, that gave most of our performances a dusty, museum-like appearance.

Sometimes we even managed to achieve an ensemble look, as in the *Figaro* revival at the end of the thirties. For that we had a first-rate cast of singing actors, and we rehearsed together for several months. Even so, the usual compromises had to be observed: there was money enough for Jonel Jorgulesco to provide new sets for the first three acts, but we had to make do with his *Matrimonio Segreto* set for the garden scene.

The most discouraging thing about the situation was the attitude of the Met audience. They were curiously indiscriminate about what they saw, and as long as the singing was excellent, which it was most of the time, they didn't seem to mind the inadequacy of the visual side of the

Director Graf and designer Simonson coach Rhinemaidens for their Ring *cycle, 1948*

opera. They didn't expect opera to be theater at all; it was just opera.

You stayed in America until the end of the war and frequently worked outside the Met during that period. Did you find audience attitude toward opera the same in other parts of the country?

The attitude varied with each place and situation. Even before going to the Met, I'd seen how successful the theatrical approach to opera could be with the American public. Remember that the Philadelphia "experiment"—despite the financial problems that led to its ultimate abandonment—was a big step in the right direction. It had been conceived as an antidote to the usual Met fare and, more often than not, had precisely that effect. Irving Kolodin pointed out the difference in audience involvement and response between our vernacular *Figaro* in Philadelphia and the *Don Pasquale* being sung in Italian at the Met.

You felt that opera should be sung in English for American audiences?

I still do, though I admit the Met is a case apart: from the very beginning of the Met, its public was made to accept opera in foreign languages, and the Met couldn't offer the great international stars if its operas were sung in translation. But New York is not the whole of the United States, and elsewhere in this country I invariably found that vernacular performances were the first and inevitable step in winning a wider public for opera. That's why, beginning with the Philadelphia season, my greatest professional satisfaction in the United States is associated with things I did away from the Met, with productions to bring opera to the people.

What were your experiences in this area?

One of the first was at the Berkshire Music Center. By 1939, my summer trips back to Europe were no longer possible and I was looking around for something to do. So I approached Koussevitzky with a plan to open an opera department as a regular part of the Center's operation. He was all for it, but as usual money was a problem. We began in a garage on the festival grounds, performing in a unit set contributed by Richard Rychtarik, with Boris Goldovsky as conductor. Eventually we moved outdoors for afternoon performances, since there were no funds for lighting equipment. Rychtarik improvised another stage to harmonize with the garden setting, with the orchestra playing behind a hedgerow. We recruited our performers from among young Americans (Mario Lanza was one who auditioned successfully for us) and put together a production of *Acis and Galatea*. The combination of the work, our youthful cast and the bucolic atmosphere charmed everyone—including Mary Curtis Zimbalist, who gave Koussevitzky a check for $10,000 the day after the performance, "to start an opera theater." It was the beginning of many such ventures all over the country, and unless I'm mistaken it was the first workshop to be organized apart from opera departments in universities and conservatories.

Academic projects you were involved in as well.

Yes, at Curtis and later at Columbia University. But the Berkshire experiment was significant in its double purpose—not only training young singers in the business of opera, but in offering their work on a regular performance basis before a real public. It laid the groundwork for such admirable professional groups as Central City Opera, Santa Fe and, most recently, Caramoor.

You were personally involved with the first of these?

Central City was a dream, and I still remember with pride and pleasure the *Barber* and *Orfeo*, both in English, that we did in 1941. And in 1947, *Fidelio* with Regina Resnik, still a soprano. The enthusiasm of the audience was one of the most gratifying rewards in all my years of work in this country.

Television has done much to "bring opera to the people" in America, and your involvement in it dates to the early days of the industry.

Yes, my interest in TV's operatic potential began during the war. Sometime in 1943 I had a discussion with General Sarnoff, who was at that time on the Met board, and he invited me to join NBC's pioneer group of TV producers, as director of musical activities. By 1944 there were only about 5,000 TV sets in general use, most of them contributed by NBC to veterans' hospitals, so our experiment was aimed at a truly experimental public. The mail response was overwhelmingly favorable, and our viewers rated opera second only to sports in popularity. By the way, it wasn't long before I got some first-hand experience in sports broadcasting as well.

