

Another Brilliantly Successful Festival

Forecast

FOR FESTIVAL QUEEN



Miss Mary Connolly, Stage Director and Wardrobe Mistress of the Waterford International Festival of Light Opera Committee, receiving a selection of "Revlon" cosmetics, value 20 guineas, on behalf of the committee, from Mr. P. Delaney, M.P.S.I. Johnstown, for presentation to the selected Festival Queen, to be chosen during the Festival dance at the Olympia Ballroom.

Seats Still Available

A number of seats are still available for several shows. "The Gypsy Baron," which will be presented by the Lurgan Operatic Society on September 9; "Pink Champagne," by the Ennis Musical Society on September 13, and "South Pacific," by the Idle and Thackley A.O. & D.S., on September 15, are now fully booked out.

Intending patrons are strongly advised to book for the shows of their choice, as it now seems certain that the entire Festival will be booked out within the next few days.

A highlight of the "fringe" attractions which are run in conjunction with the Festival, will be the Grand Carnival Dance in the Olympia Ballroom on Wednesday, 12th September. Maurice Mulcahy and his Orchestra have been engaged for this event, but a special feature will be a guest appearance of the Royal Showband from 12 to 1 o'clock. The Showband have very kindly agreed to guest at this function, at considerable difficulty to themselves. They have had to cancel several engagements, including a number of cross-Channel appearances, and the Festival Committee are deeply grateful for the Showband's co-operation in supporting the Festival.

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Booking for the 19 nights' performances during the Fourth International Festival of Light Opera has been so heavy that it seems a safe forecast that the house will once more be sold out. Although there are still some seats for some shows, demand is increasing daily and the staff at the Festival Booking Office on The Mall are under heavy pressure. A feature of the booking this year has been the vastly increased demand from sources outside the country. Even from as far away as the U.S.A. have come requests for reservations, and the Festival now seems to be well on its way to attaining its objective of becoming one of the country's greatest tourist attractions in the autumn.

The acceptance by the British and American Ambassadors of invitations to attend the opening performance is another indication of the growing prestige and importance of this unique event. The Waterford project is the only competitive Light Opera Festival in the world, and the efforts of the organisers to add something new each year ensures a freshness of appeal, which should guarantee its continued success.

There will be, in a sense, two openings this year. To-night (Thursday), the Waterford Grand Opera Society present a commemorative performance of "Maritana." Because this is not part of the competitive portion of the Festival, the actual official opening will not take place until the following night, when the Minister for Transport and Power, Mr. Erskine Childers, will officiate. However, to signalise the occasion, His Worship the Mayor and Deputy T. Lynch will speak to the "Maritana" audience on Wallace—his life and works—before the curtain goes up.

OFF-BEAT MUSICAL.

There could hardly have been a more appropriate production with which to open the Festival than "The Heart's A-Wonder." It's off-beat, it's Irish, and it is hoped to have one of the co-authors present. The Society—the Mullingar Choral Society—need no recommendation. They have been associated with so many successes, that there can be no doubt of their ability or their versatility, and this first-night audience can be assured of a grand night's entertainment. This will be Mullingar's first visit to the Festival, and they are taking the honour of opening the proceedings very seriously indeed. Behind the scenes, they have first-class and talented mentors, and this could be a show to remember, in spite of its seeming limitations in the vocal aspect.

From the home of the International Eisteddfod come Saturday's performers. These magnificent singers from North Wales have chosen the ever-popular "Arcadians" for their production, and this is a show of everlasting appeal when it is done well. Again, Llangollen (pronounced "Clangotlen") are newcomers to the Festival, but they could hardly fail to be above-average, considering their environment. There is every confidence they will become every bit as popular as their predecessors from North Wales—the talented Rhos Aelwyd group, who are this year giving us "Carousel" for the final performance. The latter had everything against them when they produced "The Gondoliers" last year. Thunderstorms and disruption of the lighting, a near-panic in the balcony because of

a creaking board, and a restless audience. Yet, many regular attendants consider that they did more than enough to become the first holders of the Swift Shield, for the best choral performance, and that in spite of the fact that the winners, Clydach, really sang magnificently in the "Gypsy Baron."

