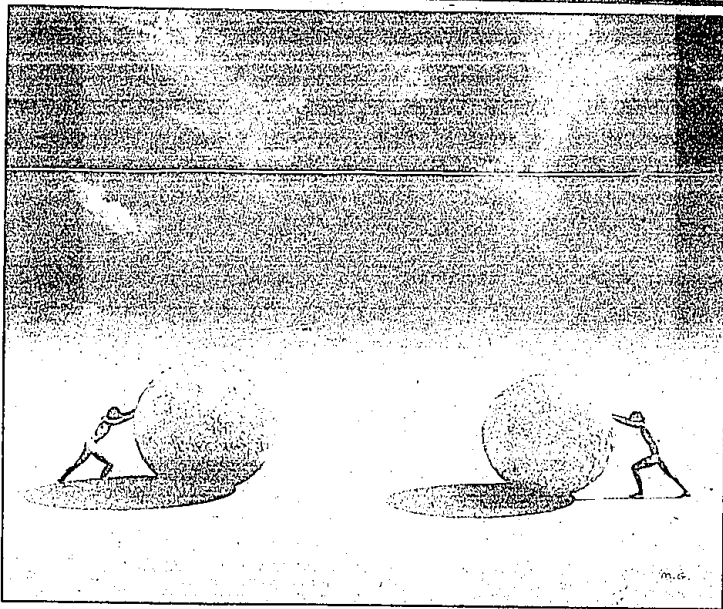


Corinne Abatt editor/644-1100

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(P18)



Mischa Gordin's "Conversation," done in 1942, is part of his newest body of work on display at Xochipilli Gallery of Birmingham through Saturday, May 26. With these Gordin has gone further into constructing his own sets and props, much as is done in the theater. His intent is to put the workings of the inner mind into a visual image rather than reflecting nature and the visible world.

Trusting intuition

Photography becomes metaphor for life

By Corinne Abatt
staff writer

Mischa Gordin uses the camera as a tool much as a painter uses a brush or a sculptor a chisel — to make a statement, give an impression, provoke a viewer.

His current show at Xochipilli Gallery of Birmingham illustrates eloquently how he works from concept rather than nature. He has been working on this show which continues through Saturday, May 26, for two years. His preparation, both the mental and physical, is slow and careful.

Now, instead of just props, he's building his own locations. Describing his backgrounds as "urban landscapes," he said, "Okay, if you don't find that you want, you build. Actually, I have more control, definitely more control."

His work, which he said, has always been about people is cleaner and more to the point than before. He has stripped it of every extraneous detail, down to the last flick of shadow that might detract from the purity. And these do have purity of form

and line that is, at the least, disarming.

Gordin uses nude figures juxtaposed with geometric forms to establish balance, interest, contrast and tension — particularly, the latter.

THE STICKLIKE appearance of the figures and their small size in relation to the obstacles confronting them establishes immediately that Gordin is dealing in mental rather than physical concepts.

These enlarge upon the feelings of futility in the face of overwhelming odds.

Gordin doesn't create an ugly world, but, rather a completely frustrating one. He doesn't offer solutions, pity or sympathy. That's for someone else. He presents man's fight with reality in a highly refined, artistic, studio approach that hits the essence of the problem.

As a service to the viewer, he has stripped away all the rationales and excuse-making elements leaving the nerve ends hanging raw and uncovered. "The darkness is very, very important," he said, "for it is here that he sets up his message. And while he may be manipulating images in the darkness, it

is to present the most penetrating kind of truth.

Gordin, born in Russia, 35 years ago, was trained there as an engineer. And there is still a kind of careful, structured analytical logic to his work.

IT IS paradoxical that he operates purely by intuition.

He said, "After the last show (Halsted Gallery 1982) I knew I must change."

It came slowly, he said, and many photographs and ideas in the interim were discarded. Now, he is asking himself (and waiting for the subconscious to give him an answer) if he should continue the current series, which he admits isn't finished, or go on to something else.

Which ever way he elects to go, he will most certainly send strong and penetrating messages via his art form.

All of the photographs at Xochipilli Gallery are printed on 16- by 20-inch paper in editions of 50. The gallery is at 568 N. Woodward, Birmingham. Hours are 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday.

Opera singer uncorks lively sense of humor

By Mary Jane Doerr
special writer

At a news conference in Toronto last week, Dame Joan Sutherland came up with a succession of one liners that cast doubts on those rumors of her shyness.

The legendary opera singer, famed for her dramatic coloratura performances in comic operas such as "Daughter of the Regiment" and "The Marriage of Figaro" as well as tragedies as "Lucia di Lammermoor," is in Toronto with husband/conductor, Richard Bonynge for Canadian Opera Company's (COC) production of "Anna Bolena."

On June 6, after five performances, the troupe, with the addition of Kathleen Segar, will move to Detroit's Masonic Temple to open with the Michigan Opera Theatre (MOT).

The meeting took place in the Prime Minister's Suite of the Sutton Place Hotel. The muted decor was enhanced by two oil paintings — one of a hunting scene, reminiscent of the hunting scene in Act I of "Anna Bolena," and another of the Paris Opera.

SUTHERLAND doesn't look 58 years old, nor does she appear to be a grandmother. She was classically dressed in red, white, and blue wearing very simple makeup.

