



A DAY WITH CABALLÉ

No two days in the life of a diva are alike. The most typical are not performance days but those spent in rehearsal, preparing for performance - long hours when musical and dramatic details are coordinated with conductor, stage director and fellow members of the cast. In between, the diva, especially if she is from Europe, strives with difficulty to maintain a semblance of family life.

Montserrat Caballé is no exception. Her temporary home in New York is a plain if comfortable hotel suite of two small rooms. These she shares with her husband, tenor Bernabe Martí of the New York City Opera. Each morning, first thing, the couple place a long-distance call to their real home, Barcelona, to "speak" with their three-month-old son, named for his father. "Expensive?" says Miss Caballé. "Yes, but when it is your first child. . . ."



The mail comes, and with it disappointment. "Why do contracts and press clippings always arrive so fast, and news and pictures of my baby so slowly? Oh well, maybe tomorrow." She and her husband get ready to go out - first to visit a nearby church, then to a session with a tax consultant, and then to an informal luncheon with Allen Sven Oxenburg, impresario of the American Opera Society, who first presented the soprano and tenor in New York. "It's a custom now," she said. "We eat at Allen's every Friday when we are here."

Over coffee, Oxenburg's Burmese kitten joins the party, arousing the soprano's easy mirth as well as her compassion for its undernourished frame. Then she and Oxenburg repair to the parlor to discuss future repertory - Anna Bolena, Armida, a zarzuela? "We'll see!" Miss Caballé takes a cab to the Metropolitan Opera House,



where she is due for her first rehearsal for the revival of Verdi's *Otello*.

There conviviality gives way to concentration. It is a year since she has sung *Desdemona*. Furthermore, it is her first encounter with conductor Zubin Mehta and the cast - James McCracken, Tito Gobbi and Ermanno Lorenzi. Mehta, assisted by pianist Alberta Masiello, begins. Miss Caballé, not yet singing, intently follows the score, occasionally making notes with her pen. Then her turn comes, and She pours her heart, soul and voice, everything she is, into the music of *Desdemona*.

Five hours later, when she returns weary to her hotel, it is to face an evening alone: her husband is at the State Theater, rehearsing for his debut as Luigi in *Il Tabarro*. Tomorrow, a Saturday, may be a holiday for some, but for Montserrat Caballé it means another six hours rehearsing *Otello*.