

"THE TOREADOR."

SUCCESSFUL PRESENTATION AT CHELMSFORD

AMATEURS' FINE WORK

All the irresistible charm and appeal of the old type of musical comedy is present in "The Toreador," which is being performed at the Regent Theatre, Chelmsford, this week by the Chelmsford Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society. It should be said at once that the play is a conspicuous success and a worthy successor to the other admirable works that have been presented by this enterprising Society. For its early productions Gilbert and Sullivan light operas were staged, but in the season 1924-25 a change was made, and musical comedy claimed the Society's attention. It speaks well for the versatility of the members that such well-known musical comedies as "Miss Hook of Holland," "A Country Girl," and "The Toreador" should have been staged in successive years with such all-round excellence. There is undoubtedly a wealth of talent associated with the Society; the more pretentious the undertaking the better it seems to be done.

"The Toreador" sets a difficult task for amateur artistes, but the way in which the Chelmsford Society have bridged those difficulties is deserving of the warmest commendation. The result is a thoroughly pleasing show. "The Toreador" has a somewhat intriguing story, but is full of sustained interest. There are two scenes—the interior of Susan's Flower Shop at Biarritz, and the Market Square, Villaya. The first act tells how Carajolo, the famous Toreador, is to marry Mrs. Amelia Hoppings, a rich English widow. He has, however, formerly had a flirtation with Teresa, a Spanish beauty, who is now 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' 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 Traill, 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 opens in 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. Dressed as 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.

The cast is as follows:—
 Carajolo (a Toreador) B. J. Myall
 Sammy Gigg (a Tiger) A. J. Walker
 Sir Archibald Slackitt (Lt. Welsh Guards) L. Hayward
 Augustus Traill (of the British Consulate of Villaya) J. C. Blooman
 Pettifer (a Dealer in Wild Animals) C. L. Bocking
 Governor of Villaya J. Nokas
 Rinaldo (a Carlist) V. C. Spurgeon
 Moreno (Carajolo's friend) H. E. White
 Bandmaster R. Tomalin
 Mr. Probitt (a Solicitor) B. E. Howes
 Commissaire A. M. Waller
 Mrs. Melton 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 Magazin des Fleurs, Grand Hotel, Biarritz) D. B. Bocking
 Cora Bellamy (principal bridesmaid) O. Catt
 Donna Teresa C. G. Marks
 La Belle Bolero L. Hobart
 Ethel Marshall O. E. Pedley

ABOUT THE PLAYERS.

Both as regards acting and singing the play affords striking opportunities. The vocal work is particularly fine, while the characterisation also sets a very high

standard. The players are well chosen for their respective parts, and all enter into the buoyant spirit of the play with zest. The ensembles are particularly effective, while the beautiful dresses add considerably to the colour and gaiety of the scene. There are some new names among the characters, which speaks for the virility of the Society, while others in the cast have taken part in every one of the Society's productions so far. To Mr. A. J. Walker, who undertook one of the most important parts (Sammy Gigg) at very short notice, is due a special word of congratulation. Mr. Walker appeared in the same rôle at Covent Garden as a member of the Midland Bank Amateur Dramatic and Operatic Society. In the Chelmsford production he is a valuable acquisition. His delightful bragging as impersonator of the Toreador, and then his quivering at the knees when faced with the prospect of going into the bull fighting arena are sources of endless fun. Miss Peggy Green, as the rich and fashionable Mrs. Milton Hoppings, is given plenty of scope for her charming vivacity. She is particularly good in the love scenes with the Toreador, and in subsequent diverting episodes with Mr. Pettifer, a part admirably taken by Mr. Cecil Bocking, whose clever dancing is deservedly applauded.

