

Classic Walls of La Scala Resound with American Airs at Allies' Concert

Military Bands of Italy, France, Great Britain and the United States Unite in a Thrilling Event—
Milan Showers Flowers on the Musicians—Our Singers Continue to Win Success in
Italian Opera House—Alvina Dianette Triumphs with Serafin—Devotion of Toscanini to
War Stricken Colleges Makes Deep Impression

By E. HERBERT-CESARI

Milan, March 15, 1918.

THE greatest friend that lyric artists and musicians can claim to-day is the famous conductor, Arturo Toscanini. As a fact, he has proved himself to be the proverbial "friend indeed" in this time of great need which has been so keenly felt by many singers and musicians since the outbreak of war.

Toward the close of the year 1916 Toscanini organized a series of operatic performances at the Dal Verme Theater and finally an open-air performance at the Arena. Many thousands of pounds were tilled and subsequently distributed in monthly remittances to those artists who it was considered had been the hardest hit by the war. The funds then gathered having become exhausted and the displacing of artists become more acute, Toscanini has inaugurated a series of orchestral concerts at the large hall of the Verdi Conservatorium here and will devote the net proceeds to a further subsidiary fund for needy artists. So far eight concerts have been given. The name of Toscanini is a distinct attraction. It is coupled with efficiency and seriousness in point of performances, hence the capacity audiences.

The first of this series of concerts was given Jan. 6. At every concert Toscanini is given a hearty reception, the applause being directed not only to the artist, but also to the philanthropist and to the patriot; to the artist, because of his extraordinary temperament; to the philanthropist because he has ever in mind the difficulties which artists have to contend with to-day in consequence of the war; to the patriot, because such he has shown to be by the indefatigable activity which he has unfolded in the national cause—that is, as much as the penetration of art into the bellicose sphere is admitted. The soldiers have not forgotten what he did to divert their minds at the Teatro del Soldato; civilians have not forgotten the Monte Santo incident, which gained him a silver war medal.

In an equitable spirit of eclecticism has Toscanini arranged the programs of this series of concerts. That of the third contained Beethoven's Third Symphony and in that of the eighth, given on Feb. 24, the Symphony in D of Haydn, both pieces being highly appreciated by the audience. The other items of this last mentioned concert were Smetana's "Ultava"; Pizzetti's "Overture per una farsa tragica," which, although ingeniously written, is not considered rich in inventiveness; Rimsky-Korsakoff's "Grande Pasqua Russe," whose music reproduces the pomp of liturgic ceremonies; Martucci's Canzone dei Ricordi,

the vocal part of which was ably sung by Roessinger; Respighi's "Fontane di Roma" ("Fountains of Rome"), which was also played at the sixth concert and scored a distinct success.

Considering the spontaneous reception accorded to Respighi's work, a few words of comment will not be out of place. It is a keen composition in the free style, but solidly constructed on most expressive and easily recognizable themes. There is a phantastic originality in the harmonization. There is no trace of



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Arturo Toscanini, the Famous Conductor, Who Is Giving Concerts in Milan to Aid War-Stricken Artists

banality in the work, and the composer eschews the defects common to many supporters of the modern impressionistic school.

Allied Bands at La Scala

The most complete fusion of music, patriotism and charity was effected through the concert of Allied Bands which was given at the Teatro alla Scala on Sunday afternoon, March 3—military bands of the United States, Great Britain, France and Italy.

There was a festal feeling in the air long before reaching Plaza della Scala, which was adorned with flags of the Allies. Inside the theater flowers and flags were amassed in countless numbers. Crammed to overflowing, it was a memorable spectacle. Yet, looking down upon this seething multitude, a melancholy thought involuntarily flashed through one's mind, that not so many miles from all this seeming forgetfulness a part of the world tragedy was being played out to the bitter end.

The bands occupied the whole of the immense stage. The Royal Carabinieri in full dress uniform opened out the festa with a slashing rendering of the Marcia Reale, rousing the house to a

high pitch of enthusiasm. They next played the "William Tell" Overture and the Overture of "Sigurd." Maestro Luigi Cajoli conducted.

The American band of the Eighteenth Infantry Regiment was the next to play. We are told that the regiment itself is already in the trenches in France. As they came forward they were given a hearty welcome. A boyish conductor, Darcy, led them. They played the American hymn, which is fast growing into favor. Italy is quite sensible of the help extended to her by magnanimous America. Some characteristic American airs were next played and a stirring Sousa march, which were warmly applauded. Some ragtime pieces were also played. Isn't it wonderful! "Tipperary" and ragtime at La Scala!

Mlle. Roch of the Comédie Française recited "L'âme de Rome," written expressly by Richepin. The poetry was a happy exaltation of the immortality of Rome. Flowers in abundance were literally showered on Mlle. Roch and the Garde Républicaine struck up at that moment the "Marseillaise," in which the public joined lustily. Balay, the conductor, then skilfully took them through the difficulties of the Overture of Berlioz's "Benvenuto Cellini." They also played a piece of his own composition, "Armorique," a Breton rhapsody. At this juncture Mlle. Roch reappeared swathed in a large French tricolor, while the Garde struck up the "Salut au Drapeau." The greatest impression, however, was made when she recited "En avant, en avant" of Déroulède, to the insinuating accompaniment of the drums. The effect which these patriotic verses had on the people was electrifying to say the least, and everyone felt the impellent necessity of joining in the refrain "En avant, en avant," as an outlet to the already overflowing feeling of patriotism and fraternal sympathy. The "Marseillaise" was repeated and the applause redoubled in vigor.

