

Enjoyment of G and S marred by a tall gent

THE humour of Gilbert and Sullivan, this time poking fun at women's colleges, and the spectacle of Burton Operatic Society in their production of *Princess Ida*, was marred to some extent by the shortcomings of the venue last night.

Many people in the audience must have been close to hitting the person in front of them over the head. I found myself behind a particularly tall gentleman who insisted on leaning first to one side and then to the other.

While the Operatic Society must be grateful, as indeed must the people who enjoyed their singing, to the governors of the William Hutson School for lending their facilities, they must long for the day when Burton has some real theatre facilities available to all local drama groups.

The production itself was a credit to producer Charles Pole, and all members of the society. The chorus scenes were fine — very stirring and enjoyable — but with one or two exceptions, the soloists lacked clarity and strength of voice to put over their songs.

CLEAR AND STRONG

At the top of the exceptions was Sheila Boyce as *Princess Ida*. Her voice was clearer and stronger than any, and the audience immediately warmed.

Best of the male voices was undoubtedly the strong bass of Terry Bassett, playing *Guron*. Not far behind was Adrian Bader as *Cyril*. His voice seems to have improved since last year's production of the *Gipsy Baron*. Not only did he

sing well, he seems to have a natural talent for humour.

A fine performance too came from John Gould as *King Gama*, the deformed and disagreeable father of *Princess Ida*.

But the chorus scenes were the outstanding thing about the production. Their strength and clarity, combined with marvellous costumes and scenery served to make them unforgettable.

M.W.

"PRINCESS IDA" A TRIUMPH

The Burton and District Operatic Society have always had a reputation for the excellence of their productions, and this year's choice, Gilbert and Sullivan's "Princess Ida," is no exception.

It opened at the Horn-inglow Secondary School on Monday night and will be performed to-night, to-morrow and Saturday at 7.15 p.m. There will also be a matinee performance on Saturday at 2.15 p.m.

The production is certainly well worth seeing if only for the costumes and scenery, which are nothing less than superb. The Operatic Society always does its utmost to put on a professional polish on its

productions, and it has succeeded again this year.

A special mention must be made of Sheila Boyce, who plays the role of Princess Ida. She has an exquisite voice with a very wide range and she succeeds in putting a great deal of emotion into her performance.

Musical director Arthur Ormerod must be complimented for the way in which the chorus scenes are arranged. "Princess Ida" is one of Gilbert and Sullivan's more melodic operettas and Mr. Ormerod has made full use of this.



THE VILLAINS OF THE PIECE. Seen here are members of the cast of the Burton and District Operatic Society's production of "Princess Ida." Left to right: Alan Mitchell, Roy Smith, Terry Bassett and (front) John Gould.



THE CHORUS AND ORCHESTRA of the Burton and District Operatic Society's production of "Princess Ida," being presented at Horninglow Secondary School,

"PRINCESS IDA" IS FEAST OF COLOUR AND SPECTACLE

Excellent singing marks opening night

As the curtains were drawn back last night at the first performance of the Burton and District Operatic Society's production of "Princess Ida," the audience burst into applause to signal their appreciation of the superb costumes and scenery which dazzled the eye of the beholder.

The opera will be performed nightly at the Horninglow Secondary School, Harehedge Lane, up to and including Saturday at 7.15 p.m. There will also be a matinee performance on Saturday at 2.15 p.m.

"Princess Ida," by Gilbert and Sullivan, was the vehicle by which W. S. Gilbert poked fun at the idea of women's colleges.

The scene opens with King Hildebrand and his son Hilarion waiting for the arrival of the deformed King Gama and his daughter, Princess Ida. Hilarion and Ida were betrothed at the age of two and one respectively and twenty years have passed since then.

Gama and his three hulking sons, Arac, Guron and Scynthus arrive but without the expected Ida. Gama explains that she has taken to Castle Adamant where she has instituted a women's university. Supporting her in her scheme to renounce men and all their works are the ladies Blanche and Psyche.

Hilarion, obviously eager to celebrate his 20th wedding anniversary in a right and fitting manner, is galvanised into action. With two friends, Cyril and Florion, in tow he makes for the castle.

They break in and, dressed as female students, they make the acquaintance of Princess Ida and attempt to persuade her to give up her scheme. Unfortunately, the transvested trio are discovered, thanks to Cyril, and they are imprisoned.

DEMANDING ROLE

King Hildebrand learns of this and storms Castle Adamant. Gama's three sons battle it out with Hilarion and his two friends and are beaten. Princess Ida, with all her schemes for the female domination of the world in ruins about her, admits defeat and everybody lives happily ever after.

The role of Princess Ida is undoubtedly the most demanding and Sheila Boyce certainly played it well. She has an excellent range and a strong voice, not to mention a penchant for the dramatic flourish.

The audience greatly enjoyed her singing and I, for one, found her the most powerful of the solo singers.

Of the male singers Adrian Bader, who played Cyril, was the most impressive. His voice has improved remarkably since last year's production in both range and power and he projected himself well.

Easily the most amusing scene was that in which Cyril, Florion and Hilarion were dressed as female students. Adrian Bader, David Neal and Ken Lowe had the audience howling with laughter with their antics.

Almost as amusing, but in a different way, were the three hulking brothers, Arac (Roy Smith), Guron (Terry Bassett) and Scynthus (Alan Mitchell).

PERFECT FOILS

These three gentlemen played the brothers with great skill and gave a great deal of amusement with their ponderous slow-witted comments and actions.

John Gould filled the role of the wheedling, hasty King Gama very well indeed. After an initial fluster over his lines, which he overcame very quickly, John went on to turn in a good performance.

Marion Yeomans and Sheila Garside as the ladies Blanche and Psyche proved the perfect foils to Princess Ida. Marion as the pedantic Blanche forever postulating theories on the application of the subjunctive and Sheila as the gentle Professor of Humanities, sweet and melodic.

"Princess Ida" is one of the more musical G. and S. offerings, concentrating more on the melody than the comedy—although there is an ample measure of the latter.

The Operatic Society excelled in the chorus scenes and compliment must be paid to the musical director Arthur Ormerod for the way in which the cast brought out to the full the rich melodies in this opera.

"Princess Ida" as performed by the Burton Operatic Society proved to be a feast of colour and spectacle, coupled with excellent singing—and who could ask for more than that?