

"THE DESERT SONG"

CHELMSFORD AMATEURS' PRODUCTION

Sid-El-Kar (the Red Shadow's lieutenant), Frederic Bateson; Mindar and Hassi (leading members of the Red Shadow's band), Cyril Bradbury and 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; Captain Paul Fontine, Lieutenant La Vergne, Sergeant De Boussac (of the French Foreign Legion), Alex Ogston, Gilbert Torry, and John Phillips; Susau, 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 (Caid of a Riff tribe), Charles Simpson.

The Chelmsford Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society are this week presenting the popular musical play, "The Desert Song," at the Regent Theatre, before large and appreciative audiences.

"The Desert Song," with all its lavish colour, tuneful music, gay ensembles, lively dances, and delightful songs, is one of the Society's most ambitious productions, and the result is highly creditable to all. Principals and chorus share in the honours, not forgetting the fine orchestra. The whole reveals great care in selection and preparation.

Chief honours go to Rose Rowbotham and Leonard Pease. Miss Rowbotham, an established favourite (in private life the wife of Mr. J. C. Blooman, a member of the executive committee) has filled no rôle better than that of the lovely Margot. Her songs give full range to her charming voice, and the part to her stage capabilities. Mr. Pease's fine voice is also heard to advantage, speaking or singing. His duet with Margot, "The Desert Song," is excellent, and so are his singing of the popular "Riff Song," and, with the men, "Let Love Go." Miss Rowbotham's is a really fine performance.

The partnership of Fred Munnion and Doris Rowland as the main mirth providers is a great success. Fred runs riot through a part well fitted to his non-stop capacity for laughs; and Miss Rowland sustains the merriment with rare gusto. Their dancing, too, with the girls, is clever. Audrey Parrett's dancing combines grace with understanding, and she is not afraid to use her voice. Douglas Catt contributes a well-played part, as do J. Lindsay Scott, and Alex Ogston, Gilbert Torry, and John Phillips. All the other players give valued assistance.

The dancing girls deserve a special word of praise. They are: Mary Barneveld, Mollie Elyth, Ida Clarke, Marjorie Ellis, Emily Everett, Lillian Hamilton, Ethnie Holbrooke, Jessie Hutton, Sybilla Ledwich, Margaret Martin, Betty Pearce, and Pauline Williams.

The ladies' chorus and the soldiers, whose combined singing is well-balanced, are: Frances Baker, Dorothy Bocking, Emily Everett, Hilda Fewell, Lillian Gravenor, Peggy Green, Ivy Harris, Enid Hey, Joan Howard, Joan Merriton, Mary Phillips, Margaret Robson, Lillian Smyth-Tyrrell, Josephine Wells; John Barnard, Guy Bevington, Leslie Bonner, Cyril Bradbury, Ernest Bryan, Douglas Catt, Stanley Hunt, Thomas Malcolm, Guy Newcombe, Ronald Newton, John Phillips, Basil Pipler, Alec Torry, and Arthur Ward. Native attendants: George Baker, Sidney Gregory, and Michael Taunton. Altogether there are eighty performers.

The orchestra, under the direction of Mr. Arthur Davies, A.R.C.M., share in the honours to a considerable extent. The members are:—Violins, Mr. W. H. Bateman (leader), Mr. C. B. Oliver, Mr. J. H. Duncan, Miss B. Duncan, Mr. V. F. Waldau, Miss J. Ruddy; 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. Dann and Mr. J. Thomas; horn, Mr. V. F. Waller; trombone, Mr. A. R. Dickerson; percussion, Mr. Chas. St. Claire; piano, Mr. L. Hey, who is deputising for Mr. A. R. Barneveld. Unfortunately Mr. Barneveld, who has rendered great help to the Society as pianist, met with an accident on Monday evening an hour or two before the opening performance. He was cycling from work to his home in Springfield Park Road, when he came into collision with another vehicle. He was thrown and sustained a dislocated collar-bone. Mr. Hey stepped into the breach.

The production and dances are under the direction of Miss Madge Macklin, who, as in previous productions, is to be warmly congratulated.

The Deputy-Mayor, Cr. S. C. Taylor, is president of the Society; Mr. C. L. Bocking, chairman of the executive committee; and Mr. A. H. Hutton, hon. sec. Major F. W. M. Powley is prompter; Mr. W. J. Turner, call boy; Messrs. H. H. Evans and W. H. Hirst are property masters; and Messrs. P. H. Russell and R. H. Fish and Claire Arnold, perruquiers. Since the Society's formation in 1920, over £700 has been distributed to various local charities.