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# May Festival Ending Elegant

The bang with which the May Festival came to a close bodes well for its future plans.

Saturday night's concert in Music Hall ended the 46th and final biennial event whose history is so closely intertwined with that of the city itself. From now on the Cincinnati Musical Festival Assn. intends that the Festival will be an annual event.

Saturday's concert in Music Hall, with Birgit Nilsson as soloist, was typical of the uniform excellence of the four concerts in this year's mighty Festival effort. Max Rudolf conducted the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra and Festival Chorus in a program of Wagner and Strauss, and Miss Nilsson placed her manifold talents at their disposal with results that

can only be described as sensational.

MISS NILSSON has a voice of extraordinary power and richness of quality, and these two commodities apparently never desert her, no matter what demands or obstacles the composer has laid along the music's course.

Elizabeth from "Tannhauser," Elsa from "Lohengrin," Isolde and Salome, were the troubled heroines whose alternate anguish and joy Miss Nilsson undertook to express. To each she brought a different characterization and a different vocal timbre that spoke as eloquently as pages of mere words about them.

Miss Nilsson possesses in full measure all the attributes that make for greatness in a singer—remarkable mental and musical agility, and the stamina of

a horse. Her voice Saturday was firm and flexible and beautiful and she sang with complete absence of strain, indicating whole reserves of power still on tap.

I LIKED HER best as Salome, that frightening, fierce, fascinating teen-age heroine for whom Strauss wrote a frightening, fierce and fascinating score to match. The orchestra and Mr. Rudolf provided masterly accompaniments to Miss Nilsson's songs, and created a healthy glow of success all their own by playing two Preludes from "Lohengrin" and Strauss' tone poem, "Don Juan," with imposing skill.

The Hallelujah Chorus from Handel's "Messiah," the Festival's traditional vehicle for ringing down the curtain, was sung in Music Hall's full incandescent glory, a phenomenon

greatly appreciated by one and all after the power blackout of the previous evening.

THE THOUGHT of what might have happened had the lights gone out during Friday's concert instead of one hour later caused Music Hall staffers to grow a little pale around the gills. Saturday night, auditorium personnel went about with their pockets crammed with flashlights, and many orchestra and chorus members had a torch tucked in purse or pocket, just in case.

Friday's orchestral concert, an account of which failed to appear next day in this paper for reasons we have just been discussing, was a triumph for Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra's musicians who were on their absolutely best behavior, instrumentally speaking, for Guest Conductor George Szell.

When a fine orchestra and a fine conductor come together in a cause to which they have devoted the greater part of their lives, it should hardly be cause for surprise when a quality product emerges. Many sections of our orchestra cannot fail to have impressed Mr. Szell, who is the notably demanding conductor of the Cleveland Orchestra.

IN BRAHMS' Second Symphony and Mozart's moving "Haffner" Symphony, they made completely satisfying musical sense and produced a beauty of tone to be cherished in the memory.

Peter Serkin, crown prince in an impressive royal line of musicians, was soloist in Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 14 in E-flat, a piece of music that demands the utmost in sensitivity and musicianship. I felt he demonstrated a great amount of both these



By  
Eleanor  
Bell

qualities, but that he has not yet reached that point of musical poise and assurance that set off the great from the near-great.

There was a diffidence, a reluctance to assert himself through the music that I thought were disappointing, as though he had been placed at the head of his class too soon.

So many words have been written about the May Festival Chorus that one can only add that it is, after all, the real heart of the Festival's success, the real reason why there are May Festivals at all.

## BULL-RING OPERA . . .

# Real Bull Killed in Carmen

CARACAS, VENEZUELA (UPI): An American opera singer, a Venezuelan bullfighter and a 930-pound fighting bull starred last night in an historic performance of Georges Bizet's "Carmen." But the bull wasn't around to hear the applause when the final curtain fell—he was caped and killed at Carmen's feet in the climax of the last act of the opera.

It was the first time in the history of the opera that a Carmen and an audience actually saw Escamillo fight and kill a live bull.

Usually, the bullfight is simulated by offstage cheering while Carmen waits outside the ring.

LAST NIGHT, however, Metropolitan Opera contralto Jean Madeira was inside the Caracas bullring on an elevated stage built into the stands.

And Curro Giron, in the role of Escamillo, killed the fighting bull directly in front of the stage.

Giron kissed and then tossed to Miss Madeira the ear of the bull he wins according to the script for his victory in the ring.

"It was magnificent — the only way

Carmen should be performed," enthused Miss Madeira later. It was her 135th performance as the bullfighter's gypsy mistress.

"Never before have I been so inspired in the role. I don't believe I have ever before sung the last act as well as I did last night."

Giron, who needed four sword thrusts to kill the bull, was more enthusiastic about his operatic debut than about his performance with the bull.

"I can now say that I have acted in opera," he said. "But I didn't have to sing a single note."

SINCE Venezuelan President Raul Leoni was in the audience, Giron could not dedicate the bull to Miss Madeira as Escamillo would have done for Carmen.

But after making the formal dedication to Leoni, Giron led the bull steadily across the ring to the foot of the stage with 15 minutes of cape work. And just before making the fatal sword thrusts between the horns of the beast, he raised his arm in salute to Miss Madeira standing alone on the stage.

A standing-room crowd of more than 10,000 jammed the bullring for the opera.

## Amusement Calendar

TONIGHT: Israeli actor Mischa Asherov speaks on cultural development of his country, under auspices of America-Israel Foundation, Jewish Community Center, 8 p. m.

"Colour It Black," revue of British humor featuring Donald Cullen, Donald Ewer, Playhouse in the Park, 8:30 p. m.

Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra free concert, Max Rudolf, conducting, Burnet Woods, 8:30 p. m.

Vocalist Cathy Johnson, comedy team of Carme and Paul open for two weeks at Playboy Club, 8:30 p. m.

TUESDAY: Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra free concert, Max Rudolf conducting, Devou Park, 8:30 p. m.

"Birthday Party," Playhouse in the Park, 8:30 p. m.

WEDNESDAY: "Birthday Party," Playhouse in the Park, 8:30 p. m.

THURSDAY: Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra free concert, Max Rudolf, conducting, Winton Woods, 8:30 p. m.

"Birthday Party," Playhouse in the Park, 8:30 p. m.

FRIDAY: Free films, Public Library, 12, 1 p. m.

"Birthday Party," Playhouse in the Park, 8:30 p. m.

Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra free concert, Max Rudolf, conducting, Seabrook Pavilion, Eden Park, 8:30 p. m.

Xavier Cugat's Orchestra and Charo

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