

# TANNHAUSER



The story of "Tannhäuser" tells of conflict between two kinds of love: true love of the highest human kind as distinguished from mere sensuous passion, and relates how the higher and purer love triumphed in the end.

*Tannhäuser and Venus.*

TO many persons "Tannhäuser," which will be performed by the Royal Christchurch Musical Society on Thursday, October 20, and broadcast on relay by 3YA is the greatest of all operas. It represents a period in Wagner's life before he had abandoned the opera-form for the music-drama. Its music is of noble character throughout.

It does not, like the "Ring of the Niebelungen," deal chiefly with the sins and the weaknesses of pagan gods, but with those of aspiring, suffering self-defeated humanity. To those who look for the "moral lesson" in a work of art, there is no disappointment; for the whole opera, with its magnificence of structure and its richness of detail, at bottom only typifies the struggle between the good and the baser elements in the human soul.

"Tannhäuser," a knight and minstrel, in an evil moment, succumbs to the wiles of Venus and dwells for a year in the Venusberg. Tiring of these monotonous delights, he leaves the goddess and returns to his home, where he is warmly received and told that the fair Elizabeth, niece of the Landgrave, still mourns for him. He is urged to compete in the Tournament of Song not far distant, the prize being the hand of Elizabeth.

The theme of the contest is the Nature of Love, and when Tannhäuser's turn arrives the evil influence of the Venusberg is apparent when he delivers a wild and profane eulogy of passion. Outraged by this insult the minstrels draw their swords to slay him. Coming to his senses, too late, he repents, and when a company of Pilgrims pass on their way to Rome, he joins them to seek pardon for his sin.

In the last act we see Elizabeth, weary and worn, supported by the noble Wolfram, who also loves her, watching for the Pilgrims to return, but Tannhäuser is not among them. Elizabeth is overcome with disappointment and feebly returns to her home.

Tannhäuser now appears, in a wretched plight, on his way to re-enter the Hill of Venus. He tells Wolfram that he appealed to the Pope for pardon, but was told that his redemption was as impossible as that the Pope's staff should put forth leaves. Wolfram's remonstrances are in vain, and Tannhäuser is about to invoke the goddess, when a chant is heard and the Pilgrims appear, announcing that the Pope's staff had blossomed as a sign that the sinner was forgiven.

Tannhäuser kneels in prayer as the mourners pass with the body of Elizabeth, who, overcome by her bitter disappointment, had suddenly passed away.

## Wagner's Romantic Opera

To be performed by the  
Royal Christchurch Musical Society  
Thursday, October 20 and Broadcast

—by 3YA—

The performance of "Tannhäuser" will be under the conductorship of Mr. W. H. Dixon, L.R.A.M., A.R.C.M., and will be given with full chorus and orchestra. The cast of soloists will be as follows:—

|                                              |                        |
|----------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| HERMAN, Landgrave of Thuringia (bass)        | .....T. D. Williams.   |
| TANNHAUSER (tenor)                           | .....Hubert Carter.    |
| WOLFRAM von ESCHENBACH (baritone)            | .....R. J. Laurenson.  |
| WALTHER von der VOGELWEIDE (tenor)           | .....T. G. Rogers.     |
| BITEROLF (bass)                              | .....J. Y. Wilson.     |
| HEINRICH der SCHREIBER                       | .....Ernest Rogers.    |
| REIMAR von ZWETTER (bass)                    | .....J. Filer.         |
| ELIZABETH (niece of the Landgrave) (soprano) | .....Madame W. Fraser. |
| VENUS (soprano)                              | .....Madame W. Fraser. |

The characters in this great opera are not wholly imaginary. There was a Landgrave of Thuringia, named Hermann, who held court in the Wartburg. Wolfram von Eschenbach was a minstrel knight who wrote the "Quest of the Holy Grail" from which Wagner took the story of "Parsifal."

Tannhäuser himself derives, in part, from a knight-minstrel of that name who served at the court of Duke Frederick II of Austria, early in the thirteenth century, dying a penitent after a somewhat too hilarious life. He has been the subject of many folk-ballads of Ger-



many and of a carnival play by Hans Sachs (of Meister-singer fame). Tannhäuser was a Minne-singer (or knight-minstrel), while the bourgeois Hans Sachs was a Meister-singer (or burgher minstrel and many find a connection between Wagner's two operas owing to this circumstance, combined with a song-contest with a maiden's (Continued on page 24.)

Richard  
Wagner.