**Education Act Oratorio (revised 29.6.25)**

**PROLOGUE – WAR**

***(Sinister chords, building and dying away. Battle noises over, if desired.)***

**MEN**

**The cannons roar,**

**Aeroplanes soar.**

**WOMEN**

**Chaos on the shore,**

**ALL**

**Barbed wire and shrapnel,**

**ALTOS & BASSES**

**Spill blood and gore,**

**SOPS & TENORS**

**Yet there is more,**

**ALL**

**More, more, more…**

**CHILDREN or A CHILD *(spoken)***

**More, more, more**

**In 1944.**

***(Into the ORATORIO itself)***

**ALL**

**This is summer in Normandy**

**Nineteen forty-four,**

**This is summer in Normandy**

**This is summer in Normandy**

**This is summer in Normandy**

**Nineteen forty-four.**

**TENORS**

**What’s owed to us now,**

**To us and our kind?**

**When we return**

**ALL MEN**

**What will we find?**

**BASSES**

**We have done our bit,**

**Showed our might,**

**Proved again that we can fight.**

**BOY/GIRL TREBLE (*possibly offstage, disembodied quality)***

**Where are our loved ones now?**

**Where are our loved ones now?**

**SOLO WOMAN**

**Where are our loved ones now?**

**Dead or alive or needing a nurse?**

**Knowing might be a terrible curse;**

**Not knowing, not knowing**

**Is even worse.**

**ALL WOMEN**

**Ah…**

**Ah…**

**MEN**

**Will the land be fit for our heroes?**

**We’ve heard all that before;**

**ALL**

**This time we’ll make it happen**

**When we’ve won this hellish war.**

**Will the land be fit for our children**

**Whose suff’ring has been so sore?**

**Will the land be fit for tomorrow’s youth**

**When we’ve won this hellish war?**

**CHILD 1**

**In our underground shelter**

**I held my mother tight**

**While bombs came raining down**

**All the night.**

**CHILD 2**

**I was taken from my daddy**

**And from my mummy too,**

**I was evacuated**

**Up to Crewe.**

**CHILD 1 *(spoken)***

**In the morning our house was a pile of rubble.**

**CHILD 2 *(spoken)***

**But at least I was safe from the bombs.**

**CHILD 3 *(sung)***

**I lost my liberty bodice**

**When I was only three.**

**The day was hot, so I took it off,**

**And then, oh dearie me –**

**The siren went, a bomb came down,**

**And when I looked to see,**

**I saw my liberty bodice**

**Stuck up in a tree.**

**ALL (raucously)**

**I lost my liberty bodice**

**When I was only three.**

**The day was hot, so I took it off,**

**And then, oh dearie me –**

**The siren went, a bomb came down,**

**And when I looked to see,**

**I saw my liberty bodice**

**Stuck up in a tree.**

**Oi!**

**ADULT 1 *(as Child 1 now grown up, remembering: spoken)***

**Our house was a pile of rubble.**

**ADULT 2 *(as Child 2 now grown up, remembering: spoken)***

**At least I was safe from the bombs.**

**MOTHER *(middle or working class: sung)***

**Does anyone know or care?**

**It isn’t right, it isn’t fair;**

**I’m feeling poorly, under the weather,**

**I’m getting near the end of my tether,**

**I could shriek, I could tear my hair,**

**The kids are ev’rywhere,**

**They need their daddy back.**

**Two months, not a letter from Jack.**

**Now it’s wash day,**

**Shop day,**

**Rent day,**

**Jack’s away, Jack’s away,**

**What can I say?**

**What can I say?**

**(Possibly another MOTHER from here)**

**Will the land be fit for our heroes**

**And for our heroes’ kids?**

**Those kids of us all**

**Who scream and bawl –**

***(The CHILDREN make loud noises)***

**Them flippin’ noisy kids.**

**TENORS**

**What’s owed to them now,**

**Each daughter and son?**

**Who’s going to help them?**

**ALL MEN**

**What’s to be done?**

**TEENAGE KIDS *(or similar)***

**Young Dick brought an object into school,**

**“It’s a practice one,” he said.**

**“Found it lying by the swimming pool –**

**I think I’ll take it to the Head.”**

**Head said: “Blimey! Look what we’ve got here –**

**It’s an unexploded bomb! (You half-wit!)**

**Bombs in schools are not a good idea –**

**Return it where you got it from! (Sound the alarm!)”**

**“Better still, go tell the local bobby,**

**Wartime bombs are very much his hobby!”