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BOUQUET FOR A PRODUCER.

STAGE DIFFICULTIES ALMOST OVERCOME IN "ROSE MARIE."

EAST SURREY AMATEURS IN AN ENJOYABLE ENTERTAINMENT.

A thoroughly enjoyable entertainment sums up the East Surrey Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society's production of *Rose Marie* which opened at the Market Hall, Redhill, on Tuesday night. Its good points far outnumbered its weaknesses and, perhaps, the first bouquet that should be proffered is one to Mrs. Elsie Rendell, the producer. In a succession of amateur shows at the Market Hall one has not struck a production where the acknowledged difficulties of the small stage were less noticeable than they were in *Rose Marie* on Tuesday. Indeed the only scene where one was conscious that the difficulty had not been overcome was in the Totem dance, and that was no fault of Mrs. Rendell's or of the dancers.

Mrs. Rendell had done her work with a painstaking thoroughness, and only one small detail in the production calls for anything in the nature of adverse comment. A lowering of the curtain to denote a lapse of time between scenes three and four of Act II would have saved a little bewilderment on the part of some members of the audience, who wondered what on earth *Rose Marie* and her brother were doing looking for a mountain sunrise in what had only a second or two previously been a cellar of darkest gloom. No doubt that one small defect will have been remedied for the remaining performances tonight and tomorrow afternoon and evening.

Now to the play itself. It is unusual in a musical play to find the comedy team walking away with principal honours, yet Don Fraser as Hardboiled Herman and Joan Windsor-Spice as Lady Jane did it very thoroughly on the opening night. That was not due to any defection on the part of Cyril Stanway or Vera Holdsworth, who took the leading roles with their customary ability and thoroughness, but to the very construction of the play itself.

Not a Strong Plot.

The plot of *Rose Marie* is generally reckoned to be a strong one as musical comedy plots go, and on paper it reads very well, but at least one listener on Tuesday was a heretic. That story which reads so well in print lost much when it was transferred to the stage. One found it dragging rather obviously in parts and lacking in that action which is necessary to establish sympathetic contact with the audience, other than "fans" and those interested merely in Friml's tuneful music.

Small wonder then that the comedy element leapt to the fore for most of the action is expended here. Mr Fraser and Miss Windsor-Spice were a grand pair, holding the stage and carrying their part of the show through with the utmost verve. They left no loopholes for criticism. Alone or together or in trio with Tomlin Osborne, who was a hefty, impressive Sergeant of the Mounties, they imparted action to every line. Their scenes at the totem pole and in the Quebec novelty shop were examples of comedy done to perfection, and in the latter scene they shared the honours with Mr O, who declined to be outdone in the matter of enthusiasm. That Mr Osborne also gave us very good singing goes without saying. His song of the Mounties was one of the best things of the evening, vocally.

One has heard Mr Stanway in better voice than he was on Tuesday, but nevertheless he imparted a great deal of charm to his solos and his duets with Miss Houldsworth, whose voice seemed a little stronger than usual, though without any loss of customary sweetness. Mr Stanway made the most of the histrionic opportunities of the part of Jim Kenyon, and found a sympathetic partner in Miss Houldsworth, whose Rose Marie was charmingly portrayed. There was a delightful freshness and easiness about her love scenes. The haunting Indian Love Call was beautifully sung.

Three Clever Studies

Three very clever character studies were given by W. D. Malcolmson, Daphne Gealer and Frederick Rose. Mr Malcolmson's Blackeagle was a gem. The drunken half-breed was portrayed to perfection – not as a roistering hiccupping drunkard, but a drink-sodden churl with a strong undercurrent of viciousness. Miss Gealer made the most of her part of Wanda, his wife. Her dancing, of course, was excellent. It was the work of an artist. So was her acting. Every little detail of the half-breed woman's character was brought out, but without ostentation. Mr Rose's Emile was done with the same distinction. The nervous energy of the scheming fur trapper anxious to make a rich match for his sister was positively real.

