

FIDDLER ON THE ROOF

Looking around the 'first night' audience at the Harlequin last week - mostly in evening dress, it was difficult to believe that this was a non-professional production, staged in a suburban theatre. The Chairman of one of our local societies has said that, in reviewing shows, we should make allowance for them being by amateurs. Seeing *Fiddler on the Roof* performed by East Surrey Operatic, it would be very easy to believe the cast acted for a living - not just their pleasure!

Of course, the stage setting at the Harlequin cannot equal that of a London Theatre, nor is Fred Harrison's Tevye, the Russian-Jewish milkman, quite as good as Topol's, but Tony Young's direction has achieved something very near to the original in the West End. However good the acting, it is the music which makes *Fiddler* so remarkable. Tevye's "If I was a rich man", his three daughters' appeal to the "Matchmaker" and so many more wonderful pieces, all excellently performed. Much of the credit must go to Angela Barker, the Musical Director, and the professional orchestra under her baton.

Dancing too forms a major part of the life in the little Russian village and Shirley Knight assisted by the Director gave us a spectacle that was faultless in its performance - and all that on the first night. This was a very special production aimed at raising money for the St. Catherine's Hospice - special tickets included champagne in the interval. Ed Stewart of "Mercury" presented a cheque for £2,100 to the Hospice at the end of the evening.

This production has also shown that ESOS can have high hopes for its future from the next generation. Many of the cast had their sons or daughters in the production and even seven year old Alys Dreux, as Bielke, Tevye's youngest daughter, showed great confidence in a major role.

DERRICK GRAHAM

This is the full text of DG's Critique, which was abridged [shown underlined] when it appeared in "The Independent" on 24.03.1988.