

"THE TOREADOR" AT CHELMSFORD.

PRODUCTION BY THE AMATEUR OPERATIC SOCIETY.

The Chelmsford Amateur Operatic Society are this week presenting the musical comedy, "The Toreador," at the Regent Theatre. Commencing on Monday there will be altogether six evening performances, and a matinee to-morrow (Saturday) afternoon. This is the Society's seventh production during its career, which commenced in 1920. The first four were confined to Gilbert and Sullivan Operas. In 1925 the members produced "Miss Hook of Holland," and last year a delightful musical comedy in "The Country Girl" was staged. A play of a similar character, with, however, the setting of the Riviera and a town in Spain, was decided upon for this season, and once more the Society may be congratulated not only on sustaining its reputation as a party of talented players, but in giving pleasure to local playgoers. Moreover the Society's work has a benevolent side. Already the sum of £460 has been distributed to various local charities as the result of past performances. In addition, a reserve fund has been built up, and in the event of the Society being disbanded, this reserve would be devoted to charitable objects.

ABOUT THE PLAY.

The scene of "The Toreador" is placed at Biarritz where Carajolo, the famous Toreador, is to marry Mrs. Amelia Hoppings, a rich English widow. He has formerly had a flirtation with Teresa, a Spanish beauty, who is on her way to persuade him to take command of a Carlist rising, but Carajolo intends to cross to Spain with his bride before Teresa's arrival. He is annoyed by the presence of Pettifer, also an aspirant for the hand of Mrs. Hoppings. Pettifer, a dealer in wild animals, has advertised for a man-eating tiger.

They all meet in Susan's flower shop and thither also come Dora Selby and Mrs.

Hoppings's niece, Nancy Staunton, who has recently been saved from an hotel fire in Dresden by an unknown stranger with whom she has fallen in love. Dora is to meet Augustus Trill, the son of her guardian, but imagining that he has designs on her money she induces Nancy to pose as her husband. While the latter is thus disguised, the unknown rescuer arrives in the person of Sir Archibald Slackitt, followed by Gus. Then appears on the scene Sammy Gigg, a "tiger," as a groom is sometimes colloquially called. Teresa makes mischief between Carajolo and the widow, so the wedding is cancelled. The Toreador refusing to accompany Teresa to Spain, she induces Sammy to impersonate him.

The second act introduces the audience to the Spanish town of Villaya, where the Governor and populace are waiting to welcome Carajolo. Sammy

is delighted with his reception, but is horrified at the idea of fighting bulls in the arena and also of leading the revolution. Arrayed in the resplendent dress of a matador, he is waiting with the courage of despair for his contest in the bull-ring, when Carajolo arrives and his troubles are at an end. In the meantime Dora and Nancy, as Mr. and Mrs. Robinson, arrive at Villaya with Archie and Gus, who eventually discover Nancy's identity, and settle matters to their own satisfaction. Mrs. Hoppings is content to accept Pettifer in place of the faithless Toreador, who consoles himself with Teresa, and thus all ends happily.

THE CHARACTERS.

The characters are sustained as follows:—
Carajolo (a Toreador) B. J. Myall
Sammy Gigg (a "tiger") A. J. Walker
Sir Archibald Slackitt (Lieut. Welsh Guards) L. Hayward
Augustus Trill (of the British Consulate of Villaya) J. C. Blooman
Pettifer (a dealer in wild animals) C. L. Bocking
Governor of Villaya J. Nokes
Rinaldo (a Carlist) V. C. Spurgeon
Moreno (Carajolo's friend) H. E. White
Bandmaster H. Tomalin
Mr. Probit (a solicitor) B. E. Howes
Commissionaire A. M. Waller
Mrs. Malton Hoppings (a rich widow) P. Green

Dora Selby (a ward in Chancery) M. F. Spalding
Nancy Staunton (friend of Dora) B. Baker
Susan (proprietress of the Magasin des Fleurs, Grand Hotel, Biarritz) D. B. Bocking
Cora Bellamy (principal bridesmaid) O. Catt
Dona Teresa C. G. Marks
La Belle Bolero L. Hobart
Ethel Marshall O. E. Podley

Ladies of the Chorus: E. Bowhill, K. Bowhill, R. O. Cannon, U. M. Cannon, V. Cannon, A. E. Chisnell, D. Davis, N. Doole, R. Gannon, G. Hagger, D. L. Mann, E. Marshall, E. S. Myall, M. Norrington, F. M. Phillips, D. G. Reed, L. M. Redgwell, D. Stannard, M. Turner, K. Young.

Gentlemen of the Chorus: G. Barlow, E. Bailey, P. Bearman, J. Bundoek, R. Catt, J. Cowan, H. C. Daek, C. Firman, F. C. Gozzett, A. J. Hobart, J. W. Hawkes, F. Hiner, J. L. Phillips, J. M. Phillips, A. W. Ward, H. G. Willis.

Stage Band: C. E. O. Jones, E. Joyce, L. Orrin, P. C. Pluck, V. Tucker.

Act I.: Interior of Susan's flower shop. Biarritz. Act II.: Market-square, Villaya.

The orchestra is composed of the following: First violins, Mr. Matland de Lacy, leader, Mr. O. B. Oliver, Mr. G. Ryder; second violins, Mr. V. Waldan, Mr. S. H. Clark; viola, Mrs. C. Price Smith; violoncello, Mr. Castagnato; double bass, Mr. W. L. Barclay; flute, Mr. G. Morley; oboe, Mr. A. V. W. Beeton; clarinets, Mr. F. Wright, Mr. B. Perkins; bassoon, Mr. E. Newcombe; cornets, Mr. S. Bianchi, Mr. Mason; trombones, Mr. T. Appleton, Mr. F. Appleton; horn, Mr. R. Spencer; drums, Mr. A. McCormack; piano, Mr. Lawrence Hey.

