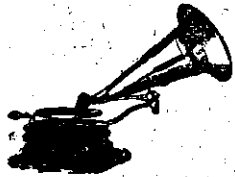


Music and Drama.

OPERA HOUSE.

Under the Direction of
MR GEO. MUSGROVE.
FAREWELL PERFORMANCES.
LAST SIX NIGHTS.
GRAND OPERA SEASON.
PROGRAMME.
WEDNESDAY—"TANNHAUSER"
THURSDAY—"IL TROVATORE"
FRIDAY—"LOHENGRIN"
SATURDAY—"BOHEMIAN GIRL"
Dress Circle and Orchestra 8 o'clock, 6/6;
Stalls, 4/; Pit, 2/; after 7 1/2 o'clock, 1/2.
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Musgrove's Grand Opera Co. has entered on the third week of its Auckland season, and the usual managerial hyperbole, "No standing room," is, in this instance, the most sober expression of fact. Quite unexpectedly, by both the public and management, Wagner has proved the company's trump card. Wagner's operas are, indeed, the talk of the town, and seats for a performance bearing his name have to be looked for or five days ahead. Perhaps it is not complimentary to the musical taste of Auckland—which, by Aucklanders, is thought to be particularly good—that one should express surprise at the success of Wagnerian music in this city. Twenty years ago the operas which were drawing best in London were Wagner's work, and Haweis remarks that at that time the Wagnerian cycle of dramas at one theatre and Niebuhringen Ring at the other kept almost every other opera off the boards. After all, we are not surely so behind hand here in music as not to wax enthusiastic over works which delighted London nearly quarter of a century ago.

Of last week's performances, two out of the six were Wagner's operas, namely, a repetition of "Lohengrin" and a first performance of "Tannhauser." The other productions were "Mignon," which we noticed last week, a repetition of "Carmen," and two performances of "Maritima." The last-mentioned is at once one of the most tuneful and most popular of English operas. Its flowing melodies and beautiful lyric which belong to a school in which most of us have gained our conception and appreciation of opera. Consequently it was to be expected that the performance would be well patronised. And so it was; but it is worth while recording the fact that the demand for seats

for the first performance was not greater, but rather less, than for the second performance of "Lohengrin," and the first of "Tannhauser"; and, further, that notwithstanding the uniform excellence of the production, its second performance was, so far as one can judge, less in demand than Wagner's music.

Miss Lilian Coulmer makes as sweet a Maritima as she does Marguerite in "Faust." Superbly arrayed, she was the centre of attraction on the stage whenever she appeared, and her pure voice welled out with delightful clearness in those familiar airs such as "Scenes That are Brightest," "It Was a Knight of Princes' Men," and "What Mystery." Signor Salvi was Don Caesar, and he surprised all more by his acting than his voice. No part fits him so well from the dramatic point of view as the bold, dashing, light-hearted Don. His magnificent voice interpreted the music which falls to his share with great success. Verre and fullness of melody informed that favourite song "Let Me Like a Soldier Fall," and he was equally good in his other songs. Mr Lawrence Mooney, as Don Jose, had a mortgage on the applause of the audience in that old ballad "In Happy Moments," while the same may be said of Miss Agnes Jansen in the aria, "Alas Those Chimes." All the singers mentioned were applauded to the echo, and recalls and encores were the order of the evening, much more than they have been in any other opera.

The second of Wagner's operas was staged on Wednesday, "Lohengrin" had raised expectation to a high point for it was understood that "Tannhauser" was, at least in its power of appeal to amateurs of Wagner, a much more impressive work. The predecessor of "Lohengrin" by about two years, "Tannhauser" was the first opera in which Wagner's theory stood unmistakably revealed to those who could read it. In it the dramatic, scenic, and musical art walked hand in hand for the first time, setting at naught all the previous conceptions of what opera should be, a mere occasion for singing pretty songs and dancing pretty dances. The magnificence of the opening scene on this occasion would of itself have captured the least musical in the audience who might have failed to appreciate the overture, which has been described as a most wonderful work. But musical or the reverse, there are few who could resist the indescribable wealth of sound that rises from the orchestra in the overture—sound embodying all the varied sentiment and passion of the drama. It was the triumph of M. Slapofski and his instrumentalists, and, as has been said a dozen times since, is of itself worth many another opera in its entirety. The music bristles with difficulties for every one engaged, and what marks the excellence of the company is that from the principals down to the least of the chorus the production showed no sign of weakness. Madame Slapofski and Barron Berthold occupy the leading places in the great musical drama, and both justified the choice of the management. The lady has done nothing better than Elizabeth, and Barron Berthold's Tannhauser is very strong. Mr Lawrence Mooney, Mr Lempriere Pringle, and Henrietta Crichton are all artists whose parts in the opera deserve special notice, but we room here to criticise at length. The same exigency of space prevents us referring to the many splendid numbers of the soloists, and the trained work of the chorus. But even could we do so it would not convey the supreme impression of the opera as a whole, the very thing that Wagner's genius was devoted to secure. One certainly leaves the theatre with little of "the sweet rhymes ringing in his head" which the frequenter of operas usually looks for; but, on the other hand, one leaves in a spirit of exaltation

that other performances of the operatic kind cannot effect—with a feeling of the reality, the earnestness, the moral beauty of the drama. It is as if one had been among the stars listening to the fullness of the spherical melodies or echoes from the sevenfold harmonies of heaven and had come down to earth again.

Owing to the pressure on our space our critique on the splendid performance of Wagner's "Flying Dutchman" on Monday by the Musgrove's Opera Company has been held over.

