

# Television in Review: Further Thoughts on Color

## Opera Program Shows Glories of Medium, Some Problems

By JACK GOULD

**F**IRST reception of colored television in one's own home, which became a reality with Saturday evening's telecast of "Carmen," produces a host of varying impressions on the viewer.

Item: The addition of color may help but cannot save an inferior production. The National Broadcasting Company's decision to revive its two-year old production of "Carmen" was ill-advised from the entertainment standpoint. The singing was far below the N. B. C. opera company's standard. Red, blue and green are not replacements for a show.

Item: The production of "Carmen" was the first show in which color was used to achieve a distinct artistic effect and mood rather than just to demonstrate the colors themselves. The restrained use of colors was very much to N. B. C.'s credit.

Item: After watching "Car-

men" and the early morning N. B. C. color test on Friday, one finds that the critical adjustment required by the cameras and the limited scope of the lens are self-evident. Movement on the stage was cramped and mostly done in terms of depth. Lighting is going to be the big problem, apparently. How to keep enough of the stage properly lit is headache No. 1.

Item: Commercial advertisers whose products are wrapped in predominantly white packages might as well start thinking now of adopting new colors. In the Friday morning test, when sample patches of different colors could be seen behind a model, the white did not show up. For sponsor identification, something new will be needed.

Item: The unsung heroine of color television is Marie McNamara. She is the model who for two years now has sat in front of cameras while engineers worked on camera and receiver equipment. Among technicians, Marie is known affectionately as "the patient angel." Marie also has another distinction. When she is on the air for test, there is no sound track but she can be seen talking. The color viewer has to be a lip reader, too.

Item: The Radio Corporation of America and its offspring, N. B. C., did not win many friends early Saturday morning. The word had gone out that there would be a test but the signal had not come on by 3:30 A. M. Looking at a colorless screen at that hour is pure torture.

Incidentally, R. C. A. should appreciate that not all color viewers went to M. I. T. Before putting on a program such as "Carmen," the company should flash on the screen the color test bars at least for a few seconds. It would enable the viewer to adjust his set more quickly and easily and materially lessen the element of controversy in a household.

Item: Woe is the prop department in color television. In the color telecast of "Carmen," the settings looked rickety at times and one could see the poor-paint jobs. On a black-and-white receiver the settings looked O. K. Did someone say color would be expensive?

Item: Many viewers have noticed that during a color transmission a black-and-white receiver seems to give a better picture. Presumably this is the result of more precise adjust-

ment of the transmitting equipment. But, there is another aspect of this compatibility problem that has received scant notice.

On some color tubes it is not easy to get a black-and-white picture of the standard to which viewers are accustomed on present sets. A tinted overcast can creep in. Engineers aver, however, that with newer designs of tubes and more research, this problem will be licked.

Item: Especially in the Friday morning test, when far brighter light was used than in "Carmen," one of the greatest blessings of color TV was vividly evident in the home. The girls looked like girls, not sacks of ashes. If for no other reason, black-and-white video has had its day.