How did that happen?

When Mr. Petrillo called the famous strike of the musician's union, we had to suspend opera activities for a while. But I was still on the NBC payroll, so they decided to send me down to St. Nicholas Arena as video director for the wrestling matches. What a mess! No one had told me the matches were rigged, so my maneuvers were somewhat less than idiomatic. John F. Royall of NBC got on the phone and demanded to know "what idiot is handling the cameras tonight?" As the strike wore on, we decided to resume our opera experiments, using RCA recordings with young singers miming the action in "lip-synch." I remember that *Variety* reviewed our telecast of *Pagliacci* (with Gigli on the soundtrack), and while they praised the visual side of our efforts, they felt it was a pity that our modest budget wouldn't allow us "better voices"!

Throughout your adventures with producing opera in America, you held the post of staff director at the Met.

Yes, I was back every season—mostly frustrated, but doing what I could within the system. In my struggle to raise production standards I got plenty of support from Irving Kolodin. But Olin Downes, though personally charming, was distinctly conservative in his tastes; he didn't always approve of my attempts at innovation, and I suspect he'd never quite forgiven me for the Philadelphia

Welitsch and Reiner, colleagues of sensational 1949 Salome

season. The material for change was there, particularly as the new breed of young Americans rose to prominence during the war years. But what could one do against the strictures of limited time and money?

Even so, by the late forties the Met began to think big again. The new Ring *cycle you directed in 1948 . . .*

It wasn't so big as you think, for several reasons. When the old *Ring* sets had literally fallen apart onstage, the Guild came up with funds to produce a fresh version of the whole cycle, and Lee Simonson was engaged to design it. It's painful to speak critically of a colleague whom one liked and respected, but I feel that with Simonson the entire project was doomed from the start. At our first meeting he said, "I have an idea. I want to make the *Ring* intimate." And in a sense he did, since he'd conceived of this whole enormous work in terms of the spoken theater. That was his outlook, you see, refined by years of outstanding work for the Theatre Guild. But what worked for Ibsen didn't work so well for Wagner. I did everything I could to influence him, but even though he scrupulously honored all the needs of the ground plans I had given him, the sets came out looking cramped and fussy, in some cases mixing half-hearted stylization with minutely realistic details. Hardly a cosmic approach to the *Ring*! And remember that the entire cycle was prepared for first performances to be given within a single month. Most of the rehearsing, as usual, took place on the roof stage, giving the singers little practice in negotiating all the steps and levels of the sets—and those for *Rheingold* were particularly treacherous. But there was such a great eagerness in the public to hear the *Ring* again that the visual deficiencies weren't criticized too harshly.

And I must admit they *heard* some excellent performances. Fritz Stiedry had worked hard and well, and his coolly analytical expertise was everywhere apparent. Some individual singers were splendid, but I could hardly count it as a directorial achievement. The underlying concept of the production was wrong, and there was nothing I could do to rise above it. This, by the way, was one of the reasons why money alone couldn't improve the Met's production standards. A director would be assigned a new production, but at the same time he would be assigned his designer, with little or no choice in the matter. Such uneasy collaborations seldom produced the hoped-for results.

Still, you must have been gratified with some of the many productions you supervised during the Johnson years.

Very few. I think the ensemble playing of the *Figaro* and *Don Giovanni* revivals was a marked improvement on previous standards, even if the productions were otherwise unsatisfactory in visual terms. *Alceste* with Rychtarik and *Trovatore* with Harry Horner were two others that I would call reasonably successful. And I was pleased with the 1949 revival of *Salome*.

Those legendary performances with Ljuba Welitsch and Fritz Reiner?

For which we had the good fortune of an excellent, if old, set by Oenslager and nearly three months' rehearsal on the roof stage. This was used mostly by Reiner, the orchestra and the Met regulars in the cast, with Welitsch arriving somewhat later—fresh from European triumphs as Salome, and bringing with her the costumes she had worn over there. At my urging she showed me what she planned to wear for her entrance: a splendid green cloak (remember, she had strikingly red hair) and under that nothing but the filmy swathings of her seven veils! "My dear child," I said, "when Salome first appears she's an innocent adolescent girl. It's only after her sexuality has been awakened by Jochanaan that she thinks of seducing Herod with an erotic dance." Welitsch was as stubborn as Salome herself, and our discussion was soon transferred to Johnson's office.

