

OPERA "MARTHA" APPLAUDED BY ENTHUSIASTIC AUDIENCE

A large and enthusiastic audience of Mount Airy citizens jammed into the high school auditorium last Monday evening to applaud the local Opera Club's presentation of "Martha," produced under the direction of Dr. Clifford Bair of Winston-Salem.

The production provided an evening of good, light entertainment. The sets, as created by Virginia and Louis Bianco, were unusually beautiful, yet did not detract from the colorful costumes. Alma Banner and Alma Lou Haynes were responsible for those costumes. Set pieces as chosen by Bertie Cheek added to the scenes, as did the skillful lighting by Bill Elder and the make-up under the supervision of Betty Lovill.

A small but excellent instrumental group from the Winston-Salem Symphony, recruited by

Kenneth Smith, gave sensitive accompaniment to the singers. Ten members of the Charlotte Opera Association appeared in the performance. This group enjoyed singing in the presentation of "Martha" in Charlotte last February so much that they offered their services to the local group. And much credit for the performance goes to four Twin City residents who weekly came to Mount Airy to participate in the workshop and production program of the Opera Club: Connie Reynolds, Riley Matthews, Ronald Milroy and John Mickey.

Miss Reynolds, who sang the role of winsome and fun-loving Lady Harriett or "Martha" was in excellent voice and called forth much applause for her portrayal. Convincing in fine vocalism and

dramatic interpretation was Grant Davis of Mount Airy, who sang the role of Lionel. The role of Plunkett was sung by Riley Matthews, possessor of a voice of rich and appealing quality and considerable acting ability. Mount Airy's talented Dolores Mills, who sang the role of the mischievous Nancy or "Betsy Ann," turned in a brilliant performance. John Mickey of Mount Airy and Winston-Salem, in the role of the foppish Sir Tristan, lent the audience chuckling with his droll and comic antics. Joe Gamble, as the fussy and cantankerous sheriff, added further comedy interest to the performance.

Further credit for a smooth and sound musical and dramatic interpretation goes to Dr. Bair, both as producer and conductor of the orchestra, and other associate directors, Ronald Milroy and Sally Phillips, and Mrs. James Bray, president of the Mount Airy Opera Club.

Highlights of the performance were the ensembles at the end of the fourth and fifth acts; Mr.

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Grant's and Mr. Matthews' arias and duets; the third act duet of Miss Mills and Mr. Matthews; the quartet of the third act; and the brilliant overture of the orchestra.