Lyric Opera

ndfather) of his found daughter, elia. Their scenes together caught fire, ticularly their Act III meeting, in which sco stalks the dying Doge like Nemesis arnate and ends up reconciled to his Also on the baritone honor roll was hard Cowan, creepily vulpine as Paolo, villain of the piece.

The young lovers did not quite match ir elders in vocal and dramatic versa- y. Michael Sylvester's tenor had the essary heft and ring (if not much mth) for Gabriele Adorno, lover of elia, but it turned harsh at high vol- e. As Amelia, Kiri Te Kanawa sounded ely, despite some lack of volume in the ldle registers, and her pianissimos and s soaring out of ensembles were allur- . But acting is not her strong suit, and e songs, tales of abandonment and as for understanding all had the same al character. She also spent her entire ning scene posed prettily on a bench, playing first one profile and then an- er. Even the ardent offstage voice of lover could not persuade her to stand or produce any animation.

Daniele Gatti led a tight, focused per- mance, whipping up orchestral fren- s, building suspense (as in Simon's poi- -taking scene) and artfully shaping the ensembles, particularly the Act I finale the Council Chamber as well as the re intimate ensembles (including a ving rendition of the Act II Simon- briele-Amelia trio). He also let the or- estra shimmer in the serenely nostalgic music that occasionally offers a respite m all the high drama.

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Behind Every Great Man . . .

By Abraham A. Davidson

Because Edward Hopper (1882-1967) is justifiably one of the most esteemed American painters of this century, new information on him is welcome. There is a great deal of it in Gail Levin's sizable biography, "Edward Hopper" (Knopf, 678 pages, $35). We learn about Hopper's Dutch forebears, traced back to the 18th century, and about his comings and goings in Paris and in New York, where he lived most his life, and the itineraries of his travels in California, Oregon and elsewhere in America. We are offered ample quotations from the reviews of his exhibitions, as well as revelations about the many writers he read and painters he admired (e.g., Raphael Soyer) or disliked (e.g., de Kooning and the abstract expressionists, whose work he referred to as "gobbledygook"). But all this wraps itself around a year-by-year account of the painter's 44-year marriage to Josephine Vertille Nivison. A more apt title for the book might have been: "Edward and Josephine: Portrait of a Marriage."

It was not a match made in heaven, and the friction never resolved itself. Sometimes opposites attract and nurture. For the Hoppers they usually proved galling, yet opposition seems to have been what held them together—along with Jo's genuine admiration for Edward's paintings.

He was taciturn, introverted and caustic; she, ebullient, sociable and often generous (though they both shared an intense dislike for Franklin Roosevelt). She urged him on, encouraged him. He usually drew back, seeing her overtures as aggressive meddling. She deplored his cavalier cruelty, his selfishness and his coldness in many instances, as during the funeral of the much-loved painter George Bellows, when (as she noted in her diary in 1942, 17 years after the event) he quietly counted the pipes of the organ and the tiles of the floor while others at the service openly showed their grief.

In a drawing he titled "Non-Anger man, Pro-Anger woman," one of several he made alluding to their relationship, Edward showed himself as a haloed saint and his wife as a skirted little girl approaching catlike, about to attack him with her claw-like nails. For her 59th birthday he gave her a paper cactus tree planted in soil accompanied by the inscription, in French (the Hoppers had courted using French, and used it in intimate moments throughout their marriage): "To the little Xanthippe whom the good Lord, in his wisdom, gave me as wife." The allusion, of course, is to the famously shrewish wife of Socrates. While Edward considered Jo as his companion for life—never once was divorce mentioned on either side—he saw himself as more victim than victimizer.

Bookshelf

"Edward Hopper"
By Gail Levin

In 1912, before meeting Edward, Jo had taken courses at the Independent School of Art in New York, the successor of Robert Henri's School, and had drawings published in several newspapers. In marriage she continually burned to attain fame as an artist, rivaling even that of her husband. She was at once proud and envious of what he had attained. Nothing riled her more than Edward's indifference and, at times, outright hostility to her efforts. His failure to push for her entry in a show led to this outburst in her diary: "He never has, never will dirty dog that he [is]. I'll never forget. Never."

Ms. Levin, who warmed to Jo on their several meetings during the writing of the book, believes that Jo would have risen in the art world had she not been obliged to tend to Edward. She is wrong. Reproductions of Jo's paintings reveal a competent but uninspired artist. Knowledgeable judges of talent, including the painter Edwin Dickinson and the historians and museum officials Lloyd Goodrich and John I.H. Baur, remained steadfastly unenthusiastic and unsupportive.

It is likely that in some instances Jo used the diaries simply to vent her rage, and in dealing with Edward face-to-face was more conciliatory. The squabbling Hoppers were in fact inseparable. They accompanied one another on long trips. They shared together a rich life of the spirit in New York, with frequent excursions to the theater, the movies and art exhibitions. Again and again Jo served as Edward's model. She commented on his reviews, proffered her opinions on art and politics, did what she could during his time of illness. In spite of everything, it was a marriage that endured.

This biography bearing Edward Hopper's name belongs more to his wife than to him. Excerpts from Jo's diaries and letters are sprinkled throughout. Ms. Levin relishes Jo's feistiness and resilience, while her husband remains a kind of *éminence grise* off whom she plays. Ms. Levin appreciates that the tension between the two culminated in masterly paintings of alienated couples, but it is remarkable that for the seven books she has written on Edward Hopper, including this one, he remains for her one-dimensionally curmudgeonly and unsympathetic. The reader is left wondering whether there could not have been more to him.

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