

PUCCINI HERE; HIS OPERA VIEWS

**Composer Believes That the
Modern Music Drama Is
to be Simpler.**

SEES REVERSION TO GLUCK

Tells How He Has Set to Music Comedy and Dramatic Episodes of "The Girl of the Golden West."

Giuseppe Puccini, the composer of "Madama Butterfly," "Tosca," "La Boheme," and "The Girl of the Golden West" arrived here yesterday on the George Washington with his young son, Antonio. It is the second visit of the Italian composer to New York, his first being for the purpose of inspecting the first performance at the Metropolitan Opera House of "Madama Butterfly."

This time he comes to superintend the final rehearsals and to see the first production on any stage of "The Girl of the Golden West."

While he is here he will naturally hear the performances of his other operas that are given at the Metropolitan. He will attend the matinee of "Madama Butterfly" to-morrow and the performance of "La Boheme" Monday evening.

Yesterday afternoon Puccini visited the Metropolitan, and after he had had a long talk with Mr. Gatti-Casazza he called in the newspaper reporters, many of whom are old friends of his.

He first astonished everybody by saying that he was looking for a comedy to set to music.

"No more heart throbs," he said. "I want a good lusty comedy. I am going to every comedy I hear about in every city I visit in an attempt to discover a good libretto for a comedy opera."

"Have you dropped 'Le Femme et le Pantin' and 'Marie Antoinette'?" he was asked.

To Work on a Comedy.

"Utterly," he answered. "Those were projects which I had in mind before I took up 'The Girl of the Golden West.' But now I have it in mind to work on a comedy I shall drop them. You see I believe that modern music drama is going to be simpler and simpler. There will not be a reversion to Wagner. Rather there will be a reversion to Gluck, whose works I tremendously admire. I like of all his operas 'Armide' the best, and after that 'Orfeo.'"

"How about Richard Strauss?"

"No personalities, please!" begged the Maestro.

Then he was asked to talk about "The Girl of the Golden West."

"The opera opens," he said, "with a few emphatic phrases, rather violent and robust. Among them one hears some of the most striking motives of the opera. Then in silence the curtain rises, revealing Minnie's tavern, the Polka bar-room. The first half of this act is full of characteristic scenes, which give the color of the environment and introduce the persons—Mexican miners, Indians, the Sheriff, and others. Two cowboys dance, singing a queer song:

"Dooda Dooda, Day—"

"In a corner a man sits silent and absorbed. All of a sudden from without comes a wailing song, accompanied by the tinkling sound of a banjo. It is a sad, disconsolate song, evoking home. The voice of the minstrel is at first heard alone; then the miners get hold of the air and the orchestra joins with a pizzicato. The singer appears on the scene and stops, but all ask him to continue. So he begins again all alone. When finally he goes away the miners sing it again. But the feeling of homesickness is swallowed up in the ensuing gayety until Minnie enters.

"The Sheriff offends Minnie and she repulses him, but Johnson, who is sitting in a corner, she recognizes as a man she has met once on the trail. After a short duet they waltz together, and this waltz furnishes one of the motives of the opera.

"Now Castro, one of Johnson's band of highway robbers, is dragged into the tavern. He does not betray Johnson, however, but sends the Sheriff on a false scent. Minnie asks Johnson to her cabin in the mountains as the act ends.

"The second act, in Minnie's cabin, opens with a duet of Indian servants, a short page of staccato music with a rhythm which has a strain of the grotesque. Minnie returns and prepares for Johnson's arrival. He comes, and between the two young people begins a scene extremely varied in movement and expression, which gradually passes into the love duet which is the centre of the opera. It is an episode to which I have become singularly attached, because it seems to me different from the usual love duet. While Minnie sings, the notes of the first act waltz slip in.

Rest of Act Dramatic.

"The rest of the act is dramatic. Outside a blizzard is raging and Minnie asks Johnson to stay. She will sleep on a bear skin. The sheriff enters to look for Johnson, but Johnson is hidden in the alcove. However, Minnie learns who he really is and when the sheriff has gone she puts him out. He is seen by two deputies and wounded. Bleeding he comes back and falls over the threshold of the door. She runs to him, raises him and conceals him. The man she kissed cannot die. The sheriff also returns and vainly seeks for the fugitive, whom he finally discovers by a drop of blood which falls on his hand.

"Minnie, to save her lover, proposes to the sheriff a game of cards. 'If you win I am yours; if I win you will leave me this man.' The game of poker begins and Minnie wins by means of some concealed cards. The act ends with the girl alone with her wounded lover.

"Here we have the finale of an act of opera based upon a game of poker. It was quite embarrassing to set to music in such a dramatic scene a game of cards which offers so little suggestive of melody. It was necessary to find something new. And so I have not written music descriptive of a game of cards—it is a game of lives and I nope—.

"The third act is the shortest. The first one lasts an hour and a few minutes; the second an hour; the third thirty-five minutes. Johnson is under arrest and is to be hung in a few minutes. At this moment Minnie arrives on horseback with a pistol in her teeth. She pleads with the miners to spare the man she loves and they finally bid her farewell and leave her with him."

"The Girl of the Golden West" is dedicated to Queen Alexandra. The composer keeps an old promise in doing this. After the opera has been sung in New York by Mme. Destinn and Messrs. Caruso and Amato it will be given in Chicago with Miss Garden, and Messrs. Dalmorés and Sammarco; and in Boston with Mme. Carmen Melis and Messrs. Constantino and Baklanoff. The composer will only see the New York production as he is going back to Italy very soon afterwards. In May the opera is to be produced at Covent Garden, and in June at the Costanzi in Rome with the Metropolitan Opera House cast. In August it will be sung in Brescia.

"And the character of the music?"

"It has no special character," answered Puccini, "I have tried to write music and music must have only one character, spontaneity and sincerity. This time I have worked hard over the form. The instrumentation differs from that of my other operas."

"Something new?"

"New or better, it is not for me to say. It is logical after all, to try always to be better. In my next opera—"

Von Possart to Appear Here Dec. 26.

Ernst Ritter von Possart, one of the foremost actors in Germany, and at the head of the Hof-theatre, Munich, will make a tour of America this Winter under the management of Gustav Amberg. He will begin his season with a two weeks' engagement at the Irving Place Theatre, opening on Dec. 26. His repertoire will include "The Merchant of Venice," "Nathan the Wise," "Friend Fritz," and "Fallissement," by Bjornsen. Herr von Possart was in America several years ago, when he played for two seasons at the Irving Place Theatre and also went on tour. For this coming visit he will bring his own company and all performances will be given in German.