

# 'THE DESERT SONG' AT CHELMSFORD

## FINE PERFORMANCE BY AMATEUR SOCIETY

A transfusion of young blood has given Chelmsford Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society a new lease of life after the catalepsy of the war years, and their production of "The Desert Song" at the Regent Theatre this week is full of sparkle and vitality.

Several pre-war stalwarts are there, together with some talented newcomers, and they combine to present a show which merits a big measure of public support. At the opening performance on Monday the audience, although not so large as might have been desired, were enthusiastic in their reception.

One of the most pleasing features was the delightful performance of a newcomer, Dorothy Cox, in the part of Margot Bonvalet. She has talent, charm, and a good voice—qualities which combined to assure for her an outstanding triumph.

Leonard Pease, as the Red Shadow, repeated the success he scored when the Society presented "The Desert Song" 12 years ago. The humorous element was provided in full measure in the role of the society newspaper correspondent by Fred Munnion, another "veteran" of the Society, but as sprightly and volatile as ever. He received competent support from Odette Clarke as Susan. Audrey Parrett, as Azuri, the native girl, made a big contribution to the success of the show with her dancing, and Richard Wood was a dashing Captain Paul Fontaine.

Other leading parts were played with ability by Jan Frewer (as General Birabeau), Vera Stock (Clementina), Reginald Bowler, Jim Welham and Cecil Bocking (members of the Red Shadow's band), Douglas Catt (a Riff farmer) and Phyllis Rowe (his wife), Jim Welham again and Tom Harper (officers of the Foreign Legion), Jose Hadler (Edith), and Reg. Brown (Ali-Ben-Ali).

### GOOD CHORUS WORK

The singing varied in quality, and a little more gay abandon by the chorus in some of the numbers would have produced a more effective result. Reg. Brown was in particularly good voice. On the whole, however, the chorus work was excellent.

The band of dancing girls were graceful and accomplished, and their numbers showed the result of careful training and diligent application. They are: Cecily Harris, Kathleen Amery, Maisie Ainsworth, Eileen Ainsworth, Joyce Manfield, June Davies, Gwen Judge, Bobbie Cheeseman, June Gisby, Florence Marjoram, Jean Ringer and Cynthia Stone; with Beryl Hockley, Selina Richards, Betty Lomas and Nesta King as Azuri girls.

The ladies' chorus, providing a background of charm throughout, comprised Phyllis Rowe, Beryl Hockley, Selina Richards, Dorothy Alexander, Rene Seward, Betty Lomas, Nesta King, June Puxley, Margaret Baker, Amy Warren, Peggy Welham, Doris West and June Phillips. In the men's chorus are H. Heisterman, D. Catt, S. Collicott, T. Harper, R. Cornell, R. Burr, K. Fox, D. Watson, J. Clarke, M. Carter, J. Welham and E. D. Evans; with George Baker, Maurice Humphreys and R. H. Day as native attendants.

The company has the advantage of the support of an excellent orchestra, with Bert Sharpe as musical director. As during the Society's pre-war career, Madge Macklis was the producer, and her efficient, painstaking work was in no small measure responsible for the generally high standard of the production.