

# STILL OPERA HEAD, HALASZ CONTENDS

Wouldn't Quit and 'Sell Truth  
for \$12,000,' Asserts Dismissed  
Director of City Company

## 44 IN UNIT BACK COURSE

Citing Contract, He Prepares  
Legal Move—Harrell and  
Menotti Among Supporters

Laszlo Halasz said yesterday he still considered himself director of the New York Opera Company and had refused to resign because he "did not wish to sell the truth for \$12,000." He produced letters in his support from forty-four members of the company.

Declaring that the board of the City Center of Music Drama had not given him time enough to learn and counter the charges made against him, he said that inasmuch as he had a contract as director until the end of 1952, he intended to place the matter in the hands of legal counsel.

The forty-four letters supporting Mr. Halasz were written between last Wednesday, when Newbold Morris, chairman of the board, suggested to Mr. Halasz that he resign, and last Friday, when the board heard Mr. Halasz and then announced his dismissal when he refused to bow out.

One of the singers supporting Mr. Halasz was Mack Harrell, a vice president of the American Guild of Musical Artists. Leopold Sachse, another vice president of that union, said yesterday that the manner in which Mr. Halasz was dismissed was "wrong in every way."

## Menotti Defends Director

Other singers who wrote in support of Mr. Halasz included Robert Rounseville, Richard Bonelli, Camilla Williams, Dorothy MacNeill, Lawrence Winters, Craciela Rivera, Herva Nelli and Arthur Newman. Another writer was the composer Gian-Carlo Menotti, whose operas "The Medium" and "The Old Maid Thief" were produced under Mr. Halasz' regime.

"As far as my experience has been in working at the City Center," said Mr. Menotti, "I can truly say that I met there with greater courtesy and understanding than in any other similar organization in the city. From Mr. Halasz, himself, I received nothing but kindness and co-operation. I sincerely feel that without Mr. Halasz we endanger an organization which has been of the utmost importance in musical life. We must not forget that he has been largely responsible in organizing it against almost impossible odds."

Isadore Bennett, who also rallied to Mr. Halasz' support, has been responsible for the company's publicity in recent seasons and it was at her office at 43 West Fifty-first Street that Mr. Halasz spoke to reporters yesterday.

Mr. Halasz said that at Wednesday's meeting in Mr. Morris' office, when it was suggested that he resign, Mr. Morris told him the board had become alarmed because a committee of five had made charges against the director, accusing him of running the company autocratically, of using foul language, of rude manners and of leaving the artists in insecurity in conjunction with premieres.

## Tells of His Dismissal

At Friday's meeting of the board, Mr. Halasz said, he was allowed to speak for about ten minutes and was called back to the meeting-room after the session. Mr. Morris, Morton Baum and Miss Edna Bauman, a secretary, were the only persons still present, he said.

"Mr. Morris put before me," said Mr. Halasz, "the intended official statement that they were terminating their association with me, explaining that he was authorized to pay me \$12,000 toward the monetary part of their contractual obligations, and to change the first sentence to 'resignation' if I accepted.



"I reiterated again that I did not wish to sell the truth for \$12,000, or any other sum of money. Mr. Baum informed me 'as a lawyer' that if I did not accept now, I would have to sue for payment, in which case I might get nothing, because the board would try to prove that they were entitled to dismiss me because of my breaking the morale of the company."

One of the chief points Mr. Halasz made was that he wanted a hearing on the "shadowy, unnamed charges."

"I am not asking to be declared innocent or perfect—certainly not without a hearing," he said. "But I vigorously protest having been found 'guilty'—of unnamed charges—without even a semblance of a trial."

#### Upheld at Guild Session

Carroll W. Taussig, a member of the board of Musical Artists Guild, who sings in the chorus of the City Opera Company, was another one who came forward to support Mr. Halasz. She said she had defended Mr. Halasz at last Tuesday's guild board meeting at which six voting members had adopted a resolution opposing his tenure.

Most of the letters supporting Mr. Halasz were sent to Mr. Morris. Mr. Harrell's letter declared:

"It seems to me that the record of artistic growth and success should be sufficient proof that the direction of Mr. Halasz has been the greatest factor in establishing our City Opera as a leading repertoire company. And let us not forget that his interest and foresight have made possible the development of some of our finest American operatic artists."

Neither Mr. Morris nor Mr. Baum was at home when comment was sought after Mr. Halasz' press interview.