

Dickens's "Pickwick" Being Set to Music

British Composer-Conductor Using Nearly All of the Original Text of the Famous Stories for His Operatic Venture

Last summer, Albert Coates, the conductor, managed to steal a few hours from his stand in the concert-hall and pursue his muse in the creative field of composing. Mr. Coates has long neglected this phase of musical activity, and has been devoting much of his time to conducting. His schedule recently took him to England, the Baltic States, Russia, and Austria. Last summer he conducted the Vienna Philharmonic during the same period that Toscanini was guest-conductor of that celebrated unit.

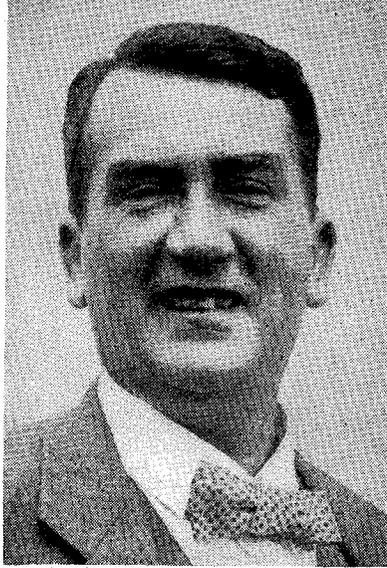
But Mr. Coates decided that he must continue with his composing. At his villa on Lake Maggiore, he found time to finish a cello concerto, which he had been working on, and which is to be played by Piatigorsky.

A group of art-songs, in the delicate Coates manner, also came from the pen of the busy composer-conductor. But, even more important than these items, Mr. Coates brought a work which is very dear to his heart a step nearer completion. This is his new operatic venture, a setting for Charles Dickens's great masterpiece, "Pickwick." Visitors to the villa are whispering about the score for this opera, which by now has reached such a point that Mr. Coates plays it every now and again for guests.

He is employing almost the entire original text of the Dickens story for his libretto. With this rich and vivid material, the work will be one of great scope, and destined to hold an important place among the truly great musical dramas of this century. As with all the adaptations from literature, the problem arises when the librettist sets about to condense the material for theatrical use. A natural and psychological sequence of the important and vital episodes must be maintained, and, yet, quantities of valuable dramatic material must be abandoned to fit the piece into stage requirements. Mr. Coates believes that he has solved this part of his problem with the introduction of many novel features for an opera. He plans to present the opus in four acts and twelve scenes. Four of the scenes are to be film interludes depicting, in rapid and concise fashion, the intricate and secondary phases of the action. A preliminary sketching of his plan gives an indication of the thought he has devoted to his libretto and lovers of the Dickens tale will enjoy the idea:

Act one contains two scenes. In the first, Rochester's maneuvers are set forth,

and these are followed by an orchestral interlude, with cinema. The second scene reveals Manon Farm and Dingley Dell, accompanied by a film of the cricket scenes, with a fugue, all making for balance.



Albert Coates

In the second act, Mr. Coates calls for another set of two scenes. In the first of these Manon Farm and Dingley Dell are revealed, followed by a symphonic interlude—the Pickwick Scherzo—with accompanying film of Aunt Rachel's elopement with Jingle. The second scene is set in the courtyard of the White Hart Inn, London, and, in this scene, Sam Weller makes his first appearance.

The third act is broken up into four scenes. Scene one is at Mrs. Bardell's, Goswell Road, London. The second shows the

Eatonville Elections, and the third is at Dodson and Fogg's. For the fourth scene, the action is brought to the courtyard of the Guildhall. Here the cinema is used to depict the breach of promise trial, with the witnesses in the box. Four scenes are again used in the fourth and last act.

In the first of this series, the Debtor's Prison in The Fleet is shown, and the famous scene with Jingle is given at this point. The second scene continues, but morning has come. The scene concludes with Mrs. Bardell being ushered into The Fleet. The third scene is at Mr. Pickwick's private apartment in The Fleet. The action stops at the point when he is persuaded to leave the prison. A musical interlude follows including an octet and a finale. The last scene of the opera is set in the garden of Pickwick's country-house, and all ends with the wedding march for Emily Wardle.

Mr. Coates, however, will not desert the podium while "Pickwick" is being brought to completion. His schedule calls for appearances in many parts of the world. A studio performance of "Salome" for the British Broadcasting Company is to be followed by conducting engagements in Riga, Kovno, and Russia. Later on, Mr. Coates will venture to Vienna, where he will lead the Vienna Philharmonic. In the same city he will direct productions of Wagner's "Lohengrin" and "Tristan" for the famous Staatsoper. In the new year, Mr. Coates plans to give a new work in London. This is to be the first symphony of a new composer, Yuli Shaporim. It is an elaborate work scored for double orchestra, and employing a chorus of 370 voices.

WILLIAM P. SEARS, JR.

