

"L'AMORE MEDICO" AT METROPOLITAN

New Opera Buffa by Wolf-Ferrari Proves to Be Enjoyable. MUSIC FULL OF SPIRIT The Comedy Treated With Ingenuity, Fancy and Infectious Humor.

A Scene From "L'Amore Medico" and the Principal Singers



MR. PINI-CORSI.

MISS BORI AND MR. CRISTALLI.

"L'Amore Medico"—At the Metropolitan Opera House. Arnolfo.....Antonio Pini-Corsi Lucinda.....Lucia Bori Lisetta.....Miss Cristalli Ciccio.....Bella Altieri Tomaso.....Leon Rothier Desdemonda.....Andrea de Saguroia Marcellina.....Angelo Bada Natario.....Paolo Ananini

"L'Amore Medico," a musical comedy in two acts, the book by Enrico Goltzsch and lyrics by Moliere and the music by Ermanno Wolf-Ferrari, was performed at the Metropolitan Opera House last evening for the first time in this country. The work being insufficient to occupy the entire evening Victor Herbert's "Madelaine" succeeded it. This arrangement was convenient for that considerable number of persons who desire to depart before the final curtain, but was inconvenient for those who are reluctant to arrive early in a theatre.

Although described as a musical comedy this new work is correctly entered in the annals of Italian opera buffa. It is a reconstruction of Moliere's comedy ballad, for which Lully made music and which was produced before the King at Versailles in mid-September, 1655. The French themselves have made at least two experiments at translating Moliere's comedy into opera. The first was that of Berton, which was produced at the Theatre Francaise in Nice in April, 1867. The second had text by Charles Monselet and music by Ferdinand Hérold, and was given at the Opera Comique, Paris, on December 20, 1880. It followed Moliere's comedy closely in construction and had some pleasing if not highly distinguished music.

The temptation to enter upon a long and learned essay on the comedies of Moliere, the special type of character represented by the *spanarelle* and the peculiar union of music and play found in the *comedy ballad* must be resisted. Nevertheless a few words of reminder are essential to a brief review of Wolf-Ferrari's charming little work.

To Gratify King's Taste.

To gratify the taste of Louis XIV., who though there was no tanko was infatuated with dancing and loved to figure in court ballets, Moliere undertook the creation of works of this type. The older court ballets were stilted and heavy, dealing with mythologic stories, Venus, Minerva, the Graces, satyrs and other kindred folk. Moliere's comedies in such a way that they were consistent little plays, but permitted the introduction of dances and songs growing easily out of the action and quite as easily dissociated from it. "Marriage Forces," for instance, is a one-act comedy, but as arranged for ballet became three acts.

Lully was Moliere's collaborator in preparing comedy ballets for the insatiable Louis. Since these comedy ballets contained airs resembling the "airs de cour" of the time, choruses, dances and processions, the only link wanting to complete the chain of operatic apparatus was the recitative, and this entered the organism when Moliere, Lully and the poet Guillet created the singular tragedy ballet "Psyché," a compound of opera and heroic dancing.

Subsequently Quinault became Lully's librettist and with his stately declamation, which Lully set as orchestrated recitative, provided the finishing element in French grand opera. Since, then, the comedy ballet set as close to comic opera the transformation made by later composers like Poiss was not strained, and the same thing is true of the reconstruction accomplished by Goltzsch and Wolf-Ferrari.

Dramatic Paris Retained.

They have retained all the dramatic incidents of the original and have commingled them to us through the medium of song and instrumentally accompanied action. The dance is retained in the close of the second act, where it takes a natural place as a feature of the wedding festivities. The recitative of the original comedy remains, though *spanarelle's* name is changed to *Arnolfo*. This was done doubtless purposely to free the old man from association with so many other characters of Moliere. Those who are familiar with the work of the French dramatist know that *spanarelle* is a convenient name for all the middle aged or old men who are outwitted by younger, more energetic characters. *Don Pausanias*, for example, would all have been *spanarelle* if Moliere had written the comedies, and customarily he would have played the roles himself. In the opera, however, now *Arnolfo*, is an old and dotting father who does not wish his daughter to be taken away from him by a lover. Of course she has seen a youth and is sick with love. The father tries in vain to comfort her. Putting new clothes, toys, trinkets, all are in vain. Then that time honored character the resourceful maid, this time Lisetta by name, tells the father that she is his daughter's lover. Father, roused and serving maid storms. In father's absence lover sines languishingly behind garden wall. Daughter *Lucinda* distracted, *Lisetta* cries, "To bed! I have a plan. My father returns and is told that daughter is dangerously ill. Great excitement. Send for all the doctors. Four arrive. End of Act I.

Satire on Doctors.

