

# THE STAGE

## AUCKLAND SHOWS.

### HIS MAJESTY'S THEATRE.

J. C. Williamson's Italian Opera Co., "Madame Butterfly"—June 20 to July 2.  
McMahon and Carroll's Pictures, "The Kelly Gang," etc.—July 4 to July 16.  
Hugh J. Ward—July 18 to July 31.  
J. C. Williamson's "Aladdin" Pantomime Company—August 1 to Aug. 13.  
Auckland Boxing Association—September 1 to 3.  
J. C. Williamson—September 5 to 24.  
Allan Hamilton—September 26 to October 15.  
Fred. Graham—October 20 to November 4.

### THE OPERA HOUSE.

Fuller's World-Wide Pictures.—In season.

### THE ROYAL ALBERT HALL.

West's Pictures.—In season.

### TIVOLI THEATRE.

Pathe Pictures.—In season.

### PRINCE'S RINK.

Skating.—In season.

### THE GLIDEAWAY.

Skating.—In season.

## HIS MAJESTY'S.

### THE GRAND OPERA SEASON.

#### PUCCINI'S "LA BOHEME."

Puccini's music is surprisingly sweet, even in the weirder and more painful phrasings. It is emotional to a degree, reflecting alike the joys and pleasures of life and its pains and sorrows. Aucklanders had a fine taste of its quality in "Madam Butterfly," the varying moods of which created such a profound feeling of sympathy and enthusiasm amongst the crowded audiences that assembled to hear it last week. "La Boheme," another opera of similar quality, reflecting in its earlier stages the joyous notes and ecstasy of love, and in its later and final scenes the sufferings of unrequited affection, the story being interwoven with the doings of four Bohemian friends in the city of Paris, was produced on Saturday and Monday evenings last, in the presence of crowded assemblies. The opera is founded on Murger's "La Vie de Boheme," and is very cleverly, yet none the less naturally, worked out, reflecting a phase of Parisian life but little known or understood in this country. The four Bohemians—Rudolph, a poet; Schanard, a musician; Marcel, a painter; and Colline, a philosopher—live together, sharing the one attic and their fortunes in common. On such days as they are in funds they live right royally; on others they exist in semi-starvation. At the opening of the opera Marcel and Rudolph are seen together in the fireless attic, on a cold winter's day, with the snow showing on the roof tops around them. They make a fire out of a bundle of MSS., and while endeavouring to warm themselves over the burning papers, Schanard and Colline arrive on the scene, bringing fuel, food, wine and money, which they place before them. The friends, after satisfying their more pressing needs, sally forth to enjoy themselves, leaving Rudolph, who promises to join them later on, to finish some writing. While thus engaged the latter is disturbed by Mimi, a poor work girl, who, living in the same house, is unable to enter her room because she has lost the key. Rudolph entertains and makes love to her, finally inducing her to join his friends and himself at a neighbouring cafe, where they feast and enjoy themselves. In the midst of their feasting Musette, a gay little coquette, who has been an old "flame" of Marcel's, enters the cafe precincts with her elderly beau, Alcindoro. Marcel soon re-establishes his ascendancy over Musette, and when the revelers are handed their bill, she joins them, telling the waiter to present the bill to the lover she has deserted. The party thus increased to six then makes off, and when the bill is handed to Alcindoro, he faints at the sight of it. Rudolph soon tires of Mimi; she is in poor health, he is full of

jealous moods; the consequence is they separate, Mimi's tender little heart being full of love for Rudolph, while he is cold and indifferent. Musette, tiring of the poverty in which she lives with Marcel, leaves him to join friends who are better off, and the Bohemians are thus again left to themselves, until one day Musette brings Mimi, now at the point of death, to say a last farewell to Rudolph and his friends. Rudolph is distracted by the sight of her sufferings, and is also filled with remorse at the consequences of his neglect. The friends pawn their possessions to buy food and medicine for the dying girl, a very pathetic scene ending in Mimi's death. The love passages between Rudolph and Mimi are very fine, and the music throughout is of a

the clear quality of his higher notes, which are attained with the utmost ease, is unmistakable. He is a singer of admirable quality, and knows how to make the best of his opportunities; it is a real pleasure to listen to him, and the enthusiasm he arouses affords a convincing proof, were such needed, of the quality of his work.

