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Pavarotti performs with bluesman B.B. King.

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work ethic of a man, a Modena, Italy, homeboy who worked at his father's chosen vocation of schoolteacher, then as an insurance salesman, day jobs for a struggling tenor. As a 19-year-old, Pavarotti was a member of a local opera ensemble that won an international vocal competition. Then, a 25-year-old Pavarotti won the Achille Peri competition. The first prize was a role in a real opera production, and on April 29, 1961, his life of operatic grandeur began, filled with high notes and precious few low ones like the aforementioned Taj Mahal clunker. "They are very rare, but there are nights like that," says Pavarotti of the show that spawned a return engage-

ment. "It has happened to me in years, about five or six times. And have always gone back. Because I am a professional singer, very professional." Explaining why it has taken Tenors so long to find their way to Chicago, Pavarotti says, "I am always ready to go to a place. But I'm not a workaholic like I was in the past. Now I am always much relaxed. I sing the things that I like." One rumor has it that Pavarotti wants to make his final performance in 2001 with Verdi's *La Forza del Destino*, a role he has long sung on stage. Of this, Pavarotti cracks, "Bullshit," neatly substituting a word suitable for a family publication. "No, I am not thinking of retire-

ment. Absolutely not, I will not do that. I will not cave. There were a few times when I thought about it, but there were 'not many'.

"One is the opera that you mentioned before that you never mentioned," quips the 64-year-old singer like a precocious child. He says

he might be capable of assuming his mantle. Prompted for their names by this reporter with a "Like..." Pavarotti replies, "Like I don't tell you."

If bloodlines are any indication, Pavarotti has a ways to go. His father is still singing at the age of 88. It could even be argued that he has begun laying the groundwork for an extended career outside the opera house with his pop work. After all, how much effort can it take for one so gifted to hang out and do tunes with pop and rock singers? Pavarotti's fame is such that he doesn't have to go for high Cs anymore. This is a man who could almost sing *Mary Had a Little Lamb*, and people would pay for the experience.

Then again, who knows? He has said he would like to sing until 2001, completing a 40-year career in opera. On the other hand, notions of a Pavarotti retirement are also quelled by his banker's perspective on the human voice.

"It is like having extra money," says Pavarotti. "You should put the money in the bank, and sing with the interest, that 10 percent, not the capital. I have always known this, because I have always heard my father talk about this."

Certainly, Pavarotti started out singing with the capital, explaining his role as "king of the high C." But today, he is indeed cruising. Whether



The tenor with "divas" Mariah Carey (top) and Aretha Franklin (above).

this is a sailing off into the sunset or rejuvenated twilight years as a singer, only he knows. The public only seems to know that it wants more of a man who is highbrow legend coupled with pop culture icon. Why?

"It is because I am a chubby boy," says Pavarotti, referring to his equally legendary girl. "I'm a chubby, nice boy. I hope they will say that I was a very honest, professional singer, and that I loved very much people."



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