

Berlioz in Boston

Running her own personal and dedicated decathlon, Sarah Caldwell is not only artistic director of the Opera Company of Boston but its director and conductor as well. Among the hurdles she is forced to surmount are a peripatetic existence in aging moviehouses and gyms and the forces she must muster into being three or four times a year. Given the odds, most producers would opt for a series of small, easily mounted works. Not Sarah Caldwell. She has tackled the American premiere of Schoenberg's *Moses und Aron* and the first East Coast *Lulu*. Now to open her fourteenth season she has compounded the impossible with the incredible by staging and conducting the American premiere of Berlioz's full-length *Les Troyens*, a work that has been heard in edited versions with the San Francisco Opera and the New England Opera Theater. The challenges of this masterpiece have been bypassed by some of the great opera houses, including the Metropolitan, which chose to ignore the 1969 Berlioz year. Its demands in terms of casting, production, conducting, and rehearsals are as mammoth as anything ever created for the lyric stage. The miracle is that Miss Caldwell ever did it at all, let alone with the distinction she brought to it.

Written between 1856 and 1858, Berlioz's epic score pays homage in various directions simultaneously. Musically, it was his paean to Gluck and the French classical style. Although composed at the height of the romantic era, it is an almost austere work, rigidly molded by set musical forms. Yet the Berlioz orchestration is unmistakable, particularly in the woodwinds and brass. Given the moment, he could create love music of sublime tenderness and passion. Vergil's *Aeneid* was another lifelong passion, its epic sentiments stirring Berlioz's thoughts during most of his years. The opera, then, pays tribute

to the classicism of a lost Greece and Rome, as well as to Shakespeare, whose presence is felt in this great canvas.

With Colin Davis's recent recording (based on a 1969 complete Covent Garden performance) and Miss Caldwell's reading in mind, it must be concluded that Berlioz's opera is great in spite of itself. One comes away awed by the idealism and nobility of the composer's vision. His imagination was immense, his view of the classical past haunting and poetic. Its four hours-plus running time is near that of *Tristan und Isolde*, but Wagner as composer-librettist set up a continuous thread of psychological, emotional, and dramatic values. Berlioz has not. *Les Troyens* is more a series of magnificent tableaux; human relationships are cemented only in the middle of Part II when Dido and Aeneas have declared their love. Dramatically, the two great moments are dominated by the two heroines, Cassandra and Dido. Both are set in the midst of destruction, both meet their ends with a knife. Yet one knows that, as much as Berlioz was fascinated by them, he was even more concerned with his tale of historic mission and destroyed civilizations. Despite the fact that he was dealing more in abstract concepts than in meaty relationships, the work remains enormously stage-worthy. However—and cries will go up from the purists—it needs judicious cutting, beginning with the lengthy, less than good ballet music.

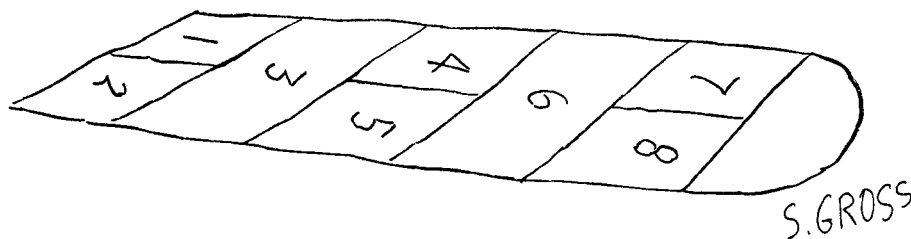
For most individuals, either staging or conducting *Les Troyens* would have been the challenge of a lifetime. Sarah Caldwell chose to tackle both for her Boston performances, and, although both were accomplished, it was her staging that found the lady at her highest powers. On the narrow stage of an old moviehouse (the Aquarius) she worked wonders. Her main plan brought the action outside the proscenium,

