

The Arts in Chicago

by Henry Hanson

Culture is alive and well in Chicago. Second City may be Chicago's nickname, but it refers to size, not second-rate culture. A city that gives the world Sir Georg Solti, Claes Oldenburg, Studs Terkel, REO Speedwagon, Mike Nichols, David Mamet, Saul Bellow, Muddy Waters, Evangelina Gouletas-Carey (condominiums can be an art form), jazz, and the skyscraper can't be culturally adrift between two shores of civilization.

So what if Mayor Jane Byrne and her husband exchange Royal Doulton figurines for Christmas? Never has a Chicago mayor done so much for the arts. She mediated a labor dispute at the Lyric Opera of Chicago and kept the season going, helped send the Chicago Symphony Orchestra on a European tour this summer, gave new lights to the Auditorium, which is one of the great theaters of the world, and saw that the city helped pay for a big Miró sculpture in the Loop and an Ellsworth Kelly in Lincoln Park.

The Second City satirical troupe—which took its name from the title of the late A.J. Liebling's not altogether unfriendly book about Chicago—is a cultural asset that has produced dozens of major talents. Chicago is the nation's first city of architecture, with three of the world's five tallest buildings, and scores of original architectural talents following in the footsteps of Louis Sullivan, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Mies van der Rohe.

The Art Institute of Chicago is rich with French Impressionist paintings, and not long ago got its three stolen Cézannes back. The Museum of Contemporary Art was the first building in America to be wrapped by artist Christo. The Chicago Film Festival is in its 17th year. The Chicago City Ballet

was born last year under Maria Tallchief. A new cultural center for the North Loop is on the drawing boards. So is a new library. Theater is in ferment, recently premiering Mustapha Matura's *Play Mas*, and sending *Mornings at Seven* to Broadway from the now defunct Lake Forest Academy Playhouse.

Ethnic restaurants abound, small hotels offer civility and high tea, the city keeps its lakefront looking better than any other city, and more than 10 million visitors a year attest that the spirit of Al Capone is kaput. This portfolio focuses on Chicago's cultural diversity.

ARCHITECTURE

Like its striptease shows of yesteryear, Chicago is noted for buildings that show their structure rather than hide it. They range from the horizontal Prairie-style houses of Frank Lloyd Wright to the "less-is-more" glass and steel facades of Mies van der Rohe's skyscrapers. A British visitor recently surveyed the black, tapered profile of the brutally severe John Hancock Center by the architectural firm of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM) and declared, "It looks like Darth Vader."

Modern American architecture came of age in Chicago. Visitors should treat themselves to one of the tours offered by the Chicago Architecture Foundation, or buy a book on the subject and set off by themselves.

