

Music

Notable New Recordings

POLYDOR, that enterprising and technically efficient German recording firm so many of whose disks are familiar to American listeners through the Brunswick re-pressings, has recently started something which seems to me an excellent idea. Hermann Weigert and Hans Maeder have been preparing special abridged versions of operas and operettas for phonographic purposes. The interpretative artists are members of the Berlin State Opera Company, and their handling of music and dialogue alike is a sheer delight. The language is German, but so skilled is the presentation of the condensed action that with the aid of the synopsis, printed in four languages, no one need fear not understanding it. These are not just selections from operas and operettas, but are complete in themselves and have perfectly clear continuity.

The latest of the condensed operettas to appear at the local importers' is Emmerich Kalman's masterpiece, *The Gypsy Princess*¹. The four double-sided twelve-inch disks make up a thoroughly entertaining three-quarters of an hour's amusement, especially for those who feel that without the costumes and scenery to help them along much of the average opera is pretty dull on the phonograph. In this set the diction is particularly admirable.

That would seem to bring us to Victor's latest complete opera on records, Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana*². Although inferior to the Polydor-Berlin State Opera work, there are no doubt many lovers of typical Italian music who will welcome this spirited rendition by the Scala operatic troupe of Milan.

Another importation with which I can find no fault is Bruno Walter's recording for the English Columbia Company of the waltzes from the *Rosenkavalier*³. No matter how many times you have heard this lovely music of Richard Strauss or what records of it you may have already, I'm sure you will not be disappointed in this disk as played by Herr Walter and the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. It shows most clearly why this music appeals both to the most critical musician and to people who "don't know anything about music, but know what they like." Presumably Columbia will eventually issue it here, but you won't regret it if you anticipate that action by ordering it from an importer now.

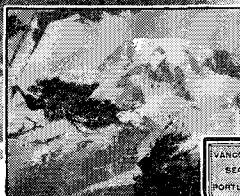
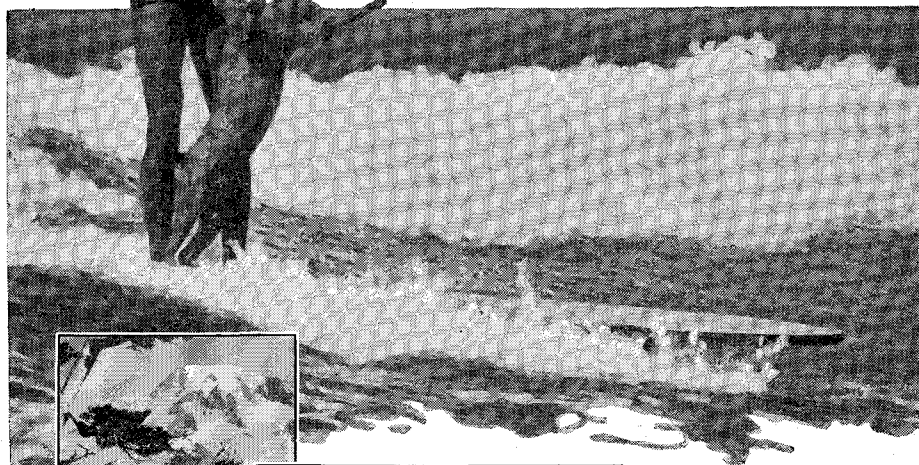
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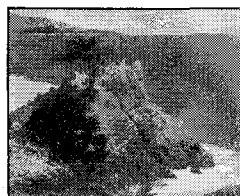
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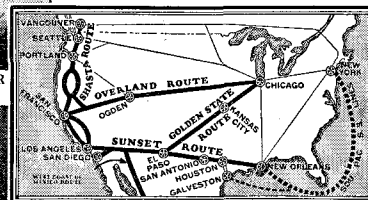
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►► The Latest Plays ◄◄

By OTIS CHATFIELD-TAYLOR

PROFESSIONAL moralists who meddle with the affairs of the theatre on the theory that the public wants dirty plays and that they (the moralists) have been divinely appointed to see that it doesn't get them may have had a considerable shock the last couple of weeks. If any of the snoopers have been observing what's been going on outside of their own slimy minds, they will have seen a striking demonstration of the fact that what the public wants is good plays well done, regardless of the presence or absence of "spice."