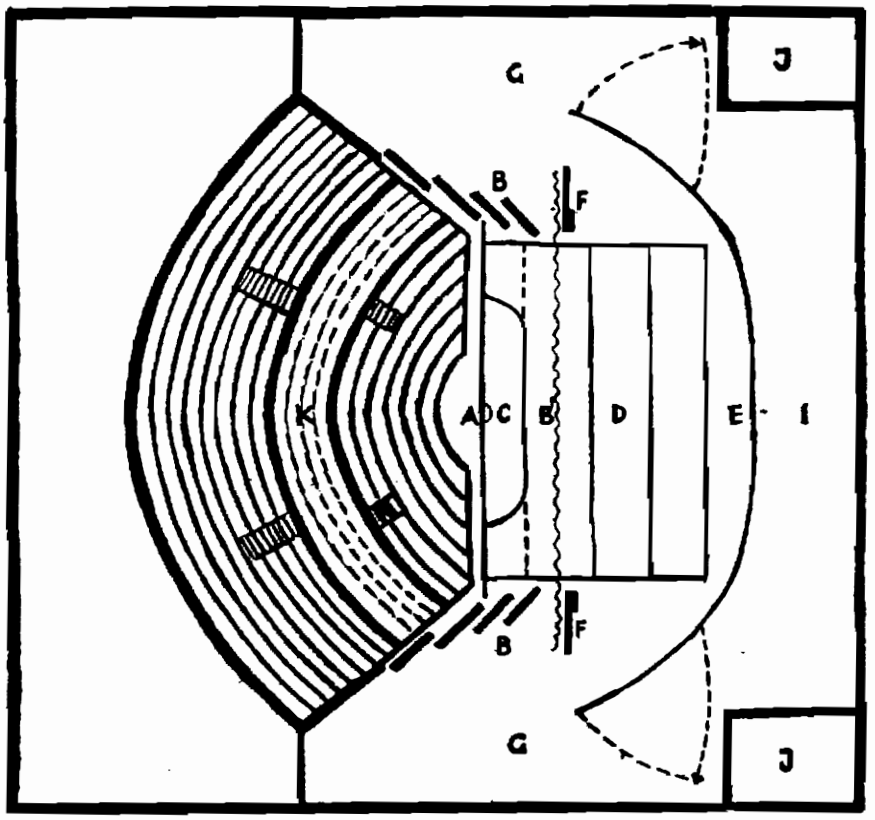
Johnson, I must tell you, was no fighter, and at that point in my Met career I wasn't much of one myself. The diva was adamant, so I finally said, "It's Mme. Welitsch's debut, after all, so perhaps it's best to let her wear what she pleases." Victorious, she started to sweep out of the office, then turned suddenly and asked with disarming simplicity, "Well, what did you have in mind?" When I showed her Irene Sharaff's costumes, she finally agreed to a change of wardrobe, and we made a happy compromise: she wore the Sharaff costume for her entrance, and I found a moment in the score earlier than Strauss' own stage directions to let her slip into the wings and into the seductive draperies that had helped make her the toast of Vienna.

