Theatre Arts’ Anne Bogart Directs Los Angeles Opera Featuring Placido Domingo

By KRISTIN STERLING

A s most Columbia stu-

dents and faculty are

to be refreshed from the summer vaca-

tion, Theatre Arts Professor Anne

Bogart is in Los Angeles, direct-

ing the world première of Debo-

rah Drattell’s opera Nicholas and

Alexandra, starring Plácido

Domingo. In this production

Domingo, who is the Los Angeles

Opera’s central director, marks his

120th role—more than any other

tenor in the history of music—as

the monk Rasputin. The produc-

tion will include five perfor-

mances that will run Sept. 14-27 at

the Los Angeles Opera.

How does a director, even one as

seasoned as Bogart, “direct” one of the world’s best perform-

ers? “Plácido Domingo has his own

ideas and comes prepared,” she

explains. “He’ll tell you what he

wants to do and you see how it

fits into your vision. He knows a

million times more about opera

than I. My job is to listen acutely

to them.”

Domingo is the consummate

actor and an extraordinary

singer,” says Bogart. “He ani-

mates characters like Rasputin and

brings intelligence and grace

to them.”

Directing an opera with

Domingo and being a tenured

Columbia professor aren’t the

only things keeping Bogart busy

this year. During the summer she

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nevichnnikov’s studio on the Florida/Georgia border. There she

and a team from the SITI Compa-

ny worked on Reunion, a play that

tells the story of aging, angry

Group Theater members who are

reunited at a symposium to dis-
cuss their story in the 1990s. Bog-

art hopes the play will be accept-

ed into the 2004 Humana Festival of New Plays.

She also spent time in Saratoga

Springs, N.Y., as part of SITI’s

summer program, working on A

Midsummer Night’s Dream,

which will premiere at San Jose

Repertory in January 2004. Addi-
tionally, she is working on the

U.S. première of Death and the

Ploughman, a 1401 German play

depicting a man who loses his

beloved wife and confronts death,
simply replies, “It’s just a habit. It’s how

I’ve always worked and what I

enjoy.”

Business’ Geoffrey Heal Works to Promote Market-Based Environmental Conservation

By COLIN MORRIS

C hange the oil in your car

and let the runoff drain into

the sewer can directly affect the
toxin levels in the fish you put on

your table. That same oil runoff

can drain not only the American

coastal business industry, but the
global economy as well (not to

mention increasing the price of

fish).

The perception that crucial

environmental legislation to curtail

toxin measures weigh down the econo-

my is something that Geoffrey

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depicting a man who loses his

beloved wife and confronts death,

looking unversed.

“It is the most beautiful philo-

sophical text ever written for the-

en,” says Bogart. The play opens

at the Wexner Center in Colum-

bus, Ohio, in April 2004.

And there is more. Her

Boobrauschenbergeramica, first

seen at the 2001 Humana Festi-

val, will be produced at the Next

Wave Festival at Brooklyn Acad-

cemy of Music in October. The

play is an overview of America as

seen through the eyes of visual

artist Bob Rauschenberg. Finally,

she and the SITI Company are

working on a multi-disciplinary
dance/theater piece, called sys-

tem/layers, that follows eight

characters through one day of

their life in a city. Bogart’s com-

pany is collaborating with the

Louisville music ensemble,

Rachel’s, who are composing the

score and will play live during the

performance.

When asked how she juggles

such a wide range of productions

simultaneously, Bogart simply

replies, “It’s just a habit. It’s how

I’ve always worked and what I

enjoy.”

The commission’s approach

and recommendations echo what

Heal calls market-based environ-

mental conservation. For exam-

ple, some of the loudest voices in

the debate over curbing pollu-
tants and protecting coastal fish

populations have come from the

sport fishing industry which, tak-

ing in around 100 billion dollars

a year, more than triples the

nation’s commercial fishing

industry. If the amount and qual-

ity of the fish is reduced, so is their

industry, which economi-

cally affects far more than mere-

ly coastal areas.

The commission focused on
two aspects that greatly harm the
coastal environment and econo-

my: pollution and over fishing.

“One thing that did surprise us

was the extent of pollution,” says

Heal, who illustrates his point

locally by means of a litmus test.

“[If you took a piece of blue li-

tmus paper off the New York

shore and put it in the water it

would come up pink,” he says.

The test measures the amount

of acidity through change in color,

which in this case was alarming-

ly high.

There are several major con-

tributors to oceanic pollution.

“A huge amount of nitrogen is

burnt in power stations and internal

combustion engines and it turns

into nitrous oxides, which dis-

solve into the sea and form

nitric acid,” Heal explains.

“There is a lot of nitrogen in the

sea from fertilizer, but you also

get a lot from general air pollu-

tion.”

A classic example of the dam-

age by fertilizer is the so-called
dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico,

where sea life has been wiped

out. While still growing, the
dead-zone is now around the size

of Massachusetts. The Mississip-
pi River is the drainage basin for

more than half of the continental

United States “So virtually all

the fertilizer that isn’t used up by

plants runs into the Gulf of Mex-

ico,” says Heal.

According to the Pew commis-

sion’s findings, oil drainage equaling the amount spilled from the 1989 Exxon-Valdez disaster pours into the oceans surround-

ing the United States every eight months. Most of this is the oil
from automobiles, and every-

thing from leaky tailpipes to oil
changes can eventually make

Geoffrey Heal

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