

BOOKED FOR TRAVEL

Squeeze Play

UNDER the guise of active employment I seem to have frittered away at least some of the winter, as I review it all now, getting a cram course in citrus fruit culture in Florida, and a taste of the high life in Southern California [SR, Feb. 1]. The curriculum did not include subjects I would have chosen had they been electives, but the fountainheads of knowledge were ideally located when one considers what has been going on in the rest of the country.

The seat of my orange education was the metropolis of Wabasso, which can readily be located on most road maps with the aid of a patient eye and a high-powered glass. It lies south of Melbourne and north of Vero Beach, if that is any help to you at all, and it is the home of the Hale Indian River Orange Groves. The Hale people pick, pack, and ship right on the grounds—operations that can be studied by the passer-by. They also dispense what must amount to all the citrus impedimenta ever assembled under one roof—every bit of it for sale. In addition they serve, on receipt of one thin dime, all the orange juice anyone cares to drink. Such offers are interpreted as dares in some minds, and one Sunday four boys pulled up and quaffed four gallons of juice before they left, presumably in a dangerously hyperacid condition, for the sports car races down the pike. The Hale people were paid forty cents, for which they were required to squeeze about 200 juice-sized oranges—or roughly one full field box. Not all the growers are quite that ingenuous and at least one stand along the route offers all the juice you can drink for a dime, by which *they* mean one glassful is all you can drink for a dime. It's a novel interpretation, but it sure saves oranges.

Oranges began growing somewhere in the tropical regions of southeastern Asia long before man started to write his memoirs. A thousand years or more later, citrus growing had been adopted in India and Persia, spreading into North Africa. Its culture is entwined with Greek history and mythology before the birth of Christ. Arabs carried the sour or Seville orange into Spain, Genoese sailors and Roman soldiers took it to Italy, and the Crusaders brought cuttings back home from the wars. Columbus the redoubtable brought citrus plants to Haiti on his second voyage in 1493, and nearly a

century later the Spaniards carried them into Florida, establishing an industry at St. Augustine. Later there were other settlements on Tampa Bay and the St. John's River. Indians who visited these civilized points took oranges back home with them, dropping seeds in the heavily forested areas and inadvertently starting wild orange groves. Some of the fruit that descended from wild trees later spawned groves that were rapidly expanded to meet the call from the markets in the North.

After the War Between the States, as they call that conflict in the orange belt, the citrus business developed some importance. In 1886 Florida shipped 1,000,000 boxes. It had grown fivefold by the winter of 1894-95, when a freeze wrecked the whole industry. The groves moved south after that, but it took nearly fifteen years to get production back into the 5,000,000-box bracket. Grapefruits, I had better tell you, have no common generic origins with oranges, or, if they do, history has no record of it. They first show up in the books on Jamaica when one Captain Shaddock brought a shaddock or pomelo into the Caribbean. Probably they derive from the pomelo, which is served today in Tahiti. Seedless grapefruits and a fancy refinement, pink seedless grapefruits, were developed just before the onset of World War I.

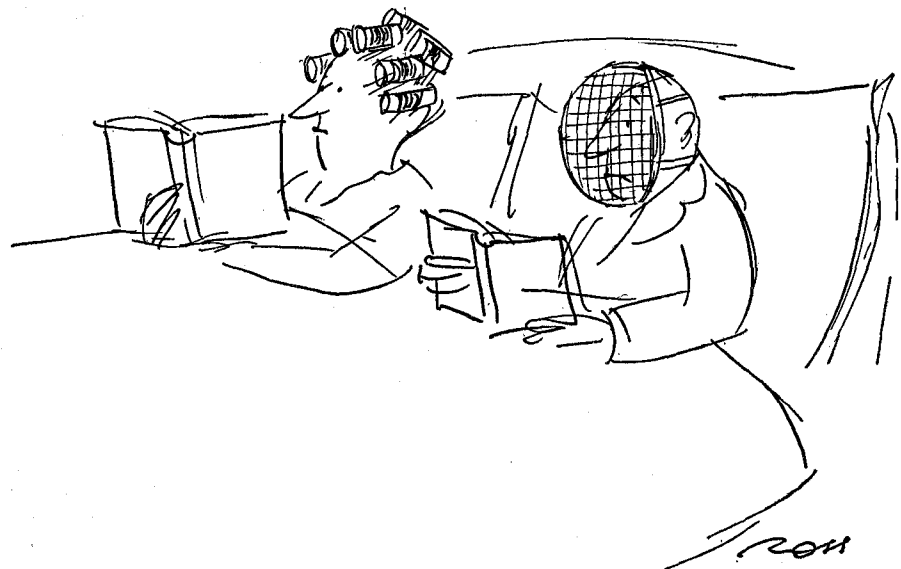
I'm not sure who took the census, but there are now 49,219,000 citrus trees planted in Florida, if you can believe