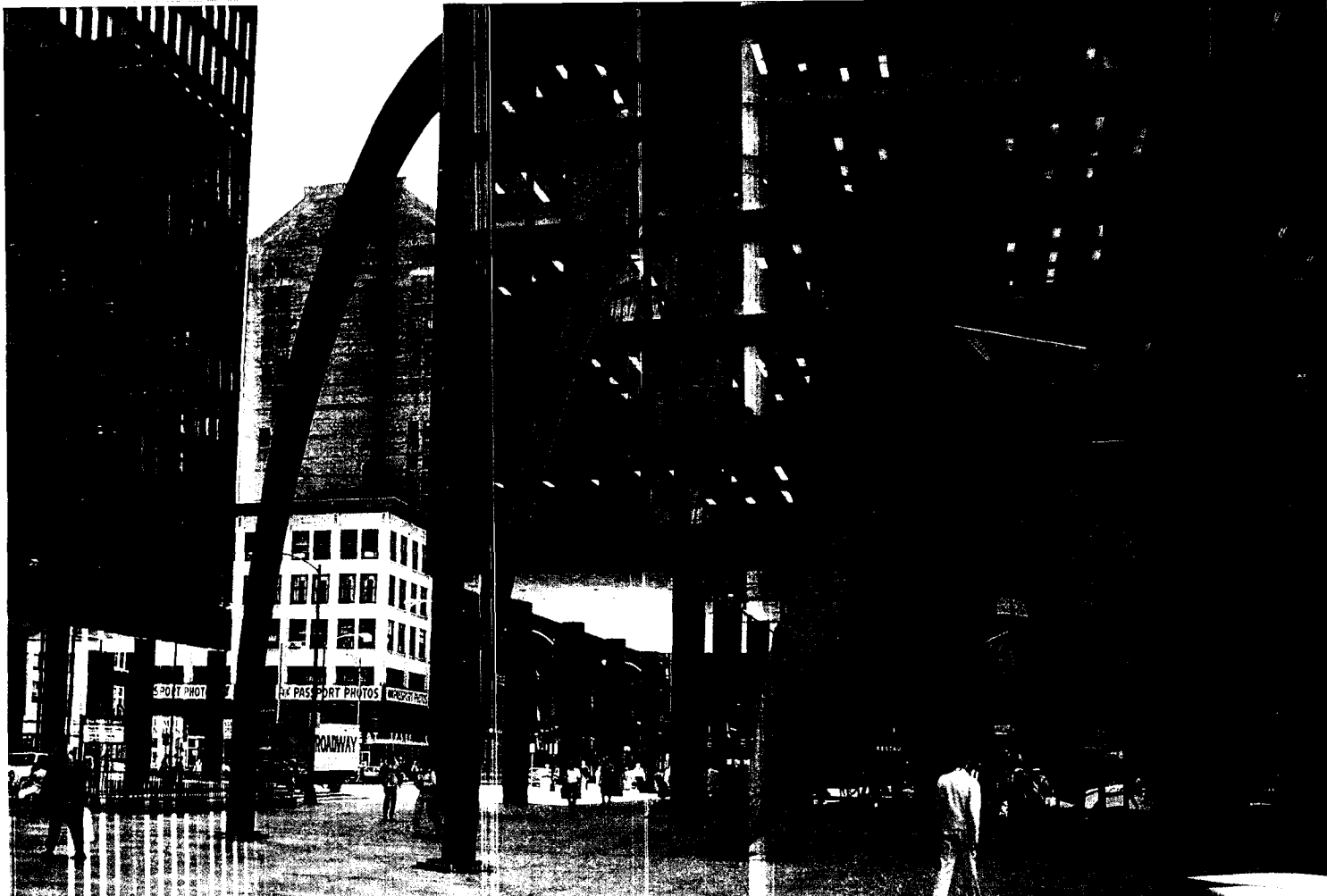
A good place to start is the corner of Dearborn and Adams streets in the heart of the Loop. There is the Federal Center, a three-building complex of austere glass and steel that is among the best works of Mies van der Rohe. Just beyond is the Monadnock Building, the tallest masonry office building of all time, with six-foot-wide walls at the

bottom to support the weight. The architectural firm of Burnham and Root did the north half of the building in 1891, and two years later Holabird & Roche did the south half. Mayor Byrne chose the red-brick structure for her campaign headquarters.

Looking the other way along Dearborn, one sees the Marquette Building by Holabird & Roche, a splendid example of early steel-frame architecture. Just beyond is the Inland Steel Building by SOM, the first Mies-inspired building in the Loop. It was completed in 1957 and signaled the start of a postwar building boom in the city. Cater-corner is the Xerox Centre by Helmut Jahn, the city's most iconoclastic architect whose spectacular glass-sheathed State of Illinois Building is under construction across the street from City Hall. Down Adams Street is the Rookery Building, a rugged, Romanesque building of 1886 by Burnham and Root. Frank Lloyd Wright remodeled the striking lobby. Beyond is Sears Tower, a bundle of nine tubes by SOM. Each rises to a different height to create a strong profile. This is the world's tallest building, and at the top is Chicago's best observation deck.

