



# Datebook

Leah Garchik:  
The deal  
of the art E6

SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE AND SFGATE.COM | Monday, May 20, 2013 | Section E

## PHOTOGRAPHY



Photos by Cathy Murphy

Photographer Cathy Murphy's images of Cesar Chavez include this one of him working in the community garden at LaPaz.

## Struggles for power preserved in pictures

### S.F. State show illuminates lives of farmworkers and their leader

By Patricia Yollin

Cesar Chavez made history. Cathy Murphy recorded it.

They met in July 1975 when she took pictures of the United Farm Workers' co-founder leading a thousand-mile march through California. Within a few days, she dropped out of college and joined the UFW as a staff photographer.

"I just couldn't imagine how such a short, small person could take on agribusiness," Murphy said. "But he looked right in the lens and his eyes were just so piercing and so strong. I got a chill down my spine, and I realized power didn't have anything to do with somebody's size."

She had planned to spend a few hours shooting the march — from the Mexican border to Sacramento and then UFW's La Paz headquarters in Kern County — for the Santa Barbara News and Review, where she was a stringer. It turned into three days. At the end, Chavez asked Murphy to replace the UFW's photographer, who had just quit.

At the time, she was a 33-year-old single mother majoring in photojournalism at the Brooks Institute in Santa

Photos continues on E2



Top: A farmworker wears protective clothing to guard against pesticide spray. Above: Cesar Chavez and photographer Cathy Murphy. Left: Farmworkers join the march. Below: Murphy's photos helped show the reality of child labor.

## MUSIC REVIEW

### Film music composer less adept offscreen

By Joshua Kosman

Composer Nino Rota is best remembered for his wonderful film scores, particularly those for the first two "Godfather" installments and most of Fellini's movies. To listen to his Piano Concerto in C, which formed the centerpiece of Friday's robust concert by the San Francisco Opera Orchestra, was to feel a renewed desire to experience those soundtracks again.

It's not just that the concerto, which dates from 1959-62, isn't a good piece, although heaven knows it isn't. What's disquieting about it, rather, is to hear all the qualities that make Rota's film music so memorable — melodic inventiveness, emotional transparency, a bitter-sweet harmonic palette — struggling in vain to make themselves at home in a concert setting. Everything about the piece is reminiscent of someone looking around and saying, "Wait, how did I get here?"

Friday's concert, presented in Berkeley's Zellerbach Hall by Cal Performances, was one of the periodic opportunities for this splendid orchestra — together with its vivacious music director, Nicola Luisotti — to emerge from the pit of the War Memorial Opera House and tackle some repertoire other

Concert continues on E2

## THEATER REVIEW



Jim Norrma

Jan Zvavfler is Em, a modern Medea, in "The Medea Hypothesis" at Central Works.

### Intriguing hypothesis in 'Medea'

By Robert Hurwitz

Bits of the old "Medea" cling to the rising waters of a climate-change challenged new world in Marian Berges' "The Medea Hypothesis," a provocative Central Works world premiere that opened Saturday. It isn't all smooth sailing. Berges' blend of old and new can get confusing. But it's engrossing.

This is ancient Greek tragedy compounded with and sometimes confounded by a

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## Farmworkers' struggles preserved

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Barbara. She sent her 7-year-old son to live with his grandparents and accepted the job, which paid \$5 a week plus food and housing.

Off and on for two years, she documented the efforts of Chavez to improve the lives of farmworkers. In 2005, her photographs turned into a traveling exhibition that is now at San Francisco State, where the student center and an institute are named after the labor leader.

"Cathy is a really good example of how photography can help make change," said Catherine Powell, director of the university's Labor Archives and Research Center, sponsor of the exhibition.

#### Well-rounded exhibition

The first part documents the 59-day march, which aimed to let farmworkers know about their newly won rights to organize. The second part shows life in the "killing fields," as Chavez called them. The third part offers private moments, some from 1992, the year before he died.

"The photographs capture the essence of my grandfather and his spirit," said Teresa Chavez Delgado, 42, of San Mateo. "Sometimes I saw him as union leader. This time I saw my grandfather first, and I started crying."

