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THE LA JOLLA CIVIC-UNIVERSITY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Thomas Nee, Music Director

Mandeville Auditorium
Friday, November 1, 1991, 8 P.M.
Saturday, November 2, 1991, 8 P.M.
Sunday, November 3, 1991, 3 P.M.

THE MOTHER OF US ALL

Libretto by Gertrude Stein
Music by Virgil Thomson

Cast in the Order of Appearance

Susan B. Anthony	Martha Jane Weaver
Anne	Anita Colet
Gertrude S.	Patricia Minton Smith
Virgil T.	Anthony Antista
Daniel Webster	Michael Morgan
Jo the Loiterer	Ken Anderson
Chris the Citizen	Jeff White
Indiana Elliot	Ruth Arnett
Angel More	Laurie Romero
Henrietta	Caroline Altman, Elana Allen (part performed as twins)
Henry B	John Cottone
John Adams	Bruce Johnson
Thaddeus Stevens	John Cottone
Constance Fletcher	Ann Chase
Gloster Henning	Ray Park
Isabel Wentworth	Kitty Pappas
Anna Hope	Carol Corcoran
Lillian Russell	Cecelia Mamede
Jenny Reefer	Patricia Minton Smith
Ulysses S. Grant	Anthony Antista
Herman Atlan	Daniel Leal
Donald Gallup	John Cottone
Andrew Johnson	Daniel Leal
Indiana Elliot's Brother	Jeff White

This performance of *The Mother of Us All* has been
made possible by a generous contribution from
the UCSD Music Department

NOTES BY ERIC BROMBERGER

The Mother of Us All

MUSIC BY VIRGIL THOMSON

Born November 25, 1896, Kansas City
Died September 30, 1989, New York City

TEXT BY GERTRUDE STEIN

Born February 3, 1874, Allegheny,
Pennsylvania
Died July 27, 1946, Paris

Virgil Thomson met Gertrude Stein shortly after he settled in Paris in 1925, and the two became friends and collaborators. After setting some of Stein's poems to music, Thomson proposed that they collaborate on an opera, but he felt uncomfortable with her desire to write on an American subject, perhaps the life of George Washington. The opera that finally resulted from this collaboration was *Four Saints in Three Acts*, composed 1928-33. An abstract representation of events from the lives of saints, *Four Saints* is essentially plotless, more concerned with the play of language than with meaning itself. First produced in 1934 with an all-black cast, the opera had a terrific vogue for a period in New York.

Thomson wished to do another opera with Stein, but World War II intervened — he returned to the U.S. to become music critic for the *New York Herald Tribune*, while she remained in Nazi-occupied France. When the Alice M. Ditson Fund offered Thomson a commission for another opera in 1945, he asked Stein to furnish the text, and this time she was able to work with an American subject, as she had proposed nearly two decades earlier, choosing to write an opera based on the life of women's-rights activist Susan B. Anthony. Already quite ill with cancer, Stein set to work on the libretto in November 1945 and completed it the following March, four months before her death. Thomson wrote the music the following autumn, and *The Mother of Us All* was first performed at Columbia University on May 7, 1947.

Susan B. Anthony (1820-1906), the daughter of a Quaker abolitionist, worked for such causes as abolition and temperance during her long life,

but she is remembered primarily for her work on behalf of women's causes, not just suffrage but also equal pay and educational opportunities for women. Her efforts on behalf of suffrage led to her arrest and trial in New York in 1872 and to achieving the right to vote for women in Wyoming in 1890, but she did not live to see the enactment of the Nineteenth Amendment, which took place a century after her birth.



