



THE WICKED OLD LADIES

Ann Massey (left) and Helen Eldridge, photographed by R. V. Vineall at the dress rehearsal of "Arsenic and Old Lace." They made a big success as the charming old spinsters who store bodies in the cellar.

ESSEX WEEKLY NEWS, FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 1949.

ARSENIC PACKED A WALLOP

Rushing to get home after Tuesday's performance, Mr. Roger Massey, the Mortimer Brewster of Chelmsford Amateur Dramatic and Operatic Society's production of "Arsenic and Old Lace," bumped his head back stage at the Regent Theatre.

Few who saw him on Wednesday can have guessed that there were four stitches in his scalp, thanks to a combination of the talents of the perruquier and Mr. Massey's own exuberant acting. With spirit gum and false hair, he has continued his galloping, energetic performances.

ROGER MASSEY TRIUMPHS IN FIRST STAGE PART

PROLONGED applause and loud encores were heard at the Regent Theatre on Monday at the end of the first performance of "Arsenic and Old Lace," by the Chelmsford Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society.

Without doubt, this thriller-comedy is the best play, and the best-acted show, the Society has put on since the war. It is a personal triumph for a man who has never been on the stage before — Roger Massey.

As an inspired piece of fooling his Mortimer ("I'm a Bastard!") Brewster stole the show. Time and again the audience stopped the show to

applaud his acting as the only sane person in a houseful of madmen.

His (off-stage) wife, Ann Massey, and experienced Helen Eldridge played the dear old sisters round whom the play centres, with professional ease, both giving delightful character studies of the spinsters with a kink.

Donald Leech was excellent as the murderous, Boris Karloff-like Jonathan Brewster, and the supporting parts were all well up to standard.

Make-up and stage direction were first-class and Miss Joyce Waddy, the producer, can congratulate herself on a slickly-running production.

The two-seats-for-the-price-of-one first night packed the theatre, and the audience were given more than full value for their money. Well done!

JOHN PARKER