

# Music for the Masses

By THE MUSIC EDITOR

**A** SLIM, dark man, with a big message, came to Canada last week and spoke to the Canadian Club of Toronto. It was a new sort of subject for the Canadian Club to listen to; nothing to do with trade, or the Empire or the army or the navy or socialism or any other 'ism. Mr. Arthur Farwell spoke for about half an hour on—Music. There were less than three musicians present. The other 300 men were mainly business and professional men who know a little about music, and like what they like without always knowing why. And those three hundred men who came with a degree of scepticism and a good deal of languid interest in a very unconcrete subject—when Mr. Farwell finished his speech, gave him a rousing ovation. It was said by old attendants at Canadian Club luncheons to have aroused more enthusiasm than any address delivered to the members in many moons.

Why? Because Mr. Farwell presented an old subject in a new light. Because, though by no means a natural speaker, he came with a message as clear as the blade of a knife and delivered it in a style that showed him to be complete master of a subject interesting to the average man.

Of course most men in business don't have time for many ideas about music. But Arthur Farwell handed out ideas; practical, experimental evidence of how he and the Municipal Commissioners of New York under Mayor Gaynor, have succeeded in making one of the greatest sociological discoveries of modern times. Mr. Farwell is the Municipal Superintendent of Public Music in the city of New York. He is a composer. The orchestral score for the pageant play, "Joseph and His Brethren," written by Louis Parker, now running in New York for the first season, was finished by Mr. Farwell by sitting up nights. And he is the first man in America to make a systematic study of Indian melodies for orchestration purposes.

However, he said nothing about that to his audience. He plunged right in to tell what he and his associates for the past couple of years have been doing to get Manhattan Island and Staten Island to take as much interest in Wagner and Beethoven and Chopin and Liszt and Mendelssohn, as ever they did in ragtime—yes more so. Last summer, on the bandstands of New York, from Staten Island down to the Battery, including the immense stand in Central Park, where orchestra concerts are given, there were put on eight hundred high-class concerts—for the people; for the masses, not the classes; giving the millions that tramp New York as good programmes as the clique of Carnegie Hall; getting fathers and mothers and their families out on to the pier pavilions along the Hudson River, and among the trees of Central Park to listen to the kind of thing that was made originally, not for a few high-brows, but for the many people who have ears to hear.

So great was the enthusiasm over this discovery of good music for the masses that fathers and mothers have been known to send their children down to the piers of a summer afternoon to hold seats for the entire family in the evening; and mothers with their children have gone to Central Park with their lunches to be on the grandstand at four o'clock, in time for the eight o'clock concert in the evening. In fact good music is as popular in New York just now as baseball.

When Mr. Farwell took hold of the bands of New York he found a lot of anomalies. Most of the band leaders gave out nothing but claptrap; on the theory that the masses don't like good music and never can be made to like it. Some of the bands had dummy players: men with instruments who looked as though they were blowing them when they weren't. In one of the tough precincts, when one of Mr. Farwell's band leaders got up to do a good programme, he was poked from behind by a grimy hand, and a decidedly Bowery voice said,

"Looka here, mister, you give us ragtime. We're tough and we wanta stay tough. See?"

But the good music went on the programme.

"How did we get the people to like good music?" asked Mr. Farwell. "Did we tell them that it was their duty to learn Wagner and Beethoven? Did we tell them ragtime wasn't good enough? Did we furnish them with programme notes setting forth the meaning of good music? Did we say anything about Culture with a capital C? No. We short-circuited the spiritual with the educational. We gave them the music.

He reiterated that the whole matter of appreciation is one of familiarity. People like best what they know best. There is nothing too good for people to know well. The municipal programmes given in New York contain most of everything that an average man or woman needs to know about good music.

"And after all," wound up the reformer, "is it not a plain and practical psychology? People in the mass are governed by a mass spirit. There is that in a crowd which is not in an individual. An individual in a crowd is bigger than the same individual alone. Put a score of Beethoven before a man alone—will he look at it? Not likely. Give him a good performance of a movement from a Beethoven symphony—will he listen? He does. Bye and bye

he gets to know the melody or the harmony. Then he gets a gradual knowledge of motif and tone-colour. Soon he wants the thing that he knows best—because he likes what he knows."

From which it may be understood why this man with a musical message succeeded in rousing members of the Canadian Club to a pitch of enthusiasm

**T**HE Montreal Opera Company is now on its longest tour away from home, its annual visit to Toronto. Ever since last November this remarkable aggregation of artists, in an ensemble of repertoires the equal of any opera company in the world, have been making Montreal musically the equal of Boston or Philadelphia—so far as opera goes.

And the company this year is as much better a company than that of last year as last year's was better than the year before. No musical progress so rapid has ever been known in Canada as this organization born in Canada, financed and managed and supported wholly in Canada, and to a considerable extent built up on Canadian talent in some of the big roles. The financial backers are all Canadians. The director-general, Mr. Albert Clerk-Jeanotte, is a Canadian—for years a professor of singing in Montreal. As a producer of grand opera it is doubtful if he has a superior on this continent. The astonishing aggregation of artists and repertoires, both French and Italian, that for the past three seasons has been given to the public in four cities of Canada is due quite as much to Mr. Jeannotte's organizing genius and knowledge of the operatic business as to the money of the men who so generously and unflinchingly support what must always be a financially losing game.

