

"THE BARBER" ON L.P.

ROSSINI'S gift as a composer was his ability to write music that sparkles and effervesces like champagne. A new L.P. recording of his opera buffa masterpiece, *The Barber of Seville*, will be broadcast in a link of the YC stations at 7.0 p.m. on Sunday, May 23. This work, with its nimble, chattering tunes and chuckling arias, is one of the greatest comic operas ever written, and it is given a first-rate performance in this new recording by the Milan Symphony Orchestra and Chorus conducted by Tullio Serafin. The leading roles are taken by Victoria de los Angeles (soprano) as Rosina, Nicola Monti (tenor) as Count Almaviva, Gino Bechi (baritone) as Figaro, Melchiorre Luise (bass-baritone) as Dr. Bartolo, Nicola Rossilimeni (bass) as Don Basilio, and Anna Maria Canali (mezzo-soprano) as Berta. An introductory talk to the broadcast will be given by Fred Kersch, of Dundedin. The total time taken up by this programme will be just under two and a half hours.

The Barber of Seville is in two acts, the libretto by Cesare Sterbini being based on the famous comedy by Beaumarchais. Rossini wrote the score in 15 days when he was 24, and although the work had been specially commissioned its first performance was a notorious failure. Many stories have been told about this opening night of February 20, 1816, at the Teatro di Torre Argentina in Rome. The main reason for the outrage of the audience was simply that the supporters of Giovanni Paisiello, whose own version of *The Barber* had held the stage for the past 35 years, assembled in force with the intention of wrecking the production.

The outcry set up by this group was intensified by a series of accidental

disasters on the stage itself. One of the singers suffered a nose bleed in the middle of an aria; at another point a cat walked across the stage; and when the principal tenor, who had been given permission by the composer to interpolate a song of his own, had trouble in tuning his guitar at the crucial moment, the uproar became tremendous. Rossini, however, who was seated at the dulcimer, was not at all worried by this reception. He 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 him already in bed sound asleep. The second and third performances of the opera met with the reception they deserved, and the work began its triumphant career which has continued to this day.

The story of *The Barber of Seville* is briefly as follows: Dr. Bartolo, a resident of Seville in 17th Century Spain, is in love with his ward, Rosina, who for her part loves Count Almaviva. The Count tries to gain access to Bartolo's carefully-guarded house, first by pretending to be a drunken soldier, then by impersonating the music-teacher Don Basilio. He manages to get in touch with Rosina, and they plan an elopement. At first their plans are frustrated when Dr. Bartolo persuades Rosina that her lover is unfaithful to her. Rosina eventually learns that this is not true, and marries the Count instead of Bartolo. The latter is made more amenable to the marriage when the Count tells him he will renounce all claims to Rosina's dowry, which can be paid to Bartolo instead. Figaro, the barber, is the match-maker between the lovers, who gives the Count advice and appears at crucial moments to facilitate the affair.



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Does Parliament fulfil its functions? Two Members of Parliament—J. Mathison (Labour, Avon), left, and J. R. Hanan (Government, Invercargill), right, will discuss this topic in "Question Mark" from YA stations at 8.30 p.m. on Monday, May 17. Also taking part will be K. J. Scott, acting-Professor of Political Science at Victoria University College, and Ian Donnelly, Editor of the "Timaru Herald." The discussion will take a look at the institution of Parliament in New Zealand at the end of its first 100 years

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