with stairs and platforms built over the side boxes. This gave her long diagonals on which to move the action, which she did with great authority. The crowd scenes of both the Trojans and the Carthaginians had fluidity and purpose, and the technical effect of the sacking of Troy (fire, smoke, tumbling temples, crumbling statues) was an imaginative tour de force. With Helen Pond and Herbert Senn's sturdy, realistic sets and Suzanne Mess's vibrant costumes, the spirit of the ancient cities was well re-created. Certain details in the direction—such as having Cassandra's first big scene set so far back and beginning the Dido-Aeneas love duet in a cramped tower—were questionable. With regard to the conducting, long immersion in the score's depths and a lengthy rehearsal period are necessary to realize its full measure. Miss Caldwell opted for its more classical tone, leading the music with the straightness and clarity needed to keep it moving. What she missed was the burning intensity and romantic sweep; and less than the full orchestral force (owing to an inadequate pit) detracted from the sum.

In an uneven cast, the two soprano heroines dominated—as they should. In Part I Maralin Niska was dramatically superb as the crazed prophetess Cassandra. Indulging in what can only be called a Maralin-athon across the stage and up and down the maze of stairs, she created the demanding role with fire and physical grace. Vocally, her lyric sound was at least one shade too light to fill out Berlioz's writing; yet she cleverly projected words and music. Régine Crespin, as Dido, had everything but the ultimate control of her large instrument in the top register. Her farewell to her city was done with the magnificence of a great tragedienne, and it was movingly, opulently sung. Together with her extraordinary *plastique*, innate nobility, womanly voice, and commanding style, this was a performance to cherish.

Making his American debut, English tenor Ronald Dowd sounded too past his prime to do justice to Aeneas's heroic music, and as a stage figure he managed to turn the warrior into a dullard. Baritone Louis Quilico was a vocally sumptuous Corebus, and among the other positive assets were Gimi Beni (Panthus and Narrator), Herbert Beattie (King Priam and Ghost of Hector), Ronald Hedlund (Narbal), and especially tenor Grayson Hirst, who had two beautiful moments with Iopas's poem and Hylas's poignant song. Now we have had *Les Troyens* in full—at long last and under albeit the most trying circumstances—whetting the appetite for a truly full-scale production by the Met in 1973. □

Robert Jacobson



Science—Communicating Its Relevance

Until the end of the nineteenth century, educated people everywhere followed with fascination, and a high level of comprehension, the progress of science. Frequently, even the layman was able to make distinguished contributions. Ironically, almost at the moment when science began to uncover increasingly spectacular facts, the nonspecialist was cut off from this knowledge by growing tangles of technical jargon.

As a result, a communication gap has opened between scientists and nonscientists. Moreover, a similar gap exists even among scientists. In this age of increasing specialization, every scientist, outside his own field, is another scientist's layman.

Science has been defined as a method for the organized investigation of nature. Employing this method, man has produced many of the tools he uses to cope with and alter his environment. Even a brief list is impressive: the iron plow, the stirrup, the printing press, spectacles, electronics, antibiotics, contraceptives, the nuclear reactor, the computer, the laser, etc. Armed with such tools, we now possess awesome powers—or at least they seem awesome to us. We are capable of ending life on the planet and perhaps, if we set our minds to it, of destroying the planet itself. On the other hand, we are capable of rebuilding and renourishing our cities, putting an end to hunger and disease, and passing on a legacy of abundance.

Science has also been called a force for change. This is an apt description, especially in terms of Newton's three laws of motion. In his first law, Newton states that a body continues in a state of uniform motion unless acted upon by an outside force. Clearly, science is one of the forces that acts upon our society—that changes it.

Newton, in his second law, defines force as something that changes the momentum of the body upon which it acts. Science unquestionably has produced a change in the momentum of society. The tempo of our lives has accelerated markedly enough to produce serious technological, sociological, and psychological consequences. As Alvin Toffler warned in *Future Shock*, we may soon face "an abrupt collision with the future."

