

Beautiful, Finished, Reposeful Singing Most Admired and Enjoyed

If Artists Would Cease to Shriek the Public Would Love to Hear Them.

By W. J. HENDERSON.

WITH the approaching close of the season of opera at the Metropolitan the minds of thoughtful lovers and students of music might well turn to the present state of the art of singing. In all times since the first of the modern world certain ideals have prevailed. These ideals have not possessed an existence separate from the general trend of human thought. Art is a product of the mind of man and it is inevitably fashioned by the general habit of that mind in any period.

The first centuries of musical art were the first centuries of the Christian church, and since that divine institution contemplated art only as an instrument of worship, instrumental music was ignored and song was developed in such forms as were suitable to the expression of religious thought. The solemn, simple and beautiful Roman chant was the one product of musical art known and cultivated for several centuries.

Despite the fall of Greece her intellectual influence continued to exert itself long after she herself had ceased to be a factor in affairs of the world. Rome's rude adaptation of her mythology, her literary methods and her art did not entirely obliterate their character, and indeed the finest scholarship of Rome always gave some of its best effort to the study of Grecian models. Hence even before the Renaissance something of the sculptured repose and pure beauty of line remained in the art of Rome, and especially in her music, which had based itself on scales drawn from the Greek sources.

The study of the chant itself led to investigation of the method of singing it. The result was the establishment of certain traditional methods of formation of a general style, of which the chief elements were smoothness, elegance and gentleness of feeling. The introduction of undulating passages of character was made without any desire for ostentation or ornamentation, nor was there any movement toward what we regard as brilliancy. Elegance and repose were preserved.

Lyrical Drama Appears.

When the infant lyric drama appeared in Italy the style of singing differed in no essential respect from that employed in the church. A singer trained for the Pagan chapel was competent to become an operatic singer. For a long flowing phrase of Monteverdi, the stately cantabile recitative of the stile parante, offered no difficulties. All the evidence available now points to the conclusion that during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the cosmopolitan of Italy, at first limited to the nobility and afterward including a large public, demanded of singers nothing but refinement and power and what we call brilliancy till the closing years of that cycle, when the delivery of florid music began to show something of the extravagance and sty which now are regarded as its principal characteristics. But loudness still remained exceptional. There were a few robust voices, such as the celebrated tenor, Filanti, which suggested to composers the making of airs suited to their exhibition. Filanti was famous for his "trumpet obbligato," somewhat similar to those later written by Bach. But beauty, clarity, limpidity of tone and perfection of finish continued to be the principal assets of famous operatic artists in the day of Handel. Certainly no one can suspect that when Mozart composed the tenor music in "Don Giovanni" and "The Magic Flute," he had in mind any singers capable of such pealing tours de force as our tenors give us.

The growth of the orchestra and the development of orchestral delineation in opera undoubtedly had much to do with the rise of the big tone habit, which was fully displayed in the early years of the last century. The success of Mozart and Handel do not call for numerous high B flats, but since the tenor finally supplanted the male soprano as the impersonator of operatic heroes early in the nineteenth century, the soaring of the masculine tone into the upper regions and the clarion challenge of its astonishing power have excited the sensibilities of opera-goers.

Screamers and Singers.

Yet there has been no time when beautiful, finished and reposeful singing has failed to evoke enthusiastic approval. It does so at the moment it is heard. The public does not create its own demands in music. It fashions its taste upon that of the artists. If singers would cease to believe and shriek the public would love to hear them sing. But it is easier to be a screamer than a singer. To be the latter one must study. The writer of these lines was present at the first of the series of "Ottello" at the Lyceum Theatre in London. The managing editor of the London edition of THE NEW YORK HERALD was an old friend and asked the writer to accompany him to the "Ottello" production. Tamagno, Maurel and the whole Scala cast, except the *Desdemona*; Facco, the conductor; the Scala orchestra and chorus had been taken to London to repeat as nearly as possible the original Italian production. Tamagno's pealing tones created the usual enthusiasm, but nothing the tenor accomplished in the course of the evening aroused such plaudits as Maurel's delivery of the story of *Cassio's* dream, sung almost in a whisper into the ear of the tortured Iago. It was a great act of restraint and finished art and the audience recognized it.

A much later illustration and one within the memory of young singers was Clement's singing of the "rest" of "Manon." Surely there was no trumpet tone, no pompous proclamation of majesty, no vociferous declamation of passion, and yet each day, he was always applauded the number to the echo.

The one thing that often fails in the present moment is pure, simple singing in the field of quiet moderation. Doubtless the aim of the Metropolitan Opera House has some relation to this. Points perhaps have to be driven home in order to go anywhere at all. But here again the memories of the past.

Just de Rossi's matchless delivery of the narrative of *Lehngren's* in the final scene. In repose this performance was well-nigh perfect. Yet old opera-goers will tell you that the memory of it has never left them and that they still recollect it as one of the finest examples of vocal eloquence that ever came to their attention.

Mr. Gigli's Artistic Singing.

