

When Campanini and Maurel Stirred New York; "Touring the Provinces" With a Noted Troupe

Max Strakosch Introduces "Aïda" at Academy of Music in the Eventful Season of '73-'74—Adventures on the Road with Carreño, Sauret and Other Artists—The "Hungarian Nightingale's" Strange Retinue—Precarious Days for the Traveling Company—Reminiscences of a Distinguished Musician

By EDUARDO MARZO

THE interest of New York music-lovers during the memorable season of 1873-74 seemed to center in the opera and certainly there was good cause for it. Max Strakosch had at the Academy of Music an extraordinary company of artists and among many new works produced two operas which made an epoch in this country.

That was the winter in which Italo Campanini made his first appearance in America and I remember well the enthusiastic reception they accorded him. He sang *Gennaro* in "Lucrezia Borgia," which was considered his best rôle, Maresi, soprano; Annie Louise Cary, contralto, and Nanetti supporting him. The next great début was that of Maurel in "Ernani," and he also made a tremendous sensation.

In December, 1873, "Aïda" had its first performance in America, with the following cast: Torriani, *Aïda*; Cary, *Amneris*; Campanini, *Rhadames*; Maurel, *Amonasro*, and Nanetti, *Ramfis*. During the following March "Lohengrin" was produced for the first time in Italian, with Nillson, Cary, Campanini, Nanetti and del Puente, a newcomer at the time.

I must not forget Capoul, another member of the Strakosch company, who made quite a sensation, especially in light rôles such as "Mignon," "Fra Diavolo," etc. Later on he became a "matinée idol."

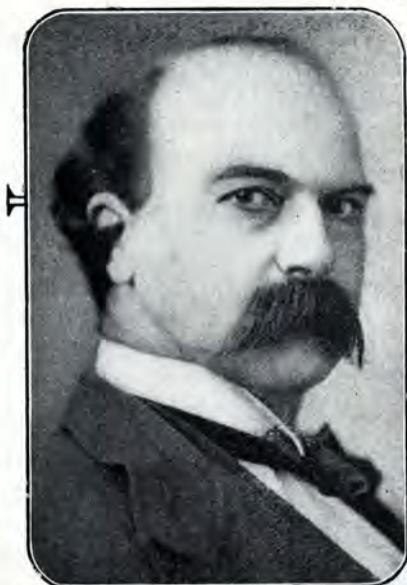
While the Strakosch Opera Company was having its well deserved success at the Academy of Music, the Kellogg English Opera drew large audiences to another theater, and toward the spring of 1874 Max Maretzek started an opera season at the Grand Opera House, with artists just come from Havana, among whom were Pauline Lucca, Tamberlick, the world-famed tenor, and Ilma di Murska. Another great attraction of that winter was the appearance of Salvini, the great Italian tragedian, who also played at the Academy of Music, alternating with the opera performances.

Both Tamberlick and Salvini I had known in Italy and because of my association also with Max Strakosch I had the opportunity to meet almost all of the other artists and know them intimately. The delights of that season shall never be forgotten. To spend almost every evening in the company of one or another of these great artists was an experience replete with delightful emotions for a young musician.

Concerts Also Flourish

All these attractions did not seem to detract from the success and enthusiasm of the concert season. The Philharmonic had its usual orchestral concerts, always so well patronized. Of other concerts I recall those given by Matzka, Dr. Leopold Damrosch, Bergner, the 'cellist; Anna Mehlig, pianist, and Antoinette Sterling, contralto. I also recall those of Alfred Pease, Myron Whitney, the bass, and Henrietta Beebe. In the summer of 1874 Theodore Thomas resumed his orchestral concerts at the Central Park Garden, with Dudley Buck as assistant conductor.

It was during that summer that Signor de Vivo, who had been until then an advance agent for several impresarios, undertook the rôle of manager and organized a concert company with Ilma de Murska as the principal star. He engaged in Europe, Braga, the noted Italian 'cellist and composer; the couple, Sauret-Carreño (they were married then), and in New York Theodore Habelmann, the tenor; Ferranti, the buffo singer, and myself as conductor and



Above—Tommaso Salvini. Below—Teresa Carreño, Emile Sauret

Above—Gaetano Braga. Below—Ilma de Murska

accompanist. This tour, which, like many of Signor de Vivo's ventures, did not end very happily, began in New York on Sept. 24 at Steinway Hall. Following the opening concerts in New York, the company visited Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, Syracuse, Rochester, Buffalo, Cleveland, Dayton, Milwaukee, Chicago, St. Louis and many smaller cities. We returned to New York at the beginning of December for a special concert at the Park Theater and for two weeks' rest, as the manager put it, but, in fact, to recuperate financially, as business had been poor almost everywhere. On Dec. 18 we went to Portland, Me., and thence we started once more for the West, touching Watertown, N. Y., and Ogdensburg. Several of the company became thoroughly discouraged on this last trip for the reason that our salaries were far behind, and I managed to obtain a release from Signor de Vivo and gladly returned to my friends and pupils in New York.

For the benefit of my readers I shall give a brief description of the artists who made up that company.

"The Hungarian Nightingale"

First and foremost was Mme. Ilma de Murska, "the Hungarian Nightingale," as Signor de Vivo was wont to call her. She was a great coloratura singer, probably one of the best of her time, with a delightful voice and considerable power also. As one of the most prominent critics, which I am pleased to quote, remarked: "While she uses the voice thus like an instrument, she is always faithful to the sentiment and the dramatic requirement of her part."

