



MASTER AND PUPIL — two reviews



Marigold Mann

Betly at the Holland Park Festival

It was given in Holland Park in tandem with *I pagliacci* by Opera Europa. Having only heard a recording of *Betly* I was keenly anticipating a chance to see it performed. I have to say I was very disappointed. The critic of Opera Magazine was far more charitable than I could possibly be, but he saw the first cast and I the second. There is some really splendid music in *Betly* but for me this production never took off; the tenor role was hard to recognise as such; the soprano got through her role; the baritone Max was rather better. I mention no names. The production and the scenery were dire. The sets were replete with mauve plastic furniture; a frame with moving cut-outs was supposed to tell us where the action was taking place; the chorus enjoyed themselves more than I did. *Pag* was more stimulating altogether. We must hope for a better production of *Betly* soon.

Mayr's *Mass* at St. Augustine's Church, Queensgate SQ7

I turned up to hear this Mass on a wet Saturday evening in June. Donizettians where were you? I did not see a familiar face in the fifty or so audience. This rather austere-looking church on the outside turns out to have an interior with Byzantine touches, that is, it has some remarkably good mosaic work. A pleasant venue.

The chorus was from an evening class at the City Literary Institute, their contribution was not large and I had some reservations about the evenness of their singing. The soloists were quite good; interestingly we had an oriental baritone and an Indian (I think) tenor, both were pleasing in tone. The soprano was also very pleasant apart from one or two squally patches at the top, and the mezzo was well-up to requirements.

As with the masses I have heard from Donizetti and Bellini, Mayr's *Mass* is quite operatic and full of enjoyment for any follower of bel canto music. It is a great pity that his music is so rarely performed in England and I hope someone will follow the lead of the City Lit.