

# Music and Drama.

By BAYREUTH.

## BOOKINGS.

(Dates Subject to Alteration.)

### AUCKLAND—HIS MAJESTY'S.

August 8—Pantomime "Aladdin."  
Aug. 24, 27, and 30—Madame Calve.  
September 1 to 3—Auckland Boxing Association.  
September 5 to 24—J. C. Williamson.  
September 26 to October 19—Allan Handlinton.  
October 20 to November 4—Fred Graham.

### ST. ANDREW'S HALL.

Aug. 16—Cyril Towsey and Mary Cooper.

### THE OPERA HOUSE.

In Season—Fuller's Pictures.

### WELLINGTON—OPERA HOUSE.

August 1 to August 12—Hugh Ward.  
Sept. 1 to Sept. 14—J. C. Williamson.  
Oct. 7 to Oct. 20—J. C. Williamson.  
Oct. 27 to November 5—Allan Handlinton.  
Nov. 12 to November 24—Fred H. Graham.  
December 24, six weeks' season—J. C. Williamson.

### THEATRE ROYAL.

Vaudeville (permanent).

### Oberammergau—A Village of Actors.

THE greatest example of an inherited dramatic instinct fostered by generations of proficiency, is afforded by the village of Oberammergau, where once in every decade the passion of the Lord is reiterated as a gigantic religious pageant. The mother's daily prayers in the village are that her boy may live to play the part of Christ, and if the child happens to be a girl, the mother's prayers are most fervent that she may live to play the part of Mary, mother of Christ. Actors fall naturally into the parts of which they have been thinking all their lives. Even the babies in Oberammergau can lip lines of the drama.

An interesting book, entitled "Oberammergau," by Josephine Helena Short (Crowell and Co., New York) has recently been published. Oberammergau, we are told, is forty-three miles south-west of Munich and scarcely two hundred and forty-three miles, as the crow flies, from the Austrian Tyrol and Venice. From May until October the spectacle is presented approximately six times a month. The play has no features of modern advertising connected with it. There is no press agent, bill poster or printer. The largest remuneration is paid to Anton Lang, who plays the part of the Saviour. He receives 25/ for each performance. Three hundred persons receive about one shilling for a performance that lasts eight hours in all kinds of weather. This is merely a reimbursement for loss to them in their vocation while rehearsing or performing the play. The gross receipts last year were £65,000, with a net profit of £20,000, employed for schools, road-breaking, and river improvement.

It is perhaps needless to say, remarks Josephine Helena Short, that the people of Oberammergau are not peasants. There are some peasants in the village, but the majority of its inhabitants are artists. "They live simply and even frugally, and do some work in the fields. They are a refined, cultivated people, sensitive to all that is beautiful and good about them; and even more, in being able to express beauty and goodness in their own lives. One cannot be in their presence and look at their strong, fine faces, many of which have great beauty of feature as well as of expression, without being conscious of the nobility of their character."

The chief occupations of the villagers are wood-carving and farming. The three men who have represented the carpenter's son since 1850, with the exception of Lang, have all been wood-carvers. One year preceding the play, the villagers, by a common vote, elect a committee of nineteen. This committee, with the burgomaster and the parish priest, select the cast and supervise the performance.

The performers put aside their respective trades for the time, and endeavour to live up to the parts assigned to them. Mr. Ellsworth fails to tell us the psychological effect of such a selection on the unfortunate singled out for the part of Judas. Anton Lang, he assures us, is tall and lithe, and bears an almost perfect resemblance to the Christ of the old masters. The costumes worn in the play are exact reproductions from copies

made in Palestine. In the village, crime is unknown. Mr. Ellsworth was present one evening when two young men engaged in a friendly game of cards. The village church claimed the Angelus. Immediately the young men put their cards aside, and, standing erect, bowed their uncovered heads in silent prayer.

The stage of the Passion Play is 140 feet long by 110 feet deep. The apron is larger than that of the ordinary stage.

"On either side of the opening, and separating the proscenium from the palaces of Pontius Pilate and of the High Priest, are two arches. The two palaces are on the extreme right and left of the stage, and are most effective and picturesque in the various scenic settings.

