

Jewel of a jubilee choice

Civic Theatre, Chelmsford, Fiddler On The Roof, till Saturday

SOMETIMES a show produced for a special occasion doesn't quite match up to that occasion because people try too hard; sometimes the occasion inspires everyone to give a performance beyond their normal capabilities.

Fiddler On The Roof marks the diamond jubilee of the Chelmsford Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society in right worthy style, with everyone of the large cast giving a fine performance.

The moment the chorus burst into the opening song and dance routine, Tradition, I knew this show was going to be a big smash hit.

Director Ray Jeffery has blown an invigorating wind of change through the society since he started to direct their shows in the mid-1970s, but he has never done a finer job than with this musical about a small Jewish community in Czarist Russia threatened with deportation.

All the qualities we have come to expect of him are present – thrilling dance routines, exciting colourful movement, lusty chorus singing, fine acting and singing from the principals – plus a sensitiveness to the pathos that always lurks near the surface in the Fiddler's most extrovert moments.

Ken Cooper, as Tevye, makes this milkman as loveable for his faults as his virtues, while Audrey Hinton brings to his wife Golda all the matriarchal qualities required of the sheet anchor of the family.

Lynette Bendall, Christine Young and Sally Lorkin each in their different ways give out-



RELAXING after the first night of Fiddler On The Roof, the cast gathered round Norman Bellamy – who appeared in the first of the Chelmsford Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society's shows in 1921 – to look at his programme and hear what life was like in the good old days.

standing performances as Tevye's daughters, Tzeitel, Hodel and Chava.

Christine's singing of Far From the Home I Love and Sally's pleading with her father to recognise her marriage to Fyedka were just two of the moments on Monday that brought tears to my eyes, so powerful were the emotions their acting engendered.

But even more heart-rending

is Joy Wallace's performance as Yente, the matchmaker. Her final scene with Golda haunts the memory, not just for its pathos, but the dignity of the human being in adversity it portrays.

And nor must I forget Peter Smith's fine study of the shy suitor Motel, Bert Simpson's big-hearted Lazar Wolf, Leo McGiff's jovial Mordcha and Arnold Graystone's unpleasantly authoritarian constable.

The Bottle Dancers (Richard Clements, Simon Fisher, Philip Gill, Simon Ward, Roy Parrott and Mark Fox) and the Russian Dancers (Richard Clements, Simon Coates, Simon Fisher, Philip Gill, Paul Reeve, Simon Ward, Roy Parrott, Mark Fox and Peter Sherlock) provide routines as thrilling as any we've seen on the Civic Theatre stage.

Sometimes CAODS' shows have been marred by overloud

orchestral accompaniment, but in Fiddler musical director Ian Hayter has got everything just right, so we can enjoy all the subtleties of Jerry Bock's score.

Every seat for the show was sold before curtain up on Monday and deservedly so. Yes, Fiddler On The Roof is fully worthy of the occasion. For that I give three rousing and prolonged cheers! P.A.