

1982 Cox & Box and The Sorcerer

BWT Review

Fine show from the opera group

COX and Box, a pocket opera by Gilbert and Sullivan, at Witham this week, is an old-fashioned miniature attractively framed by director Derek Collins. Nicholas Clough (Cox), George Fardell (Box) and Tony Wood (Bouncer) brilliantly bring to life the little story that has become a household phrase in our language.

Musical Director Gareth Dallender-Jones and his orchestra co-operate fully and it appears as a little gem of theatre craft, only to be improved by a dingier and dirtier setting of the Victorian lodging occupied by clay and night.

Witham Operatic Society's main item, The Sorcerer, also had a charm all its own. True, the company had to wade knee-deep through a morass of W. S. Gilbert's most turgid terminology lacking most of the flashes of wit displayed in his other works but most of the players coped eloquently.

Sullivan's music spread the strawberry jam to sweeten the supernatural tale of the magician who brought passion to Ploverleigh. It was vigorously sung by the lively chorus who will soon be looking out for many more men to join them in the forthcoming Oklahoma - individual voices that charmed the ear belonged to Helene Jones (Constance) Patsy Doy (Aline) and Simon Mitchell (Alexis).

Producer Derek Collins brought some of his own magic to bear on Dr Daly, Nicholas Clough aged instantly to become a very dignified Sir Marmaduke and Janet Collins followed his example as a Lady of Ancient Lineage. As Mrs Parlet, a pew opener, Rita Page also contributed to this idea of senior citizenship and Edward Maltby finally won the game with his decrepit Notary.

But Stewart Adkins defied convention and successfully blew the dust off the old manuscript by making sorcerer John Wellington Wells an ebullient Cockney spiv with an American Express card in his pocket. Do grab a seat at one of the remaining performances this week and have a nice day!

Gilbert Sutcliffe