

"CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA"

Mascagni's Celebrated Opera to be Broadcast

ON Monday, July 6, the first complete opera to be broadcast in New Zealand will be presented from 2YA by Signor Lucien Cesaroni's Operatic Company.

Speaking generally, operas are scarcely suited for microphone performance, but that chosen, "Cavalleria Rusticana," is short, melodious, simple of plot, and should appeal to all.

The scene of the opera—which incidentally will be presented entirely in English—is laid in a Sicilian village. The customs and emotional temperament of its Latin inhabitants may seem strange and perhaps a little overdrawn to us, but it must be remembered that they belong to a race which sprang from a different source from our own. To them, Anglo-Saxons appear rather stolid and unemotional.

Unlike many suddenly successful works, "Cavalleria Rusticana" continues to hold its own as one of the most popular of operas. Nor is this hard to understand. The plot moves directly and simply to its predestined end, the music is forceful and strong, intensely dramatic in feeling, and rich in harmony and orchestration. Best of all Mascagni manages to combine a good deal of straightforward melody in a score which otherwise follows the modern idea in having not set arias and ensembles.

The raw facts of the plot are so simple as to savour of everyday police court news, but the charm of the Sicilian setting, the interplay of human nature as the various characters thread out their destiny, the passionate intensity of the music, are such as to lift this tragedy of low life into a vivid and heart-searching drama.

The music of "Cavalleria Rusticana" is a happy blend of the old and the new. In its melodiousness it adheres to the older tradition. Tunes abound, so simple in character that any person with an average ear for music can readily grasp them. There are no set arias, no elaborately-arranged ensembles halting the movement of the plot while the singers display their vocal charms. The melodies occur naturally and spontaneously, and moreover they are arrayed in all the panoply of modern orchestration.

There is none of the stiff recitative of the older day. The recitative, on the contrary, is flexible and natural, giving a just musical presentment of the speaking voice's inflections with an accompaniment for the orchestra which faithfully follows the mood of the moment. Emotional crises develop, reach their climax and pass away; or again, as in the scene preceding the famous "Intermezzo," they reach a point where the lyric outburst of melody seems natural and indeed inevitable.

This flowing continuity of style is essentially modern, being one of the innovations in operatic treatment for which we are indebted to the genius of Richard Wagner. Ultra-modern com-

posers have carried the idea forward to such a degree as to practically eliminate melody in the ordinary sense of the word, but the success of their efforts is still in doubt.

The opera really begins with the Orchestral Prelude, which takes the form of a fantasia on the principal airs of the work, welded together with splendid musicianship. During the performance, however, the voice of Turiddu is heard from the curtained stage singing "Siciliana," one of the most popular airs in the whole work. It is a love song pure and simple, but in its long-drawn cadences, its darkly-coloured harmonies, is some hint of the tragedy which is the consummation of Turiddu's love for Lola.

* * * *

IT is Easter Day, a festival that means as much to the Sicilian as Christmas to us. Moreover, it is springtime, and the air is fragrant with the odour of orange blossoms, and the lark rises singing from myrtles in full bloom. The warm beauty of the day is eloquently suggested in the opening chorus, "Gli Aranci Olezanno" ("Blossoms of Oranges").

During its progress the curtain slowly rises, showing the people of the little village crossing the square to enter the little church opposite the inn where Lucia, mother of Turiddu, plies her trade. No sooner has the happy crowd entered the church than Santuzza appears and calls for "Mamma Lucia." "What is it?" asks the old woman, coming from the house. "Where is Turiddu?" questions the girl. Something in her manner warns Lucia, and she evades a repeated question with, "Do not ask me. I don't know. I want no trouble." But Santuzza pleads, asking her to be merciful. This leads to the "Dite, Mamma Lucia" ("Tell me, Mother Lucia").

LUCIA replies that Turiddu has gone to Francofonte for wine. "No," declares Santuzza, "someone in the village saw him last night." The older woman's suspicions are aroused, and she invites the girl to enter; but this the unhappy Santuzza cannot do. In this little Sicilian village the moral code is strict, and she is an outcast, excommunicated for her sins. "What of my son?" questions the mother; but before

Santuzza can reply the cracking of whips and jingling of bells announces the arrival of Alfio, the carrier, who presently enters, followed by the crowd. He sings the "Il Cavallo Scalpita" (The Sturdy Steed), a vigorous description of a carrier's career. The lively rhythm and swift changes of harmony are particularly exhilarating, and this number is one of the most brilliant in the opera.

Alfio has every reason to be
(Concluded on page 2.)

Cast:

<i>Santuzza (soprano)</i>	<i>Eunice Standen</i>
<i>Lola (soprano)</i>	<i>Janet Stirling</i>
<i>Lucia (contralto)</i>	<i>Mrs. H. Maplesden</i>
<i>Turiddu (tenor)</i>	<i>Ray Trewern</i>
<i>Alfio (baritone)</i>	<i>George Gray</i>
<i>The Sacristan (baritone)</i>	<i>Owen Pritchard</i>
<i>Chorus of Sicilian Peasants.</i>	