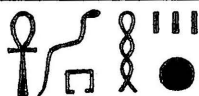


**JOSE**  
**The Nightingale of**  
**Montgomery Street**

**Farewell**  
**Performance**  
**of Verdi's**  
**AIDA**



**Jan. 8, 1967**



**BENEFIT PERFORMANCE FOR THE SOCIETY FOR INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS**

Compliments of Guy Strait





THE FAMOUS "CARMEN"



THE BLACK CAT - A Fellini kaleidoscope of faces and sound entertained thousands during its existence. It was a small bistro-opera house where a San Francisco tradition was born, hosted by Jose' Julio Sarria - "The Nightingale of Montgomery Street".

The "Black Cat" wasn't La Scala, however opera existed there for many years in the grandest tradition with the help of the Salvation Army, the Goodwill and fantastic ingenuity. The chorus was huge, usually consisting of the audience and the orchestra was tremendous (one piano). There were very few props, no scenery except for a silver-tongued diva, and the stage was made by pushing all the tables together to make at best, a fine place to turn an ankle or lose a high-heel.

Operas produced by the "Black Cat Opera Association" and "Corps de Ballet" were varied and ran the gamut from "Faust" to "Show Boat". For many years the scripts were written by James W. McGinnes, but Jimmy retired and Jose' carried on the show alone with an occasional assist from Mike Tresini or a leather-clad bike rider from the audience.

The "Corps de Ballet" was almost always drawn from the motorcycle crowd.

On Friday and Saturday nights, Jose' formally entertained the tourists with songs and banter. One of the favorite ice-breakers was to approach a couple who were obviously tourists and ask "Where do you hail from, my dear?" At the same time running his fingers through the hair of the male customer. Then turning to the female companion, he would quip, "Be careful, my dear, or he will be back later, alone."

## New Appeal

# The Black Cat Clings to Life

Sol Stoumen, the proprietor of the Black Cat, was engaged yesterday in an eleventh-hour fight to try to keep his historic bistro from going dry at midnight tomorrow.

The State Division of Alcoholic Beverage Control plans to seize the Cat's liquor license then. After 15 years of trying, the division finally has prevailed over the bar-restaurant at 710 Montgomery street that it feels is too gay.

The liquor-control division has been upheld by the California courts system — and Monday Stoumen learned an appeal to United States Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas has been ruled out by his office.

### BRIEF

Stoumen, a dignified father of five, began his last-ditch campaign yesterday in his home in Mill Valley.

He composed a seven-page brief asking that the State Supreme Court "issue an order immediately in order that my business not be destroyed."

The clerk of the court here refused to accept the brief for filing, Stoumen said. So he airmailed copies to each of the high court justices, now in Los Angeles.

Stoumen's brief argues that State liquor agents were not playing fair when they infiltrated the Cat, wearing T-shirts and jeans. The State investigators claimed they witnessed "lewd and indecent acts" on the premises, and that homosexuals there made propositions to them.

"No arrests were made on the premises," the brief states, "nor was I or my employees informed of these acts at the time of their alleged occurrences. Did my accusers condone these acts and become parties thereto?"

### 'UNSUPPORTED'

Such procedure, Stoumen claimed, made it "impossible for me to secure witnesses to refute their unsupported statements."

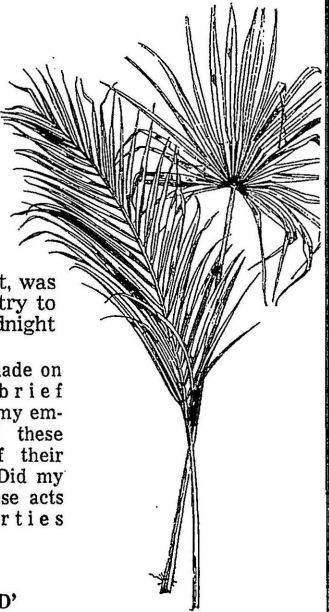
Stoumen also complained he would be given unconstitutional "harsh and unusual punishment" if the liquor license is revoked. He estimated its market value at \$8000, but said it would "destroy a business worth at least \$25,000."

He asked the Supreme Court justices: "What have I been guilty of to deserve this harsh economic punishment which may be likened to a fine of \$33,000?"

"They can't close me," Stoumen said last night.

