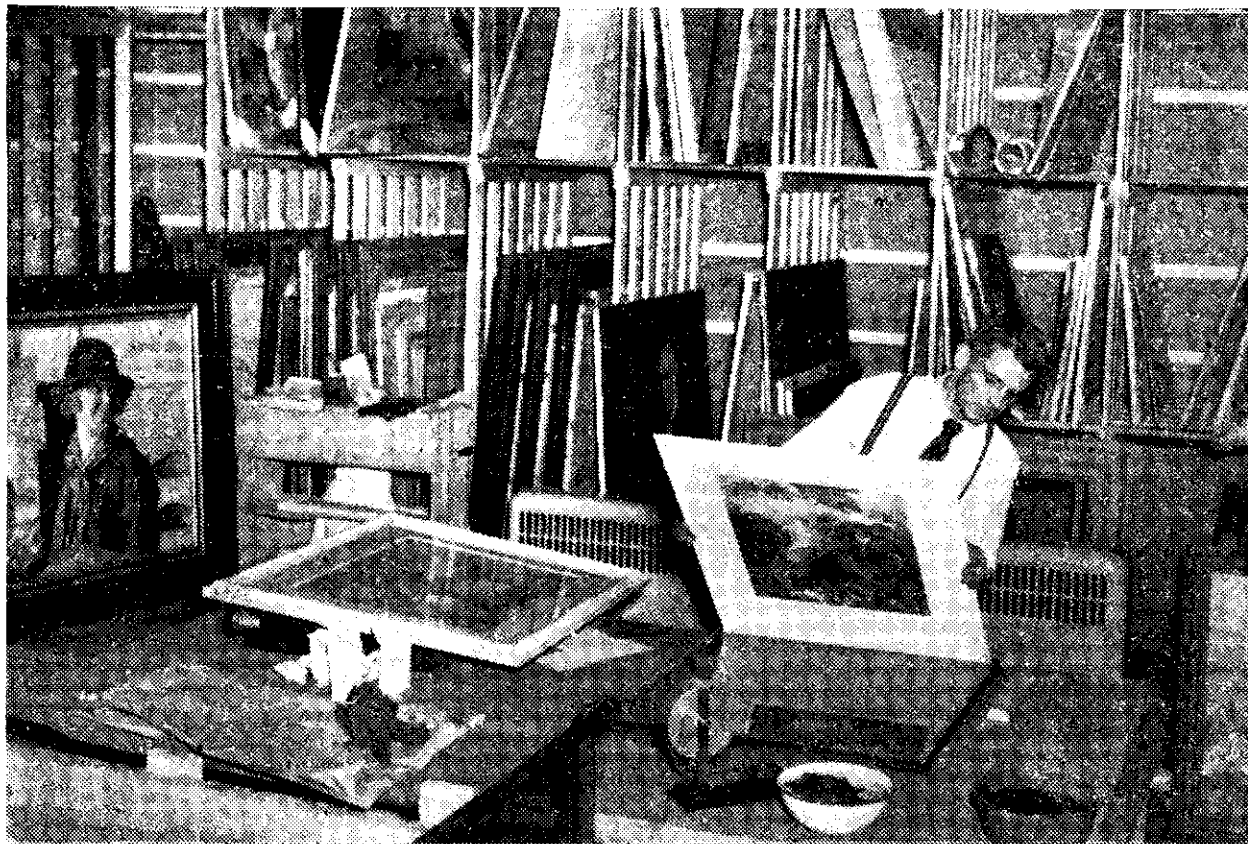


(continued from previous page)

ground. The walls and ceiling are now, incidentally, lighter than they were originally.

Battens were fixed in parallel rows along the walls (as can be seen in the photograph at the top of page 6) in order to make hanging easier. The battens are about an inch and a-half wide by half an inch thick, grooved at the back to take hooks, and spaced a foot apart. Pictures will not now need to be permanently fixed to any particular spot of wall, and by occasionally moving them around, and assembling them into groups representing say, a certain period or a certain painter, the Gallery staff will be able to give variety to what is on view. In any case the collection has increased in size so much during the war from various bequests and purchases, that it is now quite impossible to hang everything at once in an attractive manner.

The work of reframing is being done largely by J. Stackhouse of the Gallery staff, and since it is a task requiring expert knowledge and great patience, it will not be completed for some time. When it is completed, and the task of laying suitable flooring is finished, and the Director and Trustees have succeeded in hiring the five or six attendants required to build up the staff to its proper size—something that is worrying them more than a little at the moment—the Gallery will be ready to open to the public once more.



