

# WITH TAG PLAYERS and the MUSIC FOLK



"Impersonator? Oh, another one, what a bore!" That was what one said last Sunday night as "Willy" Zimmerman walked on the Orpheum stage. Neither was there any reason, only from the gentleman's exceptionally unassuming appearance, to expect anything different from the usual gallery of grease-painted, chromo-lithographic caricatures of McKinley, Sousa and George Washington that the usual impersonator deals in.

"I shall attempt to imitate Richard Wagner," Mr. Zimmerman modestly announced, and then as he walked off Stage Director Rosner struck up a wonderful imitation of a 75-man orchestra doing the "Flying Dutchman." It was, by the way, one of the best imitations ever heard at the Orpheum. And then Mr. Zimmerman, or nay, Richard Wagner himself, returned to the footlights. One may not have seen Wagner, but one knew irresistibly, as one knows of a Franz Hals "Laughing Boy," that the very substance and spirit of the man was before one. And then the impersonator-bored one sat up and decided that the matter was not with impersonations but with impersonators. With nothing but a wig and a new eyebrow or two came Verdi, Liszt, Metra, Von Suppe, Oscar Hammerstein, each in his habit as he lives or lived, and when one's mouth was not open at the uncanny life-likeness of the imitations it was stretching earward at their Attic humor. Liszt's warts alone brought Mr. Zimmerman to the paint-pot. He drags off the wig and eyebrow after each portrait to show only his own round, blue-eyed, simple, rosy countenance. Remember that he has been looking, as Lawrence D'Orsay would say, like a "boiled owl" as the dissipated Metra; sallow and sturdy as Hammerstein; round and rubicund as Verdi; ivory-pale and astorically time-worn as Liszt, and you will understand something of what Mr. Zimmerman does.

I wondered if he knew any better than most geniuses how he did the thing. He doesn't. I went to ask him.

"It is the little things that make up the big thing," he tried to explain of his methods. And Mr. Zimmerman really thinks so. He really thinks that the drooped eyelid, long inquisitive chin and the thousand other little tricks of appearance and manner that he has observed and reproduced make up his startling portrait of Richard Wagner. Not any more. Mr. Zimmerman, than ten syllables to a line, and he on lines automatically rhymed make up a Petrarch sonnet!

I met the actor at the Orpheum in the boardroom. He had a dog that said "How-dy-do" and a cane. I hadn't time for the dog, though Mr. Zimmerman gave me almost two hours. He could have given me two weeks and not have repeated himself. Zimmerman on Russian conditions, on the American vaudeville stage, as raconteur of stories of the composers he has met—one is simply in despair at the amount and choice of material.

The cane must be mentioned though, though it is only one of scores of royal souvenirs that the actor has in his possession. It is a fat, silver affair, covered with signatures in gold and royal crests such names as Von Plevhe, Duke Sergius, Nikolai Mikaelovitch—the "wickedest man in Russia"—not to speak of Maxim Gorki's, crowd one upon another. The cane is a reminder from the Czar of Russia of the pleasure he took in the Zimmerman imitations at Revel on the 22d of June, 1902, when he and his "brother of Germany" were solemnly entertained.

"You noticed the big watch I took out as Metra," the actor asked me in a by-the-way sort of manner.

I had.

"Duke Sergius gave me that," he

told me—there are about two and a half pounds of gold in it!

Then, first asking me if it "would interrupt me" if he smoked, Mr. Zimmerman talked about the unhappy country to which all eyes are now directed. He spent much time there and among his seven languages speaks Russian fluently: I thought I could understand why "Willy" saw so much as I watched him at the tale. He is so exactly like the next man you might meet, so exactly the person that sees nothing and doesn't care about it if he does.

In his wide-open blue eyes there is nothing of the lynx and his prevailing expression, is of the most good-natured and rather vacuous simplicity. Yet to this very simple person twenty minutes suffice to catch the very heart of a man. I have no doubt whatever that he could now give an imitation of Miss Partington interviewing Mr. Zimmerman that would make her best enemies howl.

He sees everything, remembers everything. As he saw Tchaikovsky sitting in a St. Petersburg Louvre, skimming all the music from a hundred different journals, he saw the vodka-sodden proletariat, staggering into the drinkshops for the vodka the Government gives them for 12 cents a pint; staggering out again on the sidewalks, slapping out the cork by knocking the bottom of the bottle with the ease of long practice, adding another pint of fire to their inward hell, and then, men and women both, belittling the sidewalks with their drunken carcasses.

"They used to make their own 'vodka,'" the raconteur added and sat down again. He had been acting out the whole grim scene.

"It cost them then 25 cents a pint to make them. The Government gives it to them for 12 cents. Why? Why, but for the purpose of degrading them, preventing them from thinking."

