



Lobbying as It Appears on Opening Night



The Real Game of Lobbying and Some of the Lobbyists at the Opening Night of the Chicago Opera

By MAY STANLEY

THE greatest indoor sport in the world is lobbying.

I don't mean what you mean—going up to the State capitol and trying to persuade a cold and unfeeling legislature that two lumps of sugar should be the legal quota of every breakfast—I mean the real game of lobbying, the kind that is played wherever opera flourishes.

The good old game was working overtime last Monday night, when the Lexington Theater hung out the "Chicago Opera Association" sign and taxis began to turn to the east.

Lobbying is like being a genius or blue-eyed or a gentleman—you have to be born that way.

Opening night!

If you are a good lobbyist that phrase will set your blood tingling and your memory racing back to all the glorious opening nights that lie behind you. Nights of glitter, nights that thrill and enthrall and dazzle you with their memories; nights when new stars of song rose in the operatic skies—not to mention nights when you discovered that your favorite soprano had taken on too much weight, or that your favorite opera had been switched to something more "tried and true."

But what did we care—it was opening night!

Your true lobbyist arrives early and takes up a point of vantage near Rufus Dewey. It is around Mr. Dewey's manly form that the real interest of the lobby centers; he is to the lobbyist what the north pole is to the magnet. To those who yearn to witness opening night performances on "paper" he is *Fate* arrayed in evening clothes and a smile.

First Comers Arrive

The ticket taker strides solemnly down to his appointed station as the first comers arrive—Father and Mother and Daughter-with-a-Voice, who have taken an early train in from Yonkers. Father and Mother and D. W. a V. pass through the enchanted portals to be taken in hand by a magnificent young man who wears a red ribbon across his chest. Father has a hazy notion that he ought to salute, thinks better of it, and drops into the seat the be-ribboned one indicates.

More comers troop in.

The lobby hums with the noise of many voices; echoes to the rustle of silk, gives back the gleam of diamonds.

Ladies who clasp magnificent furs to their ample bosoms sweep by on tiny slippers of gold or silver. Aigrettes wave in the faces of the black-clad, white-shirt-fronted gentlemen who form a sober background for this opulence—sober is right.

Alda passes by; ditto Mrs. Belmont; ditto Elsa Maxwell.

A lady who must be a great comfort in the life of some motion picture director comes into view. She holds her ermine cloak high about her neck, where it

Being Some Observations On the Professional Lobbyist at Work When the Chicago Opera Company Arrives in Town—Some Types That Haunt the Lobby When Opening Night Arrives—Kindly Gods That Rule in the World of Opera—Concerning the Lady From the Movies—The Chronic First Nighter Gives His Views—The Glamor That Memory Gives

meets a large and earnest black lace hat decked with enough paradise feathers to pay salaries for a week to all the hands on the lot.

"Gee, aint this crowd fierce?" she murmurs to her escort.

A waiting box swallows her up. You are certain, however, that it will erupt her again at the end of the first act. She has the look of the hardened lobbyist.

Faint Squeak of the Fiddle

From far away comes the first faint squeak of the fiddle, the thin wail of the flute, the questioning note of the 'cello—the orchestra is tuning up.

The crowd on the stairway—toward that enchanted upper region of dreams—grows thicker. One lovely, dark-eyed girl leans over on her upward way to audibly admire a chinchilla wrap. One reflects that raiment of this kind has checked the upward progress of many a one ere this.

Enter a busy little man who sparkles like a diamond necklace when he sees the director of publicity.

"Ah, Signor Dewey," he breathes rapturously, "such a mistake, such an unheard-of mistake! My tickets for tonight, they do not arrive!"

Inquiry is made as to what publication the gentleman decorates. He is gently but firmly informed that the foreign language press doesn't get any seats for opening night.

He goes away.

He returns.

He holds excited converse.

He waves his arms and calls on the gods of music to witness this outrage.

Then he buys a ticket.