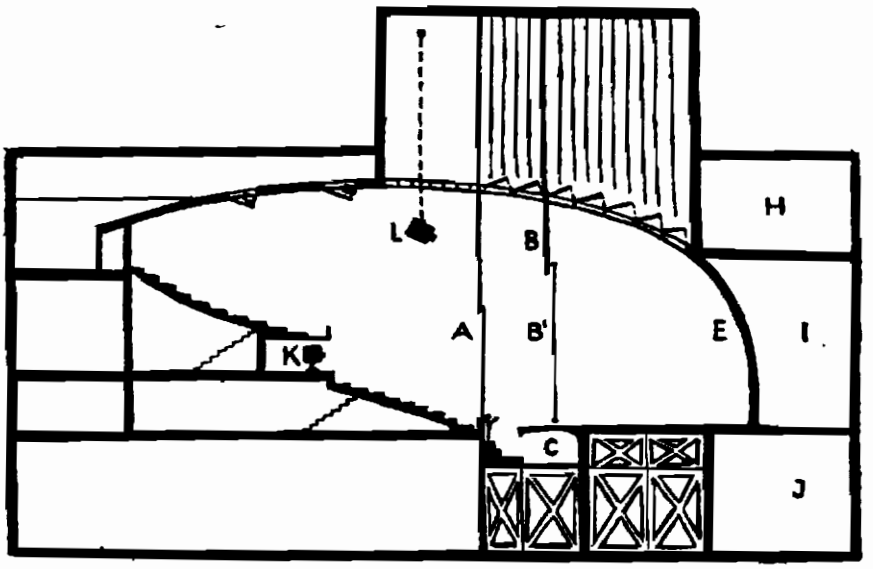
The working atmosphere of that production was positively electric, from the moment she arrived through the opening night. There was considerable tension between her and Reiner—they were both making their Met debut —but each one scored a resounding personal triumph.

(To be concluded next week)

Memoirs of an Invisible Man—IV

Herbert Graf recalls fifty years of theater: a dialogue with Francis Rizzo





Dr. Graf's copyrighted design for a television opera theater, with cameras stationed on level K free to view production onstage (B to E) from all angles

1949 was the last year of Edward Johnson's regime, but your Met career continued through the Bing administration.

I had already made up my mind to quit the Met by 1950. After sixteen years, I felt it was time to go. But Bing told me he was counting on my veteran familiarity with the workings of the Met, and he urged me to stay to help out during the transitional period. When he offered me the second new production of his opening season, *Der Fliegende Holländer*, I found it hard to turn the offer down, especially since he gave me free choice of a designer. Alas, the joy of finally working with Robert Edmond Jones at the Met was cut short by the poor man's early departure for the hospital!

There have been other notable productions of yours at the Met since then.

Rigoletto and *Don Giovanni* were successful, and Berman's designs for both were quite rightly admired by almost everybody. But if you want to know which of my Met productions pleased me most, I'd have to say the *Elektra* with Rudolf Heinrich during the first year at Lincoln Center. I'm convinced that the opera lies squarely in the mainstream of German Expressionism—the psychology Hofmannsthal applied to the characters is proto-Freudian, as far removed from ancient Greece as the music Strauss wrote in response to it—and I was given the freedom to produce it just that way. But I can't say I got much satisfaction from the rest of my extended tenure with the company. No doubt it was my own fault for staying on longer than I'd planned, and I now look back on the fifties as a decade of marking time. Up to 1960, I was spending a good part of each season in New York, since it was still customary for Met directors to check up regularly on old productions, calling corrective rehearsals when necessary and working new singers into the cast. This practice is no longer fashionable, and in fact it's now considered infra dig for a director to be seen in town for any more than a day after his premiere! So my ties with the Met have slackened considerably over the last ten years.

By the close of World War II, you'd begun to spend more and more time in Europe.

Yes, at first in Italy, particularly in Florence, my first and favorite "Italian home." It was there that I began to work with Callas, and the *Vespri Siciliani* we did together led to debuts for both of us at La Scala. I traveled about quite a bit—Rome, Naples, Verona, Palermo, Venice—and to date I've done over sixty productions in Italy.

But by 1960, Switzerland had become your home base?

My move to Zurich marked the formal ending of my long sojourn in America. When I was offered the managership of the Stadttheater, I took it as a reaction to twenty-four years of compromise. Not that I relished administrative power in itself: what I wanted was total freedom of choice in repertory, casting, designers and rehearsal time. Unfortunately, my freedom proved less than total in Zurich. I soon found that I had inherited quite a few singers who, despite their all too obvious inadequacy, could not be dismissed. Equally tenacious were prevailing repertory policies—a disturbing tendency toward too much operetta—and language, a nightmare of inconsistency.

