

# FINE EFFORT BY AMATEURS

## "The Dancing Years" at Chelmsford

Ivor Novello's "The Dancing Years," which the Chelmsford Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society are producing in the Regent Theatre, Chelmsford, this week is a romantic musical play which covers a great deal of ground. In terms of time it connects the Vienna of 1911 with the occupation by the Nazis and in human emotions it probes a little deeper than the average run of musical comedies. In terms of music the play rarely leaves the Viennese waltz idiom, which will please most people and fulfils its role as a background to nostalgia.

Pursuing the laudable policy of giving a chance of acting and singing in leading roles to members who show promise but have not yet arrived, the part of the leading lady, Maria Zeigler, was allotted to Vera Stock.

This proved an unqualified success and a remarkable piece of intelligent anticipation. Miss Stock looks the part to perfection, acts, and speaks well and sings most agreeably. She displays the necessary range of emotion and shows that she can be vivacious and touching.

### SINGING AND ACTING

Her partner, Mr. Broadley as the artist Rudi Kleiber, does not have to sing and can concentrate on his acting, which he does very well, although in emotional parts he was inclined last night to overlook that he was taking part in romantic musical comedy and not in a straight play.

Ethel Brook, as the singing mistress and the Countess in the operetta, gave a better display of singing than of acting and her duet with Maria in the rehearsal scene was particularly pleasing. Vocally, Mr. Strutt, as the watchman and the lover in the operetta, did not quite show his usual form, but as he was just recovering from an attack of tonsillitis he did very well under the circumstances.

As Prince Charles Metternich, Mr. Matthews could have put more charm and life into his acting. Josephine Maisey added the necessary colour to her role of Hattie Watne and June Gisby, as the love-lorn Grete, struck the right note. Other parts were taken by Rosemary Gonnall, Anne Fleming, Peggy Welham and Vera Sell, and Stan. Parsons made a good Franzel.

The producer, Mr. Robert Vernon and his stage manager had a Herculean task in staging a show with changes that really demand a revolving stage and in this respect the Chelmsford amateurs may possibly have been a trifle too ambitious. It is physically impossible to mount the huge sets in a limited space without some weary waits, but I daresay some of this will be eliminated in course of time. The music can do with some tightening up, but in Mr. Horrey's capable hands the path of orchestra and singers will be made more straight as the show proceeds on its way.

There is some good dancing and the mimed ballet in front of the cafe in the first act was quite pleasant, as was the dancing by the juveniles in the operetta, for which full marks to Miss Sadie Sydney, the ballet mistress.

DIAPASON.