A confirmed optimist is the seeker after free music. Always he or she expects that an orchestra seat, maybe two, will be forthcoming. Frequently they are, for the gods that rule in the world of opera are kindly gods and well-intentioned.

Marinuzzi Appears

The fiddles whine again, the woodwinds take up the note. Now there is a rustle throughout the house, followed by a burst of clapping. Marinuzzi is making his first bow to a New York audience.

You drift in as the orchestra begins to weave the first melodic threads in the tragic "Love of Three Kings."

And then you are lost in the wonder of Mary Garden's magic, as she paints the story of the too-much-loving *Fiore*.

The music dies down.

The curtain drops.

You are out in the lobby once more,

A group of earnest talkers hold a fierce converse anent the relative merits of Garden, Bori and Muzio as *Fiore*. Each one convinces himself as to the superlative merits of the prima donna he champions. They drift apart.

The lady of the movies appears—we knew she would—totally surrounded by a masculine retinue.

The chief usher explains to a large and dignified lady who "heard Miss Garden once in Paris" that she can't possibly go back stage—"Miss Garden's in her work and she don't see nobody."

Large lady is disappointed and retires, voicing her opinion of ushers.

Daughter-with-a-Voice leads Father out to the ticket office to see if he can't get Saturday matinée seats for her.

In the swirling current that runs strong through the lobby three critics are thrown together and take up the eternal question of Miss Garden's voice.

They have just got the debate well under way when the call sounds and we all hurry back to get the advance details before the hapless *Fiore* is slain.

The Débutante's Vocation

As the curtain falls once more to turn lobbyward, to be met by a pretty débutante with tickets to the Charity Ball for sale. It is going to be a hard world for the débutante when all the people are self-supporting and there is no more need for "charity" tickets. But, perhaps, in a self-supporting world there will be no débutantes.

The Chronic First Nighter is telling a knot of hearers about an opening night fifteen years ago. He is quite sure that singers were greater artists in those days and that opera now is in a very bad way indeed. One of the praiseworthy things about memory is the golden glow it throws over past performances—our

own and other people's.

Back we go as the curtain rises once more, this time with Mary as a corpse and the weeping relatives telling one another what a pity it all is.

More tears.

More lamentations.

Father and Mother—who remember that they *must* catch the 11.10—get nervous.

Other people reach for their wraps.

As the time for the final curtain draws near, the lobby fills with the tide that is now setting streetward.

Anxious ladies and their still sober escorts await their carriages.

The critics hurry by, intent on getting under the wire on time.

The galleries disgorge their mass of future composers and operatic stars.

The lights in the house grow dim.

The echo of many footsteps dies out in the distance.

First night lobbying is over for another year.

Vahrah Hanbury to Continue as Soloist in Church of Divine Paternity

Vahrah Hanbury, soprano, who was engaged as solo soprano at the Church of the Divine Paternity, New York City, last October, has been asked to sign a new contract which extends her present arrangement for sixteen months from its expiration. During the current week she will sing at Columbia University, N. Y. City, and at Witherspoon Hall, in Philadelphia. Miss Hanbury's engagements up to date have not taken her west of Chicago but in early March she starts on a tour which extends north to Grand Rapids and south to New Orleans, rounding out a season which has included about thirty concerts.

Duncan Dancers, Reed Miller and Nevada Van der Veer Interest Oklahomans

OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLA., Jan. 24.—The Isadora Duncan Dancers scored a tremendous success recently at the Overholster Theater, appearing with George Copeland, pianist, under the local management of Hathaway Harper. This was the third of a series presented by Mr. Harper. Nevada Van Der Veer, contralto, and Reed Miller, tenor, were soloists at the recent concert of the Apollo Club in the High School Auditorium. C. M. C.

RECITAL BY
Winifred Lugrin Fahey

Soprano

Mr. Claude Gotthelf, at the Piano
Aeolian Hall, Wednesday Afternoon,
February 18th, at 3 o'clock.

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