Virgil Thomson and Gertrude Stein, 1929

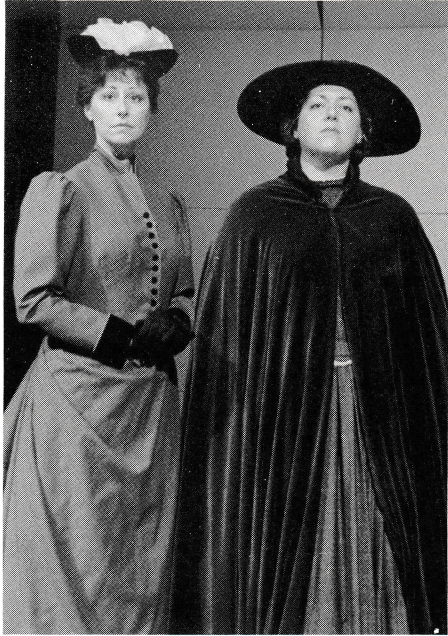
The Mother of Us All makes no attempt at a realistic presentation of the life of Susan B. Anthony. Instead, Stein produced a libretto without plot and almost without progression in which imaginary characters and real figures from American history (Daniel Webster, Ulysses S. Grant, Lillian Russell, John Adams, among others) come into contact in a way that would have been impossible in real life — characters who did not live at the same time appear on the stage together and converse in the opera, for example. Several of the created characters are based on people Stein knew, and in fact both Stein and Thomson appear themselves in the opera, helping to set scenes and character. Stein did her homework very carefully for the libretto, and she weaves excerpts from actual speeches given by Daniel Webster and Susan

B. Anthony into the libretto. The opera may be thought of as a fantasy in which a series of symbolic vignettes interweave to give some sense of Susan B. Anthony, her times, and her struggles. Stein's language purposely avoids logical progression and — at some points — seems to do away with logic altogether. The resulting "pageant" may be nearly static dramatically, but its series of impressions tries instead to create an "interior" biography of its heroine — a life full of hope, drama, loneliness, nostalgic remembrance, and pain.

Thomson's harmonic language is diatonic, and for this opera he wrote music that seems consciously low-profile, a score created to set Stein's text as clearly as possible without calling undue attention to itself. Thomson himself referred to the "plain-as-Dick's-hatband harmony" of this music, though it is enlivened at points with some biting dissonances. The score for *The Mother of Us All* echoes with hymn tunes, marches, waltzes, and summer band music, all suffused with a sort of dreamy Americana. What makes this score so impressive is that these tunes — many of which seem so familiar as to be dimly-remembered echoes from one's own past — are all Thomson's own.

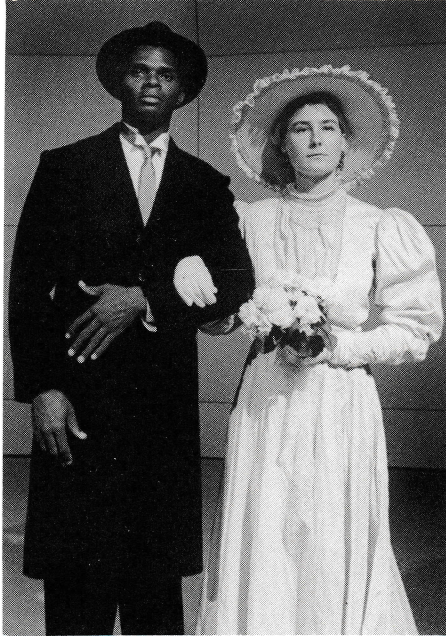
Stein's libretto introduces a huge number of characters, a fact that worried Thomson in advance; he wrote to her: "the number of characters who talk to the audience about themselves, instead of addressing the other characters, is a little terrifying." There are nearly thirty separate characters; at moments some of these combine to form the chorus, and in some productions (including this one) a single singer can cover several parts. This blending of characters makes dramatic sense in an opera in which characters appear not so much as individuals but as types who exemplify the world in which Susan B. Anthony lived and struggled.

Photo by Kariann Medina



Anita Colet (left) plays Anne; Martha Jane Weaver (right) plays the title role of Susan B. Anthony

Photo by Kariann Medina



Ken Anderson and Ruth Arnett; the marriage of their on-stage characters Jo the Loiterer and Indiana Elliott

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

The "apple-pie" mother we all love is the mother who wants to take care of us, even baby us. What we also need (and often don't get) is the mother who makes us grow up. *The Mother of Us All* is about growing up as a society.

We all know of interesting and indeed heroic figures whose lives are fascinating, but one asks, "Is it dramatic enough for the stage?" Conflict and confrontation of ideas are hard to pictorialize: quiet intellectual courage is hard to "play." Virgil Thomson was rather daring to set Gertrude Stein's richly wordy but static play to music. There is "No there, there" except for Susan B. Anthony. I believe that is why he called it a "pageant."

