



Su Jones plays a child of the city doing her best imitation of a general for soldiers during a dress rehearsal of the first act of Jean-Pierre Ponnelle's production of "Carmen" at the Lyric Opera.

Tiny troupers tackle 'Carmen'

Performing with Placido Domingo

EVER SINCE a dimpled, curly-haired mopet named Shirley Temple sang and danced her way to fame, parents have looked for "star quality" in their offspring.

In the case of Su Jones of Chicago, her parents didn't have to look for very long. At 9 years old, Su is a veteran performer currently in the Lyric Opera children's chorus, part of Jean-Pierre Ponnelle's production of Bizet's "Carmen." The opera opens Friday with tenor Placido Domingo, who will star in seven of the 10 performances through Dec. 13.

"When Su was 2 she started violin lessons," her mother, Chaesun, said. "At 3 she started ballet because I think children need training in coordination. At 5 she danced with the Danish Royal Ballet in Chicago.

SU, A 6TH-grader in the gifted program at Alexander Graham Bell School, sandwiches her professional life between daily classes and a staggering array of extra activities.

"I have a violin lesson after school one day a week, ballet class another," Su says. Latin classes at Loyola University fill another afternoon while pre-calculus takes up Saturday morning. Homework is done "between the 1st and 4th acts of 'Carmen' or at home."

Of the 100 children who auditioned last March for the children's chorus of "Carmen," 31 were chosen, including Su, who has



Tenor Placido Domingo gets acquainted with Su and children's chorus members Dominic Armato (left) and Christopher Bona.

a featured part in the first act of the opera, says children's chorus master Donna Brunzma.

SU LIVES with her mother, her father, R. Kent, and her brother, Edgar Kim, 11, and says show business "could be an extra activity when I grow up if I have time."

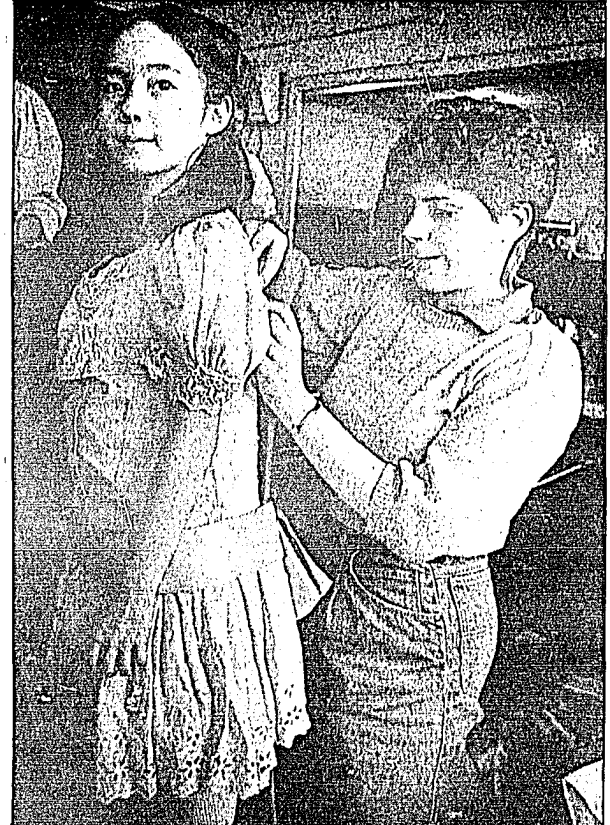
But if Su decides not to pursue a career in

show business, all those lessons and rehearsals won't go to waste, Su's mother says. "I believe that learning one thing helps her learn another thing and that all people are born with equal ability. It's love and motivation that make a difference."

Tribune photos by Karen Engstrom



Chaesun Jones arrives backstage with her daughter's "elegant young girl" costume.



Su is fitted for one of the costumes worn by children watching a "parade of officials and bullfight participants" [above] in "Carmen."