

BURTON OPERATIC SOCIETY IN "THE MIKADO"

At the beginning of this year, when the Burton and District Operatic Society presented Gilbert and Sullivan's "The Gondollers," sceptics shook their heads and forecast that with "biting off more than they could chew," the members were in for a long spell of musical indigestion.

Undaunted, the society carried on with its plan, and as distinct from the initial effort, had two "generals" in command in a separate musical director and producer.

The result was to be seen at the Little Theatre, Burton, on Monday, when "The Mikado" opened for a week's run, and even the most critical musical comedy "fan" must have admitted that for entertainment it would have taken some beating.

TWO-AND-A-HALF HOURS OF PLEASURE

In the programme notes the society plainly states that a spectacular production has not been attempted, but instead, it has aimed at producing an intimate comic opera, relying on the words of Gilbert and the music of Sullivan for the entertainment.

How wise was the society in thus not attempting to over-reach itself, for the result is two and a half hours sheer pleasure—pleasure shared by performers and audience alike.

The opening night did not get off to a smooth start, as before the curtain went up, there was consternation when the accompanist, Evelyn Woodhouse, was indisposed and could not appear. Geoffrey Wenden, who was making up for his part in the chorus, hurriedly wiped off his grease paint, and went round to the front to deputise at the piano, and did remarkably well.

NOTABLE PERFORMANCES

Outstanding in the cast is Reginald Evans as "Ko-Ko," the Lord High Executioner. Essentially the comedian. He also possesses a good voice and deserved his encore for "Willow, Tit Willow." In that solo he really looked like a bird crossed in love and considering suicide as the only solution.

It is also obvious that Maurice Smalley still has something "up his sleeve" so far as the stage is concerned, and it is becoming more apparent than ever that musical comedy is his line. As Pooch-Bah, the Lord High Everything Else, he cannot be surpassed, for he has

explored every possibility of the role, and brought out the best. His voice, too, has improved immeasurably.

Reginald Brunning takes the part of Nanki-Poo, the wandering minstrel, and son of the Mikado, and he has a good tenor voice but rather tended to press the soft pedal too much

DELIGHTFULLY FRESH

Joy Edwards, as Yum-Yum, is delightfully fresh and uninhibited, and even if she could not act at all, her voice would carry her through. As it is, however, she can act and sing, and to her goes a large part of the credit for the show's success.

Alan Thompson, as Pish-Tush, is also remarkably self-confident and has a good voice, while no better choice could be made for the Mikado than Ernest Bailey, who brought out every shade of meaning in the music.

Another who seems to have made remarkable progress since earlier this year is Jean Barton, who takes the part of the elderly Katisha.

Effie Cottrell as Pitti-Sing looked as if she was really enjoying the part, in which she was admirably partnered by Valerie Sharp as her sister, Peep-Bo.

The chorus, so essential in this type of musical comedy, provided first-class support, and was composed of: Doreen Barnes, Katherine Grant, Molly Kidger, Gertrude Kirkland, Beryl Painter, Dorothy Plowright, Annette Powell, Dorothy Sillita, Ivy Smith, Glenise Turner, Winifred Wellings, Mabel Whiteland, Patricia Wright, Jack Copeland, Norman Ellis, Clifford Howse, Herbert Macey, Alan Smith, Richard Thomas, John Welsh.

The sword bearer was Graham Evans.

SMOOTH, ARTISTIC SHOW

The musical director was Margaret Sheardown, on whom much of the credit for the success of the show reflects, for she had obviously taken great pains to ensure musical perfection and a correct balance.

The producer was Geoffrey Sharp, who has made the utmost of the limited opportunities.

The settings too are worthy of favourable comment, and they are by L. R. Scott.

Assisting Geoffrey Wenden at the piano was Dennis Reynolds (drums), and the honorary officials are Raymond Postle (stage manager), P. Appleby, F. Holmes, J. Purnford (assistant stage managers), Peter Cartwright (lighting), Florence Chandler, John Kelly and Alfred Cottrell (make-up), Edith Broughton (prompter), Mrs. F. E. Dicken (wardrobe mistress), A. E. Miller (men's costumes), Mav Webster (property mistress), Joy Edwards (performance secretary), Evelyn Woodhouse (rehearsal accompanist), G. C. Wenden (secretary), W. H. Hasshill (treasurer and house manager).