

'High Hopes' Indeed With This Group of Young People by Jim Stagg

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So much is heard of the destructive activities of young people today-admittedly a minority, the vociferous indiscretions and ill-conceived actions of whom receive untoward publicity – which it is pleasing when one hears of something constructive the young generation endeavours to initiate

The Show 'High Hopes' produced by the newly-formed 14-20 Music and Drama Society, a variety entertainment staged at the Exmouth Pavilion last week by about 50 young people, comes meritoriously within this category

It was a good title, epitomising the aspirations of all the society for the future, and all in all got them off to a good start

Accepting that there were a number of weaknesses- from which the society will doubtless learn- one can have only praise for the endeavour displayed by everyone concerned.

True there were failures but the achievement heavily outweighed these, and the society can take great encouragement both from its performance and the amount of support it received.

I was particularly impressed by the production of the husband and wife team Dennis and Diana Chiffers, of the second half of the programme, and by the overall musical direction of Pamela Jones. The singing and movement of the large chorus was the outstanding part of the show, and Diana Chiffers, who was the choreographer, Pamela Jones who directed the singing, and Dennis Chiffers who accompanied at the piano with Muriel Lamacraft and Anne Hallett, are to be congratulated on the way they inspired the young people to interpret the numbers.

Vivacious

Movement was very good- vivacious and graceful. If there were any awkward movers they were not to be seen. Voice production was good- the full lung and the open mouth to obtain clear enunciation was a lesson that had been well taught.

The opening number of the second part-'The Rhythm of Life' from 'Sweet Charity' set the atmosphere, and the chorus excelled itself. 'The Willow Pattern', a sad dance gave an opportunity for displays of virtuosity, and the young soloists mimed and danced well.

It was disappointing to me that the show was cloaked in anonymity- none of the young soloists received recognition in the programme for their ability.

One has no desire to create "prima donnas", either male or female or to relegate the very necessary- and always enthusiastic- "chorus" to the background. But individual effort and achievement deserve some recognition; the "soloists" have had to make more effort, have had to do extra work, so why shouldn't it be recognised and applauded?

Why cloak them in anonymity? Why level them down, instead of trying to level the others up?

Two very engaging young ladies did an engaging costume sketch called 'My Engagement' They both showed potential talent very worthy of development. I would have liked to have been told by the programme who they were. Instead I had to find out afterwards; Felicity Leonard and Linda Vernon, and very good they were, too.

Outstanding

And in the 'Willow Pattern' the young lady who played the unfortunate lover to the high-born Chinese girl was outstanding; her facial expressions mobile and evocative. She was good material on which to work. She was, I discovered Annette Cole.

Two young men- Males were unfortunately, heavily outnumbered- did "The Gendarmes" ably assisted by another young man in old time convict garb. They were good. But who were they? A one act play 'A Dogs Life' was well done, all the young actors showing that with experience that they will become very good. In particular the young man who played the amusing village inebriate was outstanding. A snappy piece of detection work discovered that he was Michael Gentle who recently played the hind legs of the cow, Cora in the pantomime, 'Jack and the Beanstalk'

The Finale was very good, but why, oh why, was there only one verse of 'High Hopes' sung, before the very clever additional verse written anonymously for the show, brought the curtain down?

The Chorus excelled itself in this- as they had just previously with the lovely – 'All in the April Evening'- and the audience was clearly enjoying it and looking for more.

Something must also be said about the costumes- they were terrific, and the mums and friends of the society whose hard work produced them, deserve an accolade.

All in all the 14-20 Music and drama society registered a success and I, for one, look forward to their next production.