In Act II, doctors consult and disagree. Here we must bear in mind Moliere's distrust of doctors. He satirized them whenever he had a chance. The King once said to him, "How do you get on with your own doctor?" He answered, "Sir, he visits me; we talk together; he prescribes medicines; I do not take them, and I get well." The four doctors quarrel. They take their fees and depart. Father realizes that he is no better off than before. *Lucinda* says, "Let me bring the right doctor. My father's lover, disguised as a doctor, has got up a sudden. Doctor tells father she is victim of hallucination, to wit that she must be married. Simple enough. Let's pretend to marry her, well, to the doctor, since he is on the spot. Father delighted. Wedding. The married couple departs. Father—the outwitted *spanarelle*—learns that it is no joke. End of opera.

Out of this slight material Wolf-Ferrari has made an opera buffa of real beauty, of airy and playful humor, of infectious workmanship. Whether the opera was made up of high lights to excite the general admiration of the public cannot be asserted with any degree of certainty. Fortunately the chronicler need not concern himself about this. His duty is complete when he has set forth the characteristics of the work and invited

music lovers to the dainty feast provided by the composer.

The score is largely developed from delineative theater, but these are not numerous, not used laboriously, nor worked into a complete musical web. There is much freely written music and the entire opera strikes the attentive listener as being written with consummate ease and mastery of material. There is a fundamental four cornered theme representative of *Arnolfo*, the father, and his agency in the action of the story. Delightfully contrasted with this is a theme in triple rhythm representing the opposing agency, that of the young *Ciccio's* love. This latter theme is derivative, though not a close imitation of the other.

Has Languishing Theme.

The heroine, *Lucinda*, has a languishing theme which expresses well her love sickness, her sentimental melancholy. The music sung by the chorus, which at the rising of the curtain is bewailing the affliction of *Lucinda*, is utilized later in a suggestive manner, though its treatment is not made obtrusive. The composer employs his themes sometimes as the roof of extended musical proclamations, which become complete numbers in themselves.

Nothing could be more delightful than his management of this method in the delicious scherzando scene which follows the attempt of *Arnolfo* to soothe his daughter by singing to her a lullaby. The cradle song is created from the *Arnolfo* theme with captivating florid cadences in the manner of the troubadour music. Then servants enter with toys and trinkets, including a music box. A spirited counterpoint embroiders the *Arnolfo* theme, which is enchanting as sung by the music box, imitated in the orchestra by piccolo, celesta and harp. The fluency, grace, apparent unpremeditation and elegant instrumental tinting of this scene proclaim Wolf-Ferrari a master of construction.

But the attractions of the work do not consist wholly in skilful designs. There are numerous lovely passages for the voices. The serenade of *Ciccio* behind the scenes in Act I, expands into a graceful trio. The entrance air of *Lucinda* is full of melody. The riotous ensemble near the end of the act is a capital piece of work and brimming with comic spirit. The quartet of the doctors in the second act is a masterpiece of humor and the addition of the voice of *Lisetta* gives a quintet of comic effect.

The dialogue leading up to the entrance of *Lucinda* in Act II, is excellently made, and the ensuing scene, in which *Arnolfo*, *Lisetta*, *Ciccio* and the heroine figure, is cleverly constructed so as to reach its climax in a really beautiful quartet. Further dialogue leads to a second quartet, this time swift and merry, to contrast with the more serious character of the first. The movement of the music from this to the end of the act is inspiring, and the finale is written with exuberant gaiety.

It is indisputable that there are no themes which will impress themselves upon the hearer as of the first magnitude, but their fitness for their purposes and their admirable contrasts in character, together with the readiness with which they lend themselves to the composer's method

of building an operatic score, are perfect. The vocal writing is facile, fecund in opportunities for the display of good singing and grateful to the ear. Furthermore Wolf-Ferrari has accomplished excellent results in the department of musical characterization, which is one of the essential ingredients of opera buffa. The orchestration is masterly throughout. There are few forties in the score, and these are made discreetly. The clarity of the orchestral song is paired with its infinite variety of combinations, all having clear purpose and making their points directly.

Every lover of finish in art will get much joy from this work. It has perhaps two or three dull movements and some reminiscent phrases, but how many operas have not? To create a work so replete with communicative grace, with rollicking merriment, which never sinks to vulgarity, with melody which, if not ravishing, is certainly lovely and always aristocratic, is to have placed the composer under a debt of gratitude. Those who felt that Wolf-Ferrari was not himself in "The Jewels of the Madonna" will recognize here the bounteous gifts which enriched the stage with "The Secret of Suzanne" and "Le Donne Curiose."

The work has been produced in the admirable manner which we now expect as a matter of course at the Metropolitan Opera House. The material part of the representation offers two handsome and well planned scenes and rich costuming. The action has been well arranged and moves with celerity and unctiveness. The musical interpretation, confided to Arturo Toscanini, is ideal. Operagoers do not need to be told that Mr. Toscanini is a master of delicate touch and that scores calling for exquisite clarity and refinement of delivery become as sparkling crystal in his hands. Nothing of beauty or grace or humor escapes in the interpretation of "L'Amore Medico."

