

# 'Widow Twankey' and Vera Stock were stars

**C**HELMSFORD Amateur Operatic & Dramatic Society —launching for the first time into pantomime this year—made a very good effort with "Aladdin," and thoroughly entertained full Boxing Day audiences with it.

If some of the singing was uncertain and rather thin in volume, the slap-stick comedy scenes were excellently done.

The favourite with the audience was Frank Morgan as Widow Twankey, who acted, joked and tumbled about the stage with all the skill and assurance of a professional. In fact, there cannot have been many dames in provincial pantomime who played his part so easily and with such a sense of fun.

He was very well supported by Roger Massey, always popular in comedy, as Wishee Washee. These two had some grand scenes together, particularly the one in which they and Aladdin made the Christmas pudding which ended in a grey and gluey dough.

Vera Stock, who played Aladdin, was a charming principal boy, who moved gracefully and once more proved herself an able actress.

The part of Princess Balrouba-dour was played by Diane Lawson, who enhanced her reputation with some very sweet singing, and her acting and dancing were full of charm.

William Rondell, as Abanazar, the villain of the piece, was very suitably wicked and was hissed soundly every time he appeared on the stage.

Nick Carter was a booming and regal Emperor, a difficult part to play, as he rarely had the opportunity to unbend.

Among the smaller parts, Andrew Mackinlay was outstanding as the Slave of the Lamp, with a respect-

ful yet deep mysterious voice.

Patricia Holland, as the Genii of the Ring, was most nimble. She is to take up ballet professionally in the New Year.

The comedy parts of the lanky Tu-Hi and the tiny Tu-Lo were played by Albert Miller and Peter Auger, well cast for their respective sizes. Their scene with the ghost, which is a favourite with all pantomime lovers, was beautifully done.

Others in the cast were Kay Amery, as So Shi, a dancing part; Sidney Collicott as Pekoe; and Alfred Nice, Jim Cohen, Jim Welham and Kenneth Collins as the male voice quartette.

The finest dancing of all was given at the end by Roy Morris, in a splendid display of tap-dancing.

The show was produced and directed by Robert Vernon. The book and lyrics were by Basil Thomas, with additions by the producer and two local writers, Michael Kerr and David Smith.

The orchestra was under the direction of Bert Johnson, the accompanist was Joan Brandon. The dancing was in the hands of Miss Doris Rodd.

Behind the scenes, Amy Warren wardrobe mistress; Major F. W. M. Powley the prompter; Peter Smith the property master; Rosemary Gornall and Alec Torry the call girl and boy; Percy Russell, Frank Page, Cecil Boeking, Mrs. H. Eldridge, and Mrs. W. R. Catt were the perruquiers; Will Patston was the stage manager; and R. Burton chief electrician.