For the Russian aristocrat Mr. Zimmerman has even less respect, and he remarked that there was no middle class in Russia only the foreign element; every one else is either "poor as the devil—or as rich."

"The finest gentleman in the world the Russian is when he is sober—WHEN HE IS SOBER," Zimmerman repeated and emphasized. "Drunk, there is no pig so low." He added some lively corroborative evidence, of the insults to women on the streets, of the winking threat by the police for a bribe, and such like. He added: "You must see a man when he is drunk or at cards to know him."

But all this was not Mr. Zimmerman's art, and at length I got him to talk about that. I asked how long it took him to study the peculiarities of his victims. He told me that what he could not see in twenty minutes he would not see in twenty years.

"But, to act out the character," he elaborated, "months, one year, I study. Before the looking-glass I make him, in my head I think him, until I cannot forget. It is, I tell you, not so easy. And the work I do is as nothing until I make the character in front of the people. I give you my

word, when first I make Creator, though the people do not send me away, it was r-r-rotten!—excuse me."

He has known all of the people whom he imitates, and is full of anecdotes concerning them. Nine months ago he came to Oscar Hammerstein's roof garden theater in New York. In discussing his repertoire of imitations Zimmerman asked if he should not do Sousa to prove the life-likeness of the other portraits. Hammerstein demurred, said every one else did Sousa. "What shall I do then?" the actor asked.

"Do me," Hammerstein laughed him away with. But in a few days one Hammerstein walked in at one door and another at the other, to the utter confusion of the employees. After that Mr. Zimmerman imitated the composer-manager, etc., etc., for the laughter of thousands at his own theater. His little sketch for me of Zimmerman answering two telephones at once, dictating a letter, making oral contracts with three other people and composing an opera by the way, was irresistible. Hammerstein did compose an opera in two days for a bet, he reminded me, and added that he is a "lovely fellow."

Verdi he knew well, and loved him as well as he imitates him. Gounod, Humperdinck, Smetana—who died hungry—Leoncavallo, Mascagni—whom we are to have here next week—Damoschi—nay, nearly every leader of prominence has "sat to" Mr. Zimmerman.

"How did you begin the work?" I asked.

"Accident," he replied, laughing a little at the remembrance. "It was in Odessa and I was dining with some friends at a restaurant. There was, as usual, a military band, and while the leader was resting I went up to the band and said to my friends, 'I'm going to show you how I leads.' They laughed a good deal and I decided to use the imitation at my benefit. I did, got into the leader's seat, and no one knew until he came in that it was not he!"

"Your benefit?" I queried.

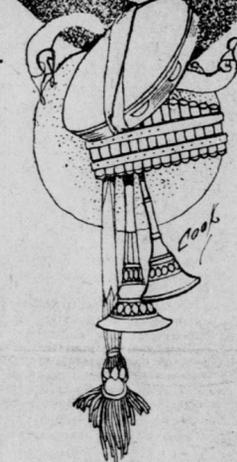


AS RICHARD WAGNER

AS OSCAR HAMMERSTEIN



PARTINGTON



WILLIE ZIMMERMAN, A CLEVER IMPERSONATOR WHO PLEASES ORPHEUM AUDIENCES.

"You are fifty years quicker here than we are," the actor replied.

"Well?"

"Well?" he laughed.

"That much more corruption here?"

"I think so."

Twenty-nine years ago his people sent the Zimmerman youth to America, hoping that his ignorance of the language would keep him off the stage. But instead it took him to the old German theater, the Thalia, where "Richard Mansfield, Herr Conried and I were long together. They couldn't do anything with Mansfield in those days, he humorously put it.

"No one thought anything of him; he couldn't catch the way they wanted him to speak—it's all experience, isn't it, whatever talent there is?"

Why he was sure that Tchaikovsky did not commit suicide, as is largely believed; how the composer was welcomed on the street "as the Czar himself"; how, though he was "fantastico at the piano," away he was the liveliest possible person, he told me. How Rubinstein, now with his wild son, with a new wife every two years, might-space all gone? Dear, dear me.

## ATTRactions AT SAN FRANCISCO PLAYHOUSES FOR THE ENSUING WEEK

The English Grand Opera Company is in its last week at the Columbia and full particulars of the bill will be found under the music on this page.

The California is to the fore with a new play, "Monsieur Beaucaire," dramatized from Booth Tarkington's well-known story of the name. Creston Clarke brings the play, which was first used by Richard Mansfield, and is said to have a good company in his support.

The Tivoli's edition of "The Burgomaster" should be a notable one. It is much the best of the Pixley and Lu-

ders comedies, and will doubtless be excellently handled by the Tivoli folk. Grace Palotta from the Gaiety Theater, London, and J. Albert Wallerstedt, imported from New York, will make their first bow here in the comedy.