The 52-year-old businessman started the Cat in 1945, with a strong Bohemian following. The feature of the restaurant has been a lunch that costs "a nickel an ounce" — you help yourself, then weigh it.

"We'll start serving dinner if we get knocked off," he said.





"WELCOME TO THE BLACK CAT!"

As the California Supreme Court stated; "The Black Cat is a place with a national and international reputation as a bohemian establishment, attributable to the fact that by-and-large its patrons are a gainfully employed section of the community, from all walks of life, who regularly patronized the Black Cat because of its non-commercial "club" atmosphere and its intellectual, cultural, and philosophical discussion."

The "Cat" had customers of all races, creeds and sexual preferences, it was not uncommon to hear a joke that would make a representative of the NAACP, Jewish Welfare League, Baptist or Catholic Church cringe when it was told.

The atmosphere was colorful, quick tempoed, entertaining and at times verged on the burlesk. The audience would sip their drinks and weave to the music of ragtime piano. A collage of college students, business men, matrons with mink coats and jewelry, tee-shirted men in boots, and couples who looked as if they had just come to town for a big night out.

Unfortunately this colorful landmark was closed on October 31, 1963.

One might philosophize that the "Black Cat" was an institution where upon one could gain a better understanding of himself, taught by a lover of humanity. The "Cat" echoed the personality of its reigning diva through its straight forward honesty and reconciliation of the world as an object to be loved... enjoyed... and most of all... to be lived in.



To The Empress de San Francisco  
Marquesa Josefina de Sarria  
The First Protectorate of Mexico  
Former Madame of Salina's Parlour  
The Nightingale of Montgomery Street  
The Bay Street Songbird

---

The Society For Individual Rights  
wishes you  
Good Luck on your first final performance.



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## THE SUPPORTING ARTISTS

### PERRY A. GEORGE

- Rhademes

His operatic career began in St. Paul, Minnesota where he was a lead tenor with the Ashland Avenue Ideal Opera Company, unfortunately the opera company never did get an opera in production. He did however, achieve acclaim as the sand **fairy** (a type cast according to his director) in a TV production of "Hansel and Gretel". He has achieved choral singing fame in such international music centers as Minneapolis, St. Paul, Rochester, Duluth and Fargo. In San Francisco he has appeared recently with José in the 1966 Sirlebrity Capades as Alfredo in "La Traviata" and captivated audiences as Mme. Aida Soto-Voce.



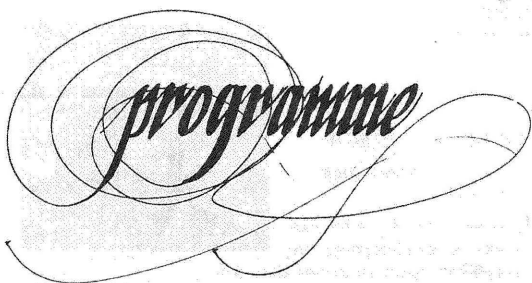
### CHARLIE KAY

- Amneris

Charlie Kay, (Lotta Crabbs) first appeared with José as Colonel Snickering in the lavish production of "My Fair Laddie" in an international tour of Sacramento under the auspices of ARC. Previous to this appearance he worked for Warner Brothers Studios in Hollywood. He now is in residence in San Francisco as the proprietor and owner of the Golden Poodle Beautification parlour for canine coifures.



Compliments of a friend



THE STORY OF AIDA takes place in ancient Egypt where Aida (an Ethiopian princess) is held captive and is the handmaiden of Amneris, the queen of Egypt. Rhadames, who becomes Commander in Chief of the Egyptian forces loves Aida but is loved by both Aida and Amneris. Suspicion runs high as Rhadames tries, later unsuccessfully, to keep Amneris from discovering his and Aida's mutual love. Rhadames is chosen as the leader of the armies and is grandly sent off to conquer Ethiopia. Left alone, Aida pleads for him to return safely to her.

While all Egypt awaits the return of the army, Amneris is amused by a troop of Ethiopian dancers. After the dance Amneris muses on Aida's peculiar behavior and in a rage, she extracts the secret that Aida is her rival for the love of Rhadames. The trumpets sound and the armies (and Rhadames) return triumphant.

