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Surrey Mirror and County Post

A MELODIOUS MAID

EAST SURREY AMATEURS SATISFYING PRODUCTION

The East Surrey Amateur Operatic Society added another to its long series of successes in popular entertainment and artistic accomplishment last week, with its production of "The Maid of the Mountains," in the Market Hall, Redhill. Judged from almost any standpoint the performances by these enterprising and painstaking amateurs ranked with their previous best, and to the producer, Elsie Rendell, no praise could be too high for the way in which the difficulties imposed by limited stage space were overcome and scenes dependent upon kaleidoscopic movement by a cast and chorus some four dozen strong were managed, not only without confusion, but with really satisfying effect. Musically, under the direction of Joyce Hooper, principals and chorus alike were adequate to the mellifluous melodies of Fraser-Simson and Tate; while the Frederick Lonsdale libretto, calling as it did in part for more acting than many musical comedies exact, proved to be well within the histrionic reach of the leading players most of them tried and trusty stalwarts of the Society.

In the title role of Teresa, Molly Larkin repeated the success she achieved in last year's "Bitter Sweet," her singing voice in such numbers as "Farewell" and the popular "Love will find a way" making up in expressiveness for its lack of the sheer volume of tone that would have given full weight to the emotional intensity she put into the more melodramatic moments of the play. Her beauty of diction in spoken dialogue left nothing to be desired, and even more noticeable in this respect was the Angela of Shelagh Daniels, who had little singing to do but whose musical and exquisitely modulated speech was a delight to hear, William Malcomson was thoroughly at home in swashbuckling character of Baldassarre, the brigand chief, and as Beppo, Tererese's unrewarded wooer, Douglas Chamler acted with simple sincerity and sang with his accustomed artistry, his rendering of the jaunty, swinging "A Bachelor Gay" being enthusiastically applauded. A pair of capital comics were forthcoming in C. Stevenson Dennis and Doris Himsworth as the long separated matrimonial partners, Tonio and Vittoria, who scored distinct hit with their two duets "Husbands and Wives" and "Over there, over here." That veteran of the Society, E Lovell Hewitt, did justice to part that might have been made to measure for him as the irascible, but roving Governor, General Malona, and Richard Nightingale put comic characterisation into the role of his pantaloonly attendant, Crumpet. Others parts were competently handled by Don Nicols as Lieutenant Lugini, Gwen Davison as Gianetta, Walter Thrift as the Mayor of Santo, C. O. Merriman as Colonel Terroni, and by Frederick Godden, John Richardson, Norman Young and Willie Jarrett as leading members of the brigand band.

The chorus work was admirable. The colourful harmony to which Fraser-Simson sometimes attains - as particularly in the opening chorus of Act III - being pleasantly brought out, a definite contribution to the evening's entertainment was made by the troupe of dancers led by Paddy Priestner, their tambourine dance in Act II being full of exhilarating movement, while their miniature ballet later on (to a piano accompaniment suavely supplied by W Castle) was almost astonishingly effective considering the very exiguous floor space within which the poetry of motion had to be achieved. In the matter of costume and scenic effects of the production made - especially in the Castle Courtyard scene - a spectacle which matched the brightness and the gaiety of the music. The orchestral accompaniment was occasionally a trifle uncertain, and there were times when singers and instrumentalists were not rhythmically in absolute accord, but these were minor blemishes in a production for which the Society merited all the appreciation that was manifest throughout.