

cial day, with Wilhelm Furtwängler scheduled to conduct the "Choral" Symphony of Beethoven.

If Bayreuth opens, can Salzburg be far behind? The answer is No, for the Austrian activity begins this year on July 25. In addition to Mozart's "Cosi" and "Don Giovanni," the schedule promises Weber's "Der Freischütz" and Strauss's "Ariadne," with the world premiere of Rolf Liebermann's "Penelope" on Tuesday, August 17. Dimitri Mitropoulos will conduct one of the orchestral concerts, Guido Cantelli, Wilhelm Furtwängler, Edwin Fischer, and Hans Knappertsbusch sundry others.

In nearby Munich (active persons can easily shuttle between Salzburg and Munich from one day to the next, or go up to Bayreuth on a third), local specialties prevail: Strauss's "Ara-bella" and "Frau ohne Schatten," Pfitzner's "Palestrina," and Mozart's "Cosi" (it was here, several decades ago, that the present favor for "Cosi" was launched). However, "Die Meistersinger" will be given, also a "Ring" cycle and Mozart's "Figaro." Those who want lighter fare will find it in Bregenz, home of outdoor operetta, on a Swiss lake actually in Austria. Those who want an extra good reason for visiting Switzerland are commended to the Lucerne Festival (August 8-29).

FORMERLY Bayreuth, Salzburg, Munich climaxed the summer festival season, but the music goes on and on, with Edinburgh drawing thousands of visitors between August 22 and September 11; a series of five orchestral concerts with conductors Ormandy, Munch, and Ataulfo Argenta at Besançon in France between September 8 and 12; a Vichy festival from September 11 to 19, and the ambitious Venice festival (September 15) and Berlin (September 18) carrying music practically to the beginning of the winter season. All details of the Edinburgh activity are not in yet, but the visiting orchestras this year will include the Philharmonia of London, the Hallé of Manchester, and others from Copenhagen, Hamburg, and Milan.

I haven't made up a schedule of overlapping dates, but I doubt there is a day between May 15 and October 15 when there is not a "festival" performance or something to be heard within a few hours' plane journey of Paris (to select a central point). Anyone finding such a day and forwarding mention of it to the Association of European Festivals in Geneva will, I am sure, be rewarded with two tickets for something which some festival will dream up for this "open" date.

—I. K.

More Music from Spain

By HERBERT WEINSTOCK

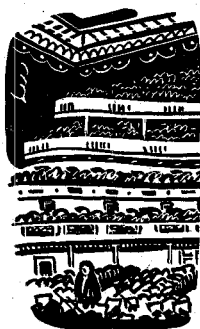
BOTH the number of *zarzuelas* and the popularity of the most enduring among them must astonish the investigator. Even an American aware of the long lists of works under such names as Kern, Gershwin, Berlin, and Rodgers, and familiar with the long runs of "Oklahoma!" and "South Pacific," can be amazed by Spanish popular composers with forty or fifty works to their credit—and by single *zarzuelas* that have been sung as many as ten thousand times. The prolificness of the Spanish lyric theatre and its enduring call to the public are both imposing. Only now, thanks to LP, can the world outside Spain and Spanish America begin to hear excerpts from the most enduringly popular pieces in the *zarzuela* repertoire (for no recording that has come to my attention is more than a potpourri of high spots or hit numbers).

Of the three works reviewed here, the oldest is "Gigantes y Cabezudos" (literally "Giants and Big-heads"), composed by Manuel Fernández Caballero to a book by Miguel Echegaray, the less famous brother of the great dramatist José Echegaray. This story of Zaragoza at the end of the Spanish-American War was first staged at Madrid's Teatro de la Zarzuela on November 29, 1898. The blind Fernández Caballero composed with special intensity both the chorus of soldiers returning from Cuba and the music of the Aragonese fiesta in which huge puppets represent giants and dwarves with enormous heads. The excellent Montilla recording (LD-19, \$5.95) features the dramatic soprano Lily Berchman, other excellent popular singers, well-trained choruses, and the Orquesta de Cámara de Madrid conducted by Daniel Montorio and Enrique Navarro. The record envelope provides a confusing approximation of the Spanish text sung, but no English explanation or text.

