

Music

"The Flying Dutchman."

A TWOFOLD interest attached to the production of 'The Flying Dutchman,' last week, at the Academy of Music. In the first place, Wagner's opera, composed before he had carried his musical theories to his later extremes, had never before been given here by an Italian Opera Company. In the second place it was felt that Mme. Albani had at last a chance of displaying her operatic abilities under entirely favorable circum-

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stances, for she is nearly the only singer outside of Germany who has admittedly been equal to Wagnerian leading parts. As regards Albani, popular expectation was not disappointed. She is not one of the greatest artists of her generation, but she has a magnificent voice in its own compass, and sufficient dramatic instinct to have caught, and in great measure successfully interpreted, Wagner's ideal heroine. Senta, Elsa, Elizabeth—their names and their local coloring may differ, but in all psychological essentials they are one and the same—the typical German 'Mädchen,' strong, possessed of an almost virile fearlessness, but brought back to maidenhood by that sweet touch of womanly modesty which almost eludes the grasp when the attempt to portray it is made. Senta is a character too absolutely Teutonic in conception for any artist who has not a drop at least of German blood in her veins to assume with absolute confidence; but Mme. Albani disappointed no one. One might fairly imagine that some traits of her Margherita might be found in her Senta, or vice-versa; but it is evident that in studying the former character she has been swayed to an appreciable degree by operatic, or rather by Italian operatic traditions, while in the latter, let its shortcomings be what they may, she has created an original and impressive character.

Wagner did not, as is so often stated, disparage in after years this early effort in musical dramatic composition. He merely claimed that, though its harmonic principles were in the main correct, he had afterward worked out those same principles to a much higher degree of perfection. Be this as it may, there can be no doubt that 'The Flying Dutchman' pleases an audience which 'Lohengrin' and 'Parsifal' would bore. The germs of Wagner's later manner of construction are evident. There is, to many, a more than sufficient amount of recitative; there is, any way, one marked 'leading motive'—the four mysterious notes of the horn which are given out whenever The Flying Dutchman appears, is mentioned, or is supposed to be thought of by one of the other characters; there are many descriptive orchestral passages, and occasionally some rather unsingable vocal phrases. All these there are, and at the same time there is an abundance of melody which in its freshness, spontaneity and general charm might find a place in one of those operatic compositions which were to Herr Wagner as things abhorrent and almost accursed.

As to the general cast of the Academy, little need be said. Signor Galassi was so essentially *not* The Flying Dutchman, that it seemed extraordinary how so fair an artist in his own line could so misinterpret an

unaccustomed part. Signor Ravelli as the lover was not much better; and the chorus and orchestra were as bad as might have been expected. The hard work and expense in stage-setting entailed by a satisfactory production of Wagner's operas have evidently kept them out of the ordinary manager's repertory quite as much as the alleged indifference of the public. It has been sufficiently demonstrated, in other countries besides Germany, that, with proper management, Wagner spells success as surely as Shakspeare was once said to spell bankruptcy.