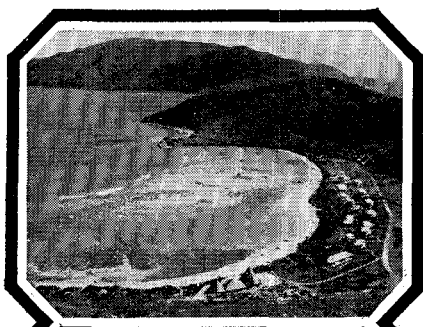
the state's Citrus Commission. Two-thirds of all the citrus grown in the USA is plucked from branches of Florida's trees, and the box count is now up to 140 million. Somebody with nothing else to do has figured out that all the frozen orange juice concentrate packed in six-ounce cans laid end to end—well, the idea is ridiculous right there—would provide the Equator with a belt that would wrap around its middle four and a half times.

In the cool Florida weather—I hope they'll forgive the adjective in Tallahassee—oranges and grapefruits turn their proper color on the tree. But when the weather is warm they are picked green and dusty. They are put through a bath of soap and water, scrubbed with a brush, sprayed, and rubbed down. A treatment of heat and gas turns a grapefruit yellow and an orange orange without changing the quality or the taste of the goods inside. After all that, the fruit is coated with liquid wax, sealing its pores. Falling on a conveyor belt, shiny and bright, the oranges are graded for size.

Orange blossoms perfume the regions in February and March, and when it comes to fruit, Temples ripen in January and February, Valencias in March and April, and navels in the fall. Besides these common varieties, there are also such refinements as marsh-grapefruit, parson brown oranges, pineapple oranges, and tangelos, a cross between a tangerine and a grapefruit not normally shipped commercially.

When you run an orange stand in Florida, squeezing oranges is only part of the show. At the Hale people's place in Wabasso you can buy a foot-high orange tree that is guaranteed to live, grow, and bear fruit indoors or out. It comes in a plastic bag, and all you need





Undiscovered

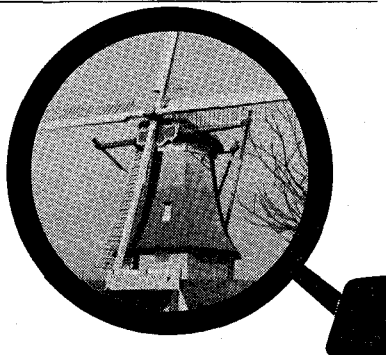
This new resort is off the beaten path, on a British Virgin Isle. Mark the name—*Little Dix Bay*. Swimming from great beaches, big game fishing, exploring. Rates from \$25 in winter, \$15 in summer (per person dbl., all meals). See travel agent or call:

New York CI 5-8055
Chicago 922-4139
Boston 423-4888
Dallas RI 7-0932
Washington 347-4951



**LITTLE
DIX
BAY**

VIRGIN GORDA
BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS



SEE THE EUROPE ONLY SEEN BY CAR!

Exciting, uncrowded, economical Europe. It's the Europe *only* seen by car. Purchase, Lease or Rent a car from Auto-Europe and see Europe at its level best. For complete information, Auto-Europe's *free*, full-color guide, "The ABC's of European Auto Travel" covers everything on wheels... it's as necessary as a passport. For free copy see your travel agent or write—

Name.....
Address.....
Car preference (if any)..... Dept. 11

auto@europe

New York: 25 W. 58 St. PL 2-2424. Chicago: 153 E. Ohio St. MI 2-3211. Beverly Hills: 268 S. Beverly Drive. BR 2-3149. San Francisco: 150 Powell St. EX 2-7894. Seattle: White-Henry-Stuart Bldg. MA 2-3456. Toronto: 88 Eglinton Ave. E. HU 7-0173. Vancouver, B.C.: 685 Hornby St. MU 1-5936.

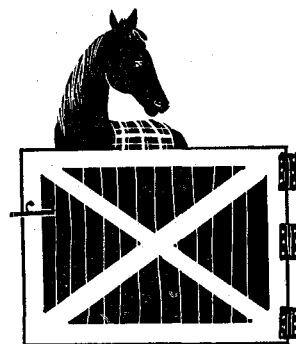
to do, it says right on the package, is water it from the top twice a week, feed it fertilizer, and if your living room gets too chilly, remember to light the smudge pots. When (and if) the tree blooms, it must be exposed to bees, or other insects unspecified on the package, or else be artificially pollinated. Anybody with a reasonably steady hand and a procreative urge can do the job with a cotton swab or a padded toothpick, picking up the pollen and transferring it to the pistil. The whole thing is just \$1.95. Palm trees are available, too, and they're only a dollar. I think it's worth a dollar, but if you're going to sit there and wait for coconuts to fall you're simply going to go crackers.

