

The Birmingham Eccentric

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NEW CHANNELS FOR OPERA
Judging from the fine television productions of two of the world's most appealing operas, "Carmen" and "Madame Butterfly," presented on CBS and NBC in the last few weeks, it would seem television may do for the opera what Hollywood has done for the world's great novels.

It will straggle them, cut them and maybe even change them a bit. But most important of all, it will popularize them to such an extent that Americans may soon be caught humming the Doye Song from "The Marriage of Figaro" in place of "Beat Me, Daddy, with a Solid Fork!"

It is no secret, yet it may surprise some readers to discover that the Saturday afternoon programs of the Metropolitan Opera have one of the highest Hoopers in radio and are gaining new listeners every week.

Quite Understandable
The popularity of these broadcasts is quite understandable for, as we know, the best in opera is being offered to listeners on a silver platter. Milton Cross deserves much credit for doing the important job of describing sets and action—plot and sub-plot—realistically, that the radio listener may easily imagine himself right in the middle of the Diamond Horse-Shoe.

Nor should we forget the very interesting between-acts presentations of the type which doesn't give away a million dollars in prizes but does manage to convey important information; the discussion of the current opera, "Opera News on the Air" with Boris Goldovsky and guests; and often a dramatic sketch of some important event in the history of the fabulous "Met."

All this, and the price—only

your interest and time—a program that deserves the plaudits and praise of everyone.

Great New Medium
But on the horizon there looms a great new medium—television—a great potential force for an even more widespread dissemination of education and entertainment than was possible through radio. I say—potential for today the science of audio tied between good programs and bad.

Among the most notable offerings of television were the exceedingly fine productions of Carmen and Madame Butterfly which traveled the video screen with rare distinction and artistry and proved once and for all that television—as a medium for opera—has arrived.

Both operas were every bit as great in setting and costume as has ever been staged at the "Met." Madame Butterfly was particularly enchanting with its backgrounds of oriental delicacy that were so perfect one could almost sense a faint and airy cherry blossoms filling the air.

Voices Were Excellent
The voices in both the main roles and the ensemble work were excellent. And it is amazing that the number of people required to stage the production of this type (about 175) managed to function so beautifully within the limited space available on the screen.

My heart was in my mouth for I feared that at any moment Dmitry Gto Sax would be seen addressing her pleas to one of the prop men instead of her lover, Pinkerton. But all went well and my fears were soon allayed.

Even more important was the problem of moving the cameras without losing the true balance of sound—a balance that was maintained by continually adjusting the microphones and camera focus as the cast moved about the studio floor.

On to Greater Feats
Of course, many of these technical problems which loom so large today will soon be a thing of the past and television will go on to greater and more amazing feats.

With further presentations of opera on television, I venture to say that they will gain an even greater audience than did the symphony through radio. The latter will be able to see as well as hear the great operas.

With colored television, there is no reason why everyone all over America can not have the opportunity to thrill to the full grandeur of Aida, Rigoletto, Faust, Carmen, Madame Butterfly, and La Boheme, to name but a few, as have thousands of lucky New Yorkers

who inherited this privilege seemingly as a birthright.

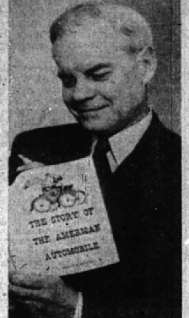
Some Are Just Too Long
And because of the necessity of cutting the operas, (something that may disturb some of the die-hard) many of the heretofore uninitiated to opera will be able to enjoy these magnificent works without having to suffer a backache in the process.

I think almost everyone will agree that some operas are just plain too long... even for the seasoned opera goer... and I say thank heaven!... for indeed, television must needs take care of this literal pain in the neck.

I was thrilled by these television presentations of opera. They promise a new world of operatic entertainment. Soon the greatest singers, the finest productions and all the color, beauty and magic of this great art will come into the homes of music lovers everywhere.

And all this without the mad rush for tickets and at times the disappointment of seeing the sign out S. B. O. ... not to mention the bother of white ties. In short, the world of opera plus all the comforts of home.

Story of Auto



RUDOLPH E. ANDERSON
For many years a former Birmingham resident, and now editor of the National Automobile Dealers Association, Rudolph E. Anderson has just completed 20 years of research into the subject that finally brings forth his new book: "The Story of the American Automobile." With his wife, he now lives in Washington, D. C.

For many years Anderson was connected with the advertising agency business in Detroit. He has given a copy of his book to the local Baldwin Public Library.

Have You Met...
Former Detroiters, Mr. and Mrs. W. B. Cary whose new address is 1710 Grandfield. Mr. Cary is a sales engineer with the Barton-Malow Company.

The newcomers from Cincinnati, Ohio, Mr. and Mrs. E. E. Wootton of 704 Grandfield. Mr. Wootton is with the Electric Auto-Lite Company.

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Local Man Named to County Board

Dean G. Beier, 1327 Washington boulevard, Pontiac attorney, has been appointed a public interest member of the Oakland county rent advisory board. The announcement was made last week by Leo M. Audretsch, area rent representative of the Pontiac branch rent office.

Beier, in accepting the appointment, said he welcomed the opportunity to fulfill his civic responsibility and that he would work to see that the public interest was served in matters affecting rent control in the county.

Beier is one of the three candidates for the office of city commissioner in the coming spring elections in Birmingham.

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