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arts



Carmen—the sure thing

— Cooper

Disappointing Carmen

This year being the centennial anniversary of Bizet's *Carmen*, it came as no surprise that the Edmonton Opera Association elected her as the vehicle with which to open its 1974-75 season. Moreover, during the intervening century, *Carmen* has developed into such an assured financial success that any responsible opera management must, for survival, include her in its repertoire. The present management has been concentrating its attentions primarily upon its deficit: *Carmen*, along with the Caballe, and Tucker-Merrill benefits, has provided it with a further means of relieving financial pressures.

Although any opera association requires financial security for its continued existence, the association must be prepared to spend monies upon its productions. If balances between income and expenditure are not maintained, then both parties — the association and the opera — are liable to suffer, as witnessed in the recent performances of *Carmen* at the Jubilee Auditorium, which were as visually inexpensive as set of experiences as any EOA production that I have seen.

The sets, designed by John Naccarato and Eugene Dent, appeared unimaginative and two-dimensional in concept, and garrish in execution. The costumes, created by Susanne Mess, were non-descript. The entire production was alternatively pallid, and unrelentingly harsh upon the eye, lacking both in realism and in local Spanish colour, and producing a visual effect of being chronically out of focus.

Any concept of opera, in order to be legitimate, must go beyond mere singing. It must be sufficiently comprehensive as to include sets, props, costumes, lighting, stage business and what ever else is required by the dramatic nature of the piece being produced. The prices which the EOA charges for admission are sufficiently ample as to justify more lavish expenditure in the area of visual-dramatic truth, and director Irving Guttman is going to have to demand a larger slice of the bugetary pie if his performances are not going to disintegrate into oratorio-like presentations.

On a somewhat brighter note, the Edmonton Opera Chorus, under the able direction of Sandra Munn, was much more involved musically and

dramatically than it has been on previous occasions; and except for a few exposed passages for tenors, where vocal abilities appeared hard-pressed, the chorus acquitted itself unimpeachably. The alto section in the chorus *Dans l'air* produced a memorably lovely sound.

The EOC was augmented by a well-drilled boys chorus which had been prepared by Lee Brodeur; and the Alberta Ballet Company provided some dancing which rivalled the sets and costumes in sheer vitality and excitement.

Pierre Hetu, conductor of the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra, presided over the performance. He tended to reduce contrasts in dynamics and tempi, thereby replacing the subtleties and intensity of the score with stolidity.

The secondary roles were all filled more than adequately,

with Larry Benson and Donald Cant strong as two smugglers, and Audrey Glass and Ruth Huang no less strong as Mercedes and Frasquita. Donalds Oddie cut a fine figure in the role of Morales and sounded well, except for a few strained high notes. In the role of Zuniga, Pierre Charbonneau appeared static on stage, and his singing lacked definition.

The principal males fared marginally better. As Don Jose, tenor Jean Bonhomme displayed both vocal and dramatic uncertainty. For the most part I found him restricted in his dramatic projection, while vocally he displayed a rather penetrating and - at times - constricted sound. Sustaining power in the upper register was somewhat strained, as best witnessed in the Flower Song which contained few subtleties in shading and phrasing.

Come back soon, B

From the moment Bruce walked on stage in SUB Theatre, there was no doubt in anyone's mind... Tonight — HE WAS GOING TO BE GREAT!

On the part of the audience, Cockburn was

greeted by much applause and enthusiasm. This response kept up throughout the entire performance.

Throughout the evening the music spoke for itself and only after the third title Bruce spoke to the audience.

Kirkusny stars with ESO



World-renowned pianist Rudolf Kirkusny will appear with the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra at the Jubilee Auditorium on Saturday, November 9, 8:30 p.m. and Sunday November 10, 2:30 p.m.

The Czech-born virtuoso is an international artist in the fullest meaning of the word. Throughout his career, Mr. Kirkusny has performed with the world's greatest orchestras and under the batons of the world's most renowned conductors.

Rudolf Kirkusny was

born in Napayedly, Czechoslovakia, and at age four was picking out one-finger tunes on the piano. A year later he was improvising fluently and learned to read musical notation (long before he learned the alphabet) and had exhausted the capabilities of his teacher. He began to study analysis with the great Czech composer Leos Janacek. At ten, Kirkusny made his debut playing a Mozart Concerto with the Prague Philharmonic Orchestra.

This Weekend's program features Adaskin's *Diversion for Orchestra*, Dvorak's *Piano Concerto* and Schubert's *Symphony No. 3*.

Tickets are available at the Symphony Box Office (433-2020) and The Box Office, The Bay Downtown (424-0121). Rush tickets will be on sale at the door one hour before concert time: \$1.00 for students, \$2.00 for non-students.