

Now look here,
Mr Weller

1972.

THIS PICKWICK JUST

didn't have
sparkle

EVEN MAKING allowance for an above average number of mishaps on the opening night, I can't get enthusiastic about Chelmsford Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society's production of *Pickwick* at the Regent this week.

Cyril Orndel's music, Leslie Bricuse's lyrics and Wolf Mankowitz's lyrics add up to an average musical, difficult to stage at the Regent and with the title role written for a tenor.

In this production Mr Fred Costello, one of the Society's most experienced members, plays the part, and, because he has a baritone or bass baritone voice, the numbers have been transposed down for him.

ROBBING

But this alters their character and not for the better, robbing them of much of

their sparkle and Mr Costello never seems at ease either vocally or dramatically.

Nor is Pat Viles, another Society stalwart, happily cast as Mrs Bardell, as she is unable to bring the necessary coy genteelness to the part. Peter Farmer has the necessary cheeky charm for Jingle, but needs to project it out far more.

John Cave, Eric Sutton and John Daldry are three rather subdued members of the *Pickwick* Club, and it is left to Peter Smith, as Sam Weller, to give the best characterised performance of the evening.

If only the attack number with his (David Purdo), *The T With Women*, could have been typical of the evening would have much more life.

Ralph Smith makes effective little study out of Georgie dell, David Hawkins is convincing as the judge than as Mr Weller.

Phil Payne directs Joe Armitage-Fuggle in charge of an orchestra which is short on the side balancewise.

Monday's show signs of under rehearsal. Inevitable, did you say at all. One has only to Sound of Music or O

1972

By DAVE

DESPITE overcoming various last-minute difficulties Chelmsford Operatic Society's production of *Pickwick* this week is not turning out to be the box office success they had hoped.

With plenty of seats left for tonight and tomorrow's two performances at the Regent Theatre, the society are worried that the show will be a financial flop.

"The show has had difficulties, but these have now been ironed out and although the support has been disappointing those who come appear to have thoroughly enjoyed it all, commented the society's secretary, Doug Hann, yesterday.

After problems in casting and



• Freddie Castello, as Pickwick and Peter Smith as Sam Weller.