

# BEHIND THE SCENES OF 'BITTER-SWEET'

**B**ESIDES putting on a really good musical show and providing Chelmsford people with a week of locally-made entertainment, the Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society are aiming at bringing their reserve fund up so that it will equal the cost of one complete show. At present they have about £600. They also like to give about £150 a year to local charities.

But their expenses are high — somewhere in the region of £1,200, as estimated by the secretary, Mr. V. J. Cooper. They are made up, very roughly, he emphasises, as follows: Hire of the theatre, £400; costumes, £170; scenery and effects, £180; orchestra, £150; producer's costs, over £100 guineas; publicity and advertising, £30-£40. Incidentals include perquisites' fees of several guineas a performance.

Past shows have made profits varying from £5 to £200. "No, No, Nanette" and "The Sport of Kings" between them totalled nearly £230, in addition to subscriptions. "Poison Pen," staged last November, brought in about £20.

The Society has made an ambitious choice in deciding to put on this operetta. But they have gone about making it a success in a businesslike way. Mr. Charles Ham-bourg, a professional, is to direct the orchestra. They also have a professional producer, Miss Mavis Ward, who runs an acting school in Brighton and has produced nine shows in two years all over the country.

'Bitter-Sweet,' in three acts, has different scenery for each act, and each occurs in a different period. One is set in

Noel Coward's operetta, 'Bitter-Sweet,' had its premiere by the Chelmsford A.O. & D.S. last night. How is the Society run? Who produces the plays? What does it all mean to the amateurs who act in them? Here are the answers by

ZENA WATSON



Producer Mavis Ward

'I am very pleased'

Vienna. This is one reason why the scenery, on loan from a London firm, is so expensive: it is not interchangeable.

Miss Ward is a believer in the talent of younger members of the Society. In particular she singles out the women for praise.

There have been twenty-five rehearsals, held at week-ends on Friday evenings and Saturday afternoons in a hall of Hoffmann's. Attendance has been good and enthusiasm has run high ever since

the casting was carried out. the petite brunette, whose first amateur show this is. She plays the part of Manon, and, because she already has a fringe, she will not be wearing a wig.

Mrs. Eldridge has had ballet training and has been to the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, has played in American stock companies and in Canada.

Diane Lawson, the youngest in the cast, is among the dancers this time. If you see the show you will probably notice specially the six bridesmaids and the four "ladies of the town." Miss Ward is particularly pleased with them — she considers they work admirably together.

Sunday was dress rehearsal day. It started at the Regent at 2.30 p.m. and continued until approximately eleven o'clock that evening. By the time the cast went home they were exhausted, but Miss Ward was satisfied.

**Y**ESTERDAY she told me: "It is up to the audiences to judge now, but I am very pleased with the Society. They have put in a lot of time and worked hard. What is more, they are keen and talented. I hope they are all relaxing as much as possible to-day, as they have quite an ordeal before them to-night. 'Bitter Sweet' is by no means an easy work to stage, and all those taking part deserve success."

This is the first time Miss Ward has produced a show in Essex. When she leaves she is going to Cornwall to put on "Lisbon Story."

Meanwhile she wants the Chelmsford Society to get the credit it deserves, and the Society still hopes, in addition to adding yet another to its many successes, to build up its funds. So, if you haven't booked yet for "Bitter Sweet," do so now!

In most cases she found members showed an aptitude for choosing in advance the parts best suited to them. At the same time there was no undue modesty about applying for the leading roles. Feminine lead is the clever young actress, Dorothy Cox. The leading man is a London professional.

Another professional is Mrs. Helen Eldridge,