

THE STAGE

HIS MAJESTY'S THEATRE.

"OH! OH! DELPHINE."

ROYAL COMIC OPERA SEASON.

"MAYTIME."

Heralded as a "play with music" and "something different," one looked for something away from the beaten tracks of the ordinary type of musical comedy in "Maytime," consequently there was a crowded audience at His Majesty's Theatre on Saturday night to watch its interpretation by the J. C. Williamson Royal Comic Opera Company. "Maytime" conspicuously gets out of the rut, Rida Johnson Young (author) and Sigmund Romberg (composer) having collaborated to such good effect that music and ballets and costuming, instead of being merely incidental, merge into the action of the play with charming unity. There are four distinct periods in "Maytime," and the spirit of romance permeates each, from the crinoline mincing days of 1840 to the tight skirts and bonhomie of 1917. The old, old story is started in the first act by Otille Van Zandt (niece of Colonel Van Zandt) and Dick Wayne, an apprentice. The affair is nipped in the bud for class reasons, and fifteen years elapse before the next scene. Otille, now married to her dissolute cousin, Claude Van Zandt, becomes reckless, and visiting Madame Delphine's Night Club is saved from scandal by the interposition of her former sweetheart, who has returned from South Africa a millionaire, and announces his engagement to Otille's friend. The third episode (1885) sees Otille a white-haired woman having to sell up her home. Arrives on the scene old Dick Wayne, who, still constant to his first love, rescues her from poverty and buys up the property as it stands. In the fourth and last phase the grandchildren of the old lovers take up the broken thread of their forbears' romance, a smart dressmaking establishment run by Otille's granddaughter (Mlle. Brown) and financed by Dick Wayne's grandson being the locale for cementing their love. Miss Gladys Moncrieff as the heroine of each period skilfully suggests the varying parts, from the dainty maiden of 16 in the first era to the old woman of later years, and then back again to the vivacious girl of the present day. Her singing is always delightful, and although there is only one solo for her, "Selling Gowns," she has several bewitching duets with Mr. Reginald Roberts, "In Our Little Home, Sweet Home," "Will You Remember" and "The Road to Paradise." Mr. Roberts is well placed as Dick Wayne, giving a good study of the contrasting periods, and in the last act he has a breezy little number with the ballet, "Only One Girl For Me." An outstanding portraiture is given by Mr. Leslie Holland in the role of the debonnaire Matthew Van Zandt, who through all the ages never loses sight of a woman's charms, and who at 94 is about to take unto himself another wife. Never once do his gallantry and courtly grace fail him, and his sentimental theories are charged with a drollery and whimsicality that are a joy to beholders. "Jump, Jim Crow," the risqué—for that period—polka theme, gives him a chance for a gay breakaway. Miss Florence Young only has a few moments on the stage in the role of Lizzie, Matthew's third wife, but she makes those moments fly quickly with her broad comedy work and ultra-bizarre costuming. Mr. Phil Smith, too, only makes a brief entrance as the auctioneer, but every word and gesture is an enlivener. Mr. Percy Claridge does convincing work as the unscrupulous Claude Van Zandt, and Mr. Gordon Ramsay discloses a fine voice in his solo, "O Come, My Love." Miss Addie Lennard conveys excellently the delicate graces of the crinoline spinster who blushed at the mention of legs, and Miss Olive Godwin has all her natural charm to fit her as Madame Delphine, of the Night Club. Miss Maie Baird and Mr. Robert McKinnon are the principal figures in an alluring set of ballets.

