



LIGHTS GO UP—Capacity crowd of more than 3,000 awaits opening performance in city's new Civic Theater last night. Fourteen members of the San Diego News Photographers Association handled the camera and lights for this first-night photo.

Civic Theater Wins First Nighter Praise

By DAVE MCINTYRE

Evening Tribune Entertainment Editor

San Diego can be rightfully proud of itself today.

The city passed a significant milestone in its growth and development last night with the opening of the Civic Theater, the sparkler in the bright new downtown Concourse.

The occasion was celebrated in suitable splendor attended by an overflow crowd of well-wishers. A festive spirit was in the air, and to match the mood the entertainment for the night was superb.

Appreciation Shows

First nighters, a good share of whom had preceded the grand opening with a dinner at the Convention Auditorium, demonstrated their appreciation for the new theater in no uncertain terms the moment the first participant stepped on the stage.

He was Morley H. Golden, chairman of the Grand Openings committee and president of San Diegans, Inc., the organization which spearheaded plans to build the City Concourse.

Before he had spoken a word, Golden received a standing ovation.

"Your demonstration, as I see it," he commented later, "was an exhibition of pride in something we have accomplished. For all of us, it is knowing that in this community the effort was worthwhile."

Golden began his introduction

by saluting the audience as "neighbors."

"In calling you that I include those who have come from afar to be with us tonight and our good friends from across the border, for this was a neighborhood project. It is something to be shared by all," he said.

No Flaws in Sight

"This house so far has been an acoustical success," Golden added. "Tonight, with the first audience present, will be a test, but we have found no flaws for any of the performing arts as yet."

The concert which followed indicated that early appraisals had not been overly optimistic. The sound in the Civic Theater, in the first row of the orchestra or the top row of the balcony, proved to be as near perfection as man can make it.

J. Dallas Clark, chairman for the opening night, introduced many of the leaders responsible for the theater, including Guilford H. Whitney, president of the San Diego Facilities Corp., which will operate the Concourse as a nonprofit venture.

"The logistics in bringing this

From all points of view, last into being were tremendous," Clark said, "and Whitney and his advisory board were responsible for much of it."

Bean Wins Salute

Clark also saluted former City Manager George Bean, who took part in beginning phases for the Concourse, and former Mayor Charles Dail, one of its early boosters. Dail could not be present because of illness, but Bean, now Grand Rapids, Mich., city manager, was here for the theater's opening night.

Even the guest stars for the evening joined in the congratulatory mood.

"May I wish you many great nights in your new theater," said soprano Dorothy Kirsten after having contributed her share to a great opening night.

"And I'm proud to have been a part of this celebration," added tenor Brian Sullivan, whose thrilling voice had showed off the acoustics to best advantage.

Earl Bernard Murray, leader of the San Diego Symphony, let the music speak for him and the ensemble. And that was an eloquent statement of faith and a glowing promise for the future.

TRIBUNE'S STAFF COVERS STAGE EVENTS

From all points of view, last night's first performance in San Diego's new Civic Theater was a triumph befitting the magnificent building.

Other pictures and stories of the stately opening are on Pages A-3 and A-42.

Dave McIntyre's Front Row column is on Page A-12. Neil Morgan's highlights and side-lights are on A-17. Dorothy O'Toole's descriptions of the first nighters' dinner, the glamorous gowns of the women and the theater's stunning decorations are on A-42.