

From the Archives: Holy Cross, Greenford, Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society

TWO THOUSAND PEOPLE WENT TO CHURCH OPERA

Holy Cross Society's Ambitious War-Time Production

(From the front page of the Middlesex County Times and Gazette)

Another ambitious war-time effort to give the people of Greenford sheer good entertainment has been staged by Holy Cross Opera Society.

Clergy and congregation alike of Holy Cross Church, Greenford, are to be congratulated on their production of "H.M.S. Pinafore," which they presented for one week in Coston School hall. The idea of further cementing the family spirit between the church and its parishioners by such an enterprise is a commendable one and judging by the packed audiences one can justly say the people of Holy Cross are indeed a happy and united crowd.

I was one of the 2000 people who saw the production and thoroughly enjoyed every minute of it. The cast, which was well chosen ably captured the breezy, rollicking atmosphere of the opera. There was not a dull moment from beginning to end and the whole show ran smoothly and was of a high standard.

No effort or expense had been spared in order to give a really professional finish and one applauds the wisdom of producer Michael Peck in this respect.

His own performance as Sir Joseph Porter, the pompous First Lord of the Admiralty, was superbly done. Indeed one could have cheerfully watched him for hours strutting across the stage with the polished mannerisms and haughty bearing of this Gilbertian character. One could see that his acting was inspiring to the rest of the company.

Donald Harris (the rector) shed his clerical collar for the role of Ralph Rackstraw, the simple sailor who loved the captain's daughter.

His acting was well-balanced, stage presence good and his voice of pleasing tenor qualities was an admirable foil for the delicate soprano of Betty Parnaby as Josephine. The latter gave a charming portrayal of the captain's daughter.

GOOD TEAM WORK

I was much impressed, too, with the acting and singing of Maurice Watson as the captain. Towards the end of the opera he showed his versatility in a brief spell of comedy acting.

Theodore Mathieson was outstanding for his portrayal of Dick Deadeye, the malicious hunchback. His performance was an excellent piece of character acting. Albert Blount really threw himself whole-heartedly into the part of Bill Bobstay, the boatswain's mate. He was completely at ease, his bearing confident and natural. As Little Buttercup, May Inglis, sang refreshingly. She has quite an effective dramatic quality in her voice. As in all operas, much of the success, depends on strong backing from the chorus. And here, both choruses ably supported the principals. The team work was good.

Undoubtedly the best piece of singing came from Father Peck, Betty Parnaby and Maurice Watson with their interpretation of the song, "Never Mind the Why and Wherefore." The blending of their voices, their actions and lively tempo were so good that it was not to be wondered that the audience kept clamouring for them to repeat the song as many as four and five times.

The rest of the cast were Brian Melton as Tom Tucker; Albert Butterfield as Bob Beckett; Elsie Prodham as Hebe; Ronald Asplin, Laurence Golding, Alfred Sampson and Frank Walsh as marines. Members of the chorus were Iris Baker, Jean Butterfield, Rosemary Butterfield, Grace Cowan, Sylvia Critten, Irene Evans, Majorie Giles, Hazel Howes, Betty Hayes, Heather Kite, Daphne Miller, Pat Richmond, Harold Arlott, Leonard Arlott, Jim Benge, George Brooker, Jim Dackham, Derek Inglis, Harry Tolchard, Harry Thomas and Hugh Wotherspoon.

Joan Harding and Elsie Kite were at the pianos with Raymond Barnes and Tom Davison on percussion and under the conductorship of Leonard Blagg. The special lighting was arranged by Tom Woodward and Jimmy Bosworth.

It is anticipated that as a result of this effort over £125 will be given to the organ fund.

A collection taken at each performance also resulted in a sum of £50 for the Red Cross Prisoners of War Fund.

E.S.

Photographs from various productions



Betty Parnaby Father Peck May Inglis Albert Blount Elsie Prodhm