The Alcazar also offers a new romance this week in "Alice of Old Vincennes," that has never been given locally before. It is a play in which Virginia Harned found much favor and will afford Miss Lillian Lawrence a pretty opportunity to display her charming art.

At the Grand Opera-house Kolb and Dill are still attracting large audiences of their admirers with "I O U."

"Faust," with Herschel Mayall in the name role, will doubtless attract a large contingent to the Central this week.

Clayton White and Marie Stuart will be headliners of the Orpheum bill this week. These old favorites will this time be seen in a new sketch, entitled "Paris." Willy Zimmerman will be among the most welcome of holdovers and will impersonate this week Anton Rubinstein, Brahms and Sousa among his galaxy of conductors.

The comediettas presented by John T. Chick and Company are proving a most attractive feature at the Chutes Theater. "A Pleasant Evening" is the week's comedy.

## OPERA OF "LA BOHEME" ADMIRABLY GIVEN BY MR. SAVAGE'S COMPANY

Had Mr. Savage's company begun their engagement here with the sparkling "Boheme" of this week, or with the fine "Tannhauser," the reception of this company of American singers might have been more enthusiastic than it has been. Both of these operas, and particularly "La Boheme," were admirably given. As Mimi and Rudolph Miss Jean Lane Brooks and Reginald Roberts won notable personal successes, and Mr. Goff as Marcel, Mr. Boyle as Colline, Mr. Bennett as Schaunard came excellently up to their level. Nor does one usually get so good a Musetta from the vocal side as Miss Newman's. But the distinguished feature of the performance was, above all, the sympathy and security of its ensemble. The singers were so well rehearsed, so admirably sure of their parts that they needed hardly to glance at the conductor, and were therefore fully free to sing and act out the gay and pathetic comedy. The whole thing was instinct with a full-blooded and spirited bohemianism that one would hardly have believed possible to the American singers.

Parts of the "Tannhauser," again, with Mr. Schenck's debut into local distinction as the conductor, were almost as good. Miss Rennyson and Mr.

Wegener distinguished themselves both vocally and dramatically as Elizabeth and Tannhauser, and Mr. Deane's Wolfram was a charmingly sympathetic person. Again, however, it was the ensemble, particularly in the fine working out of the double climax in the second act, that was the crowning charm of the work. The opera will be given again on Friday evening next, and may confidently be recommended to the Wagner-lover.

The lethargic performance of "Othello" that opened the season is responsible for a good deal; for one finds with each performance that the English Grand Opera is more and more worthy of serious attention and admiration.

And here I am glad to correct a wrong impression under which I as well as others have been laboring. Only the "Carmen" of the company's repertoire and a faintly dispraised other opera or two were not enthusiastically accepted by the New Orleans audiences. Word of a general non-acceptance of the company had wandered up here and the spiritless "Othello" went a long way to prove the truth of the report. But as I said, after the "Carmen," I could not understand the New Orleans attitude. It seems there was none such to understand very much except as to the "Carmen." The fact is, and it is a notable one, that the Savage English Grand Opera Company has been invited by the patrons of the French Opera Company of New Orleans to give a return engagement there next year of four weeks.

This week is the last here, and those that have not yet heard the company should not neglect to make themselves acquainted with its work. "Lohengrin" will be to-night's and Tuesday's bill; "La Tosca" will be given on Monday and Thursday; on Wednesday night and at the Saturday matinee "Cavalleria" and "Pagliacci" will be done; on Saturday evening "Carmen"; on Friday evening "Tannhauser," and the Sunday bill is as yet undetermined.

With Harold Bauer last spring, and Hofmann, Paderewski, De Pachmann this season, the local pianistic experience has been unusually rich this year. Perhaps no pianist could have more uniquely enriched it than Eugene d'Albert, and we are to have him this week. As exponent of the "three Bs," more particularly of Beethoven, d'Albert to-day stands perhaps without rival. Each, I see by the latest programme, is unrepresented, but one of the most important Brahms piano compositions is among the things to be given: the Variations on a theme of Handel's; and the Sonata Appassionata, the sonata op. 111—the "very" big one; the E flat major sonata, op. 31, No. 3, and the 32 variations are among the Beethoven numbers. The Sonata Fantasia of Schubert is among rare numbers to be given, but for the rest it is suggested that in the place of some of the Liszt numbers and the smaller Chopin pieces that everybody plays M. d'Albert should give us some of his wonderful Bach. The Schumann "Carnaval" is on the first programme, by the way. The concerts, it is reminded, are set for Tuesday and Thursday evenings and for the Saturday matinee, and will be given at the Alhambra.

"You Never Can Tell," with Arnold Daly as the fascinating dentist, is one of the current and shrieking successes of New York.