As I remember pageants in church basements, they were fairly static parades of people representing such things as truth, justice, education, harvest, etc. In *The Mother of Us All* the characters are given names but are no less representative of political power, quiet virtue, or fatuous romanticism.

These characters form a background tapestry for the strong central character

of Susan B. Anthony. They are historically jumbled and may or may not have been real, but each represents a type or an incident. As an example, Jo the Loiterer's name comes from an incident in which a protester at the University of Michigan was arrested on the charge of "loitering," thus losing his civil rights.

Some of the text seems totally arbitrary and disruptive, but doesn't most social intercourse have such interjections that indeed are very revealing? I have tried to persuade the performers that these, though odd, are not "jokes." As an example, Daniel Webster goes on about "my eyes"... "my eyes"... "my eyes," etc., and indeed we realize that he doesn't see anything.

I have used the children to illustrate some of the childishness we find in relations between men and women. Childishness is only charming when children are involved.

From a personal point of view, it has been most interesting to be involved in this production when, during breaks in rehearsal, we have lively discussion of the senate appointee confirmation. Art reflects and focuses life.

—Mary Nee

ACT I

- Scene 1 A Park
- 2 A Political Meeting in the Park
- 3 Noon in the Park
- 4 Susan B. Dreams in the Park
- 5 Midafternoon in the Park

INTERMISSION

ACT II

- Scene 1 Later in the Park
- 2 After Susan B.'s Speech
- 3 (Epilogue) Years Later in the Park

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The UCSD Theater Department of UCSD for the loan of many costumes.

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Special thanks to Scott Paulson for extraordinary service to the La Jolla Symphony Association.

Many of the original Victorian costumes in the opera are from the collection of Mrs. Gladys Woodhams.

For their assistance with the Suffragette Tea: Scott Paulson, Leah Negrette, Kariann Medina, Judith Zyskind and Douglas Smith, Jeanne Saier, Mrs. Gladys Woodhams, Brigitte Feucht, and Cheryl Konn of Quail Flower Gardens.

For arranging the historical photos in the East Room: Ann Silber, Annette Crosbie, Martha Kaye, Carol Broman.

Mandeville Auditorium staff and Alan Johnson.



MARTH JANE WEAVER

ABOUT THE PERFORMERS

MARTHA JANE WEAVER (Susan B. Anthony), a graduate of Moravian College in Pennsylvania, has sung a variety of solo roles in the West. She appeared with the Sacramento Opera, San Jose Opera, and has sung the roles of Giovanna (*Rigoletto*) and the Nurse (*Boris Godunov*) with the San Diego Opera. She has also performed as Dido in *Dido and Aeneas* with the Los Angeles Baroque Orchestra.

A frequent concert and oratorio soloist, Miss Weaver's solo engagements have included *Messiah* with the Las Vegas, San Diego, and Utah Symphonies; the Verdi *Requiem* with the Redlands Symphony; the Brahms *Alto Rhapsody* with the William Hall Chorale in Los Angeles and the La Jolla Civic-University Symphony; and the Durufle *Requiem* with the Philadelphia Festival Chorus.

ELANA ALLEN (Henrietta, sung as twin role) is an undergraduate at UCSD, where she studies with Carol Plantamura. She studied piano and voice at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music while in high school.

CAROLINE ALTMAN (Henrietta, sung as twin role) is an undergraduate music major at UCSD, where she is a voice student of Carol Plantamura. She has appeared with the Berkeley Shakespeare Company, San Diego Comic Opera, and the La Jolla Stage Company.

KEN ANDERSON (Jo the Loiterer) is best known as Director of the UCSD Gospel Choir. In the two years of his leadership, the choir has grown from 75 members to 900. He is Director of Music at the Mt. Olive Church of God and teaches in San Diego public schools.

ANTHONY ANTISTA (Virgil T and U.S. Grant) is a graduate student at Cal State Fullerton, where he is in the MFA program in Acting. He has also appeared with the Long Beach Opera and Orange County Opera. He is currently Minister of Music at the Huntington Beach Baptist Church.

