

## Success for Chelmsford Amateurs

# 'Perchance to Dream' is an excellent Show

By Brian Vine

**I**VOR NOVELLO, the late master of sentimentality, would have been very proud of Chelmsford Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society's presentation of his musical romance, "Perchance to Dream," which opened on Monday night at the Regent Theatre, Chelmsford, for one week.

The 40-strong cast captured all the colour, gaiety, and humour of this Novello masterpiece. The songs and choruses were sung with zest, while the fairy-tale story was dramatically portrayed.

The Society reached the peak of its maturity with the excellence of this production. They have proved that they are capable of managing anything from Gilbert and Sullivan, through to Noel Gay, and now Novello's evergreen musicals.

With the memory of this London success still vivid in the mind of many theatre-goers it is easy to disappoint when comparisons are made. On the first night, however, the cast were inspired by the warmth and feeling which made "Perchance To Dream" a West End box office record-breaker.

The Company had worked together to bring a newness to the familiar music. I felt they had striven to enhance the production with an original tang. And more—that they had achieved their object.

Much credit for this originality must be due to the Society's producer PHYL PAYNE. The cast re-acted in the best traditions to her skill and her great experience of the theatre.

The story, which takes place over three periods, Regency, Victorian, and present-day, tells of the descendants of a licentious adventurer, Sir Graham Rodney, who activities include those of a part-time highwayman. His love interest includes a mistress and the daughter of his wealthy and titled aunt.

Happily, his misdemeanours work themselves out over three generations, and the audience's anguish is satisfied with a happy-ever-after ending.

MICHAEL EVANS gives a sincere performance in his three parts, Sir Graham, Valentine, and Bay. Together with a fresh personality he incorporates all the necessary charm of a lover with a good singing voice.

VERA STOCK, as his Regency mistress, Victorian wife, and modern admirer, exhibited all the poise and sophistication Chelmsford audiences have come to expect from this most attractive member of the Society. Her remarkable singing voice would be hard to replace.

Her main success was with that famous song "We'll Gather Lilacs," to which she contributed a freshness with her own style of singing. The show also proves the indis-

pensibility of JUNE GISBY, whose obvious talent is given great opportunity. With considerable charm, she plays Sir Graham's loved one, Melinda, and descendants Melanie and Melody.

Besides being a capable dramatic actress, Miss Gisby delights with her dancing and singing. Her invigorating interpretation of the dance sequence "The Glo-Glo" was a highlight of the show.

GRACE HAWES added to the humour as Ernestine, and her strong contralto voice was an asset to the company.

WINIFRED FOLLET played Lady Charlotte Fayre, Sir Graham's

The lavish costumes and scenery aunt, with suitable propriety.

WILFRED COSHAM played the two contrasting parts of Lady Charlotte's nephew, and the modern part of Bill in an adroit and accomplished manner.

STAN PARSONS and PETER SMITH, as Sir Graham's aristocratic friends, distinguished themselves with their adept stage presence.

JIM WELHAM, as Mazelli and The Vicar, made the most of his uninspiring parts. But he excelled with GRACE HAWES in their duet "The Elopement," the humour of which was added to by the mimicry of a member of the chorus, Diane Lawson.

Music for the show, which cost £1,600 to stage, was provided by a full orchestra, under the conductorship of MR. FRED G. HART. The orchestra was an improvement in the musical accompaniments of past years,

and greatly added to this show's success.

of the production are the ones used in the original West End show, with the exception of the men's costumes in the finale.

To the first night audience on Monday, MR. DAVID SMITH, president of the Society, made an appeal to the people attending to "pass the news" of the Company's success to their friends to enable the show to be a financial success, and so keep the "live" theatre alive in Chelmsford.

In congratulating the Society, he posed the important question of where the theatre's future talent was to be found if societies like the Chelmsford Operatic and Dramatic could not survive.

Others in the cast were: William Jones, Jane Andrews, Keith Thomas, Peggy Welham, Lilian George, Shirley Paterson, Diane Lawson, Kay Trost, Trixie Brewer, Pat Matthews, Betty Wager, Ann Jackman, Betty Jackman, Cherry Beckwith, Elizabeth Dutton, Julia Fairhead, Gwendoline Gibson, Sheila de Laspee, Muriel Passmore, John Marden, Derek Ann, Fred Anelli, Sid, Collicott, Ken, Collins, Fred, Gisby, Herbert Histerman, John Howitt.

Behind the scenes: S. J. Jackman, hon. stage manager; Derek Canfield, hon. accompanist; D. Flatt, hon. prompter; Mrs. D. A. Hann, hon. wardrobe mistress, assisted by Mrs. S. J. Jackman; Tony Richardson, hon. property master; Miss D. Hurrell, hon. call-girl; Peter Smith, hon. publicity officer; Frank Page, Miss Peggy Green, Mrs. Helen Eldridge, hon. perruquiers; Mrs. H. Fewell, Mrs. S. H. Amey, hon. programme sellers; R. Burton, stage manager and chief electrician. Orchestra conducted by Fred G. Hart, leader G. V. Giddy.