

The audience hardly felt like dancing

BUT 'DANCING YEARS' STARS DESERVE PRAISE

TWO dozen of my best verbal roses to Miss Vera Stock and Mr. William Broadley, stars of the Chelmsford Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society's marathon effort, "The Dancing Years," which is being produced at the Regent Theatre, Chelmsford, this week.

Or perhaps they should be awarded a medal for meritorious conduct.

The show appeared to be far too ambitious a project for an amateur company. The great number of scene changes necessary to the action of the play slowed it up considerably. There were obviously few facilities for dealing with the scenery and backcloths. As a result the changes were effected inefficiently, far too noisily, and far too slowly.

Good-humoured though the first-night audience were, they found the four-hour sit comparable to that experienced when seeing "Gone with the Wind." And the effect was much the same.

However the members of the large cast must have been near exhaustion by the end of the performance. They are to be congratulated. Special praise is due to Robert Vernon, who managed his cast with the minimum confusion.

In her role as Maria Zeigler, Miss Stock sang delightfully and acted well. Her portrayal showed the necessary poise and assurance, and never once struck a false note.

MAJOR ROLE

William Broadley more than justified his first major role for the society. A very talented young man, he made an excellent Rudi Kleber, although at times his acting seemed rather more suited to a straight play than a musical.

Josephine Maisey was very good as the kind-hearted Hattie, and Stan Parsons made an effective Franzel. June Gisby was adequate at Grete Schone, but it was a great pity that Ted Matthews did not put more charm of manner into his role as Prince Charles Metterling.

The leading players were very well supported by Eric Strutt, Anne Fleming, Peggy Welham, Vera Sell,

Peter Smith, Rosemary Gornall, Robin Sampson, Alan Harper, Fred Gisby, Herbert Heistermann, Iris Allen, Frank Morgan, John Howitt, and Ethel Brook, who sang very well.

Young Alan Sievewright gave a neat performance as Carl, and endeared himself to the audience.

CHORUS

Dancing from the chorus, arranged by Miss Sadie Sydney, was of a high standard. The choruses included Pat Smith, Trixie Brewer, Beryl Goulden, Diane Lawson, Keith Harper, Kay Trost, Derek Ann, Fred Gisby, John Trost, Tony Richardson, Margaret French, Josephine Dyson, Roy Morris, Tony Oliver, Una Harris, Christine Richardson, Barbara Sherman, Betty Wager, Pam Williams, Peter Smith, Flora Cook, Elizabeth Dutton, Sylvia Easton, Julie Fairhead, Anne Fleming, Lilian George, Gwendoline Gibson, Joan Hann, Doreen Harrell, Carolyn Hudson, Betty Loman, Muriel Passmore, Vera Pope, Ruth Robinson, Vera Sell, Peggy Welham, John Boyle, Ken Collins, John Howitt, Herbert Heistermann, John Morella, George Pheby, and Ron Perry.

Scenery, supplied by Stage Scenery, Ltd., was excellent, but had a disturbing tendency to move at odd movements during the show.

Hon. musical director was George H. Horrey; hon. wardrobe mistress, Amy Warren; hon. prompter, Alec Torry; hon. call girl, Jane Andrews; hon. property master, Stan Stewart; peruquiers, Jules Marten, assisted by Frank Morgan, Frank Page, Mary Leech, and Josephine Maisey; hon. publicity, Peter Smith, Rosemary Gornall, John Morella; stage manager and chief electrician, R. Burton.

J.F.