At the time of writing three operas have been given on the out-of-town engagement. The most notable of these is undoubtedly "La Tosca," with Mdme. Louise Edvina in the leading role, along with Messrs. Cervi, Marti, Carmes and Gaudenzi. It is safe to say that no combination of talent in both singing and acting has ever been heard here quite to equal Mdme. Edvina. Her "La Tosca" will be remembered as the most astonishingly vivid thing of its kind ever given in this country.

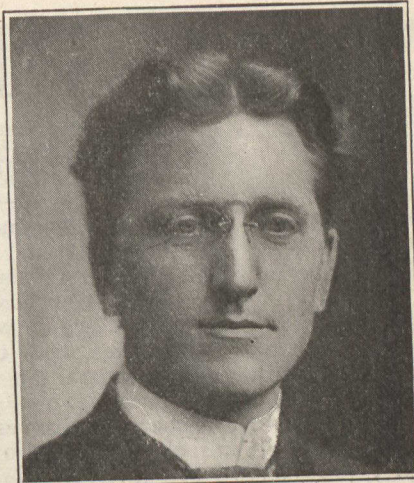
The opera itself is a tremendous thing. Years ago, before ever Puccini put it to music, it was a great play, with Fanny Davenport in the leading role. Sardou never wrote a weak thing. "La Tosca" is surely one of his strongest. A master technician as only a Frenchman can be, he left nothing lacking in finesse to make "La Tosca" one of the most gripping portrayals ever seen on any stage.

But it is only the master musician who can take a big drama and successfully put it to music for an opera. Verdi succeeded in "Otello." Puccini even better, perhaps, in "La Tosca." Compare either with Wagner; especially Puccini. Wagner had sense enough to make his own librettos. He did not want a theme so dramatically constructed that the interest could possibly be divided between the drama and the music. He carefully avoided presentations that would give even the solo voices a chance to star in competition with the orchestra. Into the orchestra and the stage mounting he put the work of his genius.

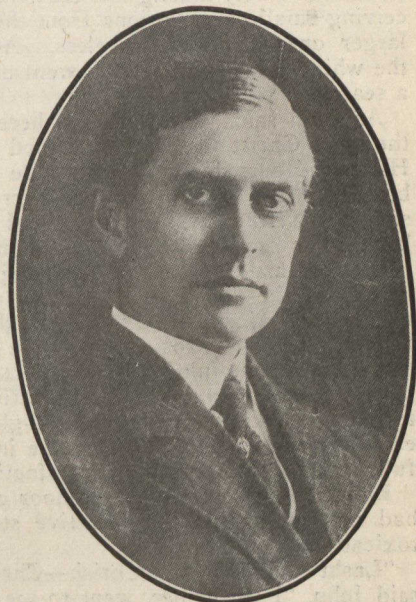
But in Puccini's treatment of "La Tosca" there is every chance for a combination of powerful singing and tremendous acting by the same person; not in one role alone, but in two or three. Mdme. Edvina made the very most of all there was; and she made all of it. There was nothing left. Thanks to a master mind in the scoring and to a splendid adaptation of the text for operatic purposes, the tremendous tragedy of the situations in the second act were brought out by the prima donna in a fashion that recalled the great acting parts of Henry Irving or Sara Bernhardt. Had the lines been merely spoken in the voice of the singer they would have been thrilling enough. With the intensity of the master music in both melody and the orchestra, every situation was tragically heightened until it became as splendidly intense as the old Greek tragedies.

And the cast was equal to the most exacting demands of the score. The Montreal Opera Orchestra has never been known to fail in delivering the message of the composer in the biggest way possible for an orchestra of that size. Indeed a bigger orchestra would have been a drawback. The orchestra now is as big for any Canadian theatre as that of the Metropolitan Opera, twice as many players, is for the big opera house. And the players are perfectly balanced for all the subtleties and dynamics of expression. With Signor Jacchia at the baton nothing was ever lost.

The whole thing was a perfect ensemble which may be called almost the last word in the human presentation of operatic art. Other works may be bigger in some directions. Wagner may be bigger in orchestral breadth and opulence. Strauss may be greater in the glorification of splendid noise. Puccini is surely the great modern master in the alternate and sometimes conflicting capacities of building up great tonal and dynamic climaxes and the subordination of the orchestra to the role of a mere commentator upon the solo voice or the chorus.



Mr. Bruce Carey, Conductor of the Elgar Choir, Hamilton, Which Gave Its Annual Concert Week Before Last.



Mr. Arthur Farwell, Who Has Taught the Masses in New York to Appreciate Good Music.



Mr. H. K. Jordan, Conductor of the Schubert Choir, Brantford, Giving Its Annual Concert Week Before Last.



Mr. Percy Hollinshead, Tenor Soloist With the Schubert Choir.