



Happy smiles from the Carousel cast.

Society's show a magic roundabout

There's a saying in show biz that everything will be all right on the night. It's a useful thing to say when rehearsal frustrations build up and people start dropping out of the cast at a late stage.

Preparations had gone so well for Burton and District Operatic Society's version of Carousel that some officials wondered what fate might have been storing up for them for Monday night's opening at the Wulfric School, Horninglow.

"My fingers are crossed. It's just too good to be true," Mr. Society's vice-chairman, Mr. Keith Dudley, who was the mastermind behind the splendid lighting arrangements, told me just before curtain up.

But the fears were groundless. The opening performance went like clockwork and by the interval Mr. Frank Doran, the producer, was smiling broadly as he sipped his coffee.

For the musical fraternity, Carousel has the lot, a strong storyline interlaced with a measure of tear-jerking, the odd flash of comedy, chorus numbers to get the feet tapping and some outstanding solo singing with June is Bustin Out All Over and You'll Never Walk Alone (without the aid of the kop choir) ringing in everyone's ears.

Carousel is one of a long line of musicals to be presented by the enterprising Society at Wulfric School, where the curtain has gone up on many fine shows over the last two decades. And when the final curtain rings down tonight, no doubt to thunderous applause, some 2,400 people will have seen the show, for it was a sell-out from the word go.

The Society worked on a show budget of £3,000 and excellent value for money it turned out to be. Music rehearsals started in April and production rehearsals in June from the Society's H.Q. in Ferry Street, Stapenhill.

RESTRICTED

The only change from the original cast was when Linda Stuart came in at the end of July to play Nettie. It was to be her first principal role after some chorus spots and she stepped handsomely into the shoes of Christine George, who left to take a professional engagement with the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company.

Mr. Dudley proudly referred to the fact that the average age of the Society members was going down due to the young dance team, aged from nine to 15, a credit to the skill of Prudence Wollaston, who had charge of choreography.

Dressing was faultless, the dance routines eye-catching. And if one or two dancers seemed a trifle stiff on the opening night.

I'm sure that one occasion would serve to get on top of opening night nerves and enable them to have a more relaxed approach for the rest of the week.

One thing is sure, the Burton Society has a tremendous back-up of young talent.

Mr. Doran wondered if they might be criticised because scenery for the show had been restricted. "I decided to dispense with some formal scenery in order to get more people on the stage. With up to 50 people on the stage at one time movement can be very restricted if the stage is too cluttered.

"I was determined to concentrate more on the players and the use of clever lighting," he said.

And so the show. The story is set on the New England Coast and opens in an amusement park. Steve Dunning plays Billy Bigelow, the busker who falls in love with Julie Jordan, played by Ann Oakley.

Steve and Ann scored with performances that drew spontaneous applause, both for their acting and singing. Steve's My Boy Billy I had to rate the best solo effort.

When Julie becomes pregnant Billy, a short-tempered character with a big heart, is tempted to join Jigger (Gordon Fry) in a bid to get some cash by robbing the mill owner.

DAMPEYES

It's a complete botch-up and when the police close in the proud Billy stabs himself. In Heaven some 15 years later he gets the chance to come back to Earth for a day to try to help out his long-suffering wife and daughter who have had a rough time because of his reputation.

But it all comes right in the end, leaving quite a few members the audience dabbing at damp eyes as Billy fades into the blue — only to return to heart-warming applause at bow-taking time.

In this type of production it is hard to single out people for special mention without being unfair to others, but I must commend Ann Dunning's version of the vivacious Carrie Piperidge, Pamela Clarke's Mrs. Mullin, Adrian Bader as the pompous Enoch Snow, Alison Chesters as Hannah, Betty Booth as Army, Reg Yates as Jonathan, and the other principals Robert Hughes, Ivor Betteridge, Bill Taylor, Dennis Atton, Roy Smith, John Stuart, Alan Thompson, Nicola Atkinson, Davis Smith, Jim Thornley, Alan Thompson and Pia Antrobus, an eye-catching acrobat.

Of course, it would not have succeeded without the musicians, directed by Myra Meseritis and Bertram Herbert, who did an excellent job, and a backroom team led by the society's chairman, Mr. Alan Thompson, who endeavoured to leave

nothing to chance, and even now is planning ahead for the society's next production Rudigore, at the Wulfric School from February 25-28th.

DANCERS

Carol Hussey, Debbie Roseway and Jennie Tomlinson swayed to the music of the Carousel and flicked their skirts provocatively as the Beauties of Europe. Enoch Snow's children were played by Andrew Booth, Amelia Clark, Jenny Goodhead, Lynn Goodhead, Denise Holmes, Anita Taylor, Jackie Thompson and Jane Woodcock.

The hornpipe dancers were Richard Dean, Steve Hickman, Mike Morley, David Smith and Reg Yates.

No musical would score without its team of singers and dancers who give body to the production. So take a bow (singers): Joy Appleby, Glenise Blant, Sue Briggs, Joan Burman, Joyce Burton, Christine Eales, Stella Hambleton, Anne Holmes, Jean Rogers, Rosemary Taylor, Arlene Thompson, Sheila Weber, Monica Welton, Mabel Whiteland, Maureen Woolley, Dennis Atton, John Biddle, Joe Buckley, Richard Dean, Toddy Easton, Maurice Goodhead, Steve Hickman, Stan Hunt, Julian Mason, Mike Morley and William Poole.

Dancers: Andrea Burrows, Tina Davis, Louise Evanson, Sarah Harvey, Anita Haycock, Rachel Mathews and Debbie Roseway.

Playing in the orchestra were Howard Jones, leader, Louis Tanti, Peter Lawson, Helen Nash, Helen Burton, Ann Boulby,

Andrew Robinson, Tony Mortimer, Tony Reynolds, Julia Williams, Christine Bassett, Moira Hendry, James Gibbs, Paul Thursfield, Howard Smith, Ron Mander and Vic Benson.

HELPERS

The team whose work contributed to the success of Carousel but by the order of things do not appear before the footlights are energetic secretary Joycelyn Hickman, treasurer Jack Copeland, social secretary Ann Clarke and committee members Jack Last and John Stuart.

House manager was Don Shorthouse, patron secretary Louise Evanson, publicity and programmes Joyce Burton, lighting design Francis Bates, stage manager David Hussey, properties Kitty Buckley and Margaret Glover, call-boy Joycelyn Hickman, assistant house manager Jack Last, performance secretary Effie Shorthouse, programme design James Grant, lighting board Keith Dudley and Michael Thompson, assistant stage manager John Stuart, wardrobe May Thornley, Audrey Hackett, prompt Janet Louch.

The scenery was designed by Frank Doran and constructed and painted by David Hussey, John Stuart, Peter Appleby, Joe Buckley, Kitty Buckley, John Burton, Peter Clarke, David Eales, Toddy Easton, Margaret Glover, Violetta Goldstein, Keith Gould James Grant.

The first night audience went home whistling and humming the show's hit tunes, a sure sign the production had made a deep impression. — Walter Harding.



Ann Oakley as Julie and Steve Dunning as Billy.