Later one, Amonasara, Aida's father, who has been captured, appeals to Aida for her aid in helping him return to Ethiopia and find the passage through which the Egyptian armies will pass. Aida reluctantly agrees and extracts the name of the pass from Rhadames. Amneris overhears his treason and turns him in.

Rhadames is then tried and convicted to die of suffocation after being sealed in the tomb beneath a temple. Aida has stolen into the tomb to die, in love, with Rhadames. Amneris is moved with grief for her dying lover, Rhadames, and implores the gods to grant him peace.



THE STAR

#### CREDITS

Piano accompaniment for the opera . . . Robert L. McKinney

Piano interlude during intermission . . Jack McGinnis

Dancers . . . . . Johnny DeLeon - Gregg Ackerman

Make up and Wardrobe . . . . . Fernando

Hairstyling for José by Jimidene

Hairstyling for Charlie Kay by "J" of Danids of Maiden Lane

Set Materials compliments of Mr. George Haas

Stage Manager . . . . . Glenn Burgess

Special appreciation to the S.I.R. Community Center Committee for lights, sets, props, waiters, and stage hands.

Costumes courtesy, Goodwill, Sirporium, Salvation Army, St. Vincent De Paul, Society of the Military Order of the Purple Heart, Fire Sales, Red Cross Disaster Fund, Rummage Sales.  
(all costumes owned by the star and not for resale)

Program . . . . . Chuck Thayer



In the person of José Julio Sarria we have something that we need to understand. How did he arrive at being an entertainer. Where did it all get started?

His background gives us no clue, for it is one of the average American.

José uttered his first falsetto tones on the 12th of December, 1923, at the fashionable St. Francis Hospital in San Francisco. But then if you study the picture of José taken at six months, you can see he was already trying out for the stage.

Then came the dark years of being a child, until his entrance into public schools at Emerson Grammar School.

But then the picture starts changing and he is in attendance at the San Rafael Military Academy, in Marin County, across the Golden Gate from the city he loves. José, even to this date, has a thing about uniforms. This probably stemming from his early years at San Rafael Military. He is reluctant to speak of the reasons for leaving this school, but soon his enrollment was at St. Dominic's School which was closer to his mother and home. This school was discontinued soon after José enrolled.

Then came the years of really growing into manhood. After being enrolled at the John Sweat High School, he buckled down to work and after transferring to the Commercial High School (since closed), he graduated with honors.

José entered San Jose State College soon after the closing of good old CHS where he studied until his enlistment in the United States Army (Uniforms?)

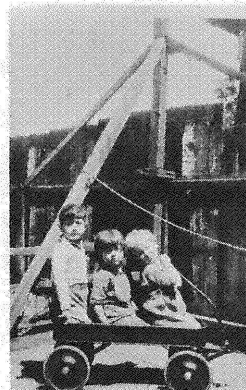
So the education pattern gives us no clue as to the present occupation qualification.

When he was engaged in the defense of his country in WW II, he served with the 70th (That number may be of some significance) Infantry Division where he was awarded the Combat Infantry Badge. After participation in two major engagements of the war as a combat infantryman, he was assigned to Headquarters, Berlin District, assigned to the Officers Club. It was here that José first became aware of his desire to entertain his fellow man.

Soon after his arrival back in San Francisco he was on the stage, as a female impersonator, at the Biege Room, now closed.



JOSE - A BOUNCING BABY...?



THE FIRST GRAND PRODUCTION

L. - R.  
JOSE,  
CARMEN MIRANDA  
BOBBY BREEN  
(IT WAS A  
BUDGET HOLLYWOOD  
MUSICAL)





TWO OF THE MANY  
"CAMP"—AIGN  
SPEECHES  
AT THE BLACK CAT.

Earlier in his youthful years, José had taken voice lessons from Madam Vought, who had proclaimed him "Another Bobby Breen", and his mother had employed Naomi Blender, concert violinist of the San Francisco Symphony, to teach her son the violin. After many months, it was decided that he would never play satisfactorily.

After his stint at the old Biege Room, José was often at the Black Cat, as a customer, and as was the practice in those days, entertained the crowd, for you see at this time each of the customers at this bohemian bar would do an act or two for the enjoyment of his fellow entertainers.

José was such a camp that he soon found that he was doing most of the entertaining, and then he became a regular or a steady feature of the "Cat".

