

Cecil Beaton: Still Stinging

By GLORIA EMERSON

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SIXTY-TWO-YEAR-OLD Cecil Beaton, whose camera, costumes and sets have made him a legend, has not lost a bit of his elegant British sting. What he swiftly stung the other day in his suite at the St. Regis Hotel here ranged from the "too clean, too pristine" look of American women to the perils of designing sets and costumes for the third opera to be given at the new Metropolitan Opera House. "I shouldn't think that I would do it again," said Mr. Beaton, who has been here for two weeks involved with the costumes and sets of "La Traviata" to be performed tonight.

"Alfred Lunt, the director,

wanted mice in the last scene," said Mr. Beaton, who let his eyebrows record his reaction to this. There will be no mice.

He says the dresses to be worn by the soprano Anna Moffo are "very sexy, very romantic."

"They will arouse a certain interest in the less young members of the feminine audience," Mr. Beaton said with the very smallest of sighs.

"Traviata, you see, was my opportunity to purvey the latent desire in the feminine bosom to be romantic — to go against the grain," said Mr. Beaton.

Although the dresses in "La Traviata" — long, ruffled ones that really rustle, sweep

and swish — represent the Edwardian core of Cecil Beaton, he clearly sees, and rather likes, that grain they go against.

"Those space helmets and shiny raincoats and those thick materials tailored like armour — it is very new," he said. He thinks it makes other, older styles look like period pieces.

"The woman wearing a hat with the brim turned down just the right way — well, she is hopelessly out of date, isn't she?" he said.

The woman in the hat may look out of date, but Cecil Beaton does not. An acclaimed admirer of Pierre Cardin's clothes for men, Mr. Beaton was wearing a jacket without lapels over a traditional waistcoat and well-creased slacks. What looked most startling were his chalk-white socks that clearly showed above loafers.

'A Hat Walking'

Speaking of the women on New York streets, Mr. Beaton said:

"The merchandise wears them. You see a hat walking down the street, not the human being who chose it. The look? It is so new, so clean, so pristine. A peck of dirt, as one's governess used to say, has to be swallowed during a lifetime."

He crossed his legs and looked around the room.

"Every room should have one shabby object," he said.

Mr. Beaton will go to London to do new sets and costumes for a production of "Lady Windermere's Fan" (which he first did 20 years ago) and then return to New York to design the costumes for the musical based on the life of Coco Chanel, the cour-turier.



The New York Times (by Arthur Brower)

Cecil Beaton, in a lapel-less jacket over waistcoat

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