

"THE DESERT SONG" AT CHELMSFORD

OPERATIC SOCIETY'S CLEVER PERFORMANCE

The Chelmsford Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society are producing this week the well-known musical play "The Desert Song" at the Regent Theatre, Chelmsford. At the first performance on Monday the company were given an enthusiastic reception by a full "house," and there is little doubt that the production will prove to be one of the most successful that has been staged in Chelmsford.

Since 1920 the Society, of which the President is the Deputy-Mayor, Councillor Sidney C. Taylor, have staged a number of light operas and musical comedies with varying degrees of success, and over £700 has been distributed among local charities. For a year or two prior to 1935 the efforts were not as successful as they deserved to be, and it became evident that something should be done to place the Society on a firmer footing. Last year it was decided to stage "No, no Nanette," a rather ambitious effort. New players (although not new to Chelmsford audiences) were introduced, and the success that was achieved encouraged the Society to go one better with "The Desert Song," an even more ambitious production for an amateur Society.

THE CAST.

Sid-El-Kar, the Red Shadow's lieutenant, Frederic Bateson; Mindar, Hassi, leading members of the Red Shadow's band, Cyril Bradbury, Cecil Bocking; Hadji, a Riff farmer, Douglas Catt; Neri, his wife, Enid Hey.

Pierre Birabeau, the Red Shadow and son of General Birabeau, Leonard Pease; Benjamin Kidd, Society correspondent for the Paris "Daily Mail," Fred. Munnion; Azuri, Ali-Ben-Ali's favourite, Audrey Parrett; Capt Paul Fontaine, Lieut. Lo Vergne, Sergt. de Boussac, of the French Foreign Legion, Alex Ogston, Gilbert Torry, John Phillips; Susan, Doris Rowland; Edith, Susan's friend, Joan Howard.

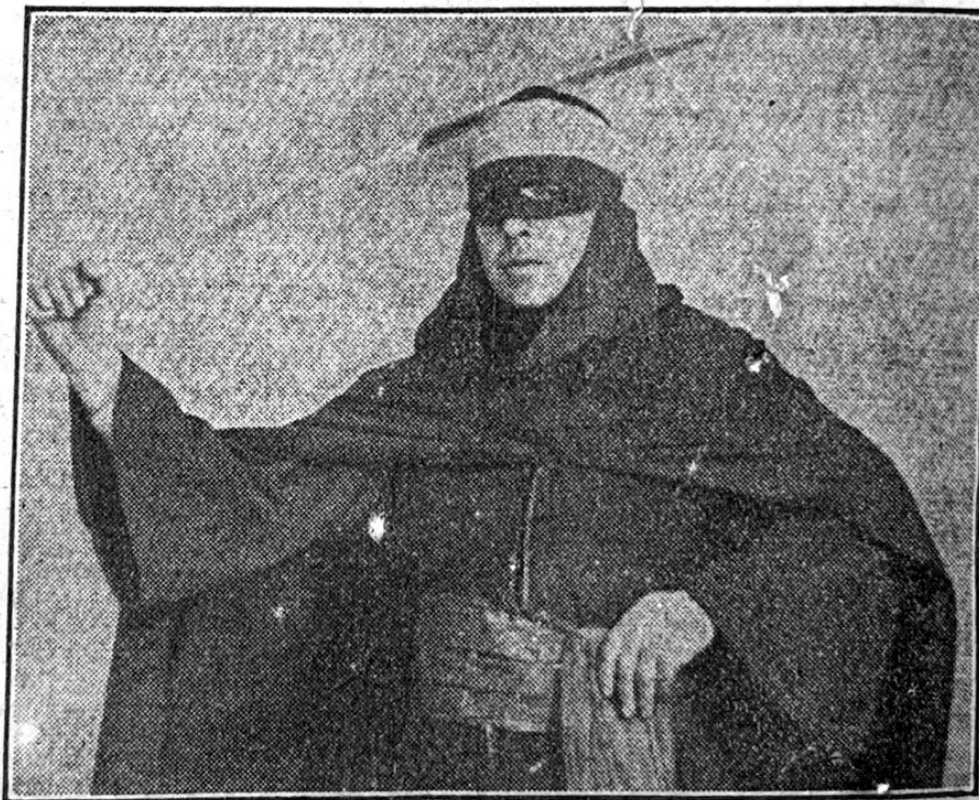
Margot Bonvalet, guest of General Birabeau, Rose Rowbotham; General Birabeau, Governor of a French Moroccan Province, J. Lindsay Scott; Clementina, a Spanish lady, Lillian Hamilton; Ali-Ben-Ali, chieftain of a Riff tribe, Charles Simpson.

