

Updated Pirates — a hit

ONLY a dyed in the wool traditionalist could fail to respond to the sheer exuberant vitality of the updated, innovative, version of The Pirates Of Penzance, playing at the Civic Theatre, Chelmsford.

Ray Jeffery is a past master at creating fast moving, visually exciting, productions for the Chelmsford Amateur Operatic And Dramatic Society, but in Pirates he has exceeded even his usual high standards.

From the initial eruption of the Pirates down the aisles of the theatre to the final, colourful, full bloodied finale, the evening is one long series of colourful, thrilling, movements.

Although the orchestration is modern and the rhythms made still more punchy, traditionalists need not fear the tunes have been mucked about beyond recognition, and I feel this version has helped to restore the original liveliness to this 100-plus year old operetta.

Hampered by a bad throat, Lee Threadgold, as the Pirate King, nevertheless acts with true and imposing stage presence. Peter Smith is his delightfully rustic lieutenant, and Angela Broad, Caroline Richards and Rachel Parsons sparkle as Kate, Isobel, and Edith.

But it is Stephen Emery's truly youthful Frederick,

ENTERTAINMENTS EDITED BY PETER ANDREWS

played as a cross between a traditional English public schoolboy and an American sob pop singer, and Patrick Tucker's fast talking, aged, Major-General, who steal the show for the men.

Both these actors can command the stage when required, as can Dawn Sampson, a demurely charming Mabel, whose singing in act two is pure silver, and Gill Plumtree as the homely Ruth, joint top

of the ladies' league.

Andrew Jeffers is a richly comic Sergeant of Police, and, as always in CAODS shows, the ensemble work of the chorus is outstanding.

Music director, Bryan Cass, achieves a good balance between singers and musicians and the show is imaginatively lit throughout by Robert Warner, aided by Nick Wheatley and John Rhodes.

PETER ANDREWS

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