

Review

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*The Bohemians (La Bohème)*. Romantic Opera in Four Acts. Libretto by Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica. Music by Giacomo Puccini. English version of Acts I. and II. by W. Grist; of III. and IV. by P. Pinkerton.

[Ricordi.]

MODERN Italian operatic composers seem gradually becoming divided into two classes, those who hanker after the blood and thunder style of Mascagni, who owe a large share of their probably ephemeral success to the sensuousness of their music and a more or less new kind of noise; and those who are content to follow the more sober and more artistic methods of Verdi, as represented by his later development from "*Aida*" to "*Falstaff*." To this latter class Puccini certainly would appear to belong, for this, his latest opera, has far more in common with "*Falstaff*" than with "*Cavalleria*." He lacks perhaps the strongly marked individuality of Verdi—at any rate, at present—and it is by a combination of virtues rather than by the supreme strength of any one that he has gained a European success. Of course he avoids set numbers, in accordance with modern operatic custom, but he also avoids the *Leitmotif*; and that which strikes the musician most strongly is his lightness of touch. Bohemian life in the Quartier Latin, or indeed anywhere else, has often its very sordid side, and there is no gainsaying the fact that had Signor Puccini been less of an artist he could have found ample opportunity for emphasising the coarse side of the picture. But from this he has refrained, with wholly satisfactory results. It is no easy matter to pick out any particular passages or scenes for especial notice from an opera, each act of which is in a sense complete in itself. But no doubt the composer's highest achievement is the superb scene in the second act, which depicts the street round the Café Momus on Christmas Eve. The lovely valse sung by *Musetta*, the varied rhythms of the music sung by the four students, the cries of the hawkers and buyers, and the music of the tattoo combine to make the most remarkable contrast. There is a wealth of pathos, too, in the scene wherein *Rudolph* and *Mimi* meet, and again in the death of *Mimi*, which is intensely dramatic, albeit the simplest means only are employed. Here especially we think Signor Puccini has shown how true are his artistic instincts. The four principal male characters are happy, light hearted, and gay, in sunshine or storm, but a vein of seriousness is perceptible in them. So, too, in the music this vein is ever present, but always unobtrusive. Two more points may be noticed. The one to show again how skilful is the composer in his use of effective contrast—the scene at the barrier in the third act, where *Mimi* and *Rudolph* wander out of sight, happy in their peaceful love, while *Musetta* and *Marcel*, the other pair of lovers, are hurling epithets of a most uncomplimentary nature at one another. The second, which shows how bold he is in adopting the means that please him best to obtain a desired effect irrespective of all academic laws—the introduction to the second act, which is but a string of consecutive fifths. The effect may be coarse, but it exactly suggests the turmoil of a vast motley crowd of soldiers, servants, boys, girls, students, hawkers, &c. The score is full of melody, and all the dramatic points are made without effort or exaggeration; it is also full of the most vivid contrasts, as we have endeavoured to show. The subject might easily have been vulgarised, but Signor Puccini has treated it with a refinement and restraint which go far to prove him the possessor of the highest artistic instincts.

*Tonality and Roots*. By Arthur J. Greenish.

[Office of the Organist and Choirmaster.]

THIS little book is described as "A new and comprehensive method for finding the keys of intervals, triads, melodic phrases, and the roots of discords," and the description may be said to be justified by the system set forth. It is based on the indicative position of the leading note, which, in almost all cases, is the note natural to the scale possessing more sharps or less flats than the scales of the companion notes in the chord or melodic phrase of which the tonality is sought. The principle is ingeniously developed and reduced to a series of *formulae*, the application of which is made clear by numerous examples. To well trained musicians the system is of course unnecessary, and the

application of the rules will seem a complicated way of arriving at that which could be more satisfactorily and more quickly accomplished by ordinary harmonic analysis; but to students the system will be decidedly helpful, and especially to those who make themselves familiar with the copious and lucid explanations of the reasons upon which the rules are based.

*Dr. Tucker, Priest-Musician*. By Christopher W. Knauff, M.A.

[New York: A. D. F. Randolph Company.]

DR. J. IRELAND TUCKER (1810-1895) was the first rector of the Church of the Holy Cross at Troy, New York, where he laboured unweariedly for fifty-one years. He was not only the introducer, but the one who made popular the Anglican school of church music in America. Himself a musician, he spared no pains to elevate the standard of devotional art throughout the land of his birth. The story of his life—which is of special interest to American musicians—is pleasantly told by the Rev. C. W. Knauff in these pages. Dr. Tucker seems to have initiated the chanting of morning prayer in America, which he did on April 14, 1846, when Tallis's responses were sung "as given in English cathedrals." Mendelssohn's *Te Deum* and Jubilate in A was introduced into his church so early as December 6, 1848. In 1870 he issued his "*Parish Hymnal*," which spread his fame throughout the States. In this connection the book before us contains some interesting letters from English musicians upon the remuneration for hymn-tunes, &c. Sir Frederick Ouseley wrote (in 1872): "I am a bad hymn writer; it is by no means my forte." Sir F. Ouseley and the Rev. J. B. Dykes intimated that they were not accustomed to write for money; but they both expressed their willingness to accept payment, the former because he was rebuilding his organ at Tenbury, the latter because he "has a large parish, a family growing up, and is not overburdened with this world's goods, and finds considerable difficulty in making both ends meet." Sir John Stainer wisely returns the words of a hymn because he considers it "unfitted for music owing to the irregular grouping of the lines." The late Dr. Garrett writes: "I receive three guineas for a tune. My contributions to the completed 'Hymns Ancient and Modern,' the 'Quiver,' and other collections have been paid for at this rate." Dr. W. H. Monk, writing to Dr. Tucker on April 7, 1872, said: "You will be interested to know, perhaps, that I am just asked to correct for the press a collection of chants for the Scotch Presbyterian Church—the authorities of which are about, for the first time, to try to introduce the practice [chanting]—not, as some of them think, to succeed in our time." A quarter of a century has now elapsed since this was written, which is far too short a time to affect the "traditions of the Elders" in regard to their dearly beloved version of the metrical Psalms.

*The Village Organist*. A series of pieces for Church and general use. Edited by J. Stainer and F. Cunningham Woods. Books 1 to 6. [Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THERE can be no question as to the practical utility of this excellent series of organ voluntaries. We have special facilities for knowing that they will supply a real want. There are a number of organists of churches and chapels up and down the country who, while doing admirable work in their several spheres of labour, are as modest in their attainments as they are in regarding their vocation as a handmaid to religion, and not as a vehicle for their own personal display. To all such these books will come as a boon. The names of the editors are a sufficient guarantee of the quality of the contents of each volume. To quote from the preface: "The editors have endeavoured to bring together a collection of pieces which they trust will prove to be at once simple without being uninteresting, and effective where the instrumental resources are limited." Each book contains from six to ten pieces of various lengths, admirably suitable for opening and closing voluntaries. The time occupied in the performance of each is stated in a foot-note, and everything has been done, especially in the important matter of clear printing and good spacing of the notes, to make the pathway of the organist pleasant and smooth. We predict a hearty welcome to this series (which is to be continued) by town as well as country organists.