

Women

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STRAWS IN THE WIND

Theater Opening Recalls Another, 73 Years Ago

By EILEEN JACKSON



Eileen Jackson

Seventy-three years ago today San Diego's population of 17,000 was in the midst of celebrating the four-day opening of the Fisher Opera House (later the Isis) on Fourth Avenue between B and C Streets, property which is now owned by Mr. and Mrs. Guilford H. Whitney. The Fisher Opera House opened with "Indigo" by Strauss, with a grand chorus of 40 on Jan. 11, 1892. The next night (73 years ago tonight) "The Gondoliers" was presented, and on Jan. 13 the Santa Fe ran a special excursion to the city from Los Angeles, Riverside, San Bernardino and Santa Ana to the opera house event featuring "Manon" (round-trip price, including admission to the theater, was \$5). On Jan. 14 "Dorothy" was presented. Finest seats for all opening events were \$1.50.

Mr. and Mrs. Whitney, like all proud San Diegans today, are looking forward to another January "opera house" opening—that of the new Civic Theater. Many guests at the theater

opening tonight are descendants of those who attended the historic Fisher Opera House opening events, including Mrs. Lionel Cumberland Ridout whose parents, Harry Smith Utley, former San Diego district attorney, and Mrs. Utley were at the Fisher opening. Mrs. Ridout has attended many theater openings here including those of the Savoy, 1911, the Spreckels, 1912, the Strand in the early 1900's, the Fox, 1929, and the Globe, 1935. Her daughter-in-law, Mrs. Lionel Utley Ridout, is president of the San Diego Opera Guild which is joining the San Diego Symphony Orchestra Association in staging tonight's gala opening.

Philip L. Gildred, whose own theater, the Fox, opened Nov. 3, 1929, and Mrs. Gildred will be at the theater opening tonight.

Mr. and Mrs. Thomas A. Clarkson will have as their guests at the theater opening and dinner tonight Mr. and Mrs. Edward C. Hall, Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Nairne and Dr. and Mrs. Frank Robinson.

Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton Marston will have Mr. and Mrs. George E. Bean, of Grand Rapids, Mich., Mrs. Hugh Dormody of Pebble Beach and Rear Adm. Charles Hartman, USN, ret., as their dinner guests tonight before the opening of the Civic Theater. Mr. Bean was formerly city manager of San Diego.

Another party will include Dr. and Mrs. Frederick Fehlmann, Dr. and Mrs. Ector Le Duc, Dr. and Mrs. Carl Hillenbrand and Capt. Robert Dimmette (MC), USN, and Mrs. Dimmette.

Mr. and Mrs. Edward S. Hope are joining Mr. and Mrs. Fred Rohr's party tonight. The Hopes and Mr. and Mrs. Frank Hope will have as guests in their box at the Charity Ball Feb. 6 Capt. William B. Wideman, USN, ret., and Mrs. Wideman and Mr. and Mrs. Fred D. Booth of Rancho Santa Fe.

Mr. and Mrs. David B. Richardson will join Mr. and Mrs. Sedgwick Williams Fraser, Dr. and Mrs. Robert Peirce Burns and Mr. and Mrs. Vernon Gaston at the opening tonight. The Richardsons will have Mrs. Richardson's twin sister, Mrs. Harris Bradbury Burrows of Chappaqua, N.Y., as their guest for two or three weeks. She will arrive Thursday. Several informal parties are being planned for her.

Today—birthdate of the theater—also is the birthdate of Mrs. Harvey P. Groesbeck and Jerome Pendleton, who will celebrate their anniversaries by attending the opening in different parties. Mr. and Mrs. Pendleton and their daughter, Christine, 16, will be the dinner guests at the Cuyamaca Club of Mr. and Mrs. Richard P. MacNulty, who will be accompanied by their daughter, Molly, 16. Mr. and Mrs. MacNulty and Mr. and Mrs. Pendleton will continue to the theater.

Mr. and Mrs. Richard Cromwell, Mr. and Mrs. Herman Gant, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Hanna and Mr. and Mrs. Lynn L. McLean also will dine at the Cuyamaca Club before attending the historic theater opening.

