Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

DRAMA AND MUSIC

AN OPERATIC PAOLO AND FRANCESCA.—JAMES MATTHEW BARRIE AND MISS MAUDE ADAMS GIVE A BALL FOR CINDERELLA

BY LAWRENCE GILMAN

IN the history of the art of music are involved at least two questions for which we should greatly like to discover answers. First, why is it that the solo music composed for the most eloquent of instruments, the violoncello, exhibits such a paucity of eloquence, though most of the great masters have concerned themselves with it? For this instrument that can so incomparably sing, there are few songs of the highest inspiration; and the 'cello comes into its kingdom only in the orchestra—where, necessarily, its reign is often contested. And here is the second and major question that puzzles us: Why is it that one of the supreme love-stories of the world, and of these perhaps the most moving and glamorous, has impelled scarcely more than a dozen composers to choose it as the theme of a music-drama? Of that small company, none is a composer of even the second rank; and not one of those operas engages the modern imagination.

The loveliest utterances that music ever attained deal with romantic passion in two superlative exhibitions; but neither of these concerns the case of Paolo and Francesca. Perhaps there have been only four men in the history of music who could have handled that great subject with adequate power. Wagner, it is superfluous to say, might have given us a *Paolo and Francesca* that would have been a thing of deathless wonder—what, indeed, could not that marvel of marvels have done, if he chose? Richard Strauss could show us a *Paolo and Francesca* that the world would not soon forget; so could Claude Debussy; so could Charles Martin Loeffler.

Not one of these masters of passionate speech (and in all music, of the past or the present, there is none whose command of passionate utterance has equalled theirs) is an Italian; not one is a man of the south. But now another than these, who is both a man of the south and an Italian, has tried his hand at an operatic Paolo and Francesca, as it was wholly fitting that an Italian should—and has failed in the endeavor. That event does not necessarily prove the unimportance of national relationship in the choice and treatment of an artistic subject. But it is certainly interesting to reflect that whereas we have here the spectacle of a typical Italian composer exhibiting unfitness in an engagement with a typical Italian theme, we can, on the other hand, look elsewhere and see another Italian, Verdi the rare comedian, handling with felicity and comprehension an unequivocally English theme in his *Falstaff;* and if you want the barbaric energy, the heroic stride and clamor, the very breath and color, of the Norse legends, you must go, not to the Norwegian Grieg, but to one of the sonatas of that profounder and nobler tone-poet, the New Yorker with the Celtic strain, Edward MacDowell. No more and no less than that does nationality count in the relation between a musical creator and his subject.

It counts, as we have indicated, for very little in the case of Riccardo Zandonai and his opera, *Francesca da Rimini,* which has just been added to the repertoire of the Metropolitan Opera House. It counts for little, we mean, because it has not produced either a special quality of sentiment or the heightened eloquence that may result from complete emotional saturation. Except for some pretty and appropriate effects of archaic color which are of merely decorative value, what one recognizes as characteristic in this score would better have been absent. We mean that peculiar kind of insistent melodic commonness that only an Italian, apparently, can achieve—that rank blend of triteness and blatancy which makes so much of Mascagni and Leoncavallo and their musical brethren an offense to the susceptible ear; that makes a good deal of the earlier Verdi a sore trial to those who love his *Falstaff* and can admire his *Othello*; and that crops out again and again even in the sophisticated Puccini. Of the contemporary Italians, Montemezzi has least of it. He is not original, he has no marked musical profile; but he has distinction and dignity of style—and

those are traits which are many miles away from the musical territory in which Signor Zandonai works.

Adequately to set the story of Francesca and Giovanni the Lame and his brother Paolo—that "handsome man, very pleasant and of courteous breeding"—a musician would need both distinction and dignity of style; and to come to this theme after Dante had touched it so briefly yet with so immortal a gesture, might, one would think, have caused a far more assured composer than Signor Zandonai to pause and take stock of his equipment.