Citrus fruit requires special citrus spoons equipped with a scoop at the end for plucking seeds. Or you can skip that stage with a Citra Sipper, a metal corer-and-straw to be inserted into the orange or grapefruit through the peel. Oranges also yield a cream and liquid perfume, not one of my favorite scents, and orange and grapefruit wine which, despite its 13 per cent alcoholic content, has not exactly alienated my affection for the grape. Naturally, there are all sorts of ways of dispatching CARE packages of oranges and grapefruits to the needy in the North. A beach bag full of citrus, along with mango butter and tangerine and papaya marmalade, concoctions invented, I'm sure, for the exclusive enjoyment of visiting pale-faces, makes a tidy package at a modest price. You can ship home half the grove plus jam, coconut patties, pecan fudge, and lime marmalade, for twenty-one bucks. Or, if there is some close friend clomping through the slush back there in Toledo, send him or her a box of six jellies, a bottle of orange syrup, a bottle of guava syrup, a box of pralines, and a palm tree—a synthesis of the whole State of Florida for \$5.95.

In the citrus sections in the center of the state, so they tell me, there are motels and inns amid the orange groves where all one need do is open the window and pick the first course for breakfast. I was disappointed not to find anything of this character in the shorelands of Wabasso or thereabouts, and about the best I can do for you is to report on a pair of places that seem to have been run up by Charles Addams. One is the Ocean Grill, sometimes called The Bucket, which sits in the salt spray at Vero Beach. The decor, I guess, is early attic, for it is embellished with such assorted goods as the world's largest wrought-iron lamp shade, a wrought-iron fence that was once part of a cathedral in Spain, a Flemish credenza, and the largest known solid mahogany table made out of one piece. To round it all out, there is a Moorish screen or two, several stained glass windows, and

a stuffed sailfish in full flight. The major-domo sits in a regal chair at the entranceway hard by a snarling gargoyle. I could only assume both are there to bid you welcome.

What the Collier Brothers didn't bequeath to the Ocean Grill has found its way to the Driftwood Inn, which is to sumptuous innkeeping what The Bucket is to gracious dining. The Driftwood Inn—its name is literal—is made of old worm-eaten timbers, rusty bells, ancient cannon, weatherbeaten doors, and bits of chain. Guests live either in the section known as the Barbary Coast (cooled by the Atlantic breezes) or on Skid Row (air-conditioned). It has twenty-five rooms, many of which open off a long creaky corridor. Meals are served at long common tables, dormitory style, under a string of rusted cowbells. Other bells once adorned ships, locomotives, camels, cathedrals, and schools. For the departure of favored guests the bells are sometimes rung simultaneously, which I should think



would take quite a crew, but the effect inspires strange sentimental reactions. What it does to the ears is incalculable.

The inn was started as a beach house three decades ago by one Waldo Sexton, who came from Indiana to grow oranges. In his spare time Mr. Sexton began collecting furnishings and fixtures from moribund mansions whose owners were affected by the Florida land bust. Although he bought them in truckload lots, a sort of fever developed, and when the supply of old mansions dwindled, Sexton went to Europe on collection tours. Among the masterpieces on view now are the El Greco altar piece, an antique French door, and the skeleton of a whale. The faithful guests refer to the place as The Junkpile, rather reverently at that. As for Mr. Sexton, he was, in his collegiate day, a luminary in the Purdue Harlequin Club, and his love of the theatre has never abated. I get the feeling, at the Driftwood Inn, that one could strike the whole set by leaning against the wrong pillar. The very notion is enough to give a worrisome soul the flutters.

—HORACE SUTTON.



Menotti in India—Vintschger, Varèse

AS THE literature abundantly demonstrates, it is much more difficult to write a comic opera than a serious one (in Verdi alone, the ratio is about 1 to 12). In *The Last Savage*, which had its first American performance at the Metropolitan in late January, Gian Carlo Menotti has ventured a combination of the two, meaning that he has risked the perils of each. In the end, Menotti's good theatre sense persuades him to make the resolution a humorous one, thus justifying both the effort and the evening's attention to it. *The Last Savage* may be the first casualty of spring, but it is good to see, entertaining to hear, and a credit to the sizable number of talented people concerned with putting it on.

Unlike his procedure in the recent past, Menotti wrote his text in Italian, as being more suitable to the character of the music he had in mind. This suggests to me that it was really being performed in the wrong language (for all the fact that it involves natives of America and India), that it might have made better sense in Italian than it did in the trite, unfunny translation of George Mead. What one can hear of it, in the solos and recitatives, is full of striving for those line-ending rhymes that are just as well forgotten ("laddie, daddy," "money, honey," "torso, more so"); what cannot be heard of it, in the ensembles, defeats the purpose of intelligibility.

