

Melissa Hayden

UAFS Under

one hand and conducted the orchestra with the other. Everyone who saw the performance was impressed at her skill, but her father was mortified and forbade her from repeating it. Compare the facts about Colonel Steiner's role in Emma's life with this quote from the St. Paul Daily Globe: "Her father is a well-known businessman of the Monumental City, and to his lavish expenditure of money in the development of the genius of his daughter, which he discovered while she was a mere child, is the world indebted for this consummate artist, whom many competent musicians look upon as a phenomenon" ("An Opera By A Woman." 20 Jul. 1891). There is no evidence that Colonel Steiner ever played a role in Emma's life beyond scorning her dream. It is telling of the way women were thought of at this time, the roles they were expected to play, that this reporter gave the credit for her entire career, her every achievement, to her father, to the man who was expected to be in charge of her life.

Emma's first job was as the music director under Edward Everett Rice. He was very progressive for his time, and booked *Clorindy*, the first musical written by African-Americans to appear on Broadway, in 1898. Emma began as a singer, and somehow caught his eye. From there, she began touring under several opera companies to perform light operas, including *H.M.S. Pinafore* and *Amorita*. She composed another opera, *Fleurette*, but couldn't get any managers to hear it, so she gathered a group of well known financial sponsors of opera, who adored it and pushed for its production. She toured with it in 1889 and again in 1891. Emma had a composition performed at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893. Then, she founded her own opera company, the Emma R. Steiner Gaiety Opera Company. Unfortunately, the company began losing money at alarming rates, including during the production of *Fleurette*, which was a net loss of \$6000 for Emma. The company was eventually liquidated, and the loss was shared among the investors.

so could do nothing and her company disbanded. This started a series of tragedies. In 1902, a fire started in a warehouse where her works were being stored, destroying most if not all of their remaining copies. This was before photocopying, so unpublished music had to be recreated by hand, a practice which Emma would not have had time to do. After this fire, Steiner contracted an unnamed illness that led to her eyesight failing, and had no money to continue to tour or compose. Incredibly

has been said at different times that I am the only woman in the United States who conducts a large orchestra; that I am the only woman who has produced and composed several comic operas; that I am the only woman who has written the complete instrumentation for operatic and other musical compositions. For myself I make none of those claims, for I know each of them to

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