Mr. and Mrs. Harry Evans Callaway's guests tonight at the Premiere Dinner and theater will be Mr. and Mrs. Fred H. Baker, Mr. and Mrs. William Callaway and Dr. George Huff. The Callaways will be hosts in their box at the Charity Ball to Mr. and Mrs. Baker, Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Flood and Mr. and Mrs. Thomas C. Allan.

Col. and Mrs. Irving Salomon, who will be at the theater opening, will have as Charity Ball box guests Mr. and Mrs. Robert Raymond, Mr. and Mrs. Louis M. Wolfsheimer, and Mr. and Mrs. Henry M. Lepman.

Last Fine Points Checked Before Theater Premiere

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By BILL PARRY

Engineers played records into the new Civic Theater sound system and measured the "carry" to all parts of the shell with instruments.

Then live talent spoke from the stage and more sound detecting equipment made the pickup.

"We haven't found any problems yet," said John T. Webb, executive director of the Community Concourse.

Simultaneously, custodians continued to sweep the floors, carpenters made last minute changes and electricians continued to re-evaluate the lighting system to get rid of dark areas in the theater.

REHEARSAL STARTS

Then the artists arrived last night for a 2½-hour rehearsal.

They all were intent on tonight's curtain rise at 8:45 p.m., which will open a new era in San Diego culture.

Word also spread that the furniture for the lobby and lounges would not arrive on time. So occasional chairs and couches were rented.

"And we will keep going right up until curtain time," said Webb.

Then today, as performers continue to practice their entrances and exits on stage, 58 ushers will be briefed on seating arrangement.

William Denton, symphony manager, said several extra ushers were hired to assure smooth seating of patrons.

The ushers, mainly college students, will all wear bronze capes with gold collars.

SELL-OUT CROWD

Morley Golden and J. Dallas Clark will greet the first nighter audience.

A sell-out crowd will hear the San Diego Symphony Orchestra, featuring Metropolitan Opera stars Dorothy Kirsten and Brian Sullivan.

Some civic and music leaders will be introduced by Clark, including Nino Macceli, first conductor of the San Diego Symphony in 1926.

It will be the first of four events this week in the the-

ater. At 8 p.m. tomorrow, Kendall Clark and Vicki Cummings will star in "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?"

At 8:30 p.m. Friday the world famous D'Oyly Carte Opera Company's production of "HMS Pinafore," which spoofs England's former nautical aristocracy, will be presented.

FINAL PRODUCTION

The final production this week will be the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, directed by Zubin Mehta, starting at 7:30 p.m. Saturday.

Prior to tonight's concert many San Diegans will attend a dinner in the Community Concourse's Convention Hall.

Altogether it will be a big night in San Diego's cultural history.

A Thrilling Event, Opera Stars Say

Metropolitan Opera stars Dorothy Kirsten and Brian Sullivan arrived in San Diego last night and said they were thrilled at the prospect of singing in the opening production at the new Civic Theater.

A few minutes later, they began a two-hour rehearsal of tonight's program with the San Diego Symphony Orchestra.

Curtain time is 8:45 p.m. At the first pause in the duet from Puccini's "Madame Butterfly," members of the orchestra broke into applause, bass players thumped the sides of their instruments and Earl Bernard Murray, symphony conductor, shouted "Bravo."

SHEATH DRESS

Both artists came here from Los Angeles. Miss Kirsten wore a Navy blue sheath dress, matching high heel shoes and gold necklace and bracelet. Overhead lights gave a pinkish tinge to her champagne blonde hair.

Sullivan, a wavy haired tenor with the shoulders of a professional football player, wore a black business suit for the rehearsal. He loosened his necktie and took off his coat as the music got underway.

HERE BEFORE

Sullivan was here last fall to participate in dedication of the Community Concourse Convention Hall and was given a quick tour of the theater, which was still under construction.

"It was really a joy to walk in here tonight and see the big change that has taken place," Sullivan said. Later he told the orchestra members, "I am sure you are all as pleased and thrilled as we are to be part of this performance. Good luck to

you tomorrow night."

Miss Kirsten was equally pleased. "I am actually anxious to test the acoustics," she said a few moments before stepping onto the stage.

She thrilled a handful of stage hands, symphony and concourse officials in the audience with her high notes in Charpentier's "Depuis le Jour." She sang most of the selection with her eyes closed and her head tilted back.

Murray also praised the theater acoustics.

"We have been rehearsing for a week and the acoustics are wonderful," Murray told the two stars.