

WITH THREE COMPANIES CONTENDING FOR ITS FAVOR, NEW YORK FACES UNPRECEDENTED SITUATION IN OPERA

Several Long-Debated Questions Will Have Their Answer in Season Bound to Make History—Two New Companies in Field That a Year Ago was Occupied by Metropolitan Alone—Ignoring Possible Legal Difficulties, Hammerstein Announces Five Dollar Opera and Popular-Priced Opera in English—Century Company Giving the Opera-in-English Problem a Thorough Test—American "Madeleine," German "Rosenkavalier," French "Julien" and Italian "L'Amore Medico" Principal Metropolitan Novelties—Eminent New Singers to Be Heard in All Three Companies

ON the threshold of a portentous musical season New York stands confronted by an operatic situation that is in all probability without precedent or parallel in the annals of the city. Its outcome is problematic in the extreme, but it offers, none the less, a state of affairs of superlative and unaccustomed interest. The approaching Winter months, if lived in due conformity with present schedules, will supply a definite response to certain questions much mooted of recent years and furnish unimpeachable evidence of the justice or invalidity of sundry theories for some time aggressively maintained in reference to the operatic propensities of New Yorkers.

To be brief, the operatic year will be triangular—a possibility undreamed of at a corresponding date last Fall. For the first time since Oscar Hammerstein relinquished his operatic ventures three years ago, the Metropolitan will not monopolize the field. On one side is the new Century Opera Company, presenting the masterworks in English and at popular prices; on the other, Hammerstein's latest enterprise, housed in the newly constructed American National Grand Opera House, on Lexington Avenue, between Fifty-first and Fifty-second Streets, and launched in defiance of his compact with the Metropolitan in 1910, forbidding him to prosecute any further operatic experiments in New York for the space of a decade.

Disregarding this injunction for reasons that seem to him to warrant such a procedure, Mr. Hammerstein has worked energetically at the erection of his latest edifice. Its opening date will be November 17 or 24, and the inaugural offering, Gounod's "Romeo et Juliette." Further to complicate the more or less merry war, Mr. Hammerstein will offer alternately with his performances in foreign languages representations of operatic *chefs-d'œuvre* in English at prices less than one-half of those charged on the other nights. And he pur-

to maintain two operatic institutions in its boundaries. Hence one may reasonably speculate as to its willingness and ability to provide sustenance for three at the present stage of happenings. At all events New York has never been called upon to lend a serious ear to three institutions of such magnitude simultaneously. The Spring of 1914 should witness some noteworthy and conclusive revelations, and in one manner or another set a milestone in the history of the city's artistic progress. It will be broadly significant by virtue of its triumphs or its failings.

Five New Works

In respect of interesting novelties and new singers of high standing the year promises to surpass the season of 1912-13. To the Metropolitan—which opens its doors November 17 to continue till April 25—one looks for some five new works of consider-

able promise. Additional zest will be imparted to the production of three of them by the presence of their composers. Deferring to the precedent established by the last four years, Mr. Gatti-Casazza has secured what he deems the best new American opera available. His choice has fallen upon "Madeleine," a one-act work by Victor Herbert, whose "Natoma," despite its shortcomings, still retains its distinction as the best American-made opera of the last five years, if not more. The libretto of "Madeleine" is the work of Grant Stewart and is described by those familiar with it as of exceptional charm. The music captivated Mr. Gatti, Mr. Polacco, who will conduct it, and all those who were present last Spring, when the composer gave a hearing of the score on the piano. He has worked at its instrumentation during the Summer. The date of the première has not yet been decided upon, but it is known that the title rôle has been entrusted to Mme. Alda.

last word, it appears to have outdistanced his other stage works in popularity and favor. That incomparable artist and consummate comedian, Otto Goritz, will assume the leading male rôle, while Frieda Hempel will sing the principal soprano part. Mr. Hertz, who has had the advantage of studying the score with Strauss himself, is to conduct.

Big Rôle for Caruso

One French and two Italian novelties are likewise slated for production. Gustave Charpentier's "Julien" is the former. The elaborately spectacular and confessedly symbolistic work of the composer of "Louise" scored but a *succès d'estime* when brought out last Spring at the Opéra Comique. The comparative coolness of its reception is claimed by many to be traceable to shortcomings of interpretation and scenic investiture. At the Metropolitan it

dei tre Re" ("The Loves of Three Kings"). Montemezzi is a new name on the lengthy, if not always distinguished roster of contemporary Italian composers. The libretto,



General Manager Gatti-Casazza, of the Metropolitan Opera, as Cartoonist Viafora Sees Him

which is of a rather sanguinary melodramatic order, is the work of Sem Benelli, who has a considerable reputation in his country as a poet and dramatist.

