

COMIC OPERA IS POPULAR

"The Free Lance" Has All of the Elements of a High-Class Musical Production and a Strong Cast.

Other Plays Offered Are: "A Stranger in Town," "Fra Diavolo" and "An American Citizen"—Vaudeville.

Klaw & Erlanger are just as responsible for the success of the "Free Lance" as the composer of the music, Joan Philip Sousa, or the author of the book, Harry H. Smith. It looks as though a combination of those three names ought to produce great results, and, in fact, "The Free Lance" is a genuine comic opera with a real plot, real singing voices and an admirably preserved romantic atmosphere that every orthodox comic opera should have. The cast is one of the best balanced that could have been devised for a singing show of the lighter kind, and from its tenors to its basses and baritone there is no mark of incapability or inexperience.

"The Free Lance" is a military comic opera, with a mimic war between mimic dignitaries and a love match between the scions of the opposing forces. The plot is delightfully simple and interesting. A goose girl and a shepherd boy are pressed into service disguised as the prince and princess, and anyone who knows Jeannette Lourie and Joe Cawthorn may imagine how unctuously these roles are played. The leading man and woman, George Tallman and Nella Bergen, play the real sprigs of royalty, and the armies and retinues of the two monarchs form the animated background for a series of attractive stage pictures and give life to the many swinging choruses and ensembles in which the March King shows at his musical best.

Cawthorn Is Talented.

Some clever musical comedians, like Eddie Foy, depend largely on makeup for their stage success. Others, like Joe Cawthorn and Raymond Hitchcock, rely on beauty unadorned to earn their Tuesday night envelopes, and Cawthorn last night went no farther than a little rouge toward disguising the features which Heaven bestowed upon him. A man who can play a part in straight face is really the most clever of all, and Cawthorn is facially comic to such a degree and has a nondescript dialect which he uses so dexterously that he quickly "arrives" with an audience.

He delivers his lines and his songs with an easy good humor that is infectious and his own smiles are reflected back to him from the countenances of his auditors as though he were gazing into a mirror. It is a matter of regret that he does not still play his concertina, for of that his Seattle old admirers never tired, but in all other respects he is the Cawthorn of the old days of "Hondrick Hudson" and "A Fool for Luck."

The Women of the Cast.

Jeannette Lourie is the living embodiment of the spirit of comic opera. She retains all the fresh and young good looks which made the Seattle chappies of 1901 rave over her when Thomas Q. Seabrooke, lightly impressing a kiss upon her alabaster shoulder, would exclaim, "I may be wrong!" She made an easy conquest as the goose girl last evening and is one of the high lights of the comedy end of the performance. Nella Bergen is a handsome prima donna with whom Seattle has hitherto been unacquainted. She is able to sing delightfully the arias which one associates only with the generously proportioned queens of grand opera, and her voice and face are her stage fortune. George Tallman has a tenor voice of pleasing quality and impersonates the role of the real prince acceptably.

George Schiller is an experienced veteran of the musical stage, last appearing in Seattle as one of the two detectives in the great Canary & Loderer review, "The Passing Show." He is capital as the mock emperor and the cast of principals is completed by other competent persons, Albert Hart and Sam Pullen.

"The Free Lance" is scheduled to remain until Wednesday afternoon and evening. "Mrs. Wiggs" comes next.