

"ROSE MARIE" AT CHELMSFORD

AN AMBITIOUS PRODUCTION

The Chelmsford Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society made a bold step when they decided on "Rose Marie" as their eighteenth production. The evergreen musical play is a big undertaking, as well as an expensive one, for an amateur society, and houses have to be very good to justify the production. Happily, the bookings for the Chelmsford Society's production at the Regent this week are described as their "best ever," so their enterprise has been well rewarded. "Rose Marie" has cost them something like £600.

This year's production is interesting for two things—it shows that Rose Rowbotham, who takes the title rôle, is still the best actress as well as singer that the Society has; and it introduces a promising young comedienne in Eileen Hobart, who plays opposite the ever-popular Fred Munnion. Miss Rowbotham has been with the Society since the 1922-23 production, "The Yeoman of the Guard," and has been in every production since, except two. She has become such an outstanding and familiar figure that it would be difficult to imagine a production without her. Her singing is as good as ever in "Rose Marie"—clear and powerful. Her leading man, Gilbert Torry, has a very pleasant baritone voice. Miss Hobart, who executes some clever tap-dancing, enters into her part as the spirited but kind-hearted Lady Jane with gusto, and she and Mr. Munnion, who struts through the play in his own inimitable style, make a fine pair. Their scene with Sergeant Malone (ably played by Leonard Pease), the first after the interval, is a grand piece of fooling, skilfully handled.

Audrey Parrett is perfectly cast in the rôle of Wanda, a part very similar to that of Azuri, which she played in "The Desert Song" two years ago. She has exceptional talent for this type of rôle, and a natural flair for the sinuous dancing that the part calls for. Edward Hawley is admirably portrayed by Alex Ogston, while Eric Strutt

assumes a convincing French accent as the brother of Rose Marie. Cecil Bocking and Dorothy Bocking are adequate in the parts of Black Eagle and Ethel Brander respectively.

A special word of praise is due to the orchestra, conducted by their musical director, Charles Hambourg. Under the guidance of his baton the lovely music of Friml and Stothart is rendered with freshness and stimulation. The familiar lilting strains of the theme song and the "Indian Love Call" are quite exceptionally well done. "Rose Marie" is a colourful play, and the costumes and scenery are well up to standard, although the latter is sometimes rather cramped, owing to lack of space.

All told, the Society make a creditable presentation of a none-too-easy musical play, and reflect much credit on the hard work of the producer, Madge Macklin. A pleasant background is provided by the ladies of the chorus, comprising the following: René Babbs, Mary Barneveld, Olive Burton, Marjorie Byford, Ida Clarke, Audrey Cutts, Emily Everett, Gwen Farrow, Hilda Fewell, Lilian Finning, Peggy Guest, Joan Howard, Marjorie Hunt, Doris Johnson, Margaret Martin, Joyce Mayhew, Muriel Millington, Barbara Parsons, Betty Pearce, Mary Phillips, Deenie Radford, Pat Rollason, Phyllis Rowe, Molly Seal, Lilian Smyth-Tyrrell, Winnie Torry, Josephine Wells, and Pauline Williams. The gentlemen of the chorus are: William Babbs, John Barnard, Harold Berry, Guy Bevington, Eric Bruce, Ernest Bryan, Douglas Catt, Sidney Finning, Stan. Hunt, Geoffrey King, Cyril Palmer, Peter Sherman, Jack Stanley, Alec Torry, John Verney, and Ralph Williams.

The hon. prompter is Major F. W. M. Powley; hon. call boy, Mr. W. J. Turner; hon. accompanist, Mr. Alfred Heather; hon. property masters, Messrs. H. H. Evans and M. Taunton; and perruquiers, Claire Arnold, Miss Gladys Butcher and Mr. Percy Russell.
G. S.



Bond's photo
Miss Eileen Hobart as Lady Jane, and Mr. Fred, Munnion as Hard-boiled Herman.