

1987 Merry Widow

Chronicle Review

A sense of style

I Well remember my first Merry Widow. She came at me out of a loudspeaker from those lovely early blue Columbia LP's. (I was enthralled by the lushness of the writing. Was it Schwartzkopf and Kunz?) Elegant nonsense is what it is. Style is everything.

Not many amateur groups manage to convey a sense of style but the Witham Amateur Operatic Society did very well with their production by Betty Blower. It's at the Public Hall in Witham all this week at 7/45. If you can get a seat it's a civilised way to spend an evening.

There are some strong performances in the Witham show: Patsy Doy scores a personal triumph as the enigmatic widow of the title. She sings well (Oh, Villja in act two was very fine with a beautifully controlled conclusion) and knows how to use the stage (not many performers manage to simply turn on stage but make the move significant and watchable). She was ably partnered by Howard Brooks as Danilo who, while not conveying quite such an aura, nonetheless managed his romantic role with conviction and some panache. Tim Sheppard was a nicely fussy old Baron and Pat Briggs was excellent as his flirtatious wife. Peter Green's Njegus was very funny and will be funnier when he's word perfect.

Congratulations to the chorus who all acted all the time and particularly to the six young ladies from Maxim's who were nicely sexy without being embarrassing which is often the case in such circumstances.

John James conducted the very competent orchestra which contributed a great deal to overall excellence of the production.

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