It was Bruno Walter who had told me Switzerland was the ideal place for opera: with a very nearly trilingual public, opera in the original was a reasonable policy. Artistic purism aside, I welcomed such a policy as part of my plan to bring to Zurich young American singers eager to build a repertory without the inconvenience of learning *Manon* or *Bohème* in German translation. Nonetheless, I was careful not to insist too much or too soon on the matter, and after doing an Italian *Otello* I decided to do *Così* in German. "Why are we denied the original text?" complained the press. But when we followed the *Così* with a *Don Giovanni* in Italian, the same newspapers decided that "it would have been better in German"!

Even the opera school I'd established as a working adjunct to the theater had trouble functioning in a meaningful way. Since the student singers were all but excluded from regular performances, I proposed a once-monthly performance for them on Monday nights, at reduced prices. "Impossible!" was the official verdict: on Mondays the theater must remain dark. My frustration was compounded by the fact that the young singers whom I could use so sparingly included such talents as Gwyneth Jones, James McCracken, Reri Grist and Regina Sarfaty. So in my flight from compromise I found myself mired down in total disillusionment. I handed in my resignation in 1962.

And moved on to Geneva?

Not immediately. For the next two years I did some guest productions at the Grand Théâtre, by then a new and admirably modern opera house, but it wasn't until 1965 that I was invited to take over its management. After the storm and scandal of Zurich, no one was more surprised than I at this offer.

But you accepted, and you've been there ever since.

My work in Geneva has certainly brought me many satisfactions, and with the opening of the Centre Lyrique in 1967 I made a good start in building the sort of opera school I'd dreamt of for so many years.

The educational theme is sounded strongly in all three of your books—the need for training audiences as well as performers. Do you feel that the future well-being of opera depends on our efforts in that direction?

Its survival depends finally on creativity, the primary gifts of those who will write tomorrow's operas. But its well-being is surely affected by the quality of its present and future interpreters and the degree of response it gets from the public. Both can be improved by what might narrowly be described as "training."

Look, I'm not a "brilliant" stage director in the style of

a Reinhardt or a Zeffirelli, and even though I can appreciate that sort of virtuosity, it's neither part of my nature nor my aim. I'm a professor's son, an earnest worker, a know-how man who believes that certain aspects of operatic know-how can be passed along to others. People say Toscanini was a genius, but for me his ideas, his artistic insights, weren't the stuff of "genius"; *that* came out in his amazing power to put his ideas across—simple, straightforward common sense, conveyed with the thrust and impact of revelation. In that sense he trained everyone who ever worked with him.

Today's young opera talents, not only singers but conductors and stage directors, have steadily increasing opportunities to shape their skill in every aspect of operatic production. Isn't that a healthy sign for opera's future?

For the most part, yes. But there may be a certain danger in the mass production of "well-rounded" performers. Opera today is visually superior to what it was before. More and more we can depend on seeing young and personable singers who truly *act*, within the framework of a well-conceived and carefully executed production. But the more we stress surfaces and rely on technique to make a point, the more we risk losing the real expressive power opera has to offer.

I think we may have misunderstood something basic about the old-time singers, whose "theatrical failings" we recall with benign amusement. Poor actors they may have been, but they compensated with the affective power of their singing. And I don't mean sheer beauty of voice. When we hear Caruso sing "Se quel guerrier' io fossi!" we should be just as impressed by his clear, meaningful delivery of these words as by the opulence of tone. Or take my boyhood memory of Schmedes in the second act of *Siegfried*. Why, after all these years, does his treatment of a single phrase—"Ach, möcht ich Sohn meine Mutter sehen!" sung in a voice well past its prime—linger so vividly in my mind? It is because, like Caruso, he knew how to act through the medium that was central to his artistic personality—the singing voice.

Rehearsing Vinay in the last act of *Otello*, Toscanini would get to the point where the tenor contemplates the murdered Desdemona, then suddenly break off with a shout: "Vinay, don't sing!" Then, in a cracked, tremulous voice he would sing the phrase himself: "E tu, come sei pallida . . ." The import of these words was so shatteringly, so movingly conveyed that Vinay had a hard time matching the Maestro's example. The greatest opera performers have had this in common—Lehmann, Flagstad, Melchior, Callas— the ability to sing meaningfully, even if they were not all wholly convincing as actors in the conventional sense.

