

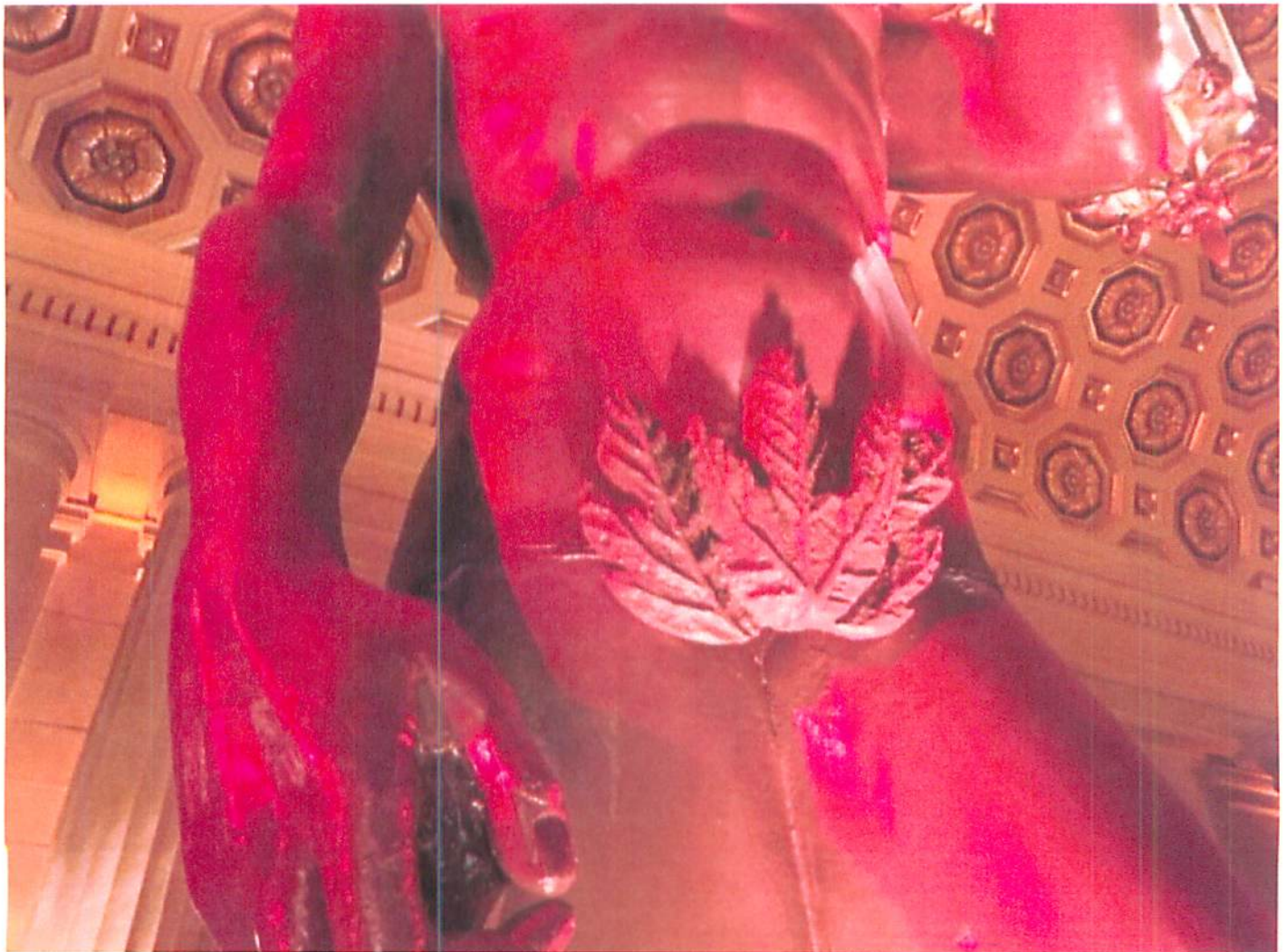
Stage at San Francisco Opera House — set for dinner

On the eve of the opening of the San Francisco Opera opening of his one-act opera “Usher House,” **Gordon Getty**, dubbed Renaissance Man, was honored at an Opera Guild dinner-dance on the stage of the Opera House. The structural bones of the vaulted arches that dominated the stage for “Die Meistersinger” were still in place, and designer **Riccardo Benavides** had created a dramatically lit and flower-filled setting for the dinner, which was sold out, it was said, by the time the save-the-date notices were sent.

