

Music

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LEISURE

Sherrill Milnes reflects a passion for his art

By Hillary Hauser
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Opera is one of the highest levels of musical artistry, one that combines more elements of human expression than most other musical forms — be it about death, passion, hate, or jealousy, says baritone Sherrill Milnes.

Milnes, one of the world's great operatic stars (and one of the few super-greats produced in the United States) will sing operatic highlights from "Carmen," "Tannhauser," "Cosi fan tutti" and "Otello" at the Lobero Theater tonight, and as he talked about his program, and about the master classes he will give at the Music Academy of the West, one realized there is nothing more satisfying to Milnes than music.

He is an international star who ex-

udes a down-home charm probably rooted in his Illinois youth. He is big, like a football player, with a forceful voice that matches his large personality. He sings in Italian, German, French, Spanish and every other language, and yet he can still say "yeah," as an affirmative answer to a question, just like anyone else in America who has never spoken a foreign word in their lives.

Pre-med studies dropped

But when it comes to music, there is sophistication and drama and passion in Milnes, and in the year during his college days in which he gave up his music for pre-med studies, it was obvious to him that he couldn't live without expressing these qualities in his life, through music, he said. He

studied a wide variety of instruments, ranging from violin to tuba, but finally settled upon the voice as the most highly developed instrument there is.

He said that many people shut out classical music from their lives because the word itself is "dull and boring."

"Classical is a terrible term," said Milnes, adding that he doesn't use the word, or uses it as little as possible.

He also doesn't like the word "talent" or "technique," and instead speaks of "heredity" and "muscle discipline."

Milnes, who said that "everyone should sing in the shower, because it's healthy," is one of the world's best known baritones. He has won audiences across the globe with his portrayals of such operatic characters as the meddling Germont in "La Traviata," or the evil Iago in "Otello." He has sung in great opera houses all over the world with tenors such as Pavarotti and Placido Domingo, and with sopranos such as Beverly Sills. Europeans, he said, respond more emotionally — on the whole — to performances.

Music is emotional

Music, Milnes said, is "primarily emotional, secondarily intellectual." A listener does not need to study or even understand music to enjoy it, he added.

"The only thing necessary is to open up," he said.

Opera is the "biggest reacher-out" to the emotions, Milnes said, and arias — those operatic showcases that stand out from all the rest of the action — are emotional subjects treated elaborately.

"The purpose of the aria is to take a single emotion and sprrraayyy it out," Milnes emphasized. "Love — jealousy



SHERRILL MILNES

a performance of "Otello" which he did with Placido Domingo in Hamburg, in which the audience cheered and clapped for over 30 minutes.

"A 10 second applause for an aria is reasonable, and 20-30 seconds is wonderful," said Milnes. "Can you imagine 33 minutes, or 35 minutes? Our smile muscles wouldn't work anymore."

While in Santa Barbara, Milnes will give opera master classes at the Music Academy of the West's Abravanel Hall at 8 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday, and on Friday evening, he will give a class in art-song, or *lieder*. All classes are open to the public, for a \$5 admission.

Master classes interesting