

ORK, WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 2, 1935

ay — Opera and Screen in Review

Music of the Day

By B. H. HAGGIN

'Boheme' Given Monday Night at Metropolitan—Lotte Lehmann in 'Tannhaeuser'—New Year's Day

Jose Iturbi I think it was who said that he was not the best pianist in the world but not the worst, and Puccini is supposed to have felt that way about his operas. One senses it in the music. There is no strutting about, no declaiming by gods (or godz, as Mr. Damrosch pronounces it), but ordinary human emotions expressed in a stream of lovely melody; no pretentiousness, no inflation, no bombast, but directness, honesty and great technical skill.

In "La Boheme," which introduced the second week of the Metropolitan season on Monday night, the tug at the heartstrings may be a little strong in the third and fourth acts, but the lighter moments in the opera are delightful, and they are the best part of one of the Metropolitan's happier productions. On Monday, I am glad to report, the comedy scenes went very well. But oh what sins against vocal good taste are committed by Italian singers, and what havoc was wrought with poor Puccini's phrases on Monday. He is as much the victim of his performers as Tchaikovsky; and if one wants to hear good style in singing one has to go to the German operas.

The point of interest was the debut of Dino Borgioli, the new tenor, who sang Rodolfo. So far as I could judge he was hoarse, and I prefer to wait for another occasion to report on his singing. Among the principals Mr. Bonelli did quite the finest singing of the evening. Mme. Bori was in good voice, but her occasional distortion of phrases and coyness were not to my taste. Mme. Morgana's voice was shrill and hard. The chorus sang very well; the work of the orchestra was passable; the performance as a whole under Mr. Belleze's direction, lacked continuity.

The new lighting system continues to be erratic. In the first act on Monday there was an interval of darkness after the candles went out, and then the moon began to shine

are at their dirty work, and so giving an exciting climax to the picture.

There are excellent deep-sea shots, full of suspense, and good acting by the entire cast. Other principals are Florence Rice, Bela Lugosi, Forrester Harvey and J. Harold MacDonald.

ANNE REVERE



Playing in 'The Children's Hour,' at the Morosco.

as though it had been turned on by a switch.

Tannhaeuser

"Tannhaeuser" had its initial production of the season at the Metropolitan Opera House yesterday afternoon before a large and appreciative audience. The performance as a whole was an impressive one, enlisting as it did the

'La Boheme'

Opera in four acts, in Italian; book by Giacosa and Illica; music by Puccini. At the Metropolitan Opera House.

THE CAST

Rodolfo Dino Borgioli
Schaunard Milo Picco
Benoit Paolo Ananian
Mimi Lucrezia Bori
Parsifal Max Allegias
Marcello Richard Bonelli
Colline Virgilio Lazari
Alcindoro Pompilio Malatesta
Musette Nina Morgana
A Sergeant Carlo Coscia
Conductor, Vincenzo Belleza.

'HERB WILLIAMS



In 'The Farmer Takes a Wife' (46th St. Theater).

abilities of two such distinguished Wagnerian artists as Lotte Lehmann and Lauritz Melchior.

It is difficult to speak in anything but rhapsodic terms of Mme. Lehmann's first appearance of the season in the role of Elizabeth. The entire part was sung with dignity and magnificent assurance. Not only were the long sustained vocal lines of her solos controlled with consummate artistry and their textual content projected with rare clarity of diction, but her portrayal was one of convincing dramatic substance. She played the role not as an isolated soloist, but as a closely knit part of the rest of the dramatic action, yielding graciously to the other singers and bringing an intimacy to the whole conception, as theater, that is seldom witnessed on the Metropolitan stage.

Mr. Melchior gave a telling performance as Tannhaeuser, one also remarkable both for mastery of style and for intensity of dramatic feeling. Lawrence Tibbett, as Wolfram, would have been excellent had the "Abendstern" aria of the last act been up to the rest of his interpretation. Unfortunately this was marred by slight but persistent flattening. Anny Koneznl was unsatisfactory as Venus, her voice being too thin and inclined to uncontrolled vibrato. Ludwig Hofmann's Landgraaf was a performance of some distinction, and generally adequate secondary roles were presented by Lillian Clark, Hans Clemens, Arnold Gabor and Giordano Patrineri. Artur Bodanzky and the orchestra gave a fair, if somewhat routine, account of the score.

If the Metropolitan ever decides to renovate its older stage sets it is to be hoped that those of the

second act and the last scene of the first act of this production will be replaced. They are not only antiquated in conception, but are literally falling apart. Many details of costume and makeup might also be taken to task. Why, for instance, must the entire chorus of pilgrims wear identical wigs, carry identical staffs, wear (with few exceptions) identical robes, and blandly sport an identical lack of makeup. Perhaps this is all a matter of routine and should be ignored, but it is a shame to see details disregarded that might have contributed much to the production as a whole.

WINTHROP SARGEANT.

Ray Henderson, of the Cornell office, due to some misunderstanding, wants it understood that their production of "Romeo and Juliet" does not transpose the original order of the scenes. Despite the fact that the fullest text seen here in years is employed, the performance lasts only 2 hours and 46 minutes due to the swift-changing of scenery.

AMUSEMENTS—BROOKLYN

AMUSEMENTS—BROOKLYN

at **CENTURY CIRCUIT THEATRES** today

Patio, Flatbush and Midwood . . . "LAST GENTLEMAN" and "Transatlantic Merry-Go-Round"
Kingsway, Kings Hwy.—Coney Isl. Av. Shirley Temple, "BRIGHT EYES"; and "GAMBLING"
Avalon, Kings Hwy. and E. 18th St. . . Powell, Loy, "EVELYN PRENTICE"; "Dangerous Corners"
Albemarle, Flatbush and Albemarle, Astaire, Rogers, "GAY DIVORCEE"; "Dangerous Corners"
Marine, Flatbush Av. and Kings Hwy. Astaire, Rogers, "Gay Divorcee"; "Captain Hates the Sea"
Midwood, Ave. J and E. 13th St. . . Powell, Loy, "Evelyn Prentice"; "Captain Hates the Sea"
Rialto, Flatbush Av. and Ave. C. . . James Cagney, "ST. LOUIS KID"; "Pursuit of Happiness"