
Foyer Musicale

Charlotte Michaud

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Sung by Home Folks

Presentation Under Direction of Mr. Cote Pleased Large Audience on Thursday Night

With less than two months of time, with a church choir augmented by a very few other singers, and an orchestra picked up from the musicians about town, not engaged in theatre orchestras, Alphonse Cote organist and choir director, and tenor lead in most of the amateur grand operas that have been produced in Lewiston, Thursday evening, put on a production of the opera "Faust," that was surprisingly complete, entertaining and, for all-round musical effect, one of the best amateur operas that has been given here.

It was in the nature of an experiment on the part of Mr. Cote, who was desirous of interesting the young singers in high grade music and of putting on something really worthwhile with the material at hand. He may well feel that it was a success. People were sufficiently interested to attend in numbers nearly filling Music Hall and sufficiently entertained to give it close attention thruout the evening and enthusiastic applause.

It was in the musical end that this presentation of "Faust" excelled. The stage business was unpretentious, with no attempt at the spectacular effects; most of the company were untrained in acting; nor were there any notable stars, but all the voices were musical, the cast well-chosen, the orchestra exceptionally satisfying and Mr. Cote showed his capacities as director, demanding and securing fine ensemble work, exactness and everything in tune.

The stage mechanics went smoothly with no perceptible hitches to mar the performance, under the capable direction of J. B. Couture.

As the role of Valentine brought to the attention of the musical public, Pierre Pelletier, in the first grand opera production of "Faust" here several years ago, so it brought out, Thursday evening, another grand opera voice which should be a great asset to local opera. This was Elmo Tremblay. It was his first appearance in grand opera and his work was a surprise to his audience.

Mr. Tremblay has a baritone of true operatic quality, rich, resonant, powerful in the climaxes, and he has dramatic instinct. All this was impressed on the audience in his first solo, "Deo Possente," and later in the death scene.

For the tenor role, always so hard to fill, Walter Richard came from Manchester, N. H. His voice, though not powerful, has much warmth and melody, high notes of particular sweetness and is smoothly produced, and he entered into the character of "Faust" with feeling, from his first important solo, "Salut, demeure" to the final scene. In the soprano of Mrs. Aurore Legendre, also, it was tonal beauty and color, rather than strength that pleased. It was light and flexible with musical high notes for the "Jewel Song," of smoothly lyric quality for "The King of Thule," sung at the spinning wheel, and appealing in the prison scene as she sang her pathetic "Listen, It Is the Fair." She was a demure and dignified Marguerite in the cumbersome costume with which all Faust Mar-

Napoleon Sansouci strole stage like an old-timer, in his Mephistophelean costume of flaming red. His diabolical laugh, his cock-eyed leer and mocking voice are not easily excelled by any Mephisto. His honorous bass can be portentous or insinuating and he is a natural actor. With all due respect to Mr. Sansouci, he is right at home in the character of his Satanic majesty. Of course it was Mr. Sansouci's singing of the famous Serenade, with its outbursts of devilish laughter that most pleased his audience but his "Calf of Gold" and Invocation were also impressive and he lent sonority and depth to the quartet and trios in which he had a part.

Mrs. Blanche Sirois was well chosen for the role of Siebel. Her voice came out fresh and clear in the "Flower Song," and sounded the compassionate yearning of the lover, torn with love and pity, addressing Marguerite in the church scene. A cello obligato was especially pleasing in Mrs. Sirois' solo. Miss Irma Marcoux was best in the quartet, "Saints Above," carrying her part in a musical contralto which was more of a mezzo, and distracting attention from the lovers with her bold flirtations with the devil. M. Adeland Ray as Wagner, led the soldiers with his tuneful baritone, and had several incidental solos.

The French operas can be depended upon for a good chorus and this one did not disappoint. Not large, it is true, but so carefully selected and well-trained that it was of ample volume and resonance and appeared at ease on the stage.

The "Kermesse" music was delightful with its chorus of young men and maidens in the festive waltz, its sextet of soldiers and quartet of old men, whose voices never quavered if their legs did. And the "Soldiers' Chorus, too, of ringing volume and martial spirit, the lusty-voiced soldiers marshalled in by Elmo Tremblay, a sextet of

them to the front with raised swords, got big applause. The orchestra did fine work in furnishing a colorful and melodious instrumental background for the chorus and was nicely restrained to suit the voices of the soloists.

The trio in the duel scene was, perhaps, the best single musical number—that and the trio in the prison scene, which Mr. Sansouci shared with Mr. Richard and Mrs. Legendre. The entire duel scene, beginning with the trio by Mephistopheles, Faust and Valentine, and followed by the tragic death of Valentine, nearly approached the professional. Here was the strongest acting, the most dramatic singing and here the voice of the tenor attained its greatest power.

Mr. Richard and Mrs. Legendre gave all the traditional enchantment and emotional stir to the Garden Scene. There was a curtain call and Mrs. Legendre received a bouquet. The church scene was effective, the voices of the chorus and organ played by Alec Deschenes coming from the church, before which Marguerite prayed in grief and humiliation, the mocking voice of Mephistopheles breaking in on the sacredness of the scene. This also received a curtain call.

Marguerite sang her prison song with sweetness and pathos and died dramatically in Faust's arms. Afterwards she was seen in a brief trans-

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Miss Carmen Cote was a very capable little pianist, every moment with the singers and giving helpful support.

Albert Auger lent his studio organ for the opera and the piano was from the Lawrence company.

A name left out of the published list of the chorus for "Faust" is that of Roland Bellemarre, a member of the Auburn choir. The members of the chorus who came from Manchester, N. H., to take part in the opera, are voice pupils of Walter Richard, who played the title role.

J. B. Couture of Lewiston, who most closely shared the burden of production with Alphonse W. Cote of Auburn, musical director, had complete charge of the dramatic end of the opera. He was assisted by Eugene Reny, Alphonse Carrier and Arthur Reny, experienced amateurs in