**

**But the local bobby said to Dick:**

**“You caught me in the nick –**

**I shall ring up double-quick,**

**Gonna call the bomb squad in**

**To hear it going tick!”**

**Young Dick showed it to the army gang,**

**They said: “It’s a big one, chum!**

**But we’ll fix it so it won’t go bang,**

**Then you can take it home to mum!”**

**“Take cover!!”**

**ALL**

**Somebody’s got to do something,**

**Someone’s got to act!**

**Don’t know who, don’t know what precisely,**

**Something’s to be done**

**And that’s a fact!**

**Help our children,**

**Save their future;**

**Don’t know who, don’t know what precisely,**

**But, please,**

**Somebody’s got to do something**

**For our children**

**And that’s a fact!**

**And that’s a fact…**

**MEN**

**Ah, ah…**

**WOMEN**

**Will there be bluebirds over - ?**

**Ah…**

**Will there be bluebirds over - ?**

**ALL *(unaccompanied)***

**Ah…**

**BASSES *(accompanied)***

**Jimmy will go to sleep –**

**If something’s done…**

***(NARRATOR’S speech (‘And something was being done’) follows, not underscored, though it could be if desired.)***

**ALL**

**Parliament’ry debate:**

**PEOPLE *(about half the choir)***

**Secondary schools,**

**And free education,**

**Lovely free school meals,**

**And free milk at playtime.**

**EVERYONE ELSE**

**The MPs and the Lords,**

**Divided in agenda,**

**The MPs and the Lords**

**Debating furiouslee.**

**Some want the schools to teach**

**Obedience to their betters,**

**While others want to preach**

**More left-wing tendency.**

**PEOPLE**

**Let’s hear a speaker from the right wing,**

**Of social sentiments bereft;**

**And then a voice endorsing union hard noses –**

**Die-hard opinions from the left:**

**SOLO *(spoken in rhythm, upper class)***

**My honourable friends,**

**Let’s educate our children**

**To grow up with required skills**

**But *pliabilitee!***

**SOLO *(spoken in rhythm, middle or lower class)***

**But Mr Speaker – no!**

**I’m speaking for the unions –**

**Let’s train our kids to use their brains**

**And think *politic’lee!***

**PEOPLE *(dispirited)***

**Secondary schools –**

**But what education?**

**Lovely free school meals –**

**But what are they learning?**

**Step forward bishops and archbishops!**

**The Church of England shows the way!**

**But can it influence these education measures?**

**What will it bring into the fray?**

**LORDS SPIRITUAL *(4 of them, an unaccompanied barbershop quartet)***

**Fear not, good people, for**

**We are the Lords spiritual;**

**We shall support your Act**

**If you support church schools.**

**Let’s educate the young**

**In lowliness and holiness;**

**And day by day they’ll learn**

**Ecclesiastic rules.**

**Let’s hope!**

**PEOPLE**

**You want this, you want that!**

**Your agendas leave us flat!**

**We, the people, urgentlee**

**Need all parties to agree!**

**We, the people, urgentlee**

**Need all parties to agree,**

**And speedily!**

**ALL *(representing all Commons and Lords parties)***

**We’ll work together for all the people**

**And their children’s future,**

**Ah… ah…**

**We’ll work together to offer children**

**Science, sport and culture,**

**Ah… ah…**

**A CHILD *(spoken)***

**All will be free, a sacred birthright.**

**AN ADULT *(spoken)***

**Generations will benefit from our foresight.**

**WOMEN**

**By a miracle we made law**

**In the chaos and pain of war,**

**SOLO *(M or F)***

**We devised an Education Act,**

**ALL**

**Nineteen forty-four.**

**SOLO *(M or F, child or adult)***

**Nineteen forty-four…**

**ALL *(including* CHILDREN)**

**Act of education,**

**An opportunity,**

**More access to learning**

**For him and her and me!**

**Second’ry education,**

**Unknown discovery,**

**Points us all to the moon and stars –**

**That’s him**

**And her**

**And me!**

**MEN**

**For him and her and me –**

**WOMEN**

**Higher still and higher, higher –**

**MEN**

**Will our ambition be**

**ALL**

**Unleashing our talents,**

**All of it for free,**

**For him**

**And her**

**And me!**

**Ah!**

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