Clydach are also coming back this year, with a really new show, as far as Waterford audiences are concerned. They will play "Victoria and Her Hussar," which will be produced for the first time on the Theatre Royal stage. This show lacks the opportunities for choral distinction that Clydach's previous efforts have offered and the stress will be more on individual performance. But they will have a really magnificent soprano in Anita Marvina, who looks like being a future star of the operatic world. Returning with the Society will be that brilliant, young conductor, Olive John, who has won the affection of Festival audiences in the previous two years.

FIRST FROM DUBLIN.

It is surprising that there has not been much interest expressed in the Festival by the Dublin light opera groups. A couple of years back, there was a mention that the famous Rathmines and Rathgar Society might be coming, but this fell through. And, of course, there have been a couple of abortive arrangements to bring the Dublin Grand Opera Society here to perform "Maritana" during the Festival. But this year, there will be representation from the Capital. They are St. Gabriel's, who present the Gilbert and Sullivan work, "Yeomen of the Guard." St. Gabriel's are attached to the Mount Argus Youth Club and are, of course, still young enough to be enthusiastic. They are a comparatively new society, but for all that, have plenty of talent and are excellently organised. They have been rehearsing extremely hard for the last few months and are very conscious that the first representatives from Dublin must make a big impression. They play on Tuesday next.

On the previous evening, there will be a repeat performance of "Maritana," because of the fact that one of the competing societies was forced to withdraw due to circumstances beyond their control. Then, on Wednesday night, is the Celebrity Concert, this year featuring that vastly popular tenor, Kenneth McDonald, as well as soprano, Lucille Graeme, and baritone, Jeffrey and Waterford's own inimitable Frank Ryan, who seems to be improving with every year that passes. Of course, there will again be a rendering by that fabulous Festival orchestra, who achieve the impossible in carrying through the whole arduous programme. This year, however, something new has been added, and there will be a complete contrast supplied by the appearance of the Royal Showband. Waterford's superb contribution to the "beat" generation and recognised as one of the finest showbands in the world. Winners of the Carl Allen Award, they have been a huge success where ever they have played, and they will certainly live up to the "celebrity" in Celebrity Concert.

PINK CHAMPAGNE.

The Ennis Franciscans came to Waterford last year with their

pretty little piece "The Gypsy Princess" and were underestimated by everyone. They scored a huge success, picked up a share of the trophies and are coming back this year with the more difficult "Pink Champagne." Festival audiences have long memories and that's why next Thursday's house was one of the first to be "booked out." It is gratifying to see an Irish Society capturing some of the glamour which generally attaches to overseas visitors, but Ennis proved last year that "The West's Awake" and have made themselves firm favourites.

On Friday, there will be a new society in a show new to Waterford audiences. From Bedford comes the Sharnbrook and North Bedfordshire Society with the not too well-known "Lisbon Story." This has a modern theme and there are some powerful scenes especially in the last act, when, as bombs crash down outside, there is a heart-filling rendition of "Les Marseillaise." Those who remember the Tauber film of the story and the catchy "Pedro the Fisherman" theme will recall how enjoyable a show this is and how rewarding it could be for a good society. Sharnbrook's reputation has come before them and they are one of the most talented societies in the English Midlands. The Festival has been extremely lucky in their English entrants. Idle and Thackley and Leeds have kept the flag of their country flying very high and Sharnbrook are expected by some knowledgeable observers to do even better than those two highly talented groups. If so, "Lisbon Story" could be the highlight of the Festival.

All-Ireland tickets were scarce last week-end, but tickets for "South Pacific" are even less available around Waterford. It's no secret that the house could have been booked twice over for this performance and demands for accommodation are still pouring in. This is Idle and Thackley's third appearance on this stage and, on each occasion, they have scored a resounding success. This is a complete change from last year's presentation of "The Student Prince" and it is good to see back in the cast, the irrepressible Dave Leslie, who scored such a success in "Brigadoon."

Gendros Catholic A.O.S. are an unique group, because they were formed specially to enter the Festival. Last year, they produced the "Desert Song" and few in the audience realised that, for most of the cast, it was their first time on a theatre stage. They will be back on Sunday week with more experience and confidence and a more appealing vehicle in "The Vagabond King." It will be interesting to see how their experience last year has benefitted them.

Space forbids a review of the shows in the second week of the Festival, but this will be remedied in the next edition.

Apart from the operas, there is again a full programme of fringe attractions, but the most appealing are towards the end of the period, when the highly-popular Barbecue (September 21st in the Military Barracks) and the Donkey Derby (September 23rd on Tramore Racecourse) take place. But there will be an unprecedented demand for