

Price's *Butterfly*—Kuchta, R. Lhevinne, Cliburn

MUSICOLOGY, generally speaking, is not the first concern of an opera theatre, but its ends are served now and then by chance, as in the accident of Metropolitan scheduling that provided the opportunity to hear Puccini's two "Oriental" operas within twenty-four hours. Moreover, they came in the sequence of composition, with the much-played "Madama Butterfly" on Friday evening and the newly revived "Turandot" the next afternoon.

What was heard confirmed the tentative feeling (to be derived from reading the scores or comparing the sound of the two in the recordings) that there is, underneath the surface lacquer of likeness, a considerable difference in the tone and character of the two works. As befits its gently tragic subject, "Butterfly" is all curves and softness, a gathering of subtle forces around the pathetic figure of Cio Cio San. "Turandot," for its part, is decidedly angular, a contest for supremacy among violently opposed interests which Puccini expressed through some of his strongest, most vividly scored music. If the two have a common ground, it is not on the Pacific strand, but in the Campagna where Tosca has her abode. In both works, when Puccini reaches for the deepest tragic note of which he is capable, it turns out, more often than not, to be the one he has sounded in the torture scene of "Tosca," or in the outbursts that convey Tosca's revulsion at Scarpia's extra-legal liberties.

That this "Butterfly" stirred any such thoughts had little to do with the non-creative conducting of Jean Morel, everything to do with the fine-sounding, many-faceted *Butterfly* of Leontyne Price. For her third Metropolitan role Miss Price produced her "third voice": a Puccini voice quite different from those she employed in either predecessor works of Verdi ("Trovatore" and "Aida"). Literally speaking, it was of course not a different voice, but so completely altered a usage of her strong resources as to suggest another set of stops completely.

How consciously this was done could be gauged from her recourse to the darker, broader sound when it was appropriate: in one sequence of Act I (after the Uncle Priest), at the climax of "Un bel di" and the scene with Sharpless in Act II—in short, wherever it would make a telling dramatic effect. For the most part, the girlish character

of *Butterfly* was portrayed through a light, well-focused sound which was at her command up to the top note of the entrance. She thus gave Puccini all he asked (and is seldom granted) in a moment of vocal fulfillment both rare and beautiful.

Dramatically, Miss Price is well on her way to a memorable creation, too. She manages to disguise her substantial physique believably, she glides rather than merely walking, and a cleverly conceived facial makeup gave her a skin tone as well as features believably Oriental. But she hasn't yet quite decided what to do with her hands; part of the time they dangled beside her, part of the time she formed them into stiff-fingered projections that were more distracting than meaningful. Authenticity is all right in its place, but its place in "Butterfly" is in the singing of the music. The exotic flavors that one adds for seasoning are very well—as in

the hand motions and gestures with which she "acted out" her artful "Un bel di" for Suzuki—but not if they clash with basic taste.

Unfortunately for the effect Miss Price was striving to achieve, William Olvis (a good-looking, youthful Pinkerton) was more concerned with vocal problems than with playing to his partner, and Lorenzo Testi's Sharpless appeared to have come on stage straight from the Galleria in Milan rather than from the American consulate in Nagasaki. (Brown shoes with seersucker? Really.) It would, I am sure, have surprised Puccini to discover that he wrote as many "arias" for Sharpless as Testi made of his conversational exchanges, thanks to the obliging Morel. Helen Vanni sang a very good Suzuki.

The season's second "Elektra" produced a new Chrysothemis in Gladys Kuchta, an American soprano recently active in Germany. As the main challenge to Chrysothemis is to be heard, its revelation of vocal capacity, for a debut, is rather specialized. Miss Kuchta was always audible, and her bright, strong soprano gave evidence of being under sure control. But it will take another, different kind of part to define what her qualities really are. This was,

Mostly People

By Jeannette Nichols

IT'S mostly people
who make the world happen.

Steeped with them,
mornings get ridden like buses
and they strap-hang
their wondrous occasional faces
into movies and mealtimes
and lovebeds.

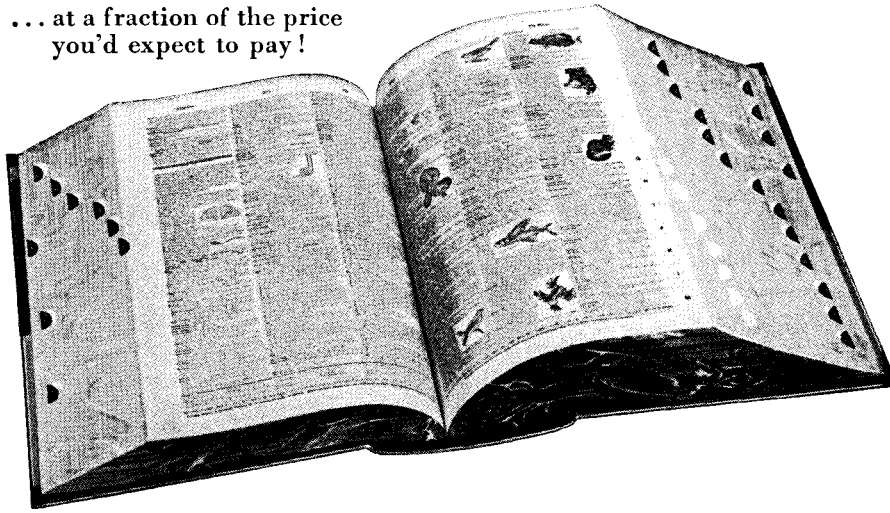
New and small and peculiar
people get born every inhale,
come and gone
like little old men
and little old wizened women
who suck and bawl
and grow up and up
to cram sideways into all
those grand yesterdays
they learn to believe in.

