

## Document Citation

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## Caught At Locarno

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### Il Bacio Di Tosca

(Tosca's Kiss)

(SWISS-DOCU-COLOR)

Locarno, Aug. 12.

A Rex Film Presentation of a T&C Film Production. Produced by Hans-Ulrich Jordi and Marcel Hoehn. Written and directed by Daniel Schmid. Camera (color), Renato Bertin; sound, Luc Yersin; editor, Daniela Roderer; music, Giuseppe Verdi, Giacomo Puccini, Gaetano Danizetti. Reviewed on Piazza Grande, Locarno, Aug. 11, 1984. Running time: 87 MINS.

Cast: Sara Scuderi, Giovanni Puligheddu, Leonida Bellon, Salvatore Locapo, Giuseppe Manachini and artists living at the Casa Verdi, Mialno.

This intelligent and highly sensitive documentary is dedicated to an institution that had been established by Giuseppe Verdi and had been inaugurated shortly after his death in 1902, and now bears his name. This is a home for retired artists in Milan which Verdi, at the time, considered his most beautiful work. Visiting it today, through the eyes of veteran Swiss filmmaker Daniel Schmid one

### Il Bacio Di Tosca

can't help but agree with him.

What could have been a lachrymose review of luminaries of the lyrical stage, now relegated to their memories only, or alternatively, a grotesque image of has-beens living in a world of their own, becomes, through the sheer affection and admiration that transpires in every sequence, a tribute to artists who may have lost the physical requirements necessary to continue their careers on stage but are still as passionately enamoured in their profession, as peripatetic musically, and as keen to sing and perform as they ever were.

That the film is dedicated to the Casa Verdi, but bears the name of a Puccini opera, is explained by the fact that Tosca is the only heroine on the lyrical stage whose profession is that of an opera singer, in common with Schmid's protagonists. Furthermore, Tosca's kiss, in the opera, is the kiss of death and while never mentioned, the presence of an imminent end is felt throughout the film.

The main charm of the whole venture is the unusual personalities of the singers interviewed and followed by the camera. Included are Sara Scuderi, one of the great divas of the past, who lights up the screen with her presence and is both humorous, sensitive and passionate in her reactions; Giuseppe Manachini, who remembers how he decided to retire at the right time, but still keeps in a trunk all the costumes that made him famous on stage; Leonida Bellon, who still sports the true spirit of the heroic tenor; and composer-conductor Puligheddu, possibly the only character in this film that is slightly grotesque, but also very amusing when he fixes dates with the camera. There is also an interview with Giulietta Simonato, one of the great mezzos of our time, who is now president of the friends of the Casa Verdi, who are responsible for keeping this venerable institution going, once the author rights left by the composer for this purpose had stopped, Verdi's works having gone into public domain some twenty years ago.

Schmid, who in most of his previous films has dealt with paroxysms of romanticism slipping into decadence and decay, stopped short of the last part, for once, to admire those who have lived their lives in that exalted climate that is the opera stage, and who continue to live in their own reality today, unblemished by the world that has changed around them.

Besides being a natural for film festivals and art houses, this documentary should attract tv programmers everywhere. —Edna.