

# LOVE IN THE ISLANDS

## *Pacific Setting for Excellent Musical*

Chelmsford Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society: "South Pacific", by Rodgers and Hammerstein.

"When men are herded together towards the end of a war with neither the excitement of active operations nor the society of the opposite sex," says the programme note, "many difficulties arise."

That is putting it mildly. "South Pacific" touches on some of the thorniest problems of the age. The "many difficulties" include the colour bar, totalitarianism, and the ironies of war.

Although Rodgers and Hammerstein wrap their subject in woolly sentiment, the sword edge cuts through, notably in the death of Lieutenant Cable. And the one weakness of this otherwise excellent production is that it glosses over the realities too much.

### NOT A SINGLE PAUSE

The romantic conclusion is presented, not as a brave attempt at human reconciliation, but as a back-garden engagement amid twittering birds.

Miss Phyl Payne, the producer, has evidently concentrated on pace and gaiety. It is hard to imagine an amateur production with more verve. From the moment the curtain rises, there is not a single fumbling pause.

Monica Gravitt, as Ensign Nellie Forbush, skips through her role with delightful energy. She has a splendid foil in Freddie Costello, in the part of her lover, Emile. He is as dignified as she is vivacious, as heroic as she is flippant, and it would be worth an evening of anyone's time to hear his splendid singing voice.

### FINE MUSIC DIRECTION

Another fine performance comes from Beryl Manaton, as Bloody Mary, remarkably transformed from her face in the programme's photograph. David Hawkins, as Luther Billis, avoids the usual extremes of vulgarity in this part, and Arthur Staniland is an engagingly modest Lieutenant Cable.

The chorus of Ensigns look remarkably attractive, while the Seabees and Marines, who contribute so much to the audience's enjoyment, lounge about the stage with a fine semblance of American ease.

Mr. George Clarke's musical direction could hardly be faulted.

Performances, at the Regent Theatre, continue until Saturday (June 2nd).