

NAIROBI CITY PLAYERS

proudly presents



BLESS 'EM ALL

Songs of The Blitz

Written & Narrated by Stephen Mills

Devised, Produced & Directed by Jacqui Mason

Songs of The Blitz

Men and women sing in sad times and happy ones; in days of peace and days of war. During the Blitz, civilians kept up their spirits with them through air raid after devastating air raid; soldiers sang them when victory seemed uncertain and when, at long last, the prize of Peace was in their grasp. They were sung at sea and in Service canteens. In wartime factories, bombs and shells were made to their choruses. They were even broadcast to aircrews while flying their dangerous missions to Occupied Europe.

The songs of World War II were about optimism. They needed to be, for World War II was harder on the non-fighting people of Britain than any previous war. In those harsh years the power of music in general and popular songs in particular, to distract and encourage a people quite unused to living under siege conditions was doubly valuable.

As in any era of popular music there were the superstars of the day. During the war years many female singers gained tremendous popularity because they caught the sentiment of the population at home and were a glamorous focus for the troops at war. Many of these female vocalists began as singers with the popular dance bands, but they soon came to the fore as their songs became almost anthems of love and hope for those separated by the War.

Vera Lynn was soon established as the "Forces' Sweetheart" and she would later become written into British wartime history thanks to her recordings of two very famous wartime songs, 'We'll Meet Again' and 'There'll Be Bluebirds Over The White Cliffs Of Dover', both capturing the gentle determination of the British people to overcome the adversity and disruption of war. Like many singers, she began as a vocalist with bands such as Joe Loss and Ambrose, before becoming a solo artist in her own right. Another favourite of the time was 'A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square', the popular tune written by the American, Manning Sherwin.

As well as Vera Lynn there were other popular female singers, such as Anne Shelton and Gracie Fields' famous song 'Coming In On A Wing And A Prayer' established a large following amongst the RAF's 'Brylcreem Boys'.

Gracie Fields was already established as "Our Gracie", a singer and comedienne when war broke out. Her song, 'Wish Me Luck As You Wave Me Goodbye' which was soon adopted by the British troops leaving for France at the beginning of the war. It was her distinctive Lancastrian humour and personality that also made comedy songs such as 'The Biggest Aspidistra In The World' so popular.

The Andrews Sisters were a prolific and hugely successful close harmony singing group of the swing and boogie-woogie era, consisting of three actual sisters: LaVerne, Maxene and Patty. They entertained the Allied forces extensively in America, Africa and Italy, visiting Army, Navy, Marine and Coast Guard bases, war zones, hospitals, and munitions factories.

There were, of course, popular male singers and stars. Although a small man, George Formby was big on smiles and humour and almost infamous for always breaking into song with his ukulele-banjo. 'Leaning on a Lamp Post' was written in 1937, but this and other tunes such as 'When I'm Cleaning Windows' were popular throughout the war years adding a welcome touch of fun to radio broadcasts and shows. The duo of Bud Flanagan and Chesney Allen from 'The Crazy Gang' produced witty and catchy songs which acted as a refreshing alternative to the more poignant and sentimental songs of the bands and vocalists. The song 'Run, Rabbit, Run' is perhaps their most famous wartime song.

Nicknamed "The Master", the highly talented Noel Coward achieved success both on the stage and screen. 'London Pride' was written by him in 1941 and became popular as a tribute to Londoners after the Blitz.

....Stephen Mills



Vera Lynn



Gracie Fields



Flanagan & Allen



Noel Coward



George Formby



Anne Shelton



Andrews Sisters

THE PLAYERS

(in order of appearance)

Valerie Kent

Robin Mason & Mike Owen-Burke

Mike Craig

Sally Clark Leila Zanette Luisa Fidelo

Jenny Dunnet & Jacqui Mason

Jackie Holt

Peter Toner

Mike Godfrey

Sean Klotsman

James Hooley

Directed by Jacqui Mason

Presented by Stephen Mills

Musical Directors - Tony Davies & Grace Muriithi

Stage Manager - Frances Cattermole

Costumes - Susan Oliver & Jacqui Mason

ARP Wardens: John Budds, Bob Oliver, Jeremy Rowe

Backstage Assistants.: Nafisa Butt, Laura Zanette

PROGRAMME OF SONGS

1. There'll Always be an England Valerie

ACT 1. PREPARING FOR WAR

2. Hey Neighbour Robin & Mike
3. I Did What I Could With Me Gasmask Mike
4. I'll Be With You In Apple Blossom Time Sally,
Leila, Luisa

ACT 2. KEEPING YOUR 'PECKER' UP

5. Nice Cup Of Tea Jenny & Jacqui
6. They're Either Too Young Or Too Old Jackie
7. Blackout Bella Peter
8. Wish Me Luck As You Wave Me Goodbye Valerie