J. STACKHOUSE, of the National Art Gallery staff, working in the re-framing room. The picture on the extreme left is a self-portrait by Dame Laura Knight

GRAND OPERA FROM 1YA NEXT WEEK

"Madame Butterfly" and "La Boheme"

THE opening performance of the International Opera Company's tour on Wednesday, February 23, will be broadcast from 1YA Auckland, when listeners will hear *Madame Butterfly* sung in the original Italian by a first-rate cast, including Mercedes Fortunati as Butterfly and Aldo Ferracuti as Pinkerton. The other leading roles will be taken by Maria Huder, Leo Piccioli, Adelio Zagonara, Plinio Clabassi, Errol Howard, and Augusto Romani. The orchestra of 48 will be conducted by Franco Ghione, and the broadcast will start at 8.0 p.m.

At 8.0 p.m. on Saturday, February 26, 1YA will also broadcast the complete performance of *La Boheme*, and since these operas, both of them by Puccini, will be sung in Italian, brief summaries of their plots are given below for those listeners who may want to brush up on the stories before each performance.

Act I of *Madame Butterfly*—a house on a hill in Nagasaki—introduces Lieutenant Pinkerton (tenor), of the United States Navy, who is being shown over a house which he has chosen for his bride-to-be, Cho-Cho-San or Madame Butterfly, by Goro (tenor), a marriage broker. He meets Zuzuki (mezzo-soprano), Butterfly's maid, and the American consul Sharpless (baritone). Sharpless tries in vain to get him to give up the girl, since the latter believes the marriage to be binding and has even given up her religion for it.

Butterfly then enters with her relatives, and the marriage is celebrated, not without opposition from her uncle (bass), a priest, who denounces her and persuades the relatives to abandon her. The guests depart in anger, while the bridal couple enter the house.

"When the Robins Nest"

Between Act I and Act II three years have passed and Pinkerton is in America, having promised to return "When the robins nest again." Sharpless arrives to tell Butterfly, who now has a son, that Pinkerton has married an American girl. But she is so excited to see her lover's letter that she doesn't listen to what he is saying, and she also refuses to marry Prince Yamadori (tenor), who arrives at this moment. A cannon shot from the bay marks the approach of Pinkerton's ship, and in Act III the Lieutenant, his new wife, and Sharpless, arrive to see Cho-Cho-San. Pinkerton, however, is overcome with remorse and leaves without meeting her. Butterfly listens stoically while Mrs. Pinkerton says she will adopt the child. She replies that in half an hour the child will be ready, then embraces him, falls on her father's sword, and dies as Pinkerton and Sharpless finally rush in.

La Boheme was produced eight years before *Madame Butterfly*, in 1896, and started Puccini on his road to fame, although his choice of subject caused a life-long quarrel with Leoncavallo (composer of *I Pagliacci*), who had just completed, but not produced, an opera on



MARIA HUDER, in costume for the part of Musetta in "La Boheme"

the same theme. *La Boheme* has been called Puccini's most lovable opera, and deals with the Bohemian affairs of Marcello (baritone), a painter, Rodolpho (tenor), a poet, Colline (bass), a philosopher, and Schaunard (bass), a musi-

cian. The scene opens with the quartet in their Parisian garret, celebrating a feast made possible by a small wind-fall. The landlord Benoit (bass) enters and demands the rent, but they fill him with wine and carry him off to a café—all except Rodolpho. After they leave, Rodolpho hears a knock at the door and meets Mimi (soprano), who asks a light for her candle. She then loses her key, and in searching for it in the dark their hands meet, and he sings "Your tiny hand is frozen." They fall in love at sight, and go out to join the others at the café.

Act II, a street in the Latin Quarter filled with a lively Christmas Eve crowd, introduces Musetta (soprano), an old flame of Marcello's, and her rich admirer Alcindoro (bass). When she sees Marcello at the café she sends Alcindoro away and he returns later to find the others gone and the bill waiting to be paid. In Act III Mimi enters, ill of consumption, and tells Marcello that Rodolpho is jealous. Rodolpho enters, she hides, is revealed by her coughing, and the two are reconciled once more. But Musetta and Marcello now quarrel, and the fourth Act shows the two men trying to forget their love affairs in work. The jokes of these carefree Bohemians are stilled, however, when Musetta brings home Mimi, who dies in Rodolpho's arms.

The role of Mimi will be played by Rina Malatrasi, who is said to have greatly impressed Sydney audiences in this part. Carlo Badioli, too, is said to give a fine character study as the landlord, while others in the cast are Maria Huder (as Musetta), Alvino Misciano (as Rodolpho), Enzo Titta (as Schaunard), Leo Piccioli (as Marcello), Antonio Cassinelli and Cecil Atkinson.