While the Staunton Opera Company were in Christchurch Mr Alexander Anderson, of that city, did all in his power to make their visit pleasant and successful. On returning home late one evening last week he was amazed to find his house in the occupation of an operatic surprise party who were busily preparing an elaborate supper. During the socialities which followed Mr Hallam, on behalf of the grateful company, presented Mr Anderson with a silver-mounted alligator skin pocket-book.

Thanks as much to the rivalry as to the enterprise of Australian managers New Zealand is likely to come in for her fair share of the best that is going. It is rumoured that we may look out next year for "L'Aiglon" and "Cyrano de Bergerac," plays of which we have heard so much. Mr J. C. Williamson is sending a company across, which, among other novelties, will stage these.

Considering how prevalent colds are just now, it is not a little surprising that Musgrove's singers should up to the present have escaped. The Staunton Opera Company, now in the South, have suffered considerably in this respect. Madame Belle Cole has recently had to postpone her Christchurch concert from the same cause.

Mr. Dix introduces the Darts to New Zealand on Friday at Dunedin. He is paying them £100 a week.

Mr. Frederick Villiers, the famous war correspondent, is again lecturing in Westralia.

Madame Belle Cole took the contract part in the production of "Naamun" by the Dunedin Choral Society on Tuesday last. The "Messiah" is promised for Thursday. Mr. John Pronse is taking part in the performance.

Mr. Williamson's Italian Opera Company commences its Sydney season on Friday. The principals of the organisation were specially selected from La Scala and the leading Italian theatres. The company visits New Zealand early next year.

On Thursday last the members of the Auckland Savage Club, to the number of 75, made a descent on the Opera House, and called Mr Musgrove before the curtain. When he came Dr. Lewis, president of the Club, thanked him and his company for the pleasure their visit had given to Auckland, wished them all success in the South, and assured them that if they ever came to Auckland again they would have a hearty welcome. Mr Musgrove, in reply, stated that on leaving Sydney it had been freely foretold that they would lose money heavily in bringing so large a company to New Zealand in mid-winter. He could only thank Auckland for the truly splendid support given, and say that if the South responded anything like as generously the management would have no reason to regret their venture, and would be encouraged to similar enterprise in the future. Cheers were given for Mr Musgrove, and more for the conductor and orchestra. To Madame Janson and Miss Coulmer the club presented superb baskets of flowers.

Iland Holt, according to an Australian contemporary, will retire at the close of his present Melbourne season and take a rest of two years. Those who know what a demon for work Mr Holt is—for years he has been at it day and night—cannot wonder that the doctors should have decreed he must call a halt. The company will be disbanded.

Mr Walter Bentley is to play in New York next season.

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HILL—HOSKIN.

At St. Mark's Church, New Plymouth, a very quiet wedding took place last Tuesday morning, when Miss Grace Facey Hoskin, eldest daughter of Mr Josias Hoskin, was married to Mr John Hill, of the local Customs Office, and the third son of Mr Joseph Hill, Grey, Westland. The bride was given away by Mr H. Hawkins, and wore a pretty costume of navy blue, with white satin vest, and hat to match. Misses Ethel and Beatrice Hoskin attended their sister as bridesmaids, the former wearing a fawn and cream costume, and the latter scarlet. Rev. Evans officiated, and Mr Tom Shaw acted as best man. The happy couple left for Christchurch, where they intend making their home, as Mr Hill has lately been moved into the Customs Department there.

DENT—PEARNS.

There were a large number of friends present in the English Church, Inglewood, to witness the marriage of the Rev. G. W. Dent to Miss Annie Pearn. The bride, who was given away by her father, Mr Alfred Pearn, looked charming in white lustre, trimmed with silk lace, narrow satin ribbon and buckles, and wore the orthodox veil. The bride was attended by Miss Richards as bridesmaid, and Mr H. Olson acted as best man. The service was conducted fully choral, Miss Gelhardt presiding at the organ, and Rev. C. W. Robinson officiating. After the ceremony the happy couple drove to New Plymouth, where they lease for their home at Paparoa, North of Auckland.

OUR ILLUSTRATIONS.

AUCKLAND POST OFFICE.

We are greatly indebted to the courtesy of Mr. S. B. Biss, Chief Postmaster, Auckland, for the facilities afforded the "Graphic" photographer in taking the views which appear elsewhere in this issue.

MR. GEORGE FRASER, SENR.

General regret will be felt at the announcement of the death, at the age of sixty years, of Mr. George Fraser, the well-known founder of the firm of G. Fraser and Son, of Stanley-street. The deceased was a native of Scotland, and arrived in this colony 50 years ago. He was a thorough engineer, and at once started in business, with the result that his name has been ever associated with the iron trade in this city. Originally the firm started as Fraser and Tinne, but subsequently the business was carried on by Mr. Fraser until two years ago, when he retired and left it to his sons. This firm has turned out many creditable engineers and ironworkers, who now occupy important positions in various parts of the world, an evidence of the thoroughness of the instruction received at Fraser's foundry.

The deceased always bore an excellent character as a thoroughly reliable, upright man, and that he was a good employer is shown by the interest he always manifested in the success of those who had been under his care to learn their trade. His old apprentices were often looked up by Mr. Fraser, whenever business took him in their direction, and the meeting was as between true friends. Mr. Fraser died on Monday at his residence, Wynyard-street, and his remains will be interred at Purosa cemetery to-day (Wednesday) at 2.30 o'clock in the afternoon.