Sarria has regularly lectured his patrons on the need for those who "are a little different" to stand up for their rights. During each of the periodic cleanups that the police departments are wont to embark upon, he has told his listeners how they should take care to avoid certain areas and to abstain from public displays.

When George Christopher, Mayor of San Francisco, was opposed for that office by Russell Wolden, he was accused by Mr. Wolden of "being soft on homosexuals". Prior to this, it was odds on, that Wolden would be elected Mayor. This issue defeated him, for the many, many who were involved, together with their friends, went to the polls in flocks to defeat the man who dared to make this a political issue.

Christopher then turned on the people who had been responsible for his election and made life generally miserable for them. During the "Gayola" scandals in San Francisco, the Mayor evidently directed a whitewash of the police who had taken bribes from the bars. It was then that our hero decided to enter politics.

The City of San Francisco has a City-County combination government, whose primary legislative branch is the Board of Supervisors. This is composed of eleven Supervisors, chosen from the entire city at large. It was for a position on the Board of Supervisors that José made his debut into politics. He did practically no campaigning in any location other than the

"Black Cat". When the ballots where being counted, our José threw a Victory Party at the "Cat". No one there thought that he would win. Even before the petition, placing him on the ballot was entered, it was a foregone conclusion that he did not have a chance. But the victory was there, for he had run the gamut of the political circus without being smeared by a single opponent. It has been said that no politician in his right mind will make homosexuality a campaign issue in San Francisco if he wants to be elected.

José received over 6,000 votes in his race for Supervisor. Those who were elected received 70,000 to 100,000. A person not connected with his campaign remarked that this was just short of remarkable, for his expenses were short of \$500, and since he made only one appearance outside of his weekend shows at the "Black Cat".

The aftermath of the political experiment was an arrest by the San Francisco Police Department on a vague and unnecessary charge. Following his own advice, so often given, José promptly pleaded "Not Guilty". The Judge, in dismissing the case, remarked, "I will not allow my court to become an instrument of punishment of unsuccessful candidates."

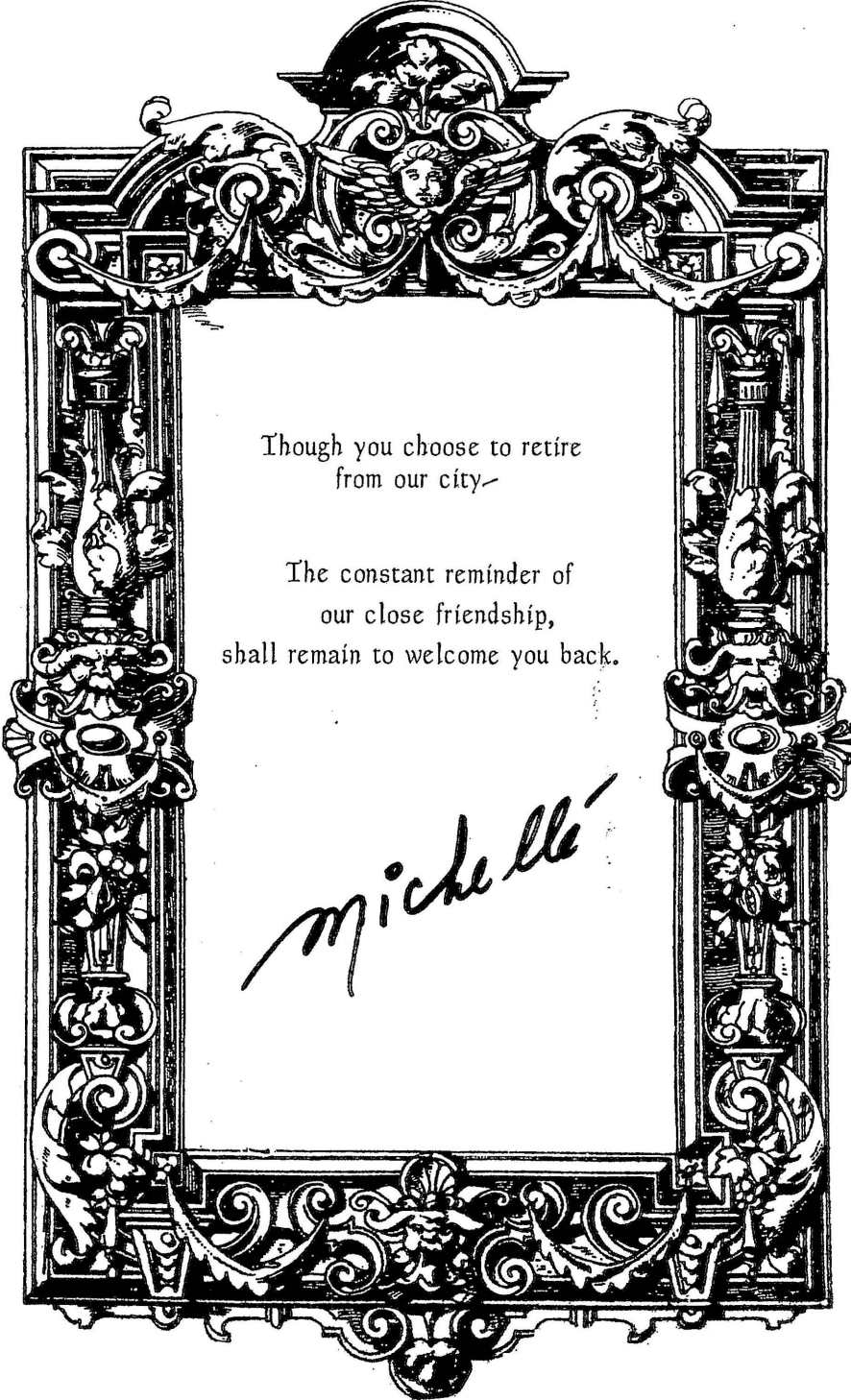
However, with the advent of the tightening of expense accounts, and the retirement of his long-time accompanist, José entertained only on Sundays at the "Cat", until it was put out of business by the ABC.

