

# A merry operetta

For over 25 years the Burton and District Operatic Society have been delighting local audiences with their performances of popular comic operas and operettas — originally concentrating mainly on Gilbert and Sullivan — and this week they are celebrating their Jubilee with a sparkling presentation of *The Merry Widow* at the Wulfric School in Harehedge Lane.

Judging from the deserved reception accorded the production at Monday's first night they can chalk up yet another in their long line of successes.

*The Merry Widow* — which they last performed in 1965 — is the best known and best loved of the Franz Lehar operettas, with plenty of good tunes, lavish costumes and a "plot" which does not over-stretch the imagination.

Set 'in the Pontevedrian Embassy in Paris, it is the story

of the efforts of the Ambassador to get his attache, the dashing Danilo, to marry the fabulously rich Madame Glavari, an attractive and eligible widow, to save the fading fortunes of "The Fatherland."

But his wife, Valencienne, has ideas of her own — she wishes to see the besotted Count de Rosillon betrothed to the rich widow.

But the plot matters little — it is the music which counts, and the score of Franz Lehar retains its popularity over the passing years. There are fine tunes in abundance — the lilting "Vilja," the world famous Waltz, and the rousing "You'll find me at Maxim's" to name but a few.

Christine George is a delightful Anna, singing well and looking suitably coquettish, while Alan Thompson as Danilo, looks and acts in true raffish fashion as Danilo. He makes the best of his baritone voice, particularly in the

duets, and is an admirable foil for his leading lady.

I was particularly impressed by the work of Ann Oakley as Valencienne, wife of the Ambassador, and the possessor of a fine voice and a whimsical charm.

As the Ambassador, Gordon Head carries off the acting honours with a droll performance, and there is more fine tenor singing from Adrian Bader as Count de Rosillon — the love-sick suitor of Valencienne.

Good supporting roles are taken by John Gould, Terry Bassett, Ivor Betteridge, William Poole and Joan Burman.

John Stuart and Keith Gould are well cast as two attaches, as is Anne Clarke and Joyce Burton as lady guests.

The "Grisettes" at Maxim's are Di Gould, Louise Evanson, Julie Boulton, Jennie Tomlinson and Maragaret Gordon, with Pamela Clarke as Margot.

There is fine support from the chorus and dancers, and especially from the orchestra

under the direction of Coral Gould, ably supported by Myra Mesaritis. Choreography is by Prudence Wollaston.

Others taking part are:

Ladies and gentlemen of the chorus: Glenna Acres, Joy Appleby, Glenise Blant, Betty Booth, Sue Briggs, Stella Hambleton, Ann Holmes, Violet Smith, Maggie Stone, Linda Stuart, Jean Rogers, Rosemary Taylor, Arlene Thompson, Sheila Webber, Monica Welton, Mabel Whiteland, Maureen Woolley, Jack Copeland, Maurice Goodhead, Mike Hackett, Stan Hunt, Steve Hickman, Julian Mason, Trevor Nicholls, Jim Thornley.

Dancers; Alison Chesters, Ann Forest, Allyson Hunt, Rachel Wollaston.

A feature of the production is the lavish costumes and fine sets.

This is a "team" effort by the players with everyone contributing to a highly successful and most enjoyable production.

The operetta runs until Saturday.—T.W.L.