

Bouncy lively and colourful

The Music Man.
CAODS, Civic Theatre

TROUBLE that starts with a T (which rhymes with P and that means Pool) was the first song from a musical show that impressed me in my tender youth. Now, yonks later, I've seen the show it came from for the first time.

The Chelmsford Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society is presenting Meredith Willson's affectionate look at American small town, turn of the century life, The Music Man, all this week at the Civic Theatre.

Ray Jeffrey's production is bouncy, lively, colourful and witty. And brings him full circle since he started on the boards in this show at the age of 17. Laurence Payne, the musical director, who stepped in at a very late stage, has his forces well under control and generally the band is in good shape.

Onstage there are some very fine performances. Patrick Tucker is brash, cheeky but endearing as the smooth-talking salesman, the Music Man himself. Perhaps he didn't quite reach the Robert Preston standard but it is to his considerable credit that he came very close.

Christine Nicol as the music teacher who falls for him was in imminent danger of stealing the whole show. She's in sweet voice, uses her beguiling eyes to devastating effect and had us all drooling when she sang Till There Was You.

Young Matthew Day was an

affecting Winthrop and nicely perky for Gary, Indiana.

Richard Clements in the minor role of Tommy Djilas made a considerable impression as a slick, hard young tough. There's a mellifluous close-harmony barber shop quartet that has a lot of fun and the ladies' ensemble brings four neatly differentiated characters to amusing life.

The setting and pieces of scenery such as there were did not leave me gasping but the costumes are stunning and some of the best CAODS has produced in recent years.

I believe there are some seats left for the final performance (Chelmsford audiences as usual are not quick to try comparatively rare works) and I strongly urge you to buy one. Or two. Or more.

Jon Richards