

estral pit, immediately beneath the stage box. From here she watched her daughter's performance with the closest attention, and was plainly either mouth-ing her every word or actually singing with her. I incline to the latter theory, as it would better account for mother's state of prostration at the close of the performance, when, with the perspiration streaming down her face, she beamed upon daughter and audience impartially before vanishing rapidly backstage to discuss the whole matter vociferously over a mouthful of supper.

In this opera, the principals were conspicuously well-dressed. This prodigality apparently exhausted the resources of the wardrobe, for the minor characters and chorus were in desperate straits. I have noticed before that the Italian idea of the Highland costume is purely rudimentary. A company which toured New Zealand years ago presented a "Lucia," in which the Highlanders wore kilts to their ankles. At Bari the gentlemen of the chorus were less fortunate. They had no kilts at all, but used as a substitute rather dainty check table-cloths, in pinks and blues. Most of them lacked stockings and wore their own socks, all except one individualist who wore nothing except a pair of hairy legs protruding from what appeared to be old football boots.

This rather overdone informality seemed to have a seriously adverse effect upon the chorus, who stood about the stage in melancholy knots taking the most perfunctory interest in the performance. Bearing in mind the sketchy nature of

their costume, they were probably suffering from "wind-up" in the fullest sense of the term.

Far happier was a sinister individual whose part in the plot it was rather difficult to determine. This gentleman, a gorgeous sight in plumed hat, satin coat, and knee-breeches of eggshell blue, with lace at collar and cuff, floated on to the stage as though but lately wafted from the court of Charles II. As the height of his heels tended to project him forward upon his nose, he maintained his equilibrium by means of a tapered staff upon which he leaned heavily. Gazing round upon his bedraggled associates he gave tongue in a disgruntled bass, as though conveying to the audience his regret that they should have come upon him in such unsavoury company.

All operas were sung in Italian, but there was little difficulty in following the plot of each. "Lucia di Lammermoor" was unusually hard to follow owing to the confusing costumes which gave little if any hint as to the wearer's identity, and were in certain cases quite one hundred years out of period.

The orchestra did not give the performers the help that they merited. This may have been because the orchestra had only lately been gathered together and needed further practice. The effect was too strongly suggestive of the thinness and discord of a village concert. By this time, however, it is probable that the orchestra has very greatly improved with more practice, and with the infusion of some fresh blood. The average age, to my recollection, appeared to be about sixty-five, and several of the older members were plainly sitting up long past their bedtime.

No one would claim that the Bari performances were good opera, but I think that most people found them excellent entertainment. One had that pleasurable feeling of anticipation that one associates with a good motion-picture cartoon: the feeling that the events you are watching have passed so far outside the realm of normal probability that fresh enchanting absurdities may and probably will occur at any moment. In this expectation, one was rarely, if ever, disappointed.—A *Korero* Report.

