

CHELMSFORD COMPANY'S SUCCESS

Regent Theatre, Chelmsford: The Chelmsford Amateur Dramatic Society in "The Happiest Days of Your Life" by John Dighton.

This is a very good amateur company with only a few weak spots, and apart from several instances of bad timing they gave a vigorous, enjoyable performance. The play, a moderately interesting example of in-offensive English farce, relies for its situations on the complications that follow when a boys' school is forced, through the error of a Government Ministry, to share its buldings with a girls' school.

The mistaken identity trick, so popular and so helpful in farce writing, produces a lot of fun and altogether the Society deserved to have fewer empty seats in the handsome theatre.

The men of the company turned in better work than the women and the outstanding contribution of the night came from Frank Morgan as the headmaster of the boys' school. Assessed on this performance Mr. Morgan is an unusually accomplished amateur actor, lacking the self-consciousness of most of his kind.

His Doctor Godfrey Pond is a delightful, tattered but determined schoolmaster who has probably at some time been sacked from Narkover because of occasional twinges of conscience. When driven to it, he certainly twists a doubtful card at pontoon and not all his references are genuine. The best of them must have been written by himself in the four-ale bar of a shady pub in a back alley.

Mr. Roger Massey would do well to cultivate his easy attractive manner and the smaller parts include a well-judged piece of character from Mr. William Rondel as a roaring, suspicious parent.

A bold and most acceptable caricature of a hearty sportin' woman by Miss Ann Massey; an excellent performance by Master Alan Harper as a naughty boy and Mr. Roy Cooper's growling school porter were other affairs to make the evening enjoyable.

Mr. Robert Vernon's production in a technically difficult convention deserves high praise but he must insist that his actors do not talk through the laughs.