"The proscenium is separated from the apron by a portiere curtain. There is, however, also a frame curtain, the upper half of which draws up into the arch, while the lower half sinks into the stage. This curtain is used at the beginning and end of the play and between the intermissions.

"The scenery of the Passion Play is built entirely for daylight effect. The stage itself is without cover, and situated as it is with a background of forest-covered hills and the blue sky for a canopy, the effect is such as no enclosed theatre ever could produce. Often during the representation birds will fly across the apron or perch themselves upon the uppermost portions of the

Passion Play unless you live in Oberammergau while it is going on, and you can never understand all of it unless you spend at least one "off year" among these very wonderful peasants. You watch these people go through the intricate complex parts of their drama, and you marvel. Where have they learned their stagecraft? Whence comes their ease? There are no anachronisms. The mob is a mob, and each performer, down to the smallest, plays his or her part calmly and naturally. How do they do it? It is in the air of Oberammergau. Half the village takes part in every production. The whole village talks and analyses the play from the moment they begin to speak. It has done so for centuries. It has become bred in their blood and bones.

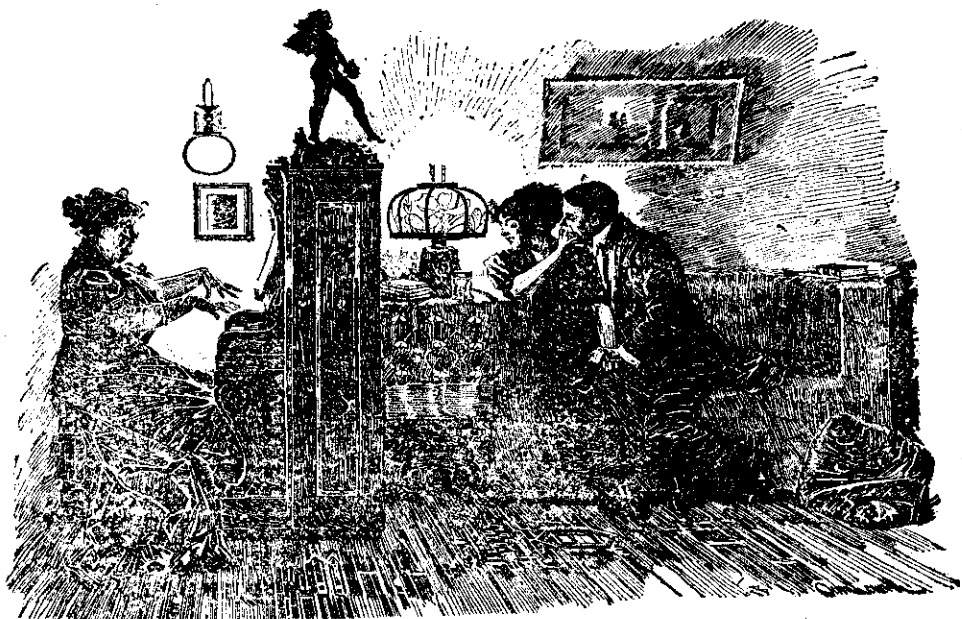
### Sunday Music Again.

The question of Sunday concerts has been agitating the Christchurch City Council. It came up last week in the form of an application from the Christchurch Musicians' Benevolent Society to give their initial concert on a Sunday evening at the Theatre Royal. The society guaranteed the entertainment to be entirely of a sacred nature, that no personal profits would be made, and that no charge would be made to the public for admission except by voluntary contributions. The Mayor, acting by virtue of an antecedent resolution of the City Council had granted the request for one concert, but refused to proceed further. The Council had therefore to decide the matter. The position was somewhat complicated from the fact that Sunday organ recitals are being given regularly in the city. As was to be expected, one or two Councillors used the occasion to

it will be, so we are led to believe, the means of expression for the chosen when the earth is no more. Judging by the amount of understanding some of our City Councillors and our divines exhibit in matters musical they will be feeling somewhat uncomfortable when it comes to handling a harp.