With her Australian accent, typified by the soft "sh" pronunciation of the word "scheduled," she amused everyone with her spontaneous, quick-witted remarks.

She was asked how long she had been working on the Anna Bolena role.

"A great long time," she said, referring to the four-week period Donizetti spent at Lake Como where he wrote the opera in 1830. It was his first major success.

"I began working on it in March," she said. "I thought it was long — it is."

Her husband, sitting next to her, compared it to other operas composed later that century. An expert in early operatic literature, Bonynge had called the opera "advanced for its time in the dramatic development of music" in a lecture given the night before at Toronto's Harbour Front.

"The opera is much harder to sing today than it was when it was written," said Bonynge. "In those days singers didn't go up with as much power as they do today. The part is so difficult because it is so long and so high. Singers have tried singing parts such as this as they were sung in 1830 but today's public doesn't like it."

BONYNGE has cut what he calls "a few junky pages" out of this production to shorten the performance time. He said the set was strong on looks with a 19th century grand opera appeal. The



Joan Sutherland

production is owned by the Chicago Lyric Opera.

After the Detroit production, it will go to Houston and San Francisco. The five opera companies all have a financial interest in it. The joint venture puts MOT in the league with the large companies in the country.

Donizetti composed some 70 operas in his career. Some of the music "comes close to the same musical phrases of later operas," said Bonynge.

Sutherland was asked if she ever gets the operas mixed up.

"All the time," she said. "Concern about getting operas mixed up is an opera singer's nightmare. No, I don't memorize easily."

Her husband finished her sentence "and she is a slow learner."

Sutherland has been criticized in the past for poor diction.

"What I have found is that when one review comes out in a city, then it is repeated in reviews in other cities around the country, right or wrong."

Sutherland said she feels that as she has gotten older she is more relaxed and in some ways it is not as difficult to take the high notes. She is one of this century's greatest voices and knows it.

"Now if I don't fit the bill, it's too bad," she adds flippantly but somehow without egotism.

The Bonnynges were asked about the tremendous demand for their services all over the world, suggesting that the Metropolitan Opera would like to have them appear more in New York.

"Oh, would they?" quipped Sutherland. "Perhaps you know something we don't."

It was an obvious referral to the couple's four year absence from the Met and another chapter in the Met's notorious history of failing to hire the world's great singers while they are in their prime.

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Suzuki violin method bridges the age gap

The first May Festival by the Suzuki Associates of Greater Detroit will be held at 4 p.m. Sunday at Academy of Sacred Heart Auditorium, 1350 Kensington Road, Bloomfield Hills.

Dr. Robert Oppelt, director of Suzuki Associates, said there will be about 85 children representing many communities participating — Farmington Hills, Troy, Birmingham, Bloomfield Hills, Grosse Pointe, Detroit and Downriver.

They attend nurseries, kindergartens and private schools where they meet twice weekly in classes to learn to play the violin with the Suzuki method.

Oppelt said, "When it (the Suzuki method) hit this country in 1964 the reaction was like when Sputnik went up."

He remembered being at a convention in Philadelphia when he first heard a troop of Suzuki trained children perform.

"WE WERE numb. We were in tears that they could play like that. Some educators went to Japan to study. And now we have more players than we can teach. There are 100,000 Suzuki students in Japan and 500,000 studying in this country. The movement spread all over the world."

He added, "The object is not to develop professionals, but to develop talent without pressure, minimizing competition. It's a tight triangle with parent, student and teacher. The parent attends lessons and the parent practices with the child. All children play the same material."

He said it's best to start 3-year olds alone and work with 4- and 5-year-olds together and 6-, 7- and 8-year-olds together.

"The three are unique," he said. "Their hand-eye coordination is not developed, so we use different games. Another important aspect — the essence of it — is to start with rote learning. They don't read music at first. They are listening every day to prescribed materials. So they know how it is supposed to sound."

Oppelt, president of the American String Teachers Association, 1973-74, and member of the Michigan Opera Theatre orchestra (viola), has been a member of symphony orchestras and university string quartets and was first recipient of the degree of musical arts in performance and pedagogy to be conferred in a string class by Eastern Michigan University in 1977.

He has held professorships at Lehman College, City University of New York, Illinois State University and Eastern Kentucky University. He is a writer, teacher and active performer.

WHILE ATTENDING a Suzuki Teachers Conference in Japan, he listened as 2,000 young violinists played "In perfect synchrony" before an audience of 10,000.

The 55 young violinists performing on Sunday will be playing in unison. They all play the pieces they know and stop when the material goes past where they have progressed.

Tony Cross, 14, of Grosse Pointe who has appeared with the Detroit Symphony, started with the Suzuki method.

Oppelt gives classes at many area Montessori schools and recently started teaching at the Marie Montessori School in Farmington Hills and at others in Dearborn Heights, Novi, Trenton and the east side.

Shinichi Suzuki, now 85 years old, was trained in Berlin in traditional conservatory technique.

It was through a request to teach a three-year old child that Suzuki discovered that children can learn to play the violin just as they learn to speak a language — by repetition and constantly hearing the material being learned.

Admission charge for the Sunday festival is \$5 for adults and \$2.50 for children.



Robert Oppelt, director of Suzuki Associates of Greater Detroit, works with Jonathan Pelereon, 4, of Oak Park, while Claire Lee, 6, of Troy joins.

use to play. Their violins are one-sixteenth the size of a regular instrument.