Dancing girls: Mary Barneveld, Mollie Blyth, Ida Clarke, Marjorie Ellis, Emily

pleasing to note that old favourites are still popular. Among the newcomers Leonard Pease and Audrey Parrett contributed in large measure to the success of the show. In the dual role of the Red Shadow and the pretended simpleton Mr. Pease has a part which gives him ample opportunity to show his acting abilities, and his fine singing of several of the tuneful songs is one of the features of the play. Miss Parrett, as Azuri, the half-cast favourite of Ali-Ben-Ali, Chieftain of a Riff tribe, has remarkable

responsibility for the dances. There is some excellent scenery, and the costumes are very colourful. A fine orchestra is under the direction of Mr. Arthur Davies, the players being as follows:—

Violins, Mr. W. H. Bateman (leader), Mr. C. B. Oliver, Mr. J. H. Duncan, Miss B. Duncan, Mr. V. F. Waldau, Miss J. Rutty, viola, Mrs. D. Adkins; violoncello, Mr. H. M. Mann; double bass, Mr. A. Shepherd; flute, Mr. H. D. Dove; clarinet, Mr. A. Cole; oboe, Mr. F. Hart; bassoon, Mr. B. Chester; trumpets, Mr. G. Gann, Mr. J. Thomas.



"THE DESERT SONG" AT CHELMSFORD.—Leonard Pease in the role of the Red Shadow, the principal character.

(Photo: Bond's Portrait Studio.)



OTHER PRINCIPALS IN "THE DESERT SONG."—Left to right: Azuri (Audrey Parrett), Capt. Paul Fontaine (Alex Ogston), Margot Bonvalet (Rose Rowbotham), Ali-Ben-Ali (Charles Simpson), and Clementina (Lilian Hamilton).

(Photo: Bon's P)

Lilian Hamilton, Ethnie Holbrooke, Sybilla Ledwich, Margaret Betty Pearce, Pauline Williams, chorus of French girls and wives: Frances Baker, Dorothy Emily Everett, Hilda Fewell, Lilian Peggy Green, Ivy Harris, Enid Howard, Joan Merriton, Mary Margaret Robson, Lilian Smyth, Josephine Wells.

of the French Legion and members of the Red Shadow's band: John Barbevington, Leslie Bonner, Cyril Ernest Bryan, Douglas Catt, Ernest Thomas Malcolm, Guy Newland Newton, John Phillips, Basil Lee Torry, Arthur Ward, Native George Baker, Sidney Gregory, Tanton.

self-confidence for so young a player and she is certainly one of the most talented members of the cast, her dances as a native girl being very realistically executed.

Rose Rowbotham, one of the old favourites, who was absent from last year's production, makes a welcome re-appearance, and plays the part of Margot Bonvalet with her usual charm, and J. Lindsay Scott is admirably cast as General Birabeau her father. Most of the comedy element is provided by Fred Munnion as Benjamin Kidd, a newspaper correspondent, and Doris Rowland as Susan, neither of them missing an opportunity to create a good laugh. All the other principals act convincingly, particularly Frederick Bateson as Sid-el-Kar, the Red Shadow's Lieutenant; Alex Ogston as Capt. Paul Fontaine, of the French Foreign Legion; Lilian Hamilton as Clementina, a Spanish lady, and Charles Simpson as Ali-Ben-Ali.

The principals are well supported by the chorus of French girls and soldiers' wives, dancing girls, and the fearsome-looking members of the Red Shadow's band, the singing and dancing throughout being a real delight.

The play is admirably staged under the direction of Madge Macklin, who is also

horn, Mr. V. F. Waller; trombone, Mr. A. R. Dickerson; percussion, Mr. Charles St. Claire; piano, Mr. Lawrence Hey. Unfortunately, Mr. A. R. Barneveld, who was to have been at the piano, met with an accident on Monday, and his place was taken at the last moment by Mr. Hey.

Assistance was also rendered by the following: Hon. prompter, Major F. W. M. Powley; hon. call boy, Mr. W. J. Turner; hon. property masters, Mr. H. H. Evans, Mr. W. H. Hirst; perruquiers, Claire Arnold, Mr. P. H. Russell, Mr. R. H. Fish. Mr. A. Ogston designed an attractive cover for the programme.

"The Desert Song" will be repeated to-day (Friday) and to-morrow (Saturday) afternoon and evening.