Nearby is the Metropolitan Correctional Center demonstrating architect Harry Weese's flare for innovation with its triangular shape and slit windows. Not far away is Adler & Sullivan's Auditorium Building, Chicago's first multi-use building. At State and Madison streets is one of the best examples of the Chicago School, a department store instead of an office tower, Louis Sullivan's masterpiece, the Carson Pirie Scott & Company store.

On Chicago's Near North Side is the Old Water Tower by W.W. Boyington, a 138-foot-high cut-stone standpipe and



A stabile by Alexander Calder at the Federal Center Plaza on a four-block stretch of the Loop called "sculpture alley."

pumping station that survived the Great Chicago Fire of 1871. Oscar Wilde called it a "castelated monstrosity," but Chicagoans love it, and it now serves as a tourist information center.

Architects come from all over the world to study the great buildings in the city where modern architecture was born. Architectural historian Reyner Banham wrote, "For sheer commercial splendor, Chicago is the rival of Baroque Rome."

SCULPTURE

Chicago prides itself on its big, outdoor sculpture. In a four-block stretch of the Loop dubbed "sculpture alley" are large works by Picasso, Miró, Chagall, and Calder. A bronze by Henry Moore is due late this summer.

"No other city in the world has such a concentration of large-scale works by world-famous sculptors," said investment broker Stanley Freehling, an arts patron who is promoting new works in the Loop by Dubuffet and Louise Nevelson. Freehling headed a citizens' committee that raised funds for the latest piece, a \$500,000 Miró sculpture of a woman erected across the street from the 14-year-old Chicago Picasso,

which long ago replaced Al Capone and the Art Institute of Chicago's two bronze lions as the city's trademark.

Up in Lincoln Park, a \$100,000, 36-foot-high stainless steel sculpture by Ellsworth Kelly is to be unveiled by Mayor Byrne, probably with a community picnic on the grass. Marble fountains by Isamu Noguchi bubble (when they're in working order) in front of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Harry Bertoia's singing wind sculpture clangs in a pool in front of the Standard Oil Building. A Henry Moore sundial is at the Planetarium, and Moore's "Nuclear Energy" saluting the splitting of the atom is on the campus of the University of Chicago.

Claes Oldenburg's 100-foot-high "Battlement" rises on Social Security Administration Plaza. Oldenburg, who grew up in Chicago, son of the Swedish consul general, has proposed several monumental sculptures for the city, including a giant fireplug on top of Navy Pier, and a rear-view mirror on the lakefront ("So you can look east and see the sunset in the west," he explained).

These are contemporary works. If you're into generals on horseback and

such, the city has a wide variety ranging from Lorado Taft's 1913 "Fountain of the Great Lakes" outside the Art Institute; his "Fountain of Time" on the University of Chicago's Midway; Ivan Mestrovic's "The Spearman and the Bowman" in Grant Park; John Storrs's 30-foot-high "Ceres" on top of the Board of Trade Building; and Saint Gaudens's classic seated Lincoln in Grant Park and his standing Lincoln in Lincoln Park. Summer is a splendid time to get acquainted with all of them.

THEATER

Chicago can hold its own for theatergoers. Its stages often astound in quality, though not in numbers. The satirical comedy troupe called Second City has given the nation talented alumni such as Mike Nichols, Elaine May, Paul Sand, Alan Arkin, Barbara Harris, Shelley Berman, Valerie Harper, and brothers John and Jim Belushi.

Tennessee Williams, disappointed by drubbings from Broadway drama critics, is now associated with Chicago's Goodman Theater, where he recently premiered his new play, *A House Not Meant to Stand*. At a 70th-birthday party for Williams, WFMT

radio critic Claudia Cassidy (who once turned down an offer by the *New York Times* to be its drama critic) told Tennessee, "Don't blow out the candles!" As former drama critic for the *Chicago Tribune*, she had lit more candles than anyone for the playwright when *The Glass Menagerie* was young in Chicago and Broadway hadn't heard of Tennessee. Playwright David Mamet, a native son, is an associate director at the Goodman Theater. His hit *Sexual Per-*

year played *My Fair Lady* in the cavernous place and allowed that he hated the theater. Critics frequently complain about the acoustics, and static-ridden, tinny-sounding body microphones don't help the situation.)

