

KONYA Sándor, opera singer

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New Opera Star—Konya Takes Big

NEW YORK, Dec. 26 (UPI).—Sándor Konya has faced unexpected situations often in his life and because he knew how to handle them he became one of the brightest new singers of grand opera.

Today the Hungarian-born tenor is a regular commuter between San Francisco New York and the great operatic centers of Europe.

Konya's most recent triumph was as Walther in Wagner's "Die Meistersinger." This is the most difficult role in this masterpiece but Konya had something else to worry about.

He was starring in an expensive and completely new production of the Wagner opera at the Metropolitan and manager Rudolf Bing had spared nothing on the eye-catching set. And this was the first time Konya had sung Walther at the Met.

For years New York's music critics have been the toughest. They will pan anyone who does not meet their standards, no matter how high these stars have ascended. Yet all applauded Konya's "Walther."

"He sang the brightest Walther heard for many a year,"

wrote Harold Schonberg of the New York Times. "So many tenors have foundered on this role."

Like Mickey Mantle, Konya can hit from both sides of the plate. That is, he is one of very few fine tenors who can sing equally well in both German and Italian repertoires. And neither is his native language.

Konya recalled in an interview that just as he was about to begin a musical career, the all-conquering Nazi army conscripted him in Hungary and soon he found himself an un-

happy war prisoner of the British.

In 1946 he escaped and hid out for four months with a German family, assuming the role of a "German born in Hungary." During the next four years he sold fish and took any odd job available to support himself and his blonde bride.

When he heard that the opera house at Bielefeld was conducting auditions, he took his meager savings from the bank.

"My wife and I hitchhiked to Bielefeld," Konya said. "The audition was a success and I

was engaged as an 'Italian' tenor."

Roles in Stride