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A NEW ARTISTIC STANDARD AT THE CENTURY OPERA

"Romeo and Juliet," Given as Opening Performance, Reveals Gratifying Advances in Ensemble Effects—Brilliant Audience Welcomes Work of New Singers, New Conductor, New Chorus Master and New Artistic Director—Changes in Auditorium Facilitate Seating

THE Century Opera House was launched upon its second season last Monday night. Gounod's distillation of "Romeo and Juliet," vested in a brand new English text fashioned expressly for the needs of the organization, served as the year's curtain raiser. The representation was accomplished under circumstances in many respects different from those that obtained last season. It took place in a house largely renovated, under the scrupulous supervision of a new stage management, new chorus direction and new orchestral leadership. It disclosed a partially renovated chorus, a largely reorganized orchestra and some new principals.

So much for generalized facts. The audience was enthusiastic and brilliant and the decision of the management to contribute the proceeds of the first two nights to the Red Cross fund for war sufferers insured capacity attendance. It was not what might justly be termed a representative Century gathering. It is obvious that the first musical function of the season should attract a very considerable number of prominent musicians and music-lovers whose attention as the year progresses will be largely transferred to other channels of activity. Yet the consensus of their opinion is not to be regarded lightly and, in relation to what they witnessed last Monday, it was eminently favorable.

Last year's precedent seemed to prove convincingly that too much stress on the qualities of the early Century performances is ill advised. It boots little to construe their deficiencies too severely as indicative of future conditions or their strong points infallible guarantees of continued merit. And, paradoxical as it may seem, the Century finds itself in something of a similar position at the beginning of its second year as it did last September. It is again on trial and has yet to demonstrate the extent of its potentialities. Clearly, then, the first performance must be to a degree inconclusive.

Pursuit of Higher Ideals

However this may be, last Monday's showing was distinctly auspicious, vastly better as an artistic entity to the average than the Aborn brothers were able to offer their expectant clientele in the first year of their consulship. This fortunate state of affairs is attributable to the new conditions that have been brought into play by the management in their presumable pursuit of higher ideals.

A shorter season, a smaller and less ambitiously constituted repertoire and the extension of the run of every opera except the first over two weeks on alternate nights, give promise of eliminating certain radical difficulties which sorely beset the course of things last year and occasioned some lively recrimination and much shifting of blame. The new system should insure, for one thing, a degree of preparation far more reasonably proportioned to the requirements of the works presented than has yet been the case. But equally important is the re-



MILTON ABORN

SARGENT ABORN

General Managers of the Century Opera Company Under Whose Direction Its Second Season Was Opened Most Auspiciously on Monday Night, With a Meritorious Performance of Gounod's "Romeo and Juliet"

organization of the artistic personnel, especially as it touches the engagement for stage director of Jacques Coini, as chorus master (and second conductor) of Josiah Zuro, as first conductor of Agide Jacchia; and the energetic reformation of last year's inefficient body of instrumentalists. Mr. Coini is remembered as one of the towers of strength of Hammerstein's Manhattan Opera House, where his consummate craftsmanship was the wholesome envy of Metropolitan patrons. Mr. Zuro's skill in the manipulation of choral forces will likewise be recalled from the days in which he co-operated with Mr. Coini, while his musicianship and innate talents as a conductor have been attested not only at the Manhattan but in the direction of smaller operatic ventures of his own. As for Mr. Jacchia, New York enjoyed a taste of his quality during the short ill-fated season of Italian opera at the Academy of Music some six years ago and found it to its liking. Since that time he has been connected with the Montreal Company.

As to the Opera Itself

"Romeo and Juliet" is not very delectable entertainment and the impulse that brought about its selection as the inaugural offering of the season is not altogether clear. Gounod's musical investiture of Barbier and Carré's pinchbeck perversion of Shakespeare is a dreary thing in its *sucrees*, its sentimentalities, its platitudes. It is enduringly

strange that of all those who have sought to voice in music the most poetic of all love tragedies only Tchaikowsky should have broken the surface and penetrated to the soul. Geraldine Farrar's art could not save the opera at the Metropolitan's revival of it three years ago and it proved soporific at the Century last year. But between that production and this week's there was a vast difference in general character of interpretation.

The outstanding improvement distinguishing this latter performance lay in the sweeping betterment of the ensemble. Mr. Coini has marshalled all his stage forces with fine generalship, and has made of a crude, ligneous, unyielding mass a really pliant, mercurial and elastic body. The chorus, apart from its vocal ameliorations—and it sang with far better tone, amenability to nuance, rhythmic precision and spirit than formerly, thanks to Mr. Zuro's able training—became a dramatic unit in the whole fabric. Its erstwhile leader's immobility was exchanged for convincing vivacity of action, and its movements in the third act, culminating in the general brawl, were calculated and executed with a superb sense of cumulative theatric effect. The consequence of this harmonious working of choral, seconded by revamped orchestral forces, was a degree of homogeneity, vitality, general cohesiveness and even style unprecedented in Century productions. That

REPORT KREISLER'S LIFE IS SACRIFICED IN EUROPEAN WAR

Cablegram from London Lists Eminent Violinist's Name Among Death Toll Resulting from Austria's Repulsing of Russian Attack—Rumor Rothier Crabbé, Huberdeau and Charlier Are Also Killed—Metropolitan to Assemble Company at Genoa for Return Voyage

MORE vividly and in a more personal way than ever before was the overwhelming horror of the European war brought home to the American musical public in the reports cabled across the Atlantic this week that Fritz Kreisler had given his life as a sacrifice to the grim war god. The New York *American* on Sunday printed the following under a London date line of September 12:

"Fritz Kreisler, the distinguished violinist, is dead to-day, having been killed in a recent engagement near Lemberg, Galicia, when the Russian army completely routed the Austrians, according to reports reaching here. At the beginning of the war it was reported that Kreisler was with his regiment at Graz in Styria, and it is said that the celebrated virtuoso was among the troops sent to meet the onrushing Russians near Lemberg."

It has not yet been possible to confirm this report, so meager are the details cabled over as to the actual casualties in the war. It is feared, however, that the eminent violinist may actually have met his death. In the first place, there would be no reason for Austria's enemies to send forth a rumor that a famous musician had fallen on the Austrian side if that were not true, since the news of his death would not serve a strategic purpose such as would that of one of the royal family or of a general in command.

Furthermore, the patriotism and the intrepidity of Mr. Kreisler, who is a lieutenant in Franz Josef's army, are just such as would make the violinist rush forward into a position of danger that might result in his death. Such was the view expressed by one of the staff of C. A. Ellis, who was to have managed Kreisler's tour of America. It was further stated that although the Ellis office was not able to confirm the report, fears were entertained that the violinist might be among the killed. Returning tourists from London added strength to the reports by testifying that rumors of Kreisler's death were current in the English capital at the time of their departure. The violinist's wife had enlisted in the Red Cross of her nation.

Maximilian Kramer, European manager of McCann's Tours, Inc., who returned to New York on Tuesday aboard the *Paladam*, related that he had seen Mrs. Kreisler at the American embassy in Vienna just before she started out for her Red Cross service. Friends of Kreisler told him that Mr. Kreisler was in an Austrian regiment with German forces at Metz.

Various New York papers of September 16 carried the following Associated Press dispatch from St. Louis, dated September 15: "A letter from Albert Stoessel, a St. Louis musician, who is studying in Germany, received by his father here, says: 'Kreisler is guarding bridges in Vienna.'"

Arriving travelers confirm the report

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