

MORE ABOUT THOSE ENGLISH LIBRETTOS

Translation of Operas

To the Editor of The Tribune.

Sir: I read and I reread Mr. Krehbiel's essay on "Opera in the Vernacular" in to-day's Tribune. Will you allow me to reply to it in part, with the courtesy one critic owes another?

In recalling recent efforts in New York to present opera in English Mr. Krehbiel had recourse to curious methods. Long years ago, as he has told me, he defended the use of English in opera. Now, in his riper age, he attacks it. To justify his pessimistic views he quotes from a translation by some unnamed writer of the libretto of "Lucia." He picks out one weak phrase from a translation of the "Lohengrin" libretto and reprints a trivial rendering of some lines from the text of "Carmen." The faults of these cheap efforts he treats as arguments. And, on the other hand, he ignores more serious efforts. He says nothing of the success which attended the performances of "Les Contes d'Hoffmann" (with my English words) at the Park Theatre. He seems unaware of the excellent translation of the English singing versions of "Das Rheingold" and "Die Walkure" which I made long ago for the Metropolitan. Maybe from modesty, he does not refer to his own version of "The Impresario" (which, I am told, is excellent).

He is silent on the subject of my translation of the foolish "Das Heimchen am Herd" ("The Cricket on the Hearth") libretto, which was sung successfully some seasons ago by the Chicago Opera Company. He does not say that "St. Elizabeth" in English charmed its hearers and that, despite its almost incredible imbecility, the original English words of Planché sung in "Oberon" helped Weber greatly; nor does he mention Mr. Henderson's able libretto which inspired "Cyrano," or the perhaps childish, but enduring, English text-book of "Natoma."

I do not apologize for referring to my own translations. For I am one of a very few men in this country who have attempted such things in earnest and, as a rule, for a mere crust of bread. The sins which distress us all in English versions of foreign librettos could be avoided, if, instead of going to poor hacks, our publishing sweatshops and our opera managers entrusted men of ability and training, like Mr. Krehbiel and Mr. Henderson (more are scarce) with the task in all America, with their translations.

But that is what they very seldom do. Rather than pay a proper price for readable, and, above all, singable "Krehbiel" versions of librettos, they hire grub street scribes to undertake a task which calls for the talents of men who, besides being linguists, should be musically poetic and at least to some extent real playwrights.

With the exception of Mr. Hinshaw, of the Park, what American is producing serious opera in this country? You can't hope for any living interest in opera in English from foreign managers. M. Gatti-Casazza, indeed, produces an occasional work by an American; so does M. Campanini. But can they judge the value of an English book, and do they try to make their singers learn English diction?

Until we have a national conservatory as a foundation for our art, and American managers to take charge of our lyric drama, the faults which Mr. Krehbiel finds so fatal may go unreformed. But they can be reformed, and they soon will be. The United States may once have been in swaddling clothes. The time is near, though, when they will insist not only on hearing and seeing, but also on understanding what we call opera.

I stand with Addison, who, as Mr. Krehbiel reminds us, derided his countrymen for enduring opera sung in foreign tongues. And chiefly I stand with Paul the Apostle, who, in the First Epistle to the Corinthians (chap. xiv), wrote these illuminating sentences:

"Except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? For ye shall speak into the air. . . . Therefore, if I know not the meaning of the

voice I shall be unto him that speaketh as a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me. Wherefore, let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret. . . . I had rather speak five words with my understanding, than by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue."

CHARLES HENRY MELTZER.

Mr. Melzer's letter is printed, partly because he is a journalist experienced in his profession, a champion of opera in the vernacular and by vocation a translator of works for the stage. Now that he has been heard we may be permitted to say that to us he seems to have contributed to his own confusion and that of his cause by his extremely and inexcusably shortsighted criticism of the article in last Sunday's Tribune on the vernacular in operatic performances. That article was not an "attack" on the use of the English language in opera, but a dispassionate and, we believe, discriminating discussion of the kinds of opera which may be translated and of the qualifications which not only a translator of a foreign work but the composer and singer of a work in the vernacular ought to possess. The few examples were cited to illustrate some of the difficulties which a translator must meet and the kind of follies which a translator is led to commit. They might have been multiplied by the dozen, by the score, by the hundred; and since Mr. Melzer says that he stands by Addison in his attitude toward foreign opera, which as I take it also includes Addison's denunciation of translations, he must not take it amiss if I tell him that in some of his books are to be found the same misdeeds condemned by the English essayist. Having refrained from mention of his books in the way of faultfinding I cannot see why he should have expected me to mention them in the way of laudation. Neither praise nor dispraise of Mr. Melzer's work, nor Mr. Henderson's (which is original), nor mine (which is not what is implied), nor of the text of "Oberon" or Miss Bache's translation of "St. Elizabeth" has anything to do with the case which I presented.

