

"THE MERRY WIDOW"

Excellent Presentation by Burton Society

The gay and lilted operetta, Franz Lehar's "The Merry Widow," has captivated audiences all over the world for many years. It has maintained its popularity through the eras of jazz, skiffle and rock, and has been performed before enthusiastic crowds in the capitals of Europe.

It has, too, been presented by touring professional companies, and by amateurs in provincial towns and cities, and this week it reappears once again in Burton.

The occasion is the presentation of the operetta by the Burton and District Operatic Society at Horninglow Secondary School in Harehedge Lane all this week. The first performance was last night, and the show is being performed each evening at 7.15, with a matinee performance on Saturday at 2.30 p.m.

It was given an enthusiastic reception by a near capacity audience last night.

For the society it was a notable departure from their usual Gilbert and Sullivan or Edward German operettas, although, of course, two years ago they presented "Song of Norway," with music by Grieg.

"The Merry Widow" contains some of Lehar's finest Viennese-type music, and its tunes have been sung and whistled the world over.

The Burton Society's presentation is colourful and well up to the standard of their previous shows. Indeed, for sheer colour the opening was probably the finest thing they have done for many a year.

Costumes, scenery and decor brought a gasp of admiration as the curtain went up on the first night, and not far behind in quality was the singing of the delightful Lehar songs.

A CAPTIVATING ANNA

Sheila Boyce made a captivating Anna. In the name part she sang and acted with a gay sparkle, capturing its mood in fine style.

Alan Thompson as the amorous Danilo was a little more restrained, but he, too, sang and acted well. He was particularly effective in his duets with Miss Boyce.

As Baron Zeta, Reg Brunning—no stranger to local stages—looked the part and sang well. He also displayed a nice sense of comedy. Joy Appleby, as his wife, proved an admirable foil, and also sang well.

Terry Bassett was not always convincing as Camille, but he handled the role well, and showed a nice flair for comedy.

Another who shone in the comedy scenes was Edgar Williams as the Baron's factotum.

Good support to these principals came from George Bruce and John Hall-sall, two diplomatic guests with their eyes on the widow's vast fortune; Michael Thorne as an attache; and Joan Gilbert as his wife.

Other leading parts were well taken by Keith Gould and Christopher Williams (attaches), Gena Jackson and Brenda Neal (lady guests), and by Betty Booth, Jane Ward, Barbara Binnersley, Pat Neale, Joan Williams and Coral Crinnell, the attractive young ladies from Maxim's.

DELIGHTFUL SINGING BY CHORUS

The chorus—whose singing throughout was a delight—consisted of Glenna Acres, Glenise Blant, Brenda Bond, Jennifer Bond, Dorothy Bramham, Lily Brunning, Linda Bowler, Betty Hall-sall, Stella Hambleton, Joy Harris, Jean Hendry, Valerie Keeling, Mollie Kidger, Eunice Marler, Ann Meddings, Doris Postle, Ann Shorthose, Lorna Staley, Joyce Tallis, Mabel Whiteland, Joe Buckley, Jack Copeland, James Gould, Garth Hamp-Gopsill, Joe Hickman, Terence Hickman, Stanley Hunt, Michael Johnson, Ken Lowe, Harry Scattergood, and Reo Tebbett.

The operetta was directed by Charles Pole and the orchestra—to whom much of the success of the production was due—was under the baton of Arthur Ormerod.

The behind-the-scenes workers played their part, and must take a share of credit for the obvious success of the show.

They include Evelyn Woodhouse, L.R.A.M. (accompanist), Ray Postle (house manager), Pat Peace (assistant house manager), Peter Binnersley (stage manager), Peter Appleby (assistant stage manager), Francis Bates, Keith Dadley and Michael Thompson (lighting), Mary Thornley, Agnes Cottrell and C. Dicken (wardrobe), Sheila Bruce (prompter), Kay Goodrich (props), Peter Appleby, Peter Binnersley and Len Harvey who designed the scenery, which was constructed and painted by Jimmie Harvey, Jack Last, Derek Rudin, Ken Vye, Ray Welton and Gerald Wright.