



Mödl in "Siegfried," Toscanini Memorial

BROADLY speaking (and meaning nothing personal) Wagnerian sopranos can be divided into two categories: those who can take the difficulties of such a role as the "Siegfried" Brünnhilde in stride, and those who are, eventually, taken by the role. There haven't been too many of the former at any time, which leaves Martha Mödl, who made her Metropolitan debut recently in the next-to-last "Ring" drama, among the human majority rather than the inhuman minority. She is very good within her limitations, but the limitations are there to be reckoned with.

When she faced the difficult moment of awakening (11:20 p.m.) and pealed forth some rich tones in "Heil dir Sonne," it seemed that the Metropolitan might have found the appealing singer for this part for which it has been looking. Reasonably well proportioned, an attractive-looking woman with a brightly burnished blond wig, Mme. Mödl had dignity in her bearing, composure in her manner, eloquence in her voice. All these qualities, plus the kind of Wagnerian intelligence that goes with a Bayreuth background, were constant so long as the part lay within manageable range.

For her, this sounded to be best in the F to F octave, with an accessible A, and a possible B. It was bright and well-focused when the music didn't move rapidly, or a mezzo-forte or louder was acceptable. Higher than B she encountered serious trouble, and in agile passages or the softer ones the pitch became uncertain and the tone breathy. Mme. Mödl is an interesting performer and clearly a sincere one, but her vocal "reach" is short.

Altogether this "Siegfried" ended rather as it had begun: with all sorts of serious endeavor and no really prime impersonations. Otto Edelmann may become an outstanding Wanderer (the Wotan role in this segment), for he is already a very good one. Lacking still are the total command of a fine, if somewhat light, voice, the kind of dominating presence that comes only from performing experience. But he can be heard with pleasure in any "Siegfried" cast, no slight recommendation.

As for the Siegfried, who is on stage virtually throughout this work, Wolfgang Windgassen showed himself possessed of qualities above the ordinary. He is, for one thing, a robust singer who can maintain activity and effi-

ciency from start to finish. He is a little oversized for believability in the part (Set Svanholm, when he first appeared ten years ago was a paragon in this respect), but he works diligently at being boyish without straining the attention unduly. Vocally, he is happier than he was in "Walküre," producing the bright quality wanted for the friskier music, and also measuring to the requirement for a darker vocal sound after he has slain the dragon and moved closer to his destiny.

Norman Kelley showed the makings of an excellent Mime in his first effort with this taxing role, and Kurt Böhme did what was required of Fafner. Gerhard Pechner was the veteran of the cast, as Alberich, Jean Madeira (Erda) and Laurel Hurley (The Voice of the Forest Bird) a pair of fledglings not too certain in their parts. In straining to produce the volume of sound required for Erda, Miss Madeira has rather lost her tonal identity without finding the kind needed for a real effect in such a part.

Taken together, the performance directed by Fritz Stiedry walked more than it ran. Where Wagner provided a full-throated climax (the ends of the acts, particularly) Stiedry supplied the energy to produce an effect. But it is the conductor's responsibility to assume leadership where leadership is most necessary—in the in-between, transitional episodes—and this Stiedry failed to do. Herbert Graf's staging maintained the well-considered plan previously admired, amid Simonson sets which are brightest when they are darkest, and most illusive when they are least visible.

The week otherwise provided the first acquaintance with the Countess in "Marriage of Figaro" as conceived by Licia Albanese and Figaro according to Giorgio Tozzi. Neither could be considered a success for different reasons. Miss Albanese (as Susanna) took part in some notable "Figaro" performances in the Metropolitan, but she is not happy, dramatically, in the quieter part of the Countess, and her voice is unpleasantly pinched and lacking in warmth for "Porgi amor" or "Dove sono." Experience is her great ally in the ensembles, but that can be an asset only when the voice is more responsive. Tozzi has voice in abundance, but not yet the ease or flexibility in comedy to make suitable use of it. Rosalind Elias, as Cherubino, showed aptitude and an outspoken

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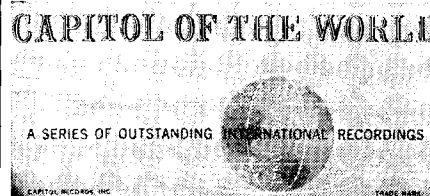


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vocal quality which may come to real utility. Nadine Conner and Martial Singher were familiar elements in a non-gala cast conducted by Max Rudolf.

THREE men of good will joined the Symphony of the Air early in February to pay a memorial tribute of music in Carnegie Hall to the late Arturo Toscanini. Bruno Walter conducted the "Eroica" symphony of Beethoven, Charles Munch followed with Debussy's "La Mer," and Pierre Monteux concluded with Elgar's "Enigma" Variations. The choices, to a certain extent, dictated themselves, but the relationship to Toscanini was strong in each instance, particularly the Beethoven, which appeared on more programs of his American career than any other symphony, and the Debussy, which was an equal favorite. The Elgar came rather late into the Toscanini repertory, but he gave several eloquent performances of it during his last years.

Taken together, it made a memorable evening of symphonic music, closest, perhaps, to the spirit of the past master in its avoidance of ostentation and show. Applause was discouraged, and a scattering of it shushed as it erupted. Perhaps, in a strict sense, this was foreign to the nature of a public concert, but for the few hours involved Walter, Munch, and Monteux were working in a spirit of reverence often invoked but rarely present.

