

# Some Old Pictures of World Famous Singers



**S**OME of these pictures show the most popular singers of the day as they first appeared to their New York admirers, while others were taken at even an earlier period.

The photograph of Mme. Sembrich was the first picture of the Polish soprano taken in this country and shows her as she looked on her visit to New York. Then her career had just begun and she occupied the same position in the company of Abbey & Gray that she now does in the troupe at the Metropolitan. Like her predecessors, Adeline Patli, she served no long apprenticeship, but was famous from the day she first sang on the stage.

"I remember well that picture," Mme. Sembrich said, "for of all the hundreds that have been taken of me in my career it possesses an especial interest. I had on the first gown ever made for me by Worth. He made me many afterward, but that was the beginning. He always dressed me in a fashion entirely too old."

"I am certainly older than I was when that picture in the Worth dress was taken. I also incline to the belief that I am better looking."

Mme. Eames' picture was made in Paris when she was studying with Marchesi in the year before her debut at the opera as Juliette. It was at this time that there occurred an incident in her artistic career which was destined to have important results later.

"I was studying in Paris just at the time this picture was taken," she told

the Sun reporter, "and was invited by some friends to go to see the first performance of 'Tosca' at the Porte St. Martin theater.

"That was in 1887. Now, nearly twenty years later, I am doing that same scene in the opera that I love above all others that I have ever appeared in. Who would ever have thought that I should have done such a thing?"

"I remember when he made my costumes for 'Les Traviata' when I went first to Russia. In the first act he had me wearing a most elaborate brocade velvet and in the same material and covered with fringes. I often wonder if the impression made on me that night so many years ago has lingered somewhere in my memory and made me so devoted to this role which I never knew would even be in an opera when I saw it first."

The portrait of Mme. Melba shows her with the young man who was recently married in London. It was taken in Paris in 1888, just after Mme. Melba had made her first appearance in Paris and London, and the young man was then a kid of 6.

Mme. Melba made her first appearance as a singer in Melbourne when she was only a little older than her son in the picture, and this fact is often told with great delight in the story of her first concert. It was in the school where she was the prize

singer, and she could even then do the trill which is the wonderful feature of her singing as easily as she can today.

"All that summer I studied the music at Valombrosa and I live in 'Tosca.' I was like a woman in love, for I involuntarily started when anyone mentioned 'Tosca' as if I had been surprised in a secret."

"It fulfills every condition of a role that can interest an artist. The music is Italian to the highest degree and is in that way appropriate to the text, for the subject is typically Italian. Then there is everything in the character of 'Tosca' to inspire an artist.

"Nelle, make that funny noise in your throat," used to be a popular request to her, and the prima donna to be would trill away to the delight of her companions.

She could sing, too, and it was when she was only 8 that she appeared at a school concert.

The most interesting circumstances about the picture of Mme. Nordica, taken when she was singing with the Mapleson company at the Academy of Music in 1888, after her seasons in Russia, is the fact that she does not play the piano and never did touch the instrument until this season.

Now it is the style for prima donnas to accompany themselves on the piano when they give an encore. Mme. Sembrich does it, so does Mme. Melba, and this year

for favor with an Omaha audience. May Tully, late leading woman at the Madison Square theater, New York, and her company will be seen in a one-act comedy entitled "Stop, Look and Listen." It is from the pen of Matthew White, Jr., who is the editor of Argosy and the dramatic editor of the Munsey publications. Another comedy sketch will be contributed by John Hyam and Lella McIntyre, who are said to create an excellent entertainment in "Two Hundred Wives," by Herbert Hall Winslow.

Bert Levy, who has a wide acquaintance through his illustrations in metropolitan dailies and books, promises an inventive novelty. As he draws his pictures on a small piece of glass in front of the audience they are reflected on a screen, magnified about 80 times. An admirer of Quigg, Mackey and Nickerson, Mr. Nickerson enjoys a big reputation as a comedian. Fox and Fuzie, a funny clown and his dog, give a bit of circus amusement. Hedrix and Prescott, singers and dancers; Mr. and Mrs. Bacon, banjoists, and the kindrome pictures complete the program.

