GIAN-CARLO MENOTTI'S

THE MEDIUM
MENOTTI has made out of plays, operas and out of opera, plays. He has been able to find, in his admirable "Medium," a vocal style which elevates the ordinary and every-day into lyric drama. In his work everything is a tour de force, but realized with such grace that any difficulty of execution is concealed. The audience receives in the lump, as it were (but supple as waves), an amalgam of elements which, by a strange privilege, is never dispersed: proof in itself that a new element exists. New, yet as old as the world. Only that before such discipline of stagecraft as his, one might have believed that the privileges of the antique theater were never again destined to flower.

Photograph by John Deakin
MARIE POWERS—

"Mme. Flora"

Although born in Pennsylvania, Marie Powers pursued the first part of her musical career in Italy, where she studied at the Royal Conservatory at Milan, taught music, and sang at La Scala under Arturo Toscanini's baton. The death of her Italian husband in 1939, together with the outbreak of war, brought her back to America, faced with the task of building a new career from scratch. The long-awaited and needed "break" came in 1947 when Gian-Carlo Menotti invited her to sing the title role for the Broadway production of THE MEDIUM. The terrifying power and conviction with which Marie Powers endowed her performances made theatre history, and in the years that have followed she has continued her brilliant association with Menotti, taking the role of the Mother in THE CONSUL, and coming to Italy in the summer of 1950 to re-create for the screen her great role in THE MEDIUM.
ANNA MARIA ALBERGHETTI

"Monica"

Fourteen-year-old Anna Maria Alberghetti, appropriately enough, hails from the same town in Italy that produced the great operatic master, Rossini. Although a child in years, Anna Maria Alberghetti has displayed in her public performances a purity of vocal style and musicianship truly exceptional for an artist of any age. During her American visit in 1950 she was heard by Gian-Carlo Menotti, and when plans got under way for the filming of THE MEDIUM, Menotti realized that here was a perfect Monica. So phenomenally successful was her histrionic and vocal artistry in the film THE MEDIUM (Menotti wrote special cadenzas for her waltz scene with Toby) that she was immediately signed up to a Hollywood contract with Paramount.

LEO COLEMAN

"Toby"

Like Marie Powers, Leo Coleman has leapt to fame and fortune by his brilliant performance as Toby in THE MEDIUM. He is the only member of the cast who created the original role back in 1946 when the Medium was first tried out at Columbia University. He has never missed a performance, and he has performed in every major presentation of THE MEDIUM at home and abroad in England, France and Italy. Although born in Louisiana, Leo Coleman spent his early youth in Chicago. He was discovered by Menotti when he was a student in Katherine Dunham's school. His personal success in THE MEDIUM has been unmatched by any other member of the company. So enormous was his popularity in Italy, during the filming of the MEDIUM, that he was engaged immediately for an extended tour throughout Europe as a featured dancer.
BEVERLY DAME

"Mrs. Gobineau"

Appeared in the first presentation of "The Medium" when it was done by the Music Department of Columbia University in 1946. She then appeared in the Ballet Society's production of this opera which was brought to Broadway in the spring of 1947. She remained with the company for its entire New York run. Miss Dame was born some twenty-odd years ago in Cleveland, Ohio where she began her musical education by singing in churches. She made several country-wide tours and spent three seasons with the Chautauqua Opera Company. A member of the Columbia Opera Company for the last five years, she was permitted a leave of absence to join the film company to play Mrs. Gobineau again for the movies.

DONALD MORGAN

"Mr. Gobineau"

