

2D PERFORMANCE TONIGHT

Civic Opera Makes Hit With 'La Boheme'

By HELEN A. F. PENNIMAN

When it comes to opera, we take off our hat to no man! Words, music and action, we know what we like, and why. And we liked the Baltimore Civic Opera's production of Puccini's "La Boheme," given its first performance last night at the Lyric—very much indeed.

It could hold up its head with many professional productions—and what wonder, since Rosa Ponselle coached the singers, Desire Defrere provided the action, and Leigh Martinet led the orchestra, in mood and manner that always supported and stressed at the right moments—never intruding.

Kira Baklanova's warm soprano, beautifully shaded and phrased, plus her winning personality, made of Mimi the endearing character she should be.

CHARLES MAY, in Rudolph's role, displayed a tenor

of admirable color, well-projected, entirely devoid of strain, giving the role the needful youth and ardor.

Elaine Scott contributed a spirited Musetta, full of fire and aggression, well matched by Robert Kirkham, making the most of the baritone role of Marcel, while the Bohemian comrades were completed by those lively individuals, Howard Schlutter, baritone, and John Beyer, bass.

Mr. Beyer, singing his first role with the company, "played down" the famous "Song of the Coat" more than we have ever heard it done, a somewhat questionable experiment.

BENJAMIN Hubbard repeated his previous success in the character roles of Benoit and of Alcindoro.

Do not forget that tonight's cast, for the second performance, will see another Musetta, in the person of Gilda Brown Sherman, though Mme. Ponselle's toy French poodle will again perform like a veteran, as Musetta's pet.

Civic Opera Hailed by Big Crowd

By HELEN A. F. PENNIMAN

Once more, we have but words of praise for the Baltimore Civic Opera.

Last night, the company presented a truly stylish performance of Johann Strauss' gay opera, "Die Fledermaus," which had been coached in the best Viennese traditions by the deft hands and ingenious wits of Dr. Elemer Nadgy, while Igor Chigogov conducted with zest and skill.

To be sure, they had top-drawer material to work with, beginning with Mary Jane Kemp singing, looking and acting the lively Rosalinda with all requisite charm, while Lloyd Leech, lent by the New York City Centre, sang well, and depicted the debonaire Eisenstein with Austrian chic.

Then too, there was Charles May, making his Civic Opera debut in his native city, after wide experience elsewhere. Mr. May displayed a pleasing tenor and a flair for comedy.

ANOTHER leading lady was the sprightly Martha Bensor, as Adele, admirable in song and projection, while Bette Hankin did a good job in the difficult assignment of Prince Orlofsky, and Alice Diffenbach was a charming Sally.

Leaving the distaff side, we find Malcolm Bernstein excellent as usual as Dr. Falke, Alvey Ruppertsberger miming and singing well in the role of Frank, and A. Russell Slagle was his habitually amusing self in the bit role of Dr. Blind.

As for Colce Worth, his musical comedy experience helped him to keep the audience in stitches, in the character of the Jailer, Frosch.

NOR MUST WE forget the charming Dorothy London dancers, delectable in white tulle, their soloists including Alfred Caples and other well-known local dancers.

The lighting in Act 1 was a shade dim for our taste, in comedy, but the effects in Act II were quite lovely, emphasizing the handsome costumes, especially after the garden was shown.

The audience was large and highly responsive, and no one seemed to mind that the opera began about 25 minutes late, making the final curtain approximately midnight.

Tonight, again scheduled for 8:15, the performance will be repeated, with Norman Kelly, who is booked for the Met this season, playing Eisenstein. Elaine Scott will take over Adele, and Judith Werle, the Prince.