Miss Ruth Grey, who has been demonstrating her marvelous powers at the Lyric theater the last week, has, owing to the great interest manifest, arranged to continue at the Lyric for one more week. The thousands of people who have witnessed Miss Grey's performances during the last week freely acknowledge her as the most wonderful woman ever entertained within the borders of Omaha. A most charming feature about the whole business is that Miss Grey does not lay any great

claims for her powers in reading people's minds. She does not claim to be in touch with the supernatural. In fact she disclaims anything of the sort. The matinees for women only on Tuesdays and Thursdays are creating unusual interest. Those who want to see something out of the ordinary should not fail to see Miss Grey during her Omaha engagement.

**Gossip from Stangeland.**

Ellen Terry is doing very well in New York with "Captain Brassbound's Conversion." In this play George Bernard Shaw doesn't ride any particular hobby, and the result is that it is at least amusing. The indictment of the alleged theatrical trust has been welcomed with more or less amusement throughout the land. The general opinion is that the bill was returned about three years late to be of any service to the public.

The Southern-Marlowe production of "John the Baptist" did not last much longer in New York than the Strauss "Salome." "John of Arc" is now being played by the stars, and is receiving much warm commendation, something they did not get with the Sudermann play.

Efforts at erection of a Shubert theater in Omaha occupied the attention of local dreamers during the week. One of the enthusiasts went so far as to insist that both the Shuberts and the "syndicate" were after one location. As Omaha has four "graduate" theaters now, not to mention two into which "independent" shows may go, the foundation for the Yarn scene plain.

Miss Lorna Elliott, who has been resting quietly in Omaha since leaving the Woodward building, left Thursday night for New York, where she has gone to take a part in "The Girl in White," one of the new plays James K. Hackett is preparing for spring production. Miss Elliott was accompanied to the train by a number of Omaha friends, who bade her an affectionate farewell and godspeed in her new employment.

# Gossip About Plays, Players and Playhouses

**S**ALOME is still receiving attention through the columns provided over by the commentators. A few, a very few, have pretended to regret the withdrawal of the opera, and one or two raise their hands in protest at the "brudery" of the public. Generally, the chorus of approval of the action of the directors of the Metropolitan opera house in suppressing what was undeniably an abomination is unbroken. W. J. Henderson, the musical critic at whose feet the American public sits, in retrospect denounces the opera unsparingly. "Two souls with but a nasty thought, two pens that drool as one," is the way he couples Strauss and Wilde, and the verdict will stand undisturbed. It is not at all likely that the opera will be revived, as it is threatened, in an expurgated form for consumption in the smaller cities of the United States where the Metropolitan Opera company goes on tour. It would be impossible to expunge the great central theme of the opera and leave it sweet and free from objection. One feels comfortable in the belief that the promise—or, was it a threat—made by Mr. Strine while in Omaha during the week that "Salome" would be sung at the Auditorium in April is not intended to be fulfilled. "La Boheme" will be welcomed, and almost anything else, but not "Salome."

Omaha folks who take their pleasure at the theater have been quite fortunate lately, and the future holds much of tempting promise. Florence Roberts came with a play that, while it lacked strength and finish as a whole, had some high points and afforded her a fine chance for good work, all of which was furnished in a liberal supply. And then came Mr. Hackett with his "The Walls of Jericho," a fine play of his kind, and Miss Bingham to finish the week with her new comedy of English life. This makes a very enjoyable combination and one that was thoroughly appreciated by those who took the trouble to go to the Boyd.

