

LIVELY PRODUCTION OF "THE MERRY WIDOW"

LATEST SUCCESS OF EAST SURREY OPERATIC SOCIETY

Lolo, Dodo and Jou-Jou seemed quite at home in Redhill last week. · With Frou-Frou, Clo-Clo and Margot they brought Maxim's to 'life on stage at the Market Hall. A "grisette", says the dictionary, is a French girl with lively and free manners. Ma foi! These grisettes were lively!

"The Merry Widow," with Franz Lehar's light and gay music and new book and lyrics by Phil Park, is the latest of many successes by' the East Surrey Operatic Society and I should this year's production will have proved even more popular than the "Carousel" and "Oklahoma" of the last two years. We have a very good amateur operatic society here and they amply fulfil their object "of giving their audiences a live musical show which merits their continued interest and appreciation" - to quote from the programme.

There were few shortcomings to this performance but two ought to be mentioned. First: the orchestra in general and the percussion section in particular, tended to be too loud for the singers. It is difficult to say much this is the fault of the singers and how much of the instrumentalists. Second: the gentlemen were by no means as clear in their diction or as powerful in their projection as the ladies. Sometimes one could not make out what they were singing at all.

However, it is easier to find points to praise: the ensemble was good, fluffing of lines just did not seem to happen as the chorus were attentive and were part of the scene. The last point is a good one. Too often in amateur productions the chorus seem sadly out of touch with the action. In this show, on the contrary, they enhanced it. We had a particularly good example of this in the second act when Molly Greaves sang "Vilia".

The guests made a definite contribution by their presence which was more remarkable because they were mainly required to be still.

Molly Greaves, as the merry widow Anna Glaveri, turned in a delightful and excellently timed performance. Opposite her, Ted Holding played Count Danilo with conviction. His singing was good but not really loud enough and one hopes he will develop a larger tone. Andrew Glass as the Pontevedrian ambassador schemed valiantly for the salvation of his country. Once again he turned in a polished performance.

One remembers him as Curly in "Oklahoma" and Billy in "Carousel." As Barton Zeta in this show he had some wonderfully funny scenes with Roy Williamson, whose comic portrait of an embassy official deserves great praise. As Camille, John Fallon was stiff in his acting but sang very well - specially in his duet with Joyce Gascoigne-Pees who was also in good voice as Valencienne. The dance numbers were well done and only once, at the beginning of Act II, were the dancers and orchestra not together. The show was beautifully costumed and staged, the audience was enthusiastic and they left no doubt that they were enjoying themselves. Elsie Rendell and Robin Gritton, the producer and the musical director, are to be congratulated on their achievements.

M.K.N.T.