

Theater's Opening Prelude to Success

First Night for New Showplace Turns Out to Be Joyous Event

By DAVE McINTYRE

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J. Dallas Clark is a man who doesn't often make a mistake, but I'm happy to say he was in error last night.

Clark, a prime mover in San Diego Symphony Association affairs and chairman of last night's opening at the Civic Theater, said in his preamble: "Something always goes wrong on an opening night."



McINTYRE

Well, the odds were on his side to be sure. But we had one of those exceptions here last night. Not a thing went wrong. It was a delightful occasion from beginning to end, a night to remember as a fitting salute to a fine new theater.

And I expect, when some of us old duffers are gathered around the Grand Salon after the theater has been well broken in—say a decade or so hence—we'll hearken back on this first night and recall what a joyous event it was and what a good omen for the future it turned out to be.

There are times when you can be absolutely sure that this is the way things are going to turn out. Last night was one of them. There was something very noticeable in the air that made it so, an atmosphere of expectancy, in part, and the sort of enthusiastic humor that expressed itself in applause at the least provocation.

The opening night audience in the Civic Theater was not holding back in its hand tributes, that's for sure. Why, when Charles Schneider, a photographer, stood on the stage taking the official opening night photograph, even he won a hearty round of palm pounding. And there aren't many photographers who have shared THAT experience.

Generosity it was, of course, and most fittingly so. For the point we were all well aware of as we took our comfortable seats and gazed around at the spacious accommodations was that a number of people had done a great deal of work to make the facility and the occasion possible. And we were aware that we had been made a more cohesive and purposeful community because of their efforts. Who wouldn't applaud that?

Then there were the artistic contributions that needed no prodding to win audible approval. Naturally one expects from Dorothy Kirsten that she sing like an angel and look like a fairy princess. She did. And one knows that Brian Sullivan's voice can fill a hall and set it reverberating with delicious sound. It did. And one hopes that the San Diego Symphony will always show itself to best advantage, particularly on an occasion such as this. It most certainly did.

As a matter of fact, after pleasing us with the Berlioz overture and showing meticulous handling of accompaniment for the visiting vocalists, Earl Bernard Murray and ensemble really convinced us that they, too, were infected with the special spirit of the night.

Along about midway of the first movement of the Brahms Symphony No. 1, inspiration took over to add to what education and application had started. It wasn't just that the Symphony was playing better than ever before. That happens all the time. It was the emotion they were putting into that soaring composition. We felt as well as heard the Brahms last night.

Surroundings, of course, had much to do with it. To the San Diego Symphony Orchestra, the stage of the new Civic Theater appears to be what the shower stall is to your vocalizing.

And as I see it, we're in for some lathering good musical nights in times to come.