**Coming Events.**

As a drama and spectacle, Klaw & Erlanger's imposing production of General Lew Wallace's "The Prince of India," which is the great attraction at Boyd's opera house February 11 week, is beyond conception. Not since the visit of "Boo Hur" has such a colossal production been placed on our local stage. Special matinees will be given during the week on Wednesday and Saturday. Chief among the many spectacular effects of "The Prince of India" may be mentioned the storm at the reception of the Emperor Constantine at White Castle by Princess Irene and her maidens, the council chamber in the imperial palace, the interior of the cathedral of Sancta Sophia and the battle scene when the walls of Constantinople fall before the cannon of Sultan Mohammed. The latter is perhaps the most realistic hand-to-hand encounter ever depicted in drama. The stage is covered with fighting men in armor and the clash of arms is spirited. Falling walls and the cannon smoke add to the illusion. In the prologue the Wanderer tells the story of his sin and his sentence. He hopes for the blessed path of death, when all men shall have come to subscribe to one creed and to recognize the Jehovah of the Hebrews, Allah of the Moslems and the God of the Christians as one supreme being. He preaches the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. His audience with Constantine is turned into a riot when his plea for universal religion having been spurned, he prophesies the destruction of the Eastern Empire.

"Brother Officers," a drama in which, as suggested by the title, the military atmosphere prevails, has been chosen for the bill at the Burwood during the coming week. The action of the play calls into commendation Miss Pitt, Mr. Morrison and Mr. Hartford, as well as all the other members of the company. It affords some very striking contrasts in personality, and with its humor as developed by the situations, makes a most attractive combination. Mr. Hartford is making much of a name for himself by the effective way in which he stages the plays at this theater, and he promises that this will be no exception to the rule. It will be offered with all the detail essential to its proper enactment,

and its presentation should prove very popular. The first performance will be given at a matinee Sunday afternoon, and then it will be presented each evening during the week, with other matinees on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday.

Wright Huntington comes to the Krug theater for two days, starting with a matinee today, as Curtis Jadin in William A. Brady's production of "The Pit," a dramatization of Frank Norris' novel. While the chief value of the play will be the attraction at the Krug theater for three days, starting Thursday, February 14. It contains many sensational features; it has beautiful scenery and its musical features are noteworthy.

A bill in keeping with the Orpheum standard will be supplied during the week at that cozy theater by a roster of players who come to register their initial bid

don McCormick play which the Mitthenthal brothers, have given an elaborate production, will be the offering at the Krug theater two days, commencing Tuesday, February 12. The play is far above the ordinary in point of interest and scenic investment, and the characters embrace many that may be found in the small villages, also others who may be found where vice and crime run free.

A. H. Woods' "Queen of the Highbinders," a sensational melodrama, will be the attraction at the Krug theater for three days, starting Thursday, February 14. It contains many sensational features; it has beautiful scenery and its musical features are noteworthy.

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**Music and Musical Notes**

**I**T SEEMS as if at last Omaha is about to have a permanent organization for the giving of musical festivals such as are given in most of the large cities of the United States. A meeting of the board of the Musical Festival association was held at Mr. Borglum's studio, last Monday morning at which plans were further discussed and the reports from the various committees heard. The board and the public at large are to be congratulated on the success with which the finance committee is meeting. While the festival proper will not be held until early summer, already nearly one-third of the \$5 season tickets have been disposed of. There is an interest in this festival association which has seldom if ever been shown in any musical event heretofore contemplated in Omaha. All Omaha has needed for years to make an organization of this sort possible is a few leaders ready and willing to do the necessary work behind such an effort. Omaha stands ready to back up projects of good to the city and the success of a permanent organization for the giving of musical festivals is no longer a matter of doubt.

One by one the distinguished European composers have visited our country this season to make, each in his turn, a few ripples in the sea of New York music. Leoncavallo came and went and created his own little signs. Colegride Taylor (whom Omaha's know best by his "Wedding Feast of Hiawatha," sung at the May festival a few years since) came, and neither left nor carried away the visible signs of a visit to America. Dr. Camille Saint-Saens, who is conceded to be the earnest, soundest and most versatile of the French composers, came, and it is asserted that no musical visitor since Ischaikowsky, not even Dvorak or Richard Strauss, so strongly moved popular interest. And now we have Puccini! who has at least the satisfaction of knowing that his works have attained lasting fame here and are likely to grow in the interest of the public. He is the most interesting as well as the most successful of the Italian composers of the present day; not satisfied like Macagnani with his one really good opera and sitting at his ease expecting a deluged public to accept anything from his pen, inasmuch as "Cavalleria Rusticana" was such a pronounced success.

