

## Death of Richard Tauber

GENERAL regret at the death of Richard Tauber is intensified by the fact that for New Zealand listeners this was to have been "Tauber Year," as he was under contract to the NZBS to give recitals throughout the Dominion and to appear, both as guest artist and conductor, with the National Orchestra in its coming season. He died in a London nursing home on January 8, after a sudden collapse following his operation last November. He was about to take a



RICHARD TAUBER

month's holiday in Switzerland before starting on his tour of Australia and New Zealand.

Tauber was born at Linz, Austria, on May 16, 1892. He studied at the Hoch Conservatory in Frankfurt, but was trained at first as a conductor and an actor, because, he was told, his voice did not show much promise. When he was 19 he came under the guidance of Professor Carl Beines, who taught him singing for three years. In 1912 he made his operatic debut as Tamino at the Chemnitz Municipal Theatre, and received an immediate contract to sing at the Royal Opera in Dresden, where he remained for several years.

After the first World War Tauber became the principal tenor of the Berlin State Opera, and soon made his name in German, Italian and French operas. He also began a series of successful guest appearances throughout Europe, and in 1924 met Franz Lehar, with whom he formed an intimate friendship. Lehar composed for him such famous operettas as *Paganini*, *Frederica*, and *The Land of Smiles*, in all of which Tauber created the leading roles. His first London appearance was in 1931 in *The Land of Smiles* at Drury Lane, and he became a naturalised British subject in 1940.

As a concert artist Tauber was almost as successful as he was in opera and

operetta. The beautiful texture of his voice and its expressive dramatic quality made it well suited for the interpretation of *Lieder*, and his Schubert recordings became world-famed. He had also a special reputation in Central Europe as a Mozart singer.

Because of his many renderings of light popular songs, Tauber came under the censure of some critics, who thought he was making wrong use of his voice. On this, Tauber's own comment is illuminating. He said: "I am both proud and happy that I have played my part in leading the movement for giving the world simple songs such as our fathers knew, improved by the newest singing technique of to-day. For art means influence. The style portrayed in concert, stage, and film is the new style of the age. As singer and actor, it is *here* that I have placed my aims, and, perhaps, even achieved them." Only time will tell whether Tauber or his critics were right.

### NATIONAL FILM UNIT

ROSINA RAISBECK, the mezzo-soprano who sang in New Zealand last year and who has just been engaged as a leading singer at Covent Garden, is heard in the National Film Unit's Weekly Review No. 334 released on January 23. In the reel also are the following: "Meet N.Z. Exhibition"—the opening in London of the Dominion's big exhibition; "Port Napier at Napier," in which the ship loads foodstuffs for Britain; and "Making Stained Glass Windows," showing how this specialised industry is progressing in Dunedin.

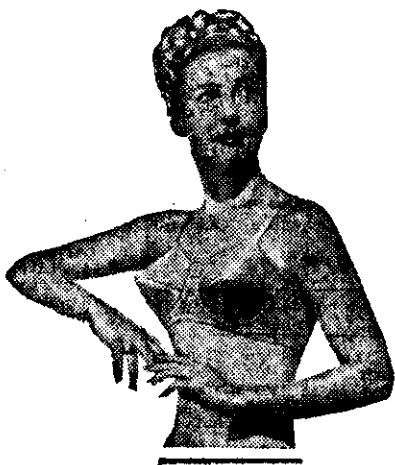
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liberties," runs the foreword, "have been taken with the incidents and chronology." The consequence of these liberties is a film which, setting out to depict the life of Clara and Robert Schumann, completely fails to realise the deep dramatic possibilities of its subject, a film which will certainly infuriate a few by its banalities and solecisms, and which even the majority may at times find tedious.

In the story of the Schumanns—the high romance of their love and marriage, their domestic difficulties, their friendship with Brahms and Liszt, the tragedy of Robert's insanity, the *Schumannndammerung* at Eendenich, and Clara's triumphant vindication of her husband's genius—there is material enough for a dozen dramas. What is offered us here rarely rises above the level of soap opera. It is the Davidsbundler vanquished by the Philistines.

Paul Henreid, as Schumann, is the only member of the cast who seems to understand the part he has to play, and there are moments when he does succeed in revealing something of the anguish and self-doubt which ended in the tragedy of an unhinged mind. But for the most part, like the others, he is lost in reams of banal and often fatuous dialogue which is no tribute to the memory of anyone. Apart from one scene with Liszt (Henry Daniell) in which she recaptures something of the original Clara's spirit, Katherine Hepburn's performance is vitiated by the prevailing sentimentality of the screen-story. Daniell, who is called upon to make brief appearances only, does not do badly, but on the whole the minor characters loudly proclaim their Americanism, and Hollywood's intellectual inability to handle the subject. There is some good music—small-scale, it is true, but it could not be otherwise in an orthodox screen biography—played (behind the scenes) by Artur Schnabel. I felt however, that these crumbs from the master's table were a poor substitute for the bread that might have been provided.

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