

PUCCINI'S "IL TABARRO"

PUCCINI'S one-act masterpiece *Il Tabarro* is the second in the series of radio operas now being broadcast by the NZBS. First produced in 1921, its action takes place on a barge which lies at anchor in the river Seine. Notre Dame can be seen in the background. The bargemen are finishing loading, and Michele, the bargemaster, stands watching the sunset. His wife Giorgetta, is taking down the washing and suggests to her husband that he offer the men a drink. He moves to embrace her, but she only offers him her cheek. He goes ashore.

Giorgetta now asks the men to drink, and one of them, the handsome Luigi, asks a passing organ-grinder to play a tune. Tinca, one of the stevedores, and Luigi dance with Giorgetta. Michele now returns to tell his wife that they sail for Rouen in the morning, and that they will take three of the men with them. The three chosen are Tinca, Talpa and Luigi. After a short scene with a song-peddler, Giorgetta and Luigi are left alone, and the audience learn that they are lovers. Michele comes on deck and interrupts them momentarily. Luigi asks if he can be put ashore the next day at Rouen.

When the pair are again alone they arrange to meet later in the evening. Giorgetta will give the signal by striking a lighted match from the barge. After Luigi has gone ashore Michele tries to persuade Giorgetta to renew their old

love, but she does not respond and goes off to bed, to leave Michele standing on deck. He now knows she has a lover, but is unable to decide who it is, and in an impassioned outburst swears to crush the life out of him if he catches him. He then takes his pipe and strikes a match to light it. Luigi, waiting on shore, thinks this is the signal and moves aboard the barge. Michele throws himself on him and with his hands around his throat forces Luigi to confess that he is Giorgetta's lover. He then chokes him to death, hiding his body under his cloak. Giorgetta, who has heard the noise, comes on deck. Michele invites her to hide beneath his cloak and opens it to reveal the body of Luigi. Giorgetta draws back but she is seized by Michele and thrown on her lover's body.

Very busy with the backstage work for this series of radio operas are Roy Melford and Brian Salkeld. Roy Melford acted an assistant liaison officer between sound and music in the NZBS production of *Christopher Columbus*, and also in *The Dark-Eyed Sailor* and *Blossom Time*. Brian Salkeld arranged the presentation of such productions as *Carmen Jones*, *Gertrude Lawrence—A Study in Starlight*, and *Carousel* for the Commercial Division's ZB Sunday Showcase. "Could they tell us something about their preparation of *Il Tabarro* for radio?" we asked them, and they had the following comments to make. "This is essentially an actor's opera," they said,



"and we have to set a scene and capture a mood almost before the music has begun. The story of *Il Tabarro* is full of the misery and sadness that surrounds the lives of the people who work the river barges. Their poor existence is only relieved by wine and the fleeting amusement they get from itinerant musicians and gossip with friends. To capture this mood in purely 'sound' values, we hope, with the assistance of a narrator, to fire the imagination and set the scene by providing a very short prologue with the orchestra pointing-up several themes which will later also aid the pin-pointing of the action.

"The evocative material is in the score, but without the visible stage set-

ting it could take longer for the mood to 'catch' than in the theatre, and we hope that the prologue will give just that extra impetus so that half the scene is not past before the full impact of character and mood is felt.

"The second part of the story deals solely with the three leading characters. The scene is very much one of conversation, and so there will be little to explain in the way of action, but where necessary—for instance, where Michele, alone on the deck, fills his pipe, and again at the final climax—the use of sound effects and perspective will, we hope, make the illusion complete." (YCs, 8.30 p.m., Thursday, November 1.)



Strauss Up-to-date

A NUMBER of top-ranking actors whose voices have previously been heard only in the spoken word, have recently added to their already well-established fame by producing singing voices of various qualities. Notable among these are Sir Laurence Olivier, who delighted his fans when he sang in an agreeable baritone in *The Beggar's Opera*, and Rex Harrison, who as Higgins in *My Fair Lady*, a musical comedy based on Shaw's *Pygmalion*, has been raucously cackling his successful way through the Broadway hit. Now Anthony Quayle and Michael Redgrave have joined the ranks with outstanding success in the film *Oh, Rosalinda*, which is described as Johann Strauss's *Die Fledermaus* brought up to date. Excerpts from *Oh, Rosalinda*, will be heard this week in YA Theatre of Music.

The plot of Strauss's operetta has been altered very little—and the music not at all—to make it a merry, modern comedy. Baron von Eisenstein in the original becomes Colonel Eisenstein of the French Army (Michael Redgrave); Prince Orlofsky becomes General Orlofsky of the U.S.S.R. (Anthony Quayle); Frank becomes Major Frank of the British Army (Dennis Price); Alfred becomes Captain Alfred Westerman of the U.S.A.F. (Mel Ferrer); and Notary Falke becomes Dr. Falke (Anton Walbrook). Rosalinda herself is played by Ludmilla Tcherina, who was in *Red Shoes*, and starred in *Tales of Hoffmann*. Not all these actors sing their own parts—the New Zealand baritone Dennis Dowling sings the part of Frank, Sari Barabas sings Rosalinda, Alexander Young sings Alfred, and Walter Berry sings Dr. Falke.

The story is of a practical joke and the revenge that followed it—a gay extravagant plan that swept the whole of Vienna into a game. The highlight is General Orlofsky's masked ball, at which Anthony Quayle sings a magnificent solo welcoming the guests to the ball and telling them of the relations between East and West. Rosalinda arrives masked and Eisenstein flirts gaily with her, not realising that she is his own wife. The music is played by the Weiner Symphoniker Orchestra conducted by Alois Melichar, and the production and direction is by Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger. The musical director is Fred Lewis, and the lavish choreography is by Alfred Rociques.

LEFT: Ludmilla Tcherina and Michael Redgrave as they appear in "Oh Rosalinda."