

Pasquale Amato Tells How He Obtained First Engagement

Famous Baritone of the Metropolitan Opera House Sees Work of Musical Alliance as Great Aid in Securing Small Opera Houses Throughout Country—Need for Houses Where Young Singers May Be Heard—Co-ordination of Musical Interests Great Objective of Present Time—Entertainment and Education Must Go Hand in Hand if Nation Is to Attain Highest Development

STUDENTS who become discouraged over the small fees they receive for their first appearances may reap consolation from the fact that Pasquale Amato, the famous baritone of the Metropolitan Opera Company, was paid ten lire for his first important engagement, and that he received no compensation at all for his first appearance in opera.

"How did you get your first engagement, Mr. Amato?" was the question that evoked some interesting memories of the baritone's early career.

Mr. Amato swung around in his chair, with the quick, responsive smile that is one of the charms of his fine, sympathetic countenance.

"It was in Naples," he said, "when I was twenty years old. That was just twenty years ago; I shall be forty tomorrow. There was a religious festival in progress and I was engaged as an extra singer in one of the churches. I received ten lire, \$2, for singing, and I assure you that—like other young students—I was grateful for the opportunity. There was a bass singer in the church, an elderly man with a very fine voice, and he became interested in me and took me to one of the smaller opera houses for an audition. After hearing me, the manager agreed to put me on in 'Traviata,' so you see my church engagement was really responsible for getting me my first operatic appearance. What did I get for singing in 'Traviata'? I will tell you. As I have said, it was one of the small houses and the management was far from wealthy. Very high boots were the operatic fashion at that time and I was provided with a fine high pair for my appearance. The manager said: 'I cannot pay you anything for this appearance, but you may have the boots.'

"And the engagement cost me a barrel of wine," Mr. Amato laughed, "because I had promised my friend of the bass voice a barrel of wine if he secured me an appearance. He was one of the best friends of my early days, and gave me much advice that I later found invaluable.

The Need for Small Opera Houses

"Now, if I had been singing in America such an incident could not have taken place, for we have no small opera houses. Instead of the thirty or more small opera houses that are open in Europe for the young singer of ability, there are here two great opera companies, the Metropolitan and the Chicago. And these are houses designed for the best, for mature art; with the best of Europe and this country waiting to be heard, they cannot make a place for the untried and untrained singer. A place for every worthy young singer is one of the great results which I believe will follow the organization of the Musical Alliance, due to the farsighted vision of John C. Freund. The reason for the indifference that has prevailed in this country toward music is not far to seek. There has been no organization, no tying up of musical interests, no co-ordination of effort to make the public realize what a vast and interesting group, quite from a business standpoint, are the musicians of the country.



Mimi Amato



Pasquale Amato, Aged Twenty



Salvatore Amato



Francesco Amato



Pasquale Amato, Aged Forty. Observe the Striking Similarity in Pose of These Two Photographs, Taken Twenty Years Apart

Pasquale Amato, Eminent Baritone of the Metropolitan Opera Company, and Three of His Brothers Who Are Now Serving in the Artillery, Infantry and Quartermaster Corps of the Italian Army

"Organized in the manner that Mr. Freund has outlined in the plans of the Musical Alliance, the musical interests can make the people realize how important we are from a commercial viewpoint. The establishment of a chain of small opera houses, in Cleveland, in Pittsburgh, in Omaha and other cities will mean the springing up of many new industries. Take the fabrics that are used in costuming, for example. Artists here find the greatest difficulty in securing the fabrics of the periods in dressing their rôles. In Europe one has, in the past, been able to go to any one of forty or fifty houses that specialize in weaving such fabrics as the operatic artist requires. America can do the same thing, will do the same thing, when the demand arises here.

Educational Side of Music

"The young American singer must be given opportunity to learn stage deportment, to gain the experience that comes from frequent appearances in different rôles before audiences. This cannot be had in \$6 opera. But in the smaller opera houses one would not expect to hear a Farrar or a Galli-Curci or a Caruso, or see such stage settings as the Metropolitan presents. But one might hear good music and fresh young voices for from \$1 to \$2, and the entertainment would be inspiring and educational for both audience and singers.

"Once the educational side of music is impressed thoroughly on the public mind of this country there will be no question of difficulty in securing public funds to maintain it. Look at the elaborate expenditures for public parks, for schools, for a dozen other civic and public enterprises. There will be quite as lavish provision made for music once the fact has taken root in the minds of public men that music is an important factor

from an educational and commercial as well as an artistic viewpoint."

A Friend of "The Movies"

Mr. Amato is an ardent advocate of the "movies" as an educational factor in our public life, and points to the evolution that the picture-play has undergone in the last few years as proof that the same strides will be made in presenting good music at popular prices, once there is a general realization of its importance.

"I go to the 'movies' quite as much for study as I do for recreation," said Mr. Amato. "As an artist I learn many valuable lessons from the film play. He who strives to convey perfect art, the dream that is within him, has a wonderful medium in the world of the films.

"I wish you might say for me how heartily I endorse the proposed establishment of the National Conservatory of Music, one of the aims of the Musical Alliance. In this connection let me tell you of an incident that happened one year when the Metropolitan company was appearing in Atlanta. A young girl wrote me that she was very anxious to have me hear her voice and I made arrangements to do so. She came and sang for me, then waited anxiously for what I had to say. It was very pitiful, for she had a mere thread of a voice, absolutely hopeless from a professional viewpoint. I told her so, as kindly as I could, and she burst into tears, telling me how she had worked and how her teacher had said she had a great voice that would some day make her famous.

"In a National Conservatory, endowed by the Government, such a girl might learn the truth about her voice instead of being deluded by mistaken friends, and her efforts would be directed toward avenues where she really had ability. On the other hand, a National Conservatory would provide opportunity for the

struggling student of real merit, who too often becomes discouraged and disheartened after realizing how expensive is the road the young singer must take before coming to places where there are financial rewards."

Organization and business methods are by no means idle words in Mr. Amato's life. The great baritone is a good man of business, himself, and at one time did much purchasing here for the business house of his brothers in Italy. Now all four of his brothers are serving with the colors, two of them in the artillery, one in the infantry, and the fourth in the Quartermaster's Corps of the Italian Army. The Amato family is one that gives a good account of itself wherever it is called on to serve.

"I am certain that it is not a very long time ahead; at least it will not be very long after the war is ended, until we have smaller opera houses established all over the country here," said the great singer. "Think of such schools of experience as we had in Milan, where Toscanini and Gatti-Casazza and I worked together. Think of the development of art in this country when we may see whole families attending an evening of music, as they now go to the 'movies,' to be entertained and educated. And that time is coming. Beyond all doubt or question it is coming."

MAY STANLEY.

Dubinsky Wins Favor in Brooklyn

Vladimir Dubinsky, the 'cellist, was richly awarded with applause on the evening of March 12, when he appeared as one of the soloists at the Red Cross concert at Bay Ridge High School, Brooklyn. He played the Handel Largo, Davidoff's "At the Fountain," Cui's Cantabile, Rimsky-Korsakoff's "A Song of India" and Popper's "Spanish Dance."

ERNEST HUTCHESON, Pianist

Direction: MRS. HERMAN LEWIS, Inc.

Aeolian Hall, New York