

# Entertainment

Editor: Agnes Kruchio

## Wildermann in Flying Dutchman

# Singing career reads like rags to riches story

By AGNES KRUCHIO

The rags to riches story of the most popular and revered singer at the current season of the Canadian Opera sound like a clichéd fairy tale.

A young lad who 'just liked to sing, but who had little training and worked as a longshoreman almost discontinued his already sporadic singing lessons when his singing teacher was asked to recommend someone to quickly step into the role of the king in Aida in a visiting opera company.

Through the only role he had ever learned, the singing career of William Wildermann began, and during the past 30 years he has done nothing else but opera.

Wildermann used this story to illustrate the effects 'flukes' have had on his career. In his case the superstition of most theatre people is well founded. He is in Toronto for the fall season of the Canadian Opera Company now at the O'Keefe Centre, from the Stuttgart Opera House.

### GOTTERDAMMERUNG

Last year he had appeared in the role of Hagen in Wagner's Die Gotterdammerung for the Canadian Opera Company, after he had refused to do the part for years on the advice of his elders, and it "turned out to be the best thing he has ever done" once he decided to gamble it.

It has won him instant acclaim with the Opera company and Toronto audiences and critics alike, and has resulted in many offers with other companies.

Many critics claim that his voice has undergone a fabulous transformation, that his voice has become richer and stronger than ever before. He admits that it may have something to do with his outlook, also.

### UNHAPPY AT MET

"I was never very happy at the Met", he told us, referring to the seven years he spent there before he had gone to the Stuttgart Opera House. "A voice is a very fine instrument, and you have to be basically happy to sing at all, and especially if you want to sing well."

While most singers at his time of life would be thinking of phasing themselves out, Wildermann has been taking on demanding Wagnerian roles that would become an ambitious young singer. "Oddly enough, in the ten years I spent in Germany I have never done Wagner — it is just as difficult to stage there as it is here," he said, referring to the massive stage props and choral participation it takes to do many Wagnerian operas.

Wildermann believes that the opportunities for young singers have diminished since the abolition of travelling companies the likes of which gave him his first start. "A person could not do today what I did" he said. "The normal route nowadays is, after years of expensive training, to sing in the chorus until given the opportunity to sing small roles."

"The problem then," he explained, "is that a singer may blow his only chance through sheer nerves, simply because he is not

## Five Easy Pieces

Jack Nicholson and Karen Black trip through Five Easy Pieces, a tale of pianos and life. Winters presents the film Friday and Sunday nights at 8:30 p.m. in Curtis LH-1, for \$1.25 general, \$1 Winters.

used to singing alone.

When asked about the effects of the different treatments of opera in Canada and in Europe, he told us: "A singer can expand artistically if he has a measure of security as he does in Europe."

"In Stuttgart, for example, there is an opera, a theatre and a ballet company all under one roof, with their own theatre shops, and they manufacture all the props and costumes right there. The complex employs several thousand, and the people support it through their taxes."

### CANADA ENTHUSIASTIC

"But opera in Canada has much more enthusiastic audiences than in Germany," he continued. "There is an air of excitement generated here that is not found in Germany, where many singers behave like a species of civil servant — they look on their performance as just doing a job."

## Brando in Tango

Last Tango in Paris waltzes onto the screen Saturday and Sunday nights at 8:30 in Curtis LH-L. Bethune presents Bertolucci's controversial film with Marlon Brando and Maria Schneider. Restricted admission, for \$1 Bethune, \$1.25 general. No movie next week, but Warren Beatty in The Parallax View in two weeks.

Here they appreciate every move a singer makes."

Aside from doing some of the early operas, white-bearded Wildermann would like to do the role of Hans Sachs in Der Meistersinger.

"That would be a role to end all roles," he said. "One could build a whole career just around that one role."

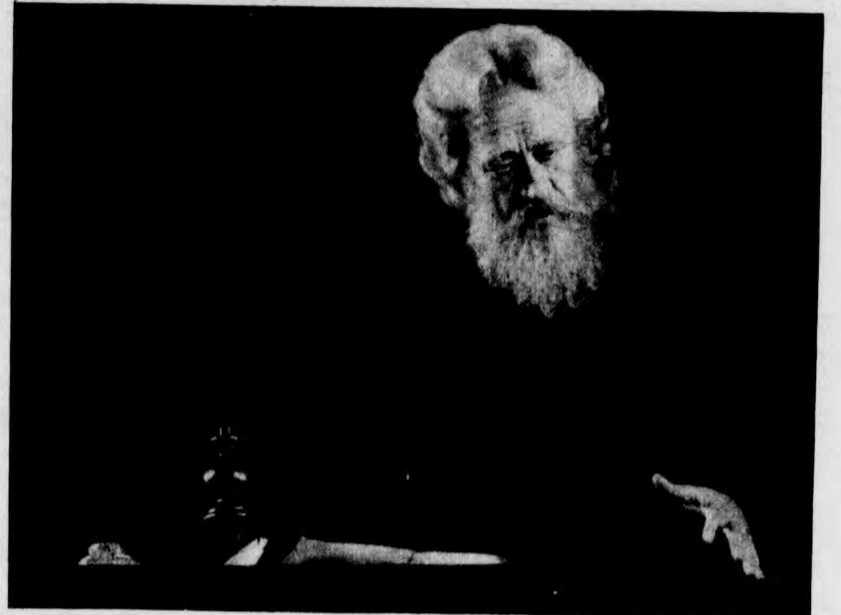
While there will not be a single base part for him to sing in next fall's seasons of the Canadian opera, Wildermann who is now freelancing is busier than ever. "I feel I'm in the best vocal shape I have ever been in" he said.

After the engagement in Toronto he will be heading to Argentina to do Tannhauser, after which he will be singing in Seattle as Hagen, and then in the entire mammoth Ring Cycle. Next fall he will sing in Tristan and Isolde for a CBC telecast.

"That is, if my gallbladder holds out," he said. He missed the first two performances of The Flying Dutchman this fall because of a sudden attack, and will be undergoing an operation for it sometime this winter.

## Creepy-crawlies

Ann James' structural creations will creep and crawl about the York Art Gallery, N145 Ross, until October 20. Everyone is invited.



William Wildermann in a scene from the extravagant production of Boris Godunov. He also sings the role of Donald in Flying Dutchman.

ing an operation for it sometime this winter.

And eventually he would like to get into a totally different line of work which beside his busy career he has had little opportunity to pursue: animal husbandry. In the meantime he will have to settle for stopovers on his long abandoned, beautiful farm in the Catskills.

"This may sound corny," he said, "but after all the travelling around and living abroad that I have done, the States are where I feel really at home."

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