MORTON GOULD has made a serious effort to write a serious piece in the "Jekyll and Hyde Variations," which Dimitri Mitropoulos introduced recently with the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra in Carnegie Hall. Presumably Gould would let us know that he is not incessantly brash and flippant, or always as lighthearted as his best-known pieces suggest. In this, for a matter of fact, Gould was undertaking a Jekyll and Hyde transformation of himself, which might have been turned to better results with a different theme—and for that matter, a different set of variations. The theme we heard was rather austere, no matter how well it worked backwards to provide the composer with the "personality change" implied in his title. As for the variations themselves, and the variants of variants they contained, one was not quite sure whether Gould, with his sleight of hand, was pulling a rabbit out of hat, snatching a handkerchief from a sleeve, or making musical wine out of tonal water. When the trick itself is unrecognizable, there's something wrong with the handiwork . . . no matter what gimmick is invoked.

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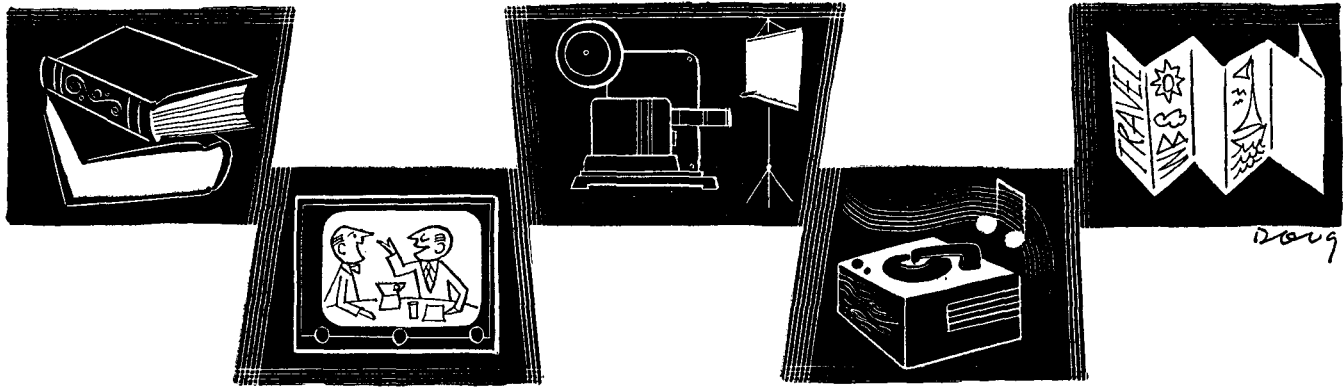
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TELEVISION: TEACHING'S NEWEST TOOL

Slowly, Educators Are Moving to Discover and Use Its Potentialities

By JACK MABLEY, *staff writer*,
Chicago Daily News.

ON A Tuesday evening last month the largest educational television station in the United States presented these programs in this order during the evening:

An exploration in modern art by University of Chicago faculty members.

A film about Israel.

"The Case of the Clubby Molecule," explaining the principles behind the joining of molecules.

A half-hour devoted to the cleft palate.

Walter Kerr of the *New York Herald Tribune* discussing poetry with W. H. Auden.

Social Science 101, Lesson 42—Meaning of Work, a college credit course.

There can be no better evidence of educational television's dedication to programming for groups with special interests. There is a potential television audience of 6,000,000 in the Chicago area, and it is safe to assume that none of these programs appealed to a majority of it. But these specialized groups deserve to see programs that appeal to them.

There were twenty-two educational television stations in operation in this country as 1957 began. Some were as violently independent in their programming as the biggest station, and others felt an obligation to program for large potential audiences. It is

impossible to generalize about the characters of twenty-two different educational television stations. They are as uniquely different as twenty-two universities of assorted sizes, endowments, and academic standards.

One thing they have in common—a government permit that forbids them to sell time, and that charges them with providing programs that are educational and in the public interest.

In 1952 the Federal Communications Commission set aside 258 channels for educational TV stations. Eighty-six are in the popular VHF wave band. One hundred and seventy-two are in the UHF band. The FCC tried to allocate the channels so that every area in the nation was within a reasonable distance of a station.

The twenty-two stations on the air at the start of 1957 had a potential audience of forty million. Eight other stations were in various stages of construction and were expected to be broadcasting by the summer of 1957. Eight additional communities were showing enough interest to be near the application stage, and some twenty others were actively interested in eventual development of stations. The Joint Committee on Educational Television asked the FCC to reserve the educational channels in the hope that eventually all 258 might be activated.

"For better or worse," Richard B. Hull, director of radio and TV for

Ohio State University, recently told educational broadcasters, "the rough outlines of a national framework for radio and television education have now been sketched out in a time of population pressure and an increasing array of problems for all levels of education—the schools, the colleges and universities, and the adult educators. The question is not whether to use educational television or educational radio in the educational crisis—the question is whether or not the personnel and the facilities available and potentially available will be sufficient to meet the need in the future."

Educators themselves will acknowledge there is probably no group in the country which is slower to move or to change than the schoolteaching profession. Many educational groups had to be pushed into exercising the rights to the TV channels which the FCC handed to them. Extreme caution is the rule in the programming of most educational stations.

One pattern already is clearly established. The operators of the educational stations have not confused themselves with entertainers. There has been little concession to the mass audience, although many stations were made possible by contributions from the masses.

There are three basic kinds of stations. One is the single agency station, in which case the license is issued to one institution. The state universities of Nebraska, Illinois,