In any dramatic setting of the story of Paolo and Francesca there are two scenes by which the entire expressional structure of the play must stand or fall. The first and chief of these, as Mr. Arthur Symons accurately observes in his preface to the tragedy of d'Annunzio which Zandonai has used (with modifications by Tito Ricordi) as his text, is the scene in which the lovers read together out of the old romance of Lancelot of the Lake. Mr. Symons seems to rank this as the crucial scene because in it the dramatist must "come into actual competition with Dante"; but, leaving Dante out of the matter, this still remains the scene which must tax most severely the capacity of the dramatist, and of the composer who undertakes to collaborate with him. The second of the great scenes of such a play is, of course, the scene of the discovery and assassination of the lovers by Giovanni. Of these two scenes, the first has provoked d'Annunzio in his play to a moment of extreme beauty and intensity—a passage that far excels the corresponding scene in the *Paolo and Francesca* of Stephen Phillips. We agree with Mr. Symons that the difference between this scene as contrived by the Italian and by the Englishman is the difference between "vital speech, coming straight out of a situation, and poetizing round a situation." But in the final scene, the difference, we think, is all in favor of Stephen Phillips. D'Annunzio kills his lovers in the full glare of the footlights, as Paolo struggles to escape through a trap-door, his robe catching in the bolt and imprisoning him. This is not even effectual melodrama; for the modern familiarity with treacherous coal-holes makes the plight of Paolo too suggestive of a sidewalk mishap to stir the heart with tragic pity. The discovery and death of the lovers is far better managed in the simpler, swifter, and more continent play of Stephen Phillips, where the final tragedy occurs behind the

scenes—invisibly, silently, without rant or a display of daggers; with the incomparably powerful effect of drama consummated behind closed doors. And, despite its power and its poetic splendor, there is nothing in d'Annunzio's version (*pace* Mr. Symons) that is at once so affecting and so simply produced as the scene in which the lovers are borne in dead upon a litter, with the brief speech of Giovanni as he bends and kisses them, quiet but shaken:

> . . . . She takes away my strength.
> I did not know the dead could have such hair.

Stephen Phillips had his limitations; but, after the beauty and dignity and feeling of that, the

> So, you are caught in a trap, traitor!

of d'Annunzio and his translator Mr. Symons sounds feebly melodramatic.

In undertaking to express these two great moments of the story, Zandonai has, by choosing d'Annunzio's version, been both hindered and helped. He has been hindered by the loveliness and intensity of the crucial scene of the reading from Galeotto; and he has been helped by the baldness and triviality of the finale. The effect upon an adequately expressive composer would, of course, have been precisely the reverse: he would have been stimulated by the drama at its best, and hampered by it at its worst. But Signor Zandonai, lacking emotional force, lacking the capacity for fresh and salient invention,—lacking, in short, the power to say anything in music that is really worth listening to, —can utter only platitudes when he should be speaking nobly and passionately of vital things: and so, at a great moment, is merely futile and tiresome and inept. In the finale, on the other hand, he is not required to be anything but conventionally violent and tumultuous; and that requirement he fulfills without difficulty.

It is a pity. Signor Zandonai is a competent music-maker; he is palpably sincere and high-minded; he has the ability to charm in unexacting circumstances. But he should have kept his hands off Paolo and Francesca.

It is possible to become merely fantastical and maladroit through a nervous dread of the bromidic; yet it has been our hope for years that in writing about Barrie we should be

graciously preserved from succumbing to the adjective "whimsical." In the face of a thousand capitulations on the part of other and better writers, we have believed that it could be done—we have continued to think so even after reading the comments of those other and better writers upon Barrie's newest deliverance, *A Kiss for Cinderella,* in each of which you will find that tyrannical epithet.

We see no help for it, however, but to grant that *A Kiss for Cinderella* is indubitably whimsical; that Miss Maude Adams (who, one need scarcely be told, plays Cinderella in her own unapproachable way) is whimsical; that the incidental music, "composed and arranged by Mr. Paul Tietjens," and implicating Chopin, Brahms, Debussy, and Mr. Tietjens himself, is also whimsical—we even have private reasons for suspecting that the ushers at the Empire are not unaffected by the epidemic of whimsicality. And now, having established the fact of its whimsicality, shall we consider whether this new piece by Barrie (we refuse to call him "Sir James"—one might as well speak of "Sir Ariel" or "Professor Puck") is anything besides whimsical? Of course, one could relapse upon the remoter synonyms, but that would hardly be playing the game: so let us set these synonyms up before our eyes so that we may avoid them. "Whimsical," says the *Century Dictionary,* means "having odd notions or peculiar fancies"; it means being "capricious," "odd," "fantastic"; and those synonyms for it which we are to avoid are: "singular," "odd," "notional," "crotchety," "fanciful," "grotesque." It is too bad: we could have used them all, except "crotchety," and perhaps "grotesque"—though, observing that memorable scene at the ball given by the King and Queen wherein Cinderella and the Prince are married by the penguin, we might even have used "grotesque" if we had been affected as was the classic lady who objected to *Alice in Wonderland* because it was "so improbable." But as it is, we shall always remember lovingly that most delightful of all stage weddings.