A clumsy attempt at hot stuff, *A Woman Denied*, with Mary Nash, has been left severely alone by the ticket purchasers, while, in addition to *Give Me Yesterday* and *As Husbands Go*, of which I wrote last week, the list of clean shows in real demand has been augmented by a play so immaculate in its conception and its fulfilment that even though two acts of it take place on a South Sea island, at the end of three years in the tropics the castaways have only just got around to talking about marriage! And one of them is a minister of the gospel!!

The Admirable Crichton, almost needless to say, is the play. Critical pundits of the daily papers went to a great deal of bother to point out the obvious in learned and involved sentences. In the thirty years since its original production the play has "dated." The war has filled the world with Admirable Crichtons. Sir James Barrie's construction and pointing for situations are too apparent. Etc., etc., etc. At the risk of being as naïvely obvious as the rest of them, I would like to point out that as long as there are any social distinctions at all, *The Admirable Crichton* will retain enough of its point to make it worth seeing—especially for those who can appreciate Barrie's neatness and delicacy of phrasing the English language. With the exception of Fay Bainter, who plays Lady Mary with all the proper satiric sparkle, the cast of the present revival is competent rather than

brilliant. It includes Walter Hampden, Effie Shannon, Estelle Winwood and Herbert Druce. Mr. George Tyler's production is nice to look at, and it is pleasant to be able to report that in spite of the patronizing criticisms of the *intelligentsia* the steadily mounting box-office receipts of *The Admirable Crichton* indicate an active demand for a piece written and presented with good taste.

The House Beautiful is another play conspicuous for its purity and containing much sound dramatic stuff—played by an excellent cast. Never actually dull, owing perhaps to the conviction with which the cast is able to read the nauseatingly platitudinous lines, Mr. Channing Pollock's sermon in three acts and goodness knows how many scenes nevertheless failed to convince me for an instant. From the standpoint of technique the whole cast, particularly Mary Phillips and Reed Brown, Jr., the director, Worthington Miner, and Jo Mielziner, who designed the settings, are to be congratulated.

Napi, in which the brilliant *farceur*, Ernest Truex, is appearing, starts with an amusing enough notion of a dry goods clerk who is Napoleon's double being sent to give *congé* to an actress-mistress of whom the emperor has tired. Instead of leaving at once, he stays in Mlle. George's apartment all night, with the imperial coach waiting without. So far, so good. But the complications which arise are so far-fetched and such heavy-handed attempts are made to be suggestive that even the resourceful Truex cannot make the thing stretch out satisfactorily over an evening. Even the most superficial student of history will be irritated by the fact that none of the illustriously named characters ever behaves in the least as the real Josephine, Duroc or Dr. Corvisart could have, and it is surely unnecessary to have a supposed actress of the *Comédie Française* pronounce "etiquette" as "edicutt." *Napi* isn't ever funny enough to make one forget such things.

Recommended Current Shows

As Husbands Go: Rachel Crothers' urbane and amusing comedy of Dubuque ladies in Paris and at home.

Civic Repertory: Unfortunately in their last weeks before closing for a year.

Five Star Final: A melodrama with a message that is really exciting.

Girl Crazy: Willie Howard and Ethel Merman doing right by Gershwin tunes.

Give Me Yesterday: A. A. Milne fantasy carefully produced.

Grand Hotel: Thrilling importation from Germany with a revolving stage.

Mrs. Moonlight: If you're not ashamed to be sentimental.

Oh, Promise Me: Rough and ready slapstick for the none too squeamish.

Once in a Lifetime: Moss Hart is about to spell George Kaufmann. It'll still be good.

Private Lives: Perfection in light comedy by Noel Coward with him and Gertrude Lawrence.

Sweet and Low: They've plugged the tunes too much on the radio, but there are some laughs, too.

The Barretts of Wimpole Street: Unevenly cast and directed but always interesting. Katharine Cornell is exquisite.

The Green Pastures: Compassionate negro miracle play. Second year.

Tomorrow and Tomorrow: Herbert Marshall is especially good in Philip Barry's best play.

Vinegar Tree: Mary Boland's memory goes back on her as to with whom she had had an affair.