The reason, perhaps, that she did not meet with more success was an utter lack of sympathy both in appearance and manner. However, another paper of the day, speaking of her appearance, said: "Her features are too small and there

is a drawn, worn look about her eyes, but the melting magic of melody inclines the eye to favor her and such is the influence of her voice that she almost seems pretty before her song is through."

Her repertoire was similar to that of Carlotta Patti, with the addition of the arias from "Semiramide," "Linda" and the "Air Hongrois" by Dopler, with flute obbligato, which she sang faultlessly and I can vouch also for her beautiful singing of Schubert's "Serenade," "The Angel's Serenade," both with 'cello obbligato by Braga, and the "Ave Maria" by Gounod, with violin obbligato by Sauret. At the Brooklyn Philharmonic concert she sang "Ah! Perfido," Beethoven, and received unstinted praise from the public and the press.

Whenever I think of Mme. de Murska I cannot fail to recall that she always had accompanying her on her trips a parrot, a *dueña* and a Count (her *homme d'affaire, soi-disant*), who habitually wore the undress uniform of a Hungarian officer. We had many comical experiences in our trip because of Madame's retinue, which made quite a sensation among the people of the small towns we visited.

Our programs were arranged very much on the plan still in vogue at the time, with the exception that the concerted numbers were principally instrumental, such as trios by Carreño, Sauret and Braga, and duos by the couple, Sauret-Carreño. Occasionally only Mme. de Murska and Ferranti sang the duets from "Crispino e la Comare" or from "L'Elisir d'Amore."

Touring the Provinces

As a rule, all the accompaniments, both for the vocalists and instrumentalists, were played by me, but in some few cities of the West we engaged local orchestras, which I led, and a very lively time I had with many of the players,

who had no idea whatsoever of how to accompany the voice. In one town I remember calling to account the flute-player, who became highly offended and left right then and there, and it took all of Signor de Vivo's *savoir faire* to make him return. He happened to be the only flute-player in that town. I succeeded in getting them to accompany most of the pieces fairly well, after hours of rehearsing. However, in one instance the local orchestra insisted on playing the "Shadow Song" from "Dinorah" in strict waltz-time and, of course, this was in horrible conflict with Mme. de Murska's tempo and interpretation. To avoid further trouble, I decided to do without the orchestra for that number at least.

Of the other members of this company I have little to add. Carreño and Sauret played somewhat better than when they were with the Patti-Mario troupe. Signor Braga, for many years well known in Paris, was a master of his instrument, with a good singing tone. Altogether a fine artist, but a very boisterous man! Of Herr Theodore Habelmann I will quote what was said in a Rochester paper, as it gives the real impression that I have retained of him: "Habelmann's voice has not changed, though his face looks much older and his manner in concert is simply funereal."

As a contrast to Habelmann's manner, Signor Ferranti kept the audience in a continual uproar of laughter from the moment he appeared on the stage. His singing of "Femine, Femine" from "Cenerentola" was extremely comical; in fact, he was the only bright and lively spot in all our programs.

Signor de Vivo was in for business and did not give us any rest. Instead of five concerts a week, for which we were engaged, we often had to play seven, including Sunday concerts and two matinées, and these often in as many different towns.

Disbanding the Troupe

Such work was beyond reason and this, together with the lack of congeniality in the company, made the situation almost intolerable for most of us. The first one to give up and leave the company was Habelmann. Shortly after this I left and, if I remember correctly, Signor Ferranti followed us soon after. After a few more cities in northern New York State the company went South, and in New Orleans Mme. de Murska sang in opera with the French opera company of that city.

The following winter Signor de Vivo took Mme. de Murska to Australia, with Carreño and Sauret, and I believe did a fairly good business.

After my return to New York, I resumed my work at the New York Conservatory of Music and private teaching and coaching. However, during the remainder of that season I had occasion to play at a number of private and public concerts. I recall in particular one given at the hall of the East Side Association, Eighty-sixth Street and Third Avenue, by Clara Louise Kellogg in conjunction with Matilda Toedt, violinist; Miss Luckardt, pianist, and Signor Giorgio Ronconi, who was at that time residing and teaching in New York.

Another notable concert of that season was given at Steinway Hall by the New York Conservatory of Music, of which I was the conductor. At this concert a quartet by Beethoven was played by Edward Mollenhauer, J. Lewenberg, G. Matzka and F. Ferriere, and the Schumann Quintet, by the same players, with the addition of August Arnold.

Capital Stirred by "Carillon" at Concert by Damrosch Forces

WASHINGTON, D. C., Feb. 26.—At the third concert of the series by the New York Symphony Orchestra, Walter Damrosch introduced a novelty in the form of a dramatic reading with musical setting. This was "Carillon," by the Belgian poet, Emile Cammaerts, with music by Sir Edward Elgar, interpreted by Frances Starr. The innovation was enthusiastically received. Miss Starr gave the poem a rhythmic reading, well attuned to the orchestral interpretation of the courageous and triumphant spirit of Belgium. The symphony of the evening was Rabaud's in E Minor. The remaining numbers on the program were two Debussy compositions, "L'Après-midi d'un Faune" and "Fêtes."

W. H.

Graveure Begins Extended Tour

Louis Graveure, the baritone, left New York recently for an extended concert tour which will take him as far South as Texas. Returning North, he will sing in Washington, a return engagement, as he has been heard in the Capital very recently. Bryceson Treharne, the composer, will be his accompanist.