

PRODUCER'S DIRECT HIT

Surrealist Goonery of Dancers

Regent Theatre, Chelmsford: "Oklahoma," by the Chelmsford Operatic Society.

Honours for the presentation of this curious mixture of sentiment and knives go without doubt to the producer Phyl Payne, who has again scored a direct hit. Wisely leaving the entire first scene to tell its own naive tale of bucolic life led by handsome cowboys and their lissome women, she concentrates on the dramatic interlude between sex-haunted Jud and Curly, and, of course, on the dream ballet. In the former Stan Parsons as Jud Fry and Freddie Costello in the role of Curly portray strong and inevitable conflict, producing one of the very best pieces of acting in the play.

The dream ballet with Brenda Goddard, Ray Marsh and Sid Collicott is extremely well contrived, especially Brenda Goddard giving an excellent sequence of drama expressed through dance and the dream fight between Jud and Curly most realistic.

The Can-Can, probably only introduced to show the difference between sacred and profane love, came off very well, as did some surrealist goonery by other talented dancers, who also provided excellent fooling in a previous scene.

A NEWCOMER

Gillian Pownall, a newcomer to the company, gives exactly the picture of a starry-eyed girl from the wide open spaces, not knowing which man to love. She has not got much singing voice, but neither have many leading ladies who nevertheless made their mark. Helen Eldridge as Aunt Eller has a surprisingly young and tuneful voice for such an elderly world-wise character, proving again the truth of the old adage that one never knows what youthful fires can burn in middle-aged bosoms.

John Daldry, as Will Parker, matches Curly in looks, and both have good singing voices, in addition to managing their speaking parts equally well. Betty Hughes, as Ado Annie Carnes, provides a nice bit of comedy, and David Flatt, as Ali Hakim, makes quite a hit.

Other parts were well taken by Robin Sampson (Ike), Ken Collins (Fred), Mike Reed (Slim), Ann Palmer (Gertie), Gillian Farr (Aggie), and Jim Welham (Papa Carnes), and all managed the American accent reasonably well, until they began to sing, when they mostly returned to English.

An orchestra, conducted by Dr. A. E. Stephens, played the well-known music pleasantly, and, all in all, this show, which continues for the rest of the week, should draw full houses.

DIAPASON