IMPRESSIONS OF THE PERFORMANCE.

The play is under the direction of Miss Madge Mackin, who is once again acting as producer and stage manager, with Mr. C. Kennett Dryden as musical director. "The Toreador" makes a great appeal by reason of the brilliance of the costumes worn by the players, especially in the second act, which is set in a Spanish town. The music is pleasing, particularly the choruses, and the vein of humour running through the piece captivates the audience from start to finish.

For the most part the principals are members of the Society who have already shown their abilities in previous productions. There was one notable exception, however, this being by accident and not by design. Mr. E. T. Parfitt had been cast for the part of Sammy Gigg, a "tiger"—which it may here be explained denotes a man servant who accompanied a dog cart in the days before motor cars were in vogue, and not the wild beast of the jungle. Owing to unforeseen circumstances this character was played by Mr. A. J. Walker, of the Midland Bank Operatic Society. That Mr. Walker was perfectly at home with the part was obvious to the audience on the opening night, and considering that he only had one rehearsal with the remainder of the cast he is playing the role remarkably well. The part of Sammy Gigg, who comes on to the stage as a manservant and ends up by impersonating a Toreador, demands a fund of

from the point of view of comic opera. In these respects Mr. Walker adequately "fills the bill," and is a distinct favourite with the audience. The part of Carajolo, a Toreador, is entrusted to Mr. B. J. Myall, whose dignity and aplomb are only equalled by the felicity of his amorous scenes with the rich widow and his Spanish lover, Teresa. He scores a distinct hit with the "Toreador's" song, and altogether does the part full justice. Mr. Leonard Hayward is happily cast in the part of Sir Archibald Slackitt, the Guardsman with an Oxford manner, not to mention a monocle! His musical number are very popular, especially "Everybody's awfully good to me," and the duet "The East and the West," which he shares with Gigg, is a feature of the play. Mr. J. C. Blooman, who makes his initial appearance in a principal part, gives a pleasing interpretation of Augustus Trill, and there are indications of his ability to sustain an even more pretentious role on some future occasion. As Pettifer, the dealer in wild animals, Mr. Cyril Bocking enhances his reputation as a clever amateur actor. His stage presence is excellent, and he sings and dances as if he did nothing else in his life. Mr. J. Nokes capably portrays the fussy, self-important little governor of Villaya, and Mr. V. C. Spurgeon as a Carlist is villainous enough in appearance and manner to satisfy the most convinced anarchist.

Cordial applause greets the appearance on the stage of Miss Peggy Green, who has many previous successes to her credit. As a rich widow who hopes to "hook" the Spanish grandee but eventually consoles herself with Pettifer she radiates exactly the atmosphere that the part demands, and is always on good terms with her audience. Indeed one feels that a Chelmsford production without Miss Green would be incomplete. Another lady who adds to her laurels as the result of appearing in "The Toreador" is Mrs. A. J. Hobart. The part might have been written for her, so daintily does she impersonate La Belle Bolero. Her charming voice is heard to advantage in the song during the second act, "My Toreador," which is unquestionably one of the most attractive numbers in the play. Mrs. W. R. Catt, as Cora Bellamy, the chief bridesmaid, is the leader of a galaxy of feminine charm and beauty whose pretty dresses and graceful dancing are quite a feature of the play. She has a duet with Pettifer, "Captivating Cora," and a song with the bridesmaids, "Keep off the grass," that are both obviously favourites with the audience. The part of Dora Selby is capably handled by Miss M. F. Spalding, who was so successful as Madame Sophie in "The Country Girl" last year. She and her friend Nancy Staunton (Miss B. Baker) have quite a lot to do, and they add considerably to the humour of the play, particularly when Nancy—most unwillingly, be it said—agrees to impersonate Dora's husband. The situations which arise out of this escapade are delightfully presented and merit the hearty applause accorded. The song by Nancy, "The language of flowers," with its accompanying actions, is very well done. Mrs. Cool Bocking scores a success in her impersonation of the proprietress of the flower shop, and does not fail to give Sammy, an old flame of hers, the "rough side of her tongue" when she finds him yielding to the seductive charms of Dona Teresa. The latter character is taken by Miss C. G. Marks, a clever actress, who has a good deal to do in the course of the play and does it with a manifest appreciation of how a lady of Spain should comport herself.

The chorus work is excellent. This department has always been a prominent feature of the Society's production, and the reputation hitherto gained is upheld. Possibly "The Toreador" has not so many popular choruses—in the sense that they are not so familiar to the average playgoer—as some other of the Society's productions. But there are plenty of tuneful incidental numbers, and the chorus do them justice. The grand chorus and march toward the end of the play, "Here they come in glittering glory," is particularly well performed.

Mr. F. W. M. Powley acts as hon. prompter, Mr. E. G. Brown as hon. call boy, and Mr. W. J. Beeton as hon. property master. Mr. Lawrence Hey is hon. accompanist and chorus master, and Mr. B. E. Howes is hon. secretary of the Society.



In the quartette during the first act.—Left to right: Archie (Mr. L. Hayward); Nancy (Miss D. Baker); Dora (Miss M. F. Spalding); Gus (Mr. J. C. Blooman).



OF THE PRINCIPALS.—Left to right: Pettifer (Mr. C. L. Bocking); Carajolo (Mr. B. J. Myall); Mrs. Hoppings (Miss Peggy Green); Dona Teresa (Miss C. G. Marks).