RUTH ARNETT (Indiana Elliot) is a soloist at St. John's Episcopal Church in Chula Vista. A student of Tom Lehrer at UC Santa Cruz and Louise Nelson of Bonita, she has been a

member of the Schola Cantorum of St. Paul's Cathedral.

ANN CHASE (Constance Fletcher) has appeared as soloist with the Pacific Chamber Opera, Cincinnati Conservatory Opera, La Jolla Civic-University Symphony, Las Vegas Symphony, and Palomar Community Orchestra. Ms. Chase teaches voice at San Diego State University and Palomar College.

ANITA COLET (Anne) is a former member of the San Diego Opera Ensemble, West Coast Opera Theater, San Diego Starlight Opera, San Diego Gilbert and Sullivan Company, and Lawrence Welk Resort Theater. Ms. Colet was also in the Santa Fe Opera Apprentice Program and was a winner of the La Jolla Civic-University Symphony Young Artist Contest.

CAROL CORCORAN (Anna Hope) is a biology major and a voice minor at UCSD, where she studies with Carol Plantamura. A resident of Baton Rouge, Ms. Corcoran is a member of the select Chamber Singers at UCSD.

JOHN COTTONE (Thaddeus Stevens, Henry B, and Donald Gallup) studied voice at the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston. Currently a member of the San Diego Opera Chorus and soloist at Sacred Heart Church in Coronado, he is also a voice teacher in San Diego.

BRUCE JOHNSON (John Adams) has sung several roles with the Los Angeles Music Center Opera, Sacramento Opera, Phoenix Symphony, and will appear this season with the San Diego Symphony in the Mozart *Requiem*. He is a graduate of Wheaton College and the University of Southern California.

DANIEL LEAL (Andrew Johnson and Herman Atlan), a native of Texas and a San Diego resident of eight years, has appeared in many Starlight Musical Theater productions, the San Diego Opera, and Lawrence Welk Theater.

CECELIA MAMEDE (Lillian Russell) is a graduate of Cal State Long Beach, where she appeared in *Così fan Tutte* and *Hansel and Gretel*. She has sung with the Long Beach Grand Opera Chorus and San Diego Opera Chorus.

MICHAEL MORGAN (Daniel Webster) is a graduate in Music Education from Hampton University, is bass soloist at the First Presbyterian Church in San Diego, and teaches at Francis Parker School. He has appeared with the Starlight Theater and the San Diego Opera.

KITTY PAPPAS (Isabel Wentworth) is a graduate student in music at UCSD, where she studies with Carol Plantamura. She has appeared in many musical productions at the University of Oregon and in Columbus, Ohio. She is costume coordinator for this production of *The Mother of Us All*.

RAY PARK (Gloster Henning) is a member of the La Jolla Civic-University Chorus, has appeared with the San Diego Opera Chorus, and is a founding member of Musique Classique.

LAURIE ROMERO (Angel More) is a voice instructor at UCSD and at USIU. She has appeared in many operatic roles at the University of Arizona and in joint concerts throughout the U.S. with her husband, guitarist Celin Romero.

PATRICIA MINTON SMITH (Gertrude S and Jenny Reefer) has appeared with the San Diego Opera Ensemble, with the San Diego Opera in *La Traviata*, and will appear as Marianne in *Der Rosenkavalier* with the San Diego Opera in 1992.

JEFF WHITE (Chris the Citizen and Indiana Elliot's Brother) a voice student of Lynn Henderson, has appeared with the Mesa College Musical Comedy Group, is a member of the newly-formed San Diego Choral Artists, and is Musical Director at Clairemont Faith Center.

STAFF

THOMAS NEE (Conductor/Music Director) is Professor Emeritus at UCSD and has been Music Director of the New Hampshire Music Festival since 1960.

ANNE YOUNG (Assistant Music Director) received a Bachelor of Music from the University of Oklahoma in piano, a Master of Music in choral conducting from the University of Indiana, and is finishing her DMA at that university. She is

Artistic Director of West Coast Lyric Works and has received a grant from the NEA for a joint composition with visual artist Deloss McGraw.

