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Quarter Notes

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T H E E D I T O R

FOR the historically minded, insatiably curious opera buff, it can be frustrating to contemplate how few of the operas that have been created over the four centuries of the genre's existence receive live, onstage exposure in our day. Unless one has the luxury of hopping around the globe to attend the rare revivals of long-forgotten works by composers such as Apolloni, Arensky, and Auber, or Paer, Paladilhe, and Persiani, the percentage of nonstandard fare one is likely to see produced in the theater will be small indeed. The compact disc has served well to expose many live recordings of unusual operas to the public at large, while only reminding that public of the vast untapped mine of works that have been produced throughout history and fallen by the wayside, probably never to be heard again. The musically educated can investigate such dinosaurs by actively seeking out manuscripts and published scores in libraries, but for the interested layperson with limited leisure time very few operatic reference books venture to provide much information beyond the standard repertory items and/or the lesser works of only the most famous composers. This is a void that *The Opera Quarterly* tries now and then to fill, by offering articles and reviews about less frequently heard composers and works.

By coincidence, the title of the first feature article in this winter installment of *The Opera Quarterly* happens to provide an appropriate general theme for a large part of the issue: in "Forsaken Phantoms of the Opera" EDWARD L. AFFLECK recounts his lifetime fascination with the neglected or forgotten works in operatic history and his personal quest to bring some of them to our attention via a full-length book anthology of synopses. As no publisher has yet jumped at the idea of printing such an esoteric collection, the author offers a selection of three of his more obscure entries here: Peter Winter's *Das unterbrochene Opferfest*, Filippo Marchetti's *Don Giovanni d'Austria*, and Vittorio Baravalle's *Andrea del Sarto*. We trust readers will let us know if this sampling whets their appetite for more of the same.

We continue in the archaeological vein with V. E. CHANCELLOR's look at the audience riot at Covent Garden in 1802 during the premiere of *Family Quarrels*, an opera with a text by Thomas John Dibdin. Another near-forgotten English opera, John Bartlett's *The Mountain Sylph*, provides the subject of the article by RODNEY STENNING EDGECOMBE, while one of Meyerbeer's less-performed works, *L'étoile du nord*, receives the learned attention of ROBERT IGNATIUS LETELLIER.

A more recent work whose exposure has been rather limited — and will probably remain so, by virtue of its length and the demands it makes on singers, musicians, and audiences alike — is Olivier Messiaen's *Saint François d'Assise*, informally recalled here by ROBERT GRENIER, one of the singers in the cast of the opera's 1983 Paris premiere production.

For the insatiably curious CD collector, our recording reviews discuss a number of rarely heard or underestimated pieces, including Piccinni's *Le donne vendicate*, Haydn's *Armida*, Dvořák's *Vanda*, and Cilea's *Adriana Lecouvreur*, not to mention an unusual recital disc by soprano Nelly Miricioiu of off-the-beaten-path bel canto scenes. Fans of the standard repertory, fear not: we also include material on best-loved singers and composers, such as Rosa Ponselle, Fritz Wunderlich, Mozart, Verdi, Tchaikovsky, and Puccini!