

THE MACHINE AGE

For Opera While Camp In Germany

Kipnis said: Certainly. But how is it possible? Will you let me out?

The colonel said: It will be better for him to come here and give you an audition.

SO, in the German concentration camp, Alexander Kipnis sang an audition for Wiesbaden and was immediately engaged for a period of five years. This was his first appearance on the stage.

In that time he studied all day. In war-time there was little else to do. He studied Schubert, Brahms, Beethoven and Mozart. From that time he built up his repertoire of more than 150 operas, several of which he sings in three languages. He learned thousands of songs, every one in its original language.

ALEXANDER KIPNIS broke off his narrative.

"I would like to tell you something about my songs, and the programmes that I will sing in New Zealand," he said.

"The programme of a singer is not merely just a number of songs. The singer, in his programme, does not casually say to the public, 'To-day I am going to sing this song, to-morrow another,' just as one sees in a playhouse, 'To-day there will be this play, and to-morrow that.' It is much more than that.

His Open Diary

"The programme of a singer is . . ." he searched for a word . . . "is his Credo. They say you can tell a man by his friends. In just that way you can tell a singer by his programme. The programme can tell you what an artist is.

"THE artist chooses his own programme, and he chooses his songs to express himself—his love, his hope, his devotion. His programme is his open diary, for everyone to read."

He knew, said Alexander Kipnis, that it was much easier to win public success by singing cheap little songs, but that was not his aim when he started to sing.

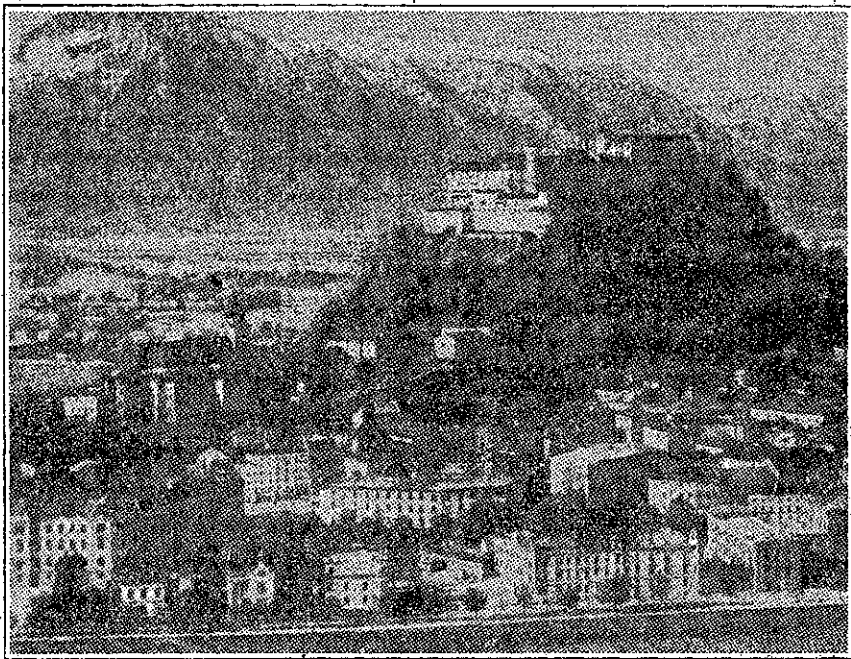
"I NEVER thought of making business out of my art. When I studied singing I never thought of being a great artist who sings in all the big countries and theatres and meets kings and dukes and makes money.

"I never thought of that. I studied my songs because I loved singing them. I used to dream them, and sometimes, as a young man, when walking in the streets I would become aware that people were staring at me.

"I found I was singing out loud the songs that I was dreaming."

IT is his desire in music to give people the best words set in the best songs and sung in the best style. He seeks perfection.

"People are usually afraid of classical songs," he says, "they are afraid of Wagnerian music. They think it will be puzzling, or that it will have shouting in it. Yet nothing can be more enjoyable than the perfect classical song, properly sung."



SALZBURG.

... But the Austrian Festivals of opera there will now be German.

This, then, is the creed of this great visiting artist. It will be curiously interesting to see what reception he will be given in New Zealand.

It is the age of mass production, in music no less than motor-cars, and mass production automatically means the cheapening of the product.

"There is nothing in the world," Maxim Gorki, famous fellow-countryman of Kipnis, once wrote, "so great and beautiful but that man can vulgarise and dishonour it. And even in the clouds, where formerly dreams and ideals dwelt, they now want to print advertisements—for improved toilets, I suppose."

Simple and Profound

KIPNIS is one of those who have refused to lower their standards. His songs will be simple, as only the songs of composers like Schubert can be simple, and at the same time have a profundity in meaning and in music that have given them their immortality.

Whether he will capture New Zealand audiences as did the "Comedy Harmonists," who—brilliant artists though they were—had frankly lowered their colours before the onslaught of the mass mind—or whether he will merely delight a discerning few, will not matter much to him.

He will have done his duty by the art which he holds very precious and the gifts with which he has been endowed.

But it will mean much, I think, to the people of New Zealand.

"I SHALL not sing so much in English," he said. "I do not wish to bring the people songs that others can bring them better. In France I have seen an American come who sings bad songs with a poor pronunciation in French, and all the people sitting laughing."

His songs will be mostly in German, Russian, French and Italian. He believes that the songs can best be sung in the language in which they were written. He will sing the songs of Schubert, Schumann, Brahms and Strauss, as they were meant to be sung.



SCHUBERT.

... Whose songs he loves to sing.