What is recurrently entertaining about *L'Ultimo Selvaggio* (as it might better be known) is neither in the story nor in the text, but mostly in the music. Fundamentally, it is more an opera about other operas than it is about its nominal subject, contemporary civilization: about coloratura sopranos who take flight in cadenzas almost automatically at the approach of a cadence; about tenors who sing plaintive airs to distant loves; about baritones torn between love and duty who nevertheless manage to get up to F on schedule. All of these conventions, and more, come under Menotti's stylistic scrutiny, including a fugal episode at the climax of Act II in which elements of the crowd scene of *Die Meistersinger* and the coronation scene of *Boris* somehow manage to coexist.

About the only convention that does not come into Menotti's work is the current one that the first requisite of a composer is to be over the head of his audience. Menotti is constantly engag-

ing his at ear level, with an occasional sortie to the heart, and a joust every so often with the funny bone. His first defiance is to begin his overture with four solid C-major chords, and he is no less high-handed in his use of arias and ensembles, set pieces, and orchestral interludes as suit his purpose. Much of the vocabulary is the common one of traditional opera, but it would be a mistake to assume that he is using it to say, merely, that two and two are four. The difference that causes it, frequently, to come out five is in the orchestral undercurrent and the parodistic intent it embodies.

Where it falls short of its objective and is therefore fated to a short life span is in the order of invention it embodies. To achieve his objective wholly, Menotti would have to be the contemporary equivalent of at least one of those whose stylistic coin he is spending—Rossini, Mozart, Richard Strauss. Failing that, one might have been satisfied had he been always as facile as he has sometimes been in the past. Factually, the melodic material of his latest work is pleasant rather than memorable, the interludes (such as "The Hunt" of Act I) skilful rather than striking. He does settle into a vein of more flavorsome writing as the end approaches, when, in the manner of *Der Rosenkavalier*, all the other participants have left the scene, leaving the lovers with the stage to themselves. In a further parallel, the sentiment that is here involved is capped with a touch of humor (akin to the Negro servant's search for Sophie's handkerchief) as the jungle cave is slyly made fit for human habitation.

As a plan for an opera, *The Last Savage* excels most of Menotti's prior schemes in sustaining a story over the championship three-act course. The situation set forth in the first act, in which an American millionaire and an Indian Maharajah plot to merge fortunes, and their children in marriage, in order to defeat the income-encroaching demands of their respective societies, could have gone no further than *Amelia al ballo*. However, the scientific quest of the American girl (Vassar-bred and an anthropologist) has first to be satisfied, and to save time a stable boy is persuaded to impersonate the "savage" she is seeking. He is such a splendid specimen that the girl must show him in America before she can consider mar-

riage to the Crown Prince. Once there, pride turns to passion, intensified when the savage flees in horror from a brilliantly staged cocktail party to the peace and quiet of the jungle. Naturally the girl pursues him to India, where she decides that primitive life is good enough, provided that Omar Khayyám is updated to provide a Frigidaire for the jug of wine. This is all to the good, for it turns out that the Crown Prince—like Figaro in *Le Nozze*—is the product of a long-forgotten romance between the Maharani and the American millionaire, and prefers another Indian to the "too white" American who is his half-sister.

Out of this comes a natural opportunity for spectacle, beautifully served by Beni Montresor's scheme of design (in which the changes are made in view of the audience) and costuming. Designers who are equally adept at interiors, exteriors, and costuming are rarities, especially when they produce work of such elegance and distinction as has Montresor. In addition to the forecurtains that mask the rest of the stage from time to time, Montresor's drops and hangings should make him a first choice to explore another phase of India's background when the rumored revival of *Lakmé* is undertaken. As for his American apartment, with its tangle of Lippold-like hangings (they eventually collapse), it is a joy in itself.

STAGE director Menotti has served his other selves well, not only in the choice of such people as George London (a muscular savage as well as a well-sounding one), Roberta Peters (the Vassar girl, not so well-sounding), Ezio Flagello and Morley Meredith as the parents, Nicolai Gedda as the Indian prince, and Teresa Stratas as the servant he prefers, but also in the holiday mood he induces in playing their frivolous parts. An unsuspected source of comedy was found in Lili Chookasian as the bulky Maharani, though it was regrettable that, in the patterns of solos allotted to most of the principals, she was denied a Rossinian rousade or two. All of these, and the many others (Paul Franke and Andrea Velis had a boisterous moment as a pair of non-fraternal tailors) were woven into a tight ensemble under the urgent direction of Thomas Schippers, who conducted as if his life depended on the results (as well it may have). If *The Last Savage* is but a passing fancy, it shows the Metropolitan company capable of an all-out ensemble effort of high quality.

Juerg von Vintschger is not an easy name to forget, but even if he were Willi Schmidt, the aptitude and inclinations