Mr. Bocking also sings very well, and is particularly pleasing in "My Zoo" and "When I Marry Amelia," the chorus participating in both items. He is also associated with Cora Bellamy, the principal bridesmaid (for which part Mrs. Catt is happily chosen) in the duet, "Capturing Cora." Two dainty young ladies, Miss B. Baker (Nancy Staunton) and Miss B. F. Spalding (as Dora Selby) do a good deal to do and sing, and they do it charmingly, and with a naturalness that makes them always welcome. Nancy masquerades for a time as Mr. Robinson, the husband of Dora, replete with plus fours and a swagger walk. Mr. Leonard Hayward fulfils the none-too-easy rôle of Sir Archibald Slackitt, and makes a marked success of it, while Mr. J. C. Blooman as Augustus Traill is much at home as a care-free, jolly individual. Dora, Nancy, Gus, and Archie dance together well, and Archie's song, "Everybody's awfully good to me," is a favourite item. Mr. B. J. Myall, as Carajolo, achieves as usual a high degree of success, and is excellent in "The Toreador's Song." Mrs. Bocking ideally fills the part of Susan, and Mrs. Hobart, as La Belle Bolero, gives a remarkably fine rendering of the song, "My Toreador." Miss Marks, as Donna Teresa, the Spanish sweetheart of the Toreador, infuses just the right spirit into her work, which she has carefully studied. The chorus work is a distinct feature of the show, which goes with a fine swing from beginning to end. The members of the chorus have been well trained, and there is careful attention to detail and a pleasant balance of tone.

Ladies of the chorus: E. Bowhill, K. Bowhill, R. C. 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, E. M. Phillips, D. G. Reed, L. M. Redgewell, D. Stannard, M. Turner, K. Young. — Gentlemen of the chorus: G. Barlow, E. Bailey, F. Bearman, F. Burdock, R. Catt, J. Cowan, H. C. Dack, C. Firman, F. C. Gozzett, A. J. Hobart, J. W. Hawkes, F. Hiner, J. L. Phillips, M. Phillips, A. W. Ward, H. G. Willis. — Stage band: C. E. O. Jones, E. Joyce, L. Orrin, F. C. Pluck, V. Tucker.

The Orchestra, whose work deserves very favourable comment, comprise: First violins, Mr. Matland and Lacy (leader), Mr. O. B. Oliver, Mr. G. Ryder, second violins, Mr. V. Waldau; Mr. S. H. Clark; viola, Mrs. C. Price Smith; violoncello, Mr. Castagnolo; double bass, Mr. W. L. Barclay; flute, Mr. G. Morley; oboe, Mr. A. V. W. Beeton; clarionets, Mr. E. 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.

The Society was exceedingly fortunate in again having the services of Miss Madge Macklin as producer and stage manager. Miss Macklin's wide experience and knowledge of stagecraft proved invaluable, and she was untiring in her efforts to get the best out of the artistes. The excellence of the performances was a splendid tribute to her work. Mr. C. Kennet Dryden, the musical director, brought the orchestra up to a fine pitch of excellence. Indeed, the orchestral work was one of the features of the show. Mr. Lawrence Hey has rendered invaluable help as hon. accompanist and chorus master.

Sir Henry Curtis-Bennett, K.C., is the president of the Society, Mr. P. Butchard chairman of the executive committee, Mr. A. Blythe hon. treasurer, and Mr. B. E. Howes hon. secretary.

Other helpers are: Hon. prompter, Mr. F. W. M. Powley; hon. property master, Mr. W. J. Beeton; hon. call boy, Mr. E. G. Brown.

The last performances take place to-night at 7.45, and to-morrow at 2.45 (matinée) and 7.45.



Photo: Spalding.

Carajolo and Mrs. Malton Hoppings, with the bridesmaids. Left to right (standing): Miss D. Stannard, Miss Peggy Green (as Mrs. Malton Hoppings), Mr. B. J. Myall (as Carajolo), Miss M. Turner. Seated: Miss D. G. Reed, Mrs. R. Catt, Miss R. C. Cannon, and Miss E. Bowhill.

"THE TORREADOR." — Large audiences have enjoyed this production by the Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society at the Regent Theatre, reported and illustrated on Page Two. Last evening there was another good house, and for the final performance to-morrow the bookings are heavy. The net proceeds will, as usual, be devoted to local charities, including the Hospital. In addition to her work as producer, Miss Madge Macklin has arranged and taught all the dances, which are very effective.



Photo: Spalding.
Mr. J. C. Blooman (Augustus Traill), Miss B. Baker, and Miss M. F. Spalding (Dora Selby).



Photo: Spalding.
Mr. Leonard Hayward (Sir Archibald Slackitt) offers a cigar to Miss B. Baker (Nancy Staunton).