

COMIC OPERA AT CHELMSFORD

SUCCESSFUL PRODUCTION OF "TOM JONES."

The Chelmsford Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society are presenting this week the popular opera, "Tom Jones" at the Empire Theatre, Chelmsford. Since its formation in the autumn of 1920, twelve productions—six of them Gilbert and Sullivan operas—have been undertaken by the Society, and £670 has been distributed to various local charities.

The performance of "Tom Jones" hardly reaches the standard of some of the Society's most successful productions, but it is up to the average, and provides an enjoyable entertainment. The opera, which is based on Henry Fielding's classic novel, has a stronger plot than many light operas, contains plenty of humour, and the story is adorned with the beauty of Edward German's music.

THE STORY.

Tom Jones, a supposed foundling, who has been adopted by Squire Allworthy, of Somerset, falls in love with Sophia, daughter of the neighbouring Squire Western, but the latter, desiring a match between Sophia and Blifil, Allworthy's

son, "On a January morning in Summer-zetshire," at the opening of the opera was also very well done.

Mr. E. T. Parfitt, always popular with local audiences, gave a polished performance in the title role, and with Miss Rosebotham as Sophia, contributed largely to the success of the production. Miss Rosebotham was as charming in her singing as in her acting, and her rendering of the well-known Waltz Song was particularly pleasing. Mrs. Lilian Hamilton, as Honour, Sophia's maid, took her part with admirable vivacity and coyness, and her singing, too, was a delight. The rendering of "Wisdom says 'Festina Lente,'" by these three—Sophia, Honour and Tom—was one of the best numbers of the evening.

INITIAL SUCCESS.

Miss Dorothy Davis, a newcomer to the cast, scored a success as the rather brazen Lady Bellaston, and her making love to Tom at the inn was an excellent piece of acting. Mr. Jack Hawkes was a dignified Mr. Allworthy, and Mr. Kenneth Woodhouse a melodramatic Blifil; while Mr. Tom Jarvis caused great amusement as Benjamin Partridge, the loquacious village barber. The boisterous hostess of the inn was admirably portrayed by Miss



Left to right: Tom Jones (Mr. Tom Parfitt), Sophia (Miss Rose Rowbotham), Lady Bellaston (Miss Dorothy Davis), and Honour (Miss Lilian Hamilton)

nephew, casts her off, Tom suffering a similar penalty at the hands of Allworthy.

In the second act complications arise through the presence of Squire Western, his daughter, Tom, and Lady Bellaston, a kinswoman of Sophia's, at an inn at Upton, on the road to London. Western is detained with the gout; Sophia through an injury to her horse; and each is at first unaware of the other's presence at the hostelry. Tom, who has rescued Lady Bellaston from highwaymen, takes her to the inn, where he yields momentarily to her advances. Sophia discovers them and, broken-hearted, resumes her journey to London.

In the final act the scene is changed to Ranelagh Gardens, London, an ultra-fashionable resort of the period, where the principals of the story are again brought together. Tom is proved to be the legitimate nephew of Allworthy and the elder brother of Blifil; Squire Western is reconciled to his daughter, and gives his consent to her marriage with Tom; and so everything ends happily.

THE CAST.

Tom Jones (a Foundling) — E. T. Parfitt
Mr. Allworthy (a Somersetshire Magistrate),
Jack Hawkes

Blifil (his nephew) — Kenneth Woodhouse
Benjamin Partridge (a Village Barber),
Tom Jarvis

Squire Western ("a fine Old English Gentleman") — Cecil Bocking
Gregory, Grizzle, Dobbin (his Servants),
Maurice Phillips, Guy Newcombe, Reginald Towers

An Officer — Alick Ogston
Post Boy — Douglas Catt
Col. Hampstead — Jack Blooman

Tom Edwards — Arthur Carrington
Honour (Maid to Sophia) — Lilian Hamilton
Miss Western (Squire Western's Sister),
Etta Alden

Lady Bellaston (a Lady of quality),
Dorothy Davis
Hostess of the Inn at Upton — Peggy Green

Bessie Wiseacre, Lettice Wheatcroft, and
Rosie Lucas (Friends of Sophia), Muriel
Turner, Vera Smith, Evelyn Lummis
Susan (Serving Maid at Upton),
Jessie Hutton

Betty and Peggy (Waiting Maids), May
Mann and Emily Everett
Sophia (Squire Western's Daughter),
Rose Rowbotham

Chorus.—Ladies: D. Bocking, C. Byford,
H. Fewell, E. M. Hey, P. Holl, D. James,
E. M. Phillips, M. Robson, N. Towers.
Gentlemen: J. Blooman, C. E. Bradbury, A.
Caseley, D. Catt, A. Carrington, E. C. Rogers,
L. Thorogood, A. W. Ward.

There was a good attendance at the opening performance on Monday, and the audience were not slow to express their appreciation of the efforts of the company.

SQUIRE WESTERN.

One of the outstanding successes was Mr. Cecil Bocking's representation of the bluff Squire Western. In his irritable moments he stormed and raged very effectively, and his appearance with a heavily-bandaged "gouty" foot at the inn caused great amusement. His singing of that delightful

Peggy Green, and the other members of the cast gave good support to the performance.

The dresses and scenery did much to increase the effectiveness of the production; and an excellent orchestra, under the



The Hostess of the Inn at Upton (Miss Peggy Green) and the Officer (Mr. Alick Ogston).

baton of Mr. A. V. Bushell, comprised the following:—

Violins, Mr. G. V. Giddy, Mr. J. H. Duncanson, Mr. W. J. Hobrow, Mr. G. Ryder, Mr. Ponsford, Mr. V. F. Waldau, Mrs. D. Co. viola, Miss J. A. Wallinger; violoncello, H. Pitwood; double bass, Mr. W. Pitwood; flute, Mr. A. Lacey; clarinet, Mr. V. Camillis; oboe, Mr. E. M. Gough; basso, Mr. J. Stanley; horn, Mr. V. F. Wall; cornet, Mr. E. A. Joyce; trombone, Mr. A. Dickerson; tympani, Mr. W. H. Ware; piano, Mr. W. E. Ford.

Miss Madge Macklin is once again producer, and the results of her careful and able work are in evidence throughout the opera. Major F. W. M. Powley as hon. prompter, and Mr. A. G. Taylor as hon. call boy.

The opera has been presented each evening this week, and will be repeated to-morrow (Friday), and to-morrow. There will be a matinee to-morrow.

The arrangements for the production have been carried out by the Executive Committee, with Mr. C. L. Bocking as chairman; Mr. H. N. Pullen, hon. secretary; Mr. A. J. Hobart, hon. treasurer; Mrs. A. E. Guest, hon. assistant treasurer.