I fear that Mr. Melzer is not so happy as he thinks in his sketched quotation from St. Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians. In fact, though I make no profession of ability in Biblical exegesis, I am inclined to think that he has placed himself among those unstable and unlearned folk who were told by St. Peter that they were wrestling the epistles of his beloved brother, Paul, in which there were hard things to understand, to their own destruction. A little more careful study of Paul's words (aided, perhaps, by the new version or that of Luther), might make Mr. Melzer realize that the apostle was not so much denouncing the use of foreign languages among the members of the church at Corinth as seeking to impress upon them the superiority of prophecy over vain and polyglot eloquence. "Wherefore, my brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy and forbid not to speak with tongues; but let all things be done decently and in order."

H. E. K.

Anna Bussert.

Harry Field, a Canadian pianist, recently played a "Heroic" sonata by the American, Campbell-Tipton, at a recital in London.

The English impresario, Charles Manners, has made an impressionable appeal through the British press for the assistance of some member of Parliament or constituency in establishing national opera. He feels that the women's vote may mean much to this worthy cause.

Violet Thorpe, a young violinist, recently created a favorable impression at her first recital in London.

Hamilton Hart's father is dead in Ireland. For forty years organist and choirmaster of Hillsborough Parish Church, he had long exerted his influence for the good of music in the North of Ireland. A pupil of Sir Robert Stewart, Harty pere was the only teacher of his son.

From Buenos Ayres comes a report of the successful production of a new opera, "Jacquerie," by Gino Marinuzzi, an Italian. It was he who composed a requiem mass upon the assassination of the King of Italy in 1900. Later his opera, "Barbarina," was produced in his native town, Palermo. Now a director at the Conservatory of Bologna, Marinuzzi conducted performances of opera in Madrid and for three seasons at the Opera Comique.

MEMBERS OF METROPOLITAN AND CHICAGO OPERA COMPANIES WHO SING THIS WEEK



Variety in Fourth Week of Chicago Company's Season

Another "Crispino" and the Operatic Debut of Dorothy Jardon

Variety will mark the fourth week of the Chicago Opera Company's repertoire at the Lexington Theatre, with but one repetition from the preceding three weeks.

"Crispino e la Comare," by the brothers Ricci, which was included in the Chicago repertoire this season for Mme. Galli-Curci, will be sung to-morrow night, with Vittorio Trevisan as Crispino, Riccardo Stracciari as Fabrizio, Vittorio Arimondi as Mirabolano, William Rogerson, a young Chicagoan, who will make his New York debut in the tenor role of Count del Fiore; Constantin Nicolay as Caparotta, Maria Claessens as La Comare, Lodovico Oliviero as Bertolo and Cleofonte Campanini conducting.

Francesca Peralta will return to the cast Tuesday night for the first time this season as Leonora in "Il Trovatore," with Alessandro Dolei as Manrico, Giacomo Rimini as Count di Luna, Cyrena Van Gordon as Azucena, Virgilio Lazzari as Ferrando, Emma Noe as Inez, Octave Dua as Ruiz and Giorgio Polacco conductor.

The only repetition of the week, "Thais," will be given Wednesday night, with Mary Garden and the same cast which appeared during the opening week of the season.

Meyerbeer's "Dinorah," which was introduced as a revival here last year by Mr. Campanini's company, will be the opera on Thursday night, with Mme. Galli-Curci again in the title role, and Octave Dua, Giacomo Rimini, Virgilio Lazzari, Carolina Lazzari and others. Mr. Campanini will conduct.

