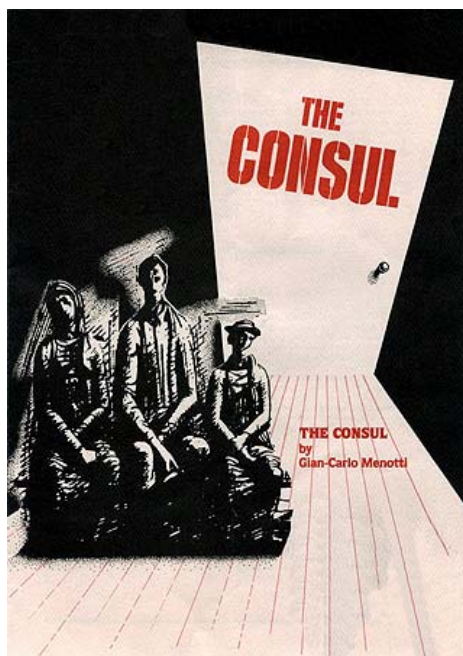


The Pescadero Opera Society presents

# The Consul



Words and Music by  
Gian-Carlo Menotti

A Musical Drama in Three Acts

Place:  
1940s postwar Eastern  
European country

## Characters

Magda Sorel (soprano)..... Patricia Neway  
John Sorel (baritone)..... Chester Ludgin  
The Mother (tenor)..... Evelyn Sachs  
The Police Agent..... Leon Lishner  
The Secretary ..... Regina Sarfaty  
Mr. Kofner ..... Arnold Voketaitis  
The Foreign Woman ..... Maria Marlo  
The Magician ..... Norman Kelley  
Assan ..... Dan Merriman  
Anna Gomez ..... Mari DiGerlando  
Vera Boronel ..... Ruth Kobart

Musical Direction by Werner Torkanowsky

Première performance at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre, New York on March 15, 1950

Produced for television by Jean Dalrymple (1960)

# Synopsis

## Act I

### Scene 1: The Sorel Home



John Sorel, a freedom fighter and fugitive, staggers into the empty room. He calls for his wife Magda who, along with his Mother, rushes in. John tells them of a secret meeting he attended which the police had learned about — shooting at them as they escaped across the rooftops, wounding him and killing a companion.

Magda sees that the police are approaching their home and hides John. A menacing Secret Police Agent enters and inquires about John, but Magda reveals nothing.

Once the agent leaves, John explains his plan to leave the country. He tells Magda to go to the Consulate and plead their case so that she, their baby and John's mother can join him.

### Scene 2: The Consulate Waiting Room

People are patiently waiting. Mr. Kofner is frustrated by the formidable secretary's insistence that he present every document possible. A foreign woman, anxious to leave the country in order to care for her sick daughter, receives the same treatment from the secretary as well. If she fills out the forms and her application is accepted, she may be able to leave in a few months.

Magda asks to speak with the Consul and receives the same stony treatment as the others. Despite a desperate appeal for an audience with the unseen Consul, she is told to fill out the paperwork and provide documents. Along with everyone else, she too must wait.



## Act II

### Scene 1: The Sorel Home



A month of waiting outside the Consul's office has left Magda discouraged. To add to her troubles, her baby is very ill. John's mother tries to console her. In a nightmare, Magda sees John with the secretary — whom he introduces as his sister. The dream ends with a horrible vision of a dead child.

Magda wakes up with a scream. A stone breaks the window. It is a sign from John — she is to send for Assan, the glasscutter. She is no sooner finished doing so when the Secret Police Agent reappears. His threats are more direct this time — Magda must reveal John's whereabouts or the names of his friends. She refuses and yells at him to get out, threatening to kill him if he returns.

Assan tells Magda that John is still hiding in the mountains and will not leave the country until he knows that his wife has a visa and can join him. Magda instructs Assan to tell John that the arrangements

have been made — it is not true, but there is no other way of compelling John to save his own life. Assan agrees to do as asked.

Meanwhile, John’s mother sees that the half-starved baby has died in its sleep.

## Scene 2: The Consulate Waiting Room

Anna Gomez appeals to the secretary, but receives the usual response. An out-of-work magician tries to console her with his tricks, but this doesn’t work either.

Magda is again refused an audience with the Consul. She can bear no more and launches into a fiery denunciation of the bureaucratic system and the injustice it leads to. The annoyed secretary finally obtains an audience for Magda, as soon as an important visitor finishes his meeting with the Consul. Magda faints when she realizes that the important visitor is the Secret Police Agent.



# Act III

## Scene 1: The Consulate Waiting Room

While Magda continues to wait, Vera Boronel finally receives her visa. Assan rushes in, looking for Magda. The news about John is bad — he has heard about the deaths of his baby and his mother and intends to come back over the frontier to fetch Magda. To prevent his inevitable capture and death, Magda invents a story for John in a letter to guarantee that he will stay away. She gives the letter to Assan, but refuses to tell him its contents.

Magda and the others leave, and the secretary is alone for a moment. John rushes into the room, looking behind him to make sure he has not been followed. He asks if Magda has been there and is told that he may still catch up with her if he hurries. That is not possible, though, because the Secret Police have followed him to the Consulate and will not allow him to leave.

The Secret Police Agent enters and, despite the secretary’s protests that the Consulate is a safe haven, he arrests John. Frantic, the secretary immediately phones Magda to warn her.