MARY NEE (Stage Director) is a graduate in theater from Hamline University and the University of Minnesota. She has directed opera productions for the Minneapolis Summer Opera, the New Hampshire Music Festival, and operas of Satie and Ravel at UCSD.

STEFANI WALENS (Coach and Rehearsal Accompanist) teaches piano at UCSD and also serves as chamber pianist, accompanist, and member of the ensemble Camerata. She was Musical Director of the Ash Lawn Opera Festival in Charlottesville, Virginia, and has taught at the University of Virginia.

KITTY PAPPAS (Costumes) See biography in artists' section.

HANNES KLING (Lighting/Stage Manager), a graduate in music from UCSD, is currently Public Events Manager for the Mandeville Center.

JOHNNY COLEMAN (Sets), a graduate of Otis Institute and an MFA candidate in Installation Sculpture from UCSD, has done other sets for SUSHI in San Diego and the Collage Ensemble in Los Angeles.

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THE MOTHER OF US ALL: A Synopsis

ACT I

Scene 1 A Park.

Conversation between Susan B. and Anne with commentary from Gertrude S and Virgil T.

Scene 2 A Political Meeting in the Park.

The meeting is opened by Virgil T who announces the subject as economic and political injustice. Most of the characters are introduced in what will be typical views and relationships; this scene features a debate between Susan B. and Daniel Webster.

Scene 3 Noon in the Park.

A peaceful lunchtime punctuated by political differences between Andrew Johnson and Thaddeus Stevens. John Adams' stilted and flowery courtship of Constance Fletcher is begun; even Lillian Russell's appearance doesn't stop the quarreling.

Scene 4 Susan B. Dreams in the Park.

Susan B. daydreams about the people and events who are obstacles to her progress.

Scene 5 Midafternoon in the Park.

The wedding of Jo the Loiterer and Indiana Elliot sets the stage for everyone to comment on the effect of marriage on people. The ceremony is delayed by the arrival of Indiana Elliot's brother. After general confusion, the marriage takes place.

ACT II

Scene 1 Later in the Park.

Friends and foes urge Susan B. to come speak at a political rally. At the end of the scene is a silent pantomime of her speech.

Scene 2 After Susan B.'s Speech.

The work of Susan and her supporters has led to what will be the Fifteenth Amendment giving all males the right to vote regardless of race and servitude. Lillian Russell joins the campaign as a suffragette. Daniel Webster asks Susan B. why she couldn't wait and Jo the Loiterer and Indiana Elliott experience marital confusion. There is general approval of Susan B.'s success.

Scene 3 (Epilogue) Years Later in the Park.

Susan B. has died and women have the vote. The occasion is the unveiling of a commemorative statue of Susan B. The mood is a strange mix of celebration and comments on her life and how the work is never done.

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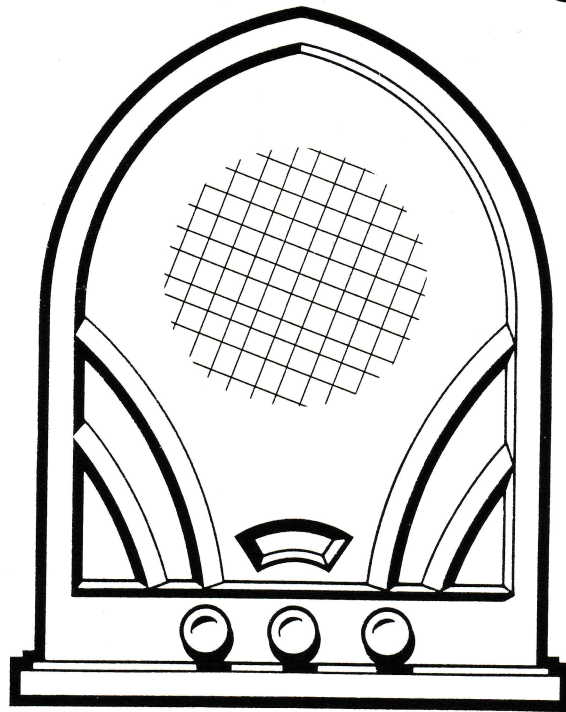
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