

*LEON WILSON CLARK*  
*OPERA SERIES*

*SHEPHERD SCHOOL OPERA*

*presents*

***THE CONSUL***

*Musical drama in three acts*

*Music and libretto by Gian Carlo Menotti*

*Thomas Jaber, music director and pianist*

*Carey Kugler, stage director*

*John Scheffler, set designer*

*Tim Dickson, lighting designer*

*Carmen Sewell, costume designer*

*November 16, 17, 18 and 19, 2000*

*7:30 p.m.*

*Wortham Opera Theatre*

*Celebrating* **25** *years*

THE SHEPHERD SCHOOL OF MUSIC RICE UNIVERSITY

1975-2000

## CAST

THURSDAY, NOV. 16, AND SATURDAY, NOV. 18

<i>Magda Sorel</i>	<i>Suzanne Hatcher</i>
<i>John Sorel</i>	<i>Michael Ross</i>
<i>The Mother</i>	<i>Andrea Jaber</i>
<i>Secret Police Agent</i>	<i>Orival Bento-Gonçalves</i>
<i>The Secretary</i>	<i>Zanna Fredland</i>
<i>Mr. Kofner</i>	<i>Kade Smith</i>
<i>The Foreign Woman</i>	<i>Katherine Moscato</i>
<i>Anna Gomez</i>	<i>Cara Spinks</i>
<i>Vera Boronel</i>	<i>Stephanie Bradow</i>
<i>The Magician</i>	<i>Karim Sulayman</i>
<i>Assan, friend of John Sorel</i>	<i>David Heffner</i>
<i>Chanteuse</i>	<i>Monica Griffin</i>
<i>First Policeman</i>	<i>Robert Darilek</i>
<i>Second Policeman</i>	<i>Robin Pontbriand</i>

FRIDAY, NOV. 17, AND SUNDAY, NOV. 19

<i>Magda Sorel</i>	<i>Holli Harrison</i>
<i>John Sorel</i>	<i>Levi Beck</i>
<i>The Mother</i>	<i>Andrea Jaber</i>
<i>Secret Police Agent</i>	<i>Orival Bento-Gonçalves</i>
<i>The Secretary</i>	<i>Jessica Lloyd</i>
<i>Mr. Kofner</i>	<i>Andrew Sudduth</i>
<i>The Foreign Woman</i>	<i>Nacole Palmer</i>
<i>Anna Gomez</i>	<i>Sharazad Mowlavi</i>
<i>Vera Boronel</i>	<i>Soon Cho</i>
<i>The Magician</i>	<i>Jamin Flabiano</i>
<i>Assan, friend of John Sorel</i>	<i>Craig Verm</i>
<i>Chanteuse</i>	<i>Monica Griffin</i>
<i>First Policeman</i>	<i>Robert Darilek</i>
<i>Second Policeman</i>	<i>Robin Pontbriand</i>

## ARTISTIC AND PRODUCTION STAFF

<i>Music Director and Pianist</i>	<i>Thomas Jaber</i>
<i>Stage Director</i>	<i>Carey Kugler</i>
<i>Set Designer</i>	<i>John Scheffler</i>
<i>Technical Director and Lighting Designer</i>	<i>Tim Dickson</i>
<i>Costume Designer</i>	<i>Carmen Sewell</i>
<i>Production Stage Manager and Props Master</i>	<i>Alex Stutler</i>
<i>Master Carpenters</i>	<i>Manning Mott, James Perry</i> <i>(I.A.T.S.E. Local 51, Houston, Texas)</i>
<i>Vocal Coach</i>	<i>Michael Franciosi</i>
<i>Assistant Stage Manager</i>	<i>Nicole Fraley</i>



# *The Consul*

*Composed in 1948-50 with music and  
libretto by Gian Carlo Menotti (b.1911)*

*First performance:  
Schubert Theatre, Philadelphia: March 1, 1950*

*The time is shortly after World War II.  
The action takes place somewhere in Europe.*

## *ACT I*

*Scene 1: The Sorel home, early evening.*

*Scene 2: The Consulate, next day.*

## *INTERMISSION*

*(15 minutes)*

## *ACT II*

*Scene 1: The Sorel Home, in the evening, a month later.*

*Scene 2: The Consulate, a few days later.*

## *INTERMISSION*

*(15 minutes)*

## *ACT III*

*Scene 1: The Consulate, late afternoon.*

*Scene 2: The Sorel Home, that night.*

This production is made possible by a generous  
endowment from the late Dr. Leon Wilson Clark.

