

4YA to Broadcast

RIGOLETTO

by Verdi



MR. ALFRED WALMSLEY

late of the Carl Rosa Opera Company, England, who will produce the complete opera "Rigoletto" from 4YA on Monday next.

—Steffano Webb, photo.

opera, and much of his character has been attributed to this incident in his infancy.

When a boy of seven, that is nearly a hundred years ago, he became a serving boy in a village church, and it was here that he realised the power that music had over him. Once through his pre-occupation in the organ music he forgot the ritual and was knocked unconscious by a priest whom he failed to supply with water at the right moment. His musical career can be said to have commenced when his parents gave him a spinet (a kind of harpsichord) and, exploring the possibilities of this, discovered the major third and fifth of the key of C. On trying to repeat this experience the next day, no matter how he tried, he could not locate the combination of notes. In a fit of anger he seized a hammer and began to belabour the instrument which, of course, yielded to his exhortation and had to be repaired. Instead of making a charge the spinet-maker inscribed:—

"This I do gratis in consideration of the good disposition of the boy Giuseppe Verdi shows in learning to play on this instrument which quite satisfies me for any trouble. (Signed) Stephen Cavaletti, A.D., 1821.

THIS outburst is, however, by no means typical of Verdi, who was outwardly calm, gentle and reserved.

His musical ability was discovered a little later by an itinerant fiddler, and fostered. At the age of eleven the young Verdi, who had received considerable coaching from good musicians, became organist of the church of his home village. When only 18 he was given a bursary to enable him to study in the Conservatorium of Milan, but that body of musicians did not want him, it being stated that the youth showed no musical disposition.

However, he took private lessons in composition, and returned to Busseto as conductor of the Philharmonic Society and organist—this was in the year 1833, and Verdi was then only 20 years old. Two years later he married, and at the age of 24 he returned to Milan with the finished score of an opera, "Oberto, Conte di San Bonifacio," which was accepted and performed with success in 1839. This was Verdi's first opera, but before this time he had been busy, having written between 13 and 18 marches for brass band, short symphonies, six concertos and variations for piano (which he played himself), and a cantata.

He was immediately commissioned by the musical authorities of Milan to write three operas, one every eight months. During

IN 1814, during the seemingly uncontrollable advances of the Napoleonic Armies, a little village in the north-west of the province of Parma in the north of Italy was sacked by the invaders. In terror the women and children fled before the foe and, fearing massacre, sought shelter in a church, where they believed they would be safe. But it was not so, the pillagers rushed in and murdered all they could reach. One woman sought the cover of the belfry, and there with her infant child huddled, unobserved while all below were murdered.

This was the mother of Verdi, who was destined to be one of the world's greatest writers of

the composition of his first commissioned opera, Verdi's wife and both children died in swift succession; small wonder that an opera distasteful in subject, and completed under such conditions should prove a "dead failure." Verdi was despondent and determined to give up composition for good. However, the Commissioners persuaded him to set to music Solera's "Nabucco," which was given at La Scala in 1842 with tremendous applause. The success of "I Lombardi alla prima Crociata" also at La Scala the following year was yet more emphatic, especially as voicing; symbolically, the national aspirations of the patriotic Milanese. Success followed success, and the great heights to which he attained were due to hard work and a love for the art.

Verdi's works naturally group themselves into three periods. The operas of the first period, ending with "Stiffelio" (1850), while making concessions to the prevailing taste, give evidence of an inborn dramatic instinct, superior to that of any of his compatriots, a fact which Italian critics recognised from the beginning.

THE second period is ushered in by "Rigoletto" (1851) and ends with "Don Carlos" in 1867.

Whereas during the first decade of his career Verdi wrote at least one opera every year, new works now appear at increasingly longer intervals; there is a steady improvement in the technical workmanship, and a noticeable growth as regards artistic moderation and refinement of taste. His powerful individuality saved Verdi from ever becoming an imitator. It is known that Verdi was a great admirer and close student of Wagner's scores, but in all his music there is not a single reminiscence, nor one measure for which he is indebted to the Bayreuth master.

Verdi married again in 1849, and after his second wife's death he founded to her memory a home for aged musicians of either sex; for its maintenance he set aside immediately £100,000, and after his death the royalties of all his works, payable for 30 years. The full extent of this last provision may be estimated from the fact that during his life Verdi received in royalties from "Aida" alone the sum of £160,000.

"RIGOLETTO" is one of Verdi's earlier operas. It was produced in 1851, and its composer died just half a century later. It is in the older discontinuous style (with set songs, etc.), and is very Italian in its type of tune and in its expression of passion. The plot is based upon a play of Victor Hugo, "Le Roi s'amuse" ("The King's Diversion").

In any selection from "Rigoletto" we are sure to find two or three tunes that, as soon as the work was produced (in Venice, three—(Concluded on page 2).

