

The Original Night Visitors



Will we ever see the original “Amahl and the Night Visitors?” That first version of Gian Carlo Menotti’s opera begins with chronic fibber Amahl Goldberg sitting outside his house in Miami Beach playing a tuba. He tells his mother that an amazing star “as big as a window” is hovering overhead, and the two of them trade arias about it (“O Mother, You Should Go Outside”; “Stop Bothering Me!”). But this time, the kid isn’t kidding, as hundreds of city folk later attest (“Enquiring Minds Need to Know”). Soon, extraterrestrials invade the Earth, subjugating humankind and despoiling the planet’s tomatoes. NBC, which commissioned the opera, was hoping for a more uplifting plot line. So Menotti, who was behind on his rent and needed the money, rewrote it. Three benevolent kings replaced the aliens, and all traces of serialism – so crucial to the despoiling of tomatoes scene – vanished. Doesn’t *any* enquiring mind long to see the original?