

## Opera At Varscona

By Elan Galper

"Der Rosenkavalier" is the most famous of Richard (no relation to Johann) Strauss's operas. It is especially distinguished by its glowing melodies, its intense charm, warmth, and sophisticated wit, and the acute pathos of some of its arias. Written in 1911, it represents Strauss's best period. The music captures fully the frivolity and light-hearted gaiety of Theresian Vienna, and deftly complements the best libretto which Strauss's great collaborator, the poet Hugo Hofmannsthal, has ever written.

Strauss had wanted for a long time to write an opera of a very witty, polished nature, modelled after Johann Strauss's "Die Fledermaus". In Hofmannsthal he found the perfect librettist for the purpose. Hofmannsthal wrote the work with great delight, making it a blend of the grotesque with the poignantly and tenderly lyric. Wanting to write a vignette of a society in its autumn decline, he picked as the setting Rococo Vienna during the reign of the Empress Maria Theresa (1717-1780).

An unending stream of seductive waltzes (many of which have since been played on dance floors) add glitter and merriment to Hofmannsthal's "jewelled verse". The usual (but delightful!) sound combinations, such as the mating of a celesta and the woodwind section in the Second Act, add verve, spontaneous charm and fascination to the opera. The music flowingly sparkles with the bubbles of choice champagne, but beneath the polished façade of Wiener Gemütlichkeit lurks the note of a deeper element: of the anxieties, the pains and the griefs that are there, even if they are momentarily forgotten on the dance floor or in the coffee house.

Although the Varscona will present "Der Rosenkavalier" in German, the splendid music of Richard Strauss can be enjoyed (from October 4 to October 11) even by a person not so versed in that tongue. True, the excellence of Hugo von Hofmannsthal's poetry will be lost to him, but the music is compensation enough.

### A Mild Debut

A Fine Arts Page is an innovation in this year's Gateway. Music, dance, drama, art, photography, literature, movies: all of these will be our subjects.

Anyone interested in writing reviews, previews, critiques, features, original prose and poetry may contact our Fine Arts Editor. Artists interested in drawing and layout will also be welcome.

## Stratford 'Pirates' Preferred Over Carte

By Phil Silver

A little over a year ago, I saw the Stratford Shakespearean Festival production of Gilbert and Sullivan's "The Pirates of Penzance". This production had provoked reactions ranging from enthusiastic hurrahs to declamatory boos. The latter stemmed mainly from a hardy group who worship the old G & S style of production, as presented by the original producers, the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company.

Last week, when said company appeared here, I donned a clean shirt and a tie in order to decide for myself who was right. Now, decision made, I count myself as a member of the "Hurrah Stratford" school.

It must be stated that vocally the English company was better than the Canadian (particularly Miss Jennifer Toye, whose "Poor Wandering One" was the highlight of the evening). However, operetta and musical comedy are composite forms and cannot be judged by voices alone.

Scenically, the D'Oyly Carte and Stratford were of similar good quality. The former, however, displayed only two or three truly good costumes, including the Pirate King's (who looked like Blackbeard, without the beard!) and Ruth's. The others had as much imagination as thirty copies of one Simplicity pattern can have.

The Canadian production, directed by Dr. Tyrone Guthrie, had spark,

vitality and freshness. The Carte production seemed to bear the weight of the 90 years since it premiered. For the actors, it was routine; well routined, mind you, but an audience feels cheated when it knows an actor it not "giving".

For example, Carte's John Reed and Stratford's Eric House, both as Major-General Stanley, did admirable jobs of the difficult "Model of a Modern Major-General," but House gave all he had. He had such a good time with his role that we in the audience could not help but enjoy him also.

The staging of the English production lacked the imagination displayed by Canada's group. Every member

of the chorus knew exactly five dance steps, seven gestures and two poor laughs. When one person does this, it is tolerable, but when a chorus of thirty executes such manoeuvres in unison, it is unbearable. Surely we are past the level of grade one pageants.

The D'Oyly Carte Company holds that giving the works a "contemporary slant and face-lift destroys their timelessness for ever". Granted, this is true for script, but updating its treatment can only make the shows more acceptable to modern audiences. Tastes in theatre change over the years. The fact that G & S's melodramatic style was once popular does not mean it is now holy.

## 'FIRST-RATE UNIVERSITY'

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Dr. Mewett supports the regimentation of professional students to poly-technical schools. He seems to be among those Dr. McMaster sees excluding scientific faculties, especially the applied scientists, engineers, with the question, "What ideas have they to contribute to an intellectual community?"

Applied science, said Dr. McMaster, depends for its vitality on pure science and therefore both belong. On the other hand, it is discouraging to hear engineers, even on radio, priding themselves on their students' study of English, not for the awareness of the human condition it affords, but for the ability it may give to write grammatical letters and reports.

Replying to Dr. Mewett's 'intellectual monasteries', Dr. McMaster said, "Allowing all sorts in and not giving them a degree might rid us of those mastering knowledge not for itself but to get good marks or a better job. It might get people interested in education with no ulterior motive. But everyone has heard of the prestige afforded by a "failed Oxford" tag. Attendance itself would become a mark of prestige.

We are, of course, already in danger of wasting tremendous potential. With automation, people will have much more time on their hands to make their lives worthwhile or empty. Attention given free extension courses on American television at unearthly hours indicates the interest people given the opportunity have in acquiring knowledge.

Today, there is especially a tremendous waste of women. Many find themselves highly trained, having degrees, raising families for the few necessary years, and then cut off from the intellectual life they are as well prepared for as men are, and left to the challenge of housework when their minds are prepared for so much more. There are hardly any adequate facilities for allowing these women to come back, to keep their minds alive.

The European tradition of the woman's place being in the home and kitchen and not competing in men's pursuits seems still to be strong—surely in the twentieth century, education is not recognized as a male prerogative. If society supposes that, then, as Mr. Bumble would say, "Society is an ass, an idiot".

These women may not go out in industry or to practical pursuits, but they will be more interesting, alert members of society and their families. In short, and to put it mildly, says Dr. McMaster, "Anyone who feels housework is a complete life for all women is a complete bloody idiot."

As for the value of a university degree, it doesn't make that much difference. A poor worker will be fired, degree or not, and we, particularly professors, should bear in mind that some of the best work has been done by people that hated, left or failed university. University simply provides opportunities. A university is like a human being in that it has vast potentialities, but rarely enough develops more than a few. Some people may not love it.

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