

Hardcover: UK

The long day wanes

Inez Hollander examines her family's tragic history in Indonesia and places it against the background of how Dutch society has dealt with the loss of its empire

BY BRADLEY WINTERTON
CONTRIBUTING REPORTER

For almost 400 years the former Dutch East Indies, now Indonesia, attracted Europeans in search of escape, quick money, exotic color and easy sex, among other things. These imperial possessions differed from British India or French Indochina in being islands, and besotted and drunken Dutchmen, incapable of returning to a cold, gray Holland, stagger through the pages of Joseph Conrad and Somerset Maugham alike.

The empire had been established in the 16th and 17th centuries on the spice trade, moving on to coffee, and then, with the invention of the internal combustion engine, rubber. To the Dutch it was simply "Yava" (Java), and during the 1860s its governor-general made twice the salary of the president of the US, while its remittances home constituted 34 percent of state revenues. By 1930 the region was producing nearly half the world's rubber supply, and coffee was worth eight times its equivalent weight of oil.

With the cheapness of servants, the warm climate, the un-Protestant attitude to the erotic and the chance of amassing a substantial fortune in as little as 10 years, it felt like paradise, despite the heavy, languor-inducing humidity. By 1900 more than 200 Westerners were arriving every week. Many foreigners kept a local concubine, popularly depicted in the literature of the day as seducing her European catch by magic, and then poisoning the foreign bride who'd routinely replace her. European males who failed to take advantage of this opportunity (with or without "shrimp poisoning," or syphilis) tended to hit the bottle, though many ended up embracing both options.

Yet today almost nothing is said in the Netherlands about its colonial past, according to US academic Inez Hollander. On one level it's become an unexamined cliché that the Dutch were up to no good, and on another the debacle that accompanied their final departure in the 1940s — totally different from the lack of British fatalities in India when engaged in a similar operation during the same period — has been deemed too grisly to reexamine.

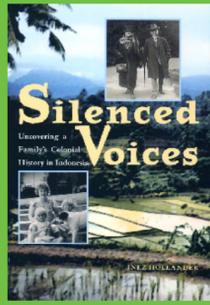
Hollander has determined to look at the record more closely. Many of her family had been in Java, and in *Silenced Voices* she sets out to examine what remains of their testimony, and place it against the background of a wider history.

She focuses on her great grandfather's brother who ran a remote coffee and rubber plantation where he lived with his wife and three children. When the Japanese invaded in January 1942 many of the Dutch thought they were safer in the East than in German-occupied Holland. How wrong they were to be proved. Of the family studied in this book, only two of the five survived the appalling events that soon began to unfold.

The head of the family was incarcerated first, on suspicion of making preparations for an American invasion. He was interrogated and tortured by the Kempeitai (KPT), Japan's secret police, one of whose techniques was a form of water-boarding. He died later, and was probably executed. Soon afterwards his wife and children were interned in abysmal conditions. They survived, but two of the children were killed when their transport got caught up in armed violence in Surabaya in 1945.

This final incident marks the most horrifying point in the narrative. Sukarno had declared Indonesian independence days after the Japanese capitulation, but the Dutch government had

PUBLICATION NOTES



SILENCED VOICES
BY INEZ HOLLANDER
278 PAGES
OHIO UNIVERSITY PRESS

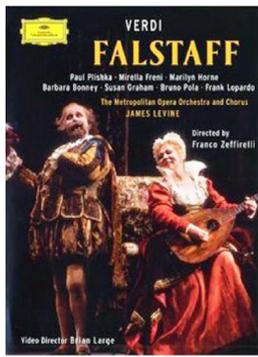
plans to return, a move agreed to at the Potsdam Conference and supported on the ground by British soldiers (the actor Dirk Bogarde was one of them). Sukarno's youthful supporters, who he was unable to rein in, took to the streets of Surabaya in October, vowing to rid the city of the British and killing almost at random, though some Indonesians also tried to help their former colonizers. Many Chinese died, together with around 200 occupants of the ambushed trucks containing the author's relatives.