Among the feel-good details: Getty, who peppily expressed his gratitude early in the evening, was among an array including four other opera composers (**John Adams**, **Mark Adamo**, **John Corigliano** and **Jake Heggie**) present; music lover and patron **Maria Manetti Shrem** said she’d worked for a year on bringing the opera here, after seeing it in

Cardiff, Wales, where it premiered. The evening seemed bathed in the glow of success.

But something must be said about the evening's start, an encounter with the heroic statuary that Benavides had placed in the lobby for the reception. Towering over an assemblage was an imposing male figure perhaps 12 feet tall, sporting a gigantic fig leaf, more than a foot across. Despite its majesty, passersby couldn't help noticing it was wider horizontally than it was vertically. In an otherwise perfect evening, I overheard one puzzled admirer asking, "Where's the beef?"



The fig leaf may be larger than life

Last Friday's performance at "Curran: Under Construction" — a series of intimate theatrical events in which audience and performers share the stage of the Curran while the rest of the theater is being renovated — was **Stew**. After seeing "Notes of a Native Song," Stew's and co-composer **Heidi Rodewald**'s meditation on **James Baldwin** on Thursday, Dec. 3, critic **Robert Hurwitt** had raved about it, and right he was. This was a three-night gig; most of the shows in the series have similarly short runs. Too bad that word of mouth travels slowly; by the time you tell a pal not to miss this, it's gone.



Stew and band the Negro Problem (Art Terry, Mike McGinnis, Stew) in "Notes of a Native Song."

This was the first time Stew had performed the work outside of Harlem, he said. It's a set

piece, and each time he strayed from the script — for a short riff about politics and one about how at home he feels in San Francisco — he mentioned he was doing that. And this came as a surprise, because the relaxed confidence with which Stew sang, talked and moved onstage made it seem organic, a one-off conversation with this audience only. Only a pro can make it seem so fresh with every performance.

Probably there will be longer runs when the full theater reopens. But how smart for **Carole Shorenstein Hays**, who owns the theater, to break away for a time from the necessity of filling those 2,000-plus seats for some bigger gaudier presentation. Right now, it feels like something for the San Francisco family, theater lovers happy to have a seat at the feast.

At **Seth Matarasso** and **OJ** and **Gary Shansby**'s Naughty or Nice holiday lunch at Bimbo's, Giants CEO **Larry Baer** talked about going to the White House recently to attend ceremonies at which **Willie Mays** received the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Baer, who had been there three times after Giants World Series triumphs, says he told **President Obama** that his presidency had so coincided with the teams' championships, he was hoping for a constitutional amendment enabling the president to run for a third term. At which Obama laughed and suggested that Baer check that out with the first lady. Her exact reply: "Trust me. There is *no* way."

Today's holiday warning, directed particularly toward shoppers, comes in an Overheard from **Arline Taylor**, who was listening at Family Haircuts in Fairfield: "Don't forget to cover up or put your Christmas shopping in the trunk. And I put a Bible on my driver's seat. Because no one ever steals Jesus."

Today's drought tip: If you see a colleague walking across the office with a bottle of water in his hand, ask

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him if he can come over to your workstation to help you take a splinter out of your palm. When he walks over, hand him a pin or pair of tweezers and put your hand out. He'll probably put the bottle of water down. That's when you grab it and run out of the building.

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“And their dog was such an overachiever.”

Woman to man, overheard outside Reverb Restaurant on Polk Street by Debby Fortune



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