



STREAMING THE FIRST CENTURY

SESSION 1: Slavic Sensibilities

SPANNING THE DECADES: Hair and Makeup Edition

Featuring: Stan Dufford (former SF Opera wig and makeup master) and Jeanna Parham (SF Opera head of hair and makeup)

(transcript read time ~ 18 minutes; audio run time ~ 26 minutes)

[BEGIN AUDIO]

NARRATOR: Welcome to San Francisco Opera's Centennial celebration.

JEANNA PARHAM [JP]: Hi, Stan.

STAN DUFFORD [SD]: Hi, Jeanna. My name is Stan Dufford. I was Head of the Wig Department at SFO from 1956 to 1968, and I took over the makeup responsibilities in 1962. So that's my background.

JP: I'm Jeanna Parham. I'm the current Head of Hair and Makeup. I started with the San Francisco Opera in 2001 as a chorus makeup artist and hair stylist, and then in 2014, I became the Head of Department and have been here since.

SD: Here we are.

JP: And I think you and I met probably in 2002 or '03. I remember you and I had some very great conversations, because I was working with Robert Wilson at the same time. We were remounting one of his shows here. So, you and I bonded, I think, originally over floating boxes across the stage. (laughter)

SD: Yes.

JP: -- for no reason, and that began our friendship.

SD: Yes.

JP: Yeah, so...

SD: And it's lasted a long time.

JP: Yes. I'm very happy about that, and I know you've been volunteering in the Archives since 2011, but your history with this Company just goes, not just this Company; the hair and makeup industry, not just San Francisco but across the nation, your influence is what started, I would like to think, a lot of the

techniques that are used in opera still to this day, because you trained the people that trained us. And I just find your story very, very fascinating. I've never met a person that had anything bad to say about you, to your face or behind your back. (laughter)

SD: Well, the training was a continuum, because I taught makeup at San Francisco State, and taught Gerd Mairandres, Judy Disbrow, Richard Battle, etc., etc., and they, in turn, of course, spread that knowledge and technique. And Richard Stead, was one of my early students, and he founded a school that taught wig and makeup. And so there was a continuum in makeup artists and wigmakers in opera companies all across the country.

JP: I'd love if you could talk a little bit about your early days when you had first discovered the art of the Japanese makeup and kabuki, which led you into your curiosity, and how you came here to San Francisco Opera.

SD: Well, I went to Japan very briefly when I was in the Navy and got to see kabuki theater, which I found absolutely fascinating. And while I was in Tokyo I bought kabuki makeup, a kabuki wig, (laughter) etc. And then, when I got out of the Navy, I did graduate work at San Francisco State in education and found it absolutely boring. (laughter) And the next summer, there was a call to the Drama Department from a man who rented the opera Company lighting equipment, and he asked if there was anybody there who knew anything about wigs, and the head of the Drama Department suggested me.

I came down and met with Matt Farruggio, and he took me into the basement and opened up some crates and pulled out three wigs -- a white tieback; a woman's eighteenth-century white wig; and a Japanese wig -- and said, "Style these," and left, and I did. And since in high school -- I mean, in college, my most fascinating class was costume history. It came in very handy. (laughter) It was the best course I took in college, as far as preparing me for my work. And I styled the two white wigs, and I had, when I was in Tokyo, bought a booklet on how to style wigs, Japanese wigs, and so I did.

Jeanna, you would not believe what the wig was. It was just a skullcap with rows of weft sewn around the outside, (laughter) nothing in the middle.

JP: Oh, gosh.

SD: But I did it a good approximation, apparently, because Matt hired me, and that's how I got started. I really wasn't a wigmaker. I really considered myself a makeup artist. But I became proficient.

JP: I would say a little bit better than proficient. (laughter) I loved your quote that this job is about creativity, and it sounds like from the get go you had to put all your creativity into coming up with how to do this.

SD: Working for Kurt Herbert Adler meant that I got no money. In the years I worked here, I got \$50 to buy hair, and that was it. And so we had a lot of very old, very tatty wigs that I would take apart in order to get hair.

