



PAGANINI, in one of his more serious moods. The frank, clear look and dominant features were caught by all the artists reproducing him

ONE HUNDRED years ago, on May 27, 1840, one of the world's greatest masters of publicity died at Nice, of tuberculosis, at the age of fifty-six. This was Niccolò Paganini, the immortal violinist, whose religious opinions and observances were so eccentric that he was denied, or failed to receive, the last rites of the Church and, after his death, was refused consecrated ground for his bones.

From Nice his remains went to Marseilles, the home of his son, but found no resting place. Even in Genoa, his own birthplace, there was no place for him. The municipality refused decent burial to one of its most distinguished sons on the ground that an epidemic had broken out in the town, and that extra hygienic precautions were necessary. Cannes next would not receive the body, and it was

"THE DEMON FIDDLER" The Centennial Of A Showman

only after urgent entreaties that the citizens of San Tassioli consented to bury Paganini.

It was said that he made a compact with the Devil who, directly the violinist shuffled off this mortal coil, would claim his soul. So Paganini rested in this grudgingly granted grave at Tassioli till the Empress Marie Louise, in the year 1845, was instrumental in having the body moved to Parma, where in the neighbouring Villa Gaione it was embalmed. But the coffin had been so shockingly knocked about in its travels that it was necessary to renovate it.

Paganini's remains rested in Villa Gaione till the year 1876, when they were again moved to Parma. From contemporary accounts, this translation seems to have been attended by extraordinary and quite uncanny ceremonial.

At dead of night a fantastically-garbed procession of mourners, bearing torches, wound along the bank of the River Boganza to the cemetery. As the procession passed, onlookers sank on their knees and crossed themselves. Attila Paganini, the artist's grandson, was present at the funeral.

In Life as in Death

But in life as in death Paganini managed to keep himself continually "in the news." He was born in 1784 (or 1782, the exact date is still in doubt), the son of a packer at the port of Genoa, a man who loved hard work, but was grasping, cross-grained, and a gambler. The father had one quality, however, which powerfully affected his son; he loved music passionately, and played the mandolin. He also loved gambling.

So Antonio, the father, taught his five-year-old son his first notes on the mandolin, and a friend of the family, a tailor who played the violin, taught him how to hold a bow. At eight years of age, a marvel of precocity, Niccolò made his first appearance, and performed variations of his own on the French revolutionary song, "The Carmagnole."

Then after studying at Parma under the strict supervision of Antonio, who had become the fierce

impresario of his own son, Niccolò set out with his father on a concert tour to Milan and the cities of Lombardy. Antonio, having thus recovered the cost of his son's education, sent him back to study; and this time Niccolò studied economically—without a master.

It was now 1801; Niccolò had reached seventeen, and wished to escape from his father's control. How he managed this is a long story, but he did free himself at last. That the violinist became a melodramatic figure cannot have been entirely due to chance. He enjoyed being talked about, even if people accused him of murder!

A Pen Picture

This is a friend's description of Paganini: "He is so thin that no one could be thinner with decency; and with it he has a pale yellow complexion, a large, curved nose, and bony fingers. He looks as if he were hardly held together under his clothes, and, when he bows his acknowledgments his body moves in so extraordinary a manner that one fears to see his legs part from his trunk at any moment, and the whole frame fall together, as a heap of bones. When he plays, his right foot is well advanced, and with it he beats time when the music becomes more animated. At the same time his face does not lose any of its death-like immobility—except when thunders of applause provoke his peculiar smile, and his eyes flash, not without good humour, in all directions."

A credulous public accounted for the breath-taking magic of this great violinist's performances on a single string by repeating the fantastic legend that "his G string was the intestine of his wife, whom he had murdered with his own hands."

America can't beat that for publicity. But what Barnum would have done with such a man baffles the imagination.

A special presentation, "The Paganini Centenary," will be broadcast by 2YA Wellington on Sunday, May 26, at 3 p.m.

BIGGEST YET: Plans For Centennial Drama Festival

Elimination Contests

IF all goes well, the biggest Drama Festival ever held in New Zealand will soon be under way. It is to be the Centennial Drama Festival, covering in its way as wide a field as the Centennial Music Festival now in progress.

Wide as the scope of the British Drama League festivals have been in New Zealand, the scope of this Centennial year festival is to be even wider. To organise it, the New Zealand branch of the Drama League has been co-opted by the National Centennial Council, and has agreed to forgo its own festival festival this year.

The usual limits on entries have been dispensed with. The competition will be open to everyone, whether amateur members of drama leagues or not, and the National organisers are doing everything possible through local subsidiary organisations to ensure that no group in any centre, large or small, will be discouraged from taking part in a Festival intended to give the public an opportunity of seeing the very highest standard of dramatic work this country can produce.

Entries will be received during June and area elimination contests will begin almost immediately. New Zealand has been divided for the purpose into four main districts: Auckland, Wellington, Canterbury and Otago. The organising officers in each centre are:

Auckland, T. W. M. Ashby; Wellington, F. V. Sanderson (including Nelson and Marlborough); Canterbury, A. E. Laurence (Timaru); Otago, G. Douglas.

Under the jurisdiction of the Drama League in each of these centres, area elimination contests will be organised in all surrounding sub-centres. The selected winners will then play in the centres, and the winners will come to Wellington, to play in the finals about the end of July.

Although the ordinary limitations, such as the amateur qualification, have been dispensed with, the Festival will be governed by conditions intended to ensure the highest possible standard. The organisers will only accept entries of plays which are considered "playworthy"; i.e., of sufficient dramatic merit. In the cast there must be at least four main speaking parts, exclusive of "bit" parts. The length of the plays should be from 30 to 45 minutes.

What The Judges Will Look For

The judges will consider the following points:

Dramatic merit and difficulty of interpretation; producer's general interpretation; standard of individual acting; team work of the cast; grouping and movement; deportment and stage technique; expressive value of make-up, furniture, lighting, costumes; tempo; clarity of speech.

For the elimination contests, the expenses will be borne by local organisers, who will retain profits. For the provincial semi-finals, preliminary expenses will be borne by the Provincial Centennial Councils, to be refunded from profits. Surplus profits will re-

main with the organisers, but it is expected that every endeavour will be made to assist with the travelling expenses of teams coming from distant areas.

For the finals, however, the Centennial Committee will definitely provide travelling expenses to Wellington, and has offered prizes of £50 and £20 for the first and second teams.

Although most of the financial considerations for the area and Provincial contests are being left to the local discretion, the organisers of the finals in Wellington are giving a lead by offering to provide stage drapes and the services of an electrician, although extra furniture, expenditure on the transport of materials, and the cost of special lighting arrangements, will be the responsibility of the teams.

Stimulus For Continued Effort

Plans for this big Festival matured at a meeting held in November of last year, at which were present Professor James Shelley (Director of Broadcasting), A. W. Mulligan (Secretary to the Centennial Branch of the Department of Internal Affairs), and three representatives of the Drama League: Messrs. W. S. Wauchop, Swan and Tomlinson.

In a statement issued then, they said: "The idea behind the national Festival of Drama is not to have a mere sudden activity which will die down on the completion of the competition, but to give an impetus to the study and practice of drama whose good effects will carry on to be indefinitely stimulating."