



# THE NEW YORKER

## Cultural happenings in New York and elsewhere, both online and off.

*Russell Platt*

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### **MENOTTI STREET (SPOLETO I)**

There isn't any music by Gian Carlo Menotti on the schedule of the Spoleto Festival USA this season. (If you want some around these parts, you'll have to go up to Glimmerglass Opera, in Cooperstown, next summer, where they'll be staging one of the late composer's most striking operas, "The Consul.") There is, however, a little old Charleston byway that has been renamed Menotti Street in honor of the man who did more than anyone else to put South Carolina's queen city back on the map by founding the festival here, in 1977. Walking around, it's easy to see why Menotti, who the year before had called Charleston "a city culturally asleep and ready to be awakened," fell in love with the place. An American Venice, it's a fantastically well-preserved seaside city whose glory days are behind it, but which has—thanks to Menotti and the city's longtime mayor, Joseph P. Riley, Jr.—found a radiant second life as a center for tourism and the arts.

Menotti Street runs right onto the grounds of Gaillard Municipal Auditorium, where one of this year's two operas is being performed—Rossini's "La Cenerentola" ("Cinderella"), a story just as delightfully unlikely as Charleston's cultural renaissance. Charles Raboud's pleasing production is set (as Menotti would have wished) in early nineteenth-century Italy, but has some imaginative video projections (courtesy of Gilles Papain) that summon up the story's fairy-tale elements in a way that's both modern and economical.

Sandra Piques Eddy, a mezzo-soprano familiar to audiences at the Met and City Opera, took the title role; I found her singing somewhat shallow in tone color and a bit lacking in rhythmic verve, but she certainly has the poise and the technique for the role (especially in the formidable coloratura finale). The rising young Met mezzo Jennifer Check gave a sonorous presence to Clorinda, one of the evil sisters. But it was the men who really walked off with the show: The City Opera veteran baritone Timothy Nolen brought off a brilliantly timed buffo performance as the scheming father, Don Magnifico; Bruno Taddia, a young Italian baritone, was a charmingly florid Dandini, even if he lacked some weight in his lower register; and the young tenor Victor Ryan Robertson carried off the challenging Prince Charming role with brightly focussed tone and elegant bearing. The Genoese conductor Matteo Beltrami kept the pace flowing and the tricky ensemble numbers (mostly) secure.

The last performance is on June 6, and it's well worth seeing. (You can find information about tickets and other information [here](#).) (The photo, showing the rascally valet Dandini and the evil sisters in full romp, is by William Struhs.)