

## PREMIÈRES OF JEANNE D'ARC AND "BÉATRICE" CHIEF EVENTS OF OPERATIC SEASON IN PARIS

"Jeanne" Conducted by the Composer, Raymond Roze—Work Gains Signal Success—Marthe Chénal Again Triumphs in Title Rôle—Graceful Arias Predominate in Music of "Beatrice"—Opera Given Beautiful Setting—George Houpt Describes Conditions in Italy—American Soldiers to Sing Christmas Carols in Paris This Yuletide

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THE music event of the season took place on Sunday evening with the Paris première of "Jeanne d'Arc," the opera composed by the Englishman, Raymond Roze. The piece was first heard at Covent Garden, London, the year preceding the war, and if stories be correct, it met with rather indifferent success. Not so with Paris. One does not have to apologize for a success, but the launching of such a work in war time, the presence of so many military men in the audience, all helped to carry the opera and, though the piece does not need such drawing cards, the production was certainly made more brilliant and the success the more striking by reason of these factors.

Critics find that Roze shows the influence of Bizet, Wagner and even the more modern school of dissonances, yet from beginning to end "Jeanne" is replete with morsels that are masterpieces. The music is young and by that I mean that it is full of life and strength. Not one passage denotes anything save virility. The whole thing goes with such a dash that one is left breathless. The ballet is charming, the prayers of the heroine full of religious fervor and the music is war-like even in its piano passages.

The costumes and part of the scenery were brought from England, and the stage setting was fine; in fact, from the war horses to the petted greyhound, nothing was left undone to make the picture full of reality and life. We rather looked for the stake or a suggestion of the death tradition says "la Pucelle" met with, but Roze chose to close his opera with the scene where the army is betrayed, and the numerous tableaux show *Jeanne* in admirable poses, as woman and warrior. There are three long acts and eleven tableaux.

Marthe Chénal sang the part of the peasant *Jeanne* and, as the rôle is a kind not attempted before by this artist-tragedienne, at first the audience could not become resigned to Chénal, the beautiful, the dashing, the impassioned, assuming a part that must be religious first of all. Chénal rose to the occasion, however, as she always does and, while the music is not particularly suited to her voice, she did magnificently and made little *Jeanne* not only a farm child inspired by the Virgin, but through her the girl became a part of the military life, the inspiration of men and women of a frivolous court. The other parts were sung by Delmas, Rambaud, Wague, Sizes, Philippe, Narcon and Franz. Zambelli led the ballet, assisted by Aveline. Roze conducted his orchestra and after frequent calls at the end of each act the composer had to turn and recognize the applause. He refused to go on the stage, however, evidently preferring to thank his audience at closer range.

Chazel as "Beatrice"

Another new work has just been brought out. I refer to "Beatrice," the music by André Messager, the libretto by Robert de Flers, taken from the poem of Charles Nodier. The new opera was given at the Opéra Comique, and may prove a success. The music is charming, full of graceful arias, the duos vibrate with passion, the serenade is seductive and the "love music" is as descriptive

as anything that has been composed for fifty years. It is a pity that Messager did not choose a worthier setting for his thoughts, however, for while the music goes on peacefully and the play unfolds



Photo by Claude Harris  
Raymond Roze, the Composer of "Jeanne d'Arc," Which Enjoyed a Signal Success at the Opéra in Paris

itself most harmoniously, things are well enough, but it is the association of religion with irreligion that becomes revolting.

This is the story of "Beatrice," rubbing off its vicious corners: A young girl, who is about to take her last vows in a convent, prays that her old playmate *Lorenzo* may return unhurt from war. *Lorenzo* appears on the scene and by force carries *Beatrice* off—though one has a suspicion that the girl is a willing victim. The Blessed Virgin to whom *Beatrice* has prayed, comes from the altar and takes the place of the novitiate in the convent. *Beatrice* soon finds that her lover is not the right kind and revenges herself on *Lorenzo* by adopting a life of debauch. In an orgy at which *Beatrice* and *Lorenzo* assist, one of the sailors who is chasing *Beatrice* for a kiss is killed by a rival. In the uproar *Beatrice* hears the chant of the other young novitiates and flies back to the cloister. The Blessed Virgin restores her old place to the repentant one, and *Beatrice* falls at the feet of the statue.

