

AMERICAN SUCCESS OF "THE MERRY WIDOW."

Franz Lehar, the Viennese bandmaster whose opera, "Die Lustige Witwe" ("The Merry Widow"), made him fame and fortune across the water, has so completely charmed American audiences with his beautiful opera that the prediction is made that it will more than equal the European success.

This has been brought about through Henry W. Savage, whose sumptuous production of "The Merry Widow" is the present sensation of Broadway.

For some time the theatre-going public has yearned for a real light opera to take the place of the tawdry musical comedy for a little while at least, and New Yorkers have prayed—none too silently—for a change from the regulation musical farce devoid of plot, and almost devoid of real music.

"Mlle. Modiste" which of course was not seen in the provinces until recent date, came as near to the real thing as anything heard in years, but it is said that in "The Merry Widow" Colonel Savage has found an opera with an interesting story well connected, with music that has not only won the most critical musicians, but has found instant favor with the great majority of theatre-goers for they can whistle the tunes even if the thing has character, and is far removed from the jingle of mediocre musical farce.

Two companies are now singing this opera in America which was produced for the first time in this country only two months ago a third production is in preparation, and it is more than probable that we in the west will see "The Merry Widow" in the year of its original production, really an unheard of thing and surely without precedent in theatrical annals.

The operetta was first produced in Vienna where after several futile efforts, Lehar induced Wilhelm Kerczag, director of the Theatre au der Wien, to put it on.

And in agreeing to try it Kerczag said, "Composers are dead—I will be frank and tell you that unless I get a brand new success, my finances will not hold out much longer."

Kerczag, who was practically bankrupt, is worth over half a million dollars today, from this operetta alone, and the manager of the Leipzig theatre who was in about the same financial condition when he secured the rights of "The Merry Widow" for that city, is a wealthy man.

It is the custom in Vienna to invite the musical critics to a dress rehearsal of a new production as they are considered most important personages over there, but this little formality was omitted in the case of "The Merry Widow" because the manager was too ashamed.

Ludwig Kurpath, a celebrated critic, went to a rehearsal without invitation, and the doorkeeper refused him entrance, but fearing his pen Kerczag sent for him, and he took a seat in front. He was filled with wrath and resolved to get even in his story, long before the performance started.

After the first act he remarked that it was fairly good, and after the second, he had completely lost his ill humor. Rushing down the aisle to Lehar, who was sitting in the orchestra, he shook him by the shoulder and said, "Why, man; you're crazy—this thing will be a sensation—you will be as great as Johann Strauss. That waltz is wonderful, you are made."

And Lehar bursting into tears could murmur only "Thank you."

THE SINGER AND HIS ART.

By M. J. Brines.

To the average person the art of a singer is an unknown quantity—indeed, the connection between art and singing is entirely lost to the most

of those who make up the majority of audiences that assemble to hear music.

The singer who has a God-given voice—all voices are God-given—but this is the term we are apt to hear given to the voice of exceptional tonal beauty—this singer so well endowed by nature often considers it quite unnecessary for him to pursue any course of instruction vocally. He

singer. Too often this sort of singer appropriates to himself the praise of his voice whilst in reality he is a slothful servant, unworthy of so great a trust. To say one's voice is beautiful reflects no credit whatever upon the owner, nor has the owner any cause to take it upon himself. How well does he use this talent? That is the question. If singers would remember this there would



DONALD BRIAN AND ETHEL JACKSON in the waltz that has made "The Merry Widow" famous.

believes that training would ruin his natural gift and often rather than run the chance of the Scylla and Charybdis of voice teachers, allows his talent to lie buried in the napkin of self-conceit. No matter how exceptional the natural voice, a certain amount of vocal training, a certain amount of voice exercise is necessary before the self-conceited tone merchant can become a

be less of the bickering talk and jealousy. It is not generally known that most musicians look upon the average singer with contempt. The singer who knows only tones and whose ambition is the applause of the crowd, is to blame for this. What, then, should a singer do to attain the aim he should strive for, and

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