

BURTON OPERATIC SOCIETY RETURNS TO GILBERT AND SULLIVAN

Fine Presentation of "Pirates of Penzance"

The Burton and District Operatic Society is surpassing itself in the excellence of its production at Horninglow Secondary School, Harchedge Lane, this week. After three years presenting more contemporary promotions, it has returned to its first love in Gilbert and Sullivan, and is producing the popular operetta, "The Pirates of Penzance."

Last Saturday evening's presentation to local Darby and Joan clubs, and the physically-handicapped, gave them a good start to what must surely be seven notable presentations during the coming week, and last night's first public performance fully confirmed this promise.

Produced by Ron Whetton, F.T.C.L., L.G.S.M., with the music directed by Arthur Ormerod, L.R.A.M., A.Mus.T.C.L. and with Peter Jackson as assistant musical director, and a full theatre orchestra of violins, viola, violoncellos, double bass, flute, oboe, clarinets, bassoon, horn, trumpets, trombone and percussion, led by George Walker, L.R.A.M., and with Evelyn Woodhouse, L.R.A.M., as hon. accompanist, the opening chorus of pirates sets the standard for the excellent performance which is to follow.

The Major-General (Alan Thompson) played this part in the production nine years ago, but whereas he then gave a straight interpretation of the patter-parts, he now gives a totally new and slick presentation of "I am the very model of a modern Major-General," and his entrance in "Hush! Not a word" provokes considerable amusement.

His daughters, Edith (Betty Halsall), Kate (Doris Postle) and Isabel (Coral Crinnell) are led by Sheila Boyce as Mabel.

Sheila took the lead in "The Rebel Maid" two years ago, but her voice has improved still further in range and texture. Her singing of "Poor wand'ring one" is outstanding, the tricky cadenzas being beautifully taken, and the top E flat being reached without visible effort. Her duets with Frederic, "All is prepared, your gallant crew await you," and "Stay, Frederic, stay," are also worthy of special mention.

The society has produced a new principal in Joan Gilbert (Ruth), who sings and acts a rather difficult part with credit.

The Pirate King (Peter Williams) has a considerable singing lead, and acquits himself with distinction.

Ken Lowe as Frederic, the pirate apprentice, has previously played comic leads, but this time has the tenor lead, which he must find exceptionally demanding, and Jim Thornley as Samuel, the pirate lieutenant, also has a leading part which he takes with distinction. John Halsall is new to principal parts and plays quite a good line of comedy as the Sergeant of Police, giving a very good interpretation of, "When a felon's not engaged in his employment."

EXCELLENT CHORUS WORK

Outstanding chorus work is evident in "Climbing over rocky mountain," beautifully rounded and modulated, and the unaccompanied singing in the finale is of a very high order, and reflects considerable credit on Arthur Ormerod's musical direction.

The entrance of the pirates in "With cat-like tread," and the subsequent encounter with the police, reflect clearly the impish guidance of the producer, Ron Whetton.

A better mixed-bag of comic policemen it would be difficult to imagine, Edgar Williams and Joe Hickman particularly catching the eye in a very good front-line. All the company in a rousing finale bring down the curtain on a very entertaining and amusing production.

The opening scenery, representing a rocky seashore on the coast of Cornwall, and the three-dimensional effect of the ruined chapel by moonlight, seen in the second act, make one realise how fortunate the Burton Society is to have a supporter with the artistic ability of Gladys M. (Jimmy) Harvey, able and willing to assist in this direction. The lighting effects are also as well-controlled as has now become usually accepted.

Members of the chorus are: Joy Appleby, Barbara Binnersley, Glenise Blant, Jennifer Bond, Betty Booth,

Dorothy Bramham, Lily Brunning, Linda Bowler, Angela Fair, Brenda Florence, Stella Hambleton, Joy Harris, Jean Hendry, Gena Jackson, Dorothy Jeggo, Mollie Kidger, Branda Neal, Pat Neale, Joan Rowley, Ann Shorthose, Effie Shorthose, Lorna Staley, Jane Ward, Mabel Whiteland, Terry Bassett, George Bruce, Jack Copeland, Malcolm Dearnley, James Gould, Keith Gould, Joe Hickman, Terence Hickman, Glifford Howse, Harry Scattergood, Michael Thorne, Edgar Williams and Christopher Williams.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Other credits are due to: Chairman, Alan Thompson; vice-chairman, Jim Thornley; secretary, Joan Gilbert; treasurer, Robert Smith; performance secretary, Mollie Kidger; publicity manager, Charles M. Boyce; house manager, Ray Postle; assistant house manager, Pat Peace; stage manager, Ray Welton; assistant stage manager, Peter Appleby; stage carpenter, Jack Last; lighting, Francis Bates, Joe Buckley and Keith Dadley; wardrobe mistresses, Mary Thornley and Agness Cottrell; prompter, Sheila Bruce; properties, Bill and Helen Purvis and Kay Goddrich; scenery designed and constructed by Gladys M. Harvey, Pauline Prevett, Kenneth Vye, Peter Appleby, Peter Binnersley, Len Harvey, Peter Jackson, Jack Last, Ray Welton and John Woodcock.

The show is being presented each evening this week, but tickets are now only available for this evening and Saturday afternoon. These may be obtained from the hon. concert agency, the Abbey Music Co., Market Place. Any tickets remaining unsold will be available at the doors.

Light refreshments are available during the interval, and there is adequate car-parking accommodation within the school grounds.