The "Carmen" Revival

Apart from these novelties, certain revivals are promised. "Carmen," the greatest of all French operas, which has been unaccountably slighted at the Metropolitan of late years, is an assured fact this coming Winter. Geraldine Farrar, who has been heard in Bizet's masterwork as *Micaela*, is announced as the cigarette girl, a character to which she seems admirably adapted temperamentally and in appearance. Besides "Carmen," there is mention of a possible "Mefistofele," "William Tell," "Masked Ball" and "Samson and Delilah." Delibes's "Coppelia," Saint-Saëns's "Javotte" and other ballets are bespoken. And in accordance with its annual habit, the Metropolitan announces that it has acquired the sole American rights to Debussy's "Fall of the House of Usher," "Devil in the Belfry" and "Legend of Tristan," which are still unfinished, but which may some day arrive at completion; also Ravel's "L'Heure Espagnole" and Giordano's "Madame Sans Gêne," whose lot seems identical with that of the aforementioned Debussy operas.

The regular repertoire remains in all essentials as before. As Verdi's "Falstaff" figures on the list of standard attractions, it is not unreasonable to surmise that it may be slated for revival, particularly in view of the Verdi centenary observances. At any rate, intimation to that effect was afforded by the management last year. The customary afternoon "Ring" cycle will be given, and "Parsifal" will serve to solemnize holidays. Wagner lovers will learn with gratification that the tetralogy will be entirely restaged. It has certainly suffered seriously from the want of worthy scenic accoutrements for some years. "Parsifal," which has been sung in the same garb since Conried imported it, will be similarly favored. Last season's triumph, "Boris Godounow," is, of course, retained, as is also Damrosch's "Cyrano." Furthermore, one notes with pleasure that the "Bartered Bride" reappears on the prospectus.

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The Metropolitan Opera House

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Those who have lamented the boycott levied upon the dramas of Richard Strauss since the unfortunate wrangle over the morality of "Salomé" in 1906 will derive considerable satisfaction from the knowledge that the difficulties between the Metropolitan management and the composer have been smoothed over and that the German master's comic opera, "Der Rosenkavalier," will have its first New York hearing on December 6. The work has already established itself in the repertoire of many of the foremost German opera houses, and, while it does not represent Strauss's

is to be mounted with exceptional lavishness, while the two leading characters are to be assumed by Mr. Caruso and Geraldine Farrar. The remaining parts, though large in number, are of subsidiary importance, and the legions of Carusomaniacs will be overjoyed to learn that *Julien* occupies the center of the stage through practically the entire course of the opera. The brilliancy of the performance will be further enhanced by the presence of Mr. Charpentier himself, who has definitely promised to cross the ocean in order to be present on the occasion of the American première of his work.

Wolf-Ferrari has thoroughly endeared himself to the American public by his charming "Secret of Suzanne" and to a greater or lesser degree by his "Donne Curieuse" and the melodramatic "Jewels of the Madonna." At present he has reverted to the manner of the first of these works in a lyric version of Molière's "L'Amour Médicin"—Italianized as "L'Amore Medico." It is in two acts. The Metropolitan will present it as one of its pair of Italian novelties, and Wolf-Ferrari will be on hand in person to receive the popular verdict.

"L'Amore Medico" has not yet received its first presentation on any stage, and it is consequently impossible to prognosticate its fortunes in America. But the second Italian offering of the year has been heard and warmly approved in Italy. In fact, it was one of the most highly esteemed operas brought out there last season. The work in question is Italo Montemezzi's "L'Amore



A Viafora Impression of Conductor Arturo Toscanini

poses to continue these English performances throughout the Summer.

Strictly speaking, the New York opera season is already under way at the present writing. The Century company is about to enter upon its fifth week. So much has been written about its performances and its chances of success in this journal during the past month that it seems superfluous to dwell in detail upon its aims and aspirations at this juncture. The large audiences which have patronized it thus far have been widely accepted as an indication that the city's demand for opera is insufficiently satisfied by the ministrations (however excellent) of a single establishment. The truth of which supposition will be effectually proven only when the older house opens its doors. The experience of Mr. Hammerstein in the days of the Manhattan Opera House failed in the long run to show that the city was ready or willing