

OLDHAM MUSICAL SOCIETY

President: Miss MARJORY LEES.

Chairman: FRANK WHITTAKER, Esq.

A GRAND PERFORMANCE OF

“MESSIAH”

HANDEL

In the ODEON THEATRE

(By kind permission of the Directors and Management)

On SUNDAY, 5th DECEMBER, 1948

Commence 2-0 p.m.

Held under the gracious patronage of
His Worship the Mayor and Mayoress
(Councillor and Mrs. S. Thornton) and
the Chief Constable (W. E. Schofield, O.B.E.)

Principals:

JOAN CROSS, Soprano

SARA BUCKLEY, Contralto

JAMES JOHNSTON, Tenor

ARTHUR COPLEY, Bass

The Musical Society's Choir and Orchestra

Leader: Fred Brough. Solo Trumpet: S. Wilkinson.

Organist: FRANK BERRY, L.R.A.M., F.R.C.O.

Conductor: ERNEST CRAIG, A.R.C.M.

Hon. Secretary: S. MILLS, 134 Birch Avenue, Chadderton.

PROGRAMME - THREEPENCE

F. Schofield, Acme Press, Oldham Road, Royton.

SOCIETY'S 'MESSIAH'

THE Oldham Musical Society has had reason recently to complain that public support for its work has not been what it might have been. In fact, one was given to understand a short time ago that, although the society has never been a profit-making organisation, the drop in support, which followed its war-time boom, was beginning to threaten the society's future plans.

The society's aim has been to bring to Oldham only the best artists, but such artists have to be paid, and unless public support can be fairly reasonably guaranteed even a non-profitmaking society must lower its standards—though reluctantly—in order to pay its way.

So it was that Sunday's "Messiah" performance in the Odeon Theatre became more than just another "Messiah" by the Oldham Musical Society. For those who have the society's interests at heart, and rightly deem it a tragedy that its high standards should be in jeopardy for the want of just a few hundred more followers, Sunday's concert (quite apart from its musical worth, which was not inconsiderable) will probably have provided good grounds for renewed optimism. The theatre appeared to be full, and, unless they were all once-a-year "Messiah" fans (a possibility not to be discounted) the occasion might well be considered at some future date to have heralded in a new period of prosperity for the society.

A Standard

This year's "Messiah" was not faultless by any means. There were orchestral and choral flaws—recognised by the audible whispers of those who know it all from past experience as listener or performer. There was a tendency to jerk and to chop (which must be a temptation with Handel at most times) and the tempo will no doubt have been reckoned by some as a little too racy on occasions. But, all in all, this performance set a standard for "The Messiah" performances which are to be heard locally within the next few weeks.

The singing of the principals, Joan Cross, Sara Buckley, James Johnston and Arthur Copley, was first rate. The quality of their singing was achieved by intonation, enunciation and careful precise distribution of emphasis. The general competence of all four, who are to be rated high among "Messiah" performers, strengthened the whole performance.

The choir's might ensured that atmosphere necessary for a "Messiah" performance. Possibly the basses came out best, with the contraltos just behind. But the whole worked well in the choruses to provide those thrills of the oratorio which never die for those who love to hear or sing the story of stories.

Mr. Ernest Craig was the conductor, with Mr. Fred Brough leader of the orchestra, Mr. Frank Berry organist, and Mr. S. Wilkinson solo trumpet.

E.B.