

Subs Save Day for the Met; 'Die Walkure' Pulls Rave Notices with Big Name Sopranos on Sidelines

By JOHN RANDOLPH
NEW YORK, Dec. 22 (AP)—It was "Die Walkure" night at the Metropolitan opera—one of Wagner's biggest productions.

It calls for super-charged sopranos, lots of shining armor, and tenors big enough to handle both. But the main things are the sopranos.

One of them is Sieglinde, who gets into a jam with her brother and doesn't make it to the final scene.

Brunnhilde

The other is Brunnhilde, warrior-daughter of Wotan the god. She gets in a jam of her own for insubordination. Pappy busts her out of the Valkyries—the Valhalla women's army corps—and puts her to sleep on a mountain top—surrounded by magic flames, of course, to cool off the trespassers.

All this needs a powerful lot of singing, and the Met was rubbing

its hands and chuckling yesterday morning.

It had two high-velocity sopranos all lined up—Polyna Stoska for Sieglinde or anything else. Then Miss Traubel's doctor called up and said she was spending the night with laryngitis and not at the opera.

Fast Work

The Met worked fast. It jerked Regine Resnik out of her own role as Helwige and told her to warm up as Sieglinde. To take her place, Maxine Stellman was promoted from the ranks of the Valkyries.

Then they called up Astrid Varnay, who usually subs for Miss Traubel. But Miss Varnay said so sorry, but she was rehearsing for a philharmonic concert and couldn't

do it. That's when they got that sinking feeling at the Met.

Wagnerian sopranos are rarer than All America halfbacks. It looked like they'd have to change the bill. And Wagner fans who pay hard cash to hear "Die Walkure" don't like it when the curtain goes up on "Madame Butterfly."

Then someone thought of Helena Braun, wife of the Metropolitan baritone slated to sing Wotan. Mme. Braun has done Brunnhilde 80 times in Vienna and Munich, but never for the Met.

'Ja'

They made her a fast telephone proposition with four hours to go. She said "ja," and started to work. In three hours she had won union clearance, tried on her armor, had a piano rehearsal with Conductor Fritz Stiedry, and found out where to stand on the stage.

When the curtain went up the audience gave a sickly sigh as it

learned that of the big names only Laurita Melchior was on hand as Sieglinde's brother, Siegmund.

But by the time nearly everybody on the stage was dead and the curtain came down, everybody was happy again.

Listen to the critics—

Jerome D. Bohm of The New York Herald Tribune: "Miss Resnik's Sieglinde is her finest portrayal since she joined the Metropolitan... an extraordinary accomplishment... her identification with the role was complete... her impetuous voice is especially well suited... a telling characterization." And so on.

'On The Nose'

Howard Traubman of The New York Times: "Miss Braun... a dramatic soprano who knew her business... the voice rang out with confidence and musicianship... the high B's were hit on the nose... she had the temperament

for the role... here was a Brunnhilde who acted and sang as if she belonged in a performance in a great music-drama in a great opera house... she will undoubtedly get an opportunity to sing other Wagnerian parts." etc.

Which leaves nearly everybody singing, including Mme. Braun's husband, Ferdinand Frantz. He was Wotan.

Poachers Spotted From Planes

WASHINGTON, (AP)—Federal game officials are using aerial photographs as evidence against commercial fishermen operating illegally in certain waters.

The idea is showing special promise in Alaska, where rough waters sometimes make it impossible for a patrol plane to land.

Albert M. Day, director of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, says the plane has replaced the dog sled in Alaskan patrols to the extent that only 13 miles were covered by sled last year, against 134,329 by plane, 300 by helicopter and about 100,000 by other means.

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