Signor Antonio Zanelli, in the character of Marcel, makes an excellent impression. He is a baritone singer, and seems well suited to the part. Mr. Arthur Crane's fine baritone voice is heard to advantage in the limited opportunities the character of Schanard, the musician, affords. As Musetta Miss Mabel Batchelor sang well, and acted with much spirit. She was at her best in the dramatic duet with Marcel.

cinating opera "Carmen," which was presented to an absolutely crowded house on Tuesday evening, the scenes of enthusiasm aroused by the production being a marked feature of the performance. Encores and recalls seemed to be the order of the evening, and truly, the brilliant melodies, the many fine solos, duets and concerted pieces that run through the opera, notably the magnificent Toreador song, sung so effectively by Signor Antonio Zanelli, with the superb singing of Mlle. Bel Sorel as Carmen and Signorina Maria Pampari as Micaela, would have aroused the most phlegmatic audience to a high pitch of enthusiasm. Save for its tragic ending, and the distress of Micaela, at the desertion of her lover, scarcely a note of sadness enters into the composition. The story is one of life and action—somewhat free and lawless certainly, but pleasurable in its romantic side. It must be familiar enough to the majority of our readers, and we need not therefore enter into an explanation of the circumstances attaching to Brigadier Don Jose's desertion of his betrothed Micaela in his infatuation for Carmen, the fascinating gipsy maiden, who wins his affections simply to spurn him from her side, her heart being given to the gallant Toreador Escamillo; nor speak of the tragic denouement, when pressed by Don Jose to return his love, Carmen thrice attempts to join Escamillo, who is heard singing in the distance, and, on the fourth attempt, is stabbed by the unfortunate Brigadier, who is mad with jealousy.

The performance was a very fine one—"the best of the season"—according to the general verdict. It was certainly brilliant to a degree. Mlle. Bel Sorel, who appeared in the title role, again showed the true artistic instinct. She was Carmen to the life, and from her first entry in the laughing, winking role that so works upon and fascinates the unfortunate Brigadier, until the final tragic moment of the gipsy's death, she acted with a verve, animation and abandon that delighted everyone. Her singing, too, was wonderfully correct, particularly in the famous "Habenera" and "Sequidilla" numbers, and won for her the most enthusiastic approval. Her singing in the quintette with the smugglers and the two gipsy maidens was responsible for the vigorous encore that followed its performance.

Mr. Frederick Blamey's interpretation of the character of Don Jose presented a very fine and convincing dramatic study, the passion infused into which was in admirable keeping with the part portrayed. In the closing scene with Carmen, the feeling infused into the terrible struggle between the false gipsy and her despairing lover so gripped the audience that the tragic denouement was awaited with breathless interest.

Of Signorina Maria Pampari's work as Micaela, a great deal might be said in the way of unstinted praise and commendation without overstepping the line that divides truth from mere flattery. Her vocal work was particularly effective, especially so in the very telling appeal in the third act, where she is discovered in the vicinity of the smugglers' mountain retreat. The sweetness of her notes, the pathetic nature of the appeal and the natural attitude of the singer, all of which were in such perfect keeping with the part assumed and the circumstances in which the unfortunate girl was placed, added to the charm and effectiveness of the appeal, which was enthusiastically encored.

Signor Antonio Zanelli had a somewhat difficult task before him in the character of Escamillo. He has a naturally fine baritone voice, and although singing very spiritedly the famous Toreador song, there was a certain roughness in the lower notes that rather detracted from the performance, and somewhat marred the effect, the song itself requiring a deep bass voice for its proper presentment. It would be ungracious, therefore, to



SIGNORINA MARIA PAMPARI, of the Grand Opera Company.

very high order, the orchestration being notably excellent.

Signorina Maria Pampari, who made her first appearance in Auckland in the character of Mimi, has an exceptionally sweet voice, which rings true in every note. She is at once simple and unaffected, yet remarkably convincing in her interpretation of the part which fits her like a glove. She had a most enthusiastic reception, and was recalled, again and again. Her singing all the way through, from her opening lines, "They Call Me Mimi," down to the last sad notes of "Always Yours For Ever" in the death scene, thrills and enthralls her audiences, and the ease with which she reaches the C in alt in the culminating passages of "Lovely Maid in the Moonlight" is very remarkable.

Signor John Zerga as Rudolph gave us a further taste of his excellence, both as a tenor singer and an actor. His voice rings delightfully true; there is no straining after effect, and

In the minor roles, which are all well presented, Mr. Fergusson Allan appears as the land'ord, Benoit, Mr. Edward Wynn as Parpignol (a toy seller), and Mr. Rufus Ferguson as Alcindoro (a Councillor of State). The chorus is well sustained and directed, the stage mountings again being excellent, while the production of the opera under the stage direction of Mr. Henry Bracy, and the orchestra under Signor Hazon, leave nothing to be desired. As in "Butterfly," the orchestration is simply delightful, the richness and originality of treatment marking it as one of the finest things ever accomplished by any body of musicians in Auckland.

### BIZET'S "CARMEN."

#### A BRILLIANT PRODUCTION.

In vivid contrast to the sadder notes that dominate the Puccini operas were the livelier moods, gay colouring and brilliant setting of George Bizet's fas-