Of a later generation is "La Canción del Olvido" ("The Song of Forgetting"), composed by José Serrano to a text of undesignated origin. First presented in Serrano's native Valencia on November 17, 1916, it has won

enduring popularity. A story of amorous intrigue in the imaginary Neapolitan town of Sorrentino in 1790, it has little Spanish color, Serrano having aimed at being Italianate. In this Montilla recording (LD-20, \$5.95), Lily Berchman again is featured, this time as paired with an outstanding baritone, Luis Sagi Vela. The most renowned number from "La Canción del Olvido" is probably "Soldado de Nápoles" ("Soldier of Naples"), for tenor and male chorus; it is here excellently set forth by one E. Barta and the Cantores Líricos de Madrid. The Orquesta de Cámara de Madrid is under the tripartite direction of Daniel Montorio, Enrique Navarro, and a conductor listed only as Estevarena. Again the Spanish text sung is printed incorrectly on the record envelope and there is no English synopsis or translation.

Most recent is "Luisa Fernanda," composed by Federico Moreno Torroba to a book by Federico Romero and Guillermo Fernández Shaw. Heard first at Madrid's Teatro Cal-



derón on March 26, 1932, this tale of jealousy and renunciation has been sung more than ten thousand times. Called a "lyric comedy in three acts," it is very close to the condition of such an opéra-comique as "Carmen." Moreno Torroba (1891-), some of whose guitar pieces have been made familiar by Andrés Segovia, is an accomplished technician fully aware of

many contemporary styles. In this Soria recording (70.009, \$5.95), "Luisa Fernanda" is handsomely performed by a competent cast under the composer's direction. The chorus and the Orquesta Sinfónica Española perform with prevailing accuracy and excellence. The accompanying booklet supplies the sung text in Spanish and a synopsis in English.

Among recorded *zarzuelas*, those I have heard which seem to me the most likely to appeal widely to American listeners include "Luisa Fernanda," Ruperto Chapí's "La Revoltosa" (Montilla LP-3, or Soria 70.003, either \$5.95), Fernando Chucaca's "Agua, Azucarillos, y Aguardiente" (Montilla LP-7, \$4.95), and Amadeo Vive's "Doña Francisquita" (Soria 70.006, \$5.95).



It's Opera, But Is It Grand?

OPERA'S business is to be grand. Television opera's business is to communicate grandeur. How's business in TV opera? The answer is: terrible on some streets, good on others, but nowhere grand.

The word, the music, and the story—this is the trinity of theatrical art, glorified by color, light, and scene, alive and effective in a darkened theatre, the individual perception magnified by the multiple presence. In the pantheon of the arts there is nothing equal to it at moments of barbaric splendor, of lyric joy or sorrow, of elegant, mannered refinement of emotion. Television, in its role of the Great Disburser, faces its most difficult assignment in opera. Gone are the physical temple and the group spectators. Gone even is the immaterial temple of the mind which radio opera retains. The works of pageantry are clearly impractical. However, the intimate, the fairly confined, and the comic lie within the realm of the possible. But grandeur then faces its ultimate Goliath—the text in English.

How shall exaltation be maintained when, as in a recent "Omnibus" production of Respighi's "Sleeping Beauty in the Wood," a fairy-tale minister rides a tank over a gossamer web of illusion with: "Take a good look, I'm wasting my time on a wild-geese chase?" Or when, in the NBC Opera production of Mozart's "Marriage of Figaro," the Count sings: "Who's behind the door? I'll go and get the implements?" Or when, in "Tosca" (WOR-Mutual's "Opera Cameos"), the lovers embrace each other in Italian and the titles in English are flashed on the screen: "Tonight I sing. Afterwards we'll go to the villa. There's a full moon. Are you happy? Of course. Are you sure?"

