

Classical Concert from 2YA

On Monday evening, September 21, Signor Lucien Cesaroni and his operatic company will present from 2YA excerpts from Rossini's famous oratorio, "Tribulation," and from his equally famous opera, "The Barber of Seville." In the following interview Signor Cesaroni tells listeners something of Rossini and his compositions.

ROSSINI'S "Tribulation," one of the most successful of this composer's oratorios, is well known, being often performed in many churches on Good Fridays. I last heard it in one of the most famous of European Cathedrals, Notre Dame, on the Good Friday of 1912, when it was presented by a picked orchestra of sixty musicians and by singers, the majority of whom were from the Grand Opera House, Paris. It is characteristic of the music of Rossini's oratorios that while he retains much religious fervour, the influence of the old Italian school of music is evident in the beautiful, easily-remembered melodies running through all his compositions—particularly his operas.

Perhaps the most famous of the solos from "Tribulation" are the following three, which will be presented, among others, from 2YA next Monday night. The first is a tenor solo, "Lord, Vouchsafe Thy Loving Kindness"; the next, "Through the Darkness," is a bass solo, and finally, perhaps the best-known of all, is the famous "Inflammatus" ("When Thou Comest") solo with chorus.

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Knowing the widespread popularity of Rossini's opera, "The Barber of Seville," many people will be surprised to learn that, when it was first introduced in Rome, it was a complete fiasco. In this, however, it fulfilled an almost fixed tradition with meritorious or afterwards popular works. Aware that his opera was good, Rossini took failure with philosophy. He believed that the opera would ultimately succeed, and the belief was justified.

The following curious incident is typical of the inconstancy of public opinion. The "Barber of Seville" was being produced for the first time in a provincial city and Rossini himself had travelled there incognito to attend the opening night and to watch the reception accorded his recently-completed opera. The first act was accepted in silence, but, at the commencement of the second, the crowd broke into a storm of hissing and jeering, and the opera was completed amidst a tumult of disapproval. Rossini was not greatly perturbed, however, for he knew his work was good.

A few days later, while walking in the street, he was accosted by a local jeweller and watchmaker, who introduced himself as one of the opening night's audience. He congratulated and thanked Rossini for producing such a splendid work, and remarked that he was certain the public in a few years' time would be acclaiming the "Barber of Seville" just as vigorously as they were then disclaiming it. He then produced a beautifully-worked gold watch of his own make, and asked Rossini to accept it as a token of remembrance. Rossini took it and thanked him.

About eight years later the watchmaker's prediction came true. The "Barber of Seville" had become one of the most popular of operas. Once more it was produced in the city which its composer had visited in disguise. This time, however, he came as Rossini, the idol of the public, and was met by cheering crowds who accompanied him in triumph through the streets. He was accosted several days

later by the watchmaker, but failed to recognise him until the watch was mentioned. He produced it, remarking that he had carried it everywhere with him, and that it had been very useful. The watchmaker asked if he had ever opened the back, and upon being informed that he had not, was told to press a little catch. Slightly mystified, Rossini did so, and to his surprise there came forth from some inner mechanism a few tinkling bars from the commencement of the second act of "The Barber of Seville"—just where the audience had, years ago, commenced to show their disapproval. And then, as the jeweller had expected, Rossini remembered the dismal failure of years before which he had completely forgotten in the joy of his sudden rise to fame.

Several excerpts from the "Barber of Seville" will be sung from 2YA on Monday night, and the following brief notes on the story of the opera might help listeners to a more complete appreciation of the performance.

Count Almaviva, who is deeply in love with Rosina, the ward of Dr. Bartolo—a physician both mean and suspicious—is discovered, with a band of hired musicians, serenading Rosina. He sings "Softly, Softly." He is not very successful, it must be admitted, for she pays no attention, though the musicians wake the neighbourhood. The Count then conceals himself to watch a newcomer who is vigorously making known his identity. It is Figaro, the factotum, the jack-of-all-trades, the debonair Barber of Seville—the same hero who figures again in Mozart's "The Marriage of Figaro."

FIGARO is thoroughly well satisfied with himself and gives a list of his accomplishments in the famous "Largo al Factotum" ("Room for the Factotum"). This brilliant and loquacious song is sung at breakneck speed, and is a severe test of the singer's art. The music is as merry and forceful as the words.

The next excerpt is from the second scene of the first act. Rosina is discovered reading a note from Count Almaviva, and in her elation she sings that well-known aria, "A Little Voice I hear." It is one of the gems of the work.

At its conclusion, Rosina runs out of the room and shortly afterwards her guardian appears, accompanied by Basilio, a music master, and incidentally a matrimonial agent. Dr. Bartolo is telling his companion that he wishes to marry Rosina himself, but that her hand is sought by one Count Almaviva. Basilio, scenting profit, is sympathetic and they agree to produce a story that will disgrace him. "A culumny," cries Basilio. "What is that?" asks the Doctor. In reply the musical matrimonial agent gives his famous description in song in "La Calunnia" ("Slander's Whisper"), full of bombastic humour.

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The broadcast performances of Signor Cesaroni and his company are always of a very high standard, and in a country where stage productions of operas and classical works generally are almost unknown, such entertainments are particularly appreciated.



The SIGNAL a Dramatic Play

to be broadcast

from 3YA, Friday,
25th,

under the direction of
Major Lampen

Scene: The English Channel
on a foggy day in 1917.

Following the play will be
a half-hour's gramophone
lecture-recital by Karl
Atkinson.

"The Sea in Music"