And it's most people
who make the others necessary,
like to love, to give to,
to buy from and curse at;
and without such a half-cocked
people-pocked kind of world
which has locked us all up
in one bright birthday package
to open at any whim of a face,

why then, to be born and get dead
would be just one long yawn.

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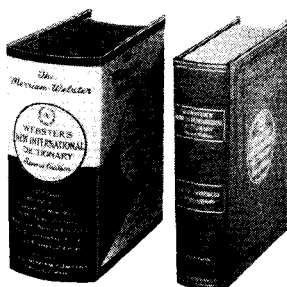
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on the whole, a noisier, stormier "Elektra" than the previous one directed by Joseph Rosenstock. Among other changes (Hermann Uhde as Orest, Karl Liebl as Aegisth), Regina Resnik's Klytemnestra was notable for fervor, discipline, and excellence of conception. If, as rumored, this was her final Metropolitan appearance, she leaves at a high point of artistic esteem.

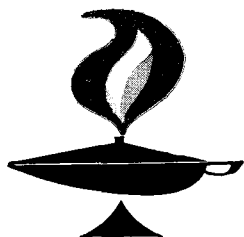
THE maxim that "Those who can, do; those who can't, teach" had rough treatment at the concert of the National Orchestral Association in the Hunter College Assembly Hall at which Rosina Lhevinne played the E minor Concerto of Chopin. To be sure, Mme. Lhevinne (whose pupils include Van Cliburn) was surrounded from childhood with exemplary musical influences, including the example of her distinguished husband Josef. But this carries her now to her eighty-first year, which, in point of pianism, is a more than ripe age.

Mme. Lhevinne's performance, however, spoke much more of assets than liabilities, of the advantages of her past rather than the disadvantages of her present. Now and then in a fast passage, hands and keys were not exactly matched, but she never missed a meaningful phrase, failed an emotional issue, or undervalued a musical climax. In the "Romanza," Mme. Lhevinne's spacious phrasing, her unhurried pursuit of each florid elaboration reminded us that no more than vocal wisdom is in the throat is pianistic virtue in the fingers. John Barnett's productive work with this ensemble was evident not only in its responsive support of Mme. Lhevinne, but also in a spirited, technically clean production of William Bergsma's adroit "Chameleon" variations.

Some of the late Dimitri Mitropoulos's staunchest co-workers joined in a memorial concert in his name, for which the Musician's Aid Society was the worthy beneficiary of a large attendance in Carnegie Hall. Among them were Renata Tebaldi and Eleanor Steber, Mignon Dunn and Barry Morell, as well as Van Cliburn, who made a double contribution as pianist-conductor of the Prokofiev Concerto No. 3. Cliburn did his unconventional task in the conventional way, giving cues as convenience permitted, supplemented by the concertmaster's bow as baton when required. He also performed his primary task well, aided no little by a "see-through" transparent plastic top for the piano which, even when raised, enabled him to see and be seen. Meanwhile, Leonard Bernstein was backstage awaiting a turn to speak, and conductors Karl Böhm and Fausto Cleva (who shared the program) were, doubtless, practising the piano.

—IRVING KOLODIN.

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Associate Education Editor: JOHN J. SCANLON

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Countdown on Federal Aid to Education

DURING THE campaign last fall both major parties pledged themselves to increased federal aid to education. The Democrats went beyond the Republicans in promising aid for teachers' salaries as well as for schoolhouse construction. Since the election, educators and others deeply concerned about our schools have waited eagerly to see whether the campaign promises would be remembered in February.

The President's message to Congress, highlights of which appear in this issue, indicates that the Administration is ready to move. Whether the majority in Congress is equally ready remains to be seen. The President's program already has encountered vigorous opposition.

Congressmen and Senators who vote against the President's program will do so for a variety of reasons. Some, of course, will be representing what they believe to be the wishes of their own constituents. Some will vote against the bill because they see education as a local rather than a national problem, because they believe that local communities or states can support the schools adequately, or because they consider education less important than other demands on the federal tax dollar.

A rider may be attached to the bill, prohibiting the use of federal funds in segregated schools. Many will vote for such an amendment because they oppose segregation, but, by so doing, they will make it easy for those opposed to integration to combine with those opposed to federal aid to defeat the bill.

The pace of desegregation must be accelerated, but this is a separate problem and ought not to be allowed to obscure the issue of school support. This issue should be fought out on its own merits. The federal aid bill should be kept clear of entanglements with other issues in order that each member of Congress may stand up and be counted; each voter has a right to know where his Congressmen and his Senators stand.

Last month in our pages, Senator Clark of Pennsylvania stated the case for increased federal aid, particularly for higher education. In this issue Senator Goldwater of Arizona offers an equally vigorous statement of the case against federal aid. Both sides should be heard because they represent widely divergent philosophical positions, theories of government, and interpretations of the fact that the U.S. Constitution ignores education altogether. They also represent different judgments of the seriousness of our educational needs.

The question of whether there shall be *any* federal aid to education is not at issue. We have had it for a long time in growing amounts and in many guises, and both the major parties are committed to its continuance. But President Kennedy's proposals for federal support on a much more massive scale go far beyond existing programs and may well provoke a major battle in the Eighty-seventh Congress. The outcome, whichever way it goes, is sure to have an enormous influence on the future of American education.

—P.W.