



Review, *Musical Times*, July 1957, page 385

‘Blind Raftery’ (TV)

Music (by which is meant Good Music) is so much the Cinderella of television that the commissioning of a new opera for that medium by Joan Trimble to a libretto by Cedric Cliffe is a step in the right direction for those whose taste inclines to something better than bad Variety. The story of *Blind Raftery*, first performed on 21 May, is brief and simple. Raftery, a blind Irish poet, is tricked by David Evans, the Welshman, into accepting as his wife one of Evans's discarded mistresses. When he discovers this from a pedlar, Raftery finds that his wife truly loves him and the tables are neatly turned on Evans.

Perhaps too many hands had been at work on this tale, for it is based on a novel by Donn Byrne which was itself partly based on an actual eighteenth-century character. At any rate, Mr. Cliffe was unsuccessful in selecting a suitable language which was apt both for the period and the characters.

Miss Trimble has already shown her aptitude for conjuring up the Irish atmosphere in some delightful pieces for two pianos, and now, on this larger canvas, one felt that her music, though not strikingly original, was exactly right. The singers had cause to be grateful to her for lyrical melodies which required to be well sung but did not need much learning. The choruses, ‘popular’ in the Percy French style, were delightfully boisterous, and particular mention must be made of the skilful orchestration, which was well worth listening to on its own account.

The success of this opera rests on the playing of Raftery himself, and Denis Dowling’s singing was as poetic as the part would suggest. It was part of Mr. Cliffe’s failure that Hilaria, the wife upon whose love the plot rests, was such an unimportant character compared to her husband, but Gertrude Holt did all she could within the limits allotted to her. Parry Jones, John Kentish and Dennis Noble were all good in small parts. The performance had clearly been carefully rehearsed under the direction of Stanford Robinson, and Christian Simpson’s production allowed the story to proceed gently and without fuss.

W. E. [William Elkin]