I considered the '60s my most creative period because I had no money and I had to use resources, and I also thought of myself as a sculptor and approached wig making as a sculptor, in many ways. I devised techniques of making wigs out of rubber latex, out of ceramic slip -- cast wigs, out of ceramic slip. And

in 1960, when I went to Europe, and went to Bayreuth, that was a huge influence on me, because at Bayreuth they had suffered depressions after the war, and then learned to make do with things. And they made wigs out of hair that had been cut and formed onto globular shapes, like lampshades and things like -- lamp bulbs. They would glue it onto a foundation. I thought, ach, I don't have to ventilate all the time. (laughter)

JP: How was your experience going from education, from San Francisco State, into the world of opera? Were you prepared at all?

SD: I had not worked in theater, and what also worked against me was that the opera company was a bit of a chaos in terms of -- there was no paperwork. Absolutely none. I mean, I never got chorus lists. I didn't know who was who.

My first opera rehearsal was a disaster. It was *Manon Lescaut*. And I had styled some brown tiebacks and some white tiebacks, and when the choristers came to the wig room door, I said, "Are you a bourgeoisie or a nobles?" He said, "I don't know. I enter stage left and I sing la, la, la." (laughter) And I said, "Well, is your costume satin or is it like upholstery fabric?" "I don't know." (laughter) Well, of course, everybody got mixed up, you know, the nobles with the bourgeois wigs, etc. And there were no wig fittings ever. I also knew nothing about any rules. There was no union at that -- time, and it was just catch as catch can.

JP: (laughter) I remember you saying that a lot of the artists brought their own wigs.

SD: Oh, yes.

JP: They had very strong opinions on the wigs you provided versus -- if they showed up with one or not, or...

SD: Well, in the '50s and '60s it was not unusual for divas to bring their own wig. However, (laughs) in the case of Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, she would bring a bag full of wigs (laughter) and deposit it with me, and then on the day of the piano dress, or the dress rehearsal, or even on the day of opening night, she would change her mind. She would call and say, "Oh, Stanley, dress the such-and-such wig." (laughter) There was a Hungarian basso who claimed he had 75 wigs. He always brought his, and shoes and boots. Very smart of him. But the story about Schwarzkopf is that when we did *Così* in 1960, I learned beforehand that, you know, you can't change anything in Mozart. Guglielmo is one color; and Ferrando is another color.

JP: Mm-hmm.

SD: But with the ladies, Fiordiligi almost always blonde or a warm blonde. Dorabella's a brunette, and Despina, being Italian, is always black. In the 1960 production, I, at 20 minutes to curtain, I went to Ms. Schwarzkopf's room to put on her wig, and I just casually mentioned that although I had dressed a black wig for Despina, Mary Costa had brought her own red wig, and Schwarzkopf said, "A black wig? A black wig? Oh, Stanley, you must get it. Go, go." So at 20 minutes to curtain I ran to the basement, picked up the black wig, and brought it in, and we put it on her, and we had to restyle it, you know. "Higher, Stanley, higher. Bombe! Bombe!" (laughter) Meantime, Maestro Adler is knocking on the door, because they always visited the divas before curtain, and she wouldn't let him in, (laughter) and she was almost

giggling as we were doing this. And then when it was time to go onstage, she went out, and her colleagues just were agog, and that's what she wanted. She wanted a frisson of excitement,

She was very good at that

JP: I would love to hear about the *Madame Butterfly* from 1966 and the Japanese wigs.

SD: Well, our Japanese wigs were not wonderful, but Nathaniel Merrill came from the Met to direct *Butterfly*, and he insisted that we use absolutely authentic Japanese. And I said, "Oh, please, please no. (laughs) It would be a disaster." I said, "You can't pin them on. They're made on a metal frame; our chorus is not used to that." And it was true. They were beautiful, absolutely beautiful. Have to be kept in cases because you can't get dust on them. They're very difficult to clean. The chorus women would come in and shake their heads and say, "My wig is gonna come off." And I said, "Yes, if you keep on shaking your head like that, it might come off." (laughter)

JP: I love that, when I first took over for Gerd I had known that at some point we used real geisha wigs from Japan -- but I never really knew the story. And I had a crate brought over from the warehouse, and inside we still had about three of them -- and I opened it up. The whole shop just came running over to see what this was. It was in the original 1966 case that it came to us in. And we all looked inside of it and thought, no way (laughs) -- could we get anyone to wear this now. Because you're right: they're heavy; they have a huge metal plate on them. But we still keep it, and we'd like to put it on display, because this is what we used for many, many productions, because they were so beautiful, and so authentic. I just wanted you to know that they live on, Stan. (laughter)

SD: Okay.

