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## **AMATEUR OPERA**

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## AMATEUR OPERA

# Lavish 'Gondoliers' at Winchester has colour and verve

**M**ANY similar societies must envy Winchester Amateur Operatic Society the merit and versatility of its singing talent.

Vocal strength is *sine qua non* when opera of any brand is the order, but happy are the amateur players who can achieve the uniformity of skill that at present marks the W.A.O.S.

The lasting impression left after Saturday's opening night of a week of "The Gondoliers," was that one would have to go a long way to hear the music of Sullivan sung — and played — with more verve. Choruses, in particular, were invested with the power, tonal quality and musical spiritedness that are so vital, so satisfying when present and yet so often sought in vain.

In expressing that view one is far from detracting from the work of the individual character-players. Almost without exception they are vocalists of the first order.

### PRAISEWORTHY GEMS

Tessa's (Jacqueline Duffy's) singing, with the chorus, of "When a merry maiden marries," Casilda's (Mary Spalding's) parts in duets and quintet, Marco's (Bertram Dobson's) version of that most beautiful song "Take a pair of sparkling eyes"—these were gems in their own right, each differing in technique, in approach, each quite praiseworthy.

And throughout the opera the colour in the music was matched by the visual splendour of the settings. Producer Gladwys Star-

ling has revealed the hand of a true artist. One is constrained even to admit her right in sacrificing ease of movement on the none-too-large stage—as in the gavotte—to the overall impression of lavishness.

The "Gondoliers" is another artistic success for the Society. One welcomes some newcomers among the players, yet feels a warm regard for the few tried retainers, among them Horace Taylor, a member of the Society for a quarter of a century, who has appeared in every production since 1932.

Paul Brown (the Duke of Plaza-Toro), Bryon Cavill (the drummer who turns out to be king), Edward Willis (Guiseppe), Dorothy Crosby (the Duchess), Jane Binstead (Gianetta) must each have a share in the honours. So, indeed, must John Sealey (musical director) and the orchestra.

### FIRST LOVE FIRST?

If precedent is being followed, the moment has arrived for the society to make a diversion from the Gilbert and Sullivan tradition.

A change may often be a good thing but with the society so obviously in sympathy with and able so easily to fit into the Savoy pattern, the moral would seem to be "first love first."

Saturday was "civic" night, attended by the Mayor of Winchester (Councillor Major Paul Woodhouse), members of the Corporation and Hampshire heads.

unbearable richness and weirdness