

Waggonload o' Mirth at Regent Theatre

Good effort by Chelmsford Amateurs

THE Chelmsford Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society's current production, "Waggonload o' Monkeys," a three-act farcical comedy, proves to be a waggonload of mirth at the Regent Theatre this week.

The play, a sequel to "Worm's Eye View," which broke all box-office records at the Whitehall Theatre, tells of the escapades of Porter and Taffy in Civvy Street.

The company takes every opportunity of exploiting the comic antics of the likeable Cockney and his naive Welsh companion.

For the first half-hour on Monday the cast found the first-night audience rather stubborn, but both soon settled down and the Cockney humour and amusing situations soon warmed the house.

STAN STEWART gave a true Ronald Shiner interpretation of Sam Porter, the slick, fast-talking, good-natured Cockney. He put plenty of 'pep' into the part and set a great example to the rest of the cast. Although the script needs little support to carry the character along Mr. Stewart gave a delightful performance.

DAVID FLATT plays the part of the landlord of the bankrupt "pub"—which Porter agrees to sell on a commission basis—with a great deal of creditable characterisation. With his Yorkshire accent and thumbs in braces, he was responsible for creating much of the laughter.

GWYN JONES was a natural choice for Taffy, the shy Welshman. Considerable ability showed through Mr. Jones's performance and he had an easy stage presence although quite new to acting.

PATRICIA HARRISON was an attractive 'Evie,' the landlord's daughter, but her voice was pitched rather too high at times and she made the mistake of being a slave to the words without due attention to their presentation.

Her first-night nervousness was understandable, but the determination to show improvement was

apparent in subsequent performances.

With the aid of heavy make-up KATHLEEN NEWELL played the gambling spinster, Miss Cowshott. Her frequent interruptions in the bar to make 'phone calls to her bookmaker caused laughter on each occasion.

F. ARTHUR JEFFRIES, as "Scrumpy," the bewhiskered "permanent fixture" in the "pub," is to be congratulated. He paraded across the stage with due infirmity and even while away from the centre of interest kept up a stream of grimaces and gestures which amused yet did not distract from the others on stage.

STAN PARSONS, as the aristocratic-sounding, love-crazy suitor of Evie, seemed to experience some difficulty with an outsize R.A.F. type moustache, which seemed to muffle his words. But he entered well into the spirit of the part.

MIKE CORNELL was rather too staid and self-conscious in his part as the ex-flyer and love-match for Evie. He warmed up as the play progressed, but there was little tenderness in his love-making.

PETER SMITH drew many laughs as the bowler-hatted bureaucrat from the Ministry. His late appearance in the play was in strong contrast to Porter's Cockney clowning.

DOREEN HURRELL, as Genevieve, the East End barmaid, was appropriately dressed for the part, and her loose-limbed walk and 'seductiveness' added brightness to the comedy.

MR. DAVID SMITH, the President of the Society, was introduced to the audience after the first-night performance.

He complimented the Company



Drinks all round

Our picture shows some of the cast in a scene from the play. From left: Gwyn Jones as 'Taffy,' Pat Harrison as 'Evie Dawn,' David Flatt as 'Willie Dawn,' and Stan Stewart as 'Sam Porter.'

on the excellence of their production and spoke of the urgent need for the people of the County Town to support their local talent.

"If the Society fails to pay its way this time it will be the last straight show they will be able to stage because of the high cost of running them," he said, and added: "It is a challenge to the County Town."

Mr. Smith said that he hoped that with the influence of television and radio we were not becoming a nation of "watchers and sitters."

MR. ROBERT VERNON has made an excellent job of the production.

Others who helped in the production: Hon prompter, Mr. William Broadley; hon. call girl, Mrs. Jane Andrews; hon. stage manager

and property master, Mr. H. Bacho assisted by Mr. S. Jackman, Miss M. Passmore, Mr. D. Ann; hon. perruquier, Mr. Frank Page stage manager and chief electrician Mr. R. Burton. B.V.

Rettendon villagers are organising a Christmas Bazaar to help pay for an extension to the parish churchyard.