The plates of the old literally translated texts which this program apparently still uses should have been fused into oblivion long ago. The NBC Opera Department very commendably tries new English versions. Occasionally they stumble, mostly they are adequate, rarely do they achieve the goal of an inspired matching of antique style with modern feeling, as they did so well in Figaro's mock military song to Cherubino: "Your courting and cavorting are over. You'll be free as a bee in the clover. On to glory—on to war!" And surely

there is no operatic law which decrees that phrases must be endlessly repeated as indicated—in slavish adherence to foreign-tongue originals. No good results from the unintentionally ludicrous repetition, long past twilight, of "You'll meet me? You won't deceive me? Etc. Etc." Rodgers and Hammerstein write fresh choruses. The word in TV opera has yet to come across grandly.

The music, fortunately, comes to us least impaired of all. If, as in the Respighi work, the music is unstimulating, this is regrettable. "Omnibus" is to be thanked for trying. "Die Fledermaus," which this program brought us some time ago, was a rousing success. The comic spirit, thus far, is TV opera's ace. Mozart's "Marriage" was a cool, calm stream of musical loveliness. "Macbeth" (NBC) earlier in the season was static, very heavy. On "Opera Cameos" the music is a case study in dismemberment. The inviolable unity of the final love duet in "Tosca" and Mario's execution was gruesomely violated by a tomato-paste commercial. When NBC spends large money and takes great pains to give us a production like "Figaro" in its entirety, on two successive Saturdays, splendidly cast and sung and excellently staged, a production up to the highest musical standards and uninterrupted by commercials, it touches the hem of the garment of its cultural franchise.

Technically, TV opera permits a wider use of the medium's optical bag of tricks. Fantasy is not, but could be, a forte of television. Drama story editors shy away from it. The assumption is that the mass mind is not a fantasy mind, that it is given more to extravert, juvenile space-rocket fantasy than the interior, mental, Cocteau kind. But in opera the supernatural is often important—the fairies in "Sleeping Beauty," the witches in "Macbeth." In both these presentations the optical dissolves of images appearing and fading away were effective, new, and interesting. They made their contributions to the grand mood.

At one point in the Respighi production the "Omnibus" staff achieved a high point in imaginative staging. The good fairy put the courtiers to sleep in pairs. At one moment they stood conversing, at the next they

froze in their attitudes, touched by a spotlight. Like porcelain figurines they made a stunning pattern of stylized immobility. Opera offers unexplored vistas for stylization on television and the producers should plunge in more boldly.

One is amused at the oddity of the adult "Figaro" production in the light of TV's alleged code. The story concerns an eighteenth-century aristocrat's traditional nuptial privilege on the wedding night of his servants. Try getting this tale on a TV dramatic show. Opera apparently is harmless. "The Voice of Firestone" does an occasional operatic selection also. Patrice Musnel on a recent program sang Musetta's waltz from "La Bohème." This is the scene in the cafe where she teases Marcello, her true love, while she sits at another table with a rich old fop. The Firestone casting director slipped a handsome young fellow in place of the elderly gentleman. This is a small but significant portent. If opera is to be brought to the people, it ought to be as the composer conceived it.

IF GRANDEUR is yet to come in TV opera, television can give it to us with the word alone. Such a gift was ours from ABC on Lincoln's Birthday when Carl Sandburg read "A Lincoln Preface," the introduction he had written some thirty years ago for his book "Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years" and which he then had shelved when the plan for his life of Lincoln expanded. The Chicago poet has become a veritable symbol of the Springfield martyr, he has lived so long with him in legend and in truth. Classic face, voice, and prose. Here was a deeply moving experience in the best American mood. How poorly served it was, however, by the cliché organ-music background and by the flashing on the screen, at so big a moment, of ABC's little "Lucky 7 Contest" insert!

"Figaro" and "The Lincoln Preface" and a touch of the Sadler's Wells Ballet on "Toast of the Town." What's wrong with TV that more heights like these cannot ennoble?

—ROBERT LEWIS SHAYON.