The singers are all fully equal to the tasks assigned to them. The best roles in the opera are the comic ones, *Arnolfo* and *Lisetta*. Mr. Pini-Corsi impersonated the father with the art of an experienced buffo and without burlesquing it in the least. Miss Altieri's *Lisetta* is

the best thing she has done in many long moons for she sang it well and acted it with ebullient vivacity. Miss Bori was most charming as *Lucinda* and by the beauty of her tones, the freedom and grace of her delivery and the elegance of her style again gave joy to all who know good singing. Mr. Cristalli was commendable as *Ciccio*, while as the four doctors Messrs. Rothier, De Saguroia, Bada and Leonhart were excellent. The chorus furnished the other element of merit to a well rounded performance. The new opera was followed by Victor Herbert's "Madelaine," which was presented with the regular cast.

In the Boxes and Stalls.

Mr. and Mrs. J. Fred Tams and Bertram Cruger were with Mr. and Mrs. Stephen H. Olin in W. K. Vanderbilt's box. Mr. and Mrs. Harris C. Fainstocck's guests were Dr. and Mrs. Austin Flint, Jr. and Mr. and Mrs. Clinton Gilbert. Dr. and Mrs. Preston P. Satterwhite and Miss Lucile Thornton were with Mr. and Mrs. E. Reeve Merritt. Mr. and Mrs. Garrett B. Kip, Miss Mary Cutting Cumneck and George B. Wagstaff were with Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Wagstaff, Jr.

Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Iselin were with Mr. and Mrs. De Laney Kountze, and Mr. and Mrs. E. Francis Hyde's guests were Mrs. Joseph Ferris Simmons and Mrs. Charles W. Armour. Mr. and Mrs. David Wagstaff's guests were Mr. and Mrs. Allen G. Wellman, Miss Eugenie Philbin and Arthur Jones. Among others in the audience were Mrs. P. Cooper Hewitt, Mr. and Mrs. W. Seward Webb, Jr., Mrs. Gouverneur Kortright, Gen. and Mrs. Howard Carroll, Miss Caranati Carroll, Miss Anne Fensie Paulding, Mrs. J. Russell Soley, W. Rhinelandier Stewart, Major G. Creighton Webb, Miss Leary, Mr. and Mrs. Lewis B. Gawtry, Miss Curtise Alexander, J. D. Wolf Cutting, Shipley Jones, Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Guggenheim, Mr. and Mrs. Harold Sands, Miss Janet Fish and Charles E. Sampson.

\$33,000 ALIMONY FOR NANCE GWYN URGED

Referee Favors Dancer in Suit Against Art Dealer for Divorce.

Nance Gwyn, the dancer, whose real name is Nance Fabia Williams, will get \$33,000 alimony from Charles Romer Williams, member of the well known art firm of Thomas Agnew & Sons of London, if a referee's report filed with Supreme Court Justice Greenbaum yesterday in Mrs. Williams's suit for divorce is confirmed and a decree is awarded to the dancer. The defendant, who is the fourth husband of the actress, married her at Paterson, N. J., on February 23, 1911. Mrs. Williams testified that her husband abandoned her while they were travelling in Spain, Mrs. Williams filed her divorce suit last year. The referee found that Williams had been guilty of improper conduct with Miss Elsie Mitchell in July, 1912, in an apartment at Rue Messine, Paris, and in New York the same year. Mr. Williams was called to testify as to his income. He said he had a drawing account of \$10,000 a year and a percentage of the profits. The stipulation by which Williams agreed to give the plaintiff \$33,000 alimony stated that this settlement was made "to avoid publicity." When Mrs. Williams filed her divorce suit she said: "A Hindu soothsayer in Hongkong once told me I would have seven husbands. Anyway, I don't feel that I know man thoroughly yet."

NEW CASE OF SMALLPOX FOUND.

Negro III Nine Days in House Containing Thirty Families. It was announced at the Health Department yesterday that another smallpox case had been reported. The patient was Charles Payne, a negro waiter of 31 West 123d street. He had been ill for nine days. The health officers say Payne's illness has no connection with other cases recently recorded. In the house with Payne were thirty families, composed of 225 persons. Vaccinations have been ordered.

WIFE HELPS FREE "MASHER."

Sentence Suspended in Case of Orlando, Accused by Girl. Sentence was suspended last night in the case of Alfred Orlando, landing agent for the Pierce Steamship Company, who was accused before Magistrate Marsh in the Night Court of hugging Miss Esther Grossman in a subway train. Orlando's wife appeared in court and throwing her arms around her husband's neck cried: "I do not believe you did it. I think it is all a lie."

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