Evita, the musical based on the life of Eva Peron, is holding up through August at the Shubert Theater. The Goodman recently premiered *Dwarfman, Master of a Million Shapes!*, a new play by Michael Weller, who also



From left: Marilyn Hamlin, Ian Trigger, Stephen Pearlman, and J. Pat Miller, in Michael Weller's play *Dwarfman*, which premiered recently at the Goodman Theatre.

versity in Chicago is to be filmed in Chicago. Mamet now lives in Vermont, but continues to open his plays in his hometown. Sam Shepard, the nation's second most-produced living playwright (after Williams) was born near the Chicago suburb of Fort Sheridan of a career army father. The playwright set his Pulitzer Prize play *Buried Child* on an Illinois farm. Shepard seldom returns to his native state, but Chicago gives vivid productions of his works, especially under director Robert Falls, who staged a brilliant production of Shepard's *Curse of the Starving Class*.

Falls is artistic director of Wisdom Bridge Theater, a second-floor walk-up on the city's northern boundary, which has staged stunning productions of Bertolt Brecht's *Mother Courage* and *The Idiots Karamozov* co-authored by Albert Innaurato and Christopher Durang. A production of Brian Friel's *The Faith Healer* will be running at Wisdom Bridge during most of August.

Chicago's largest theater, Arie Crown, seating 4,319 in McCormick Place on the lakefront, had Sandy Duncan flying around in the road company of *Peter Pan* last month. *Annie* is next, in September. (Rex Harrison earlier this

wrote *Loose Ends* and *Moonchildren*. *Annie Get Your Gun*, the Forties musical with the Irving Berlin score, plays through August 16 at Candlelight Dinner Playhouse in suburban Summit, which back in 1959 opened as the nation's first dinner theater.

About 40 professional theaters keep their doors open for most of the year, and the League of Chicago Theaters, a theatrical umbrella organization, operates a HOT TIX booth in the Daley Center Plaza near the Chicago Picasso sculpture. Tickets on the day of performance are sold there half-price. For up-to-date information and reviews of current shows, visitors should consult *Chicago* magazine, the *Reader* weekly newspaper, and the daily newspapers.

CONCERTS

Classical music lovers have two main oases in the Chicago area this summer—free concerts in Grant Park between a magnificent skyline and Lake Michigan, and the Ravinia Festival in the suburban woodland of Highland Park 30 miles north, which sells tickets. The Chicago Symphony Orchestra plays Ravinia before quitting in

mid-August for a European tour under conductor Sir Georg Solti. Then the New York Philharmonic under Zubin Mehta will give concerts on August 24 and 25. The Grant Park Symphony will perform for all concerts in Grant Park through August 30.

For innocent out-of-towners, the programs for the free Grant Park concerts may look better on paper than the Ravinia Festival where seats in the open-air pavilion cost up to \$16. Critic Robert C. Marsh of the *Chicago Sun-Times* said, "It's Grant Park that reads like the major American festival and Ravinia that looks, more and more, like the free summer series." Grant Park concerts will run through August, with pops concerts conducted by Norman Leyden August 12 and 14, and by Mitch Miller August 26, 27, 29, and 30.

Elsewhere in Chicago, rock, pop, bluegrass, and jazz will hold forth all summer long. The largest crowds will flock to ChicagoFest, a 12-day celebration running through August 9, at Navy Pier, with more than 500 bands and headliners such as Crystal Gayle, Mickey Gilley, Air Supply, and Bobby Vinton. Troubadors will sing on city street corners under Byrne's Summer-time Chicago program. That old Woody Herman tune, "Big Noise Blew in From Winnetka," should have Winnetka changed to Chicago.

OPERA

The Lyric Opera of Chicago begins its 27th season September 25 with Camille Saint-Saëns's *Samson et Dalila*, and a new general manager, Ardis Krainik. Early in her singing career with the Lyric Opera ("I think I've played everybody's maid or mother," says Krainik), she sang as a Valkyrie, one of Wotan's daughters who escorted the fallen warriors to Valhalla. Now, after 20 years as assistant Lyric Opera manager, Krainik runs the company that is Valhalla itself on its good nights.