That's why, in training opera singers today, superficial technique must not be allowed to dampen or replace the expressiveness that is opera's only raison d'être. In the days when the conductor dominated the production, there was less danger of undervaluing this factor; the point of departure then could be summed up with the phrase "In the beginning was the Word." These days, the business of realizing opera's dramatic content is in the hands of the director and designer. So the singer, with everything around him "looking good," is called on less and less to use his own resources in the interests of expression.

Another aspect of the old-time singer's self-reliance was the care with which he used his gifts. He didn't try to sing too much or too often, and the days leading up to a performance were spent in quiet preparation for that big event. I agree with those who say that today's singers try to get too much mileage, literally and figuratively, out of their talents. You simply can't jet around from one engagement to the next for the better part of the year without some loss of depth in what you're doing. That's why we must avoid training personal expressiveness out of young singers by reducing them to efficient, interchangeable parts in a well-oiled machine.

Another of your lifelong concerns is the need for the structural reform of the opera house, the creation of a flexible theater suited to the widest range of performing styles.

I once thought America would be the ideal place for such reform, but progress has been slow and the result inconclusive. Before a new theater goes up, there's lots of idealistic and visionary talk about multipurpose facilities, and endless consultations are held with directors and designers to insure that playing space and audience deployment will allow the maximum fluidity of performing style. But then the architects take over and produce a compromise scheme that serves no one's interests fully. Too many cooks! I suppose Tyrone Guthrie came closest to getting what he wanted in Minneapolis, but even there his victory was only partial.

Despite all pious disclaimers, most of the men responsible for our new theaters disregard the corpus of opera literature already in existence, to say nothing of those works still to be written, in favor of one narrow segment of it: we are fundamentally bound to the romantic, nineteenth-century convention of the picture-frame stage and the representational format of the bourgeois dramas written for it. But this is only one convention among many! You have only to see the old baroque court theater in Bayreuth to realize how anti-illusionistic opera was before Wagner bent its form to suit his purposes and built a theater of his own to realize them. Makers of opera began to react against the limitations of the romantic genre almost as soon as Wagner had brought it to apotheosis, and the most interesting operatic output of today comes from composers like Britten, Henze and Penderecki, who cannot and will not confine their dramatic vision to the peephole presentation of the well-made play.

Today's boxed-in opera composers should feel encouraged by your own recent experiments with productions of works outside the nineteenth-century mold.

My interest in this sort of production is far from recent! Don't forget that I began staging Handel oratorios more than forty years ago, when I was still in Breslau and

Frankfurt. When I settled in America, I tried to carry on my experiments along these lines, devising projects for epic musico-dramatic events with such like-minded theater men as Norman Bel Geddes and Robert Edmond Jones. But it was virtually impossible to find backing for these ventures, and only three of them were carried to completion: a scenic production of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* at Montreal, one of Haydn's *Creation* near Denver, and Handel's oratorio *Belshazzar* at Indiana University. Yet my enthusiasm for this form of musical theater has never left me, and the success of my staging of Cavalieri's *Rappresentazione di Anima e di Corpo* at Salzburg, repeated annually since 1968, has encouraged me to plan similar productions for Geneva. Right now, for instance, we're preparing *Belshazzar*. And the possibilities of other such works, from Cavalieri's time through our own, are rich. Think of *La Damnation de Faust* or *Moses und Aron*.

Works we uneasily classify as operas . . .

Uneasily, because it's obvious that they can't be presented properly within the limits of the nineteenth-century opera house—limits which further hinder the overdue alliance between television and musical theater.

For the past few years you've been making videotapes of some of your Geneva productions. How does this work?

The basic idea is to plan a staged production to be compatible in every possible way with TV taping. Even within the convention of the proscenium stage much can be done to accommodate the cinematic fluidity of the medium, provided its needs are considered from the very beginning. With a revolving stage the problem is already minimized. The four basic sets for *La Traviata,* for example, can readily be expanded into six or seven different locales—Violetta's Paris boudoir, indoors as well as outdoors in the second act, and so on.

This scheme, of course, allows for scene changes during actual performance in the theater. And afterward, during closed sessions held specially for TV, the onstage shifts allow a variety of angles, even with few and stationary cameras. We had an arrangement of this sort when we did the original version of *Boris* last year, in collaboration with French and Swiss television, and *Rappresentazione* was taped in the Salzburg production for Eurovision. It works but it's not ideal. What we should have is an actual performance with a regular public which could be simultaneously videotaped. This would require the same "liberated" theater we spoke of earlier.