Forbes Robertson has one of the remarkable successes of the New York season in his new play "Love and the Man."

## QUERY: CAN ARTISTS BE GENTLEMEN?

---BY LAURA BRIDE POWERS

Are the qualities that contribute to the make-up of artists incompatible with those of a gentleman?

Can a man fill both roles with equal success?

Or is it incumbent upon a man of artistic talent to exhibit the manners of a Hottentot that he may "stand out" among his fellows?

Or is there extant a code of manners and morals for the fellows who paint and model?

In the discussion the women artists are eliminated, because for the most part they conform in a general way to the commandments of organized society in manners and morals. And when they don't—well, the world rises in its righteous wrath and denounces them. And they sink—and die, and we cease to hear of them.

But with the men it's different. And why? Simply because some few men who have been really great have been bores and worse, and lesser men have mistaken their bad manners and loose morals for evidences of genius. These men were great in spite of their deficiencies, not because of them, and immediately the lesser men proceed to copy.

A studied carelessness in dress is usually the first bad symptom, showing itself in a disregard for the modes of attire adopted by polite society. Then come the boorish manners—the cynical attitude, the curt reply, the

unremoved cigarette, in short the clout, the boor.

Then there are the artist chaps who hold to a moral code quite distinct from that held by the commonplace. But happily this sect of sensualists holds not many votaries in the local coterie; but alas! alas! for the manners of some!

On the other hand, and by far the greater number of the painters in this growing center of American art are sane and normal fellows, to whom art is first—their personality afterward; and who refuse to advertise their art by freak dressing and freak manners or morals.

And this is as it should be. Your work first—yourself afterward. And you can bank upon it that if your work is honest and worthy and sincere you'll not need to cease to be a gentleman in dress or manners to proclaim the fact. The world DOES recognize ability, the cynics notwithstanding.

Annie Frances Briggs, whose cozy studio is on Kearny street, at Clay, in the Arts and Crafts building, has been doing some worth while things in water-color, notably her sand-dunes abloom with the pink and purple blossoms that spread over the soft gray wastes.

There is in Miss Briggs' work a delicacy of feeling—a glow of gladness that typifies her personality. Color and composition are notably strong in her Holland sketches, one of which is here produced. The trees, in a symphony of

greens, possess a weird ghostliness in the soft morning mist, which spreads a subtle veil over the grass and underbrush. The whole tone is distinctly Dutch and, like other things done abroad, is wholly different from the type of work done in California.

This clever young woman gives promise of big things, adding to an intelligent sympathy with nature a will to work—and the knowledge of how.

L. P. Latimer gives an exhibition of thirty paintings at Schussler's, beginning on the 15th. Among them will be many alluring redwood scenes—for "Latimer" and "redwoods" have come to be synonymous.

I know of no man whose knowledge of the giant redwoods is vaster than this woodsman, nor whose love is holier—and therefore must his work bear merit. I am sure, when I look into his pictures, that he has peered into the brook, with a glow in his heart; into the clump of baby trees at the side of the gray stretch of road, with a tender solicitude for them; and at the splendid redwoods, whose branches are bathed in the glow of the passing day.

Will Greenbaum's been a busy lad these passing moons, having finished one of the most virile things in the line of portraiture that has come under my eye for some time. It's a portrait of a French girl, Miss M., but how true a likeness I cannot tell; however, that's another story!

That it's arresting, dashing, dramatic, there is no doubt.

The girl is gowned in red—a stunning red, and the frock is eminently smart.

I cannot help thinking as I look upon the lines of that chic gown that Mr. Greenbaum would make a fortune as a dressmaker—but about the girl and the picture.

Of a rich olive skin, creamy in tone, the color lies in the lips, full and luscious as a ripe cherry. The eyes are Oriental, dark, languorous, passionate, shaded by a sweep of dark lashes. The hair is o'er-topped with a smashing black hat, famously becoming and good millinery—another triumph in feminine trumpery.

The gown is shown high in the neck, concealing what must be a beautiful throat and shoulders. But the omission is consistent with the muff the fascinating little maid is coquetting with, since muff does not look well with the evening frocks.

Mr. Greenbaum has painted his lovely subject against a soft, dark blue background, shading it into gentle grays. The portrait, which is now at his studio in the Columbia building, is really a fascinating study and well worth a visit. It will be shown later at the Spring Exhibition at Hopkins, and if I mistake not it will make a hit.

But these prophecies are bad—they don't always make good. And then what? Nevertheless, I reiterate my prophecy.



"A SCENE IN HOLLAND," A CHARMING WATER COLOR BY ANNA FRANCES BRIGGS, ONE OF THE CLEVER ARTISTS OF SAN FRANCISCO. HER WORK IS ATTRACTING FAVORABLE ATTENTION AND RECEIVING WELL-MERITED PRAISE.