

# FINE SINGING, GOOD COMEDY

## *Chelmsford Amateurs in Gay Musical*

Regent Theatre, Chelmsford: Chelmsford Operatic Society in "Show Boat."

When amateurs produce a musical such as "Show Boat", launched originally from a large commercial stage, and have to adapt this to the much smaller accommodation available to them, they are faced with a serious problem.

In the case of "Show Boat", now running for a week at Chelmsford, this is especially difficult, as room has to be found for some 80 participants. Producer Phyl Payne can be congratulated on the successful manner in which she has solved her problems—the show runs with commendable smoothness.

As to the acting, straight from the start a good note is struck by Freddie Costello in the commanding role of Captain Andy, which helps to establish the right atmosphere. He is well supported by Beryl Manaton, who plays the role of Puritan mother Parthy Ann Hawks with terrifying aplomb.

Another effective actor is John Jemison, who, like Miss Manaton, is a newcomer to the company. A good singer and speaker, he plays his rakish part of Gaylord Ravenal well in style, and shows his versatility in the very amusing ham-acting scene with Magnolia (Pat Viles), whose best feature, apart from her ingenue looks, is a fine singing voice. In acting she requires some more experience, and her diction is not too clear.

### EXCELLENT COMEDY

Pauline Connolly and Stan Parsons make an excellent comedy couple with more than average dancing and singing abilities. In the part of Joe, Bernard Smith, a guest from Leigh-on-Sea, sings his famous solo very well, and although Helen Eldridge, as his wife Queenie, tends to overact a little she sings quite nicely.

Iris Ford makes a winsome and pathetic Julie, and Peter Smith a convincingly violent Steve. As trigger-happy backwoodsmen David Hawkins and Derek Fisher add to the comic element.

The ladies' period dresses are more attractive than those selected for the men, who are made to wear some incredibly coloured garments. The dancing, also arranged by Phyl Payne, runs quite pleasantly and the sum total amounts to yet another success.

The orchestra, energetically conducted by George E. Clarke, in the main played quite well, but had some unaccountable lapses in attack and intonation here and there.

DIAPASON.