

"PINK CHAMPAGNE" HAS PLENTY OF SPARKLE

Operatic Society shine in gay Strauss work

Many people brew their own beer and just as many make their own wine. But how many know how to make "Pink Champagne."

According to the Burton and District Operatic Society, "Pink Champagne" is made from a plot as light as candyfloss, fine costumes, excellent scenery, and a selection of waltzes which made Johann Strauss the toast of old Vienna.

The result may not be potable but it's certainly enjoyable and you can see the fruits of the Society's labours every night this week up to, and including Saturday at Horninglow Secondary School.

Last night, at the first performance of this production, "Pink Champagne" was presented to a large and enthusiastic audience.

Basically the plot of "Champagne"—which is the English adaptation of "Die Fledermaus"—is as substantial as an evening mist. It's raison d'être is purely as a vehicle for a large selection of waltzes.

The two main characters are Gabriel von Eisenstein, a prominent member of Viennese society, and his wife Rosalinda.

They are due to celebrate their tenth wedding anniversary, but the night before that great day Gabriel and his friend Dr. Falke paint the town red.

IN PRISON

Gabriel pushes Falke, who is in fancy dress costume and dressed as a bat, into a fountain. For this he gets eight days in prison. He must report to the prison at 10.0 p.m. on his wedding anniversary.

That particular evening also happens to be when the ball of the year is being held, courtesy of the jaded Russian aristocrat Count Orlovsky.

Now hold tight here because the plot really thickens at this point Rosalinda has an admirer in Alfred, an Italian opera singer and he pays a visit to her that night.

In the meantime Gabriel has received an invitation to Orlovsky's party, courtesy of Falke. So too has the Von Eisenstein's maid, Adele.

Now then, Gabriel decides to go to the ball before reporting to prison, Adele goes to the ball pretending to be Olga, a ballerina and Rosalinda goes to the ball pretending to be a Hungarian countess. I forget to mention that Gabriel pretends to be a Marquis.

In the meantime Alfred, the opera singer, gets arrested by the prison governor, Colonel Frank, by mistake. Frank thinks Alfred is really Gabriel.

Things come to a head at the ball, to which everyone seems to have got an invitation and they're all pretending to be someone else. And who's at the bottom of all this. Why, Dr. Falke, of course, who is getting revenge

on Gabriel for pushing him into a fountain.

CRYSTAL CLEAR

Surprisingly, the plot seems crystal clear on the stage and it is eased along with generous helpings of Strauss's music.

Last night's performance was a lavish affair. The costumes were gay, colourful and sumptuous and a great deal of credit must go to the wardrobe mistresses — Mary Thornley, Agnes Cottrell and Janet Louch — for their work here.

The scenery too was extremely well done. Credit for this goes to Clive and Mick Baker, Jimmie Harvey, Sally Muirhead and all those who lent a hand in building it.

But of course, in an operetta such as this, everything stands or falls by the music.

And, I'm afraid, I must say that at times I wished some of the solo artistes had voices with a wider range and a little more power. In general the ladies of the cast performed better in this field and particular mention must be made of Joy Appleby, as Rosalinda, Betty Booth, as Adele, and Ann Oakley as Ida, Adele's sister.

These three performed well and their voices had both the power and the sensitivity to enhance the roles in which they were cast.

Good performances were also turned in by Margaret Gordon, as Mitzi, Christine George, as Lea, Pamela Clarke, as Lilli, and Joan Burman as Frau Trauber.

Alan Thompson, as Gabriel, had the major part in the operetta and he performed it well. His voice wasn't as powerful as it might have been but he made up for this with plenty of expression.

Roy Smith, as Dr. Falke, injected a lot of character into his performance and he sang well. So too did Davil Neal, as Orlovsky, and Bill Phillips as Colonel Frank.

In all, "Pink Champagne" was extremely enjoyable both visually and musically—the latter being enhanced by the performance of the orchestra under the direction of Arthur Ormerod and Coral Gould and conducted by Mr. Ormerod.

—B.H.

Usual high standard of singing

IT IS WORTH seeing Burton Operatic Society's production of Pink Champagne at Horninglow Secondary School this week to hear again the wonderful music of Johann Strauss, beautifully played by a seventeen-piece orchestra under the baton of Arthur Ormerod.

The show is an adaptation of Strauss's *Die Fledermaus*, a farcical story of life in Vienna in 1874, when society was only permissive if you didn't get found out. And of course, everyone finds out, causing endless predictable funny situations.

There was the usual high standard of singing, with Joy Appleby's rendering of Lilt of Gypsy Music proving a particular delight.

DANCING TOO

There's dancing, too, of course, and Alan Thompson and Bill Phillips were excellent in comic dance routines.

An indication of the happy teamwork of the society is that faces familiar from principal roles in earlier productions are to be seen in humbler parts this time.

Obviously none of the jealousy and temperament of the professional stage filters through to these talented amateur performers.

If you can stand the rather dated comedy and the larger than life characters, or think it's worth putting up with it to hear those Strauss tunes, you have until Saturday to see the show.

D.S.

Sparkling "Champagne"

I went to see the Burton and District Operatic Society's latest production on Monday at Horninglow Secondary School.

Their production is "Pink Champagne"—the English-language version of Johann Strauss' "*Die Fledermaus*."

The thing that most impressed me about this effort was the great amount of care put into the selection of the costumes, which captured extremely well the feeling of old Vienna, and the excellent scenery. Anyone who has seen

the production will agree with me, I'm sure.

I must confess I was a little disappointed at times with the singing of some of the male members of the group, but this was overshadowed by the excellently scored and constructed chorus songs.

If you haven't seen the production yet, it's on tonight, to-morrow night and Saturday night and the cost of admission is 45p.

