

AROUND DOWNTOWN



DIANE SCHADE



ROBERTA LISZCZ



LYNN SCHUETTE



KIT GOLDMAN



HOLLACE KOMAN

SHOW STOPPERS: SPOTLIGHT ON FIVE

By Hilliard Harper

The arts have long relied on women to fill a variety of needs. Until recently, women have predominantly worked in a number of essential volunteer capacities. Increasingly however, key staff positions are being filled by women professionals.

Nancy Peterson directs the Timken Art Gallery in Balboa Park. Jane Rice as development director for the San Diego Museum of Art, is responsible for raising several hundred thousand dollars each year for the museum. Business manager Kathy Magiera supervises com-

Hilliard Harper is a San Diego-based writer whose entertainment articles have appeared in both area and national publications.

pany operations as the chief administrator under San Diego Opera general director Tito Capobianco and Sharon LeeMaster, who recently left her position as director of the La Jolla Chamber Music Society, is the new development director for COMBO.

But there are also several smaller arts organizations which have become important elements in San Diego's growing arts community partly because of the business skills of key personnel who happen to be women.

Roberta Liszcz of San Diego Repertory Theatre, Lynn Schuette of Sushi art gallery and performance space, Hollace Koman of San Diego Gilbert and Sullivan and Diane Schade and

Kit Goldman of the Gaslamp Quarter Theatre recently talked briefly about their positions as administrators in the arts.

"Men are expected to make a living," Kit Goldman said, "but people are still surprised when a woman goes into business. Some women feel they need to be macho, but if you don't play the macho game and allow yourself to be feminine, it's an advantage."

Goldman, the theater's managing producer, co-founded the Gaslamp Quarter Theatre in 1980. The night the theater opened Diane Schade worked as a volunteer usher. She is now producer and, along with Goldman, supervises the theater's business operations.

With the ascent of Schade, Goldman now concentrates on community relations in the developing Gaslamp Quarter, fundraising and long-range planning. Schade prepares budgets for individual shows, sets production deadlines, negotiates contracts, handles personnel relations and arranges the myriad details associated with a production: preparation of audition notices, notification of actors of call backs, arranging rehearsal space and property loans from businesses, assisting the artistic director with auditions and keeping the production on track through the rehearsal period.

Just as most of the plays at the Gaslamp are selected for their strong female characters, the style of management reflects a feminine emphasis. The male stereotype "grew up on the playground where he learned to fight and win," Goldman said. "Women grew up without the experience of fighting. They learned to get what they wanted through manipulation. I think we've arrived at a compromise, a middle ground. Our method is to resolve rather than confront."

Said Schade, "Power and money are the catch-all measures of male success. Here it's the quality of work you do." Hollace Koman is the artistic director and general director of the San Diego Gilbert and Sullivan Repertory Co. which she helped found in 1979. A musician by training and preference, Koman took on managerial tasks because it seemed that the only way to direct the operettas was if she also produced them.

"I would not have picked a Gilbert and Sullivan career if I could have predicted it 10 years ago," Koman said. "It was due partially to some friends who thought I had what it takes to conduct that we got the company going."

Koman, who says, "I am not by nature a management person," nevertheless negotiates contracts, hires the production staff, including the stage director, and prepares the annual budget and budgets for each of the three operettas staged during the season.

While Koman says that her "greatest pride and joy is to see a production perking along so that everyone feels the creative spark," she is clearly proud of the work of company manager Diana Jones and of the develop-

ment of the company's board of directors as an outreach, planning and fundraising body.

"The old stereotype of females doesn't work against a woman being in the arts," Koman said. "A typical play has male and female leads—a balance, where women show their highest capability. So in the theater it's expected that women do what is needed whether as actors, stage hands, stage managers or in the front office management."

Listed in *San Diego Magazine's* "82 More San Diegans to Keep an Eye on in '82" and in *The Reader's* "Heavy 50, San Diego's Movers and Shakers," Lynn Schuette operates downtown's oldest art gallery.

The fact that the two-year-old Sushi, a gallery and performance space, is downtown's oldest gallery, disturbs Schuette, who says there is woefully little art in the center city. Fortunately, she says, a number of smaller galleries have opened downtown in the past year. The arts, she says, are an integral part of redevelopment. "You can't just renovate a building. That doesn't give anyone a reason to move downtown."

Schuette is a painter who became an arts administrator because of the difficulty of making a living at painting. "No one gives you any idea in college of the problem of making a living without a masters degree," said Schuette, who was a summa cum laude graduate but never got her masters. Supporting herself as a cocktail waitress did not work out, and she resolved to find an arts-related job.

She landed a CETA job as assistant director for Community Arts under June Gutliessch, working as a grants writer. During her two years at Community Arts Schuette discovered that she was a highly organized administrator.

"Community Arts focused on variety, but I wanted to see contemporary work stressed," Schuette said, and in July, 1980 leased 5,000 square feet of space at the corner of E Street and Eighth Avenue.

Acting as curator, coordinator, public relations person, producer and janitor, Schuette brings in 50 shows a year to Sushi. Ticket prices pay for the artists and she covers the rent by leasing the space to dance groups for rehearsal and by selling a few

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of her paintings every year.

"Some weeks we have 70 people come in, sometimes 145," she said. "There is a definite audience for this type of art."

"Look around and you'll see that little galleries are sprouting up downtown where they don't have to pay high overhead and La Jolla rents. Survival here isn't contingent on a heavy clientele and large sales."

Frequently San Diego Repertory Theatre general manager Roberta Liszcz finds herself working "six productions ahead of the current show." "I began negotiations in July for *A Christmas Carol* which this year will be performed in December at the California Theatre." The apparent time warp doesn't bother her, though. There is a comforting structure. "You're still seeing a beginning and an ending for every show. But the product is

always changing. It's not the same 'widget.'"

Liszcz (rhymes with dish) has an undergraduate degree in labor relations and a masters in theater management. She handles contracts with designers and actors, but most of her personnel work is related to hiring and firing the staff of eight full-time employees, down from 12 when the Rep operated the Lyceum Theatre.

She also handles negotiations for royalties with publishing houses and does the budgeting and planning of cash flow schedules. "The year I arrived there were no systems — charts and accounts — to give an immediate feedback on each department." Management of cash flow, she said, is critical in theater where the artistic success of a play has no effect on the account ledgers.

Liszcz, who had worked in insurance, finance and education, had not believed she was

making a contribution until she began to work as a volunteer for a community theater. She and her husband made a living for three summers touring their own children's theater after which she won a scholarship to the California Institute of the Arts to study theater management.

Liszcz has encountered little male chauvinism in the theater. The biggest problem is "convincing the business community that we're not all crazy artists, but a smart group of people running a business. There's a feeling that if you choose to do business in the theater, it's because you couldn't make it somewhere else."

"The reasoning goes, if you're any good, you'd be in NCR or IBM."

"It's not the money. I'm doing what I want to do," Liszcz said. "I love theater. Do you know what I do after work? I go home and read plays." **D**