ACT 3. S.W.A.L.K (Sealed With A Loving Kiss)

9. We'll Gather Lilacs Leila
10. Berkeley Square Mike
11. We'll Meet Again Luisa
12. You'd Be So Nice To Come Home To Sean

ACT 4. BATTLES ON THE HOME FRONT

13. Run Rabbit Run Robin & Mike
14. Hey Little Hen Jackie
15. Siegfried Line Peter

ACT 5. THE BLITZ

16. Coming In On A Wing and A Prayer Sean
17. The Biggest Aspidistra in the World Valerie
18. Kiss Me Goodnight Sergeant-Major Peter
19. London Pride James
20. Leaning on a Lamp Post Mike
21. Bless'Em All Mike & All

*(There may be an AIR RAID, please listen for the siren and go to the
NAAFI CANTEEN immediately)*

INTERVAL

SUPPER IN THE NAAFI CANTEEN

(please listen for the ALL CLEAR siren, when it will be safe for you to return to your seats in the Garrison Theatre)

ACT 6. OPERATION PIED PIPER

- | | | |
|-----|---------------------------|---------|
| 22. | That Lovely Weekend | Sally |
| 23. | Fanny Is Evacuated Now | Peter |
| 24. | I'll Be Seeing You | Valerie |
| 25. | When I'm Cleaning Windows | Mike |

ACT 7. THE 'G.Is' ARE HERE

- | | | |
|-----|---------------------------------------|---------------------|
| 26. | Lilli Marlene | Jenny |
| 27. | Blue Skies | Mike |
| 28. | This is the Army Mr. Jones | Jackie |
| 29. | I Don't Want To Set the World on Fire | Sean |
| 30. | Oh Johnny, Oh Johnny Oh | Sally, Leila, Luisa |

ACT 8. WILL IT EVER END

- | | | |
|-----|---------------------------|--------------|
| 31. | Hitler Song | Jackie |
| 32. | Underneath the Arches | Robin & Mike |
| 33. | Ma, I Miss Your Apple Pie | Sean |
| 34. | White Cliffs of Dover | Valerie |
| 35. | Rose of England | James |

ACT 9. VICTORY IN EUROPE (Please join in and SING)

- | | | |
|-----|-------------------------------|----------------|
| 36. | Let the People Sing | All + Audience |
| 37. | Roll Out The Barrel | |
| 38. | MairzyDoats | |
| 39. | You Are My Sunshine | |
| 40. | There'll Always Be An England | Chorus Only |

CHORUSES

(for Audience to join in - repeat chorus only)

HEY NEIGHBOUR

Hey Neighbour, say neighbour, how's the world with you
Aren't you glad to be alive this sunny morning
Have you noticed that the sky above is blue
That's why we say neighbour, hey neighbour
You know what to do,
Spread your happiness around you as the day goes by
You'll find the habit catching, if you only try
To spread a little love and laughter with your labour
Hey neighbour that means you.

WISH ME LUCK AS YOU WAVE ME GOODBYE

Wish me luck as you wave me goodbye
Cheerio here I go on my way
Wish me luck as you wave me goodbye
With a cheer, not a tear, make it gay
Give me a smile I can keep all the while
In my heart while you're away
Till we meet once again, you and I
Wish me luck as you wave me goodbye

WE'LL MEET AGAIN

We'll meet again, don't know where, don't know when
But I know we'll meet again some sunny day
Keep smiling through just like you always do
Till the bright clouds drive the dark clouds far away
And won't you please say hello to the folks that I know
Tell them I won't be long
They'll be happy to know that as you saw me go
I was singing this song
We'll meet again, don't know where, don't know when
But I know we'll meet again some sunny day.

CHORUSES

SIEGFRIED LINE

We're gonna hang out the washing on the Siegfried line
Have you any dirty washing mother dear
We're gonna hang out the washing on the Siegfried line
'Cause the washing day is here
Whether the weather maybe wet or fine
We'll just string along without a care
We're gonna hang out the washing on the Siegfried line
If the Siegfried line's still there

BLESS 'EM ALL

Bless 'em all, bless 'em all, the long and the short and the tall
Bless all the sergeants and w-o-ones,
Bless all the corporals and their blinking sons
'Cause we're saying goodbye to them all
As back to their billets they crawl
You'll get no promotion, this side of the ocean
So cheer up my lads bless 'em all.

UNDERNEATH THE ARCHES

Underneath the arches, I dream my dreams away
Underneath the arches, on cobblestones I lay
Every night you'll find me, tired out and worn
Waiting till the daylight, comes creeping, heralding the dawn
Sleeping when it's raining and sleeping when it's fine
I hear the trains rattling by above
Pavement is my pillow, no matter where I stray
Underneath the arches, I dream my dreams away.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

NCP would like to thank:

The Staff & Management of MCC for their support & help.... and.... Members of the Club
and friends for loaning various items for this production.