Puccini has had many discouragements. His first appearance was very shabby made in New York at Wallace's theater, when a Royal Italian opera company produced "La Boheme" and "Manon Lescaut" for the first time. From the Italian performance, so one could exactly formulate his ideas of what the opera was really like. It remained for the production given "La Boheme" at the Metropolitan in 1900, with Melba as Mimì to give the opera some fair opportunity to see the real fluency and polish of the music. Even then it was not understood, and little was it dreamed that it would grow in favor as it has. Then came "Tosca" in 1901, which aroused such dissent, which seems the

usual experience of works of great originality.

Carl Bergmann's classic prescription for the public of the Philharmonic society that did not like Wagner—"Don't say hear him till they do"—is appreciable to a really distinguished musical family; one that then "Madame Butterfly," which is the ripest as well as the most recent production of Puccini's genius. This opera has won much admiration which speaks well for its future success. It is interesting to learn that Puccini is of a really distinguished musical family; one Giacomo Puccini an organist in 1712; Antonio, his son, born in 1747, a church composer whose requiem mass was performed at the funeral of Emperor Joseph II of Austria. His son, Domenico, wrote opera. Fourth in the line came Michele, the father of the present Giacomo, who studied under Mercadante and Donizetti at Naples, wrote masses and an opera, and became a teacher; among his pupils being Viarese, who was conductor at the Paris opera for a time and for a time at the Metropolitan. Giacomo was the fifth of seven children, whom the father, dying, left at tender ages for the mother to rear. Privations without number followed one upon another and yet this musician kept on undaunted, writing operas, some of which never "arrived," but little by little they have crept to the front till now Puccini stands at the top of his art. He is not a conductor in any sense and makes little impression on the performances of his compositions. His influence will probably be felt, however, in the first performance in Italian of "Madame Butterfly" which is put down for February 11.

Miss Arnold, the supervisor of music in the public schools, gave a lecture before the cadets and kindergarten training class. She prefaced her remarks with a sketch of the life, trials, and final triumph of Wagner, following with an outline of "Lohengrin," of which it was said by Wagner, at a time during his exile, "that he would soon be the only German, who had never heard it," it being due to the all powerful influence of Liszt that Wagner really came into such prominence. The motifs accompanying the talk were very beautifully brought on by Miss Helen Hitte at the piano.

A musicale and luncheon was given at the Her Grand on Wednesday of this week, to the wives of the visiting hardware merchants, who held a convention here. The musical program was furnished by a quartet composed of Miss May Weaver, Miss Jessie McCune, Miss Myrtle Jones and Mrs. Sheets. JULIET McCUNE.

teresting to a Sun reporter of this period of her artistic career.

"I began just as every French lyric soprano begins," she said, "and was just as conventional as every one of them is. I acted Marguerite and all my other roles just like the rest of them, and so long as I remained in France I don't think I ever thought of departing in the least from what I had been taught and what I had always seen at the Opera or the Opera Comique.

"When I went to Italy, however, there was already a new artistic influence in the air. Duse had begun to be talked about and I saw her. She made a wonderful impression on me.

"I saw her first in Rome and then it happened that we were together in Milan and other cities. After I had seen her in many parts and begun to realize that there was more in acting than I had ever dreamed of before I fell ill and was sick for a long time.

"During the weary days of convalescence I had much time to think of what I had seen and to ponder over its applicability to my own art. When I was strong again and began to sing I did try to put into my own performances my conception of the new art."

"It was from that time that I became an actress as well as a singer. If I had remained in France I might never have been different from the majority of the French singers."

The picture was, of course, taken long before Mme. Calve's smooth and girlish brow had been troubled by any such art problem.

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