

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

June 2, 1954

'Katcha-Koo'

On Saturday evening, May 2, 1924, there took place in the City of Monterey an Oriental-American Musical Opera Comedy "Katcha-Koo," according to the headlines of the day's newspaper.

For days and days before this important social event there had been notices of the certain magnificence of the production, dwelling at great length upon the colorful scenery, the charm of the music and the greatness of the acting – so the public waited with bated breath for the opening night.

Monday's Herald gave the reviewer of the comedy plenty of space and that person gave flowery praise to the excellence of the performance, the beauty of the young women taking the various parts and to the extravagance of the costumes. The Monterey Theater was the setting, the San Carlos Church the producers, and the California Missions Restoration Fund the benefactor.

The cast of characters contains many names of persons still residing on the Peninsula, a bit older, with thespian ambitions abandoned for either business and home life.

Stuart Work was the leading man as the Katcha-Koo, a fakir, who could do incredible stunts. He could stand for weeks perfectly immovable without taking food much to the annoyance of his victims. He chose in the comedy to make the Maharajah of Hunga his victim of the moment, and the opening scene showed the front of his private temple. Edgar Earle Breaux played the important role of the maharajah, an Oriental Romeo.

The maharajah offered an immense reward to anyone who would move the fakir. It remained for the two ingenious Americans to undertake the job. Maria Antonia Bach, now Mrs. Thompson, was Mrs. Chattie-Gaddin, a rich American widow. Joe Gutierrez was a collector of adventure; Robert Harkins, a collector of antiques, and John Sparolini Jr. was a slave.

Eleanor Watson was Dolly, the daughter of Mrs. Chattie-Gaddin; Evelyn Morris was Prudence, another daughter, and Mrs. George Fortier, acted the part of Solejah widow of the wizard. Ktty Enea took the part of Urbanah, high priestess of the temple; and Clarice and Lucille Sparolini were wives of a Chinese and an

Irishman, while Angela Ferranti and Margaret Lial were Brazilian and French wives, respectively.

The show was a complete sellout and everyone attending had a gay evening, including the players, according to our report gathered from several of the participants 30 years later.

Another May item in the newspaper of May 27, 1924 was one concerning the humble abalone shell. It appears that on that date the colorful shell had come into its own. The story related that abalone shell diving was the latest industry of the Municipal Wharf. A large crew was engaged that morning at Paladini's raising shells from the bottom of the bay beneath the dock. Between 400 and 500 tons of these shells were dumped there several years before when the market for them had failed. In 1924 they were being reclaimed for shipment to factories in Southern California, where they were to be turned into material for finishing stucco buildings.

Capt. Takigawa was named as the diver. Tackle had been rigged up to drop a large net down through an opening in the floor of the wharf. He would quickly fill the net, so the story is told, with the shells, give a signal by jerking the rope and the men above would heave away. At the same time another net would be lowered to the diver. Nearly a ton of shells was procured by this method in the first half hour.

The late J.A. Zanetta, manager of Paladini's said that 10 tons a day could easily be raised by using two divers and a lively crew on the hoisting tackle.

In a story in the later paper we found an item from the waterfront stating that in four hours of diving, six tons of shells had been procured.