

ART AND MUSIC IN JOHANNESBURG

Fine Show at the Empire

BRILLIANT ARTISTRY OF MOLLY PICON

THE spirit of Old Johannesburg sat next to me at the Empire during the week when I went to the new variety show, headed by the brilliant Molly Picon. "Ah!" he sighed. "This is like the old days once more!—the days when Johannesburg was a city."

He meant that once again Johannesburg had the opportunity of seeing a first-rate vaudeville show of the kind that could compare with some of the best in the past.

Chief of the artists of the evening was Molly Picon. How shall one adequately record the vivid impressions her performance leaves? A small woman, looking surprisingly young, girlish, and even shy, she is soon transformed into a symbol of all humanity—into the thousand voices of a city, into the varied voices of her people. She becomes in turn the highstrung lady with "noives," the "woiking goil" scurrying through her "woiking" day to a round of pleasure as strenuous in the evenings; the immigrant Jewess coming to her husband in America, learning the disillusion of the Land of Liberty, toiling on New York's East Side that her husband may become a lawyer, climbing to her social ambition as the wife of a successful lawyer, to end as the old grandmother, sage at last with the knowledge of Koheleth, the Preacher: "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity."

She makes no change of costume, does not alter her make-up. She uses an elementary, but a great art; she changes her personality with each sketch she does. Not her whole personality, because behind everything there is still Molly Picon, the interpreter of life, the Jewess taught by the heritage of her people the subtle

nuances of the shadows of life—that wistful pathos, laughter so close to tears, which Jewish humour seems above all else to possess.

And how the audience received her! The theatre was a clamour of clapping, one big echo of "Encore!" The artiste showed her appreciation of the warm reception in what, as she said, is the only manner an artist really can show appreciation—in giving yet more of her work.

Incidentally, she was accompanied on the piano by a Jewish musician of note, Mr. A. Ellstein, who composed the musical score for each of her numbers.

Molly Picon was supported by a company of good variety artists who were all warmly received. There was some slick cross-talk by Alda Campbell and Vic. Wise, "A weak guy and his weakness;" and an excellent act by Ted Ray and his girl friend. Laurie, Joy and Graham gave a good dancing number, and Dai Jones demonstrated the possession of a superb tenor which could rise from softness to sustained notes ringing through the hall. Ada and Eddie Daros had a good acrobatic number and Rose Perfect sang many favourites in beautiful voice. Tex McLeod put across some good work a la the late Will Rogers, and Medvedeff's Balaika Band, supported by those superb dancers, Wolkowsky and Esme Grand, gave a delightful musical performance. Last, but by no means least, all praise to Jimmy Hunter and Dan Young who did excellently as Comperes.

Full credit is due to African Consolidated Theatres for giving the South African public the opportunity of seeing this first-class overseas show.

E.B.

REPERTORY PLAYERS IN "THE SACRED FLAME"

SOMERSET MAUGHAM'S sombre play, "The Sacred Flame," was presented by the Johannesburg Repertory Players at the New Library Theatre a week ago. The cast comprised some of the Repertory Players' best performers, and the production was in the capable hands of Miss Muriel Alexander.

Yet the performance, good as it undoubtedly was, could have been better. A play with little movement, relying for its effect upon psychological nakedness, it demands for its full effect greater definition, deeper contrasts, and, at times, a swifter tempo. The play tells a tale of fierce loves and hatreds centering upon an invalid of the war. In the small circle of his family a tragic drama plays itself out—his nurse falls in love with him, his wife with his brother. Through their regard for him, neither may let him know. His mother, realising what is happening, and understanding all angles of the tragic situation, is responsible for its resolution: she helps her son to the death he craves.

Carol Levitas, as the mother, gave by far the best performance, defined and restrained throughout. Minna Schmeier was cast to advantage as Nurse Wayland, and Emanuel Nathan gave a polished performance as Dr. Harvester. Henry Ginsberg was competent in his portrayal of Major Liconda, and Geoff. Allen was good as Colin Tabret, the invalid's brother. Kenneth Kisch, in the role of the invalid, did his best, but his performance lacked the depth and the contrast, lacked the overwhelming feeling of tragedy, which this character demands. As his wife, Blodwen Lloyd was inclined sometimes to a facility not consonant with the character, and sometimes to melodramatisation. She did well in an extremely difficult part, but less of polished elocution and more of deep emotional acting are needed for this character to have full effect.

E.B.

DELIGHTFUL S.A.B.C. CO.

THE S.A.B.C. Symphony cert on the 2nd inst. at the Guild was indeed a treat for lovers. A varied programme presented, the feature of the evening Lorenzo Danza at the piano, the orchestra as a fine, but background, Signor Danza gave a quise rendering of Chopin'scerto in F Minor, notably the ghetto Movement, which he with delicacy and care. The audience was delighted with the playing was obvious from the longed applause accorded him.

Elgar's Overture "Cockaigne" the opening number, and Mr. Shulman conducted in a spirited manner, bringing it finally to a climax.

The Dance Rhapsody, No. 1, Delius, Mr. Shulman handled in a strained style, the strings in the position bringing out the melody which is the charm of the work. The final item was a Symphonic Poem, "Don Juan," impulsive moods and sudden vulsions were well conceived. Mr. Shulman's usual appreciation contrast and his admirable presentation.

Each successive concert adds to the fine reputation which both Mr. Shulman and his orchestra deserve to enjoy.

MINSTREL SHOW AT THE

THE novelty of a nigger minstrel programme filled the Johannesburg Jewish Guild Hall on the evening last, when the Music Section of the Guild presented "Merry Minstrels." The show, quite fittingly have been called "Merry Hebrew Minstrels," since rendered Harlem wisecracks, Darkie songs with a distinct braic accent. It was also very of a one-man show; the prod Morry M. Blake, was so far the level of the rest of the pany that he dominated the show. The rest of the players were poor.

The programme itself—a formidable array of 27 numbers—was the usual minstrel variety, songs, patter and dancing. There were one or two good numbers, "Dese Bones Gwine Rise Again" and "Moonlight Bay" (in which Miller showed how a fine voice be used to advantage), "Mass De Cold, Cold Ground" (in which showed Marcelle Ginsberg as the one of the men with a good voice and some excellent tap dancing Doreen Lehman, assisted by JJ Stein. Generally, however, the were not good, and most of the were old. The singing was unimpressive and most of the cast lacked presence.

Perhaps such criticism should be passed on amateurs, but the have established such a high reputation in this type of entertainment that your critic must, in all justice maintain a corresponding standard of criticism. All praise, however, Morry M. Blake, who did his best put on a good show.



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