

THE MIDDLESEX COUNTY TIMES

11th November, 1939

QUESTORS CARRY ON IN SPIE OF WAR

A Clever and Cheerful Revue

TOPICAL NUMBERS

To the Questors belongs the credit of opening the local amateur dramatic season, which they did by the production of a topical and original revue at their theatre at Mattock Hall, Ealing, on Saturday afternoon and evening. It was a gesture much appreciated by both audiences, which, although not quite so large as The Questors usually attract, showed all the accustomed enthusiasm. Indeed, sundry conversations between those who had taken part and those who had looked on were variations of the lines in the final number: "Thank you for having us: Thank you for coming."

The "book" of the revue was the joint effort of Messrs. William Dann, Alfred Emmet and Lionel Locke, with some additional numbers by Mr. Frank Cockburn. "Twopence Plain—Penny Coloured." Music was by Mr. Laurie Rivers. The production was in the capable hands of Mr. Alfred Emmet, and Mr. Gunter Heilbut designed the settings.

MACBETH INTERNATIONALISED

One of the most brilliant of the numbers was called "Macbeth—Revised." There were five versions of the famous supper scene at which Macbeth sees Banquo's ghost, and each had its own satiric humour. Perhaps the Moscow version deserved place of honour, and the Chicago gangster version came a very good second. The instructional commentary which continually held up the action of the English school version of the scene had a humour all its own, and the sophistication of the Mayfair and the amiable futility of the Chinese versions were not without humorous and spectacular appeal.

"Thoughts in the Black-out" was highly topical, and greatly amused the audiences, and satire had full swing in such scenes as "A Tip for the Post Office," "The Big Shot," and "A Day in the Life of a Sword Swallower."

"Twopence Plain—Penny Coloured," "A Russian Night," "The Vagabond Lover," "Land Army Girls," and "A Victorian Interlude," were other specially amusing divertissements.

Revue work has always been a strong string in the bow of this society, and their first war-time effort proved their pluck in carrying on and cheered up quite a number of people.

Mr. George Johnston was at the piano, Mr. Fred Robinson was principal stage manager, and Mrs. Mildred Emmet performed her usual task as wardrobe mistress. Many familiar names appeared more than once on the programme of players.

C.C.

"THE WEST MIDDLESEX

GAZETTE"

11th November, 1939

THE QUESTORS BRIGHTEN THE BLACK-OUT

TOPICAL TOUCH IN A REVUE PROGRAMME

The Questors 1939 Revue, book by William Dann, Alfred Emmet and Lionel Locke, additional numbers by Frank Cockburn, and music by Laurie Rivers; The Questors Theatre, Ealing; Saturday, November 4, 1939.

A REVUE has one main purpose only. It must be amusing, a lively, pert, cynical humour that must be first class to hide the general air of childishness, from which all revues have a tendency to suffer. It seems to me that a revue is good fare for people who have not the means to submit to or be entertained by a play. It is good fare for that mythical creature, for whom all revues, musical comedies and bedroom comedies are said to exist, the tired business man.

All this may appear that I have a grouch against The Questors for producing a revue, and that I am suggesting that Saturday's audience, who braved the rain and blackout, consisted entirely of childish-minded people or tired business men. Indeed, I am not. I am filled with admiration that The Questors, whose six months programme was "torpedoed" the day Hitler went finally mad, should have buckled on their armour in such vein as to give us something of considerable entertainment value. I only wish that the majority of local amateur societies would have saved something of themselves from the wreckage of war, and not have allowed themselves to be submerged, apparently "for the duration."

I HAVE seen many revues. In my early days as a writer of the theatre in a small provincial town, revues were my entertainment two weeks out of three. This may be the reason why I have little liking for them. It is also my reason for affirming, with considerable pleasure, that The Questors' revue compared favourably with the tired business man's fare at which I have so often yawned.

There was a great deal of excellent humour in it, humour that was not elemental (vulgarity being lacking), but was more razor-edged, more satirical than that. This is the only fault I have. Some of this satire could have been leavened with some honest vulgarity, and would have been the better for it. Could it be that The

Questors are above vulgarity, that broad common touch that allies all the great humorists of literature, from Chaucer and Shakespeare of yesteryear to Charles Chaplin and George Robey of to-day? I would not like to think so.

The sketches were all good. Of the batch "A Day in the Life of a Sword Swallower" was the best. In this Mr. Lionel Locke performed famously in elocution, and Mr. William Dann did doughty deeds as a photograph. These two also satirised stage "strong men," and they took the leading parts in various "revised" versions of "Macbeth." In these we were vastly entertained by versions from, school, Mayfair, Moscow, China, and Chicago.

The idea behind "Twopence Plain—Penny Coloured" was good, but it failed in its satire, because the writer or writers of the sketch did not understand the fact that though news may be "coloured" by the penny newspapers, these newspapers dare not colour facts of a police court case. The newspaper that did that would soon be mulcted of heavy damages for gross libel. Satire, to be effective, must have a true background; it is no use being cynical about something that could never happen.

THERE were some good choral numbers, effective in their wit. I thought that the Land Army Girls and The Open Theatre were first rate, and Thoughts in the Black-out was a topical touch good to the ear.

Space forbids a notice of every one of the 22 numbers. One or two were poor compared with the others. I liked Mildred and Alfred Emmet's Victorian Interlude, Rosalie van der Gucht's Deux Morceaux, and Gwendolen Thomas's ballet dance. Disguised as M. Dupont Perrichon, Mr. William Dann gave the best individual turn of the revue, a gusty, light-hearted feature. I liked the singing of Mr. George Will, and the final chorus.

Mr. Alfred Emmet was the producer. Mr. Gunter Heilbut's stage settings were of the highest class, as were the lighting effects of Messrs. Mike Kelly and Fred Greenfield. Mr. Fred Robinson was the stage manager

PETER QUINCE.