

Opera in Review

By JOHN ROSENFELD

Opera Without Action

The Dallas Lyric Theater had a big night, perhaps the biggest of its history, Monday with a concerted version of "La Traviata" at McFarlin Auditorium.

Not to infringe on the Metropolitan, which has the Verdi opera coming up May 9 (with Steber, Tucker and Merrill), the Lyric Theater did not attempt to stage it. They saved themselves the cost of scenery but otherwise took on an equal amount of trouble.

While we are so old-fashioned as to like our opera theatrical, this stunt worked very well and with an opus that can take it. For "Traviata," despite its derivation from Dumas' "Camille," is chiefly talk and now talk of the most dated kind.

A terse sensible narration, given without trills, fine writing or forced jocularity at the start of each act, served excellently. James Shelburne, from seasoned little theater circles, did the honors. The script was the informed handwork of Vin Lindhe, who once produced opera over the NBC Network with Radio City Music Hall forces.

THE DUMAS CONCEPT of a heart-of-gold courtesan and redemption through love may have been proved even temptuous Sarah Bernhardt with a stage vehicle. Today it is tolerable only in Verdi's lilting score.

To fault is "Traviata" even for Verdi. There are signs of haste in the writing, imitations of and quotations from Verdi himself. But it is still plenary genius in one of its freest moments. And "Traviata" was, 101 years ago, a new type of opera with contemporary middle-class instead of renaissance heroic characters.

The quintessence of Verdi is found in the duet between Giorgio Germont, the paternal baritone, and Violetta, the agile soprano. The scene embracing "Pura Siccome un Angelo" and "Dite all Giovinetto" is essential dramatic speech and is cushioned in as tuneful and still expressive music as was ever written.

As sung Monday night by Carolyn Friday and Richard Leatherwood, it almost took the show. Granted that the material was there, the singing also was first-class and worthy of the music.

MISS FRIDAY was a Violetta of both voice and heart. And her gown, cleverly designed, gave her the appearance of a Violetta for any stage; that is, for the festivities of "Traviata."

Violetta's music is weighty and only incidentally did it draw upon Miss Friday's skilled coloratura technique. This talent, abundantly displayed in "Don Pasquale" earlier in the year, was valuable for the odd cavatine-caballetta in Act I comprising the famous "Ah! Fors e Lui" and "Sempre Libera."

Otherwise she had no more troubles than encountered by the average coloratura soprano singing Violetta's music. Occasionally she had to force in the ensembles beyond her loveliest tones. When possible she remained in purest bel canto and again disclosed a soprano range and appealing warmth. Miss Friday is a woman of beau-

tifully. Her friends not only in the duet with Violetta but also where Giorgio is supposed to woe an audience, in "Di Provenza il Mar," wherein he proposes the seacoast as a girl-friend.

No other "Traviata" you will hear can have a Flora Bervoix of such vocal attainments as Carolyn Schlipf, a prima donna of other Lyric Theater performances. Smaller roles were articulate and musical in the hands of Jo Ann Person Jones, Thomas Sturges, Charles Coners (who staged the act), Robert Bertram, William Steenberg and Dillon White Jr.

The chorus, small but hand-picked, showed the careful training of Travis Shelton. The "Brindisi" of Act I was excellent and the Act III ensemble even better and properly massive.

THE ORCHESTRA, massed on stage right, negotiated the Verdi score with confidence if not always with precision or balance. The two preludes, however, were sympathetically sounded.

The production reflected the energies of Paul Vellucci, Lyric Theater director, who also directed. With the baton he has firm authority. Artistically he prefers the wide arc of Verdian melody to melodramatic punch and smooth coordination to stentorian free-wheeling.

THE "TRAVIATA" production, which ends the season's work for the Lyric Theater, had the cooperation of the newly-organized Creative Arts Guild.

Their efforts were shown in a museum-of-representative audience of 1,000 the largest yet drawn to a single performance by this group and almost large enough to pay the bills. They also distributed carnations in honor of Violetta, the "Dame aux Camellias."

There will be no repetition of the performance. It was presented by the SMU School of Music.

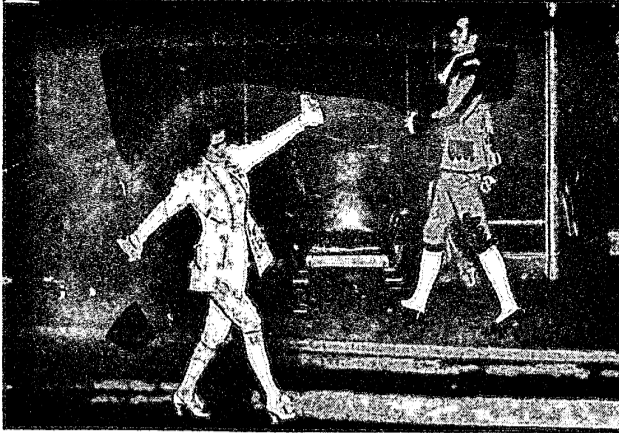
Paul Vellucci, musical director of the Lyric Theater.

Complete newsreel coverage of the hydrogen bomb test in the Pacific area will be presented on regular programs of several important theaters here this week, beginning Tuesday at the downtown Majestic and Palace.

The newsreels include a personal message from President Eisenhower, who has urged all citizens to see the films.

