

OPERA TONIGHT

SUZANNE MASTERS

I

Tired from the long climb to the balcony, the old lady paused on the second landing. She tugged at her worn, black hat for a moment, then started up the last flight. A polite young man met her at the top step and waited patiently while she fumbled through her leather bag for her ticket. The seat was back a little farther than she had hoped, but there was no doubt but that she could hear. Loosening her old black coat, she gazed about. From the red and gold ceiling dripped tiered crystal lights. Far below, members of the orchestra were beginning to take their places and tune their instruments. The red velvet curtain rippled above them.

The music was starting. She listened attentively as the musicians performed.

II

Cross, the manager, hurried about giving instructions to the stupid ushers, speaking to the right people, ignoring those who started toward the stairways. It looked like a good house. The best people were there. Galleries and balcony were filled as usual. There went the press boys now. Another season like this and they could have a new curtain and some new sets. And the ceiling, the horrible gilt ceiling, could be done over. Why did an orchestra have to make such noises just to get in tune? Well, there goes the curtain. Funny people, these musicians.

ENTERTAINMENT---TWO KINDS

ROBERT DIETZ

I walked into the theater. A snappy little blonde took my ticket. As I approached the nearest aisle another such bit of pulchritude dressed in red satin slacks said, "How far down, please?" Just as I sat down the news reel was over, the screen darkened, and the footlights shone on a gigantic velvet curtain. As the curtain was raised, revealing a brilliantly lighted stage with multi-colored backdrops, the orchestra, sitting behind dazzling music stands, played a popular theme song.

One by one the players unfolded their arrangements of popular hits. Saddle oxfords kept rhythmic time to "In the Mood" and "Oh! Johnny". A bald-headed man in the front row roared loudly at the novelty arrangement of "Ragtime Cowboy

Joe". Suddenly a soft spotlight revealed a beautiful brunette dressed in blue satin—what there was of it. As she gave her rendition of "Blue Orchids" the two in front of me nestled closer. I relaxed a little myself. But soon the curtain fell, accompanied by the usual clapping, whistling, stamping, and howling.

* * * * *

Again I walked into a theater. A distinguished gentleman took my ticket, then handed me the seat stub and directed me to my seat. The stage was unlighted and bare except for the music stands, chairs, and a plain backdrop. As I glanced through the program, the musicians came out on the stage one by one and proceeded to tune up. Sudden applause made me

realize that the conductor had just appeared. He tapped his baton and Wagner again came to life.

The music of Valhalla itself could be no more beautiful than that overture to "Tannhauser"; the tense faces of the listeners revealed its effect. There was no spotlight, but suddenly all eyes were on the

harpist as her fingers ran across the instrument, giving the delighted listeners Schubert's "Ave Maria". "Finlandia" seemed to lift the whole audience into some strange ecstasy. When the concert closed with "The Blue Danube" the applause was spontaneous and long; the music lovers were well satisfied.

JOSEPH LAUTNER--Director Entertainer

HARLAN JOHNSON

In a student choir the responsibility for the success of the group rests almost wholly on the director. The success of a singing group, I have learned, is not only measured by the degree of ability and technique which the choir possesses, but also by the personal enjoyment which members get out of rehearsals. Measured by these two standards, Joseph Lautner seems to be the ideal choir director. Since Mr. Lautner's reputation as a teacher and musician is known well to the general public, I shall endeavor to picture to you Lautner the director, as seen by the student choir member.

By Mr. Lautner's suave and gentlemanly appearance, no one would suspect that he might be transformed at the rise of a crescendo. This, however, is all too true. As the music swells he leans forward, his eyebrows lower, his jaw quivers, perspiration breaks out, he beats the air furiously with his fists; and a fiery gleam comes into

his eyes as the desired effect is finally produced. Then suddenly softer music soothes him; he becomes gentle and as meek as a lamb. He winks at the girls and smiles at the boys. As the music strikes a rhythmical passage, he steps from the platform and times the music by dancing back and forth before the choir. If the singers' eyes do not show enough spirit, he strides slowly past them with a fiendish glare until more laughter is heard than music. Mr. Lautner has his own method of handling tardy cases. When a student comes in late, the director stops all singing. He then wishes the late-comer a pleasant good afternoon and politely inquires how he is, as everyone enjoys the embarrassment of the student.

Choir might be boring to many, but to those who through their preparatory years have learned to appreciate music, choir under Lautner is the very frosting on the cake of higher education.

