

'Desert Song' is a jolly good show

By F. J. TAPP

A 22-YEAR-OLD girl clerk and a schoolmaster get most of the applause in this week's £1,000 production of "The Desert Song" by the Chelmsford Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society at the Regent Theatre. Last night the large and enthusiastic audience gave them an ovation at the successful opening performance.

Miss Dorothy Cox is the girl—she's a supervisor in the Land Agency Department of the Essex War Agricultural Executive Committee, and on leave this week. Her acting and singing in the soprano lead of Margot are as good as anything the supporters of the Society can remember is its past high record. This is Dorothy's first appearance in the lead of a local show.

Leonard Pease, the schoolmaster,

no stranger to local amateur operatics, puts into the part of Pierre Barabeau some of his best work yet on a Chelmsford stage. Both these leads have excellent voices, which the enchanting tunes in "Desert Song" enable them to give full expression to.

Perhaps one's most pleasant impression of the show is that the players all work as a team. A good-looking, well-spoken, happy team, enjoying every minute of the two and a half hours' run, and capable of putting over their enjoyment to the audience.

Funny man of the show, Freddie Munnion, is an established Chelmsford favourite. Jan Frewer's General Birabeau, Audrey Parrett's Azuri, and Odette Clarke's Susan are outstanding among the other characters in this all-round successful post-war revival of the Society's activities.

Here is the full cast:—

Sid-El-Kar..	.. .. .	Reginald Bowler
Mindar ..	.. .. .	Jim Welham
Hassi ..	.. .. .	Cecil Bocking
Hadjl ..	.. .. .	Douglas Catt
Neri ..	.. .. .	Phyllis Rowe

Pierre Birabeau ..	.. .. .	Leonard Pease
Benjamin Kidd ..	.. .. .	Fred. Munnion
Azuri ..	.. .. .	Audrey Parrett
Capt. Paul Fontaine ..	.. .. .	Richard Wood
Lieut. La Vergne ..	.. .. .	Jim Welham
Sergeant De Boussac ..	.. .. .	Tom Harper
Susan ..	.. .. .	Odette Clarke
Edith ..	.. .. .	Jose Hadler
Margot Bonvalet ..	.. .. .	Dorothy Cox
General Birabeau ..	.. .. .	Jan Frewer
Clementina ..	.. .. .	Vera Stock
Ali-Ben-Ali ..	.. .. .	Reg. Brown

A vivacious troupe of dancing girls, who include last year's Chelmsford Carnival Queen (June Gisby), come in for much well-deserved applause. The ladies' and men's chorus give good support. Bert Sharpe capably conducts the orchestra.

It is a well-dressed production. Through it all is recognised the mark of Miss Madge Macklin's first-class work as producer. Miss Macklin, also as producer of most of the Society's pre-war shows, has played a great part in building up its high reputation.

There will be a performance each evening this week, with matinees Wednesday and Saturday. At each performance there are 100 unbookable 2/6 seats.