

The Art of Molly Picon

MAGNIFICENT YIDDISH CONCERT AT STANDARD THEATRE

MOLLY PICON is known in New York as "the Darling of the Yiddish Theatre." The audience which packed the Standard in Johannesburg yesterday afternoon and evening to see her in an all Jewish show could give you very good reasons for this affectionate title. She cleared herself to everyone of them. After the show I lingered among the crowd trooping out of the theatre and mattering about their impressions, and, for all the wide variety of opinions, I found none but was in her favour.

This is a great achievement — an achievement so great that it is not readily realised. It needs pondering. Any competent artist can appeal to one or another section of an audience and enjoy some measure of popularity; but to appeal to each and every one in the audience—this is a triumph which falls only to the very great.

In her art, Molly Picon is among the very great. Small, petite, girl-like, sometimes boyish too, she has the ability to parade before an audience the varied lights and shadows of a world—old men and women, working folk, the idle rich, the driven poor—she brings these and countless others onto the stage with a change of expression, stance, tone and posture. She brings forward comedy and pathos, impudence and dignity. She recreates a nation's aspirations and triumphs and defeats.

In this Yiddish concert she gave the highest and the best that was in her. She began with an item "Yiddish is a Shprach"—to show, she explained, that Yiddish was capable as varied and as full expression as any other language. It seemed, from her performance, that it could surpass other languages. There were so many subtle nuances in these Jewish items which could not be conveyed in any other language but Yiddish. And Molly Picon's noble Jewish spirit was evident in this concert more than it could be in others of a more general nature. Perhaps the outstanding example of this was "The Wandering Melody," a character song portraying an underlying theme of Jewish life which, though it changed in form with the generations and the lands, remains thematically the same. The old Chassidic melody "Ai Ai Ai," handed down from father to son, is sung in Russian by the children, receives a jazz interpretation by the grand-children in America, and in the movement of the artist's arms, in her voice, in her whole bearing you perceive that the melody was noblest in its original and uncorrupted Jewish form.

She did some impressive characterisations in costume—"Jankele," which was her first role on the Yiddish stage, and which was written for her by her husband Jacob Kalisch; the pitiful "Ich Beinkt Aheim" of a young Chassid in a strange city, who as he walks moodily along the street, calls to mind all he has left behind him at home; the brilliant comedies, "Four periods in the life of a woman"—the first as child, the second as student, the third as bride and the fourth, a year after marriage. . . . These, and many more.

She was supported on the stage by her husband, Mr. Jacob Kalisch, who contributed many enjoyable anecdotes



Miss Molly Picon.

to the evening's programme—typical Yiddish stories gathered from the four corners of the world in the course of extensive travels. Mr. Kalisch, on his first appearance on a Johannesburg stage, told the gathering how happy he and his wife were to be able to give the Jewish public of Johannesburg a Jewish concert. It was not, he said, a question of the financial success or otherwise of the venture. It was simply that wherever they went they deeply desired to be in touch with their own Jewish people, to come together and feel at home with them, and to give them Yiddish fare which, in these gloomy times for so much of Jewry, might show them the happier spirit of Jewish life—a spirit which would endure for ever, past all the Pharaohs and Hitlers in the world.

Molly Picon was accompanied at the piano by Mr. Abe Ellstein, the young Jewish composer who has set all her songs to music. Mr. Ellstein also delighted the audience with a solo performance of a couple of his own compositions.

The artists received a great ovation at the close of the evening, and Miss Picon was the recipient of some beautiful floral tributes.

E.B.

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Youth Mass Meeting Next Tuesday

ADDRESS ON "UNION OR DISRUPTION"

A Youth Mass Meeting under the auspices of the S.A. Zionist Youth Council will be held in the Coronation Hall (cor. Plein and Claim Streets), Johannesburg, on Tuesday, April 6, at 8.15 p.m. Mr. S. M. Kuper (chairman of the S.A. Zionist Youth Council), will preside, and the other speakers will be Mr. B. Gering and Dr. B. Friedman. The subject will be "Union or Disruption," and, in view of its interest, a very large attendance is anticipated.

A FAREWELL MESSAGE FROM DR. SYNGALOWSKI

To the Editor of the "Zionist Record."

Sir,—Permit me, on leaving Johannesburg, to express through the medium of your valued newspaper my appreciation and thanks to all the old and new friends of Ort-Oze who assisted towards the success of my mission in your country.

With you, and the whole of South African Jewry, I hope that the worries of the past year will disappear together with the imported mania according to which anti-Semitism is the means of achieving economic prosperity and the moral progress of a country.

With best wishes,

I am,

Yours, etc.,

A. SYNGALOWSKI.

GRAND CONCERT ON SUNDAY NIGHT

Organised by the United Zionist Socialist Party

All preparations have now been completed for the grand concert which the United Zionist Socialist Party has organised for Sunday night (4th inst). The affair promises to be one of the most successful of the year. It will be held at the H.O.D. Hall, De Villiers Street, commencing at 8.45 p.m. An excellent programme has been arranged, to which a number of leading Johannesburg artists will contribute. Among them are Cantor Berele Chagy, Mr. Michael Doré (sometime conductor of the Colosseum Orchestra), Madame Olga Ryss, and Mr. Favish Zeigelbaum, who recently arrived here from Europe. Alter's Balalaika Orchestra, well-known to the Johannesburg Jewish public, will also appear. Tickets are obtainable from all members of the party, or from Mr. J. Silverman, 6 Becker Street, Yeoville. Phone Yeoville 813.

PLAZA THEATRE ATTRACTIONS

From Monday of next week the feature film at this theatre is "Mummy's Boys" starring Bert Wheeler and Robert Wolseley, the famous American comedians. Over the week-end the attraction is "King of Jazz," which has been re-issued. Included in the programme supporting "King of Jazz" there is a thrilling story of Rear-Admiral Byrd's second expedition to the Antarctic, entitled, "At the Bottom of the World," and the rest of the supporting programme is also well up to standard.

MR. D. KOENIG

Exhibition of His Work Next Week

Many readers will recall the article published in this journal a couple of weeks ago dealing with the work of Mr. D. Koenig, the Hungarian Jewish artist, who is now living in South Africa. They will be interested to learn that an exhibition of Mr. Koenig's work will take place next week in Johannesburg. The exhibition will be held at the residence of Mr. and Mrs. R. Feldman, "Ny-Hame," corner of Central and Fourth Avenues, Houghton.

The exhibition will commence on Saturday morning and will be open all that day and Sunday. Mr. Koenig will have a considerable amount of new work on view and this should prove of great interest to art lovers in the city. The artist has a fresh, clean style and his recent work particularly has fine vigorous treatment. His character studies will make a deep appeal to many and his landscapes, particularly his studies of trees, of which mention was made in these columns recently, should make a wide appeal.

"THAT GIRL FROM PARIS" AT THE COLOSSEUM.

The current attraction at this theatre is a sparkling musical production entitled "That Girl From Paris." Lily Pons, the singing star, has the leading role and with a good cast to support her, she makes the picture one of the most delightful "musicals" shown on a Johannesburg screen. The first half of the programme at the Colosseum this week is very entertaining.

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