

"PINK STRING AND SEALING WAX"

Unambitious but Satisfying

COMPARED with some of Chelmsford Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society's previous productions, "Pink String and Sealing Wax" is not ambitious. On opening night at the Regent Theatre on Monday the performance was quite competent, but, on the whole, uninspired.

That is not damning the show by any means, for any appreciation is bound to be a matter of comparison, and after the Society's panto at Christmas most productions would be an anti-climax.

Thanks to the cinema, most people know the story of the self-made successful chemist whose affection for his family takes the form of subjecting them to only those things that he thinks best, which involves his son in a murder.

VILLAINS AND HEROES

It seems that some quirk in human nature dictates that villains are easier to act than heroes. Right from the moment when five year-olds start on their first school play where good and bad are involved, it seems safer, from the player's point of view, to settle for the unsympathetic part. So it was in "Pink String." The two characters who elicited the least sympathy were undoubtedly the best played.

Frank Morgan was in a complete reversal of his well-known comic roles as the chemist and father of a family of four.

He was unrelentingly severe—the type of Victorian father that the elder generation swears by and the younger generation swears at. Everything he said or did was tinged with severity. Yet Mr. Morgan did not sink into parody which would have been so easy. He took the idea to its fullest extent without stretching it. He can count this as one of his most successful plays.

MASTERLY

So, too, can Rosemary Gornall. She found in the part of the murdering wife of a publican not the slightest amount of grace or humanity. Her greatest achievement was finding three distinct kinds of viciousness. Firstly, there was the revengeful kind which makes her into a murderess; then the spiteful kind which exercised itself merely for the sake of hurting people. Finally, when the murder was being discovered, she turned to the viciousness of someone at bay who hits out indiscriminately. She added to this an oily licentiousness, used to achieve her ends as well as satisfy her desires. It was a masterly performance.

On the lighter side, Barbara Mulrenin did a delightful little sketch of a daughter who wants to be artistic. It would have served as a model for that often recurring part which usually appears rather ham-like. As another of the chemist's daughters Patricia Harrison found delight in the attractive and childlike simplicity of a demure Victorian miss. Her naivety was completely convincing.

Peter Andrews was not quite so effective as the son that gets mixed up with a street strolling woman and finally a murder. While his voice was good his actions occasionally betrayed some uncertainty.

OTHER CHARACTERS

Joan Wilson was unfortunate in that she was very successfully a loving but characterless mother. She attracted little attention sheerly because she was what the author intended her to be.

In smaller ways Joe Puley, William Rondel and William Broadley filled their parts satisfactorily.

As a whole the play was satisfying, even if it did not live up to some of the Society's previous productions. One small criticism must be made of the gentlemen behind the scenes. Every time the supposed gas jets on the stage were turned off there was a crack like a ringmaster's whip from behind the stage as the appropriate switch went off.

The show, which runs until tomorrow (Saturday) is produced and directed by Robert Vernon. Hon. prompter is Major F. W. M. Powley; hon. wardrobe mistress, Amy Warren; hon. property master, Peter Smith; hon. call boy, Alec Torry; hon. perruquiers, Helen Eldridge and Frank Page; stage manager and electrician, R. Burton.