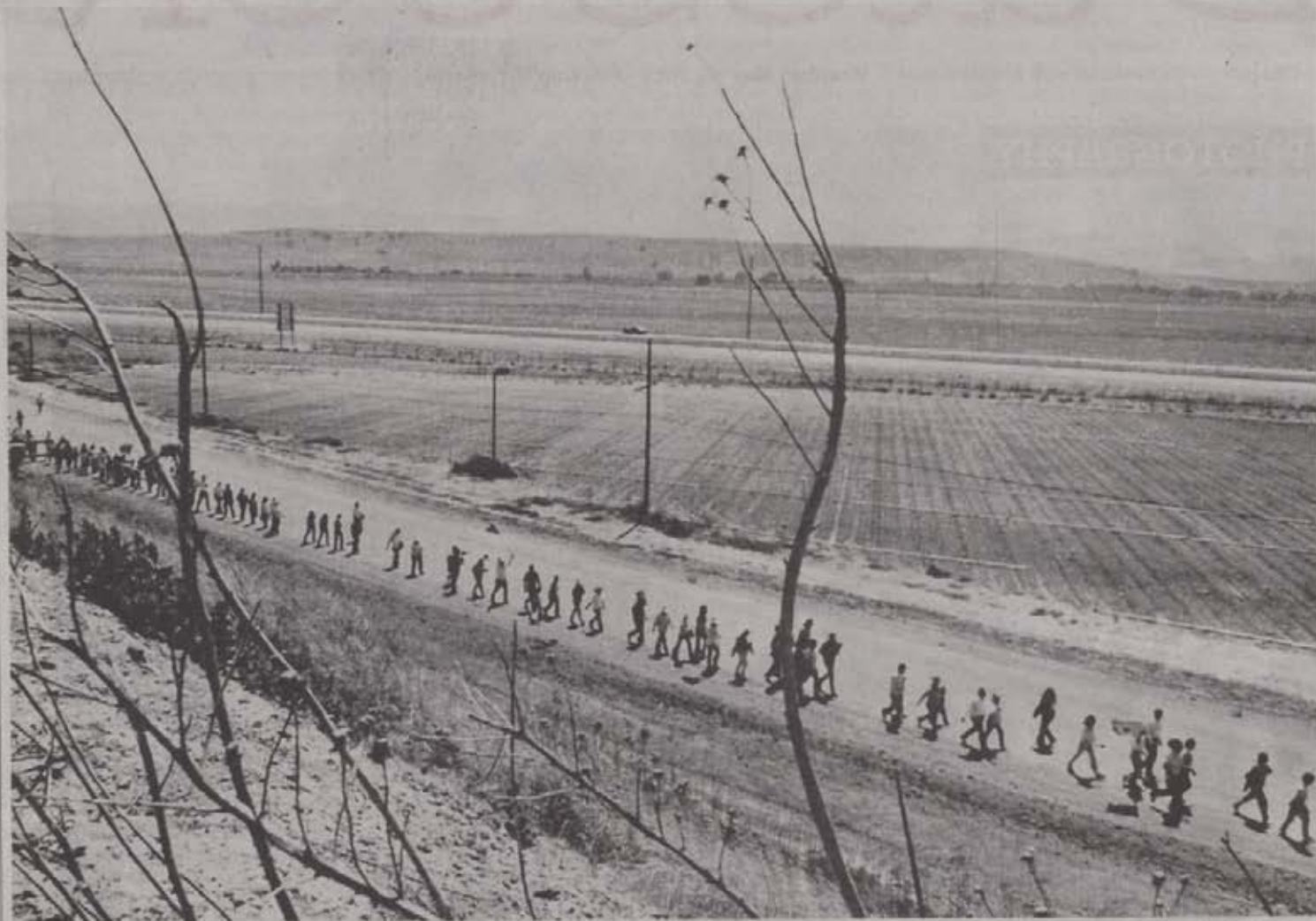
Murphy described Chavez as charismatic but down to earth, a vegetarian who practiced yoga, and a self-educated man who went to libraries often to compensate for an eighth-grade education in 37 schools.

He also had an extraordinary memory, she said, and remembered everyone's name. A major civil rights leader, he was described by Robert F. Kennedy as "one of the heroic figures of our time," and 50,000 mourners attended his funeral when he died at age 66 in April 1993.

#### Unforgettable experience

When she was photographing the 1975 march, Murphy walked about 20 miles a day in scorching weather. By the third day, she had severe blisters. After she soaked her feet in hot water, Chavez opened all of the blisters with a needle.

"That was an experience I'll never forget," said Murphy, 70, who grew up in Michigan until she was 14, when her family moved to Antioch. Now she



Photos by Cathy Murphy

Cathy Murphy's camera caught a long line of farmworkers and supporters on the UFW's march through California in 1975.



Above: Cesar Chavez and his German shepherds Boycott and Huelga. Left: Lupita Galvan works in the onion fields.

lives in Bisbee, Ariz., and teaches digital media art at nearby Cochise College.

Equally unforgettable was the way she began her UFW tenure. Security was always an issue because Chavez received death threats, so he had guards and two German shepherds named Boycott and Huelga, who were in the backyard with Murphy during a meeting in Santa Maria.

"When Cesar came out of the house, I put my lens up to

take a photo," she recalled. "The guards were yelling, 'Drop your lens' and the dogs were running toward me. One of them had actually chomped a photographer's lens in New York the month before."

"Nobody had told me not to point a lens at Cesar's face because it looked like a gun. So that was my first day on the job."

She also learned the hard way how to dress. "When I first started going out in the

field, I wore a tank top," Murphy said. "I had three Nikons and five lenses. I got sprayed with pesticides one day and had a nosebleed for almost a month. I realized why everyone was so covered up."

#### Documenting child labor

Keeping people from getting sprayed was a big goal for Chavez. Another was stopping child labor — something growers insisted did not happen. To prove otherwise, Murphy

**Marching Through History with Cesar Chavez and the Farm Workers:** Through Sept. 30, 1-5 p.m. By appointment in the morning. Monday-Friday, J. Paul Leonard Library Gallery, Room 460, San Francisco State University, 1630 Holloway Ave., S.F. (415) 405-5571.

crawled through the fields and took pictures of small children picking onions.

A photograph of a little girl named Lupita Galvan was put on a UFW poster. It helped eliminate child labor in California, Powell said.

"Lupita was working in her socks," Murphy recalled. "I asked why she didn't have her shoes on. She said she had to save them for school and church."

Sometimes Murphy was overcome by what she saw. "I'd go in the fields and take the photos," she said. "Afterward, I'd go in the darkroom and break down."

Patricia Yollin is a freelance writer and editor. E-mail: [datebookletters@sfgate.com](mailto:datebookletters@sfgate.com)