

THE BAYREUTH FESTIVAL. MEDIOCRE SINGERS AND DEFECTIVE STAGE MANAGEMENT—RESPECT FOR THE COMPOSER'S SON.

Bayreuth, August 8. The Wagner Festival is at its height here. The first cycle of the "Ring" has been concluded, and now the performances of "Parsifal" are drawing music lovers from all countries and focusing the rays of royalty, wealth and fashion on this little Bavarian city, which glows with life and color.

In addition to "Parsifal" and the "Ring" a feature has again been made this year of "Der Fliegende Holländer," which has been presented with more than customary care, both as regards the choice of singers and the setting. The title role has been sung by Bertram and Van Roy, whose work has been most favorably commented on by every one and which has certainly been marked by great care and brilliancy. Emmy Destinn has taken the part of Senta, and by her sweetness and charm, both in voice and manner, has made for herself hundreds of new friends. Schumann-Heink has sung Mary with her usual intensity and power, while the part of the steersman has been taken by Emil Borgmann at all of the performances, but this wonderful young tenor has started for a five months' tour of America, it is said, under a guarantee of 100,000 marks. The part has therefore been sung by Ernst Kraus, who has shared to a large extent the honors accorded to Burgstaller and Schmedes, the other two notable tenors singing in Bayreuth this year.

But despite the fact that such able artists have assisted in the production of the opera, it cannot be said that it has been a distinct success. It has not been attended by full houses, and even now seats can be obtained for the next performance. The reason for this is probably that those who come to Bayreuth prefer to hear the dramas which manifest Wagner's most characteristic methods and his mature genius, rather than this earlier work, no matter how artistically it has been staged. It would have been well if the same care which went into the presentation of "Der Fliegende Holländer" had characterized the other productions. "The Ring" felt the loss of many singers who in former years made the Bayreuth production of these dramas so unalloyed a delight. It is true that Bertram sang Wotan with perhaps a deeper conception of the part than ever before, and that both Burgstaller and Kraus made favorable impressions as Siegmund and Siegfried, and also that Schumann-Heink contributed almost perfect work as Waltraute. But it is also true that some of the singing approached near to mediocrity than it is possible to believe of Bayreuth. At times Ellen Gulbransen does work which is almost great in the role of Brinnhilde, but at other times her voice is strikingly inadequate, and her dramatic work often borders on crudeness. She made a more favorable impression as Kundry, although even in that impersonation her work was uneven, and often lacking in that fire and passion which at other, and often not so appropriate, times she had indicated as belonging to the character. The performances of "Parsifal" this year were certainly below the standard, and, strangely enough, to a large extent it was the very singer who was supposed to lend distinction to the work who was responsible for much of the disappointment which was felt. This singer was Theodor Reichmann, who twenty years ago created the role of Amfortas under Wagner's own and constant supervision. Listening to his singing after his long alienation from the house of Wahnfried, one wondered that only twenty years could have elapsed since he was in the glory of his youth. His voice is hard and unsympathetic, his acting awkward, and at times it has seemed as if the very business of the part were strange to him. The part of Amfortas was all that was required of him, and he has already led the role in the hands of Carl Perron and Hans Schütz, and gone to Munich, where he is to appear at the Prinz-Regentent Theatre next week.

But "Parsifal" this year has been notable for the introduction of a comparatively new tenor, Schmedes, whose work in the title role has received the highest notice from European critics, and which is certainly marked by so much purity and brilliancy that it amounts almost to genius. His voice is a really splendid tenor, under surprising command, and his assumption of this difficult rôle is characterized by an unusual combination—youthful exuberance and mature understanding, although he himself is yet far from his maturity. Whether he has been so much a favorite with those who live in Bayreuth or not is doubtful. Altogether Burgstaller, who also sang "Parsifal," is the pet of the city, where it is believed that he is the great benefactor of the future. His voice is certainly full of charm and power, while his manner is captivating, but he lacks that fulness of tone and that breadth of understanding which mark Schmedes's work. Another new singer who made a promising impression was Richard Mayr, a young basso who has been studying for some time under Professor Knies, of Bayreuth, and who made his debut as Hagen. His voice has a clearness of tone in the lower register suggestive of Edouard de Reske's, and his entire range, which is quite an unusual one, is notably even in quality and under good command. His acting lacks the confidence of experience, but it is believed in Bayreuth that he has a long and brilliant future before him.

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