According to Newton's third law, forces occur in pairs: For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. In the nineteenth century, science produced the mechanical loom, and thousands of weavers were thrown into

poverty. In more recent times, science has made enormous inroads in the fight against disease and pestilence, and, in response, the world's population spirals ominously.

Nevertheless, there is room for optimism that man will prove capable of harnessing and directing the force of science and that he will survive the collision with the future if and when it occurs. Homo sapiens is a rugged species. Although he is a relative newcomer to the planet, overwhelmingly outnumbered (by the insects) and physically inferior to any number of the planet's other inhabitants, he has survived and flourished. And he possesses the skills to continue to do so.

But what has all this to do with the communication gaps between scientists and nonscientists; between scientists and their colleagues? Simply this: To control and direct the force of science requires a thorough understanding of that force. The editors of *Saturday Review* believe that increasing such understanding must be one of our prime functions. In other words, we aim to narrow the gaps.

Toward that end, this week we introduce our fourth expanded supplement: *Saturday Review of Science*. Like its sister supplements—*Saturday Review of the Arts*, *Saturday Review of Education*, and *Saturday Review of the Society*—it will appear once every four weeks in a repeating cycle.

Coverage of science by *Saturday Review* will be extensive. We will strive to present the ideas and discoveries of the top men in the various fields of science. We hope to describe their findings in terms that the layman can understand, while at the same time preserving the integrity displayed in *Saturday Review's* coverage of science in the past. This does not mean, however, that we will ignore the so-called fringe areas of science. Genius often operates on the fringes.

The articles in this issue reflect the direction we will be taking. In future issues we will examine new developments in biology, the findings and theories of psychologists, sociologists, and anthropologists about why we seem to enjoy clubbing each other to death whenever possible, and the workings and implications of cryogenics, a science that may someday allow people with incurable diseases to be safely stored in a deep freeze until researchers can discover cures for the illnesses. We will take a close look at such things as President Nixon's newly announced

Technological Priorities Program and investigate what happens to all those tax dollars slated for scientific research. We will consider what would happen if industry suddenly stopped manufacturing synthetic crystals, those tiny chips of matter found in television sets, watches, spark plugs, and telephones; some researchers say that without them, our technological society would suddenly grind to a halt. We also will explore the "softer" areas of science, presenting what scientists have to say about such matters as the rearing of children, the depression common to executives, and the role of women in our accelerating society.

In the months to come *Saturday Review of Science* will be adding regular editorial departments focusing on such areas as health and medicine, environment, physical science, life science, social science, and applied science. In these departments we will provide the reader with up-to-date news coverage of the latest advances and events in a variety of disciplines.

The coverage of science in *SR* will be impartial, for impartiality forms the very backbone of science. As we noted earlier, science is a method. It makes no claims to truth or right or wrong. These are the realms of other disciplines. When an apple falls from a tree, science says the apple acted *as if* the laws of gravity were true. The next apple might soar out of the atmosphere; it *probably* won't, but it might.

The recent arguments for and against the space program are a case in point. Critics of the program state that we are throwing away money sending men to the moon—money we could use to solve more urgent problems here on earth, cleaning up the environment, feeding the hungry, curing the sick. Could we? Or better, would we? Proponents of the program argue in turn that spinoffs alone—new techniques in management, new products, new discoveries in weather control, new jobs—will make the money well spent. Will they? Science cannot answer these questions. It can, however, equip us to make a guess. A scientific guess.

Finally, *Saturday Review of Science*, primarily through the use of photographs and illustrations, will attempt to convey to its readers some of the excitement and beauty of science. This, it seems to us, has been a much neglected aspect of science coverage. Yet, since man first gazed at the stars or tried to understand the workings of the world around him, science has been a source of fascination and wonder. We hope we will make it so for you. □