The British then bombarded the city from the sea, and the Dutch withdrew from the country anyway four years later under American pressure. Conditions were such that few of the planters had returned to their estates. None of this is taught in modern Dutch schools, says Hollander. Students learn about the Holocaust and Anne Frank, but not about the end of their country's colonial experience. Situations where events can be presented in black-and-white terms, she says, are easy to teach. Those where blame cannot be so easily attributed, and that might tarnish something essentially worthy (such as Indonesian independence), are by contrast bypassed.

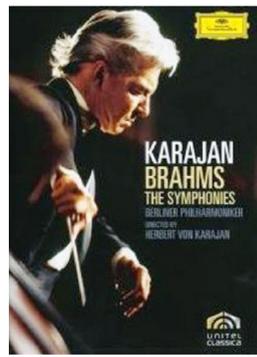
This sane and largely factual book makes no attempt to draw up a moral balance sheet. The privileged lives of the colonizing Dutch, the cruelty of many of the occupying Japanese, the random violence of some young Indonesian freedom fighters — all are displayed, and sources cited. Indeed, the book's greatest use to future researchers may well be its bibliography and footnotes.

I have some minor quibbles. At one point the author wonders whether dressing young European boys in what look to us like girls' clothes was normal at the time or the result of her particular family's paranoia. In fact it was traditional, at least among the middle classes. And, though a Dutch speaker, she never learned Indonesian (Bahasa Indonesia) and didn't visit the region when undertaking her research.

Silenced Voices, though modest in its aims, has the virtue of bringing a neglected topic into the limelight, and of allowing private family archives and large-scale public history to throw light on one another. Even more, it succeeds in breaking what is apparently a taboo in the Netherlands itself — a country that, after decades of exceptional enlightenment, has recently exhibited a darker face in matters related to race. You can't help feeling that the sooner there's a translation of this illuminating book into Dutch the better.



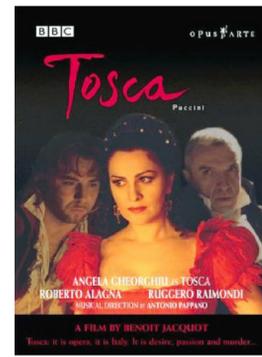
FALSTAFF
Metropolitan Opera, New York
Plishka, Freni, Horne, Bonney, Levine
DGM 73-345320



KARAJAN BRAHMS — THE SYMPHONIES
Herbert von Karajan
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TOSCA
A film by Benoit Jacquot
Gheorghiu, Alagna, Raimondi
KULTUR D4010

BY BRADLEY WINTERTON
CONTRIBUTING REPORTER

There was great excitement among opera fans earlier this year when the rumor got around that Deutsche Grammophon was about to issue the New York Metropolitan Opera's *Falstaff* from 1992 on DVD. This was a legendary production, with such stars as Mirella Freni, Marilyn Horne and Barbara Bonney, and Paul Plishka in the title role. It duly appeared in July, and confirmed the stellar reputation of the performances it records.

Other great names grace the enterprise. James Levine conducts, Brian Large is in charge of the video recording, and the stage production is by Franco Zeffirelli.

Zeffirelli's New York staging was old even in 1992, but then that is the way with opera. New productions get created and run for maybe 10 performances over a month or so. When the time comes for a revival of the opera with different singers, there's rarely a question of commissioning new sets, let alone costumes — a notoriously expensive business. And in the case of Zeffirelli's *Falstaff*, little would have been achieved. His name, after all, was a selling-point in itself.

James Levine as conductor is also a huge asset. Not only is he unfailingly faithful to any composer's original intentions,

but he also delivers passionately committed renditions recorded with hi-tech fidelity. And Brian Large has long been the one to beat for video versions of live opera performances.

Nothing fails to please in this magnificent DVD. Plishka gives a superb reading of Falstaff himself, as good an actor as he is vigorous a singer. Freni is unimprovable as Alice Ford, and though Marilyn Horne is really too great an artist to undertake as modest a role as Mistress Quickly, she still enters into the comic spirit of the occasion and gives her all. Bonney is sumptuous in the lovely music Verdi wrote for Nannetta, while Frank Lopardo and Bruno Pola are more than adequate as Fenton and Ford, respectively.