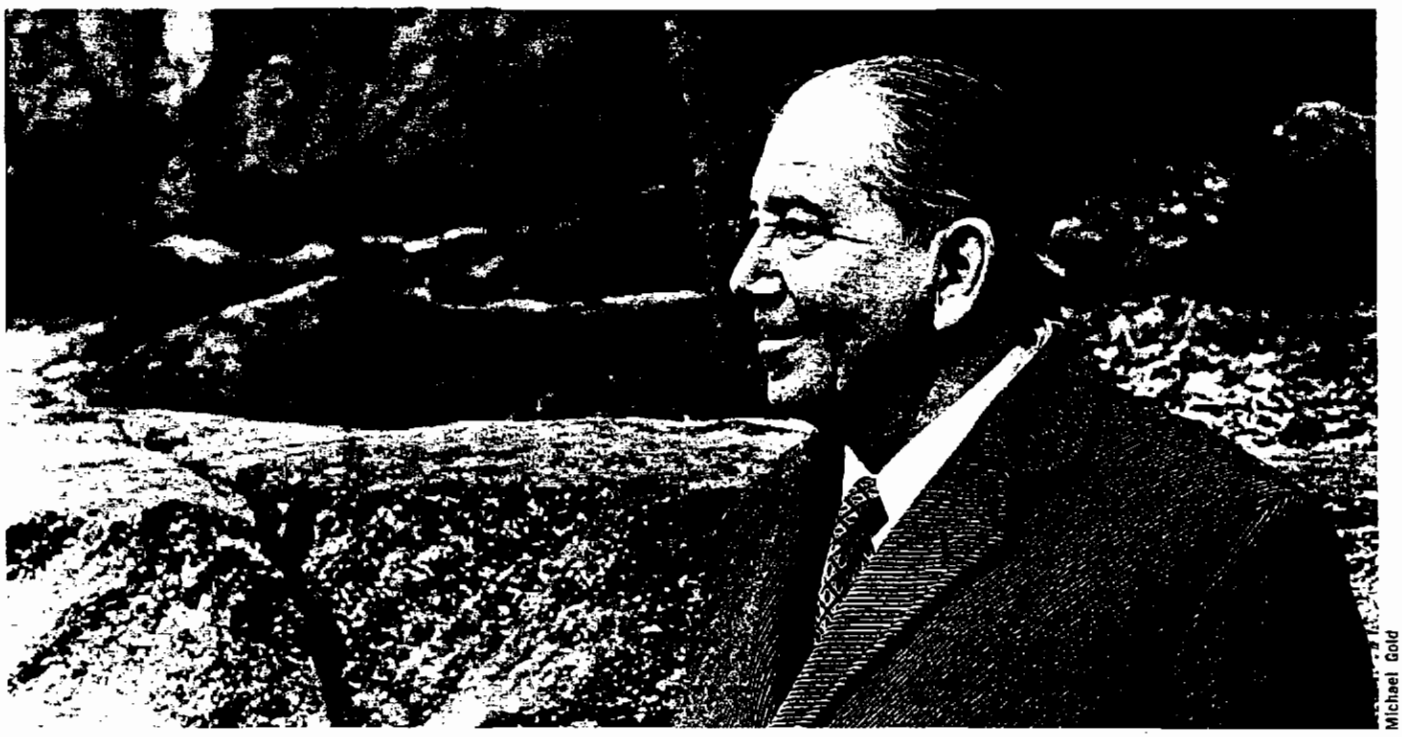
Imagine a playing area which can be surrounded by the public on three sides. The semicircular parterre would rise away from the stage to the point where boxes are usually situated; instead of these, a deep opening encircles the seats below; and above, more rows of seats, corresponding to the upper regions of a normal theater. That semicircular opening is the vantage point of a whole battery of unseen video cameras, trained on the stage and free to maneuver for angles just as they would on the floor of a TV studio. Direct broadcast or taping could be done without discomfiting the performers or the public.

