

Gigi is full of romance

IT'S romance with a capital R, or should I say amour with a capital A at Chelmsford's Civic Theatre all this week where the town's amateur operatic and dramatic society is presenting Gigi.

This tale of how a Parisian philanderer, Gaston, finally tires of having affairs with women, and falls in love and marries the sweet innocent Gigi is set at the turn of the century and was first seen as a film.

It's no use pretending its transformation into a stage musical is entirely successful, the first act, in particular being very bitsy and fragmented.

But I lost my heart to the Gigi of Christine Young the moment she first appeared on stage, her performance being lit by a radiance no matter what mood she is called upon to assume.

Patrick Tucker is equally convincing as Gaston, while Leo McGiff is both avuncular and gallant at Honore. His duet with Marmita, engagingly played by Joy Wallace, I Remember It Well is one of the high spots of the show.

Another fine performance emanates from Audrey Hinton, as Aunt Alicia, who shows that, when it comes to preparing a girl for the marriage market, nothing but haut couture will do.

Of the cameos those of Victor Tuck as Gaston's lawyer and Simon Fisher as a telephone installer, stand out.

But on Monday attention to detail and the general staging was well below Chelmsford Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society's accustomed high standards, doubtless in part due to the extra difficulties caused by the temporary absence of a scene dock during the extensions to the Civic.

But the stage crew's efforts to set the next scene were often only too audible, the interior set for Marita's was disturbingly insecure, a bottle of drink seemed to be empty and the French newspapers of 1901 looked suspiciously English and contemporary.

As with all Ray Jeffery productions the dance routines are vital and alive, and the magnificence of the costumes make this Gigi an impressive visual spectacle.

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