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ONE TOUCH OF VENUS

THE overtures of the composer Franz von Suppé are the common property of the lowliest municipal bands in the farthest-flung outposts of civilisation. Yet the operas to which they belong are almost unknown here. However, on Saturday, August 4, in *YA Theatre of Music* listeners will be introduced to *The Beautiful Galatea*, Suppé's most successful comic opera and one which is still a favourite on European light operatic stages.

Suppé's librettists do not depart appreciably from the old classical story of Pygmalion, the sculptor who fashions a beautiful marble woman, calls her Galatea, and falls in love with her. He is so affronted by a rich client's wish to buy his handiwork that he prepares to destroy it. Venus intervenes, breathing life into the statue. Galatea's newly-opened eyes meet Pygmalion's and immediately return his love. Then the trouble starts. The minute his back is turned, the wench starts flirting with everyone, from her creator's servant to the customer who has just tried to buy her. The customer proffers jewels and Pygmalion returns just as she seems to be accepting him. In despair he beseeches Venus to undo her good deed. The goddess obliges on the spot and the misogynist sculptor cynically offers to abet his client's desire after a fashion and for a price—"How much am I bid? She can be all yours." And a minute later she is. *Curtain.*

A final irony. The lilting theme that is heard first in one of Galatea's arias turns up at the close with the trio as they sing that "without women, without love, it is splendid in the world." That the same *motif* suffices for the fickle female and the bitter misogynist could be Suppé's way of saying, musically, what his libretto leaves unsaid—that maybe there's no living with women, but you can't live without them, either.

Beautiful Galatea is sung by the chorus and orchestra of the Vienna State Opera, with Anton Paulik conducting and soloists Elizabeth Roon (soprano), Waldemar Kmentt and Kurt Preger (tenors), and Otto Wiener (baritone).

Against the Law

STORIES of crime and judgment attract us all, as great writers from Dickens to Dostoevsky have found out to the enrichment of literature, and cinema moguls to the enrichment of themselves. When the stories are true, so much the better, or worse, according to your point of view, but there is no denying that the ritual of the law in action can make manufactured drama look feeble.

A new series of half-hour programmes, *Famous Trials*, is being broadcast from ZB stations on Tuesdays and 2ZA on Fridays. These are true stories gathered from police records and courtroom archives all over the world. Some are murder cases, including the story of one of England's most famous post-war trials, that of the flying smuggler who tried to smuggle out the body of a murdered man; some are stories of espionage during the war, and others deal with the War Crimes trials which made history at Nuremberg.

N.Z. LISTENER, JULY 27, 1956.