



## How Not to Make a Decision

IN THE spring of 1963 Jackie Cooper, an actor, proposed to James T. Aubrey, Jr., of CBS Television, that he play the part of a Peace Corps volunteer in a new television series. Merle Miller and Evan Rhodes describe the scene in their new and nervously hilarious book, *Only You, Dick Daring! or How to Write One Television Script and make \$50,000,000* (William Sloane Associates). "He [Aubrey] said, 'I don't like snoopers,' . . . Then he leaned back in his chair. . . . 'I see a man in a dusty pickup in the Southwest . . . wearing a Stetson and khaki pants. I don't know exactly what he is, but he's not a cop; he doesn't carry a gun. I don't want him to be a policeman or a law enforcement officer.'"

It was an expensive vision. Seven months later it had cost \$346,000, written off in some financial report as "corporate development" for a fifty-two-minute pilot program on film at \$7,000 per minute. "After the conference . . . Cooper went to Washington to find out what kind of a guy wore a Stetson, khaki pants, and drove a dusty pickup. Somebody told him about county agents." Merle Miller (collaborating later with Evan Rhodes) was called in and invited to write the pilot of *Calhoun*, a television series based on the life of a county agent. CBS Television offered no objection, and Miller and Rhodes commenced a saga of television pilot writing that lasted five months and eight days. "The script for *Calhoun*," writes Miller, "was totally rewritten at least nineteen times by me; it was partially rewritten by me and Evan 782,946.17 times. It was tampered with unnumbered times by people I have never seen and by people I have seen."

A film was finally shot from the endlessly tortured script, but it failed to find a place in the CBS Television schedule. "Later, James T. Aubrey, Jr. —'I see a man in a dusty pickup in the Southwest'—said that he had never liked the county agent idea much anyway." Of the final product Miller and Rhodes say: "There was not . . . any indication of who a county agent was or what he did. . . . There was also nothing to move, enlighten, arouse, enlarge or entertain anyone."

Why an experienced television executive should have believed that a series about a county agent could be sold for prime-time TV is a mystery. Typically, the real county agent is an amiable agronomist whose daily activities offer

small prospect of violence, sex, melodrama, or physical action. "In the first thirty seconds a pilot should go like this," lectures another program executive in the book. "Fifty thousand murderous Berbers are headed toward Cairo, and only you, Dick Daring, can stop them. . . . You have to keep everything moving at all times, moving, moving, moving. Fast, fast. Action. No studying of the navel, no introspection." Mr. Miller naïvely made the intellectual's mistake of challenging television's Berber mystique by doing intensive research among live county agents, reading books, compiling cartons of notes, and hoping eventually to do a story about "a dedicated man who believes that the human being comes first."

OUT of the incredible fantasy of his experience (to which he clung for economic and psychological reasons, not to mention the obvious chance for a writer's-revenge book after it was all over), the authors have fashioned a "fast, fast" exposé of decision-making in television, a record with flashes of the navel and some

introspection. Other writers in the industry have lived through similar macabre jests but have kept their lips sealed, preferring to hold onto their employment opportunities. Mr. Miller, who has written seven novels and two nonfiction books, has not feared to burn his bridges. Executives, agents, producers, directors, writers are all revealed in the full scale of their professional value systems. The authors are gentle with their cast, describing them as "picaresque—lovable rogues and vagabonds." The implications, nevertheless, are oppressive. Not all pilots are failures. Those that succeed rarely face demands of the no-navel school of television programs.

Mr. Miller and Mr. Rhodes have rendered the public a genuine service with their chronicle of the times in television. It is easy to split one's sides over the absurd antics and egocentric posturings of the prime pillar of our popular culture. But underneath the laughter is the tragic waste of human potential. The authors underscore the point that one of the principals in the story is a product of Phillips Exeter Academy and a graduate of Princeton, cum laude. His associates generally are talented, intelligent men. Someday someone may write a book, illuminating the mystery of how the best education our society can give comes out looking like fifty thousand murderous Berbers.

