

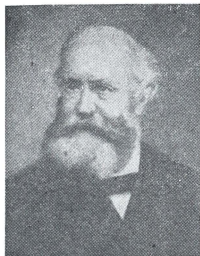
MUSIC APPRECIATION SECTION

GREAT COMPOSERS OF MUSIC

SECOND SERIES

By BERT PAUL OSBON *

IV. GOUNOD



Gounod, Idol of French Opera

WHEN the director of the Paris Opera was asked to name the most popular French opera of today, he replied without hesitation, "Gounod's *Faust*." And yet, when this opera was first produced in Paris in 1859, it was a failure. Ten years later, after a total of 300 successful performances outside of France, it began to become well-known and liked in Paris.

Gounod (pronounced goo-no), now "the idol of the French opera," was born in Paris in 1818. He received his first musical instruction from his mother who was an artist. She did her best to make a practical man of her son. After having been taught music by his mother, the talented boy entered the great music school of France which is known as the Paris Conservatory. Here he did such outstanding work in music that he won the Grand Prize.

Later he went to Rome where he heard the music of Palestrina. (See THE YOUNG CITIZEN for January, 1941.) This

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music so developed his piety and religious zeal, that, when he returned to France, he considered seriously becoming a priest, and adopted the title of Abbe Gounod. If you read the story of Liszt in THE YOUNG CITIZEN for February, 1941, you remember that abbe is the title given by the Catholic Church in France to a clergyman who has not taken vows and does not receive his living from the church.

While in Rome, Gounod devoted much time to the study of church music; later he studied theology, but he gave this up in order to devote himself to music, especially to the writing of operas. His first operas were not well received, but later he achieved success. His first successful opera was *Faust*, although, as previously stated, it was not liked in France until ten years after its first production in Paris.

I am sure you have heard some of the lovely melodies from the opera *Faust*. Let me tell you a little about this opera, and you will want to hear more of it.

First, let



The Grand Stair-Case of the French Opera

NIGHT IN A HUT

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sun, and then sell it to one of the farmer's wives.

They offered us the skin, but we thanked them and declined. We could not take the skin with us because we had no means of carrying it on our motorcycle.

We cleaned the mud from our motorcycle, and waited until the hot sun had dried the road. Then we said goodbye and climbed onto our motorcycle which took us to our farm in a short time.

We were glad that we had stayed with the natives during the night, as this had given us the opportunity of seeing their home life and enjoying their hospitality. But one night in a native hut was enough, especially when we had a visit from an East African leopard.

QUESTIONS

1. What can you tell about a leopard? (See the encyclopedia.)
2. Describe the skin of the leopard.
3. Why do the natives not wish to make holes in the leopard's hide?
4. Find Kenya Colony on the map. Mount Elgon.

A GOOD-FOR-NOTHING

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So he added a little petition of his own to his prayer. "Help me, God, to do something worth while, so I won't be a good-for-nothing."

Just as he finished his prayer, he happened to notice the back cover of a recent magazine for young people. "Can you write a good story? Win a prize!" the advertisement read. He scanned the announcement through. "I wonder if I could," he said, half aloud. He thought for a few moments. "Well; I'll try."

He seated himself at his study table. As he did so, he again said the words of his prayer uttered a few moments before. "Help me, God, to do something worth while, so I won't be a good-for-nothing."

Inspiration and strength come to the boy. Soon he was working away on a short story to be sent in answer to the advertisement he had read. Never before had he had such an eager desire to do something worth while. He wrote and wrote. It was a simple story, and the plot unfolded naturally and easily.

"I think this is a pretty good story," Pedro thought when it was almost finished.

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GOUNOD

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dramas, Wagner. (See THE YOUNG CITIZEN for November, 1940.)

At seventy-five, crippled and blinded by a paralytic stroke, Gounod composed a *Requiem*. He heard it played, and when it was finished, he fell over unconscious and died. This was in 1893. At the funeral service hosts of his admirers were present.

Gounod's great operas *Faust*, *Romeo and Juliette*, and many of his sacred compositions will always be heard and loved whenever there is music.

REVIEW

1. What is Gounod called?
2. What is his nationality?
3. What are the dates of his life?
4. What is Gounod's most famous opera?
5. Tell of the success of this opera.
6. What is an opera?
7. Name some selections from *Faust*.
8. Name some other compositions by Gounod.
9. Tell of the disposition of Gounod.
11. Name one contemporary.
12. What was Gounod's last composition?