

The Washington Times Music Page For Young and Old Music Lovers

All-American Opera Prima Donna Offers Secrets of Success

By JESSIE MacBRIDE.

"An all-American prima donna, Miss Charlebois?" "Yes, that is my real name. Both parents were French, but I was born in San Francisco."

Sofia Charlebois, who sings Nedda in "Pagliacci" this evening with the San Carlo Grand Opera Company, belongs to the rather limited number of Americans in grand opera today. She very interestingly told the writer in a social chat at the Shoreham some few of the requisites that must go into the making of American grand opera stars if we are to take our place in the opera world.

"Opera needs," Miss Charlebois, who in private life is Mrs. Fortune Gallo, speaks both as prima donna and as wife of the impresario—a role of diplomat joined to that of opera star.

"For Fortune Gallo carries a very large corps of artists to enable him to stage opera every day throughout a season."

"One must have voice, looks to fit your roles, interpretation," Miss Charlebois counted them out on her fingers, reflectively, "but above all, in a company such as ours, the singer must have 'staying power.' The opera singer who succeeds must be reliable, which means that you cannot strain your voice and sing three or more roles a week."

"Opera in America," Miss Charlebois, who in private life is Mrs. Fortune Gallo, speaks both as prima donna and as wife of the impresario—a role of diplomat joined to that of opera star.

"But you Americans demand finish in your opera. The voice alone does not satisfy you as it does in Italy." "You are not American trained then?" Miss Charlebois was asked.

"So, I received much of my opera training in Italy." "What do you think are our prospects for the future?" "Ah, that is a problem. American life is so full it makes one scatter his powers. In Italy, when I was studying, I spent the morning with my first teacher, then there was lunch, and for an hour in the afternoon there was the lesson with my more advanced teacher. There was nothing else, no tea, and here the prima donna smiled at though confessing a personal weakness, "no movies."

"But how America has grown in musical appreciation! So in love for art she does not find us half bad."

"That is a very serious obstacle, however, that the wife of Fortune Gallo needs must understand from a working standpoint."

"There must be concentration, there must be freshness in body and voice, if a young singer is to become an opera star. Think of the sheer mental grasp of a repertory!"

HER NEDDA. Miss Charlebois studied her role of Nedda with the composer himself. Leoncavallo gave her his personal ideas as to the real character of this famous role.

"Yet Leoncavallo gave his Nedda very little opportunity," Miss Charlebois commented. "At her very best moment, in her best aria, he has the clown making faces behind her and taking the attention of the audience away from her."

In Italy it was Sibella who taught Sofia Charlebois much of the finish of her art, the Sibella whom we know as composer of delightful songs, and who was the teacher also of Lucresia Bori, who is singing so beautifully at the Metropolitan this season.

"Your repertory?" "French opera, chiefly. My father was a singer, a Catholic church singer only, not opera, but it gave me the atmosphere at home. And then came some years in Europe."

"The glimpse behind the scenes, in what has brought out an opera singer, usually brings out that all-important fact of musical environment."

SOPIA CHARLEBOIS as Nedda in "Pagliacci," who sings the lyric soprano with the San Carlo Grand Opera Company tonight at Poli's. Miss Charlebois is, in private life, Mme. Fortune Gallo.



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MUST KNOW OPERA. "To love opera, one must know opera and hear it often. We do feel we are helping to make America musical," she added naively.

Miss Charlebois' roles are the lyric ones. She is fond of "Faust," she should make a most attractive Marguerite with her mobile face and large expressive eyes. Then "Juliet," "Manon," she regrets that "Elisir d'Amore" of Donizetti is not sung oftener, and Bizet's "Pearl Fishers."

"Can one study on tour, Miss Charlebois?" "An ambitious person can. Not of course with short stays in a city, out with a two or three weeks' stay, it is possible to coach with the opera director."

"And so the background of an artist's life loomed large and exacting, with work, work, work."

"When you are exacting in your criticisms," she added, "you must realize that we are human beings, sometimes tired, sometimes not at our best. But we try always to give, sincerely, our contribution to art."

ADVICE TO BEGINNERS. Today Washington has a brief glimpse of the music drama that is the art of the opera. The wife of Fortune Gallo, herself an artist who has succeeded, makes one feel with increasing understanding the humanity that lies beneath the great organization of a touring opera company.

Fortune Gallo brings a tremendous aggregation for grand opera at popular prices. Because opera is in the making, here in Washington, his wife very graciously forgot her personal story and has given some sterling advice that should serve our embryo stars.

