

**Beverly Sills Captivating as Baby Doe** from *Cleveland News*, Tuesday, September 9, 1958  
By Ethel Boros

If Baby Doe will forgive the allusion, there's gold in them there silver mining town stories of the 1880's and composer Douglas Moore, with the help of John Latouche's compact libretto, has struck a rich vein of Americana in his new opera, "The Ballad of Baby Doe."

"Ballad of Baby Doe" was introduced to Cleveland last night in the big Musicarnival tent on Warrensville Road. The arena staging does a fine job of capturing the bustle and elegance of the period. The sets, though sketchy, are adequate to convey the impression of the Colorado mining towns of Leadville and Denver.

The Musicarnival production features Beverly Sills as the Baby Doe, and Walter Cassel as Horace Tabor, a middle-aged tycoon who falls in love with her and divorces his wife, Augusta, to marry her.

Margery Mayer sings the austere Augusta, and Cleveland's own Beatrice Krebs is rightly amusing in the role of Baby Doe's mother, Mrs. McCourt.

### **Miss Sills Scores In Difficult Role**

The singing last night was of a high order. Beverly Sills was utterly captivating, and her handsome appearance matched the high quality of her vocal art. From the moment she entered to a waltz-like theme, to the last scene with Horace dead at her feet, she was beauty and grace personified.

Douglas Moore has written some beautiful and difficult music for this role but Miss Sills made it seem easy. Her wistful air in the first act calls for subtle changes of expression and she made it memorable with her silvery tones. Her letter aria was also a thing of great beauty and so was the long solo in which she praised silver above everything else.

The aria seemed to be made to order for her soprano voice, and the silver which figures so prominently in the story is reflected also in her exquisite singing.

### **Dream Song Hits High Spot**

Walter Cassel's clear, resonant baritone was also magnificent. In a tender song in which he tells Baby Doe of his dreams he reached a melodic high spot, but his big dramatic moment came in the last act when his failing vision glimpsed past and future.

Margary {sic.] Mayer's difficult vocal lines made her role less melodic but she did them beautifully, although her words sometimes lacked the clarity achieved by Miss Sills and Cassel.

Bill Boehm as President Arthur, and Wayne Mack as William Jennings Bryan, added to the smoothness and excellence of the production with their polished performances.

### **Production Well Staged**

Musicarnival's production, well-staged by Donn Driver, captures the flavor of a mining town through sketchy sets and real antique props. It is attractively costumed. The work of the ensemble is most effective, especially in such rollicking scenes as the opening in the honky tonk.

Boris Kogan and the hard-working orchestra should certainly received credit for their help in spreading the gospel of American opera.

A large, enthusiastic audience was on hand last night, including members of the National Council of the Metropolitan Opera Company.