Falstaff is a connoisseur's piece, musically subtle with a quick-silver vitality far removed from the sturdy melodramatics of Verdi's middle years, wonderful though those are too. This sublime version does it justice in every way — as the *New York Times* commented at the time, the entire undertaking represented "a milestone in the history of operatic production in this city." It's wonderful to have it available at last on DVD, with a BluRay option and subtitles in Italian, English, German, French, Spanish and Chinese.

The Zeffirelli production climaxes, as all productions of this opera must, in the last scene, set

at night in Windsor Forest. The stage is ablaze with fireworks and multi-colored lights, plus perhaps 200 performers.

This month I also much enjoyed the DGM DVD of Karajan conducting the Brahms symphonies with the Berlin Philharmonic back in 1973, at the peak of his career. The picture is highly traditional, mostly Karajan himself in close-up, plus various featured soloists, also in close-up, from time to time. The sound, too, is slightly boxed-in, but very forceful nonetheless. Karajan had the power to raise performances to an ever higher level simply by his participation, and this plus the stature of Brahms' four ever-rich symphonies — none of them inferior to any of the others — makes this a very attractive set of two DVDs.

Is Andre Rieu getting cynical, taken over ever so slightly by his own organizational machine? Universal Music in Taiwan has re-issued an old Rieu concert, *Andre Rieu Live at the Royal Albert Hall*, unavailable for the last four years. Visually the concert is all colored lights and tinted hair, a confection of pink and blue. But even back then it was possible to catch a sober look in those ever-smiling eyes, as if Rieu were carefully checking everything was going according to plan, that the plants in the audience were

leading the dancing in the aisles as arranged, and that the right kind of hilarity was going to take over at just the appropriate moment.

Lastly, this month I belatedly discovered the DVD of *Tosca* in the film version from Benoit Jacquot. It may not please purists — there are moments when the characters are heard speaking their words rather than singing them, and the church procession that normally concludes Act One so memorably doesn't feature at all. But all in all I found it a powerful experience.

Antonio Pappano conducts the Royal Covent Garden orchestra and chorus in London's famous Abbey Road studios, and you see them from time to time, filmed in monochrome, and then return to the drama itself taking place in color. Angela Gheorghiu proves far more powerful as Tosca than you might have expected, her voice more mellow and rounded than previously. Roberto Alagna, too, is a very strong Cavaradossi, while Ruggero Raimondi makes an openly sexual Scarpia.

Each act is slightly less good than the one before, but that's the case with Puccini's original. Nothing is as lovely as Act One where the impending tragedy is still mixed with the sense of possibility, and the joyful hopes of young love, before politics intervenes.

Hardcover: US

Taiwan marches to a different drummer

Rambling political machination gets in the way of logical argumentation in 'The Second Long March'

BY J. MICHAEL COLE
STAFF REPORTER

Modern Chinese history, Yu Peter Kien-hong argues, can be divided into two defining periods — the First Long March, led by Communist leader Mao Zedong (毛澤東) to "liberate peasants and farmers," and the Second Long March, in which non- and anti-communists sought to "promote full-fledged and mature constitutional democracy" in China. Yu, a professor at Ming Chuan University, posits that Taiwan and "mainland China" are both part of the Republic of China (ROC). Both Taiwan and the People's Republic of China (PRC), though they have engaged in different, lesser marches since, are bound by the same destiny, in the form of the ROC Constitution, to "reunite" at one point. As the ROC was never dissolved, the PRC is a derivative of, or partial successor to, the ROC. In other words, it did not completely replace the ROC, meaning that it can only claim sovereignty over Taiwan as part of the ROC.