Hopefully, tomorrow's opera theater?

Yes, we seem to have come all the way from opera's gaslit yesterdays to somewhere in its electronic future. And since you asked me to recall only my own operatic past, don't you think we ought to stop right here?

(This is the last of four articles)

Herbert Graf, head of Geneva's Grand Théâtre, in New York's Central Park last spring



Michael Gold

Graf, Herbert (*b* Vienna, 10 April 1904; *d* Geneva, 5 April 1973). Austrian producer and administrator, naturalized American. He was the son of the critic Max Graf and studied in Vienna. After appointments in Münster, Breslau and Frankfurt am Main, he was forced to leave Germany and went to the USA where he worked first with the Philadelphia Opera, and then, from 1936 to 1960, at the Metropolitan, New York. From 1960 to 1962 he was director of the Zurich Opera and from 1965 until his death, of the Grand Théâtre, Geneva. He first worked at Salzburg in 1936, producing *Die Meistersinger* and *Die Zauberflöte* for Toscanini, and after World War II was a frequent visitor there. In the 1958–9 season he produced Handel's *Samson*, *Boris Godunov* and *Parsifal* at Covent Garden. He also taught at opera schools in the USA and in Switzerland, where he especially encouraged young American singers. His productions relied on a traditional approach and technique.

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HAROLD ROSENTHAL

Graf, Herbert (*b* Vienna, 10 April 1904; *d* Geneva, 5 April 1973). American director and administrator. He was the son of the critic Max Graf and studied in Vienna. After appointments in Münster, Breslau and Frankfurt, he was forced to leave Germany and went to the USA, later becoming a naturalized American. In the USA he worked first with the Philadelphia Opera (1934–5) and then at the Metropolitan (1936–60). From 1960 to 1962 he was director of the Zürich Opera and from 1965 until his death of the Grand Théâtre, Geneva. He first worked at Salzburg in 1936 and after World War II was a frequent visitor there. His productions relied on a traditional approach and technique.

Graf taught in the opera department at the Curtis Institute, Philadelphia (1950–60), as well as at several other opera schools, including the Music Academy of the West (Santa Barbara, California) and the International Opera Studio (Zürich), where he especially encouraged young American singers. He wrote three books, *The Opera and its Future in America* (New York, 1941), *Opera for the People* (Minneapolis, 1951) and *Producing Opera for America* (Zürich, 1961).

L. Mansouri: 'Herbert Graf, 1904–1973', *Opera*, xxiv (1973), 702–4

HAROLD ROSENTHAL/R

Graf, Max (*b* Vienna, 1 Oct 1873; *d* Vienna, 24 June 1958). Austrian music critic, father of Herbert Graf. He was the son of a Viennese newspaper publisher, and studied law (taking a doctorate), philosophy, history and philology at Vienna University, as well as music history with Hanslick and music theory with Bruckner. He took the doctorate in 1896 with a dissertation on the music of women in the Renaissance. From 1902 he taught musicology and musical aesthetics at the Conservatory of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde and when this became a state academy he was appointed to a lectureship in music history (1909–38). He worked as a music critic on the *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung*, and also wrote articles for the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, *Berliner Tagblatt*, *Vossische Zeitung* (Berlin), *Prager Tageblatt*, *Boston Transcript* and many musical and cultural periodicals.

Before World War II Graf was also a lecturer at the Austro-American Institute in Vienna (1930–35). For the centenary of Schubert's death, he organized the Vienna Music Festival (1928), as well as the Vienna May Music Festivals that came into being as a result, until 1936. When Austria was annexed (1938) Graf emigrated to the USA, where he worked at the New School of Social Research, New York, the Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, and Temple University, Philadelphia. He contributed to the *New York Times*, *Musical Courier* and other periodicals; several of his books appeared in English and met with great success. In 1947 he returned to Vienna. He held a seminar on music criticism at the Academy of Music (1947–50) and wrote reviews for the daily newspaper *Weltpresse* until it closed (1955). Graf was best known as a critic in pre-war Vienna, where he wrote extensively in support of Mahler, Schoenberg, Berg and Webern, and until his death he remained a champion of any young composer of talent; his fluent essays had considerable influence.

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