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that goes with it. The producers of *Opera for the People* seem to have been more concerned with the story than the music, they have extracted the essential action and comment from its musical matrix and converted it to up-to-the-minute dialogue. But plot is seldom the strong point in Grand Opera, and its rattling skeleton is more suitably shrouded in the voluminous draperies of recitative than deliberately revealed by the scanty bathing-dress of ordinary dialogue. In any case, principles apart, there would appear to be little justification for a programme of opera which seemed to me to consist of two parts talking to one of singing.

O. Henry Stories

I HAVE come to take for granted both the manner and the matter of Tusitala's tale-telling, but I was even more impressed than usual by his recent choice of two O. Henry stories, on Monday "The Furnished Room" and on Wednesday (the Master in Lighter Mood) "The Exact Science of Matrimony", two complementary studies revealing obverse and reverse sides of their creator's genius. "The Furnished Room" lost none of its pathos in the telling, in fact its bitter backroom flavour was intensified by a slight hesitancy (intentional or unintentional?) in Tusitala's usually faultless delivery. "The Exact Science of Matrimony" was, of course, pure comedy, probably as near as O. Henry ever gets to the man-sitting-on-a-drawing-pin method of raising a laugh. And Tusitala, by a nice use of hesitation (intentional this time), played the comedy for all it was worth, and the adroit flick of O. Henry's pen which gave us that inevitable but delicious conclusion "I was" had its suave vocal counterpart in the Master's Voice.

Congratulations, Christchurch

AS a Dunedin listener I feel it my privilege to congratulate Christchurch musicians for having made more of their opportunities with Isobel Baillie and the NZBS Symphony Orchestra than did my own city. During Dunedin's hundredth anniversary, the combination of visiting artist, local soloists, symphony orchestra, and massed choirs was one of the opportunities of a city's very long lifetime; something grand, impressive, and of really majestic musical value should have emerged. Some memorable things certainly did emerge, as I have indicated in these columns, and nobody could have been more impressed than I with the festival of enthusiastic music-making provided by our musicians. As far as the standard of the works chosen was concerned, we had everything in the musical barometer from "deep depression" to "very fine"—but it was left to another city to give radio listeners the finer effort. Christchurch, magnificently and boldly, decided—not as Dunedin, on a succession of short choral items with one or two cantatas—but on the Bach B Minor Mass, the most beautiful and moving work, surely, that has ever been written. With Isobel Baillie as soprano soloist, Thomas West, of Christchurch, as tenor, and the two Dunedin

singers Mary Pratt and Bryan Drake, the Christchurch Harmonic Society and the National Orchestra combined to present an unforgettable evening of great music. Congratulations, Christchurch.

Genius at Bay

THE career of a musical genius has for a long time been a favourite theme for play and film. Any sort of genius would do really, but the musical variety is much more spectacular, giving as it does scope for recordings of somebody else's voice or close-ups of somebody else's hands playing popular classics on a photogenic violin. Perhaps it was a surfeit of these productions, often (though not always) indifferently done, that made one a little wary of the implications of a *Listener* programme note which announced "the story of a pianist whose husband was jealous of her genius." But this particular play (by John Gundry) had in addition to this self-explanatory note a title which had no explanation—*Camp Ground's Over Jordan*. The incident to which this referred was the pianist's visit to a church, where she hears a Negro preacher addressing his congregation. This has a profound influence on her life, and is, as I realised later, the fulcrum of the plot. From here she goes steadily down from the fiasco of her return to the concert platform to the final surprising murder of her husband. Not that it wasn't what many listeners must have been itching to do, but the heroine herself seemed to find it a little unexpected. Even allowing for an initial prejudice against such dramatizations of genius, this play was well worth hearing.

Marco Polo Goes West

THE final episode of 2ZB's Sunday night *East With Marco Polo* left me feeling as nostalgic as Mr. Fitzpatrick when the time comes for him to say farewell . . . For it was, take it for all in all, a very pleasing entertainment, and in spite of the amount of matter crowded into each episode the general effect was curiously leisured. (I'm not sure how many Sunday nights' entertainment, but it was not till the last instalment that the Polos finally reached the court of the Great Khan Kublai.) The whole thing might be regarded as an apt illustration of the aphorism that it is better to travel interestedly than to arrive.



Marco Polo is a favourite topic with radio writers (I remember a very good play on his life in the recent *Broadcasts to Schools*) but this is the most detailed account I have yet listened to. Strangely enough the strong infusion of additional romance does not detract from the excitement of the original theme (the actual historical fact is so colourful that additional embroidery does not look out of place) and the dialogue even when it inclines to banality maintains a mannered aloofness and a studied floweriness in keeping with the pervading atmosphere of high romance.

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