

CHELMSFORD Operatic and Dramatic Society is putting on a gay, zestful, colourful full-of-life show, "Guys and Dolls," at the Regent Theatre this week.

It has about it that spirit so vital in a musical but which in the past year or two has shown signs of escaping the Operatic's grasp.

There is one glaring, blaring fault—or there was on the opening night, Monday—and that was the overloud orchestra.

It is a good orchestra, but it just swamped the singing and, in some cases the dialogue, during the early scenes.

When they do break through the sound barrier the voices are very pleasing voices indeed.

"Guys and Dolls" — is about Broadway in the piping days of Damon Runyan's imagination and tells the story of an inveterate gambler and a Salvation Army lass who fall in love.

TOP TEAM

In these two leading roles are last year's top team of Freddie Costello and Pat Viles. Both have voices big enough for the parts and sing attractively together. And they can act as well!

The show is also a success for Beryl Manaton as the scene-stealing night club dancer, who has been engaged for 14 years without managing to get her reluctant beau, played by Stan Parsons, to the altar.

This comic couple are fun to watch and to listen to.

Arthur Staniland provides the cast with another strong voice, and the show reaches quite a peak when he leads the singing of "Sit down, you're rocking the boat" backed up by a big chorus.

DANCE APPEAL

But if no-one sang a note the show would still have plenty of appeal the dancing is great.

There is a particularly attractive line-up of chorus girls.

And their talent is by no means confined to appearance and the male dancers have never been stronger, with outstanding performances by Peter Smith and John Daldry.

SENSATIONAL

When the two teams get together in the "Havana" number the result is quite a sensational scene of colour and movement.

It is a show of speed and spirit. The acting is not always too wonderful, but the general effect is one of happiness and warming humour.

The cast in addition to those already mentioned includes: Robin Sampson, Ron Bearman, Jim Allen, Roger Ball, Neville Burt, David Warder, Margaret Ryder, Audrey Adler and Jose Cabral.

The Chorus comprises Edna Bennett, Sally Briggs, Jean Clements, Pauline Conolly, Marian Dann, Iris Ford, Madeline Gardner, Audrey Hinton, Marea Jones, Prudence Lyod, Maureen Masters, Audrey McAuliffe, Sandra Mills, Gloria Nicholls, Rita Noble, Anne Palmer, Sheila Prior, Linda Smith, Kay Trost, Marina Tyler, Stella Wakeman, Elizabeth Wilkes, Norah Williams, Jim Aitken, John Arnold, Stan Bacon, George Bruce, Sid Collicott, John Daldry, Gerald Dodson, Peter Farmer, Gordon Hargreaves, Jeff Hunt, Stan Mold, Robin Rhodes, Bryan Simpson, Peter Smith, Randal Thomas, Robin Tyrell, John Whatham, and Bruce Wilkinson.

The entire production and choreography are by Phyl Payne and the musical director is Terry Steel.

There are further performances tonight (Friday) and tomorrow afternoon and evening.

JIM PEECOCK

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