

Clarkson Music Theatre History

Compiled by Bill Cook

(Compiler extraordinaire)

60 YEARS AGO.....In 1949...

The Clarkson Community Choir presented Gilbert and Sullivan's Comic Opera IOLANTHE at the Community Hall for one week commencing Monday and running through Saturday October 3-8. The cast of 44 featured Edith Bradshaw as Queen of the Fairies and Eva Manley as Iolanthe. As usual, Frank B Houston was Producer, Director, Chief Cook and Bottle Washer. Thanks to the B-A Oil Company Clarkson Refinery who contributed to the programme.

50 YEARS AGO.....In 1959...

Having undergone a name change, the Christ Church Opera Group performed the MIKADO for the third time. Produced and Directed by Frank Houston, the show ran for the first two weekends of October in the church auditorium. The retrospective programme featured 'principal singers of all operas presented since 1945.' The Port Credit Weekly continued to print the programme and the local Scouts and Cubs served refreshments under John (Jack) Thomson's Chairmanship while June Cook left three screaming offspring with their father to make her debut.

40 YEARS AGO.....In 1969...

A dramatic change occurred when the group performed The MERRY WIDOW. It was the first 'non-Gilbert & Sullivan musical' since inception. While the programme boasts: "the 24th Annual Production of the Clarkson Opera Group," the archivist would be slow to point out:

- 1) there was no show in 1951 so this would be the 23rd production and
- 2) the name Clarkson Opera Group had only been in use for a short period.

Franz Lehár's magnum opus ran from October 22-25 in the Port Credit Secondary School Auditorium and featured the 29 piece Oakville Symphony Orchestra under the Direction of Kenneth R.R. Hollier.

30 YEARS AGO.....In 1979...

Clarkson Music Theatre presented Victor Herbert's SWEETHEARTS at the Cawthra Park Secondary School Auditorium for a two-weekend run. Based on a book by Harry B. Smith with lyrics by Robert B. Smith, the show was directed by John (not the Judge) Smith and featured Betty (middle name not important) Smith. There were others in the cast but they were not named Smith and, therefore, of little consequence to the archivist. An ongoing bane of the group's existence was the storage of sets and during this era they were located at <the former> Serson Recreation Centre. According to the programme, our next Production was Most Happy Fella (which we have not performed to this day!). In the Fall of 1979 CMT performed a concert featuring the classics of Rodgers and Hammerstein.

20 YEARS AGO.....In 1989

A very busy year for CMT starting in January with a cabaret-style musical revue called ADVENTURE THROUGH FANTASY. Directed by Maria Gordon (Moore), the small-

cast production debuted at the Mississauga Senior's Centre. The Official Opening of Meadowvale Theatre March 31-April 1 featured a few CMT members in an ensemble cast performing Die Fledermaus. ANYTHING GOES became our first Meadowvale Theatre production opening on May 19th for *three* weekends (a first). Artistically directed by Murray Ellis with musical direction from James Bickham, the 20 page programme featured no fewer than 32 ads from local businesses. Finally, in the Fall of 1989, we presented the Lionel Bart classic: OLIVER! for the second time this decade. Directed by Rex Buckle, with music direction from Ruth McDonald.

10 YEARS AGO.....In 1999...

We started off with our Second "Tribute to Broadway" concert which was performed in April at the Royal Bank Theatre in the Living Arts Centre, Mississauga. With composer, music director and award winning pianist Anthony Bastianon at the helm and renowned Baritone Bruce Kelly hosting, the group triumphed with selections from Showboat, Oliver and Les Miserables along with many other gems.

Closing out the millennium, in November CMT hit the boards with HELLO, DOLLY! under the artistic/musical supervision of Bob Ridell and Ruth McDonald respectively.