

moment or two when, with the footlights on and the curtain down, the orchestra did its final tuning and the cast waited for the stage-manager's "Beginners please." One or two more telegrams arrived wishing players good luck and then the stage-doors were closed. Anybody without a stage-pass had to stay outside. From then on until the final curtain-call Carmen and Don José went through their stormy love-passages, the minor principals and chorus played their parts and the audience warmed to the familiar music.

Seven Microphones Used

For broadcasting *Carmen* many hundreds of feet of cable and seven microphones were used. Two were hung from the flies, one was used for the orchestra, three were in the footlights, and one was for the announcer in the dress-circle. So as not to encroach on the normal equipment used by the Dunedin radio station, a special type of microphone, with extra cable, was flown from Wellington on the day before the opening performance.

During the rehearsals and the first public performance, excerpts from the opera were recorded by the mobile unit of the NZBS, near the theatre, to check the balance of the music and to accustom the technicians to following the cast on the stage. Test recordings of a stage performance are more difficult to secure than commercial discs, for in the latter the cast and chorus are stationary.

On the professional stage it was the custom once upon a time to celebrate

a successful first night with a behind-the-curtain supper, and though the stage and its people are a close corporation, the more knowledgeable stage-door callers and regular habitués were sometimes invited to join in the fun until the early hours. But Dunedin's chorus and the minor principals had their ordinary work to do next day and so half an hour after the curtain had dropped for the last time on opening night, the theatre was empty, save for the cleaners and a few essential workers, discussing technical details. Only one batten illuminated the stage which a short time before had been a blaze of Spanish noon-day sun. And the scenery was being stacked away in order of future requirement.

On the following day snatches from the opera — mostly "The Toreador's Song" — were whistled and hummed in Dunedin's shops, offices, and streets, and seats for the seven other performances of *Carmen* in Dunedin were almost completely booked out.



TOP RIGHT: Carmen is snapped as she prepares to leave her dressing-room for the stage. BELOW, LEFT: Stage-hands in the "flies" heave on the back-cloth ropes during a change of scene. RIGHT: Dunedin gipsy-girls, members of the chorus, await their call in the wings