

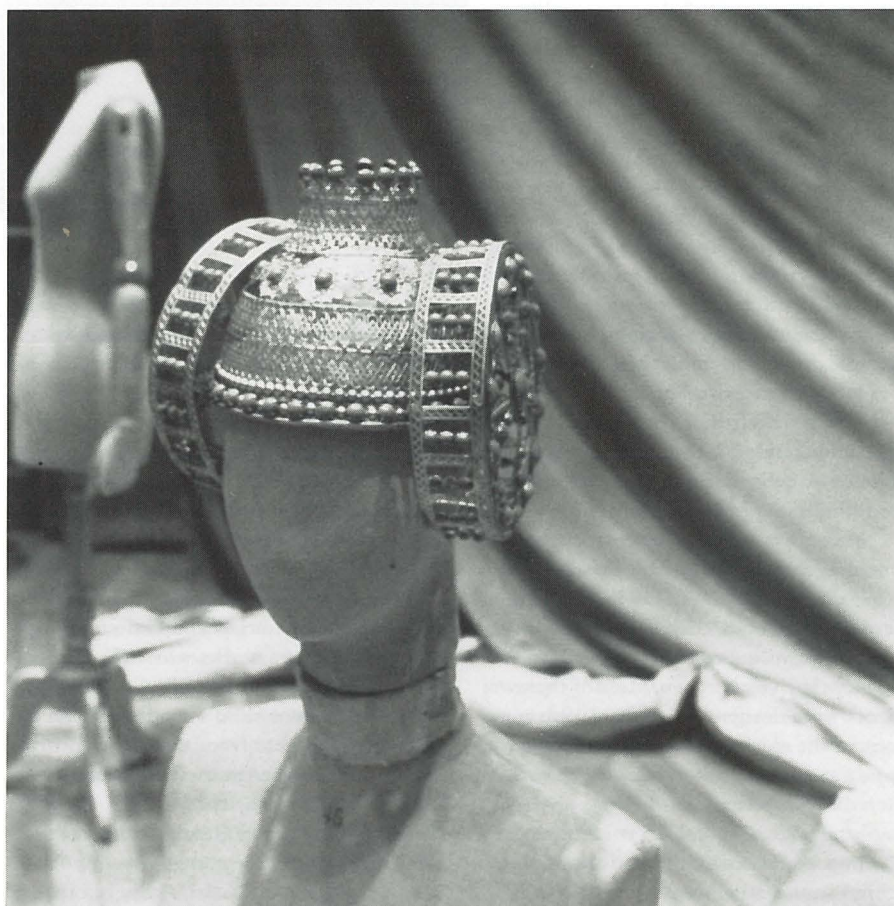
DANIELE FOUACHE CARES FOR THE PARIS OPERA'S CENTURY-OLD JEWELRY COLLECTION

Bijoux de l'art lyrique

BY LISA NESSELSON

For the past eight years, Danièle Fouache has been single-handedly wading through the unparalleled collection of costume jewelry designed for the performers who have held forth on the stage of the Paris Opera throughout modern history. Her mission — to figure out who wore what, when, and — as in the case of the least self-explanatory accoutrements — how. She finds it a challenging, endless, and thoroughly delightful task.

Fouache, whose post translates as “person responsible for the classification, restoration, exhibition, and carrying out of all relevant historical research pertaining to the collection of stage jewelry of the Paris Opera,” was presented with a job that her employers figured would take “about a year.” Eight years later, Fouache, now in her forties, sees no end in sight. “My first day on the job,” explains Fouache, seated among packing crates in the high-ceilinged circular sanctum in the Opera House that serves as her workspace, “they unlocked a door and I was shown a regular Ali Baba’s cave brimming over with treasure.” Staunch theatrical tradition combined with garden variety nonchalance had conspired to create a colossal and completely uncatalogued assortment of one-of-a-kind accessories. “Each piece was retired for good once a given performer finished singing a role,” explains Fouache. “Costumes are reused and loaned to other theatres, but the jewels never were. They’d just fling the stuff into the storage room — and this had been going on since the Opera opened in 1875!” Over 100 years of pearls, tiaras, crowns, filigree bodices, bracelets, belts, rings, and earrings lay lumped together



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■ Since the Paris Opera opened in 1875, the exquisitely detailed costume jewelry worn on stage — pearls, tiaras, earrings, and headdresses (above) — had been unceremoniously dumped into a storage room after their use. Since 1981, Danièle Fouache has had the task of identifying, restoring, and categorizing this treasure trove.

● *Depuis l'ouverture de l'opéra de Paris en 1875, de parfaites imitations des joyaux, créées pour la scène — perles, tiaras, boucles d'oreilles et diadèmes (dessus), ont été jetées à l'abandon dans un débarras. Depuis 1981, Danièle Fouache a pour mission d'identifier, de restaurer et de répertorier tous les trésors de cette caverne d'Ali Baba.*

▼ Seit der Eröffnung der Pariser Oper im Jahre 1875 wurde der feindetaillierte Kostümschmuck — Perlen, Tiaras, Ohrringe, und Kopfschmuckstücke (oben) — nach ihrer Benutzung sang — und klanglos in einen Lagerraum geworfen. Daniele Fouache hat seit 1981 die Aufgabe, den Inhalt dieser Schatzkiste zu identifizieren, restaurieren und kategorisieren.