Lyric Opera will share the production of *Samson et Dalila* with the San Francisco Opera. Both cities enjoy 12-week opera seasons, and Harold C. Schonberg, former chief music critic of the *New York Times*, observed on the Lyric's 25th anniversary, that New Yorkers tend to grow "smug and provincial" about great opera outside New York's Metropolitan Opera. Schonberg wrote, "Within those 12 weeks, both [Chicago and San Francisco] present opera of the very highest standard, with a repertory that invariably is more

interesting than the Metropolitan's, and with superstar casts that even the Metropolitan often cannot match."

Lyric Opera, which was called Lyric Theater when it was founded in 1954, is Chicago's longest-lived opera company in a city whose opera history goes back to 1850. Until early this year, it was headed by the dynamic founder and general manager Carol Fox, who had brought Maria Callas to Chicago for her American debut and who commissioned Krzysztof Penderecki's *Paradise Lost*. It had its world premiere in Chicago in 1978, and then, in an unprecedented move, the entire physical production was sent to play at La Scala in Milan, Italy.

Fox, who had pulled off miracles in signing great singers and conductors, retired reluctantly early this year for reasons of health in a period when skyrocketing production costs were agitating the opera's board of directors. The *Chicago Tribune* said Fox deserved 25 years of curtain calls for what she had given the city. The Lyric board of directors immediately signed Krainik to become general manager, with Bruno Bartoletti remaining as artistic director, just as Krainik was about to take over as head of the opera in Sydney, Australia.

Lyric Opera's other productions this season, which had been planned by Fox and Bartoletti, include *L'Elisir d'Amore*, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, *Macbeth*, *Fidelio*, *Don Quichotte*, and a Lyric Opera premiere of *Roméo et Juliette*.

A smaller but noteworthy opera company is the Chicago Opera Theater

that is scheduled to open its season next February 6 with an English version of Mozart's *The Abduction From the Seraglio*, celebrating the 200th anniversary of the opera's 1782 premiere.

The company's opera production of Tennessee Williams's play *Summer and Smoke* was filmed last year by WTTW, Chicago's public television outlet, and will probably get national viewing next year.

MUSEUMS

Alexander the Great may have Greeced the known world in the 4th century B.C. before he died at 32 after a drinking bout, but his spirit is alive and pulling in the crowds this summer at the Art Institute of Chicago. A show of 180 Greek antiquities called *The Search for Alexander* runs through September 7. It was brought to the U.S. from Greece by Time Inc. and the National Bank of Greece.

If you're still catching up, the Art Institute owns El Greco's "The Assumption of the Virgin," Rembrandt's "Young Girl at an Open Half-Door," Seurat's "Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte," and some of the greatest French Impressionist paintings ever assembled under one roof. It's what you expect at one of the world's great museums.

Over at the Museum of Contemporary Art through August 31 is a kicky show by 22 artists from Detroit's inner city. The title is *Kick Out the Jams*, which was the name of a late Sixties song by the revolutionary rock group from Detroit called the MC5. The show

was a hit in Detroit during last summer's Ronald Reagan convention, so if *those* people liked it, it can't be all counterculture ranting.

The Field Museum of Natural History has a delightful show of large-scale models of Hopi Indians at religious ceremonies, through September 8, plus the usual stuffed mammoths, Egyptian mummies, and reassembled dinosaur bones. The nearby Adler Planetarium has a show called *Cosmic Catastrophes*, running through September 15, that is truer to life than *The Empire Strikes Back*. The Museum of Science and Industry has shows called *Italy: A Country Shaped by Man*, and *Berlin: A City in Search of its Future*, through most of August, plus an array of technological and scientific exhibits. And the Shedd Aquarium has 4,500 fishes. In suburban Evanston, the new Terra Museum of American Art has fine American Impressionist paintings from the collection of its founder, millionaire industrialist Daniel J. Terra, who is President Reagan's designee for Ambassador at Large for Cultural Affairs.