## DIRECTOR'S NOTES

*"Immigrant A Suicide; Woman Denied Entry  
to U.S. Hangs Herself on Ellis Island."*

- The New York Times, February 12, 1947

*This was the headline Gian Carlo Menotti read on his return to Philadelphia after a frustrating stay in Hollywood, where his attempts at writing a movie script had failed to materialize. One of these unproduced scripts, **The Bridge**, dealt with the struggle of twenty-five Austrians to return home from Hungary after World War II. For months these people literally lived on a bridge between the two countries, waiting for the bureaucracy to decide their fate. From these two incidents of post-war history came the idea for an opera which reflected Menotti's anger and distaste for bureaucracy and gave eloquent voice to his grief and indignation at the tragic fate of his Jewish friends in Austria and Germany.*

*Menotti began work on **The Consul** in 1948, receiving financial support from Chandler Cowles and Efrem Zimbalist, Jr., who had helped produce **The Medium** on Broadway. **The Consul**, too, was destined for Broadway, but its world premiere took place at the Schubert Theatre in Philadelphia on March 1, 1950. **The Consul** played for ten days at the Schubert and was an overwhelming critical success. The production then went on to Broadway, where it was a financial, as well as an artistic success. It played 269 performances, at that time the longest run ever for a show of its type, and won the New York Drama Critics Circle Award and the Pulitzer Prize for Music. Critics vied for words to describe its significance. Olin Downes wrote in The New York Times: "This opera is written from the heart, with a blazing sincerity and a passion of human understanding. It is as contemporary as the Cold War, surrealism, television, the atom bomb. It is torn out of the life of the present-day world, and poses an issue which mercilessly confronts humanity today. And this is done with a new wedding of the English language with music in a way which is singable, intensely dramatic and poetic by turns, and always of beauty." Virgil Thompson commented in The Herald Tribune: "To report on it as merely a piece of music would give no idea of its real nature. To recount it as drama would not experience its intensity. It is a play of horror and deep pathos, but these qualities in it are as much a result of musical stylization as they are of dramatic exposition."*

*The thirty-nine year old composer, who was also librettist and stage director, had introduced a new American genre. **The Consul** was to become the first American opera produced at La Scala, and despite attempts by a Communist faction in the audience to disrupt the performance, the ensemble received twenty-five curtain calls. This "musical drama" would be translated into twelve languages and be played in twenty countries. In Russia, the production was hailed as "a great artistic accomplishment." The Soviet reviewer pointed out that the theme of the work is the cruel treatment of the "little man"*



by the "capitalistic world." Then Belgrade heard *The Consul* in 1953; there were a dozen curtain calls as the audience wept and cheered. The Vienna State Opera production was the "top event of the year" as the Viennese speculated over which country Menotti intended for his attack on bureaucracy.

Menotti was often criticized for not specifying the locale, and some critics felt the generalized situation gave the work a lack of immediacy. I could not disagree more. The story of man's inhumanity to man goes far beyond the indictment of any totalitarian regime. It is the universality of these characters and their situation which make *The Consul* a timeless piece of music theatre. Certainly the work was written within the confines of its time, but the drama transcends any such limitations. In *The Consul*, music and words can not be separated; hence the designation "music drama." It is this synthesis which demonstrates the genius of Menotti.

Our production emphasizes not the realistic nature of the plot but the surrealistic qualities of the music and poetry. The setting hints at the 1950s but does not preclude the possibilities of the new millennium. The set represents both the Sorel living area and the Consulate's waiting room. It is a distinction which fades in Magda's dreams. She is never far from the bureaucracy that haunts her. The words on the paper-covered walls echo her fears and expectations. Heart — Chains — Tears — Freedom — Hope — Waiting — Papers. It is a world of faceless pictures, and clocks without hands, black and white apart from the occasional cabaret lights nearby, silent except for the chanteuse song promising "tu reviendras" meaning "you will return."

It occurs to me how little the world has changed in the last sixteen years since Thomas Jaber and I produced this piece. This is especially perplexing given our preoccupation with the speed of technological advancement. Yet when you consider the "human condition," only the names seem to have changed. Iran, Berlin, and El Salvador have been temporarily replaced with Kosovo, Jerusalem, and Haiti. Television still brings the individual and collective struggles of people around the globe into our living rooms each and every night. We, who are fortunate to live in a free society, become increasingly numb or indifferent to this daily barrage of headlines. Our escape lies in the button of a remote control. The Sorel family, and the very real families around the world they represent, have no such button to push.

Unlike the images on our television, the theater appeals to us on a very different level. It asks us to enter imaginatively into the lives of these characters and through this emphatic connection to "see" with our hearts. When the theater "holds the mirror up to nature," the reflection is not always pretty, but it is a reflection as deep as our conscience.

As you experience the sorrowful journey of Magda Sorel this evening, we hope you'll see her final, desperate act not as an end, but as a beginning. Though her freedom comes at a great cost, her sacrifice empowers us. Armed with her courage, we reach out to touch the lives of those who need our help. Perhaps sixteen years from now, more than just the names will have changed.

— Carey Kugler

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## SHEPHERD SCHOOL VOICE DEPARTMENT AND OPERA STUDIES FACULTY

*Kathleen Kaun, Professor of Voice and Chair of the Voice Department  
Janet de Chambrier, Artist Teacher of Opera Studies  
Debra Dickinson, Artist Teacher of Opera Studies for Acting and Movement  
Joyce Farwell, Professor of Voice  
Michael Franciosi, Artist Teacher of Opera Studies  
Thomas Jaber, Associate Professor of Music, Director of  
Choral Ensembles, and Vocal Coach  
William Murray, Associate Professor of Voice*

## UPCOMING EVENT OF SHEPHERD SCHOOL OPERA

*Gian Carlo Menotti's  
**Amahl and the Night Visitors**  
(fully-staged and costumed)  
and carols and music of the season  
Debra Dickinson, director  
Thomas Jaber, music director and pianist  
Saturday, December 2  
8:00 p.m., Stude Concert Hall  
Free admission. No tickets required.*



**RICE**