

ANSWER TO G. & S. PRECISIONISTS *Hands-down win by Burton singers*

AN amateur company prepared to face hostility from "G. and S." enthusiasts who, weaned on the immaculate precision of the D'Oyly Carte company, are not prepared to stand for any nonsense with the tradition of either Gilbert's stage "business" or Sullivan's music.

Burton and District Operatic Society faced up to all possible hostility with their production of "Iolanthe" at Burton Little Theatre last night—and won hands down.

For an amateur company, they gave an excellent performance—good enough to satisfy the most rabid Gilbert and Sullivan "fan"—and my only regret after the show was that they had not a larger stage on which to show the results of what must have been some very hard rehearsing.

STRONG PRINCIPALS

They were lucky in having something rare in amateur companies—strong principals and a sound chorus.

The principal who took my eye was William Beddow as the Lord Chancellor, who is, on so susceptible. Mr. Beddow bumbled round the stage beautifully and his treatment of the nightmare song—a nightmare to all Lord Chancellors—was first-rate.

The leaders of the peers—Jack Heys and Harry Scattergood—were a well-matched pair, while Mollie Kidger was equally as impressive in her role as the Fairy Queen. John Clemes fitted well into the uniform of Private Willis, and Alan Thompson and Joy Appleby were both well-cast as the Arcadian shepherd and shepherdess. In the title role, Effie Cottrell gave a sound performance.

CHORUS SANG WELL

The chorus always means a great deal in Gilbert and Sullivan and there was no disappointment in this department last night. This chorus sang well and, despite that postage-stamp stage, manoeuvred without giving the effect of Victoria Station on a Bank Holiday. The peers in particular handled their mantles in the confined space with a noble majesty.

"Iolanthe" is 74 years old this year, but last night's show proved that there are still plenty of people well able to present Gilbert and Sullivan

withs kill, and even more people ready to enjoy it.

Others taking part were: Doreen Barnes, Margaret Bradley, Ivy Smith, Jean Atkin, Glenise Blant, Edith Broughton, Margaret Brambley, Molly Charlton, Valerie Crawford, Eileen Cahoon, Helga Hughes, Rhoda Heys, Gertrude Kirkland, Gwendoline Osborne, Dorothy Sillita, Monica Welton, Mabel Whiteland.

Joseph Buckley, Leonard Farley, Norman Hasshill, John Hill, Clifford Howse, Eric Jacks, Percy Lowe, Herbert Macey, Alan Smith, Robert Smith, Richard Thomas, Edgar Williams.

The opera was produced by Charles Pole and the musical director was Arthur Ormerod. The pianist was Evelyn Woodhouse with Edward Prince (drums). The opera will be repeated each night this week, including Saturday.

J.E.P.

BURTON OPERATIC SOCIETY SCORES ANOTHER SUCCESS

"Iolanthe" Opens On High Note

Coincidental with the ending of British Summer Time on Sunday, Burton's entertainment season started without the slightest delay last night, when at the Little Theatre a week's run of the Gilbert and Sullivan opera "Iolanthe" opened—and a good opening it was, too. This is the sixth production by the Burton and District Operatic Society, and the standard of performance is in keeping with any of its predecessors.

The secret of the Society's success seems to be an infectious enthusiasm which starts from the producer and is transmitted through the cast right down to the chorus. There is no slackness, nor any sign of contempt bred by familiarity of words, and music.

Although they have heard the Gilbert jokes dozens of times at rehearsal, the players contrive to make them sound spontaneous, and do not have that "stop me if you have heard this one" look on their faces.

And talking of enthusiasm, the most enthusiastic singer last night was unseen by the audience, as she will be for the rest of the week.

Dorothy Stone has a glorious voice, and is a popular and ever-regular honorary member of the Society. Unfortunately, she cannot take any of the principal parts because she is blind, but so keen is she that her colleagues decided she was going to take part in "Iolanthe," or else. Accordingly, she has been placed in the wings, out of sight of the audience, but near enough to the chorus to be part of it—and she is having a grand time.

INTRODUCTION OF NEWCOMERS

A welcome feature of this sixth production is the introduction of newcomers. The stalwarts are there, of course, but a notable absentee from the ranks of the principals is Reg Brunning, who had to drop out because of important examinations being held at the same time as the final rehearsals. He has been replaced by Harry Scattergood, a member of Burton Parish Church choir, who makes a good debut in the role of the Earl of Tolloller.

Another newcomer is Noreen Barnes, who is cast as Celia, one of the faeries, and she, too, makes a promising start.

Having been near the sea during their last two productions ("H.M.S. Pinafore" and the "Pirates of Penzance"), the society has moved inland this year for a breath of arcadian air. Here we have the story of a mother whose son is half human and half fairy, and of the goings-on in the House of Lords when the noble fairy gets going.

In total it is a glorious satire on politics, and the wisecracks are as fresh to-day as ever they were.

NOTABLE PERFORMANCES

Turning to the performers themselves it would be difficult, and grossly unfair, to single out any one or two as "stars."

Nevertheless, a special word of praise must go to William Beddow for his portrayal of the introspective Lord Chancellor and his complete mastery of the semiquavers in the "nightmare" aria.

Alan Thompson keeps up his reputation as the half-man half-fairy character who almost wrecked the Parliamentary system, and John Clemes makes an excellent Grenadier Guardsman.

Harry Scattergood's "partner in crime" is Jack Keys, who possesses a grand voice and style.

Among the ladies, Mollie Kidger, Effie Cottrell and Joy Appleby again share the honours, with good supporting performances by Doreen Barnes, Margaret Bradley and Ivy Smith.

In the chorus are: Jean Atkin, Glenise Blant, Edith Broughton, Margaret Brambley, Molly Charlton, Valerie Crawford, Eileen Cahoon, Helga Hughes, Rhoda Heys, Gertrude Kirkland, Gwendoline Osborne, Dorothy Silitta, Monica Welton, Mabel Whiteland, Joseph Buckley, Leonard Farley, Norman Hasshill, John Hill, Clifford Howse, Eric Jacks, Percy Lowe, Herbert Macey, Alan Smith, Robert Smith, Richard Thomas and Edgar Williams.

The opera has been produced by Charles Pole, and the music is directed by Arthur Ormerod, L.R.A.M., A.Mus.T.C.L.

EXCELLENT SETTINGS

A further special word of praise must be accorded to the settings, which are convincingly life-like, and have been designed, painted and constructed by Kathleen M. Budd, Gladys M. Harvey, Joan Lester, Ray A. Welton, Peter Appleby, Jack Last, John Woodcock and Dudley Ford.

As on so many previous occasions Evelyn Woodhouse, L.R.A.M., is the accompanist—no easy task, for she is playing for the best part of two and a quarter hours—and is assisted by Edward Prince on the drums and Mrs. Thompson, Mrs. Clemes and Miss Richardson.

The honorary officials are:—Ray A. Welton (stage manager), Jack Last (stage carpenter), Jean Smith (wardrobe mistress), Peter Cartwright and Kenneth Vye (lighting), Irene Hasshill (house manager), Joy Appleby (performance secretary), Miss M. Kidger (secretary), H. N. Hasshill (treasurer), Mavis Wilson (prompter).

A.T.M.