

## DRAMATIC DETAILS AS ESSENTIAL AS SINGING IN OPERA, SAYS MURATORE

Distinguished Tenor of Campanini Forces Says That Even a Stage Duel Should Be Historically Accurate—Began His Career as an Actor in Paris

A CONVERSATION with Lucien Muratore, the eminent French tenor, who occupies the same position in the Chicago Opera Company that Caruso does in the Metropolitan, is a very different affair from the usual interview.

"Tell me something that will interest all the people who are waiting to hear you sing," said a representative of MUSICAL AMERICA.

"What shall I talk about?" asked the tenor, "interviewers are all so different. This morning a woman from some paper or other asked me my views on love and marriage and about the war. Could anything be more ridiculous? Why should the opinion of an opera singer on those subjects be of more interest than that of anyone else? But that seems to be the way with the public. A statesman, for instance, will praise a book and then everybody will read it, irrespective of its merits, although the opinion of any young student of literature would probably be of more value.

"But of singing and the stage? Well, I do know something about that. You see, I was fortunate in having a family who were in sympathy with my ambitions and I was given every advantage. I studied everything I could at the Paris Conservatoire, singing, piano, *solfège*, acting. Do you know, I even played the bassoon. And I did it rather well, too!" he added with a laugh.

"I first went on the stage as an actor, in Rejane's company. I was *jeune premier comédien*, which was splendid experience. Of course I had had experience in acting at the Conservatoire. In fact, I took the first prize in my class in acting. The training was most complete in every way down to the smallest detail, such as the wearing of a sword or tossing a cloak over the shoulder. But once actually on the stage, one must study and study in order to grow. I try never to let any detail of the drama be neglected. Take, for instance, the question of stage duels which in nine cases out of ten are merely modern fencing. Now, as a matter of fact, the duel changed with every era just as did the costume. In "Faust" the sword should be long and heavy and the fighting more or less slashing about. But in the period of "Romeo and Juliet" men fought with a rapier in the right hand and a dagger in the left, did you know that?"

The interviewer admitted that he did not. His only knowledge of stage duels was that they were usually very unconvincing.

"What would you?" asked the tenor. "Details of that sort are as important as voice production. You may not notice them if right, but if they are wrong they throw the performance out of key and spoil the atmosphere."

The interviewer mentioned a performance of "The Pearl Fishers" he had seen in France, where a Cingalese singing girl wore a white satin evening gown and high heeled slippers.

### Also a Painter

"Precisely," said Muratore. "I've seen mediaeval operas sung in François Premier settings and East Indian characters wearing American Indian moccasins. They didn't know the difference between *Indoue* and *Indienne*. When Mme. Cavaliere and I were to sing 'Manon' in Paris, we went often to the Louvre and studied all the pictures of the period and I made sketches. You see, that's another advantage in not being merely a singer. These pictures are all my work," and he pointed to some excellent landscapes which were here and there about the room. "I studied all last summer at Waterford with Metcalfe. But about the costumes. The ones I wear as *Roméo* are all made of really old velvet and brocade of the period. Even the colors are antique shades one does not see now.

"There is such a lot that an opera-singer has to do besides mere singing. In fact, I would advise all aspirants for



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Lucien Muratore, the Distinguished French Tenor of the Chicago Opera Company, Who Will be Heard in Leading Rôles at the Lexington Theater

fame in opera, to learn to sing correctly and then to put it in the background. In so many operas, there is comparatively little real singing to be done. Take "Carmen" for instance. Outside of the duet with *Michaëla* and the flower song, *José* has practically no singing, the rest of the part is entirely dramatic. *Eh bien*, I study it over even now, without singing at all. I speak the words as though it were a play and when I have got the proper dramatic intonation, I sing the phrase in the same way. The reason so many singers have poor diction is because their production is poor. If your production is good, you never have to sacrifice a vowel for a tone."

The interviewer saw a striking picture of Muratore as *Canio* lying on the desk. "Are you going to do 'Pagliacci' here?" he asked.

## ENGROSSING CONCERT OF ANTIQUE MUSIC

Mr. Casadesus and Associates  
Assisted by Bonnet Create Sensation

Concert in Aeolian Hall, Friday Afternoon, by Mlle. Gabrielle Gills, Soprano; Joseph Bonnet, Organist, and the Société des Instruments Anciens. The Program:

*Third Symphony, Bruni* (1759-1823). *Noël* (on two Christmas carols from Lorraine), *d'Aquin*; "Elves," *Joseph Bonnet*; *Final, Alexander Guilmant*; *Suite en quatre Parties, Lorenziti* (1740-1794): "Larghetto de Suzanne," *Handel*; "Aria de la Cantale Nuptiale," *Bach*; "La Viollette," *Mozart*; "Air de la Folie" (*Opera Bouffe Platée*), *Rameau*; *Concerto in D, F. G. Händel*.

A distinctly French atmosphere prevailed in Aeolian Hall Friday afternoon when a number of foremost French artists co-operated in a program as valu-

"No," replied the singer, "I shall do in New York only the parts with which I have been identified in Chicago and in Paris. I love 'Paillasse,' but Caruso has made the part his very own here, so why challenge comparison? I am anxious to hear him in 'Lodoletta' because I created in 1906 at the Opéra Comique, the tenor rôle in an opera written on the same story. It was called 'Muguette' and was by Edmond Missat, a lovely opera not unlike 'Mignon'—"

At this point Mme. Cavaliere interrupted.