Donald Morgan, who grew up in the shadow of Hollywood's studios, made his film debut in Rome, Italy, playing one of the six leading roles in "The Medium." Born in Pomona, California, on March 17, 1911, of Welsh-German parentage, Morgan began singing at the age of two and has been singing in this country and abroad ever since, both as a professional and non-professional. He studied singing at the Universities of Cologne, Bonn and Munich, worked under the great singing coaches of Germany in perfecting his work in opera and in the oratorios of Bach, Haydn, Haendel and Verdi, and studied dramatics under Frieda Richard of the Max Reinhardt Theatre in Salzburg, Austria.
Belva Kibler, who sings the plaintive role of a mother who comes to the medium in search of contact with her dead sixteen-year-old daughter in Gian-Carlo Menotti's film version of "THE MEDIUM," presents a startling contrast to her role in real life. Trim, young, attractive and energetic, she's a busy concert, oratorio and opera singer whose reputation is based on the classic repertoire of a gifted and well-trained contralto. Born in Los Angeles, she received her musical training at the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music, and privately in Los Angeles and New York. She has recently returned from a concert tour of Germany and Austria under the auspices of America House, an organization for promoting cultural relations between America and Germany.
notes on THE LYRIC THEATRE of Menotti

by Robert Horan

BEFORE we can speak of success, we should speak of intentions. The operas of Gian-Carlo Menotti are somewhat haloed by the dangerous light of acclaim, which is justified, but not always so discriminating as to meaning. Their direct, simple power over an audience is like that which among cardboard scenery might attend the appearance of a lion. We are nervously aware of his plush power, his intricate graces, but we do not analyze his muscles. What Menotti intends in his operas is, of course, various, unpredictable, personal. He has a signature, an unmistakable caligraphy that informs his work with a particular architecture, breath, line.

Menotti’s greatest talent is the jointless welding of pure music and real theatre, his refusal to compromise one with the other. Large chunks of the music are not secretly intended, or desperately adapted for symphonic performance, nor are the libretti boasted of as dramas. They are true melodramas. Even in making the difficult transfer of “The Medium” to the screen the opera is filmed as an opera. There is no concession to spoken dialogue, nor distortion of musical elements. It is simply seen in the special terms, the particular anonymous and poetic eye of the camera, giving the work a visual freedom which was naturally circumscribed by the stage.
"The Medium" is essentially dominated by a philosophical idea. The fact that its theatrical appearance is so vivid, filled with eerie light and ectoplastic veils, murder and madness, is apt to blind people to its curious, relentless examination of the nature of faith. The pathetic little group of believers, who have seen the disembodied loved ones in the air over their heads, or heard their remembered laughter tinkling in the dark, are not to be cheated of this grotesque but so human solace. Their faith brought them here and sustained them against the most bold and eccentric trickery. But Mme. Flora, lost and loveless, enclosed in the closet of her alcoholic machinations has no support. Her innocent child and the enigmatic gypsy reach each other in some mute loving contact, and find some faith of their own. But for Mme. Flora what can this cold hand in the dark, this unexpected gesture that terrifies her signify? Is it the revenge of the unlettered and meanly treated boy? An accident, a delusion, a genuine phenomenon, a penance for the guilty? And the fact is, the crucial philosophic, as well as telling dramatic fact is, that she will never know. It will drive her beyond the rational into acts of violence, because she has sold her chance for peace, or even intelligent disbelief; she is the victim of her own frauds. And so rather than the mere scaffolding of melodrama, there is the firm field of tragedy.
The music alternates between expressive, chromatic and ghoulish sounds which underscore the trickery and deceit and broad melodic passages as in the pantomimed love “duet.” Menotti’s works are without excuses, without obligations. There are uncertainties, influences, yes; but no nervous, wholesale devotion to existing cliques or manner. His fluid, rapid and passionate style is thoroughly Italian, for all of its American technical training. The orchestration is lucid and delicately athletic. As in all his works, sound singable melody and the sentiments of sorrow or of hope are unashamed, personally compelling.

Puccini’s ghost hovers, but retires to his own grand chambers. It is not an embarrassed relative or ghastly skeleton in the closet, as so many “tune detectives” seem to think when they discover that artists, like people, have ancestors.