JP: How 'bout we jump into your affiliation with Goldstein's?

SD: Goldstein's, was the primary and perhaps the only real costume house in San Francisco, and it was very popular, back in the '40s and '50s, debutantes and balls and masquerade balls and things like that. And they supplied all of the costumes for the opera company. Well, it had an incredible store of old costumes. For instance, after the earthquake in 1906, the Metropolitan Opera sent here costumes from the *Faust*, and they were still there, made out of felt.

It had costume, like, from the Folies Bergère in the '20s and '30s, and they finally had to get rid of them. And they hired Caesar Caiati, who was, one of the Agnini family at the opera, and he cleared out an awful lot. But they reigned until finally Goldstein sold their stock to the opera company, and we started our own costume shop here.

At the end of my first opera season -- it would have been in probably early December -- I had no job, and, of course, the opera season, including prep, was about three months. And so I went to work at Goldstein's, in their so-called wig department, which was just a little closet with some wigs for rental. But the bonus of it was that there was an old German hairstylist who came in in December to style the Santa Claus wigs and beards, which were made out of yak hair, which takes a beautiful curl. And he taught me how to marcel. And so I learned how to style the Santa Claus wigs and beards with irons, and that's when I started my collection of irons. Cosmopolitan Opera would come there and Goldstein's

would rent wigs to them, or someone like Richard Tucker would bring his hairpiece in to be styled. (laughs) Rose Goldstein was very good about allowing that.

JP: Leontyne Price, you did her street wigs as well, right?

SD: Yes.

JP: Now you guys had a, a great relationship. Maybe you could tell some, some fun stuff about the two of you.

SD: Ah, well, let's see, in 1960 I went to Europe, and I met up with her in Milan. I remember walking down the street with her, and the Italian men were crazy about her, and they kept saying things. And I said, "What they saying? What are they saying?" She says, "Relax, honey, it's all complimentary." (laughter)

She was great fun to be with. I really loved working with her.

JP: What's your favorite memory of your tenure here?

SD: I enjoy so much enjoy working with people, like Schwarzkopf. Price, Sutherland -- just the memories of working with them, rather than one particular highlight.

JP: Yes. I have to say, I feel the same way. We have such wonderful singers who come through here that it's those moments with them that make the show for me, more so than the show itself, because we in hair and makeup are always so . . . we're in the room with them. (laughter)

SD: We're the, the counselor -- the shrink, the . . .

JP: The confidant.

SD: The confidant, yeah.

JP: We're there with them through thick and through thin, and, whether we like it or not, we gotta get those eyelashes on.

SD: I remember one time, Leontyne Price got out of a hospital bed to do a *Butterfly* in San Diego, and Maestro Adler came in and said, "Lee, that wasn't so good." I thought, oh, (laughter) And, and she's kind of slumped. I rubbed her back, and I had a brand new wig I'd made for her and put that on, you know, and -- to cheer her up, that sort of thing.

JP: Yeah.

SD: I also was in her dressing room when she learned that her hometown church, Baptist church in Laurel, Mississippi, had been firebombed. Phew. Heavy times.

But you're there for them.

JP: So when you came back and you started working in the Archives Department in 2011, did somebody seek you out, or what made you decide to come volunteer? (laughter) You just couldn't get enough of us?

SD: Well, I was -- I was a little lost -- when I retired. (laughter) Really, I had no identity.

I was just this older person (laughs) walking his dog, and one day I -- as I was walking my dog, I ran into a woman, said, "I know you. I know you." (laughter) And I told her my name. She says, "Oh!" She had rented a flat in my building with her husband. I said, "What are you doing?" She says, "Well, I'm volunteering in the Archives." I said, "I'd like to do that." And so that started it. And it just saved my soul. (laughs)

It really did, because I enjoyed it so much, and it brought back a lot of memories, lot of memories. And also, it turned out that I was pretty good at recognizing people, and remembering their names --

JP: What exactly are you doing with helping date these productions?

