

# BURTON OPERATIC SOCIETY CHOICE FULLY JUSTIFIED

## Polished Performance of "Princess Ida"

An ambitious choice of the little known and lavish Gilbert and Sullivan comic opera, "Princess Ida," as this year's production of the Burton and District Operatic Society, was amply justified by the competent and polished performance given at the Hillside School, Stapenhill, last night.

Seldom do amateur companies choose this work for their performances, because of the scenery and costume changes which add to their costs and difficulties, and it is for this reason that professional companies seldom bring "Princess Ida" on tour of the provinces.

Last night's opening performance had few of the faults common to amateur shows, and boasted many of the refinements usually found on the professional stage.

The light-hearted plot is set around the love story of Hilarion, son of King Hildebrand, and Princess Ida, daughter of King Gama, who were betrothed in infancy.

Ida fails to keep the pledge to join Hilarion on her 21st birthday, having retired to a women's university.

Hilarion and his two friends resolve to enter the university in search of Ida, and to this end disguise themselves as women. War is threatened between the two nations, and only averted when Ida admits the error of her views on men, and happily gives herself to Hilarion.

After rather a stiff first act, probably due in part to first night nerves, the cast warmed up in the second and final acts, displaying their obvious enjoyment of their roles, an enjoyment which communicated itself to the audience and became apparent in the spontaneous bursts of applause.

### GOOD SINGING AND ACTING

Singing and acting were of good quality, and Bernard Bourne, in the role of the cantankerous King Gama, deserves full marks for his excellent characterisation, which delighted the audience.

Pamela Pegg, in the title role portrayed the haughty princess very well indeed, and it is perhaps a pity that her voice, sweet and pure in the higher register, should on one or two occasions appear to be in competition with the orchestra. This problem—no doubt due to acoustics—does not adversely reflect on either soloist, or musical director Arthur Ormerod.

Cyril (Reginald Brunning) and Florian (Alan Thompson), friends of Hilarion (Ken Lowe) took every advantage of the comedy situation where the trio enter the grounds of the women's university and don female garb. Their song and dance act in mimicry of female gestures and mannerisms was

delightful, and Reginald Brunning, a the somewhat buxom "female," who later in "her" cups gives the game away, gave an easy and relaxed performance which was highly appreciated.

Jack Heys, as King Hildebrand, both in voice and carriage, contributed to the kingly dignity demanded of him, and Effie Cottrell (Lady Blanche) and Mollie Kidger (Melissa, her daughter), portrayed the superior matron and innocent daughter convincingly.

Bernard Emery, Jim Thornley and Ray Hemming as Arac, Guron and Scynthus, sons of King Gama, clanked their armoured way across the stage, as befits Gilbert and Sullivan warriors.

Other major roles, of Lady Psyche (Margaret Bradley) and Sacharissa, Chloe, and Ada played by Jean Hendry, Mabel Whiteland and Joan Gilbert, sustained the high quality of performance.

No production of this type would be complete without the chorus, in this case numbering 27, whose singing, and utilisation of the rather cramped stage, left nothing to be desired.

Summing up, producer Charles Pole can congratulate himself on a really ambitious show which has "come off," and which will maintain for the society a continued interest in future productions.

### SMOOTH PERFORMANCE

So far as members of the audience were concerned, they saw nothing of the "back-room boys," and the show ran so smoothly that no incident reminded watchers of the presence or activities of the electricians and stage hands, the wardrobe helpers, and the anonymous body of people whose hard work contributes to the success of any stage production.

Special mention must be made of the scenery, which was designed, painted and constructed by Gladys M. Harvey, Joan Biddulph, Ray Welton, Peter Appleby, Alfred V. Pearce, Jack Last, John Woodcock, Frank Toon and Len Harvey—it really looked a professional job, and skilfully provided adequate access to the stage for the large cast.

Lighting was excellently controlled, and the hard work done by Peter Appleby and Kenneth Vye was well repaid.

In these days, when professional entertainment of high quality is readily available to all, any amateur production must reach a high standard to compete for an audience, and there is no doubt that the Operatic Society's "Princess Ida" reaches that standard.

# BURTON OPERATIC SOCIETY

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## Hard Work Ensured Success

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Members of Burton Operatic Society celebrated the success of their production "Princess Ida," at their annual dinner at the Midland Hotel last night.

Chairman, Mr. A. Thompson, thanked all members who had contributed their hard work to the success of the opera, and said it had been a big gamble which had come off.

President, Mr. George Bates, said the company had had a tremendous amount of pluck to tackle this difficult show, and made a very good job of it.

Musical director, Mr. Arthur Ormerod, said that from the first night he had complete confidence in the success of the show, and said that artists had each night given a "standard" show.

He praised the team spirit of the society, which, he said, contributed much to the success of their production.

Mr. Charles Pole, the producer, said that during the four years he had been producing shows for the society he had watched them mature, and after their production of "Princess Ida," if they staged any more Gilbert and Sullivan operas, they could not exceed the standard they had achieved.

"You can stay as good as you are, but I would like you to look for something other than Gilbert and Sullivan," he said.

Miss Mavis Wilson concluded the formal part of the evening by presenting a pigskin combined wallet and purse to the accompanist, Mrs. Evelyn Woodhouse, a pen and cigarettes to Mr. Ormerod and a leather wallet to Mr. Pole.