NEW GOLDEN AGE

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the sense of theatre. No longer can managers allow any old set, any old staging. Not more than a few decades ago it would have been unthinkable to give stage directors anything like the free hand recently enjoyed by such nonoperatic craftsmen as Alfred Lunt, Margaret Webster, Cyril Ritchard, and José Quintero. Experienced opera men, like Herbert Graf and Dino Yannopoulos, have eagerly seized upon the new opportunities offered them and revitalized the tired old war horses. The Metropolitan has even gone to the extent of hiring Japanese theatre people to restage Madama Butterfly, with results that are authentic, touching, and beautiful. From Don Carlo to Cosi fan tutte the repertoire is being infused with new dramatic cogency. In Europe the situation is even more pronounced. with Gunther Rennert, Wolfgang and Wieland Wagner, Carl Ebert, and Margherita Wallmann wielding unprecedented power.

Again, where during the Golden Age could a designer of the genius of Eugene Berman have found employment? His settings for Don Giovanni are superb, and they spring naturally from the growing realization that opera is more than a singing contest. Berman and his colleagues—men of talent and experience like Oliver Messel, Cecil Beaton, Rolf Gerard, Howard Bay, Donald Oenslager, and Horace Armistead—now contribute to a total stage picture that is something more than a painted backdrop in front of which an over-dressed soprano and a tenor in tights hurl B flats at one another.

These developments are all to the benefit of opera as an integrated art form, a conception which has communicated itself to performers too. Only rarely now is a singer given a role for which he is physically unsuited. Opera stars keep their weight down, and by and large they can act. There are scores of current performances that are exciting for sheer theatrical effectiveness, above and beyond any vocal resource: Callas as Tosca, Stella as Butterfly, Ramon Vinay as Otello, Frank Guarerra as Cugelmann, Tito Gobbi as Scarpia, Nell Rankin as Princess Eboli, Boris Christoff as Boris, Cesare Siepi as King Philip. Against a list like this, the fascinations of a Mary Garden take on only an isolated significance.

Finally, keep in mind that the Golden Age derives a good portion of its luster from the polishing process of memory. It was probably not as great an era as its apologists would have us believe. For every Giuseppe