

[Met Performance] CID:138250

Lohengrin {459} Metropolitan Opera House: 12/20/1944.

(Debuts: Morton Bowe, William Hargrave
Review)

Metropolitan Opera House
December 20, 1944

LOHENGRIN {459}

Wagner-Wagner

Lohengrin.....Lauritz Melchior
Elsa.....Helen **Traubel**
Ortrud.....Kerstin Thorborg
Telramund.....Alexander Sved
King Heinrich.....Norman Cordon
Herald.....Mack Harrell
Noble.....Morton Bowe [Debut]
Noble.....Richard Manning
Noble.....William Hargrave [Debut]
Noble.....Philip Whitfield

Conductor.....Erich Leinsdorf

Director.....Lothar Wallerstein
Designer.....Joseph Urban

Lohengrin received seven performances this season.

[**Traubel**'s costumes were designed by Adrian.]

Review of Oscar Thompson in the Sun

TRAUBEL AS ELSA IN NEW "LOHENGRIN"

After a year on the shelf, "Lohengrin" was brought back to the active repertory at the Metropolitan last night. It was the familiar production in settings, cast and costumes, save for the first-time Elsa of Helen Traubel and her strangely inappropriate gowns. Erich Leinsdorf conducted, as he did when the opera was last given, early in 1943.

Mme. Traubel was painstaking in her singing and her impersonation. Her voice was quite generally of beautiful quality. But it is not -or was not, last night - a voice with the upper reaches for the high tessitura of the role. She was slightly below pitch repeatedly in the plodding first act. The second act was more sure, but in the wedding scene of the final chapter there were two high tones that were barely touched - and they were not true.

Mme. Traubel has been known to present a new role tentatively before this; and, as reappearances in it have given her the confidence of experience, she has come to realize it vitally and significantly. Let us hope this will be the progress that she makes with Elsa. Her attire has remained out of the period in other Wagner essayals. Perhaps it is too much, therefore, to expect her now to conform to ordinary operatic dictates in her costuming of Elsa.

Lauritz Melchior also swished about in his specially designed stylistic monstrosities, but he sang much of his music as the Swan Knight should. Indeed, he has rarely of late been in better vocal condition. He treated his adieu to the swan well, the nuptial scene better, and in spite of vocal fog met the demands of the last-act narrative with consummate skill. The farewell was over-emotional, but that was of small consequence.

Of the others, the best singing was done by Mack Harrell as the Herald. His light voice was projected with uncommon skill. Kerstin Thorborg shouted her high tones as Ortrud; but the dramatic import of the scene before the Minister, and, more particularly, of the solo, "Entweite Goetter," brought her heavy applause. Alexander Sved used his burly baritone voice in his accustomed way as Telramund and there was sometimes a question as to which note he was singing. Norman Cordon was scarcely happy in the range of the King's solos and the first-act prayer went lamely. Morton Bowe, Richard Manning, William Hargrave and Philip Whitfield were heard momentarily as Telramund's four adherents. This was scarcely to be counted as a debut

for either *Mr. Bowe* or *Mr. Hargrave*.

Mr. Leinsdorf was very busily occupied with the singers, the orchestra and the score. But the results were hardly a challenge to his good showing in "*Tristan und Isolde*." There have been few Metropolitan "*Lohengrin*"s that were less poetic. The chorus, however, filled its Wagnerian mission nobly.

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