



# The Guide to Musical Theatre

## CHRYSANTHEMUM

a melodrama in ragtime by Neville Phillips and Robin Chancellor: Music by Robb Stewart

New Lindsay Theatre, London 14 March 1956 (40 perfs)

Prince of Wales Theatre, London (transferred to Apollo) 13 November, 1959 (148 perfs (total))

### SYNOPSIS

The action takes place in Greenwich Park Lane and Limehouse in 1913 - the age of Ragtime, Russian Ballet, William Morris, Suffragettes, Opium Dens, Lloyd George and the White Slave Trade.

### STORY

One morning Chrysanthemum Brown goes out to fetch in the milk but vanishes. It is three years later that she returns with the milk cans, filled this time. Her father accuses her of having been to Buenos Aires and consequently turns her out of his house and onto the streets where she wanders in Limehouse with the other fallen ladies. The secret that Chrysanthemum cannot reveal is that she has been a victim of the white slave trade. She was ensnared by the evil Ma Carroty and when Chrysanthemum learns that the innocent Mary Ann, beloved of her other Bob Brown, she is horrified. Mary Ann has been whisked away by Ma Carroty as she dallied to meet Bob in the park.

Chrysanthemum rushes to Limehouse to rescue Mary Ann and she returns the girl to Bob. Mary Ann is now safe but Chrysanthemum loses her heart to John Blessington-Briggs. Mary Ann, in gratitude for being saved convinces Chrysanthemum's family that she had been at a Paris finishing school during the period she was absent - and not in Buenos Aires at all. A double wedding is on the cards, Mary Ann and Bob, Chrysanthemum and John.

Unfortunately Uncle Fred spoils the celebrations by inging in Pepe who recognises Chrysanthemum as the "Flame of Buenos Aires".

Chrysanthemum returns to Limehouse, determined to find Ma Carroty and seek revenge. She disguises herself as a Chinese strip-dancer to enter Ma Carroty's establishment, "The Skull and Chopsticks". However, her disguise is penetrated and she is imprisoned. Back at the Brown household Pepe has revealed the truth to the family. He it was who had saved Chrysanthemum from the bordellos of Argentina. She had become his dancing partner and subsequently famous and rich enough to be able to return home to England.

The judgement of Chrysanthemum is revised and John goes off to find his love. Drama follows as Ma Carroty prepares to immolate the gagged and bound Chrysanthemum. In the nick of time, John, together with Bob and Mary Ann arrive and rescue Chrysanthemum just as the building goes up in flames. Ma Carroty is captured and her true identity revealed.



## MUSICAL NUMBERS:

### ACT 1

1. Overture
2. Opening Chorus: "Alexander" - The Brown Sisters, Boy Friends & Guests
3. 2a Melos
4. Song: "Ships At Sea" - Bob & Guests
5. 3a - Chysanthemum's Entrance
6. 3b - Melos
7. Song: "Sinner Me" - Chrysanthemum & Chorus
8. 4a Reprise "Sinner Me" Chorus
9. 4b Ma Carroty Theme (1st Version)
10. Song: "Watch Your Step" John
11. 5a John's Exit
12. Duet: "Mary Ann" - Mary Ann & Bob
13. 6a Ma Carroty Theme (2nd Version)
14. 6b Ma Carroty Kidnaps Mary Ann
15. The Limehouse Ballet
16. 7a Change of Scene
17. 7b The Escape
18. Song: "Sorry You've Been Troubled" - John
19. 1st Reprise "Mary Ann" - Bob & (off-stage) Chorus
20. 2nd Reprise "Mary Ann" - Mary Ann & Bob
21. Duet: "Is This Love" - Chrysanthemum & John
22. Concerted Number: "Understanding" - Captain Brown, the Brown Sisters & Friends
23. Duet: "Love Is A Game" - Chrysanthemum & John
24. Quartet "Double Wedding" - Lily & Daisy, Rose & Lavender
25. Finale Act 1: - Wedding Guests
26. "At The Wedding" - John, Bob & Best Men
27. Mimed Scene - Chrysanthemum, Mary Ann, Captain Brown & Violet
28. Scena - The Full Company

### ACT 2

29. Intermission Leading To Opening Chorus Act 2: -
30. "Saturday Night" - Chorus
31. Concerted Number: "Thanks To The Weather" - Bob, Mary Ann & Chorus
32. Song: "No More Love Songs" - Chrysanthemum
33. Reprise "Saturday Night" - Chrysanthemum & Chorus
34. 19a Pepe Says: No: Routine
35. 19b Pepe Routine - Exit
36. 19c Change Of Scene
37. Song: "How Can I Find My Love" - John & Chorus
38. The Skull & Chopsticks
39. Song: "Shanghai Lil" - Chrysanthemum & Chorus
40. 22a Incidental Music
41. 22b Chrysanthemum Enters The Secret Den
42. 22c Melos - Agitato
43. Opening Scene 6
44. 23a Reprise "Love Is A Game" - Lily & Sam, Daisy & Tom, Rose & Joe
45. 23b Melos - Pepe And The Suffragette
46. 23c General Panic - Off To Pennyfields

47. The Secret Den
48. Concerted Number: "The Fire Brigade" - Chorus of Firemen:
49. 25a The Fire Scene :
50. 25b Ma Carroty Is Caught :
51. Reprise "Understanding" - Chrysanthemum & Full Company:
52. Finale To Act 2
53. Reprise "Double Wedding" - The Company :
54. Reprise "Love Is A Game" - The Company :
55. Reprise "Saturday Night" - The Company :
56. Playout :

Chrysanthemum did make it to America where it starred Patrice Munsel at Palm Beach. Contractual problems scuppered any chance of a Broadway opening. Then came the film *Thoroughly Modern Millie* which has a plot line too similar to *Chrysanthemum* for the latter to have succeeded at the time.

**CAST:** (in order of appearance)

(daughters of Captain Brown)

- Lily
- Daisy
- Rose
- Lavender
- Violet

(their boy friends)

- Sam
- Tom
- Joe
- Willie



Captain Brown (a retired sea captain)	2nd Suffragette (Edith)
Uncle Fred (his other-in-law)	3rd Suffragette (Monica)
Bob Brown (his son)	4th Suffragette
Chrysanthemum Brown (his eldest daughter)	James (the Blessington-Brigg's butler)
Ma Carroty	Harriet (their parlour maid)
John Blessington-Briggs	Pepe
Mary Ann Blessington-Briggs	Gertie, Horace - (a couple outside "The Rose & Crown")
Emily (Mary Ann's personal maid)	A Newspaper Boy
Ching Loo	1st Chinaman
1st Lady of Limehouse	1st Thug
2nd Lady of Limehouse	2nd Thug
3rd Lady of Limehouse	A Police Officer
1st Suffragette (Mrs. Potts)	Firemen.
Singers and dancers; Guests & Friends of the Browns, Limehouse Characters, Wedding Guests, Couples in the Park, Passers By., etc.	