

and manner to the languorous lines of artistic posture ; but intensely stiff, they can only look stiffly intense.

The heroine, Patience, is pure virtue, loth to love except unselfishly. She is in direct contrast to Lady Jane whose single-minded purpose is to get herself a man before her fast-fading charms are over-blown. (Who was the original of this unpleasant and recurring character—had Gilbert an unfavourite aunt whom he has thus pilloried in perpetuity?)

This is not an easy opera for boys to perform because so much depends upon Patience, a cardboard character at best and almost impossible for a boy to portray. Eleven-year-old Roger Mayo, unexpectedly called from the chorus, had three weeks in which to learn the part. He succeeded admirably and the occasional weakness of his singing and the lapses of memory were forgotten in the confidence of his delivery, and his adroit overcoming of some awkward moments such as (on one occasion) the threat of Patience on a monument through unexpected attachment to a tuffet, and a rather precipitate entry on another.

The parts of Bunthorne and Grosvenor were safe in the hands of D. J. Maurice and J. A. Dawes, who had mastered the terrifyingly tongue-twisting lyrics and produced them with speed and clarity. The Dragoons were dashing and vigorous, and A. I. Hunt, D. P. Nash and T. P. Thirlway made the most of their chance when the three military orchids are required to droop and wilt like hothouse blooms in the name of love. The lovesick maidens were prettily precious and dolefully demure at first, and uninhibitedly boisterous at the end.

Perhaps the surprise of the production was the success of D. C. J. Pallett as Lady Jane—totally unlike Gilbert's conception of the character and all the better for that. His grace and slimness completely belied the words put into his mouth and by substituting self-mockery for self-pity he made Jane's predatory swoops on Bunthorne tolerable instead of repulsive. One would have thought it impossible to make this character sympathetic and the Producer and Pallett deserve credit for this achievement.

What is one who knows nothing of music, and who regards the playing of five-finger exercises as a triumph in manual dexterity, to say of the orchestra? It was a merry noise which must have pleased the performers and certainly delighted the audience. The conductor, Mr. J. S. Dawes, looked alarmingly authoritative and it is impossible to conceive of any false notes being engendered beneath his nose. The scenery made less demands than usual upon Mr. G. A. Grant and his assistants but was as satisfactory as we have all come to expect.

Only the producer, Mr. A. G. Hills, knows what nightmares he endured in rehearsing and producing this opera, but if, as one suspects, the School Fund derived little from his efforts, let him

take comfort from the knowledge that the reputation of the Operatic Society has been maintained and that the audience were richly rewarded.

A.J.S.

MESSIAH

Handel's "Messiah" is one of those few masterpieces which remain great no matter what treatment they are accorded. No doubt this fact prompted the School to produce it both in 1951 and again this year. I believe the earlier performance was a considerable success, while in the recent one the School Choir, together with the soloists from "outside" and a generously augmented orchestra did full justice to nearly all aspects of the work.

Unless one wishes to go home in the early hours of the morning, one naturally rarely hears the complete work in one performance. Mr. Dawes gave us nearly all of Part One, much of Part Two, but none of Part Three. This made an effective programme, allowing the climax of the work, the Hallelujah Chorus, to come at the end. Another satisfying feature, to my mind, was the employment of an orchestra and chorus of Handelian, rather than Wagnerian dimensions. It was perhaps unfortunate that the continuo had to be supplied on a piano rather than on a harpsichord.

The four soloists made a generally good team. The two most successful were Rosamund Strode and Kenneth Tudor, the soprano and bass.

The greatest moments in the oratorio are, as always with Handel, in the choruses, and it was here that the School made its main contribution.

The Choir's singing was generally of a high standard, but towards the end there were signs of tiredness, and in consequence the later choruses lacked some of the vitality they deserved. However, the orchestra's accompaniment was ever energetic and there were many impressive moments.

Finally, much praise must go to Mr. Dawes for very able conducting, and more especially for his unflagging enthusiasm during rehearsals. This was chiefly responsible for the very satisfying final performance.

B. TETTMAR.