But there is a lesson for all still nearer to us. Mr. Caruso (whom the gods protect) is recovering from a long and serious illness. He has been greatly weakened. Meanwhile other singers have had to do what they could to fill his place. What tenor has attracted the largest amount of public favor in the course of the season has rapidly nearing its end? We shall undoubtedly have to admit that it was Mr. Gigli, who does not emit clarion tones for the simple reason that he has not any, and who



PERCY GRAINGER, MUSIC WEEK PIANO SOLOIST AT THE CAPITOL.

MISS ELENORE ALTMAN IN PIANO RECITAL, AEOLIAN HALL.

CAMILIERI, FOUNDER AND LEADER OF PEOPLES LIBERTY CHORUS IN MUSIC WEEK CELEBRATIONS.

MISS ALICIA BROWN IN "LOUISE" AT THE METROPOLITAN.

MISS KATY BEALE IN RECITAL, AEOLIAN HALL.

has been vain enough to cultivate a mellow mezzo voice to be employed as an asset easily substituted for sheer noise.

Miss Lucrezia Bori is not one of the loud singers. She never had a huge voice and now she is obliged to be discreet in the treatment of her vocal organ. Nevertheless there has not been greater enthusiasm in the Metropolitan Opera House in the course of this season than at recent performances of Boheme, in which these two artists sang together.

The truth is that there are two parties among opera-goers. One dearly loves everything loud, coarse, brutal, aggressive in vocal delivery and shouts itself hoarse in expressing approval. The other values all that is elegant, finished, serenely and chastely beautiful. This party espines its applause to the clapping of hands and therefore appears to be outnumbered by the lovers of strenuous singing.

It is announced that New York's Music Week is here. Some observant persons have supposed that New York and already enjoyed thirty music weeks crowded with incidents of interest. But we are told that this particular week is intended to focus the consciousness of the entire community on music.

Well, by this time it needs focusing, of course.

GALA OPERA NIGHT FOR PRINCE OF MONACO

Special Bill Arranged for Next Friday Evening.

The Metropolitan Opera House is to be the scene of a gala performance in its closing week, on Friday, April 23, a special bill will be presented in honor of the Prince of Monaco. The performance will consist of scenes from four different operas instead of "The Barber of Seville," originally announced. The bill in detail will be as follows: The second act of "The Barber of Seville," with Mmes. Chase and Borat; the first act of "Tosca," with Mmes. Muzio and Messrs. Haddock and De Luca; the first act of "Tosca," with Mmes. Muzio and Messrs. Haddock and De Luca; the first act of "Tosca," with Mmes. Muzio and Messrs. Haddock and De Luca.

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Operas at Metropolitan

LAST WEEK.

MONDAY.

Matinee—"Aida," with Mmes. Muzio and Amato. Evening—"Carmen," with Mmes. Farrar and Bori. Messrs. Martinielli and De Luca.

WEDNESDAY.

"Andrea Chénier," with Mmes. Muzio, Messrs. Gigli and Danise.

THURSDAY.

"Zaza," with Miss Farrar, Messrs. Cimoli and De Luca.

FRIDAY.

Matinee—"La Bohème," with Mmes. Bori and Delaunoy, Messrs. Gigli and Scotti. Evening—"Il Barbiere di Siviglia," act 2, with Scotti, Bori and Delaunoy, Messrs. Gigli and De Luca; "Boris Godunoff," coronation scene, with Mr. Didur and chorus; "Tosca," with Mmes. Muzio, Messrs. Haddock and Scotti; "Samson et Dalila," Bacchanale.

SATURDAY.

Matinee—"Louise," with Miss Farrar, Messrs. Harold and Rothier. Evening—"Lohengrin," with Mmes. Easton and Clausen, Messrs. Kingston and Whitehill.

Seville," with Mmes. Chase and Borat.

The coronation scene from "Boris Godunoff," act 2, with Scotti, Bori and Delaunoy, Messrs. Gigli and De Luca; the entire chorus, Mr. Papi conducting.

The first act of "Tosca," with Mmes. Muzio and Messrs. Haddock and De Luca; the first act of "Tosca," with Mmes. Muzio and Messrs. Haddock and De Luca.

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Concert Calendar

TO-DAY.

Carnegie Hall, 3, Oseip Gabriellovi, pianist; Aeolian Hall, 3, Young Men's Symphony Orchestra; Carnegie Hall, 8:15, Irish Musical Society, Christian Kriens, conductor; Metropolitan Opera House, 8:30, Verdi-Puccini-Mascagni programme by operatic singers.

MONDAY.

Carnegie Hall, 8:15, National Symphony Orchestra; Aeolian Hall, 3, Miss Kitty Beale, song recital; Aeolian Hall, 8:15, Miss Elenore Altman, pianist; Town Hall, 8:15, Alfred Boswell, pianist.

TUESDAY.

Aeolian Hall, 8:15, Beethoven Association; Town Hall, 8:15, Miss Elenore Altman, pianist; Town Hall, 3, Miss Ellen Beason, soprano; Town Hall, 8:15, Verdi-Puccini-Mascagni programme by operatic singers.

WEDNESDAY.</