

# Trial by Jury



Following the successful Gilbert and Sullivan productions of the past two years under Frank Kennard's direction, Graham Caldbeck broke new ground by combining a performance of 'Trial by Jury' with a concert of choral and orchestral music in the last full week of the Lent term.

The opening item, Britten's setting of Psalm 150, has the two advantages of orchestration which can be adapted to fit the forces available, and of a testing middle section which will bring out the best in them. This work exemplified Graham Caldbeck's approach of using public performances to develop the musical talents and confidence of any boy in the school willing and capable of 'having a go'; the string players were all members of the Lower School; none of them had been learning their instruments for more than two years, and the clarinetist, Webber, is only in his second year.

The solo instrumental items, mainly from members of the Middle School, were no less enjoyable. M. Fisher (4P), in his performance of Bach's Prelude in C and the first movement of the 'Moonlight' sonata, showed his awareness of the shape of the music and sufficient technical skill to play with a measure of personal feeling. C. Newell's (4B) performance of 'Trumpet Tune' by Greene reflected considerable promise. The most outstanding instrumental playing, however, came from C. Williams (7BL), who performed the second movement of Mozart's clarinet concerto — an ambitious choice, but he surmounted the technical difficulties with apparent ease, his instrument sounding rich and beautiful throughout its range — and a piano piece, 'Reflets Dans L'Eau'. Playing from memory, his full response to the sonorities and limpid texture of Debussy demonstrated a musical sensibility far more mature than one would expect to meet in a school concert.

The most frequent performers in the concert were the Lower School Choir, which has now, after several years of progress under Frank Kennard and Iwan Davies, reached a good standard under Graham Caldbeck. With twenty members drawn more or less equally from the First and Second Forms, the choir possessed the bright, strong treble tone which comes from a well-developed chest register. They ended the first half of the evening with another lively performance of 'The Daniel Jazz' (the first had been in the concert on November 28th) but I felt their most interesting contribution to be seven songs by Richard Rodney Bennett, three from 'The Insect World' and four from 'The Aviary'. They appreciated, for example, the wit of 'Clock-a-day', and responded well to the harmonic,

melodic and rhythmic inventiveness of Bennett, attacking the faster sections, in particular, with confidence and precision. L. Noga (2BM), the soloist in 'The Widow Bird', has a rich, full voice, and the choir as a whole produced a glowing sound in the climax of the last song, 'The Lark'.

'Trial by Jury', a light-hearted skit on the partiality of British justice for a damsel in distress, was Gilbert and Sullivan's first operetta. As in 1973 and 74, most of the main roles were taken by masters. Members of St. Martin's and James Allen's filled the ladies' roles, notably Marian Southwick, from St. Martin's, who took over the plaintiff's role at a fortnight's notice after Trudy Chantrill had received injuries in an accident which forced her to withdraw. Both Marian, and Robert Coupe (tenor) as Edward, performed admirably, and the bridesmaids were, visually and aurally, a delight. Of the masters, Brian Stowe, portentously arthritic as the Usher, and Iwan Davies, portentously solemn as the Counsel for the Plaintiff, lent excellent support to Trevor Tindale (the Judge), whose india-rubber movements mirrored faithfully the rapturous flexibility of his emotional responses. Taken together the three performances gave the production much of its cohesion and thrust.

Most encouraging of all on the musical side, however, were the performances of the orchestra and of the large number of boys from the Middle and Upper School who filled the roles of jury, clerks and spectators, singing lustily and with enjoyment. They had made a great deal of progress in a relatively short time.

As the entire action of the operetta takes place in the court-room, with thirty to forty people permanently on stage as officers of the court and spectators, much of the dramatic effect of the work depends on how naturally they react to and identify with the posurings and indulgences of the principals. The animation and confidence of all these players was a tribute to the experience and skill of John Newton (who, though he hasn't previously directed at Allyn's, was responsible for many productions over the year at St. Dunstan's) and a happy prelude to his acceptance of the burdens of office as Master in charge of Drama.

This production marked the transition from the old order to the new; whilst we must express our gratitude to Frank Kennard, who retired last year as Director of Music, and to Steven Jenkins, who has given up the post of Head of Drama after a mammoth stint of some ten years, following his appointment as Commanding Officer of the C.C.F., we can reasonably look forward to progress in new directions under Graham Caldbeck and John Newton.