—ROBERT LEWIS SHAYON.

## Your Literary I. Q.

Conducted by John T. Winterich and Yetta Arenstein

NOW IS THE TIME

Whether you are DEM or REP or still undecided, Frances Marean of Alexandria, Virginia, suggests that you can benefit from filling in the blanks in the words below to conform with the meanings alongside. Final results on page 56.

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|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. — — — DEM —          | society of learned men |
| 2. — — — REP — — — — —  | boldness               |
| 3. — — — DEM — — — —    | compensation           |
| 4. — REP — — — —        | ready                  |
| 5. — — — DEM — — — — —  | deliverance from evil  |
| 6. — — — REP — — — — —  | blameless              |
| 7. — — — DEM            | symbol of dignity      |
| 8. — REP — — — — —      | twilight               |
| 9. DEM — — — —          | hero                   |
| 10. REP — — — — —       | treasury               |
| 11. DEM — — — — —       | destruction            |
| 12. — REP — — — — —     | fear                   |
| 13. — — — DEM — — — — — | censure                |
| 14. — — — REP — — — — — | unruly                 |
| 15. DEM — — — — —       | faction                |
| 16. — — — REP — —       | worn out               |
| 17. — — — DEM — — — — — | wild tumult            |
| 18. — — — REP — — — — — | stealthy               |
| 19. DEM — — — — —       | corrupt                |
| 20. REP — — — — —       | blameworthy            |



## Schwarzkopf's Marschallin, Gorr's Dalila

TWO new productions are more than an expectable dividend for an opening week of a Metropolitan Opera season, but it was what might be called an older reproduction that provided its greatest artistic profit. New York may be the last great opera center of the world where Elisabeth Schwarzkopf has sung the Marschallin in *Der Rosenkavalier*, but the pleasure long deferred was a pleasure doubly enjoyed—on both sides of the footlights.

She comes to the Metropolitan at the crest of a long and distinguished career which has given her a hard-won command of every nuance of the actress's trade to go with the vocal finesse that has made her a great lieder and concert singer. Some vocal quality was, perhaps, sacrificed to volume on this occasion, but there was ample to match every gesture with a sound worthy of it. There are those who would rather die than switch their allegiance from the cherished memory of Lotte Lehmann, but, in Mme. Schwarzkopf they have an opportunity for a gay form of *Liebestod*, in the lilting three-four of the Ochs waltz rather than the measured four-four of Wagner.

As the Marschallin appears in two acts, each of a different character, there are at least that many ways of playing the part. With Mme. Lehmann, there was always the tear trembling on the crinkle of the smile. With Mme. Schwarzkopf, one is readily certain that, in the end, the tear will be most likely from a displaced eyelash and that the smile will not come off. Already, one suspects, she is thinking of another Octavian by a different name, while regretting that she has lost this one so soon after teaching him not to leave a sword lying around a lady's boudoir. Hers is the Marschallin of the waltz rather than the dirge, well versed in *c'est la vie, toujours l'amour*, and all that.

The gravitation to the French in a consideration of Mme. Schwarzkopf's Marschallin is more compulsive than voluntary, a tribute to the lightly brittle way in which she sips her bitter cup (champagne sec rather than tea). Nor is this inconsistent with the Viennese background of the story. After all, even Ochs makes a point of his social French, and if the country cousin, why not the city cousin? Others have sought to pursue this thread in Strauss's writing of the part, but it has remained for Mme. Schwarzkopf to weave it into an international texture.

The telling factor, beyond her shrewd mind and responsive voice, is the aura of physical beauty she brings to the part. Front face as well as profile, she presents a cameo of chiseled features and aristocratic poise which, however they may sag in the mirror she holds up to herself, still will age enticingly, Dietrich-ly. Thus, when she comes to the moment of renunciation in Act III, it is still at the height of her mature appeal and with the worldly wisdom that, as there are other Octavians, so there are other hairdressers than the inept Hippolyte of Act I who made her, for a fleeting instant, look like "ein altes Weib."