The final effect, in the theatre is a work, that liked or disliked has a uniqueness of approach. It is Menotti’s imagination for the visual that makes possible the tremendous leap from the printed page to the living theatre. Things indicated, almost anotated in the text are ornamented with full, breathing detail on the stage. The dead, dotted score may be clue enough to the trained eye and ear, but the mere lines, wrenched away from the cloak of music, marching leadenly across an unlighted page are nothing. They are not plays, they are not poetry, they are not philosophical nor social essays. They are libretti, alive in the ear, in the performance. And no more alive figure in the lyric theatre is now before us, than Menotti.
In the not too distant past, when the city of Hollywood still existed and its inhabitants were vaguely interested in my work, I had a charming conversation with Jean Cocteau on the subject of film making. When I told him how worried I was at the prospect of having to face a camera, he gave me this delightful, if somewhat irresponsible, advice: "The only way to make a good film is to know nothing about it. Go straight at it, unprepared, and ask for the impossible." Had this been an oracle from the mouth of the Cumaean sibyl herself, I couldn't have obeyed it more religiously.

There we were, the whole lot of us, plumb in the middle of the Scalera Studios in Rome, in our country clothes and with our picnic baskets, carelessly trampling on forbidden grounds, disregarding all "No Trespassing" signs, and enjoying the fair weather while it lasted—a director who had never directed before, and who had an invincible distaste of anything mechanical (cameras in particular); a conductor who had never recorded a note of music (least of all, for a sound track); a cast of singers who had never seen a film studio (much less acted in one) and producers who had very little money to spend.
The first few days of shooting were indeed very trying for everyone concerned. I soon found out that when I asked for the impossible, I often got it, and it looked impossible, too. I became timid and awkward—like those people who, on their first flight, never move from their seats, afraid that if they were to walk about, they might upset the balance of the plane. But picnics must have guardian angels, and my producers had just enough money to hire two of them. One was Sasha Hammid, the distinguished director-cameraman of "Forgotten Village," the other Enzo Serafin, the man who actually photographed "The Medium."

We soon formed a telepathic trio. I announced what I wanted, Sasha explained to everybody what I really should have wanted, and Serafin, a quick syllogist, finally did whatever he thought best. It would be highly inaccurate to say that I enjoyed making my first film. I missed all along the spontaneity of the stage and its immediacy of expression. I felt all the time the defeating personality of the camera, whose elaborate steel mask one must always wear, through whose glassy eyes one must look at the world—that de-
vourer of time, that merciless Medusa which petrifies all freshness before it. Of one thing I soon became convinced: the director must be his own cameraman if his film is to be a real work of art, because to give personality to a film the poet-director’s mind must live in the black-room behind the lens, he must lend his human soul to the artificial limbs of the camera. That is the reason why so many films, exciting and convincing though they may be, never reach the level of a work of art. Too often they are nothing but photographed plays, while the camera is a hack-reporter rather than a visionary re-creator. I even go so far as to believe that one shouldn’t plan shots in advance, for in that way one cheats the camera of its creative power, as no one can really tell what its eye may unexpectedly discover. An accidental light, a seemingly unimportant detail, may suddenly be transfigured into all important elements by the candor of the lens.

A great deal of the film of “The Medium,” as a matter of fact most of it, was improvised. My colleagues can bear witness that I never looked at my carefully prepared script, and that very soon everybody else stopped looking at it. To the orthodox, this may sound an extremely dangerous method of working, wasteful of time and money, but actually the improvised shots took less time than the carefully planned ones and were by far the most satisfactory. Yet in spite of my brilliant co-operators, I often felt frustrated at having to depend so much on other people’s skill. On looking at the rushes, I often felt like a young orchestrator who is surprised at the actual sound of what he has written.

Apart from my inexperience, I was hampered by another obstacle which few directors have to face—a pre-recorded sound track, an inflexible framework which forces both action and timing into its pattern. In my moments of frustration, I was often reminded of a story I heard many years ago. A man was climbing mountains in Switzerland and met, on one of his excursions, an enchanting woman with whom he fell madly in love. He felt certain that she was to be the woman of his life, and having a camera with him, he took twelve photographs of her. On the way back, the girl slipped and fell into a crevasse, never to be seen or heard of again. He did not know her name. All that he had left of her were those twelve photographs on the little roll of film. When he arrived back home, he locked himself in the dark-room and, trembling with excitement, developed the spool. He discovered that all of them were over-exposed; so he strangled himself, twisting the shiny black film around his neck.

