



### LOWER SCHOOL CONCERT Friday, July 4th, 1975

The first half of this year's Lower School Concert consisted of musical items, the second of a short play, 'The Gentle Art of Persuasion', an adaptation of chapter two of Mark Twain's 'The Adventures of Tom Sawyer'. The programme as a whole reflected the variety and the generally high standards of musical and dramatic activity in the Lower School.

The musical half offered a nicely balanced mixture of choral and instrumental pieces. The Lower School Choir, who opened and concluded it with performances of Graham Caldbeck's 'Jubilate' and 'Venite', and of Offenbach's 'The Bold Gendarmes', sang with their customary skill, vitality and warmth. Particularly entertaining were their folk songs, to the accompaniment of bongo drums, tambourine and four guitars. Laurence Noga's solo, 'The Lord's Prayer', also to guitar accompaniment, illustrated once again the beauty and power of his voice and his quickness and confidence as a performer — he learnt it at half a day's notice after G. Dallaway had developed a bad throat.

The other solo items were also good. Mark Williams' trumpet version of 'Drink to me only', with Nathan Ariss playing the piano accompaniment, demonstrated an excellent technique; tone and breath control were very impressive for a performer of twelve years of age. Richard Pullinger gave a sensitive performance of Bernard Allsopp's Etude in A minor for guitar, and Nicholas Wrighton's two piano pieces, Study in D major by Heller and 'Maple Leaf' Rag by Joplin, were as popular and even more proficient than his performance of another Joplin rag the previous year.

Most cheering of all, I felt, was the opportunity given by this concert for instrumentalists in the Lower School to gain experience of ensemble work in public performance, and the evidence provided by the concert of the extent to which ensemble work is a regular part of Lower School musical life. The Lower School Orchestra (ten violins, two cellos, two flutes), which played arrangements by Woodhouse of traditional Welsh melodies, is a group meeting regularly on Thursday evenings under the guidance of Mrs. C. Kennard. Later in the evening three of its members, Andrew Levinson and Jovito Athaide, violins, and Nicholas Geere, cello, gave a competent performance of an ambitious choice, 'Preludium' by Shostakovich. The Lower School Wind Ensemble, which played arrangements of pieces from Purcell's 'Dido and Aeneas', meets on Tuesday evenings under Graham Caldbeck.

There was, also, the Lower School Band (bolstered by two horns from the Third Forms), which played an Air by Purcell. There has evidently been a great deal of progress in this direction during the past year; the foundations are being laid for the re-establishment of a capable school orchestra with members drawn exclusively from Alleyn's.

'The Gentle Art of Persuasion' was the first Lower School play under Michael Lemprier's direction. It is a dramatisation of the part of the story where Tom, forced as a punishment by his Aunt Polly to whitewash a fence, persuades his friends to do it by pretending he won't let them have a turn with the brush because he wants to do it himself; he discovers 'a great law of human action, without knowing it, namely that, in order to make a man or boy covet a thing, it is only necessary to make that thing difficult to attain.'

Though the cast coped well with their American accents (just a little more volume and distinctness would have made the dialogue completely easy to follow — the Hall is notoriously difficult to speak in, especially when the actors have only one evening to adjust to the acoustical impact of an audience) and Andrew Sim was most effective as the Narrator, the main feature of this production, I felt, was the naturalness of their movements. This was apparent from the opening quarrel and fight between Tom and the Stranger (Graham Neale) and the reactions of Tom's friends, to the differing ways in which each of the latter played his part as an 'Innocent' seeking permission to take a share in the whitewashing; without such variety of movement this last sequence would have become repetitive. That it did not is a tribute to the imagination shown by both cast and producer. Nicholas Holmes as Ben Rogers gave an excellent imitation of the 'Big Missouri', Andrew Key as Aunt Polly startled us all, and Patrick Gray, as the hero, fully realised Tom's varying qualities and emotions — his despair and frustration as he started to paint the fence, his calculated off-handedness as he whetted Ben's appetite, his relish and joy as, one after another, his other friends fell for the bait, too. He communicated Tom's spontaneity, confidence and spirit most convincingly. Altogether the play was a great success, both as a performance and as evidence of the quality and value of the weekly sessions of the Lower School Drama Club.

P. E. Kingman.