

Dumas double an absorbing entertainment

All 4 One CHAODS Civic Theatre

IN a bold move away from "standard" musicals, CHAODS chose a practically new musical by local writers for its Spring Production. All 4 One is an amalgam of a pair of Dumas classics, The Three Musketeers (here, there are four) and the Man in the Iron Mask. Director Ray Jefferies has developed a production far more intelligent and true to the original than - say - Les Miserables, which is a banal love story clad loosely in Revolutionary

garb.

The music, by local composer John Trent Wallace, is full of complex rhythms and structures and rewards intelligent listening.

It was played with panache under Andrew Denyer's direction. The group's legendary chorus work was fully realised too.

The book and lyrics, also by a local, Kevin Heuston, are equally complicated and pay close attention to the originals.

The four musketeers - Nick Court, David Pridge, Karl Wilson and Patrick Tucker - have a very wide range of voices which they blended beautifully in a

pair of stunning quartets. For me, a delicate duet between Nick Court as D'Artagnan and the ever-graceful Claire McGeough as his lover, will live on in my memory.

The costumes were breathtaking and sets elegantly spare - though the first four rows of the coughing stalls could have done with less stage smoke.

In the final analysis, this is never going to be a popular smash hit because no one leaves the theatre with tunes running through their heads.

But it is an absorbing evening's entertainment, and I hope it will see further productions.

JIM HUTCHON