

# "Florodora" Girls — Their Lives and Fates

## What Happened to the Original Sextet

By CHARLES COLLINS

THE LEGEND of the "Florodora" girls may have been dimmed by the passing of thirty-seven years; it may have been crowded into a dark corner of the theatrical archives by the more recent fame of the Ziegfeld girls, the Mack Sennett girls, and other glamorous breeds of nymphs on professional exhibition; but it was a great story in its time.

The year 1900, marking the turn of the century, found the "Florodora" girls as national heroines who gave a special flavor of romance to their era. The good-old-times brigade of today, the weathered citizens between 50 and 60 years of age, will prick up their ears and stand at attention at any mention of "Florodora" and its historic choristers.

This musical comedy, which was one of the richest box-office allurements of the American stage, recalls the frou-frou of prudent skirts, the occasional glimpse of reckless ankles, the slow and graceful walk-around of a sextet of singing girls in English garden costumes with six silk-hatted male auxiliaries, and a few words of an elaborate concerted number which swept the world:

*Tell me, pretty maiden, are  
There any more at home like you?  
—There are a few, kind sir,  
But simple girls and proper, too.*

*If I love you,  
Would it be a silly thing to do?  
For I must love some one—  
—Then why not me?  
For I must love some one truly  
And it might as well be you.*

These lines are only a brief part of the memorable double sextet in "Florodora"—the ones that are most easily remembered. The complete number, cleverly composed and ingeniously orchestrated, with intimations of modernism in its touches of syncopation, filled ten or twelve minutes of playing time. It was the soul of the show, and its tremendous popularity, both as a piece of music and as a stage spectacle, created the "Florodora" vogue.

This article is intended to satisfy curiosity about the original "Florodora" girls, whom hardly any one alive can name off hand, and their fates. There were hundreds of pseudo-originals, or choristers of later vintage, for changes in the sextet were frequent as the show ran through its 547 performances in the New York Casino, its years

silence and abject respect for the voice of authority. Among other things, "Florodora" holds the world's record for being mis-spelled in print.

The show came from London, where it was staged in the Lyric theater on Nov. 11, 1899, and had 455 performances. Its New York premiere took place on Nov. 10, 1900, with Cyril Scott, Edna Wallace Hopper (De Wolf Hopper's third wife), R. E. Graham, Willie Edouin, May Edouin, and Guelma L. Baker in the principal rôles. It came to Chicago, at the Illinois theater, on May 11, 1902, and ran until July 19 with Mr. Scott, Miss Hopper, and Mr. Graham as survivors of the New York cast, with Helen Redmond in the important role



Edna Wallace Hopper, third wife of De Wolf Hopper, was a member of the original New York cast.

of Dolores, but without one of the original girls in the sextet. It remained on tour for eight years. It was revived handsomely at the Century theater, New York, on April 5, 1920, and was a favorite item in the repertoires of lyric stock companies for three decades. Touring English companies have carried it over the world-encircling expanse of the British empire.

Its composer, Leslie Stuart, was one of the best writers of light opera scores of the Edwardian era in England, the Teddy Roosevelt era in the United States. He was an organist in Roman Catholic churches in England until his gift for song



(Acme photo.)

Girls of the original "Florodora" sextet. From left to right: Marie Wilson, Daisy Green, Vaughn Texsmith, Agnes Wayburn, Marjorie Relyea, and Margaret Walker. Their show opened in New York on Nov. 10, 1900, and soon "Tell me, pretty maiden . . ." was being sung almost everywhere.



Another principal of the New York cast was Cyril Scott. He and Miss Hopper came to Chicago with the company.

writing became recognized. Among his other successful musical plays were "The Crystal Slipper," "The School Girl," "The Belle of Mayfair," "Havana," and "The Slim Princess." He died in 1928.

The librettist of "Florodora" was Owen Hall, also author of "The Gayety Girls," "The Geisha," "Jetsam," "The Track of a Storm," "Eureka," and "Dan Leno." The names of both collaborators were pseudonyms. Leslie Stuart in private life was Thomas Augustine Barrett, Owen Hall was known to his family as James Davis.

The musical comedies of the



R. E. Graham, who also played in "Florodora" both in New York and Chicago.



Guelma L. Baker had a leading role in the original New York company.

*My star will be shining, love,  
When you're in the moonlight calm,  
So be waiting for me by the eastern sea  
In the shade of the shell-ring palm.*

The "Florodora" girls, carefully selected for figure, face, and voice, became the belles of Broadway's night life and were much sought after by Wall street brokers, millionaires whose wives did not understand them, and dashing young men about town. Occupants of stage boxes tossed bouquets to them almost every night; gifts of jewelry from mysterious admirers were frequent; "mash notes" flooded their dressing rooms. Five of the original six, and many of their uncounted successors, made wealthy marriages.

Here are the names of the original six:

Marie Wilson, Agnes Wayburn, Marjorie Relyea, Vaughn Texsmith, Daisy Green, and Margaret Walker. The picture of the group which illustrates this page is a rare item. Finding it required several months of clew-chasing and research.



Leslie Stuart, who wrote the music for "Florodora." The librettist was Owen Hall. Stuart in private life was Thomas Augustine Barrett. Hall was James Davis.



Elizabeth Ann (Nan) Patterson, a "Florodora" girl, who was tried three times for the sensational murder of "Cesar" Young, New York bookmaker.

## Six National Heroines of 1900

Wayburn left the "Florodora" sextet early in its career. She later married a rich citizen of Johannesburg, British South Africa.

Marjorie Relyea was regarded as the prettiest girl in the group. When she joined the company for rehearsals she was secretly married to Richard Davis Holmes, a nephew of Andrew Carnegie. On the day of the tryout opening in New Haven, Conn., four days before the New York premiere, Mr. Holmes died of a heart attack in the Hoffman house, New York. He left Miss Relyea a comfortable fortune and jewels valued at \$100,000. Thus Miss Relyea was regarded as the richest girl in the sextet until Miss Wilson made her Wall street cleanup. Several years later she married Albert Stokes, an affluent stockbroker.

Vaughn Texsmith was the southern girl of the sorority. Her right name was Smith, but, because she came from Texas, she invented the stage name of Texsmith. She married Isaac J. Hall, a silk manufacturer of Paterson, N. J., believed to have been a multimillionaire.

Daisy Green advanced farther in the theater than any of the others, because she had the best voice and was in no hurry to get married. After leaving the sextet she went to London, where she sang in light operas with Alice Nielsen. She finally married a stockbroker in Denmark.

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Marie Wilson, member of the original sextet, was married to Frederick Gebhardt, New York society man. She is said to have acquired a fortune of \$750,000 through Wall street investments.



Florence Clemmons, one of the "Florodora" sextet girls who played in the Illinois theater in Chicago in 1902.

of touring, and its occasional revivals; but the first degree "pretty maidens" were, of course, only six in number. The history of the show itself, however, should preface this report on its personnel.

To quell controversy and avoid error, it should be announced, at the start, that the title of this work is correctly spelled. Its first two syllables are "Floro" and not "Flora," in spite of the typographical inaccuracy of numerous chroniclers. The plot of the libretto is concerned with the secret formula of a perfume called "Florodora"—odor of flowers. This fact should reduce all objectors, who think that the title is a combination of the names, Flora and Dora, into



(Merceau photo.)

In the important role of Dolores, Helen Redmond charmed Chicago theatergoers who flocked to see and hear "Florodora."



Edna Goodrich, who of the many girls who sang in the sextet at one time or another had the most brilliant career on the stage. She became a dramatic star and later a movie star in the heyday of the silent films.