NO such mastery is won without a price, and Mme. Schwarzkopf has paid her dues, in a vocal production that has its worn patches and rough spots. But these were of indifferent consequence at most, and of no consequence whatsoever in any important passage. In these, the preparation was always so thorough, the awareness of the difficulty to come so profound, that the precise tracery of sound—whether for a tender delivery of the silver rose to Mohamet in Act I, or the curt dismissal of Ochs in Act III—were always available. From coiffeur to finger paint, and filmy negligee of Act I to the huge tent of a ball gown she wore in Act III, every detail of the physical image was in complete keeping with a penetrating inner vision of the effect she ought to achieve. Operatic artistry can hardly be more encompassing.

Thanks to a revival of Otto Edelmann's vocal strength and a far more refined study of Baron Ochs than he has ever offered here before, and the mostly good conducting of Thomas Schippers in his first Met venture with the score, this was an evening of almost constant pleasure. Least to the point of a well-balanced ensemble was the Octavian of Lisa Della Casa, often good to hear but rarely in keeping with the visual image that was wanted. A pouty, unmasculine, and rather insignificant figure in the part—her Octavian would scarcely have intimidated even the most craven Ochs—Miss Della Casa seemed unaware that she was, after all, playing the work's title role. Anneliese Rothenberger was a steady Sophie, Norman Mittelmann a promising Faninal, and Mignon Dunn (Annina) and Andrea Velis (Valzacchi) refreshingly resourceful as the social eavesdroppers. Sándor Kónya gave name

value to the role of the Singer in place of the indisposed Barry Morrel.

Had Dino Yannopoulos contented himself with the best of his improvisations (such as the comedy doctor who examined Ochs in Act II), his staging would have commended itself as an improvement on its predecessor. However, he brought on a second serving maid to confront the disguised Octavian in Act I for the sake of a momentary snicker, and otherwise showed a weakness for compounding the obvious. In all, for artistic effort on the level of this *Rosenkavalier*, reservations may be restricted to those left at the box office.

HIGH hopes for the future of the French repertory at the Metropolitan were prompted by the debut of the estimable George Prêtre as conductor of a new production of *Samson et Dalila*, the first hearing of Saint-Saëns's cultivated score here in seven years. What this fortyish Frenchman has suggested at his concert performances in New York was affirmed in the more demanding conditions of the theater—that he is a conductor with not only the mind and the heart but also the ear to restore the glow to a repertory tarnished by disuse, not to say abuse. It was comforting to hear the high spots of the score so well projected, but it was an absolute delight to experience the duet "Pres de moi" of Act II shaped with such certainty, flow, and sensitivity. In a purely physical sense, Prêtre is the kind of conductor with the power to "move" an orchestra, and this one, to its credit, responded, individually as well as collectively, to his urging.

In this duet as well as elsewhere, most of what was Prêtre-worthy on the stage came from Rita Gorr, who poured out a stream of well-modulated sound as Dalila, and from Gabriel Bacquier, who made himself welcome as the High Priest. Gorr has never sounded so good nor acted so effectively in prior roles (mostly Italian) as she did in this exacting French one. Visually as well as aurally she commands the voluptuous means to make Dalila a figure of some grandeur, while skirting altogether the possibilities of travesty the role contains. Oddly, her familiar specialty ("Mon coeur") was pushed slightly sharp, the result, probably, of trying too hard, but "Printemps qui commence" and "Amour, viens aider" had the grand line and assurance that have been lacking in such music hereabouts for years. Such singing, when combined with the leadership of Prêtre, subdues complaints that *Samson* is static or nontheatrical.

A little more of the same from Jess Thomas would have muted them altogether. He has both the range and the physique for a convincing Samson, but  
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