Ambrose Skelton's Hawley was one of conflicting emotions. Mr Skelton seemed undecided whether Hawley should be out-and-out bad or just half-and-half. The result often was a compromise that failed to carry conviction. Joan Trevarthen imparted just the right degree of cattiness to the part of Ethel Brander, Hawley's lady friend. George Hawes was heard but not seen in the role of a hotel caretaker since his only appearance was in a darkened cellar. Nevertheless his threats of beatings and other unpleasantness were very effectively put over.

A word of praise should go to the scene in Act II which the programme described as an *episode dramatique*. In plain English it was a dramatic scene involving eight of the characters, and it was a wonderful piece of team work on the part of the eight – Lady Jane, Hawley, Emile, Wanda, Herman, Kenyon, Rose Marie and Ethel Brander.

Chorus And Orchestra

Mr Cyril Jenkins, the hon. Musical director, is to be congratulated on achieving the right balance between his orchestra and the forces the other side of the footlights. The orchestra never gave the slightest cause for anxiety either as to balance or unanimity, and what slight disagreements occurred in the matter of intonation were very slight indeed and could be safely put down to the inevitable first night uncertainty.

The chorus work also reflected credit on Mr. Jenkins. The men's chorus, although not large numerically, got its music over comfortably without forcing the tone. The ladies were in the majority and might easily have over-ridden the males or have caused a coarsening of the tone - but they didn't, and presumably this was due again to Mr. Jenkins' sound views on the question of balance.

Members of the chorus were:-**Ladies:** P. Aylwin, A. Bamford-Smith, J. Bath, A. Bonny, P. Bonny, E. Bourne, K. Cook, M. Cornwall-Walker, P. Crickmay, W. Fuller, D. Funnell, M. Guthrie, B. Holdsworth, J. Holdsworth, L. Jeffree, G. E. Malcomson, M. Morgan, J. Nayler, K. Orr, H. Ramsey, M. Ramsey, B. Read, N. Reynolds, J. Robinson, T. Scurfield, K. Skelton, J. Stanway and M. Stevens. **Gentlemen:** N. Bourne, G. Dewar, G. Hawes, T. Holdsworth, B. Jephson, I. Mason, W. Ramsey, G. Thrift, R. Tremayne and E. H. West.

The orchestra comprised :-1st violins: Miss Vera Kantrovitch (leader), Mrs. Bashford, Mrs. Roberts, Mrs. Childerstone; 2nd violins, Miss L. Church Berett (leader), Miss Perry; violas, Miss E. Gritton, Mrs. Martin; 'cello, Mr. J. E. T. Martin; bass, Mr. W. Bashford; flute, Mr. E. C. Woolgar; clarinet, Mr. H. T. Wyatt; oboe, Mr. E. H. Baxter; timpani, Gerald Batty; harp, Miss H. E. Mathew; piano, Mr. W. Castle.

Behind the Scenes

Credit must also be given to those workers behind the scenes without whom the efforts of those on the stage would be greatly retarded - Mr. Albert Mulder, hard-working stage manager, and his assistant, Mr. Christopher Broad; Mr. Castle, who has accompanied the rehearsals; Mr. S. I. Myers, who has managed the publicity so efficiently and whose foresight presumably the audience owe those clever programme insets which enabled them to read the list of characters even at the darkest hour; Messrs. Tamplin and Makovski for the lighting effects; "Pauline" of Reigate for the display of gowns, etc., in the novelty shop scene; Messrs. B. J. Simms and Co. Ltd. for the costumes and Messrs. Cape of Chiswick, who were responsible for the scenery; Mrs. Shelton, prompter; Miss Brockwell, who had charge of the programme selling corps, Mr. Geoffrey Goodman, O.C. of the lers; and last, but by no means least, Mrs Malcomson, the hon. secretary, and committee, for so much useful spadework.