

OPERATIC SOCIETY

Talented company had packed houses

UNPRECEDENTED scenes for a Chelmsford amateur stage show were seen at the final performance of "Bitter-Sweet" by the Chelmsford Amateur Operatic Society at the Regent Theatre on Saturday, after a week's run that beat all records in the Society's history.

The "house" was packed. It was a gala night. Popular tunes, especially the theme song "I'll see you again," were encored, and all on the stage, principals, chorus, dancers — and the orchestra too — received rounds of applause.

Highlights of the Noel Coward wit, and they abound in "Bitter-Sweet," had to be played over again before the cheering audience was satisfied.

More than once the show was held up by the enthusiasm. It was a great performance from start to finish, lasting fully three and a half hours, and described by competent judges as "easily the best show yet by the Chelmsford Society."

After the final curtain came more enthusiastic scenes. With the whole company, smiling if a little tired, grouped on the stage, numerous bouquets and other gifts were handed up to the players.

Soon the stage became a mass of flowers. Some of the ladies were literally smothered with flowers,

baskets of fruit, and boxes of chocolates. The gay-hearted "Manon" (Helen Eldridge) got over the difficulty by sitting on the stage and grouping her gifts around her!

There were some comical presents for male actors, illustrating in an amusing way the parts they had filled.

Producer Miss Mavis Ward, and musical director Charles Hambourg (cousin of the famous pianist, Mark Hambourg) were called on to the stage and received an ovation from both sides of the footlights.

They both warmly praised the talent of the Chelmsford players, whose work, said Miss Ward, compared favourably with that of societies in far larger places.

Team work

The secret, she said, was team work—everybody putting the best possible into the show.

Dr. John Taylor, acting President of the Society, added his congratulations, and thanked the general public for their magnificent support.

Members of the cast presented Miss Ward with a lovely bouquet. There were also gifts for Mr. Hambourg.

After the show, the players and "back-room boys and girls," with some friends, had a celebration supper.

Although production expenses for such a lavish show were naturally heavy, so good were the attendances throughout the week that there will be a substantial profit.

According to the Society's tradition, it will go to local charities.

"New heights"

An official said: "The public responded most generously to the



MISS MAVIS WARD

appeal to fill the house at the earlier performances, as well as those for the end of the week. Our advance bookings were a record. The full houses were a great encouragement to the performers. There is no doubt we touched new heights this time."