As other films of the H-bomb test become available they will be shown at the suburban Forest, Village and Lakewood, beginning Wednesday, and at the downtown Tower starting Thursday.

Varsity 4719 North Plaza—LA-9411 Starts Today—Open 5:45 "STRANGER WORE A GUN" Color by Technicolor Randolph Scott—Claire Trevor "GREAT DIAMOND ROBBERY" Red Skelton "ESCAPE FROM FORT BRAVO" William Holden DRIVE-IN THEATRE 5306 W. JEFFERSON—PH-YU-5433



MOZART'S SMASH FINALE The memorable climax to Act I, Scene 4 of Mozart's comic opera, "Le Nozze di Figaro," comes in the celebrated aria, "Non più andrai." . . . Above, left to right, Margaret Roggero as Cherubino prances properly while Cesare Siepi, as Figaro, sings the mock military air. . . The pair will be seen in the Metropolitan Opera Company production of the Mozart classic May 9 at State Fair Auditorium.

STAGE REVIEW: Actress Fills Evening With Varied Spells

A devoted following from her many film, radio, television and stage appearances filled the Coronet Theater to its 441-seat capacity Monday evening to see and hear Agnes Moorehead. Both senses were richly rewarded, from the auburn beauty's piquant and elegant mauve to the splendid range of an artist who swept unerringly from Biblical stories to Ring Lardner to the mandatory, "Sorry, Wrong Number" sketch and with a lot more in between.

Miss Moorehead came to Dallas for the dramatic concert under the aegis of Paul Gregory, who had previously sent her into local stage history as a vital element in the First Drama Quartette's "Don Juan in Hell." As before, Miss Moorehead was performing to Charles Laughton's canny direction, and the results were almost as spellbinding in solo as they were in ensemble.

The glow of her impact bore the Gregory trade-mark in the forward surge of emotional interest, the near abstract simplicity of the stage picture and the superior taste of materials. Even though the evening was designed all of a piece, several of its parts would not be forgotten out of context.

HER DELIVERY of "Moses and the Bullrushes," in the version devised from a wildly imaginative maid-of-all-work in her childhood home in Ohio was a mastery illusion, and so was the impish excerpt from James Thurber. The underlying poignancy of Lardner's "Some Like 'Em Cold" welled through the Moorehead reading for all its gruff surface humor, and there were shining bits of impudence culled from fourteenth century cookbooks, an imperious letter from

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NIGHT SPOTS: Duke Dishes Fat Tones In Old Way

By WILLIAM TAYLOR Duke Ellington brought some old masters and at least one bright new jazz talent to the Plantation Monday night. The oldest big-name jazz band displayed the fine tonal command and mellow orchestration for which it is justly renowned.

Ellington favorites like "Take the A Train," with skat lyrics; "All the Things You Are," with Rick Henderson's mellow sax, and "Black and Tan Fantasy," featuring the amazing range of Bird Woodman's trombone, provided memorable high lights.

Drummer Dave Black proved a fast man on his feet, literally, with a bass roll highlighting a 15-minute solo on the skins. William "Cat" Anderson rode high on trumpet

When it was done there was a warm ovation and a spray of red roses in return for an absorbing evening. Still, there was something regal about it all and the flexible artistry was somehow kept to itself, even as it communicated its stirring warmth. We liked best her moods as raconteur rather than reader, but it was a rare moment that wasn't intense.—R.A.

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Hollywood in Person

By SHEILAH GRAHAM

Cary Sought Kelly For 'Catch a Thief'

HOLLYWOOD, Calif. (NANA).—Cary Grant wanted Grace Kelly for his leading lady in "Catch a Thief," but Alfred Hitchcock, who's now thin, couldn't spring the prize blonde from Metro. I asked Hitch what was the secret of Grace's man appeal, and he replied: "Watch her love scenes with Jimmy Stewart in 'Rear Window.'"

Zsa Zsa Gabor will stay with mama Jolie Gabor—but not at the Plaza Hotel, where Rubiosa is currently domiciled.

Corinne Calvet and John Bromfield, who she recently divorced, are closer because of the sleeping-pill scare.

Now it can be told: Deborah Kerr almost didn't land that sexy role in "From Here to Eternity."

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FOR THOSE WHO prefer soulful performances with only occasional virtuosic antics for variety relief, the Duke's men dished up a rewarding platter.

Season Rehearsal Special to The News SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS.—The San Antonio Municipal Opera Company is currently in rehearsal for its projected summer season. Vittorio Palombi will be production manager of the series to be staged in the Sunken Garden.

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Two Held Over

Two movies now showing at suburban theaters will be held over. "Stalag 17," which stars William Holden in his academy award-winning role, will continue through Wednesday at the Village, while "The Long, Long Trailer," with Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz, will be held through Thursday at the Wilshire.

THE REASON Mrs. Hugh Marlowe can not return here to her very ill mother, Mrs. Sam Wood, is that her two children have the chicken pox in New York. She's waiting until they feel better, then she'll come.

Joan Evans' husband, Kirby Weatherly, is home from the hospital after minor surgery.

In spite of the "we're just good friends" line, Eleanor Parker and Painter Paul Clemens are very much in love, according to their closest friends, who can feel the vibrations.

ROCK HUDSON will surprise even his biggest boosters in "The Magnificent Obsession." The handsome star gives a magnificent performance. Rock, by the way, goes to Ireland for his next picture.

Mrs. Edward G. Robinson has returned from her painting exhibition

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