



Reviewing the situation: Superb!

THE Civic Theatre exploded last Monday night. It exploded with the verve and vivacity generated by a gigantic cast of players in the Chelmsford Amateur Operatic and

Dramatic Society's production of Lionel Bart's 'Oliver'. The first half was breath takingly exciting and among the very best things I remember seeing at the Civic. The London scenes had colour, vitality and sheer professional theatricality about them which my French companion thought could only have been produced by professionals. Ray Jeffery, CAODS' producer, has done it again. I wish I could advise you to see the production. Alas (for you) the entire run was booked completely before the show opened on Monday night.

It was a pity on the opening night that the second half fell apart a bit but that is as much the fault of the book as the cast. But by the time this appears in print those edges will have been smoothed and the pace tightened. I still have my reservations about the well-groomed workhouse boys with their trendy haircuts and

the destitute orphans of the London that Dickens knew and cared so passionately about, but given that these undoubtedly talented and exceptionally well-rehearsed boys are asked to sing about jelly and cakes and all the other delights of a juvenile palate in the Lionel Bart manner, then their performance was superb.

The cast was each and every one exceptionally good. The chorus work was impressive as I have already indicated and because I do not have the room to write out all their names I must pick and choose among the leading roles.

UNITED

Stan Parsons was a deliciously crusty Mr. Bumble; Jean Clements a superb foil to him as Widow Corney. Simon Coates almost stole the show as The Artful Dodger giving a very engaging and suitably mannered performance. Peter Smith enjoyed himself as Fagin, cavorting around in a most



The team of the stage starting one of the outcasts scenes in Oliver, produced by the Chelmsford Amateur Operatic and Dramatic company at the Civic Theatre all this week.



Stan Parsons (right) as Mr. Bumble and Robin Sampson as Mr. Brownlow with Joy Wallace as Mrs. Bedwin.

TOUCH

Diane Watson makes Irene Molloy a delightful woman and she brings an affecting touch of wistfulness to her one big number, Ribbons Down My Back, her performance being beautifully complemented by that of Angela Jenner as the good-natured, simple, man-conscious Minnie Fay.

The roles of Mr Vanderpel-der's apprentices, Cornelius Hackel and Barnaby Tucker are but pale shadows of their equivalents in the straight play, but Russ Watson and Peter Smith do everything they can to make the characters come alive.

It is true there were one or two awkward moments on Monday night especially for the musical director, Robert Ladkin, but I am positive they will have been put right by the time this notice appears in

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