A distinct innovation is promised on Thursday night in the new musical play "Oh! Oh! Delphine." It comes with the most flattering credentials. In London especially it enjoyed a prolonged run at the Shaftesbury Theatre under the direction of that doyen of musical comedy producers Robert Courtneidge. The play will be presented here with all the lavishness and attention to detail that is customary with a J. C. Williamson production. The plot is of a particularly racy and sparkling nature. The story is from the French of Messrs. George Berr and Marcel Guillemaud, founded on the play of "La Villa Primrose," a very celebrated Palais Royale comedy. The book is by C. M. S. McLennan, and the music is chiefly from the pen of that past-master of tuneful lyrics Ivan Caryll. As to the story, Mlle. Delphine arrives by way of Paris. She has her connubial home in the French capital, and a most attractive young husband who is by way of being an artist. The juvenile party is something of a

modern Don Juan, and so gathers round him a group of charming young ladies, whose beauty in the aggregate is to supply him with the perfect form of "Venus Rising From the Sea." Delphine divorces him. Victor Jolibeau is exchanged for Alphonse Bouchette, divorced from the piquante Simone. The illusory ideal makes way for the positive prosaic. Then the irony of fate ordains that they shall meet, and absence has spread the cloak of forgetfulness over the past. Worse still, wealthy Uncle Noel appears, and the divorced couple have to superficially resume their matrimonial relationship, while Bouchette, for reasons quite obvious to those skilled in the unravelling of musical comedy plots, gives out that he is the husband of a sylph-like lady who carries about expensive Persian rugs on her shoulders, and whose knowledge of the English language consists of a liberal use of the word "carpets." The opera is of the supersprightly order, with a repletion of beautiful ballets and ensembles.



MISS GLADYS MONCRIEFF as a bride in the title role of "Katinka."

"KATINKA."

That queen of comic operas, "Katinka," will be presented on Monday next and three following nights. Writes a leading Sydney critic of this melodious piece: "In the course of their managerial career, J. C. Williamson, Ltd., have given the public many sumptuous and exquisite scenes, but for sheer picturesqueness they have done nothing so scenically beautiful as the three acts of 'Katinka.' 'The Merry Widow' and 'Belle of New York' enjoyed phenomenal successes, but I think 'Katinka' is going to perform to a more triumphant tune. In every way it is stronger in that valuable dramatic element—contrast. The characterisation is more firmly marked, and the individuality of each artist is given more play. Everyone stands out clear and each character remains a fixed entity in the mind." In the play there are two delightfully comic characters, Knopf (Mr. Leslie Holland) and Thaddeus Hopper (Mr. Phil Smith); a good singing and acting part for Mr. Reginald Roberts, and a fine old man study for John Forde and an attractive singing role for Miss Olive Godwin. Miss Florence Young is most happily placed as the bewitching Mrs. Hopper, and as the beautiful Katinka Miss Gladys Moncrieff has especially fine singing and acting opportunities. Add a number of beautiful novel dances by Miss Maie Baird and Mr. Robert McKinnon, and sparkling ballets, a more than ordinary lavish scenic display, a quantity of ravishingly chic costumes, and a performance of a deal more than the ordinary merit may be anticipated. The scenery, costumes and other artistic impedimenta necessary to the play are all new. The production of "Katinka" should prove of extraordinary interest to local playgoers, in view of the fact that it is a production of the opera, complete in every detail, lock, stock and barrel, straight from His Majesty's Theatre, Sydney.

"THE PINK LADY."

Last, but by no means least, of the musical riches to be dispensed by the Royal Comic Opera Company this season is promised—"The Pink Lady," most tuneful and entirely desirable of musical plays. The last time this roseate damsel was seen here she was impersonated by Miss Minnie Love. This time Miss Gladys Moncrieff is to be the "pink lady." Most of the other old favourites are playing the same parts as heretofore, notably Mr. Phil Smith as Philippe Dondidier, Mr. Reginald Roberts (Lucien), Mr. Leslie Holland (Bebe), Miss Olive Godwin (Angele), Miss Addie Lennard (Madame Dondidier) and Miss Florence Young (La Comtesse). "The Pink Lady" will be played for the last two nights.

The many friends of Mr. John Fuller, sen., will regret to learn that he has had a relapse in Christchurch while making his return journey to Auckland.



MISS FLORENCE YOUNG in the harem scene in "Katinka," the brilliant musical play, which follows "Oh! Oh! Delphine."