Nothing is left to the imagination so far as stage setting is concerned, and the acting is excellent throughout, the color scheme perfect. A new singer, Yvonne Chazel, takes the part of *Beatrice*. Chazel is good looking; she shows promise of becoming a rare actress, but there is certainly a great deal of the student in her yet, and her voice, while an agreeable one, is not finished or well posed. The other artists reflected great credit on the composer and their school—Charles Fontaine, who essayed the ungrateful rôle of *Lorenzo*, and Mathieu-Lutz, who sings with great beauty and composure. The melodies were all gracefully handled by the orchestra—easily the finest in Paris.

Victor Gille gave the first piano recital

of the season at Salle des Etats-Unis Wednesday with a program of Bach, Scarlatti, Beethoven, Schumann and Chopin numbers.

### Italian Season Languishes

George Houpt, the American baritone, has just returned from Italy, where he spent several months. In speaking of music conditions in that country he remarked: "While there is some activity in Milan, Genoa and perhaps Florence, music is not flourishing in the once land of song. Almost nothing is being played save Mascagni's 'Lodeletta,' Puccini's 'Rondine' and Giordano's 'André Chenier.' There are few companies organized, and those on the road play but one opera. For instance, they give 'Rondine' a fortnight in Milan, then, when sure that the public has heard and no more time need be wasted, they go on the road, giving anything from one night stands to one week. It is economical to give but the one opera, for it obviates hauling about a great deal of scenery and costuming.



André Messager, Whose Opera, "Beatrice," Has Just Been Produced in Paris

"As for salaries, I'm afraid they don't amount to much as a whole. Musicians are content with smaller prices than in America and, of course, they live more simply, too. If the war continues during the winter, or rather if the same activity that has been going on the past month continues, then there'll be no opera giving. There are almost no embusqués in Italy. On my return to Genoa I could

not find any of my old associates, for all had entered military service, the big musicians as well as the minor. The teachers are generally past military age, but they are engaged in whatever they can do for national defense. They give lessons when there are pupils, and when peace is declared they intend taking up their classes again, for the war has far from killed the love of music among them."

George Houpt was soloist at the Army and Navy Club Tuesday evening. The American soldier shows good discrimination in his choice of music and nothing put before him passes unappreciated. The men are generally in the early twenties, but they are by no means childish in their fondness for songs of a certain simple kind, and when Mr. Houpt sang the other evening the soldiers listened most attentively. They don't want to hear too much of music that is either heavy or light, but a little of both is a good rule on programs. All sorts of chorus songs are sung by the Sammies when they meet, and they are preparing for the Christmas carols that for the first time in history will be sung here Christmas Eve. For a month singers have been going Sundays to the Red Cross to drill for the entertainment. The French like the idea, and are joining the choruses, though as yet only American songs have been learned. There will be a dozen bodies of singers to start at ten o'clock in the evening, Dec. 24, and each portion of the city will be visited from that hour till dawn. The Red Cross ambulances will be used to carry the singers, and no time will be lost in getting over this city of big distances.

LEONORA RAINES.

### Portland (Ore.) Symphony Gives Third Concert of Season

PORTLAND, ORE., Dec. 13.—The Portland Symphony Orchestra gave its third concert of the season in the Auditorium recently. The audience was exceptionally large and enthusiastic. Mose Christensen won much praise for the skillful manner in which he conducted Beethoven's Fifth Symphony and Handel's "Largo." The latter was made doubly effective by augmenting the orchestra with the big Auditorium organ, played by William Robinson Boone.

A. B.

### Report Disastrous Musical Conditions in Milan

According to a private communication received at the office of MUSICAL AMERICA, the present musical season in Milan, Italy, seems to have been quite disastrous. Following the complete omission of this year's season at La Scala, now comes the news that the Dal Verme Opera, the rival opera in Milan, has also abruptly closed its season instead of continuing until April. Poor business for the last few months is reported to have been the primary reason for the sudden termination.

### Courboin Gives Admirable Recital in Grand Rapids

GRAND RAPIDS, MICH., Dec. 17.—Charles Courboin, the Belgian organist, gave a recital on Dec. 7 at St. Mark's Pro-Cathedral, under the auspices of the St. Cecilia Society. Presenting a program of works of many composers, Mr. Courboin exhibited splendid technique, great taste in registration and fine interpretative ability.

E. H.

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