

# 'THE MERRY WIDOW' PROVES CAPTIVATING

Wins Instant Approval in American Debut at the New Amsterdam Theatre.

REPEATS FOREIGN SUCCESS

Miss Ethel Jackson Plays the Widow with Spirit — Famous Waltz Charms Large Audience.

**THE MERRY WIDOW**—A Viennese operetta in three acts. Music by Franz Lehár. Book by Victor Leon and Leo Stein. English lyrics by Adrian Ross. The New Amsterdam Theatre.

Popoff, Marsoviau Ambassador... R. E. Graham  
Nathalie, his wife... Lois Ewell  
Prince Danilo, Embassy Attache... Donald Brian  
Sonia, a young widow... Ethel Jackson  
Camille de Jolidon... William C. Weedon  
Marquis Cascada... Walter C. Wilson  
Raoul de St. Brioche... Charles Meakins  
Khadja... Harry Hyde  
Maltza, his wife... Margaret Dalrymple  
Nova Kovich of the Embassy... F. J. McCarthy  
Olga, his wife... Frances Cameron  
Nish, messenger of the Embassy... Fred Frear  
Praskovia... Blanche Rice  
Little Willie... Harry Meyers  
An Englishman... Ralph Whiting  
Head Waiter... Gerald Lane  
Orchestra Leader at Maxim's... Nicholas Szabo  
Zo-Zo... Frances Cameron  
Fi-Fi... Eva Bennett

It was nearly 10:30 o'clock last night when the strains of the celebrated "Merry Widow" waltz floated over the footlights of the New Amsterdam Theatre, but it was not necessary to wait until then to know that this operetta was to become as popular in America as it has been in Europe since it was produced in Vienna in January, 1905.

The theatre was packed and all the available standing room was taken. It was one of the most brilliant audiences which has attended a New York first night in recent years. For the fame of this "widow" had preceded her, and very many persons in the audience had seen her in Europe and wished to know if she had lost any of her gayety in crossing the ocean. It should be stated at once that she had not, nor any of her melody either, as the audience quickly realized. The applause was almost terrifying in its intensity at times, and there were as many shouts of "Bravo!" as at a performance of "Pagliacci" when Caruso sings.

Every provincial capital in Europe has seen this operetta, which has just been introduced to us in the English version produced in London by George Edwardes at Daly's Theatre last Summer. The English version is practically a translation of the original libretto, with perhaps a few of the suggestive lines and situations accepted in Munich or Vienna eliminated. It is the story of a Marsoviau widow's attraction for a Marsoviau Prince, and the scenes are laid in Paris, commencing demurely enough in the Marsoviau Embassy and ending in Maxim's, and the Maxim's on view at the New Amsterdam will disappoint nobody, because it is more exciting than the real Maxim's.

But it is on its music that "The Merry Widow" depends for its chief success, and which carries it into a class which compels one to remember "Fledermaus" and "La Grande Duchesse" to find anything to compare it with. There is the charming waltz, the "bal sirenen," which everybody has talked about and which everybody will whistle and sing for the next few months. And it will be played in all restaurants and at all balls as it is in Europe. Then there are the Maxim's song, the song of the Cavalier, "Villia," "A Dutiful Wife," and an amusing comic ditty called, "The Women." Everything was encored last evening and pretty nearly everything deserved to be. It is all very jolly and amusing and charming, and the greatest kind of a relief from the American musical comedy.

Mr. Savage has provided a magnificent scenic and sartorial environment for the piece. The gowns in the first act were smart, in the second picturesque, and in the third dazzling. In fact, the scene in Maxim's was almost too exhilarating in its color scheme and gayety. When Eva Bennett entered, kicked a waiter's tray out of his hand and proceeded to kick all sorts of imaginary objects in the air there was nobody present who was unhappy.

Ethel Jackson was assigned to the title rôle. It was natural that she should be nervous at a performance of so much importance, and it is certain that she will play the part very much better to-night. Lilly Elsie, who played Sonia in London, was a demure widow, and that Sonia never was. Miss Jackson plays along truer lines. She comprehends the verve and joy of the part, as well as its seductiveness. She makes the waltz the dramatic moment in the action, as it should be, but she was always "the Merry Widow."

Donald Brian as Prince Danilo perhaps made the success of the evening. He was a complete surprise to those who had seen him in other parts. Lois Ewell was a very blonde Nathalie, R. E. Graham was an amusing Popoff, and Fred Frear a capital Nish. Eva Bennett and her last-act dance have already been mentioned.

The orchestra, under the direction of Louis F. Gottschalk, played with spirit, and a harp in the score provided a surprise for musical comedy goers.

Altogether it is very likely that "The Merry Widow" will remain on Forty-second Street for a very long time, and if Mr. Savage is serious in his announced intention to open another theatre in New York with another company in the same place he must be considered a wise man.