SD: Photos, contact sheets, negatives, and a lot of it was really detective work. We came across in, the Lobster Room boxes of old negatives, and some came in a little paper envelope. Most didn't. And it was great fun, trying to figure out. Fortunately, fortunately, in the communications office there were two file cabinets in which there were photographs by Morton, the first official photographer for the Company. And in going through those, I noticed a pattern of the numbering on the photographs, from which I was able, eventually, to figure out that, uh, some of the numbers referred to a year.

JP: I'd love to hear about Ms. Resnik.

SD: Well, actually, I have a story about Regina Resnik in *Elektra*. I had prepared a really fantastic wig for her, and she entered stage from on high, and she descended to about three different platforms. And each level was lit with a saturated color. I don't remember exactly which: blue, green, red, or whatever. And Maestro Adler said, "Dufford, why does Resnik's face keep changing color?" (laughter) I thought, oh my God, this is a man who worked for Max Reinhardt, premier theater director in the mid-nineteenth century, how can he not understand that much about lighting? But I think he was just questioning because he liked to question. (laughter)

JP: Yes.

SD: Liked to show he was boss.

JP: And the fabulous wig for *Queen of Spades*, how did that come about?

SD: Actually, it was a stock wig. And, you know, I tarted it up (laughter) with feathers, and redid it, because we had the basic basket, wire basket frame -- that was built on. Fortunately. I didn't have the knowledge that your assistants have of making, uh, the wire frames.

JP: Ashley Joyce Landis was the assistant department head, and she brought a lot of traditional wire work back into the shop about how to create balance by using wire, and then dressing hair over it. And it was

great that you got to see that, because it makes it so much more lightweight, and, the performers are happier.

SD: Of course.

JP: But I've been in the situation, as well, where you have to use what you have, and I've stuffed the inside of wigs with newspaper, and all different types of found, unconventional objects to try and create silhouette out of nothing.

JP: I would love to talk about the art of ventilating, and the early days of when you learned to build wigs. Maybe you could tell everybody what ventilating is, and how you kind of came upon it and were self-taught.

SD: Ventilating is a process of knotting hair into a lace, or even into silk. In the case of lace, it can be either tying one hair at a time, or a small bunch of hair into a lace, depending upon what volume is required. Working on film lace is a bitch, as you know. (laughter)

JP: Yes.

SD: You have to be very gentle with it. You can't pull too hard.

JP: Yeah. You have to go slow.

SD: I learned self-taught, I took a bent pin, a pin, and bent it with pliers, and stuck it into a dowel to create my first ventilating needle, or knotting needle.

JP: Just so that people know, traditional wig lace is made in a honeycomb pattern, whereas fabric is sown in a square pattern.

SD: When I started, there was no way to get wig making materials. There was a company in New York called Zauder Brothers, who made really wonderful canvas wig blocks, and I did buy hair from them eventually, my \$50 budget.

JP: Yeah. (laughs)

SD: But getting lace early on was very, very difficult. But finally, there were, there was a company in London that I was able to get a heavy-duty net, which at the time in the '60s was okay. We weren't filming yet. And then later on they got finer and finer lace, as it went along. And, of course, now you have these companies in Germany in Switzerland which provide everything.

JP: Yeah, it's interesting that you say that you had a hard time getting resources, because although we do have some companies here in the United States, we do order most of our wig-building supplies from Fischbach Miller in Germany, and Atelier Bassi in Switzerland -- and we still order from London quite a bit, because they were where you got it from, and they still have the factories, and they still produce some of the best wig-building material. So not a lot has changed. We don't have to bend our own hooks anymore,

FEMALE: Jeanna, tell us what your most memorable moment or most proud achievement has been.

JP: I really consider myself being in this position for a very short period of time. I've been the Head of Department since 2014, and we've done some fantastic shows, but I feel my greatest achievement is the things that aren't seen: when we are able to put a toupee on the tenor and nobody sees it; when we have somebody come in three days before a first dress rehearsal and we're able to create a wig that looks custom made and effortless when, in reality, we were pulling that stock wig out of a bin and quickly trying to get something on her head. Those are my greatest achievements, when somebody goes onstage and it looks so organic to the production that nobody notices the hair or makeup, the rubber band and one bobby pin holding the whole thing together. (laughs) That's my greatest achievement.

And I think -- I won't tell those secrets, because those are our secrets,

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