To make his point, Yu walks us through the marches led by Chiang Kai-shek (蔣介石), Yan Chia-kan (嚴家淦), Chiang Ching-kuo (蔣經國), Lee Teng-hui (李登輝) and Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁), arguing that despite great contests of power and changing times, the leadership in Taiwan — which throughout the book the author annoyingly refers to as "Taiwan

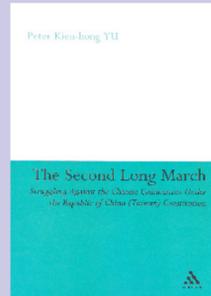
area" — nevertheless continued to adhere to the ROC Constitution, which in his view has worked quite well in its "struggle" against the CCP.

While not shying away from criticizing the Chiangs and Lee, Yu shows his true political colors in his description of Chen, whose election engendered a "political mess plus scandals of one type or another," and who did a "terrible job" as president. Yu's problem, however, is that in the 35 pages he dedicates to the Chen march, he fails to show us why his tenure was so terrible, relying on the 2004 shooting incident — a favorite of deep blues in their attacks on the former president — to somehow make his point. Here, as in many books written by KMT sympathizers, the pan-blue camp's scorched earth tactics in the legislature, which often prevented the executive from governing, are papered over.

It is more likely, therefore, that Yu's unfavorable characterization of Chen lies in the fact that the latter was the leader who came closest to abandoning the so-called Second March by forsaking the ROC Constitution in his efforts to create a Republic of Taiwan (ROT). Doing so would have destroyed, once and for all, the theory — now on life support — that "mainland China" and Taiwan are two parts of the ROC.

As long as Taiwan adheres to the Constitution, written

PUBLICATION NOTES



THE SECOND LONG MARCH: STRUGGLING AGAINST THE CHINESE COMMUNISTS UNDER THE REPUBLIC OF CHINA (TAIWAN) CONSTITUTION

BY YU PETER KIEN-HONG
205 PAGES
CONTINUUM

under much different times in 1947, it is possible to hope, as Yu does, that at some point in future it will be possible for the two sides to "reunite." As this is ostensibly Yu's preferred scenario, Chen's pro-Taiwan ideology was therefore a threat. This prompts him into reminding us, though he is wrong, as it turns out, that

Ma Ying-jeou's (馬英九) victory in 2008 was a "severe warning" sent by the "majority" of voters in the pan-blue camp "that the ROC [i.e., Taiwan] cannot abandon mainland sovereignty." We all know, of course, that the majority of people who voted for Ma did so because he promised to revive the economy and improve relations with Beijing, not because of some deep-felt desire to claim sovereignty over China.

For all his opposition to Chen's efforts to create a Republic of Taiwan — which like the PRC could arguably be seen as a "successor" of the ROC — Yu fails to mention that in 1954 Beijing adopted its own Constitution of the People's Republic of China, which rather than draw from the ROC Constitution, is modeled after the Constitution of the Soviet Union, written in 1936. We can therefore argue that the disconnect that obviated the ROC Constitution was not caused by the Taiwanese independence movement, but rather by the enactment of the PRC Constitution, the latest version of which was adopted in 1982. Yu would be extremely naive if he thought that "reunification" would occur under terms other than the PRC's — that is, under the ROC framework he advocates.

Equally unpersuasive is Yu's argument that the KMT should join forces with like-minded elements in China in fostering full

democracy, efforts that surely would take us closer to war in the Taiwan Strait than anything the Lee and Chen administrations ever did in the name of Taiwanese independence. Toward the book's end, Yu himself admits that the CCP prioritizes its hold on power and only sees the possibility of democracy "with Chinese characteristics" at some distant point in the future. He also ignores the impact that more than 110 years of separate rule has had on identity in Taiwan and people's desire to link their destinies with a regime that, to all, is an alien one.

Sadly, the relatively simple — and by no means original — theory at the core of *The Second Long March* is marred by damnably poor editing and the author's tendency to jump from one point to another without any seeming connection between them, which is distracting and often confusing. Outrageous passages, such as his claim that 650,000 natives of Taiwan — or one-tenth of the population — were slaughtered by Imperial Japanese forces during the colonial period (the figure is closer to 30,000, according to many experts, while only Chinese propaganda supports such numbers), serve to discredit Yu and raise questions about the intentions of his badly written, flawed and ultimately unconvincing his book.