### A Fine Song Cycle

The Auckland Liedertafel's second concert of the present season were rendered unusually interesting by the appearance of Mr. Cyril Towsey and Miss Mary Cooper last week after their recent tour of the Dominion. It must be a long time since the Liedertafel programmes were graced with such a fine song cycle as Von Fielitz's "Beautiful Jessie." The tenor is essentially poetic. It is a modern work written with inspired effort and culminates with the fifth number in a magnificent piece of song writing. It represents a drama of love—the awakening, the expectancy, realisation, desertion, and tragedy. Miss Cooper gave a comprehensive and sympathetic rendering to the whole. The effort was indicative to what range her powers of interpretation extend, particularly when supported by so fine an accompanist as Mr. Cyril Towsey. Miss Cooper is an exponent of that style of singing which Eleona Gerhardt has brought to such a fine pitch in the concert rooms of Europe with the support of Arthur Nikisch, the well-known conductor. It represents something more and inexpressibly finer than ballad singing. It is the art of using the voice with restraint and modulating it as near as may be to all the subtle and exquisite proportions of a truly poetic composition. It is only to those artists who can project themselves into



He: Charming! Delightful! What a sympathetic touch! Please play something longer—and rather loud.

stage, and their songs and twitterings add an element of reality which makes the illusion almost perfect."

The first production of the Passion Play reaches back almost three centuries. Since 1634 the performances have been given every ten years, with one exception. Instead of producing the Passion Play in 1864, it was given in 1860, in order that the dates of the production might fall in the initial year of each decade. The invasion of the Austrian army of 1809 destroyed part of the village of Oberammergau, and consequently the play was not given until 1815. In 1870 the performances were brought to an abrupt close by the declaration of war between Germany and France.

Within recent years the text and the personnel of the Passion Play have become familiarised to the ends of the earth through the medium of the work of writers and translators. The whole dialogue of the play, translated into English, with the choruses and an account of the performance, was printed for the first time in 1890. It was a translation of a German prose version taken down in shorthand in 1880 by W. Wyl, and it was impossible to obtain a libretto of the play previous to that time. Mr. Montrose J. Moses is responsible for a more recent English translation.

However, you cannot really know the

endeavour to have all Sunday concerts suppressed, chiefly because they are incapable of thinking otherwise. There seems to be little doubt that Christchurch would have to suffer the result of such distressing mentality were it not for the fact that the Council has been compelled to permit organ recitals. Under their agreement with the proprietor of His Majesty's Theatre, the latter is entitled to have free use of the organ there for ten Sunday nights in the year. The Council, of course, refused to accede to the request, utilising the allegation that these Sunday concerts were intended for individual gain to veil their ancestral prejudice in the matter.

How long must it be before our municipalities will be forced to realise how far New Zealand is behind England in its attitude towards Sunday music? It seems as though all the most depressing attributes of the middle class early Victorian England were transplanted to this country by our grandfathers, and are our grandmothers, to become a perennial and luxurious source of ignorance in the arts. Music is not the work of the devil. It is not an offspring of original sin. That these elementary facts should have to be voiced is enough to make one blush, much as the enemies of Sunday music need to be informed of them. It has also to be pointed out that on the other hand

the mood of the composer and express it free from technical blemish that this is possible. Miss Cooper shows the necessary artistic insight and has the technique requisite to the interpretation of a song cycle like "Beautiful Jessie," and her fine effort won the keen appreciation and applause of all keenly musical people in the audience. She also sang "The Erl-King" (Schubert) in the original tongue of the composer, the treatment throughout being notable for its wealth of poetry and artistic insight. Both items were encored.

Mr. Cyril Towsey was deserving of a finer instrument, but he was enjoyable as ever in the Grieg "Lyric Piece" (Op. 43) and the "Polonaise in C Sharp Minor" (Chopin). The Grieg number, with its delightful range of mood, so effectively contrasted in "The Solitary Traveller" and "To the Spring," was given with exceptional deftness of fingering and delicacy of poetic expression. In the Chopin Polonaise the interpretation was marked by its spontaneous and intellectual force, combined with refinement of feeling. The pianist had to respond to the audience in both items.

### The Liedertafel

The Liedertafel, under Dr. Thomas, were in characteristic form, which means that in some items they did better than