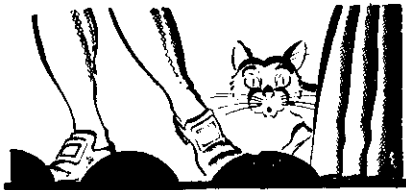


THIRD TIME LUCKY

But "The Barber Of Seville" Was A Fiasco At First

ONE of the regular haunts of music in the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries was the barber's shop. Here customers waiting their turn for shaving, hair-cutting, blood-letting or tooth-pulling, found some simple instrument on which they could strum. The barbers themselves in their waiting time between customers took up the instrument and thus came to possess some repute as performers.

It was quite understandable, therefore, for composers of operas to use the guitar-strumming barber as a character in their works, the most famous



"... A cat walked on to the stage"

being, of course, *The Barber of Seville*, by Rossini. This opera was written and produced as long ago as 1816, but it is still so popular that 2YA have decided to devote a whole evening programme to it on Sunday, April 13. Between 8 and 9 o'clock there will be

LOOK BEFORE YOU LISTEN

(Continued from previous page)

Keen on Solitaire

KIRSTEN FLAGSTAD is one of the few stars who do not have a maid or secretary. While some prima donnas travel with six or seven maids, chaperones, maestros, managers, and keepers-of-the-Pekinese, Kirsten Flagstad hates to have people "fussing around her." When she is on tour she packs her own suitcases, dresses herself, and puts on her own make-up.

2YA listeners will hear Kirsten Flagstad, Norwegian soprano, on Monday, April 14.

A Fidgety Fiddler

AT the age of seven, John Barbirolli started to learn the violin, but was so fidgety that his grandfather lost patience with him and bought him a 'cello. At the age of fourteen he was earning his own living by playing in restaurants, theatres, cafes, and with dance bands. He gave his first recital in 1917, when he was seventeen, and a few weeks later joined the army, becoming a lance-corporal in the First Suffolk Regiment. In 1928 his "big chance" came when, at two days' notice, he deputised for Beecham at a symphony concert at which Casals, the famous 'cellist, was soloist.

John Barbirolli will be heard conducting the New Symphony Orchestra at 1YA on Friday, April 18.

presented a play dealing with the difficulties and unusual circumstances surrounding the composition and first presentation of the opera, and after the break at 9 p.m. for the NBS newsreel, a full presentation of the opera itself in the "Music from the Theatre" series.

They Laughed When He Sang

Although *The Barber of Seville* turned out to be a masterpiece, thanks to the happy wedding of Rossini's finest comic inspiration with a worthy libretto (based on Beaumarchais's comedy, *The Barber of Seville*), the initial performance on February 20, 1816, was notoriously a fiasco. In the first place there was the opposition of the friends of the veteran composer Piasello, who more than a generation before had himself composed *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, and there were other difficulties. Rossini had given the tenor Garcia permission to sing a serenade of his own, with guitar accompaniment, in the first act. His tuning his guitar on the stage and his spiritless singing of the interpolation provoked laughter. Then, instead of the solo expected when the heroine entered, there were a mere few notes sung behind the window of her balcony, and this substitution caused such an uproar that the remainder of the scene could scarcely be heard.

Rossini Was Unperturbed

Then, when a cat walked on the stage, the audience could not resist catcalls and demands for a saucer of milk. At the end of the act, Rossini offended many of the audience by clapping his hands, though he was not applauding the opera, but the singers who had done their duty under trying conditions. The disturbance continued throughout the second act (Rossini's own division of the opera is into two acts). The composer, however, left the theatre with an air of complete indifference, and when the agitated prima donna, Giorgi-Righetti, hurried to his house, to console him for the failure, she found he had already gone to bed, and was sleeping quietly.

Lost Overture

At the following performance a serenade by Rossini himself replaced Garcia's unfortunate song, and the opera was accorded respectful attention and received with considerable favour. At the third performance it elicited the deserved applause. It is worth noting that though the overture composed by Rossini for *The Barber* was lost, the substitute overture, which had already served for two earlier operas (*Aureliano in Palmira* and *Elizabetta*) might have been written expressly to fulfil its ultimate function, and has achieved world renown.

In the production from 2YA on Sunday evening the greater part of the opera is sung by the La Scala Opera of Milan, but there have been added two or three solos by Tito Schipa. This is the latest addition to the "Music from the Theatre" series, and this particular presentation will be heard for the first time in New Zealand.



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