I am often asked whether I liked the filming of “The Medium.” I feel that that is like asking a surgeon whether or not he liked a certain operation. All I can say is that the patient is still alive, and even looks a little better than before.

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Evan M. Frankel
presents
Gian-Carlo Menotti’s

THE MEDIUM

starring
Marie Powers
as Madame Powers

featuring
Leo Coleman as Toby
and
Bevery Dame as Mrs. Gobineau
Belva Kibler as Mrs. Nolan
Donald Morgan as Mr. Gobineau

and introducing
Anna Maria Alberghetti
as Monica

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Radio Italiana
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Screenplay and Direction
by
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produced by
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Associate Producer
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Georges Wakhevitch
C. Robert Fine

Associate Director
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Joseph Sciavitta
Art Director
Charles Paskal
Sound Recording
Joseph Sciavitta

Production Managers

Bianca Battista
Leopoldo Savona

Costumes
Elio Gottsche

Camera Operator
Aldo Savarina

Make-up
Leandro Marin

Editorial Assistants

Miriam Aschim
Alberto di Martino

Hairdresser
Amalia Paletti

Based Upon the Broadway Production
presented by
Chandler Cowles and Efrem Zimbalist, Jr.

“The Medium” was photographed at the Scala Film Studios in Rome, Italy, in the fall of 1960. Its world premiere took place at the Sutton Theatre in New York on September 5, 1961.

A TRANSFILM PRODUCTION
ALEXANDER HAMMID

Associate Director and Editor. Mr. Hammid's film experience dates back to some of the remarkable documentary films produced by Herbert and Rosa Klein, among them "Lights Out in Europe," on which he served as cameraman. Born in Czechoslovakia, he continued his association with the Kleins on the memorable production of John Steinbeck's "The Forgotten Village" which he co-directed and photographed in Mexico. In recent years he has directed and edited some outstanding documentary films, including the OWI film "Hymn of All Nations" with Arturo Toscanini and "Angry Boy" for the Mental Health Film Board.

THOMAS SCHIPPERS

Conductor. Schippers was the conductor of the Lemonade Opera Company in New York when he was taken as assistant conductor of Gian-Carlo Menotti's "The Consul." A few weeks after the premiere of "The Consul" in New York, he was elevated to the post of senior conductor. This has marked the most important event in the career of this twenty-year-old young man. He comes from the middle west and received his musical training at the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia. He was given a leave of absence from "The Consul" to journey to Rome to act as musical director for "The Medium" filming. He rejoined "The Consul" company in London in the spring of 1951.

GEORGES WAKHEVITCH

Art Director. Russian-born, he has been a resident of Paris for some twenty years and one of the most successful contributors to French Theatre Arts. In addition to his work for the stage he is a veteran of hundreds of films (produced in practically every country of Europe) for which he designed the costumes and sets. Outstanding has been his work on the films of Cocteau and his set design for the Broadway productions of "Ring Around The Moon" and the Roland Petit Ballet.

C. ROBERT FINE

Sound Recording Engineer. Though only 29 he is a veteran in the field of music recording for film and disc. Fine built his first piece of sound equipment when he was nine, pioneered with Miller in the development of tape recording and, after a stint as radar technician in the Pacific with the Marines, was appointed chief engineer for Majestic Records. He is now in charge of the disc division of Reeves Sound Studios. Here he supervises the classical records of Mercury Records, including such aggregations as the Chicago and Louisville Symphony Orchestra. He was also responsible for the magnificent sound recording of the score for Robert Flaherty's film "Louisiana Story."

ENZO SERAFIN

Director of Photography. Of the many fine Italian cameramen, he is perhaps the most promising newcomer. Just prior to his work on "The Medium" he filmed "Cronaca di un Amore," containing some exciting new photographic techniques for which he won high critical acclaim in Italy. His earlier film experience was in Spain, where he served as cameraman for many feature films. His fluent command of English in addition to French, German, Italian and Spanish, made him a welcome member of the truly international company that produced "The Medium."

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