

CALLS OPERA USEFUL

VIEWS OF IMPRESARIO

Oscar Hammerstein Discusses Value of Operatic Form of Compositions.

By Oscar Hammerstein.

The educational value of opera, either grand or comic, cannot be overestimated. Music in



OSCAR HAMMERSTEIN.

Who has introduced real opera comique at the Manhattan Opera House.

general ennobles the mind and exalts the perceptions, and when the inspirational strains of a Verdi or Gounod are wedded to a story wherein the conflicting phases of human nature are dramatically unfolded and the same sung and acted before us, we are transported to the realms of the ideal.

As everything that tends toward the latter condition is essentially instructive, it will be seen that the conclusion stated in the initial paragraph is self-evident. It follows, then, that the study of opera should find a place in the curriculum of every institution of learning. So necessary do I believe a knowledge of opera to be for every individual that I long since advocated a municipal opera house for the benefit of the poor. Such an institution, where music lovers to whom the price of even the cheapest opera seat is prohibitive, would do more to abolish vice and crime than a thousand jails.

We are at present enjoying a renaissance of

light music. By the latter term I do not mean music of a frothy or frivolous nature, but that which, while it does not rise to the dignity of the grand opera classes, is nevertheless far above the trivial nonentities which the present generation has come to regard as comic opera.

It is because of this renaissance that I produced "Hans, the Flute Player," at the Manhattan Opera House. When I heard this opera abroad I was immediately impressed with its musical merits and was convinced that New York would welcome its presentation here. The prolonged and enthusiastic plaudits which greeted its premier Tuesday evening proved that my judgment was correct.

The music of "Hans" is a worthy sample of the brand of melody which captivated the entire world when Offenbach, Lecocq, Audran, Planquette and others of their school reigned supreme.

"The Tales of Hoffmann" is Offenbach's masterpiece, and was one of the most successful operas I gave at the Manhattan Opera House. In "Hans" many people have declared that I have found the legitimate successor of that delightful work, and the splendid success achieved by the new opera seems to confirm these opinions.

My present policy at the Manhattan is to produce many such operas as "Hans," compositions which, while they delight, at the same time instruct, and so benefit humanity and prepare the mind for higher attainments. There are many such operas in Europe as yet unsung and unknown in the United States, as were "Thais," "Louise," "Pelléas et Mélisande" and "Elektra" until I introduced them. I have procured the American rights to a number of these, and shall give them here. Not, however, while "Hans" is enjoying such a season of popularity. Judging from present indications, it will be a long time before a change of opera will be necessary.

GREAT DANCING CENTRE

New York Schools in Classic Art Rank Among the Best.

The classic dance seems destined to rule on the stage in the forms of entertainment to which it is adapted for a long time. Certain it is that its best exponents command salaries almost fabulous, and that even those less skilled are sure of engagements as long as the furore persists. The revival of interest in this phase of entertainment has attracted the attention of hundreds, and the dancing schools where such steps as the classic dancers reveal are taught are attracting new pupils in abundance. Care should be taken by those aspiring to success in this field that they do not fall victims to the lure of those who profess ability to teach quickly all that is needed to insure triumph. None of them can do that, and the schools and teachers really capable of teaching the art are careful as to what pupils they take, and very frank in stating the difficulties to be overcome.

There is a good chance for the active girl, well formed, strong and graceful, to win success as a dancer, for, even after the present rage is a thing of the past, skilful and well trained dancers, equipped with the technical training that is essential to success, will of necessity be in constant demand for ballets, for musical comedies that depend in large measure upon pretty dances for their success and for many varied forms of entertainment.

For the training of dancers good schools are not numerous, but the ones that are good are very good indeed. Their methods are time tried and stamped with approval by those theatrical managers who

know how to get what they want, and the acceptance of a pupil by such a school is a good indication that she will, if earnest and thorough in her work, win some measure of success.

Many of those already engaged in stage work, particularly in musical productions, find that their earning capacity is increased by the training these schools can give, and that they are enabled to get better and more profitable engagements after such a course of training. The work is hard, and involves constant practice and close attention, but the rewards make the effort distinctly worth while, and few who have undertaken the work have ever regretted it.

New York is really the centre for such schools

in this country, and few of any account are to be found in other cities. The place of the metropolis, as the producing centre of the country, accounts very simply for this fact.

A CURIOUS CUSTOM.

In some parts of Russia it is customary at weddings for the bridegroom to take a whip with him to church and at the conclusion of the ceremony to lightly apply it to his bride's back, as a reminder that she is in subjection to him as her stronger half. To marry under these circumstances would hardly appeal to some of the more advanced women of up-to-date countries, who demand that the word "obey" shall be omitted from the marriage service.—Montreal Standard.

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