

IL. May 18th, 1954

BURTON OPERATIC SOCIETY SUCCESS

“H.M.S. Pinafore” Enjoyed

It has been said that the keynote of all Gilbert and Sullivan operas was to the effect that the course of true love never ran smoothly, but that everything came right in the end. That may be so, but the subject does not pall, because librettist and composer had the happy knack of writing so many variations on the given theme.

In their last production, members of the Burton and District Operatic Society told (and sang) the story of the girl Patience who loved one poet and was loved by another, and chose wisely and happily in the finale. In their current production, which opened at the Little Theatre last night, the society recreate the story of the girl who loved a sailor but is wooed by the First Lord of the Admiralty. As in the case of the two gondoliers, there was a case of switching during babyhood, so everything was brought above board, and true love reaped its due reward.

Having thus been rehearsed by their performances of “The Gondoliers” and “Patience,” members of the society were able to take the current production, “H.M.S. Pinafore,” in their stride, and make a really good job of it. Their nautical high spirits early became apparent, and the overall success of the show (judged by accepted standards),

was no doubt due to the fact that they were confident, and were enjoying it as much as the audience. Had they not been, the effort may have been unfortunate, as it was the enthusiasm that swept aside some of the weak spots, and made them appear insignificant.

SAILED MERRILY ON

As enjoyable as was the show, it must be admitted that it did not go over so well as its predecessors, probably due to the fact that in striving for progressive improvement, the artistes are over-reaching themselves. It would be impossible to lay the blame on any particular doorstep, and it would be unfair, as it does not lie with any individual.

Such failing was particularly noticeable in the first half-hour or so, after which there was a general settling down, and the good ship Pinafore sailed merrily on the crest of the melodic wave.

As the programme notes explained, the producer, Geoffrey Sharp, has given the opera a less stylised production than usual, and that reacts advantageously, for it cuts out superfluous frills and leaves something to the imagination of the audience.

Individually, honours go to the "old faithfuls" of the Society—and the term is used without sarcasm or condescension.

Reginald Brunning, who seems fated in his stage career to start in the social depths and rise to the heights, sings his way through the part of the sailor who finishes up as captain, and Alan Thompson sings himself into the opposite direction. Both have good voices, and can be guaranteed to keep things going.

OTHER NOTABLE PERFORMANCES

Ernest Bailey runs true to form as the sinister one-eyed humpbacked A.B., who is against life in general and his shipmates in particular, whilst William P. Beddow shows admirable restraint and "ton" as the First Lord of the Admiralty who conducts his romances in officialese.

As the captain's daughter, Joy Edwards again charms with her singing, and Molly Kidger, too, repeats her earlier successes.

Among the smaller roles, Bernard Bourne stands out not the least for the facial expressions which add point to his lines, and Effie Cottrell, too, is good.

Also taking part are Alan Shotton, Doreen Barnes, Glenise Blant, Edith Broughton, Clarice Hill, Beryl Painter, Dorothy Plowwright, Dorothy Sillito, Ivy Smith, Monica Smith, Mabel Whiteland, Patricia Wright, Leonard Farley, Clifford Howse, John Jones, Herbert Macey, and Richard Thomas, with Derek Bell as the midshipman.

The music was directed by Arthur Ormerod, L.R.A.M., with Evelyn Woodhouse, L.R.A.M., as accompanist, and Norman Dowson on the drums.

Honorary officials were John Kelly (stage manager), John Pumford (assistant stage manager), Mary Shotton (wardrobe mistress), Alwyn Powell (prompter), Sheilia Devine, Alfred G. Cottrell and Maurice Smalley (make-up), Joy Edwards (performance secretary), H. N. Hasshill (treasurer and business manager).

The setting was designed by Ann Hatfield, and constructed and painted by John Woodcock, Ray Welton, Ann Hatfield and Walter Woodthorpe. Assisting the accompanist was Gillian Richardson.

The show will be repeated each night this week, including Saturday.

A.T.M.