

ANOTHER SUCCESS FOR BURTON OPERATIC SOCIETY

Impressive Performance of "Patience"

Sceptics who thought that after its initial success, the Burton and District Operatic Society would gradually fade away and become a back number, must now start thinking on different lines, for it is going from strength to strength, and will become even more solidly established by the end of the run of "Patience," which opened at the Little Theatre last night.

In continuing to favour Gilbert and Sullivan, the society has adopted a wise policy, for although "dated," the music and plots are always refreshing, and are sure of a large following. At the same time they provide a test for the artistes, as most of the operas are well known and an indifferent performance would soon be noticed.

The standard was set in "The Gondoliers," the society's first show; then came "The Mikado," which exceeded all expectations; and now there is "Patience" to prove that previous successes were not mere flashes in the pan.

What gives the greatest feeling of satisfaction is the fact that all the principles are members of the society and are local, the only "foreigner" being a citizen of Ashby, but still a member of the society.

Perhaps that is the main contributory factor to any success, as they all work together as a team, and do not look on the chorus as a collection of individuals put on the stage to sing while the "big shots" have a rest.

DIFFICULTIES OVERCOME

Mention of the stage brings to mind the fact that in another direction, the society has triumphed. The Little Theatre is ideal for what it is supposed to be—a small theatre for the production of plays requiring not too many performers and certainly not designed to cater for large-scale musical comedy. Despite a little cramping here and there, the chorus gets along quite well, and there is no impression that they are scared to move about for fear of falling over someone's feet.

In fact all difficulties are made to appear non-existent, and there is nothing to detract from the opera itself.

The story of the current production is typically Gilbertian—Patience is a daring maid who knows not the meaning of long words, and finds herself caught between two poets. The whole opera is a biting satire on affectation with everyone taking the "mickey" out of everyone else, not excluding the army.

The satire is laid on with a trowel, and it is in that fact that most of the humour lies.

From the point of view of casting the society is fortunate in its membership, as the producer does not have to seek far for his types.

As Patience there could be no better choice than Mabel Whiteland, who looks the part and absorbs herself into it. Possessor of a sweet, clear voice she makes the most of it, and does not make

the mistake of trying to force it to carry right down the theatre and back again.

For the part of Bunthorne, the affected poet, the producer looked no further than his own doorstep, and put himself down for it, and if anyone could do it better than Geoffrey Sharpe, he would have to be good indeed. That man is a born actor, and knows the importance of timing and gesture.

The other poet in the story, and one just as affected, is played by Alan Thompson, who also exploits the possibilities of the part to the full, while the commonsense approach of the military is well brought out by John Clemes, Reginald Brunning and Reginald Evans.

The leading lights among the feathered-brained young ladies are Effie Cottrell, Valerie Sharp, Dorothy Plowright and Molly Kidger, the latter being exceptionally good.

In a minor role is Hugh Tunn, and then there is the chorus of love-sick maidens and poker-back Dragoon Guards, comprised of:—Doreen Barnes, Edith Broughton, Joy Edwards, Ena Evans, Beryl Painter, Annette Powell, Dorothy Sillita, Ivy Smith, Glenys Turner, Patricia Wright, Leonard Bowler, Leonard Farley, Clifford Howse, Herbert Macey, Ralph Milnes, Alan Shotton, Richard Thomas and Geoffrey

PROFESSIONAL TOUCH

Geoffrey Sharp's production has the professional touch about it, and sharing his success is Margaret Sheardown, musical director.

The accompaniment is played by Evelyn Woodhouse (piano), John W. Walker (violin), Hayden A. Knighton ('cello), and Dennis Reynolds (drums).

Assisting officials are:—Stage manager, John Kelly; assistant stage managers, Peter Appleby and John Pumford; property mistress, May Webster; wardrobe mistress, Rosamund Day; prompter, Alwyn Powell; make-up, Geoffrey Sowerby, Madeleine Sowerby and Maurice Smalley; accompanist at rehearsals, Evelyn Woodhouse; performance secretary, Joy Edwards; secretary, R. Brunning; treasurer and house manager, H. N. Hasshill.

The setting was designed and painted by L. R. Scott.

In case the impression is gained that the production is almost too perfect to be true, it can be mentioned that there are weaknesses in one or two places, but they can be forgiven and forgotten quite easily. And if anyone can play the parts better, the society is not a closed shop and will welcome new members!

A.T.M.

BURTON OPERATIC SOCIETY'S SUCCESS

TO judge by their first night's performance of Gilbert and Sullivan's "Patience" at the Little Theatre, Burton, last night, Burton and District Operatic Society have a deserved success to add to their record.

After a somewhat halting first act, the production finished in gay fashion.

Carrying the dual responsibility of producer and the leading role, Geoffrey Sharp languished perfectly as Bunthorne, the aesthetic poet whom Gilbert modelled so closely on Oscar Wilde.

He excelled when partnered by Alan Thompson, who admirably portrayed the other ethereal poet, Archibald Grosvenor. Their second-act duet gained well-merited applause.

REGAINING AFFECTION

John Clemes, Reginald Evans and Reginald Brunning were all well cast as Dragoon officers who, to try to regain the affections of their fiancées, adopt the "art for art's sake" pose.

As in other operas, Gilbert takes sly, almost sadistic, digs at the ageing woman who is well aware of the decay of her charms. In "Patience" it is Lady Jane, the almost ever-faithful disciple of Bunthorne.

Molly Kidger, in this difficult part, was at first too stern, but she soon gained the necessary confidence.

One criticism of the chorus. The titled ladies were supposed to be rapturously in love with Bunthorne, but they did not

A little less restraint would make all the difference. Otherwise the chorus work was of high standard.

Others taking part were:

Mabel Whiteland, Hugh Tunn, Effie Cottrell, Dorothy Plowright, Valerie Sharp, Doreen Barnes, Edith Broughton, Joy Edwards, Ena Evans, Beryl Painter, Annette Powell, Dorothy Sillita, Ivy Smith, Glenys Turner, Patricia Wright, Leonard Bowler, Leonard Farley, Clifford Howse, Herbert Macey, Ralph Milnes, Alan Shotton, Richard Thomas and Geoffrey Wenden.

The musical director was Margaret Sheardown. The production will be repeated tonight and every night up to and including Saturday.—J.E.P.