As they came forward, the 250 members of the Coldstream, Grenadier, Irish, Scotch and Welsh Guards cut a very handsome figure in their flaming scarlet and gold uniforms and enormous busbies. Major Mackenzie Royan was their conductor. They afforded a glimpse of the happy halcyon days, which seem so far away now. After playing the staid National Anthem, they gave three dances of Edward German and then "Tipperary," which the public was evidently expecting. Everybody more or less joined in the refrain, "It's a long way . . ." In point of pronunciation it must have been the funniest "Tipperary" chorus ever heard. Yet it was sung with such right good will that even the grave conductor was moved and conducted facing the audience.

A genteel surprise came from the Guards by their playing of the Garibaldi hymn, so dear to Italians. They might have been Italians themselves for the spirited way in which they read it. The audience was delighted and robust "evivas" resounded everywhere. The concert closed by the bands playing the "Brabançonne."

The kaleidoscopic medley was made all the more interesting by the conspicuous appearance in their characteristic costume of the Dames of the Red Cross. It is the first time that the institution has permitted them thus to appear in public. Their duty was to sell elegant programs.

After the spectacle was over the visiting bands had to literally forge their way through the enormous throng which had collected in Piazza della Scala awaiting their exit, in Piazza del Duomo and in the glass-roofed thoroughfare called "Galleria Vittorio Emanuele" (which links up these two piazzas). With the Royal Carabinieri Band at their head, they waded through the Galleria. Flowers were showered on them from the balconies and windows above.

The net proceeds of the concert, reaching over £4000 sterling, are to be devoted to the respective Red Cross funds.

In the evening the Prefect of Milan

invited the Consuls and the officers of the bands to a dinner at the "Cova." He made a short speech of welcome, to which the bandmasters responded, thanking the Milanese for the cordial reception accorded them.

The following afternoon the Allied Bands gave a concert at the Lirico Theater exclusively for the wounded and disabled soldiers.

Milan again turned out on the afternoon of March 5 at its gayest to greet a distinct novelty—an open-air concert in the Piazza del Duomo. The attraction was enhanced by the fact that the Allied Bands, who had just created a furore at La Scala, were the executants.

In a locale at Piazza Fratelli Bandiera the band members were entertained by the civil and military authorities, the ladies of the executive committee and by the representatives of the Italo-Britannic Institute. Mlle. Roch recited an ode in honor of the British and American soldiers, whose response was the singing of the "Marseillaise," while the French intoned "Tipperary." The same evening the bands left for Turin on their way back to Paris. The netted amount collected in the course of the afternoon figured at £1200 sterling, which will also be devoted to the Allied Red Cross institutions.

American Singers in Italy

The artistic status of many American singers in this country is growing very rapidly. *Certes*, the penetration of American singing art into Italy is an established fact. We wish here to deny once and for all any opinions which have, and perhaps with intent, been circulated to the effect that American voices do not find acceptance and appreciation in this country. We nail the lie to the board by giving a few facts.

Charles Hackett, the tenor, was the talk of the La Scala winter season of 1916-17 and obtained subsequently a phenomenal success at the Costanzi in Rome not only for mere beauty of voice, but for his practical demonstrations of many refinements of the *bel canto*. Alice Gentle, who sang with him at La Scala in "Mignon," was also very charming. Edoardo di Giovanni is an old favorite here and no comment is necessary.

Among other American singers in Italy, we must name Alvina Dianette, soprano, who has met with extraordinary success wherever she has sung. Her latest triumph was scored in a concert organized and conducted by Maestro Tullio Serafin at the Politeama of Monza—a small but potentially industrial town about ten miles northeast of Milan—with a special demonstration in favor of America, on Feb. 10. The well-known artists Ines Ferraris, Eva Mangili, Donaggio, Badini and Gennaro Barra, as well as Professor Ranzato, the La Scala violin soloist, also took part in the concert. The Prefect of Milan assisted with Generals Angelotti, Gastaldello and Filippini, and the Civil Authorities. The special guests of this meeting were the American Consul at Milan, Mr. North Winship and Major Robinson, deputy commissioner of the American Red Cross stationed in Italy. There were also Captain Regis Poste and Dr. Moore and other officers of the American Red Cross. The fighting representatives of the Allies, headed by Commander Fischer of the French forces operating on this front, were also present.

Maestro Serafin, who is a soldier of the Motorist Section of Monza, requested Miss Dianette, who sang the part of *Mimi* of Puccini's "La Bohème" to perfection, to spring a surprise on her kinsmen by singing the "Star-Spangled Banner" improvisation. Miss Dianette, minus *Mimi's* paint and powder, appeared with the Stars and Stripes thrown over her shoulders and sang the "Star-Spangled Banner" with spirit and emotion. Needless to say that this item was a conspicuous success. The Americans, visibly delighted, called for an encore, in which they joined to the fullness of their lungs. Miss Dianette received the congratulatory embrace of Maestro Serafin, who was most enthusiastic about her.

No more eloquent outlet for the overflowing feeling of amity harbored, especially in this part of Italy, for the Allied forces and their stimulating presence, could possibly be found than through the many musical entertainments which have been given in honor of these stalwart representatives of the Allies ever since their arrival in this country.

The first appearance of the Grand Opera Quartet, consisting of Frances Alda, Carolina Lazzari, Giovanni Martinelli and Giuseppe de Luca, will take place in Toronto on May 13. The quartet has been widely booked for next October.

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