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MAX PUGATSKY, violinist, who announces a recital here for early autumn. Mr. Pugatsky is well known as second violinist with the National String Quartet. He has been soloist in New York with the Beethoven Society, the International Art Society, and in recital at the Hotel Astor.



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AMONG MUSICIANS

MRS. HOWE AND RUSS SYMPHONY. Mary Carlisle Howe, pianist, well known to Washington as Mrs. Walter Bruce Howe, left yesterday for a concert tour with the Russian Symphony Orchestra, directed by Alexander Schuler. Mrs. Howe will play two piano programs with Anne Hull, of Baltimore, with whom she was heard in two-piano recital here last winter. The itinerary is as follows: April 28, Richmond, Va.; April 29, Raleigh, N. C.; April 30, Durham, N. C.; May 2, Lynchburg, Va.; May 7, Columbia, S. C.; May 8, Charleston, S. C.; with later dates for Wilmington, N. C., and Newport News, Va.

These dates include some of the most important Spring Festivals in the South, notably that of Columbia, S. C. On this tour with the Russian Symphony, they will play the Mozart Concerto for two pianos and orchestra. Also, Mr. Schuler has paid these two artists a special compliment by inviting them to give a group on the program of two-piano recitals with orchestra. These will be "La Nuit, l'Amour" by Rachmaninoff, and a "Valse" by Arensky.

WASHINGTON COLLEGE OF MUSIC. The Twenty-fifth Students' Concert of the Washington College of Music is announced for the evening of Monday, May 9, at 8:15, in the auditorium of Central High School. The Washington College of Music Orchestra, under C. E. Christian, president of the college, will be a feature of the program.

The soloists are: for piano, Miss Doris Thorne, Miss Gertrude Dyre, Miss Gertrude Locher, and Miss Stuart, representing the teaching of Miss McCauley, Mr. Carter, and Mr. Wad; for violin, Miss Ethel Cohn, Norman Goldman, Kenneth Douce, and Miss Carrie Notes, representing the teaching of Mr. Christian, and Mr. Van Hulsteyn; for voice, Miss Rose Hyer, Mrs. Kathryn Murrell, Miss Hazel Gibson Wood, and Mrs. Julia Daniels, representing the teaching of Miss Young, Mrs. Miller, and Mr. Paul. The orchestra will play for overture the "Midsummer Night's Dream" of Mendelssohn; one movement of Beethoven's fifth Symphony, the Allegro con brio; and the Liszt "Second Hungarian Rhapsody."

KITTREDGE-LEWIS RECITAL. At the Woman's City Club this evening, at 8:30, Miss Eleanor Bernice Kittredge, contralto, and H. LeRoy Lewis, baritone, will give a program of songs. Mrs. Lewis will open with a group by Franz, for baritone. Miss Kittredge will sing two groups of the Franz songs, inserting an interesting element by emphasizing the work of one composer.

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REINALD WERRENKATE

American baritone, who was guest artist at the first of the functions put on by the National Press Club this winter at Keith's Theater, has the distinction of being the only singer chosen for the second time to go to London as the representative of American art-song singing. He leaves for England in June and will give two recitals at Wigmore Hall, London.



course with short stays in a city, out with a two or three weeks' stay, it is possible to coach with the opera director."

"And so the background of an artist's life loomed large and exacting, with work, work, work."

"When you are exacting in your criticisms," she added, "you must realize that we are human beings, sometimes tired, sometimes not at our best. But we try always to give, sincerely, our contribution to art."

ADVICE TO BEGINNERS. Today Washington has a brief glimpse of the music drama that is the art of the opera. The wife of Fortune Gallo, herself an artist who has succeeded, makes one feel with increasing understanding the humanity that lies beneath the great organization of a touring opera company.

Fortune Gallo brings a tremendous aggregation for grand opera at popular prices. Because opera is in the making, here in Washington, his wife very graciously forgot her personal story and has given some sterling advice that should serve our embryo stars.

Miss Kittredge's other selections are: "De Profundis" (MacFadyen), "Cradle Song" (MacFadyen), "I came With a Song" (La Forge), and a final group, "Sea My Heart, Dip To Thee" (Gena-Brancos), "Love's Sunshine" (Cadman), and "I Did Not Know" (Vanderpool). Mr. Lewis will give also, two arias, one of Gounod, and one of Massenet, and a program of songs. Mrs. Lewis will open with a group by Franz, for baritone. Miss Kittredge will sing two groups of the Franz songs, inserting an interesting element by emphasizing the work of one composer.

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