

# music

## *society ties up* *perfect* **pinafore**

WHAT a delight it was to see some really well-performed **Gilbert and Sullivan** in St Albans last week.

It is six years since **St Albans Operatic Society** last staged any of the works which were once seen as the mainstay of local societies.

But even though the shows are now well over 100 years old, they still have plenty to offer.

For its latest production at the **Alban Arena** last week, St Albans Operatic chose **HMS Pinafore** as its main work with the delightfully-funny **Trial by Jury** as a top-up.

Both shows take a swipe at society as it was and show a decidedly left-wing streak in Gilbert's thinking.

**Trial by Jury** tells the tale of a breach-of-promise case where the judge neatly solves all the problems by agreeing to marry the plaintiff himself.

This brief but delightful one-act curtain raiser saw **Barry Sawyer** as a marvellous judge and **Jacque Hick** as a stunning plaintiff.

Directed by society veteran **David Berridge** it gave a great opportunity to quite a few members of the cast to build some wonderful cameos.

**Pinafore** was probably the first of the G&S operas to use the now-familiar theme of lower-class boy falls in love with upper-class girl – only to find he was lost, stolen or swapped as a baby so he is upper-class anyway!

But it is a wonderful show and St

Albans rolled out some super-performers. Semi-professional **Mick Wilson**, one of the country's top Gilbert and Sullivan performers, was a tremendous Able Seaman **Ralph Rackstraw**, who wants to marry Josephine, the captain's daughter, beautifully performed by **Claire Colthup**.

**Clive Webb** made a splendid Captain Corcoran and the role of Little Buttercup could have been invented for **Jane Forster**.

There were many other excellent individual performances including **Susan Akroyd** as Cousin Hebe, **Rob Milner** as Dick Deadeye and **James Shipp** as the Boatswain's Mate, but the one which shone brightest was **Don Scott** as Sir Joseph Porter.

In his 37 years with the society, G&S has featured strongly in his performances and he has had similar character roles including The Major General in **Pirates** and The Duke of Plaza Toro in **The Gondoliers**.

Directed by **Eve Davies**, **Pinafore** was a great success.

**Graham Thomson**, who was musical director for both productions, had, by local society standards, a huge orchestra of 24 musicians who all gave excellent performances.

And Graham ensured that the orchestra kept its volume at a level at which all the singers could be heard all of the time.

**JOHN MANNING**