Those are highlights from a few of more than 70 Chicago-area museums, which range from the Du Sable Museum of African American History, to the Oriental Institute Museum, both at the University of Chicago, to Frank Lloyd Wright's Home and Studio in suburban Oak Park. Each deserves a visit. ■

Henry Hanson is senior editor of *Chicago* magazine.

Degas's "Ballet at the Paris Opera," from the Art Institute of Chicago's first-rate collection of French Impressionists.



Tribal Treasures

by Susan K. Reed

Lester and Sue Wunderman admit happily that their wedding was exotic. Not the first one—that was a traditional family affair held in New York City. It was the *second* ceremony, performed a few weeks later by a high priest in the east African village of Sangha, somewhere between Mopti and Timbuktu in Mali, the arid home of a cliff-dwelling tribe called the Dogon. The festivities spanned three days; at the end of the singing, dancing, and storytelling the Wundermans had become a chapter in the folklore of the village.

Lester Wunderman's relationship to the Dogon tribe, however, is much more than folklore. Over the last 30 years, the chairman of the New York advertising firm of Wunderman, Ricotta & Kline has lovingly assembled what is now the most complete collection of Dogon sculpture to be found in the world. This year, he has donated a major part of his collection to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, for the new Michael C. Rockefeller Wing (scheduled to open in January 1982), which will display arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas.

The Wundermans share their spacious Fifth Avenue apartment overlooking Central Park with masterpieces of Dogon craftsmanship: wood figures with arms raised skyward, vaguely menacing masks, elegantly carved stools, and graceful iron statuettes. The foyer, wallpapered with black-and-white geometrically patterned Dogon burial cloth, beckons

visitors into a different world. The sunny living room holds wood and iron sculpture of humans and animals, rings, necklaces, funerary headrests, and abstract door locks. Iron figures, anticipating Giacometti by five centuries, lead down the hallway to a stunning walnut-paneled library filled with masks, sculpture, and books on African art. Sue Cott Wunderman, manager of editorials at WCBS-TV, gestures to the odd but appealing group surrounding her.



Top: Sue Wunderman with the Dogon. Opposite: On table, a 15th-century funerary bowl (terra-cotta) formed by five figures. Couch is covered in cloth from Mali. On shelf: four ritual masks flank a wood sculpture of mother and child.

"They're my friends, my family."

"When Sue and I were married six years ago," Lester Wunderman explains "and she came here to live, the house was filled—was really *possessed* by this material. I thought it wouldn't be fair for her to live here and not know what this stuff was."

The opportunity soon presented itself. "Lester had been invited to visit President Leopold Senghor of Sene-

gal to talk about raising funds for a cultural center in Dakar," Mrs. Wunderman explains. "While we were there, he sent word forward to the Dogon: Would they marry us? Since there was no way to get their reply, we just got into a Land Rover and *went* there. After about twelve hot, dusty hours I saw something. It was people jumping up and down, yelling and dancing. It was wildness! They rushed over to the Land Rover and grabbed Lester out of the car and threw him into the air. My new husband! I have to admit, I was very apprehensive about our future." These were Lester Wunderman's old friends, of course, made on a previous visit to the tribe in 1972. His wife's apprehension soon vanished as she moved temporarily in with the Dogon.

Lester Wunderman never set out to collect anything. Born 60 years ago and raised in New York City, he was drawn to writing and photography as a young man. He went into advertising, and in 1958 founded his present company. How did he come to be the world's foremost expert and collector of Dogon art? "I was in Los Angeles in 1955, and I had to buy

a present. I wandered into a gallery specializing in Pre-Columbian art, and the gallery owner's wife brought out a small kneeling figure to show me. She thought it was African. I liked it, so I bought it and brought it back to New York." Wunderman pored through all the books he could find trying to pinpoint its origin—"though in those days, most of them were in French," he recalls. "I found a picture in one book