We should have little use for any one who did not enjoy this dream-ball of Cinderella's. Chiefly, of course, because Cinderella herself was there—Cinderella, no longer a bedraggled, shabby little drudge, a Cockney slavey doing odd jobs in Mr. Bodie's studio, and envious of the pulchritude of Mrs. Bodie, except for Mrs. Bodie's feet (Mrs.

Bodie, one should know, was a large plaster cast of the Venus of Milo). The Cinderella who came to the ball was a wondrous and ravishing apparition, fit for any prince to marry—even if the Lord Mayor had to take her temperature (which happily proved to be 99) before the King was sure of her availability. But not only was Cinderella there to glorify the occasion: the ball-room itself was supernal, being made entirely of gold, even to the rocking-chairs in which the King and Queen swayed comfortably back and forth upon their throne. The King and Queen themselves were dressed like the royal couple in a pack of cards, and spoke after the manner of Whitechapel rather than Mayfair, as it was proper that they should: for did not Cinderella dream this ball for her own pleasure, and was she not entitled to dream it as she chose? The Censor was there, too, all in black, with a headsman's axe; there was a multitude of lovely ladies and resplendent courtiers, and—the most awe-inspiring figure of all—there was Lord *Times,* to whom all the company deferred, and who was evidently a very great person: for as the King was making a gracious address of welcome, and promising every one a paper bag containing two sandwiches, buttered on both sides, a piece of cake, a hard-boiled egg, and an apple *or* a banana, Lord *Times* suddenly strode to the foot of the throne and sternly commanded, "Less talk": whereupon the King replied "Certainly," and sat down. But the best moment of all came when the flunkeys wheeled on a magnificent push-cart of solid gold, loaded with ice-cream cones, which, announced the King, no one was to touch "until one royal lick has been taken by us four"—meaning the royal party. "Us *five,*" amended Lord *Times,* and took the first lick himself, without waiting for the King, the Queen, the Prince, or Cinderella. But no one minded that, least of all Cinderella, who danced ecstatically until the very end, when the clock had completed its twelfth stroke, and the lights went out, and the dream was over.

But not really over: for the authentic Prince who held dominion over Cinderella's heart, David the Policeman, writes her a love-letter in the last act—a letter to be treasured forever, for in it he tells her that "there are thirty-four policemen sitting in this room, but I would rather have you, my dear." And he generously consents to propose to her twice, so that Cinderella may have the satisfaction of refus-

ing him once. "Tell me frankly," he asks Cinderella, "do you think the police force is romantical?" The general verdict, as David agreed, is No: "yet a more romantical body of men do not exist." And David proves it by setting a new fashion in engagement rings: "Instead of popping a ring on the finger of his dear, a true lover should pop a pair of beautiful slippers upon her darling feet." He says nothing about their being glass, but of course they are.

In the wit and gayety and delicate slyness of its writing, most of this play is beyond praise—at least it is so as shrewdly revised and given by Miss Adams at the Empire. In the original version—that which was seen in London—there are some areas of low pressure, stretches of un-Barrie-like murkiness; but Miss Adams has edited the play with nice discretion, and has supplied a few touches that are admirably in the vein of Barrie at his best. It is a pity that she did not more courageously reduce the dullness of the earlier scenes of the second act, where one is uncomfortably aware of the usually adroit and easeful Barrie striving somewhat too arduously to measure up to the requirements of his legend. But in the whole of the first act, in all of the third, and in the exquisite ball scene, you have Barrie very nearly at his triumphant best—not quite, to be sure, the superlative Barrie of *Leonora,* but a Barrie who reigns without a claimant in an inviolable kingdom where his consort is the Comic Spirit herself, in one of her most enamoring incarnations. Barrie, at his worst, hovers rather perturbingly near the brink of the sentimental abyss. In *A Kiss for Cinderella* his foothold is securer because it is more constantly aërial. The Barrie who will chiefly count to us in the end is, we believe, not the *vox humana* Barrie, but the Barrie who adored the Comic Spirit above all things: the unenvenomed and irrepressible satirist, the gentle ironist of incalculable and delicious wit.

LAWRENCE GILMAN.