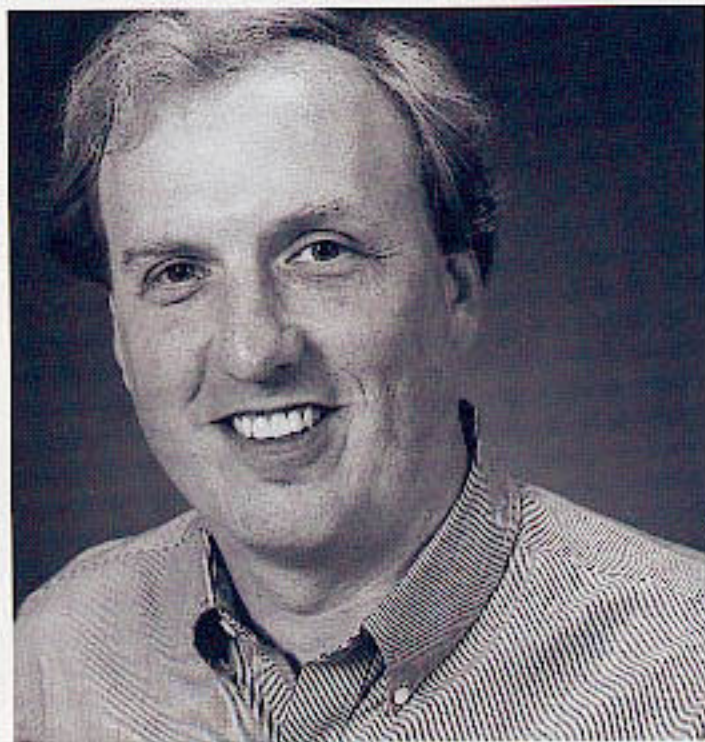


KURT LANDISMAN, LIGHTING DESIGNER, SACRAMENTO OPERA

Opera is known for its ability to stir intense and wide-ranging emotions. Kurt Landisman, Sacramento Opera's lighting designer, makes it his business to enhance the feelings created by music. "Music has a way of cutting right through—quicker than the spoken word, in a way. You can feel the emotions of the music immediately, and lighting expresses the emotional impact of the music beautifully," says Landisman. He began his career as a technical director for the playwright/actor Sam Shepard in the late '70s and served as assistant lighting director for the San Francisco Opera for four years in the '80s. "With every aria or choral section of the music, the lights are going to change—there may be as many as 200 to 300 lighting changes during the operatic performance in order to exactly complement the music."

Landisman has worked nationally and internationally for theater productions, circuses and corporate events. However, he says opera is his favorite lighting playground because of the size and fast pace of the productions. "Opera is probably the most expensive performing art to produce because of the size of the stage, scenery and the number of people involved," says Landisman, who also teaches lighting design at Foothill College in Los Altos, Calif. "There's a lot of pressure on lighting because the costumes and scenery have all been designed and built, but the lighting gets designed on stage during the process in the theater."

Landisman says he lives his trade. "When I look at something, I look at how the light is reflected, what surfaces are being lit. If I am walking along the sidewalk, I look at how the leaves filter the light and make a pattern on the ground. It's a trained way of looking at the world." Look for those leafy patterns in Sacramento Opera's production of *Hansel and Gretel*, Nov. 21–25. Call (916) 737-1000 for ticket information.



PHOTOGRAPH BY MARTHA LANE SMITH



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