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The Opera Season Closes

By THE MUSIC EDITOR

TO have the chance to hear grand opera for three weeks—and from the Montreal Opera Company—is particularly worth the while of a city like Toronto. There should be about ten thousand people at least in a town so allegedly musical who feel that way about it. But there aren't. At any rate the box office receipts don't quite look that way. The opera has been attended—fairly well; by a middling appreciative but never exuberantly enthusiastic audience. Anglo-Saxons require to be shown. I daresay that among the French down below enthusiasm for at least French opera runs very high. In Toronto it is measured up and paid out discreetly. We are not capable of abandon. The tenor hero may, if he feels so disposed, throw the attitude that is supposed to fetch a heavy hand; but he won't always get it.

Now, of course, not all the artists of the company are the kind to rave about. But many of them are. Not all the operas in the repertoire are events in a lifetime. Some of them are.

Among the operas that no true lover of good music and dramatic art should miss we may mention first above all,



Zeni, the Giant Tenor, in "Aida."

Louise; and also Thais by Massenet; Aida, of course—plethoric of grand arias and stunning ensembles and great scenes; La Boheme, with its fine music pictures of studio life; Faust, always humanly interesting—because the devil is in it. Rigoletto? Yes—to such as like lyric opera of the romantic sort. Il Trovatore—in a similar way but more so. Lakme? N—no; Delibes may be a tuneful writer for the bel canto voice, but whoever got up the libretto knew little of what makes real grippy interest of a dramatic sort; the piece contains little action worth while, and not much colour, except in the stage setting. However, the coloratura work is fine, and there is plenty of it; also now and then the Brahmin does some great singing that brings the goose flesh. Otherwise the piece is negligible.

How about Tales of Hoffmann? I know this is a favourite among those who like dreamy, indolent things of a frou-frou delicatessen character. But it is poor drama, indifferent music—even in the famous Barcarolle; and if it were not for a few character studies and a really effective tenor role it would drop into the list of banalities.

In a general way it is safe to allege that modern opera of the best character, such as the works of Puccini, Massenet and Charpentier are worth more to the hour than the older things are to the day. This is not to say that many of Verdi's works ought not to live. They are exceedingly tuneful, well



Alice Nielsen, Who Starred in "La Boheme."

scored, and the work of a genius who knew how to write for the chorus and the orchestra and the solo voice as few men ever did before his time, and very few after. But Verdi made a bigger work in his Requiem than in any of his operas. And there is more dramatic value in a work like Louise than in any work of Verdi's. That is not to say that Charpentier as a maker of operas is the equal of Verdi who, outside the realm of music drama, has perhaps no equal. But it does mean that the simple story Louise staged and set to music as Charpentier has done it is a far more dramatic work, means more to the minute, has more native colour, and is a far better presentation of the alliance between the music and the words than most if not all of Verdi's. Louise is probably the greatest opera ever written. Some allege that it is too impressionistic; that it lacks tune. Well, that depends on whether it is



Agide Jacchia, Italian Conductor, and the Husband of Madame Ferrabini.

judged as music or as drama. Not much of it would be worth a great deal as programme music—in the sense that Wagner's music dramas are. But why divorce the music from the text and



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