

BWT Report

Thursday, October 26, 1989

Witham Gondoliers sail off to success

Dress rehearsal for the Gondoliers by Witham Operatic Society.

IT IS almost 100 years to the day since D'Oyly Carte first produced one of Gilbert and Sullivan's most sparkling and popular operas. Witham Operatic Society have chosen The Gondoliers as its Autumn show and it is being performed at the Public Hall all this week.

Tony Court's bass was a strong feature and Doug Coleman and Steve Draper made up the quartet of gondoliers. The young ladies of Venice are in love with the two leading men. The leaders of the chorus, Alison Brewer, Helen Collins and Pam Reid were well contrasted.

Brian Brown, the musical director, has gathered together an excellent orchestra. They were often taken along at a lively pace and never overwhelmed the performers on stage. His variations of pace in the different numbers kept an excellent balance throughout.

Simon Mitchell and Howard Brooks play Marco and Guiseppi. They are well contrasted in their characterisation and in their tones of voice. In the second act, in particular they introduce some interesting business that is always looked for by the audience. Alison Brand plays Gianetta and Kathryn Adkins, Tessa. They too are well contrasted, developing very different characters.

In Act two they are at their best with Kathryn Adkins' pleasing voice blending well in the quartets and quintets. Helen Jones is a fine Casilda and with Stuart Adkins as Luiz change the pace of the show with a delightful performance of one of Sullivan's loveliest tunes, *There was a time*. It was a pity that their parts are so brief.

Nicholas Clough was an excellent, pompous, very finely dressed Grand Inquisitor who made the most of his part. Geoff Coverdale had the humorous part of the unscrupulous, poverty stricken, Duke of Plaza - Toro. Pat Briggs as his Duchess was every inch the Gilbertian lady who has her husband well under control.

Produced by Patricia Pullen the story works out well for the characters on stage and they end with an apt quotation for the feelings of the audience - " on the whole, delighted"

JAMES BRIGHT