

'Fludde' to delight eye and ear

Britten's "Noye's Fludde" continues to produce a succession of performances throughout Great Britain which must list the work in popularity as the junior partner to "Messiah." With St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral as the venue for a series of performances until Saturday this week, some 200 children from Edinburgh schools have gathered together to produce a performance that is both memorable and exciting.

Exciting both visually and aurally, this production will improve with each performance for there remain some teething problems. The singing by all but Mr and Mrs Noye is still tentative and lacks a full commitment of intention. This is no doubt "first night nerves," not greatly helped by the request for audience non-reaction usual to church buildings. There is nothing a child responds to better than a quick show of approval when engaged in any activity.

INSPIRATION

Gordon Clinton is a convincing Noye and a help and inspiration to all his young colleagues. His performance is sympathetic and positive and in this he is helped by a wonderfully brash Mrs Noye, Marjorie McMichael. Their sons and daughters were slow starters but gave pleasing support. Score upon score of "animals" delighted the eye with their costumes and movement, the primary school element singing lustily and giving their elders an example to follow in later performances.

The orchestra gave lustrous colour to the entire performance being always reliable and quick to add drama to each successive point in the story. The music director, Dennis Townhill, and his colleagues must be well pleased with this commendable opening night. **G. M. L. H.**

Cathedral 'Flooded'

ST. MARY'S Cathedral, Edinburgh, was packed every night from September 6 to 10 for performances of Benjamin Britten's "Noye's Fludde," the Chester miracle play set to music.

Mr John McColl's attractive production, together with the lively musical direction by Mr Dennis Townhill and the beautifully executed set, combined to provide not only a real "Festival event" but also a great act of worship. This was apparent not only in the impressive performance of actors and musicians, but also in the obvious pleasure which they both received and gave.

The large cast mainly of Edinburgh schoolchildren clearly enjoyed what they were doing—all the animals skipped happily two by two into the Ark—certainly there was no evidence of their having been beaten or driven there. Every future "Kyrie Eleison" will remind me of them.

A. R.

200 pupils to perform opera at Festival

The biggest direct contribution Edinburgh Corporation school pupils have ever made to the Festival programme will be the performance by 200 singers and instrumentalists, aged seven to 18, of Benjamin Britten's opera, "Noye's Fludde" (Noah's Flood), in St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral, from September 6 to 10.

The opera was written by Britten for performance by children, and the words are from the medieval Chester Miracle play, put into modern English. Like most of the early mystery and miracle plays by which the Bible was made alive for people who for the most part could not read, the action contains some non-Biblical comic relief.

For instance, Mrs Noah and her "Gossips" refuse to help in building the Ark because they don't believe a flood is coming. Her three sons eventually have to carry her, under protest, on board after the Ark has been built in sight of the audience.

Mr Dennis Townhill, organist and choirmaster of the cathedral, who suggested that Edinburgh school children should perform this work, said yesterday at a Press conference that the pupils had entered into the project with enthusiasm.

Rehearsals of the singers, numbering 130, and of the school orchestras, began last October. The cast has been drawn from practically all the secondary schools and a number of primary schools.

The Very Rev. Provost Reginald Foskett expressed gratitude to the officials of the Edinburgh Education Department and the director,

Dr George Reith, for their help. The making of the animals' head-gear and pieces of scenery were set as "school projects."

Mr Geoffrey Fisher, director-secretary of the Edinburgh Zoo, suggested a programme cover, and Mr Paul Shillabeer carried out the idea photographically. In fact, the credit titles are numerous, and a particularly large part of the production (under the direction of Mr John McColl) has been carried out by Ainslie Park School staff and pupils.

Dr Reith commented to "The Scotsman" yesterday that school pupils had always been encouraged to support the Festival by attendance, but this big participation would constitute an important advance.

The cathedral's musical programme will include a recital on the Festival's opening night (August 21) by Stuttgart Schola Cantorum, conducted by Clytus Gottwald; lunch-time organ recitals on the three Wednesdays by Dennis Townhill in aid of the centenary appeal of the Royal College of Organists; an organ recital by Dr Francis Thomas; a recital by Kingston-upon-Hull Youth Choir and Chamber Orchestra; and a recital by the Sine Nomine Singers, with Helen Longworth at the organ.