Giordano's "Fedora," which was presented in New York first in 1906 and again the following season, will be revived Friday night. Dorothy Jardon, a young American soprano who has been heard only in lighter musical performances and as a follower of Cadman, whose songs she has featured in concert and vaudeville, will make her grand opera debut as Fedora. Alessandro Dolei will be the Loris, Riccardo Stracciari the Siries, Marguerite Namara the Olga, Gustave Huberdeau the Greek and Constantin Nicolay the Lorcek. Mr. Polacco will conduct.

Massenet's "Werther" will be revived on Saturday afternoon, with John O'Sullivan in the title part, Irene Pavloska as Charlotte, Gustave Huberdeau as the Bailiff, Myrna Sharlow as Sophia, Alfred Maguenat as Albert, Desire Defrere as Schmidt, and Octave Dua as Johann, with Louis Hasselmanns conducting.

The Saturday night bill will be "Carmen," with Mary Garden as Carmen, Charles Fontaine as José, Georges Baklanoff as Escamillo and Myrna Sharlow as Micaela. Marcel Charlier will conduct.

A Busy Week at The Metropolitan

Buying an Operatic Cat in the Bag

In an interview published in The Tribune more than two weeks ago George Prokofieff informed the public that Mr. Campanini had invited him to compose an opera for the Chicago Opera Company. The information has now been officially confirmed by the publicity department of the company, which lays stress upon the circumstance that this is "one of the few times when an opera has been ordered for production without a preliminary hearing or examination of the beginnings of the score." Mr. Prokofieff is said to have written the libretto of the opera in Russian, but it is to be performed in a French version. Its title is "L'Amour des Trois Oranges," and it is based upon a satiric comedy by Carlo Gozzi, which in turn was founded upon an old Italian fairy tale. The play was first performed in Venice in 1761, and was popular for many years. Mr. Prokofieff has made extensive changes in the story, as much of the satiric concerned contemporary figures in the musical and political life of the period.

The opera will consist of a prologue and ten short scenes, divided into four acts. Although he has written several other operas, this will probably be Mr. Prokofieff's first to be staged. His former operatic work, "The Gambler," based upon a novel by Dostoevsky, is said to have been accepted by the imperial theatre of Petrograd and Moscow and was about to be produced at the former, when the tide of Bolshevism prevented and swept its premiere into the indefinite future.

Douglas Fairbanks Entertains

William McAdoo liked the Wild West show which was staged for his benefit recently by Douglas Fairbanks in the hills of Hollywood, and we can prove it. Bennie Zeidman said so, and here is what he said:

"The finest exhibition of horsemanship I have ever seen," said William G. McAdoo last week, after witnessing the thrilling Wild West show staged especially for his entertainment by Douglas Fairbanks. He was accompanied by his wife, the daughter of President Wilson; Frank Crane, the actor and 'stage daddy' of Fairbanks; Mrs. George Franklin and Mrs. Joseph P. Cotton, after having been the guests of Mr. Fairbanks at his Beverly Hills residence.

"Mr. McAdoo's excitement at getting a glimpse of the real West was genuine. Mrs. McAdoo was enthusiastic, and both took an active part in congratulating the various rodeo stars who rode bucking horses and threw steers for their benefit."

Changes in the Repertoire of the Chicago Company

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Other changes in the repertoire of the week are as follows: Tuesday evening, "Werther," instead of "Il Trovatore"; Saturday matinee, "Madame Butterfly," instead of "Werther," and Saturday evening, "Il Trovatore," instead of "Carmen." The casts will remain unchanged.

Park Theatre

The revival of "Robin Hood" by the Society of American Singers is crowding the Park Theatre at every performance. Wednesday matinees will be added, beginning this week, to accommodate the increased demand for tickets. The cast remains unchanged. It is evident that in spite of nearly thirty years of fame, besides the 4,250 performances by the Bostonians and countless other presentations in this country, England and Australia, "Robin Hood" is still a name to conjure with.

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Paderewski, the Patriot

By H. E. Krehbiel

It has been supposed on this side of the ocean that Mr. Paderewski had been appointed Prime Minister of a provisional government of a provisional Poland. But "The London Times" of January 18 would appear to have announced that he has been elected President of Poland. Commenting on the pianist's entry into politics "The Musical Times," of London, says:

"Musicians will view the fact with mingled feelings. Poland's gain is music's loss. Will Paderewski find time to compose the finale to his B minor symphony? The work was produced ten years ago by the Boston Orchestra, and played at Queen's Hall by the London Symphony Orchestra, under Richter, in November, 1909. It dealt with the political troubles of Poland, and broke off at the third movement, the composer having deferred the writing of the finale—a song of triumph—until his country was free. As patriot, Paderewski makes a better figure than Chopin. The latter was at Vienna when Poland began one of her struggles for freedom. Chopin's companion, Woyciechowski, hurried home, but Chopin hesitated, and finally contented himself with expressing his devotion to his country in the tremendous C minor étude."