He then embarked upon the Opera on Bay Street at the "Backstage". From there to the grand madame at "Salina's Parlour" holding the traditional cultural events on Sundays as usual until they discontinued serving brunch. Finally on October 31, 1965 he was crowned the Royal Empress of San Francisco and ruled for one year with great grandeur and much pomp.

Guy Strait

AFTER  
ACCEPTING  
FOR THE  
BOLSHOI  
WHERE ELSE  
CAN ONE  
GO?





Though you choose to retire  
from our city—

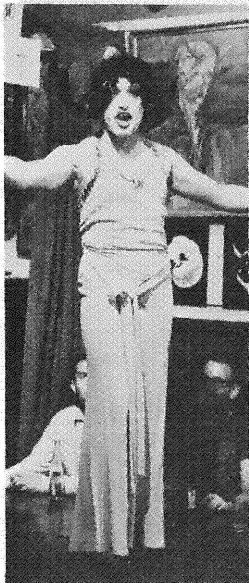
The constant reminder of  
our close friendship,  
shall remain to welcome you back.

*Michelle*



WHAT CAN BE SAID?





#### JOSE AT HOME

What kind of a person is this, off stage? I have been in the home of José Sarria many times. I had the rare privilege of knowing his mother who was affectionately known as "Mama Dolores" by the many visitors in his home. "Mama" did not understand her son completely, but she did know what was going on. She would always ask, "You boy or you girl?" of everyone when she was introduced.

José is sincere with himself and with others. He has had set-backs and has overcome them without leaving the residue of bitterness. He is a very earthy person, believing in his right to live as he sees fit so long as he does not interfere with the right of others to do likewise. He has preached to the patrons of the "Black Cat" that they must register to vote if they want to change the laws. He has bluntly condemned the people who frequent public places and has acted as confessor to the many who have found themselves in the hands of the law, with a true understanding of the reasons for the conduct. Truly a remarkable person, José lives across the bay from San Francisco in an exclusive suburban development in Marin County.

José Sarria; formerly an entertainer at "The Most Bohemian Bar on the West Coast", a prima ballerina on Bay Street; a former madame at Salina's Parlour, a political aspirant, and declared the Empress José de San Francisco in 1965; a man who openly espouses the rights and privileges of the social variant along with the responsibilities; a man whose fast wit has entertained thousands in spoofing Grand Opera; a man who does not hesitate to chastise the high or the low.

His motto is; "United we stand; divided they will catch us, one by one."

José Julio Sarria, San Franciscan Extraordinary!

Guy Strait





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