"*Mon Cher, Monsieur Chose est venu*—"

"Ah! Then I must ask you to excuse me. You see, these first few days are such busy ones. But I hope your readers will be interested in our talk."

JOHN ALAN HAUGHTON.

able as it was interesting. The Bruni Symphony was rendered by this select quatuor des violes and the clavecin (played by that young but masterful exponent of the ancient precursor of the pianoforte, Mme. Regine Patorni) with exquisite finish and unparalleled subtlety of tone. To all appearances the afternoon's palm was carried off by Monsieur Bonnet, whose superb playing of the Aeolian organ evoked storms of applause, the audience insistently demanding encore after encore. And, in truth, one could but admire the French organist's supreme command of the registers and his striking ability in pedaling. Lorenziti's *Suite en quatre Parties* gave Henri Casadesus—the eminent virtuoso on the viole d'amour and the founder of this estimable organization—the opportunity to display unforseen possibilities of his instrument. Mlle. Gabrielle Gills, ever the expressive and spiritual artist, rendered her group of well-chosen numbers with all the intensity of feeling and musical expressiveness with which she has come to be identified. The attendance of an entire program becomes almost an impossibility for the critic. So here also we had to forego the pleasure by listening to the concluding Händel Concerto in D, played by the organ, the quatuor of violes and the clavecin. A very appreciative audience completely filled the hall.

O. P. J.

## ALTSCHULER GIVES 'COQ D'OR' EXCERPTS

First Hearing of Rimsky Work Brings Disappointment—Other Premières

Russian Symphony Society, Modest Altschuler, Conductor. Concert, Carnegie Hall, Evening, Jan. 19. Soloist, Sophie Braslau, Contralto. The Program:

*Jurassovsky, Symphonic Poem, "The Phantoms"; Spendiarioff Legend, "The Sermon of Beda," Miss Braslau and Orchestra; Scriabine, "Poème Extase"; Rachmaninoff, Vocalise; Stravinsky, Suite, "The Shepherdess and the Faun," Miss Braslau and Orchestra; Rimsky-Korsakoff, Four Musical Tableaux from "The Golden Cockerel."*

Reflecting on the splendor of the orchestration of "Scheherazade," the writer of these lines has on several occasions told himself that had Rimsky-Korsakoff been able to create themes one-sixth as good as his genius for orchestrating them he would have been a great composer. In view of this reflection it was something of a shock to listen to the above program last week and arrive at the conclusion that this composer's invention was the strongest of anything in the list. Of Mr. Altschuler's offerings—all first time in New York with the exception of Mr. Scriabine's "Ecstasy"—Rimsky-Korsakoff's musical ideas, as expressed in the suite of excerpts from his "Coq d'Or," were the most salient. All of which is intended to convey the idea once more that these Russian "first times" are sorry specimens of contemporary musical creativity. And when it is understood that the four tableaux from Rimsky's "Golden Cockerel" are music much inferior to the gorgeous "Scheherazade" it is possible to gauge the worthlessness of other items that were introduced to us last Saturday. One also feels that if the rest of "Coq d'Or" is not better than the excerpts heard at this concert the Metropolitan will add a delightful failure to its list in producing it this winter.

Mr. Altschuler conducted these various scores with devotion, as though he believed in them. And his orchestra, in excellent trim, has not played better in a long time. But even this could do little to interest the audience in the banalities of Jurassovsky's "Phantoms," which, strangely enough, begins most interestingly, as though it were going to be a serious impressionistic poem, but soon lapses into the succulently melodic, where the composer is engulfed in commonplaceness. Scriabine's poem has fine moments, but its meaningless yearnings, its unrequited soul languishes in pools of harmonies that irritate and rhythms that become tiresome. It was splendidly played. The Rachmaninoff piece, finely orchestrated by Conductor Altschuler, is inconsequential. A program note informed the uninitiated that the composer could find no poem for this melody and so wrote it without words. Thinking of Schumann's melody for Heine's "Du bist wie eine Blume" after hearing Rachmaninoff's melody, the information provokes a few thousand smiles!

The Spendiarioff legend was dull and conventional; Miss Braslau worked to give it meaning and was applauded heartily for her effort. One hoped for better things in Stravinsky's suite for voice and orchestra. And again one was disappointed. The contralto sang it admirably—it is none too well written for the voice—and characterized the three movements, as much as it is possible to when music lacks physiognomy. She was recalled a half dozen times at the close. The applause was all for her, not for Stravinsky. When this suite was written we do not know; it can scarcely be a youthful work of the brilliant composer of "Petrouchka," for it is not in the idiom of his early symphony, which Mr. Altschuler played for us in 1916. Therefore, it would seem to be a work written in a moment of weakness; perhaps a *pièce d'occasion* for some singer? In any case, after hearing it we believe sincerely that it is the duty of those who would have us esteem Stravinsky, as we do for his "Fire-Bird" and "Petrouchka," not to produce such things as his "Shepherdess and the Faun." They harm his reputation mightily.

A. W. K.