New York Audiences Acclaim Casey and the Abbey Players

On intermittent evenings, Sean O'Casey, the play-boy of the Abbey Theater, has two works being performed in New York. One is "Within the Gates," a fiercely contentious invention, and the other, thanks to the present visit of the players from the Dublin capital of contemporary Irish drama, is "The Plough and the Stars." And when New York is not devoting its whole evening to O'Casey, it is turning to the Abbey actors for old favorites and new pets.

No grveled Irish swarmed over the footlights and battered the actors when the present engagement of the Abbey group began with "The Plough and the Stars." Instead, a large audience sat back, relaxed, and enjoyed every moment of the play's four—and once inflammatory—acts. When it first was played here some years ago, the producer, awed by reports from Dublin describing the riots there when the play made its debut, called for the police and stationed them, clubs in hand, in the aisles.

Some elder followers of the Abbey's actors professed to find a small lack in the visiting company. They yearned for the richness of Maire O'Neill and the suave rightness of Arthur Sinclair, closing their prejudiced eyes to the performances of Barry Fitzgerald, Eileen Crowe, May Craig, and Maureen Delany.

Whatever the loyal elders may have felt, the younger and more eager supporters of the Dublin visitors described Fitzgerald as one of the sublimest clowns in the current theater, a resourceful, knowing, canny, and completely acceptable character-buffoon who kept his audience rocking with laughter. Not much more than that can be asked of a pantaloon.

Short Tour of America

The only evident restlessness in the first audiences was that aroused by impatience, and the impatience rose out of a wish to get the old plays in the repertory done with so that at least two of the new plays—"Look at the Heffernans" and "Grogan and the Ferret"—might be seen. The latter is a typical village folk-play concerning a badgered individual in the town and the ferret, or town gossip. Eileen Crowe, so excellent as the young Nora Clitheroe in "The Plough and the Stars," is the destructive gossip of the new play.

The Abbey Players had been on a short American tour before coming to New York, performing mainly in New England cities, and after the Manhattan engagement will start out on a long swing across the Continent. Thus far, and including the New York stand, the tour has been remarkably successful. And there is small wonder for it, because here, with or without some of the veteran blessings in the Abbey roster, is a company making substantial, understanding performances of the best plays from Ireland. Their wit has savor and their philosophy has weight, and the combination makes for something brave in the theater.

Current Poetry

Unsolicited contributions to this department will not be returned. Unpublished poetry is not acceptable

SANCTUARY

BY KENDALL BANNING

Not when your banners sweep the sky
And lips of friends your feats acclaim,
Nor when gay youth goes riding by
With pulse astir and eyes aflame;
Nor when your laughter echoes through
The halls of revelry, and men
Accord you praise, my dear, do you
Have any need of me.

But when
The garlands wither, and the rust
Has silenced lutes that strummed the dance,
And golden dreams have turned to dust
Beneath the chariot wheels of chance;
When sorrow sets upon your eyes
The trace of frustrate hopes, and when
The lonely heart, in longing, cries
Out through the night—

Come to me then!
—Wings (New York)

I WILL LEAVE THIS HOUSE

BY JOSEPH AUSLANDER

I will leave this house, being tired of this
house
And too much talk;
I will walk down to the sea where the wind
blows
The waves to chalk,
And the sand scratches like a silver
mouse.
I will leave everything here and walk.

I do not know why grass like golden leather
Whipped into strings
Should quiet the heart, or why this autumn
weather,
This salt that stings
My eyes and eyelids should heal me alto-
gether—

I do not know the reason for such things.

I only know that here are walls that harden
The eyes and brain;
I only know words hiss and hurt and
pardon—

Only to hurt again;
And that the sea is like Death's emerald
garden

Dripping with silver wind and silver rain.
—Harper's Magazine

WICKLOW TINKER GIRL

BY W. M. LETTS

There was a tinker girl I met,
The March wind blew her hair.
She looked at me, she laughed at me
That day at Aughrim Fair.
She had no shawl about her head
That was so bright and squirrel-red,
But what had I to say to one
Whose dusty feet were bare?

The tinker girl she passed me by
One day I walked through 'Clash
The spring itself was in her face,
But why should I be rash?
A farmer's son must look for gold,
Cattle and wives are bought and sold,
Put tinker girls they beg and steal
From fools that have the cash.

I saw the tinker girl again.
She travelled through Greenan,
From door to door she hawked her wares,
Tin mug and jug and can.
The river there runs golden brown,
So like her eyes your heart would drown
While looking in them till she said,
"You're staring hard, young man!"

I followed her to Glenmalure,
When all the whins were gold,
And tho the sun was on the grass
The April wind blew cold.
The tinker girl still laughs at men.
She left me lonely in the glen.
She stole my watch, she stole my youth,
And left me wise and old.

—Yale Review

Light one from another?

Who cares!



Mouth keeps daisy-fresh



...if you keep to Spuds



They have a way all their own of cooling the smoke
...sifting out irritants... giving you unspoiled flavor.

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