This is not in accord with the statement made by Mr. Paderewski when the symphony received its first performance in Boston. The Tribune's musical reviewer, who was present on the occasion (it was on February 12, 1909), reported that by the composer's own confession he had in the work paid tribute to his native land and set a memorial of the revolution of 1863-'64. The missing movement was not a finale, but a scherzo—"The uprising and its awful outcome," said H. E. K. in his telegraphic report, "receive musical delineation in the final movement, which is frankly programmatic; but there is also a hymning of Poland's heroic period in the first movement and of the musical nature of the Polish people in the second. There are only three movements in the symphony at present, but a fourth movement, which, it is to be supposed, will body forth the happy side of the Polish nature, since it is to be scherzo, will be added when Mr. Paderewski takes the symphony in hand again."

Nevertheless, we can imagine that if Mr. Paderewski's patriotic heart's desires are realized, and if he ever takes up the symphony again, he will write a new finale. Nine-tenths of the work is freighted with melancholy. "It tells of a great, corroding longing," said our reports ten years ago, "of vain effort and hope, which never shines resplendent, but appears even at the end as only a flickering light. In the last movement the voice of the people, striving to throw off the yoke of oppression, finds expression in the frequent recurrence of a suggestion of the Polish national hymn, 'Poland is not yet lost,' but the suggestion remains only a suggestion. The device has been used by other composers in

treating patriotic and political themes—by Liszt in his "Robespierre" overture, by Tschakowsky in his "1812"—but generally there is a swelling proclamation of the typical hymn at the end. Mr. Paderewski has no consolation which he can hymn; his song is only of longing still cherished and pride unbroken. To me at a first hearing the most moving portions of the music were the buoyant proclamations of the second theme in the first movement, which seemed to tell of ancient glories, and a heart-searching serenity in the last movement after the din of a lost battle and before a digress for the heroic deed. . . . (The last movement) might bear a super-scription like Tschakowsky's overture already mentioned; 'Poland: 1863' might have been its title. It is a delineation of the stirrings of popular unrest, the unheeded admonitions of wise conservatism, of warfare begun with heedless daring and enthusiasm, of defeat and lamentation ending with a glimmer of hope."

Bowery Mission Concert

Eleanor Patterson, contralto, assisted by Anna Milch, violinist, will give a concert at the Bowery Mission on Tuesday evening. The program will include songs by Ole Spies, Del Riego, Cadman, Lieurance, Woodford-Flinden, Turner-Maley and others, and violin pieces by Mendelssohn, Chopin, Kreisler and other composers.

Alice Joyce, Jr., Disapproves Of Mamma's Profession

Henrik Ibsen's famous character asked for the sun. But little Alice Joyce, the three-year-old daughter of the Vitagraph star, only wanted a college education. The new Alice Joyce picture, "The Girl Without a Heart," was being filmed on the Columbia campus last week. When the star returned to her car to rest she was warmly greeted by her mother and rosy daughter.

"Do you want to be a movie star?" asked Miss Joyce of the child, but little Alice's attention was being diverted by two girl students entering Barnard College across the street. They had books under their arms and wore the conventional horn-rimmed eye-glasses.

"No! No!" cried the precocious daughter, pointing toward the college building. "I wanna book!"

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In "Robin Hood," at the Park Theatre

Concert Will Be Given By Institute of Musical Art

The Institute of Musical Art will give a concert at Aeolian Hall next Saturday evening at 8:15. The programme will be as follows: First Movement from Symphony No. 7. A major Beethoven Orchestra of the Institute. Concerto for Violin Paganini Joseph Fuco. Chorus for Women's Voices. Choral Class of the Institute. "Le Rouet d'Orphée" Saint-Saëns Orchestra of the Institute. "Les Djinns" for piano and orchestra, Cesar Franck Arthur Klein. "Les Préludes" Liszt Orchestra of the Institute.

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