## Scene 2: The Sorel Home

The phone can be heard ringing in Mrs. Sorel’s room, but Magda, in a calm but mechanical state, ignores it. After plugging the cracks under the doors and windows with clothing, she goes to the stove and turns on the gas. She puts the shawl that covered her baby’s cradle over her head and bends over the stove. As she weakens, she imagines that she sees all the characters of the Consulate, John and his mother. Suddenly the phone rings again. Magda stretches out her hand to answer it, but she is too weak. She falls inert over a chair, while the phone continues to ring.

# Gian Carlo Menotti

**Born: July 7, 1911, in Cadegliano, Italy; Died: February 1, 2007 in Monte Carlo, Monaco**



Gian Carlo Menotti was an Italian-American composer and librettist. Although he often referred to himself as an American composer, he kept his Italian citizenship. At the age of 7, under the guidance of his mother, he began to compose songs, and four years later he wrote the words and music of his first opera, *The Death of Pierrot*. He began his formal musical training in 1923 at the Verdi Conservatory in Milan. Following the death of his father, his mother took him to the United States, where he was enrolled at Philadelphia's Curtis Institute of Music. There he completed his musical studies, working in composition under Rosario Scalero.

His first mature work, the one-act opera buffa, *Amelia Goes to the Ball*, was premiered in 1937, a success that led to a commission from the National Broadcasting Company to write an opera especially for radio, *The Old Maid and the Thief*, the first such commission ever given. His first ballet, *Sebastian*, followed in 1944, and for this he wrote the scenario as well as the score. After the premiere of his Piano Concerto in 1945, Menotti returned to opera with *The Medium*, shortly joined by *The Telephone*, both enjoying international success.

*The Consul*, Menotti's first full-length work, won the Pulitzer Prize and the New York Drama Critics Circle award as the best musical play of the year in 1954. By far Menotti's best-known work is the Christmas classic, *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, composed for NBC-TV in 1951. Menotti writes the text to all his operas, the original language being English in every case, with the exception of *Amelia Goes to the Ball*, *The Island God*, and *The Last Savage*, which were first set to Italian words. Recent operas include *The Singing Child* (1993) and *Goya* (1986), written for Placido Domingo and given its premiere by The Washington Opera. Menotti's most recent vocal works are *Jacob's Prayer* (1997), a commission from the American Choral Directors Association, *Gloria*, written as part of a composite Mass celebrating the 1995 Nobel Peace Prize, *For the Death of Orpheus*, with a premiere by the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra led by Robert Shaw in November 1990, and *Llama de Amor Viva*, premiered in April, 1991. He has also recently written a trio for the *Verdehr Trio*, which received its world premiere at the Spoleto Festival in July, 1996.

In addition to the numerous operatic works, Menotti has enriched the artistic world with ballets, including *Errand into the Maze*, and *The Unicorn, the Gorgon, and the Manticore; Pastorale for Piano and Strings* (1934); *Poemetti*, a suite of piano pieces for children (1937); *The Hero* (1952), a song on a text by Robert Horan; and *Canti della Lontananza*, a cycle of seven songs (1967).

In 1958 Menotti saw the opening of his own festival, the *Festival of Two Worlds*, in Spoleto, Italy. Devoted to the cultural collaboration of Europe and America in a program embracing all the arts, the Spoleto Festival has gone on to be one of the most popular festivals in Europe. In 1977 the festival literally became "of two worlds" with the founding of Spoleto USA in Charleston, South Carolina, which he led until 1993 when he became Director of the Rome Opera. Menotti continues to direct opera at Spoleto and elsewhere, including a *La Boheme* at the Washington Opera in November 1996. In 1984 Menotti was awarded the Kennedy Center Honor for lifetime achievement in the arts. He was chosen the 1991 "Musician of the Year" by Musical America, inaugurating worldwide tributes to the composer in honor of his 80th birthday.

Despite his American upbringing and his Anglo-Saxon fame, Menotti has never changed his Italian nationality, and considers himself as a decisively Italian composer. He is best known for the holiday classic, *Amahl and the Night Visitors*. His other most-performed operas include *The Medium* and *The Telephone*. Menotti's operas embody everything we love about musical theater — beautiful music tightly wedded to powerful drama, on contemporary themes, and sung in plain English.

Menotti has discovered and fostered talented young people in virtually every area of the creative and performing arts. In 1986, despite his Italian citizenship, in recognition of his contributions to the performing

arts in America, he was awarded the Kennedy Center Honors for lifetime achievement in the arts. In 1991, in honor of his 80th birthday, he was chosen “Musician of the Year” by *Musical America*, inaugurating worldwide tributes to the composer. He was artistic director of the Opera di Roma from 1992 to 1994. His music has been published by G. Schirmer since 1946. Menotti died on February 1, 2007, at the age of 95, in a hospital in Monte Carlo, Monaco, where he had a home.

### ***The Consul: The Video (1960)***

**Starring Patricia Neway, Chester Ludgin and Evelyn Sachs**



*The Consul* was originally produced on Broadway with the usual schedule of eight performances a week. It was called a musical drama instead of an opera so not to discourage a broader audience. The opera was a phenomenal success and the reviews were ecstatic, bringing awards and accolades. The more *The Consul* was performed the more it became a work of enormous compassion and depth.

Menotti has produced a great musical drama that holds your attention from start to finish. This is theater — any theater, not just opera — at its best. The realism is stunning, the message chilling, and the music perfectly suited.

Patricia Neway seems to have been born for the role of Magda Sorel. She is a commanding presence and possesses one of the great voices of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Both Neway’s acting and voice combine to make this production one of the works that every singer and actor should buy and study. It will be hard to keep a dry eye through Magda’s great aria.

This video is the original 1950 version before Menotti revised some of the score. The film is in black-and-white.